

value should I later on be in a position to re-occupy the country between Hillah and Samawah, and, if destroyed, would take several months to rebuild. But the continued spread of the insurrection and the proclamation of a Jihad or holy war by the Chief Mujtahid of Karbala about the 6th August showed that this project would have to be deferred for some months. I therefore ordered the withdrawal of the post. This was effected, and on the 29th August Brigadier-General Coningham's column reached Hillah, having been opposed on the first day of its southern advance by 2,000 Arabs, who were driven off by the cavalry and Euphrates levies, after which he carried out some punitive operations.

*Operations North-East of Baghdad.*

(67) Meanwhile, the transfer of troops to which I have referred had begun, a transfer which necessitated a temporary suspension of active measures in the Hillah area.

(68) On the 6th August, signs of unrest in the area north-east of Baghdad showed themselves. These were followed by attacks on the railway line, and from the 9th August the train service from Baghdad to Quraitu and Kingarban ceased. Troops were not available in sufficient strength to suppress the rising in its initial stage, but the energetic action of Colonel J. H. F. Lakin, the officer commanding the Persian Line of Communication, who made the utmost use of the very small force which he hastily collected, prevented the spread of the disturbances beyond our border into Persia. As the railway line near Baqubah had been cut and the presence there of insurgents in some strength was reported, I sent from Baghdad on the 10th a small mixed column under Brigadier-General H. G. Young, D.S.O., commanding the 7th Cavalry Brigade, the despatch of which removed my last reserve at Baghdad.

(69) The moment was an inopportune one for weakening the garrison of Baghdad, as reports, to which I have already referred, had been received of possible attacks not only from the west, but from the north. The police, too, had selected the 12th August for the arrest of certain agitators, and on the night of that date an outbreak was predicted and the internal defence scheme was ordered to be put into operation. It was important, however, if possible, to suppress without loss of time the first signs of the insurrection in an area which had so far escaped contamination.

(70) Brigadier-General Young's force consisted of:—

- “A” Batt., R.H.A., Chestnut Troop (one section),
- 1st (King's) Dragoon Guards (about 100 sabres),
- 7th (P.R.) Dragoon Guards (about 100 sabres),
- 16th M.G. Squadron (one section),
- 50th Mountain Battery (one section),
- 1st Bn., Rifle Brigade,
- 1/94th (Russell's) Infantry (at Baqubah, 1 $\frac{3}{4}$  companies).

(71) The concentration of this force at Baqubah was delayed owing to railway difficulties, but before daylight on the 12th August the column, less the 1st Bn., Rifle Brigade, which I ordered to be left at Baqubah, whence it could be recalled quickly to Baghdad if required, proceeded some 18 miles towards the

south-east and destroyed a village which had harboured some of the marauders. Unfortunately, owing to some shots fired by Arabs in the early morning, which caused a stampede of mules and resulted in the loss in the dark of some machine-gun and transport animals, the action of this column, which had accomplished all that was required of it, had not the desired effect and tended to encourage the tribes in the Baqubah area. The column was withdrawn to Baghdad where, owing to the unrest, its presence was urgently required. But on the 14th August, the 1/15th Sikhs, which had arrived from India on the afternoon of the previous day, were sent to reinforce the small garrison of the railway bridge over the Diyalah, near Baqubah, and protect the wireless station at that place. Here also was the Assyrian refugee camp, but as it possessed a considerable number of armed men, it was in a position to protect itself.

(72) The unrest north-east of Baghdad now spread, and by the 25th August practically all the tribes in the Diyalah division became implicated in the rising, and lawlessness and disorder spread as far north as Kirkuk and later on to Arbil. Several of our posts on the Baghdad-Quraitu line and the branch line to Kingarban were attacked and temporarily cut off.

(73) On the 20th August, the Acting Civil Commissioner had informed me that the forces in the disturbed area with which I would have to deal might soon rise to 10,000, that quantities of arms were being bought in Persia by the insurgents, and that the tribes across our border in that country would in all probability join forces against us.

(74) As the situation was now one which might conceivably involve the safety of the whole of the married families at Karind and Sar-i-mil I ordered these camps to be concentrated at the former place, arrangements for defence to be made, and supplies to be collected. As regards defence there were 1,000 British troops, mostly young soldiers, at Karind, and there was no cause for anxiety regarding supplies, which are readily procurable in Persia.

It was in these circumstances that I decided to transfer troops from Hillah to re-open the Persian Line of Communication, and to defer the relief of Kufah.

(75) While the necessary forces were being concentrated a small column under Lieut.-Colonel F. A. Greer, C.M.G., D.S.O., 1st Bn., Royal Irish Fusiliers, consisting of:—

- 13th British Mountain Battery,
- 1st Bn., Royal Irish Fusiliers (who were brought by mechanical transport from Kasvin),
- 1/94th (Russell's) Infantry (3 platoons),
- 79th Carnatic Infantry (150 rifles),
- 15th Light Armoured Motor Battery (1 section),
- 50 Irregular Horse (Persian Kurds),
- Some Sappers and Miners and other details.

reached Mirjanah on the 1st September after some opposition, and did useful work in repairing the railway line. The 1/15th Sikhs, in anticipation of the arrival of the troops from Hillah, occupied Baqubah and the railway station, expelling a number of insurgents who had taken possession of the palm gardens round the town.

(76) On the 22nd August the construction of blockhouses between Baghdad and Baqubah