

## CHAPTER IX

### THE RAIDS ACROSS THE JORDAN

THE capture of Jericho and the west bank of the Jordan was only the first stage of operations of the utmost importance. The Jordan position was more than a good defensive flank; it offered an opening for attack, with good prospects of success, against the Turkish communications along the Hejaz railway. The Sherifian Arabs were still raiding the enemy south of El Kutrani, and in early March were present in some force about Et Tafle. Turkish columns from Kerak, to the north, and from the railway, on the east, drove them out of Et Tafle on March 11th, but a week later had withdrawn again to their camps on the railway. It was deemed to be of the highest importance to interrupt the communications of these Turkish troops by cutting the railway about Amman, and especially by destroying a railway viaduct at the south of that town. Moreover, the Bedouin tribes about Madeba were inclined to hostility against the Turks, and it was held that any successful operations against Amman might count to some extent on their co-operation. Hence the great raids of March and April against Amman, Es Salt, and the Turkish garrisons east of the Jordan had a direct importance, evidenced in the event by the enemy's sensitiveness. They had also an indirect result of the greatest possible value, as subsequently appeared. In these spring operations Allenby probably builded better than he knew. When the time came for the final assault which destroyed the Turkish armies, the enemy was still inclined to suspect that the British intended to attack across the Jordan rather than along the Mediterranean coast. The expectation was manifestly inspired by the earlier operations now to be described.

The British advance to the western bank of the Jordan produced an immediate effect of its own. The enemy promptly reinforced his eastern section from other parts of the front. At Amman large new camps sprang up to support the lower Jordan defences. Es Salt fed increased garrisons at Shunet Nimrin, and was itself the eastern end of an increasingly busy route from Nablus and the Jenin railway by way of the road

down the Wady Fara to the Jisr ed Damieh ford. Jisr ed Damieh (more shortly called Damieh) took the place hitherto held by Ghoraniye bridge in the Turkish defence scheme, and became the enemy's main link between his eastern and western sectors. A pontoon bridge was built here immediately after that at Ghoraniye had been withdrawn.

Soon after the Jericho fight, movement on the railway east of the Dead Sea attracted the attention of No. 1 Squadron. Austin and Finlay (observer) reconnoitred El Kutrani on March 1st and reported a camp of 150 tents there, fourteen large dumps, 150 rolling-stock (including three made-up trains), and seven gun-positions south-west of the station. Near by were a new aerodrome with six hangars, a number of tents and marquees, and two large two-seater aeroplanes on the ground. A combined raid of five machines from No. 1 and No. 142 Squadrons dropped forty-five bombs on this aerodrome on March 4th, but without marked effect. Better success attended a second raid next day at Kalat el Hesa station, farther south on the railway, and due east of Et Tafele; of forty-eight bombs dropped, thirteen hit a small Turkish camp and two damaged the reservoir, an important target. Meanwhile No. 1 Squadron covered the whole front, and particularly that beyond the Jordan, in several exhaustive patrols, which noted down the condition of every camp and supply centre, and the state of all main roads. The whole of the Shunet Nimrin area was examined in this way on March 3rd by Ross Smith and Mustard, who reported a considerably increased collection of tents at Shunet Nimrin, with a headquarters' camp and twenty-eight dumps, a good target for bombs. Bombed this place accordingly was on March 6th by five machines (three of them Australian), and with excellent results; troops rushing from the camps were attacked and scattered by the airmen's machine-gun fire.

Patrols on the Mediterranean flank were at this time mostly without incident. On March 5th, while reconnoitring over Jiljulieh, Lieutenants Headiam and E. B. S. Beaton<sup>1</sup> (observer) and C. N. Watt<sup>2</sup> and T. C. Macaulay<sup>3</sup> fought an

<sup>1</sup> Lieut. E. B. S. Beaton, D.F.C.; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Motor driver; of Winton, Q'land; b. Durban, S. Africa, 13 Sept., 1893

<sup>2</sup> Lieut. C. N. Watt; No. 1 Sqn. Commercial traveller; of St. Kilda, Melbourne; b. Melbourne, 6 Sept., 1891.

<sup>3</sup> Capt. T. C. Macaulay, M.C.; No. 40 Sqn., R.A.F. (previously R.F.A.). Sub-Director General, Egyptian Customs Administration; b. Bittern, Hants. Eng., 15 Aug., 1871. (He had been wounded while serving with the New Zealand artillery at Anzac.)



ES SALT, LYING IN THE HILLS EAST OF JORDAN

The view is from the north-west

Inst. H. at Museum Official Photo No. B3328  
Taken 21st March, 1918.



JISR ED DAMIEH FORD ACROSS THE JORDAN SHOWING THE STEEP VALLFY-SIDIS

*East War Museum Official Photo No B3320  
Taken 20th March, 1918*

engagement against five Albatros scouts, which attacked, but were beaten off, two of them being driven down out of control.

The enemy was very active on the roads between Nablus and Es Salt, and constant watch had to be kept on the camps along the Wady Fara track. The Lubban-Nablus road also was remarkable for movement, new gun-positions, and increased size of its camps; the enemy seemed to be expecting an attack there, and this surmise was confirmed by the statement of a Turkish officer taken prisoner towards the end of the month. Three machines from No. 1 Squadron and three from No. 142 bombed these Lubban-road camps on March 9th, and twice again on the following day. The raids were completely successful; the Australian airmen dropped nearly 150 bombs, causing the enemy many casualties and much destruction of material. Six bombs fell fairly among a party of 150 infantry; others wrecked transport parks, stampeded horses, and fired a petrol-dump. The airmen calculated upon increasing, by means of these raids, the enemy's fears of an infantry attack to follow in the same sector.

Having spread alarm and confusion south of Nablus, No. 1 and No. 142 Squadrons next attacked the Damieh bridge and camp with six bombs weighing one hundredweight each. They were meant for the bridge, but bridges are not easy targets, and all six bombs missed. One, however, fell in the middle of a camp of tents, and was, therefore, not entirely wasted. The four machines concerned flew low and fired over 1,000 rounds from their machine-guns into fleeing parties of the garrison. Between March 19th and 24th, the Australians made seven more attempts to hit this bridge with bombs (some weighing as much as 230 lbs.), but without causing any important damage.

A raid of four Martinsydes (three of them from No. 1 Squadron) visited El Kutrani on March 19th. Heavy clouds obscured the town, and the main event of the raid, the dropping by Haig of a 230-lb. bomb on the station, could not be clearly observed. The formation met with bad luck on the way home. Major A. J. Evans, in the Martinsyde from No. 142 Squadron, had to land with engine-trouble near Kerak. Austin and Lee, in an escorting Bristol Fighter, went down to pick

him up, but in landing broke a wheel. The three officers had no alternative but to burn their machines and give themselves up to Arabs, who quickly came up and subsequently handed them over to the Turks.<sup>4</sup> Two Bristol Fighters, sent out after the raiders had returned, failed to find any trace of the missing airmen or machines,<sup>5</sup> but reported three railway trucks burnt out and a large bomb-crater at the edge of the railway track at the northern end of El Kutrani station.

The attack on Amman across the Jordan was launched on March 21st. The strong British raiding force included the Anzac Mounted Division. Only two fording places were available—at Ghoraniye and Makhadet Hajla—and each was covered by heavy Turkish musketry and machine-gun fire. That night all attempts to put rafts across at Ghoraniye were defeated, but at Makhadet Hajla a few men from the 60th (London) Division and Australian Engineers swam the river with a rope and then pulled over the first raft. By 8 a.m. next day an infantry battalion was established on the eastern bank without heavy casualties. Not till the following morning (March 23rd) was any useful progress made, but Ghoraniye bridge-head also was cleared that day by the cavalry, and thereafter bridges were thrown across at each place. An air raid, in which one Australian Martinsyde took part, bombed Shunet Nimrin camp ahead of the Londoners, who shortly afterwards captured it and the hills overlooking it. That night, pursuit of the enemy began in two directions—up the Es Salt road and towards Rujm el Oshir. Heavy rain fell all through March 24th and 25th; most tracks became impassable for wheeled traffic, and supplies had to be sent up to the advancing troops by camel and pack-horse. Es Salt was occupied at midnight of March 25th-26th by the light horse and handed over to the infantry. By March 26th, the cavalry were beyond the Es Salt-Amman road. That night they blew up a section of the railway south of Amman, but could not reach the desired viaduct. A two-arched bridge on the railway north of Amman was also destroyed. All efforts however, failed to dislodge the Turks from Amman station. Amman village, two miles west of the station, was actually

<sup>4</sup> See note at end of chapter.

<sup>5</sup> The story of the capture of these three airmen will be found in *The Escaping Club*, by A. J. Evans. (Major A. J. Evans, M.C.; Nos. 3 and 142 Sqns., R.F.C. Company director; of Kent, Eng.; b. Newtown, Hants., Eng., 1 May 1889.)

entered by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles after desperate and protracted fighting, which culminated in a determined night attack at 2 a.m. on March 30th. But the Turkish machine-gun positions in the hills beyond were too strong, and the enemy, seriously alarmed, was reinforcing his troops near Es Salt from Nablus and threatening a second counter-attack from the Nahr ez Zerka on the north. The raider's flank here had to be strengthened at the expense of the Amman attack, and on the night of March 31st the withdrawal from Amman was ordered. The retirement was by way of Es Salt, was well carried out, and by evening of April 2nd all troops were again across the Jordan, except those holding bridge-heads at Ghoraniye and Makhadet Hajla. One cause of anxiety had been the rising of the river after the rains of March 24th and 25th and the consequent danger to the bridges.

The airmen were out continuously over the scene of operations. Their reports from the battlefield were invaluable. They had assisted preparations for the action by photographing the Jordan front and the Amman position, and by reporting closely the details of all camps and defence positions; thereafter during the attack they roamed the air to observe and assist the fighting over ground which they had learned by heart. The Wady Fara region was seen astir on March 22nd and 24th, when the first reports of the Jordan crossing reached the enemy. Nablus camp was on parade. Many small bodies of infantry and transport were on the march towards Khurbet Ferweh and the Damieh crossing. On March 24th A. R. Brown and Kirk (observer) noted a large troop-train in Leban station making north towards Amman. They attacked it with their machine-guns, halted it, and fired 700 rounds into its troops, who fled in panic. By March 27th, Huwara camp had increased to three times its previous size, cavalry and infantry were marching north, and other forces were on the road out from Nablus, all heading for the battle. Camps were swelling along the Wady Fara. On the same day three troop-trains were seen to enter Amman from the north and one from the south, and strong bodies of troops held the hilly positions about the village and the station. Addison and Fysh (observer), at noon on March 27th, found at El Kutrani and Kerak cavalry assembled and preparing to

march north; these airmen carried a bomb, which they dropped in the middle of one unlucky cavalry group; they then pursued the horsemen over the plains with machine-gun fire. Small Turkish parties were moving north from every station on the Amman-Kutrani line. During the afternoon of March 27th and all day of March 28th every air patrol reported bodies of cavalry, infantry, and transport marching along the Wady Fara road towards Damieh. Bomb raids on Damieh on March 26th and 27th again failed to destroy the bridge, but inflicted heavy damage on troops and camps. All patrols machine-gunned enemy camps and parties wherever seen. Another raiding patrol, on March 27th, attacked Amman; the British machines from No. 142 Squadron bombed the station with excellent results, but the Australian machines by some mistake dropped their explosives on El Kastal station instead. Lastly, in the days immediately before the retirement from Amman, the enemy's threatening concentration about the Nahr ez Zerka, north of the Es Salt-Amman road, was reported and promptly bombed. To complete his mental picture of the scene from the air, the reader must imagine no clear sunny air above, but bright intervals in a generally cloudy sky, sometimes rain storms, and an untidy and often mountainous floor below; he must imagine, too, a low-lying bulk of cloud frequently hiding some point to be reconnoitred, and the air scout diving beneath it to keep a view of the ground or to identify troops discerned, and often narrowly skimming some misty hilltop in pursuit of his quarry.

The enemy's airmen were active, but rarely venturesome, though thirteen German machines bombed the attacking force at Shunet Nimrin at dusk on March 28th. For the most part they avoided any risk of air combat. Lieutenants C. C. Cameron<sup>6</sup> and Kirk (observer) fought a short and indecisive engagement on the way home from a raid on Damieh on March 19th. Headlam and Kirk, reconnoitring Amman in the early morning of March 27th, met two A.E.G. two-seaters at 5,000 feet and drove them both to ground; one of them (Headlam records) flew around in dazed circles at 1,000 feet, then landed, and Kirk fired into it on the ground. Several men

<sup>6</sup> Lieut. C. C. Cameron; No. 1 Sqn (previously Light Horse) Stock and station agent, of Jamestown, S. Aust., b. Jamestown, 30 April, 1890. Died of illness, 18 Nov., 1918.

came to help the pilot, but were driven off by the Australians' fire. "Tracer" bullets were manifestly hitting the crippled two-seater, and "neither pilot nor observer were seen to leave the machine." During this combat Lieutenants J. M. Walker<sup>7</sup> and Finlay (observer) and Rutherford and Lieutenant J. McElligott<sup>8</sup> were reconnoitring Kissir, south of Amman. They fought another A.E.G., drove it down, and destroyed it on the ground in much the same fashion as that described by Headlam. These were the only encounters between No. 1 Squadron and enemy airmen on all the battle-front during these operations. The fighting scouts of No. III Squadron elsewhere reported a number of air combats; they met the enemy rather more often than did the Australians. Nevertheless, it must be held that on the whole the Germans avoided their duty in the air.

Such was the Australian airmen's verdict at the time. The enemy admitted the truth in documents which were captured at a later date. An official diary found at Nablus in September records, under date of April 4th:—"The situation in the air is still unfavourable to us; the A.E.G. and Rumpler C.4 do not satisfy demands any longer." A little later the diary notes:—"Our machines are no longer a match for the English," and it proceeds, by a reference to the activity and fighting power of the Bristol Fighters, to indicate the particular foe whom the enemy dreaded. Towards the end of June, for instance, the German staff opinion was:—"The enemy, who possesses in his Bristol Fighter an exceptionally fine machine, has made himself lately very redoubtable. Nearly always flying in twos, the Bristol Fighters present an extraordinary fighting force, and their harassing of our activities becomes more and more felt." Another complaint is that of "the aggravated shortage of reinforcements, especially pilots." An entry in the diary of May 6th reads:—"No. 302 Squadron had to discontinue its flights, all pilots being either wounded or sick." Three weeks later there is mentioned a report, furnished to the Turkish Command, which may be regarded as intended to break gently the news that the German airmen were feeling unable to

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<sup>7</sup> Lieut. J. M. Walker; No. 1 Sqn. (previously A.A.M.C.). Chemist; b Grenville, Ballarat, Vic., 1888. Killed in action, 22 Aug., 1918.

<sup>8</sup> Lieut. J. McElligott; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Telegraphist; b. Bundaberg, Q'land, 7 Jan., 1893.

promise much improvement. "As long as the English use two-seaters which are superior to our machines in climbing capacity," says this report, "successful activity on our part is very much in question, owing to the impossibility of the single-seater even attempting to make an attack on higher-flying and better-climbing two-seaters, and owing to our inability during the attack of the enemy to take over the attack ourselves." Yet the Germans' own two-seaters were speedy enough, as was frequently proved. The enemy squadrons, besides single-seater Albatros D.5.a scouts and A.E.G. two-seaters, contained Rumplers (260-h.p. Mercedes), L.V.G.'s (260-h.p. Benz), and Halberstadts—all serviceable two-seaters—which were the equal in flying-speed of the Bristol Fighters. In many a running fight the Germans made a long stern chase of it, and often escaped. Where they failed was in the manœuvring skill, daring, and morale of pilots. The German airmen, as a corps, ignored the fighting maxim, "Never show tail to the enemy," and therein, as nearly as a single phrase will express it, lay the difference between the two flying services.

The first (Amman) raid across the Jordan had as its immediate tactical objective the destruction of the Amman viaduct. The second (Es Salt) raid was planned to envelop and capture the Turkish garrison at Shunet Nimrin, opposite the Ghoraniye bridge-head. From Es Salt ran the only metalled road which served the Nimrin position. A second road to Shunet Nimrin, no more than a fair-weather track, ran along the Wady Es Sir from Amman. The Beni Sakr tribe of Arabs, who lived along the wady, promised to assist if the British would attack before the first week in May, at which time (the tribe represented) it would have to move to fresh grazing-grounds. For the new venture a slight re-arrangement was made in the duties of the two air squadrons of the army wing. It was found necessary to increase what were called "hostile-aircraft patrols" (or, colloquially, "hopping-off patrols"), since, on several chance occasions when the Amman raiding force was concentrating in the Jordan Valley, enemy airmen had taken advantage of the absence of British machines, dashed across the line, and bombed the light horse camps. To oppose any repetition of

these attacks, a watching patrol was stationed over the concentration area throughout the hours of daylight. No. 1 Squadron performed its share of this duty. Moreover, the old work of constant strategic reconnaissance over the enemy's rear area had to be repeated, and revised maps were wanted of the Amman-Es Salt district. Reconnaissance was especially the department of No. 1 Squadron. Consequently the carrying out of bombing raids was now assigned to No. 142 Squadron (Martinsydes and B.E. 12.a's). No. 111 Squadron (S.E.5.a fighting scouts) pursued its own task of roaming the whole front with destroyer-patrols. In preparation for the Es Salt raid, No. 1 Squadron made about twenty special photography-patrols over the eastern Jordan region, and exposed 609 plates. These supplied the basis for a new set of maps, showing all local roads, tracks, and caravan routes.

The enemy soon repaired the railway bridge north of Amman. On April 3rd a train was seen to leave Kalaat ez Zerka and arrive at Amman. Another train, carrying a crane in one truck and rails in three others, was on the same day observed to move out northward from Kissir towards the other break in the line. Repairing of this section went on till April 10th, when it was completed. Amman station was bombed on April 3rd, 4th, and 5th by No. 142 Squadron. A. R. Brown and Finlay (observer) on April 3rd made an exhaustive reconnaissance of "the horse-shoe road"—the road up to Tul Keram and round by Nablus to El Lubban. Trenches were being dug near Kakon, north-west of Tul Keram. Ross Smith and Mustard subsequently confirmed this report, and farther over, at Jenin, they observed the double aerodrome to have greatly increased in size; it now had seventeen hangars, and fourteen machines were counted on the ground. There was also a hospital south of the station. A few days later, large enemy camps were seen on the coast, near Mukhalid. Till April 15th the Australian machines found no Germans in the air, though in the interval the scouts of No. 111 Squadron fought a dozen combats. On that day, however, Lieutenants R. S. Adair<sup>9</sup> and R. A. Camm<sup>10</sup> (observer), returning at noon

<sup>9</sup> Lieut. R. S. Adair; No. 1 Sqn. Engineer; b Maryborough, Q'land, 22 May, 1894.

<sup>10</sup> Lieut. R. A. Camm; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Camel Corps). Farmer; of Scottsdale, Tas; b Zeehan, Tas, 29 Jan., 1893

from patrol over Et Taiyibeh (south of Tul Keram), saw three Albatros scouts flying towards them from the south-east, and slightly above. Adair fired a light to warn Lieutenants G. C. Peters<sup>11</sup> and J. H. Traill<sup>12</sup> (observer) whom he was escorting, and climbed to meet the enemy. The fight began at 9,000 feet, when, as the enemy dived to attack, Adair turned, closed on the centre Albatros of the formation, and fired 100 rounds into it. This Albatros tried to spin away, failed, and then dived steeply, with Adair still following and firing. It landed ultimately near Kalkilieh in rough country and tilted over on one wing. Meanwhile, Peters attacked a second Albatros, shot that down into a steep dive earthward, and then engaged the third Albatros until his gun jammed. Adair picked up this opponent at about 5,000 feet, but it span away earthward and was lost to view in the shadows of the hills. Two other Bristol Fighters—Lieutenants Kenny and F. C. Hawley<sup>13</sup> (observer) and E. C. Stooke<sup>14</sup> and H. B. Fletcher<sup>15</sup> (observer)—fought a similar engagement with four Albatros scouts south of Nablus on April 28th, and drove down three of them.

By April 19th, when the British concentration for the Es Salt raid was beginning, the enemy camps at Shunet Nimrin were likewise reported to have considerably increased. The number of tents seen was not always a sure indication, for it was usual to furl tents in the daytime. Better tokens of enemy strength were probably the heavy traffic on the Es Salt—Amman road and the great activity at Amman station.<sup>16</sup> All airmen flying over the plains about Madeba saw the unimpressible Bedouin—large numbers of them—ploughing and grazing flocks as though no war were anywhere near. They decamped across the railway as soon as the second battle began at Shunet Nimrin.

<sup>11</sup> Maj G. C. Peters, D.F.C.; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Engineers). School teacher, of Hobart, b. Adelaide, 6 May, 1894.

<sup>12</sup> Lieut. J. H. Traill, D.F.C.; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Signal Services). Station hand, of Cassilis, N.S.W.; b. Bligh, Cassilis, 8 July, 1895.

<sup>13</sup> Lieut. F. C. Hawley, D.F.C.; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Commercial traveller; of Sydney, b. Wellington, N.Z., 26 July, 1890.

<sup>14</sup> Lieut. E. C. Stooke, D.C.M.; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Camel Corps). Station hand, of Northcote, Melbourne, b. Glenferrie, Melbourne, 1894. Killed in action, 19 Aug., 1918.

<sup>15</sup> Lieut. H. B. Fletcher, D.F.C.; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Auctioneer; of Stanthorpe, Q'land; b. Newcastle, N.S.W., 22 Nov., 1890.

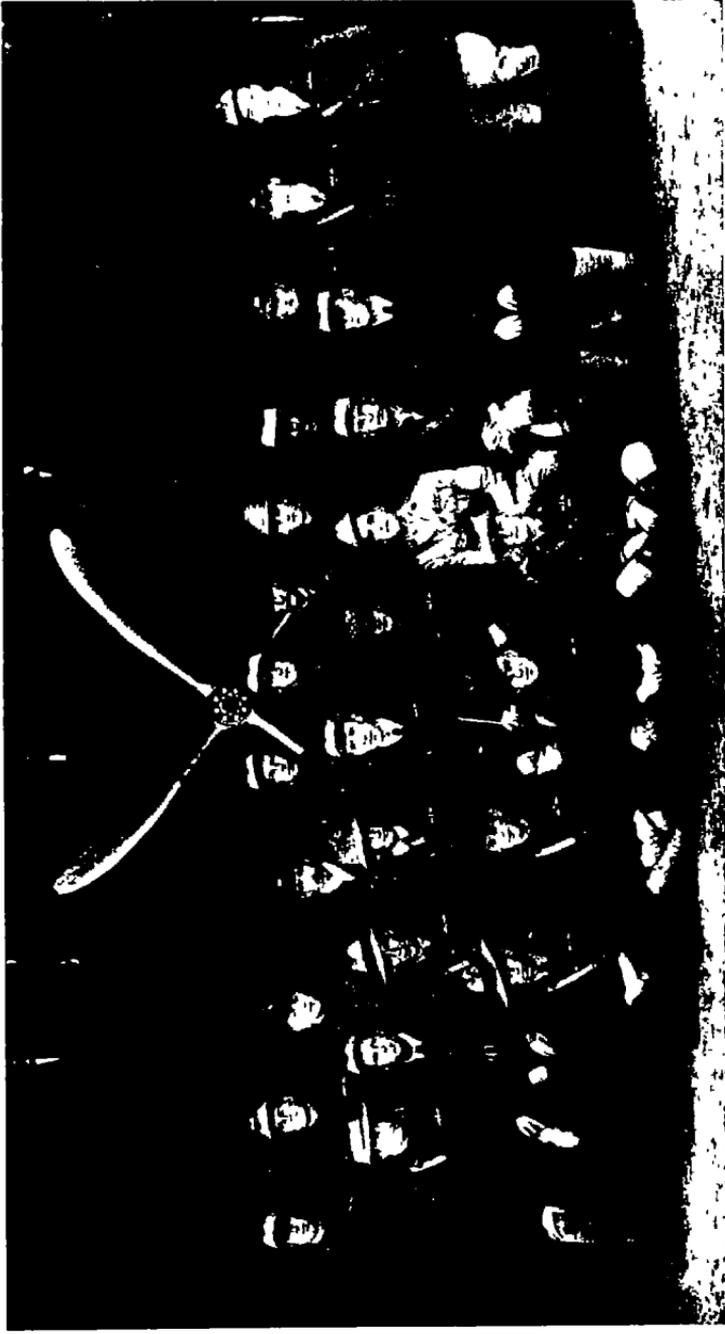
<sup>16</sup> At Shunet Nimrin the Turkish garrison of 3,000 was increased by reinforcements to 8,000 to meet this attack. This was learned subsequently.



THE AJIA FORD, RIVER JORDAN

*Aust. Nat. Museum Official Photo No. B3570*

*To face p. 114*



OFFICERS OF NO 1 SQUADRON, A.F.C., AT RAMLEH, NOVEMBER, 1918

*Aviation Museum Official Photo No B1238*

The attack was opened on April 30th by two brigades of the 60th Division, but the Shunet Nimrin position was strong, and no real success was gained before it. Moreover the Beni Sakr Arabs gave no assistance; the tribes were always cautious allies. The cavalry crossed at Ghoraniye in the evening of April 29th, and the 4th Light Horse Brigade marched all night up the track to Damieh and arrived at that place early the next morning. While this force held the enemy at the crossing, two other mounted brigades marched on Es Salt, fought an action north-west of the town, and entered it amid great enemy confusion at 4.30 p.m. on April 30th. They just missed capturing the headquarters of the Turkish Fourth Army. The 4th Brigade was unable to seize the Turkish bridge-head at Damieh, and on May 1st the enemy, here heavily reinforced, attacked and gradually pushed this brigade back towards the Umm esh Shert crossing of the Jordan. It was imperative to hold Umm esh Shert at all costs as a line of retreat for the brigades at Es Salt, since to this point ran the only available track across the hills from the Es Salt direction. The Anzac Mounted Division was to have taken Shunet Nimrin in flank from the north, but could not direct all its strength to this purpose; in response to Turkish pressure the greater part of two of its brigades were sent to reinforce the light horse near Damieh and around Es Salt. The threat from these two points by early morning of May 3rd compelled the abandonment of the whole venture, the object of which—as has been described—was not the forcing of the enemy out of Shunet Nimrin, but rather the surrounding and capture of his garrison there. The light horsemen on the exposed flank to the north narrowly escaped being hoist by their own petard and themselves cut off. By evening of May 4th the attacking force had recrossed the Jordan and the original bridge-head at Ghoraniye was re-established. Bridge-heads were also held at El Auja ford, to the north of Ghoraniye, and at Makhadet Hajla to the south of it.

The successful withdrawal of the light horse owed much to the co-operation of the Australian airmen. No. 1 Squadron's pilots watched and recorded the advance on Es Salt, and on May 1st they reported the enemy's threat from north-west of

Damieh. A strong south wind blowing over the Amman area made the day unfavourable for flying. Two Australian machines, sent out on the dawn reconnaissance—Rutherford and McElligott (observer) and Lieutenants Haig and R. T. Challinor<sup>17</sup> (observer)—were to drop leaflets on the Beni Sakr Arabs. Near Amman machine-gun fire from the ground perforated both of Rutherford's petrol tanks.<sup>18</sup> He was forced to land, and burned his machine. Haig and Challinor alighted alongside to pick up Rutherford and McElligott, and Haig tried to take off again with all three passengers; but one wheel collapsed as they were starting, and the aeroplane toppled over on its nose. The Australians set fire to it, and then surrendered to Circassian cavalry which had ridden up to them. They were handed over to the German flying corps, and German airmen later dropped on the Australian aerodrome letters from the four officers describing their mishap.

That evening, May 1st, at least 800 cavalry and 400 infantry were reported on the road south-east of Damieh by the Australian escort of a bombing raid upon Damieh undertaken by No. 142 Squadron. The Bristol Fighters flew low after the bombs had been dropped, and fired 700 rounds into the scattering cavalry. Guns also were seen coming into action at Damieh against the light horse beyond the river. On May 2nd the position was an anxious one, and No. 1 Squadron reconnoitred the Es Salt area three times in the morning of that day. On the first reconnaissance, at 6 a.m., Lieutenants P. J. McGinness<sup>19</sup> and Hawley (observer), escorting Lukis and Beaton, sighted a German two-seater at about 9,000 feet between Jericho and Damieh. The enemy was well above, and McGinness, after warning the reconnaissance machine, climbed to the combat. On arriving near the German's level, the Australian machine attacked from below, and both pilot and observer fired bursts from this position

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<sup>17</sup> Lieut. R. T. Challinor, No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Clerk; of Brisbane, b. Beenleigh, Q'land, 13 Nov., 1889.

<sup>18</sup> Besides the main petrol tank, fighting machines carried above the centre section a small reserve tank for emergency. This was meant to enable the airman to fly home if his main tank were shot through and his petrol supply exhausted.

<sup>19</sup> Lieut. P. J. McGinness, D.F.C., D.C.M.; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Farmer; of Framlingham, Vic; b. Framlingham East, 14 Feb., 1896.

into the enemy until he stalled, rocked unhappily from side to side, and then went down in a slow spin. McGinness had to swerve sharply aside to avoid collision as his opponent fell; the Bristol Fighter's engine cut-out at this moment, and the German was not seen again. Lukis and Beaton reported enemy reinforcements still arriving at Damieh, and Lieutenants E. L. Spragg<sup>20</sup> and Vyner (observer) half-an-hour later brought in news of large enemy cavalry forces about Ain es Sir (south-east of Es Salt). By noon the Turks were hurrying reinforcements and ammunition from Nablus to Mejdal Beni Fadl, foreshadowing pressure down the western bank of the Jordan. The lower Wady Fara road was full of transport, cavalry, and guns. The Damieh-Es Salt road was littered with Turkish cavalry. Amman showed at least 500 infantry and 100 rolling-stock in the station, and another large troop-train was entering from the north. Towards Es Salt, at Ain es Sir, were strong bodies of cavalry and infantry, a fairly large new hospital, and 200 horse-waggons. This picture of the field situation derives its military interest from the fact that the details of it were not collected from reports after the action, but were seen and recorded from the air at the time.

Lieutenants H. S. R. Maughan<sup>21</sup> and Fysh, who brought in this noon report, and their escort, Lieutenants A. W. Murphy<sup>22</sup> and Camm, fought three Albatros scouts while over Amman. The Australians were at 6,000 feet when they saw the enemy machines leave the Amman aerodrome, and flew to 10,000 feet to await them. As soon as the Germans had made 8,000 feet, the Australians dived at them together. Murphy attacked the centre machine and split the formation. The Albatros on the left promptly attacked from below, but Camm fired into him. The Albatros swung back and came again from the right, flying level. Camm again fired a burst into him, so that he stalled and disappeared into a cloud. Next

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<sup>20</sup> Lieut. E. L. Spragg; No. 1 Sqn (previously Light Horse). Station book-keeper; of Morven, Q'land; b. Sydney, 29 March, 1889.

<sup>21</sup> Lieut. H. S. R. Maughan, D.F.C.; No. 1 Sqn (previously Artillery). Printer; of Ipswich, Q'land; b. Brisbane, 27 May, 1893.

<sup>22</sup> Wing Commander A. W. Murphy, D.F.C., A.F.C.; No. 1 Sqn. (afterwards R.A.A.F.). Air-mechanic; of Melbourne; b. Kew, Melbourne, 17 Nov., 1891.

moment Murphy was engaged in a hot duel with his first opponent. The two attacked each other head on in a dead line, both firing hard, and the Australian had to zoom sharply to avoid collision.<sup>23</sup> The Albatros simultaneously dived, but attacked again from the left. It received a fierce sixty rounds at close quarters from Camm, and then it, too, fell into a cloud. Meanwhile, Maughan had engaged and driven down the rightmost Albatros of the formation. He then met Murphy's second opponent and fired more shots into that as it span away. Diving through the clouds from the scene which the enemy had left, the Australians saw all three Albatroses gliding down to their aerodrome again. In the evening Captain A. R. Brown and Lieutenant Finlay (observer) and R. Burton<sup>24</sup> and Fletcher, escorting a British bomb raid on Amman, chased a German two-seater to earth near Suweile (on the Amman-Es Salt road); they fired into this machine as it lay on the ground, at others on Amman aerodrome, and into every party of infantry and cavalry around the town for as long as their ammunition lasted.

The days of the withdrawal (May 3rd and 4th) saw every available machine from No. 1 Squadron over the east-Jordan area. The knowledge that the light horse were involved in a difficult retreat was the keenest spur to the Australian airmen, most of whom had aforesaid been light horsemen. May 3rd was marred by an accident to Lieutenant J. K. Curwen-Walker<sup>25</sup> and Corporal N. P. B. Jensen<sup>26</sup> in a Bristol Fighter which got into a spin and crashed as it was leaving the aerodrome at dawn. Brown and Finlay (observer) and G. V. Oxenham<sup>27</sup> and H. A. Letch<sup>28</sup> set out at the same

<sup>23</sup> An exciting situation which sometimes occurred when opposing airmen were keen fighters. It was a good test of nerve. Pilots appear to have received no distinct instruction in training as to the proper manœuvre for avoiding collision in such circumstances. Ordinarily one machine would pass another on the right, as with ships at sea. Fighting tactics of two-seaters were generally a matter of arrangement between pilot and observer, especially where these were experienced comrades.

<sup>24</sup> Lieut. R. Burton; No. 1 Sqn. Engine-fitter; of Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.; b. Payneham, Adelaide, 7 April, 1892.

<sup>25</sup> Lieut. J. K. Curwen-Walker; No. 1 Sqn. Salesman; of Prahran, Melbourne; b. Windsor, Melbourne, 18 March, 1888. Killed in action, 3 May, 1918.

<sup>26</sup> Cpl. N. P. B. Jensen (No. 506; No. 1 Sqn.) Sailor; of Albek, Snebjerg, Denmark; b. Albek, 6 March, 1892. Killed in action, 3 May, 1918.

<sup>27</sup> Lieut. G. V. Oxenham; No. 1 Sqn. Grazier; of Boggabri, N.S.W.; b. Randwick, Sydney, 26 March, 1893. Killed in action, 27 June, 1918.

<sup>28</sup> Lieut. H. A. Letch, M.C.; No. 1 Sqn. (previously Light Horse) Clerk, of Hampton, Melbourne, b. Donnybrook, Vic., 3 May, 1894. Killed in action, 22 Aug., 1918.

hour and found that enemy strength at the Wady Fara and Damieh camps had increased overnight. Turks were crossing at Damieh in a punt. Holding on their flight past Es Salt, the two Australian machines at 7 a.m. chased down an enemy two-seater at Suweile and riddled it on the ground with bullets. Other patrols during the day watched the retirement from Es Salt. The enemy was evidently glad to see the light horse go at their own pace. Next day, May 4th, every Australian machine sent out on reconnaissance carried four 20-lb. bombs to harass Turkish reinforcements. At dawn the light horse rear-guards were about half-way between Es Salt and Umm esh Shert. Amman station was crowded with tents, transport, and stores, and two Bristol Fighters on the dawn patrol dropped their eight bombs in the middle of the traffic. Two others repeated this performance at 10 o'clock upon a collection of cavalry at Amman, and fired 400 rounds into other cavalry advancing from Ain es Sir. The afternoon patrols bombed Es Salt and Amman, and, when the bombs were expended, the steady stream of cavalry marching through Ain es Sir provided a constant target for machine-gun fire. To the best of the airmen's ability every sort of reinforcement making forward to worry the light horse retreat was impeded and exhausted long before it reached the scene of the fighting. The enemy made few attempts to imitate this example of co-operation with troops on the ground. The special hostile-aircraft patrols on the British side kept guard against any such venture. Two German machines did attack British infantry withdrawing west of Shunet Nimrin on May 4th, but were both shot down by that infantry.

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*Note.*—Turkish documents captured in September disclosed the following scale of rewards offered by the enemy:—

For every Arab or Indian prisoner, 40 piastres.

British private, T£1 (coin).

Colonial or Indian officer, T£2.

British officer, T£5.

Documents containing strengths or movement orders, T£1.

Official orders of units, 20 piastres.

Letter or map, 5 piastres.

(Captured order of 158th Regiment, dated 15/12/17.)

Rewards for bringing down a British aeroplane were:—

To an airman, T£40.

To a company of infantry, T£30.

To an anti-aircraft gun crew (including T£15 for the gunner)  
T£30.

(Captured order, dated 1/3/18.)

The Bedouins were not slow to perceive the possibilities of this trade. Even friendly tribes required money payment for returning to British Headquarters, on one occasion, two captured Australian airmen Lieutenants Tonkin and Vyner. The price was £50 each.