

CHAPTER IX

OPERATIONS IN AND BEYOND THE JORDAN VALLEY

PART of the Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea having been occupied, two raids were made, in March and April 1918 respectively, towards Amman on the steep-sided plateau of Moab, east of the river. These operations, in which the mounted troops formed the striking force for the distant objective, failed, and, especially during the withdrawals, were the occasion of the most difficult and dangerous marches undertaken by medical units in the campaign.

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The stay in the victorious progress of the second Palestine offensive was not so much due to any change in the military dominance of the attacking force as to the fact that, facing a reinforced enemy on a new strategic base, it had outrun its own lines of communication and supplies. To meet the desire of the Supreme War Council for a "knock-out blow" to the Turk in Palestine, General Allenby was instructed by the War Cabinet that his plans should be directed to that end, and in February two Indian divisions were ordered to Palestine from Mesopotamia. As a strategic preliminary to a general advance Allenby carried out certain subsidiary operations with the object of securing his right flank and advancing it clear of the Dead Sea by the occupation of the Jordan Valley, as well as of isolating the Turkish force at Medina by an attack on the Hejaz railway. Besides their direct results, both these operations would have the desired effect of turning the attention of the enemy to the openings on his left flank, and especially to the possibility that Deraa might be the objective in a British general advance.

The first step in these various moves involved the capture of Jericho and of sufficient space to the north to ensure its safety as a base for trans-Jordan operations. This was carried out on February 19th-21st by the 60th (London) and the Anzac Mounted Divisions, the operations being under the direction of the XX Corps. The infantry made the main

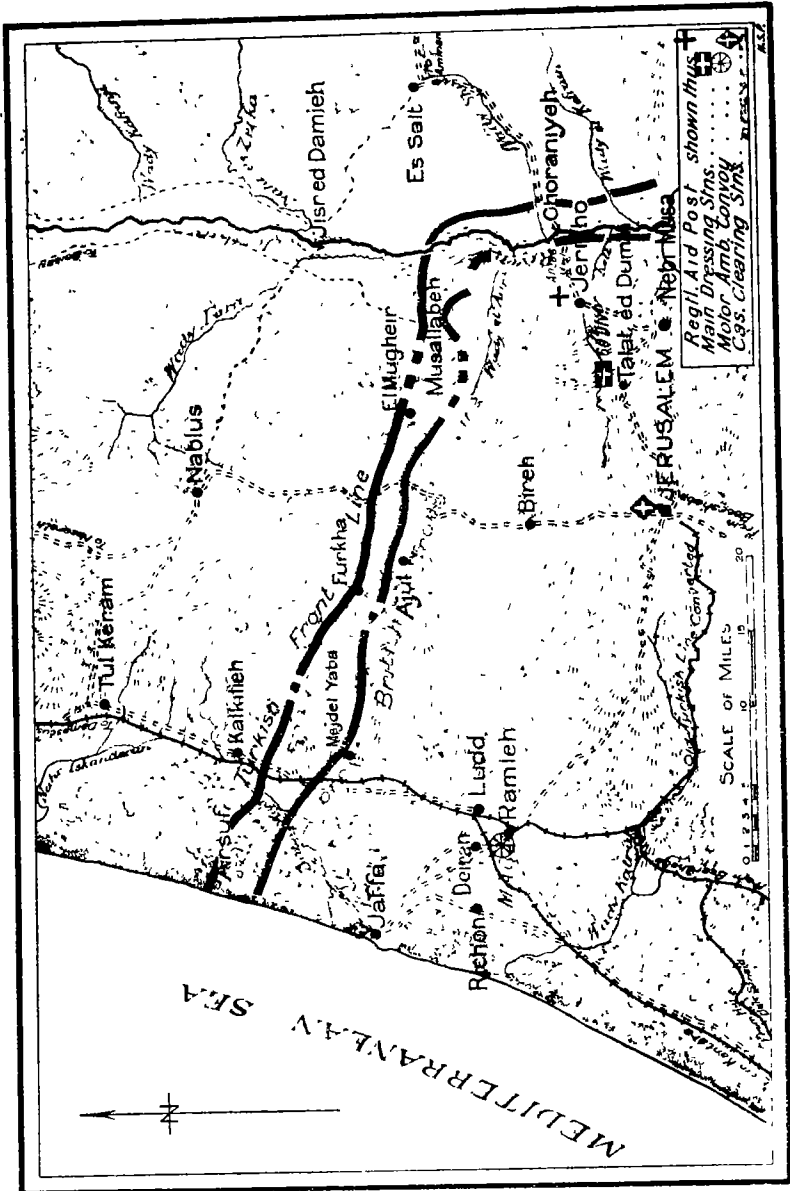
**Occupation of
Jordan Valley
—Feb. 19-21**

attack against the enemy positions in the hills on the west border of the Jordan Valley: the light horse moved through difficult hilly country farther east and south in a flanking movement directed on Nebi Musa, the site of a large mosque and the reputed burial-place of Moses. The light horse was for a time held up, but after the capture of their objectives by the infantry the enemy evacuated Nebi Musa on the 20th and retired across the Jordan. The Anzac Mounted Division occupied Jericho next day, after little fighting.

In these operations, leaving their pleasant bivouac area round Richon, the 1st Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulances, with the Anzac Mounted Division, marched on February 18th to Bethlehem, where each unit took over twenty cacolet and six baggage camels, lent by the XX Corps. In the approach march the bearer divisions with all camels accompanied their brigades, but the route taken was impassable for wheels and the transport vehicles followed later by the main Jerusalem-Jericho road. That traversed by the mobile sections was merely a bridle track, steep and rough, in some places leading across the face of precipitous hills, down narrow wadys, or along "razorbacks" with a precipice on either side. Horses and camels were led in single file; in the more dangerous parts it was necessary to move the wounded from the cacolets and carry them by hand.

In Jericho were found a few Turkish wounded and ten with typhus fever. All were in the neglected state of starvation and dirt usually met with in abandoned Turkish hospitals. The typhus cases were in the basement of the Jordan Hotel, left to fend for themselves, and with their food passed to them through the windows. They were removed to a Russian hospice, while the wounded were taken to a Russian church, the only other clean building in this squalid and dilapidated town. On the 22nd all were evacuated by motor ambulance waggons to casualty clearing stations at Jerusalem: on the same day the Anzac Mounted Division returned to Richon, leaving one regiment in the Jordan Valley. The

**Action of
medical units**



THE MEDICAL SITUATION IN FEBRUARY 1918 AFTER THE CAPTURE OF JERICHO

British line was soon afterwards advanced to the Wady Auja, while the Turks held the east bank of the River Jordan and maintained a bridge-head at Ghoraniyeh.

By this time the British advanced base of operations had shifted from Deir el Belah to the new railhead in the vicinity of Ludd. General Headquarters, and with it the D.M.S., E.E.F., moved to Ramleh; the headquarters of the Motor Ambulance Convoy to Junction Station. Thirteen casualty clearing stations and stationary hospitals were by now established along the course of the lines of communication, from Jaffa and Jerusalem to Kantara, whither, by March, ambulance trains ran from Ludd.

The second move in Allenby's plan involved the light horse in their most difficult and unsatisfactory operations in the campaign. During these the regimental medical establishments and bearer divisions of the light horse field ambulances were faced with situations as difficult, and experiences as trying, as a medical service is ever likely to meet in collecting the wounded from a raid on a large scale in enemy territory and transporting them to safety.

THE FIRST AMMAN RAID.

The first trans-Jordan raid, now to be described, was directed against a viaduct and tunnel at Amman, on the main strategic railway through Eastern Syria, which formed the Turk's line of communication with his forces in the Hejaz.¹

Amman (the ancient Philadelphia, which possessed a Roman amphitheatre still well preserved) lies in the hills of Moab on the railway from Damascus to the Hejaz, about sixty miles to the east of Jerusalem. In marching from Jerusalem a descent of some 3,400 feet is first made down the eastern slope of the Judæan hills to the Jericho plain, which lies from 900 to 1,280 feet below sea level. A winding road, steep in parts, but well graded and with a good surface, covered this stretch of twenty miles to Jericho. In places it had been destroyed by the Turks in their retreat, but had been repaired by the British Engineers. For the last few miles a deviation

¹ That is, the strip of country along the west shore of the Red Sea, where, directed by a few British officers, in particular Lieut.-Col. T. E. Lawrence, a somewhat desultory but peculiarly interesting war was being waged with their hereditary enemy the Turk by Emir Feisal, and a semi-organised army of Arabs

had been made by the Turks during the war to eliminate a very steep descent in the last portion of the ancient Roman road to Jericho. Crossing the western side of the soft loamy scrub-covered plain, the road gradually descends till, at a distance of seven miles from the edge of the Judæan hills, the Jordan is met. On the eastern side of the river a track led from the Ghoraniyeh crossing across the plain for six miles to Shunet Nimrin, at the foot of the hills of Moab. Thence, along the side of the wild hills bordering the Wady Shaib, a road began to climb in a north-easterly direction to the town of Es Salt, a distance of eleven miles. Es Salt—the biblical Ramoth Gilead—situated 2,050 feet above sea level, had a number of good stone buildings and a mixed population of about 15,000, comprising Arabs, Christians, Turks, and Circassians. From it, at first easterly and then south-easterly across a great plateau, there runs for eighteen miles to Amman (3,000 ft) a road which was metalled for a few miles beyond Es Salt but from that point became unfit for motors in wet weather. The only bridge across the Jordan, at Ghoraniyeh, had been destroyed.

After several days' delay on account of heavy rains which had caused a considerable rise in the Jordan, a passage was forced across the river, the enemy was driven away from its eastern bank, and sufficient bridges were formed to allow of the raiding force on March 24th being concentrated on the east of the river. That force consisted of the Anzac Mounted Division, with the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade attached, and the 60th Infantry Division.

With the brigades went the mobile sections of the ambulances, but their waggons and sandcarts were all collected together near Jericho to follow on when circumstances should permit. Pack-camels were used to carry the equipment, since the tracks to be traversed were expected to be impassable for wheels. The regimental medical equipment was carried on packhorses. Thirty-five cacolet camels were allotted to each ambulance for the raid. The motor ambulances, with the horsed ambulance waggons, were parked under the D.A.D.M.S., Anzac Mounted Division, near Jericho, to be used between the Anzac Mounted Division receiving

**Medical
arrangements**

station,² which was to be opened in the first stage of the operations at Ghoraniyeh, and a main dressing-station (infantry) at the foot of the old road west of Jericho. The main dressing-station consisted of the tent divisions of two field ambulances of the 60th Division. Attached to it were the Desert Mounted Corps Operating Unit and the Consulting Surgeon to the E.E.F. (Lieutenant-Colonel H. Wade, R.A.M.C.). In rear of this were two casualty clearing stations in good buildings in Jerusalem.

The position held by the enemy at Shunet Nimrin having been taken by the 60th Division and New Zealand Mounted

The advance Rifles Brigade on the 24th, the main road was now open, and by nightfall the infantry was four miles beyond Shunet Nimrin on the road to Es Salt. Half a mile beyond Shunet Nimrin there is a path leading to the main road to Ain es Sir (a Circassian village) and eventually to Amman. This direct route was followed by the New Zealand Brigade and ambulance: the 1st Light Horse Brigade with attached ambulance advanced a little up the plain to the north to protect the left flank, while the 2nd Light Horse and Camel Brigades with their ambulances followed another road, which passed some three miles south of Shunet Nimrin to the village of Naaur. It was soon discovered by the light horse formations that the roads marked on the maps were largely the beds of wadys, and, as it was raining heavily, these rapidly became converted into muddy streams. Consequently it became necessary to send back to Shunet Nimrin the ambulance waggons and sandcarts which had joined their units; instead they were now to follow by the

A trying march

road through Es Salt as soon as it should be open. The march was continued through the night and was certainly one of the most difficult undertaken by any ambulance in the campaign. Of the two routes, the southern was the more trying. It was raining hard and bitterly cold. The grade was steep—4,300 feet in sixteen miles—nearly all the climb being in the last ten miles. The tracks, which in many places ran along the sides of steep hills, were rocky and slippery, and wide enough only for horses to march in single

² The Anzac Mtd. Div. receiving station consisted of only one immobile section, the others being employed at railhead, at Ramleh, to receive patients from the casualty clearing station at Jaffa in front of them.

file. The camels (which are miserable under such conditions) had to be pulled and pushed along the tracks. They frequently fell, and a number, with their equipment, went over the edges of the cliffs and were killed. It was not till **March 25-26** 6 p.m. on the 25th that the ambulances, with camels and men exhausted, reached Ain el Hekr on the edge of the plateau, having taken twenty-four hours to cover ten miles.

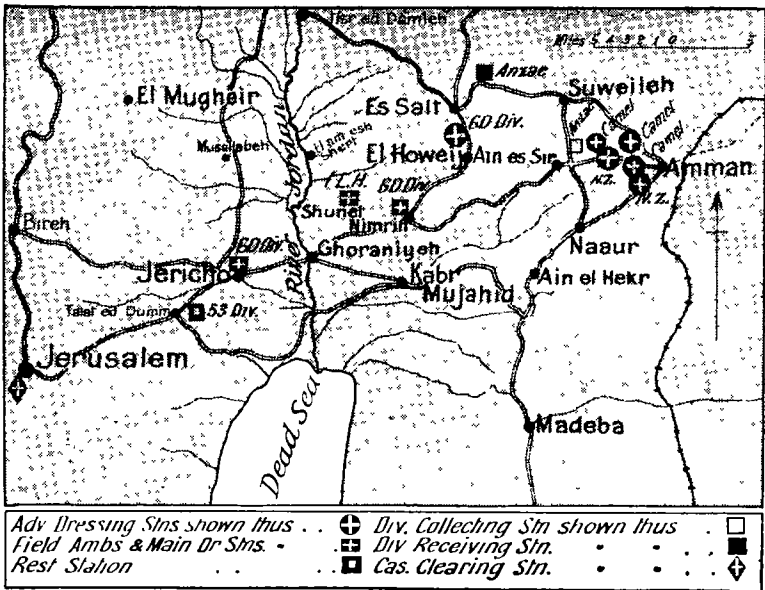
After another very cold night-march in heavy rain and deep and slippery mud, the brigades arrived at Ain es Sir and remained close to this village for twenty-four hours to recover from their exhaustion. Es Salt was occupied by the 1st Light Horse Brigade and infantry at about the same time. The attack on Amman was begun on the 27th. The long delay caused by the rain and the state of the country had given the enemy ample warning of our intentions, and foredoomed the attempt to failure. A stubborn fight was carried on throughout the day by the Anzac Mounted Division, supported by three mountain batteries, and small gains were made; but in general the enemy was able to hold up the attack.

**March 27—
the attack**

Regimental aid-posts, to which wounded were carried on light stretchers or blankets, were established about half-a-mile in rear of the attacking regiments. Advanced dressing-stations were established about three miles to their rear, and the return journey to and from these, made in sandcarts, occupied from three to six hours. A divisional collecting station was established six miles farther back at Birket umm Amud. The country was so heavy and rough between it and the advanced dressing-stations that wounded who were unable to ride could only be evacuated on cacolet camels. As the return journey over this stage occupied six or seven hours, other dressing-stations were established on the way, where wounds were re-dressed if necessary. As no satisfactory contrivance had been evolved to make the camel cacolets suitable for patients with fractured thighs treated by means of Thomas splints, the latter were not applied till the divisional collecting station was reached; treatment of the shock caused by the long rough trip was also carried out there.

**Evacuation
difficult**

To the rear of the divisional collecting station the road, though soft and boggy, was just passable for wheeled transport, and evacuation was continued through Suweileh and Es Salt to an infantry advanced dressing-station at El Howeij, five miles in rear of Es Salt, until the Anzac Mounted Division receiving station opened two miles east of Es Salt. The time occupied by the vehicles³ for this part of the journey, including their return and a period for resting and feeding the



horses, was thirty-four hours in the case of the sandcarts and forty hours for ambulance waggons. The remainder of the journey to the main dressing-station and operating unit near Jericho (twenty miles) was covered by motor ambulances. Hence the time spent in actual travelling to Jericho from the spot where a man was wounded was about twenty-four hours for the forty-five miles. To this must be added a further three hours before the cases reached the casualty clearing stations at Jerusalem.

³ These had rejoined their units after Es Salt was occupied.

The attack on the Amman position was continued on the 28th, 29th, and 30th. The enemy being steadily reinforced through the unharmed railway from the north, the position gradually changed, and it was the enemy who was attacking while the British were with difficulty defending themselves. By this time the operation had become hazardous. The only road by which the force could retire without abandoning all wheeled vehicles, including guns, was the devious one through Es Salt. On the 29th Es Salt was attacked by the Turks from the north-west, while the Jordan, rising nine feet through the night, washed away every bridge but that at Ghoraniyeh, which became the sole connection with the supplies and reinforcements west of the Jordan. The threat to the line of communications was so serious that only one infantry brigade could co-operate with the mounted division in the attack on Amman. On March 30th the

Retirement retirement from before Amman began. The divisional collecting station at Birket umm Amud was reinforced by a tent sub-division of the Australian Camel Field Ambulance, so that the advanced dressing-stations could be closed. On the 31st there were over 240 wounded in the divisional collecting stations. By the use of all available means of carriage, including sandcarts sent by the 60th Division, all patients and the divisional collecting station were on the march by that evening; about fifty patients were sent on foot. The march was carried out with much difficulty. Throughout almost the whole raid the rain and cold continued, and the road was thoroughly soft and boggy. Progress was slow, since the camels were in a very exhausted condition and were continually falling. The last convoy of wounded, which left at the same time as the divisional collecting station, found, bogged and exhausted at Suweileh, twenty camels carrying wounded; these had begun the journey six hours earlier in the day. Nine of them being still unable to move, some ambulance personnel was left to attend to the wounded. This work they did throughout the night, assisted by the villagers. At daylight a handful of light horse warned them to move on, as the Turkish cavalry was close by. Five of the camels were able to proceed, but the remaining four

were too exhausted. By this time the enemy had opened fire on the party. Of the eight wounded, six were placed on horses, but two, who appeared to be mortally wounded, were left behind when the enemy got between the covering party and the ambulance men. In the end all escaped but the two above mentioned and three men of the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance. The latter, who were mounted on donkeys and so had little chance of avoiding capture, were taken prisoners; two of them died while prisoners of war.

After this the evacuation of wounded across the Jordan continued without further trouble and was completed by the evening of April 2nd. The total casualties of the two divisions were about 1,200: of the Anzac Mounted Division, 724, including 551 wounded; of the British, 476, including 347 wounded.

On the 21st of March, 1918, the great German offensive was begun in France: America was not yet ready: and every available battalion was now drawn into the supreme struggle on the French front. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force was consequently reorganised. Two infantry divisions were completely, and the remainder partly, replaced by Indian troops, of whom 50 per cent. were raw recruits from India, the rest drawn from Mesopotamia and France. Six yeomanry regiments were disbanded and left for France; but on the other hand two new cavalry divisions (4th and 5th) were formed, each composed of three brigades, and each of these again containing one British and two Indian regiments. The British mounted field ambulances remained, but were changed by the inclusion of Indian personnel, forming what was known as "combined cavalry field ambulances." The Australian and New Zealand formations were only slightly affected by this reorganisation. The Anzac Mounted Division remained unchanged: in the Australian Mounted Division the 5th (British) Mounted Brigade was withdrawn, its place being taken by the Australian companies of the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade, which became the 5th Light Horse Brigade. The Australian Camel Field Ambulance became the 5th Light Horse Field Ambulance. The training of these

**Re-organisation
of E.E.F.**

new troops, welding of the new units into a fighting machine, and general preparations for a great move, called for the closest attention. Meanwhile a second trans-Jordan raid was undertaken by General Allenby.

THE SECOND AMMAN RAID.

The chief object of this considerable operation was the strategic one of impressing on the Turk the idea that the British Commander-in-Chief was aiming at the railway junction at Deraa. Important tactical objects were, however, also involved, such as the capture of a large body of enemy troops entrenched at Shunet Nimrin. The possibility of exploiting such success by extending the British line to the Moabite hills offered a prospect of escape from a summer in the Jordan Valley.

The preparations for this raid, which was under the direction of the Desert Mounted Corps, were hasty and imperfect, the reason being that, after the move had been planned for the middle of May, it was decided to carry it out at an earlier date, since a strong Arab tribe which was expected to give important aid during the operation had sent information that sufficient supplies remained only for its maintenance till May 4th. The troops were in consequence concentrated hastily from places more than 100 miles apart.

The formations engaged were the whole of the Anzac and Australian Mounted Divisions, two brigades of the 60th Division, the Imperial Camel Corps, the 6th Cavalry and Imperial Service Cavalry Brigades (the latter consisting of three Indian regiments), the 20th Indian Infantry Brigade, and a siege and a heavy battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery.

Medical units of the Australian and New Zealand mounted formations were complete in personnel, but all were considerably under strength both in camels⁴ and in cacolets (the only form of transport suitable for operations in the hills): the camels, lent by the XX Corps, kept on arriving daily until the operations were

⁴In Dec., 1917, by order of G.H.Q., E.E.F., the transport camels allotted to the mounted field ambulance were greatly reduced. As a result of the experiences described in this chapter the order was rescinded

over. The immobile sections of the 1st and 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulances did not arrive until the third day of the action. The ambulances attached to the Indian brigades were very weak—till the second day each had one officer only—and their transport consisted of a few sandcarts and miscellaneous vehicles. They had never been in action.

Plan of the raid The plan of operations aimed, as ultimate objective, at the seizure and retention of Amman and the railway, and of Es Salt; the primary objective was an enemy force entrenched on a line north and south in front of Shunet Nimrin, whose only communication with the main enemy forces was by two roads, namely, that from Es Salt and the track through Ain es Sir which had been followed by the New Zealanders in the first raid, but subsequently much improved. In the first phase Shunet Nimrin was to be attacked by the 60th Division, while the Australian Mounted Division, with a brigade of the Anzac Mounted Division, would make a dash northwards, seize the crossing at Jisr ed Damieh, and, turning into the hills, capture Es Salt. The Arab auxiliaries were to hold the Ain es Sir track. West of the Jordan the Imperial Camel Corps was to act as a flank guard.

Medical arrangements by the D.D.M.S., Desert Mounted Corps, centered on an infantry corps main dressing-station which was located to the west of Jericho and was formed by two tent sub-divisions of the 2/4th London Field Ambulance, together with a section of the 121st Indian Field Ambulance for wounded Indians. Attached to it were the Desert Mounted Corps Operating Unit and an operating team from the Citadel Hospital, Cairo, together with the consulting surgeon for the force, and two "malarial diagnosis stations." This would serve the troops engaged both west and east of the Jordan. Evacuation thence to casualty clearing stations would be by motor ambulance waggons. Mobile sections of field ambulances were organised to carry as much equipment as possible on packhorses, and a number of ambulance bearers were allotted to each regiment.

The attack was launched on the morning of April 30th, after the Jordan had been crossed by the Ghoraniyeh bridge.

April 30—
attack launched The infantry advanced against Shunet Nimrin, but made little progress. The 3rd and 4th Light Horse Brigades, advancing rapidly up the eastern valley of the Jordan, met with but little opposition till the Jisr ed Damieh bridge-head was reached. There the enemy position being found strong, the 4th Light Horse Brigade formed a line facing it, while the 3rd Light Horse Brigade advanced up a very steep track to Es Salt, which it captured by evening. The 5th Mounted Brigade (British and Indian) moved by the Umm esh Shert-Es Salt track to Es Salt, followed by the 2nd Light Horse Brigade and later by the 1st; the last-named remained across the track to guard it.

A divisional receiving station was established by the Anzac Mounted Division within the bridge-head at Ghoraniyeh, the Australian Mounted Division receiving station being held in reserve alongside it to move up the main Es Salt road when Shunet Nimrin should be taken. For the stage thence of six miles to the main dressing-station the motor ambulance waggons of the 1st Mounted (later 4th Cavalry) Division were used, this formation not being yet ready for the field. A divisional collecting station was formed by the Australian Mounted Division two miles east of the Jordan on the Umm esh Shert-Es Salt track. Following in rear of their brigades, the 3rd and 4th Light Horse Field Ambulances were heavily shelled on the Jisr ed Damieh-Es Salt track. The 4th then formed an advanced dressing-station about three miles north of the Umm esh Shert track, to serve both 3rd and 4th Light Horse Brigades, while the 3rd, having sent its wheeled transport back to Ghoraniyeh bridge-head, made the ascent through the hills by the Jisr ed Damieh-Es Salt track—little more than a goat-track running along the edges of very steep cliffs and in parts very slippery. Previously, indeed, it would have been thought impossible for camels to make such a passage, and in places horses had to be led. At 8 p.m. a halt was made for the night in a wady four miles east of Es Salt.

The 5th Mounted Field Ambulance followed its brigade up the Umm esh Shert track, both vehicles and camels being left at the foot of the hills two miles east of the divisional collecting station.⁵ The 1st and 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulances accompanied their brigades. The 2nd, with nine of its cacolet camels, reached Es Salt; the 1st, without any transport animals, remained with its brigade three and a half miles down the Es Salt-Umm esh Shert track.

Thus, for wounded from the five brigades around Es Salt, the transport consisted of the twenty-nine cacolet camels of the 2nd and 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulances, but was augmented by the capture of a German motor ambulance waggon (the driver of which worked excellently) and a number of captured motor-cars and waggons.

The first casualties, from the infantry,⁶ arrived at the divisional receiving station three hours after the fighting began: two hours later they were at the corps main dressing-station, and later in the day they reached the casualty clearing station at Jerusalem. For the stage from the corps main dressing-station to Jerusalem twenty-eight heavy and ten Ford motor ambulance waggons were available, the return trip taking seven hours. Use was also made of returning motor lorries of the army service corps. By evening 409 cases had been admitted to the Anzac Mounted Division receiving station, and evacuation was going on smoothly. To keep the station clear of casualties, on the following day the motor lorries, general service waggons, and some of the light motor ambulances that had been brought inside the bridge-head were used to supplement the heavy cars.

On the following day, while the infantry made little progress against the enemy at Shunet Nimrin, who was reinforced down the Umm esh Shert track which the Arab force had failed to block, the 4th Light Horse Brigade, holding the Jisr ed Damieh crossing, was driven back into the hills by a strong enemy

⁵ The camels, together with those of the light horse field ambulance, were afterwards sent back to bridge-head.

⁶ For the collection of their wounded in the attack on Shunet Nimrin the 6th Division formed three advanced dressing-stations in front of the divisional receiving station

attack from Jisr ed Damieh, and from Mafid Jozele, where, unobserved, he had constructed a pontoon bridge. In the retirement ten guns were cut off and captured by the enemy, as were also four ambulance waggons, a general service waggon, a water-cart, and horses and personnel of the 4th Light Horse Field Ambulance. This transport was at once replaced by that of the 5th Mounted Field Ambulance.

The Australian Mounted Division collecting station, which had been placed under the orders of the A.D.M.S., Anzac Mounted Division, was now withdrawn to the Wady Abu Muhair at the junction with the main road. During the day the Anzac Mounted Division receiving station admitted 372 more cases, all of whom were cleared by evening.

On May 2nd the fighting became very involved. While the 60th Division kept up pressure against Shunet Nimrin

May 2 from the west—though without much avail—the 2nd Light Horse and 5th Mounted Brigades attacked that position from the rear down the road from Es Salt. But at the same time the enemy, advancing from Jisr ed Damieh, was strongly attacking Es Salt from the north and north-west, and his reinforcements for Shunet Nimrin from the Ain es Sir road continued. Later in the day another enemy force from Amman made its appearance at Es Salt, and, to hold up this threat to Es Salt from the east, two regiments of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade were withdrawn from the attack on the rear of Shunet Nimrin. By the evening the attack by the mounted troops on Shunet Nimrin had definitely failed, and at the same time Es Salt was being assailed by the enemy from the south-east, north, and north-west.

The situation of the Australian Mounted Division at Es Salt—now consisting of the 2nd and 3rd Light Horse and 5th Mounted Brigades—was becoming serious.

Situation becomes precarious

Its only outlet back from the town was over the very rough and precipitous Es Salt-Umm esh Shert track. This vital path was held against the attacking enemy by the New Zealand Mounted and 4th Light Horse Brigades and a regiment of the 6th Mounted

Brigade along the line of the Wady er Ratem from the Jordan to the hills, and by the 1st Light Horse Brigade in the hills. Its loss would have entailed the capture of the division. In the meantime the ambulances in Es Salt were becoming short of dressings, anti-tetanic serum, chloroform, sutures, and medical comforts. A stock of these was sent out on a donkey ammunition convoy, and by very fine handling it made the ascent of the Umm esh Shert pass in the dark and arrived



The second trans-Jordan raid, 2nd May, 1918

at Es Salt next morning; a duplicate supply was sent by aeroplane.⁷ The same night (May 2nd) the third brigade of the 60th Division was sent down in motor lorries from Jerusalem. As

**Medical stores
by aeroplane**

⁷ It was known that these supplies could only be dropped from the aeroplane, and, as Es Salt was in a basin, the drop would be about 1,000 feet. No experiment had previously been made in Palestine to determine in what manner they could be packed so as to avoid breakage when dropped. It was thought that they would be best wrapped in motor tubes, but none could be obtained quickly enough. Accordingly the method adopted was that which had been employed in the siege

its field ambulance was consequently without transport, the vehicles of the 6th Mounted Field Ambulance, which had not so far been engaged, were attached to it. In addition a casualty clearing station was put under orders for attachment to the corps for the final massed attack on Amman planned for the 3rd.

By the afternoon of the 3rd, however, the enemy pressure had increased greatly in all directions and the position of the troops around Es Salt became so critical that the force was withdrawn.

**May 3—
withdrawal**

Only forty-two slight casualties had as yet been evacuated—on horseback—from Es Salt, but a considerable number remained in the advanced dressing-station, which had been established in a Greek church. For these there were available only the twenty-nine camels of the 2nd and 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulances, together with horses which had lost their riders. By 6 p.m. the camels of the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance had left with all the light cases they could carry, leaving the serious cases behind, since it was thought that a number of these, with medical personnel to look after them, must be left for capture by the enemy. By good management, however, all but two mortally wounded men were mounted, though a great deal of equipment was abandoned to the enemy. Under heavy but wild rifle fire from the townspeople the camel cacolets of the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance left at 7.30 p.m. on their perilous trip of twenty miles down the hills in the dark, closely followed by the personnel of the advanced dressing-station.

The ascent of the Jisr ed Damieh track had been difficult enough, but the difficulty was not to be compared with that of their descent of the Umm esh Shert track in the dark and loaded with wounded. It was probably the most remarkable exploit of any medical unit in the campaign. One camel with its two patients fell over a cliff, but the patients were rescued. Other burden camels fell over precipices and were killed. The last

**A perilous
descent**

of Kut-el-Amara. The materials were placed in a loosely filled sandbag, bottles being well packed in cotton wool in addition; this was enclosed in a second sandbag. Forty pounds of dressings were prepared at Jerusalem, whence the aeroplane started. All were received intact at Es Salt with the exception of phials and bottles, the whole of which were broken.



99. THE JORDAN VALLEY AND FOOT-HILLS

Jericho may be seen in the middle distance and the Jordan Valley and Mountains of Moab in the background



100. DUST IN THE JORDAN VALLEY

Aust War Memorial Official Photo No. B32



101. A LIGHT HORSE FIELD AMBULANCE CROSSING A BARREL BRIDGE
AT GHORANIYEH

*Lent by Lieut-Colonel M. W. Carr, A.I.M.C.
Aust War Memorial Collection No. B2649*

To face p. 615.

part of the convoy to leave Es Salt, reaching in the dark a fork in the track, was unable to use lights in order to determine which branch to follow, and had to be guided by feeling with the hands in order to discover which was the more cut up by the traffic ahead. Camels were led over places which would previously have been thought impassable for them. Towards morning they showed signs of exhaustion and could be urged forward only with the greatest difficulty. The night was bitterly cold. The last slope—reached soon after daylight—was under view of the enemy and was vigorously shelled. On reaching the plain and cover two men were found dead in the cacolets. The convoy proceeded to the Australian Mounted Division collecting station on the Wady Abu Muhair, and, after being fed, the wounded were taken by ambulance waggons to the Anzac Mounted Division receiving station.

This unit consisted till May 3rd of the immobile sections of the New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance only; but on that morning the immobile sections of the 1st and 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulances arrived from the reserve area. Evacuation from this station to the main dressing-station and subsequently to the casualty clearing station had been made very effective by additional motor ambulance waggons from the 1st (British) Mounted Division and the XX Corps. At the main dressing-station prompt and very effective surgical treatment was made possible by the presence throughout of three operating teams, which performed seventy-eight major operations.

The total number of evacuations during these operations was 1,784, of whom 1,076 (including 310 from the mounted brigades) were wounded and 708 sick.

From the military point of view, this remarkable raid, though tactically a failure, served a strategic purpose of great importance by holding east of the Jordan quite one-third of the whole Turkish force. But from the medical side the failure to retain a hold on the eastern extremity of the Jordan Valley and the hills of Moab condemned the mounted troops to a summer in the Jordan Valley.

During May a strategical plan was drafted by Allenby's general staff, which had as its purpose the destruction of the

**D.R.S. and
dressing-station**

**Plans for
future**

whole Turkish Army in Palestine, but the reorganisation of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force mentioned earlier in this chapter compelled postponement of offensive operations. The fact, however, that the wet season in Palestine begins in November and lasts till May made it necessary that the campaign should be completed by the end of October. The middle of September was therefore decided upon for the opening move. During this period—May till September—intense training was in progress. Apart from this, preparations were concerned chiefly with the improvement of communications with the base, accumulation of supplies, and the organising of defence for the future lines of communication. The port of Jaffa was improved, and the landing of supplies there much accelerated. Ludd became an immense supply and ordnance area, with Rafa as an intermediate base. Water supplies were improved where necessary, and extensive pipe-lines were laid down to facilitate the rapid concentration of troops.

In the medical service also the situation was developed to meet the requirements of extensive operations. By August

Medical dispositions casualty clearing stations were thus distributed:—at Ludd, two British and two Indian; at Jaffa, one combined clearing hospital for British and Indians; at Jerusalem, one British casualty clearing station and two combined clearing hospitals. Two advanced dépôts of medical stores were situated at Ludd and one at Jerusalem. On the lines of communication between Ludd and Kantara accommodation in stationary and general hospitals was gradually built up, to provide ultimately for 10,000 British and 5,000 Indian sick and wounded.

During the period of preparation D.D'sM.S. of corps were by order of the D.M.S., E.E.F., made responsible for the evacuation of all casualties from their respective areas to casualty clearing stations. An Inspector of Lines of Communication controlled evacuation from casualty clearing stations, and an A.D.M.S. controlled hospital trains. The D.M.S., E.E.F., retained control of the Motor Ambulance Convoy, from which cars were distributed to D.D'sM.S. and A.D.M.S., L. of C.

The four months that intervened between the second trans-Jordan raid and the final advance were occupied by the Desert Mounted Corps in holding and strengthening the defences in the Jordan Valley. No further attempt was made to gain new ground, but frequent offensive patrols were carried out which served to enhance the morale of the cavalry and depress that of the enemy.⁸ But the outstanding feature of this phase of the campaign—April to September, 1918—only less than the military preparations themselves, was the efforts of the medical service to maintain the health of the troops. The XX Corps in the Judæan hills between the Jordan and the coastal plain had little to contend with beyond the summer heat. But in the XXI Corps on the coastal plain, and still more in the mounted divisions in the Jordan Valley 1,200 feet below sea level, the medical service had to meet the effects of a prolonged residence in one of the most malarious districts in the world, while the Desert Mounted Corps had in addition to face a combination of physical conditions which gave to this period of Australian military service in Palestine a special character of sufficient significance to call for a separate chapter.

⁸ Enemy activity was shown chiefly in the shelling of back areas, but on July 14 a determined attempt was made by a German force, very ineffectively backed by the Turks, to drive out the light horse in the region of Musallabeh. The attack completely failed, with the capture of most of the Germans. The casualties were small and were comfortably handled by the field ambulances of the Anzac Mtd Div, with the assistance of extra motor ambulance waggons from the D.M.S., E.E.F. Evacuation was carried through to the C.C.S. at Jerusalem, which was now the base of clearance for the mounted divisions in the Jordan Valley.