

SECTION LIII.—EVENTS OF THE
12TH FEBRUARY, 1942.

539. Thursday the 12th February was a day of heavy fighting on the whole front. The enemy, who had now been greatly reinforced, launched strong attacks at several different points.

At about 0900 hrs. the enemy attacked with tanks on the Bukit Timah road front and almost reached the Chinese High School area before they were stopped. As happened so often in Malaya, our commanders experienced great difficulty in controlling their units in the thick country. Strengths underwent rapid changes as sub-units became detached and later rejoined. The Commander Massy Force finally stabilized the front on the general line MacRitchie Reservoir—Adam Road—Farrer Road. To relieve the pressure on this front I ordered the Commander Western Area to organize an attack from the south against the enemy's flank in the Racecourse Village area. The Johore 15 in. Battery also engaged targets on this front.

540. After visiting the front on the Bukit Timah road area I formed the opinion that there was a very real danger that the enemy would break through on that front into Singapore Town. After consultation with the Commander Northern Area I decided that the time had come to organize a close perimeter defence round Singapore Town itself. This defence must, however, include the sources of the vital water supply. This plan involved the withdrawal of all troops from the beach defences on the north side of the Island and also from the Changi area with a consequent loss of the Changi Coast Defences. Accordingly, I instructed the Commander Northern Area to withdraw the 11 Indian and the remainder of the 18 British Division from the beach defences, to select and occupy a position covering the water supply and linking up on the right with Southern Area north east of the Kallang aerodrome, and to appoint the Commander 18 British Division to take over responsibility for the front now held by Massy Force. I also instructed the Commander Southern Area to make all preparations to withdraw from the Changi area and the beaches east of Kallang as soon as he received orders to do so. I informed the Governor of the dangerous situation which was developing on the Bukit Timah road front. He ordered the destruction of the broadcasting station and took certain steps to reduce the stocks of currency notes held by the Treasury.

541. At about 1000 hrs. the Japanese Imperial Guards made a determined attack, supported by tanks, in the Nee Soon Village area, but were held west of the village by units of the 8 and 28 Brigades. Early in the afternoon the 53 Brigade, on withdrawal from the beaches, took up a position astride Thomson road a little south of Nee Soon Village and later in the day the remainder of the 11 Indian Division passed through it.

542. Throughout the day the 22 Australian Brigade Group continued to hold its advanced position in the Pandan area in spite of all attempts by the enemy to dislodge it. There was a lot of fighting at close quarters. Towards the evening, however, the enemy effected a deep penetration south of the position held by this brigade. The brigade was withdrawn under cover of darkness to the Holland Village area.

It had fought a gallant action for 48 hours and done much to hold up the enemy's advance in this area.

543. Further south the enemy concentrated during the day on the front of the 44 Brigade and the 1 Malaya Brigade, fresh troops being brought up by M.T. Several enemy attacks were repulsed. After dark the front was adjusted to conform with the situation on the right and ran from the Tanglin Halt area to Pasir Panjang Village.

544. At 2030 hrs., in consequence of information which I had received, I ordered the demolition of all the Changi defences and the withdrawal during the night 12/13th February of all troops from the Changi area and from the south-east coast to the Singapore defences. These orders were duly executed.

545. The general line of the perimeter defences included Kallang aerodrome—Woodleigh Pumping Station (one mile south-west of Paya Lebar Village)—east end of MacRitchie Reservoir—Adam Road—Farrer Road—Tanglin Halt—The Gap and thence to the sea west of Buona Vista Village. The Commander Northern Area was, however, instructed to delay the withdrawal on the Thomson road front to give time for certain dumps in that area to be cleared.

546. During the day the Japanese aircraft and artillery were both active, an observation balloon being moved to the western end of Singapore Island. The Town area came in for much attention and there were a large number of casualties.

547. The administrative situation now began to cause great anxiety. As a result of the further withdrawals the military food reserves under our control were now sufficient for only about seven days' consumption. In addition to this there were the reserves, varying in quantity, held by units and the civil food reserves. We still had adequate ammunition reserves except as regards 25-pounder, Bofors and mortar ammunition. As regards petrol, except for the Asiatic Petroleum Company's reserves on Pulau Bukum, we only had one small dump and what was in vehicle tanks.

Pearl's Hill water reservoir was empty and the Fort Canning Reservoir began to lose water rapidly. In the Town area breaks in the mains from bombing and shelling began to gain steadily over repairs, with the result that from the 12th February pressure failed seriously and water at low pressure was only available at certain street and ground floor levels. Special water carrying parties were organized. On the 12th February Royal Engineer personnel and military transport were called in by the Director General of Civil Defence to assist the civil staff. For some time past certain Royal Engineer Officers, Warrant and Non-Commissioned Officers, had been understudying Public Utility Services so as to be able to assist should need arise.

SECTION LIV.—EVENTS OF THE
13TH FEBRUARY, 1942.

548. The main Japanese offensive during the 13th February developed along the Pasir Panjang Ridge on the left of our position. Here the Japanese 18 Division, which had fought in the Mersing area and later taken part in the initial attack against Singapore Island, came