

successful in capturing Mecca and Jeddah within the first month. The garrison of Taif held out for three and a half months, its eventual capture on 22nd September, 1916, being very largely due to the support of the Egyptian Artillery detachment under the command of El Lewa Sayed Pasha Ali. Medina was invested immediately, but the presence of a picked force of 3,500 Turks destined for operations in Southern Arabia in connection with the Stotzingen Mission made it too difficult an operation for the Arab forces to carry out, and the city was not captured. This has led to a considerable prolongation of operations, as the Turks were enabled to keep open the railway and use Medina as a base from which to threaten Mecca.

4. In the middle of September, 1916, a French Military Mission left Suez for Jeddah under the direction of Colonel Brémond. The Mission was composed of two French officers and four Moslem officers of French regiments. The objects of this Mission were to keep in touch with the military situation and to concert with the King of the Hedjaz and the British authorities regarding such military assistance as it might be found possible and advisable to give to the Arabs on behalf of the French Government.

At that time the Arab threat on Medina had, to a large extent, been dissipated, and the enemy were in a position to threaten an advance against Mecca. It was of vital importance to prevent the recapture of Mecca by the Turks, more especially at a moment when the pilgrimage was about to start.

5. Early in October, although the pilgrimage had been carried out without hindrance, the situation in the Hedjaz had become a serious one, and the threatened advance from Medina via Rabegh to Mecca appeared to have a considerable chance of success. The Turks, under the direction of Fakhreddin Pasha, were steadily progressing with the establishment of advanced supply depôts, the collection of transport, and the improvement of communications, and, provided they were able to overcome the difficulties of supply and transport in a waterless country, there appeared to be no reason why they should not succeed in recapturing Mecca.

6. On 30th October, 1916, incidentally the day after the Sherif had declared himself King, approval was given for the despatch to Rabegh of a flight of aeroplanes, which it was hoped would prove of much value in the operations impending. The flight was despatched to Rabegh early in November.

7. In the autumn of 1916, when it was obvious that a direct attack on Medina was most unlikely to succeed, it had become evident that the only way of removing the threat against Mecca and eventually securing the fall of Medina was to undertake raiding tactics on as large a scale as possible against the railway and the enemy lines of communication from the north. With this object in view Emir Feisal, who had been operating against Medina from the west, with his base on Yambo, moved north against Wejh, and, after capturing the town with the aid of H.M. ships on 24th January, 1917, threatened the whole line of the railway from Hadiyah to Moadhdham. It was largely this move which early in January began to relieve the situation and necessitated the withdrawal of the bulk of

the Turkish Hedjaz Expeditionary Force to the neighbourhood of Medina, followed by the despatch of considerable reinforcements from Medina to the north for the protection of the railway line.

8. At this time the Turkish troops were distributed as follows:

At Medina.

1st Battalion of the 131st Regiment,
1st Battalion of the 129th Regiment, and
500 Camel Corps for work on the lines of communication between Medina and the protecting posts of Bir Darwish, El Ghayir and Bir el Mashî.

At the three last-named places was stationed a force covering Medina, consisting of:—

1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 55th Regiment,
1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 42nd Regiment,
1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 130th Regiment,
300 Arab Camel Corps,
Three Companies Mule Mounted Infantry,
One Camel Battery Mountain Artillery,
Three Mountain Guns,
Two Field Guns.

Total, approximately, 9,500 men.

In addition to the above, 2,500 men were distributed along the railway, the town of Wejh had a garrison of 800, and small detachments held the coast towns of Dhaba and Muweilah.

As soon as Emir Feisal was established at Wejh, Emir Abdulla, who had advanced from Mecca along the interior road towards Medina and made a wide circling movement round the north of that town, crossed the railway line near Bueir and took up his position in the Wadi Ais with his base on the sea at Yambo, at the same time leaving small detachments to the north-east of Medina to intercept all supply caravans from the direction of Ibn Rashid.

Emirs Ali and Zeid took over command of the forces threatening Medina from the south and west, and thus the armies of Emirs Feisal and Abdulla were free to concentrate against the railway.

9. In view of the necessity of providing additional officers to assist Lieut.-Colonel Wilson (on whom up to date had fallen the whole of the difficult task of guiding and advising Arab leaders both in military and political matters) a British Military Mission, consisting of Lieut.-Colonel S. F. Newcombe, D.S.O., R.E., Major C. E. Vickery, D.S.O., R.F.A., Major C. H. F. Cox, D.S.O., R.F.A., and Captain W. E. Marshall, M.C., R.A.M.C., was despatched from England, and left Suez for the Hedjaz on the 9th January, 1917. The members of this Mission are all Officers of experience with native troops, and the tact and energy displayed by them was beyond all praise. Early in March, 1917, I was able, in view of the improved situation, and having regard to the necessity for senior and experienced artillery officers in other theatres, to dispense with the services of Majors Vickery and Cox, retaining only those of Lieut.-Colonel Newcombe and Captain Marshall.

10. The raiding operations which have been instituted against the enemy's lines of communication have attained a considerable measure of success. A training school in