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THE SOMALILAND OPERATIONS

JUNE, 1903, TO MAY, 1904.

By Major F. CUNLIFFE OWEN, R.F.A.

THE general trend of affairs in our Somaliland Protectorate, leading up to the operations recently conducted, will be probably well known to the readers of this JOURNAL.

I.—GENERAL SITUATION AT COMMENCEMENT OF RECENT OPERATIONS.

Suffice it to say here that the object of the operations was, in a word, the expulsion or capture of the Mullah, who, for the three years previous, had been disturbing the peace of the Protectorate, and against whom three previous series of operations had been directed.

The last of the three series, viz., that under Brigadier-General Manning, had left the situation as follows:—

The Mullah, overwhelming a detachment from General Manning's force at Gumburru (W. of Galadi), and fighting a sharp action with another portion of the force at Daratoleh (N. of Walwal and Wardair), had moved from the west to the Nogal District, with some 1,200 to 1,500 riflemen, 4,000 ponies, and a number of spearmen.

General Manning, who had mainly been operating round Galadi, withdrew his forces from that region, and retired north along, and retaining hold of, our old-established line, Bohotleh-Burao-Sheikh to the sea, which the Mullah, it will be observed had crossed in moving to the Nogal.

II.—THE POSITION OF THE ENEMY AND OUR OBJECTIVE.

In making this move to the Nogal, the Mullah had entered into a region which was acceptable to a large portion of his following. To explain this, and for the purposes of this narrative, the Somali tribes may be classed generally into the four following divisions:—

1. Ishak.
2. Dolbahanta.
3. Mijjarten.
4. Ogaden.

The first are mostly attached to us, inhabiting the coast and more northerly portion of our Protectorate. The second, more of a fighting class than the first, were divided between us and the Mullah; but the great preponderance lay with him. Their habitat comprises the Nogal and country N., W., and S. of the latter. The Mijjarten are the one great tribe occupying the N. and E. Somali coasts in Italian territory. The Ogaden country lies in the west of our Protectorate—up to and across the Abyssinian border.

¹ This paper was written last September.

Now, the Mullah himself is an Ogaden, and if pressed in the Nogal district, the region of his choice might be placed as the western country and well-watered district of the Webbe Shebeyle. Inasmuch, however, as a large part of his later following comprised Dolbahanta men, attracted to him during his previous enterprises, and as the Nogal district affords some permanent water supply with good grazing on the adjacent northern and southern Haud tablelands, a fair assumption on our part was that he might make some more or less determined attempt to cling to the Nogal as long as it suited him for resting purposes, and so forth; and in view of the certain amount of prestige obtained after Erigo and Gumburru, it was very possible that he would be emboldened to try some really definite conclusions with us in the district in question. In any case, however, our course was to move against him thither, taking such precautions, at the same time, as we could to block his way back to his own country.

There is more to be said in connection with the full strategical situation, but these few preliminary remarks will be sufficient at this stage to outline what was in front of the field force.

III.—OUR FORCES FOR THE CAMPAIGN.

The forces left over by General Manning comprised the following units:—

British Troops.

1 company mounted infantry.

Indian Troops.

2 companies mounted infantry.

Bikanir Camel Corps.

1 section mountain battery.

1 company sappers and miners.

52nd Sikhs.

The 101st Grenadiers.

107th Pioneers.

African Troops.

About 1,000 rifles from the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th Battalions and Indian Contingent of the King's African Rifles, and the camel battery from the same corps, 2 companies mounted infantry and some foot levies, forming the nucleus of the recently-formed 6th (Somaliland) Battalion King's African Rifles.

In all about 4,000 men, now occupying, as above noted, Bohotleh and the line thence N. through Sheikh to the sea.

There was also in the country a British R.E. Telegraph Detachment, working a wire right up to Bohotleh.

Upon, or generally concurrent with, General Egerton's arrival, the following additional troops were added:—

3 companies 2nd Bn. Hants Regiment, from Aden.

27th Punjaubis,

2 companies British mounted infantry, } from India.

1 company native sappers and miners, }

IV.—ORGANISATION AND INITIAL DISTRIBUTION OF OUR FIGHTING FORCES.

The whole force was now grouped into:—

- a. Mounted troops.
- b. I. Infantry brigade.
- c. II. Infantry brigade.
- d. Line of communication and divisional troops.

The mounted troops were sub-divided into 4 corps:—

- I. Corps British (and Somali)¹ M.I.
- II. „ Indian M.I.
- III. „ Tribal Horse: A body of Somali Irregulars newly raised in the country.
- IV. „ Gadabursi Horse: A similar body to the last named.

These two last corps were each 500 strong, and were supplied with fire-arms and 3 British officers apiece. The whole of the mounted troops were under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Kenna, and (except the Somali M.I.) were for the moment distributed along the line, where water and grazing facilities best offered. The Somali M.I. were left forward as part of a small "movable column."

The 1st Infantry Brigade consisted of all the K.A. Rifle detachments grouped together, and the 2nd Brigade of the Hants, Sikhs, and Punjaubis. The 1st Brigade held Bohotleh and occupied the line thence to Burao, also supplying the infantry for the "movable column." The 2nd Brigade were concentrated generally in the high-lying country at Upper and Lower Sheikh.

Of the remaining troops, the engineers were kept busy with water supply, the improvement of the defences of posts and so forth, and the pioneer battalion with road-making on the line. The Grenadiers performed the duties at the base, supplied escorts and garrisons for Hargeisa (an important centre in the west, though not included in the present operations) and Las Dureh, a small post east of Sheikh.

In reference to the dispositions described above, it must be noted that an advanced base had been formed at Kirrit, a place of permanent water supply, and Wadamagoa, another favourable spot for water and grazing, had been selected as the centre from which a small "movable column" (before referred to) carried out reconnaissances, and stood ready in case of raids or any premature enterprise by the enemy.

Having now dealt with the fighting forces at disposal,² attention will be next directed to the question of transport, which, always a difficult matter in "savage" operations, perhaps presents even more difficulties in Somaliland than elsewhere.

V.—TRANSPORT; WITH WHICH ALSO DESCRIPTION OF COUNTRY AND COMMUNICATIONS CAN BE SUITABLY COMBINED.

On account of the poorness of communications and the sandy soil of the country, little opportunities offer in Somaliland for more than

¹ Only nominally in this Corps. They were generally detached.

² The Mullah's forces by the autumn may be said to have totalled up to about 40,000 men, the number of rifles being perhaps a couple of hundred more than that given on p. 169.

"pack" transport, and on account of water and forage difficulties this "pack" transport must be mainly camel.

In our communication line from Berbera to Bohotleh, a more or less clearly defined road presented itself, latterly well laid and improved by the pioneers for a great portion of its length. Even, however, where so improved and well laid, any continuous traffic of men and beasts rendered the road deep and heavy sand.

Further, the high-lying country from Upper Sheikh to the south is reached from the maritime region by an extremely steep pass, difficult of negotiation by the lightest of wheeled transport.

Off the above main line and in the Nogal, there are merely primitive tracks, in some cases through thick scrub.

Apart from the steep ascent at Sheikh, there is nothing really formidable in the nature of hilly country to face in the region now under description. From Sheikh the country gently descends south to Bohotleh and east to the Nogal district. This latter is somewhat rough and broken up by nullahs and water-courses, with isolated hills, but is not generally difficult for pack transport or mounted men. South of the Nogal, past Bohotleh to the west, stretches the Southern "Haud," a high-lying table-land¹ approached by steep passes; and the Northern "Haud" (or "Sorl") lies similarly on the north.

As regards the water and forage difficulties, any permanent wells are some distance apart, and require as often as not some considerable cleaning out; while, though there are numerous water-courses and water-pans, these cannot be depended upon except after good rain. No crops are grown, and therefore for animals one is entirely dependent upon grazing, complications being thus introduced if animals are imported who normally require grain. Great exertions had to be put forward in organising transport for the present expedition, for not only was there little of much use left at the conclusion of former operations, but those now undertaken were designed to be more comprehensive than any which had gone before, and were prosecuted with considerably larger forces.

Though nothing very extensive could be effected with other than camel transport, the following were also utilised:—

- a. 2 companies A.S.C. from South Africa, with buck-wagons and mules, for work at the base and a short way up from Berbera.
- b. A mule corps of about 800 mules, principally for work up and down the Sheikh Pass. These mules were from South Africa, and also from India, the former having remained over from the previous Obbia operations.
- c. 3 Ekka trains from India for work along the best part of the main road, Sheikh to Burao, and also between Berbera and the Sheikh Pass.
- d. An Arab camel cart train for similar work to the last named.

And—

- e. An Arab coolie corps from Aden for pier work at Berbera, in conjunction with a light tramway which conveyed stores from the pier to the various departments.

¹ Mostly waterless, but with good grazing facilities.

The main transport amounted to 16 camel corps, each of about 600 camels, Indian, Arab, and Somali, attended by natives from the country from which drawn. The Indian corps were on the Silladar system, and their camels were of greatly better value than either Arab or Somali, carrying more weight and lasting longer. The Arab camels were purchased at Aden, the Somali mostly in the western part of the Protectorate, near the vicinity of Hargeisa, Bulhar, etc.

VI.—INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT.

Next to the transport, the Intelligence Department necessitates a few words of special description.

With such an elusive enemy as the Mullah and the desert nature of the country, the gaining of intelligence, especially for the period antecedent to the commencement of regular operations, was by no means an easy matter.

The main source by which intelligence was obtained lay in the sending out of somewhat large parties of mounted scouts ("illalos"). These men really covered enormous distances and secured the bulk of the news.

Other sources of information were spies and refugees (though it was difficult to establish any regular system of the former), and reliable news filtered in sometimes from places on the coast. The principal of these were Hais, Las Khorai, Bosaso, Ras Hafun, and Obbia. H.M.'s ships visited these spots at intervals, in addition to which, military intelligence officers were posted for periods at Hais, Las Khorai, and Obbia,¹ either living on land or in a war-ship. The Intelligence Department generally, which was of meagre proportion in the previous operations, was organised most effectively for the later phases. Some half-dozen to a dozen intelligence officers were employed with the various units or at posts, and the scouts were augmented to the number of 450, being changed according to the theatre operated in. Furthermore, all the interpreters to the force, totalling to 150 or more, were engaged and supplied by the intelligence authorities.

VII.—PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS PREVIOUS AND LEADING UP TO GENERAL ADVANCE.

It will be recollected that the initial movements for the campaign, concurrent with the organisation of the necessary transport service, consisted of the occupation of Kirrit as an advanced base and the maintenance of the "movable column" at Wadamagoa.

This "movable column," subsequently pushed forward to Eil Dab, effected various reconnaissances to the east and south, and the parties of scouts at Eil Dab and Bohotleh, more especially those at the latter place, were industriously and effectively worked. The telegraph, besides running to Bohotleh, was also laid to Eil Dab, and the R.E. had done much in perfecting the water supply from Sheikh forward. By the middle of November the force was practically ready for forward movement, and the Mullah had been located as still in the vicinity of Kallis and Adadero (S.E. Nogal).

An immediate forward movement was, however, held up on account of the delayed progress of our allies, the Abyssinians.

¹Through the consent of the Italian authorities in this latter case.

Negotiations had been entered into with the Emperor Menelik to co-operate with us once again in our Somali warfare, but his forces, through want of transport, were not as far advanced as was hoped would have been the case. Their intention was to move down S.E. from Harrar, *viâ* Gerlogubi, Wardair, and take up the occupation of the Galadi Wells, and possibly further, of those at Galkayu, so as to act as a stop to the Mullah returning back south or across the line to the Webbe Shebeyle neighbourhood.

In view of the delay with the Abyssinians, it was now decided, before making our Nogal advance, to escort a garrison down to Galadi, and to leave this garrison there with provisions to last till relief by our allies, calculated to the beginning of January.

This movement was successfully effected, and the escorting column returned to Bohotleh. Concurrently with this, negotiations were entered into, through the Italians, with Ali Yusuf, the Sultan of Obbia, to move his tribesmen west and occupy Galkayu, a main watering place for the Mullah should he take a more circuitous route to the Webbe Shebeyle neighbourhood than that *viâ* Galadi.

It is true that in our calculations the country to the north of the Nogal was more or less open to the Mullah, but this could not be altogether avoided. All that we could do in this direction was to make overtures to Osman Mahmoud, the head of the Mijjarten.¹ This gentleman, swayed by divided counsels, could not be counted upon to oppose the Mullah very actively. He could be relied upon, however, to make matters uncomfortable by raiding, and would probably not care for the Mullah to take up any but a very temporary abode in his territory. Moreover, the Mullah, in any case, if in this northern zone, would be farther and farther away from his own country, with the waterless "Sorl," or Northern "Haud," always intervening.

Towards the end of December the advanced base had been pushed forward to Eil Dab; the headquarters moved thither, and concentration made there of the mounted troops and bulk of the IIInd Brigade.

VIII.—THE ADVANCE INTO THE NOGAL.

The plan was now for the IIInd Brigade to move along the northern Nogal line, and the Ist Brigade, from Bohotleh, along the southern. This arrangement was, however, modified in view of action by the enemy.

Information arrived that the latter were on the move; in fact that the Mullah was himself proceeding north and east from Adadero, and had established a strong advanced post at Jidballi (50 miles east of Eil Dab).

To clear up matters, somewhat, a reconnaissance of mounted troops was directed towards Jidballi, and after some desultory fighting, it appeared pretty clear that the enemy was in considerable force in the neighbourhood.

¹ Nominally his rule extends as far south as Obbia, but practically the Sultan of the latter place does not acknowledge allegiance. The Sultan of Obbia was more amenable to our wishes than Osman Mahmoud, inasmuch as we had been very active at Obbia during the last operations, and the present Sultan had himself been set up by the Italians in place of his father.

Doubtless the Mullah had now perceived the danger of remaining longer quiescent; but whether he intended to try conclusions with that portion of our field force at Eil Dab,¹ or whether his occupation of Jidballi was merely to cover his movements north, was not, of course, evident. In any case, it appeared expedient to divert the 1st Brigade from the intended southern movement and to call it up north.

This was done, and the whole force united at Badwein on 9th January.¹

At dawn the day following, advance was made, with the infantry in *échelon*, or open square formation, thus:—

guns behind the front face, mounted troops on left (greater portion) and right rear, baggage, rations, water-tins, etc., being left behind in zariba.

IX.—ACTION OF JIDBALLI.

On nearing Jidballi, the enemy were reported in force, and the mounted troops on the left were ordered to make a wide sweeping movement to their (the enemy's) rear.

The advance was continued over more or less open terrain till within some 800 yards of the position (a depression in the ground) when, upon a halt being made, the Dervishes opened fire. Reply was made by the guns, and shortly after by the infantry. The Dervishes thereupon vacated their position and rushed forward to the attack. They could not, however, face the magazine and Maxim fire poured into them, and fled after a few minutes, not having reached within some hundreds of yards of the square. The mounted troops pursued for 18 miles. In this action the enemy lost some 1,000 killed, 200 prisoners, and 400 rifles of sorts. Our casualties amounted to 58 all told, including 3 officers killed: Lieutenant Bowden-Smith, in the square; Lieutenant Welland, R.A.M.C., shot and speared in a hand-to-hand fight which the mounted men on the right had with some of the Dervishes; and Captain Lister, 10th Hussars, most unfortunately killed when taking a message to Lieut.-Colonel Kenna's men on the left. Though the Dervish strength at Jidballi was probably 5,000, the Mullah was not himself there, nor was the action more than one against a strong detached portion of his army. Nevertheless, the result was a fairly sharp blow to his prestige. Numerous defections from his ranks ensued, and had it been possible to follow up the victory with greater celerity, some far-reaching results might have been early attained.

Unfortunately the force had to halt for a couple of days owing to supply and water difficulties. The Mullah himself had not been far away behind Jidballi, and according to deserters he had now fled to Halin. This might either presage retirement south again towards his old quarters, with ultimate attempt to get away *via* the Mudug,

¹The Galadi garrison had been previously withdrawn.

or it might be his intention to go north. However, after pushing forward a force to Hudin, which encountered no enemy, a general movement of our troops was made S.E. and S., the mounted troops and 1st Brigade being directed on Gerowai, the 2nd Brigade and headquarters following to Darialeh. Quantities of live stock were captured, but the enemy not being met with during the above movement, the 1st Brigade and mounted troops were directed on Halin and the 2nd Brigade on Gaulo.

On arrival at these places it was evident that we were on the track of the Mullah's line of retirement; but it was found that he had already moved up to the "Sorl," *via* the Anane Pass, and was now doubtless en route for Jidali or the Gebi District in the north.

X.—CONCLUSION OF FIRST PHASE OF OPERATIONS.

At this point (beginning of February) may be said to have concluded the first stage of the operations. The Mullah with his main force had got away, but his numbers were greatly thinned, and he had lost, or was now losing, an enormous number of camels, sheep, and other stock. Many of these had been left behind by him grazing on the Southern "Haud" or vicinity, and apart from the number already seized by the mounted troops and 1st Brigade, rounding-up parties of our men were now sent out from Bohotleh and elsewhere, and Ali Yusuf's men from Obbia were also at work to some purpose.

XI.—ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECOND PHASE OF OPERATIONS.

The second phase of operations, while leaving the 1st Brigade in the Nogal as a stop to the south, contemplated as strong a movement on new lines as the available remaining transport would allow, a breathing space of some three weeks ensuing between the two phases.

During these three weeks the mounted troops¹ and 2nd Brigade were withdrawn from the Nogal and given a short rest, the former being refitted with horses. Every means was tried to ascertain the Mullah's whereabouts in his new quarters, and Intelligence Officers were sent to Hais and L. Khorai, which latter, next to Bosaso (in Italian territory), was the most likely place for news to filter through. Ships of war also visited Bosaso and Ras Rafun on the coast, and a body of levies were formed and armed in the Musa Abukr country, under Lieut.-Colonel Melliss, U.C.

Meanwhile the Tribal and Gadabursi Horse, having come to the end of their 3 months' engagement, were disbanded, with the exception of 100 picked men.

By the first week in March the fresh preparations were complete, and a start forward was made.

XII.—SECOND PHASE AND MOVEMENT INTO N.E. ZONE.

The scheme was as follows:—A column under Major Brooke, 7th Hussars, consisting of the Indian Mounted Infantry, some of the Bikanir Camel Corps, and an infantry support, was to move out north from Eil Dab, and unite near El Afweeneh with a column under Brigadier-General Fasken, moving east from Las Dureh. General

¹ Except the Somali M.I. left with the 1st Brigade.

Fasken's column comprised something over 1,000 infantry, with 600 mounted men (British M.I., Bikanir Camel Corps, and Somali Irregulars).

On arrival at El Afweeneh, and nothing intervening, further forward movement would be arranged.

The junction was made on the 16th March, and the telegraph run out to El Afweeneh.

It was now arranged that Major Brooke's column should remain near Danan and act as a stop in that direction, while General Fasken's column, in conjunction with Colonel Melliss's levies, would operate northwards to Durdar Jidali, and then if necessary E. and S.E. to the Gebi.

Durdar Jidali was reached on the 21st without any encounter with the enemy beyond the discomfiture of a raiding party, which resulted in 50 dervishes being killed and the capture of 23 rifles, besides stock.

It transpired that the Mullah, on receiving news of the further advance of our troops, had retreated precipitately towards Buran from Kalgoraf, where he himself had actually been, though many of his following had been at Durdar Jidali.

Colonel Melliss's levies were now left to hold Jidali, and the column pushed on south to Ausaneh, the mounted troops proceeding further to Higli Gab. In doing this they struck upon the direct line of the Mullah's retreat, every testimony of a hurried move on his part being in evidence.

Some captures were made from Higli Gab, but the Mijjarten and Warsangeli¹ showed little sign of co-operation. This, coupled with the ever-diminishing transport and the nearness of the spring rains, seemed to offer little results to any further advance of the force.

It was accordingly determined to concentrate at Badan (S. of Las Khorai), whence the infantry should march to Las Khorai to embark for Berbera, and the mounted troops commence to return by land the way they had come.

Whilst these movements were in progress, however, circumstances ensued which caused a prolongation of offensive operations, and which led to a further effort on the part of our mounted troops.

The instructions for the infantry to proceed to Berbera were countermanded, and they were ordered to stand fast at L. Khorai. Concurrently all the mounted troops (including those under Major Brooke) were to assemble at Jidali for renewed movements towards Italian territory.

The withdrawal of the 1st Brigade from the Nogal was also countermanded. This brigade had already been for some time in difficulties regarding transport and supplies, but had been very active in patrolling and reconnoitring work, and had, among other captures, taken several thousand further head of live stock.

XIII.—CAPTURE OF ILLIG.

Besides the final movement with the mounted men, it was arranged to simultaneously bring off a descent upon Illig.

This place is a comparatively unimportant fishing and trading village on the East Italian Coast of Somaliland. The Mullah had,

¹ A comparatively small tribe, adjoining, but more or less independent of the Mijjarten.

however, possessed himself of the spot so long ago as October, 1903, and from there carried on an extensive trade in the disposal of skins, with possibly gun-running either there or in the vicinity. He had left a strong garrison, and had erected some formidable works. It also afforded him a *piéd-à-terre* should he move south to the Mudug between the Nogal and the sea—a possible route. The village had been fruitlessly bombarded by the Italians in the winter, and several subsequent proposals against the place had come to naught.

The Naval Commander-in-Chief of the E. Indies Squadron (Rear-Admiral Atkinson-Willes) now agreed to attack, with the assistance of a detachment of the Hants Regiment. The expedition left Berbera on the 16th April, and as the enterprise affords some interesting reading, it is treated at some length separately in an Appendix (A).

XIV.—FURTHER FINAL MOVEMENT IN N.E. ZONE.

The mounted troops meanwhile, with a support of infantry, had assembled at Badan, and were pushed forward by Lieut.-Colonel Kenna as vigorously as the spring rains, now in full force, and the available transport permitted.

On the 26th Biliyu was reached, and the infantry support left there. The mounted troops thence pressed on 50 miles farther south to Kheman, and some capture of stock was made; but the Mullah, it was evident, was not within practicable striking distance, and the troops returned to Biliyu, thence to Las Khorai. The latter place was now evacuated, and the campaign concluded with this and the recall of the 1st Brigade from the Nogal.¹

XV.—CONCLUSION OF THE OPERATIONS.

As for the Mullah himself and what remained of his following after our operations had shifted him from place to place, he had apparently struck E. in front of Colonel Kenna, and then turned S. across the Sorl, which movement the rains had facilitated. The 1st Brigade had pushed up reconnaissances on to the Sorl, and had captured stock there, also coming upon isolated parties of dervishes. When this brigade finally left the Nogal, the Mullah moved round to Gerowai and the neighbourhood from whence he started at the commencement of the present operations.

XVI.—RESULTS AND FINAL REMARKS.

The net result of these latter have not, it is true, either resulted in the capture of our antagonist or in his final expulsion from British territory.

On the other hand, it is estimated that he has suffered very real losses, and has had his prestige practically broken.

To absolutely extinguish an adversary of this description appears impossible, unless one can really limit his sphere of action or move our more cumbrous fighting organisation more rapidly than he can travel with his tribesmen. The pushing forward of a railway appears the

¹As regards the Abyssinians, they ultimately had reached with their advanced parties to the neighbourhood of Gerlogubi, and commenced to return in beginning of April.

only means to gain this double end, and moreover to deny power to fresh Mullahs should this present one be extinguished.

But when one comes to the question of such a costly undertaking as railway construction matters have also to be considered from the point of view of utility of the country, and a general discussion thereupon is not within the scope of this paper.

Meanwhile a temporary Indian garrison has now been left in Somaliland (posts at Eil Dab and Bohotleh being still retained) until Brigadier-General Swayne has got into trim a scheme of defence on the basis of tribal organisation, either with or without outside levies. Much may be done—as on the Indian frontier—in the matter of playing off one tribe against another, and no one understands or has the confidence of Somalis better than the Commissioner-General.

NOTE.—In many quarters it has been held that anticipations as to the Mullah's power being practically broken were unduly optimistic. At the time of writing, however, latest reports in the newspapers fully bear out this assertion.

APPENDIX A.

CAPTURE OF ILLIG.

The force detailed for the capture of Illig, under the direction of H.E. the Naval Commander-in-Chief East Indies Squadron, comprised H.M.S. second-class cruisers "Hyacinth" (flag-ship) and "Fox," the third-class cruiser "Mohawk," and 125 men of the 1st Bn. Hants Regiment, under Major Jackson, D.S.O., with a few further military details.

From reports of earlier inspections of Illig and vicinity, it was determined to effect the landing at the mouth of the Gullule River, some $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Illig, and thence make a flank advance upon that place. The surf on this coast always renders landing a difficult matter, but in the case of Illig itself, dervish entrenchments crowned the heights and covered the beach, the heights themselves also presenting an exceedingly steep ascent.

It was decided that the "Mohawk" should precede the other two ships and give an anchoring point for the latter, which should arrive after dark with lights out. It was calculated that the dervishes would not, in merely seeing one ship arrive (as had often happened before), anticipate a landing.

Pursuant to these arrangements, the "Mohawk" arrived off the Gullule River on the afternoon of 20th April, the "Hyacinth" and "Fox" duly following.

At dawn on the 21st, the landing commenced, the "Mohawk's" boats making a feint of landing on the beach near Illig itself. Before describing the operations it is necessary to give some account of the spot selected. As before remarked, nowhere is the shore easy for disembarkation, but in the Gullule gorge there was known to be a practicable path up on to the heights which run along to Illig. It was proposed that an advanced party should move up this gorge, establish themselves on the heights, and then the remainder of the force would follow either the same way or straight up the cliffs from the beach as expedient.

The advanced party, 100 seamen from the "Hyacinth," under command of the flag-captain, Captain the Hon. H. Hood, covered by

boats mounting field guns and Maxims, encountered no opposition, and assembled on the beach without mishap. They were towed ashore by steam launches, which, on account of the shallow water, had to slip boats when about 30 yards from the shore. The boats were then backed in and anchored up to within about 20 yards, from which point the men had to wade. Progress up the gorge was not so easy as was hoped, but no enemy were met with, and the heights were successfully crowned about three-quarters of an hour after leaving the ship. At this point the enemy were first seen, some 20 of his scouts being observed in the distance. An advanced picket was now thrown out to an eminence on the right, communication with the flag-ship established by signal, and the remainder of the force awaited.

This latter followed, part along the route which the advanced party had taken, and part by the steep ascent direct up the cliffs from the beach.

The force was formed up by 7.40 a.m. in the following order:—Seaman battalion ("Hyacinth," "Fox," and "Mohawk") on the right, marines in the centre, and Hants detachment on the left, each body finding their own fighting line, supports, and reserves; 3 tripod Maxims slung on poles were on the right and 1 with the Hants; stretcher parties and pioneers with units.

The advance was made on a front of about three-quarters of a mile, the flag-captain assuming command of the Naval Brigade (seamen and marines), which consisted all told of just under 600 men; the Hants numbered 120 odd.

The plateau, upon which the advance was made, was very hard and rocky, level except for occasional folds and undulations. The ground sloped away from the cliffs.

At 8.5 a.m. the enemy's scouts were observed to retire, and a short halt was called. The advance was then continued without incident for 40 minutes, when the enemy's scouts retired into the works, which now showed up. Our ground and advance scouts arrived at the outlying "gurgis"¹ at about 9 o'clock; shots were exchanged between our scouts and the enemy, and a round was fired by a gun belonging to the latter. Very shortly afterwards firing became general, and two more rounds were fired by the gun. The distance from the works was now about 600 yards.

The attack then advanced straight forward, alternately lying down to volley fire under cover of the outlying huts and folds of the ground, and then making steady advances.

Having thus approached to 80 or 100 yards the whole line rushed the position, the extreme right having previously closed in and wheeled round so that the works were taken end-on. (See sketch.)

The Hants finally entered somewhere near "F" on the sketch, the bluejackets, led by Captain Hood, at "G," where there was a second embrasure for the gun. The Dervishes were seen running down through their communicating walls and passages to get out S. and S.W., but being closely pursued were many of them shot down. The place was cleared out in about ten minutes.

Two companies of seamen were at once assembled and advanced over the country S.W., where they followed the fugitives up for about 1½ miles, the ships firing upon those anywhere near the cliffs.

¹ Native shelters or huts.

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A large number of the enemy had, however, collected in caves on the cliff sides, in a small work, mounting a second gun just below the cliff top, 100 yards from south end of the main position, and near the breastwork in front of the village. (See sketch.) Parties were sent to clear out these people, which was rather a ticklish job, and the village was finally burnt, operations coming to a close about noon.

It was decided to leave the Hants, 50 marines, and 4 Maxims, with their detachments, on shore, and to erect a small stone zariba for them, food and water being landed from the ships.

Our loss in the day's work amounted to 3 seamen killed, 11 wounded (10 seamen and 1 marine); 2 of the killed and 1 of the wounded were shot by a man concealed in a shelter behind the backs of the assaulting party as they were getting over the walls.

The enemy lost 58 killed (including some bodies found the day following) and 14 wounded.

In addition to the enemy's 2 guns (small ships' ancient 3-pounders), about 27 rifles of sorts were captured, with 2 banners.

The appended sketch shows the nature of the Dervish fortifications, which were certainly quite formidable.

The force remained on shore for 4 days, during which various excursions were made to round up fugitives, and the fortifications were demolished. In this latter task Italian sailors from the "Voluturno" assisted, this ship having arrived the day after us and anchored off Illig.

Messages were despatched to Ali Yusuf at Obbia to get him to occupy Illig with some of his tribesmen, but the force had to leave before this was assured on account of the rise of the S.W. monsoon. As it was, the re-embarkation was attended with some difficulty, a steam launch being stove in and the last boat, conveying the rear guard, being swamped. This occurrence delayed matters till near night-fall, and the rear guard of 25 men had to temporarily re-occupy the heights while fresh arrangements were made, the men ultimately coming off on a line.