

THE KING'S AFRICAN RIFLES

A STUDY IN THE MILITARY HISTORY OF
EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA, 1890-1945

LIEUT.-COLONEL H. MOYSE-BARTLETT



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PART IV

INTERNAL SECURITY AND REORGANIZATION, 1914-1939

The campaigns against von Lettow were not the only military operations undertaken in eastern Africa during the first world war. In British Somaliland, in Jubaland, in the Northern Frontier District and in Turkana, punitive expeditions were required for the maintenance of internal peace. After the war the K.A.R. experienced successive reductions in establishment that eventually culminated in a major reorganization of the Regiment. This was followed by a period of rearmament preceding the second world war.

The End of the Mad Mullah
(Map III)

(i) *Operations in British Somaliland, 1914-19.*

FAR removed from the course of events that carried so many men and so much material into the conquest of German East Africa, British Somaliland was by comparison a military backwater during the war of 1914-18. But although little attention was focused upon it during that period, the southern and eastern areas of the Protectorate remained nearly as turbulent as ever. The Mullah abated nothing of his pretensions, and continued steadily to defend his most important centres with stone fortifications. During the war several engagements took place, which formed important landmarks in the training and development of the Somaliland Camel Corps, fitting the new force to play its part in the post-war operations that finally drove the dervishes from British territory.

In July, 1914, Lieutenant-Colonel T. Astley Cubitt, D.S.O., R.F.A., was appointed Officer Commanding Troops and Deputy Commissioner of the Protectorate, with Major G. H. Summers (26 Lt. Cav. I.A.) as Staff Officer. Besides the new Camel Corps, which was increased in October by the addition of a *Depôt* Company 50 strong, the Protectorate was also garrisoned by an Indian Contingent, and could be reinforced when necessary by other Indian troops from Aden. On the outbreak of war the Government of India proposed to withdraw the Indian Mounted Company, but an attempt to replace it with an Arab company came to nothing, as not enough suitable men could be recruited.

In November Cubitt set up his headquarters at Burao. Berbera was then garrisoned by 150 rifles of the 73rd Carnatic Infantry; Sheikh and Las Dureh by 50 and 100 rifles respectively of the Indian Contingent. A similar garrison of 100 sepoys was now stationed at Burao, together with the Somali *Depôt* Company. There was also a mobile force of 450 rifles of the Camel Corps, fresh from their intensive training camp at Galoli, and the 150 rifles of the Indian Mounted Company. With these troops Cubitt planned to attack the Mullah's new forts at Shimber Berris.

On the narrow plateau of the Burdab Range, standing some 800 feet above the wells in a ravine near the entrance to the Ain valley, the Mullah had built several blockhouses along the edge of the escarpment. There were more in the ravine below, which was full of caves. The forts were constructed of well-fitted stone, cemented hard with mud, and the largest, which were capable of holding about 50 men apiece, had walls 12 feet thick at the base. The bush had been cut to offer a clear field of fire.

First Attack on the Shimber Berris forts, 19th-23rd November, 1914.—Cubitt left Burao on 17th November with 14 officers and 520 Indian and Somali rank and file. Two days later he got within three miles of Shimber Berris before being discovered. One of the forts on the western spur was rushed by the sepoy before it could be properly manned. 'C' Company of the Camel Corps made three unsuccessful attacks on the second fort, during which two officers were wounded. A party of six officers, each accompanied by three men, then made another attempt to rush the door. One officer was killed; Captain A. Carton de Wiart¹ (4 D.G.) whose eye had been wounded in the first assault, was now wounded for a second time, and several of his men were also hit. A pause followed while Cubitt made a personal reconnaissance. Six Indian and six Somali volunteers then made another unsuccessful attempt on the door. After this Cubitt withdrew to await artillery from Burao.

On 23rd November the attack was renewed with a 7-pounder gun. No impression was made upon the stone walls by this ancient weapon, but the bombardment was more than the dervishes inside could stand, and they came pouring out. The gun was then turned on the third fort with the same result. As he was hampered by the wounded, Cubitt refrained from attacking the forts and caves in the ravine, and contented himself with trying to demolish the forts on the ridge, which he could not destroy properly for lack of gun-cotton.

The first attack on Shimber Berris, though good experience for the Camel Corps recruits, was thus only a partial success. It had cost one officer and five men killed, and two officers and 25 men wounded, most of them Somalis. As the dervishes immediately reoccupied the forts when the troops withdrew, Cubitt at once began to plan a second and better equipped attack.

Second Attack on the Shimber Berris forts, 3rd February, 1915.—On 2nd February, 1915, Cubitt again camped a few miles south of Shimber Berris, with a force of 15 officers, 570 rank and file, six maxim guns and two 7-pounders. Gun-cotton and bombs had been obtained from India, and Sikh Pioneers from Aden. To save water transport 240 of the Somali troops were dismounted.

On 3rd February two columns moved against the forts on the ridge, intending to take these before venturing into the ravine. The forts were found to be unoccupied and were blown up by the Pioneers, while the dervishes contented themselves with sniping from the shelter of the caves. Leaving a body of friendly tribesmen to guard the plateau, Cubitt marched his force round to the ravine entrance. Two forts were situated on high ground flanking the ravine; a third and larger one stood at the far end. Keeping two companies in reserve, Cubitt sent a company against each of the flanking forts while opening fire with his guns on the main fort at about 1,400 yards. The flanking forts were taken with-

¹ Later Lieutenant-General Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart, V.C., D.S.O. In his *Happy Odyssey*, pp. 51-52, he gives a brief account of the action. Throughout it the enemy kept up a running fire of insults. The threshold of the door, which was covered by loopholes, could only be reached by jumping three feet from the ground. 'We were so near the dervishes that I could touch their rifles with my stick, which was only a couple of feet long.'

out much difficulty, and occupied by the troops. Meanwhile a hot but erratic fire came from the dervishes in the caves, who were attacked with rifle fire and bombarded by the guns. By mid-afternoon some of the enemy were seen retiring up the ravine. The troops surrounded the main fort while the Pioneers fixed their gun-cotton, blowing half of it down and burying the dervishes inside. Bombs were thrown into the caves, the other two forts were blown up, and the troops withdrew. Next morning all caves were found empty. On this occasion the casualties were fewer: three men killed, and one officer and ten men wounded.

The results of the second attack on Shimber Berris were heartening. The reputation of the Somali as a soldier was largely restored, and in March the position of the new unit was regularized by the publication of the Camel Corps Ordinance. Control of the Ain valley was retained by 200 *illalos*, stationed at seven posts. The nearest dervish post was now at Jidali, which would have been attacked in May but for a Turkish threat to Aden. The expedition was cancelled on the ground that the Camel Corps might be needed for service abroad, and although this proved unnecessary, orders were issued that the offensive against the dervishes should not be resumed if it could be avoided.¹

In January, 1916, Cubitt was succeeded by Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Summers as O.C. Troops, British Somaliland. At that time the farthest posts in the interior permanently garrisoned by regular troops were Burao and Ber. Headquarters were at the former, which was garrisoned by three camel companies (one Indian and two Somali). The pony company, 100 infantry of the Indian Contingent, and two 12-pounder field guns were stationed at Ber. *Illalos* held the wells in the Ain valley, and later in the year posts were also formed at Eil Dur Elan and on the summit of the Ok Pass.

Except for one incident, the year 1916 passed quietly. The Warsangli had now quite broken with the Mullah, and in May dervish forces from Jidali and Tale descended to the coastal plain and attacked Las Khorai. They were bombarded by a British warship and withdrew, raiding the tribes as they returned. Las Khorai was then garrisoned by Indian troops and a post was established twenty miles south, covering the pass leading down to the plain.

Towards the end of the year the dervishes were again active in the north-east. The Sultan of Obbia and other Mijertein chiefs were hostile, and raiding continued throughout the early part of 1917. Camel Corps patrols were frequent and several small actions were fought. The Mullah's prestige was still high, though his activities bore unmistakable signs of increasing madness, as his ruthless and unreasoning cruelty, not only to human offenders, real or imagined, but even to animals, could not otherwise be explained. He was said to be so swollen with a disease called *barasheh* that it took six men to lift him on to his horse. This

¹ A small Turco-German expedition under Baron von Stotzingen attempted to reach southern Arabia to disseminate propaganda and foster revolt in Aden, British Somaliland and contiguous territories. It was frustrated by the Hejaz Revolt in 1916. See *Military Operations in Egypt and Palestine*. (Official History of the War, Vol. I, p. 230.)

disease may have been a contributory cause of his mental disorder.¹

In 1917, so far as the King's African Rifles were concerned, the war in German East Africa reached its grimmest phase. No help was possible for British Somaliland. Two companies of Indian infantry, relieved periodically from India or Aden, provided garrisons for Berbera, Las Khorai and Las Dureh. Defence of the undefined and unofficial frontier with the Mullah, which stretched for nearly 200 miles, was the task of the Camel Corps with its Indian Contingent and of the irregular levies. The Somali companies of the Corps (two camel, one pony and the *depôt*) then totalled some 500 rifles. The Indian Contingent, recruited from volunteers from regiments of the Indian Army, consisted of one camel and two infantry companies (400 rifles). The *illalo* levies, who wore no uniform but a distinctive head-dress with red and yellow pagri, numbered over 300 rifles. The whole force amounted to some 1,500 men, with two field guns, twelve maxims and one Lewis gun. Berbera, Burao and Las Dureh were provided with wireless telegraphy.

In October, 1917, the Camel Corps fought the most important action since the attacks on Shimber Berris. The dervish leader Hussein Yusuf (Agararan) had for some time been very active in the north-east. In the course of his raids he had on several occasions come into conflict with the tribal levies, not without credit to the latter. Early in October they reported that Yusuf had attacked the tribes south-east of Las Dureh and driven off 300 camels and 7,000 sheep. As there appeared to be a good chance of catching the party while far from home, Major Breeding concentrated at Negegr Spur, twenty-eight miles north-east of Burao, a mobile column consisting of two camel companies, one pony company, two pony troops, and five maxim guns.

Travelling by way of the Ok Pass, the column reached Eil Dur Elan on 8th October. Breeding left the tired camels behind and pushed on with 100 men on camels, 150 on ponies, and the maxim guns. The levies reported that the dervishes were twenty miles away, making for a high range ahead, which was crossed by two difficult passes.

Action at the Endow Pass, 9th October, 1917.—On 9th October Breeding sent the pony troops ahead under the command of Captain H. L. Ismay² (21 Cav. I.A.). He found that the stock had already crossed the passes and that the dervishes were posted on the heights commanding both entrances. Sending the levies to contain the enemy on the western route, Ismay opened the attack on the Endow Pass. Within an hour Breeding's troops arrived in support. The dervishes were also reinforced, but by early afternoon the Pass had been forced to a depth

¹ The condition described, known variously as *barasheh*, *barasha*, or *chachaleh*, is caused by a dietetic deficiency and is common in Somaliland. It causes burning pain which may be generalized and particularly severe in the extremities. The heart is weakened by the deficiency and there is usually swelling of the legs, abdomen and shoulders. Though chronic the condition is rarely fatal and may be cured by suitable diet, which may not be available to natives in some areas even if they recognize its importance.

Irritability, lack of judgment and considerable physical incapacity are associated with the physical disorder. The Mad Mullah would certainly be less able to lead a coolly calculated and skilfully conducted campaign when disabled in this way. We have here another interesting example of the effect of disease on history.—G. C. P.

² Later General Lord Hastings Ismay. P.C., G.C.B., C.H., D.S.O.

of a mile. By this time, however, the stock was too far away for capture, and as resistance was still stubborn and his food supplies only sufficient for the return march, Breeding broke off the action and withdrew. He estimated that at least 70 dervishes had been killed for a loss of one officer and nine other ranks wounded.

During 1917 and 1918 the rains were poor and the grazing bad. The Camel Corps had to establish special grazing camps to keep the animals fit; remounts were difficult to get and camels had to be imported from Egypt. This reduced the number of troops available for operations and interfered with the mobility of the remainder. Meanwhile dervish raids continued from the direction of Jidali. Strong protective patrols were sent out in August and October, when dervish forces occupied Bohotle and afterwards Damot. But it was evident that the whole situation was gradually changing as the dervishes enlarged their herds and became increasingly tied to fixed localities. It was now the Camel Corps that was constantly on the move, counter-raiding to recover looted stock, while the main dervish strength remained on the defensive. This was one result of the Mullah's policy of fortress-building. It was known that seven forts ringed the position at Tale; that five others had been built at Jidali; that two were on the coast, and five more (at Las Anod, Dariali, Damot, Galadi and Wardair) lay along the escape route to the Webi Shabelle.

Soon after the Armistice of November, 1918, a mission under Major-General A. R. Hoskins visited Somaliland to report on the situation and make recommendations for the settlement of the dervish problem. After consultation with the officers who had served with the Camel Corps during the past four years, a visit to Badwein to study the approach to the Nogal valley, and to Las Khorai to examine the north-eastern area, Hoskins left the country in February, 1919. But his plan of campaign required so large a force that the Government thought the cost too high, and for the time being the matter was shelved.

Within a very short time events in Somaliland showed that there was little likelihood of dervishism dying out of its own accord. Though the Mullah's influence was declining, other and younger leaders were arising in his place. Encouraged by their previous success, the dervishes planned in February another raid on the tribes south of Las Dureh. Their tracks were seen and reported to Burao. On 26th February Major C. A. L. Howard (32 L.) concentrated a mobile column at Negegr Spur, consisting of one Indian and one Somali camel company from Burao, and one Somali camel and one pony company from Ber, making a force of eight combatant officers and 372 rifles, with six maxims and a Lewis gun. On the following day Howard reached Ok, overlooking the Saral Plain, where he stayed to water and await reports from the *illalos*.

On 28th February Howard heard that the dervish force, numbering about 500 riflemen, had camped on the previous night at Rujuna. Aware now of his enemy's position and anxious to avoid the situation that had confronted Breeding in 1917, he decided before advancing to ration his main force at Eil Dur Elan, leaving 'C' Company and a few details under Captain R. F. Simons (N. Lan. R.) to secure the head of the Ok Pass.

As dawn broke on 1st March, a heavy fire was suddenly opened on the western corner of 'C' Company's zariba. The dervishes followed this with three rushes on the east and south sides, delivered with their usual fury. Each attack was repulsed, and after trying to occupy a nearby hill, from which they were dislodged by rifle fire, the dervishes withdrew. A wounded prisoner said that in the half light they had mistaken the zariba for a *karia*. After discovering the truth, they pressed the attack for as long as ammunition lasted, losing 64 men killed.

Simons sent the news to Howard, who realized that the raiders were unaware of his presence and made as quickly as possible for Bobolileh, in the hope of cutting them off. Meanwhile Simons set out after the retreating dust column, and at 9 a.m. on 2nd March reached the Kurumba Pass in time to see the looted stock disappear within it. The dervish riflemen were strongly ensconced to seal the entrance, and after reconnoitring the position Simons decided that a quick victory was impossible. He therefore withdrew to collect water and rations, followed by derisive howls from the enemy.

Action at the Ok Pass, 3rd March, 1919.—By this time Howard was at Bobolileh with the main force. News reached him that the enemy was still within the Ok Pass, unaware of his presence and evidently elated at Simons' departure. During the dark hour before dawn on 3rd March, Howard took up his position on the reverse slope of a hill overlooking the route by which he expected the enemy to come. *Illalos* were out in front to block the Pass. A wait of several hours followed before the dervishes were sighted, unsuspectingly driving their loot across the plain. At 1 p.m. the signal was given that the enemy were level with the ambush. The Indian Company opened fire, which at once threw the dervishes into disorder. After a few moments they rallied and made for the shelter of a nullah, hustling the stock towards another pass. 'A' and 'B' (Somali) Companies mounted their camels and after half an hour's ride over very rough country headed the enemy. This completed the rout: the dervishes broke and fled in all directions, abandoning the stock and taking to the hills, many of them throwing away their rifles in panic. Such a scene had not been witnessed since Jidbali in 1904. For a time the Camel Corps pursued into the hills, until lack of water obliged Howard to return. He estimated the enemy loss at a minimum of 200 killed.

Another chase took place in April, following raids along the sea-coast west of Ankhor. Once again a concentration of troops took place at Negegr Spur under Major Ismay. Water was short, and with the exception of one troop all the ponies had to be sent back, and some of the camels. Thus hampered, Ismay reached the top of the Ok Pass on 10th April with a column of 275 rifles and seven maxims. There he got news of a dervish force numbering 600 rifles, said to be moving westward in the neighbourhood of Eil Dur Elan. Marching by night, Ismay reached Eil Dur Elan, where he expected definite information. Reports were confused, so he decided to force the unknown and difficult Dudub Pass, which was said to be twelve miles long and to consist of the bed of a river, running between high, steep banks. The passage was attempted at dawn on 13th April and proved less difficult than

expected, but after a prolonged pursuit over very bad country during the afternoon and night, Ismay was forced to return. The troops reached headquarters again via the coast road and Berbera, with the ponies in the last stages of exhaustion.

By 1919 the Camel Corps had developed into an experienced, well-trained and highly mobile body, backed by a good record of service at a time when the Protectorate was in urgent need and obliged very largely to depend upon its own resources. But there were limits to what it could do, and to the radius of action over which it could operate; nor could protection be guaranteed to the tribes living in the north-east of the Protectorate. It was at this juncture that the Mullah, finding his stock in the open plains around Tale too easy a prey for raiders from the Mijertein left the ring of forts he had constructed there and moved with his family, stock and personal retainers to a strong natural position at Medishe, about twelve miles north-west of Jidali in the hills overlooking the coastal plain. There he was within fifty miles of the port of Las Khorai, and far removed from his old escape route to the south. It seemed that the time for decisive action had come at last.

(ii) *The Final Defeat and Expulsion of the Mad Mullah, 1919-20.*

By October, 1919, it was clear that an offensive against the dervishes should no longer be delayed. Besides his strongholds in the Nogal valley, the Mullah had another series of strong forts in the north, at Baran, Jidali, Medishe, the Surud Hills, Ershida, and Galbaribur. The number of his riflemen was reported to have decreased from 6,000 to 1,000, but as most of this force was now concentrated in the Medishe—Jidali area, the condition of the Warsangli was becoming desperate. This was partly the fault of the Sultan, who for years had attempted to intrigue with both sides, and he was now removed. To relieve immediate distress the Government issued a ration of rice at Las Khorai, while plans were maturing for another expedition.

Many years had passed since the last attempt to catch the Mullah, and new ideas and new weapons had come to the fore. At the same time, the dervishes had become less mobile and less elusive. With their stone fortresses and swollen herds they now had something to defend. Even if they escaped once more across the Haud, their expulsion from the Protectorate after such long immunity would involve a loss of prestige from which they were not likely to recover. But it was hoped to bring matters to a more decisive conclusion than this.

The operations were to begin with an aerial bombardment of the Mullah's forts. It was difficult to predict the moral effect of this, but the practical results would be limited to the first, or static phase. A striking force (known as 'A' Force), highly mobile and consisting of the troops who knew the country best, was then to advance from El Afweina in the hope of bringing the dervishes to action and capturing the Mullah before he could escape. Meanwhile another column ('B' Force), slower in movement but consisting of more experienced and seasoned troops, was to move inland from Las Khorai, capture the fortress at Baran, and seal the escape route eastward to the Mijertein.

Tribal levies were to watch the Tale fortress and occupy the line of retreat south. A naval landing party was to capture the fort at Galbaribur.¹

The composition of these forces was devised in accordance with their rôles. The detachment of the R.A.F., under the command of Group Captain R. Gordon, consisted of 36 officers and 189 other ranks (including a very complete medical service) from Egypt, equipped with a flight of D.H.9 bombers and six spare machines. The main body reached Berbera late in December. Elaborate precautions were taken to maintain secrecy, and reconnaissances for landing-grounds were made under pretence of prospecting for oil.

'A' Force, commanded by Colonel G. H. Summers, consisted of the Camel Corps, about 700 rifles (three camel and two pony companies, one of which was newly raised for the campaign), under Lieutenant-Colonel H. L. Ismay; a wing of the 101st Bombay Grenadiers, employed mainly on escort duties with the supply column; and 300 *illalos*. A portable wireless set was carried by camel. Concentration was to be at Eil Dur Elan, and the Force was to move up to the deep pool at El Afweina, ready to advance as soon as the aerial bombardment was over.

'B' Force was a composite K.A.R. battalion from Tanganyika, consisting of three companies (Coastal, Kavirondo and Uganda tribes) from the new 6 K.A.R., and one company of 2 K.A.R. These troops reached Las Khorai in two contingents: the first, Headquarters and Nos. 2 and 3 Companies, 6 K.A.R. (10 officers and 389 other ranks), under Lieutenant-Colonel J. S. Wilkinson on 8th November, 1919; and the second, consisting of No. 1 Company, 6 K.A.R. and No. 2 Company, 2 K.A.R. (11 officers and 356 other ranks), under Major L. G. Murray (Gordons) on 2nd January, 1920.² It was intended at first to raise about 3,000 Somali irregular levies, but this number had to be halved as it was impossible to control so many on the scattered stations for which they were intended. H.M.S. *Odin* and H.M.S. *Clio* comprised the naval force.

Owing to delays in the preparations of the R.A.F., zero day had to be postponed till 21st January, 1920. The Camel Corps left Burao on the 5th, and by the 19th both the R.A.F. and the Corps had concentrated with all their stores at Eil Dur Elan, ready to open the first phase of the campaign. The Camel Corps left for El Afweina, and on 21st January six planes took off for Medishe. The weather was cloudy, the maps were poor, and with no artificial features to guide them, all the pilots but one lost their way in crossing the endless panorama of rock, sand and scrub that unfolded beneath them. Only one reached Medishe and bombed the fort. Thinking that this strange machine had brought messengers from the Sultan of Turkey, the Mullah came out to receive them and had the narrowest escape of his career, his uncle being killed beside him and his own robe singed by the explosion. Four of the other planes discovered and bombed the fort and stock at Jidali.

Further bombing attacks were made during the next few days, and

¹ An account of the capture of this fort by a naval brigade landed from H.M. Ships *Odin* and *Clio* will be found, complete with drawings and plans of the fortifications, in C.O. 534, Vol. 43.

² Regimental Records, 6 K.A.R.

aerial reconnaissance showed that the area was apparently deserted. The Camel Corps began its advance towards Jidali, the only possible objective in the circumstances, as no news could be obtained of any large concentrations of dervishes, and it was assumed that the Mullah was somewhere in hiding. It was 'B' Force, however, that first came into action.

When 6 K.A.R. reached Las Khorai, Wilkinson found the garrison troops of the 101st Grenadiers occupying the town with 75 rifles, and a station inland at Musha Aled with 100 rifles and two Lewis guns. Both posts were strongly fortified and well stocked with ammunition and supplies. In the interests of secrecy it was given out that 6 K.A.R. had come to relieve the garrison. No. 3 Company took over the post at Musha Aled and was followed later by the rest of the first contingent, less two platoons left to garrison Las Khorai. In December a preliminary reconnaissance was made towards Baran, and another on 13th January, after the arrival of the second contingent. The transport column was assembled, water reserves completed, and on 20th January, after receiving notification of the date of zero day, the K.A.R. battalion moved into its first camp. The strength was then 24 British officers, seven British other ranks, and 731 combatant African ranks, with an armament of two Stokes mortars, four Vickers guns and 16 Lewis guns. The transport column consisted of about 800 camels.

Attack on Baran Fort, 22nd-23rd January, 1920.—On 21st January the advance began across the deep gorge of the Tug Mogor. In the early-morning darkness of the 22nd, an *illalo* patrol was dispatched to establish a listening post, and another patrol of 25 men to seize the water at Galgalla. At 4 a.m., leaving No. 3 Company to bring on the baggage and act as a reserve, the rest of the column moved forward. After marching for four and a half hours the troops were within two miles of the main fort at Baran. Beyond this point the advance was resumed in lines of platoons. At 1,200 yards two platoons of No. 2 Company, 2 K.A.R., went forward with the Stokes guns in the centre and machine guns on both flanks, approaching the fort at an angle so that the defenders were unable to use their narrow loopholes. The machine guns kept the dervishes below the parapets of the towers while the Stokes guns went into action. No. 2 Company, 6 K.A.R., moved to the left front to watch the south-western exit.

The fort at Baran consisted of a square building with four corner towers some 40 feet high, solidly constructed and loopholed for defence, connected by a wall 12 feet high, enclosing the centre courtyard. The main entrance was surmounted by a small tower with a gallery, the whole presenting a very substantial position, defended by 80-100 riflemen.

The fire of the mortars was inaccurate, and many of the shells were dud. By 4.30 p.m. 320 had been fired, and only six direct hits had been registered. Not enough impression had been made to risk an assault, and at nightfall the troops were withdrawn to Galgalla. *Illalos* remained to watch the fort.

On the afternoon of the 23rd, Nos. 2 and 3 Companies, with the Stokes guns and a section of machine guns, approached the main fort under

cover of a *tug* about 1,000 yards distant. The Stokes guns opened fire at 270 yards with better results than before, registering twelve direct hits on the roofs of the towers. But little damage was done to the stone walls; the dervishes continued to hurl abuse and defiance at their attackers, so it was decided to blow up one of the towers with gun-cotton after darkness. At 7.45 p.m., when the moon was on the point of setting, a demolition party consisting of Lieutenant G. Godfrey (Spec. List), C.Q.M.S. H. Wood and four African ranks,¹ crept up to the eastern tower under cover of machine-gun fire and exploded a hundred pounds of gun-cotton. The results of the explosion could not be properly observed, and the companies returned to camp, leaving *illalos* on watch as before. That night news of the bombing of Medishe was received by wireless.

At six o'clock on the morning of 24th January, Lieutenant J. Minnery (A. & S.H.) was sent with a platoon of No. 1 Company, 6 K.A.R., to ascertain the result of the explosion. When he was within 300 yards of the fort, Minnery saw a dozen dervishes escaping in the direction of a smaller fort in the hills nearby. He rushed for the gate with his platoon, got inside and occupied three of the towers without resistance. A solitary sniper in the western tower held on for some time. Efforts to bomb him out having failed, Minnery climbed the ladder inside the tower and after a brief struggle shot him with his revolver. The rest of No. 1 Company moved up in support, and a platoon of No. 2 Company, 6 K.A.R., occupied the hill fort without opposition.²

Twelve dervishes escaped, and 18 men and three women were found dead in the main fort. Its condition was filthy, littered with dead animals and human bodies. A wounded prisoner brought in by the *illalos* said that smallpox had broken out, and that the Mullah had forbidden contact with his encampment at Medishe. Consequently an appeal for help, sent when the dervishes first sighted the K.A.R. on 20th January, had not been answered.

The destruction of the forts was completed on the 25th. That afternoon two aeroplanes arrived with the news that the bombing of Medishe had taken place and that the Camel Corps was advancing. On the 27th 'B' Force received orders to remain at Galgalla until the Mullah's whereabouts were known. On the 30th news came by wireless that 'A' Force was in full cry after the Mullah, who was flying south with 150 mounted men. Next day 'B' Force was ordered to the Jidali area to round up the dervishes and their stock in the Surud Hills. Wilkinson made a forced march via El Ad, destroyed the abandoned fortress at Jidali, and although handicapped by lack of camels, carried out during the next few weeks a number of patrols and destroyed all the Mullah's forts in the north-eastern part of the Protectorate.

After the bombardment of Medishe, 'A' Force advanced into an apparently deserted area. Early on 28th January the Camel Corps

¹ Sergeant Saa Nane and Privates Yowana Musoka, Sekwa and Kahema of 6 K.A.R.

² Minnery was awarded the M.C. and Wood the D.C.M. for gallantry in these operations.



[Crown Copyright

Bomb bursting near Tale Fort, 1920



[Photo: Major D. St. John Cleese

Main gate of Baran Fort, 24th January, 1920

reached the fort at Jidali and found it still occupied. The fort was bombed at 10 a.m. and some of the defenders were seen to fly. 'B' Company then opened the attack with mortars and machine guns. The shells made no impression whatever on the walls, but several penetrated the roof of the fort and exploded inside. As no breach had been made, Lieutenant-Colonel Ismay thought a direct assault too costly to risk and broke off the action to await more shells. During the night the dervishes evacuated the fort.¹

On 30th January a deserter said that since the bombardment the Mullah had been hiding in a cave near Medishe, but that he had now broken south, evidently making for Tale. The Camel Corps at once left Jidali in pursuit. The tracks of the Mullah's party were discovered at El Der. Colonel Summers sent a patrol to follow, while he moved with the rest of the column into the Nogal via El Afweina, hoping to cut off the Mullah's retreat. Hudin was reached on 2nd February. Having got so far south it appeared certain that the Mullah's stock must be captured at any rate, and Summers returned to El Afweina, where the transport column was concentrating from Jidali, ready to send supplies south. Ismay and his troops were left to continue the pursuit as soon as definite news could be obtained.

On 4th February, while the main body of the Camel Corps was still at Hudin, reports from several sources indicated that the Mullah was moving on Tale. On the same day the ring of fortresses was bombed. Ismay set out with the Corps, with patrols riding far out on both flanks. Before long he contacted the Somali levies, who reported that the dervishes had been reinforcing Tale daily. As no one knew whether the Mullah was at Tale or not, and the animals were nearly exhausted, the Corps moved via Tagabei to Gaolo, while the levies continued to watch the forts, twelve miles away.

One of the Mullah's sons and three of his uncles surrendered to a picquet on 9th February, and on being questioned admitted that the Mullah was at Tale with about 250 riflemen. Plans were made for a show of force, and the Camel Corps, now much reduced in strength, advanced upon Tale. When the dust of their approach became visible over the hills, the Mullah with his relatives and a few of his most trusted followers left the forts and fled. The levies apparently made no effort to stop him.

By the time Ismay reached Tale it was too dark to follow the tracks,

¹ The abandonment of the fort was discovered early on the morning after the bombardment by Captain W. P. Lousada (Norf. R.), O.C. 'A' Company, who noticed that some goats were wandering in and out of the open door. With Major Howard and two *illalos* (former dervishes who had changed their allegiance) he made a cautious approach, and the party rushed the entrance. Lousada has described the scene as follows:

'What a stench met our nostrils in the dark outer passage! Filth of every description, and decaying animal carcasses. We dashed through the courtyard, in which we found an old woman stone dead, and up into the main building by a narrow stairway on to the roof. It was quite true: the fort had been evacuated some time during the night; no doubt the terrifying Stokes shell detonations had been too much for the nerves of the defenders, who left us to a bloodless victory. Many rifles but not much else was found in the fort, with the exception of one very small boy who had somehow been left behind. He was quite unhurt, and I later handed him over to my Colour Sergeant, Jama Hersi, as our only prisoner.'

but at dawn on the 10th the last long pursuit of the Mullah began. Throughout that day the Corps picked its way through a confused mass of tracks. After riding for twenty-three miles, the column crossed the *Halin tug* where the tracks divided into two main branches. Sending a troop along one branch, Ismay followed the other with his main force until darkness fell. All day long reports of dervish horsemen had come in from the patrols, but the 'horsemen' invariably proved to be herds of ostrich or wild donkeys, distorted by the mirage.

By 3 a.m. on the morning of the 11th, Ismay's column was again following the trail in bright moonlight. Before long the tracks split, only to converge again on a well at Galnoli. The pace had now begun to tell upon the animals. Ismay sent back all but the fittest, and continued with only 150 rifles. Before long the tracks swung to the left, and a captured dervish picquet said that the fugitives were watering about a mile ahead. Thus warned, Ismay was able to surprise the party. All the fighting men, some 30 rifles, were killed, and the rest of the party were captured. They included the Mullah's wives, children and near relations, but to the intense disappointment of the exhausted pursuers, the Mullah was not among them.

On 12th February the Camel Corps fought and scattered a party of dervish horse and foot near Gerrowei. The frontier had now been reached, but reports of the Mullah's whereabouts were still very confusing. At noon the presence of another party was reported. Ismay set out with a troop of camels and 20 ponies, all that were still able to walk. Once again the quarry was hunted down, but without finding the Mullah, though more of his relatives were taken prisoner. By now it seemed certain that the Mullah had escaped into the Haud, and as the animals were incapable of doing more and only one day's rations remained, Ismay gave up the pursuit. His troops had to walk back to Gaolo, as their mounts were not fit to be ridden.

While the chase was in progress, mopping-up operations continued elsewhere. The Tribal Levy engaged a large party of dervishes *en route* for Tale and captured a quantity of supplies, firearms and stock. The machine guns lost so many years before at Erego and Gumburu were recovered.¹ A naval party attacked and captured the fort at Galbaribur as originally planned, and this and all the Mullah's other fortresses were blown up. The fort at Medishe showed evidence of the hasty flight that had followed the bombing. The bodies of several leading dervishes were found there, and a stock of 520 rifles, besides 70 destroyed by fire, probably in the bomb explosions.

In spite of the fact that it was faced with the reduction of many substantial fortifications, the losses of the Field Force of 1920 were far smaller than those of any previous expedition: one officer slightly

¹ An extract from the diary of Captain D. St. J. Clowes (Leins. R.), O.C. No. 2 Company, 2 K.A.R., reads: 'Sat. 7 Feb. 1920. Two machine-guns and a bugle marked 2 K.A.R. captured yesterday from fifteen dervishes in a cave, only one tripod with guns: one gun a Maxim Nordenfeld, 1895, No. 5260, and the other Vickers, Sons & Maxim, No. 9358. Tripod belongs to the latter. Both converted .450 to .303. We believe one was taken from Swayne's Sikhs at Erego in 1901. Bullet hit on feed block.' Captain Clowes adds: 'It is strange that we blew Last Post over the captured forts with this very bugle, and that a 2 K.A.R. Company should return these trophies to the Regimental Headquarters at Tabora.'

wounded, one sepooy accidentally killed, three other men killed and several wounded. The whole campaign was over within three weeks. Having completed the demolitions, the composite K.A.R. battalion concentrated at Musha Aled early in March, and by the middle of May was back at Dar-es-Salaam.

But where was the Mullah? The man who had defied British authority with such success fled with a handful of followers across the Haud to seek shelter at Galadi. He then entered the country of the Ogaden tribes between Walwal and the Webi Shabelle, and settled for a time at Shinileh, about forty miles west of Gorrahai. There he was visited by a terrified group of influential sheikhs, dispatched on an embassy from British Somaliland in the hope of reaching some kind of agreement. But instead of finding a reasonable human being, the sheikhs found only a wandering madman with whom discussion was impossible, and were lucky to return unharmed.¹ After this, the Mullah and his followers entered the Arussi country round the headwaters of the Webi Shabelle. There they were overtaken not by the armed forces that had pursued them over so many weary miles, but by the great influenza epidemic that was sweeping the world. It was apparently of this disease that on 23rd November, 1920, the Mad Mullah died.

His death brought peace to a territory continually harried by every species of villainy for more than twenty years.

(iii) *The Tactics and Strategy of the Campaigns in British Somaliland.*

In the early stages of the Mullah's career the strength and moral influence of dervishism were greatly under-estimated. At the end, inflated by long years of the Mullah's prestige, dervishism was treated with a respect far greater than warranted.

When it became evident in 1899 that the growing influence of the Mullah among the Dulbahante was not likely to be limited to religious affairs, there was no reason to suppose that any action was needed other than the organization of a protective force to keep the peace among contiguous tribes. As this was not the rôle of the Indian troops garrisoning the ports, it became necessary for the first time to open stations inland. The ten months spent in the Protectorate by 2 C.A.R. showed, among other things, the unsuitability of infantry for this purpose. Despite the enormous herds collected in his raids, the Mullah moved fast and far. Maps of the interior were unreliable and largely blank. Besides mobility, quick and reliable information was essential, particularly regarding the position of the wells and water-holes, which determined the possible lines of movement, and varied in capacity at different seasons of the year.

The second phase, therefore, which covered the first two punitive expeditions, was fought exclusively by troops raised within the Protectorate: men who on camel and pony could equal the dervishes in mobility, endure the same privations, exist without distress on water from the same foul sources, and find their way through country of a type familiar to them. It was supposed that if the dervishes were faced with such a force, larger and better armed than themselves, their defeat

¹ D. Jardine, *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland*, Chapter X.

would be inevitable and the loss of prestige thus sustained would be sufficient to kill the movement for good. But the need for action was urgent; Britain was overburdened with military commitments elsewhere; few officers could be spared; the Indian havildars were late in reaching the Protectorate, and consignments of arms from England were delayed. The result was an ill-trained and hastily raised Levy, which while effective enough at the favourite Somali pastime of stock-raiding among the encampments of the Mullah's supporters, showed a dangerous lack of discipline in the presence of a determined enemy.

The third phase, covered by the third and fourth expeditions, arose from the resulting conviction that the key to success was reliable troops. Regular units were dispatched to Somaliland from the Indian Army and the K.A.R.; the conduct of the campaigns was entrusted to experienced officers of greater seniority than before. Yet to all intents the result was the same. It was now mobility that suffered; the troops could be trusted to deal effectively with their enemy, but the dervishes could never be caught. Somehow the proper balance could not be discovered in the composition of the Force; mounted troops were essential against an opponent whose forces could divide, move, and re-concentrate with the speed and evasiveness of a ball of quicksilver, but the presence of a large number of animals so greatly aggravated the water problem that the Force as a whole became tied to the larger groups of wells. The problem seemed insoluble, and it was exhaustion rather than any other cause that brought the expeditionary period to a close. The Mullah had tired of being chased around, and the Government was glad enough to leave him in Italian territory.

The Official History of the expeditions of 1901-04 contains a somewhat arid dissertation on the strategy of those campaigns, written soon after their conclusion and seeking perhaps to derive some consolation for the expenditure of so much money and effort. The real object to be achieved—the defeat of the Mullah in battle and his consequent capture or death—was obscured in discussion of the advantages of pushing him in and out of the Nogal valley or driving him to and fro across the southern Haud. Opinions appeared to vary on whether these secondary objectives were intended to keep him within British territory or to exclude him from it.

The dreadful events that succeeded the defeatist policy of withdrawing to the coast in 1910 proved how mistaken was the opinion that if they were adequately armed the tribesmen would combine to resist the Mullah by themselves. Yet it was out of this mistake that the right policy was evolved: the maintenance of a Somali force, comparatively small, well trained, well experienced, well officered, as a sound foundation on which local effort could be based when need arose. For by now the necessary knowledge was available. The dervish tactics were well known. Their excellent intelligence system had been matched by spies and *illalo* scouts, many of whom were themselves ex-dervishes. The Mullah's policy of trapping his pursuers when hampered by a full train of baggage in thick bush was met by the formation of advanced bases for supplies, so that the enemy area could be approached with light columns only. The sudden rushes of dervish riflemen were countered by

marching in square formation whenever the presence of the enemy was reported. To some extent nearly all battalions of the K.A.R. came to know and profit by these lessons, in those early years of the century when the Horn of Africa provided a practical training-ground for the new regiment. Without these campaigns many askaris of the K.A.R. might have served throughout their period with the colours without ever seeing any military formation larger than a company.

It was the Camel Corps that experienced the change in dervish strategy during the years of the 1914-18 war. In his own view the Mullah had now established an undisputed right to the eastern parts of the Protectorate. In his new guise of settled leader instead of scuttling fugitive he protected his chief pasturages with an increasing number of stone forts. Left for years in comparative peace beneath their shelter, his herds grew and multiplied. At last there was something tangible to hit. It was now the dervishes who defended, while the Camel Corps could select its own point for attack.

Simultaneously, the prestige of the Mullah began to weaken. Age and infirmity did not increase his reputation for holiness. New leaders arose to take the field, men who could plan and carry out the raids that now formed the main attraction of the dervish way of life. The terrifying, unreasoning cruelty of a man who for years had wreaked the most inhuman vengeance in reprisal for the most trivial offences was at last taking effect, and the number of deserters from his cause steadily grew. Eighteen years before, desertions had been in the reverse direction.

Even so, the suddenness of the dervish collapse in 1920 was a surprise. Neither the bombs of the R.A.F. nor the shells of the Stokes mortars were particularly effective, but the fanaticism of the dervish movement had largely evaporated. It was no longer desirable to be slain in battle for the Mullah's sake. Most of the forts were evacuated before assault; the Mullah's *haroun* had ceased to be a rallying-point, and the dervish forces dispersed and were defeated in detail. The campaign became an affair of pursuit and demolition. The Camel Corps were disappointed, and in the presence of the R.A.F. and K.A.R., even a little ashamed of the poor showing made by their notorious Mullah.¹

Yet to some extent the Mullah's final escape has kept the old legend alive. Though dervishism was crushed, its founder chose his own line of retreat, and as of old, got clean away.

¹ In the Camel Corps, the Mullah was familiarly known as 'Maud'.

CHAPTER 15

Internal Security, 1914-30

DURING the first world war and the decade that followed, tribal unrest was rife in many parts of the East African territories. Jubaland, Turkana, the Masai country, the Northern Frontier District and British Somaliland were all the scene of operations by the K.A.R., Camel Corps and Police.

(i) *Jubaland*. Map IV.

On the withdrawal of most of the regular troops from Jubaland in 1914, an Armed Constabulary was formed, mainly mounted on camels. Considering the recent history of the tribes in the northern part of Jubaland it was hardly to be expected that the situation created by the war would not result in further disturbance.

Trouble was not long in coming. In October, 1914, raids and counter-raids broke out between the Aulyehan and Marehan. Abdurrahman Mursaal, the leader of the Aulyehan, denying that his tribe was to blame or that he had stolen cattle, demanded leave to make war on the Marehan. A visit to Nairobi in the following year, where he was undoubtedly influenced by rumours of reverses to British troops, sent him back to Jubaland with a heightened sense of his own importance and a wholly unfounded claim that the Government had given him all the country between Serenli and Wajir.

By January, 1916, the state of affairs in northern Jubaland had become serious. Lieutenant Elliott, who commanded the Constabulary at Serenli, did his best to persuade the tribes to accept arbitration. The Marehan agreed, but Abdurrahman Mursaal arrogantly demanded Elliott's help in recovering stock, and when this was refused carried out another raid. Elliott informed him that unless the stock were returned and blood money paid within three days he would be arrested. The chief went away, ostensibly to consult his headmen, but actually to collect a force of about 500 men at Hellsided.

Abdurrahman Mursaal had previously suggested that trouble might arise if the Constabulary carried their rifles when leaving camp at night. Elliott had accordingly given orders that the rifles of those not on duty should be placed in the guardroom each evening. This extraordinarily ill-advised action left him at the mercy of the Somalis, who delivered an unexpected and well-planned attack on the night of 2nd/3rd February. Three parties broke into the boma; one surrounded Elliott's house and killed him before he could escape; another held up the bazaar, and a third looted the stock. The askaris were unable to get at their rifles; 35 were killed, seven were wounded and three deserted. About 50 civilians were also killed. For six days the Aulyehan remained at Serenli, carrying

away a great quantity of loot, including a machine gun, 50 rifles and 300 boxes of ammunition. They were then driven away by Italian forces from Bardera.

As no troops were available to restore order in northern Jubaland, raids and reprisals continued for the rest of the year. Abdurrahman Mursaal now aimed at the overlordship of the whole Province, but he suffered a set-back in November, when the Marehan captured his camp and took the machine gun. Wajir had been evacuated when news of the Serenli disaster came through, but was reoccupied later by the Police Service Battalion. It was in these circumstances that the decision was taken, as part of the general policy for expansion of the K.A.R., to include a new battalion for the defence of Jubaland and the N.F.D. 5 K.A.R. therefore came into being under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel W. E. H. Barrett (Res. of Off.).¹

At the end of August, 1917, Barrett left Gobwen by river steamer to reoccupy Northern Jubaland. The resistance of the Aulyehan was overcome and Serenli post was re-established. Barrett returned in October, leaving Captain O. Martin (Spec. List) in command. By this time the Aulyehan were uncertain whether to surrender or fly. The Rer Ali, who had taken no part in the attack on Serenli, were anxious to make peace; the other sections wanted to withdraw through the Marehan and Garre towards El Wak, or to cross the Juba below Serenli into Italian territory. For the time being, however, an abnormal drought prevented them from moving, and they were obliged to remain near the Juba or in the vicinity of Hafanli, Fafadun and other water-holes.

On 1st November Martin occupied Garba Harre with the M.I. company and 'G' Company, 5 K.A.R. Scouts were sent to contact the Aulyehan and reconnoitre the wells. Large numbers of the enemy were discovered at Fafadun, and their whereabouts reported via the Italian wireless station at Lugh to Major E. G. M. Porcelli (D.C.L.I.), O.C. Troops, Jubaland, who ordered Martin to obtain levies and baggage camels from the Marehan and concentrate with most of his Somali troops at Serenli before beginning operations. The Italians were to prevent the Aulyehan from crossing the Juba.

Porcelli's plan was for Martin to drive the enemy south, away from the river and wells, against another force advancing north from Yonte. Martin was ordered to attack without delay in two columns, one following the river and one operating inland; to keep the Aulyehan constantly on the move; to capture Abdurrahman Mursaal, Gabodi Ali and other chiefs implicated in the attack on Serenli, and to recover as much stock as possible.

Operations against the Aulyehan, 20th December, 1917-20th February, 1918.—On 20th December two officers, one B.N.C.O. and 100 askaris of 1/6 K.A.R. left Yonte for the north. Floods along the river road prevented them from getting through and they were forced to return. Meanwhile Martin, very ill with fever, had reached Serenli with his troops and tribal levies. On the night of 20th/21st December he dispatched Colour-Sergeant Farah Regeh with 15 mounted infantry, 15

¹ See Chap. 11, Sec. (i).

askaris of 'G' Company, 350 Marehan riflemen and 450 spearmen to Harao, with orders to move south from there parallel to the river. On the 21st, commanding his troops from a hammock, Martin moved down the Juba with four combatant officers, 60 Somalis of the M.I. Company and 'G' Company, 120 Swahilis of 'C' and 'E' Companies, 18 men of 'F' Company and about 300 Marehan levies.

Passing through Harao, Farah Regeh's column captured about 2,000 camels watering at Hafanli. This led to an attack by several hundred Aulyehan and a running fight ensued. The troops lay prone and kept the enemy off by firing volleys, but the Marehan bolted, leaving the camels, and only 160 were brought into Serenli.

The main body of the Aulyehan had been located at Hagagabli. The water there was soon exhausted and the tribesmen constantly tried to break through the troops to reach the river. On 25th December, after killing four tribesmen and wounding several in an ambush, Martin began his move on Hagagabli. Before dawn next day he attacked the enemy riflemen on both flanks. Lieutenant E. N. Erskine (Spec. List) had mounted a special fitting to a mule saddle, so that the Lewis gun could be brought into action within a few seconds, and with this cover the troops steadily pressed forward, taking the Aulyehan by surprise and breaking up their attempts to rush the column. At daylight the advance reached Hagagabli, where the old government boma was cleared with a bayonet charge.

Martin then sent a column to the west. Abdurrahman Mursaal's encampment was approached in bright moonlight. Unfortunately some of the Marehan levies discharged their rifles too soon; surprise was lost, the encampment had to be rushed without being surrounded, and Abdurrahman Mursaal escaped. His flag and personal papers were taken; many of Lieutenant Elliott's effects, including his field glasses and thermos flask, were recovered, and 1,233 camels and about 3,000 goats were found in the vicinity. The goats were slaughtered and the rest of the stock sent to Serenli.

This action greatly demoralized the Aulyehan. Martin followed it with an unexpected return to Hafanli, where he again found his enemy watering stock and after a brief action took another 600 camels. Patrols continued to make similar raids throughout January, 1918. The machine gun lost at Serenli was retaken in good condition and all the chiefs except Abdurrahman Mursaal were captured or surrendered. Fines were imposed and by 20th February their collection was completed. Over 5,000 camels were brought in; 402 large-bore rifles; 32 of the rifles taken at Serenli, and 16,000 rounds of the stolen ammunition.

Abdurrahman Mursaal got across the Juba and was reported to be making for Abyssinia. Seventeen men were tried by court-martial for their part in the Serenli affair and found guilty. Eight of them, including Gabodi Ali, chief of the Rer Afgab, were hanged and the rest deported.

The internal security of northern Jubaland was constantly threatened at this period by the unsettled state of affairs in southern Abyssinia. Tigre and Degodia made frequent raids across the River Daua, where the tribesmen in British territory, now practically disarmed, offered an

easy prey. It was therefore decided to establish a military station at Dolo. Few outposts of Empire have been more isolated than the little post at Dolo, perched in the farthest corner of the Jubaland province with the Abyssinians in front, the Italians on the flank, and the Marehan in the rear. On Christmas Day, 1918, Lieutenant V. Lambert (Spec. List) and Sergeant Mackenzie, with 49 rank and file of No. 2 (Swahili) Company, 5 K.A.R., reoccupied the old boma and hoisted the flag upon the hill-top. A strong fence of thorn, about 35 by 40 yards in extent, was built to replace the former zariba. No troops were allowed to leave after sunset, nor during the day-time without a rifle and magazine charged. Defence schemes and alarm parades were practised regularly.

Lambert found the whole district very unsettled. Most of the natives had been driven south or into Italian territory by constant raids. Meetings were held with the Garre headmen and with Abyssinian officials from across the Daua, whose attitude was courteous but unsatisfactory. Patrols sent out to stop armed tribesmen from crossing the river soon discovered that Garre from the Abyssinian side were coming over in large numbers and were terrified at the prospect of being forced to return. Lambert sought instructions from Serenli, and was told to demand from the Abyssinians the return of all property stolen in the recent raids before exerting pressure on the Garre. It was agreed, however, that in future all crossing of the frontier should be forbidden.

At the beginning of May Lambert's troops were relieved by a detachment of 1/6 K.A.R. Rumours and counter-rumours continued of impending attacks by concentrations of Tigre and Degodia. Abdurrahman Mursaal was reported to be among them. There was some fear that the pressure created by Abyssinian operations, which were shortly to begin against the Tigre, would drive large numbers of refugees across the frontier, and in June all stock was removed from the Daua and taken south. The garrison was again relieved, and towards the end of the year 300 mules were provided for mounted patrols.

Jubaland was now garrisoned by some 400 troops in the north and 500 in the south. A policy of general disarmament was proceeding and several hundred rifles were collected during the year. Conditions were becoming more peaceful, when at the beginning of 1920 a disquieting incident occurred.

Most of the troops in northern Jubaland were Somalis. On 11th January a Somali platoon of No. 3 Company, 5 K.A.R., who had been detailed for the Garre guard in the preceding October, mutinied and murdered their officer, Lieutenant F. Dawson-Smith. The 19 men implicated fled across the frontier with a Lewis gun and 2,000 rounds of ammunition.

The news of this outrage reached Lieutenant Graham, who was then in command at Dolo, on 13th January. Requesting the co-operation of his Italian and Abyssinian neighbours if the mutineers should enter their territory, Graham sent 20 rank and file with a Lewis gun to reinforce Hopkins, the Acting D.C., Garre District. Two days later an urgent appeal came from Hopkins to say that he expected to be murdered also. Leaving Dolo to an African sergeant and ten men (four of whom were sick), Graham set out himself with ten askaris and the second Lewis

gun. *En route* a letter reached him from Hopkins saying that he was at Neboi and was likely to be attacked at any moment. Accompanied only by his interpreter and orderly, Graham rode on through the night and reached Neboi at 1 a.m. on 16th January, suffering from fever and an old leg wound made troublesome by the ride.

Serious signs of unrest were evident among the N.F.D. Constabulary, but precautions were taken and no attack materialized. Hopkins began discussions with the men, and Graham moved to Ramu, where he built a new boma.¹ On 10th February an officer arrived from Moyale with ten askaris of 3 K.A.R. and eight Police of the N.F.D. Constabulary. Graham then handed over the Garre guard and returned to Dolo.

Early in August patrols were instituted along the Daa in conjunction with the Abyssinian offensive against the Tigre. Though warned not to cross the river, many of the tribesmen did so. The Dolo garrison came into action on the afternoon of 10th August and again at dawn on the 11th, when 200 Tigre were discovered on British soil. About 30 were killed or wounded and the rest escaped into Italian Somaliland.

After the Tigre operations, conditions became much quieter along the northern frontier. As part of her reward for supporting the Allied cause in Europe, it had been agreed that Italy should receive Jubaland. The local Italians therefore became very interested in the affairs of the province, and began to cultivate the friendship of the Marehan chiefs and headmen. The post at Dolo had weathered the difficulties of earlier days and entered a calmer period. 'All dead and still as the Sahara and equally hot,' was all the commanding officer could find to write in the station diary by the beginning of 1922.²

The Mohammed Zubeir Expedition, March-April, 1925.—One more punitive expedition took place before the cession to Italy. At the end of February, 1925, reports reached Nairobi that the Mohammed Zubeir were attacking the Herti on Lake Deshek Wama. In March the Acting Governor of Kenya dispatched No. 3 Company and a machine-gun sub-section, 3 K.A.R., to Jubaland under the command of Captain A. L. Kent-Lemon (York and Lanc. R.). As the tribe remained defiant and reports put the number of fighting men as high as 5,000, Kent-Lemon was followed by Major C. H. Fowle (Hamps. R.) with 'C' Company, 4 K.A.R., the Reserve Company, 3 K.A.R., a detachment of the S. and T., and another 29 men of No. 3 Company. These reinforcements reached Kismayu on 15th March and were increased later in the month by another officer, warrant officer and 96 reservists.

¹ Graham wrote in the Dolo station diary that he 'did not like to stop in the boma where Dawson-Smith was murdered'.

² Lieutenant C. Fowler, in closing the first volume of the Dolo station diary a few weeks later, wrote on the last fly-leaf: 'Whosoever readeth this Book should remember that he has read about the passing events of no less than 3 years and 3 months, which have taken place in and around a small British garrison in a very remote corner of the Empire. During this period there have been 9 officers in command of the uniquely-situated post. . . . Nor have these various officers commanded without numerous trials and tribulations, alarms and excitements. . . . My advice is: when awake, keep both your eyes and ears wide open; when asleep, only shut one eye.' He concluded the entry with a tribute to the 'tireless efforts' of his interpreter, Mohammed Aden.

The column proceeded to Yonte and established an advanced base. Events then followed the normal course of such expeditions. The troops moved on to the Deshek Wama; Osman Gele, the paramount chief, left his warriors; the murderers fled across the Italian frontier; no important engagements took place, and the Government demands were still ignored. At the end of March the fall of local rains allowed freer movement to the tribes, but prevented the troops from reaching Afmadu. The main column therefore withdrew to Yonte and operations were left to fighting patrols, who inflicted some 50 casualties without loss to themselves and collected about 20,000 head of stock. By the end of April the operations were over, and 'C' Company, 4 K.A.R., and the Reserve Company, 3 K.A.R., were withdrawn.

No. 3 Company, 3 K.A.R., remained until the Province was ceded to Italy in June. At the time, this appeared to be the end of a long and troubled episode in the history of British administration in East Africa, yet less than sixteen years was to elapse before the K.A.R. were again operating in Jubaland.

(ii) *Turkana*. Map I (c).

Reference was made at the end of Chapter 9 to the operations carried out by police forces and by troops from the Sudan when the unexpected outbreak of war in 1914 cancelled the K.A.R. expedition then preparing against the Turkana. During the war, and for some years afterwards, the whole area between Lake Rudolf and the Karamoja escarpment remained in a state of perpetual unrest, and many engagements were fought, first by the police and later by the K.A.R., before effective control was established.

Much of the Turkana country consists of desert and thorn scrub, which gives way to open plains near the lake that are covered after the rains with a short sward of thin grass. The Kerio, Turkwel, and less important streams are partially dry for much of the year, though water can usually be obtained by digging. As in Jubaland, therefore, the strategy governing punitive expeditions had to be based upon a knowledge of tribal movements for watering stock, and a proper understanding of the country, its climate and people has always been essential for the officer commanding troops in this area.

The Kenya Police Service Battalion (originally called the Police Mobile Column) was raised in November, 1914, with a strength of four companies, each of 75 askaris, for service in conjunction with the regular forces. The Battalion left Nairobi for Turkana in January, 1915. Operating in two columns, the police came into action against the Turkana at the foot of the Laikipia Plateau. Considerable numbers of camels, cattle, donkeys, sheep and goats were taken and driven to a Government stock camp set up at Kacheliba. After the operations, headquarters of the Turkana Company remained at Kalosia on the River Kerio, where a station was built in March, 1916, under the command of Captain R. F. Rainsford (Spec. List).

The northern Turkana were not affected by these operations, but in June, 1916, a station was established at Lokiriama. At the end of the

year the Police Service Battalion ceased to exist and 5 K.A.R. was raised for the defence of the northern frontiers. Rainsford transferred to the K.A.R. and remained in Turkana as O.C. Troops.

The lawlessness of the tribesmen was still being fostered by gun-runners and ivory poachers from southern Abyssinia. Rainsford estimated that about 400 of them were operating regularly in Turkana. Around April each year these men would organize their expeditions at Maji, and descending the plateau would form their bases at Moru Akippi and Mogilla, where water was obtainable. From there they dispersed in bands of about 30 each, penetrating the Toposa, Didinga and northern Turkana districts. The two first-named tribes were generally hostile, but the Turkana welcomed these marauders on account of the rifles and ammunition they brought, and those sections of the tribe living in the region of Mounts Mogilla and Lobur were accordingly well armed, hostile, and addicted to raiding.

By the beginning of 1917 the memory of the operations carried out by the Police Service Battalion was beginning to fade. Rainsford advised that the garrison should not be less than a double company; that a post should be established at the junction of the Turkwel and Kagwalas Rivers near Lodwar Hill, where the northern sections of the Turkana usually crossed on their way to raid the Samburu; and that a fighting patrol of not fewer than 75 men should be maintained on the northern frontier. As it was, the garrison was practically immobilized by lack of food and porters, confining the troops to a station that could as easily be protected by police.

By March, 1917, the situation had again become serious. Within one week the Turkana and Donyiro relieved the Suk and Karamojong of 8,000 head of stock. The raiders were estimated at 100 riflemen and about 3,000 spearmen. The D.C. Turkana then appealed for at least 200 more troops to occupy the country north of the Turkwel bend. Rainsford informed KARSTAFF that his troops were adequate for immediate operations against the raiders, and that it was useless to send reinforcements unless a forward depôt could be stocked with supplies. On 28th-29th March he intercepted the tribesmen, broke them up with the loss of one rifleman and seven spearmen killed, and recovered 97 head of stock. A week later Lieutenant E. U. Raikes (Ches. R.), with a patrol of 11 askaris, attacked 40 riflemen and 100 spearmen, captured seven rifles and 40 cattle belonging to the Suk and beat off a determined attempt to recover the loot.

The appeal for more troops could no longer be ignored, and early in April Captain H. Rayne (Spec. List) reached Lokiriama with one officer and 76 other ranks of 'A' Company, 5 K.A.R. With his help more stock was recovered from sections of the southern Turkana who, either through coercion or inclination, had assisted the raiders from the north. There were now two companies of 5 K.A.R. and 90 police available for operations.

Rayne's policy was to attack all raiders who ventured south of Lobur with strong, mobile patrols. While agreeing with the D.C. that punitive measures could achieve no lasting result so long as the northern frontier remained open, he realized that sufficient troops to seal it effectively

would not be available until after the war, and that his own operations could only meet with temporary success.

On the arrival of Rayne at Lokiriama with 'A' Company, it had been intended that Rainsford and 'B' Company should be relieved. But the state of affairs in northern Turkana led to some delay and for a time both companies continued to chase the marauders who were roaming freely about the country.

On 7th May a report reached Lokiriama that a mixed party of Abyssinians and Swahili were at Loliabe. Rayne set out with Raikes and 50 Somalis of 'A' Company. His movements were reported by the supposedly friendly sections of the Turkana and the enemy disappeared, but before returning Rayne heard from Rainsford of a large party of raiders between Mounts Longolechum and Pelegech. Rayne marched all night with 40 askaris and struck the tracks of this party, but as he was running short of rations was unable to continue and had decided to return to Lokiriama when he heard that 250 riflemen, led by two well-known raiders, were in the hills nearby. Sending out three bodies of spearmen to watch all probable exits, he took up a central position near the Nakot Pass and sent a runner to Rainsford, who had gone to Loketerim, with instructions to 'come like hell'.

Action at Nakot Pass, 17th May, 1917.—Shortly after dawn on 17th May one of the outposts was surrounded by the enemy, a few miles east of the Nakot Pass. Rayne hastened to the scene with 22 askaris, and with bayonets fixed broke through the raiders to join his outpost, losing two men killed and one wounded. Forming square on the plain in the centre of some clumps of sanseveira, he awaited attack. The raiders, led by a mounted Abyssinian who was attended by an umbrella-bearer and a trumpeter, methodically surrounded the position and at the sound of the trumpet charged in organized formations. For the next four hours the issue hung in the balance. Repeated charges, broken up to some extent by the bushes, were driven off. Rayne himself took a rifle and fired over 100 rounds.

About 11 a.m. a lull occurred in the fighting, and Rayne called out in Arabic to inquire if the enemy would 'like some more'. Shouting back that they were now coming to 'catch him with their hands' the raiders delivered a final charge. They were stopped within ten yards of the square, and then withdrew, leaving behind them 37 dead Abyssinians and one notorious Swahili raider. By that time Rayne had only 11 riflemen left.

The patrol had lost four men killed and was hampered by eight wounded. Appeals sent to Rainsford for support had gone to Lokiriama by mistake. When the news reached him he covered 48 miles in 34 hours, but did not reach Rayne until eight hours after the battle, when it was too late to pursue. Consequently no stock was recovered.

'B' Company left Turkana at the end of May. The unsettled conditions in the north were reflected in the southern sections of the tribe, who frequently joined the northern sections when they came south to raid the Suk. Rayne thought Lokiriama useless for military purposes, and recommended that the post there should be garrisoned by police, while his own force was made more mobile by the addition of Mounted Infantry

from 5 K.A.R. and the provision of more carriers and transport. Thus equipped he would be able to continue operations around Mount Lobur.

As a result of Rayne's reports it was decided at Nairobi on 17th October to undertake operations on a larger scale. This appeared suitable employment for the ex-German askaris of 1/6 K.A.R. While part of the battalion went to Jubaland to take part in the operations against Abdurrahman Mursaal, the rest went to Turkana. Rayne was appointed to command the expedition, and met these troops at Nairobi, where he had gone to arrange transport. Owing to the shortage of pack animals occasioned by the war, this was no easy matter. The troops were taken by rail to Kisumu, towed on lighters to Jinja, transported again by train to Namasagali on Lake Kioga, pushed across the lake on lighters by the stern-wheeler *Stanley*, and then marched to Moroto River Camp, accompanied by several thousand naked carriers raised by the D.C. at Soroti.¹

In December No. 4 Company, 1/6 K.A.R. left Moroto with donkey transport for the mouth of the Kabua River. On Christmas Eve contact was made with the rear of a large column of raiders. Most of them escaped, but within two days a great number of stock had been recaptured. Driving the animals before them, the company returned down the lake shore, and marching by way of the Turkwel River delivered the stock to the civil authorities at Kacheliba. This was a useful prelude to Rayne's operations, but unfortunately the start was delayed by a number of difficulties. The ex-German askaris became restive at a life of camp fatigues on short rations, and in February, 1918, some of their number demanded that the operations should begin or that they should be sent home. The leaders of this movement were arrested and court-martialled, but it was thought best to relieve the company, which took no further part in the operations.

The main expedition took place between April and June, 1918. Rayne had established a temporary base at Loyoro manned by a company of police, and an advanced base at the mouth of the Kabua. His striking force consisted of 300 askaris of 5 K.A.R. ('A' Company and M.I.). About 250 Sudanese troops were sent to co-operate, with a company of the Equatorial Battalion at Ikolo to provide escorts and act as a reserve.

Operations in Northern Turkana, 20th April-19th June, 1918.—The combined force moved north from the Kabua on 20th April, marching up the shore of the lake towards Mount Lobur. An enemy stronghold had been reported at Lomogol, but patrols of the Mounted Infantry found it evacuated. A post was established and columns were formed to patrol the Lorusia Mountains. Many Abyssinians, well armed with modern rifles, were among the Turkana, and Rayne thought it inadvisable to divide his force into more than two columns at first, the Sudanese operating to the north and the K.A.R. to the south. On 6th May Rayne dispersed a party of the enemy who were driving cattle in the Latome valley, breaking up the tribesmen with his Hotchkiss gun and rounding up the stock with the Mounted Infantry. Two days later the Sudanese

¹ Relays of carriers had been arranged *en route* to cope with the usual difficulty of supplying carriers to carry food for the carriers, and carriers to carry food for the carriers carrying food for the carriers, and so on.

were also in action; other raiders were attacked near Lomogol, and by the middle of the month 141 enemy had been killed and nearly 4,000 cattle and donkeys recovered. The combined force then concentrated at Latome.

At the end of May smaller patrols were organized to comb the Lorusia area. Another action was fought against a party about 400 strong, mainly Abyssinians armed with rifles. These men were formidable enemies, who did not lack courage and daring, though their shooting was poor.

While the operations were in progress a well-planned boma had been constructed at Lomogol, with machine-gun posts and buried magazines. Rayne decided, however, that in present circumstances a post so near to the Abyssinian border could not be permanently maintained. On the completion of his operations early in June he therefore evacuated Lomogol, pulled down the stockades and returned to the Kabua, where the Turkana had destroyed the camp in his absence. Rayne decided to hold the line Kaliow—Lodwar—Karget, and accordingly returned to Lodwar on 18th June.¹

The effect of these operations restored British prestige for the time being, but the country did not remain quiet for long. The history of the next three or four years along the frontier west of Lake Rudolf is one of constant raids and counter-raids by the Abyssinians, Swahili, Merille, Turkana, Didinga and Toposa. The patrols of 3 K.A.R. were incessantly marching to the reports of raids (many of which proved to be false), recovering stock, chasing a very elusive enemy, and sometimes inflicting casualties. Under Captain von Otter, the new O.C. Troops, Turkana, the garrison consisted of a company of 3 K.A.R., a half-company 4 K.A.R. and a mounted infantry troop 5 K.A.R. His headquarters and main striking-force were at Lorogumo, with subsidiary posts at Kapeddo, Kalosia, Lodwar and Kaliow.

The key to the situation lay in the so-called 'Ilembi Triangle', the disorderly area north-west of Lake Rudolf where the boundaries of three territories converged. Only a common policy could prevent raiders from taking advantage of this convenient means of escaping from one jurisdiction to another. Early in 1919, by agreement with the Abyssinians, a British representative was sent to Maji. Shortly afterwards a conference took place at Nairobi between the Governors of Uganda and East Africa, to discuss the advantages of placing the whole of Turkana under unified control.

Meanwhile perpetual raiding continued. In March, 1919, a party of Abyssinians attacked the Ukuti villages, killed seven tribesmen and captured 100 cattle. Most of these were recovered by police patrols, but in October, when the police were absent, the attack was repeated and Chief Ocheng was murdered with his wives and children. The raiders were followed and 18 of them killed in a running fight. Spies were everywhere, and it was extremely difficult for the troops to move without their whereabouts being reported, but no peace was to be expected until these roaming bands of outlaws were hunted down.

Four major raids by the Turkana and four by the Didinga took place

¹ Rayne was awarded the M.C. for his operations in Turkana.

in the Karamoja area during 1920, all of which resulted in clashes with police or K.A.R. patrols, with varying results. Many smaller raids occurred as well; in fact no fewer than 52 were reported west of the lake during the sixteen months from April, 1919, to July, 1920.

In 1921 the Sudan agreed to extend administration to the Didinga country. Considerable delay occurred and it was not until January, 1923, that O.C. Northern Garrison, 4 K.A.R., was able to withdraw all his troops. Meanwhile it had been agreed that Kenya should become responsible for the whole of Turkana, Uganda paying half the cost of the garrison on the understanding that sufficient troops would be maintained there to put a stop to raiding. The Uganda boundary was then drawn down the line of the Karamoja escarpment, with 3 K.A.R. responsible for Turkana and 4 K.A.R. for Karamoja.

Effective administration was still a long way off. Headquarters of the company of 4 K.A.R. stationed at Karamoja were at Kakamari, but as a rule not more than one platoon could be kept there as the company was obliged to maintain outstations at Lotim, Kamion, Loyoro, Lokosomel, Magosi and Moroto River to watch the passes over the escarpment. These small detachments, many of them commanded by African N.C.Os., were constantly at work collecting and disseminating information by helio,¹ or patrolling and recovering stock. An example of the excellent work done by these N.C.Os. occurred in May, 1921. A large party of Didinga who had raided the Nangiya tribes south-west of Tshudi-Tshudi was intercepted on the banks of the Kidepo River by Corporal Hassan Alijabu, on instructions by helio from Kakamari. Though greatly outnumbered, the patrol attacked at once, killed seven of the enemy and drove the rest into the flooded river. Only four were seen to escape on the farther bank, and most of the stock was recaptured.

Lack of space prevents a complete account of the numerous little actions fought against raiders during these years. A further conference was held between Kenya, Uganda and the Sudan in 1925. The Sudan then agreed to administer the frontier as far as Lolimi; Kenya to move on to the frontier at Lobur and Lokwanamur, and Uganda at Zulia and Lokichoggio, south of Mount Mogilla. V. G. Glenday,² who had been appointed D.C. Turkana, was convinced that stable conditions could never be achieved until an adequate military force was stationed on the northern frontier in the neighbourhood of Lobur, but this could not be done until a new road, then under construction to Lodwar, was made passable to motor transport.

In June, 1928, a permanent frontier post in northern Turkana was at

¹ Communication by helio became highly developed in Turkana at this period, eventually placing Lokitaung in touch with Kakamari and Moroto, a distance of more than 300 miles. Some stations were maintained for months at a time by two signallers, in one case situated on a hill 2,000 feet above the nearest water. 'With long experience of visual signalling,' wrote the I.-G. in 1929, 'I doubt if there is a better record of the maintenance of a visual line in the history of Army signalling, and with the introduction of wireless, it is not now likely to be beaten.' The Army Council agreed to the publication of this account in the journal of the Royal Corps of Signals.

² Later Sir Vincent Glenday, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., Governor of British Somaliland, 1939-42.

last established at Lokitaung and garrisoned by one company of infantry and a machine-gun sub-section, 3 K.A.R. Internally, Turkana was now quiet, though the Merille and Donyiro did not cease their raids across the frontier. The former were particularly troublesome. The posts established by 4 K.A.R. at Zulia and Lokichoggio had been abandoned in October, 1927, owing to failure of the water supply, and this withdrawal, coupled with the occupation of Lokitaung, diverted the attention of the Merille to the north-western part of the province.

The new garrison at Lokitaung was soon in action. On 11th March, 1929, reports reached Lieutenant L. B. Francis, R.A., at that time the only officer at the post, that some Merille had passed southward down the lake shore during the night and were raiding the Turkana. Moving to intercept them, Francis caught one party at dawn on the 13th, scattered the tribesmen and recovered much of the stock. Pursuing the fugitives, he attacked again and drove them into the lake, killing 31 and taking their rifles. The garrison was then reinforced by three officers and 68 rank and file from Nairobi. In May Captain P. C. Marindin (W. Yorks R.) followed a large Merille raiding-party who were driving captured stock towards the salt springs of Mount Lorientam in the Sudan. Attacking at dawn, just as the stock was being driven from the boma, Marindin told the Turkana who accompanied him to go after their cattle. The tribesmen were too slow in pursuit and were driven back by the raiders, who began to surround the patrol in increasing numbers. Marindin was forced to retire, dispersing his pursuers as he did so with his automatic weapons.

The operations of 1929 marked the beginning of a new phase. The northern sections of the Turkana were ceasing to be a predatory tribe awaiting administrative control and were becoming a pastoral people, practically disarmed and in need of protection. Lodwar became the administrative headquarters of the district, with civil officers there and at Kaliow and Lokitaung.

Lokitaung was an unpleasant station, continually swept by high winds that were very trying. The rainfall was scanty; little would grow in the dusty soil but a few stunted trees along the dry river-beds. But there was a supply of water that never dried up, and some miles distant, away from the mass of hills in the vicinity of the post, a piece of flat ground was found for an airstrip. A few Somali shops sprang up to supply the troops, and the whole station was surrounded by defensive posts and barbed wire.

The garrison at Lokitaung was reduced a few years later, when a new road was constructed over the Moroto River Pass. By that time transport was available for mechanized patrols, and two small detachments, at Fort Wilkinson (on the frontier near Todenyang) and at Naramum, watched the routes down the shore of the lake and into the Latome valley.

(iii) *The Masai.*

Towards the close of the first world war the situation in British East Africa was disturbed by the growing defiance of certain sections of the