

Katib Gannit-Bir El Nuss line in a north-westerly direction, with the object of forcing back our entrenched line before we could interfere from the west and north-west. I warned General Lawrence of this possibility, which was confirmed by events.

5. On the night of the 3rd/4th August, owing to the proximity of the enemy at Qatia, the cavalry, in addition to leaving out the usual officers' patrols, put out a strong outpost line which extended from just south of Katib Gannit along the entrance to the gullies between the sand dunes up to and including Hod El Enna, thus preventing the enemy from penetrating unobserved into the waterless area of sand dunes south-west of Romani, into which I anticipated he would attempt to move. This outpost line, formed by two regiments, was attacked by the enemy in increasing strength from midnight onwards. Several attempts to force the line were repulsed, a bayonet charge on Mount Meredith, a high sand dune midway between Katib Gannit and Hod El Enna, being beaten off between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. The continuous pressure of the enemy gradually forced back the outpost line, which by 4.20 a.m. was facing generally south along the dune called Wellington Ridge, between Mount Meredith and Katib Gannit. Before long the enemy's threat to outflank our right made it necessary to retire slowly northwards towards the railway. It was evident by daylight that the enemy had committed his troops to a decisive attack, as he was pressing the line of fortified works from the east under cover of artillery fire from field guns and heavy howitzers at the same time as he was moving round the southern flank of the position with strong forces, before which our cavalry, while stubbornly resisting, were slowly retiring.

The situation had developed in accordance with my anticipations, and it was certain that, once the force of the enemy's attack from the south was spent, a decisive and rapid counter-attack would place him in a position of great difficulty. General Lawrence issued orders for all available troops to be ready to operate against the enemy's southern flank in the direction of Mount Royston, a high sand dune about two miles south of Pelusium Station: a Mounted Brigade was directed to act vigorously from Dueidar towards Hod El Enna; another Mounted Brigade was ordered to send one regiment to Hod El Aras, and to be prepared to follow it up with the whole Brigade, so as to co-operate with the first-mentioned Mounted Brigade. Finally, I issued orders to the Mobile Column, under Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, V.C., to commence operations against the enemy's left rear towards Mageibra and Bir Aweidiya, working wide of the flank of the last-named Mounted Brigade. This Column at once started for Hod El Bada, which it reached by the evening of the 4th.

During the forenoon the enemy made several attacks against the Romani-Mehemdia defences from the east, south and south-west. These were repulsed by the garrisons, composed of Scottish and Welsh Infantry, with considerable loss, and in spite of heavy artillery fire from the enemy's heavy howitzers, which in one or two cases inflicted severe casualties on our troops, who behaved with admirable steadiness. The fire of these howitzers, however, was very effectively kept down by the guns of the monitors, with the co-operation of the Royal Flying Corps.

There was, unfortunately, more delay than had been anticipated in moving up the infantry reinforcements to Pelusium Station, so that during the morning of the 4th no infantry was available for an attack on the enemy's flank at Mount Royston. This caused the whole brunt of the fighting in this area to fall upon the cavalry, whose casualties had not been light, and whose right flank was unprotected. A squadron of cavalry from 7.45 a.m. onwards held off attacks from the south-east for three hours till a yeomanry regiment, which had come into action at 9.45, gained touch with it. The result of the somewhat rapid advance of the Turks from the south was that General Lawrence was obliged to divert the cavalry originally destined to operate against the enemy's rear to strengthen the line of resistance on the north. By 12.30 p.m. the enemy on our southern flank reached the furthest point of his advance—a line running from Bir Abu Diyuk, north of Mount Royston, along the southern slopes of Wellington Ridge, and thence bending round to the east and north facing the southernmost infantry post. Shortly after 1 p.m. New Zealand mounted troops, with some Yeomanry, began to attack Mount Royston from the west. This attack was pressed slowly forward, and was accompanied, in spite of heavy fire from the enemy, by a general move forward of the cavalry. By 3.30 p.m. two battalions of the E. Lancashire Regiment, closely followed by a third, were on the march southwards from Pelusium Station, and by 4 p.m. all the troops were ordered to press forward for the counter-attack and gain and hold the line Mount Royston-Wellington Ridge. By 6.30 p.m. Mount Royston, with about 500 prisoners, some machine guns, and a battery of mountain artillery were in our hands. At 6 p.m. an attack was made on Wellington Ridge by infantry, supported by the fire of our artillery. The ridge was strongly held, and, owing to darkness, the enemy remained in possession of part of it during the night. The result of the day's fighting was that we had repulsed a vigorous attack, capturing between 500 and 1,000 prisoners, retaken Mount Royston and part of Wellington Ridge, and were pressing back on the south a now exhausted enemy. The outpost line for the night was taken up by the leading battalions, with some of the cavalry in the centre. Some Australian cavalry, which had reached Hill 70, was ordered on to Dueidar to be ready to take up the right flank of the pursuit.

Vigorous action, to the utmost limits of endurance, was ordered for the next day, and the troops, in spite of the heat, responded nobly. At daybreak the Scottish Territorial Infantry, assisted by Australian and New Zealand mounted troops, took the remainder of Wellington Ridge by assault, capturing about 1,500 prisoners. Elsewhere the mounted troops pressed forward, meeting with some opposition, but prisoners continued to come in steadily, and it was soon obvious that the enemy's offensive was completely broken. An advance was ordered all along the line, and all mounted troops were put under the command of General Chauvel, with orders to push on as far and as vigorously as the resources at his disposal would permit.

The mounted troops pressed steadily forward, and found the enemy holding the ridges