

DESPATCH No. II.

Army Headquarters, Cairo,  
19th August, 1915.

Sir,—

I have the honour to forward the accompanying despatch of Major-General A. Wilson, C.B., Commanding the Suez Canal Defences.

The troops under General Wilson's command have been on service for over eight months, and though the actual fighting they have experienced has not been severe, yet their work has been heavy and monotonous owing to the large amount of patrolling necessitated by the enemy's attempts at minelaying and to cross the Canal.

Owing to the withdrawal of troops to other theatres of war, and to sickness incidental to the hot season, this patrolling has become very arduous, especially at night.

The list of recommendations for rewards in which I concur and forward is not, I submit, excessive, having regard to the strength of the force, which rose in February and March to 30,000 men.

A considerable number of the officers mentioned are now serving either in the Dardanelles, Aden or France, some have been killed and many wounded, but, none the less, I feel it my duty to mention their services in Egypt.

It will be seen that a good many recommendations on behalf of the administrative staff have been made, especially the Medical Branch, but as Egypt has developed into an Intermediate Base and Clearing Station for the Indian Forces serving in France and in the Mediterranean, the work and responsibilities of the administrative staff and services have greatly increased, and are consequently specially deserving of consideration.

In conclusion I would like very specially to bring to the notice of the Secretary of State for War the eminent services of Major-General A. Wilson, C.B., who has commanded the Canal defences with ability, tact, and resource since the 16th November, 1914.

I have, &c.,

J. G. MAXWELL, Lieut.-General,  
Commanding the Force in Egypt.

From the General Officer Commanding,  
Canal Defences, to The General Staff, Army  
Headquarters, Cairo.

Headquarters, Canal Defences,  
Ismailia,

1st August, 1915.

Sir,—

On the 11th February, 1915, I submitted a report on the operations which took place early in the month in the Canal zone, and also a brief *resumé* of events since I assumed command of the Canal Defences on 16th November, 1914.

At the time this report was made it appeared from information at our disposal that the operations under reference might only be a preliminary to further hostilities, and that a more determined attack on the Canal would be undertaken in the near future. These anticipations have, however, not been realised, and though the enemy has continued to hold the Sinai Peninsula in some strength and has undertaken several minor enterprises, with a view to causing damage to the Canal and the shipping using it, no further advance in force

has taken place. This result may be attributed to the fact that the losses suffered by the enemy in the attack on the Canal were, according to subsequent reports from Turkish sources, heavier than had been originally estimated, while the demoralisation of the force, consequent on its retreat across the desert, necessitated a considerable pause for reorganization.

2. Now that the hot season is well established, and also as considerable forces of the enemy have been withdrawn to other theatres of operations, it is probable that the existing state of affairs will continue for some months: I therefore consider it a suitable opportunity to forward a narrative of events subsequent to my last report, and also to submit the names of officers whose services during the past eight months are, in my opinion, worthy of mention:

3. My last report dealt with the operations in the vicinity of the Canal up to 10th February, 1915, by which date hostilities in its immediate neighbourhood had ceased for the time being.

On the 12th February, in accordance with instructions from Army Headquarters, a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -battalion 2/7th Gurkha Rifles, under Lieut.-Colonel Haldane, embarked at Suez on board H.M.S. "Minerva" to proceed to Tor, with a view to dispersing a force which had been threatening that place for some time past. This force landed at Tor during the night of the 12th/13th, and, in conjunction with 150 men of the 2nd Egyptian Battalion, which had been in garrison at Tor, attacked the enemy at dawn on the 13th. The attack was completely successful, the enemy losing some 60 killed and 102 prisoners; our losses were 1 killed and 1 wounded. Since this occasion no further forces of the enemy have appeared near Tor.

4. For the remainder of February and till the 22nd March no incident of note took place. The Imperial Yeomanry Brigade, as well as the Australian and New Zealand Infantry, who had reinforced the troops on the Canal, returned to Cairo.

Several reconnaissances, principally to Abu Zenima (by sea), El Haitan, Wadi Muksheib, Moiya Harab and Katia, were pushed out, but no enemy encountered.

From information received from agents and through aerial reconnaissances, it appeared that during this month the Turks had concentrated mainly at El Arish and Nekhl, while considerable bodies of the beaten troops were withdrawn to Syria, being, it was rumoured, replaced by fresh formations from the north.

5. On 22nd March an infantry patrol moving from Kubri Post encountered a force of some 400 men north-east of that post at dawn. The enemy withdrew on being engaged by troops from the nearest posts, and a subsequent aerial reconnaissance discovered a force of some 800 infantry and 200 mounted men with guns about 10 miles east of the Canal.

From the report furnished it appeared that the Turks were entrenching and intended to stay, and, consequently, orders were issued for a column, consisting of 2 squadrons Hyderabad Lancers, 1/5th Lancashire Battery R.F.A. (T.F.), detachment Bikanir Camel Corps, 51st and 53rd Sikhs, and  $\frac{1}{2}$ -battalion 1/5th Gurkhas, to move out next day to engage and drive off the enemy.

This column, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Boisragon, V.C., moved out from Kubri at daylight (23rd), and attacked the