

from Abiad, and in concentrating the striking force at the latter place.

On May 5th the garrison at Abiad beat off an attack by an enemy force estimated at 500; on the 9th the telegraph line was raided three miles to the east of the post, but was repaired immediately. On the 12th an aeroplane reconnaissance dropped a number of proclamations over the town of El Fasher, whence the Sultan's army apparently showed no inclination to move.

By the evening of the 14th May all preparations were completed, and the following force was ready at Abiad for the advance upon the capital:—

60 Mounted Infantry Scouts,
8 Guns,
14 Maxims (Artillery and British sections),
4 Companies Camel Corps with two maxims,
8 Companies Infantry (13th and 14th Sudanese, and Arab battalion),
with Field Hospital and details.

Colonel Kelly decided, owing to watering difficulties, that this force should leave Abiad in two parties—a slow-moving column "A" and a mobile column "B"—which should reunite 40 miles west of Abiad and 28 miles short of Meleit. The latter place, where an ample water supply was known to exist, was held by a small enemy garrison, and was the first objective, whence the final attack on El Fasher would be made.

At 4.15 a.m. on the 15th a small party of our Mounted Infantry Scouts, under Mulazim Awal (Lieutenant) Suleiman Effendi Omar, skilfully cut off a mounted enemy observation post, cleverly sited on a ridge two miles distant from the camp, and captured all but two individuals, who escaped on foot. It was subsequently ascertained that by this smart piece of work, which was typical of the excellent service rendered by these Mounted Infantry Scouts throughout the operations, information of the movement of our troops did not reach El Fasher before the latter were within striking distance of Meleit. Columns "A" and "B" left Abiad on the mornings of the 15th and 16th respectively, and after extremely hot and trying marches, reached the point of concentration on the 17th. That morning an aeroplane reconnaissance over Meleit dropped bombs on the village, whence some shots had been fired at the machine by a force of about 500 of the enemy. On the morning of the 18th the combined force reached Meleit, which the enemy had evacuated hastily on the previous evening, leaving a quantity of stock, which fell into our hands.

An aeroplane reconnaissance on the following day reported the country clear of the enemy for 15 miles, but, owing to the exhaustion of the troops, the further advance was postponed until the 21st, when our scouts kept touch with small parties of the enemy throughout the day.

On May 22nd Camp was struck at 5.30 a.m. and large parties of enemy horsemen and camelry were encountered from the outset. The country traversed consisted in a succession of low, broken sandhills, with many depressions and much concealed ground; scattered bush made it difficult to see for more than a few hundred yards in any direction, and at times one portion of the square would be on high ground and the other portion entirely

lost to view. Scouting was both difficult and dangerous, and a company of Camel Corps and 4 (British) Maxims were therefore pushed to the front to support the Mounted Infantry if necessary.

At 10.30 a.m. the enemy were observed to be occupying a strong position about 2,000 yards away, which was shelled by our batteries and the occupants driven from their advanced trenches. Enemy horsemen were also engaged on our left, and "A" and No. 2 batteries had an opportunity of shelling them at about 1,600 yards with good effect.

The square now advanced about 800 yards to a better position, where they entrenched, whilst the Mounted Infantry, "A" battery, No. 2 battery, British R.G.A. Maxims and one company of Camel Corps were sent to occupy an elevated position, south-west of the square, on our right front. At the same time enemy cavalry continued to threaten our left flank, to meet which eventually a company of Camel Corps, with one Maxim section, were ordered to some high ground on the left.

Some 500 yards in front of the square was situated the village of Beringia, about 600 yards south of which, and extending for about 1,000 yards east and west, was the main entrenched position occupied by the enemy. Their left formed a semi-circle, only a portion of which could be seen and reconnoitred by our scouts, and their right was thrown back with the flank resting on a Khor (valley or depression).

Colonel Kelly decided to attack forthwith and to clear up the situation. Whilst, however, he was making the necessary dispositions, the company of Camel Corps, who had been acting as escort to the Artillery and Maxims on the right front of the square, entered Beringia, and a few individuals boldly pushed right through the village to the southern crest, where they immediately came under a very heavy fire and commenced to withdraw. Seeing this, a number of the enemy emerged from their entrenched position in close pursuit, thus exposing themselves to the flanking fire of No. 2 battery from the right of the square, and forming a good target for "A" battery from the left of the square.

The enemy now debouched with great rapidity from the whole of their position and advanced in great strength.

At this time there were actually in the firing line on the south face of the square (from right to left) No. 2 battery; 3 companies Infantry; "A" battery; 1 company Infantry, with 1 section British Maxims: then, after a gap of 150 yards, another company of Infantry, with the remaining section British Maxims, these latter units facing east.

Colonel Kelly, fearing the enemy might envelop the flanks of the square, saw no immediate necessity for reinforcing the southern face until matters developed further; but, shortly afterwards, 2 sections of No. 6 Maxim battery were moved to the right of No. 2 battery, and 1 company of the Arab Battalion was pushed forward to a better position slightly in advance of the right of the southern face.

The assault was delivered with great desperation—many of the attackers falling within ten yards of our firing line—but after the square had been in action some 40 minutes the enemy's ranks were seen to waver, and at this moment Colonel Kelly ordered the "advance" to be sounded. Our counter-attack was exe-