



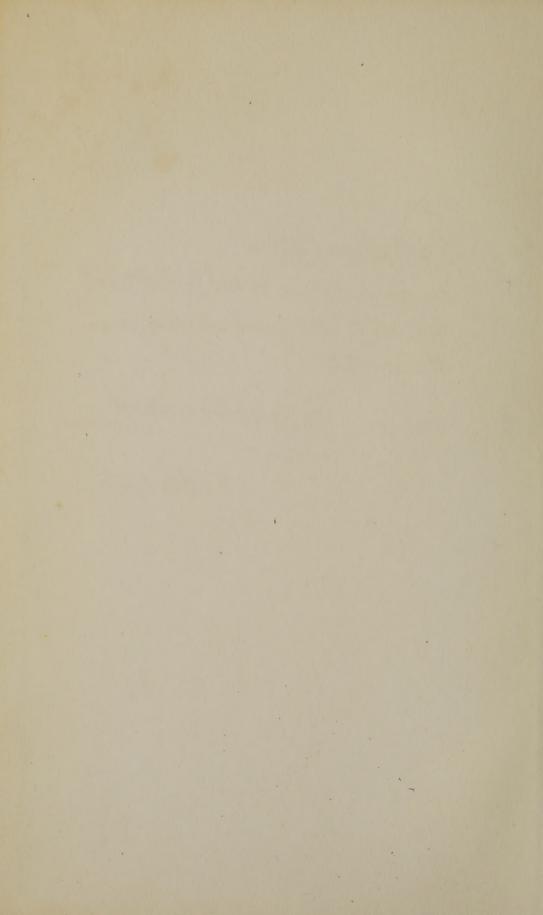
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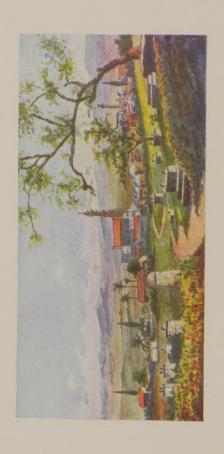


PALESTINE MEMORIES 1917–1918–1925

WORKS BY ROBERT H. GOODSALL.

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Ramiela and the Julies Hills.

Ramleh and the Judean Hills.

PALESTINE MEMORIES

1917-1918-1925

BY

ROBERT H. GOODSALL

A.R.I.B.A., A.I. Struct. E. A.R.P.S.

Lieutenant Royal Field Artillery (T.F.)

WITH SKETCHES IN COLOUR AND MONOCHROME, PHOTOGRAPHS AND FOUR MAPS MADE BY THE AUTHOR



CANTERBURY - CROSS AND JACKMAN - MCMXXV.

Subscription Edition, limited to 300 copies ...

1925.

TO MY MOTHER.

The Author is greatly indebted to the Rev. J. A. Nash for his kind permission to use of the five photographs, facing pages 162, 168, 174, 176, 178; to J. Dunn, Esq. M. Inst. M. & Cy.E. for certain notes and press cuttings embodied in the work, and the Proprietors of "The New Photographer" for the loan of blocks facing pages 16, 34, 38, 110, 136.

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FOREWORD.

So much has been written concerning the Great War that some justification would seem necessary for the present work.

My excuse must lie in the hope that these pages will mirror a little of the life, duties, and pleasures which fell to the lot of those who served in Palestine during the last two years of the war. My story is a simple one, a narrative of every-day happenings which will, perhaps, stir the memory of those who were "out East" in 1917 and 1918, and serve to conjure up a picture of strenuous and not always unhappy days. To others the work may form some slight commentary to the more ambitious and historical descriptions of the Palestine Campaign which have already appeared. Some of the material forming part of this work was penned while on service, when impressions were fresh and vivid. The remainder has been written five to six years later. In thus looking back, much that was disagreeable and trying-physically and mentally-has been forgotten, whilst it is possible to see in truer perspective, events which at the time seemed obscure. The excitement of the actual fighting is remembered, while the danger and suffering becomes a memory dimmed by time. When there was no fighting to be done life was a great carefree adventure lived in vast open spaces and shared by fine companions. It is this impression, I think, which will remain most strongly with those who experienced it.

In the description of events I have purposely retained much of the Army slang and phraseology in current use, as being typical and giving a truer picture of the time.

In January, 1917 I joined a newly-formed Territorial Battery of the Royal Field Artillery as a temporary Second Lieutenant. The unit belonged to a Territorial Division, which, according to rumour, was on the point of leaving for France to join the Expeditionary Force. The fortunes of war, ever uncertain, decreed that this battery should proceed East instead to French soil. Consequently two months later I found myself on Board H.M.T. Cestrian bound for

Salonica and Egypt. Of the voyage little need be said except that the time passed uneventfully. It was a period of anxiety. The submarine menace was at its height and any moment an encounter with one of the enemy's under-water craft might have heralded the ship's doom. Thanks to the watchfulness of the ship's officers and of the Naval escort which accompanied the vessel, and our good luck, such a meeting—although narrowly avoided—did not take place.

Three weeks after leaving Plymouth the transport berthed in Salonica Harbour. She carried troops for the Struma and Doiran Fronts as well as the horses of the Brigade to which my Battery belonged. Here we learned that our destination was the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. After a few days the *Cestrian* left for Alexandria. Again fortune was kind, and the dangerous passage of the Greek Islands, passed historic Mudros and the dimly outlined Dardanelles, was safely accomplished. Two days later in the early dawn the lighthouse of Alexandria became visible on the horizon and in a few hours the voyage was at an end.

For several weeks the unit remained in camp at Sidi Bishr east of Alexandria awaiting the arrival of the guns, gunners, and some of the officers who had been sent out via France and Marseilles. This camp on the fringe of the desert and a few hundred yards from the sea shore was occupied at one time or another by most of the troops in the E.E.F.

It is not in the province of this work to describe the charm of Egypt—perhaps the most wonderful country in all the East. This ancient land casts a spell over those who live for any time under her skies of eternal blue, from which escape is never completely possible. Circumstances may not permit of a return, but the desire to see once more the verdant Delta and the vast desert wastes never dies.

One day, perhaps an opportunity will arise for me to write about this magic land, but in the subsequent pages the reader will find described a country very different, yet hardly less interesting—the land of Southern Palestine. Historically, Judea is very old, and so intimately is it associated with the story of the Bible that it must ever remain to Christians—nay more to the followers of every creed—one of the most revered spots in the World.

To-day, owing to the exigencies of military service, thousands of Britons from the mother country and from beyond the seas know this corner of the Holy Land as few except the natives know it. The Crusaders of old gained a similar knowledge, and so once more, history has repeated itself. This last Crusade, perhaps the greatest of them all, resulted in that success which Christians of old fought so hard to gain and yet failed to achieve.

In the pages which follow I have endeavoured to portray by pen, brush and camera this land of Judea, and to suggest something of the charm and beauty of the country. In dealing with the fighting I have purposely adopted the narrower viewpoint of personal knowledge and observation. The full history of the campaign may be studied in the official "Brief Record of the Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force—July, 1917 to October, 1918," and many other works. My object has not been to write a war history, but rather to suggest to the reader the life of the individual Tommy fighting in the rich plains of Philistia or the difficult hill country of Judea.

ROBERT H. GOODSALL.

Tankerton-on-Sea, Kent, 1925.



PALESTINE MEMORIES.

CHAPTER 1.

FROM EGYPT TO PALESTINE.

In the early hours of a June morning in 1917, after a tedious journey lasting several hours by Egyptian State Railway from Alexandria, my unit, the — Brigade R.F.A., arrived at the Base Camp of the E.E.F.—Kantara—on the Suez Canal.

The majority of us had never so much as heard of Kantara before and certainly could not have placed it on the map, but the mysterious words "the base" helped those with experience of France to describe to the less initiated some of the beauties and pleasures one might expect to find.

The detrainment of a battery is always a "busy" job, particularly so at night, under the fitful light of blazing acetylene gas flares, when everyone is tired by the journey, the O.C. 's liver is badly shaken and tempers generally are none of the best.

In this particular case however the work was comparatively easy. Ramps were available for running off the guns and wagons from the railway trucks, and unboxing horses, and powerful electric arc lamps pierced the deep blue of the Egyptian night, brilliantly illuminating the station.

For ten minutes or so chaos reigned along the arrival platform. The ground was littered with bags—or rather saddle blankets—full of harness, piles of Q.M.S.', farriers', and saddlers' stores, guns and their limbers, frightened horses and mules, and officers' kit, all apparently mixed up in hopeless confusion.

But the army machine is a remarkable affair, and the British Tommy, T.F. or otherwise, a remarkable person, so that before long a certain amount of order was evolved out of the existing chaos. At last the battery was "standing to," the men ready to mount and drive away, upon the O.C's order "Walk march!"

There was always a spirit of rivalry between the three batteries of the Brigade as to who could detrain in the quickest time. On this occasion I think it was about thirty minutes before "Ack" battery was ready to move off. It might here be mentioned that units were never called A and B but always the "Ack" or "Beer" of signalling parlance. Similarly trench mortar batteries were called the "Tock Emmas" and the machine guns "Emma g's," while antiaircraft guns were known as "Archies."

I shall never forget my first glimpse of the Canal,—which afterwards became such a familiar sight,—as the battery marched out from the station and crossed the temporary swing bridge leading to the eastern bank. At one time or another every officer and man in the E.E.F. must have crossed this bridge, the narrow gateway to the front. Many, alas! returned slowly and painfully in a Red Cross car, while others passed this way no more.

The station was close to the western bank of the Canal, for the Cairo-Port Said Railway runs parallel to it the whole way from Ismalia to the sea, separated only by the Sweet Water Canal, a narrow dyke, barely thirty feet wide.

The Canal looks a curious waterway under the soft radiance of an eastern night, with its high banks dark against the luminous sky, and the surface of the water sparkling with myriads of tiny ripples. When a giant ship glides slowly past, with a great search light illuminating the water and banks for a mile or more ahead, the effect is particularly eerie.

It was in the beam of one of these searchlights that we saw the Canal on that June night. The battery had to wait while the bridge was opened to allow a large vessel to pass by bound for India or more distant lands.

When she had gone the bridge was closed again and we crossed to the eastern bank. My memory of the subsequent march is somewhat hazy. Impressions are apt to be so at 3 a.m., when one has been "hard at it" for twenty-four hours or more. All that I can recall is the vision of a hard metalled road bounded by numberless camps, lines upon lines of tents, sheds, and dumps silhouetted the sky.

Half an hour later we reached the East station, the terminus of the Military Railway to Palestine. Dawn was breaking and in the gathering light we unharnessed the horses, watered and fed them, and then, to use Tommy phrase, "got down to it," or in other words lay down where we could to snatch an hour or so of sleep.

Before the war Kantara was no more than a name. Well informed would have been the school boy who could have placed it accurately on the map. It was merely a spot in the desert, marked only by a station on the E.S.R., and a tiny village of native mud hovels occupied by a few "gyppos."

Yet the history of Kantara extends back to the remoteness of antiquity, for it has always been the gateway to the desert, astride the caravan route from Egypt to Palestine. Kings and Princes, armies and pilgrims throughout the ages have passed this way. Possibly from this point the tribes of Israel may have been led by Moses when they set out from the land of the Pharoahs to cross the Wilderness of Sin; here too may have rested the Holy Family with the Child Christ when they escaped from the wrath of Herod.

The name El Kantara signifies in Arabic "The Bridge" for a narrow strip of land here separates the great lagoons and in olden days formed the Caravan route from Egypt towards Katia, Romani, El Arish and Palestine. To-day, when the Suez Canal forms a sharp dividing line between the desert of Egypt and the Wilderness of Sin and is spanned by a permanent girder bridge and two or more temporary pontoon bridges the name is even more significant. To the Tommy bound on his way "up the Line" Kantara was in truth a bridge where the comforts of civilization were left behind at the West station and the rigours of a campaigner's life awaited him at the East station.

The growth of Kantara during the two years—1917 and 1918—was tremendous. By January 1919 it had quite the appearance of a settled bungalow town, several large kinemas, a magnificent Y.M.C.A. establishment, and a wooden church being numbered among the more important buildings.

I have never ceased to marvel at the Kantara Military Railway. In many respects it was the most remarkable engineering achievement of the war. To realise what its construction meant to the campaign it is necessary to recall briefly the events which led up to our advance across the desert in pursuit of the Turks during the winter of 1916-1917 and the resulting battles of Gaza.

In the early days of the war, when Germany overwhelmed Belgium, Turkey mobilized her army and prepared to enter the combat upon a signal from her Teutonic masters. When the final break with the Allies occurred, Turkey had a partially organized army some 150,000 strong, collected around Beersheba, ready to advance to what, she fondly hoped, would be the easy conquest of Egypt.

In 1915 she made her first attack upon the Suez Canal. The result was a hopeless fiasco and the Turkish troops were driven back, losing many guns and two thousand prisoners.

The news of this misfortune was suppressed from the Turkish people for some time and a fresh expedition of mixed Turks and Germans was gradually organized. Far more care and preparation was lavished upon this than on the previous ill-starred adventure. The railway through Central

Palestine, which before the war only reached the northern portion of Judea, was extended southwards to Beersheba and into the desert of El Audja, while a branch line was carried from Et Tineh, situated in the Plain of Philistia, southwards almost to Gaza.

In August 1916 the Turks made their last and strongest thrust against Egypt. The attempt was anticipated by our forces which were drawn up on a line from Romani to the Mediterranean some twenty-three miles east of the Canal.

The old plan of holding the Canal as a defensive line had gone by the board. One remembers the story—unofficial of course—of Lord Kitchener's visit to Egypt, and his question "Are you defending the Canal or is the Canal defending you?" The hint had been taken and we were well out in the desert.

On the coast was the 52nd Division, their left flank protected by monitors in the Bay of Tinah, while on the right lay the Anzac Mounted Division. At midnight of the 3rd-4th of August the Turks attacked and fighting continued throughout the day. At one time during the action our right was forced back, but reinforcements from the 42nd Division together with the Warwickshire and Gloucestershire Yeomanry arrived during the afternoon and by dusk the enemy was hopelessly beaten.

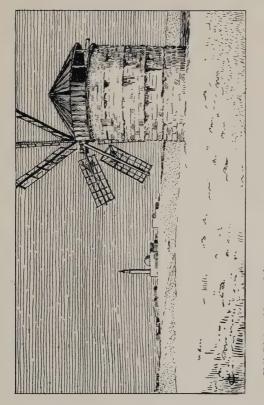
The defeat was quickly changed into a rout. From daylight on August 5th our cavalry continually harassed the Turkish retreat, rounding up prisoners and booty of war in the process. Day after day the enemy continued to withdraw until many miles of desert separated the two forces.

This state of affairs offered a new problem to the leaders of the E.E.F. Touch with the enemy was completely lost and to renew the attack it was necessary to transfer a large force across a barren and waterless desert and maintain it at full fighting strength many miles from the base. To achieve this end two things were necessary—a railway, and the provision of an adequate supply of stores and water.

Of course our force might have remained on the defensive and continued to hold the desert outposts, but such inaction was directly opposed to all the accepted axioms of war.

The enemy had received a stern rebuff and such a blow must be followed up by others. The situation in Mesopotamia demanded that the largest possible enemy force should be detained on Sinai front. Furthermore in Egypt we had lost prestige in the eyes of the natives by allowing the Turks to advance to the shores of the Canal, and this could only be regained by following up the Turkish army and inflicting further defeats.

So the advance across the desert was decided upon, and work commenced on the Sinai railway. The new line started



Sidi Bishr, Alexandria.



from Kantara and was pushed out towards Katia and Bir el Abd. At certain places along the line of advance, the caravan route which has been termed so aptly "the oldest road in the world," there were wells, but the supply of water thus available was so scanty and bad that the crossing of the desert by a large force was practically impossible unless the existing supply was supplemented.

Fortunately behind us lay one of the greatest water supplies in the world,—the Nile,—and it was the waters of this immortal river which supplied our troops during their passage of the Sinai desert. In this manner was fulfilled an ancient native prophecy which foretold that the Holy City would not be delivered out of the hands of the Infidel until the waters of Egypt flowed into Palestine.

Along the western bank of the Suez Canal at its northern end runs the "Sweet Water Canal" fed from the Nile, and as soon as the advance was ordered, plant to filter 600,000 gallons of water per day was set up. Pipes were laid under the Suez Canal and the purified water was conveyed to reservoirs on the eastern side. At the same time pipes were laid out into the desert. This pipe line consisted of three mains, 12in., 10in., 8in. sections respectively.

Concurrently with the laying of the pipe line, the work of building the railway was pushed on. The task was indeed a colossal one, both from the constructive point of view and also in the provision of the necessary material. The amount of surplus railway metals and sleepers in Egypt was neglig-In view of the demand which the new line would make on her resources, and to meet the immediate need, many miles of the less important tracks of the Egyptian State railways were taken up and conveyed to the Sinai Day after day the work of construction went on apace. Large gangs of men were employed in each operation. First came the sappers with their direction posts to mark out the line. Next parties of men would roughly prepare the ground for the track, followed by others who put the finishing touches to the levels, or embankments and Behind these were more gangs carrying sleepers from trucks on the completed line in rear which were thrown down and correctly spaced. Immediately other parties of men fixed the rails to the sleepers, and as soon as each section was completed, an engine, pushing a truck in front of it, would move up to the exteme limit of the newly laid line.

Except in places where the nature of the ground offered particular difficulties an average length of two miles of line was laid each day.

The construction of the railway and pipe line went on simultaneously, but to maintain the supply of water until each section of the pipe line came into operation a system of railway transport was organized. A large number of trucks were fitted with tanks which were filled with water at a special siding at Kantara. The train was then sent forward to the ever advancing railhead where the contents was emptied into long canvas troughs built against the line. From the railhead the water was camel-borne forward to the troops.

During the Autumn of 1916 the main objective was El Arish a native village situated at the estuary of the Wadi El Arish—the ancient River or Brook of Egypt mentioned in the Bible—distant about 100 miles from the Canal.

El Arish is mentioned several times in the Old Testament. In a vision Moses was told the boundaries of Canaan and "the border shall fetch a compass from Azmon unto the river of Egypt, and the goings out of it shall be at the sea" (Numbers Ch. 34. V. 5), and again "Solomon held a feast and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt" (I. Kings Ch. 8. V. 65). The name again appears in one of Isaiah's Prophecies (Isaiah Ch. 27. V. 12).

During November the enemy held the village of El Arish and the wells of Masaid some three miles to the south. Our mounted patrols had been pushed up until, on 28th, they came in contact with the enemy at the latter place.

Great strides were made with the railway, and by 1st December it was east of Mazar, 70 miles or more from Kantara. The principal stations were Bir el Dueidar, Romani, Bir el Abd, with several smaller intermediate stations. Being a single line, the track had to be worked in sections, and trains could only pass at the stations, consequently a train frequently had to wait while another coming in the opposite direction traversed the intervening section line. Later, when the railway reached Deir el Belah, an elaborate system of control was instituted to reduce the waits at stations. Trains left Kantara and Belah respectively at half-hourly intervals, so that as many as forty-eight trains could run in either direction during the course of twenty-four hours.

After a few hours' rest at the East station, the Brigade received orders from the R.T.O. to entrain. Here the facilities for loading up were even better than at the West station. A long ramp, the length of the train, permitted access to all the trucks simultaneously. The work went on rapidly, and in a comparatively short space of time every vehicle and horse was on board, and it only remained to allot the passenger trucks to the men.

These vehicles were somewhat of a novelty, compared with the third-class compartments to which we had become accustomed. Originally they had been sideless trucks without any superstructure, but as a protection against the sun rough timber framing and boarded tops had been built on to them, a few boards with spaces between forming the sides.

Into one of these conveyances the officers of the Brigade managed to crowd themselves and their kit, while the "other ranks" were packed equally like sardines.

After considerable delay—I never knew a troop train to start for at least an hour after everyone was on board—the journey commenced.

It was the first time most of us had seen the real desert. The rolling sand dunes stretched away on either side of the line until they were lost on the far horizon, the monotony of the landscape being broken only by an occasional clump of palm trees, and the buildings or tents of some control point on the line.

A Tommy writing home once aptly described this dreary country as follows: "Dear Brother," he wrote, "we are now in the desert. If you want to know what a desert is like its miles, and miles, and miles of sweet damn all," and that I think is the last word on the subject.

When night fell the temperature dropped considerably and we were very glad to turn in under rugs or into "fleabags" to gain what rest was possible in a badly-sprung railway truck passing over a newly laid desert line. If you have ever seen a goods train pull up suddenly and the trucks bump against each other from engine to guard's van you will guess that our sleep on this occasion was fitful. Our train played this game on an average every quarter of an hour.

CHAPTER 2.

THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF JUDEA.

The peoples of Palestine have played so great a part in the history of the world that the smallness of the country is often overlooked. It is a little land of very great traditions, the most interesting spot in all the world to followers of the Christian faith. In size it is about equal to Wales and like that country is very mountainous, a terrain of tortuous tumbled hills and many valleys, with here and there an open fertile plain.

A glance at the map will quickly reveal its physical features. The coast line runs from north to south, curving to the westward at the southern end. Along this coast is only one natural harbour, the Bay of Acre, where the wooded heights of the Carmel run out into the sea. Southwards there is not a single anchorage which affords protection to shipping from the breakers of the Mediterranean. The seaboard terrain is a continuous line of sand dunes varying in width from three to six or seven miles. Eastward of this sandy shore lies the maritime plain commencing at the foothills of Carmel in the north, past the narrow plain of Sharon and then widening out into the southern plain of Philistia. From this lowland country rise the foothills and the mountains of Samaria and Judea.

The western side of this watershed is a maze of tumbled hills separated by deep wadies, rising gradually to a height of two thousand feet or more above sea level. Eastward the fall is more rapid and the depth much greater until at the foot is reached the sacred river Jordan. Beyond lie the mystic mountains of Moab. In the north are the vast heights of Mount Lebanon. Swift and strong is the fount of the Holy River in the bosom of Hermon. Southward flows the water through the Sea of Merom, and the Lake of Tiberias, twisting and winding and for ever falling lower through vast gorges far below the sea level until the Dead Sea is reached. Such briefly are the physical features of the Holy Land which became so familiar to thousands of Britons during 1917 and 1918.

The land of Judea is the south-eastern portion of Palestine. The northern boundary extends from a few miles north of Jaffa on the coast eastwards towards Ram Allah, then roughly north east until it strikes the Jordan north of Jericho. To the west the coast forms a natural boundary while eastward the province is separated from Moab by the valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. The southern limits extend into the great desert "the Wilderness of Sin." The line of demarkation exists only upon maps and there is no physical counterpart in the dreary waste of sand; a country where landmarks change with every gale of wind.

The contours follow the same general disposition of plain and hill country which extends through the whole of Palestine. Along the coast is the broad maritime plain—the Land of the Philistines,—a country of rich soil capable of bearing generous crops, lacking only water during the summer to make it one of the most fertile spots in the world. From the plain of Philistia rises the rugged range of the Judean hills, for the most part barren stony ridges, often devoid of vegetation, divided by numberless precipitous water courses, or wadies as they are called. To the east the hills fall rapidly, the Jordan emptying into the Dead Sea, far below the level of the Mediterranean. South of Gaza and Beersheba the hills and fertile plain merge into the desert sand, a region of waterless desolation.

This was the country which the Turk guarded so tenaciously during the summer of 1917, strongly holding the line from Gaza on the coast, to Beersheba some thirty miles to the south east.

After the conspicuous failure of our forces to drive back the Turks from this line in the second battle of Gaza in April the advance of necessity came to a standstill. For the time being the war of movement was at an end, and both sides settled down to a period of trench warfare, each force building up its strength preparatory to the next round in the contest.

The Turk had by far the stronger natural position. The terrain before Gaza was eminently suited to trench warfare, undulating hills of which he held the crests in most places gave him the advantage of clear observation. East of the town was the famous height of Ali Muntar, from which he had an uninterrupted view of the whole of our defences, giving him an enormous advantage. Not until the city was taken in the Autumn did we realise what a wonderful vantage point Ali Muntar was. This was brought home to us in a striking way by the discovery that from a Turkish battery position upon the reverse slope of the hill the gunners could lay their guns with open sights on to the key of our defensive system, the trench

works of Samson's Ridge. The ground to the south of Gaza was split up into a great number of cultivated patches—one could hardly call them gardens—by tall impregnable cactus hedges. Difficult as these barriers were in themselves they were rendered practically invulnerable to advancing troops by deep trenches dug immediately behind them and manned by machine gunners. These cactus hedges remain a tragic memory to the attacking troops in the first and second battles of Gaza.

Immediately behind the city to the north was a concealed plain, where subsequently the station on the military railway was built. This made an admirable railhead for the Turkish line, close to their front, out of range and entirely concealed from our observers except from the air. During the attempts upon Egypt the Turkish railways were extended southward, and by this time they had one line running from Ramleh via Junction Station to Beersheba and southwards into the desert towards Khalassa, Rubeiba, and El Audja, while a branch line ran through Mejdel to Deir Sineid. From the latter point it was carried on almost to the outskirts of Gaza. This line greatly simplified the transportation of supplies to the Garrison. More important still there was an adequate supply of water drawn from wells north of the city.

During the weeks which followed the failure to take Gaza in the second battle, the Turks worked unceasingly to strengthen and improve their defences until this key position became impregnable from frontal attack, rendering their right flank perfectly secure.

Their left flank was situated at Beersheba, another position of great natural strength, fed by a well-laid railway and having an abundant water supply, the only spot in the district where water was to be found.

Between these two points they built strong redoubts situated on various heights overlooking the plain southwards for miles, while behind, to the north, was a strong line of lateral communication.

Sir Edmund Allenby, in his despatch of 16th December, 1917, gives the following description of the Turk's Defences:—

"The Turkish army in Southern Palestine held a strong position extending from the sea at Gaza, roughly along the main Gaza-Beersheba road to Beersheba. Gaza had been made into a strong modern fortress, heavily entrenched and wired, offering every facility for protracted defence. The remainder of the enemy's line consisted of a series of strong localities, viz., the Sihan group of works, the Atawineh group, the Baha group, the Abu Hareira-Arab el Teeaha trench

system, and, finally, the works covering Beersheba. These groups of works were generally from 1,500 to 2,000 yards apart, except that the distance from the Hareira group to Beersheba was four and a half miles.

The enemy's force was on a wide front, the distance from Gaza to Beersheba being about thirty miles; but his lateral communications were good and any threatened point of the line could be very quickly reinforced.

Our own position was far less satisfactory. Before Gaza we held the sand dunes and the dominating crest of Samson's Ridge. The summit was slightly higher than the enemy's line but was dominated by Ali Muntar.

Southwards from Samson's Ridge the ground fell away to the Wadi Ghuzze, a distance of about four miles, and then extended as a practically level plain right away to our rail-head at Deir el Belah and beyond. The greater part of this country was in view of the Turkish observers on Ali Muntar who must have seen every train which ran into Belah station. Further east were a series of low gently sloping hills, the ridges of which we held, but everywhere the ground was as low or lower than the opposing Turkish positions.

Our right flank was situated at Gamli and protected by the Cavalry and Desert Corps about twenty miles south east of Gaza on the south of the Wadi Ghuzze. Here an open plain eight or nine miles wide separating us from the enemy's position at Beersheba.

Everywhere behind our lines the ground was a soft fraiable earth, little better than fine dusty sand, which made the "going" for all vehicular traffic extremely heavy and in many places impossible, a fact which added enormously to the difficulties of supplying a large force with ammunition and rations.

But the greater problem was the ever present difficulty of obtaining water in a waterless country. The pipe line from Egypt brought the water of the Nile to within a few miles of railhead at Belah, but this was of little use to the troops in the line and immediately behind. Fortunately the Wadi Ghuzze, which will be described in detail later, although dry during the summer, carried a water bearing strata below the surface of its bed, and the engineers by excavating numerous "sumps" were able to provide a supply more or less adequate to meet the demand.

Water was also found in the sand dunes a hundred yards or so from the foreshore west of Belah, and it was here that the bulk of the transport animals were watered daily.

My Brigade reached the frontier of Palestine at Rafa in the early hours of the 2nd July, 1917.

The ramifications of the Practical Joke Department immortalised in the pages of "The First Hundred Thousand" were very much in evidence. During our hurried "over-seas" preparations in England the unit, as "thrown together," consisted of two six-gun 18-pdr. batteries, and as such we were equipped and trained. Then at the last moment some humorously minded individual conceived the brilliant idea of making us Horse Artillery, and splitting us up into three four-gun batteries with 12-pdrs. in place of 18-pdrs. This change was effected a week before we embarked at Plymouth and as Horse Artillery we arrived at Alexandria.

This metamorphosis proved most distasteful to the E.E.F., and it was at once decided that we should become two sixgun batteries once more. The immediate result of this order was colossal "wind up" in the Q.M.S. department of the unfortunate battery which had to be split up. However by dint of much judicious "wangling," "wire pulling," and "camouflage" various deficiencies were made good and the respective sections returned complete to their parent units.

But the joke had by no means reached its climax, for at Rafa we received orders to proceed to Shallal and hand over our 18-pdrs. to the Horse Artillery Brigade and draw in place their 18-pdrs., for which presumably they had no further use.

Of course we realised the humour of Horse Artillery equipped with 18-pdrs. in a country where the "going" was so bad that their normal light weapons could only be drawn at a slow walk. The joke seemed a little forced however when we thought of our own team drawing the added weight and ammunition. Truly the ways of the army are mysterious.

We stayed at Rafa for twenty-four hours. It was by no means a pleasant spot. The bivouac area allotted to us had been camped on by scores of units which had preceded us and was by no means clean. After the comparative cleanliness of the camp at Sidi Bishr, Alexandria, it was a blow to find that one's bivvie had been pitched on someone else's incinerator heap, and that the slightest disturbance of the sand revealed blackened bully tins and other refuse. However we were very tired and it was good to sleep.

Another disadvantage of the camp at Rafa which appealed with particular force to the orderly officer of the day was the distance of the water troughs which were several miles away, coastward over the sand dunes, entailing a march of about two hours. We were learning things quickly concerning this delectable land reputed to be "flowing with milk and honey."

"In The Wilderness."

A Desert Study.

Block kindly loaned by "The New Photographer."



Before the war the importance of Rafa lay under two heads, it marked the coastal boundary between Palestine and Egypt, and was a station on the Eastern Telegraph Company's over-land line from Egypt to Constantinople. The resident population can never have been more than a hundred souls.

Polybius tells us that in classic times there was a large city at Raphia, while in the reign of Ptolemy IV., 222-265 B.C., the last battle of the Fourth Syrian War was fought here. So much only of its ancient history appears to be known. It stands abreast the "oldest road in the world," and so must have played a part in the doings of nations who passed and repassed this way.

Rafa once more became a battle ground with the advance across the desert in 1916-17. During the night of 8th-9th January, 1917, Lieut.-General Chetwood set out from El Arish with a force consisting of Yeomanry, Australian, and New Zealand mounted troops and the Imperial Camel Corps, with a battery of Artillery attached, to attack the Turk's position.

The subsequent action is described by General Sir Archibald Murray in his despatch of 15th March, 1917.

"So efficiently and swiftly was the approach march carried out that the enemy was completely surprised, and by dawn on the 9th January his position was almost entirely surrounded before he became aware of the presence of any large forces in his vicinity. The position, however, was a formidable one. It consisted of three strong series of works connected by trenches, one series facing west, one facing south-west, and one facing south and south-east. The whole was dominated by a central keep or redoubt, some 2,000 yards south-west of Rafa. Moreover, the ground in front of these works was entirely open and devoid of cover, and in their immediate neighbourhood was almost a glacis.

The guns, with which aeroplanes were co-operating, started to register at 7.20 a.m. The main attack, to be carried out by Major-General Sir H. G. Chauvel, K.C.M.G., C.B., General Officer Commanding Australian and New Zealand Mounted Troops, was timed for 10 a.m., with New Zealand Mounted Rifles on the right, attacking from the east, some Australian Light Horse on their left, attacking from the east and south-east, while the Imperial Camel Corps attacked the works in their front from the south-east. A body of Australian Light Horse were in reserve and the Yeomanry in column reserve. Shortly after 10 a.m. parties of Turks, who were attempting to leave Rafa by the Khan Yunus road, were met and captured by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, who galloped the Police Barracks and Machine Gun post, capturing six Germans (including one officer), two Turkish officers, and 163 other ranks.

Before 11 a.m. Rafa was occupied, and two regiments of the troops in reserve were advanced against the works on the left of the troops attacking from the east and south-east. Some Australian Light Horse and the Camel Corps were ordered to press their attack on the works facing south-west, and about the same time the remainder of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, with a body of Light Horse, galloped an open space south of the Police post, and established themselves 300 yards east of the nearest enemy work. The Yeomanry were also ordered to deploy against the western works and to attack in conjunction with the Camel Corps. The encircling movement was now practically complete, save for a gap in the north-west between the New Zealand Brigade and the Yeomanry.

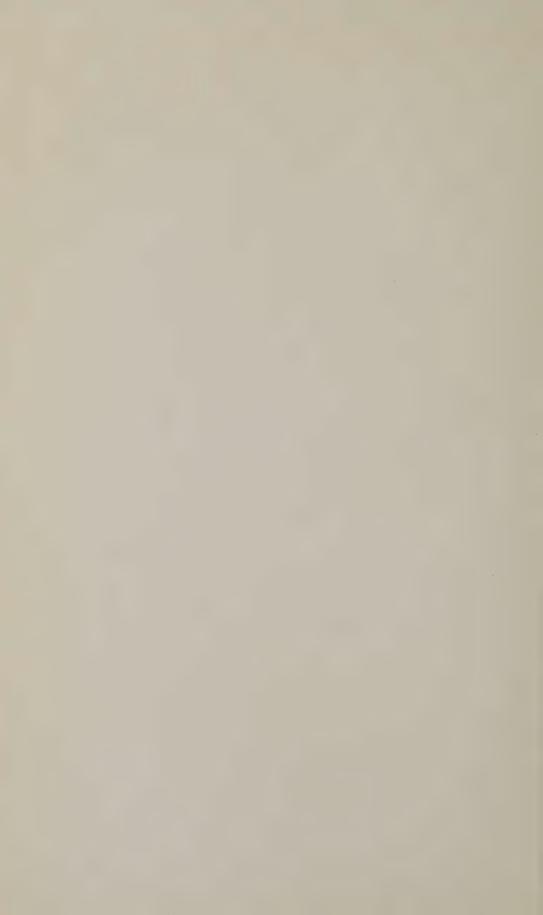
At 12.20 p.m. one of the Horse Artillery batteries moved forward some 1,500 yards to support the attack of the Yeomanry. By one o'clock our troops were within 600 yards of the southern and western trenches, which were being shelled with good effect by our artillery. By 2 p.m. the right of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles had linked up with the left of the Yeomanry, and was pressing its attack on the rear of one of the enemy's works. General Chetwode now issued orders for a concerted attack on the "Redoubt" or central keep, by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, and all other available troops of the Australian and New Zealand mounted force, to commence at 3.30 p.m. The Yeomanry were ordered to co-operate against the rear of the work. By 3.15 p.m. two of the enemy's works had been captured and further prisoners had been taken.

While the attack on the central redoubt was developing, information was received, both from patrols and from the Royal Flying Corps, that an enemy relieving force was marching from Shellal on Rafa. This force was attacked frequently with bombs and machine gun fire by our aeroplanes with success. General Chetwode did not allow this threat, which complicated his situation to affect the execution of his purpose. He at once gave orders for the attack to be pressed with vigour. The troops, admirably supported by the artillery, advanced with great gallantry, and at 4.45 p.m. the New Zealand Mounted Rifles captured the redoubt with brilliant dash, covering the last 800 yards in two rushes, supported by machine-gun fire. By this achievement they were able to take the lower lying works in reverse, and these soon fell to the Camel Corps, the Yeomanry, and the Australian Light Horse. By 5.30 p.m. all organized resistance was over, and the enemy's position with all its garrison was captured, while a detachment of the Australian Light Horse, which had come in contact with the force marching from Shellal, drove off the enemy without difficulty. Our troops now withdrew, taking



"The Sentinel."

The Gamli Plann, above the Waddi Ghuzze.



with them all prisoners, animals, and material captured; one regiment and a light car patrol, which were left to clear the battlefield, withdrew unmolested on the following day.

In this fine action, which lasted for ten hours, the entire enemy force, with its commander, was accounted for. More than 1,600 unwounded prisoners were taken, including one German officer and five German non-commissioned officers. In addition, six machine guns, four mountain guns, and a number of camels and mules were captured. Our casualties were comparatively light, amounting to 487 in all, of which 71 were killed, 415 wounded, and one was missing."

When we reached Rafa in July signs of the Turkish defence could still be traced in the half filled up trenches and derelict wire entanglements.

It was a dreary enough spot, hardly a vestige of green was to be seen, the brown earth pounded to a fine dust, and the sand dunes to the west of the railway station making a truly monotonous prospect.

When the army first arrived it was a delightful picture of rolling hills, green with the spring grass, and here and there patches of young corn, but several months of army traffic had entirely obliterated these signs of vegetation, and nothing remained but the hardy cactus hedges brown with dust.

The station was just as ugly as a railhead can be. There were a number of timber workshops, several rush huts, and the usual collection of tents which housed the R. T.O., canteen and other establishments connected with the railway and camp. Hundreds of tents, mostly camouflaged with paint or mud—more usually the latter, for paint was a difficult commodity to extract from a zealous D.A.D.O.S.,—dotted the plain. The tents were arranged in carefully studied disorder, for Fritz—the common epithet for all Turk aeroplanes—had a nasty habit of penetrating our anti-aircraft defences and forcing his unwelcome attentions upon Rafa and other places well behind the line.

At this period, in fact throughout the whole of the summer of 1917, our own air force was woefully outmatched, both in the number of really skilled pilots and in modern machines. I doubt if we had a single machine on the Palestine front which could touch Fritz for speed.

I think none of us were sorry to leave Rafa on the morning following our arrival. Having got the worst of our journey over we wanted to move up to the actual front and get in our whack at Johnny. During the night we heard the guns thundering before Gaza, and the sound made us impatient to be up and doing.

An early start was made, about 5.30 a.m. We travelled

light, the transport being sent on direct to Belah, with the H.O. staff, while the batteries went to Shellal to hand over the R.H.A. guns and draw 18-pdrs. in their place.

Immediately north of Rafa the railway branched, the western portion going through Khan Yunus to railhead at Deir el Belah, while the eastern line went to Shellal. We followed the latter route.

The going was very bad. We were using eight instead of six-horse teams, but even so it was as much as the "hairies" could do to draw the guns and vehicles. Everywhere the surface was broken up into the finest dust in which the men and animals walked ankle deep. The delightful vision, gained during training, of the battery proceeded into action at a trot, gunners mounted on the carriages as laid down in F.A.T., was rudely dispelled. We moved at a snail's pace with the gunners trudging through the dust, weary and perspiring.

For miles the country appeared to be of the same monotonous character, relieved only by a ridge of high sand hills away to the west. Occasionally we trecked through patches of scorched vegetation, at other times the route lav across fields of stubble. At one spot we came upon a patch of water melons, and the gunners made a rush for them. They proved excellent eating, although not quite ripe, and

were very welcome as thirst quenchers.

By 8 a.m. the heat was intense, quite as bad as anything we had experienced in Egypt, except three days when the "khamsin" blew continuously. From dawn to 7 a.m. the temperature was delightful and one could take exercise in comfort, but as the morning advanced the thermometer rose with a bound, and movement in the open became almost unbearable. Later in the summer, and during 1918 when I had become thoroughly acclimatised, the heat ceased to trouble me—except for two nightmare weeks in the Jordan Valley to be described later - but at this period we were unaccustomed to it and felt the strain accordingly. Fortunately our sun helmets provided adequate protection to the head and neck, and we only had one case of sunstroke—one of our junior officers. The "topie" is quite a comfortable head dress to wear after one has become accustomed to the weight, but experience proved that the much lighter and more picturesque hat used by the Australian and New Zealand troops was just as effective.

The B.C. soon discovered that the normal procedure of marching fifty minutes and halting for ten every hour was unworkable in this country of heavy "going." Half-hour spells were about as much as men and beasts could stand.

After the first ten minutes the animals were in a "muck sweat," the dust clung to their hair and dried, so that they soon looked as if they had not been groomed for a month.

About 10 a.m. Fritz supplied a diversion by appearing immediately overhead. At the time the battery was halted in battery column, making a splendid target, but presumably the airman was not out for bombing practice. Anyway he passed on towards Rafa where he met with a warm reception from our "archies." The incident provided considerable excitement, for most of us were quite unfledged warriors, and this was the first enemy activity we had seen. It was a welcome fillip to the day's programme.

About noon we reached some water troughs supplied from the pipe line, and were able to water and feed the animals. It is at such times that the foot sloggers—who "hump the charlie"—i.e. the infantry, have the pull over the gunners. They have no animals to attend to before administering to their own wants, and are free to settle themselves down to feed or sleep as soon as they halt. To water, feed, and brush down, the horses or mules after a heavy march is one of the hardest tasks of an artilleryman's life.

The animals drank greedily and it was some time before they could be got away from the troughs. We began to wonder how their condition would last in this waterless country. Little did we imagine that these same animals would have to go from 24 to 48 hours without water when the necessity arose. This they did on more than one occasion when the autumn "show" started.

A good feed and an hour's rest did much to "buck up" the animals, but the strain of the morning's treck through the heat had certainly told on them and it was as much as some of the teams could do to draw the guns and wagons over the soft soil. With considerable relief we presently encountered eight pairs of leaders thoughtfully sent out to meet us by the B.C., of the Horse Artillery Battery. It was little acts of kindness and consideration such as this which did so much to foster the feeling of friendliness and good tellowship universally met with throughout the force. On many occasions I experienced similar kindly acts, and their memory remains among the most pleasant recollections of the years I spent in Palestine.

The district south of Shellal was in many respects similar to Salisbury Plain, lacking only a hard surface to make it a gunner's paradise. It was an admirable country in which to train for open warfare, as we learned to our cost during the subsequent months spent at Deir el Belah.

The civilian population can never have been great, and by this time war had obliterated all traces of the native fellahin. Except at Belah and Khan Yunus I never remember seeing a native south of the Wadi Ghuzze.

I must speak now of the Wadi Ghuzze, that remarkable water course which played so important a part in the life of

the E.E.F. during the summer of 1917. Unsuspectingly we came upon it, above Shellal, a sort of nightmare gulley. Even among the officers there was little or no knowledge of what we should encounter on this treck. Only one map had been issued, and that was the cherished property of the B.C. We hardly knew such a place as the Wadi Ghuzze existed,—the men certainly didn't—and suddenly we came upon its tumbled banks.

It is a deep irregular chasm bitten deep in the soft fraible plain by centuries of winter storm water, its banks are a mass of fantastic outlines, jumbled mud castles of the giants—I know not how else to describe them. The width varies considerably. In places it is half-a-mile wide, elsewhere a hundred yards or more, but everywhere the dry river bed is hidden from the plain above by intervening mud hills of every conceivable shape and size, weird and eerie.

It was into this unique river bed that the Shellal track—nowhere could it be called a road,—led us, a dusty cutting made by the sappers as an approach to the Wadi. For two hundred yards or more the route lay between mud hillocks, and then opened out into the stoney and barren watercourse where the only sign of life was a pumping station and water troughs.

Turning eastward the battery moved "up stream" towards the railway bridge at Shellal, and a few minutes later we reached our destination.

The position of the Hants. battery was a delightful oasis in this barren wilderness. The Wadi at this point opened out to a considerable width and a small grass plot on the southern bank formed an admirable gun position. The gun pits were cleverly hidden, being cut into the clay banks of the watercourse, and having their fronts and tops camouflaged by nets. Behind, the miniature hills rose to the general plain level a hundred and fifty feet or so above, and winding downwards through cuttings and along embankments was the track for the railway to Karm, in course of construction, looking for all the world like the scenic railway of an exhibition. Immediately to the east the R.E's were constructing a fine trestle bridge. The work was nearly complete and the day we arrived the first engine passed over to the northern side of the Wadi. Later in the year, when the advance started, the bridge played an important part in the supply of stores to the troops of 20th Corps, and finally connected Rafa with Beersheba and Jerusalem.

We found both men and officers of the Horse Artillery Battery a happy crowd in their delightfully quiet position, which was a purely defensive one. During several weeks the only firing they had carried out was a registration in front of our own wire.



Gun Drill, Sidi Bishr, Alexandria.
 Tell el Jemmi, Wadi Ghuzze.
 Sheikh Nakhrur, Wadi Ghuzze.



They put us up for the night and on the following morning we pulled out their guns and handed over our 12-pdrs. The same day we trecked back westward across the plain to Deir el Belah, which was destined to be our home until the Autumn push.

CHAPTER 3.

DEIR EL BELAH.

The summer of 1917 remains as a very happy memory. At the time one was inclined to "grouse" about the various discomforts which a barren country and active service conditions entailed, but looking back one realises that the hardships were more than counterbalanced by the pleasures of the open air, the carefree life, and the convivial society of comrades-at-arms.

After leaving Shellal we trecked back from the Wadi Ghuzze to Deir el Belah, the railhead and the most important centre behind our line.

The march across country was uneventful except for the breaking of the limber poles of two guns due to inexperienced wheel drivers and difficult ground. The country was similar to that met with on the march from Rafa to Shellal, extremely heavy going and greatly broken up by numerous dry water courses—or wadis. Finding the way from one place to another was an art not easily acquired. True there were maps with the salient features such as wadis, wells, ruins, gardens, and so forth marked thereon, but to identify these in a barren wilderness lacking roads, buildings, and other recognisable features, was by no means easy. To attempt the task without the aid of a prismatic compass was to court disaster. The only sound method was to set the compass by the map and march on the bearing, trusting to luck to strike the spot one was making for.

Gradually as one got to know the country better it became easier to find one's way about but at first it appeared a hopeless business.

The camp which was allotted to the Brigade at Belah was about a mile east of the station on the banks of the Wadi Selka—a miniature Wadi Ghuzze—an uninviting enough spot at first glance but having certain advantages which we eventually came to appreciate. Our neighbours—fortunately well removed—were the Egyptian Labour Corps—the dusky, blue smocked, gentlemen who worked on the railway, and

ration dumps, and did other laborious duties. They kept pretty much to their own preserves, and did not annoy us at all.

The edge of the wadi made a most suitable bivouac area. The soft soil was easily dug away and by stretching a bivvie sheet across the top of a box-like hole cut in the bank a roomy and presentable domicile was easily constructed. In these holes most of us lived, rather in the nature of rabbits. Experience is the best teacher and we soon learned to use a few sand bags to reinforce the sides of our temporary homes. Sandbags could also be built up to form a serviceable, if somewhat hard couch, in fact almost any article of furniture could be constructed with them-from a table to a Chesterfield-while filled with "tibbin," the compressed forage issued for the horses, an excellent cushion could be improvised. An excavated sleeping apartment had several advantages over the ordinary bivouac pitched on flat ground. The sides formed a great protection from wind and sand storms, in addition to giving a certain measure of shade, and by improvising a double canvas roof, it could be kept several degrees cooler than a tent, a blessing when every degree meant additional discomfort. But there were also disadvantages. The sides had an uncomfortable habit of falling in, and it was no uncommon thing to be awakened from slumber by a torrent of loose soil being precipitated upon one's recumbent form. Then, too, various "creepy crawlies" of the insect world pestered one with their attentions. Ants, of formidable size, were the most conspicuous cohabitants, and they found their way into everything, including bedding and clothing. Fortunately they were viceless. There was also a very small variety which it was almost impossible to keep away from anything of an eatable nature. I remember their inroads into a tin of biscuits from which I failed to exclude them, until I hit on the plan of suspending it in mid-air by a piece of string. Occasionally we found scorpions, but not so frequently as later when we were in Central They were comparatively small, about an inch and a half long from head to tail, but capable of delivering an intensely painful sting. Several of the men suffered in this way, fortunately without serious results. The most interesting insects were large beetles which the Tommies christened "the world's workers." These creatures lay their eggs in dung and were to be found in great numbers round the horse lines. They would remove balls of dung many yards across the sand by rolling them with their hind legs and pushing with their fore legs, a most remarkable performance.

One of the greatest trials of camp life in the East is the "fly." In appearance he is similar to the English house variety, but here and there will be found one more vicious than

his fellows who is capable of stinging. His number is legion, and although one does everything possible to reduce the numbers the task is almost hopeless. While at Belah we tried all manner of expedients to fight the pest with little success. The most satisfactory method was a poison provided by the M.O., which caused wholesale execution. Fly papers were an army issue, but, although they were covered in a few hours, they had little effect in reducing the plague. Another method of extermination was by means of an apparatus known as a "swotter,"—a square of leather or wire gauze attached to a wooden handle. With this one smote lustily at any and every fly which came within range, an amusing occupation for a hot afternoon.

Looking through my note-book I find the following entry,—an impression of Belah during the summer:—

"Deir el Belah will always be associated in my mind with the peace and beauty of its evenfall. I think one felt this the more on account of the trying character of the days, so hot and dusty,—periods of war against the all-prevailing fly.

And the dust,—ye gods!—it was one of the dustiest spots in the world. From ten in the morning until five at night the daily breeze caught up the fine earth and swept it as a vast cloud across the plain from the railway and beyond—to the Wadi Selka,—reminding one of a veil of London fog.

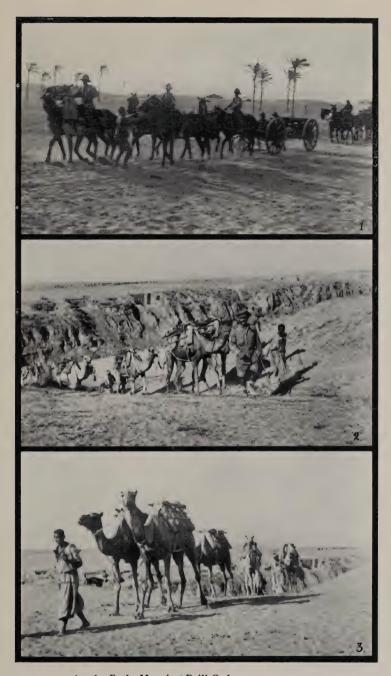
Through this dust-cloud convoys of wagons, motors, horses, camels, and men moved in continuous stream, churning up the surface of the soft fraible earth, adding a quota to the general discomforts.

How one hated that pest—the fly. His number was legion. Traps, sticky paper, and the fly whisk carried on the good work of extermination, the result, however, seemed scarcely noticeable, so innumerable were these vultures of the insect world.

But evening brought a respite. Gradually as the sun dipped lower into the mirror-like surface of the Mediterranean the parched earth gave up its heat, a blessed soft breeze kissed the hot feverish land, deeper grew the colours of the sky, once more the dust settled on the plain, and a rich silence, the herald of night, fell upon the world.

Blessed peace of nature; how one loved it after the turmoil of the day. Overhead the sky toned to a riot of colours, the breeze fanned one's hot temples, the earth seemed stilled, and it was good to be alive.

Ten miles away, in front of Gaza, we faced the Turk, dogged, watchful, confidently awaiting the day, not long distant, when we should overthrow his tenacious guard and drive him back in disorder to the stronghold of the Judean Hills,



- 1.—An Early Morning Drill Order.
- 2.—The Wadi Silka, Deir el Belah.
- 3.—A member of the C.T.C. with a Camel Convoy.



So peaceful seemed the eventide that war appeared a thing remote, only the thud of a distant gun reminded one of the grim reality of it all.

Gone were the flies, gone the heat of the mid-day sun, and the vast dust cloud; purple shadows tinted the sand dunes, the palm trees became green-black silhouetted against the rainbow hues of the sky, a deep hush descended over all.

Sometimes I would sit outside my bivouac lost in the peace of the closing day, forgetful awhile of the war, and as I watched the lengthening shadows, below in the Wadi Selka and the deepening colours of the sky the faintest sound of voices would come to me wafted across the plain. Strange unmelodious notes they were, barbaric crude chants, monotonously rising and falling, one voice chanting and many filling in the response, utterly unmusical to western ears yet possessing a certain fascination. The men of the E.L.C. were returning to camp after the toil of the day.

What children they are, these men of Egypt and Sudan and Nubia, happy, light-hearted, souls who have done so much to lighten the burden of this campaign. The "gyppo" and his camel, all hail to man and beast, how hard would have been the toil of the desert without them.

In a while they are all back in camp, from railway or road or dump, and amid the quickly gathering darkness camp fires spring into life, many sparkling lights dot the plain, and a subdued murmur, the hubbub of hundreds of voices steals through the calm air. The day is over, the hour of leisure is theirs; all too soon sleep will call them, prelude to the round of another day.

Soon the colour died from the sky, lower and lower crept the blue of the heavens till all was black on land and sea. With the passing of the shadows into night came the glory of an eastern sky, ablaze with stars, myriad points of light in the ever clear vault of eternity. How wonderful it was,—God seemed very near.

Never can I forget those nights and the sounds they brought, sometimes sinister, the deep booming of guns, or the persistent tapping of machine gun fire, at other times softly atune with nature, the croaking of a frog or the chirrup of the cricket. Occasionally deep in the night, would come the baying of some pariah dog or jackal, mournful and eerie. One sound there was, the strangest of them all, never have I heard its like, the utterly indescribable swish and swirl of water in the half empty fanatis of a camel convoy. Other memories may die, but never shall I forget that sound as the great beasts of the desert passed by silently below in the Wadi Selka, each with its burden swaying backward and forward to its stately gait, churning the contents of the tanks with a soft musical swish against the metal sides.

Often as that sound died upon my ears, sleep has come to me in those memorable nights at Belah."

Next to the fly plague, dust was our greatest discomfort at the Wadi Selka camp. The soil was of such loose fraible nature that the whole plain for miles was covered by a thick layer of the finest dust. Every morning about ten a strong westerly breeze sprang up and the immediate result was a miniature sand storm. As our camp was to the windward side of the railway and ration dump we naturally received the full benefit of this. Every moving thing, man, beast, or vehicle, caused a swirling cloud of dust to rise behind it which would go whirling away hither and thither like the spirit of some damned soul lost in eternity.

The dust clouds continued to drift across the plain until about four in the afternoon, when the breeze gradually died away to the glorious calm of the evenings.

Life for everyone, men and beasts, was a trying business during the summer months. The heat was intense, though not quite so hot as Egypt, certainly not as bad as conditions in Mesopotamia or the Jordan Valley, but sufficiently trying for unacclimatised troops. Work was the only relaxation. The organization of the Y.M.C.A. and Canteen was far behind the standard of excellence later attained, books were hard to come by and the mails infrequent and unreliable. Letters from home took about a month over the journey, but it often happened that one mail would take six weeks and the next one three, so that one received the later letters first. Being fresh up the line, short leave to Egypt was not allowed. consequently there was little to account for the men's cheerfulness. Yet cheerful they were, they worked hard and were remarkably keen during the often tedious hours of training which generally occupied the early part of the day. The most monotonous duty was "watering order," everyone hated this trying but very necessary business.

The nearest wells were two-and-a-half miles away, entailing a march across the plain, past the ration dump and railway, and over the sand dunes towards the sea. Each man rode one horse and led another. Taking three horses instead of two was not permitted, although later without official sanction it became the practice to do so. The parade was under the Orderly Officer and Orderly Sergeant of the day.

Owing to the scarcity of water and the small number of the wells, definite times were allotted to each unit, two watering orders a day being permitted. It often happened that when a unit reached the well allotted to it, the preceding party had not cleared away, and so a delay of perhaps halfan-hour would occur before watering.

The wells were, in reality, shallow reservoirs or sumps

dug in the sand by the R.E's. Just below the surface of the ground was a water-bearing strata which was rich enough to maintain the level under continuous use. As the locality was close to the shore it is possible that the sea water percolated through the sand, the salt being filtered during the process.

The watering orders occupied anything from two to three hours, and men, and beasts returned tired and covered in dust. I always used to think of white mice when I saw them coming into camp, the horses with their coats matted with sweat and dried dust, and the men looking like millers.

Text book standards all went by the board in this pernicious district. One watered when and where one could, thankful if it was twice a day, and groomed afterwards, often feeding the animals at the same time to the horror of the "old school." We infringed almost every rule of feeding and watering, yet the animals thrived. Owing to the heat and sun the horses' coats took on a beautiful sheen, to the pride of our "skipper" and the gratification of the Vet.

At the time we feared the lack of water would affect the horses condition, but after the first week or so, during which they appeared to fall away, they settled down well to the new scheme of things. As a matter of fact, in the light of future events, it was essential to accustom the animals to going without water for long periods, for in the autumn, when the advance started, one "watering" during the twenty-four hours was the rule rather than the exception, and on one occasion they went as long as forty-three hours without water, doing hard work most of the time. But I am anticipating events.

Belah was a busy hive of industry during these summer The main supply dump of the R.A.S.C., from which most of our units in the line were supplied, adjoined the east side of the railway station. Supplies were drawn daily by all units, so as may be imagined the amount of transport engaged in the work was considerable. busiest hours of the day were from dawn until 10 a.m., and from 4 p.m., onwards into the night. During these periods, the Belah plain was alive with moving convoys, long snakelike lines of camels or motor lorries, moving laboriously across the dusty earth, southwards in the morning towards the dump, to draw the day's supplies, returning northwards in the evening gloom to the Wadi Ghuzze, even during the hottest hours of the day and throughout the night this activity never ceased altogether, such a tireless machine in an army at war.

Along several of the main routes to the front the sappers laid wire roads to assist infantry on the march and to carry light motor traffic—principally Ford cars. I once heard these wire roads described as "the biggest brain-wave of the war." They consisted of nothing more than rabbit netting laid on

the sand, and certainly answered their purpose admirably, making a road over which it was possible to walk with a certain degree of comfort, and a track along which light cars could travel in places where the desert was impassable. Hundreds of miles of these wire roads were laid between Kantara, Belah, and Karm. Needless to say it was a heinous crime to ride a horse or drive a wagon along them. Elsewhere the tracks were nothing more than routes marked by the imprint of previous toilers in the sand, and were quickly obliterated by the first strong wind.

At night the plain was a "Chinese puzzle" to the unfortunate wanderer trying to find his way across it. There were practically no land marks and the whole area was dotted with camp lights with nothing to identify them except the glare of the station which gave one a rough bearing upon which to march. Otherwise the compass or the stars were the only guides.

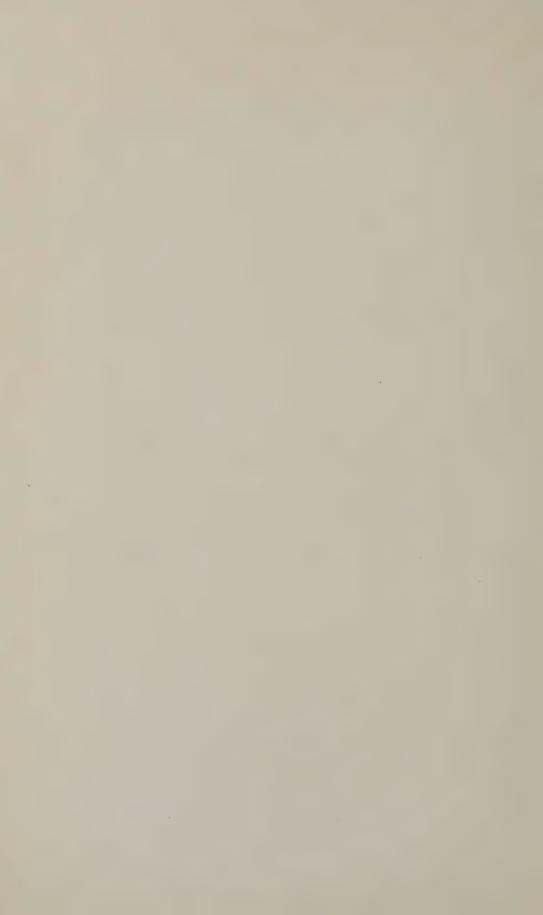
Fortunately Belah station was just outside the range of the most powerful enemy guns, for it would have made a splendid target. On one or two occasions the Turks did try to shell it but the rounds fell a few hundred yards short and they gave up the attempt. Aggression from the air offered greater possibilities, and during May and June enemy aircraft carried out several moonlight raids, the planes swooping down and machine gunning the sleeping camps. These raids occasioned a number of casualties, but after a time effective counter measures were taken by the Royal Air Force, and the attacks ceased.

On one occasion a Turk plane bombed the Casualty Clearing Station, adjoining Belah Station, and in this connection a delightful story was current. Needless to say it was not culled from "Comic Cuts," the army's name for the daily intelligence sheets. The day after this bombing raid one of our airmen dropped a note over the Turkish lines telling them that they had bombed a hospital, and suggesting in no uncertain terms that they should refrain from doing so in future. The following morning an answer was delivered from the air in a similar manner. It was in the form of a personal communication from the Turks' C.-in-C., Kress von Kressenstein,—"He regretted," he said, "the necessity of bombing the C.C.S. at Belah, particularly as he knew it to be such, but as the British guns had repeatedly shelled the Great Mosque at Gaza which was clearly marked on the British Gaza Maps X and Y as a hospital, some retaliation was necessary. If we would refrain from shelling the Great Mosque he would not bomb the Belah hospital."

The accuracy of this story I cannot, of course, guarantee, but the ruthful faces of the "brass hats" upon learning of the enemy's obvious knowledge concerning our maps thoroughly appealed to Tommy's sense of humour.



Bathing Parade, Deir el Belah.
 The Plain above the Wadi Ghuzze, Tell el Fara.
 Watering the Battery Horses, Deir el Belah.



As a matter of fact it turned out, when Gaza was eventually taken, that the Great Mosque was being used as the main Turkish ammunition dump, so General Kress von Kressenstein's dislike for British shells in the vicinity was explained.

As the summer wore on the Air Force gradually won supremacy in the air, the bombing raids ceased, and the enemy devoted his aerial activities to reconnaissance only. Two or three times a week his planes would appear over Belah, flying high, and he generally went south as far as Rafa—sometimes to El Arish—and back over our right flank at Gamli. During these periodic visits, which generally took place in the early morning or evening, our "archies" (antiaircraft guns) were very active, and often put up remarkably good shooting. On one occasion they hit their bird and the enemy plane came crashing to earth a mass of wreckage. The aerial barrage was most unpleasant, and it was no uncommon thing for "dud" shells to come skimming down to earth without exploding, and on many occasions pieces of shell cases or nose caps fell in the camp.

I remember one morning our "Vet.," known familiarly and affectionately as "squeemy eye," on account of a pronounced squint (an old injury caused by a horse kick) being in the lines when an "archie straff" opened up against a Hun plane. He was just about to attend one of the mules when a nose cap came skimming downwards and buried itself in the sand between him and the animal. We heard of nothing but this story for days.

This particular officer was most unfortunate in meeting with unpleasant adventures. While in camp at Sidi Bishr, Alexandria, his tent was raided one night by a thief, at a time when he was the sole occupant.

He awakened and saw a black shadowy form endeavouring to escape under the canvas valance. He made a grab at the native, but the fellow, who was stark naked and greased all over, slipped from his grip with the greatest ease, and fled carrying a suit case with him. The Vet. raised the alarm and we chased the marauder across the desert for about a mile, where we found the suit case thrown on one side with a large cut in the leather and the contents rifled. The thief, however, entirely eluded us, having "done down" the unfortunate officer for kit and money to the value of about LE15.

The distance from the wells made the question of providing water for the Brigade difficult. Each unit was allotted a number of water camels, with one or more E.L.C. men to look after them. A battery had three camels, each carrying two fanatis, and these made two journeys to the wells each day. Consequently the total amount of water for

all purposes was only 90 gallons. and there was precious little available for washing purposes. Officers—favoured mortals—got about half a canvas bucket-full, while the men thought themselves lucky if not more than six had to share one bucket. Drinking water was confined to one water bottle-full per man per day, and tea with his meals—generally about half-a-pint. Water for washing clothing was an unheard of luxury.

Fortunately the proximity of the sea, saved the situation as far as washing was concerned, and at least twice a week a bathing parade was held. These parades took place in the early morning, and were one of the most popular features of life at Belah. Every available man would go riding and sometimes also leading a horse. The sea was a delightful temperature, and men and beasts loved it. After the bathe the horses were watered and a return to camp was made in time for breakfast.

And so the summer days at Belah passed by. It was certainly not an unpleasant time, although the men groused, the temperature was bad, the dust and flies abominable, and the daily training hard. It was not so much these considerations which made our gunners "fed up," as the delay of getting into a scrap of some kind or other. Ten miles away were the Turks, and the men wanted to "get a biff at 'em." So far we had not so much as seen the front line, except at Shellal, and certainly had not seen a Turk.

However, early in August we had our first taste of the line.

CHAPTER 4.

THE GAZA DEFENCES.

Early in the month of August we received orders to occupy a prepared position behind "Samson's Ridge," the backbone of our trench system before Gaza. The occasion was a night raid on a part of the enemy's works known as "Sea and Beach Posts," and we were brought into the affair as much for the experience to be gained by our many untried gunners, as for the need of additional artillery support. These periodical night raids were a continual annoyance to the enemy, in addition to enlivening the tedium of trench warfare and prevented our men from getting stale.

During the whole of the summer of 1917 the campaign resembled in character the trench warfare in France, but lacking, of course, the intensity of the latter. Both the enemy and ourselves were deeply entrenched behind wire, and the fighting consisted of raids, sniping, and the daily shelling of each others lines.

The sand in the coast sector was difficult material in which to maintain a trench system. It was easily dug, but needed either continuous revetting, or else had to be held up by sand bags. In either case the trenches suffered heavily from artillery fire and were very easily broken down. On the other hand many shells buried themselves in the soft sand, and either proved duds, or had their action greatly modified.

Everywhere, with the exception of "Samson's Ridge," the Turks had the advantage of position and were able to look down on our lines.

I remember one Sunday, when Lieutenant L——. and I were off duty, we rode over from Belah to visit the line. The first few miles lay across the Belah Plain. We started early in the morning so that we might ride in the cool, for after 10 a.m., the temperature became distinctly unpleasant.

An hour's riding brought us to the mouth of the Wadi Ghuzze where a small "deccaville" railway crossed the watercourse. On the opposite side we entered a region of rolling sand dunes with barely distinguishable tracks, and

but few sign boards to notify the direction. Here and there were bivouac areas for troops in support, more or less camouflaged, the bivvies being dotted about irregularly to lessen the risk of detection. Presently we came upon some battery positions, 18-pdrs. and howitzers, the guns protected by breastworks of sand bags and camouflaged from the air with great nets held up by poles. Half-a-mile further on we reached the front line trenches.

The sand dunes prevented us gaining a view of the ground in front and naturally we did not expose ourselves. A quarter of a mile or so from the crest we struck the main communication trench, a deep cutting in the sand, its sides strongly revetted with stakes and rabbit netting. It was a zig-zag path cut so that it was not exposed to enfilade fire, and under its cover we reached the front line trenches. We were particularly impressed with the quietness and apparent peacefulness of the line. In the forward face of the trench, small shelters had been constructed, and here and there a few men sat smoking and chatting, or reading the papers which had arrived by the last mail. No one seemed to be aware that there was "a war on," and our appearance did not call forth the slightest comment. For a while we wandered along the trench, but the procedure was not particularly interesting. The temperature was rapidly rising, and the game hardly seemed worth the candle. Presently we happened upon a cheery individual in charge of a periscope. A request to inspect the enemy's position was immediately granted, and for the first and only time I saw Gaza from our front line.

To say that I saw Gaza is perhaps hardly stating the case correctly. Actually I saw only a mass of cactus hedges and a sandy no mans' land. In the distance was the minaret of the Great Mosque, and away to the right the hill called Ali Muntar, to which, tradition states, Samson carried the gates of the City.

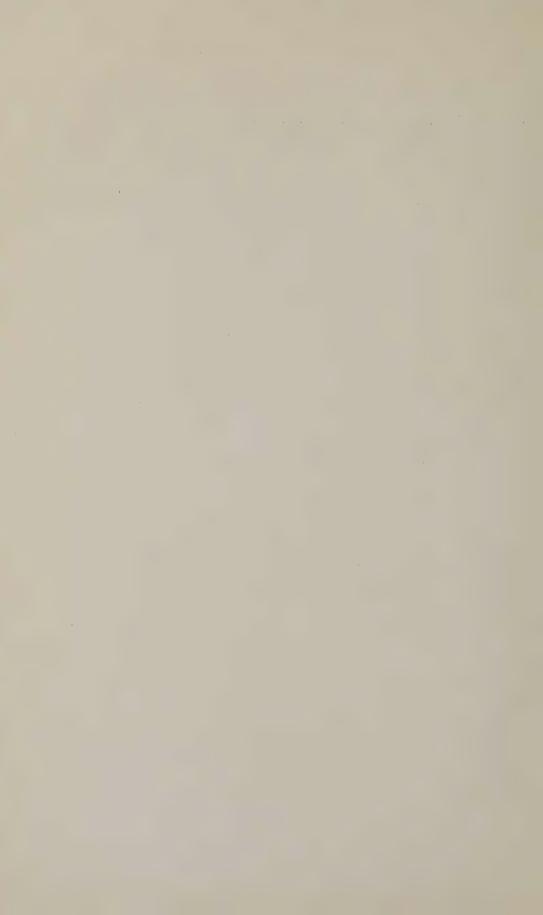
Ali Muntar was the key to the Turkish position, and when the fortunes of war made it possible for us to examine the enemy's defences, we found gun positions on the hill side, from which it was possible to train the guns with open sights onto our front line trenches, in fact the hill dominated the whole of our position in this sector of the front.

The daytime was always a peaceful period in the front line. Between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., the heat produced what the men called "a mirage," and rifle fire under such conditions was apt to be erratic. By a sort of mutual agreement, both sides shut down the war until the hours of dusk and darkness.

Night time was the period for raids, scrapping and small "shows" by patrols, and when most of the artillery fire took



"Old Cairo."



place. At such times the front line was by no means a healthy place.

It was in connection with one of these raids, a more ambitious affair than usual, that my Brigade first saw action. An attack was to be made against "Sea Post" and "Beach Post," two "strong points" of the Turkish defences on the extreme right of his line, with the object of testing his strength in this direction.

During the night before the raid the Brigade moved up from Belah into prepared gun positions in the line. The experience proved very different from ordinary night manœuvres and possessed the added excitement of being "the real thing." A slow and somewhat dreary march brought the column to the banks of the Wadi Ghuzze, at a spot where a track crossed the Wadi bed.

On the opposite side the fun began. Our teams were still unused to work over heavy sand, and the horses were soon floundering in the trackless dunes. It was a pitch dark night, and there was no guide to direction. In the army jargon of the time "we hadn't the foggiest idea where we were" A few direction boards gave assistance by day, but the darkness effectually obliterated this help. There was nothing for it but to push forward and hope for the best. Very soon the sub-sections of the battery became separated. Some teams pulled together better than others, with the result that the guns and waggons were all out of order. Some moved forward and others became firmly stuck in the sand.

It took at least two hours for my section to accomplish the last stage of the journey, a distance of only a few hundred yards. The men worked like Trojans, manhandling the guns and limbers, unhooking a team here, and giving a hand to some floundering team there. To the accompaniment of much swearing and cursing the guns and waggons were gradually moved forward, and eventually the position was reached. It had been a tiring night's work, and a small foretaste of pleasures (?) to come. The next day was spent in preparation for the "straff." Targets had to be carefully registered, watches synchronised, and ammunition checked and got ready for "zero" hour.

Only three or four rounds of fire were allowed for registration purposes, for fear that anything in the nature of a prolonged bombardment might put the enemy on his guard.

The raid was a great success from the point of view, both for the infantry and the gunners. The artillery put down a gradually lengthening barrage, behind which the infantry advanced. Johnny Turk was taken completely by surprise, and his guns fired only a few rounds in return. The infantry accomplished the whole of their task with comparatively few casualties. Although this raid was quite a small show,

compared with others which were undertaken in the later stages of the campaign, it was, nevertheless, a spectacular affair to those of us who were inexperienced warriors. The brilliant flashes of the guns in the darkness, the noise, and the persistent rattle of distant machine gun and rifle fire was inspiring enough, and served to bring home the stern reality of it all.

A day or so later the Brigade drew out of the line, and returned to the camping area at Deir el Belah, where life became comparatively uneventful once more. In re-reading my letters and notes written at this period, I find recorded a a round of uneventful days of routine work and intensive training for the autumn offensive. The following is an extract from a letter written in July—

"We are still settled in a plain of dusty earth, spending the days in watering horses, cleaning 'em, sleeping, eating, and enjoying the sun (sic)—my batman has made a terrible discovery: I am GETTING FAT, positively my tummy is expanding. If I go on at this rate, by the time I get back, I shall be actually corpulent. This is the result of the simple life."

In September I was detailed for a course of signalling at the Zeitoun School of Instruction at Cairo, and for a few weeks I enjoyed the comforts of civilization. Upon my return to the unit I found a subtle change had taken place. An air of expectancy seemed to have spread through all ranks, from "brass hats" to drivers, the training had become more intensive, and at officers "pow wows" the O.C. began to talk of warfare in mountainous districts, all of which, if one read the signs aright, foreshadowed the coming of important events.

In every unit of the force there was great activity, vast dumps were created by the A.S.C. around Belah Station, the railway was pushed forward towards the Wadi Ghuzze, and the number of camps was greatly increased. One day the Brigade received orders to move to a new camping area near Khan Yunus, some six miles S.W. of Belah.

Towards the end of October, about the 20th, if I remember rightly, several of the officers of the Brigade, myself included, were detailed for special duty, and with such kit as we could carry in our haversacks and saddlebags, we set off "into the blue." Our immediate destination was a camping area at El Gamli, on the Wadi Ghuzze, some sixteen miles S.E. of Belah.

Little or no information concerning the affair was vouchsafed to the junior ranks, and my companion subalterns were as mystified as myself. We spent the night at Gamli, above the banks of the Wadi, in a spot remarkably similar to the old camping area at Belah. Orders were given for an early start to be made the following morning—officers and their grooms only to attend.

In the early dawn we were up and about, booted and spurred, in full marching kit and carrying one day's rations. When the party set out, none of the junior ranks knew what all the "fuss and bother" was about, but on the face of it, the affair was distinctly out of the ordinary.

Our route lay across the Wadi and out onto the plain to the eastward. The day was typical of all other summer days in Palestine, cool and hazy at first, but rapidly growing hot as the sun gained power. The flat plain, intersected here and there by dry watercourses, bitten deep into the fraible soil, extended in all directions. On what appeared to be the distant horizon was a range of blue hills, or mountains. Towards these hills we trotted at a sharp pace.

The scene was a remarkable one. From left and right small groups of horsemen were rapidly approaching, all making for a common meeting point, reminding one of a meet of hounds rather than an episode of active service. The word was passed round that we were to reconnoitre the Turkish position at Beersheba.

After riding for about an hour we reached a slight eminence, which was identified on the map by the name of Here everyone halted, the different groups El Buggar. collectively making quite a formidable force, perhaps one hundred strong. There were several "brass hats" and a good sprinkling of Colonels and Majors, in addition to the lesser lights. When the party was complete we moved forward again, this time with only a few of the grooms, the remainder being left behind under the charge of a sergeantmajor.

As the veiling haze of the early morning decreased, the distant hills proved to be much nearer than was at first apparent, and we rapidly approached them. From El Buggar the route lay S.E., towards the Wadi el Saba, an upper or northern arm of the Wadi Ghuzze. Soon we descended the Wadi bank and crossed its stony bed. On the east side lay a tangled mass of foot hills—stony and desolate. Fifteen-hundred yards on we crossed the Wadi again, and fivehundred yards further a third crossing was made, necessitated by the curving watercourse. Reference to the map showed we had reached the Abushar Wadi.

In this district of foothills, the map bristled with Wadi names, the three main ones being "The Devon," "The Abushar," and "Y" Wadis. These differed from the Wadi Saba, being merely open watercourses between more or less steeply rising foothills, whereas the Wadi Saba was a torrent bed cut deeply into the level of the plain with often precipitious banks.

We had barely entered the Abushar Wadi when we became unpleasantly conscious of the enemy's proximity. A Turkish "pip squeak" sent over a round of shrapnel which burst immediately above the Wadi track we had just crossed. It was a beautifully-placed shot and would certainly have resulted in a number of casualties had it been fired a few moments earlier.

Our destination was a point above the junction of the Kent and Abushar Wadis, an open piece of ground with a gradually rising hill in front.

Here, if my memory serves me, we lunched. We realised that the enemy's line could be no great distance away, for there was occasional rifle fire, and several spent bullets came humming through the air.

After a frugal meal we set out to reconnoitre the position. A short walk northwards brought us to the top of Kent Wadi. The B.C. was some two-hundred yards away, while Lieutenant L—— and I prospected along the crest. Barely had we shewn ourselves when several bullets whistled by with a shrill "ping! ping!" We ducked and waited. Presently we summoned up sufficient courage to crawl to the top of the crest again, and look out.

The enemy's lines were some 2,600 yards away, the nearest works being the strong point known as Z.19., and Hill 1070.

A few minutes later the B.C. came wandering along the crest, perfectly oblivious to the fact that he was in full view. Just as he reached us another burst of fire made us duck like rabbits. The skipper laughed uproariously.

"What's the good of ducking when you hear 'em go by?" he queried. "If one of those bullets has got a label on for you, it will get you long before you can possibly hear it. So why worry?" And in very truth he didn't.

Major S— was a fine fellow. Before the war he had qualified as a rough-riding Bombardier in the regular R.F.A., and he received his commission in France, soon after 1914. He did not seem to know the meaning of fear, and in consequence was a tower of strength in a tight corner.

We completed the survey of the enemy's works, through our glasses, and identified the different points of the enemy's line by means of the maps. This done we joined the rest of the R.A. Officers to listen to an appreciation of the position by the senior Artillery Colonel present. We found him seated on a rock just below the crest line of the Abushar Wadi. When the whole party had congregated, he delivered an address concerning the position, taking us up to the crest to point out the salient features of the enemy's line. The talk had drawn to a close and he was on the point of dismissing us when there was the sound of Turkish gunfire, and a moment or so later a shell burst in front of the group, just short of the crest. Johnny had got us "taped," and his first round nearly tound its target.



"In a Cairo Street."



No one required a second warning. There was a stampede down the slope for cover. The party must have been in full view of one of the enemy's O.P's. Despite the danger, one could not help laughing. The ignominious rush of everyone down the hillside, with the Colonel as an "also ran," and shells dropping behind the stragglers was certainly a humorous spectacle. However, despite the fact that Johnny's gunners continued to search the wadi bed, everyone reached the horses without casualty, and we were soon trotting quietly down to the Wadi Saba.

Darkness found us a weary band of horsemen wending our way towards Gamli, with only a compass bearing upon which to march. The reconnaissance had been entirely satisfactory, and had furnished valuable information.

Often since I have wondered at the risk of the undertaking. The party consisted of more than half the officers of the Division, with nothing more than a thin cavalry screen in front. Actually, during the time we were in the vicinity of the Wadi Saba, we were some distance in front of this screen, and less than three-thousand yards from the Turkish front line. Had the enemy attacked with cavalry it would have been a race for dear life over miles of opening country, and the devil take the hindermost. Fortunately they did not do so, and the information obtained during the day was of inestimable value.

From Gamli we returned to our camp at Kahn Yunus. The push was shortly to take place, and those of us who had been on the reconnaissance, knew something of the difficulties which lay ahead. Very little official information was vouchsafed however.

A few days later orders were received to leave camp on the following day and to move to a destination known only to the Colonel. The tents were not to be struck, and kit was reduced to the minimum—a dump being made of the surplus. It was good-bye to camp beds, washstands, chairs and the other comforts which had helped to make life agreeable, and a diminutive kit of marching-order dimensions.

The day was hot and still, particularly oppressive in view of the extra work which had to be accomplished, but in the evening the men arranged a sing-song, and a barrel of beer was obtained from the canteen. After dinner the officers went over the men's lines to listen to the concert. It was a great "do." We had several excellent performers, and the evening went with a swing. So intent was everyone on the show that the gathering of dark clouds to the south passed unnoticed. Suddenly there came the sighing of wind a long way off. A boisterous shout drowned the warning, the men sang lustily the words of a popular chorus. Then came the wind again, this time nearer, so that a wave of cool

air cut through the sombre heat. A few rain drops pattered down, to be licked up by the parched earth, and there was the smell of water in the air, the smell which heralds the breaking of the torrid Eastern Summer.

The warning was unmistakable, the concert ended abruptly, and there was a stampede to the tents and bivvies, to slacken the ropes, and put things ship-shape.

The task was barely complete before the storm broke in all its fury. I have seen many storms, both before and since, but never, I think, one to equal this in intensity. In a few seconds the wind reached hurricane force, the sandy earth rose as a veil of dust, the tents strained at the guy-ropes, and we thanked our lucky stars for the meed of protection they offered. Then came the rain, such rain, it beat down on the canvas more as a solid sheet of water than drops, and the tents swayed under the weight and the fury of the tempest.

In a few minutes, half the number of tents, and most of the men's bivvies were flat, for as soon as the soft earth became wet the tent pegs refused to hold.

The tent occupied by Lieutenant L—— and myself was among the lucky ones which stood more or less firmly, but with the falling of the others, it quickly became crowded with our less lucky and distinctly damp neighbours who rushed to it for shelter. In this manner the night passed.

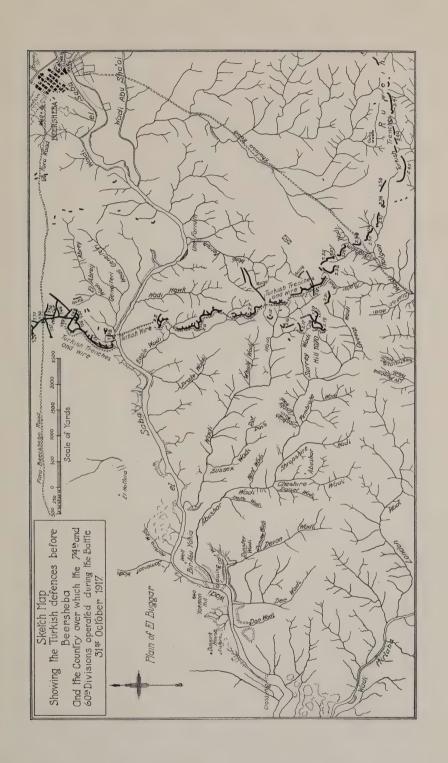
The next day nature smiled her sweetest. It was a beautiful morning, delightfully fresh and distinctly cooler, but the camp presented a woeful appearance. The whole area was strewn with canvas, personal belongings, and papers. Early in the storm the Brigade Office tent had "gone west," with the result that most of the secret and confidential orders were blown to the four winds of Heaven. A Turkish spy could have reaped a rich harvest that morning.

After stable hour and breakfast, we put up the tents again, for the camp had to be left standing, and paraded for the day's move.

I will not describe the march which was uneventful. All day there was the sound of heavy firing, for the Turks were attacking our outposts beyond Karm and El Buggar, where the R.E's. were busy pushing out the railway and laying a "deccaville" line.

The next day the nearness of "zero hour" was made manifest when the A.S.C. "dished" out to unit quartermasters, extra special rations for all ranks, including RASPBERRY JAM. It was a curious thing, but whenever we were given ration raspberry jam, it was a sure sign that a few hours would see us in action. So it was in this case.

On the morning of 30th October, we again moved from our bivouac area to the north bank of the Wadi Ghuzze.





CHAPTER 5.

THE BATTLE OF BEERSHEBA.*

On Monday the 30th October, 1917, the whole of the Wadi Ghuzze round Gamli was packed with Field Artillery Brigades and other troops. The tumbled broken banks, suggesting the unreality of a stage setting rather than nature, offered wide opportunities for the concealment of a large force of guns and their teams, and all the vast paraphernalia which accompanies an army on wheels.

During the previous night the infantry pushed out over the Plain of Gamli, for months the vast "no man's land" between our defences, along the Wadi Ghuzze, and the Turkish lines in the Wadis of the Saba, beyond Karm and El Buggar. Darkness hid the advance. At dawn the men sought concealment under whatever cover was available, and lay hidden from the enemy's positions in front of Beersheba, and the observation of his airmen, who for days had been driven away from the area by our flying men.

All day long our brigade of two field batteries remained securely hidden in a pocket of the Wadi Ghuzze. The day was strangely quiet, there seemed to be an air of hushed expectancy over all. Weeks of hard unremitting labour and training were over at last.

This was the prelude to battle, the eve of great events. To many the coming fight would be a baptism of fire. Death would claim its toll, and before another night, many a stout lad would return from battle a shattered wreck. Vast possibilities stirred the imagination, visions of fierce fighting and a war of rapid movement, if the first clash of arms was successful.

Something of this must have been in the men's minds. They were quieter, less boisterous than usual, an ominous calm before the storm.

From a far distance came the sounds of battle. Away, fifteen miles to the left, our guns were battering against the Turkish defences at Gaza.

^{*}The description of the battle which forms the basis of this chapter was written a few days after the event,

Evening brought a sunset, striking in its beautiful peace and calm serenity; war and all its horrors seemed a grotesque impossibility, a shameful discord.

By half past five darkness had fallen, and it was time for the great adventure to begin. The teams were hooked into the guns and wagons, and the men in full "marching order" stood ready beside them. As the last golden glow died from the western horizon, the battery started.

Like some long sinuous serpent, the vehicles, in column of route, wound their way up the tortuous track from the wadi to the Gamli plain above.

Earlier in the year, before war spread its stifling hand over the generous soil, this open plain was an expanse of waving barley. Stubble still remained among the furrows, but the sun-parched earth was quickly crushed to dust by the passage of many wheels.

Not a light was to be seen on the distant hills, where lay the Turkish defences. A low veil of mist, spread in wreaths over the ground, muffling every sound and obscuring all signs of movement. In deep silence the battery, followed by the other units of the Brigade, moved forward to El Buggar, seven miles away, a tiny force, seemingly alone on a deserted plain.

After a while, a pearly silver light crept over the eastern sky, as if heralding the coming of dawn. Then, suddenly, as the column reached the top of a rising crest, the moon, in full splendour, rose above the low-lying mist.

What a mocking contrast this deep calm seemed to us, bound on our errand of destruction.

Presently, from the flank, drifted the clanking sounds of motor tractors, iron monsters creeping tortoise-like over the yielding earth. One realised that on all sides the vast converging movement of an army was in progress.

Two spells of fifty minutes' marching brought us to El Buggar. On the reconnaissance a few days before, we had first seen the place, a deserted well, and a few stunted trees. Now, after barely two hours of darkness, a giant organisation of sappers and others had transformed the district into a hive of busy industry. Motor roads had been cut in the soft earth, telephone poles—the nerves of the army—stretched in all directions, dumps were formed, and all the other activities which a forward base centre entails, were in progress.

It was from this spot—remembered on account of the well which had often been used by our cavalry patrols—that the advance into the enemy's country really commenced.

A gradual climb for about half an hour brought the column to the crest of a gently rising hill. Beyond, the ground, somewhat broken, fell away to the serrated banks of

the Wadi el Saba. Much might happen before we crossed this dried-up watercourse, a branch of the wadi we had left some six hours before. In daylight the crossing was in full view of the enemy, and his guns could enfilade the whole stretch. We knew from experience, that the Turk had carefully registered his artillery on this vital artery of communication, and we looked to its passage with a certain amount of apprehension, feeling that a warm reception might await us.

In silence, except for the wheels rumbling over the broken ground, the Brigade passed down the tortuous track to the wadi bed. The spot was steeped in mist, not a sound came from the hills to break the peace of the night. The calm seemed sinister, as if the enemy was biding his time to loose the hounds of war upon our advancing force.

Presently we were crossing the wadi by a track prepared by the engineers, who had gone forward earlier in the evening with the infantry. The vehicles bumped and jolted over the uneven surface, making considerable noise. But the mist muffled the sound, a fact which helped to keep the Turk in ignorance of what was taking place.

At this point the Wadi Saba is a wide, stoney, watercourse, which during the rains, floods with a torrent of water. The banks descend steeply to some two-hundred feet below the general level of the plain.

Beyond the eastern bank lies a district deeply intersected by wadis, dried-up watercourses with gently sloping banks, and northward on the highest ridge lay the Turkish positions screening Beersheba. The principal ridge, which formed the strongest work of the enemy's defences, was known as Hill 1070, and was the first objective for the attack next morning.

The main route into this web-like system of wadis was a wide dry watercourse known as the Abushar Wadi, running first eastward and then southward to its source.

In half an hour we reached the mouth of this wadi. Hardly had we entered before the Brigade came to a halt. Under a brilliant full moon a wonderful sight was presented. As far as the eye could see, stretched a column of guns and their wagons, battery after battery, waiting to move up to their firing positions.

Ahead of us the enemy was active, for we could hear the sharp reports of rifle fire, and the tap, tap, tap, of machine guns. Our outposts were in touch with enemy snipers.

Slowly, and with frequent halts, the long column moved forward.

Our gun position lay some distance along the Abushar Wadi. Quickly and silently the guns were unlimbered and

the wagons driven alongside. In a few minutes the teams were moving away, back to the wagon line. Without casualty, and apparently unknown to the enemy, we were in position, and ready to play our part in the attack. It was barely midnight.

For a while the men were busily at work about the guns, digging cover for the detachments and spare ammunition, but this was soon accomplished, and healthily tired, they lay down to gain what sleep was possible before dawn.

A fitful rifle fire was the only sound which came from the enemy.

For a while there was nothing more to be done; I went across to the signallers' dugout to rest, and if possible sleep for a few short hours, giving the man on duty instructions to call me an hour before dawn.

At four o'clock I was awakened. I had been detailed to reconnoitre a forward battery position which we could occupy after the conclusion of the first phase of the battle. When the infantry advanced to the attack of the strong redoubt on 1070, which was the key to the Turks' defences, my B.C. hoped to be able to push forward into the Sussex Wadi. If this proved possible, the battery would be in a much more advantageous position for wire cutting on another work, known as Z6, to be stormed by the infantry later.

In addition to choosing a battery position, I had to find a suitable road over the crest separating the Abushar Wadi from the Sussex Wadi. By this time the volume of rifle fire had considerably increased and a number of machine guns were busy, whether ours or the enemy's it was impossible to determine.

After some difficulty I found a suitable route, but in the twilight of dawn it was difficult to tell if it was under cover. Subsequent events proved it to be well hidden from enemy view, but in any case a battery moving across a crest at a trot is always a difficult target to hit.

When I reached the Sussex Wadi it was packed with infantry, waiting to deploy. All along the forward slope were men in extended formation, and as each line passed over the crest into the next wadi, another wave moved up to take its place. The men advanced as if at drill, but the rifle and machine gun fire continued to increase in intensity.

I pushed on to the head of the Sussex Wadi where the bed forked. It was on the ridge above this spot that my battery commander had chosen his O.P., and had, in fact, already gone forward to await the opening of the attack.

The moon had set and it was now darker than it had been previously during the night, but presently a pale glow in the east heralded the coming dawn. From immediately in front came a medley of sound. The infantry were busy with entrenching tools, digging as much cover as they could, while waiting to deploy.

It was an eerie sound, this noise of a hidden multitude, frantically busy, each man striving his utmost. All the while the bullets pinged and whistled across the ridge, for the Turk had heard it too! Suddenly there was an ominous hissing in the air, swiftly growing louder, and then with a bright flash, and sharp report, a "pip squeak" shell burst above the workers on the crest.

The first shell of the day found its mark, for the Turks had the spot carefully registered. Shrapnel sprayed in all directions. Immediately the busy metallic sounds ceased, to be resumed after a few moments' silence.

Whiz!—bang! Another shell followed, but the work went on with greater haste than before.

The Turk now had the spot "set" for he continued to put over shells at a rapid rate of fire. Either the sound, or figures seen dimly against the sky line, had given away the infantry's presence.

I managed to select a suitable spot for the battery to occupy. The light was rapidly becoming stronger, and as the arrival of numerous "pip squeaks" was making the wadi somewhat unhealthy, I collected my two assistants—the R.O's. director man and a telephonist—and retraced my steps.

In half an hour, at most, our artillery would be in action, and I was anxious to be back with the battery before the show started. After a quarter of an hour's stiff walking we reached the guns.

In the soft morning light, the Abushar Wadi presented a wonderful sight. Battery adjoined battery along its length, a grand display of guns, while close up under the forward crest was a heavy "how." battery.

The golden light of morning had now taken the place of twilight. So far no orders had come through from the O.P., but we knew the range and angle of sight to our target—and on this the guns were laid.

The "straff" was about to begin. The men stood ready at the guns, the telephonists in their dugout sat alert, with receivers to their ears, awaiting the coming of orders.

Suddenly with a crashing report the "how" battery on our right opened with a ranging shot. As if this was the signal to begin, other batteries took up the cue and in a few moments guns were firing on every hand.

The trying period of anxious expectancy was over, our own orders to fire came through, and with a sharp crack and a flash our right gun opened. "Raise angle of sight one "0" minites, all guns one degree, three "0" minites, more right, corrector 160, battery fire one five seconds." I gave out the orders as they came through on the 'phone and the gunners got to work. Round after round "hurtled" away through the air with a crash and a mighty tearing sound. Batteries on all sides were equally busy and a rapidly rising crescendo of rifle, and machine gun, fire told its tale of advancing infantry.

Only then did the Turk begin to show his hand. Away to our left, at the mouth of the Abushar Wadi, was a well where his, and occasionally our patrols, had watered. He had carefully registered this spot and his guns began to plaster it with shells. Round after round, at a rapid rate of fire, screeched through the air and burst over the the well, spraying shrapnel in all directions.

At first his guns were concentrated on this one area, but after a time the fire lifted and he began to search and sweep the Abushar Wadi.

Our batteries were not to escape the bombardment. Shell after shell ploughed down into the bed of the wadi, and gradually the bursts crept nearer and nearer.

Immediately in front of our position was a gradually rising slope to the crest dividing the Abushar from the Sussex Wadi, a quarter of a mile distant. On either side of this were spurs of the hill.

This saucer-shaped re-entrant now began to receive full attention from the enemy. Any part of it would have made an admirable battery position, a fact which of course, the Turks realised. Consequently they began to search backwards, systematically sweeping the fire from side to side. On the crest immediately in front was one of the battery O.P's. Originally, perhaps, this attracted the enemy's attention.

Then occurred one of those incidents of heroism which, during a fight, may be seen on every hand, and generally pass unrecorded.

Many telephone wires had been laid over this area and one of them was apparently cut, for the adjoining battery on our left sent out a wireman. Methodically he went forward examining the wire, oblivious to the shells which were falling around him. When nearly at the top of the ridge he knelt down to repair a fault.

At length his work was done, for he got up to move on again. Just as he did so, four "pip squeak" shells burst in quick succession immediately in front of him.

Was he hit?

When the smoke cleared away we could see him lying motionless on the ground, either wounded or killed.

Suddenly, from a crevice in which they had taken shelter, two men arose, and ran towards the prostrate figure. One carried a dixie.

A shell burst above them and for a moment they dropped to the ground. They were up again before the smoke cleared away, and had reached the injured man.

We watched the two rescuers busy with a field dressing. When the task was done—twice it was interrupted by shells—they lifted the wounded man to his feet, and supporting him on either side, the trio began to rush towards us. All the time the shells were bursting over and around them. Held spellbound we watched this tragic sport of fate. As if inspired with evil, the shells seemed to follow their movements, bursting over or behind the group every few seconds. Time after time they dropped to the ground at the warning sound of an approaching missile, to rise again untouched, after the danger had passed. If ever men bore charmed lives, these did. On one occasion an involuntary shout arose from the anxious watchers, for two shells burst literally among the group, obscuring everything in white smoke.

Yet when this cleared away the two rescuers were seen to be on their feet once more, half dragging, half carrying the wounded man with them. At last they reached the comparative safety of the battery. For a few minutes two of them had run the greatest risk, to save a third, an act of bravery, of which they were entirely unconscious. The wireman had been wounded in the back and arm, but was not seriously hurt. We patched him up, and later a stretcher party carried him off to the Dressing Station.

"Come on Alf" said one of the rescuers "we had better get an 'imshi' on with this dixie," and they went away to fetch their pals' breakfast.

Meanwhile the battle raged fiercely about 1070. Until this hill was taken, any advance on the adjoining defences was impossible.

Messages began to come through from our F.O.O., who had gone forward during the night.

"The infantry have deployed and are advancing to attack 1070."

"The infantry advance appears to be checked."

We heard, and increased our rate of fire!

"The infantry makes no headway against 1070."

The bombardment continued with increasd fury.

"The infantry are about to assault 1070 against considerable opposition.

Only too plainly the turmoil of sound, which came to us, told its tale of the intense fighting in progress.

It was an anxious moment. Everything depended on the works falling. Would the Turks give way?

The men at the guns worked on grimly.

"Another message coming in from the F.O.O., sir."

I went and watched as the telephonist put down the message on his writing pad.

"The-infantry-report-fall-ot-1070."

"Repeat that message to the Brigade" I ordered, and turned to tell the men. From the O.P. came the order to stop firing.

For the time being our work was over, and we had to await orders to move forward to cut wire on Z6.

During this first phase of the battle, in fact during the whole morning, the battery commander's O.P. at the top of the Sussex Wadi was heavily shelled. It was at this point that the infantry deployed over the crest, and in so doing, made an obvious target which drew the enemy's fire. Half-way through the first phase our B.C's Director-man was seriously wounded in the back and spine. Unfortunately the wound subsequently proved fatal. It was our only casualty that day.

Afterwards, when I was in hospital with Diphtheria, I met another gunner who had been in an O.P. nearby during the whole show, and he spoke of the great bravery of a certain B.C., whom I had no difficulty in recognising as Capt. S—. "The fellow didn't seem to know what fear was" he said "at one time I saw him helping the stretcher bearers with one of his men who had been hit, and he took no more notice of the rain of bullets than if they had been hailstones. Later he was wandering about the crest line, giving water to the wounded out of his bottle, with shells continually bursting over him." It was all so like old S—.

About 10 a.m. the Colonel came along to the battery and told me he had sent to the wagon lines for our teams and we were to move forward immediately to the position I had reconncitred earlier in the morning, one section to remain behind until the other four guns reached their new position.

The two guns which remained behind were turned on to Z6, and fired at long range. The infantry were now making a fierce assault on a work known as Z7, where for a time, they were held up by uncut barbed wire. It was at this trench that some of the most stubborn fighting of the day took place.

At this period the enemy's artillery fire grew more fitful, suggesting that he was withdrawing his guns. This, in fact, proved to be the case.



On the summit of Tell el Fara, Wadi Ghuzze.

Major S.—, Lieut. H.— and Lieut. L.—.



At length our teams arrived and it was the work of a few moments to hook in and get away. We moved forward at a trot, and a few minutes later had passed over the crest and were in the Sussex Wadi. The spot was somewhat uncomfortable, for shells were still falling and spent bullets were flying in all directions. I was glad to get the guns in action once more.

Subsequent events proved the move to be a more or less wasted one, for when the infantry went forward to the assault at noon, the opposition offered by the Turks was very weak, in fact the day was nearly won.

For a time we continued to fire fitfully on various targets, and about 2 p.m. moved forward once more to a semi-open position at the top of the Sussex Wadi, to be in readiness to repel any counter attacks which might take place.

None came however, for the Turks had flown—the day was won. In connection with the first battery position in the Sussex Wadi, I was more or less responsible for a mistake which might well have had serious consequences.

When the guns drove up, the trails were dropped too high up the hillside, with the result that the necessary elevation could not be obtained. This necessitated a considerable amount of manhandling, tor it was impossible, owing to the rocky nature of the ground, to dig in the trails to any depth. However, at last we got the guns properly placed and proceeded to fire some ranging shots. One gun, however, still lacked sufficient elevation, and the first round fired, instead of clearing the crest burst below it on the opposite hillside. At the same moment the Colonel appeared on the top. To say that he was annoyed is to put it mildly.

When the battery was settled in this third position I went forward to the spot where our Battery Commander's O.P. had been. In the deep silence, so strangely in contrast with the earlier hours of the day, I looked out over the battlefield.

It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight and filled one's heart with pride for the men who had advanced against those seemingly impregnable white fortresses on the distant hilltops. I realized what that advance over two thousand yards of open country had meant to the infantry, and how magnificent was their achievement.

Immediately in front the ground fell away abruptly to "Y" Wadi, out of which led the Whale Wadi, leading up to Z7, and further to the right, Surrey Wadi, leading up to 1070. It would be difficult to imagine more treacherous ground to advance over, opposed as the infantry were, by the enemy in carefully chosen and sighted trenches.

The Turk proved himself a brave man, but—as was afterwards learned from prisoners—he was completely taken

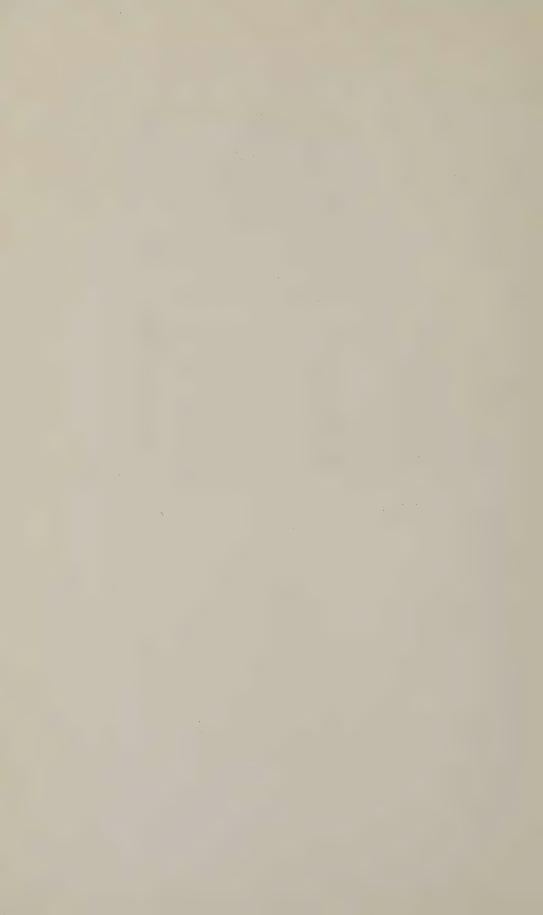
by surprise, for he thought our advance to be nothing more than another reconnaissance in force.

The fine work of the Imperial Australian mounted troops has been fully dealt with in the official despatches. When the cavalry entered the town they found only the broken remnants of a beaten force.

Night descended on a deep calm after the storm of the battle-rent day, an impressive contrast. Once again the sun set on a day upon which British arms could add another name to their glorious roll of victories—Beersheba.



Palestine.



CHAPTER 6.

BEERSHEBA.

By the middle of the afternoon, our work as a battery was over. All the objectives had fallen and we were out of range. We had completely lost all count of time, but I remember my batman, Morgan, who in days of peace was tenor at one of our greatest Cathedrals, bringing me a mug of cocoa and some ration biscuits. How good they were, particularly the former. Only on one other occasion, which I shall speak of later, did a drink "go down" so well. It was the sort of meal one remembers, and is thankful for, when the recollection of some elaborate banquet is forgotten among the memories of the past.

Individually there was still much work to be done. To my lot, together with a number of battery signallers, fell the task of collecting the telephone wire run out by our F.O.O. during the advance. Darkness was falling fast when we started. It was a gruesome task making our way across the ground which had witnessed the morning's advance. The signs of battle were everywhere, the toll of war had been paid on these barren slopes, as many a shadowy mass on the stony ground told but too well. The reality and horror of war became manifest far more strongly than in the heat of the fight.

Slowly, in the darkness, we followed along the telephone wire to its end, the farthest point reached by our F.O.O., and commenced to reel in. The sounds of fighting had ceased, except for an occasional rifle shot in the far distance, but from the direction of Beersheba came the baying of pariah dogs. Presently the moon rose, resplendent in the east, and it would have been difficult to realise the turmoil of the passing day had not those dark tragic masses, which here and there lay athwart our path, borne mute witness to the trail of arms. At last we reached the gun position, a very weary body of men.

Sleep that night seemed good indeed.

Early next morning orders to advance came for the Brigade, and we had barely finished a hasty breakfast when the gun limbers and teams arrived from the wagon line.

Before we moved off I walked to the top of the crest and looked out over the battlefield. It was a wonderful sight. In front lay the tumbled hills dominated by the height of 1070, and the line of Turkish works, the barbed wire entanglements of which were easily discernible through field glasses. Away to the right, across the Wadi Saba, a vast cloud of dust was rising high into the air, an army was passing by. Infantry, artillery, camel convoys, A.S.C. wagons, and lorries were all moving forward towards Beersheba, and the north, in a continual column which stretched as far as the eye could see. Nothing could have portrayed, more convincingly, the success of the previous day's battle. During the whole campaign I remember no sight more spectacular.

In less than an hour our battery had joined the stream of traffic on the Fara-Beersheba road—a Turkish attempt at road making—which leads to the town.

The terrain occupied before and during the advance by our troops was strewn with debris, dumps of stores, fodder, ammunition, and other impedimenta which was left behind for the Salvage Corps to clear up later.

The day's march was quite a short one, a bivouac area having been allotted to the brigade, on the northern side of the road. Here we were able to settle down for a few hour's rest, until orders for a further advance came through. Actually, we remained in this area until the following afternoon. All day the stream of traffic passing along the road continued, later consisting mostly of A.S.C. wagons, motor lorries and camel convoys, laden with stores and ammunition. The marvel was where the horde of men, animals, and vehicles came from.

By the evening we gunners were feeling pretty "fed up" at being, as it seemed, left behind and forgotten. Of course there was a perfectly sufficient reason, which became apparent later. The whole show was a big gamble, as war must always be. The stakes were "water," upon which depended the whole success or failure of the enterprise.

Lord Allenby's Despatch of December 16th, 1917, and the "Official Record of the Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces, July, 1917 to October, 1918" have fully described the plan of campaign, and it will suffice here to explain quite briefly the plan adopted. It consisted of a strong frontal attack against Gaza and the coast sector, helped by the Royal Navy, a day or so after the main attack took place against the extreme eastern flank at Beersheba. To quote from Lord Allenby's Despatch:—

"I had decided to strike the main blow against the left flank of the main Turkish position, Hareira-Sheria. The capture of Beersheba was a necessary preliminary to this operation, in order to secure the water supply at that place and to give room for the deployment of the attacking force on the high ground to the north and north-west of Beersheba, from which direction I intended to attack the Hareira-Sheria line....."

"After the complete success of the Beersheba operations, and as the early reports indicated that an ample supply of water would be available at that place, it was hoped that it would be possible to attack Sheria by Nov. 3 or 4. The attack on Gaza was accordingly ordered to take place on the morning of Nov. 2. Later reports showed that the water situation was less favourable than had been hoped, but it was decided not to postpone the attack."

Under the heading Royal Engineers I. Water Supply the official record says:—"The water question ahead of Beersheba was, at best, a doubtful one, and it was essential that when the advance from Beersheba began, the force employed should be in a position to face a long waterless period.

The Turks only destroyed a few of the wells before leaving, though all the principal wells had been prepared for demolition. This neglect, while most fortunate for us, was not creditable to the Turkish engineers, for, however sudden the attack, it was only the work of a moment to light the fuses which were ready in position.

Of the seventeen wells in Beersheba, only two were thoroughly demolished, and two partly damaged. In three wells the pumps were in a workable condition though the engines had been put out of action. In three other wells saqqias* were found in at least a workable condition, although two or these saqqias were discarded as unprofitable and replaced by pumps and engines, the third was put in good working order in a few hours and was able to cope with the full yield of the well. In addition, the Turks had left intact two reservoirs, containing some 90,000 gallons, a very useful legacy.

It was at once clear that the source of water in Beersheba was a large one and likely to provide nearly the whole needs of that part of the force which was temporarily based on the town—a force requiring in all about 400,000 gallons per day."

The force consisted of one cavalry corps and two infantry divisions.

My unit, in common with the rest of the 74th Division, remained encamped along the main road position we

^{*} A saqqia is a wheel fitted with buckets for raising water. It is worked as a rule by an animal pacing round in a circle on the principle of an old-fashioned mill.

occupied during the night of 1st—2nd, to benefit by the supply of water to be obtained from surface pools lying in the Wadi Saba. This was found sufficient to water the horses of the divisional artillery and other horse units without adding to the strain on the water supply at Beersheba.

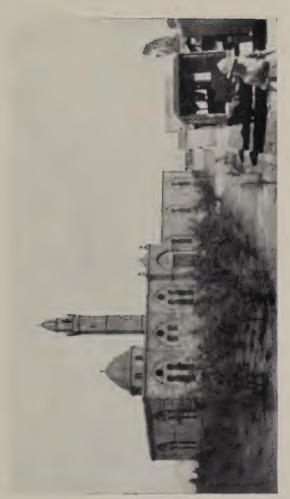
Matters were not helped by the weather, for four days after the battle the temperature was extremely high, a strong khamsin blew without intermission and a cloud of fine dust resembling a mild London fog enveloped the whole district.

On the morning of the 2nd the officers of the battery obtained leave to visit Beersheba, some four miles away. The excursion was most interesting, spoiled only by the high wind and rising dust. Proceeding along the main road we crossed over the deserted Turkish trenches and broken wire. Signs of the battle were everywhere and the damage to the trenches and wire spoke volumes for the effectiveness of our artillery fire. Behind the trenches on the south of the road I noticed the wagon line of an enemy battery which must have received a direct hit from one of our heavies. A dozen or more of the animals had been killed and the bodies of the men lay where they had fallen.

As we neared the town evidence increased of the rapidity of the enemy's flight. Great dumps of stores and ammunition were to be seen on every hand and no attempt had been made to destroy them. Despite their haste however the Turks had found time to lay several booby traps. In the station a train consisting of several loaded ammunition trucks was fixed up with a time bomb. Fortunately this was discovered before it exploded and no damage was done. The main road was strewn with hand-grenades, which no doubt would have gone off had our horses stepped on them. As we rode along an explosion suddenly occurred on the railway one hundred yards or so away. We did not stop to ascertain the cause, but no doubt it was another of Johnny's "surprise packets."

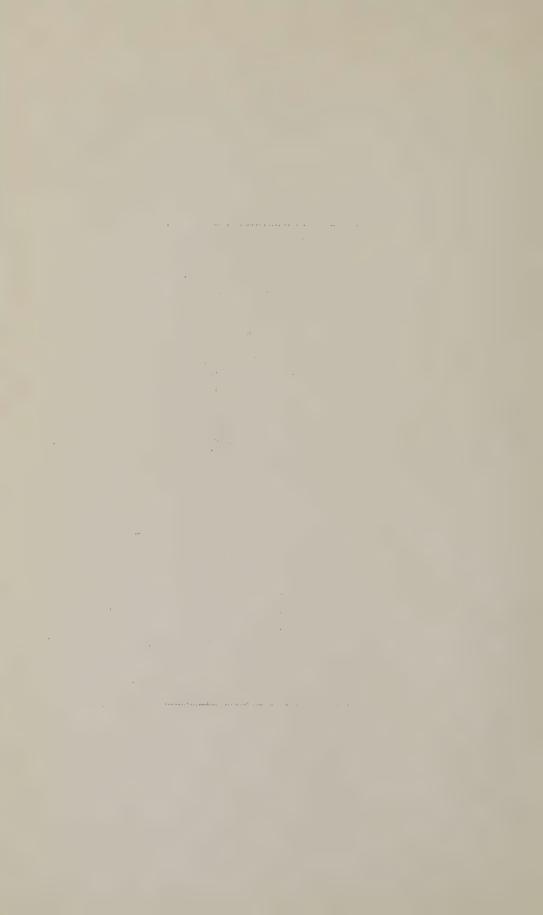
We had heard and expected so much of Beersheba that the reality was disappointing. It proved to be a mean village of native dwellings, a few poor lock-up shops containing little or no stock, and a few stone buildings put up by the Turks before the war. These latter included a Serai or Government House, a Mosque, a Post Office, a Khan, and the Station, grouped around an attempt at a public garden.

We rode to the centre of the town and dismounted to inspect some of the native buildings which were all deserted. Wandering around we came upon a house which had obviously been a quarter-master's store. One room had been used as an office. It was littered with Turkish papers and books which had been cast in every direction in a frantic effort to secure any of importance. In another room the



Beersheba.

The Mosque and Public Garden. 2nd Nov., 1917.



remains of a meal were still on the table, while the yard and stabling beyond was packed with stores, bright saddlery of red leather ornamented with brass, water bottles, clothing, swords, and lances. We helped ourselves to specimens of these. My "loot" consisted of a sword and a lance. The latter I had to throw away eventually, its length making it unwieldy to carry, but the sword I eventually brought home to England with me at the end of the war.

After this we inspected the famous wells where the R.E's were busy installing pumping gear, and then returned to the battery, looking like young Christmas trees with the spoils of battle slung around us and literally bristling with swords and lances.

In the afternoon we received orders to move to a fresh bivouac area on the north side of the railway and some three miles N.E. of Beersheba. It was at this time that we lost an important number of our brigade staff, by name Sambo.

Sambo, who was about fourteen years old, hailed from the Sudan. He was a coal black "fuzzy-whuzzy," and had received some education at the Kitchener School at Khartum. The Colonel happened upon him in Alexandria. Apparently he had no relatives to worry about, so he was roped in to assist the native cook employed in the Brigade Mess. When we left "Alex" the latter was discharged, but Sambo accompanied the brigade up the line, the Colonel realising that as he spoke English fluently, in addition to his native tongue, he might make a useful "acting, unpaid, and not on the strength" interpreter.

All through the summer Sambo administered to the needs of the brigade officers' mess by more or less successfully carrying out the duties of waiter and receiving perhaps more kicks than half pence for his trouble. He was an accomplished rogue, who could lie like the best of 'em and swear like a driver. Among other amusements he was addicted to reading "John Bull," and actually won a fountain pen in a competition organised by that paper. He used to wear this with much pride tucked into his right puttie, for of course the Q.M.S. had fitted him out with uniform. The smartness with which he saluted the Colonel was a thing to marvel at, and his carriage and military bearing were superb.

But alas, I regret to say, bravery was not his strong point. He went in mortal terror of being captured by the Turks, and being a native perhaps he might have got a thin time if such a thing had happened. He also developed a strong distaste for war at close quarters. He spent the day of the Beersheba "show" in the wagon line, taking cover underneath the battery cart. However as soon as the tide of battle receded somewhat he put on a bold front, and appeared all smiles and as brave as his martial bearing suggested.

Attached to us for duty were four water camels and two "Gyppo" Labour Corps men to attend them. The animals carried the "fanatis" which supplied the brigade with drinking water, and Sambo ruled the two camel men with a rod of iron. Speaking English, he had the "whip hand" every time.

From our new position it was necessary for the horses to go back to Beersheba to be watered, a treck of about six miles there and back, while the camels, with Sambo riding the leading one, went to the same place.

One of the camel men was a tough looking bird and obviously entertained no love for the youngster, who was not above "pulling his leg."

Sad to relate, Sambo disappeared. He was seen to leave for Beersheba, but he returned not. It was impossible to question the camel men because they couldn't speak English, and no one knew Arabic.

To have obtained an interpreter might have resulted in awkward questions being asked in high places as to the reason of Sambo being with us at all. So we buried our grief and kept quiet, while the men whispered that the hefty "Gyppo" had "done im in."

The sequel to the story came three months later when, in January, we were stationed at Abu Shusheh.

A report was received from the A.P.M. at Jerusalem, to the effect that Sambo had turned up in that City. As he claimed connection with our unit, would the C.O. say, please, what was to be done with him? As the result of this information the Colonel sent an N.C.O. up to the Holy City to bring back the boy to the brigade.

On the evening of his arrival he entertained the men of the headquarter's staff, who were gathered round a camp fire, with a number of Arab songs he had learned during his wanderings. How he had lived in the interval, or where he had been, remained a mystery, for not a word as to his doings could we get out of him. Later, the C.O. thought discretion the better part of valour, and when a suitable opportunity occurred, this young limb was despatched down the line.

But to return to our muttons.

The following morning we were again on the move northward. With the exception of the Jordan Valley, I have never seen a more desolate country. It was a barren and stony waste of rounded hills, practically devoid of vegetation, a wilderness if ever there was one. The brigade formed part of a large force, both mounted and foot units, all advancing in the same direction. There were no tracks, and it was necessary to march on a compass bearing. Often we had to make considerable detours to find a route over which the

guns could pass, for frequently the way was strewn with great boulders. To make matters worse there was a strong khamsin blowing and the air was filled with a fine dust, which parched the throats of men and beasts.

The problem of the hour was "water." The animals had had nothing to drink since their visit to Beersheba, the previous day, and the poor "hairies" were in a bad way. A mug-full of tea apiece was served to the men with their breakfast, but strict orders had been issued that no one was to touch the reserve supply in his water bottle. So vital had the water problem became that a divisional order was issued forbidding anyone to shave, with the result that we were hourly becoming more and more disreputable looking.

About mid-day, when we had been trecking for some three hours, word was passed back that the brigade would water at a well located at a certain map reference, the spot being close at hand. The news raised almost a sight of relief through the ranks, for there were few drivers who did not "feel" for their spent teams.

At last came the order—halt! And in the unmistakable voice of the B.S.M. "get ready to water." The poor, tired and thirsty beasts pricked up their ears and whinnied at the sound, many became restive and pawed the ground.

We had halted on a hill top, and the well lay below us in the valley. The teams were quickly unhooked and the watering order preceded by the B.S.M., set off down the hill. As Orderly Officer for the day, I accompanied the animals belonging to my battery.

A few moments' walk brought us within view of the spot. It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight. The well was in the centre of a narrow valley, but at first one could not see it, for the whole area was closely packed with horses, literally hundreds. Then, in the centre of the crush, it was possible to identify some R.E's. busy at a hand pump, from which dribbled a miserable supply of dirty water. If a good oath is ever justified, it was on that occasion. At all events there were many. Not a tenth part of the horses could be watered by such a supply.

Sorrowfully we turned back with the poor beasts, which had scented water from afar, and were becoming frantic in their efforts to press onward. It was a struggle to turn and drive them up the hill again.

As we retraced our steps, other units were waiting to pass down, and the chagrin with which they received our news can be imagined.

With muttered cursings and grumblings the men hooked in the teams once more, and the order was given to "walk march." A mile further on we again halted and prepared to bivouac. The outlook was not exactly cheering. The water carried by the men in their water bottles had to be held at all costs, in case matters got worse, and only a very small supply, perhaps a third of a small mug full per man, was available from the battery fanatis. With throats parched, by the continual clouds of dust through which we had been marching, a meal of bully and hard biscuits, without drinking, did not appear to be a particularly appetising repast. However there was nothing to be done but make the best of it.

After lunch the O.C. detailed me to go out and prospect for water, as a sort of forlorn hope. My groom brought up my dust begrimed and shrunken looking charger—all the horses had fallen away in appearance in the most alarming manner—and I started out, hardly knowing which way to go.

I asked several people whom I met if they had seen anything of the water officer, and at last one man indicated a nearby hilltop where that individual might be found. I rode off in the direction indicated and at last spotted a solitary horseman who proved to be the object of my search.

"Is there any chance to water the horses of my brigade?" I enquired.

"Yes," he answered shortly, "bring them back here in half-an-hour and you'll be able to water."

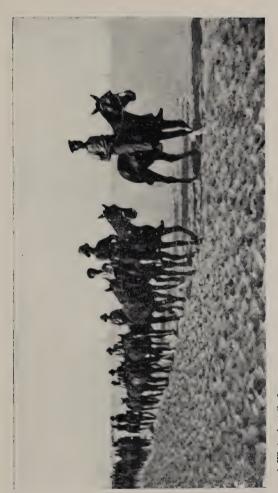
A less promising spot for the operation it was difficult to imagine, but I had passed the stage of wondering. Instead I turned about, urged my jaded mount into some semblance of life and cantered back to the battery.

"We can water in half-an-hour, Sir," I reported to the O.C., "Shall I get the horses off the lines?"

It was no easy matter to persuade the men to hurry, they had lost faith in the possibilities of watering and probably suspected another "snag." I chafed under the delay, for I was impatient to be on the move, knowing full well that unless we were first in the field we might have a long wait, or worse still, be disappointed again.

At last the parade was ready and we set out. As we neared the spot my heart lept, for I saw the seemingly impossible had been achieved. Water awaited us. Barely half-an-hour could have elapsed since I left the spot, but in the interval the whole situation was changed. A large party of R.E's had appeared and had erected long lines of canvas troughs. But, a more wonderful sight still, from the direction of Beersheba was approaching a vast camel convoy, each beast carrying two fanatis of water.

Never have I seen so many camels at one time. I have no means of knowing the actual number, but the total camel strength of the 20th Corps was 20,000, and I think it is quite



A Watering Order.



possible that, to meet the situation, 5,000 beasts were pressed into service on this occasion, possibly more. The leading sections of the convoy filed up to the various troughs, and the water was emptied into the canvas containers.

My "hustle" had been well worth while, for we were among the first units to water. The thirsty "hairies" rushed the troughs the moment they smelt the water, and the drivers in units which followed us had the greatest difficulty in holding back their horses.

There were, of course, strict routine orders forbidding anyone to drink unchlorinated water, but on this occasion most of the men produced enamelled mugs, apparently from nowhere, and proceeded to drink their fill from the trough. It was useless to try to stop them, the best I could do was to emulate Lord Nelson, who on a certain famous occasion failed to see what was happening.

On my return to the battery one of the batmen was despatched with a "dixie," and later we all regaled ourselves with unlimited tea made with water from the same source.

Upon the return journey to the battery I had still further occasion to congratulate myself on being first in the field. Suddenly a German Taube appeared in the sky above the troughs and proceeded to bomb what must have been an excellent target. Fortunately the amount of damage he accomplished was not great and our anti-aircraft guns quickly took up the challenge and drove him off with a burst of fire.

The brigade remained in the same position for the rest of the day and the following night. The next morning an early start was made and we proceeded in a north-westerly direction once more. The physical features of the country through which we were passing were practically unrecorded on the maps issued to us, but our route lay to the east of Bir Abu Irgeig.

About nine a.m. a halt was called and the B.C. went forward to choose a battery position on a nearby hillside. Half-an-hour later we drove the guns into the position and sent the teams away to a wagon line in the rear.

It was not long before a burst of enemy shelling told us that we were well within range. The Turks overestimated the distance, however, and the shrapnel sprayed down behind us into the Wadi bed, making the cooks and batmen, who were preparing a meal, scurry away for cover.

We remained in action all day and registered a certain number of targets on the enemy's country in front of us.

The following day, November 5th, most of the officers of the brigade were occupied in reconnoitring the country which lay ahead. All day troops continued to advance into the surrounding wadis and it was jobvious that a few hours would see the Division in action once more. In the evening we drew out the guns and proceeded to a wadi bed where the other batteries of the brigade, and the H.Q. Staff, were congregated.

The show was due to start at dawn on the following morning and the brigade had to be ready to move at midnight. There remained therefore only a few short hours for rest, and we made the most of these.

CHAPTER 7.

THE BATTLE OF SHERIA.

The few hours of sleep passed as if they had been but minutes, and it was time to be up and doing. The batmen had prepared cocoa and each of us had a mug full of the steaming hot beverage. Soon the Sergeant-Major came to report the battery paraded and standing to. The order was given to mount and quietly we moved off behind the H.Q. Staff.

At this period we were very short of officers. Our normal complement was Major, Captain, and three, or more rarely four Subalterns, but our Captain had gone sick, and one of our three section commanders was acting Captain, another went out as reconnaissance officer during the night, leaving only the Major and myself with the battery.

The Colonel and the Adjutant had already gone forward along the road. I use the word "road" but "track" would better describe the route we had to follow. We rode in silence except for any necessary orders which were passed down the column in a whisper.

Ahead of us a considerable amount of rifle firing was taking place, and now and again the sound of a spent bullet, very tired and "whiny," could be distinguished, showing that the enemy were within measurable distance.

The night was very dark with the darkness which comes just before dawn, and the air cold. It was good to be on the move.

Our orders were to advance along the road until we reached the dead camel, and then bear to the left. These delightfully vague instructions were necessitated by the scanty information afforded by the "Ist Edition Provisional Maps" supplied to us, which were the only ones available. The dead camel had been chosen as the only suitable landmark during the previous day's reconnaissance.

There is unfortunately often a slip 'twixt cup and lip and somehow we missed the camel, hidden in the darkness. Not even the *smell* gave it away, and the guns and wagons rumbled on over the soft track.

The rifle firing was nearer now, much nearer. The ping!——ping! of bullets passing overhead was becoming uncomfortably frequent.

Word reached me, I know not how, that the Colonel was at the head of the column. Every one was on the "qui vive."

Suddenly, without warning, a Very light illuminated the roadway, and the marching column, with dazzling brilliance, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred yards away to the right, that was all. To say the effect was startling is to put it mildly, we were practically in touch with the Turkish outposts.

Proof that we were spotted, in the form of a tornado of bullets, which whistled all around, followed swiftly on the bursting of the light.

"Subsections left," came the order, and the battery wheeled into line at right-angles to the road.

The next moment Major S--- came galloping down the road.

"Hurry up! Goodsall, and get the battery under cover! There is a bit of a hill here on our right, and a wadi further on."

In a few moments we were screened from the road and in comparative safety.

"The C.O. has passed the word along to halt, Sir!" said the Sergeant-Major, coming up from the right, "and he wants to see you."

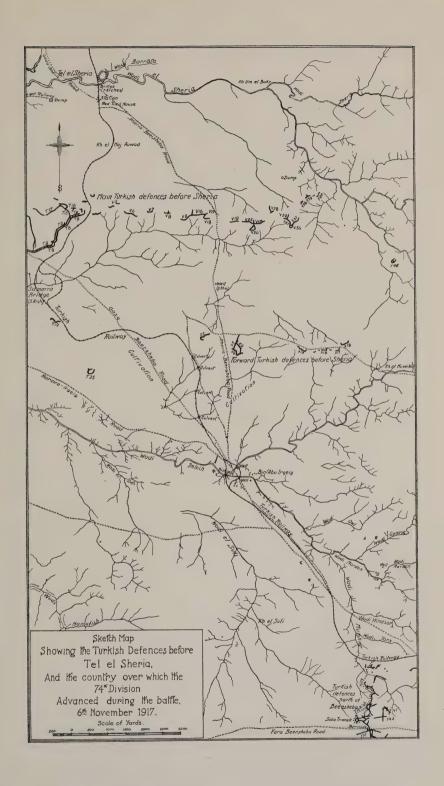
Major S—galloped away, and for a while we waited expectantly. A faint light began to appear in the east, the herald of dawn. I rode along the column to make sure we had sustained no casualties. Our luck was in, for not a man or beast had received a scratch.

My inspection was barely completed when the Major returned.

"That was a near one," he said," another two hundred yards and we should have marched gaily into Johnny's outposts. As it is we're right in front of the infantry. Our fellows must have been pushed back during the night, or we missed that damned camel. The "old man" is up there with a number of other "tin hats," none of them know what the blazes is up. They're like a lot of peas on a drum. By God what a show!" and then, after a pause, "Damn it! I'm not going to stop here, doing nothing, and be plugged by Johnny. Come on! We'll go and find a battery position and get into action! Sergeant-Major—""

[&]quot;Sur-r-r"

[&]quot;Stand by to move into action as soon as Mr. Goodsall





returns, and send on the director man and my groom."

"Very good, Sir!"

"Come on, Goodsall!"

We dug spurs into our horses and set out at a break-neck pace. It was rough "going" and only luck saved us from a bad spill. We bent over our horses' necks and let 'em have it. Three-quarters of a mile perhaps we went, away to the north-west, the ground rising gently before us. In the gathering twilight of dawn we could discern the crest ahead.

"Here you are!" shouted the Major, "This'll do! Go back and bring up the battery into action here while I choose an O.P. I'll be up on the crest. Hurry up!" and he was away, galloping hell-for-leather up the hillside, with the director man a bad second.

I turned and galloped back in the direction from which we had come. My horse was in a muck sweat and I knew the pace was telling, for the "going" could hardly have been heavier. Every moment the light was becoming stronger; the pearly opalescence of the new day tinged the sky above the crest line of the surrounding hills. The noise of the rifle fire was more insistent, and now and again came the sharp explosion of a hand-grenade.

I began to feel increasing anxiety. No one knew the country, the light was rapidly gaining strength, and for all one could tell the whole plain might be in view of the enemy, in which case the battery would have to advance into action in the open. Every moment was of importance.

I urged on my tired mount to his utmost pace, bending low and riding as if it was a race, which indeed it was, against the dawn.

Seconds seemed like minutes, and to add to my anxiety I realised that I could not identify exactly where the battery was waiting. The general direction I was fairly sure of, but the dawn was changing the whole aspect of the scene, and there was no sign of the guns and their teams. Here and there clouds of dust revealed the presence of moving bodies of troops, but which, if any of these was my unit I could not tell.

To say that I was "rattled" is to put it mildly. At last, however, I espied a single horseman galloping towards me, who proved to be the Adjutant.

"Have you seen 'Ack' Battery?" I shouted as we drew near.

"Yes, in the Wadi, two hundred yards or so ahead," he replied, "where's S——?"

I told him where the Major had chosen his O.P., and a few moments later I spotted "Ack" Battery Sergeant-Major.

- "Battery, prepare to mount! Mount!" I bawled.
- "Battery will advance by battery column, walk march.

As soon as the column was clear of the wadi I gave the order to trot, and galloped forward with the signallers, leaving the Sergeant-Major to act as battery leader.

When we reached the gun position I placed one man as a marker and pushed forward to find the O.C. I had no difficulty in locating the observation post on the crest.

The signallers were already running out a telephone line, and after seeing they had got the direction correctly I returned to await the arrival of the battery.

Very soon they came along in great style, which made one feel proud of the spade work done during the months of training, and dropped into action as if on a "drill order."

Firing orders had now come through, and in a remarkably short space of time we had got the right section ranging. The noise of incessant rifle fire just beyond the crest showed that our infantry were engaged.

Glancing back I saw that the whole plain was alive with advancing units, the batteries of other brigades, the D.A.C., A.S.C. columns, and camel convoys.

Soon we were putting over a steady fire with gradually

increasing range.

Suddenly from behind came a frightful detonation and a cloud of smoke burst among the advancing column of the D.A.C., followed immediately by the sound of exploding shells from the wagons. A Turkish aeroplane had bombed the column. In quick succession the Turk dropped two more bombs at other masses of troops which lay below him. From his line of flight I realised he would pass immediately over our position, and if nothing else did, our gun flashes would give us away.

"Tell the O.C. that a Turkish aeroplance is passing over the battery, and ask if we're to stop firing!" I ordered the signaller at the O.P. line, remembering the instruction on such matters which was "dished out" to us at Lark Hill, Salisbury Plain.

Immediately the answer came back: "The Colonel says tell Mr. Goodsall to carry on, and remember that we are at war!" It was news that the C.O. was using the same O.P.

Probably Johnny had exhausted his stock of bombs for he passed over without paying any attention to us, and we continued at battery fire, sweeping and increasing the range.

After half-an-hour the order came through "Cease firing, prepare to advance," the object being to move to the top of the crest and so gain range. Before the teams could be got up however the infantry had advanced so far that the

projected move was useless, and the Major returned to the

battery.

"The show's going on splendidly," he said, "the infantry have left us far behind, we'll have to be "up and doing." I'm going over the crest to the well at U.31.a. (a map reference on the Irgig (C.5) 1st Edition Provisional Map), I want you to take the battery round under cover, and I'll meet you and tell you where to come into action."

At that moment the limbers and wagon teams came up at a trot from the wagon line. The Major mounted his charger and galloped away, and a few moments later the battery was on the move.

From all along the line the noise of battle welled up, a crescendo of rifle and artillery fire. The country around us was alive with movement, batteries advancing, A.S.C. trains pressing their way forward, and here and there a long snake-like line of some camel convoy following swiftly on the heels of the advancing infantry. Victory, one felt, was in the air.

It must have been an hour at least before we reached the position indicated by the map reference. There was no mistaking the spot for the Sheria-Beersheba road—a recognisable track, and the configuration of the ground as shown on the map, rendered identification easy, but we could find no sign of a well.

The O.C., too, was nowhere to be seen. I consulted with the Sergeant-Major, and we came to the conclusion that the spot we had reached was the one indicated by the Major, yet we had missed him, or he us.

For an anxious half hour we waited, expecting any moment that he would turn up. But he did not do so, and we chafed under the delay.

We might have gone into action but for the fact that we were entirely out of touch with R.A. and the Infantry H.Q's, and so had no means of finding out where our fire was required.

At length I decided to go and look for the B.C. I sent one of the sergeants away to the left and then rode off to the right, the direction from which Major S— would probably appear.

The search however proved fruitless, and I returned to the battery hoping that by now he had put in an appearance. He had not done so, and I set out again, this time forward.

A few hundred yards away from the battery I passed a Tommy being led by two others. At first I thought he was wounded, for he was shouting and crying. He had not received a scratch however, his trouble being shellshock or loss of reason, I know not which.

I pushed on over the crest and down the front face of the hillside. Our infantry were attacking the strong works on the opposite crest line from which came the sound of continual rifle fire, the bursting of hand-grenades, and the white puffs of exploding shrapnel shells.

Barely had I reached the bottom of the shallow valley when the Turkish artillery began to sweep the hillside. The fire was rapid and six shells burst in quick succession some four hundred yards in front of me. I heard the shrapnel spray down, and a few minutes later there was another round of fire. This time the range had lengthened, and the shells burst considerably nearer.

I guessed I was "for it." There was no cover available, but I dismounted and lay down, holding on to my horse's reins. Away to the right was an Egyptian Labour Corps man leading three camels. I watched him make the animals lie down (barrak), and then crouch down himself behind the largest, and very good cover the beast made.

As I anticipated the next rounds burst practically overhead and the shrapnel hissed down all round. Why I was not hit it is impossible to say. The metal threw up the dust in all directions and escape seemed impossible. I had the "wind up" properly but I can remember thinking perfectly clearly, calculating in my mind where the next shell bursts would come, and realising that my best course was to ride along the valley as soon as the range had lengthened. The next shells burst behind me, and I lost no time in mounting and galloping away in the direction I had determined upon.

The escape was a narrow one, and as the Major was nowhere in sight I decided to return to the battery.

When I reached it, there were still no signs of the missing officer, but I found that Lieutenant L—had turned up. He had completely lost track of us during the night, having gone out with the infantry as F.O.O. and failed to find us at the first battery position.

A quarter-of-an-hour or so later the Major suddenly appeared. His manner was not exactly jovial and he had a number of caustic remarks to make about battery leaders in general and the writer in particular.

When the flow of his eloquence had somewhat subsided I proceeded to explain gently to him that we had come to the map reference he had indicated but could find neither himself or the well.

The real explanation was simple. He had gone to the well which was not situated on the map reference as shown but was actually in the next wadi, and for the last hour we had been playing a game of hide and seek.



"War."



When later in the day we got into telephone communication once more with the Brigade H.Q. there were more caustic remarks about lost B.C's and lost batteries. However it transpired later that we were not the only people to get lost on that remarkable day of moving warfare. C.R.A's lost their Brigade Majors and A.D.C's, while Colonels lost their adjutants and orderly officers. Throughout the morning brigades and batteries were completely out of touch with R.A., H.Q.

Having at last retrieved our missing officers we were once more in a position to go into action. This time the move was one of only a hundred yards or so. The B.C. went up to a position on the crest in front from which he could observe the Turkish works, a line of strong trenches, heavily wired, guarding the approach towards Tel el Sheria, the railway station, and the Wadi Sheria.

For half-an-hour or so we put over a steady fire, sweeping the area behind the Turkish lines while our infantry were attacking. By 13.15 (1.15 p.m.) all the objectives of the 74th Division had fallen and we were again able to advance.

When the gun limbers and wagons came up from the wagon line we moved forward over the crest towards the captured Turkish trenches. From the hilltop the ground dropped down gently towards the wadi bed and then rose to the enemy's trenches on the opposite summit. This was the ground over which our infantry had just made such a splendid advance. It was here, too, that another battery of the division achieved the ambition of every gunner by trotting over the crest and coming into action in the open, a manœuvre which they carried out splendidly and with few casualties. From this position they were able to fire with open sights on to the enemy's trenches.

On the way to our new position we passed stretcher bearers busy searching the ground for casualties, and when we reached the Turkish lines we found a number of wounded, both our men and the enemy's, waiting to be evacuated.

We came into action immediately below the crest and mid-way along the section of trenches which formed the Turkish line at this point. From the crest itself a magnificent view of the country to the north and west was obtained, the ground falling gently to the bed of the Wadi Sheria, some 4,000 yards away. Prominent to the north-east lay Tel el Sheria.

As far as we were concerned, fighting was over for the day. Our infantry were well down towards the Wadi Sheria, and the station, while on the right the 60th, and the 10th, Divisions, who had launched an attack on the main Kauwukah and Rushdi systems at 12.30, had just broken through.

As darkness was falling a big explosion occurred in an ammunition dump at the station which lit up the whole country and effectively stopped any further advance by the 60th Division, who had gained the station buildings.

During the whole of the night which followed there was continuous firing along the line of the Wadi Sheria. Every few minutes the front was lit up by Very lights and the bursting of shells, while the sharp detonations of hand-grenades rose above the insistent rattle of machine gun and rifle fire.

Lying by the guns, we were able to gain a few hours' sleep, but before dawn we were up and ready for the attack on the wadi.

During the night the Turks made preparations for their withdrawal, and towards morning their artillery fire ceased, showing that their guns were on the move. At dawn however, when the 60th Division attacked Tel el Sheria, their rearguards were still in sufficient force to offer a stubborn resistance. At o6,00 the hill fell and the whole of our line was able to advance some two-and-a-half miles beyond the Wadi Sheria.

From our elevated position we gained a most spectacular view of the fighting round Tel el Sheria. Through field glasses it was possible to watch the whole progress of the fight, the storming parties of infantry, mounted men dashing hither and thither, and the bursting shells above the hill.

It was a day of stirring sights. As soon as the infantry had forced a gap through the retreating lines of the Turks, the time arrived to use the cavalry, upon whom in the following days the brunt of the fighting descended. About 10.00 a fast-moving body of horsemen appeared from the rear. It was the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade, who, as they neared the crest, broke into a gallop, and with a thundering roar, dashed down towards the wadi.

Spellbound we watched this fine body of men and beasts flash past—a brilliant sight. They quickly covered the distance to the wadi and disappeared, only to reappear a few moments later on the opposite bank, and then away, away to the north until they were lost in the distant blue haze.

In their wake followed a number of motor cars and many horsemen wearing the red cap bands and tabs of the staff. When they reached the crest the party stopped close to our gun position and the sappers rigged up a mast from which was flown the Union Jack.

Men of the Signal Corps erected a wireless ariel, while the great ones of the staff stood in a group watching the advance of the cavalry through their glasses. Word came to us, in the mysterious way news travels in the army, that the C-in-C himself was among the party. If such was indeed the case it was the first of two occasions I, personally, saw him in the line. The second occasion I shall speak of later.

The "brass-hats" had not been assembled many minutes on the crest line when "Johnny" provided an unpleasant diversion from the air. Suddenly came the hum of an aeroplane engine overhead, followed almost immediately by the rapid pop! pop!,—pop! pop! pop! of machine gun fire. In the speed with which everyone scurried into the Turkish trenches for cover we rivalled the scared occupants of a rabbit warren which has suddenly been startled.

Fortunately there were no casualties, and as the aeroplane circled away it was hotly shelled by a battery of "archies."

In the late afternoon we received orders to advance to a covering position on the Wadi Sheria, a spot we occupied during the two following days. The same night, duty decreed that I should go out, several hundred yards, to an O.P. immediately above the wadi, nominally as F.O.O. Actually of course there was nothing to do, for the advance had left us "stranded" far behind the line of fighting.

I slept that night in the wadi immediately below the hillock which was to serve as an O.P. A more unwholesome place I think I have never been in. All round were the remains of dead donkeys and camels, all manner of indescribable filth, for cleanliness was not a strong point with "Johnny," and a number of Turkish dead. Mosquitos and sand flies added their quota to the general discomfort.

So ended our part in the battle of Sheria and our share of the fighting for some weeks.

CHAPTER 8.

THE COMING OF THE NEW YEAR.

As this work does not profess to be a chronicle of the Palestine campaign, but rather a simple record of personal reminiscences, there is no need for me to record the details of the great advance across the Plains of Philistia which in less than two weeks carried the victorious British army beyond Jaffa and Ludd to the foot-hills of Judea. The story has been told, in official records, personal descriptions of participants, and in the great war film "Armageddon."

For the time being the work of the 74th Division was accomplished, and my unit, in common with the other arms of the force, received orders to move back towards the Wadi Ghuzze. By easy stages we marched to Karm, that dreary, dusty plain we had left but little more than a week before. The weather was vile. On November the 10th a khamsin began to blow, and lasted for two days, raising a perpetual cloud of dust, resembling a fog, which covered everything and everybody, and made the outlook as miserable as it could be. Furthermore we were absolutely "fed up" at being out of the show.

On the 14th I suddenly developed a bad sore throat and a temperature. I had just been appointed to the Headquarters Staff as orderly officer in place of Lieutenant R— who became Captain and Adjutant, and not wishing to lose the job, I kept going as long as I could. On the 15th I was worse, and in the evening the doctor decided to send me to hospital.

As dusk was falling a "sand cart" arrived and I was pushed off to the Casualty Clearing Station at Karm. The receiving M.O. quickly diagnosed diphtheria, and the same night I found myself in a Red Cross train bound for El Arish.

So, for the time being, ended my experiences in Palestine. After a stay at the Hospital Camp for infectious cases at El Arish I was evacuated to Egypt, where I spent several weeks, first in Hospital, and later at the Rest Camp at Abbasia Barracks, where followed many days of glorious idleness.



General Base Details' Camp, Kantara.

Lieut. S— and Batman Packing Kit.



By the last day of the old year I had sufficiently recovered to leave the Rest Camp and travel to the R.A. Base Details Camp at Kantara to await instructions to proceed up the line.

Several days later I was called upon to present myself before the M.O. for examination. As a result of this I was given two more weeks' light duty.

One morning I was suddenly detailed to take a number of men up the line, to the Rest Camp at Deir Sineid. The excursion promised to be an interesting one, and I was by no means sorry to escape from the boring idleness of the Base Camp.

We left by the evening train for the long desert journey. El Arish was reached in the early hours of the morning, and Rafa just as the dawn was breaking. It was a cold grey day, with heavy storm clouds scudding across the sky, very different to the beautiful springlike weather of Egypt. The temperature was a disagreeable surprise. Rations I had brought with me, and when the train left Rafa I made a frugal breakfast consisting of sardines, ration biscuits, chocolates, and water, trusting for better things when we reached railhead at Deir Sineid.

Soon the familiar country round Deir el Belah came into sight, but the change wrought in two months was amazing. Gone were the vast dumps, the camps, and the teaming life of several divisions. I could hardly recognise the plain, which seemed bare and deserted, even the colour had changed from a dark brown to the tender green of young grass.

Presently the train was rattled down towards the Wadi Ghuzze, but it came to a standstill before reaching the water-course. Halts on the part of the military trains were the rule rather than the exception, so that it was half-an-hour or more before it occurred to me to get out and ascertain the cause of the delay.

At length I descended and wandered along to the engine to inquire. It transpired that there had been a "washout" on the track where it crossed the wadi, and the train could not proceed until the R.E's had repaired the damage.

It was cold, rain was beginning to fall, and so, having satisfied my curiosity I returned to the chilly comfort of a 3rd Class Gyppo State Railway carriage.

About an hour later, blasts from the engine whistle announced the fact that the train was starting once more. It was now raining in earnest, a steady downpour.

Cautiously the train rumbled down a cutting through the Wadi bank. The track was supported by sleepers laid across the Wadi bed, and a strong stream of turbid water washed about them. The recent damage was caused by the soft soil

below some of the timbers having been washed away. Once safely across the train put on speed again and commenced the climb towards Gaza.

Soon we were nearing our old front line. I recognised the entrance to the long communication trench, and fancied I spotted the battery position we occupied for the "Sea and Beach Post" raid. The front line trenches remained exactly as the infantry had left them two months previously, for everyone had been much too busy in the interval to think of cleaning up.

The train rattled on over "no man's land" past the rows of formidable cactus hedges which had proved such an impregnable barrier during the attacks against the town. One was able to realise the strength of the Turks' position, deeply entrenched behind these hedges, so difficult to penetrate, and veritable death traps to an attacking force.

Soon the Turkish lines were left behind, and the train came to a standstill at Gaza. The station was situated to the north east of the town, which was built around and upon a slight eminence. The dominating architectural feature was the Great Mosque. Very little military work had been done, so far. There were one or two sidings, an R.T.O's. tent, and a few tents for the permanent staff. The whole place was a quagmire, and everyone appeared "fed to the teeth."

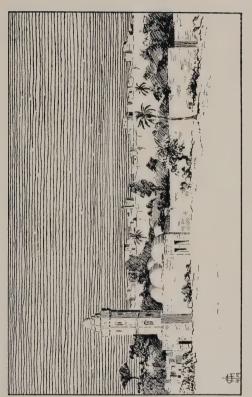
Anxiously I looked about for signs of a canteen tent but was disappointed and the hope of augmenting my breakfast disappeared, indeed the prospect became distinctly less promising when I learned that the train might be held up indefinately, as the line was being continually washed away.

I routed out my men to find out how they had fared. Like myself they carried only one day's rations.

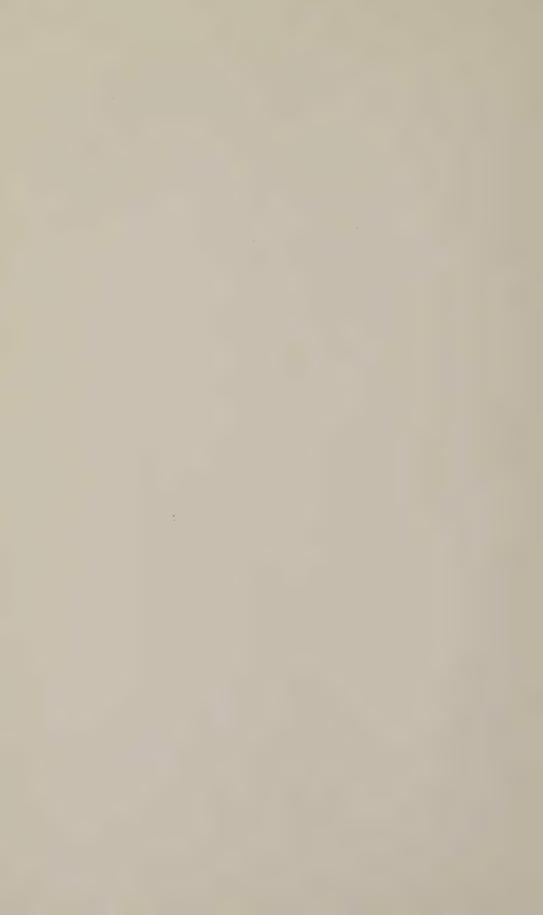
Some two hours later a down train arrived from Deir Sineid. The line at this time was only a single track, and now that the way was clear our engine showed signs of renewed activity. I returned to my solitary compartment and commenced lunch—bully and biscuits.

With great caution, for the newly-laid track was none too "permanent," the train moved northward once more. The country between Gaza and Deir Sineid had been heavily shelled during the November attack, both by our heavies and the long-range guns of the Navy. Many ancient olive trees had been cut down by shell fire, and still more by the Turks for fuel. By the side of the newly-laid line ran the narrow gauge Turkish railway, and a few miles north of Gaza we passed the remains of an enemy ammunition train which had received a direct hit from a naval gun. It was a twisted mass of ironwork.

In the late afternoon the train reached Deir Sineid, and I felt that my job was nearly at an end. Disillusionment



Gaza from the Railway Station.



followed quickly. The Rest Camp had been moved to Mejdel, seven miles or so to the north, and there was no one to whom I could hand over my "merry band of warriors."

I searched out a weary "Lines of Communication" Officer, but he was entirely unsympathetic. He knew nothing about us and cared less, he was very wet and very "windy," so I deemed it advisable to beat a hasty retreat.

The outlook was far from cheerful, and there seemed nothing for it but to proceed to Mejdel. This however was easier said than done, unless one cared to walk. The railway track had only just been laid, and the possibility of a train going north was problematical. The alternative was to "foot slog."

I watched a convoy of donkeys coming into camp. They were sliding about in all directions, over the slimy mud, and could hardly keep their feet. They were the only animals which could keep going at all. Most certainly "walking it" didn't seem good enough.

The alternative was to remain at Deir Sineid. There was no official accommodation provided for anyone unattached to units, but a Y.M.C.A. tent offered dubious shelter for the men, and a smaller E.P.I.P. tent packed with forms, trestle tables, and dumped kit, was all I could find for myself. In it were installed seven or eight other officers going "down the line." The track across Wadi Ghuzze had now completely given way, and there was no possibility of trains moving either up or down.

All night it rained "Heaven's hard." The tent leaked, and little rivulets of water ran across the muddy floor. I was without blankets, having left Kantara fondly imagining that I should only be away one night, and never suspecting the change of temperature I should experience. I paid for my folly by lying on the top of a pile of kit all night and shivering, not even my greatcoat being sufficient to keep out the cold, besides it was wet through.

The next morning brought no improvement. It was still raining, a steady downpour. I looked up my men who were moderately comfortable, and told off a couple of them and a sergeant to draw rations.

After breakfast I went to the Ordnance Stores about a mile away and purchased a "wetter sheet" which acted as a cape to keep off the rain.

I was amazed to find the size to which this new railhead had grown. Round the station were congregated all manner of camps belonging to the non-combatant units, A.S.C. stores, workshops, dumps, and others connected with the "Q" branch of the service, collectively covering a considerable area. Later of course the whole "outfit" was moved to Ludd, which became the final railhead. In the afternoon the weather

brightened up considerably, and by the evening the sky was clear of clouds. The line to the south was in operation again, and my companions in the previous night's suffering were able to depart, but there still seemed no possibility of my party being able to reach Mejdel.

At eight-thirty p.m. I decided to "turn in" on top of the pile of kit. I was just beginning to get comfortable when a sergeant of my party routed me out with the information that a train was going north in about an hour.

I thanked him and told him to parade the men.

Sure enough we found the train, a long line of open goods trucks loaded with tibbin, waiting in a siding. The members of my party scrambled on to the loaded trucks, thankful to be on the move once more.

After considerable delay the train started, moving at a snail's pace over the metals. This portion of the line had only been laid about a fortnight to three weeks, the sleepers merely rested on the earth without any prepared bed, and the rain easily undermined the track.

When the train started the heavens were absolutely clear, but now heavy clouds once more overcast the sky, and rain commenced to fall. Fortunately the tibbin was covered with canvas, and under these sheets we were able to scramble and keep comparatively dry.

At the end of an hour, possibly longer, the train stopped and an individual carrying a hurricane lamp, who came wandering past, vouchsafed the information that we had reached Mejdel.

"Where is the Rest Camp?" I asked.

"Up on the hill where you see the light," was the answer.

I dismounted my party and we set off in the direction indicated The rain was falling as hard as ever, and it was a very wet and disgruntled party which at length "made" the twinkling light issuing from the tent of the O.C. Rest Camp.

"Hallo! who are you?" queried a weary voice from the depth of a flea bag.

I explained.

"All right," said the gentleman of the Lines of Communication, "shake down where you like, you may find one or two tents which are dry, but I doubt it. The camp has only been pitched a week, and its rained like "hell" ever since. There's no one here, so take your choice, and I wish you joy."

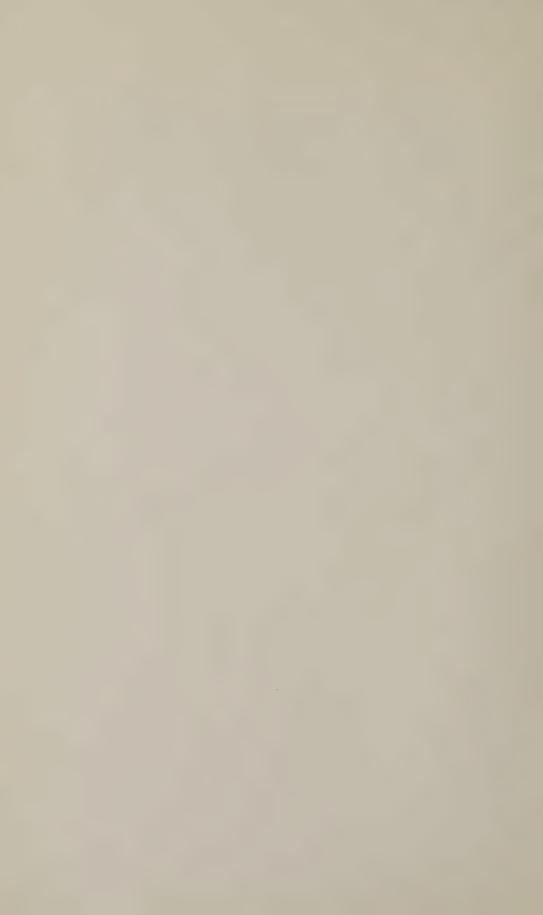
I thanked him for his hospitality, and inquired if by any chance he could provide me with a blanket.

"Can't be done, old man, awfully sorry, but I've no stores of any kind. Haven't you your kit with you?"



Roman Jar.

Found during excavations carried out by the Author at the Roman Outpost Town, Kantara.



I was too "fed up" to explain, and fearing my wrath might overcome me, I withdrew hastily.

During the two years of the campaign I spent several really unpleasant nights, but none worse than this one. I lay on my "wetter" sheet and shivered. The rain beat down on the soaked canvas and ran in little rivulets across the floor of the tent, for the camp was on a hill-side, and no trenches had been dug to carry off the water.

My thoughts turned to pneumonia, rheumatic fever, and ague, actually however, I experienced no bad after effects.

Morning brought a perfect day, warm and spring-like, with a clear blue sky overhead. After breakfast—the remains of rations and chocolate—I interviewed the O.C. Rest Campagain.

"What am I going to do with these men," I inquired. "Will you take them over?"

"Certainly not," he replied, "I've got no authority to to take 'em over, you'll have to go to Latron."

"Where's that?"

"Up the line somewhere, I haven't been there myself, anyone will tell you though."

"How do we get there?"

"Walk!"

"Look here," I said, "I was told to bring this party to Deir Sineid. I've just come out of hospital, I'm on light duty and I've got no kit, and if you think I'm going to wander all over Judea, like Harry Tate's army, with a party of men who are all going to different units you're mistaken. You've got to do something with them."

"Well, if that's how you feel the best thing you can do is to draw rations for 'em for four days and send them off up the line to find their units. Tell the senior sergeant to take 'em to Latron and get instructions there."

This seemed sound advice, and as the prospect of a Court-Martial appeared a minor evil compared with another night in the Rest Camp, I adopted the obliging Subaltern suggestion. As a matter of fact I never heard anything more about the affair, which only goes to prove that it does not do to worry over trifles.

Later that morning I watched the departure of my merry band. Having bid them God speed, I cast the dust, or rather the mud, of the Rest Camp from my raiment, and boarded a train of goods trucks bound for the south.

In contrast to the previous days of discomfort this afternoon's journey down the line was altogether delightful. It was beautifully warm and sunny and the country looked wonderfully fresh and green, a much more charming prospect

than the dusty plain of Belah. On every hand were signs of pastoral activity and many groups of natives working in the fields. Here and there were signs of native villages—clustered mounds of mud hovels.

Dusky children gathered by the railway line to shout and laugh and run alongside the train as it passed. At one stopping place some small kiddies brought baskets of great oranges to sell. Greedily they accepted an Egyptian piastre for several of the luscious fruits, a foretaste of pleasures to come. Never have I eaten such magnificent oranges as those grown round Jaffa, except perhaps the "loose jackets" of Sicily.

The journey back to Kantara was uneventful. The goods train proceeded as far as Rafa, where later in the evening I was able to catch a coach train back to the base.

By a curious prank of fate, I found upon my return that the spare bunk in my tent was occupied by Lieutenant S—who had been a chum of mine during the Exeter Cadet days of 1916.

He had spent several months on the Somme, but owing to chest trouble his health had broken down and so he was sent out to the more kindly climate of Palestine. He was now waiting to be appointed to a heavy battery.

During the few days we remained at G.B.D. we turned our attention to archæology. About a mile south of the camp, away out in the desert, there was a permanent dark patch of sand popularly known as the buried city. Actually a light covering of sand hid the remains of a Roman out-post of the time of Constantine. The spot provided much amusement to those amateur archæologists, who were sufficiently energetic and enthusiastic to brave the heat and burden of the midday sun and the trudge across the sand as the preliminary to some strenuous digging.

S— and I worked up sufficient of this necessary energy and interest to explore the ruins. Armed with spades borrowed from the camp, we sallied forth each morning after breakfast, and crossed the desert to the dark heaps of sand which covered the ruins. There was always something of interest to be found. Broken pottery, pieces of glass, copper nails, and, if one was lucky, lumps of green metal which once had been copper coins. The time to find coins was immediately after a gale of wind when the sand had been blown up into all manner of fantastic heaps, and the desert resembled the sea shore at low tide. Sitting on a hillock of sand and armed with field glasses it was possible to search the ground for spots of vivid green. When I returned to England I had one of these lumps treated with acid, and the result was an admirable example of a coin of the time Licinius A.D. 307-324, the head and inscription being clearly discernible.

It was said, I know not with what truth, that an R.A.M.C. man attached to one of the hospitals found a horde of gold coins, contained in a pottery jar.

In one portion of the ruins the sand was littered with pieces of broken glass and lumps of silicate material which suggested that glass was once manufactured here.

It was impossible to dig without coming upon something of interest. On one occasion we struck a finely-built brick drain, circular in section and some two feet across internally. Another time we found a platform of squared stones, covering an area of some 6oft. by 3oft. No doubt this had formed the podium of some important building.

On another occasion we unearthed a row of amphora, big fellows about 3ft. high, standing upright in the sand, their mouths some six inches below the surface. We spent several hours trying to excavate one of these intact, but as soon as the sand was cleared away if fell to pieces, and our luck with the others was no better.

My best "find" was made after the Armistice when I was waiting at Kantara for demobilisation orders. This was a jar of pleasing lines with a handle on one side. Unfortunately I broke a piece out of the side when I located it. Owing to its size it was impossible to bring it home to England and I reluctantly had to leave it at G.B.D.

The evening was the most pleasant time for working, a cool breeze blew across the desert after 4 p.m., and the sun was then low. The walk back to camp was a real pleasure, at a time when one could enjoy the gorgeous colours and beauty of the sunset reflected in the salt lakes. The sun would sink into the haze of the distant horizon, across the Canal, and for a few short minutes afterwards the sky would light up with the riotous colours of the afterglow. Then, if at no other time, one felt the spell of this wondrous land of Egypt.

CHAPTER 9.

SPRING TIME IN JUDEA.

Early in February I received orders to rejoin my old unit at Latron in Judea. I packed my traps, and in company with S— who was posted to a heavy battery, I bade farewell to General Base Details and the amusements of amateur archæology.

We made the long desert railway journey to Palestine at night, in fact from this time onward troops were always despatched from Kantara in the evening, and as the service improved the trains covered the distance to Ludd, the railhead, by breakfast time the following morning.

On this occasion however we only got as far as Rafa by dawn. Since my previous journey some three weeks before, the track had been greatly improved and there were no vexatious stops until Deir Sineid was passed. The weather was beautiful and the country looked wonderfully green and fresh, a sight for tired eyes after weeks of desert sand.

North of Mejdel, which delectable spot I had good reason to remember, the line passed through the fertile maritime plain. On either side were fields of young corn or other crops, belts of gnarled olive trees, and deep green orchards of oranges, a beautiful smiling country. To the west lay the coast, and a line of golden sand dunes, rising above the surrounding country. Soon Esdud was passed and the train rattled over a trestle-bridge thrown across the Wadi Mejma, and so on to Yebna, a large native village of clustered mud hovels.

The work of building the railway had been pushed on with great energy and had now reached the outskirts of Ludd, the new rail-head. Curiously enough ours was the first train to cross the Jaffa-Jerusalem road into the new station, an honour we had to pay for, subsequently, by walking back a half-mile or more to the Rest Camp, which was situated on the roadway.

We reached the camp at noon, and were pleasantly surprised to find an excellent mess and tent accommodation, equal in every respect to G.B.D. at Kantara. No one seemed



"The Sea Gate of Zion."

Jaffa, 1918.



in any particular hurry for us to proceed to our units. Orders, we learned, would be issued in due course, and for the afternoon we were free to do as we pleased.

Jaffa was barely twelve miles away, and there were plenty of "flivvers" (Ford vans) passing to and fro along the main road, which boasted of a more or less metalled surface. So armed with cameras, and in true holiday mood, S— and I set out on a joy ride.

We boarded the first available car and were soon rattling along the highway past the famous orange groves, the trees of which were laden with luscious fruit. In three-quarters of an hour or so we had reached the town. We found it a quaint place, poor and unattractive in comparison to other and more famous eastern cities, but sufficiently interesting to appeal to our uncritical mood.

There was plenty of life and colour, dazzling sunlight and luminous shadows, and what could enthusiastic photographers wish for more. We wandered through the whole place,—it was a little more than a large village,—taking photographs and exploring the dark alley-ways, and so onto the beach, where the surf came thundering in on the golden sands.

Jaffa is one of the worst harbours it is possible to imagine. A bar of jagged rocks separates the deep water from the beach, and there is no sort of protection, either natural or artificial. Even in the finest weather there is a ground swell which urges forward the rollers across the bar and causes them to thunder down on to the shore in a cloud of spray.

Before the war Jaffa was the port for Jerusalem, but it could only be used in the finest weather, a fact which often resulted in the country being without foreign mails for days, if not weeks, on end, when the weather was bad.

After the great advance at the end of 1917 to beyond the line of Jaffa and Jerusalem, it was of the utmost importance that stores should be landed here to augment the supplies which could be brought up by rail. Despite the difficulties, a great number of valuable stores were safely landed during the early months of the year and conveyed to Ludd by a narrow gauge railway.

On this afternoon we watched a small cargo boat being unloaded. Unwieldy longshore boats, manned by crews of local natives, were being used as lighters. With considerable skill the crews brought them safely through the surf to the shore where teams of Egyptian Labour Corps men were waiting to carry the stores up the beach.

The Gyppo Labour Corps men were fine workers, and wonderfully cheerful and light-hearted souls. They could carry on their backs extraordinarily heavy loads, and as they

worked they sang, or rather chanted, some eastern song, using only two or three notes. The words of Tommy's equivalent to one of these song ran as follows:—

"Down where the water-melons grow,
How they came there I don't know,
Came ye lah! Come yho!
Down where the water-melons grow."

Among the natives one man would sing the air, the remainder of the party taking up the response, with the additional accompaniment of much hand clapping in tune with the rhythm. At first this music seems wierd and ridiculous to western ears, but after a time one appreciates that it has a certain melodiousness and a great fascination. The airs, however, are by no means easy to memorise.

On a par with the Tommy's "water-melon" ditty was the following popular doggerel:—

"And when I die don't bury me at all,
But pickle my bones in alcohol,
Put a bottle of rum at my feet and my head,
And if I don't wake, you'll know that I'm dead."

As workers the Egyptians compared very favourably with the Turkish prisoners. The latter were a poor undersized lot of men who were either totally unwilling or physically incapable of doing an honest day's work.

Among my notes written at the time is the following appreciation of the men of the E.L.C. and the C.T.C.:—

"Before coming out to Egypt I often tried to picture in my mind the building of the Pyramids and the great monuments of Upper Egypt—at Luxor and Assuan. The work entailed seemed almost superhuman in its immensity.

What a wonderful sight it must have been, for example, to watch the erection of Cheop's great Pyramid at Gizeh, or the ceaseless activity of countless numbers of slaves, hewing the great stones in the quarries across the Nile? Almost inconceivable difficulties had to be overcome in transporting the stone blocks over the fertile valley to the edge of the desert, a slow laborious procession in which thousands of men must have assisted. And then to see these huge stones weighing hundreds of tons raised to their appointed spot, tier upon tier of them until the apex stone was in place. One can picture the desert a seething mass of humanity, sweating, cursing, always striving, and often breaking down under the terrible strain. The cries of the task-masters, the cruel crack of the lash as it descended upon the back of some unfortunate wretch, the hum of a thousand voices, mingling with the sounds of the countless hammers and chisels of the masons, continuing always, day after day, year after year, till the mighty task was completed.



A Way-side Tomb.

On the Jerusalem Road,
near Jaffa.



Even with such a picture conjured up before one's eyes the Pyramids remain as one of the wonders of the world, lasting witness to the power of a multitude whose energies are controlled and directed to one aim and end.

Since taking part in this Palestine Campaign I am beginning to realise a little of this power of controlled energy.

I have seen the achievements of the Egyptian Labour Corps, and I am full of admiration for the "Gyppo." The building of the Pyramids does not seem quite such an impossible task now. The E.L.C. has certainly helped greatly towards making this campaign the success it is. Throughout, the paramount necessity has been labour, continuous and unlimited in supply, to build up and maintain the evergrowing lines of communication. This demand has been met, and met magnificently by the men of Egypt and Sudan and Nubia."

Once when at Kantara I witnessed a remarkable example of the power of a multitude under direction. I was standing before my tent door at G.B.D., when suddenly I noticed a big hut some distance away begin to move. I rubbed my eyes to make sure I was awake and looked again. No! I had not been mistaken, slowly but unmistakably the hut, nearly a hundred feet long and forty feet wide, was creeping along the ground with a swaying unsteady motion. My curiosity was tickled, and I went along to find out the explanation of such an unusual occurrence. Under closer inspection the mystery was explained.

Two or three hundred "Gyppos" were inside. None of these huts were floored, and at the word of command each man took the most convenient hold he could and lifted. It was then merely a case of "walk march," and in the words of F.A.T., the hut "moved to its front." In this manner it was conveyed to its new resting place half-a-mile or more away. All the while the dusky sons of the East kept up a monotonous and unmusical chant in which one voice cried something like this—"Oh! ah!" and the remainder responded with "Ah! la! ah!"

The Egyptian Labour Corps played a considerable part in the construction of the military railway across the Sinai desert, one of the great achievements of the war. The task was accomplished in barely four months, and the track was laid at the rate of three miles a day, a result which commands one's admiration. The men were used to the climate and could stand the strain of unremitting work in great heat and with a scanty water supply, conditions under which white troops might have failed.

At railhead—first at Rafa, then successively at Belah, Gaza, Deir Sineid, and lastly Ludd, the men of the E.L.C.

were always in evidence. Sidings had to be built, camps erected, boats unloaded on the beach, and the work of the big A.S.C. dumps carried on. In all these activities the "Gyppo" was much in evidence.

Out across the plain towards Beersheba during the November, 1917, roads were marked out, crossings made over the wadis, and the branch railway line constructed from Rafa to Shellal on the Wadi Ghuzze was extended several miles in a remarkably short space of time, thanks to the E.L.C.

In addition, Egypt gave another fine body of men for service in Palestine, the C.T.C.,—the Camel Transport Corps. As in the case of the E.L.C., the men of the C.T.C. did invaluable work. But for the Camel Transport the army could not have "carried on" while crossing the desert, and during the summer of 1917 at Belah camels did the bulk of the transport work. It was no uncommon sight in those weary days before Gaza to see a convoy of three hundred or more camels trecking across the plain, each animal carrying its burden of water fanatis.

After the smashing blows against the enemy line from Beersheba in the east to Gaza on the coast, the Turk was forced to retire, at a speed which was almost a rout, to the line of the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, a distance of about forty miles. The summer was at an end and the early rains commenced. Over a large area of Philistia the soft soil was rapidly churned to a quagmire of liquid mud. Our army had to be supplied with ammunition and food, and adequate lines of communication had to be built up.

The brunt of this work fell on the Labour and the Camel Corps and under the most trying conditions of wet and cold the men of Egypt responded magnificently.

When lorries failed owing to the lack of roads, and camels could no longer be used because the great beasts were physically incapable of traversing the mud-covered country, donkeys took their place, and it was no uncommon sight to see one "Gyppo" leading twenty or thirty of these sturdy little beasts, each with his load of stores, through driving rain such as is never known in Egypt.

The natives suffered greatly at this time. They were thinly clad in smock-like garments, generally without boots or socks, in a country which was in the grip of a pitiless winter of rain and cold. Many of them went sick, some died from exposure, but the majority carried on in spite of all difficulties, and the supply of ammunition and food was somehow maintained, often short but never failing altogether.

The task of extending the railway was one of the utmost difficulty. The plain of Philistia is traversed at frequent intervals by deep wadis which had to be bridged, and in



The White Tower, Ramleh.



places the ground was so soft that the track was washed away by the continuous rain almost as fast as it was built, in fact, it was not until February that the line eventually reached Ludd. The whole of this work was carried out by the E.L.C., under the superintendence of the Royal Engineers.

With the coming of spring, and the consolidation of the line well north of Jerusalem, an enormous amount of construction work had to be carried out on the lines of communication, particularly in the right sector where the hill country necessitated an entirely fresh mode of warfare. The paramount necessity was roads, varying in character from hastily-cut limber tracks, immediately behind the infantry's front line, to first class motor roads as the main arteries of forward and lateral communication. These latter had to be wide, with easy gradients and the surface had to be capable of standing the strain of continual use under war conditions.

During the summer many miles of road were made across the plain of Sharon and through the tortuous hills of Judea, opening up little known and practically unpopulated tracks of country.

It was a fascinating sight to watch one of these roads grow, in a few weeks, under the spur of military necessity, from a rough pack track to a first-class trunk line of communication.

Thousands of natives were employed excavating soil, carrying and breaking up stones for the road metal, building up embankment walls, and carting away the rubbish resulting from the blasting operations which were so often necessary in the hills.

The contrast between east and west was often very humorous, for example the sight of a dusky son of Nubia employed as the driver of a modern steam roller, built in Rochester and carrying the familiar Invicta badge of Kent.

Seeing the "Gyppo" under war conditions, and in the most trying weather, I have acquired a great admiration for him. He is a simple light-hearted soul, easily contented, and always happy. He works well, he has an enormous power of endurance, and is most amenable to discipline, while army training has, I think, given him an added respect for the white man. Further, he has learned to appreciate cleanliness and the advantages of an ordered manner of life.

True, if you give him the opportunity to steal, he will probably do so, and he understands the lash as a punishment better than anything else, but then the inborn habits of a lifetime cannot be eradicated in a few months.

Often I have seen a party of E.L.C. men, sitting by the road side, get up and stand to attention while the senior saluted a passing officer, and I have said to myself "the

spirit is right, these men have seen and will make worthy sons of a great Empire. They, too, are doing their bit."

The official record of the Campaign pays tribute to the C.T.C. men and their beasts in the following terms:—

"It will thus be seen that the camel transport drivers whose sky-blue galabiehs added a very welcome touch of colour to the drabness of our khaki and the country side, together with their trusty 'oonts,' besides increasing our knowledge of natural history, took a very considerable share in operations, and were not wanting in pluck when occasion required. The camel, by the way, proved to be impervious to shell-fire and the drivers stood their ground repeatedly under difficult circumstances, showing themselves wellendowed with the fatalistic courage of the East. The same may be said of the Donkey Corps, and, in addition, these plucky little beasts made fast friends of all who had to deal with them."

I cannot leave the subject without quoting a delightful example of a native N.C.O's report given to me by an officer who was stationed at Kantara:—

Copy of Report from a Native N.C.O. to his O.C. Driver-

The above Driver has been making quarrels with each other yesterday at 5/30 p.m.

I have seen at once all the Drivers gathering round these

tow Drivers.

I came at once when I have seen them and trying to

keep them out of their quarrel.

But I could not except by beating all these drivers who are stopping. The Driver is very bad conduct he has, he that makes that quarrel and every time he make the trouble.

He left the camp after that and gone as he wished.

Please give it stiff to that man.

Reis Ismail.

P.S.—Please change this man away—I want to change this Driver away to keep my camp clean and to keep my work extremely good."

Kantara 1918."

But to return to my description of Jaffa. There were, I think, only about four shops of European character and a few native stores, while in the better part of the town were several stone-built houses approaching a civilised standard of comfort. One of these subsequently became an Hotel for Officers run by the Army and Navy Canteen Board.

After wandering about for an hour or so S --- and I boarded a Ford lorry going up to Latron and returned to the Ludd Rest Camp.

From a Garden Entrance. The Town of Jaffa.





The next day we were still without orders to proceed, and in the morning we set out to explore the village of Ramleh, about a mile to the east of the road. A prominent building which could be seen for miles around was the so-called White Tower.

The following description of the place is given by Lieut.-Commander Victor L. Trumper in his "Historical Sites in Central Palestine," published as a small pamphlet in Egypt during the war:—

"This place is not ancient as things go in Palestine, and it is probably not more than 2,000 years old. It was an important place in the early days of the Mohammedan conquest, and also during and after Crusading times, as it is situated at the junction of the two main highways in Palestine, namely, that between Jaffa and Jerusalem, and Gaza and Acre.

The famous "Tower of the Forty" is, according to Moslems, in commemoration of the forty companions of the Prophet, but according to Christian tradition it was connected with the forty martyrs of Cappadocia. Probably it was originally the campanile tower of a Christian church, but later used as the minaret of a mosque. There are also remarkable vaults underneath, but as to their origin and use nothing is definitely known. The mosque in the centre of the town is one of the finest specimens of a twelfth century church, the only changes being that the western doorway is closed, and a prayer niche is scooped out in the southern wall. This is probably the church mentioned by the old English pilgrim, Sir John Maundeville, A.D. 1132."

There is little doubt, I think, that this tower was originally the work of the Crusaders. The architecture certainly suggests Norman influence, blended with a certain eastern feeling, which is what one would reasonably expect from such builders. Adjoining the tower are some ruined arches of an ambulatory which in the spring are covered with garlands of wild flowers.

The view towards the Judean hills from the base of the tower is very fine. In the foreground are a number of the curious headstones with which the Moslems decorate the graves of their departed, a winding pathway leads towards the village of Ramleh, a collection of stone-built houses clustering round the mosque from which rises a slender minaret. In the distance are the purple-clad foothills of Judea, around which play the white fleecy clounds of spring. In simplicity and pastoral beauty this is one of the most delightful prospects to be seen in southern Palestine.

For an hour or so we lingered among the ruins, S—smoking, and content to enjoy the quietude of the spot, while I made the impressionist sketch of the country which

now forms the frontispiece of this volume. At mid-day we returned to camp.

In the afternoon we received orders to be ready at 8.30 a.m. the following morning to proceed with a draft to Latron.

The march proved a tedious and uninteresting affair. We were a party of some 150 officers and men, of all arms, destined for various units of the 20th Corps which occupied the hills. The day was hot for the time of the year, and the road appallingly dusty, motors passing to or from Jerusalem kept the dust whirling in small clouds for practically the whole distance, and the going was rough.

Upon arrival at Latron I learned from Divisional Artillery H.Q., commonly known as "Div. Arty," that my unit was at a place called Abu Shusheh, and I telephoned through for my horse to be sent over for me. Later in the afternoon my groom arrived, and I set out on the last stage

of the journey.

Abu Shusheh—or better known perhaps by its ancient name of Gezeh-is situated some four miles west of Latron and six miles south of Ramleh. The site historically is one of the oldest in Palestine, and physically the westernmost outcrop of the Judean foothills. I found the brigade encamped in a slight declivity of an outcropping spur. A stone-built structure, which may have been a farm, or the rest house of the archæologists who worked here in pre-war days and which popular superstition said belonged to a Rothschild, acted as Brigade H.Q., while the officers' brigade mess was located in a cave, of which there were a number along the hill face. A few bell tents were available for the officers' sleeping quarters, while the men perforce had to be content with their "bivvies." The building already mentioned would have housed the greater part of the brigade, but unfortunately the higher command had issued orders that no troops were, on any account, to be billetted in buildings, owing to the risk of infectious diseases being contracted. Hence the breezy life in the open.

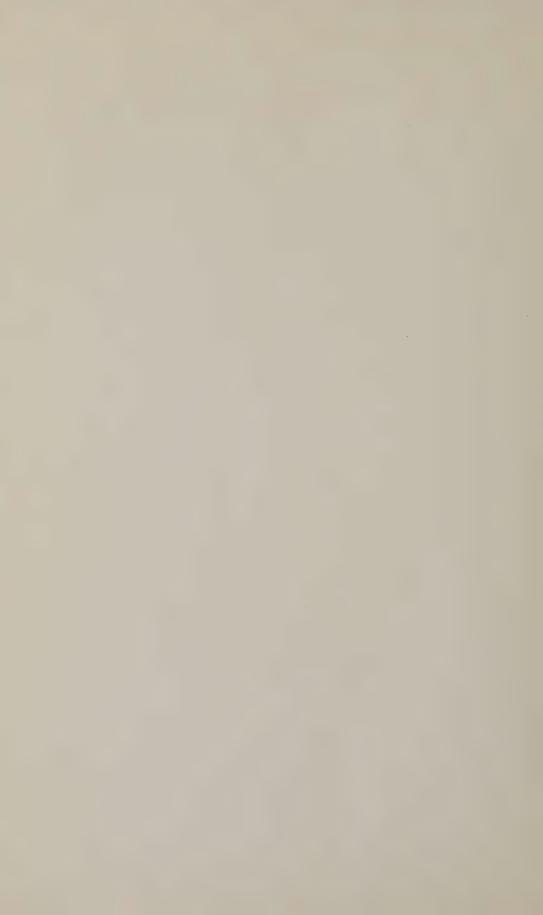
It was good to be back with the unit once more and to be surrounded by the cheery and familiar faces of one's comrades. There were but few changes. One or two men had gone on Egyptian leave, others were attending courses of instruction, several were sick, while one poor fellow had been left among the bleak hills above the Wadi Saba, and would return no more, a school master who had forsaken his classroom to find glory and his destiny on the field of battle.

For several days after my return we spent our spare time in making the mess cave more suitable for human habitation. No doubt from time immemorial it had been used as a shelter for goats and sheep, pariah dogs and shepherds, and a spring clean was long overdue.



Abu Shusheh.

Looking towards the Foothills of Judea.



We commenced operations by digging out the floor, to a depth of one foot or more, to give reasonable head height. Several places where the ceiling of rock looked none too secure were shored up with balks of timber, and a limber gunner who had been a mason in Yorkshire, was pressed into service to build an open fireplace and chimney in which we could burn a charcoal fire. In a small cave adjoining we built a similar fireplace to act as the mess kitchener! The only fly in the ointment was that on wet days the rain dripped through the rocks above and made pools about the floor.

A short distance away was another and much larger cave in which the Colonel pitched his tent. As shelter from both wind and rain was thus gained it seemed an admirable spot. But unfortunately the O.C. failed to reckon with the legacy bequeathed by previous occupants, no doubt quadrupeds. A few days after taking up his residence therein the distinguished Gunner Officer was seen sitting on his camp bed, in distinctly airy attire, busy with a large tin of Keating's powder. Later the same day a fatigue party moved the tent into the open.

A few nights later the Colonel was the recipient of another visitation, this time in the form of an owl which perched on the top of the tent pole, and proceeded to make the midnight hour hideous with its mournful cries. For a while he bore with the visitor in silence, but at length with patience exhausted, he rose in his wrath and attempted to slay the destroyer of his sleep with a revolver. Unfortunately it was a dark night and cold, and the somewhat hurried aim was not true, for the bird flew quietly away, hooting as it went.

The hill on which the camp was pitched lav just north of the native village of Abu Shusheh, and was known as Tell Jazeh, the ancient Gezer. I cannot do better than again quote Lieut.-Commander Trumper. He says, "This is one of the oldest sites known in Palestine, and thorough excavations have revealed a series of caves, which were inhabited by a low-type Neolithic man, who did not even use metal. Later there was a town in which the rude trades, which one sees in villages now, were carried on, the craftsmen making poor imitations of things on foreign models—with the same methods of business,—for a goldsmith's shop was found with two sets of weights, one too light for selling purposes, and the other too heavy to buy with! Many remains of Egyptian culture speak of Egypt's domination under Thotmes III, but the Tel-el-Amarna tablets show how, about B.C. 1500 it was Later Horam, King of Gezer, was destroyed lost to Egypt. by Joshua during his conquest of the land. (Josh. x. 33).

This place was also the scene when one of David's mighty men slew another of the Philistine giants (I. Chron. xx. 4). In the early days of Solomon it appears to have had some measure of independence, as the King of Egpyt conquered

it, and gave it as a dowry to his daughter when she married Solomon, who afterwards repaired and fortified it. (I. Kings IX. 15-17).

A couple of cunieform tablets found there indicate the period of the exile, when the Assyrian troops garrisoned the place. Among the objects found during the excavations are many small models of the Queen of Heaven; in Jeremiah VII. 18, XLIV. 17., we find the Prophet denouncing the making of cakes for Queen of Heaven. (These cakes are probably the origin of our hot cross buns). Her symbol seems to have been the cow, and she is probably connected with Hathor the cow-goddess of Egypt.

An old 'high place' was also discovered, and the remains of infants' bones, burnt and unburnt, showing it was here the ghastly worship of Molock was carried on, and parents burnt their children alive in honour of their god. (Deut. XVIII, 10.. II Kings XVI. 3. XVII. 17. 31. XXI. 6.; Jer. VII. 31).

In the year B.C. 160, Gezer was captured by the Syrian General Bacchides, who held it for a year, but it was then taken and fortified by Simon Maccabaeus, the Jewish Chief. A piece of stone was discovered, during the excavations, and written on it was 'may fire destroy Simon's palace;' probably this was a curse written by one of the Syrians.

In the twelfth century, A.D., a strong castle was built here by the Crusaders, called Mont Gisart, and near here the Crusading king, Baldwin IV, completely defeated Saladin, in A.D. 1177, and compelled him to return to Egypt. Ten years later, after the defeat of the Christians at Hattin in the north of Palestine, Saladin recaptured Gezer, and had his head-quarters there when he was negotiating with King Richard I of England in A.D. 1191."

Evidence of the work of the Palestine Exploration Fund was to be seen everywhere. Near to the farm building was a vast excavation, going down 30 to 40 feet, while the ground was strewn with broken tiles, stones, and debris of all description, the remains of the successive cities which formerly stood upon this site.

On the opposite side of the valley where the mess cave was situated were a number of rock tombs. One of the best of these was used by two of our battery commanders as their quarters, the stone coffin ledges making excellent sleeping bunks. The ghosts of departed Philistines, giants such as David slew, troubled them not at all, and as the tomb was moderately dry this novel billet certainly had points to recommend it.

In looking through some of my letters to home of this period I find continual reference to the wild flowers and the weather. Early in February I wrote:—





"This spot, high up in the foothills, and surrounded by beautiful mountains, is very different from the dusty old plain at Belah. The whole country-side is covered with a mass of wild flowers which are just coming into bloom, anemones or wind flowers, red and purple orchids, and primroses. The ground will be carpeted with blooms in a week or so.

The weather has been lovely since I arrived, and now it really looks as if the rain is over for the year, at any rate the worst of it is passed. Of course there is any amount of fruit going. We get huge Jaffa oranges, 3 for half-piastre (i.e. one penny-farthing), and I understand—I have not yet tried it—that the monks (of Enab) make uncommonly good wine.

The country is quite thickly populated compared to the desert land we were in round Gaza, and the natives—many of them Jews—seem to be delighted at being under British protection; everywhere they are most friendly."

In regard to the weather I spoke too soon, for in another letter written a week later I find:—

"The last few days have been very wet, violent rain showers and thunder all day, but now it has cleared up and is perfect. It won't rain again for about a week. The rain stops altogether in March."

The one thing that can be said in favour of the Palestine winter is that one knows what to expect. For two or perhaps three days it will be perfectly fine, clear skies, and barmy air, such as one might expect on a fine May day in England. After this the following day will be overcast, with perhaps one or two heavy showers, but otherwise fine periods. The next day it begins to rain in earnest, and the steady downpour continues unabated for four or five days. After this the clouds clear away, and there is another burst of sunshine. This programme is repeated, with clockwork regularity throughout the winter months.

CHAPTER 10.

JERUSALEM.

After I had been at Abu Shusheh for a week or so I was detailed to take a party of men up to Jerusalem on three days' leave. The junior officers took it in turns to accompany these parties, one leaving as soon as the previous one returned.

We started from camp in the afternoon, and spent the night at a Rest Camp at Latron. We breakfasted at an early hour the following morning and then proceeded to the A.S.C. M.T. Park, where a fleet of lorries was waiting to take up rations to the Holy City. After a certain amount of delay the convoy started. Unfortunately the weather was very bad, the temperature was low, and rain was falling heavily.

The day marked the end of a wet period, and we were able to look forward, with a certain amount of confidence, to a fine spell before the end of our leave.

From this time onward Latron was one of the most important distributing centres along the line. Being situated abreast of the main road from Jaffa to Jerusalem, a mile or so west of the great range of the Judean hills, and at the point where a road from Junction Station, on the old Turkish narrow gauge railway to Jerusalem, joined the main road, it was the obvious position for the great supply dumps which were of such vital necessity to the divisions holding the line. Later a fine military road, called "The Great North Road," was built north from Latron to serve the 10th Division, and added still more to the amount of transport centred upon this point.

For the first three miles after leaving Latron the road passes through a wide rocky valley with gently rolling foothills on either side. Then a ruined building is reached, an old Turkish guard house, at a place called Bâb el Wâd,—meaning in Arabic "The Gateway." It is indeed a veritable gateway to the mountains beyond. Frowning heights rise in front and the road climbs steeply through a narrow defile.

For sheer rugged grandure this section of road would be difficult to equal. Great masses of rock are strewn about the Wadi bed. On either hand rise precipitous heights in which a few gnarled olive trees find a precarious roothold, and all the time the road climbs higher and higher. In a distance of about four miles, from Bâb el Wâd to Kh. Zunukleh, the road rises 1,400 feet and an altitude of 2,310 feet above the Mediterranean is reached.

Then follows a sharp descent, the road twisting in a number of hairpin bends, and continuing with another steep climb up to the picturesque village of Kuryet el Enab.

From this point onward the country is more open, the backbone of the hill land is reached and with varying ups and downs, and a number of sharp hairpin bends, the road leads into Jerusalem eight miles or so further on.

During the ride on this occasion we could see but little of the country, for rain and mist blotted out the landscape. As we neared the city the lorry driver pointed out a steep hill to the north just discernible through the mist which was Neby Samwil ("Mizpah" of the Old Testament). This historic height was the scene of some of the fiercest fighting, attacks and counter attacks, which preceded the taking of Jerusalem. More nationalities were represented here among the fallen than at any other spot in Palestine, Germans, Austrians, Turks, and Syrians among the enemy, and English, Scots, Welsh, Irish, and Indians among the British forces.

A mile from the city the convoy stopped to deposit us at the rest camp, which was situated just off the road. In an absolute deluge of rain we floundered along a muddy track which led to the camp.

We were welcomed by the cheery Scot in charge, who did his best for us under the adverse circumstances. Considering the weather it was wonderful to find a dry spot anywhere, the tents however were more or less waterproof and something in the nature of a mess both for officers and men was provided.

At this period the food problem was one of great difficulty. Everything had to be brought up to Jerusalem by road, for the enemy had effectively put the narrow gauge railway out of action by blowing up the bridges before he retired. Two divisions, in addition to the forces in the Jordan valley, relied for their commissariat upon stores passing through the Holy City, which taxed the transport service to the utmost. Furthermore something had to be done to alleviate the suffering of the civil population who were entirely without supplies and in many cases practically starving. Anything in the nature of a canteen for the troops was, as yet, quite out of question. The O.C. Leave Camp had done his best and had

"wangled" a few canteen stores to be brought up by a "pal" in the A.S.C., for which small mercies we were sincerely thankful.

In the afternoon the weather cleared up somewhat and the whole of our party started out to walk into the city.

We found quite an extensive modern town outside the ancient walls, consisting of simple stone-built and tile-roofed houses and a few mean shops, the latter mostly heavily shuttered. One or two of the more enterprising shopkeepers had opened their establishments and exhibited stocks of olive wood articles, nick-nacks of mother o' pearl, gaudy-coloured postcards printed in Germany, and crucifixes.

Near the Jaffa Gate was situated one of the two hotels which the city boasted—called "The Fast." Until the departure of the Turks this was run by a German, but a few months after our occupation the place was taken over by the Army and Navy Canteen Board and became an excellent leave hotel for officers. The other and smaller hotel was within the city walls and close to the Jaffa Gate. At this time neither place could provide anything more than a bottle of very inferior "wine of the country."

We spent the afternoon wandering through the ancient city. The streets were dirty, narrow, and covered in filth and garbage of every description. Some of the party made purchases of souvenirs from such shops in the bazaars as were open for business. Later, another deluge of rain drove most of us back to the Rest Camp.

For the evening's entertainment an agreeable surprise awaited us. From the O.C. Leave Camp we learned that the 60th Divisional Concert Party—"The Roosters"—were performing nightly in an improvised "Theatre" in the City.

Little did I think, as I listened that night to one of the best Army "shows" I have ever heard, that six years later, while enjoying the peace and comfort of my own fire-side, I should hear again the familiar voices of Rfm. A. E. Mackman, Pte. P. H. Merriman, and Rfm. E. G. Western, producing substantially the same jolly show which made the boys roar their applause, for the enjoyment of thousands of "listeners-in." Yet such is the wonder of wireless telephony.* Much water has run under the bridges since then.

The amusing programme was so typical of the spirit of the Army that I reproduce it in full.

^{*} Programme broadcast from the London Station of the British Broadcasting Company, Saturday, December 27th, 1924.

PALESTINE PAVILION

JERUSALEM (JAFFA-GATE).

60-th Divisional Concert Party,

"THE ROOSTERS"

(under the Direction of Lt. H. E. Ward),

Lay their egg-shell-ent Programme before you

ON

MONDAY 18 FEB. 1918

And each evening of the two following weeks, excepting Wed. and Sunday.

COCKS.

Billy .		Pte. W. F. Copping.
Charlie		Pte. W. H. Harrison.
Claude	•	Pte. P. H. Merriman.
Cyril .		Rfm. A. E. Mackness.
Freddy		Rfm. S. W. Davis.
George		Rfm. E. G. Western.
Gordon		Rfm. A. H. Titchmarsh.

HENS.

Clarice		Pte. I	X.	Lov	vndes.
Stella		Rfm.	F.	E.	Weldon.

O 1 data Diana		Rfm. E. G. Western.
Cock o' the Piano	•	Killi. E. G. Westerli.
Stage Manager.	•	Lce. Cpl. T. Hill.
Assistant S-M.		Lce. Cpl. J. Keenan.
Box Office		Pte. R. A. Lawrence.
Producer		PTE. W. Mc. CLELLAN.

PRINTING BY KAHANE-JERUSALEM.

PART I.

- The Roosters break their new shell. (Music by George—Words by Claude).
- 2. Freddy "The Kipling Walk."
- 3. Billy in a choice from.
 "Bashful Tom," "Jack Briton," "All that I ask."
 "At Santa Barbara," "The Waggoner,"
 "Before you came."
- 4. Stella (if she arrives in time) will select from her Repertoire.
- 5. Charlie in one of "Where did that one go?" "Shall us? Lets," "I stopped, I looked, and I listened," "That's All," "In other Words."
- 6. "WALKS" by the Roosters.
- 7. Gordon in "Voila," "The Awfully Chap," "Alphabets," or "The Art of Song Writing."
- 8. Claude will select from "Dan McGrew," "At a Wedding,"
 "Clampherdown," Dickens Sketches.
 "Pied Piper of Hamelin," "Enchanted Shirt,"
 "The Stranger."
- 9. Cyril will sing from "Love's Garden of Roses."

 "All Mine Alone," "I'll Sing thee Songs of Araby,"

 "Lily of My Heart," "My Dreams," "Friend of Mine."
- 10. Charlie and Gordon in "Carry On" "Wellerisms," or "Tiddley-Um-Pom."

INTERVAL.

The Roosters, where possible, will gladly comply with any requests for special numbers.

GOD SAVE

PART II.

The Roosters in a Roysterous Ranto Produce a pithy potted Panto

"CINDERELLA."

or "The Army Boot," in 4 Scenes, by Claude. (who should know better).

CHARACTERS

Prince Doodah & Dandruff (his A.D.C.)		•		•	Cyril.
Baron Bolo & The Demon King		•	•	•	Billy.
Bera Sheba (Baron Bolo's D	augh	ters)	•		{ Claude. Freddy.
Camouflage (his Page)					Charlie.
Cinderella & The Fairy Queen		•		•	Clarice.

- Scene 1. The Forest. (Real French leaves. Logs presented by a naval friend).
- Scene 2. The Kitchen. (Note the Jacobean set made by our Dresser).
- Scene 3. On the Road. (It does'nt matter about this).
- Scene 4. Rooster Palace. (Wonderful Bantamimic effects).

Lyrics by Claude (who will never live to enjoy the royalties, and why should he?).

Tuneful Music. Demon King's Song by George.

Special Scenery (such as it is) by Keenan & Keenan.

Lighting effects by Lampus Ltd.

Thunder by Jove!

Costumes thrown together by Elsie (a designing minx and our Producer) ably assisted in the spoiling of precious fabrics by Clarice.

(DON'T TURN OVER).

THE KING.

L'ENVOI.

Our actors and our means are small,
So please be courteous to us all.
Though other pantomimes you miss
You'll never see one quite like this;
And please remember ere you go
It's just a tuppenny ha'penny show!

ADVERTISEMENTS.

Amusements.

ROOSTERS Concert Party, Palestine Pavilion. Every evening except Wed. and Sunday.

Star: "The best evening to see the Roosters is on a Sunday."

Looking at Shop Windows.

What would Maudie like?

Dressing by the Right; The N.C.O's Delight.

Care of Arms (oil) and feet (oil).

Where to Lunch.
PIASTRE PALACE.
Oranges. Fig Cakes. Nuts.
No Bread. No change.
No. Backsheesh.
30 pts. per Person.

Motto for a Pioneer Battalion: Infra Dig.

For Exchange. Pte. Jacods is willing to exchange one listening post for a late Xmas parcel. Apply — The Vineyard.

Ridge's Food.

We all love it. Only one more dose and you can rest.

N.B.—Was it the Pett Ridge that broke the camel's back.

Are You Happy?

If not, why not? If so, why? "Tommy's heritage is the gift of eternal Song." So cheero, and another little year won't, etc.

This Space to Let.

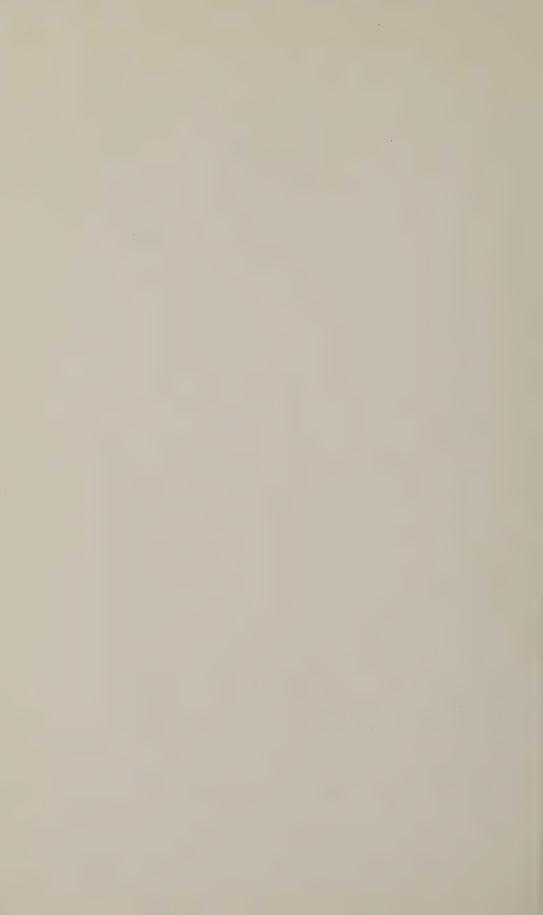
Latest Song.

"Blighty," by the composer of "It's ever so far away."



1.—Via Dolorosa. 2.—A Native Group. 3.—Mount of Olives and the Russian Church.

4.—Mosque of Omar.
5.—Approach to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
6.—A Street in Jerusalem.
7.—Via Dolorosa.



This concert party became the most famous of all the divisional concert parties in the E.E.F. Later in the year the "Roosters" played for a long run at the Opera House, Cairo, where the show put on was magnificently dressed and staged, equal in every respect to a London production. To meet the taste of a civilian, as well as a military, audience the turns had to be censored occasionally, but the bright wit and tuneful singing were as good as ever.

On the morning following our arrival in Jerusalem the weather improved greatly and the services of a native guide, who could speak a certain amount of English, were obtained to conduct our party round the city. Under his "expert" guidance we "did" the sights in true tourist fashion. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Temple Area, including the Dome of the Rock and the El Aksa Mosque, Gordon's Garden Tomb, the Tombs of the Kings, and the Mount of Olives, to mention the most important.

In plan, the ancient city, contained within the walls, is roughly square, with sides facing the cardinal points of the compass. The east side overlooks the Kidron Valley, perhaps better known as the Vale of Jehoshaphat. The west side is bounded by the Valley of Hinnom. The two valleys meet on the south side. To the north there is no natural boundary, and consequently it is from this direction that the city has always been entered by attacking forces. Lord Allenby's entry was no exception to the rule.

Passing through the heart of the city from north to south is the Tyropeon Valley which joins the Kidron and Hinnom Valleys at their confluence south of the city. At the present day it is difficult to distinguish the Tyropeon Valley, the bed of which was once 100 feet or more below its present level, the debris of the ages having gradually filled up the space. The city was thus roughly divided into four equal quarters, called respectively Bezetha at the N.E., Mount Moriah containing Solomon's Temple, the site now occupied by the Mosque of Omar, on the S.E., ACRA on the N.W., and ZION on the S.W. Extending from the south of Moriah is a spur known as Ophel, probably the site of the Jebusite fortress captured by David.

On the east side of the Kidron Valley is the Mount of Olives.

Little is recorded of the early history of Jerusalem. The first known reference was found on a tablet discovered at Tell-el-Armana in a form of a letter from the Governor of the City to the Pharaoh Amenophis IV. circa B.C. 1500. At this time it was occupied by the Egyptians. Later it fell into the hands of the Jebusites, who held it at the time of the Israelite conquest (Josh. XV. 63, and Jud. 1. 7-8).

The Israelites did not obtain full possession of Jerusalem

until David became king. Some years after his accession he attacked the city and finally succeeded in taking it. Here he built his Royal City and raised massive defensive walls, choosing probably as the site for a great Temple of Jehovah, the spot occupied by the Dome of the Rock—the so-called Mosque of Omar.

The actual work of building the Temple was carried out by Solomon and resulted in a structure of unparalleled magnificence.

After Solomon's death Rehoboam, his son, reigned in his stead. The northern half of Palestine was ruled by Jeroboam who had been exiled in Egypt, and probably stirred up the Pharoah Shishak to attack Jerusalem. This the Pharaoh did, and the tale of the sacking of the City is recorded on the walls of a Temple, at Luxor in Upper Egypt.

In the II Book of Kings we may read of the chequered history of the City under later rulers, how Queen Athaliah usurped the throne (II. Kings XI.) Later Hezekiah threw off the Assyrian yoke, (II. Kings XVII. and XIX.), and Josiah cleansed the City of all idolatrous and obscene places (II. Kings XXIII).

Lastly comes the terrible story of the destruction of Jerusalem and the old Jewish monarchy, and the fate which befell King Zedekiah (II. Kings XXIV. and XXV.).

Later a Persian ruler named Cyrus gave permission for the Jews to return to the city and to rebuild the Temple and the walls.

Alexander the Great spared the city and showed favour towards the Jews, as did the Syrian King Antiochus III., who in B.C. 198, expelled the Egyptian garrison.

His successor, Antiochus IV., however turned against the Jews, and in B.C. 170 plundered the Temple. A revolt under the Maccabees was carried out against this tyranny and Judas Maccabaeus succeeded in capturing Jerusalem after severe fighting.

Nearly a century later the influence of the Roman republic began to be felt in Palestine, and in B.C. 63, Jerusalem was captured by Pompey. A few years later Herod the Great took possession of the city and founded the Idumaean dynasty. He rebuilt the Temple and reconstructed the walls.

The most terrible of all the sieges of Jerusalem took place in A.D. 70, when the Roman General, Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian, was sent to quell a revolt of the Jews. Titus, who had under his command about 60,000 men comprising the 5th, 10th, 12th and 15th Legions, attacked from the north, and after a siege lasting fifteen days succeeded in taking the third or outer wall of the city. Five days later the



A Jerusalem Street.



second wall was captured by the Romans. Then followed a truce, but the Jews would not give in, and works were commenced by the invaders to make possible the scaling of the third or inner wall defending the upper city, the Citadel of Antonia, and the Temple.

The works were finished on the 37th day, and a desperate struggle for Antonia ensued, lasting until the 64th day. As the Jews still held out Titus decided to try the effect of starving out the garrison. He built a rampart all round and closely invested the stronghold.

About the 70th day four men of the 5th Legion, under cover of night, managed to creep into the Tower of Antonia and to surprise and kill the guard. As soon as this was done the Romans rushed in and captured the place. Still the Inner Temple held out, and it was not until thirty-five days later that the last defence was broken down, the defenders fighting and dying, on the roof of the building.

Titus gave orders that the Temple should be spared, but an impetuous soldier, angered by the long resistance of the defenders, threw a burning torch into the building from a window. The wonderous Cedar-wood decorations immediately caught fire, and so our Lord's prophesy was fulfilled, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." (Matt. XXIV. 2).

The whole of the eastern portion of the city was pillaged and burnt, but still the upper city to the S.W. of the Temple area held out for another two days, the terrible siege having lasted in all 134 days. Thereafter the whole city was burned and razed to the ground, and the inhabitants were thrown into captivity.

In A.D. 135 the Emperor Hadrian decided to rebuild Jerusalem and make it a Roman Colony. The new city was called Aelia Capitolina, and contained a temple dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus, as well as a theatre and other public buildings.

In the following years, until the accession of Constantine the Great in 306 A.D., Jerusalem enjoyed a period of tranquility. When this Emperor was converted to Christianity in 326 A.D., he gave orders that the sites of the Crucifixion and the Tomb of Our Lord should be recovered, and when this was done he erected two magnificent Churches thereon. On the site of one of these churches now stands the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but the position of the other has been entirely lost.

In 460 the Empress Eudocia visited the city and expended large sums of money in carrying out extensive repairs to the walls and enlarging the fortifications so that they included the Pool of Siloam. She also erected north of the Damascus Gate a large church in honour of St. Stephen. The site of

this church was discovered in 1874 and the building reerected.

In the 6th century the Emperor Justinian built a magnificent basilican church in honour of the Virgin Mary. The position of this church is not definitely known, but some authorities hold that it was within the Haram area, near the Mosque of el Aksa.

Many of the buildings in Jerusalem were again devastated and the inhabitants massacred when, in 614 A.D., Chosroes II. King of Persia, attacked and captured the City.

The Emperor Heraclius in turn attacked the Persians, and after a severe struggle recaptured the city in 629 A.D., restoring the Holy Cross which had been carried away by Chosroes.

A few years later the influence of Mahomet began to spread throughout the eastern world, and in 637, four years after the Prophet's death, the Caliph Omar laid siege to Jerusalem, which capitulated after some months. Omar showed great toleration towards the inhabitants whom he allowed to remain in possession of their churches. He erected a wooden Mosque near the site of the temple, which later was replaced by the Mosque of El Aksa. This permanent building was the work of the amir Abdalmalik, who in 688 A.D., also built the Dome of the Rock on the site of the Jewish Temple.

Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Mahommedans until 1099, when it was captured by the crusaders under Godfrey of Bouillon, and for eighty-eight years enjoyed a period of peace from invasion. In 1187 the city was besieged by Saladin and capitulated after eight days. Subsequently it was held by the Mahommedans until 1244 when it passed under the rule of the Egyptian Sultans. In 1517 it was captured by the Turks under Selim I., together with the rest of Syria.

In 1831 A.D. Jerusalem was taken by Ali Pasha, but in 1840 it reverted to the Turks, who held the city until 9th December, 1917.

For the description of this last surrender of the Holy City I cannot do better than to quote in full the "Notes on the Surrender of Jerusalem" in the "Official Record of Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in July, 1917, to October, 1918."

"Before the arrival of the flag of truce on December 9th the movement of the crowds accompanying it had been observed and reported by patrols, but definite news of the impending surrender was first actually communicated to British soldiers by civilians, who informed Pte. H. E. Church and Pte. R. W. J. Andrews of the 2/20th Battalion London

Regiment. These men, who had advanced into the outskirts of Jerusalem in order to obtain water, reported what had been told them without meeting the flag of truce. Shortly before o800 Sergt. Hurcomb and Sergt. Sedgewick, of the 2/19th Battalion London Regiment, met the flag of truce, and shortly afterwards Major W. Beck, R.A., and Major F. R. Barry, R.A., came up and entered into conversation with the Mayor. They turned back to report the presence of the flag of truce and met Lieut.-Colonel H. Bailey, D.S.O., and Major M. D. H. Cooke. Lieut.-Colonel Bailey, as senior officer, declined to accept the surrender, and reported the Mayor's wishes to Brig.-General C. F. Watson, C.M.G., D.S.O., Commanding 180th Brigade, who rode up a few minutes later and reassured the Mayor. Brig.-General Watson transmitted the offer of the surrender of Jerusalem to Major-General J. S. M. Shea, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., G.O.C., 60th Division, who was then at Enab. Major-General Shea communicated with Lieut.-General Sir Philip Chetwode, Bt., K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., G.O.C., 20th Corps, and about 1100 was instructed to accept the surrender of the city. In the meantime Brig.-General Watson (with a small mounted escort, followed by the Mayor in his carriage), had ridden forward to reassure the people, and was the first British soldier to arrive at the Taffa Gate. Guards were posted at 0930 from the 2/17th Battalion London Regiment over the Post Office, which had been occupied in the interval by Major Cooke, at some hospitals, and outside the Jaffa Gate. Shortly after Brig.-General Watson's arrival a mounted patrol from the 53rd Division appeared. Major-General Shea, on arriving in a motor car outside the Post Office, sent for the Mayor and Chief of Police. These functionaries were informed that Major-General Shea accepted the surrender of the city in the name of the Commander-in-Chief, and Brig.-General Watson was directed to make the necessary arrangements for the maintenance of order."

An ancient prophecy, current for generations among the natives, foretold that the land and the Holy City would not be delivered out of the hands of infidels until the waters of the Nile flowed into Palestine. In a wonderful manner this prophecy was fulfilled, for the water from the sweet water canal at Kantara which was drawn from the Nile actually flowed into Judea by way of the pipe line across the desert, a sign which heralded the last and perhaps the greatest of all the crusades.

CHAPTER 11.

SIGHT SEEING IN THE HOLY CITY.

The guide who undertook to show our party the sights of Jerusalem was a typical specimen of his kind. To what nationality he belonged I am unable to say, but he certainly seemed at home in the Holy City. He wore a tarboosh and a dirty overcoat which had seen better days, and carried a walking stick. He talked volubly and incessantly, but as his knowledge of English, "as she is spoke," was distinctly limited, fifty per cent. of his conversation was unintelligible.

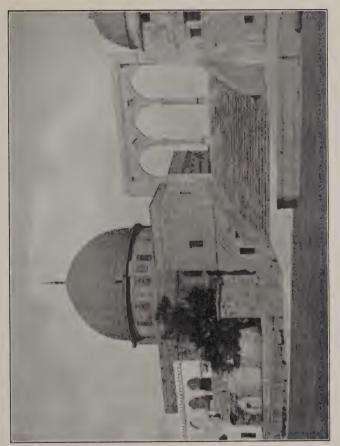
A delightful article on Guides appeared in the *Palestine News* of 2nd May, 1918, from the pen of a writer signing himself H.G.F., and I make no excuse for quoting extracts here.

GUIDES.

"A Guide is one that shows you the way, but in this he has no monopoly, for street signs and the North Star render the same service with greater accuracy and do not charge for it.

In addition to showing you the way a Guide is supposed to be philosopher and friend, that is to say a rational thinker and attached to you by affection. In reality his mind is like a gramophone with only one record, to-day's thoughts being a mechanical repetition of yesterday's. Affection is the very last thing that attaches him to you. If he had any affection for you at all he would leave you in peace. You do not engage a Guide—whether you are aware of it or not—he engages you. He spies you from afar, tracks you down, and you succumb to a torrent of carefully rehearsed patter. It has been said that a Guide is to a tourist what a dog is to a blind man, and if I had my choice I would rather be at the dog's end of the chain any day. . . , . .

You may be painfully aware that a Guide is weaving a web of fabrications for your edification, but if you hint that he is a stranger to the truth his look of offended pride will almost make you wish that you had not opened your mouth. If you endeavour to throw a ray of light into the murky



Dome of the Rock. Harem el Sherif, Jerusalem.



depths of his intellect he will resent it. Suggest to him that the Great Pyramid is a monument of geometrical design and a silent witness to the New World of the astronomical knowledge of the Old, he will blindly continue as if you had never spoken. It is Cheop's Tomb. It is the Book. It must be so.

I believe there are good Guides, but if I must have a Guide I would rather have a bad one than a good one. The bad ones are funnier.

The best way to escape the attentions of the man who-shows-you-the-way is to go to bed with a mosquito poultice on your face and walk out next morning with a bell hanging on your belt. Walk straight up to the first Guide you see, and say to him "I am a leper, give it backsheesh." He will vanish, and before the day is out the whole community of Guides will have a detailed description of you. If your conscience will allow you to enjoy the remainder of your holiday the Guides will certainly not interfere to spoil it."

Under the direction of our particular "affliction" we started from Jaffa Gate at 9.30 a.m. First we were led to the English Cathedral Church "a corner of some foreign field which is for ever England," and then on to Gordon's Calvary—known as the Garden Tomb. The late General Gordon believed this spot to be the site of the Holy Sepulchre. In the carefully kept Garden the visitor is shown a rock-cut tomb, which certainly seems to correspond to the Gospel narrative. Personally I like to think the tomb was in a garden such as this, rather than hidden beneath the tawdry decorations and tinsel of the great building which has so often been the scene of bitter quarrels and disputes of the adherents and enemies of many creeds.

From this garden we proceeded to the so-called Tombs of the Kings, or to give them their Arabic title, Kabûr es Salatân (the Tombs of the Sultans). A broad flight of stone steps leads down into a large open courtyard excavated out of the virgin rock. At the northern end of this court is a richly carved vestibule, cut in the rock face, which gives access to the tombs. Above the opening is an entablature of Greek character with triglyphs and much carving in the frieze, all Formerly there were two rock pillars cut in the rock. supporting the roof but these have disappeared. On the west side of the vestibule a small shaft or low passage, leading down from the floor level, gives access to the tomb chambers, which, in character, are very similar to the rock-cut tombs to be seen at Thebes and in other parts of Egpyt. In one of the chambers was found a sarcophagus (now in Louvre), and from an inscription it is thought that it once contained the body of Queen Helena, the wife of Monobazus, King of Adiabene.

Leaving the Tombs of the Kings we returned to the Jericho road, leading down to the Vale of Jehoshaphat. Here I cannot do better than quote some notes of mine written in June 1918, on a subsequent visit to the Holy City:—

"It was a cool fragrant morning such as often precedes the heat of an August day at home. A faint haze was in the air, but the lazy stillness suggested the coming of a day of heat, all too common in Jerusalem during the summer.

It was Sunday. Hardly a soul was abroad in the streets when I left the hotel and made my way down the Jericho road which passes the Damascus Gate. On the right were the walls of the Holy City, reminding one of some medieval town in western Europe, crusted by exposure to the sun and rain, and weathered to beautiful tones of greys and browns.

How wonderful it all was. I thought of the traditions associated with these great walls with something of a feeling of awe. They stand for so much—these walls of Zion. They are a symbol of the faith which has grown up within their midst.

Presently I came to the Damascus Gate, a gaunt mass of masonry, grimly unadorned, guarding the entrance to holy places. People were passing in and out. A water seller with his limpid burden, two Bedouins, garbed in coarse flowing garments of goat skin, patchwork in colour, and their heads bound around with plaited coils of coarse hair, a priest of the Armenian church, some Catholic nuns, a boy with three heavily-laden donkeys, all went to complete a scene of quaint and picturesque beauty.

Regretfully—for it was a fascinating pageant—I passed on down the Jericho road, thickly dust-covered, for innumerable lorries were continually tearing at the soft metalled surface. These lorries carried all the supplies to the troops sweltering in the appalling heat of the Jordan Valley three thousand eight hundred and sixty feet below. All day, amid clouds of white dust, the convoys rumbled out from the city, passed the ancient walls, down into the Kidron Valley, and so out along the snake-like highway which winds through the barren hills falling continually till the Jordan and the Dead Sea are reached.

After a while I passed round the north-east angle of the walls, the Brook Kidron, and the Mount of Olives lay before me.

The bed of the brook, which is dry at this season of the year, except for a few muddy pools, extended before me in a graceful curve from left to right deep in the valley two hundred feet or more below. The Jericho road follows the line of the city walls until it crosses the Kidron bed near the Tomb of the Virgin and opposite the Garden for ever associated with the poignant memories of Our Lord's agony.



The Damascus Gate, Jerusalem.



On the lower slopes of Olivet stands the strange bizarre pile of the Russian Church, its golden cupolas shining with brilliant lustre among the deep sage tints of the stately cypress trees which surround it. On the western slope of the Mount is a steep track which ascends the broken side to the summit.

In my thoughts I had always pictured the Mount of Olives as a single isolated hill but now I perceived it to be a ridge a mile or more in length with several pronounced points along the crest. At the western end stands the great modern pile of the German Hospice, now put to a use little anticipated by its builders, while to the east is the cluster of buildings and great bell tower of the Russian Hospice. The latter is the highest view-point on the Mount and was my goal.

The sun was rapidly gaining strength, and as I wished to make the somewhat tedious climb while it was still cool I pushed on briskly.

Close by the entrance to Gethsemane is a little church and tomb, the traditional burial place of the Virgin Mary. It is a simple unpretentious building with a plain pointed arch spanning the entrance doorway in the front façade. It stands facing a courtyard considerably below the level of the road, the approach being by a flight of muchworn stone steps.

Slowly I trudged up the steep path which leads to the Russian Hospice. As in the case of Lot's wife, the temptation to look back was strong, but I refrained until I was nearly at the summit. A group of ragged children met me half-way up, with plaintive appeals for backsheesh, the inevitable cry of the east. Their costumes were picturesque if scanty, and they harmonised so completely with the land-scape that my heart softened and my pocket was lightened to the extent of several "small" piastres.

At length, when nearly at the top, I forsook the path and turned off along one of the terraces of the hillside. Choosing the luxuriant shade of an aged olive tree, I sat down on the bank. Only then did I perceive the full beauty of the scene which lay before me. I looked out across the Holy City and all that is most revered in Palestine.

It is difficult to analyse one's emotions on occasions such as this.

Wonder, awe, admiration and a feeling of great peace all formed a part; I was content merely to sit there, amid the great stillness and feast my eyes upon the view, conscious that it was a rare moment of enchantment.

From far away, borne on the soft air, came the faint boom of a gun. Northward, and to east and west we faced the armies of the Crescent but on Olivet there was peace. It was Sunday morning and for a little while I forgot the war.

Nature seemed alive, the faintest breeze rustled the grass and the leaves above my head; unknown and unseen insects hummed and chirruped, a hornet droned somewhere near at hand, and I could hear the musical tinkle of a goat bell rising up to me from the lower slopes of the Mount.

Then, suddenly, I was conscious that someone was playing upon pipes, a haunting, plaintive melody which seemed to harmonise rather than distract from the prevailing peace around. For a while I looked in vain for the player, then at last, far down below me, I perceived a shepherd boy clad in goat skins, sitting on a rock—a veritable Pan with the pipes to his lips.

Other sounds came drifting from the city on the lazy air, the pealing of bells summoning worshippers to the day's devotions. It was the first time for many months that I had heard church bells and their musical notes conjured up visions of some old Cathedral town at home. In a flash my mind was far away, space and time had disappeared. A smiling English landscape lay before me, rich with the colour of summer, bathed in a lazy heat, the air full of the odour of fresh cut hay, and the joyous fragrance of the fields which only beloved England knows. In the distance lay the old city, with the bells of its great fane giving forth their dancing melody. On this perfect Sunday morning peace lay on the world and I was very happy.

As a mist borne away by a gentle breeze the vision faded and, with a start, I awoke from my reverie. On the Jericho road below a great convoy of lorries was churning the dust to a dense cloud, while away on the highway to Nablus a continual stream of traffic was moving northward and the sight brought back to my mind the ugly reality of the war.

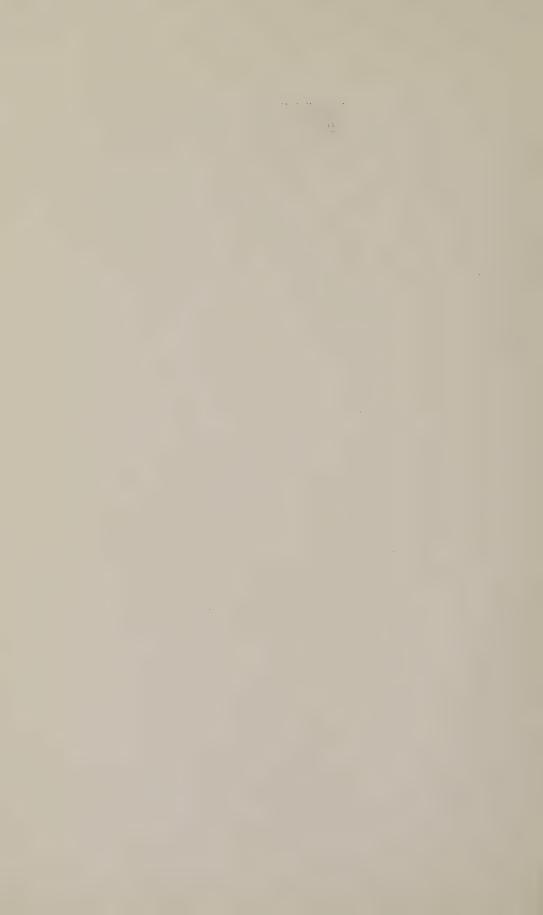
The spell was broken, I got up and quitted the protecting shade of the olive tree, and went forward to the Russian Hospice.

I crossed a deserted and litter strewn courtyard and followed a paved walk till it led me beneath the deep shade of some spreading cedars. A cool breeze rustled beneath their shelter, a welcome relief to the heat without. Through gaps between the trees the rounded outlines of the barren hills southward towards Hebron and Beersheba looked chimerical in the hazy sunlight, a pageant of pearly colours. I went to a terrace wall at the border of the plantation, and looked out. Below lay the Jericho road, appearing as a snake-line of white, which curved among the hills, falling continually, towards the lowest spot in all the world, the Jordan Valley.

To the south-west I caught a glimpse of the far away Dead Sea, like the surface of a mirror, faintly blue, and



The Jews' Wailing Place, Jerusalem.



beyond the mystic land of Moab, hemmed in by a wall of rugged mountain heights. The morning sunlight kissed the landscape with a kindly tenderness, changing the barren wilderness into a country of enchantment. The matchless art of nature hid the cruelty of this land of desolation under the softest tints of indescribable blues and greens and pinks blended with each other till the whole seemed scarcely real. I had the feeling that I was looking at some mysterious, far away landscape, not of this earth, a conception of dreams, unreal and undefined."

The same vast panorama of hill and valley appeared very different when I saw it on the occasion of the leave party visit in March. Dark storm clouds were scudding across the sky, and in places falling rain blotted out the landscape, while only here and there did a gleam of sunlight find its way through the leaden clouds to bathe some distant crest in brilliant yellow light.

In the opposite direction the view over the Holy City is very fine. Immediately below, almost hidden among the trees, are the golden cupolas of the Russian Church. The Garden of Gethsemane is entirely hidden, but on the opposite side of the valley rise the walls of the Temple area, with the Golden Gate, and the graves of the faithful buried without. The central feature of the picture is the Haram al Sherif or the Temple area on which stand the Mosque of el Aksa, and the Mosque of Omar, or Dome of the Rock. Rising up behind are the jumbled buildings contained within the city walls, and beyond the red roofed houses and buildings of modern Jerusalem.

Wonderful as is this comprehensive picture, it is the view to the east over the wilderness, and the deep valley of the Holy River with the distant purple mountains of Moab, which exerts the greatest appeal and to which one longingly returns. It is as if one stood on the roof of the world and looked out upon the countries of the earth.

From the Russian Hospice we retraced our steps past the Garden of Gethsemane and the Virgin's Tomb to Bàb el Asbât or St. Stephen's Gate, and so to the Temple Area.

At this time the Mosque of Omar was still being guarded by Mahommedan troops from our Indian Forces, and Christians were not allowed to visit the interior. Later this ban was removed, but during my subsequent visits to Jerusalem I never had the time and opportunity to go inside*. This was a great disappointment. I had no such ambition as the man I once met, whose military duties kept him at Cairo for

^{*}During my visit to the Holy City in 1925 I was fortunately able to make good the omission and I had the pleasure of seeing the interiors of the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of El Aksa.

several months and who boasted that he had visited the Great Pyramid on many occasions but had never seen the Sphinx. He intended to return to England with this as a proud achievement.

The Mosque of Omar is undoubtedly the finest building, architecturally, to be found in Palestine. It has a wonderful dome, fine lines, and the walls are a riot of colour, truly oriental and eminently suitable to the blue of an eastern sky which forms its background.

Every building in the Haram el Sherif is architecturally worthy of study. One might wander here for days and find continual interest and enjoyment.

The Mosque of El Aksa was also out of bounds to all troops and we could do no more than admire it from the outside. Our obsequious guide was full of information, but unfortunately he lacked sufficient knowledge of English to impart this in an intelligent manner and most of us preferred to wander and admire in silence rather than listen to his discourse.

After a time the guide shepherded us to the north-east corner of the Haram area, where a building containing a somewhat dirty pool of water has been indentified, somewhat doubtfully, as the Pool of Bethesda, and having duly admired this and purchased sundry highly-coloured postcards and metal medallions, of obvious German origin, we were led tourist fashion to the Jew's Wailing Place immediately without the walls of the Temple area near Wilson's Arch. This is a narrow quadrangle, on the east side of which rise the massive stones of the wall of the Sanctuary. The day was not a Friday and there were only two devout and aged women standing before the wall with bowed heads and reciting prayers. Had it been the day of Lamentation the place would have been crowded with Jews, and their wailing would have been heard many hundred yards away.

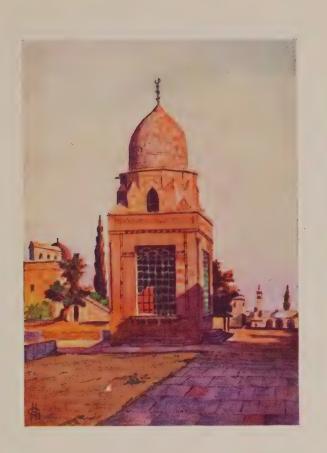
This concluded our sight-seeing for the morning In the afternoon we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Without any desire to be irreverent, I consider this is the most tawdry church interior I have ever seen, although if the walls could be stripped of their gaudy trappings the result would, no doubt, reveal the fine proportion of the building. The crosses carved or scratched on the walls of one of the chapels by devout crusaders are among the most interesting things in the building. These are something real and historic among so much that is tinsel and sham. I was glad to leave this church, the object of continual jealousies, where the members of one creed strive to dominate the others, and where so little appears to be historically authentic.

This reminds me of the story, which must be accepted with a grain of salt, of the Australian Tommy who was being

The Fountain (Sebil) of Kayat Bey, Haram al Sherif, Jerusalem.

This beautiful, little fountain was crected in the year 1445 by el-Ashraf Abu Nasr Kayat Bey.







conducted by a native guide to see the sights of the Holy City. In one place he was shown an ancient lamp which burnt with a flickering flame. Proudly the guide told his patron that for many hundreds of years the light had never been extinguished. "Oh! is that so," said the "Aussie," and taking a deep breath, he blew lustily, "It's damn well out now, anyway."

It is to be deeply regretted that great buildings which for centuries have been revered throughout Christendom, or the lands swayed by Mahomet, should by this insistence upon incredulities tend to shake belief and give point to stories such as this.

The narrow tortuous streets of Jerusalem are full of the interest, colour, and life of the east. They are very different from the native quarters of Cairo and the other cities of Egypt, and remind one more of the labyrinth of streets which climb the steep heights of the Kasbah Hill at Algiers. They are roughly paved and mostly fall towards the Temple Area. In places they are stepped and flying arches span the way between the buildings on either side. The pageant of the streets is always a fascinating sight. The costumes vary greatly in type and colour, according to the wearer's nationality, from the sombre black of some Coptic or Greek priest, to the flowing white robes of the Arab, or the motley brown of a wandering Bedouin.

On the occasion of my first visit the streets of the Holy City were indescribably dirty and ill cared for, but modern sanitary methods and an efficient, and ample, water supply quickly worked an improvement, so that by the autumn of 1918 the streets and bazaars were as clean as any in Cairo or Alexandria. Squads of road men and scavengers were recruited from the ranks of the native population, and under the able tutorship of British Army instructors they quickly became efficient.

The policeing of the City was first carried out by the A.P.M., and the military police, but latter a City Police Force was formed, and much of the work of maintaining order among the civil population was carried out by its members.

When the British Army first occupied the city there were certain quarters which held a distinctly unsavoury reputation, but as the result of stringent regulations and the activities of the Military Police, the place was cleaned up in a remarkably short space of time.

On the last day of my leave I visited a shop close to the Jaffa Gate to buy some small souvenirs. Most of the shops displayed only the usual olive wood boxes, tables, pipes, knives, etc., mother-of-pearl nicknacks, and rosaries, but before the war this one had apparently carried on a better

class trade and had only recently reopened. The stock included carpets, native metal work from Damascus and elsewhere, native jewellery, beads, etc. The proprietor was a pleasant rogue who spoke English well, and in these early days of reviving trade was prepared to accept a reasonable price for his articles of stock.

I questioned him as to the state of business before the British Army reached the City.

"Oh! there was no business," he replied, "my shop has been shut for three years and my stock hidden away. I have been serving in the Turkish army but when I saw that the city would fall and the Turks began to leave Jerusalem I hid myself and remained behind. I am very glad your great Nation has driven away the Turks for now I can continue my business once more and your rule will make it better for everybody."

I think no one among the civil population was sorry to see the back of the Turks. When we arrived the economic condition of the City was appalling and the people were on the verge of starvation. At first the British administration experienced great difficulties in dealing with the situation, but the opening up of the railway from Ludd quickly effected an improvement and by the time of the Armistice civil life had returned to normal.



"The Afternoon Game."

Block kindly loaned by "The New Photographer."



CHAPTER 12.

PREPARING FOR THE MARCH PUSH.

For some days following my return from Jerusalem, life in camp proceeded in its accustomed groove. The weather had improved, the countryside was a blaze of colour from the carpet of wild flowers which were now in full bloom, and time passed pleasantly enough in simple routine duties, inevitable stable hours, feeding and watering horses, and the training of signallers. In addition to these pursuits it fell to my lot to "run" the brigade mess, the job of President having been pushed on to my reluctant shoulders. This was by no means an enviable task, and any success achieved was almost entirely due to the activities of a burly Yorkshireman, a stonemason by trade, who acted as the mess cook. He was a stout lad, literally and figuratively, and did wonders with the materials at his disposal. In addition to the rations which were drawn from the A.S.C., consisting of meat, bread, tea, sugar, flour, bully, and maconachie, etc., we were able to augment the larder with various tinned "eats," including sausages, pork and beans, salmon, fruit,—usually peaches or apricots, sardines, tomato soup, and various condiments, while it was sometimes possible to buy crates of eggs sent up from Egypt, or loose from the local natives. Oranges and figs, of course, appeared at every meal. Out of this material the lordof-the-kitchen produced a four-course dinner every night, while on occasions when visitors were entertained additional courses were added. On guest nights it was a point of honour with the Cook to put on the very best "spread" possible, so as to rival, or excel, the neighbouring messes. Judging by the number of guests we entertained our reputation cannot have been too bad.

About this time the issue of fresh maps covering the country north of our line on either side of the Jerusalem-Nablus Road, and the appearance of greatly enlarged editions of "Comic Cuts"—i.e., Intelligence Reports, dealing with the country in enemy hands, with particular reference to wells, roads and tracks, indicated that our days of comparative peace were over and the war was about to proceed. Sometimes these Intelligence Reports contained cheering trifles, such as the following:—

"MORAL.

The following are extracts from captured enemy orders:—

1st Bn. 2nd., Regt., 11/12/17:—'The negligence and inaptitude amongst soldiers is obvious and attention of officers is drawn to this fact. Desertion is increasing and stringent measures must be taken to check it. Having regard to our serious position, every order must be carefully applied."

"Detachment (? of 24th Division).

Orders—undated—"Desertion is increasing in the battalions. This must be stopped and all suspicious men kept under surveillance by the N.C.O's."

Then again the following description of the enemy's methods were enlightening:—

"Europe.—German method of obtaining information.

British P. of W., and particularly R.F.C., Officers, more especially on being first captured are often kept in solitary confinement for some days and then placed with other P/W in a room fitted with microphones—the whole of their conversation being then taken down. This has been proved beyond question—proof including the tearing down of match-boarding and revealing the actual instruments."

"ORGANISATION.-

(a) Training—Outpost Duties.

Men on outpost duty during the day must perform their duties lying down, keeping themselves entirely concealed. During the night they may move about freely and may take up a position on top of a tree or some other elevated position for the purpose of observation. The duty of a sentry is to observe all enemy movements and to take note of any whistling, chattering, or lights. In the case of a surprise attack a few rounds should be fired and then the sentries must fall back as rapidly as possible. (Captured document).

(b) Supplies.—

A deserter states that the enemy are using wood and bitumen (a combustible mineral substance) as fuel on the HEJAZ railway. The bitumen is quarried near MEZERIB ($8\frac{1}{2}$ miles N.W. of DERAA) and at TEL ES SHEHAB (5 miles W. of MEZERIB. A large quantity of the bitumen is stacked near DERAA station. (G.H.Q. 1/2/18).

At the beginning of March the anticipated move took place. The day prior to leaving Abu Shusheh was occupied in going through brigade stores and personal kit and discarding what was not required. The resulting surplus was sent to the divisional storage dump to be "looked after."

The last evening in the mess cave was spent as a farewell



Abu Shusheh.
Studies of Native Types.



"tamash" in honour of what had been really very comfortable and peaceful quarters. It was late before most of us turned into our "bivvies"—the tents having been struck—and even then two or three festive spirits remained behind to greet the coming of the new day. Conspicuous among these were Lieut. — who was always open to be convivial, and Brevet Lieut. Colonel — who had recently been appointed to the Unit, as a Battery Commander.

In the early hours of the morning the camp was suddenly roused by a great noise, shouts of "fire," and the rushing of many feet up the hillside. Looking out from my "bivvie" a remarkable sight met my gaze. A few yards away flames were licking high into the air, from the quickly charring remains of what had once been a "bivvie." Lying upon a camp bed, in the centre of this funeral pyre was Brevet Lieut.-Colonel — supremely unconscious of the commotion around him.

With commendable presence of mind the Adjutant dashed into the flames and shook the recumbent commander by the shoulder.

- "Wake up, Sir, your 'bivvie's' on fire;" he shouted.
- "What's that?" queried a sleepy voice.
- "Your 'bivvie's' on fire, Sir."
- "Well, you damned fool, put it out! Put it out!" came the rejoinder, and turning over on his side the gallant officer once more relapsed into peaceful unconsciousness.

By this time buckets of water were to hand and the fire was extinguished, not however before the canvas of the "bivvie' had been entirely consumed and the Colonel's valise badly damaged.

Next morning I was in the mess cave early when the hero of this adventure entered. He had shaved off his moustache and his hair showed unmistakable signs of having been singed.

- "Good morning, Goodsall," he said.
- "Good morning, Sir," I replied.
- "Now be a good fellow, and tell me, was I very drunk last night?"

After breakfast the remains of the packing was accomplished, the camp was struck, and the whole brigade moved off down the valley to the Jaffa-Jerusalem road.

Our way lay past Latron and on to Bâb-el-Wâd, the gateway to the mountains, a route already made familiar by my visit to Jerusalem and destined to become more so in the following months. On this occasion the sky was cloudless and it was possible to appreciate to the full the rugged grandeur of the pass.

After a march of several hours we reached the night's camping ground adjoining the main road at the village of Kuryet el Enab, meaning the "Town of Grapes," or simply Enab as it was usually called.

To the brigade this was a well-remembered spot, for it was the point reached by the unit on Christmas Eve, during the strenuous advance of the previous December. Luckily or unluckily I had missed this experience—but the story of those trying days was subsequently related to me by several participants.

In vile weather and continual rain the brigade had trecked through the plains, a morass of soft mud, past Latron, and up the main road, which at this time was a road only in name, inches deep in yellow sticky mud, strewn with great boulders and full of pot holes.

The temperature was only just above freezing and the men were in "khaki drill," which was the regulation kit during the summer. There had been no opportunity, so far in advance of railhead, to draw warm clothing from stores, even if this had been available.

Everyone had to rely entirely upon rations, food from canteens being a thing of the past. Almost without exception the men and officers had used up their stores of tobacco and cigarettes, in fact one gunner was heard to offer another fifty piastres for one cigarette.

Cold and exhausted, and in blinding sleet, men and horses struggled into Enab about 9 p.m., on Christmas Eve, 1917. A reconnaissance showed that the only available building in which to shelter was a small monastery where a few French Monks resided.

The guns were run into the garden and the poor "hairies" picketted alongside them, for there was no available shelter against the driving sleet and biting wind.

Somehow or other all the personnel of the brigade managed to squeeze into the small monastery building. The monks were indefatigable in their efforts to make the men as comfortable as the circumstances permitted. Fires were lit and an attempt made to dry the saturated clothing, while the mess orderlies set to work to prepare hot tea.

The officers were entertained in a small room adjoining the refectory. Here they congregated after seeing to the comfort of the men and horses. Even amid their discomforts there was a touch of humour about the proceedings, for the Colonel had stripped off all his clothing, which was wet through, and had donned a monk's sombre habit. So garbed he presently called a round table conference, to discuss the plans for the following day, when there was every possibility of the brigade going into action—as in fact it did.

Under the generous spring sunshine Enab appeared much more inviting, and personally I found it a very pleasant place.

Unfortunately there was no opportunity on this occasion or later of visiting the ruins of the Church of St. Jeremiah which are situated in the valley at the foot of the village. They are considered to be one of the most beautiful examples of Crusaders' work in Palestine, and exhibit the characteristic fusion of eastern and western styles of architecture always associated with their buildings.

In the evening the C.O. went up to the monastery to renew the acquaintance of the kindly monks, and the following morning we moved off in a north-easterly direction for Ram Allah. At first the route lay over a poor road of Roman origin, past Biddu, and then into a wild country of tangled hills, stony and barren, except where the hillsides were terraced for vines or olives. It was a long and tiring march, but possessing the continual interest of the unexpected.

Towards the end of the day we reached Ram Allah, a large village containing a few European looking buildings, situated a little to the west of the main Jerusalem-Nablus Road, which passes through the adjoining village of Bireh. Later in the year Ram Allah became an important centre, the Headquarters of the 20th Corps and a main supply point for this part of the line. To facilitate the transportation of stores a light railway from Jerusalem was constructed and had the effect of greatly lightening the volume of traffic on the main road.

Ram Allah is the probable site of Samuel's home, Ramar (I. Sam. VII. 17. VIII. 4-22) and may possibly have been identical with Arimathaea. The adjoining village of Bireh was the ancient city of Beeroth and one of the four cities of the Gibeonites (Josh. IX. 17).

We did not camp at Ram Allah, but pushed on a mile or so north, and bivouacked near to a small lake called el Balûa, on the main road.

From Ram Allah the ground rises gradually and our camping area lay just below the crest line, which was under enemy observation. That the Turk kept close watch on the road, we quickly discovered, for a supply convoy which pushed forward as darkness fell, was heavily shelled, and his guns continued to fire at odd intervals throughout the night, no doubt in hope of catching some of our transport.

Although but little information was vouchsafed to those of us in the junior ranks, we knew enough to guess that a big "show" was pending. The following afternoon the Colonel, accompanied by a party of officers drawn from the three

batteries, went forward a mile-and-a-half to some high ground called Sheikh Abdullah, or Hill No. 2984, upon which were the ruins of a Sheikh's tomb.

We went on foot, and the way lay along the main road and over the crest. The number of shell holes which pitted the road and surrounding ground at this point showed that it was by no means a healthy place in which to loiter. However most of the shelling took place between dusk and dawn, for the mid-day light made observation difficult, we therefore passed unchallenged.

On the crest we came upon a German motor lorry which had been abandoned by the Turks in their retreat. It had a strongly-built chassis and massive wheels, which were tyred with wood rims instead of rubber, striking evidence of the enemy's shortage in this respect.

Beyond the crest the road dipped down for, perhaps, half-a-mile and was soon screened from observation by the hill country beyond. After a hot and dusty walk we left the road and climbed the steep hillside of Sheikh Abdullah.

When the whole party had congregated the Colonel delivered an appreciation of the position and pointed out the objectives of the coming fight. From the hill top the whole country lay spread out as a map, and it was easy to identify the salient points in the landscape.

Immediately below to the northwest, but hidden from view by the forward slope of the hill, lay the small village of Dûrah. Further on in the same direction but also out of sight was Jutna, while two miles away, prominent on a hillside, was Bîr ez Zeît, a spot afterwards known to many a Tommy as "Beer in sight," owing to the fact that a divisional canteen was set up in the village.

Crowning the most distant height in this direction was 'Attâra, one of the principal objectives of the division.

Bîr ez Zeît was a sort of "Tom Tiddler's Ground," for the outposts of both forces. At the moment the Turks held on strongly to the position, while our shells were bursting above the village, but next day our infantry gained complete possession of the place.

One and three-quarter miles due north lay Ain Sînia, astride the Jerusalem-Nablus Road. This was held by the enemy, and also the adjoining village of Yebrûd slightly further away and more to the east. Ain Sînia was in a valley and Yebrûd on a hill top, a fact appreciated later, but viewed from Sheikh Abdullah they appeared to be on the same level.

Immediately below to the north-east was Ain Yebrûd, also screened from view. Some distance eastward beyond Yebrûd lay a ridge of high ground with the village of Selwâd on its

crest, while in the far distance could be seen the dominating heights of Tel Asûr.

The whole district was a mass of tumbled hills rising to considerable heights and intersected by deep valleys. The hillsides were mostly terraced for vines, figs, or olives, but in places they were precipitous. Such was the terrain over which the infantry would shortly have to fight their way.

The immediate objectives were 'Attâra and Selwâd. If these were attained it seemed possible that the attack would be pushed on vigorously northward, with the final objective of Nablus and a complete break through of the enemy's line. Unfortunately these sanguine hopes were not realised. The country could hardly have been more difficult for an attacking force, and the enemy held on stubbornly to every hillside. Considerable ground was gained, but before it could be completely consolidated, and a fresh blow struck, General Allenby was called upon to part with a large section of his forces, for help was urgently required to stem the adverse tide of events in France. With the untried, and mostly untrained troops from India, which took the place of the divisions thus lost, and the general dislocation of the force due to the change, further aggressive warfare was out of the question for the time being.

On the morning of March 7th it fell to my lot as Orderly Officer to accompany the Colonel on a reconnaissance of the forward slopes of Sheikh Abdullah.

On the south side of the hill a deep wadi bed led away to the east for a distance of about half-a-mile, where it turned north. From this point onward the hill face was under full enemy observation. Along the wadi bed the engineers had prepared a rough track, and batteries of 60 pdrs. were already in position. Upon reaching the front face of the hill we climbed up several terraces overgrown with olive trees. The hillside fell away steeply so that it was impossible to see the bottom of the wadi, but on the crest of the opposite slope and slightly below us in point of altitude was the village of Ain Yebrûd.

While we were proceeding along this portion of the hill we had the uncomfortable feeling that the sharp eyes of enemy observers might be watching us. This feeling was not relieved when the enemy artillery suddenly opened fire. Fortunately we had reached a spot where a jutting bastion of rock offered admirable cover. Here we rested awhile and waited developments. The enemy was firing shrapnel and the shells burst over the village of Ain Yebrûd.

The elevation and line of fire suggested that we must be the target, but as the rounds fell short, and the firing continued without any increase of range, it became obvious that the village, and not ourselves, was the object of this unwelcome attention. The shelling continued for some time, and as it seemed unlikely that we had been spotted we emerged from cover and proceeded along the terrace. Half-a-mile further on we came to a scar in the hillside which was entirely devoid of trees or other cover. For some unexplained reason this area had been very heavily shelled, and the whole hill face was pitted with large craters. It looked a distinctly unhealthy spot in which to loiter.

"This is where we shall be spotted if Johnny's observers are any good," remarked the Colonel, "I'll go first! Give'em time to fire a round, then if nothing happens you follow up."

I watched the C.O. as he hurried round the bend of the hillside, expecting any moment to hear the screeching approach of a shell. But nothing happened, and a few minutes later with a quickly-beating heart I stepped out from the cover of a boulder into the sunlight and walked quickly along the terrace. I had a strong desire to run, but such a display of "wind up" seemed hardly fitting to the occasion, and my pace became no more than a brisk walk.

Our fears proved groundless, for the Turk seemed quite unaware of our presence, and continued to shell Ain Yebrûd. A few minutes later we reached a wooded and deeply sunk wadi bed, with a stream of crystal clear water bubbling along the bottom. This was Ain Abrud which flowed from its source near Sheikh Abdullah.

In the main wadi bed below the C.O. chose a position for one of the batteries. This concluded the morning's work, and we returned to camp.

CHAPTER 13.

THE BATTLE AMONG THE HILLS.

March 8th was a busy day of preparation for the attack which was due to be launched at dawn on the 9th.

To quote from Lord Allenby's Despatch of September 18th, 1918:—

"The 20th Corps had reached the line En Nejmeh-Et Taiyibeh-Ain Sinia, on the Jerusalem-Nablus road, Hill 2665 overlooking Bir ez Zeit-Beit Ello, the 53rd Division being on the right, the 74th Division in the centre astride the Jerusalem-Nabulus road, and the 10th Division on the left."

With this advancing movement going on there was naturally considerable artillery activity on both sides, and a good deal of rifle firing.

It was a strenuous time for everyone in the brigade. Early in the day final orders came through from "Div. Arty." and the various battery positions having been allotted, units were making preparations to occupy them as soon as darkness fell.

Not least among these activities was the laying of telephone cables to the O.P's from the gun positions, connecting the batteries with Brigade H.Q., and with their respective wagon lines.

Sheikh Abdullah, being the highest point in the line, and dominating the whole of the enemy country for several miles, naturally became the site of the Brigade H.Q's, as well as the O.P's for the various batteries, in fact most of the observing for the whole division took place from here. It was arranged that each battery should send forward an F.O.O., while to my lot fell the task of acting as Liaison Officer to Infantry Divisional H.Q.

The morning and most of the afternoon was spent in laying telephone lines from Sheikh Abdullah to the battery position below Ain Yebrûd, through the small wadi in which Ain Abrud was situated.

This spring of Abrud was a delightful spot. The pure cool water bubbled out from a crevice in the rock-face of a

shallow cave. The rocks all round were garbed in a dress of maidenhair fern, making a cool refreshing oasis in contrast to the heat of the wadi bed without.

From the spring a stream flowed along the hill face below an overhanging wall of rock, eventually finding a path into the centre of the valley.

On our way to the battery position we were only too glad to pause awhile and refresh ourselves with the ice-cold water of the spring. Soon after resuming work we came upon the carcass of a dead donkey lying in the stream. A hundred yards or so further on we discovered a Divisional Water Officer testing the water for purity, and we were able to save him the trouble of proceeding further with his test, the dead donkey putting the question beyond dispute.

All day the artillery duel and rifle fire continued, punctuated now and again by the sharp denotation of a hand grenade. Towards the end of the afternoon Brigade H.Q. arrived at Sheikh Abdullah, but the batteries waited until dark before commencing their march forward along the Nablus road to their positions in front of Ain Yebrûd and Jutna. It was quite dark before they reached their respective destinations.

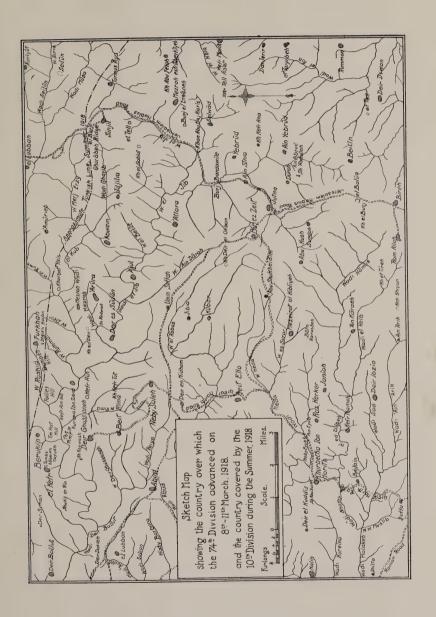
When all the telephone lines had been connected to the Battery H.Q. and reported O.K. there remained nothing more to do but wait until it was time to set out for the infantry lines, shortly after midnight. Having been "on the go" all day I was by no means sorry to snatch a few hours' rest.

Shortly after midnight I was called by my batman. I had given him instructions to pack my haversack with some food and a few other necessaries, and I was much annoyed to find this was not ready for me. The fellow had only held the position a few days, my regular man having unfortunately gone sick, and so far the new broom did not sweep particularly clean.

However, after a little delay everything was ready, and in the pitch darkness we set out.

Our way lay along the small wadi, past Ain Abrud, to the battery position at its mouth, where the signallers were to be in readiness.

As we stumbled along in the darkness, picking our way as best we might, I heard the gunner behind me mumbling to himself. This went on for some time, and at last I asked him what was the matter. He refused to answer, and I realised that all the while he was trying to hang back. Becoming impatient I told him pretty sharply to get in front of me and step out. This he did, with a bad grace, and in this manner we proceeded a little further. Then the mumbling started again.





"What the devil is the matter with you?" I snapped at him.

"It's murder," he retorted sullenly, "that's what it is; I don't want to get shot, if you do!"

The cat was out of the bag; the fellow was in a mortal funk, and had done everything he could to delay our departure and to dawdle on the way.

Time was getting on, and realising that the fellow would certainly prove more nuisance than he was worth, I took over the few articles of kit he was carrying for me, and left him to his own devices.

I learned afterwards that he was missing from the Brigade for the whole of the day, and eventually turned up with the story of having been lost.

At the battery position I found the party of signallers waiting for me under the cover of a terrace wall. Spent bullets were whistling and whining through the air or pinging on to the ground. From the north came the sound of heavy rifle and machine gun fire, mingled with the sharp reports of bombs.

Leaving the battery we proceeded along a deep wadi which rose high above us on either side. The shadowy heights were just visible against the lighter tone of the sky.

As the party proceeded the telephonists, who carried drums of wire strapped to their belts, played out the line. Other dimly discerned parties of men, were also moving forward, some leading pack mules carrying stores, others in small parties or singly. A considerable number of telephone lines, following the same route, had already been laid, and in the darkness it was not easy to avoid tripping over them.

The steepness of the northern wadi face soon gave us complete cover from the rain of spent bullets which were falling round the battery position. But as we neared the fighting line the sounds of battle greatly increased. It was clear that the infantry were heavily engaged all along the front.

At length we reached a spot where it was necessary to climb a steep gully in the hillside to the right, our route being indicated by the number of men proceeding in the same direction.

It was a stiff climb, encumbered as we were with kit and telephone apparatus, and we were much exhausted before we reached the summit. Just below the crest I gathered my little party under the shelter of a terrace wall, to give the men a necessary "breather." It was also a good opportunity to test the telephone line we had laid, which proved to be O.K.

Many bullets whistled overhead, and several shells burst in the vicinity, but there was plenty of cover and no harm was done. Dawn was breaking when we started forward once more.

What, from below, had appeared to be the crest, proved, when we reached it, to be a comparatively level plateau sloping gently away towards the north. A couple of hundred yards or so from the head of the wadi was a large sangar, or ruin called Khurbet Kefr Ana. A number of fig and olive trees were dotted about the intervening space,

For the moment this was the Infantry Battalion Head-quarters.

As the sangar naturally drew a good deal of the enemy's fire the spot was by no means a healthy one, and I was glad to get my party safely across the open ground to the comparative shelter of the ruins.

Here we found a crowd of officers and men belonging to the staff. I immediately reported my arrival to the Battalion Commander, and explained that the artillery covering his section was ready to open fire on any target he might wish.

"For the moment you cannot do very much, I'm afraid," he said, "my men are hung up by machine gunners in Yebrûd, and so far we have been unable to shift them. They're going to make another attack now, and if that is not successful, I'll call them off and get you to shell the place."

I accordingly sent through a report to this effect to my C.O. and then went forward to a low rubble stone wall in front of the sangar from which a view of Yebrûd and the surrounding county could be obtained.

The distance to the village was about six furlongs, the ground sloping down from Khurbet Kefr Ana. Near the village was an orchard of olive trees, dotted with much outcropping rock.

Enemy snipers in the village were keeping a sharp watch on the sangar and the wall, behind which a number of observers were stationed; to show oneself for a moment was to invite a shower of bullets.

As soon as it was sufficiently light our artillery opened fire on the country beyond the village, and particularly the next ridge called Burj Bardawile, the native equivalent of "Baldwin's Castle."

I had not been watching long before the fresh assault on the village commenced, the infantry having worked their way round under cover of the hill slope on either side.

The noise was terrific, the sharp rattle of machine guns mingling with the exploding hand-grenades and rifle fire.

We could do nothing but watch and wait, the infantry being too near, if in fact they had not actually gained the village, to make shelling possible.

In the growing light we were able to identify the various features of the more distant country. Away to the west of Selwâd on the dominating heights of Tell Asûr, the white smoke puffs of bursting shells showed that heavy firing was taking place, preparatory to the assault, while the artillery on our left were firing heavily upon 'Attâra. Above the sharp reports of the 18-pdrs. came the thundering roar of the "heavies"—the 60-pdrs. and six-inch.

Fascinating as was this panorama of distant fighting it passed almost unnoticed in the excitement of watching the attack on Yebrûd, which was so vitally important to success on our immediate front. The watchers lying under cover, were keyed up to the highest pitch of excitement. Only a hasty glance above the wall was safe, to remain with one's head above for any length of time was to invite a hail of snipers' bullets. Now and again one could catch sight of a figure running hastily from one point of cover to another, and all the time we knew the encircling girdle of infantry was drawing in upon the village. The continual rattle of machine guns, and the cracking of the rifles beat a tattoo in answer to the pounding throb-beats of our hearts.

Presently a few wounded men came struggling back across the open, some running, others dragging themselves wearily along, aided perhaps by the supporting arm of a comrade. Still the machine gunners in the village held out.

As the morning wore on I lost all account of time. After a lengthy spell of watching I left my position at the wall and went back to the sangar to discover if there were any instructions for my brigade.

I found the Infantry Commander optimistic, he considered that the village might fall at any moment. As soon as the infantry had captured the place the main attack on Burj Bardawile would develope and necessitate a preliminary bombardment by the artillery. Having gleaned this information I returned to my signallers at the wall, to await events. Here I learned that our telephone wire, leading back to the brigade, had been cut. This necessitated sending one of the men along the line to locate the fault.

The morning was well advanced—possibly it was 10.30 or 11 a.m., when the machine gun fire from the village ceased and news came through that the place had fallen. For some time our guns had been shelling Burj Bardawile, and I now received a request from the infantry for the brigade to put over a lengthening barrage, to cover the advance of the attacking troops as they ascended the hill. Our own telephone line being out of order the message had to be sent

over the infantry lines. There was no difficulty in getting through, and I was able to speak to the Colonel and explain the position. He was in fact already aware of the fall of Yebrûd, and from his O.P. on Sheikh Abdullah was able to observe the fire on Burj Bardawile.

Shortly afterwards a large party of supports which had been held back pending the fall of Yebrûd appeared, and advancing in file, proceeded in a snake-like column towards the village. Suddenly, when the leading files had covered about half the distance the Turkish guns opened fire on them. The shells burst over the party and the men scattered in search of cover. It was hardly to be expected that the enemy gunners would miss such a good target. The rounds came over "hot and strong." At first shrapnel, and later H.E. The yellow-green smoke rose from among the olive trees and the crashing explosions seemed to shake the earth. The advancing infantry disappeared as if by magic. In small parties they worked their way round the village on either slope of the hill, and there were only a few casualties.

By this time the foremost lines of attacking troops were climbing the heights of Burj Bardawile, and through field glasses we could see small dark forms scaling the terrace walls which lined the hill face.

Meanwhile all the guns of the division were firing at "gun fire" on the crest line, and the bursting shells made a spectacular and impressive sight. At length orders were passed through for the firing to cease, as the infantry were

nearing the top.

Almost immediately afterwards the Divisional Staff prepared to move forward, in fact the linesmen had commenced to lay the necessary telephone lines. As our own line was still out of order, and we had not enough wire to extend it further, I left a man to direct the signallers, who were due to come up from the Brigade H.Q., with a pack mule carrying extra wire, and started off with the other two of the party to catch up the forward infantry.

The Turkish gunners had now turned their attention to Yebrûd and were firing round after round of shrapnel, which burst just over the house tops. We hurried forward, expecting every moment that the range would lengthen again. Once more luck favoured us, for no shells fell beyond the village.

I expected to find many casualties among the plantation of fig and olive trees as the result of the intensive Turkish fire, but there were none. The spot was a mass of rocks and boulders, which fortunately offered magnificent cover.

Yebrûd proved to be a collection of a few poor stone-built hovels, hardly worthy to be called houses, and most of them had been badly knocked about. We entered by a narrow lane in which several of our wounded were lying, propped up against a wall. After walking a short distance we reached the northern boundary of the place. Every few moments a shell burst overhead, and the shrapnel hissed past, knocking down the topmost stones of the buildings. We crouched against the bottom of a wall and waited to see if the fire would slacken.

Then a wonderful thing happened, at least so it seemed to me. From a doorway of the house against which we sheltered, there emerged two small native children with an earthenware jar of water. They showed no signs of fear, although the shells were bursting but a few feet away, and hand-in-hand they went along the narrow lane to where the wounded men were lying, and offered each one a drink.

It is strange how events, lasting but a few short moments, can become indelibly impressed on the mind. Whenever I think of Yebrûd I immediately picture that narrow lane, the wounded men lying under cover of the shattered walls, and those two children bent on their errand of mercy.

At the time our thoughts were chiefly concerned with the necessity of catching up the attacking infantry. There seemed no chance of the fire slackening, and the only thing was to "run for it."

From the spot where we stood the ground sloped down steeply towards a hidden wadi bed. Some thirty yards away was a stone sangar, and between this and the village most of the shells of shorter range were bursting, those of longer range passed over the tops of the houses.

We waited until a particularly heavy burst of shelling had passed, and then raced for dear life to the sangar. We reached it safely and paused a moment while one shell burst behind us and two in front. Then we hurried on again. The whole hillside was terraced and overgrown with olive trees. Over the walls we scrambled in frantic haste, down towards the wadi bed and cover. Every terrace descended meant so much greater security.

It took about fifteen minutes of the hardest "going" I have ever experienced before we reached the bottom. In many places there was as much as six to eight feet difference between the levels of the terraces, and in cases where the drop was too steep to jump, or scramble down, we had to seek an easier path.

The wadi bed proved to be fairly wide, perhaps fifty or sixty yards of comparatively flat ground, before the southern slope of Burj Bardawile commenced. Towering high above us we could see the buildings of Yebrûd, but the crest of the opposite hill was screened by the olive trees on the upper terraces.

We had quite lost sense of direction and had no idea where the new brigade headquarters had been established, so we proceeded to tap various telephone lines in the hope of one leading to it.

When we came upon a wire we made a temporary connection by the simple expedient of pushing a safety pin through the insulation. One terminal of a "Don 3" telephone was connected to this pin, and the other terminal to an earth pin driven into the ground.

The first line we tried proved to be one of our own brigade F.O.O's, Lieut. H.—. He told us that he believed the Infantry H.Q. was established on the crest away to his right.

His line backward from the point where we tapped-in was broken, for we were unable to get in touch with the battery. Considering the length of the line, and the amount of traffic in the wadis behind us through which it was laid, this was not surprising.

While I was speaking to H—— one of the signallers, a youngster by the name of Payne, was busy tapping another wire. I saw him kneeling down using a telephone while the other man had wandered off in search of further wires to test.

Suddenly there came the unmistakable sound of a very "tired" shell which had travelled a long way. Instinctively we ducked, and I saw the distant signaller roll backwards on the ground and a cloud of dust rise up from the spot.

My companion and I sprang to our feet and rushed across the intervening space expecting to find the unfortunate fellow badly wounded. Not a bit of it. To our amazement he rose to his feet, knocked the dust off his clothes, and picked up his cap.

"Arn't you hurt?" I gasped as we reached him.

He was a regular "lad," full of fun and spirits.

"Not a bit, Sir," he laughed. "I've had much nearer 'go's' than that in Salonica."

Despite his bravado I knew it had been a mighty near thing. The shell buried itself in a bank of soft earth not two yards away, blowing off the lad's cap as it passed, but failed to explode. Had it not been a "dud" he most certainly would have been killed. As it was he suffered nothing worse than a good dusting.

The line he was testing at the time proved to be the one we were looking for, and we learned that the Infantry H.Q. was established on the top of the crest above us.

To say that the climb was strenuous is putting it mildly. Imagine a terraced hillside with walls rising from one terrace to the next a height of anything from three feet to eight or nine feet, each tier being perhaps ten to twenty feet wide, with

a row of olive trees growing on it. Then picture the joy of the perspiring soldier with all manner of "gadgets" hung round his person like a Christmas tree, under a blazing sun and in an airless valley, toiling up such a trackless ascent. In a reckless moment I once set out, and actually did, climb the Great Pyramid without any assistance from "guides," but it was child's play compared to this.

Anyway we consoled ourselves with the thought that what the infantry had done gunners certainly could do (where would the army have been without friendly rivalry) and plodded on. We found it in our hearts to pity the attacking "foot sloggers" who, but a short while before, had scaled these same heights, carrying far heavier kit and accoutrements than our own. Besides was not their emblem, the Broken Spur, a sign that "foot slogging" and "humping the Charlie" was not their proper job?*

It was a weary trio that reached Burj Bardawile about 3 p.m., after having been continuously on the "go" for twenty-six hours. Moreover we had touched practically no food since the previous evening and very little water, for we feared to empty our water bottles.

As we neared the crest we came under fire once more, the bullets humming merrily about us. Fortunately there were many rocks and dwarf walls to afford cover, and gradually we worked our way along, running from one protected position to another until, at last, the telephone line we had been following led us to the H.Q.

This was established in a small underground chamber which the Turks no doubt had used as an O.P. and but lately quitted. On the south side a screen-wall of boulders had been built to give protection to the observers. It was certainly an admirably contrived spot from which to conduct operations, and from it one gained a wonderful view over the whole of our country to the south, the dominating feature in the land-scape being Sheikh Abdullah. We found a number of telephonists already established, busy transmitting reports, and the place was full of staff officers in consultation.

I appropriated a corner of the observation pit outside for my signallers and then endeavoured to find out what was going on. The infantry were forming up in extended order just below the crest line, as a preliminary to going over the top in waves. Enemy artillery fire had ceased, a sign that he was moving back his batteries to fresh positions. A certain amount of rifle and machine gun fire was in progress, otherwise there was a lull in the fighting.

^{*}The Broken Spur was the emblem adopted by the 74th—the Dismounted Yeomanry Division. The Divisional Christmas Card for 1917 bore the motto: "A horse, a horse, my Kingdom for a horse,"

I had not been at the Infantry H.Q. long when Lieut. H—, "Ack" Battery's F.O.O., turned up. I was very glad to see him, because he had gone forward with the party of supports which had been so heavily shelled in front of Yebrûd, and I feared he might have been hit. He looked worn-out with fatigue and was covered in dust but was very cheery. He told me he was going forward again as soon as the infantry moved over the crest.

About 4 p.m. the infantry formation was complete and the first line started to advance. A few paces behind followed the second wave, then the third, and so on. Their appearance on the crest was the signal for the enemy to open intensive fire once more. A veritable storm of bullets from rifles and machine guns swept the top of the hill, followed a few minutes later by heavy artillery fire. The Turkish gunners had accurately determined the range and elevation, for the shells burst a few feet above the crest and the shrapnel swept down the reverse slope. From the number of shells which came over it was obvious that many guns were engaged, all firing at gunfire.

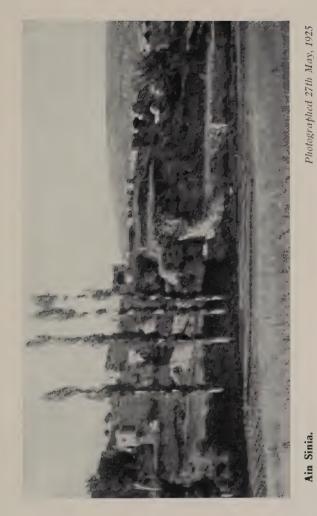
It was hopeless to expect troops to run the gauntlet of such fire and get through. The lines of advancing infantry wavered and then fell back to such cover as they could find. Seeing that it was exposing his men to useless risks the Battalion Commander stopped the advance until dusk, a respite calculated to give the men a valuable and much needed rest.

The men were called in, and gradually the intensity of the enemy fire decreased and died down to a casual artillery and rifle duel.

After a while H— returned. He had gone over the top with the first wave of infantry, which had not caught the straff quite so badly as the later lines. Nevertheless he assured me that, while it lasted, it was the hottest "do" he had ever been in. The whole of the crest and the front face of the hill was under full enemy observation, and the Turks must have turned the whole of their available guns and rifles on to the splendid target created by our advancing troops. The men, H— said, had been magnificent, but to have pushed on in the face of such fire would have been hopeless.

The welcome respite was an opportunity for a meal, which everyone badly needed. The infantry set to on their rations, and my little band and I followed their admirable example.

And so came the dusk. It had been a great day and a stubbornly fought action. We had made a considerable advance over most difficult country and in the teeth of determined opposition. If equal success had been won by



From the Jerusalem-Nablus Road.



the forces on either side the final objectives would certainly be reached and we might even make a complete breach in the enemy's lines. Unfortunately these sanguine hopes were not entirely realised.

CHAPTER 14.

THE BATTLE AMONG THE HILLS-Continued.

As soon as it was sufficiently dark to screen all movement the infantry formed up once more and advanced in waves over the crest. The descent of the north face of the hill to the Nablus Road, some 600 feet below, over a series of terraces, many of which were sheer drops of ten or twelve feet, was a difficult and hazardous undertaking in the darkness. Moreover the Turks still held on to the lower terraces and our men had to fight their way down.

The artillery could give little or no help. The registration of any useful targets had been impossible before darkness fell, and the whole position was so obscure that any firing during the night was out of the question. The scanty reports which came in from the infantry were sent on to the brigade, otherwise there was little to do. We took it in turns to snatch a few hours' rest, one remaining awake to attend to the telephone.

In the early hours of the morning news came through that the infantry had reached the bottom of the wadi, an upper stretch of the great Wadi el Jîb, through which the Nablus Road passed.

Concerning this portion of the road I heard an amusing story when I got back to the brigade. Two of the junior section commanders, Lieut. S ——, a bright lad of many escapades, and Lieut. —— were detailed to make a reconnaissance during the morning of March 8th along the road to Dûrah, Ain Sînia and beyond. They started off gaily enough and reached Ain Sînia without seeing anything of enemy or of the battle which was in progress on either side of them. North of Ain Sînia the road makes a sharp bend to the east round the northern slopes of Burj Bardawile. The two young "hopefuls" pushed on for some distance past the village, still without meeting any opposition. The time being about noon they dismounted, tied up their horses, and proceeded to partake of the lunch they carried in their haversacks. Subsequently it was proved that the spot they had chosen was well



Burj Bardawile.

Looking south from the Jerusalem-Nablus Road.



behind the strong position of Burj Bardawile, to which the Turks were clinging so tenaciously. In other words they were half-a-mile or more behind the Turkish lines.

The meal finished they lit cigarettes, well pleased with the day in general and themselves in particular. Suddenly one of the two spotted a number of men ascending the opposite hillside, and it was obvious at a glance that they were Turkish Infantry. Things began to look unpleasant, and the gallant "2nd Lieuts." came to the conclusion it would be best to "hop it."

"Hop it" they did, and not a moment too soon. They lept onto their horses and galloped "hell for leather" down the road, followed by a rain of bullets from the Turkish Infantry. Fortunately the enemy marksmanship was not of the best and no harm came of the adventure.

A somewhat similar story was told about a certain artillery officer, whom we will call Colonel A——.

In addition to being a very brave man, Colonel A—was a thoroughly conscientious gunner and a great believer in the value of reconnaissance by officers, of the enemy's positions.

On one occasion when the unit under his command was in the vicinity of Beit 'Ur el Tahta,—the Lower Beth Horan of the ancients—he set out to explore a certain deep wadi which led towards the enemy's territory.

The party had proceeded some distance along the valley when suddenly one of the B.C's spotted a group of men on hillside above them.

"By jove!" he exclaimed, "there are some Turks up there."

Colonel A—— stopped, lifted his glasses, and scanned the strangers.

"Yes!" (pause) "Yes! I believe you're right. I think they are Turks!"

Meanwhile one of the B.C's had been studying the opposite hillside somewhat to their rear.

"Good God!" he burst out, "there's a large party of them up there."

The Colonel switched his glasses over to the new position indicated.

"Yes, you are perfectly correct, Major," he replied in his slow methodical way, "they certainly are a party of the enemy; perhaps we had better run for it."

The three Majors required no second bidding. They turned about and sprinted for dear life down the stony watercourse, their Commanding Officer bringing up the rear. By this time they had been spotted and fired upon.

After a while the pace began to tell and Colonel A ——shouted out to those ahead of him.

- "It is perfectly safe now, we are out of range. We can walk." But the B.C's were taking no chances.
 - "Don't you listen to the old ——!" panted the first.
- "No, I won't," replied the second, and all three kept on running.

The infantry spent the remaining hours of darkness in climbing the hill face on the northern side of the Nablus road. They met no greater opposition than that offered by the natural difficulty of the ground. Many of the terrace walls were exceptionally high ones, in places the rise was precipitous, while the darkness made it difficult to find an easy route. The curve of the hill formed an efficient screen against enemy bullets, except for an occasional and not very effective enfilade fire, and only isolated parties of Turks were encountered.

When the gathering light of dawn became sufficiently strong to show up the position, a report came through from an officer stationed on the Nablus Road that the infantry had reached the crest and that artillery fire would not be required.

We had arranged to put down a barrage in front of the advancing infantry, but in view of this information it now appeared to be unnecessary.

Actually at this time the crest had not been reached, in fact the infantry had only accomplished about two-thirds of the ascent, but to observers stationed on the road below it did appear, in the uncertain light of dawn, that the objective had been gained.

The enemy were still in possession of the crest, and as soon as the light made firing possible they opened on our advancing troops. This state of affairs necessitated a corrected report being sent through to the artillery, and the guns immediately opened fire.

The barrage, together with the pressure of our advancing infantry, made the spot too warm for the Turks, and about an hour later they evacuated the position.

This success virtually brought the action in this sector of the front to a close, although stubborn fighting continued on the right and left flanks.

About 7 a.m. I received the welcome order to "C.I.," the signaller's abbreviation for "come in." We lost no time in packing our gear and retracing our steps down the southern face of Burj Bardawile. By bearing to the west we were able to strike the road north of Ain Sînia.

On the highway, which had a more or less metalled surface but was covered in shell and pot holes, we encountered

tremendous activity. Motor transport was pushing up with stores and ammunition, the sappers were hastily mending the worst places in the road and building up several small bridges which the enemy had attempted to destroy, and ambulances were continuously wending their way back to the Clearing Station.

When we had proceeded about half-a-mile we came upon a battery of 60-pdrs., the guns being in action on either side of the road. As we passed them the officer in charge hailed me, and I recognised one of the members of the signalling course which I had attended in Cairo the previous Autumn.

I stopped to chat with him for a few moments, for he was anxious to hear how the battle had gone, and I was able to give him a short description of the fighting I had seen.

"You look as if a drink would buck you up, old man," he remarked. "Come up to the mess and have a Bass, which is all we have to offer, I'm afraid."

Never, I think, did a glass of beer taste so wonderful. It was as "nectar of the gods," for, be it remembered, I had been constantly on the "go" for forty-eight hours, and during the last twenty had had practically nothing to eat.

Stout fellow, in the years which have passed since that day, I have forgotten your name, but I shall ever remember your hospitality.

The last part of the walk and the climb to the top of Sheikh Abdullah was an extremely tedious business, and made one realise what being really tired-out meant. Upon arrival at H.Q. I immediately reported to the Colonel, but there was little fresh information I could give him.

"You look as if you need a rest," he said kindly, "you had better go and lie down for an hour; use my 'bivvie" if your's isn't ready."

I gladly availed myself of his offer, and for a few hours slept the sleep of the really weary.

About mid-day I was called and joined the Colonel and the Adjutant at lunch. The repast was hardly completed when an amusing incident happened.

It has already been explained that Sheikh Abdullah was used as the main observation point for most of the units operating on this sector of the line, and particularly for artillery observation. The H.Q's of various brigades were dotted about the hill top, the one adjacent to our own being separated only by a path which led up to the crest.

We had just lit our cigarettes and were preparing to enjoy a few minutes "easy" before commencing the afternoon's work, when a party of "Brass Hats" appeared below us on the path. As the crowd approached we noticed that it included no less a person than the C-in-C himself.

When opposite to us the group paused, and the Great Man spoke to the R.A. commander of the adjacent H.Q. We were near enough to hear the gist of the conversation, which was somewhat as follows:—

The Great Man: "Good day! What is your unit?"

C.O.: "X Brigade R.F.A., Sir."

G.M.: "Are you in action?"

C.O.: "No, Sir, we're now out of range."

G.M.: "Then what the deuce are you doing here? You should advance at once."

My own C.O. required no further warning, for we were just as much offenders. He grabbed his belt and tunic, whispered to us to follow him, and steathily crept down the hillside, away from the mighty ones. Once out of view he literally ran down the path, as quickly as his "gammy leg"—he had been badly wounded in France—would allow him.

At the bottom our mounts were waiting for us, and in a very short space of time we had reached "Ack" battery position in the wadi below Ain Yebrûd. Here we paused sufficiently long for the Colonel to give the B.C. orders to advance and to be joined by the brigade staff which was congregating at this point. Then at a brisk trot we emerged onto the Nablus Road.

Some three-quarters of an hour later, when the C-in-C passed up the road he found the whole of our brigade on the move

Colonel D——, the hero of this little adventure, was, to use the vernacular of the time, a "nib." On one occasion when the brigade was near Biddu, and the track was so bad that the teams were unable to get the guns forward into action, he turned all the available personnel onto the drag ropes of one gun and manhandled it up a mountain track to a spot where it was possible to clear the crest. The job occupied most of the night, and the following morning this was the only gun of the Division in action.

On another occasion he had one of the 18-pdrs. entirely dismantled and rigged up the different parts on horses, after the manner of a mountain gun, to ascertain if it was possible to get into action in such a manner. The piece was slung from limber poles supported on the backs of three pairs of wheelers, the buffer and trail being carried in a similar manner. The other and less weighty parts were carried by single horses. Unfortunately the opportunity never occurred to put this idea to a practical test while in action.

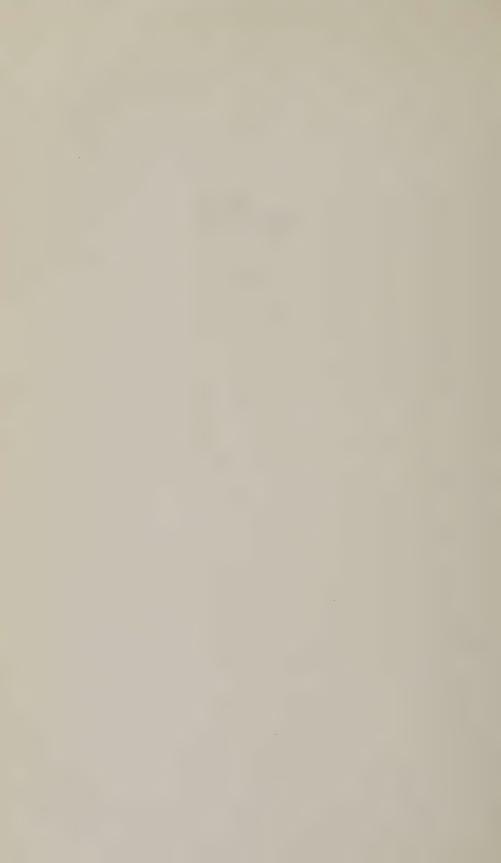
One evening in the mess at Belah Colonel D — put forward a delightfully whimsical plan for the capture of Gaza.



Photographed 27th May, 1925.

Khan Abu Haj Haris.

On the Jerusalem-Nablus Road, below Burj Bardawile.
This bridge replaces the one destroyed by the Turks on March 9th, 1918.



"The capture of the town is simplicity itself," he said. "All you have to do is to bring from Central Africa as many 'Fuzzy-wuzzies' as you can lay hands on, say twenty or thirty thousand, and the wilder the better. When you've got them to Belah you take a few representative ones and carry out careful tests to ascertain exactly how much beer it takes to make 'em roaring drunk. Having calculated this to a nicety you import the requisite quantity of beer to make the lot tight.

Just before zero hour you arm each 'Fuzzy-wuzzy' with a Very light and a Mills bomb. You give 'em Mills bombs, because if they had rifles they would fire them in the air, which would do no good.

Now comes the crux of the whole plan. You have to find one brave white man to act as a leader. He is almost certain to be killed, so he must be a volunteer. He must be dressed all in white and mounted on a white charger, so that the niggers can see him in the dark.

When the beer has taken effect the leader will dash forward, followed by thirty thousand odd 'Fuzzy-wuzzies.' Some will be killed, but the rest will get through, by sheer weight of numbers and Gaza will fall.'

Beyond Ain Sînia the road turned north once more towards Sinjil, el Lubbon, and Nablus. At this second L turn was a stone guard-house and a bridge, spanning the watercourse of the wadi. When the Turks retired they destroyed this latter, with the result that the road was impassable for wheeled traffic beyond this point. Furthermore it was obvious that the road northward would be under observation and enfilade fire from the heights around Sinjil.

The comparative narrowness of the valley and the height of the enclosing hills made the choice of battery positions difficult. In fact it was only by selecting sites some distance up the north slope of Burj Bardawile that the guns would be able to clear the crest. The subsequent task of getting the guns into these elevated positions was an extremely tricky business, in fact one of the section commanders of "Beer" battery broke his leg during the afternoon, owing to his horse slipping with him.

By the time dusk was falling the three batteries were in position. The infantry were occupied in consolidating the line they had won on the heights above, and our immediate task was concluded.

The last job of the day was to run out a telephone line from our new H.Q. to the infantry battalion H.Q., on the hill top to the north of our position. At 8 p.m. I started with three signallers to carry out this work.

The task was not a pleasant one. It was pitch dark, and

we had only a vague notion where the Infantry H.Q. was located. The hill proved one of the steepest climbs we had so far experienced. Furthermore it was by no means certain that all the enemy had been cleared off the terraces, and they certainly still occupied part of the opposite heights. Consequently all the time we were on the "qui vive" for a scrap.

However we encountered no one, although there was a certain amount of rifle fire going on round us. Now and again bullets passed unpleasantly near, being fired apparently as much from the rear as from the front.

It was past 10 p.m. when we reached the summit and located the infantry H.Q. The whole crowd was worn out with fatigue and we found most of the H.Q. Staff, from the Commander downwards, tucked up in blankets and fast asleep.

We handed over our line to the sleepy signallers on duty with a feeling of satisfaction at having completed the job. It only remained to retrace our steps to the brigade and then for a blessed night's rest.

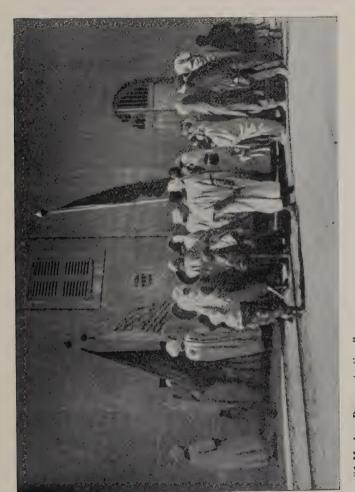
If anything the descent of the hill in the dark proved more difficult than the ascent, and in negotiating the successive terrace walls it was difficult to gauge the depth. This led me into an accident which might have been more serious than it was and resulted in my remaining with E.E.F. when the rest of the Brigade went to France. Thinking that one of the drops was only a couple of feet or so, I jumped rashly enough, for the distance must have been well over ten feet. I landed on one foot, my ankle gave way, and I rolled on to the ground in violent pain. I was uncertain whether my ankle was broken or only sprained, but in either case the foot was effectively out of action.

The rest of the descent was a slow and painful business. I had to hop across each terrace, assisted by the signallers. Then I sat down, dangled my legs over the edge, and with assistance gradually lowered myself onto my sound leg. In this manner we at last reached the Brigade.

Everyone was asleep, and I was so worn out that I preferred to turn in, rather than call up the doctor.

In the early dawn, I was awakened by the Colonel calling for me, I jumped up, forgetting the episode of the past night, but a sharp dart of pain quickly reminded me. My ankle was double its normal size. I went along to the C.O., and explained what had occured.

He was distinctly annoyed, for in addition to my accident Lieut. H—— had broken his leg, one of the battery Captains had tripped over a telephone wire and put his shoulder out of joint, and another Section Commander had "gone sick" the previous evening.



"A Moslem Demonstration."

Block kindly loaned by "The New Photographer."



I protested that it was only a small matter, and that I should still be able to ride, although it might mean hobbling about when on foot.

"Rubbish! You're no use to me like that. Doc!" he shouted, "here's another case for hospital. I shall lose all my officers if this goes on."

And so to hospital I went. After breakfast I was placed in camel coracle, a kind of long basket seat in which a wounded man could lie. Two coracles were fastened together and carried one on either side of a camel. Most of the wounded from the line were evacuated to the dressing stations in this manner. Although, owing to the movement of the beast, there was a certain lack of equilibrium in this means of progression, there was no jolting or jarring as was the case with a sand cart or Ford Ambulance, and camel transport proved the least painful and, in fact, the only way of dealing with casualties in the hill country.

From the brigade I was passed on to a field dressing station at Ain Sînia. Here the wounded were transferred to Ford Ambulances and conveyed to Ram Allah where one of the largest buildings in the village was being used as a hospital. There was only room to deal with the most serious cases, and the remainder were sent through to Jerusalem, where there was a permanent hospital.

We reached the Holy City about 4 p.m. and were immediately sent to bed. The next day I was evacuated to a general hospital at Junction Station and the day after to Kantara. Here I was detained a day or so and finally sent on to the 21st General Hospital at Victoria, Alexandria, close to Sidi. Bishr, the camp we had first occupied when reaching Egypt the previous year. So for a few weeks ended my participation in the war.

CHAPTER 15.

SUMMER TIME IN THE HILLS.

March, 1918, was a fateful period for the Allies. In France the Germans were making a determined attack on a vast scale and the situation appeared so serious that it was necessary to send reinforcements from the Palestine front to help stem the tide of the enemy's advance.

The changes which took place in the E.E.F. at this period are described in Lord Allenby's despatch of September 18th, 1918:—

"The despatch of troops to France and the reorganisation of the force, has prevented further operations, of any size, being undertaken, and has rendered the adoption of a policy of active defence necessary. During the first week in April the 52nd Division embarked for France, its place being taken by the 7th (Meerut) Division, which had arrived from Mesopotamia.

The departure of the 52nd Division was followed by that of the 74th Division which left Palestine during the second week in April. The 3rd (Lahore) Division was sent from Mesopotamia to replace the 74th Division, but it was not till middle of June that the last units disembarked. In addition to the 52nd and 74th Divisions, nine Yeomanry regiments, five and a half siege batteries, ten British battalions, and five machine gun companies were withdrawn from the line, preparatory to embarkation for France.

By the end of April the Yeomanry regiments had been replaced by Indian Cavalry regiments which had arrived from France, and the British battalions by Indian battalions despatched from India. These Indian battalions had not, however, seen service during the present war; and, naturally, had not the experience of the battalions they replaced.

Thus in April the strength of the force had been reduced by one division, five and a half siege batteries, and five machine-gun companies; while one mounted division was in process of being reorganised, and was not available for operations.



Ludd.

The Crusaders' Church contains the remains of St. George, England's Patron Saint.



In May a turther fourteen battalions of British infantry were withdrawn and despatched to France. Only two Indian battalions were available to replace them. Thus at the end of May the Force had been further reduced by twelve battalions, while the loss of the 74th Division had not yet been fully made good. On the other hand, the reorganisation of the mounted division had been completed.

In June the places of the British battalions which had been despatched to France were filled by Indian battalions. Six of the Indian battalions had, however, been formed by withdrawing a company from twenty-four of the Indian battalions already in the Force. As few reinforcements were available for the battalions thus depleted, the Force had been completed in name only.

During July and the first week in August a further ten British battalions were replaced by ten Indian battalions, the personnel of the British battalions being used as reinforcements."

For a few weeks, while my sprained ankle was recovering, I enjoyed the pleasures and comforts of civilisation, first in hospital, and later at the Rest Camp at Mustapha Pasha, Alexandria. But sooner or later, everything, pleasant and unpleasant, comes to an end, and on the 16th April I was discharged from Mustapha and sent forward to G.B.D. at Kantara.

Encamped next to General Base Details I found my old Brigade, which had just arrived from Palestine *en route* for France. Hourly I expected to hear my fate. Either I should be posted to a fresh unit up the line or join my old one and journey to France.

In a few days the matter was definitely settled by my being posted to the 10th Divisional Artillery, and with many regrets I said good-bye to old friends and the unit which I had first joined at Canterbury in 1916, and once again travelled up the line.

I left Kantara by the night train and reached Ludd the following morning. I reported at the Rest Camp to receive instructions to proceed, for it was the pleasure of the army that officers and men should not travel forward to their units singly but in parties and several days were generally spent at rest camps between the base and the line.

I spent the afternoon exploring the village of Ludd, the Lod or Lydda of the Ancients, a typical native settlement clustered beside a fine Crusading Church, now used as a mosque. It was in this place that the Apostle Peter performed the miracle of healing the man Aeneas (Acts IX. 32-35). Ludd is particularly interesting to British visitors, because the Church is dedicated to St. George, the patron Saint of England, and his tomb is to be seen in the crypt below the altar.

St. George was a native of Ludd, and it appears that he had a blood feud against the people of a village on the coast who worshipped Dagon the fish-god, whose form was half man and half fish. One day George arose in his wrath and attacked these followers of Dagon and slew a number of them. This story was noised abroad and people spoke of how George slew the Dagons.

The Crusaders heard this story, and probably confusing the mythical half-man and half-fish with a monster called a Dragon brought the tale back to England, and that's where the pretty picture on our pound notes came from.

The morning following my arrival at Ramleh, to quote from my note book, "I stood before my tent door and viewed one of the fairest prospects in Judea. The cool fragrance of the early hour sent the blood racing through my veins and it felt good to be alive. The air was full of graceful scents and the faint indescribable odour which belongs to this country of orange groves. It was like the perfume of some ancient garment long packed in a pot-pourri of lavender and rose leaves.

The camp was on a hill, and below extended a gorgeous panorama from the north where Carmel lay almost lost amid the hazy sunlight, eastward and then south along the whole range of Samarian and Judean hills, till the heights faded once more into the purple distance towards Hebron and Beersheba.

Immediately below and extending far away to the right and left was a wide belt of orchard land, the orange groves of Jaffa, bright green in the morning sunlight. Nature has been generous in her bounty to these acres round Ludd and Ramleh, and on this fair morning I beheld a smiling land of plenty.

Here and there the deep green belt was broken by brighter patches, the pale green of growing corn. The gentle breeze swayed the tender shoots till the surface appeared to rise and fall as a summer sea. Behind the orange groves rose the tower and minarets of Ramleh, clear-cut and beautiful under the morning sunlight.

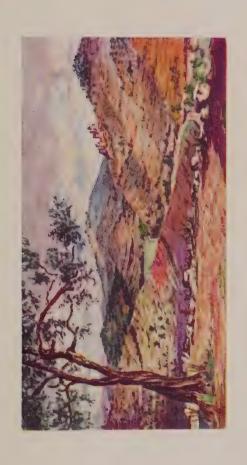
The lure of this fair countryside was strong upon me. I longed with a fiery impatience to sally forth and explore, to wander again through fields of growing corn, to amble amid the shelter of those shady orchards, and once more to seek out the beauty of that alluring cluster of spires and domes. After breakfast, accompanied by a companion, I set out to revisit the White Tower and the village. To the left lay the great white highway from Jaffa to Jerusalem, obviously the quickest route to Ramleh, but the continuous rumbling of motor lorries and the clouds of dust which they raised, savoured too much of military activity, the thing from which we most wanted to escape, for a few short hours at least.

The Great North Road through the Wadi Neda.

North of the village of Khurbetha Ibn Harith. In the distance to the right is seen the village of Ras Kerker. At the foot of the hill, on which this hamlet stands, is Neby Eyub and Ain Eyub, the traditional burial place of the Prophet Job.

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Accordingly we left the highway severely alone, and with the White Tower of the Crusaders as a goal, we set out through the fruit-laden orchards. Soon we came upon a footpath which promised to serve our purpose.

If the way proved circuitous what matter? The golden hours of the day lay before us, and nature was near."

And so for a few hours my companion and I wandered through the fair countryside and amid ancient ruins, thankful to be able to forget the war for a short while.

A day or so later I was ordered to accompany a party of reinforcements and details going up to the front.

As far as Latron my route lay over familiar ground, but from here onward I had to travel over unknown tracks, for the 10th Division operated in hill country to the west of that previously covered by the 74th Division.

After the fall of Jerusalem, as the advance progressed into the hills, the 10th Division constructed a magnificent new road, following the line of an old track past Amwas, Beit Sîra, Suffa, to Khurbetha Ibn Harith, or Harith as it was more generally called. This highway was known as "the Great North Road," and considering the difficulties of construction it was a wonderful achievement. East of Harith the road branched, one route leading to Bîr ez Zeit, and the other to Neby Saleh.

At this time the 10th Divisional R.A. H.Q. was at Bîz ez Zeit, and this was my destination from Latron. I joined a party proceeding by motor convoy on the Great North Road. The motors carried us as far as Harith, but beyond this point the track was still in such a bad condition that lorries were not allowed to increase their weight by taking passengers.

At Harith was another small rest camp, where we stayed the night, and the following morning a party of four of us set out to "foot-slog it" to R.A. H.Q., a distance of about twelve miles. It was an interesting but dusty walk. On the way we passed a spring and an ancient tomb which is supposed to be the burial place of the Prophet Job, and of which more anon.

On the way we passed gangs of Egyptian Labour Corps men, clad in blue smocks, busily employed road making, while here and there were large groups of local natives, men, women, and children who had been taken on, principally to relieve their poverty, and in a lesser degree for the value of the work they were able to perform.

Although we had made an early start, so as to march during the cool of the morning, it was distinctly hot by the time we reached Bîr ez Zeit, just before noon. At the time of our arrival a thrilling and tragic episode happened.

During the latter part of the march we had seen a captive observation balloon, of the type generally referred to as a

"sausage," high above the surrounding hills. Actually it was immediately above Bîr ez Zeit. As we drew near to Headquarters the balloon was pulled down, the observation work being concluded for the morning, but for some reason after a short while it again rose into the air.

A few minutes later werentered the R.A. H.Q., and reported our arrival to the Brigade Major. Hardly had we done so when a terrific bombardment broke out immediately overhead. With one accord everyone in the office rushed into the open to ascertain the cause.

Looking up we saw the deep blue of the sky dotted in all directions with the white woolly bursts of anti-aircraft shells. From every hand came the crashing reports of the "archies," an increaing number of shell bursts being grouped round the dark specklike outline of an enemy aeroplane.

Totally disregarding the ring of bursting shells by which he was encircled, the hostile airmen flew straight at the "sausage." He was a very brave man, that flyer. His object was perfectly clear. A few hundred feet from the ground, his machine made a perfect target for our guns. There was but a "fifty-fifty" chance of success, to "down" our observer, or be brought down himself in the attempt; but the flyer did not swerve in the least from his course.

The aeroplane flew straight at the balloon which crumpled up in a moment and came swirling down to earth in a mighty dive. The task accomplished, the enemy turned and commenced to climb higher and higher into the air, followed by our shell bursts until he was out of range.

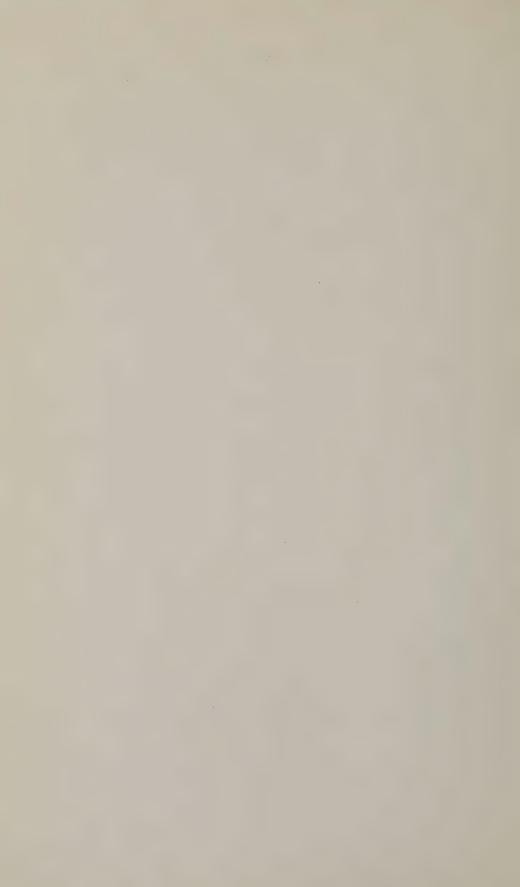
The whole episode lasted only a few moments and resulted in the death of our observer. It was impossible not to admire the bravery and total disregard of personal danger which inspired the act, all the more remarkable in that the same flyer repeated the performance over three different parts of our front during the week and destroyed all our observation balloons.

In the afternoon I received instructions to report to No. 2 Section of the 10th Divisional Ammunition Column which was stationed a few hundred yards away. From the camp I was able to study the country taken by my old division during the March "show," Ain Sînia, Yebrûd, Burj Bardawile, and Sheikh Abdullah, and from this new viewpoint it was possible to appreciate more fully the difficulties of the terrain over which the advance had been made.

I remained at Bîr ez Zeit for a few days and then received orders to report to No. I Section of the D.A.C., stationed at Harith. On this return journey along the Great North Road I was fortunate enough to have a mount, and after a pleasant ride I reached the camp destined to be my home during the next few weeks.



Wadi Neda. "The Great North Road," near Harith.
 Job's Well, Wadi Neda.
 Bir ez Zeit.



From this time onward the personnel of the 10th D.A.C., in common with many other units of the Palestine Force, consisted of one-third white troops and two-thirds raw native drafts from India which were sent over to take the place of reinforcements despatched to France. All the officers were white, but the native sections had native N.C.O's, including a native Havildar or B.S.M.

All castes were represented among the Indians, Sikhs, Pathans, Bengalis, and Gurkhas, and the ration question was one of considerable difficulty, for the food which was accepted by one caste would be rejected with scorn by another. Each group of men had an appropriate cook and drew its own special rations.

The camp of No. 1 Section was situated half-a-mile north from the H.Q., Staff and No. 3 Section, which was near the village, in a delightful setting of olive trees, a very pleasant spot with magnificent views over the surrounding country. Our duties consisted of carrying ammunition up to the batteries in the line, and in general convoy work for the division when not so engaged,—unexciting and uninteresting routine work. Stable hours and watering orders to "Job's Well" in the valley below occupied our time when not out with a convoy. A brother subaltern and myself were the only two officers in the section, and as we never decided the vexed question as to who was senior in the date of commission we acted as joint Officers Commanding and jogged along very happily together.

Looking through some notes written at the time I find the following:—

"I have been reading the Book of Job. I must confess that my knowledge of this particular prophet was distinctly sketchy until to-day. How many weary hours one devoted to Divinity at school, and how little one really learned. Poor old Job, his lament is very human, his trials were heavy, even for this land where trouble is so often rife.

Below me as I write is the deep watercourse of the Wadi Neda. Standing on the hill top a hundred yards or so away from the tent one gains a magnificent view eastward along the valley. The terraced hills are piled up one above the other, an amphitheatre of rugged heights, forming a prospect typical of this hill land of Gibeon,* fair to behold, an ever changing pageant of light and colour, under the racing clouds.

Along the almost sheer face of the hill, and gradually falling to the valley below, the R.E's have cut a road and a fine highway it is. It winds down the hillside to the wadi bed and curves away serpent-like east and then north among the

^{*}Perhaps this is hardly correct, the stronghold of the Gibeonites may be identified as El Jib, five and a half miles north of Jerusalem.

hills till at length it reaches Bîr ez Zeit. It is a busy highway these war days, along which motors, horses, mules and camels pass unceasingly to supply the needs of the troops in the front line.

I wonder how many of the men who daily pass this way trouble to bestow more than a casual glance at the ruined white tomb which stands at the bend of the road two miles or so north of Harith. It appears to be just a common Mahommedan shrine, similar to hundreds of others which are dotted indiscriminately over the countryside. Yet if tradition is to be believed, the spot is one of great interest.

To-day there stands before the building a small notice-board bearing the following inscription:—

"NEBY EYUB," (The Prophet Job).

"Local tradition fixes this as the veritable tomb of Job."

Tradition is dear to the hearts of these children of the east, the fellahîn of Palestine. If our better judgment persuades us that this is but a common Moslem shrine it would be a pity, for the spot is fair, fitting to the peace which came to the prophet at the end of his long life.

"So Job died, being old and full of years," and they buried him in the Wadi Neda one might well add

Adjoining the tomb is a spring of bubbling crystal-clear water, and this inscription tells also of its tradition:—

"AIN EYUB," (The Spring of Job).

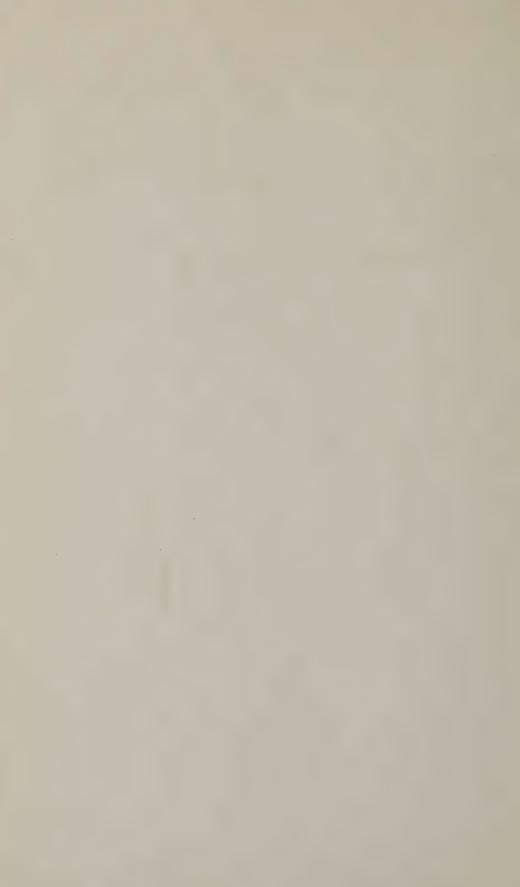
"Tradition says that by washing in the water from this spring Job was healed of his bodily ills."

I am no sceptic. Willingly would I believe that the holy man found health in this clear natural fountain. If poetic fancy ascribes to it a power which Ain Eyub does not possess the pure thirst-quenching qualities are as great a reality to-day as they were in those far away Biblical times, and to this many a tired and dusty Tommy will testify.

The structure itself, quite apart from the tradition, is of interest as a typical example of Moslem art. It is square in plan, built of rough coursed stones, and covered by a pointed dome. On the north side is an adjoining structure now much ruined, which at one time was probably domed in a similar manner. The stone is coarse in texture, and numberless years of exposure to the sun and rain have toned it to a beautiful golden brown colour, a brilliant gem amid a setting of rich green of the surrounding fig trees and vine-clad hills. A little vaulted chamber at one side of the tomb encloses the source of the spring. The water now finds its way beneath the newly-constructed road and bursts into the wadi bed on the opposite side,



Village above Neby Eynb, Wadi Neda.



The tomb and spring is delightful to see on a fine day in its fair setting, but the valley is a lonely spot, and he who would become a Job's comforter should not elect to dwell in the Wadi Neda, for the rôle might become difficult."

It was now the middle of May and the day temperature was becoming distinctly warm. As far as possible all work was done in the early morning or late afternoon. Sometimes it was necessary to send out a convoy, to Neby Saleh or Bîr ez Zeit, in the middle of the day, and the heat during the journey through the Wadi Neda was terrific.

I remember one period when a khamsin blew for three days, making life extremely unpleasant. The wind was almost a gale and fiery hot, all liquids were tepid, and food, such as bully, melted to a liquid state. We lay about, garbed in the minimum of clothing, and gasped for air, even the Indian troops showed signs of discomfort.

However, in due time the visitation passed, and the weather became thoroughly enjoyable once more.

Towards the end of the month I was transferred to the Headquarter's Staff of the D.A.C. to act as Orderly Officer and to conduct a signalling class for men destined to fill vacancies in the Signalling Staffs of the Brigades.

The H.Q. Camp adjoined the village of Harith and was in a very pleasant spot. In one of my letters home I described it as—"a great neglected garden, with numerous olive trees dotted about, beautifully shady and cool. All around are big clumps of sage, mint, and thyme, making gorgeous purple splashes of colour among the rocks, and a profusion of scarlet poppies. The effect is very pretty."

We were lucky in having a large E.P.I.P. tent for the mess, which we were able to keep delightfully cool during the day.

In this camp the flies were not so troublesome as in other places, and with the exception of hornets we were remarkably free from the visitation of live stock. The hornets certainly were very trying, particularly in the mornings and evenings. It was no uncommon sight to see our respected commanding officer sitting in his canvas bath, unclad, and armed with an enormous sponge in one hand and a fly whisk in the other. He was generally surrounded by a multitude of buzzing hornets, and the fly whisk proved of very little use against their onslaughts.

In the early days of the Harith Camp we were worried somewhat by mosquitos, deadly enemies of the 10th Division, which had suffered so severely from their ravages in Salonica. However the M.O.,—much to the annoyance and dismay of the inhabitants of the village—liberally doped with oil all the wells and standing water in the district, thus effectively destroying the larvæ and breeding spots of these pests.

The horses of the unit had a great time. Routine duties were not heavy, and all animals, not required for convoy work during the day, were turned loose to graze over the adjacent hillsides. They required no supervision, and just before stable hour in the afternoon, usually 4 p.m., the whole lot would come wandering into camp. It was very rarely that any stragglers had to be rounded up.

Most of the evenings were devoted to sport. Several of the native N.C.O's, and the R.S.M., and one or two of the sergeants who had been in India, were experts at "tent pegging," and we spent many hours at this fascinating pastime. The Havildar and the B.S.M. were particularly good, and equal in ability. Each of them was able to take three successive pegs, "edge ways on," a fine feat of skill and horsemanship.

An unfortunate accident occurred one evening. One of the N.C.O's, who was a novice at the game, missed his peg and dropped his sword, hilt downwards. The point of the blade pierced the side of his mount, and a few days later the unfortunate animal died. This put rather a damper on tent pegging for beginners, and the C.O. eventually stopped the amusement.

Another sport much favoured by the Indians was wrestling. A number of the men were great wrestlers, and one was a professional. His name was Aki Kahn, a man of gigantic physique and tremendous strength. No one in the unit was anything like his equal, and consequently he never had occasion to exert his full powers. As a trainer, however, he was in great demand.

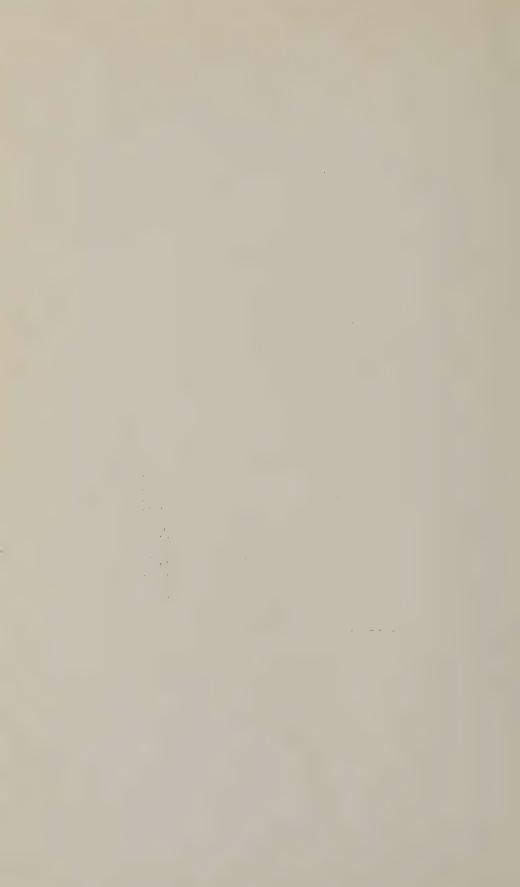
Wrestling does not possess the same thrills and speed as boxing, but as a demonstration of trained strength, scientifically applied, it is an interesting spectacle. Often the two participants in a bout will remain motionless, locked in each other's arms, muscles taut, and bodies rigid, for several minutes at a time, each awaiting an opportunity to throw the other. Then suddenly one will make a great heave and over the two will go on to the ground. Then usually the battle is speedily finished.

At the end of June the 53rd Division held a Tournament at Ram Allah. Officers and men from all the units in the neighbourhood attended and the meeting was graced by the presence of a number of ladies from Jerusalem.

The events included a Cable Wagon competition, Tortoise Race for Motor Bicycles, Motor Driving for Ford Vans, R.A.M.C. competition, G.S. Wagon Turn-out competition—(a) for British, (b) for Natives,—Wrestling on Camels, R.A. Driving final, Camel Saddling competition, Officers, and N.C.O's Jumping, and Ladies' event.



Sheikh Abu Yusef.
Khurbetha Ibn Harith.



My C.O. had a charger which possessed a great reputation as a jumper, and he was very anxious for it to be ridden in the officers' jumping event. No one seemed particularly keen to enter, and eventually the Colonel persuaded me to do so. I laid no claim to horsemanship and tried to excuse myself, but he would take no refusal. The only other officer from the D.A.C. attending the meeting was Lieut.——, Interpreter for the native troops, a regular officer in one of the Indian regiments and a fine horseman.

Upon arrival at the Tournament ground at Ram Allah we found the jumps were most formidable stone-built walls some four feet high, the first jump being of the "in-and-out" variety. The ground was hard and rocky, and already there had been two casualties among the officers practicing during the morning.

Nevertheless there was a large entry for the event and about thirty or more actual starters. My heart sank as I watched the failures and nasty falls of several of the participants.

At last my turn came. The big grey which I was riding quite entered into the spirit of the thing and started off for the "in-and-out" in fine style. I cantered gently towards the jump and when within fifteen yards or so I gave my mount his head. He took a mighty spring sideways, and instead of clearing the first wall of the jump only he leapt the corner, clearing both of the angle walls. This was an effort I did not anticipate, but somehow I managed to keep my seat. I made two successive attempts but on each occasion he did exactly the same thing.

I think the cause of the trouble was the light. The sun being low in the heavens the interior of the jump was in deep shadow, and the horse, not knowing what to expect, was frightened to land inside.

Actually several of the entrants went round the course in fine style.

The most amusing event of the day was the wrestling on camels by natives. The awkward animals did the most unlooked for things at the most inconvenient moments. They either walked away from each other in disgust or else proceeded to barrak, *i.e.*, sit down, while their riders were vainly endeavouring to unseat each other. One or two of the most vicious beasts tried the effect of biting their own or the opposing driver's legs.

Truly camels are strange animals. The natives say that Allah created the world and all the animals, and then turned to man and said, "Now you try your hand,"—the camel is the result! Another native tag runs as follows:—"Man knows the names of ninety-nine gods, but the camel knows the hundredth and he is'nt going to tell."

CHAPTER 16.

GUNNERS' O.P's.

At the end of June I paid a brief visit to Jerusalem to confer with the O.C. of the 20th Corps Signalling School, on various points connected with the training of the D.A.C. signallers. On my return I found I had been posted to a battery of the 263rd Brigade R.F.A. This was a distinctly unpleasant surprise. My signalling class was well "on the go," the D.A.C. was in a pleasant spot, and my companions were a delightful crowd, in short life was distinctly "cushy."

However it was no good grousing, so I packed my traps, bade farewell to the D.A.C., and set off for Neby Saleh, some six miles north-east of Harith. I found the Battery occupying a position above a bend in the Wadi Rima, a mile north of Neby Saleh. This Battery,—the 75th R.F.A.,—was one of the few Regular Batteries in the E.E.F., having been sent from India at the outbreak of war. Most of the officers were New Army or T.F. men, but the rest of the personnel were, with few exceptions, serving soldiers. It was interesting to compare this professional unit with the T.F. Battery in which I had first served, a comparison by no means disparaging to the latter.

At this period—July, 1918—the fighting was of a purely defensive nature, with the exception of small night raids into the enemy's territory, and one raid on a big scale, which I shall describe later. All battery arrangements were made on the assumption that we should occupy the position for an indefinate period. Four of the six guns were at the Wadi Rima, immediately south of a prominent hill called Kh. Kefr Tut, while a detached section of two guns was in action near the village of Beit Rima, a mile and a halt due east of the main position. Observation work for the battery was carried out at no less than four O.P's. This duplication of observation posts was necessary on account of the mountainous nature, both of our territory and the enemy's country.

At the main position the guns were on a small plateau, the crest of which was under enemy observation. This necessitated the gun pits being heavily camouflaged with gunnets and green stuff. The latter had to be renewed every few

Kefr Ain Hill and the Wadi Rima.

An early morning sketch made by the Author from the battery position on Kh Kefr Tut, looking north towards the country held by the Turks during the summer months of 1918.

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days. So effective was this camouflage that it was practically impossible to discover the gun pits until one was on top of them, and although Turkish aeroplanes passed overhead repeatedly they never appeared to spot the position. In the next wadi, immediately north, was the "how" battery belonging to the same brigade, with the heights of Kefr Tut rising in front. On the crest of this hill, in full view of the enemy, was the main observation post.

This O.P. was a most elaborate affair. The R.E's had converted the remains of a native building into a formidable stronghold. The flat roof was strengthened with rolled steel joists and corrugated iron, and the whole reinforced outside with a number of large boulders. Nothing but a direct hit by a heavy shell could have hurt the place in the slightest. An elaborate, permanent periscope provided means of observation. A large mirror, worked by cords, was hidden in what might be described as a small penthouse, projecting from the roof, and a second mirror on a table below reflected the first. By juggling with these two mirrors it was possible to bring the whole of our zone under observation, except where intervening heights spoiled the view, in perfect security and comfort. Unfortunately, this O.P. was so far away from the principal enemy targets that accurate observation was impossible during the heat of the day owing to the shimmering of the atmosphere, or as it was popularly and wrongly termed "mirage."

To overcome this difficulty there was always an F.O.O. on duty with the infantry on the top of a hill called Kefr Ain. This was an isolated height rising steeply from the Wadi Rima and the Wadi El Jib, the crest of which dominated the whole country for miles. Here we had two O.P's, one at each end of the crest, perhaps two hundred yards apart. One was used for observing targets lying to the eastward and the other to observe those to the westward. The F.O.O. also observed the fire of the detached section.

Lastly the detached section had an O.P. for its own use in the village of Deir Ghussaneh.

The battery being split up in this manner the junior officers had to take F.O.O. duty in turn. A three days' stay was made at each place, and then everyone changed round, the officer at the battery went to the section and the one at the section became F.O.O., an arrangement which certainly made for variety.

Life at the battery was very pleasant. Immediately below the gun pits was a newly-constructed military road, a continuation of the Great North Road from Neby Saleh. On the next lower terrace was the officers' mess and the men's quarters, the "bivvies" being dotted about among the olive trees, while in the bottom of the wadi were the wagon lines.

The spot was cool and shady, and being on the road we were always receiving visits from the members of other units passing up and down, so that it was impossible to be dull.

Just before my arrival at the battery a terrible accident had occurred. For some reason, which was never explained, a shell exploded while it was being loaded into one of the guns and before the gun-breech was closed. The Sergeant and the No. 3 of the gun team were killed, the No. 2 and No. 4 were very badly wounded, while the Section Commander on duty was wounded in the leg. The three wounded men eventually recovered, and the bodies of the No. 1 and No. 3 were buried in a spot nearby.

Another accident, which fortunately had no serious results, occurred in connection with a captured Turkish "pip-squeak" gun which was sent up together with some enemy ammunition for us to experiment with. We had no means of reading the range drum, or arriving at the "corrector" figure to use, which were inscribed in Turkish figures, and we were only able to find out these points by trial and error. We fired the first shot at extreme range and the burst was unobserved. The range was then reduced and the second round fell on the enemy crest line near a village called Furkhah. When a third round was tried the shell exploded, presumably just in front of the gun, and the nose-cap went hurtling away into the valley below and hit the iron recordbox in the office tent of our "How" Battery. A few moments before the battery clerk had been sitting on this box, but providentially, he moved his position just in time.

The remarks of the B.C., when he rang us up on the telephone immediately after the occurrence were distinctly caustic, and we gave up playing with our new toy for the rest of the day.

The position of the detached section was also a very attractive one, although being isolated, life for the officer-incharge was somewhat quiet. The chief amusement was to walk across to the village of Deir Ghussaneh and carry out observation work. The telephone was the connecting link with the battery and F.O.O., and when one was particularly bored it was always possible to ring up either and chat for half-an-hour or so.

When with the section I used to amuse myself sketching, and on one occasion I was guilty of composing the following doggerel effusion in an attempt to wile away an idle hour. I lay no claim to being a poet, but as the verses express, perhaps, something of the spirit underlying the campaign, I include them here:—

"A COCKNEY'S GROUSE."

Yus, I've 'ad enough of fightin'
Cos I ain't no soldier bloke.
I'm a civvie dressed in khaki,
And it 'aint no blooming joke.
Away in good old Blighty
There's a 'ome down Bethnel Green,
Wiv' the missus, and the nippers,
And a kid I 'avent seen.
Four years come next Christmas
I've bin straffin' Boche and Turk!

Straffin' Boche and Turk, Lads, Up at Wypers and 'olleybeke, In the bloomin' 'eat of Mespot, Johnny copped it in the neck. Are we goin' to carry on yer say? Are we goin' to win the war? Ain't we straffed the Boche and Turk? By Gawd! What yer take us for?

Yus, I know the blessed 'oly land,
From Rafa up to Zeit.
From the sands of bloomin' Gaza,
Where yer lost yerself at night.
From Belah, where the dust is
Blowin' down yer throat all day,
And Johnny thought he'd got us beat,
But we 'ad come to stay.
Four years come next Christmas,
I've bin straffin' Boche and Turk!

Straffin' Boche and Turk, Lads,
In 'eat and rain and shine.
From Ludd to that 'ell Jericho,
Through blooming Palestine.
Are we goin' to carry on yer say?
Are we goin' to win the war?
'Aint we straffed the Boche and Turk!
By Gawd! What yer take us for?

It's a land of milk and 'oney,
Leastways so the Scriptures say.
But yer welcome to the 'oney
What I 'ave to throw away.
Bully and bread more like it!
With some olives for dessert,
For there 'aint no bees, nor cows 'ere,
Leastways not enough to 'urt.
Two years come next Christmas
I've fought in Palestine.

Straffin' Johnny Turk, Lads,

Till we pushed 'im up the line.

Did he run? Well, I should say so,

To the 'ills of Palestine.

Are we goin' to carry on yer say?

Are we goin' to win the war?

Ain't we straffed the Boche and Turk?

By Gawd! What yer take us for?

'Ave you ever bin for days on end
Without a drop to drink,
A 'sweating through the 'eat and dust?
By Gawd that makes yer think!
When the sun is like a furnace,
And there 'aint a breath of air,
When the ground is parched and bakin'
And you're fit to drop—or swear?
Give me the cold of Blighty,
Not the 'eat of Palestine.

Straffin' Johnny Turk, Lads,
In this land of 'oly spots,
It's a game, I give yer my word,
What ties yer up in knots.
Are we goin' to carry on yer say?
Are we goin' to win the war?
Ain't we straffed the Boche and Turk?
By Gawd! What yer take us for?

Does it rain, yer asks? Lor' luv yer,
Does it 'ell? That's what I say,
Just try a week in winter,
In the 'ills up 'arith way.
That'll show ye what the rain is,
When yer "bivvie's" like a sieve,
And yer clothes and bed is soppin'.
Gawd! 'ow the Tommies live!
By gosh, tho' don't we luv it,
In the 'ills of Palestine!

Straffin' Johnny Turk, Lads,
In mist and rain and sleet,
When yer fingers are all thumbsticks,
And yer can't ler'cate yer feet.
Are we goin' to carry on yer say?
Are we goin' to win the war?
Ain't we straffed the Boche and Turk?
By Gawd! What yer take us for?

Flies, yer say? Lor' luv yer,
There ain't no flies out 'ere,
Nor ants to "drown" in whisky,
Or beetles in yer beer.
There ain't no scorp-i-ons to crawl
Inter yer bed at night,
And centipedes, with 'umpteen legs,
To give yer a wind-up fright.
I wish they'd leave yours truly,
And go and straff the Turk.

Straffin' Johnny Turk, Lads,
And damn the snakes and jacks,
We ain't no time for them things,

When its Tommies hump yer packs. Are we goin' to carry on yer say? Are we goin' to win the war? Ain't we straffed the Boche and Turk? By Gawd! What yer take us for?

Roll on the time what's comin',
When this bloody war is done,
When we've fought the Boche and beat 'im,
And 'is army's on the run.

Then its 'ome to good old Blighty.

And we'll all go down the Strand.

A tidy sight more lively,

Than this bloomin' 'oly land.

Four years come next Christmas

I've been straffin' Boche and Turk!

Straffin' Boche and Turk, Lads,
Over land and air and sea,
Till lust and might is beaten down,
And all the world is free.
Are we goin' to carry on yer say?
Are we goin' to win the war?
Ain't we straffed the Boche and Turk?
By Gawd! What yer take us for?

Having succumbed to the poetic muse I make no excuse for quoting the following lines, written by a sportsman at Kantara in 1918:—

"LINES IN EXILE."

Tho' air be mild and sky be blue above I pine by Suez waters for the Dove. Tho' in the deep Canal the noontide beam Flashes like gold, I think of Derwent stream. Tho' dawns rise glorious in the east, and speak Of Sinai's mount, I ponder on the Peak. Nor can the Pyramids themselves beguile My homeward thought from Chatsworth's stately pile, Nor domes, nor minarets replace for me The charm of Haddon's elfin mystery. Delightful Derby! How my soul it calms To hear my Buxton's breeze sweep thro' Kantara palms. To think that birds, which winter here hath sent, A short noon since, were skimming o'er the Trent. Nor shall the base forbear to mention here, Thrice glorious Burton, famed for Bass's Beer.

In my note book I find the following entry describing Deir Ghussaneh:—

"Yesterday, for the first time, I went up to Deir Ghussaneh, a village in the line where one of our O.P's is situated. In common with most of these hamlets of Samaria, it stands upon the crest of a hill, dominating the country around, and looking down upon a tortuous terrain of deep wadis and precipitous hills. To the east, and north towards Nablus, the hills rise, ridge upon ridge, like the wave crests of a broken sea, till the hot haze obscures the horizon in a mantle of purple mist. To the west are the foothills, a tangled mass of rounded outlines, falling rapidly to the plain of Sharon, and appearing in the far distance, chimerical and mystic. Beyond all lies the sea, which at eventide, when the sun dips to meet it, seems to be a mirror of beaten gold.

There is something indescribably sad about these villages of the line, often ruined and always deserted, the soul of life has passed over them, leaving only the husk of death. The noise and bustle of the people who lived therein no longer fills the narrow lanes and covered ways, only the soft hum of nature which never dies, stirs the stillness, the drone of a bee, or the chirrup of a cricket.

Such is war, and the wisdom of man.

Slowly I climbed the southern slope of the hill on which Deir Ghussaneh stands. The way was steep and winding, and here and there pitted with shell holes. The vines had thrown their loving tendrils in uncared for abandon over the broken earth, the fig and olive trees still carried their quota of fruit, which ere now should have been gathered. Nature flourished, untrammelled by the careful hands of man.

Presently I reached the hilltop and the village lay before me bathed in the generous sunlight of early morning. I



Doorway to a House in Deir Ghussaneh, Wadi Rima.



passed through a gap in the second line wire and traversed the winding path which permitted one to approach without being seen by the watchful eyes of the enemy. To expose oneself meant calling forth an angry burst of shelling.

The path led round the corner of a ruined stone building, standing in a garden, which was elaborately trenched and protected with wire. Overhead camouflage hid the defensive works from the keen scrutiny of enemy observers. Vines climbed luxuriantly over the crumbling walls, hiding their timeworn scars.

A few yards further I turned a corner, and found myself in the main way—street it could hardly be called—of the village."

The place was much battered by shell fire, and several of the houses had the upper stories destroyed. Our O.P. was situated in the strongest and most important stone-built house in the village. Quite an elaborate gateway gave access to a courtyard surrounded by buildings on three sides. One of these was a two-storied structure with an outside stone staircase leading up to the first floor. The main room on the ground floor contained an elaborate and curious-looking wooden olive press, and on shelves all round were large earthenware jars filled with olive oil.

The principal room on the first floor was of considerable size, and from one of the windows a magnificent view could be obtained over the whole of the country to the north, with the towering heights of Kefr Ain rising precipitously from the valley of the Wadi Rima.

The R.E's had made the place practically shell-proof by the use of iron girders, corrugated iron, and sand bags. The floor of the observation room was greatly strengthened and the whole apartment was packed with sand bags until the space remaining was barely eight feet square. A powerful telescope made observation a particularly easy matter when the light was good, *i.e.*, in the mornings and evenings.

Many of the buildings in the village had details of architectural interest. Here and there beautifully coloured Persian tiles had been built into the walls as a form of decoration, and there were many attractive examples of wrought metal work, such as brass door handles and iron strap hinges.

Most of the artillery observation was carried out from the two O.P's on the summit of Kefr Ain. The climb to the top from the bed of the Wadi Rima was quite a formidable undertaking, particularly during the heat of the day, and usually occupied an hour. Half-way up was a plateau, some six hundred yards wide, and most of the enemy's shells, which failed to hit the crest, passed right over and burst on this piece of ground. The whole area was deeply pitted with shellholes, and everyone hurried over this portion of the journey

as quickly as possible. The Turks had an annoying habit of putting over single shells at odd times and for no apparent reason, and there was always the chance of being caught by one of these.

The upper slopes of the hill were covered with outcropping rock and boulders, and a little coarse vegetation growing between. The crest was a knife edge of rock and

fell away sharply on both sides.

The spot was being held by Indian troops with white officers. The former were mostly raw drafts from India, but they did their work magnificently. The officers were, I think, without exception, Scotchmen, and none of them knew more than a few words of Urdu, nevertheless they somehow managed to make the men understand orders and things ran smoothly.

The front face of the hill was under full enemy observation, but the infantry built strong posts, in the form of stone sangars, half-way down the forward slope, the guards being

changed at dawn and dusk every day.

The H.Q. and officers' mess of the infantry company was established at the western end of the crest where a natural cliff of rock gave a moderate amount of protection from enemy fire. Here, too, was one of our O.P's and the signallers' "hole in the rock"—it could hardly be called a dug out.

The O.P. was a most wonderful contraption. A natural vertical fissure in the rock allowed just enough room to accommodate an observer, while a sand bag provided a convenient, if somewhathard, seat, and a piece of board was wedged in front to form a table. A "Heath Robinson" sort of arrangement of wire and string supported a periscope, the head of which projected about three inches above the crest line. The top of the O.P. was formed of corrugated iron and boulders. So natural was the general effect that the Turks never spotted the place, and such shelling as occurred round about was directed against the infantry.

The east O.P. was a much more elaborate affair. A small apartment, eight feet long by four feet wide, had been partly excavated from, and partly built up, on the front face of the hill. The constructed portions of the sides were of squared stones and the roof was formed entirely of steel joists, with four or five feet of stonework above. The result was a chamber of immense strength. Being under direct enemy observation it had been necessary to construct a screen wall of boulders from the O.P. round the end of the hill until cover was reached, so that the observers and telephonists might come and go without being seen.

When I was first on duty at Kefr Ain this wall was only half built, but with the help of fatigue parties of infantry and working a few hours each night, we quickly completed

the task.

This was a really fine O.P. and afforded magnificent observation over all our eastern targets. The position having been established for some time successive observers had registered most of the spots where enemy activity was likely to be seen, and it was only necessary to give the number and the "corrector" for the day when ordering fire on any of these registered targets.

The principal points under observation were, a large valley called the Wadi Rashid, a bold hill immediately in front known as the Follies, on one part of which was a very obvious enemy observation post, Dumbell Hill, to the east of "the Follies," a curious-shaped outcrop from Dumbell Hill, which was christened "the Onion," and on the crest above, the village of Furkhah.

From the west O.P., the main targets were, in addition to points on the Wadi Rashid and the Follies, a patch of vegetation, where in the early morning men were often seen engaged on some mysterious task. For want of a better title we termed these "the grass cutters." Finally a track or road, considerably further off, which was fully exposed for a distance of some three hundred yards.

This latter was a very favourite target to watch, for the enemy used the road a good deal. The range was too great for the battery, but the detached section could just manage to reach the point. It was known as target No. 19, and as soon as the F.O.O. saw any movement on the road he passed through the order to the section "Target No. 19. Fire," a gun always being trained on the spot. I never actually saw anyone hit, but our fire certainly put the wind up a number of the enemy. It was very amusing, if one possessed a grim sense of humour, to watch, shall we say, a man on horseback proceeding at a walk along the road. The section received the order to fire, and in thirty seconds the shell came screeching over the top of Kefr Ain. Seconds later the horseman would suddenly burst into a gallop—he had just heard the shell—and the next moment the white puff of the burst would appear.

The range was so great that one could not rely upon any accuracy of fire, but the moral effect on the enemy was obvious. One afternoon I boosted off several rounds at a convoy of camels, and the beasts and their drivers scattered in all directions. On another occasion I put the wind up two horsemen, Germans or Austrians, to judge by their uniform, in a similar manner.

It was the same with the "grass cutters." In the early morning a single shell was sufficient to put an immediate stop to their activities for the day.

When using the east O.P. the most interesting targets were the village of Furkhah, where enemy activity was often

to be seen, and the O.P. on the Follies. Successive bombardments had knocked about the former place considerably and it must have been nothing but a mass of ruins. One afternoon I had the satisfaction of getting two direct hits on the O.P., after having seen a man approach the spot.

I remember one occasion, a Sunday morning, when I saw two men—Germans or Austrians, to judge by their uniform—walking along a terrace on the lower slopes of the Follies. They were too far off to be touched by rifle fire and too low down for our shells to reach them, the crest of Kefr Ain being in the way. For some considerable time I watched the pair moving among the olive trees. Eventually they went into a large cave, and did not appear again.

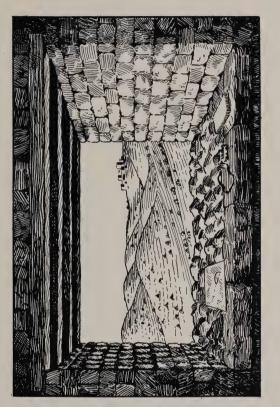
Curiously enough from Kefr Ain I saw more of the enemy

in the line than at any other place during the war.

At night time the infantry were always busily occupied with patrol work in the Wadi el Jib, immediately below Kefr Ain, and the mouth of the Wadi Rashid. On these occasions there was always considerable promiscuous rifle fire and bombing, but generally speaking there were no casualties. A tragic exception was the case of a young R.E. subaltern who went out with the infantry to inspect the Wadi Rashid with a view to road making when the great advance started. The party fell in with a number of the enemy and the engineer was killed, although all the infantry got back unscratched.

Generally speaking life on Kefr Ain was very peaceful, the only times that the enemy paid us any attention being in the mornings and evenings when the reliefs were taking place. On such occasions the enemy gunners from a battery to our left flank were in the habit of putting over a few enfilade rounds which bursts beautifully, a few yards above the hill. One morning a party of Indians were sitting about, just below the crest, when one of these shells burst right in the middle of the group, the smoke blotting out everything for the time being. I expected to see most of the men casualties, but when the smoke cleared away it transpired that, by some miraculous chance, not a single man had been hurt.

They were fine fellows, those Indians, and tremendously keen on their job. I particularly admired their native M.O., a white-haired old fellow, who never missed a day without making the stiff climb to the top of Kefr Ain from his H.Q. in the Wadi Rima, to see how his men were getting on. He always appeared in the middle of the afternoon, whether there were any sick or not, and would stay to take a cup of tea in the mess. He had a wonderful command of English and had closely studied the topography and history of Palestine, so that he was a veritable mine of interesting information.



View of Furkhah.

From the east O.P.

Kefr Ain, Wadi el Jib.



Early in August the Brigade received instructions to pull out of the line for service elsewhere. The order applied to most of the divisional artillery. The batteries concerned congregated in the hills north of the Wadi el Jib, some eight miles east of Kefr Ain, the movement being preliminary to a raid on an extensive scale against some strong enemy works on the Ghurabeh Ridge.

Lord Allenby's Despatch of September 18th, 1918, gives the following account of the affair:—

"A raid on a larger scale, carried out on August 12th by the Leinster Regiment, 54th Sikhs, and 1st Battalion 101st Grenadiers, was crowned with complete success. The objective was the enemy's defences on the El Burj-Ghurabeh Ridge, north-west of Sinjil. This ridge is some 5,000 yards in length, and lies 2,000 yards in front of our line. It was held by 800 rifles and thirty-six machine guns. The defences consisted of strongly-built sangars, protected by thick wire entanglements. The approaches to it are rocky and broken, involving a climb of 900 feet. The position was attacked from both flanks. The enemy was surprised. His losses were heavy, and the raiders brought back 239 prisoners, including a battalion commander and sixteen officers, and thirteen guns. Great dash was shown by all the troops taking part in it."

In this raid one of the biggest concentrations of artillery during the whole Palestine campaign was made, most of the guns of the division forming the 20th Corps being in action.

Very cautious registration of the ridge was carried out by every battery, so that the enemy's suspicions should not be aroused, and he seems to have been in total ignorance of the coming blow.

I was acting as Battery F.O.O. on this occasion, and the preliminary bombardment of the position, which took place about 10 p.m., was the most spectacular artillery display I witnessed during the whole war. The effect of this was to absolutely pulverise the works, and the infantry met with practically no opposition while advancing to the attack. At first the enemy's guns retaliated but soon ceased firing, and there is little doubt that they commenced to retire, thinking that we meant to break through at this point.

Actually of course no such thing was attempted, the object of the raid being to give the raw Indian drafts, taking part, an idea of the power of concentrated artillery fire, and so inspire them with confidence. As a spectacular demonstration and in every other way the raid was a complete success.

After the "show" we returned to our old battery and section positions, and for a short while life continued in its accustomed groove.

CHAPTER 17.

ON THE ROAD TO JERICHO.

At the end of August the 75th Battery received instructions to draw out of the line. At the time I was taking my turn as F.O.O. on Kefr Ain, and quite unexpectedly I received orders to hand over all registers and other information relating to the position to the officer of another battery, and to rejoin my unit at a rest position south of Neby Saleh.

The cause of this movement was quite a mystery, particularly as the other batteries of the brigade did not receive similar orders. The only information vouchsafed was that we were destined for special and important duty.

A couple of days were spent in thoroughly overhauling our gear, indenting on D.A.D.O.S., for deficiences, and in other ways preparing for the move. Two days later, the 4th September, found us encamped on the outskirts of Jerusalem after a long treck across country and along the Nablus-Ierusalem road.

The bivouac area allotted to us joined the main road at the northern end of the Valley of Jehoshaphat. It was certainly not a comfortable spot in which to camp. The ground was hard and stony, there was not a blade of grass or other green thing within measurable distance, a continual stream of traffic was passing up and down the road, raising clouds of dust, while all the itinerant vendors of the City—and their number seemed legion,— with one accord marked us down as their especial prey.

They commenced to arrive a few minutes after we made camp, armed with baskets of merchandise and camp stools, and their numbers appeared to increase hourly.

Under the circumstances any attempt at privacy was quite out of the question. At first they wandered all over the camp, but a flow of language, forceful and eloquent, resulted in their keeping to the outskirts. Here they took up permanent positions. We attempted to chase them still further, but as fast as they were driven away from one side, another crowd, or the same, appeared opposite. As they were mostly women and children the use of actual force was out of the question.

Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.

From the Nablus Road at the upper end of the Vale of Jehoshaphat. the transfer at the common transfer of the co

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At last we gave up the unequal struggle, and resigned ourselves to the inevitable. True there were certain domestic details connected with camp life which, previously, we had not been in the habit of flaunting before the public gaze, but as the admiring andience did not appear to be disturbed in any way, there seemed no valid reason why we should feel abashed.

At Jerusalem we learned that our destination was to be the Jordan Valley, a by-no-means cheering prospect, for even in September the temperature in this "hole in the earth" is distinctly tropical.

Life in the Holy City had changed greatly for the better since my previous visits. To quote from one of my letters to Blighty—"I wish I could tell you of all the wonderful changes which have taken place here during the last few months, but most of them touch directly, or indirectly, military matters and are consequently taboo. However, it is safe to say that we shall leave the city miles better than we found it. It will be clean for one thing, and possess a water supply for another." Straying to other matters the letter continues-"I cannot help chuckling to myself at life's incongruity. Picture your humble servant in the middle of the Vale of Jehoshaphat lying in a perfect travesty of a tent—a 'Gyppo' Ordinance 'bivvie,'--reading of all things Mrs. Henry Wood's 'The Channings,' the only example of light literature available. To-day I am going shopping, or in other words, to pay a visit to the Ordnance, to get some socks and other things. The clothes are top-hole value if you can find the requisite fit, which is not always easy.

I must dry up. Jarvis, my cockney batman,—a lad of the village—has just brought my shaving water, and my morning tea and biscuits await me. Not too bad considering there's a war on somewhere!"

The battery was due to move on the afternoon of the 5th September, the parade being ordered for 2 p.m. A quarter of an hour before this time the sergeant of one of my sections routed me out with the cheering information that a man of his sub-section was drunk and incapable. I accompanied him to investigate the charge. As I approached the alleged offender he jumped to his feet and saluted smartly.

"The Sergeant says I'm drunk, Sir. But I'm not. Do I look drunk?"

I was rather nonplussed. The fellow certainly appeared to be sober.

"You must have made a mistake, Sergeant."

"So it appears, Sir," remarked the No. 1, somewhat grimly.

I turned on my heel, and had proceeded a few yards, when I heard a thud. On looking back I saw the accused

man had fallen to the ground absolutely incapable. He was as "tight as a fiddler," but by a tremendous effort he had pulled himself together while I was speaking to him.

Almost at the same time two similar cases were reported in the other sections. The explanation was simple. The men had purchased some vile concoction of raw spirit from the vendors of food stuffs and lemonade, who infested the outskirts of the camp. So potent was this "fire-water" that those who indulged in it were quickly "blind to the world."

It was a problem to know what to do with these "blottos." Obviously we could not prop them up on a limber wagon during the march through the Holy City, neither had we the means or the men to carry them. Equally impracticable was the suggestion to requisition a Ford Ambulance to get them to the other side of the City. Our only vehicle, other than the guns and gun wagons, was a G.S. wagon, and eventually we put all three defaulters into this and covered them with tent canvas. In this manner the trio journeyed unconsciously past the ancient walls of Jerusalem.

The whole population turned out to watch our progress, and I suppose we presented a most war-like sight. That we were begrimed by the dust of ages goes without saying.

A march of an hour-and-a-half brought us to the village of Bethany on the south side of the Mount of Olives. Here we watered and fed the horses and settled down for a few hours' rest, until darkness brought a certain amount of relief from the heat.

At the time we felt a grateful sense of appreciation for the forethought of the great ones in allowing us to march during the cool of the night, but in the light of subsequent events it was obvious that no such kindly consideration entered their minds.

The reason was that from this time onward all movement of troops took place during the hours of darkness, an essential part of the concentration plan for the great offensive shortly to be launched.

Bethany proved to be a miserable collection of mud and stone hovels, although of course it is rich in Biblical interest.

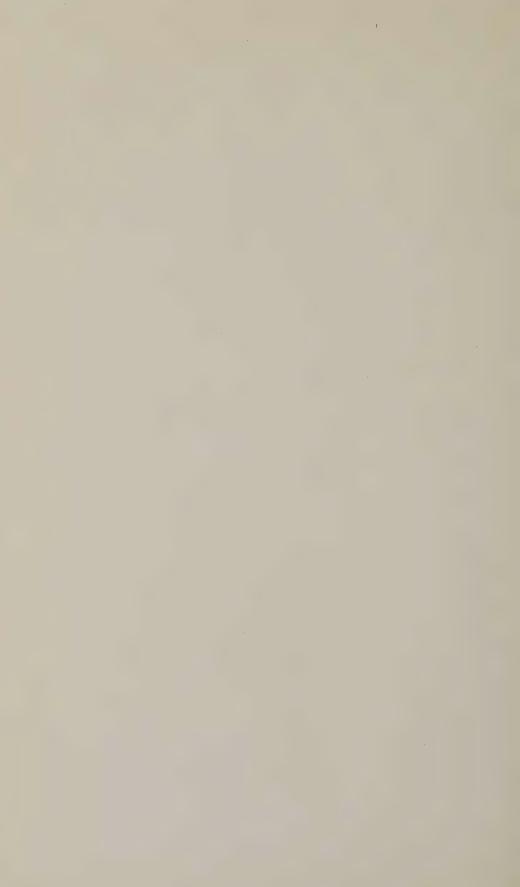
Here was situated the house of Simon the leper (St. Matt. XXVI, 6—9), and it was in this village that Christ performed the miracle of raising Lazarus from the grave. (St. John XI, 1-46).

When the twinkling lights appeared in the doorways and windows of the poor hamlet we harnessed our teams and moved off along the Jericho road.

This march, through the long hours of the night, was one of the most impressive and strange I have ever experienced.



By kind permission of The Rev. J. A. Nash.



The sky was clear and starlit, and the temperature, anyway at first, was pleasantly cool. On either side were the dark outlines of rounded hills. The road was a continual descent, although in the darkness it was impossible to perceive this, and the manner in which the wheelers held back in the traces told its tale of easy going.

This highway follows one of the oldest routes in the world, the caravan track to the east. Before war laid its stifling grip upon this country of barren hills and desert plains the pass formed the gateway between Palestine and the country east of Jordan, Es Salt, Amman, and even far-away Baghdad. Along this way came the caravans, carrying the produce of distant lands, for sale in the Holy City, or westward in the seaboard country.

As the hours wore on the temperature became distinctly warmer, and the air in the valley seemed breathless. One by one the men discarded their tunics and caps, and the frequent halts were more than welcome. Still the road fell away in front of us, and we had the feeling of marching into the mouth of a furnace.

On a night march the hour before dawn is always the most trying. A great weariness seems to come over one, and it is very difficult to keep awake. On this occasion the sudden rise of temperature, as we descended lower and lower into the valley, accentuated the feeling.

At last the pearly light of dawn began to creep into the sky. We halted once more and served out a ration of tea to all ranks. By the time that this was consumed it was quite light.

A landscape of unutterable desolation lay before us. Not a tree or blade of grass was to be seen, only towering hills of rock and brown earth, truly a wilderness. The march was resumed, and an hour later we reached a spot on the road where the R.E's had constructed large reservoirs, known by the delightful name of Talaat ed Dumm. Here, in a small open space by the roadside, we bivouaced.

If a more dreary country exists on the face of this globe I have still to hear of it. I cannot conceive any place more appallingly desolate. Yet the cheery souls who looked after the reservoirs seemed happy enough. Truly the British Tommy is a wonderful fellow.

As there was not a vestige of natural shade we pitched our "bivvies" by the roadside and sweltered in the sultry heat beneath. As the customary costume for all troops in the hills was a shirt, a pair of shorts, putties, boots, and of course the inevitable sun helmet, we had already reached the irreducible minimum, and there was no relief to be gained in this direction. When walking in the open everyone wore his handkerchief hanging from his topic as an added protection

to the spine Even so, before the end of the day, the Battery Captain had "gone down" with the sun and had to be hurriedly evacuated to Jerusalem.

In the middle of the day the heat was terrific, certainly the worst any of us had so far experienced and a foretaste of "what was coming to us" lower down.

Night brought no relief and everyone was touchy and full of grouses. Towards midnight we struck camp once more and resumed our downward march into the valley. The experience of the previous night was repeated, only that it was, if anything, more trying.

A wind, fiercely hot, was blowing up from the valley and on either side the mud hills rose abruptly steep and of grotesque outline, a country such as one traverses only in the wildest nightmares. Again, just before dawn, a great drowsiness descended upon all. Mounted men lurched in their saddles as they rode and the gunners were glad to dismount from the vehicles and walk to keep themselves awake.

Gradually the light gained strength. We were still in the pass, and the hills appeared just as barren as at Talaat ed Dumm, only more broken and angular. The country reminded me of the Wadi Ghuzze on a vastly bigger scale.

Suddenly, a turn in the road brought the column on to the open plain of Jericho, and a wonderful panorama lay before us. In the far distance, on the other side of the valley, were the dark, blue-black, outlines of the mountains of Moab silhouetted against the softly-coloured light of early dawn. To the right, a few miles away, was the mirror-like basin of the Dead Sea, with the horizon lost in the haze. To the left extended the wilderness we had just left.

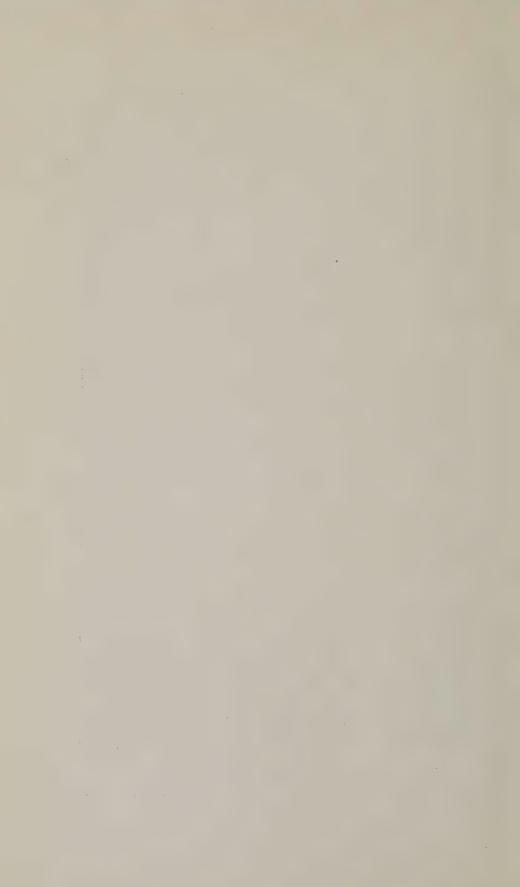
Now that we were clear of the pass the temperature was much less oppressive, and for the first time in two days one felt a certain "joie de vive."

For two hours or so we marched across the plain, following the metalled road which eventually led us to Eriha, the modern village of Jericho. The temperature rose quickly, and by 7 a.m. it was uncomfortably hot. Despite the fact that all the members of the battery were thoroughly inured to the heat of Egypt, and the lesser temperature of the hills of Palestine in summer, the sudden transition to the scorching atmosphere of the Jordan Valley was a severe strain on everyone. No doubt this was, in a large measure, due to the fact that the heat was of a damp clammy nature. Also it must be remembered that Jericho is no less than 3,600 feet below the level of Jerusalem and 1,000 feet below sea level, so that the atmospheric pressure was considerably increased, and we felt the effects accordingly.



1.—Talaat ed Dumm.

Talaat ed Dumm.
 The Jordan and the Ghoranyeh Bridgehead.
 Australians bringing in men of the 14th Turkish Army Corps. Amman
 (30th September, 1918.)



At 9 a.m. we were passing through the streets of modern Jericho, a poor, parched - up village, the principal building being a tumbled-down looking shack, rejoicing in the proud title of the "Gilgal Hotel." On the north side a camping area near to a stream was allotted to us, and we were by no means sorry to pitch the "bivvies" and indulge in a much needed rest. A "water and feed" for the horses and the merest apology for a "brush down" was all that we attempted in the way of the usual stable hour.

In the evening the Major and the Junior Officers, with the exception of the orderly officer of the day, repaired to the "Gilgal Hotel," to revel at its festive board. Considering the war conditions, and the place, the meal might have been worse, and afterwards we made the night hideous by playing the latest "rags" on a terribly ancient and out-of-tune piano and bellowing the words in chorus.

Needless to say there were no visitors staying in the place, and the proprietor and his family appeared to regard our proceedings as a great joke.

The next day orders were issued to the battery to take up a position of the Wadi el Auja, seven miles north of Jericho, and to send a detached section of two guns to occupy a defensive position at the Hajlah bridgehead, about six miles south-east of Jericho and three-and-a-half miles north of the Dead Sea.

Being the senior section commander, the B.C. decided that mine should be the detached section, and in the afternoon I set off to reconnoitre the position.

I proceeded along the main Jericho—es Salt road, which led to El Ghoraniyeh bridgehead. At a distance of four miles from Jericho I came to a spot where the level of the road drops suddenly through a tangled mass of broken mud hillocks, sometimes rounded, and at others sheer cliffs, to the deep gorge of the Jordan. This vast cutting, which the river has carved out of the soft soil on its way to the Dead Sea, is known as "the Ghor." In character it is very similar to the Wadi Ghuzze, only on a much bigger scale.

In a pocket behind one of the hillocks I found the Headquarters of the C.R.A. Right Sector, who was a Major having under his command the Ayrshire Battery, the Somerset Battery, and 32nd Mountain Battery.

The Major was away when I arrived, but in the late afternoon he returned to camp in a "flivver." After a hasty tea he took me in the car along a wire track skirting the river to the Hajlah bridgehead and indicated a position nearby for the guns to occupy.

I had sent my horse back to the battery along the main road, and the C.R.A. motored me over to Jericho, taking a direct route across the plain.

There were, of course, no roads and nothing but the tracks of numberless vehicles, which had passed the same way to indicate the route. It was a country almost entirely devoid of land marks with the exception of a gaunt pile of stone buildings, known as "Kusr Hajlah," the home of a few devout monks,

When I reached the camping area at Jericho I found the spot deserted except for my section, the guns and wagons of which were harnessed-up ready to move off. The other two sections of the battery had departed half-an-hour previously.

My batman managed to provide a simple meal, which I hurriedly consumed, for I was anxious to move while it was still daylight.

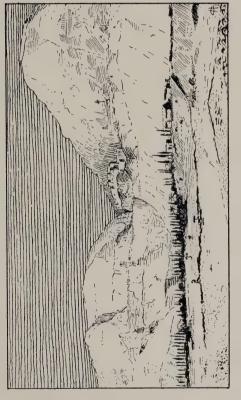
In the gathering gloom we set out. Soon the little column was toiling over the dusty plain at a slow pace, for the going was heavy. Before long I realised that I should have difficulty in finding the way, particularly after the daylight had finally departed. While motoring across the plain I had endeavoured to memorise the route, but this was difficult in the absence of any definite landmarks, and now that we were travelling in the opposite direction the task of finding the way was by no means an easy one. I set my compass, so as to march on a bearing I thought to be approximately correct, and then endeavoured to follow a line of wheel tracks which proceeded in the required direction.

Soon it was pitch dark and the "going" rapidly became heavier. There was nothing for it but to push on and hope for the best.

At the end of two hours' heavy marching there was not a single landmark in sight and I came to the conclusion that I had completely lost my way. We had not encountered a soul and not a light was to be seen across the plain. My only hope, therefore, was to strike the monastery I had noticed during the motor journey from Hajlad, but as it was much too dark to locate this and, as we failed to come upon it by accident, the only alternative was to shake down for the night and be prepared to move as soon as we could see the way in the morning.

I was somewhat loath to adopt this course, because, for all I knew, the whole plain might be under enemy observation, and a moving section of guns would make a fine target.

I need not have worried myself. The Turks had only one gun which could fire a shell beyond the Jordan—the famous "Jericho Jane," of which more anon—and the position which the gun occupied in the Wadi Nimrin made it impossible to reduce the range sufficiently to hit any targets near the river and still clear the crest. Consequently we were perfectly safe.



Jericho.

The line of trees marks the course of the stream which flows from Elisha's Spring, Tell es-Sultán.

Behind are the towering heights of Mt. Quarantania (Jebel Kuruntul) the supposed scene of our Lord's temptation.



With the first sign of the coming dawn I was up and doing. The No's 1 had some difficulty in getting the men on parade, but at length we were ready to move off.

In the twilight of the coming day it was possible to identify the surrounding landscape. I was surprised and pleased to find that the Kusr Hajlah monastery was only a few hundred yards away, and consequently it was perfectly easy to determine our direction of march. An hour later we had reached the selected position covering the Hajlah bridgehead.

The position was really not a bad one. There was a good deal of low scrub about, which formed excellent camouflage for the gun pits, and one or two stunted trees which offered a small measure of natural shade under which to pitch the "bivvies." Furthermore we were close to the river. Such was our home for the next two weeks.

The first task, after having arranged the camp and built and camouflaged the gun pits, was to make the aquaintance of the neighbouring units, particularly the infantry we were covering.

Fifty yards or so away was the headquarters of a regiment of Indian Cavalry, while on the opposite side of the river, guarding the bridgehead, was a company of Indian Infantry.

The Officers of the former Arm very generously offered me the hospitality of their mess, a kindness of which I thankfully availed myself until they left the position a week later.

The day after our arrival I went across to the infantry on the other side of the river to call upon the British officer in charge and to make arrangements for our guns to register in front of the wire. I found two cheery "two-pippers" who made me royally welcome. They were only too pleased to see a new face in such a dead and alive spot. For some weeks there had been nothing to do except sit behind the barbed wire entanglements which guarded the bridgehead, and to wonder if Johnny would ever have the energy to break through our cavalry screen and attack them. Actually he never attempted any such thing.

I arranged that the guns should register on the following afternoon. At the appointed time I crossed the river and met the senior of the two at an observation dugout they had built behind the front line wire. My signallers had already run out a telephone line from the section. I worked out the range, angle of sight, and corrector, and passed the orders through to the guns. No. 1 gun ranged first.

We sat on a sandy hillock just above the dugout to watch the result of the firing.

"No. 1 gun fired, Sir," said the signaller.

Almost at the same moment came the noise of the shell overhead, and the smoke of the burst appeared from a hollow in the ground a little to the right. I corrected the line, reduced the range slightly and gave the order to

The result was startlingly unexpected and might have been serious. The shell screeched past, apparently only a yard or so above our heads, and burst twenty-five yards in front of us. With a slightly shorter range we should almost certainly have been hit. To say that my infantry friend received a shock is to put it mildly. I tried to make him think that the whole affair was perfectly normal, but he was difficult to convince, and in fact considered we had done quite enough ranging for one day. However, I calmed his shattered nerves and boosted off a round from No. 2 gun, taking care to add a couple of hundred yards to the range. The shell burst where I expected and I duly logged the necessary particulars. This was the last time we fired the guns of the section during the war.

Life in the Jordan Valley was lazy, dull, and very trying, a condition of affairs which is reflected by the following extracts from my letters home:-

"This is the warmest thing in climates I've struck yet. Fortunately the heat agrees with me and I think I shall be able to stand it, although it has already knocked over quite a number of our men. Coming here is an opportunity I would not have missed for worlds. The scenery is magnificently wild, quite unlike anything I have met previously, and particularly wonderful under the lighting effects of dawn and sunset," and again :-

"Monday morning, 7 a.m., surely a suitable time for letter writing: as a matter of fact the early hours of the day are the only time one has the energy to do anything. There is practically no work to be done, except looking after the horses, a task which takes an hour or so in the early morning and late evening. During the day we sleep, if it is possible to do so in a temperature of 110° or more. It must be the most enervating spot in the world, and there is a great deal of sickness. The air is full of moisture due to the proximity of the marshy jungle bordering the river which makes matters worse. There are legions of mosquitos, and at night the place is alive with sand flies.

Speaking of the river, I had a swim in the Holy Waters vesterday morning. It is a dirty, muddy stream, but the bathe was a welcome relaxation. On another occasion I worked up sufficient energy to ride some three miles over the slime pits, as the Bible describes this part of the valley, to the shores of the Dead Sea. It is much like any other stony beach, but the water is edged with a thick deposit of salt.

I did not bathe.



Ain Hajlah, Plain of Jericho.

The Beth Hoglah of the Old Testament. Nearby is the Monastery of Kusr Hajlah. May, 1925.



There is one saving grace about the whole show. You can get *ice* from the canteen. This may seem a curious thing to affect life, but you will realise to what depths we have sunk when I tell you that our thoughts centre almost exclusively on where the next iced drink is coming from and what it will be."

Bathing in the river was a very pleasant pastime and the means of getting cool for a short while, but it was only with the greatest determination one could work up sufficient energy to undertake the walk down to the river and to face the heat which followed the exertion of a bathe. Most of the men discarded their shirts entirely and lived in a sun helmet, a pair of shorts and boots.

Riding in shorts was strictly against regulations as the friction on the knees was apt to cause septic sores. One day an Australian cavalryman was riding along the main road near the river garbed as described above. Suddenly he spotted a large Rolls-Royce car approaching, flying a small Union Jack pennant on the radiator cap.

The Aussie realised that a very superior form of Tin Hat was approaching and that he was very likely "for it." But his ready resource, characteristic of his countrymen, saved the situation. He dismounted hastily, took off his shorts, and garbed only in a sun helmet and a pair of boots rode past the great man as "cool as a cucumber."

One afternoon an orderly came up to my "bivvie," saluted, and gave me a large parcel wrapped round with old newspaper.

"With the compliments of the sergeant-in-charge of the Bridgehead Guard, sir," he announced.

I thanked him appropriately and he withdrew.

The offering proved to be a large fish caught in the river. We cooked this for the evening meal, and although the flavour was rather muddy, it was a great treat after weeks of tinned food.

I was somewhat mystified as to the reason of this sudden burst of generosity on the part of the donor, but enlightenment followed the next day.

"The compliments of the sergeant-in-charge of the Bridgehead Guard and would the officer commanding the Detached Section of the 75th Battery, R.F.A., oblige him with the loan of a horse so that he might ride to the canteen at Jericho?"

Even as late in the year as September the conditions of life in the proximity of the river and the Dead Sea were extremely trying. What they must have been like in the height of summer I do not care to imagine. After seven in the morning the heat was tremendous, and there was not a breath of air stirring. As the day wore on the temperature

gradually rose, and in the middle of the afternoon a hot breeze sprang up, like the breath from a furnace mouth, which carried with it clouds of the finest dust. To add to the discomfort of the daytime innumerable flies drove us nearly crazy. They were a particularly vicious sort and possessed a form of sting or trunk with which they punctured the skin, causing a sharp dart of pain.

At sunset the wind dropped and the temperature moderated somewhat. The next two or three hours were the only pleasant ones of the twenty-four. At half past nine or ten p.m., when one was thinking of retiring for the night the mosquitos commenced their attacks. In desperation one sought the protection of a mosquito-net, but it was merely a case of out of the frying pan into the fire, for the moment one lay down the sand flies started to irritate.

Sand flies are the worst insect pests I have ever encountered or ever hope to. They are almost too small to see and they find their way into everything, clothes, bedding and through mosquito netting. Wherever they bite they set up the most violent irritation, and as they attack in hundreds all over the body life becomes a mild form of hell. To scratch one's self is useless. The persistent itching is too general to be dealt with in this way. The only chance of relief is to get up and move about; pipe smoking also helps.

Pariah dogs were another night annoyance. The pack was led by a jackal, and the mournful cries of these miserable beasts as they roamed about the valley during the hours of darkness in search of food were most annoying.

One night I was awakened by the pattering of padded feet round my "bivvie" and on looking out I saw a large jackal. I shot at him with my revolver but missed.

Another visitation occurred in the daytime. One afternoon I was lying on my camp bed, when suddenly there was a swishing sound and a large snake glided on to my recumbent form. Fortunately an involuntary movement on my part, caused it to slip away under the flap of the "bivvie" into the scrub outside. I shouted to my batman and together we searched the spot but could find no trace of the visitor.

The thick jungle or undergrowth which extends along the banks of the river, contained all manner of wild things, but mostly it was too dense to penetrate. Rumour had it that wild pigs were to be found and several of the cavalrymen went out in the hope of sticking some, but without success.



The Jordan.

Near the Hajlah Bridgehead, Looking South.



CHAPTER 18.

THE GREAT PUSH.

A week after our arrival in the valley, the Indian Cavalry received orders to pack up preparatory to an extensive move to an unnamed destination. This was a blow, personally, as it necessitated making my own messing arrangements and I had much enjoyed the society and hospitality of my neighbours' mess. During the two days preceding the move, the Indians were very busy over the extraordinary task of building dummy horses.

This formed part of the biggest camouflage "stunt" of the war. Stout stakes were cut from the undergrowth along the banks of the Jordan, to form the legs of the dummy animals, bundles of straw formed the bodies, and a stout stick, bound round with straw, and a knob of straw on the end, formed the neck and head.

Every horse on the lines had its dummy counterpart erected beside it, while sham men, similarly constructed, were dotted about the camp.

In the darkness two nights later practically the whole of the cavalry in the Jordan Valley departed, leaving their camps standing with hundreds of dummy horses and men as the only occupants. It was positively uncanny to ride about the valley and come suddenly upon a camp peopled by such naturallooking fakes.

This dummy camp business, and the departure of the cavalry, was only a small part of the vast plan of concentrating the whole of the available strength of the E.E.F., in the orange groves round Jaffa for the coming blow against the Turkish right flank. At the same time, by every means in our power, we strove to make the enemy believe that the attack would take place along the Nablus road.

With this end in view all troops marched to the west at night time, while during the day small detachments were told

off to march eastward to counterfeit a general movement of the force in this direction. Similarly in the Jordan Valley, the small detachments of Australian Light Horse, who took the place of the Indian Cavalry, cantered about in the most dusty spots they could find, so as to give the enemy the impression that the area was strongly held. Aerial observation of the dummy horse lines gave him the same idea.

Meanwhile units from all parts of the front were beginning to congregate under cover of the orange groves around Jaffa. To quote from Lord Allenby's despatch of October 31st, 1918:—

"The concentration in the coastal plan was carried out by night, and every precaution was taken to prevent any increased movement becoming apparent to the Turks. Full use of the many groves round Ramleh, Ludd, and Jaffa, was made to conceal troops during the day. The chief factor in the secrecy maintained must be attributed, however, to the supremacy in the air which had been obtained by the Royal Air Force. The process of wearing down the enemy's aircraft had been going on all through the summer. During one week in June, one hundred hostile aeroplanes had crossed our lines. During the last week in August this number had decreased to eighteen. In the next few days a number were shot down, with the result that only four ventured to cross our lines during the period of concentration."

The secrecy with which the concentration was carried out is exemplified by the experience of a friend of mine attached to G.H.Q., at Surafend. In the course of his duties he had occasion to call-up on the telephone a unit he supposes, from information available, to be in the Jordan Valley. He was much surprised when he got through almost at once, instead of having to wait a considerable time as he anticipated. The reason of this was explained the next day, when, quite by chance, he came upon the unit encamped in an orange grove practically adjoining G.H.Q.

A week or so before the attack was due to start the Fast Hotel at Jerusalem, which, as previously mentioned, was being run by the Army and Navy Canteen Board for the benefit of officers on leave, was closed for an indefinite period, and the news went round that it was to be used as G.H.Q.

No doubt this information spread through the bazaars of the city with lightning speed, and quickly became known to the enemy, as it was intended that it should.

In a few days a number of staff officers duly appeared and there was much coming and going of orderlies, signallers, staff cars and so on. The conspicuous red bands and tabs of the staff became a familiar sight in the streets of the city.

The whole affair was of course a blind. The real G.H.Q. never left the vicinity of Jaffa.

The Jordan Valley, in common with several other wide stretches of the front, was very lightly held, in fact "watched" is a more suitable term to use. When the show started on the 19th of September the various small units in the valley were collected together into one force under Major-Gen. Sir E. W. C. Chaytor, K.C.M.G., C.B., a Staff Officer of the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division and became known as Chaytor's Force.

The Force was made up as follows:-

HEADQUARTERS.

Mounted Troops-

Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division (less one Squadron).

Artillery-

A/263 Battery, R.F.A.

No. 195 Heavy Battery, R.G.A.

29th and 32nd (Indian) Mounted Batteries, R.G.A.

No. 6 (Medium) Trench Mortar Battery R.A.

Nos. 96, 102, 103, Anti-Aircaft Sections, R.A.

Engineers-

Detachment No. 35 A.T. Company, R.E.

Infantry-

38th and 39th Battalions Royal Fusiliers.

20th Indian Brigade.

1st and 2nd Battalions British West Indies Regiment.

In the right sector of the valley the troops were, a few Indians with two white officers guarding the Hajlah bridgehead, a troop of the 2nd Australian Light Horse and the two guns of my section, the latter having the proud honour of alone holding the extreme right flank of the British Army when the great attack developed. Fortunately for us the Turk did not attempt a trial of strength. Had he done so we should certainly have been in "queer street."

Under the circumstances, the following order from the C.R.A., was a delightful reminder that at any moment it might be necessary to be up and away.

G.78.

O.C., Ayrshire Battery.

O.C., Somerset Battery.

O.C., 32nd Mountain Battery.

O.C., Detached Section, A/263 Bde.

In the event of an attack developing in either Sector, all Batteries in both Sectors will harness up and stand to.

. . . . for Major, R.H.A. C.R.A. RIGHT SECTOR.

12.9.13.

When the Indian Cavalry departed a troop of Australian Light Horse took their place. They were a fine crowd of stalwarts, typical examples of their countrymen. Every evening the officer-in-charge came over to my camp for a chat and a smoke, and although I have forgotten his name, I remember our conversations with great pleasure. I wonder if these lines will ever meet his eye!

I tried to persuade him to come over early so that he might share my frugal evening meal, but he would not do so.

"You see," he said, "the boys would think I was trying to 'come it over them' and they wouldn't like it."

This remark seemed to epitomise the whole difference of outlook between the Colonial Troops or those from the Mother Country, such difference, however, in no way detracted from the achievements of either.

The great push was launched on the 19th with an overwhelming concentration of troops operating over a few miles of front in the coastal section.

Some notes of mine, written at the time, summarise the events as they affected us in the Jordan Valley.

18th September.

"I hear to-morrow is the day," said the Australian.

We sat together before the tent door, smoking and talking. In the evening he generally came across to my 'bivvie' to wile away an hour or so. He knew that I was lonely and I dare say he was also, anyway these evening meetings were very pleasant moments in the otherwise drab monotony of waiting.

Our talk generally ranged over the campaign of the previous year, the fights of Beersheba and Sheria and the great advance through Philistia and the hills. The Aussie had a fund of good stories to recount of the time when the advance moved so swiftly that it was entirely a cavalry war, tales full of blunt humour and pathos, and brave devotion to duty.

The talk invariably came round to the subject uppermost in our minds at this time—the great 'push.' Everyone knew that zero hour could not be long delayed, but the secret was closely kept.

"Yes," he continued, "I hear the show starts to-morrow. Zero hour will probably be at dawn," and then we fell to discussing what the result of the blow would be, and whether the Turks would sue for peace.

About nine o'clock we heard the first gun fire, a far away, distant boom, coming to us through the still moon-lit night. It was followed by other reports, a rapidly rising crescendo of



Northern End of the Dead Sea.

By kind permission of The Rev. J. A. Nash.

orthern End of the Dea Looking East. May, 1925.



sound, until we knew that a great bombardment was in progress over a wide front.

We got up and went to the top of an adjacent sand hill and looked out across the Jericho plain towards the hills.

The distant heights were flicked by stars of dancing light, which flashed into being only to disappear at once. They were the bursts of shrapnel

"Zero hour was earlier than you thought," I remarked. But I was mistaken.

All night the roar of distant gunfire continued and later, when I turned into my valise, I was reminded strongly of a night in 1916 when, in camp with the Artists Rifles at Romford, Essex.* I heard the guns firing on the Somme. Again I heard these sinister tapping thuds of sound, seeming to come through the earth rather than the air, telling of heavy shelling a long way off.

19th September.

At dawn this morning—the 19th—the attack started. All day the air has been rent with sounds of gunfire, the sharp reports of field guns and the dull roar of the heavies.

It has been one of the strangest days I have ever spent, sitting thus idly in my tent, listening to the sounds of the battle in which we can take no part. Still we have our job to do I suppose and must not grumble, even if it is a waiting game.

Noon. The rumour has reached us that the Cavalry have broken through on the left and the 5th Division are advancing north through the hills.

There has been very heavy firing this afternoon from 1520 to 1600. I wonder if the Turks are counter-attacking? 20th September.

All night the guns have been active, but the sounds are getting fainter. This argues well, the Turks must be retiring.

At breadfast time a News Bulletin was brought to me. The news is splendid:— Situation 1500, 19th aaa., Cavalry well on the way to LEJJUM aaa. 5 LHB crossed TUL-KERUM-NABLUS road 4 miles west of NABLUS aaa. 54th Div. already wheeled into hills aaa. Our Infantry just outside TUL-KERUM aaa. Enemy personnel, transport, guns have been moving through Tul-Kerum all day aaa. These have been bombarded by 40 of our aeroplanes aaa. 3400 prisoners captured aaa. Ends." 0915 The sounds of very heavy gun fire from N.N.W. is reaching us. Is it the attack on Nablus, I wonder? This afternoon the sound of firing has ceased. Does this mean that the Turks are retiring so rapidly

^{*}Only those who occupied tents heard this bombardment. The men in huts did not notice anything unusual, showing that the sound must have travelled through the earth.

that we have lost touch or is it merely the inevitable pause while the gun trails are in the air? Perhaps Nablus has fallen!

situation o900 aaa. 53rd Division KH. JEBUT SM MOPIAMNEH, and KH ABU MALUL aaa. 10th Division captured FURKHAH aaa. Rt. Bde. 10th Division on line SELFIT-SEKAMEN at 0430 and now moving on ISKAKA MERDA aaa. Left Bde hold KURBET BIR ET TELL aaa. 53rd Div. advancing N. of MEJDIL BENT FEDL and SH HATTIM 10th Div. captured 100 prisoners night 19/20 aaa. 53rd Div. captured 1'77 mm. gun night 19/20 aaa Ends.'

The news from the left is, if anything, better. 'Chaytors Force wire begins, aaa. Situation 21st Corps o8oo to-day aaa. 54th Div. on line BDEH EEJWA WADI KOLA aaa. 3rd Indian Div. KEFR KELT point 2000 yds. west AZEUM-JIMUS aaa. 7th Indian Div. FELAINIEH-MEJDAL TAIBIEH aaa. 10th Div. M of TUL KERAM with H.Q. in town aaa. Our casualties light aaa. 5500 prisoners captured aaa. All documents enemy, 22nd Army Corps captured intact aaa. JENIN aerodrome located this morning aaa Ends.'

21st September.

The night has been quiet with very slight sounds of gunfire. This morning Johnny is shelling round Jericho with his long range gun "Jericho Jane" from east of the Jordan. It has a range of 20,000 yards. Probably an old naval gun. 22nd September.

Morning quiet, in the afternoon received orders to prepare to move at short notice. Wonder what our job is?

23rd September.

Orders arrived to rejoin battery at once. A great volume of smoke is rising from the hills in the direction of Shunet Nimrin. The enemy is burning his dumps.

Struck camp and moved across to Ghoraniyeh Bridgehead. Arrived about 0900. Cavalry have gone out over the plain towards Es Salt.

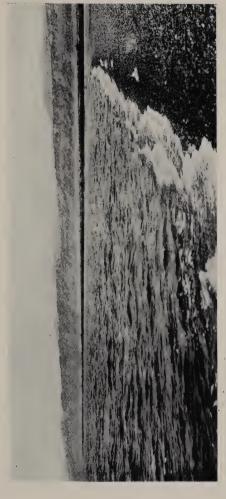
Battery moved at 0400 p.m. to Cave Ridge, Shunet Nimrin. Long and tedious trek. Arrived about 0900 p.m. Ground previously occupied by the Turks, very dirty.

September 24th.

Boot and Saddle 0400. Cold, bright moonlight. Just about to move off when message arrived that Turks had blown up the road ahead. Six hour work necessary to repair it.

Breakfast and left at o600.

Vast quantity of ammunition and miscellaneous stores, etc., left by enemy along the roadside.



The Northern End of the Dead Sea.

Looking West.

May, 1925.

By kind permission of The Rev. J. A. Nash.



Soon after starting, passed "Jericho Jane" overturned in the stream (Wadi Nimrin). Johnny had been unable to do more than move it a short way from the spot where it last fired.

Long up-hill march to Es Salt. About 1000 reached spot where road was blown up. Halted an hour until the R.E's completed repairs. Pushed on again as soon as possible. Watered about noon and lunched by a wide span bridge.

Problem. Why didn't the Turks blow up this bridge also? A great number of dead Turks and animals along road side. Result of the work of our bombing planes.

Approached Es Salt about 1500. Watered and made camp in old Turkish lines. Quantity of Q.M. stores, gas masks, etc. on the ground. Nearby the enemy left 4.2 How. in centre of the road. Expect to move to-morrow.

September 25th.

Transport passed up road all night long. Horse Artillery passed through. Australian Light Horse to attack Amman to-day. Horse Btys. pushing up to support, 24 miles before them. 1600 sound of gunfire from direction of Amman. Army of 6,000 reported to be south of the town. Formidable opposition for Chaytor's Force to encounter.

21.00 Received orders to move at once. Infantry passing up the road. Our job to push through to Amman at all cost and hold the railway.

September 26th.

Start delayed till 2430 owing to slowness of infantry getting away.

Up-hill climb from Es Salt along Amman road. Got into open country of rolling hills about 0200 Bitterly cold."

The above sketchy notes only give a rough outline of events during our advance to Amman, and it will be well to amplify them somewhat.

On the morning of October 2nd, the order to rejoin the rest of the battery at the Ghoraniyeh Bridgehead, arrived early. In anticipation of this order, everything was got ready the previous evening and at of owe bade farewell to Hajlah and commenced the trek north along the banks of the river.

Quite a reasonable track had been cut between the undergrowth and the cliffs of the Ghor, and the R.E's had put down a rabbit netting motor road. There was consequently no difficulty in finding the way.

En route we passed a number of silent camps occupied by dummy horses and men, but no troops. Everywhere the country seemed deserted.

At Ghoraniyeh we found the battery in a bivouac area close to a small stream of water, the Wadi Nueiameh. All around were sandy hillocks fifty to sixty feet in height.

On the night of their arrival the Major and one of the section commanders pitched their 'bivvies' on one of these hillocks, with the object of gaining a somewhat cooler sleeping place, little suspecting that the spot was under enemy observation. The following morning they were rudely awakened by a "pip squeak" bursting in close proximity to their beds. Needless to say they made a hasty withdrawal to safer regions below.

In the afternoon we crossed over the pontoon bridge to the east side of the Jordan and watered the horses in the Wadi Nimrin, which flows into the river at this point. Then began a slow march along the road towards the distant mountains of Moab.

From the bridgehead to Shunet Nimrin, where the foothills commence, the plain is some six miles wide and we did not reach the spot, known as Cave Ridge, until 6 p.m.

Here we halted for the night. We were due to move forward again at 4 a.m., but, owing to the destruction, by the enemy, of a portion of the road ahead, we did not actually start until 6 a.m.

Close by the bivouac area was the great gun with which the Turks had bombarded Jericho, and also at an earlier date, Ram Allah. The men had appropriately christened the piece "Jericho Jane," It was of considerable size, and probably a naval weapon. A great number of empty cartridge cases, measuring about 2ft. 6ins. long, were lying along the road side. Later I saw one in a metal-worker's bazaar in Cairo, and a clever native worker was decorating it to form a dinner gong. The gun lay overturned in the stream, a few yards from where it had last been in action.

The enemy had held the hill country, on either side of the road, in force, and a little way further on we came upon a large camp. The condition in which the place had been left was evidence of the hurried nature of the Turkish flight.

They had made a partially successful attempt to destroy such dumps as they could by burning, and a large stack of fodder was still smouldering when we passed, but apart from this the camp remained practically undamaged, with the



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The Jordan.

Near Hajlah, Looking North. May, 1925.



stores intact. For some distance the way was strewn with Q.M. stores, furniture, scientific instruments, food, books, "bivvies," tents, discarded uniforms, and a quantity of arms and ammunition. All along the road were unexploded hand grenades, no doubt left as booby traps.

Our pace was very slow owing to the delay of the troops ahead, halts were frequent and at every opportunity the dismounted men were "scrounging" among the debris for souvenirs. At one spot, I blush to admit, I followed their example and searched a 'bivvie' which had, apparently, belonged to a doctor, for a great assortment of bottles, phials, papers, etc. were lying about, and in addition a complete photographic outfit of plates, papers, developing dishes and chemicals. One box of plates bore the name of a well-known English maker. How this enemy photographer got hold of it is a mystery.

Among the books I found an elaborately bound history of Turkey—in Turkish, and a copy of Shakespeare—in English with the inscription "Edith Watson" written in a feminine hand on the front page. There were a number of pencil notes in margins, while many of the famous love passages were underlined, particularly in the play of Hamlet. It seemed strange to find, in this out-of-way-spot in Moab, such a gift from an English girl to a Turk, or Austrian, or German, evidence perhaps of some shattered romance. Who can say?

From this camp onward, we encountered the abandoned debris of the fleeing army, the signs of a complete debacle. The road, which rises the whole way to Es Salt, is in most places hewn out of the southern rock-face of the Wadi Nimrin, a narrow ledge with a precipitous drop to the stream on one side and a wall of rock on the other. Along this "bottleneck" the demoralised Turkish troops hurriedly withdrew to Es Salt and Amman, when the leaders realised that their forces, had been beaten back along the whole front on the west of the Jordan and their position, with an unsupported north flank, had become untenable.

At best such a hurried retirement is a difficult task and may easily develop into a route, but in this case, our air force sent over bombing planes to harass the fleeing troops. The planes flew along the line of the road, from Cave Ridge to Es Salt, bombing as they went, and when they had exhausted their load of missiles they swooped down and machinegunned the panic-stricken column, wedged in the narrow defile.

For the enemy, caught in this death trap, there was no escape and the awful destruction caused by our air force was obvious to us as we passed up the road. Turkish dead lay where they had fallen, sometimes on the road side and sometimes in the Wadi bed below, vehicles and horses too had

crashed over the precipice and lay, tangled masses of wreckage, at the bottom.

Here and there carts and wagons, laden with kit and stores, stood on the roadside, the teams lying dead in the traces, on the ground. In other places the horses or mules had been unhooked and their loads abandoned. It was a terrible object lesson of the power of modern aerial warfare and, in fact, a similar performance to the utter destruction which occured to the Turkish troops on the Nablus-Wadi Farah road near Kh. Ferweh and thus described in the Official Record:—

"Early on the morning of the 21st a column of enemy troops and transport was reported by a strategical reconnaissance machine moving along the Nablus-Wadi Farah road, just south of Kh. Ferweh. It was of the utmost importance that this movement should be stopped, as, although the cavalry had blocked the enemy retreat by way of Beisan, the road to the bridge over the Jordan at Jisr ed Damieh could not possibly be closed by our troops for some hours; nor could the crossings over the Jordan between that place and Beisan be guarded in time. All available machines were at once mobilized for this attack, and departures were so timed that two machines should arrive over the objective every three minutes, and that an addition formation of six machines should come into action every half hour. These attacks were maintained from o800 till noon, by which time our troops were in touch with the column. The road was completely blocked and was strewn with a mass of debris of wrecked wagons, guns, and motor lorries, totalling in all eighty-seven guns, fifty-five motor lorries, four motor cars, and nine hundred and thirty-two wagons."

The delay on the road was due to the action of the enemy in blowing up a bridge which spanned a small but deep ravine joining the Wadi Shaib, a continuation of the Wadi Nimrin, some fifteen miles from Shunet Nimrin. Fortunately the work had been done so hastily and badly that the abutments of the arches were still intact and the R.E's quickly spanned the breach with a temporary structure. Had the bridge been properly destroyed, our advance along the road would have been effectively blocked for a considerable time.

Two miles further on we reached a large span stone built bridge across the Wadi Naheir. Here we halted for a meal and to water and feed the horses. A continual stream of troops was passing up the road, and the sound of distant gunfire welled up, showing that the advance forces were in action. With the memories of the two Amman shows fresh in our minds we began to wonder what fate held in store for us.

By the middle of the afternoon we had reached the outskirts of Es Salt. Here we drew off the road to a camp recently evacuated by the enemy, and bivouaced for the night.

CHAPTER 19.

AMMAN.

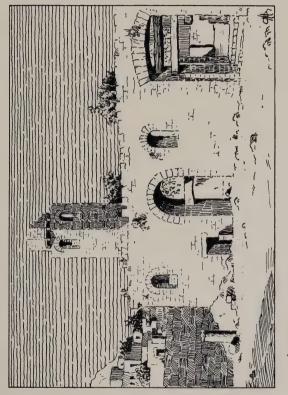
During the day of September the 25th, the 75th Battery remained in the Turkish Camp at Es Salt. Apparently the place had been a store, and a great amount of valuable equipment such as telephones, reels of wire, directors, range finders, and similar instruments were lying about, in addition to a large quantity of clothing and arms. There were also a vast number of gas masks, showing that the enemy anticipated we might use this deadly weapon of modern warfare. In point of fact neither side attempted to do so on the Palestine front.

Es Salt is an important place as towns go in this part of the world. It is some 4,000 feet above the level of the Jordan. Before the war it was the principal centre of trade on the east side of the river, with a population estimated at about 10,000, of which a considerable number were Christians.

The buildings cluster around a steep hilly spur formed by the junction of two gorges, on the summit of which are the remains of an old castle, built by the Sultan Bibars in the 13th Century. The place has been identified, probably accurately, as the Mahanaim of the Old Testament and there is a record of the Crusading King Baldwin I. taking tribute from the town. The immediate district is very fertile, the hillsides being covered by vines, and figs, while a great number of pomegranates grow in the valleys.

An aged beggar wandered into the camp during the morning and sold us bunches of very fine grapes, and hands full of nuts and dried figs, which made a pleasant addition to our usual menu of bully and biscuits. We were also able to buy a few eggs.

All day the stream of traffic proceeded along the road in the direction of Amman. At mid-day the sound of heavy and distant firing was persistent, but as the afternoon wore on this ceased.



Amman.

The remains of a Roman Building, later used as a Mosque.



Amman fell to the attacking force, the 1st and 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigades and Canterbury Mounted Rifles, at 1510. In anticipation of instructions to move forward we struck camp early in the evening but the order did not come through until 2100. The men were paraded and the teams hitched up to the guns and wagons, owing however to the slowness of the long column of infantry and motor lorries passing up the road with supplies, we did not actually move off until three and a half hours later.

This wait was a most trying business for everyone and after standing still so long, it was a great relief to be on the move. From Es Salt a stiff up-hill climb lay before us and frequent halts were necessary to rest the teams. The road had a fair metalled surface.

After what seemed to be a long time we reached an open plateau of rolling country. A cold wind was blowing, and despite the movement it was impossible to keep warm. We were in tropical kit and, having just left the heat of the Jordan Valley, the sudden change of temperature was a rude shock.

Never, on a night march, have I felt so weary as I did on this occasion. No doubt the sudden transition to the high altitude and the invigorating air partly accounted for this. I sat on my horse with my head nodding, and only with the greatest difficulty prevented myself from falling asleep.

Everyone was in much the same state, and at one of the ten minutes' halts I had to go round and wake up several of the men who had fallen asleep where they dismounted.

The Australians, more used to long and tiring treks than our fellows, invariably dropped off to sleep during the halts on night marches, but they always retained hold of the bridles of their mounts and when their horses moved forward they were awakened by the pull on the reins.

At last the weary night drew to a close, and the first signs of dawn appeared in the eastern sky. It was, I think, the most beautiful sunrise I have ever seen. A rich yellow light seemed to strike up from behind the distant hill crests and tinge the great woolly clouds with burnished gold. Soon the sky was glowing with rich colours, red, orange and yellow, with the upper vault appearing in patches of the palest greeny blue behind the clouds, while the earth was still purple-black. It was a sight I shall always remember.

At 6 a.m. we passed through the village of Suweileh which was entirely deserted by the inhabitants and drew off the road to breakfast, and water and feed the horses.

While we waited a column of Australian G.S. wagons came down the road. They were drawn by six-horse teams driven with long reins from the box seat, by one man, and to the back of each wagon was attached a Turkish field gun.

This unconventional manner of drawing guns much amused our regular drivers and gunners, who had never before seen an example of horsemanship quite its equal.

The road between Suweileh and Amman, a distance of about six miles over an open plain, was strewn with debris and the bodies of fallen Turks. Here again our bombing planes had wrought terrible havoc among the retiring enemy who had fought stubbornly to retain their hold on the town.

Lack of information concerning the position of the Turkish forces west of the Jordan, and the turning of his northern flank decided the Commander of the Turkish IV. Army to retire on Amman. When he found he could no longer hold the place he was forced into the inhospitable country lying to the south and east. This move was the last desperate throw in a losing game, and his plight was a bad one.

With the occupation of Amman we gained control of the only available water supply in the district and cut the railway so that the IV Army were without supplies, in a practically desert country, Furthermore, the wild troops of Sherif of Mecca were rapidly advancing from the south.

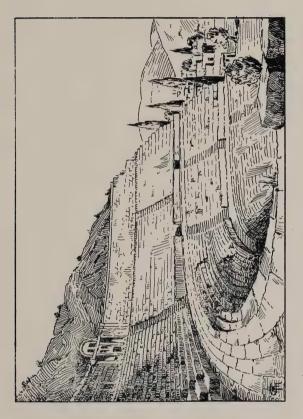
We reached Amman shortly before mid-day and camped a mile from the town. After lunch, being off duty, I retired to my 'bivvie' and fell into a heavy sleep from which I did not awake until 8 p.m.

Amman is the modern day representative of Rabbath Ammon the capital of the Ammonites of the Old Testament (Deut. iii II).

In the 11th and 12th chapters of Samuel II is an account of the siege of the city by Joab who attacked and captured "the city of the waters" or the lower town by the river—now the site of the modern town. However he was unable to reduce the citadel and in response to a request for reinforcements, David, King of Israel, came in person and conducted the siege and eventually captured the place.

The modern town clusters about a stream which runs through the valley and provides its water supply. Towering above is a steep isolated hill on which are the remains of the Citadel, the whole place being enclosed by an amphitheatre of silent and desolate hills.

The Turks had evacuated the town in so great a hurry that they left behind a considerable quantity of stores, grain, and fodder, and most of their wounded. The bodies of numerous dead Turks lay about in the streets, and also the carcasses of a large number of animals. The whole place was in an indescribably filthy condition, and it was some days before the streets were cleaned up.



Amman.

The Roman Theatre.



A considerable number of prisoners were collected in the town, waiting to be evacuated to the prison camps in Palestine and Egypt, and the more robust of these were put on to the work of burying the dead and otherwise cleaning up the streets. The wounded had been left in a shockingly bad state. A small school building contained a number of serious cases, vastly in excess to its capacity, but the enemy left no one behind to look after them, there were no proper sanitary arrangements, and before our medical service had time to deal with the situation, a number of men died from sheer neglect.

By September the 26th, we were firmly established in Amman, while the Cavalry of Chaytor's Force were waiting to round up the IV Turkish Army which was still roaming through the barren country to the south east.

Concerning the subsequent operations I cannot do better than quote from the Official Record of the Campaign:—

September 26th and 27th.

"With Chaytor's Force, the period covered by Sept. 26th and 27th forms a gap in the operations, owing to the fact that the main body of the Turkish IInd Corps had not yet come within range to be struck at and the rest of the Turkish Fourth Army had moved away from the Amman area into the inhospitable Hauran (Bashan). The force was actively engaged in finding fresh enemies to conquer, and the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade was fortunate in finding some Turks in the Wadi el Amman, who fought before surrendering to the number of 105 with one gun. Turks were seen moving south, stragglers probably from the main body of the Fourth Army, trying to join the advancing IInd Corps for safety, in view of the hostility of the local population. The 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade located the advancing troops of this corps near Kastal and, on the morning of September 27th, there was a further engagement in the Wadi el Hamman, in which the 3rd Australian Light Horse Regiment, with aeroplane assistance, captured 300 prisoners and two machine guns.

September 28th.

In Gilead, Chaytor's Force located the southern portion of the Turkish Fourth Army at Kastal, with three trains in the station. At 1515 the Commander was summoned to surrender by 0845 next day, in a message dropped from an aeroplane, but no reply was received. At 1145, however, on September 29th, the Turks opened negotiations with the 5th Australian Light Horse Regiment, on the railway south of Leban. The situation was difficult as large numbers of the local inhabitants, intent upon looting, were surrounding the Turkish position. Any sign of a white flag was likely to

precipitate matters, so the 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade advanced to Kastal and formed a cordon behind which the Turks were able to surrender. The Turkish Commander, Ali Bey Wahabi, was taken by car to Divisional Headquarters. The other prisoners, to the number of over 4,000, marched into Amman under the protection of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade, while some 500 sick had to be left for a time at Kastal. The surrender also included twelve guns and thirty-five machine guns, and brought the list of captures by Chaytor's Force during its operations as a separate entity to over 10,000 prisoners, fifty-seven guns, and 132 machine guns. Large quantities of railway rolling stock, ammunition, and other material were also taken."

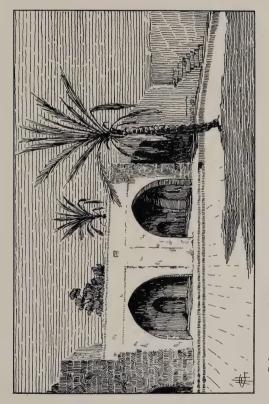
The final round-up of the demoralised IVth Army was a "tricky" business, but not without its humorous aspect. Here was a force, 4,000 strong, willing and anxious to surrender to our comparatively small contingent of Cavalry, which was only just numerically strong enough to provide guards for so great a number of prisoners. The unfortunate Turks were in considerable danger of being wiped out by the hordes of local inhabitants, and—it was whispered—a number of the Sherif's men, who saw a splendid opportunity to loot, about to slip from their grasp.

The Turks were too demoralised to defend themselves unassisted, and the Australian and New Zealand Cavalry were too small in numbers to deal with the situation unaided. The only alternative was to combine forces.

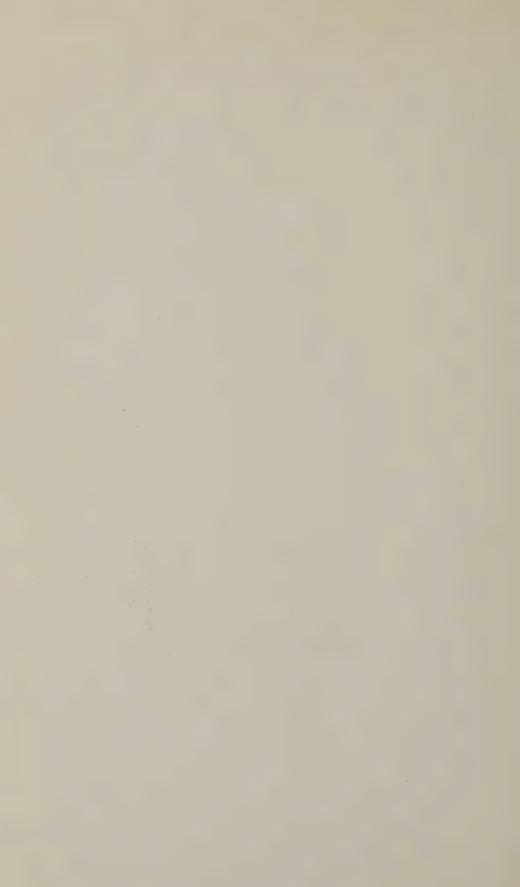
So came about the Gilbertian situation of British and Turkish troops fighting, side by side, to quell the onslaughts of the Arab irregulars and local inhabitants.

The condition of the unfortunate Turkish troops when they were brought into Amman, was appalling. They were practically starving and had been without water for many hours. Their clothes were in rags—there was no attempt at any regulation uniform—and in many cases they marched barefooted, or their boots were entirely worn out. It was not an army, but a rabble,

The sight of these wretched men increased my respect for the Turk as a fighter. He was badly clothed, badly fed, often underfed, and in many cases he was an unwilling conscript, hardly knowing why he was fighting or against whom. At best the organisation and arrangement of the army and the equipment provided was a "Harry Tate" affair, compared with our magnificent military machine. Stores did not arrive when they were required, orders went astray, there was continual friction between rival leaders, the officers ruled the men with a merciless hand, and the latter were rarely, if ever, paid. Yet the Turkish soldier carried on and for two years, he and his kind, held us at bay.



Selme, near Jaffa.
Courtyard of Native House.



Two men and a boy, with a machine gun, would defend a hillside against a company of our infantry and run to earth, in the form of a cave, at the last moment, only to appear a little later as peaceful goat-herds badly hit by the cruel war! Certainly Johnny Turk was a brave but misguided man.

Every morning and evening a large convoy of motor lorries arrived at Amman from Jericho, carrying stores, and after a few hours halt the cars returned laden with prisoners. The A.S.C. drivers were among the hardest worked members of the force during the last weeks of the war.

The daily journeys of these convoys were not always without excitement. The long length of road from the Jordan Valley to Amman was only lightly held, owing to the smallness of our force, and on several occasions isolated motors were fired on when passing through Es Salt, and on the wilder parts of the road.

Amman contains a great many remains of architectural and archæological interest, but I only found time to briefly inspect the Roman Theatre, the remains of a large Christian Church, which was afterwards converted into a Mosque, the minaret of which still stands, (this was used as a temporary lock-up for the hordes of Turkish prisoners) and the Citadel.

The Roman Theatre—I learned afterwards—is one of the largest in Syria, and is in an excellent state of preservation. It is in the form of a horseshoe, 128ft. in diameter, from which rise forty-three rows of seats, divided into three tiers by broad passages, and approached by seven flights of steps. Behind the second tier of benches is an arched passage, reached by communicating doors, and opening on to the side staircases. In the centre of the top bench is a chamber excavated from the rock, having an ornamental cornice above, and a niche of shell pattern on either side.

The stage was an open one and was ornamented with a Corinthian colonnade. Eight of the columns, 15ft. high, and a portion of the entablature remain. Originally there must have been about fifty columns. The architectural style is not of the purest but the general effect of the completed building must have been very fine.

From the Theatre I climbed the steep heights to the Citadel. It is a large rectangular building, the exterior walls of which are constructed of large stones, closely jointed and put together without mortar. The foundations of the walls are cut into the hill top, originally they cannot have been much higher than the summit of the hill within.

By the side of the north wall a deep ditch was cut to increase the natural strength of the fortress.

The whole area of the hill top is covered with ruins probably dating from the second century A.D. One of the

principal buildings was a Temple with a portico, and a peristyle of Corinthian columns, the fragments of which lie about the site.

The most interesting building, however, is an example of Persian architecture supposed to have been erected for Chosroes II during the subjugation of Palestine A.D. 620.

The building is nearly square in plan, measuring 85ft. long and 80ft. wide. In the centre is a court 33ft. square and 27ft. high. Apparently this central court was never roofed over. The walls are richly decorated with carvings, probably executed by Syrio-Greek artists, and exhibit Greek, Jewish and Sassanian influence. In some of the string courses and blind arcading, which form part of the decoration, the dog-tooth enrichment, so characteristic a feature of our own Early English style of architecture, is to be noticed. This is the earliest known example of its use.

The purpose to which the building was put is unknown, but it has been suggested that it may have been a Kiosk or summer house.

Outside the Citadel walls on the north side are the remains of another and similar building which may have been a mosque.

These remains at Amman are particularly interesting in that they form a connecting link between the Byzantine style of architecture and that of Persia.

As far as Chaytor's Force was concerned the war was now over. It is not within the province of this book to speak of the glorious achievements of the main force west of Jordan. The story of the break through on the coast, the great encircling movement by which the Cavalry got behind the major part of the beaten and demoralised Turkish Army, the brilliant advance to Damascus, the great march of the 7th Division well beyond Beirut and the final sweeping drive of the 5th Cavalry Division to Aleppo has been graphically told in the Official Record and by abler pens than mine. There only remains for me to speak briefly of the remaining weeks of war, and our march back to the vicinity of Jaffa. The task which I set out to perform will then be completed.

CHAPTER 20.

THE ARMISTICE.

On the 2nd of October the 75th Battery left Amman and commenced the long march back to western Palestine. The first day's trek brought us to Suweileh where we bivouaced for the night at the side of the road. From the rising hills at the back of the camp a wonderful view could be obtained, over the falling hill country lying to the west. In the distance lay the Jordan Valley, with here and there a glimpse of the silver thread of the sacred river, and beyond, almost lost in the blue haze, the far away heights of Judea and Samaria. On this far horizon one could just make out the bell tower of the Russian Hospice on the top of the Mount of Olives.

The next day an early start was made, and as the road fell all the way to the Jordan Valley, it was an easy task to cover a good deal of ground. Es Salt was passed just before mid-day, and by the late afternoon we had reached our old camping area at Cave Ridge, Shunet Nimrin. Here we bivouaced for the night and I have memories of an evening's sport, during which we fired off our remaining stock of revolver ammunition, shooting at tin cans put out in a row. "Aprés la guerre fine!" what use had we for ammunition?

Again we began to feel the heat of the Jordan Valley, an abrupt contrast to the bracing, but somewhat chilly, atmosphere of Amman. Next day we continued our westward march and by the evening we were sweltering in the heat of the plain, a few hundred yards from the Village of Jericho. Once more we sampled the fare of the "Gilgal" Hotel.

The same evening we were joined by an absentee who had been missing since the morning on which we first entered the valley, a white shaggy-haired terrier who held the proud position of battery mascot. This animal was last seen in an A.S.C. camp outside Jericho, when we were trekking east, and had not returned, but now suddenly he walked into camp as if nothing had happened. The ways of animals are truly mysterious.

But after all we were to lose him. The following morning an early start was ordered, as we had the trying march to Talaat ed Dumm. The battery was paraded, and waiting to move off when the Major, in the act of mounting his horse, stood on a nest of hornets.

The enraged insects rose in a cloud about him. One stung him on the arm. Several fastened onto the horse which nearly went mad with pain and fear, and two or three froze onto our poor little mascot.

Screaming with pain the wretched animal tore across the desert, enveloped in a cloud of dust and was seen by us no more. I wonder what happened to the poor little beggar? I hope some other unit found and befriended him.

The Major's arm was excessively painful, and by the end of the day's march his horse was so ill that it could hardly walk. Several weeks of careful nursing elapsed before the animal recovered condition.

We spent the night in the inhospitable region of Talaat ed Dumm, and the following morning continued to march up the winding road to Bethany. Here we halted at mid-day and in the afternoon pushed on, through the Holy City and along the Jaffa Road, as far as the outskirts of Enab.

In a delightfully shady spot in the valley east of the village we camped for the night. The country seemed pleasantly rural and fertile after the barren heights of Moab.

The following morning we awoke to find that the battery had been raided, and some tinned food, knives and forks, enamelled mugs and plates belonging to the sergeants, and officers' messes had been stolen from the battery cart.

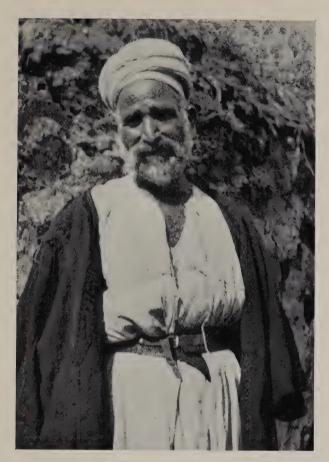
Immediately above the camp was the small village of Beit Nakuba, and it was clear that the inhabitants had paid us a silent and nocturnal visit.

The value of the stolen property was little, but not so the annoyance and inconvenience caused by the loss.

The Major decided to teach the wily natives a lesson and if possible put the wind up them. After breakfast twenty men, carrying rifles, were paraded and under the Sergeant-Major marched up the hill in column of fours. The officers attended "en masse" to see the fun.

The arrival in the village of this formidable looking force caused a great stir. Most of the men were away, working in the fields, but the women came pouring out of the stone built hovels, wringing their hands, wailing, or rocking babies in their arms, frightened, perhaps by memories of the visitation of soldiery other than British.

No one appeared to understand a single word of English but, at last, the schoolmaster, who seemed to be the only man



The Mukhtar of Sarafend.



about the place, owned to a knowledge of a few words of French.

It was explained to him that property had been stolen from the battery, during the previous night, and that the men of the village were suspected.

He stoutly denied the charge.

The Major ordered him to call in the men and find out who had carried out the raid. Thereupon he ascended to the roof of the highest building in the place and let forth a number of resounding shouts. They were meant ostensibly to call in the men, but we shrewdly suspected their real import was "keep out the way, troops are in the village and if you show your faces you'll be 'for it'." In any case no one appeared to answer the call.

We waited a quarter of an hour or so, and as none of the men came in we proceeded to search the village.

It was not a particularly attractive task, for the place was indescribably dirty, but the final result was surprising. In almost every house we found stolen property, obviously the result of systematic raids on every unit which had camped in the vicinity. There was nothing of very great value, but the number of mugs, plates, forks, and spoons, we unearthed would have completely "fitted out" several units. There was also a considerable amount of food, tins of bully, flour, sugar, and so on. Among the articles collected we found most of the property taken from the battery the previous night.

In the afternoon we struck camp and marched down the pass toward Latron. On a level piece of ground at Bâb-el-Wâd we bivouaced for the night.

A curious incident happened here. One of our junior officers had gone forward to select a camping ground and as we came in sight, along the road, he galloped up in a great state of excitement.

"The war's over," he shouted, "the signallers have got word that an Armistice has been declared in France!"

We could hardly believe the news, but later, inquiry proved that the Signals Office at Latron certainly had received such a report, although no one seemed to know how and from where it had come.

That night we celebrated the event in fine style, but the following morning brought disillusionment. The report was false.

Nevertheless, the incident was a very curious one. There is no doubt that a substantial rumour *did* circulate throughout the force, concerning the Armistice, almost exactly a month previous to the date of the real event. How did the rumour originate? The explanation was never forthcoming.

The following morning we marched as far as Ludd, where we camped for two days in a shady grove of olive trees.

Upon arrival, quite unexpectedly, I was given Egyptian leave and a night later I found myself in a train bound for the land of the Pharoahs once more.

On the 21st October I returned to Palestine. I found my battery had rejoined the Brigade at a spot called Rantie a few miles north of Ludd. I had not been back many days before I developed a nasty attack of sand fly fever, the result of our sojourn in the Jordan Valley. There was a great deal of sickness, generally among the troops, the forerunner of the terrible influenza scourge which struck down so many people, both in Palestine and Egypt and throughout the rest of the world, during the last months of the year.

From Rantie I visited the interesting Crusading Castle at Ras el Ain, above the Wadi el Auja, which, during the summer, had been a prominent point in our front line. The building is only a shell, and suffered considerably during the war, but is nevertheless an imposing pile.

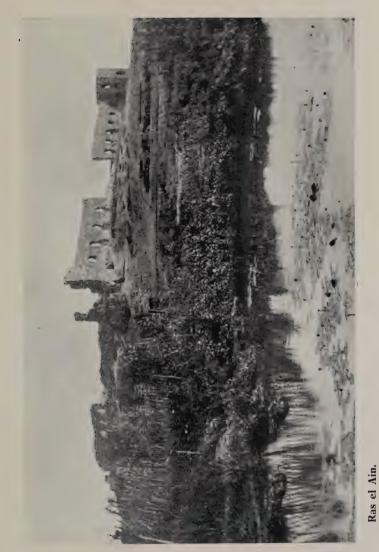
While at Rantie a sad event happened. One of our two Gyppo camel-men died. The pair of natives had been with the unit for several months, carrying out their task—which was often a hard one—patiently and uncomplainingly. They were quiet, obedient fellows and very amenable to army discipline. We had no idea that one of them was sick, he did not report to the M.O. or complain of being unwell. One day, when the camels returned with water, he lay down beside his beast and died.

We buried him the same day, and one of the officers read the C. of E. burial service, from the Prayer Book, over his body. His companion attended the simple service and at conclusion remarked "quise"—i.e. "good"—the only word we understood by which he could express his approval.

The natives when they are sick, are funny folk. They have apparently simple and effective ways of dealing with their ailments. If a man meets with an accident, a cut on the hand for example, he will immediately beg, borrow, or steal a match, light it and burn the wound. For a stomach-ache a man will obtain a large stone boulder, and hugging it close to the affected part, roll about on the ground until he gains relief. Apparently both treatments were efficacious.

On October 31st we received news which occasioned no surprise as it was a foregone conclusion, that the war with Turkey was over and the Turkish armistice had come into force.

A few days later the Brigade moved to a new camp on the Jaffa road, a mile a so south of the Jewish Colony of Rishonle Zion, the heart of the wine industry, among the



The Crusaders' Castle, built by Baldwin III, King of Jerusalem, C. 1149.



Jaffa orange groves. This gave an opportunity of again visiting Jaffa, and for sketching and photographing native life in the neighbouring villages. The sketch and photograph on pages facing 186 and 190 were made at this period.

Here it was at 5 p.m. on the 11th day of the 11th month that the sound of gunfire suddenly boomed out from among the distant Judean Hills. What did it mean? In a few moments the news came through on the telephone. The war was over. An Armistice was signed.

That night most of the world went mad, but none more so than the force in Palestine. The men shouted and threw things at each other for sheer joy, Very lights were burnt, rockets shot into the sky and guns fired in an overwhelming outburst of excitement.

It was rapidly growing dark and along the whole of the distant hills, bright coloured lights burst into life, rockets flew into the air, and the sky appeared as a Brock's night at the Crystal Palace, but on an infinitely bigger scale. It was a never-to-be-forgotten night.

Near by, an anti-aircraft battery blazed off shells into the air, and as if to close the story of the war, a nose cap fell just outside the entrance of our mess tent. A number of us were congregrated within, celebrating the great occasion, and when the whistling sound of the falling cap burst rudely into our revelry, everyone with one accord bolted for cover under the table.

Fortunately no harm was done and so the last shell of the Great War passed us by.

Before the light of a great camp fire the men of the Brigade held a concert,—"It's a long way to Tipperary," "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag" and many another famous soldier chanty, rang through the air, sung with a vigour which had in it something of triumph and something of thankfulness.

Song followed song until, at last, came the boisterous chorus of "God save the King" welling up to a mighty roar, and then the final chorus of "Auld lang syne" bringing with it a picture of the distant home lands, and memories of chums lost, and dear ones soon to meet.

The war was over, the war was won, the last great Crusade had drawn to its close. Farewell to the mountains and plains of Palestine.

"Then it's 'ome to good old Blighty,
And we'll all go down the Strand,
A tidy sight more lively
Than this blooming 'oly Land."

CHAPTER 21.

SEVEN YEARS LATER.

Seven years have rolled by since that memorable night The great peace, to which we all of 11th November, 1918. looked forward and fought for, has been signed, units famous in their time have been disbanded and comrades have scattered to all the distant places the earth, their addresses unknown, their names almost forgotten. Most of us have tried to bring back our lives to normal, in what has been one of the most abnormal periods of the world's history,—the hectic months of the great boom period and the long years of world depression. At times, perhaps, we are inclined to ask "was it worth while?" and before the question is formed, in our minds, we know the answer to be "yes," otherwise the gallant sacrifice so many of the Sons of our Empire would have been in vain. The price has been paid, and eventually good must follow.

This year I have seen a little of the good which follows as war's aftermath in the great work of reconstruction which is going on in Palestine. Fortune decreed that I should visit the Holy Land once more.

To thus renew acquaintanceship, under happier and more peaceful circumstances, with many well-remembered spots, and to note the great development which has taken place, as a result of British influence during the last seven years, was wonderfully interesting. I make no excuse, therefore, in adding this chapter as an epilogue to my story of the Story of the Last Crusade.

The small party of travellers, of which my wife and I were members, approached Palestine from Damascus by way of Semakh and the Trans-Jordan Railway.

This is not the place to speak of the unfortunate political situation which has arisen in Syria and has resulted, at the time this work is passing through the press, in the shelling of the city of Damascus. At the period of our visit we were conscious of an undercurrent of unrest among the native population, in direct contrast to the condition of affairs in Palestine, which even then we feared might lead to open revolt.



Rock-cut Inscription at the Dog River, Beirut.

On the cliff face of a hill above the Dog River, near Beirut, are a number of Rock-cut Inscriptions and Sculptures. The earliest are Egyptian and Assyrian On one of the former the cartouche of Rameses II has been identified. A later one records the fact that the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius made the Road which passes this way. Centuries later the French carved a tablet to commemorate their occupation of the country in 1860. Nearby is the inscription illustrated above. Together, these rock-carvings give a record of local history throughout the ages, which must be unique.



During the last miles of the journey the line winds through a deep gorge with rugged mountains on either side, until suddenly the southern end of the Sea of Galilee comes into view. At Semakh we left the train and motored along the western shore of the lake to Tiberias.

The village of Tiberias is most delightfully situated at the edge of the lake with rugged mountains rising steeply to the westward and the whole sweep of the Sea of Galilee within view. The ancient walls still skirt the water front and may be traced at various points round the town.

We reached the small and comfortable hotel in the late afternoon and after a welcome cup of tea set out to explore the place.

A young boy, perhaps fifteen years old, immediately attached himself as guide. He was most polite, and spoke English very well indeed.

- "Where did you learn to speak English?" we asked.
- "In the Government Schools," was the reply.
- "Are you still at school?"
- "No, I have just left."
- "What are you going to be?"
- "I want to go to England to work. Meanwhile I wait outside the hotel and act as guide to visitors. I play football! we are taught in the Government School."

We walked through the narrow streets of bazaars, all looking remarkably clean, and well cared for, very different to most eastern cities. The bulk of the population appeared to be Jewish,

Presently we came to a small quay by the waters edge. A tiny pier formed a landing stage for boats, and a few small craft rode at their moorings. At tables set out before a café, a number of the inhabitants were taking their evening cup of coffee and playing backgammon or draughts.

The small strip of beach was shut off from the roadway and quay by a barbed wire palisade, reminiscent of the prison camps of the war, but a gateway gave access to the lake.

To this spot the women of the village came to draw their household supplies of water. Some were provided with large earthenware "chatties," but more generally the receptacle was an old petrol tin or other improvised container.

At the gateway a man was stationed to chlorinate all the water taken away. He was provided with a number of bottles, presumably containing chlorate of lime, and as each woman passed, with her burden poised gracefully on her head, he sprinkled a few drops of the liquid into the water. None of the women appeared to object.

Pure drinking water is one of the great blessings which the British administration has given to Palestine. What this will mean to the coming generations of her people may easily be imagined, particularly by those who remember the usual filthy state of the wells in the old days.

In addition to the inexhaustible supply of fresh water in the lake, Tiberias had a main supply, laid on through pipes, from a spring source outside the town, so that pure water is assured.

Another recent innovation is an electric light supply which adds its comforts and blessings to the modern life of the place.

Altogether there is a feeling of progress and well-being about the town which appears strangely new to the country, and in great contrast to pre-war days.

The late H. Rider Haggard who visited Tiberias in 1901 describes the town in the following terms:—

"We set out to explore Tiberias, the abode, according to the natives, of the King of all the Fleas.

Heavens! what a filthy place was that. The King of all the stenches must dwell there also. The bazaars are narrow and foul beyond conception; along some of them I could only pass with a handkerchief held before my face. Down the centre of these pestilential streets flow gutters full of every beastly refuse; there too sit and wander the population of Tiberias."

The new spirit of progress, which is growing up throughout Palestine, was the subject of conversation among our party congregated on the hotel terrace, after dinner, the same evening.

"What this country requires," said the padre, "is mutual toleration and irrigation."

Personally I would describe the British policy as "toleration and education."

It was curious that "irrigation" should be brought into the discussion. I remember long conversations, in at least one army mess, concerning the possibilities of irrigation in Palestine. It seemed to us then, in the war years, and fresh from Egypt where water is the vital life blood of the country, that so much might be done by collecting a vast supply from the winter rains. If a number of the valleys in the Judean Hills could be dammed, many millions of gallons of water might be conserved and by liberating this during the hot summer months, to vivity the parched earth of the plains, at least one additional crop would be secured. Perhaps one day something on these lines will be attempted.

Archæology hardly comes within the perview of these remarks, but the recent find of a pre-historic skull approximating to the Neanderthal type in Europe, in a cave in the plain of Gennesaret, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. some six miles north west of Tiberias, reminds us that the British School of Archæology at Jerusalem is actively engaged in most valuable excavation work in all parts of Professor Garstang's letter to The Times of 3rd Palestine. July, 1925, shows how this work may be extended in the future. "A large number of historic cities, at present little more than names, have been reserved in Palestine for achæological purposes. Some of the names alone, Dothan, Ta'anach, Megiddo, Dora, Ascalon, suffice to indicate possibilities of rich discoveries bearing on the early history of the country the monuments of the Trans-Jordan offer to students of classical architecture especially a field of study which is now open and no less attractive."

We spent a day visiting Capernaum, sailing across the lake from Tiberias. The extensive remains of the ancient Synagogue are full of archæological and architectural interest. The next morning we set out upon the long motor journey to Jerusalem.

A fine road has been constructed from Tiberias to Nazareth. Our chauffeur was a native of Nazareth, a capable, if somewhat reckless, driver who had travelled the route from Tiberias to Jerusalem and back for many years. He told me that, in his younger days, he had often driven a carriage this way, when there were no roads and a track had to be followed between the boulders which lay strewn about the rugged hillsides, the whole journey taking three or four days.

Immediately outside Tiberias large gangs of men were busy improving the highway and widening the hairpin bends which were necessary to negotiate the steep ascent. Along the first mile or so of the road, the authorities have planted palm trees on either side, and one can imagine the fine effect this avenue will have when of mature growth. Soon we passed a notice board, announcing the fact that the spot was on the sea level. Far below lay the town of Tiberias, a cluster of white buildings standing out against the green of the lake. From this point onward, for several miles, the road is bordered with recently planted firs in place of palms.

The considerable number of motors using the roads is surprising and it takes a little while to become accustomed to the unusual sight of a Ford car, heavily loaded with baggage strapped to the bonnet and running boards, and closely packed with natives, going all out, the white robes of the occupants flying in the breeze, a curious jumble of east and west.

Motoring in the hill country of Palestine is an education

in the art of taking risks. I have been driving motors myself for some seventeen years, but I never remember anything approaching the experience of this journey from Tiberias to Jerusalem, which was merely typical of the conditions generally.

The surface of the main roads, is by no means bad, in fact it is often quite good, while the width is adequate for two vehicles to pass each other with a reasonable margin of safety. The manner in which the steep hills are negotiated, by the provision of innumerable hairpin bends, is a tribute to the skill of the engineers who planned them.

The majority of the cars are of the cheaper American varieties, many of them in the last stages of dilapidation. The native drivers are wonderfully skillful, entirely without nerves or any sense of danger, and perfectly child-like in their love of speeding and showing off. They possess no road sense, or even the most elementary feelings of road courtesy, they are road hogs, pure and simple. Their faith lies in "Kismet," and they decorate their cars with strings of blue beads to keep off the "evil eve." Every man is for himself alone and the devil take the hindermost. In negotiating the hills, particularly when ascending, the object of every driver is to keep his car going at the utmost speed to save changing down to a lower gear. This necessitates rushing every hairpin bend and practically skidding round the sharp curves. The strain on the "business" parts of the car, occasioned by this operation, is enormous.

The outer edge of the road-bends have no parapets, so that loss of nerve, or a misjudgement of the speed at which he can "get round" the curve on the part of the driver, a fault in the steering, or a burst tyre, would undoubtedly land the car in the "cud" below.

The feelings of the occupants in the rear seats of a car travelling all out, which has its back wheels passing within a foot of a sheer drop into eternity, may well be imagined.

In descending the hills the cars are allowed to "coast," but occasionally the drivers do consider it necessary to apply the brakes somewhat. For anyone on the look-out for thrills I can thoroughly recommend a few weeks motoring in the hills of Samaria or Judea.

Our small party, with two cars, left Tiberias at 8 a.m., and reached Nazareth about 10 a.m., after pausing for a while to visit the church at Kefr Kenna, the traditional site of Cana of Galilee. Here again the children of the village greeted us in good English.

The first view over Nazareth, away to the heights of Carmel, and the distant blue horizon of the sea beyond Haifa is very fine. The town itself looks white and clean, the buildings being dotted picturesquely about the hillsides.



Nablus. May, 1925.



The stone work of "Mary's Well," in the centre of the town, has been repaired recently, and a retaining wall has been built about the sunken court. Consequently it is now in a thoroughly sound state structurally, the water is perfectly pure, but the old-time effect of picturesque delapidation is gone, it is no longer an "artist's bit."

British administration is much in evidence at Nazareth. The town is remarkably clean, there is an air of well-being and order about the place which is pleasant to behold, even the roads are dotted with "caution" sign-boards and speed control notices for the benefit of motorists.

An hour is much too short a time to devote to the place but, in view of the long journey to Jerusalem, it was all that we could spare. After visiting one or two of the churches and walking through the bazaars, we resumed our journey. An ascent on the west side of the town leads to the summit of the hills overlooking the plain of Esdraelon. Upon reaching this, a wonderful panorama lay before us. Far away across the plain to the south were the hills of Samaria, to the northwest the rising heights of Carmel, and to the east the mountainous terrain which separates the plain from the valley of the Jordan. The whole area was divided into patches of colour by the varying vegetation and looked like a gigantic chess board.

This was the scene of the great advance of the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions on September 20th, 1918. To quote from the Official Record of the Campaign:—

"Pressing on all night in parallel columns, the 4th Cavalry Division on Megiddo (Lejjnn) and the 5th Cavalry Division on Abu Shusheh (a few miles to the north), the plain of Esdraeldon was reached before dawn. Here the first opposition was met with; as the advanced guard of the 4th Cavalry Division debouched from the defile at Lejinn, a Turkish battalion with several machine guns was deploying in the plain below them. They were charged without hesitation by the leading regiment, the 2nd Lancers, and in a few minutes the Division was able to continue its advance; less prompt action might have caused fatal delay. The 4th Cavalry Division continued its advance through El Afule to Beisan, which was successfully reached by evening; the 19th Lancers securing the important bridge over the Jordan at Jisr Mejamie ten miles further north. As showing the rapidity of our advance and the extent to which it surprised the enemy command, the following incident might be mentioned:-

Shortly after our cavalry had taken El Afule, a German aeroplane, arriving from the north, landed on the aerodrome, the pilot being quite unconscious of the fact that the place was in the hands of the British.

Meanwhile the 5th Cavalry Division crossed the plain, and soon after dawn the 13th Brigade rode into Nazareth. Here some hard street-fighting occurred, but the Germans and Turks were driven out of the town and only held out in a few houses covering the Tiberias road. They were not dislodged as only one brigade was available for the attack, the remainder being held ready in the plain to support the 4th Division if necessary. Yilderin Army Group Headquarters were captured in Nazareth with numbers of valuable documents, and the enemy commander, Marshal Liman von Sanders Pasha, himself only just made his escape in time; some accounts even say that he was actually in the town when the cavalry arrived, but if so, he cannot have stayed there long.* In the evening the whole of the 5th Division were at and around Afule."

Extending as white thread across the plain was the highway which led via Jenin and Nablus to Jerusalem. Soon our motors had coasted down the corkscrew road onto the flat country. It was now nearly mid-day and the heat was intense. Every few minutes the radiators of one or other of the cars became overheated, and it was necessary to stop and fill up with water, which was carried in a spare can against such an emergency.

On every hand were signs of extensive cultivation. There were many large fields of corn, the golden-brown grain ears waving gently in the hot breeze, so that the surface appeared as the idle lapping of a summer sea.

Here and there, attractive little bungalows were being constructed in gardens bordering the roadside, and in one or more places entirely new villages were springing up, the work of Jewish settlers.

All along the roadside an avenue of trees had been planted, several rows deep, so that, in years to come, this will be a beautiful and shady highway.

At the southern boundary of the plain we came to Jenin, the site of the main Turkish aerodrome in 1918. A few heaps of shapeless scrap iron were the only remains of war activity.

The village is a small and rather mean place clustered about the hillside. A diminutive mosque, with a white minaret and dome, forms a point of interest among the buildings. The high-road passes through a dangerous bottle-neck among the houses, which native motor drivers seem to delight in negotiating at high speed and without giving warning. Here as at Tiberias, several quite conventional European type

^{*}An eyewitness asserts that at the alarm he ran, clad in pyjamas and armed with an electric torch, from his sleeping quarters to near Our Lady's Well, shouting for the driver of his car in which he made off. Subsequently the Marshal returned, dressed and superintended the removal of some of his papers.

shops were being constructed, no doubt to meet the needs of a more western form of civilisation.

From Jenin to Nablus the road winds through a tortuous hill country, sometimes following a wadi valley, at others climbing to the summit of some hill crest by way of numerous hairpin bends.

At 1.30 p.m. we reached Nablus and stopped at the hotel for lunch, a curious and somewhat primitive building approached by a mean door and a flight of stone steps, but possessing a large common room on the first floor.

Here we found a party of gorgeously attired, and distinctly dusky, gentlemen from east of Jordan. They were the personal Staff of the Son of the King of the Hejàs who were visiting Nablus that day, to take part in some military sports arranged by the garrison, and at which the Governor of Jerusalem was to be present.

They had just completed their mid-day repast and were enjoying cigarettes and coffee. The wonderful colouring of their flowing garments almost made one believe that these sons of the desert had come straight off the stage of a musical comedy or a play by Oscar Asche.

We were greeted with fixed stares of childlike wonder which were almost disconcerting, and might have been taken as insolence, had they not been so obviously the outcome of genuine interest in a party of western foreigners. When these gentlemen smiled it was to expose some of the finest sets of teeth it has been my luck to see.

A small bedroom, adjoining the lounge-drawing room and dining room, to which we were ushered to make our toilet, we found strewn with a wonderful array of jewelled sworks, belts bristling with silver-mounted revolvers, and ammunition, calculated to cheer the heart of an eastern warrior.

Fine types of manhood as these men were, it would have been a splendid thing for some of the Sheikh-struck flappers, who frequent out picture palaces, to come thus in contact with the real thing.

After lunch a chance conversation with the only other European occupant of the dining room, proved to be an introduction to the British Governor of Nablus. He had served throughout the Palestine "show," and subsequently taken service under the civil administration. For a while we chatted about the war and mutually remembered spots.

"When we first came here," he said, "the population of this town was in a shocking state, quite seventy-five per cent were definately phthisical. Now we have reduced this, in the rising generation, to somewhere in the region of twenty-five per cent, which considering all things is not too bad." Here was another interesting sidelight on what British administration means to the people of Palestine.

At length we returned to the waiting motor cars and resumed our journey. The road south to the Holy City is in excellent condition. In places it is somewhat narrow and the customary hairpin bends are present in disconcerting numbers, disconcerting that is to say, when taken at high speed, and an error of judgement on the part of the driver, may rapidly land one over the cud. However, the Kismet habit is soon acquired in this land of hills and valleys, and the ever changing panorama is very fine.

To me this last stage of the journey was the most interesting, for the route passed through the Robbers Valley lay below Burj Bardwaile, Ain Sinia, Balua and so on to Bireh and Jerusalem.

A village on the crest, which the motor drivers told us was Sinjil, warned me that we were about to enter the country during the advance of March, 1918. Soon we reached the spot where the Turks had blown up the bridge below Burj Bardwaile, and I looked once more on the difficult hillside which the Norfolk and Suffolk Dismounted Yeomanry negotiated on the night of 10-11th March.

A new bridge now spanned the wadi bed, and the terraces of the hillsides each bore a strip of golden corn growing between the olive trees. I had no difficulty in locating our gun positions and the spot in the wadi where the Brigade H.Q. had been established.

For a while we paused, to enable me to photograph the spot, and then on once more past Ain Sinia, still showing the scars of war, and up the steep ascent which leads to the small lake called Balua. From here onward the road falls gradually the whole way to Jerusalem. At the top of the hill the traveller gains a wonderful view over the country to the north with Bir es Zeit in the foreground.

In the rich yellow light of the late afternoon, after passing Bireh, we gained our first sight of the Holy City. This vantage point on the Nablus road is, in many respects, the finest spot from which to view Jerusalem, embracing as it does the whole of the City and the Mount of Olives across the Vale of Jehoshaphat.

And so, once again, I entered the Holy City. At first glance it appeared to be very little changed, but during the following days I quickly learned how great has been the development of what I might term an "enlightened municipal spirit."

As is but natural, in one of the greatest tourist cities of the east, the number of European shops has increased considerably, and many well-known Cairo establishments have opened up branches here. Professional business men too, have already firmly established themselves, and many brass plates of Lawyers, Doctors, Architects, Auctioneers, etc. are to be seen. The "Fast" Hotel has become the "Allenby," while the "New Grand," within the City walls is open again and in full swing.

Large stores, collected round the Jaffa Gate, do a big business in eastern metal work, beads, jewels, cedar wood articles, and curios, with the vast hordes of tourists which patronise them during the season.

Such are a few of the outward and visible signs of the greater prosperity which has come to the Holy City during the last few years. Throughout the native quarters much has been done to clean up the place, so that most of the streets are as neat and tidy as any to be found in the bazaars of Cairo.

An efficient native police force maintains order, and it is difficult to recognise, in the contented peoples of so the many different races who throng the streets, the wretched half-starved inhabitants who greeted the arrival of our troops in 1917.

Reconstruction is a difficult and uphill task for those whose duty it is to carry it out, a task in which racial and religious antagonism often plays an important part. How ably the problems have been met and dealt with can only be realised by those who are able to compare Jerusalem to-day with the city of seven years ago.

To those who care to learn more of what has been achieved in this direction I would recommend a perusal of the pages of "A Palestine Notebook, 1918-1923" by C.R. Ashbee, F.R.I.B.A., who was Civil Adviser to the City of Jerusalem during these years.

One day we motored down to the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea. How familiar seemed the road and the oppressive heat when we reached the valley. Reconstruction had effected little here, except that a neatly cut track, across the soft earth of the Jericho Plain, led to the Dead Sea and from thence to the Jordan, an obvious and successful attempt to provide for the needs of the tourist.

At a little hotel where we took our lunch I noticed an auctioneer's announcement of a forthcoming sale of land at Jericho, "The Ideal Winter Resort," boasting of a delightful climate. To those who know the severity of the winter months in the hills the claim does not appear without some reason.

At last my opportunity came to see the interiors of the Dome of the Rock and Mosque of El Aksa, each in its way very beautiful. Necessary and long overdue repairs and restoration were in progress on both buildings. In the case of the former I noticed craftsmen busily engaged replacing loose and missing tiles on the walls of the fabric.

So the days passed by, sightseeing, souvenir buying, and wandering through the narrow ways of the native quarters, until the morning arrived, when we took our seats in the train which was to carry us to Ludd and the main line to Kantara. I was very glad to have the opportunity of travelling over this section of the line, which follows a tortuous track through the Judean hills and Vale of Sorek to the Plain of Philistia.

Throughout the journey we saw the signs of great agricultural activity, both in the hills and on the plain. When the train emerged onto the open country I could see the hill of Gezeh or Abu Shusheh where our camp had been in the early months of 1918, and soon afterwards we were passing well-remembered spots about Ramleh, and so to Ludd.

Gone were all signs of the vast railhead. In its place stands a neat station with several platforms, protected by open roofs, a booking office, waiting rooms and other buildings.

Presently the Haifa-Kantara train steamed into the station and a few minutes later we had commenced the long run, south, to Egypt.

I very much regret that I had no chance to visit Jaffa and more particularly the remarkable Jewish City of Tel-Aviv which, mushroom-like, has sprung up adjoining the ancient port. To quote from an article in *The Times* at the period of Lord Balfour's visit to Palestine this spring:—

To-day there are probably more than 25,000 Jews in Tel-Aviv. It has its special constitution, with its mayor, its council, its own police force, and its municipal bench. The value of its properties amounts to about $f_{,2,000,000}$; there are pumping stations, schools, a telephone system, and an electric power plant which is a link in the Rutenburg scheme. If a visitor was suddenly dropped from the blue into the middle of the town he would imagine that he was in some mushroom city of the American middle east. There are the same wide streets laid at right-angles to each other, and the same fenceless gardens sloping down to the concrete "side walks." American motor-cars bump over the railway crossings, and even the young man of the town affects an American style of dress, with a straw "boater" hat well on the back of his lank hair, and the collar of his striped shirt worn outside his jacket."

So the good work goes on, difficulties there are in plenty, no doubt mistakes have been and will be made, but these are merely incidental checks to the march of progress which is slowly changing the face of the Promised Land.

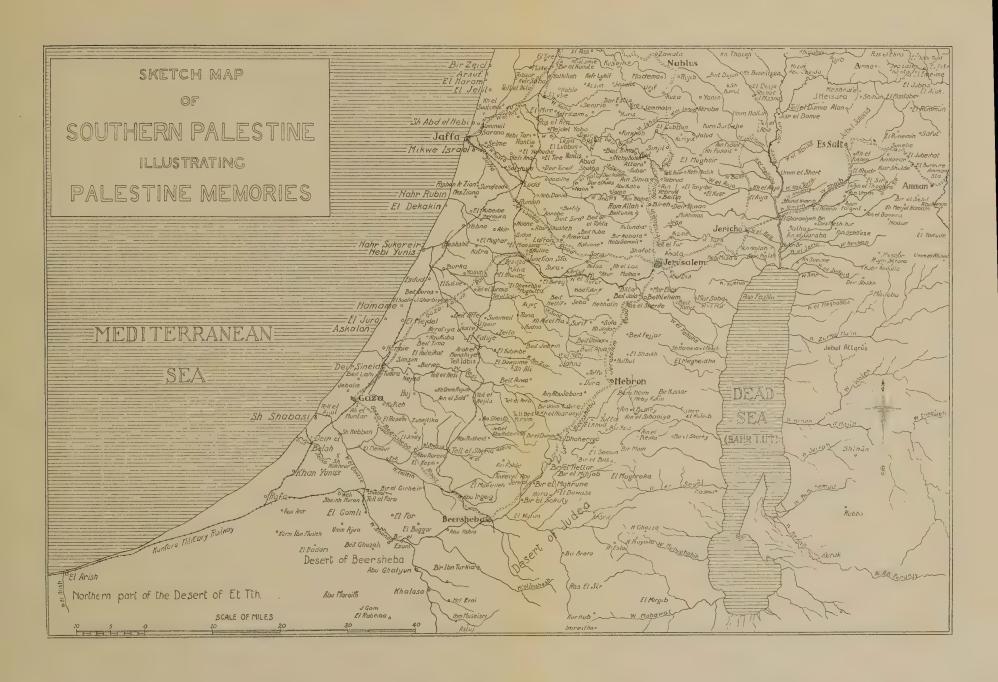
Swiftly the fine train, equal in its appointment of carriages and luncheon cars to any that run on the great European continental routes, bore us across the plain of Philistia, past Mejdel and Deir Sineid to Gaza. Soon we were passing between the town and Samson's Ridge, then away through the sand dunes to the Wadi Ghuzze and over the plain to Belah, where acres of ripening corn waved golden in the soft breeze. Belah—silent and deserted, except for a small brick building which acts as a railway station amid the fields of grain,—brought back a flood of memories, and so to the great desert which changes with every gale of wind and yet is always the same.

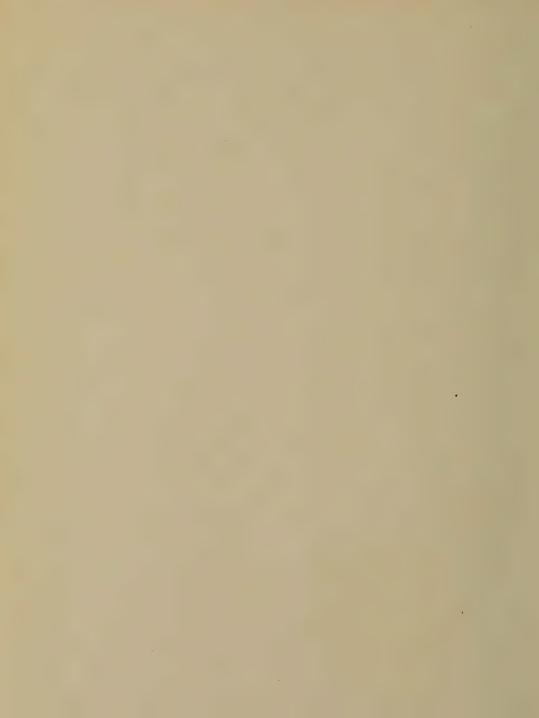
In the late afternoon the dark scrub growing in patches among the sand dunes told us that we were nearing Kantara and shortly after passing Romani the train ran along side the Suez Canal. Across the water lay Egypt, our Palestine journey was ended, and this chapter, which has formed my epilogue to the story of the years of war is finished.

If the perusal of these pages gives but a tithe of the pleasure to those who know Palestine and remember, or to those who hope one day to visit this historic land, as it has given me in the writing, my work will not have been in vain, and so with the hope and belief in the great future of the Holy Land, I lay down my pen.

FINIS.







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Cactus—a plant having large prickly leaves. The term commonly used by the troops to denote the prickly-pear which grows extensively on the plains of Philistia and particularly round Gaza.

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Cairo-Port Said Railway, 6. Caliph—the name assumed by the successors of Mohammed

Caliph Omar, 100. Camel coracle, 137.

Camel Corps — an important section of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in which the personnel, mainly Australian and New Zealand troops, were mounted on camels, 18.

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Drag ropes—ropes used by gunners to pull a gun and assist a team, or when manhandling the weapon into a difficult position, 134.

Dressing Station—The place where mens' wounds are first dressed behind the firing

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"Dud" (slang)—a shell or hand grenade which fails to explode, 31, 33, 126.

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Elevation—gunnery term. The angle at which a gun must be placed to fire on a given Part of this angle target. is called the "angle of sight" the remainder being angle for range, in yards.

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First Hundred Thousand—the volunteer drafts which went to France in the early days of the war, 16.

"Flea bags" (army slang)sleeping blankets sewn up in the form of a bag, 11.

"Flivver" (army slang)—Ford

car or van, 79, 165.

Fly whisk—also called swotter. A piece of leather, wire gauze or horse hair switch, fixed to a wooden, bone or ivory handle, with which to kill flies, 26, 145.

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correct, 120. Old Testament, 10, 91, 182, 184. Olive Oil, 155. Olive Press, 155. O.P. — Observation Post. commanding position from which artillery fire can be observed, 44, 45, 46, 48, 63, 64, 69, 90, 119, 148, 149, 154, 155, 156, 157.

Orange Groves round Jaffa, 79,

172, 193.

Orderly Officer—the subaltern officer detailed for orderly duty i.e. to attend all stable hours, the watering feeding of horses, the men's meals, to receive any complaints. To inspect guards, etc. The junior officers, took duty in turns, 16, 57, 128.

Orderly Sergeant—a sergeant with similar duties as an orderly officer, 28.

Ordnance Stores, 73, 161. Our Lady's Well, Nazareth, 200.

Ρ.

Palestine Campaign, 1, 70, 81, 159.

Palestine, central, 25, 182. Palestine, Mohammedan Conquest of, 85.

Palestine, Crusading Times in,

Palestine, Historic Sites in, 85. Palestine Exploration Fund,

Palestine News — the official army paper published during the war, 102.

Palestine Note Book, 9, 203.

Palestine Winter, 89.

Pariah dogs—wild dogs which roam the desert and run stray round the native towns and villages of the East. A pack of these dogs is usually led by a jackal, 27, 170.

Pathans, 143. Peak, 154. Periscope, 34, 156. Persia, 188.

Persian Architecture, 188

Persian Tiles, 155. Persians, 100. Pharoahs, Land of the, 7, 192. Pharoah Amenophus IV., 97. Pharoah Shishak, 98. Philistia, Plain of, 3, 12, 10, 204. Philistine giants, 87. Philistines, 88. Philistines, Land of the, 13. Piece—the barrel of a gun, 134. Pipe Line—the system of water mains laid across the desert of Sinai from Kantara to Deir el Belah by Egyptian Expeditionary Force, 9, 10, 15, 21, 101. "Pip Squeak" (army slang)-the shell of a Turkish or Austrian field gun, corresponding to the British 18pdr. but somewhat smaller, 37, 45, 46, 178. Plymouth, 16. Police Barracks at Rafa, 17. Polybius. 17. Pompey, 98. Port Said, 6. Pot holes (slang)—large holes or worn patches in the surface of a road, 132. fight. 36.

the

"Pow-wow" (army slang)—a conference of officers called to discuss details of a coming

Practical Joke Department— (army slang), Administrative branch of the army, 16.

Prismatic compass, 24. Prophet Mahomet, 85. Prophet Job, 141, 144. Ptolemy, 11, 17. Pyramids, the, 80, 81, 154.

"Q" Branch — Quartermaster-General's Branch, 13. Q. M. S. Quartermaster ___ Sergeant, 5, 55. Queen Athalih, 98. Queen Helena, 103. Queen of Heaven, 88.

R.

R.A.—Royal Artillery.

R.A Base Details Camp—see General Base Details Camp. Kantara.

Rabbath Amman—see Amman Rabbit netting—wire netting, used extensively in Sinai and Southern Palestine to form roads over sand and fine earth, also for rivetting trenches, 29.

Rafa, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 31, 71, 76, 78, 80, 82, 151.

R.A.H.Q. — Royal Artillery Headquarters, 67, 141, 142. Railhead, 14, 15, 19, 20, 78.

Railway, Military, 6, 81.

Ramar, 115.

Ram Allah, 13, 115, 137, 146, 147, 178.

R.A.M.C. - Royal Army Medical Corps, 77.

Ramleh, 14, 85, 86, 140, 172,

Ramleh, Tower of the Forty,

Ramleh, White Tower, 85, 140.

Ramps—sloping ends to railway platforms to facilitate the loading and unloading of vehicles from railway coaches, 10, 45.

Rantie, 192.

Raphia—see Rafa.

Ramar, 115.

R.A. Right Sector - Royal Artillery Right Sector Jordan Valley, 176.

R.A.S.C.—RoyalArmyService Corps, 29.

Ras—head, cape, top.

Ras el Ain, 192.

R.E's—Royal Engineers, 22, 29, 53, 55, 57, 58, 60, 83, 143, 149, 155, 158, 177, 180.

Regiment, 3rd Australian Light Horse, 185.

Australian Regiment, 5th Light Horse, 185.

Registration — the firing by Artillery of trial shells on a given target to provide data for accurate fire at some future time, 22, 35, 130.

Rehoboam, 98.

Rest Camp—a camp at which details proceeding up the line could rest for one or more nights en route. 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 78, 90, 92, 139

Revetting — material fixed against the sides of trenches to support the earth or sand and prevent it falling in, 33.

R.F.A.—Royal Field Artillery. R.F.A., 75th Battery, 148, 169. R.F.A. Battery 14th, 169.

R.F.A. Brigade 263rd, 148. R.F.C.—Royal Flying Corps, (Royal Air Force), 12, 18, 30, 31, 112, 172.

R.G.A. - Royal Garrison

Artillery, 173. HA — Royal R.H.A. Horse Artillery, 20.

Richard, 1st King of England,

River of Egypt, 10.

R.O.—Reconnaisance Officer,

Rochester, 83.

Rock-cut Tomb, 103.

Rock Tombs, 88.

Rolls-Royce, 169.

Romford. 175.

Romani, 7, 8, 10, 205. Roman-out-post, 76.

Romans, 99.

Roman Theatre, Amman, 187.

Rothschild, 86.

Royal Navy, 52, 72. R.T.O.—Railway Transport Officer, 10, 19, 72.

Rubeiba, 14.

Rushdi, 67.
"Roosters"—60th Divisional Concert Party, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97.

Saladin, 88, 100.

Slang, Army, I. Salisbury Plain, 21, 64. Salonica, 2, 145. Salt Lakes, Kantara, 77. Salvage Corps — the corps whose duty it is to recover all useful material left on a battlefield after a fight, 52. Sambo, 55, 56. Samaria, 12, 154, 140, 189, 198, 199. Samson, 34. Samson's Ridge, 14, 15, 133, 205. Samuel's Home, 115. Sandbags, 33. Cart — a two-wheeled cart, the wheels of which have wide iron tyres to prevent them from sinking into soft sand. Used extensively in Palestine ambulances, 70. Sand dunes, 15, 16, 19, 27, 34. Sand flies—extremely small flies, which bite and cause violent irritation to the body at night time, in infested districts such as the Jordan Valley, 69, 168. Sanctuary, 108. Sangar—a stone built redoubt strong point, applied loosely to any large heap of stones or a ruin, 112, 122, 125. Sappers — Royal Engineers, 9, 133. Sanders, Marshal Limon von, 200. "Saqqia" 53
"Sausage" — an observation balloon, 142. School, Corps 20th Signalling, Scorpions, 25. Scots, 91. Scotsmen, 156. "Scrounging," (army slang)to look for something. "To grub about," 179. "Sea and Beach Post Raid,"

72.

"Sea Post," 33, 35, 72. Commanders Sections subaltern officers of the Royal Field Artillery, 136. Sekamen, 176. Selfit, 176. Selwad, 116, 173, 123. Semakh, 195. Serai-a Turkish Government Building, 54. Shakespeare, 179. Sharon, Plain of, 12, 83, 154. Sheikh Abdullah, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 124, 126, 127, 133, 142. Sheikh—(abbreviation Sh) chief, elder, saint. Sheikh's Tomb, 116. Shellal, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 32, 82. Shell case—the metal container forming the outside of the shell, 31. Sheria, 53, 54, 55, 174. Sheria, Battle of, 61-69. Sherif of Mecca, 184. Sh Hattim, 176. "Shows"—fights, 34, 41, 159. Shunet Nimrin, 176,178,180,189. Sicily, 76. Sidi Bishr, Alexandria, 2, 16, 31, 137. Signal Corps, 68. Sihan, 14. Sikhs, 143. Sikhs, 54th, 159. Simon Maccabaeus, 88. Simon the Leper, 162. Simon's Palace, 88. Sinai, 8, 9, 81. Sinai Desert, 9. Sinai's Mount, 154. Sinjil, 159, 165. "Skipper" (a (army slang) captain of a battery or a company, 29. "Snag" (slang)—a stumbling block or obstacle, 58. Soldier's Songs, 80, 193. Solomon, 10, 87, 88, 98. Somerset Battery, 165, 173.

Somme, 76, 175. Sorek, Vale of, 204. Sphinx, 108. Spring of Job, 144. Spur, 121. St. George, 139, 140. Stable hours—the time devoted to the grooming of animals, Straff (army slang)—Intensive

activity in the form of artillery, machine guns, rifle fire against a particulra object or area, 35, 45.

Struma Front at Salonika, 2. "Sub Sections"—half sections. In artillery, consisting of I gun, I firing battery wagon, and I first line wagon with the necessary personnel and animals, 35.

Sudan, 27, 55, 81.

Suez, 154.

Suez Canal, 5, 79, 205.

Suffa, 141.

Sultan Bibars, 182.

"Sumps" — shallow excavations made in a water-bearing strata of sand or earth by the Royal Engineers, to provide a water supply, 15, 28. Sun Helmets, 20.

Surafend, 172. Surrender of Jerusalem, 100. Suweileh, 183, 184, 189. Sweet Water Canal, 69. "Swotter" (army slang)—see fly whisk, 26. Syria, 100, 187, 194. Syrian General, Bacchides, 88. Syrian War, Fourth, 17,

Syrians, 88, 91. Syrio Greek, 188.

T. Talaat, ed Dumm, 163, 164, 190. "Tamash"—An Indian celebration, 113.

"Taped" (army slang) marked down, registered, 38. Tarboosh—native head dress, particularly Turkish, 102. Taube — German aeroplane, any hostile aeroplanes, 59. T.F.—Territorial Force. Tel-mound, especially covering ruins. Tel Asur 117, 123, Tel Aviv, 204. Tel el Armana, 87, 97. Tel el Jazeh, 87. Tel el Sheria, 67, 68. Tel es Shehab, 112. Tent Pegging—an army sport, 146. Thebes, 183. Thotmes III, 87. Tibbin—compound fodder, 25, 74. Tiberias, 195, 196, 197, 198, 200. Tiberias, Lake of, 12. "Tin Hat"—see brass hat, 169. Titus, 98, 99. "Tock Emmas" (army slang) trench mortars. Tomb of Job, 144. Topie—sun helmet, 20 Tower of Antonia, 99. Tower of Forty, Ramleh, 85. Town of Grapes, 114. Trail, 134. Trans-Jordan Railway, 194. Trap, 148. Trek—to march across country Trent, 154. Trumper, L. Victor, Commander, 85, 87. Tul Kerum, 175, 176. Tul Kerum, Nablus Road, 175. Turk, 13, 26, 82. Turk Aeroplane, 19, 149. Turkey, 7, 13. Turkish Armistice, 188. Turkish II Corps, 185. Turkish IV Army, 165, 186. Turkish "Pip Squeak" Gun, Turkish Prisoners, 80. Turkish Railways, 14.

Turks, 7, 8, 13, 14, 30, 32, 33,

91, 100, 110.

Urdu-the root language of India, 156.

Very Light-a firework discharged from a pistol to illuminate a dark area, or as a signal, 62, 68, 193.

Vespasian, 98.

Vet-veterinary officer, 29, 31. Virgin Mary, 100, 105.

W.

Wadi-awater course normally dry in summer.

Wadi Abushar, 30, 37, 38, 43,

44, 45, 46. Wadi Devon, 37.

Wad el Amman, 185.

Wadi el Arish, 10.

Wadi el Auja, 165, 192.

Wadi el Hammon, 185.

Wadi el Jib, 130, 149, 158. Wadi el Saba, 37, 39, 41, 43,

52, 54, 87. Wadi Farah, 180.

Wadi Ghuzze, 15, 21, 24, 29, 33,

35, 36, 37, 40, 40, 70, 71, 73,

82, 164, 165, 205. Wadi Kent, 38.

Wadi Mejma, 78.

Wadi Naheir, 180.

Wadi Neda, 143, 144, 145.

Wadi Nimrin, 166, 177, 179, 180.

Wadi Nueiameh, 178.

Wadi Rashid, 157, 158.

Wadi Rima, 148, 149, 155, 158.

Wadi Shaib, 180.

Wadi Sheria, 67, 68, 69.

Wadi Surrey, 49.

Wadi Sussex, 44, 46, 48, 49,

Wadi Whale, 49.

Wadi "Y" 37.

Wagon line, 44, 54.

Wangling (army slang)—To obtain by cunning or craft,

Watering order—a parade of animals to the drinking place, 28, 29, 143.

Water Melons, 20.

Water Officer—the officer in charge of the arrangements for the supply of drinking water to a force, see also Divisional Water Officer. 58, 120.

Water Supply, 53. Welsh Troops, 91.

West Indian Troops, 178.

"Wetter Sheet" (army slang)waterproof sheets sleeping upon. Towards the end of the war, an extra flap was added to the rectangular shaped sheets so that they might be used as capes, 73, 75.

Wheel driver—the driver in charge of the wheelers of a team of horses, i.e. the two horses nearest the vehicles

or wheels, 24.

Wheelers—the rearmost pair of horses in a team, 134.

White Troops, 143.

Wilderness of Sin, 7, 13.
Wild Flowers of Palestine, 88, 89.

"Wind up" (army slang) fright, nervousness, 16, 118. Wild pigs, 170.

Wire, barbed wire entaglements, 22.

Wire cutting—firing shells at enemy barbed wire entanglements with the object of cutting or destroying them,

"Wire pulling" (army slang) to scheme to obtain a given

object, 16.

Wire roads—see rabbit netting.

Wireman—a signaller whose duty it is to repair faults in a telephone line or cable, 46.

Worship of Molock, 88. Wrestling Indian, 146.

Wrestling on camels, 146, 147.

Wrought Iron Metal Work, "Wipers" (army slang)— Ypres, 151.

Y.

Yebna, 78. Yebrûd, 116, 122, 123, 124, 125, 128, 142. Yeomanry, 17, 18. Yeomanry, 74th Dismounted, Yeomanry, Gloucestershire, 8. Yeomanry Regiments, 138. Yeomanry, Warwickshire, 8. Yiddish, 178.

Yilderin, Army Group Headquarters, 200. Y. M. C. A. — Young Men's Christian Association, 7, 28, Yorkshire, 87.

Zeitoun School of Instruction, 36. Z6, 44, 48. Z7, 48, 49. Z19, 38.

"Zero hour"—the exact time to a second arranged for the launching of an attack, 174.



