

Royal Horse Guards trotting through Andover on the road to Newbury, evidently to take part in the attack of General Godley's mobile force on the Mercian right. I was soon on the road, motoring to Whitchurch, and on to Overton. Parties of Mercian troops (who all wore steel helmets) were dotted all along the road, and when they halted they were always under large trees. The hedgerows by that road are full of splendid timber, the branches mostly meeting overhead, so that it would be almost impossible for aircraft to discern what was actually happening on the road. Then the roseate hues of early dawn behaved in the traditional manner, as related by King Charles the Martyr, and down came the rain in torrents. So horrible was the weather that the correspondent of one prominent daily paper evidently concluded that aircraft could do nothing in it, and reported to that effect to his paper. I can only conclude that he himself took good rainproof cover and stayed under it, for as I moved about the sky was never for one moment empty of Bristols, wheeling like vultures overhead. As a matter of fact, the clouds for the most part were not low, and visibility was not too bad. I made inquiries later from an authoritative source and learnt that during all that day every troop movement of importance was reported to the respective commands by the aircraft; and that for hours at a stretch there was a ceaseless stream of reports from the air but no other information at all.

Meantime I was thirsting to see a battle. My soul craved

circle. It was a most inspiring spectacle. The umpires allowed 10 per cent. of casualties among the two companies of the Berkshires who were caught. Then No. 25 reformed squadron mass and went off for other prey. That morning they sighted all the foreign attachés and visitors and performed the same manoeuvre over them, just to show how British aircraft do it.

Afterwards I went up to the scene of the slaughter, but the Berkshires had departed, carrying their dead and wounded with them. An officer of the 3rd/6th Dragoon Guards emerged from a copse near by and told me that he had 50 horses and half a dozen machine guns in the copse, but he had not opened fire on the aircraft. Presumably he had strict orders not to give away his position. It then turned out that the Wessex cavalry had succeeded in occupying the woods along the right bank of the Test, and were waiting for the infantry to take over the line. This change was effected later on, and during the afternoon the Wessex brigades gained some temporary successes, captured Whitchurch for a while, and also captured the Brigadier and H.Q. of the Mercian 10th infantry brigade. Subsequently, however, part of the Mercian 2nd division came up in a fine forced march (some of the infantry covered 17 miles in 5 hours) and restored the line, driving the Wessex troops away from the banks of the Test.

That morning I also saw a flight of No. 56 Squadron flying low above the tree tops over the Mercian lines. They caught



ANTI-AIRCRAFT PRACTICE : Airmen of No. 25 Fighter Squadron manning their "guns".



"ENEMY AIRCRAFT OVER" : The Klaxon alarm signal of No. 2 A.C. Squadron

for a scene of gory slaughter. But the war was invisible and inaudible. Occasional pickets of troops, a very occasional shot from an anti-aircraft gun, and that was all. I ranged up and down the road several times in vain, wondering what had become of the Wessex attack, which was to move so fast. As a matter of fact, it took about as long to develop as if the infantry had footslogged all the way; and Lord Cavan must still be without convincing proof of the value of a mechanicalised brigade. So I went up a second-class road out of Whitchurch leading to high ground beyond, and on the top of a hill I "debussed" and swept the land with binoculars. About half-a-mile to the north-west, the road along which the Wessex troops might be expected topped another hill, and coming down that hill was a regiment of infantry, the Royal Berkshires, as I afterwards learnt. Then I enjoyed the finest sight which fell to the lot of any correspondent that morning. A Mercian Bristol faded away over the tree tops, and we almost fancied we could hear its frenzied radio-telephonic summons to the fighters. Scarcely a minute passed ere a roar to our left turned our eyes from the slow-moving infantry, and there were the nine Grebes of No. 25 tearing up in squadron mass. The hedges of the road were low, and afforded no cover. The squadron changed into circular formation over the heads of the devoted infantry, and fell upon their prey in scientific fashion. Now from one direction and now from another in rapid succession, Grebe after Grebe dived on the Berkshires, shooting and bombing, and then zoomed up to its place in the wheeling

the 4th Guards Brigade on the march and delivered a rapid attack. The umpires only gave two limbers as destroyed, but my informant, a correspondent not specially connected with the Air Force, considered that the Guards would have suffered a good deal more than that; while the three Grebes appeared and disappeared so quickly that no effective fire could be brought to bear upon them.

I must now revert for a moment to the southern end of the line. There a section of Wessex armoured cars crossed the Test by the bridge at Romsey and split up into two subsections of two cars each. One wandered off and disappeared. I never heard its adventures, but I believe it ultimately got back to its own lines safe and sound. The other section got between columns of the Mercian troops, laid up successfully in by-lanes when necessary, emerged occasionally to shoot up the supply trains, and captured a cyclist with important messages on him, which were successfully passed on to Wessex headquarters. The cars then went on and attacked the Mercian aerodromes at Odiham and Farborough. Their machine guns were held not to have done much harm to the hangars, which is a very interesting point. The airmen put up a plucky fight with rifles and would doubtless have suffered casualties, but the cars could only afford brief visits. One car became disabled and was left on a road to delay transport while the other safely regained its lines.

Odiham, however, was not to enjoy security for the rest of that day. Between 18.30 and 19.00 hours No. 39 Squadron and No. 56 Squadron raided it heavily. Twenty machines