

## CHAPTER VI

### THE VICTORY OF GAZA

INFERIOR technical equipment was not the only hindrance to air work by No. 1 Squadron in the four months prior to the Third Battle of Gaza. Three new Australian service squadrons were being trained in England for the French war theatre, and behind them had to be built up training squadrons for the supply of reinforcements in pilots and mechanics. The natural result was that A.I.F. Headquarters called upon No. 1 Squadron to provide experienced pilots for the new units. Captain Watt had gone away in October, 1916, to command No. 2 Squadron; Captain Sheldon departed in March, 1917, and subsequently succeeded to that same command when Watt left it to take charge of the Training Wing in England. Many attached British flying officers left No. 1 Squadron in June and July under the new order for re-organising with A.F.C. officers.<sup>1</sup> Captains Ellis and A. L. Macnaughton,<sup>2</sup> both flight-commanders, and Lieutenant Baillieu, all left No. 1 Squadron in September. Before the end of the year Captain S. I. Winter-Irving,<sup>3</sup> another flight-commander, went to Australia on leave, and in December Murray Jones and Cole were sent to the new squadrons in England—Cole to become a flight-commander in No. 2 Squadron, and Jones eventually to command that squadron in succession to Sheldon. The loss of so many tried and valuable pilots would have been severely felt by any flying unit, and No. 1 Squadron at the time could ill-afford to spare them.

The local recruiting field, however, was all that could be desired. Since the beginning the squadron had enlisted volunteers from the light horse, and horsemen were the finest possible material for the work required. As the attached British officers, both pilots and observers, quitted the squadron, their places were filled by Australians, the majority of them being selected candidates from the light horse. As has already

---

<sup>1</sup> See page 64, Chapter V.

<sup>2</sup> Capt A. L. Macnaughton, Aust. Flying Corps. Law student, of Brisbane; b. Townsville, Q'land, 11 Oct., 1894.

<sup>3</sup> Capt. S. I. Winter-Irving, M.C., No. 1 Sqn. Grazier; of Toorak and Nagambie, Vic.; b. Melbourne, 13 Nov., 1891.

been explained, other things being equal, the good horseman has all the qualities of the good airman. The head and hands required of him in horse-mastery are precisely what the skilful pilot must needs possess. The cavalryman must have a good eye for country; so must the airman. It seemed natural, too, that, while the traditional scouting duties of the mounted arm were being transferred to the air, the horsemen themselves should turn spontaneously in the same direction.

The ground personnel of No. 1 Squadron was also severely taxed. Good mechanics are precious, and the squadron had to give up some of its best men to be training instructors in England. In this respect also the loss was only temporary, for both in Australia and at the new flying school in Egypt mechanics could then be trained more easily than flying officers. As the supply of mechanics increased, the squadron-commander could afford to invite his experienced non-commissioned officers and mechanics to volunteer for commissions as pilots and observers, and when in July he called for a few such applications, half the squadron responded. Needless to say, nothing like so many could be spared.

The daily work of reconnaissance and photography on the fighting front also took its toll of Australian airmen. Between July and October—when the third and final battle for Gaza took place—No. 1 Squadron performed the whole of the strategical reconnaissance on the front, some of the tactical reconnaissance,<sup>4</sup> and much of the photography. Artillery observation was the duty chiefly of No. 14 Squadron, but Australian machines occasionally took part in this work as well. Photography demanded almost a daily patrol; the machines flew in pairs, and their objective was the photographing of the Turkish line for the purpose of map-making. The maps of the area from Gaza to Beersheba were drawn almost entirely from air-photographs taken by No. 1 Squadron. The airmen thus became the true precursors of the army's movements. They carried their cameras ever farther and

---

<sup>4</sup> Reconnaissance was divided into forward-area patrolling and distant patrolling far over the enemy's rear communications. The former, called "tactical" reconnaissance, required detailed examination of trench works, gun positions, strength of wire, and the like; the latter, called "strategical" reconnaissance, aimed at keeping a continuous record of railway activity, the state of the enemy's supplies, the size of his reserve camps, and all movements of troops behind the lines. Tactical reconnaissance became recognised as the duty of the corps air squadron; strategical reconnaissance was carried out by high-flying scouts of the army wing which sometimes ranged over hundreds of air miles a day.

farther afield. The maps made from their photographs enabled the artillery to shatter the enemy's defence positions at Gaza and later on in the Nablus hills, and by their maps, too, the light horse rode at last on their triumphant sweep through the Esdraelon plain.

For a long time the technical superiority of the enemy's aircraft made this photography trying and dangerous. Such air fighting as took place in the summer of 1917 revealed the Germans still as the aggressors. Reconnaissance patrols at this time had to reckon upon constant attack from German scouts. For this reason air escort of all photography and artillery machines was a regular order. The British squadrons were still on the defensive. The time when the possession of fighting scouts would permit of true tactics—the seeking out of the enemy and destroying him—was not yet come.

The dangers awaiting the slower British machines were well illustrated on July 8th. On that day a patrol of three went out from No. 1 Squadron—Captain C. A. Brookes<sup>5</sup> in a Martinsyde, Lieutenant C. H. Vautin<sup>6</sup> in a B.E.12.a, and Lieutenants T. Taylor<sup>7</sup> and F. W. F. Lukis<sup>8</sup> (observer) in a B.E.2.e. Taylor and Lukis were to make the reconnaissance; the other two were escorting. Near Gaza two German scouts attacked the escorts. One dived at Brookes, who spun away to avoid the attack; but the wings of his Martinsyde were seen to fold up and the tail to fall off, and the broken machine went down like a stone. The Germans then made for Taylor and Vautin. Taylor met the challenge with two well-directed bursts of fire, from which the German sheered off and joined his comrade in attacking Vautin. Taylor and Lukis reached home, but Vautin was driven down by the superior manœuvring power of his opponents, forced to land, and taken prisoner. The amiable Felmy sent a letter by aeroplane messenger two days later to say that Brookes was killed and was buried with military honours.

---

<sup>5</sup> Capt. C. A. Brookes; Wiltshire Regt. and R.A.F. Attached to No. 1 Sqn., 26 June, 1917. Masonry contractor; of Bradford-on-Avon, Wilts., Eng.; b. Winsley, Eng., 11 Dec., 1887. Killed in action, 8 July, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> Lieut. C. H. Vautin; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Commercial traveller; of Perth, W. Aus.; b. Warracknabeal, Vic., 5 March, 1890.

<sup>7</sup> Lieut. T. Taylor, No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). School teacher; of Lucknow and Delvine, Vic.; b. Lucknow, 17 Aug., 1894.

<sup>8</sup> Group Capt. F. W. F. Lukis, O.B.E., p.s.a.; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse, afterwards R.A.A.F.) Farmer, of Balingup, W. Aust.; b. Balingup, 27 July, 1896.

"Felmy wrote that Vautin was quite well, and hoped we would send him some kit. Vautin, he said, was a very kindly man and a gentleman. Felmy enclosed two photographs of Vautin and himself, taken together. He said he had shown Vautin Jerusalem. Two letters from Vautin were in the dropped bag—one to me and one to his father. He wrote that he was safe and sound and being well treated, that he had been flown back in a German aeroplane, and that, when he started out from here the other morning, he did not expect to be in a German aeroplane that afternoon."<sup>9</sup> Following the receipt of these interesting messages from the element wherein war was carried on with such old-fashioned chivalry, Murray Jones flew over the lines with Vautin's clothes, small kit, and home letters. Felmy and other German airmen were waiting for him on their aerodrome at Huj. Jones descended as low as fifty feet and dropped the parcel among them, then circled the ground, returned the enemy's hand-waving, and flew home again. No shots were fired at him. The incident affords a pleasing picture of the knightly fashion in which airmen frequently treated each other between determined duels.

Further misfortune for the squadron followed on July 13th. Two B.E.2.e's went out that morning on photography-patrol over the Beersheba area. By some mistake the escort, which was to have been provided by No. 14 Squadron, failed to appear over Esani, the meeting place, at the time arranged, and the two B.E's—Lieutenants A. H. Searle<sup>10</sup> and G. L. Paget<sup>11</sup> (observer) in one, and Baillieu and A. E. Barbe<sup>12</sup> in the other—went on without escort. They were taken by surprise almost at once by an enemy scout, which attacked them from the sun.<sup>13</sup> Searle and Paget were shot down and fell in the Turkish lines, killed. Baillieu and Barbe managed to escape with injury to their machine, and landed safely in the British lines. They, too, narrowly missed being shot down, and the

<sup>9</sup> Note by Williams in his diary.

<sup>10</sup> Lieut. A. H. Searle; No. 1 Sqn. (previously A.A. Pay Corps). Clerk; of Hampton, Melbourne; b. Bendigo, Vic., 27 Dec., 1887. Killed in action, 13 July, 1917.

<sup>11</sup> Lieut. G. L. Paget; 9th Northumberland Fusiliers. Attached No. 1 Sqn., 17 March, 1917. Killed in action, 13 July, 1917.

<sup>12</sup> Lieut. A. E. Barbe, R.A.F. (previously 5th Bn., Highland Light Infy.). attached to No. 1 Sqn., 24 June, 1917. Of Glasgow, Scotland; died 27 May, 1918.

<sup>13</sup> The best possible position of advantage in the air was to have the height of the enemy in direct line between the sun and the hostile machine. In such a position it was quite impossible for the lower machine to see an attacker.

14. 7. 1917  
Please send the post with the  
envelope to the  
address  
14. 7. 1917

My joy was very tall, to  
receive your many letters.  
To-morrow Vautin comes, to  
take all the things and  
all the letters (with photos), which  
were dropped. He is a well  
well educated and gentle  
boy, that we ~~make~~ with  
pleasure all, what is  
pleasant for him.  
But when if you write

for us, you must write  
more distinctly, because  
our English is not so per-  
fectly, that we can read all,  
the most legible writing.  
I hope to fight with this sport  
more often. I thank him for  
his kind letter. - I thank also  
for the decoration of the "Pibing  
sun" from Mr. Lex Macquarrie (?).  
Perhaps I can see the sun ha-  
ter in Australia

LETTER, WRITTEN 14TH JULY, 1917, FROM THE GERMAN AVIATOR FELMY TO No. 1 SQUADRON,  
A.F.C.

Enclosed in a message bag, it was dropped by a German machine over the Australian  
aerodrome. The envelope was addressed to Captain Murray Jones.

Lent by Capt A. T. Cole, No 1 Sqn, A.F.C.



whole episode showed that for photographing machines to go out unescorted into enemy country was to offer themselves an easy prey to the speedier fighting scouts of the other side. The Australian aerodrome was not surprised when Felmy—recognised by the machine which he always flew—appeared next morning. He looped the loop in friendly gymnastic over the landing-ground, dropped a message bag, and departed. One letter therein related the last particulars concerning the unfortunate airmen; Searle, it stated, had been shot through the head, and both were found dead in the wreck of the machine. This extraordinary correspondent also sent a packet to Murray Jones—whose fighting qualities he greatly admired—containing a letter, a packet of cigarettes, and some photographs. One of these pictures showed a group of German flying officers; another was an enlarged presentation of Felmy and Vautin. The letter related some news of Steele, acknowledged to have been omitted previously by some oversight. It gave the definite information that Steele, who was lost on April 20th, had been shot down by anti-aircraft fire and had died soon after landing.

The Germans, however aggressive against undefended patrols, were not over-keen in attacking reconnaissance machines under escort, even though the escorting De Havillands or Martinsydes were of inferior manœuvring speed. As a rule they would not attack unless they could be sure of some tactical advantage; their daring was generally tempered with much discretion. A German scout, on July 16th, sheered off from an attack when an escort prepared to meet him. Next day an artillery machine was directing fire on German anti-aircraft batteries with such good results that the gunners wirelessed in distress to Ramleh—No. 1 Squadron's station intercepted their signals—and in response a hostile scout appeared on the scene. This scout attacked, but the Australian machine met it with a full drum from its Lewis gun, and the German went down and landed, evidently damaged, on the Beersheba road.

On the ground there was infantry raiding by each side in the latter part of July, and, following the successful capture of a strong enemy post near Irgeig, Turkish cavalry made a strong demonstration from Beersheba. The light horse moved

out in strength in the night of July 19th to try to cut them off, but air reconnaissance by daylight next morning showed that the Turks had retired. A second and weaker attempt north of Esani, on July 28th, similarly died away. The air was markedly quiet, and the Australian photography-patrols covered large areas of unmapped ground about Beersheba.

The long-mooted expansion of the British air force on this Eastern Front was now plainly becoming fact. New machines, Bristol Fighters, were dribbling up in ones and twos for the recently-arrived No. 111 Squadron, R.F.C. No. 113 Squadron, R.F.C., was reported to be shortly following, to operate as a corps unit, which would relieve No. 1 Squadron of much trench-reconnaissance duty. No. 1 Squadron, under the new arrangement, was to be made a special bombing squadron. All this news presaged increased strength and more detailed organisation of duties, which, in turn, meant better equipment. New Australian pilots and observers, fresh from the training school, were reporting to the squadron, and further applications were invited for cadet flying-officers from the ranks of the aerodrome and from the light horse. The responses were overwhelming, and selection was of the strictest kind. In August, No. 1 Squadron was authorised by A.I.F. Headquarters to hold a reserve of fifty per cent. of flying officers above establishment—a licence granted by reason of heavy work in the squadron and the drain upon its trained members from oversea. The full value of this useful provision became evident in the heavy fighting of 1918.

On August 3rd, the enemy laid an artful trap. A reconnaissance patrol from No. 1 Squadron reported a hostile machine abandoned on the ground near Beersheba, and it was still there next morning. Four machines were sent out to bomb it, and two others to guard against a surprise attack. When the bombers descended to attack the object on the ground, they saw that the supposed aeroplane was a dummy. The Australians grasped the truth in a flash and promptly zoomed up again to meet the expected squall. It burst without loss of time. Two German scouts darted down from the sun, where they had been hovering unseen, and in a moment the fight was joined. The enemy did not enjoy the advantage he expected, for the Australian escorting machines were also

watching cautiously, and after some hot exchanges the Germans broke away for home.

August passed almost without fighting incident. On August 5th a German aeroplane again landed in the desert near Bir el Abd and attempted to blow up the rear railway communication, but was again foiled by the guard.<sup>14</sup> A night raid by a demolition party of light horse against the Turkish railway near Irgeig was likewise unsuccessful. At the end of the month an enemy formation bombed a yeomanry camp; No. 1 Squadron immediately replied with an air-raid on Abu Hareira. Ross Smith and Ellis, in Martinsydes, reconnoitring on September 1st, attacked a German scout over Beersheba and put it to flight. Smith was slightly wounded in the head, but the German did not escape scot-free, for the wireless caught an enemy message stating that "Lieutenant Schmarje<sup>15</sup> has crashed, and another escort is required in his place," and that "one machine is not enough to get through the English blockade." Thereafter the Australian daily patrols worked for some days unmolested.

The railway was now pushing out rapidly on the desert flank towards Karn, in a straight air-line between Rafa and Beersheba. No. 1 Squadron, which had already gone forward to Deir el Belah, was preparing to move on again to Weli Sheikh Nuran. The new aerodrome at that place was finished and occupied in mid-September. No. III Squadron, with its coveted Bristol Fighters, was established at Deir el Belah. A few days later—September 28th—No. 1 Squadron was joined at Weli Sheikh Nuran aerodrome by the new No. 113 Squadron. In the areas behind the front all was restless; reserves, supply-dumps, and all arms auxiliary to the infantry moved up constantly with the advancing railhead, and by the end of September No. 1 Squadron was reconnoitring a new advanced landing-ground among the light horse forward camps north of Esani.

The Bristol Fighters of No. III Squadron soon demonstrated their powers, and the enemy formally made their acquaintance on October 8th. Several Bristol Fighters were sent out that day to wait for the usual German reconnaissance

---

<sup>14</sup> See page 66, Chapter V.

<sup>15</sup> The name cannot be confirmed from available German records.

and soon sighted two Albatros scouts. One of these was caught without chance of escape from the new and swifter British machines, and was shot down in the light horse lines. The pilot was unwounded, and the Albatros, little damaged, was repaired by the Australian squadron's mechanics. The perfect running of its engine was greatly admired. The enemy's curiosity was aroused by the loss of this machine, and on October 15th three more Albatroses crossed the lines. British anti-aircraft gunners, a few minutes after opening fire on the enemy formation, observed it to be in violent commotion. A waiting Bristol Fighter, whose attention had been attracted by the anti-aircraft bursts, had attacked from the upper air. The German nearest to it was apparently thrown into convulsions. It looped and spun and performed a variety of manœuvres to elude the Bristol Fighter; finally it went into a prolonged spin, one wing fell off, and it crashed into the ground. The victorious pilot proved to be the same airman, a Lieutenant Steele,<sup>16</sup> from No. III Squadron, who had shot down an Albatros a week earlier. He told an interesting story of the fight. He put the German's engine out of action in his first attack. The enemy pilot signalled the Bristol Fighter off and glided down as though to land. Steele stopped firing and flew earthwards alongside the Albatros, but noticed that the enemy was gliding towards the Turkish lines, and signalled him to turn back. The German declined to turn. Steele's observer accordingly re-opened fire and shot off one of the Albatros's wings, which finished the dispute.

Two days later, No. 1 Squadron received from Kantara the first of its new equipment of R.E.8's. The remainder followed quickly, and the squadron was warned to prepare for heavy bombing operations to accompany the coming attack on the Gaza line. The R.E.8's were not the only improvement in the squadron's technical outfit; new Martinsydes, fitted with 160-h.p. engines, arrived to replace the older type (120-h.p. Beardmore's).

The attack on the Turkish positions was to begin with operations for the capture of Beersheba, which would lay open the flank of the stronger defences between Abu Hareira and the sea. The date, fixed by the progress of the railway towards

---

<sup>16</sup> Capt R. C. Steele, D.S.O.; R.A.F. Farmer, of Birch Creek, Saskatchewan, Canada, b. Enniskillen, Ontario, 12 April 1890.

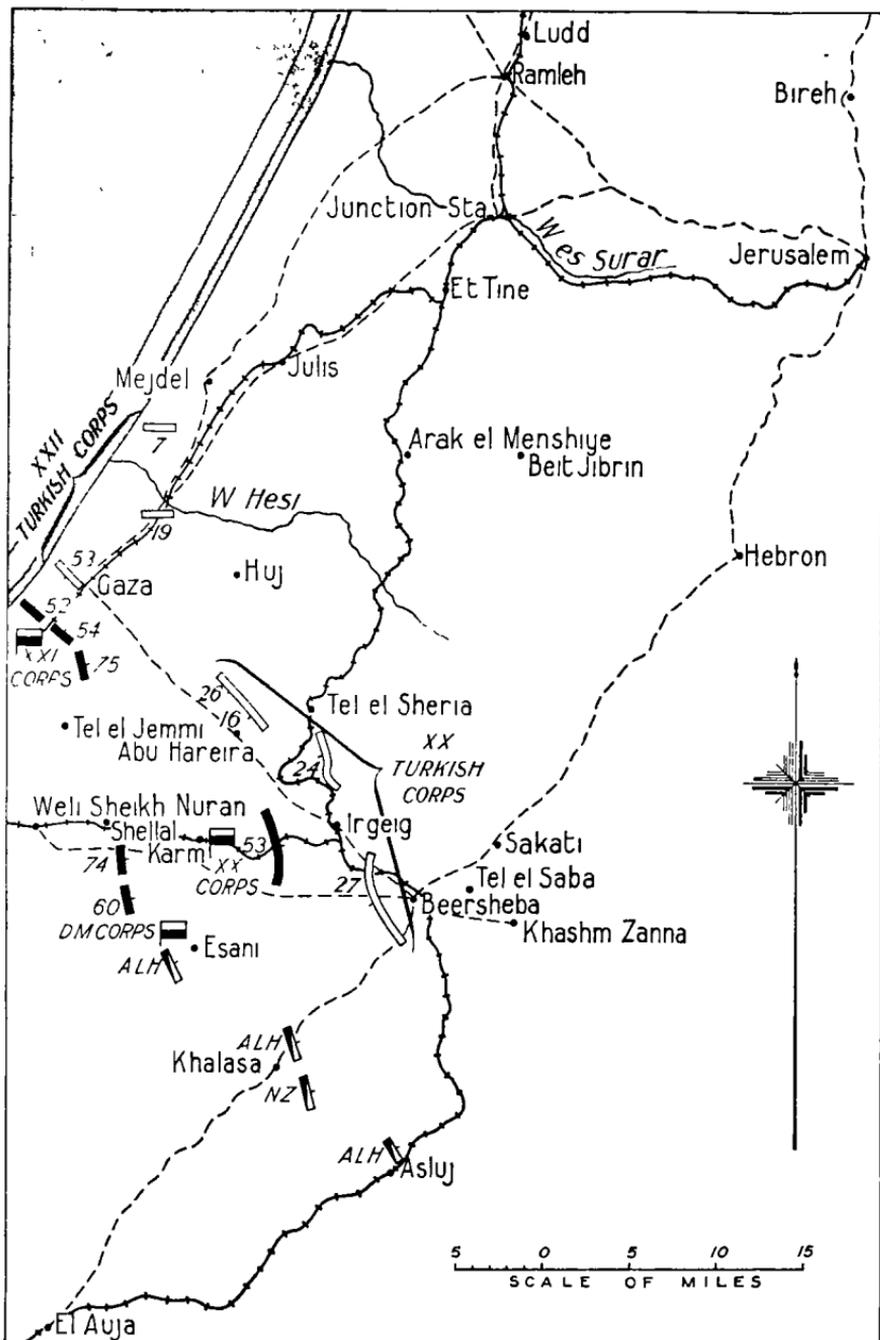
Karm, was to be October 31st. The air preparation entered its intense stage on October 28th. From that date onwards No. 1 Squadron carried out daily two strategical reconnaissances of the whole Turkish front, escorted by the Bristol Fighters of No. 111 Squadron. This work included the photographing of the Turkish defences each day for the revision of maps, and copies of these photographs were supplied every evening to the troops which were to make the assault. The artillery bombardment of Gaza opened on October 27th. The observation for this was performed by No. 14 Squadron, also under escort, No. 1 Squadron's R.E.8's and B.E.12a's escorting on the first day, and No. 111's Bristol Fighters later. No. 1 Squadron also was busy fitting out for bombing operations as soon as the attack should begin. Another bombing unit (known as "X" Squadron, R.F.C.) arrived at Weli Sheikh Nuran on October 30th. The enemy was distinctly apprehensive, and German aeroplanes, though constantly in the air, avoided all risk of encounter.<sup>17</sup>

The battle opened on October 31st with the attack of the 60th Division, the 74th (Yeomanry) Division, and the Camel Corps on the works between Khalasa and the Wady Saba, south of Beersheba. These defences were captured by 1 p.m. During the preceding night the Anzac Mounted Division and yeomanry had moved out across the desert and round to the east of Beersheba. The Australians and New Zealanders arrived at Khashm Zanna, five miles from Beersheba, in the early morning, and shortly afterwards attacked. While the infantry were assaulting the defences south-west of the town, the light horse had deployed to the north-east. The New Zealand Mounted Rifles in the centre went for Tel el Saba, a fortified hill; the 1st Light Horse Brigade advanced on their left; the 2nd Light Horse Brigade dashed across on the right to occupy Sakati on the Hebron road. Till afternoon there was hard fighting for these positions; they were ultimately captured late in the day, and about the same time other light horse detachments and yeomanry charged into Beersheba from the east, on the left of the New Zealanders. The Turks were thrown out of the town in great disorder, leaving 2,000 prisoners and thirteen guns; over 500 of their dead were buried on the field. The objective at Beersheba, apart from

---

<sup>17</sup> See note at end of chapter.

Map No. 5



SOUTHERN PALESTINE, SHOWING THE POSITION BEFORE THE THIRD BATTLE OF GAZA

P. R. WIGHTMAN

the facilitating of the coming assault on Gaza, was water—still the most pressing necessity of all. In the event the supply at Beersheba was disappointing. The requirements of four actively-engaged divisions (two of them cavalry) overtaxed the Beersheba wells, and on November 4th the yeomanry had to go back for water as far as Karm.

In the evening of the day following the capture of Beersheba, the 52nd Division advanced on the sea flank of the line, and captured Umbrella Hill, an important position 2,000 yards south-west of Gaza. This was the immediate preliminary to a strong attack, delivered at dawn on November 2nd, by the 52nd and 54th Divisions, assisted by men-of-war which shelled the coast defences from Umbrella Hill to Sheikh Hasan (north-west of Gaza). Nearly all the desired objectives were taken, and the enemy was compelled to commit to this fight reserves which might otherwise have turned the scale on the Beersheba flank. As it was, the Australian and New Zealand cavalry were heavily engaged for five days in hill fighting north of Beersheba which drew in all local Turkish reserves. Then, on November 6th, the 10th, 60th, and 74th Divisions conducted the second stage of the attack, overran the Sheria defences, and made a gap in the enemy's line. By early afternoon the Desert Mounted Corps was pushed forward here and penetrated as far as Huj, ten miles east of Gaza. Gaza had meanwhile been under heavy bombardment. At midnight on November 6th, infantry patrols south of Gaza found the place evacuated. A general advance at dawn next morning passed through the town, and advance-guards, hastening up the coast, crossed the Wady Hesi that same evening. Huj was taken by the yeomanry on November 8th, and the enemy fell back in full retreat. By dawn on November 10th the British had occupied Mejdal and Arak el Menshiye.

Throughout this fighting the airmen constantly patrolled the whole battlefield. Bombing began on the night of November 1st, when Williams, in a B.E.12.a, dropped twelve bombs on Gaza. During daylight hours of November 3rd and 4th machines of No. 1 Squadron accompanied the operations in the hills north of Beersheba. The work of all hands in the squadron was increased through overheating of the engines. On November 6th, the airmen perceived an early sign of a

general retreat by the enemy, the moving back of his hospitals; next morning, after Gaza had been taken, No. 1 Squadron's patrols reported the Turks retreating on the whole front and Allenby's troops in pursuit. Large numbers of the enemy were seen making for Mejdal. Thirty machines—twelve from No. 1 Squadron—were sent out promptly to bomb them, and this raid hustled the enemy out of Mejdal ahead of the advancing cavalry.

German aircraft were rarely met during the fighting for the Gaza lines. Not till November 6th did they attempt to interfere with the Australian machines. In the afternoon of that day two R.E.8's, patrolling, and two B.E.12.a's, photographing, from No. 1 Squadron, were attacked by four Albatroses and badly mauled. Although the German air force did not suffer in the battle, it sustained severe losses during the subsequent pursuit. The morning reconnaissance of November 8th found that, while the enemy was everywhere moving back, his air squadrons were apparently delayed, and that on aerodromes at Julis (just beyond Mejdal), Arak el Menshiye, and Et Tine, machines were waiting on the ground and many hangars were not dismantled. Another bombing raid of thirty machines—nine of them Australian—was promptly organised to attack the largest of these aerodromes at Arak el Menshiye. A further raid upon the same place followed in the afternoon. The bombs wrought considerable havoc, several hangars were seen to be set on fire or damaged, and aeroplanes on the ground were disabled. The Germans then abandoned Arak el Menshiye in haste. Serviceable aircraft which escaped from this place and from Julis were bombed again twice next day at Et Tine, and the German airmen burnt and left that aerodrome also. When the cavalry advance-guards reached Arak el Menshiye and Et Tine, on November 10th and 11th, they found the charred remains of eight aeroplanes and both the aerodromes and Arak el Menshiye railway station in ruins.

---

*Note.*—An illuminating document, captured at Nazareth in September, 1918, may be quoted here. It is unsigned, but was apparently a report from General Kress von Kressenstein (G.O.C. of the enemy's Sinai front) to "Yilderim" (the official name of German Headquarters

with the Turkish army in Palestine). It is dated from Huleikat (north of Huj), 29th September, 1917. It reads—

“The mastery of the air has unfortunately for some weeks completely passed over to the English. Apart from the withdrawal of some particularly efficient officers from Squadron 300, and apart from numerous cases of sickness in this squadron, frequent damage to material, and the irregular supply of working material, the reason for this sudden change is to be sought in the great numerical superiority of the English, and in the appearance of a new type of machine which is far superior to our one-seater.”

(Here occurs a firm-pencilled note in the margin: “This cannot be the case. The English in Flanders certainly have not bad aircraft, yet we have the superiority there.”)

The report proceeds—

“Our aviators estimate the number of the enemy aircraft at from thirty to forty. Against this we have at present two two-seaters and two one-seaters fit for use.

“I have, therefore, already proposed to the Headquarters, Fourth Army, an increase of our air-fighting strength, to be accelerated as far as possible. I further hold an increase of the anti-aircraft sections, and in particular a speedy and considerable increase of anti-aircraft ammunition, to be necessary.”

It remains to be noted that during October, 1917, fifty-six aeroplanes, belonging to Nos. 301, 302, 303 and 304 Squadrons of the German flying corps, arrived in Palestine from Germany. There was also a No. 14 (Turkish) Squadron (which was about the strength of a flight) stationed at Kutrani; its machines were A.E.G. two-seaters.