

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