

Middlesex troops was surrounded by 700 Turks, supported by mountain artillery. Although without artillery support, it offered a most gallant resistance, holding out till relief came on the morning of the 28th. None of the other attacks on this division's front were any more successful.

On the 60th Division front north of Jerusalem a lull in the fighting occurred after 8 a.m. This lasted till 12.55 p.m., when the enemy launched an attack of unexpected strength against the whole front. In places this attack reached our main line of defence, but these small successes were short-lived, for in each case local counter-attacks, carried out immediately, were successful in restoring the line. This proved to be the final effort.

At noon the counter-attack by the 74th and 10th Divisions, which had been launched at 6.30 a.m. against the right of the enemy's attack, had made itself felt.

The 74th Division, climbing the western slopes of the Zeitun Ridge, advanced along it in an easterly direction. On their left a brigade of the 10th Division advanced along the neighbouring ridge, the left of the 10th Division advancing in a northerly direction to form a defensive flank.

These divisions met with a determined and stubborn resistance. The ground over which the advance took place was sufficiently rough and broken to render the advance slow and difficult, quite apart from any action of the enemy. In addition, the boulders on the hills rendered it ideal ground in which to fight a delaying action, providing positions for machine guns, which are difficult to locate.

Nevertheless, when night fell the 74th Division had reached the east end of the Zeitun Ridge, opposite Beitunia. On their left the 10th Division overlooked Ain Arik, and further to the left were in possession of Deir Izbzia.

The counter-attack of these two divisions had thus not only resulted in an advance of 4,000 yards on a six-mile front, but, by attracting the enemy's reserves, had prevented the enemy from repeating his attacks on the 60th Division, and, depriving him of the initiative, had forced him to abandon his attempt to capture Jerusalem.

Seeing that the Turkish attack was spent I ordered the XXth Corps to make a general advance northwards on December 28th.

The enemy, after the failure of his attack on December 27th, was still holding his original position in front of the 60th Division. This position was of considerable strength, and included Khurbet Adaseh, a high ridge overlooking the approaches from Beit Hanninah, while further west it included the villages of Bir Nebala and El Jib, the scene of heavy fighting at the end of November.

El Jib and Bir Nebala were captured by 1 p.m. Khurbet Adaseh was then attacked and captured by 5.30 p.m.

At 6.30 p.m. the advance was resumed and by 9.15 p.m. the 60th Division had reached the line Er Ram-Rafat. Considerable resistance was met with at Er Ram. The right of this advance was protected by the 53rd Division, which extended its left northwards, capturing the villages of Anata and Kh. Almit.

On the left the 74th Division, advancing from the east end of the Zeitun Ridge, captured Beitunia, which was defended with ob-

stinacy, and seized the high ridge east and north of it. Further to the left, the right of the 10th Division, descending into the valley of the Ain Arik, climbed the opposite slopes and captured Kefr Shiyon Hill, one mile east of Ain Arik, and the ridge between this hill and Kh. Rubin. Considerable opposition was encountered, and great difficulty was experienced in locating the enemy's machine guns.

The 60th Division continued its advance on December 29th. At the start no opposition was met with, the enemy having withdrawn to Bireh and the Et Tahuneh Ridge just north of the village, leaving a garrison at Shab Salah, a precipitous hill 1,000 yards south of Bireh overlooking the Jerusalem-Nablus road. As soon as the leading troops came within range of Bireh they were met with heavy rifle and machine-gun fire. Some delay was caused owing to the difficulty experienced in bringing the guns forward.

By 4.15 p.m. the left of the attack reached the Bireh-Ram Allah road, and then stormed the Tahuneh ridge, the last position from which the enemy could observe the approaches to Bireh.

Simultaneously with this attack the right of the 60th Division had stormed Shab Saleh in face of heavy machine-gun fire, subsequently capturing the ridge east of Bireh.

At 9 p.m. the advance was continued to the line Beitin—El Balua—Kh. El Burj. Little opposition was encountered. On this day the 53rd Division extended its line northwards to protect the right of the 60th Division, occupying Hizmeb Jeba and the high ground north of it overlooking the Wadi El Medineh, with little opposition.

On the left the 74th Division occupied Ram Allah, and the 10th Division advanced without opposition to the line Khurbet Rubin—Ras Kerker—Deir El Kuddis.

The final line occupied by the XXth Corps thus ran from Deir Ibn Obeid, south-east of Jerusalem, northwards past Hizmeb and Jeba to Beitin, and thence westwards through El Burj, Ras Kerker to Deir El Kuddis.

During these days the Royal Air Force not only gained valuable and timely information, but repeatedly attacked the enemy's troops and transport with bombs and machine-gun fire from low altitudes, inflicting considerable losses.

The Turkish attempt to recapture Jerusalem had thus ended in crushing defeat. He had employed fresh troops who had not participated in the recent retreat of his army from Beersheba and Gaza and had escaped its demoralising effects. The determination and gallantry with which his attack was carried out only served to increase his losses. The attack had commenced on the night December 26/27th. By the evening of December 30th the XXth Corps had advanced on a front of 12 miles to a depth varying from 6 miles on the right to 3 miles on the left. This advance had to overcome not only a determined and obstinate resistance, but great natural difficulties as well, which had to be overcome before guns could be brought up to support the infantry.

750 prisoners, 24 machine guns and 3 automatic rifles were captured during these operations, and over 1,000 Turkish dead were buried by us. Our own casualties were considerably less than this number.

As a result of this advance and of that of the XXIst Corps, my force was in a far better