

sufficient water supply to maintain a large body of troops, preliminaries to the accomplishment of our ultimate aim—the permanent occupation of the well-watered zone radiating 15 miles east and south-east of Qatia—were steadily pushed on. On 2nd April, a squadron of the Gloucestershire Hussars under Lieut.-Colonel Yorke, with a detachment of Bikanir Camel Corps, reconnoitred Bir el Abd, some 15 miles east of Qatia, met with no resistance, and burnt some tents and stores belonging to the enemy. On the following day, Bir Mageibra, 10 miles south-east of Qatia, was reconnoitred by the Worcestershire Yeomanry. On the 6th April Brigadier-General E. A. Wiggin, commanding the 5th Mounted Brigade, took command of the Qatia District, and was made responsible direct to the headquarters of No. 3 Section.

On 9th April, a further reconnaissance of Bir el Abd was undertaken by a squadron of Worcestershire Yeomanry. This time a strong party of enemy were found in possession of a ridge north-east of Bir el Abd. A sharp skirmish ensued when the Yeomanry attacked, and the enemy was driven eastwards from his position, but, owing to the heaviness of the sand, it was impossible for our cavalry to keep up the attack, and, after easily fending off an attempt at a flank attack, they withdrew unmolested. On 12th April, on orders being received for General Horne to proceed to France, Major-General The Hon. H. A. Lawrence took over the command of No. 3 Section.

By the 21st April, the railway towards Qatia had reached a point upon which a serious advance to hold the whole district could be based, as soon as the necessary dispositions could be made. On the 23rd, however, the enemy attempted to forestall any such advance by making a sudden raid in force upon Qatia. This operation, though comparatively small forces were engaged, produced the severest fighting yet experienced by the force under my command.

8. On 21st April, the 5th Mounted Brigade were disposed as follows:—The Worcestershire Yeomanry at Qatia, the Warwickshire Yeomanry, less one squadron, at Hamisah, 3 miles S.S.W. of Qatia, and Brigade Headquarters and the Gloucestershire Yeomanry at Romani, 6 miles N.W. of Qatia. General Wiggin, commanding the Brigade, had received orders to dispose his Brigade in the Qatia District in such a manner as to protect all railway, topographical and water survey parties, with special attention to the exploitation of the water supply; also to observe the route eastwards towards Bir el Abd, but not to take any serious offensive measures without further orders. It had also been impressed on General Wiggin by the General Officer Commanding No. 3 Section that, since it would take two days to reinforce him with infantry, he was, in the event of a heavy attack, to manoeuvre back upon Dueidar, 13 miles from Qantara on the Qatia road, or upon the railhead near El Arais some 7 miles N.W. of Qatia. On the evening of the 21st one squadron of Worcestershire Yeomanry moved into bivouac at Oghratina, 7 miles E.N.E. of Qatia, to cover an R.E. party detailed to prepare wells. On the 22nd another squadron of Worcestershire Yeomanry proceeded to Oghratina, being replaced in Qatia by a squadron of Gloucestershire Yeomanry, pending the arrival of one regiment of the Anzac Mounted Division,

which had been ordered up from Salfia so as to reach Qatia on the 24th. The remainder of the 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade was marching to arrive at Qantara on the 23rd.

In Qatia the squadron of Gloucestershire Yeomanry was covered by good trenches for some 50 or 60 men, and a number of smaller shelters afforded good covers. Their horses were picketed close to their camp.

The Officer Commanding the two squadrons of Worcestershire Yeomanry at Oghratina had been told to push on entrenchment as far as possible, and it was General Wiggin's intention that these squadrons, if attacked in force, should retire on Qatia and thence, if necessary, on Romani, with their left flank covered by the Gloucestershire Yeomanry and their right by the Warwickshire Yeomanry from Hamisah.

On the morning of the 23rd, both posts stood to arms at 4 a.m., and I have ascertained that patrols had gone out by that hour, though those at Oghratina were probably much hampered by a thick fog.

On the 22nd April the Royal Flying Corps reported to No. 3 Section that new bodies of enemy troops were at Bir el Bayud, 15 miles E.S.E. of Qatia, and Bir el Mageibra, 10 miles S.E. of Qatia. Upon receipt of this information, General Wiggin obtained leave from General Officer Commanding No. 3 Section, to attack the enemy at Mageibra that night, reporting that he intended to use two squadrons of Warwickshire, and the one remaining squadron of Worcestershire Yeomanry. General Wiggin, with Lieut.-Colonel Coventry, commanding the Worcestershire Yeomanry, accompanied the raid to Mageibra. Finding very few enemy, they destroyed the camp and returned to Hamisah about 9 a.m. on the 23rd with six Turkish prisoners. In the meantime the post at Oghratina was attacked at 5.30 a.m. This attack was repulsed. No further information was received from the Officer Commanding at Oghratina until 7 a.m., when he reported that he was again heavily attacked on all sides. This attack carried the post, all the garrison of which were either killed, wounded, or captured. No details of the fighting have, therefore, been obtainable. Qatia itself was attacked about 9.30 a.m. Lieutenant-Colonel Coventry was detached with one squadron of Worcestershire Yeomanry from General Wiggin's Force to operate towards Qatia. Unfortunately, this squadron became involved in the unsuccessful resistance of the Qatia garrison, and, with the exception of some 60 men and one officer who were able to disengage themselves, fell with it into the hands of the enemy. I have therefore been able to gather no detailed information of the actual fighting at Qatia.

General Wiggin and Colonel Yorke, commanding the Gloucestershire Yeomanry at Romani, both showed great judgment in dealing with the situation, and did all that was possible with their small forces against the enemy force of about 2,500, with four guns of small calibre. General Wiggin pushed forward from Hamisah north-east against the enemy's left, south of Um Ugbah, and drove him back for about a mile; the advance was slow owing to the nature of the ground and the determined resistance encountered. Colonel Yorke, after hearing that Dueidar was safe, moved his whole force at 10 a.m. to attack the enemy's right advancing on Qatia. He skilfully drove the Turkish right back to El Rabah,