

the capture of the whole of the enemy's advanced position by noon.

It was entirely due to careful preparation and organisation of artillery fire of all kinds that our casualties were very few.

These operations form a good example of the co-operation of the Royal Navy with infantry and artillery.

13. An aeroplane reconnaissance on the morning of 1st June discovered that the enemy had evacuated his main position, and was in full retreat up the Tigris.

The Naval Flotilla, led by H.M.S. "Espiegle" (Captain Nunn, R.N.), pushed in pursuit, followed by the shipping with troops.

On the morning of 2nd June, when some 10 miles below Qalat Salih, the deeper-draught vessels could proceed no further owing to shoal water, and the pursuit was continued by the naval armed tugs. Up to this time the "Espiegle" had engaged and sunk the Turkish gunboat "Marmaris," and had captured two steamers and a number of lighters laden with munitions and stores.

14. Qalat Salih was reached on the afternoon of the 2nd June, and after some hostile troops outside the town had been dispersed the pursuit was continued.

H.M.S. "Comet" (Captain Nunn, R.N.), with General Townshend on board, and three armed tugs, occupied Amarah in the afternoon of 3rd June, capturing there some 700 troops and 40 officers. This is a most excellent instance of courage and pertinacity in pursuit, and very creditable to all who took part in it.

The leading infantry (2nd Battalion, Norfolk Regiment) of the 6th Division arrived at Amarah at 6.30 a.m. on 4th June, not a moment too soon, as the inhabitants were beginning to realise the size of the force which had cowed them into submission on the previous day.

15. The captures resulting from the action at Qurnah, the pursuit and the occupation of Amarah, included 17 guns, 2,718 rifles, 1,773 prisoners, four river steamers (exclusive of the gunboat "Marmaris" and another steamer, which was sunk), a number of lighters and boats, besides quantities of ammunition and stores.

The weather throughout these operations was intensely hot—a sweltering sun all day, followed by still and sultry nights; but in spite of this the spirit and energy of all ranks was excellent.

16. I consider that General Townshend carried out these operations in a highly creditable manner. His prompt and vigorous pursuit is worthy of high praise, and it was largely due to his dash and enterprise that Amarah was entered unopposed.

The part played by General Gorrings's force to help General Townshend's operations has been described in an earlier part of this despatch.

17. Immediately after the capture of Amarah, preparations were taken in hand for the capture of Nasiriyah, on the Euphrates, the dominant place on this flank. Its importance lies in the facts that it is the base from which a hostile force threatening Basrah must start; it is the centre from which influence can be exercised among the powerful Arab tribes which lie along the Euphrates; standing at one end of the Shatt Al Hai, it closes communication between the Tigris and Euphrates, and is thus of strategic value; and,

lastly, it was the headquarters of the civil administration of a large part of the Basrah Province.

18. To General Gorrings and his troops was allotted this objective. The route from Qurnah to Nasiriyah is by water, through the low-lying valley of the Old Euphrates Channel for 30 miles to Chahbaish; across the Hammar Lake for 15 miles to its western side, thence by the Haqiqah—a tortuous channel, some 50 yards wide and 15 miles long—until the main channel of the Euphrates is reached some 25 miles below Nasiriyah. From Qurnah to Chahbaish, deep draught vessels can go up the old Euphrates; beyond this, at the time the operations commenced, on 27th June, the Hammar Lake was passable by all river steamers drawing less than 5 feet, as far as the entrance to the Haqiqah Channel. By the middle of July the channel across the lake held little more than 3 feet of water, and only the smallest steamers could cross. In many cases steamers were aground for days at a time, and the small tugs fitted as gunboats could only be taken across by removing guns, ammunition, armour plating, fuel and water, and using light-draught sternwheelers to tow them. Later, troops and stores could only be transported in "bellums," which for some distances had to be dragged over mud and water by men.

The Haqiqah Channel was blocked by a solidly constructed "Bund" half a mile from its entrance to the Lake, which had to be removed before the passage could be used by shipping.

19. Above its junction with the Haqiqah the Euphrates has an average width of 200 yards. Along its banks are numerous gardens, patches of cultivation, and several small villages within walled enclosures. On the left bank, belts of date palms, with an occasional fringe of willow trees, are the prevailing features. On the right bank the country is more open. During July, except for a belt of dry ground along the river banks a few hundred yards wide, on either side the country was completely under water. Numerous irrigation channels intersect this belt of dry land at right angles to the river, presenting a series of obstacles to an advance. Such was the nature of the country where the Turks offered their main opposition to our advance on Nasiriyah.

20. On 26th June General Gorrings's Force was concentrated at Qurnah, and proceeded on the 27th June across the Hammar Lake, preceded by gunboats under command of Captain Nunn, R.N. Hostile armed launches above the Haqiqah bund were driven back. The bund was occupied, and the work of demolition commenced.

During the 28th a channel 150 feet wide and 4 feet deep was made. The rush of water through the opening created a strong rapid, almost a cataract, up which parties of men were successful in hauling up the naval craft on the 29th.

It was not until the 4th July that all vessels and troops were passed over the Haqiqah obstruction, and established about two and a half miles from the junction with the Euphrates. Covering this entrance, reconnoissances proved that the enemy had established themselves with guns on the right bank of the Euphrates commanding both banks of the Haqiqah, and the mine field which they had prepared about a mile down it.