

west of Qatia, supported by artillery. The Australian Light Horse, which had moved forward from Dueidar by Bir El Nuss, came into contact with the enemy near Bir El Hamisah and captured some 450 prisoners, with machine guns and other materiel. The further advance of these troops, however, was met with heavy fire from field guns and howitzers, and no further progress was made. Further northwards, as soon as the infantry had cleared Abu Hamra, the advance was continued towards Qatia, where the enemy's rearguard was found firmly established east of the palm trees, with both flanks well protected. A strong attempt was made to eject him by dismounted action, but the attack failed to make progress, and darkness found our troops and the enemy's facing each other roughly on parallel lines. During the day the Royal Flying Corps reported that the retreat of the Turks was general throughout their depth, and our aeroplanes most effectively harassed his movements and threw his columns into confusion by well-directed bomb attacks.

On the morning of the 6th the enemy was found to have retired from Qatia, and, while the cavalry pressed on in pursuit, the infantry moved forward and occupied the line Er Rabah-Qatia-Bir El Mamluk. These Australian Light Horse regiments, which had borne the brunt of observing and harassing the enemy's advance, were given a day's rest in camp, while the remainder of the cavalry continued the advance. The enemy's rearguard was found to be occupying his previously prepared position extending across the road and telegraph line between Hod El Reshafat and Hod El Dhaba. Our attempts to turn his flanks by Hod En Negiliat on the north and Hod El Sagia on the south were frustrated by heavy artillery fire.

On the same morning the Camel Corps detachment of Smith's Mobile Column occupied Bir El Mageibra without opposition. Another body of mounted troops also moved to Mageibra in support at Bir El Jafeir. In the afternoon Major J. J. de Knoop, commanding the Camel Corps detachment of this column, reconnoitred towards Hod El Bayud, and reported that a force of the enemy was in occupation of Hod El Muhammad, five miles north-east of Mageibra. Orders for an attack next morning were issued by Colonel Smith.

On the 7th August the cavalry maintained their action with the enemy's rearguard, which had fallen back to the line of his first entrenched position running from Oghratina to Hod El Masia, with flanks thrown well out to the north and south. There was continuous fighting throughout the day, but the enemy were too strongly supported by artillery for the cavalry to drive him from his position. Meanwhile the Mobile Column, operating from Bir El Aweidiya, had fought a very successful action with the enemy force—consisting of 1,000 rifles, three machine guns and two 12-pounder guns—in the neighbourhood of Hod El Muhammad. The camel detachment and cavalry, the whole under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Grant, drove the enemy out of several successive positions, capturing 53 prisoners, and successfully withdrew at nightfall. This threat to his flanks was probably an important factor in determining the enemy to continue his retreat. I regret to say that Major de Knoop, who had handled the camel detachment throughout with great skill

and judgment, was killed while directing operations.

On the 8th August the enemy was found to have abandoned Oghratina and, by the evening, to have taken up a position covering Bir el Abd, his advanced base. It was here that the enemy made his final stand to cover the evacuation of his camp and stores. Touch was now gained between the cavalry and Smith's Mobile Column, and was maintained from this time onwards.

On the 9th August the cavalry which had hitherto carried out the pursuit was reinforced. A strong effort was made to encircle both flanks of the enemy at Bir El Abd and cut off his further retreat. Strong opposition was, however, encountered on both flanks, and it was decided to deliver a dismounted attack with the object of driving out the enemy. Our field batteries got close enough to shell effectively the convoys removing stores from the pile at Bir El Abd, but our artillery fire drew a heavy reply from the enemy's howitzers, which caused some casualties. The enemy, well supported by artillery, fought stubbornly. He made three counter-attacks, all of which were driven back with heavy loss by our rifle and machine-gun fire, and in the evening what appeared to be a general advance by fresh forces was made against our troops. This was also driven back with heavy loss, but the enemy was able to maintain his covering position. During the next two days our cavalry was unable to do more than maintain continuous pressure, but the Mobile Column, which had occupied Bayud on the 9th, continued to menace the enemy wide on his left flank. On the 10th a strong reconnaissance was made against the enemy, who was in strength at Hod El Mushalfat, south-east of Bir El Abd. On the 11th an enemy force with two mountain guns approached Bayud. A sharp action, which commenced at 5.30 a.m., was fought, and in the course of it all the baggage camels and ammunition mules of the enemy detachment were destroyed. Towards the afternoon the enemy evacuated this position and retired on the main body of his rearguard. On the following day patrols from the neighbourhood of Bayud found the country to the east and north all clear.

Early on the morning of the 12th it was found that the enemy had retired from Bir El Abd, and, though there was a small encounter with his rear troops about Salmana, the general pursuit stopped at this point, the enemy feinting through Bir El Mazar to El Arish. The General Officer Commanding was ordered to hold the line Bir El Abd-Homossia with two brigades of cavalry, keeping touch with the Mobile Column, which remained at Mageibra. The infantry returned to the Mahemdia—Romani line.

6. The complete result of the operations in the Qatia district was the decisive defeat of an enemy force amounting in all to some 18,000, including 15,000 rifles. Some 4,000 prisoners, including 50 officers, were captured, and, from the number of enemy dead actually buried, it is estimated that the total number of enemy casualties amounted to about 9,000. In addition, there were captured 1 Krupp 75 mm. mountain battery of four guns complete with all accessories and 400 rounds of ammunition, 9 German machine guns and mountings with specially constructed pack saddles for camel transport, 2,300 rifles, 1,000,000 rounds small