

13. During the flood season, from April to June, nine-tenths of the country round Basrah is under water, and in normal years a continuous belt of flood, from 6 to 9 miles wide and from 1 to 4 feet deep, separates the Basrah tract from the higher lying desert country to the south-west.

This flood water in 1915 forced its way into and inundated the Makina Masus Camp area. This year, in order to meet the needs of the constant stream of troops and stores pouring into Basrah, it was imperative to safeguard from floods the ground space required for camps, hutting, store depôts and additional hospital accommodation. This was done by constructing, first, a main protective embankment or "bund" from the Tigris at Magil to the higher ground at Shaiba. This "bund" was 11 to 12 miles long, and completely shut off the belt of flood water above referred to.

It was supplemented by a second bund, which branched off from it about 2 miles from the river, and was carried to the neighbourhood of the Zubair Gate of Basrah, some 3 miles. A series of smaller subsidiary bunds was constructed along the river front and the intermediate creeks. The whole system, covering a total length of some 20 miles, safeguards an area of some 48 square miles in all, and of 1½ square miles at Magil and Makina Masus, which has been adopted as the main camp for troops in and near Basrah. Wharves have been constructed, and ocean-going steamers are now able to come alongside and unload.

A large amount of hutting for hospitals and troops has been erected, providing accommodation for 8,700 sick and 15,000 troops; water supplies for the troops have been installed at Basrah and Amarah, and many important miscellaneous works have been carried out.

The amount of valuable work brought to completion reflects credit on Major-General J. C. Rimington, Chief Engineer; Colonel E. R. B. Stokes-Roberts, Director of Works, and those serving under them.

14. Two railways are now in course of construction. Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. White and his assistants are pushing on both lines with much zeal and energy, in spite of considerable difficulties in the transport of materials.

15. A new powerful wireless station has been installed. Work was commenced on the 10th February, 1916, and completed on the 25th August, 1916. The rapid erection of this station is due to the energetic co-operation of the Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs, India; to Mr. E. L. Bagshawe, Director of Telegraphs, Force "D," and especially to the ability and energy of Mr. J. G. P. Cameron, Assistant Superintendent of Telegraphs, the engineer in charge of the construction work.

16. The Veterinary Services, under Lieutenant-Colonel W. S. Anthony, have done much to maintain the animals of the force in good condition, in spite of hard work and unavoidable short commons in certain cases.

17. The administration of the Remount Services, the care and training of the horses reflects credit upon Captain J. F. H. Anderson, Army Remount Department.

18. I am anxious to place on record my deep sense of the good effect produced through-

out this force by the Army Chaplains of all denominations, whose devotion to duty and contempt of danger while performing it deserve the highest commendation.

19. Like other departments, the Royal Indian Marine has suffered severely from sickness and invaliding, especially among its superior officers. The rapid growth of its duties may be gathered from the fact that whereas in January, 1916, there were nineteen permanent and twenty-one temporary officers and 525 other ranks employed, by July the number had risen to forty permanent and 163 temporary officers and 3,981 other ranks, besides native labourers. The necessity for assimilating this large influx of newly-appointed officers and men threw a heavy strain on the permanent cadres, who were also faced with many unforeseen demands. That under these conditions its duties have been carried out with a considerable measure of success is distinctly creditable to the Service.

20. The thanks of the whole force in Mesopotamia are especially due to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the British Red Cross Society, including its Indian branch, and the Young Men's Christian Association.

The two former, through their representative, Lieutenant-Colonel J. Gould, have devoted their resources to supplementing the medical appliances and comforts provided by the State for the care of the sick and wounded. All officers and men who have passed through the hospitals at any time would desire to express their gratitude to these Societies.

The Young Men's Christian Association, on the other hand, through its able officials, among whom I would specially mention Mr. L. A. Dickson, Revd. B. H. McLain, Revd. T. S. Riddle, and Mrs. Webley, has contributed most materially to the well-being, physical and moral, of the troops in general outside the hospitals in a manner deserving of the highest admiration.

21. The appointment of Sir G. C. Buchanan to the Force as Director-General of Port Administration and River Conservancy has been of undoubted value. Owing to the difficulty experienced in obtaining certain stores and equipment from India and Burma, and to sickness among the supervising staff, the work of developing the Port of Basrah, and of dredging and improving water communications generally, was at first delayed. It is now, however, well in hand, and the results already achieved are sufficient to show that the projected measures will have far-reaching effect on the business of the Port and our all-important river communications. Sir G. Buchanan especially desires to mention the assistance he has received from Lieutenant J. G. Grant, R.E.

22. My thanks are due to Captain the Honourable Malik Sir Umar Hayat Khan for many valuable services rendered in connection with the Army of Occupation; also to 2nd Lieutenant E. Ezra, I.A.R.O., attached General Headquarters, who held his fast motor-launch at all times at my disposal.

23. The able services of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir P. Z. Cox and the officers of the Political Department, to which I referred in my previous Despatch, have continued to be of high value to the State during the period under review.

24. The administration of the Lines of Communication has throughout been extremely