



On Makin, also in the Gilbert Group, which the Americans attacked at the same time as Tarawa, the fighting was bitter in spots but less gruelling. American casualties here were 65 killed and 121 wounded. As will be seen from the map, Makin consists of two large islands and a number of islets.

space filled with coral, sand and rubble. No bullet could get through them, and it took a large calibre shell to do much damage.

The positions were consolidated by nightfall on the second day, and the third day was the beginning of the end. The valuable airstrip was taken and work began on it while the Japs. were still sniping from the far tip of the island to which they had been driven. The official clean-up was seventy-six hours, but six days after the first attack odd snipers were still being rounded up, and as long as twenty days later a live Jap. came out of a blockhouse. He'd been living in there with a lot of dead men for a long time.

The Japs. fought to the death. Some took their own lives, pointing the muzzles of their rifles to their heads and pulling the triggers with their toes. They were big men—about 5 ft. 10 in. in height—and the pick of the Japanese forces, the Imperial Marines. Altogether between 3,000 and 6,000 were killed, with the latter figure given by an official U.S. spokesman.

The Marines who took Tarawa were mainly those who fought on Guadalcanal and had been resting in New Zealand. They had a tough job, but in the opinion of the Naval pilot they did it splendidly. The Japs. tried several counter-attacks without success, though at times on the first day and night the Marines' position was crucial. The only aerial reprisals attempted were the

excursions of several Jap. bombers, who would come over each morning at 5 a.m., so regularly that you could set your watch by them and after dropping a few bombs, hurry home.

Though their real estate value may be negligible, the Gilberts do possess an important strategic value. "For the Japanese they constituted the major nerve centres of their Western Pacific Naval sphere and a threat to American communicating lines. In American hands they represent an important new dent in the Japanese defensive perimeter and a spring-board for operations in a number of directions which the continuing Pacific offensive must take."

