

1926 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
2nd Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF SECOND BATTALION DIARY

January 6.—Captain D. C. Colvill, M.C., and a draft of 59 other ranks, arrived from the 1st Battalion.

January 9.—The District Commander inspected the Draft.

January 21.—Lieut. K. S. Wootten rejoined the Regiment on vacating the appointment of Station Staff Officer, Razmak.

January 24.—The Razmak Column composed as follows marched to Razani (16 miles). [The Regiment piquetted the road.] Headquarters 7th Indian Infantry Brigade, 7th Indian Infantry Brigade and R.A. Signals Sections. Signal Sections, Wireless Section, 20th Indian Pack Brigade R.A., 14th Field Company Sappers and Miners, 52nd Light Infantry, 3/11th Sikhs, 2/1st Gurkha Rifles, 1/2nd Gurkha Rifles, 3/2nd Bombay Pioneers, Brigade Ammunition Column, 9th I.B.T. Company, 17th D.T. Train and Field Ambulance.

January 25.—The Column marched to Damdil [Old Camp] (distance 15 miles), "C" and "D" Companies formed the rearguard.

January 26.—The Column marched to Miranshah (distance 16 miles).

January 27-30.—The Column halted at Miranshah to collect supplies.

January 31.—The Column marched to Mohammed Khel (distance 14½ miles). The Regiment piquetted the last six miles.

February 1.—The Column halted at Mohammed Khel.

February 2.—The Column (less 52nd and 2/1st Gurkhas) marched to Datta Khel *via* the Spinchilla Narai. The Regiment and the 2/2st Gurkha Rifles escorted the Transport by road (distance 10 miles).

February 3.—The Column halted at Datta Khel.

February 4.—The Column marched back to Mohammed Khel *via* the Spinchilla Narai (distance 7½ miles). The Regiment piquetted the first 6 miles.

February 5.—The Column halted at Mohammed Khel. The Brigade Ammunition Column, Transport and Train returned to Miranshah escorted by the 3/2nd Bombay Pioneers.

February 6.—All supplies and baggage were loaded into lorries and sent to Razani by road (distance 45 miles). The Column marched back to Razani *via* the Tut Narai and Loargai Narai, the latter being under snow (distance 16 miles).

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February 7.—Two battalions were sent ahead to Razmak Narai in lorries to clear the road which was blocked by snow.

The Regiment, 1/2nd Gurkha Rifles and 10th Pack Battery R.A., returned to Razmak with Pack Mule Transport.

February 8.—The remainder of the Column returned to Razmak.

Major L. Tunnard assumed command of the Regiment.

Information received that Lieut. M. T. Stephens qualified as an instructor at the Army Signal School, Poona.

February 10.—Information received that Captain C. B. Crawford qualified at the Small Arms School, Pachmarhi.

Information received that Lieut. R. H. Coad, M.M., is seconded from Regimental duty whilst employed as Adjutant and Quartermaster, Army School of Education, Belgaum.

February 22.—"C" Company carried out Field Firing.

February 23.—"D" Company carried out Field Firing.

February 24.—M.G. Platoon carried out Field Firing.

February 26.—2nd Lieut. G. G. Hughes and G. C. H. Wykeham to be Lieutenants (to date from January 31).

March 1.—Final of Lewis Gun Section Competition held. Won by "C" Company.

March 11.—Annual Inspection by Brigade Commander took place,

March 12.—Captain C. B. Crawford took over Command of "B" Company.
Heavy baggage despatched to Bannu.

March 13.—One N.C.O. and 3 men proceeded to Bannu with remainder of heavy baggage.

March 14.—Captain W. L. Barnard joined after a tour of duty at the Regimental Depot, and took over command and payment of "D" Company.

March 18.—Lieut. F. Clare, D.C.M., proceeded to Chakrata.

March 19.—Information received that 2nd Lieuts. A. J. W. Macleod and A. R. E. Walker, I.A.U.L., have been posted to the Regiment for one year's attachment, and will join at Chakrata.

Arrival of Advance Party of 2nd Bn. The Sherwood Foresters.

March 22.—More heavy baggage despatched to Bannu under escort.

Lieut.-Colonel W. H. M. Freestun, C.M.G., D.S.O., resumed Command of the Regiment.

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March 23.—2nd Bn. The Sherwood Foresters marched in and took over the lines. The Regiment moved into tents.

March 24.—Camp Piquets and Perimeter Posts handed over to 2nd Bn. The Sherwood Foresters.

March 25.—Regiment marched to Razani.

March 26.—Regiment inarched to Damdil.

March 27.—Regiment marched to Idak. Heavy rain and hail from Thal fort. Distance 19 miles.

March 28.—Regiment remained at Idak.

March 29.—Regiment marched to Saidgi.

March 30.—Regiment marched to Bannu.

March 31.—Regiment remained at Bannu.

April 1.—1st Echelon consisting of “A” and “B” Companies Machine Gun Platoon, Indian Platoon, Band, 20 Buglers and some followers entrained in two trains and proceeded by narrow-gauge railway to Kalabagh Ghat, crossing the ferry and reaching Mari Indus Camp about 5 p.m.

April 2.—1st Echelon remained at Mari Indus. 2nd Echelon (remainder of Regiment) remained at Bannu.

April 3.—2nd Echelon left Bannu for Mari Indus in two trains as before.

April 4.—1st Echelon left Mari Indus by train at 10 p.m. for Dehra Dun.

April 5.—2nd Echelon left Mari Indus from Dehra Dun.

April 6.—1st Echelon arrived at Dehra Dun.

April 7.—1st Echelon marched to Jumnipore. 2nd Echelon arrived at Dehra Dun.

April 8.—1st Echelon marched to Kalsi. 2nd Echelon marched to Jumnipore. Transport largely bullock carts, which caused much difficulty.

April 9.—1st Echelon marched to Saiah. 2nd Echelon marched to Kalsi.

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April 10.—1st Echelon marched to Chakrata.

2nd Echelon marched to Saiah.

2nd Lieut. J. D. Palmer joined the Regiment on first appointment and was posted to "B" Company.

2nd Lieuts. A. J. W. Macleod and A. R. E. Walker, I.A.U.L., reported their arrival and were posted to "A" and "D" Companies respectively.

April 16.—"A" and "C" Companies were struck off duties until further notice for the purpose of carrying out individual training and the Annual Musketry Course.

April 18.—Information received that Captain L. W. Giles, M.C., has been posted to the Home Establishment on promotion.

May 11.—The Regiment was inspected by the Brigade Commander.

May 13.—Inspection of the Barracks by the Brigade Commander.

May 19.—Major L. Tunnard reported for duty.

May 20.—Following inter-Company transfer of officers took place :—

Lieut. M. T. Stephens, "B" to "A".

2nd Lieut. A. J. W. Macleod, "A" to "B".

May 26.—Information received that Major W. G. Tolson, M.C., has been seconded with effect from May 8, 1926.

June 5.—King's Birthday Parade.

June 16.—Inspection by G.O.C-in-C Eastern Command.

June 18.—Waterloo Sports held.

June 24.—Lieut. G. C. H. Wykeham took over Command and payment of "C" Company.

June 25.—Captain D. C. Colvill, M.C., proceeded to Dehra Dun to take over the duties of officiating Staff Captain, 17th Indian Infantry Brigade.

July 25.—Lieut. M. T. Stephens proceeded on a Course at the Army School of Education, Belgaum.

July 28.—Information received of death of Major L. Tunnard at sea on July 20.

August 5.—Captain C. B. Crawford took over command and payment of "C" Company.

August 10.—2nd Lieut. K. Bayley proceeded to Jullunder on 6 months' attachment to the British Infantry Training Company of the 10/17th Dogra Regiment.

August 11.—Extract from *London Gazette* dated Tuesday, July 20, 1926: "Lieutenant to be Captain W. A. R. Ames (April 28)."

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August 19.—Colonel Commandant Macnamara, Commanding the U.P. District inspected the Regiment.

August 27.—Information received that Lieut. J. A. Theobalds would embark for the United Kingdom on H.M.T. *Nevasa* sailing from Bombay on October 12.

September 7.—2nd Lieut. J. D. Palmer transferred to the British Station Hospital, Naini Tal.

September 13.—"B" and "D" Companies and a party of casuals began their annual musketry course and individual training.

September 24.—Information received that 2nd Lieut. K. Bayley would embark for the United Kingdom on H.M.T. *Nevasa* sailing from Bombay on October 12.

September 27.—Information received that 2nd Lieut. J. W. H. K. Greenway, I.A.U.L., would be attached to the Regiment.

September 28.—The following inter-Company transfers took place :—
Captain W. A. R. Ames, "A" to "D" Company.
Lieut. M. T. Stephens, from "A" to "H.Q." Wing.
Captain D. C. Colvill, M.C., from "C" to "A" Company.
2nd Lieut. F. T. Horan, from "C" to "A" Company.

September 29.—The following extract is taken from the "*London Gazette* of September 4, 1926 :—
2nd Lieutenants to be Lieutenants: K. Bayley (August 27th); P. F. Metcalfe (August 30).

October 2.—Lieut.-Colonel Freestun and Lieutenant Clare proceeded to Gangora to inspect training camp returning the same day.

October 6.—Lieut. J. A. Theobalds, 2 Sergeants, 1 Corporal and 5 privates left to embark on H.M.T. *Nevasa* for the United Kingdom.
Captain K. Horan assumed command of the Regiment vice Lieut.-Colonel Freestun, who was placed on the sick list.

October 7.—Lieut. Bayley proceeded to Bombay to embark for the United Kingdom.
Information received that 2nd Lieut. G. W. S. Burton, I.A.U.L., has been posted to the Regiment for one year's attachment.

October 13.—Information received that 2nd Lieut. L. L. Falkiner has been posted to the Regiment on first appointment to fill an existing vacancy.

October 15.—Lieut.-Colonel W. H. M. Freestun, C.M.G., D.S.O., resumed Command of the Regiment,

October 20.—Information received that Lieut. M. T. Stephens qualified at the 3rd Course of 1926 at the Army School of Education, Belgaum.

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October 28.—Lieut. G. C. H. Wykeham and 33 other ranks proceeded to Dehra Dun to re-inforce the advanced party of 17 other ranks previously despatched.
Captain K. Horan took over command of the Regiment with effect from to-day.

October 30.—A draft of 2 Corporals and 12 privates left Chakrata proceeding to the United Kingdom for discharge and transfer to the Army Reserve.
The following officers of the Indian Army Unattached List reported their arrival for one year's attachment and were posted to Companies as under :—
2nd Lieut. G. W. S. Burton, "C" Company; 2nd Lieut. J. W. H. K. Greenway, "B" Company;
Lieut.-Colonel W. H. M. Freestun, C.M.G., D.S.O., resumed command of the Regiment.

November 1.—3rd Half yearly examination for N.C.O/s promotion started.
Lieut. J. E. D. Kilburn reported his arrival for duty after a tour of duty at the Regimental Depot,

November 2.—Lieut. W. G. Clarke reported his arrival for duty after relinquishing his appointment as A.D.C. to the G.O.C Poona District.

November 7.—Lieut. W. G. Clarke proceeded to Jullunder for attachment to the British Infantry Training Company, 10/17th Dogra Regiment.
The Machine Gun Platoon left Chakrata for Dehra Dun to fire the annual Machine Gun Classification.

November 11.—Nonnebosschen Day. "B" Company won Athletic Shield.

November 14.—1st Echelon of the Regiment consisting of "C" and "D" Companies, the Band and the Indian Platoon left Chakrata and marched to Saiah under the command of Major J. L. Portal, D.S.O. Captain W. A. R. Ames proceeded to Dhanauri practice camp for attachment to the Royal Artillery.

November 15.—1st Echelon marched from Saiah to Kalsi.

November 16.—1st Echelon marched from Kalsi to Jumnipore.

November 17.—2nd Echelon of the Regiment consisting of "A" and "B" Companies, the Buglers and the remainder of the Headquarter Wing under the Command of Captain K. Horan, left Chakrata and marched to Saiah.
1st Echelon marched in to Gangora Camp from Jumnipore.
Captain H. S. Eagle returned from 8 months' leave in the United Kingdom.

November 18.—Information received that Lieut. G. G. Hughes qualified at the 3rd Qualifying Course at the Machine Gun School, Ahmednagar.
2nd Echelon marched from Saiah to Kalsi.

November 19.—2nd Echelon marched from Kalsi to Jumnipore.
A draft consisting of 2 corporals and 7 privates left Chakrata to proceed to the United Kingdom.

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November 20.—2nd Echelon marched from Jumnipore and arrived at Gangora.

November 22.—Company and Battalion Training started.

November 23.—Lieut. G. G. Hughes was transferred to the Headquarter Wing with effect from to-day.

November 26.—The Machine Gun Platoon left Dehra Dun to proceed to Tughluqabad for a Machine Gun Concentration.

December 7.—2nd Lieut. L. L. Falkiner joined on first appointment and was posted to "A" Company.

Captain K. Horan proceeded to Dhanauri for a week's attachment at the Artillery Practice Camp.

Captain D. C. Colvill, M.C., returned from a Course at the Small Arms School, Pachmahri.

December 8.—Information received that 2nd Lieut. J. D. Palmer was granted 6 months' leave to the United Kingdom on Medical Certificate.

December 20.—Lieut. J. Thorne reported his arrival from the United Kingdom after a tour of duty at the Regimental Depot and was posted to " B " Company.

December 27.—A draft of 1 sergeant, 1 corporal and 14 other ranks left for the United Kingdom.

December 28.—Lieut. J. Thorne left the Regiment to proceed to Jullundur for attachment to the British Infantry Training Company, 10/17th Dogra Regiment, Jullundur.

December 30.—Lieut. W. G. Clarke returned from attachment to the British Infantry Training Company, 10/17th Dogra Regiment, Jullundur.

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SECOND BATTALION LETTER,

DEAR EDITOR,

This chronicle of our doings for 1926, although somewhat monotonous in itself, can, at least, hardly be accused of lacking in variety.

Up to this point in our Indian tour, our moves have largely consisted of a triumphal [*sic*] progress from one bleak and unpleasant hill-top to another bleaker (and more unpleasant) hill-top and back again.

So it has been with us in the present year of Grace. The New Year saw us still in Razmak, where the combination of an unusually mild winter and something more substantial than tents to live in was much welcomed.

The operations of the Razmak column in January have already been fully described elsewhere. So, having taken no personal part in it, we (the plural is editorial and not Regimental) will merely dismiss it by saying that it made a very suitable finish to our tour of duty on the Frontier.

Returning to Razmak on February 8, after a heavy fall of snow, the remaining six weeks were spent in field firing and packing and despatching mountains of baggage to Bannu by lorry. During most of this period the Sherwood Foresters who were relieving us in Razmak had been "marching in relief o'er India's sunny plains" with a vengeance, having had to foot it from Rawalpindi, a march which took them some three weeks by road. They were observed by some of our officers who went to Kohat to play rugger, marching through torrents of rain, so that particular line of Kipling hardly applies.

To cut a long story short, we had the inestimable pleasure of playing them into Razmak No. 1 Gate on March 23, where they took over the lines which we had vacated, moving into tents for this purpose.

From what we saw of him the Derbyshire Ram did not take kindly to Razmak or the local inhabitants.

Having handed over camp piquets and perimeter posts with a sigh of relief, we marched out to the tune of bands, drums, pipes, " Sackbuts, psalteries, and all other kinds of musick." The five days to Bannu were comparatively uneventful. The worst march was between Damdil and Idak some 19 miles, which were not rendered shorter by the short cuts by which certain officers elected to lead the Regiment and by the hail storm which burst upon us near Thal Fort.

The Regiment was marching in shirt sleeves, and hail stones as big as cob-nuts falling on bare arms and unprotected shoulders caused enough profanity to melt the hail as it fell. As the hail was afterwards followed by a roaring deluge of cold rain, we were not sorry to get into Idak Camp.

Having halted there over Sunday, we resumed our march and now having left the hills behind us, we found it exceedingly warm. At Saidgi there was a memorable "fishing" expedition to the Tochi inaugurated by the Colonel, who led a party of desperadoes armed with shovels to dam the pools (shades of Izaak Walton !).

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On arrival at Bannu we took up our dwelling in the rest camp and after wrestling not like Jacob, with the angel, but with an unusually somnolent and lethargic Brigade Staff, we departed piecemeal in two toy trains to Mari Indus,

At Mari Indus we again halted to collect ourselves and our kit, and after a suitable interval we again moved in two trains, this time of the normal broad gauge variety, on two successive days. After two days in the train we arrived dirty and dishevelled at Dehra Dun, where the unfortunate Clare had to contend with an army of mutinous bullock cart drivers.

We left Dehra Dun again in two echelons on two successive mornings. To see the green trees and tea gardens, the canals, rivers and jungle of the Doon was indeed a pleasure to the eye after Waziristan, "the abomination of desolation" so aptly described by St. John, who would undoubtedly have burst an etymological blood vessel if he had served there, which unfortunately Holy Writ gives us no reason to believe.

The march of both echelons to Chakrata, a four days' journey, was lightened by several amusing incidents, the only one of which we will mention was the shooting party at Kalsi led by that urbane officer Crawford, who enjoined that budding Nimrod, Ward, to stand in a certain spot while a patch of jungle reputed to contain jungle fowl in abundance, was beaten towards him (Ward). On being asked whether he had seen any jungle fowl, Ward replied: "No, but a lot of barn door fowls ran past me."

No doubt the gallant Captain's honeyed phrases were sufficiently crushing. We were not there to hear.

Our arrival at Chakrata was not as musical as our departure from Razmak. In fact, it could only be described as an anti-climax and even more bathos was added by the remarks of the Orderly Corporals when they realised how much walking they had to do in the course of the day.

Roughly the two halves of the Regiment are situated on two "from each other most distant hill tops" to misquote Mark Twain. We have experienced the same disadvantages before "not once nor twice in our rough island story" but this unfortunately does not make it any better.

We had a good deal of work before the rains started, largely musketry and individual training, which saved us from boredom, but we little realised what was before us.

After the Waterloo Sports the rains broke; not English rain of a few days' duration, but day after day, week after week, even month after month, of soaking rain and swirling mists which made anything beyond work in barrack rooms, on sand tables and in the gymnasium a rank impossibility. Our one and only flat piece of ground where games can be played, was a morass.

From early July to the middle of September, there was hardly a gleam of sun.

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There were several landslips which blocked the road to Dehra Dun, but these happily did not prevent us from getting our mails. For recreation we turned to Company dances and smoking concerts and theatricals. Two very successful shows, one by the officers and one by other ranks, were staged between August and October.

In late September, the floods abated and there came a time of perfect weather—cold crisp days, a warm sun and bitterly cold nights.

We watched the snows creeping closer down the Himalayas and looked forward to the move to Dehra Dun.

On November 14 and 17 we moved in two parties, arriving in Dehra on the 17th and 20th respectively.

At Gangora, we established ourselves in our winter standing camp comfortable enough as camps go, excepting such little annoyances as white ants, who devour tents with relish and confidential documents with avidity, not slowly but in one night. There is a great scarcity of good training grounds near Dehra Dun which taken with the entire absence of the latter up at Chakrata has seriously hampered our training.

After a quiet and well behaved Christmas, we set ourselves to get ready for manoeuvres.

This closes the chronicle of our activities during 1926. It is no exaggeration to say that we were bitterly disappointed at our present station and the fact that it is rumoured strongly that we may remain at Chakrata for four years does not make us look forward to our next three periods of imprisonment in the hills with any great pleasure.

Yours,
5 2ND.

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THE 52ND COLOURS

AFTER considerable delay, the ten Battle Honours awarded for the late war have arrived and the scrolls have been put on the King's Colour.

On Nonneboschen Day we had an exhibition of Regimental relics, and a sand model was prepared with accounts of the battle. The various veterans of the encounter—only six remain with the Regiment who actually charged with their Companies—were not unanimous on the details of the battle. At the same time the Colours were displayed and a short history of them was given to every man. Practically every man in the Regiment went to examine them, a thing they do not normally get the chance of doing and we hope to have another exhibition soon. The Colours which were presented in 1868 are now in rather bad repair, especially the Regimental Colour, whose original buff has lost its colour.

Mrs. Freestun has very kindly volunteered to repair them, which will be a really tremendous work, and one for which we are very grateful. The work has already started and it was generally agreed that it would be nicer to have it done in the Regiment as a labour of love than by an outside firm.

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"COMINGS AND GOINGS IN WAZIRISTAN"
BY K. S. WOOTTEN AND J. A. THEOBALDS

AFTER the Waziristan Campaign of 1919-20, the country was occupied, and it was proposed to open it up by building roads, and even railways, with the idea of giving the tribes some means of earning their living other than by preying on their more peaceful neighbours in British India. In this way it was hoped to bring about the gradual pacification of the country as has been done in Baluchistan.

With this end in view, a circular motor road was built (parts of it were in existence before), starting from Bannu, the railhead in North Waziristan, and finishing up at Manzai, the Southern Waziristan railhead.

An extension was made leaving the main road near the bridge over the Tochi at Thai, and it is hoped eventually to make another extension to Wana in the south and to link up with Fort Sandeman in Baluchistan.

Razmak itself is situated on an undulating plateau of an average elevation of about 7,000 feet; it is 74 miles from Bannu and about the same distance from Manzai.

The border between the territory of the Wazirs and Mahsuds, the two chief tribes who inhabit Waziristan, lies just outside the camp, and there are frequent disputes between the two tribes about the boundary, the much coveted Razmak plateau with its good grazing being the Waziris' territory.

The present military policy is to maintain a striking force at Razmak in the centre of the country to deal instantly with any trouble, and to have a series of posts on the road from which the permanent piquets and road protection troops are provided. In addition to the regular troops, there are the Tochi and South Waziristan Scouts, with head-quarters at Miranshal and Jandola respectively, and Khassadars. The former are militia with British officers of the Indian Army seconded from their regiments, while the latter are local levies who find their own arms and ammunition and are paid for their protective duties.

The garrison at Razmak consists of six infantry battalions, one pioneer battalion, one squadron of cavalry, one armoured car company, one brigade of pack artillery, one section of 6 inch howitzers, one company of Sappers and Miners, Signals, Field Ambulance and all the various auxiliary services.

It is a brigade group commanded by a Colonel Commandant. Of this force, two battalions and the section of 6 inch Howitzers, are left behind to look after the camp, while the remainder constitutes the mobile column and is a fairly formidable force.

The camp is built on the principle of a perimeter camp, each battalion being allotted a portion of the perimeter while the remaining troops are situated in the centre.

It is protected by a ring of camp piquets, while round the camp itself is a 3 feet 6 inches wall, a deep ditch and two belts of wire. This perimeter is held by posts at frequent intervals, with automatic weapons on fixed mountings, so that they can, if necessary, fire along the wire at night. The camp is divided into two, an upper and lower camp.

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The former is permanent with stone huts, while the latter is evacuated when the column goes out and its garrison therefore lives in tents. Between the two is an alternative perimeter which is held on the evacuation of the lower camp. All supplies are brought up from railhead at Bannu by M.T. convoys, and the road has to be opened six days a week to enable these convoys and other traffic to get through.

From Razmak to Manzai the road is opened by Scouts and Mahsud Khassadars, and officers are encouraged to travel that way to get the Mahsuds used to everyday traffic through their own country protected only by themselves.

About the beginning of December, rumour started getting busy, and it was said that the Column was going to be exercised; some said to build bridges down at Nairobi, others said to chase a tribe at Splitoi, who had been leaving undone the things that they ought to have done. Eventually, soon after Christmas, definite orders were issued that the Column would go out on January 24, to Datta Khel, to test the organisation and transport arrangements, and to show the flag in territory seldom visited by troops.

Everybody now got busy with preliminaries, and frequent conferences were held at Brigade Headquarters. Arrangements were made for evacuating the lower camp and for handing over that portion of the perimeter and those piquets held by column troops. The Lower Camp was handed over to Wazir Khassadars to look after, and on our second day out the "flying bedstead," which will be referred to later, received a message that Razmak was being attacked by Mahsuds. Actually, it transpired that Mahsuds had attacked the Wazir guardians of the lower camp, but had retired without doing any material damage. The Column moved out on winter scale, which meant tents would be carried, and for their transport lorries were provided. Greatcoats, jerkins, waterproof sheets, and three blankets were taken, and in addition each man was allowed a fifteen pound kit, and each officer a forty pound kit. All kits, blankets, stores, etc., were labelled with different colours, and each company, orderly room, and quartermaster was allotted throughout the same carts, which were also carefully labelled.

About a week before we started, it was suddenly discovered that instead of having ten officers' chargers, we only had four, and a frantic search began. Gunners, Signals and I.A.S.C. were all drawn blank, but finally six old screws were produced, which served the purpose.

At last the great day arrived, and the Regiment awoke in the dark and early hours of a very cold January 24, to the fact that they would soon have to be out on the road.

After the usual incidents, which always accompany a start in the dark, the companies paraded at the appointed hour and marched out to form up as a regiment outside the camp. But this was not so easy as it appeared. Every other unit seemed imbued with the same idea, and that was to get out of camp first, and had not the gate posts stood firm, there is no doubt that the principle of "the expanding torrent" would have been well illustrated. As it was, we had the greatest difficulty in getting through intact.

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Once through the "Narrows," we were able to breathe a little more freely and to look upon our neighbours with contempt. The ever hardy Gurkhas were in shirt sleeves (it was surely freezing at the time), and their officers were trying to look as if they enjoyed it, and had lived in shirt sleeves all their lives. We ourselves felt quite cool enough in drill jackets, as we had been wearing serge all the winter up till then.

The Regiment formed part of the advanced guard, and "A" Company was vanguard throughout the march. "B" Company had moved off earlier to open the road for the whole column as far as the Razmak Narai, eventually rejoining the column with the rearguard.

It would not be amiss here to put in a word about road protection generally, as it will no doubt help those, who have not been fortunate enough to take part in the game, on the frontier, to follow this narrative more easily.

The road from Bannu to Razmak (74 miles) is opened daily, except Sundays, by regular troops from the garrisons of the seven posts or camps distributed along it, each post being responsible for a certain section. In addition there are permanent piquets, housed in small forts, which command the road from the heights on either side. These are manned day and night, some by regular troops, some by Khassadars, and are only relieved weekly. The road opening troops (probably a company, or perhaps two) move out in the early morning and take up positions, closer in than the permanent piquets, on the section of road allotted to them, with the object of preventing any organized attack on the convoys and troops passing through. There they remain until "road closing" time, probably about two or three in the afternoon, and then withdraw to camp. The withdrawal or closing is not a mere matter of "about turn" and march back: it has to be done at great speed, each successive piquet covering the withdrawal of those in the rear. The Regiment, we believe, holds the record in speed for Razmak at any rate. In bad weather, road opening is not a pleasant occupation, and those who have remained for six or seven hours on a bleak hill-top on a rainy day with the wind cutting clean through you, will bear this out. This system of road protection or "R.P." as it was called, is somewhat different from what we were to experience later on when we got off the beaten track. Here there were no permanent piquets, and to protect the march of the column, it was necessary to piquet as we went along. The normal procedure is for the piqueting troops to march immediately in rear of the advanced guard. The advanced guard commander, accompanied by the officer commanding the piqueting troops and the leading company commander, move just ahead of the main guard, so that the advanced guard commander's orders regarding the position and strength of piquets can be acted on immediately.

We left the regiment with chattering teeth just moving off, "A" Company doing vanguard. It was just getting light, and, though you couldn't see more than thirty yards ahead, an optimistic photographer was busy taking his first snaps of the column. These Indian photographers are an amazing breed. There were four of them with the column and they were continually popping up everywhere when least expected. Piquets in their last rush to take the hill, expecting a horde of fierce tribesmen to meet them on the top, encountered the grinning face of the Brigade photographer, or "B.F." as he was affectionately called. (This is not a misprint, but his official title, of which he was very proud.) Needless to say these enterprising gentry reaped a very rich harvest in selling their photographs to the men on return to Razmak.

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As it grew light, we were able to observe an amazing mechanical contraption on wheels, which got into everybody's way on every possible occasion, and was heartily cursed by every commander from end to end of the column. Even Heath Robinson, in his wildest moments, could not have conceived anything like this. It resembled an aerial spring bed on wheels and was rightly named the "flying bedstead." Some said it was the Brigade Commander's camp bed, others said it was a form of ambulance specially constructed for the use of Quartermaster-Sergeants who might fall by the wayside. However, it turned out to be a wireless brain wave on the part of the Brigade Signal Officer, who had inadvertently let it loose to roam at will.

Razmak Narai was reached without incident, and the march downhill commenced with "C" and "D" Companies piqueting as far as Razani, our destination.

We had been going downhill for about half-an-hour, when on the morning stillness broke the thunder of horses' hoofs from the rear; nearer and nearer they sounded, and those of us who could look round beheld a horseman galloping, as it were, for dear life down the hill. "The rear guard has been attacked—urgent message for the van guard commander" we thought. Rider and horse swept past us in a flash, but we were just able to recognize our gallant signal officer, with a look of grim determination on his face, which told us that whatever happened, he meant to do or die. Then, to our horror, we saw a hairpin bend straight ahead of him, with a sheer drop of several hundred feet on the outer edge. Could he stop in time? No, he couldn't, and was round the corner before we could recover our breath. Yet another hair-pin bend ahead of him—this time he must surely pull up—but if anything he was going faster. It seemed that nothing could save horse and rider from dashing themselves to pieces on the rocks below. They were just on the corner, the rider frantically tugging at the reins—the horse banked—his feet slipped (we wanted to shut our eyes) but he managed to skid round the corner in a way that would have done credit to a racing motorist. On they went at a still fiercer speed, but then came a sudden check. A brave and intrepid gunner stepped into the middle of the road, and the horse, probably having had previous experience of gunners, came to a dead stop. It is only fair to mention here that the rider remained seated. To us onlookers, it appeared a serious breach of discipline that a soldier should take it upon himself to stop a messenger with probably a most urgent communication, no matter how reckless he might appear to be. However, we were yet to learn the plain and simple truth. This brave and fearless officer had apparently had a temporary "dis" in the circuit between his own forces of control and those of his mount, and the look of determination on his face as he passed us was only evidence of the supreme effort he was making to regain "contact." It was a sight never to be forgotten, and an episode that many a film producer would have paid thousands for.

After this, the rest of the march was tame enough, and after putting sixteen miles behind us, we were quite glad to sight Razani, our first camp, though this was not the end of the day's work by any means.

On arrival at our camping ground, we noticed that greetings to Company Quartermaster Sergeants, who had been carried in state ahead of us in lorries, were not of the friendliest character.

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Temporary piquets were immediately put out by the advanced guard and the regiment marched on to their camp site, which had previously been marked out by Clare and his minions of the colour party with tapes and flags.

Now setting up a perimeter camp and getting settled therein, is a somewhat stiffer proposition than coming to anchor in the ordinary type of camp which most of us are used to. Therefore a short description of such as we experienced on this column would not perhaps be out of place.

The perimeter, having been previously marked out by the column staff, is divided amongst the infantry regiments, each having a definite sector to look after. The remaining units such as gunners, sappers, transport, medical, etc., are then allotted areas in the centre. The gunners have their guns ready laid so as to be able to give immediate support to any camp piquets should they be attacked.

As regards outer defence, camp piquets are posted on the hills around the camp and at such danger points which provide a covered line of approach. A wall, about 3 feet 6 inches high is built round the whole of the perimeter, each regiment constructing its own portion; if stones are not available for this, then lying cover or a small trench is substituted. At night sentry groups are posted on the perimeter, and emplacements at corners and entrances, the latter usually being blocked by transport carts, are manned by Lewis or Vickers guns. In addition, each regiment finds an inlying piquet and local reserve, the former ready to turn out in a minute at the most. In the event of an alarm the remainder of the regiment man the perimeter opposite their tents, each man having a definite place to go to. The whole procedure of manning the perimeter is rehearsed at "Stand To" which takes place every evening before dark.

Returning to our narrative, we find the Regiment just arriving on their camp site, and no doubt many were wondering how much rest they would get that night when they saw the legions of small, flinty stones which littered the ground. It was because these stones were so small, and there were no others available, that we were unable to build a perimeter wall, and therefore we had to set to and dig a wide shallow trench sufficient for lying cover only. This did not take very long, and no sooner was it finished than up came the tents and kits in the train transport. These were unloaded in no time, and tent pitching began. The four companies were in line, each with a double row of tents parallel to and about six paces from the perimeter. Competition between companies and platoons as to who should have their tents up first was very keen and survived throughout the column, and it was certainly this excellent spirit which spurred on the sore and weary to work with a will and a smile on their faces, no matter how tired they might be. Suddenly when the tents were nearly up, above the sound of tent commanders urging their teams to further efforts, and the melancholy moan of mules crying for their food, there broke forth a voice of thunder calling down maledictions on some person or persons unknown to us. It was terrific, and had we built a perimeter wall, it would surely have imitated that of Jericho. Everyone redoubled their efforts, feverishly hoping that they might not be the cause. However, it was not one of us, but an optimistic Pack Battery, who were taking their mules to water straight through our lines; the Commanding Officer had spotted them, and they richly deserved all they got committing such an unpardonable breach of etiquette in a perimeter camp.

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The Regiment had to find one camp piquet. Prior to its going out, a building party was sent up to construct a sangar on the hill which had been selected for the piquet. When it was finished, the piquet party moved off, taking with them such ammunition and stores as they required for the night, and were safely installed in their miniature fort before dark. At dusk the whole camp "stood to" with every man on the perimeter in his appointed place. The Brigade Commander made a tour of inspection after which we were able to "stand down," and from then onwards, until "Rouse" no one was allowed to enter or leave the camp.

There was a great stir in the officers' lines that evening when two camp beds arrived and were installed in an "A" Company officers' tent. How it was possible for a camp bed to be included in a 40 lb. kit no one understood, and it was even hinted that these officers' kits weighed more than 40 lbs. Judging by the remarks, it seemed that these beds were destined for a speedy end, and envy was rife that night when those less fortunate were trying to seek slumber on jagged boulders. However, the "A" Company officers were wise in their generation, and had commissioned the services of a charitable padre, who carried their beds in his car until he could go no further.

Shortly after dark, the local tribesman who had evinced much shyness during the day thought fit to remind us of his presence in the most ungentlemanly manner by sniping at the camp until quite a late hour. However, he at last desisted from his futile pastime, and, though the night was cold and our couches none too downy, we were soon sleeping the sleep of the just.

When we rose on the 25th, there was a mutiny of bearers. Previously on manoeuvres there had been no trouble about officers' tents, and the bearers had all worked well. But this time they got it into their heads that the soldier was there to do their work for them. But Clare thought differently. He had a quiet meeting round the corner. What he said or did no one excepting the bearers know, but we never had any further trouble, and the officers' tents were struck and pitched like lightning from then onwards.

Everything went according to schedule, and at the appointed time we were ready to take the road again.

On that day we were the rear guard whose first duty is to relieve all camp piquets found by other regiments about half-an-hour before the column moves.

After we had been marching for about two hours, there occurred, what from then on became a daily phenomenon, the passing of the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," namely the quartermasters of the column. These, after staying behind to see the transport off and the camp cleaned up, left with the rear guard followed by their body guard of sweepers. They then jogged gently past the already hot and dusty column amid derisive cheers, and joined the advance guard in readiness to mark out the new camp before the arrival of the column; after this, cool and refreshed, they met their respective regiments when they marched in.

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A great addition to the Regiment was our genial medical officer, who was by now quite an old friend, having doctored most of us at one time or another in Pindi. His great characteristic was his clothes, which would have done credit to a Savile Row tailor under any conditions, and his capacity for drinking beer and smoking Burma cheroots must be unequalled. He was known to the troops as the "Honourable" and he certainly looked the part.

It is interesting to record that the length of the column with transport was seven miles. After doing about 13 1/2 miles, Damdil Post came in sight and was greeted with a cheer which later turned to groans when the head of the column was seen to be going straight on, and we found we were to camp on the site of Damdil old camp about two miles farther on. We were not very impressed with it at first sight, as the old perimeter wall had collapsed and the stones were scattered all over the area on which the tents were to be pitched. This later proved a blessing as the stones were cleared to build up the perimeter wall and no trench had to be dug. It would not be out of place here to express our gratitude to the 3/2nd Bombay Pioneers. They were used as infantry throughout, and in addition supplied skilled labour to build camp defences. They were always very helpful to us, and in addition to lending us tools, they frequently sent us two platoons to build corner posts on the perimeter.

At this camp we found two camp piquets, one on the flat about 300 yards from the perimeter, and one on a hill overlooking the camp. Piquet building and occupying worked more smoothly now as everybody knew what to do, and we went to bed looking forward to getting off the beaten track on the next day and seeing a bit of country new to us.

The next morning, the 26th, we were out of camp by daylight and once more on the road, which seemed extraordinarily hard to some of us, or perhaps it was that our feet were extraordinarily soft. It was not long before we reached the top of Thal hill, where, on a clear day, one gets a magnificent view of the Tochi valley. The road from here winds steeply down for about three miles to the fine bridge, which crosses the Tochi river. Thal Fort, a grim-looking battlement, perched on a razor edge, commands the bridge and both approaches, and the column, crossing the bridge and crawling like a snake into the distance, presented a fine sight to those who were watching from the fort.

A few miles beyond Thal Bridge, we branched off the main Bannu road at Isho Corner and headed for Miranshah; at least that was our general direction, but the road frequently took us round in circles which was a trifle disheartening at times.

While we were trudging along, the Brigade "Q" Staff was really earning its pay. They had arrived in advance on the proposed camp site at Miranshah and found that the local inhabitants had opened their irrigation channels, and had completely flooded the whole ground. Apparently that was their polite way of informing us that we were not wanted. The column was due to arrive in another hour, so something had to be done at once, and the Staff Captain, nothing daunted, set off to select an entirely new camping ground, which would have to be marked out by the time the column arrived.

Few people could have done it in time, but our Staff Captain was a man of great resource and common sense, and everything was ready for us when we marched in, at the end of our 17 mile march.

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It was again decided that the perimeter defences should take the form of lying cover only, and to get ours finished quickly we borrowed additional tools from the Pioneers and the Ammunition Column. As a matter of fact, one finds that when one does have all the company available for digging, the allotment of tools is not nearly sufficient to keep every one employed.

Our friends, the Pack gunners, who had not forgotten the little episode at Razani, now thought the time was ripe to get their own back. Their lines were in rear of ours, and they had carefully demarcated their boundary with a line of stones, so that there should be no dispute over territory. Presently along came a most agitated gunner officer, and addressing one of us, said:—"Major A's compliments, will you please remove your kit out of his lines at once." The officer concerned went to make investigations, and found that his bearers had thoughtlessly put up his camp basin so that two of its legs were on the gunners' side of the line of stones. However, we still considered ourselves one up.

After "Stand Down," a few of us went round to have a look at some of our neighbours' messes. Some were fairly comfortable with tables and chairs, others preferred packing cases, but wherever we went, we found each one full of good spirits. The Regiment had to find two camp piquets, each out on the plain, commanding dangerous nullahs which ran towards camp. Sangars were built and the piquet parties moved out before dusk.

It was that evening that the great water scandal was exposed. The Commanding Officer had paid a visit to the river to see what the watering arrangements were like, and he found at the spot marked off for drinking, a large collection of mules disporting themselves in the water, which was supposedly earmarked for human consumption. The Medical Officer responsible for the watering arrangements was not to be found at that moment, but when he was!!!

When darkness had fallen, and we were enjoying that excellent feeling of ease and contentment, that comes to one after a hard day's work, we were rudely disturbed by the sounds of a terrific battle, which seemed to be taking place around one of the camp piquets held by the Pioneers. Their signaller was working his lamp at a speed which made us doubt whether his message would ever get through. However the noise of battle soon died down, and we were glad to learn that the piquet suffered no material damage. It was only some of the local gentry trying to remind us of their unwanted presence.

Finally as we turned in that night, our hearts were full of gladness at the thought of a well-earned rest on the morrow. It was a great joy next morning to dress and shave leisurely, and finally to sit down to a comfortable breakfast knowing that one's plate would not be snatched away and packed up before the bacon and eggs, so necessary to ensure a good day, were disposed of. Owing to water scarcity, washing up to the present had been rather scanty, and it was decided to spend the 27th in bathing and cleaning up generally. The only water available for the column was that of the river Charkhai, a tributary of the Tochi, and it was about a mile away. The oft maligned mule certainly earned his daily keep as all cooking and drinking water had to be fetched in pakhals.

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For washing the troops went down to the river by companies in clean fatigue dress with rifles and 20 rounds of S.A.A. and carrying canvas buckets, soap and towels. At the river a piquet was put out and then a scene rivalling Blackpool in the season presented itself; men in every stage of dress and undress could be seen removing the dust and dirt of the road and thoroughly enjoying the bathe.

Miranshah is situated on a bare, sandy plain, stretching from the river Gharkhai up to the hills. In the centre of the plain is the fort, the head-quarters of the Tochi Scouts who are some 2,400 strong but are scattered all over North Waziristan in detachments. We were much impressed by their appearance here, smart, well turned out, and well drilled. In addition to the Scouts, there was a flight of the Royal Air Force who had quite a good aerodrome at their disposal. Most of us paid a visit to the Scouts' Mess in the fort during our stay at Miranshah, and it proved well worth while. Outside the mud walls is a typically desolate frontier scene, while inside is a beautifully green lawn and garden with running water and even a stork standing on one leg. The mess would rival that in a Gurkha permanent station. Oak panelling, good heads and furniture—all being a fine testimonial to the amount of time, trouble, and money which must have been spent on it.

Our second day there, the 28th, was spent in company training, each company under its commander carrying out a tactical exercise, which finished off with a bathe in the river.

By this time we were thoroughly settling down, and each night the camp resounded with melody varying from hymn tunes to popular songs. Most of them were echoed or drowned by the rival songsters in the men's tents just outside.

On the 29th we went out as a Regiment and executed a masterly attack on an imaginary European foe.

One day, the Brigade Commander gave a luncheon party in the camp to some ladies who were motored out from Bannu, the road thus far being considered safe enough. As a good many had not seen a white member of the fair sex for nearly a year, quite a crowd assembled to view them when the news got round.

The Air Force here, at the request of the Brigade Commander, had agreed to take one officer in each unit for a flip over Waziristan, and there was much competition in the regiment for the place. Eventually the lot fell upon Horan major, and an entire evening was spent by those who were jealous, in regaling him with the most harrowing details of frontier air crashes, and stories of what happened to people who were unlucky enough not to be killed and were captured by the local inhabitants, hoping by this means to frighten him off. But he proved to be made of sterner stuff, and nothing daunted set off and had a most enjoyable flight, taking some very good oblique photos, several of which have appeared in the JOURNAL.

On the 30th, the necessary rations and supplies for a further move had been collected, and it was with mixed feelings that we went to bed that night; ambition to visit the upper Tochi Valley vieing with regret at the thought of an early rouse and packing up.

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Owing to the congestion likely to be caused in moving off from Miranshah, elaborate routes had been allotted for reaching the starting point. The one given to us involved a chukker round of about a mile ending up with a ditch full of water which had to be jumped. As the transport accompanying the Regiment included about sixty water and S.A.A. mules tied together in strings of three and led by one driver, this was no easy matter, but we managed to take our places in the column up to time. These same mules were in charge of the Regimental-Sergeant-Major, who had a small party of police to assist him. During the daily long halt of twenty minutes, they all had to be unloaded, and by the time the last load was grounded it was time to start reloading again. How the Sergeant-Major survived without going bald or greyheaded, it is hard to imagine.

The road from Miranshah onwards is little better than a cart track. It had previously been reconnoitred by a section of armoured cars and reported on as being fit for lorry transport. It follows the left bank of the Tochi for 10 or 11 miles, and then crosses over to the right bank at a ford. The valley is fairly wide here, well cultivated and a great contrast to that part of the country farther from the river. The road hugs the hills on the north bank and consequently piquets on that side only are sufficient to protect the road.

A number of Khassadars were out helping to piquet the road, many of them being ex-soldiers of Pathan Regiments, and, as we marched by, it was a very comic sight to see them standing on top of the hills some thousand feet above the road, saluting smartly with their rifles at the slope.

After about eight miles, the 1/2nd Gurkha Rifles, who were doing advanced guard and piqueting, came to the end of their piqueting troops and the regiment passed through them. Shortly afterwards the Tochi was forded near Boya Post.

It is interesting to recall that the latter was handed over to a supposedly loyal Wazir Malik when the upper Tochi posts were evacuated in 1919, but before the evacuating troops were even out of sight, the post was sacked and looted and a most treacherous attack was made on the transport as it was fording the river.

From here the road runs more in the centre of the valley and the only protection that could be provided against possible rushes from the scrub on the left or the cultivation on the right was the posting of piquets on the level ground at frequent intervals. Machine and Lewis Guns protected by rifle sections were also used to cover large areas.

Our new camp site, just south of the village of Moh'd Khel, was a few hundred yards above the river near a Khassadar post, the west side being close in under steep hills, the east and south sides bounded by an open plain.

The camp was sited partly in a dry nullah, partly above it. "B" Company were allotted their perimeter in the nullah bed, and although they had easier digging than the rest of us, I think they would rather have been more secure from the possible consequences of a sudden spate, a not unknown event in this part of the world.

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Two piquets were found by the regiment, one on top of a hill from which a fine view of the camp could be obtained, the other amongst some ridges which commanded the watering place. An amusing incident occurred when the first piquet's kits were being taken up on a mule. As the mule reached the piquet's sangar, the kits fell off and rolled down to the bottom of the hill followed by the very expressive language of the sweating mule leader who had to go down to the bottom to fetch them up again. The mule probably felt even more bitter about it, but unfortunately couldn't express its feelings. Everybody settled down hopefully to sleep that night, but in the small hours we were rudely disturbed by a volley which seemed to whistle up the nullah over "B" Company. Everybody tried to huddle a bit closer to the ground, and in the morning no casualties were produced. Incidentally the village was fined two hundred rupees the next day; they insisted that some "badmashes" had done it, and to avoid a repetition of the fine, they said they would mount a guard that night to drive off any malefactors. We rather expected to be disturbed again by the two parties coming into conflict, but the evil-doers were either economising in ammunition, or else got wind of the reception they would have.

On February 1, we remained halted at Mohammed Khel, and the morning was spent in widening and deepening the perimeter trench, and in cleaning of rifles, equipment, and lines. In the afternoon, volunteers were called for to take part in a fishing expedition to the Tochi river. There were about a hundred starters in all, including most of the officers, and the keen fisherman would have looked aghast if he had seen that their fishing tackle consisted of picks, shovels and buckets only. However, we were to be initiated into a new method of fishing practised by the Gurkhas, and they had kindly sent two of their men with us to act as instructors.

On arrival at the river, the two Gurkhas took command, and shedding our jackets, boots and socks, we got down to work.

It would take too long to explain the method in detail. The principle is to divert the stream by means of a dam, and to hold the water in the old channel with another dam lower down stream. This water is then allowed to drain off slowly and as it becomes shallower you see your fish, who are beginning to feel somewhat apprehensive about the future, darting about among the stones. The way the two Gurkhas picked out fish after fish made it look too easy. But just you try! Although our bag was nothing in the way of a record, there were some quite tasty snow trout in it by the time we had finished. It was a good afternoon's amusement, and though we had managed to get thoroughly wet in the process, we had enjoyed ourselves and had learnt something useful.

Orders for the morrow revealed that half the column was to march to Datta Khel *via* the Spinchilla Pass, and old and hardened frontier officers tried to make our flesh creep with awful tales of ambushes and massacres which had taken place there years ago. Still it took a good deal more than these to make us lie awake o' nights, but we did rather wonder before retiring to roost what the next day held in store for us.

On the 2nd we were up and away early as usual, and we were detailed, with the 2/1st Gurkhas, to accompany the transport round by road, the remainder going over the notorious Spinchilla. They had a shorter distance to go, but owing to the stiff country, it was doubtful whether they would arrive at Datta Khel, our next camp, before us.

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Our day's march was 10 miles, of which we piqueted the first six. In places it was very stiff. On the left was a tangled mass of hills with almost perpendicular slopes; on the right it was more open, but several of the piquets had to go far out over the other side of the Tochi, thus making their withdrawal a lengthy and breathless business. The Scouts from Datta Khel, with whom we were able to get into helio communication, helped out the Gurkhas in piqueting the last two miles of the march, and we were thus able to get along quicker than we thought.

As our picquets came in, we started to form the rear guard and the Gurkhas went forward to carry on the piqueting. It was a pleasure to get on the road once more, but no sooner had we got into our stride than we were rudely checked by the extraordinary behaviour of another of the Brigade Signal Officer's mechanical contraptions. This was an ordinary A.T. Cart, on which were mounted several empty cable drums. When it moved along, which was not often, a man, sitting in the cart and turning a handle for dear life, wound up (theoretically) the line, which had been previously laid alongside the road by the advanced guard. However he could never wind fast enough, and the wire in consequence wound itself round the legs and finally the bodies of the rear guard. It was painful both to hear and watch; we couldn't leave the thing behind, and consequently had to endure the playful capers of this infernal machine for several miles.

Finally we left the river, wound up a small side valley and sighted Datta Khel, the isolated fort standing on a fair sized plain in the midst of the hills. Our camp was adjacent to the fort, and on our arrival we found that those who had braved the Spinchilla Pass had already got there. As we were marching in, we saw some of the local inhabitants, and it was difficult to imagine a more bloodthirsty-looking lot of scoundrels.

No sooner had we halted, taken off our equipment and unloaded the mules, than we set about digging our bit of the perimeter defences. Here again the stones were legion, but not big enough for a wall.

The Regiment had to find two camp piquets, one of which was to be on a sort of sugar loaf rock standing up out of the plain about half a mile from the camp. When the building party arrived there to construct the sangar, it was found that the rock had to be blasted before anything effective could be done. However, with the aid of the Pioneers, this was soon carried out.

At dusk the bold, bad men, mentioned above, took it upon themselves to put a few chance shots into the camp, which had no effect beyond causing the Gurkhas to man their perimeter with incredible speed, much to the amusement of our men who were looking on.

The next day, February 3, we remained at Datta Khel and spent the morning in improving the perimeter defences and repairing the cemetery, in which were buried the seven officers who were treacherously murdered in 1897 while having tea with one of the local maliks. Naturally enough when we heard that the Brigade Commander intended to take a meal with one of the local celebrities, attended only by the Political Officer and an orderly, we were not a little anxious as to his safety. But all went well, and he returned to camp very much alive, having made a great impression on his host.

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The inhabitants of this part of the country are a thoroughly unscrupulous lot, and by the advice of the political authorities it was decided that the column should penetrate no further into their country, and that we should start the return journey next day.

It was our turn this time to negotiate the Spinchilla Pass, and daybreak on the 4th found us, as advanced guard, moving up a long winding nullah through the hills which eventually brought us out on the Narai, or top of the pass. Our orders had been to halt there, and this we did; but nothing daunted the main body came on, bumped us and even tried to pass us. Infantry, gunners, and pack transport were frantically trying to pass each other, and at the same time keep a footing on the narrow track, which was no more than two paces wide.

The confusion was awful, and in the midst of it all, up rode the Brigade Commander. Over the next few moments we will draw a veil but apparently someone on his staff had blundered in the wording of his orders, and it will no doubt be many years before that staff officer forgets that short period in his life. Once the tangle was sorted out, we started off to piquet the route down the other side of the pass. This was quite the most difficult country we had so far met. It was a maze of hills and nullahs, and it was not long before the whole regiment was used up in piqueting. By that time we were through the pass and had reached the foot of the hills, and the column debouched into the open plain on which stood Mohammed Khel, only about two miles distant. At this point the Pioneers took over the piqueting, and as our piquets withdrew, we formed part of the rear guard. During the latter part of the march, the Commanding Officer met an old Khassadar Subedar, wearing the Croix de Guerre, and, very generously we thought, offered him a Burma Cheroot, which he accepted. However, when we encountered the old soldier again later, he cut us dead.

On arrival at Mohammed Khel, we found for the first time little to do. The old perimeter defences, which we had left behind, were still intact and it took us no time to get the tents up and settle in. There was great consternation among the men, when it was found that Clare was weighing kits, as soon as they were unloaded, to see if any of them were over weight. At any rate judging from the almost unparalleled attendance at Orderly Room the next day, he must have got a good haul, and not a few old soldiers amongst them.

The following day we remained at Mohammed Khel and in view of the necessity of being lightly equipped for the march over the Tut Narai Pass the next day, we sent off all surplus kit, including packs, by the wheeled transport, which was going round by road to Razani. The escort for this transport was a picked one and consisted of men who could march well and be relied on to see that the baggage arrived intact the other end. As they moved off their friends wished them *bon voyage* and, as a parting shot, informed them that one of the worst gangs of cut throats in the country was reputed to be on their trail.

Rumour had it that our own route the next day was beset with fearful difficulties. Sappers were to take ropes with them to pull the mules up the cliff faces; Pioneers were to take ice axes to cut steps for the infantry, and some doubted whether the gunners would ever get through at all. But we were used to rumours by this time, and felt fit enough to tackle anything.

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In the afternoon, the officers armed with picks and shovels could be seen making for the river, and it did not take a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that they were probably after fish. It was indeed so, and what is more, we had actually persuaded our genial doctor to accompany us, and even to carry a shovel, though it looked strangely out of place. This time we were in deadly earnest, and diverted the river to such purpose that a whole Sikh regiment, who were washing lower down, had to forgo the completion of their ablutions.

That evening we looked at our next day's march on the map, and though maps are notoriously bad in this part of the world, we could easily see that we were in for a fairly stiff job of work.

It was wet that night, but fortunately our tents were fairly serviceable and we suffered no discomfort. The threatened spate did not come down, and "B" Company were still there in the morning.

We woke up on the 6th with mixed feelings. First of all only a very limited supply of lorries was available to move our kit round the 45 odd miles of road which separated us from Razani, and we were rather doubtful as to whether everything would go on them. Secondly we were doing a very difficult 15 miles march on a small track over a bad pass, and it was quite on the cards that we might have to remain out all night in drill clothing with neither kits, tents, nor food. But thirdly we were getting nearer Razmak again, and we were now quite ready to return and hibernate.

The lorries, taxed to their utmost capacity, were loaded up successfully and went off under an escort of armoured cars, and at about 8.30 a.m. we moved off.

For the first three miles we followed the nullah bed, and very heavy going it proved. Immediately in front of us rode Sergeant Carter in charge of the followers of the Brigade. In his rifle bucket he carried a small rattan cane and at intervals he would be seen to clap spurs to his steed and, brandishing his weapon like a scimitar, would drive some bhisti back into the ranks.

The track, as it wound up the hills to Tut Narai Post, was now only wide enough for single file. After the previous night's rain, it was very muddy and the opening out of the Column caused innumerable halts to us behind.

In 1917 Tut Narai Post, garrisoned by the predecessors of the present Tochi Scouts, was captured by a ruse by Mahsud raiders dressed as girls, and they managed to get away with large numbers of rifles and a great deal of S.A.A. before the relieving column arrived, although the latter got there in record time.

The Gurkhas, who had been piqueting, had by this time exhausted their supply of men, and the 45th Sikhs passed through them. There was a small plateau on top of the hill on which there had been a fresh fall of snow and this made the going even worse. As each company reached this, it halted for twenty minutes to close up and eat haversack rations, for we were now reasonably certain of reaching Razani that day. To such an extent was the column spread out by this time, that during those twenty minutes there were never more than two companies halted together.

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The Loargai Narai, the highest point, was now reached and the descent began. The track here coincided with the bed of a stream down which was running a certain amount of water. The Regiment was getting very anxious by this time as to whether it would be called upon to piquet, as the Sikhs were nearly all used up, but as the last Sikh platoon was sent off, Mami Rogha was reached and we met the Razani Brigade who had already piqueted the last three miles for us. We accordingly only had to march straight in and arrived to find the head of the lorry convoy with our kits on board just heaving in sight. The rear guard, which had had to withdraw all the piquets, did not get in until very late.

Sergeant Carter caused us much amusement as he rode in at the head of his little band. As he passed the canteen tent, a man dashed out with a mug, which Sergeant Carter drained at a gulp without checking his pony for an instant. His organization for refreshing the inner man would have done credit to any "Q" staff.

Although there was little to be done in the defence line, the camp was not very pleasant, as the recent snow had thawed and left the ground very cold and wet. Our spirits were further damped by the news that the Razmak Narai was impassable owing to a heavy fall of snow, and that we should have to wait until it cleared. A conference was held at Brigade Headquarters that evening after the state of the road had been reported from Duncan's piquet, and it was eventually decided to move ourselves, the 1/2nd Gurkhas and the British Pack Battery, with pack transport to Razmak next day. Dumps of all kit which was not absolutely essential, were to be left at Razani under a guard. The Razani Brigade agreed to send a regiment in lorries as far as they could go at daybreak, and shovel snow off the road. A lot of brain work was now required to decide what was to be left, how loads should be packed and re-arranged for pack transport, and how transport should be allotted. This was finally done and we settled down to a late and well-earned dinner. As the soup came in—Crack! it sounded just over the mess tent and we all resisted an inclination to put out the light and lie down on the floor. A second shot followed and then peace reigned.

No one was very sorry to get up on the 7th, as the night had been cold, wet, and miserable. We packed up in good time and the dump of surplus kit was soon full while the remainder was laid out in loads and roped up. We did not leave until about 9.30 a.m., so as to give the Razani troops time to make some progress with clearing the road.

No snow had fallen during the night, and though we hoped to get through all right, we anticipated a fairly bad march. The going was good for the first five or so miles and then we reached the snow line. The Razani troops were still clearing snow when we reached them and had removed the top layer leaving a bit of snow on the road surface which, being well trampled in, made it very slippery. Mules were continually falling down and having to be reloaded, while those which got off the road fell into heavy drifts at the side. Once we got to Duncan's piquet, all went well as a thaw had set in. "A" Company piqueted into Razmak from the Narai and our rear guard got in about 3.30 p.m., tired but glad to have a roof over their heads again.

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The remainder of the column and the wheeled transport arrived the next day and so ended an experience which few of us will regret. There had been no casualties and nothing very much in the way of regrettable incidents, and the weather had been extremely kind to us for the time of year.

We were sorry to have missed the Wana Column on which our relief, the Sherwood Foresters, went soon after our departure for a more peaceful life. If we had done that we should have seen most of Waziristan during our tour there.

In conclusion we must apologize to our 52nd readers for any inaccuracies that may appear, but this account has been written from memory a year after the events took place, and memory may have slightly distorted or exaggerated them.

