

to the efficiency of the staff arrangements. A column of Yeomanry co-operated with this force, and did very good work.

2. On 10th and 11th June, Bir Bayud, Bir El Mageibra and Bir El Jefeir were reconnoitred. Enemy stores and huts were destroyed at Hod El Bayud, and at Hod El Dababis a hostile patrol was successfully disposed of. On 15th June Bir El Abd was reconnoitred, and between 21st and 23rd June a reconnaissance of the Hod El Ge'eila, Hod Um El Dhaunnin and Hod El Mushalfat area was carried out by an Australian Light Horse Brigade. During the latter operation one of our aeroplanes was reported missing, and the reconnoitring troops were ordered to find it. This they successfully accomplished, after considerable prolonged exertion in trying weather conditions, and the damaged engine and the machine gun were brought in on the 23rd. Bir El Abd and Mageibra were reconnoitred on 30th June and found to be clear of the enemy.

At the beginning of July a small reconnaissance was carried out from Abu Zeneima by detachments of the Sikh Pioneers and the Bikanir Camel Corps, under the command of Major W. J. Ottley. The column left Abu Zeneima on 11th July and returned on 14th July, having captured an Arab Sheikh and some other prisoners.

3. As regards the western front, during the month no important enemy movements took place. In the coastal section reconnaissances by aeroplane, motor and camel corps, to assure the safety of the Sollum post, were carried out, irrespective of frontier, and with the agreement of the Italian local military authorities, with whom a complete accord has been established by the interchange of visits between the respective commanders. Progress on the Baharia railway continued, though slower than was anticipated, and the defences of posts in the Kharga Oasis were completed. Aeroplane reconnaissance established the continued presence of an enemy force of some 1,800 rifles in the Dakhla Oasis. On 25th and 26th July a raid from Sollum was carried out by a detachment of light armoured cars, under the command of Captain C. G. Mangles, Hussars, in conjunction with some motor cars and personnel furnished by the Italian garrison of Bardia, supported by half a company Imperial Camel Corps, and by the Italian armed yacht "Misurata," ably commanded by Captain Como, Italian Navy. The objective was a party of some 100 Muhafzia, located near the mouth of the Wadi Sanal, in Italian territory, 40 miles west of Ras El Melh, whence they had been robbing the Bedouin under pretence of collecting taxes for the Senussi. A complete surprise was effected, but only about twenty-five Muhafzia were found in camp. These fled towards the sea, after a slight resistance, leaving six killed and three prisoners. Scattered groups on the seashore came under the gun fire of the "Misurata." The importance of this well-conducted operation lies in the proof which it gave to the Arabs of the close co-operation and good fellowship that existed between our Italian neighbours and ourselves.

4. More than half the month of July passed without any important occurrence on the eastern front. In the northern section mounted troops carried out frequent reconnaissances to the east, penetrating on 9th July as far as Salmana, but found the country clear

of all but a few Bedouin. On 17th July, however, enemy aircraft were active over the Romani-Dueidar area, and on the 18th a patrol came in contact with a camel patrol of fifteen Turks, with whom shots were exchanged. The Turks retired rapidly eastwards. Up till this date there was no considerable body of Turkish troops further west than Bir El Mazar, some 18 miles east of Oghratina, where for some time there had been a camp of between 1,500 and 2,000.

The situation suddenly changed on 19th July, when an evening reconnaissance by the Royal Flying Corps revealed the fact that a large force of the enemy had moved westwards from El Arish and established itself on the line Bir El Abd-Bir Jameil-Bir Bayud. Their numbers were estimated to be between 8,000 and 9,000, of which from 3,000 to 4,000 were at Bir El Abd, and the remainder divided between the other two places. It was not immediately clear whether the enemy's intention was to repeat the raid of 23rd April on the Qatia district on a larger scale, or to make a more deliberate advance, but I at once decided, on receipt of this information, to reinforce the troops in this area.

Early on the morning of the 20th the cavalry reported that Oghratina was held by strong forces of the enemy, who were entrenching. This was confirmed by the Royal Flying Corps, who further reported that the pile of stores at Bir el Abd had increased in size, and that the troops reported on the previous evening at Bir Jameil and Bir El Bayud had moved. A further air reconnaissance, in the afternoon, revealed that this force had moved to Mageibra, where there were between 2,000 and 3,000 men, with bodies of between 500 and 600 moving on a line between that place and Oghratina. Instructions were issued that the enemy was to be allowed to become involved in an attack on our defences, if he would, and that any such intention was not to be hindered by a premature counter-attack. The cavalry were in touch with the enemy all day, capturing a few prisoners, from whose information it appeared that the force in front of us was the 3rd Turkish Division, consisting of the 31st, 32nd, and 39th Regiments, with mountain guns, heavy artillery, and special machine gun companies; the artillery was manned by Turks, Germans and Austrians, and there were Germans with all the machine gun companies. Prisoners also stated that there were other échelons following behind these advanced troops at a distance of one day's march. This information was confirmed in all essentials by the completer knowledge subsequently obtained of the attacking force, except that prisoners all exaggerated the number of troops that was following behind them. The whole force consisted of the Turkish 3rd Division, with eight machine gun companies, officered and partly manned by Germans, mountain artillery, and some batteries of 4-inch and 6-inch howitzers and anti-aircraft guns, manned chiefly by Austrians, with a body of Arab Camelry. It was commanded by Colonel Kress Von Kressenstein, a German officer in Turkish employ, and the German personnel of the machine gun units, heavy artillery, wireless sections, field hospital and supply section had been organised in Germany as a special formation for operations with the Turkish forces. The force was in fine physical condition and admirably equipped.

On the evening of the 20th a demonstration