

ian Light Horse Brigade advanced along the Tul Keram-Nablus road on Messudie Station. By evening the line Baka-Beit Lid-Messudie Station-Attara had been reached.

The 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut) Divisions encountered a determined and well-organised resistance, which stiffened as the Meerut Division approached Beit Lid. The enemy showed no signs of demoralisation, and the country was very rugged and difficult.

Considerable confusion existed, however, behind the enemy's rearguards. All day his transport had been withdrawing. The Messudie-Jenin road was crowded. Its defiles had been bombed continuously by the Royal Air Force, as had long columns of troops and transport moving on Nablus in order to reach the Beisan road. It is probable that the enemy did not yet realise that my cavalry was already in Afule and Beisan, and had blocked his main lines of retreat.

17. Early on the morning of September 19th, before the infantry had advanced to the attack, the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions moved out of the groves round Saron, and formed up in rear of the 7th (Meerut) and 60th Divisions. The Australian Mounted Division, less the 5th Light Horse Brigade, was on its way from Ludd.

Thanks to the rapidity with which the infantry broke through both Turkish systems of defence, the cavalry obtained a good start. By noon the leading troops of the Desert Mounted Corps had reached Jelameh, Tell ed Drurh and Hudeira, eighteen miles north of the original front line. After a brief rest the advance was continued. The 5th Cavalry Division moved north to Ez Zerghaniyeh. It then turned north-east, and, riding through the hills of Samaria past Jarak, descended into the Plain of Esdraelon at Abu Shusheh. The 13th Cavalry Brigade was then directed on Nazareth, the 14th on El Afule.

The 4th Cavalry Division turned north-east at Kh. es Sumrah, and followed the valley of the Wadi Arah into the hills. The valley gradually narrows as the pass at Musmus is reached.

The enemy had sent a battalion from El Afule to hold this pass, but only its advanced guard arrived in time. Overcoming its resistance, the cavalry encountered the remainder of the battalion at El Lejjun. The 2nd Lancers charged, killed forty-six with the lance, and captured the remainder, some 470 in number.

The 4th Cavalry Division then marched to El Afule, which it reached at 08:00, half an hour after its capture by the 14th Cavalry Brigade.

In the meantime the 13th Cavalry Brigade of the 5th Cavalry Division, riding across the Plain of Esdraelon, had reached Nazareth, the site of the Yilderim General Headquarters, at 05:30. Fighting took place in the streets, some 2,000 prisoners being captured. Liman von Sanders had already made good his escape, but his papers and some of his staff were taken. This brigade then marched to El Afule; arriving there as the 4th Cavalry Division rode down the Plain of Jezreel to Beisan, which it reached at 16:30, having covered some eighty miles in thirty-four hours. The 4th Cavalry Division detached a regiment to seize the railway bridge over the Jordan at Jisr Mejamie.

The Australian Mounted Division, which had followed the 4th Cavalry Division into the Plain of Esdraelon, was directed on Jenin, where the road from Messudie to El Afule leaves the hills. Jenin was reached at 17:30, and was captured after a sharp fight, a large number of prisoners being taken.

Thus, within 36 hours of the commencement of the battle, all the main outlets of escape remaining to the Turkish VIIth and VIIIth Armies had been closed. They could only avoid capture by using the tracks which run south-east from the vicinity of Nablus to the crossings over the Jordan at Jisr ed Damieh. These were being rapidly denied to them.

The first phase of the operations was over.

18. The enemy's resistance had been broken on September 20th. On September 21st the Turkish rearguards were driven in early in the morning. All organised resistance ceased. The 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade, with the French Cavalry leading, entered Nablus from the west; the 10th Division from the south.

By the evening, the XXth Corps had reached the line Neby Belan, on the high ground north-east of Nablus, and Mount Ebal; the XXIst Corps the line Samaria, Attara, Belah.

Since the early hours of the morning great confusion had reigned in the Turkish rear. Camps and hospitals were being hurriedly evacuated; some were in flames. The roads leading north-east and east from Nablus to Beisan and the Jordan Valley were congested with transport and troops. Small parties of troops were moving east along the numerous wadis. The disorganisation which already existed was increased by the repeated attacks of the Royal Air Force; in particular, on the closely packed column of transport moving north from Balata to Kh. Ferweh, where a road branches off, along the Wadi Farah, to Jisr ed Damieh. Some of the transport continued along the road to Beisan, where it fell into the hands of the 4th Cavalry Division. The greater part made for the Jordan along the Wadi Farah. Nine miles from Kh. Ferweh, at Ain Shibleh, a road branches off to the north to Beisan. A mile beyond this point the Wadi Farah passes through a gorge. The head of the column was heavily bombed at this point. The drivers left their vehicles in panic, wagons were overturned, and in a short time the road was completely blocked. Still attacked by the Royal Air Force, the remainder of the column turned off at Ain Shibleh, and headed for Beisan.

The VIIth Turkish Army was by this time thoroughly disorganised, and was scattered in the area between the Kh. Ferweh-Beisan road and the Jordan. These parties had now to be collected.

At 01:30 on September 22nd the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade and the British West Indies Battalions of Chaytor's Force seized the bridge at Jisr ed Damieh. All hope of escape for the enemy in that direction had vanished.

In the early hours of the morning, parties of Turks, of strengths varying from 50 to 300, began to approach Beisan, preceded by white flags.

At 08:00 a column, with transport and guns, 10 miles long, was reported by the Royal Air Force to be moving north along the Ain