

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES

First battle of Ypres—Arrival of Lahore Division at the front—Ferozepore Brigade attached to British Cavalry Corps—General situation—Attack on German position—Fighting spirit of the troops—Enemy's attack on Messines front—Gallantry of Captain Forbes' Company 57th Rifles—129th Baluchis heavily attacked—Attack on Messines by nine German battalions—Heavy losses of British officers—Sepoy Khudadad Khan's Victoria Cross.

ON the 21st October, the Lahore Division, without the Sirhind Brigade, marched to the area round Wallon Cappel and Lynde.

Orders were then received for the 1st Battalion Connaught Rangers, under Lt-Colonel H. S. Ravenshaw, to move by motor-bus via St Sylvestre and Bailleul to Wulverghem, which they reached in the early morning of the 22nd October, coming under the orders of General Allenby, Commanding the Cavalry Corps, by whom they were attached to the 1st Cavalry Division under General De Lisle.

The 57th Rifles, under Lt-Colonel F. W. Gray, D.S.O., on the return of the motors, moved up to Wulverghem, about seven miles south-west of Ypres, and were attached to the 2nd Cavalry Division under General Gough. Half of the battalion was then placed at the disposal of General Bingham, Commanding the 4th Cavalry Brigade, and half with General Chetwode's 5th Cavalry Brigade, both Brigades being in the vicinity of Wytschaete.

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This arrangement continued till the 26th October, the 57th remaining in the trenches. On the same date the remainder of the Ferozepore Brigade marched to Bailleul and billeted.

Thence the 129th Baluchis, under Lt-Colonel W. M. Southey, proceeded by bus to St Eloi, where they were also attached to the 2nd Cavalry Division and placed at the disposal of General Vaughan, Commanding the 3rd Cavalry Brigade. The honour of being the first British battalion of the Indian Corps to enter the trenches therefore belongs to the 1st Battalion Connaught Rangers, the first Indian battalion being the 57th Rifles, closely followed by the 129th Baluchis.

The position at this moment was briefly as follows in the immediate front occupied by the Cavalry Corps to which the units of the Ferozepore Brigade were attached.

The key to Ypres in the south lay in the ridge which commences in the west with the Mont des Cats and runs eastward for some eleven miles to Wytschaete, between the Poperinghe—Ypres road on the north side and the river Lys on the south. Rising as it does in places to a height of several hundred feet, with a maximum breadth of two miles, the occupation of this ridge by the enemy would have entailed the evacuation by the British of Ypres, Vlamertinghe and Poperinghe. It was imperative, therefore, at all costs to prevent the Germans from gaining a footing on the ridge.

The Cavalry Corps, the strength of which was barely 4,500 sabres, was holding the space between Zandvoorde and Wytschaete with its right resting on the north-east corner of Ploegstert wood, which

will always be known to the British soldier as "Plug Street." This wood was a sparsely treed patch, nearly two miles long by three-quarters of a mile broad. The ground was mostly bog, while the slightest rain rendered the road almost impassable. Here the Cavalry Corps joined hands with the 3rd Corps, which held the front from the eastern extremity of the wood through Le Gheir, crossing the river Lys about a quarter of a mile south of Frelinghien.

On the 22nd October the 1st Cavalry Division took over the section of the defence from the river Douve to a point east of Messines, linking up with the 4th Division on the right, and the 2nd Cavalry Division on the left, which carried the line on northwards for $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, its right on Messines in touch with the 1st Cavalry Division, and its left at the canal bridge east of Hollebeke in touch with the 3rd Cavalry Division.

The fighting for some time past had been of a hammer and tongs order, with alternate gains and losses on both sides. The 21st October may be taken as the turning-point, as on that day the Germans commenced an offensive along the whole line from La Bassée in the south to Menin in the north, the British, except on the extreme left, being pinned down to the defensive.

The position was critical, for the Allies were outnumbered and outgunned. There was no prospect for several days of our receiving any substantial reinforcements, while it was known that the enemy was bringing up large bodies of troops from the east. Sir John French had no illusions on the subject. In his despatch of the 14th November, he remarked,—

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"I fully realized the difficult task which lay before us and the onerous rôle which the British Army was called upon to fulfil. That success has been attained, and all the enemy's desperate attempts to break through our line frustrated, is due to the marvellous fighting power and the indomitable courage and tenacity of officers, non-commissioned officers and men. No more arduous task has ever been assigned to British soldiers; and in all their splendid history there is no instance of their having answered so magnificently to the desperate calls which of necessity were made upon them."

On the 23rd October, two companies of the Connaughts relieved the Essex Regiment in front of Messines, the remaining two companies taking over cavalry trenches at the same place on the 24th. The battalion Head Quarters occupied a convent in Messines, which was shelled on the 26th, but without casualties. This notice to quit was accepted in the spirit in which it was meant, and it was fortunate that the move was made without delay, for the convent was shortly afterwards very heavily bombarded, the church being burnt down. Orders were then received to hand over the trenches to the cavalry.

The relief was commenced in daylight, and was carried out with considerable difficulty, as the Germans had the range to a nicety, their shrapnel and rifle fire causing several casualties. The 57th Rifles occupied trenches near Oost Taverne with the Afridi Company, the Dogra Company being between Wytschaete and Messines. Their first casualties took place that night during a small German attack which was repulsed.

The temper of the men was strikingly illustrated during this affair. Sepoy Usman Khan (55th Rifles attached) was hit by rifle fire but refused to leave; he was again hit, and again declined to give way. Finally, a large piece of flesh was blown away from both legs by a shell splinter, and he was carried back. For his grand example he was awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal.

On the 26th October, orders were issued for an attack on the enemy's lines. The general idea was that the 1st Cavalry Division should hold Messines. The Connaughts and 57th, pivoting on Messines, were to attack towards the line Gapaard—west of Wambeek, while the 2nd Cavalry Division attacked the line from west of Wambeek—Houthem, the operations being supported by the 1st Cavalry Division at Messines, and by fire from our trenches.

The 2nd Cavalry Division was directed to commence the attack at 3 p.m. The 129th Baluchis, under the orders of General Vaughan, were to co-operate with the attacks on the right and left towards the line west of Wambeek—Houthem. The 4th and 5th Cavalry Brigades were held in close reserve.

The ground over which the attack was to be made was of a difficult nature, consisting of a series of low hills, the slopes of which fell towards the Gaapard—Oost Taverne line. There was little or no cover, while in the vicinity of Oost Taverne there was a small wood which served to mask the movements of the enemy.

The morning of the 26th October broke grey and misty. Rain had fallen throughout the night, and the trenches were deep in mud and water.

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The trenches of those far-off days were very different from the elaborate field fortifications of the present time. As often as not they were merely ordinary ditches, improved to the best of our ability, as time, means and opportunity might allow. The line of defence was not continuous. Gaps existed everywhere, through which snipers crept at night and shot our men from the rear. It was no uncommon occurrence for a company to find in the early morning that a section of trench on their right or left had been evacuated by our men during the night, and had been occupied by the enemy. The first notice of the change of tenants was frequently given in the shape of a shower of bombs or an enfilade rifle or machine-gun fire.

Such attempts at drainage of the trenches as could be made were of the most primitive description. In the lower-lying ground, the water-level was so high that trenches could not be sunk to a depth sufficient to give adequate cover. A few hours' rain sufficed to fill them knee-deep with mud and water.

The communication trenches, where they existed, were very imperfect, and there were many instances of wounded men being drowned in them when attempting to find their way back from the firing line. It would be impossible to imagine conditions more terrible for Eastern troops. No language can describe their sufferings, carried swiftly from a fierce tropical sun to the wet and winter of Flanders.

The attack commenced at 3 p.m., and by 5 p.m. had progressed without much opposition to a distance ranging from 200 to 1000 yards at different points. The Connaughts on the right unfortunately lost

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direction while feeling for the 57th in the growing darkness.

It is significant of the extreme difficulty which existed with non-continuous lines in distinguishing our old trenches from those of the enemy, that a party of a certain regiment reported in all good faith that they had taken at least one line of German trench, the occupants of which had cleared out. The truth was that our men had occupied a section of trench which had been abandoned by us, and as bullets were flying about promiscuously, they believed that the enemy had fired at them and fled.

The 57th Rifles had begun the day with bad luck. The enemy shelled Wytschaete heavily. Lt-Colonel Gray, the Commanding Officer, who had just returned from the trenches with the adjutant, Captain W. S. Trail, was severely wounded in the right shoulder by shrapnel. The absence, even temporary, of an officer of his experience was a heavy blow to the regiment at the very outset of the campaign. The 57th got on by degrees, but darkness fell before they reached their objective, and the order to retire was then received from Head Quarters. Their casualties were slight, being, in addition to Lt-Colonel Gray, only eleven rank and file wounded.

The 129th Baluchis, operating with the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, made slow progress, owing to the difficulties of the ground and the necessity of keeping touch with the other units. The attack came under fairly heavy shell, machine-gun and rifle fire. Early in the advance, Captain Hampe-Vincent, while gallantly leading his men, fell mortally wounded, the first officer of the Indian Corps to lose his life in the war in Europe.

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Darkness had begun to fall when No. 2 Company at last succeeded in pushing to a point within 200 yards of the German trenches. The men were very keen to carry the assault through, but as the attack had not progressed in other sections, and the darkness was now rendering movement very uncertain, orders were given to retire to their original line.

The orders were fortunate, for the position, protected as it was by at least four skilfully placed machine guns, would probably have proved too strong to offer any chance of success to so small an assaulting force. The 129th lost in the action Captain Hampe-Vincent and 9 other ranks killed, 48 wounded and 4 missing. This concluded the day's operations.

Nothing of any value was effected, and had not this been the first action in which Indian troops were engaged, it would not have received so much notice. It served, however, to test the fighting spirit of the men under novel and trying conditions, and it is satisfactory to note that the behaviour of the troops was throughout admirable, their disappointment at being ordered to retire before coming to conclusions with the enemy being very marked.

On the 27th October the Connaughts were with the 1st Cavalry Division, the 129th Baluchis with the 3rd Cavalry Brigade; of the 57th Rifles half a battalion was with the 4th and half a battalion with the 5th Cavalry Brigades, Head Quarters being at Wytschaete. On the 28th, two companies of the 57th were transferred to the 1st Cavalry Division at Messines to relieve the Connaughts, who, with the Brigade Head Quarters, left to join the Division further south. The 9th Bhopal Infantry had, since

the commencement of operations, been with Brigade Head Quarters. They left on the 26th October to rejoin the Division.

The 27th, 28th and 29th October were not marked by any very resolute attack on the part of the enemy, but a fairly heavy bombardment was kept up, to which our guns, inferior in strength as they were, replied to the best of their ability. Messines was continually shelled by night as well as by day, while the enemy made frequent half-hearted attacks.

During the night of the 29th-30th October reports were constantly received from the outposts that considerable movements of the enemy were in progress along our front. Owing to the easterly wind which brought up heavy mist, aeroplane reconnaissance could reveal nothing, but the early morning of the 30th brought a plain explanation of the movements.

At 6 a.m. the Germans opened a very heavy fire with howitzers and field guns against the left of the 2nd Cavalry Division, the sounds heard during the night having evidently been due to the bringing into position of these guns. At the same time the position on the Zandvoorde ridge, held by the 3rd Cavalry Division under General Byng, was bombarded with great violence. Messines suffered very severely. Shells fell fast in every part of the town, but luckily all the inhabitants had been evacuated, and casualties were confined to the troops.

The 7th Cavalry Brigade was most severely tested. Their trenches were hammered with heavy shells, and were practically obliterated, many men being buried under the ruins. At the same time the attack was pressed home by overwhelming masses of infantry.

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The 2nd Cavalry Division fought hard to hold its position. A squadron of the 1st Life Guards under Lord Hugh Grosvenor, and another of the 2nd Life Guards under Captain Vandeleur were surrounded in their trenches by the Germans. Scorning surrender, they fought to the last, and were absolutely wiped out in hand-to-hand fighting against hopeless odds.

The Division was compelled to fall back to the ridge of Klein Zillebeke, about a mile to the north and slightly to the east of the now famous Hill 60. Here, with the aid of two regiments from the Cavalry Corps, it managed to hold its position until relieved at nightfall.

In the meantime, the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, with which were the 129th Baluchis and 2 companies of the 57th Rifles, was passing through a critical period. The hostile artillery fire became heavier and heavier. It was soon evident that some forty guns were in action instead of the six which had been firing for the past few days.

At noon it was ascertained that the enemy was massing all along the front, but especially opposite the salient held by the 5th Lancers, whose strength at that point was only ninety rifles. At 12.30 p.m. two battalions attacked the 5th, who held on until the enemy was almost upon them, and only retired after losing over thirty of their small number.

The Division, in fact the Corps, had become so weak numerically that the defensive line consisted, not of a continuous line, or even of a broken line, of trenches, but merely of a thin scrawl of more or less detached posts. As a result, the enemy having once gained a footing in a section of the line, was able

to enfilade each post in succession. The position was untenable, and a general retirement was imperative.

This movement, always one of great danger and difficulty in the face of an enemy superior in numbers and in guns, was as a whole carried out deliberately and in good order during the afternoon, the enemy's infantry pressing hard.

A troop of the 20th Hussars, which did not commence its retirement until the enemy was within three hundred yards, lost very heavily. Captain L. Forbes was in command of No. 3 Company (Punjabi Mahomedans) of the 57th at this point, near Oost Taverne. For some unknown reason, but probably because all communication had been cut by the enemy's shell fire, the order to retire did not reach Captain Forbes in time to permit of the movement being made deliberately. Not having received any order to retire, he saw no reason to do so, and held on to the last. When eventually the order did arrive, it was too late. The enemy's infantry were upon them, and both flanks of the company were enveloped in a murderous machine-gun fire.

During the retirement, the half company under the command of Lieutenant Clarke was threshed out by machine guns, and practically none escaped. The remains of the company, now reduced to some sixty men of its original one hundred and forty, retired to Wytschaete, where it took up a previously prepared position about a quarter of a mile north-east of the village.

On the right of the line the bombardment had not been quite so heavy, and Major Willans was

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able to withdraw his company of Sikhs and the machine guns to a position slightly east of the Wytschaete—Messines road. During the night the Germans continued to bombard the trenches as also the village of Wytschaete, which was now a mass of ruins.

In the meantime, the 129th Baluchis under Lt-Colonel Southey had been undergoing a searching test. No. 1 Company under Captain Adair and No. 2 under Major Humphreys relieved C Section of the line and the reserve, while No. 3 under Major Hanynghton and No. 4 under Major Potter were relieved by the cavalry, and ordered to billets early in the morning of the 30th. No. 4 Company was successfully withdrawn under fairly heavy fire. No. 3 Company's progress rearwards was arrested by very heavy shelling, and it had to take refuge behind a farm slightly in rear of the trenches.

At about 6.30 a.m. the enemy opened a very heavy artillery fire on the whole of our position, Major Humphreys being mortally wounded in the reserve trenches; a number of other casualties also took place at this time.

Shortly after noon, all available men of the battalion were ordered to reinforce the firing line, which was being hard pressed by artillery fire as well as by infantry with machine guns. The Germans had chosen the moment for attack very skilfully. The fact that reliefs of this part of the line were taking place was doubtless known to them through their elaborate system of espionage, and greatly added to the confusion. In some cases orders did not arrive at all, in others they were incorrectly delivered or were misunderstood.

Three platoons of No. 3 Company had taken refuge behind the farm before mentioned, one platoon only having managed to get back. Colonel Southey took No. 4 Company and the one platoon of No. 3 back towards the firing line, but found the whole line, British and Indian, retiring. He then sent his men to hold a wood on the right flank and rallied those who were retreating, ordering them to hold positions covering the right and centre of the château. In the meantime, Lieutenant Lewis, who had replaced Major Humphreys, when that officer was mortally wounded early in the day, returned from the front line, and with Subadar Adam Khan held the position against heavy odds until ordered to retire, which he did very deliberately, holding the enemy in check with his fire.

About 4 p.m. orders were received from the General Officer Commanding 3rd Cavalry Brigade to withdraw to the trenches north of the château. After a brief wait to allow our guns to clear, this movement was successfully carried out.

The day had been a very trying one, and our losses were correspondingly heavy. Between the hours of 3 and 4 a.m. on the 31st October a fierce onslaught was made on Messines by nine German battalions, a very heavy bombardment having been kept up throughout the night. The enemy advanced at the jog-trot which later became so familiar, accompanying the movement with the usual raucous guttural sounds. They poured over the trenches of the 57th in wave after wave.

Major Barwell, who was in the 57th support trenches, hearing a prolonged burst of fire from No. 4 Company, at once rushed forward to get to the

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front trenches, but before he had gone many yards was shot dead ; several men were killed or wounded in gallant attempts to bring him in.

Captain Gordon, in command of No. 2 Company, seeing that No. 4 was being very heavily attacked, called on his company to counter-attack. As he rose to lead them, he too was shot, and died almost at once.

Lieutenant Molony, company officer of No. 2, heard the Germans charging on his right and suddenly saw three distinct masses of the enemy at a distance of about seventy-five yards. They had apparently just taken the trench on his right. Lieutenant Molony had no thought of retreat, and opened rapid fire, which soon put an end to the German cheering, and the enemy began digging himself in. Our trench was to some extent protected by a thick hedge and trees, which made it difficult for the enemy to see exactly where they were shooting. The duel went on for almost two hours, when suddenly a sweeping enfilade fire was opened from the right on the devoted little party, by this time very gravely reduced in numbers. Lieutenant Molony got his men out of the trench, and they lay down in the open about 20 yards behind, in prolongation of a cavalry trench, keeping up rapid fire as long as the ammunition lasted. At this moment Lieutenant Molony was badly hit in the arm, but before he became unconscious he ordered Jemadar Ram Singh to hold on, only retiring should the cavalry do so. The wounded officer eventually managed to crawl back to a trench in rear, whence he was taken to an aid post established in a cellar.

Jemadar Ram Singh was about the only survivor

of this party, the remainder being wiped out by the frightful fire which the enemy brought to bear on them as they were lying in the open.

Jemadar Kapur Singh also fought it out until all but one wounded man had been put out of action, and then, rather than surrender, shot himself with his last cartridge.

Even this war can present few more devoted pictures than the death of these noble-hearted Dogras and the heroic Indian officer who chose rather to follow his men than to surrender.

The 57th in this part of the field were now left without a single British officer.

Subadar Arsla Khan, the senior Indian officer remaining, seeing that No. 4 Company was being overwhelmed, made a counter-attack with the bayonet in a gallant but vain attempt to succour it. He was, however, quite outnumbered, and was pushed back to the support trench by sheer weight, losing heavily in the process. Recognizing the hopelessness of the position, he succeeded, with the greatest coolness, in retiring the remnant of his men to Messines. His gallantry was recognized by the award of the Order of British India, 2nd Class, with the title of Bahadur.

While this was going on, a determined attack had been made on No. 3 Company north of Wyt-schaete, under Captain Forbes, who held on until the enemy's numbers again told, and enabled them to force their way through, Captain Forbes being badly wounded in the shoulder.

Havildar Gagna was holding a portion of this trench with a few men. When the Germans burst upon him, sanguinary hand-to-hand fighting took

place in which most of the 57th were put out of action. The Havildar fought it out and killed five Germans, when his bayonet broke. With a sword which he picked up, he continued the unequal combat until, after receiving six wounds, he collapsed. Happily, when the trench was retaken he was found still alive, and was afterwards rewarded with the 2nd Class, Indian Order of Merit.

A counter-attack was at once organized and delivered with the bayonet by a squadron of the 5th Dragoon Guards and a company of the 57th. After ferocious hand-to-hand fighting, the 57th were reinstated in a portion of their trench.

During the night the enemy continued to press his advantage on the left of the line, and in the morning of the 1st November, when Major Swifte and Captain Trail went up to the front line, they believed that the hundred men with them were all that remained of the 57th. To their delight, they found Major Willans with about another hundred men, mostly Sikhs, with whom he had held out during the night against all attacks, although the Germans were well past him on both flanks.

With Major Willans was Lieutenant Fowler, in charge of the regimental machine guns, which he fought with great gallantry throughout the action. While crossing a road under heavy fire in search of information, he was wounded in several places by a high explosive shell which burst quite close to him. For his gallant conduct he was awarded the Military Cross, while Major Willans received the D.S.O.

Captain Trail, the adjutant of the 57th, had been conspicuous for his disregard of danger, and had

rendered the most valuable assistance to the Commanding Officer. For his services he received the Military Cross.

The 57th nobly sustained the reputation which they had earned in other fields. Sikhs, Dogras, and Afridis vied with each other in heroism, inspirited by the bravery of their British officers.

We must now return to the 129th Baluchis, whom we left holding a wood and covering the right and centre of a château.

Early in the morning of the 31st October, the enemy was observed to be moving infantry up to Oost Taverne and the wood slightly to the west, but our artillery prevented them from pressing very seriously. The second Division was reinforced at noon by three French battalions with twelve guns, which arrived at St Eloï, whence they moved forward towards Oost Taverne and Hollebeke and to a great extent cleared the front of the 3rd Brigade, which had hitherto been closely pinned down to its trenches. The Brigade was thus enabled to assemble by nightfall, but before this could be effected, it was necessary to turn a body of the enemy out of a farm in which they had been allowed to gain a footing, under the impression that they were French. This operation is described by Major-General Gough, Commanding the 2nd Cavalry Division, as having been very well carried out by Lt-Colonel Southey and some of the 129th.

In the early morning of the 31st three companies of this regiment were sent up to support the 18th Hussars, and at dark took over four of their trenches. Shortly afterwards, a heavy fire was opened on their right, which steadily increased.

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News was then received that Captain Maclean had been wounded.

About midnight, Colonel Southey received a message from the General Officer Commanding the 3rd Cavalry Brigade that a farm which was held by Major Potter with part of No. 4 Company had been taken by the enemy. It appeared that a small body of Germans had advanced on the farm with the utmost assurance, so much so that No. 4 Company, not well versed in the difference in appearance between French and Germans—this at first was a constant and very serious difficulty for our Indian troops—believed that they were French. Fire was consequently not opened until they were practically in the farm, which was only held by a few of our men. After a brief struggle, Major Potter withdrew the men to a trench about fifty yards to the rear of the farm, having accounted for some fifteen of the enemy.

Colonel Southey then came up, and at about 3 a.m. on the 1st November, he attacked the left of the farm, while Major Potter attacked on the right. The 129th were thoroughly in their element in this kind of fighting, and chased the enemy from room to room of the building, killing ten and wounding three. Those who had not bolted then surrendered, to the number of fourteen. As one of the 129th remarked, "It was a very good game."

Shortly after this, the 129th were ordered to hand over their trenches to the French cavalry and to rejoin the Ferozepore Brigade. On their way south, they were inspected by Major-General H. P. Gough, Commanding 2nd Cavalry Division, who thanked the battalion for its assistance, and added that

he would send in a very favourable report on its behaviour.

The 57th Rifles and 129th Baluchis, both under Lt-Colonel Southey, rejoined Head Quarters a few days later.

Thus ended their part in the famous First Battle of Ypres, the first serious engagement in which Indian troops fought in the war. Both regiments possessed previous experience of fighting in parts beyond the confines of the Indian Empire, for the 57th saw service in China in 1900, while the 129th bear on their Colours "Tel-el-Kebir" and "Egypt, 1882." During this long-drawn-out and fiercely contested battle, they fully sustained their own reputations and the honour of the Indian Army.

The casualties, as was to be expected from the nature of the fighting, were heavy. The 57th lost Major E. E. Barwell and Captain R. S. Gordon killed, Captain L. Forbes, Lieutenants E. K. Fowler and C. W. Molony wounded, while Lieutenant H. S. Clarke was missing. Indian officers: one killed, one wounded, two missing. Other ranks: 192 killed or wounded and 98 missing, of whom the majority were killed.

The losses of the 129th Baluchis were Major G. G. P. Humphreys, Captains W. F. Adair and P. C. Hampe-Vincent killed, while Captains F. A. Maclean and R. F. Dill, with Lieutenant H. V. Lewis were wounded. Of the Indian officers, three were killed and two wounded. Other ranks: 164 killed or wounded and 64 missing, of whom again the majority were probably killed.

The respect and affection felt by the Indian soldier for his British officers is well known. No

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officers of any army in the world at any period of the world's history have ever fought with more valour and devotion than the British officers of the Indian Army Corps. Those who fought and fell in these first engagements were typical of a very noble and heroic class.

Major Humphreys is spoken of as having on every occasion commanded his company with the greatest coolness and judgment.

Captain Adair had shown himself to be a most gallant leader. When mortally wounded and lying under heavy fire, Havildar Zauf Khan and two men, with that devotion to their officers which has so often been shown, attempted to get Captain Adair away. He refused to be an encumbrance to them, saying that he was mortally wounded.

Captain Dill was in command of the machine guns. When one gun was put out of action, he ordered the men to retire. He then continued to fight the other gun until he was severely wounded in the head by a shell. His gallantry was recognized by the award of the D.S.O.

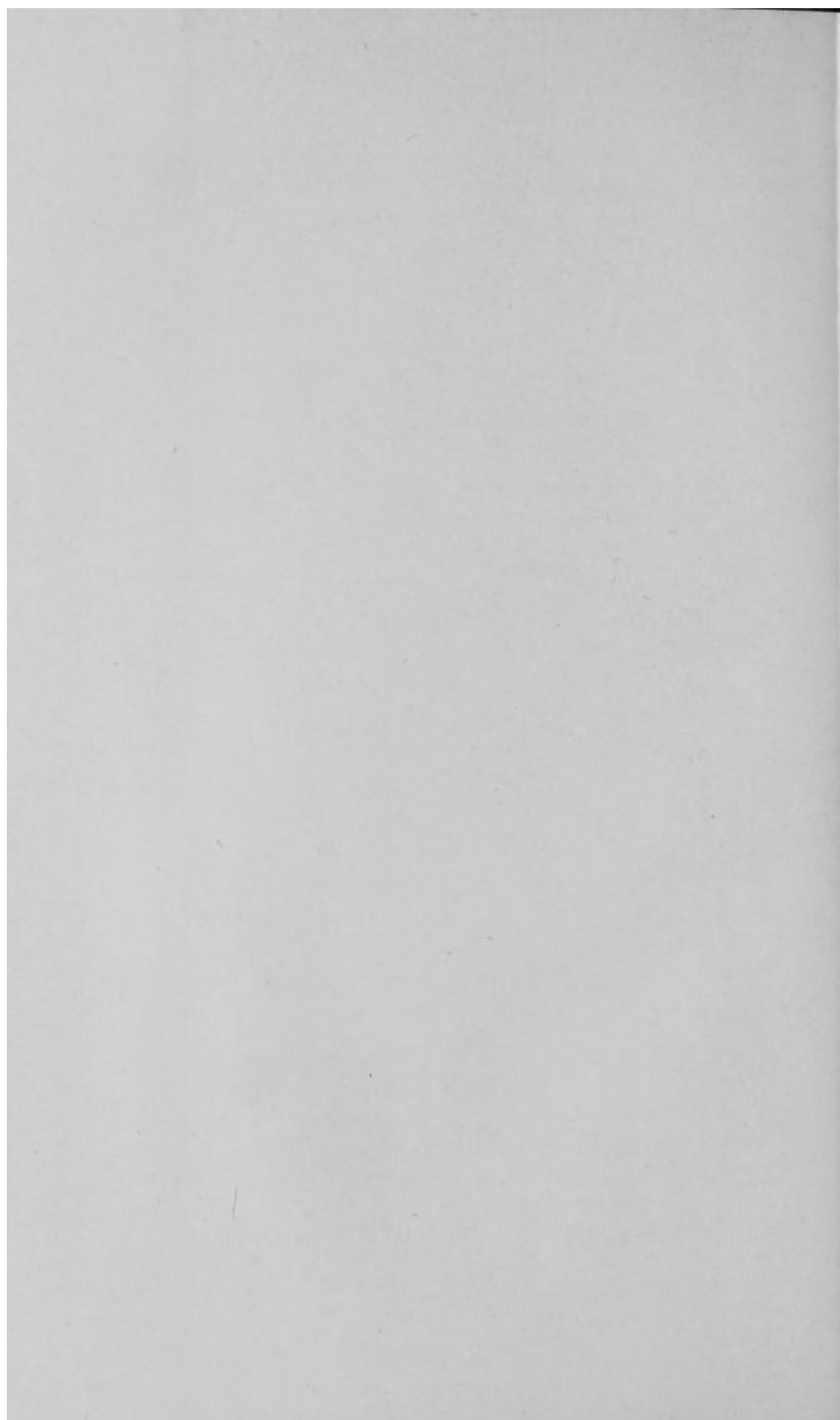
His men remained in action until they were rushed by the enemy in overpowering numbers, and all died fighting to the last, except Sepoy Khudadad Khan, who, although grievously wounded and left by the enemy for dead, managed to crawl away and escaped with his life. For his very conspicuous bravery he was awarded the Victoria Cross, being the first Indian soldier to receive this great honour.

The names of these gallant machine gunners deserve special record. They were—Havildar Ghulam Mahomed, Sepoys Lal Sher, Said Ahmed, Kassib and Lafar Khan. They were honoured in



[*Daily Mirror.*

SEPOY KHUDADAD KHAN, V.C., 129TH BALUCHIS.



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death, for the Havildar received the Indian Order of Merit, while the sepoy was awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal.

Major-General Allenby, Commanding the Cavalry Corps, reported to the Indian Corps Commander in terms of great praise of the behaviour of the 57th and 129th while under his command.