

3. As the enemy's retention of the Sannaiyat position prevented the passage of our supply ships up the river, our troops operating on the other bank towards the Hai had to depend for food, forage, and in some cases even water, upon land transport.

Consequently, General Gorrings occupation of the positions evacuated in the enemy's retirement could only be gradual, and was largely dependent upon the construction of new roads and a reorganisation of his supply system.

These conditions have continued practically unchanged up to the present date. The abatement of the floods and the intense heat have dried up the ground, caused the marshes to recede and made movement easier. On the other hand, water difficulties have increased, and drinkable water away from the river is difficult to find, the soil being usually impregnated with various salts.

The Turks still hold the Sannaiyat position, and have constructed other lines behind it on the left bank, which they appear to hold in force.

On the right bank their outposts reach the Hai river, which is now fordable. We hold positions from which we dominate the Hai and can deny its passage, while we could, if we pleased, bombard Kut itself.

4. One incident requires mention. On May 20th a strong Russian Cavalry patrol of three officers and 110 other ranks arrived unexpectedly at Ali Gharbi. The patrol had started from the neighbourhood of Karind and had safely executed an adventurous march of some 200 miles, much of it through the Pusht-i-Kuh hills. The officers came to report themselves to me in person at Basrah, where, by command of His Majesty the King, I decorated them with the Military Cross, in recognition of their exploit, and of this, the first meeting of British and Russian troops as Allies in the field for 100 years.

The patrol left Ali Gharbi on their return journey on June 4th, and after skilfully surmounting various difficulties succeeded in reaching their main body in safety.

5. On July 11th General Gorrings was succeeded in the command of the Tigris column by General Maude, who has held it up to date.

6. As regards aviation, the superiority of certain of the hostile aeroplanes over any of our machines in the matter of speed, combined with a large reduction in the number of our pilots (due to sickness partly attributable to overwork), enabled the enemy in May and June to establish what was very nearly a mastery of the air.

With the arrival of more pilots from home matters improved, until in August three of our machines, working together, forced the best enemy machine, a Fokker, to descend, seriously damaged, in its own lines.

7. Operations on the Euphrates have been confined to raiding expeditions, carried out in order to punish attacks on our vessels, damage to the telegraph line, or attacks on tribes who are our allies. All these expeditions have been well organised by Major-General Brooking.

8. On the Karun Line the only incidents worthy of note have been attempts by pro-German Persian tribesmen, who had been co-operating with the Turks against the Russians, to escape to their own mountains, where they were likely to make mischief. These attempts were frustrated by the 23rd Cavalry operating on the Kharkeh and Ab-i-Diz rivers. Lieu-

tenant-Colonel Younghusband's arrangements were well conceived, and resulted in the complete discomfiture of the tribesmen and the capture of their leaders.

9. During the hot season, now drawing to a close, the business of administration and the work of preparation for more active measures during the coming cold weather assumed relatively great importance. I make no excuse, therefore, for alluding at some length to the work performed.

10. The valuable co-operation of the Royal Navy, under Captain W. Nunn, has, as usual, been conspicuous during the period under review. The gunboats stationed on the Euphrates took a leading part in the successful minor operations referred to in paragraph 7 on that river and in the Hammar Lake.

I would also bring to notice the able assistance given by Mr. W. Grant, Admiralty Overseer at Abadan, in preparing river craft for service.

11. In my previous despatch I alluded to the difficulties against which the Medical Services have had to contend.

Much thought and hard work have been devoted to overcoming these difficulties and meeting the medical needs of the force. The advance made in this direction is clearly shown by the fact that the total accommodation for sick and wounded in Mesopotamia, which on January 21st (exclusive of Kut) was 4,700 beds, and by May 13th had risen to 9,425, amounted on July 1st to 15,745, with 2,700 more in process of organisation.

The advent of the hot weather early in May, with a sudden rise in the temperature, increased the number of sick rapidly. The intense heat was aggravated at the front by the total absence of shade and by the failure of the "shamal" or north wind, which, usually due about the middle of June, did not commence to blow till July 19th. The admissions to hospital then at once lessened, and are still decreasing. The majority of the cases are not serious.

An outbreak of cholera occurred at the Tigris front at the end of April, but was got under control in the course of a short time, since when only a small number of isolated cases are reported from time to time from various parts of the country.

I am much indebted to Surgeon-General F. H. Treherne for the valuable assistance he has consistently rendered since his arrival in the country; also to Colonel W. H. Willcox, Consulting Physician, whose high professional knowledge has always been at the service of the force. Much credit is due to the Nursing Sisters, who have carried out their duties with great devotion, and have shown untiring zeal and energy in alleviating the sufferings of those who have passed through their hands.

By the untimely death of Colonel Sir V. Horsley, both the force and the medical profession sustained a severe loss.

12. In the Supply and Transport Corps much sickness, followed by invaliding, occurred, especially among the senior officers. As a result the duties of the Corps fell heavily on those who remained, while the service of supply was much hampered by a shortage of river transport on a rapidly falling river. That the supply of food, clothing, etc., has nevertheless been maintained without serious deficiencies reflects credit upon the work of the Corps.