



# FOURTH SUPPLEMENT

TO

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FRIDAY, 25 JANUARY, 1918.

War Office,  
25th January, 1918.

The Secretary of State for War has received the following Despatch from General Sir Edmund Allenby, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., Commanding-in-Chief, Egyptian Expeditionary Force:—

General Headquarters,  
Egyptian Expeditionary Force,  
16th December, 1917.

MY LORD,—

I have the honour to submit a report on the operations of the Force serving in Egypt and Palestine since 28th June, 1917, the date on which I assumed command.

1. When I took over the command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force at the end of June, 1917, I had received instructions to report on the conditions in which offensive operations against the Turkish Army on the Palestine front might be undertaken in the autumn or winter of 1917.

After visiting the front and consulting with the Commander of the Eastern Force, I submitted my appreciation and proposals in a telegram despatched in the second week of July.

2. The main features of the situation on the Palestine front were then as follows:—

The Turkish Army in Southern Palestine held a strong position extending from the sea at Gaza, roughly along the main Gaza-Beersheba Road to Beersheba. Gaza had been made into a strong modern fortress, heavily entrenched and wired, offering every facility for protracted defence. The remainder of the enemy's line consisted of a series of strong localities, viz.: the Sihan group of works, the Atawineh group, the Baha group, the Abu Hareira-Arab el Teeaha trench system, and, finally, the works covering Beersheba. These groups of works were generally from 1,500 to 2,000 yards apart, except that the distance from the Hareira group to Beersheba was about 4½ miles.

The enemy's force was on a wide front, the distance from Gaza to Beersheba being about 30 miles; but his lateral communications were good, and any threatened point of the line could be very quickly reinforced.

My force was extended on a front of 22 miles, from the sea, opposite Gaza, to Gamli.

Owing to lack of water I was unable, without preparations which would require some considerable time, to approach within striking dis-

tance of the enemy, except in the small sector near the sea coast opposite Gaza.

3. My proposals received the approval of the War Cabinet, and preparations were undertaken to enable the plan I had formed to be put into execution.

I had decided to strike the main blow against the left flank of the main Turkish position, Hareira and Sheria. The capture of Beersheba was a necessary preliminary to this operation, in order to secure the water supplies at that place and to give room for the deployment of the attacking force on the high ground to the north and north-west of Beersheba, from which direction I intended to attack the Hareira-Sheria line.

This front of attack was chosen for the following reasons. The enemy's works in this sector were less formidable than elsewhere, and they were easier of approach than other parts of the enemy's defences. When Beersheba was in our hands we should have an open flank against which to operate, and I could make full use of our superiority in mounted troops; and a success here offered prospects of pursuing our advantage and forcing the enemy to abandon the rest of his fortified positions, which no other line of attack would afford.

It was important, in order to keep the enemy in doubt up to the last moment as to the real point of attack, that an attack should also be made on the enemy's right at Gaza in conjunction with the main operations. One of my Commanders was therefore ordered to prepare a scheme for operations against Gaza on as large a scale as the force at his disposal would permit. I also asked the Senior Naval Officer, Egypt, Rear-Admiral T. Jackson, C.B., M.V.O., to afford me naval co-operation by bombarding the Gaza defences and the enemy's railway stations and depôts north of Gaza. Rear-Admiral Jackson afforded me cordial assistance, and during the period of preparation Naval Officers worked in the closest co-operation with my staff at General Headquarters and the staff of the G.O.C. troops operating in that region.

4. The difficulties to be overcome in the operations against Beersheba and the Sheria-Hareira line were considerable, and careful preparations and training were necessary. The chief difficulties were those of water and transport, and arrangements had to be made to ensure that the troops could be kept supplied with water while operating at considerable distances from their original water base for a period which might amount to a week or more; for, though it was known that an ample supply of water existed at Beersheba, it was uncertain how quickly it could be developed or to what extent the enemy would have damaged the wells before we succeeded in occupying the town. Except at Beersheba, no large supply of water would be found till Sheria and Hareira had been captured.

The transport problem was no less difficult; there were no good roads south of the line Gaza-Beersheba, and no reliance could therefore be placed on the use of motor transport. Owing to the steep banks of many of the wadis which intersected the area of operations, the routes passable by wheeled transport were limited, and the going was heavy and difficult in many places. Practically the whole of the transport available in the force, including 30,000 pack camels, had to be allotted to one portion of the eastern force to enable it to be kept supplied with food, water and ammuni-

tion, at a distance of fifteen to twenty miles in advance of railhead. Arrangements were also made for railhead to be pushed forward as rapidly as possible towards Karm and for a line to be laid from Gamli towards Beersheba for the transport of ammunition.

A railway line was also laid from Deir el Belah to the Wadi Ghuzze, close behind the sector held by another portion of the eastern force.

Considerable strain was thrown on the military railway from Kantara to the front during the period of preparation. In addition to the normal requirements of the force, a number of siege and heavy batteries, besides other artillery and units, had to be moved to the front, and large depôts of supplies, ammunition and other stores accumulated at the various railheads. Preparations had also to be made and the necessary material accumulated to push forward the lines from Deir el Belah and Shellal.

5. During the period from July to October the enemy's force on the Palestine front had been increased. It was evident, from the arrival of these reinforcements and the construction of railway extensions from El Tine on the Ramleh-Beersheba railway to Deir Sineid and Beit Hanun north of Gaza, and from Deir Sineid to Huj, and from reports of the transport of large supplies of ammunition and other stores to the Palestine front, that the enemy was determined to make every effort to maintain his position on the Gaza-Beersheba line. He had considerably strengthened his defences on this line, and the strong localities mentioned in paragraph 2 had, by the end of October, been joined up to form a practically continuous line from the sea to a point south of Sheria, except for a gap between Ali Muntar and the Sihan Group. The defensive works round Beersheba remained a detached system, but had been improved and extended.

6. The date of the attack on Beersheba, which was to commence the operations, was fixed as October 31st. Work had been begun on the railway from Shellal towards Karm and on the line from Gamli to El Bugar. The development of water at Ecani, Khalasa and Asluj proceeded satisfactorily. These last two places were to be the starting point for the mounted force detailed to make a wide flanking movement and attack Beersheba from the east and north-east.

On the morning of October 27th the Turks made a strong reconnaissance towards Karm from the direction of Kauwukah, two regiments of cavalry and two or three thousand infantry, with guns, being employed. They attacked a line of outposts near El Girheir, held by some Yeomanry, covering railway construction. One small post was rushed and cut up, but not before inflicting heavy loss on the enemy; another post, though surrounded, held out all day, and also caused the enemy heavy loss. The gallant resistance made by the Yeomanry enabled the 53rd (Welsh) Division to come up in time, and on their advance the Turks withdrew.

The bombardment of the Gaza defences commenced on October 27th, and on October 30th warships of the Royal Navy, assisted by a French battleship, began co-operating in this bombardment.

7. On the evening of October 30th the portion of the eastern force, which was to make the attack on Beersheba, was concentrated in

positions of readiness for the night march to its positions of deployment.

8. The night march to the positions of deployment was successfully carried out, all units reaching their appointed positions up to time.

The plan was to attack the hostile works between the Khalasa Road and the Wadi Saba with two divisions, masking the works north of the Wadi Saba with the Imperial Camel Corps and some infantry, while a portion of the 53rd (Welsh) Division further north covered the left of the corps. The right of the attack was covered by a cavalry regiment. Further east, mounted troops took up a line opposite the southern defences of Beersheba.

As a preliminary to the main attack, in order to enable field guns to be brought within effective range for wire-cutting, the enemy's advanced works at 1,070 were to be taken. This was successfully accomplished at 8.45 a.m., after a short preliminary bombardment, by London troops, with small loss, 90 prisoners being taken. The cutting of the wire on the main line then proceeded satisfactorily, though pauses had to be made to allow the dust to clear; and the final assault was ordered for 12.15 p.m. It was successful all along the front attacked, and by about 1 p.m. the whole of the works between the Khalasa road and the Wadi Saba were in our hands.

Some delay occurred in ascertaining whether the enemy still occupied the works north of the road; it was decided, as they were still held by small parties, to attack them from the south. After a preliminary bombardment the works were occupied with little opposition by about 7.30 p.m.

The casualties were light, considering the strength of the works attacked; a large proportion occurred during the advance towards the positions previous to the assault, the hostile guns being very accurate and very difficult to locate.

Meanwhile, the mounted troops, after a night march, for part of the force of 25 and for the remainder of 35 miles, arrived early in the morning of the 31st about Khasim Zanna, in the hills some five miles east of Beersheba. From the hills the advance into Beersheba from the east and north-east lies over an open and almost flat plain, commanded by the rising ground north of the town and flanked by an under-feature in the Wadi Saba called Tel el Saba.

A force was sent north to secure Bir es Sakaty, on the Hebron road, and protect the right flank; this force met with some opposition, and was engaged with hostile cavalry at Bir es Sakaty and to the north during the day. Tel el Saba was found strongly held by the enemy, and was not captured till late in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, attempts to advance in small parties across the plain towards the town made slow progress. In the evening, however, a mounted attack by Australian Light Horse, who rode straight at the town from the east, proved completely successful. They galloped over two deep trenches held by the enemy just outside the town, and entered the town at about 7 p.m., capturing numerous prisoners.

The Turks at Beersheba were undoubtedly taken completely by surprise, a surprise from which the dash of London troops and Yeomanry, finely supported by their artillery, never gave them time to recover. The charge

of the Australian Light Horse completed their defeat.

A very strong position was thus taken with slight loss, and the Turkish detachment at Beersheba almost completely put out of action. About 2,000 prisoners and 13 guns were taken, and some 500 Turkish corpses were buried on the battlefield. This success laid open the left flank of the main Turkish position for a decisive blow.

9. The actual date of the attack at Gaza had been left open till the result of the attack at Beersheba was known, as it was intended that the former attack, which was designed to draw hostile reserves towards the Gaza sector, should take place twenty-four to forty-eight hours previous to the attack on the Sheria position. After the complete success of the Beersheba operations, and as the early reports indicated that an ample supply of water would be available at that place, it was hoped that it would be possible to attack Sheria by November 3rd or 4th. The attack on Gaza was accordingly ordered to take place on the morning of November 2nd. Later reports showed that the water situation was less favourable than had been hoped, but it was decided not to postpone the attack.

The objectives of this attack were the hostile works from Umbrella Hill (2,000 yards south-west of the town) to Sheikh Hasan, on the sea (about 2,500 yards north-west of the town). The front of the attack was about 6,000 yards, and Sheikh Hasan, the furthest objective, was over 3,000 yards from our front line. The ground over which the attack took place consisted of sand dunes, rising in places up to 150 feet in height. This sand is very deep and heavy going. The enemy's defences consisted of several lines of strongly built trenches and redoubts.

As Umbrella Hill flanked the advance against the Turkish works further west, it was decided to capture it by a preliminary operation, to take place four hours previous to the main attack. It was accordingly attacked, and captured at 11 p.m. on November 1st by a portion of the 52nd (Lowland) Division. This attack drew a heavy bombardment of Umbrella Hill itself and our front lines, which lasted for two hours, but ceased in time to allow the main attack, which was timed for 3 a.m., to form up without interference.

It had been decided to make the attack before daylight owing to the distance to be covered between our front trenches and the enemy's position.

The attack was successful in reaching all objectives, except for a section of trench on the left and some of the final objectives in the centre. Four hundred and fifty prisoners were taken and many Turks killed. The enemy also suffered heavily from the preliminary bombardment, and subsequent reports from prisoners stated that one of the divisions holding the Gaza Sector was withdrawn after losing 33 per cent. of its effectives, one of the divisions in general reserve being drawn into the Gaza sector to replace it. The attack thus succeeded in its primary object, which was to prevent any units being drawn from the Gaza defences to meet the threat to the Turkish left flank, and to draw into Gaza as large a proportion as possible of the available Turkish reserves. Further, the capture of Sheikh Hasan and the south-western defences consti-

tuted a very distinct threat to the whole of the Gaza position, which could be developed on any sign of a withdrawal on the part of the enemy.

Our losses, though considerable, were not in any way disproportionate to the results obtained.

10. Meanwhile on our right flank the water and transport difficulties were found to be greater than anticipated, and the preparations for the second phase of the attack were somewhat delayed in consequence.

On the early morning of the 1st November the 53rd (Welsh) Division, with the Imperial Camel Corps on its right, had moved out into the hills north of Beersheba, with the object of securing the flank of the attack on Sheria. Mounted troops were also sent north along the Hebron Road to secure Dhaheriyeh if possible, as it was hoped that a good supply of water would be found in this area, and that a motor road which the Turks were reported to have constructed from Dhaheriyeh to Sheria could be secured for our use.

The 53rd (Welsh) Division, after a long march, took up a position from Towal Abu Jerwal (6 miles north of Beersheba) to Muweileh (4 miles north-east of Abu Irgeig). Irish troops occupied Abu Irgeig the same day.

On November 3rd we advanced north on Ain Kohleh and Tel Khuweilfeh, near which place the mounted troops had engaged considerable enemy forces on the previous day. This advance was strongly opposed, but was pushed on through difficult hill country to within a short distance of Ain Kohleh and Khuweilfeh. At these places the enemy was found holding a strong position with considerable and increasing forces. He was obviously determined not only to bar any further progress in this direction, but, if possible, to drive our flankguard back on Beersheba. During the 4th and 5th he made several determined attacks on the mounted troops. These attacks were repulsed.

By the evening of November 5th the 19th Turkish Division, the remains of the 27th and certain units of the 16th Division had been identified in the fighting round Tel el Khuweilfeh, and it was also fairly clear that the greater part of the hostile cavalry, supported apparently by some infantry ("Depôt" troops) from Hebron, were engaged between Khuweilfeh and the Hebron Road.

The action of the enemy in thus employing the whole of his available reserves in an immediate counter-stroke so far to the east was apparently a bold effort to induce me to make essential alterations in my offensive plan, thereby gaining time and disorganising my arrangements. The country north of Beersheba was exceedingly rough and hilly, and very little water was to be found there. Had the enemy succeeded in drawing considerable forces against him in that area the result might easily have been an indecisive fight (for the terrain was very suitable to his methods of defence) and my own main striking force would probably have been made too weak effectively to break the enemy's centre in the neighbourhood of Sheria Hareira. This might have resulted in our gaining Beersheba, but failing to do more—in which case Beersheba would only have been an incubus of a most inconvenient kind. However, the enemy's action was not allowed to make any essential modification to

the original plan, which it had been decided to carry out at dawn on November 6th.

By the evening of November 5th all preparations had been made to attack the Kauwukah and Rushdi systems and to make every effort to reach Sheria before nightfall.

The mounted troops were to be prepared in the event of a success by the main force to collect, as they were somewhat widely scattered owing to water difficulties, and push north in pursuit of the enemy.

Tel el Khuweilfeh was to be attacked at dawn on the 6th, and the troops were to endeavour to reach line Tel el Khuweilfeh-Rijm el Dhieh.

11. At dawn on the 6th the attacking force had taken up positions of readiness to the S.E. of the Kauwukah system of trenches. The attack was to be commenced by an assault on the group of works forming the extreme left of the enemy's defensive system, followed by an advance due west up the railway, capturing the line of detached works which lay east of the railway. During this attack London and Irish troops were to advance towards the Kauwukah system, bringing forward their guns to within wire-cutting range. They were to assault the south-eastern face of the Kauwukah system as soon as the bombardment had proved effective, and thence take the remainder of the system in enfilade.

The attack progressed rapidly, the Yeomanry storming the works on the enemy's extreme left with great dash; and soon after noon the London and Irish troops commenced their attack. It was completely successful in capturing all its objectives, and the whole of the Rushdi system in addition. Sheria Station was also captured before dark. The Yeomanry reached the line of the Wadi Sheria to Wadi Union; and the troops on the left were close to Hareira Redoubt, which was still occupied by the enemy. This attack was a fine performance, the troops advancing 8 or 9 miles during the day and capturing a series of very strong works covering a front of about 7 miles, the greater part of which had been held and strengthened by the enemy for over six months. Some 600 prisoners were taken and some guns and machine guns captured. Our casualties were comparatively slight. The greatest opposition was encountered by the Yeomanry in the early morning, the works covering the left of the enemy's line being strong and stubbornly defended.

During the afternoon, as soon as it was seen that the attack had succeeded, mounted troops were ordered to take up the pursuit and to occupy Huj and Jemmamah.

The 53rd (Welsh) Division had again had very severe fighting on the 6th. Their attack at dawn on Tel El Khuweilfeh was successful, and, though they were driven off a hill by a counter-attack, they retook it and captured another hill, which much improved their position. The Turkish losses in this area were very heavy indeed, and the stubborn fighting of the 53rd (Welsh) Division, Imperial Camel Corps, and part of the mounted troops during the 2nd to the 6th November drew in and exhausted the Turkish reserves and paved the way for the success of the attack on Sheria. The 53rd (Welsh) Division took several hundred prisoners and some guns during this fighting.

12. The bombardment of Gaza had meanwhile continued, and another attack was ordered to take place on the night of 6th-7th.

The objectives were, on the right, Outpost Hill and Middlesex Hill (to be attacked at 11.30 p.m. on the 6th), and on the left the line Belah Trench-Turtle Hill (to be attacked at dawn on the 7th).

During the 6th a certain amount of movement on the roads north of Gaza was observed by our airmen and fired on by our heavy artillery, but nothing indicating a general retirement from Gaza.

The attack on Outpost Hill and Middlesex Hill met with little opposition, and as soon, after they had been taken, as patrols could be pushed forward, the enemy was found to be gone. East Anglian troops on the left also found at dawn that the enemy had retired during the night, and early in the morning the main force occupied the northern and eastern defences of Gaza. Rearguards were still occupying Beit Hanun and the Atawineh and Tank systems, from whence Turkish artillery continued to fire on Gaza and Ali Muntar till dusk.

As soon as it was seen that the Turks had evacuated Gaza a part of the force pushed along the coast to the mouth of the Wadi Hesi, so as to turn the Wadi Hesi line and prevent the enemy making any stand there. Cavalry had already pushed on round the north of Gaza, and became engaged with an enemy rearguard at Beit Hanun, which maintained its position till nightfall. The force advancing along the coast reached the Wadi Hesi by evening, and succeeded in establishing itself on the north bank in the face of considerable opposition, a Turkish rearguard making several determined counter-attacks.

On our extreme right the situation remained practically unchanged during the 7th; the enemy made no further attempt to counter-attack, but maintained his positions opposite our right flank guard.

In the centre the Hareira Tepe Redoubt was captured at dawn; some prisoners and guns were taken. The London troops, after a severe engagement at Tel el Sheria, which they captured by a bayonet charge at 4 a.m. on the 7th, subsequently repulsing several counter-attacks, pushed forward their line about a mile to the north of Tel el Sheria; the mounted troops on the right moved towards Jemmamah and Huj, but met with considerable opposition from hostile rearguards.

13. During the 8th the advance was continued, and interest was chiefly centred in an attempt to cut off, if possible, the Turkish rearguard which had held the Tank and Atawineh systems. The enemy had, however, retreated during the night 7th-8th, and though considerable captures of prisoners, guns, ammunition and other stores were made during the day, chiefly in the vicinity of Huj, no large formed body of the enemy was cut off. The Turkish rearguards fought stubbornly and offered considerable opposition. Near Huj a fine charge by some squadrons of the Worcester and Warwick Yeomanry captured 12 guns, and broke the resistance of a hostile rearguard. It soon became obvious from the reports of the Royal Flying Corps, who throughout the 7th and 8th attacked the retreating columns with bombs and machine-gun fire, and from other evidence, that the enemy was retiring in considerable disorganisation, and could offer no very serious resistance if pressed with determination.

Instructions were accordingly issued on the morning of the 9th to the mounted troops, directing them on the line El Tine-Beit Duras, with orders to press the enemy relentlessly. They were to be supported by a portion of the force, which was ordered to push forward to Julis and Mejdal.

The enemy opposite our right flank guard had commenced to retreat towards Hebron on the morning of the 8th. He was pursued for a short distance by the Yeomanry, and some prisoners and camels were captured, but the Yeomanry were then recalled to rejoin the main body of the mounted troops for the more important task of the pursuit of the enemy's main body.

By the 9th, therefore, operations had reached the stage of a direct pursuit by as many troops as could be supplied so far in front of railhead. The problem, in fact, became one of supply rather than manoeuvre. The question of water and forage was a very difficult one. Even where water was found in sufficient quantities, it was usually in wells and not on the surface, and consequently if the machinery for working the wells was damaged, or a sufficient supply of troughs was not available, the process of watering a large quantity of animals was slow and difficult.

14. On the evening of November 9th there were indications that the enemy was organising a counter-attack towards Arak el Menshiye by all available units of the force which had retired towards Hebron, with the object of taking pressure off the main force, which was retiring along the coastal plain. It was obvious that the Hebron force, which was believed to be short of transport and ammunition, to have lost heavily and to be in a generally disorganised state, could make no effective diversion, and that this threat could practically be disregarded. Other information showed the seriousness of the enemy's losses and the disorganisation of his forces.

Orders were accordingly issued to press the pursuit and to reach Junction Station as early as possible, thus cutting off the Jerusalem Army, while the Imperial Camel Corps was ordered to move to the neighbourhood of Tel el Nejile, where it would be on the flank of any counter-stroke from the hills.

Operations on the 10th and 11th showed a stiffening of the enemy's resistance on the general line of the Wadi Sukereir, with centre about El Kustineh; the Hebron group, after an ineffective demonstration in the direction of Arak el Menshiye on the 10th, retired north-east and prolonged the enemy's line towards Beit Jibrin. Royal Flying Corps reports indicated the total hostile forces opposed to us on this line at about 15,000; and this increased resistance, coupled with the capture of prisoners from almost every unit of the Turkish force, tended to show that we were no longer opposed to rearguards, but that all the remainder of the Turkish Army which could be induced to fight was making a last effort to arrest our pursuit south of the important Junction Station.

In these circumstances our progress on the 10th and 11th was slow; the troops suffered considerably from thirst (a hot exhausting wind blew during these two days), and our supply difficulties were great; but by the evening of the 11th favourable positions had been reached for a combined attack.

The 12th was spent in preparations for the attack, which was ordered to be begun early on the morning of the 13th, on the enemy's position covering Junction Station. Our forces were now operating at a distance of some 35 miles in advance of their railhead, and the bringing up and distribution of supplies and ammunition formed a difficult problem. The routes north of the Wadi Hesi were found to be hard and good going, though there were some difficult wadi crossings but the main road through Gaza and as far as Beit Hanun was sandy and difficult. The supply of water in the area of operations, though good and plentiful in most of the villages, lies mainly in wells 100 feet or more below the surface, and in these circumstances a rapid supply and distribution was almost impossible. Great credit is due to all concerned that these difficulties were overcome and that it was found possible not only to supply the troops already in the line, but to bring up two heavy batteries to support the attack.

15. The situation on the morning of November 13th was that the enemy had strung out his force (amounting probably to no more than 20,000 rifles in all) on a front of 20 miles, from El Kubeibeh on the north to about Beit Jibrin to the south. The right half of his line ran roughly parallel to and only about 5 miles in front of the Ramleh-Junction Station railway, his main line of supply from the north, and his right flank was already almost turned. This position had been dictated to him by the rapidity of our movement along the coast, and the determination with which his rearguards on this flank had been pressed.

The advanced guard of the 52nd (Lowland) Division had forced its way almost to Burkah on the 11th, on which day also some mounted troops pushed across the Nahr Sukereir at Jisr Esdud, where they held a bridge-head. During the 12th the Yeomanry pushed north up the left bank of the Nahr Sukereir, and eventually seized Tel el Murreh on the right bank near the mouth.

The hostile commander may have hoped to exercise some moral effect on our plans by the presence of the southern portion of his forces on the flank of our advance; if so, he was mistaken. The Australian Mounted troops extended over a wide front, not only secured this flank but pressed forward on the 12th towards Balin, Berkusie, and Tel es Safi. Their advanced troops were counter-attacked and driven back a short distance, but the enemy made no effort to press further forward. Arrangements were then made to attack on the 13th.

The country over which the attack took place is open and rolling, dotted with small villages surrounded by mud walls with plantations of trees outside the walls. The most prominent feature is the line of heights on which are the villages of Katrah and El Mughar, standing out above the low flat ground which separates them from the rising ground to the west, on which stands the village of Beshshit, about 2,000 yards distant. This Katrah-El Mughar line forms a very strong position, and it was here that the enemy made his most determined resistance against the turning movement directed against his right flank. The capture of this position by the 52nd (Lowland) Division, assisted by a most dashing charge of mounted troops, who galloped across the plain under heavy fire and turned the enemy's position from the north, was a fine

feat of arms. Some 1,100 prisoners, 3 guns and many machine guns were taken here. After this the enemy resistance weakened, and by the evening his forces were retiring east and north.

The infantry, who were sent forward about dusk to occupy Junction Station, met with some resistance and halted for the night, not much more than a mile west of the station. Early next morning (November 14th) they occupied the station.

The enemy's army had now been broken into two separate parts, which retired north and east respectively, and were reported to consist of small scattered groups rather than formed bodies of any size.

In fifteen days our force had advanced sixty miles on its right and about forty on its left. It had driven a Turkish Army of nine Infantry Divisions and one Cavalry Division out of a position in which it had been entrenched for six months, and had pursued it, giving battle whenever it attempted to stand, and inflicting on it losses amounting probably to nearly two-thirds of the enemy's original effectives. Over 9,000 prisoners, about eighty guns, more than 100 machine guns and very large quantities of ammunition and other stores had been captured.

16. After the capture of Junction Station on the morning of the 14th, our troops secured a position covering the station, while the Australian mounted troops reached Kezaze that same evening.

The mounted troops pressed on towards Ramleh and Ludd. On the right Naaneh was attacked and captured in the morning, while on the left the New Zealand Mounted Rifles had a smart engagement at Ayun Kara (six miles south of Jaffa). Here the Turks made a determined counter-attack and got to within fifteen yards of our line. A bayonet attack drove them back with heavy loss.

Flanking the advance along the railway to Ramleh and covering the main road from Ramleh to Jerusalem, a ridge stands up prominently out of the low foot hills surrounding it. This is the site of the ancient Gezer, near which the village of Abu Shusheh now stands. A hostile rearguard had established itself on this feature. It was captured on the morning of the 15th in a brilliant attack by mounted troops, who galloped up the ridge from the south. A gun and 360 prisoners were taken in this affair.

By the evening of the 15th the mounted troops had occupied Ramleh and Ludd, and had pushed patrols to within a short distance of Jaffa. At Ludd 300 prisoners were taken, and five destroyed aeroplanes and a quantity of abandoned war material were found at Ramleh and Ludd.

Jaffa was occupied without opposition on the evening of the 16th.

17. The situation was now as follows:—

The enemy's army, cut in two by our capture of Junction Station, had retired partly east into the mountains towards Jerusalem and partly north along the plain. The nearest line on which these two portions could re-unite was the line Tul Keram-Nablus. Reports from the Royal Flying Corps indicated that it was the probable intention of the enemy to evacuate Jerusalem and withdraw to reorganise on this line.

On our side the mounted troops had been marching and fighting continuously since



October 31st, and had advanced a distance of seventy-five miles, measured in a straight line from Asluj to Jaffa. The troops, after their heavy fighting at Gaza, had advanced in nine days a distance of about forty miles, with two severe engagements and continual advanced guard fighting. The 52nd (Lowland) Division had covered sixty-nine miles in this period.

The railway was being pushed forward as rapidly as possible, and every opportunity was taken of landing stores at points along the coast. The landing of stores was dependent on a continuance of favourable weather, and might at any moment be stopped for several days together.

A pause was therefore necessary to await the progress of railway construction, but before our position in the plain could be considered secure it was essential to obtain a hold of the one good road which traverses the Judæan range from north to south, from Nablus to Jerusalem.

18. The west side of the Judæan range consists of a series of spurs running east and west, and separated from one another by narrow valleys. These spurs are steep, bare and stony for the most part, and in places precipitous. Between the foot of the spurs of the main range and the coastal plain is the low range known as the Shephelah.

On our intended line of advance only one good road, the main Jaffa-Jerusalem road, traversed the hills from east to west. For nearly four miles, between Bab el Wad (2½ miles east of Latron) and Saris, this road passes through a narrow defile, and it had been damaged by the Turks in several places. The other roads were mere tracks on the side of the hill or up the stony beds of wadis, and were impracticable for wheeled transport without improvement. Throughout these hills the water supply was scanty without development.

On November 17th the Yeomanry had commenced to move from Ramleh through the hills direct on Bireh by Annafeh, Berfilva and Beit ur el Tahta (Lower Bethhoron). By the evening of November 18th one portion of the Yeomanry had reached the last-named place, while another portion had occupied Shilta. The route had been found impossible for wheels beyond Annabeh.

On the 19th the Infantry commenced its advance. One portion was to advance up the main road as far as Kuryet el Enab, with its right flank protected by Australian mounted troops. From that place, in order to avoid any fighting in the close vicinity of the Holy City, it was to strike north towards Bireh by a track leading through Biddu. The remainder of the infantry was to advance through Berfilva to Beit Likia and Beit Dukka, and thence support the movement of the other portion.

After capturing Latron and Amnas on the morning of the 19th, the remainder of the day was spent in clearing the defile up to Saris, which was defended by hostile rearguards.

On the 20th Kuryet el Enab was captured with the bayonet in the face of organised opposition, while Beit Dukka was also captured. On the same day the Yeomanry got to within four miles of the Nablus-Jerusalem road, but were stopped by strong opposition about Beitunia.

On the 21st a body of infantry moved north-east by a track from Kuryet el Enab through Biddu and Kulundia towards Bireh. The

track was found impassable for wheels, and was under hostile shell-fire. Progress was slow, but by evening the ridge on which stands Neby Samwil was secured. A further body of troops was left at Kuryet el Enab to cover the flank and demonstrate along the main Jerusalem road. It drove hostile parties from Kustul, 2½ miles east of Kuryet el Enab, and secured this ridge.

By the afternoon of the 21st advanced parties of Yeomanry were within two miles of the road and an attack was being delivered on Beitunia by other mounted troops.

19. The positions reached on the evening of the 21st practically marked the limit of progress in this first attempt to gain the Nablus-Jerusalem road. The Yeomanry were heavily counter-attacked, and fell back, after bitter fighting, on Beit ur el Foka (Upper Bethhoron). During the 22nd the enemy made two counter-attacks on the Neby Samwil ridge which were repulsed. Determined and gallant attacks were made on the 23rd and on the 24th on the strong positions to the west of the road held by the enemy, who had brought up reinforcements and numerous machine guns, and could support his infantry by artillery fire from guns placed in positions along the main road. Our artillery, from lack of roads, could not be brought up to give adequate support to our infantry. Both attacks failed, and it was evident that a period of preparation and organisation would be necessary before an attack could be delivered in sufficient strength to drive the enemy from his positions west of the road.

Orders were accordingly issued to consolidate the positions gained and prepare for relief.

Though these troops had failed to reach their final objectives, they had achieved invaluable results. The narrow passes from the plain to the plateau of the Judæan range have seldom been forced, and have been fatal to many invading armies. Had the attempt not been made at once, or had it been pressed with less determination, the enemy would have had time to reorganise his defence in the passes lower down, and the conquest of the plateau would then have been slow, costly and precarious. As it was, positions had been won from which the final attack could be prepared and delivered with good prospects of success.

20. By December 4th all reliefs were complete, and a line was held from Kustul by the Neby Samwil ridge, Beit Izza, and Beit Dukka, to Beit ur el Tahta.

During this period attacks by the enemy along the whole line led to severe local fighting. On November 25th our advanced posts north of the river Auja were driven back across the river. From the 27th to the 30th the enemy delivered a series of attacks directed especially against the high ground north and north east of Jaffa, the left flank of our position in the hills from Beit ur el Foka to El Burj, and the Neby Samwil ridge. An attack on the night of the 29th succeeded in penetrating our outpost line north-east of Jaffa, but next morning the whole hostile detachment, numbering 150, was surrounded and captured by Australian Light Horse. On the 30th a similar fate befell a battalion which attacked near El Burj; a counter-attack by Australian Light Horse took 200 prisoners and practically destroyed the attacking battalion. There was particularly heavy fighting

between El Burj and Beit Ur El Foka, but the Yeomanry and Scottish troops successfully resisted all attacks and inflicted severe losses on the enemy. At Beit Ur El Foka one company took 300 prisoners. All efforts by the enemy to drive us off the Neby Samwil ridge were completely repulsed. These attacks cost the Turks very dearly. We took 750 prisoners between 27th and 30th November, and the enemy's losses in killed and wounded were undoubtedly heavy. His attacks in no way affected our positions nor impeded the progress of our preparations.

21. Favoured by a continuance of fine weather, preparations for a fresh advance against the Turkish positions west and south of Jerusalem proceeded rapidly. Existing roads and tracks were improved and new ones constructed to enable heavy and field artillery to be placed in position and ammunition and supplies brought up. The water supply was also developed.

The date for the attack was fixed as 8th December. Welsh troops, with a Cavalry regiment attached, had advanced from their positions north of Beersheba up the Hebron-Jerusalem road on the 4th. No opposition was met, and by the evening of the 6th the head of this column was ten miles north of Hebron. The Infantry were directed to reach the Bethlehem-Beit Jala area by the 7th, and the line Surbahir-Sherafat (about three miles south of Jerusalem) by dawn on the 8th, and no troops were to enter Jerusalem during this operation.

It was recognised that the troops on the extreme right might be delayed on the 7th and fail to reach the positions assigned to them by dawn on the 8th. Arrangements were therefore made to protect the right flank west of Jerusalem, in case such delay occurred.

22. On the 7th the weather broke, and for three days rain was almost continuous. The hills were covered with mist at frequent intervals, rendering observation from the air and visual signalling impossible. A more serious effect of the rain was to jeopardise the supply arrangements by rendering the roads almost impassable—quite impassable, indeed, for mechanical transport and camels in many places.

The troops moved into positions of assembly by night, and, assaulting at dawn on the 8th, soon carried their first objectives. They then pressed steadily forward. The mere physical difficulty of climbing the steep and rocky hillsides and crossing the deep valleys would have sufficed to render progress slow, and the opposition encountered was considerable. Artillery support was soon difficult, owing to the length of the advance and the difficulty of moving guns forward. But by about noon London troops had already advanced over two miles, and were swinging north-east to gain the Nablus-Jerusalem road; while the Yeomanry had captured the Beit Ikksa spur, and were preparing for a further advance.

As the right column had been delayed and was still some distance south of Jerusalem, it was necessary for the London troops to throw back their right and form a defensive flank facing east towards Jerusalem, from the western outskirts of which considerable rifle and artillery fire was being experienced. This delayed the advance, and early in the afternoon it was decided to consolidate the line gained and resume the advance next day, when the right column would be in a position to exert its pres-

sure. By nightfall our line ran from Neby Samwil to the east of Beit Ikksa, through Lifta to a point about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Jerusalem, whence it was thrown back facing east. All the enemy's prepared defences west and north-west of Jerusalem had been captured, and our troops were within a short distance of the Nablus-Jerusalem road.

The London troops and Yeomanry had displayed great endurance in difficult conditions. The London troops especially, after a night march in heavy rain to reach their positions of deployment, had made an advance of three to four miles in difficult hills in the face of stubborn opposition.

During the day about 300 prisoners were taken and many Turks killed. Our own casualties were light.

23. Next morning the advance was resumed. The Turks had withdrawn during the night, and the London troops and Yeomanry, driving back rearguards, occupied a line across the Nablus-Jerusalem road four miles north of Jerusalem, while Welsh troops occupied a position east of Jerusalem across the Jericho road. These operations isolated Jerusalem, and at about noon the enemy sent out a parlementaire and surrendered the city.

At noon on the 11th I made my official entry into Jerusalem.

24. In the operations from October 31st to December 9th over 12,000 prisoners were taken. The total captures of material have not yet been fully counted, owing to the large area covered by these operations; but are known to include about 100 guns of various calibres, many machine guns, more than 20,000,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, and 250,000 rounds of gun ammunition. More than twenty aeroplanes were destroyed by our airmen or burnt by the enemy to avoid capture.

25. My thanks are due to the cordial assistance which I have received from His Excellency the High Commissioner, General Sir Francis Wingate, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., who has always given me the greatest assistance.

26. During the whole period Rear-Admiral T. Jackson, C.B., M.V.O., has given me most loyal support, and has co-operated with me in a manner which has materially contributed to our success.

27. Brigadier-General Sir G. Macauley, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Railway Transport, has given invaluable help in the organisation of my railways.

28. All ranks and services in the Force under my command have acquitted themselves in a manner beyond praise. Fatigue, thirst, heat and cold have been endured uncomplainingly. The co-operation of all arms has been admirable, and has enabled success in battle to be consummated by irresistible and victorious pursuit.

Leaders and staffs have all done well, and in particular I bring to Your Lordship's notice the names of the following officers:—

Major-General (temporary Lieutenant-General) Sir Philip Chetwode, Bart., K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.

My plan of operations was based on his appreciation of the situation and on the scheme which he put forward to me on my arrival in Egypt last summer. To his strategical foresight and tactical skill the success of the campaign is largely due.



Major-General (temporary Lieutenant-General) E. S. Bulfin, C.B., C.V.O.

Has shown great ability as an organiser and leader in high command. To his determination in attack, and his dash and drive in pursuit, is due the swift advance to Jerusalem.

Major-General (temporary Lieutenant-General) Sir Henry Chauvel, K.C.M.G., C.B.

Has commanded my mounted troops with invariable success in attack and pursuit. His co-operation with other arms has always been ready and loyal, and has contributed greatly to the victory won.

Major-General L. J. Bols, C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the General Staff, has done brilliant work. He is a General Staff Officer of the first rank.

Major-General J. Adye, C.B., Deputy Adjutant-General, has rendered invaluable service.

Major-General Sir Walter Campbell, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., Deputy Quarter-master-General, has had a difficult task which he has carried out with complete success.

Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel (temporary Brigadier-General) G. P. Dawnay, D.S.O., M.V.O., Reserve of Officers, Brigadier-General, General Staff, has proved himself a strategist and tactician of unusual merit. His work has been of the highest value.

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

E. H. H. ALLENBY,  
General,

Commanding-in-Chief,  
Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

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