



EIGHTH SUPPLEMENT

TO

The London Gazette

Of TUESDAY, the 8th of APRIL, 1919.

Published by Authority.

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FRIDAY 11 APRIL, 1919.

War Office,
11th April, 1919.

The Secretary of State has received the following despatch, addressed to the Chief of the General Staff, India, by Lieut.-General Sir W. R. Marshall, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., Commanding-in-Chief, Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force:—

General Head-Quarters,
Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force,
1st February, 1919.

Sir,

1. I have the honour to submit the following report on the operations of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force from 1st October, 1918, the date of my last despatch, to 31st December, 1918:—

2. The overwhelming victories achieved by General Allenby in Palestine and Syria had naturally re-acted, greatly to our advantage, on the situation in N.W. Persia. The Turkish threat against Kasvin (and therefore Teheran) was now no longer to be feared. In fact, even before the fall of Damascus, my information

led me to believe that the Turks were hurriedly withdrawing troops from the Caucasus.

This, then, seemed the moment to take the offensive against the Turkish 6th Army, covering the approaches to Mosul, and it was with great pleasure that on the 7th October I received orders to carry out this movement.

3. The forces opposed to me were the 2nd and 14th Divisions of the 6th Turkish Army, and, possibly, the 5th Division, which was known to be on its way to the Mosul Vilayet from the direction of Urmiä.

The bulk of the Turkish forces (calculated at about 9,000 rifles and 59 guns) was located on the Tigris, and holding a position of great natural strength astride the Fatha Gorge. This position had been in their occupation nearly 18 months, and had been thoroughly prepared for a protracted defence. The enemy's right flank from the Fatha Gorge to Shergat was not only artificially defended, but also naturally protected by two formidable ranges of hills known as the Jebel Makhul and the Jebel Khanuka, which could not be turned owing to lack of water in the desert.

On the left bank of the Tigris the position

extended for some five miles along the crest of the Jebel Hamrin. Opposite the junction of the Lesser Zab with the Tigris, the Turks had constructed a second strong position astride the Jebel Khanuka and Jebel Makhul, as well as trenches to defend the line of the Lesser Zab, a bridge at El Humr giving them free movement between both banks of the Tigris.

4. The exigencies of the Persian line of communication, which extended to Enzeli on the Caspian Sea, and the collection of the harvest, had denuded me of a large amount of transport, but for which facts I should have hesitated to adopt a line of advance against positions such as I have roughly outlined, and would have preferred that the main operation should take place via Kirkuk, and so make the Turks fight on ground of my own choosing. The distances from railhead by this route, however, were, in view of the available transport, an absolute deterrent, and there was nothing for it but a direct attack up the Tigris.

A good deal of preliminary movement of troops not required for the operations was necessary in order to get them on to the railways, and so enable them to give up 2nd line transport to form supply columns. The 56th Infantry Brigade was also sent up from the Euphrates to construct the railway line in advance of Tekrit, the latter place being then railhead, and 35 miles distant from the Turkish position at Fatha.

5. I entrusted the conduct of the main operations on the Tigris to Lieut.-General Sir A. S. Cobbe, V.C., K.C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., Commanding I Corps, and placed at his disposal (in addition to the 17th and 18th Divisions) the 7th and 11th Cavalry Brigades.

To protect the right flank of General Cobbe's advance a small column from the III Corps, under command of Brig.-General A. C. Lewin, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., A.D.C., was detailed to advance on the line Tauk-Kirkuk-Altun Keupri, and to prevent the Turkish forces in that area from moving down the Lesser Zab.

6. It was impossible, as previously stated, for troops, other than light armoured motor cars, to operate against the Turkish right flank, and a direct attack on the main Fatha position would certainly have proved very costly. The plan adopted, therefore, was to turn the left of the Turkish position on the Tigris and force a crossing of the Lesser Zab, thus getting their right bank positions enfilade, and so enabling our troops on that bank to attack with greater chances of success. Having cleared the left bank of the enemy, it was then intended to cut his line of retreat on Mosul by means of cavalry working up the left bank and by light armoured motor cars moving round the enemy's right.

There could, unfortunately, be little element of surprise in our attack, because the Turks had been confidently expecting it for some time, in addition to which dumps of ammunition and supplies had to be formed at Jift Post, 20 miles in advance of Tekrit. Bold and repeated reconnaissances against the enemy's right flank were, however, carried out to try to induce him to put his strength on that side.

7. By drawing on all possible sources for transport both cavalry brigades and half the infantry brigades were made sufficiently mobile to carry out the intended operations. By October 18th the forward dumps at Jift Post had been completed, and two crossings of the

Jebel Hamrin were also occupied, owing to the necessity for developing the wells at these points, in view of future requirements. On the same date Brig.-General Lewin moved from Tuz Khurmatli and occupied Tauck, and the important bridge four miles N.E. of that place, capturing 25 prisoners and some animals.

8. The dispositions for the attack on the Fatha position were as follows:—

On the right bank Tigris, the 17th Division and attached troops, under Major-General G. A. J. Leslie, C.B., C.M.G., and on the left bank the 18th Division and attached troops, as well as 7th Cavalry Brigade (Brig.-General C. E. G. Norton, A.D.C.), under the command of Major-General H. D. Fanshawe, C.B. Special missions were also assigned to the light armoured motor batteries on the right bank and to the 11th Cavalry Brigade (Brig.-General R. A. Cassels, C.B., D.S.O.) on the left bank. The R.A.F. were retained to work under the direct orders of the I. Corps.

9. Both the divisions detailed for these operations were new formations, and, with the exception of a few units, had had no previous war experience. Each infantry brigade had recently been reduced by one Indian battalion withdrawn for service in another theatre of war, and from each of the remaining Indian battalions of these Brigades one company had been taken away for the purpose of forming nuclei for newly raised battalions in India. In addition many officers and non-commissioned officers had been sent away to assist these new formations.

A serious outbreak of influenza which occurred at this time also greatly reduced the fighting strength of all units. Special influenza camps had to be improvised in order to free medical units in the field for the reception of the wounded. It is a curious fact that as soon as the operations started there were practically no further cases of influenza.

10. By the morning of the 23rd October General Cobbe had completed all his preliminary moves and was in touch with the enemy both on the right and on the left banks of the Tigris, and Brig.-General Lewin had reached Taza Khurmatli, 12 miles S.E. of Kirkuk. That afternoon a column under Brig.-General M. R. W. Nightingale, C.M.G., D.S.O., moved along the crest of the Jebel Hamrin against the Turkish left; whilst the 7th Cavalry Brigade moved round the north of those hills. The vigorous action of these two columns during the night of October 23rd/24th caused the Turks to abandon the very strong Fatha position before daylight on 24th.

11. On the 24th October the 11th Cavalry Brigade (which had concentrated at Ain Nakhalla on the previous day) after a 45-mile march through a waterless country, reached the Lesser Zab, some 20 miles above its confluence with the Tigris, at about 3 p.m. The Turks were holding the right bank in some strength, but in spite of opposition a crossing was forced over a deep ford in the neighbourhood of Uthmaniya with surprisingly few casualties. On the same day the 17th and 18th Divisions followed up the retreating Turks, maintaining a continuous pressure, whilst the R.A.F. co-operated with low flying aeroplanes which bombed and machine-gunned the enemy columns. The artillery of the 7th Cavalry Brigade also found good targets from their

forward positions on the left bank. The Light Armoured Motor Brigade, under command of Lieut.-Colonel Sir T. R. L. Thompson, Bart., M.C., having been especially equipped to make it self-contained for some days, proceeded to El Hadr (60 miles W. of Shergat) in order to establish a base at that place for operations against the Turkish communications with Mosul.

The roads through the Fatha Gorge (on both banks) were found to be impracticable for vehicles, the Turks having blown the road into the river in several places, and a new road therefore had to be made by cutting into and blasting out the rocky hillsides. A pontoon bridge was also thrown across the Tigris at Fatha to facilitate transference of troops and supplies.

12. On the 25th, the 7th Cavalry Brigade and the leading (53rd) Infantry Brigade of the 18th Division forced a crossing over the Lesser Zab, near its confluence with the Tigris, in face of considerable opposition and heavy shell fire. Meanwhile the 11th Cavalry Brigade, which was now engaged in ferrying its transport across the river near Uthmaniya, sent a force down the right bank of the Zab. These two movements caused the Turkish force on the left bank of the Tigris to retreat across their bridge at El Humr.

Lewin's column had during the day driven back superior Turkish forces and occupied Kirkuk.

13. The 17th Division, on the right bank, was keeping in close touch with the Turks, but was meeting with great difficulties, and its advance was necessarily slow. The few tracks existing over the deep ravines and precipitous slopes of the Jebel Makhul and Jebel Khanuka were mere goat paths, and all transport had to be converted from wheeled to pack; one brigade having to be immobilised to provide sufficient pack transport for the troops operating. The difficulties of getting forward, the field and heavy artillery in time to support the infantry were immense, while the heat and lack of water entailed great exertions from the troops.

The Division, however, worked steadily forward, assisted by artillery fire from the left bank, and in the late evening the leading troops (1st Battalion, Highland Light Infantry) made a gallant attack on the advanced trenches of the Turkish position covering Humr. The wire protecting these trenches was uncut, but the H.L.I. were not to be denied, and, rushing the wire, captured the trenches, which they held throughout the night and following morning, despite considerable losses.

14. On the 26th the Division continued the attack on the Turkish position, which was, in addition to being well entrenched, one of great natural strength.

On the same day the 11th Cavalry Brigade (consisting of 7th Hussars, Guides Cavalry, 23rd Cavalry, and "W" Battery R.H.A.) was despatched at an early hour from Uthmaniya (moving wide of the Tigris) to a reported ford opposite Hadraniya, some 14 miles upstream of Shergat. The ford, which was discovered at 3.30 p.m., proved just feasible, but it entailed crossing three channels of the river, one of which was nearly 5 feet deep, with a strong current. The leading regiment having completed the crossing galloped to seize the Huwaish gorge, about 5 miles downstream. This important point was occupied without opposition, and by the morning of the 27th the

bulk of the Brigade had taken up a strong position, blocking the road to Mosul.

During the day the 7th Cavalry Brigade by moving up the left bank of the Tigris towards Shergat attracted the attention of the Turks, and thus masked the movement of the 11th Cavalry Brigade to Hadraniya. Whilst the cavalry was engaged in this operation the light armoured motor cars moving from their base at El Hadr round the right rear of the enemy, cut the telegraph line to Mosul, thus isolating the Tigris force from the 6th Turkish Army Headquarters.

15. During the night of October 26th/27th the 7th Cavalry Brigade, having run out of supplies, was brought back to the bridgehead at Fatha to fill up from the supply columns, and also to be available for use on either bank as the situation might demand.

On the 27th the 11th Cavalry Brigade, with its right flank protected by light armoured motor cars, moved southward from Huwaish and launched an attack against the Turkish reserves with the double object of assisting the 17th Division and concealing its own weakness. Meanwhile the 53rd Infantry Brigade, under Brig.-General G. A. F. Sanders, with some artillery, marched from the Lesser Zab to join the 11th Cavalry Brigade. After a march of 33 miles the leading battalion reached Huwaish early in the afternoon of the 28th, and at once moved into position.

Throughout the day the 17th Division continued to advance over extremely difficult country, maintaining a continuous pressure on the Turks in order to prevent them from putting all their weight against the 11th Cavalry Brigade.

16. At 3 a.m. on October 28th the 17th Division continued its march over a broken, arid, and waterless country. Some eight hours later it closed with the Turkish rearguard which was holding a position three miles south of Shergat, and by 2 p.m. had driven it from its trenches. In this attack the assault by the 2nd Royal West Kent Regiment was skilfully arranged and gallantly carried through to the enemy's rearmost line of trenches, over 200 prisoners and 11 machine guns being captured.

Owing to the complete exhaustion of men and animals due to the heat, lack of water, and their previous exertions, the Division was in no state to pursue. It was, indeed, necessary to get men and animals to the river for water. The Turks were thus able to concentrate during the night in a position amongst a maze of hills and deep ravines about 6 miles S. of Huwaish. Here, however, they were discovered by our aeroplanes and heavily bombed as well as being shelled by our artillery from the left bank.

During the day Turkish reserves some 2,500 strong with several batteries of artillery made repeated attempts from the south to break through the 11th Cavalry Brigade, who barred the road to Mosul, but their attacks were unsuccessful, though the approach of enemy reinforcements from Mosul compelled the Brigade to draw back its right flank to cover its rear.

During the afternoon infantry reinforcements from the 53rd Infantry Brigade began to arrive, and at 6.30 p.m. the 7th Cavalry Brigade (13th Hussars, 13th and 14th Lancers, and "V" Battery, R.H.A.), after a march of 17 hours from Fatha, in which they covered 43 miles, and crossed the difficult Hadraniya ford, where several men and horses were

drowned, joined the 11th Cavalry Brigade on the right bank, and took over the protection of the right flank.

All troops on the right bank north of the enemy main body were now under the command of Brigadier-General Cassels, who conducted the operations which barred the retreat of the Turks to Mosul.

17. The position now was that a stubborn and not yet defeated enemy lay between Cassels' command and the 17th Division. The troops were urgently in need of rest; the 17th Division had been marching and fighting for the preceding four days under most arduous conditions. The 11th Cavalry Brigade had been continuously in action for 72 hours, and all had made very long marches. Nevertheless, it was imperative to call on the troops for renewed exertions in order to close in on the enemy and force his surrender. During the night (28th/29th) the Turks made repeated attempts to break through to the north, but were each time repulsed. During this fighting the Guides Cavalry and 1st Bn., 7th Gurkha Rifles, distinguished themselves by their staunchness.

In spite of exhaustion, darkness, and abominable roads, the troops of the 17th Division responded magnificently to the call made on them, and by 11 a.m. on the 29th had driven back the Turkish rearguard on to the main body, which was holding a position north of Shergat. This position consisted of successive lines of hasty entrenchments commanding a series of ravines which had to be crossed by the attackers. Early in the afternoon the attack was launched against this position in the face of a galling fire. Whilst this was in progress the Turks delivered a heavy and vigorous counter-attack, which in one place reached the line held by the supporting battalions before it was stopped and dispersed with heavy loss by an immediate counter-attack. The 114th Mahrattas particularly distinguished themselves in this affair. Fighting continued throughout the night, the Turks fighting very stubbornly, and partially maintaining their positions.

18. Meanwhile a serious threat from Turkish reinforcements (5th Division troops) moving down from the Mosul direction developed against Cassels' right flank. These troops established themselves with guns and machine-guns on the high bluffs near Hadraniya, but were promptly dealt with by the 7th Cavalry Brigade. The 13th Hussars galloped across the open, dismounted under the bluffs, and, led by their colonel, carried the position by assault, many Turks being accounted for with the bayonet.

Mounted pursuit by the remainder of the 7th Cavalry Brigade cleared away further menace from the north, and resulted in the capture of 1,000 prisoners, with 2 guns and 12 machine guns.

The enemy's avenues of escape northwards were now effectively blocked, thanks to the skilful and resolute handling of his detachment by General Cassels, and the firm determination of his troops, who repulsed every attempt by the enemy to break through.

19. Gripped as in a vice, with his men packed in ravines, which were raked by our guns from across the Tigris, Ismail Hakki, the Turkish Commander, found himself in a hopeless position. All attempts to break through

had failed, communication with the Turkish Commander-in-Chief at Mosul had been rendered impossible, and no relief was in sight. At dawn on October 30th, just as our troops were about to renew the attack, white flags appeared all along the Turkish lines, and later on Ismail Hakki surrendered in person.

A close was thus brought to the last battle to be fought in this war by a Turkish Army. It had been characterised by a stubborn resistance, and was in accordance with what one might have expected from Ismail Hakki and his troops. This Turkish General was the same officer who, in the early spring of 1917, commanded the Turkish forces on the right bank of the Tigris, opposite Kut-el-Amara, and was one of the last to escape across the river when the remnant of his forces were captured in the Dahra bend.

20. Immediately after the surrender the 7th Cavalry Brigade and light armoured motor-cars were ordered to push rapidly along the Mosul road and round up any Turkish troops in the vicinity of Kaiyara. This was effectively carried out. The 14th Lancers, charging with the lance, captured a convoy and some 500 additional prisoners, whose retreat had been cut off by the armoured cars, while the 13th Lancers captured a Turkish battalion 6 miles north of Kaiyara. At this place also a depôt of supplies and a paddle steamer were captured, whilst the machinery established by the Germans at the oilfields was but slightly damaged.

21. Whilst the fighting as described had been in progress Lewin's column had fulfilled its rôle admirably, and had throughout contained and out-maneuvred a superior Turkish force, eventually driving it across the Lesser Zab at Altun Keupri (where the Turks blew up the bridge) in the direction of Erbil. Early on October 31st General Lewin occupied Altun Keupri.

22. The total captures during the operations amounted to:—

11,322 prisoners (including 643 officers),
51 guns,
130 machine guns,
over 2,000 animals,
3 paddle steamers,

and large quantities of gun and rifle ammunition, bombs, a complete bridging train, and war material of all kinds.

23. Immediately the news of the Turkish surrender on the Tigris was received I determined to exploit the victory to the full by pushing on immediately to Mosul, the chief town of the Vilayet of that name, and the headquarters of the 6th Turkish Army. With this object in view a column was formed consisting of the 7th and 11th Cavalry Brigades and the 54th Infantry Brigade, as well as artillery, the whole under the command of Major-General Fanshawe. On November 1st, when the news of the armistice was received, both Cavalry Brigades had reached Hamman Ali, 12 miles S. of Mosul, where they were met by a flag of truce sent by Ali Ihsan, commanding 6th Turkish Army, requesting them to return to Kaiyara, but as I had reason to fear for the safety of the Christian inhabitants of Mosul I ordered the cavalry to move to that place as a deterrent to disorder. The Turkish Commander, however, endeavoured to evade the real meaning of the armistice terms and energetic measures had to be taken to clear the

Mosul Vilayet of the remnants of his troops. By 10th November we were in full possession, and the Turkish troops had been withdrawn to Nisibin.

24. The complete success of the operations reflects the greatest credit on Lieutenant-General Cobbe, who had entire charge of the main operation, and also on his staff and subordinate commanders. The difficulties of supply, not only of food and water, but also of ammunition, were very great, but were largely overcome by the energy and resource of the responsible staff.

The daring and brilliant leadership of the Cavalry Brigades under Brigadier-Generals Cassels and Norton contributed largely to the final result, whilst the able tactical handling of the detached column under Brigadier-General Lewin efficiently safeguarded the exposed flank of our main forces.

The long protracted campaign in Mesopotamia was thus brought to a highly successful conclusion, and my warmest thanks and admiration are due to the troops who achieved this crowning victory. Their courage, endurance, and fortitude under conditions of considerable privation and exhaustion are worthy of the highest praise; they were continuously called upon for redoubled efforts, and they responded nobly and unflinchingly.

25. I now turn to events in North-West Persia, where, as I described in my last despatch, the Turks had during the summer given me some anxiety by reason of my long and vulnerable line of communications to the Caspian Sea.

There were three possible lines on which operations might take place, viz.: Mianeh, Bijar, and Senna. On the Mianeh line the Turks were in possession of a strong position on the Kufon Kuh effectively covering Mianeh from the south. On October 1st our troops were not in actual contact with the enemy, but frequent reconnaissances were undertaken by aeroplanes as well as by light armoured motor cars. From the information received from these and other sources it was clear that the Turks were being withdrawn, but, owing to difficulties of maintenance and to the ravages of influenza, it was decided not to follow them up, but to attack them by aeroplanes only, the rest of the troops on this line being concentrated at Zinjan.

On the Bijar line a strong patrol of British cavalry sent out from Bijar on October 2nd caused the Turkish detachment that had been in contact with them to withdraw. A small mixed force moved north on October 5th, the enemy retiring without offering fight, but a severe epidemic of influenza brought operations to an abrupt close, the troops returning to Bijar on October 9th.

On the Senna line a reconnaissance in force was carried out for 20 miles along the Sakiz road on October 2nd and 3rd, but this failed to establish contact with the Turks, who were later reported to have withdrawn to Sakiz.

26. Immediately after the conclusion of the armistice with Turkey on October 31st, I received instructions to re-occupy Baku (in co-operation with our Allies), and all available troops of the 39th (British) Infantry Brigade were ordered to concentrate for this purpose at Enzeli. They were joined there on November 9th by Russian and Armenian troops under General Bicharakhov, who had been driven by the Turks out of Petrovsk, where the Turkish

Commander, despite representations by both British and French Staff Officers, refused to recognise the armistice. At this time Nuri was commanding the Turkish forces in the Caucasus. An envoy had been despatched to him on November 4th asking for a definite date to be fixed by the Turks for the evacuation of Baku, but a procrastinating reply was received, and in consequence the envoy was sent back again to him accompanied by a staff officer to inform him that Baku would be occupied by a British and Russian force on November 17th, by which date Turkish troops, with the exception of a small detachment to preserve order, were to be clear of the town.

At dawn on November 16th a fleet of 17 transports left Enzeli escorted by three vessels of the Caspian Fleet, which had been armed by the Royal Navy under the supervision of Commodore D. T. Norris and Captain B. G. Washington, R.N.

During the morning of November 17th they were joined off Nargin Island by General Bicharakhov's Russian force, escorted by the Russian Caspian Fleet. The expedition was accompanied by French and American representatives, and the vessel conveying Major-General W. M. Thomson, C.B., M.C., commanding the British troops, entered Baku at the head of the combined fleets flying the flags of Great Britain, France, Russia and America. Our troops landed without opposition, and Baku was taken over from the Turks, who completed their evacuation of the town during the afternoon.

Many and varied were the questions which had to be dealt with in Baku, amongst which I may instance shipping control, feeding the inhabitants numbering a quarter of a million, finance, including the reopening of the Russian State bank, settlement of labour disputes on the oilfields, strikes in the town, payment of overdue wages, reopening the Trans-Caucasus system of railways, getting into working order the oil pipe-line from Baku to Batoum, etc., etc. All these questions were most ably and firmly dealt with by General Thomson, who was quite evidently the right man in the right place.

Our efforts had to contend with the mutual jealousy and intolerance of various factions, and it is not too much to say that all arrangements for reorganisation were hampered by entirely unnecessary delays in withdrawal on the part of the Turks. After retiring from Petrovsk they made further delays at Elizabetopol and other towns, much of which being due to the excessive amount of baggage (mostly loot) which they attempted to remove, together with a reserve of one month's supplies requisitioned by them from the country. A mission had also to be sent to Tiflis to put an end to the hostilities which had commenced between the Georgians and Armenians.

28. Besides the troops in Baku, a small force was also despatched to Krasnovodsk in order to secure that place as a naval base for the shipping working under our orders, and to deny it to the Bolsheviks, who were holding Astrakhan in strength. Portions of this Krasnovodsk detachment were taken to assist in the fighting near Askabad and Merv.

Despite armed Bolshevik ships based on Astrakhan, our armed vessels have permitted of the reopening of the Caspian trade and fisheries except in the far north.

During the month of December the result of our actions by land and sea along the Caspian littoral was one of steady progress towards pacification as the confidence of the people was gradually gained, and the repatriation of the Armenian and Russian refugees, who had been driven out of the Caucasus by the Turks, has nearly been completed.

29. Towards the end of the year troops from our Salonika force landed at Batoum; Baku and Krasnovodsk passed out of my command on the last day of December, 1918, as it was considered easier to maintain troops at these places by the Batoum—Baku line, which was now working with some regularity.

30. Up to the end of 1918 the maintenance of the troops in North-West Persia and in Baku depended on the Persian lines of communication viâ Hamadan and Enzeli. From railhead to Hamadan, a matter of 340 miles, a lightly metalled road has now been made which admits of the passage of light motors 48 hours after rain. From Hamadan to Enzeli, nearly 300 miles, an old metalled road exists, but has to be kept in constant repair. The work entailed in constructing the road from railhead to Hamadan and in keeping open the road from Hamadan to Enzeli reflects the greatest credit on the organising staff as well as on the engineers and pioneers responsible for the work.

31. I now turn to my left flank on the Upper Euphrates where, during October, my information was to the effect that the small force which the Turks had kept in that valley since their defeat at Khan Baghdadi at the end of March was gradually being withdrawn. Haditha was accordingly occupied on October 30th and Ana on November 1st. Abu Kemal, 60 miles upstream of Ana, was visited in the middle of November, and eventually occupied on December 27th. The attitude of the Arabs was everywhere most friendly.

32. Nothing has occurred to mar the peaceful conditions which exist in the region of Ahwaz and the oilfields.

33. On the Tigris line of communication the daily consignment from Basra up river averages 2,600 tons, of which 600 tons are fuel; in addition moves are carried out of considerable numbers of troops. The maintenance of the fleet of some 2,000 steamers, launches, and barges of the Inland Water Transport R.E. has necessitated the erection of large dockyards and repair yards. Moreover, special construction yards have been opened to put together the steamers and barges which arrived in parts from England.

The port of Basra, from very small beginnings, can now be ranked as thoroughly up-to-date. 6,000 tons a day can be unloaded, and 12 ocean-going vessels can be berthed at permanent berths, 8 of which are fitted with electric cranes. The port has been planned so as to be capable of further extensions on the most modern commercial lines, and should prove a considerable asset to the future trade of the country.

34. The Refugee Camp of Armenians, Assyrians, Nestorians, and Jelus, which I formed at Bakuba in September, now contains some 40,000 men, women and children in approximately equal proportions. These refugees have been accommodated in tents and have been carefully separated according to their various tribes and sects into areas and sections for the welfare, cleanliness, and discipline of

each of which selected British officers and men are made responsible. Each area is self-contained with its own piped water supply, cooking and washing places, etc.

Three hospitals and special disinfecting plant have been attached to the camp, and I have received great assistance from the members of the American Persian Relief Commission, who have spared themselves no trouble in providing employment for the women and girls in particular. The men are employed on road making, and work about the camp, for which they receive payment. An orphanage, containing some 800 boys and girls, who have lost their parents during and subsequent to the exodus from Persia, has been instituted, and these children are well cared for, clothed and taught. In addition to the human element provision has had to be made for close on 6,000 ponies, mules, donkeys, cattle, and camels, besides flocks of sheep and goats.

I formed some 3,000 of the able-bodied men into four battalions, provided them with arms and clothing, placed them under the command of British officers, and provided them with instructors with a view to aiding them towards repatriation. The armistice with Turkey has now removed the necessity for armed formations, and these men will be absorbed into their own tribes.

I hope the repatriation of all these refugees will take place early in the coming spring, and I have already set machinery in motion with this end in view.

35. There have been many calls on this force to furnish units and personnel for other theatres. During December, 1917, and January, 1918, the 7th (Indian) Division was despatched to Palestine, and this was followed in April and May, 1918, by the 3rd (Indian) Division and three siege batteries, while at the same time a fourth siege battery went to Salonika. Further, in May, 1918, I was called upon to form 15 new Indian battalions by withdrawing 60 trained companies from battalions in the force, these being subsequently replaced by recruits. Of these 15 battalions some went to Palestine and the remainder to India, to release a similar number for service in other theatres of war. In September, 1918, I despatched 12 seasoned Indian battalions to Salonika, and just prior to the operations which ended at the battle of Shergat two heavy batteries and some 3,500 British infantry drafts were sent to France.

In addition to the above during the past 18 months there has been a constant drain on the force for trained British and Indian officers and other ranks, to the extent of between two and three thousand, to assist in the formation of new units in India and elsewhere.

36. Since the cessation of hostilities I have had under consideration a scheme for educational training in the force with a view to preparing men for civil life pending demobilisation. This is now in operation, and will, I believe, stimulate the desire for study, and help men in their work when they return home. In the theoretical portion of the scheme I have received great assistance from the Y.M.C.A., while technical and practical instruction is being given by the various directorates.

37. The campaign in Mesopotamia has lasted just four years. From small beginnings, when Fao Fort was captured on November 6th, 1914, the ration strength of the force when Mosul

was occupied had grown to some 420,000, including labour battalions.

The area of territory of the Turkish Empire which has been conquered and occupied amounts to 114,000 square miles. The sphere of operations has included Trans-Caucasia and Trans-Caspia, and detachments furnished by the force are being employed over territory extending from Deir ez Zor on the Euphrates, 330 miles N.W. of Baghdad, to Merv in Trans-Caspia, some 1,450 miles N.E. of Baghdad.

Actual captures since the beginning of the campaign amount to:—

45,500 prisoners and 250 guns, together with vast quantities of war material of all descriptions.

These results have been achieved in a country destitute of shade in summer and impassable owing to floods in wet weather, and are a lasting record of the gallantry and endurance of the officers and men, both British and Indian, who have fought uncomplainingly in spite of heat, thirst, rain, and discomfort for four years in Mesopotamia.

38. No general has ever, I venture to think, been more loyally served, and I take this opportunity of recording my most grateful thanks to all ranks and all services who have fought so gallantly, worked so hard, and whose devotion to duty has made the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force an army in which all can be proud to have served.

39. A list of names of officers, ladies, non-commissioned officers and men who have been

deemed to have earned special distinction is being forwarded to you on a separate list.

40. In addition to the foregoing, and in pursuance of the authority delegated to me as Commander-in-Chief, I have made the following immediate awards for gallantry and distinguished service in the field during the period covered by this despatch:—

Bar to the Distinguished Service Order	6
Distinguished Service Order	21
Bar to the Military Cross	1
Military Cross	70
Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross	1
Distinguished Flying Cross	7
Distinguished Conduct Medal	17
Military Medal	115
Indian Order of Merit (2nd class)	22
Bar to the Indian Distinguished Service Medal	1
Indian Distinguished Service Medal	141

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

W. B. MARSHALL,

Lieut.-General,

Commanding-in-Chief,

Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

To be purchased through any Bookseller or directly from H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE at the following addresses:

IMPERIAL HOUSE, KINGSWAY, LONDON, W.C. 2, and 28, ABINGDON STREET, LONDON, S.W. 1;
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Printed for His Majesty's Stationery Office by WYMAN & SONS, Ltd., Fetter Lane, Fleet St., London, E.C. 4.

Friday, 11 April, 1919.

Price Four Pence Net,

