

32nd Lancers (less two squadrons),
97th Battery, R.F.A. (less one section),
131st (How.) Battery, R.F.A. (less one section),

45th Mountain Battery,
2nd Battalion, Manchester Regiment,
8th Rajputs,
87th Punjabis,
Details of the 114th and 1/116th Mahrattas,

1/32nd Sikh Pioneer (one company),
and certain details.

The second column was commanded by Lieut.-Colonel H. L. Scott, D.S.O., M.C., 1/10th Gurkha Rifles, and consisted of:—

35th Scinde Horse (two squadrons),
97th Battery, R.F.A. (one section),
131st (How.) Battery, R.F.A. (one section),

1/99th Infantry,
1/10th Gurkha Rifles

Both columns contained troops taken from General Coningham's force, which was badly in need of rest. The situation, however, was not one that permitted of delay, and the first of the columns assembled at the northern outskirts of Hillah on the afternoon of the 9th, the date on which General Coningham's column arrived at that place, that under Lieut.-Colonel Scott following in the same direction on the 10th.

(59) I had decided to operate next in a northerly direction for the following reasons. I anticipated that the insurgents would conclude that my next effort would be to relieve the garrison of Kufah, which had been invested for nearly three weeks, and would not be found in strength north of Hillah. Kufah, I knew, was well supplied, and its situation gave no cause for anxiety. On the other hand the defences of Baghdad were still incomplete, and even after the arrival on the 10th August of the first reinforcing battalion from India, the 2/7th Rajputs, which had landed at Basrah on the 6th, the capital would be inadequately garrisoned. Frequent reports had come in regarding concentrations on the right bank of the Tigris, which, it was understood, were a prelude to an attempt to capture Baghdad, and I neither felt justified in again hazarding my limited force at a distance from the capital nor exposing the latter to the risk of a *coup de main*. It was essential, too, to repair and blockhouse the railway line from Baghdad to Hillah before putting into execution the plan for the relief of Kufah, as supplies of all kinds would be required at Hillah for that operation, besides a bridging train from Baghdad to ensure a passage across the Euphrates, which at Kufah is 250 yards in width.

(60) Another strong reason which actuated my decision was the importance of securing the Hindiyah Barrage, whence the waters of the Euphrates could be controlled, as well as the town of Musaiyib, which lies some eight miles further up the river. The capture of these two places would give me command of two important crossings over the Euphrates, the possession of which had allowed the insurgents to conduct with impunity raids against the railway from the country which lies to the west of the river.

Occupation of the Hindiyah Barrage.

(61) On the 12th August, after some diffi-

culty regarding water at Khan Nasiriyah at this the hottest period of the year, the 55th Brigade column occupied Musaiyib. Some opposition was encountered both on that and the previous day, but a bold advance by the 2nd Bn., Manchester Regiment, forced the insurgents to retire with loss. At Musaiyib the 8th Rajputs were left as garrison, and on the 13th August the insurgents, who stood between the column and the Hindiyah Barrage, were driven off, and that important locality was occupied and placed in charge of the 2nd Bn., Manchester Regiment, with a section of 18-pounder guns.

(62) On the 14th August and following days punitive measures were undertaken by both General Walker's and Lieut.-Colonel Scott's columns, the latter force throughout the period of its absence from Hillah covering the construction of blockhouses thence along the railway, similar work being carried out from Baghdad towards that place. Several Arab concentrations were driven off and casualties inflicted.

(63) On the 19th August the first train was able to proceed from Baghdad to Hillah. On the 23rd and 24th August respectively the 55th Brigade column and Lieut.-Colonel Scott's column returned to Hillah, which during their absence had been subjected to several attacks, more especially on the 21st, when the Arabs were repulsed with heavy loss, the 45th Sikhs, as usual, distinguishing themselves by their gallantry and resolution.

(64) I was now in a position to operate for the relief of Kufah, and, from a purely military point of view, I should have preferred to continue putting pressure on the insurgents who inhabit the country south of Baghdad. Here it was clear that the focus of the insurrection was to be found.

Events elsewhere, however, made it advisable and, indeed, imperative, to transfer the troops to another area, where I proposed to begin operating on the 1st September:

Operation South-East of Hillah.

(65) While preparations for this operation were in progress, such troops as could be spared were given a few days' rest, and on the 26th August I moved the 34th Brigade column, under Brigadier-General Coningham, from Hillah in a south-easterly direction. The column, which contained two battalions that had taken part in the operations which led to the capture of the Hindiyah Barrage, was composed as follows:—

32nd Lancers (less two squadrons),
39th Batt., R.F.A.,
131st (How.) Batt., R.F.A. (less one section),
67th Company, 2nd (Q.V.O.) Sappers and Miners (one section),
45th (Rattray's) Sikhs,
1/99th Infantry,
1/116th Mahrattas,
1/10th Gurkha Rifles,
1/32nd Sikh Pioneers (one company),
17th Machine Gun Bn. (one section),
2nd Euphrates Levy (three troops),
and certain details.

(66) It will be remembered that I had left a post at Jarbuiyah to protect the important railway bridge at that place. The Arabs had tried by floating burning matter down the river to set fire to it, but their attempts to do so had failed. The bridge would be of