November 13.—The objective for to-day was to turn the Turks out of the wadi Janus line before they had time to dig in; the 52nd Division were to attack Beshit and Katra while we moved along the coast and turned the Turkish right. The 6th Brigade went on in the night and were to take the brunt of the fighting, so we sent on their F.A. complete, and as soon as the morning sick had been evacuated by ambulance car to Julis, we brought up the 8th Brigade Tent Section along the coast road to Tel Karrube and opened them up as a Divisional Collecting Station; the 22nd Brigade Tent Section we kept in reserve.

Divisional Headquarters moved on to Tel Karrube about 8 o'clock, and there we stayed all day; all direct view of the fighting was hidden by the ridge east of the road, but by midday we heard that the 8th Brigade had taken Kebna, and towards evening news trickled through of the great charge of the 6th Brigade against Mughar ridge, which had taken 1,200 prisoners, 16 machine guns, and turned the whole Turkish line of the wadi Janus. We could get no details of casualties and the 8th Brigade Tent Section had opened up before the first trickled in. However, we left the 22nd Tent Section beside them in case of need, and when, later on, we got a message from the 6th Brigade reporting about 150 casualties got the 22nd Section opened up as well. At dusk Divisional Headquarters had moved to just south of Jebna, and, after arranging things at the collecting station, I pushed on into Jebna to find water for my horses. It took me an hour to find Divisional Headquarters, as the whole plain was full of cavalry of the Anzac Division, who had moved up in the afternoon, and it was a very dark night.

November 14.—We had heard from the 6th Brigade F.A. that they had established a dressing station for their casualties on the Mughar ridge, and at dawn all spare cacolets from the 8th and 22nd Brigades Tent Sections had been sent out there to assist in getting them in. So after breakfast I rode out to Mughar to see how they were getting on. Not many horses appeared to have been killed during the first part of the charge, although the Brigade had had a gallop of two or three thousand yards across an open plain; but as I got to the foot of the ridge carcasses were dotted about more thickly, and there was a clump of thirty or forty where the 6th Brigade dressing station was. The brigade had gone on with the rest of the Division which was attacking Naaneh to-day, and Colonel M. was a bit worried at the slowness of the evacuation. It was three or four miles to the collecting
station, and though the going was good the tired mules and camels seemed simply to crawl. He had about forty wounded Turks on his hands, in addition to the British, and hearing there was a Turkish doctor amongst the prisoners, I went across and dug him out, together with a couple of Red Crescent orderlies. We walked over to Mughar village, and I saw the Sheik, commandeered his best house for a hospital, and told him he must feed the wounded till they were fetched away. It did not take long to get the wounded Turks in there, and I then put the Turkish doctor in charge, with a couple of Yeomen borrowed from the prisoners' escort to act as guard. This relieved Colonel M. considerably; and by one o'clock he had all his casualties cleared and was able to push on after his Brigade, while I rejoined Divisional Headquarters, who were on the top of Mughar ridge, just above Akir. One had a magnificent view of the towering Judæan highlands, with the stony ridge of Abu Shusheh standing like a sentinel at the mouth of the Ajalon valley, and near at hand the Zionist settlements Akir and Deiran, with their vineyards and orange groves; it was startlingly like California—the same fruit orchards and cool verandahed villages, with Judæa standing for the Sierra on beyond. The noise of desultory firing drifted back to us, but we were obviously not up against much opposition, and one could see squadrons going to water at the village wells. Our next tough job was to be the attack on Abu Shusheh next day. It was a relatively idle afternoon for us; someone bought a sheep at Akir, and some fruit, and we had a cooked dinner for the first time. It was pleasant to come across even a thin trickle of milk and honey, and what with that and the consciousness of victory, we all felt rather happy as we stretched our tired limbs and rolled up in our blankets for the night.

November 15.—The Division was attacking Abu Shusheh to-day but Headquarters remained where they were. The A.D.M.S. and I were getting a bit anxious about the clearing of the collecting station where by this time about 250 cases had accumulated. Evacuation was back to the receiving station at Julis and our five Ford cars couldn't make much impression on the large numbers that had collected. In fact we felt more acutely than ever the disadvantage under which we had lain from the first—namely, that our supplies had been so irregular and the dumps from which every few days we drew them so far back that we had never been able to use motor lorries to evacuate our sick and wounded. "Q" branch rarely knew beforehand where supplies were coming to, and when they did forgot to inform us. I was just about to ride off and see what could be done when I saw through my glasses a long train of motor lorries a mile or so this side of Jebna and returning south. I could obviously never catch them on a horse, and there was not a moment to lose if I was to intercept them, so I leapt straight into a Ford car belonging to the Light Car Patrol Detachment we had with Headquarters and dashed off in pursuit. The driver was an Australian, a sporting fellow, and we went at a breakneck speed across wadis and fields and intercepted the head of the convoy before it wound out of sight. I discovered it was the Desert Mounted Corps convoy
which had just dumped supplies for the Anzacs and ourselves, and with a bit of bluffing I soon persuaded the young and tender subaltern in charge to diverge from his orders to the extent of picking up our casualties. His chief fear was that of getting his lorries stuck, but I lied stoutly and said that I knew an excellent track leading straight to our collecting station, while I painted such a rosy picture of the coast road back to Gaza as compared with the cross country route he had come up by that his last scruples vanished. I did, as a fact, get his convoy safely over the ridge to the collecting station where I was hailed with rapture. The cars had evacuated most of the bad cases in the twenty-four hours and we got all the rest—between two and three hundred—on to the lorries. I had even enough room to spare to play the good Samaritan and lent lorries to clear fifty cases for the New Zealanders and fifty more for the 52nd Division, all of whom were in like case with ourselves as regards evacuations.

I left the collecting station with orders to pack up and stand by and motored back to Headquarters. Here I learned that Abu Shusheh had fallen after an exciting fight ending in another brilliant charge by the 6th Brigade and that the Division was moving into Ramleh for the night, so I went back to bring along the collecting stations as there was no means of signalling to them. I rode back with my horses and we were soon on the road to Ramleh. Daylight began to fail by the time we had crossed the plain beyond Jebna and were winding through the vineyards and orchards round Deiran, so hitting an open meadow just off the road we bivouacked for the night. Tea was boiled and the four of us—S., H., Padre H., and myself—had a right merry meal and sat up yarning over our pipes for an hour. It was a lovely night of blazing stars, with the scent of the fruit-laden trees drifting across in slow waves as the light wind rose and fell, while the mellow chimes of Ramleh Convent told the hours and the watch-dogs barked. We all felt that our troubles were over for a few days and enjoyed the profound peace of the evening after the strenuous days we had lived through for a fortnight.

November 16.—We had breakfast betimes and then rode into Ramleh where the two tent sections rejoined their respective field ambulances. I found Headquarters installed in the Convent. I learned from the A.D.M.S. that the Australian receiving station had moved up to Jebna the day before, so we evacuated our casualties from Abu Shusheh (they had been brought in to Ramleh) thither by motor ambulance. We found a lot of sick and wounded Turks in the town and these we also sent to Jebna by the Divisional train which had just caught up with us for the first time since Beersheba.

This arranged I set to and had a bath; it was the first wash I had had since we left Shellal and of course the first time I had had my clothes off, but the comfort of it was somewhat marred by the necessity of getting back into my dirty kit.

In the afternoon I strolled round and started some sanitation going at Headquarters as it was rumoured we were to be here a day or two.
Neil Primrose, who had been killed the day before at Abu Shusheh, was buried in the Convent garden in the afternoon.

We had a great dinner that night with fruit and some brown bread of the country: it was good to see a chair and table again and the Jaffa oranges tempted us all to excess.

November 17.—Still at Ramleh. I went round to the field ambulances and found them all crying out about the shortage of dressings and bandages, as we had had no chance of replenishing our supplies. There was a Franco-Syrian chemist in the town, but all his stock had been taken by the Turks. Seeing a bandage roller in his shop I had an idea: I sent for the only cloth merchant in the place, and finding he had sixty yards of linen, requisitioned the lot, borrowed the bandage roller from the chemist, and sent it all to the 22nd Field Ambulance, who made 200 bandages. I then arranged with the A.P.M. for all first field dressings from unwounded prisoners to be collected by the M.P. and handed over to me for distribution, so that in this way we replenished our stocks after a fashion.

I wandered round Ramleh a little to-day. The big mosque was the old Crusader Church, practically untouched; the Moslem fittings, mihrab, dikka and the rest are housed in the old south aisle, and the three apses to the east are still intact. It was a heavy, unpretentious building, built in very early transitional style. The finest thing in Ramleh is the white tower of Sultan Baybarg: it is a faithful copy of the French late transitional style, and all round about lie the ruins of the mosque built by the founder of Ramleh.

In the afternoon I washed my clothes and had to sit about in a Burberry till they were dry. We were in hopes that our kit and batmen, last seen at Beersheba, would overtake us here, but there was no sign of them.

November 18.—The 8th Brigade started up into the hills to-day, and towards evening word came back that wheeled transport was impossible beyond Annabeh: so we decided that for the forthcoming advance we would have the 22nd Tent Section at Ramleh, leaving the cars there to clear its casualties to Jebna. The 8th Brigade Tent Section was to be at Annabeh, evacuating to Ramleh by sandcart, and the 6th Brigade Tent Section in reserve for orders to explore possible roads and move up as near to Beit ur el Tahta as the going permitted. It was obvious that the camel cacolets would be the only transport available up in the hills, so we distributed all we had evenly between the three bearer sections.

November 19.—At 8 a.m. the Division started off on its march up into the hills. It was a cool, cloudy morning, and before afternoon it turned to rain, our first since we left the canal ten months before. The going up Annabeh was fairly open, but after that the column wound its way up boulder-strewn valleys, ever getting steeper and more rocky. We kept to the old Roman road, passed Berfilya and Suffa, and late in the afternoon reached Beit ur el Tahta. There had been no fighting so far, as the 8th Brigade had made all this country good the day before, and at Tahta we bivouacked
for the night. All the hillside at Tahta was pitted with cisterns, most of which still held some water from the last season’s rains. It was now raining sharply, and we had a wretched night, cowering under the scanty protection of our ground sheets and chilled to the marrow, but we slept somehow.

November 20.—We started off soon after daylight, our object being to cut the Nablus-Jerusalem road and establish ourselves across it at Bireh; it seemed an ambitious programme, but we were told not to expect any organized opposition, and in the light of a grey dawn we could see units of the 52nd Division moving parallel to us along the ridges to the south, the men threading their way in Indian file and the camels in long strings. As soon as we left Tahta and started to climb up to Beit-ur-el-Foka the going got worse than ever. The guns which had been hauled up somehow as far as Tahta had to be left behind, and the old Roman road, though clearly marked, was so choked with boulders that it was impossible to ride our horses, and from now onwards we walked and led the horses. We made Zeitoun Hill without much opposition, but after that progress slowed down a lot, while the advanced guard cleared out the clusters of snipers that were holding us up. They were pretty active, and a native guide we had was shot through the stomach. He was dressed in white, and made a good mark against the rock, and the same sniper had several shots at me while I was dressing him—fortunately all misses. As we neared Beitunia, resistance stiffened considerably, and it became evident we should get no further in the hour or so of daylight that remained, so Headquarters settled down for the night, well sheltered under the lee of a terraced hill that gave good standing to the horses. We were sniped a bit here, but nothing serious. We were over 2,000 feet up, and it was very cold for the men, most of whom had had nothing to eat all day, and just as dark came on down came the rain in torrents. As bad luck would have it, one of the signallers was shot through the neck just before, and while dressing him and getting him into shelter I got soaked to the skin. However, there was nothing to be done, so I rolled up in a blanket between a couple of boulders, hungry and shivering as I was, and let the rain do its damndest. I was so tired from the long day’s scramble and holding my horse up on the rocks that I managed to sleep in spite of everything.

November 21.—Luckily, a fine sunny day dawned, and though stiff and hungry, we began to get warm and dry. The 6th Brigade were attacking Beitunia, and at dawn we started off some casualties on the long march back to Annabeh. It was as near as we had been able to bring up a tent section or anything with wheels, and we depended for evacuation entirely on the cacolet camels. There was very little for the A.D.M.S. or me to do as the 22nd Brigade was away on the left at Ain Arik guarding our flanks, and for the time being out of touch. Only the 6th and 8th Brigade Bearer Sections were with us, and they both had dressing stations under brigade arrangements pitched under the lee of the same hill that sheltered
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us. So I sat about, and every now and then went to the top of the hill to watch the fight. It was evidently going to be a tough business, for the Turks treated us to a good deal of shelling, and we had nothing to give in reply except the little mountain guns of the Hong Kong and Singapore Battery. The Sikh gunners hauled their funny little popguns about amongst cheers and laughter, but they hadn't much ammunition and nobody believed they were doing much good. Casualties began to come in towards the end of the morning, and in the afternoon we had still failed to take Beitunia, while the Turks were obviously being reinforced, and their fire got hotter and hotter. About 4 o'clock they put in a strong counter-attack which swept us off the hill we had just taken commanding Beitunia, and was only just stopped in time to prevent the whole lot of us getting scuppered. We were now palpably outnumbered, and not only without hope of reaching the Nablus road four miles away, but in a very dangerous position ourselves. So a retirement was ordered and the 6th Brigade began to stream back under the lee of our hill. The Turks must have spotted this, for just when the whole side of the hill was covered with troops they treated us to twenty very lurid minutes of howitzer fire. The hill was so steep that it had seemed impossible they should reach the reverse side, but they systematically quartered the whole ground till it seemed as if nobody could escape being hit. A good many horses and camels began to fall, but the men crouched against the leeside of the rocky terraces, and it was some minutes before I went out with a haversack in response to the cry of "men hit." By the time I had dressed a couple of men the shelling was over, and when we came to look round the total casualties to men were only half a dozen or so. A lot of shells had fallen plump into the dressing stations without doing any harm, and though I was hit a number of times by flying stones and a number of shells had burst within a few yards of me I was quite unhurt. But the toll of wounded animals was heavy, and our revolvers were all busy for a few minutes putting them out of their pain.

Everything now began to move back, but the General kept out a thin rearguard to help us get in the last of the wounded. The A.D.M.S. went on with Headquarters and I stayed behind to clear the dressing stations. We only had about thirty camels between the two bearer sections and we put the worst cases on these, mounting all the others on horses. Even broken legs had to go on horses and I was prepared for a number of broken necks as well, as it seemed impossible that any animal should keep its footing in the dark amongst those awful boulders. Even in daylight sound men had not ventured to ride, and it seemed like murder to put badly wounded men on to tired horses for such a journey. But it was our only chance as we might be rushed and lose everything at any hour. By 7.30 I judged we had practically all casualties in and after carefully counting horses and camels formed them in a string, 6th Brigade cases in front, 8th Brigade behind and led the way back to Beit-ur-el-Foka. It was tricky steering as the winding wadis made it impossible to keep to a compass bearing and a slight deflection would have sent us
straight into the arms of the Turks on our flank. (This actually happened to a ration party going up from Foka a couple of nights later.) I walked in front leading my mare and threading a precarious path over the rocks, and we began to make progress. Halts were frequent: the camels were dead beat, having had no water for five days and no food for two, and at every check they promptly knelt down and had to be half flogged half lifted on to their feet again. The Egyptian camel drivers were fine, they were hardly better off than their beasts but stuck to it like men. Luckily the horses kept their footing in marvellous fashion and I wasn't aware of a single fall. For an hour and a half we made slow progress through the darkness and then I bumped into a squadron of Rough Riders taking up a line on Zeitoun Hill which was to be our outpost line next morning. This was a great weight off my mind as I knew our direction was all right so far, and in another hour I made the first house of Foka. I called a halt here while I walked on to find a possible track round the village (it was too narrow for cacolets between the houses), and to look out a suitable place to doss down for the night: after half an hour I came back and led the weary procession on to the olive yard I had selected for our night's rest. I counted them in—first the horses and then the camels of the 6th Brigade, from which none were missing. B. brought up the rear and then came Major B. of the 8th Brigade. To my dismay, after counting in half his horses the procession stopped, about twenty horses and fifteen camels being missing. Major B. was obviously whacked, so leaving him and B. to get the wounded already in settled for the night, I set off back again by myself. Up the hill to Foka and then I heard groans amongst the houses and found a pretty kettle of fish. The lost horses which should have been in front had vanished into the blue and the camels had blundered into the houses and got stuck. The first one I found had the cacolet jambed into the branches of an olive tree, the native driver curled up asleep between the camel's feet and the wounded unable to do anything but reiterate querulous curses: the next camel had knelt down between a couple of houses and nothing could get it up, so finding an R.A.M.C. orderly we lifted the cacolets bodily off its back with the wounded inside and carried them out of the way, finally getting the camel thus lightened on to its feet. Then more groans and striking a match I found a camel with its back broken lying in a ten-foot hole with the remains of a smashed cacolet underneath, luckily both passengers had been flung clear and were too badly wounded to care much about the fall which hadn't killed either of them. Beyond the block caused by these three casualties, I found the rest of the cacolets huddled together beyond the village, the R.A.M.C. orderlies too tired and lost to do other than stay where they were till found. However I took some of them along the track to our bivouac ground and when I saw the whole party well under-way we went off in search of the missing horses.

November 22.—It was now well past midnight, but I reckoned that the horses having been in front must have gone to the right of the village (we
had skirted it to the left), so I tramped round that way and presently struck
the old Roman road, now nothing more than a stone-bestrewn pathway.
This seemed a likely trail for lost men to have followed, so I pushed on
along it with many casts to right and left, and, sure enough, about a mile
further on found the missing horses—the wounded still in the saddle—
halted in a group: the orderlies in charge, feeling themselves lost, had
sensibly halted and were casting round, trying to get into touch with the
rest of the convoy; so I led them all back to our olive yard, and we soon
had all the wounded off-loaded and settled for the night. It was just
3 o'clock as I rolled myself, tired and footsore, into my blanket. | was up
at 5 o'clock, and having seen the two bearer sections started on feeding
and dressing the wounded, went out to find the A.D.M.S. Headquarters
were only a few hundred yards away, and we discussed the situation over
tea and biscuits. The situation seemed to be that we were to hold on to
the line of Zeitoun Hill, where we protected the flank of the 52nd Division
who had reached Nebi Samwil, a mile or two from the Nablus road without
much trouble. It seemed unlikely the Turks could attack in force for a
day or two, as they had to get their guns up, and there seemed a chance
of a quiet couple of days. We did not want a battle as we had no available
transport for wounded; indeed, it was obvious that many of the cases we had
brought away on horses the night before would be unable to ride to-day.
But we were expecting more cacolets back from Annabeh to-day, so we
decided to send all cases who could ride on horses, fill up the available
cacolets with bad cases, and keep the remainder till cacolets became
available. I gave orders to the bearer sections to this effect and we started
off about eighty cases on horses by 9 o'clock, sending Y. of the 8th Brigade
to take them back to Annabeh. It was a slow business getting the cacolets
loaded, and by the time we were finished a dozen more turned up from
Annabeh, and in the event this enabled us to clear all our wounded at once.
The two bearer sections had only a couple of M.O.'s apiece now Y. had gone,
so I suggested to the A.D.M.S. I should guide the camel convoy back myself,
as it did not seem probable there would be much work for me for a day or two.
So about 10 o'clock I started off; as far as Beit-ur-el-Tahta the going was as
bad as the night before, and it took us two and a half hours to do the three
miles. On the way I passed Colonel E. with a gang of impressed villagers
tinkering up the Roman road; he was trying to get his guns up to Foka.
When I finally got clear of Tahta, I halted to let the last camels catch up,
and dealt out morphia and water to the wounded, as well as picking up
rations and medical comforts from the refilling points I found there. For
in the three days since we left Ramleh supplies had been busy, getting a
road of sorts cleared, and limbered wagons were now getting up as far as
Tahta, which presented a busy scene. From there on to Annabeh every-
thing was plain sailing; the limbers had beaten the rain-soaked earth into
a very tolerable track which had now dried hard and firm: I even found
a sand cart at Tahta, one of four that Colonel M. of the 6th Brigade Field
Ambulance had sent up on spec., but the others had all broken down on the
way as the ribs of rock running across the road were too much for anything with springs, though negotiable with limbers. I heard from the sand cart drivers that Colonel M. had got his tent section on to Berfilya three miles this side of Annabeh, and I thought I should do well if I got my tired camels as far as that by nightfall. Luckily we could now push on without any halts and gave the camels no chance of kneeling down: so without further adventure we made Berfilya and Colonel M.’s dressing station just before 6 o’clock.

Colonel M. was single-handed, and we set to work sorting out the cases, dressing and feeding them and making them snug for the night. They had stood their awful journey surprisingly well, and though two or three died in the night, the rest were much better when we came to start them off next morning. An M.O. of the Imperial Camel Corps turned up with about forty cacolet camels at 6.30 p.m. Desert Mounted Corps had heard of our casualties and the D.D.M.S. had sent him up to help us clear them. He was relieved to hear we had got them all away and set to work to help us dress the wounded. By 8.30 we were all through, and then I licked my lips over the first cooked food I had tasted since Ramleh, to be followed by a solid nine hours’ sleep.

November 23.—I got up at 7 o’clock and sent the camels off to the well for water; I found we could clear most of the casualties from Berfilya by the I.C.C. cacolets, so after they were loaded I sent them straight into Ramleh, where I heard the Anzac Receiving Station was established. The few that remained we got away by sand cart, and that left the 6th Brigade Tent Section clear. With the 8th Brigade Tent Section only three miles away at Annabeh there did not seem much point in keeping Colonel M. at Berfilya, and I knew we should want him badly further up. So leaving the 8th and 22nd Brigade Tent Sections at Annabeh and Ramleh respectively I arranged that Colonel M. should leave his sand carts at Annabeh with the 8th Brigade Field Ambulance and come up with his limbers to Beit-el-Tahta to open a divisional collecting station there. Leaving the camels in charge of a serjeant with orders to come back to Foka as soon as they were fed, I rode off with my groom about 10 o’clock and got back to Foka in the early afternoon. The division had had two quiet days without any casualties to speak of, and as the camel cacolets turned up before dusk, and rations were now plentiful, the crisis was over for the moment.

November 24.—This was an idle day and in the afternoon my servant, Private B., turned up at Foka on his donkey: our transport and baggage had arrived at Latron and he had thoughtfully abstracted a shirt from my valise, so I had a wash and change. I was down to my last pipe of tobacco in the afternoon when the post arrived with a providential tin of Capstan from Eily, so altogether I felt in good cheer.

The horses of the Division were all sent back to Ramleh to-day as they were only an encumbrance to the squadrons in line, but we kept ours at Divisional Headquarters.

(To be continued.)