

*Royal Flying Corps.*

The flight of the Royal Flying Corps, which was generously placed at my disposal for the Darfur operations by the Commander-in-Chief in Egypt, more than justified the high expectations I had formed of its utility and of the great moral effect of its first appearance in Darfur. The transport of machines, hangars, repair shops and other necessary equipment from Suez to Rahad (on the Kordofan railway), and thence over the rough motor track to Nahud, which had been cleared by the Public Works Department, proved a most difficult and laborious undertaking. The petrol supply was affected by a temperature which sometimes reached 120° F. in the shade, lorries were marooned for whole days in sand up to the axles, and success was only attained by the excellent organisation and the untiring efforts of Major V. W. R. C. Groves and the personnel of the flight.

Amongst the most noteworthy flights may be mentioned that by Lieutenant F. Bellamy, on the 12th May, from Jebel el Hella to El Fasher and back, landing at Abiad on the out and return journeys; that by Captain E. J. Bannatyne, on the 17th May, to find Bir Meleit, a flight of over eight hours—a very remarkable performance under local flying conditions—during which his propeller was hit by a bullet when flying at a low altitude; and Lieutenant J. C. Slessor's flight over El Fasher on the morning of the 23rd May, which also brought the first news of the victory at Beringia, and in the course of which he was slightly wounded.

The conduct and efficiency of this flight throughout its period of service in the Sudan fully upheld the splendid reputation of the Royal Flying Corps.

*Transport and other Services.*

Two outstanding difficulties, largely interdependent one on the other, were connected with the transport service and water supply. The northern (Dudia) road between El Obeid and Nahud proved impracticable owing to the absence of water along it. Between Nahud and Um Shanga, a distance of over 100 miles, the only reliable water supply was that stored in the Tebedi trees. These are hollow trees of great girth which, from time immemorial, have served the natives of the region as reservoirs for the storage of water which is collected during the rains against the needs of the dry season. The trees supplied sufficient water for a small force, but required constant refilling, which involved the employment of special camel-convoys and considerable manual labour. Between Um Shanga and El Fasher wells are more frequent, but during the advance they were found to be usually over 200 feet in depth, very narrow, and requiring constant repair. At all posts the men were on continuous fatigue duty drawing water. At Um Kedada and at Abiad, before the final advance on El Fasher, work on the wells never ceased by day and night for four days, during which time 1,800 transport and riding camels were watered and over 12,000 gallons drawn for carriage with the force. This work was carried out at all times with the greatest good will, and the men of the Camel Corps, who are well acquainted with the local conditions, set a particularly fine example, and were invaluable in this respect.

The 3-ton lorries with the detachment of Army Service Corps Mechanical Transport, which were lent from Egypt, did excellent work under Lieutenant S. W. Carty, Army Service Corps, between El Obeid and Nahud; and the mechanical transport services organised by the Director of Public Works were also of great assistance on several occasions; whilst the Ford Ambulances, supplied from England by the Director-General, Army Medical Service, worked with great efficiency and despatch between Nahud and El Obeid.

The great bulk of the transport service and all transport with the troops in Darfur, however, was carried out by camel; and very great credit is due to Major S. E. H. Giles, Army Service Corps, and his subordinates, as well as to Major J. J. B. Tapley, D.S.O., and Captain R. S. Audas, Army Veterinary Corps, whose powers of organisation and improvisation were put to a high test. I am also greatly indebted to the Managing Director for the loan of several Inspectors of the Sudan Plantations Syndicate for work in connection with the transport services.

In normal times it is possible to hire almost any number of camels, with their drivers, for service in the Sudan, but at the time of mobilisation the country had been so depleted of transport animals by the requirements of the British forces in Egypt that it was necessary to organise and equip at once 10 Army transport companies, each of about 260 camels, with the necessary personnel. To add to Major Giles' difficulties there was a shortage of pack saddles, which had also been supplied in relatively large numbers to the forces in Egypt. Nevertheless one transport company was ready to accompany the independent mounted troops from Nahud on March 15th, and two more companies accompanied the main body four days later. Camels had actually to be employed putting water into Wad Banda for the use of the personnel of the transport working between Nahud and Jebel el Hella, to which post the transport had to work direct from Nahud owing to lack of water at Um Shanga; and even after the arrival of the force at Jebel el Hella all the transport companies were kept working at high pressure bringing up stores, material for the telegraph extension and for the construction of *hangars* for aeroplanes.

The transport was re-allotted for the final advance on El Fasher to enable each unit to leave Abiad with 15 days' rations, 5 days' forage, and 4 days' water for personnel and horses, thus bringing the number of camels actually with the force to a total of 1,800.

*Line of Communications.*

The work executed on the line of communications was very considerable, and the thanks of all those engaged in the military operations are due to the very efficient assistance rendered by Captain R. V. Savile, Governor of Kordofan province, Messrs. E. N. Corbyn, F. Atterbury, R. A. Bence-Pembroke, J. A. Gillan, and other members of the province staff. Their contribution, especially in connection with the provision of transport camels, was a very valuable one. Much excellent work was also carried out in the improvement of existing tracks for mechanical transport work by personnel of the Public Works Department under temporary Captain H. Claxton, who is now in charge of the larger scheme