THE DEFENCE OF JALALABAD.

THE account of the defence of Jalalabad¹ and of the discussions in the councils of war assembled there as told in the 'Career of Major George Broadfoot, C.B.,'² differing as it did materially from that given in Kaye's 'History,' attracted considerable attention, and has generally been recognised as an important correction of historical error. The evidence on which it is based, having been carefully sifted and tested, has been pronounced by the highest authorities to be eminently trustworthy and indeed incontrovertible. When sending his memorandum on the councils of war for verification, Broadfoot mentioned that Havelock, who kept the records, had been 'deprived somewhat suddenly of all the documents regarding our Jellalabad parliaments,'³ and referred to General Sir Robert Sale's wish for concealment of the facts to which they referred. That such a desire was, under the circumstances, natural will not be denied; and it is unnecessary to inquire what blame he incurred by yielding to the temptation. As a matter of fact the records seem not to have been forwarded in the usual way to government, but were detained by Sale amongst whose effects they were afterwards found. They remained in the custody of his descendants till 1890, when, with other documents, they were sent to the India Office in circumstances which it is unnecessary to detail. They have since been examined in order to find out whether they possessed sufficient historical interest to warrant publication; and notes and extracts have been made of the parts which seemed of greatest value.

The records referred to are thus divided:—

I. *Three volumes of general and brigade orders.* These cover a period from December 1838 to July 1842, but, though not void of interest, they do not appear to contain fresh matter of much importance.

II. *One volume of letters* written between 9 March 1841 and 22 August 1842, when they end abruptly. Sale probably continued correspondence whilst he held a command in Afghanistan, and this would not expire till December 1842 when the forces returned to India; but of letters after 22 August there is no trace in this volume. Amongst the letters there are many of importance, the main parts of which have already been published. Besides these, however, there are others of interest to those acquainted with the history of the war, and of value to those capable of estimating their worth as evidence. To do this correctly a minute knowledge of events and persons concerned is required. A student should note that in some

¹ In extracts or copies of documents the original spelling is retained; in the rest of the article the system used in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* has been followed.

² London: John Murray. 1888.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 62-63.

instances letters written immediately after events have been cancelled and others after a lapse of time substituted; also that no reference to the councils of war appears in the letters written whilst they were held, although the most important questions concerning the defence were there and then decided. It is unnecessary to publish extracts from the letters in this REVIEW; the originals may be consulted at the India Office.

III. Lastly there is a collection of '*papers respecting the defence of Jellalabad, 1841-1842.*' Amongst these are two reports by Captain afterwards Major Broadfoot. The first, a 'note on our present position, our prospects, and plans, dated 15 Nov. 1841,' is now of no importance; for the course advocated—to fight their way to Peshawar, refit, and return to relieve the Kabul force—was not followed. The second, a 'Memorandum on the defence of Jelalabad,' is chiefly of interest to the military engineer as showing what considerable results can be obtained with inadequate means when the defence is conducted by an officer of ability and resource. The other papers form the official record of the proceedings of the councils of war assembled on Jan. 27 and 28, and again on Feb. 12, 1842. These are interesting now partly because of their strange history, to which allusion has been made, and partly because, though merely a bald record of decisions arrived at, they confirm Major George Broadfoot's memorandum in every essential particular. That account⁴ must be read by all who desire to learn what took place at the councils and how and why the various members voted; but an important contribution to our knowledge of these matters will be found in the reasons for their votes recorded by Colonels Dennie and Monteath, and Captain Abbott, and above all in Captain Broadfoot's reasons for opposing them. The minutes of the proceedings are here printed as written; an abstract of the correspondence considered is appended, in which extracts or copies are distinguished in the usual way; and then follow the reasons for their votes recorded by the four officers above mentioned.

Before reading these papers it is desirable to call to mind the situation at that time in Afghanistan. Throughout that country discontent with our administration had led to rebellion, which our failure to suppress had encouraged whilst our forces were proportionately depressed. Sale with a brigade had been sent from Kabul to clear the passes and had fought his way to Gandamak, a post near their eastern entrance. His troops were at times dispirited, though to a less dangerous extent than those at Kabul. Whilst at Gandamak Sale heard of the outbreak at Kabul in which Sir Alexander Burnes was killed, and was requested to return if possible and assist in restoring order. He declined to do so and occupied

⁴ *Career of Major Broadfoot*, pp. 67-78.

Jalalabad, the fortification of which was entrusted to Broadfoot. Here the news of Macnaghten's murder and of the Kabul catastrophe reached Sale, deepening the prevailing gloom. He still however maintained the defence in expectation of relief, but on Wild's failure to penetrate the Khaibar this hope was dispelled. Then apparently for the first time realising the full peril of his position and acting on the advice of Macgregor, a young artillery officer in political employment, he summoned a council of war to approve of his proposal to negotiate for the evacuation of Jalalabad and the retreat of his brigade to Peshawar.

Minutes of the Proceedings of a Council of War, assembled by order of Major General Sir R. Sale, K.C.B. Commanding at Jellalabad, January 27, 1842.

Present, Major General Sir R. Sale, K.C.B. Captain Macgregor, Political Agent. Lt. Col. Dennie, C.B. Commanding H.M. 18th. L. Infty. Lt. Col. Monteath, C.B. Commanding 35th Regt. N.I. Captain Abbott senior Officer of Artillery. Capt. Oldfield, senior Officer of Cavalry. Capt. Backhouse, senior officer of the Shah's Force, and Capt. Broadfoot, garrison engineer.

Captain Havelock, temporarily attached to Major General Sir R. Sale, and Captain Wade, Major of Brigade, attend to record the proceedings.

The following documents are read to the council.

1. Copy of letter, dated 2nd December 1841, to His Excellency the Commander in Chief, from the Governor General in council communicated by George Clerk, Esqre. to Capt. Mackeson and from the latter officer to Capt. Macgregor.

2. Extract of a letter, from the Secretary of Government, dated 8rd December, 1841, to the address of His Excellency the Commander in Chief, communicated through Captain Mackeson to Captain Macgregor.

3. Letter of the 9th January from G. Clerk, Esqre. to the address of Capt. Macgregor.

4. Letter from Capt. Mackeson to the address of Capt. Macgregor, dated 20th January.

5. Letter from Capt. Lawrence, dated midnight the 19th January to the address of Capt. Mackeson, and letters dated 2 A.M. 20th January and 1 A.M. the 21st January to Capt. Macgregor from Capt. Lawrence.

6. Letters from Capt. Mackeson dated 21st January, to the address of Captain Macgregor.

7. Letters from Major Pottinger, dated Budiabad, January 28rd, to the address of Captain Macgregor.

8. Letters from Sir J. Nicolls, K.C.B. to the address of Major Genl. Sir R. Sale, K.C.B., dated December 16th, 1841.

9. A Private Letter from Shah Shooja, marked No. 1, and a Public one marked No. 2, the latter received 26 January.

Captain Macgregor makes known to the Council, that this morning's news which has reached him is to the effect that Capt. Mackeson has retreated from Ali Musjid, and that Torabaz Khan, the friendly Momund chief has fled to the hills. These reports, however, require confirmation.

The Council are required to decide on what reply is to be sent to the letter No. 2, from His Majesty Shah Shoojah-ool-Moolk, and to meet to-morrow morning at 10 o'clock A.M. for the purpose of recording their decision.

Continuation of Proceedings, January 28th, 1842.

A letter to H.M. Shah Shooja-ool-Moolk is read for the information of the Council, and for their approval. The Council agree in the terms of the letter, with the exception of our proposal of giving Hostages. Captain Broadfoot further objects to the demand for the withdrawal of Mahomed Akbar's [force],^a from this part of the country, and also the omission of demanding the Hostages Prisoners and Sick men now in their hands. Captain Oldfield also is of opinion that we should demand our Hostages, Prisoners and Sick now in their Hands.

Capt. Backhouse, Capt. Abbott, Lt. Col. Dennie, and Lt. Col. Monteath, agree to the propriety of our treating for an evacuation of Jellalabad, provided the securities are given which have been demanded, under the impression that from the letters read before the Council, it appears the Government have no ulterior views in this Country.

Capt. Broadfoot and Capt. Oldfield object to any treaty being entered into, for the evacuation of this Place.

A. ABBOTT, Capt. Artillery.

G. BROADFOOT, Capt.

T. MONTEATH, Lt. Col.

Gsn. Engr. Jelalabad.

W. H. DENNIE, Lt. Col.

J. B. BACKHOUSE, Capt.

C. E. T. OLDFIELD, Capt.

The separate opinions of the members are appended.

Summary of documents laid before the Council of War, with extracts. The numbers correspond with those in the minute of proceedings where full description of the letters is given.^a

1. Details the measures for the support of the troops at Kabul and Jalalabad, viz:—the concentration of an effective brigade at or near Peshawar. If this brigade should be able to reach Jalalabad and hold the neighbourhood the officer commanding the collected force 'will have a discretion to make that forward movement,' but may not advance to Kabul unless he should see certain success with little hazard, or a prospect of successfully saving the troops there. Attempt considered impossible before April. A reserve army of from 10,000 to 12,000 men to be stationed on the Sutlej, and orders will be sent to Bombay to assemble two brigades at Sukkur and Shikarpur.

2. 'para. 4. En tel cas, il nous seroit difficile, à concevoir qu'il pouvoit avoir, des circonstances ou des objets Politiques d'une importance aussi grande pour nous faire desirés de retenir possession du reste de ce Pays, et au moins que ces objets ne deviendroient parfaitement clair, comme resultant de la suite des evenemens nous desirions que nos officiers et employés militaires et Politicale ageroient d'une maniere à faciliter le but desiré de se retirer avec la moindre perte à notre reputation possible. Bien entendu que ce mouvement retrograde sera fait d'une maniere delibere et resultera d'arrangement que nous conserverons un influence

^a Omitted in the original.

^a Pp. 95 f.

politique dans ce Pays ; mais il ne faut pas, fermer nos yeux à la probabilité qui existe que la première mouvemente, de la Population de Province, meridionale, lorsqu'elle sera appris qu'il nous est arrivé un revers à Kabul, sera de se lever en masse et d'entourer nos Postes, fermant nos communications. Dans cet événement, les officiers qui commandent les différents Postes, seroient instruit d'avoir égard premierement à se joindre au support le plus prochain de manière à ne pas exposer leur troupe au danger d'être isolés ;—car il est de la première importance de prévoir à la sûreté des différents corps détachés autant qu'il sera possible. Le Major General Nott, ou l'officier qui commande à Kandahar, seroit instruit, dans l'événement de la perte de Kabool, de recevoir sous ces ordres les Troupes à Ghuzni (to take the force at Ghuzni under his orders) et de donner des ordres qu'il faut au Colonel Palmer. Quant au Régiment qui se trouve à Ghuzni, nous ordonnerons à Mons^r. Clerk d'arranger avec le Gouvernement Sikh pour leur porter toute l'assistance qui pourra si'il seroit décidé, que ce corps, supporteroit en arrière ou sur Dera Ismael Khan, ou sur quelque autre point au Frontier.

' Nous ferons prévenir une copie de cette Paragraphe à Mons^r. le Major Rawlinson, au Major General Nott, et au Lt. Colonel Palmer, par la moyen du Major Outram dans la Sinde Supérieure, et par les moyens du Capt. Mackeson à Peshawar.' ⁷

True extract.

F. MACKESON.

8. In this letter Mr. Clerk detailed the steps he had taken towards reinforcing our troops in Afghanistan and the movements of the reinforcements as far as he knew them.

4. Mackeson from Ali Masjid informed Macgregor respecting recent affairs in the Khaibar pass : reported Wild's failure to march through it : the demoralisation of the native troops at Peshawar : his (Mackeson's) intention to hold Ali Masjid ; and if Sale is obliged, which God forbid, to fall back, he will advance to assist.

5. H. M. Lawrence from Peshawar told Mackeson at Ali Masjid that he could send help in men or food and invited him to act as he thought best. Lawrence informed Macgregor of Wild's failure in the Khaibar : that help for Jalalabad could not be given for a month at soonest : begged him not to be deluded by false hopes or a mistaken sense of honour : suggested retreat from Jalalabad : and reported panic at Peshawar.

6. Mackeson having heard of the destruction of the Kabul force wrote to Macgregor recommending courage and holding Jalalabad : but if retreat were decided on he would do his best to assist : warned Macgregor to beware of Afghan treachery.

7. Pottinger, a prisoner in Akbar Khan's power, wrote to Macgregor

⁷ This paragraph has been printed as it is to be found in the collection of papers respecting the defence of Jalalabad. It is, perhaps, more intelligible to an Englishman than it would be to a Frenchman. Nevertheless, in mitigation of the numerous errors, it may be pointed out that the original was written in Calcutta ; that several copies were made there, very possibly by native clerks, one of which was sent to Peshawar, and there again copied in Capt. Mackeson's office, and lastly in Jalalabad. Each time it was copied, there is a probability that fresh error was introduced.