

left repelling as many as six such attacks. But our line held firm, and the enemy retreated at dawn, having suffered losses estimated at 4,000 to 5,000 men.

47. In this engagement the following units particularly distinguished themselves by their steadiness and gallantry:—1st Battalion, Connaught Rangers; 27th Punjabis; 89th Punjabis; 47th Sikhs and 59th Rifles—also the South Lancs., East Lancs. and Wiltshire Regiments. The 66th and 14th Batteries, R.F.A., did good service, also the 23rd Mountain Battery, which expended all its ammunition, and did great execution at close range. Generals Egerton and Campbell, who commanded the Brigades most heavily engaged, set a fine example of coolness and gallantry in the hand-to-hand fighting which took place.

Although the enemy had suffered heavy losses and had failed to obtain any success after their initial rush, they had checked our advance and regained that portion of Beit Aiessa nearest the river which included the bunds controlling the inundations. Its recapture was essential.

48. During the succeeding days some progress in this direction was made by trench fighting and by consolidating positions pushed out towards Sinn Aftar. The boggy nature of the ground made movement difficult, and many of the troops were worn out with fatigue.

Meanwhile on the left bank, although frequently interrupted by floods, the 7th Division had been steadily pushing forward saps, and as there were some signs of a weakening of the enemy's forces at Sannaiyat, there appeared to be an opportunity to make another attempt to capture that position. The 7th Division was ordered to prepare for an assault on the 20th, supported by troops from the right bank. But on the afternoon of the 19th the wind veered round to the north, water from the marsh flooding their trenches and the ground in front of them; the attack had therefore to be postponed.

49. Throughout the 20th and 21st the Sannaiyat position was bombarded. Arrangements were made for the assault to take place next morning, on a front which eventually had to be reduced to that of one Brigade, the extreme width of passable ground being only 300 yards. After preliminary bombardment the 7th Division advanced, the 19th Infantry Brigade leading. Besides our Artillery on both banks, massed machine-guns on the right bank covered our advance. The leading troops carried the enemy's first and second lines in their immediate front, several of the trenches being flooded, but only a few men were able to reach the third line.

50. Large Turkish reinforcements now came up. They delivered a strong counter-attack, which was repulsed. A second counter-attack, however, succeeded in forcing our troops back, as many men were unable to use their rifles, which had become choked with mud in crossing the flooded trenches, and so were unable to reply to the enemy's fire. By 8.40 a.m. our men were back in their own trenches.

51. By mutual consent parties went out, under the Red Cross and Red Crescent flags, to collect their respective wounded. The Turkish casualties appear to have been heavy as they were evacuating wounded until night-fall. Our casualties amounted to about 1,300.

52. Persistent and repeated attempts on both banks had thus failed, and it was known that at the outside not more than six days' supplies

remained to the Kut garrison. General Gorrington's troops were nearly worn out. The same troops had advanced time and again to assault positions strong by art and held by a determined enemy. For 18 consecutive days they had done all that men could do to overcome, not only the enemy, but also exceptional climatic and physical obstacles—and this on a scale of rations which was far from being sufficient, in view of the exertions they had undergone, but which the shortage of river transport had made it impossible to augment. The need for rest was imperative.

53. There remained but one chance if the relief of Kut were to be accomplished, and that was the introduction by some means of additional supplies into General Townshend's camp, which would enable him to hold out for a still longer period.

Faint as the chance was, the "Julnar," one of the fastest steamers on the river, had for some days been under preparation by the Royal Navy for an attempt to run the enemy's blockade.

54. At 8 p.m. on April 24th, with a crew from the Royal Navy under Lieutenant Firman, R.N., assisted by Lieutenant-Commander Cowley, R.N.V.R., the "Julnar," carrying 270 tons of supplies, left Falahiyah in an attempt to reach Kut.

Her departure was covered by all Artillery and machine-gun fire that could be brought to bear, in the hope of distracting the enemy's attention. She was, however, discovered and shelled on her passage up the river. At 1 a.m. on the 25th General Townshend reported that she had not arrived, and that at midnight a burst of heavy firing had been heard at Magasis, some 8½ miles from Kut by river, which had suddenly ceased. There could be but little doubt that the enterprise had failed, and next day the Air Service reported the "Julnar" in the hands of the Turks at Magasis.

55. The leaders of this brave attempt, Lieutenant H. O. B. Firman, R.N., and his assistant—Lieutenant-Commander C. H. Cowley, R.N.V.R.—the latter of whom had throughout the campaign in Mesopotamia performed magnificent service in command of the "Mejidieh"—have been reported by the Turks to have been killed; the remainder of the gallant crew, including five wounded, are prisoners of war.

56. In the hope of prolonging the resistance of Kut for even a day or two, the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service had dropped into Kut, between April 16th and April 29th, approximately 8 tons of supplies, besides fishing nets, medicines and specie.

Although these supplies could not materially alter the course of the siege, it was a performance which is deserving of high praise, for it involved a great strain on the pilots, and the journeys were subject to attacks by enemy aircraft of superior speed and fighting capacity. One of our machines was shot down while engaged on this supply service, another was damaged, but brought home safely with great skill.

57. With the failure of the "Julnar" there was no further hope of extending the food limit of the garrison of Kut. Everything that was possible with the means to hand had been attempted. The troops only desisted from their efforts when, through battle losses, sickness and exhaustion, the limit of human endurance