

Turkish forces at Lahej, and on the 4th of November that officer visited Aden under a flag of truce. He explained that he was unable to surrender without the authority of the Corps Commander at Sanaa, but, negotiations with the latter having produced no result, he eventually agreed to surrender his troops in spite of the orders of the Corps Commander. The surrender took place on the 6th of November and following days, and totalled 186 officers and 2,420 men with 24 guns and 2,600 rifles.

Lahej was occupied by our troops on the 9th December and the railway has now been extended to the neighbourhood of that place.

The Turkish Commander at Hodeida having refused to comply with the terms of the armistice, a force was landed there during the night, 13th-14th December. The town was occupied on the morning of the 14th after slight resistance by the Turks.

The evacuation of the Turkish forces from the Yemen was not finally completed till about the end of March, 1919.

II.—SOUTH PERSIA.

The British and Persian forces, under the command of Brigadier-General Sir Percy Sykes, K.C.I.E., C.M.G., and subsequently of Colonel E. F. Orton, have on frequent occasions been engaged in operations against the local tribes.

In my despatch, dated 23rd July, 1917, I referred to Sir P. Syke's Mission which was sent to South Persia from India for the purpose of raising a Persian force, under British officers, to assist the Persian Government in restoring and maintaining order. By May, 1918, this force, known as the South Persia Rifles, consisted of two regiments of cavalry, two batteries of artillery, two companies of engineers, and six battalions of infantry, together with the necessary administrative units, and was organised in two brigades, located in the provinces of Fars and Kirman, with headquarters at Shiraz and Kirman, respectively. In addition to the British officers, the establishment of each unit include a proportion of British non-commissioned officers.

The escort of Indian troops which originally accompanied Sir P. Syke's Mission consisted of only 500 men of all arms, but the unsettled state of the country and the importance of securing the position of the South Persia Rifles at Shiraz and of keeping open a line of communication with the coast at Bandar Abbas, necessitated the despatch of reinforcements from India. At the beginning of the period covered by this despatch, the Indian troops in South Persia (excluding the normal garrisons at the Gulf Ports) amounted to one squadron, 3 companies of mounted infantry, 1 mountain battery and 2½ battalions, the bulk of which were located at Shiraz.

The creation of the South Persia Rifles and the presence of Indian regular troops in the country were misrepresented through the intrigues of German agents in Persia as a threat to Persian Independence. Persistent attempts were made to undermine the loyalty of the South Persia Rifles, and in the Fars Brigade met with considerable success. Desertions on a large scale began to occur, and it became necessary early in May to place detachments of Indian troops in the posts at Abadeh and Dehbid, to guard the treasure and stores and to give some support to the British officers of

the South Persia Rifles. Attempts to tamper with the loyalty of the Kirman Brigade were less successful, and though the situation gave cause for anxiety, the Brigade remained generally staunch.

The chief leader of disaffection was the Saulat-ud-Daulah, II Khani of the Qashqais, who with Nasr-i-Diwan of Kazarun, appears to have aimed at the complete expulsion of the British from South Persia. The promise of an easy victory over our troops at Shiraz, and of valuable loot in the shape of rifles, ammunition, treasure, and other stores attracted a large following, but attempts to preach a holy war were only partially successful.

The Saulat's first step was to lay siege to the South Persia Rifles post at Khaneh Zinian, his object apparently being to induce a British force to proceed from Shiraz to its relief, and then to fall upon it with his main body on its return journey.

Accordingly, about two thousand Qashqais and Kazarunis laid siege to the post, while the Saulat himself, with four to five thousand men, occupied a flank position near Khaneh Khabis. Simultaneously, agitation began in Shiraz city, and the mullahs and other hostile elements became more actively anti-British.

To deal with the situation, a column 1,600 strong was organised from the troops in Shiraz and the remainder of the garrison was concentrated into a previously arranged defensive perimeter. On May 25th, the column, under the command of Colonel E. F. Orton, engaged the Saulat near Deh Shaikh, and inflicted on him a severe defeat. The enemy showed bravery and great mobility, frequently pressing to close quarters and endeavouring to work round the flanks; but our troops maintained a steady pressure in spite of great difficulties of ground, and after a fight lasting fourteen hours occupied the enemy's camp at Khaneh Khabis. Our losses amounted to only 18 killed and 33 wounded, whereas the enemy is computed to have lost 250 killed and 450 wounded.

The fight at Deh Shaikh was not decisive, as the Saulat returned to Khaneh Khabis a few days later; but it produced a very salutary effect on the general situation. It is much to be regretted that its effect was too late to prevent the mutiny of the garrison at Khaneh Zinian, where the British officer and non-commissioned officer in charge of the post were treacherously murdered and the gates opened to the enemy, on the day on which the action was fought.

With the re-appearance of the Saulat at Khaneh Khabis, the position at Shiraz became one of considerable difficulty. The troops were concentrated in a perimeter of walled gardens which was strengthened by towers, and arrangements were made for a protracted siege. The chief dangers were the untrustworthiness of the South Persia Rifles and the efforts of agitators to foment a rising in the native city.

As soon as the position became known in India, reinforcements amounting to two squadrons, two guns and three companies were placed under orders to Bandar Abbas. The distance to Shiraz by this route is thirty stages as against fourteen from Bushire, but the latter route passes through the centre of the disaffected area, and deliberate operations in force would have been necessary to open it up. Owing to the extreme heat and scarcity of water opera-