

ing line, of some 12,000 sabres, 57,000 rifles and 540 guns.

I had thus a considerable superiority in numbers over the enemy, especially in mounted troops.

4. I was anxious to gain touch with the Arab Forces east of the Dead Sea, but the experience gained in the raids which I had undertaken against Amman and Es Salt in March and May had proved that the communications of a force in the hills of Moab were liable to interruption as long as the enemy was able to transfer troops from the west to the east bank of the Jordan. This he was in a position to do, as he controlled the crossing at Jisr ed Damieh.

The defeat of the VIIth and VIIIth Turkish Armies west of the Jordan would enable me to control this crossing. Moreover, the destruction of these armies, which appeared to be within the bounds of possibility, would leave the IVth Army isolated, if it continued to occupy the country south and west of Amman. I determined, therefore, to strike my blow west of the Jordan.

5. With the exception of a small and scattered reserve, the whole of the Turkish Force west of the Jordan was enclosed in a rectangle 45 miles in length and only 12 miles in depth. The northern edge of this rectangle was a line from Jisr ed Damieh on the Jordan, through Nablus and Tul Keram, to the sea. All the enemy's communications to Damascus ran northwards from the eastern half of this line, converging on El Afule and Beisan, some 25 miles to the north. Thence, with the exception of the roads leading from El Afule along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, his communications ran eastwards up the valley of the Yarmuk to Deraa, the junction of the Palestine and Hejaz Railways.

Thus El Afule, Beisan and Deraa were the vital points on his communications. If they could be seized, the enemy's retreat would be cut off. Deraa was beyond my reach, but not beyond that of mobile detachments of the Arab Army. It was not to be expected that these detachments could hold this railway junction, but it was within their power to dislocate all traffic.

El Afule, in the Plain of Esdraelon, and Beisan, in the Valley of Jezreel, were within reach of my cavalry, provided the infantry could break through the enemy's defensive systems and create a gap for the cavalry to pass through. It was essential that this gap should be made at the commencement of operations, so that the cavalry might reach their destinations, 45 and 60 miles distant, before the enemy could make his escape. Moreover, whichever route the cavalry followed, the hills of Samaria, or their extension towards Mount Carmel, had to be crossed before the plain of Esdraelon and the valley of Jezreel could be reached; and it was most important that the enemy should not be given time to man the passes.

6. For this reason I decided to make my main attack in the coastal plain, rather than through the hills north of Jerusalem. In the hills the ground afforded the enemy positions of great natural strength, and taxed the physical energy of the attackers to the utmost. The operations in March, astride the Jerusalem-Nablus road, had proved that an advance of five miles in one day, in face of determined opposition, was the most that could be ex-

pected. A far more rapid and decisive advance than this was necessary. In addition, the route along the coast would enable the cavalry to pass through the hills of Samaria into the plain of Esdraelon at their narrowest point, thus ensuring greater speed and less likelihood of being checked. The supply of a large force of troops in the plain also presented fewer difficulties.

7. The coastal plain at Jiljulieh, the ancient Gilgal, is some 10 miles in width. The railway from Jiljulieh to Tul Keram skirts the foothills, running through a slight depression on the eastern edge of the plain. To the west of this depression the Turks had constructed two defensive systems. The first, 14,000 yards in length and 3,000 in depth, ran along a sandy ridge in a north-westerly direction from Bir Adas to the sea. It consisted of a series of works connected by continuous fire trenches. The second, or Et Tireh system, 3,000 yards in rear, ran from the village of that name to the mouth of the Nahr Falik. On the enemy's extreme right the ground, except for a narrow strip along the coast, is marshy, and could only be crossed in few places. The defence of the second system did not, therefore, require a large force.

The railway itself was protected by numerous works and by the fortified villages of Jiljulieh and Kalkilieh. The ground between our front line at Ras El Ain and these villages was open, and was overlooked from the enemy's works on the foothills round Kefr Kasim.

8. By reducing the strength of the troops in the Jordan Valley to a minimum, and by withdrawing my reserves from the hills north of Jerusalem, I was able to concentrate five divisions and the French detachment, with a total of 383 guns, for the attack on these defences. Thus, on the front of attack I was able to concentrate some 35,000 rifles against 8,000, and 383 guns against 130. In addition, two cavalry and one Australian mounted divisions were available for this front.

9. I entrusted the attack on the enemy's defences in the coastal plain to Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Bulfin, K.C.B., C.V.O., commanding the XXIst Corps. In addition to the 3rd (Lahore), 7th (Meerut), 54th and 75th Divisions, which already formed part of the XXIst Corps, I placed at his disposal the 60th Division, the French detachment, the 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade, two brigades of mountain artillery, and eighteen batteries of heavy and siege artillery.

I ordered him to break through the enemy's defences between the railway and the sea, to open a way for the cavalry, and at the same time to seize the foothills south-east of Jiljulieh. The XXIst Corps was then to swing to the right, on the line Hableh-Tul Keram, and advance in a north-easterly direction through the hills, converging on Samaria and Attara, so as to drive the enemy up the Messudie-Jenin road into the arms of the cavalry at El Afule.

I ordered Lieutenant-General Sir Harry Chauvel, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., commanding the Desert Mounted Corps, less the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, to advance along the coast, directly the infantry had broken through and had secured the crossings over the Nahr Falik. On reaching the line Jelameh-Hudeira he was to turn north-east, cross the hills of Samaria, and enter the plain of Esdraelon at El Lejjun and Abu Shusheh. Riding along the plain, the Desert Mounted