



An L.R.D.G. desert bivvy.

of the trucks, 30 and 15 cwt., over the sand-dunes. This called for plenty of practice and skill in gear-changing. A rush down the slope of one dune and up the next, and unless the gear-change was nicely timed—well, out would come sand-plates and sand-mats and it would be a case of all hands but the driver heaving from the rear to get a truck over the crest. On one training trip a truck took the upward slope at speed, shot off the crest and landed on its nose 30 ft. down the other side. The occupants were spilled out, but not seriously hurt, and a broken front axle was replaced by the fitter working hard for thirty-six hours. Soon, however, the drivers had mastered this new type of driving, and over the firmer parts the truck, speeding up, over and down dune after dune at 50 m.p.h. gave the impression of standing still while huge breakers of sand rushed past it.

Some of the difficulties were enough to daunt the most intrepid. As the distances were so great, and maps, where they existed, inaccurate, the vehicles had to be navigated in the same way as a ship. For this a sun compass was used, necessitating an open cab. In order to deal effectively with any roving enemy patrols, a 37 mm. Bofors gun was mounted on the truck with anti-tank rifles and Lewis guns. So a hood could not be

used. And that meant that the occupants were exposed to the blazing sun during their daytime travels. Temperatures rose at times to 120° and 130° F. The north wind, which cooled the nights, would sometimes swing to east, south, and west, and stir up the sand till the column was enveloped as though in a fog and the heat struck like a naked flame. Several became delirious with heat stroke, and to show they were not the only sufferers, often under the shade of small rocks would be found dead or dying migrant birds. As water was limited and precious, shaving and washing were dispensed with. In spite of this the only vermin picked up were camel ticks after a night spent in an abandoned Italian camp. Such camps were given a wide berth after that. One man, badly wounded during an attack on a desert outpost, had to be carried seven hundred miles by truck and then flown by plane three thousand miles to a hospital. On another occasion a spill from a capsizing truck split open the knee of one of the party and this



The shaded area of the map lying along the Egyptian-Libyan border is the Great Sand Sea, and L.R.D.G. patrols were the first military force to cross it. Uweinat, on the border, Aujila in the north, Kufra in the south, and Murzuk and Traghen in the south-west are landmarks in the epic journeys of the desert raiders. Their voyages took them also to the Free French province of Chad, south of Libya, and to the Sudan.