

**A SCARCE 19TH HUSSARS OFFICERS 'SUDAN 1884' GROUP, HIS REGIMENT BEING CONSPICUOUS FOR THEIR GALLANTRY AT THE BATTLE OF EL-TEB IN PARTICULAR. HE LATER SERVED AT THE RELIEF OF CHITRAL, 1895 AND AS A LIEUTENANT-COLONEL, SERVED IN THE GREAT WAR**



EGYPT AND SUDAN 1882-89, UNDATED REVERSE, CLASP, EL-TEB TAMAAL 'LIEUT. R. W. NICHOLSON. 19TH. HUSSARS'; INDIA GENERAL SERVICE 1895-1902, CLASP, RELIEF OF CHITRAL 1895 'CAPTN. R. W. NICHOLSON COMST. TRANSPORT. DEPT. BO: CD.'; BRITISH WAR MEDAL 1914-20 'LT. COL. R. W. NICHOLSON.'; DELHI DURBAR 1911, SILVER, UNNAMED AS ISSUED; KHEDIVE'S STAR 1884.

Ralph Wise Nicholson was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the Kilkenny Militia on 21 February 1880, before transferring to the 19th Hussars with the ranks of Lieutenant on 2 August 1882. With the 19th Hussars, he served in the Sudan Expedition of 1884, his regiment seeing a good deal of hard service. At the battle of El-Teb in particular, the 19th and 10th Hussars were in the thick of action;

### **THE BATTLE OF EL-TEB**

'On the 21st February 1884, the force under the command of Sir Gerald Graham left for El Teb, via Trinkitat. It was composed of 4,500 men with 22 guns and 6 machine guns. On the 29th, they approached the main Mahdist position, on a hill near El Teb. This position consisted of various entrenchments and rifle pits. The Mahdists also had several artillery pieces including Krupp guns captured from the Tokar garrison, some of whom had changed sides, and were now fighting for the Mahdists. Estimated strength of the Mahdist force was well over 10,000. The British, forming into a square, circled the Mahdist entrenchments to outflank them, under cover of dense rifle and cannon fire. After a brief artillery duel, the Mahdist guns were silenced, and the British advanced. During the artillery duel, the Mahdists had hidden in trenches to avoid incoming British rifle and artillery rounds. However as the British square advanced they bravely rushed out in small groups to attack the British infantry and guns, momentarily stopping the advance, pushing it back momentarily.





At this point Colonel Stewart's Cavalry Brigade, consisting of the 10th and 19th Hussars, advanced past the right flank of the square and charged the enemy positions, where the British were confronted by the Mahdist appearing before them from behind bushes or unseen trenches. Another tactic used by the Mahdist was to pretend to lie dead on the battlefield as British cavalry charged through, then, as the cavalry returned at a slower pace back through the ranks of the 'dead', the Mahdists would rise up and slit the hamstrings of the horses then proceed to kill the riders. This was made all the more difficult for the cavalry as the Hussars, armed with swords, as opposed to Lancers, who's weapons would have been better suited to counter such tactics. This led to a confused struggle with the tribesmen and in the broken country covered by thorn bushes, the cavalry suffered heavy casualties. Of all those who lost their horses, Colonel Barrow of the 19th, was the only one to escape alive, but he was badly wounded with a spear through his arm pinning it to his side.

As the British infantry reached the earthworks, the battalions moved out of square formation and, forming line, stormed the tribesmen's positions. At the top of the hill, a village had been fortified by the Mahdists, and here they resisted the most stubbornly. The British infantry had to clear the trenches with bayonets after which the fighting died down. At around 1pm General Graham's troops took the hamlet of El Teb and the Mahdists began to stream away into the surrounding country. British casualties amounted to 172 killed and wounded. 'Mahadist between 2 and 3,000. One VC and several DCM's were awarded to men from the 19th Hussars for gallantry at El-Teb.





Proceeding to India, he transferred to the Bombay Staff Corps on 29 January 1885, was promoted Captain on 2 August 1893, and served with the Chitral Relief Force under Sir Robert Low in 1895. He was promoted Major on 10 July 1901, and was advanced to Lieutenant-Colonel on 2 August 1908. During the Great War he served in the Supply and Transport Corps; entitled to BWM only (MIC confirms). According to his Army List entry:

*'Major R. W. Nicholson served in the Soudan Expedition in 1884 with the 19th Hussars, and was present in the engagements at El Teb and Tamaï (Medal with Clasp, and Khedive's Star). Served in the Nile Expedition in 1884-85'*



**Note:** Medal rolls make it clear he was only entitled to the El-Teb Tamaai clasp to his Egypt and Sudan medal.



Condition VF; light pitting and contact marks to edges of 1 & 2. Naming on I.G.S. is officially re-engraved from as few letters of surname onwards; presumably there was a spelling mistake. Sold with an original photograph of Nicholson wearing his Egypt, I.G.S. and Star. Also two original military documents from the early 1860's, relating to Captain A.L. Nicholson, 64th Foot; Father?

A scarce on the market 19th Hussars Officers medal for the 1884 Sudan campaign.