



FOURTH SUPPLEMENT

TO

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THURSDAY, 10 JANUARY, 1918.

War Office,
10th January, 1918.

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

General Headquarters,
Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force,
October 15th, 1917.

SIR,

1. I have the honour to submit herewith a report on the operations carried out by the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force during the period extending from April 1st to September 30th.

2. My previous despatch included a narrative of the operations subsequent to the fall of Baghdad up to March 31st, by which date our Columns had driven the enemy north-east, north and west in divergent directions along the Dialah, Tigris and Euphrates respectively,

and our advanced troops had established a screen covering Baghdad, being disposed approximately on the line Shahraban-Dogameh-Mushaidie-Feluja. In order, however, to provide for the security of Baghdad, which is an open city devoid of means of defence, it seemed desirable to prosecute our operations against the shattered but reinforced Columns of the 18th Turkish Corps, with which we had been so recently engaged, whilst keeping careful watch on the movements of the 13th Turkish Corps, which was falling back before our Russian Allies, lest the enemy should detach troops from this direction against the right flank and rear of our movement towards Samarra. The pressure applied by the Russian Columns which had already reached Karind with advanced troops at Khanikin, assisted by our troops operating in the Jebel Hamrin, as described in my last despatch, now forced the enemy to cross the Dialah and continue his retreat on Kifri.

3. On April 2nd we effected a junction with General Baratoff's troops about Kizil Robot, and as soon as these were well established on

the line of the Dialah our Column in this vicinity—having served the double purpose of harassing the retreat of the Turks and joining hands with the Russians—was withdrawn. This enabled us to resume our operations along both banks of the Tigris, which had been temporarily suspended.

4. On the 6th our Cavalry moved forward to the vicinity of Deli Abbas with instructions to cover our right flank, and by delaying action to draw on gradually any movement initiated by the 13th Turkish Corps towards the Tigris. On the left bank of the Tigris it seemed wiser not to commit our troops to definite action until such time as the intentions of this Turkish Corps became clearer. On the right bank of the Tigris the enemy's force was estimated at 4,000 rifles with 200 sabres and 16 guns, and these were holding Harbe with advanced troops about Beled Station. On the 8th our troops moved forward to attack the enemy's position covering Beled Station, and good progress was made until they came under close machine gun and rifle fire from some rising ground in that vicinity. The 51st Sikhs were ordered to secure this point, and making good use of the broken ground and well supported by artillery, they established themselves there without difficulty and pressed forward beyond. The enemy holding the station now found his position untenable, and soon his whole line was in retreat. Our losses were slight, but the enemy, in addition to his battle casualties, lost 200 prisoners, including nine officers as well as three machine guns and some rolling stock. On the 9th Harbe was occupied, and here a pause was ordered in order to allow for further operations on the left bank of the Tigris.

5. Our troops on the left bank had driven several parties of the enemy across the Shatt El Adhaim on the 7th, and on the following day a close reconnaissance of this river was carried out with a view to bridging it. It now became evident, however, that the 13th Turkish Corps from Jebel Hamrin and the 52nd Division of the 18th Turkish Corps on the line of the Shatt El Adhaim were contemplating a converging movement against our troops on the left bank of the Tigris. The 2nd and 14th Turkish Divisions, some 6,000 rifles strong, with 250 sabres and 32 guns, moving down the right bank of the Nahr Khalis Canal towards Deltawa, had by the evening of the 9th reached a point some 10 miles south-west of Deli Abbas. On the following day our Cavalry, falling back under instructions, continued to draw them on whilst our Horse Artillery inflicted substantial casualties on their marching Columns, and by the evening they had reached Arab Bu Abin, but the 52nd Division remained stationary on the line of the Shatt El Adhaim. On the 10th the enemy was reported to be entrenching, but on the 11th he continued his advance, moving in dense columns with his left on the Nahr Khalis. To meet this movement and to support our Cavalry we had detached troops from Deltawa up the right bank of the Nahr Khalis Canal towards Deli Abbas, whilst another Column, leaving sufficient troops to contain the enemy on the Shatt El Adhaim, fell upon his right flank after a night march from Dogameh. This attack, resolutely pressed by two Welsh battalions and the Wiltshires, was a complete surprise, and before the enemy could recover himself heavy casualties were inflicted on his Columns by our well-handled artillery and by rifle fire. Low visibility owing to mirage, heat and the absence of water hindered

our operations, but the enemy was soon in retreat, and by 7 p.m. he had regained Arab Bu Abin.

During the early hours of the 12th the enemy continued his retreat, followed by our infantry patrols, and in the darkness touch with him was lost. At 7 a.m. the Cavalry was ordered in pursuit, and at midday located him 6 miles west-south-west of Deli Abbas, covered by an entrenched rearguard. The Turks were now fighting a stubborn rearguard action, and this continued throughout the 13th and 14th, our progress being continuous but slow. Our Cavalry essayed a wide enveloping movement round the enemy's right flank so as to gain the Kifri Road ahead of him, but his right flank refused to the foot of the Jebel Hamrin, and lack of water prevented them from reaching their objective. During the night of the 14th/15th the enemy continued his retreat on Kifri, and by midday on the 15th our patrols had entered Deli Abbas, where the pursuit was stopped, as it was not intended to follow the enemy into the Jebel Hamrin, since the advantage of position would there have rested entirely with the defence. Over 300 of the enemy's dead were buried, and 1 gun and 80 prisoners were captured by us.

Having disposed of the 13th Turkish Corps temporarily, it was now decided to force the passage of the Shatt El Adhaim and deal with the detachment of the 18th Turkish Corps still holding it. These operations commenced early on the 18th, and by 6.30 a.m. our troops were sufficiently established on the right bank to allow of a bridge being thrown across the river. The channel was narrow, but full of quicksands, and these caused delay, but at 11.40 a.m. the bridge was completed, and by 2 p.m. our infantry had cleared the loop of the river and were moving towards the Barura peninsula. The Turkish opposition had collapsed, prisoners were coming in and a composite Cavalry Brigade moved forward in pursuit. This Brigade, skilfully handled, pushed on resolutely and, in spite of heat and want of water, succeeded in turning the enemy's retreat into a rout. His casualties in killed and wounded were heavy, and 1,300 prisoners—of which 26 were officers—and 6 machine guns were captured. Indeed, only a small fraction of the troops opposed to us that day effected their escape. In this action an Indian Cavalry Regiment, the Horse and Field Artillery Batteries, and four Lancashire Battalions specially distinguished themselves.

6. On the 19th the Tigris was bridged at Sinijah and riverhead was moved up to that place. The enemy's opposition on the left bank having been completely destroyed, a further advance was now ordered on the right bank. The Turks were holding a position about Istabulat, facing south-east, with their left resting on the river and extending over a frontage of about 2½ miles across the Dujail Canal to the Baghdad-Samarrah railway. After crossing that railway their line bent back sharply, and continued more or less parallel with the railway track to a point west of Istabulat Ruins, a distance of over 3 miles. The Dujail Canal, diagonally situated to our advance, was a considerable obstacle, with banks 40 feet high in some places, and containing water 6 feet deep and 20 to 25 feet broad, and its banks had been prepared in places so as to bring enfilade fire to bear upon the ground south of it. Two redoubts north of the Canal were prominent features in this

section of the defence, and immediately in rear of the Turkish left centre was a group of mounds affording good positions for machine guns. The position was a strong one, and was held by some 6,700 rifles with 200 sabres and 31 guns, whilst in the vicinity of Samarrah were reserves consisting of some 4,000 rifles with 500 sabres and 15 guns. The enemy's left and left centre were selected as the point of attack, and on the 20th his covering troops were driven in and an advanced line established to render it possible for our artillery to be brought forward and for the Canal to be bridged. At 5 a.m. on the 21st his position on the North side of the Canal was resolutely attacked by the Black Watch and 8th Gurkhas, under a creeping barrage, and both battalions made steady progress. In spite of a hot rifle and machine gun fire from the main position the redoubt near the river was captured, and the garrison made prisoners. The other redoubt on this side of the Canal was assaulted, recaptured by the enemy, and finally secured by us, thus giving our troops a good foothold in this part of the enemy's defences. At 6.30 a.m. an attack by the Seaforth's and 28th and 92nd Punjabis was launched south of the Canal. This advance was carried out with fine dash and gallantry across 2,000 yards of ground, devoid of cover, and by 7.25 a.m. the enemy's front line, some 700 yards long, was in our hands. Consolidation proceeded, and in spite of several counter-attacks all gains were held. Reconnaissances were made with a view to a further advance, but they indicated that further progress without reorganisation and careful preparation, which would only be possible under cover of darkness, would be needlessly costly. It was decided therefore to devote the remainder of the day and night to establishing ourselves securely and preparing for a simultaneous attack on both sides of the Canal, to be carried out next morning. A counter-attack by the enemy during the afternoon was dispersed by gun and rifle fire, and his artillery was active through the afternoon.

Early on the 22nd our patrols reported that the enemy opposite our right was beginning to withdraw, and by 4.30 a.m. the whole of the position had been evacuated, and was then occupied by us. The natural and artificial strength of the position now became apparent, and the number of enemy dead testified to the tenacity with which it had been held. Our troops moved forward in pursuit at daybreak and were in contact with the enemy's main body in the vicinity of Istabulat Police Post by noon, where his defensive system consisted of detached groups of trenches partially completed. The heat was great, and the attack was postponed till the evening, when the assault, aided by concentrated artillery fire, was delivered in dashing style by the Leicesters, supported by the 51st Sikhs and 56th Rifles, and the defence was easily penetrated. The attacking troops pressed on relentlessly and rapidly some 1,200 yards further, and the enemy's guns were only withdrawn just in time to avoid capture. The Turks rallied and put in a series of counter-attacks, with which our supporting troops dealt, but the enemy maintained a heavy fire until 8 p.m., when he retreated on Samarrah. This attack had been considerably aided by artillery fire from a Column detached along the left bank of the Tigris to co-operate. During the day a regi-

ment of Indian Lancers made a spirited attempt to break through the line of trenches, and, supported by artillery fire, it captured the front Turkish trench, but its advance was finally checked by fire from other trenches in rear. Our captures on the 21st and 22nd amounted to 20 officers and 667 other ranks taken prisoners, 14 Krupp guns, 1 5.9 in. gun damaged, 2 machine guns, 16 engines and 240 trucks, 2 barges, many rifles and much ammunition and equipment.

At 10 a.m. on the 23rd Samarrah Station was secured, the enemy offering no further resistance and retreating on Tekrit, and on the 24th Samarrah Town, on the left bank, was occupied and a post established there.

7. Whilst these operations were in progress on the right bank, it became evident that the 13th Turkish Corps was once more moving forward from the Jebel Hamrin, but this time down the Shatt El Adhaim, against our forces on the left bank of the Tigris, and the latter were accordingly readjusted to deal with the new situation. At 5 p.m. on the 23rd his leading echelon, estimated at 2,000 rifles, with 9 guns, had reached Duhaba, with his second group 17 miles in rear. The chance of defeating him in detail was thus offered, and orders were issued for a night march, culminating in an attack at dawn next day on his advanced troops. The infantry were to attack Duhaba whilst to the Cavalry, moving wide to the north, was assigned the mission of intercepting any Turkish forces moving up in support. Our right came in touch with the Turks soon after daybreak, and the action developed rapidly. As the pressure from our left began to be felt the Turks gave way, crossed the river, and retired rapidly up the left bank towards the remainder of their force, and in doing so presented good targets for artillery and machine-gun fire to our Cavalry. This attack had been gallantly delivered by several Lancashire battalions, and as a result about 100 Turks were buried by us and 150 prisoners fell into our hands.

On the morning of the 25th aeroplanes reported the Turks as retiring up both banks of the river, and our troops moved forward in pursuit. By the evening of the 27th they had reached Satha Ruins, being in touch with the Turkish rearguard covering withdrawal to and occupation of a selected position in the foothills of the Jebel Hamrin, and on the morning of the 28th we occupied a line within 2 miles of the enemy's position. Heat, low visibility and engine trouble had all combined to handicap reconnaissance by land and air, so that the situation still remained somewhat obscure, and during the night of the 28th/29th a violent dust storm arose, which continued intermittently for 48 hours.

Briefly put, the plan adopted was to throw our weight on the 30th up the left bank of the Shatt El Adhaim against the enemy's weaker flank and more shattered division, and then turning north and west to drive him away from water and his line of retreat. From dawn till 7 a.m. the dust storm abated, and our attack on the left bank, developing at 5 a.m., was brilliantly carried out by the Cheshires and South Wales Borderers over 1,000 yards of level plain, and was immediately successful. By 8 a.m. all objectives had been reached, including the village of Adaim, and the retreating Turks were being engaged at long range, whilst a number of prisoners were

already in our hands. Two of our Companies, however, which had lost nearly all their officers, advanced too far in pursuit. For a moment they captured two batteries, a section of machine guns and many prisoners, but whilst still out of touch with the remainder of our force they were counter-attacked and isolated. They maintained a gallant hand-to-hand fight for some time, but few of them survived. This counter-attack, assisted by the configuration of the ground, and the dust storm, which was now raging, enabled the enemy temporarily to regain the village of Adaim, but, checked here by artillery and machine gun fire, he was unable to debouch, and was ultimately driven out again by 11 a.m., and our infantry firmly re-established themselves in the village. The Turks, aided by a continuance of the dust storm, strengthened their left and secured their line of retreat to the north-east, but towards evening the dust storm died down, and the enemy's second line trenches, his transport, his horse lines and his artillery north-east of the village of Adaim were shelled with good effect. Our troops bivouacked on the ground won and pushed forward patrols to maintain touch with the enemy, but during the night he withdrew, and at 6.45 a.m. on May 1st our aeroplanes reported him in retreat 7 miles away. In the action on the 30th the enemy suffered heavily in casualties, and our captures included 365 prisoners, 1 Hotchkiss gun, 1 machine gun, and rifles, equipment and all kinds of ammunition, whilst 214 enemy dead were buried by us. During this period of hard marching and heavy fighting the Buffs specially distinguished themselves on several occasions.

8. As a result of the fighting during the month of April the enemy's 13th and 18th Corps had been driven back on divergent lines, the former into the Jebel Hamrin and the latter to Tekrit. The 13th Corps had twice taken the offensive, with results disastrous to itself, and the 18th Corps had been defeated and driven from its selected positions on four occasions. Our total captures for the month amounted to some 3,000 prisoners and 17 guns, besides a considerable quantity of rolling stock and booty of all kinds. The objectives which we had set out to reach had been secured, and the spirit of the enemy's troops was broken. The fighting carried out during this month had imposed a severe strain upon the troops, for the heat, the constant dust storms, and the absence of water on occasions, tested their stamina very highly. But as conditions became more trying the spirit of the troops seemed to rise, and to the end of this period they maintained the same high standard of discipline, gallantry in action, and endurance which had been so noticeable throughout the Army during the operations which led up to the fall of Baghdad and subsequently.

9. The increasing heat now rendered it necessary that the troops should be redistributed for the hot weather, and that every provision possible under existing conditions should be made with a view to guarding against the trying period which was rapidly approaching. Whilst it was necessary to hold the positions which had been so bravely won and to strengthen them defensively, the bulk of the troops were withdrawn into reserve and distributed in suitable camps along the river banks, where they could obtain the benefit of such breezes as were available and where a

liberal supply of water for drinking, bathing and washing was obtainable.

For the remaining five months of the period under review the heat was considerable, and during the latter part of June, July and beginning of August it was intense. Consequently movements could not be undertaken by either side without grave risk of incurring substantial casualties from heat stroke and heat exhaustion. The troops enjoyed a well-earned respite from the continuous fighting in which they had been engaged during the five months terminating in April, but they were by no means idle. Our hold over the area was made secure, defensive positions and pivots were prepared, and training was carried on in the early mornings and late evenings as the temperature permitted. Manly sports, too, which are so essential to the well-being of the soldier, especially when temporarily inactive in the military sense, were freely indulged in with beneficial results to the health and future fitness of the Army for service in the field. Arrangements had been made for a proportion of the troops to proceed to India on leave during the summer months, and those who had been on service for a considerable time derived much benefit from the change and rest thus obtained.

10. Early in June a communication was received from our Russian Allies to the effect that in consequence of the increasing heat they had found it necessary to evacuate the line of the Dialah River, and they subsequently withdrew beyond Karind towards Kermanshah. This rendered the occupation of Beled Ruz by us necessary, and this was carried out on the 23rd.

For some time after our occupation of Baghdad tribesmen on the upper reaches of the Dialah, Tigris and Euphrates, above Baghdad, were restless, and it was found necessary to take punitive measures against them. Columns for this purpose operated on the Euphrates from May 3rd to 10th, on the Tigris from May 16th to 24th, and on the Dialah from June 2nd to 8th and June 28th to July 3rd. In each case salutary punishment was meted out to the delinquents. Consequent upon these measures the situation became quiet on each river line, and the tribesmen have, generally speaking, remained peacefully disposed except in the case of the operations against Ramadie referred to below, when the refractory elements were again severely dealt with.

It now seemed desirable to increase our hold on the Euphrates line still further, and it was consequently decided early in July to occupy Sinn El Zibban, some commanding ground on the right bank of the Euphrates about twelve miles up stream of Feluja, which dominates the left bank of that river at its junction with the Saklawie Canal. As this advance on our part would bring our right bank detachment within striking distance of Ramadie, where the enemy was located, the opportunity seemed favourable for attacking him with a view to covering our movement. The enemy's troops at Ramadie, who occupied an entrenched position covering Ramadie from the east and south-east, were estimated at 1,000 rifles with 100 sabres and six guns, besides some 2,000 Arabs of the Delaim tribe.

On the 8th Sinn El Zibban was occupied, and by the 10th the Column destined to attack Ramadie was concentrated there. Careful reconnaissances of the approaches to Ramadie had already been carried out and motor vans

and lorries were allotted to carry a proportion of the troops as necessary and thus minimise the amount of marching to be done in view of the heat then existing. Special provision was also made for water and for ice. After a night march the Column was in touch with the Turks east of Ramadie by 4 a.m. on the 11th and by 8.15 a.m., after considerable opposition, our troops had driven in the enemy's advanced troops, and were preparing for the final assault against his main position. But a blinding dust storm now sprang up, and this added to the fact that this day marked the commencement of an abnormal heat wave rendered the position of the troops more and more difficult as time went on. Observation became almost impossible and the interruption of our communications—both wireless and land line—by unlucky circumstances rendered co-ordination of measures for the attack impracticable. It was therefore decided to cancel the order for the attack, but the troops remained in their advanced positions throughout the day and were withdrawn during the night of the 11th/12th to the river bank about Mushaid, where shade was available, but whence they still continued to contain the Ramadie position. On the 12th the heat wave was still increasing and consequently further operations against Ramadie were deemed impracticable, but the troops remained confronting the Turks as there were indications that the latter were meditating retreat. As these indications did not materialise the forces withdrew to Sinn El Zibban on the 14th, this movement being methodically and well carried out, and some 1,500 tribesmen who followed up the rearguard were severely handled by our Artillery and Light Armoured Motor Batteries. The troops throughout the operation evinced a soldierly spirit, and inflicted on their opponents severe battle casualties which considerably exceeded their own.

On the Dialah front our aeroplanes reported early in August that the Turks were entrenching a position south-west of Shahraban, and this was confirmed by reports received locally. It was therefore decided to occupy Shahraban without further delay, and for this purpose converging columns were despatched from Beled Ruz and Baqubah on the night of the 18th/19th. On the 19th Misdad was seized at dawn, and on the 20th Shahraban was occupied with slight opposition, the enemy retiring hastily into the Jebel Hamrin. A new line was at once established and consolidated without interference on the part of the enemy.

11. Plans were now maturing for the capture of Ramadie, the garrison of which had been reinforced as a result of the operations in July, but the distance from Baghdad and the bad state of the communications between these two places rendered this matter one of considerable difficulty. Very careful preparations were necessary before these operations could be carried out, and it was September 26th before a column of adequate size could be concentrated within striking distance of Ramadie for this purpose.

The enemy held an advanced position four miles east of Ramadie on Mushaid Ridge, which runs north and south, and rises some 60 feet above the plain. To the north of the ridge lies the Euphrates River, and to the south the salt Habbaniyeh Lake. The Turkish main position was semi-circular in outline, and was sited about one mile to the east and to the south of Ramadie. The eastern front ran along but

behind the Euphrates Valley Canal and the southern front across bare sandy downs extending from the Euphrates Valley Canal to the Aziziyeh Canal, which leaves the Euphrates one mile west of Ramadie and flows southwards. The plan of operations was to turn the southern flank of the Mushaid Ridge, secure a crossing over the Euphrates Valley Canal, and attack Ramadie from the south with the bulk of the column, whilst the cavalry operating west of the Aziziyeh Canal threw themselves across the enemy's communications with Hit by blocking the Aleppo Road. Steps were taken to induce the enemy to expect the main attack against his left on the Euphrates, and with this intent the river was bridged at Madhij and a road was constructed thence up the left bank, whilst supplies were also collected there. The distribution of the troops until the night of the 27th/28th was also designed to give colour to such a movement.

At 6 p.m. on the 27th two infantry columns with the cavalry moved from Madhij to the position of assembly some 5 miles in front of our outposts, and the infantry subsequently made a night advance some 2 miles in a westerly direction to a position of deployment, whence an attack on Mushaid could be delivered at dawn. An infantry detachment also skirted the northern edge of Lake Habbaniyeh, and before daybreak on the 28th had secured important tactical features on and behind the southern flank of the Mushaid position, including a dam across the Euphrates Valley Canal, passable by all arms. This action compelled the enemy to withdraw from Mushaid Ridge, which he shelled heavily subsequently in expectation of its occupation by our troops, but in this he was disappointed, as our infantry moved south of the ridge and crossed the dam. At 7 a.m. the cavalry were transferred from our right to our left flank, their march being screened from the enemy by Mushaid Ridge. They crossed the Euphrates Valley Canal by the dam and pushed westwards across the Aziziyeh Canal to a position astride the Aleppo Road, so as to cut off the enemy's retreat. Meanwhile, to the west of the Euphrates Valley Canal, our left infantry column advanced against the enemy's southern front and occupied and consolidated a position under considerable opposition. In this attack the Dorsets and 5th Gurkhas especially distinguished themselves. Under cover of the attack our right infantry column was withdrawn, and passing in rear of the left column, was subsequently launched to an attack which secured a firm footing on Aziziyeh Ridge. Thus by nightfall the enemy was hemmed in on the south-east and south by our infantry and on the west by the cavalry, whilst to the north ran the River Euphrates.

At 3 a.m. on the 29th the enemy made a determined effort to break through our cavalry and retreat by the Aleppo Road, but after an action lasting for one and a half hours they were driven back into Ramadie, the Hussars and part of a regiment of Indian Cavalry, with some Horse Artillery and Hotchkiss guns, being mainly instrumental in heading the enemy off. At 6.15 a.m. the infantry attack was renewed from the south-east and south, and our left infantry column captured successive positions along Aziziyeh Ridge. The 39th Garhwalis seized the bridge where the Aleppo Road crosses the Canal and captured three guns and many prisoners by 7.30 a.m.,

whilst the 90th Punjabis pushed eastwards through Ramadie and secured the Turkish Commander (Ahmed Bey) at his headquarters near the eastern front of the position. Both these units displayed commendable dash and initiative, and by 11 a.m. the whole of the Turkish force had surrendered.

Throughout the operations, which were continuous, the endurance and fine fighting spirit of the troops was conspicuous, whilst the night operations so successfully carried out testified to the excellence of their discipline and training. During the daytime the heat was considerable, and these operations, which were conducted at some distance from the river, were only rendered possible by the excellence of the arrangements for water supply. A salient factor in these successful operations was the part played by the cavalry. First by their rapid movement round the enemy's rear, and subsequently by the tactical disposition of their machine guns they prevented the enemy's columns from breaking out, and so drove them back into the arms of the infantry. Very useful work was also done by the transport, and especially the motor transport, whilst the medical arrangements for the evacuation of the wounded over some bad ground were most satisfactory. Amongst our captures were included 3,454 prisoners, of whom 145 were officers and 192 wounded, 13 guns, 12 machine guns, 2 armed launches, 2 barges, and large quantities of arms, ammunition, equipment, engineering stores, railway material and supplies.

Simultaneously with the above operations on our left flank, our cavalry, operating wide on the right flank of the Army, marched during the night of the 28th/29th and occupied Mendali early on the 29th. The Turkish detachment holding that town fled into the hills, leaving 300 baggage camels in our hands and suffering some casualties from our guns whilst retreating. Mendali had for some time been used by the Turks as a source of supply, and its occupation, whilst supplementing our own needs, denied it for this purpose to the enemy.

12. In my former despatch I had occasion to bring to notice the capable handling of the troops by the higher Commanders, assisted by their staffs, and the gallantry, endurance and devotion to duty displayed by the Regimental Officers, Non-commissioned Officers and men. To this I can only add that the fine record then established has been fully maintained under very trying climatic conditions, and that the fighting spirit, discipline and efficiency of this Army have never stood at a higher level than they do at the present moment. The further training which it has been possible to give the troops will tend to develop still further that close co-operation between all arms which was so noticeable throughout the operations last winter and which is so essential a factor to success in war.

13. Similarly the valuable services rendered to this Army by the Directors and the Administrative Services and Departments were previously dealt with by me in detail. In their case there has been no partial respite from their labours such as has been enjoyed by the fighting troops, for their work at the front, on the Lines of Communication and at the Base has continued at the highest pressure. Re-organisation, development of our resources and preparation for the future have needed careful

thought and unrelaxed efforts on the part of all and the progress made in these directions has been very gratifying. More than a passing word of recognition is therefore due to these individuals, who, in spite of the intense heat during the summer months, have continued to work so assiduously in the interests of the Army.

14. Our communications by water and by land have been thoroughly overhauled to meet the new situation, additional ships and barges have been placed on the river, and our railway system has been developed as rapidly as existing conditions have permitted. The ever-increasing needs of this Army have rendered expansion as regards port facilities at Basrah necessary, and this has been successfully met by the opening of a subsidiary port in its vicinity, which is being still further developed as the result of the recommendations of a Committee assembled to report upon the matter.

An abnormally low river during the flood season gave rise to some anxiety that this might be followed by a correspondingly low river during the summer months, and, though the river did not fall below its lowest record, it reached as low a gauge as it has touched within reasonable recollection. The work of the Inland Water Transport was therefore from June onwards one of considerable difficulty, and it was due to the skill and energy of the personnel of the I.W.T., and to the admirable buoying of the channels, that the number of serious groundings was almost negligible, and that the service of maintenance in front of the Base was carried on unimpaired.

The work of transportation by the I.W.T. was ably seconded by the development of our railways, and the way in which, in spite of a limited personnel, construction progressed and the railways were worked at constant high pressure is deserving of high commendation.

The health of the troops during the summer months has been uniformly satisfactory, and many of the diseases from which we suffered in previous years—such as cholera, enteric fever and scurvy—were either non-existent or negligible in their extent. This successful result was partly attributable to the untiring work of the officers employed in the bacteriological laboratories, without whose valuable assistance the difficulty of dealing with the epidemic diseases would have been considerably increased. But, although better conditions as regards accommodation and increased facilities for combating the heat resulted generally in a far lower sick rate, an abnormal heat wave which swept over the area in July was responsible for a heavy casualty list. During this time the personnel of the Medical Services were severely taxed, but they resolutely and successfully responded to the calls made upon them. All ranks redoubled their exertions as the situation became more difficult, and the unremitting labours of the Nursing Sisters, many of whom suffered in health themselves, were worthy of the high record for devotion to duty which the Nursing Service has always maintained. The very practical assistance rendered by the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John during this trying period was typical of the valuable services so consistently rendered by that organisation.

The growing needs of this Army and the

necessity for marshalling all the available resources of this country have necessitated the formation of a special directorate to deal with this matter, and consequently the department of Local Resources which had been in process of construction during the advance on Baghdad took definite shape from the date of our arrival in that City. It will be realised that in a country such as Mesopotamia, where supplies, though available in large quantities in certain districts, are organised under no system, the work of placing this matter on a sound footing is one calling for considerable business capacity and energy. It is sufficient, then, in order to show how successful this comparatively youthful organisation has been, to record that all districts within reasonable distance of our troops have now been tapped, and that the ramifications of the Department have extended very wide beyond the districts which we actually hold.

15. The cordial co-operation of the Royal Navy, which yielded such valuable results during the advance on Baghdad, has since then been maintained uninterruptedly. The gun-boat flotilla participated in the fighting during April, rendering substantial assistance to the land forces, and during the summer months when active operations were temporarily suspended much useful patrol work on the Lines of Communication has been performed by it in spite of the low water conditions then existing. I was fortunate in receiving visits in turn from Vice-Admiral E. A. Gaunt, C.B., C.M.G., Naval Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, and Rear-Admiral D. St. A. Wake, C.B., C.I.E., Rear-Admiral in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, and these visits provided an opportunity for the discussion of topics of interest to both services.

16. To the Signal Service and Telegraph Department much credit is due for the rapidity with which they have constructed the extended communications rendered necessary as a result of the operations carried out during last winter. The vast network of lines which has been so quickly erected has been of very real value to the Army at large.

On other fronts at Nasariyeh and Ahwaz and on the Lines of Communication Defences quiet has reigned throughout the period under review, a state of affairs largely due to the firm control exercised by local Commanders over their districts and to the capable manner in which the troops serving under them have carried out their somewhat monotonous duties.

A very high standard of efficiency, too, has been reached by the Imperial Service troops serving with this Army. The excellent spirit, zeal and keenness that has permeated them has proved a valuable asset, and our thanks are due to the ruling Chiefs of India by whose generosity and patriotism these Units have been provided and kept in the field.

17. Since my last despatch several units have come into prominence which were at that time not fully developed. The Light Armoured Motor Batteries began to make their mark during the advance on Baghdad, and since that time they have continued to render valuable services in reconnaissance work, in patrolling and in co-operating with other arms. The cars have been capably handled and the personnel are resolute and determined fighters.

The Field Force Canteen, originally on a

small basis, has increased in size at a rapid rate in order to cope with the ever-growing demands of this Army. Branch canteens have been opened in larger numbers month by month at all suitable stations, and these canteens have contributed in no inconsiderable way to the health and well-being of the troops at the present time.

The Military Police organisation has, owing to the development of the Force and the extension of our communications, been considerably increased, and the personnel have carried out their responsible duties satisfactorily, often under trying conditions of heat.

18. I wish to acknowledge once again on behalf of this Army the services rendered by those who have worked so zealously at home and in India to supply our needs. The difficulties with which they have had to contend are well recognised here, and for this reason our gratitude is the more spontaneous.

19. In closing this despatch I would bring to notice the names of Lieut-General Sir W. R. Marshall, K.C.B., and Lieut-General Sir A. S. Cobbe, V.C., K.C.B., D.S.O., who have continued to render me every assistance and have commanded their respective Corps with competency throughout the period under review. During the month of April the fighting was severe, but these formations were handled throughout with vigour and judgment. To Major-General Sir H. T. Brooking, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., my thanks are due for his resolute and able handling of the troops during the operations at Ramadie. The practical result of having secured the surrender of the whole force opposed to him is probably the best indication of his tactical skill and ability.

20. The occupation of Baghdad, the consequent extension of our Lines of Communication, the increase in the size of the Force, the development of our resources, and the need for looking well ahead into the future have thrown heavy work upon my Staff, both at General Headquarters and on the Lines of Communication. In spite of the great heat and occasional shortage of numbers in consequence they have responded wholeheartedly to every call made upon them, and I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the unvarving support which they have rendered me and of the efficient manner in which they have carried out their duties.

Major-General Sir George MacMunn, K.C.B., D.S.O., deserves my thanks for the capable manner in which he has carried out his duties as I.G.C. His watchwords have been progress and efficiency, and the development of the Port and City of Basrah under difficult conditions, arising from an insalubrious climate, is a tribute to his energy and perseverance. His efforts have been ably seconded by the Base, Advanced Base and Administrative Commandants and those working under their orders.

21. With our advent into Baghdad the duties and responsibilities of the Civil Commissioner, Major-General The Hon. Sir Percy Cox, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., already of an exceedingly heavy nature, have increased substantially. I wish to express my gratitude to him officially for the assistance which he has rendered me and for the advice which has so readily been placed by him at my disposal from time to time. With his name I should like

to associate the personnel of the Political Service working under his orders. Their duties have been responsible and at times dangerous, and they have not hesitated at all times to give of their best and have been the means of seconding the successful efforts of the Army in no small measure.

22. A list giving the names of those Officers, Ladies, Warrant and Non-Commissioned Officers and Men whose services are deemed de-

erving of reward and special mention accompanies this despatch.

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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