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TUESDAY, 10 JULY, 1917.

War Office,
10th July, 1917.

The Secretary of State for War has received the following despatch addressed to the Chief of the General Staff, India, by Lieut.-General Sir Stanley Maude, K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief, Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force:—

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,
MESOPOTAMIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

10th April, 1917.

SIR,—

1. I have the honour to submit herewith a report on the operations carried out by the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force for the period extending from August 28th, 1916, the date upon which I assumed command of the Army, until March 31st, 1917, three weeks after the fall of Baghdad.

2. The area over which the responsibilities of the Army extended was a wide one, embracing Falahiyeh, on the Tigris; Ispahan (exclusive), in Persia; Bushire, on the Persian Gulf; and Nasariyeh, on the Euphrates.

Briefly put, the enemy's plan appeared to be to contain our main forces on the Tigris, whilst a vigorous campaign, which would directly threaten India, was being developed in Persia. There were indications, too, of an impending move down the Euphrates towards Nasariyeh. To disseminate our troops in order to safeguard the various conflicting interests involved would have relegated us to a passive defensive everywhere, and it seemed clear from the outset that the true solution of the problem was a resolute offensive, with concentrated forces, on the Tigris, thus effectively threatening Baghdad, the centre from which the enemy's columns were operating. Such a stroke pursued with energy and success would, it was felt, automatically relieve the pressure in Persia and on the Euphrates, and preserve quiet in all districts with the security of which we were charged.

This then was the principle which guided the subsequent operations, which may be conveniently grouped into phases as follows:—

First: Preliminary preparations, from August 28th to December 12th.

Second: The consolidation of our position on the Hai, from December 13th to January 4th.

Third: The operations in the Khadairi Bend, from January 5th to 19th.

Fourth: The operations against the Hai salient, from January 20th to February 5th.

Fifth: The operations in the Dahra Bend, from February 6th to 16th.

Sixth: The capture of Sannaiyat and passage of the Tigris, from February 17th to 24th.

Seventh: The advance on Baghdad, from February 25th to March 11th.

Eighth: The operations subsequent to the fall of Baghdad, from March 12th to 31st.

PRELIMINARY PREPARATIONS: AUGUST 28TH TO DECEMBER 12TH.

3. It was of paramount importance, in view of the approach of the rainy season, that no undue delay should take place in regard to the resumption of active operations, but before these could be undertaken with reasonable prospect of success it was necessary:—

(a) To improve the health and training of the troops, who had suffered severely from the intense heat during the summer months.

(b) To perfect our somewhat precarious lines of communications.

(c) To develop our resources.

(d) To amass reserves of supplies, ammunition and stores at the front.

It was therefore considered desirable to retain General Headquarters at Basrah till the end of October, in order to systematise, co-ordinate and expand (b) and (c), whilst (a) and (d) continued concurrently and subsequently.

4. Steady progress was made on the lines so carefully designed and developed by my predecessor, Lieut.-General Sir Percy Lake, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., to whom my warm thanks are due for the firm foundations which had been laid for the ensuing winter campaign. The growth of Basrah as a military port and base continued, and the laying of railways was completed. The subsidence of the floods and the organisation of local and imported labour removed obstacles which had hitherto hindered development, although conversely the lack of water in the rivers and consequent groundings of rivercraft gave rise to anxiety from time to time. The Directorate of Inland Water Transport was created, and accessions of men and material arrived from overseas, as well as additional rivercraft; whilst the influx of adequate and experienced personnel for the Directorates of Port Administration and Conservancy, Works, Railways, Supply and Transport and Ordnance enabled these services to cope more adequately with their responsibilities in maintaining the field Army. Hospital accommodation was reviewed and still further expanded, whilst the Remount and Veterinary Services were overhauled and reconstituted. Changes were also made in the organisation of the Army, the grouping of formations and units was readjusted, and alterations were made in the system of command. The line of communication defences were recast and additional lines of communication units for administrative pur-

poses were provided. Establishments for all units, whether on the various fronts or on the L. of C., were fixed, whilst the provision of mechanical transport and an increase in animals and vehicles enabled the land transport with the Force to be reconstituted.

5. During the latter part of October the Army was fortunate in receiving a visit from the incoming Commander-in-Chief in India, General Sir Charles Monro, G.C.M.G., K.C.B. His Excellency made an extended tour of the theatre of operations, and his advice and comments on various matters were of the greatest value to myself personally, whilst the Army hailed his visit with the liveliest satisfaction, feeling that he would assume his office with first-hand and sympathetic knowledge of our needs and difficulties.

6. Matters had by this time developed so satisfactorily that during His Excellency's visit General Headquarters were moved to the front at Arab Village. Before joining there myself I carried out short tours of inspection on the Karun front at Ahwaz, proceeding as far as the Oilfields, so as to make further provision for their local security, and on the Euphrates front at Nasariyeh. At both places satisfactory conditions prevailed.

By the end of November preliminary preparations were well advanced. A steady stream of reinforcements had been moving up the Tigris for some weeks, and drafts were joining their units, making good the wastage of the summer. The troops had shaken off the ill-effects of the hot weather, and their war training had improved. Stores, ammunition, and supplies were accumulating rapidly at the front, our communications were assured, and it seemed clear that it was only a matter of days before offensive operations could be justifiably undertaken. Training camps which had been formed at Amarah were broken up, and the general concentration upstream of Sheikh Sa'ad was completed.

7. At the beginning of December the enemy still occupied the same positions on the Tigris front which he had occupied during the summer. On the left bank of the Tigris he held the Sannaiyat position, flanked on one side by the Suwaikieh Marsh and on the other by the river. In this position he had withstood our attacks on three occasions during the previous April. Since then he had strengthened and elaborated this trench system, and a series of successive positions extended back as far as Kut, fifteen miles in the rear. The river bank from Sannaiyat to Kut was also entrenched.

On the right bank of the Tigris the enemy held the line to which he had withdrawn in May when he evacuated the Sinn position. This line extended from a point on the Tigris three miles north-east of Kut in a south-westerly direction across the Khadairi Bend to the River Hai, two miles below its exit from the Tigris, and thence across the Hai to the north-west. There was a pontoon bridge across the Hai near its junction with the Tigris which was protected by the trench system in that vicinity. These defences also covered the approaches from the east and south to another pontoon bridge which the Turks had constructed across the Tigris on the eastern side of the Shumran peninsula. The enemy occupied the line of the Hai for several miles below the bridgehead position with posts and mounted Arab auxiliaries.

On the left bank of the Tigris our trenches were within 120 yards of the Turkish front line at Sannaiyat. On the right bank our troops were established some eleven miles upstream of Sannaiyat, with advanced posts about two miles from those of the Turks opposite the Khadairi Bend, and some five miles from his position on the Hai.

In the positions outlined above desultory warfare, with intermittent artillery and aerial activity, had continued for some months.

Strategically we were better situated than the enemy. The withdrawal of the bulk of his troops from the right bank of the Tigris left him with his communications in prolongation of his battle front. If we established ourselves on the Hai it would mean that we should be able to strike at those communications, or at least at the point of junction between his field units and his communications. On the other hand, we were exposed to no such danger. The Suwaikieh Marsh, although it protected the northern flank of the Sannaiyat position, also formed an obstacle which necessitated a wide detour through a district at times marshy, at others waterless, to reach the river line behind us. Again, our troops were suitably disposed to meet any attempt from the Hai to turn our left flank, and thus strike our communications—a movement which would have involved long marches, with difficulties as regards water and supplies.

It was decided therefore to operate as follows:—First, to secure possession of the Hai; secondly, to clear the Turkish trench systems still remaining on the right bank of the Tigris; thirdly, to sap the enemy's strength by constant attacks, and give him no rest; fourthly, to compel him to give up the Sannaiyat position, or in default of that, to extend his attenuated forces more and more to counter our strokes against his communications; and lastly, to cross the Tigris at the weakest part of his line as far west as possible, and so sever his communications. In carrying out this programme our extended line offered good opportunities for making successful feints to cover our real intention.

THE CONSOLIDATION OF OUR POSITION ON THE HAI: FROM DECEMBER 13TH TO JANUARY 4TH.

8. By the 12th the concentration of our troops upstream of Sheikh Sa'ad was complete. To the force under Lieut.-General A. S. Cobbe, V.C., K.C.B., D.S.O., was assigned the task of holding the enemy to his positions on the left bank of the Tigris and of piqueting the right bank as far as Sinn Banks, while the cavalry and the force under Lieut.-General W. R. Marshall, K.C.B., were, by a surprise march, to secure and entrench a position on the Hai.

During the night of the 12th-13th Lieut.-General Marshall's force completed its concentration in the forward area on the right bank. On the 13th General Headquarters moved forward to Sinn, whilst Lieut.-General Cobbe bombarded the Turkish trenches on the left bank, so as to give the impression that an attack on Sannaiyat was intended.

On the night of the 13th-14th the cavalry and Lieut.-General Marshall's force marched westward to the Hai, and at 6 a.m. crossed that river at Basrugiyeh and Atab respectively. The enemy was surprised, and the force, pivoting on its right, moved up the left (or eastern) bank of the Hai, whilst the cavalry cleared the

right (or western) bank, driving the enemy's advanced troops back on to the Hai bridgehead position, which was strongly held. Two pontoon bridges were thrown across the Hai at Atab, the right flank of the force under Lieut.-General Marshall was secured by linking up its old front line defences with its new position on the Hai, and Lieut.-General Cobbe continued to demonstrate against Sannaiyat.

During the night of the 14th-15th our aeroplanes, flying by moonlight, bombed the Turkish bridge over the Tigris east of the Shumran peninsula, which the enemy was endeavouring to move further upstream, and the pontoons, breaking adrift, were scattered. By the 18th the enemy succeeded in re-establishing this bridge to the west of Shumran.

Between the 15th and 18th Lieut.-General Marshall extended his hold northwards and westwards, and pressure against the enemy's Hai bridgehead position was continued, whilst bombardments destroyed his bridge and sunk several of his pontoon ferries. Except for some patrolling and sniping, the enemy showed no offensive enterprise; but he worked hard at his defences every night.

On the 18th we interposed between the two Turkish trench systems on the right bank of the Tigris opposite Kut, thus severing the enemy's lateral communications on this bank, and giving us command of the river upstream of the Khadairi Bend. The extent of river line to be watched by Lieut.-General Cobbe was now extended up to this point.

9. The remainder of the month and the first part of January were devoted to consolidating our position on the Hai. Communications were improved by making additional bridges and by the construction of roads, and the light railway was pushed forward to the Hai. Operations were hampered by heavy rain which fell during the last week in December and the first week in January, flooding large tracts of country, and by a sudden rise in the river which occurred early in the new year. The single-line light railway and the land transport were materially affected, and only sheer determination on the part of those concerned enabled them to carry on their functions under these trying conditions.

Where the ground was not too sodden by rain and floods our cavalry was constantly engaged during this period in reconnaissances, in harassing the enemy's communications west of the Hai, and in raids, capturing stock and grain. For example, on the 18th the cavalry, with a detachment of infantry, operating west of Shumran, drove the enemy from his trenches and shelled his bridge and shipping, and on the 20th, while a similar raid was being made against the Shumran bridge area and bombardments were being carried out around Kut and at Sannaiyat, a column of all arms essayed to bridge the Tigris four miles west of Shumran. But as our arrival there had been anticipated by the enemy, and the further bank was found to be strongly entrenched, the troops were ordered to withdraw after some gallant attempts to launch pontoons had been made, and after some Turks found on the right bank had been taken prisoners.

As the result of our occupation of the Hai, we had:—

(a) Secured a position whence we could control that waterway and directly threaten the enemy's communications west of Shumran;

(b) Rendered Nasariyeh safe against a hostile movement from the Tigris down the Hai;

(c) Increased the possibility of obtaining supplies from the prosperous districts on the middle Hai, and rendered it correspondingly difficult for the enemy to supply himself from there;

(d) Interposed between the Turks and their adherents at Shattrah.

THE OPERATIONS IN THE KHADAIRI BEND: JANUARY 5TH TO 19TH.

10. It was evident that the enemy intended to maintain his hold on the right bank of the Tigris, and preparations were accordingly made to reduce these trench systems. His position in the Khadairi Bend was a menace to our communications with the Hai, for in the event of a high flood he could inundate portions of our line by opening the river bunds. It was therefore decided to clear the Khadairi Bend in the first instance, and this operation was assigned to the force under Lieut.-General Cobbe. The enemy held a well-prepared line some 2,600 yards long, facing east. The ground in front was flat and bare, except for a belt of low brushwood along the river bank on the northern flank. At the southern end, 200 yards from the river and parallel to it, was a double row of sandhills, on which the enemy had constructed a strong point with covered-in machine gun emplacements. The front of the position was swept by fire from both flanks from the left bank of the river. There was a second line in the rear, at distances varying from 500 to 1,000 yards from the front line, whilst between the two were trenches and nasals prepared for defence. The southern portion of the second line, and some sandhills 400 yards behind it, formed a last position, and the garrison had communication with the left bank by means of ferries, which, owing to the conformation of the river bend, were protected from direct rifle and machine-gun fire so long as this retired position was held.

Our troops drove in the Turkish advanced posts, but progress was slow, as many of the trenches had to be made by sapping. On the 7th our trenches were within 200 to 350 yards of the enemy, the rain had ceased, and as the ground was beginning to dry, preparations for the assault were made. This preliminary stage had involved digging some 25,000 yards of trench under trying conditions—constant rain and exposure to enfilade, as well as direct fire.

On the 7th and 8th bombardments were carried out. On the 9th a successful assault was delivered with small loss on a front of 600 yards against the southern end of the Turkish line, but a thick mist hindered further artillery support and facilitated counter-attack by the enemy. Severe hand-to-hand fighting ensued, but the Gurkhas and Mahrattas on the left reached the river bend, having inflicted severe casualties on the enemy. On the right our troops continued to gain ground along the trenches and nasals, until a heavy counter-attack, made under cover of the mist, temporarily checked its progress. This counter-attack was defeated with heavy loss by the resolute resistance of the Manchesters, a frontier Rifle Regiment, and a detachment of Sikh Pioneers. The ground gained was consolidated during the night.

Prior to the attack on the 9th, raids had been made into the enemy's front line at Sannaiyat. Simultaneously a diversion was carried out by

Lieut.-General Marshall against the Hai bridge-head, whilst other intended operations west of the Hai by the cavalry and a detachment of Lieut.-General Marshall's force were necessarily abandoned on account of the mist.

12. On the 10th the attack was resumed in foggy weather, and the enemy was pressed back trench by trench till, by nightfall, he had fallen back to his last position.

On the 11th an unsuccessful attack was made on this position. Our troops reached their objective, but were driven back by a strong counter-attack. A further counter-attack, which attempted to recover trenches which we had taken on the previous day, suffered heavily from our artillery and machine guns during its retirement. On this occasion a battalion of Sikhs specially distinguished themselves.

On the same day the cavalry occupied Hai Town and remained there several days. A considerable quantity of arms, ammunition and supplies was captured, and on our withdrawal an attack made on our troops as they retired received well-merited punishment, a Jat Lancer Regiment executing a brilliant charge.

13. Owing to the open nature of the ground now confronting our troops, and in view of the fact that it was commanded at close range from both flanks from across the river, it was decided to construct covered approaches and trenches in which to assemble the troops under cover prior to the assault.

By the 17th the forward trench system was completed, and one by one the enemy's advanced posts had been captured. A strong point, which would enfilade the attack, only remained. On the night of the 17th/18th our troops captured and lost this redoubt twice. They retook it again on the 18th and held it.

The final assault was fixed for the 19th, but during the night of the 18th/19th the enemy, under cover of rifle and machine-gun fire, retired across the river.

During these operations the fighting had been severe, and mainly hand-to-hand, but the enemy, in spite of his tenacity, had more than met his match in the dash and resolution of our troops, and had learnt a lesson which was to become more deeply ingrained on subsequent occasions. The enemy's losses, judging from the number of dead found by us, were very heavy, and we captured many prisoners and a considerable quantity of war stores.

THE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE HAI SALIENT: FROM JANUARY 20TH TO FEBRUARY 5TH.

14. On the 11th, while Lieut.-General Cobbe was still engaged in clearing the Khadairi Bend, Lieut.-General Marshall commenced preparations for the reduction of the Hai salient—the extensive trench system which the Turks held astride the Hai river near its junction with the Tigris, and for a fortnight we gained ground steadily in face of strong opposition, until on the 24th our trenches were within 400 yards of the enemy's front line.

15. On the 25th the enemy's front line astride the Hai was captured on a frontage of about 1,800 yards. On the eastern (or left) bank our troops extended their success to the Turkish second line, and consolidated and held all ground won in spite of counter-attacks during the day and following night. The enemy lost heavily, both from our bombardment and in violent hand-to-hand encounters. On the western (or right) bank, the task was a

severe one. The trench system attacked was elaborate and offered facilities for counter-attack. The enemy was in considerable strength on this bank, and guns and machine guns in skilfully concealed positions enfiladed our advance. Our objective was secured, but the Turks made four counter-attacks. The first was repulsed; the second reached the captured line, and was about to recapture it when a gallant charge across the open by the Royal Warwicks restored the situation; the third was broken up by our artillery fire; the fourth, supported by artillery and trench mortars, forced our infantry back to their own trenches. As it was now late, further attack was postponed till the following morning.

On the 26th the assault was renewed by two Punjabi battalions with complete success, and the captured trenches were at once consolidated. Subsequently our gains were increased by bombing attacks and with the bayonet in face of stubborn opposition, and a counter-attack in the afternoon was repulsed by our artillery. Meanwhile our troops had considerably increased their hold on the enemy's position east of the Hai by bombing attacks, though their progress was hampered by the battered condition of the trenches and by the numbers of Turkish dead lying in them. On this bank the first and second lines, on a frontage of 2,000 yards, were captured by the 27th, and on the following day the whole of the front line had been secured on a frontage of two miles and to a depth varying from 300 to 700 yards, the enemy withdrawing to an inner line.

On the 27th and 28th our troops penetrated further into the Turkish defences west of the Hai by bombing attacks supported by artillery barrage, and consolidated their position in the first four lines of trenches on a frontage of 600 yards. On the 29th they secured more trenches by means of infantry raids supported by artillery.

16. The movements of the cavalry had meanwhile been restricted by the waterlogged state of the ground. It had been intended to move the Division via Bedrah and Jessan against the enemy's rear, so as to synchronize with Lieut.-General Marshall's attack, and reconnaissance showed that the proposal was feasible, but soon after the movement had commenced a heavy thunderstorm burst over the district, and the flooding of the Marsh of Jessan and its neighbourhood rendered progress impracticable, and the attempt was abandoned. The work done by the cavalry in man-handling guns and vehicles on this occasion was especially commendable.

17. After a short pause to readjust our dispositions, the centre of the enemy's third line on the eastern (or left) bank of the Hai was successfully assaulted by the Cheshires on February 1st. Bombers pushed rapidly east and west until the whole trench had been secured from the Tigris to the Hai on a front of about 2,100 yards, and an attempted counter-attack was broken by our artillery. The enemy's casualties were heavy, and many prisoners were taken. On the western (or right) bank the two Sikh Battalions captured the enemy's position on a front of 500 yards, but our troops—especially the left of the attack—were subjected to artillery and machine gun fire in enfilade. The trench system was complicated and difficult to consolidate, and it was not long before the Turks delivered a counter-attack in strength. The most advanced parties

of our infantry met the enemy's charge in brilliant style by a counter charge in the open, and casualties on both sides were severe. The preponderance of weight was, however, with the enemy, and our troops, in spite of great gallantry, were forced back by sheer weight of numbers to their original front line.

Owing to foggy weather on the 2nd, which hampered artillery registration, a renewal of the attack was deferred until the 3rd, but meanwhile Lieut.-General Marshall extended his left north-westwards towards the Tigris at Yusufiyah, with a view to enclosing the Dahra Bend ultimately.

18. On the 3rd the Devons and a Gurkha Battalion carried the enemy's first and second lines, and a series of counter-attacks by the Turks, which continued up till dark, withered away under our shrapnel and machine gun fire. Our troops east of the Hai co-operated with machine gun and rifle fire, and two counter-attacks by the enemy on the left bank of the Hai during the day were satisfactorily disposed of. In the evening there were indications that he was contemplating withdrawal to the right bank, and by daybreak on the 4th, the whole of the left bank had passed into our possession. That night there was heavy rifle fire on our front up to midnight, when it gradually died away. Patrols before dawn encountered little opposition, and the enemy was found to have fallen back to the Liquorice Factory and a line east and west across the Dahra Bend.

During this period the splendid fighting qualities of the infantry were well seconded by the bold support rendered by the artillery, and by the ceaseless work carried out by the Royal Flying Corps. These operations had again resulted in heavy losses to the enemy, as testified to by the dead found, and many prisoners—besides arms, ammunition, equipment and stores—had been taken, whilst the Turks now only retained a fast vanishing hold on the right bank of the Tigris.

THE OPERATIONS IN THE DAHRA BEND: FEBRUARY 6TH TO 16TH.

19. The 6th to the 8th were days of preparation, but continuous pressure on the enemy was maintained day and night by vigorous patrolling and intermittent bombardment, and many minor enterprises were undertaken whereby losses were inflicted and advanced posts wrested from him. An assault on the Liquorice Factory would have been costly; therefore it was decided to deal with it by howitzer and machine gun fire, so as to render it untenable—or at least prevent the garrison from enfilading our troops as they moved north.

On the 9th the Liquorice Factory was bombarded and simultaneously the King's Own effected a lodgment in the centre of the enemy's line, thereafter gaining ground rapidly forward and to both flanks. Repeated attacks by the enemy's bombers met with no success, and two attempted counter-attacks were quickly suppressed by our artillery. Further west the Worcesters, working towards Yusufiyah and west of that place, captured some advanced posts, trenches and prisoners, and established a line within 2,500 yards of the Tigris at the southern end of the Shumran Bend.

On the 10th our infantry in the trenches west of the Liquorice Factory, who had been subjected all night to repeated bombing attacks, began early to extend our hold on the enemy's

front line. This movement was followed by a bombardment directed against machine guns located at Kut and along the left bank of the Tigris, which were bringing a galling fire to bear against our right. During this, The Buffs and a Gurkha Battalion dashed forward and, joining hands with the King's Own on their left, the whole line advanced northwards. As communication trenches did not exist, any movement was necessarily across the open, and was subject to a hot fire from concealed machine guns on the left bank, but in spite of this, progress was made all along the front to depths varying from 300 to 2,000 yards, our success compelling the enemy to evacuate the Liquorice Factory. Artillery observation was much hindered by a high wind and dust storm.

20. The operations of the 10th and the information obtained by patrols during the night of the 10th/11th made it clear that the enemy had withdrawn to an inner line, approximately two and a half miles long, across the Dahra Bend, with advanced posts strongly held. Weather conditions rendered aerial reconnaissance impracticable, and some re-adjustment of our front was necessary before further attack upon his trenches could be justified, but on the 11th our infantry established a post on the Tigris south-east of the Shumran peninsula, and on the following day extended our hold on the right bank. The enemy was finally enclosed in the Dahra Bend by the 13th.

An attack against the enemy's right centre offered the best prospects of success, and this involved the construction of trenches and approaches for the accommodation of troops destined for the assault. The foreground was however occupied by the enemy's piquets, and the dispersal of these necessitated a series of minor combats between our patrols and the enemy's covering troops, as well as some severe fighting on the 12th. Opposite our right an important point was brilliantly captured by assault across the open on the 12th by an Indian Grenadier Battalion, and retained, in spite of heavy fire during the advance and two counter-attacks launched subsequently. This success not only deprived the enemy of a point from which he could enfilade most of his own front, but enabled us to force the withdrawal of his advanced posts in the eastern section of his position.

During the four days of preparation, although there were indications that the enemy intended to stand and fight, the most likely ferry points were bombarded every night lest transfers of men and stores across the Tigris might be in progress.

21. Early on the 15th the Loyal North Lancashires captured a strong point opposite our left, which enfiladed the approaches to the enemy's right and centre, the retiring Turks losing heavily from our machine-gun fire. An hour later the enemy's extreme left was subjected to a short bombardment and feint attack. This caused the enemy to disclose his barrage in front of our right, and indicated that our constant activity on this part of his front had been successful in making him believe that our main attack would be made against that part of his line.

Shortly after the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and South Wales Borderers carried the enemy's right centre in dashing style on a front of 700 yards, and extended their success by bombing to a depth of 500 yards on a frontage of 1,000 yards, taking many prisoners. Several half-

hearted counter-attacks ensued, which were crushed by our artillery and machine guns, and it became evident that the enemy had strengthened his left and could not transfer troops back to his centre on account of our barrage. A little later the enemy's left centre was captured by The Buffs and Dogras, and pushing on in a north-easterly direction to the bank of the Tigris they isolated the enemy's extreme left, where about 1,000 Turks surrendered. By nightfall the only resistance was from some trenches in the right rear of the position, covering about a mile of the Tigris bank, from which the enemy were trying to escape across the river, and it had been intended to clear these remaining trenches by a combined operation during the night, but two companies of a Gurkha battalion, acting on their own initiative, obtained a footing in them and took 98 prisoners. By the morning of the 16th they had completed their task, having taken 264 more prisoners. The total number of prisoners taken on the 15th and 16th was 2,005, and the Dahra Bend was cleared of the enemy.

Thus terminated a phase of severe fighting, brilliantly carried out. To eject the enemy from this horseshoe bend, bristling with trenches and commanded from across the river on three sides by hostile batteries and machine guns, called for offensive qualities of a high standard on the part of the troops. That such good results were achieved was due to the heroism and determination of the infantry, and to the close and ever-present support rendered by the artillery, whose accurate fire was assisted by efficient aeroplane observation. Very heavy rain fell on the night of the 15th/16th, and torrential rain during the afternoon and night of the 16th, bivouacs and trenches being flooded out.

22. The enemy had now, after two months of strenuous fighting, been driven entirely from the right bank of the Tigris in the neighbourhood of Kut. He still held, however, a very strong position defensively, in that it was protected from Sannaiyat to Shumran by the Tigris, which also afforded security to his communications running along the left bank of that river. The successive lines at Sannaiyat, which had been consistently strengthened for nearly a year, barred the way on a narrow front to an advance on our part along the left bank, whilst north of Sannaiyat the Suwaikieh Marsh and the Marsh of Jessan rendered the Turks immune from attack from the north. On the other hand we had, by the application of constant pressure to the vicinity of Shumran, where the enemy's battle line and communications met, compelled him so to weaken and expand his front that his attenuated forces were found to present vulnerable points if these could be ascertained. The moment then seemed ripe to cross the river and commence conclusions with the enemy on the left bank. To effect this it was important that his attention should be engaged about Sannaiyat and along the river line between Sannaiyat and Kut, whilst the main stroke was being prepared and delivered as far west as possible.

THE CAPTURE OF SANNAIYAT AND PASSAGE OF THE TIGRIS: FROM FEBRUARY 17TH TO 24TH.

23. While Lieut.-General Marshall's force was engaged in the Dahra Bend, Lieut.-General Cobbe maintained constant activity along the Sannaiyat front, and as soon as the right bank

had been cleared orders were issued for Sannaiyat to be attacked on the 17th.

The sudden condition of the ground, consequent on heavy rain during the preceding day and night, hampered final preparations, but the first and second lines, on a frontage of about 400 yards, were captured by a surprise assault with little loss. Before the captured trenches, however, could be consolidated, they were subjected to heavy fire from artillery and trench mortars, and were strongly counter-attacked by the enemy. The first counter-attack was dispersed, but the second regained for the enemy his lost ground, except on the river bank, where a party of Gurkhas maintained themselves until dusk, and were then withdrawn. Although we had failed to hold the trenches won, considerable loss had been inflicted on the enemy, especially during the counter-attacks, and the operations had served their purpose in attracting the enemy to the Sannaiyat front.

The waterlogged state of the country and a high flood on the Tigris now necessitated a pause, but the time was usefully employed in methodical preparation for the passage of the Tigris about Shumran. Positions for guns and machine guns to support the crossing were selected, approaches and ramps were made, and crews were trained to man the pontoons. In order to keep our intentions concealed it was necessary that most of the details, including the movement of guns, should be carried out under cover of night. Opposite Sannaiyat, where it was intended to renew the assault, artillery barrages were carried out daily, in order to induce the enemy to expect such barrages unaccompanied by an assault as part of the daily routine. Minor diversions were also planned to deceive the enemy as to the point at which it was intended to cross the river.

On the 22nd the Seaforth's and a Punjabi battalion assaulted Sannaiyat, with the same objective as on the 17th. The enemy were again taken by surprise, and our losses were slight. A series of counter-attacks followed, and the first three were repulsed without difficulty. The fourth drove back our left, but the Punjabis, reinforced by an Indian Rifle battalion and assisted by the fire of the Seaforth's, who were still holding the Turkish trenches on the right front, re-established their position. Two more counter-attacks which followed were defeated. As soon as the captured position had been consolidated two frontier force regiments assaulted the trenches still held by the enemy in prolongation of and to the north of those already occupied by us. A counter-attack forced our right back temporarily, but the situation was restored by the arrival of reinforcements, and by nightfall we were in secure occupation of the first two lines of Sannaiyat. The brilliant tenacity of the Seaforth's throughout this day deserves special mention.

Feints in connection with the passage of the Tigris were made on the nights of the 22nd/23rd opposite Kut and at Magasis respectively. Opposite Kut preparations for bridging the Tigris opposite the Liquorice Factory, under cover of a bombardment of Kut, were made furtively in daylight, and every detail, down to the erection of observation ladders, was provided for. The result was, as afterwards ascertained, that the enemy moved infantry and guns into the Kut peninsula, and these could not be re-transferred to the actual point of

crossing in time to be of any use. The feint at Magasis consisted of a raid across the river, made by a detachment of Punjabis, assisted by parties of Sappers and Miners and of the Sikh Pioneers. This bold raid was successfully carried out with trifling loss, and the detachment returned with a captured trench mortar.

The site selected for the passage of the Tigris was at the south end of the Shumran Bend, where the bridge was to be thrown, and three ferrying places were located immediately downstream of this point. Just before daybreak on the 23rd the three ferries began to work. The first trip at the ferry immediately below the bridge site, where the Norfolks crossed, was a complete surprise, and five machine guns and some 300 prisoners were captured. Two battalions of Gurkhas, who were using the two lower ferries, were met by a staggering fire before they reached the left bank, but in spite of losses in men and pontoons, they pressed on gallantly and effected a landing. The two downstream ferries were soon under such heavy machine-gun fire that they had to be closed, and all ferrying was subsequently carried on by means of the up-stream ferry. By 7.30 a.m. about three companies of the Norfolks and some 150 of the Gurkhas were on the left bank. The enemy's artillery became increasingly active, but was vigorously engaged by ours, and the construction of the bridge commenced. The Norfolks pushed rapidly upstream on the left bank, taking many prisoners, whilst our machine guns on the right bank, west of the Shumran Bend, inflicted casualties on those Turks who tried to escape. The Gurkha battalions on the right and centre were meeting with more opposition and their progress was slower. By 3 p.m. all three battalions were established on an east and west line one mile north of the bridge site, and a fourth battalion was being ferried over. The enemy attempted to counter-attack down the centre of the peninsula, and to reinforce along its western edge, but both attempts were foiled by the quickness and accuracy of our artillery. At 4.30 p.m. the bridge was ready for traffic.

By nightfall, as a result of the day's operations, our troops had, by their unconquerable valour and determination, forced a passage across a river in flood, 340 yards wide, in face of strong opposition, and had secured a position 2,000 yards in depth, covering the bridgehead, while ahead of this line our patrols were acting vigorously against the enemy's advanced detachments, who had suffered heavy losses, including about 700 prisoners taken in all. The infantry of one division were across and another division was ready to follow.

25. While the crossing at Shumran was proceeding, Lieut.-General Cobbe had secured the third and fourth lines at Sannaiyat. Bombing parties occupied the fifth line later, and work was carried on all night making roads across the maze of trenches for the passage of artillery and transport.

26. Early on the 24th our troops in the Shumran Bend resumed the advance supported by machine guns and artillery from the right bank. The enemy held on tenaciously at the north-east corner of the peninsula, where there is a series of nalas in which a number of machine guns were concealed, but after a strenuous fight lasting for four or five hours, he was forced back, and two field and two machine guns and many prisoners fell into our possession. Further west our troops were engaged

with strong enemy forces in the intricate mass of ruins, mounds and nalas which lie to the north-west of Shumran, and rapid progress was impossible, but towards evening the enemy had been pushed back to a depth of 1,000 yards, although he still resisted stubbornly. While this fighting was in progress the cavalry, the artillery, and another division crossed the bridge. The cavalry attempted to break through at the northern end of the Shumran Bend to operate against the enemy's rear along the Baghdad road, by which aeroplanes reported hostile columns to be retreating, but strong Turkish rearguards entrenched in nalas prevented them from issuing from the peninsula. That evening the troops closed up ready to advance early next morning. There was every indication that the enemy was in full retreat and that the force which had opposed us all day was a strong and very resolute rearguard, which would probably withdraw by night. During this day's fighting at Shumran heavy losses had been inflicted on the enemy, and our captures had been increased in all to 4 field guns, 8 machine guns, some 1,650 prisoners, and a large quantity of rifles, ammunition, equipment and war stores. The gunboats were now ordered up-stream from Falahiyeh, and reached Kut the same evening.

27. While these events were happening at Shumran, Lieut.-General Cobbe cleared the enemy's sixth line at Sannaiyat, the Nakhailat and Suwada positions, and the left bank as far as Kut without much opposition.

The capture of the Sannaiyat position, which the Turks believed to be impregnable, had only been accomplished after a fierce struggle, in which our infantry, closely supported by our artillery, displayed great gallantry and endurance against a brave and determined enemy. The latter had again suffered severely. Many trenches were choked with corpses, and the open ground where counter-attacks had taken place was strewn with them.

THE ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD: FROM FEBRUARY 25TH TO MARCH 11TH.

28. Early in the morning on the 25th, the cavalry and Lieut.-General Marshall's force moved north-west in pursuit of the enemy, whose rearguards had retired in the night. The gunboats also proceeded up-stream. Our troops came in contact with the enemy about eight miles from Shumran, and drove him back, in spite of stubborn resistance, to his main position two miles further west, where the Turks, strong in artillery, were disposed in trenches and nalas. Our guns, handled with dash, gave valuable support, but were handicapped in this flat country by being in the open, whilst the Turkish guns were concealed in gun pits. After a severe fight, our infantry gained a footing in the enemy's position and took about 400 prisoners. The cavalry on the northern flank had been checked by entrenched infantry, and were unable to envelope the Turkish rearguard. The Royal Navy on our left flank co-operated with excellent effect in the bombardment of the enemy's position during the day.

On the 26th, one column, following the bend of the river, advanced to force any position which the enemy might be holding on the left bank of the Tigris, whilst another column of all arms marched direct to the Sumar Bend in order to intercept him. His retreat proved, however, to be too rapid. Stripping them-

selves of guns and other encumbrances, the Turks just evaded our troops, who had made a forced march across some eighteen miles of arid plain. Our cavalry came up with the enemy's rear parties and shelled his rearguard, entrenched near Nahr Kellak.

29. The gunboat flotilla, proceeding up-stream full speed ahead, came under very heavy fire at the closest range from guns, machine guns and rifles, to which it replied vigorously. In spite of casualties and damage to the vessels the flotilla held on its course past the rearguard position, and did considerable execution among the enemy's retreating columns. Further up-stream many of the enemy's craft were struggling to get away, and the Royal Navy pressed forward in pursuit. The hostile vessels were soon within easy range, and several surrendered, including the armed tug "Sumana," which had been captured at Kut when that place fell. The Turkish steamer "Basra," full of troops and wounded, surrendered when brought to by a shell which killed and wounded some German machine gunners. H.M.S. "Firefly," captured from us during the retreat from Ctesiphon, in 1915, kept up a running fight, but after being hit several times she fell into our hands, the enemy making an unsuccessful attempt to set fire to her magazine. The "Pioneer," badly hit by our fire, was also taken, as well as some barges laden with munitions. Our gunboats were in touch with and shelled the retreating enemy during most of the 27th, and his retirement was harassed by the cavalry until after dark, when his troops were streaming through Aziziyeh in great confusion.

30. The pursuit was broken off at Aziziyeh (50 miles from Kut and half-way to Baghdad), where the gunboats, cavalry and Lieut.-General Marshall's infantry were concentrated during the pause necessary to reorganise our extended line of communication preparatory to a further advance. Lieut.-General Cobbe's force closed to the front, clearing the battlefields and protecting the line of march. Immense quantities of equipment, ammunition, rifles, vehicles and stores of all kinds lay scattered throughout the 80 miles over which the enemy had retreated under pressure, and marauders on looting intent did not hesitate to attack small parties who stood in their way.

Since crossing the Tigris we had captured some 4,000 prisoners, of whom 188 were officers, 39 guns, 22 trench mortars, 11 machine guns, H.M.S. "Firefly," "Sumana" (recaptured), "Pioneer," "Basra," and several smaller vessels, besides ten barges, pontoons, and other bridging material, quantities of rifles, bayonets, equipment, ammunition and explosives, vehicles and miscellaneous stores of all kinds. In addition, the enemy threw into the river or otherwise destroyed several guns and much war material.

31. On the 5th, the supply situation having been rapidly re-adjusted, Lieut.-General Marshall marched to Zeur (eighteen miles), preceded by the cavalry, which moved seven miles further to Lajj. Here the Turkish rearguard was found in an entrenched position, very difficult to locate by reason of a dense dust storm that was blowing and of a network of nalas, with which the country is intersected. The cavalry was hotly engaged with the enemy in this locality throughout the day, and took some prisoners. A noticeable feature of the day's work was a

brilliant charge made, mounted, by the Hussars straight into the Turkish trenches. The enemy retreated during the night.

The dust storm continued on the 6th, when the cavalry, carrying out some useful reconnaissances, got within three miles of the Dialah river, and picked up some prisoners. The Ctesiphon position, strongly entrenched, was found unoccupied. There was evidence that the enemy had intended to hold it, but the rapidity of our advance had evidently prevented him from doing so. Lieut.-General Marshall followed the cavalry to Bustan (seventeen miles), and the head of Lieut.-General Cobbe's column reached Zeur.

On the 7th our advanced guard came in contact with the enemy on the line of the Dialah river, which joins the Tigris on its left bank, about eight miles below Baghdad. As the ground was absolutely flat and devoid of cover it was decided to make no further advance till after sunset. Our gunboats and artillery, however, came into action against the hostile guns.

32. Measures for driving the enemy's infantry from the Dialah were initiated on the night of the 7th/8th. It appeared as though the enemy had retired, but when the first pontoon was launched it was riddled by rifle and machine-gun fire. A second attempt was made with artillery and machine-gun co-operation. Five pontoons were launched, but they were all stopped by withering fire from concealed machine guns. They floated down-stream, and were afterwards recovered in the Tigris river with a few wounded survivors on board, and further ferrying enterprises were for the time being deemed impracticable. It now became evident that, although the line of the Dialah was not held strongly, it was well defended by numerous guns and machine guns skilfully sited, and the bright moonlight favoured the defence. To assist in forcing the passage a small column from the force under Lieut.-General Marshall was ferried across the Tigris in order to enfilade the enemy's position with its guns from the right bank of that river.

During the night of the 8th/9th, after an intense bombardment of the opposite bank, an attempt was made to ferry troops across the Dialah river from four separate points. The main enterprise achieved a qualified success, the most northern ferry being able to work for nearly an hour before it was stopped by very deadly rifle and machine-gun fire, and we established a small post on the right bank. When day broke this party of seventy of the Loyal North Lancashires had driven off two determined counter-attacks, and were still maintaining themselves in a small loop of the river bund. For the next twenty-two hours, until the passage of the river had been completely forced, the detachment held on gallantly in its isolated position, under constant close fire from the surrounding buildings, trenches and gardens, being subjected to reverse as well as enfilade fire from distant points along the right bank.

33. On the 8th a bridge was constructed across the Tigris, half a mile below Bawi, and the cavalry, followed by a portion of Lieut.-General Cobbe's force, crossed to the right bank in order to drive the enemy from positions which our aeroplanes reported that he had occupied about Shawa Khan, and north-west of that place, covering Baghdad from the south and south-west. The advance of our troops

was much impeded by numerous nalas and water-cuts, which had to be ramped to render them passable. During the forenoon of the 9th Shawa Khan was occupied without much opposition, and aeroplanes reported another position one and a half miles to the north-west, and some six miles south of Baghdad, as strongly held. Our attack against this developed later from the south and south-west in an endeavour to turn the enemy's right flank. The cavalry, which at first had been operating on our left flank, withdrew later, as the horses needed water, but our infantry were still engaged before this position when darkness fell, touch with the enemy being kept up by means of patrols, and the advance was resumed as soon as indications of his withdrawal were noticed.

On the morning of the 10th our troops were again engaged with the Turkish rearguard within three miles of Baghdad, and our cavalry patrols reached a point two miles west of Baghdad Railway Station, where they were checked by the enemy's fire. A gale and blinding dust storm limited vision to a few yards, and under these conditions reconnaissance and co-ordination of movements became difficult. The dry wind and dust and the absence of water away from the river added greatly to the discomfort of the troops and animals. About midnight patrols reported the enemy to be retiring. The dust storm was still raging, but following the Decauville railway as a guide our troops occupied Baghdad Railway Station at 5.55 a.m., and it was ascertained that the enemy on the right bank had retired up-stream of Baghdad. Troops detailed in advance occupied the city, and the cavalry moved on Kadhimain, some four miles north-west of Baghdad, where they secured some prisoners.

34. On the left bank of the Tigris Lieut.-General Marshall had, during the 9th, elaborated preparations for forcing the passage of the Dialah. At 4 a.m., on the 10th, the crossing began at two points a mile apart and met with considerable opposition, but by 7 a.m. the East Lancashires and Wiltshires were across and had linked up with the detachment of Loyal North Lancashires which had so heroically held its ground there. Motor lighters carrying infantry to attack the enemy's right flank above the mouth of the Dialah grounded lower down the river, and took no part in the operation. The bridge across the Dialah was completed by noon, and our troops pushing steadily on drove the enemy from the riverside villages of Saidah, Dibaiyi and Qararah—the latter strongly defended with machine guns—and finally faced the enemy's last position covering Baghdad along the Tel Muhammad Ridge. These operations had resulted in the capture of 300 prisoners and a large quantity of arms, ammunition and equipment, whilst severe loss had been inflicted on the enemy in killed and wounded, over 300 of his dead being found by our troops.

During the night of the 10th/11th close touch with the enemy was maintained by patrols, and at 1.30 a.m. on the 11th it was reported that the Turks were retiring. The Tel Muhammad position was at once occupied, and patrols pushed beyond it, but contact with the enemy was lost in the dust storm. Early on the 11th Lieut.-General Marshall advanced rapidly on Baghdad and entered the city amid manifestations of satisfaction on the part of the inhabitants. A state of anarchy had ex-

isted for some hours, Kurds and Arabs looting the bazaars and setting fire indiscriminately at various points. Infantry guards provided for in advance were, however, soon on the spot, order was restored without difficulty, and the British flag hoisted over the city. In the afternoon the gunboat flotilla proceeding upstream in line ahead formation anchored off the British Residency, and the two forces under Lieut.-Generals Marshall and Cobbe provided for the security of the approaches to the city, being disposed one on either bank of the river. For over a fortnight before we entered Baghdad the enemy had been removing stores and articles of military value, and destroying property which he could not remove, but an immense quantity of booty, part damaged, part undamaged, remained. This included guns, machine guns, rifles, ammunition, machinery, railway workshops, railway material, rolling stock, ice and soda water plant, pipes, pumps, cranes, winches, signal and telegraph equipment, and hospital accessories. In the Arsenal were found among some cannon of considerable antiquity all the guns (rendered useless by General Townshend) which fell into the enemy's hands at the capitulation of Kut in April, 1916.

THE OPERATIONS. SUBSEQUENT TO THE FALL OF BAGHDAD: FROM MARCH 12TH TO 31ST.

35. With the near approach of the flood season it was now necessary to obtain control of the river bunds upstream of the city, and Yahudie and Kasirin on the left bank of the Tigris, 20 and 28 miles respectively above Baghdad, were consequently occupied on the 13th and 14th. On the right bank of the Tigris the retreating enemy had entrenched a strong position south of Mushaidie Railway Station some 20 miles north of Baghdad. Lieut.-General Cobbe was entrusted with the mission of securing the bunds on this bank, and on the night of the 13th/14th a column marched from Baghdad and reached Tadjie Station by daybreak on the 14th. The Turkish position was some seven miles in extent, extending from the river in a north-easterly direction towards the railway which runs due north and south. The western flank rested on successive lines of sandhills, which lie on both sides of the railway line, whilst east of the railway the defensive system centred in two dominant heights, linked to each other and to the river by a series of trenches, nalas and irrigation cuts. In front lay a bare flat plain, whilst undulating ground behind gave the enemy concealment for manœuvre and cover for reserves. It was decided to attack the Turkish right flank with the whole force, as such a movement aimed directly at the enemy's railhead and general reserve would turn the main position east of the railway.

Our troops advanced on both sides of the railway supported by artillery barrage, whilst the Cavalry operating on the western flank took the enemy's position in enfilade and in reverse with rifle and machine gun fire. Communication was maintained with our gunboats, which co-operated by shelling points in the Turkish line. Ridge after ridge was captured in spite of infantry and artillery fire, which was sometimes intense, until the Black Watch and Gurkhas by a brilliant charge carried the main position, inflicting severe casualties on the enemy. Fighting continued after nightfall,

and at Mushaidie Station the enemy made his last stand, but the Black Watch and Gurkhas rushed the station at midnight and pursued the enemy for half a mile beyond.

The enemy's flight was now so rapid that touch was not obtained again, and on the 16th our aeroplanes reported stragglers over a depth of 20 miles, the nearest being 25 miles north of Mushaidie. These operations had involved continuous marching and stiff fighting, almost without a break, for two nights and a day, in which our troops displayed fine endurance and determination.

36. On the 14th a post was established on the right bank of the Dialah, opposite Baqubah, 30 miles north-east of Baghdad, which was held by the enemy. On the night of the 17th/18th a column effected a surprise crossing over the Dialah five miles below Baqubah, and our troops entered the town the following morning, inflicting some casualties on the Turkish detachment, and capturing some prisoners and stores. Baqubah is the centre of a district rich in supplies, and its occupation was essential as a preliminary to further operations to assist our Russian Allies, who were advancing through Persia by way of Kermanshah and Kasr-i-Shirin, with the 13th Turkish Corps falling back on Kifri before them.

37. On the 19th our troops occupied Feluja, 35 miles west of Baghdad, on the Euphrates, driving out the Turkish garrison, which retired up the right bank of the Euphrates. The occupation of Feluja, with Nasariyeh already in our possession, gave us control over the middle Euphrates from both ends.

38. The arrival of our Allies at Khanikin was now momentarily expected, and a column was concentrated at Baqubah with the object of holding the enemy's retreating columns to their ground till such time as the Russians could come up, or alternatively of inflicting loss on them should they weaken their front and endeavour to cross the Dialah. This column moved out on the 20th and occupied Shahraban on the 23rd, the enemy having retired on the previous night. A few prisoners and large supplies of grain were captured. Five miles to the north-east of Shahraban lies a commanding ridge of Jebel Hamrin, where the enemy held a strong position covering Kizil Robat and the road to Khanikin, and here our troops were actively engaged with him from the 24th until the end of the month.

On the right bank of the Dialah the enemy also held a position along the Jebel Hamrin about Deli Abbas and Lambaral covering the approaches to the Kifri road. The cavalry was instructed to work up the right bank of the Dialah, so as to co-operate with our troops on the left bank in obstructing the retirement of the Turkish forces.

On the left bank of the Dialah our progress was slow, owing to the difficult nature of the country, which is intersected by canals and deep nalas, some of them full of water, but on the night of the 24th/25th part of the force moved forward to test the strength of the enemy in our front. By daybreak our infantry had established itself in the foothills, and the advance to the main ridge began. Hostile piquets were driven in, and the lower crest of the hills was gained, but beyond this another crest rose 2,500 yards away, and the intervening country was much broken with

hillocks and ravines. The advance continued towards the line held by the enemy about 1,000 yards north of the captured crest, but as he now began to show considerable strength, it was deemed inadvisable to press the advance further. The subsequent withdrawal of the column was followed up closely by the enemy, but several strong attacks were beaten off, and an attempted charge against our right flank by his cavalry was dispersed by rifle and gun fire. During the withdrawal the enemy, who necessarily came out into the open, suffered heavily, and the offensive enterprise of his infantry slackened visibly as the day wore on. The Manchesters specially distinguished themselves by their gallantry and steadiness on this occasion.

The advance of our Allies had been delayed in a difficult pass east of Khanikin, mainly owing to weather conditions, and in consequence up to the close of the period under review we had not gained touch with them, but our column still maintained its position, harassing the Turkish retreat and securing a number of prisoners.

39. About the 26th there were indications that a converging movement was being made by part of the 13th Corps down the right bank of the Dialah from Deli Abbas, and by the 18th Corps along the left bank of the Tigris from Shatt El Adhaim against our troops in the vicinity of Deltawa, apparently with the intention of assisting the withdrawal of the 13th Corps from before the Russians. A column was accordingly concentrated at Khan Nahrwan to deal with the Shatt El Adhaim force, whilst the cavalry contained the Deli Abbas force. On the 27th the enemy made a determined attempt to move down the right bank of the Dialah towards Deltawa, but our cavalry, skilfully handled in some difficult ground, resisted the enemy's advance from successive positions, inflicting severe losses, and finally checked the forward movement that evening. Next day the enemy fell back towards Deli Abbas followed up by our cavalry.

The Turkish force from Shatt El Adhaim held an entrenched position between Dogameh and Himma, and during the night of the 28th/29th our troops deployed for attack in suitable positions. The attack was well pressed from the east and north till about midday, when the mirage became so bad that artillery support was impracticable. Later in the evening it was renewed, and in spite of fierce counter-attacks we secured the greater part of the enemy's position, although he still held a few trenches when darkness fell. His losses had evidently been severe, as we buried over 190 bodies, and we took many prisoners, whilst the enemy retired during the night behind the Shatt El Adhaim.

The total number of prisoners taken during the period December 13th to March 31st was 7,921.

OPERATIONS ON OTHER FRONTS: AUGUST 28TH TO MARCH 31ST.

40. The period with which this despatch deals was devoid of important incidents on the Karun and Bushire fronts. On the Euphrates front in the early part of September guerilla warfare was commenced against our camps and patrols round As Sahilan. Immediate steps were taken to crush this hostile concentration before it became formidable,

and on September 11th a column moved out from Nasariyeh which destroyed the towers and fortifications of As Sahilan. Our comparatively small column was opposed by some 5,000 enemy irregulars, who fought boldly, but the steady behaviour of our troops gave them no opening, and before mid-day the enemy withdrew, having lost, as it was afterwards ascertained, 436 killed and some 800 wounded. This prompt lesson had an excellent effect round Nasariyeh, and no further hostilities of any importance occurred during the period under review. The only Turkish Regular detachment on the Euphrates was a small one at Samawa, and when Baghdad fell this detachment retreated to Feluja, whence it was subsequently ejected by our troops from Baghdad.

41. On the lines of communications during the same period the daily routine of our defence troops was only occasionally broken by raids, which were suitably dealt with by our posts and mobile columns.

42. Owing to the attention drawn to the Tigris front by the severe fighting in progress there, the situation had remained comparatively quiet. Considerable progress, however, was made in many ways. This was especially the case at Nasariyeh, where much was done to develop the administration of the town and the surrounding country, whilst at Ahwaz various projects were carried into effect which placed our position in that neighbourhood on a more satisfactory basis. Considerable credit is due to the commanders on the Euphrates, Karun and Bushire fronts and on the lines of communication defences for the manner in which they maintained peaceful conditions in their neighbourhood and the efficiency of their troops.

SUMMARY.

43. The above is a brief record of the operations carried out during seven months by the army in Mesopotamia—the first three and a half months a period of preparation, the last three and a half months one of action. During the latter the fighting has been strenuous and continuous, and the strain imposed upon all ranks, both at the front and on the lines of communication, severe. But they have responded whole-heartedly to every call that has been made upon them, and their reward has been the measure of their success. The nature of the operations has been as varied as it has been complex, and the training of the troops has been tested, first in the fierce hand-to-hand fighting in trench warfare round Kut and Sannaiyat, and later in the more open battles which characterised the operations in the Dahra Bend, the passage of the Tigris, the advance on Baghdad, and the subsequent actions. From this ordeal they have emerged with a proud record, and have dealt the enemy a series of stinging blows, the full significance of which will not be easily effaced. British and Indian troops working side by side have vied with each other in their efforts to close with the enemy, and all ranks have been imbued throughout with that offensive spirit which is the soldier's finest jewel.

The operations have involved long hours and strenuous work, as well as great responsibilities, for commanders and their staffs, but by sheer hard work and a determination to succeed they have risen superior to every obstacle and compelled success.

As regards the regimental Commanders and the regimental Officers, Warrant and Non-commissioned Officers and men, it is not easy to do justice to their sterling performances. In spite of the youth and consequent lack of training and experience among some of their officers and non-commissioned officers, leadership has never faltered, whilst all ranks, by their heroism, endurance and devotion to duty, have almost daily affirmed their superiority over their opponents in the bitterest struggles. Each difficulty encountered seemed but to steel the determination to overcome it. It may, then, be truly said that not only have the traditions of these ancient British and Indian regiments been in safe keeping in the hands of their present representatives, but that these have even added fresh lustre to the records on their time-honoured scrolls. Where fighting was almost daily in progress it is difficult to particularise, but the fierce encounters west of the Hai, the passages of the Tigris and Dialah, and the final storming of the Sannaiyat position may perhaps be mentioned as typical of all that is best in the British and Indian soldier.

For the success achieved the fighting spirit of the troops has been mainly responsible, but the dash and gallantry of individuals and units have been welded into a powerful weapon by that absolute sympathy which has existed between both services and all branches.

To the Royal Navy the thanks of the Army are due for the thorough way in which they carried out somewhat restricted but none the less important duties during the earlier part of this period. The fact that the enemy barred the way at Sannaiyat necessitated their work being at first limited to assisting in the protection of our water communications, co-operating with our detachment on the Euphrates front and occasionally shelling the enemy's position at Sannaiyat, where the Naval Kite Balloon Section rendered good service in observation work. Their opportunity came later, when after the passage of the Tigris they pressed forward in pursuit and rendered the brilliant and substantial services described above.

The work of the Cavalry has been difficult. The flat terrain intersected with nalas obstructed movement without providing cover, and the state of the country after heavy rains made progress even for short distances laborious. The absence of water, too, away from the river limited its radius of action. Nevertheless its reconnaissance work and the blows delivered against the enemy's communications helped in no small way to bring about that dissipation of his forces which was so essential to our success, and the pressure applied after the passage of the Tigris to the retreating enemy was instrumental in completing his final rout.

The union in which Artillery, Infantry, Machine-Gun Corps and Air Service worked has been admirable. The combination of irresistible gallantry and devotion to duty evinced by the Infantry and Machine-Gun Corps was equalled by the determination of the Artillery to render their comrades the closest support. Batteries were pushed forward to points within effective range of the enemy's riflemen, and the forward observing officers and their detachments, in order to obtain the best results for their guns in this flat and difficult country, were always to be found with the leading lines of

infantry. The intense but methodical fire of our guns formed a screen of shells under which our infantry advanced boldly, whilst the accuracy of our gun fire was largely assisted by the excellent observation work done by the Royal Flying Corps. The activity of the latter throughout the operations was unbounded in co-operation with artillery, air combats, reconnaissance, raiding, bombing, and photography. The R.F.C. at the outset wrested the command of the air from the enemy, and subsequently by skill and ceaseless energy maintained its superiority, in spite of the heavy strain thrown on personnel and machines.

Closely allied to the Infantry throughout the fighting and especially during the period of trench warfare were the Field companies, Sapper and Miner companies and Pioneer battalions. Their work was as daring as it was tireless and was of inestimable value in planning, supplementing and improving by their technical knowledge the work done by the Infantry.

Owing to the conditions under which fighting has taken place a heavy strain has been placed upon the Signal Service and Telegraph Department, and especially during the rapid advance after the passage of the Tigris. That the communications of the Army were so well maintained testifies to the efficiency and high sense of duty among all ranks in both branches. Their work, especially in the case of those with advanced formations, was frequently carried out under conditions of considerable danger, in which conspicuous gallantry was frequently needed and displayed.

The zeal and scientific knowledge evinced by the Field Survey Department is best exemplified by the fact that since the commencement of the campaign accurate surveys of an area of over 13,000 square miles of country have been produced, which have been of the greatest value to the Army.

44. One of the features peculiar to this campaign is the length of the lines of communications which we have necessarily had to adopt. In consequence the difficulties by which the Administrative Services and Departments, both in the field and on the lines of communications, have been confronted have been exceptional. The success or failure of the operations has so largely depended upon their efficiency that a substantial measure of credit is due to the Directors and their Assistants and all ranks of those Services and Departments who by capable methods and unwearied energy have surmounted all obstacles and regularly met the needs of the fighting troops with ample supplies, munitions and stores, and have been the means of providing every comfort obtainable for the sick and wounded.

As in the case of the fighting troops, the interdependence of these Services and Departments has necessitated the closest co-operation, and equally successful has been the result. We have relied upon three classes of transport—river, rail and road, the latter being further sub-divided into motor and animal transport. The work in all cases has been peculiarly heavy. The newly formed Inland Water Transport Directorate had first to fill its ranks and then develop its organisation and provide for its many indispensable requirements, but the personnel, making light of these very real obstacles to rapid progress, worked unceasingly, with the result that night and day an endless chain of rivercraft passed up and down the river,

thereby assuring the maintenance of the troops at the front.

The rainy season was one of continuous anxiety for the railways (especially as regards the light line between Sheikh Sa'ad and Atab) and the road transport. Every ingenuity possible was, however, brought to bear on the problem, and vigour and determination on the part of all concerned once more carried the day.

To the Directorate of Port Administration and Conservancy much credit is due for the development of the Port of Basrah on an efficient basis and for the method and smoothness with which the vast fleet of steamers which has served this expedition has been handled, as well as for the provision of many facilities in connection therewith. The monthly statistics bear eloquent testimony to the efficiency of this Department.

The excellent work done by the Director of Sea Transport and his assistants also deserves more than passing recognition in view of the amount of shipping involved.

Our long line of communications has complicated the delivery of supplies and ordnance stores at the front considerably. Although large stocks of foodstuffs, munitions and stores were available at the Base early in the autumn, accurate calculations and ceaseless activity on the part of all ranks were required to ensure their delivery to the troops punctually and in due proportion. Difficult as the problem was whilst the Army was sedentary in the vicinity of Sannaiyat and Kut, it became more and more complex as the advance proceeded. The strain on the personnel was increasingly severe, and the fact that throughout this period the troops at the front were well maintained in all respects constitutes a fine record for the Supply Service and Ordnance Department.

In dealing with the problems at the Base and on the Lines of Communication, the responsibilities of the Works Directorate have been very heavy, but the many problems have been resolutely handled with that resourcefulness and success which are so characteristic of the Royal Engineers. Road-making, water supply, and building and reclamation work at the Base alone have reached vast dimensions, and have demanded constant attention and thorough organisation.

Since the termination of the hot weather the health of the troops has been uniformly good, and our well-equipped hospitals have been more than adequate to meet the calls made upon them by sick patients. Throughout the operations the evacuation of the wounded was carried out on model lines, and the arrangements made for the comfort and rapid transfer of patients from the field units to the hospitals on the Lines of Communication reflect much credit on those concerned. Whilst those on the Lines of Communication have done their share efficiently, the work of the Medical Services at the front has maintained its high reputation. During the operations the strain thrown upon all has been heavy, and the courage and devotion to duty displayed by the personnel on the battlefield has only been equalled by the zeal and energy of those in the field units. In this connection the valuable services rendered by the consulting surgeons and physicians demand special mention, whilst the thanks of the Army are due to the Nursing Sisters for their indefatigable services in tending the sick and wounded. These ladies have by their devoted work under difficult conditions

of climate and surroundings set an example of which they may well be proud.

The wastage of horses during continuous operations under trying conditions has necessarily been large, but the Remount Department has, though assisted by few facilities and faced by many obstacles, by practical methods, foresight and adaptability, successfully met the demands made upon it.

Sickness and battle casualties have placed a strain upon the resources of the Veterinary Department which has been met by wise anticipation and considerable efficiency.

The chaplains—always to the fore where danger calls—have been untiring in their attention to the spiritual needs of the troops and in their ministrations to the sick and wounded, not only in the field ambulances and hospitals, but also on the battlefield.

The Postal Service has been handicapped by the long distances to be covered and by the fact that other articles requiring carriage claimed precedence in order of urgency. It has had heavy mails to deal with and its duties have been well carried out.

45. I should like further to express my thanks to those individuals and organisations which, though not strictly military, have rendered valuable services to the Army. Foremost among these I would mention the British Red Cross Society, which has worthily maintained its splendid record throughout this campaign. The sterling work performed by its *personnel*, and its bountiful provision of motor launches, motor ambulances and gifts, have been the means of alleviating much suffering.

The ceaseless labours of the organisers and committees of the various war-gift societies, both in England and India, and the liberality of the subscribers to these funds, have contributed largely to the comfort and well-being of the troops, especially in regard to their recreations, and our heartfelt gratitude is due to them all.

The officials and *personnel* of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company have displayed courtesy and willingness to assist, and have given us facilities which have been of great value to our troops.

The Young Men's Christian Association has been indefatigable in its exertions to enliven and improve the surroundings of the troops, and has with my approval opened additional branches throughout the country, which have been immensely appreciated.

46. The thanks of the Army are due for the prompt manner in which our necessarily large demands have been sent overseas from England, India and Egypt. This factor has contributed in no small measure to the successes achieved.

47. During the operations the Commanders have had great responsibility, and have justified fully their selection for the posts they hold.

Lieut.-General W. R. Marshall, K.C.B., has commanded his troops with determination and judgment. His quiet, imperturbable manner, his coolness and decision inspire confidence among his subordinates, whilst his bold methods and intelligent appreciation and rapid execution of orders have been of the greatest value.

Lieut.-General A. S. Cobbe, V.C., K.C.B., D.S.O., has commanded with marked ability. Always methodical and thorough in his plans,

he brings to bear upon their execution a complete knowledge of the details of his profession. These qualities, added to a thorough grasp of the possibilities and limitations of the various arms, have enabled him to make the most of his opportunities wherever severe fighting has been involved.

48. To my Staff at General Headquarters and on the lines of communication (including the lines of communication defences), as well as to the technical advisers attached, my warmest thanks are due for the whole-hearted and vigorous support which I have received from them throughout, and for the efficient manner in which they have discharged their functions.

Major-General A. W. Money, K.C.B., C.S.I., Chief of the General Staff, has carried out his responsible duties most competently. He has not spared himself in giving me every assistance, and his knowledge of Indian, and, indeed, Eastern conditions, has frequently been of great value to me.

Of Major-General G. F. MacMunn, K.C.B., D.S.O., Inspector-General of Communications, it is not too much to say that his responsibilities have been immense. The repeated calls made on him by me during these protracted operations have never once failed to elicit a satisfac-

tory response, and the thoroughness and elasticity of his organisation was never better exemplified than in the efficiency maintained on the lines of communication during the rapid advance on Baghdad, and subsequent to our arrival at that city. Optimistic by nature, he readily brushes aside obstacles, whether imaginary or real.

49. This despatch would not be complete without a reference to the valuable services rendered to the Army by Lieut.-Colonel Sir Percy Cox, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., and the political officers working under his direction. His advice has been invaluable to me on many occasions, and the tranquil state of the country from Baghdad to Basra at the present time is in itself an additional testimony to his already well-established reputation.

50. A list giving the names of those Officers, Warrant and Non-commissioned Officers and Men whose services are deemed deserving of special mention will follow.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

F. S. MAUDE,

Lieutenant-General:

Commanding-in-Chief,

Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force.

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