

(less 2 companies), supported by the 1/15th Sikhs, broke through the insurgents' position, causing them heavy loss. Our casualties on these dates amounted to 18 killed and 68 wounded.

(94) On the 11th October the troops of the Kufah and Tuwairij columns, being now assembled, carried out operations to clear the flanks of their subsequent lines of advance, and on the 12th they moved towards these places.

The 53rd Brigade Column reached Tuwairij on the same date, blockhouses being constructed along the 12 miles traversed. Stubborn opposition was encountered at the Jarjiyah canal, half a mile short of the objective, and the 2nd Bn., East Yorkshire Regiment and the 13th Rajputs, who had been sent forward some time earlier to support the cavalry and guns, drove back the insurgents, light armoured motor-cars sharing in the action.

(95) At Tuwairij a further stand was made by the tribesmen, who set fire to the boat bridge which crosses the Euphrates at that point; but the Sappers and the 13th Rajputs, pushing on, extinguished the flames and occupied the town. In this action aeroplanes co-operated with effect, as they had done on many similar occasions, attacking the insurgents as they streamed back towards Karbala. The Arab loss this day in killed was estimated at 200. Our own was inconsiderable.

(96) This operation north-west of Hillah led, on the 16th, to the submission of Karbala and the acceptance of our terms, and while negotiations were in progress punitive action was continued in the neighbourhood.

(97) The operations of the 55th Brigade column were equally successful. On the 12th, that portion of the column which marched along the Kif road was opposed by some 2,000 Arabs, who were driven off by the 87th Punjabis, the cavalry and guns working on their flank. On the 14th, a smaller body, which held the canal bank north-east of Kif, was disposed of by the 1/116th Mahrattas, supported by light armoured motor cars, and the town was entered. Here the column which had constructed blockhouses along the Nahr Shah canal united with that which marched along the Hillah-Kif road. To cover the construction of a bridge, the 2nd Bn., Manchester Regiment, was at once ferried across the Euphrates in pontoons, but the width of the river falsified reports, and was found to be considerably greater than was anticipated. By 9.30 a.m., however, on the 16th, the whole force had crossed and resumed its march on Kufah.

(98) At 8 a.m. on the 17th October the northern outskirts of the town were reached, and the insurgents were found to be holding it in strength. The 35th Scinde Horse, making a wide turning movement to the west, cut the Kif-Najaf road and charged the insurgents, sabring 27 and causing other casualties by Hotchkiss gun fire.

(99) Meanwhile, the infantry rapidly advanced through the palm gardens, ably assisted by low-flying aeroplanes. In the front the 108th Infantry, the balance of which regiment formed the beleaguered garrison, led, closely followed on their right by the 2nd Bn., Manchester Regiment, and on their left by the 1/15th Sikhs. The insurgents turned and fled, pursued by aeroplanes, and at 9.30 a.m. Kufah was relieved.

(100) The garrison (786 personnel and 176 animals), which was commanded by Captain

G. Dowling, 108th Infantry, whose unit (490 all ranks), formed the fighting force, and who was ably helped by the Political Officer, Major P. FitzG. Norbury, had been besieged for 90 days. Through the foresight of the latter officer, large stocks of food had been laid in and defences constructed before the investment began. The insurgents, making use of the 18-pounder gun captured on the 24th July, had harassed the garrison and set fire to the town, and disaster was only averted by the gallantry of some of the defenders, whose losses during the siege were 25 killed and 27 wounded, the former figure including two British officers.

On the 18th Najaf submitted, and on the 19th 79 British and 88 Indian prisoners were handed over.

Operations for the Relief of Samawah.

(101) At this point it is necessary to turn to the operations in what is known as the River Area, which is comprised roughly within a triangle bounded by the rivers Tigris, Hai, and Euphrates, and to which, for convenience of command, the town of Samawah and the line of communication thereto were added in August. The disturbances, which began at Rumaithah at the end of June, spread southwards, and displayed themselves mainly in attacks on the railway line, which was repeatedly damaged and as repeatedly repaired.

(102) At this time the only regular troops on the Euphrates between Jarbuiyah and Basrah were the garrisons at Samawah, Ur, and Nasiriyah. At Samawah there were 2½ companies of the 114th Mahrattas and a small detachment of the 2/125th Rifles and 2/129th Baluchis, and at Nasiriyah three companies of the 2/125th Rifles. At Ur, the railway junction for the latter place, was a company of the 2/125th Rifles, less one platoon. I had every intention of withdrawing the garrison of Samawah, but to have done so before reinforcements arrived from overseas would almost certainly have precipitated events and led to other powerful tribes joining in the insurrection. Had this occurred, Basrah, which was my base, and which, like Baghdad, has its numerous military establishments distributed over a wide area, and possessed a garrison inadequate for more than essential guard duties, would have been in danger of attack. And further, a rising of tribes in the region between the Tigris and Euphrates, on both banks of the Shatt al Gharraf, would have led to disturbances on the Tigris, which would have imperilled my sole line of communication with the base. As the weeks went by, and the prospect of an outbreak in this area trembled in the balance, Political Officers had to be withdrawn by aeroplane from the territory of the Muntafiq. One of these officers pluckily returned to his post, when for a brief space the situation seemed slightly better, but soon again had to be extricated by the same means.

(103) The situation was highly critical, and several times I was definitely informed that in the course of a few days some of the tribes of this powerful confederation were certain to revolt. Jihad was being preached with frenzied fervour by the numerous emissaries from the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala; parts of the country were in an uproar, and at any moment there might be thrown into the scale on the insurgents' side the majority of the Muntafiq, which possesses approximately 43,000 rifles.