

France gates. Every consideration was shown to the holy Ulema and to the theological students (most of whom were Persian subjects), and had it been necessary to proceed to extremities all these would have been given an asylum. The loyal inhabitants, under the guidance of the Ulema, determined, however, to rid themselves and their sacred city of these evil-doers, and eventually by 13th April the proscribed persons had been handed over and the blockade was raised. The instigators of the murder and the actual murderers were brought before a military court to answer for their deeds, and as a result of the trial eleven were condemned to death and duly executed, seven others were sentenced to transportation and three were deported; in addition a number of undesirables were sent out of the country. The firmness with which the situation was handled, the fairness with which the law-abiding inhabitants were treated and the scrupulous care which was taken to avoid damage to holy persons and places created a most favourable impression on all the surrounding tribes and contributed in no small degree to the subsequent establishment of friendly relations with the somewhat recalcitrant tribes of the Shamiya, Rumeitha, and Shatra districts.

For this eminently satisfactory ending to a delicate and somewhat difficult situation my thanks are due to the acting Civil Commissioner, to Brig.-General G. A. F. Sanders and the troops under his command, and also to the political officer on the spot, Captain F. C. C. Balfour, M.C.

I subsequently visited Nedjef myself and was received with every token of honour. I attended a meeting at which were assembled the Ulema, the Shaikhs of the district and the notables of the town, who one and all expressed the most lively gratitude for the measures which had been adopted and their loyalty to Government.

3. On the Persian border certain tribes, notably some sections of the Sinjabis, were inclined to be troublesome (another result of German intrigue and gold) and as this tribe has its habitat just to the north of the Qasri-Shirin-Kermanshah road it became necessary to give them a lesson. The Guran confederation (which includes the Kalkhanis) was reported on the 19th April to be about to take action against the pro-enemy sections of the Sinjabis. I decided therefore to support these friendly tribesmen in their action and despatched a small column of all arms to cooperate. On the 25th April a brief action took place with eminently satisfactory results. The Sinjabis were defeated and suffered heavy casualties (as well as losing large numbers of animals) and our aeroplanes turned their retreat into a rout.

The effect of this small operation, carried out in severe conditions of weather, has been far-reaching. The pro-enemy chief of the Sinjabis, who was known to be in German pay, was himself wounded and the German agents were thoroughly discredited; whilst among the surrounding tribes a profound impression was created in favour of the British and our line of communications into Persia was safeguarded from serious raiding.

4. Again with the object of making the Persian line of communication more secure, I considered it advisable to drive the Turks out

of the Kara Tepe—Kifri—Tuz Kermatli area and to hold both Kifri and Tuz for the future.

5. The general plan of operations decided upon was to simulate a converging attack upon Kara Tepe and Kifri, but in reality to strike first at the more distant objectives of Abu Gharaib and Tuz Kermatli, with the intention of cutting off and dealing subsequently with any hostile forces south-east and east of these places. This plan was to be carried into effect by means of various columns. Preliminary movements were delayed by rain in the middle of April, but all columns were concentrated at their respective positions of assembly by the 25th of that month. Secrecy was well maintained, and the Turks appeared to be in ignorance of the impending attack. The operations were entrusted to Lieut.-General Sir R. G. Egerton, K.C.B., K.C.I.E., and by the morning of April 26th he had completed the deployment of the troops selected for the operation.

A small column was sent up the Adhaim River to induce the Turks to strengthen and hold their Abu Gharaib defences. On the right a small mixed column, with which were some irregulars, demonstrated on the upper Diala. At Mirjana another small column of all arms was concentrated, and the 6th Cavalry Brigade moved to Umr Maidan and bridged the Lesser Naft River above that place. The main column consisting of the majority of the 13th Division with attached troops under Major-General Sir W. de S. Cayley, K.C.M.G., C.B., was at Nahrin Kupri, where the bridge, which had been destroyed by the Turks in their hurried retreat last December, was rapidly put in repair. This column detached forces towards Abu Gharaib and the Lesser Naft, the last named with orders to move to Abu Alik before dawn on April 27th in order to head off any enemy movement from Kara Tepe in a north-westerly direction. Although the Turks must have been aware of these movements, they evidently failed to appreciate their significance, as they did not commence their withdrawal from Kara Tepe until evening of 26th April.

The night of 26th-27th April was very stormy, and torrential rain fell, making the night march of the detached forces an exceedingly difficult and arduous one. However, in spite of inky darkness, boggy ground and flooded streams, they reached their objectives by daybreak on 27th. The Abu Gharaib position had, however, been abandoned by the Turks, and its retreating garrison was discovered and bombed by our aeroplanes. The detached force on the Lesser Naft came in contact with the Turks retreating from Kara Tepe and fulfilled its mission by heading them off from their direct line of retreat.

The 6th Cavalry Brigade, under Brig.-General P. Holland-Pryor, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.V.O., after an arduous night march overtook the Turks who had retreated from Abu Gharaib and had taken up a defensive position at Kulawand, covering Tuz Kermatli from the south-east. Feigning a frontal attack, whilst gradually working round the enemy's right flank, our cavalry cut the enemy's lines of retreat and then charged right through his infantry, killing some 200, including two battalion commanders, and capturing 565 prisoners, a mountain gun and considerable booty. After reconnoitring the Ak Su with cavalry and light armoured motor-cars, and finding the trenches south of Tuz Kermatli strongly held, the cavalry fell back on the main