

again placed a small detached garrison within striking distance of my mounted troops, I determined, if possible, to repeat the success at Maghaba by surrounding and capturing the Magruntein position also. On 7th January I communicated this decision to General Dobell, who entrusted the operation to Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode, Bt., C.B., D.S.O., commanding the Desert Column, who set out from El Arish on the evening of the 8th-9th with a force consisting of Yeomanry, Australian and New Zealand mounted troops, and the Imperial Camel Corps, with a battery of artillery attached.

So efficiently and swiftly was the approach march carried out that the enemy was completely surprised, and by dawn on 9th January his position was almost entirely surrounded before he became aware of the presence of any large forces in his vicinity. The position, however, was a formidable one. It consisted of three strong series of works connected by trenches, one series facing west, one facing south-west, and one facing south and south-east. The whole was dominated by a central keep or redoubt, some 2,000 yards south-west of Rafa. Moreover, the ground in front of these works was entirely open and devoid of cover, and in their immediate neighbourhood was almost a glacis.

The guns, with which aeroplanes were co-operating, started to register at 7.20 a.m. The main attack, to be carried out by Major-General Sir H. G. Chauvel, K.C.M.G., C.B., General Officer Commanding Australian and New Zealand Mounted Troops, was timed for 10 a.m., with the New Zealand Mounted Rifles on the right, attacking from the east, some Australian Light Horse on their left, attacking from the east and south-east, while the Imperial Camel Corps attacked the works in their front from the south-east. A body of Australian Light Horse were in reserve and the Yeomanry in column reserve. Shortly after 10 a.m., parties of Turks, who were attempting to leave Rafa by the Khan Yunus road, were met and captured by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, who galloped the Police barracks and Machine Gun post, capturing six Germans (including one officer), two Turkish officers, and 163 other ranks.

Before 11 a.m., Rafa was occupied, and two regiments of the troops in reserve were advanced against the works on the left of the troops attacking from the east and south-east. Some Australian Light Horse and the Camel Corps were ordered to press their attack on the works facing south-west, and about the same time the remainder of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, with a body of Light Horse, galloped an open space south of the Police post, and established themselves 300 yards east of the nearest enemy work. The Yeomanry were also ordered to deploy against the western works and to attack in conjunction with the Camel Corps. The encircling movement was now practically complete, save for a gap in the north-west between the New Zealand Brigade and the Yeomanry.

At 12.20 p.m. one of the Horse Artillery batteries moved forward some 1,500 yards to support the attack of the Yeomanry. By 1 o'clock our troops were within 600 yards of the southern and western trenches, which were being shelled with good effect by our artillery. By 2 p.m. the right of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles had linked up with the left of

the Yeomanry, and was pressing its attack on the rear of one of the enemy's works. General Chetwode now issued orders for a concerted attack on the "Redoubt," or central keep, by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, and all other available troops of the Australian and New Zealand mounted force, to commence at 3.30 p.m. The Yeomanry was ordered to co-operate against the rear of the work. By 3.15 p.m. two of the enemy's works had been captured and further prisoners had been taken.

While the attack on the central redoubt was developing, information was received, both from patrols and from the Royal Flying Corps, that an enemy relieving force was marching from Shellal on Rafa. This force was attacked frequently with bombs and machine gun fire by our aeroplanes with success. General Chetwode did not allow this threat, which complicated his situation, to affect the execution of his purpose. He at once gave orders for the attack to be pressed with vigour. The troops, admirably supported by the artillery, advanced with great gallantry, and at 4.45 p.m. the New Zealand Mounted Rifles captured the redoubt with brilliant dash, covering the last 800 yards in two rushes, supported by machine gun fire. By this achievement they were able to take the lower lying works in reverse, and these soon fell to the Camel Corps, the Yeomanry, and the Australian Light Horse. By 5.30 p.m. all organised resistance was over, and the enemy's position with all its garrison was captured, while a detachment of the Australian Light Horse, which had come in contact with the force marching from Shellal, drove off the enemy without difficulty. Our troops now withdrew, taking with them all prisoners, animals and material captured; one regiment and a light car patrol, which were left to clear the battlefield, withdrew unmolested on the following day.

In this fine action, which lasted for ten hours, the entire enemy force, with its commander, was accounted for. More than 1,600 unwounded prisoners were taken, including one German officer and five German non-commissioned officers. In addition, six machine guns, four mountain guns, and a number of camels and mules were captured. Our casualties were comparatively light, amounting to 487 in all, of which 71 were killed, 415 wounded, and one was missing.

10. The result of these successful operations was that the province of Sinai, which for two years had been partially occupied by the Turks, was freed of all formed bodies of Turkish troops. The destruction of his rearguard at Maghaba compelled the enemy to withdraw from Maghara, Hassana and Nekhl, all of which were clear by the 31st December, and the victory at Magruntein had driven him over the frontier at Rafa, which he did not attempt to reoccupy. For this achievement I am greatly indebted to Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Dobell, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., and his Staff for their unremitting efforts during the whole period to make our advance, as it was, rapid and decisive. To them are mainly due the excellent organisation and dispositions which ensured success without delay, and, above all, the perfection of arrangements for maintaining the troops in a waterless district far ahead of the railway, without which the dash and endurance of our troops would have been of no avail. The foresight, rapid de-