

men, of whom only 4,000 were effective rifles, fled northwards a mass of individuals, without organisation, without transport, and without any of the accessories required to enable it to act even on the defensive.

25. I determined to exploit this success and to advance to the line Rayak—Beirut. The occupation of Beirut would give me a port, with a road and a railway, leading inland to Rayak and Damascus. An alternative and shorter line of supply would thus be obtained.

The Desert Mounted Corps, leaving the Australian Mounted Division at Damascus, moved on Rayak and Zahle on October 5th. No opposition was encountered, and both places were occupied on the following day.

At Rayak, the junction of the broad gauge railway from the north and the metre gauge lines to Beirut and to Damascus and the Hejaz, were found on the aerodrome the remains of thirty aeroplanes which had been burnt by the enemy before he retired. Large quantities of stores and rolling stock were captured, most of the latter in a damaged condition.

In the meantime, the 7th (Meerut) Division had marched from Haifa to Beirut. Leaving Haifa on October 3rd, it marched along the coast. Crossing the Ladder of Tyre, it was received by the populace of Tyre and Sidon with enthusiasm. On October 8th it reached Beirut, where it was warmly welcomed, the inhabitants handing over 660 Turks, including 60 officers, who had surrendered to them. Ships of the French Navy had already entered the harbour.

26. On October 9th I ordered the Desert Mounted Corps to continue its advance and occupy Homs, leaving one division at Damascus. At the same time I ordered the XXIst Corps to continue its march along the coast to Tripoli. Armoured cars occupied Baalbek on October 9th, taking over 500 Turks who had surrendered to the inhabitants. The 5th Cavalry Division, which led the advance, reached Baalbek on October 11th, and, crossing the watershed between the Nahr Litani on the south and the Orontes on the north, followed the valley of the latter river, past Lebwe, and reached Homs on October 15th, having marched over eighty miles since leaving Rayak.

The station buildings at Homs had been burnt by the enemy before he evacuated the town on October 12th.

On the coast, Tripoli was occupied by the XXIst Corps Cavalry Regiment and armoured cars on October 13th. No opposition was encountered. The Corps Cavalry Regiment was followed by a brigade of the 7th (Meerut) Division. The occupation of Tripoli provided a shorter route by which the cavalry at Homs could be supplied.

27. Having secured Homs and Tripoli, I determined to seize Aleppo with the least possible delay. The 5th Cavalry Division and the Armoured Car Batteries were alone available. The Australian Mounted Division at Damascus was over 100 miles distant from Homs, and could not be brought up in time. The 4th Cavalry Division at Baalbek was much reduced in strength by sickness, and needed a rest to reorganise. Time was of importance, and I judged that the 5th Cavalry Division would be strong enough for the purpose. The information available indicated the presence

of some 20,000 Turks and Germans at Aleppo. Of these, only some 8,000 were combatants, and they were demoralised. Moreover, reports from all sources showed that considerable numbers of the enemy were leaving the town daily by rail for the north.

The armoured cars had reached Hama without opposition on October 20th. On the following day the 5th Cavalry Division commenced its advance. On October 22nd the armoured cars reached Khan Sebit, halfway between Homs and Aleppo, as the enemy's rearguard left the village in lorries. A German armoured car, a lorry and some prisoners were captured. The enemy were not encountered again till October 24th, when a body of cavalry were dispersed at Khan Tuman, ten miles south of Aleppo. Five miles further on the armoured cars were checked by strong Turkish rearguards and had to remain in observation till the cavalry came up.

On the afternoon of October 25th the armoured cars were joined by the 15th (Imperial Service) Cavalry Brigade. That evening a detachment of the Arab Army reached the eastern outskirts of Aleppo, and during the night forced their way in, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

Early on the morning of October 26th the armoured cars and the 15th Cavalry Brigade, moving round the west side of the town, followed the enemy along the Aleppo—Katma road and gained touch with him south-east of Haritan. The Turkish rearguard consisted of some 2,500 infantry, 150 cavalry, and eight guns. The Mysore Lancers and two squadrons of the Jodhpur Lancers attacked the enemy's left; covered by the fire of the armoured cars, the Machine Gun Squadron and two dismounted squadrons of the Jodhpur Lancers. The Mysore and Jodhpur Lancers charged most gallantly. A number of Turks were speared, and many threw down their arms, only to pick them up again when the cavalry had passed through, and their weakness had become apparent. The squadrons were not strong enough to complete the victory, and were withdrawn till a larger force could be assembled.

That night the Turkish rearguard withdrew to a position near Deir el Jemel, twenty miles north-west of Aleppo. The 5th Cavalry Division remained in observation, astride the roads leading from Aleppo to Killis and Katma, and occupied Muslimie Junction.

It was too weak to continue the advance to Alexandretta till the arrival of the Australian Mounted Division, which had already left Damascus to join it.

Before the latter could arrive, the armistice between the Allies and Turkey had been concluded, and came into force at noon on October 31st.

The 5th Cavalry Division captured fifty prisoners and eighteen guns in Aleppo. The Turks had carried out demolitions on the railway at Aleppo and Muslimie Junction before retiring, but had left eight engines and over 100 trucks, which, though damaged, are not beyond repair.

Aleppo is over 300 miles from our former front line. The 5th Cavalry Division covered 500 miles between September 19th and October 26th, and captured over 11,000 prisoners and fifty-two guns. During this period the 5th