

and Zeur was occupied. The enemy's advanced troops withdrew towards Ctesiphon after offering slight opposition. On 20th November the force on the left bank reached Lajj (nine miles from Ctesiphon); the shipping and the right bank detachment arrived on the 21st, the latter crossing the river and joining the main body on the left bank.

7. The Turkish position at Ctesiphon lay astride the Tigris, covering the approach to Baghdad, which is situated some 18 miles to the north-west. The defences had been under construction for some months. They consisted of an extensive system of entrenchments forming two main positions. On the right bank the front position extended from the river for about three miles in a S.W. direction; the second line trenches lying some five miles further upstream. On the left bank a continuous line of entrenchments and redoubts stretched from the river for six miles to the north-east; the left flank terminating in a large redoubt. On this bank the second line was about two miles behind the front position and parallel to it for three miles from the Tigris, thence it turned northwards to the Dialah River. Close to the Tigris, on the left bank and midway between the two defensive lines, was situated the Arch of Ctesiphon—a prominent landmark.

A mile in rear of the second line of trenches a bridge of boats connected the two wings of the Turkish Army. Further in rear, the Dialah River, near its junction with the Tigris, was bridged at two points, and entrenchments commanded the crossings.

During General Townshend's concentration at Aziziyah accurate information had been obtained by aerial observation regarding the position of the Turkish defences.

8. The officers employed on these reconnaissances displayed the same intrepidity and devotion to duty that has been commented on in previous despatches. Unfortunately during the actual period of the battle at Ctesiphon a series of accidents deprived the Royal Flying Corps of several officers and machines. Among those forced to descend within the enemy's lines was Major H. L. Reilly, a Flight Commander of exceptional ability, who has much distinguished service to his credit.

9. It was reported that the enemy had over 13,000 regular troops and 38 guns in the Ctesiphon position. There were reports of the early arrival of further reinforcements. Though information on this point was indefinite and lacked confirmation, it was advisable that there should be no delay in attacking and defeating Nur-Ed-Din before the arrival of possible reinforcements.

10. General Townshend, after a night march from Lajj, on 21st/22nd November attacked the hostile position on the left bank at the centre and on the north-east flank. A severe fight lasted throughout the day, resulting in the capture of the front position, and more than 1,300 prisoners.

Our troops pressed on and penetrated to the second line, capturing eight guns and establishing themselves in the enemy's trenches. Here they were subjected to heavy counter-attacks by fresh troops. The captured guns changed hands several times. Finally they had to be abandoned, as shortly before night-fall it was found necessary, owing to diminished numbers, to order the withdrawal of our troops from the forward positions to

which they had penetrated back to the first position.

11. On the 23rd November our troops were reorganised in the position they had captured, and the work of collecting the numerous casualties was continued.

Owing to heavy losses in killed and wounded it was inadvisable to renew the offensive.

There is no doubt that the Turkish troops who had fought on the previous day were in no condition to resume the fight. The battlefield was littered with their killed and wounded, and many of the trenches were choked with dead. The 45th Turkish Division which had held the front trenches was practically destroyed. But reinforcements came up, and heavy attacks were made all along General Townshend's line throughout the night 23rd/24th November. These were repulsed, and the enemy must have lost heavily.

12. On the 24th November wounded and prisoners were evacuated from Ctesiphon to Lajj, where the shipping flotilla was banked in; and General Townshend consolidated the position he had taken up on the battlefield. His left flank, which had been near the Ctesiphon Arch, in advance of the main position, moved back into the general alignment. Owing to the interruption of a water channel which had supplied the trenches on the north-east flank our troops there suffered from want of water; so the right flank was brought nearer the river. This movement was successfully effected under the cover of an offensive movement pushed out from the centre of the position. The enemy displayed little activity throughout this day, except for shell fire. Most of this came from guns on the right bank, which prevented the steamers advancing upstream from Lajj.

13. On the 25th November the remainder of the wounded were sent back to Lajj. Up to this time it appeared from hostile movements to their rear—reported by air reconnaissance—that the Turks contemplated a retirement from their remaining positions. But apparently they received fresh reinforcements on the 25th. During the afternoon large columns were seen advancing down the left bank and also inland, as if to turn our right flank; while hostile cavalry threatened our rear.

14. General Townshend was nine miles from his shipping and source of supplies at Lajj, faced by superior forces of fresh troops. He decided to avoid an engagement, and, under cover of night, withdrew to Lajj.

Here he remained during the 26th.

15. A position so far from bases of supply, with a vulnerable line of communication along the winding shallow river was unfavourable for defence. It was necessary to withdraw further downstream to a more secure locality until conditions might enable a resumption of the offensive.

16. General Townshend withdrew unmolesed during the night of 27th/28th to Aziziyah.

On the 29th the Cavalry Brigade, under Brigadier-General Roberts, east of Kutunieh engaged and drove back the enemy's advanced mounted troops who were attacking a stranded gunboat. The 14th Hussars and the 7th (Hariana) Lancers made a successful charge. Some 140 casualties were inflicted on the enemy.

17. On the morning of 30th, continuing the retirement, the main force halted at Umm