

Military Text-Books

FROM THE BLACK MOUNTAIN
TO WAZIRISTAN



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TORONTO

FROM
THE BLACK MOUNTAIN
TO WAZIRISTAN

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE BORDER COUNTRIES AND THE
MORE TURBULENT OF THE TRIBES CONTROLLED BY THE
NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE, AND OF OUR MILITARY
RELATIONS WITH THEM IN THE PAST

BY

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'THE MILITARY MEMOIRS OF LIEUT.-GEN. SIR JOSEPH THACKWELL, G.C.B., K.H.'

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

LIEUT.-GEN. SIR HORACE L. SMITH DORRIEN

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TO
E. M. W.

PREFACE

THIS book is the outcome of my own experience of the want of something of the kind in the early autumn of 1897, when the Second Battalion of my old Corps, the Sherwood Foresters, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment, then serving at Bareilly, was ordered to join the Tirah Expeditionary Force. The Battalion had then been in India for nearly fifteen years, but only one or two of the officers, and none of the other ranks, had ever been west of the Indus, and few of us therefore knew anything of the wild men against whom we were to fight, or of the equally wild country in which the operations were to be conducted.

The fault for such ignorance cannot fairly be said to have been ours. There was at that time no single book, generally procurable and of an up-to-date character, describing the country immediately beyond the North-West border, the men who inhabited it, and the campaigns which, since the decline of the Sikh power, have there become our natural and our troublous inheritance. Paget and Mason's monumental work, *Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes*, published in 1885, was wholly admirable, but much of it was ancient history ; it was

an enormous volume; it had for long been "confidential," and had never been placed on general sale. Mr. Oliver's most fascinating book, *Across the Border, or Pathan and Biluch*, had been published in 1890, but it contained little more than a general mention of certain campaigns. It was therefore almost inevitable that British officers—and especially those serving in India in British regiments—had no idea where, in regard to the Frontier, they could draw their knowledge or inspiration.

Even in the present day matters have not greatly improved. The cream has been drawn from Paget and Mason's book, it has been brought up-to-date, and re-christened *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*; but the material is now contained in several large volumes, of which seven have already appeared, and it does not seem to be intended that these should be generally available, since each is labelled "For Official Use only."

It seemed then to me that there was room for a single volume, compiled from official and other sources, describing the more turbulent of the tribes beyond our Border, the countries they inhabit, and the campaigns which the Indian Government has undertaken against them during the last sixty-five years; and up to the time of completing the chapters which follow, I believe this to have been the first attempt which has been made to put such a record before the Army in one handy volume.

I wish to express my thanks to my old comrade, Sir Horace, for so kindly acceding to my request to

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write an introduction to my book; to my brother, Major Wylly, Librarian at the Royal United Service Institution, for much help in research; and to Mr. J. H. Harper, of the staff of the same Institution, for preparing nearly all the maps.

The appearance of this book has been delayed some four and a half months by the request of the Government of India that it should be submitted to Simla for scrutiny prior to publication; the delay is to be regretted, but it has admitted of advantage being taken of certain suggestions offered by the Indian authorities for adding to the instructional value of the work.

H. C. W.

March, 1912.

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THE ARMS TRADE AND THE TRIBESMEN.

No book dealing with the military relations, now and in the past, of the Indian Government and the frontier tribes, can be said to be complete, which does not contain some allusion to the armament of these men. In the matter of small arms we have not invariably possessed the conspicuous superiority which might have been expected of a highly-civilised nation warring against a semi-savage people. Readers of Kaye's *History of the War in Afghanistan* will not need to be reminded how frequently both the Afghans, and the tribes which followed our columns, proved that their firearms were better in range and in man-killing power than were the weapons with which in those days, and even for some years after, our soldiers were armed. We read of our muskets: "Little could they do against the far-reaching Afghan matchlocks. . . . The muskets of our infantry could not reach the assailants. . . . The two forces were at a distance from each other, which gave all the advantage to the enemy, who shot down our men with ease, and laughed at the musket balls, which never reached their position. . . . But, again, the British muskets

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were found no match for the Afghan jazails... the Afghan marksmen mowed down our men like grass." ¹

At the time of the second Afghan war we had completely re-established the superiority of our armament; but since then arms factories have been set up in many places within and without our border, and by this means and by a well-organised, large-scale system of rifle-stealing—not only from regiments in our frontier garrisons, but from others far down country—the tribesmen, who could pay the prices asked, gradually became well equipped with modern rifles and the necessary ammunition. At the time of the Tirah Expedition of 1897-98 the old-fashioned, home-made jazail had practically been everywhere replaced by the breech-loader, many of which, if not actually made at Enfield, had probably been manufactured in the Kohat Pass with all the Government "marks" carefully reproduced. Such confidence had their improved armament inspired in the men of the border, that the feeling found expression in an offer made from more than one clansman at the close of the Tirah campaign: "if we would only leave our artillery behind, they would fight us all over again."

But the improvement noticed in 1897 in the armament of the tribes, seemed to point to the existence of other and more open markets for the supply of modern rifles, than those known to exist to the west of our border; and the Government of India now set inquiries on foot relative to statements, of late years

¹ Vol. III., pp. 86 and 89, 1851 edition.

often repeated and as persistently disregarded, of the existence of a well-established and flourishing trade in arms carried on in the Persian Gulf. There can be no doubt that the arms traffic both at Bushire and at Muscat was originally begun and maintained by British subjects; but the demand for modern rifles in Southern Persia, in Afghanistan, and on the north-west frontier was now so great, that other nations quickly went into the business, and it has been computed that in 1906 four European nations between them imported £278,000 worth of rifles into Muscat alone. The traffic at Bushire does not appear to have exercised any perceptible influence on the arming of the north-west frontier tribes; but that which originated at Muscat in the early nineties soon grew and flourished exceedingly, "parcels" of rifles and ammunition being shipped in native craft from Muscat to the Mekran coast, where they were met by the caravans of the Afghan traders, and being taken thence along the Perso-Baluch frontier into Southern Afghanistan, were distributed among the tribes on our border. This trade was permitted to flourish for fully ten years before any adequate steps were taken to stop it.

In the reports of the Baluchistan Agency during the last five years, so far as these have appeared up to the time of writing, it is possible in some degree to trace the growth of the traffic, and to note the steps belatedly taken for its suppression. Thus, in the Report for 1906-07 we read: "During the months of October to December over a thousand rifles imported

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from Muscat are reported to have been landed and distributed throughout Persian Baluchistan."

Report for 1907-08 : "Not so satisfactory to record is the enormous increase in the arms trade between the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. A very large number of rifles and a vast amount of ammunition are reported to have been landed on the Persian coast during the year under report. Arrangements were being made at the close of the year under report to reinforce the military garrison at Robat, with a view to preventing these arms being taken through British territory. The Afghan arms traders have since successfully brought all their large consignments of arms into Afghanistan through Persian territory."

Report for 1908-09 : "In the year under review very large numbers of rifles, with great quantities of ammunition, were again imported into Afghanistan and into Persian Baluchistan from the Persian Gulf. A force of 500 infantry, with two machine guns, was sent to Robat in April to reinforce the military detachment already there, and to assist in intercepting any caravans which might attempt to reach Afghanistan through the Chagai District. This additional force returned in August at the close of the arms-running season. Though no captures were made, the traffic by this route was effectively checked. In the absence of any effective measures on the Persian side, however, this was of little advantage, and the trade through Persia, being practically completely unchecked, increased considerably in volume."

In 1909 the Admiral of the East Indian station took the matter seriously in hand, and the result of the efforts of the Navy is recorded in the Report of the Baluchistan Agency for 1909-10. After making some complaint of the increase in the number of raids from across the border, and stating that "owing to the possession of modern rifles and abundant ammunition these outlaws have been more daring and difficult to deal with," the Report goes on to say: "Throughout the year under review reports continued to be received regarding the landing of arms and ammunition on the Persian Gulf coast. It is estimated that over 16,500 rifles, 352 revolvers and pistols, 1,079,000 rounds, as well as 137 boxes of ammunition, were landed between the 31st March, 1909, and 1st April, 1910. Owing to the frequency of these reports regarding the landing of arms, the Government of India, in September 1909, decided to resume naval operations on the Persian Gulf coast. It is satisfactory to note that these operations proved far more successful than previous ones, some 6307 rifles and 619,700 rounds of ammunition being captured between July 1909 and April 1910, and 4260 rifles with 520,000 rounds being accounted for after the close of the year. As a result of a conference held at Simla in July 1909, Mr. Gregson, Superintendent of Police, North-West Frontier Police, was placed on special duty in November, with a view of preventing Ghilzais and other trans-frontier tribesmen from getting to the Gulf through India. This measure resulted in some 152 Afghans with about Rs. 73,000

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in their possession being detained, and it has been proved that another Rs. 26,000 was returned from Muscat.

“Half a battalion of Native Infantry, with a maxim gun section, left Quetta for Robat on the 3rd January, 1910, with a view to protecting the trade-route and closing the road leading through British territory to arms-runners. No attempts were made by the Afghans to make use of these routes, but as the Persian authorities made no attempt to close the routes leading through Persian Baluchistan, the Afghans experienced no difficulty in entering Afghanistan by skirting Robat and travelling a few miles to the west of that place. It is, however, satisfactory to note that several of the caravans are reported to have had to return empty owing to the naval operations referred to above. . . . One attempt was made during the year to land arms on the coast on the British side of the Persian boundary. A consignment, estimated at from 9500-15,000 rifles, was landed at Pishukan, near Gwadar, which is a Muscat possession within British territory. It is, however, satisfactory to note that the fate of this consignment should act as a warning to arms-runners not to make the attempt again; for 850 of these rifles were captured by a party landed by H.M.S. *Perseus*. . . . But for the active steps taken to check the arms traffic, the trade during the year would have attained abnormal proportions. Very large numbers of Afghans went down to the coast, and with them large numbers of Afridis and men of the north-west border tribes. Very great discour-

Combined Operations in 1910 481

agement was caused to them by the failure of their ventures, and how far the success of our operations will diminish the number of those who will make similar ventures next year remains to be seen."

The Report of the Baluchistan Agency for 1910-11 hardly does sufficient justice to the success met with by the naval operations of the twelve months under review. "The combined naval and military operations in the Persian Gulf," we read, "were continued during the year. Several large consignments of arms and ammunition were captured by His Majesty's ships, and the landing of arms on the Mekran coast was rendered more difficult than ever. Notwithstanding the difficulties experienced by arms-runners last season, large numbers of Afghans and tribesmen again proceeded to the Gulf for the purpose of obtaining arms, but it is satisfactory to note that a large proportion of these are said to have returned either with unladen camels or with ordinary merchandise. Those that managed to procure arms are reported to have purchased them mostly from the local Baluch, with the result that prices have risen and very few arms are now obtainable even at the high prices offered by the arms-runners. Half a battalion of Native Infantry, with a maxim gun detachment, was maintained at Robat throughout the year, and prevented any attempts being made to use the routes leading through British territory. The routes followed by the Afghans, both when proceeding to and returning from the coast, were those to the west of Robat, which the Persian Government

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is incapable of closing. Reports from all sides show that the active measures again taken to stop the arms traffic are keenly felt both in Afghanistan and among the gun-running community generally. The trade is now looked upon as an extremely difficult and hazardous undertaking."

It was, of course, hardly to be expected that so independent a people as these border folk would take "lying down" this interference with their supply of arms and ammunition—the less that the business appears to have been conducted on the "payment-in-advance" principle, and, the money being already in the hands of the traders for the rifles seized by British ships, whole communities were not merely disappointed but ruined. Much ill-feeling and disaffection was aroused on the frontier; and the Kohat Pass Afridis actually put in a claim against the Indian Government for compensation—a demand which was not entertained.

Thanks to the energy of the naval authorities, the Muscat gun-trade would appear to have been scotched, but it is very far from being killed, while the operations in the Gulf have cost something like £100,000 each season. How, too, can any preventive service, however well organised, deal with cases such as that reported in August 1911 in the Indian papers—of a steamer of the Hansa Line which arrived in Bombay, having among its cargo a number of cases labelled "Loaf Sugar"—shipped at Hamburg, through Antwerp, for Koweit via Bombay? Unfortunately for the consignees, one of these cases was damaged

in trans-shipment, when the "loaf sugar" was found to be magazine rifles, fifty in number, of '203 bore, and with a quantity of ammunition to match.

Mr. Lovat Fraser has told us that when he was on the north-west frontier in 1909, he tried to ascertain what proportion of the tribesmen were then armed with modern rifles. The lowest estimate was 80,000, and many frontier officers seemed of the opinion that there were probably 150,000 good rifles in possession of men of the border. "Not only," says Mr. Lovat Fraser, "does this great influx of arms affect the character of our relations with the tribesmen, by giving them greater confidence in their offensive capacity, but it may also have very grave results should it ever be necessary for us to advance again into Afghanistan."¹

But coincident with the departure from Indian waters of Rear-Admiral Sir Edward Slade, whose vigorous measures have done so much during the last three years for the suppression of the arms traffic between Muscat and Mekran, comes the opportune announcement that the Sultan of Oman has happily decided to control the trade himself—hitherto protected by a treaty, dating back to the Second Empire, between the Sultan and the Government of the French Republic. The Sultan of Oman has come to the decision to store all arms and ammunition imported into his dominions in a bonded warehouse, from which they are not to be released except upon production of certificates of destination, while no such

¹ *Proceedings of the Central Asian Society*, May 1911.

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certificates are to be issued for the Mekran coast. If the supervision of the bonded warehouse is thorough, the traffic in arms should be effectively controlled, and a considerable relaxation of British naval activities should be possible; unfortunately, however, the continued existence of the trade benefits many others besides the men of the "Bloody Border"—Oriental officials and European manufacturers and exporters—and it is possible that, though the traffic is to all appearance dead, it may ere long be surreptitiously revived.

APPENDIX B.

TABLE OF EXPEDITIONS AGAINST THE FRONTIER TRIBES MENTIONED
IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

YEAR.	TRIBE.	COMMANDER.	NUMBERS EMPLOYED. ¹	CASUALTIES.	
				K.	W.
1847	Baizais, - - - - -	Lt.-Col. Bradshaw, C.B., - -	Mixed Brigade	1	13
1849	Do., - - - - -	Do., - - - - -	2300	7	40
1850	Afridis, Kohat Pass, - -	Brig. Sir C. Campbell, K.C.B., -	3200	19	74
1851	Miranzai Tribes, - - - -	Capt. J. Coke, - - - - -	2050, including levies	2	3
1851-2	Mohmands, - - - - -	Brig. Sir C. Campbell, K.C.B., -	1597	4	5
1852	Do., - - - - -	Do., - - - - -	600	2	8
"	Ranizais, - - - - -	Do., - - - - -	3270	11	29
"	Utman Khels, - - - - -	Do., - - - - -	2200	3	15
"	Wazirs, Darwesh Khel, -	Major J. Nicholson, - - - -	1500	24	7
1852-3	Hassanzais, - - - - -	Lt.-Col. Mackeson, C.B., - -	3800, including levies, etc.	5	10
1853	Hindustani Fanatics, - -	Do., - - - - -	2000	Nil	
"	Afridis, Adam Khel, - -	Col. Boileau, - - - - -	1740	8	29
1854	Mohmands, - - - - -	Col. Cotton, - - - - -	1782	1	16
1855	Afridis, Aka Khel, - -	Lt.-Col. Craigie, C.B., - -	1500	9	25

¹These figures are in many cases only approximate.

APPENDIX B.—continued.

YEAR.	TRIBE.	COMMANDER.	NUMBERS EMPLOYED.	CASUALTIES.	
				K.	W.
1855	Miranzai Tribes, - - -	Brig. Chamberlain, - - -	3766	—	14
"	Orakzais, Rabia Khel, - - -	Do., - - -	2457	11	4
1856	Turis, - - -	Do., - - -	4896, including levies	5	3
1857	Yusafzais, - - -	Major Vaughan, - - -	400	2	3
			990	5	21
			1625, including levies	1	8
1858	Khudu Khels, etc., - - -	M.-Gen. Sir S. Cotton, K.C.B., -	4877	6	29
1859-60	Wazirs, Darwesh Khel, - - -	Brig.-Gen. Chamberlain, C.B., -	5372, including levies	1	19
1860	Wazirs, Mabsuds, - - -	Do., - - -	6796, including levies	100	261
1863	Ambela Expedition (Hindustani Fanatics, etc.),	Do., - - - (later M.-Gen. Garvoek),	9000	238	670
1864	Mohmands, - - -	Col. Macdonell, C.B., - - -	1801	2	17
1868	Orakzais, - - -	Major Jones, - - -	970, including levies, etc.	11	44
"	Black Mountain Tribes, - - -	M.-Gen. Wilde, C.B., C.S.I., -	12,544	5	29
1869	Orakzais, - - -	Lt.-Col. Keyes, C.B., - - -	2080, including levies	3	33
1872	Dawaris, - - -	Brig.-Gen. Keyes, C.B., - - -	1826	—	6
1877	Afridis, Jowaki, - - -	Col. Mocatta, - - -	1750	1	10
1877-8	Do., - - -	Brig.-Gens. Keyes and Ross, -	7400	11	51
1878	Utman Khels, - - -	Capt. Battye, - - -	280	—	8

APPENDIX B.—continued.

YEAR.	TRIBE.	COMMANDER.	NUMBERS EMPLOYED.	CASUALTIES.	
				K.	W.
1878	Ranizais, - - - -	Major Campbell, - - - -	860	Nil	
"	Utman Khels, - - - -	Lt.-Col. Jenkins, - - - -	875	—	1
"	Afridis, Zakha Khel, - - - -	Lt.-Gen. Maude, V.C., C.B., - - - -	2500	2	9
1879	Do., - - - -	Do., - - - -	3750	5	13
"	Mohmands, - - - -	Capt. Creagh and Major Dyce, - - - -	600	6	18
"	Zaimukhts, - - - -	Brig.-Gen. Tytler, V.C., C.B., - - - -	3226	2	2
1880	Mohmands, - - - -	Brig.-Gen. Doran, C.B., - - - -	2300	2	3
"	Batannis, - - - -	Lt.-Col. Rynd, - - - -	721	—	5
"	Wazirs, Darwesh Khel, - - - -	Brig.-Gen. Gordon, C.B., - - - -	800	Nil	
1881	Wazirs, Mahsuds, - - - -	Brig.-Gens. Gordon and Kennedy, - - - -	8531	8	24
1887	Bunerwals, - - - -	Col. Broome, - - - -	460	3	2
1888	Black Mountain Tribes, - - - -	B.-Gen. J. McQueen, C.B., A.D.C., - - - -	9416	25	57
1891	Do., - - - -	M.-Gen. W. K. Elles, C.B., - - - -	7289	9	39
"	Orakzais, - - - -	B.-Gen. Sir W. Lockhart, K.C.B., - - - -	4600	Nil	
"	Do., - - - -	Do., - - - -	8000	28	73
1894	Wazirs, - - - -	Brig.-Gen. Turner and Lt.-Gen. Sir W. Lockhart, K.C.B., - - - -	11,150	45	75
1895	Chitralis, - - - -	M.-Gen. Sir R. Low, K.C.B., - - - -	15,249	21	101

Expeditions 1878-95

APPENDIX B.—*continued.*

YEAR.	TRIBE.	COMMANDER.	NUMBERS EMPLOYED.	CASUALTIES.	
				K.	W.
1895	Chitralis, - - - -	Col. Kelly, - - - -	1400 ¹	165	88
1897	Wazirs, Darwesh Khel, - -	M.-Gen. Corrie-Bird, C.B., - -	8000	29	61
"	Akozaïs (Swat), - - - -	Col. Meiklejohn, C.B., C.M.G., and M.-Gen. Sir B. Blood, K.C.B.,	12,650	97	386
"	Mohmands, - - - -	Brig.-Gen. E. Elles, C.B., - -	8500	12	96
"	Akozaïs and Tarkanris - (Dir and Bajaur)	M.-Gen. Sir B. Blood, K.C.B., -	12,200	61	218
"	Utman Khels, - - - -	Colonel A. Reid, C.B., - -	2900	Nil	
"	Orakzaïs, - - - -	M.-Gen. Yeatman-Biggs, C.B., -	9500	26	54
"	Afridis, - - - -	Lt.-Gen. Sir W. Lockhart, K.C.B.,	34,550	287	853
"	Chamkannis, - - - -	Brig.-Gen. Gaselee, C.B., and Col. Hill, C.B.,	9700	46	35
1898	Bunerwals, - - - -	M.-Gen. Sir B. Blood, K.C.B., -	8800	—	1
1899	Chamkannis, - - - -	Capt. Roos-Keppel, - - - -	1200, including levies	—	1
1900-01	Wazirs, Mahsud, - - - -	Brig.-Gen. Dening, - - - -	Small Columns ²	32	114
1901-02	Wazirs, Darwesh Khel, - -	M.-Gen. Egerton, C.B., - -	Do., ²	4	15
1908	Afridis, Zakka Khel, - -	M.-Gen. Sir J. Willcocks, K.C.M.G.,	14,000	3	37
"	Mohmands, - - - -	Do.,	12,000	38	184

¹ Includes garrisons of Chitral Fort and Mastuj, and parties under Capt. Ross and Lieut. Edwardes.

² Four to six small columns employed, strength averaging 1000.

APPENDIX C.

TABLE SHOWING BY WHOM THE TRIBES ARE CONTROLLED.

Dep.-Commissioner, Hazara.	Cis-Indus Swatis — Allai, Tikari, Deshi, Nandihar and Thakot. Yusafzais — Trans-Indus Utmanzai, Mada Khel, Amazai, Hassanzai, Akazai and Cis-Indus Chagarzai.
Political Agent, Dir, Swat and Chitral.	Yusafzais—Trans-frontier Akozai. Sam Ranizais. Bajauris. Chitralis.
Dep.-Commissioner, Peshawar.	Yusafzais—Trans-Indus Chagarzai, Khudu Khel, Chamlawals, Sam Baizai and Cis-Indus Utmanzai. Utman Khel. Mohmands. Gaduns. Bunerwals. Afridis—Adam Khel of Janakor and Kandar.
Political Agent, Khyber.	Afridis—except Adam Khel. Mullagoris. Mohmands—Shilmani. Shinwaris.
Dep.-Commissioner, Kohat.	Orakzais—except Massuzai. Afridis—Adam Khel. Bangash.
Political Agent, Kurram.	Zaimukhts. Turis. Orakzais—Massuzai. Chamkannis.
Dep.-Commissioner, Bannu.	Bannuchis.
Political Agent, Tochi.	Dawaris. Wazirs—Darwesh Khel.
Political Agent, Wana.	Wazirs—Mahsuds.
Dep.-Commissioner, Dera Ismail Khan.	Batannis.

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