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Movements of the Dervishes in the Sudan after the fall of Khartum.

1885.

To oppose the British Desert Column, troops were collected from Berber under Abd El Majid Khojali, from Shendy under Wad Hamza, and from Khartum under Abdullah Wad Saad. Situation in middle of January.

To oppose the River Column, Abd El Majid El Kalik with Monassir and Robatab Arabs were collected at Birti.

At Khartum were the Mahdi and his Khalifas (Abdullah Et 'Taaishi, Ali Wad Helu and Mohamed Sherif) with the following Emirs and their troops:—Wad En Nejumi, Abu Kurja, Wad Jubara, Abu Anja and Nur Angar.

At Berber was the Emir Mohamed El Kheir, and in the desert at Bir Sani was Ez Zein.

Nur Angar was despatched from Khartum to reinforce the troops at Abu Klea. He arrived on the 18th January, and took part in the battle of Gubat on the 19th January.

When Khartum fell on the 26th January, news was at once sent to El Kheir at Berber, who received it 30th January, and the same day informed El Kalik by letter. Fall of Khartum. Opposition to British River Column.

The latter had retired to Kirbekan, not considering himself strong enough to meet an attack at Birti. He was actually carrying out a further withdrawal when, on the 6th February, he received El Kheir's letter. He then reoccupied Kirbekan, and, after his defeat on the 10th February, retired up the river to Abu Ahmed.

Ez Zein meanwhile remained at Bir Sani to resist any advance across the desert on Berber, and to gain information and harass the communications of the River Column.

To meet the advance of this column, El Kheir sent reinforcements to F Kalik at Abu Ahmed, and himself proceeded, under orders from the Mahdi, to Wady Bagara.

Meanwhile the Mahdi despatched Nejumi with troops towards Matammeh. Nejumi, however, did not feel strong enough to advance as far as Gubat, the English victories having produced a great effect. Perhaps, also, the Mahdi, wishing to make certain of victory, may have ordered him to wait for reinforcements. Opposition to British Desert Column.

Nejumi accordingly waited till the troops under Abu Kurja and Abu Anja had joined him, and, with this force of 12,000 men, he resumed his advance.

The British now retired from Gubat (14th February), and Abd El Majid with Nur Angar and his troops, issuing from Matammeh, closely pursued them. Retreat of British Desert Column.

The Mahdi, on hearing of this retreat, recalled Abu Anja with 6,000 men to Khartum. Disturbances had broken out in Kordofan (perhaps in consequence of the British advance), and Abu Anja was sent to restore order. He left at the beginning of February, moved to Rahat, and drove the insurgents under El Malik Kumbo into the Takalla Mountains. Having taken many slaves and much booty, he moved at the end of May to Jebel Dair to punish the insurgents Despatch of troops to Kordofan.

at that place. Sherif Mahmud (Uncle and Emir of the Mahdi) also left Obeyid with a force on the 30th April, to punish En Nawai, who had revolted at Birka.

Abu Anja and the troops of the Mahdi were at the beginning of June, 1885, masters of the situation in Kordofan.

Retreat of
British River
Column.

Returning to the Nile Valley, we find that the River Column turned back at Huella near Abu Ahmed, on 24th February, and that on the 8th March General Brackenbury and his troops had returned to Korti.

Situation in
March.

El Kheir, on hearing of the retreat, returned from Wady Bagara to Berber, where he made preparations to resist the British advance from Suakin. El Kalik took up the pursuit and arrived at Birti again with 2,000 men on the 15th March. Ez Zein still occupied Bir Sani.

The Mahdi, doubtless well informed of our intention at that time to resume the advance from Dongola on Khartum after the hot weather, ordered Nejumi to remain at Matammeh.

He established a post at Jabra Wells under Wad Guraish, and everywhere the strictest measures were taken to obtain information of our movements.

Despatch of
reinforce-
ments to
besiegers at
Senaar.

It was now important to secure the fall of Senaar and release more troops to oppose the English. An army was accordingly despatched, in March, to reinforce the besiegers there. Wad Jubara and Wad Abd El Kerim proceeded in command.

Decision of
British
Government
to withdraw
from the
Sudan.

By the middle of May the Mahdi must have heard of the decision, announced in Parliament on the 22nd April, to retire from the Sudan.

Nejumi
ordered to
Khartum.

There was now no immediate necessity for keeping Nejumi at Matammeh. It was more important to send him to Senaar, which was still holding out. An order was therefore sent to him and Abu Kurja to return to Khartum.

El Kheir
ordered to
Dongola.

Berber being no longer threatened from Suakin, El Kheir received also an order on the 26th May to follow the English into the Dongola Province.

El Kheir had visited Khartum at the end of April to take the Mahdi's orders, in view of the British advance from Suakin. He conferred also at Matammeh with Nejumi, and thereafter Abd El Majid Khojali was sent back to him, and he was also reinforced by Abdullah Wad Saad, Mohamed Wahabi (Wad Er Reis), Moghani Sowari Ed Dahab, Osman El Azrak and other trusted leaders with their troops.

Occupation of
Merawi.

Merawi on being evacuated by British troops, was at once occupied by Ez Zein from Bir Sani, and El Kalik from Birti, about the 15th June.

Reinforce-
ments at
Abu Ahmed.

To cover the movement on Dongola, the Mahdi appointed a special Emir, El Hassan Wad Saad to Abu Ahmed. The latter established a post at Murad Wells, and succeeded for many months in leading us to believe that a very large force was at Abu Ahmed.

Death of the
Mahdi.

Nejumi and Abu Kurja arrived at Omdurman at the beginning of June, and were preparing to start for Senaar, when the Mahdi was suddenly taken ill and died on the 20th June.

The Khalifa
Abdullah
succeeds the
Mahdi.

Abdullah Et Taaishi at once took the lead, and issued letters next day to the Emirs and others informing them of the event. The Mahdi had prophesied shortly before his death that he would die, and the event did not affect the dervish movement so seriously as would have been expected. "His orders must be carried out." Such was the determination of his followers, much as they lamented "the great master of all."

Every effort was made, however, to conceal the news from the infidels, and it was not till January, 1886, that the fact was satisfactorily proved to us by the capture of correspondence at Giniss.

Concealment of the news of the Mahdi's death.

Rumours of the event had, however, reached Dongola as early as the 4th July.

Nejumi and Abu Kurja having completed their preparations, left for Senaar at the end of July with about 10,000 men.

Departure of Nejumi for Senaar.

Before their arrival, however, the place capitulated to Wad Jubara about the 18th August, and the news reached Khartum on the 22nd August.

Fall of Senaar.

Two days earlier had arrived the news of the capitulation of Kassala, against which Osman Digna had despatched most of his troops on the retreat of the English at Suakin.

Fall of Kassala.

And now the Khalifa Abdullah and the other chiefs turned their attention to the plans for the conquest of Egypt, which had been sketched out by the Mahdi.

Nejumi, Abu Kurja, Jubara and their troops returned from Senaar to Khartum in September, 1885. Abu Anja appears also to have returned from Kordofan at this time, bringing with him 3,000 head of cattle and other booty. He returned probably in consequence of the Mahdi's death, and to consult with his colleagues. Nur Angar appears also to have been at Khartum at this time, for it is very doubtful if he ever left Khartum after he returned from Matammeh in March.

Concentration at Khartum.

Meanwhile the advance of the dervishes into Dongola proceeded satisfactorily.

Evacuation of Dongola by the British troops.

The British rear guard left Dongola on the 5th July.

On the same day arrived at Korosko, Hussein Pasha Khalifa (of the Ababdeh Arabs), whom the Mahdi sent down to Egypt to take the place of Zebehr Pasha* as his chief newsagent. He was also eventually to be appointed Emir of Assuan. He left Khartum about the same time that the orders were given to El Kheir to advance into Dongola, *i.e.*, about 15th of May.

Despatch of Hussein Pasha Khalifa to Lower Egypt.

El Kalik advanced from Merawi with the advanced guard of the dervishes. He arrived at Debbah 28th July, and moved on to Kolid (Goleh), where he awaited the arrival of Abd El Majid, and then left for Khandak, arriving there 12th August, and at Dongola 17th August.

Advance of Abd El Majid El Kalik to Dongola from Merawi.

His force consisted of about 3,000 men.

El Kheir sent his men in detachments across the desert to Merawi, the first starting about the 14th June.

Advance of Mohamed El Kheir's troops from Berber.

He appointed on the 28th June his nephew (Abd El Majid Khojali) as his Vakil, and specially instructed him not to let the troops harm the people.

Appointment of Abd El Majid Khojali as second in command.

On the 13th July, Abd El Majid left Berber with the bulk of the troops, and passing through Merawi arrived at Debbah 5th August, and at Kolid 11th August.

Advance of Abd El Majid Khojali from Berber.

A letter had been written to the Dongola people on the 19th July by El Kheir, bidding them obey Abd El Majid.

The latter sent out letters in friendly terms to the Sheikhs as he advanced, and they all submitted.

Troops were enrolled in the Merawi District and also in Dongola. A strong detachment was also collected in the Robatab and Monassir country and sent to join the army.

Enrolment of troops.

* Arrested at Cairo 15th March, and taken to Gibraltar.

Arrival of Abd El Majid Khojali at Dongola. On the 26th August, Abd El Majid arrived at Dongola, and on the 30th he issued more letters to the people of that province to reassure them that no harm would befall them.

Advance of El Kheir from Berber to Dongola. On the 29th August, leaving about 1,000 men at Berber under Haj Mohamed, El Kheir left Berber, and on the 5th September arrived at Merawi. Here he pushed on the collection of troops and supplies. On the 6th October he arrived at Debbah and issued a proclamation to the Dongola people. He then proceeded to Dongola, and arrived there on the 16th October.

Advanced guard at Hafir. El Kalik and Osman El Azrak had pushed on to Hafir.

Council at Khartum. At Khartum, in September, a council was held, and it appears to have been decided to despatch Nejumi, *via* Berber, and the Khalifa Mohamed Sherif (who is "like a sea of great waves") direct on Dongola to reinforce El Kheir.

The destination of Nejumi's force at that time is not quite clear, whether also for Dongola or for the direct advance on Korosko.

Departure of Nejumi for Berber from Khartum. Some of Nejumi's troops were sent on from Khartum to Berber in the end of September. He himself left with the remainder on the 24th November, arriving in December with 3 steamers and 30 or 40 boats.

Advance of El Kheir from Dongola. Mohamed El Kheir, having left Dongola, arrived at Hafir on the 28th October, and his troops crossed to Kerema on 1st November, on which day El Kheir issued a proclamation in friendly terms to the people of Mahass and Sukkot announcing his advance.

El Kheir establishes his head-quarters at Kerema. El Kheir has remained at Kerema (Abu Fatmeh) at the top of the cataracts ever since.

Advance of Abd El Majid. The troops moved on under Abd El Majid. The advanced guard arrived at Farak 10th November, Dulgo 15th November, Absarat 21st November, Abri 25th November, Atab (near Kosheh Fort) on 27th November.

Attack on Ambigole Wells and destruction of the railway. Everything had been arranged for a raid on the railway, and Ez Zein and Abdullah Wad Saad accordingly started on the evening of the 28th, and, marching in the desert, appeared on the 1st December north and south of Ambigole Wells station with from 1,000 to 1,500 men.

A party was told off to fire on the fort and the rest tore up the line. They withdrew at night to Khanak Wells, but returned next day, and again on the 3rd December. On the 4th December, having ascertained that a British relief column was approaching, the Arabs withdrew south, making a raid on Firket, and an attack on Mograkeh, carrying off some supplies.

This success greatly pleased El Kheir and he wrote, on the 12th December, to Abd El Majid expressing his satisfaction, and saying that his mission was to destroy the railway and harass the infidels.

Abd El Majid Khojali divides his forces. Abd El Majid did his best to annoy the defenders of Kosheh Fort, and also detached a large force (3,000) of his best troops, mostly Jaalin, to the left bank to threaten a work on that side.

Advance of British troops and battle of Giniss. Meanwhile the British reinforcements were rapidly and secretly brought up. Taking advantage of the tactical error which Majid made in dividing his force, the British General took the offensive on the right bank, and completely surprised and routed the 7,000 troops at Giniss on the 30th December, 1885.

Some nuggars with arms and provisions were captured by the British, but the pursuit was not carried further than Absarat.

Retreat to Kerema and Dongola. El Kalik, it seems certain, was killed. Abd El Majid Khojali and the others fell back on El Kheir at Kerema.

Moghani Es Sowari Ed Dahab and Osman El Azrak were posted at Dongola; Abdullah Wad Saad at Hafir. Many of their followers were allowed to disperse to their homes.

The news of this defeat was received at Berber on the 11th January. The defeat was ascribed to surprise. Nejumi is said to have ordered Haj Mohamed and Ali Bishir of the Jehimab to prepare camels for reinforcements.

Reinforce-
ments from
Berber.

On the 12th February, Haj Ahmed's force crossed the river at Berber, and left 15th February, arriving at Kerema on 23rd March. The numbers are variously stated as from 500 to 3,000. Mustapha Wad Mustapha accompanied this force.

Nejumi was said to have at Berber, after Haj Ahmed's departure, about 2,000 men. He was awaiting reinforcements under the Khalifa Mohamed Sherif from Khartum.

Nejumi at
Berber waits
reinforce-
ments from
Khartum.

Ali Pasha Wahbi left Berber at this time (22nd February). He states that he escaped. It is possible that he may have been sent down to find out if it was proposed by the British to reoccupy Dongola. He was also perhaps instructed to give us false information.

Despatch of
Ali Pasha
Wahbi to
Lower Egypt.

In February also, El Hassan Wad Saad was recalled from Abu Ahmed. He appears to have offended the Robatab chiefs (sons of Abu Hejel)—specially Suleiman Mohamed Abu Hejel and Mohamed Awadullah, who made complaints about him in October and November to El Kheir, and the Khalifas at Khartum.

El Hassan
Wad Saad
recalled from
Abu Ahmed
to Khartum.

On the 7th April, Nejumi received orders from the Khalifa Abdullah to despatch further reinforcements from Berber, and, on the 10th April, Wad Jubara and troops crossed the river at Berber.

Further re-
inforcements
sent from
Berber to
Dongola.

After his departure for Merawi, Nejumi received a summons to Khartum and left (15th April) for Khartum. This was probably on account of the receipt of the news of our withdrawal to Halfa, then in progress. The proposal to abandon the railway was known in Cairo on the 7th March, and the news was probably sent to Khartum by Minshetta Bey of Siala. The meeting was held to consider the news.

British with-
drawal to
Wady Halfa.
Nejumi
summoned to
Khartum.

Jubara arrived in the Merawi District at the end of April, and his advanced guard reached Handak at end of May.

Advance of
Wad Jubara
from Berber
to Handak.

Strict orders were given at Berber to prevent news reaching us from there.

Precautions at
Berber.

Nejumi arrived at the end of April at Khartum, Wad Abd El Kerim from Senaar, Abu Kurja from Mesalamia also arrived; and there were 12,000 troops there at this time.

Council at
Khartum.

A council was held, and a dispute was considered which had arisen amongst the Khalifas and Emirs as to Mohamed Sherif's taking the sons of the Mahdi, who wished to go with his army. Abdullah said they were too young, and it was finally agreed that some of the Khalifas should leave Khartum. Troops were, however, ordered to Berber to reinforce Nejumi.

A striking account* is given of the final meeting to bid adieu to Nejumi; when the Khalifas and Emirs stretched out their hands in the direction of Cairo and called out "Allah Akbar" (God is great) three times. Nejumi then (end of May) left for Berber, where he arrived 13th June.

On arrival he issued a proclamation stopping the removal of camels from Berber. He would leave for Dongola (it was said) after Ramadan (June).

Return of
Nejumi to
Berber.

* See Diary Frontier Field Force, No. 43, p. 4.

Return of El Hassan Wad Saad to Abu Ahmed.

At the same time El Hassan Wad Saad returned with troops to Abu Ahmed. It is believed that the quarrel with the Robatab chiefs has been made up. But it is said that he is to move on Korosko, leaving the sons of Abu Hejel in command at Abu Ahmed.

State of affairs in Dongola.

In the Dongola District things have been going on quietly. Probably the dervishes have been ruling justly and impartially notwithstanding reports to the contrary.

Some of the Kababish having made a raid on a convoy at Abu Gus, Abd El Majid is supposed to have gone there to guard that point. It is more likely, however, that this report is to account for the arrival at Handak of Wad Jubara's advanced guard.

Destruction of the railway.

Ez Zein was told off at the end of May (after the meeting at Khartum above referred to) to destroy the railway. For this purpose he collected, temporarily, the people of Mahass and Sukkot, who dispersed about 16th June, having destroyed the line as far as Ambigole and partly to Sarras.

Affairs in Kordofan since the death of the Mahdi.

With regard to Kordofan there is very little trustworthy information.

It appears that during the absence of Abu Anja at Khartum in September 1885, some of his soldiers at Obeyid under Farajullah Pasha (formerly Gordon's commandant at Omdurman) mutinied and made off to the mountains at Jebel Dair.

The Sherif Mahmud (Emir at Obeyid) went after them, and is reported to have been killed.

Abu Anja was then sent back to Kordofan and took with him Nur Angar.

Zukal of Darfur appears also to have assisted them in putting down the rebellion.

The dervish rule.

The documents captured at Giniss throw much light on the motives which actuate the dervish leaders, showing that their rule is far from being so oppressive as is often reported.

The Khalifa Abdullah orders that people going beyond the boundary are not to be beaten without examinations.

El Kheir particularly ordered that the troops were not to harm the people, and both Osman El Azrak and El Kalik reported to Abd El Majid Khojali that they were doing their best to please the people. The notables of Mahass, when they tendered their submission, were treated with great kindness.

Moghani Sowari Ed Dahab complains of some of the dervishes having been looting, and says it should be stopped. Ez Zein is also appealed to to prevent taxes being taken twice over.

El Kheir is appealed to concerning the alleged injustice of El Hassan Wad Saad at Abu Ahmed.

Goods captured from the enemy are sold by auction, and the proceeds distributed.

Complaints as to delay in paying the troops are at once attended to.

The proclamations and letters issued as the dervishes advance into new districts all show their anxiety to conciliate and enlist the sympathies of the people amongst whom they come.

Mohamed El Kheir.

Reports have frequently been spread of Nejumi's hostility to El Kheir, and also that the Khalifa Abdullah has been writing threatening letters recalling him from Dongola.

It should be noticed, however, that all the Khalifas used to correspond on friendly terms with him before Giniss, and the services rendered by him, and the other leaders with him, are not likely to be soon forgotten.

Present situation in Dongola.

The latest reports announce the arrival of some of Nejumi's people, i.e., part of Jubara's force, at Dongola. This is not unlikely, looking to the progress made by a similar party this time last year.

El Kheir, with his leaders and troops, is still near Kerema and Hafir.

Ez Zein is probably at Suarda in the Sukkot country.

The rest of Nejumi's troops are echeloned along the route from Berber, *via* Merawi, to Handak.

Nejumi himself may have left Berber for Merawi.

The advance against Wady Halfa will, if carried out, be made earlier than that against Kosheh, in order that supplies may be brought down in boats.

These boats have been collected and are being used in bringing down Nejumi's troops.

Grain is being collected for the troops, and the Kababish are prevented from buying at the river banks. Some of them therefore have recourse to looting to supply themselves, and their chiefs make great efforts to induce the Egyptian Government to re-occupy the Dongola Province.

The Kababish have also another reason for disliking the dervishes, as the Khalifa Abdullah prohibited some time ago the export of male slaves and camels, and so orders were sent to the Wady El Kab to prevent the Alogat Arabs going there to buy them. Abd El Majid Khojali is in no fear of them for, when they showed hesitation in providing camels before Giniss, he wrote threatening to destroy them.

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INTELLIGENCE BRANCH, WAR OFFICE,
25th August, 1886.
