

ground was perfectly flat and without any vestige of cover. In these circumstances it would have been wiser to have postponed the attack at the last moment. The advance was, however, continued with the greatest gallantry under heavy artillery and machine-gun fire, to within 700 yards of the Turkish trenches. Here the attacking lines were checked, and eventually fell back on to the supporting 3rd line, where they dug themselves in at about 1,000 yards from the enemy.

38. During the night of 5/6th April and throughout the 6th the river rose steadily, until at mid-day it reached the highest level of the year. The wind changed to the north, and blew the water of the Suwaikieh Marsh southwards across the right of the 7th Division; protective bunds along both the Tigris and the edge of the marsh had then to be constructed under the enemy's fire. Our guns were surrounded by floods, and for some time the position was distinctly critical.

The marsh continued to encroach so much on the ground occupied by the 7th Division, that all efforts had to be devoted to securing from the floods the positions already gained. On the right bank the inundations rendered communication most difficult, and threatened to isolate the 3rd Division altogether. On April 8th, in face of many difficulties, a new bridge over the Tigris was completed at Falahiyah.

39. During the night 8/9th April the 13th Division took the place of the 7th Division in the trenches, and at 4.20 a.m. advanced to the assault on Sannaiyat. When within 300 yards of the enemy's front line they were discovered by the Turks, who sent up Very lights and flares and opened a heavy rifle and gun fire. The first line, including detachments of the 6th K.O. Royal Lancaster Regiment, 8th Welsh Fusiliers, 6th L. North Lancashire Regiment, and 5th Wiltshire Regiment, penetrated the centre of the enemy's front line trench. In the glare of the lights the 2nd line lost direction, wavered, and fell back on the 3rd and 4th lines. Support thus failed to reach the front line at the critical moment, in spite of the most gallant and energetic attempts of officers concerned to remedy matters.

Our troops who had reached the enemy's trenches were heavily counter-attacked by superior numbers and driven back to from 300 to 500 yards from the enemy's line, where brigades dug themselves in.

40. I had been at Wadi in close touch with the Corps Commander since April 6th, and after the failure of this attack we met and discussed the situation together in detail. While it was clearly very desirable to secure the Sannaiyat position with its obvious advantages, yet we had to bear in mind how very short the time at our disposal was if Kut was to be relieved, and the delay which a systematic approach by sapping right up to the position must involve. It was therefore decided that another attempt to force the enemy's right about the Sinn Aftar Redoubt offered prospects of speedier success.

41. General Goringe accordingly proceeded to make the necessary arrangements for this move. As will be understood, it involved securing the control of the river bunds which were covered by the enemy's advanced position at Beit Aiessa, and establishing communications across the intervening flooded areas which must be traversed before we could reach that

position. It should be borne in mind that there is no such thing as a road, in the sense in which we use the word, in this part of the country, and that no road material or metalling of any sort exists; yet in order to supply the troops with food and ammunition when they should have succeeded in crossing the inundations, some sort of permanent track above flood level, along which transport could work, was essential.

42. The 7th Division now again took over and pushed forward the trench work in front of Sannaiyat as far as constant interruptions by floods would permit. The 13th Division was held back near Falahiyah Bridge in reserve.

43. On April 12th, the 3rd Division, advancing across belts of inundation intersected by deep cuts, drove in the enemy's picquets east of Beit Aiessa and occupied their outpost line, consolidating their position during the night.

On April 15th and 16th, some of the enemy's advanced trenches were captured and counter-attacks were repulsed. Our new line was consolidated by night, guns were moved forward and preparations were made for the attack of the main Beit Aiessa position on the morning of the 17th.

44. Under cover of an intense bombardment, the 7th and 9th Infantry Brigades advanced at 6.45 a.m., and actually reached the Turkish trenches before our Artillery fire lifted. When the bombardment ceased they leapt into the trenches, bayoneted numbers of the enemy, and the Beit Aiessa position was soon in our hands. The enemy left 200 to 300 dead in the trenches and 180 prisoners were captured.

These operations, culminating in the capture of Beit Aiessa, reflect great credit on Major-General Keary and the troops under his command. Steady and consistent progress was made day after day in spite of most difficult conditions and often with a shortage of rations which the transport was heavily strained to bring forward.

45. Orders were now issued for the 13th Division to move up in relief of the 3rd Division, after dark, the latter to concentrate on the left rear of the 13th, preparatory to further operations next day.

46. At 5 p.m. the enemy's artillery commenced to bombard Beit Aiessa and to establish a barrage in rear of the 3rd Division, sweeping the passage through the swamps along which its communications lay. An hour later a very strong counter-attack came from the southwest. In spite of heavy shelling from our guns, the attack was pressed home against the 9th Infantry Brigade, from which a double company had been pushed forward to guard two captured guns which could not be brought in during daylight. In retiring the double company masked our fire; the 9th Infantry Brigade was pressed and gave ground, exposing the left of the 7th Infantry Brigade, which was also forced back. Our troops rallied on the 8th Infantry Brigade, which was holding its ground firmly on the left of the line, and on a portion of the 7th Infantry Brigade.

Reinforcements from the 13th Division were already moving forward, but owing to the darkness and boggy ground they were delayed, and some hours elapsed before they arrived.

The attack which commenced at 6 p.m. was followed by a series of heavy attacks throughout the night, the 8th Infantry Brigade on the