DIARY OF A D.A.D.M.S. ON THE JERUSALEM CAMPAIGN, PALESTINE, NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1917.

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The following diary was written exactly ten years ago at the time of the events it describes when the writer, then a Captain, was D.A.D.M.S. of the Yeomanry Mounted Division. It was not intended for publication, and when a Regular officer who read it a few months ago suggested it might be of some general interest as illustrating the difficulties of the divisional medical services in cavalry warfare, I was faced with the choice of rewriting it for publication, or leaving it as it was. Lack of leisure and a failing memory of events led me to adopt the latter course. I trust its originally private nature will be held to excuse its purely personal tone. The meaning of terms such as "divisional receiving station," etc., will be found explained in the notes published in the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps, December, 1927. The verses at the end were conceived at the end of an exciting day described in the diary.

The Yeomanry Mounted Division consisted of three brigades, the 6th, 8th and 22nd Mounted Brigades (Mtd. Bde.), each with its own field ambulance (F.A.). The latter consisted of two sections each: the bearer section, whose business it was to collect casualties on the field and form a dressing station in which they were treated, and the tent section which had wagons holding medical stores and a few tents, and was able to retain cases for a day or two if pressed. All the men of these were mounted and so able to keep up with cavalry, and for the transport of wounded each F.A. had twenty camels carrying each a double litter (called a cacolet), twelve sand carts (light two-wheeled carts drawn by four mules and capable of carrying two or three men each), and four Ford motor ambulances.

The mobility of cavalry, the rapid advance, and the fact that we so often marched away from supplies and organized communications, forced us to employ a tactical scheme for the field ambulances—which were of course under the direct command of the A.D.M.S.—very different from that of the textbooks. Generally speaking the officer in charge of the bearer section kept close to his brigade, made his dressing station under brigade arrangements and used camels and sand carts to get the casualties back to the tent section. The long distances over which we had to evacuate, our heavy casualties, and the limited amount of transport at our disposal, made it necessary to use the tent sections on successive days as collecting stations for the whole division. Once open they became immobilized till all casualties were cleared, so we usually opened one for every day of advance,
the others catching up as soon as they were clear of casualties and could move on. From these collecting stations casualties were taken back by the Ford motor ambulances (which we kept in one convoy for this purpose) to the receiving stations. These were a sort of mobile hospital, one for each division in Desert Mounted Corps, and were under the control of the D.D.M.S. of the corps: they were always tied to one of the two main roads of the plain and the D.D.M.S. moved them forward alternately in the same way and for the same reasons as we employed our collecting stations. So that just as all the casualties of any one day from the Division would be going to the tent section of one field ambulance so our collecting stations would be evacuating to the receiving stations of the Yeomanry, Anzac or Australian Division at different times during the campaign. Once in the receiving stations our responsibility for casualties ceased, and they were moved down the lines of communication under corps management.

The Division left the beach at Marakeb on October 28, and moved out to Shellal. For the initial phase of the operations we had been taken from Desert Mounted Corps and placed under the 20th Corps as part of their reserve, and as such we remained inactive at Shellal for several days while Beersheba was taken and the troops of 20th Corps got into position for the attack on the Turkish left wing.

November 5.—It was not till November 5 that we finally moved out to Beersheba. It was a long, hot march; there was no water on the eighteen miles there, and the great motor lorries taking supplies from Karm to Beersheba had even in those few days pulverized the surface soil, so that the column moved in a mist of dust that choked, blinded and parched us all. Headquarters reached Beersheba at 4 o'clock, though it was after 7 p.m. before the last details were in. The trim hangars and barracks of the new-built German cantonment were a strange contrast to the untidy litter of the native town, but I had no time to explore. I first rode to the well allotted to us for drinking water and saw that all was in order there, then went to the hospital, where our receiving station was to open up, and arranged for guides to direct them there when they arrived, and finally came back to the house we were using as Headquarters, in time for the arrival of our transport; after I had given instructions about water and sanitary arrangements, dinner was ready. Operation orders came round soon afterwards, and the A.D.M.S. and I drafted and dispatched our orders for field ambulances. We then lay down on the floor for a few hours, as we were to start at midnight, though the fleas effectually robbed me of any sleep.

November 6.—Half an hour after midnight we moved off. There was a good moon, but this was obscured by the mist through which our column wound in ghostly silence broken only by the creaking of saddle leather and the muffled padding of the horses' feet on the dusty ground. All wheeled transport had been left behind except for the light sand carts of the field ambulances, and, though we did not know it, we were destined not to see
our kit or our batmen again till our part in the campaign was nearly finished. Luckily I had learned to carry the bare necessities of campaigning on my horse: food, a coat, blanket and shaving kit, and on these slender resources I lived for a full month.

We slogged on, tired and sleepy, till nearly 4 o'clock, by which time we were well up in the foothills of the Khuwelfe range, close under the crest of Abu Jerwal. It was very cold, too cold for the halt to be restful, and we were soon kept wide awake by the noise of the 53rd Division attacking Khuwelfe. It was only two or three miles ahead, and athwart the pitchy darkness—for the moon had now set—the flashes of the guns lit up the sky, while the staccato chatter of machine-guns was incessant for nearly an hour. Then everything stopped quite suddenly, though whether the attack had succeeded or failed we could not know. Dawn now broke, and soon afterwards we began to come in for some random shelling. But an hour or two later orders came to move on. The 74th Division were attacking the Kauwukah system, and as they swung left-handed we were to fill in the gap that spread out between them and the 53rd on Khuwelfe. The A.D.M.S. moved off with Headquarters, and I went back to give orders to the field ambulances. We had decided to open up the 22nd Brigade Tent Section as a collecting station for the Division, keeping the other two in reserve with their brigades, and I picked them up as I passed the 22nd Brigade and moved them back to a likely-looking spot as far up as motors could reach them and just off the line by which supplies were to come. M. had turned up with the cacolet camels, having followed the Division at a camel pace, but there was no sign of B. with the cars. This was rather worrying, but I decided we could manage on camels for that day, and having written orders for camels, cars and the receiving station rode on after the Division. On my way I met C. coming back with casualties from the 6th Brigade, and directed him to the collecting station. Just as I got up with Headquarters two Albatrosses flew over and laid their eggs: one fell just on my left and killed a couple of horses, and a big fragment just missed my mare's head and made her jump. After dressing one man with a bomb splinter in his back and sending him off, I had some food while we waited an hour or so. It was now afternoon, and about three o'clock we moved forward for a couple of miles and finally halted in a wadi, where about sunset we picketed down for the night. Water was now becoming a problem: I had most of my water-bottle intact, for which I was glad, as there was none nearer than Beersheba, and it was not till next morning that some came up on camels. The horses were sent back to Beersheba—a twenty-mile trek—to water, and arrived next morning with tales of falling down wadis and losing themselves in the foothills all night.

November 7.—I went round to the field ambulances as soon as my horses got back; they most of them reported men and sand carts lost in the foothills: indeed, it was as likely a country to get bushed in as you could wish to find, no landmarks but the main range to the east and all
intersected with confused wadis and clay ridges. I rode back to the collecting station at Muweilah. They were quite snug, had picked up water from the supply dump which was close beside them, and had evacuated about forty casualties to Beersheba on camels. There was still no sign of the cars, and when I got back to Headquarters the A.D.M.S. wired to Beersheba to have them sent up. It was dark when I got back, but I hit off Headquarters nicely and had the luck on my way to find one or two of the strayed sand carts and shepherd them home. After dinner, regiments of the Anzac Division began to ride by; we heard that most of the Kauwukah redoubts had fallen, and we expected that the cavalry would get through next day. Our rôle was to be that of clearing the flanks of Khuwelfe and stopping any counter-attacks from that direction.

November 8.—There was no time to have breakfast before we moved off and then we crossed very broken country between Kauwukah and Khuwelfe. There were a lot of bodies lying about—men of the 74th Division, who had been caught by the Turkish guns during the advance of yesterday. As soon as we got into touch with Turks, and could be certain of the direction the Division was likely to make, I went back to the collecting station. Here to my relief I found the ambulance cars just arrived: B. had lost his way and spent two days wandering in the foothills before he found us. He was obviously unsuited to the job, and having loaded up the cars with casualties for Beersheba I sent him back there to join the receiving station and put M. in charge. I got some water for my horses here and had some food at the collecting station: and then I pushed on, taking one car to see if it were practical to get cars to Bir Khuwelfe. Our evacuation to Beersheba had now stretched out to over twelve miles, and I was anxious to get cars up as far as possible. But after getting the cars along for three or four miles, the going got so bad I had to send them back and pushed on to pick up the Division. It was awful country, rocky, wild and waterless, and in spite of the presence of two Divisions just in front I did not see a soul for six miles. Finally I hit off Bir Khuwelfe where I found the 53rd Division R.E.'s developing the water—the first out of Beersheba—and gave my horses another drink. The Turks had only left the place a few hours, and there was still some skirmishing with their rearguards just in front. I rode north-west through very broken country for a mile or two, and then began to find some units of the Division and soon arrived at Headquarters. The A.D.M.S. was relieved at my news about the cars, and we were able to load up the day's casualties on camels, and send them back to the collecting station. Hardly had they gone when the order came for the Division to break off the pursuit and march to Sheria. This set us a problem as it meant that our line of evacuation to Beersheba was done with. We sent a dispatch-rider to the collecting station, with orders to clear all casualties to Beersheba, collect all camels and sand carts as they arrived, and come with the whole convoy to Sheria via Irgeig. It was a long way round, but they could never have made their way across country
and on the Irgeig route they would be in touch with supplies. We sent similar orders to M. for the cars and then rode on to Sheria. Divisional Headquarters headed the column and we rode in about ten o'clock. The place was a perfect shambles, and I slept in the yard of the Turkish railway station, with the stench of dead men and horses invading me on every side—a most unpleasant night. Before I turned in I stumbled on a granary and gave my horses the best feed they had had since Shellal, besides stuffing all my nose-bags full of barley.

November 9.—At 4 a.m. I was awakened by an M.O. of the 8th Brigade Field Ambulance, who reported that his brigade had only just got in, and that he had about thirty casualties. I told him to make them comfortable and leave them on the ground with an orderly in charge if he were ordered off in a hurry. At 5 a.m. orders came for the Division to move on at once to Huj, and we arranged that I should stay behind to clear the 8th Brigade casualties and the sick, and to leave orders for the details coming up from Irgeig. A wire had arrived from D.D.M.S. Desert Mounted Corps (with whom we were now reunited) that the receiving station was moving up from Beersheba that night and would be able to take in casualties at Sheria this morning. I sent my groom off to water the horses at the pools in the wadi Sheria, and walked over to the 8th Brigade Field Ambulance to see their casualties. The ambulance was just moving off and I got them to leave a tent for the worst cases and a few men; and then I went back, picked up my horses and rode a mile or two along the Irgeig road to find the receiving station: it was nowhere to be seen and I began to think we should have to make a dump of the casualties for to-day at the railway station. I found a section of an infantry field ambulance standing to, waiting for orders to move, and they consented to collect my casualties who were lying a mile away across the wadi, and bring them in to the station. But by the time they had done this the receiving station had arrived and took the cases over, leaving me free to push on to Huj. I hardly expected the 22nd Brigade Tent Section or the cars up before afternoon and left them orders with the receiving station to push on to Huj and rejoin the Division with all speed.

I did the ten miles to Huj by map and compass and hit it off nicely, finding Headquarters on a hill amongst the litter of yesterday's battle: the guns captured in the charge of the 5th Mounted Brigade were near by. There seemed to be nothing much doing as we had found the Turks gone from Simesim ridge, so I had a shave and got my boots off for the first time since we left Shellal. It was now late afternoon and as soon as orders came that we were to bivouac here for the night I rolled up in my blanket to make up arrears of sleep.

November 10.—We started off at dawn next day with orders to march to Nejile and then operate in the Shephelah in the direction of Beit Jibrin. I collected a couple of men from the 8th Field Ambulance and gave them orders for the 22nd Brigade Tent Section and the cars to push on to Nejile
as soon as they arrived, which I hoped would be some time in the morning. The sick for evacuation this morning we had to send back on our few remaining camels to Sheria. This arranged I pushed on after Headquarters. It was intensely hot and dusty in the wadi Jemmameh and I kept to the hills and had a look at some of the Turkish works defending Huj. There were plenty of Bedouins about looting arms but they left me alone. We got to Nejile about noon: the water there was as black as ink with dead oxen from the Turkish gun teams lying in it: many of the horses wouldn’t touch it, thirsty as they were, but we found a sump a little clearer than the rest which we could chlorinate for the men’s water bottles and then the Division moved off in skirmishing order through the low hills of the Shephelah. It was very hot, the most parching day we had had, and the horses were looking very tucked up: most of them had only watered twice in the five days we had been out and the men were not in much better case.

Towards sunset we began to get into touch with the Turks and took up a line for the night, intending to attack at dawn, but about 8 o’clock an officer arrived from Corps Staff with orders for us to break contact with the Turks at dawn and go to El Faluje for supplies. This was welcome news as we had consumed the last of our rations and forage that morning and were all of us taking up belts and girdles a hole or two. The idea was that after that we should march across to join the rest of the Mounted Corps on the left wing where the real pursuit was to be pressed.

November 11.—The medical position this morning was giving the A.D.M.S. and me a good deal of anxiety. The previous day we had dropped the tent section of the 8th Brigade at Nejile to act as collecting station for the Division, so that our available strength as regards ambulances had fallen very low indeed. Of the three field ambulances only the 6th Brigade had its tent section intact, and that reported having left half its medical equipment at Huj owing to a broken axle or two. The twelve sand carts apiece with which each had set out from Shellal had sadly dwindled: many had fallen by the wayside with axles hopelessly bent, half a dozen or more disappeared with their teams in the blind foothills of Khuwelle and had not been heard of since: the same applied to the cacolet camels. The pace had been too hot for them, and the two miles an hour and the double journey entailed by every evacuation had caused them to be left hopelessly behind. Of our original sixty only about a dozen remained with the Division, while the Ford ambulance cars which we had relied on to do all our long distance evacuations had been lost to us ever since the Division was whisked away from the right wing to the centre and we had had to cut loose from our line of evacuation to Beersheba. We arranged that the A.D.M.S. should go on with the Division, whilst I went back for two or three days if necessary, cleared the collecting station at Nejile, collected as much of the lost transport as I could and brought it over to the left wing by forced marches. It was obvious that if the Division had heavy casualties
there would be a medical breakdown in the present low state of our
resources.

I waited till 7 o'clock to see if the move westward were cancelled or not,
and then rode back over the swell of the Shephelah down to Nejile. The
sky over the Judæan highlands was murky and lowering, the morning very
close and oppressive, and by the time I reached Nejile it was obviously
blowing up for a sand storm. At Nejile I was relieved to find the
22nd Tent Section who had been following us up from Beersheba by forced
marches. They had picked up my chits at Sheria and Huj and arrived
at Nejile the night before. They had seen nothing of the cars, and in
their haste to catch up had left twenty or thirty cacolet camels on the road
under the charge of a N.C.O. These were the camels which had brought
back the Khuwelfe casualties to them on the 8th, and which we were hoping
would arrive with them. However, it was something to have another Tent
Section to play with, and we sat down to a breakfast of porridge and fried
bacon—the first cooked food I had tasted since we left Shellal.

Casualties came trickling in all this time, and when the last were in I
found the 8th Brigade Tent Section had about thirty on their hands.
There was no supply of wagons or lorries to take them off, but an Australian
medical orderly rolled up on a horse, with a chit from the D.D.M.S. saying
that the receiving station had been moved up to Um Ameidat, only three
miles away. I sent the orderly back with a note asking for cars to evacuate
our casualties, told the 22nd Brigade Tent Section to saddle up and make
Kaukaba that night, and the 8th Brigade Tent Section to do the same as
soon as their casualties were cleared. I then pushed back along the tracks
of the Division towards Huj in the hope of falling in with some of the
lost transport. My luck was in. Only two miles out I fell in with M. and five
ambulance cars. They were all that was left of our dozen, the rest having
broken down or got lost at various points on the journey up from Beersheba.
M.'s spirit was almost broken, but I cheered him up with fallacious stories
of real roads farther on, gave him my only big scale map, and sent him off
to make Kaukaba that night and bivouac with the two tent sections. The
sand storm was now at its height, and I was afraid I might miss
some of the
transport in the high wild hills between Nejile and Huj. The 60th Division
and the Imperial Camel Corps had come east from Huj, and when in the
afternoon I reached the latter place all the hospitals, supply dumps, etc.,
that had covered the ground two days before were gone. This made my
search for our lost sheep easier, and my luck still held. I first found about
a score of cacolet camels that had dropped behind the 22nd Tent Section in
the march from Beersheba, and having found the Division gone from Huj
knew not where to proceed. Then in the course of an hour or so I dropped
on half a dozen more camels, together with four or five sand carts. All
these had got lost at various times, and having tracked the Division as far
as Huj were baffled by our rapid changes of direction after that. Into the
sand carts I loaded the medical equipment of the 6th Field Ambulance left
behind at Huj and finally collected the whole party and bivouacked for the night near the well. Most of the lost sheep had collected rations and forage by the wayside from various good samaritans, and having watered the thirsty beasts we sat down to a square meal well content at the reunion.

I had now recovered the bulk of our lost transport and determined to start before dawn and pick up the cars and the tent sections at Kaukaba early.

November 12.—We started off in the dark at 4.30. I had only a small scale map, having lent my good one to M.; but it proved to be sufficient, and by forced marching we made Kaukaba before nine o'clock. It was an interesting march: there had been some thunder and a little rain in the night and the air was much cooler. Our path lay over rolling downs, and on every side were signs of the rapid Turkish retreat from Huj, abandoned guns and howitzers often with the draught oxen dead beside them, water gear and supply transport, and all the untidy litter of deserted camps, which there had been many round Huj and Bureir. We saw no sign of any troops till we got to Kaukaba, though there were plenty of Bedouins looting arms, and once we were fired on by them. At Kaukaba I found the ambulance cars, and the 8th Brigade Tent Section arrived just as I did, they had lost their way the previous afternoon and were overtaken by darkness before they could reach Kaukaba. Of the 22nd Brigade Tent Section nothing was to be seen, and I learned later that they, too, had lost their way, had fallen in near Jel el Hesi with the 6th Brigade Field Ambulance and with them had rejoined the Division at Mejdel, where they had bivouacked for the night. I left orders for them with some Australian supply details I found there, and from the latter I learned that Desert Mounted Corps Headquarters were only a few miles ahead, while at Julis, six miles on, I should find supply dumps. I gave my party an hour to rest and feed the animals and have breakfast, and then started them off for Julis, while I pushed on in a car to Desert Mounted Corps Headquarters; there I learned that the Division would be at Esdud that afternoon, and then pushed on to Julis to arrange about rations and forage for my party. Julis was a buzzing hive of activity, as great a contrast as could be imagined to the country I had just passed through. The 75th Division was marching through, and everywhere were elephantine lorries and dumps of supplies. As soon as my convoy was in, they picked up their supplies, and we all marched across to the coast road. I heard of water by Ferani, and left the camels and sand carts there with orders to push on to Esdud after watering while I went on with the cars. I found Divisional Headquarters at Esdud about 4 o'clock. Later all my convoy arrived, and after dark I found another sand cart and some more of the lost cacolet camels which had found their way there and had the luck to run into me and recognize me. Poor devils, they had no food, forage, or water, but I got them a meal from an infantry field ambulance there, and, before I turned in, arranged for everyone to be distributed to their units. All our missing details were now...
accounted for except the sand carts and cars that had broken down and been abandoned, and about ten cacolet camels with a few orderlies; these we heard afterwards had drifted into the 53rd Divisional Lines by Khuwelfe, and we did not recover them for some weeks.

The A.D.M.S. was pleased to hear of my successful salvage. The Division luckily had not been in action during the two days I had been away, but we were expecting a big fight next day, so that my thirty-mile trek with my convoy that day had brought them up in the nick of time, and we could face the next day with more confidence. All that afternoon the 52nd Division had been attacking Burka, and we had a splendid view of the battle from Esdud, while the shells from our guns shrieked over our heads and fell with distant thuds on to Burka redoubt. The thin waves of infantry seemed almost to loiter along as they slowly trickled up to Burka, but towards sunset they took the redoubt, and we knew that the Turkish attempt to stand on their prepared line along wadi Sukereir had failed.

(To be continued.)