

might be induced to cross the barrier of hills which extends from north to south some sixty miles from the Canal: he would then have been exposed to attack with the defiles behind him. However, he made no such advance, and, during the hot weather in the middle of May, there were indications that he was drawing in his advanced posts. On the 8th and 21st May enemy aircraft attacked Port Said with bombs, doing no material damage. On the first occasion three civilians were wounded; on the second two civilians were killed, five soldiers and thirteen civilians were wounded. In each case the attack was answered by prompt and successful retaliation by the Royal Flying Corps. In all sections of the Eastern front reconnaissances were frequent, particularly in No. 3 Section, to which were now allotted three brigades of the Anzac Mounted Division. During the month the Mahemdia-Romani district has been occupied in some force, and at a conference, held on 17th May, at which General Lawrence, commanding No. 3 Section, was present, further decisions regarding the occupation of the Qatia district were arrived at.

During the month several successful reconnaissances to the east were made by the Anzac Mounted Division, which proved itself a unit upon which I could absolutely depend to display energy, resource and endurance. On the 8th May, starting early from Oghratina, the 2nd Light Horse Brigade reconnoitred to Bir el Abd with patrols pushed out to Hod Salmana. On the 16th May, a day of intense heat, the same brigade, starting from Hod el Sagia, five miles E.S.E. of Qatia, reached Hod el Bayud, 15 miles on in the same direction, at 7 a.m. Camels and dismounted men were seen making off in a north-easterly direction. The enemy's camp was destroyed, and one prisoner, 36 camels, and a quantity of ammunition were brought in. The reconnaissance returned to Qatia, having covered 60 miles in 30 hours. During this time the Canterbury Mounted Rifles went out to Bir Abu Afein, covering 40 miles in 30 hours.

On the 18th May a very successful bombardment of El Arish from the sea and the air was carried out. A sloop and two monitors of His Majesty's Navy bombarded the town, reducing the fort S.W. of the town to ruins and damaging the aerodrome. The seaplanes of the Royal Naval Air Service then attacked with bombs, being followed later by 6 machines of the Royal Flying Corps, who had orders to attack any enemy aircraft that appeared and to bomb the enemy's camp and troops. The camps were effectively bombed, and three bombs exploded in the middle of a body of a thousand men who were on the march south of the town. A close reconnaissance of El Arish from the air was made, and many valuable photographs taken at the same time. All ships and aircraft returned safely. On 22nd May the Royal Flying Corps carried out a highly effective bombardment of all enemy camps on a 45 mile front roughly parallel to the Canal, during which severe damage was done to the waterworks at Rodh Salem and to buildings at El Hamma and Bir Mazar. On 23rd May the 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade reconnoitred Hod el Gedaidia, 15 miles east of Qatia, where shots were exchanged with a patrol of 40 men on camels, who retired. Finally, on 31st May, the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade, one regiment of Australian Light Horse, and a sub-section of the

Ayrshire Battery R.H.A., attacked the enemy's post at Bir Salmana, 20 miles E.N.E. of Qatia. The post was surrounded before dawn, and an enemy post on the Ganadil road was rushed, while a camel detachment was seen making off to the south-east. The enemy lost 15 men killed and 2 men captured. Our cavalry pursued till 8 a.m. when the pursuit was taken up by aeroplanes which bombed scattered parties with effect, killing 20 camels and 8 more men. The force returned, having covered 60 miles in 36 hours besides fighting an engagement. The only casualties were two men slightly wounded.

On the Western Front during May preliminary measures for the occupation of the Baharia Oasis have been in progress. A line of blockhouses has been established along the Darb el Rubi which runs due west from Samalut on the Nile. Four blockhouses were completed and occupied by 23rd May. Work on the two remaining blockhouses has been postponed till the railway has reached a point where it can materially assist in the supply of stores: this should be about the end of June. From the most advanced blockhouse it is now possible to reconnoitre as far as the Mohariq sand dunes, some 80 miles west of Samalut. The difficulty of maintaining such a line in a waterless desert subject to frequent and severe sand storms has not been small, but all ranks have worked well and with great keenness.

The enemy has a small body of troops, under the command of Nuri, collected on the Libyan side of the frontier west of Sollum, but as yet he has not openly displayed his intentions. Two battalions of Italian troops landed at Moraisa during the month and have occupied Bardia. The relations between the Italian and British commanders on the frontier are excellent. The area between Sollum and Barrani has been cleared of the Bedouin population, and, though it has been impossible entirely to prevent communication between the Bedouins and Siwa, the energy of our patrols, according to numerous reports, is successfully restricting the entry of food supplies into Siwa.

By means of patrols of Imperial Camel Corps and motor cars, communication between the oases occupied by the enemy and the Nile Valley and Delta has been rendered almost impossible. In particular, the camel patrolling from Kharga towards Dakhla and Beris has been carried out most efficiently by No. 1 Imperial Camel Company under especially trying conditions. The Farafra, Baharia, Moghara and Wadi Natrun fronts have also been controlled with great vigilance.

The Aulad Ali tribes in Egyptian territory are now all west of Barrani, except for a receiving camp at Sollum. Markets have been established for the sale of food at Sollum, Mersa Matruh, Dabaa, El Hamman and Wadi Natrun, where they are allowed to purchase what is necessary for their daily needs. This restricts indiscriminate movement to the west or to the Delta.

In spite of the occupation, during very hot weather, of so many advanced posts in the desert or on its edge, I am glad to report that the health of the troops has been remarkably good. I much regret, however, that General Sir Blyan Mahon, shortly after his arrival in this country to take up the command of the Western Frontier Force, had to be invalided home owing to severe sunstroke. In the meantime, Major-General A. G. Dallas, C.B., has