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IN KUT & CAPTIVITY
WITH THE
SIXTH INDIAN DIVISION

MAJOR E. W. C. SANDES, M.C., R.E.

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MAJOR-GENERAL SIR CHARLES TOWNSHEND, K.C.B., D.S.O.

[Frontispiece

IN KUT AND CAPTIVITY

WITH THE SIXTH INDIAN DIVISION

BY MAJOR E. W. C. SANDES, M.C., R.E.

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1919

IN KUT

AND CAPTIVITY

WITH THE SIXTH INDIAN DIVISION

BY MAJOR E. W. SANDER, M.C., R.E.

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LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1919

TO
MY BROTHER-OFFICERS
OF THE
KUT GARRISON

P R E F A C E

So great a field is covered by this narrative that were it written in the popular style of books of adventure it would be necessary either to omit many facts of interest, or to allow the book to run into two or three volumes and become unwieldy. The story mainly follows the fortunes of the 6th Indian Division and its attached troops in prosperity and adversity, in victory and disaster, during their struggle against the Ottoman troops in Mesopotamia; and it describes the adventures of a small portion of the garrison of Kut when in captivity in Turkey.

Such as it is, the author offers the story to his readers, and in so doing tenders his sincerest thanks to his brother-officers who have supplied him with the facts, figures, and photographs which have enabled him to expand his own diary to the dimensions of this volume.

August 1919.

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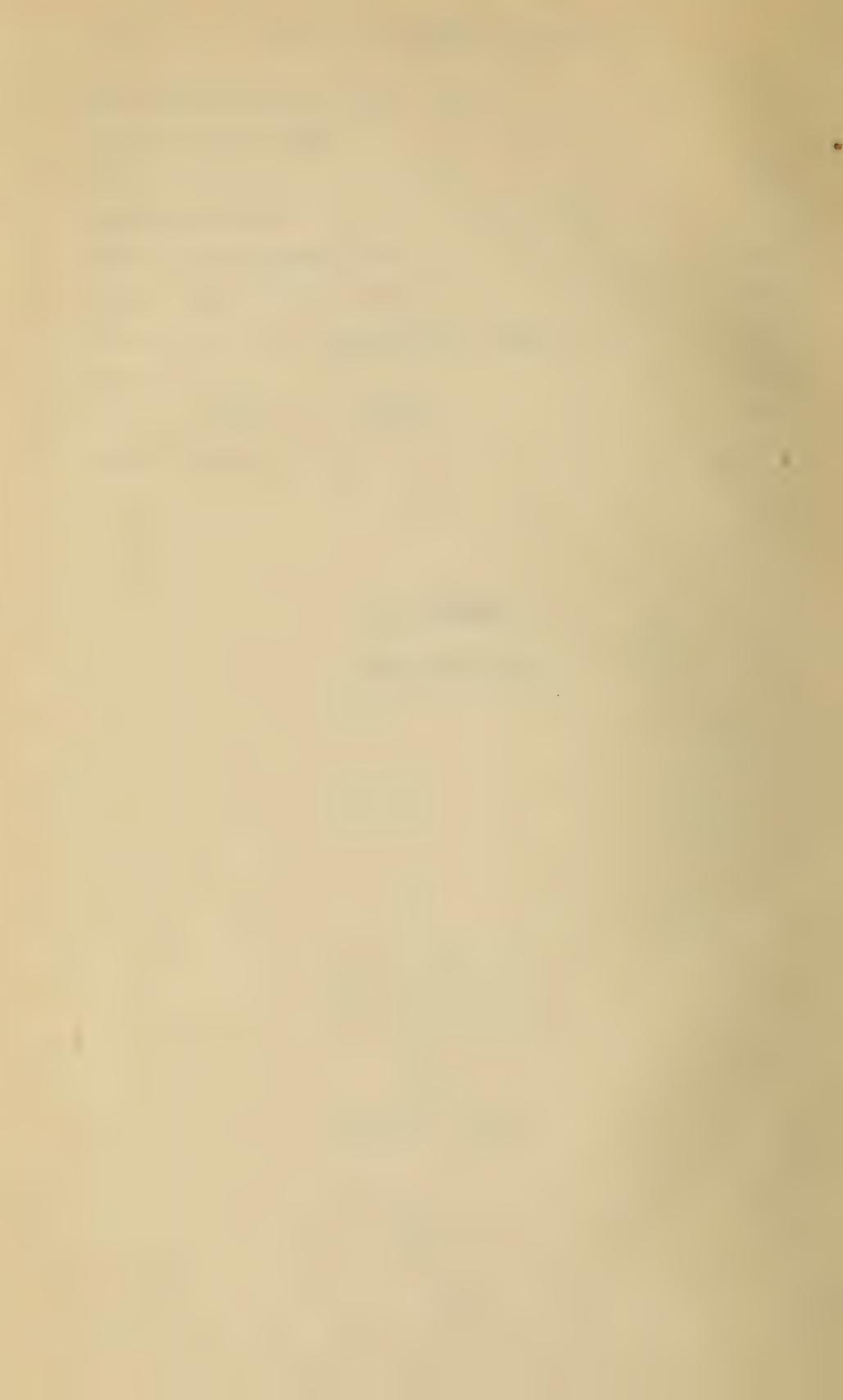
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PART I
VICTORY



CHAPTER I

EARLY EVENTS UP TO THE OCCUPATION OF AMARAH

THE campaign in Mesopotamia was one which, from the smallest beginnings, expanded and grew till it became one of the principal struggles in the Great War. The brunt of the earliest portion of the campaign fell entirely upon one division of the British Army in India—the 6th Indian Division, whose headquarters are at Poona in the Bombay Presidency. This division was commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur A. Barrett, K.C.B., and included the 16th, 17th, and 18th Brigades and Divisional troops.

It could muster rather over 10,000 bayonets, and its three Brigade Commanders were Brigadier-General W. S. Delamain (16th Brigade), Brigadier-General W. H. Dobbie (17th Brigade), and Major-General C. I. Fry (18th Brigade).

The 16th Brigade, under General Delamain, sailed for the Persian Gulf from Bombay on October 16th, 1914, before the declaration of war against Turkey, and touched at Bahrein Island, where the five ships carrying the brigade lay at anchor for ten days. It was thus in close proximity to the head of the Gulf at the moment war was declared on November 5th, 1914, and could consequently strike hard before the Turks had time to take extensive protective measures on the Shatt-al-Arab.

Having taken possession of Fao Telegraph Station on November 6th, 1914, the brigade effected a landing in the Shatt-al-Arab Estuary, and fought small actions against the Turks at Sunniyeh on November 11th, 1914, and at Sihān on November 15th, 1914. The remainder of the 6th Division, under General Sir Arthur Barrett, then arrived from Bombay.

The first serious battle of the campaign was fought at Sahil on the Shatt-al-Arab Estuary on November 17th, 1914, when the Turkish forces were completely defeated, in spite of bad climatic conditions and difficult country.

4 EVENTS UP TO OCCUPATION OF AMARAH [CH. I

Very heavy rain preceded this battle, and the ground became such a quagmire that our field artillery had to bring up their guns at a walk when going into action, and to use double teams of horses in many cases. Our losses were considerable, but the effect of the victory was great, for the way now lay open to Busrah, which was occupied without resistance on November 22nd, 1914. Three steamers sunk by the enemy in the Shatt-al-Arab Estuary failed to block the channel sufficiently to delay our flotilla appreciably. At Busrah great quantities of German stores and railway material fell into our hands.

The local palace of the Sheik of Muhammareh on the river-bank was soon converted into a first-class base hospital, and had been fitted with an electric installation by July 1915. The improvement of the existing roads and paths and the construction of new communications were undertaken with all speed, though much hampered by floods, rain, and lack of road metal. Stone was unobtainable locally, nor can any be found on the River Tigris below Baghdad.

After the occupation of Busrah a small column proceeded upstream, camped at the Shwaib Creek below Kurna on the left bank, and attacked the enemy at Kurna on December 4th, 1914. This column was commanded by Colonel Frazer, 110th Infantry. The column in this first attack upon Kurna consisted of 104th Rifles, 110th Infantry, one double company of 2nd Norfolk Regiment, and the 76th Battery R.F.A. It was assisted by some ships-of-war on the Tigris. The troops advanced to attack Mazera village on the left bank of the river east of Kurna, and captured and set fire to the village. They were unable, however, to cross the River Tigris, so retired to their camp on the right bank of the Shwaib Creek.

Later (on December 7th, 1914) a determined attack was delivered on Kurna from the Shwaib Creek camp by a force composed of the 2nd Norfolk Regiment, 110th Infantry, 120th Infantry (less two double companies), 104th Rifles, 76th and 82nd Batteries R.F.A., one Mountain Artillery Battery, and the 17th Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners (less two sections). Most of this force had arrived from Busrah on December 5th and 6th as reinforcements for the small force already at the Shwaib Creek.

The sketch-map herewith gives a rough idea of the locality and the tactics of the attack on Mazera village

and Kurna. The Turkish trenches south of Mazera were very shallow and badly constructed.

Our guns on December 6th had bombarded the Turkish guns at A on the Euphrates Channel and at B near the Customs House below Kurna on the point of land at the junction of the streams.

On December 7th, 1914, our artillery was assisted by the fire of the guns of H.M. ships *Espiègle*, *Sheitan*, *Lawrence*, and *Miner*, which bombarded the hostile guns at A, B, and C, and also the trenches shown at E prior to the assault of the 120th Infantry on them. This line of trenches was liable to enfilade our attacking line, so attention was paid to it as early as possible. Our artillery on land dealt with the Turkish artillery at C and C₁, behind the enemy's position.

The general attack then took place, and the trenches were rushed with little loss. Mazera village was captured and completely destroyed by fire. Two battalions next pushed on northwards up the left bank of the Tigris, while the remainder cleared the palm groves behind Mazera village. At dusk our force concentrated, and bivouacked west of Mazera. The sketch-map shows the disposition of our force during the attack and indicates the lines of advance of the various units.

On December 8th, 1914, the 2nd Norfolk Regiment and 104th Rifles marched up the left bank of the Tigris to above the bend upstream of Kurna—say to the point marked F—and waited there as a covering party for the proposed flying-bridge which was to be put across the Tigris at the locality afterwards the site of Fort Snipe, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles upstream of Kurna.

At this place a fine piece of work was completed in ferrying the 110th Infantry across the Tigris. The 120th Infantry had crossed the river higher up in mahelas. Lieutenant M. G. G. Campbell, R.E., assisted by some of his sappers, swam the river carrying a line, by means of which a double cable was got across subsequently. To these ropes a mahela was attached as a flying-bridge, and thus the 110th Infantry were ferried across the wide stream.

Arrangements had been made to bombard Kurna from opposite the Fort Snipe locality if the bridging operations were interfered with, but no fire was required; the 110th and 120th Infantry marched south to assault the town,

but subsequently withdrew north again for the night. The Turkish garrison surrendered next day and the two regiments marched into the town.

Our losses were slight. The bridge of H.M.S. *Sheitan* was smashed by a shell and a lieutenant of the Royal Naval Reserve killed. H.M.S. *Miner* was also badly holed. We captured altogether 1,000 prisoners, and also seven guns of more or less out-of-date design. The prisoners were Arab soldiers of the 38th Division, commanded by Turks. Our ships steamed up and down the Tigris during the action so as to avoid damage as far as possible, but even so they were hit more than once.

So ended this small fight which gave us possession of the town of Kurna.

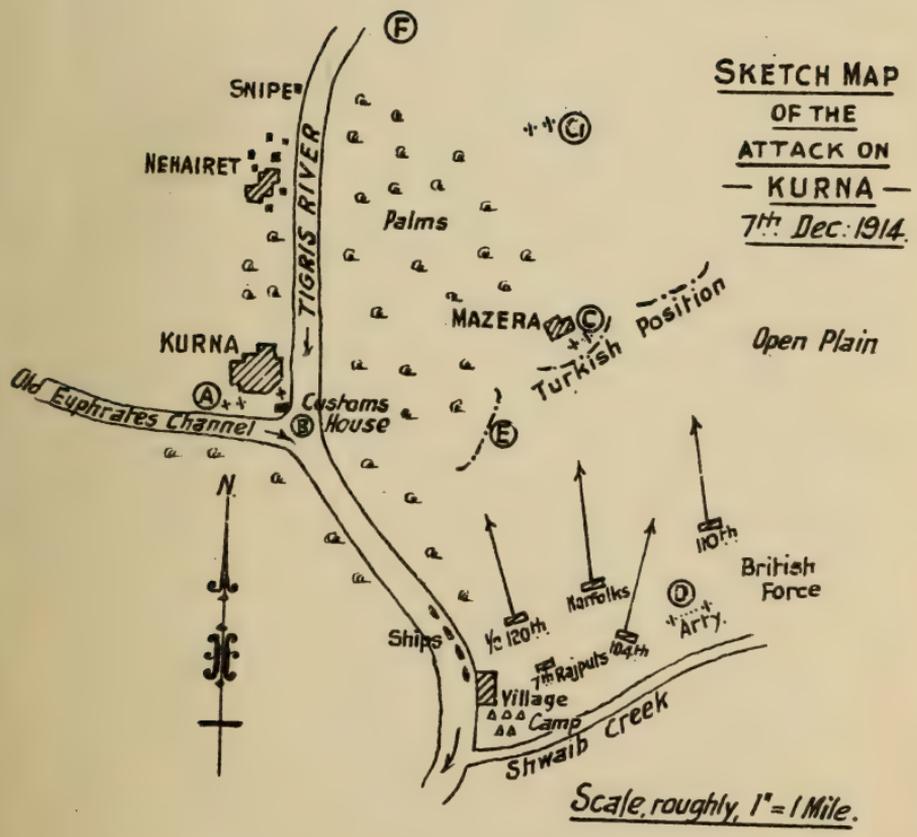
Kurna, forty-eight miles by river from Busrah, is situated at the junction of the Tigris with the old channel of the Euphrates leading from the Hammar Lake. It is stated by the Arabs to be the site of the Garden of Eden. If this statement is to be believed it will surprise no one that Adam and Eve throve after being cast out of the Garden, for a more unsanitary and unpleasant spot it would be difficult to find.

The town—of some 2,000 inhabitants, mostly Arabs—is built on the point of land formed by the junction of the two streams. The houses, of mud or small bricks, have flat roofs and are crowded close along narrow alleys full of villainous smells. These thoroughfares were christened by our force with a variety of cheerful names, such as Lover's Lane, Temptation Square, etc., etc., according to their supposed attractions or distractions.

North of the town, groves of palm trees stretch for a mile or more along the right bank of the Tigris, and similar groves, rather over half a mile in depth, extend up the left bank to the same distance.

Among the groves on the right bank is a straggling village named Nehairet, whose northern edge is very undefined. You may think you have reached the last house, when yet another appears in view through the palms. To this collection of dwellings the following tale is appended: A certain officer submitted a report one fine day, in which he referred to a locality "north of the village of Nehairet." A senior officer's remark on receiving this report was to the effect that it was indefinite, "for," as he aptly put it, "*the village has no north.*"

**SKETCH MAP
OF THE
ATTACK ON
— KURNA —
7th Dec. 1914.**



Scale, roughly, 1" = 1 Mile.

It was thereafter known as the "village without a north"!

On the plain east of the palm groves on the left bank the village of Mazera used to exist, while west and north-west of Kurna on the right bank stretches a great plain which becomes, during the floods, an interminable swamp, full of stagnant water and tall reeds, and emitting an overpowering stench of decaying vegetation. Except during the cold weather, the climate of Kurna is that of a hothouse enlivened by myriads of mosquitoes and sandflies. During the flood season, in April, May, and June, the whole surrounding country, and even the town itself, is more or less under water.

On arrival in this delectable spot the troops first went into camp on the then dry plain on the right bank beyond the palm groves $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles or more north of Kurna. Great efforts were made to render Kurna fit for occupation, and for protection against the approaching floods. A road was constructed along the Tigris and Euphrates river-fronts, and a defensible line selected stretching from the Tigris north of the town round to the Euphrates Channel. Many thousands of sandbags were used along the river-fronts to raise and protect the edges of the roads; a loopholed line of raised parapet was also constructed along the defensible line selected and strengthened by small redoubts at intervals.

During this period of hard work at Kurna, military operations continued on a minor scale elsewhere; but in addition Kurna itself still displayed an aggressive spirit. On January 20th, 1915, a reconnaissance took place from Mazera to the village of Rotah upstream on the left bank, and touch was always maintained with the enemy's outposts round about; or, to put it more correctly, the enemy always kept touch with our force. In February Kurna was honoured by a visit from H.E. Viscount Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, then on a tour to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf. From Busrah a small column was despatched about the middle of February up the Karun River via Muhammareh to prevent the destruction of the Admiralty pipe-line from the oilfields in Persia beyond Ahwaz (see Map No. 1). Great natural difficulties were met with and overcome by this force, and a battle took place at Ahwaz on March 3rd, 1915. On the same date a small action was fought at Shwebda, near Busrah.

Large forces of the enemy, including some of the best Turkish troops (notably the "Fire Brigade" from Constantinople), were now concentrating via the Euphrates for an attack on Busrah itself, with the idea of striking a decisive blow at the heart of the expedition. This force of the enemy received its supplies chiefly by mahelas, which came downstream along the Euphrates. The Euphrates blockade was accordingly taken in hand, and suitable ships with barges carrying guns and troops were continually despatched up the Euphrates channel to harry and disorganise the Turkish means of transport. Such success was attained by sinking mahelas and attacking outposts that the Turks were forced to abandon their water transport for a lengthy line of overland transport of camel convoys across the deserts stretching between Nasariyeh and their forces north-west of Busrah.

The 6th Indian Division received a valuable reinforcement early in April 1915 in the shape of the 30th Brigade. This brigade, under Major-General C. J. Melliss, V.C., C.B., had been recalled from Egypt, and arrived on April 6th, 1915, in Busrah. Its final composition is shown in Appendix A, but it arrived in Mesopotamia only three battalions strong, having left one at Muscat. Other brigades, forming with the 30th Brigade the 12th Division, followed in due course, and later took up their duties on the line of communications along the Tigris, when the 6th Division and the 30th Brigade were far towards Baghdad. The 12th Division was only formed in Mesopotamia in April 1915, from the 12th, 30th, and 33rd Brigades. It was never a complete division, for it had no pioneers, no divisional cavalry, and no guns.

Interest now centred on the small village of Shaiba, about 12 miles west of Busrah. In this neighbourhood large forces of Turks had been concentrating for some days past and threatened an attack on Busrah itself.

The Turks were known to be collected in and around the Barjisiyeh Wood of palm trees, some six miles south-west of Shaiba village. On April 11th, 1915, information was received from our Intelligence Department that an attack in force might be expected on the night of April 11th/12th; and at 5.45 a.m. on April 12th, 1915, the enemy commenced a powerful attack on the Shaiba defences, directed chiefly on the south salient and on the western portion of our perimeter, but also in considerable

force from the direction of Ana's Tomb north of Shaiba ; a large force of Arabs was also advancing to attack us from the south-east from the direction of the Busrah-Zobeir Road.

The attack on April 12th began with a very heavy rifle fire poured in by the Turkish forces from all sides, from ranges in the neighbourhood of 1,000 yards, and within a couple of minutes the enemy's artillery also joined in the fray, firing chiefly from the west and south. The enemy's gun and rifle fire continued to be heavy throughout most of the day, and his snipers especially caused many casualties among our troops. It was not till 9 p.m. that the Turks launched their main assault against Shaiba, and then it met with no success. The enemy finally desisted, leaving the ground strewn with dead.

At 4.30 p.m. on April 12th General Melliss left the Zobeir Gate of Busrah with his staff and an escort of the 24th Punjab Infantry in bellums (paddling boats) and crossed the miles of inundation direct to Shaiba. He reached Shaiba after dark at about 7.30 p.m. on April 12th, and then took over the command of our force from Major-General Fry. On April 13th the Turkish artillery was fairly quiet in the morning—probably because they had had a rather bad time of it on April 12th from the accurate fire of our own guns.

The enemy held a mound known as North Mound some 1,000 yards north of the northern face of our perimeter, and from this small entrenched position threatened our defences, so it was decided to capture North Mound without further delay.

The 7th Hariana Lancers issued forth from our north-east corner and advanced along the inundated shore towards a small wood, and then wheeled to the left and charged the mound. The cavalry was led by Major Wheeler, 7th Hariana Lancers, who, with a squadron of his regiment, galloped straight for the mound, and actually reached it himself, accompanied by his Rissaldar-Major in an heroic attempt to capture an enemy standard. Both he and his Indian officer were killed on the mound. For this gallant attempt he was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. His men charged round the mound under heavy fire, and then retired again to our perimeter, while the 104th Rifles in support also withdrew within

our defences. This, our first attempt to capture the mound, had failed, but soon afterwards it was captured by our infantry.

On April 14th, 1915, at 7 a.m., General Melliss issued orders for our whole force (less two battalions and some guns) to move out to clear the ground between Shaiba and Zobeir to allow convoys from Busrah to get through. Our force formed up outside the south-west corner of the defences—16th Brigade on the right, with the 18th Brigade on its left rear, and the Cavalry Brigade on the right flank. The 16th Brigade (General Delamain) was ordered to disperse a large body of Arab cavalry occupying broken ground to the south between Old Busrah and the small walled town of Zobeir, some four miles south of our position. The brigade advanced against the enemy with the Dorset Regiment leading, the 117th Mahrattas on their left and the other battalions rather in rear. Meanwhile, the 18th Brigade (General Fry) swung half right behind the advancing 16th Brigade and, protected by the cavalry on the right flank, advanced south-westwards towards the Barjisiyeh Wood, roughly five miles distant. Later our whole force faced the Barjisiyeh Wood, with the 16th Brigade on the left, the 18th Brigade on the right but rather in rear, and the cavalry guarding the right flank. Throughout these operations there had been very little fire from the Turkish artillery. The day was very hot and our men and animals were suffering much from thirst.

Our attack then commenced on the main Turkish position east of Barjisiyeh Wood. The position was about two miles in length and consisted of two lines of very shallow trenches (a mere collection of rifle pits), the first line being located in a hollow hidden by a ridge from our troops and the second line on higher ground some 800 yards behind the first. The enemy's strength was roughly 20,000 men and he had thirty guns. There is no doubt that the position had been selected by German staff officers who accompanied the Turkish forces, and the trenches, though very inferior, were well concealed in the scrub jungle covering the plain.

Our line commenced a general advance about 1 p.m. towards the crest of the ridge which hid the Turkish position in the hollow beyond; but when our men appeared on the sky-line 700 yards from the Turkish first line of

trenches, they were subjected to a terrific volume of rapid fire which caused many casualties.

So heavy was the Turkish rifle fire that our troops were unable for a time to advance further, and lay down in the open ; at 3 p.m., however, during a lull in the firing, the 16th Brigade advanced 100 yards, and another 100 yards before 4 p.m., when our firing line was thus within 500 yards of the Turks. At 4.45 p.m. the Turks raised a white flag stuck on a bayonet, but as they did not stand up the British force continued to attack. Five minutes later the Turks jumped up, threw down their arms, and fled towards the wood behind them. They did not hold their second line of trenches. Our troops advanced, and many of the enemy returned and surrendered ; they were collected and marched back to Shaiba, and later on to Busrah. So tired were our men and horses that they were unable to pursue the retreating Turks, the greater part of whom consequently made good their escape. The British force then concentrated and marched back to Shaiba.

The casualties in our force were as follows :

Killed :

British officers	. . .	12	} = 173	} = 1,232 casualties
Indian officers	. . .	6		
British rank and file	. . .	55		
Indian rank and file	. . .	100		
<i>Wounded :</i>				
British officers	. . .	53	} = 1,059	
Indian officers	. . .	20		
British rank and file	. . .	251		
Indian rank and file	. . .	735		

The wounded were collected and removed as soon as possible, and the dead were buried at Shaiba on the following day with full military honours. The Turkish losses are not known, but they must have been very great.

At one time during our attack matters looked extremely serious—so much so, in fact, that orders for a retirement via South Mound were actually written, and the 48th Pioneers advanced from Shaiba to the South Mound to cover the withdrawal ; but, luckily for our fortunes in Mesopotamia, the enemy gave way at last. Sheer grit won the day.

Almost all the enemy's dead, found in the captured

position, were genuine Turks from Anatolia—there were very few Arabs amongst them. They had mostly been killed by shrapnel, and each was found doubled up in his little rifle pit which was of no value as cover against our accurate gunfire.

The flooded country between Shaiba and Busrah caused us the greatest difficulty in maintaining communication and in the removal of our wounded; yet by dint of fleets of native bellums this work was adequately carried out, and every obstacle was overcome.

The Turks abandoned enormous quantities of ammunition when they fled, the greater part of it being small-arm ammunition with the modern pointed bullet of the Spitzer type, thus indicating that the enemy's troops were armed with up-to-date rifles. When the Turks fled from their entrenched position they streamed through the Barjisiyeh Wood, leaving all their tents standing in the wood among the palm trees, and made for their main camping-ground at Nakhailat, some miles to the north-west. They succeeded, however, in getting away practically all their guns. After a short halt at Nakhailat the Turks retreated towards Nasariyeh and thence probably up the Euphrates. They moved with extraordinary rapidity, and had put seventy miles between themselves and our force before they eased down. It is believed that their retreat was much harassed by hordes of Arabs eager to turn upon whichever side appeared to be the loser.

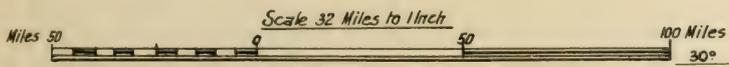
During the afternoon of April 14th, when our force was in a critical situation in front of the Turkish trenches, an incident occurred which may have had some influence in causing the enemy's resistance to waver. General Melliss had sent to Shaiba for every available Jaipur cart to assist in removing our wounded, and just before 5 p.m. a column of these carts suddenly appeared over a rise in the distance, distinctly visible from the rear of the Turkish position. It is believed that the enemy mistook these carts for guns or reinforcements, for it was just after this that their resistance broke down. If such was the case, it was a very lucky incident for us.

On April 15th and 16th large quantities of ammunition were brought in from the enemy's camp in the Barjisiyeh Wood, and other material was burnt, while the evacuation of the wounded across the inundation to Busrah was completed. After this, the garrison of Shaiba was gradually



MAP OF MESOPOTAMIA.

Marsh land shown thus [symbol]. It decreases during Summer.



reduced, and finally Shaiba was evacuated in favour of another post more advantageously situated for the defence of Busrah from the west.

Hundreds of Turkish prisoners were soon marching into Busrah after the battle, and a very woebegone and weary lot they looked as they embarked on the s.s. *Franz Ferdinand* and other ships en route for Burma. The ships were beautifully fitted up, and the Turkish officers occupied first-class cabins provided with luxuries far beyond those to which they were accustomed. General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B., who had arrived from India on April 8th to take over the command of our little army in Mesopotamia, was present in Busrah during the Battle of Shaiba. Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Barrett had relinquished his command early in April 1915, owing to ill-health, and had left Busrah for India on the 12th of that month.

A more complete account of this decisive action at Shaiba is beyond the scope of this volume. The effect of the victory was far-reaching. If the Turks had recaptured Busrah, the disaster would have been a most serious one, and in such a case the blow to our prestige would have been crushing in effect at a particularly important period. Luckily, owing to the prowess of our troops, the enemy did not succeed, but in his turn suffered such a reverse that his action was crippled for several months.

After the success at Shaiba the centre of interest shifted once more to hot and steamy Kurna. Reinforcements were arriving from India and from Egypt, and it was not to be imagined that the growing force in Mesopotamia would be content to sit down for the hot weather in the restricted areas offered by Busrah, Kurna, and the surrounding unhealthy districts. More space was imperative. In addition it was desirable to take offensive operations against the enemy before he could recover fully from his recent reverses. General Sir John Nixon decided that an advance should be made to Amarah as early as possible, both for strategical and political reasons and for the health and comfort of the troops.

I can now take up my narrative from personal experience. Soon after my arrival in Busrah I left for Kurna under orders to take over command of the Bridging Train, 1st K.G.O. Sappers and Miners, from Captain M. G. G.

Campbell, R.E., which I did on April 20th, 1915, at Kurna. The first work of my unit at Kurna after my arrival was the improvement of the great floating bridge already constructed by Captain Campbell, R.E., and the removal from it of all pontoons, equipment, and trestles belonging to the Bridging Train by replacing them with locally manufactured stuff. After this I had to improvise a floating boom across the Tigris, 300 yards upstream of my bridge, to protect the latter from floating mines sent down by the enemy. One of these mines had successfully blown up a portion of the bridge early in April 1915, so no more chances could be taken. The sentries posted on the bridge to shoot at, and thus explode, the floating mines could not always be relied upon to see these engines of destruction in bad weather; at night the mines would always pass unseen.

Such unexploded mines as were picked up near Kurna and elsewhere were of local or of German manufacture, and spherical or oval in shape. The smaller mines were usually provided with some arrangement of projecting rods attached to a small block of metal balanced so as just to support a powerful spring striker. If one of the rods was touched the small block was displaced, the striker fell, and the infernal machine exploded. The charge in one of these mines was 45 lb. of dynamite. The spherical German mines contained about 100 lb. of T.N.T. high explosive, and were electrically-operated contact mines. The Turks also had some huge spherical observation mines containing 450 lb. of gun-cotton exploded by electricity from the shore. These were apparently discarded articles of British Submarine Mining Companies—a branch of the Royal Engineers abolished in England some years ago—but the Turks did not understand their working, for five such mines, captured later by our troops, had been laid but had *no ignition apparatus in them!*

The necessity for a boom near the bridge was apparent to all to protect the bridge and the ships-of-war often at anchor below it, in addition to the boom which already existed opposite Fort Snipe. The existing boom had been constructed before my arrival by the 3rd Sappers and Miners, and was formed of a string of mahela masts lashed along a cable from bank to bank, the cable being attached to mahelas anchored in mid-stream. This boom

was effective for objects on the actual surface, but was too far from the bridge, and would allow an intrepid foe to drop mines into the stream, unseen at night, downstream of Fort Snipe. Hence a second boom¹ under the close rifle fire of Fort Winsloe was constructed by my men. This lower boom could be illuminated by the searchlight at Fort Winsloe.

On the River Tigris below the bridge one or more of His Majesty's ships-of-war *Espiègle*, *Odin*, and *Clio* were frequently at anchor. Each of these sloops was fitted with a bow net capable of being lowered into the water to protect the bows against floating mines. Each ship carried an armament of six 4-in. B.L. guns and smaller weapons, except the *Clio*, which mounted only four 4-in. guns (in addition to smaller ordnance), but was otherwise similar. The little armed launch *Louis Pelly* also put in a frequent appearance at Kurna and did useful patrol work; and stern paddlewheel ships, armed with pompoms, came to Kurna from time to time.

A prominent feature in Kurna was a very fine observation tower, 90 feet high, with platforms at intervals. This tower was erected by Captain R. C. Lord, R.E., 3rd Sappers and Miners, near the Tigris bank just south of Fort Winsloe. A climb to the top of the tower in the overpowering heat of May was indeed a test of endurance, yet the extensive view from the top platform well repaid the effort. Here one was far above the tops of the highest palm trees clustering around; and a panorama of swamp, dotted in the distance with the small knolls occupied by the Turks, stretched on every side; while through these dreary wastes the flooded Tigris slid along between dense fringes of palm trees marking its submerged banks.

In April the fight against the river flood became acute. Unceasing work was required in repairing the edges of the raised roads along the river-bank to prevent the water bursting through, and a considerable volume of water percolated through the soil. Accordingly, to keep the camping-area dry, two centrifugal pumps worked by oil engines were installed before the floods became serious, and by their agency we kept the ground in tolerably good condition. The steady "puff-puff" of the exhausts of these engines could be heard at all hours of the day.

In Fort Winsloe on the river-front was a powerful

¹ See Appendix L.

searchlight worked by a detachment of the Searchlight Section, and a similar light was located in Fort Frazer, 800 yards away, and facing the plain to the west which afterwards became a swamp in March and the succeeding months. Both lights were cleverly improvised by Captain R. E. Stace, R.E. They were worked by cinematograph oil engines, and were fitted with projectors taken off a captured Hansa steamship. These lights did excellent work in discouraging the enemy's snipers, for they were suddenly switched on at uncertain hours in the night, and woe betide the unfortunate Turk or Arab on whom their beams alighted.

The troops forming the garrison of Kurna in May 1915 lived in cleverly constructed reed huts put up by our engineers among the palm trees around the town within the fortified area. One hut in our R.E. camp was used as a mess, where a dripping crowd of four or more officers used to assemble at meal times. Before dinner, reclining forms in deck and camp chairs might be discerned in the dusk grouped in some open spot between the various huts, imbibing a favourite Scotch liquid diluted with soda or water. This recreation was pleasant, but involved continuous labour, for as fast as the liquid went down the right channel it reappeared through the imbiber's skin, or at any rate the soda-water did so. Our life at Kurna was dull and trying, so the news of an intended advance was hailed with joy by one and all.

I have not yet mentioned the dispositions of our friends the enemy. In April and May 1915 the Turks did not attempt any attack in force on Kurna. They were satisfied with night raids, sniping, and distant shelling, and with occasionally letting loose a few mines manufactured mostly by two Germans who lived in a mahela moored behind the Turkish positions upstream. A night attack by the Turks on Mazera in January 1915—really a reconnaissance—had been repulsed with loss, so after this our troops were only exposed to the annoyance of parties of snipers creeping up close to the fortified areas at night and firing into them. Many of these night-birds even stole corrugated iron sheets from places within 100 yards or less of our machine guns, but the searchlights hampered them considerably. Much of our stolen material was found later in the shelters of the captured Turkish trenches.

In April 1915 the Turks were occupying certain advanced positions on the only islands appearing above the universal flood. The most conspicuous and nearest of these positions, viz. Norfolk Hill, was only 1,800 yards from our advanced post at Fort Snipe, but was held only by infantry. Of the remaining positions the most important were Gun Hill and One Tower Hill, in both of which were guns.

The enemy had four light field guns of Krupp make, accurate yet rather out of date. With these weapons the Turks could bombard Kurna, but only the two guns on One Tower Hill could make accurate practice. Very little damage was done by them. Our observation tower was hit once, the shell passing through a steel shield on the top platform and *between the legs* of an observer behind the shield. Needless to say, he did not stay longer to admire the view. Another shell pitched on my bridge of boats over the heads of a line of my men sitting along the upstream edge, yet no one was injured.

The main Turkish camp was at a place called Mazeblah, away to the north, on the horizon. Several mahelas and a couple of steamers were frequently visible at this camp. On Norfolk Hill the enemy could be seen digging with their customary industry every day, and the long-range rifle fire of this outpost caused some annoyance to the garrison of Fort Snipe.

In general, it may be said that our troops were opposed by quite a small body of the enemy, with only a very few guns; but the fact that it was necessary to attack their entrenched positions *in boats* through the swamps rendered the task a formidable and unique one, and likely to be costly.

The attack on the Kurna positions held by the enemy was planned for May 31st, 1915. My own orders were to open the "cut" in my bridge and also that in my boom, after dark on May 30th/31st, and to be ready to dismantle the upper boom at Fort Snipe when ordered to do so. For the latter job the 22nd Company 3rd Sappers and Miners, under Captain Campbell, R.E., was placed under my orders. In the pitch darkness preceding midnight my men opened the boom-cut and the bridge-cut for the passage of ships, and we then lay down for a few hours in the sweltering heat. At dawn I climbed the observation tower to watch the operations, as from this post of

vantage I could keep in touch by telephone with the 22nd Company near Fort Snipe.

It was necessary to attack the Turkish island positions across the intervening swamps in boats, so a large fleet of bellums had been collected, fitted with steel shields, and the men practised daily in paddling the boats and in wading alongside them. Machine guns had also been mounted on rafts of two bellums each.

At 5 a.m. on May 31st our artillery fire opened, and Norfolk Hill, to which the howitzers paid special attention at a range of only 2,650 yards, became a wonderful and awful sight. A small island—only 150 yards long—it was entirely hidden in rolling clouds of yellow fumes, from amid which great mountains of earth shot up as if from a volcano, while the 50-lb. lyddite shells of the howitzers plunged into this inferno in rapid succession. To the wretched Arabs and Turks cowering in their trenches it must have been a hell upon earth. Then our bellums, crammed with men and struggling through the swamps, reached the island; the gunfire ceased, there were a few straggling shots, a small charge, and all was over. One company of the Oxfords had taken the first small Turkish position.

From accounts received later, the sight in the covered trenches was an awful one. Very few of the two hundred enemy in this death-trap survived. The trenches were half filled with dead and dying; portions of bodies lay all around, dyed yellow by the lyddite, and the ground near the trenches was pitted like a honeycomb with shell-craters. A dressing-station was hurriedly arranged, and everything possible was done to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded and dying; the dead were buried in the battered trenches, and the few dazed prisoners were collected. Our losses were very small.

Meanwhile One Tree Hill had been seized, shortly before the capture of Norfolk Hill, by the 22nd Punjabis, who had started very early from Mazera. There was very little resistance in this affair, and the few hostile trenches were soon in our hands.

Fire was next concentrated on the more distant One Tower Hill, beyond Norfolk Hill, and on the Gun Hill position—the latter away among the marshes to the north-west and already the object of an attack by one of our Indian battalions. The troops gradually approached

these low islands and captured them in a few hours. These two positions held the inferior Turkish artillery which had annoyed us for so long.

So ended the actual battle. One could not help pitying the small bodies of the enemy caught like rats in a trap in their island positions whence escape was scarcely possible. The low-lying ground and high water level denied them the use of really deep trenches in most places, and they lacked sufficient material to make first-class shelters.

When Norfolk Hill was almost captured I telephoned the order to Captain Campbell, R.E., at Nehaïret to cut the upper boom at Fort Snipe, and the whole flotilla of ships and barges, crammed with troops and headed by H.M. ships *Espiègle* (with General Townshend aboard), *Odin*, and *Clio*, steamed upstream, so that the guns of the warships could come into action at close range. It was a fine sight from the tower. Small tugs and boats preceded the ships to sweep for mines.

The flotilla paused till all resistance was at an end and all mines had been removed or exploded, and then steamed on upstream. The roar of the battle gradually died away in the far marshes and peace reigned once more over the desolate wastes of water around Kurna. The fight popularly known as the "Regatta" was finished.

On June 1st the flotilla approached the Bahrān position of the enemy, and the guns of the ships and those of the field artillery on barges bombarded the trenches for half an hour, but the place had been already evacuated. After passing Ezra's Tomb, the village of Kalat (or Qalat) Salih was occupied without resistance on the following day. Just above Ezra's Tomb the Turkish gunboat *Marmaris* met her fate. Apparently she could get no further, and was set on fire by our bombardment and abandoned by the Turks.

Finally, on June 3rd, 1915, General Townshend landed from H.M.S. *Comet* at Amarah well ahead of his troops, and, with less than thirty men, received the surrender of this important town about 140 miles by river from Busrah, a daring piece of work only rendered possible by the complete demoralisation of the Turkish forces, for the leading battalion of his force (2nd Norfolks) did not arrive till 6.30 a.m. on June 4th.

The Turkish troops at Ahwaz were now in an unpleasant position, for the route from Ahwaz to Baghdad runs

through Amarah. Small bodies of Turks retreating from Ahwaz, and probably unaware of our sudden jump forward, were taken and disarmed as they trickled into Amarah. The remainder of the 6th Division gradually arrived in the place; picquets were posted, billets allotted, police measures taken, a military governor installed, and all settled down to a well-earned rest. The Turks had retreated up the river to Kut-el-Amarah, with advanced troops near Shaik Sa'ad (see Map No. 1). The heat was intense and military operations most exhausting. The captures resulting from the Kurna-Amarah advance included 17 guns, 2,718 rifles, 1,773 prisoners, four river-steamers, and one gunboat.

My own little unit, with its mass of boats and stores, was still in Kurna awaiting orders, in an atmosphere of smells, sandflies, and unbearable heat. At length our orders arrived, together with the large paddle-steamer P.7. This ship was to tow my eighteen pontoons and the mahela in which I lived with my men amidst a multitude of chesses, baulks, tackle, anchors, and other gear inclined to entangle one at odd moments. We were soon traversing mile after mile of winding channel through a world of swamp and reed, with an occasional glimpse of a darting "mashoof" manned by Marsh Arabs, poling and paddling through the narrow, silent waterways of the marshes.

Norfolk Hill on the left, One Tree Hill on the right, and One Tower Hill on the left were dropped far astern, and the Bahrān position on the left was also passed. The last view we had of Kurna showed the great observation tower rearing its proud head high above the distant palm trees far away across the waters. At Ezra's Tomb, some hours later, we tied up for the night on the right bank, the opposite bank among the palm trees being crowded with our troops and our general hospital tents. Next morning the three sloops passed on their way downstream, after a tricky bit of navigation, in which one ship ran aground. They could go no higher up the difficult channel.

The following evening the Bridging Train arrived at Qalat Salih, passing en route the stranded and burnt Turkish gunboat *Marmaris*. She was subsequently blown up by our invaluable wreck-party under Lieutenant Slater, R.E., who was working up the river raising or



EZRA'S TOMB.



ARABS AT AMARAH.

demolishing Turkish mines and generally clearing up the situation.

During the next afternoon I arrived in Amarah and passed the bridge of Arab boats called "gissaras." We tied up below Norfolk House, a prominent building occupied by the officers of the Norfolk Regiment, situated at the extreme northern point of the town where the Jahalla Canal takes off, and subsequently I took my boats round this point into the Jahalla Canal.

A bridge of boats was urgently required across the 200-yard width of rapid current in this creek (or canal) to prepare for the passage of a column of our troops coming from Ahwaz. We worked like slaves for four days and just completed the bridge as the first dusty and tired Indian cavalry began to arrive from their 100-mile trek across the marshy desert. A more sun-baked and travel-stained set of men it would be difficult to conceive, yet all looked fit and up to any work required of them.

The 6th Division was now complete in Amarah, and held a strong strategical position of much value in the subsequent advance to the important point of Kut-el-Amarah, of which more anon. Whether the advance beyond Amarah was justified or not it is not my business to discuss. Many critics maintain that Amarah should have been held as an advanced post for our main force at Busrah, and that we should have been content with that. Others take an opposite view of the case. Those in supreme command of our forces held the opinion that a further advance to Kut-el-Amarah was justified after the success of the operations at Nasariyeh on the Euphrates, and the result of their decision was the advance to Kut-el-Amarah, and beyond, which took place in the autumn months of 1915.

CHAPTER II

AMARAH TO NAKHAILAT (INCLUDING THE OPERATIONS AT NASARIYEH)

THE town of Amarah is a large place with a thriving trade. Peopled mostly by Arabs, it yet has its large colonies of Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Chaldeans, Kurds, and Bakh-tiaris, in infinite variety of dress and varying degrees of squalor. The Jewish and Chaldean women of the place are particularly noticeable for their gaudy dresses and curious headgear; many are passably good-looking, but their appearance is spoiled by their dirty and slovenly dress. The Arab women always appear in the same dark-coloured robes, though the better-class women do not go out much; many are quite fair, but the prevailing hue is that of Southern Italians. The more wealthy Arab men seem to do nothing but lounge all day in small ramshackle cafés, or on benches outside these shops, drinking black coffee or tea out of small glasses.

The chief feature of the town is its great extent of river-frontage on the left bank of the Tigris. Along this front runs a wide road, thronged by a cosmopolitan crowd at all hours of the day. The deepest channel of the river runs close along the left bank, so ships can come alongside the river-front and load or unload stores with ease. All along the $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of the front, flat-roofed, double-storied houses built of brick—each house with its inner courtyard—make a show of prosperity, unmarred, in the distance, by the dirt which closer inspection usually reveals.

An extremely prosperous bazaar, completely covered from end to end by a brick vaulted roof, runs for some 300 yards back from the river; and here a jostling crowd of all nations clusters round the small shops on either side, fingering the weird assortment of goods in each stall, and bargaining for a couple of hours, if necessary, over the spending of one piastre. The merchandise on view is

mainly composed of the cheapest products of Birmingham, Sheffield, and Manchester, interspersed with shoddy German ware, gaudy native cloth and other local goods, but the deep gloom of this arcade is a welcome change to the glare and dust outside.

A rickety floating bridge of Arab "gissaras," now replaced by steel pontoons, gave access, in May 1915, to the right bank of the Tigris, which is thickly studded with palm trees. On this bank there are a few comparatively good houses, but the dwellings are mostly of a poorer class and are not numerous. The "gissaras" (see Appendix E) of the bridge were built in Amarah. Each consisted of a framework of round spars (bullies) nailed together, covered with rotten planking, and coated outside with bitumen (gir). The boats supported a curious roadway 5 feet above the water, so that small boats could pass underneath. The roadway was of round bullies, nailed down to the boats, with odd bits of planking nailed onto the bullies. A layer of litter topped all, and a shaky handrail on either side gave an idea of safety. The bridge was about 200 yards long with a roadway 16 feet wide. It was a typical example of an engineering structure in a country ruled by the Turks—ugly, cheap, unsafe, and of rotten material, just holding together by pure luck.

North of the town the Jahalla Canal runs off eastwards, separating into two branches within half a mile or so of the Tigris. Spanning one branch was an extraordinary wooden road-bridge, a part of which could be raised to pass boats, in the manner of the Tower Bridge on the Thames. Near this bridge we established an excellent bathing-place with a springboard for diving, and before dusk the banks of the stream were lined with officers in a state of nature enjoying a refreshing swim. Along the Jahalla front of the town looking out over the desert towards the Pusht-i-Kuh Hills away on the horizon, cool breezes in the hot weather helped to make life bearable.

The capture of Amarah blocked the road to Ahwaz for our friends the Turks, but the route to the town of Nasariyeh on the Euphrates, by way of Kut-el-Amarah and the Shatt-al-Hai Channel, remained open to them (see Map No. 1). By July 1915 a considerable Turkish force had collected at Nasariyeh. This force constituted a threat against Busrah and our line of communication along the Tigris River. It accordingly became necessary to deal

with this menace before a further advance could be attempted from Amarah.

A force was collected early in July and despatched up the Old Euphrates Channel from Kurna. The expedition was under the command of Major-General Gorringe. It included the 30th Brigade of the 12th Indian Division, the 90th Punjabis, a wing of the 48th Pioneers, the 63rd Battery R.F.A., the 30th Mountain Artillery Battery, and two companies of Sappers and Miners (17th Company 3rd Sappers and 12th Company 2nd Sappers), together with the necessary administrative formations for a detached force.

The expedition steamed up the Old Euphrates Channel in ships with barges attached, and towing strings of "bellums"; it crossed the shallow Hammar Lake (*vide* Map No. 1), at that time navigable, though with difficulty, but it was checked one mile up the channel leading off the other side of the lake by an obstruction made by the enemy across a narrow reach of the stream. This obstruction was ingeniously designed to stop the passage of ships and boats of every sort, and much time and labour must have been spent upon it. It was cunningly contrived by sinking bellums and mahelas loaded with earth in the stream, interlacing the sunken craft with matting, and then filling in all spaces with rammed clay. The result was a solid dam 30 feet thick, rising some feet above the flood level.

The troops waited six or seven days while the obstruction was being partially cleared away by demolition with explosives and by manual labour. Thirty mines, captured from the Turks, were hurriedly sent up from Busrah for the demolition work; deep holes were dug into the dam at intervals, and the mines were inserted and tamped. The subsequent explosion and the rush of water following it did much to clear a passage. The force of the torrent of water was so great that the steamers were unable to make headway against it under their own steam alone. This difficulty was overcome by attaching three ropes to each ship negotiating the opening, and manning each rope with 100 men; by dint of much hauling, combined with engines working at highest pressure, the vessels were coaxed through the gap one by one. The enemy hardly bargained for such skill and resource.

The main Turkish position was found below Nasariyeh

astride the river, the outer flanks on both banks resting on marshes. On the left bank were date palm groves with the usual irrigation cuts; on the right bank, open country and a creek—supposed to be unfordable—immediately in front of the position. To cross the creek under concentrated close rifle fire without great loss was a difficult problem. A barge was brought up by an armed tug, and, by mooring it across the creek, a bridge of some sort was improvised. This work was carried out in a most plucky manner by the Sappers and Miners, assisted by the Pioneers, under a hail of bullets from trenches less than 100 yards distant. The difficulty of crossing the creek, however, had been over-estimated, and a bridge was subsequently found unnecessary; the troops waded across the stream, except the Gurkhas, who adopted the quicker and drier route, though badly exposed to fire, and the Turkish trenches were soon taken.

A few days were next spent in reconnaissance, and an attack was planned having for its primary objective an outlying sandhill in the marshes on the right bank.

The 24th Punjab Infantry, supported by the 30th Mountain Artillery Battery, advanced in bellums to assault the sandhill, but without success, for as the Turks on the sandhill were on the point of retiring, a very large force of Arabs opened fire on our troops wading through the swamp. We suffered very heavy casualties, the unfortunate wounded in most cases falling into the water and being drowned. The casualties among the officers of the 24th Punjabis were especially heavy, for they led the attack with the greatest heroism, and suffered accordingly.

The positions already captured were now consolidated, and the troops waited in a temperature of 113° F. while reinforcements arrived from Busrah and Kurna and from the 6th Division at Amarah. These consisted of the 18th Brigade of the 6th Division, the 1/5th Hants Howitzer Battery of four 5-inch howitzers from Kurna, and four 15-pounder field guns of the Volunteer Artillery Battery. On the arrival of these formations a second and successful attack was made on July 24th, 1915. The positions on the left bank were first heavily bombarded and captured; then all the guns were turned on to the right bank positions, and finally, after another heavy bombardment, these were also assaulted and captured.

The whole of the Turkish artillery, consisting of fourteen field guns of Krupp make, one 40-pounder and two mountain guns, fell into our hands, in addition to hundreds of prisoners. Our force then moved on and occupied Nasariyeh, a small town with many date palms and vineyards, situated on the Euphrates at its junction with the Shatt-al-Hai.

Nasariyeh having been garrisoned, a Military Governor was appointed and defences constructed; the greater part of the force then returned to its original stations at Busrah and Amarah. Thus ended the Turkish scheme for threatening our Tigris line of communication.

The fighting at Nasariyeh was carried out under fearful difficulties in a terrible climate, and the hardships suffered by our troops, exposed all day to the burning sun of July among the marshes of the Euphrates, can be better imagined than described. Scores of men went down daily with heat-stroke, and the wonder of it is that any British troops could fight under such conditions. The advantages gained by the victory were very great, however, and well worth the loss of life entailed, deplorable though this was.

The scene now shifts again to the operations on the Tigris.

It was well known at this period that the Turks were busily preparing a strong defensive position on the Tigris below Kut-el-Amarah. Every month of grace allowed to them rendered that position stronger, and also permitted more reinforcements to reach the enemy from Baghdad. General Townshend also doubtless wished to utilise the whole of the cold weather, then approaching, for offensive operations. The troops were well rested, large masses of stores had been collected, and the strategic position of Kut rendered its capture a matter of some importance to us. Accordingly, late in July 1915, the 16th Brigade, under General Delamain, was despatched upstream to Ali-al-Gharbi (see Map No. 1), and occupied that village as an advanced post on August 1st. An Arab chief called Ghazbān assisted our advance with his horsemen, but afterwards turned against us.

The Turkish outposts had moved downstream below Shaik Sa'ad, but the main efforts of the enemy were devoted to strengthening the great Es-Sin position astride the Tigris below Kut-el-Amarah. They had impressed all local Arabs, and the latter were digging hard every day.

Early in September 1915 I received orders to advance with my bridging train, now increased to a fleet of eighteen pontoons and forty-two danacks.¹ These boats had been gradually assembled at Ali-al-Gharbi during August, being towed upstream (a few at a time) by successive steamers taking up troops and stores. The danack rafts were very frail and easily damaged, yet most arrived in safety, and also all the valuable pontoons except one, which foundered. On arrival at Ali-al-Gharbi, after passing Kumait and Ali Sharqi en route, I was ordered to throw a bridge at once across the Tigris, and did so south of the village at a difficult site with a high bank on the west shore and a quicksand on the east (or left) bank. In a few days the remainder of the 6th Division, reinforced now by a portion of the 30th Brigade of the 12th Division, began to arrive. The country became a mass of camps and the river a seething cauldron of ships and boats. On September 12th General Townshend's force was concentrated at Ali-al-Gharbi. The heat was intense and the dust and glare very trying. The mercury in the thermometer in my little tent during a couple of days I spent ashore touched 120° F. more than once, and even my men were knocked over by the temperature.

The flotilla carrying part of the 6th Division was soon on its way again upstream, bound for Sannaiyat, while the remainder marched up the left bank. Ali-al-Gharbi then reverted to a state of comparative repose. Crowds of Arabs roamed over the deserted camping-grounds picking up the odds and ends left behind. My orders were to wait till a column of transport (the 30th Mule Corps under Captain Stewart, S. and T. Corps), which was marching up the left bank from Amarah, had arrived and crossed to the right bank. I was then to dismantle the bridge preparatory to a move. In a few days the column came labouring in—mule carts, pack mules, and men, all very dusty and tired. They crossed the bridge safely in an hour, and we then fell to work dismantling and making up tows of boats. Two naval launches, *R.N.1* and *R.N.2*, arrived from Sannaiyat to tow my boats, and also the ship *T.2* under Captain Brown, R.N.R. We were soon moving, for we were urgently wanted at the big camp upstream. And so farewell to Ali-al-Gharbi.

An uneventful voyage through the Biblical country of

¹ See Appendix E.

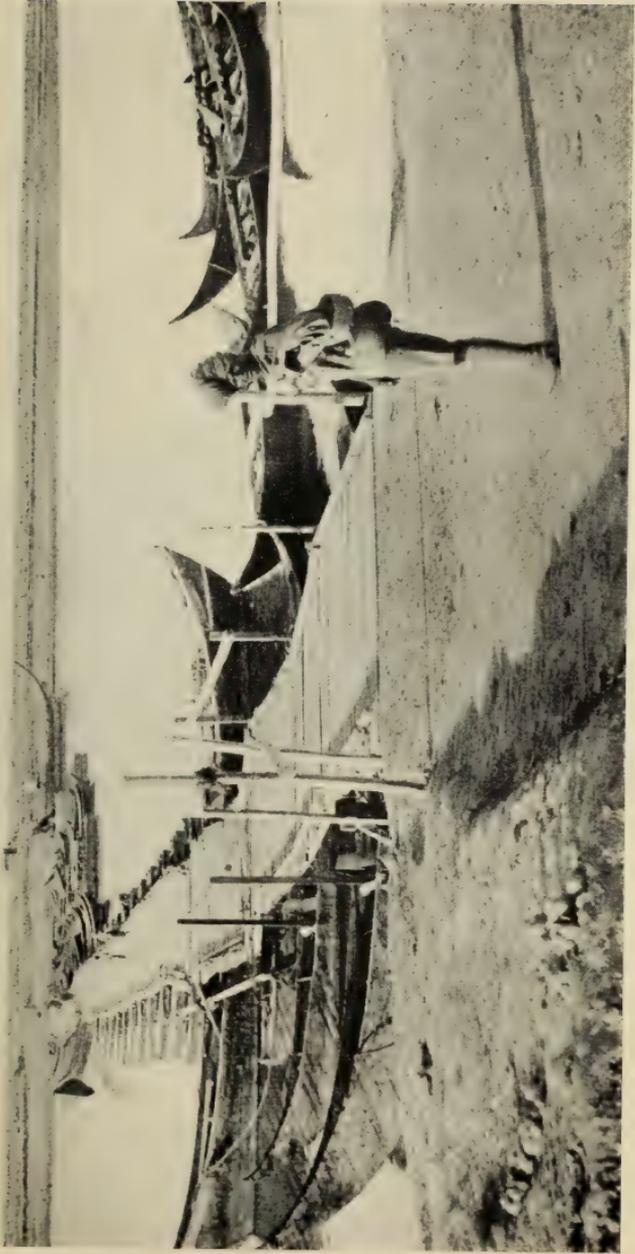
Shinar brought us past the village of Shaik Sa'ad on the right bank and thence westwards to Sannaiyat, where all was bustle and preparation. Observatories raised their proud heads to the sky; aeroplanes and seaplanes buzzed, roared, and splashed about; dust rolled along in continuous clouds; streams of carts crawled from camp to camp; and perspiring troops with faces white with dust trudged from place to place. In fact, all the usual sights and sounds of a great camp met the eye and struck the ear with redoubled force after the calm voyage up the silent river.

The camp was pitched along the right bank, and a long line of steamers, moored along this bank, completed the scene. The left bank was grassy and covered with thorn bush. I set to work to make a bridge at once, assisted by a company of the 3rd Sappers and Miners; and this bridge, which was 270 yards long, we completed in seven and three-quarter hours, so we all congratulated ourselves on a good piece of work.

Two or three days later I went upstream in the ship *T.2* with Major Winsloe, R.E., to select a bridge-site for the next camp at Nakhailat. Here we came in sight of Turkish cavalry patrols. We had some anxious moments while our ship was trying to get out from the river-bank and was prevented from so doing by the wind and current; our capture seemed not improbable, but we got clear at last and raced off downstream with the information required.

On September 26th, 1915, our troops marched from Sannaiyat at 5 a.m. and arrived within striking distance of the Es-Sin position. The 18th Brigade went up the river in ships, but the remainder marched up the right bank and camped on that bank near Nakhailat behind the Chahela Mounds (see Map No. 2).

A bridge was urgently required, as usual, and my fleet left Sannaiyat at early dawn towed by various ships proceeding upstream. My own mahela, and another small mahela with baulks and other timber, were being towed by a launch when the small mahela began to sink, and in the confusion of hoisting the heavy beams out of her, one of these slipped and fell across my left foot, crushing the ends of two toes badly, but by hurried bandaging and winding a puttee round the injured foot I was able to supervise the work of bridge construction on arrival at



BRIDGE AT ALI-AL-GHARBI.

Nakhailat. It was more than two months, however, before I could wear a boot again on my left foot. At Nakhailat I erected a short bridge at the previously selected site below the burnt remains of the little village of that name on the left bank. The site was a difficult one because of the high, crumbling right bank with a rapid current close by and a quicksand on the left bank. The river also ran on a very sharp curve which made it difficult for ships to steer a safe course through my bridge-cut. The site had the advantages, however, of being screened from the view of the Turks, and of being just out of range of their shrapnel.

September 26th saw almost the whole of General Townshend's force—guns, troops, and transport—massed opposite Nakhailat on the right bank of the Tigris, with the ships moored lower down on both banks and adequately guarded. Observatories were erected and gun-emplacements prepared upstream of the village; two entrenched positions were dug on the right bank near the bridge; and the airmen toiled unceasingly at their machines or sailed above us to reconnoitre. The Short seaplanes were not satisfactory. They were too heavy to rise quickly in spite of their enormous 120 h.p. Sunbeam engines, nor could they rise to a suitable height. The spectacle of one of these monsters rushing along the water like a great duck, and then rising with a roar over my bridge, was a never-failing source of interest to my men. These seaplanes had been brought from the Rufigi River in East Africa, where they had assisted in the destruction of the German warship *Koenigsburg*, but their engines were now much worn and required renewal.

The decisive action at Es-Sin deserves a chapter to itself. The strategy of our generals in this battle was skilful and their tactics bold; and even though the results achieved were not those anticipated, they were sufficiently remarkable to add still further to General Townshend's reputation in Mesopotamia.

CHAPTER III

THE BATTLE OF ES-SIN

THE important little town of Kut-el-Amarah—important, that is, from a military point of view—is situated on the left bank of the River Tigris, which is here a wide and rapid stream, very difficult to cross. The Turks were well aware, in September 1915, that the capture of this town was the objective of our force, and the line of retreat for their own army lay along the left bank of the Tigris past Kut. Hence they determined to offer a strong resistance to our advance at the good natural position of Es-Sin, seven miles downstream of the town and chiefly on the left bank at that time.

After the reverse at Kurna and the pursuit to Amarah by our troops, the Turks concentrated their attention on the preparation of a very extensive entrenched position at Es-Sin, and in September 1915 they had had four months' grace in which to prepare the ground for defence. In this task the enemy employed large gangs of Arab coolies, and no doubt they got the maximum amount of labour out of these men for the minimum amount of pay.

The trenches and redoubts of the Es-Sin position in September 1915 were fairly complete. The fire trenches were deep and narrow, and in most instances provided with loopholes, and the communication trenches were exceedingly deep. The greater part of the line of fire trench was protected by wire entanglements, in many places screened from view by being sunk in specially-prepared depressions. The wire itself was generally of inferior quality—frequently plain wire was used in place of barbed wire. As an additional obstacle, lines of small deep pits, containing sharpened stakes, had been strewn in front of the trenches, and in many localities contact land-mines had been laid. The defences on the banks of the River Tigris were particularly elaborate.

Attempts had also been made to block the river-channel by a boom, and by means of sunken mahelas loaded with heavy material. The Turks had a second line of trenches about 1,000 yards in rear of their first line. Elaborate arrangements also existed in the form of large dug-outs (shelters) for the protection of officers and for the storage of ammunition. Large pumps on the river-banks, driven by oil engines, supplied water in pipes to several points in the position. A flying-bridge within the position gave access for small bodies of troops from one bank to the other.

A reference to Map No. 2 will show sufficiently clearly the general lie of the country. It will be seen that the Es-Sin position in September 1915 was roughly eleven miles in length, of which the greater part lay on the left bank of the Tigris. The right flank of the position, on the right bank of the river, was protected by the Dujailah Redoubt, and the left flank on the left bank of the river by the Ataba Marsh. An attack directed on the left flank was rendered very difficult by the extent of the great Suwaikieh Marsh, and a frontal attack would be split into two portions by the position of the Suwada Marsh.

Through the position ran the River Tigris, facilitating the arrival of Turkish reinforcements and supplies from Kut or Baghdad. On the right bank the high embankment of an old canal provided a series of good observation posts. The whole country for miles in front of the Es-Sin position was as flat as a pancake except for a few small sandhills. It was also entirely destitute of trees, or even of high scrub. Such was the great entrenched position which General Townshend set out to capture in September 1915, when it was held probably by 15,000 or more trained Turkish and Arab troops.

On September 26th practically our whole force—consisting of the 16th, 17th, and 18th Brigades of the 6th Division, a portion of the 30th Brigade of the 12th Division, and the 6th Cavalry Brigade—was camped in the neighbourhood of the Chahela Mounds on the right bank of the Tigris upstream of my bridge. Below the bridge, as before described, lay the flotilla of ships moored to both banks. The Army Commander, General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B., was present on board the s.s. *Malamir*, and the Bishop of Lahore was also at Nakhailat during the operations at Es-Sin. The Bishop spent a large portion

of his time visiting the sick and wounded in the hospital tents.

The enemy had carefully "registered" the Chahela Mounds with their guns and during the afternoon of September 26th bombarded the neighbourhood with shrapnel, but without much effect.

General Townshend, who had come upstream from Sannaiyat in the s.s. *Mejidieh*, crossed to the right bank during the morning in the steam launch *Delawar*, and went to the Chahela Mounds, from which place he reconnoitred the Turkish position as far as was possible. Every available tent was pitched at the Chahela Mounds, whether required for use or otherwise, so as to make as big a display as possible on the right bank.

On the afternoon of September 26th the 103rd Mahrattas advanced from the Chahela Mounds a couple of miles upstream to another group of sandhills at the point marked N on Map No. 2, and dug themselves in there with as much display as possible, so as to deceive the enemy. This battalion remained at N during the ensuing night and returned to Chahela at midday on September 27th, 1915.

At Sannaiyat a small post had been left, garrisoned only by 100 convalescent men and a detachment of Artillery Volunteers with one 15-pounder gun. A body of 2,000 Turkish cavalry under Kai-Makam Subri Bey reached the Tigris downstream of Sannaiyat during the action at Es-Sin, and captured and sank thirty-two of our transport mahelas, one or two barges, and a telegraph launch, but did not attack the post. The launch was subsequently raised and repaired. This force of cavalry with two guns then went on to Ali-al-Gharbi, where we had two double companies of the 24th Punjab Infantry, some convalescents, and a large mass of stores and two aeroplanes. The post was commanded by Captain C. A. Bignell, 4th Rajputs. The enemy arrived at 4 p.m. and intended to attack that night (September 28th/29th) but did not do so, and retreated before dawn. Our main force was too much occupied at Es-Sin to deal with these raiders.

The scheme of attack decided on by General Townshend was to make a feint upon the right bank of the river, and then to transfer practically the whole of his force to the left bank. A portion of it was then to hold the Turkish defence between the Suwada Marsh and the Tigris, while the larger part of it broke through the Turkish line be-

tween the Suwada Marsh and the Ataba Marsh (*vide* Map No. 2) and then rolled up the enemy's position and cut off his retreat while he was being attacked in front by the "holding" force between the Suwada Marsh and the River Tigris.

When the infantry had broken through the Turkish line the cavalry were to push round the enemy's left flank, towards Kut and the Baghdad road, to pursue the Turks and to capture as many of the enemy as possible. The feint on the right bank, coupled with the large number of tents at the Chahela Mounds and the conspicuous movement of the 103rd Mahrattas also on the right bank, were all designed to deceive the foe into anticipating the main attack on that flank, and thus to induce him to transfer his reserves to his right flank, leaving his left flank thinly held. For the benefit of the uninitiated I may say that the "right bank" of a river means the bank on the observer's right *when facing downstream*—thus at Es-Sin the right bank was the bank on the south side of the Tigris. The left bank similarly is that on the observer's left when he is facing downstream.

The feint on the right bank was carried out on September 27th by the 16th Brigade under General Delamain. This Brigade marched out from the Chahela Mounds at 4 p.m. towards the enemy's position, accompanied by a portion of the 30th Brigade (*viz.* 2/7th Gurkha Rifles and half of the 76th Punjabis), and, on arrival at the sandhills marked N, the troops dug trenches with much display and throwing about of dust. At dusk the 16th Brigade retired again to my pontoon bridge at Nakhailat and crossed in rear of the other troops to the left bank, leaving the portion of the 30th Brigade in the trenches upstream of the Chahela Mounds at the point N, with a small force holding trenches defending the right bank bridgehead at Nakhailat. During the morning of September 27th all the hired transport of the division (camels, donkeys, etc.) had crossed the bridge to the left bank, unseen by the enemy, to ensure that no delay occurred in the rapid transfer of the fighting troops later on. The bridge was covered with a thick layer of earth to reduce the noise of the wheeled traffic, and I found this covering quite effective as the weather was dry. If rain had come on, the earth would speedily have become sticky clay, and impossible for such work.

At 4 p.m. on September 27th, 1915, the fighting troops of the 6th Division commenced to cross my bridge at Nakhailat. The crossing continued without interruption till 9.30 p.m., when all the troops had reached the left bank of the Tigris, including the 16th Brigade which had returned from the demonstration on the right bank. The period of the crossing was an anxious time for me, but everything went without a hitch. A large mass of earth from the right bank had fallen during the previous night on to two danacks in the bridge close to that bank, completely destroying them and causing us some hours of work in the dark. There was always a chance of such an accident again occurring, and this would have meant the interruption of traffic for two or three hours, so I was exceedingly glad when the division was safely across the river. The right bank was continually crumbling away because of the rapid current curving along it.

For the purposes of the attack General Townshend divided his force into what may be called a "Maximum Force" (or "Principal Mass") and a "Minimum Force." The Maximum Force was formed by a column known as "Column A." The rôle of the Maximum Force was to attack and force its way through the Turkish position; while the Minimum Force (Column B) was intended to hold the enemy and to frustrate any counter-attack. Column A consisted of the 16th and 17th Brigades, with a portion of the divisional troops, and was under the command of Major-General Delamain; while Column B was composed of the 18th Brigade, with some divisional troops, under the command of Major-General Fry. A small detached force was also detailed to arrange for the safety of the right bank. It consisted of a portion of the 30th Brigade of the 12th Division, viz. 2/7th Gurkha Rifles and two double companies of the 76th Punjabis. Its commander was Lieutenant-Colonel Climo of the Gurkhas.

In Column A the 17th Brigade was commanded by Brigadier-General Hoghton, and the 16th Brigade was temporarily under the command of Colonel MacGeorge of the 117th Mahrattas, while Major-General Delamain commanded the whole of the column. The divisional troops accompanying Column A were the 76th and 82nd Batteries R.F.A., the Hants Howitzer Battery, the Machine-Gun Battery, and the 22nd Co. 3rd Sappers and

miners. Those accompanying Column B were the 63rd Battery R.F.A., and the 17th Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners (less two sections).

On September 26th, on arrival at Nakhailat, the 104th Rifles had been sent out some three miles northwards to establish a post known as Clery's Post, at the downstream end of the long Suwada Marsh, for use as a dressing-station, and also to keep the narrow neck of land between the Suwada and Suwaikieh Marshes clear of prowling Arabs. This battalion was still at Clery's Post on the evening of September 27th. The position of the post is clearly shown on Map No. 2.

The whole essence of the attack on the Es-Sin position lay in its being in the nature of a surprise, so that it was of great importance that the Turkish positions should be assaulted and captured at earliest dawn before the enemy had time to reinforce his threatened left flank. It seems probable that the feint on the right bank on the evening of September 27th had the desired effect of causing Nuruddin, the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, to reinforce his right flank heavily during the night of September 27th/28th. According to Turkish reports, 5,000 men were transferred to the right bank during that night across the bridge behind the Turkish position. General Townshend had considered a scheme for the destruction of this bridge with explosives by an officer taken up to it by a seaplane, and landed above it, but the scheme was abandoned.

It was of supreme importance that our Columns A and B should be in a position to engage the enemy at the first streak of dawn, and the two columns consequently executed night marches to arrive at their positions of deployment close to the hostile trenches.

After crossing the bridge at Nakhailat, Column B (18th Brigade) advanced to our aerodrome situated about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles north-west of Nakhailat village, and thence marched during the night towards the hostile position between the Suwada Marsh and the Tigris past the point marked Q. At 5 a.m. on September 28th this force, under Major-General Fry, was deployed facing the Turkish first-line trenches at a distance of about 1,200 yards from them, and was in occupation of a convenient nullah.

The Divisional Headquarters were established in one of two observatories erected on the left bank of the Tigris a quarter of a mile north and north-east respectively of

Nakhailat. Here General Townshend remained throughout the operations on September 28th, 1915.

The duty of Column B, as before stated, was to hold the front of the Turkish position while Column A turned the left flank of the position, and then to deliver a frontal assault and break through the opposing lines when Column A had got well behind the enemy's left flank. General Fry, therefore, was unable actually to assault the trenches in front of him till reports of the success of General Delamain's force should enable him to do so. Much depended consequently on the celerity and accuracy of the operations of Column A, and on the rapid transmission of news of its progress to General Townshend at Nakhailat so that orders could be issued to General Fry.

The chief interest of the Battle of Es-Sin centres in the operations of Column A under Major-General Delamain. This column marched away from the vicinity of Nakhailat at 10.30 p.m. on September 27th, and headed for Clery's Post. A signal section laid heavy telephone cable as the column advanced.

The authorised length of heavy telephone cable for a brigade section of a signal company was six miles, and transport for this amount was all that was provided, so that the authorised length of cable with Column A was twelve miles. It was apparent that this would not suffice to allow the column to keep in touch with Headquarters if it turned the Turkish left and then reached the River Tigris behind the enemy's position, so all the reserve heavy cable of the signal company was loaded on to hired donkeys and sent with Column A, thus giving a total length of heavy cable of about twenty miles. I have referred to this matter at some length because the whole course of the battle was influenced subsequently by the difficulty or impossibility of maintaining communication with Headquarters. Heavy cable was also laid from Divisional Headquarters to the position occupied by the 18th Brigade, which remained in touch with Headquarters throughout the action.

Column A, commanded by General Delamain, set forth on its night march, as before stated, at 10.30 p.m. on September 27th, and marched northwards to Clery's Post, where it halted at about midnight and rested for a couple of hours. The 104th Rifles, who formed the garrison of the post, were relieved by two double companies of the

117th Mahrattas and rejoined the 16th Brigade. The progress of the column was notified to Divisional Headquarters near Nakhailat by telephone.

Shortly after 2 a.m. on September 28th the column once more marched off, being led by Lieutenant A. B. Matthews, R.E., who had carefully reconnoitred the ground during daylight. It marched northwards along the eastern edge of the Suwada Marsh until it approached the Suwai-kieh Marsh, and then turned north-westwards and passed up between the two big marshes till, at 5 a.m., it found itself at its position of deployment marked D at a corner of the Suwai-kieh Marsh (*vide* Map No. 2).

General Delamain's orders to his troops were that the 17th Brigade (1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, 22nd Punjabis, 103rd Mahrattas, and 119th Infantry), accompanied by a portion of the 16th Brigade (*viz.* 20th Punjabis and 104th Rifles), should form the attacking force in a direct assault upon the redoubt marked W in Map No. 2, situated close to the Ataba Marsh and known in conjunction with Redoubt X as "V.P.," or the Vital Point of the position. This portion of General Delamain's force was under the command of General Hoghton and was accompanied by the 76th Battery R.F.A. General Delamain himself was to stay with the remainder of the 16th Brigade (*viz.* 2nd Dorset Regiment and 117th Mahrattas), which formed a General Reserve to the attack, and he retained with him the 82nd Battery R.F.A., the Hants Howitzer Battery, the Machine-Gun Battery, and the 22nd Company 3rd Sappers and Miners,

As the success of the attack depended upon a surprise assault at earliest dawn, it was of extreme importance that General Hoghton's assault should be launched at precisely the correct moment and without any delay. As the day broke, General Hoghton's force marched off, but had only proceeded eastwards for a short distance when it was seen (at 7 a.m.) to turn suddenly off to the right. This movement was not understood by the supporting troops marching in rear, but was at first deemed to be merely a small *détour* to avoid bad ground.

Before General Hoghton's force marched off, Column A was fired upon by an advanced line of the enemy's skirmishers at P (see Map No. 2), but when General Hoghton's column swung off to the right these skirmishers retired to the line of redoubts. The Turks were then well

aware that a large hostile force was in the vicinity, so they commenced to hurry up reinforcements into their redoubts. To all intents and purposes General Hoghton's force was for the time being useless, and General Delamain was left with a small force facing a strong line of redoubts which were being more heavily manned every minute. If the Turks in these redoubts had now issued forth and attacked General Delamain in strength, a very serious disaster might have occurred to our arms. Luckily for us, the enemy did not do so.

It had been intended that the Vital Point of the Turkish defences should have been captured by 9 a.m., and it was now 8 a.m. General Delamain then decided upon a very bold stroke, and, with his General Reserve composed of only two battalions, one company of sappers, and two batteries, he advanced to attack Redoubt W before still greater hostile reinforcements could reach it or the Turks could themselves take the initiative. Redoubt W was more or less square in shape and extremely strong.

The 82nd Battery R.F.A., the Hants Howitzer Battery, and the Machine-Gun Battery advanced to suitable positions and opened a heavy fire on a conspicuous salient of the redoubt; but other corners of the work, which were difficult to see, were almost untouched for the time being. When, consequently, our men advanced to assault the redoubt, the Turks concentrated in the sheltered portions of their defences and poured in a terrific enfilading fire on the small force attacking them. The troops advanced towards the point E and there assaulted more or less from the north, the 22nd Company 3rd Sappers and Miners on the right, with the Dorsets and the 117th Mahrattas in that order next to them in the line. So heavy was the enemy's rifle fire that the 117th Mahrattas lost 50 per cent. of their men during the advance, and the other units also lost very heavily. Assisted by the extremely accurate fire of our guns and howitzers, however, our troops were not to be denied, and at 10.30 a.m. they finally rushed the redoubt and the enemy surrendered.

Terrible havoc had been wrought by our artillery in the narrow and deep Turkish trenches, and dismembered remains lay in every direction. Amid this shambles our tired men now rested for a short time in the captured trenches while the enemy concentrated in the adjoining redoubts.

It will be well at this juncture to follow the fortunes of General Hoghton's force which was marching away round the Ataba Marsh.

When General Hoghton left General Delamain he took with him one brigade section of the 34th Signal Company, with ten drums of heavy telephone cable, equivalent to a length of about seven miles of line. Ten miles of cable had already been laid in the march to the position of deployment at point D, so that, when the two forces separated, only three miles of cable remained with General Delamain. As General Hoghton's force went round the marsh the cable with it was laid, and touch was maintained with Divisional Headquarters; but the cable was rapidly being used up as mile after mile was traversed. When point F was reached, the column halted for an hour, and then continued its march after the arrival of some armoured motor-cars intended for scouting operations.

As General Hoghton's column ploughed along through very muddy ground round the Ataba Marsh, it gradually swung westwards and approached an unfinished redoubt held by some 200 Turks. It seemed as if this work must have been hastily put in hand when the Turks learnt that all our troops were not remaining on the right bank of the river. The redoubt was soon captured by the 104th Rifles and the Turks in it were taken prisoners; the column then proceeded towards the point marked L, but the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry and the 119th Infantry pushed on round the Ataba Marsh towards General Delamain's force, which they joined shortly before noon at Redoubt W after its capture. The remainder of General Hoghton's column passed on east of the unfinished redoubt, inclining eastwards towards the point L as before stated. When the troops had arrived at this point they came to the end of the ten drums of heavy telephone cable, and thence onwards were consequently out of touch altogether with Divisional Headquarters at Nakhilat, and also more or less out of touch with General Delamain.

Communication by heliograph was very difficult, owing to the flat nature of the country, and the extremely powerful mirage which also made accurate artillery fire no easy matter. Up to 1.15 p.m. both General Delamain and General Hoghton were in telephonic communication with General Townshend, but after this hour all such communication ceased, for the cable with General Delamain only

extended as far as the point M and there the supply of the 16th Brigade Signal Section ran out. The serious nature of the situation when Column A was completely out of touch with Divisional Headquarters, and the 18th Brigade (Column B) was waiting under heavy shell fire for the order to advance, will readily be seen.

The Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry and the 119th Infantry came under a very heavy and accurate fire from Turkish quick-firing field-guns before they reached Redoubt W, and were thrown into some confusion, but rallied and resumed their march. The Turkish guns were firing from the direction of the River Tigris. When these two battalions reached General Delamain he proceeded to assault and capture Redoubts X, Y, and Z, being greatly assisted in this work by the very accurate fire of the Hants Howitzer Battery and the 82nd Battery R.F.A., which had moved up to close range. By 2 p.m. all the Turkish redoubts and trenches between the Ataba and Suwada Marshes were in General Delamain's hands, together with many hundreds of prisoners. A certain proportion of the defenders escaped towards the point J before the assault, and from behind the low ridge running west from this point they brought rifle fire to bear on the advancing forces of General Hoghton, assisted probably by other Turkish troops arriving from the south.

There can be no doubt that a pack wireless telegraphy set would have been invaluable to Column A, but, although there were two wagon sets and four pack sets of wireless apparatus in Mesopotamia, seemingly none could be spared to accompany General Delamain. Four sets were located at Ali-al-Gharbi, Amarah, Nasariyeh, and Ahwaz respectively, and there were also one set at Nakhailat on the ss. *Mejidieh* used by the 6th Divisional Staff and one set on board the ss. *Malamir* for the Army Commander. If one of the last two sets could have been sent with Column A, our victory at Es-Sin would probably have terminated in overwhelming disaster to the Turkish forces, but doubtless good reasons existed for keeping them aboard the ships.

When the heavy cable with Column A ran out owing to the waste entailed by encircling the Ataba Marsh, great efforts were made to prolong the line with light cable but without success, for the light cable was speedily destroyed by fire and by the passage of troops and transport across it. If General Hoghton had not swung to the right round

the Ataba Marsh, General Delamain's General Reserve would have followed for some hours along the line of heavy cable laid for General Hoghton, and could have tapped it, when necessary, to send messages to Headquarters, and thus it would never have lost touch with Nakhailat.

After the capture of Redoubt Z, the 119th Infantry were left in the redoubt to clear up the place and to protect our ambulance from prowling bands of Arab cut-throats while the collection and evacuation of the wounded was in progress. The other troops with General Delamain marched to the point marked J on Map No. 2, where a junction was at length effected with the remainder of Column A under General Hoghton. Of this junction of forces General Townshend, in his observation tower at Nakhailat, was unaware till late in the evening, though the two portions of Column A had joined hands at 4 p.m. All that the G.O.C. 6th Division knew he gathered from the reports of his aeroplane observers, who stated that matters were going well.

In other parts of the field of battle up to 4 p.m. on September 28th no events of any great importance had taken place. On the night of September 27th/28th the 18th Brigade (Column B), under General Fry, was entrenched within distant rifle-range of the Turkish portion between the Suwada Marsh and the Tigris, having driven in some outlying forces and advanced guns.

When the noise of the artillery bombardment in the attack on Redoubt W was heard at about 8 a.m. on September 28th, General Fry ordered his line to advance, and it then reached a position roughly 600 yards from the Turkish first-line trenches. There the troops remained throughout the day, subjected to very heavy artillery fire from about twenty Turkish guns at close ranges. The infantry found fairly good cover in some dry ditches and the casualties were not great. At 10.30 a.m. news arrived of the capture of the Vital Point of the enemy's line by General Delamain, but no orders were received to advance to the assault. As no orders had come by noon, General Fry asked for instructions, but he still got no orders to advance.

At 1 p.m. very heavy firing was heard from the right, and it was guessed later that Redoubts X, Y, and Z had been captured, for General Delamain's men could be seen through the heat-haze advancing round the Suwada Marsh.

Still no orders were received from Headquarters, the reason, of course, being that Column A was not in touch any longer with Nakhailat.

The enemy's shell fire had been very heavy in the morning from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., and again at 6 p.m., towards dusk, the bombardment directed on the 18th Brigade was intense. Apparently the Turks expected that the Brigade was about to attack. Desultory shell fire continued after this till midnight of September 28th/29th. The 18th Brigade remained in position awaiting orders.

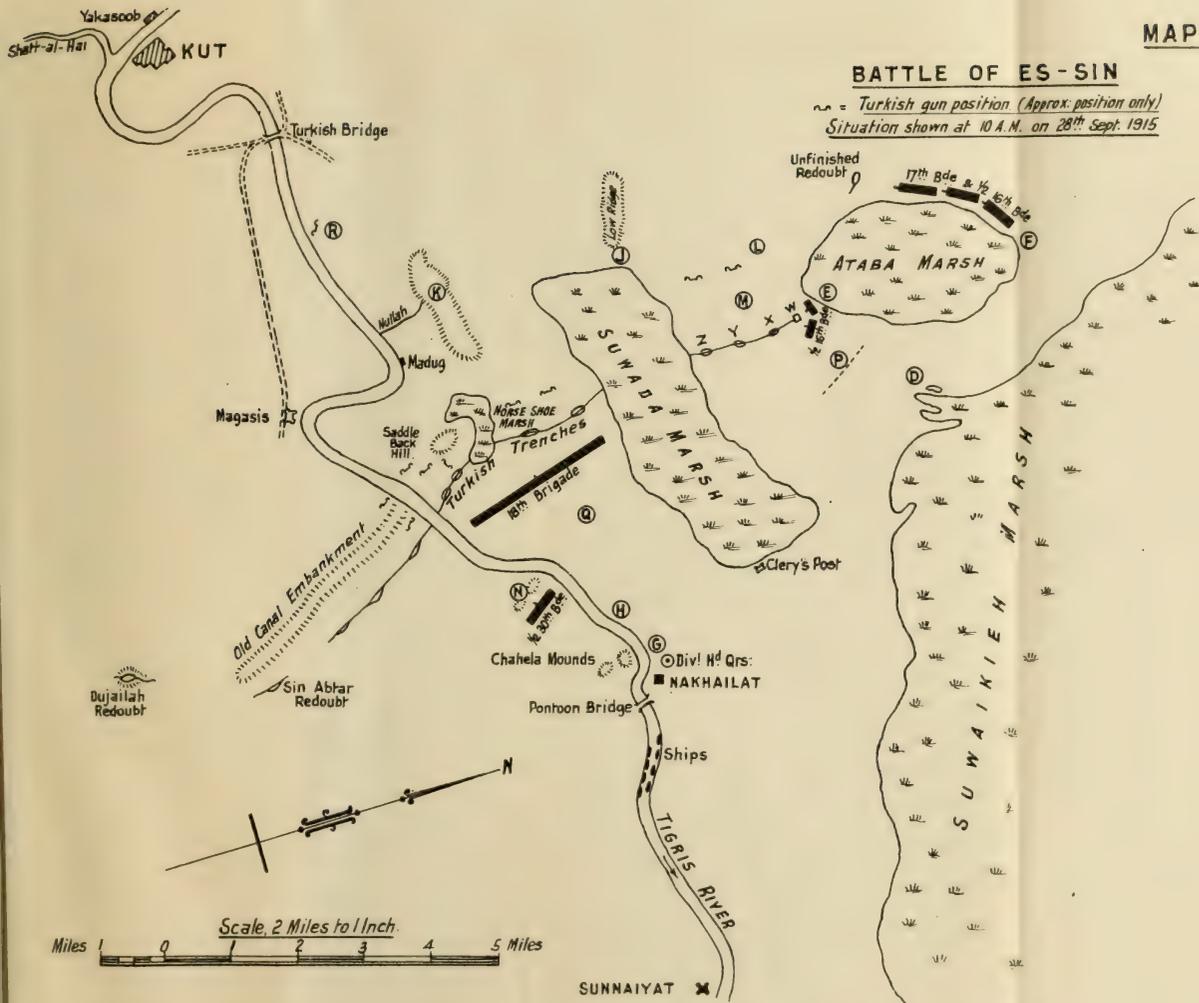
On the right bank of the Tigris the 2/7th Gurkhas and the portion of the 76th Punjabis occupying the sandhills, opposing the enemy's right, stayed in their trenches throughout September 28th to frustrate any attempt at a counter-attack. The Turks actually launched a feeble counter-attack against this force at 3 p.m. on the right bank, but the effort was easily repulsed.

When Nuruddin, the Turkish Commander, knew that our main force was attacking his left, he hurriedly transferred all his available troops to that flank from the right bank of the Tigris by means of the bridge of boats some miles to his rear. In doing so, he played into our hands. Our force had taken the initiative and he passively conformed to our action. If he had at once counter-attacked heavily down the right bank, and thus met our offensive by a counter-offensive, he might well have overwhelmed the small force on that bank and have reached Nakhailat and our valuable shipping, with disastrous results to our small army. His transfer of troops was too late to save his left flank, and was only useful in that it enabled him by a counter-attack to secure the retreat of his troops from the Es-Sin position by delaying the advance of Column A.

Our heavy artillery occupied positions on, or close to, the Tigris at the points H and G shown on Map No. 2. At H lay four 4·7-inch naval guns, each in its little barge (horse-boat), and near them on shore were the emplacements of two 4-inch B.L. guns of the 104th Heavy Battery R.G.A., under Major W. C. R. Farmer, R.A., while at G were the four 5-inch B.L. guns of the 86th Heavy Battery R.G.A., under Lieutenant-Colonel R. P. Molesworth, R.A. Our ten heavy guns engaged the Turkish artillery and supported the 18th Brigade throughout September 28th; the enemy's guns, however, were very difficult to locate,

BATTLE OF ES-SIN

~ = Turkish gun position (Approx. position only)
 Situation shown at 10 A.M. on 28th Sept. 1915



SUNNAIYAT ✕

owing to the mirage, and observation of fire was not easy. The whole atmosphere was a fog of fine dust.

Our three men-of-war—H.M.S. *Comet*, H.M.S. *Sumana*, and H.M.S. *Sheitan* (the first an armed river-steamer, and the last two armed tugs)—steamed up the river under heavy shell fire and assisted in the bombardment, but had to retire later to avoid being sunk. Commander Cookson, R.N., of H.M.S. *Comet*, took his ship right up to the boom which the enemy had placed across the river, and was killed in an heroic attempt to cut the wire cable of the boom. His relatives received the Victoria Cross, which was awarded to him posthumously for his gallant attempt.

I will now revert to the adventures of Column A, under the command of General Delamain, which had collected at about 3 p.m. at the point marked J at the western end of the Suwada Marsh.

The column had been heavily shelled as it approached the point J from Turkish gun-positions in the neighbourhood of the Turkish bridge of gissara boats, and it had edged down to the corner of the marsh, where the men rested for an hour and tried to drink the marsh water but found it undrinkable. They were suffering badly from thirst, yet could get no suitable water; the day had been extremely hot and dusty, and the men were very tired. About this time Major Reilly, R.F.C., reached the column in an aeroplane and flew off again to Nakhailat to report how matters stood.

At 4.15 p.m. great masses of Turks were seen advancing from the direction of the Turkish bridge over the Tigris. These troops were the 5,000 men recalled by Nuruddin from the right-bank positions to reinforce his left, and they were proceeding to make a counter-attack on Column A as it advanced towards the Tigris behind the Turkish position. The enemy were supported by field guns at the point R and elsewhere. General Delamain at once grasped the situation, and, with his usual promptitude, wheeled his column to the right and launched his tired troops straight at the advancing enemy. The orders for the movement were sent round by gallopers, and in five minutes our attack had commenced with perfect precision. The men knew that the River Tigris with its good water lay ahead and that the Turks barred the way, and their attack was irresistible. The enemy opened fire with a battery of four Krupp field guns from near point

K, but the 76th and 82nd Batteries R.F.A. and the Hants Howitzer Battery at once engaged these guns, and in twenty minutes had completely wiped out the battery, killing every man. It was now growing dark. The counter-attack of the Turks had been successfully checked and their position in a nullah near K was captured.

The scattered troops under General Delamain concentrated as well as they could in the dark, having searched in vain for the river, and they bivouacked for the night near K. So parched with thirst were the men that few of them could speak intelligibly, and in this condition they lay down exhausted to pass the hours of darkness. They had captured five redoubts and innumerable trenches, as well as two complete batteries of the enemy's Krupp field guns (eight guns in all), since the previous evening, and they had marched about twenty miles without replenishing their water-bottles.

It will be remembered that the Turks opposing the 18th Brigade kept up their gunfire on that brigade till about midnight on September 28th/29th, and that the fire ceased at that hour and all was quiet. In the hours that followed, while the exhausted Column A was bivouacked at point K, the Turkish force between the Suwada Marsh and the river succeeded in slipping away in the darkness unknown to the 18th Brigade, and passed along the river-bank and so away upstream—a remarkably well-executed evacuation which saved the enemy from complete disaster and enabled him to get away most of his artillery and transport.

In addition to the eight field guns captured by Column A, five or six ancient muzzle-loading guns and mortars were found in the position. Some of these guns fired round balls and were concealed in deep dug-outs in the river bank, with their muzzles only protruding through mud ports in the banks. They were apparently intended to fire one shot each at our ships at close range, for they could scarcely be reloaded under fire.

On September 29th Major Reilly, R.F.C., arrived in the early morning by aeroplane at the bivouac of the thirsty Column A, and reported that the Turks had fled and that the Es-Sin position was empty. The troops marched down to the river and simply wallowed in the water. Men rushed into it up to their knees, or lay face downward on the edge and drank till they were sick, and then drank

again. The animals also were in a terrible state from thirst, but soon rallied when they had drunk their fill of the liquid.

The 18th Brigade then marched through the deserted position and rejoined the other brigades of the 6th Division at Madug, where the troops rested for a short while. General Townshend heard in the early hours of September 29th that the Turks had retreated and at once started upstream in the s.s. *Mejidieh* and arrived at Madug. The 6th Cavalry Brigade, followed by the 16th Brigade, then marched upstream past the rickety Turkish bridge and on into the town of Kut-el-Amarah, which was entered without trouble, the local Arabs showing the usual attitude of great joy which they invariably display to the winning side.

Meanwhile the flotilla of ships at Nakhailat got under weigh and steamed up through my bridge-cut and through the Es-Sin position to Madug, which it reached at 10 a.m. on September 29th. The 17th Brigade was left at the Es-Sin position to clear up the ground, destroy mines, and collect captured material and stores; and the 18th Brigade commenced to embark on the various ships of the flotilla. This embarkation was a lengthy business owing to the difficulty of getting our field guns and wagons aboard the *Mejidieh* from the high and crumbling bank of the river; but by 2 p.m. the work was finished and the s.s. *Mejidieh* with the 7th Rajputs and 63rd Battery R.F.A., s.s. *Blosse Lynch* with the Headquarters of the 18th Brigade and the Norfolk Regiment, s.s. *Mosul* with the 110th Infantry, and s.s. *Julnar* with the 120th Infantry aboard, got under weigh from Madug and steamed upstream towards Kut.

The 17th Brigade was occupied during the day in clearing up the position and in exploding Turkish land-mines under the direction of a captured Turkish officer. A great number of these mines were thus destroyed. They were usually located on footpaths, and consisted of a charge of gun-powder ignited by a cartridge which was fired by the movement of a balanced piece of plank. A short length of plank was balanced at its centre over a hollow dug in the ground, and it was then covered with earth. If one end was trodden upon, the see-saw movement of the plank fired the cartridge and ignited the mine below it. No great damage was done by these mines;

but Colonel Climo, commanding the portion of the 30th Brigade on the right bank, had a very narrow escape from destruction by one of these Turkish mines on September 28th. Some of the mines were arranged with trip wires, and all were very well concealed.

Our losses in the Battle of Es-Sin amounted to 1,233 men. Of this total, by far the greater number were slightly wounded. The very small proportion of killed may perhaps be accounted for by the comparatively ineffective nature of the enemy's shell fire, for a wound inflicted by a modern rifle bullet is less likely to be fatal than the septic wounds caused by jagged pieces of shell or by shrapnel bullets which always carry pieces of clothing into the wound and thus cause poisoning.

One thousand one hundred and fifty-three prisoners were taken at Es-Sin, among them being three or four hundred Anatolian Turks—big, heavy, round-shouldered men, patient and dogged fighters, who are the pick of the Turkish forces. The prisoners were collected later on in a palm grove north of Kut till they could be sent downstream. By the capture of Kut we obtained control of the Shatt-al-Hai Channel from the Tigris to the Euphrates at Nasariyeh, and thus denied this useful waterway to the enemy.

All thoughts now centred on the pursuit of the retreating Turks, who were moving upstream at a great rate towards Aziziah and Baghdad. The 18th Brigade was intended to pursue in ships, but a chapter of accidents commenced directly the flotilla attempted to navigate the tortuous river-channels below Kut. The river-level was exceptionally low; and though Captain Cowley (of Messrs. Lynch Brothers), who was the able skipper of the s.s. *Mejidieh*, knew the river very well, the courses had altered completely during the summer months and the preceding winter. Time after time the ships ran aground, and so slow was the progress that not till 2 a.m. on September 30th did the flotilla pass the Turkish bridge of boats. At 5 a.m. the ships were close to Kut, but again the channels were almost impossible to locate, and it was 4 p.m. on September 30th when the ships came alongside the front at Kut itself.

A hospital ship was badly needed to remove the wounded downstream, so General Sir John Nixon disembarked from the s.s. *Malamir* with his staff, and handed her over for

the use of the wounded, who were then put aboard her and sent down to Busrah. The accommodation in the field hospitals during the Battle of Es-Sin was very inadequate for the great number of wounded men, though every effort was made to provide room, and our doctors worked like slaves. Motor-lorries were used as far as possible to collect and bring in the more serious cases.

On October 1st, 1915, at 8.30 a.m., the river-steamers *Mejidieh*, *Blosse Lynch*, and *Mosul*, carrying the 18th Brigade, left Kut, escorted by H.M.S. *Comet* and the other men-of-war, and commenced to steam upstream, while the cavalry reconnoitred along the left bank. The s.s. *Julnar* was left hopelessly aground near Kut and did not overtake the other ships for two days. Progress was very slow, for the ships were continually running aground and having to be hauled off the sandbanks.

Bghailah was reached at 4 p.m. on October 2nd. Here the Arabs evinced signs of great joy at the arrival of the British. These were the same brutes who, two months later, did their utmost to slaughter isolated parties of our retreating forces. The retreating Turkish troops kept far ahead of our ships and were rarely seen. The ships splashed on upstream to the monotonous chants of the men sounding with poles from their bows.

The 18th Brigade and 63rd Battery R.F.A. arrived in ships at Aziziah shortly after noon on October 5th, 1915, and the troops proceeded to dig themselves in and await reinforcements. The Turks were at Zeur, eighteen miles away, with a cavalry outpost at El Kutuniah, nine miles away. The position of the isolated 18th Brigade at Aziziah was decidedly precarious; and General Townshend, who accompanied this force, wired urgently for the remainder of his troops. The 18th Brigade might have retreated from Aziziah when it failed to overtake the Turks, but political needs overruled military considerations and the brigade was kept in its isolated position. The 16th Brigade reached Aziziah by forced marches at 10 a.m. on October 9th, and the 17th Brigade, with the 76th and 82nd Batteries R.F.A., and the Hants Howitzer Battery, at 6 p.m. on October 10th. The division was thus concentrated at Aziziah as an advanced post of our British forces in Mesopotamia.

In conclusion, with regard to the operations at Es-Sin and the Turkish retreat, it may be instructive to draw

attention to the peculiar character of Nuruddin, the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, which largely contributed to our success. He seems to have been a man of some ability, but little determination or courage. At Es-Sin he held a very strong position, and again he did so at Ctesiphon. Nuruddin seemed to be capable of planning and occupying a very strong position and of putting up a powerful defence in that position *up to a certain point*; but once matters became somewhat critical Nuruddin's nerve seemed to fail him, and he was prone to order a retirement of his whole force. He did so at Es-Sin, and he contemplated doing so at Ctesiphon, but was persuaded not to take this step in the latter battle by his subordinate Khalil Bey (afterwards Khalil Pasha)—a very different type of man, unfortunately for us. Again, when opposing General Aylmer at Shaik Sa'ad, Nuruddin as usual evacuated his trenches when things looked doubtful, and so at last brought home to the Turkish Government his cowardice and incapacity in the field, and thus secured his removal from his responsible position and the promotion of Khalil Pasha to the supreme command of the Turkish forces in Mesopotamia. I believe that, after his failure at Shaik Sa'ad, Nuruddin was given the command of a division in some obscure part of the Caucasus.

CHAPTER IV

THE DASH FOR BAGHDAD

THE advance of the 6th Indian Division from Kut to Aziziah constituted the first step of the final phase of the much-disputed advance on Baghdad in 1915. Controversy has raged over this venture to such an extent that any lengthy discussion of the matter in this amateur narrative is superfluous; yet a brief statement of the facts, and a few surmises, may not be out of place.

Up to October 1915 the resistance offered by the Turks had always been overcome with comparative ease, except perhaps at Shaiba; and there seems no doubt that our troops had established a considerable moral ascendancy over the enemy. The Dardanelles Campaign was thought to have tied down their best troops to that area, and the subsequent failure of that campaign was not foreseen. The seizure of Baghdad in 1915 would have been a terrible blow to Turkish prestige, second only to the capture of Constantinople.

Reinforcements were known to be on their way to our army in Mesopotamia from France and Egypt. It was also a matter of common knowledge that Baghdad held valuable stores, and possessed an arsenal, and that it was the terminus of an eighty-mile length of railway extending northwards towards Mosul as far as Samarra. Lastly, we wished to advance rapidly to join the Russians operating from the north and east, and to check any possible trouble in Persia.

On the other hand, in September 1915 we had only one complete division in the country, viz. the 6th Indian Division. The 12th Indian Division consisted of infantry and sappers only. Most of the 12th Division was scattered along an already extensive line of communication from Busrah to Kut, leaving only the 6th Division and one

brigade for offensive operations. The line of communication was not provided with railways, and our shipping was always liable to be delayed in the difficult channels of the Tigris. Other divisions on their way to the country could hardly be expected to reach Amarah before March 1916. Our troops were operating in a land peopled by treacherous Arabs liable to harass an expedition on the slightest sign of a reverse. Baghdad was 500 miles by river from Busrah, and at low water this river-route was difficult to navigate. Baghdad itself, even in September 1915, was defended by the partially prepared Ctesiphon position of immense natural strength; and lastly, the great city could scarcely be held by a force of less than two of our divisions if attacked in a determined manner subsequent to its capture by us.

The author will not attempt any criticism as to whether, or not, the advance beyond Kut was justified on these terms, but he merely lays before his readers some of the pros and cons of the question. It is sufficient to say that the undoubted risk incurred in an advance was considered justifiable in the circumstances, and every one may be sure that the question was thoroughly considered in every aspect before this decision was reached by those entrusted with the welfare and honour of our arms. The advance to Kut-el-Amarah will be admitted by many as a sound move from political, if not from strategic, reasons; but the chiefly disputed advance is the subsequent forward move from Kut on Baghdad itself. The Army Commander, General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B., ordered the advance to be made, and it was made. Let the matter rest at that.

To resume my personal narrative. After a few days at Nakhailat I brought my rafts up to Kut-el-Amarah, and later we were towed upstream again towards Aziziah. The *Shushan*, with my mahela and a large bellum full of my timber and stores, thrashed upstream, her great stern wheel leaving a foaming trail in the muddy water. The upper deck of this typical little river-steamer was delightfully cool, and well fitted with good cabins, so I spent part of my time on that deck, from which elevated position I could see over the high banks and across the dreary waste of brown and yellow desert on either side. Below Bghailah, to my disgust, we came upon the *T.2* fast on a sandbank with some of my rafts moored to the



ON THE TIGRIS.



THE MINARET AT KUT.

river-bank. She had been there for two days, and was still trying to get off without success. We could not assist her, or tow the rafts, and had to go on upstream lest a like fate should befall us. We passed Bghailah on the right bank shortly afterwards, and zigzagged along through the shallow channels, running first on to one sand-bank and then on to another in our uncertain course.

The Arab tribes above Bghailah were known to be still actively hostile, and one afternoon, as I was sitting in the large bellum directing my men at work, a sniper on the bank only twenty yards away fired at us but missed. He was off before a shot could be fired at him, and escaped on his fleet Arab pony into the desert.

Later we passed an outpost of our force below Aziziah. This was the fortified area known as Frazer's Post on the right bank at a bend in the stream. Then our course took us round a great loop to the right and we came in sight of the village of Aziziah on the left bank surrounded by tents and enshrouded in dust. The little *Shushan* brought up alongside the bank below the village, and our journey was at an end.

Here I found some of my danack rafts, *i.e.* those brought along by the two naval launches, so I collected these rafts and made arrangements to construct a bridge of some sort as soon as possible. The river at Aziziah was then about 280 yards wide with a rapid current near the village. My difficulty lay in making a bridge without proper materials, for half of my bridging train had not yet arrived, including the most valuable portion, *viz.* the pontoons, and I had only one spare pontoon and twenty-four danacks, which would suffice for a bridge perhaps 140 yards long. After much trouble I succeeded in improvising a footbridge for infantry in single file with my twenty-four danacks, four Wheatley-Bag rafts, some private and government bellums, a large cutter, my one pontoon placed broadside to the slow current near the shore, several small pile trestles, and a few ordinary low trestles. On this crazy affair infantry in single file could stagger across the wide deep river at considerable risk, but still it was better than nothing at all, and a battalion crossed the bridge safely in an hour. None of the men fell into the water, but it was a perilous journey, and the Wheatley-Bag rafts were hourly becoming more and more water-logged as the Tigris penetrated through the tar-

paulins of the rafts into the grass and hay within them. A couple of days later more of the boats came along, and at length all had arrived and the bridge was soon converted into a stable affair suitable for gun and horse traffic. It was the longest bridge we constructed during the campaign, being, when finally completed, just under 300 yards in length.

The traffic over the bridge at Aziziah was continuous for many hours each day. All firewood for the troops had to be cut on the right bank and brought across to the left bank daily by streams of two-wheeled carts, each drawn by two mules or ponies; and the troops also carried a great deal across themselves. In addition to this, all traffic going to, or coming from, Frazer's Post crossed the bridge. And, last but not least, it was used as a means of training camels to negotiate a floating bridge.

Aziziah was then a small village of mud huts on the left bank surrounded by a great perimeter camp for the whole 6th Division. Trenches encircled the camp on the north, north-east, and eastern fronts; while three redoubts, thrown forward a mile or so to the north, and another redoubt to the east, were designed to check any attempt of the Turks at a serious attack from the Baghdad direction. The River Tigris formed the western face and the southern boundary was picqueted. A signalling station was established on the roof of a prominent house near the river so as to give notice of the approach of our ships, and for the transmission of messages.

At Aziziah the chief difficulty was to get food supplies. No local produce was available, for the miserable little village was deserted. For many weeks the troops had to live chiefly on bully beef and biscuits with an occasional ration of onions to give variety to the menu. Most vegetables, and milk and eggs, were almost unobtainable, though later on matters became better when sufficient ships were available to bring up stores in large quantities from Kut.

The peaceful weeks at Aziziah were spent by all in military preparation for the final dash for Baghdad; but in the evenings the vicinity of my bridge was dotted with sportsmen out after sand-grouse with their shot-guns which had reached them from India. Flocks of these sand-grouse would fly over the bridge in the mornings and evenings and occasionally a few duck. Fishermen

were also plentiful, and some of the rods were wonderful affairs with reels made from bits of wire more curious even than the specimens manufactured by our disciples of Izaak Walton when we were at Kurna. Quite a fair number of fish were caught, mostly of the mud-fish variety, but a welcome addition nevertheless to a very restricted menu. The weather was becoming cooler at the end of October, and the nights quite pleasant. On October 27th General Townshend decided to destroy the Turkish camp at El Kutuniah, nine miles north of Aziziah (see Map No. 3). The whole division, less a small force, did a night march commencing at 11.30 p.m., drove the Turks from their camp, demolished a small Turkish fort, and was back at Aziziah on October 28th at 1 p.m., having marched nineteen miles. A good piece of work, and annoying to the enemy. On another occasion our cavalry made a reconnaissance in force beyond Frazer's Post on the right bank during the morning, but encountered no hostile troops.

The 6th Division was reinforced by part of the 30th Brigade (viz. 2/7th Gurkha Rifles, 24th Punjabis, and 76th Punjabis), and every conceivable arrangement for the final advance in November was completed; but the actual decision to advance beyond Aziziah on Baghdad itself was not reached, I believe, until the early days of November. My leaking mahela, which had been badly strained by repeatedly running aground during the voyage to Aziziah, was replaced at the last moment by a steel barge (No. 36) of much larger capacity, about 80 feet long and 20 feet in beam, and rather over 6 feet deep to the top of the combings of her hatches. With spare timber and planks I rigged up a very comfortable cabin in the stern, and forward of me lived my Indian officer. Then came a mass of bridging material, and in the bow were my men.

On November 15th, 1915, the whole of our force (less the 18th Brigade, which had gone ahead on November 11th), preceded by the warships *Firefly* and *Comet* scouting ahead of the troops, started upstream from Aziziah. I dismantled my bridge and formed up the strings of rafts on the right bank opposite Aziziah where the low, flat shore was suitable, and there I awaited the order to follow the force. A small force of infantry (viz. 400 men of the 24th Punjabis) was left as the garrison of Aziziah

under Major W. C. R. Farmar, R.A., with two 4-inch B.L. guns and one 15-pr. of the Volunteer Artillery Battery, brought in from Frazer's Post. This force was soon busy constructing strong defences suitable for a small detachment to occupy. Four hundred sick men also remained at Aziziah, and most of these men were ready to assist in manning the trenches in case of emergency. Scurvy had appeared among the troops, which accounted for the large number of sick. Frazer's Post was evacuated about this time, for an adequate garrison for the place could no longer be spared.

As large vessels were unsuitable for towing work, I had been allotted a little fleet of six L launches, each with an enclosed stern cabin and an enclosed wheel-house forward. These launches were manned by lascars from Bombay and Calcutta, the head man in each boat being called a "Serang." The launches were fairly powerful, but not ideal for the work in hand. They burnt a lot of coal and drew over 4 feet of water—the latter fact a serious consideration at this time.

An event at Aziziah just prior to the final advance on Baghdad was the arrival of H.M.S. *Firefly*, a smart little monitor of really up-to-date design. This little ship, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander C. J. F. Eddis, R.N., was the first of a "Fly" class, specially designed for river-work in a restricted channel. She drew about 3 feet of water and carried a modern 4-inch Q.F. gun on the latest pedestal mounting in her bow. This powerful weapon threw a high-explosive shell of 31 lb. weight and could shoot accurately up to 9,000 yards range. The ship was painted the usual blue-grey colour. At her stern she carried a 6-pr. Q.F. gun on her upper deck, and there was an alternative mounting for this gun on the upper deck "forrard." It was intended to mount a 12-pr. 12-cwt. gun on this alternative mounting, and the gun was on its way up from Busrah, but did not arrive in time for the advance. The *Firefly* carried five maxims on her upper deck, and on her tall mast was fitted a powerful searchlight. This mast also carried the aerials of her wireless installation. Her speed was about 10 knots, and her engines were of modern type driving twin screws. Owing to her shallow draught, high speed, and short length, she was an ideal boat to manœuvre amid the numerous sandbanks of the Upper Tigris, and the whole

force was proud of her. She was sent out in sections from England, and constructed on the Shatt-al-Arab below Busrah. Unfortunately the others of her class, such as the *Gadfly*, *Butterfly*, etc., could not be got ready in time to accompany us.

H.M.S. *Comet*, an armed river-steamer, also accompanied the advance on Baghdad. She carried an armament of one 12-pr., one 6-pr., and two 3-pr. Q.F. guns and also two maxims. In addition may be mentioned the armed tug H.M.S. *Sumana*, a hardy little vessel commanded by Lieutenant L. C. P. Tudway, R.N., and carrying one 12-pr. Q.F. forward, two 3-pr. Q.F. guns aft, and a maxim on the roof of her bridge. A similar ship, H.M.S. *Sheitan*, with a like armament (less one 3-pr. gun), also went with the force. The four warships *Firefly*, *Comet*, *Sumana*, and *Sheitan* constituted our means of protection on the Tigris during the final dash for Baghdad and during the first part of the retreat to Kut.

The 18th Brigade, under Brigadier-General Hamilton, marched out of Aziziah on November 11th, 1915, northwards along the road on the left bank of the Tigris, and in four hours reached El Kutuniah on the river-bank and camped there. The enemy offered no resistance. Thus began the ill-fated final dash for Baghdad. The 6th Cavalry Brigade, supported by the 110th Infantry, occupied an advanced post in and near the conspicuous wood on the left bank of the Tigris $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of El Kutuniah (see Map No. 3).

The remainder of the 6th Division left Aziziah on November 15th, 1915, at 8 a.m., arriving at El Kutuniah at noon, where it joined the 18th Brigade on the left bank. On the next day General Sir John Nixon, the Army Commander, reached El Kutuniah in the s.s. *Malamir* from Aziziah, where he and his staff had arrived some days previously. He inspected all the units, and was satisfied with the appearance of the troops. The Turks had not constructed any defensive position at El Kutuniah, but they were known to have a position on the left bank at Zeur, ten miles or so farther up that bank.

Meanwhile the Bridging Train was at Aziziah moored along the right bank and awaiting orders to start. These came on November 16th, 1915, and at noon on that day my fleet set out on its cruise. Each launch came up close

to the right bank in turn, took its string of rafts (five or six) in tow, crossed to the deep channel on the left bank, and fought its way up against the stream with the rafts foaming along behind. Last, but not least, came my steel barge No. 36 with gallant little *L.9* puffing and snorting alongside. The day was fine and calm, and everything seemed propitious. The men were in high spirits, for all believed we should soon be in Baghdad. Our troops had never suffered a reverse.

A run of four hours or so brought us to the camp at El Kutuniah. Here I was ordered to throw a bridge at once across the river, so commenced work at 5 p.m., and by steady labour managed to reach the far shore in five hours. The site was an easy one with a slow current throughout, but the bridge itself was about 250 yards long and used up most of my available boats. I was assisted in the work of construction by a section of the 17th Company 3rd Sappers and Miners, under 2nd Lieutenant W. R. Boyes, I.A.R., attached to the 3rd Sappers.

The following morning (November 17th) we improved and beautified the bridge by careful adjustment of chesses and alignment of boats and pontoons. About 8 a.m., while this work was progressing, the Army Commander strolled on to the bridge with some of his staff, and I was introduced as the officer-in-command of the Bridging Train. Sir John Nixon then asked if my danacks were satisfactory, and, when I replied that they were not, he asked why I did not have pontoons instead of them. I answered that only eighteen pontoons were authorised. He then ordered me to wire at once to India for more pontoons and enquired how many I wanted. Now, pontoons cost from £100 to £120 each, so I debated whether I should say perhaps another twenty. The Army Commander waited a few moments and then said, "A hundred?" I was so knocked over by this suggestion that I did not know quite what to say, and he then followed up his query with the question, "*Two hundred?*" This encouraged me to give my candid opinion, which was that another fifty pontoons (worth a cool £6,000, by the way, even in India) would do very nicely, and instructions were given for these boats to be ordered at once by wire from India. Perhaps my successor as a builder of bridges in Mesopotamia derived some benefit from these new

boats, but they could not arrive in time to be of any use to the luckless 6th Division.

At 10 a.m. on November 17th, the 17th Brigade (Column C) under Brigadier-General Hoghton crossed my bridge to the right bank at El Kutuniah and bivouacked on the bank at the bridge-head. I brought my barge across to the right bank and moored upstream of the bridge, with my flotilla of launches upstream of the barge and H.M.S. *Sumana* higher up again.

Next day (November 18th) I got orders at 1 p.m. to dismantle the bridge, so set to work and completed the job with the aid of Boyes and his men by 6.30 p.m. We carefully arranged all the rafts in their proper tows in a little sheltered bay on the right bank below the bridge site, and then returned to my barge for a well-earned dinner. Suddenly, as we were just about to commence the banquet in my cabin, an urgent message arrived ordering the bridge to be put up again without delay. There was nothing for it but to drag the tired men out and start work once more. This time we did our record bit of bridging in Mesopotamia, for we touched the left bank in $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours. We knew the site, and the current was gentle; but the work was done in the dark and by tired and hungry men. At 11 p.m. at last we got our much-needed dinner and rest.

The reason for this sudden alarm and change of plans was that at 6 p.m. on November 18th the G.O.C., 6th Division, at El Kutuniah, received a report that a body of 6,000 enemy was advancing to attack him down the right bank, and that another 3,000 men were approaching with the same fell design down the left bank. He accordingly had to re-establish road communication at once with the right bank, where the 17th Brigade was then bivouacked. It was decided to advance to meet the threatened attack, but meanwhile the 16th and 18th Brigades on the left bank rapidly dug a defended perimeter camp during the night of November 18th/19th as a precautionary measure.

On November 19th before dawn, the 17th Brigade on the right bank marched off westwards for one hour and then halted and dug a defensive position across the neck of land formed by the loop of the river at the apex of which is El Kutuniah (see Map No. 3). This work was completed by noon, but no enemy appeared, so, at 3 p.m., the brigade

continued its march towards Zeur across very difficult country with deep nullahs and high grass. Frequently the men had to march in single file, so difficult was the route. The remainder of the 6th Division began to move up the left bank. The 18th Brigade (Column B) marched straight along the road to Zeur, leaving El Kutuniah at 8.50 a.m. on November 19th, while the 16th Brigade (Column A) took a long détour round a marsh so as to take the expected enemy in flank. The 6th Cavalry Brigade operated further out on the land flank.

No resistance was encountered till near Zeur, where the Turks occupied a large perimeter camp, including a fairly deep nullah prepared for defence. Overhead cover had been arranged in some of the hostile trenches. Our guns shelled this camp and the enemy fled northwards. Our armoured motor-cars did some execution with their maxims.

At about 4 p.m. on November 19th, the 16th and 18th Brigades, with the Divisional Headquarters and attached troops, marched into Zeur and bivouacked there, and soon afterwards the flotilla of ships followed. After dark my rafts were ready also to start upstream. H.M.S. *Sumana* was ordered to convoy us, and she led the way round the bend at about 9.30 p.m., followed by all the launches in line ahead. After passing the dense wood of fruit trees on the left bank above the bend, East (my subaltern) and I had dinner and turned in for a few hours' sleep as all seemed going well.

Column C, under General Hoghton, was then well on its way up the right bank, and it arrived opposite Zeur on the river-bank at 2.30 a.m. on November 20th, when it halted to await the construction of a bridge.

Before dawn on November 20th, 1915, my unit reached Zeur and I got the usual order to make a bridge at once. The site was a difficult one, crowded with shipping and with a rapid current. The bridge was also a very long one—so long, in fact, that every available raft except two had to be used. By dint of great efforts we completed the work in six hours, and Column C began to cross to the left bank about 11 a.m. while we got a short rest and some food. By noon the column was across and following the other troops up the road towards Lajj. The wheeled and other transport, which had reached Zeur at 10.30 p.m. the previous night, followed also as quickly as possible.

The whole flotilla of ships then steamed off upstream

again, while my tired men set to work to dismantle the bridge, make up tows and attach them to the launches. Just before dusk we said goodbye to Zeur—once more deserted and quiet—and sat down to food and rest. We had all worked hard for *eleven hours* consecutively that day, except for half an hour off for a hurried breakfast.

Columns A and B with the Divisional Headquarters, followed later by Column C, marched unopposed straight along the road from Zeur to Lajj (or Lejj), and arrived at the latter place at 2 p.m. on November 20th, 1915. A reference to Map No. 3 will show that the distance, though only seven miles by road, is exceedingly long by the river route owing to the preposterous bends of the stream. The great length of the river route was one of our chief causes of anxiety during the retreat some days later.

The Cavalry Brigade during the advance from El Kutuniah had been operating on the land flank of the division and scouting ahead. The 6th Division, 6th Cavalry Brigade, Divisional troops and attached troops concentrated at Lajj within ten miles of the great Ctesiphon position held by the Turks as their last effort for the defence of Baghdad.

At 4 p.m. on November 20th General Townshend issued orders for the whole force to dig itself in as a defence against possible shell and rifle fire. At the same time the various Generals and their staffs rode out to reconnoitre towards the enemy's position with a view to the subsequent attack.

My Bridging Train was steaming upstream at this time round the wide loop of the river above Zeur. We quite expected to have to construct yet another bridge that night, for we did not know where the troops would halt. Darkness fell and we still puffed along. We had just completed the great loop above Zeur, and were still within a couple of miles of that place, when we came across the whole flotilla of ships moored along both banks of the river, but chiefly on the left bank, so we tied up to that bank upstream of them.

On November 21st the flotilla of ships got under weigh early, and the Bridging Train was ordered to follow the last ship. All the huge vessels steamed one by one past us, and finally we also set forth about 9 a.m. It was a pleasant, sunny morning, so I put my deck chair on the roof

of *L.9's* wheel-house, from which elevated perch I could watch the launches through my field-glasses.

We steamed on round another wide bend (see Map No. 3), and then the current shifted close up to the left bank and became exceedingly rapid. It was difficult here to make any headway at all—in fact, my launches far ahead seemed to have stopped dead, though actually they were forging very slowly ahead against the stream. A long line of Arab huts was scattered along the high left bank above us, and interested Arab spectators thronged the whole length of this bank. They may have been hostile, but did not dare to show it at this time. Things were different a few days later.

The river then became wider, with many shoals, and one lot of rafts ran aground, but I got the boats clear after some delay. The ships soon came into view, moored along the precipitous left bank at Lajj. My launches steamed up to a position astern of the s.s. *Julnar*, where they moored as they came up. By noon on November 21st, 1915, all my rafts and launches were bunched together near the bank in an extremely rapid current with their mooring-ropes as tight as fiddle-strings and the holdfasts ashore groaning with the strain.

Orders had been left for a bridge to be put across the river at once. The site selected was an extremely difficult and dangerous one, yet no other was available. The left bank was 25 feet high and very steep; ships were crowded both above and below me; the current near the left bank ran at 5 knots, and the bottom of the river was of hard and slippery clay in which small anchors failed to hold. The only good point was that the length of the bridge was only 200 yards. However, we started work at once on the left bank, and first constructed an enormous sloping ramp by means of a cutting in the bank, followed by high trestles, and then by low trestles, till the roadway reached the proper boat-level, and so across the river to the low right bank. The bridge was completed by the time darkness fell. The time of construction was seven hours. I improvised hand-rails and fitted them on the long and dangerous ramp down to the boats, so all was ready for the passage of troops.

Lajj that evening (November 21st) seemed almost deserted, except for the long line of vessels, the hospitals, the aeroplane folk, and the ordnance and supply and

transport parks. All the troops had marched away before we turned in for the night, leaving only a small guard at Lajj for the ships, hospitals, the bridge, and the stores.

On the morning of the fateful November 22nd we awoke with the distant roar of battle in our ears, but could not get any information. To my surprise, I was ordered to dismantle my carefully constructed bridge of the previous day. The process of dismantling was completed by 1 p.m., but we had not quite finished arranging the boats when orders came to *re-erect the bridge immediately*. The men set to work with a will, even though all our previous labour had apparently been wasted, and another seven hours of toil ensued till at 8 p.m. the bridge was again complete and ready for use. The bridge remained in position all the following morning (November 23rd), while my barge was moored upstream of it on the right bank. On that afternoon we were again ordered to dismantle, and did so. We then formed up on the left bank below the *Julnar* for safety.

Crowds of wounded were now flowing into Lajj in carts and on foot. Everywhere the hospitals were overflowing. The s.s. *Mejidieh* had been converted into a hospital ship, and her decks were crammed with suffering humanity, packed like sardines, yet one heard no complaints. The horizon to the north-west still continued to be lit up at night with flashes from guns and shrapnel, but the illumination was not so incessant as before. Ammunition-wagons came in, filled up, and trotted off again, and everyone seemed desperately busy. We could get no definite news except that all was not going too well. The aeroplanes came and went like great birds, but their pilots did not volunteer much information. I arranged and sorted my small stores and checked those on every raft, for everything had got considerably mixed in the hard and rapid work just completed.

The afternoon passed quietly, and also November 24th, but after dinner on November 25th (at 8.30 p.m.) a very urgent message came that yet again the bridge was to be constructed at once. A portion of the Searchlight Section had accompanied me in one of my launches with an acetylene light. This we quickly rigged up, and by its rays my men for the third time made the bridge in seven hours. We ceased work at 4 a.m. on November 26th, 1915.

In the dim light of the early morning Major Winsloe, R.E., who had accompanied the Flying Column in the great battle just concluded, arrived on my bridge and brought me the sad news that many of our friends had met their fate, that we had failed to break through the Turkish position though our troops had gallantly taken the first line, and that the whole of our force was arriving back in Lajj sadly reduced in numbers. I returned to the barge, sleepy and hungry, and got a little rest during the next few hours.

A description of the actual battle at Ctesiphon I shall reserve for other chapters, for this battle was the turning-point in our hitherto unbroken tide of success.

The extraordinary gallantry of our troops in this desperate fight will ever be remembered to their credit and to the honour of their country.

CHAPTER V

THE BATTLE OF CTESIPHON (FIRST DAY)

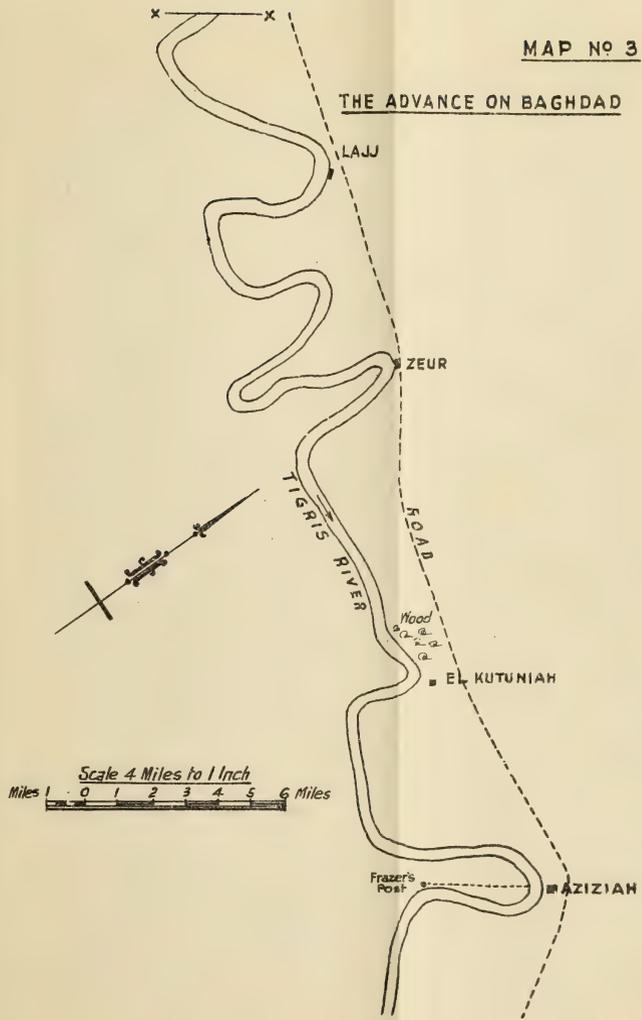
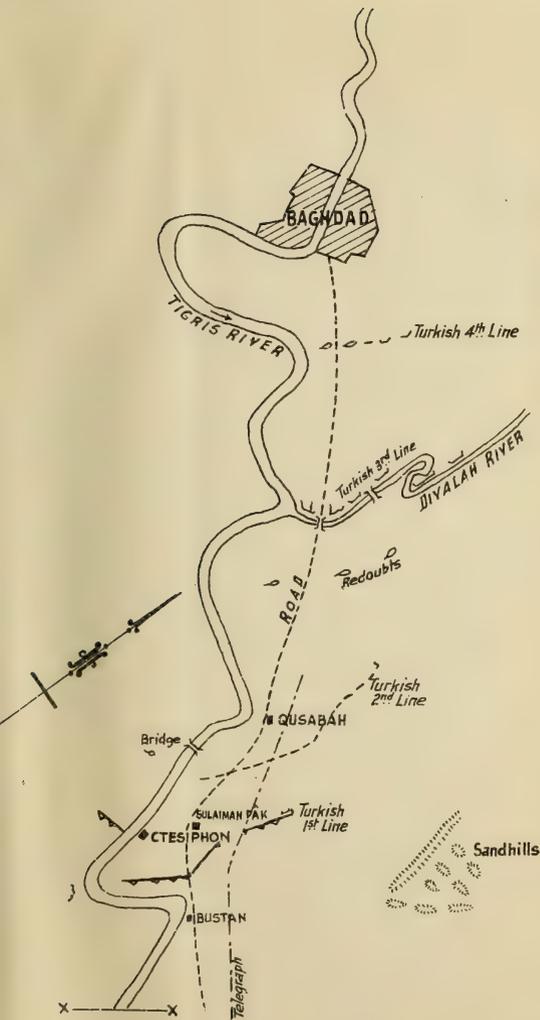
IN this chapter and the next I will endeavour to give a general idea of the course of the Battle of Ctesiphon. As will be understood from Chapter IV, the events I am about to describe took place some miles from Lajj, where my Bridging Train remained during the battle. Critical readers, therefore, and especially those who were in the thick of the fight, must be merciful if the description is not as accurate as it might be. The battle lasted for four days; the fighting was desperate and involved; the country was as flat as a pancake except for a few small mounds; and our force had not the benefit of a special "Eye-witness" guaranteed to gather information suitable for a descriptive account. Hampered by all these facts, a consecutive narrative is no easy affair. Most officers engaged in the struggle can give a very good description of events taking place in their own part of the field of battle, but they are unable, of course, to say exactly what was happening at the time in other areas, as they were naturally too much engaged with their own duties in their immediate surroundings to take accurate note of outside events, even if they were able to see much of other columns or units. My account of the battle embodies information gathered from many different officers of various branches of the service in widely separated areas of the fighting, so that in general it may be taken as giving a fair idea of the course of events; but it must of necessity deal with a certain amount of dry detail, for otherwise it would be impossible to describe the action at all.

A reference to Map No. 3 will show that the city of Baghdad—the objective of our force—is situated on both banks of the Tigris at a distance of about thirty miles by road from Lajj. Downstream of Baghdad, and eight

miles from it, the small River Diyalah (or Diala) runs into the Tigris on the left bank. Another eight miles or so downstream of the Diyalah River the Turks had selected the front line of their great defensive position at the place called by us "Ctesiphon," but known by the enemy as "Sulaiman Pak" on account of the scattered village of that name in the vicinity of the famous Arch of Ctesiphon. Some two miles in rear of their front line the Turks had dug a second and much longer line with its flank to the north thrown back towards the Diyalah River. Along the Baghdad bank of the Diyalah River itself a series of trenches had been dug forming a third position with the small river as a natural obstacle in front of it. Three redoubts also were thrown forward in front of this river. Still farther in rear, and about three miles from Baghdad, was a fourth and last line of defence. All these main lines of defence were on the left bank of the Tigris. On the right bank both the first and second lines of defence had been prolonged for a short distance, but no great effort seemed to have been made for the defence of that bank.

A question which will naturally present itself on reference to Map No. 3 is why General Townshend did not endeavour to capture Baghdad by the apparently easy route up the right bank. The reasons against this course of action would appear to be as follows. The *primary* objective of an army should be the field forces of the enemy and not the capture or occupation of a city, however valuable, unless the forces of the enemy have first been defeated. As a secondary consideration it must be remembered that, the River Tigris being the sole source of water-supply for our troops, they were naturally more or less tied down to it, and prolonged détours into the desert were impossible. Thirdly, unless the Turks could be forced or manœuvred out of their position at Ctesiphon on the left bank, it was impossible for the ships carrying all our supplies even to approach within gun range of that position, and certainly not to pass it. Lastly, an attack up the right bank would necessitate a division of force, since a large body would have to remain on the left bank to hold the enemy in front. Such a dispersion of strength was out of the question with a force of hardly more than one division. It should also be remembered that the more valuable portion of Baghdad itself lies on the left bank of the Tigris, except the railway

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terminus and workshops, which are on the right bank outside the populated area. It will therefore be clear to all that the only way to attack the Ctesiphon position with a small force, and at the same time to defeat the Turkish field army, was the way selected by our able commander, viz. to attack up the left bank of the Tigris.

Communiqué No 1 in Appendix G at the end of this book shows that General Townshend did not consider a force of one division sufficient to attack so strong a position as that of Ctesiphon. He had already asked for an army corps (viz. three divisions) with which to undertake the task. Nevertheless, when the army corps was not forthcoming, the attempt was made with less than four infantry brigades and only one cavalry brigade. How nearly this small force succeeded will only be fully known when the official account of the Battle of Ctesiphon is supplemented by a true version of the strategical situation of the Turkish forces at the time.

Suppose, however, that General Townshend's small army had succeeded in defeating the Turks and in capturing Baghdad, it is difficult to see how so small a force could have held Baghdad and at the same time kept intact its line of communication to Kut. I think I am not far wrong in saying that no force of less than two complete divisions could have held Baghdad with safety in the face of any determined attack by the Turks; so that, allowing one more division for holding the line of communication, it is apparent that we required an army corps to undertake, with any certainty of success, the attempt to capture and hold the city.

A matter of much uncertainty before the battle was the precise strength of the enemy, and the nature and strength of any possible reinforcements which might reach him. The failure of the Dardanelles campaign was known to have freed a large number of first-class Turkish troops. These had not yet put in an appearance against our forces, but any day they might do so. There was also the chance of Turkish reinforcements arriving from the region around Erzerum (see Map No. 9).

Reliable information is almost impossible to obtain from Arab spies, who will invent any tale which suits their purpose. The Arabs in the districts around Ctesiphon also were uniformly hostile to us. Imagine, then, the anxiety of a commander attacking an extremely strong

position in a hostile country when that position is held by a force superior probably in numbers to his own, and with large reinforcements possibly within close call. A more daring military operation has seldom been undertaken than the attack of the 6th Indian Division, and its attached troops, on the Turkish position at Ctesiphon in November 1915.

If the reader will refer again to Map No. 3 he will realise that if the Ctesiphon position could be turned by a force operating on its left flank downstream of the Diyalah River, this force, by cutting in behind the second line of defence and possibly capturing or destroying the bridges across the Diyalah River, would cause the enemy to be caught in the angle formed by the Tigris and Diyalah Rivers. A portion of the hostile force might escape by the bridge across the Tigris, but even this would scarcely be possible under concentrated artillery fire. The Diyalah River—unfordable near the Tigris—would in such a case help to complete the net around the enemy rather than to act as a difficult obstacle to our attack. Hence the importance of the Diyalah River in the strategy of this battle.

General Townshend's plan of attack on the Ctesiphon position* was to attack that position in front, and to endeavour also to turn the left flank of the enemy's second line. If luck attended him, the operations might end in the capture of all the Turkish troops on the left bank downstream of the Diyalah. This would certainly result in the fall of Baghdad unless unforeseen hostile reinforcements arrived in the nick of time.

A reference should now be made to the large-scale Map No. 4, showing the first and second Diy lines of the Ctesiphon position and the mouth of the Diyalah tributary.

Dealing first with the all-important Turkish first-line defences, it will be observed that the left of the enemy's line rested on two small mounds in the open plain which were marked "V.P." on the official map by the G.O.C. 6th Division, prior to the battle. These letters stand for the words "vital point" (as at the Battle of Es-Sin), for General Townshend decided that this was the key of the whole position—as indeed it proved to be. The locality referred to was thereafter always known as V.P. The two mounds at V.P. were surrounded by deep fire trenches, and intersected with deeper communication trenches, and

the place was thick with barbed-wire entanglement. From V.P. the front line ran, as one or more deep traversed fire trenches, past two small redoubts (A and B) to a larger redoubt known by us as "Water Redoubt" or "Delamain's Redoubt." After turning south for another 1,000 yards the trenches bore off to the south-east till a curious embankment called "High Wall" was reached about 1,300 yards or so from the River Tigris. The trenches then continued parallel to the river in a southerly direction right into the loop of the Tigris. High Wall was an enormous bank from 25 feet to 40 feet high and shaped like the letter L in plan. Its sides sloped very steeply up to a sharp ridge. One arm was about 600 yards long and the other about 400 yards. On the right bank of the Tigris the Turkish first line was formed by many gun-emplacements and a collection of trenches.

The huge ruined Arch (or Hall) of Ctesiphon near the left bank of the Tigris formed a landmark easily seen from all the country around. Its position is shown on Map No. 4.

The Turkish second-line trenches extended from the River Tigris in a northerly direction for some three miles or more, as shown on Map No. 4, and then curved back towards the north-north-west for another three miles or so. A short portion also existed on the right bank of the Tigris. The second-line trenches occupied a slight rise in the ground, in which, however, there were two or three gaps, of which more anon. In front of the second line, detached trenches (not shown on the map) had been dug at various places. Behind the second-line trenches the Turks had a bridge across the Tigris composed of large "gissara" boats brought down from Baghdad, and they also possessed two floating bridges across the Diyalah River in rear. Gun-positions were dotted about behind the first-line and second-line defences, as shown *approximately* on Map No. 4. Wire entanglements were freely used everywhere.

The enormous strength of this position can readily be seen. Owing to the loop of the Tigris River in front of the position an attacking force would, of necessity, have to attack towards Water Redoubt and V.P.—the latter a veritable fortress of trenches and wire. If an endeavour was made to outflank the line at V.P., this movement could be enfiladed by the extended second line and the

detached trenches thrown out east of it. An attempt to attack the second line direct (going north of V.P.) could be taken in flank from V.P. An attempt to outflank the second line could be enfiladed by forces operating from the direction of the Diyalah River, and was rendered doubly difficult by the throwing back of the left-flank trenches of the second line and by the extent of that line. All these points, and many others, will strike the military student at once, but my excuse for indicating them is that every one is not a student of strategy and tactics.

A telegraph line ran through the Turkish position at Ctesiphon. This was the line connecting Busrah, Amarah, Kut, and Baghdad. It formed a valuable guide for our troops during the night advance towards the position, in addition to the help given them by the alignment of the road from Lajj towards Baghdad.

I will next describe as briefly as possible the various columns into which our force was divided by General Townshend for the attack on the Ctesiphon position. These were as follows :

- (a) *Column A* (Major-General Delamain). This included the 16th Brigade, 2/7th Gurkha Rifles, 24th Punjabis (less two double companies), 82nd Battery R.F.A., the Hants Howitzer Battery, and the 22nd Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners (less 2 sections).
- (b) *Column B* (Brigadier-General Hamilton). Included the 18th Brigade, 63rd Battery R.F.A., and two sections of the 22nd Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners.
- (c) *Column C* (Brigadier-General Hoghton). Included the 17th Brigade, 48th Pioneers, 76th Battery R.F.A., two 5-inch guns of the 86th Heavy Battery R.G.A., and the 17th Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners (less one section). Divisional Headquarters accompanied this column for a time.
- (d) *Flying Column* (Major-General Sir C. Melliss). Included the 6th Cavalry Brigade, 76th Punjabis, S Battery R.H.A., the Machine-Gun Battery, armoured motor-cars with maxims, and a pack wireless set.

Appendix A gives the composition of each brigade in detail.

Orders for the attack were issued on November 21st, 1915, at Lajj, and that afternoon the various columns began to move from their camps. The columns moved as follows :

(i) Column C (Brigadier-General Hoghton) left Lajj at 2 p.m. on November 21st, and marched along the Baghdad road or near the telegraph line for some five miles. It then diverted to the left towards the Tigris, which it reached at 8 p.m. Soon after its arrival on the bank the column was shelled by H.M.S. *Firefly*, whose commander did not know the column would deviate down to the river, but no serious damage was done and the shelling ceased as soon as signals could be sent to the warship. The animals were watered and the men filled their bottles, and the column marched northwards at 10 p.m., crossed the road and the telegraph line, and finally halted at midnight about five miles from the enemy's front line facing the section Water Redoubt to High Wall. The two 5-inch guns of the 86th Heavy Battery R.G.A., made emplacements here and prepared for action.

(ii) Column A (Major-General Delamain) left Lajj with Column B and the Flying Column at 7.30 p.m. on November 21st. It marched along a track north-westwards to the sandhills opposite V.P. (see Map No. 4) in company with two other columns, and reached a point at the south end of the sandhills about three miles from V.P. at 12.15 a.m. on November 22nd. Here this column halted and dug itself in as a protection against shell fire. The other two columns went on.

(iii) Column B (Brigadier-General Hamilton) left Lajj with Column A and the Flying Column at 7.30 p.m. on November 21st, and accompanied these columns to the sandhills. It then continued to march north-westwards along the track through the sandhills for one and a half miles. The column reached a point at 1 a.m. on November 22nd where the track issued from the sandhills and crossed the dry canal bed shown on the map. Here it halted.

(iv) The Flying Column (Major-General Sir C. Melliss) left Lajj with Columns A and B at 7.30 p.m. on November 21st, and went with these columns to the sandhills. It continued on with Column B, and when that column halted it marched a further one and a half miles to the north-west and then halted. This column was not actu-

ally very mobile at the time owing to its infantry (viz. 76th Punjabis), but seventy-two transport carts were to be provided later so that the infantry could drive one hour in every three, and thus keep up better with the mounted troops composing the greater part of the column.

The approximate location of all the columns in their various positions of assembly at 5 a.m. on November 22nd, 1915, prior to the attack, is indicated on Map No. 4. The positions of the ships-of-war and the heavy guns on barges are also shown.

The night march of Columns A and B and the Flying Column to the sandhills was a difficult affair owing to the intense darkness which prevailed at first. Lieutenant A. B. Matthews, R.E., and Captain W. E. T. Morland, 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, led these columns by repeated bearings taken by each officer on suitable clouds ahead, as no stars were visible at the time. Having taken a bearing, each officer marched about a quarter of a mile on his bearing, with the columns following in the direction thus given by both officers approximately. At the end of the quarter mile the distance between the two officers, caused by their probably divergent lines of march, was halved by both guides marching inwards till they met. The officers then started again side by side on the given bearing, and repeated the process just described. The columns thus progressed by short stages but with fair accuracy.

The general plan of attack of all the columns was as follows :

Column A (Major-General Delamain) was to deliver a flank attack on Redoubt V.P. and the trenches south of this stronghold for a short distance, while Column C (Brigadier-General Hoghton) was to make a holding attack on the section of the enemy's first line from Water Redoubt to High Wall until V.P. was taken.

When these attacks had commenced, Column B (Brigadier-General Hamilton) was to move north-westwards past V.P. and attack the Turkish second-line defences. The Flying Column, by a wide détour, was to operate on the left flank of the enemy's second line, endeavouring to turn that flank and to get behind the line ; and later, if all went well, it was to advance if possible and cross the Diyalah River by a ford some miles up that stream

and then to operate on the flank of the enemy. It might also be called upon to destroy the bridges across the Diyalah River if necessary.

It was hoped that the encircling movement of the Flying Column on the enemy's left, combined with the attack of Column B on the left front of his second line, would so influence the enemy's resistance to the attack of General Delamain on V.P. that the vital point V.P. would speedily be captured without serious loss; the enemy's first line could then be rolled up from the north, and his second line attacked, while Column C (General Hoghton) broke through the portion north of High Wall, thus cutting off the retreat of any hostile troops holding the remainder of the Turkish front line in the loop of the river. Meanwhile the Flying Column would be turning the left flank of the enemy's second line so as to hinder his retirement and hem him in to the river. Possibly the Flying Column, as before stated, might attempt to destroy the bridges over the Diyalah River so as to cut off all means of retreat.

If Baghdad was entered, the Flying Column was to make for the railway terminus and railway line on the right bank, seize the rolling stock, and if necessary cut the line. A force of one brigade was then to proceed to Samarra, eighty miles away, to hold the railhead during the occupation of Baghdad.

Dawn on November 22nd, 1915, saw all our troops in their proper positions to commence the attack on the Ctesiphon position. It is very difficult to give a consecutive account of the attack as a whole, so it will be best to describe briefly what occurred as regards each separate column stage by stage.

At 6 a.m. on November 22nd Column C (General Hoghton) began to move forward, leaving its two 5-inch guns in emplacements with a section of Sappers (17th Co.) as escort. This column advanced west-south-west for two miles before the enemy opened fire from their front line north of High Wall. The 119th Infantry were diverted to the left to attack the Bustan Redoubt on the river-bank and occupied the redoubt without difficulty. It was now found that the 5-inch guns were too distant from the enemy's position, so they were moved up a mile across rough ground towards V.P.; hasty protection was arranged with sandbags, and the guns came into action against the larger mound of V.P.

The direction of attack of Column C, however, was too far south. It left a portion of the enemy's line near Water Redoubt untouched. Realising this, the Turks in this quarter began to come out of their trenches to attack the flank of Column A (General Delamain), which was then assaulting V.P. Column C was much nearer Lajj than it should have been when the advance began, and thus delayed the attack of Column A on V.P.—a most unfortunate delay.

The enemy's fire was becoming heavy and accurate and Column C was being enfiladed from High Wall, but it was necessary to correct the error of direction of the column before assaulting the trenches ahead. General Hoghton accordingly executed a flank march to his right (northwards), so as to be in a position to assault the powerful redoubt called by us Water Redoubt, or Delamain's Redoubt. This flank march under fire was a difficult and precarious undertaking, but it was most necessary and was ably carried out.

The flank march being completed, Column C faced Water Redoubt and the trenches some distance south of it, with the 22nd Punjabis and two sections of the 17th Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners in support and reserve. At 10.30 a.m. the rifle fire was very heavy and accurate, and Column C suffered severely. General Hoghton sent a message to General Delamain (now at the captured V.P.) that he had lost heavily and required assistance to push through. General Delamain then sent a portion of his force along the enemy's first-line trenches southwards towards Water Redoubt. This had the desired effect. General Hoghton with Column C assaulted Water Redoubt and the adjoining trenches at 11.30 a.m. with all his troops and captured this strong position. The Turks surrendered when the barbed wire was reached. Captain E. J. Loring, R.E., commanding the 17th Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners, was seriously wounded in this attack.

General Hoghton next consolidated his position in Water Redoubt and sent a portion of his force along the enemy's trenches southwards towards High Wall to assault another redoubt. The Turks retired southwards along their trenches. The pursuit, however, could not be continued, as only twenty rounds of ammunition per man remained. It was now about 1 p.m.

It will be well to return at this point in my narrative to trace the fortunes of Column A in the fight. At dawn this column was in position in the sandhills waiting for orders to attack V.P. At 8 a.m. on November 22nd, when Column C was commencing its attack, General Delamain, opposite V.P., saw a large body of the enemy which he thought was retiring from V.P. to the second line. This retrograde movement seemed favourable to an attack on the powerful redoubt, so the attack was launched. Column A advanced on V.P. and was soon under terrific rifle and shell fire. The final assault on the deep trenches surrounded by barbed-wire entanglements was carried out with the greatest gallantry by our Indian troops. The 2/7th Gurkha Rifles and the 24th Punjabis were in the firing-line, supported by the 66th Punjabis and 117th Mahrattas, while the 2nd Dorset Regiment and 104th Rifles formed the reserve. The leading troops rushed straight at the barbed wire, the little Gurkhas jumping right into it, in their furious efforts to hack a way through the cruel strands. Soon the wire was thick with corpses, but our troops were not to be denied. The supports crowded in, the wire was passed, and our men were into the trenches with the kukri and the bayonet, avenging in terrible fashion the slaughter of their comrades outside. The two mounds forming the redoubt were soon in our hands—the trenches full of dead, and the ground soaked with blood. We had captured the vital point of the position. The Gurkhas and the 24th Punjabis lost heavily, as they bore the brunt of the assault. At 10 a.m. Column A had occupied V.P. and the wounded were being collected under what little cover there was. The plain around the redoubt was scattered with our dead in heaps, each man lying as he had fallen with his face to the foe, giving the lie direct to those who have denied the fighting qualities of the best type of Indian soldier when properly led. All honour to those gallant Gurkha and Indian soldiers who perished in this assault. They upheld the best traditions of the Indian Army.

The message from General Houghton arrived after a time asking for assistance, so General Delamain, as before stated, despatched a portion of his force southwards at 11.15 a.m. along the Turkish first-line trenches towards a redoubt (marked A) some 600 yards from V.P. This force consisted of A and B double companies of the 2nd Dor-

set Regiment, followed by two double companies of Gurkhas and two sections of the 22nd Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners. Nothing, I think, shows the scarcity of troops from which we suffered more than the fact that it was necessary to use sappers as infantry. Every man who could carry a rifle was required to use it that day. The men fought from traverse to traverse, and finally assaulted and captured Redoubt A. In this assault 2nd Lieutenant W. O. Garrett, I.A.R. (attached to the 22nd Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners), was killed, and Captain M. G. G. Campbell, R.E., of the 22nd Co., was hit by seven bullets but survived. The detached force then went on farther south along the trenches towards Redoubt B (see Map No. 4), which was also captured. The detachment then consolidated the positions won. One thousand three hundred prisoners were taken in the Turkish first-line trenches.

While this fighting was in progress, Column A, less the force sent towards Redoubts A and B, continued to advance towards the Turkish second-line trenches beyond V.P. C and D double companies of the 2nd Dorset Regiment, with the 66th Punjabis, 104th Rifles, 117th Mahrattas, and some Gurkhas rushed forward. In this advance eight Turkish field guns were captured. The troops continued to advance till within 300 yards or so of the enemy's second line, where they were subjected to very heavy fire and lay down in the open. They were unable to advance farther without the support of Column C on their left, which, as before explained, had been unable to break through early owing to the heavy resistance encountered before Water Redoubt.

General Townshend had arrived in V.P. at 11 a.m. and consulted with General Delamain with regard to the situation, and he remained at V.P. throughout most of the first day of the battle.

At 2 p.m. the Turks commenced what appeared to be a counter-attack from the south end of their second line near the bridge of boats across the Tigris, and poured out from behind their trenches towards the Arch of Ctesiphon through various gaps in the slight rise of ground marking the position of these trenches. This counter-attack, however, did not get far, for the enemy were quickly dispersed by the accurate and concentrated fire of our guns and fled for cover. Some authorities are of opinion that the Turkish troops were not attempting to attack, but merely

retiring from the loop of the river. Possibly that is so. At 3.30 p.m. a still larger counter-attack was launched (about 7,000 men) towards V.P. from the same locality. It would appear that heavy reinforcements had just reached the Turks. These troops had been brought down from Baghdad in the nick of time and landed from ships downstream of the Diyalah River. The great counter-attack poured out eastwards from the Tigris towards V.P. between the first and second Turkish lines.

With regard to these counter-attacks it is interesting to note that at 3.10 p.m. an aeroplane reconnaissance showed that the enemy had dismantled his bridge across the River Tigris and it was actually being towed upstream in sections by two steamers. Also a body of about 1,000 infantry was retiring upstream at that hour from the Arch of Ctesiphon towards Qusabah village, and 2,000 more were halted near a sunken road close to that village. Three columns of transport were retiring up the road towards the Diyalah River, and a body of infantry was assembled in and near each of the three redoubts guarding the approach to the Diyalah River (see Map No. 4). All these facts point to an intention of the Turks to retire from the Ctesiphon position after the failure of the first counter-attack at 2 p.m. What, then, is the explanation of the more determined attack delivered at 3.30 p.m.? It can only be that very large reinforcements of fresh troops arrived in the nick of time from Baghdad, as before stated, and that they were thrown at once into the fight. These men were without doubt a portion of Khalil Pasha's Army Corps which had just arrived from Erzerum.

In the absence of Column C—which had not advanced beyond the Turkish first-line trenches—the brunt of the second Turkish counter-attack fell upon the left flank of Column A, which was engaging the enemy's second line as described previously. Two battalions were forced to retire on the left flank of Column A, but the detachment of Dorsets managed to hold on for a time by forming one of its two double companies to the exposed flank, while our guns at V.P. assisted by raining shrapnel on the advancing masses of the enemy. Later, however, Column A had to retire a trifle and the whole line of infantry went back about 400 yards, being obliged thus to relinquish the eight Turkish guns previously captured, for there were no teams with which to remove them.

The troops then remained in their exposed position till dusk, when they retired as ordered into V.P.

At 4 p.m. the two 5-inch guns with Column C marched from their previous position to V.P., where they assisted in bombarding the hostile guns and troops.

It is now time to switch on to the doings of Column B (General Hamilton), which we left bivouacked one and a half miles from Column A among the sandhills at dawn on November 22nd, 1915.

General Hamilton's orders were that he was not to commence his attack until the attack of Column A on V.P. had been launched. Column B accordingly waited, but kept in touch with Column A by signal. At 8.30 a.m., however, General Hamilton, seeing that Column A on his left was attacking V.P., commenced his own advance and moved straight on Qusabah village (see Map No. 4) from the junction of the track and the canal-bed in the sandhills. By 11.30 a.m. Column B had assaulted and captured two advanced trenches in front of the Turkish second line, but could get no farther owing to the concentrated fire of the enemy in front at 600 yards distance, and later because of the partial retirement of Column A on its left, and the retirement of the Flying Column on its right. The retirement of the Flying Column had been brought about by the flank attack of a force of 2,000 Turks from a Turkish reserve division, posted behind the enemy's second line and assisted by Arabs; but the guns of the Flying Column checked the enemy sufficiently to obviate the necessity of the retirement of Column B from its position. The 76th Punjabis from the Flying Column reinforced the exposed right flank of Column B fairly early in the battle when the Flying Column was checked. Column B then was unable to advance to the actual assault of the Turkish second line. It remained in position all day facing that line, and at dusk retired as ordered to V.P.

It is difficult to ascertain what actually occurred in the case of the Flying Column commanded by Major-General Sir Charles Melliss. This column had halted one and a half miles north-west of Column B on the night of November 21st/22nd, and was intended to outflank the Turkish second line when the general attack had progressed sufficiently to render such a movement effective. The column was not truly mobile as a whole on this the first day of

the battle, owing to the presence of the 76th Punjabis with the cavalry; though, as I have said before, it was intended that this infantry battalion should be provided with some transport carts to render it more mobile later in the battle.

It appears that the Flying Column marched from its bivouac on November 22nd in a westerly direction, but after proceeding some distance it found itself in a most difficult position, exposed to fire from the enemy's second line in front and to a powerful attack by 2,000 Turks assisted by hosts of Arab cavalry on its right flank. The westerly direction of march, calculated to bring the column up towards the left flank of the Turkish second line, could not be maintained, and at 10.15 a.m. the Flying Column was in a situation (as reported by our aeroplane observers) about two miles only north-north-west of V.P.

The column suffered severely, and there were very heavy casualties among the horses. As the rôle of this force could not now be fulfilled, it was ordered to retire from its difficult position, and this movement was carried out with success. The 76th Punjabis joined Column B, and the mounted troops retired behind the sandhills and V.P., but the guns of S Battery R.H.A. kept the enemy's forces under fire so as to protect the now exposed right flank of Column B.

Ammunition was now running short in Columns A, B, and C, for many small-arm-ammunition mules had been hit and much of the ammunition lost.

At 5.30 p.m. General Townshend at V.P. sent General Delamain southwards, leaving Column A in the vicinity of V.P. under the command of the next senior officer. General Delamain was ordered to proceed to the Arch of Ctesiphon to take up a position between it and the River Tigris. He was to collect what troops he could for this work while on his way to the Arch. General Delamain left V.P. as ordered, and reached Water Redoubt; but owing to the military situation at the time he remained at Water Redoubt and informed General Townshend of this fact.

During the course of the afternoon of November 22nd the wounded were being collected in all parts of the battle-field, and were being brought in to V.P. when possible for treatment.

Late in the afternoon General Townshend issued orders

from V.P. that all columns were to concentrate on V.P. with the exception of the troops at Water Redoubt, where General Delamain was in command, and at dusk this concentration commenced. It was most necessary to reorganise the various columns and units, for owing to the desperate fighting and heavy losses they had become very much mixed. To give some idea of the state of affairs, I may mention that in the 17th Brigade, when both the Brigade Major and the Staff Captain had been killed, a Company Sergeant-Major acted as Brigade Major for some time under the orders of General Hoghton and excellently performed his duties. This same N.C.O. also took command of a large body of Indian infantry which had lost all its officers, and led the men with the greatest courage and dash. The N.C.O. to whom I allude was C.S.M. Arlett, 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. On many other occasions, and notably in the fight at Ahwaz in March 1915, have our N.C.O.s and men of British regiments taken command of Indian troops in critical situations on their own responsibility. It says much for the excellence of their training and their devotion to duty.

At dusk on November 22nd a body of 500 Turks with two guns approached to within 700 yards of Water Redoubt and dug themselves in. This seemed to indicate a probable night attack on the redoubt, so General Delamain sent a message to V.P. asking for artillery. The 82nd Battery R.F.A. and the Hants Howitzer Battery were accordingly sent to Water Redoubt at 10 p.m. and remained there for the night. No attack was attempted by the Turks during the night of November 22nd/23rd, and there was no shelling of V.P. The troops in V.P. and in Water Redoubt strengthened their positions, collected the wounded, and got what rest they could.

It will be well to take a brief survey of the work carried out by the naval flotilla on November 22nd. At dawn the warships *Firefly*, *Comet*, *Sumana*, and *Sheitan* were moored to the right bank of the Tigris, 3,000 yards downstream of Bustan (see Map No. 4). The target for their gunfire was the enemy's front line from High Wall southwards to the loop of the river. In addition the s.s. *Shushan* and s.s. *Messudieh* had each brought up two horse-boats with 4·7-inch naval guns aboard, and these little barges were moored two in midstream and two on the right bank downstream of the men-of-war. The s.s. *Shihab* had

brought up two barges, each with a 5-inch gun aboard, and had moored them also in midstream. The six heavy guns on these horse-boats and barges assisted in the bombardment of the enemy's front line from High Wall southwards, and also fired on the gun positions near the Old Fort south of the front line on the right bank of the river. The guns of the men-of-war did not fire much except the modern 4-inch weapon on board H.M.S. *Firefly*. The high mast of this ship was found to draw fire on the other ships, for it was used as a ranging mark by the enemy, so the *Firefly* continued thereafter to steam up and down the Bustan reach. H.M.S. *Comet* was hit by a ricochet, but no great damage was done.

Later on, all the warships steamed up to the top of the bend past Bustan, and the *Sumana* and *Sheitan* tied up under the left bank. The two larger vessels steamed up and down. After two hours, owing to the heavy shell fire, all the ships retired again downstream and took up their moorings along the right bank, this time downstream of the barges with the heavy artillery aboard. Early in the day the men-of-war had bombarded the Turkish river-steamer *Pioneer*, which was then moored to the left bank of the Tigris downstream of the Arch of Ctesiphon (*vide* Map No. 4), and had forced her to retire upstream. Our ships, and the heavy gun-barges, remained in their positions for the rest of the day. So much for the naval affairs on November 22nd.

Even grim war has its lighter side, as evidenced by a tale told by one of our medical officers. A wounded Tommy Atkins comes marching in at dusk asking for the field ambulance. Being asked where his equipment is, he points over his shoulder to a shadowy figure in rear, and says laconically, "My prisoner 'as it." Behold then a grimy Turk following the injured hero, and carrying not only that hero's kit but also *his rifle*!

The gallantry and devotion to duty shown by our medical officers on this memorable day were beyond all praise. Out on the open plain, often unguarded from wandering Arab cavalry, always exposed to shell-fire and rifle bullets, they carried on their work in the collecting stations and field ambulances with complete disregard of personal danger, and worked till they were fit to drop with fatigue in alleviating the sufferings of friend and foe alike.

The night closed down, on November 22nd, 1915, with General Townshend's small force firmly established in the northern portion of the Turkish first line, but sadly reduced in numbers. The advantage in this the first day of the battle clearly rested with our force; yet the final result of the struggle appeared doubtful even to the most sanguine among us, for none knew what further reinforcements might reach the enemy, and the second and succeeding lines of defence still remained uncaptured.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OF CTESIPHON (SECOND AND SUCCEEDING DAYS)

ON the morning of November 23rd, 1915—the second day of the Battle of Ctesiphon—General Townshend and the majority of our force were in and behind the redoubts at V.P., and General Delamain held Water Redoubt one and a half miles south of V.P. with a mixed force from different columns. The Army Commander, General Sir John Nixon, spent the night of November 22nd/23rd near V.P. and remained with the Divisional Headquarters during November 23rd. His G.S.O. I (Intelligence), Lieutenant-Colonel Beach, R.E., had been wounded and several of his staff had had narrow escapes. The night had been comparatively quiet, except for some desultory shelling at intervals. Morning dawned without any indication of immediate activity on either side.

The chief interest of the second day of the Battle of Ctesiphon was centred in the southern area of the battlefield around the famous Arch of Ctesiphon. South of this great ruined edifice, and some hundreds of yards from it, a small hillock existed which was christened by our troops "Gurkha Mound." This mound had been heavily entrenched by the Turks—in fact, some of the cover trenches in the mound were more than 15 feet deep. Between Gurkha Mound and the extraordinary embankment called High Wall the enemy had dug many small trenches for defence and communication, thus rendering this area impossible for guns to traverse after dark. High Wall itself, as I have already said, was a great ridge shaped in plan like the letter L, the longer arm (about 600 yards long) running south, and the shorter arm (400 yards long) running east. The bank was of earth, about 40 feet high in places, with very steep sides and a sharp crest.

It will be recollected that General Delamain was ordered at 5.30 p.m. on November 22nd to proceed to the Arch of Ctesiphon, collecting what troops he could *en route*, in order to take up a line between the Arch and the Tigris. The order indicates that this area of the battlefield was of considerable tactical importance, and this fact was thoroughly recognised by the Turks.

On the evening of the first day of the battle our troops were not in occupation of the most southerly portion of the enemy's front line, so that the area of ground enclosed in the loop of the River Tigris remained open to the enemy. Any attempt by the Turks to outflank the left of our line would of necessity pass the Arch of Ctesiphon and develop to the south of High Wall. To check any such attempt at turning our left flank, the simplest procedure for our force was to hold strongly a position near the Arch. The best position in that vicinity was Gurkha Mound. Hence the importance of this small hill.

About 7 a.m. on November 23rd the 6th Cavalry Brigade (formerly a part of the Flying Column) proceeded to High Wall. Previous to this the 2/7th Gurkhas, accompanied by the Machine-Gun Battery, had marched via High Wall to Gurkha Mound, which they occupied without difficulty. They were joined shortly afterwards at the mound by one section (two guns) of the 82nd Battery R.F.A., under Lieutenant F. W. B. Wilson, R.F.A.

At 8 a.m. the 6th Cavalry Brigade marched from High Wall past Gurkha Mound and went down to the left bank of the Tigris to water the horses. They encountered some Turkish cavalry, and rifle fire was opened on them from the village near by. Our troops returned the fire, assisted by the two 18-pr. guns of the 82nd Battery. The Cavalry Brigade then retired to the Arch, and later on went back again to High Wall.

Turkish artillery now opened fire at a range of 4,000 yards from the direction of the Diyalah River; the target was the space fortunately just quitted by the 6th Cavalry Brigade. Our two 18-pr. Q.F. guns near Gurkha Mound engaged the hostile guns, whose fire was then directed on to the mound. Eight Turkish guns were concentrating their fire on Gurkha Mound at intervals throughout the day. Lieutenant F. W. B. Wilson, R.F.A., seeing that it was useless to engage these eight guns with his two for any length of time, devoted his attention to registering

carefully on certain gaps in the low rise of ground occupied by the Turkish second-line trenches. Through these gaps hostile troops could be seen in motion behind the second line. Fire continued to be directed on Gurkha Mound throughout the day, and at 4 p.m. it was noticed that the enemy was massing behind the right of his second line for an assault on the mound. This assault proved a fiasco, largely owing to the heavy losses caused to the enemy by our gunfire on the carefully registered gaps.

At dusk on November 23rd matters were in a rather critical condition at Gurkha Mound. Only ten rounds of ammunition per gun remained, and, owing to the difficulty of crossing the ground to High Wall in the dark, it was imperative for the two field guns to leave the mound at once. As the guns were leaving the mound, Turkish cavalry dashed round Ctesiphon Arch to the east of the mound and only 400 yards from it, apparently with the intention of capturing the two guns. The guns were unlimbered immediately and came into action. They fired two or three rounds "gunfire" (extremely rapid) with fuze 0, and thus checked the threatening cavalry charge. This was one of the few occasions on which our artillery was actually in danger from the Turkish cavalry. The section of Field Artillery then limbered up and trotted to High Wall, where it rejoined the other two sections of the 82nd Battery R.F.A., recently arrived from Water Redoubt.

The Turks next opened a very hot fire from machine guns and rifles on to Gurkha Mound, and a number of casualties occurred among our men, for the fire came from three sides. It was 7 p.m., and the enemy began to press the attack on the mound but never actually reached the trenches. On this, as on so many other occasions, the careful training of our troops in musketry told its own tale, for not a Turk could live for long in the storm of well-directed bullets which swept the plain. The Gurkhas and other troops holding the little mound were heavily attacked and shelled during most of the ensuing night, yet they held on to the mound in spite of all, while the guns of the 63rd Battery R.F.A., from Water Redoubt and those of the 82nd Battery R.F.A., from High Wall showered shrapnel on the attacking Turks and the hostile guns.

The enemy suffered extremely heavily. The whole

country around Gurkha Mound was littered with dead and wounded before morning, and about 4 a.m. on November 24th the Turks gave up the attempt to capture the mound and retreated upstream. At 6.30 a.m. on November 24th the gallant little garrison of Gurkha Mound retired to High Wall, and thus ended the struggle for this small position. We evacuated the mound, but the enemy gave no sign of attempting to occupy it. The Turks had had enough fighting for the time being.

It will be well now to follow the movements of the other bodies of our troops during November 23rd.

As before stated, the morning of November 23rd was quiet except near the Arch of Ctesiphon. Columns A and B and most of Column C were at V.P., and all the troops were busy collecting the wounded and in improving their positions. General Townshend issued orders for the various units to rejoin their several columns as far as possible, for the formations were still much mixed. At 2.45 p.m. Column B (General Hamilton) moved from V.P. to High Wall, as matters seemed to be becoming more serious in that direction. *En route*, the 2nd Norfolk Regiment and the 120th Infantry were detached to join General Delamain in Water Redoubt, and these battalions remained there during the next night and rejoined Column B at High Wall on the morning of November 24th. The 110th Infantry and the 7th Rajputs (of Column B) went on to High Wall, where they held the western (enemy) face. Column B had suffered very much from lack of water. Many of the men had been unable to replenish their water-bottles for thirty-six hours.

At 4 p.m. on November 23rd heavy shelling recommenced on V.P. and on Water Redoubt, the fire on V.P. being directed apparently on the masts of the pack wireless installation (previously with the Flying Column), and causing many casualties among our wounded collected close behind the two mounds. The wounded men were being removed from V.P. to Lajj in transport carts and many of the animals bolted, with the deplorable result that the wretched wounded had an agonising time in these carts going at a gallop across the rough ground. In time, however, control was regained. The wireless masts were then taken down so as not to draw shell fire.

V.P. was held at this time by Column C (General Hoghton). Column A was at Water Redoubt, except the 2/7th

Gurkhas at Gurkha Mound. The 6th Cavalry Brigade had moved to a position in rear of High Wall, but was also employed in keeping open our line of communication to Lajj.

V.P. was now again attacked with some violence; and our two 5-inch guns—under orders at 3 p.m. to proceed from V.P. to High Wall—were recalled by General Hoghton to assist in repelling the attack. On reaching V.P. again these heavy guns came into action at 700 yards range against the foe (*i.e.* at practically point-blank range) and did great execution. The enemy's rifle fire was heavy and accurate, but the counter-attack was finally repulsed with heavy loss. The two guns remained at V.P. and continued to fire on the enemy's troops, guns, and ships when visible.

General Townshend, with the Divisional Headquarters, had left V.P. and had proceeded to Water Redoubt.

At 5 p.m. on November 23rd large bodies of the enemy's troops advanced from the right flank of their second line near the Tigris and spread round V.P. towards the east. They did not assault by daylight, but waited till dark. On the night of November 23rd/24th a series of attacks were delivered by the Turks on V.P., while their forces were also assaulting Gurkha Mound as before described. It is thought that the object of these attacks on V.P. was to cover the withdrawal of the enemy to the Diyalah River. They were preceded and accompanied by the most blood-curdling shouts and yells, calculated, I suppose, to strike terror into the hearts of the British. In order to assist Column C—the hard-pressed garrison of V.P.—the 5-inch howitzers of the Hants Howitzer Battery at Water Redoubt were ordered to fire over V.P., so as to bring more shell fire on to the enemy. The captured trenches of the Turkish first line between Water Redoubt and V.P. were only very thinly held by our force, if at all, for there were no men to spare for such a lengthy line of front. Meanwhile, the gun ammunition at V.P. was getting perilously low—so much so that after a time only six rounds of ammunition per gun remained. During this memorable night the Turks made four separate demonstrations against V.P., but without result except to lose a great number of men. Throughout the hours of darkness every man of our force in V.P. and in Water Redoubt stood weapon in hand, determined to sell his

life dearly for the honour of his country, and scarcely expecting to see the light of another dawn. Small mercy can be expected by the defenders of a redoubt captured by assault at night, and our soldiers were well aware of the fact.

At 11 p.m. on this night of turmoil and bloodshed the question of the supply of ammunition at V.P. had become so critical that a column of wagons was despatched to Lajj with orders that, cost what it might, it must get back to V.P. with ammunition in the shortest possible time. By most strenuous efforts this column actually succeeded in doing the twenty-mile journey to Lajj and back, including the loading of the wagons, in about four hours, and was back at V.P. before dawn with its precious load. The two 5-inch guns of the 86th Battery R.G.A. left V.P. at 1 a.m. on November 24th, between two counter-attacks, and marched to High Wall.

The chill dawn of November 24th, 1915, showed the blood-stained area around V.P. strewn with dead and wounded men, but with our exhausted troops still in occupation of that vital point. When the counter-attacks had ceased at length, the work of removing the wounded from V.P. went on, and many fresh cases had now been added to those already collected.

A medical officer told me an amusing tale of what occurred at his field ambulance out on the plain during the battle. A Turkish officer, slightly wounded, came wandering to the hospital. He was asked what he wanted, and replied, "I wish to be taken prisoner." Our doctor answered that he could not be bothered with guarding prisoners, and told the Turk to go back to his "ain folk" clearly visible across the plain. The brave Turk replied that he did not wish to go back and *insisted* on being taken prisoner! So a prisoner he became, and remained unguarded with the ambulance till he was duly handed over to an escort. That Turk knew on which side his bread was buttered.

Soon after dawn on November 24th the Army Commander, General Sir John Nixon, who had remained till then on or near the field of battle, left for Lajj, whence he took ship for Kut. As events proved, he delayed his departure for Busrah, via Kut, almost too long, for it was below Kut, as I shall relate later, that his ship was held up for a time by a large body of the enemy.

On the morning of November 24th, after their repeated and unsuccessful attacks upon V.P., the Turks were discovered to be in occupation of a line of trenches opposite V.P. and about 800 yards distant. From these trenches they kept up a regular fire, but made no sign of renewing their attack. At Water Redoubt and at High Wall matters were fairly quiet for a time.

General Townshend now ordered Columns C and A (at V.P. and at Water Redoubt respectively) to concentrate on High Wall, whither he and his staff had already repaired. He was in communication with both columns by heliograph. General Delamain brought his troops in from Water Redoubt, but General Hoghton replied from V.P. that, owing to the lack of carts for the removal of the wounded and to the necessity of burying the dead, he was unable to comply with the order at once. Later in the day he asked for assistance to enable him to rejoin the force at High Wall, so Column A under General Delamain went out again from High Wall and made a demonstration to enable Column C to evacuate V.P. in safety. The desired effect was produced, and Column C arrived at High Wall during the night of November 24th/25th.

At High Wall during November 24th the troops were chiefly occupied in burying the dead on the plain outside. During the morning High Wall came under a heavy bombardment for a time from the Turkish big guns, and the situation was very unpleasant.

Our warships attempted to render what assistance they could. H.M.S. *Sumana* had returned to Lajj and had brought up a mahela full of ammunition; and on November 24th, with the senior naval officer aboard, she steamed up past Bustan and made fast to the left bank while the S.N.O. (Captain Nunn, R.N.) went up to High Wall to consult with General Townshend. Captain Nunn then ordered all the other men-of-war to come up to the bend of the river. The enemy's artillery, however, opened so hot a fire on the ships when they arrived that they were forced to retire again to their former positions downstream. H.M.S. *Sumana* later returned to Lajj, while the other ships stayed near the battlefield.

Food was running short at High Wall, and the sole source of water-supply was, of course, the River Tigris, three-quarters of a mile from High Wall. The question of

water-supply caused some anxiety. If the Turks, having received further large reinforcements, attacked in great force via the Arch of Ctesiphon, and succeeded in turning our flank south of High Wall, it appeared possible that they might get in between High Wall and the Tigris, and thus cut off our force from its sole source of water-supply. This would indeed have been a disaster. The enemy, however, had had enough fighting for the time being and gave no sign of massing for another attack from the direction of the Arch. The night of November 24th/25th passed quietly.

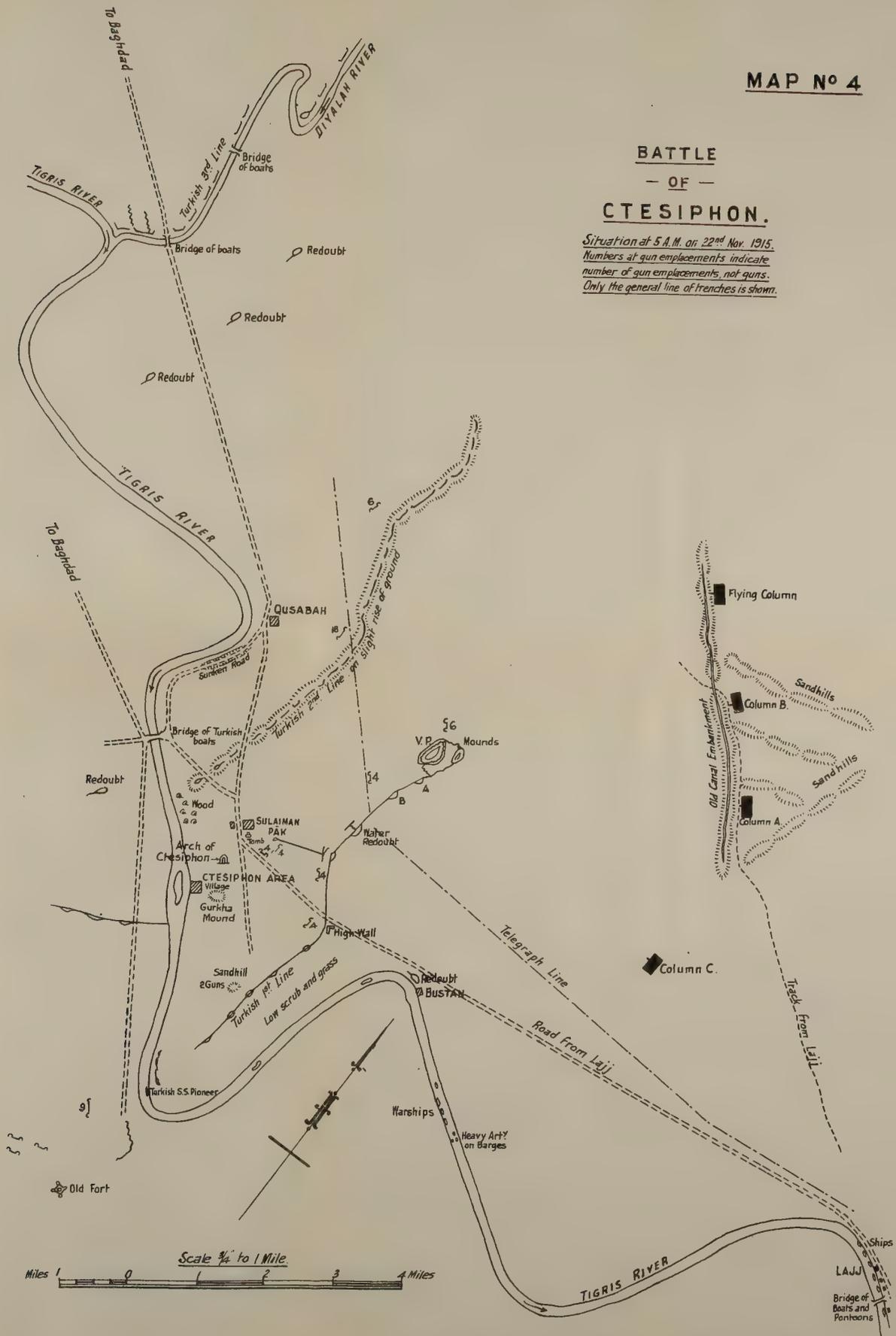
On November 25th our force was still concentrated at High Wall, but burial parties were hard at work all day. At 5 p.m., however, it was believed that the Turks were advancing in force once more to attack us. Orders were then issued for the whole force to retire upon Lajj, abandoning all stores difficult to remove. A large 13½-inch mortar, of great age and made of bronze, had been captured at High Wall. This extraordinary weapon was prepared by us for demolition with eight slabs of gun-cotton, but it was decided at the last moment not to blow it up, so it was left intact. It was afterwards brought down to Kut by the enemy and used against us, as I shall relate further on in my narrative. Very little was left behind at High Wall when our troops left the place. The various units made an orderly retirement past Bustan and along the road towards Lajj with the cavalry guarding the line of march. Our whole force was clear of High Wall by 9 p.m., and reached the camp at Lajj between midnight and 2.30 a.m. on November 26th, 1915.

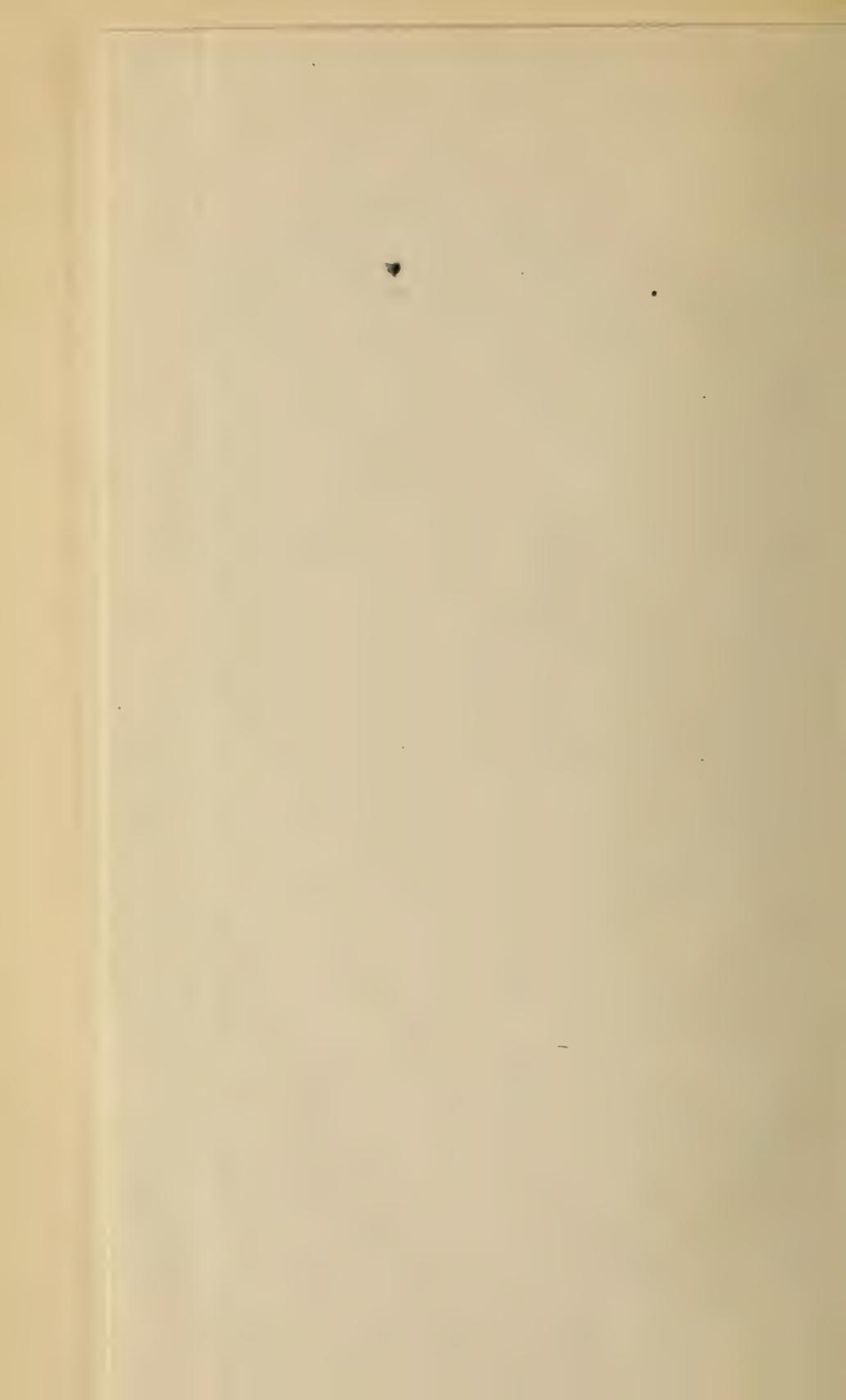
Thus ended this remarkable and historic encounter, claimed as a victory by both sides. The first day's fighting was clearly a victory for our troops, though the result of the succeeding days' contest was a retirement of our force to Lajj. The final advantage thus rested with our enemies; yet, though our little army of 11,000 bayonets had suffered casualties to the extent of 4,267 men killed, wounded, or missing,¹ there is no doubt that the casualties

¹ As an example of the terrible percentage of our losses I may mention that the 18th Brigade went into action with a total strength of 2,715 and emerged after losing 1,214 officers and men. Of 59 British officers in this brigade, 8 were killed and 21 wounded; of 48 Indian officers, 5 were killed and 22 wounded; of the British rank and file, 530 in number, 27 were killed and 225 were wounded; and of the Indian rank and file,

BATTLE
— OF —
CTESIPHON.

Situation at 5 A.M. on 22nd Nov. 1915.
Numbers at gun emplacements indicate
number of gun emplacements, not guns.
Only the general line of trenches is shown.





of the Turks were even heavier; and though our men were exhausted, they were not demoralised, as the enemy found to his cost later on at Ummal Tabul and at Kut.

Nevertheless, the attempt on Baghdad had failed. It had failed in spite of superhuman effort on the part of all concerned, and only one course now remained for our battle-stained troops—to retreat on Kut-el-Amarah, or beyond it, till sufficient reinforcements arrived to enable them again to take the offensive. Victory or defeat, whichever it may be deemed, the Battle of Ctesiphon will ever be remembered as a gallant attempt.

It is interesting to note that a German officer, in a semi-official diary compiled in Mesopotamia, classed the Battle of Ctesiphon as undoubtedly a victory for the British force, in spite of its subsequent retirement.

After the surrender of Kut, when General Sir Charles Melliss interviewed Khalil Pasha in Baghdad, the Turkish General volunteered some very interesting information about the struggle at Ctesiphon. It appears that Khalil Pasha, who was commanding an army corps at Erzerum, received orders early in November 1915 to take his force to Baghdad, and he set off at once, though himself ill with appendicitis. His men came down the River Tigris on rafts, but only one division arrived in time to participate in the Battle of Ctesiphon. This division reached Baghdad on the first day of the fight and went at once to the battlefield, where it took part in the great counter-attack against our force delivered at 3.30 p.m. on November 22nd.

Khalil Pasha himself was forced to remain in Baghdad on account of sickness, but contrived to keep in touch with events. After the failure of the first counter-attack launched against our force by the Turkish Army-Commander Nuruddin, Khalil Pasha realised that, owing to their terrible losses, neither the British force nor the Turkish would be able to advance; but news reached him

out of 2,078 the killed numbered 91 and the wounded 801. Sixteen men were reported as missing. The 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry went into action with 15 officers, but the battalion emerged with only the commanding officer and one second lieutenant—7 officers had been killed and 6 wounded. "Reuter" reported the total casualties in the British force during the Battle of Ctesiphon as—killed 643, wounded 3,030, missing 594. Many, however, of those shown as "missing" were afterwards found in hospital.

at this period that Nuruddin, with his customary weakness, intended to abandon the Ctesiphon position and to retire behind the Diyalah River. This appeared so disastrous a move that Khalil Pasha rose from his bed and went himself to see Nuruddin at Ctesiphon on November 23rd, and remonstrated with his superior officer in the strongest terms. He stated that if Nuruddin persisted in his mad project, he (Khalil) would lead his own army corps unsupported across the Diyalah River high up that stream, and then, marching eastwards, would attack the right flank of the British force and work round to its rear. He added that in a week he would guarantee to capture the whole of General Townshend's army.

This bold statement by Khalil Pasha induced the vacillating Nuruddin to cling to his second-line position at Ctesiphon. Again urged by Khalil Pasha, the Turkish army commander afterwards decided to launch an attack in force against our position at High Wall on the night of November 25th—the night of our retirement to Lajj—but he lacked sufficient good cavalry with which to reconnoitre our position, since our cavalry succeeded in keeping off his inferior Arab horsemen.

After our retirement to Lajj the Turkish troops marched unopposed to High Wall on November 26th, and later commenced to follow the retreating British force towards Aziziah and beyond it.

These statements by Khalil Pasha throw considerable light on the demoralised state of the greater part of Nuruddin's army after the first day of the fight. If only General Townshend had commanded two divisions instead of scarcely more than one, how different might the result have proved! To Khalil Pasha is due the honour of having saved Baghdad for his country in 1915, and it was the ill-fortune of the 6th Division that he appeared on the scene in time to do so.

It should be remembered that the class of men against whom our troops were fighting at Ctesiphon was very different from that composing the bulk of the foe at Es-Sin or in the earlier battles of the campaign. At Ctesiphon we encountered, for the most part, the pick of the Turkish Army; men with experience in the war against Bulgaria, men seasoned by the fighting in the Dardanelles, every man well equipped, well trained, and well

armed ; and many with no previous experience of defeat or failure.

It is believed that on the second day of the battle Nur-uddin had at his disposal four divisions, or say 15,000 bayonets, allowing for heavy casualties. Is it surprising that the small and exhausted British force failed to break through to Baghdad ?

CHAPTER VII

THE RETREAT AND THE ACTION AT UMMAL TABUL

THE 6th Division and its attached troops remained in camp at Lajj on November 26th, 1915, and the Turks made no attempt to attack them. From this fact may be gathered the state of demoralisation into which the enemy had been thrown. Our troops required rest after the fighting and marching of the Battle of Ctesiphon prior to commencing the retirement of 100 miles to Kut. The great camp at Lajj presented a busy scene. Stores were sorted and packed into ships and barges; missing men were collected from other units; ammunition was replenished; and arms and equipment were cleaned and repaired. Enormous numbers of wounded men were transferred from the various hospitals to river-steamers, which left for Busrah as quickly as possible.

On November 28th the work of reorganisation and preparation for a retreat still continued, but at 2 p.m. on that day information reached General Townshend which led him to believe that the enemy was advancing in force. He then issued orders at once for the whole force to retire on Aziziah, and instructions were given that the tents of the camp should be left standing in order to delay the Turks before they discovered that the camp was empty. The loss of the tents was of less importance than an uninterrupted retreat for the troops.

At 4 p.m. on November 27th the various columns commenced the march to Aziziah. As they moved off, the crowds of Arabs in the village downstream of Lajj began to loot everything they could lay hands on with safety. I doubt if much was left for the Turks when they arrived a day or so later.

The force arrived at Aziziah at 5 a.m. on November 28th, after an uneventful night march, though there was some sniping by Arabs. It was decided to halt at Aziziah

for two days, and I believe there was some discussion in high quarters as to whether the force should not take up a defensive position at Aziziah and hold it as we subsequently did Kut. Very fortunately the opinion in favour of a retirement to Kut itself prevailed, and preparations for the evacuation of Aziziah were commenced.

I will now return to the adventures of my Bridging Train in its precarious existence on the River Tigris.

On November 27th, before noon, a double company of Indian infantry crossed my bridge at Lajj to the right of the Tigris. These were the only troops which used the bridge during the whole period at Lajj. At 2 p.m. I received urgent orders to dismantle my bridge at once, abandoning boats if necessary, and to be under weigh downstream by 4 p.m. This was indeed quick work in such a locality, but all my men were out at the double in three minutes. Planks and baulks were hurriedly piled on the rafts forming every alternate bay; anchor ropes were cut, and the anchors and cables abandoned; the launches were got under steam and came up in turn to take their rafts in tow; the trestles and other gear were piled into the barge; and before 4 p.m. my barge itself, with *L.9* alongside, was swinging downstream in the wake of the five other launches towing the rafts.

We ran past the long straggling village on the left bank below the camp at Lajj, and crowds of Arabs, with their rifles often partially hidden under their clothes, watched us from the bank, but they did not dare to fire at us because of the proximity of our troops on land and our warships on the river. The afternoon was fine, so East and I sat on top of the wheel-house of launch *L.9* to keep an eye on the progress of the various other launches. We were all going at a fearful speed down the narrow channels, between the shoals, and I was very anxious lest one of the launches should run aground and all its rafts pile up on top of it. By good luck the serangs always chose the right channels, guided by the course taken by the ships ahead when they were sufficiently close. Unfortunately, this was not the case for long, for, as a rule, the large ships steamed much faster than any of my little "Puffing Billies." Several ships fast aground were passed safely by my launches, but it was often a question of inches.

The whole river hereabouts was swarming with ships and barges, rounding the prodigious loops of the stream

at high speed and running aground at intervals. It was every one for himself, however, and no boat could stop to help the others except the warships, which cruised about giving what assistance and protection they could. We all had orders to get to Aziziah as quickly as we could, so we did our best to comply. The Bridging Train, by good luck and good management, continued its voyage safely till dark, and at 7 p.m. East and I retired to our little cabin for dinner.

At 8 p.m. I heard some shrill whistling from the darkness ahead and soon came across one of my launches. The serang in charge had lost sight of the nearest big ship ahead, and had taken a channel ending in a shoal, on which the launch was now fast aground. I ordered my serang to go about so as to help the offending launch, but, sad to say, in turning the barge, launch *L.9* herself ran aground. I sounded three blasts on the whistle as a signal to the other launches ahead that we were aground and that they must go about and wait for us, which they promptly did. After two hours of puffing and snorting and churning up of muddy water, *L.9* got herself off the sandbank, having left my barge No. 36 at anchor while she did so.

I then tried to help the wretched launch away among the shoals in the darkness, and sent some of my men across to her in the dinghy; but the launch, and the rafts in wild confusion around her, refused to budge in spite of every effort. My men worked all night alongside and aboard the stranded launch while I remained on deck on *L.9*, giving what orders and instructions were necessary. It was bitterly cold at 4 a.m., and soon after that hour I decided we must abandon the launch and its rafts for the time being, trusting to one of the men-of-war to get them off if possible when they came along. I knew that General Townshend would probably require a bridge at Aziziah as early as possible, and so could not afford to wait any longer. It was a very difficult matter to decide, but I concluded that it was best, under the circumstances, not to waste any more time. As events turned out, I was right.

Accordingly, at 5 a.m. on November 28th, the now reduced Bridging Train was once more steaming downstream with all aboard the barge and rafts, very cold, tired, and ill-tempered. After breakfast we sighted Aziziah, and at 10 a.m. we came alongside the left bank

at the village and moored within the protection of the recently constructed barbed-wire fencing. A considerable number of ships and barges were moored near the village, but none were alongside the left bank below it, and the river had a peculiarly strange and deserted appearance.

On arrival at Aziziah I got orders to make a bridge at once across the Tigris, as I had anticipated. I knew we were in for a hard piece of work, for this had been the site of the longest bridge during the advance. All the men set to work with a will, and in two or three hours we were far out from shore. Just as nearly all my available boats had been put into the work, the stranded launch and her valuable tow of rafts hove in sight upstream, steaming rapidly down towards us. She was hailed with great delight, and we were enabled to complete the long bridge by 7 p.m. The launch had been helped off the sandbank in daylight by our indefatigable Marine Transport Officer, Lieutenant-Commander Goad, R.I.M., and despatched post-haste down the river. All my men were dead tired, and I was so sleepy that I could hardly keep my eyes open, so we turned in as early as possible for a good night's rest.

The troops arriving from Lajj took up bivouac areas around Aziziah village, and such of the old perimeter trenches as had not been filled in were occupied. Very large quantities of "bhoosa" (compressed hay) had been accumulated in the camp. Some of this fodder was used to improvise defences, for a bale of "bhoosa" is proof against a rifle bullet if properly placed. The men rested as far as possible, but a good deal of work was done in sorting stores and issuing clothing, equipment, etc., etc. When it was decided that the retreat should continue, all the barbed wire was taken down, cut to pieces when possible, and thrown into the Tigris.

On November 30th, 1915, at 8 a.m., the 30th Brigade and the Hants Howitzer Battery, under Major-General Sir Charles Melliss, marched out of Aziziah towards Kut-el-Amarah. This brigade was ordered to push on as fast as possible to deal with a hostile force operating downstream at Sannaiyat, which had already held up Sir John Nixon's ship on her way to Amarah and Busrah, and had caused her to return to Kut for a strong escort; so the 30th Brigade marched about twenty miles down-

stream on November 30th and encamped for the night on the left bank of the river.

General Townshend had decided that the first day's march for the remainder of the force should be a short one, and that they should camp for the night at a spot called Ummal Tabul, some seven miles below Aziziah. Accordingly the 6th Division marched out of Aziziah at 11 a.m. on November 30th and had an uneventful journey to its halting-place on the left bank of the stream. The 6th Cavalry Brigade formed a right flank guard (*i.e.* it operated on the *left* of our retreating column), and of course it also provided scouts ahead of the column.

I received orders at 9 a.m. on November 30th to dismantle the Aziziah bridge and to get away with all possible speed downstream, abandoning such boats as might cause any delay. The reason for these extremely urgent orders I do not know. Possibly news had arrived that the Turks were moving in force towards Aziziah. The extremely short march of the 6th Division to Ummal Tabul from Aziziah is also difficult to understand, but it may have been ordered to avoid fatigue for the troops. We had our orders, and the reasons for the orders did not concern us. Two of my launches had been taken from me for other work, so that I now had only four, and these consequently were badly overloaded. Every one worked in great haste, and before noon we succeeded in getting away from Aziziah, where I abandoned only eight or nine danacks. I sank what boats I could among the abandoned craft by knocking holes with pickaxes in their thin planking.

We bade good-bye to Aziziah, already almost deserted when we left. The voyage downstream for ten miles by water passed without event, and at 3 p.m. we came to the bend in the stream where the 6th Division and the 6th Cavalry Brigade and a mass of transport were bivouacked or parked on the left bank. Here we went about, and the launches came one by one alongside the very high river-bank, where they all moored in line ahead with my barge upstream of the lot. The 6th Division had been reinforced at Aziziah by a wing of the 2nd Royal West Kent Regiment recently arrived from downstream, and this detachment joined the 30th Brigade. The 14th Hussars also met our retreating force at Aziziah and joined

the 6th Cavalry Brigade. Both these reinforcements were most valuable.

At 8.30 p.m. on November 30th the camp was shelled for half an hour by hostile field guns, though no appreciable damage resulted. Later on, about 10 p.m., camp fires and lights were visible stretching all along the country north of the upstream perimeter of our camp. It was then realised that the Turks had come downstream in considerable force and were camped very close to us near some sandhills to the north. The reason of this extraordinary procedure on the part of the enemy will remain a mystery until the Turks see fit to explain it. Their camp was barely over a mile from ours. Did they think our force was only a small rearguard, or did they imagine that the division was completely disorganised and incapable of fighting? The matter is almost inexplicable.

General Townshend was now well aware that a large force of the enemy was close on his heels, but the size of that force was unknown. It was also uncertain whether other bodies of the enemy had proceeded downstream in order to cut off our retreat, so the G.O.C. 6th Division decided to recall the 30th Brigade at once to the assistance of the main body. Two young officers of the 7th Haryana Lancers (Lieutenant Coventry and another) gallantly volunteered to ride on with a few men through a country infested with savage Arabs to take the order to General Sir C. Melliss, recalling him to the assistance of the 6th Division. Late at night these officers and men started on their perilous journey, while a fast motor-boat from H.M.S. *Comet* also started downstream with a similar message. The message by land reached General Melliss safely before dawn on December 1st, 1915, and at 6 a.m. he warned all his commanding officers that the 6th Division was in danger of being surrounded at Ummal Tabul and that the 30th Brigade would march back upstream at once. By 6.30 a.m. the brigade had started on its return journey of ten miles to Ummal Tabul, leaving all its transport behind it protected by a small escort. The brigade reached the 6th Division in time to give some invaluable assistance, as I shall presently relate.

At Ummal Tabul, when the Turkish shelling had ceased, the night passed quietly enough. Our guns did not attempt to reply to the shelling. On December 1st, 1915, at 6.15 a.m., as the light broke over our camp, there,

within 1,800 yards of our northern perimeter, were hundreds of tents—a great Turkish camp pitched, one might say, almost within a stone's throw of the 6th Division. Our soldiers rubbed their eyes, for the thing seemed too mad to be true, yet there the tents were sure enough. Suddenly, at 6.50 a.m., our field guns opened fire with a roar at a range of only 2,300 yards. Soon the enemy's camp was a veritable inferno of dust, falling men, galloping horses, battered tents, and general confusion. The shrapnel rained among the tents in an increasing stream from a dozen of our field guns, and the Turkish casualties were correspondingly heavy. This storm of shell continued for some minutes before the enemy's guns began their reply. Two of their guns were galloped to the river-bank upstream of our camp on a bend of the stream, and thence made matters extremely unpleasant for the shipping and for my Bridging Train.

Our bivouac at Ummal Tabul, previous to the battle, was guarded by picquets—those of the 16th Brigade on the northern face, the 17th Brigade on the eastern face, and the 18th Brigade on the southern face. When the fight commenced, the 18th Brigade formed up on the right of the 16th, and the 17th on the extreme right of all; our troops then faced the enemy in line, with the 16th Brigade next the River Tigris. As soon as possible after the battle had begun, the transport, under Major E. E. Forbes, S. and T. Corps, started to march downstream, escorted by the 48th Pioneers, who also guarded a column of Turkish prisoners captured by us at Ctesiphon. The transport was soon getting clear of our camp, but was unable to get away very fast because of a difficult corner in the narrow track which all the carts had to negotiate.

The first object of the 6th Division was naturally to get its transport safely away. That completed, it would be free to deal with the enemy without let or hindrance. General Townshend accordingly ordered the 17th Brigade (on the right of the line) to advance towards the Turks occupying the sandhills to the north, and the 18th Brigade also advanced a trifle. In fact, our force took the offensive in order to gain time. When the transport was reported to be well on its way, the forward movement of our troops towards the foe ceased, and General Townshend ordered the division to recommence its retirement.

The operation was conducted with perfect precision by échelon of brigades—the 16th Brigade first, then the 18th, and lastly the 17th Brigade acting as a rearguard, assisted by the cavalry. The enemy's infantry advanced in lines as our force retired. At about 9 a.m. on December 1st, 1915, the 30th Brigade rejoined the 6th Division from downstream, at a spot perhaps two miles below Ummal Tabul, after a march of at least ten miles, and at once went into action on the right flank (*i.e.* to the N.E.) of the retreating division.

General Townshend was unaware, of course, of the exact strength of the force opposing him at Ummal Tabul; nor could he tell what other hostile forces were behind that body or endeavouring to cut off his retreat. From the report given by a Turkish officer, the force opposed to us was stated to be only one division; but as Khalil Pasha himself was present, and not in supreme command, this statement is scarcely credible. The Turkish officer affirmed that, if our attack had been pressed home, his division would have surrendered, as it was completely disorganised. This statement may, or may not, have been true; but in any case our little force, encumbered as it was with transport, could not risk an attack with so little information available. The correct procedure was to continue the retirement, and this was done. The attack which we commenced gave most of our transport and shipping time in which to get clear away.

The 10th Brigade R.F.A., under Lieutenant-Colonel H. S. Maule, R.F.A., did excellent work in the retirement. Its three batteries of Field Artillery (63rd, 76th, and 82nd) formed in échelon and retired one by one, keeping up a continuous and well-regulated fire. S Battery R.H.A., operating on the land flank, also did useful work. About 9.30 a.m. the advance of the Turks slackened. It is believed that they were occupied in capturing and looting our abandoned ships and barges, of which more anon. Arab cavalry, however, kept up a very annoying fire on our retreating troops. Column of route was now formed and the regular march resumed, the Arab cavalry being held off by a cavalry screen pushed out as a rearguard by the 6th Cavalry Brigade.

During an interview with Khalil Pasha at Baghdad after the fall of Kut, the Turkish General stated that his force overtook the 6th Division at Ummal Tabul on

November 30th, 1915, with Nuruddin in supreme command. It was evening when the Turks arrived, and it was Khalil Pasha's intention to attack at once, as Nuruddin agreed. Before doing so, however, a regiment of three battalions was sent ahead towards Kut to get astride of the Aziziah-Kut road at Bghailah in order to cut off the retreat of General Townshend's troops and transport, if they retired when attacked at Ummal Tabul. The commander of the Turkish regiment lost his way, wandered in a circle, and finally fetched up in rear of the Turkish main body. This blunder caused the plan of immediate attack to be abandoned, and the Turks camped for the night, but made the error of camping much too near our troops. In the morning began the action of Ummal Tabul, just described, in which the Turks suffered so heavily.

The retirement of the 6th Division and the 30th and Cavalry Brigades continued all day, till at 10 p.m. on December 1st, 1915, the troops arrived at Shaik Ja'ad (generally known as Monkey Village), at a distance of twenty-four miles from Ummal Tabul. Here the 6th Division caught up with its transport, which, together with the column of 1,600 Turkish prisoners, had marched steadily along the road on the left bank of the Tigris. The transport was already parked in and around Monkey Village when the troops arrived. Every one was dead tired, the night was bitterly cold, and food was scarce. Each man lay down where he was, and tried to get what sleep he could. The 30th Brigade had been on the move since dawn, and had covered at least thirty-four miles in that period, in addition to fighting an action—a very fine performance, as all will agree.

I will now resume my personal narrative, and will endeavour to describe what occurred at Ummal Tabul on the River Tigris on December 1st, 1915.

My orders, received on the previous evening, had been that I was to sail at 7 a.m. on December 1st in rear of the other ships. The Bridging Train usually followed in rear of the other vessels, as the launches towing the rafts could not travel very fast, and if in advance would be continually blocking the narrow channel for the faster vessels of large tonnage.

At dawn I heard a lot of firing, and when I reached the top of the river-bank an extraordinary scene unfolded itself. Within fifty yards of us on the river-bank the

82nd Battery R.F.A. was in action, firing rapidly on what appeared to be a hopeless confusion of men, horses, tents, and dust in the near distance across the flat plain to the north. In the dust-clouds men could be seen running about and horses galloping. It was impossible to understand what was happening. Turkish shrapnel next began to burst over the 82nd Battery and in the camp behind it. The bank near us was thick with Indian camp-followers grouped together in shallow ditches, or crawling from place to place to find cover.

H.M.S. *Firefly* lay in midstream about 100 yards upstream of my barge and commenced to fire her bow 4-inch gun, and H.M.S. *Comet* also started firing from downstream of us. The Turks then brought two field guns into position on the river-bank itself, on a bend upstream of the ships, so that they enfiladed the shipping and also my rafts, previously well covered by the high bank. This bank now gave my boats no cover at all, and things began to look nasty. I did not dare to move off without orders, for the large ships had not yet got under weigh, so I remained on the bank with Stace and East and watched the battle.

The Turkish guns soon selected H.M.S. *Firefly* for their target. She made great efforts to get under weigh so as to increase the difficulty of getting her exact range, but her high mast still presented a perfect ranging mark for the hostile guns. A shell fell in the river fifty yards upstream of the ship; another followed just astern of her, throwing up a column of water. A third fell close alongside her and drenched her low decks with spray. Lieutenant-Commander Eddis, R.N., her commander, returned the fire from his one gun, but with what result I could not see. Suddenly a shell hit the doomed ship amidships. A fearful roar followed, gradually dying away into a continuous hiss, and an enormous column of smoke and steam shot up 100 feet into the air from the *Firefly's* funnel and spread out like a great fan above her. Another cloud of steam burst forth from her engine-room and enveloped her decks. Men ran out on to the decks and were plunged into a storm of shrapnel bullets, which rattled against the superstructure and cut up the water around the ship into hundreds of little fountains. It was a pitiful sight to see the little vessel being thus battered to pieces, caught at such a disadvantage, but we could

do nothing. H.M.S. *Comet* made a gallant effort to steam up to the disabled ship to get a hawser aboard her, which finally she actually succeeded in doing. The *Comet* then turned, but in doing so she was carried downstream in the narrow channel and touched a sandbank. Before she could get clear the *Firefly* was carried down on top of her, hit her violently on the port beam, and rammed her hard up on to the sandbank.

All this time both ships were under a continuous artillery fire from the enemy's field guns, and rifle fire was beginning to add its quota to the hail of shrapnel. The plucky little *Sumana*, commanded by Lieutenant L. C. P. Tudway, R.N., then came to the rescue. She tried repeatedly to assist by towing off the *Firefly*, but failed. H.M.S. *Comet* was on fire by this time, and disabled, and the Turks were swarming along the left bank of the river. All the other ships except the s.s. *Shirur* had hurried off downstream; but two barges brought to Ummal Tabul by the *Sumana* and laden with aeroplane stores and S. and T. stores were still alongside the bank and were soon captured by the enemy. My Bridging Train had passed on its way downstream shortly before this. The s.s. *Shirur*, with an ammunition-barge on one side and a large S. and T. barge (No. 11) full of wounded on the other side, was still alongside the bank, as I have said, and stayed as long as possible in order to provide ammunition if required; but she also eventually started off downstream, when the troops had left, and overtook and passed my Bridging Train a mile or two lower down the river. The three men-of-war were then alone in their glory, and the target of every Turkish shell and bullet.

H.M.S. *Sumana* remained alongside the two disabled warships taking off their crews as rapidly as possible, and the Turks actually came swarming over the bows of the *Comet* while our men were getting off her at the stern. Shots were exchanged along the decks, but the *Sumana* got safely clear. H.M.S. *Firefly* might, perhaps, have been sunk by the *Sumana's* 12-pr. gun, but aboard the *Firefly* lay a poor fellow in the engine-room, still alive but terribly scalded by the escaping steam. His state was so dreadful that it was impossible to move him, so he was given a merciful dose of morphia and left in the ship. His presence aboard the *Firefly*, however, deterred his friends from shelling her, nor was there much leisure

to do so even if humanitarian considerations had not prevailed.

The Senior Naval Officer (Captain Nunn, R.N.) and his staff from the *Comet* were now aboard the *Sumana*, in addition to Lieutenant-Commander Eddis, R.N., of the *Firefly*, and most of the crew of both disabled ships, so H.M.S. *Sumana* went about and steamed downstream to save her valuable company from capture.

The s.s. *Shirur*, soon after passing my launches and barge, ran aground in midstream in a very bad reach of the river at a place called Shedaif. The *Shirur* then abandoned her S. and T. barge (No. 11) filled with wounded men and S. and T. subordinates, and went on downstream with her ammunition barge in order to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemy. Her skipper trusted that the *Sumana* would be able to pick up the S. and T. barge and bring it along; but the *Sumana*, with all the naval staff aboard, could not risk the delay of attempting this, so was forced to abandon the *Shirur's* barge fast aground in midstream.

Lieutenant-Commander Goad, R.I.M., was unfortunately captured by the Turks soon after this. In his capacity as Marine Transport Officer he had returned upstream in launch *R.N.2* (accompanied by a six-cylinder motor-boat), after seeing the large paddle-steamers and other craft safely away, in order to try to rescue the men on No. 11 supply barge abandoned by the *Shirur*. With him was 2nd Lieutenant Flynn, I.A.R. The launch reached the stranded barge and embarked some of the men aboard her, but could not take many. Shortly after leaving the barge she ran aground and her engines broke down. She was then under a hot rifle fire from Turks and Arabs on the left bank and was helpless, so Commander Goad surrendered.

Aboard the S. and T. barge were thirty-six British and 300 Indian wounded, and a few S. and T. subordinates. They found what cover they could in the hold, but the men on the launch were very much exposed. After the white flag had been hoisted, those on the launch noticed men swimming towards her and thought that they were Turks; they turned out, however, to be Arabs, who swarmed on board and stripped our officers and men of almost every stitch of clothing, and looted everything they could find on the launch, even including her brass

whistle. One Arab tried to wrench a signet ring off one of Commander Goad's fingers, and when he could not succeed, tried to amputate the finger. When Commander Goad succeeded in taking off the ring, the Arab hit him in the face with a pair of boots. Others of the prisoners were also brutally treated by these savages.

The Turks on the bank, seeing this ill-treatment of prisoners, opened fire on the Arabs, who thereupon fled. The Turks then made signs to the prisoners on the launch to come ashore. Meanwhile the remainder of the prisoners had been marched off. After walking about a mile with bare feet, Commander Goad met Khalil Pasha, who was kind and courteous to him. The Turkish General was in a motor car with some staff officers.

Commander Goad's attire at the time consisted of a short pair of linen drawers and a coal-sack in which he had cut holes for his head and arms, and some of the men had even less clothing. He was conducted several miles to the Turkish camp and was interviewed by Nuruddin, the Turkish General, and questioned closely regarding the strength of the British force and the disposition of our troops, but would say nothing. This angered Nuruddin very much. Commander Goad, Lieutenant Flynn, and ten others were then put in a bell tent, and given a spare tent as bedding. They lay shivering and hungry in the tent all night. The next morning some Turkish officers gave them some tea and chupatties—the first food they had had for about thirty-six hours. A few odds and ends of captured clothing were also given to them.

Later on Nuruddin again sent for Commander Goad and questioned him, but drew a blank. After this the prisoners (joined by Captain Brodie, 103rd Mahrattas, who had been previously wounded and captured) were sent to Baghdad.

It appears that the Turks and Arabs did not loot much clothing from the Indian prisoners, but did all they could to rob and strip the British. The Indians were thus fairly well off, while the British were almost naked. The march to Baghdad was a terrible trial to the cold and hungry men, many of whom marched barefooted through country covered with thorn bush. Soon after leaving Ummal Tabul they passed the site of the Turkish camp previous to the battle, where the bodies of transport animals lay in heaps, whilst mounds of newly turned earth showed

where the Turkish dead had been buried. The slaughter apparently had been great. On arrival in Baghdad, the Arab populace behaved very badly to the prisoners marching through the streets, for they spat at them, and threw stones and filth, and even tried to stab the officers, who would certainly have been murdered but for their guards. In Baghdad the officer-prisoners were confined in the infantry barracks, where they were well treated, and later they left for Afion Karahissar.

To resume my narrative of the retreat. Soon after H.M.S. *Firefly* was hit and disabled, I noticed that the ships downstream of my flotilla of launches and rafts were beginning to move off one by one, and the barges upstream of me had already slipped away, so I gave the order for my most downstream launch to go about and start, followed by the other two launches in turn, each with its unwieldy tow of pontoon or danack rafts. All three launches got away successfully, abandoning only two rafts sunk by shell fire.

Then came the turn of my barge. We pushed out from the high bank, but, after two or three revolutions of the propeller, the engine of launch *L.9* alongside us refused to work. I asked what was the matter, and Serang Basamiah replied that the propeller had apparently been fouled by something. We were drifting helplessly down on to the burning *Comet*, and were coming under ever-increasing rifle fire from the Turkish infantry advancing along the left bank. I ordered two of my crew to get into the water with knives, which they lost no time in doing, and they discovered a rope coiled tightly around the propeller shaft. After hacking like madmen at this rope for a couple of minutes, they managed to free the propeller and clambered aboard, chattering with cold but unhurt. To my great relief the engines then consented to work, and we put on full steam ahead and chased after the other launches as hard as we could go, abandoning the couple of rafts which, up to then, we had towed astern of the barge.

The launch and barge soon rounded a bend lower down the Tigris, and the last view I had of the furious river-fight upstream was the little *Sumana* steaming into the bullet-swept zone in her plucky endeavour to save the ill-fated *Firefly*. We never expected to see H.M.S. *Sumana* again.

The land hid the tragic scene from view. Soon we were coming full speed down on to the s.s. *Shirur* aground with her two barges in the Shedaif Reach, as I have already described. We crushed the *Shirur's* boat, but got clear and tore on downstream through the winding channels of the shallow and treacherous river.

Thus ended my experience of the fight at Ummal Tabul—a most successful action ashore, but equally disastrous on the river. Ashore we had accomplished all we intended, and had thoroughly checked the pursuit of the enemy; but on the water luck had gone all against our force. Our most up-to-date warship, H.M.S. *Firefly*, had been captured, and H.M.S. *Comet* had been destroyed. Only the little *Sumana* remained to escort our large flotilla of river steamers, launches, and barges on the long river-journey to Kut-el-Amarah; and even she had the bad luck to run aground soon after the battle, and was within an ace of capture, as I shall presently relate. Our flotilla no longer had the protection of H.M.S. *Sheitan*, for that ill-fated vessel had become so hopelessly stranded at El Kutuniah during the retreat from Lajj to Aziziah that it was necessary to remove her guns and to scuttle her, for she could not be floated. Of the four men-of-war which had set forth with us from Aziziah in the middle of November for the attempt on Baghdad, only one remained when the sun set on December 1st, 1915.

CHAPTER VIII

TO KUT-EL-AMARAH AGAIN

THE three little *L.* launches towing the rafts of my Bridging Train sped on down the River Tigris for some miles after the action at Ummal Tabul on December 1st, 1915, followed by my barge with launch *L.9* hard at work on her port beam. I then signalled to the launches ahead to go about, and we all put in to the left bank at a sharp bend in the stream to try to get some orders and to find out where our troops were. For a quarter of an hour I waited near the bank, and then at last I received orders to continue downstream. Before doing so I took aboard *L.9* some seven or eight men of the Royal Flying Corps who had escaped from the aeroplane-barge abandoned at Ummal Tabul. This barge, in addition to aeroplane fittings and stores of all sorts, contained some hundreds of 30-lb. T.N.T. aeroplane bombs, and a number of other bombs of larger and smaller sizes. These 30-lb. bombs were used against us by the Turks when we were in Kut.

The launches swung out again into the current and steamed on for a mile or so, but I soon noticed that the leading boats had slackened down. A 6-cylinder Wolseley motor-boat, belonging to the Royal Flying Corps and named the *Thelma*, dashed up towards us from downstream, and a naval officer who was steering her shouted to me, "Have you any guns aboard?" Thinking that he meant artillery, I said we had not. He then asked for a doctor, and said he had one man dead on board his boat, another dying, and that he himself was wounded. "There is very heavy sniping ahead," he said, "and you must go back at once. Don't go on." After this he went on full speed upstream in the motor-boat. It appears that this was the motor-boat despatched from H.M.S. *Comet* by General Townshend's order the previous night, when

he sent the message to General Melliss recalling the 30th Brigade, and that she was on her way upstream to rejoin her ship. In compliance with the naval officer's advice I ordered my launches to go about, and we moved upstream again towards the enemy to our previous position at the bend of the river. The *Thelma* was captured by the Turks higher up the river when Lieutenant-Commander Goad was taken prisoner.

Just as we arrived at the bend of the stream, H.M.S. *Sumana* appeared coming downstream at full speed with all our naval officers crowded on her. The s.s. *Shirur*, with her ammunition-barge, had passed us some time before this, and I knew that the *Sumana* must be the last of all our ships, so I signalled my launches to go about at once and we all followed hard in the wake of the warship. Before the latter had gone half a mile she ran aground in midstream. The little *Aerial* was also aground on an adjacent sandbank, with the Rev. H. Spooner (C.E. Chaplain) poling for all he was worth in her bow, while the *Aerial's* aeroplane engine roared and the huge propeller whirled at her stern. Captain Nunn, R.N., in the *Sumana*, ordered the skipper of the *Aerial* to stand by in case the *Sumana* had to be abandoned, and he also ordered me to assist him if possible.

The *Sumana* made great efforts to get off her sandbank, but it seemed impossible, though she churned up the water into a great area of whirling mud in her attempts. I signalled my launches to stop once more and to go about and stand by, while I did the same and anchored the barge in midstream. Launch *L.9* then steamed back to the helpless *Sumana*, took the end of a hawser from her, and pulled; but, alas! the rope broke in a few seconds. Back went the launch to the ship and another attempt was soon in progress. Meanwhile, Stace and I sat mournfully in the bow of our quiet barge, watching the land at the top of the river-bend three-quarters of a mile away where the Turks and Arabs were just beginning to arrive, and wondering when the first shell would come smack into us.

With a final lurch and a heave H.M.S. *Sumana* at last slid off the sandbank and, followed by the roaring *Aerial*, shot away downstream. Launch *L.9* came back to the barge and tied up alongside in a desperate hurry while my men hauled up the anchor, and in a couple of minutes

we went about and followed the *Sumana* and the other launches as fast as we could. There was very little sniping at first, for the *Sumana* was not far off, and the sneaking Arabs hiding on the banks feared her guns and maxim.

For the remainder of the afternoon we made the best of our way downstream, trying to pick out the right channels, continually sounding, almost always at full speed regardless of risk, and frequently only just avoiding the sandbanks scattered on every side. All the big ships, including our protector the *Sumana*, had gone on far ahead, and my fleet of launches was left absolutely unguarded. A serious mistake in the choice of a channel meant at least the loss of a launch and her rafts, if it did not mean the massacre of her skipper and crew by the Arabs on the bank. Snipers had a shot at us now and again, and we replied when we could see them. Rarely have I come across a more plucky little fellow than Serang Basamiah of my launch *L.9*. At times he would take the wheel himself in a critical place, and would stand bolt upright in his unprotected wheel-house, giving a full-length target to the Arab marksmen on the bank, his whole attention fixed on the swirling eddies of the river which indicated the edges of the sandbanks around. I had much pleasure, after our arrival in Kut, in recommending him for his bravery during the retreat, and I am glad to say he received a decoration in 1916.

Towards sunset I saw the masts of two ships ahead of us, and we felt much cheered by the sight. Shortly afterwards we passed the s.s. *Salimi* trying to get upstream with a barge of provisions for the 6th Division, but I do not think she went much farther up the river. Just after this we came suddenly upon my old friend *T.2*, fast aground in midstream some way above Bghailah, with a large barge alongside her containing several tons of ammunition. My launches had the greatest difficulty in passing her in the rapid curving current, but we managed it without serious mishap.

On board the *T.2*, as I afterwards heard, were Lieutenants Simmons and Baillie (both of the 2nd Dorset Regiment), with about fifty British soldiers of various units. Their experiences are worth relating. It seems that they were on their way upstream from Kut to rejoin the 6th Division and to bring it ammunition. Their orders were to proceed to Aziziah. On their way up, when near

Bghailah, they met H.M.S. *Sumana* and the *Aerial*; and the senior naval officer shouted to them that our troops were retreating, but that he did not know exactly where they were. The two officers aboard *T.2* decided to go on upstream according to their orders, and the skipper agreed, but the *T.2* grounded badly at the spot where we found her.

It appears that some hours later they were successful in getting the ship clear of the sandbank, and then went about and ran down below Bghailah village, where they stuck again in midstream at a very bad spot. There they remained for many hours. When the Arabs of Bghailah village saw the ship aground and at their mercy, they all turned out, and those with rifles started to fire on the little vessel, which carried no armour-plating to protect the men on her upper deck. The small force in the *T.2* lay down behind any sort of cover available, and returned the fire hour after hour, while the ship's crew made desperate efforts to get her clear. Each man on board expended nearly three hundred rounds of ammunition that day. At length the *T.2* slid off her bank and steamed away downstream, her superstructure riddled with bullets, but the valuable ammunition-barge had been saved. Other running fights took place lower down before the ship reached Kut, where she was the last vessel to arrive. No one thought she would ever reach Kut when it was known that she had been left aground upstream. It was largely due to the gallant conduct of her skipper and his Indian crew that she was saved.

My orders for December 1st were that I was to try to reach Shaik Ja'ad (Monkey Village), where the troops would camp for the night. After getting safely past the stranded *T.2* above Bghailah at dusk, the launches went on downstream, and it soon became pitch dark. About 9 p.m. we were opposite Bghailah and ran safely past the hostile village in the dark. I do not think we were seen at all, but there were anxious moments till we got clear of the place, for the channel necessitated our going over close to the bank below the village itself. Below Bghailah there is a peculiarly bad reach of the river. Here it was that *T.2* lay stranded for two days during our advance when towing up some of my rafts, and here again she ran aground on December 2nd, and made the fight against the Bghailah scoundrels which I have just described.

In this reach I found four or five ships at anchor or aground, but H.M.S. *Sumana* was somewhere about, so we were not molested by Arabs. I tried to pick a way between the different vessels in the dark and collided with one. I found another encircled with one of my tows of danack rafts which had drifted down broadside on to her bows; and finally, when all my launches had signalled by whistle that they were aground, I gave up the hopeless task and put into the left bank and tied up there. It was about 11 p.m. and bitterly cold. I had not dared to leave the deck of *L.9*, so was chilled to the bone. The only thing to do was to wait till the moon rose, and then to try to go on again, hoping that the other launches would get off their sandbanks unaided, for I could not assist them as I could not tell where they were.

At 1 a.m. the big ships, which were distributed about the wide shallow river, began to move past me like great ghosts in the dim light, so I cast off our ropes and followed in their wake as fast as I dared down a very narrow channel within a few feet of the left bank. The moon was now rising and we could see the shore. At 2.30 a.m., after another bitterly cold watch on deck, I came upon the s.s. *Blosse Lynch* and s.s. *Mosul* tied up alongside the left bank. This place I decided must be Monkey Village, so I put in to shore downstream of the ships and moored to the bank, and my other three launches turned up one by one some time afterwards and moored below us. We were thus complete again, though a few more rafts had foundered, and at 3 a.m. on December 2nd I was able at last to turn in and rest for a couple of hours under a few blankets.

The s.s. *Blosse Lynch* had taken aboard her at Monkey Village a great number of wounded, and the s.s. *Mosul* also carried a considerable number. At 5 a.m. on December 2nd these ships got under weigh and left Monkey Village for Kut. About half an hour later, as dawn was breaking, I gave orders for the Bridging Train to start again. The left bank of the Tigris was thick with followers of the 6th Division wandering along wearily, alone or in small groups. Many of these men were left behind by the troops through their own fault. They were completely exhausted and absolutely apathetic in consequence, and I am afraid many were cut up by the Arabs following the retreat.

The morning of December 2nd, 1915, was bright and clear, and when the sun had risen well above the horizon it warmed the chill air and put fresh life into us all. My much reduced flotilla of launches and rafts steamed steadily on towards Kut, but was being left farther and farther behind by the ships ahead which were convoyed by the *Sumana*. The two Arab boatmen who lived on my barge informed me that we were getting into country where the Arab tribes were friendly to us. At noon we passed another village named Niferehe on the left bank, and as I noticed a good dinghy aground there, I ordered a telegraph launch, which had joined us, to go back and fetch the dinghy to my barge. The launch in question (L.3) did so, while the barge and the other three launches waited in midstream. I had lost my own dinghy at Ummal Tabul, and another was most necessary in case we ran aground.

This delay of half an hour proved serious to us later on. About noon we exchanged shots with a group of Arab snipers on the right bank, who fired first on my barge and then on each launch as it passed at almost blank range. The serang of the launch towing my eight pontoon rafts was an arrant coward, and, though the steersmen of the other launches stuck to their wheels, the serang and steersman of this launch bolted below, and the launch turned into the bank. She slid off again, but each pontoon raft behind her ran in turn high up on to the bank, and the first two rafts turned completely over and foundered. Havildar Jalal Din and the five other men of my Bridging Train on board the raft had a bad time, and one man was rather badly crushed about the ribs. The foundered rafts were cut loose, and the Havildar and men went aboard their launch to bind up their injuries and to dry their clothes, leaving the rafts with no one aboard them. Of this I was not aware at the time.

Soon afterwards, when we were about a mile above the reach of the river known as Shumran, there was suddenly great excitement among the men on board my barge. I tumbled out of my cabin to find that fifty Arab horsemen in uniform were chasing us along the right bank. They were galloping furiously along the narrow path in single file, firing at my rafts astern of the barge and at the barge itself as they rode. We were so near Kut that none of us expected to be attacked in force in

this manner, but we lost no time in defending ourselves. My men in the rafts astern of the launches got down into the danacks and returned the fire of the enemy. The serang, however, of the launch towing the valuable pontoons got panic-stricken, and either he or one of his native crew cut the towing ropes, and the launch rushed past my barge while the Arabs seized the pontoons. I thus lost all my remaining pontoons, but I could get no direct evidence of the cutting of the ropes, for the serang swore that the ropes had broken—an improbability.

The pursuing cavalry were soon very close upon us. On the barge all the men got their rifles, took cover, and opened fire, while I served out ammunition to them, and Stace and East assisted in other ways or had a few shots themselves with borrowed rifles. The telegraph launch (*L.3.*) was some distance ahead of the barges and drawing away from us rapidly. No troops were in sight anywhere. The situation began to look very critical, for if one of the launches had grounded, I really do not know what we could have done. I therefore gave the order to Serang Basamiah to sound the whistle of launch *L.9* continuously, and soon we were making a tremendous noise. All the launches took up the tune and whistled for all they were worth. This was a happy thought, for, as it turned out, the rearguard of our troops was marching along the road towards Kut, about half a mile from the loop of the river which we were rounding. The continuous whistling and the crackle of musketry attracted the attention of our force, and the most enlightened officers interpreted the blasts of the whistle as the S.O.S. signal. It was indeed a case of S.O.S., though we did not signal it so.

Some of the guns of the 63rd Battery R.F.A. were rushed up to the river-bank and opened fire, while I put in to the left bank and explained things to Major H. Broke-Smith, R.F.A., in command of the battery.

I now got orders to go on downstream with my launches and rafts. We were at the upstream end of the Shumran Reach at the time, at a place called Algie, and the current was close to the left bank where the 6th Division was resting. To go downstream it was necessary to steam across again to the enemy's bank—the right bank. We set out, not expecting any more fighting, but as soon as the boats got across near the other bank the fire started

again. The Arab snipers on that bank established themselves in small ditches leading to the river-bank. A sniper would lie down in one of these hollows and wait for my boats to pass the mouth of the ditch. As the boats passed he would fire at us at a range of less than twenty yards. The beauty of this arrangement from the sniper's point of view was that he was only visible to us at the moment of passing his ditch, so it was very unlikely that he would be hit by our return fire. The right bank was thick with these brutes, and we had a hot running fight at almost point-blank range as we went along. Here I lost Havildar Jalal Din—shot through the throat. He died within a minute of being hit. He was a brave and experienced old soldier and I was very sorry to lose him. We took him into Kut, and he was buried there in the Mohammedan cemetery by his comrades of the Bridging Train.

At the end of the Shumran Reach the current brought us back again to the left bank, and I waited for a maxim from the Machine-Gun Battery to be mounted on the bow of the barge, and for a small troop of Indian cavalry to escort us round the next dangerous bend of the stream. The telegraph launch (*L.3*) was hopelessly aground a quarter of a mile upstream of us at this time. Her serang had refused to negotiate the proper but dangerous river-channel close to the enemy's bank, and had tried to find a way along the left bank amid the shoals. I received orders to try to save the launch, so I sent some men to her assistance under Captain Stace, R.E. Her case, however, was quite hopeless, so she was abandoned and the telegraph men taken aboard my barge.

The escort of Indian cavalry having appeared, and the maxim being ready for action, we set forth again towards the enemy's bank to negotiate the next bend of the river, while the cavalry trotted across the neck of land, keeping us in view. Everything was ready for another fight, but I suppose the Arabs saw the machine-gun and crew and thought better of it. Anyhow, no more firing took place, and soon we were round the loop and back once more to the left bank close to our escort of troopers. The escort bade us adieu at this place, for, to our great relief, the minaret of the mosque at Kut was in sight far downstream. About 4 p.m. we were opposite the town and steered for the left bank, where I brought up alongside a mass of ships, barges, and mahelas stretching all

along the river-front of the town. We were the last of the shipping to arrive in Kut on December 2nd, 1915, with the exception of the *T.2*. Few people apparently expected to see us arrive at all. I had now only twelve danack, or bellum, rafts left out of all my fine array of craft, and some of these wretched boats were sinking. All my excellent pontoons were gone.

With some difficulty we found moorings in various crowded spots, and rested after the recent excitement and hard work. I never saw a more welcome sight in my life than the distant minaret of Kut when it came in view below Shumran. The *T.2* turned up after dark on December 2nd, some five hours after us, and she was the last boat to reach Kut. The front of Kut-el-Amarah was a seething mass of men hard at work loading stores on ships, disembarking other stuff, and unloading ammunition; and the Turkish prisoners later on assisted in this work when they reached the town. It was a busy scene, but time was very precious, so every man was working at high pressure.

To return for a short time to the adventures of the 6th Division and its attached brigades, which we left at Monkey Village on the night of December 1st/2nd, I may say that after a very cold night the transport moved off at dawn across a bridge out of the village, followed in due course by the troops. When all had crossed the deep nullah by the brick-arched bridge, the latter was demolished with all the available gun-cotton by Lieutenant A. B. Matthews, R.E., in order to delay the advance of the enemy. The troops then marched till noon, when they halted at the bend where the guns of the 63rd Battery drove off the Arab cavalry attacking the Bridging Train. After a halt of a couple of hours the march was resumed, and at 8 p.m. the force reached a mud fort and bivouacked there. The troops had been much harassed by sniping by Arabs from the right bank of the river, and the men were very hungry and very tired, but they were within four miles of Kut. They had marched about twenty-six miles from Monkey Village that day. Food was sent out to the troops from Kut, though not all the units got it as there was some difficulty in its distribution. Next morning (December 3rd) the force resumed its march at 6 a.m. and arrived in Kut-el-Amarah at 9 a.m., where the various units proceeded to their allotted billets.

The following Order of the Day was published by General Townshend on arrival at Kut, and was received with enthusiasm by the troops :

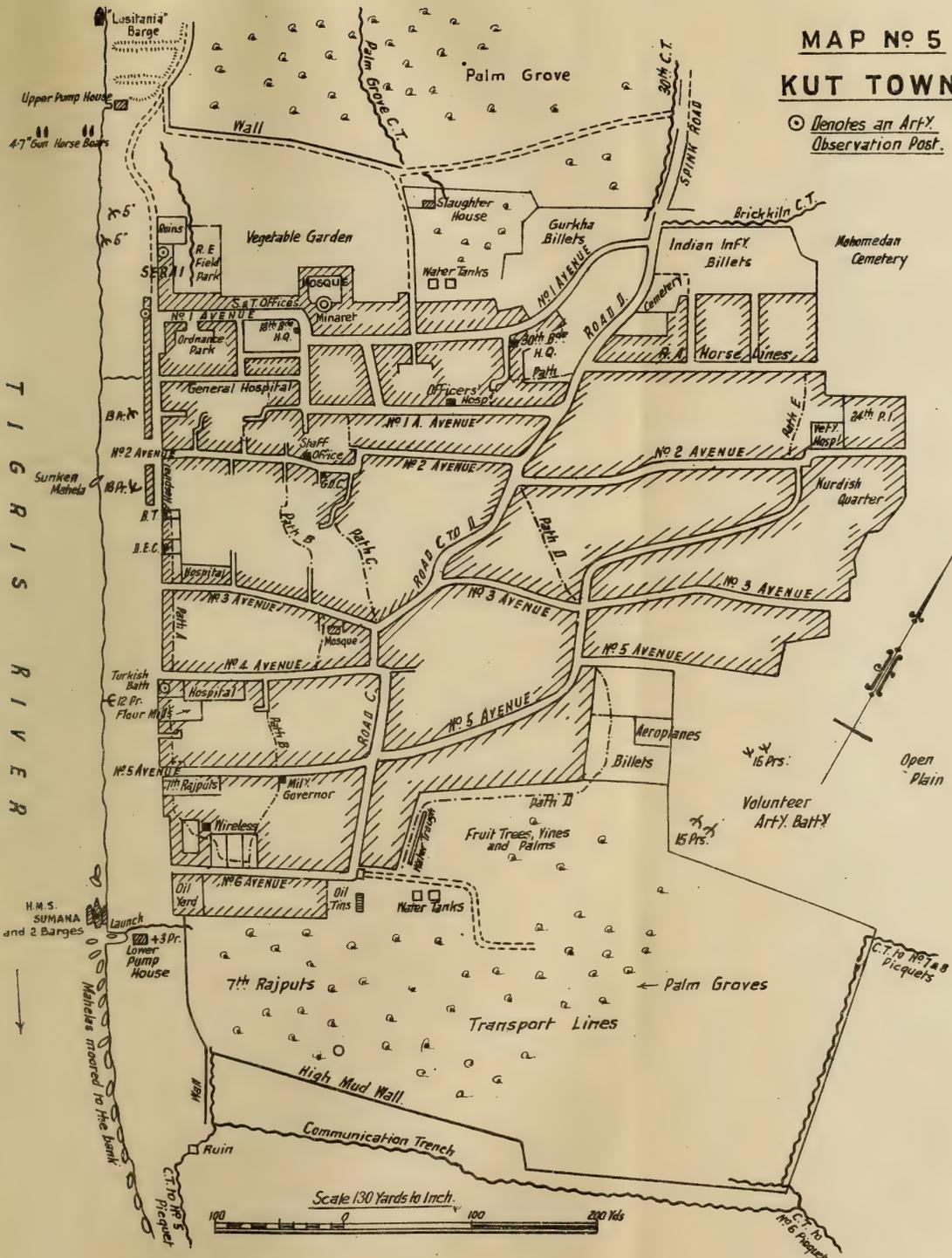
“ I intend to defend Kut-el-Amarah and not to retire any farther. Reinforcements are being sent up from Busrah to relieve us. The honour of our mother-country and the Empire demands that we all work heart and soul in the defence of this place. We must dig in deep and dig in quickly, and then the enemy's shells will do little damage. We have ample food and ammunition, but commanding officers must husband their ammunition and not expend it needlessly.

“ The way you have managed to retire ninety miles under the very noses of the Turks is nothing short of splendid and speaks eloquently for the courage and discipline of the force it has been my honour and pride to command.”

The historic retreat of the 6th Indian Division and its attached troops from Ctesiphon to Kut was finished—a retreat carried out with skill and steadiness in a hostile country after extremely hard fighting. The conduct of the men in these trying circumstances was admirable ; and the *moral* of the force had not suffered appreciably, in spite of the despondency inseparable from a long retreat following on a previously unbroken series of victories.

MAP NO 5 KUT TOWN.

○ denotes an Artillery Observation Post.



TIGRIS RIVER

PART II
SIEGE

CHAPTER IX

THE DEFENCES OF KUT

WHEN the 6th Division advanced from Kut-el-Amarah to Aziziah in the early days of October 1915, the town of Kut became one of the chief posts on our line of river-communication to Busrah. The defence of the place was taken over by the troops of the 12th Indian Division, and the control of all traffic through it came under the Inspector-General of Communications (the I.G.C.). The garrison of Kut, during the greater part of October and November 1915, consisted of the minimum number of men consistent with safety against Arab raids, though reinforcements were continually passing through the place.

It was decided by those in authority that it was unnecessary to construct a strong defensive position at Kut, capable of resisting an attack by the Turks when the 6th Division and the 30th Brigade had advanced to Aziziah, nor was such a position prepared during the fateful days of November which preceded the Battle of Ctesiphon. The reasons which led to this decision are perhaps open to criticism, but it is not the author's place to attempt to criticise. A possible explanation may be that a serious reverse to our hitherto undefeated troops was not considered to be even probable; perhaps it was thought that, even if the advance of the 6th Division was checked beyond Aziziah, sufficient reinforcements would have arrived by that time to take up a defensive position at Aziziah itself, or farther south at Bghailah; again, the fact that the garrison of Kut was inadequate to undertake the digging of many miles of trenches may have influenced the decision, though it may be pointed out that at least a thousand Arabs could have been formed into a Coolie Corps to assist in the work; still again, it may have been deemed improbable that the enemy would be sufficiently reinforced to cause the complete retirement of the 6th

Division to Kut itself, though some Turkish units might arrive from the Dardanelles. Lastly, the situation of Kut may have been considered such as to render it so unsuitable for occupation by a small force that it was waste of labour to attempt to turn it into a strongly fortified position ; or to put it briefly, that it was tactically unsound to attempt to hold Kut itself with a small force without strong reinforcements close at hand.

Be the reason what it may, the fact remains that, when General Townshend's force arrived in Kut after the exhausting retreat from Ctesiphon, it found no complete defensive position outside the town ready for its occupation. The intelligent reader must use his own judgment in arriving at an explanation of this fact. The author merely puts forward a few surmises which may, or may not, be correct.

The military authorities responsible for the defence of Kut-el-Amarah as a post on the line of communication decided that it should be provided only with means of defence against attacks by Arabs unsupported by artillery. With this end in view a scheme was evolved which embraced the construction of a walled fort and a line of four blockhouses stretching across the neck of land occupied by Kut, and the probability—or even the possibility—of an attack being delivered on Kut by an organised force provided with artillery was considered negligible.

The scheme of defence against Arab attack was based on the decision that, after the advance of the 6th Division had terminated in the capture of Baghdad, the town of Kut would not be occupied by our troops, but that the whole garrison, including all field parks, field hospitals, supply depots, etc., etc., would occupy the walled fort before mentioned at a suitable site downstream of Kut.

After some discussion a site for the fort was approved at a spot on the left bank of the Tigris at a bend in the river, downstream and due north of Kut town, and about two miles from it as the crow flies. This site was selected chiefly because, at this point, there was sufficient depth of water at all times of the year to enable ships and mahelas to moor next the bank, and so to avoid having to enter the very difficult channels of the river opposite the town higher up. The area to be included within the high mud walls of the fort was calculated on the assumption that the garrison of Kut would occupy the enclosed space,

together with its administrative departments, supply depots, and hospitals.

The reader should now refer to Map No. 6 showing the defences of Kut towards the end of the siege, and the Turkish trenches and gun-positions around the place at that time. Certain portions of our trenches had been flooded and abandoned at that period (notably in the north-west section of our front line), but a detailed description of the portions so evacuated will appear later on. The fort was constructed where shown in Map No. 6; and the line selected by the Brigadier-General R.E. (General Rimington) for the four blockhouses was that, marked A, B, C, D, subsequently occupied by our first-line trenches and redoubts. These blockhouses were to be connected by a single fence of barbed wire extending also to the fort.

The fort itself was to be constructed with lofty and thick mud walls having many loopholes and ample provision for flanking fire from bastions at two corners. Military readers will recognise at once a design eminently suited for defence against savages, but useless against artillery.

On October 18th, 1915, while the 6th Division was at Aziziah, the sites for the fort and blockhouses were selected, and the work of construction was handed over to Messrs. Lynch Bros., to be done by contract as quickly as possible. By the beginning of November 1915 the blockhouses had reached plinth level, and in another three weeks they had been completed and the barbed wire provided. The construction of the fort was also far advanced. The fort was hurriedly finished after the Battle of Ctesiphon, but considerably modified in design to meet the altered conditions as far as possible.

It will be noticed on reference to Map No. 6 that the line of defence, though two miles from Kut at the fort (*i.e.* on the right flank), was only one mile from the town on the left flank. This was not objectionable in the scheme for defence against Arabs by a force concentrated in the fort, but the distance of the fort from Kut was a difficult matter in the subsequent scheme of defence against the Turks by a force in occupation of the town and its environs. In this latter case the fort occupied an extremely exposed and unpleasant position, and the Turks were fully cognisant of the fact.

On receipt of the news of the result of the Battle of Ctesiphon and the probable immediate retirement of the

6th Division to Kut, it was realised at once that the system of blockhouse defence would be useless in the altered circumstances, and strenuous efforts were made to alter the defences. Every available man was turned on to the work. The blockhouses were left intact for the time being, but the fort was hurriedly altered and improved so as to be better fitted to resist the assault of organised troops provided with good artillery.

Digressing for a moment from the subject of the defence measures taken in Kut, I may say that the Army Commander (General Sir John Nixon) arrived in Kut about November 27th, and on November 28th proceeded downstream on his way to Busrah. His ship, however, and the others accompanying her were heavily fired on by hostile forces in the neighbourhood of Shaik Sa'ad (*vide* Map No. 1), and all were forced to return to Kut for a suitable escort. The ships arrived in Kut again on November 30th, when a powerful escort of some 400 men was provided to safeguard the Army Commander on his journey. The 30th Brigade at Aziziah was ordered to march towards Kut to assist as required. The flotilla, much increased in strength, left Kut again on December 1st, and, after a delay below the fort, succeeded in getting safely downstream, taking with it the two mountain guns of the 30th Mountain Artillery Battery.

This adventure of Sir John Nixon caused some anxiety in Kut, where it was feared that an attack by a large Turkish force of about 4,000 men with two guns might take place at any moment; it was rumoured that this was the strength of the force operating on the Tigris below Kut. These fears turned out to be groundless. It is probable that the hostile force operating near Shaik Sa'ad was composed chiefly of raiding Arab cavalry, though General Townshend had wired from upstream that a force of 4,000 Turks with two guns was moving down on Kut. Nevertheless, the small garrison of Kut was thankful to receive the addition of the sadly depleted 6th Division and its attached troops on December 3rd, 1915.

With the great increase in the strength of the garrison of Kut caused by the arrival of the force from Ctesiphon, the defences around the town were pushed on at a great pace, for every day was of supreme importance, since the bulk of the enemy's advancing troops might arrive at

any moment and attempt to take Kut by assault while yet unfortified.

It was decided that the fort should be held and the four blockhouses demolished, the line of wire fencing occupied by the latter being strengthened by four powerful redoubts connected by a traversed line of trenches. These redoubts were called A, B, C, and D, from the right to the left flank; their positions are clearly shown on Map No. 6. The four blockhouses were demolished by gun-cotton on December 7th.

The four redoubts had been roughly completed by December 12th, and trenches had been run out from each redoubt towards those from the adjacent redoubts on either side, so that, by December 15th, 1915, we had a complete traversed fire trench (strengthened by four redoubts), extending across the neck of land on which Kut lies. Our second line of trenches had been roughly completed some days previously. Much work of course remained to be done both in the redoubts and in the fire trenches, but at any rate by the middle of December we possessed a fairly powerful defensive line in front of Kut.

As a further safeguard an additional line of fire trench, called the "middle line," was commenced about December 14th between our first- and second-line trenches, and was more or less completed by Christmas. Deep communication trenches were dug as time permitted, extending from Kut to the first line, or connecting the different lines, such as the Gurkha C.T., Reserve C.T., 67th C.T., Hants C.T., Palmgrove C.T., and Brick Kilns C.T. Emplacements were made for the various batteries, the greater proportion of our guns being grouped among and around the ruined brick kilns on the level plain 500 yards north-east of Kut. On Christmas Day a "retrenched line" was laid out (see Map No. 6) and completed in a week.

It was decided that it would be necessary to hold Yaka-soob village (Woolpress) on the right bank of the Tigris opposite, and slightly upstream of, the town of Kut, in order to hinder the enemy in his operations on that bank and to prevent him bringing guns up close to the right bank opposite the town. The village consequently was emptied of all Arabs, strongly fortified, and garrisoned by the 110th and 120th Infantry Regiments of the 18th Brigade, assisted at times by a detachment of the 2nd Norfolk Regiment.

Viewing the defences as a whole, it is evident at once that the fort constituted in a way a weak point in the scheme, for it was far from Kut and liable to be cut off. Yet it was a strong post, commanding two long reaches of the winding river, and it was also an excellent observing-station on the flank of our gun-positions round Kut.

Woolpress village was another weak point. It was much isolated by the wide stretch of river between it and Kut, and depended for its supplies of ammunition and food on H.M.S. *Sumana*, one *L.* launch, and two motor-boats during the siege. The Turks were not blind to these defects, as the subsequent fighting soon indicated.

Another rather difficult point to be decided was whether some of the sandhills immediately north of our first-line trenches should or should not be held by us. To hold them meant an unduly extended line of defence, while to relinquish them gave the enemy some strong points from which to launch attacks and several useful observation stations. It was finally decided that we could not hold them.

The line of the left bank of the Tigris was occupied by our picquets (see Map No. 6) in entrenched posts which were gradually connected to Kut by communication trenches. Opposite each of our picquets the enemy placed one of their own as early as possible. They also proceeded to invest Woolpress village closely with loopholed trenches connecting the Shatt-al-Hai Channel with the bank of the Tigris upstream of the village.

It may be remarked here that if there is one thing in which the Turks excel it is in digging. His industry and endurance in this work are little short of marvellous. The length of the trenches dug by the Turks to enclose Kut bears evidence to this fact. The enemy of course made full use of Arab labour, while our small force could not muster so many Arabs in the town of Kut; and in addition, at the commencement of the siege, the Turks numbered three men to our one; yet the excavation work carried out by our besiegers, making every allowance for numbers, was indeed stupendous.

Luckily for us, the Turk is a poor hand at assaulting an entrenched position held by determined and disciplined troops. He will fight very well in his trench, but has no liking for the open country. Yet some of the enemy showed remarkable pluck in the game of sniping. Lone

Turkish snipers would frequently lie out all day in extremely exposed positions behind inferior cover on the chance of bagging some of our men in the trenches. These adventurous spirits, however, hardly represent the general run of Turkish soldiery.

Map No. 6 will show that in addition to their advanced trenches pushed up close to our first-line defences, the enemy subsequently completed three separate entrenched lines across the neck of land occupied by our force, and many lines around the fort, as well as one entrenched line around Woolpress village. This work involved the excavation of over twenty miles of traversed trench provided sometimes with redoubts at intervals, and its purpose was obviously to safeguard the investing army against the possibility of the garrison of Kut breaking out during the later stages of the siege, when the Turks could not spare a large force to invest the town. The work involved in the completion of this maze of trenches will give some idea of the diligence and ability of the Turk in handling his shovel.

The grouping of our batteries around Kut during the latter days of the siege is shown also on Map No. 6. At the Brick Kilns (our main artillery position) there were two 5-inch B.L. guns of the 86th Heavy Battery R.G.A., the other two being on the river-front at Kut during the greater part of the siege. Towards the end they were in emplacements east of Kut. The 63rd Battery R.F.A. (with six 18-pr. Q.F. field guns) and the Hants Howitzer Battery (with four 5-inch howitzers) were also near the Brick Kilns. Behind our middle line of defence was the 76th Battery R.F.A., and upstream of Kut in a palm grove lay the 82nd Battery R.F.A. East of this palm grove, early in the siege, were the two 4-inch B.L. guns of the 104th Heavy Battery R.G.A., but these were afterwards moved to the rear to emplacements in a palm grove close to the north-west of Kut. An "anti-aircraft" 13-pr. Q.F. field gun was rigged up not far south of the 82nd Battery R.F.A. during the siege.

In Kut itself (see Map No. 5) were the four 4·7-inch naval guns in their horse-boats, the remaining two 5-inch B.L. guns of the 86th Heavy Battery (until moved outside), one 18-pr. Q.F. field gun, one 13-pr. ditto, two 12-pr. naval guns (one of 12 cwt. and one of 8 cwt.), and one 3-pr. Q.F. ; also four 15-pr. field guns of the Volun-

teer Artillery Battery, two of which were in the fort till January and two near the N.W. section trenches very early in the siege. There was also, as a spare gun, one 3-pr. Q.F. from H.M.S. *Sumana* which was never mounted on shore. Our total ordnance at the beginning of the siege thus amounted to four 5-inch B.L. guns, four 4·7-inch naval guns, two 4-inch B.L. guns, nineteen 18-pr. Q.F. guns, four 15-pr. guns, two 13-pr. Q.F. guns, two 12-pr. naval guns, and two 3-pr. naval guns, also four 5-inch howitzers: a grand total of thirty-nine guns and four howitzers. The 12-pr. naval gun of 12 cwt. was intended for H.M.S. *Firefly*, but never reached her. The 12-pr. gun of 8 cwt. and the two 3-pr. guns were taken off H.M.S. *Sumana* during the siege, when the ship was in danger of being sunk.

The Turks shifted their gun-positions frequently, but some idea of their location may be obtained from an examination of Map No. 6, where the positions are shown by certain letters of the alphabet, and the map also indicates the number and type of the guns in each position. Each Turkish gun-position was opposed by one or more of our batteries. The old 13½-inch mortar—known as ‘Fanny’ with an impolite adjective—which lay just north of Woolpress village, did not require much attention. It provided the comic element.

The Turkish artillery around Kut (if we include two big naval guns at Z which practically never fired) reached a total of thirty-two guns, five howitzers, and a mortar. Rather fewer than our own total, but it should be remembered that the guns were not limited to the same extent in ammunition. For the most part the enemy’s guns were inferior to ours in design; and, with the exception of the two naval guns, they fired no high-explosive shells.

I have purposely omitted to include the 4-inch naval gun aboard the captured *Firefly*, for this gun hardly ever fired and was a very great distance from Kut.

The general system on which our troops were distributed in the defence of the various entrenched lines around Kut was based upon the division of the whole defensive position into four areas or sections. These were as follows:

- (a) *The north-east section*, including the fort and a portion of the first and middle lines and adjacent trenches.

- (b) *The north-west section*, including the remaining lengths of the first and middle lines.
- (c) *The second line* (manned by the General Reserve in Kut).
- (d) *Woolpress village, Kut itself*, and most of the river-picquets downstream of Kut.

One brigade was allotted to each of these four sections or areas.

The north-east section was defended throughout the siege by the 17th Brigade, under Brigadier-General F. A. Hoghton at first, and later on under Brigadier-General U. W. Evans. This section, to describe it in more detail, included the fort itself, and the first line up to, but exclusive of, Redoubt B (*vide* Map No. 6). After the flood of January 21st, 1916, however, Redoubt B was included. The middle line and the river line, and other trenches in rear of this portion of the first line, were also included in the north-east section.

The north-west section was defended by two brigades alternately, viz. the 16th Brigade under Major-General W. S. Delamain, and the 30th Brigade under Major-General Sir C. Melliss. It comprised the first- and middle-line trenches from Redoubt B inclusive to the River Tigris north-west of Kut. After the flood of January 21st, 1916, the former middle line in this section became our front line, as the original first or front line was under water in the north-west section.

The second line extended across the neck of land on which Kut stands. It was held by either the 16th or the 30th Brigade, whichever happened to be acting as the "General Reserve" in Kut, *i.e.* not defending the north-west section.

The Kut area and Woolpress village were occupied throughout the siege by the 18th Brigade under Brigadier-General W. G. Hamilton. Half of this brigade—viz. the 110th and 120th Indian Infantry Regiments—were permanently quartered in Woolpress village across the river, while the 2nd Norfolk Regiment and the 7th Rajputs lived in Kut itself and supplied most of the river-picquets downstream.

From the foregoing description it will be seen that two brigades—viz. the 17th Brigade in and near the fort, and the 18th Brigade in and near Kut—were stationary ;

while the 16th Brigade and the 30th Brigade became alternately the "General Reserve" and shifted accordingly. The distance to the fort, and the difficulty of transferring troops frequently across the Tigris, may explain why the 17th and 18th Brigades remained always in the same localities and were not relieved by other brigades.

There is no doubt that the portion of our first-line trenches near the River Tigris in the north-west section (*i.e.* near Redoubt D) was a vital point in the defence of Kut, for the first line was here near to Kut itself, and if the enemy had broken through at this place, Kut would have been captured and the fort and the north-east section isolated. It will be seen, however, from Map No. 6 that this flank of our defence line was very powerfully entrenched, and it was held alternately by two brigades, both of which had done particularly well during the whole campaign.

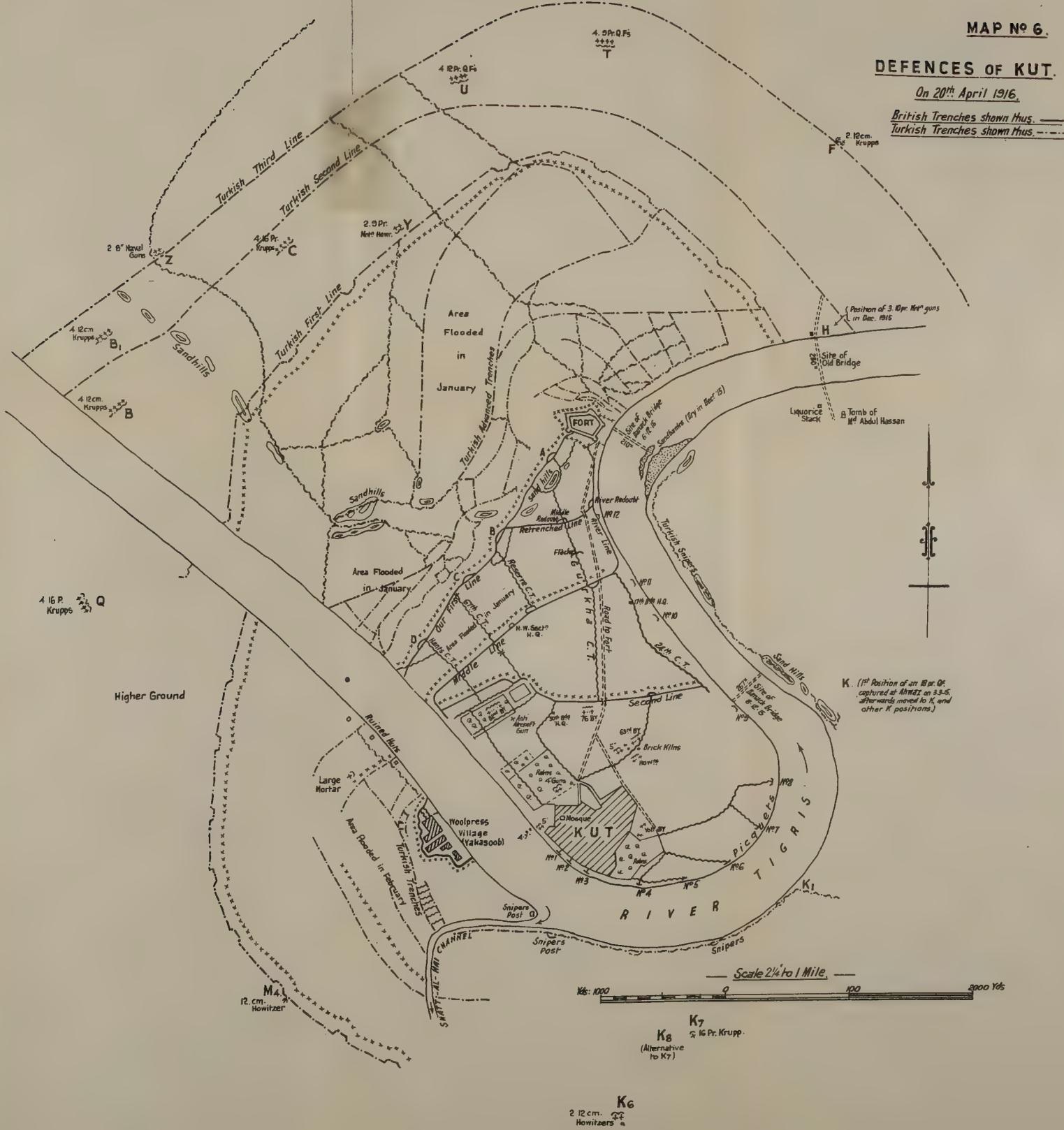
A weak feature of our defences as a whole was undoubtedly the lack of sufficient communication trenches leading to the first line to enable reinforcements to reach that line under cover in case of an assault on Kut. In the very early stages of the siege, prior to the completion of the middle line, a further source of weakness was the distance between our first and second lines. It was recognised that the communication trenches would not suffice for reinforcing against a general attack, and consequently orders were issued that in such an event the reinforcing troops should move across the open up to the first line. This would naturally entail heavy casualties, but such would be unavoidable in the circumstances. More communication trenches to the first line would have been extremely useful; still, it must be remembered that our troops arrived in Kut much fatigued; that they were on reduced rations for the latter part of the siege; and that a large part of their time had to be spent in fighting the rising floods as well as the Turks. Every extra yard of trench to be dug was therefore an additional task put upon already sorely-tried men. It should also be noted that after January 21st the flooded area of ground north of, and within, our north-west section rendered a general attack by the enemy on this section practically out of the question.

I have endeavoured in this chapter to give some idea

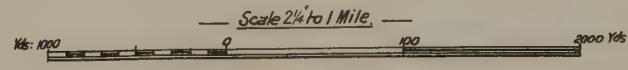
DEFENCES OF KUT.

On 20th April 1916.

British Trenches shown thus ———
Turkish Trenches shown thus - - - - -



K. (1st Position of an 18 in. QF. captured at Amwat on 3.3.15, afterwards moved to K, and other K positions.)



K7
5 16 Pr. Krupp.
(Alternative to K7)

K6
2 12 cm. Howitzers

of the defences of Kut and the dispositions of our troops during the siege. Such details must of necessity make dry reading. Yet, for a clear appreciation of the military situation in the beleaguered area, such information is necessary before I proceed with my narrative of the course of the siege.

CHAPTER X

EARLY DAYS IN THE SIEGE OF KUT

WHEN on the morning of December 3rd, 1915, General Townshend's exhausted force marched into Kut-el-Amarah after the retreat from Ctesiphon, everything possible was done for the welfare of the troops, but it was some time before they could be accommodated in comfortable billets or bivouacs, though they were soon provided with good and plentiful rations. Immediate arrangements were made to send the remaining sick and wounded downstream with the flotilla of ships which was to leave shortly for Amarah and Busrah. Every ship and steel barge in Kut was under orders to go downstream except H.M.S. *Sumana*, four *L.* launches, two motor-boats, and six barges of different sizes, for it seemed certain that in a few days the enemy would render the passage of ships downstream impossible. At this time the general impression was that, if Kut was isolated by the Turks, our siege would not last much beyond Christmas Day, or the end of December at the latest. Vain hope! We little knew what was before us.

The s.s. *Blosse Lynch*, s.s. *Mosul*, and all other river-steamers and barges except those detailed to remain at Kut, left us on December 4th on their journey downstream to hotter but safer climes, their passengers wishing us good luck and promising to come back to our assistance within two or three weeks. The long and stately procession of ships swung downstream and disappeared from view, and the river-front of Kut—piled with ammunition and stores, and with a great gallows towering above all—was left to the tender mercies of the troops and the Arabs, who were hard at work removing valuable stuff to safe places in the town. The gallows, I may say, had been erected by us in October to mete out justice to two

Arab cut-throats convicted of mutilating and robbing our wounded at the Battle of Es-Sin.

I received orders to construct a bridge at the fort, so, on December 5th, as the sun lifted his rim above the desolate plains to the east, my first launch got under weigh with its string of rafts in tow, and, preceded by the *Sumana* and followed by two other launches with rafts and by *L.9* with my barge, she started on the trip across to Woolpress village and then down the river. My barge was blown into the right bank by the wind at the bend and we could not get clear for a long time, and farther downstream she ran badly aground, so I did not reach the fort till about 11 a.m., an hour or more after the rafts had arrived. Here we set to work with a will to construct a bridge across the river to the right bank from the shore close under the fort.

For the construction of this bridge at the fort I was lucky enough to have the assistance of the Sirmoor Sappers stationed there, and was still further fortunate in having enormous stacks of planking and beams of all sorts close at hand on the bank just below the fort. Without this spare material a bridge would have been out of the question with my incomplete Bridging Train equipment. The materials had been brought up from Amarah by a convoy of forty mahelas under the charge of Lieutenant Aldous, I.A.R., who had done a record voyage upstream, thanks to the strong southerly wind blowing at the time. The mahelas only arrived on November 28th at the fort, so that the timber came through just in time to get safely to its destination at the fort.

The reason why a bridge was urgently required at the fort was that it had been decided that the 6th Cavalry Brigade should leave Kut at once to join the force under General Aylmer then commencing to move up towards Ali-al-Gharbi from Amarah. One squadron of Indian cavalry (23rd Cavalry) was to remain in Kut, and two 13-pr. Q.F. guns of S Battery R.H.A.

It was clear that we would have to stand a siege of at least a few weeks, hence the presence of a cavalry brigade in the town was a hindrance rather than an advantage, while, on the other hand, this mobile force might be exceedingly valuable to General Aylmer in his advance. For the safe journey of the brigade to Ali-al-Gharbi it was necessary that it should proceed down the right bank

and also that it should leave Kut without the least delay, for it was known that the Turks were moving down on Kut in force along the left bank of the river. Every hour was of great importance—General Townshend was very particular on this point—and my orders were that the bridge should be completed in the shortest possible time.

For several days previous to November 30th the Sirmoor Sappers, under Captain Colbeck, R.E., had been busily engaged a mile downstream of the fort improving the old Turkish (or Arab) bridge of "gissaras" so as to render it suitable for gun-traffic in case the 6th Division should require to cross the river at once on arrival back in Kut in order to retire on Ali-al-Gharbi. On November 30th, however, a telegram came from General Townshend (then at Aziziah) ordering an entrenched position to be dug at Kut for the 6th Division, and on receipt of this message the Inspector-General of Communications ordered Captain Colbeck to dismantle the old bridge and to bring it upstream. Thus on my arrival at the fort on December 5th, 1915, I found a mass of material available for use, thanks to the Sirmoor Sappers.

During the whole of December 5th we worked hard at the construction of a floating bridge across the Tigris, commencing within the barbed-wire enclosure of the fort. I had not sufficient danacks to span the river, so introduced three "gissaras" near the left bank to commence with (the roadway in this case spanning from gunwale to gunwale), and stiffened these boats with huge 9-inch \times 9-inch beams 40 feet long lashed across them. I used planking for these spans from the large stacks ashore. After these three large boats came all my danack, or bellum, rafts. The laying of anchors had to be carried out from a launch since I had no pontoons: it proved a very tricky business, but we accomplished it safely. After about eight hours' hard work we found ourselves within ten yards of a large sandbank near the right bank, with not another danack available for use. Night had fallen. It was bitterly cold, and the men were tired and hungry; nevertheless they got down into the four-feet depth of chilly water and placed two trestles and the shore transom in position, and thus completed the bridge as far as the sandbank.

Brigadier-General Roberts, commanding the 6th Cavalry Brigade, came down during the afternoon to see the bridge,

but decided not to attempt to cross it that night. The sandbank seemed hard and firm, though separated from the sandy shore of the river by a stretch of water twenty yards wide and three feet deep. I sent a man through this shallow channel, and he reported the bottom hard and sound.

The next morning my men were out early on the bridge, baling out the water from the boats and patching up the more leaky ones with lumps of wet clay. Some of the danacks were in a very shaky condition, but they had to be used, for we had no others.

At 9 a.m. on December 6th, 1915, the 6th Cavalry Brigade began to arrive at the fort from Kut. A squadron of cavalry crossed first, and I went across to the sandbank to watch them negotiating the ford from the sandbank to the shore. All went well for the first minute, but then matters got serious, for the ford rapidly became a quicksand. The horses floundered through it somehow, but one fell at last, pinning his rider down in the shallow water, and was only extricated with much difficulty. Two R.H.A. guns then took the ford at a gallop and happily no horse fell—but it was touch and go.

By this time the whole sandbank for a distance of twenty yards around the end of the bridge on the right bank was a heaving and oozing mass, so further traffic was impossible. Meanwhile the left bank near the fort had become crowded with guns, wagons, cavalry, camels, mule carts and donkeys, all waiting to cross the river. My heart was in my mouth lest the Turks should appear and open fire on the crowded brigade with even a few guns. I hurriedly collected eight small trestles, all my spare baulks and timber, and every plank I could get, and made a trestle bridge across the twenty yards of water and quicksand and a roadway of planks (laid three deep) across the sandbank. This job took an hour and a half, but when it was completed the stream of traffic was able once more to roll across the bridge.

The whole brigade, with all its transport, crossed without a mishap and streamed up the shelving sandy bank of the river opposite the fort. Last, but not least, came a heavy R.F.C. motor-car of whose safe crossing I had the gravest of doubts; yet even this enormous vehicle reached the far bank at last, and, after much sticking in the deep sand, was coaxed up to the firm ground above. I have

rarely been so pleased as when I saw that car on terra firma, and knew that the whole column was across the wide river. If any Turkish guns had opened fire during the crossing of the troops and transport, a disaster would have occurred which does not bear consideration, for I had not a single spare boat with which to replace a damaged one. A marvellous stroke of luck, indeed, was the escape of the 6th Cavalry Brigade from Kut.

Orders now arrived to commence dismantling the bridge. The rearguard troops of the cavalry waved their adieux and disappeared at about noon *en route* for Ali-al-Gharbi and freedom. We started work on the trestle bridge across the ford and on the causeway of planking, but, as these were being dismantled and removed across the bridge, I saw to my intense surprise that a picquet of Indian infantry, which had been guarding the bridge on the left bank about 300 yards downstream of the fort, was withdrawing into the fort, and shortly after the withdrawal of the picquet I noticed several armed Arabs strolling or running towards a ditch downstream of the bridge, and in a few minutes others followed and disappeared into the hollow. Within five minutes rifle bullets came whistling over our heads, and the fire increased so much that we had to knock off work while daylight lasted and take shelter in the fort. About 10.30 p.m., the enemy having apparently retired, we recommenced dismantling the bridge as quickly as we could in the darkness. My orders were to proceed upstream to the site of a second bridge which General Townshend required near No. 9 Picquet (see Map No. 6). At 3.30 a.m. on December 7th the last danack raft had been removed and was attached to its launch, so we bade good-bye, for the time being, to the fort, and the rafts started on their last short voyage to the new site.

We reached No. 9 Picquet as dawn was beginning to break, but even before my barge was properly moored to the shore I got orders that the new bridge must be commenced without delay. My men were very weary, and I was so sleepy that I could hardly stand, but we had to start work as soon as we could, for it appeared that the early completion of a bridge at this new site was a matter of great importance.

Why was the new bridge required? I think it was intended for the crossing of the whole of General Towns-

hend's force to the right bank for a retirement on Ali-al-Gharbi if he decided, even at this eleventh hour, to abandon Kut. The bridge at the fort was in too exposed a position for a safe crossing after the Turks had realised that they had let the 6th Cavalry Brigade slip away.

Knowing that the number of my danacks would not suffice to span the river at the site near No. 9 Picquet, it was first necessary to bring up several Arab "gissara" boats with which to commence operations. While my men were fixing a high trestle in position near the left bank, I took a party downstream in a launch to the group of gissaras left by us at the fort when we dismantled the previous bridge, and towed them upstream. While these three boats were being placed in the bridge I went down again to the two long sections of gissara bridging moored by Captain Colbeck, R.E., above the fort, where we cut loose two more gissaras and brought them up also to be placed in the new bridge. This was very slow and laborious work. We also brought up two mahela loads of planking and beams. By the time the five gissaras had been placed in position and stiffened with beams, and the spans decked over, it was 2 p.m. on December 7th, and less than fifty yards of bridge had been completed. We longed for our lost pontoons.

To protect the bridge while under construction a double company of the 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry had been taken across in a barge at dawn by H.M.S. *Sumana*, the ship remaining at the right bank throughout the day, while the infantry dug a few trenches and picqueted the ground around the vicinity of the bridge-site. There were no signs of the enemy at this time. The work of bridge construction soon proceeded more rapidly, and I completed altogether 120 yards of bridge by sunset. We then broke off and returned to the barge for our evening meal. The night passed without incident and dawn broke with the promise of a beautiful day, calm, sunny, and fresh.

When I awoke on December 8th, 1915, I noticed H.M.S. *Sumana* moored to the right bank, opposite and upstream of my partially completed bridge, with a small barge alongside her, so I took it for granted that the usual infantry covering party was already on the other side to guard us from attack. Just at this moment I got an urgent message from the *Sumana* stating that a large mahela was drifting down on to my bridge. There she

was, sure enough, within 200 yards of the bridge and coming rapidly down with the current. I roared to my men to tumble out into a cutter which we now had, and to row hard round the bridge to intercept the derelict and anchor her, but we could hardly have reached her in time. Lieutenant L. C. P. Tudway, R.N., in the *Sumana*, seeing this, sent a couple of his men aboard her in a dinghy, so that she was soon riding at anchor close above the partially constructed bridge.

The mahela seemed absolutely deserted. We towed her round the end of the bridge and moored her to the left bank below it. Some hours afterwards I saw an Arab suddenly emerge from her and run up the bank. He must have been hiding somewhere in her stern cabin, and I have not the slightest doubt that he was in the pay of the enemy, and that this was a deliberate attempt to destroy the bridge. He had timed his venture just too late, for dawn broke before the mahela could crash down on to my frail danacks. I wish we could have caught or shot that Arab, but he was too quick.

Work continued hard during December 8th, and in the afternoon a message arrived that a large body of hostile infantry had been seen moving upstream on the right bank some distance away, but there was no sign of any enemy along the river, so I did not worry much about this news. Jemadar Sadar Din made two trips to bring up more gissaras from the fort, and the boats on arrival were swung into position and their inferior roadway of round "bullies" and rotten planking was patched and nailed. At last the final gissara slid up close to the right bank, and I jumped ashore while the final touches were put to the rickety boats by my men.

I went to the *Sumana* and asked where the covering party was. The reply was that there was no covering party. It appeared that we depended for our safety at the time solely on the *Sumana's* maxim up aloft! A covering party was hurriedly summoned from Kut by signal. In the course of conversation with the commander of the *Sumana* I learnt that he had seen two Turkish officers on some sandhills about 300 yards upstream observing my bridge with some interest, but the arrival of the covering party of 200 men of the 67th Punjabis half an hour later put an end to immediate anxiety. H.M.S. *Sumana* then left the bridge-site and steamed up to Kut

with her barge alongside her. She was bombarded by eight Turkish guns from the right bank upstream of Kut when she rounded the bend of the river, but arrived safely in Kut before dark.

The finishing touches were put to the bridge, which, like the curate's egg, was excellent in parts though doubtful in other places. A bridge of a sort had, however, been completed, and more could hardly be expected in the circumstances; it was fit to take field-gun traffic with reasonable care. General Townshend visited the bridge at 5.30 p.m., after its completion, and congratulated me on the work. He seemed satisfied with the structure, though it was hardly ornamental.

The reason for the construction of this the last bridge completed by my Bridging Train in Mesopotamia was not explained to me; but it would appear, as I have said before, that it was intended for the transit of the 6th Division and 30th Brigade to the right bank of the Tigris if it was decided, even at this late hour, to evacuate Kut and retire on Ali-al-Gharbi.

Early in the morning on December 9th, 1915, my men were out on the bridge repairing leaks, adjusting planks, tightening lashings, and engaged on the thousand and one small jobs inseparable from bridge work. At 8 a.m. I heard one or two distant rifle shots upstream, and about this time, to my great surprise, we received orders to dismantle the bridge, though we had only just finished its construction. We had nearly completed the removal of the rack lashings on the ribands when more rifle fire came from upstream and a few bullets whizzed over the bridge. The sentries of the covering party on the right bank replied with a few shots while we continued our work on the bridge.

Soon the firing from the right bank upstream of us began to increase in volume, and looking upstream to the river bend I saw several Turks doubling along the bank opposite the site of No. 7 Picquet and making for my bridge. More of the enemy followed them, and then "thick and fast they came at last and more and more and more," as the rhyme goes. We ceased work on the bridge and assembled at the barge to get our arms and equipment, and I telephoned to headquarters that the bridge was being attacked.

The fight on the right bank was becoming exciting

at this period. The Turkish infantry, led by an officer waving his sword, was advancing in short rushes down the right bank, screened to some extent by the small dips in the ground and by the sandhills; while our covering party of the 67th Punjabis was trying to check them by steady fire when they could be seen, but the view was much obstructed by the sandhills. Shortly afterwards the enemy gained the nearest sandhill upstream, and from there poured in so heavy a fire on the small party of Indian infantry that Captain Gribbon, the commanding officer, concluded that his little force would be overwhelmed if it remained unsupported on the right bank and ordered the men to retire across my bridge to the left bank. The troops marched across, bringing their wounded back with them, yet, strange to say, the Turks remained among the sandhills and did not attempt to rush the bridge. The covering party came up the left bank past my barge and lay down along the edge in the open to return the enemy's fire. I also took my men up the bank to assist the infantry, leaving a few in a trench below us near my barge.

At 9 a.m. Major-General Sir C. Melliss, commanding the 30th Brigade (then in the General Reserve), arrived at the bridge with Captain McKenna, 16th Rajputs, his Staff Captain. I found him sitting on the top of the river-bank and reported briefly what had occurred. He sent for Captain Gribbon and asked why he had withdrawn the covering party; and on being told that the reason was that the party was too small to hold the sandhills on the right bank, as well as the trenches, against so strong an attack, he ordered the 67th Punjabis to return again to the right bank and attack the enemy at the sandhills. This strong measure was certainly the only method of preventing the Turks from seizing the bridgehead on the right bank. Captain McKenna had meanwhile been despatched at full gallop to Kut to bring up reinforcements, and General Melliss also galloped later to Kut to consult General Townshend. Captain Gribbon, 67th Punjabis, pluckily led his little command back across my bridge to the right bank and advanced upstream towards the sandhills. A furious musketry fight took place, but it was impossible to see what was happening, so General Melliss himself went across to the other bank to ascertain how matters were going there.

After twenty minutes or so the enemy's fire increased still more in volume and the covering party began to lose heavily. Man after man was knocked over; Captain Gribbon was mortally wounded while gallantly encouraging his men in their counter-attack; his subaltern, Lieutenant Arbuthnot, was incapacitated by a nasty wound, and an Indian officer was killed; and at last the remnants of the party could hold on no longer, and retired again across the bridge, with General Melliss himself, in a hail of bullets, bringing up the rear. Happily he was not touched. Many wounded had been left on the right bank as there was no time to get them away, but a number were assisted back by their comrades, including the subaltern of the detachment, who was carried in covered with blood, but still cheerful.

The Turks advanced as soon as the covering party had retired, and seized the trenches dug by our troops overlooking the bridge. From there they opened an accurate and at times heavy fire across the river on to our men, who were almost without cover on the left bank. Fortunately I had reconnoitred this bank the day before and knew of a small shallow nullah which led up to the bank and gave a little cover—a disgustingly dirty place, too. General Melliss himself rallied the men of the covering party, and I assisted to the best of my ability and led some of them to the little channel, along which we worked our way up to the edge of the river-bank. General Melliss then left for Kut, but reinforcements of the 2/7th Gurkha Rifles could be seen advancing in lines across the plain from Kut behind us.

I got a machine gun mounted at the end of the nullah near the river, and its periodical streams of bullets, assisted by our rifle fire, prevented the Turks from attempting to rush the bridge before the Gurkhas arrived. The enemy on the opposite bank 300 yards away kept up a steady fire, which we returned to the best of our ability. There were several Arabs among the Turks opposing us, and these were more conspicuous than the Turks owing to their coloured head-cloths. To while away the time I borrowed the rifle of a sepoy next me and marked down with my glasses the exact place from which an Arab was firing whose bullets seemed to have a liking for our particular bit of ditch. I plastered that spot on the other bank very carefully with lead from the trusty '303, and

though I do not know if that Arab was hit, I do know that his nerves suffered to such an extent that he soon began to fire his rifle over the parapet of his trench without the slightest pretence at aim, and bobbed down almost before he had pulled the trigger. It was quite amusing to watch him from behind a small tuft of weed which formed a good screen.

Reinforcements of other regiments as well as the Gurkhas had now come up and were extended to right and left of us along the bank, keeping up a steady fire on the enemy across the river. The nullah in which I lay was scarcely eighteen inches deep and smelt disgustingly, yet we had to stay there for seven interminable hours while daylight lasted. I had a few biscuits and my water-bottle, and wore my great-coat for warmth, but I was ravenously hungry as I had had no breakfast. The sun gradually sank towards the west, and the firing began to die away as the daylight failed. I then collected eight of my men and led them down the river-bank to the barge to get off a few sick men and my servant and to send them away into Kut. We also wanted to get some blankets for the night. While sharing my loaf of dry bread with another officer I heard that General Melliss was in a ruined mud hut 100 yards away, so I went there for orders.

It had been decided that the bridge should be destroyed, and Lieutenant-Colonel F. A. Wilson, R.E., arrived from Kut and reported that he had made arrangements to blow up the bridge with gun-cotton. Lieutenant A. B. Matthews, M.C., R.E., had volunteered for this work with a few picked men of the 3rd Sappers and Miners, and had brought with him two gun-cotton charges ready made up and attached between planks so as to cut the roadway in two places. Each charge contained 50 lb. of gun-cotton, with four fuses for igniting it. A fireship had also been prepared in Kut to be floated downstream if occasion demanded, assisted by H.M.S. *Sumana*, but it was never required.

Lieutenant Matthews and his men, accompanied by Lieutenant Sweet with some Gurkhas, set out on their perilous journey, expecting at any moment to have a hurricane of fire directed against them. They found that in two places the danacks had foundered, and they had great difficulty in crossing the first gap in the dark, encumbered as they were with the heavy charges of explosive.

They continued, however, to struggle through the icy water across the submerged boats, laid the charges at two places, and lit the fuses, while the Gurkhas hacked at the anchor ropes. Then, having meanwhile rescued some wounded men on the bridge, the party cleared off with all speed. Not a shot had been fired at them. Two deafening explosions rent the air—the volley over the grave of my ill-fated bridge of boats. It made us sad indeed when we thought of the result of the work of so many months destroyed thus in a moment, yet it was unavoidable. My men, as well as I, took a great pride in the bridge, which was chiefly of our own design and manufacture, and it was with heavy hearts that we turned away from the river, though we recognised that the bridge must go, as it was a menace to the safety of Kut.

It was not completely demolished by the explosions, but was split into sections, and in each section many boats were smashed; these sections swung slowly downstream, checked by one or two remaining anchors, till all came to rest. On December 11th one of the 15-pr. guns of the Volunteer Artillery Battery at the fort fired eighteen rounds at the remaining boats and sank eight, but the greater number sank gradually from leakage.

A party in one of my launches above the bridge attempted to go across to the other bank to recover the dead and wounded, thinking that perhaps the Turks had retired, but it was met by such a hail of bullets that the attempt was given up.

It was decided that I and my men should march into Kut and occupy quarters there. Accordingly we set out under the guidance of Lieutenant-Colonel Wilson, R.E., and reached the D.E.C.'s house on the river-front at Kut at 10 p.m. The men had some food and quarters, and I got a good dinner in the R.E. mess, and retired to sleep on the floor of a room upstairs.

Thus ended the bridging work of my little unit in Mesopotamia—a sad termination to a successful series of bridges across the Tigris over a length of river extending from Kurna to near Baghdad. Altogether we had made seventeen bridges across the river between March and December 1915—one at Kurna (under Captain Campbell, R.E.), three at Amarah, one at Ali-al-Gharbi, one at Sannaiyat, one at Nakhailat, two at Kut, two at Aziziah, two at El Kutuniah, one at Zeur, and three at Lajj. The

shortest bridge was one across the river in Amarah roughly 130 yards in length; and the longest was one at Aziziah just under 300 yards long, though the bridge at Sannaiyat (287 yards) ran it close. An average length was about 220 to 250 yards. Of this long series of bridges *seven* were made between November 16th and 28th, 1915 (both dates inclusive), during the advance from, and retreat to, Aziziah. I think it will be admitted that the twenty-eight officers and men of the 1st K.G.O. Sappers and Miners, assisted by their comrades of the 3rd Sappers and Miners or the Sirmoor Sappers, did their best for the 6th Indian Division on the Tigris.

CHAPTER XI

THE SIEGE DURING DECEMBER 1915

WHY did the 6th Indian Division and the 30th Brigade halt at Kut-el-Amarah in the retreat from Ctesiphon instead of continuing their retirement towards Amarah ?

This is a question which has been asked many times and around which much heated discussion has raged ; for the fate of the unfortunate force under the command of General Townshend was due to the fact that it remained in Kut, where it was overtaken and surrounded by the Turks, and lacked sufficient food-supplies to enable it to hold out till relieved by an army which was hampered and delayed by atrocious weather conditions.

As in the case of the vexed question of the advance on Baghdad in 1915, I will leave the reader to draw his own conclusions and make his own criticisms, yet some aspects of the problem which confronted General Townshend on his arrival at Kut-el-Amarah present an interesting study. Before enumerating the pros and cons of the question, let me quote an extract from General Townshend's communiqué to his troops in Kut, dated January 26th, 1916, the full text of which will be found in Appendix G at the end of this narrative. The communiqué runs as follows : " I desire all ranks to know why I decided to make a stand at Kut during the retirement from Ctesiphon. It was because, as long as we hold Kut, the Turks cannot get their ships, barges, stores, and munitions past this, and so cannot move down to attack Amarah ; and thus we are holding up the whole of the Turkish advance. It also gives time for our reinforcements to come up from Busrah, and so restore success to our arms. It gives time to our allies the Russians, who are now overrunning Persia, to move towards Baghdad. . . . By standing at Kut I maintain the territory won in the past year—and thus we maintain the campaign as a glorious one

instead of letting disaster pursue its course to Amarah and perhaps beyond."

This statement enumerates most of the points in favour of the halt of our retiring force at Kut, but I may perhaps add one or two others for the consideration of my readers. Our troops had come through some very strenuous fighting, and had reached Kut by forced marches; men and animals consequently were much fatigued and in need of rest in order to recuperate and refit. In addition, the strategical importance of Kut with regard to the Shatt-al-Hai Channel to Nasariyeh should not be overlooked. The evacuation of Kut would have left the Shatt-al-Hai Channel—which would shortly be filled with flood water—open to the boat traffic of the enemy down to Nasariyeh, thus enabling the Turks to mass troops and stores with ease for a flank attack on Amarah or for an attack on Nasariyeh itself, and also to make use of the great supplies of grain available in the area around the Shatt-al-Hai Channel.

Again, with the shipping available, it would not have been possible to remove from Kut all the stores and ammunition accumulated at that place, and enormous quantities of both would consequently have had to be destroyed to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy. A further consideration was the fact that the town of Kut was known to contain a very great quantity of provisions of all sorts, seemingly ample for a force of 13,000 men besieged for what would probably be a short period. Lastly, the unfortunate loss of prestige caused by our unavoidable retirement from Ctesiphon would be partially redeemed if our force remained in Kut and retired no farther.

Recapitulating the advantages gained by a halt at Kut, we find the following:

- (a) It held up the river-transport of any large Turkish force advancing on Amarah by the Tigris.
- (b) It gave time for our reinforcements to arrive from Busrah and beyond, and to concentrate for action.
- (c) It assisted the Russian move on Baghdad from Persia by diverting many of the enemy's troops to Kut.
- (d) It enabled our fatigued troops to rest and refit.

- (e) It closed the Shatt-al-Hai Channel to the river-transport of the enemy.
- (f) It obviated the necessity of destroying a great quantity of valuable stores.
- (g) It took advantage of the mass of provisions available in Kut which would otherwise have been lost.
- (h) It saved a further, and more serious, loss of prestige, such as would have been entailed by a continued retreat downstream.

Any reasonable person will admit that some or all of these considerations would carry weight when placed before a commander in the field; yet as there are two sides to every question, it will be well to examine the case for the opposition.

The main objection to holding Kutlay in the fact that, by remaining in Kut, the 6th Division, which had outdistanced the Turkish pursuit from Ctesiphon, allowed the enemy to regain touch with it before it had reached reinforcements sufficient to defeat that enemy.

Another objection to the holding of Kut was that, in nine cases out of ten, the correct place for a fighting force is the open field, where its liberty of action will not be restricted and it can still retain the initiative. In most cases a force besieged is a force wasted, for it deliberately adopts the defensive attitude which tends to develop into a passive defence late in a siege; and a passive defence is liable to cause loss of *moral* in the defending troops and a corresponding gain in *moral* among the besiegers.

Again, the approaching flood season of the River Tigris was a matter of the gravest importance. At high flood the river can be made to swamp most of the country below Kut, and this was likely to render the advance of a relieving force, faced by determined opposition, a matter of extreme difficulty, probably involving great loss of life. Lastly, if the 6th Division had retired towards Amarah and joined hands with the force collecting there under General Aylmer, the concentration thus effected would have created a large field force unhampered by any necessity for an urgent advance under unfavourable conditions; and all our troops would have been comparatively close to their depots of supplies and ammunition, and the enemy more distant from his own.

Summing up the case against the holding of Kut, the leading points are as follows :

- (a) It caused the halt of a retreating force, which had succeeded in eluding pursuit, but had not been adequately reinforced.
- (b) It imprisoned, in a restricted and unfavourably situated area, a force designed for fighting in the field.
- (c) It incurred the danger of the capture of that force, owing to the difficulty of a relief force reaching Kut across flooded country.
- (d) It entailed strategical dispersion of force by having a portion of our army in Kut and the remainder near Amarah.

The decision to halt in Kut was not reached hastily, nor without very lengthy discussion of the problem from every point of view. Of this we may be sure. No one unacquainted with the whole of the information at the disposal of our generals is qualified to give an opinion on the subject, or to criticise the decision reached about December 8th, 1915—viz. that the 6th Division and the 30th Brigade should remain in Kut, and keep the Union Jack flying far up the Tigris, till relief arrived from below. That this decision should have led to the disastrous termination of the siege of Kut was the result of a combination of misfortunes and delays which none foresaw in December 1915. A perusal of my narrative may perhaps give some idea of the difficulties and trials of the 6th Division in Kut, as well as those of their gallant comrades of the Relief Force endeavouring for months to reach Kut.

Granted that it was necessary that Kut should be held by the force under General Townshend, there can be no doubt that the only possible defensive position *for so small a force* was that selected and occupied in the bend of the river in which Kut lies. But if our force had been an army corps, instead of four weak brigades, it seems that a better position could have been occupied, upstream of the town, and chiefly on the right bank, where the force could have fortified and held a loop of the river, placing the Tigris between it and the enemy as a natural obstacle to his advance; whereas in Kut itself the loop of the river cut off our retreat when my bridge had been destroyed, and there was no natural obstacle between us and the line



BAZAAR SCENE DURING THE SIEGE.



of advance of the Turks—we were between the devil and the deep sea. Leaving these matters of strategy to those better qualified to deal with them, I will return to my description of our life in Kut in December 1915.

On December 10th my men rested in Kut throughout the day, and I made arrangements for their rations and obtained orders as to our duties during the siege then commencing. The Bridging Train was renamed by the curious title of "Town Engineers," and our duty was to make and maintain various internal communications in the town, as well as to keep the roads in repair, erect shelters against the enemy's snipers, and to carry out any other odd jobs found necessary from time to time.

The R.E. mess was on the ground-floor of the D.E.C.'s house on the river-front.

On the flat roof of the house, reached by a steep winding stair,* we had a small observation station enclosed by brick walls, from which place we could watch the country (except towards the north or north-east) through loopholes or gaps in the walls, and with fair safety from the bullets of the Turkish and Arab snipers at the mouth of the Shatt-al-Hai Channel about 950 yards away across the Tigris.

Adjoining the D.E.C.'s house, on the upstream side, was a yard about fifteen yards square enclosed by double-storied houses on three sides and a high wall on the river side. This place was used as a workshop and was littered with timber, bits of tin, and other stuff, and the ground was honeycombed with deep dugouts made by me, and roofed with Arab benches covered with six inches of earth, so as to be splinter proof. These dugouts were intended for our mess, and for my men and the servants.

Next door to this enclosure came my own little double-storied residence with a tiny central courtyard. On the ground-floor on one side lived my men of the Bridging Train, while on the upper floor on the other side (nearer the river) I had my abode. Behind the house lived Sheik Hajji Abbas el Ali, the headman of Kut—a very big and dignified old Arab, always smartly dressed—together with his son Sa'ad and his nephew Mahomed Najeeb, and numerous wives and servants. My house was really a portion of the Sheik's residence which he had given up for use as a billet for troops. The son Sa'ad was a strapping young fellow, though idle and good for nothing; but

Mahomed Najeeb, the nephew, worked under our Military Governor (Colonel Taylor) and made himself useful. Next to my house came a stable, and beyond that again No. 106 Field Ambulance, occupying numerous houses and an Arab restaurant. Mention should also be made of the R.E. workshops behind the D.E.C.'s house, where every kind of work was ably carried out, including the manufacture of periscopes, hyposcope rifle fittings, hand grenades, etc., etc., and every sort of metal fitting.

Along a portion of the front of Kut, commencing from outside my house, ran what was originally a bazaar street, covered as usual with a pent roof of matting on coupled rafters of round bullies. This street, or bazaar, was not a nice one to walk along during the siege. In February, March, and April 1916 it was full of convalescent Indians sunning themselves during the day—all in a terribly emaciated state and mostly very dirty, for water in abundance was difficult to get without the risk of a bullet, though the river was within fifty yards. Through this crowd of unfortunates one had to pick one's way with care for more than one reason. The whole roof of this street was dismantled during March 1916 to provide firewood for the troops, since, by the end of that month, wood was becoming exceedingly scarce and precious.

The work of the Bridging Train in Kut during December 1915 included first of all the construction of various paths, or "emergency roads" as they were called, through the town parallel to the river, the paths being lettered A, B, C, D, and E. Map No. 5 shows the line taken by each of these thoroughfares. It was rather amusing work knocking these "rabbit runs" through the houses. I was supposed to get official leave from the Military Governor before boring into a house, but time did not admit usually of this, so, after a few enquiries to avoid the risk of inconveniencing any influential Arab, I would set my men to attack the selected wall with picks and crowbars, and in time a small hole would appear right through the wall backed by the protesting face of an Arab shouting "Makoo, makoo!" (No, no). He was politely waved aside with the answer "Akoo, akoo," and soon we were climbing through into one of his downstairs rooms and out into his courtyard, where we started the same game again towards the next house while the recently made hole was enlarged into a good doorway. By thus

working from house to house good covered pathways throughout the town were constructed by us in three weeks.

There was always a pleasing uncertainty as to where one was going to come out when a hole in a wall was started, added to the undoubted fascination of knocking things down which is felt by most male human beings. The Arab owners of the houses were invariably compensated liberally for the damage to their property and were given sheets of matting for use as screens. They quickly recovered from any injury to their feelings when the shining rupees began to trickle into their palms.

An interesting building was the Turkish bath (Hammam) at the river end of No. 4 Avenue. This house was divided into two parts, one for men and the other for women. The walls were over three feet thick and built in cement, and the roof of each room was vaulted. The gloomy apartments were practically without ventilation, and consisted, in the men's suite, of a large outer room and a small inner room, the latter surrounded by cement-lined tanks full of water heated by a furnace in a vault below the building, the water being supplied to the room by pipes with taps attached. The atmosphere in this inner room was incredibly oppressive, since there was here no attempt at ventilation. On the roof of the Turkish bath was Lieutenant Tudway's observing-station, and beyond the building was a yard where we rigged up flour-mills during the siege, supervised and erected by Captain S. C. Winfield-Smith, R.F.C., assisted by other officers. Emergency Road A, running close along within the houses on the river-front, went through the Turkish-bath building and the flour-mills' enclosure in the course of its wanderings.

When my men had completed the emergency roads, and I had painted and fixed name-boards at all the corners, we set to work to screen the avenues and the two pump-houses from the attentions of the snipers across the river. There was a plentiful supply of large sheets of matting in Kut at first, and these sheets were very useful as shelters for the men in the trenches. From some of the sheets we made up long screens of matting with bamboo uprights, and stole forth on to the river-front at night to dig holes for the bamboos and lift the screens into place. So, when dawn broke, the wily sniper across the river found his view up, say, No. 3 Avenue obstructed by a screen

which hid everything. This business of erecting screens was not too pleasant at times when the bullets were flying in the dark, but a screen acted almost as well as a wall in stopping the sniping. Sad to say, all the screens were stolen one by one by Arabs, so we then put up high walls of rough bricks, or of kerosene-oil tins filled with earth, across the ends of the roads, and these lasted till the end of the siege. This work had also to be done in the dark. Until the walls were completed Emergency Road A had to cross the various avenues in deep trenches with bridges for the passenger traffic over them. All this meant a lot of digging.

At dusk the Arab women would begin to collect behind the protection walls, each with her long-necked jar or a skin—all chattering hard and much frightened when a bullet hit the wall outside with a swish and a smack. At last, just before dark, a venturesome one would steal out and make for the river, followed by another and another till all came forth in a long string. "Crack, crack," would go the cruel rifles on the opposite bank, and "phut, phut" would come the nickel-covered or leaden bullets, yet the women only hurried on with muttered complaints and prayers to Allah as they slipped and staggered on the narrow causeways leading to the water's edge. Occasionally a wild cry would go up as a bullet found its billet, and then, in the general stampede which followed, the wounded woman would be borne off to hospital by weeping relatives, and for a time the dreary waste of river-front would be deserted save for a wandering dog or two. Every night the same little drama was played, and all too frequently the curtain was rung down on some unoffending woman or child. Life is cheap in Mesopotamia.

On December 11th I moved into the small house belonging to Sheik Abbas, which the Bridging Train occupied throughout the siege, putting my own kit into a back room on the first floor overlooking the central courtyard. When I had arranged my furniture I went down to the R.E. mess in the D.E.C.'s house for a few minutes and, while there, I heard the now familiar "brrp" of a heavy gun from upstream, followed by the high wail of a shell which deepened into a roar and ended in a terrific crash a few yards away. I ran out and across the workshop yard to my own house, where the courtyard was now a chaos of wreckage; yet not a man had been hurt. A

40-lb. shell had gone clean into my upstairs room, exploding within it, and blowing out the whole wooden partition wall on the courtyard side. It was a lucky escape. The yard was still full of clouds of dust and fumes, and the room itself looked like a dustbin. My cigarettes had been blown all over the place and had to be dug out of six inches of brick-dust and plaster which covered the floor; and the walls were pitted with holes as if from a prolonged burst of rifle fire—in fact the place was a very poor imitation of the room in the bombardment scene of “An Englishman’s Home.”

An unfortunate feature of the situation was that my previously snug little room had now only three walls, yet the large front room adjoining it and facing the river could not be used at this time, for it had many windows all highly attractive to the bullets of the wily snipers across the stream. But with the aid of a dozen bales of compressed hay (bhoosa) I improvised a wall four feet high across the open end of my little room, and in this airy apartment I spent the winter months—an open-air cure of the most complete description. It was indeed fortunate for the garrison of Kut that the enemy had no high-explosive shells. The town could be inhabited under the fire of common shell filled with black powder, but high-explosives would have reduced it to pulp in a very short time.

The Turks were arriving thick and fast around Kut. Shortly after we reached Kut their force was said to be four infantry divisions, totalling 15,000 rifles, with thirty-eight guns, and since then they had continually been reinforced. Khalil Pasha, their able young commander, knew that his chances of taking the place by assault were better at this period than they could be later on, so he planned an attack in considerable force on our line in the north-west section near the Tigris. On December 12th, about 7 p.m., when the enemy knew that the parties bringing up rations to the troops in the trenches would have returned to Kut, a very heavy rifle fire was opened on our front line near Redoubt D (see Map No. 6) and maintained for an hour, while parties of the enemy advanced in the dark to assault the trenches. Our artillery came into action and showered shrapnel on the attacking troops, small bodies of whom contrived to reach our barbed wire but were there annihilated. The fight raged

till 9 p.m., but our defence could not be broken, and finally the Turks abandoned the attempt and retired to their trenches with losses estimated at many hundreds of men. This repulse must have had a most disheartening effect on the Turks, and showed them that the *moral* of our troops had in no way suffered by their recent long retreat from Ctesiphon.

On December 16th 2nd Lieutenant A. T. East, I.A.R. (attached to the 3rd Sappers and Miners), who had accompanied my Bridging Train during the advance to Lajj and the retreat to Kut, was shot through the body, and to my great regret succumbed to his injuries on December 24th—a sad loss to the 17th Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners. On Christmas Eve also a shell from one of the Turkish 40-pounders burst on the roof of the Divisional Staff office in Kut and killed Captain Begg, R.A. (Ordnance Officer), and so badly wounded Lieutenant-Colonel Courtenay, R.G.A., and Captain Garnett, R.G.A., that both officers died in hospital. A most disastrous shot for us.

After the abortive Turkish attack on the north-west section trenches on December 12th, the centre of attraction for the enemy seemed to shift to the fort. This they determined to capture as soon as possible, and it will be well, therefore, to describe the course of events in and around this much-exposed outpost of our force in Kut.

The Turkish attack on the fort may be said to have begun after the 6th Cavalry Brigade had so fortunately got across the river in the nick of time on December 6th, 1915.

The digging work of the enemy was wonderfully energetic and rapid, and, unluckily for the garrison of the fort, the Turks had two large drainage nullahs near the fort, which were suitable for their occupation; these nullahs ran from the north-west towards the river-bank where their exits were 300 and 450 yards respectively downstream of the fort, and they were deep enough to conceal a man standing in them. Our troops had commenced to fill them in, but this work was stopped on December 5th owing to lack of men.

Between December 8th and 24th the Turks excavated some five or six lines of deep fire trenches roughly parallel to the north and north-east faces of the fort, working both day and night incessantly. Throughout the hours of darkness saps were pushed on, and by day these ex-

cavations were deepened and widened, but nothing was visible to the defenders of the fort, except shovelfuls of earth thrown up from below.

By December 18th the enemy had begun five sapheads running towards the fort from their forward trench, which was roughly 100 to 150 yards from the fort walls. They were rapidly destroying our barbed wire by means of hand grenades and spherical bombs thrown from some form of machine in a trench; these bombs generally pitched about fifty yards from the wire and rolled along the ground till they reached the entanglement, where they exploded with great effect. The noise at night was incessant, and great numbers of bombs were expended. So effective were these missiles that by December 23rd there was practically no wire, or even posts, left standing opposite the north-east bastion and the east point of the fort.

The Turks covered their operations by incessant rifle fire day and night from single loopholes newly built every night. Millions of rounds must have been expended; but luckily the fort walls, though scarcely dry, were proof against the pointed bullet, and casualties on the perimeter itself were few. The "overs," however, caused a steady drain on the garrison of ten to twenty casualties a day in the early stages of the siege amongst working parties in the interior and in rear of the fort, and water could only be drawn from the river at night until a covered way to the river was completed near the old pump-house (see Map No. 7).

The enemy's rifle fire was supplemented by day by intermittent bombardments by his guns—usually for an hour or so at a time, from 7.30 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and also about midday. At first the shells were aimed at the south-east bastion and the Arab buildings behind it, so that the latter had to be evacuated; and then the bombardment was directed against the north-east bastion. The Sirmoor Sappers lost many men and had nearly all their equipment destroyed in a serious fire, which they pluckily extinguished before it reached their explosives dugout.

After this the north-east bastion, east face, observation tower, and river face were heavily plastered with shells, and all the combustible supply and transport stores near the observation post were burnt, including a large stock of brushwood and "bhoosa." The post itself was a high

structure built of "atta" bags and stood shell fire splendidly; but the river-gate openings, which were blocked with bhoosa bales, had to be rebuilt up almost nightly until sandbags and atta bags could be substituted for the burnt bhoosa.

The hostile guns usually opened fire from different positions each morning. Our guns did excellent work in subduing their fire, but could not afford to expend sufficient ammunition to silence them. The two 15-pr. field guns in the fort, ably manned by gallant Volunteer Artillery Battery, constantly harassed the enemy's working parties and drew heavy reprisals on themselves. Our guns elsewhere assisted the garrison of the fort as much as they could. For instance, our 5-inch howitzers from the Brick Kilns kept up a steady fire on the enemy outside the fort on December 13th and 14th (one round every forty-five seconds for short periods), to delay his sapping work; and again on December 16th the howitzers and our 4-inch B.L. guns fired several rounds. On December 17th they kept up a more rapid fire of groups of four rounds at long intervals. In reply to our fire, it was calculated that the Turks expended 6,000 rounds of gun ammunition on Kut and its defences before December 15th, 1915.

The garrison of the fort at this time had a very hard life. The troops had no dugouts or communication trenches when the siege began. By day a certain amount of work was done in constructing dugouts, but the greater part of the work had to be carried out at night. For the first fortnight all who could be spared from the defences worked in reliefs of three hours up to 3 a.m., or even 4 a.m., until finally, about December 23rd, there was reasonably safe, though insufficient, communication throughout the fort and back to the sandhills and middle-line trenches, and every man of the garrison could find shelter in a good dugout. The work, however, was very hard on the men because of the dearth of picks; and breaking new ground at night for the communication trenches to the rear always led to many casualties. In addition to all this heavy work, many alarms occurred, and great vigilance had to be maintained to cope with night assaults which were constantly expected. Parties of Sappers or 48th Pioneers from Kut assisted, when they could be spared, in repairing walls breached by gunfire, and in trench work.

Little could be done to hinder the sapping work of the

Turks, but our troops pushed out saps from the fort ditch to our barbed wire towards each of the enemy's saps, and posted bomb throwers at night to harass the hostile bombers when the saps neared each other. Our bomb throwers reached the saps through tunnels. The Turks, however, concentrated their efforts chiefly on destroying our barbed wire, and were able to pitch out their bombs and grenades without exposing themselves. They made practically no attempt to retaliate on our bombers, but they threw towards our men a number of pamphlets wrapped round stones or sticks which all fell short, and were only found during sorties in later stages of the siege; these pamphlets were printed in Hindi and were evidently intended to promote disaffection among the Indian troops—a scheme which, I need hardly say, failed completely.

Hand grenades at first were very scarce in Kut, and here the Turks had a great advantage over us. We could not afford to expend a great number of grenades, as it was necessary to retain a large reserve to repel possible assaults. The R.E. Field Park in Kut rose nobly to the occasion and kept the fort supplied with most efficient improvised grenades of the "jam-pot" variety as well as the McClintock pattern (all manufactured in the workshops behind the D.E.C.'s house); whilst Lieutenant F. Mayo, of the Sirmoor Sappers, made twenty or thirty bombs daily at the fort from old jam-tins charged with gun-cotton primers and Turkish shrapnel bullets picked up within the fort, and these were found to be excellent missiles at short range. The R.E. Field Park also sent out two wooden wire-bound bomb guns to the fort, and others elsewhere to our trenches, and very extraordinary weapons they looked. They were soon given up, however, as they were liable to burst, yet the two wooden guns sent to the fort effectively checked all work by day in the nearest enemy saps when operated by two properly trained bomb-gun parties.

Captain R. E. Stace, R.E., then devised some very efficient and ingenious bomb guns from the cylinders of a 70 h.p. Gnome aeroplane engine, and two of these little guns were sent to the fort. A sketch of the completed bomb gun is appended. At first these guns threw 3-lb. T.N.T. aeroplane bombs fitted with special wooden adapters, and were fairly accurate up to, say, 100 yards

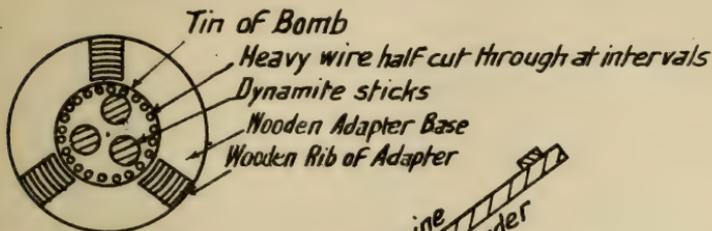
range if all went well, but the adapter frequently wedged on to the bomb instead of falling away from it at once as intended, and thus spoilt the flight. It was found that these bomb guns fired the old tin-cylinder variety of bomb equally well, so the old type was readopted. These steel bomb guns were much safer and more accurate than the wooden guns in which the wood soon dried and opened out after about twenty rounds or so, and in which the bombs never fitted the bore with any accuracy after a few rounds had been fired and often detonated in the gun itself with disastrous results.

The R.E. Field Park also turned out a supply of periscopes, which were altogether lacking at first. Every available mirror in Kut was bought up and cut into small rectangular pieces, and these were mounted at the correct angles between wooden side-pieces. In addition to these useful accessories, "hyposcope" (periscopic) rifles were issued in small numbers to the troops by the R.E. Field Park, the design being copied from a photo in an illustrated paper of a similar arrangement invented by an Australian in Gallipoli. The wooden periscopic frame in which the rifle was fixed enabled the marksman to aim and fire the weapon over a parapet, while himself completely under cover. Two or three rifles thus mounted were sent to the fort and others elsewhere, and they were useful in dealing with the enemy's snipers.

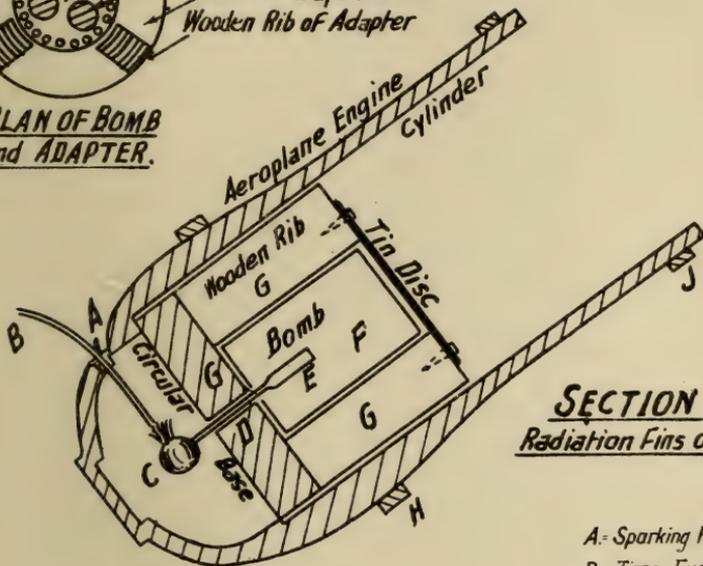
Life in the fort was crowded—one might almost say overcrowded—with incident. The garrison became accustomed to the incessant rattle of musketry, and only felt anxious during the lulls, which were infrequent. Water-supply presented great difficulties and washing was at a discount, so every one became dreadfully dirty until the Sirmoor Sappers built a bomb-proof covered way down to the river. Several attempts were made to work the old irrigation 16-h.p. Hornsby oil engine and pump in the pump-house; but as soon as the sump was cleared it invariably became choked with *débris* brought down by the enemy's shell fire, as also did the engine itself, in spite of the efforts of some of the men of the Royal Flying Corps, who pluckily worked for over a week on the machinery in the ruined pump-house. Finally a shell smashed the water circulation tank, and the attempt to repair the mechanism was abandoned. The engine was then removed at night by the R.F.C. men and sappers, and sent

GNOME ENGINE BOMB GUN.

Designed by Capt Stace R.E.

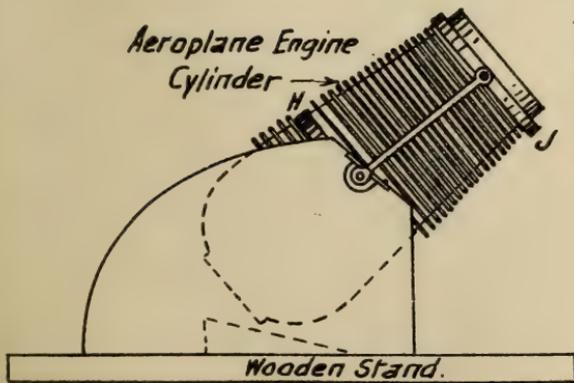


PLAN OF BOMB
and ADAPTER.



SECTION
Radiation Fins omitted

- A.= Sparking Plug, porcelain removed
- B.= Time Fuse wedged at A.
- C.= 1/2 oz. black powder
- D.= Time Fuse
- E.= Detonator
- F.= 3 Dynamite Sticks in tin
- G.= Wooden Adapter
- H.= Rear Trunnion Band
- J.= Front Band



ELEVATION.

into Kut to operate the grain-crushing mills then hard at work near the Turkish-bath building in the town.

A further tax on the garrison was caused by the large stacks of timber, wire, etc., lying on the river-bank outside the fort, brought thither, as I have previously described, by a fleet of mahelas just before the siege. This mass of material had to be brought into the fort piece by piece at night under heavy sniping fire, and the last piece was not got in until April 1916.

It was evident that the Turks intended to assault the fort, and, by December 17th, the garrison feared that the enemy had begun mining from his sapheads. Our sappers had sunk a shaft opposite the east point of the fort and another in the north-east bastion, and had run out some short listening-galleries. As water was encountered only 13 feet below ground-level there was no fear from deep Turkish mines, but to ascertain if hostile mining was actually in progress and to check the enemy, two sorties were planned for the early morning of December 18th.

To commence with, two parties of Sirmoor Sappers crept out after dark on December 17th and cut two ways through the remains of our barbed wire, and stacked light bamboo pyramids of barbed wire close at hand ready to close the openings if required. A red Verrey light (part of our aeroplane equipment) was to be fired as a signal for the sorties, whereupon our guns were to shell the Turkish support trenches, and all the machine guns and rifles in the fort were to add their quota to the storm of bullets. The sorties were timed to start an hour or so before dawn, as soon as the moon went down.

No. 1 Sortie Party (fifty men of the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry) was led by Lieutenant Hinds, 103rd Mahrattas, with four bombers from the 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, accompanied by Captain C. E. Colbeck, R.E., with six Sirmoor Sappers carrying explosives for destroying mine-shafts. This party dashed for the nearest hostile sap from the north-east bastion. No. 2 Sortie Party, similarly composed, but with men from the 119th Infantry and led by Lieutenant Haddon of that regiment, with Jemadar Durga Singh in charge of the sapper party, rushed out at the same time from our trenches outside the east point of the fort.

The Turks were taken completely by surprise while

at work and were bayoneted before they could get their rifles. The sortie parties then worked down the Turkish trenches and saps with bombs, sending back about a dozen prisoners and a quantity of rifles and entrenching tools. A fierce fight ensued with a party of Turks trapped at the third sap opposite the north face, but this sap was eventually cleared by bombing. Five sapheads were next examined and found to show no trace of mining work, so the two sortie parties returned to the fort just before dawn on December 18th, having killed about forty of the enemy and with only one man of the two parties slightly wounded. Lieutenant Hinds subsequently received the Military Cross for his conduct on this occasion. The garrison of the fort was much relieved to know that the Turks were not mining towards the walls, and jubilant at the complete success of the sorties.

After this successful exploit by our troops at the fort the Turks made nightly attacks on the barbed wire defences by means of bombs, and their rifle fire became heavier than ever. All this pointed to an intention to capture the fort by assault, and such proved to be the case.

The long-expected attack on the fort seemed imminent on December 24th, 1915, when the enemy concentrated the fire of about twenty guns on the north-east bastion and the east face, commencing soon after 7 a.m. and continuing for four hours. The walls of the fort now had low-level trenches and loopholes as well as the original high-level loopholes, but the bombardment soon reduced large sections of the walls to ruins. Practically all the lookouts and sentries on the east face and at the east point were killed or buried, and the north-east bastion became untenable, so the garrison of the latter work held a stockade which had been erected previously across the gorge (rear) of the bastion in case of an emergency of this sort, and which provided head-cover of bhoosa bales.

Under the concentrated hail of shells the fort had become enveloped in dust and smoke, and the Turks launched their assault before the defenders realised that the bombardment had ceased; but the alarm was soon given from the observation post and the garrison rushed out from its dugouts. The Volunteer Battery, under Captain K. F. Freeland, R.G.A., took post behind the north-east bastion stockade, accompanied by Captain L. H. G.

Dorling, R.F.A. (the R.F.A. forward observation officer), who, finding that all his telephone cables had been cut, threw in his lot with the Volunteers. Together with a detachment of thirty men of the 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, the Volunteers had to hold the stockade, acting as a local reserve, and they were flanked on either side by the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry. Here the Turks launched a heavy attack. They came right up to the ruined walls of the bastion, but were met with such a hail of bullets and grenades that none actually entered the fort, and after suffering very heavy losses they retired, losing still more men before they reached cover once more. Some of the enemy got into the ditch near the north-east bastion, and tried to cover our loopholes with haversacks stuck on their bayonets, but without avail, and none of these fellows survived.

Meanwhile the Turks had made a similar attack against the east point near the river, but without much dash. Nevertheless, about a hundred of the enemy got amongst the débris of the fort wall at this spot without opposition, until the 119th Infantry rallied a party of their men, and with the help of Major Anderson (O.C. Volunteer Artillery Battery) and six of his Volunteers who had remained near their posts to remove the breechblocks of their two guns, drove out the Turks after a fierce hand-to-hand fight at the east point stockade.

In about half an hour the Turks had had enough of it, and except for occasional gunfire the afternoon was quiet. The garrison worked hard to clear the perimeter of débris, and to collect the wounded in the dugout hospital of the fort, whence they could be removed to Kut after dark. The 119th Infantry had lost two officers and many men, and were relieved during the afternoon by the 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, and the O.C. Fort asked for a strong party of Pioneers to help with repairs after dusk. Heavy reinforcements of Turks were seen to be entering the distant trenches opposite the north and north-east faces during the afternoon, and the garrison stood to arms at dusk. The Sirmoor Sappers and 48th Pioneers worked at a second-line river-trench to defend the river front and flank, and at a trench along the south side of the fort.

The usual heavy night firing continued until the moon rose in a cloudy sky some two hours after dusk, and

then the Turks made their second effort to capture the fort.

The enemy attacked on much the same lines as in the morning, but with better success on the whole. Captain W. F. C. Gilchrist, 52nd Sikhs, with the Rajput company of the 119th Infantry held the trenches outside the east point of our defended area, and there they shot down every man who emerged from the Turkish trenches opposite them and completely demoralised this portion of the attacking force. Similarly the Oxfords repelled all attempts of the foe to enter the fort on the north-east face. But matters were critical at the north-east bastion. Here the enemy rushed our battered defences, and the two companies of the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry in and near the bastion were bombed out of the side wings with terrible loss.

On the north face the remainder of this regiment held its own, so the Turkish assault concentrated on the gorge stockade of the north-east bastion, and the enemy lined the ruined walls and kept up a deadly fire at point-blank range on the loopholes of the stockade, while his bomb throwers crept along the side faces and interior communication trenches. The Volunteer Battery men again fought most gallantly; Captain Dorling, R.F.A., who was still with them, was wounded early in the evening by a bomb, and soon afterwards Lieutenant Mellor of the Oxfords (who was helping with some of his men) and then both Major Anderson and 2nd Lieutenant Davern of the Volunteer Battery were seriously wounded. Still the Oxfords and the Volunteers hung on and bore the brunt of the attack with the greatest coolness and bravery, using rifles and grenades with precision and success. So serious, however, was the situation that the O.C. Fort sent up the 48th Pioneers (about 200 strong) to the stockade, where they relieved Captain Freeland and the gallant survivors of the Volunteer unit, and embarked on a stiff fight themselves, much handicapped by ignorance of the geography of the place.

The Turks had mounted a machine gun in the right gallery of the bastion, and we had one on the stockade; our maxim on the stockade was most pluckily worked by the Indian soldiers of the Machine Gun Battery, one man taking the place of another as casualties occurred until the maxim was put out of action. The bhoosa loopholes

of the stockade were by this time sadly disintegrated and almost useless. The first thirty men of the 48th Pioneers to man the stockade were all either killed or wounded by bullets or bombs—amongst them Captain Newman in command, who was wounded in the face and had to retire. Lieutenant Raynor then took command, and he and his Indian troops had a fierce fight against the foe till about midnight, but prevented the Turks from getting round, or over, the stockade. The remainder of our defences had been strongly held meanwhile, and the attack began to weaken and finally ceased.

Another fierce attack was made about 2.30 a.m. on Christmas Day. This was also repulsed, and the Turks had then apparently had enough of the struggle and relinquished their attempt to capture the fort. The Norfolk Regiment, which had been in reserve near the sand-hills, marched into the fort and relieved the brave Pioneers, who then marched back to Kut with their wounded to a well-deserved Christmas Day's rest.

The honours of the day fell, I think, to the Volunteer Battery, which showed a splendid example of coolness and bravery in most desperate hand-to-hand fighting. The unit lost two officers wounded, six men killed, and twelve men wounded out of a total strength of three officers and twenty-nine men at the fort. Captain Goldfrap, 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry, in command at the north face of the north-east bastion, had a fearfully hard day and night, and his coolness and pluck were beyond all praise; and the 48th Pioneers under Lieutenant Raynor at night won great honour by their stubborn defence of a very hot corner, where they could only have had the vaguest idea as to how the enemy was placed and what was in front of them.

Those in the fort never realised that our artillery was supporting them during the Turkish attack, so stupendous was the din of the battle; but some 300 rounds were fired by the 104th Heavy Battery R.G.A. and the Hants Howitzer Battery on the nearest registered targets (*e.g.* the nullah 450 yards distant from the fort), and probably caused very heavy losses to the enemy's supports, as we heard later that the Turkish 52nd Division from the Caucasus front, which had been allotted to the attack, had 4,000 casualties—possibly an exaggeration, but it is certain that the casualties were very great.

Thus ended all serious attacks on the fort, or indeed on any portion of our line, though the Turks continued to work on their trenches and looked like attempting another attack in January 1916; but, as I shall mention later, this attack never materialised, and the Kut defences were then hemmed in by a retired line of redoubts and barbed wire, and harassed by snipers, intermittent shelling, and floods. Our men were never given another chance at hand-to-hand fighting with the enemy.

No more gallant resistance has ever been made than that of our small garrison of the fort on this memorable Christmas Eve; and the result of our success was very great, both in showing the enemy the quality of our defence and in once again demonstrating to our own men the fact that in hand-to-hand fighting the Turk was no match for them. For weeks after this desperate encounter the surroundings of the fort were ghastly. The Turks made no attempt, under a properly arranged armistice, to remove their own wounded; and their dead lay thick around the fort. On December 29th the Turks near the fort sent in under a white flag an envoy in the form of a very drunken Bimbashi (Major), who bore a letter from the *local* Turkish commander proposing an armistice for the burial of the dead, but as Khalil Pasha had not made the proposal, General Townshend decided that it could not be accepted, and the envoy then returned with the answer of refusal. In consequence of the failure of the proposals for an armistice the bodies of the Turks killed around the fort lay unburied for nearly two months, with results which may be better imagined than described.

Our men managed to bring in a few of the seriously wounded Turks who lay close to the fort, and actually found several men still alive four days after the assault. A few of the enemy's wounded crawled into the fort unassisted and surrendered, but the greater number perished miserably from hunger, thirst, and exposure without any assistance being possible, and within a stone's throw of the fort. The gratitude of the poor fellows rescued at night by our troops was touching in the extreme; they received every attention from the hands of our doctors and a fair proportion recovered. They were fine, strong, hardy fellows, who would make first-class infantry if properly led. Whether the enemy had any particular object in selecting Christmas Eve for the attack on the

fort is not known. Possibly the Turks thought that it might lead to the capture of Kut itself on Christmas Day, which they knew to be one of our chief festivals. Such an event on such a day would appeal to the Eastern mind.

On Christmas Eve my men were working during the morning in the palm grove south of Kut, busily constructing a very long water-trough of canvas from which to water all the transport animals. Suddenly a shell from one of the enemy's 40-pounders crashed into a house 100 yards north, and then another fell into a house twenty yards to my left, sending up a fountain of dust and killing an Arab woman inside. Amid the shrieks and cries of the Arabs in this house I heard the roar of another approaching shell, which burst over our heads, but well clear of us. The corner where we were working was obviously bad for our health, so I assembled my men and started to march them towards the entrance to the palm grove. I had just rounded a turn of the path, and was passing a group of horses enclosed by a bank of earth about 4 feet high, when we heard yet another messenger of death approaching, and down it came with a sickening crash among the horses near me and in a direct line with me. I had turned my back to it as it fell, for a ridiculous instinct seems to prompt one to do this in such circumstances. A cloud of earth, *débris*, and fumes shot over me, but that was all, and as soon as the clouds cleared we examined the horses, expecting to see them all dead. Marvellous to relate, only one horse had been hit. He was merely a shapeless mass, as the shell had hit him direct. The missile had exploded under the next horse to him, and yet this animal was without even a scratch as far as I could see. My own escape was a very narrow one, and another 15 feet of range would have prevented this narrative being inflicted on my readers. The bombardment lasted all day in Kut as elsewhere, and I believe about 500 shells were fired into the town alone. Every one had good cause to remember Christmas Eve of 1915.

Christmas Day 1915 dawned over a blood-stained fort and a battered town on the banks of the wide River Tigris—a mockery indeed of the peace on earth and good will towards men appropriate to the day, and so fervently desired by many thousands of men and women the wide world over. Our hospitals were filled with suffering

wounded; our gallant dead were being borne to their last resting-place; and the Turkish wounded lay in their agony around the ruined fort amid their more fortunate comrades who had met a sudden end while bravely attempting to do their duty. It is at such seasons that one realises what a senseless and brutal thing is modern warfare, in which thousands of men set forth to kill their fellow-men against whom they sometimes feel no personal enmity, and whose bravery and endurance they in many cases actually admire. In the little chapel on the upper floor of the Serai in Kut the same service was conducted, and the same well-known hymns were sung, as in so many cathedrals and churches in old England; and the tunes and words, heard many a time under happier circumstances and in company with those they loved, conjured up before the minds of the little congregation scenes very different from the interior of the little room in which they now lifted up their hearts and voices.

Christmas Day was quiet in Kut and at the fort, for the enemy was resting and reorganising his exhausted troops after the failure of his assault on Christmas Eve. The expenditure of gun ammunition in preparation for these assaults and during their progress may also have made him uneasy. In any case, the fact remains that the Turkish guns and rifles were almost silent throughout the greater part of December 25th, 1915.

On Christmas night those of us who were not on duty had an excellent dinner in the R.E. mess in Kut. There was no attempt at decoration, since we had no holly or mistletoe, but a good five-course meal, including a plum-pudding of sorts and asparagus as an extra, made up for the deficiency. Excellent Scotch whisky, suitably diluted with filtered water, formed what one might call a running accompaniment to the eatables. It was quite a festive meal in the cosy little room. For tea in the afternoon we had had a real plum cake (tinned) and condensed milk and sugar with our tea, so that when the party broke up about 10 p.m. every one felt satisfied with himself and the world at large, and for a short time the Turk and his machinations were forgotten. Unhappily our Christmas party was not complete, for Barker and Tomlinson were out near the fort laying out the new "retrenched line" (see Map No. 6) and did not get back till late. The excavation of this new line of trench was completed about

PLAN OF THE FORT

MAP NO 7.

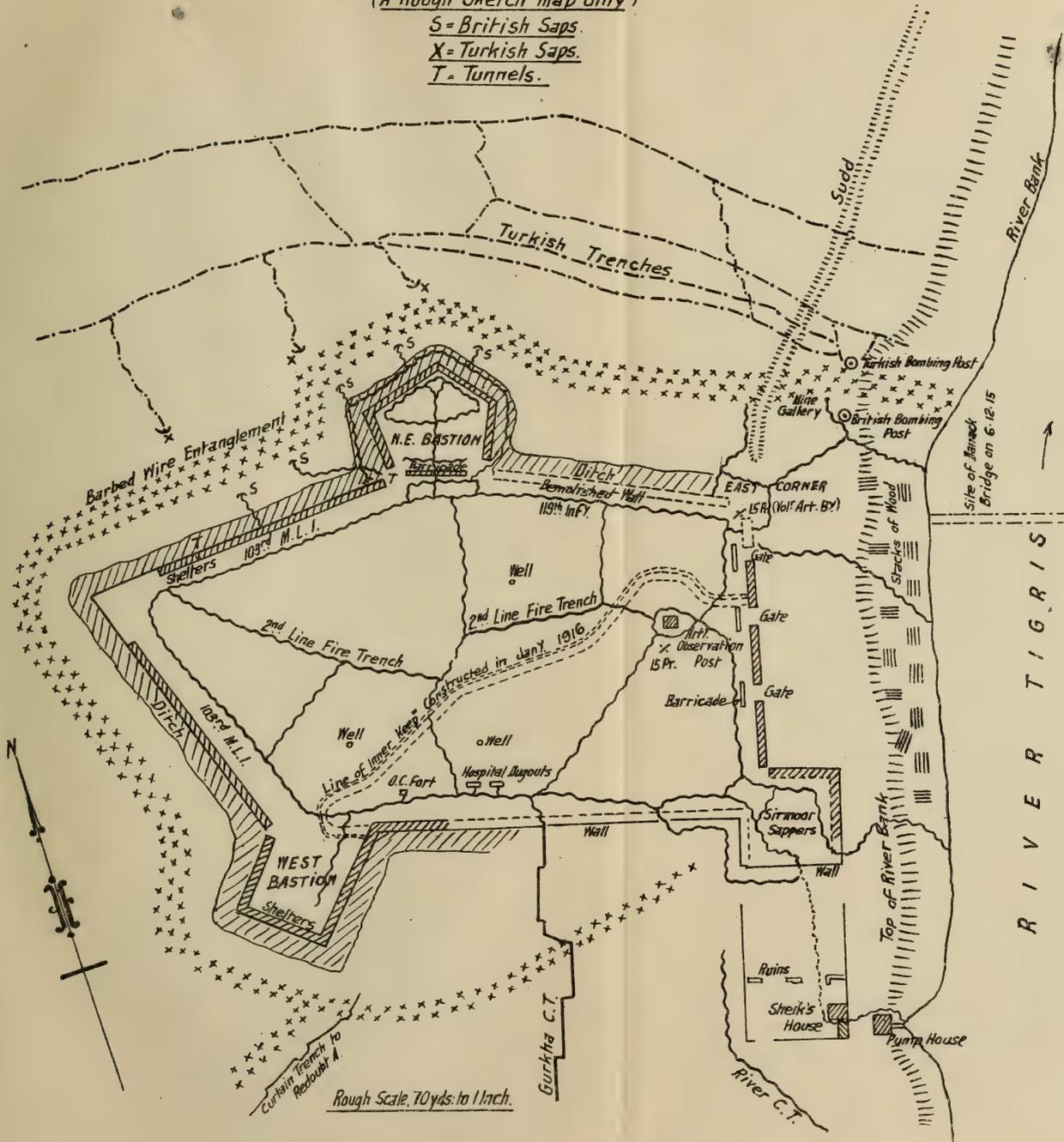
— AT KUT. —

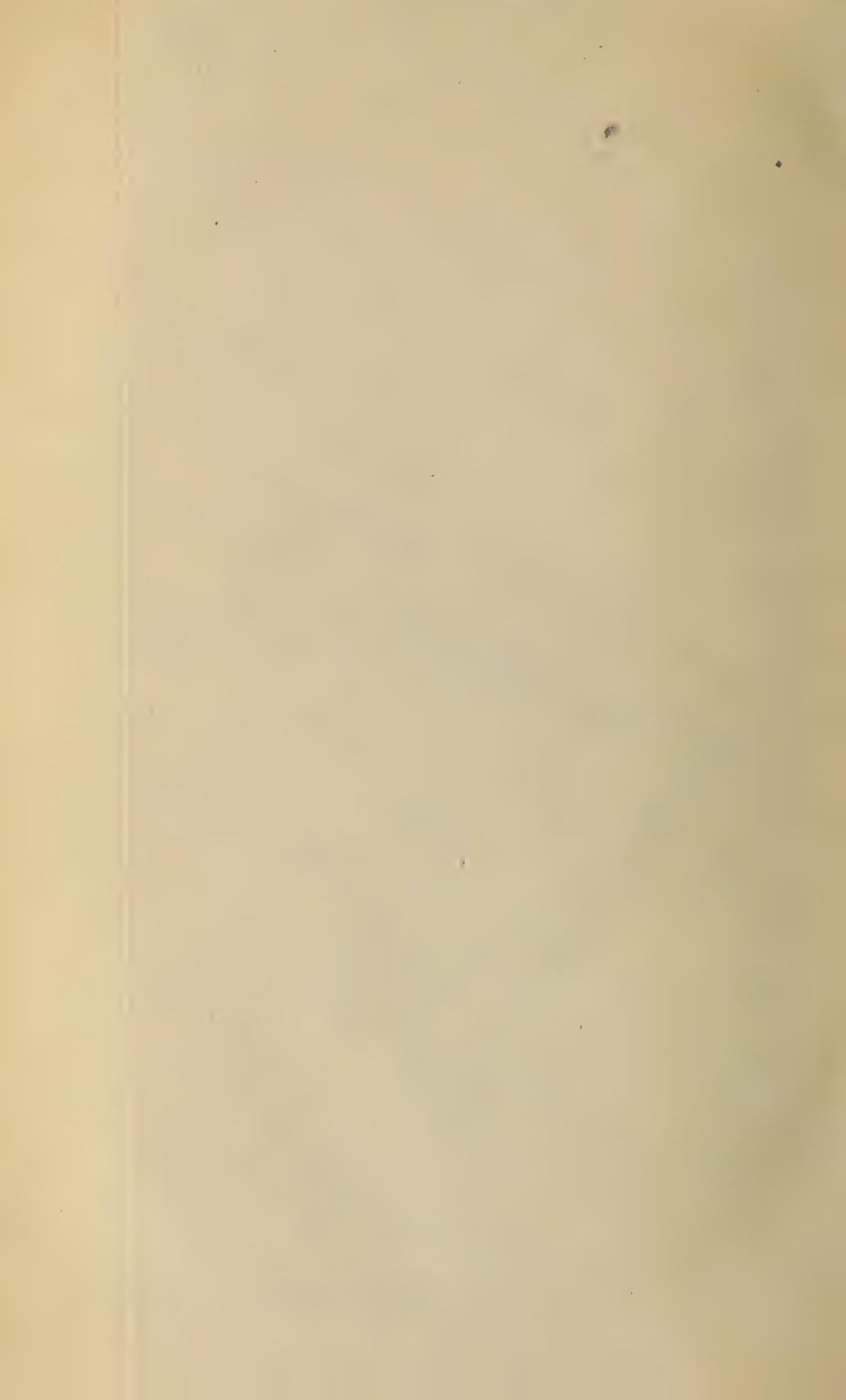
(A Rough Sketch Map only)

S = British Saps.

X = Turkish Saps.

T = Tunnels.





a week later. The recent attack on the fort made it advisable to construct this additional defence.

The cheering news reached us on Christmas Day, 1915, that the Relief Force under General Aylmer was about to commence an advance towards Ali-al-Gharbi *en route* for the Turkish position in the neighbourhood of Shaik Sa'ad. At this time the general consensus of opinion of those people who were not behind the scenes fixed the probable date of our relief as January 15th, 1916, at the latest. Our Army and Navy Stores catalogue was in great request by people making out lists of what they intended to order from Bombay when their first letters could get through to Busrah.

The days in Kut succeeding Christmas Day were enlivened by occasional shelling from the Turkish guns at regular hours each day. Many units were hard put to it to keep up their establishment of officers. In one regiment of British infantry, out of some twenty-five officers who came out to Mesopotamia at the beginning of the campaign, only the colonel, one subaltern, and the doctor remained. In the two sapper companies only Lieutenant A. B. Matthews, R.E., was left fit for duty out of the eight R.E. officers who originally came from India with these units. These instances will give some idea of the losses in officers in the 6th Division while in the country. Influenza now began to spread its dire influence over the town. A great number of men were affected, but fortunately most recovered fairly quickly.

About December 23rd a message had come in saying that my Bridging Train Barge No. 36 had broken loose from her moorings near No. 9 Picquet and had drifted down at night to the sandy shore opposite the fort. This was intensely annoying, for it meant the total loss of all the remainder of our kit on board the barge. How the accident happened remains a mystery to this day, for the barge was securely moored both bow and stern by three good ropes attached to well-constructed holdfasts. My own opinion is that Arabs must have swum across the river and cut the mooring cables in the dark.

On December 27th Major Winsloe and I went out to the east end of the second-line trenches with two periscopes to have a look at the position of the stranded barge and the state of the wreckage of my unfortunate bridge. We arrived at the end of the second line unnoticed, and care-

fully put up our periscopes for a good look round. Before a minute had passed, "ping" went a bullet past our periscopes from a sniper across the river, and another followed, but we had then seen all we wanted. Three "gissaras" (Arab boats) lay high and dry on the left bank near us, some six or eight danacks still floated in midstream interspersed with sunken craft, and the three launches had been sunk by rifle fire and had practically disappeared in the mud even in this short time. My barge was visible in the distance lying on the right bank opposite to the fort downstream of us. It appears that she had been fired on by the field guns at the fort, and that her timber and matting had caught fire. The conflagration raged furiously, fanned by the wind and encouraged, I regret to say, by some cases of whisky and vermouth aboard her. This was the end of all the valuable stuff on the barge, including my books, instruments, tent, and some kit. Later, after the old derelict had been used for some time as a sniping-post by the Turks, she drifted off and floated downstream towards the Es-Sin position of the enemy. It was thought apparently that the gunshot holes in her sides would prevent this mishap, but the holes just cleared the water-line, so the poor old boat escaped to the enemy downstream and was subsequently used by him for ferrying troops and guns across the River Tigris at Magasis, near the Es-Sin position.

In the last days of the year 1915 the 6th Division and 30th Brigade were holding their own against the enemy, and were in fairly good health and good spirits. All looked forward with confidence to a speedy relief. The defences around Kut were more or less complete; there was abundance of food for a considerable time; ammunition was sufficient for probable requirements; the weather was fine and cold, and the river-level fairly low. Optimism prevailed.

CHAPTER XII

FLOOD AND FOE IN JANUARY 1916

THE garrison of Kut welcomed the New Year of 1916 with every confidence that the efforts of the Relief Force would soon be crowned with success, and that it would shortly be voyaging downstream to Amarah and perhaps even towards the distant shores of India itself. The hope of relief and final victory over his assailants buoyed up many an overworked, cold, and hungry soldier in the flooded trenches around Kut during the bitter winter months of 1916, when he would otherwise have been tempted to give way to the despair fostered by fatigue and sickness.

The cheeriness of the British private soldier in the trying circumstances prevailing in January must have been seen to be believed. Almost up to his waist in water, drenched to the skin by rain, frozen during the night, and sniped continually by a vigilant foe, he would yet turn everything into a joke, would sing his well-known music-hall ditties, and the more trying the situation the more, apparently, would he enjoy it. Never surely did the character of the British soldier undergo a more searching test, and never did it survive that test with greater honour than during the siege of Kut. A tribute is also due to the patient endurance of the Indian ranks and the dogged pluck of the Gurkhas which backed up the untiring efforts of our small force of British troops, so that together, British and Indian, these men withstood the best troops in the Turkish Empire for five long months.

The Turkish snipers were always most enterprising in front of our first-line trenches early in the siege, and at the first streak of dawn each morning a fire-fight took place between our snipers and those of the enemy for the more advantageous positions for the day. Many of the Turks had good telescopic sights on their rifles, while we had none, but the British troops at any rate managed

to hold their own in the sniping game. Various patterns of hand grenades were used in our trenches, as I have already mentioned. The earlier ones turned out by the R.E. Field Park workshops in Kut were composed of two one-ounce primers of dry gun-cotton in a small tin cylinder, but later one ounce (half cartridge) of dynamite was used instead with good results. A short length of time-fuse projected from each grenade and had to be lit with a fusee before the missile was thrown. The Turkish hand grenades were usually spherical, with a fuse lighted before throwing by pulling a string attached to a friction tube in the interior. These grenades were, of course, superior to our makeshift articles, and the enemy seemed to have an unlimited supply of them.

On January 3rd the Turks sent in a letter to our headquarters in Kut under a flag of truce announcing, I believe, that the body of Captain Gribbon, 67th Punjabis, had been buried by them with all honours. This was the officer who commanded the covering party of my bridge on December 9th. On the same day some excitement was caused in Kut by messages received between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. from observing officers stating that large bodies of the enemy appeared to be massing in their camp six miles away near Shumran on the river-bank upstream of Kut, and that they were also concentrating towards Woolpress village on the right bank opposite Kut; in addition to which not less than two complete divisions were reported to be marching towards the fort. These movements may have been correctly observed, but nothing eventuated from them, though all preparations were made in Kut to withstand a general assault.

On the evening of January 5th, 1916, about 9 p.m., while sitting in our mess in Kut, we were startled by some rapid shots fired apparently at Woolpress village, and followed shortly by a roll of musketry which rapidly increased in volume and continued for half an hour or more. The bullets whistled continuously over our house from across the river, and the din was increased by the *Sumana's* 12-pr. gun, which had joined in the duel. In time the firing died away, but no news reached us that night as to the cause of all this "hate." Next day we heard that the enemy had suddenly opened a violent rifle fire on the village from his trenches closely encircling it, but had not actually come out to attack the place. I imagine the

Turks thought that the village had been partially evacuated (since some troops had been brought back to Kut the previous night), and on finding their fire returned with accuracy and strength, had decided not to assault. Whatever the cause may have been, the Turks did not leave their trenches on this occasion.

During these early days of January 1916 the Turks continued their regular habit of afternoon bombardments directed on Kut and on the fort, but never on Woolpress village. There was heavy fire on January 2nd while I was in bed with influenza. It was most unpleasant to have to lie in bed just under a previous shell hole and to listen to the roars and crashes of the heavy shells as they fell among the houses near by, but I was too seedy to get up and go down to our mess, so had to take the risk of a shell hitting my own house again. Fortunately none did so. The R.E. mess-room was comparatively safe, for it was necessary for a shell to penetrate four brick walls, if fired from upstream, before it could enter the room. A number of shells exploded just outside the mess on the river-front, and two entered the central courtyard of the house, but the mess-room itself remained intact.

Further rumours reached us about this time that the Relief Force under General Aylmer was starting on its advance towards Kut, and this news tended to raise our spirits considerably.

The snipers at the mouth of the Shatt-al-Hai Channel were becoming very pressing in their attentions and were perpetually firing at some sniping-post of ours near the D.E.C.'s house. Their bullets came in rapid succession over the wall of the workshop yard next the house, making a deafening crack as they passed close over the wall or hit the house itself. These snipers had a wholesome lesson on January 6th, for one of our field guns on the river-front put a shell right into their nest and practically demolished it, killing two men and causing the remainder to bolt to a safer spot. Our chief sniping-post was located on the first floor of a building occupied by the 7th Rajputs at the river end of No. 5 Avenue. Here there were always a few picked shots on duty, and a machine gun in position and ready for any unwary Turkish sniper across the water. The range was over 900 yards, but a good number of the enemy fell before the accurate fire of the Rajput marksmen. Elsewhere along the river-front of Kut other small sniping-

posts were established from time to time and shifted when desirable. Outside Kut the river picquets dealt with the snipers nearest to them. On the first floor of the D.E.C.'s house we rigged up a very convenient sniping-post with a steel loophole plate, a table, and an observing slit, and General Townshend himself had a shot or two from this spot on more than one occasion.

Two or three times early in January the aeroplanes of the Relief Force flew over Kut, bringing home to us that our friends were not very far off. On January 5th, however, a machine flew over the town after dark whose engine had a different hum to that of our aeroplanes, and it was reported by our experts as a hostile machine. This was an interesting development of the situation, but one fraught with unpleasant possibilities so far as we were concerned, for we had no anti-aircraft guns at the time, nor could we send up from Kut any aeroplanes to combat the newcomer.

January 6th brought us news of the loss of the P. & O. s.s. *Persia* with so many valuable lives. The Reuter's telegram received by wireless did not give many details, yet enough was said to show that this dastardly act was on a par with the destruction of the *Lusitania*, and the troops felt very strongly about it.

We were living at this time on tinned meat (*i.e.* corned beef and bully beef) and had been doing so for several days, the ration being half a pound of tinned meat in place of the usual pound of fresh meat. The corned beef, which was issued in large seven-pound tins, was very good indeed and much preferred to the bully beef. The issue of fresh meat had ceased for the time being on December 26th. On January 7th, however, we got some good fresh beef, since many of the fine oxen of the Heavy Battery's gun teams had been hit by bullets and had to be destroyed. This meat formed a welcome change of diet.

Large bodies of Turkish infantry were reported, on the afternoon of January 6th, to be moving down towards the Es-Sin position in preparation probably to oppose the advance of General Aylmer's force. On January 7th very distant gunfire was distinctly heard beyond the Es-Sin position downstream of Kut. This was, I believe, the first occasion on which we heard these unmistakable sounds from our friends to the east. The firing was so distinct that many of the men thought the guns must be

just beyond the Es-Sin position, but of course this was not so. I understand that it was the occasion of the battle at Shaik Sa'ad. The same day at about 7 p.m. the Turks brought very heavy rifle fire to bear on the fort and on Redoubt A, and an attack was expected, but they did not leave their trenches.

The weather soon gave signs of breaking up. Banks of cloud had appeared to the south and south-east, from which direction the wind was blowing steadily, and there had apparently been heavy rain higher up the River Tigris, for the water-level was beginning to rise slowly. In view of the fact that the Relief Force was commencing to engage the enemy this was a source of some anxiety in Kut. On January 8th the sky became completely overcast; and in the evening, to our disgust, the rain fell in torrents for some hours. Every road became a river; every trench became wellnigh impassable; men slipped and fell continually as they attempted to stagger along in the treacherous mud; and in the lines of defence around the town the troops tried in vain to get some slight shelter from the deluge under their waterproof sheets. We knew well that this heavy rain would make it impossible for the Relief Force to move until the ground dried, and that it thus added a few more days to our already much-retarded release.

A welcome selection of war gifts reached our R.E. mess about this time. These had been distributed to all units and messes by the Supply and Transport Corps in Kut from a stock in their charge, and included in our case a good supply of cheroots, cigarettes, tobacco, cakes and biscuits, much appreciated by us all.

The enemy's guns round Kut had been more or less silent for several days, and the popular opinion was that some of them had been moved away downstream to assist in resisting the attack of our Relief Force; but whether this was so, or whether it was merely that the Turks were short of ammunition, seems uncertain.

My men were busily employed all day in trying to render the roads in Kut passable for traffic—more especially No. 1 Avenue, which was a sea of mud from end to end. No proper drainage was possible, for there was no appreciable slope, so at first ditches were dug at the sides of the roads and all the mud was shovelled to one side, but this tended only to make matters worse. Eventually I found

that the only thing to do was to dig small wells in the wider parts of the roads in secluded corners, and to hire a hundred or more Arab coolies, provide them with kerosene-oil tins, and set them in gangs to bale out the ponds in the roads and empty the tins into the wells. By subsequently scraping off the soft mud thus left exposed we at last reached the brick soling of the roads, and a few hours of sun and wind rendered this passably dry. The stench when baling out these filthy ponds was unbearable—even the Arabs occasionally covered their mouths with their head-cloths. As fast as we cleared the roads the rain recommenced and we had to start the work all over again. It was a most uninteresting and monotonous job, yet it was necessary both for ease of communication in the town and for the health of our troops. For weeks my men laboured on these roads or supervised the gangs of Arabs we employed. To improve No. 1 Avenue we dismantled many superfluous brick walls of houses along the street, using the material so obtained to fill up the worst hollows, and this scheme answered fairly well.

We had the doubtful assistance of the lascars forming the crews of the three lost *L.* launches under the command of the diminutive serang of launch *L.9*—Basamiah. These men worked under my orders during most of the siege, having been lent to me by Lieutenant R. D. Merriman, R.I.M., our Marine Transport Officer, and they were nicknamed by us the "Man-apes." The dress of the "Man-apes" puzzled some of the Indian infantry soldiers who came across them while at work, and one stopped to ask my Jemadar if these were convicts and what sentences they had received. The joke was duly explained to the lascars, to their great disgust and the delight of my sappers.

A matter of some difficulty during the siege was the provision of a proper supply of water for men and animals. Communication trenches were dug down to the river at intervals along the front of the town containing hand pumps at the water's edge, and we excavated four large tanks in the ground in the palm groves north and south of Kut and lined those in the northern grove with huge tarpaulins. The upstream pump-house supplied the latter pair of tanks with water, and also supplied the water for the watering-troughs some little distance from these tanks; while the downstream pump-house did the same for the south palm-grove water-tanks and the long canvas water-

trough near them. The Turkish snipers across the river knew of this and plastered the upper pump-house with bullets every night, so that when Captain Stace's men had to repair or alter the suction pipe in the sump outside the little house, assisted by some R.F.C. men, they had a most risky job to perform. The pump-houses were places to avoid at any time, as many men found to their cost.

In my little room in Kut during January the sparrows became an awful nuisance. Fond as one may be of the feathered tribe in moderation, it is not all joy to have one's room turned into something resembling a cage in the aviary at the Zoo, with the corresponding noise and mess. Having only three walls to the room, it was impossible to exclude the little wretches, who hopped about over my bed, on my books, and among my most cherished possessions to their hearts' content.

A heavy burst of machine-gun fire was directed by the enemy on Redoubt A on January 9th; and the barbed wire in front of the redoubt was much damaged by bullets and had to be repaired. The Turks round the fort itself fired very little at this period, but contented themselves with sapping towards the fort and with flinging bombs at our sapheads and at our barbed wire. At 7.30 p.m. on January 12th the Turks brought very heavy rifle fire to bear on our first-line trenches and the redoubts for half an hour, and thereafter kept up a fairly heavy fire till 11.30 p.m. Our guns engaged the enemy's troops, who emerged from their trenches in small parties opposite Redoubts A and C, but did not attempt an attack in force. The following day the enemy exploded a mine under the barbed wire of our first-line trenches west of Redoubt C not far from the head of the 67th communication trench. He had been driving a gallery in this direction for some days. His infantry then attempted to rush in and occupy the crater; but our men were ready, and by oblique fire and the judicious use of bombs the enemy was kept out of the hole till the wire could be repaired. I heard the heavy rifle fire accompanying these small attacks and demonstrations from my camp bed, for an attack of malaria laid me low on January 10th and lasted for five days, and a number of other people were in a like predicament at about this time.

On January 14th we received news which both cheered

us up and at the same time brought home to us the difficulties to be overcome by the Relief Force. A wireless message came in announcing that General Aylmer's troops—composed of the 7th (Meerut) Indian Division from France, supported by an additional brigade and some cavalry, the whole under General Younghusband—had attacked the Turks downstream of Shaik Sa'ad on January 12th, 1916, and with great difficulty had captured their position, losing more than 4,000 men in the attack.¹ It appeared that the enemy's flanks were greatly prolonged by a large force of trained Arabs, so that the position could only be assaulted frontally by our men.

This news gave the garrison of Kut some food for reflection. Few had deemed it likely that the Turks would be sufficiently ambitious to hold a strong position so far downstream as Shaik Sa'ad, nor that they could inflict such losses on a well-equipped force straight from Europe. It seems, however, that the advance of the Relief Force was opposed by the finest troops in the Turkish army—divisions some of which, rumour said, had never been defeated, and who were, as the Turks afterwards expressed it, "indomitable." The Turkish troops opposing General Younghusband were commanded by Nuruddin, whom our troops had so often defeated. We heard that after the reverse at Shaik Sa'ad, Nuruddin was finally relieved of his command and retired into obscurity, the command of the Turkish army then passing to Khalil Pasha, who up to then had commanded an army corps. In Kut we now ceased to believe that we should be relieved by January 15th, and the end of the month appeared a more probable date. News arrived that the 3rd (Lahore) Indian Division from France was nearing Busrah, and this looked well.

From the middle of January, however, luck went steadily against us. On January 16th the south wind began to rise and the clouds came up, and the next day it was blowing half a gale from the south, with the rain falling in torrents and the whole country streaming with water, thus forming a sea of mud preventing any possibility of a further advance of General Aylmer's force for a time.

In Kut wood was becoming very scarce. The firewood necessary for cooking was almost unobtainable, and doors

¹ The actual number was 4,262.

and even windows were being impressed for the work. The question of fuel supply for the troops gradually became more and more difficult as the siege progressed. The Supply and Transport Corps collected all possible wood from abandoned or inferior houses, yet this did not suffice. A large portion of the roof of the covered bazaar was dismantled later on to feed the flames, and crude oil, of which there was a stock in the south palm grove, was issued in place of firewood for cooking operations. When coal became scarce, it was also necessary to use wood and oil fuel for the furnaces of H.M.S. *Sumana* and the *L.* launch; this work required enormous quantities of wood, and arrangements for feeding oil to the furnaces had to be improvised.

The Turks next turned their attention again to Woolpress village, and, on the night of January 19th/20th, launched a determined attack against the place. They first poured in a very heavy rifle fire, and then sprang from their trenches and rushed across the short distance to our barbed wire. Here they met our fire and were shot down with ease, so they retired, leaving twenty-one dead near our entanglement. It was noticed next morning that these Turks were carrying bundles of brushwood in addition to their arms and equipment, perhaps to assist them in crossing our barbed wire or to help them to set fire to a portion of the village if they got in.

The Relief Force troops under General Younghusband turned the Turks out of an entrenched position east of the Wadi on January 13th, and on January 21st attacked the Turkish trenches at Umm-el-Hannah (the Hannah Reach of the River Tigris), but failed to break through and suffered very heavy losses. The attack took place in atrocious weather through oceans of mud, so it was scarcely surprising that General Younghusband's gallant troops failed in their frontal assault on so strong an entrenched position on such a limited front. The comparatively small Relief Force had now lost something approaching 8,000 men, with the inevitable result that, for the time being, it was unable to advance and could only entrench itself and await reinforcements. By the respite thus obtained the Turks were enabled to dig line after line of trenches in rear of their Hannah positions before further offensive operations were possible.

The weather continued to be stormy with occasional

intervals of sunshine, and the streets of Kut were in an awful state only exceeded by the appalling condition of the trenches. Every one was more or less plastered with greasy mud.

Major H. E. Winsloe, R.E., was hit above the knee by a stray bullet on January 24th, but it could not be accurately located, for we had no X-ray apparatus in Kut, so he remained a cripple more or less for the remainder of the siege and was many weeks in the Officers' Hospital in No. 1 A Avenue. This was a great loss to our small staff of R.E. officers available for duty. Lieutenant K. A. S. Crawford, R.E., then commanding the 17th Co. 3rd Sappers and Miners, was hit by a bullet on December 17th which went through both his legs and incapacitated him for the remainder of the siege, and other R.E. officers were in hospital at different times on account of sickness almost unavoidable in our unhealthy surroundings.

Owing to the very heavy rain the level of the River Tigris had been rising rapidly, and we were confronted with a very serious problem, viz. how our defences around Kut were to be maintained both against a vigilant foe and against the threatening water. The trenches were dammed in many places where possible in anticipation of trouble, but the torrents of rain turned the whole country north of our north-west section trenches into a vast lake, and in due course the inevitable happened.

At 6.30 a.m. on January 21st, 1916, the water burst into our first-line trenches in the north-west section, in spite of every effort made to prevent such a possibility by means of dams built across the trenches at suitable places. In Redoubt D bunds (dams) were built across the trenches at the island traverses and across the ends of the support trench, and by this means the support trench remained unflooded; but the greater portion of the first-line trenches in the north-west section were soon neck deep in water and impossible to occupy. Our troops then commenced to evacuate these trenches, moving back in échelon to the middle-line trenches. Immediately our men got out of their trenches the Turks opened fire from their own, and we lost a good many men as they slipped and staggered across the swamp laden with ammunition boxes and equipment. At 8 a.m., however, the Turks, then being drowned in their turn, could stand it no longer, and had to

retire to their rear trenches while our troops in turn took their toll among the hostile ranks with well-directed rifle fire. By 10 a.m. we had completely evacuated our first-line trenches in the north-west section with the exception of the redoubts, which we held with strong picquets under cover behind the parados of the support trench in each redoubt. The opposing forces, excluding the picquets, were soon nearly a mile apart. At night the enemy usually sent up picquets to within 600 yards of our own, but a great sheet of water stretching between the opposing lines prevented any possibility of a serious assault by the Turks.

The flood extended away north-eastwards to Redoubt B. From the vicinity of this redoubt a new fire trench was now écheloned back towards the middle line, so as to provide fire to the front from each échelon face. The new trench then continued parallel to the flooded Reserve C.T. till it joined the middle-line trench by a straight length of 300 yards giving flanking fire along the middle line. Thus our first line of defence, after the flood of January 21st, extended from the fort via Redoubt A to near Redoubt B, where it dropped back by the aforesaid écheloned trench and straight trench to the middle line and so to the River Tigris north of the palm groves. The parapet of the middle-line trench was raised to a four-foot command with a twenty-foot base and an outside borrow pit, in order to resist floods and give a good field of fire. The écheloned trench is not shown on Map No. 6, as it would add too much detail to an already crowded diagram, but the reader will perhaps be able to follow its course on the map aided by the foregoing description.

It appears that, after the fall of Kut, Khalil Pasha at Baghdad stated that the Turks had intended to deliver a general assault on the defences of Kut during January 1916. The scheme of attack involved a first assault on the fort by eight battalions, and, when this attack had drawn our troops towards the fort, sixteen battalions were to attack our north-west section defences near the Tigris and take Kut by storm. Field-Marshal von der Goltz, however, strongly deprecated such action, which, he pointed out, would entail enormous losses of men which the Turks could ill afford. He advised a policy of investment by strongly entrenched positions, relying on starving our garrison before help could arrive, and in his

prediction of events the German general proved to be remarkably far-sighted. His advice was adopted by the Turks, and shortly afterwards the flood prevented the possibility of an assault in force on Kut.

On January 26th, 1916, we were still eating the oxen of the Heavy Battery gun teams—and very tough some of them were—though a few units had commenced to consume an issue of horseflesh on January 24th. Flour was becoming scarcer, and tobacco was increasingly difficult to obtain. The weather had become truly awful, there was usually a high wind with frequent heavy storms of rain, and the cold was bitter, especially at night.

General Townshend, on January 26th, issued a very complete and lengthy communiqué which will be found verbatim in Appendix G. It well repays perusal. He commenced by announcing General Aylmer's failure¹ of a few days previously at Hannah, and added that he confidently expected to be relieved during the first half of February. He went on to explain his reasons for holding Kut, and quoted his application before the Battle of Ctesiphon for an increased force with which to assault the Turkish position. He concluded his communiqué with an exhortation to his troops to husband their ammunition.

This open statement of affairs was much appreciated by all ranks and made each man resolve to hang on to the end, however long our relief might be in arriving in Kut. General Townshend also stated that there was sufficient food in Kut for eighty-four days, not including 3,000 animals which might be eaten. This statement became important in the light of subsequent events, for it fixed the limit of rations, exclusive of horseflesh, at *April 19th, 1916.*

The succeeding few days of January were comparatively uneventful. There was little shelling, and no likelihood of an assault by the enemy, and the chief source of anxiety was the level of the river flood. On January 29th the less valuable horses began to provide the British troops and some of the Indian troops with meat, but a large proportion of the Indian troops (including most of the Mohammedans) refused to eat it. I was very agreeably surprised when I first tasted horseflesh. Except

¹ General Aylmer was in supreme command, though General Young-husband commanded the troops in the attack.

for a slightly novel flavour it was quite as good as the beef obtained usually in India, though in no way comparable to English beef. Some of our mess were slightly prejudiced against it at first—chiefly on sentimental grounds—but hunger soon altered their views, and all came to enjoy the food in a remarkably short time.

The weather at the end of January was very cold but not so wet as before. In the early hours of the morning a temperature of 21° F. was registered one day, and when my men set forth at 8 a.m. with their picks and shovels for their daily work on the roads, there was a film of ice over every shallow pool of water. A temperature of eleven degrees of frost in a misty swamp when following on the scorching heat of the Mesopotamian summer is trying to the constitution.

On the last day of January one of the British aeroplanes from General Aylmer's force dropped a small parcel into Kut for the first time attached to a long streamer of white cloth. It was a pretty sight to see the parcel come fluttering down, and by timing its fall I found that it took over twenty-five seconds to reach the ground.

The end of January 1916 found the 6th Division and 30th Brigade still in Kut, hopeful in spite of previous disappointments, fairly fit, plentifully supplied with ammunition though restricted in its use, and with still sufficient food to support life with moderate comfort. The floods of the Tigris were now a greater source of anxiety than the attacks of the Turks.

CHAPTER XIII

FEBRUARY 1916 IN KUT

It should not be imagined that the garrison of beleaguered Kut was prepared to sit down within its defences when the long-expected troops under General Aylmer appeared over the eastern horizon. Far from it. During February 1916 a number of schemes were prepared by the General Staff in Kut for active co-operation with the Relief Force when it should come into touch with our isolated force. These schemes were indicated by the letters A to E and embraced every possible contingency. Schemes A and B included a sortie in force across our trenches west of the fort *via* the sandhills, and bridges were constructed or prepared for such localities as required them for the passage of guns; a large number of light wooden gangways were also made up to enable men to cross any obstacles, such as barbed wire, with celerity.

A number of telegrams were exchanged with General Aylmer relative to the construction of bridges across the Tigris and across the Shatt-al-Hai Channel by my Bridging Train assisted by the 3rd Sappers and Miners. The great difficulty in these schemes was the scarcity of bridging material. Thirty mahelas (all more or less leaky) were available in Kut, but baulks and planks for a roadway were practically unobtainable, though a good number of mahela masts fifty feet or more in length could be unshipped and used to support a roadway. It was found impracticable to bridge the Tigris anywhere except at the site of the old Arab bridge a mile below the fort, and this only provided the Relief Force could bring up 800 planks with it. Since the Turks held positions far down the Tigris, this planking could not be sent up by river; and, as cart transport was insufficient, a bridge of any sort across the Tigris, to enable the Relief Force to march into Kut, had to be ruled out of the question.

Arrangements were next put in hand for a bridge across the Shatt-al-Hai Channel, which was roughly 150 yards wide when in flood, but of no great depth. I prepared twenty-nine trestles from all the squared timber in Kut (chiefly from the fort), varying in height from two feet to nine feet, in case trestles were required, and also twenty-four baulks of pontoon pattern to assist the construction work, but the real problem was the planking. I suggested the front doors of the Arab houses in the town as a substitute for planks, and went round every street and alley in Kut, painting large white numbers on all suitable doors and removing a few at once for a practical test of their strength. Two hundred strong doors were thus marked, to the great disgust of the Arab owners, though they were promised, and subsequently received, their compensation in cash. As a test I constructed a short length of bridge east of the town and ran a 15-pr. field gun several times across the decking of doors, the latter being connected together by small dog-spikes made out of the vertical bars of Arab railings. The result was eminently satisfactory, so all the 200 doors were collected in the R.E. Field Park, and this solved the problem of planking for the possible Shatt-al-Hai bridge.

A bridge across the Shatt-al-Hai Channel nevertheless would not enable General Aylmer's troops to reach the town of Kut if they succeeded in breaking through the portion of the Turkish position at Es-Sin, which was situated on the right bank of the Tigris. We could, of course, ferry troops across the wide river by means of the *Sumana*, the *L.* launch, and our available barges; but, to supplement this, preparations were ordered for a series of three or more flying-bridges near No. 8 Picquet (*vide* Map No. 6). The Bridging Train accordingly busied itself in making up great wooden drums, on which was wound all the available two-inch and one-inch steel wire cable, and in preparing blocks, pickets, travellers, and a quantity of other gear. We also designed rafts, of two small mahelas each, to run along the steel cables to form the required flying-bridges when the cables had been pulled across the river and fixed.

Six small mahelas were selected for the raft construction and grouped opposite No. 5 Picquet downstream of Kut, and a large quantity of the prepared material was stacked in the southern palm grove. Sub-

sequently, on dark nights, four of the little mahelas were loaded up with a complete outfit of these stores so as to be ready for towing down at any instant to the selected sites for the immediate construction of two flying-bridges. A flying-bridge could not be operated across so wide a river as the Tigris if there was any wind, but our Staff was fully aware of this fact, and I arranged to rig up a sham flying-bridge if the weather was bad, to draw the enemy's fire on to it and away from our real ferries. This sham affair I designed by arranging to place a drum of artillery-gun wheels inside one mahela where men could sit and wind themselves and the mahela along the cable by revolving the drum while under cover beneath a decking of doors. Fortunately for us, we never had to offer ourselves thus as a moving target for the Turkish artillery.

Every scheme for co-operation with the Relief Force was worked out in complete detail by our Staff and by the various unit commanders; the necessary orders were issued, and all officers knew exactly what their duties would be if called upon to take part in any scheme.

No offensive operations were possible from Kut until the Relief Force came within touch of the place. Kut was now surrounded by a maze of hostile trenches and redoubts, often strengthened by barbed wire, and backed up by well-protected artillery at a safe distance in rear. Any attempt by the garrison to break out and attack the Turks—unless the latter were badly shaken or on the point of retirement—would have entailed enormous losses to our force, even if successful at the time. Such losses would have so reduced our already small garrison as to render it an easy prey to the large bodies of Turks which could probably be brought against it in the field, and it would have been too small to hold the defences of Kut if it was unsuccessful and had to retire again into the defended area. All that was possible, therefore, was to remain patiently in Kut and await the turn of events; and meanwhile to prepare for every possible contingency in full consultation with General Aylmer, who then commanded the Relief Force.

Every day after February 1st, 1916, our force became less mobile as the horses were killed to provide food for the men; and the troops themselves grew gradually weaker owing to their reduced rations, and less numerous

as our hospitals slowly filled with wounded and sick. Each day that passed, therefore, saw us less capable of taking the field as a striking force against a sufficiently fed, well armed, and numerous foe. In preventing that foe from capturing Kut and in thus denying him the use of the Tigris below Kut for his shipping, the force in Kut was carrying out all that could reasonably be expected of it under the circumstances.

The difficulties under which the Turkish forces opposing General Aylmer must have laboured with regard to their supplies of food and munitions will be readily apparent to military readers if they will refer to Map No. 8. The enemy had only five large river-vessels available for the transport of materials and stores from Baghdad to his camp upstream of Kut at Shumran, viz. the steamships *Busrah*, *Baghdad*, *Burhanieh*, *Khalifa*, and *Hamadieh*. There were also the tug *Pioneer*, the launch *Takrit*, and a couple of *L.* launches captured from our retreating troops. The voyage downstream from Baghdad to Shumran (a distance of 200 miles) would take one and a half days to accomplish, while the journey upstream would require say three days, allowing for possible delays. Including the time necessary for loading and unloading the barges alongside the ship, it is improbable that each ship would complete more than one trip to Baghdad and back from Shumran each week. A maximum of five shiploads of material (neglecting troops) is not much per week to support an army of at least 30,000 men, including the force investing Kut.

Again, from Map No. 8 it will be seen that from Shumran to the Hannah positions was a land journey of from twenty-five to thirty miles over rough unmetalled tracks, frequently almost impassable through mud, and finally through some miles of trench. The Turks employed very large camel convoys and pony-cart convoys for most of this work, but any one versed in the management of convoys will admit that the difficulties of maintaining an adequate supply of material, food, and ammunition to the Turkish troops at Hannah from Shumran must indeed have been very great. The Turkish wounded from downstream were usually removed to Shumran on transport camels returning without loads, and must have suffered greatly during the long journey.

The enemy was assisted in maintaining his advanced

position down the Tigris by various factors, some of which may be mentioned here. Firstly, the Turk is extremely hardy, and can thrive on rations which would reduce the European to despair—a few large biscuits as hard as iron, a handful of dates, and perhaps a little meat commandeered from the local Arabs, suffice to keep him fit and plump. Hence, the food-convoy work could be reduced to a minimum. Secondly, the Turk, by the most ruthless discipline and reprisals, knows how to intimidate the Arab villager and force him to work as he never worked before, and to produce all his available resources of wheat or cattle. Thirdly, the great delay in the arrival of our Relief Force from Ali-al-Gharbi doubtless enabled the enemy to accumulate large stores of ammunition below the Es-Sin position in preparation for future battles. Nevertheless, making every allowance for all these advantages, there is no doubt that the Turks accomplished a fine piece of work in maintaining their large advanced forces so far below Kut until the surrender of that town at the end of April 1916.

In Baghdad itself the Turks had a well-equipped arsenal from which they could turn out rifles and small-arm ammunition; but, as far as is known, most of their artillery ammunition had to be obtained from Constantinople along some 800 miles of railway, over two mountain passes, and across 400 miles of desert country, or else down the tortuous channels of the Euphrates River from their railhead, and thence across the barren wastes to the Tigris. Truly no light task, and all the more wonderful to any who have had a chance of seeing the slipshod Turkish transport actually at work in time of war, as we of the 6th Division unfortunately have had.

During January and the following months the most elaborate precautions were taken in Kut to prevent the flooding of the town itself and of the area around it enclosed within our defensible line. Flooding was possible both from the River Tigris, when it reached a sufficiently high level, and from the flooded areas of land north of our trenches. To exclude this flood water a high flood bund (dam) was built along the middle line formed of a brick-in-mud wall 4 feet 6 inches high in front of the existing trench and acting as a retaining wall to a heavy filling of earth in front of it with a forward slope of one in four. A bund from two to three feet high followed

the left bank of the river completely round the loop from the north-west section trenches to the fort, and many other bunds were made to exclude the water.

The work of construction and consolidation, in which we employed large gangs of Arabs, had necessarily to be carried out at night to be unseen by the enemy's snipers and gunners. At dusk each day three hundred or more coolies would commence to assemble near Spink Road and would sit down in gangs, each under a headman, to be counted by Lieutenant W. Snell, 1/6th Devons (T.), who was in charge of the coolie gangs. The men would next be issued with picks and shovels and marched off under an R.E. officer or N.C.O., who placed them along the required alignment and set them to work. Occasionally the enemy's guns opened suddenly with shrapnel, and all the coolies would immediately throw down their tools and run for their lives. It was thus a matter of some uncertainty as to how much work would be completed on any night. Each coolie was paid a rupee for his evening's work of four hours or so—a good rate of pay considering that casualties were comparatively few.

The bunds answered very well when the high floods came, and certainly saved Kut and its surroundings from inundation. The banks were carefully patrolled at regular hours during the floods, every defect being remedied at once. The coolies working on the bund along the river-front at Kut itself were much exposed to shrapnel (for the river-front was frequently swept at night by the enemy's artillery), but eventually an excellent bank was finished within a few yards of the fronts of the houses and afforded complete protection to the town from any flood except one of exceptional height.

The Turks also did a great deal of work at night of the same description in their endeavours to protect their trenches from being flooded and to prevent ground which they required from becoming useless. Our artillery helped to check the work of the Turkish gangs just as the enemy's guns interfered with our own labour, but we had less ammunition to waste on doubtful targets than the enemy, and in this he had a great advantage. It should also be remembered that when the Turks abandoned the idea of taking Kut by storm it was actually to their advantage to allow the ground around our defences to become flooded, since they thus placed an additional obstacle

in the way of a sortie by the garrison and could then afford to enclose Kut with a less number of men; the enemy also could always shift his camps to higher unflooded tracts when occasion demanded, and all that concerned him seriously was the problem of keeping open his lines of communication. The garrison of Kut was in a very different position; no higher ground was available, and all flooded areas around Kut made it more difficult to cooperate with the Relief Force.

On February 1st, 1916, the general condition of the garrison was good, but the food question required very careful handling. The bread issued was no longer white but brownish in colour, being made of two-thirds fine flour and one-third atta (coarse flour). Still, it was quite good and nourishing. Butter was becoming very scarce, so in our R.E. mess we decided that no butter should be allowed for *chota-hazri*, lunch or dinner, but solely for breakfast and tea, and then in moderate quantities only. We had entirely run out of sugar, and only the coarsest types of English tobacco could be obtained on payment from the Supply and Transport Corps. I made a good mixture of birdseye tobacco with a little navy cut, and though it was frightfully strong it was better than nothing. Cigarettes of European manufacture were unobtainable, so the Arab variety was adopted by every one. This consists of a long paper tube partly filled with tobacco dust and closed at the end away from the mouthpiece—a very poor form of smoke, and always liable to drop burning pieces of ash on to one's clothes, to the speedy destruction of the inflammable khaki. The R.E. mess managed to get hold of six bottles of whisky. This was a great treat for many a chilled and weary officer returning from night work, and most conducive to a cheerful atmosphere in the mess after dinner.

Little happened in Kut during the very early days of February. The Turks continued to dig like moles, but were careful of their gun ammunition except for some shelling on February 4th and 5th. H.M.S. *Sumana*, under Lieutenant L. C. P. Tudway, R.N., and the *L.* launch or motor-boats under Lieutenant R. D. Merriman, R.I.M., continued to do excellent work in their nightly ferrying operations between Kut and Woolpress village. When any of these vessels commenced to move from their moorings it was invariably a signal for a burst of fire from the

Turkish snipers near the Shatt-al-Hai Channel, but the rations were always ferried safely across to the garrison of Woolpress village, and wounded men or stores brought back to Kut. During high floods, when the current was very rapid, H.M.S. *Sumana* had to do all the ferrying work, as the *L.* launch was not sufficiently powerful to manage the steel barges. The motor-boats continued to do useful work in taking across messages, mails, or a few men. Lieutenant Merriman in his little motor-boat had many a risky job to perform on the wide river at night, and most ably did he complete the work, in spite of the best efforts of the Turkish marksmen. To reduce the noise of the motor engine Captain Winfield-Smith, R.F.C., fitted a numnah (felt) box over the engine of one boat, with good results.

On February 4th our only three camels in Kut were slain to provide meat for the Indian troops, so I got twenty-nine pounds of meat for my twenty-nine men, who had been without it for some time. They had a great feed of camel's meat and said it tasted good, but I believe the taste is too strong for a European palate. The men still refused to touch horseflesh, as did most of the other Mohammedans of good class, but they had no scruples with regard to camels. All the remaining battery oxen were now being slaughtered for food, so we got a little more beef. Such magnificent animals they were to waste on such a purpose; but still the oxen were not so valuable as the field artillery horses and chargers, and one or other had to go.

On the day previous to this an aeroplane from the Relief Force had dropped several letters for General Townshend, and also the Christmas number of *The Times* weekly edition, which was most interesting to the officers who saw it, for it contained accounts of the Battle of Ctesiphon from the Turkish point of view. Any newspapers dropped by our aeroplanes were circulated as a rule to the different brigades after General Townshend and his Staff had seen them, and the news contained in them was eagerly scanned by all and sundry. The Turkish account of the Battle of Ctesiphon was surprisingly accurate on the whole, but written of course to convey the idea that the British force was completely defeated and quite demoralised.

On February 6th tinned milk was becoming scarce.

Fresh milk could not be obtained as a rule except for the patients in hospital, and the milk so obtained was considered sometimes to be of more than doubtful origin. In the R.E. mess we had no sugar and very few eggs, hence puddings were difficult to make. The jam ration for officers was becoming minute, and the craving for more sugar first began to make itself felt.

We had been informed that General Aylmer's concentration for a further advance would be complete on February 6th, 1916, but the rain came on again on this day and we knew that a further delay was probable. News came also that another Turkish division had arrived from Constantinople, bringing the total strength of the enemy to about 30,000 men. On February 8th and 9th we heard heavy firing downstream, either from General Aylmer's artillery or from the Turkish guns shelling his advancing troops—probably the former, as the sound carried better upstream. At 6 p.m. on February 9th heavy rain again fell and put an end to any attack downstream, and also to our hopes of seeing our friends within a few days. This perpetual alternation of hope and disappointment was one of the most trying features of the five months' siege of Kut.

General Townshend issued a short communiqué on February 9th (which I have not included in Appendix G), in which he stated that a complete British division was about to leave Egypt at once for Busrah and would join the Relief Force as quickly as possible. Much speculation was rife in the garrison as to how this would affect the probable date of our relief. In view of the recent Turkish reinforcement and the enormous losses in men sustained by the force under General Aylmer in the battles at Shaik Sa'ad and the abortive attempt at Hannah, it seemed quite possible that our relief might be delayed till the British division (in this case the 13th Division) had reached the Relief Force. Supposing that the division reached Busrah, and completed its concentration there by February 24th, it could hardly be expected to arrive complete below Hannah before March 16th, in which case our relief would probably be delayed till about March 20th. This reflection tended to dishearten us to an appreciable extent, but many were of opinion that General Aylmer would not wait for the advent of the British division before making a further effort, and this opinion was adopted

by the majority, I think, when taking into consideration the probable floods of the River Tigris.

On the evening of February 11th my men were busy after dark dismantling a ruined house at the river end of No. 2 Avenue, when suddenly the unwelcome "brpp, brpp, brpp" of a salvo of three Turkish 40-pounders sounded from upstream, followed in a few seconds by the shells. We all ran for cover, and the shells passed close over our heads, followed soon by three more. I knew that one shell had fallen near the D.E.C.'s house, so went to investigate. I found it had passed just over the roof of my house and, falling at an angle of thirty degrees, had hit the base of the wall of the D.E.C.'s courtyard. It had gone through the wall and had exploded in our little matting kitchen, from which Stace's bearer Narain had just fled in time. The whole place was an extraordinary litter of broken stove fittings, pots, dust, and eatables, but not a soul was hurt. A wonderful piece of luck, for the kitchen was usually filled with servants after dark. The destruction of eatables in this accident was a sad loss to our mess.

On this same day the artillery of the Relief Force was distinctly heard once again, but it was deemed to be only a deliberate bombardment in progress—probably when the guns were registering on future targets in view of the next offensive.

The weather had become fine again. It was very cold on February 13th (incidentally my birthday), and in the R.E. mess we were sitting at breakfast at 9.15 a.m., when we heard the hum of an aeroplane engine very distinctly and then a loud explosion. Every one ran out of the mess-room to see the machine, and to our surprise we saw that it was a dark-coloured aeroplane flying at not more than 3,000 feet altitude. Just at this moment a peculiar whining noise began and gradually increased in intensity, pulsating in a curious way. The noise was followed by a violent crash and a column of dark smoke which rose in the town near by. Then it dawned upon us that we were being bombed for the first time by a hostile aeroplane. Rifle shots rang out all over the town in answer to the bombs, but this of course was useless waste of ammunition and was not allowed in subsequent raids. It appears that the pilot of the monoplane was a German of considerable daring whom we promptly nicknamed "Fritz," and in this his first raid on Kut he flew particularly low,

expecting that he would take us by surprise. He did indeed surprise the garrison, but did not do much damage in this his first effort.

Elaborate arrangements were put in hand at once to deal with hostile aircraft. Gongs consisting of gun-cartridge cases were hung up in various places, and there was always an observer on the look-out for the first sign of Fritz rising off the ground four miles away upstream at his aerodrome on the left bank of the Tigris River below Shumran. As soon as the aeroplane rose, the gongs were sounded and every one was on the *qui vive*. Fritz would then rise in spirals—a tiny speck in the distant sky—and in a few minutes would be coming along downstream, usually on a slanting course from the right bank to which he had crossed when rising. The menacing aeroplane would rapidly grow larger and larger to the eye, and the hum of its engine grew distinct as it swooped down upon Kut. Then, when it was getting close, the muffled roar of a field gun would break the stillness, followed shortly by a little white plume of smoke in the sky, seemingly far from the racing Turkish monoplane, but very difficult to judge correctly. Another and another shell would shriek into the sky and explode far up in the blue, but still the aeroplane would race along untouched. Then our group of anti-aircraft maxims would start to chatter like a lot of magpies, belching forth a stream of 3,000 bullets a minute into the sky, yet Fritz would continue on his way undaunted, fly along the line of Roads C and D, wheel about, and return over our house and upstream again to his lair in the distant north-west as darkness fell. And as he traversed the town his four bombs would come whining down in rapid succession, each followed by the familiar crash and geyser of dark smoke, telling often of a shattered house and mangled bodies in the poorer quarters of the town. Weeping and wailing crowds of Arab women, congregated around the wrecked house, soon guided the Arab or Somali police to the scene of the disaster, from which the injured were hurriedly removed to hospital and the dead prepared for burial in the Arab manner.

After some discussion and careful examination of houses hit by the 30-lb. T.N.T. bombs used by the Turks, it was decided that the roof of a mud hut was sufficient to cause the bomb to detonate, so that any one on the ground-floor of a double-storied building was more or less safe from the

effects of such a missile, except perhaps from falling débris. All troops were warned to go into double-storied houses where possible whenever a hostile aeroplane came near them.

The arrangements for bombarding the raiding aeroplanes were interesting, for everything had to be improvised from any material available. On the roof of the 18th Brigade Staff Office in No. 1 Avenue (see Map No. 5), and on the adjacent Royal Flying Corps house and another building, six maxims were mounted on large wooden barrels. The design of the mounting in each case included a barrel perforated at the ends and transfixed in a vertical position by an iron bar which was fixed in a wooden stand, and about which consequently the barrel could revolve, like a reel on a bobbin. The bottom of the barrel was well greased to reduce friction when turning on the wooden stand. A machine-gun tripod was then lashed securely on to the barrel, its two forward legs spread horizontally across the barrel top and the third leg fastened vertically down the side of the barrel. The maxim on this tilted stand could be elevated up to the vertical position, and could be traversed by turning the barrel. The system worked fairly well, but accurate firing was difficult and the feeding-in of the cartridge belt required care at great elevations. The correct method of firing at an aeroplane—by sending streams of bullets in small spirals around the hostile machine—could not be employed with this rough-and-ready mounting. Nevertheless, from Turkish accounts, we actually put a bullet through Fritz's thigh one day, though, to our sorrow, he was not forced to descend within our lines.

In addition to the machine guns an anti-aircraft gun was rapidly evolved from a 13-pr. Q.F. field gun—one of the two guns of S Battery R.H.A. which were left behind in Kut when the 6th Cavalry Brigade left us. A large circular pit was dug with a still deeper trench encircling it. In the centre of the pit a wooden pile was securely driven, and the carriage of the gun (minus wheels) was slung to the top of the pile by tackle, while the trail of the carriage rested on the bottom of the pit. The 13-pr. gun on its suspended carriage could then elevate up to a very high angle, but could traverse only ninety degrees at first, though this was later altered to an all-round traverse. The Turks subsequently said that Fritz's

machine was twice hit by some shrapnel bullets from this our only anti-aircraft gun, which was mounted north of Kut behind a palm grove, as shown on Map No. 6.

On February 13th a quantity of grain was found in the town, in many cases carefully concealed by the Arab owners; this was collected and paid for at a liberal rate. A flour-mill, operated by a 16-h.p. Hornsby oil engine, had already been arranged near the Turkish bath building by Captain S. C. Winfield-Smith, R.F.C., so that grain could be crushed rapidly for issue as flour, or bread, to the troops. Much credit is due to Captain Winfield-Smith for his skilful management of the flour-mills, which were of the greatest value during the siege, and had to be rigged up with inferior material under most difficult circumstances. A large quantity of grain was also obtained from Mr. Tod, the local agent of Messrs. Lynch Brothers, and an additional mill with another Hornsby oil engine was rigged up next door to the other mill and did good work. Later in the siege these flour-mills and the precious stores of grain were most carefully guarded by British sentries, and Emergency Road A through the mill enclosures was closed to ordinary traffic.

Mules were now being slaughtered for rations, and the R.E. mess tried a mule stew, much to the satisfaction of the eight members, for the stew was excellent, and the meat, after being properly hung, was preferable to horse meat. The whole of the remaining tinned stores in our mess were checked and divided up so as to last seven weeks in case the siege lasted so long. This meant a considerable reduction of our daily allowance of butter, small though it already was.

In the palm groves in Kut during February 1916 there was a very large number of starlings, and at dusk these little birds clustered thickly on the palm fronds, making a din which was absolutely deafening. Such sportsmen in Kut as had 12-bore shot guns were wont to issue forth at sunset and, having carefully aligned their weapons on convenient boughs, would let fly and bring down a shower of birds to be collected by watchful orderlies below. Thirty-seven starlings in two shots was the record bag! They were very good when served up nicely roasted, and even sparrows came not amiss. It was necessary to behead the starlings immediately they were shot, or otherwise they tasted bitter when cooked, and it was

found that they required cooking as soon as possible after they were shot, for they did not improve by being kept. Just before dark a regular fusillade could be heard in the south palm grove in particular—not very sporting shooting, no doubt, but cartridges were none too plentiful and food was scarce.

The troops were attacked by dysentery at this period, and almost every one in Kut suffered more or less at times from milder forms of the complaint, largely due no doubt to the quantity of silt in the river-water. In our mess we always filtered our drinking-water roughly through one of the great conical Arab jars of earthenware intended for this purpose, which we kept on a wooden stand in the courtyard, and the water was also boiled. The filtration through the earthenware jar was only intended, of course, to remove the silt suspended in the water, and we relied on the subsequent boiling to destroy any bacteria.

On February 17th, 1916, General Townshend issued another short communiqué to the troops (not included in Appendix G), in which he stated that General Aylmer intended to await the arrival of the British division from Egypt before he made his next attempt to relieve Kut. This news was not unexpected. Provided that the food-supplies in Kut admitted of it, there was no reason why our garrison should not safely wait for several weeks in order to ensure that the Relief Force should be so strong when it made its next effort that the result would be certain victory for our arms. But—and a very big “but,” too—what was to be expected regarding the approaching floods of the River Tigris and the additional positions which the Turks might construct in the interim to bar the advance of the Relief Force? We also saw in the telegrams that it had now leaked out in England that Kut was actually surrounded and undergoing a strenuous siege, for, curiously enough, this news was not published at home until we had been cut off for many weeks.

General Townshend was honoured by a message from His Majesty the King-Emperor on February 17th. The message ran as follows: “I, together with your fellow-countrymen, continue to follow with admiration the gallant fighting of the troops under your command against great odds, and every effort is being made to support your splendid resistance. George R.I.” We

were much pleased and cheered by this gracious message from our Sovereign.

Things had been very quiet for several days, as the enemy was too busy downstream to waste much time on Kut itself, except to shell us occasionally during the afternoons. On February 19th, however, not a single shot was fired after midday and there was no afternoon bombardment. This absolute cessation of hostilities caused anxiety in Kut, and General Townshend issued a statement in which he said that he mistrusted this silence and ordered the whole garrison to be prepared for a general assault at night, so the troops slept in the trenches in their equipment with their rifles beside them, but nothing occurred after all.

On the same day Brigadier-General Hamilton, commanding the 18th Brigade, was wounded when on the roof of his office in Kut by a stray bullet from a sniper during a raid by a Turkish aeroplane, but luckily the bullet only passed through the muscles of his back and he was able to return to duty in a few weeks. Meanwhile, Colonel U. W. Evans took over the command of the brigade. Whenever a Turkish aeroplane flew over Kut the snipers across the river opened a hot fire on the roofs of the houses, aiming at the supposed positions of our anti-aircraft guns. About this time a good deal of artillery bombardment was heard in the downstream direction, but no news arrived of what was happening. On February 20th our anti-aircraft 13-pr. gun fired its first round at a hostile aeroplane—an unpleasant surprise to Fritz or one of his brother-airmen, though the machine was not hit; still, it was noticeable after this that the enemy's aeroplanes were very wary in approaching the town.

Kut was bubbling with excitement on February 22nd, 1916, and the whole garrison was ordered to stand to arms, for it was expected that General Aylmer was about to launch an attack in force. It was actually the occasion of a demonstration to induce the Turks to evacuate Hannah. The troops in Kut remained in a state of "complete readiness" throughout the day, as the orders expressed it; but in the evening we were told to break off, and we then reverted, as some wit put it, to a state of "partial unreadiness." A heavy bombardment could be heard in progress downstream during the day, but we did not know what was happening. I was very busy at this time

making up the trestles for the possible bridge for the Shatt-al-Hai Channel in order to be able to bridge that obstacle at short notice when required to do so. In the evening news reached us by Reuter's telegrams that the great fortress of Erzerum (or Erzeroum) had fallen to our allies the Russians, with enormous captures of guns and munitions, at which our troops were much elated, and which our Turkish prisoners in Kut flatly refused to believe, for they affirmed that Erzerum could never be captured.

Kerosene oil was becoming very scarce and could only be used in very small quantities for lamps. The men were supplied with crude oil for burning, but this gave little light and a very smoky flame. Our mess had in hand a good stock of dates which were dealt out to us for lunch and tea; never did we more appreciate the large amount of sugar in this useful fruit which supplied to some extent a much-felt want in our daily food at this time. Whisky was altogether finished and practically unobtainable, so plain Tigris water took the place of whisky and water. Jam was still issued by the Supply and Transport Corps at the rate of a 1-lb. tin every second day for our mess of eight members. If the reader will make the required simple calculation, he will find that this works out at 1 oz. of jam per head per day, but he can have no idea of how very minute 1 oz. of jam appears to a hungry man in search of something sweet unless he has found himself in like circumstances to ours. Eggs were so scarce in the town that they could only be purchased for the sick and for the men in hospital, and even these could not get many. Our own chickens had been gradually stolen till only three remained, yet the survivors continued to present the mess with at least one egg a day, which was better than nothing at all.

Owing to the continued refusal of most of the Indian troops to eat horseflesh, scurvy had made its appearance amongst them; the hospitals were full of previously able-bodied soldiers, now mere bags of skin and bone and with all their former energy gone. It was a gruesome sight which greeted one when passing along the hospital bazaar road near the end of No. 2 Avenue, where these invalids lay about in the sunshine on their blankets.

On February 26th, while my men were working in the R.E. Field Park at noon, we saw overhead four of our

British aeroplanes—distinguishable by the bullseyes on their wings—flying upstream towards the Turkish camp at Shumran. After an interval great fountains of earth and smoke shot up in various places near the Turkish aerodrome and beyond it, and we knew to our great joy that the enemy was being paid back in his own coin by bombs from our aeroplanes. In time the fountains of smoke ceased and the machines faded into the distant blue sky. I do not know what damage was done, but the episode was very pleasing to us after our recent experiences. Near the Turkish camp at Shumran was the enemy's bridge of gissara boats, brought thither, I believe, from the Diyalah River near Baghdad; and downstream of this bridge lay the captured *Firefly*, kept there apparently more for show than anything else. We hoped that our aeroplanes would endeavour to bomb the bridge and the *Firefly*, but I do not think they ever did so. The Turks tried unsuccessfully to "jamb" our wireless messages from Kut by means of the wireless installation aboard the captured *Firefly*; still, the *Firefly's* installation doubtless enabled the enemy to tap some of our messages, and on at least one occasion when this was suspected a false message was sent to Kut from downstream for the benefit of the Turks. General Aylmer's guns still continued to thunder in the far distance. The noise was particularly noticeable on February 26th, but it did not seem to be of sufficient volume to indicate an attack.

Our aeroplanes had lately brought up several English and Indian newspapers, which were duly passed round the various messes and read and re-read. From these we gathered that in England and India the populace was at last fully alive to our plight. On February 29th, also, news arrived by Reuter's telegrams that a great battle was then raging around Verdun in France, where the Germans were carrying out an immense offensive, but with no very great success. A blizzard in England was another item of news.

February 29th saw the end of a short spell of fine weather, during which we had hoped day by day that perhaps General Aylmer might advance, and now the rain again descended upon us to dash our hopes and reduce our spirits. If ever there was a virtue needed in Kut during these winter months, it was Patience with a capital P. The Turkish aeroplanes on this day seemed a bit out of

sorts. There were now three of them, but all were doing short trial flights only, and one was seen to alight very badly. Fritz, however, was a most skilful pilot, and his confrères were quite capable, so unfortunately the machines were soon in good trim once more. I believe the Turks had several smashes with their aeroplanes, and at one time a hostile machine was seen standing on its head on the distant plain apparently badly damaged.

General Baratoff, commanding the Russian force in Persia, had sent several messages direct to General Townshend of late, and the latter now issued a short communiqué to the troops in Kut in which he quoted a message from the Russian commander, who said that he had entered Kirmanshah and "hoped soon to shake hands with General Townshend in Mesopotamia."

Two sweepstakes were got up in Kut on February 28th (at Rs.5 per ticket) on the date on which the first ship of the Relief Force would pass the fort. One was started by Lieutenant A. B. Matthews, R.E., and the other by Lieutenant Clifton, East Surrey Regiment, who was General Townshend's aide-de-camp. In the sweepstake run by Lieutenant Matthews the "field" was drawn by Major-General Sir C. Melliss, and this ticket was known as "Mosul," that being considered as our probable destination if Kut was never relieved. The result of the drawing caused some amusement, for Sir Charles was the last man one would expect to see in Mosul in such circumstances; but alas! he won that sweepstake after all, and I understand that the money was handed over by his order to some suitable charity.

Food continued to be much the same. On the last day of February, however, we had a great delicacy in our mess—a *mule's tongue in aspic*. It was really first class and disappeared in less than no time. We also concocted a fairly good pudding from atta, breadcrumbs, gur (coarse sugar), dates, date juice, ginger, and a little fat—not very sweet, but quite eatable. As a great treat we each got a ration of twelve cheap cheroots issued by the Supply and Transport Corps, who had discovered some boxes of cheroots three days before. This was a luxury indeed after a long bout of inferior and strong tobacco of the birdseye or coolie-plug brands. We smoked those cheroots to the last inch, and that last inch was put by some people into their pipes, so that nothing was wasted.

The enemy's guns around Kut continued silent more or less to the end of the month, probably on account of a lack of ammunition, but possibly because some had been sent downstream for a time. In any case things were quiet around the beleaguered town. So ended February 1916 in Kut.



MAJOR-GENERAL SIR CHARLES MELLISS, V.C., K.C.B. (RIGHT).

CHAPTER XIV

EVENTS IN MARCH 1916

AT the beginning of March 1916 few people who had visited Kut in the piping times of peace would have recognised the river-front and the formerly populous and shady bazaar street. Gone was the customary crowd of ships and mahelas; gone the throngs of noisy Arabs; the pent roofs of the front bazaar streets were either falling down or had been removed *en bloc*; the doors and windows facing the river had been bricked up; great walls blocked the river ends of all the main streets; the whole front was pitted with shell holes, and all the bazaar houses near the river were more or less in ruins.

On March 1st, 1916, in Kut the morning passed uneventfully enough, and it seemed as though the usual daily routine would continue uninterrupted; but this was not to be. At 4 p.m., when the enemy was wont to try a few deliberate salvos at our well-protected batteries, he altered his customary procedure by suddenly opening fire from every gun in every gun-position around Kut—about thirty-two guns in all at that time. The big 'Lizzies' hummed and crashed, the field-gun shells whizzed and banged, and in the middle of the show old 'Fanny' (with the impolite prefix)—the antediluvian mortar close upstream of Woolpress village—lobbed her extraordinary projectile into our northern palm grove.

This freak among cannon was first seen by our force near High Wall at the Battle of Ctesiphon, where we captured it, but decided not to destroy it, as I have previously related. It was a very ancient mortar of bronze or gun-metal, of $13\frac{1}{2}$ -inch bore and highly ornamented, and it threw a spherical projectile of 200 lb. weight filled with black powder. The shell appeared to be of brass, with walls about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, and was fitted with a time-fuse

which was ignited by the flame of the discharge. The huge ball often lay on the ground unexploded for about ten seconds or more after its flight, so that every one had time to get well under cover before the wonderful missile uprooted the nearest palm trees and scattered itself broadcast over the land. If it did nothing else it provided the garrison with mementoes of the siege in the shape of fragments nicely polished in our workshops and elsewhere. Ammunition for this strange mediæval weapon was apparently very scarce, for it was rarely fired by the Turkish "arquebusier-in-chief," as I suppose one should call him.

When the violent bombardment of March 1st commenced, several of our mess went up into the little observing-station on the roof of the D.E.C.'s house to see the show. It was not undiluted joy to be in this exposed position, yet the sight well repaid the risk. The Turkish gun-positions all over the country belched flame and smoke, while our guns roared their reply and our shrapnel dotted the landscape with little plumes of white vapour from which the bullets rained down on to the Turkish gunners. From Turkish accounts our fire did great damage—in one case, for instance, a 5-inch shell annihilated a whole gun's crew. The 40-lb. shells of the enemy's big guns came roaring into Kut and exploded all along the river-front upstream of our house, three of them actually dropping right into one of the emplacements of our 5-inch guns and hitting the rear parapet without killing any one, while the gallant fellows within the emplacement still continued undaunted to work their gun. The fire of the Turkish guns which bombarded the fort on this day was also most accurate, for the observation tower within the work was hit directly on five occasions and grazed by two other shells.

The heroism of the naval crews of the 4·7-inch naval guns afloat below the upstream pump-house at Kut was beyond all praise in this bombardment as throughout the siege. The sailors manning these four useful long-range weapons were grouped closely around their guns in the tiny horse-boats moored out in the river—quite unprotected except by the shields of the guns and a few thin steel side-plates proof only against rifle bullets. It appeared to be only a matter of time before a heavy shell from the Turks would score a bullseye and carry death

or disablement to all aboard one of the little craft, yet, wonderful to relate, this never occurred. One of the men thus expressed himself: "We know we have got to be killed sooner or later, but we hope it will be later." I am glad to say that his knowledge was incorrect as regards the majority of the crews of these guns.

On this memorable March 1st shell after shell splashed into the water around the little barges carrying the 4.7-inch guns, shooting spray over them, and making them rock with the waves set up; but the long slender guns continued to roar out their answer. A shell from upstream hit a mahela moored close below us, and with a long-drawn gurgle the curious boat sank down to rest on the river-bottom till only her high prow remained visible above the bank. For two and a half hours the rain of shells continued without a pause till the sun sank low towards the western horizon and the light began to fail; and then at last the hostile batteries quieted down one by one, and finally silence reigned again over the dreary extent of swamp and plain around Kut.

On the roof of the northern end of the Serai we had an artillery observation station (*vide* Map No. 5), protected to a certain extent by sandbags. Here Lieutenant "Nun-ky" Johnston, R.G.A., occupied a perilous and responsible position throughout the siege, and carried out his work with the greatest pluck and coolness, in spite of hairbreadth escapes from the enemy's big shells. The verandah roof immediately to his left was shot away, the corresponding verandah roof to his right was shot away, more than one shell skimmed just over the sandbag parapet, but the station itself remained intact to the end of the siege.

Soon after the commencement of the bombardment of March 1st, 1916, our enemy Fritz arose from his lair to the north, followed by his two confrères in turn, two machines being in the air while the third was replenishing with petrol and bombs. In rapid succession the three swooped over Kut and their bombs came whining down one after the other, adding their quota to the infernal din of the guns, machine guns, and shrapnel. The aeroplanes continued their raids till forty bombs in all had smashed down into the town. As dusk approached, the machines sank down into their aerodrome to the north-west and we saw them no more that eventful afternoon.

Our casualties were not heavy considering the violence of the bombardment, but the Arabs were in a state of considerable panic from the bombs and shells, though they quickly regained confidence and seemed all right next day. Four of the bombs dropped by the aeroplanes were of the 70-lb. variety, and one of them fell in a house close to our officers' hospital, but luckily it did not explode. It was removed safely the next day after an unsuccessful attempt to detonate it. On at least one occasion during the siege it was found that the reason why the Turkish bombs had not exploded was that the airman had forgotten to remove the safety-pin before releasing the bomb!

The cause of all the "hate" of March 1st is difficult to understand, for no attempt at an assault followed it. We thought it was in commemoration of some Turkish victory or in retaliation for a defeat, or again rumour said that some German of high rank (nicknamed by us von Pilsener Pasha) had visited the Turkish camp and that the display had been organised in his honour to show him how energetic was the attack upon Kut. Whatever the cause, we had the satisfaction of knowing that the enemy had wasted a very great quantity of ammunition with very small results. During the next day or two the Turks appeared to be resting from their labours, for things remained quiet and peaceful, and we in Kut continued our preparations to assist the Relief Force on arrival.

On March 3rd, 4th, and 5th, 1916, General Aylmer's guns were heard distinctly in the distance, but no news of any violent fighting filtered through to our isolated little force. The Relief Force was then holding Mason's and Abu Roman Mounds on the right bank and facing the Hannah position on the left bank.

March 6th, 1916, was a day of some excitement among the garrison, for our observers reported that a large number of metal cylinders had been seen by telescope being unloaded from one of the enemy's ships at Shumran. What could these be but one of the most devilish means of waging modern war—poison gas? The thought was one to cause some consternation, for we could not retaliate in like manner, nor had we any proper means of combating the deadly fumes; nevertheless our firing-line was hurriedly issued with respirators of a sort, and every precaution was taken against a possible attempt to overcome our

men by gas fumes. But it seems that the cylinders, whatever their nature, were not intended for a gas attack, and matters soon reverted to their normal state. General Aylmer's guns continued to mutter and thunder in the distance, registering on new targets and preventing the enemy from carrying on his fortification scheme unhindered.

Early in March the D.E.C. 6th Division originated a scheme for the destruction by a floating mine of a bridge of mahelas which the Turks had established some time before at the Besoula Ford on the Shatt-al-Hai Channel, to which the boats had been brought from lower down the channel. Map No. 8 shows the position of this bridge. All the Turkish traffic down the right bank of the Tigris crossed this bridge of boats, so that it was of great importance that it should be destroyed.

The mine took the form of an empty packing-case, carefully rendered watertight but without a lid, and provided with four long wooden legs projecting about eight feet or so from the box at a slight downward inclination, and fitted with wooden feet at their ends. Inside the packing-case lay a charge of 150 lb. of dynamite in a carefully made box, while on a board on the inner box stood a battery of dry cells. A specially prepared clock was included in the outfit and formed part of an electric circuit through two detonators buried in the explosive. The clock was so arranged that it completed the electric circuit four hours after setting, so that in four hours after the release of the mine the charge was automatically exploded. The minute and second hands of the clock had been removed, and the hour hand coated with a thin sheet of silver obtained by beating out a rupee. The actual contact was made by the silver-covered hour hand touching a similarly silver-covered spring on the clock face. Silver was used as it was the least corrosive metal available. The mine was further arranged so as to explode if swamped with water, as would occur if it drifted violently down on to a floating bridge, for the spreading legs were of such a length as to render it impossible for the mine to pass between two mahelas in a bridge. If one leg struck a boat, the mine would be tilted and the water would run into the open outer case and would thus reach the mechanism, which was merely protected from spray by a tarpaulin well tucked in. In the electric circuit a "shunt" was

arranged round the clock, consisting of two parallel iron plates about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart, connected to the leads, and separated by a quantity of common salt packed in a muslin bag. When the water entered the packing-case it would run in between the iron plates and would offer a good path for the electric current between the plates because of the large admixture of salt. The electric circuit would thus be automatically completed irrespective of the clock, and the charge would explode at once. On the other hand, if the water did not enter the packing-case, the mine would explode four hours after release. I have described this engine of destruction in detail as it is typical of the carefully designed implements of war which the Royal Engineers in Kut had to produce at short notice.

It was hoped that the mine, if released at Woolpress village, would float down to the mouth of the Shatt-al-Hai Channel, and would there be sucked into it by the current and so would pass down it unseen to the Turkish bridge. Even if it was seen, it had all the appearance of a discarded packing-case which would probably be allowed to float away unhindered. Kerosene-oil tins had been released to test the action of the current, and these had disappeared down the Shatt-al-Hai Channel, but the bar at its mouth made it doubtful if a mine would follow a similar course.

On the night of March 7th/8th Captain Stace took some of his men across to Woolpress village and worked for an hour in water up to his waist getting the mine into position and making the final connections in the dark, though barely recovered from a bad attack of jaundice which was prevalent among the troops. The barbed wire around the village made it necessary to work in the water, and it was a very nasty job connecting the leads in the dark, when the least mistake would mean the end of this world so far as the operator was concerned. All went well, however, and the sprawling mine floated off downstream in the darkness at about midnight in the guise of a harmless and dilapidated packing-case.

Before dawn on March 8th (at about 4 a.m.) a fearful explosion shook the whole of Kut, and my bed rocked and jumped as if the floor was about to collapse. The mine had apparently stuck on the bar of mud at the mouth of the Shatt-al-Hai and had blown a great hole in the bank when the charge was ignited by the clock

circuit. It must have produced nervous prostration in the Turkish snipers near by, but it failed to carry out its mission. Two similar mines were put in hand later, but they were never used and were dismantled. Other schemes for the destruction by mines of a supposed Turkish bridge near the Es-Sin position and of one of their flood protection bunds on the right bank opposite No. 8 Picquet were considered, but were rejected as impossible owing to the danger to the ships of the Relief Force and difficulties in launching the required mines. Incidentally I may say that, before the fall of Kut, the Turks never succeeded in constructing a bridge across the Tigris downstream of the town.

On March 8th, having slept for a couple of hours after the explosion of the huge floating mine, I awoke to hear a tremendous bombardment in progress downstream, so I dressed hurriedly and went up on to the roof of the post office near the D.E.C.'s house with my field-glasses, taking care to run up the last few stairs where one could be seen by our friends the snipers across the way.

As the morning mists cleared away a wonderful sight was visible downstream. Shrapnel was bursting in salvoes all along beyond the Es-Sin position, but how far in rear it was difficult to estimate. The geysers of earth thrown up by high-explosive shells spouted in continuous succession in many places, and the "thud, thud, thud" of the firing went on without a break. I remained on the roof most of the morning awaiting orders and watching the wonderful spectacle, hoping hourly to see the khaki uniforms of our comrades in the distance, but no such welcome vision appeared. Turkish batteries were galloping about on our side of the Es-Sin position, and infantry were marching rapidly along in clouds of dust, but our shells did not seem to be falling on the Kut side of the position, nor did the explosions appear to be coming nearer to us.

Towards evening we watchers on the housetops began to fear that something was amiss, for every one knew that this must be the great attempt so long expected for the relief of Kut, and all the troops were standing to arms throughout the day. After more or less continuous firing for several hours the bombardment became intense for a short while in the evening—but still no news arrived. We were a very silent mess that night, each one being

too busy with his own thoughts to discuss lighter subjects.

Next morning (March 9th) there was another burst of heavy bombardment downstream at 6.30 a.m. In an hour it ceased, and all remained quiet for the remainder of the day except for occasional deliberate gunfire in the distance. Still no news came in, so that we now feared the worst. In such cases no news means bad news.

On March 10th, 1916, General Townshend issued a lengthy communiqué to the troops, the full text of which will be found in Appendix G. It announced the failure of General Aylmer's force to relieve Kut, and gave the contents of two telegrams dated March 8th, received from General Aylmer, which explained the reasons for, and the probable results of, the failure. The two telegrams announced an unsuccessful attack on the Dujailah Redoubt of the Es-Sin position (see Map No. 8) on the right bank of the Tigris, and explained that the failure was due to large hostile reinforcements reaching the troops in the redoubt from across the river and from Shumran. The telegrams also intimated that a retirement of the Relief Force downstream again to Wadi was probable. The communiqué then went on to explain that the leading brigade of the British division must by now have reached General Aylmer, and concluded with an intimation that a large number of our horses were being slaughtered to lessen the consumption of grain. (As a fact, approximately 200 horses were slaughtered for this reason on March 10th.)

One point immediately struck us in this explanation. This was that General Aylmer had attacked without the aid of the new British division, which, as I have before mentioned, could hardly be expected to have concentrated at Wadi before March 20th. The question then asked by many of us was, why the Relief Force had risked all in this venture when large first-class reinforcements were so close but had not yet arrived. I have no official knowledge of the cause of this early attack, but I imagine it was brought about by a supposition that we had less food than was actually the case. Conceivably it may have been caused by tidings of an expected rise in the level of the Tigris calculated to render the ground impassable for an advance; or again by news that large reinforcements were about to reach the Turks opposing the advance. Whatever the cause of this gallant

attempt, which ended so disastrously, it was an almost impossible task for so small a force as that under General Aylmer at the time when the attempt was made, but it is conceivable that it might have succeeded if carried out in a faultless manner and aided by good luck.

The history of the attack has doubtless been fully written in official books on the war, but all that we in Kut subsequently learned was that the greater part of General Aylmer's force had executed a night march of about eighteen miles from near the Orah Canal (*vide* Map No. 8) north of the Umm-el-Brahm, and thence westward towards the Dujailah Redoubt on the night of March 7th/8th; that the force had bombarded the redoubt on the morning of March 8th, but, owing to some delay, the enemy had found time to hurry up first-class troops in large numbers via the Magasis ferry, and also from Shumran, and that when our troops attacked they had been unable to break through; that after a long and bloody fight they had retreated to the position marked on Map No. 8 by the trenches which they dug for their protection on the night of March 8th/9th after the failure of the attack; and that, finally, the Relief Force had retreated to Wadi, having lost a great number of men, and having suffered extreme hardships from lack of water. All of us understood how precarious that retreat to Wadi must have been with the Turks holding strong positions at Sannaiyat and Falahiyeh on the flank of the retiring forces.

The problem which confronted General Aylmer when he had decided that it was necessary to attack at once was indeed a difficult one, for to attack one by one the series of Turkish positions on the river below the Es-Sin position would take at least two or three weeks, and would entail enormous losses which the small Relief Force could not risk. The only alternative then was to stake all on a surprise attack on one flank in the hope of breaking through the main position at Es-Sin and of forcing a general retirement of the Turks from the more advanced positions on the right bank. Owing to the lack of water away from the Tigris, the attacking force would necessarily be unable to continue the attack for long if not at once successful, unless indeed it reached the Shatt-al-Hai Channel, at which distance it would, however, be in grave danger of isolation.

Again, supposing that the flank attack succeeded in breaking through the Es-Sin position at the Dujailah Redoubt, it must be remembered that the Turkish positions on the right bank near Sannaiyat still remained to be captured unless the whole of the Es-Sin position on the right bank speedily fell into our hands, when the Sannaiyat positions would be more or less untenable. Yet again, if the Relief Force reached the Tigris opposite Kut, there remained the difficulty of maintaining it there and of joining up quickly with the garrison of Kut across the wide river without the assistance of a bridge. Truly a stupendous problem to confront any commander whose total force did not exceed that of the disciplined foe awaiting him in entrenched positions supported by plentiful artillery.

The failure of General Aylmer's force was a bitter blow to our hopes of early relief, and the sorely-tried troops in Kut knew that it must be many a long day before they could expect to shake hands with their comrades from Europe and India, and that meanwhile they must continue once more to fight, dig—and starve.

On March 9th, 1916, another telegram arrived from General Aylmer announcing that the Turks had lost heavily, and it *implied* that the 13th British Division had arrived, since it stated that *the British division had not been engaged in the battle*. This news at the time appeared inexplicable to the uninitiated in Kut, for if the British troops had actually reached Wadi, why had they taken no part in the most important portion of the fight? The explanation of the true state of affairs may be that the reference to the British division was intended to deceive the Turks, who were known to be attempting to tap our wireless messages. I believe I am correct in saying that, at the time General Aylmer attacked the Dujailah Redoubt, the 13th British Division was still far off down the River Tigris.

From a Turkish statement made in Baghdad after the surrender of Kut it seems that at the Dujailah Redoubt the enemy was completely surprised by the sudden appearance of General Aylmer's troops in the early morning of March 8th, 1916, and that the redoubt was only weakly held. It is said that if the British force had advanced early to the assault, without lengthy artillery preparation, the Turks in occupation of the redoubt would have re-

tired, for they were actually under orders from Khalil Pasha to retreat upon Shumran, and their retirement would have been the signal for the evacuation of all the Turkish positions on both banks of the Tigris below Kut—in fact, it would have led to the immediate relief of Kut and a general retreat of the enemy towards Baghdad. The Turks affirmed that in the early morning at the Dujailah Redoubt their own men were watching in fear and trembling for the first sign of an assault from the British troops below them on the open plain, but no assault was launched, and a five-hours artillery preparation took place which gave time for the Turkish reinforcements to arrive. The enemy had only 3,000 men actually investing Kut on this day. It is easy to be wise after the event, but if there is any truth in these statements it shows how nearly General Aylmer succeeded in his bold attempt to relieve Kut. It is worth remembering, however, that the Turks, when successful, are prone to assure their prisoners how nearly the Ottoman forces suffered defeat—perhaps from a sense of courtesy to the vanquished.

Cheerful tidings came in by Reuter's about March 10th that our friends the Russians had reached Bitlis, south of Lake Van (see Map No. 9), and that another Russian force was advancing from Kirmanshah in Persia towards Khanikin. The telegrams also stated that there had been a mutiny among the Turkish troops at Smyrna, and that the Mohammedan priests at Constantinople were preaching against the Germans. I am inclined to think that the news about the mutiny and the preaching was rather exaggerated, but at the time it was accepted as gospel truth and was encouraging.

Fine weather continued on March 10th and 11th, but on March 12th the rain again descended in torrents, and the desultory firing heard for the last two days in the direction of Wadi ceased. The whole country became a sea of mud and slime once more, impassable for traffic and impossible for military operations.

Rations were reduced in Kut after the failure of the attempt to relieve the place on March 8th. Each British officer and soldier now received a small loaf of about ten ounces weight per diem, the bread being composed of a mixture of wheat and barley—very coarse and very heavy. The Indian troops were given an equivalent of

flour and made their own chupatties as usual. Those of the garrison who would eat horseflesh received one pound of meat per day, and a small quantity of oatmeal was issued to certain troops. The jam ration had ceased altogether, and also the supply of dates and of butter. In the R.E. mess we consumed our small private supply of jam and butter from our mess almirah. We allowed ourselves a small spoonful of jam each at breakfast without butter, and a small helping of butter at tea (without jam), so as to keep the balance true, like John Gilpin. The game of Patience, so appropriate to the situation, was a great favourite in the mess, and the four available packs of cards were in continual use.

On March 12th, 1916, the Turks, for the second time, I believe, sent an envoy into Kut proposing that the garrison should surrender. A white flag was raised in the enemy's front line of trenches, and after a few seconds a Turkish officer appeared. Promptly a British officer got up out of our trenches and advanced to meet him across the "No Man's Land" between the lines. They met and the Turk was conducted to our trenches, where he was blindfolded, and then led along the mile or more of trenches, and through the town to the house occupied by General Townshend. His bandage was removed and his written message delivered. He was offered some refreshment and presented the G.O.C. of the Forces in Kut with a box of good cigarettes as a gift from the Turkish commander Khalil Pasha, who sent it with a polite message that as General Townshend was probably running short of cigarettes he might appreciate a box. Such small courtesies help to make one regard the real fighting Turk as a chivalrous foe, even if one cannot admire him in everyday life. The Turkish officer then took back a written reply to Khalil Pasha, after being again carefully blindfolded. During his presence in Kut no shots were exchanged. The proposal of surrender was of course politely but firmly refused by General Townshend.

Things were uninteresting for the next three or four days. The weather was bad, and the level of the river was rising steadily. The aeroplanes of the Relief Force flew frequently over Kut, and on one occasion dropped some pounds of saccharine, sufficient to allow each officers' mess an ounce of this invaluable substitute for sugar. The saccharine added greatly to our enjoyment of

our tea, but did not supply the actual sugar for which our bodies were asking very insistently by now.

The strength of the garrison of Kut was by this time considerably reduced by deaths from wounds or disease. A reference to Appendix H at the end of this book will show that on March 14th, 1916, the average strength of the battalions of infantry was only slightly over 500 men, and some battalions could not muster nearly that number. The *effective* strength of each battalion seldom exceeded 350 to 400 men. Of the complete battalions present in Kut, the 2nd Norfolk Regiment totalled 413 of all ranks, the 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry mustered 415 officers and men, and the 104th Rifles 417 officers and men. The grand total of the garrison on March 14th amounted to 13,676, of which 3,310 were Indian camp-followers (non-combatants), so that the total number of fighting men was 10,366 of all ranks, British and Indian.

Late in 1915 rumours had reached the 6th Division that two naval guns of large calibre, taken off a damaged Turkish warship (probably the *Goeben*), were on their way from Constantinople to Mesopotamia, and it was now reported by our observers that they had seen what appeared to be two enormous guns of about 8-inch calibre being mounted in emplacements to the north at a distance of approximately 7,000 yards. An 8-inch gun throws a projectile weighing over 200 lb., and naval guns would certainly have high-explosive shells, hence bombardment from such weapons would speedily reduce Kut to ruins and would render it untenable. You may imagine, then, that we did not feel very happy. On March 18th I was very busy with my men improving various dugouts, and making one in the 18th Brigade office, in anticipation of a bombardment by these heavy guns, but luckily for us the huge projectiles were never fired into Kut itself. The reason of our salvation I will explain later. I am doubtful if the guns were really as big as was reported, but they must have been at least of 6-inch calibre.

On the same day Fritz again flew over Kut and dropped four 30-lb. T.N.T. bombs. One of these unhappily fell into the British portion of our General Hospital. I am convinced that this was not intentional, for the whole dilapidated roof of the long bazaar was dotted at intervals with large Red Cross flags laid flat which were easily visible, if somewhat faded, but the result was none the

less disastrous. The small covered bazaar road into which the bomb fell was crowded with the beds of our unfortunate British wounded, and the T.N.T. bomb hit a side wall and detonated among the beds. The result was that five men were killed outright and twenty-six more were wounded, of whom eleven afterwards died—a very heavy casualty list for one bomb.

From the roof of the D.E.C.'s house on March 18th I observed a great structure being reared in the Turkish camp at Shumran. The next day it was completed and proved to be a lofty observation tower, apparently built of mahela masts lashed together and supporting three platforms at various heights from the ground. This tower must have been of some value for the observation of the Turkish artillery fire, but as it was about 13,000 yards distant from our big guns it was out of range of our shells.

The weather had now become very bad. A gale of wind was blowing from the south-east, producing quite large waves in the wide reach of the Tigris opposite Kut where it was in opposition to the current—waves sufficiently big to render a floating bridge impassable for troops, if not to necessitate its being dismantled. I wondered how the officer in charge of the British pontoon bridge below Wadi was faring, and whether his bridge was still intact. He probably had a better outfit of proper pontoons than I had, for, as I have mentioned before, fifty pontoons were ordered by wire in November 1915 from India to supplement my meagre outfit of eighteen pontoons, and these should have reached the Relief Force by March 1916.

The daily allowance of bread on March 18th had been reduced to 8 oz. per man, and it was estimated that by this reduction it would be possible for the garrison to hold out till April 17th, 1916. The want of cereals began to make itself felt, for 8 oz. per diem is not sufficient for a healthy man doing considerable physical labour. It is a fact that one's body requires its due proportion of different kinds of food, and that an endeavour to provide for a scarcity of cereals by a large increase in nitrogenous matter (such as meat) is a failure. We proved this by personal experience.

News reached us from downstream that General Aylmer had handed over the command of the Relief Force to

General Gorringe (of Nasariyeh fame), who had up to this time been acting as his Chief-of-Staff. Incidentally I may mention that both these officers were Royal Engineers who had spent the greater part of their service in staff employment. General Aylmer had a great name in India, and General Gorringe had made a reputation in South Africa as one of the best of Lord Kitchener's men. Every confidence was felt that if any man could push on matters downstream, that man was the general who had now taken over the command of the Relief Force; for, after all, the question resolved itself into a race against time, with the garrison of Kut as the prize. I would like to mention, however, that the Turks had a great opinion of the ability of General Aylmer as a commander in the field. Khalil Pasha himself stated, after the surrender of Kut, that when opposed by General Aylmer he could never guess at what point the decisive attack was to be anticipated, and that this general was one who, having decided on his plan of attack, fearlessly employed the maximum possible force at the vital point in order to ensure success. Such praise from a skilful and outspoken opponent should carry great weight.

Up to March 18th H.M.S. *Sumana* had escaped practically untouched from the many shells aimed at her by the Turkish guns. The enemy was fully aware of the extreme importance of this, our only powerful steam vessel in Kut, for by means of the *Sumana* the troops in Woolpress village were provisioned at night, and all large ferrying operations on the arrival of the Relief Force would have to be carried out by the *Sumana*, assisted to a small extent by our one remaining *L.* launch. The Turks determined, therefore, to disable the little man-of-war without further loss of time.

Accordingly during the night of March 18th/19th they pulled an 18-pr. Q.F. gun (which they had captured from us at Ahwaz a year previously) down to the actual bank of the Tigris opposite No. 7 Picquet to a position marked K on Map No. 6; and from this spot at earliest dawn on March 19th, screened partially by the river mists, they suddenly opened fire at almost point-blank range on the unfortunate *Sumana*, which lay moored near the lower pump-house on the front at Kut. The ship was partially screened by the mahelas astern of her, but one shell pierced her funnel and wrecked the roof of her bridge, and another

raked her superstructure from aft and killed one of her crew. In a short time our guns and howitzers opened fire and silenced the hostile piece for the time being. The *Sumana* was not seriously damaged, though her appearance had suffered; the injuries to her superstructure were partially repaired at night, but she had had a narrow escape. After this mishap elaborate arrangements were made to screen and protect this our only available ship. Mahelas were closely grouped upstream and downstream of her, and, as these mahelas were damaged or sunk, others were moved up to take their places from the long line of mahelas moored below her along the left bank (see Map No. 5). Steel barges also were always kept moored alongside the ship; and most elaborate walls of kerosene-oil tins, filled with earth, were erected on the deck of the outer and larger barge to explode any shell before it could penetrate to the vitals of the ship.

On March 20th, just before dark, Fritz came whizzing downstream with fell intent and dropped two or three bombs. With his first he made a remarkably good shot at the 4·7-inch gun barges—the bomb only just missed the little boats and exploded in the water immediately alongside one of them. The resulting shock to this boat was so great that the long 4·7-inch naval gun within her was displaced from its mounting, and thus was put out of action; by means of jacks, however, the gun was remounted a day or so later and was again fit for use. The horse-boats carrying the 4·7-inch guns were moored, I may say, in pairs separated by a distance of twenty yards, and a great difficulty in working the four guns was that, when one gun fired, its boat pitched to such an extent and created such waves that its mate could not fire accurately till the disturbance had subsided. Thus, although the guns were of quick-firing type, they could not be fired rapidly if accuracy was essential, as was the case at all long ranges.

On the night of March 21st/22nd Fritz gave yet another exhibition of his prowess, for he flew over the town in the darkness and dropped four bombs on different parts, fortunately with little damage to life or limb so far as the garrison was concerned; but the fact that we were no longer safe from bombing even in our beds did not make our slumbers more peaceful, and many decided that it was

safer to sleep on the ground-floors of their houses in preference to the upstairs rooms. Whenever I awoke after this in my upstairs room and heard the monotonous hum of an aeroplane engine from on high, I generally dived down my little staircase pretty quick till our well-beloved Fritz had passed safely on his way—let us hope *without* rejoicing.

The Turkish gunners on March 22nd gave us another treat. At 6 a.m. a tremendous bombardment started from their thirty or more guns, and the shells came whistling and crashing into Kut and its defences from every side for three and a half hours. The object, it was said, was to destroy the guns on the river-front at Kut with a view to attacking Woolpress village that night. The greater part of the enemy's fire was certainly directed on to the river-front on this occasion. Our guns, of course, replied, and a fine noise they made, the roars of the two 5-inch and three 4·7-inch guns upstream being drowned at intervals by the sharp barking of the two field guns and the naval 12-pr. gun close to us. In the distance the batteries at the Brick Kilns and elsewhere kept up a continuous thunder. It was no time to wander abroad, so every one waited quietly for things to settle down a bit, and after breakfast the "hate" died down and ended. We then found that one of our 4·7-inch gun horse-boats had been badly holed, and so had been swung into the shore, where the boat had sunk. This was an unfortunate accident, for we could ill spare any of our useful naval guns. I examined the wreck the following night, but found it impossible to remove the gun from the boat because of the depth of the water, the weight of the gun, and the rapidity of the current. Luckily, the crew of the gun escaped without serious loss. It was calculated that over 800 shells were fired into Kut town alone during this bombardment lasting three and a half hours.

Matters then remained fairly peaceful throughout the morning, but again in the afternoon deliberate bombardment commenced and continued till 7 p.m., when it ceased till 10.30 p.m. At this hour the Turkish gunners again got to work and kept at it more or less the whole of the night in order to produce a state of "frightfulness." I moved out of my exposed room and slept in our mess dugout in the yard below, where it was at any rate safe and comfortable, though exceedingly damp from the recent

rain. As each big shell came thundering in, often hitting the ground on the river-front within twenty yards of my snug little cave, the ground trembled and my hurricane lamp rattled, but that did not interfere with a good night's rest, which I could not have got in my room above. All the remainder of our R.E. mess slept that night in the mess-room and other ground-floor rooms of the D.E.C.'s house; but the dugout afforded more room and was more convenient, so I slept there.

On the morning of March 23rd all was calm again. My men were busily employed in building several large brick walls around the wireless telegraph instrument wagons in a shed adjoining the courtyard occupied by the Wireless Signal Section under Lieutenant Greenwood, R.E., and by part of the crew of H.M.S. *Sumana*. It was most important to protect our valuable installation from damage by the enemy's guns, especially from the gun firing at the *Sumana* from downstream. The wireless station was at the south end of Kut (see Map No. 5), and the aerials ran from the upper floor of the shed before mentioned to the top of the mast of a mahela moored alongside the river-bank near by. These aerials (wires) were frequently cut by rifle bullets, but were always rapidly repaired by Lieutenant Greenwood and his men, though at considerable risk from the bullets of the Turkish snipers across the Tigris.

While working at this spot on March 23rd I heard that wireless messages were being received from an aeroplane which had come up from General Goringe's force to register for two of our 5-inch B.L. guns of the 86th Heavy Battery R.G.A., which were then in action under the command of Major Alexander, R.G.A. I could hear the guns firing at frequent intervals, but did not know at the time that their target was one of the big naval guns which the Turks had just mounted in position. It seems that on the previous day the two 5-inch B.L. guns at the Brick Kilns had opened fire on the two hostile guns at position Z (see Map No. 6) with most decisive results. Only seven rounds were fired altogether—four at one of the big guns and three at the other—at a range of 7,100 yards. These rounds were so accurate, though only intended as registering rounds, that one shell killed or wounded the whole of the German naval detachment of one of the guns and probably damaged the gun itself, while another hit the

mounting of the other monster and rendered the gun absolutely useless. The observing officer at the fort on this occasion was Captain E. J. L. Baylay, R.F.A. We heard, after the surrender of Kut, from a German officer who was in charge of these and others of the Turkish guns, of the disastrous effect of our 5-inch shells on this occasion. On March 23rd, as before stated, the two 5-inch B.L. guns again opened fire, this time on the remaining slightly damaged gun, while our aeroplane overhead wired the result of each round. One shot was signalled as "O.K.," signifying that it was a direct hit. The result of the two-days firing by our 5-inch guns was that neither Turkish gun ever fired a shot into Kut, though a few rounds were fired at the Brick Kilns before the guns were put out of action; and thus, by excellent marksmanship, aided by good luck, the enemy's work of months was brought to naught, and Kut was saved from being pulverised by big shells filled with high explosive. A wonderful piece of luck for us all! Imagine the disgust of the Turks at having their two finest guns destroyed thus, when they had spent several months in bringing them more than 1,500 miles by railway, mountain pass, desert, and river, at great expense and with prodigious labour.

An Arab rumour arose on March 23rd that the Turks intended to assault Kut that night. This rumour was so strong and persistent that all troops were ordered to be prepared for an assault, and the whole of our front-line troops stood to arms before dawn in anticipation of an attack, but nothing occurred. Such rumours are wont to spread in bazaars, and it seems impossible to find out how they commence, or who starts them.

The river-level was now rising steadily and rapidly, and all thoughts were centred on the problem of saving Kut and its defences from an inundation which would force the garrison into the open and would put it at the mercy of the enemy's guns. Ceaseless attention was paid to the flood bunds, and work continued every night in the improvement of their design and in consolidating their slopes. In this flood, which culminated on March 26th, the Tigris reached a level which was two feet above the January flood, and six inches above what we had been told by the Arabs would be the probable maximum level. Redoubt B was again flooded by water coming from the west across the peninsula, but this oc-

curred late in the evening and the garrison got away under cover of the darkness. Very soon the water burst into the trench connecting Redoubt A with Redoubt B, and the rush of water carried away the numerous small bunds, and then flooded Redoubt A and the adjacent communication trenches. The 22nd Punjabis in Redoubt A retired to the middle line. The flood was finally held up in the trenches by the bunds between Redoubt A and the fort, and at the sandhills and middle line. This left dry only the communication trenches from the fort to the sandhills, and from the fort to the middle line via the river-bank, and the fort was thus practically isolated. The sandhills, however, were occupied by fifty rifles of the Oxfords, and at night a line of picquets connected them with the fort.

It was a very anxious time, for it was impossible to tell how much farther the water might rise. The flood water in the trenches was still 2 feet or so below the river-level at the fort. Working parties from the fort were out till 1 a.m. strengthening the small bunds. A high wind later on caused further anxiety, for the rough water eroded the river-banks and bunds, and working parties and patrols were busy day and night to prevent damage. Luckily the Turks were similarly occupied. The inner keep of the fort was being built, so the garrison was much overworked, and also worried by the sniping, which was bad at times. Eventually three or four hours work by day and two to three hours at night was fixed as the maximum for the men at the fort (who were on short rations), but in the last fortnight of the siege the night work was reduced to one hour.

The River Tigris was in full flood on March 26th, 1916, and every bund was doing its duty like the buttons on the plump man's waistcoat. Then at last the river-level remained stationary and we breathed again, and after three or four days it began to fall once more. The weather became fine and no longer cold, but the country around was becoming completely flooded, portions being purposely allowed to flood by the enemy and other parts getting submerged much against the desire of the Turks. As far as the eye could see, the waste of waters stretched in all directions, except for a few slightly higher tracts used by the Turks for their road transport and for their camps. To the east the Es-Sin Ridge protruded out of

the swamps. Around Woolpress village the whole of the nearer Turkish trenches were under water and the enemy had been forced to retire to his rear trenches, 900 yards or more from the village and on higher ground. The village was consequently safe from assault, but had become almost submerged in spite of prodigious work by the small garrison in building up bunds for protection from the threatening flood. Map No. 6 shows the general position of the Turkish trenches around Woolpress village. The garrison after this was fairly free from the attention of the enemy's snipers, and the village was very rarely shelled. Men could sit about with impunity along parts of the river-front in the village, and we on the other side often envied them this privilege.

We heard about this time that our people in England were desperately anxious about Kut, and that prayers were being offered up in the churches at home for our speedy relief—a comforting thought to the tired and hungry soldiers in our flood-bound post, for it was a sure indication that England was at last really alive to our predicament and no longer regarded General Townshend's force as participating in what had once been dubbed a "picnic" by a certain journalist of some repute.

A vegetable garden had been started in January near the R.E. Field Park north of Kut, and every mess obtained a small but welcome ration of radishes at the end of March. The problem of vegetable supply had been partially solved by the use of chopped dandelion leaves collected at night in the fields around the town. For some time in our mess we had been eating these leaves, which, when well cooked, made a dish resembling spinach; but it was difficult to exclude the stalks of grass from the concoction, though their presence was unmistakable from the bitter taste they gave to the dandelion leaves.

It was expected soon after March 26th, 1916, that General Goringe would make his first serious attempt to relieve Kut when the flood of the Tigris began to subside. We were informed that no inkling would be given to us of the exact date, for the town was full of Arab spies in the pay of the Turks, all eager to gather such important information. The weather remained fine and the river-flood was slowly subsiding, making it appear that our troops downstream should have a good chance of getting through if their assault was launched before the

next river-flood occurred. Very little bombardment had taken place of late from the Turkish gun-positions around Kut, and Fritz and his brethren of the air had not been seen for several days. The popular opinion was that they were busy watching General Gorrings's force at Hannah.

The reader is invited to refer to Map No. 8. The original copy of this map was prepared by the General Staff of the Relief Force from reconnaissances made by British aeroplanes on March 18th, 1916, and was brought up to Kut by aeroplane and dropped into the town. The map shows that on March 18th the force under General Gorrings (then at the Wadi) was confronted by a perfect network of positions extending up both banks of the River Tigris from Hannah to beyond the Es-Sin position; and it should be remembered that every day these positions were being rapidly extended and strengthened.

Commencing from the Wadi, we have the Hannah position mainly on the left bank of the Tigris, including many lines of deep trenches, loopholed and heavily wired, with other positions backing them up and forming a continuation of them. Behind these again we have the trenches at Falahiyeh on the left bank, and, four miles upstream of these, the left wing of the Sannaiyat position, connected by a deep communication trench six miles in length with the advanced positions near Hannah. All these positions on the left bank were grouped on a very narrow neck of dry ground between the great Suwaikieh Marsh on the one side and the River Tigris on the other, thus precluding the possibility of capture except by frontal attacks in a very restricted area.

On the right bank of the Tigris, behind an advanced position at Dir el Said Hashim, we find the extensively fortified area around the Abu Roman Mounds, followed in turn by the right wing of the great Sannaiyat position, and then by the trenches about Beit Aiessa, and finally by the trenches below the Chahela Mounds at Nakhailat. These latter trenches were soon prolonged till they formed an unbroken line to the Sin Abtar Redoubt in the Es-Sin position.

Upstream of all these advanced positions we see the enormous Es-Sin position itself, extending from the Ataba Marsh on the left bank of the Tigris almost to the village of Mhairijeh on the Shatt-al-Hai Channel. The position

was actually completed to the Shatt-al-Hai Channel—and included in its line the five redoubts south and south-west of the Dujailah Redoubt—before the final attempt to relieve Kut in April 1916. Its total length was then about eighteen miles, and its strength was prodigious.

Between the Es-Sin position and Kut, on the right bank of the river, was a further position shown on Map No. 8, but there were also numerous small redoubts and trenches dotted about in advantageous sites, and provided with loopholes and wire entanglements. The Turks had a great advantage over us in Kut in the matter of steel loophole plates, of which they seemed to have an unlimited supply. Perhaps the Relief Force was better provided than we were.

The enormous strength of this series of positions held by the Turks opposing General Goringe strikes one at once when considered in conjunction with the various swamps, then much swollen by the floods or the rain. An advance up the left bank could only take place along the river-bank, since the whole country beyond was under water; whilst on the drier, but still much flooded, right bank the advanced positions at the Abu Roman Mounds and at Beit Aiessa must first be captured before the main Es-Sin position could be attacked; and the oblique line of the Es-Sin position, when actually completed to the Shatt-al-Hai Channel and protected by the entrenched line from Chahela to Sin Abtar, precluded any outflanking movement on the right bank of the Tigris.

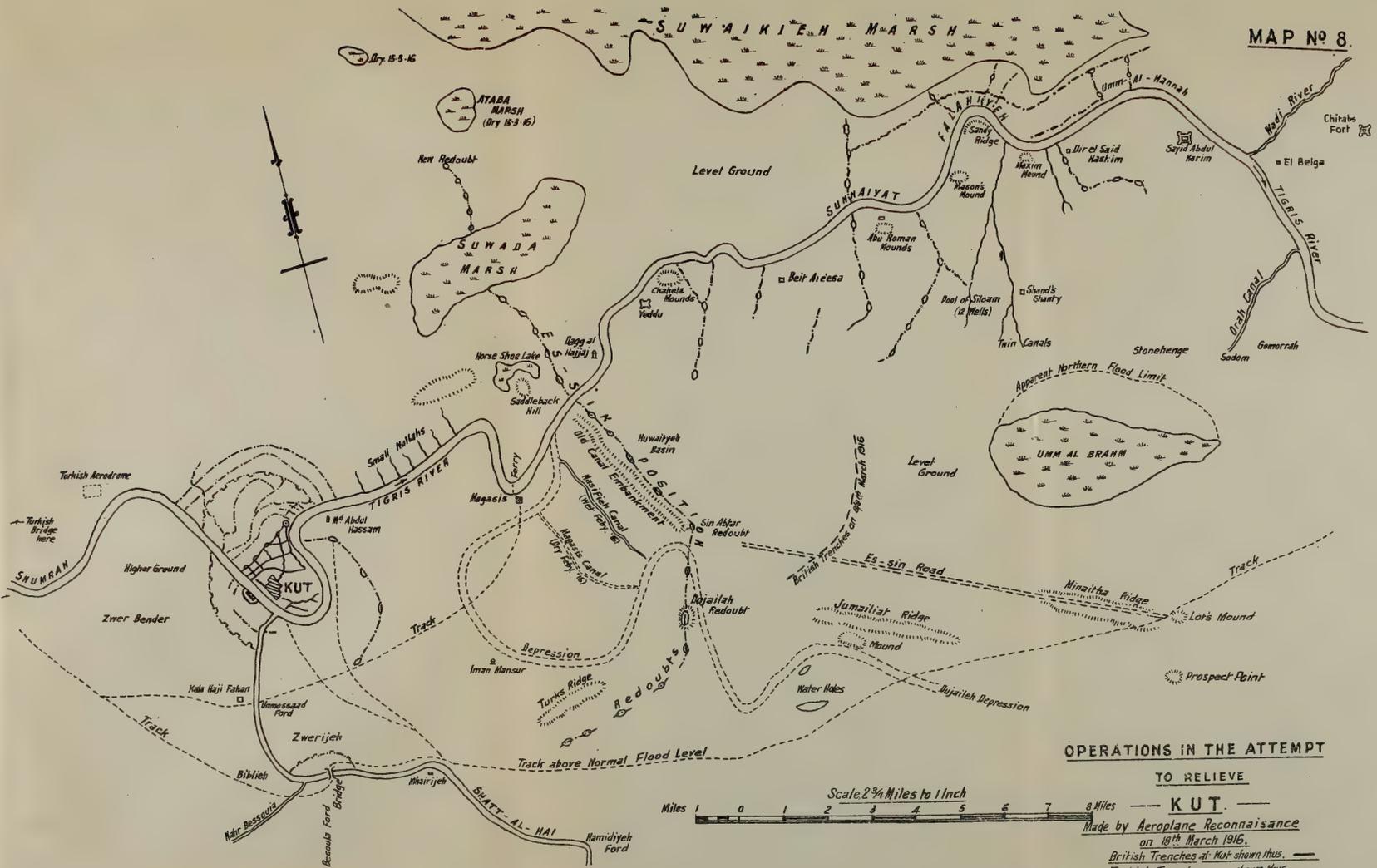
Add to this the fact that a commander, capturing step by step the right-bank positions, must of necessity keep his supply ships downstream of the Wadi unless he also captured the terribly strong left-bank positions, and you have a state of affairs difficult enough to cause a skilful general many a doubt as to what course to pursue, even if not pressed for time and hampered by atrocious weather and ground as was General Goringe.

In beleaguered Kut on March 29th, 1916, each British officer and soldier was still receiving his little 8-oz. loaf of brown bread daily and a plentiful supply of horse meat, but the food was becoming tasteless, for condiments and sauces were getting scarce. The little loaves were distributed in our mess each morning, so that each officer received his exact allowance and could consume it as he liked till the next issue took place. It was amusing to

see each one bringing his little piece of bread with him to the mess at meal times ; but the comic element was rather damped by the hollow feeling in the region of one's own belt. My belt had already required tightening several holes, and I had seriously to contemplate punching some new ones, for my normal girth had decreased by four inches.

An aeroplane from the Relief Force flew over us on March 29th, and dropped several bundles of private letters, among which I was delighted to find that seven were for me. It was a very unexpected piece of luck and most welcome. Almost every officer in Kut was trying to get private telegrams sent off to relatives and friends at home. The Wireless Telegraph Section had 300 such telegrams waiting for transmission, since only a very limited number of private telegrams could be despatched each day. I was fortunate enough to get one despatched from Kut by wireless on April 1st to Captain F. C. Molesworth, R.E., who was in charge of the R.E. Field Park at Amarah, and he then forwarded the message by wire to the Manchester address mentioned in it, and paid the cost of the telegram to England. This was the system on which all private messages had to be wired home. We had to trust as a rule to the kindness of friends downstream. My wire reached Captain Molesworth in a very mutilated condition—for instance, my name had become "Saddle," and the name "Rusholme" was denoted by the cryptic sign "Msshlme"—but by the exercise of common sense and some guesswork he corrected the wireless message and despatched the telegram to England, where it duly arrived on April 2nd. In it I acknowledged the receipt of the seven letters by aeroplane mail and said that we still had sufficient food—not quite correct perhaps. The numerous private telegrams despatched from Kut did good work in relieving the anxiety of our relatives and friends at home.

On March 30th at 6 p.m., as I was walking through the wireless telegraph station with Colonel U. W. Evans, the violent bang of the Turkish field gun firing at H.M.S. *Sumana* shook the air, and was followed by a roar of steam from the little vessel. The enemy had at last scored an effective hit after many attempts, for a shell had pierced the junction piece of the main steam-pipe, smashing the valve and allowing all the steam to escape.



OPERATIONS IN THE ATTEMPT

TO RELIEVE

KUT

Made by Aeroplane Reconnaissance
on 18th March 1916.

British Trenches at Moit shown thus. ———
Turkish Trenches shown thus. - - - - -

This was an extremely serious accident, and it appeared doubtful if the broken fitting could be repaired or replaced. A wireless message was sent downstream at once asking for a new junction piece (with stop-valve complete) and two new steam-pipes, which could probably be taken off a sister ship of the *Sumana* and dropped by aeroplane into Kut. Meanwhile, every effort was made in Kut itself to remedy the disastrous effect of the Turkish shell, and in less than a week our mechanics succeeded in turning out and adjusting a workable fitting, and thus enabled the valuable little *Sumana* to do some more useful work before the end came. The raising of steam again in the *Sumana* was most difficult. A ton or so of valuable timber was needed to get up the necessary 50 lb. of steam-pressure prior to the use of the oil-fuel arrangements with which the ship had already been fitted while in Kut, but, to the disgust of the enemy, the *Sumana* was soon taking her barge-load of supplies once more across to Woolpress village by night, while the bullets of the enemy's snipers splashed around her or clanged against her steel plates.

The last day of March 1916 brought a change of wind, and heavy clouds appeared from the south following on a spell of several days of fine weather. Down came the rain once more, and soon the streets of Kut and the country around the town were again under water and impassable except at great risk. The bad weather culminated in a terrific thunderstorm about 10 p.m. Great banks of black cloud rolled up and the lightning flashed all around with extraordinary brightness, turning night into day; the thunder crashed and the rain increased to a deluge which lasted several hours. It was a wonderful sight from the little observation station on our roof before the heavy rain commenced to fall; the wind howled and tore round the small enclosure till its walls shook and the loose bricks on the top of them were whirled away into the darkness. It seemed as though the Creator had let loose the elements to impress on us mortals the greatness of His power in comparison with the puny efforts of man striving against his brother-man. The wild night was a fitting accompaniment to the death and destruction in this area of warfare.

In this whirl of storm and rain the long month of March 1916 terminated in Kut—a month of sore trial to us all; of hope and bitter disappointment alternating almost

from day to day ; of hunger, sickness, and pain—yet we were buoyed up by the knowledge that, though fate seemed to be fighting against us, we were doing our duty for the Empire, and that our fellow-countrymen in far-off England and India, and in Mesopotamia itself, were striving manfully to rescue us from the clutches of the treacherous Tigris and the Turk.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST DAYS IN KUT

APRIL 1916—a month destined ever to be remembered by the unlucky force in Kut, and to be marked in history as a period of desperate fighting by the brave troops under General Gorringe. Thousands upon thousands of our gallant soldiers cheerfully laid down their lives before the almost impregnable positions of the Turks in fruitless efforts to save their starving comrades in the flooded country behind the Es-Sin Ridge, and tens of thousands of men and women mourned their loss in England and India, yet gloried in their noble end. Forced by the urgency of the situation to deliver frontal assaults across inundated ground against position after position held by stubborn troops supported by good artillery, it is not surprising that their advance failed to reach as far as Kut itself, in spite of superhuman effort backed by the highest courage. All honour to the gallant force which so nearly won through in the face of incredible obstacles.

April 1st, 1916, was a dreary day in ruined Kut. Rain fell at intervals and the south wind blew in gusts, and the lowering clouds rolled away towards the north in endless succession; yet still the garrison hoped against hope, and confidence remained that we should in the end find ourselves steaming downstream in vessels bound for restful if sultry climes. Two remarkable hailstorms occurred at Kut at the beginning of April. On these occasions the hailstones were of enormous size—some in fact were literally as large as pigeon's eggs and heavy enough to injure a man seriously.

To show that some cheerfulness still existed amongst us, let me recount an incident which occurred in the D.E.C.'s house on the morning of April Fool's Day. A native servant—Narain by name—duly brought his master's

chota-hazri and deposited the teapot and slice of toast conveniently for the sleepy officer, who, on attempting to pour out his cup of tea, found that the teapot contained *sawdust*! The dutiful Narain then explained with becoming gravity that it was April Fool's Day. Whether this trick was done from a sense of humour—in which case it was a remarkably plucky act when dealing with a dozing "Sahib"—or whether it was done with the idea that his master would *expect* to be fooled on April 1st, and would notice the omission if not duly fooled, I do not know. It caused much amusement to us all and Narain was not reprimanded, for I really think he was actuated by a sense of duty.

The next day was still rainy, and Kut as muddy and unpleasant as ever, except that the main roads were in a better state than earlier in the siege. The Indians who refused to eat horseflesh were becoming very thin and losing strength day by day; their daily ration of 10 oz. of *atta* and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of ghee was certainly not sufficient to maintain them in proper condition. The Mohammedans of the smaller units still refused to touch horseflesh in spite of all argument, because, as they said, their co-religionists of the Indian regiments had not yet done so. Many of the Hindus also would not eat this excellent, if rather novel, form of food.

Kut was now in hourly expectation of General Gorrings's advance, but each morning was quiet, and the garrison remained only in a state of semi-readiness for the great event. Every preparation for co-operation was complete.

On April 4th the Turkish field gun near the bend of the Tigris downstream of the town again fired on H.M.S. *Sumana*, but luckily it did no damage. From this date onwards hardly a day passed without an attempt on the life of the little vessel. The shells which missed the ship also only just missed my projecting room on the river-front; one of these shells hit a wall on the roof of the D.E.C.'s house next door, and covered the roof of my room with pieces of broken brick, but the room itself escaped damage.

The Turkish gunners in charge of the field gun were very enterprising and persistent in their efforts. On the open plain, south of the bend in the river and a few hundred yards away from the river-bank, was a shallow ditch, at various places in which the enemy made suitable

positions from which to fire the gun. The positions were known to our gunners as K2, K3, K4, K5, K7, and K8, and the last two are shown on Map No. 6. Our artillery never knew from which position to expect the first shot, unless the special observing officer, who was always on duty on the roof of the 7th Rajputs' mess, could manage to spot the gun itself and the tops of the wheels peeping over the low bank of the ditch. The distance of the gun from our batteries at the Brick Kilns was never more than 2,400 yards, and frequently less, and the gun bombarded the *Sumana* from a distance usually less than 1,500 yards. To deal with this little pest our 5-inch howitzers at the Brick Kilns, and the two 15-pr. field guns of the Volunteer Artillery Battery behind Kut, were always ready. The howitzers actually scored a direct hit once with excellent results, but the damaged hostile gun was replaced by a new one.

The Turks would get their gun into position at night, and at different times during the day (preferably at dawn or dusk) the gun detachment would crawl along the shallow ditch from a dugout and load the gun, keeping well down below it while so doing. One man then very slowly raised his head to lay the weapon while his companions crawled back to shelter, followed by the layer as soon as the gun was correctly aligned and prepared for firing. A very long lanyard then served to fire the gun from the dugout. Directly it fired—often before it fired—the muffled bang of a howitzer would be heard from the Brick Kilns, and, after a long pause, a tremendous column of black smoke spouted up and enveloped the ditch near the Turkish gun, and the dull roar of the lyddite reached us in Kut a few seconds later, while the shrapnel from the 15-pounders and sometimes from the field guns on the river-front cut up the ground around the trench. The howitzers also occasionally fired shrapnel. It must have been very nasty in that ditch. All sorts of stratagems were tried by our gunners to catch the Turkish gun crew unawares, but usually with no very great success, for the men had excellent cover close at hand. Frequently the Turks laid the gun by day and fired it after dark, when they judged that the *Sumana's* crew would probably be aboard her preparing for a trip across to Woolpress village.

Before dawn on April 5th, 1916, a very heavy bombardment commenced downstream. The detonations of the

bursting shells, and the distant roar of the guns, shook our houses in Kut and seemed to be absolutely continuous. One could feel the whole atmosphere pulsating with the muffled concussions. This state of affairs lasted till 6.15 a.m., when there seemed to be a lull. I got up and went on to the post-office roof, but could see practically nothing because of the dense mist; yet it was apparent to all that General Gorringe must have started on his way, and that his troops were even then assaulting the maze of Turkish trenches below Kut.

The garrison of Kut stood to arms and anxiously awaited news of the progress of the attack. The weather was fine again and calm, but the uncertain Tigris had commenced to rise slowly and it seemed that the maximum flood of the year must be approaching from upstream. On more than one occasion we had received intimation of approaching floods (caused by heavy rain in the Pusht-i-Kuh Mountains east of Baghdad) from a British officer—a Captain Marsh, I believe—who was a military attaché with the Russian force in Persia; but it was exceedingly difficult to estimate the exact time which a flood would take to reach Kut, though roughly it was ten days. Nor could we judge to what level such a flood would rise.

For some hours on April 5th no tidings arrived from General Gorringe. Later in the morning, however, a message came in stating that the 13th British Division had assaulted and captured the first five lines of trenches of the Hannah position on the left bank of the Tigris. Map No. 8 does not show the five lines of trenches, but merely two lines at Hannah itself, which may be taken as roughly indicating the situation of the five lines of captured trenches. This message cheered us very greatly, and doubtless that was the reason why it was despatched, for, from what I heard subsequently, it appears that the enemy did not hold these trenches strongly.

Throughout April 5th the guns muttered and growled in the distance, and the Turkish reserves could be seen grouped in rear of the Es-Sin position, while far away to the east the shrapnel burst incessantly with small white puffs of smoke, and the tall fountains of exploded lyddite sprang up and died away before the light breeze.

It seems that the Relief Force also attacked up the right bank past Dir el Said Hashim and Maxim Mound, and during the afternoon the troops on this bank captured

a position downstream of the Abu Roman Mounds, where they then strengthened the localities they had taken. I am unable to give an accurate account of these operations, which have of course been fully reported elsewhere, and my object rather is to show what information the rank and file of the garrison of Kut had in April about the progress of operations beyond the Es-Sin position.

We, in Kut, observed the bombardment at intervals throughout the day with our field-glasses, and all remained ready to help if the Relief Force broke through the Turkish lines; at dusk the noise of the intermittent firing grew in intensity and finally became an incessant roar. As darkness fell, the horizon to the east was a wonderful spectacle; the unceasing explosions of the shells—bursting, often, in salvoes of six or more—lit up the distant plains as though a gigantic firework display was in progress, while in the nearer distance coloured lights, directed towards their rear by the Turkish forces, indicated to us whether the enemy was calling for reinforcements or for ammunition. The roof of the post office in Kut was crowded with officers and men, as were many other roofs in the town, but no one could tell how matters were going. The terrific bombardment lasted till 8 p.m., gradually dying away at that hour till all was quiet once more. It seems that this bombardment must have been in connection with the fight on the left bank of the Tigris when the Relief Force captured the Turkish position at Falahiyeh.

On April 7th, 1916, things seemed to be fairly quiet again downstream, and we concluded that the Relief Force had halted for a short rest prior to a further advance, but General Gorrings's guns could still be heard at intervals slowly bombarding the Turkish positions at Sannaiyat. A message came in from General Gorrings in which he stated that he was preparing to attack the Sannaiyat position, which he could enfilade from the right bank—presumably from the neighbourhood of the Abu Roman Mounds. On the whole, the situation appeared to be fairly satisfactory, yet the slow progress of our rescue party made it apparent that it would require a considerable time to reach Kut.

During the night of April 6th/7th the two 5-inch B.L. guns at the Brick Kilns shelled the Magasis Ferry at intervals, to interfere as much as possible with the passage of troops across the Tigris in my old Bridging

Train barge, which was employed by the Turks as a flying-bridge at that place. The range was 10,400 yards, and the trails of the gun carriages were dug well into the ground to get the required elevation for the guns. Fairly good practice was made, but the barge was not damaged. On this night Lieutenant Greenwood, R.E., of the Wireless Telegraph Section, was hit by a fragment of segment shell from the field gun bombarding H.M.S. *Sumana*, but escaped with a slight wound in the shoulder.

The River Tigris, which had begun to rise again with great rapidity on April 4th, was still rising on April 7th, when it reached the highest level of the March flood, and then passed it by a few inches. The water-level was then so high that the bunds around Kut were in great danger. It seemed as if after all we were destined to be flooded out. Readings were taken at frequent intervals from all the river-gauges fixed in the water, and the bunds were continually patrolled and inspected. The water lay in great sheets extending for miles over the plains around Kut, and the Turks were as busy as our own men in trying to prevent the destruction of their carefully dug trenches and redoubts.

The river-bank 200 yards below the fort burst on April 7th, and the peninsula was flooded more rapidly than before through the network of Turkish trenches. The fort ditch on the north-east and western faces was flooded, and the river-water rose right up to the river-face of the fortification. The inner keep was now ready except for head cover, so no further work was really necessary on it. Luckily the old walls of the fort, and their strengthening arrangements, held out; though one evening the water broke through into the Oxfords' dugouts, but was eventually checked. After this the river-level fortunately fell and never rose again to the same height. The men in the fort suffered much in these strenuous periods from overwork, scanty food, and the enemy's snipers, who prevented much work being done during daylight. All dugouts within fifty yards of the Tigris were gradually flooded.

General Townshend issued a short communiqué on April 7th, giving a brief account of how the Relief Force was faring, but no very definite intelligence of its progress was vouchsafed to us.

April 8th was fairly quiet downstream. At 3 a.m.,

however, on April 9th a terrific bombardment commenced in the Sannaiyat direction and lasted till 9 a.m. This we knew must be the occasion of another attack by the Relief Force—probably on the Sannaiyat position—yet the lengthy duration of the bombardment made us think that all had not gone too well and that very great resistance must have been encountered. The troops stood to arms in Kut as usual, but no message arrived, so we remained in ignorance of what had happened, hoping, however, that there had not been any serious set-back. The 5-inch B.L. guns at the Brick Kilns kept up a steady fire on the Magasis Ferry to interfere with its working during the battle then raging at Sannaiyat.

On April 10th, 1916, General Townshend issued another long communiqué to the troops dealing with the situation as a whole. Its full text will be found in Appendix G. In it he announced that the Relief Force had attacked the Turks in the Sannaiyat position, but had not as yet won its way through, though now entrenched close up to the enemy. This was a great blow to our hopes, but was scarcely unexpected, for we should have received immediate tidings of a fully successful attack. The communiqué went on to announce a reduction of the daily ration to 5 oz. of meal for all ranks, British and Indian, so that we could hold out till April 21st if necessary. It ended with an appeal to all ranks to help in the food difficulty.

General Townshend also alluded to the effect upon our power of resistance of the refusal of certain of the Indian troops and followers to eat horseflesh. This had a great effect among the Indians; combined with increasing hunger it subsequently brought them to see the necessity for eating horse.

Again, on April 11th, General Townshend issued yet another important communiqué to the troops, in which he informed them that in reply to a telegram of his own to the Army Commander—explaining that he had still further reduced our rations so as to be able to hold out till April 21st—Sir Percy Lake (the Army Commander) had replied that there could be no doubt that General Gorringe would in time force his way through to Kut, but that, in consequence of the set-back of April 9th (at Sannaiyat) it certainly seemed doubtful if he could reach Kut by April 15th. The communiqué (see Appendix G) concluded with an appeal to the Indian officers to endeavour

to induce their men to eat horseflesh, as the Arabs in Kut were then doing.

The point which struck us in Sir Percy Lake's reply was the words "*in time.*" They naturally suggested to us hungry folk the question "In what time?" No answer could be forthcoming to that query, for none could even guess at it.

In fairness to the Indian troops and followers in Kut I should like to say that in the early days of April a good many of those men, who had up to then refused to eat horseflesh, were beginning to do so of their own accord; and after General Townshend's communiqué of April 10th almost all the Indians drew and consumed their regular ration of meat. Unfortunately by that time, however, the mischief was done, and the greater part of these men were too weak to get full benefit from their food.

In January 1916, when the horses were beginning to be slaughtered to provide food for the troops, the R.F.A. drivers were formed into a Driver Company under Captain T. R. M. Carlisle, R.F.A. This unit did useful work, first in Kut as town police or town guards, later at the fort, and finally at the river-picquet posts south of Kut. There were not many battery horses left in Kut in April 1916.

In the R.E. mess our diminutive daily ration of bread was prized more than untold riches, and each little 10-oz. loaf was divided with mathematical accuracy into its two 5-oz. portions, one for each officer, to last him for the next twenty-four hours. We thoroughly endorsed the old proverb that half a loaf is better than no bread, but half a loaf is only a shade better if it has to last for twenty-four hours! I always brought my little half loaf (or its remains) to meals in an empty half-pound tobacco tin, and allowed myself three thin little slices for breakfast, one for lunch, two for tea, one for dinner, and one for *chota-hazri* the next day; and by rigidly adhering to this allowance at each meal I managed to rub along somehow. The flour-mills near the Turkish baths ceased to work about April 11th, for there was no more grain to be crushed.

Of meat we had plenty. The ration was $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. per man per diem, so every one consumed enormous quantities of horse or mule's flesh, not because he liked it or needed it as sustenance, but merely to fill up an aching void inside him. One would imagine that so much meat would make a person very ill; but it seems that if one's body

is starving it can assimilate an excess of any sort of healthy food, though it cannot thrive on a diet of meat alone relieved only by a minute quantity of bread and a few dandelion leaves. For tea in the afternoon I used to make a number of very small chupatties with fat in them, and each member of our mess got three for his tea or sometimes even four—about 2 oz. of flour or atta made four of these chupatties. I generally made these chupatties from a small mess stock of atta which we had previously laid in as a reserve in case of need. It was hot in the afternoons in April and the chupattie-making was hard work; usually after handing over the completed articles to the cook I had to rest in a deck-chair for half an hour, feeling almost sick with hunger and a concentrated longing for just a little sugar which nature craved incessantly. The small amount of starchy food produced this craving for sugar which attacked most of us with such force. To still the complaints from within I would sometimes be forced to smoke half a pipeful of my precious remaining “smoking mixture,” composed of the dust and stalks of the worst class of Arab tobacco. It was unsafe to allow the servants access to our little stock of flour, so 2nd Lieutenant Abbott and I undertook the chupattie-making.

Many officers and all the men had now come to the end of their tobacco, and all sorts of nauseous substitutes were tried, such as tea leaves, the leaves of lime trees, and even ginger, but these makeshifts I could not face. We found that large quantities of meat stilled the pangs of hunger for a time, but they returned long before the next meal. I suffered very much from cramp at night, especially in my feet, frequently necessitating a tramp up and down my roughly-tiled floor in the dark small hours of the morning.

Another trial to which we had been subjected for some time was that of the “*Pulex irritans*,” or common flea. These sweet insects, accompanied by their larger and more powerful brethren, simply swarmed in most of the rooms, and it was necessary to scatter Keating’s powder broadcast to get a good night’s rest. Mesopotamia actually boasts a “flea season” from January to April—a fact which may bring home to the reader some idea of the numbers and ferocity of these pests.

Sandflies also thronged the air at nights, biting one’s

wrists and ankles till one was forced to draw socks over feet and hands and to roll oneself in a sheet like a mummy. We longed in Kut to give that "Mesopotamian-picnic" journalist a practical demonstration of our picnic in Kut. If, gentle reader, you will add to the foregoing discomforts frequent touches of colic and dysentery, complicated in many cases by jaundice, you will have a good working idea of the home comforts of our life in April 1916.

Several auctions were held during the siege to dispose of the effects of deceased officers and men. It may be instructive to mention the prices fetched by a few articles at one such auction held on April 11th. The following will suffice: one box of 100 cigarettes, Rs. 100 (£6 13s. 4d.); one $\frac{1}{2}$ -lb. tin of doubtful butter, Rs. 12 (15s.); a small shaving mirror, Rs. 32 (£2 2s. 8d.); one pound of coarse sugar, Rs. 20 (£1 5s. 4d.); one oke ($2\frac{2}{3}$ lb.) of Arab tobacco, Rs. 54 (£3 12s.), compared with the normal bazaar price of 6d. Also Rs. 50 (£3 6s. 8d.) was offered for a bottle of whisky but was not accepted. As the box of 100 cigarettes was handed over to its proud owner, a voice from the other side of the circle of buyers arose: "I say, G——, have you got such a thing as a cigarette about you?" The answer, I regret to say, was in the negative.

At a subsequent auction on April 25th, a box of 100 inferior Indian cheroots fetched Rs. 204 (£13 12s.); and $2\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of English tobacco sold at the trifling figure of Rs. 55 (£3 13s. 4d.)! And, mark you, we were not millionaires in Kut; but in such places and under such conditions money loses its normal value, for no one in such circumstances knows if he will ever have an opportunity of spending what he has saved. So why not use it and take no thought for the morrow?

The difficulty of the supply of cash and notes in Kut had been largely obviated by means of the aeroplanes of the Relief Force. The machines frequently flew over the plain east of the town and dropped boxes full of silver rupees or golden liras, and also a great amount of paper money. The rupees were invaluable for the payment of the troops and the Arab coolies, and the gold coins also went into the pockets of the Arabs and kept the British officers in funds.

The shock of impact was so great when the money struck the ground after its fall of 5,000 or 6,000 feet, that

several rupees which I saw were twisted into the weirdest shapes, and of course the money was always scattered broadcast upon the ground when the box burst. The money was collected by sentries and brought into headquarters in Kut. Many of the Arabs handed over their accumulations of rupees to the representative of a well-known firm who ran a species of bank during the siege, and he in turn passed the money back to the military authorities, who then had it available for re-issue in payment for work executed. Thus many rupees by circulation created credit much beyond their value, and the system was very useful when money was scarce.

Early in April 1916 it was reported by our observers that a very great number of danacks and mashoofs were being collected in the Shatt-al-Hai Channel near the bridge at the Besoula Ford (see Map No. 8). This report caused our tacticians to put their heads together, and in due course the conclusion was reached that the Turks contemplated an attack on the town itself from the mouth of the Shatt-al-Hai by means of infantry rushed across in boats on a dark night. Steps were then taken to defeat any such attempt at a surprise. A 12-pr. naval gun on a pedestal mounting (taken off H.M.S. *Sumana*) was fixed just within the end of No. 6 Avenue, whence it could fire on the mouth of the Shatt-al-Hai. The gun-platform was of palm trees roughly squared, bolted together, and buried in earth. We mounted a searchlight on a roof near the wireless yard, protected by a wall of rough brickwork; and a 3-pr. Q.F. gun, mounted behind the lower pump-house and primarily intended for use against the enemy's gun which bombarded the *Sumana*, was also available for use against a boat attack. For several nights the picquets along the river were strengthened by British infantry. If a boat attack had ever been attempted, it would have been repulsed with great slaughter, but no such assault took place.

Our 5-inch B.L. guns at the Brick Kilns, in addition to bombarding the ferry at Magasis, made an attempt to destroy the mahela bridge at Besoula. With trails dug in and muzzles pointing high in the air, they hurled forth their shells over Kut and far out across the plains beyond the river. The range was about 11,400 yards and the angle of elevation 31 degrees. Moderately good practice was made, but the bridge was not hit—under

such conditions it would have been a lucky shot which pitched on to so small a target.

Brigadier-General F. A. Hoghton, commanding the 17th Brigade, was taken suddenly ill during the night of April 11th/12th and died in a few hours. Though physically strong and robust, he had been in poor health for some time, but the news of his sudden death came as a shock to his many friends and caused much grief in the garrison, where he was popular with all ranks. He was buried that afternoon in the little cemetery at the north end of Kut, in the presence of all the officers of the garrison who were off duty. His genial presence was much missed from our small community, but he is not forgotten in his grave in distant Mesopotamia among so many gallant comrades laid to their long rest during those fateful months.

During the siege of Kut the casualties among the garrison (omitting sick) amounted to approximately 3,800 men, of whom about 1,000 were killed or died of wounds.¹ In a force of only four weak brigades this was a heavy percentage. Every hour added to the total, and every day thus reduced our fighting strength, in spite of the wounded men returned to duty from our many overworked and badly equipped hospitals. The supply of drugs for the hospitals was kept up by medicines in tabloid form brought by the aeroplanes from below and dropped into Kut; but it was suitable accommodation which was so terribly lacking in Kut. Operations had to be performed in places which would make a London surgeon speechless with disgust, and the wounded and sick had to lie in dark rooms with mud floors, frequently very damp, generally very dirty, and always exposed to shells or bombs. Our doctors did their best in the wretched surroundings in which they found themselves.

After the funeral of General Hoghton on April 11th, all officers commanding Indian units in Kut assembled by order in General Townshend's house, where the question of the refusal of the Indians to eat horseflesh was discussed. The G.O.C. the forces in Kut explained why the Arab population had been allowed to remain in the town instead of being turned out when we arrived from Ctesiphon. He also read us a portion of a telegram sent to Army Headquarters requesting that on relief the 6th Division should



AN OPERATING THEATRE IN KUT.

be sent back to India to recoup and refit. We all earnestly hoped that this request would meet with approval. No definite decision was reached on the meat-eating question. It appears that the expulsion of the Arab population from Kut on our arrival was strongly recommended on military grounds, but once more the political element had stepped in and the Arabs were allowed to remain—the result being 19,000 souls to feed in the besieged town instead of only 13,000.

At 6 a.m. on April 13th we heard a heavy and prolonged burst of rifle fire on the Es-Sin Ridge away to the east. This was puzzling. Could it be that our troops had completely surprised the enemy and were capturing the ridge? It seemed impossible. The rattle of musketry ceased in time, and later we heard that the enemy had fired heavily on one of our aeroplanes reconnoitring along the ridge, though I understand that the machine escaped without damage.

The weather was fine on April 13th, but the wind was veering about from all points of the compass till it finally settled down to blow again from the south or south-east, and then the hateful clouds rolled up once more and the following day brought us drizzling rain with its usual discomforts. What could the Relief Force do against such weather conditions? It seemed as if heaven and earth had combined to prevent our rescue.

The Supply and Transport Corps issued its last reserve of jam, and our mess received one tin, which worked out at an allowance of 1 oz. for each member—such a treat after long abstinence from sugar, but so small compared with the regulation allowance of 4 oz. per head.

April 15th, 1916, was still wet and cloudy; yet General Gorringe contrived to capture a few more trenches on the right bank. The position of the advanced Turkish forces on the left bank, downstream of General Gorringe's advanced positions and exposed to the enfilading fire of his 60-pr. guns and 4.5-inch Q.F. howitzers, must have been exceedingly precarious; but the picked Turkish troops in their deep trenches hung on like grim death to what they held, and grim death indeed overtook many a hardy Anatolian in those trenches.

The weather cleared again on April 16th, and all soon felt more cheerful though very hungry. It is remarkable how weather affects the spirits, for even a hungry

man can be cheerful on a fine day, but it needs a hungry superman to be hilarious on a wet day.

A scheme had been evolved a short while before this for rationing Kut from aeroplanes. The fame of this attempt seems to have spread over the world, for even in the wilds of Anatolia we met men who knew little about the siege of Kut, but who had heard of the food dropped into the town from our flying machines. On the assumption that each large aeroplane could carry 300 lb. of flour, it appeared that, to provide all ranks and the Arabs with 6 oz. of flour per head per diem (or say a total of 5,000 lb.), at least sixteen trips by aeroplanes would be necessary. It seemed that six machines might accomplish this number of trips between sunrise and sunset. Meat was sufficient in Kut—it was flour which was lacking.

The scheme for fully rationing the troops in Kut by an aeroplane service failed. It was unsuccessful partly because sufficient aeroplanes in good condition were not available, and also because it was found that the machines could not manage the *bulk* occupied by 300 lb. of flour, nor could all the machines even carry that dead weight. To supply 1 oz. of flour per head for the garrison of Kut it was necessary to bring about 870 lb. of flour to the town, and this made no allowance for the Arab population. The maximum weight of flour brought to Kut in any one day by all General Gorrings's aeroplanes was about 2,450 lb.—usually it amounted to about 1,600 lb., and frequently much less. This was quite inadequate to maintain even the garrison alone on quarter rations. Nevertheless, a large amount of flour, and some dal (lentils) and other eatables, were brought to Kut by the aeroplanes of the Relief Force, though only sufficient to keep the garrison for a few days beyond the previously calculated date. Some of the loads of flour were dropped by mistake into the Tigris by the seaplanes, much to our disgust. It appears that the seaplane pilots had had little practice in bomb-dropping, and that the position of the planes prevented them from getting a clear view downwards unless the planes were slightly cut away. For some reason this alteration to the machines was not carried out, and we lost in consequence several valuable consignments of food. It is very hard to judge when an aeroplane is vertically over one's head, and I am told it is even harder for a pilot to judge when to release a bomb or other load

from a height of 6,000 feet unless he has the necessary instruments and has been trained in the work.

The first aeroplane dropped its two huge loads of good white flour on April 15th, 1916, on to the plain outside Kut, each load being made up of two sacks with their ends tied together, and each sack containing an inner sack which held the flour. The loads were slung below the fusillage and, when released at a height of 6,000 feet, fell turning slowly over and over and leaving an aerial trail of flour till they plunged with dull thuds on to the plain near the Brick Kilns. Strange to say, the loads stood the shock of impact well and not much flour was lost. Our supply of "manna" from the skies continued fairly steadily day by day from April 15th, and some tons of flour were gradually collected for use when our own supply of bread had altogether ceased.

Many other necessary articles had been dropped before this from our flying machines, such as drugs, machinery, fishing-nets, and actually a granite grindstone for the flour-mills. The airmen certainly did their best, but there were not enough of them. Our enemy Fritz no longer pressed his unwelcome attentions upon us; he was much too busy with his duties downstream and never flew over Kut. The Turks sat around the dying town like vultures round a dying man, waiting for the end.

On April 17th another terrific bombardment broke out downstream in the morning. The great guns muttered and growled unceasingly for several hours, and again the weary garrison of Kut prepared for any emergency and hoped for good news. It was not till the following day that we heard that on the morning of April 17th the 3rd (Lahore) Indian Division, under Major-General D'Urban Keary, had attacked a strong Turkish position at Beit Aiessa on the right bank of the Tigris (see Map No. 8), and had captured it, taking two guns, three machine guns, and 180 prisoners, including eight officers. This was cheering news and more was eagerly awaited. The capture of Beit Aiessa enabled General Gorringe to enfilade the left-bank portion of the Sannaiyat position with his big guns.

The same evening the distant sound of gunfire which had lasted throughout the day rose to a continuous roar, and the eastern horizon was lit up by the flashes from hundreds of bursting shells. Hour after hour the thunder went on, till at 4 a.m. on April 18th it lessened in volume

and finally faded into silence. The meaning of this concentrated bombardment was not known till towards noon on April 18th, when a telegram arrived stating that the Turks had made stupendous efforts to eject our troops from the captured trenches on the right bank near Beit Aiessa. Counter-attack after counter-attack had been launched, and two of our brigades had at last been forced to withdraw from the captured trenches, but the third heroic brigade of the 3rd Lahore Division stood fast against every assault and so saved the situation. It is said that 10,000 Turks attacked our troops in massed formations throughout the night, and delivered on one section of our line twelve separate assaults, each repulsed with awful carnage. The enemy also worked along the trench leading from the Sin Abtar Redoubt to the Chahela Mounds and massed in numerous feather trenches leading off this trench. The slaughter in this trench was great. According to the official telegrams 4,000 Turkish dead were counted at daylight on the bloodstained plain in front of our line. This figure, if correct, will give an indication of the total losses of the enemy. I presume that the Turks were reinforced during the night to replace casualties occurring in their determined assaults. The Relief Force lost about 2,000 men in this desperate combat.

The news of General Keary's successful attack, and the repulse of the subsequent Turkish counter-attacks, caused much jubilation in Kut, and bets were freely exchanged about the probable date of relief, which, in the fine weather then prevailing, seemed imminent. But many failed to understand that for the time being General Gorrings's force had all it could do to maintain the positions it had won with such terrible loss, and that it could not advance further with reasonable prospect of success until heavily reinforced; meanwhile, the Turkish positions grew and multiplied in front of the force, and the ground not fortified by the enemy became submerged. General Gorrings's troops had not only to fight the Turks, but had also to construct miles of causeways and scores of dams and bridges in their endeavours to render the flooded ground around them passable for guns, lorries, and men. The fatigue and exposure undergone by the men employed on such work must have heavily discounted their fighting value, great as that undoubtedly was.

A rumour reached Kut about this time that the Turks

were making great efforts to construct a bridge across the Tigris in the Es-Sin position. On many occasions pontoons had been seen being dragged across the plains in the distance towards Es-Sin, and our guns had opened fire on them when within range. The pontoons were probably some of the captured ones of my Bridging Train which were abandoned by one of the launches above Shumran, as I have related elsewhere. A floating bridge at Es-Sin would have very greatly facilitated the enemy's work of reinforcement between the two sections of the position separated by the River Tigris; and thus it was of paramount importance for us to destroy any such bridge as early as possible, and a scheme was made out to this end. The idea was that Lieutenant Tudway, R.N., accompanied by me with ten of my men and a British infantry officer with twenty of his men, should go downstream at night in the *Sumana* and charge the bridge. The *Sumana* was to have a steel barge on either side fitted with raised prows of wooden beams, strongly strutted, so as to cut through the raised roadway if gissara boats happened to be in the bridge. The twenty British soldiers were to carry bombs, and, if we failed to smash a large portion of the bridge when we rammed it, the bombers were to leap on to it and run along it in either direction, throwing bombs into the boats. I was then, with the aid of my sappers, to try to cut the *Sumana* clear of the wreckage, and the ship and barges were to proceed downstream to General Gorringe. The bombers on the bridge were to dive into the river and swim for the ship, and were to be provided with lifebelts to assist them.

I rigged up one barge with the necessary structure of wooden beams in its bow, but before further work was done I suggested that General Gorringe should be asked to send up an aeroplane to report whether the Turks actually had sufficient boats at Es-Sin to bridge the river. An aeroplane reconnoitred, and its report showed that a bridge was impossible, so the night venture of the *Sumana* did not take place—luckily for us who were to form the crew, for I think we stood a poor chance even if we broke the bridge.

In Kut the flour ration for British troops now produced approximately 5 oz. of bread per diem for each man; little enough on which to support life, though assisted by plenty of horseflesh. In the R.E. mess we had no milk,

sugar, butter, jam, or mustard, and only a very little tea and coffee. Our three hens were doing their best on short rations, and the industrious trio often produced two eggs in a day. These eggs we used with a small quantity of rice from our mess stores to make a "milk" pudding of a sort for dinner, when each member got one small helping of this unsweetened curiosity. Some ate their share mixed with salt and pepper, but I preferred my own in the plain state.

As Kut was getting very hot again in the daytime the smells were becoming correspondingly worse, in spite of every effort at sanitation. The river-front was in a disgusting state of filth. A south wind blew the odours of the place into our mess, and no remedy was possible. The Arabs were in a starving condition. A certain amount of food was issued to needy cases daily at a ration depot in No. 1A Avenue, but this could not suffice. In many places in the town one could see emaciated forms lying about in various stages of collapse. Nothing could be done for these unfortunate folk, for we ourselves had barely sufficient food with which to sustain life.

The Arab population commenced to leave Kut in hundreds every night from the middle of April onwards, just as rats leave a sinking ship. They collected kerosene-oil tins, jars, or anything else which would float, and bound them together to form rafts on which the women and children could be placed while the men swam and pushed the shaky affairs along. The rafts were launched from the river-front at Kut after dark, and the adventurers tried to reach the right bank as quickly as possible and there to land and escape across the plains.

The Turks did not want the Arabs to leave Kut, for they knew that the Arabs were consuming our slender supply of rations, so they sent in a message to Kut that they would shoot all Arabs seen leaving the town. The Arabs were warned by us at once, and we also told them that if they left we ourselves would shoot any of them trying to return. Yet night after night the loaded rafts drifted away downstream before the moon rose, and night after night the roll of musketry below told of Arab corpses floating down the river on riddled and sinking wreckage. Doubtless many of the people escaped, but apparently the majority did not. The noise at the fort was extraordinary on some of these nights. A submerged sandbank

divided the river-channel about 600 yards upstream of the fort, and some of the refugees got safely into the right-bank current and landed opposite the fort, but a number were caught in the swift current on the left bank and came past the fort close inshore, shouting to each other and to their friends who had safely reached the right bank. These unfortunate folk near the left bank were swept inshore close to the Turkish picquets lower down the river, particularly at one spot, and from the cries and shots and general uproar I fancy that few survived. The banks were strewn with the wreckage of their rafts every morning.

From time to time we got a few fish for our mess by dynamite cartridges or detonators exploded in the sumps of the pump-houses. An endeavour was made about this time to net fish for the troops by dragging backwaters with long nets brought to Kut by our aeroplanes. I tried this scheme for two nights but without result, so it was given up. As a final attempt, however, I fitted a net on the mahela mast boom floating above the 4'7-inch-gun barges on the night of April 21st/22nd, and went up after dark in a motor-boat with three other officers to above the boom, carrying a 4-lb. bomb of dynamite. Having lit the fuse, I dropped the charge into the river and was shot away at full speed towards Woolpress village. In about fifteen seconds the dynamite detonated on the river-bottom 20 feet or more below the surface, and our little boat jumped as if hit by a huge hammer, but continued on her way unharmed. Unfortunately the fish killed or stunned by the explosion were not caught in the net, for they came to the surface much farther down the swiftly flowing river. The bomb shook Woolpress village and all Kut felt it and was enquiring about it next day, for there was very little sound but a violent shock.

Arab tobacco was almost unobtainable in the town at this time, and Arab cigarettes, however inferior in quality, could not be purchased at any price; other goods, previously obtainable for our larder at great cost, could not be bought in Kut late in April 1916. It was noticeable, however, that when a very heavy bombardment commenced downstream, some carefully hoarded stuff would sometimes be seen for sale in the streets, but it vanished again with the cessation of the bombardment; the prices of all articles which were not eatable, and which

remained for sale up to the end, were likewise affected by gunfire.

April 22nd, 1916, a disastrous day for our arms in Mesopotamia, saw a desperate struggle in progress at Sannaiyat, where General Gorringe was making his last effort for the relief of Kut. The roar of the bombardment dimly reached us. The gallant British troops, supported by their comrades from India, hurled themselves against the barbed wire of the Turkish positions, ploughing through seas of mud to get even thus far, and cut down by the cruel fire of dozens of concealed machine guns flanking the entanglements. Over such appalling ground no troops, however brave and determined, could hope to win through so strong a defended line held by picked troops equally well armed as themselves. Our Relief Force was at length compelled to relinquish the attempt to break through the Sannaiyat position, but not until the ground was strewn with thousands of our brave fellows who had fallen in the attempt. Over that ghastly scene it would be well to draw a veil, were it not for the objectless conveyed in it of the heroism and discipline of the matchless infantry of our Army. The Relief Force sacrificed itself in a hopeless endeavour for the honour of England, and failed only after 23,000 men had fallen in the early months of 1916.

No news of the disaster reached us on April 22nd, nor on the morning of April 23rd, but later during that day the tidings spread that General Gorringe had attacked the Sannaiyat position, and that he had been unable to break through owing to the muddy ground. It was not announced to the troops that this was the final effort of the Relief Force unless a large supply of food could be sent to Kut, but we understood perfectly that the situation was extremely critical and that hope of relief was very slender.

The two-days reserve ration supply had already been issued and consumed, and now the two-days emergency rations were given out for consumption. Each ration consisted of 6 oz. of good biscuits, some of which were sweet and therefore doubly prized, and these biscuits were a most welcome change from our smaller ration of 4 oz. of bread. I actually succeeded in saving a little of my ration, so as to have something in hand for emergencies.

After April 22nd, 1916, our gunners around Kut were given leave to fire on every likely target irrespective of

the ammunition expended. Why husband ammunition, of which there was plenty, when food was almost finished? The Turkish gunners had a bad time around Kut in these latter days of the siege.

The only chance of saving the garrison seemed to be in bringing to Kut a sufficient supply of food to keep the troops alive until the floods had subsided and a very large Relief Force had assembled—say for another two months. The Army Commander decided that an attempt should be made to run a ship up the Tigris laden with selected provisions for the garrison of Kut, and the fine twin-screw steamer *Julnar* was selected for this desperate venture. She was inspected by Admiral Wemyss at Falahiyeh on the evening of April 8th, to see if she was suitable for the attempt, and then, having unloaded all cargo, she was sent downstream to Amarah. There her cabins, saloons, and upper-deck stanchions were removed, her masts cut down, and her bridge and engine-room protected by thin armour plating. She was then loaded with about 270 tons of selected stores for the starving garrison of Kut.

While at Amarah volunteers were called for, and three officers and eleven men were selected. No married man was allowed to volunteer for the attempt to reach Kut. The three officers were Lieutenant-Commander C. H. Cowley, R.N.V.R. (formerly of Messrs. Lynch Brothers), Lieutenant H. O. B. Firman, R.N., and Engineer-Lieutenant Lewis Reed, R.N.V.R. (also formerly of Messrs. Lynch Brothers). The eleven men belonged mostly to the Royal Navy. To this small band of heroes was given the task of running the *Julnar* through the Turkish position to Kut.

The ship arrived at Falahiyeh on April 23rd, but did not start for Kut till the following night. Every arrangement was made with all secrecy in Kut itself to unload the stores from the *Julnar* on her arrival near No. 12 Picquet (usually known as No. 3 Picquet), not far above the fort, where she was expected to run alongside the bank at about 4 a.m. on April 25th.

Alas for our hopes! the *Julnar* failed to reach Kut. In the early morning of April 25th we could see her at the Magasis Ferry, aground and captured.

It appears that the ship started at 8 p.m. from Falahiyeh, where the Relief Force flotilla was moored, and in

half an hour had been discovered by the Turks by the aid of star shell. She ran through a hellish rifle fire from both banks in the Es-Sin position, and safely crossed the steel cable of a flying-bridge in that position. It is said that the cable broke. About fifteen minutes before reaching Fort Magasis, however, the ship was shelled at point-blank range by Turkish field guns brought down to the water's edge. A shell hit the bridge and killed Lieutenant Firman, R.N., and others raked the ship while bullets riddled her hull. At length, opposite Magasis, the *Julnar* fouled another steel cable and was held up by it. The gallant crew then surrendered. The survivors, including five wounded, were removed to the shore and later were sent up country, but Commander Cowley disappeared. There is no doubt that he was secretly murdered by the Turks. With the capture of the *Julnar* the last hope of the relief of the garrison of Kut failed. Lieutenant-Commander Cowley and Lieutenant Firman were subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously for their heroism.

Time dragged on, but no news of what was impending reached our troops, who patiently and doggedly continued their daily work with implicit trust and confidence that whatever was decided would be for their welfare and for the honour of our country. The aeroplanes from below flew over the doomed town each day, carrying comfort and hope to us prisoners within it, and still bringing with them their small contributions of flour to be added to our rapidly diminishing stock. Our little loaves of bread were once more pure white in colour, and very palatable after the barley and atta loaves of some days before, but the ration of 4 oz. of bread per man from April 22nd told terribly on the health of all. The Indian troops who were now eating horseflesh were often too weak to pick up strength on their small ration of flour irrespective of the amount of meat which could be given to them. Of late many Indians had died in hospital from exhaustion caused by starvation, and many more were at death's door. No man in the garrison could have marched ten miles carrying his arms and full equipment, and the greater part could not have marched five. Our doctors took the temperature of a large number of soldiers and found that the average was ninety-seven degrees, and the temperature of some was as low as ninety-six degrees.



RUINED BAZAAR ON THE RIVER FRONT.



DORSETS IN THE FRONT LINE.

On April 26th, 1916, a Turkish Bimbashi (major) arrived, blindfolded as usual, in Kut, and delivered his written message at headquarters, but he left the town without a bandage over his eyes, and this quickly became known to the garrison and caused some conjecture. The Bimbashi was conducted as far as the fort by Captain A. J. Shakeshaft, 2nd Norfolk Regiment, and rejoined the enemy downstream of the fort. It had been arranged apparently that General Townshend was to go down to the Magasis Ferry that night in the *Sumana*, which was to show special coloured lights, and he was there to interview Khalil Pasha; but a Turkish gun fired a shot into Kut that afternoon (a mistake, I believe), and General Townshend then refused to go, as it was understood that no firing should take place.

The next morning (April 27th) brought an absolute cessation of hostilities at Kut. An armistice had been arranged. The stillness after so many months of noise was quite extraordinary. The day was calm, the weather fine, and the river-flood had fallen considerably; the atrocious weather and flood conditions had lasted just sufficiently long to prevent our relief. The news spread that an interview was about to take place between General Townshend and the Turkish Commander-in-Chief. It was difficult to recognise Kut that morning. Gradually one by one, and then in twos and threes, people wandered out on to the river-front, deserted for so many months in the daytime; and men walked openly on the roofs of the houses, safe from the bullets of snipers for at any rate a few hours.

Lieutenant R. D. Merriman, R.I.M., in resplendent white uniform, was busy near the *Sumana* with Captain S. C. Winfield-Smith, R.F.C., preparing the four-cylinder motor-boat for use by General Townshend and his staff, and soon she was running rapidly upstream towards the Turkish positions with the G.O.C. and other officers aboard her. The enemy's snipers on the right bank below the Shatt-al-Hai Channel were much interested, and only too glad to be able to get out of their shallow trenches and damp dugouts and lie basking in the sunlight or wander down unchecked to wash on the river-bank.

General Townshend's motor-boat grew smaller and smaller in the distance upstream, with a large white flag fluttering in the breeze, while from upstream a Turkish launch (one of the captured *L.* launches) approached her,

also flying a white flag. The boats met, and the motor-boat came alongside the launch opposite the Turkish advanced trenches about one and a half miles above Kut. General Townshend was accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Parr, 7th Rajputs (G.S.O. I), and Captain Morland, 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry (G.S.O. III), with Captain A. J. Shakeshaft, 2nd Norfolk Regiment, as interpreter, though the latter officer was hardly required as General Townshend could speak French fluently. Khalil Pasha and his staff were aboard the Turkish launch, and General Townshend first introduced himself and then his officers to the Turkish general. Our staff officers then returned to the motor-boat, where they remained with those in charge of the boat, while General Townshend himself descended into the cabin of the launch and remained in secret conference with Khalil Pasha for nearly half an hour. What passed during this momentous interview I am unable to say. General Townshend had full powers to propose almost any terms he thought suitable, but what those proposals were we were not told. After the interview our officers returned to Kut in the motor-boat, and General Townshend then published an order prohibiting any more firing until further orders.

On the night of April 26th/27th the destruction of gun-ammunition commenced in Kut. The various batteries were ordered to retain a certain number of rounds and to throw their balance of ammunition into the Tigris. This was done after spoiling the brass cartridge cases and removing the fuses of the shells. Again, on the next night, a still further reduction of ammunition was ordered and more was thrown away. This destruction of valuable munitions indicated fairly clearly that a surrender was imminent.

The night of April 27th/28th was still and peaceful. It was indeed a novelty to be able to lay one's head on a pillow with the certainty that no shell would come along to disturb one's rest; the sandflies, however, prevented the possibility of much comfort during the night.

On April 28th, 1916, General Townshend issued a long communiqué to his troops—one which, while giving the death-blow to our hopes of victory over our assailants, encouraged us to think that we should yet rejoin our comrades downstream within a few days. The full text of this communiqué appears in Appendix G. It opened

by stating that it had become clear, after General Gorrings's second repulse at Sannaiyat on April 22nd, that the Relief Force could not win its way through in anything like time to relieve Kut, and went on to explain that General Townshend had then been ordered to open negotiations for the surrender of Kut, as it was considered that he could get more favourable terms from the Turks than any emissary from the Relief Force.¹ The communiqué mentioned that negotiations were still in progress, and that General Townshend hoped soon to be able to announce the departure of his troops for India on parole not to serve against the Turks. It included an exhortation for the maintenance of discipline, and stated that the garrison might go into camp below Kut on the river-bank pending embarkation.

This part of the communiqué caused great joy among us all, in spite of the fact that our return to India would not be as glorious a one as that which we had anticipated; but we knew that everything possible had been done to defend Kut, and that only the direst necessity had caused the surrender of the town to the Turks. We had not succumbed to any attack of the enemy, but to a combination of circumstances which could not be avoided; and we rested assured that this would ensure us almost as warm a welcome from our comrades in India as if we had returned thither a victorious, instead of a captured and paroled, force.

At 6 a.m. on April 28th Captains Morland and Shakeshaft started upstream from Kut in a motor-boat under a flag of truce, and proceeded to a point opposite the advanced trenches of the enemy where they landed on the left bank. There they were met by a Turkish officer, who first gave them breakfast and then provided them with horses and rode with them a distance of five miles to the Turkish camp at Shumran. Our two officers went aboard the s.s. *Busrah*, where they were met by Khalil Pasha and Kâzim Bey (the latter in command of the 18th Turkish Army Corps) and by other Turkish officers, and they then proceeded, as our representatives, to refer to the proposals of surrender. Khalil Pasha was very polite

¹ The "Admiral" alluded to in the communiqué was Rear-Admiral Wemyss, R.N., who then commanded the squadron of river warships with the Relief Force, including, I believe, eleven ships of the "Fly" class and the *Tiger*.

and spoke French excellently, and he seemed remarkably well read. A man about thirty-five years of age, of medium height, dark, well groomed, and smart, he looked every inch a soldier.

Khalil opened the interview by stating that he had received a telegram from Enver Pasha, the Turkish Minister of War, in which the latter refused to accept any parole from the garrison of Kut, and demanded an unconditional surrender, and that our garrison should proceed as soon as possible to the Turkish camp at Shumran. This flat refusal of any terms proposed by General Townshend at once put an end to all negotiations, except those for facilitating the unconditional surrender thus peremptorily demanded.

The two British officers remained for an hour at Shumran talking with Khalil Pasha, who pressed every sort of refreshment upon them, and said that he considered the defence of Kut a most heroic one, and that it would rank with the defence of Plevna when the history of the war came to be written. He then sent a letter to General Townshend by the hand of Captain Morland demanding an unconditional surrender of Kut, and the British officers, escorted by a young Turkish staff officer, returned to Kut in a Turkish launch. On arrival they went to our Divisional Headquarters and delivered Khalil Pasha's letter to General Townshend.

The Turkish officer on the launch was a young artilleryman named Haider Beg who had spent eight years in the United States, and was the son of the Turkish Ambassador at Washington. He spoke English very well, but with a strong American accent, as did many of the educated Turks.

About 2 p.m. on April 28th Captain Shakeshaft with Lieutenant Merriman, R.I.M., and three Turkish officers started downstream in our motor-boat for Magasis, but broke down on the way and had to drift down the remainder of the distance. Our officers landed near Magasis while the Turks sent for a motor-boat of their own to tow our disabled boat. Meanwhile, the British officers waited in a tent, where they were offered refreshments. The disabled *Julnar* was visible downstream of them, and the Turks had unloaded her stores on to the river-bank and were busy checking them. Captain Shakeshaft, who had proceeded to Magasis simply to facilitate the arrival

of the Turkish officers at that place, was presented with a variety of stores off the *Julnar*. A Turkish motor-boat then took ours in tow, and the two boats reached Kut about 6 p.m., and our officers landed and reported at headquarters.

Instructions were issued to all units and departments in Kut regarding the destruction of rifles and ammunition. It was settled that fifty per cent. of the rifles should be destroyed at once, and only a few rounds of ammunition per man retained, so the rifles were burnt or broken up as ordered, and the small-arm ammunition thrown into the Tigris, except a small reserve. Wooden shoots had been prepared for the disposal of gun ammunition, and these were in continual use on the river-front at Kut during the night of April 28th/29th, where fatigue parties were hard at work all night sliding the shells into deep water. Thousands of rounds were thus disposed of, but it was very exhausting labour for the weakened men. We heard later that much of the ammunition was recovered from the river by the Turks when the river-level fell.

Of the 1,800 transport mules with which the force under General Townshend had marched into Kut in December 1915, only twenty-six remained. When fodder became very scarce, many of the mules were fed for a time on the flesh of other mules, finely chopped up and mixed with salt and bran. The animals ate this peculiar mixture and seemed to like it, especially if the meat had been cooked. These "cannibal mules," as we called them, ceased to receive this rather revolting diet when grass was more plentiful after the rain and salt became very scarce. The meat diet kept them very fit, and thus served its temporary purpose.

On the afternoon of April 28th I went for a walk along the river-bank past No. 5 Picquet, across the plain by the Brick Kilns, and back by the northern palm groves—the first long walk in the open country which I had been able to indulge in by daylight for nearly five months. The day was very hot and steamy, and the tramp of three miles tired me so much that I had to lie down in a chair when I got back. The river-front of the town was in a disgusting state—refuse was lying about everywhere, and the smell was nauseous. The Arabs were in the habit of throwing refuse round the high walls which blocked the ends of the various avenues so as to avoid the risk of

being hit by the bullets of the enemy's snipers, and no amount of supervision had been effective in altogether preventing this dirty habit, especially at night.

H.M.S. *Sumana*, the *L.* launch, and our two motor-boats still remained afloat near the lower pump-house, surrounded by sunken or leaking mahelas, with a small steel barge left high and dry on the shelving bank by a sudden drop in the water-level. The masts of two sunken mahelas showed in midstream, and another mahela lay at the entrance to the Shatt-al-Hai Channel—all destroyed by our own gunfire some time before when the boats had broken loose from their moorings and might have drifted across to the Turks. Another sunken mahela lay close to the river-front opposite the bazaar; and a sunken horse-boat, with a dismantled 4·7-inch gun aboard, showed below the upper pump-house alongside her three more fortunate sister ships. Upstream of all was the enormous double-decked steel barge *Lusitania* fast aground on the sloping bank and partially submerged. All the walls along the river-front were pitted with bullet holes, and the ground was honeycombed with shell craters. The walls of the bazaar running along the front were in ruins, and the north end of the Serai was in a similar state. From this brief description the reader will perhaps be able to picture the wreckage of the river-front of Kut at the end of the siege. As may have been gathered from previous descriptions, the state of the fort was even worse—it was scarcely recognisable.

On the morning of April 29th, 1916—a date which will never be forgotten by those in Kut—the weather was fine and clear, and our spirits revived as we looked forward to our release from captivity and our probable voyage downstream. Khalil Pasha's demand of unconditional surrender had not been announced to us. Then the last blow fell with redoubled force after our sanguine hopes of a bright future—an urgent message to all units from headquarters in Kut that everything was to be destroyed instantly. H.M.S. *Sumana* alone was to be spared. The very worst had happened, as all the garrison now fully recognised; for this message could only have one interpretation—that all negotiations for special terms for the garrison of Kut had failed, and that our fate was to be unconditional surrender to the Turks.

A scene of destruction followed. All units destroyed

their rifles and ammunition, and the Transport units destroyed their carts and shot their remaining mules if time admitted. Wagons were burnt, six fine motor-cars of the Mechanical Transport Section were destroyed, telephone instruments and cables were smashed and torn down, the wireless instruments were burnt, and every article likely to be useful to the enemy was spoiled. Captain Stace, R.E., went out with gun-cotton charges prepared beforehand and blew up the 12-pr. naval gun and two 3-pr. Q.F. guns, while the gun crews of the three 4.7-inch naval guns and the 18-pr. and 13-pr. Q.F. field guns also destroyed their weapons with gun-cotton. Each loud detonation marked the end of another valuable gun and brought sadness to the hearts of its crew. Everywhere similar sharp explosions rang out—among the Brick Kilns, in the palm groves, and east of Kut—as the gunners fired the charges and destroyed their well-beloved weapons which they had tended so carefully and handled so well.

The 5-inch howitzers were destroyed with lyddite shells in their bores to assist in their demolition. The high-explosive shells detonated in them when the gun-cotton charges exploded in their chambers, and one of the weapons simply vanished into space. A portion of one flew right over the town of Kut and across the Tigris and fell on the plain beyond. The rule adopted for the calculation of the charges was a breech charge of 2 lb. for a gun of 3-inch calibre or thereabouts (such as an 18-pr. field gun), doubling the charge for each inch of increase in calibre. Thus a 5-inch B.L. gun required 8 lb. in the chamber. Charges of from 2 to 3 lb. of gun-cotton were also clamped on to the guns near their muzzles. The muzzle charges proved to be very effective, in some cases blowing the muzzle off altogether, and in all others denting it so as to render the gun quite useless. The small chambers of the 5-inch howitzers presented some difficulty, but the lyddite shells in the bore did the work almost too effectually. The breech charges, with the breech blocks closed as far as possible, in most cases split the breeches of the guns and always smashed the breech blocks. All the charges had been carefully prepared in advance, but the rectangular shape of the gun-cotton slabs was very inconvenient in preparing breech charges, though the results attained were on the whole very good.

Thus in the space of an hour or less on April 29th our fine array of thirty-eight guns and four howitzers was completely destroyed, so that the Turks did not get one serviceable gun or howitzer when they entered Kut. The value of the artillery destroyed that morning in Kut was approximately £100,000. The two motor-boats were sunk by charges of 6 oz. of dynamite placed in each boat; they rapidly filled and went down in deep water. The magnetos of their engines had been broken up before this to render the engines useless even if the boats were raised. The *L.* launch was away on duty carrying our staff officers who had been sent to interview Khalil Pasha, as I will mention shortly, so she could not be destroyed, and together with the *Sumana*, she was seized by the enemy.

Meanwhile I was destroying all bridging material and other stores in the R.E. Field Park. There I made a great bonfire of first-class manilla rope soaked in oil, and heaped on to it tools, timber, pontoons, baulks, and everything else I could see. The bridging material ready loaded in the mahelas downstream had already been tipped into the river. Columns of smoke arose in all parts of Kut to the accompaniment of the roar of the gun-cotton charges in the guns. Not a shot was fired by the enemy during this process of destruction. I presume the Turks had orders not to fire, though it must have been annoying to the snipers to see the demolition work in progress before their eyes.

On the morning of April 29th, 1916, General Townshend issued his final communiqué to the troops in Kut.¹ In it he quoted a letter he had addressed to Khalil Pasha, announcing his readiness to surrender Kut and asking for considerate treatment of the garrison in view of its gallant defence and the poor state of health of the men. He added that there was still hope of an exchange of prisoners being arranged, and that he would go to Constantinople, where he hoped to get permission to proceed on parole to London to endeavour to have an exchange of prisoners arranged at once. He concluded by thanking the troops for their devotion, discipline, and bravery. Sad to say, General Townshend was not allowed to proceed to London, nor was an exchange of the able-bodied men of our garrison arranged.

¹ The full text of this message will be found in Appendix G.

Before noon our *L.* launch returned to Kut, and the Turkish flag, with its white crescent on a red ground, was hoisted in her stern sheets, while the first Turkish pilot landed from her on the river-front amid the shrill cries of welcome and fantastic dancing of a crowd of Arabs who were endeavouring to curry favour with the Turk, since he appeared for the moment to hold the upper hand over the Briton. A bitter sight it was to us after our long defence to see the Turkish flag waving among our river-craft in Kut itself.

No more destruction of stores was now possible, but we had seen to it that our revolvers had been broken up or thrown into the river, our field-glasses smashed, and all our revolver ammunition pitched into the Tigris. All plans, books, records, and orders had been burnt and their ashes scattered to the four winds of heaven. Orders had been issued that all troops were to stay in their billets while a Turkish regiment marched into Kut *via* the fort, so we in Kut had some food and awaited as patiently as we could the advent of the enemy.

About 2 p.m. we heard in the distance the muffled sound of drums beating a lively march—"rum-ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum" they went, but they failed to bring gladness to the British and Indian soldiers who heard them that fine morning—and in due course a column of thickset, dusty, dirty, and tired-looking Turkish infantry, laden with their full field-service kits, poured out of the town on to the river-front near our house, shuffling along in their thick uniforms of every conceivable pattern, and with their puttees wound round their legs like those of the proverbial brigand in a melodrama. They formed into line at the word of command, and, after posting sentries in various places, piled arms and removed their packs.

Kut was in the hands of the Turks and we were prisoners.

It may be interesting to trace the actual progress of the final arrangements for the surrender, as told me later by one of our staff officers.

It appears that at 6 a.m. on April 29th Major Gilchrist, Captain Morland, and Captain Shakeshaft, accompanied by Lieutenant Merriman and Captain Winfield-Smith, went down to the Turkish camp near Magasis in our *L.* launch, and thence rode two miles or so to Khalil Pasha's

tent a short distance upstream of the battered *Julnar*. Our staff officers went into Khalil's tent and handed him a translation into French of General Townshend's letter agreeing to the surrender of Kut which appears in his communiqué of April 29th. Khalil Pasha then said that matters were now settled, and that at 1 p.m. a Turkish regiment of three battalions would march into Kut to take over the town. Major Gilchrist next requested to be allowed to take some of the stores off the *Julnar* back to Kut with him in the *L.* launch, but the Turkish general would not agree to this, and said that provisions would be given to our troops when they had quitted Kut and were at Shumran. He promised, however, to send two steamers to take our men to Shumran, and to guard the hospitals in Kut, where our sick and wounded would have to remain for a short time.

The interview with Khalil Pasha near Magasis lasted for over an hour, and our officers were introduced to Colonel Nizām Bey, the officer commanding the regiment which was to march into Kut. With this officer and a doctor they then rode back to the launch at about 8.30 a.m., and the Turkish regiment received orders to march towards the fort and to wait outside it. The launch steamed up to below the fort, where Colonel Nizām Bey and the Turkish doctor landed and joined the Turkish troops, who were approaching the fort. The British officers went on in the launch to the fort and warned Colonel Brown, 103rd Mahrattas (the O.C. Fort), to be ready to admit the Turks in one hour's time. A British escort marched to the fort from Kut with our forty-five Turkish prisoners and released these men at the fort.

The launch then returned to Kut with our staff officers, and Captain Shakeshaft received orders to go to our middle-line trenches in the direction of the fort to meet Colonel Nizām Bey and his troops at 1 p.m. He went on foot and unarmed through the town, where the Arabs were making a great noise, and dancing and singing with joy, chiefly, I think, because the siege was ended and not because the Turks were coming. At the middle line Captain Shakeshaft met Colonel Nizām Bey riding a grey horse. The Turk was a tall fellow wearing large pince-nez, very stiff and erect, and of distinctly the German-staff-officer type. He wore the Turkish "Enverri" head-dress. He adopted an extremely arrogant manner and

demanded in French to be taken to the *mayor*. It was explained to him that there was no mayor, and he then demanded to be taken to headquarters, and set forth at such a pace that Captain Shakeshaft had to ask him to slow down as he could not keep up with him on foot. On the way to the town Nizām Bey asked how many guns we had in Kut, and when told that there had been forty-two, he asked where they were. Captain Shakeshaft pointed to a few twisted wrecks of ordnance visible not far off, and explained that these were a few specimens of our guns. The Turkish colonel then exploded into very lurid French and seemed much excited when he realised he was too late.

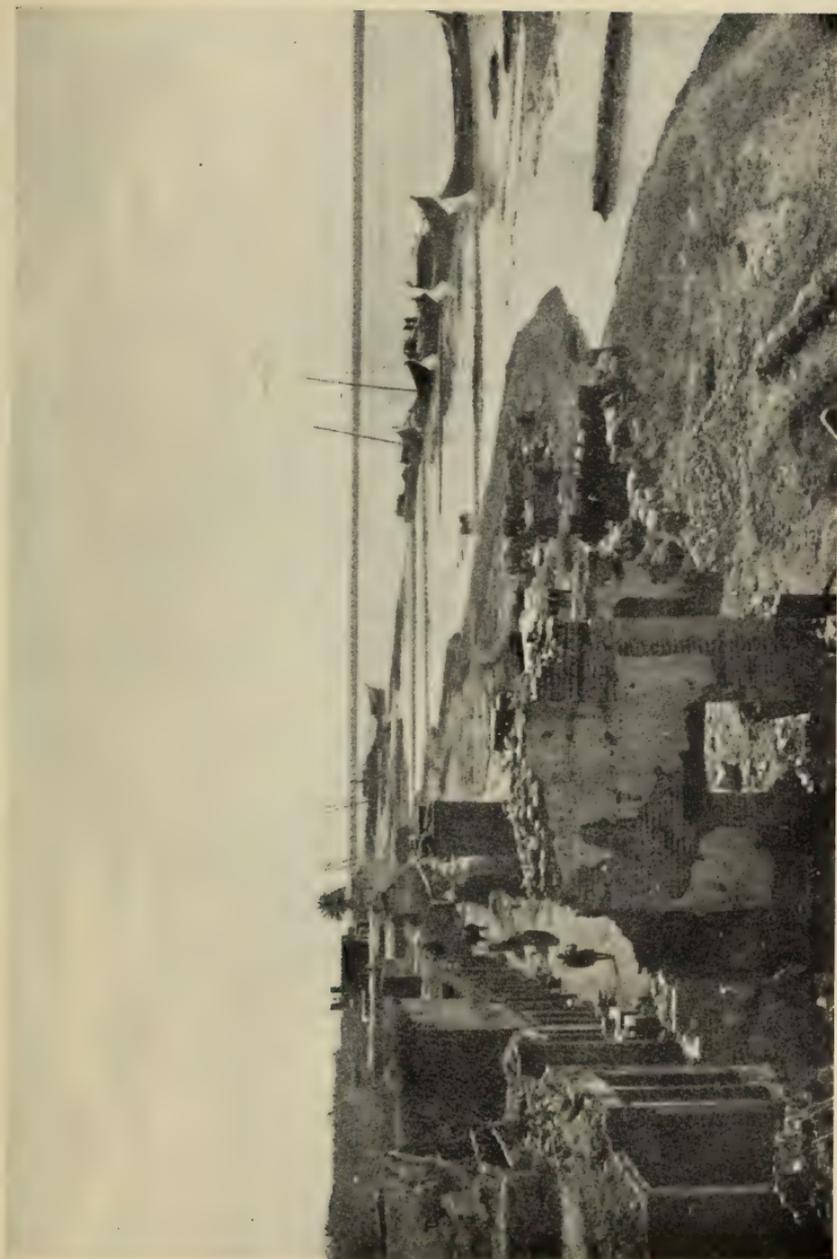
On arrival at our Divisional Headquarters in Kut the Turkish officer was met by General Delamain and Colonel Taylor (our Military Governor), and certain arrangements were discussed while the Turkish regiment waited outside the town. The Arabs in Kut had shown extreme joy on the arrival of Colonel Nizām Bey, dancing about and keeping up the shrill wavering cry much in vogue among their women. On several occasions they ran forward to kiss the Turkish officer's boots, but only received a few kicks in the face for their pains. After leaving our headquarters, Colonel Nizām Bey, escorted by Captain Shakeshaft, returned to Spink Road outside the town, where the Turkish regiment had already arrived. From the junction of Spink Road and No. 1 Avenue two Turkish battalions were marched away and spread over our trenches and into the town of Kut; the remaining battalion, with bayonets fixed and colours flying, marched to General Townshend's headquarters, headed by Colonel Nizām Bey, and accompanied by an Indian traitor of some education who spoke in Urdu to many of our Indian soldiers. Colonel Nizām Bey then assumed his office as Turkish Commandant of Kut.

After this Captain Shakeshaft went out again with a company of Turkish infantry under a Yuzbashi (captain), and they relieved all our guards in the vicinity. The Arab women were running forward frequently to kiss the feet of the Turkish officer, and the men were shouting and dancing as before, but they were kicked as a reward for their hypocritical joy. The Turk explained that he knew full well that if the British had been the victors and the Turks the vanquished, the Arabs would have shown

similar joy. It was not till 3 p.m. that Captain Shakeshaft got back to headquarters, very tired and hungry, and embarked on the s.s. *Busrah* en route for Shumran.

Thus ended the historic siege of Kut by the Turks—a siege of about 143 days as compared with the 120 days investment of Ladysmith in the South African War, but unhappily without its satisfactory termination. The 6th Indian Division, and the 30th Brigade of the 12th Indian Division, caught in a bend of the River Tigris, had defended Kut till no further resistance was possible on account of starvation; they had repulsed every attempt of the enemy to capture the town; and their final surrender was due, not to the prowess of the Turks investing Kut, but to the terrible run of ill-luck in the weather conditions which prevented the gallant efforts of the Relief Force from culminating in the rescue of the starving garrison.

And so farewell to General Townshend's small army as a fighting force—an army renowned in Mesopotamia for its previous victories, and honoured by all in its final adversity.



KUT LATE IN THE SIEGE.

PART III
CAPTIVITY

CHAPTER XVI

TO BAGHDAD AND BEYOND

WHEN Kut-el-Amarah was surrendered to the Turks on April 29th, 1916, the strength of the garrison, according to the official return handed over by the D.A.Q.M.G. 6th Division to Khalil Pasha, the Turkish Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia, was as follows :

British officers (including five general officers).	277
Indian officers	204
British rank and file	2,592
Indian rank and file	6,988
Indian followers	3,248
Total	<u>13,309</u>

The figures published in the Turkish paper *Journal de Beyrouth* of May 2nd, 1916, were : five general officers, 277 other British officers, 273 Indian officers, 2,592 British rank and file, 6,988 Indian rank and file, and 3,200 Indian followers—a total of 13,335 men ; and, except as regards the number of Indian officer prisoners, the figures were extraordinarily accurate for a hostile newspaper. The *Journal de Beyrouth* also contained a lengthy article about the supposed monetary offer for the release of the garrison on parole, and expressed many high-flown sentiments relative to the impossibility of Turkey being influenced by money—an extremely comic assertion, as all who know the Turk will admit.

The accounts of the surrender, however, which appeared in several Turkish and German newspapers not only gave the impression that the 13,300 prisoners were all combatants, but that they were all British troops ; whereas, as will appear from the foregoing figures, the total included a very large number of non-combatants (camp-followers

such as bhisties, dhobies, sweepers, etc.), and the number of British prisoners of all ranks did not exceed 2,900. When the correct figures were explained in reply to various queries during our wanderings in Turkey, they caused some astonishment and not a little unbelief.

Of the total strength of 13,309, a very large number of men were in hospital on account of wounds and sickness, and probably not more than 5,000 combatants were in a fit condition to take any part in a hard-fought battle, while of these it is doubtful if fifty per cent. could have withstood the fatigue of a long march. It may therefore be assumed with fair exactitude that when Kut surrendered, the garrison could not be considered as a field force capable of active warlike operations. Appendix J shows the number of casualties in Kut during the siege—537 men were killed in action, 488 died of wounds, and 1,958 men were wounded. Disease also caused 731 deaths. The high proportion of those killed or died of wounds to those wounded may be accounted for by the fact that head wounds were exceedingly common and usually fatal. Of the seventy-two officers and men shown as “missing,” the British officer was, I believe, Captain Gribbon, 67th Punjabis, who commanded the covering party of my unfortunate bridge, and the Indian officer was one of his subordinate commanders; a proportion of the remaining seventy men belonged to Captain Gribbon’s double company, and the remainder of the total is made up chiefly of Indian deserters to the Turks. Considering that our Mohammedan troops were fighting against their co-religionists, there were very few desertions; and I am glad to say that men attempting to desert received in most cases their just reward. Needless to say, there were no British deserters.

When the Turks occupied Kut, they found themselves suddenly called upon to take charge of a large number of wounded, sick, and starving soldiers and non-combatants with wholly inadequate arrangements for so doing; and the result was that many men of the garrison succumbed during the next two months to the hardships of the long marches across the deserts of Mesopotamia in the extreme heat of the summer.

In fairness to the Turks it should be remembered that they were hard put to it to maintain their own field army in food and ammunition with their very inadequate ship-

ping and land transport; and also that perhaps they scarcely understood that British and Indian soldiers cannot exist on the food on which a Turk will thrive, and that the British soldier in particular finds the heat of Mesopotamia excessively trying. Still, though our surrender was almost a matter of certainty for ten days or so before it occurred, the Turks do not appear to have made any arrangements for feeding and sheltering our men; and had it not been for the close proximity of the Relief Force and its ability to send up a large quantity of rations for the garrison of Kut after the surrender, the casualties from starvation and sickness would have been increased to an appalling extent.

On arrival in Kut on April 29th, the Turkish regiment which had marched in from the fort spread over the town and rapidly took charge of all offices, store depots, billets, and hospitals; and Turkish sentries were posted at the more important places to maintain order and to guard such few stores as had not been destroyed. General Townshend remained in his house in No. 2 Avenue, where a Turkish guard had been mounted.

The Turkish troops who marched into Kut were a very war-worn crowd of men. After the smartness and uniformity of dress of our own troops, the extraordinary variety of costume in the Turkish ranks was very noticeable. Their tunics—mostly of very coarse thick material of yellowish-grey colour—were of widely differing design, and here and there one saw a khaki garment looted from the British, or bluish-grey apparel hailing from Berlin. Their footgear and leg-coverings were even more diverse in character. A few men wore our ammunition boots; others wore Turkish shoes; a few others again affected the long boots of the German soldiery; and the puttees on the legs of the majority were of all colours and patterns, and wound or coiled on in every conceivable way. Many of the Turks had no puttees at all, and several had used their puttees to protect their feet in the absence of boots or shoes.

The men carried very large and heavy packs, each with a rolled greatcoat coiled round it. On their waist-belts they had a number of extremely bulky pouches of ammunition, and occasionally one or two spherical bombs. Their rifles were of the Mauser pattern taking Spitzer ammunition, and their bayonets were long and heavy. Few of

these Turks had water-bottles, and most of their equipment, though well designed, was much worn and very dirty. Each man wore as a head-covering the peculiar arrangement, half helmet, half cap, called the "Enverri," which was designed for the Turkish soldier by Enver Pasha, I believe, to give adequate protection to the head and neck and at the same time to retain a slight resemblance to the traditional turban of a follower of the Prophet.

The Turkish officers wore in many cases the same head-dress, though of superior manufacture, but some appeared in the Turkish officer's high astrachan cap adorned in the combatant branches with stripes of gold radiating from the centre of the cloth portion forming the crown, or with stripes of silver in non-combatant services. The officers were fairly well dressed; they wore their field-glasses dangling on their chests from straps about their necks, and at their sides they carried either very short swords like dirks, or else ones of ordinary length but extremely light and fragile, and also as a rule small automatic pistols. Many of them could speak French, and all appeared to rule their men with an iron hand.

The Turks who first entered Kut came from Anatolia—very different men from the Turks of Upper Mesopotamia or to the trained Arab levies of Lower Mesopotamia. The Anatolian Turk is renowned the world over for his endurance and courage, and is certainly the pick of the Ottoman Army; yet he lacks the intelligence and dash indispensable in absolutely first-class infantry. The kit worn by the Turks seemed to indicate that their first outfit was excellent in material and design, but that the wear and tear of active service was not considered and that the men were left to replace their worn clothing as best they could during a campaign. It was interesting to see the troops against whom we had fought so long, though the circumstances under which we now met were so distressing to us.

When the Turkish regiment which first entered Kut marched into the defended area from downstream of the fort, white flags were hoisted on the walls of the fort; and as soon as the regiment reached the fort, a picquet of one company was posted there at about noon on April 29th, while the remainder of the unit continued its advance towards the town itself, as previously described. Our troops evacuated the fort at 5.30 p.m. that day and marched to a palm grove half a mile upstream of Kut,

where the whole of the 17th Brigade collected and bivouacked for the night.

Taking into consideration the fact that the Turkish troops suddenly entering our captured stronghold were badly clothed and had very worn equipment, and that they found our men well clothed and equipped, the amount of looting which took place was extremely small and does credit to the discipline of the enemy. In only a few instances was there any organised attempt to rob our men of their money and valuables. In most cases, when the attention of a Turkish officer was drawn to the fact that a soldier was looting, punishment was meted out at once to the offender. In one case the officer held an informal court-martial—with himself alone as the whole court—and had the offending soldier shot at once; and in another instance the officer drew a pistol from his belt and shot the soldier himself. Such drastic measures seem to be effective when dealing with the type of men forming the Turkish soldiery, who recognise that against a decision by one of their officers there is no appeal, and who meekly submit to any abuse or blows bestowed upon them by these officers.

The Turkish officer, apeing his German confrère, regards his men as mere machines, modelled perhaps on human lines, but of altogether inferior clay to himself; and curiously enough, the mere machine remains content to endorse this view, though influenced no doubt by the probability of getting a pistol bullet in his brain if he fails to do so. The Turkish officer on active service has absolute power of life and death over each and all of his men, and does not hesitate to exercise it.

On the afternoon of April 29th, 1916, the river-front in Kut was thronged with men. The Turks were resting in groups on the front, or wandering in twos and threes through the streets and alleys and emergency roads of the town with a keen eye for any unguarded trifles. Arabs were also lounging on the river-front, and a few British soldiers stood here and there observing their late enemies with some interest. I had expected the attitude of the Arab population to become extremely hostile to us when the Turks arrived, but such was not the case. The Arab hates the Turk even more than the Turk despises the Arab, and he appears on the whole to like the British, who bring money in their train instead of the blows and abuse of

the Turk. And though the Arabs applauded the Turks from motives of diplomacy when the latter arrived in Kut, their joy was short-lived and seemed forced, nor did they make any attempt to revile the unarmed British soldiery, though they tried to do some looting when they thought they might safely accomplish it.

At 3 p.m. on April 29th the Turkish steamer *Busrah*, gaily decked with bunting, came down the river, went about, and ran alongside the front at Kut, where she moored and awaited orders. The Turkish naval contingent had already taken possession of the *Sumana* and were busily studying her machinery, though rather puzzled by our ingenious arrangements for burning oil fuel.

We had been given to understand that all officers would be allowed to retain their swords, as is customary, I believe, in the case of a garrison which voluntarily surrenders after a prolonged siege. Our surprise may be imagined, therefore, when orders came that all officers in the town of Kut were to take their swords to the Turkish Commandant at the Divisional Staff Office and there hand them over. I believe General Townshend himself was permitted to retain his sword, but all other officers had to relinquish theirs. I accordingly set forth up No. 2 Avenue with two brother-officers to perform this distasteful duty.

On our way towards the Staff Office we passed a Turkish private soldier laden with water-bottles and boots which he had looted from our sick men in the hospital bazaar road. A Turkish officer was passing at the moment, so we appealed to him and pointed out in broken French that the man had been looting. The officer at once stopped the man, accused him of stealing the water-bottles, and beat him violently over the head and shoulders while the soldier cringed lower and lower under the rain of blows and deposited his booty in the road, whence it was afterwards returned to the hospital. One cannot imagine a British soldier thus treated by his officer, nor indeed would he stand such treatment.

On arrival at the Staff Office in No. 2 Avenue we found a Turkish guard in the road outside General Townshend's house, and the Turkish Commandant of Kut—Kai-Makam (Lieutenant-Colonel) Nizām Bey—busy receiving the swords of our officers as they arrived. The Commandant was the officer who, as I have already related, had been conducted into the town by Captain Shakeshaft. As each officer

presented his sword, the Turk bowed, took the sword, and shook hands with perfect courtesy. A rumour spread some weeks later, when we were on the march, that our swords would be returned to us, but they never were. Doubtless they grace the walls of select houses in Constantinople or elsewhere at the present moment.

All sick or convalescent officers and men who happened to be out of hospital were now ordered to return thither, and the Turkish doctors were busy in our hospitals noting the numbers and nature of the cases shown them by our own medical faculty. They displayed much more interest in the British sick and wounded than in the Indians, for they were determined not to allow a British prisoner to be exchanged unless his case was exceedingly serious. They troubled very little about the Indians.

Orders had been issued by the Turks that the garrison of Kut was to go into camp at Shumran as soon as possible, moving off in échelons as shipping became available. The first échelon was to embark in the s.s. *Busrah* as early as possible, others following in due course when the *Busrah* or the *Burhanieh* was ready for them on succeeding trips. Long lines of our troops, each man carrying his kit, soon began to file on to the river-front and went aboard the ship, which then got under weigh and proceeded upstream.

A second échelon of prisoners left Kut for Shumran by ship during the night. The Sappers and Miners, the Bridging Train, and other divisional troops were due to leave by the first boat on April 30th; so, after a troubled and uncomfortable night, we were up betimes in the morning and prepared to embark. There was much delay in getting the troops aboard the *Busrah*, which lay ready for them with a large barge on either side. We officers sat on our kit on the river-front in a hot sun for a couple of hours with the Sapper companies and other troops till the order came to move on board. At length all was ready for us, and the long strings of men filed up the gangways on to the ship and her barges, while others helped to get the baggage aboard. The hawsers were cast off, and the ship swung out into the stream and began to thrash her way up against the current past the well-known landmarks on the river-front and its dilapidated houses, on the roof of one of which sat a group of Turkish officers drinking coffee.

Soon the houses were receding in the distance, and the

hum of voices on the crowded river-front grew dim. In the palm groves on the left bank long files of our infantry were trudging slowly into Kut, heavily laden with their kit. The day was bright and sunny, but very hot, except when relieved by occasional puffs of breeze. As each well-known landmark slipped by, memories crowded on to one of experiences during the siege—memories of dangers past and of good comrades whom, alas! we should meet no more; memories of hard work and exposure, of duties carried out amid the cracks of snipers' rifles and the roar of the Turkish shells. We were gazing for the last time on the wreck of a town and the wreck of our hopes, and silence reigned aboard the ship.

Farewell then to Kut and all its bitter disappointments. I may safely say that there was not a soul in that ship but devoutly hoped that never again would he set eyes on that desolate town on the Tigris.

Some distance upstream on the left bank we passed the end of our first-line trenches—the scene of so much hard fighting—and soon came opposite the advanced Turkish lines, which were a source of some interest to our men. Higher up the river came the Turkish gun-positions, so carefully concealed that even at such close quarters it was almost impossible to locate the guns themselves in their deep emplacements. Here and there on the bank groups of the enemy's artillerymen lounged about watching us being taken upstream, and a Turkish artillery officer busily observed us through a periscopic range-finder mounted on a tripod, while a brother-officer took snapshots of the ship with his camera. The Turks seemed to have all the latest and best equipment in range-finders and other such instruments so sadly lacking with the 6th Division.

We also noticed three German officers grouped round a pump which supplied water to their lines. These were the first Germans most of us had seen at Kut. In fairness to most of the Germans we met in Mesopotamia and elsewhere, I should like to say that on the whole they treated us well, and were disposed to pity us in our unfortunate situation; they had no love for the Turks, and I think they endeavoured to induce the Turks to take more trouble in arranging for our accommodation and food than would have occurred if the Turks had had a free hand to do as they liked—which would mean doing nothing.

After a slow voyage upstream of a couple of hours or so, the *Busrah* rounded a bend of the flooded river and came alongside the left bank at Shumran, where we found a crowd of our companions who had come up from Kut on the previous day. The troops rapidly disembarked and went to the portions of the camp allotted to them by one of our own staff officers. Most of our officers had brought their small tents, and these were quickly pitched and furniture arranged within. Stace kindly invited me to share his single fly 80-lb. tent, as I had only the outer fly of a 40-lb. tent picked up at an auction in Kut. With our camp beds and chairs and my little X-pattern camp table and a candle lamp, we were quite snug in our shelter. Facing us were the tents of the other R.E. officers, and to right and left and before and behind stretched the camps of British and Indian infantry, sappers, and gunners. Most of the men had no tents, and were consequently exposed to the full force of the sun during the day, except for such slight shelter as a few could get from their blankets. Many had no blankets or kit of any sort, and no arrangements were made by the Turks to supply them with any shelter or kit.

The great problem naturally was to feed the British and Indian troops rapidly assembling on this bare plain seven or eight miles from Kut. The Turkish camp, a mile farther up the river, held all the available supplies, and the only food sent to us during the first day was some Turkish biscuits which were thrown on to the ground and lay there in a dusty heap till distributed to us at 6 p.m. by our own Supply and Transport officers.

The Turkish army biscuit is a curiosity in its way. Imagine an enormous slab of rock-like material, brown in colour, about 5 inches in diameter and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, made of the coarsest flour interspersed with bits of husk and a goodly proportion of earth, and you have a tolerable idea of the staple article of diet on which the Turkish soldier seems to thrive. Every one received two and a half biscuits, and many of the men, being really starving, commenced to eat theirs at once, breaking off little bits with their teeth and trying to imagine they were eating something as good as Spratt's dog-biscuits. Some men had had no food since the morning of the previous day. The more enlightened and less hungry washed their biscuits, pounded them to dust, extracted the superfluous husks

and earth as far as possible, and boiled the remaining mixture; the porridge so formed was more digestible but still possessed a disgusting taste of earth, though some fellows seemed not to mind this. There is no doubt that the Turkish biscuit, whatever its ingredients may be, is a nourishing form of food *for a cast-iron interior*, but does not agree with people weakened by a five-months siege.

Khalil Pasha had promised to send adequate rations to our men, and perhaps he did actually issue orders for the provision of a proper quantity of food of a suitable character; yet only Turkish biscuits reached us from the Turkish camp on this first day at Shumran, possibly because of bad arrangement but more probably on account of dishonesty among the lesser Turkish officials. I make this statement because Turkish soldiers were continually wandering through our camp *selling* onions, dates, chupatties, and bread, which were almost certainly intended for free issue to us. On one occasion I actually caught a Turk selling our rations, and escorted him to our ration-stand, where he delivered over his stores without protest and without payment.

Such was the hunger of many of our British and Indian soldiers that they were bartering clothes for food, and very poor food at that. I saw a British private exchange his only tunic for a loaf of coarse brown bread, leaving him in his shirt-sleeves; he had already parted with his coat to provide himself with something to eat. Another man gave a golden sovereign for a hatful of dates worth perhaps twopence. Arab cigarettes were on sale from the Turks, and two Turkish soldiers came wandering around our tents at dusk with a couple of boxes of Turkish cigarettes; these they refused to sell for cash, but said that they had been sent to our camp by Turkish officers who wished to barter the cigarettes for good field-glasses at the rate of a box of cigarettes for a pair of field-glasses! As no one had any field-glasses the cigarettes remained with the Turks, nor in any case would we have thus presented field-glasses to our enemies, even if we had been able to do so.

A certain amount of firewood arrived in the camp, chiefly, I think, because the Turks found this more difficult to sell to our men than food; and the wood was duly issued free of charge to every one by our own Supply

service. The Turks made no attempt to interfere in any way with the management of our camp, and everything was done in the camp by our own officers and under the orders of our own generals. Even at this early stage we found that it was much better to do everything for ourselves, for otherwise nothing would be done; and the Turks seemed to acquiesce thoroughly in this principle, for it saved them trouble, and this is the primary objective of a Turk's life.

Dreadful sickness very soon attacked our men. The troops had been living almost entirely on a diet of meat for some time, and were in a starving condition; they were now suddenly deprived of all meat and issued with coarse biscuits, full of dirt and as hard as iron. Many, as I have said, were too ravenous to wait while their biscuits were being crushed and boiled, and ate three or four at once. The infallible result was a violent attack of enteritis called by our doctors "cholérine," and resembling cholera in some ways. Stretchers passed along continually to the hospital tents at the lower end of the camp, where dozens of sufferers (more British than Indian) lay groaning in agony in a few hours. Day by day the complaint brought in new victims to the hospital; and before the troops left Shumran 100 men had been buried, all struck down by this disastrous illness due to food unfit for dogs to eat.

Returning now for a moment to the happenings in Kut after our departure from the place, I regret to say that very violent and unnecessarily cruel measures were taken by the Turks against the Arabs and certain Turkish subjects during the early days of May 1916. The elderly Sheik of Kut, by name Hajji Abbas el Ali, had been in bad odour with the Turks before we advanced from Amarah in August and September 1915, and had been imprisoned by them in Baghdad, but was afterwards liberated and sent on a mission by the Turks to some tribe in the region of Nasariyeh. When we captured Kut in September 1915, the Sheik returned thither on his own responsibility and was in Kut during the siege. Consequently he was marked down as a traitor by the enemy. A Turkish subject, by name Sassoon, who was a Jew, was also known by the Turks to be in Kut and to be helping our forces. This wretched man was well educated, and did a great deal for our mess during the siege in selling us provisions

in the earlier days, and lending us novels, of which he had a plentiful supply. Towards the end of the siege he went almost off his head with anxiety and would frequently come round to our house for advice as to what he should do; indeed, he and his two or three assistants carried poison about with them, which they said they would take rather than fall into the hands of the Turks. We advised him to attempt to cross the river, or to float down it on a skin, when the surrender of Kut seemed imminent, and the same advice was given, I believe, to Sheik Abbas; but it seems that Sassoon's nerve failed him when it came to the point, and he hid in Kut on the evening before the surrender, though I believe he offered as much as £1,000 to some Arabs to help him to escape, but they refused to do so. Sheik Abbas, with his son Sa'ad and his nephew Mahomed Najeeb, actually crossed the river on a raft, but as they made the attempt too near dawn, they were captured by the Turks and brought back to Kut to be dealt with.

It seems that in Kut also there was an Arab named Mahomed Sedi, who was known by us to be pro-Turk, but whose presence had been tolerated because he was friendly with the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh, with whom we were on good terms. This villain, after the surrender, proceeded to betray as many people as he could, assisted by some other Arabs. Sassoon and his assistants were found in hiding by the Turks, aided by the myrmidons of Mahomed Sedi. The old Sheik Abbas and Sassoon were dragged through the streets to the building which had been our Staff Office, and were there so brutally flogged on the roof of the house that Sassoon leapt off the roof to kill himself, but only broke his leg in the courtyard thirty feet below. The Turks hanged both Sassoon and the Sheik of Kut on the following day, with the Sheik's son and nephew, whose right hands had previously been cut off, and I believe Sassoon's assistants also suffered the death-penalty. A dozen men were hanging at one time on small tripod gallows erected on the river-front of the town. About 250 Arabs and some interpreters were shot in the Serai in batches of six to ten, and many others were mutilated. Thus does the Turk enforce his authority.

All our sick and wounded in Kut remained there in the various hospitals for a few days, and we heard at Shumran

that they would all be sent down at once to General Gorringe, but this was not the case. Of our sick and wounded British officers in Kut, I believe only four were sent downstream, and among the British rank and file in hospital only one hundred were lucky enough to be allowed to rejoin their friends down the Tigris.¹ The Turks would not release a Britisher unless he was almost in a dying condition; and it is a fact that some of the British rank and file, whom the Turkish doctors refused to send downstream as not being sufficiently ill, died in Kut within three days of this decision. Most of our sick or wounded officers followed us in due course up to Baghdad, and later on into Anatolia, when they were sufficiently recovered, though a few were exchanged from Baghdad in September 1916. The Turkish methods with regard to the Indian sick and wounded were very different. Almost every Indian in hospital was sent downstream, and, in one or two cases, Indian hospital attendants who were not ill at all, but merely resting on the ground, were pronounced to be ill and were sent off with the sick and wounded.

To transport the sick and wounded from Kut to Amarah the steamer *Sikkim* was sent up to Kut by General Gorringe, and she did several trips up and down the Tigris. For every sick or wounded soldier (or even follower) released and sent downstream by the Turks, Khalil Pasha demanded a sound and healthy Turkish soldier from a selected regiment in exchange. To save the lives of our sufferers in Kut this was agreed to by our Government, and the exchange of prisoners was duly carried out and completed by May 8th, though Khalil Pasha complained repeatedly that there was unnecessary delay in the transaction.

After dark on April 30th, 1916, the 16th and 17th Brigades arrived in our camp at Shumran, having marched the seven or eight miles from Kut because no steamer was available after all to bring them to Shumran. The men were exhausted, and it says much for their stamina that they succeeded in accomplishing even this short march in their weak state.

On May 1st, 1916, to our great delight, a British ship reached us from downstream under a white flag. The barges alongside her contained a quantity of good rations

¹ Six Indian officers and 963 Indian soldiers and followers were also released on exchange.

sent up to us by the Relief Force. English biscuits, tinned beef, jam, condensed milk, a little sugar, and other necessaries were issued as soon as possible and ravenously consumed; but the consignment did not admit of a large ration for every man, so Turkish biscuits or bread had still to be used to fill up voids within us. Jam and sugar were almost incredible luxuries to us after such a long abstention from sweets. If any of us who were in Kut had ever to undergo another siege—which Heaven forbid—I know three substances with which we should fill every nook and corner of our baggage if circumstances permitted—*flour, sugar, and tobacco*. One can exist on flour and sugar alone, but one starves on meat alone.

The heat was very great throughout the days we spent at Shumran, and the dust and the smells were almost worse than the heat. It was not until sunset that one could walk about with any degree of comfort, and then of course in shirt-sleeves with sleeves well rolled up. Most officers wore their badges of rank on shoulder-straps on their shirts, and had spine pads buttoned on to their backs for protection against the sun. The camp, which was in a loop of the river, was guarded on the land side by a long line of Turkish sentries at wide intervals, but there was plenty of room for walking about within the camp, owing to its great area.

Each day dragged on much the same as its predecessors. On May 3rd the *Sumana* came up, flying her new Turkish flag, and was busy towing downstream some sections of a Turkish gissara bridge which had been at Shumran during the siege, but had now been dismantled. I conclude it was required farther downstream at Magasis or in the Es-Sin position itself. On the evening of May 3rd a smart little Thorneycroft launch, armed with a couple of pompoms, came alongside the bank at our camp on her way upstream. On board her were General Townshend, Colonel Parr, and Captain Morland on their way to Baghdad. General Townshend received a hearty welcome from his men, and left again to the sound of their cheers. The next day my interior economy began to suffer from too much Turkish biscuit, and I developed a mild attack of cholérine. It was sufficiently bad to prevent much sleep at night and to cause me great pain. It was several days before I recovered from this attack, and I was lucky not

to have to go into hospital. Most fellows who suffered from some form of this complaint developed, as I did, an intense disgust for the taste of the Turkish biscuit, and would not touch such biscuits unless absolutely starving.

On May 4th the Turks ordered 100 British officers, sixty Indian officers, and their orderlies to be ready to start at once for Baghdad, so in the evening we commenced to move along the river-bank in the dark to the place upstream of the tents where the Turkish paddle-steamer *Burhanieh* was moored. Here there was a dense crowd. There were strings of men carrying the kit of their departing officers, the said officers themselves, and friends who had come to say goodbye, all jostling in the dark towards the single narrow gangway provided for going aboard the ship, where some Turkish officers stood to examine the nature of the baggage we were taking on board. There were practically no lights on the ship, and the Turks confiscated any oil lamps which they saw among our belongings. Jemadar Sadar Din and I, with our orderlies Rahmat and Mahomed Din, bade farewell to the remainder of the Bridging Train who had been our companions in so many adventures and so much hard work, and boarded the *Burhanieh*. The British officers and orderlies were accommodated on the upper deck, and the Indian officers and their orderlies occupied the lower deck. General Sir Charles Melliss, who was ill, occupied a cabin also on the lower deck; and General Delamain camped with the rest of us on the upper deck with Brigadier-Generals Hamilton, Grier, and Evans—the two latter recently promoted to that rank. We were packed like sardines, especially forward, where the sapper and gunner officers were congregated. When every one had spread out his valise for the night, it was almost impossible to pick a way through the lines of sleeping forms without treading on somebody's face in the dark. Messing was also very difficult on so crowded a deck.

On either side of the *Burhanieh* was a large steel barge, that to starboard full of Turkish wounded from below Kut, while in the one to port lay the remains of a British seaplane (a Short) captured by the Turks, and also a damaged Turkish Morane monoplane. There were several German sailors strolling about on the aeroplane barge with *Goeben* on their caps; these men were the survivors

of the crews of the big naval guns which had been so speedily placed *hors de combat* by our 5-inch guns at Kut.

On the morning of May 5th, 1916, we were voyaging up the Tigris past Monkey Village and the scenes of our long retreat in December 1915. The river-level was now so much higher that it was very difficult to recognise most of the spots marking events in the retreat. We passed the time in reading books and such English papers as had reached us in a mail brought up from downstream by our ration ship. Many of us had also received several letters, and these we read and re-read. We had all written postcards or letters to our friends and relatives before leaving the camp at Shumran, but it seems that none of these got through to England except one or two taken personally by a Turkish officer as a favour. This man spoke English with a most American twang and had been in the United States.

On board the *Burhanieh* was a German artillery major returning to Berlin from Kut. He spent most of his time on the bridge with the Turkish ship's officers and two other Germans. This fellow, who wore a long beard, was quite affable and talked with several of our people, and his appearance earned him the nickname of "Von Tirpitz." It seems that in November 1914 he had been in charge of a battery of anti-aircraft guns on the Belgian coast, and he it was who brought down Lord Annesley's aeroplane and thus caused the death of that gallant officer, who had flown across the Channel from Eastchurch with Lieutenant Beevor, R.N. For this exploit he had received the Iron Cross, and was very proud of it. "Von Tirpitz" was loud in his condemnation of Mesopotamia; an "unfit-to-believed-in country" said he, and he was quite correct. He said that there had been a great mortality among the Germans with the Turks, for they did not understand such a trying climate, ate the wrong food, drank a lot of beer, and went about in small caps; so that most of them found a grave somewhere near the Tigris. He himself was overjoyed to be going back to his native land after his months of hard work in charge of the enemy's heavy artillery upstream of Kut.

At 3 p.m. on May 5th the ship fetched up at Bghailah village on the right bank and moored to the shore close to the village. This place was the scene of the memorable fight of the handful of British soldiers in the ship *T.2*

against a crowd of Arabs during our retreat, and the same scoundrels who had come out to attack the stranded *T.2* now clustered on the bank and on the housetops to see the *Burhanieh* full of British and Indian officers, and to jeer at us and make signs expressive of the cutting of throats. It would have given me the greatest pleasure in the world to turn a machine gun on to that crowd for a minute or two. The Turkish soldiers and Arab gendarmerie with us prevented any really hostile demonstration, but were obviously in sympathy with the Bghailah mob.

We stayed an hour or so at Bghailah, where, towards sunset, the evening breeze became quite chilly. Then we cast off our hawsers and steamed upstream till the light was failing, when we tied up for an hour or so on the right bank, and a wounded Turkish soldier who had died on the barge alongside us was buried by his comrades. The conditions under which these wounded men existed were shocking. The barge certainly had a matting roof, but the unfortunate men lay about on the hard steel deck and in the hold, in all stages of collapse, without any one to attend to them. Their blood-stained bandages were not changed, and the only food or drink which they got was in most cases brought to them by their less disabled friends who were capable of staggering slowly along the narrow gangways of slippery steel.

On May 6th we continued to forge steadily ahead against the stream, and at 9.45 a.m. passed the site of the action at Ummal Tabul, almost unrecognisable owing to the height of the flood. I could see no sign of the wreck of *H.M.S. Comet*, so I presume she had been destroyed by the Turks to avoid blocking the channel, and that her remnants had sunk in the mud of the river-bottom. An hour later we rounded the bend of the stream where Frazer's Post used to be and sighted in the distance the small deserted group of mud huts at Aziziah, while away to our left across the plain the wood of El Kutuniah showed on the horizon. We left Aziziah at about 10 o'clock the next morning, and started again on our voyage towards Baghdad round the prodigious loops of the Tigris.

Early on May 8th, 1916, the *Burhanieh* was approaching Lajj, and in the distance we could distinguish the great Arch of Ctesiphon rising out of the plain. I could just pick out the site of my strenuous bridging work at Lajj by the road cutting in the left bank and a few ruined

mud huts near it. After rounding another bend of the stream we gradually approached the site of the Battle of Ctesiphon, bringing memories of desperate fighting to many among us. There on our right lay the remains of the small Bustan Redoubt, while facing us was the great embankment of High Wall and away in the distance to our right front the small low mounds of V.P. To our left towered the great Arch, a landmark visible for many a mile in the surrounding desert. The river swung away on a long curve to the left, and we approached nearer and nearer to the Arch, and then, after cruising round a wide bend dotted with shoals, we turned towards Baghdad and came up behind the Arch towards the left bank not far from Sulaiman Pak village.

A crowd of jubilant Arabs awaited the arrival of the *Burhanieh* and commenced the customary war-dance as we drew near, while the women kept up the shrill wavering cry which is their sign of pleasure or victory. The blue-coated Arab gendarmes on shore stopped these demonstrations when the ship drew very close, and the crowd was then reduced to order. As we lay near the bank an excellent view could be obtained of the wonderful Arch itself rearing its ruined vault more than 100 feet to the sky—a great hall of perfect masonry of nearly 90 feet span, which is said to have been part of the winter palace of the Parthian kings, and which has stood the sun and tempests of centuries with wonderful success. The Arch was built, I believe, by Chosroes, the last of the Parthian kings, but the palace of which it formed a part was wrecked by the Mohammedans in or about A.D. 700 when on their way to found their city at Baghdad. The Arab name for Ctesiphon—Taq Kisra—seems to mean “The Arch (Taq) of Kisra,” and “Kisra” is probably “Chosroes.” Around the ruined edifice lay the enclosed country, dotted with huts and mounds, where such desperate fighting took place on November 23rd, 1915, when our Gurkhas held Gurkha Mound against every assault of the foe.

Leaving the neighbourhood of Ctesiphon, the *Burhanieh* splashed along up a wide reach, where the Arabs working in the fields ran to see the hated English in their adversity, and trotted alongside us on the bank shouting their monotonous war-cry and led by a man waving a cloth over his head at intervals. Whenever he waved his cloth the whole throng, dancing in close formation and in time

to the chant, turned about and went downstream for a few yards and then again about and past the slowly moving ship. Those Arabs who had breath to spare hurled abuse at us and drew their hands with expressive meaning across their throats—a sure sign of what these brutes considered the correct treatment of prisoners of war, and indicative of the fate which they thought awaited us at Baghdad.

Towards sunset the *Burhanieh* swung across again to the right bank, where the country was now fertile and well cultivated. On the right bank of the Tigris, a little upstream of Ctesiphon, we passed an enormous area covered with mounds—the remains of the ancient city of Selucia, second only to Babylon in size and with a population of 1,000,000 souls. Soon we were cruising up a branch of the stream close to an island covered with high scrub and small trees. As darkness fell, the ship was moored to the right bank ready to finish her voyage to Baghdad the next morning.

May 9th, 1916, found us again on the move at dawn. In an hour's time the first houses of the famous city commenced to show on the left bank and cultivated fields and orchards increased in number. Deep plantations of date palms fringed both banks of the stream, and the Tigris became a wide and deep river flowing swiftly and calmly between well-shaded banks. The houses on the left bank (to our right) increased in number and in size as we ploughed our way upstream, and in a short time we came alongside the bank opposite a large double-storied building. This turned out to be one used as a Turkish hospital, and here many of our Turkish wounded were disembarked. A large number of convalescent soldiers, in their hospital kit of long red-and-white gowns, viewed the proceedings from the upper floors of the house. We called at two more similar houses farther upstream, and then it appeared that almost all the houses along the left bank were used as hospitals for the thousands of Turkish sick and wounded.

Far up the straight reach of the Tigris in which we found ourselves lay the densely populated area of Baghdad, with a great three-storied building, previously the British Residency, conspicuous on the left bank. Some distance above it a large floating bridge spanned the river from bank to bank and maintained communication between the prosperous colony on the left bank and the extensive

poorer area on the right bank, where the only house of any importance was the Persian Embassy.

Our ship arrived opposite the British Residency building, over which waved the Turkish flag, and we moored alongside the brick river-wall. This building also was used as a hospital. In the garden were three German Red Cross nurses in white dresses, with large white linen caps like poke bonnets. They were the first European women I had seen for thirteen months. On an upper-floor verandah roof a German medical subordinate was very busy with his camera taking snapshot after snapshot of our ship and ourselves, but the awnings must have largely discounted his efforts to secure good results. Three typical German officers stood on this verandah, and the three German nurses, after a voyage of discovery round the *Burhanieh*, went up on to the verandah, where they were presented to some other German officials of high rank. It was now about 11 a.m., and decidedly hot, so we aboard the *Burhanieh* remained under shelter and awaited the course of events. We had reached Baghdad indeed, but not under such circumstances as we liked; still, it was interesting to see this world-renowned city, 500 miles from Busrah, even as prisoners of war.

I will now endeavour to describe briefly what occurred at Shumran Camp after the departure of Echelon A—more usually called the 1st Echelon.

On May 5th at Shumran orders were issued by the Turks that the British and Indian officers who had stayed behind at the camp to look after their men should separate from them, and that the latter should be ready to march for Baghdad that afternoon; later in the day, however, these orders were cancelled.

The following day a large barge was brought up from below and reached the camp about 10 a.m.; it was full of stores of every description sent up by the Relief Force. Just too late to benefit the 1st Echelon, but very welcome to the officers and men still at the camp. Butter, tinned milk, good biscuits, cake, and plum-pudding were hurriedly issued to the troops, and only just in time, for the men were ordered to march, and left the camp at 2 p.m. On reaching the road some distance from Shumran camp, they formed up at 3.30 p.m. and headed for Baghdad.

Our rank and file, it appears, received very cruel treatment from their Arab guards; but if the guards saw that

a man was seriously ill, they generally put him on a camel or a donkey and so brought him along. This arrangement had been made on behalf of the men by General Delamain before leaving Shumran. The column of prisoners halted for two days near Bghailah (fifteen miles from Shumran by road), where 200 men, unfit to march, were left to be brought on by ship. As an indication of the terrible ravages already made in the ranks by death, wounds, and sickness, I may mention that the strength (exclusive of officers) of the 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry when leaving Shumran was only 252 all told. The rank-and-file prisoners reached Bghailah on May 8th, after a long march in great heat. They had had no water all day and staggered from exhaustion. They had been issued with three days' rations (six Turkish biscuits and a handful of dates per man) on leaving Shumran, and were thirty-six hours in camp near Bghailah before they received anything more; each man was then given a few mouldy chupatties and could only purchase extra chupatties from the Arab guards at three for a rupee (ten times the actual cost). Any men who lagged behind were beaten with rifle butts or sticks by the Arab gendarmes. Some more sick men were embarked on a steamer at Aziziah, but many failed to reach that place, for they fell off the camels carrying them and died. Six men who collapsed with heat-stroke were abandoned by the Turks, but rescued afterwards by their comrades; and another sufferer was beaten so that he died on reaching camp. The column reached Baghdad on May 17th. Thus began the ghastly march of our rank and file to Anatolia.

At 6 a.m. on May 10th the 2nd Echelon of officers at Shumran embarked on a Turkish steamer which left the camp within an hour, leaving only our Field Ambulance with the sick who were too ill to be moved. The 2nd Echelon included about ninety British officers, sixty Indian officers, and roughly 200 orderlies (British and Indian), the senior officer being Lieutenant-Colonel Brown, 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry. The British orderlies were accommodated in a barge on one side of the ship, and the Indian orderlies in another barge on the other side. Thus the officers of the 2nd Echelon had a less crowded ship than that of the 1st Echelon.

There were several German naval and military officers aboard, who were also rather crowded together. They

proved very affable and talked a good deal with those of our fellows who could speak French or German. One of the German officers was a good artist and made an excellent sketch in water-colours of a subadar major on board the ship. The Germans also invited several of the British officers to dinner.

On May 11th at midday the s.s. *Julnar* was overtaken on her way upstream. She had aboard her several of the British officers left behind on duty in Kut in connection with medical or other work, and also our General Hospital staff and some of our sick and wounded from Kut. She was steaming slowly, and her funnel and hull were like sieves from bullet holes; all her stern cabins had been removed, presumably to give more space for stores when she made her disastrous dash for Kut. On her bridge was an inscription in Turkish reading "She came by herself," meaning that the Turks considered that the ship did part of her voyage after her crew was *hors de combat*.

The 2nd Echelon of officers and orderlies stopped near the Arch of Ctesiphon on May 12th—when the 1st Echelon was leaving Baghdad for Sāmarra—and on May 13th at 10 a.m. the ship was steaming up the Tigris in Baghdad itself, where the prisoners landed and marched through the city to the Cavalry Barracks recently vacated by us. Here I will leave our comrades of the 2nd Echelon, and will return to the fortunes of the 1st Echelon of officers and orderlies waiting in the steamer *Burhanieh* alongside the former British Residency at Baghdad on the morning of May 9th, 1916.

Several Turkish officers came aboard the *Burhanieh* soon after we moored alongside the British Residency building and interviewed General Delamain, who was the senior officer with our party, since General Sir C. Melliss was on the sick-list. Mr. Cree, of Messrs. Blockey, Cree & Co., and Mr. Tod, of Messrs. Lynch Brothers, were brought before the senior Turkish officer by request of the Turks, and were closely questioned by them. The two civilians were in rather a difficult position, and we felt anxious about how they would be treated. It appears that on the outbreak of war the Turks interned all British subjects in Baghdad, but that subsequently they allowed the men to leave Turkey, and the subjects of other nations at war with Turkey were similarly treated. A large party of civilian Europeans consequently left Baghdad in Novem-

ber 1914, travelling across to the Euphrates and up that river, and then by rail to Aleppo, whence they reached a Mediterranean seaport (Mersin, I believe) and took ship. They had been told first that they would be interned at Kaisarie in Anatolia (see Map No. 9), but when they protested against this destination they were put under orders to go to Constantinople. Eventually, however, they were allowed to leave Turkey, as I have related. Their wives and families were not allowed to leave the country and remained at Baghdad under the protection of the United States Consul.

Mr. Cree on release took ship to Busrah via the Suez Canal and the Red Sea ; and Mr. Tod, after proceeding to England, eventually went also to Mesopotamia, where he and Mr. Cree continued their business as merchants, but also assisted our Government at times, and subsequently accompanied our advance to Kut and beyond. Mr. Cree held a post in our Political Service, and Mr. Tod accompanied the Flying Column at the Battle of Ctesiphon as a guide and did a great deal of business in supplying stores for Government purposes. Hence, when Kut surrendered and both these gentlemen were recaptured by the Turks, considerable doubt was felt as to whether the enemy would take the view that they were strictly non-combatants, as was actually the case. After a very searching examination about their identity and their employment with our forces, they were marched off under a guard, together with another civilian (Mr. Tom Dexter), and we saw them no more for a time. Subsequently they were brought to the Cavalry Barracks where we were quartered in Baghdad, but they were soon moved again and we did not meet after this. I believe, however, that they came to no bodily harm, though rumours reached us that they had been imprisoned in Constantinople after trial by a court-martial which had first condemned them to death.

Orders were soon issued by the Turks that all British captains and subalterns, and also the Indian officers, were to land at once and form up within the Residency enclosure. The more senior officers were to stay on board the *Burhanieh* for the time being. We captains, subalterns, and Indian officers then put on our equipment and truded ashore, where we fell into line in two ranks and were counted. Having been counted once we were counted again, as

is customary in Turkey, where it seems that the first count is a sort of "trial run." Guards with fixed bayonets were placed at intervals along our line, and we turned to the left and started our march through Baghdad, where we were apparently to be exhibited exactly as in a Roman triumph, except that we wore no chains and had our full complement of clothes. We were marched through the most densely populated area of Baghdad. There was no necessity for this. For some reason best known to the Turks, the Indian officers were put at the head of the procession, followed by the British officers in order of seniority of rank. Whether this was done to annoy us, or whether through ignorance, I do not know; but it is almost incredible that the Turks could be wholly ignorant of the fact that all Indian officers of whatever rank are junior to the last-joined British subaltern. We passed out into the streets, turned to the left, and entered the mercantile and bazaar portions of the city. The sun was very hot, and I was carrying a considerable weight in my haversack and a large water-bottle, in addition to a thick coat over my arm. Others were equally or more heavily loaded than I was, so we commenced to drip freely before we had gone far.

We traversed all the main bazaar roads of the city, where interested crowds thronged the route to see us. I had seen photographs in papers of processions of German prisoners going to or coming from railway-stations at home, but had never thought to take part myself in one of these mournful pageants. We tried to keep up a cheerful appearance before the crowd, and found the unique bazaar with its vaulted roof quite interesting and comparatively cool after the glare outside. From several windows in the upper floors of houses pretty faces looked down on us in curiosity—and I think even in pity—for a large portion of the populace was very unfriendly to the Turk.

The general behaviour of the crowd was excellent. There was no shouting or hissing, or in fact any organised demonstration of hostility, and any individual attempting to interfere with us was ruthlessly knocked down at once by our Turkish guards. The long tramp through the covered bazaars brought us again into an open street where were several large buildings, outside one of which stood a long line of little Turkish cadets, intensely interested in seeing the officer prisoners of the British force

which had so nearly captured Baghdad some months before.

On our right appeared a large mosque with really beautiful slender minarets, encrusted from top to bottom with mosaic of turquoise blue and glittering in the dancing sunlight. Near by fluttered several storks, which had built their nests on the highest point of a neighbouring house and were gravely watching our progress from their point of vantage. Passing some infantry barracks, the procession wound through the big north gate of Baghdad and out on to the plain beyond. Another quarter mile of dusty road and we reached our destination at the empty Turkish Cavalry Barracks north of the town, at that time surrounded by sheets of water, with indications on the walls themselves of a still higher flood. We filed in through the big archway facing the city and found ourselves in a great enclosure about 150 yards square, of which the sides were formed by single-storied barracks and stables, with double-storied buildings at the entrance archway and at two corners of the enclosed area.

After some delay we were conducted into empty upper-floor rooms over the archway, and the British and Indian officers were all located at first in the same central building. There was no furniture, but fortunately, when our kit arrived later with our orderlies, we had our own camp furniture; and, though we were very crowded, it was not really uncomfortable compared with our accommodation later on. The rooms were moderately clean and were well ventilated.

Our first business was naturally to get separate accommodation for the Indian officers, who, we knew, would much prefer to have a house or houses to themselves, where they could live and talk as they liked untrammelled by the presence of the British officers, and also we ourselves naturally preferred to have a separate house. We explained to the Turkish bimbashi (major) who was in charge of us that we were not accustomed to live with our Indian officers—much as we liked them personally—since their habits were different from our own, and because they had certain prejudices and established customs about the preparation and eating of food. We explained also that Indian officers, in spite of the badges of rank on their shoulders, were always of inferior rank to British officers and were under their orders. The bimbashi listened

politely to this explanation, and then, with a knowing smile, he said, "Ah! you do not like them. Is it not so?" Obviously he did not believe what had been explained to him and considered it an organised attempt on our part to get more space for ourselves. His remark caused a good deal of indignation, but we controlled our tempers, and later we induced him to allow the Mohammedan officers to occupy the house at the south-west corner of the quadrangle, while the Hindu officers occupied the one at the south-east corner. Every one thus had more space—though we were still very crowded—and each section of our little community was well suited.

The large quadrangle was fairly clean, but the ground was exceedingly damp and soft in places owing to the recent flood. The sanitary arrangements of the barracks were, as usual, of the worst description. The lower-floor rooms could not be occupied owing to their extreme dampness, for their floors were below the water-level of the swamp around.

Soon after our party of officers arrived at the Cavalry Barracks, Arab hawkers made their appearance outside and were allowed by the Turkish sentries to come inside the porch to sell their wares. They had oranges, onions, Arab cigarettes, and a variety of small cakes at exorbitant prices, but we were not disposed to cavil at the cost, and the Arabs were soon doing a roaring trade. Some of the small cakes were sweet and resembled shortbread. I should be sorry to say how many of them I ate, though my best efforts could not compare with those of some other people. There is no doubt that it was just such sweet cereal food which we needed so badly after the long siege of Kut. Sugar was dear in Baghdad, but much more plentiful than farther up country, where its price became almost prohibitive.

The Turks tried to make matters difficult between the British and Indian officers by insisting that the Mohammedan Indian officers should not only feed at our tables and with our crockery, and should eat the same food as ourselves, but in one instance endeavoured to make the British officers wait in the mess-room until the Mohammedan officers had first had breakfast. The Indian officers, with their customary good-breeding, showed the strongest objection to this arrangement, and wished to give place to us, but were ordered not to do so by the Turks, so we

left the room and managed to get breakfast of a sort in the quadrangle outside. The senior Indian officer (a subadar-major) then came up and apologised for the necessity of occupying the tables laid ready for our meal—an act of courtesy on his part which we much appreciated.

Throughout our stay in Baghdad the Turks appeared to have some deep scheme in hand to stir up ill-feeling between the British and Indian officers; and it says much for the good relationship between the two classes that the efforts of the Turks met with no success. Again, when we were given our pay prior to leaving Baghdad, the Turks, in spite of all explanation, insisted on paying all officers according to their badges of rank. Thus a subadar-major (wearing crowns) received 20 liras as his month's pay, *i.e.* the same amount as a British major; while a British subaltern of an Indian regiment, though actually the subadar-major's superior in rank, received 8 liras, as he only wore two stars on each shoulder. Similarly the subadars (whom the Turks ascertained to be company commanders) received the same pay as British captains, *viz.* 10½ liras. The British officers did not grudge the Indian officers their good rate of pay, but they felt some annoyance at receiving, when senior to them, a lower rate of pay, and a shockingly poor rate at that.

Our generals, colonels, and majors had disembarked from the *Burhanieh* shortly after we did, and had proceeded on foot or in carriages to the Grand Babylon Hotel, not far from the bridge of boats in the town. Its high-sounding name hardly describes the building, which was a rambling affair, with empty rooms none too clean. General Sir Charles Melliss was removed to the house, near the hotel, occupied by General Townshend and his staff, and General Delamain and the other general officers lived in the hotel. Those in the hotel went across to a restaurant for food on May 8th, but afterwards were fed by contract at a cost of about 1½ mejidiehs per head per diem.

On May 10th after breakfast we were all assembled in a lower room to have our names taken down and to be counted and recounted. The taking of names was an absurd business. The Turks never appeared to understand what a *surname* indicated. They could not realise that one's father's name could be the same as one's own,

or that one's place of birth was not necessarily one's "native village," as they put it. For instance, Captain Leonard Mathias, 128th Pioneers, was entered as "Leonard, son of Leonard, of Bombay," and Lieutenant Henry Curtis Gallup's name became "Henry Curse It Hants," as he hails from Hampshire. Another officer was put down as "John, the son of John, of London": I hope his friends would know him.

After breakfast on May 11th I went out with the first batch of twelve officers conducted by a good-natured Turkish soldier. We hurried along the road to the city, for time was scarce, and entered it without any hostile demonstration towards us—in fact the people merely seemed very interested in us. After walking a mile we chartered several phaeton carriages and drove through the bazaars to the Imperial Ottoman Bank, where a polite manager received us in his office, gave us cigarettes and provided us with comfortable chairs, while we changed sovereigns for Turkish liras and made enquiries. Next we drove some distance to the American Consulate. Here a typical American welcomed us with "Come right in, gentlemen! Come right in! I guess I know what you fellows are after." We accordingly came right in, and he soon found out that he had rightly guessed what we were after, which was money.

The American Consul (a Mr. Brissel, I believe) was most affable and gave us excellent liqueur brandy, coffee, and cigarettes, and later advanced us each three liras in gold from his small store carefully hidden away in his safe, and apologised because he was unable to give us more. He asked us not to mention to the Turks that he had given us any money, and we then signed receipts for the money we had been given, so that he could recover it eventually from our Government. The Consul said that he had been absolutely cut off from all communication with the outer world for six months, and so had no news to give. His sphere of influence extended right away to the borders of Anatolia, and made it necessary for him to travel a good deal. He talked about Khalil Pasha, the Turkish general, for whom he had a great admiration, and said that Khalil often dropped into his office for a chat and was always most friendly and courteous, and that on these occasions they avoided any reference to the war; but he warned us that all the Turks were not like Khalil, and that many

of them were, as he put it, "evil-minded men." The Consul promised to send one of his men at once to our barracks to take over any kit we wished to leave at Baghdad, and said he would look after it as well as he could. After some further conversation we took our leave, with many thanks for his kindness, and drove back into the bazaar to purchase a few eatables and necessaries.

No inkling had been given us of how long we were to remain in Baghdad, but on May 11th we heard we should probably move off soon for Aleppo. On May 12th, however, it was suddenly announced that we were to move off before noon that day. We had despatched some spare kit to the American Consulate the day before, and now we again went carefully through our stuff, discarding a lot of articles not likely to be of much use. During the course of the morning the bimbashi and another Turkish officer turned up with our pay. Each British or Indian officer signed a large pay-sheet in duplicate and received his pay partly in gold and the remainder in notes; the proportion in my own case was five gold liras and eight notes of one lira each. As we had been taken prisoners on April 29th, this was really an advance of pay, but it was most necessary to help us through our long desert journey. I had left Kut with only three sovereigns and four liras; and the three liras from the U.S. Consul, together with the thirteen now received in gold and notes, sufficed to pay most expenses during our long march, with a bit to spare at the end.

By 11 a.m. on May 12th our baggage had left the Cavalry Barracks, and at noon we put on our equipment, and started to march in file out of our prison and along the road to the city, which we entered by the north gate. It had been given out that our immediate destination was Mosul on the River Tigris (see Map No. 9), and that we should travel by train from Baghdad to Sāmarra, eighty miles away up the river.

Interested crowds again watched our progress through a portion of the city to the bridge of boats spanning the Tigris. On the right bank of the Tigris the streets of Baghdad were dirty and the houses poor and slovenly. We marched along a very hot and dusty road for three-quarters of a mile till at length we reached Baghdad railway-station. Here we found our senior officers already in first- and second-class carriages in a train which

was awaiting us in a siding. The captains, subalterns, and Indian officers, and all the orderlies were destined to travel in third-class carriages of corridor type. We were very crowded, every seat being filled, and the Indian officers were distributed among us—some in each carriage—in spite of their protests that they would all prefer to congregate in a carriage to themselves.

The journey by rail was tedious and very uncomfortable. We ate our small store of food, and talked and smoked. The country on all sides continued to be a bare and barren plain with long undulations. A small elderly Turk, who spoke French fluently, struck up an acquaintance with three officers in the opposite pigeon-hole to the one I was in, and was so enchanted with them that he presented them with half a small bottle of wine, which was much appreciated by the thirsty travellers. We rattled and bumped along, frequently stopping at uninteresting stations where there were no passengers and no adjoining towns or villages as far as I could see, and at length darkness fell. The wearisome journey came to an end at last. The train drew up in Sāmarra railway-station, eighty miles from Baghdad, at about 9 p.m., and our first railway journey in Turkey was finished.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DESERT MARCH TO MOSUL

SĀMARRA is an ancient and historical town of small size situated on the left bank of the River Tigris about seventy miles above Baghdad as the crow flies. The popular pronunciation of the name among Britishers is "Sāmārra," but the correct Arabic pronunciation puts the accent on the first syllable and not on the second. The railway station is a mile or more from the town itself. In 1916 it was the northern terminus of the Baghdad Railway, which, when completed, was intended to run from Busrah via Baghdad up the right bank of the Tigris to Mosul, and thence westwards across the desert to Aleppo via Raas-el-Ain (see Map No. 9). A narrow-gauge trolley-line service, operated by manual labour, connected the railway station with a serai near the town for the transport of material to and from the town.

When we arrived at Sāmarra station from Baghdad at 9 p.m. on May 12th, 1916, we found ourselves alongside a deserted platform covered with gravel. There was no sign of tents or any other arrangement for our accommodation. One or two station buildings could be dimly discerned in the darkness near the far end of the platform, but the place showed no sign of life.

As soon as the train had come to rest we put on our equipment, seized our collections of odds and ends, and were beginning to get down on to the low platform, when we were ordered by the Arab gendarme guards on each car to get back again. They explained that we should have to pass the night in our carriages. This was clearly impossible, packed as we were, so we quietly but firmly disregarded the order and spread slowly on to the platform, where we lay down on the hard gravel to await more sensible instructions, and later moved farther along the platform for the night.

General Townshend and his staff had come from Baghdad in the same train with us, and they now occupied a small square house yet farther up the line near a level-crossing, but all the other officers slept on or near the platform in the open air. Most of us still had our camp beds, and some had camp tables and chairs, so we managed to be fairly comfortable. Candle lamps were produced and lit by those who had them, and by their dim light we managed to make a scratch meal before preparing for slumber. Fortunately the night was fine and calm though rather hot.

Early next morning I awoke and made a perfunctory toilet with some water from a tap on the station platform, and then confronted the problem of how to get shelter from the sweltering heat of the day. Everybody started to prowl around, and soon we discovered one or two rooms in the station buildings where some of us were lucky enough to get places for our valises on the floor. Every available inch of floor-space was soon occupied, and those not fortunate enough to find room inside passed the day in the shade outside thrown by the walls of the house. An order was then issued that we were to pack up and move to the town; but in a short while this order was cancelled, and we settled down on our valises on the concrete floor of the ticket-office to have some food and to pass the day as best we could. As the sun rose the wind rose also, carrying clouds of fine dust with it, and making the lives of those outside the house a burden to them.

On the morning of May 13th, 1916, General Townshend left Sāmarra railway station accompanied by his staff—viz. Lieutenant-Colonel Parr, 7th Rajputs (G.S.O. I), and Captain Morland, Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry (A.D.C.); a smart-looking Turkish officer was also in attendance as an escort and extra A.D.C. Four or five carriages arrived, and when the kit had been packed into them, General Townshend himself appeared. After saying goodbye to a couple of Indian officers, he drove away with the Turkish officer in the leading carriage, followed by the other vehicles containing his staff, orderlies, and baggage. They took the road to Mosul, and we saw them no more. General Townshend travelled rapidly to Mosul by carriage, and thence to Raas-el-Ain by motor-car, whence the party took train to Aleppo, and so via Konia to Constantinople. General Townshend, I believe,

was given a house on the island of Prinkipo in the Bosphorus, but he was not allowed to proceed on parole to England, as he had hoped.

Our commandant, Essād Bey, was a yuzbashi (captain) of the infantry of the line who hailed from Kerkuk, a very isolated town on the River Adhaim (or Edhem), a tributary of the Tigris (see Map No. 9). He had commanded an infantry regiment of the much harassed 38th Turkish Division at the Battle of Es-Sin, and had fought against us again at Ctesiphon, where he was wounded and consequently in hospital for several months at Baghdad. Essād Bey, of whom we saw so much during the next month, was a dark-skinned Turk, partly of Arab extraction, I should say, and about thirty years of age. In his way he was not a bad fellow, but he was very uneducated and had only the merest smattering of French. His attempts at this language were laughable, often getting no further than a repetition of "Il y a."

As commandant in charge of our party of 375 prisoners,¹ Essād Bey had to arrange for all our transport and to decide on the stopping-places each day, as well as being responsible for our safety and for our food-supply. This list of duties was utterly beyond his powers, as fortunately we found out very quickly. General Delamain then decided that, unless we wanted to lose all our kit and to starve, we must arrange our own affairs as far as possible. The result was that the unique situation arose of a large batch of prisoners trekking across desert country, taking orders mostly from their own staff officers, and making their own arrangements for food. Our well-meaning but incompetent commandant issued his orders for the hour of marching and indicated the route to be followed, but gradually he left more and more to our staff to arrange, as it saved him so much trouble.

Under Essād Bey's command was a squad of Arab gendarmerie about twenty strong, who were armed with .400-bore rifles of out-of-date pattern and were festooned with bandoliers and belts full of ammunition. They formed the guard whose business it was to prevent our

¹ British officers	.	.	.	.	.	.	88
Indian officers	.	.	.	.	.	.	60
Orderlies	.	.	.	.	.	.	227
Total	.	.	.	.	.	.	<u>375</u>

escape and to protect the column when on the march. Each and all were continually on the look-out for any article of kit left lying about or dropped by the wayside. We christened these Arabs "Yellahs," on account of their favourite cry of "Yellah!—yellah!" when waking us in the morning for another day's march or when urging any one to increase the pace a little.

Owing to Essād Bey's ignorance or incapacity, we should have fared very badly but for the energy of Major W. F. C. Gilchrist, 52nd Sikhs, of the 6th Division Staff, who took upon himself the management of affairs under General Delamain's orders, and incidentally the management of our swarthy commandant. Essād soon learnt to put implicit trust in "Monsieur Gilchreest," as he called him, and was usually argued out of any more than ordinarily preposterous idea which may have entered his head, but his French was so bad that argument was a lengthy and difficult matter.

On May 14th at Sāmarra we were told that each officer's kit must be reduced to 30 kilos in weight (66 lbs.), though senior officers were allowed rather more. This reduction of weight caused us great tribulation and meant wholesale discarding of kit. Every one was offering clothes and necessaries to any one who would like to have them. At length the litter of discarded articles had been given away or sold to the Turks, and we sat down upon our microscopic kits to pass another long day. Outside the house the air was yellow with fine dust, and inside the building we dozed and read and smoked while the flies buzzed and swarmed over our eatables.

The night of May 14th/15th was uneventful. On the morning of May 15th, however, orders were issued that we were to start our march at 4.30 p.m. that day. It appears that on the previous day, on enquiry as to what transport would be available for ourselves and our kit, it had been found that the scale proposed was utterly inadequate. General Delamain had then flatly refused to start with the scale of transport proposed unless "at the point of the bayonet," as he put it. Telegrams had been despatched to Baghdad, and finally matters were arranged on a more satisfactory basis. General Delamain stipulated that a hospital-cart should accompany our caravan of pack and riding animals, but the cart never appeared and we finally had to start without it on May 15th.

A violent dust-storm raged all the morning, covering everything with a thick layer of yellow powder and making everybody dirtier, if possible, than they already were. All officers had been ordered to arrange themselves in parties of ten as far as possible, to facilitate the allotment of transport animals when the latter arrived, and at 4 p.m. the representatives of each party wandered round to the back of the station building to get the animals for their party. The "Yellahs" had been out collecting donkeys, and herds of these small animals were grouped together behind the railway station, or were wandering aimlessly about with their Arab owners near them. Even then the number of animals produced was much less than that agreed upon. There were not enough animals to allow each officer one donkey, and none at all for the multitude of orderlies. I may mention here that throughout our march the Turks made no allowance whatever for the orderlies. To the Turkish mind a private soldier should travel the whole distance on foot, and should carry all his kit and his food. If he dies of exhaustion, it is to the Turks a matter of no importance, for they have no regard for the lives of their own rank and file. Thus the allowance of transport, intended solely for us officers, had to suffice for officers, orderlies, and Indian servants, and consequently was inadequate in every case.

Great confusion occurred when attempts were made to issue the donkeys. The animals moved continually from place to place; the Arab owners shouted and refused to let some of their animals go unless all went; and through the turmoil came officers hauling along the donkeys already issued to them, while the animals stoutly resisted. Stace and I got two donkeys, one a fairly strong animal and the other a tiny beast. On the larger one we loaded our two valises, and the kits of Corporal Reid (Stace's orderly) and Mahomed Din (my orderly); Narain, our little Hindu cook, also piled his rope-bound bundle on top of the whole lot. Any space left after this last straw had been added was filled up with pieces of wood, or canvas buckets and other odds and ends. With our valises on either side, strung together by odd straps and bits of rope, and with the other bundles piled on top of him, our poor baggage donkey, though not overloaded according to Arab ideas, looked very much so.

The little riding donkey, which we and our three retainers had to share, was a diminutive beast surmounted by an extraordinary pack-saddle covered with very coarse cloth; he was girthed with a piece of thin rope, and was of just sufficient height to prevent my feet trailing on the ground unless the surface happened to be uneven. The saddle was an ingenious instrument of torture; we tried at first sitting astride, but found that in half a mile we were in danger of being cut in half. A portion of my camp mattress tied over the saddle improved matters a little, but still a long ride astride was hopeless. I then tried the Arab method of sitting sideways across the saddle, and very nearly turned a back somersault within ten yards of the start. The whole saddle was inclined to sway suddenly to either side, for it was at least two inches clear of the animal's back, and this sway generally resulted in the rider being deposited with violent language on terra firma until such time as he gained more confidence and skill.

At length the confusion of donkeys and kit began to subside, and at 6 p.m. on May 15th we moved in a cloud of dust out of the station yard on to the wide plain beyond, where a halt was called while loads were adjusted. By this time, even before the march commenced, we were feeling rather tired, but luckily none of us knew of the appalling journey which lay before us.

As the sun was sinking towards the west the head of the long column began to move off from Sāmarra towards the north along the wide track across the plain, and we started to tramp along through the clouds of dust raised by the animals. Soon the whole column was on the move, headed by the Turkish commandant on his Arab pony and accompanied by General Delamain and several staff and senior officers also on Arab ponies of all sizes and descriptions. On either side of us, and ahead and behind, rode the Arab gendarmerie in their light blue uniforms, very much alert for any attempt to escape. We moved along a bare plain covered with coarse grass and small thorn bushes, and hour after hour the march continued with a halt of ten minutes after each hour. In a short while darkness fell, and our jostling crowd still shuffled and plodded along the uncertain route, breathing in the clouds of dust raised by the fortunate leaders. We had not marched for many months, and for

months we had been on reduced rations; and as, hour after hour, we continued our journey through the darkness, every one began to get very weary. Once we were allowed to fall out to fill our water-bottles from the Tigris when we were near it; and later again, during a ten-minutes halt, we found ourselves on the banks of a pond of stagnant water which many of us sampled, driven to it by our thirst. The night was hot and our throats were parched with dust.

We marched on till, at 2 a.m. on May 16th, after covering eighteen and a half miles in seven and a half hours, including all halts, Essād Bey at length decided to bivouac for the night. There was no water to be had except what remained in our water-bottles. We unloaded our kit from the tired animals, spread our valises on the hard ground, took off our puttees and boots, and lay down to sleep for a couple of hours after munching a few stale remnants of chupatties or one or two biscuits. Hardly had our eyes closed, it seemed, when the cry of "Yellah! yellah!" arose from the Arab guards—it was 4 a.m., and dawn was just breaking. Very stiff and sore, I rolled up my valise and put on my boots and puttees, and then helped to find our two donkeys and load our goods on to the long-suffering baggage animal.

Soon after 4.30 a.m. we were once more plodding along the level but stony track. The sun rose and the heat increased, till at 10 a.m., to our great joy, the road dipped down to the river-bank in a loop of the River Tigris, and we halted for ten minutes so that every one could gulp down the fresh water and replenish his water-bottle. We hoped that this was to be our camping-site, but there was no such luck. Again the whistle sounded and we trudged off round the river-bend and up and down steep and stony hills in steadily increasing heat. My left knee had begun to give out—a strained ligament, I think—and caused me much pain; many of the officers and men were limping along with blistered feet due to their having done no marching for so long and to ill-fitting boots, but in the far distance across the plateau we could see the village of Takrit, which we rightly concluded to be our destination.

We were becoming very exhausted. We halted at more frequent intervals, since the column commenced to tail out to a great length when on the move, but by plodding

on under a red-hot sun, we gradually approached Takrit, which we reached after noon.

The donkeys were handed over to the orderlies and Arabs, and the officers were marched into a filthy little courtyard on the western border of the village, where the valises and kit arrived in a few minutes. I found a place in a cattle-stable with one low door as an entrance and one small hole in its mud roof for ventilation; so bad was the air within this cavern that I had to go to the door periodically to breathe, but it had the advantage of giving protection from the burning sun. We all spread out our valises and lay down to rest, having munched a few hard chupatties. There was no water available in the vicinity, as the river was half a mile away on the other side of the village. The Arabs were *selling* water from their water-skins to such as would buy it, but I preferred to invest in a little "libben" (sour milk) and drank the remaining tepid water in my water-bottle to help down the stale chupatties. Personally I could not eat much, and was slightly feverish from the sun and fatigue, but was still in better trim than some others.

Thus ended the most terrible march which I think most of us had ever done or are ever likely to do. Since the short halt during the night we had covered seventeen miles, making a total distance of thirty-five and a half miles between 6.30 p.m. on May 15th and 12.30 p.m. on May 16th. This march we made in a very enfeebled condition and when completely out of training, and it ended in extreme heat. Of the total journey Stace and I estimated that we each rode about seven and a half miles on the little donkey and marched the remaining twenty-eight miles. My boots were old and comfortable, so I escaped without blisters, but some feet were in a shocking state at Takrit. It was indeed creditable that in this arduous march not a man fell out who could manage to walk somehow, and that those few who were compelled to give in did so only in the last miles, when their legs would carry them no farther.

For two or three hours most of us lay in our stuffy dungeons and tried to rest our aching legs, and a few lucky ones managed to sleep a little. In the stifling heat we discussed the situation and decided that we could never get through our journey if we were to march continually as we had just done—flesh and blood could not stand such

a strain. Luckily for us, on only one occasion subsequently were we ever called upon to make so great a march, and in that instance the climate was cooler and we were in good training. Word was passed round later that officers would be permitted to go down to the river under escort to bathe and drink, but I did not go as I still felt rather done up. A fairly large party, however, marched down through the big village for some half-mile or so to the river-bank and disported themselves on a wide beach downstream of the houses in the cool and fairly clean water, greatly to the interest of their Arab guards and the local Arabs.

Soon after the energetic party of officers returned from the river-bank it was time to make arrangements for the night, so most of us carried our valises up some crazy mud steps on to the shaky roofs of the serai stables and spread them on these flat but dirty spaces. The Indian officers and orderlies, who occupied another house, followed our example. Our frugal dinner of chupatties, dates, eggs, and biscuits made its appearance before dark, and after the meal we smoked for a time before turning in for the night. It was pleasantly cool on the roof, and personally I slept like a log.

At sunrise on May 17th we were up again and carrying our valises down into the dungeons below before the sun got too hot. Orders were issued that we were to march at 4.30 p.m., and that baggage must be still further cut down if possible, so I set to work discarding things, as most others were doing. It went to my heart to have to throw away some of my thickest and best clothes and underclothes, but they were too hot and heavy to wear while on the march, and the reduced weight of kit would not admit of taking them along with me. Mahomed Din, my orderly, to whom I gave my Burberry cord riding-breeches (costing about five guineas) managed to get one mejidich (3s. 4d.) for them from an Arab.

We had great trouble at Takrit in getting sufficient donkeys to carry us and our kit. At 4.30 p.m. we were all sitting on our belongings outside the village; but it was two hours later that the column started. The donkeys, as usual, were not produced up to time, and many were so small that they were quite useless for carrying any load. A few officers hired riding animals at Takrit, though most of us agreed not to do this in order to

prevent others being unable to get good animals unless they paid for them.

Just before dusk on May 17th, 1916, we left Takrit and ascended a steep hill on to more level country beyond, not without much shedding of ill-adjusted loads and a great variety of language in the course of the hurried reloading operations which followed these accidents. Mile after mile that night we marched along a level plain covered with coarse grass, weeds, and small prickly shrubs, halting each hour for ten minutes or so to allow the stragglers to close up. During these halts every one sat or lay down and smoked. Some munched chupatties and dates or hard-boiled eggs, but the whistle which sounded the "advance" always seemed to come almost as soon as we had lain down. If a man was unlucky enough to be at the rear of the column he frequently got no halt at all. The rear of a column is a place to avoid, as those who did not already know soon found out. That night we halted near the Tigris, and our next morning's march brought us to a place called Kharinina near the river.

Most of us were very tired and the heat was unbearable. I saw at once that the first thing to do was to get shelter from the sun, so, with the assistance of Stace, I started rigging up a *tente d'abri* for the first time. In this instance we made the supports by means of the extended framework of an X-pattern bath, to which we lashed our cane walking-sticks with straps and bits of red tape. The whole structure was then stayed with my mosquito-net cord moored to pegs which I had made at Sāmarra out of the wooden bars of the seat of my X-pattern camp chair. The framework and canes supported my rug tied to the canes and pegged to the ground, and Stace's blanket was draped over the side most exposed to the sun. Into this welcome shade we crawled and spread our valises, and lay down for a short rest before having some cold meat, dates, chupatties, and tea.

Our German acquaintance "Von Tirpitz" from the *Burhanieh* paid a visit to our camp at Kharinina on his way to Mosul, and went to the commandant's tent to chat with the swarthy Essād. Von Tirpitz seemed quite pleased to see us and spoke to several fellows, but he was in a hurry to get on and did not stay long. Throughout the heat of the day, after our twelve-mile march, all of us who had shelters lay under them and smoked, read, and slept as

much as the flies permitted, keeping meanwhile a bright lookout for Arab hawkers or Turkish soldiers selling eggs (baidh), fowls, or dates. "Libben" vendors also appeared at times.

Towards evening the heat grew less and we emerged from our shelters, collected our washing materials, cleaned out our valises, and made for the river-channel near by. The water's edge below the high bank was soon crowded with officers in a state of nature removing from their persons the grime of many miles of marching. I waded into the backwater and enjoyed a splendid wash in the three-foot depth of rather muddy liquid. The water being tepid, one could stay in for several minutes without the risk of a chill. Much refreshed after this dip, we all adjourned to our evening meal. The shelters were dismantled and packed ready for the morning, valises were made ready for the night, and, after a pipeful of Arab tobacco following on a good meal, we rolled ourselves in our blankets and were soon in the Land of Nod.

All of us were warned at Kharinina that the next stages of our journey would mean going two days without water, so, when we set off at 5 a.m. on May 19th, we expected a very unpleasant time. Yet, strange to say, we did an absurdly short march of only four and a half miles along the river-bank, and were then told that we were to halt again till the evening. It really seemed hardly worth the trouble of packing and unpacking. The order presumably originated from the addled brain of our commandant and was quite in keeping with the usual Turkish uncertainty about time and space. The place at which we re-erected our little shelters was called by the Arabs "Sanaich" (see Map No. 9).

At Sanaich there was no village, but merely a small walled enclosure, or "serai," perched on a mound in a bend of the Tigris. Inside the enclosure were a couple of small rooms opening on to a central courtyard. General Delamain and other senior officers occupied this shelter, and many other officers sampled the shade offered by the walls, but the shelter cut off all breeze and the heat in the enclosure was stifling, so that we in the open on the river-bank a couple of hundred yards away were much better off under our small shelters of blankets or rugs, especially those who had constructed theirs in nooks and crannies in the bank where the breezes off the

water reached them. No supplies of any sort were obtainable, and we passed the day in sleeping and reading. Far upstream beyond Mosul ranges of hills now fringed the Tigris Valley, and others appeared eastwards, denoting our approach to the more mountainous regions of Turkey in Asia. The river-water at Sanaich was rather muddy, yet quite drinkable and fresh. In our strenuous marches as prisoners in Mesopotamia to filter or even boil water for drinking was usually out of the question, and one drank whatever liquid one found, provided it seemed reasonably clear and did not smell.

On leaving Sanaich at 5 p.m. on May 19th, 1916, we marched up a shallow valley where were several pools of brackish water and headed into the desert. This detour was necessary to get round a large salt-marsh enclosed by broken country on the right bank of the Tigris. We plodded along a wide and very sandy track for the first hour, and after that for hour after hour along the level in heat, dust, and darkness. It seemed as if Essād Bey had determined to march the whole night through, but gradually the wide caravan track began to bear to the right and approached nearer to the stony hills on that side, till at last we swung straight towards the broken ground, climbed a steep slope up a small valley, and halted at 2 a.m. on May 20th on a narrow stony spur of the hills after covering about twenty miles from Sanaich. It was an hour later before I got to sleep, very thirsty and dog tired, while the first streak of dawn was breaking over the desolate hills near us. The Arabs who had accompanied us were selling water at some fancy price, but we did not then know that within 200 yards of the camp was a small spring of only slightly brackish water quite fit to drink. The place where we lay down to rest was called by the Arabs "Wadi Khanāna" (see Map No. 9).

After a couple of hours' sleep I awoke, very stiff and tired, and heard from our servant Narain that a drinkable stream existed in a deep nullah near us, so I sallied forth to prospect, carrying my washing materials and water-bottle. I clambered down a steep gravelly slope and reached a little trickle of water, filled my water-bottle, and had a good wash in a small pool lower down. Every one was soon replenishing their interiors and cleansing their exteriors with this water, and we then pitched our shelters, had breakfast, and prepared for the heat of the day.

We had been told we should not leave Wadi Khanāna till evening, so this gave Narain an opportunity of making a good supply of chupatties from a store of flour which we carried in an old pillow-case. If there is one thing needful on a march of this sort it is a plentiful supply of *bags* of all sorts. It is impossible to have too many. We kept our cooking-pots, stores, and plates in an old canvas clothes-bag, which also held our stock of flour tied up in a pillow-case, some dates in a handkerchief, rice in another handkerchief, wheat in a duster, salt in a piece of canvas, and pepper in a shaving-soap tin. We longed for about twenty small canvas bags for all our supplies. The coffee-tin broke open during one march and deposited its contents in the bottom of the canvas bag with a goodly supply of salt which had leaked out of its cloth. Thereafter, Stace and I had slightly salted coffee for breakfast each morning, as our tea had run out, and a nauseous mixture it was too. The reader should sample it to understand fully its piquant flavour.

The sun at Wadi Khanāna beat down with terrific force on our shelters of rugs and blankets on the bare ridge where we were camped, and towards afternoon the atmosphere got more and more oppressive and heavy clouds commenced to bank on the western horizon. Our orders were to pack up at 4 p.m. and march at 5 p.m.; but just before we were due to start a heavy storm came up and the rain began to fall in torrents. The sound of the second whistle was a welcome one, and we all trekked down on to the soaking plain, struck the wide caravan route, and headed north. The exercise kept us from getting a bad chill in our wet clothes from the high wind which was blowing, and after half an hour or less the rain ceased and the setting sun helped to dry our clothes.

The atmosphere was then perfectly delightful. After a long period of extreme heat combined with excessive dryness, the delights of a damp cool air cannot be appreciated except by those who have experienced the change. The column seemed to have new life put into it, and we moved along towards the north at a rare pace—not far short of four miles an hour including all halts. After dark we continued to push along rapidly till, at 8.30 p.m., the track turned more towards the east and entered rocky and hilly country. It was pitch dark

and the road was very narrow and uneven. The column then began to tail out and checks were frequent. At 9.30 p.m., after a ten-mile march, when we had come to a particularly difficult spot where the track crossed a stream, the whistle sounded a halt, and we sat down but did not unload the animals.

Major Gilchrist announced that the march would be resumed in two hours' time, when the moon had risen. Perchance the moon did her duty by rising as expected, but she took good care not to show any light till 1.30 a.m. on May 21st by effectually screening herself behind dense clouds, so we lay about on the hard damp ground for four hours on a very chilly night. The Arabs seized the opportunity to steal anything on which they could lay hands, and one unfortunate mess (that of Lieutenant A. B. Matthews) lost all its aluminium cooking-pots—a terrible calamity on a long march. I slept in my overcoat with my old air-cushion under my head, literally amid the legs of wandering donkeys and ponies. It was often touch and go whether they mistook my head for a stone (perhaps a pardonable error), or took the trouble to avoid treading on it. Twice I awoke with a start to find a pony snuffling at my forehead and trying to graze within a few inches of my face. Such pleasures, however, cannot endure for ever, and at 2 a.m. the column was once more stumbling on through the stony wilderness—this time by the dim light of the rising moon.

In a couple of hours dawn began to break. The sun lifted his golden rim over the lines of rocky hills, bringing warmth and good spirits to our weary crowd of men and animals. We were travelling more or less eastwards, having circumnavigated the salt-marsh which had barred our way, and were rapidly approaching the River Tigris once again. The track continued straight across a wide plateau surrounded by a fringe of rocky hills of small height through which we had penetrated during the night, and in an hour or so we were once more pushing on through broken country.

Early on May 21st, to our great delight, we saw, far below us and some miles away, the silver streak of the Tigris and the ruined city of Šhergāt (a mere collection of mounds), and we knew that we should soon be back once more on the welcome river-bank where good water could be had in unlimited quantity. Men, and sometimes

officers too, could be seen marching about 100 yards away on either flank of the column busily collecting brushwood and small sticks for firewood in anticipation of our arrival in camp. The Arab guards did not object to this custom, and it was very necessary to collect every scrap of material in a country such as this, which was practically destitute of trees. Leaving the stony hills, we marched across a sloping plain followed by a steep short climb up on to a small hill crowned with mounds and the remains of walls, and then we clattered down a steep and stony path to a large, square, double-storied house near the river with a central courtyard and an upper verandah encircling the yard. The senior officers were allotted rooms within the house, and the remainder of the British officers, Indian officers, and orderlies put up their little shelters on the cliffs overlooking the Tigris or among the ruined outhouses around the building.

It was 9 a.m. on May 21st, 1916, when our dusty column marched down into Shergāt. We had completed sixteen miles since our four-hour halt the previous night—or a total of twenty-six miles from our bivouac in the desert at Wadi Khanāna—and had covered about forty-six miles in the thirty-eight hours since our departure from the River Tigris at Sanaich inclusive of all halts. It was delightful to get a long drink of the cool fresh water from the river and to sit down to a breakfast of some sort with the certainty of a good rest ahead of us after our trip into the salt-desert. We were becoming a thin but tough crowd by this time, and could manage a fifteen-mile march without much trouble provided it was done during the cool of the day.

Shergāt—also known as Shaikal or Sherkut—is a most interesting place on the right bank of the River Tigris some sixty miles south of Mosul. There is no modern village of any size so far as we could see, but on every side the steep hills are covered with the ruins of a great town or fortress called Asshur, once the capital of Assyria. Sanskrit writings are visible on some of the stones, and the half-buried ruins of the numerous houses and walls are built of exceptionally large bricks of first-class material and manufacture, very different from the rubbish produced by Arab kilns. Many of the better-preserved ruins have paved floors in quite good preservation. A huge mound of earth towers above all the lesser ruins near the river,

and from its conical shape would appear to hide the remains of a temple of some sort.

On all sides we found deep excavations carried out, I believe, by German antiquarians, who had lived for several years in the strong stone house where we had halted. The house was reported to have been built by these Germans for their occupation while engaged in their researches. From the top of a steep hill overlooking the house there was a fine view over the ruined stronghold and up and down the River Tigris, which swept past its eastern boundary. The river-water was clear, and the stream deep and rapid on the right bank, though it seemed more shallow towards the far shore some 150 yards distant.

During the heat of the day we slept within or without the large house or under our little shelters on the steep cliffs overlooking the Tigris, but as late afternoon approached, one and all wandered down to the river-bank to bathe. The bank was very steep, and the shore rocky and skirted by a deep and cold current. It was delightful to get a good dip, but the water was too chilly to permit one to stay long in it. In the evening we got orders that we must pass the night within the walled enclosure outside the house, as Arab thieves were feared, so most of us carried our valises into this very crowded space, which was by no means as clean as it should have been.

Our "Yellah" troupe of Arab guards was changed at Shergāt, and a new lot made their appearance under the command of a young Arab mulāzim (lieutenant) of the gendarmerie. It appeared that his district extended from Shergāt to Mosul, and that we were then entering it. True to their Arab character, the "Yellahs" who were leaving us took with them on relief the Arab ponies ridden by our generals and staff officers, so that, when we were ordered to start from Shergāt on May 22nd, there was nothing suitable for General Delamain or any other senior officer to ride. General Delamain thereupon refused to move until new horses were provided; and thus it was not till 6 p.m. that we were actually clear of Shergāt. A heated argument had taken place with Essād Bey, who had finally arranged matters by ordering some of the new Arab gendarmes to give up their ponies to our general officers. At about sunset we bade farewell to Shergāt, climbed the steep hill behind the large house, dropped

down to the plain again, and swung off to the right along the track leading northwards towards Mosul.

We marched that night till near midnight, gradually bearing away from the river till we found ourselves again on a great open plain, slightly undulating and of more European appearance than the tracts we had previously traversed. Poppies and hollyhocks were plentiful among the grass, and the soil was rather sandy. Some people likened the landscape to that of the Orange River Colony in South Africa, with rounded knolls instead of the steep kopjes of that country. During this march I was particularly struck with the extraordinary way in which the Arab donkey-boys could sleep on a rapidly moving animal. Each Arab lay on his stomach with one arm clasped round the donkey's neck, and with one leg trailing near the ground while the other leg was clasped round the animal in some mysterious manner. None of us ever attempted this trick, for it required a very small man to do it with any prospect of success, and even then it must have needed much practice and could not have been comfortable. We halted finally on the open plain after a thirteen and a half miles march from Shergāt. There was no water obtainable at this spot, so our small skins full of water came in very useful for providing drinking water.

Daily we journeyed on till on May 25th we were approaching Mosul. The climate in the early morning was now beautiful, and the country much greener and prettier; flowers abounded, and the grass was of much better quality. The Tigris had become a rapid stream flowing in a winding and tortuous channel over a bed of pebbles, with numerous small islands dotted about in places. The whole scene was so unlike the dreary brown plains of Lower Mesopotamia that our spirits rose, for we knew we were rapidly entering country more suited to white men.

At the second hourly halt Essād Bey announced that he wished to count us, so the British officers formed up in line alongside the track, and then the Indian officers, and later the orderlies and servants. This boring proceeding occupied nearly three-quarters of an hour, but was completed at last, and the column moved off again along a stony road which dipped and rose continually over a succession of ridges. Corporal Reid (Stace's orderly) looked very ill at this time and complained of pain in his legs, and Mohamed Din (my orderly) was incapable of

walking at all, so Stace and I walked as much as we could, to give Corporal Reid long rides, while Mahomed Din rode the whole way on another small riding-donkey.

About 8.30 a.m. we had just surmounted a long rise by a zigzag road on stony ground, when a wonderful view burst upon us from the crest. A great wide valley stretched below us away towards the north, with the River Tigris sparkling and rippling between green fields and occasional orchards, and in the distance, on the banks of the river, lay the city of Mosul with its thousands of small stone houses, its many minarets, and its massive military barracks. Beyond the valley we saw line upon line of low hills, and to the far north, on the horizon, ranges of mountains showed dimly. It was a joyful moment when we first set eyes on Mosul, for it meant at any rate a return to comparative civilisation for a day or two.

We slipped and slid down a steep rocky track which ended in a plain on the river-level, where we halted for a few minutes and then marched along a dusty level road towards the city. By 10 a.m. the column was within half a mile of the outskirts of Mosul, and a halt was called so that officers and men could tidy themselves up a bit before facing the eyes of the Mosul populace. We had marched fifteen miles that morning and were a dusty and rather dishevelled crew.

Just outside the city the donkeys and baggage were handed over to the orderlies and the officers were ordered to fall in in file. We then marched into Mosul, with the baggage animals following us a short distance in rear. Our route did not lie through the densely populated area as in Baghdad, but along a wide metalled street with houses on one side only. We soon came to an open space, flanked by a very large Turkish barrack on one side and houses on two other sides. Across this parade-ground we continued till we reached the large entrance-gateway of the barrack and entered the barrack square. A Turkish officer led us to the upper floor, where we took up our quarters in various small rooms leading off the upper verandah. The baggage arrived in a few minutes, and we then made ourselves as comfortable as the overcrowded nature of the rooms and the hard floors permitted. It had been an agreeable surprise to us that we had not been paraded before the population of Mosul, as at Baghdad.

Our column had reached Mosul after a march of perhaps 170 miles, completed in seventy-seven and a quarter hours of actual marching-time, including hourly halts. The average march in twenty-four hours was seventeen and a half miles, and on some days we did far more. We completed this long journey between 6.30 p.m. on May 15th and 10.30 a.m. on May 25th—a portion of the hottest period of the year in Mesopotamia; yet only three British and no Indian officers fell out owing to sickness during the march.

While at Baghdad some British officers learned many interesting facts from Khalil Pasha, such as the dispute with Nuruddin regarding the tactics of the Battle of Ctesiphon, the Turkish scheme of attack at Ummal Tabul, the anxiety during General Aylmer's assault on the Du-jailah Redoubt of the Es-Sin position, and the contemplated assault in force on Kut in January 1916. The Turkish general also related the circumstances of the capture of Lieutenant-Commander Goad, R.I.M., at Ummal Tabul. He was extremely affable and offered to do all he could to assist our officers. Without doubt he represents the best type of modern Turk—a well-educated man, brave, and chivalrous, whatever other defects he may have. The Turkish Minister of War, Enver Pasha, arrived in Baghdad during General Melliss's stay in the city, but the British general did not have an interview with him.

It appears that while the Battle of Ctesiphon was in progress the Christian population of Baghdad (mostly Chaldeans and Armenians) was intensely excited, and expectant of a British victory. The people spent days on the roofs of their houses listening to the distant roar of the artillery combat, and were bitterly disappointed when they heard of the retirement of the British force. Now, however, that our men had at last arrived in Baghdad—though unhappily as prisoners—the Christians in the city did all in their power to alleviate the sufferings of our sick and to help those in good health. A large British hospital had been prepared in the Artillery Barracks at Baghdad, and about 300 British and Indian soldiers were collected there and well tended by the Turks and our own doctors. Our sick officers were accommodated in a house in the Christian quarter. The Baghdad Christians gave our soldiers food and money, and showed their friendliness in every possible way.

When the column of British and Indian rank and file arrived from Shumrān by road, the men were put into a large camp on the plain near the railway-station, and a convalescent camp was also established on the river-bank. In connection with these camps, Mr. Brissel, the United States Consul in Baghdad, did excellent work. He frequently visited the camps and supplied the men with eatables and money as far as his means permitted. Our troops did not remain long in Baghdad, but left for Mosul on or shortly after May 18th, if capable of marching. On arrival at Sāmarrā by rail some sick men in the column were removed to a hospital in the town, where they were given two wards. Captain Clifford, I.M.S., was left there to look after them when Major Baines, I.M.S., went on with General Melliss.

General Melliss left Baghdad on June 8th. His journey from Sāmarrā to Mosul was one which his party will never forget, for on all sides were traces of the hardships and sufferings of our rank and file who had already marched through this barren wilderness. At Takrit on June 10th General Melliss found 192 Indian and forty-three British soldiers. They had just been moved into dirty mud houses in the village, but had previously lain for days exposed to the heat and dust on the river-bank. Many were dying of dysentery, enteritis, and starvation, as they could not eat the coarse bread given them; and there were practically no medical arrangements for their relief and no medicines. The plight of all the sick was truly pitiable. Very few had either blankets or boots. General Melliss did all he could for them before going on, and distributed as much money as he could spare. He also sent a letter back to Khalil Pasha reporting the state of affairs at Takrit, and requested that a medical officer of ours should be sent there.

Again, at Shergāt on June 13th, 1916, fifty Indian and twenty-six British sick were found practically starving and all very ill, with only one of our own assistant surgeons to tend them. They were continually jeered at and ill-treated by Arabs, who threw stones at them as they crawled weakly down to the river to drink. These unfortunate men also received monetary relief from General Melliss, and everything possible was done for them, though that could not amount to much. Seventeen of the men were dying from sickness and starvation.

From what I have been able to gather from the narratives of survivors, the march of our rank and file up the course of the River Tigris from Sāmarra to Mosul in May and June 1916 was marked by horrible severity on the part of their captors and by terrible hardships from the extreme heat and the inferior and inadequate rations. Discipline became lax among the Indian camp-followers and some of the Indian soldiers, and thefts occurred from British soldiers which naturally led to fights. The Arab guards then stepped in and beat our men with the butts of their rifles, so that many were badly hurt. If a man through weakness consistently fell behind when on the march, he was brutally knocked about by the guards and he usually disappeared. Why he disappeared no doubt the Arab guards could tell.

The first column of our rank-and-file prisoners marched from Sāmarra on May 22nd and reached Mosul on June 3rd. It consisted of about 3,000 men. No transport was provided except a few camels and donkeys for the sick, and the escort frequently used these animals, so that the sick men had to walk—or die. The escort stole boots and clothing from the prisoners, and many of the latter had to march in strips of blankets wrapped round their feet. The usual ration given to our men was a double handful of atta (flour), a handful of wheat, a spoonful of ghee, and some salt. This was expected to last them for one, two, or even three days. At Sāmarra another party of our men received a “meat ration” before starting for Mosul. The ration was *one goat among 400 men*. The prisoners were forced to sell the very clothes they stood in to avoid starvation. They were driven along by the escort like a herd of cattle. The meagre rations of atta and wheat were replaced in some cases by a few mouldy chupatties. No firewood was ever issued to the prisoners for cooking their food.

The sick men were helped along as far as possible by their comrades, and, if lucky enough to reach a halting-place such as Shergāt, had the prospect of slow starvation instead of a speedy death on the open plain from the blows of Arab rifles. The ghastly sufferings of the men of the 6th Indian Division and 30th Brigade after the fall of Kut in the heat of the Mesopotamian summer were predicted by General Townshend in a remark made by him to some of his officers during the siege, when he said that

if the garrison held out till the rations were absolutely exhausted, the sequel would not bear contemplation. He was right. The sequel does not bear contemplation even now. Captain Murphy, R.A.M.C., and Captain Mukerji, I.M.S., accompanied some of our rank and file on the march from Sāmarra to Mosul, and left what assistant surgeons they could spare with the parties of sick who dropped out along the route, though little could be done for the invalids as there was a scarcity of medicines. A medical officer estimated that at least one thousand of our men must have perished either on the road or in hospital between Kut and their destination in Anatolia. Other groups of our invalid soldiers were found by General Melliss at other places, and more money was distributed. On his arrival in Mosul, however, on June 16th, arrangements were made with the Turks to have some carts sent back at once along the road to Shergāt to pick up the sick and bring them in to hospital.

In Mosul during June 1916 a large number of our sick men were collected in hospital. In contrast to the horrors of the march from Sāmarra, the men received every attention from the Turkish doctor, assisted by Captain Spackman, I.M.S., who had been left behind on duty at Mosul when we left the city. There were fifty-eight British and two Indians in hospital when General Melliss arrived. Each invalid had a comfortable bed and clean bedding, and the food was passably good. Four wards (sixty beds) in the local hospital were reserved for our men, and most of the sick who reached the place made a good recovery. Captain Spackman had good quarters, was well treated, and had complete liberty. In conversation with one of our medical men a Turkish doctor at the hospital deplored the scarcity of good drugs and appliances, and summed up the situation correctly with the words "Turkey is Turkey, and England is England. You must not expect too much."

Major Baines, I.M.S. (accompanying General Melliss), hearing that a large number of our rank and file were in the Infantry Barracks at Mosul, visited them on June 16th. He found that seventy British and Indian soldiers were suffering from dysentery and required medical comforts, of which there were none. These sick men had not been admitted to hospital, and were almost starving, as they could not eat the Turkish bread. Their plight was strongly

represented to the Turkish authorities, and seventy-five more beds were obtained in the hospital. Major Baines heard later that 350 prisoners, British and Indian, were to march at once for Raas-el-Ain, so he requested to be allowed to inspect these men, and did so in company with two Turkish doctors. He rejected 100 men as unfit for the march, *and the Turkish doctors agreed*. Yet the Turks would have forced these unfit men to start if Major Baines had not examined them.

It is impossible to trace consecutively the progress towards Anatolia of many echelons and parties of prisoners scattered along so great a length of desert track. I have digressed considerably from my personal narrative in this chapter to describe, however briefly, experiences other than my own, and to give my readers some idea of the incredible hardships through which the survivors of the rank and file of the 6th Indian Division and 30th Brigade passed while on their way to Anatolia in 1916.

CHAPTER XVIII

WESTWARDS TO ALEPPO

THE city of Mosul, on the borders of the mountainous country of Kurdistan in Asia Minor, lies on the banks of the River Tigris, roughly 240 miles north of Baghdad. It has a population of about 60,000 souls, and is consequently about half the size of Baghdad; but whereas Baghdad has a first-class line of communication to the Persian Gulf by way of the River Tigris, Mosul has no such navigable waterway on which to rely for traffic; all its trade has to be conducted by slow overland transport, which naturally limits the expansion of the place both in commerce and in population.

The greater part of the crowded city lies on the right bank of the river, which is spanned by a stone bridge of many arches giving access by road to the left bank. The river above Mosul runs for a couple of miles under a chain of limestone cliffs, at the end of which the city is built. On the left bank are the remains of ancient Nineveh, now indicated merely by a large mound called "Koyunjik," surrounded by smaller tumuli composed of parts of ancient walls, and there is also a place reputed to be the tomb of the prophet Jonah. The historic mound of Khorsabad lies also on the left bank in addition to many others. Along this bank of the Tigris runs the main road to Baghdad—passable for motor traffic, but unmetalled—a better route, I believe, than the track by which we came along the right bank.

The big Turkish Infantry Barrack, into which we were put at Mosul on May 25th, was built in the form of a rectangle with a central parade-ground about 80 yards by 60 yards in size. The building was double-storied, and a stone-flagged verandah (15 feet wide) on the upper floor overlooked the parade-ground; off this verandah barrack-rooms of different sizes and varying

degrees of filthiness could be entered through doors opening from the verandah. In the barrack with us were a few Turkish soldiers and a large number of Turkish prisoners—deserters probably—who wandered about in chains; and at various hours during the day a bugler would appear in the barrack square and sound an extraordinary call, chiefly composed of false notes in which he seemed to take a special pride.

Our little room in the barrack had some interesting remarks written on its whitewashed walls. One of these ran as follows: "Five British officers were *imprisoned* here for periods from three to six months"; and another in large letters: "Gott strafe the Commandant." Yet another message stated that a party of British officers was leaving for Aleppo. It had been written some two months or so previous to our arrival. The names of Captain White and Lieutenant Treloar of the Royal Australian Flying Corps (whom we met later at Afion Karahissar) figured conspicuously under a drawing of the Australian flag and the motto "Advance Australia." Our picture-gallery attracted such notice from the occupants of other rooms that we said we contemplated making a small charge for admission to see the show!

My orderly, Mahomed Din, was reported to be very ill soon after we arrived and was removed to a room in the barrack used as a hospital. Corporal Reid collapsed on arrival and was also taken into hospital in a delirious condition, in which he continued to affirm that every one was accusing him of cowardice and would not be convinced otherwise. Stace and I thus lost both our orderlies, and only our servant Narain remained fit for work. I went two or three times to see Mahomed Din in hospital, and before leaving Mosul gave him some money; but I regret to say he died of acute enteritis a few days later. He was a good soldier of an excellent type, and I was extremely sorry to hear of his early death. Corporal Reid remained dangerously ill with sunstroke long after we left Mosul, but whether he recovered I am unable to say.

A problem which now arose was how I was to get at least one more orderly, and I solved it by engaging as an orderly a British soldier named Pringle whom we found in the barracks. This man came up to some of our men soon after we arrived, and so pitiable an object did he appear that they had difficulty in believing that he actually

belonged, as he said, to that famous regiment the Seaforth Highlanders. He was a very small fellow, dressed in a white flannel singlet of sorts and a pair of coarse blue "dungaree" pantaloons rather like a mechanic's overalls. His feet were wrapped in rags, and he was bareheaded. He was very pale and emaciated, and looked very ill.

Private Pringle was soon surrounded by a circle of our officers and men, and proceeded to tell his story. It seems that his regiment had assaulted the Turkish trenches at Shaik Sa'ad in January 1916, when General Aylmer commenced his advance towards Kut, and that the Highlanders soon captured some part of the hostile line; but a party of forty men, including Pringle, was not properly supported, and, as the men were unable to get out of a very deep and muddy trench without great delay, they were surrounded and captured by the enemy. The Turks then stripped them naked, gave them some rough pantaloons, and *made them march without boots most of the 400 miles to Mosul*. Their feet were only protected by such rags as they could get with which to bind them. Imagine the state of these wretched men, fed on food unfit for dogs, and marching almost barefooted and half naked, in bitter cold at nights, along the stony tracks of the desert for hundreds of miles. Yet such was their hardihood and grit that most of them won through to Mosul.

The remainder of Pringle's party had gone on, but he himself had been left behind, as his feet were almost cut to pieces and required a long rest to heal. We provided him with a pair of khaki trousers, an old helmet, and shoes and socks, and I gave him a long-sleeved woollen cardigan waistcoat. In a couple of days, with better food to eat and fellow-Scots to talk with, he brightened up wonderfully, and proved quite a good orderly when he regained his strength. Pringle's Scotch accent was one which you could cut with a knife—in fact at times I could scarcely understand him at all, not being of his canny clan myself. Colonel Wilson, R.E., had a spare orderly (Private Cherry), and he kindly handed him over to Stace, so we were fitted out again with our proper number of servants for the march beyond Mosul.

The barrack, as I have said, was very dirty, and the sanitary arrangements were incredibly filthy and quite beyond my power or inclination to describe. How any human beings could live for long in this building without

an outbreak of some foul disease is past comprehension. We passed the night fairly comfortably, though our concrete floor was very hard. One officer in our room complained of fever which continued throughout the time we remained in Mosul, and when the column marched away he stayed behind in hospital. His complaint proved to be enteric fever, and I regret to say that after a long illness he succumbed to the disease. It is curious that no other cases of enteric occurred among us considering the water we had drunk, and it forms a good testimonial to the efficacy of the present system of inoculation against the disease.

On the morning of May 26th we were allowed to go in parties across the open space outside the barrack and along the road to a small eating-house, some 200 yards away, dignified by the name of "restaurant." There I had *déjeuner*, and enjoyed the luxury of *sitting at a table covered with a white cloth* and eating food in a civilised manner *off a china plate*, which was delightful after our recent meals of leathery chupatties, dusty dates, and tough meat, eaten off dirty metal plates while we lay or sat on the hard ground. The food was good, though cooked entirely in oil. It seemed so delicious that many people sadly overtaxed their internal machinery at this their first meal. We returned to the restaurant in the evening for dinner, and again did more than ample justice to the food set before us, particularly to some sweet cakes from which I, for one, suffered many internal pangs that night.

After *déjeuner* our Turkish guard took some of us to a house which we had passed on our way to the restaurant, and as he said we were intended to go in we complied. The building was a Turkish Officers' Club, and we heard that the local officers had kindly made us temporary members while we were in Mosul. The club was a curious place with a square central hall and four reception-rooms opening off it, and I believe there were some living-rooms also. The reception-rooms were fairly comfortably furnished, but on the walls of one of these rooms were hung the most extraordinary and bloodthirsty pictures which it is possible to conceive. They mostly represented Russian soldiers massacring Turkish men and women, and hacking babies into pieces with swords—all very crudely drawn and disgusting to look at. I

cannot understand how men of any education at all could appreciate such masterpieces of sensationalism on the walls of their club, but perhaps it is because the Turkish officer of this part of Turkey-in-Asia is after all only a savage at heart, with a thin veneer of civilisation which rubs off with the greatest ease.

A dozen of us trooped into the central hall of the club, and were there met by an attendant from whom we ordered coffee. In a short time a small and ancient kai-makām (lieutenant-colonel) appeared and welcomed us in French with great affability—such excessive affability, in fact, that it struck me as curious from the start, though the explanation was soon forthcoming. He invited us into a small room, where we all sat down on fairly comfortable chairs and sofas, and then suggested a drink, so we ordered a bottle of liqueur brandy to take with our coffee.

The already loquacious Turk drank glass after glass from the bottle, and soon his weary head commenced to sink and his conversation became incoherent, so we thought it time to say adieu. An attendant came and we paid for our drinks, while the gallant Colonel was assisted across the square outside by an obsequious club servant to his quarters on the far side. I heard later that this bibulous hero (who was a doctor) had already been removed from his appointment on account of his fondness for looking on wine when it was red. It would not be fair to judge Turkish officers as a whole by the conduct of this particular specimen.

The following morning many of us went out under escort to the bazaars in the city. I went with two others, and having trudged for half a mile along a broad metalled street we came to the densely populated area, where we wandered for a couple of hours through the narrow cobbled streets of the bazaars, buying sugar, dates, raisins, tin boxes, and other necessaries at fairly cheap rates, aided by a local guide and shadowed by a good-natured Turkish soldier. The shops were almost all of thoroughly Eastern type—little stalls facing the road, in each of which sat the owner, surrounded by a weird assortment of shoddy goods. Mosul is many years behind Baghdad in progress. It makes little pretence at European customs and ideas, and the greater part of the buildings are of distinctly Eastern design. We wandered about the city till it was time to return, and then came back once more to the

dirty barrack after getting some lunch at one of the small restaurants. When we arrived, we heard that the first echelon would leave Mosul that afternoon and that all kit was to be packed ready for the start.

Enver Pasha, the young Turkish Minister of War at Constantinople, had just returned to Mosul in a large motor-car from Baghdad, and he was expected to arrive soon at our barrack. At about 4.30 p.m. he appeared with a numerous staff, and, coming along the upper verandah past our rooms, he stopped and addressed us in fluent French. He was a small, well made, and rather thickset man of distinctly French appearance with a very alert manner, and he wore the uniform of a Turkish general officer. Major Gilchrist translated Enver Pasha's speech for the benefit of those unable to follow it. The gist of it was that he, the War Minister, had the highest admiration for us, and that we should not be downhearted and despondent, for it was merely our misfortune that we were, for the time being, prisoners of war; that at one time we British thus found ourselves prisoners and that at another time the Turks might find themselves in a similar predicament—it was all the fortune of war; but that we should rest assured that while we were in Turkish hands we should be treated as *PRECIOUS AND HONOURED GUESTS of the Ottoman Government*.

This expression—the "Honoured Guests" of Turkey—became, later, almost classical in the 6th Indian Division. Its irony is immeasurable in view of our treatment before and after this interview with Enver Pasha. We all agreed that, if our treatment was that meted out to honoured guests, then God help those who were to be treated as ordinary prisoners of war. In the greater part of Turkey-in-Asia one word expresses both "prisoner of war" and "slave." To the uneducated Turk there is no difference. Our rank and file were treated as slaves.

I have come to the conclusion that the utter neglect—I will not say ill-treatment—frequently shown towards us officers by the Turks may be traced, not to ill-will, but to absolute apathy, dislike of responsibility, and incompetence. Our captors were not cruel to us or even hostile to us, but in most cases simply left us alone and neglected all appeals for assistance unless induced to take action by the presence of Germans, or by the fear of punishment from a superior officer. The Turk is not a Euro-

pean, and when beyond the influence of Constantinople his Asiatic character asserts itself. He is an implicit believer in the principle of taking no thought for the morrow, and finds that by letting slide his duties for the day he can usually get some one else to do them for him. He is not urged on by the restless energy found among more civilised races, and desires only a calm and comfortable existence of dignified indolence. Also he has an immense respect for rank. With regard to this trait in his character it is instructive to follow the progress of Major-General Sir Charles Melliss through Mesopotamia.

General Melliss, before his capture, had a great name among the Turks as a daring and brilliant commander, and the influence of Khalil Pasha in Baghdad secured him almost complete liberty in that city. A young Turkish officer was attached to his staff as an aide-de-camp and not as a guard. Knowing the importance of prestige among the Turks, and to ensure prompt and effective assistance being given to our unfortunate sick men abandoned along the line of march, General Melliss's staff saw to it that the local Turkish commandant at each post was duly impressed with the dignity of the captured General. Their scheme worked excellently. On the arrival of the party at an outlying post, the Turks and Arabs would be much impressed by the caravan of carriages and would enquire, "Who is this officer?" The answer was, "This is His Excellency General Sir Charles Melliss *Pasha*," and after that things hummed in that little post. The dread names of Enver Pasha, Emin Pasha, and Khalil Pasha arose before the vision of the sleepy Turkish commandant, and dreams of bad reports troubled his rest at nights. General Melliss's staff officers always addressed him in public as "Your Excellency," and even his Turkish A.D.C. spoke of him as "His Excellency." Many a dying British soldier in the deserts between Baghdad and Anatolia had reason to bless General Sir Charles Melliss.

To return to our experiences in Mosul, I may say that Enver Pasha did not remain long in our barrack, and as soon as he had left we completed our preparations for departure. On the whole I was not sorry to get away. A desert journey was in many ways preferable to the dirty rooms and disgusting smells of our prison. The sun was streaming into the verandah, and it was very hot, but at

5.30 p.m. we began to get our kit carried down the stone steps to the entrance archway and thence out on to the big parade-ground outside the barrack, where were a number of light four-wheeled wagons, without springs, each drawn by two ponies, and palpably intended for us and our baggage. There were also a few carriages with springs and hoods (called "arabas") for the general officers and their staffs; and four gunner majors had hired an extra araba for their private use.

The wagons were allotted to officers at the rate of one wagon to six officers and their six orderlies plus any private servants they might have. This was a very meagre allowance, and the carts were so crowded with valises, sticks, and other paraphernalia that only three persons were allowed to ride on the top of the baggage in addition to the Turkish driver, who occupied a small seat in front. In our wagon I shared the limited space available with five other officers, six orderlies, and three servants—a total number of fifteen persons for one small cart exclusive of the driver—so we officers could only get one hour's ride in every four, and the orderlies and servants got even slightly less riding-time than this. Many other parties were as badly off as we were. Thus were the Precious and Honoured Guests sent on their 200-miles journey across the deserts from Mosul to Raas-el-Ain.

There was very great delay in starting from Mosul, and we all sat or lay on the hard ground waiting for orders for nearly an hour, surrounded by groups of spectators, till at length at dusk the carts—each with one orderly aboard—began to move off and rumbled away down the road skirting the city. Soon afterwards we officers formed up in file and marched along the same road, and thus on May 27th, 1916, we bade farewell for ever to Mosul. We soon overtook our carts and began to take our turn in riding on them.

Our journey on May 28th was uneventful, and on May 29th we started out again at 5 a.m. (our usual hour) and went along at a good rate over a fair road for four hours, when a halt was called for the day. Towards the end of this march I felt too ill to walk much. I had fever, and, on arrival in camp, I lay down under my blanket and managed later to get some shelter from the sun between two carts under a roof formed by a rug. Nothing occurred during the day till our departure later from camp,

when we marched for four and a half hours and camped for the night near a small pool of rain-water on the open plain. I got a lift all the way in the hospital-cart, so was not tired, but was very stiff and decidedly weak and shaky when we stopped. The hospital-cart held two or three wooden boxes filled with medical stores, and I found these most uncomfortable to sit upon even with a rug and cushion to ease the shocks of the road.

Word was passed round that, as the next march was to be a long one, we should not start in the morning, and every one was glad of the prospect of what is known in India as a "Europe morning" instead of rising before dawn. Most of us filled our water-bottles that night from the small pool of rain-water, but before morning the pool was a mass of slime and mud owing to the ponies wading in it and the water was quite undrinkable. Even before it had been reduced to this state the liquid was full of small animals of great variety and liveliness, and I feared we imbibed a large portion of this aquarium during the hours of darkness; yet the nourishing "consommé" from the pool did not seem to harm any one. We slept close to the carts as usual, for a raid by Arab cut-throats was feared. Many were known to be on the prowl in the vicinity, and even during daylight we were warned not to wander more than 100 yards from the camp.

On May 30th, at 5 p.m., we set forth again on our way, and in twenty minutes found a small stream of quite good water which the road crossed. Near it was a small serai used by a Turkish outpost—a sort of police post, I should say. A general rush ensued to the water's edge when the column had halted, and every available receptacle was filled with liquid and every man took the longest drink he could hold. I was still in the hospital-cart, for I was not allowed to take any exercise, though the fever had gone. The march continued hour after hour across a seemingly endless plain, with a range of low hills showing some miles away to our left in the desert and higher hills in the distance to our right. It was not till 11 p.m. that the commandant decided to call a short halt, when we all lay down close to the carts and slept for an hour or two. Warning had again been given that hostile Arabs were near and that we must on no account leave the vicinity of the wagons. The night was cold, so sleep was difficult.

In two short hours after we settled down to sleep the first whistle sounded, and by 3 a.m. on May 31st the tired column was on the move once more in the darkness. Dawn broke over the barren plains, and the sun rose higher and higher, and still the column travelled steadily more or less towards the west, but gradually approaching a direction rather north of west, so that the distant hills to the right took form and shape as we neared them. Men and animals alike were very tired and stiff. It looked as if Essād Bey had set himself to do a record march—very nice no doubt for him on his Arab steed, but viewed in a different light by those trudging along in the dust of the carts. The real reason, however, for this forced march was lack of good water, so I think the commandant was wise. At 8 a.m. we reached at length a stream of drinkable water outside the small village of Rumelāt (see Map No. 9), and there we took a long draught of fresh water and lay down and ate a little food. The Turkish drivers were allowed to water their animals in the stream anywhere they wished, so needless to say they chose to do so upstream of our halting-place and thus soon spoilt the water for drinking purposes. After an hour's halt we started once again and marched steadily along an undulating stony road till nearly eleven o'clock in increasing heat and clouds of dust. At length the road dipped steeply down into a small deep valley, and we halted by another excellent stream of water after the longest march of the whole journey from Sāmarra.

We had been on the move since 5 p.m. on May 30th, except for halts totalling about four hours—a period of about fourteen hours of marching—and the pace had been very rapid throughout. The distance covered must have been between thirty-six and thirty-eight miles. Luckily for me I rode the whole way in the hospital-cart, but every one else was exceedingly weary—and no wonder; they agreed, however, that the march was not so killing a one as the thirty-five and a half mile journey from Sāmarra to Takrit, as all were now fit to withstand fatigue and the climate was cooler.

The valley in which we lay at rest under our little shelters was a deep and winding depression in the midst of the desert. It contained a walled enclosure occupied by a Turkish outpost, and there was a charming little stream of the purest water rippling through the reeds and grass

among the rocks. This valley was a veritable haven of rest after the waterless tableland across which we had come, and the pleasure of seeing for the first time a stream reminiscent of those in far-off England was keen indeed. The place was called *Demir Kapu* (Iron Gates).

After some hours of well-earned rest the camp awoke and became a busy scene. Keen disciples of Izaak Walton found that fish existed in the little brook, and were soon beguiling the denizens of the vasty deep to their doom with improvised rods and tackle. Others wandered downstream to some clean pools of deep water and enjoyed a dive and swim, while each and all on the banks of the stream set to work to scrub from their persons the accumulated dust of many miles of desert travel.

We rested in this valley west of *Rumelât* during the greater part of June 1st and marched again in the evening. When we had crossed the brook, we climbed to higher ground and set off across the rolling plains towards the sinking sun, making good progress till 8 p.m., when we halted for the night near a running stream of fairly good water. We had crossed the high tableland of waterless country west of *Mosul*, and had now struck the area watered by the eastern tributary streams of the *River Chabur*, itself a tributary of the *Euphrates*. We had entered a more fertile region nearer to the northern hills bounding the *Mesopotamian plain*, and were certain of abundant water-supply from the numerous streams which had their source in these hills.

The following morning we marched as usual, and for hours were in sight of the small round hill marking our halt of the previous night, for the desert was a gently undulating expanse covered with grass and any ex-crescence showed for miles around. At 8 a.m. *General Delamain's araba* stopped near a house where was a well, which he proceeded to examine, since sinister rumours of *Armenian massacres* were already afloat among us. The state of the well confirmed the rumour. It was half full of the remains of wretched men, women, and little children, done to death by the *Turks* or by their satellites the *Kurds* and *Arabs*.

All the way along the line of march from this point to *Raas-el-Ain* we continually saw deserted villages, for the state of which our guards would offer no explanation. These villages were situated in open country and were

close to good streams as a rule. Though typhus was rampant in the district, all these villages could not have been depopulated by sickness to such an extent, and the condition of the well discovered by General Delamain undoubtedly gave the correct solution of the problem.

I think that the Turks are led to these dastardly deeds by both hate and fear—the fanatical hatred of the Mohammedan against the Christian and fear of the growing power and influence of a people of superior education to themselves. Many of the specimens of the Armenian race whom we encountered were undoubtedly swindlers and liars ; but this, though an excuse perhaps for severity, cannot condone wholesale murder, and the Young Turk party, backed by the German Government, has much to answer for respecting these atrocities. So far as we could see there had been no wholesale massacres for some months in this particular district, but perhaps the explanation of this fact may be that, after the slaughter of Armenians in 1914, there were hardly any able-bodied Armenians in these parts worth massacring.

On June 2nd we passed Aznauar, where we camped, and the next day we set out in the early morning across a wide plain gradually rising towards a distant and conspicuous village of large size with a big stone barrack on a spur of the hill, made the more noticeable by a minaret or tower of some sort. Trees were scattered in clumps around the village, and the general appearance of the place was more promising than any we had yet seen. I also noticed that a telegraph line was close to our track and that it ran to the village. The place turned out to be Nesibin (or Nisibin), about 120 miles from Mosul, and the largest and most important village in this area of the desert.

The column was moving at a great pace—so fast did the carts travel that it was difficult to keep up with them on foot—and we soon came to a very fine spring on the right of the road, enclosed by a stone wall with the water escaping in the form of a waterfall. At this spot, as I heard later, a British soldier-prisoner, of a rank-and-file column, was murdered some weeks afterwards by his Arab guards when he lay down by the roadside and said he could go no farther. It was 9 a.m. when we reached a camping-ground below the village and erected our shelters close to a large stream of good water. The march had been

a hurried one, so we were all glad to get a good rest, and were pleased at having broken the back of the long desert journey from Mosul to the rail-head at Raas-el-Ain.

The village of Nesibin, built on a tributary stream of the River Chabur (the River Habor of Biblical history), struck me as quite different from any place we had previously reached. It was on a rise of ground surrounded by plantations of poplars, and in general appearance resembled more the villages of Palestine than those of Mesopotamia. The houses were built of stone, and an arched bridge of the same material spanned the stream to the east of the village. Over this bridge the main road passed, and thence up to, and through, the village as a wide street fringed with little native shops. The people were much superior in appearance to the savage Arabs of Mesopotamia, and wore good clothes of Armenian or possibly Jewish make. They were quite friendly and seemed to be much interested in us. One old gentleman was particularly kind to two of our officers; he provided them with excellent food, and when we departed waved his farewell to them.

We were allowed to go freely into the village to purchase stores, and every one took full advantage of the permission. Dates and flour were on sale in the shops, and also—luxury of luxuries—cherries! To taste European fruit again was a great treat, and I am afraid we ate more than was good for us. Many sorts of goods were on sale in the little shops, though mostly of shoddy material. In the afternoon I had a ripping bathe in the stream at a place where there was good grass on the bank and the water about 4 feet deep, and slept like a top that night in spite of the cold.

The following morning (June 4th) we took it easy under our shelters and strolled into the village to have a look round the shops. Orders were issued for marching at 5 p.m., but a series of unfortunate incidents delayed the start. To commence with, every one had purchased firewood in Nesibin, as we knew from experience that wood was unobtainable on the march, and this firewood we put into our carts under our valises.

When all were ready to march, Essād Bey came round and ordered all firewood to be removed from the carts. This order caused considerable indignation, as we were not told of the prohibition till we had all spent some preci-

ous cash on the purchase of wood. With many protests from heated and indignant owners, all the kit was unloaded from the carts and the sticks of firewood removed, many fellows taking a piece or two as a walking-stick of highly rustic design to be used later on to feed a camp fire. Simmering with rage, we commenced our march, and had partly crossed the stone bridge when the column was halted so that a dispute could be settled. It seems that one of our majors had been involved in an altercation with an Arab ending in blows, and that the driver of an "araba" close by had then joined in and had struck him on the head with his whip. The major then demanded of the commandant that this driver should be beaten, and finally Essād Bey himself punished the offender by beating him soundly till he wept.

Justice having been done, the train of wagons moved on again up the hill and through the village, till it came to a level stretch of road near the empty stone barrack. Again we were ordered to halt. Essād Bey, and every one else, was in a shockingly bad temper by this time, and matters were not improved when the commandant insisted on every cart being searched for firewood or its occupants questioned as to whether they had any of the material still with them. Practically no wood being forthcoming, the carts were at length allowed to proceed, and we set forth across the open plain once more en route for Raas-el-Ain.

During this march I felt very ill and suffered from violent sickness and other symptoms of poisoning. In the third hour of the march I was so bad that I had to ride for a short time in the hospital-cart, but, feeling slightly better after this, I managed to march for the last hour's journey along the narrow footpaths fringing the road. We camped for the night near a stream not far from a very small village, called Amūḍla, I believe, but I was too sick to be able to notice much about the place and went supperless to bed as quickly as possible. The cause of all the trouble, according to our medical staff, was probably some chupatties made of bad flour, bought in Nesibin and eaten just before the march commenced. The flour apparently fermented after the chupatties had been eaten—with the disastrous results just described. Many other people, I hear, were similarly poisoned.

We were now much closer to the hilly country to the

north, and the plain was well covered with grass. We passed the village of Harin on June 5th, and when we marched again, early on June 6th, I could discern far ahead a small prominent hill in the plain, at the base of which showed a few houses of a village. Away to our right front, on a conical mountain among the ranges of hills, appeared what looked like a town, but it was very far away and not very distinct in the early morning. Gradually the column approached the small hill on the plain. We extended over an enormous length of road, because of the excessive pace set by the leaders and the heat of the day when the sun rose. Soon we were skirting the hill, and found that the greater part of the village was on the far side of it. We swung off the main road to the right, and marched down to a camping-ground near the banks of a clear stream of water which flowed under a stone bridge. I, and the other early arrivals, drank deeply of this water, which was delightfully cool and refreshing and seemed quite pure. The name of the village was Telorji, or Teleman, but it is apparently also known as Kotschissar, and as such it is shown on Map No. 9.

High on a precipitous mountain, some fifteen miles away to the north of our camp, lay the hundreds of houses and mosques of the picturesque town which we had seen before, and which we now ascertained to be Mirdin. From its appearance and situation I should say that it must have been an ancient stronghold, for it was surrounded by a high wall and was built in a most inaccessible place.

Telorji itself is a place of considerable interest. The village is of no importance, but adjoining it lies a remarkable collection of ruins, seemingly of some Christian settlement or monastery. The most conspicuous ruin is that of a great stone church or abbey of the basilica type, with a dome over the nave and the openings heavily ornamented. The age of this ruin I could not judge, but should place it at some hundreds of years. Within it were quotations from the Korān, indicating that it had been converted into a Mohammedan temple, though originally a Christian place of worship, as shown by its design.

Grouped about the church were other ruins, and, conspicuous for miles around, stood a ruined campanile perhaps 100 feet in height. High up the campanile was

a loophole around which the wall was pitted with recent bullet holes. We should have been interested to find out the history of these ruins so far out in the desert, but this was not possible, for Thomas Cook & Son had failed to supply us with a guide.

In the afternoon we set off past the church and campanile till we struck the main road. Along this the column marched for an hour and a half, when an unexpected halt was called for the night. We had anticipated at least a four-hours march, but it is foolish to anticipate anything under Turkish control, as we should have known by that time. Our general direction of march had changed from a point or two north of west to south-west, and consequently we commenced to leave the better tract of land close to the hills and to approach nearer to the desert proper.

The reason of our unexpected halt within five miles of Telorji was soon explained. We had just crossed a wooden bridge over a deep nullah in which flowed a good clear stream of water, and the wagons were parked on the left-hand side of the road. It seems that our commandant, Essād Bey, had lately been hearing from Major Gilchrist and other officers of the delights and fascinations of fishing. When he saw this stream he decided that here was a likely spot at which to try his luck, and volunteered his favourite French phrase, "Il y a"—presumably in reference to the fish. So here we camped in order that Essād should fish! As I have said before, time and space convey no particular meaning to the genuine Turk of uncivilised Turkey.

Whether Essād Bey actually fished or not I do not know, but the camping-site was a good one with pure water close at hand, so we did not grumble, and we spread out our valises and had our frugal meal by daylight for a change. Later on I watched the commandant being literally tucked into bed by his Arab servant, who carefully spread each article of bedding over him after he had lain down on his "rezai," and still more carefully tucked each article in under him; indeed, I quite expected him to wind up the proceedings by kissing Essād good night, but this fitting climax was never reached.

Next day we halted for a time near a well where several fellows had a good drink. Afterwards, on prospecting round a bit, they found to their disgust that other wells

close at hand contained the remains of massacred Armenians. No harm ensued to those who had drunk of this water, but it made people very careful in the succeeding marches.

Before sunset, as we were toiling up a long rise, we saw ahead of us a small cavalcade approaching—the riders dressed in khaki instead of the usual grey of the Turkish troops, and wearing helmets in place of the ordinary Enverri caps; the helmets, however, were different from those of British troops, for they were noticeably higher in the crown. We soon realised that we were meeting German troops for the first time. Headed by a young German officer, and accompanied by an Arab guide, the troop of forty mounted men jingled by us, gazing curiously at our travel-stained column. The troop was, I believe, a mounted machine-gun section en route for Mosul. The men were young and looked well; their chubby faces and fresh colour were in marked contrast to our own thin visages, now burnt to a mahogany hue. Their equipment seemed first-rate and complete to the smallest detail, and the few carts which followed them showed that the men were travelling with a minimum of kit.

When darkness had fallen, we still continued our march, gradually entering country which was a barren desert; the track led in a south-westerly direction, so that, as before mentioned, we were leaving the neighbourhood of the northern hills and the adjacent fertile land. The night was rather hot at first, but occasionally we traversed beautifully cool bands of atmosphere in the hollows of the undulating plain. At 8.30 p.m. Essād Bey decided to park his wagons and to camp for the night on the wide track, so we unloaded our valises and settled down to eat and sleep. The air had suddenly turned cold, and I was glad of the warmth of my great-coat and knitted woollen waistcoat. There was no stream near our bivouac, but as the night was cold the water in our bottles sufficed for drinking purposes. Stace and I slept well that night, and curiously enough we both dreamed of freedom, luxury, and all sorts of pleasant things, and were correspondingly disgusted when we awoke before dawn to find ourselves prisoners of war, cold, stiff, and lying on the hard ground with another march before us.

At the usual early hour on June 8th the column marched once more on the road towards Raas-el-Ain—the haven

which we longed so much to reach. This interminable marching, morning and evening, combined with poor food and uncertain supplies, was telling on us all both in health and temper, and most people were getting decidedly stale.

The morning's march was a very short one. At 6.15 a.m. we found ourselves near a very large ravine in which were long shallow pools of water but no flowing stream. The ravine was spanned by an immense wooden trestle bridge of elaborate and scientific design but of rather inferior finish. Some of the trestles must have been quite 30 feet in height. The Turkish sappers, whose work the bridge was, were wandering about near the structure, and one of their officers was superintending the construction of a stone abutment for a permanent bridge across the ravine.

On sloping ground to our right lay a large camp of Turkish cavalry, their hundreds of lances stuck upright in the ground with the pennants waving gaily in the breeze. Our column crossed the wooden bridge and the wagons were parked on a filthy camping-ground on the left of the road. The arabas of our general officers were taken up to the top of a steep hill overlooking the bridge, so Stace and I had our valises carried up the hill, and on its crest we put up our shelter.

In the afternoon we set forth on our last march to Raas-el-Ain, where we knew we should meet the railway once more. Heavy clouds had been massing on the horizon, and these soon came rolling up, driven by a strong wind which was blowing from the north-east. The rain came down and drove in sheets against our backs as we trudged along, and in a few minutes my back was soaking while my chest was quite dry. Riding on the baggage wagons was a chilly business in the high wind in wet clothes, but by crouching under tarpaulins most of us managed to avoid getting a severe chill.

An hour or so after the march commenced we met a long column of Turkish troops and transport. There were field guns, mountain guns, wagons galore, and a pontoon section—the last naturally very interesting to me. The guns seemed to be all of German type of the latest design and had very long trails. The pontoon section (or train) was a small one, intended, I should say, to accompany a field troop with a cavalry division. A body of cavalry preceded the guns and transport. We

observed this column with great interest, and the Turks in their turn were interested in our very draggled and muddy caravan.

After we had passed all these troops Essād said that he wished to halt for the night, although he must have known that we were within a few miles of Raas-el-Ain and away from any water, but he was argued out of his absurd decision by our staff and consented at last to proceed. From the top of a long rise of the ground just before sunset we could discern in the distance a group of buildings on the plain, a raised water-reservoir, and the smoke of locomotives. A thrill of joy ran through the column, for here at last was a definite sign of approaching civilisation—the terminus of a line of railway.

We reached Raas-el-Ain at about 8.15 p.m. on June 8th, 1916, after an overland journey from Mosul of roughly 200 miles, and camped near the railway station. We completed this journey in seventy-six hours of actual marching, including the short hourly halts. The joy of knowing that our enormous journey across the deserts of Upper Mesopotamia had actually been completed was great, and the very dirty camp in which we found ourselves was welcome to us despite its filth. Except for two uncomfortable days in the large barrack at Mosul, the column had been marching almost incessantly, morning and evening, since May 15th—a period of twenty-five days—and in that time had covered a total distance by road of approximately 370 miles under very trying circumstances. Of the whole distance from Sāmarra to Raas-el-Ain, I calculate that I walked about 250 to 270 miles—a good test for the best boots ever made, and mine were not equal to the task.

The total distance of 370 miles took us 153 hours (marching time) to complete, including short halts, or say 128 hours, deducting the hourly halts; thus the actual average speed at which the column travelled was slightly under three miles an hour. The pace from Mosul to Raas-el-Ain with cart transport was more rapid than that on the journey from Sāmarra to Mosul with pack animals.

The village of Raas-el-Ain in June 1916 was the eastern railhead of the line from Aleppo (Turkish Halep) towards Mosul. The railway to Raas-el-Ain was to be continued till it met, at Mosul, the line being pushed out northwards from Baghdad via Sāmarra; but the out-

break of war prevented the completion of the work, so that a gap of some 370 miles, from Sāmarra to Raas-el-Ain via Mosul, had to be negotiated by means of road transport—luckily for the British Army then in Mesopotamia.

Raas-el-Ain, as a village, deserves no particular notice. It is a small place of a few hundreds of inhabitants, situated roughly midway between Mosul and Aleppo (*vide* Map No. 9), and watered by the River Chabur. The village consists of a straggling collection of inferior stone or mud huts on a small hill up which runs a very broad unmetalled roadway with booths on each side of it. In the higher portion of the village is a hospital of sorts with a medical staff of Armenians. On the left-hand side on entering the village we found a small shop run by a very advanced and extremely villainous and foul-mouthed Turk, who sold European tinned stores and wine and brandy at prices sufficient to make angels weep and more than sufficient to make Britishers swear. The Turk, who spoke English, interlarded his conversation with profanity of all sorts, and was ready to abuse his customers freely on the smallest pretext. We met this same villain again at Islahie later in our journey—in fact, he made such a good thing out of us at Raas-el-Ain that he thought it worth while to follow us.

On the opposite side of the street was a small eating-house where meat was procurable in the mornings, and which was much patronised by Turkish soldiers in search of a meal. Farther up the street on the left was a wooden shelter used as a café where highly sweetened tea without milk was sold in small glass cups. Some of our fellows could usually be seen in the booth enjoying a glass of the curious concoction produced by the shopman from an urn on a shelf. Farther up the street on either side were many small stalls where dried vegetables, spices, onions, and chupatties were for sale, as well as other eatables and shoddy goods. A couple of small bakeries were turning out loaves of coarse brown bread, and, though I tried twice to get some, I could not do so, as apparently the bread was made only for the Turkish troops.

Next day a plausible Armenian employed at the local hospital promised to bring meat to our camp for sale, and actually appeared there with a sheep a few hours later. The price he asked for the animal, however, was so outrageous that we refused his offer with scorn, and

found by enquiry that he was trying to make a clear profit of some 300 per cent. or so. This gave us some insight into the Armenian character, for the man had pretended to be very well disposed towards us at the village and to be ready to help us in any way he could. The Armenian told us that in the massacres of his people a total of 15,000 persons had perished in the district round about Raas-el-Ain, and from what we had seen I should say that on this occasion the man was not lying.

In the village I met one or two Germans. One, who spoke English, told me of the naval battle of May 31st, 1916, in the Skagerrack (the Battle of Jutland), and of course quoted it as a decisive victory for his country. He also mentioned the loss of H.M.S. *Hampshire* with Lord Kitchener aboard, but at the time I did not believe this report.

Later in the day Stace and I returned again to the village to try to get some eggs, and went to the Armenian's small stone cottage near the hospital. We were invited inside and introduced to an Armenian doctor who had learnt English moderately well during his medical course in Beirut. This man said that he had heard that Baghdad had fallen to General Gorrings's force soon after our departure from Kut. We hoped that the rumour was true. Later, however, we got news which dispelled the idea.

As we were returning to our camp in the afternoon we met a column of Indian orderlies and servants, escorted by Turks and loaded with kit, marching out of the camp. When we enquired the reason of this, we were told that the Turkish commandant at Raas-el-Ain had ordered that all Hindu and Christian orderlies and servants were to be marched off to a separate camp, and that, after many heated protests, the order had been carried out, leaving our Hindu Indian officers and many British officers without orderlies and servants. Our Hindu cook Narain had been left by us in the village to collect stores, and he was found there by the Turks and attached to the column then marching through, but he was worse off than the other men as he had no kit at all with him. Most of the Hindu and Christian Indians, thus suddenly taken away from our column, never returned to it. They were left at Raas-el-Ain when we departed, and were employed on the extension of the railway-line beyond that place. We sent Narain his kit as soon as possible, and Stace

went to see him and gave him some money before we left Raas-el-Ain, but we sadly missed his useful services as cook. The Mohammedan orderlies and servants were allowed to remain with their officers. The Hindu Indian officers, though deprived of their orderlies, accompanied our column as before.

The night of June 9th/10th at Raas-el-Ain was cold but fine, and June 10th passed without event till the afternoon came, when orders were issued for all kit to be packed by 4 p.m. and put aboard a train which would then be waiting for us. After a scratch meal we packed all our goods and chattels and carried our kit to a long train of horse-boxes standing ready in the station. Orderlies had been sent to the train a short while before to sweep out the wagons—a most necessary precaution. There was one passenger coach for the generals and some of the other senior officers, and the remainder of us were accommodated in horse-boxes. The allotment was ten officers to a horse-box, but we were not uncomfortable, for there was space enough for ten valises to be spread on the floor of each wagon and we were used to roughing it. The din and clatter when we were on the move was prodigious, yet it did not worry us much. After filling our water-bottles at the station pump and getting our valises into the covered wagons, all was ready for a start.

Punctually at 5 p.m. on June 10th, 1916, our long train began to move out of Raas-el-Ain railway station en route for Aleppo. It was delightful to be carried along at a rapid pace through the deserts across which we had been wearily "foot-slogging" for so long. The scenery, however, was uninteresting and monotonous, so we whiled away the time in our jolting horse-box by reading, smoking, eating, and playing "patience." It soon grew dark, and except for periodical stops at ugly stations, there was nothing to attract our attention or to relieve the monotony of the journey. In our wagon we turned in early and slept on the swaying and bumping wooden floor as if it was a spring mattress, for it was soft compared with some specimens of Mother Earth on which we had reposed during our long march.

In the early hours of the next morning we crossed the Euphrates over a long steel girder bridge of many spans, and at dawn found ourselves jolting along through more prosperous country with occasional very curious villages

in which the thickly clustered huts were roofed with high conical domes in place of flat or pent roofs. The railway stations which we passed were of distinctly European appearance and well built. They had roofs of good red tiling and were not inartistic in general design. It was very cheering to see such houses in place of roughly built stone hovels or the mud huts of Mesopotamia. The people also seemed quite civilised, and the Mesopotamian Arab was conspicuous by his absence, though aboard our train we still had our "Yellah-yellah" guards.

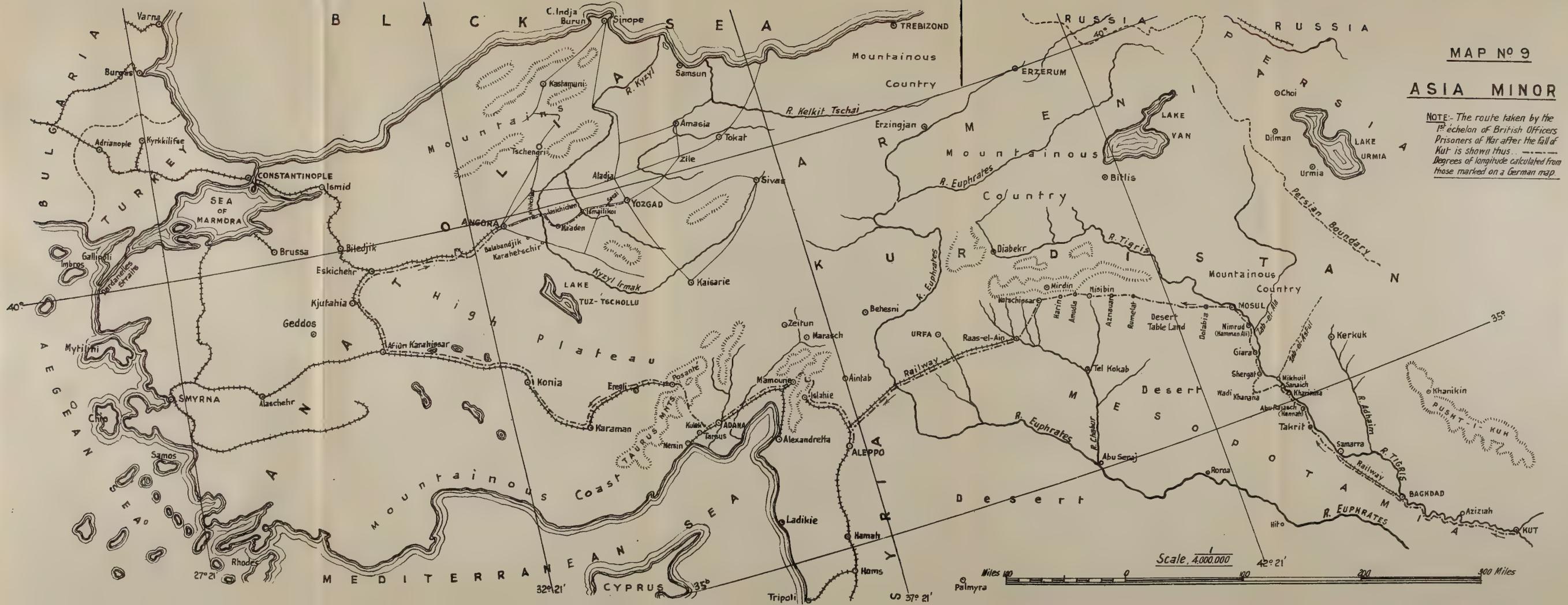
Early on June 11th we reached a larger railway station (Mosuliah, I believe), whence another line bent away towards the north. This was the junction of our present line with the line leading to the Anti-Taurus or Amanus range of mountains towards which we were soon to travel. Another half-hour's run through a country of stony hills brought us in sight of the great city of Aleppo (Turkish Halep). It lay in a valley surrounded by rocky heights, and in the valley itself were other lesser heights crowned by an old citadel, a large infantry barrack, and other conspicuous buildings.

Completing a journey of about 180 miles from Raas-el-Ain, our train slowly entered a fine railway station with four or more lines of rails and a main platform of great width and length covered by a first-class roof. A large buffet gladdened our eyes, but I regret to say it was never opened for our use. Every one bundled out of the train and helped to collect the valises and other baggage on the platform. The senior officers soon received orders to start for hotels in the town, and they departed forthwith, while we poor juniors waited on the platform and tried to make a meal off bread and oranges which we bought from hawkers outside the station railings.

For the first time since leaving Baghdad on May 12th, 1916, we were once again in a city which made a show of Western culture; and on this, June 11th, 1916, we were still fairly fit and strong, in spite of the hardships of the long journey from Lower Mesopotamia almost to the Mediterranean Sea.

ASIA MINOR

NOTE:- The route taken by the 1st echelon of British Officers Prisoners of War after the fall of Kut is shown thus. Degrees of longitude calculated from those marked on a German map.



CHAPTER XIX

ALEPPO TO POSANTÉ

ALEPPO, with a population of about 125,000, is the largest city (except Damascus) in Syria, and one of the most important in the Near East. Its main streets are wide and well laid out, and are frequently cobbled as in continental towns in Europe ; in fact, in many of the thoroughfares, one might imagine oneself in a town of Southern France. Many of the houses are large and well built and quite European in style, but in the poorer parts of the city the dwellings are inferior and the streets very narrow. Such refinements as electric trams had not yet been introduced in 1916. The town has a lofty clock tower in its market and a large number of small shops furnished in European style. The people are mainly a cosmopolitan crowd of Turks, Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Kurds, and a few Arabs, with a number of French and Swiss. The Armenian population lives more or less in European style, and the young women delight to walk abroad on Sundays in Parisian frocks a few years out of date—for in 1916, for instance, I saw more than one quite smart hobble skirt reminiscent of Britain in prehistoric times.

To revert to our experiences as prisoners of war, I may say that after a long wait in the railway station on the northern outskirts of the city, we captains, and the subalterns and Indian officers, were ordered to fall in outside the station and march in file to the great barrack on a hill a mile or more distant. We formed up and trudged off two by two, like the animals entering the Ark, with our armed Arab guards in close attendance.

Though early in the morning the sun was extremely powerful ; and, having marched through many deserted streets sparsely fringed with houses, and up a long steep hill to our destination, we arrived there dripping with perspiration and were glad to get under shelter out of the

intolerable glare from the dusty road. The inevitable counting ceremony took place as we filed through the archway into the great barrack square, and then we were led to a large low room on the upper floor fitted with broad wooden platforms covered with seemingly clean matting for use as beds. The Indian officers were put in the same room, and there we all sat and waited.

Suddenly I heard an exclamation of disgust from an Indian officer near me and then another, and, looking round to see the cause, I found that the whole place was literally alive with vermin. Every known species seemed to be represented, from the humble but lively flea to the largest louse. They swarmed from every crack and crevice, and leapt upon us from walls, benches, and floor. I tucked my trousers into my socks and watched them carefully, and we all took very good care not to sit down again or to approach the benches, and by these precautions avoided the pressing attentions of the insect population for some time. The monkey-house at the Zoo was nothing to that room.

At last we could stand it no longer, and all trooped out into the long verandah corridor, where we politely stated we should prefer to stay. Some of us requested to be taken before the commandant of the barrack to make a complaint. Arrived in that dignitary's office, our spokesman stated our grievance and we requested to be allowed to remain anywhere but in the awful barrack-room—even in the heat of the midday sun outside the building. The commandant—a dour old *bimbashi* (major)—said we could remain in the corridor, and there we stayed for an hour or more, sitting on window-sills or lying on some cleaner mats on the flagged floor. Each individual kept a sharp eye on his neighbour's clothes as well as on his own, so that by more or less continuous attention to the job in hand, we managed to avoid any very grievous harm.

In this incident of the filthy barrack-room at Aleppo the curious nature of the Turk appears once more. The room had been swept, the matting provided was new and clean, but no trouble had been taken to see that the room was really fit for habitation. When we protested and moved into the corridor, the mats were taken out into the sun and beaten before being laid in the corridor for our use; but the beating was insufficient to remove the in-

sects. In the cleaner corridor to which we moved later we were provided with chairs, and the officials seemed friendly. The incident is typical of the indolence and lack of supervision always shown by the Turks. They had apparently ordered a room to be prepared for us, but no responsible person supervised the work; they ordered the mats to be beaten, yet no one saw that it was properly done; and we only got better quarters, and chairs to sit upon, because we made a fuss, and refused to be content with the arrangements made for us.

The happy tidings soon spread that we were all to go to hotels in the town, and that the yuzbashis (captains) were to set off first in parties to certain hotels, followed by the mulāzims (lieutenants) to others. The Indian officers were to remain in the barrack, and all the orderlies (British and Indian) were also to remain there, except two for each party proceeding to the hotels. I was allotted to a party of nine other captains, and we collected our valises, which had arrived at the barrack, and piled them into two carts—each with an orderly aboard—and saw them safely started. We ten then marched off down a short cut to the town, escorted by a Turkish soldier as a guard.

Our way took us down a long cobbled street with numerous shops; then past a clock tower and down a side-street facing a sort of public garden, till we stopped outside a small hotel named the "Hotel Abdullah." Our Turkish guide beckoned to us to enter, so we trooped up the steep and narrow staircase and into a dining "salon" on the first floor. The room was empty of people and seemed fairly clean.

The proprietor soon appeared—a sullen-looking, youngish man—and our guide entered on a heated discussion with him, while a black-haired youth, a small boy, and two shapeless women watched us from the background. A fact which was quickly apparent was that we were most unwelcome guests; but our Turkish guide seemed to order the proprietor to take us in, and he then departed, after posting an Arab gendarme at the head of the staircase.

Our best French scholar now approached the hotel people, and asked in French for rooms and for lunch. The man, youth, boy, and women all looked blankly at us and appeared not to understand French. By much

perseverance and by gestures we got to know, however, that, though not a room was vacant at the time, accommodation would eventually be forthcoming, and later on we were allotted three rooms from which the occupants had been turned out.

Now, the curious part of this episode was that the proprietor of the hotel understood French perfectly and spoke it passably well, as we found out during the next few hours, and that the small boy was an excellent French scholar. Yet they had feigned blank ignorance of that language at first; and throughout our stay in the hotel the manner of the man and the youth was sullen and curious—the latter, more especially, would sit in a corner and glower at us during our meals. I came to the conclusion that the people were Armenians, and in mortal dread of the Turks, who forced their prisoners of war into the hotel whether the proprietor liked it or not; and I imagine that the proprietor thought at first that we should have no money with which to settle our bills, for his behaviour improved a little when we showed that we were not destitute of means.

The following morning our party of ten first went to the United States Consulate. There we were shown into an upstairs room and had a long talk with the Consul and Vice-consul. The Consul kindly undertook to wire our names home as having arrived safely in Aleppo, but I believe he afterwards sent our names, with those of the remainder of the British officers of the 1st Echelon, by letter to Constantinople, whence they were communicated by wire or letter to London. We knew that our relatives would be anxiously waiting for news of us, so it was a relief to get this matter arranged. Next we were taken, for some unknown reason, to a female hospital! From thence we fled with all haste and made for the district where the best shops were said to be situated. Many of our people were busy in the town making purchases of all sorts in two or three fairly presentable European shops in a narrow street. We followed their example and bought socks, handkerchiefs, tobacco, sweets, tinned stores, and wine, till every one was laden with packages. We also got several newspapers printed in French, such as the *Hilal* and the *Suisse Libérale*, which gave a certain amount of garbled news of the progress of the war, though the information given in the Swiss

journal was more accurate and impartial than that in the *Hilal*. After some further shopping, entailing a long walk in the hot sun, we drove back to the hotel for lunch.

On the evening of June 12th, just as some of us at the Hotel Abdullah had retired for the night, the United States Consul and his assistant arrived with money for us from the British Prisoners Relief Fund. Each officer received a most welcome gift of five liras (£4 10s.) in the form of a Turkish bank note, though we signed receipts for the amounts as having been paid in gold. I did not notice this oversight at the time. Probably no gold was available for issue, but in any case the money we received was precious beyond words. It was, I think, the first occasion on which any of us had been objects of public charity! We bade good night to the Consul, who was in a hurry to continue his round of almsgiving, and retired to our slumbers.

Every one had expected to receive pay from the Turkish Government on arrival in Aleppo.

In Baghdad we had been given the full amounts authorised as the monthly pay of Turkish officers of equivalent ranks to our own, and consequently were prepared to pay for our food, lodging, lighting, etc., from the amounts given us. It appears that the Turks now wished to introduce the system of payment of prisoners in vogue in Europe, viz. a minimum amount to officers of 4s. 6d. a day—or seven liras a month—with slightly greater amounts for officers of field rank or general officers. Under this scheme a major got 8 liras, a lieutenant-colonel 10 liras, and a colonel 15 liras per mensem. But whereas this scale of pay was intended merely to provide pocket-money for officers, the Turks wished to make us keep ourselves, house ourselves, and provide our fires and lights, out of this miserable allowance—and indeed we actually had to do so. They never provided us with food, fires, or lighting free of charge, as I think we were entitled to expect when paid on this reduced scale.

On June 13th I was awakened at the Hotel Abdullah at the unearthly hour of 4.30 a.m. by a loud knocking on the door of the room, and a gendarme announced that a cart had arrived to remove our kit, and that we were to start at once for the railway station, whence a train would leave at 6 o'clock. His news came as a great surprise, for in our hotel we had heard nothing at all of the pro-

posed move, though I believe that in other hotels the news arrived the previous evening.

We sleepily packed up our belongings, paid our bills, and then saw our kit into the wagon below, which was escorted by a couple of our Arab "Yellahs." Our little party was rather late in arriving at the station, and the train was already alongside the platform with most of the compartments of its passenger coaches full of our British and Indian officers. I managed to get a good seat in a roomy second-class compartment with seven other fellows, where we had ample space for comfort. The seats were well upholstered in leather with moderately good cushions, and the style of the fittings was much superior to that of the carriages on the Baghdad-Sāmarra line.

The train began to move out of Aleppo station at about 6.30 a.m. on June 13th, 1916, and the last view we had of the town showed the thickly clustered houses and streets stretching away along the wide valley and up the slopes of the nearer hills. Conspicuous above all was the ancient citadel on its rocky height, and the huge Turkish barrack on another hill, reflecting the rays of the early-morning sun.

We settled down in our carriages and ate some of our stores of bread, fruit, and horse-shoe-shaped rusks purchased that morning; and then, lighting our pipes, we settled the fate of empires, and discussed our future hopes and prospects.

I will now revert for a short time to the adventures of other parties of prisoners.

Major-General Sir Charles Melliss and his staff, who arrived at Mosul on June 16th by carriage, left it again on June 19th in a motor-lorry. The party reached Nesibin on June 20th, but halted there only two and a half hours. They came across Captain Murphy, R.A.M.C., with some men (seven very ill) a few miles short of Nesibin. General Melliss reached Raas-el-Ain safely on June 21st, and proceeded by rail to Aleppo. In the country on the road to Nesibin he passed six British soldiers lying in a shelter near some brackish water, and all in the last stages of dysentery. They were attended by a Turkish assistant surgeon, who said he could do nothing for them as he had no drugs; so, on arrival at Raas-el-Ain, General Melliss saw the local commandant and asked that a telegram should be despatched to Mosul at once for help to be sent to the

six British soldiers and other sick men passed on the road, but the commandant refused to send the telegram as he said he was not in the Mosul Command. Our Hindu and Christian Indian soldiers and servants were seen at work on the railway near Raas-el-Ain, and appeared to be all right.

On arrival in Aleppo on June 22nd General Melliss put up at Baron's Hotel and then interviewed Shefket Pasha at Army Headquarters. This officer, I believe, commanded the Turkish troops at Adrianople in the Balkan War. He was most courteous and obliging, and telegraphed at once to Mosul for assistance to be given to our sick soldiers who were scattered in small parties along the desert track; and he said he would do everything possible for them. Whether his promise was duly fulfilled, and if so with what result, I do not know. It seems doubtful if anything was done.

The march of our rank-and-file prisoners from Mosul to Raas-el-Ain was a cruel one. The prisoners proceeded in various parties, each usually commanded by an Arab officer. The escorts stole the prisoners' clothes and boots, and any complaints were ignored or the complainant beaten. In not many instances were the Indian soldiers knocked about. It was the white men whom the brutal Arabs delighted to beat. A party of 1,700 British prisoners was given seven camels and a dozen donkeys for the transport of the sick—an utterly inadequate allowance. I will quote now some of the evidence given later by survivors. One man stated: "I saw, about two days before we reached Raas-el-Ain, the escort burying one of our men who was foaming at the mouth and moving. Seeing this, I and several other men went to help him, but were driven off by the escort with loaded rifles. He was buried alive in our sight." The evidence of another man was as follows: "At Nesibin I went into hospital with 100 others and remained in hospital from June 14th to 27th, 1916. While waiting to be admitted, several men, too weak to stand, were knocked about by a Turkish 'chaoush.' For the first four days after admission we received no medical treatment whatsoever. Water was issued to us only in the morning and evening, and we had no receptacles in which to store it. Once I managed to walk to the stream to wash, but those too weak to walk could not wash at all. Helpless dysentery cases were neither

washed nor tended in any way, and the result may be imagined. On the fourth day some medical treatment was given owing to German intervention. Deaths occurred daily, and as far as I know I am almost the sole survivor of those who went into hospital at Nesibin. As rations we each received in the early morning a small teacupful of cooked wheat and rice, at 2 p.m. two chupatties, and at night another cupful of wheat and rice with a tiny morsel of meat." Another soldier stated: "I was without boots or helmet, and on the last march into Raas-el-Ain I fell out from weakness, and was driven along for the last four miles by continual blows from the escort with rifles."

On arrival at Raas-el-Ain each prisoner was given a 2-lb. loaf of coarse bread and received no more for forty-eight hours. In the evening the men were forced, like a herd of cattle, into a train, an average of forty men being allotted to each wagon. Some of the wagons were open and some closed. Into the closed wagons the prisoners were locked, and the doors were usually unlocked at stations. Into one wagon, however, fifty-two men were locked, including many severe cases of dysentery. *This wagon was never opened till Islahie was reached the next morning*, in spite of the shouts and appeals of the occupants. There was no room to lie down and the men had to sit on top of each other. The heat and stench were terrible, and several men died during the journey. The prisoners got no food at Islahie till nightfall, when some pomegranates were issued. This inhuman treatment is vouched for by many witnesses.

It is now time to return once again to our adventures en route from Aleppo towards the Anti-Taurus range of mountains.

At 12.30 p.m. on June 13th our train stopped at the small railway station of Islahie at the foot of the Anti-Taurus (or Amanus) Mountains, and we were ordered to alight and march to a camping-ground two or three hundred yards from the station. There we found four large Arab tents, pitched at this spot to give us shelter from the sun, and the tents were told off to our British and Indian officers by our staff. The sun was hot, so we were glad to get into the shade afforded by the flimsy tents.

Islahie is a very pretty spot in the heart of the subsidiary ranges of the Anti-Taurus chain. I did not see

any town or village, and I think the place was important merely as the terminus of the railway from Aleppo in 1916. High hills surround the valley, in which the railway station, with its half-dozen outlying buildings, marks the progress of civilisation into the mountainous wilds. At the time we reached the place there were also a number of tents, and the bivouacs of troops, near the station.

When we had unrolled our valises in the shade of the large Bedouin tents, word was passed round that there was a refreshment-room at the railway station to which we should be allowed to go for our food; but when a few hungry folk attempted to go towards the station they were immediately "yellahed" back by the Arab gendarmes surrounding our camp. This was most annoying, for we had very little food with us and were hungry. The reason apparently lay in a dread of cholera (or so we were told), which was said to be rife in Aleppo; and in proof of this a small and bearded Armenian doctor of absurd appearance turned up at 2 p.m. and demanded to inspect us all. We formed up in line, and put out our tongues as the medical freak passed down the line. This was done by special request, and not as a mark of disrespect! A very ridiculous sight it must have been. Of course none of us exhibited any traces of cholera—we were a fairly tough crowd at this stage in our wanderings.

In the afternoon a pitiable object wandered into our camp at Islahie. It was a man dressed in blue cotton clothing very much too small for him and wearing a dilapidated khaki helmet almost unrecognisable in shape. He turned out to be a British soldier of the Royal West Kent Regiment, who had been wounded and captured during General Aylmer's advance towards Kut. He was as thin as a skeleton, and so weak that when he tried to rise from the ground he had to lift himself on one leg at a time by the aid of his arms. Such hardships had this poor fellow undergone that his mind was affected, and his memory had failed—for instance, he did not know his name, and could only remember that he had been wounded and had lain untended for two days in the sun till picked up by the Turks. Needless to say, within two minutes of his arrival in our camp he was surrounded by a compassionate group of our good-natured orderlies, and soon had a cigarette between his lips and something edible in his hand. He seemed too dazed even then to understand

anything except that he was among friends, and he continued to wander aimlessly around the tents for some hours. It seems that he had barely recovered from an attack of typhus, and was in no fit state to travel, but it was certainly better for him to accompany our column than to remain at Islahie, though I believe he died a short while after he joined us.

During the afternoon a couple of young German officers sauntered slowly towards our tents and apparently wished to have a friendly chat with us, but the objectionable Arab guards around the camp would not allow them to approach us and shouted "makoo" and "yellah" for all they were worth, and threatened also to use the butt ends of their rifles on us, so the Germans indicated by signs that they were sorry they could come no nearer.

A rather amusing incident then occurred. The Arabs began to push us back towards our tents, and, seeing among us Captain Startin, R.A.M.C., in a soft hat with a peak, put him down as a German and commenced to "yellah" him *towards the Germans*, amid roars of laughter from every one. The truculent sentry was very disgusted when he found out his mistake—much to our delight, as may be imagined.

The same evening orders were issued that we should leave Islahie at half past four the next morning, and at 3.30 a.m. on June 14th, the first whistle blew to arouse us from our slumbers to be ready to start, as ordered, at half past four. I packed my valise, strapped it, and got everything ready for transport, yet no lorries or carts were to be seen anywhere when dawn began to break. We waited for half an hour, and word was then passed round that we could not start, so I unrolled my valise again, unpacked my kit, and tried to sleep, once more reviling the utter lack of *bundobust* of our gracious hosts for their Honoured Guests.

The day passed much as the previous one. We strolled about within the line of the Arab sentries, and bought eatables from a villainous contractor and from another man in a small hut near the railway-line. In the station were a number of trucks loaded with field guns of German make, and during the morning we saw two enormous howitzers coming by road into Islahie from the mountains, each drawn by a long team of oxen. These huge weapons were mounted on travelling carriages, and their

firing carriages were transported on other travelling carriages. I believe the howitzers were of 27-centimetre calibre. The Germans and Austrians affirmed that several 42-centimetre howitzers had already gone through Islahie, having been sent from Belgium for the war in Turkey, but I did not believe this statement, because of the incredible difficulty of bringing such huge pieces of ordnance across the mountains and through the deserts. Most of the heavy guns and howitzers which we saw were said to be intended for a great attack on the Suez Canal which the Turks were contemplating in June 1916, and which happily failed completely.

A number of light, two-horsed, four-wheeled wagons arrived at the camp at 4 p.m. and were parked not far from the tents. Orders were circulated to pack up all kit, and the carts were then allotted to us, the allowance for the junior officers being one cart to four officers and their orderlies. This allowance of space was much better than any we had had previously, for it was now possible to get a ride on the cart every alternate hour.

On June 14th at 5.15 p.m. the column of carts filed out of Islahie, and moved off along the metalled road leading up the valley. The road led first through broken country which was very stony and covered with small stunted trees, and the surface soon became perfectly appalling, for it had been cut to pieces by motor-lorry traffic. So bad was the jolting on the springless carts that frequently it was much preferable to get off and walk rather than to ride on them. Just as it was becoming dark the road reached the foot of the mountains and commenced to rise steeply, and in a short time it crossed the formation level of the extension of the railway-line from Islahie into the mountains.

The column marched up the steep ascent of the dusty high-road till 9.15 p.m., and then halted in a small village peopled by Armenians. The halt was to be for two hours only. There was a good stream of pure water issuing from a spring enclosed by masonry, and some flat ground around the stream where we could rest. After we had slept for a very short time on the hard ground, the whistle sounded the advance. All officers and orderlies were directed to march up a short cut to the mountain crest, except one man on each cart who was to remain with the cart to guard the kit. The carts, it was said, would take

three hours to ascend the mountain by the road, and the pedestrians about an hour by way of the mountain path. I was lucky enough to be one of those on the carts, so wrapped myself in my great-coat and lay fairly comfortably on the valises during the very chilly hours of the long ascent.

We started from the village about 11.30 p.m., and followed a winding road cut in the precipitous mountain side with a sheer drop of many hundreds of feet to the bed of the rocky ravine as we mounted to higher regions. The scene was very like that on a road in the Himalayas, except that the route was far more dangerous, for there was no parapet on the "khud" side of the road, and we looked down sheer into the abyss dimly lit by rays of the moon. Soon after leaving the village our column of carts met a battalion of Turkish infantry—mostly mere boys—tramping along down the dusty road, the soldiers singing as they went.

The carts reached the summit of the pass at about 1 a.m. on June 15th, and there our pedestrians were awaiting our arrival much chilled by their long rest in the cold air after a steep climb of nearly 2,000 feet. I dismounted, and commenced the march down the other side of the pass along a wide metalled road following the contour of the hills and, later on, the bottom of a gorge. We pushed on at a good rate in the clear moonlight. All of us were very sleepy by this time, and personally I could hardly keep my eyelids up. At length, at 3.30 a.m., just as the sky was beginning to show a faint rosy glow in the east, we arrived at a fairly level space in a wider portion of the valley, where, on our left, appeared a village. This place was called Hassan Begli (or Hamām Begli), and here Essād Bey sounded his whistle for a halt and we were told we should camp on the open ground. It hardly seemed worth while to lie down to sleep, for the dawn was breaking and in an hour the sun would be getting up; but a wink or two being better than none at all, we tried to slumber for the short time available.

When the daylight strengthened and objects grew distinct before our sleepy eyes, a very pretty scene unfolded before us. The small Armenian village of Hassan Begli lay opposite us in a steep gorge leading off the main valley, with its outlying houses clustered thickly on the adjoining slopes. Poplars and fruit trees were sprinkled

among the little stone houses, and above all towered a ruin on a precipitous spur of the mountain. A steep cobbled street ran through the village and crossed a clear stream at its foot by a well-built bridge. The whole effect of the landscape reminded me strongly of a Swiss hamlet, except that the ubiquitous *châlet* was absent. So pleasing was the appearance of the village on this bright morning that most of us would have been glad to rest there for a day or two before moving on again towards our final destination in Anatolia.

Most of us shifted down to the bank of the stream amid shady mulberry trees, where we got a good camping-site for the day, though not a very clean one. I had a jolly bathe in the clear shallow water, and then went off to forage in the village, where mulberries in plenty were for sale, as well as butter, eggs, figs, chupatties, flour, and other stuff. We ate far too many mulberries that day as we lay beside the rippling stream in the shade of the small trees, and I for one bitterly regretted it that evening.

The column started again at 5.30 p.m. and set off along a rough metalled road towards lower regions. I should say that Hassan Begli must be at least 4,000 feet above sea-level.

Our camp on the night of June 15th/16th was on the right of the high road some little distance after passing through a village on the journey towards Mamourie. It was practically at the foot of the western slope of the Anti-Taurus Range. A stream ran close alongside the camp, and beyond the stream rose a steep spur along the side of which was a cutting and a high embankment for the railway-line through the mountains. In June 1916 we heard that the necessary tunnelling operations were far advanced, and that with their completion the railway connection between Mamourie and Islahie would be made. This would greatly improve the Turkish line of communication from Constantinople to Egypt or Mesopotamia, for there would then be only one break in the line of railway—that in the Taurus Mountains, of which more anon. I saw an official Turkish announcement later in the year (November 20th, 1916) that the line through the Anti-Taurus Mountains had been completed and opened for traffic, but this was not strictly true.

On the morning of June 16th we reached the railway station at Mamourie, where a train was awaiting us. The

senior officers travelled in a first-class carriage and the remainder in second-class carriages, while the orderlies occupied third-class coaches. All the carriages were of the corridor bogie type and were well sprung and fitted, but the Turks insisted on every seat being filled, and the consequent crowding was a great nuisance. There were a number of Turkish soldiers at Mamourie, but I did not see many Germans. The place seemed to be of no great importance except as a temporary railhead.

The train steamed out of the station about 9.15 a.m., and we soon put many miles between us and the Anti-Taurus Range. In an hour or two the line traversed undulating, cultivated country, in which occasionally one saw quite a pretty little river scene. In one place particularly I remember a ruin high on a precipitous rocky pinnacle overlooking a picturesque reach of a small river, reminding me strongly of a typical scene on the Rhine but on a smaller scale. In time the country changed and became flat and rather uninteresting, though still fertile and well cultivated.

About noon I saw several factory chimneys in the distance, and we were soon rapidly approaching the town of Adana, where we arrived in due course. The railway station is large and up-to-date, with several lines of rails and two large platforms well sheltered from the sun and rain. We saw nothing of the town itself, for it was about a mile from the station. It lies in a well-watered valley between the Taurus and Anti-Taurus Mountains, and is about twenty miles only from the Mediterranean Sea.

We stopped only half an hour at Adana, and our journey thence towards the Taurus Range was rather monotonous. The afternoon was hot and the country flat and uninteresting. Most of us dozed, or smoked, and read such novels as we had with us, till at 4.30 p.m. on June 16th the train drew up at a small station called Kulek, on the railway from Adana to the seaport of Mersin.

Kulek itself is a village of no importance. It is a few miles from a small town called Tarsus. Some people affirmed that this was the Biblical town famous as the native place of St. Paul. They may have been right. The conjecture is strengthened by the statement of some of our senior officers who drove into Tarsus. They said that at the post office they saw a reply to the Epistle to the Corinthians, *still lying undelivered*, and quoted it

as an example of Turkish post-office methods! We were now within fifteen miles or so of the Mediterranean coast, but could not see the sea.

To our right and to our front at Kulek extended the rugged Taurus Mountains, which were another bar to the speedy realisation of the Berlin-Constantinople-Baghdad-Busrah Railway dream of the Germans. The mountains, as viewed from Kulek some miles from their foot, are not grand in appearance, for the higher ridges and peaks lie so far back that their altitude is dwarfed, and in the height of summer no snow is visible on them. I believe none of the peaks in the actual range exceed about 10,000 feet in altitude.

At Kulek station were a number of Germans and Austrians, and at once the difference caused by their presence was noticeable. When we alighted from the train we found two rows of small bell tents ready pitched for our shelter some fifty yards from the platform, and most of us were accommodated in them. General Delamain and a few other senior officers were allowed to drive into Tarsus to an hotel.

As the bell tents were rather stuffy in the heat of the day we spent most of our time outside them, and slept on the ground close to them at night. Supplies were obtainable near the station from local hawkers, and apricots especially were plentiful. Firewood was rather a problem, for there was none to be picked up near the camp, but a little wood was issued during the evening. Between our lines of tents and the railway-line was a row of aeroplanes without their wings, and the German aviators lived close at hand. They were much interested in us, and came across to have a chat. Especially were they pleased to meet Captain Winfield-Smith, our aviator, and had a long talk with him; a gramophone belonging to the Germans discoursed music at intervals from amid the aeroplanes.

At Kulek, as at Islahie, our guards made an absurd error as to who were British and who Germans among the crowd at the station; for, when ordered to separate us and to stop our conversation, they pushed two British officers into a German tent and drove the Germans away! We did not feel complimented.

In the afternoon before dusk our one idea was to get a good wash, and luckily we were allowed to go to a small

stream 300 yards away for that purpose. This stream was, I believe, a tributary of the River Cydnus. I had a refreshing bathe, but the water was too cold to be pleasant and no time could be wasted when once ablutions had commenced. We had been warned to beware of thieves, so kept our belongings close to us. Many Turkish soldiers had strolled between the lines of tents during the day, looking about for anything worth having, with a view, no doubt, to operations under cover of darkness.

On June 17th at 8 a.m. a large number of excellent motor-lorries came to our camp, and formed up with great precision in column two abreast. A German staff officer was in charge, and of course all the drivers were Germans or Austrians. Everything was well managed, and in a very short time every lorry was filled with officers or orderlies, and their valises and kit. Each lorry accommodated ten officers and their belongings or twenty orderlies. Most of the vehicles had hoods and side screens, but the one in which I found myself, with three other British officers and six Indian officers, had no such luxuries, and we suffered for this later on.

General Delamain, with the other general officers and Essād Bey, was given a motor-car which took the head of the procession; and at 9 a.m. the great lorries began, one by one, to whirl along the very bumpy road at long intervals, each leaving a great cloud of dust behind it. In spite of good springs the jolting was very bad, and our valises, which we used as seats, failed to save our spines from frequent nasty shocks. After a stretch of level the ground began to rise at the foot-hills of the Taurus Range, and soon the gradient became fairly steep, though never excessively so. The lorries ran magnificently, never faltering, and usually on top gear. We halted for water for the radiators of the lorries every ten kilometres or so, if there happened to be a spring by the roadside, but on the whole the mountains were curiously waterless. Not a stream was to be seen till we had climbed far up into the mountains later in the day; and the foot-hills on this, the eastern, side of the Taurus Range were as bare and ugly as they could be. There were no trees, and there was practically no vegetation.

A journey of a few hours brought us to a more temperate climate, and at 2.15 p.m., when at a height of perhaps

5,000 feet above sea-level, we reached a place called Dijām Alām where was a great German hospital camp. The lorries stopped on the road in this camp, and soon dozens of Germans were strolling about, looking at us, and sometimes talking to us. Most of these fellows wore only small caps to protect their heads from the powerful sun, and some were not only bareheaded but stripped to the waist, and with their bodies so sunburnt that this must have been their usual rig. How these men avoided going down with sunstroke will ever remain a mystery to me. They were an untidy and unkempt crew, with slouching figures and round shoulders—typical “Huns,” in fact.

One young German approached us and informed us in rather bad English that he knew London and had been employed at the Savoy Hotel. Rather a violent change from the Savoy to the wilds of the Taurus. Later on three German nurses strolled along to have a look at us, escorted by a couple of German officers. The women were young, and looked very well, and one was passably good-looking as Germans go. On the whole we were well treated at this camp. We were not insulted, nor subjected to any unpleasantness whatever. The spectators were merely curious.

We stopped only half an hour at Dijām Alām, and then resumed our uneven and rather precarious journey up the mountain road, which now ran along the sides of precipices and round numberless hairpin bends. Great mountains towered above us, adorned here and there by small clumps of fir trees. At places the road was so narrow that lorries could not pass each other, and at other spots the surface was so bad that we had to crawl along at two miles an hour for thirty or forty yards. We met and passed many motor-lorries near this difficult portion of the journey, much to the interest of their occupants. At length the gradient lessened and the gorge opened out a little, till at 3 p.m. the lorries emerged on to an open pass where a good road enabled the drivers to make up for lost time. This pass in the Taurus Mountains is, I should say, about 6,000 feet above sea-level. It is celebrated in history as the “Cilician Gates.” Through it marched the armies of Barbarossa and Alexander in the dim ages of the past; many a troop also of the gallant Crusaders passed through its rocky gorges on their way to and from the Holy Land.

Immediately we had crossed the flat summit of the pass a marked change was visible in the scenery. Gone was the bare and stony mountain side; gone was the waterless nullah; and in their stead were beautiful stretches of steep and wooded mountains, and clear streams rippling through pretty little gorges. It appeared as if one was suddenly transported from a barren wilderness into a scene in Switzerland, and it seemed to augur well for our captivity in the land still so far ahead of us.

The road now commenced to drop steeply in great loops down the mountain side, and each motor-driver did some fancy work down the steep slopes, round the hairpin bends, and across many narrow bridges frequently under repair. Along this road for miles we passed large gangs of Turkish or Armenian prisoners, all hard at work trying to keep the road in order. Finally, just before 4 p.m. on June 17th we ran into the village of Posanté, about forty-three miles from our starting-point at Kulek (*vide* Map No. 9).

Just outside the village I heard a shout of "Keep your hearts up," and looking round as we passed I saw an Englishman in mufti waving his hand to us. There were about fourteen others working on the road—all captured British soldiers from Gallipoli. They were being well treated on the whole, and were working under Germans, who paid them regularly for their labour. They also received one lira a month from the United States Ambassador in Constantinople, so they had sufficient money to make themselves fairly comfortable.

It may be interesting to mention that General Melliss and his staff, having arrived at Islahie from Aleppo on June 23rd, 1916 (nine days after our departure), found ninety British soldiers of the 16th and 17th Brigades and Divisional Troops, isolated in Arab tents a mile from the road out on the open plain, and tended by one assistant surgeon—all of them very ill and quite helpless. No proper food or adequate supply of milk was brought to them by the Turks. The local Germans had done their best to help these unfortunate men, yet the Turks would not even allow them, as a rule, to approach the tents. General Melliss complained to Shefket Pasha at Turkish headquarters about the state of affairs at Islahie, requesting that the sick men should be sent back by train to Aleppo, and it is to be hoped that the treatment of the prisoners

was improved in consequence, though I doubt if they were sent back.

Again, on June 24th, when four or five miles short of Hassan Begli in the Anti-Taurus Mountains, General Melliss found three British artillerymen abandoned on the road by the Turks more than twenty-four hours previously. The men were dreadfully ill with acute dysentery. They had no food or water and very few clothes. Had it not been for the kindness of the German officer of a passing Wireless Section, in giving our men tinned meat and bread from his own slender store, they would certainly have died. They were picked up by General Melliss and brought along in his carts.

At Hassan Begli itself General Melliss found twenty-seven sick men of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, Royal Artillery, and Royal Navy. They were quite unable to march, and would have fared badly but for the care of a German under-officer, who assisted General Melliss in procuring good rations for these men. The General refused to leave this place until he had seen the seven-and-twenty invalids safely off towards Mamourie in carts.

Some time later the General himself left Hassan Begli, and had not gone very far before he found three of the sick men lying helpless in the road. These men had dismounted from their carts, but had been unable to climb back again, and the carts would not wait for them. They were too weak to rise from the ground. They were rescued and brought along in the General's carts to Mamourie.

On June 25th at Mamourie General Melliss found most of the men of the 16th and 17th Brigades and Divisional Troops in camp. They had been much neglected, and many were in a poor state of health. They were destined for work on the railway near Mamourie. General Melliss wished to hand over the thirty British sick men to the Turkish doctors, as all were acknowledged by the Turks themselves to be hospital cases; but the Turks refused to take charge of them. A German officer, one Major Schön, then came to the rescue, and said he would arrange to have the men sent up to a German hospital in the mountains, where they would receive every attention. He added that he had no authority to do this, but would take the responsibility, and the men were then handed

over to him. He had given each man a piece of good bread and a cup of coffee on arrival at Mamourie—a thing no Turk would have done.

I have quoted these instances of the treatment of our sick soldiers in some detail in order to bring out the absolute apathy and disregard of the ordinary dictates of humanity shown by the Turks, when away from the close supervision of more civilised people. I shall shortly have more to write on this subject. In almost every instance it was our bitter enemies the Germans who played the part of Good Samaritans. I have read of the behaviour of the Germans in Europe; but in Turkey-in-Asia, so far as our experience goes, their conduct, as a whole, was good, especially towards those in distress.

General Melliss left Mamourie at once and proceeded to Kulek by rail, whence he motored to Dijām Alām in the Taurus Mountains on June 26th, 1916. There he spent the night in the German hospital camp, and then motored through the pass to Posanté, whence the party took train on June 27th for Constantinople. They reached Konia on June 28th, and Afion Karahissar the following day, where the party was split up. General Melliss and Major McKenna proceeded to Broussa on June 30th, and the other three British officers of the party were ordered to remain at Karahissar, which they did for some days before proceeding to Yozgad.

Let me revert now to the misfortunes of our British rank-and-file prisoners during their journey up to Posanté and during the early days of their employment on railway work near Mamourie.

A number of British rank-and-file prisoners from Kut developed dysentery or cholera and were left at Islahie when the main body of prisoners marched over the Anti-Taurus Mountains. To describe the ghastly experiences of these men, I cannot do better than to quote from the evidence of a man who was a patient at this hospital camp—evidence, I may say, which was corroborated by other men who were placed in the camp at Islahie. The evidence ran as follows: "I went into the cholera camp at Islahie suffering from dysentery. I received no medicine of any sort. My food was two tablespoonfuls of barley porridge in the morning and the same at night. To wash we had to creep unnoticed to a stream 200 yards away. The patients lay in Arab tents on the ground without bedding,

and in some cases absolutely naked, and men were dying three or four a day out of a total of about eighty. The dead were often laid outside the tent naked, and had to be buried in the evening *by the patients.*" Such barbarity in the treatment of sick men is wellnigh incredible, yet there is no shadow of doubt that thus were our helpless invalids treated at Islahie.

On arrival at Mamourie, after the march over the Anti-Taurus Range, the main body of rank-and-file prisoners was railed to Adana, but returned the same day to Mamourie to work on the railway-line in the mountains. The prisoners marched to a place called Jabachi or to another spot called Bagtsche. One British soldier thus described his experiences: "On the march from Mamourie to Jabachi I saw a man hit over the head with a rifle. He dropped down and died by the roadside. He was merely straggling from weakness. At Jabachi we were broken up into working parties by regiments. I was attached to the Oxfords at Airan. Here we suffered a lot from fever and beri-beri. Before we started work we got good rations and seven days' rest, thanks to the good offices of a Swiss engineer. We started work on July 3rd, 1916, and worked daily from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., with half an hour off for breakfast and an hour for dinner, Sundays included. At Airan I went into hospital with fever, but received no treatment. The diet consisted of rice-water and a loaf shared with four other men. After two days I was discharged at my own request, still suffering from fever. Another man came out of hospital about 2 p.m. one day and died in his bunk at 10 p.m. the same night. There were at least one or two deaths daily from beri-beri. In September nearly all our party left Airan and went by rail to Tarsus. Here, with fever on me, I was ordered to march but was unable to move, and the guard came in and knocked me about with rifles. I, with 120 others, was eventually sent to the American Mission at Tarsus, where we were excellently treated. When I left (after five weeks) I was given 5 liras (£4 10s.) and a complete outfit of clothing by the Americans, and sent by cart over the Taurus Range to Posanté."

The evidence of another prisoner was as follows: "Just before we got to Bagtsche when marching from Mamourie, I saw one of the escort, as we moved off, knock a garrison gunner's helmet off and strike him on the back

of the neck with a stick. He fell down and died on the spot. A complaint, however, was made to the Germans at Bagtsche, and we were told that the offender had been shot. We were at Bagtsche nine weeks. On arrival we were seventy-one strong, but we left the place thirty-three strong, the rest having died. No rations were provided at first for sick men, who had, consequently, to be fed by those capable of working, till, nearly eighty per cent. being sick, a small invalid ration had to be given. At one time no doctor came to the camp to see the sick for five days, so, on the fifth day, I and some others took a gunner and another man who were dying to hospital. The doctor refused to see or admit them, and they both died outside. My unit was housed in two mud huts full of vermin and lighted only by the doors. Our pay was 4 piastres a day while on tunnelling and blasting work."

Another man, also at Bagtsche for a time, said: "I was employed as an orderly in the hospital at Bagtsche. For the first three weeks I was in the cholera camp, where six of the seven British cases died. Then I joined the main hospital, where enteric, dysentery, and fever were all treated alike. A very bad case might get *one quinine pill every third day*. Otherwise there was no treatment. Rations for the sick were a slice of black bread and sometimes rice-water, which the doctors said was too expensive to be given regularly. The beri-beri cases, in spite of German advice, were given no vegetables, as tomatoes (at 7 piastres an 'oke,' *i.e.* at $5\frac{1}{4}d.$ a lb.) were said to be too expensive. I never saw a beri-beri case recover in hospital. I saw about thirty or forty men receive an injection of a brandy-coloured fluid, and the cases invariably died within fifteen or twenty minutes of the injection. I asked the man who gave the injection what it was, but he would not tell me. I saw men discharged from hospital too weak to stand, and some returned the next day and died. In seven weeks in this hospital over 300 British soldiers died."

One hardly knows how to express one's feelings in the face of such evidence as this. It should be noted that $5\frac{1}{4}d.$ a day was deemed too great an expense when a ration of vegetables at that price might have saved a human life.

In September 1916 a large body of British prisoners

marched from Tarsus across the Taurus Range. One prisoner stated in his evidence: "While marching over the Taurus I saw an infantryman very badly knocked about by the escort because he was so weak that he could not keep up, and he was left dying on the road. At Dijām Alām (the German hospital-camp) about 150 of us were set aside by a German and a Turkish doctor to go on to Posanté in motors as being unfit to march. But in the evening, after the doctors had gone, the unfit men (of whom I was one) were set upon by the escort with sticks and rifles in an attempt to force them to march with the main body, and the treatment was so severe that several yielded and did so."

These few extracts from the evidence of survivors of the rank and file of the Kut garrison give an idea of the sufferings of our gallant British soldiers delivered into captivity in the hands of a barbarous nation. Let us hope they will be avenged when the civilised world learns of the fate of these men.

CHAPTER XX

BY RAIL TO ANGORA

POSANTÉ (or Bozanti) is a pretty little village in the Taurus Mountains 4,757 feet above sea-level. With its broad, high street and rather picturesque houses, it much resembles a Swiss village in the Alps. Around it on all sides tower the steep slopes of the mountains, well wooded in places, and below it, in a wide valley, a mountain stream called the Chakut Su (Chakut Water) ripples and sparkles over a bed of pebbles. The railway station is in the village, but is not so conspicuous as to spoil the general appearance of the place.

Our long line of motor-lorries drew up in the main street in the afternoon of June 17th, and there we waited for some time, though not allowed to alight. Opposite my lorry was a small beer-shop, much patronised by the super-men of the Fatherland. The proprietor, however, refused to understand our requests for beer and pretended he thought we were using the Turkish word "bir"—meaning "one." Expressive pantomime even did not convince him.

In time the lorries moved on again down the street, through the village, and out to a camping-site on the far side of it near some stables. Here the lorries deposited us and our kit, and we spread our valises on the bare slope of the hill above the road, after which I wandered across the valley to have a wash in the clear water of the Chakut.

While kneeling on the water's edge and busy with my soap, I suddenly became aware that a Turkish officer was standing close by and watching me, so I stopped work and said "Good evening," and he promptly replied in good English. He hastened to add that he was an Armenian and not a Turk, as his uniform seemed to indicate, and said that he was a Christian and hated all Turks.

We had quite a long chat while I scrubbed and dried, and the Armenian (who was a doctor) said that he had come from the Dardanelles and had been at Suvla Bay when our troops evacuated the place, and that the stores abandoned by us there had been most welcome to the Turks, who were badly off for food. He himself still had a case full of English biscuits, which he considered a great luxury. He eagerly asked for news from Mesopotamia, and enquired if it was not true that General Townshend's daughter had been killed by a shell in Kut! When I explained that we had none of our female relations in the beleaguered town, he seemed incredulous, and said that all the newspapers had stated that General Townshend's wife and daughter were with him, nor would he be convinced to the contrary.

During the afternoon, before dusk, several officers were allowed to walk back into the village to buy stores for us all, and they were most successful in their quest, for they reappeared with cheese, sugar, tinned beef, soup tablets, tea, fruit, and other things, all bought at very cheap rates, and in many cases captured British stores from Gallipoli and so of first-class quality. The tea particularly was invaluable, for our supply was very low, and the price prohibitive in Turkey. The cheese also was good and strong, so a little of it went a long way, which was just what we wanted. All the stuff came from the Turkish Government Stores near the railway station, and was sold to us at the official prices, which were very cheap; on the other hand, the officers of the 2nd Echelon a few days later had to pay the bazaar prices, which were four or five times as great.

After dark, laden with coats, baskets, and bottles, we all trooped along the road to the railway station in the village, and entered it to await orders for entraining. Major Gilchrist came along after a time and showed us our train, and detailed us to various carriages. The whole train was in darkness, and throughout our railway journey we junior officers were never provided with lights at night. Each carriage had a platform at either end, and on each platform was a Turkish or Arab guard always more or less in fear of a dash for liberty on our part.

All our valises, and some other kit, were put into a covered wagon which was duly locked and sealed; but for some reason the wagon was left behind at Posanté when

the train started. This was a frightful blow to us, for everything we valued in the world (as expressed by Turkey) was in that wagon, with the exception of our money, equipment, the clothes we stood in, and perhaps a tooth-brush and a cooking-pot or two. There was much figurative wailing and gnashing of teeth and much forcible language when the news of this mishap spread along the train the next day, and many of us never expected to see any of our belongings again; nor did we see them for many days. I conclude this wagon was left behind to avoid overloading the already overworked locomotive of the train.

At 9 p.m. on June 17th, 1916, our train steamed out of Posanté, and we arranged ourselves for the night as well as we could. A few fellows slept on the floor or in the gangway, but I doubt if they were more comfortable than those of us who sat up. The night was fine, with a bright moon. The first part of our journey lay through very grand mountainous country where precipices rose sheer above us to our left, the Chakut Su foamed in a black torrent over the rocks in a deep gorge on our right, and the line itself twisted and tunnelled amid rocky crags.

At earliest dawn on June 18th the train again halted on a lengthy up-grade in a small valley among the lower mountains of the Taurus Range, and the little engine puffed and snorted and spun its wheels without inducing the train to stir an inch. It looked as though we were destined to pass the day in this deserted spot, but the Turks said, "yewash, yewash" ("slowly, slowly"), and assured us that it would be all right in time, so meanwhile we got out and fetched some water from a small brook running through the green fields alongside the line. The engine gradually raised more steam and then made another desperate effort, and the heavy train began to move and continued to do so until it reached a down-grade once more.

Then we got up speed and rattled along for many miles at a great rate; the whole country was on a steady down-grade, and without any irregularities. The train was not provided with vacuum brakes, so the only method of controlling our mad rush down the long straight lengths of line was by means of hand brakes applied on each carriage by men or boys. I shudder to think what would have happened if we had suddenly approached a damaged

rail, for the train was running at quite forty miles an hour most of the time.

Farther on, we occasionally drew up at a small station ; on such occasions, if it was near meal time, orderlies, and officers too, could be seen running along to the locomotive with degchies (cooking-pots) to beg for a fill of hot-water, which the good-natured driver generally gave to the more persistent or more liberal supplicants. At stations where time permitted we kindled small fires alongside the track, and cooking operations proceeded apace, interspersed with nervous glances at the train, which was liable to move off whenever the station-master thought fit. Our Arab gendarme guards at such times were in a terrible state of excitement and shouted " yallah " with great persistency. They had a rooted idea that our one object in life was to be left behind in the desolate country, whereas our real object was very much the reverse. They were also quite unused to trains, and doubtless considered them frightfully dangerous.

In a few hours we left the Taurus Range behind, and at 10 a.m. on June 18th were running through more fertile and level country with small hills here and there. We came to a station called Eregli (see Map No. 9), and stopped there for half an hour or more and had breakfast. Word was passed round that cherries were for sale. In a remarkably short time the station railings were thronged with people buying first-class fruit from some Turkish hawkers outside, and any and every receptacle was requisitioned. I used my battered old khaki topi, which I passed across to be filled more than once with the delicious fruit. When the train left Eregli showers of cherry-stones were shooting from every window, and conversation languished.

Throughout the day we ran through more or less level and cultivated country on a great plateau well over 3,000 feet above sea-level, for Eregli is at an altitude of 3,458 feet, and Konia and Afion Karahissar (*vide* Map No. 9) are 3,379 feet above the sea. At each station its height above sea-level was shown in metres on the station name-board, or near it. About 2 p.m. we came to the small town of Karaman, with a mediæval tower overlooking thickly clustered houses, but we did not stop long at this place, and the rather monotonous journey continued till at 5 p.m. we sighted Konia.

Konia (the Biblical Iconium) is a large and prosperous

place with many good buildings. It is an ancient city of the Seljuk Turks. The railway station is an extensive one, with many lines of rails and two or three platforms. On arrival we were ordered to collect our kit and get out of the train. The Hindu officers were ordered by the Turks to fall in separately, and were formed up in line. We said goodbye to those we knew, and they were then marched out of the station and we saw them no more. The Mohammedan officers and orderlies were also directed to fall in, and we said goodbye to them also, thinking they were about to leave us; but, later on, they were ordered to get into our train again, and they accompanied us to Eskichehr.

Several of our officers succeeded in getting out of the station under escort to an excellent little restaurant called the Hotel Baghdad, which was fitted up in European fashion with electric light and electric bells and indicators. There they enjoyed a good dinner, properly served, and assisted by local red wine. I was not one of these lucky ones, for when I found out what was toward, it was too late and no more officers were allowed to leave the station. The hotel was run by a Frenchwoman whose husband was fighting in France at the time.

At dusk we were told that we should go on again that night in the same train, and we all got into the same carriages and compartments. Why we were ordered to get out is a mystery to me, unless it was merely to display us to the populace, some of whom had assembled at the station before the train came in and stared at us with much interest.

The United States Consul at Konia turned up while we were there and talked with us for some time on the platform. He discussed the Armenian massacres, and said that he himself was feeding and looking after 1,000 Armenians who would otherwise have starved. The Turks would do nothing for them.

At 8.30 p.m. on June 18th we were back once more in the carriages, and the long train rolled out of Konia railway station towards Eskichehr. We were rather sorry that we were not destined to stop at Konia, for prisoners at that place were said to be very well treated at the time, and the climate seemed to be a good one, and the country pretty as Turkey goes. Also the town, being on a main line of rail, was unlikely to be isolated

in the winter months. However, luck was against us. We had another very uncomfortable night in our crowded carriages. Some people seem to have the faculty of being able to sleep soundly when sitting upright, but personally I find it very difficult, so the night following our departure from Konia was not a restful one, though the seats were comfortable enough, the carriages well sprung, and the permanent way fairly well laid. The line from Karaman via Konia to Constantinople is well over twenty years old, and has had time consequently to take its final set, so it is better levelled than the newer sections of line east of Karaman.

During the morning of June 19th our railway journey westwards continued without interruption through a fertile, wheat-growing district. In the early morning the climate was really beautiful. A bright sun and fresh mountain air gladdened our hearts; and the fields, and the graceful willows on the banks of the winding streams, charmed our eyes, so long accustomed to dreary, sun-baked deserts. We were all as cheerful as could be, for the country had a European look about it, and the climate had none of the sultry feeling of Eastern countries.

Before noon we came to Afion Karahissar, about 150 miles from Konia (see Map No. 9). Here some forty-two British officers were imprisoned at the time as well as foreign officers, but we saw nothing of them, as the town is some little distance from the railway station. A gigantic rock, with straight sides and a ruined fortress on top, rises abruptly out of the plain at this place, and is a prominent feature of the view. The railway bifurcates at Afion Karahissar, one line going to Eskichehr, while the other runs via Alaschehr to Smyrna.

When we had left Afion Karahissar the country gradually became more bare and less cultivated. About 5 p.m. the line commenced to descend a steep down-grade through a winding gorge, where it crossed and recrossed a stream (the Kara Su, I believe), and tunnelled through many spurs of rock. Rumour had it that in this tract of country there had been many Armenian massacres some months previously.

Our invisible Commandant Essād now asked General Delamain if he would kindly give him a "chit" (character), to say, I suppose, that he had been a good commandant! Was there ever a more laughable request? An officer

in charge of prisoners of war asking for a recommendation from one of his prisoners! After this, who will deny that the Turk is Asiatic to the backbone? I do not know if Essād Bey was given a good character, nor indeed if General Delamain wrote him a note of any kind.

That night our train arrived at the junction of Eski-*chehr*, about 267 miles by rail from Konia and say 400 miles from Posanté. This was our nearest approach to Constantinople, for here we were within 150 miles or so by rail of the Turkish capital. We were met on the platform by a couple of Turkish officers and by a *bash-chaoush* (sergeant-major), the latter a very plausible and well-mannered young fellow who was really a cadet and soon expected a commission. The cadet spoke English fairly well, and was very polite and attentive. So polite was he that he apologized to me because he could not speak English better; so of course I assured him that his accent and vocabulary were worthy of the best society at home, and he was much pleased.

The orderlies remained in the railway station, but all the officers, including the Mohammedan Indian officers, were marched out of the station and a short way down a badly lighted street, where were a number of empty houses, some partially furnished and some unfurnished. Into these houses a number of officers were put. The remainder, of whom luckily I was one, were then marched back to an hotel at the corner facing the station. Here Stace and I got a very small room on the first floor. We had passably good beds, and were quite comfortable, except for a plentiful supply of the usual insects and the absence of all our kit. Dinner of a sort was served in the salon on the ground-floor, where the *bash-chaoush* certainly did all he could to have things arranged to our satisfaction. The Mohammedan Indian officers were in the same hotel with us and occupied rooms on the top floor. They dined with us in the salon, though at separate tables, and I am afraid they did not relish either the food or the prices. The former was insipid to their taste, and the latter atrocious to their ideas. The sanitary arrangements of the hotel were very bad; by this time, however, we had got to expect no better, so were not surprised.

Most people slept soundly that night in spite of the insect pests, for we had been sitting up in the train for two consecutive nights. Nothing short of a "vagin-load

of monkeys with their tails burned off" (as Sam Weller put it) would have disturbed our rest. Several fellows chose safer quarters and slept on the floor of the landing outside their rooms. I believe the rooms in the empty houses down the street were so full of vermin that one energetic officer killed seventy bold insects at one spot before he retired for the night—to another spot. How we longed for some Keating's powder at Eskichehr!

Next day in the square outside the railway station I saw a crowd of Armenians—all elderly women, very old men, or young children. They sat on the ground with nothing, apparently, but the clothes they wore, and a little bread to eat. Their Turkish guards seemed to ignore them altogether, and their faces were expressionless except for a look of dull despair. Later on these wretched people—the remnant probably of the population of a village—were marched off. A pitiful procession they made as they plodded along the street in stony silence with set faces.

In our hotel we were fairly well off for food, but the officers in the empty houses had great difficulty in getting good meals at outside hotels. General Delamain and the other general officers discovered a very small eating-house, kept by a motherly old woman who cooked them really first-class meals at a most reasonable rate. She seemed very anxious to do her best, and addressed them as "Mes Enfants," to their great delight, so, on leaving the place, they shook hands with her and thanked her for her attention.

Late in the afternoon of June 20th Major-General Delamain, and Brigadier-Generals Hamilton, Evans, and Grier, with their respective staff officers, all left by train for Broussa, some seventy miles as the crow flies from Eskichehr and twenty or thirty miles inland from the southern shore of the Sea of Marmora (*vide* Map No. 9). Broussa is, I believe, a health-resort of the people of Constantinople. We had no opportunity of saying good-bye to the party leaving for Broussa, for every one was shut up in one or other of the various houses, except those officers allowed out in small parties to the bazaar.

After tea a few of us got permission to go into the town to make some purchases, and each small party had one old Turkish guard with it. We walked about three-quarters of a mile through streets with scattered houses before we reached the bazaar proper, where the roads

were cobbled and the shops very small and rather Eastern in style. I noticed, however, several large cafés of the usual continental type, but there was no time to sample their capabilities. It was almost closing-time for the shops, so there was little leisure to buy anything except a few figs and other necessaries for our cuisine. Our old guard insisted on taking us back to the hotel by a circuitous route, as he had orders to *show us round* through the bazaar—this in spite of our insisting that we wished to get back to dinner as soon as possible—and it was dark by the time we regained our hotel.

Most of our people at the hotel, and several from other houses, had finished dinner when we returned. Orders had been circulated that we were to leave for Angora that evening, so I made a hurried meal, and then had to argue about the bill, which we finally settled at a pretty high figure. The Mohammedan Indian officers now left for the railway station, but later on both they and their orderlies were marched off into the town. We did not meet them again, and left the place without them.

At about eleven o'clock the order came for a general move to the station across the way, so we adjusted our equipment, seized our baskets of provisions, and marched out across the small square to the railway. Here we assembled on a broad low platform, and waited patiently. The 1st Echelon was now much reduced in size; it was formed only of British officers and British orderlies, the senior officer of the whole party being Colonel A. J. N. Harward, 48th Pioneers. The echelon was only about one-half the size of the original echelon as it started from Baghdad on May 12th, and consequently it was more easily accommodated in a train or in wagons for a road journey.

When we had waited more than a quarter of an hour on the platform, a train of bogie passenger-coaches came in and we all crowded into the unlighted carriages and stowed away our belongings as best we could in the dark. Our Commandant Essād Bey had handed over charge to another Turk, and his troop of Arab "Yellahs" had vanished with him on their way back to their Mesopotamian deserts. It was a pleasure to know that we had seen the last of the hated Arabs; the Turk may be objectionable in many ways, but we found our Arabs objectionable in every way.

Several young Turkish officers from Constantinople were on the platform at Eskichehr and engaged in animated and friendly converse with our best French scholars. One said that he could sympathise with us as he had been a prisoner with the Bulgarians for ten months during the Balkan War, and he added that he had been badly treated. The officers deplored the fact that Turkey was at war with England, and hoped to see us again in happier circumstances. One of them invited Captain Munday to dine with him when we came through again after peace was declared, and undertook also to deliver a note from one of our officers to his brother in our 2nd Echelon, which was expected shortly.

Our temporary commandant for the railway journey to Angora was an awful little brute, both surly and arrogant, and the guards on each carriage were ancient "dug-outs." These old men, who were armed with heavy rifles of large bore, were in absolute terror of our escaping. So much so that for a time they would not allow any of us on to the small platforms at the ends of the carriages even when we were far out in desolate country; and if an officer was eventually allowed to alight for a few minutes, they shouted "Haidy, haidy" (the Turkish for "come along") and "Yussuk" ("forbidden") at the top of their voices. They insisted also on the doors at the ends of the carriages being kept tightly shut while the train was in motion. These restrictions added greatly to our discomfort, and were extremely annoying, for we were treated as if we were wild beasts instead of civilised and reasonable people.

On June 20th at about 11.30 p.m. the train left Eskichehr en route for Angora. We tried to arrange ourselves for the night journey so as to get some small degree of comfort. The compartments were even smaller than in our previous train journeys, and every seat was filled. At our end of the carriage two compartments, holding four officers each, faced each other across a very narrow central gangway. We eight occupants tried to dispose our persons for repose, and we did it as follows: I slept (or rather lay) on one seat, four feet long, with my legs hanging over the end, while Stace did the same on the opposite little seat. Another officer lay and groaned on the hard floor between us with his legs doubled up. Three other fellows in the opposite compartment were arranged in

like fashion. Another lay in the dirty corridor, and the eighth induced the Turkish guard (after much shouting of "Yussuk") to allow him to sleep on the swaying iron platform outside. Never in my life have I seen such an extraordinary mixture of legs, arms, and heads as that carriage presented. It was simply impossible to decide which limbs belonged to which people.

After many fruitless endeavours to sleep with our legs dangling over the elbow-rests of the short seats, Stace and I decided to sit with our legs across the central gap between the seats, and did so; but this so imprisoned the unfortunate naval lieutenant on the floor between the seats that when he awoke later on, with many gasps and coughs, he found himself unable to move hand or foot and struggled desperately for freedom and life. In this peaceful manner passed the cold hours of darkness, while the train rumbled and jolted eastwards, carrying us once more away from the better country of Western Anatolia into the barren wilds of the centre of Asia Minor.

When dawn broke, the view from the windows of the carriage was most depressing. In place of the fields, orchards, and streams of the country around Konia, we found a landscape of bare stony hills, and, as we plunged further into this wilderness, the land became more and more forbidding and dreary in appearance. Shortly after noon we sighted, straight ahead of us, several minarets and an extensive ruined fortress on a hill; and later we came in view of most of the remainder of the town of Angora on a hillside and in the adjacent wide valley. At 12.30 p.m. on June 21st, 1916, the train drew up in Angora railway station, the terminus at that time of the line extending eastwards from Eskichehr, from which place we had travelled a distance by rail of 160 miles or more since the previous evening.

Let me now revert again to the treatment by the Turks of our rank-and-file prisoners of war, which I have already described in some detail but which cannot be too widely known. In September and October 1916 a large number of our men reached Afion Karahissar, where they were employed on road making and other work for which they received a small rate of pay. The survivors of the dreadful journey from Kut were naturally in a very poor state of health and required rest and nourishing food. Of

rest they got little ; of nourishing food none. They were imprisoned and beaten for the most trivial offences. Those who were seriously ill were allowed to die practically untended in the local hospital. Painful as it is to read of such atrocities, I consider it my duty to set the evidence of various prisoners before my readers.

The evidence of one soldier was as follows : " On arrival at Karahissar we were each issued with a new suit of Embassy clothing (viz. clothing sent by the U.S. Embassy at Constantinople for the use of prisoners of war). Our old clothes were taken from us and handed over that evening by the commandant to a contractor, and we heard that they were sold. We were told we should be beaten on the feet if we did not hand in the clothing by the evening. Shortly afterwards a British prisoner was awarded three days' cells with bread-and-water diet for being in possession of a second blanket, which was his regimental one, the other being an Embassy one. One of these was taken from him. Although it was mid-winter, our bedding consisted of a blanket and a quilt—but no mattress. I was one of seventeen prisoners occupying a wooden-floored room about 21 feet by 15 feet. We were allowed a stove after 4 p.m., but the wood issued was so small that we could only keep it burning for three hours at the outside. I was told by another prisoner that he and two others were flogged, and imprisoned on bread-and-water diet for fourteen days, for burning verminous clothing. I saw these men at the end of their imprisonment, and they could hardly walk, though quite healthy when they went in. Our rations were half a pint of wheat gruel and a 1½-lb. loaf at 11 a.m., and in the evening half a pint of vegetable stew with opium oil in it one day and fragments of meat the next day."

As regards these rations, the amount of meat received by each man may be judged from the fact that the issue of meat was one goat, or at most one and a half goats, for 400 men every second day !

Another man stated : " The first commandant, a Turkish naval officer, was very fond of knocking the men about. He struck me across the face for wearing my slippers in my room. I saw an Australian receive six strokes across the shoulders with a 'sjambok' from a chaoush (sergeant) for playing catch with his bread. The same Turk beat me and two others for going across and

shaking hands with two new arrivals. I saw one British soldier receive ten strokes of the stick on his feet."

Yet another prisoner gave evidence that a British soldier was flogged till he was unconscious for burning a small hole in the sleeve of his Embassy jacket. He also stated that he left Karahissar for Angora by rail on May 12th, 1917. Thence he and others marched for seven days to Yozgad. For the march each man received two okes ($5\frac{1}{2}$ lb.) of bread and a double handful of olives—nothing else; the men were given no transport and had to carry their food and kit. Almost all of them were invalids. The distance was about 120 miles.

The foregoing evidence reveals a sufficiently bad state of affairs, but what shall be said of the treatment meted out to our sick men in the Turkish hospital at Afion Karahissar? I give herewith some evidence regarding this hell upon earth. One soldier thus described his experiences: "On arrival at Afion Karahissar I went into hospital. There I saw many weakly men knocked about by the Turkish orderlies simply because they were too weak to attend to themselves. I saw this happen to a Q.M.S. who died within a few days of the beating. I saw about half a dozen men receive an injection from a Turkish doctor. This was done about 9 p.m., and in every case the man was dead next morning. We nicknamed one of the Turkish doctors 'The Butcher,' from his habit of lancing abscesses with a sharpened half of a pair of scissors."

Another prisoner stated: "I arrived at Karahissar at the end of October 1916. I was a patient in the hospital there in December 1916, and in the bed opposite me was a Q.M.S. I saw him receive the same brandy-coloured injection as was given to the men at Bagtsche, and he died shortly afterwards."

From another source comes the following: "On arrival at Karahissar on September 18th, 1916, I went into hospital for twelve days and was well treated. About a month later I went in again and was put in a room with another prisoner who had lost an article of his kit. I was suffering from fever. The other man's hands were tied together, so I undid them, with the result that I got a beating and both of us had our hands tied. The beating was inflicted by a Turkish hospital orderly, and was so severe that I lost consciousness and remember nothing

more till I awoke next morning, when my hands were still tied. My hands were not untied till the following morning."

One prisoner affirmed that the hospital clothing was only changed every three weeks and that for six weeks he never got a wash. Another man said that opposite him in the ward was a Q.M.S. of artillery who was unconscious for four days, and that during that time this helpless invalid was neither fed nor tended in any way and died in the end in a horrible state.

One more piece of evidence and I will cease. Here it is: "On arrival at Karahissar on September 29th, 1916, I went into hospital, remaining there till December 24th. No attempt was made to feed men too weak to feed themselves, and their food was taken away again by the orderlies. I saw several bad dysentery cases given an injection of brandy-coloured fluid. This was given by a Turkish orderly usually in the afternoon, and was injected into the patient's thigh with a large syringe about six inches in length. After the orderly had given the injection, he used to turn round to us, laughing, and say 'Tamām! Finish!' making a gesture similar to the lie-down signal. These cases were invariably dead next morning."

Let the sufferings of our rank and file in the hospital at Karahissar be remembered as one of the darkest stains on the blackened reputation of the Turkish Government. If the injections given to our men were indeed brandy and the patients subsequently died, more shame on the Turks that they should ever have allowed their prisoners to reach such a state of exhaustion.

CHAPTER XXI

EASTWARDS TO YOZGAD

ANGORA (the ancient Ancyra of Galatia) is a town of, I should say, about 30,000 inhabitants, and stands at an elevation of 3,130 feet above sea-level. It is in the heart of Anatolia (*vide* Map No. 9), and is approximately 200 miles east of Constantinople, and 130 miles south of the Black Sea. The town is surrounded by bare and stony hills covered to some extent with coarse grass, but destitute of trees, so the view in almost every direction is ugly and uninteresting. The greater part of the town lies on the slopes of a steep hill which is crowned by the remains of a large fortress. In the town are numerous Mohammedan mosques with very slender minarets, each surmounted by an extremely sharp conical roof of sheet metal, giving to the minaret the appearance of a highly sharpened pencil—a type apparently universal in Anatolia. The main streets and roads are rather narrow and usually stand in need of repair. In the bottom of the wide valley, outside the town and about half a mile from it, lies the railway station, from which a broad straight road leads up a sharp rise into the town.

When our train arrived in Angora on June 21st, 1916, there was a large armed guard of Turkish soldiers drawn up on the platform with bayonets fixed, and several Turkish officers were walking about. Orders were issued for every one to leave the train, so we put on our equipment and got out. The wagon containing all our valises and other baggage, which had been left behind at Posanté, was found to be attached to the train. It had caught us up at Eskichehr owing to telegrams sent by the Turks, after much urging by our staff. It was a great relief to know that we had not lost our kit, but we had to leave it all in the station when we marched away.

The Turkish commandant of Angora was strutting

about the platform, and he came up and spoke to Colonel Harward when we arrived. He was an elderly kai-makām (lieutenant-colonel) with grey hair and moustaches well turned up; his manner was very arrogant, and, much as he seemed to dislike us, I am sure we disliked him more even after only five minutes' acquaintance. In a short time the orderlies were told to fall in outside the station, and a few carts were loaded up with light baggage. The orderlies then marched off with the carts and the officers were ordered to march towards the town. As Stace and I had no further opportunity of seeing either of our orderlies, and as they had almost all our cooking-pots, plates, and stores, we lost all our belongings of this nature except one "degchie" (pot) which I had kept and a couple of tins of meat. We naturally thought we should be allowed to have our orderlies with us, but not only were they suddenly taken away without any warning, but we were unable to communicate with them before we left Angora.

We officers plodded along a wide and dusty road and up a straight rise till we reached a species of large café on the outskirts of the town and were shown into this building. It stood in a garden intersected with gravel walks and with a bandstand, and the interior had more the appearance of a drill-hall than a restaurant. A contractor had undertaken to supply us with food. This man had a small kitchen and a stall outside the café, and he also sold eatables from a counter within the building.

It was soon apparent that the arrangements for food-supply and for attendance were utterly inadequate for a party of more than sixty officers. The colonels and majors got a moderate lunch at about 2 p.m., but it was not till 4 p.m. that I managed to get anything to eat, and by that time most of the eatables had been finished. The ubiquitous word "yoke" ("no"), or the equally expressive throwing up of the head and clicking of the tongue, were the answers to all requests for vegetables, macaroni, and in fact everything except bread and meat. Many fellows gave up the idea of waiting to be served as hopeless, and bought what they could get at the bar.

After our very late lunch the Turks said they wished to photograph us. Two long lines of chairs and benches had been laid out in the garden, and a young Turkish officer was ready to snap us with a small pocket-camera of Kodak type, so we all sat down or stood behind the

benches, and were duly photographed with the Turkish commandant as a centre-piece. From the lateness of the hour, the hopelessly bad arrangement of the group, and the position of the sun, I would lay a bet of ten to one that all the photos taken were failures. I should be glad to hear that this was the case, for the pictures were probably intended for some newspaper, to impress the population with the defeat of the British and the triumph of the Ottoman soldiery.

When the photography had ended, we sat in the garden listening to excruciating Turkish music produced by a local band some distance away, and eating passably good ices produced by the ice-cream vendor at the stall outside the café. I was feeling very tired and sleepy after our uncomfortable train journey of the previous night, but it was difficult to find a comfortable spot where one could lie down and rest.

Dinner was announced at 7 p.m., and the scramble for food recommenced. It was better managed than the lunch, for the meal was served to us in three parties, but the last party did not get very much. The meal consisted of a little boiled mutton for each person, with a dish of cucumber and potato salad, a plate of macaroni, and a plate of cherries. Bread was also included. All the dishes, except the fruit, were cooked in oil. After dinner we paid our very exorbitant bills and prepared to march to our quarters, which were said to be a long way from the café.

Prior to the start we were, as usual, carefully counted, recounted, and again counted; and at length we were directed to march in fours along the dark streets, guided by a Turkish "chaoush" (sergeant). Every one was heavily laden with coats, baskets, bottles, etc., and all were rather weary, so the tramp through the town, along a country road, across a stream, and up a steep hill-track seemed interminable. At the end of this two-mile march we were confronted by a great double-storied building in complete darkness, and a halt was called outside the main entrance while some of the Turks entered the place and lit a few lamps. The field officers were first called inside and distributed in the small rooms in one wing of the upper floor as far as space permitted, and then the remaining majors and all the more junior officers trooped into the gravel-floored hall, up the stone

staircase, and into an enormous upper-floor room forming the wing of the building opposite to that occupied by the seniors.

In this long dormitory a total number of sixty-eight officers were expected to live. The size of the room was 66 feet by 40 feet. It had a boarded floor, numerous large windows, and a double line of wooden pillars supporting the wooden ceiling and the roof structure. There was just sufficient space for us to sleep in four long lines, with an interval of a few inches between the mattresses and narrow gangways between the lines, leaving a wider central gangway down the room. The floor-space works out at under 32 square feet per man; and in this room we had often to feed as well as to sleep.

For each officer a clean mattress, quilt, and pillow had been laid out ready on the floor. This was the one redeeming feature of our disgraceful treatment at Angora. A couple of small oil lamps threw a flickering light over part of the big dormitory, and by their dim light we undressed and were soon fast asleep on our billowy mattresses and beneath our gawdy quilts.

The great stone-built barrack in which we were imprisoned was a recently completed Agricultural College, but it had never been used as such. Judging by the drawings of targets on the walls, the dormitory in which we lay crowded together had been used for the instruction of recruits in aiming; and, though it looked fairly clean, it was not free from the usual insect pests. Outside our dormitory a large landing led to a stone staircase giving access to the ground-floor, where were a number of small rooms all floored with gravel. The sanitary arrangements, both within and without the barrack, will not bear description, and there were no facilities for washing.

The barrack was perched on a bare spur of the hill. It afforded a fine view over the wide valley towards Angora on the opposite side, but the side was absolutely unprotected, and every gale of wind whistled over the spur and into the barrack. In summer it was bleak enough; in winter the place would have been uninhabitable.

There were no means of getting any water whatever in the barrack. A piped water-supply system had been partially installed, but no water was supplied to the pipes, and the nearest place from which to obtain water was a

stream in a valley about 500 yards distant from the house. In this delightful health-resort we were not allowed to have any orderlies; nor were we permitted for some days to go down to the stream to fetch water or to wash ourselves and our clothes.

Early in the morning on June 22nd a few carts arrived with our valises, so we went downstairs and carried our kit up to the dormitory. Very little had been looted, which was no small consolation among our many tribulations. We expected, of course, that a Turkish officer would be placed in charge of us officer prisoners of war, but this was not the case. A "chaoush" (sergeant) was our temporary commandant—a most insulting arrangement and quite contrary to recognised military procedure. This chaoush was afraid to do anything on his own responsibility, and consequently we were kept imprisoned as if we were criminals.

We also naturally expected that the Commandant of Angora would visit us as soon as possible to see that everything was well arranged, and to listen to any complaints. Vain hope! During the time we were confined in the Agricultural College at Angora we never once set eyes on the Commandant of Angora, nor did he send any officer to us as his representative, nor would he vouchsafe a reply to any letter addressed to him.

When we arose from our beds on June 22nd and had carried our kit upstairs, we found that not only could we get no water for washing, but not even for drinking and cooking; and when, at about noon, one small water-cart (holding fifty-four gallons) arrived at the barrack, the quantity of water was barely sufficient to fill our water-bottles, allowing a small extra amount for cooking. We got no water except that from this one cart during the whole of June 22nd, nor were we given anything whatever to eat till the evening of that day. Those who were lucky enough to have tinned stores and remnants of bread ate their meagre supplies.

I had a few pieces of coarse brown bread and some large thin chupatties of white flour bought at Posanté on June 17th, and therefore five days old. The chupatties were as hard as iron, yet they were better than nothing, and my only tin of anchovy paste made them palatable enough if eaten very slowly. The Turkish sentries strolled continually into our dormitory merely to stare at us,

and brought their friends in also to gaze at us, until we objected strongly and there was nearly a row. We were not allowed to smoke in the big room, and had to sit on a draughty landing if we wished to indulge in a soothing pipe.

It was not till 6.45 p.m. on June 22nd that a Turkish contractor arrived with food for our large party. We had then been without any food from Turkish sources *for twenty-four hours*, and, so far as the Turks were aware, might have been absolutely starving for that period.

This was the treatment accorded by the Turkish Commandant of Angora to the "Precious and Honoured Guests" of his country.

On June 23rd a water-cart arrived very early in the morning. The quantity of liquid did not suffice, of course, for proper washing, as it had to be kept for drinking and cooking, but I used a little water from my water-bottle to remove the worst grime from my face and hands and to wash my teeth. Two other water-carts arrived during the day, so that later on there was more water for drinking and cooking. We got no food from the contractor on this day till 1 p.m.

In the morning the Turks announced that forty officers were required to volunteer to start at once for some place beyond Angora—name not stated. As our conditions of life at Angora were so abominable, I sent in my name as one of the forty who were to sally forth "into the blue," for I considered that nothing could be much worse than our prison at Angora. The scheme, however, was abandoned by the Turks, for we heard no more of it.

Shortly before noon we saw a column of British officers marching up the steep hill towards the barrack, and it turned out to be our 2nd Echelon of officers which had been following so long in our tracks. Our friends got a hearty welcome from us, and experiences were freely exchanged and much news gathered on both sides. The officers of the 2nd Echelon were detailed to occupy the small rooms on the ground-floor of the barrack. In charge of this echelon was a young *mulāzim*, and the difference made by the presence of a Turkish officer with it was at once apparent. The officers of the 2nd Echelon were allowed to march down to the stream after lunch to wash their clothes and bathe, while we of the 1st Echelon, to our intense disgust, still remained close prisoners in the barrack,

The contractor offered to give us a scratch meal about 1 p.m., but tried to double his charges before doing so, as he knew that every one would be very hungry, and with the arrival of the 2nd Echelon of officers he anticipated a fine profit. The Turkish soldiers made no attempt whatever to control the contractor or to safeguard our interests, but we struck at the prices charged, and eventually got a reduced meal at a less figure. In the evening the contractor again brought some food, but announced that he refused to supply a cooked meal. Towards sunset, therefore, we were all allowed out on to the bare ground behind the barrack to boil water or to cook, and were soon engaged in culinary operations with what food was available—colonels and majors blowing fires and cleaning dirty cooking-pots, next to the last-joined subaltern similarly occupied. Were German officer prisoners ever treated thus by the British? I think not.

On the following morning, through the good offices of the *mulāzim* of the 2nd Echelon, we of the 1st Echelon were at length allowed to go to the stream to bathe and to wash our clothes—an inestimable boon. We marched down the steep hillside, past squads of raw recruits, to a shallow stream some ten yards wide flowing over a bed of pebbles. There we all stripped in a chilly wind and scrubbed for dear life. I washed all my clothes, and never knew before what hard work the Indian *dhobi* does to earn his daily bread. The sun and wind soon dried our dilapidated garments, and in an hour's time we were toiling up the hill again in changed raiment, carrying our washing and some buckets of water.

The contractor now opened what we called a "coffee-shop," and there we had to buy our eatables at one small hatch. So long was the queue of officers that each purchaser generally had to wait for about an hour (and frequently longer) before being served if he happened to arrive rather late after the hatch was opened. Having got our supplies at last, we then cooked our own food in the open, and washed up our plates and cooking-pots afterwards with the little water we had collected. Bread, eggs, white cheese, fruit, and sometimes meat, were obtainable, but all at very exorbitant rates.

Nothing of importance happened on June 24th. We passed the day chiefly in monotonous waiting for our issue of food and in cooking it when we got it. One officer

wished to be transferred to the 2nd Echelon in which was his brother, so he approached the mulāzim with this request. The gallant Turk replied that he thought it could be arranged, but that the officer *must pay him at once*, as he (the mulāzim) would be leaving the next morning. I need hardly say that the British officer did not pay the Turk; he quietly exchanged with another officer and simply notified the exchange.

On June 25th we were allowed to go down to the stream again if we wished, and many did so. Later in the morning the Turks announced that the 1st Echelon would move off at 5 p.m. for Yozgad, and that the 2nd Echelon would proceed later to Kastamuni—a town about 110 miles as the crow flies east-north-east of Angora in a very mountainous district some fifty miles from the Black Sea (see Map No. 9).

After breakfast we began to prepare for the move, but did not expect to have to pack up till about 3 p.m. At 1.30 p.m., however, as we were eating our miserable lunch, shouts of “Haidy, haidy” arose from the guards; a Turkish officer, one Kai-Makām (Lieutenant-Colonel) Fevri Bey, then appeared and peremptorily ordered us to clear out and get into some carts which had arrived outside the barrack. This officer appeared to be in the Commissariat Service, and was a low type of fellow; he was consistently rude and overbearing in his manner towards us.

I packed my few belongings as quickly as I could, and carried my valise downstairs. Some of the carts outside the building had been allotted for baggage, and others with hoods as riding-carts for officers. The usual allotment was one four-wheeled cart to five or six officers—seemingly a fairly liberal allowance, but the carts were so small that the occupants had to pack themselves like herrings in a tub if all wished to get in. The low arched matting roofs of the carts made it difficult to get in or out of them, though they gave fair protection from the powerful midday sun of June. Stace and I were lucky in getting a very small cart with one other officer only (Major C. F. Henley, 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry), but even then we were none too comfortable owing to a box inside the cart. The journey to Yozgad was said to be one of five days, yet no assistance was given us by the Turks in collecting food for the journey, nor were we told what stores we could purchase on the road,

It is difficult to understand the reason of the disgraceful neglect shown to us by the Turks at Angora, but my personal opinion is that the Commandant of Angora should be considered solely responsible for it. In Turkey prisoners of war passing through any town are absolutely under the control of the commandant of that town whilst there. The officer in immediate charge of the prisoners while on the march has no authority over them while they are in a town where there is a commandant. I do not know if any of us gave offence to the Commandant of Angora. If we did, it was not intentional. I take it that he was one of the "evil-minded men" against whom we had been warned by the U.S. Consul at Baghdad; that is to say, he was an incompetent, or impossible, senior officer for whom the Turkish Government wished to find a secluded billet where his shortcomings would be hidden. Possibly, unlike the majority of Turks, he hated the British; or again, the neglect shown to us may have been merely due to hopeless laziness in a semi-civilised and inexperienced man. We should all like ten minutes alone with the then Commandant of Angora. He might not emerge a better, but he would certainly be a wiser, man.

At 3.30 p.m. on June 25th, 1916, we officers of the 1st Echelon said goodbye to our comrades of the 2nd Echelon outside the ugly college at Angora, and climbed into our wagons, which then descended to the main road and bumped along it towards the town. When we reached the town, the wagons were halted to pick up a squad of British orderlies who were to accompany the echelon to Yozgad.

We had been informed on the previous day that British orderlies would be allowed us on the scale of one orderly to four junior officers, with an improving scale for the more senior officers; and a careful list had been compiled of the names of the orderlies we wished to select to accompany us to Yozgad. This list had been forwarded to the Commandant of Angora. The list, however, was ignored, and twenty-two orderlies were chosen at random by the Turks, and sent to meet us in the town. The result was that our meagre allowance of servants included several men who were both lazy and incompetent, and who were ignorant of the rudiments of cooking.

I bought some bread and fruit in the town while we waited for the orderlies; and at 5 p.m., with the orderlies

crowded on to two wagons without hoods, the procession started on again through the streets of Angora. All officers were forced to ride in the crowded carts until clear of the town. We saw some British officers at the window of a house not far from the high-road, but too distant for us to talk to them. Afterwards we learnt that they were captured Yeomanry and other officers from Egypt. They followed us a fortnight later to Yozgad, and are referred to again in my story.

The road leading out of Angora was a broad metalled thoroughfare, and well constructed. It ran in an easterly direction, more or less directly towards Yozgad; but it appears that this route was not the best one, for we heard later of another route farther to the south (at that time reserved for the use of troops and transport) which enabled the journey to Yozgad to be made in less time. The Turks did not wish us to meet their troops, so we travelled by an inferior road. Our road led round a hill, and then up a long rise, where we saw on our right some barracks in which the rank-and-file prisoners of war, British, French, and Russian, were kept. Here the remaining British orderlies from Kut waved to us and shouted that they were being well treated (far better, in fact, than we were), and wished us good luck.

A halt was called at 10.30 p.m. alongside the high-road close to a railway embankment, so we laid out our valises in the customary way and turned in. Our Turkish guards were ancient fossils, armed with antediluvian rifles of enormous bore, and they rode during the daytime beside the drivers on the various carts; they now formed a close ring around our prostrate forms, nor would they allow us to wander more than twenty yards or so from the carts, so great was their fear of the desperate British character.

The next day was charming—the sun bright but yet not hot, and the air fresh and keen—so we cheered up and, after a very early start, stepped along gaily to keep warm. The road was hilly but good. We passed some camps of Armenian prisoners who were working for the Turks on the railway extension, and I had some conversation with one or two. One, who spoke English, said to me, “How many *slaves* are you?” I replied that we were *not* slaves but prisoners of war—a distinction, however, which the man did not seem able to understand. It then transpired

that the Turks use the same word for both slave and prisoner of war.

The road led across a wide stretch of plain, and we crossed the line of the proposed railway and entered a deep gorge, where the column halted for half an hour close to a stream. On the other side of the stream the railway was under construction through very difficult country. Deep rock-cuttings and high embankments followed each other in rapid succession. After our halt we crossed the stream by a bridge, and followed a very steep winding road leading up through a village of small stone huts. When the carts reached the top at about 8 a.m., they were parked, and we halted for two hours for breakfast.

At 1 p.m. the column halted again for an hour at a small village called Kilitchlar, and we sat about in mulberry orchards, and ate a lot of white mulberries with our lunch. Personally I found the fruit very tasteless. The local Turks were greatly interested in my badges of rank, and wished to know the ranks of all the other officers near me. I explained the meaning of crowns and stars, and the rustics were so pleased that one man insisted on giving me a pipeful of tobacco to smoke, and on holding the match while the pipe was lit. I was afraid he would offer to light the pipe for me, but luckily his friendship did not go to such a length, so we parted with mutual protestations of esteem.

After we left the village there was a very steep range of hills to be surmounted, and it was necessary to lighten the loads on the carts. All officers and orderlies, except one man per cart, were ordered therefore to march over the hills by a short cut, while the carts went on a longer route by road. We accordingly started to climb a stiff ascent of about 1,500 feet up a small stony track in a hot sun. On reaching the summit we found that the track led along the hillside for half a mile and then dropped down a steep bare slope towards the high-road, which showed as a white streak far below us.

High up on the hillside was a spring built in with masonry, and there we found a group of Armenian prisoners and a few Turkish deserters—the latter chained together. The deserters were in a very bad way, some being so footsore that they could barely hobble along. We reached the high-road at the bottom of the valley

at about 4 p.m., and sat down to await the arrival of our carts, which came along half an hour later. After this the column went rapidly down the valley till it reached a very much larger valley through which ran the River Kyzyl (the Biblical River Halys), shown on Turkish maps as the Kyzyl Irmak (see Map No. 9).

At the point where our column reached the River Kyzyl the stream was about fifty yards wide at that time of the year, and three feet deep near its centre. The ponies were tired, so the drivers allowed the animals to pull the carts into the shallow stream, where the cool water refreshed the ponies' legs. Half a mile beyond this place we came upon the same Armenian and Turkish prisoners we had previously seen, all plodding wearily along the road, and we then arrived at a spot where the high-road crosses to the right bank of the river by a well-constructed steel girder bridge. We crossed the river by the bridge, and halted for an hour in a small hamlet (named Jaschichen, I believe), where we had tea. The river-water was very muddy, but a couple of wells in some vegetable gardens gave fairly clear water which was quite safe to drink when boiled.

After an hour's halt we started once more, and marched along a fair road till ten o'clock, when the column halted for some minutes; and then the tired ponies plodded on for yet another hour and a half, till we camped for the night outside a small village, having completed sixty miles from Angora in thirty hours, including all halts—very fast travelling, and most difficult to understand, for there seemed no necessity for such desperate hurry.

Early on June 27th the column marched again. The ponies were moving very slowly now, and some showed signs of exhaustion. We passed on a hillside a large column of Armenians—men, women, and children—marching towards Angora. They were refugees from some small village on which the Turks had descended. At 9.30 a.m. the roofs of houses showed over a rise in front of us, and soon we were rattling along the cobbled streets of the small town of Denck Ma'aden, more usually known as Ma'aden (pronounced Marden). The narrow streets were cobbled, and led towards a large market-square, adorned by a drinking-fountain in the centre and flanked on all sides by a variety of small shops. We were accommodated in a couple of so-called hotels in the town, and

our carts were parked in the central courtyards of these ramshackle houses. I and two others got a small room on the upper floor of a hotel adjoining the market-square. It was unfurnished, of course, and dirty; the building, indeed, was filthy throughout, and badly in need of repair, but that was only to be expected and did not worry us.

We were allowed extraordinary liberty in Ma'aden, and wandered in and out of the hotels as we liked except after dark. I presume it was because there was no local Turkish commandant at the place, and our temporary commandant, who was a decent fellow, wished to treat us reasonably. Feeding was rather a problem, for there were only two small eating-houses in the town, and these were so over-crowded with our people that it was almost impossible to get a meal in them; so we three had a scratch meal in our little room in the evening rather than wait for an hour or so on the chance of getting a hot dinner in the town.

I had some conversation with a Turkish civilian who spoke French. The man was quite friendly and said that of course we English must realise now that the war was hopeless for us. He seemed surprised when I assured him we were not downhearted—whether the more surprised at my sentiments or my linguistic efforts it would be difficult to say, but he seemed to understand me. He gave me glowing accounts of Yozgad, and said the town was a pretty one, the climate good, and the food plentiful. This sounded cheerful, and I thought that the desolate country through which we had passed could not be a sample of the Yozgad district, but, sad to say, I was wrong.

We left Ma'aden on June 28th, 1916, at our usual hour of marching, and travelled through bare and uninteresting country along an uneven road, till we halted at 10.30 a.m. in the shade of some small trees bordering an orchard. Above us on a knoll was a very small and partly deserted village, whence the womenfolk fled in terror when a few adventurous spirits approached to buy eggs. We had breakfast at this place, and left again a couple of hours later. The road then led into an area of very ugly and waterless country, and it was not till 5.30 p.m. that the carts halted on the road for half an hour in a small valley opposite a deserted village. Some people affirmed that the inhabitants had recently been massacred; but I

heard from a Turk that the village was not an Armenian one, so I think it more probable that the population had been deported by order of the Government, or else that the total failure of their fresh-water supply forced the inhabitants to evacuate the place. In this small valley there were a few pools of brackish water, but no trace of fresh water.

We resumed our march down the valley, and at sunset came out into a larger valley, where curious rounded hills of bare mud flanked the road, and camels wandered about loose. It was not till 10.30 p.m. that we halted for the night by a stream of water which was fit to drink (the Delidje Irmak, I believe—a tributary of the Kyzyl Irmak), and personally I was very glad to crawl into my valise, even though the ground was hard and stony. The drinking-water was none too good, but only very slightly salt.

At dawn next day we found that we had halted within a mile of a small village called Sekilah. We could easily have reached the place the previous night, and could then have occupied a better camping-site. My opinion is that the commandant, who went on as far as the village, wished to keep the place to himself and to have first pick of any local produce. Our column started at dawn and soon crossed the stream by a ford and passed through the village. We met many of the curious little two-wheeled bullock-carts of the country, accompanied by their rustic owners. These carts make an extraordinary squeaking and groaning noise as they bump slowly along on their solid wooden wheels.

The country soon became barren and stony once more, and the road dipped and rose over endless ridges. We frequently got out of the carts and walked up the longer hills, for the ponies were very tired. At length, at 2 p.m., we descended into a deep valley where there was a welcome change of scenery. A pretty little stream of excellent water ran down the valley, and in a plantation of trees on its banks we rested for a couple of hours and lunched off what eatables we happened to have with us. The commandant wished to press on to Yozgad that evening, but the transport officer flatly refused to go so far, as his ponies were almost dead beat; and we, of course, sided with the transport man against all senseless attempts to lower the world's record for the journey. Two carts had collapsed, and their occupants had to be

crowded into other vehicles, so our ponies had still heavier loads. Before six o'clock in the evening we straggled into a fairly large village called Serai, and were all herded into two crowded stable-yards. I slept in a dirty verandah, and others in similar places or on the flat roofs of the verandahs, while bitter complaints arose from those below these roofs when showers of dust from the roof-dwellers descended on their heads and faces from time to time.

The night passed without event, though in considerable discomfort for us, and at 5 a.m. on June 30th we set out on our last short march into Yozgad over a much improved road in hilly country. At nine o'clock the column halted by the roadside on the spur of a hill, and below us in the distance farther along the valley we could see some of the poorer houses in the outlying parts of Yozgad. The town lay deep in the valley with bare hills towering above it on all sides, except where in one place there was a wood on a hill-slope to the south. By 10 a.m. we had entered the town and halted in a steep street to await orders. It was the sixty-second day of our great journey from Kut in far-off Mesopotamia—a journey of about 2,000 miles over desert, mountain, and plain—and all of us were heartily sick of travelling. We longed for rest, peace, and a quiet life for a time. Little did we imagine when we arrived in Yozgad how long we should be imprisoned in that isolated town.

CHAPTER XXII

LIFE AT YOZGAD IN 1916

IN one of the deep valleys of the desolate country about 130 miles south of the Black Sea lies the Turkish town of Yozgad, with a normal population of, perhaps, 15,000 inhabitants in time of peace. Around it rise rugged hills with steep and stony slopes thinly covered with coarse grass, but destitute of trees, except on one hill to the south of the town where a wood of gnarled and twisted fir trees relieves to some extent the general monotony of the landscape.

Metalled roads radiate from Yozgad in many directions—westwards to Angora, southwards to Kaisarie (the ancient Caesarea of Cappadocia), and eastwards to Sivas, Tokat, and Amasia—all traversing an endless succession of great ridges and valleys stretching away to the horizon on every side. An inhospitable land, where human habitations are found nowhere but in the valleys, which afford some shelter to man and beast from the bitter east winds of winter rushing across the great plateau from the icy regions of the Caucasus.

The general appearance of Yozgad would hardly convey the impression of an Eastern town but for the minarets of the numerous mosques scattered among the houses. The typical flat-roofed house of Asiatic architecture is absent, except in the poorer quarters, and its place is taken by buildings roofed with inferior red tiles. The steep and winding streets which intersect the town are either metalled or else cobbled after the fashion of French towns; indeed Yozgad strongly resembles a small continental town of Europe with the addition of the mosques of a Mohammedan population.

Along the bottom of the valley and a short distance up either slope small houses are thickly clustered, with here and there a larger residence. In the centre of the town

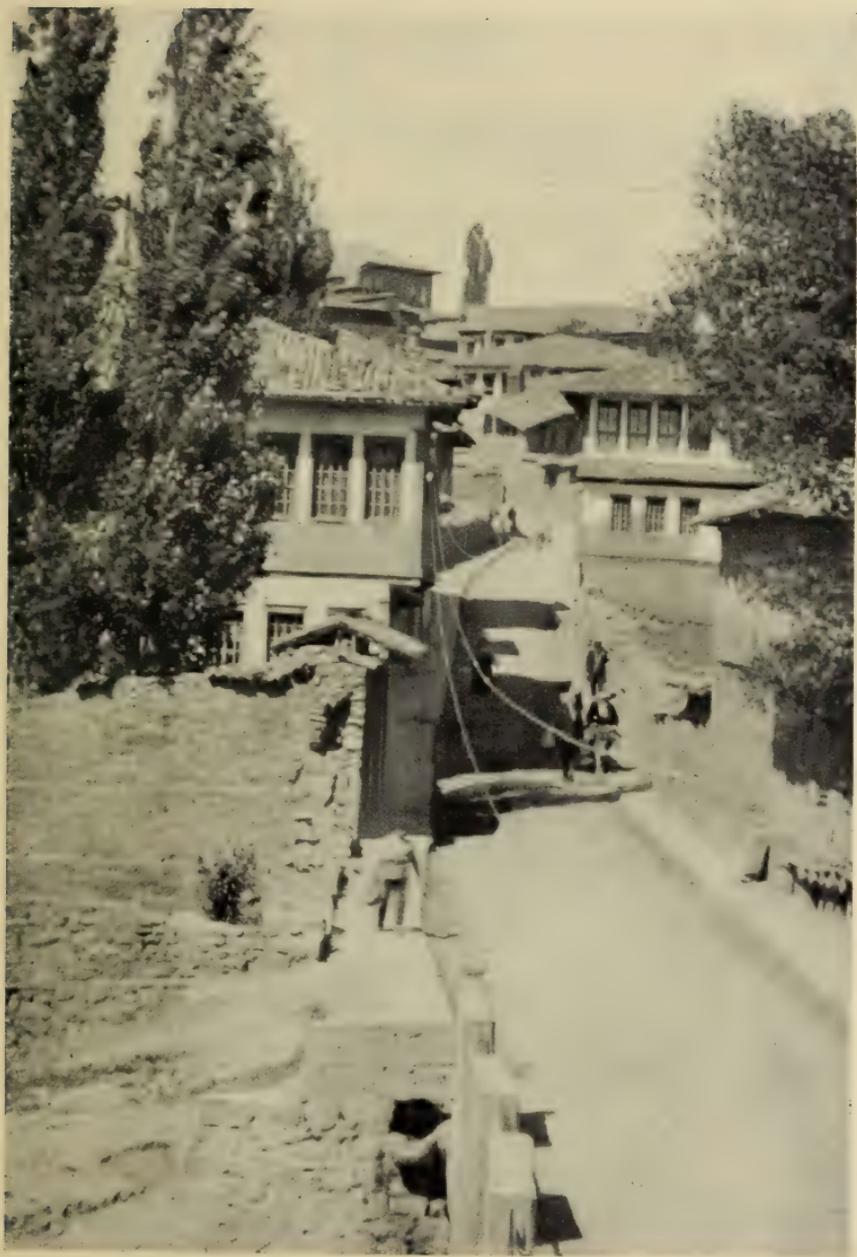
stands a large mosque with a very tall and slender minaret, which is capped as usual by an extremely lofty conical roof of sheet metal, giving the minaret the appearance of a carefully sharpened pencil. High up on the minaret is a gallery whence the faithful are called to prayer at dawn and sunset, and on the nights of religious festivals this gallery is adorned with a cordon of lamps.

In contrast to the bare heights around, the town is plentifully besprinkled with poplars and fruit trees, more especially in the neighbourhood of a small stream which flows along the bottom of the valley. The vertical lines of the poplars harmonise well with the slender sharpness of the minarets. Along the banks of the stream, where the soil is good and fertile, are many well-cultivated fields of vegetables.

The country in which Yozgad is situated is a great plateau over 4,000 feet above sea-level, and it is very thinly populated. Cultivation seems to be impossible except in the valleys, where water and shelter can sometimes be obtained. The hills provide inferior pasturage for herds of cattle, sheep and goats. The town is well supplied with water from a number of springs. Rumour puts the number of these springs at one hundred, and hence the name of the town, which, being interpreted, means "one hundred springs." This bountiful supply of good water may account for the existence of so large a town in so isolated a spot.

When our column of wagons descended into Yozgad at 10 a.m. on June 30th, 1916, we stopped in a steeply sloping street and unloaded our belongings. The Turks had prepared for our use two large detached houses on the western side of the road. Our senior officers decided to occupy the lower house of the two, so the captains and subalterns trooped into the upper house—a double-storied building on steeply sloping ground, separated from the high-road by a few walled enclosures containing fruit trees. We selected our rooms, leaving two for our orderlies, and then carried our kit into the house and proceeded to arrange our meagre possessions to the best advantage. The Turks posted sentries at once outside the entrance-doors of our house, and no one was allowed to go in or out except to fetch water.

Both the houses at first set apart for our use were large buildings with red-tiled roofs, whitewashed walls, and



A STREET IN YOZGAD.

Photographed with a camera made secretly by prisoners.

innumerable windows. The walls were very thin (about 9 inches), and were formed of stone rubble and mud, which was enclosed between thin planking nailed to concealed wooden uprights at intervals. The planking was covered with plaster, both inside and outside the building, and finally whitewashed. The effect produced by this construction was neat and regular, but the buildings were very flimsy and vibrated alarmingly at times, and the floors were particularly weak.

The houses which we entered had been thoroughly cleaned and swept; in fact, it was an agreeable surprise to most of us to find our quarters in such good condition. Very rarely does one find a house in Turkey which is comparatively free from lice and bugs. The upper house really consisted of two semi-detached residences connected through a couple of small passage-rooms on the upper floor. Many of the rooms had boarded floors and ornamental wooden ceilings, and most had cupboards let into the walls. In each half of the upper house there was a small downstairs landing with a kitchen adjoining it, and three rooms fit for occupation, and also a larger upstairs landing with other living-rooms opening off it. Naturally, all the first-comers selected rooms with boarded floors for their messes of from three to seven officers, and the later arrivals had to be content with rooms with brick-flagged floors. Altogether, in the upper house, we had twelve living-rooms for officers (excluding the two passage-rooms), and two rooms next to the kitchens were allotted to our dozen orderlies.

The rooms in the upper house varied much in size. The largest rooms on the upper floor were two measuring 16 feet by 19 feet, and the smallest rooms were only $12\frac{1}{2}$ square feet. Seven officers occupied one of the big rooms—an allowance of only 43 square feet of floor-space per man. There were no spare rooms in which we could feed; so when, later on, we had all our meals in the house, some messes used the landings as mess-rooms, and the remaining messes had their meals in their rooms.

Between the upper house and the high-road, about thirty yards distant, were various small enclosures bounded by stone walls, where apricot, apple, and plum trees grew. At the northern end of the house a steep zigzag pathway led down through what had once been terraced gardens to a small lane sixty yards long, flanked by high stone

walls and a row of poplar trees, which led to the high-road. Near the high-road, on the north side of the lane, was the senior officers' house, and adjoining it was another large house—used at first as a "hastana," or Turkish hospital—with a large garden behind it. This garden became later on our chief place of exercise, and the lane was also much used by pedestrians, though a small stream which ran along it made it inconvenient for use by many people at a time.

From what I could gather, it seems that all three houses were occupied up to the end of 1914 or thereabouts by well-to-do Armenian families. In various rooms and landings of our upper house were small niches with traces of sacred pictures pasted on the walls within them. Soon after our arrival I found a number of old exercise-books of children, containing translations from Armenian into French and vice versa. The three houses were large, as I have said, and the woodwork of the ceilings and cupboards was elaborate. In some cases the ceilings were carved with intricate ornamentation. Everything pointed to the comparative wealth and good education of the former occupants. In 1914 or early in 1915, however, the Turks took possession of the houses, marched the occupants up the wooded hill south of the town, and there, it is said, they brutally murdered them all—men, women, and little children. I should like to hope that we were misinformed of the fate of these Armenians, but I fear not, for large areas of the town of Yozgad (notably around our houses) were filled with empty houses, falling into ruin, whose owners were said to have been Armenians. The simple exercises in a childish hand which I found in our house made pathetic reading when one thought of the cruel fate of the innocent little writer. I do not admire the Armenians, but no provocation can condone such heartless cruelty on the part of the Turks.

The small room on the lower floor of the upper house which I shared with Stace and Carlisle measured only 14 feet by 16 feet, and was at the north-east corner of the building, so that it was exposed to the chilly winds from the distant Caucasus region; yet on the whole the room was comfortable enough for three people. Two sides were taken up by large windows, and a third side by cupboards, a niche, and a door. Below the windows ran a continuous low platform, 3 feet wide and rather

over a foot above the floor, its length being sufficient to allow three persons to sleep on it. The floor was well boarded, but the room was very draughty in cold weather from currents of air blowing up from a cellar below, and from cracks around the ill-fitting windows. We found all cracks around the windows carefully pasted up with strips of paper, and though we removed some of the paper, we found the utility of the remainder in the winter months. In some of the rooms double windows existed as a protection against extreme cold, but there were none in our room. Scarcely any of the rooms had fireplaces or chimneys, and all the rooms were more or less of the type which I have described, though some had paved instead of boarded floors.

The kitchen ranges were extremely primitive, and there were no ovens. We made our own ovens, later on, with kerosene-oil tins and mud. The sanitary arrangements were such as to be expected in Turkey—no more need be said. No water was obtainable within any of the houses. In the upper-house enclosure the sole source of water-supply was from a small central tank (about 2 feet square) behind the house, fed by a trickle of doubtful liquid from a surface channel in the next garden. From this open tank the water was led by filthy pipes to a wooden trough at each end of the building, where slabs of stone permitted of clothes being washed. Often the trickle of water to the little tank ceased. Often it became foul and undrinkable, for it was always liable to contamination. Nevertheless, it was the only water obtainable close to the house. If the trickle of water ceased, or the water became foul, the sixty-three original occupants of our house were forced to fetch all their water from the senior officers' house down below—no light task, I can assure my readers. The supply of water to the trough outside the senior officers' house was always plentiful, yet how it remained unpolluted from the untended sewers and cesspits in the ground around its source is wonderful.

The senior officers' house was smaller than ours, and had much fewer rooms, but it boasted a large central room on the upper floor and a corresponding room or lobby on the ground-floor. So few rooms were there, and so small were most of them, that officers of the rank of lieutenant-colonel were three or four in a room, and many of the junior field officers had to sleep in the large central

room, where there was little shelter from draughts and no privacy. Behind the house was a small fruit garden enclosed by high walls. The large hall or room on the ground-floor was used as a dining-room, as no other room was at all suitable, but it was invaded by most unpleasant smells at frequent intervals.

The chief defect in the meagre arrangements made for our comfort by the Turks was that in the upper house no furniture whatever had been provided. For many a long day we had to use our mattresses both as chairs and tables, until, later on, we made our own furniture. The Turks affirmed that no furniture was available in the town, but this is scarcely credible in so large a place as Yozgad. I have no doubt that the truth of the matter was that the Government would not spend the money required to buy us furniture. In the senior officers' house also there was no furniture in the bedrooms; and the rickety chairs, tables, and benches in the dining-hall belonged to the food contractor and had been brought thither by him.

When we took possession of the upper house on June 30th, 1916, we found two rooms full of short and billowy mattresses of the French type, "rezais" (quilts) of wonderful designs, and large pillows of lurid colouring stuffed with wool. The mattresses and pillows were palpably second-hand and much patched, but the rezais were practically new and in good order. We were given permission to use these articles, so each officer took a mattress, a rezai, and a pillow, and we proceeded to make ourselves comfortable. It was a great luxury to be able to lie down on something soft once more. My mattress was far too short for me, but I lengthened my bed by folding the rezai and placing it at its foot, and later, when I required the rezai for warmth, I used my valise for this purpose.

Our commandant at Yozgad was one Bimbashi (Major) Kiāzim Bey of the Turkish Artillery. His staff comprised a young mulāzim-i-sani (2nd lieutenant), another mulāzim called by courtesy a yuzbashi (captain) and known officially as the "staff officer," and an interpreter. As this quartette had the control of all our affairs, it may be interesting to describe them. I have omitted to mention a diminutive commissariat mulāzim who worked in the commandant's office, for this fellow merely performed a clerk's duties and had nothing to do with us.

Bimbashi Kiāzim Bey lived some distance away in the town with his family, but he had a small house a short way up our street for use as an office where the interpreter lived. The commandant was a grey-haired man of medium height, with a thin, hatchet-like face and eyes set close together—very proud, very suspicious, extremely indolent, and a confirmed invalid. He could speak no language but his native tongue. I will say this for him, however, that when he condescended to interview any of us he was always punctiliously polite. His employment as a commandant of prisoners of war was, of course, the result of his unsuitability for any billet where he would command troops. This was the man who was placed in charge of nearly 100 British officers in an isolated place where he was free to do more or less as he liked.

Whether because our echelon had been reported upon badly before we reached Yozgad, or whether because Kiāzim Bey took offence at our behaviour on arrival, or because he wished to subdue us by harsh treatment at the commencement of our captivity, he displayed towards us at the outset neglect almost amounting to hostility, keeping us in unnecessary confinement, ignoring all appeals, and doing nothing to meet our wishes or to help to render our imprisonment bearable. He carefully avoided all contact with us, and for the first few months never came to inspect our houses. In course of time his behaviour improved, as did that of all the other Turks, but he never became really friendly to us. In my opinion he was a Turk of the old school, poorly educated, only partially civilised, soured by ill-health, and with a rooted dislike for all Europeans.

The mulāzim named Tassim, who looked after us for some time after our arrival, was an insignificant but amiable little fellow with a lame leg. He had been badly wounded in the thigh in the Dardanelles, and had only just come out of hospital. A smattering of French enabled him to understand some of our requests without the help of the interpreter. Tassim was always polite and considerate, and he seemed to wish us well, as did all Turks who had actually fought against us; but he was completely overruled by Kiāzim Bey, and was powerless to help us. We were sorry when he left for Angora early in September.

The third member of the little group of Turkish officials

provided the comic element. This was the so-called "yuzbashi," a pock-marked man of so swarthy a countenance that he must have had Moorish or other black blood in his veins. We nicknamed him the "Black Man" or "Sambo." He was always very slovenly in appearance, so his high-sounding title of "staff officer" seemed particularly ludicrous. He affected elastic-sided or buttoned boots, and loved to sit on a chair with his legs tucked under him. The "Black Man" knew no French, but spoke Spanish with moderate fluency. He had little to do with us, as his work seemed to be chiefly to assist the commandant—a task of no great labour.

The fourth member of the Turkish staff was the interpreter, Moise Eskenāz, more usually addressed by us as "Moise Effendi," or "Mr. Moise," but universally known among us by an impolite name rhyming with "shrimp." The interpreter was an exceedingly stumpy young man of about twenty, with very short legs encased in breeches and gaiters, and remarkably short-sighted eyes peering through pince-nez. He wore the uniform of a chaoush (sergeant), but was really a species of cadet. By religion—if he had any—he was a Jew. He was a good linguist, speaking Turkish and French fluently, English passably well, German slightly, and I believe he had a smattering of Italian. His French he had learnt in Paris, where he had lived for five years as a student previous to the war. His experience of Paris had not improved his morals, but it had at any rate quickened his intellect and civilised him considerably, and he was as sharp as a needle and remarkably observant. Though inclined to be conceited and patronising, he was not averse from being bribed with chocolate or biscuits, or even from asking for eatables and clothes in the most barefaced manner. Like the others of the subordinate Turkish staff, he was in mortal dread of the commandant, though quite ready to disobey his orders if he could do so without risk of discovery. He was, however, the only member of the Turkish staff who did any work, and though we disliked him intensely at first, we became accustomed to his ways as time went on and his manners improved.

Here, then, you have our four Turkish officials—a supercilious and invalid commandant, a crippled mulāzim, a barbaric "staff officer," and a young Turkish student from Paris; an interesting study, perhaps, to an eth-

nologist, but scarcely an efficient staff to be in charge of a large body of officer-prisoners.

Under the orders of the *mulāzim* was a squad of about twenty Turkish soldiers, who lived in a small house next to that of our senior officers and formed our guard. Among them were two or three young men of a different type from the remainder and inclined to be objectionable and insulting, but the greater part of the men were ancient Anatolians who became exceedingly friendly towards us after some months, though by no means so at first. They were warmly clothed in thick grey uniforms, and their faces and necks were weatherbeaten and tanned to an extraordinary extent. Each man, when on duty, carried an old breech-loading hammer rifle of about '600 bore, and I should say about 1870 date. Our old guards (or "postas") were usually alluded to by us as the "game-keepers" or as the "apes"—for many of them were markedly simian in face.

Gradually, as time passed, our Turkish guards became more and more friendly. There were various reasons for this change of attitude. When we first arrived the old "apes" were firmly convinced that we were desperate characters, probably penniless, and that the commandant could treat us in any way he thought fit. Later they discovered that, firstly, we did not intend to attempt to escape at once; secondly, that, though quite mad on games according to their ideas and very noisy at times, we meant no harm; thirdly, that we were fabulously wealthy from a Turkish point of view; and lastly, that bad treatment of us led to enquiry from neutral sources instigated by our Government—in fact, that we were of some importance. When these matters penetrated their slow brains, their obstructiveness and bad manners vanished. In fact, by the end of the year the *onbashi*, named Achmed (and nicknamed Augustus), and the one-eyed soldier (a *chaoush*) known as "Cyclops" who accompanied the *onbashi* at times on his rounds when we were counted morning and evening in our rooms, would actually knock at each door before entering, say "Good-evening," count us, and then bid us "Goodernight," smiling amiably the while. Occasionally, in their ardour for politeness, they would say "Goodernight" in the early morning, but they soon learnt the correct words. They were not averse from a few delicacies from among

our stores which came in time from home, and were no losers by treating us decently. Cyclops had lost one eye from a British bullet-wound at Anafarta in the Dardanelles, but he bore no malice on that account.

Prior to our arrival in Yozgad the commandant had engaged a contractor named Ali to cater for us. Ali was a very plausible and affable fellow, but a confirmed swindler and liar, as we soon discovered. Associated with him was a sub-contractor whom we christened "Shylock," because of his supposed resemblance to the Shakespearean character, and there were also a youth and a couple of small boys who assisted at table and some women who worked in the kitchen. Kiāzim Bey had arranged that we should all mess in the large room on the ground-floor of the senior officers' house, so Ali had furnished the room with a couple of large tables and some rickety benches and chairs, and had also provided cutlery, crockery, and table linen, all of the most shoddy description.

Within a couple of hours of our arrival on June 30th, the captains from the upper house were collected and marched down the garden path and along the lane to the senior officers' house, where we trooped into the dining-hall and sat down with the colonels and majors to a *déjeuner* of mutton, cucumber, macaroni, cherries, and fairly good white bread. There was too much oil in the dishes, but most of us made a good meal. Ali gave us moderately good food at the outset, though there was no variety in the menu and the method of cooking was not to our liking. We did not enquire at the time what he proposed to charge us. It was the duty of the commandant to see that the contractor's charges were reasonable. Ali arranged also to supply country wine, butter, fruit, additional bread, and a few other things as extras, for which we could sign in a book, and it looked as if the contract system of messing would prove a success.

After a day or two, however, the contractor began to show his hand. The good white bread was soon replaced by sour bread and the colour darkened to a dirty brown. Goats' meat replaced mutton, and less and less was given to each person. Water was added to the wine. The prices of extras rose by leaps and bounds, and the menu was never varied. The table linen was not washed. The crockery was always dirty. Benches and chairs

broke and were not mended ; in fact, things soon became impossible. The subalterns, who messed after us, usually got even worse food than we did, and at both meals the overcrowding at the tables was abominable.

Ali gave us two meals each day—*déjeuner* at noon and dinner at about 7 p.m. These meals we supplemented by a frugal breakfast of bread, butter, and eggs in our own rooms in the upper house, and by tea there in the afternoon. For boiling the necessary water in our house we required wood, and none was supplied to us for this purpose, so we collected all the refuse wood we could find about the house when our guards were not looking. Ali, however, heard of this and at once sent his own men to collect every stick of spare wood, to force us to buy wood from him at any price he liked to charge. The commandant, of course, did not assist us, for we never saw him.

But our chief grievance during the early days of our captivity in Yozgad was undoubtedly our close confinement in our houses. The Turks posted guards immediately outside the doors of the houses, and no one was allowed to leave his house except to fetch water from just outside the door, or to march down to meals from the upper house to the senior officers' house. Protest after protest did Colonel Harward, then our senior officer, address to the commandant, but without result.

During the first three weeks of our sojourn in Yozgad we were kept close prisoners within our houses, as if we were desperate criminals instead of officer prisoners of war ; we had no opportunities whatsoever for exercise ; we were not allowed to go to the bazaar under escort or even to send representatives thither ; and Kiāzim Bey would not reply to any appeal, nor would he come to see us.

Many officers received letters from home congratulating them on being prisoners of the Turks rather than the Germans, "because," as their friends put it, "the Turks treat their prisoners like gentlemen." As a rule, I think the Turks did treat their officer-prisoners like gentlemen, but during our early days in Yozgad they treated us like criminals, except that our food was passably good and we were given some bedding.

On July 3rd, 1916, when Colonel Harward saw that our disgraceful treatment was likely to continue, he addressed a letter through the commandant to Enver Pasha, the Turkish Minister of War, protesting against it ; but

the letter was merely returned by the commandant, who was careful never to commit his views to writing.

The excuses given verbally for our close imprisonment were, firstly, that the Rumzān (or Ramadān) Mohammedan festival was in progress, and secondly, that three British officers of the Royal Navy had attempted to escape some time before from Afion Karahissar. These excuses for our close confinement in Yozgad were palpably absurd—the first because we had adequate guards for our protection in case of trouble with the populace,¹ and the second because Yozgad is so isolated that escape is extremely difficult. The contrast of our treatment with that of the Turkish officer-prisoners in India, or of the German officers in England, is remarkable. We were delivered over helpless to the tender mercies of an impossible Turk in an isolated place where he hoped that no questions would be asked.

I think that the real causes of our bad treatment in the summer of 1916 are easy to find. The Turkish commandant, Kiāzim Bey, wished to save himself all trouble and to protect himself from the remotest possibility of our escape. I think, also, he was in league with the villainous Ali and desired us, for private reasons, to deal wholly with this contractor and to be kept in ignorance of the current bazaar prices of eatables and goods. His conduct, at any rate, strengthened this suspicion. Be it remembered also that, as an uncivilised Turk of the old school, he could not understand our need of outdoor exercise. Lastly, his feelings, for some reason, were undoubtedly hostile towards us. I am convinced that on Bimbashi Kiāzim Bey himself should rest the whole responsibility for our criminal treatment on first arrival in Yozgad. Our remembrance of this treatment has undoubtedly been dimmed by Kiāzim Bey's efforts later on to treat us better when he was forced to recognise his responsibilities. I merely describe what took place at Yozgad in the summer of 1916.

When we reached Yozgad we naturally wished to write to our relatives at once to let them know where we were, and to ask for various necessaries; but we were disgusted to find that our correspondence was restricted to a weekly postcard of only four lines. It is difficult to write much

¹ N.B.—During the same festival in 1917 we had as much liberty as at other times.

on a postcard. At Angora we had also been allowed to write one postcard each, and these cards had been collected before we left that place, but few of them reached England.

Funds were running very low among us. On May 12th at Baghdad we had received our pay for the month of May at full Turkish Army rates. It was now early in July and we had not been paid for June, nor was there any news of pay being on the way. Cash was unobtainable in Yozgad except in exchange for cash, and it was imperative to keep what little gold or silver we had for our next journey by road—possibly at an early date, as we fondly hoped. The difficulty of paying for eatables and goods was solved subsequently by each small mess keeping an account like a “bridge score,” and buying articles in bulk for the mess, which were paid for in paper currency.

On July 3rd the good-natured little onbashi took pity on us and allowed us all to walk up and down for a couple of hours in the narrow lane between the two houses; but the commandant was furious when he heard of this, and slapped the onbashi's face, and we were ordered back again within our crowded houses. Colonel Harward then addressed a letter to the United States Ambassador at Constantinople, stating our case, but this letter the commandant refused to forward. In our crowded houses we tried to keep fit by doing Müller's exercises, and by walking up and down the landings, but as day succeeded day we grew pale and flabby as a result of our indoor life, and it remains a marvel that we had no epidemic of illness.

The contractor, Ali, announced that his charge for our messing would be 1 medjidieh per head per diem. As the full pay of a 2nd lieutenant is only 7 liras (35 medjidiehs) per month, this rate of messing was clearly impossible. Our “House Committee” of three senior officers then appealed to Kiāzim Bey to induce the contractor to charge a reasonable amount. The commandant sent as his reply the insulting message, “Eat less,” and made no effort to induce Ali to charge less—no doubt for reasons of his own.

Acting on our polite commandant's advice to eat less, we adopted a reduced menu, omitting all the more expensive items of diet, such as milk, vegetables, and other things, and allowing for meat at only one meal in the day.

The contractor then refused to agree to this, and the commandant informed us that Ali could not afford to supply food to us if we selected only his cheaper dishes ; or, to put it in the exact words used by the commandant in clause (1) of his " Rules for Prisoners " dated July 23rd, 1916, " Notwithstanding the moderate prices fixed by the commandant for the dishes, the prisoners, for economic reasons, are contenting themselves with one dish. In this case the contractor's expenses cannot be covered, and he wishes to break his contract and go." It is interesting to note that the *moderate prices fixed by the commandant on his own admission* gave Ali a profit of from 100 to 300 per cent., and as Colonel Chitty put it, " it appeared that officers were expected to feed so as to meet the profit and convenience of the contractor, irrespective of their means."

The commandant informed us that either we must accept Ali's charges and mess by contract, or we could send out four orderlies daily into the bazaar to buy our food, which we should then have to cook ; but that if we preferred the latter course, he (the commandant) would wash his hands of all responsibility for our messing if the bazaar scheme failed, nor could he guarantee that our paper money would be accepted in the bazaar. He also warned us that Ali would remove all his furniture.

It will be observed that this statement placed Ali in a position to make a ring against our purchasing orderlies in the bazaar—in which case we should starve, for we could not purchase with cash. As a result of this dispute, we got no breakfast on July 5th till after noon, when we received a few eggs and some bread. Finally, Ali agreed to continue his contract till the end of the month at 12 piastres per head per diem for a reduced scale of food.

Our life in close confinement in our houses in July 1916 was very dull. There were few books to read, so most of us tried to pass the weary hours in mending our ragged clothes, playing bridge or chess, or smoking and talking. Two or three people carved very creditable sets of chess men out of inferior wood, using ordinary pen-knives for the work. There was an epidemic of chess playing, but it did not last very long. The main object of all was to pass the time somehow. The weather was warm and fine, which made it all the more exasperating that we should be imprisoned all day in our houses ;

when, however, the wind blew from the east there were one or two fairly cold days, even in the month of July.

On July 12th, to our great joy, the English mail arrived. I got five postcards of very different dates, and others fared likewise or better. It seemed as if the post office at Constantinople must have a huge bin for all letters for prisoners, into which the mail-bags were emptied as they arrived, and that the despatching clerk treated this bin like a "penny dip," ladling out so many letters from it for despatch to Yozgad quite irrespective of their dates of arrival. Subsequently our letters arrived with greater regularity—twice a week, except in the depth of winter—but at first their arrival was very uncertain. A letter then took at least four weeks to reach Yozgad from England, and later on the time extended to four months or more. From India our letters reached us, if we were lucky, in two months, though they sometimes were six months on the journey. It was truly delightful on July 12th to get some news from home, for most of us had had no letters since those delivered to us by the Turks at Shumran camp outside Kut on May 3rd. Most of the postcards showed that our relatives were still in some anxiety about us, in spite of the telegram or letter despatched from Aleppo by the United States Consul saying that we were safe and well.

While on the subject of postal arrangements, I may say that throughout our time at Yozgad in 1916 the one absorbing topic of daily conversation—if I exclude the progress of the war and our chances of speedy release—was *parcels*. The receipt of parcels was an absolute matter of luck. Almost all of us wrote as soon as we could for a great variety of clothing, necessaries, and food. I do not mean an excessive quantity of these things, but enough to make us comfortable and presentable. On arrival in Yozgad many of us had little besides what we stood up in. Some of the parcels reached Yozgad from England within two months of despatch. Others took four months on the journey, others six months, others eight months or more, and some never arrived at all. Some officers received from twenty to thirty parcels in 1916; while others, for whom as many had been despatched, received only four or five. If the "penny dip" principle was in vogue at first at Constantinople in the case of letters, it was even more the fashion in the case of parcels.

No complaints by us in 1916 seemed to produce any lasting effect. We even proposed to pay from our own pockets for extra carts to bring our parcels from Angora, but without result. By December 1916 I calculate that between two and three thousand parcels were actually en route to us somewhere between England and Yozgad. Some fellows had four or five parcels despatched to them every week from England, and I think it would be fair to calculate that our total weekly consignment of parcels despatched from home amounted to, say, two hundred. I doubt if we received an average of thirty parcels a week at Yozgad in 1916, and for many weeks we received none at all. If our letters arrived with moderate punctuality, we generally got no parcels. On the other hand, if we got, say, as many as 100 parcels in one week (an average of only one per head), the letter post seemed to be paralysed by the activity in the parcels department. Good luck followed some men in the receipt of parcels, ill luck dogged others; it was a pure gamble. But gambling for bare necessities, such as boots and warm clothing, is singularly devoid of charm.

On Sunday, July 16th, while we were at breakfast in our crowded rooms, a few carts stopped in the street outside, and a number of British officers—some in uniform and others in mufti—alighted and came up to our upper house, and a few others who went to the senior officers' house. We had heard a couple of days before that some yeomanry officer-prisoners were about to arrive, and these were they. The mulāzim detailed the new arrivals to various rooms, and in our small room we had to accommodate two of the yeomanry, making a total of five people to live *and feed* in a space measuring 14 feet by 16 feet—an allowance of 65 square feet of floor-space per man. This, mark you, when we were imprisoned all day in our houses.

With the yeomanry officers were three engineer officers (Territorials), a chaplain, a medical officer, and a survey officer, all captured on the same day, and an aviator captured alone at another place. With these prisoners also were Colonel Chitty, Major Baines, and Captain Shakeshaft, who had accompanied Sir Charles Melliss as far as Afion Karahissar, and Colonel Chitty now became the senior officer of the prisoners of war at Yozgad.

The yeomanry and engineer officers and the chaplain

and medical and survey officers had been captured near the Suez Canal on April 23rd, 1916, six days before the fall of Kut, and the Royal Flying Corps officer (Lieutenant C. W. Hill) a few days later. Among these prisoners were thirteen officers of the Worcester Yeomanry—including Lieutenant-Colonel Hon. C. J. Coventry, well known in racing circles at home—and two officers of the Gloucester Yeomanry. The three engineer officers belonged to the Lowland Engineer Company of Territorials. The yeomanry officers belonged to the 1st Mounted Brigade attached to the 15th Army Corps in Egypt.

From what I gathered from these officers, the circumstances of their capture by the Turks were as follows: On the night of April 22nd/23rd, 1916, the 1st Mounted Brigade (Worcester, Gloucester, and Warwick Regiments) were occupying camps at Kathia (twenty-seven miles east of the Suez Canal), at Romani and Hamesa (four miles north and south respectively of Kathia), and at Ogheratina, four miles east of Kathia. The whole country was an undulating desert of sand, and the water obtainable from the wells was unfit for human consumption, so drinking-water had to be brought on camels from the Canal.

Early on April 23rd, 1916, 5,000 Turkish infantry and 1,000 Camel Corps Irregulars with twelve guns and thirteen machine guns advanced to attack the force at Kathia. The Turks overwhelmed the two squadrons of Worcesters and the Engineer Company at Ogheratina, and then, advancing on Kathia in a dense fog, they captured the remaining squadron of Worcesters and a squadron of Gloucesters after a stubborn fight lasting six hours, during which about half the British force was annihilated. Seven British officers were killed at Kathia and nine at Ogheratina. The survivors (twenty-one officers and 200 men) were marched across the desert via Bir-el-Abd to Maza on the coast, and thence via El Arish to Bir Saba (Beer-sheba), whence they proceeded by rail to Anatolia. The officers were diverted to both Jerusalem and Beirut to be displayed to the populace, but were well treated on the whole, though kept in close confinement for six weeks at Angora before they proceeded to Yozgad.

The experiences of the new arrivals afforded us much interesting information, for we were quite ignorant of the trend of events at the Suez Canal; and the fact that

the yeomanry and their companions were all men of other walks of life than our own in the piping times of peace added greatly to the variety of subjects discussed at much length in the long evenings of the winter months.

It was on July 20th that our commandant, Kiāzim Bey, notified us at last that we should be taken out for walks, under escort, in three batches, and that the first batch would go out that afternoon. This concession, it should be noted, was not granted till we had been *three weeks* in close confinement in our crowded houses, unable to take any exercise whatever except on one day during the whole period.

I was lucky enough to be included in the first batch of officers to go out. Thirty of us set forth after tea, with guards before, behind, and abreast of us. We marched up a steep street paved with cobbles, through the town, and past the large mosque into a market-square where were numerous small shops and a clock-tower. Thence we went along a metalled street till we passed a boys' school on our left and emerged on the eastern side of Yozgad. The inhabitants were much interested, and stared hard as we passed. I refer to the male inhabitants, for the females always shrank aside with their veils drawn closely around them, and cowered in any convenient doorway till the dangerous and brutal English had safely passed on their way. We marched along the Sivas road for a couple of hundred yards, and were then taken on to the hillside above the road and told to "sit down and play"! This was the Turkish idea of exercise. The Turks did not tell us what game we were expected to play. Perhaps "cat's cradles."

Some argument ensued, and the mulāzim was induced to take us on to more level ground and to extend his cordon of guards; and then the astonished inhabitants of Yozgad watched some of us playing leap-frog, while others varied the entertainment by running round within the circle of stolid Turkish sentries, who also observed us with mild surprise. At sunset we returned to our houses in the town, and so ended our first outing. The two remaining batches of officers went out on other days. After this we were allowed to stroll in the small lane between our houses at certain hours—the first concession we received from the commandant. Later we were per-

mitted to walk in the lane, or in the gardens of the houses, at any hour during the day; and walks abroad began to be of more frequent, though very uncertain, occurrence. It was not until the lame mulāzim Tassim was replaced by a mulāzim named Hassan, in September, that we went out for walks regularly. With Hassan Effendi we got many good walks up through the woods on the hill south of the town, and along the roads towards Angora or Kaisarie—walks, that is to say, of three or four miles. After our first walk abroad on July 20th, as many officers and orderlies as wished to do so were allowed to go out for a walk together, and we were no longer divided into batches, though still under the strict surveillance of our guards when outside our own domains.

The Turks still gave no sign of giving us the pay due to us, so most of our party sent cheques of £10 each to the United States Ambassador at Constantinople, for we had heard that the Embassy would cash at any rate one cheque for each of us up to that amount. Some of the yeomanry prisoners had already received money by this means. We naturally refused to pay our dues to the contractor, Ali, till the Turkish Government saw fit to give us our pay. In the meantime many officers were very low in funds, and some had practically no money at all. To be without money in Turkey is the worst disaster which can befall a person or a community. There is no mercy for the penniless.

To occupy our evenings something exciting but yet not "brainy" was necessary. Thoughts turned to gambling, and the result was the birth of the game of roulette in Yozgad. Each evening in either house a crowd of eager players surged round an improvised roulette table, staking weird tokens on lucky, and unlucky, colours and numbers. Any sort of relaxation from the deadly monotony of our existence was welcome, and roulette did its part in distracting our attention from our troubles. Extraordinary—and of course infallible—systems were evolved, and were only discarded after causing heavy loss to the enterprising inventors. The stakes were extremely small at first, but gradually rose as the novelty of the game wore off, yet they never exceeded reasonable limits, and cash payments were not required, so no harm was done. In the

upper house the craze for roulette continued at its height during August and September and then began to wane. By the end of November 1916 the roulette board of the upper house (a door taken off its hinges) lay practically unused. The game had had its day and had done good work; it was gathered to its forefathers, and poker reigned in its stead. In the senior officers' house, however, roulette kept its head above water for many months—possibly because the poker fiend did not take so strong a hold on the inmates of that dignified building.

The contractor, Ali, threw up his hand on August 2nd because he had not been paid; so, as usual, we starved for that morning, though we got some food in the afternoon. The commandant now allowed an officer and a few orderlies from each house to go daily to the bazaar to buy our food. Our cooking had to be done in our houses by ourselves and our untrained orderlies with insufficient wood, and for some time we had to feed sitting on our mattresses till we could make some furniture. Throughout our stay in Yozgad in 1916 we officers in the upper house had to assist our orderlies in the preparation of our meals. No doubt this gave us some useful occupation, but the work was very distasteful to most of us, and was not work which officer-prisoners of war should ever have to undertake. We were not given enough orderlies to do our cooking and our washing unassisted. For some time, indeed, most of their junior officers did their own washing, but when things had settled down a bit the orderlies as a rule washed the clothes.

In some of our messes the officers each took on a week's "cooking" in rotation; in others the duty lasted a fortnight; in others, again, a month. In my own mess we soon had a daily roster, and finally we adopted the weekly system. The "cooking" included merely the preparation of all puddings and the purchase of stores for the mess, for the orderlies prepared the meat and vegetables and cooked all the dishes. Duffs were favourite puddings, and many wonderful varieties were evolved. We had fig duffs, raisin duffs, apple duffs, honey duffs, and combinations of these, besides "bickmish" (treacle) duffs and other brands. When we had made ovens from kerosene-oil tins and mud and bricks, we had "bickmish" tarts, apple tarts, and other delicacies. In fact, by our own

exertions we came in time to do very well in the feeding line. The Turks gave us no assistance whatever.

As soon as Ali had gone, the prices at which we obtained our food from the bazaar were a revelation to us. We found that the contractor had been charging us three or four times the correct price for many things, and that though he had denied that any vegetables except cucumbers were on sale in the bazaar, a large assortment of vegetables was procurable. When we commenced to arrange for our own messing, the daily cost per head amounted to only 6 piastres instead of the 12 piastres paid to Ali for our reduced scale of food, and for this 6 piastres we got a sufficient supply of meat, eggs, potatoes and other vegetables, bread, and butter or honey occasionally. In fact, we lived comfortably at a cost of 1s. per head per diem. Flour could be purchased as an extra, and also wheat from which to make porridge; and raisins, figs, and other useful stuff could also be bought. The full villainy of Ali was exposed, and also the absolute incapacity of the commandant—taking the most charitable view of the case.

The commandant was induced to take action about August 12th to relieve in some degree the gross overcrowding of the officers in the upper house, where, since the arrival of the yeomanry, it had been necessary for officers to live and sleep even in the small passage-rooms connecting the two portions of the house. Some Turks were set to work to remove the Turkish sick from a house next to the senior officers' house which had been used as a hospital, and five days later, twenty-eight officers and six orderlies moved out of the upper house into the newly-allotted house, but they were only allowed to occupy the lower-floor rooms. The place had not been properly disinfected nor were the rooms over-clean, but the accommodation was good and there was a very large central room or lobby. Matters then became much more comfortable in our upper house, and in my own room we reverted to our original number of three occupants.

Soon after our arrival in Yozgad it became the custom for Moise, the interpreter, to bring the *Agence* telegrams of current war news for us to see after he had translated them from Turkish into French. This concession ceased, however, when the commandant became annoyed with us, and for some months we saw no more telegrams, though later in the year we were permitted to see them again,

The news in the *Agence* telegrams was, of course, very misleading, but one could gather something from the names of the places mentioned from time to time; and the continued absence of any mention of the progress of events in certain theatres of the war indicated to us that the Entente must there be successful.

Definite information, however, as to the victories of the Entente was what we required in the autumn of 1916—information which would give us some idea of the welfare of our country in the war, and our chances of a speedy release. Such information had to run the gauntlet of both British and Turkish censors, so it was not easy to obtain; but nevertheless we got some very cheering news from time to time, as I will soon explain, though I fear the news was not always very accurate.

We desired also to transmit news to England of our disgraceful treatment on arrival at Yozgad, so as to lead the British Government to force the Turkish Government to permit an enquiry to be held by neutral agents with a view to securing better treatment for us. The commandant would not pass any letter containing the smallest complaint, so some inventive people among us set to work to defeat that wily Oriental and to obtain and transmit news by means of cryptograms—and with considerable success, as will be seen. I will give a selection from the cryptograms sent to, and received from, England.

On August 3rd, 1916, 2nd Lieutenant E. H. Jones, R.G.A. (Volunteer Artillery Battery), who hails from the Principality, sent this surprising postcard to his home:

“Now Darllenwch:

“Send tea and tobacco, Eno’s, underclothes, needles, sugar, Antipon, tabloid ink, soap, Formamint, aspirin, cocoa, toffee, Oxo, razor, Yardley’s dental extract, matches, alum, nuts, dates, Euthymol, novels, quinine, uniform. I remain Yozgad for present.”

An innocent if somewhat eccentric missive, you will say, my reader. But wait and see. The word “darllenwch” is no term of endearment, but signifies “read” in Welsh; and the recipient of the postcard, reading the initial letters of the succeeding words, duly received the following message:

“*State unsatisfactory. Demand enquiry.*”

A most useful message to get safely through to England, and I believe that it found its way into the hands of Mr. Lloyd George himself.

The following reply arrived some later time in Yozgad :

“ Have sent parcels of following, Darllenwch dear :

“ Grape-nuts, oil, Virol, Eno’s, razor, nuts, malt, elastic, novels, tea, envelopes, quinine, underclothes, ink, reels, indiarubber, needles, games. Eryl now growing long and noisy. Daisy very energetic. Ruth yesterday saw Ted. Rode over. Nesta going Newnham. Orme Willows empty now. Emma married. I expect spend Christmas Oxford. Llandudno after. Papa says I’ll never go.”

This cheerful postcard informed us that our Government was enquiring into our treatment ; that England was very strong now ; and that her enemies were collapsing

The Turks never guessed, when they read the list of requirements of the “ mad English,” what this list meant. I am convinced that the improvement in our conditions of life at Yozgad may be traced largely to the postcard which Lieutenant Jones sent off early in August and supplemented later by other cryptograms, for the British Government then began to institute enquiries about Yozgad.

On October 26th, 1916, another cryptogram from Lieutenant Jones left Yozgad for home and duly arrived at its destination. It ran as follows :

“ As I cannot write to all myself, I want you to send Xmas greetings on my behalf to the following five : O. N. Imewn, R. O. Ombach, L. Lawr, C. Arreg, and H. E. B. Gwelu. Also if you know their address to, D’Onion-Marw, F. E. L. Pryfid, A. R. Fordd. The last I heard of poor D’Onion he was very ill and pitifully hard up.”

Now, all these initials and names form Welsh words, and this was the message :

“ Five of us in a small room with a stone floor and no bedsteads. The men are dying like flies on the road. The last I heard of the men (D’Onion) they were very ill and pitifully hard up.”

I hope that this message had the effect of ameliorating the hardships suffered by our rank and file at work on the roads and railways of the barren tablelands of Turkey-in-Asia.

Another officer, in writing to his people, concluded his letter as follows :

“ Love to Mama, to Timothy, to Niné, and all the boys.”

If the reader will take up his Bible and refer to 2 Timothy ii. 9, he will find a much exaggerated description of our early treatment at Yozgad. We suffered trouble certainly as evildoers might, but not “ unto bonds.”

Let me next turn to some interesting items of news which reached Yozgad from home. I select these :

“ Uncle G. Orringe has joined his friends in the north and they are proceeding to the Lake District. All is well with them.”

This comment on affairs in Mesopotamia was received in July 1916. We took it to mean that General Gorringe had effected a junction with the Russian force in Persia. Again, the cryptogram “ We have a new dog called Trafalgar, but not quite so good as the last,” conveyed news that the Battle of Jutland was at any rate considered as a victory for our fleet ; and later a postcard from one of our brother-officers at Kastamuni announced, “ Authentic Skagers 3G. Dreads 6 btl. crs., &c., gone west,” thus telling us that it was authentic that the Germans had lost three Dreadnoughts and six battle-cruisers and other boats in the naval fight, though I think the figures were not quite correct. We also heard that “ Hibernia was quite well again,” so we knew that the Irish troubles were past.

Several of the many cryptograms received by Captain C. B. Munday, 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, were interesting. In reply to a postcard of his saying :

“ I hear you have bought a sweet little Persian cat called Smuts. Let me know if he has won the prize,”

the answer, written later in September 1916, was :

“ My Persian cat taken all prizes east. Now hope he will finish off champion in the west.”

We took this to mean that General Smuts and his South Africans had captured a large part, if not all, of German East Africa, but the meaning of "the west" was doubtful.

Take this example, written in September 1916 in England :

"I went to town and saw the Night Jars. They had a very warm reception. What a family! Ten in all. I saw them off in the morning. Mrs. N. and 3 of the boys are remaining over here for their health. Uncle Tommy will look after them. I heard the other day that others of the family had come back to stop."

We gathered from this that ten Zeppelins had raided London under heavy fire, and that four had been destroyed or captured at the time, and others later.

One last example of the cryptograms received. The following was written in England on December 4th, 1916 :

"Mr. Stoplook has been tackled by Fat George and now Os In Lex is top dog. Great changes in C.B.'s stable. Studgroom has been made trainer, and D.B. to studgroom. We expect lots of winners. S. T. M. Roller wants lots of pushing. He is very strong but slow, and does his best. Rue took a bad toss when he started riding, but will soon be out again."

We understood from this racy postcard that Mr. Lloyd George had replaced Mr. Asquith (N.B. "Stoplook" means "wait and see"), and that Mr. Bonar Law (Os In Lex) was then in power; that there had been great changes in our Admiralty (C.B. is Charlie Beresford), where "studgroom" Jellicoe had been made First Sea Lord (trainer), and that Admiral Sir David Beatty had taken over the command of the Grand Fleet in the North Sea, and great things were expected; that Russia (the steam-roller) was strong and painstaking, but was slow and required much assistance or "pushing"; that the Rumanian Army would soon be in the field again, in spite of its first grave defeat.

There were many other amusing and instructive cryptograms sent to us by relatives and friends, but space does not permit me to include them. Those I have given are fair specimens of the cryptograms which successfully ran the gauntlet of the censors,

A few parcels arrived from England on August 21st, and were a source of great excitement to the lucky recipients and of much envy to their less fortunate friends. We were glad to know that it was possible for parcels to reach us safely at Yozgad.

A craze for carpentry soon developed among us. We could get empty packing-cases from the bazaar which had contained tobacco. These boxes often bore the painted inscription "R. O. T." (Régie Ottoman Turquie), and the three letters aptly described the wood of which the boxes were made. We dismantled the boxes and used the material to make ourselves shelves, tables, chairs, beds, small boxes, photo-frames, and a thousand-and-one other things. Throughout the winter months carpentry was in full swing. It helped to pass the time, besides providing us with healthy exercise on wet days and making our rooms comfortable. The necessary tools were bought from the bazaar, and though of wretched quality, they were good enough for the work we usually turned out. Our houses were regular workshops during the mornings; indeed, on wet days the din was truly deafening on the landings. Very comfortable armchairs were produced by our more expert carpenters, and were extensively copied by the less ambitious.

September 8th was a red-letter day. For the first time since May 12th, 1916, we received our pay from the Turkish Government. But alas! the scale was no longer that on which we had been paid at Baghdad. The Turks announced that on the new scale colonels would receive 15 liras a month, lieutenant-colonels 10 liras, majors 8 liras, and all other officers 7 liras. The pay of the junior ranks was equivalent to 4s. 6d. per day, which was said to be the sum allowed to such officer-prisoners in other countries. But whereas, on this reduced scale of pay, the Turkish Government should have provided us with quarters, fuel, and lighting free of charge, we had to pay all such necessaries ourselves in 1916, though in 1917 the charge for rent ceased.

The problem of how to pass the evenings in our upper house had been solved, at any rate for a time, by the craze for roulette, but already our Monte Carlo experts were getting tired of playing this game night after night. Captain Tomlinson, R.E., then proposed that officers should be asked to give lectures on two nights in the

week, and he got a long list of volunteers who were prepared to oblige the remainder by displaying their knowledge (or imagination) of certain subjects which they selected. The lectures lasted till the end of the year, and even continued well into 1917. They proved to be a great success, for we had a variety of professions and occupations among the inmates of the upper house. On the whole, the most popular lectures were those dealing with non-military subjects. We had all had enough of war.

I cannot enumerate all the subjects of these after-dinner lectures, but if I mention that lectures were delivered on artillery, aeroplanes, torpedoes, colour photography, law, tea planting, sailing ships, minting of coins, cow-punching, submarine mining, police work in Burmah, sleeping sickness, the geological survey of Egypt, and wireless telegraphy, the reader will understand that at any rate we had great variety in our lectures; and considering the lack of all books of reference, the quality was good. Twice a week one of our upper landings was packed with officers and orderlies, while the anxious lecturer poured forth his wisdom, and showed his diagrams, to an appreciative audience hidden from him in a cloud of Turkish tobacco-smoke, which the dim rays from a couple of small oil lamps could scarcely pierce.

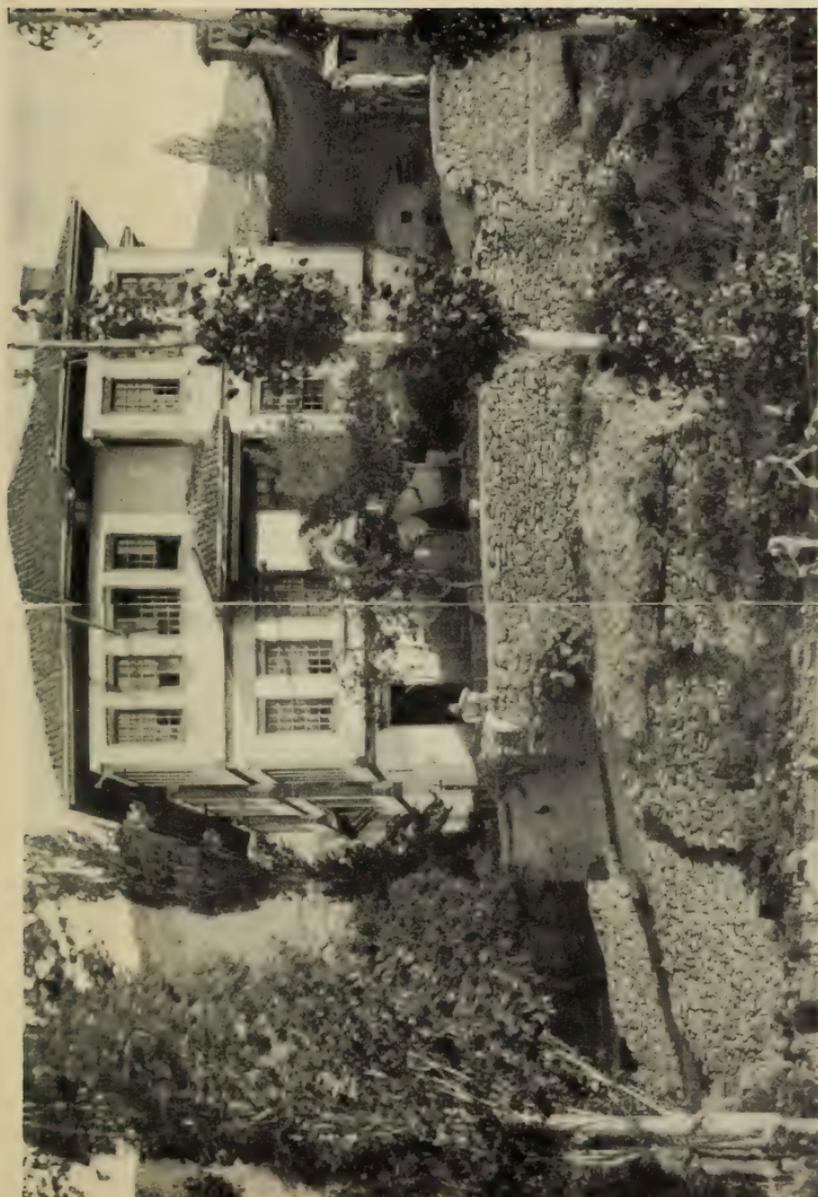
At the end of July every officer was given 3 liras, sent from the U.S. Embassy, and thereafter we received this amount with fair regularity month by month. The sum was increased to 5 liras in 1917, and later again it finally reached the amount of 15 liras. This regular remittance of 3 liras, together with our monthly pay of 7 liras (or more), sufficed in most cases to meet all ordinary expenses; but if we had been unable to draw on our private accounts by cheque during the early months of our imprisonment we could not have paid for our food, since our pay from Turkish sources was issued, during 1916, some months in arrear.

In our upper house we started a store in one of the lower rooms, the storekeeper being Captain M. J. Dinwiddy, R.W. Kent Regiment. We kept a reserve stock of flour, vegetables, and other necessaries in the store-room, which were obtained by our storekeeper through the Turkish contractor, and our store was open to purchasers from the various messes at fixed hours on six days in the

week. Behind the counter, Dinwiddy, in a large apron, drove a thriving trade, and weighed out flour, sugar, "bickmish," wheat, and other extras as to the manner born, by means of a pair of home-made scales. Each mess kept an account with the storekeeper, so that cash payments were unnecessary, and the accounts could be adjusted periodically by paying in Turkish notes. Supplies of bread, meat, eggs, and vegetables were sent daily to our house by the contractor, and were put into our store. Three officers were on duty daily for the issue of these rations by weight to the different messes of the upper and lower houses, and another officer directed the work and kept the account of the rations. By this arrangement the uncertainty of our food-supply was abolished, and we soon began to get our supplies regularly and to obtain a good variety of eatables. We could also purchase from our store such things as notepaper, pens, tobacco, cigarettes, matches, wine, etc., and could order anything obtainable in Yozgad if the store did not stock it.

In the middle of September one of our number got a postcard from a friend in the 2nd Echelon of Kut prisoners at Kastamuni (see Map No. 9), from which we gathered that the treatment of our officers at that place was excellent as compared with ours—in fact, we heard later that some Germans at Kastamuni had objected because *the prisoners dined too often with the commandant*. We envied our fellow-prisoners at Kastamuni their good-natured commandant. Our own Turkish guards at Yozgad admitted that our commandant, Kiāzim Bey, was "choke fenna" (very bad), and in this at that time they were quite right. It was our misfortune to be under such a man.

What had once been a small vegetable garden, next the lane and below the upper house, was now bare of vegetation and was used by us as an exercise-ground. At the beginning of October hockey became the rage in this restricted space, only 25 yards long. The best game resulted with four players a-side—two forwards, a half-back, and a back. The sticks we surreptitiously cut from fruit trees in our gardens, amid much shouting of "yussuk" from the Turkish guards if they happened to catch a glimpse of the offender, and the balls were made from any available material. The games of hockey were most amusing to watch, and the commandant's two



UPPER HOUSE FOR PRISONERS AT YOZGAD
Photographed with a camera made secretly by prisoners.

small boys, in sailor suits and fezzes, often came to see eight perspiring British officers charging against the high stone walls around the ground, or trying to rout the nondescript ball out of heaps of débris so as to centre for a shot at goal. The exercise was good, but several players developed blood-poisoning of a rather virulent type from germs in the soil introduced into their blood through abrasions.

The mulâzim took us, on October 9th, to a large field in the valley east of the town, and there a game of "Soccer" was started with a football kindly sent us by the U.S. Embassy. We also played cricket in this field with walking-sticks for stumps and other sticks for bats. The game was amusing but hardly scientific, though it gave us the exercise which we needed. Frock-coated Turks from the town would occasionally stroll up close to the field to watch the English play their national games and to wonder at such waste of energy from the Ottoman point of view.

To help to pass the time we started libraries in each of the three houses which we occupied, and books were interchanged periodically between them. Many fellows had three or four novels, while some had none, so that by clubbing together our books every one could get one volume, and the scheme proved a great success. Gradually books arrived in parcels from home and were added to the libraries by the owners, and finally all small libraries were combined in one large one. In time we accumulated an extensive assortment of novels, including many really well-written books.

The postal regulation regarding books sent to prisoners of war was that books could only be sent to us direct from a publisher, but those despatched previous to the introduction of this rule were given to us after being read by the interpreter, who acted as our local censor. Books sent direct from a publisher were supposed to be issued to us at once without censoring, for they could not contain any message. The commandant at Yozgad, however, took it upon himself to ignore this regulation, and kept all novels for perusal by the interpreter, whether they came direct from a publisher or otherwise. This was extremely annoying, and the interpreter quite saw the absurdity of the practice, and was willing after a time to allow us to pocket the novels if the mulâzim or the "staff

officer" were absent when the parcels were opened. For this Mr. Moise duly received his reward in the form of chocolate or biscuits from our parcels. A certain number of novels had to be kept to display to the commandant, but many were smuggled safely through, and old ones were sometimes put into the office in exchange for new ones which had just arrived, so as to make a good display for Kiāzim Bey. We sent home a long list of technical books which we would like from the British Board of Education which offered to supply such works free of charge to prisoners of war, but none of these volumes reached us during 1916.

The occupants of all three houses began to purchase geese, turkeys, and fowls about this time in anticipation of Christmas festivities. The courtyards and gardens of our houses resounded with familiar farmyard sounds. Dogs also began to make their appearance—not as food for the hungry, but as pets of our orderlies, who had all the British soldier's devotion to the canine race in any form or shape. A pack of small and woolly puppies of a local breed, varied by other small mongrels, grew both in numbers and in size in quite an alarming manner. Some of the puppies developed into fine strong dogs of fawn colour with black muzzles, unlike any English breed, but in character rather resembling the "piedog" of India.

On October 23rd sixty large parcels of warm clothing arrived from the U.S. Embassy at Constantinople, and we received other large consignments of clothing and necessaries at later dates. This warm clothing was a god-send to us. Many of us had only thin khaki drill suits and practically no underclothing. We should indeed have fared badly in the bitter cold of winter but for the kindness of our American friends. Lounge suits of tweed cloth, greatcoats, thick vests, pants, socks, flannel shirts, boots, shoes, caps, and ties and other useful things were duly distributed amongst us. The quality of the articles was hardly up to British standard, but we were extremely grateful for them nevertheless.

The appearance of most fellows when rigged out in their ready-made Embassy suits was extremely comic. Lengthy officers in suits made for short fat men, and small officers in suits made for big fat men, produced a troupe suitable for a turn at a music-hall. All the suits seemed to be made for extremely fat men, and most of

us were by no means fat. Ribald remarks were plentiful, and allusions to "the man who has called about the gas-meter, miss," and similar witticisms arose on all sides. Truly the clothes make the man. We were given suits to fit us as far as possible, but I doubt if our relatives would have cared to be seen with us walking down a street in England in our smart "ready-mades" and our resplendent caps and ties. Some fellows looked like needy plumbers, others like Parisian loafers, and others again like discharged stokers; and those few who still contrived to appear comparatively smart were the men who, whatever they wore, would never seem otherwise than British officers. My own suit was designed for a big fat man with short legs, but by sacrificing my waistcoat to lengthen my trousers I contrived to produce a suit which did good service for a very long time.

Following on a spell of warm weather at the end of October, we got some cold and wet days when greatcoats and thick clothes were necessary. Awful rumours had reached us of the rigours of the winter in Yozgad, and we were advised by the commandant to buy up all the firewood we could get, and to lay in a very large stock, so this we proceeded to do in October 1916. On most days a certain number of officers were detailed as a "wood fatigue," and stored the cartloads or donkey-loads of wood in the cellars beneath our houses after sawing the wood into short lengths. The storing of the wood was good exercise but very tedious work, and the junior officers alone spent £276 on firewood. If we had been unable to produce this sum from our own private means we should not have been able to purchase the wood necessary for the warming of our rooms and for cooking, during the winter, for the Turks did not supply us with any firewood.

While on the subject of the rumoured hardships of the winter months at Yozgad, I should like to say that even supposing the winter of 1916-17 was an exceptionally mild one—which I do not believe to be the case—the Turks' fondness for exaggeration displayed itself in a marked degree in their description of its approaching terrors. We were told that the winter months were so cold that most of the population left the town and journeyed to warmer districts; that the snow lay 6 or even 8 feet deep in the town for two or three months; that Yozgad was completely

cut off from the outer world for long periods ; that absolutely no eatables except bread and inferior meat could be obtained during the winter ; and that no firewood could be purchased after November 15th. These were all lies. We could not be aware, however, in the autumn of 1916 that we were being deceived, and Major Baines, I.M.S. (our senior medical officer), consequently addressed a strongly worded letter to the Turkish authorities requesting that we should be moved from Yozgad to a more temperate climate, or otherwise he would not be responsible for our health.

As a matter of fact, the winter months in Yozgad were certainly colder than those in England, and we had bitter east winds at intervals, but the climate was in no sense one of which even an Anglo-Indian need have been afraid, provided that there were adequate arrangements for warming his room, and that he had plenty of warm clothes. We anticipated an Arctic winter, when we should have to lie in sleeping-bags to get warm and should be forced to live on starvation diet. Instead of this, we got through the winter very comfortably, and there was little sickness. The purpose of the mass of false information given us by the Turks is difficult to understand. Perhaps it was due simply to the Oriental's love of exaggeration, or possibly the commandant wished to frighten us into laying in ample stocks of wood and food so as to save himself any possible trouble later on. As things turned out, we found that food was plentiful though expensive in the winter ; that Yozgad was never cut off from the outer world ; that the snow in the town never exceeded about a foot in depth except in drifts ; that none of the population left the town ; and that firewood could be purchased easily up to the end of the year.

One morning at the end of October we were surprised to see a column of some 200 prisoners of war marching up the street past our house. The prisoners turned out to be Russians on their way from Sivas to Angora. They had been at Sivas some time, for a few of our orderlies who had been captured in Gallipoli and had also been prisoners of war at Sivas recognised some of them. We waved to them from our windows and sang the Russian national anthem, much to their delight. I am afraid the Russian rank-and-file prisoners in Turkey were subjected to much harsh treatment, for the Turk hates

the Russian with a bitter hatred. At Sivas the Russians were kicked and beaten continually by the Turkish soldiery, but our own men were not so treated, partly because the Turk has no natural enmity towards the British, and also because our soldiers were wont to retaliate, regardless of the possible results to themselves, while the dull and patient Russians submitted meekly to any ill-usage at the hands of their captors.

News of the progress of events continued to reach us occasionally by means of cryptograms. For instance, at the end of October a postcard dated September 27th gave the curious announcement, "100,000 Poloni in a fortnight," from which we gathered that 100,000 Germans and Austrians had been captured in a fortnight. It was most satisfactory to see in the *Agence* telegrams that our country was taking a strong line in the treatment of the pro-German party in Greece, which figured, of course, in the telegrams as a sacrifice to the British Lion.

November 1916 in Yozgad opened with some cloudy days. On November 6th we found there had been a slight frost during the preceding night—our first frost in Yozgad. During the month we had a succession of fairly cold snaps, though there was no snow. Most of us felt the cold very much, for we had no stoves in our rooms, although the commandant had promised to supply them. On some days it was impossible to keep warm except by taking short walks at frequent intervals in the garden, and it was not until the beginning of December that we obtained the necessary stoves for warming our houses, and then at our own expense.

Our commandant, Kiāzim Bey, actually paid a personal visit to all our houses early in November, inspecting broken window-panes and other such damage. This was most unusual, and we tried to guess the cause of such energy. The mulāzim became for the time being a sanitary enthusiast, and objected to dead leaves lying on the ground and to a few cobwebs in our rooms. Encouraged by this energy, one of our number remarked on the foul smell which entered his room frequently during the day through his open window. This, however, did not appeal to the mulāzim. A smell cannot be seen. The officer was merely told that if he objected to the smell he had better *keep his window shut!* In due course the sudden burst of energy on the part of our Turkish staff was

explained—a Government sanitary inspector from Constantinople was about to visit us. The inspector, one Jeosit Bey, inspected our houses and gardens about November 22nd, listened politely to our complaints, made a few suggestions, and then went his way. Our local Turkish staff then ceased from troubling. The inspection was over. Spiders could spin their webs and trees could drop their leaves without interference from the Ottoman officials.

The local dentist—a funny little Armenian—had been ministering to our dental wants for a few weeks and proved of some benefit to a few sufferers, but his methods were extremely crude and his work not above suspicion. While boring into a tooth of mine, he turned to the Turkish guard who watched operations, and engaged him in a spirited discussion, meanwhile keeping his drill well pressed home in the cavity of my offending tooth. He reached the nerve and I reached the end of my patience at precisely the same moment.

Though our lectures in the upper house continued with regularity, we thought that it would lend variety to our evenings if one of the two lectures delivered each week was replaced by a debate. A Debating Society was therefore formed, and those best versed in the conduct of such societies arranged a list of subjects for our weekly debates. The Debating Society—consisting of practically all the occupants of our house—first assembled on November 12th, and thereafter once a week for nearly three months. A few of the speakers had previous experience of debate, but most had not, and the language of the majority, though usually forcible, was at first hardly parliamentary. Their metaphors were often somewhat mixed—witness the budding orator who alluded to “a dog in the manger kicking against the pricks”—but it was noticeable that the speeches improved very much as the debates continued.

Among the subjects of debate in 1916 I may mention the following: that the modern stage is degenerate, and that this is a sign of the degeneracy of the times (November 17th); that all officers of the Regular Army should always wear uniform (November 24th); that the pre-war condition of the Naval and Military Forces (*i.e.* a large Navy and a small highly-trained Army) is a sufficient safeguard for the Empire (December 15th); and that

Temperance Reform is not to be attained through overstringency of the Licensing Laws (December 29th). I must not omit to mention an amusing evening, known as a "Hat Night," when the names of all present were put into one hat, and a lot of subjects into another. Each member, as his name was drawn, was expected to speak for at least two minutes on a subject drawn at the same time from the second hat. Roars of laughter greeted the efforts of various officers to deal adequately with such topics as "Babies," "Flappers," "Infant Feeding," and "The Use and Abuse of Hair Oil"; and the speaker who drew "The Greatest Benefactor of the Age" strongly upheld the claims of Mr. Keating of powder fame. This amusing debate took place on Christmas Eve.

Lieutenant A. V. Holyoake, of the Worcester Yeomanry (a writer of short stories under the *nom de plume* of Arthur Valentine), wrote, with the assistance of Captain L. H. G. Dorling, R.F.A., an amusing pantomime entitled *The Fair Maiden of Yozgad*, and rehearsals were in progress late in October. Holyoake himself played the part of the beautiful damsel, and the part of the hero (Captain Vere de Vere) was played by Captain C. A. Bignell, 4th P.A.V. Rajputs.

Unhappily, in the middle of November, Bignell became seriously ill with a septic knee, and the rehearsals for the pantomime ceased. In a few days Bignell was pronounced dangerously ill, in spite of a successful operation on his knee, and it seemed that he was suffering from acute blood-poisoning. Everything possible was done to save his life. Some of his brother-officers nursed him night and day, but alas! to no purpose, for he passed away early on November 21st, to the great grief of us all. He was an extremely popular fellow, handsome, witty, and cheerful, and his sad death threw a gloom over our little community for some time. He was buried in the Armenian cemetery near the Angora Road in the presence of us all, and made his last journey on earth under the flag of his country. A suitable tombstone was erected over his grave by his brother-officers in Yozgad.

Our senior officers had repeatedly pointed out to the commandant that they were disgracefully overcrowded in the house below ours, and at last Kiāzīm Bey arranged to place an additional house at their disposal—perhaps as a result of the visit of the Government sanitary in-

spector. On November 20th eight senior officers (mostly colonels), including Colonel W. W. Chitty, moved into a well-built house farther up the street, where they had plenty of room and could live in moderate comfort. This move reduced the overcrowding in the senior officers' house.

A few houses up our street lived a French family of the name of Garus. Monsieur Garus was a civil engineer who had been employed on the Samsūn-Sivas road. The family consisted of father, mother, three grown-up daughters, two sons, and two small daughters, by name Marie Thérèse and Poulette, aged eleven and eight years respectively. In November the two little girls were allowed to come to see us at times, and even had tea once or twice with Captain Tomlinson, R.E., who was their particular friend. They were pretty little things, always neatly dressed, and they prattled away merrily in French to our best French scholars. When Kiāzim Bey, however, found that we had become friendly with these children, he issued an order that they were never to be allowed to talk to us, and we saw very little more of them. Apparently there was an order that prisoners were not to be allowed to converse with outsiders, and great care was always taken that we should never talk to the elder members of the Garus family. We heard that before the family left Samsūn, about June 1916, the Russians frequently bombarded the place—presumably from their warships. The family was given less than twenty-four hours' notice to leave, and had to come by road to Yozgad in a few carriages with scarcely any kit. Marie Thérèse once told us that there was a scheme on foot to move all officer-prisoners from Turkey to Switzerland. Doubtless this was the beginning of the proposal of exchange of prisoners of which we heard later. Unfortunately for us, nothing came of it. There were other civil prisoners interned in Yozgad and living in houses near us, but we seldom saw them.

We had frequently asked for stoves to warm our rooms, and in the early days of December we were able to purchase a large number of these useful articles, and proceeded forthwith to fit them in almost every room occupied by officers or orderlies. The stoves were of very light sheet-iron and were made to burn wood. They gave out a great amount of heat for the fuel they consumed. We led the

stove-pipes, as a rule, through the upper portions of the most convenient windows. A daily ration of wood was issued for each stove, and most people had already laid in a private store of wood and charcoal—the latter of the greatest value in lighting the stoves. The luxury of living in a warm room, and of being able to get hot water whenever required, was very great. The stoves smoked horribly at times if the wind blew from the wrong quarter, yet we put up with this discomfort willingly in exchange for the warmth and comfort of our rooms, despite their thin walls and numerous windows.

Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. C. J. Coventry, of the Worcester Yeomanry, became ill early in November, and gradually got worse till, in the latter days of that month, he was dangerously ill. His case was diagnosed as one of typhus. The disease is carried, I believe, by a certain species of bug by which he had unfortunately been bitten, for it seems that this insect flourishes in the Turkish winter. There is no doubt that the insanitary and overcrowded house in which Colonel Coventry lived was the cause of his contracting the disease. He very nearly died in November; in fact, at one time he had to have an injection of caffeine hourly to prevent collapse. But, owing to his excellent constitution and the careful nursing of our doctors and our two assistant surgeons, he pulled through, and by the end of the year could leave his room at times for a little exercise.

News of the disastrous commencement of Rumania's operations against the Central Powers had reached us early in December, but no great attention was paid to these rumours till, on December 6th, we heard definitely that Bucharest had surrendered to the 9th German Army Corps and other troops under the command of General von Mackensen. This was certainly discouraging, for we expected much from the Rumanian Army. The boys of the local Turkish school passed in procession through the streets of Yozgad, headed by a small band and bearing the national flag of Turkey. They halted for a time outside our houses, to impress on us, I suppose, the recent victory of our enemies; but we paid no attention, and the little Turks, in baggy coats and trousers and red fezzes, soon departed shrilly singing their national chants.

We were never subjected to any unpleasantness from the populace of Yozgad, partly, I think, because they felt

no great enmity towards us, and partly because they knew that any hostile demonstration would bring down savage punishment on the offender's head from our guards. The Turks live in a reign of terror. Every man is a spy upon his neighbour, and every inferior is a spy upon his superior. All are liable to punishment—cruel and savage punishment—on the smallest pretext. Bribery and corruption, suspicion and terror, rule the land. Such is modern Turkey.

On December 11th, 1916, two Swiss representatives of the Geneva Red Cross Society, accompanied by a Turkish doctor, arrived by motor in Yozgad and inspected all our houses. The names of the Swiss gentlemen were Monsieur Albert Boissier and Monsieur Fischer (the latter a doctor). The cause of their visit did not transpire, but we suspected that it had been arranged by the British Government as a result of our complaints. All our grievances were duly laid before the representatives, much to the disgust of Kiāzim Bey. The two Swiss gentlemen said that they could take no action with regard to our past bad treatment except to talk seriously to our commandant, though they would report anything objectionable which they could see themselves. They photographed groups of us outside our houses, and then took their leave, and went on, I believe, to Sivas on the following day. Their visit had a very beneficial effect on Commandant Kiāzim Bey, who recognised now that he must not ignore the existence of his prisoners if he wished to escape censure.

The pantomime, which had been postponed on account of the death of poor Bignell, again claimed the attention of our theatrical talent in December, and rehearsals recommenced in the second week of that month. The part of "Vere de Vere" was taken by Captain K. F. Freeland, R.G.A., whose previous rôle of "Good Fairy" then devolved on 2nd Lieutenant E. H. Jones. In October I had bought a small violin and bow (about three-quarter size) for the huge sum of 60 piastres—or, say, 10s.—and this noble instrument, on which I struggled with the intricacies of the various songs, formed our orchestra. The pantomime bore the attractive title of *The Fair Maiden of Yozgad*, as I have already mentioned, and it dealt in no flattering manner with the supposed failings of our Turkish staff and their friends, so that the strictest

secrecy had to be maintained to prevent the performance being witnessed by them.

After the Turks had made their evening round on December 16th, we rapidly arranged a stage on one of the landings of the upper house, and the piece was performed before a most appreciative audience of officers and orderlies of the upper house packed like sardines into the limited space. The pantomime lasted two and a half hours and went with a swing. To 2nd Lieutenant A. V. Holyoake, of the Worcester Yeomanry, belongs the credit of putting on the boards a most amusing show, in addition to writing most of the dialogue or "book." He was ably assisted by Captain Dorling, R.F.A., who wrote the words of many of the songs.

The plot of the pantomime (for a plot there was) may be said to deal with the fortunes of the lovely Saba, for whose hand the Turkish interpreter is a suitor, favoured by Saba's father (the contractor Ali) in consideration of the sum of "liras three." But the charming Saba inclines towards the gay deceiver Captain Percy Vere de Vere (a prisoner of war), who presses his attentions on her. At last, when peace is declared, matters reach a climax, and de Vere is forced to tell Saba that he cannot take her with him to England as he is already a much married man; so the beautiful Saba thereupon accepts the interpreter. *Voilà tout!* The costumes were screamingly funny and the dialogue quite witty, but unfortunately space will not admit of a further description of this the first pantomime performed in Yozgad.

The *Agence* telegrams of December 18th, 1916, had a good deal on the subject of peace proposals by Germany, which was pleasant reading, for it was easy to understand from this that all was not well with the Fatherland of the Huns. The telegrams had begun to give absurdly little news of fighting of any importance. The advance of the German forces in the Dobrudja area of unfortunate Rumania was always described, but the other news usually ran somewhat as follows: "At Falahiyeh in Mesopotamia a company of British infantry attacked our outposts, but was repulsed. On the Caucasus right wing we captured an enemy's trench." Other trivial, and probably untrue, details of this sort formed the padding to the Dobrudja operations. Very rarely was there definite news of the progress of the serious struggle either in France

or Russia, except the mention of occasional small incidents, when our Allies were, of course, invariably repulsed. The great advance of the Russians under Brusiloff in Galicia was never mentioned. Very fortunately we had one excellent map of Europe and Asia Minor, bought by Captain Tomlinson when we were at Aleppo, and by means of this German map we were able at times to form some idea of the positions of the rival armies.

Christmas Day was fast approaching. Every house had its flock of turkeys and geese living a short life but a merry one while it lasted. At length the auspicious day arrived, and we all regaled ourselves on our best tinned food and other luxuries, and every mess sat down in the evening to an excellent dinner of turkey and plum-pudding; the latter sometimes English but more often Yozgadish. In the morning our chaplain held the usual services in the large room of the lower house. At Morning Prayer there was a large congregation, who joined heartily in the well-known Christmas hymns, and the altar was draped with a Union Jack made by some of our senior officers.

The event of the day was a concert in the lower house, to which we invited all the Turkish staff. We who lived in the other houses were given special permission by the commandant to leave our houses after dark, instead of being locked in at about 8.30 p.m., which was the usual custom. The concert was a long one. It included over twenty items and was a great success, though some noisy spirits at the back of the large room spoiled to some extent the enjoyment of those in the stalls. The *mulāzim* and the *yuzbashi* (*alias* "Sambo," the coon staff officer) were present, and the latter actually treated us to a Turkish song before leaving—greatly to our amusement, in spite of the excruciating sounds he produced. The interpreter, of course, was there also, and busily translated for the Turkish officers so long as they remained capable of understanding him, which was not very long on account of the powerful effect of the *raki*, which they drank freely. It was very near daylight before the last straggler left the lower house for his own snug quarters elsewhere, and there were not many early risers on Boxing Day, 1916.

I must not omit to mention the many musical evenings in which we indulged on one of the upper landings of our upper house, when my little fiddle was in request as "or-

chestra." The proceedings usually opened with violin selections which I could remember, such as portions of *Il Trovatore*, *Rigoletto*, Henry VIII Dances, Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*, etc., and then progressed to sentimental songs with violin accompaniment, and wound up with lighter music, such as comic songs and coon songs, in which all joined with much gusto. Many a cheerful evening did we pass thus on a crowded landing thick with tobacco-smoke. It was a pity we had no piano, but the cost of hiring one was almost prohibitive, and we had no very brilliant pianist amongst us.

For some time the weather had been fairly fine, though we had a little rain on Christmas night, and there had been no hard frosts or snow. But on December 29th the wind veered to the east, and we awoke in the morning to find the ground, trees, and houses white with snow, which was still falling fast—the first snow which some of us had experienced for several years. The bare branches of the fruit trees around our houses glistened white in the early morning light and the scene was a typical Christmas one, spoilt only by the scarred trunks of the poplars around us, which the vandal Turks of our guard had stripped of most of their branches for use as firewood. A furious snowball fight soon started between the occupants of the upper and lower houses; and the mulāzim, who arrived later, actually led a detachment of his guards into the thick of it, where they performed prodigies of valour. The cold was bitter, but the exercise was sufficient to keep every one warm.

The last days of the momentous year 1916 ended with Yozgad still under snow, but with us, prisoners of war, at last fairly snug and comfortable in well-warmed rooms furnished with chairs and tables of sound if crude design. We had even a room in our upper house, warmed by a stove, in which we could dry our clothes after they had been washed. Our food was plentiful, though not of the best quality. White bread, wheat porridge, meat, vegetables, honey, apples, figs, prunes, dried apricots, raisins, flour, sugar, and eggs served to keep us fit and even fat, and cost remarkably little. There was hardly any illness, and we should have been happy were it not for the terrible monotony of our life, the uncertainty of the arrival of our letters and parcels, and, above all, the loss of that inestimable boon—freedom. Only those who have suffered

imprisonment for a long period can know what loss of liberty means.

In our upper house at Yozgad, on the last evening of the year 1916, we assembled on one of the landings and made the place ring with song after song. And when midnight arrived and the hour had been duly struck on a large tin basin, I took my place on a chair, fiddle in hand, and played "Auld lang syne," while a great ring of officers circled round me with linked hands, and joined with such vigour in the time-honoured chorus that the sleepy Turks around must have thought that their captives had at last broken loose and were wrecking the house.

Far from our native land, cut off from all reliable news of the outer world, and with little prospect of a speedy release in spite of many optimistic letters, we yet looked forward with confidence and hope to the year 1917 then commencing; nor did we desire a speedy release from our captivity unless it heralded the complete victory of England and her Allies over their foes.

CHAPTER XXIII

EXPERIENCES AS PRISONERS OF WAR IN 1917 AND 1918

THE months of January and February 1917 at Yozgad were extremely cold. The greater number of the prisoners of war in our camp had come from Mesopotamia, and were unaccustomed to the hardships caused by temperatures in the region of zero Fahrenheit. If our houses had had well-fitting doors and windows, thick walls, and good fireplaces, thirty degrees of frost at night would have had no terrors for us; but, living as we did in flimsy structures with walls six inches thick and with cracks around every window through which the icy east wind whistled and the snow drifted, we found our existence by no means a happy one.

Yet, if we suffered at times from the rigours of the Yozgad winter, we enjoyed at any rate some of the winter sports which the snow and ice made possible. Every one who prided himself on a rudimentary notion of carpentry turned his hand to the manufacture of a "luge" or a toboggan of some sort, and many were the designs and wonderful the names bestowed on the finished articles. Each afternoon while the snow was deep we enjoyed ourselves on a short toboggan-run which we made on the hillside outside the town, and the enthusiasts in the sport also made a "Cresta Run" down the small zigzag path in our upper house garden, where they could dash themselves against stone walls or upset over a four-foot drop at any time during the day if they felt that their livers would benefit by it. One or two fellows made skis, and Lieutenant Spink commenced to instruct others in the gentle art of ski-ing, but it was not till the winter of 1917-18 that a proper Ski Club was formed at Yozgad and the sport seriously indulged in. In January 1917 we were not allowed sufficient liberty to learn to ski properly.

From the absence of news about the operations in

Mesopotamia in February 1917 we concluded that something of importance must be taking place. So many rumours were afloat in the town and they were usually so incorrect that it was difficult to know what to believe. The recapture of Woolpress Village (Liquorice Factory) on February 10th, 1917, leading up to that of Kut on February 24th by General Sir Stanley Maude, was carefully concealed from us by our Turkish staff if they knew of it, and indeed the fall of Baghdad itself on March 11th was denied point-blank by the Turkish officers for a time, and, so far as I know, was never published subsequently in the newspapers till the end of the war. But friendly Greeks and Armenians in the town were always eager to whisper good news to us if opportunity offered—which was very seldom—and we knew of the capture of Baghdad by the middle of March 1917, and celebrated it in proper style. So uncertain, however, was our source of information that I regret to say the capture of Kut by the British had already been celebrated by us at least twice before the event actually occurred. The bazaar was full of rumours in March. It was said that we had captured Jerusalem, then that we had occupied Damascus, and later that we had entered Aleppo and had landed a force near Adana. In fact, to my certain knowledge we captured Aleppo three times during the year 1917! At first we were inclined to believe these wild rumours, but we soon learned to take everything with many grains of salt, and by the autumn of 1918 had become so sceptical that we believed practically nothing unofficial. If you had said to a prisoner, "The world is round," he would probably have replied from force of habit, "Who told you that?" However, we were still optimists in the summer of 1917, and Lieutenant-Commander Stoker, R.N., began to take bets on the month of our release from Turkey. As events turned out, he must have done very well on the business.

Lieutenant-Commanders Cochrane and Stoker and Lieutenant Price, all of the Royal Navy, arrived from Constantinople on February 20th. For many months they had been kept in a filthy prison in the capital awaiting their trial by court-martial for their escape from Afion Karahissar in the spring of 1916. These three officers had made a very gallant attempt to reach the southern coast of Anatolia, and after great hardships were recaptured in an exhausted condition within a few miles of

the sea. The Turks at Constantinople knew, of course, that no severe punishment should be given for a simple attempt to escape, yet they wished to deter other officers from such attempts. They therefore hit upon the plan of keeping the recaptured officers for months in prison *awaiting trial*, and finally trying them and awarding a sentence of three weeks' imprisonment. To impress upon all officers the iniquity of escaping, the Turks also herded all the British, French, and Russian officers at Afion Karahissar into an empty Armenian church, afterwards used as a barrack for rank-and-file prisoners, and there they kept them close prisoners for six weeks in great discomfort. This system of punishing whole communities for the deeds of individuals no doubt saved the Turks some trouble, and the Oriental mind is not prone to worry itself about the moral aspect of the case. Later on the Turks published a warning that any officer attempting to escape would be awarded solitary confinement in a house at Afion Karahissar till the end of the war—a truly barbarous award which, I am glad to say, was never given. It was not till the summer of 1918 that a prisoner could escape with the certainty that in so doing he would not bring serious trouble on his fellow-prisoners, and this desirable state of affairs was only attained by the urgent representations of our Government.

It is instructive to trace the gradual change in the general treatment of British prisoners in Turkey as the war progressed. In 1916 our rank and file were treated with the greatest barbarity, delegates of neutral Powers were not allowed to visit them, complaints were never forwarded, clothes and food sent to the men were generally stolen, and the sick died by scores without treatment. The dead were stripped and thrown in batches into large graves, and no chaplain was allowed to read the Burial Service over them. For the most trivial offences our soldiers were beaten on the feet (*bastinadoed*) so severely that they could not walk properly for weeks, and in fact they were treated as badly as any slaves in the time of the Roman Empire. Gradually, as the Turks were forced to open up their country to Red Cross delegates, the condition of prisoners improved. Parcels began to arrive, some of the more villainous Turkish commandants were removed, British doctors took medical charge of numbers of our rank and file, and the Turkish guards began to

understand and even to like our men, so that in 1918 most of our soldiers were warmly clothed, cheerful, and had sufficient food and money; but there still remained to the very end certain working camps from which the men returned in a shocking state of collapse and clad in rags. We all owe the greatest gratitude to the representatives of the American and Dutch Embassies at Constantinople for their indefatigable efforts on our behalf to overcome the passive resistance of the Turks to any enquiry into the condition of prisoners. In 1918 Mr. Menton, of the Netherlands Embassy, did an immense amount of useful work for us and was a great favourite in every camp he visited.

The arrival of new prisoners always caused a good deal of excitement in our camp at Yozgad. On March 9th Flight-Lieutenant Nightingale, R.N.A.S., and Lieutenant P. M. Woodland, R.N. Volunteer Reserve, underwent the usual volley of questions when they suddenly appeared in our midst. Two or three people knew Woodland personally, he being the famous steeplechase jockey and winner of a Grand National. On April 8th, again, when a new face was seen among us, its owner was quickly cornered and the bombardment commenced. The newcomer said he was an aviator and gave the most astounding news about every front. He was introduced to, and gravely shook hands with, our senior officers and had some liquid refreshment with the juniors, but he seemed strangely reticent about aviation and even irritable when questioned about it. At length first one fellow and then another started to laugh, and finally the "aviator" was recognised as Lieutenant-Commander Stoker in a new suit of clothes, minus his beard and plus a pair of tinted glasses. I think this was the best "leg-pull" ever brought off during our captivity, and the chief victims of the hoax laughed as heartily as any one.

While on the subject of hoaxing let me say that the mysteries of what we called "spooking" gave full scope in the spring of 1917 to the ingenuity of our chief wizards. By "spooking" I mean the obtaining of messages from supposed spooks or spirits by means of a tumbler inverted on a polished metal plate bearing the letters of the alphabet and operated by "mediums" in the usual way of spiritualistic séances. Lieutenant Jones and Captain O'Farrell were the chief operators, and after a time they obtained

a marvellous series of messages which, I am told, in every case were fakes. Though completely deceived at the time by a very fine piece of acting, as were most other fellows, I learned after my release that the whole thing was planned by Lieutenant Jones with a view to the escape of himself and a few others, and it led to many amusing episodes in the deception of the Turkish commandant and the interpreter. To Jones belongs the credit of the invention of such blithe "spirits" as Silas P. Warner, Herman, Sally, and Louise, who interested, amused, and even shocked us with their witty and unexpected messages.

The playwrights and actors of our Dramatic Society entertained us with several plays which they wrote and performed during the summer. The stage in the large room of the hospital house was hardly large enough, but it served its purpose fairly well. These performances and occasional concerts helped very much to relieve the monotony of our lives and gave a lot of much-needed occupation to those who took part in them. No one, unless he has been a prisoner of war, can realise the state of apathy into which a man is liable to sink in captivity as month succeeds month and year follows year, unless the prisoner can manage to make work for himself and can force himself to keep hard at that work. It matters not what the work is. Whatever it is, it serves its purpose as exercise for brain or body. The men who felt captivity most were those few who did nothing.

To beguile some dull hours I got together a small string band of three violins, a flute, and a guitar. We could get no music, so I wrote and harmonised about thirty pieces from memory, including practically the whole of *The Geisha* and selections from *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *Il Trovatore*. Every fortnight my band gave a concert which was well attended, and I think met with the approval of a not too critical audience. When at Afion Karahissar my band increased in numbers, but it never reached the dimensions of the band at Kastamuni, where expert carpenters among the officers made violoncellos, double basses, drums, and other instruments. Some of the violoncellos were so wonderfully finished that they would have passed for the genuine article, and the amount of time and labour involved in their construction was prodigious.

Subsequent to a visit by the Commandant of Angora, an additional house to contain sixteen officers was allotted

for our use to ease the crowding in other houses. This house, which was opposite the "Colonels' House," was occupied in June and became known to every one as "Posh Castle," because certain of the inmates were accused of a love of breaking up furniture in their lighter moods. The garrison of the castle set to work and made their abode the show house of the camp. They made all the furniture to approved patterns and stained it dark brown, and they took great trouble with the dining-room, kitchen, and garden, and even filled a small plunge-bath outside the house.

Soon after the occupation of Posh Castle an outbreak of para-typhoid took place, though with no serious result. Some one, however, injudiciously wrote in a letter home that *typhoid fever* had appeared in the camp, and several relatives were very anxious about us in consequence. I quote this as an indication of how careful it was necessary to be in writing home, for it took a long time to eradicate a false impression once given.

In the life of a prisoner of war the most trifling incidents cause excitement, and are subjects for conversation and, if possible, for betting. For instance, on top of one of the chimneys of the "Hospital House" lay the remains of a stork's nest, and on March 28th a pair of storks arrived and began to repair the nest preparatory to increasing the population of the stork world. Never were birds so closely observed as were those storks. They were in the habit of serenading each other at intervals, which they accomplished by swinging their heads over backwards and clicking their bills rapidly—a manoeuvre usually productive of applause from their audience. In due time young storks hatched out in the nest, and on July 23rd they took their first uncertain flight. I believe a considerable amount of money changed hands as a result of this first effort. When the young ones could fly, the old birds began to prepare for their journey southwards, on which they started at the end of August, and we saw them no more. So small and trivial are the events which interest a prisoner of war.

From the bazaar at Yozgad our purchasing officers could always bring us a fair variety of eatables. In 1917, however, it became increasingly difficult to get bread which was fit for consumption. At times the bread became so bad that it was almost impossible to eat it. It was black

and full of pieces of straw and husks, and contained so much sand and grit that one's teeth grated on these impurities at every mouthful. The consumption of much bread caused many internal troubles, though our stomachs were gradually becoming toughened by the rough food we had been compelled to eat. Protests brought about a slight improvement in the quality of the bread, but only when a higher price per loaf was paid. In the summer of 1917 the price of a loaf of bread was 10 piastres—say 1s. 8*d.*—and one got one's money's worth of sand if of nothing else. Apparently the commandant could not induce shopkeepers to sell us better bread, so we had to take what was obtainable.

Gradually, as I have said, the attitude of the commandant towards us improved. On July 28th, 1917, for the first time, he allowed us to go out for the day for a picnic in the pinewood on the hill south of the town, and every one took advantage of this concession and spent some enjoyable hours lying under the trees. After this there was always a picnic at least once a week, and we had three walks a week in certain fixed directions. Many people played hockey regularly on the little ground below the upper house, and crowds of fellows always turned out to watch the game when tournaments were in progress and to applaud or "rag" the players. As autumn approached, our spirits sank, for hopes of a speedy termination to the war vanished. The failure of Russia was a terrible blow, and, though rumours arrived of a possible exchange of prisoners, we put no great faith in release by this means. To the very end of the war the Turks clung grimly to their British prisoners, and particularly to the officers. I think they regarded us as a sort of asset to play off against possibly bad terms of peace, though I do not think it ever entered their heads to murder us if offered bad terms. Still, even shortly before the conclusion of the armistice in 1918, nothing would induce them to release invalid prisoners unless the prisoners were at death's door, or such hopeless cripples that they were never likely to be of much value to their country.

As an instance of how the mediæval character of the Turk showed itself from time to time, let me recount what happened on the night of July 5th/6th. Most of us were in bed when we heard a few rifle shots in and near the town. This was no unusual thing, as the watch-

men in charge of the crops were wont to let drive at intervals at poachers or brigands, but soon a regular fusillade started, and one or two bullets whistled high over our houses. Then some one noticed that an eclipse of the moon was taking place, and it appeared that in this ultra-civilised Turkey all the armed inhabitants on such occasions fire at the moon to scare away the devil who is obscuring her light. The firing continued till the silver crescent of the moon began once more to appear, and even our old "postas" let off their blunderbusses into the sky—a brave deed considering the bore of the weapons and their age.

The Turkish sanitary inspector who visited Yozgad in August 1917 brought us news that four British officers had escaped from the camp at Kastamuni. As is now well known, three of this plucky quartette, aided by political brigands, made good their escape across the Black Sea to the Crimea, and so via Russia, Sweden, and Norway to England. Captain Sweet, unfortunately, was recaptured, and I regret to say he died of Spanish influenza at Yozgad in 1918. Captain Keeling, one of the lucky trio, subsequently described the adventures of the party in *Blackwood's Magazine* of January 1918. The result of this escape was that all prisoners were removed from Kastamuni to Tchangri, farther inland, and herded into filthy barracks at that place, from which they only procured their removal by energetic protests addressed to Turkish headquarters. Some of the prisoners were then sent to Yozgad and others on parole via Afion Karahissar to Geddos near Ouchak on the line from Afion to Smyrna. In this case again the Turks punished the whole camp for the escape of four officers. While in the Tchangri barracks the prisoners made elaborate preparations for escape, even going to the length of driving a tunnel out of the barracks, but they were moved away before their plans could be put into execution.

Autumn came, and we dragged out our monotonous existence from day to day—we ate, we worked, we played, we slept, and we tried not to drown our sorrows too deeply in "raki," till in September the Turks announced that a small party of officers could go to other camps if they wished. Only Colonel Chitty and Colonel Harward were allowed to go to Broussa, where our general officers (except General Townshend) were interned, but twenty others,

myself included, were permitted to go to Afion Karahissar. We accordingly started on October 19th, 1917, with ample transport on the long journey by road to Angora, leaving Lieutenant-Colonel Maule, R.F.A., as senior officer at Yozgad. Afion Karahissar at any rate had the attractions of being on the railway and nearer to civilisation.

The journey to Angora was uneventful, and we did it by easy stages. The mulāzim, Hassan Effendi, who was in charge of us took great care that we should not meet any parties of our men who were working on the extension of the railway-line eastwards from Angora, and he was also careful to line his pocket at our expense by insisting on all food purchases being made through him. At Angora we were closely confined in crowded hotels which were full of bugs, so we were glad enough to get away as soon as we could by rail. We are not likely to forget our last night in the train before reaching Afion Karahissar on November 1st, 1917. At Eskichehr Junction we all went out to have tea, and on returning to the station just missed our train, which started for Afion with everything we possessed in Turkey. Most of us were clothed only in khaki drill and the night was bitterly cold. We were then crowded into a covered goods-wagon attached to another train, and till 3 a.m., when we reached our destination, we tried to keep warm by sitting back to back on the floor and singing songs. The mulāzim was blind drunk, and a chaoush who was with him and in a similar state toyed playfully with a loaded revolver and then tried to light a fire on the floor of the wagon for warmth. So drunk was the mulāzim that he denied that the train had reached Afion when it had actually done so, and it was only because we took the law into our own hands and got out of the wagon that we were not carried on to Konia. During the journey from Angora to Eskichehr we saw a party of newly enrolled conscripts being brought along under a guard of gendarmes. These wretched boys tried continually to escape from their wagons, on each of which was posted a gendarme with a loaded rifle. Whenever the train slowed down between stations after dusk one or two conscripts would make a bolt for it and the gendarmes would fire on them. I believe that one conscript was killed and a few wounded, but quite a number escaped in the darkness. This episode gives some idea of the popularity of military service among the Turks in 1917.

Afion Karahissar is a town of about 20,000 inhabitants, lying for the most part between a precipitous pinnacle of rock and the hills partly encircling it. On the summit of the pinnacle, about 400 feet above the plain, are the ruins of an ancient fortress whose history I never succeeded in ascertaining. There are a few large buildings in the town, but for the most part the houses are small and ramshackle and the streets cobbled and badly worn. At the southern base of the pinnacle is the Armenian church, which was used as a prison for our rank and file for the last two years of the war, in addition to a building in the town known as the "Madriisah." Opposite the church across the gorge is the Armenian quarter, in which most of the officer-prisoners were housed, while the remainder lived in a block of houses outside the town on the road to the Stamboul railway-station. Thus at Afion the officers were divided into two groups, the greater number being in the "Town Camp" (or No. 1 Camp) in the Armenian quarter, and the remaining forty or so in the Lower (or No. 2) Camp a mile away. The officers of the two camps were only allowed to exchange visits on Thursdays, and then merely for lunch and tea.

When we arrived at Afion the commandant of the prisoners' camp was the notorious Bimbashi (Major) Muslum Bey, under whose orders were a kholasi (senior captain) in charge of No. 2 Camp, and a mulāzim, by name Emin Effendi. The commandant was a thickset fellow who was said to be a capable soldier, but was certainly one of the worst villains in the Turkish Army, which is no small attainment. Many complaints had been made about him before our arrival from Yozgad, yet it seemed to be impossible to get him shifted. Rumour had it that he was one of Enver Pasha's "hired assassins," and that by blackmail at Constantinople he retained his lucrative position of commandant of prisoners of war at Afion, where parcels for the prisoners arrived in plenty and were seldom issued. This fellow Muslum, just previous to our arrival, had bastinadoed a Russian officer so cruelly that the victim lay in hospital for many weeks, unable to walk as his feet were cut to ribbons. He also bastinadoed an Indian officer for an attempt to escape. In the case of the Russian officer, Muslum himself beat the prisoner till he was tired, and there were few British warrant or non-commissioned officers at the church who



AFYON KARAHISSAR.

escaped corporal punishment ordered at one time or another by this brute. It was not till March 1918 that we secured his removal and court-martial on a charge not only of theft, but of other crimes so serious that if found guilty by Turkish law he could not have been awarded any other punishment but death. To our disgust, he was acquitted on the serious charges and convicted only of theft, for which he received the ridiculous sentence of five months' imprisonment. In Turkey imprisonment does not seriously affect an officer's prospects, and no stigma apparently attaches to an officer released from prison. This, then, was the scoundrel who was our commandant till March 1918.

His second-in-command, the kholasi, had no criminal tendencies except towards theft, for which I believe he was sentenced later by the court-martial. He admitted good-naturedly to one of our officers that on one occasion he *had stolen all our parcels for a month*, but pointed out that we got plenty, so could well spare a few. By trade, I believe, he was a shopkeeper, and many of the tinned stores sent by kind friends at home appeared in due course for sale at exorbitant prices in shop windows in Afion.

The third member of this unholy trio, Mulāzim Emin Effendi, was also sentenced by the court-martial in 1918, but I do not know what for. He did not seem to be a thief, but was undoubtedly intensely hostile to us. If ever the Red Cross delegates or other intermediaries secured us any privilege, Emin Effendi tried at once to get it revoked, and he frequently succeeded.

In No. 1 Camp our houses were almost all in one dilapidated street on a hillside near a large mosque. Some of the houses were fairly comfortable, but all were more or less infested with lice and bugs of every species. In Turkey one must expect this. During the summer it was necessary to empty boiling water periodically into all the chinks of one's home-made bedstead, so as to slay the budding generations of bugs which bred continually in these nooks and crannies. We found that a bath of boiling water once a week effectually checked the increase of the bugs, though it was impossible to eradicate them as the walls and floors were full of them.

The street in which we lived was watched by Turkish sailors, who were reinforced later by soldiers. The sailors were of quite a different type from the rough old "woollies"

of Yozgad, and were recruited, I believe, chiefly from the district around Trebizond on the Black Sea. They were more European in appearance than the old "woolly" postas, and more intelligent, but, with a few exceptions, they were in such terror of Muslum's frequent floggings that they were seldom openly friendly to us till after his removal. After the arrival of the first party from Yozgad, there were about seventy British officers in No. 1 Camp, and also eight French officers (mostly naval), of whom the senior was Capitaine-de-Corvette Fabre. In addition, there were a large number of Russian officers from all parts of Russia, the senior being Captain Prince Avaloff, of the Russian Guards. The street in which we lived was cold and cheerless in the winter, for during December and January the sun did not rise high enough to shine down into it, and it remained covered with a solid crust of dirty snow and ice till the beginning of March. The commandant refused to allow any fatigue parties of our men to come across from the church to break up the ice and sweep the road periodically, so that at times during the winter it was almost impossible to use it for exercise.

None of us will forget the bitter cold of December 1917 and January 1918. We who had only just arrived from Yozgad had not had time to lay in a large winter stock of fuel, and were also too short of money to buy wood at the exorbitant rate then asked. The commandant promised to get us fuel at a reasonable cost, but, after the fashion of Turks, did not fulfil his promise to any extent. So cold was it that in our mess-room in No. 1 house the water in our glasses at lunch-time froze within a minute of being poured into them, and at night the thermometer frequently registered twenty degrees or more of frost. The climate of Afion is damper than that of Yozgad, and consequently the cold is more trying. In the midst of awful weather a party of seventy-five British officers and some orderlies arrived from Tchangri *en route* for Geddos, and they will certainly remember their stay of a week or two at Afion. Many had no fuel and, when not warming themselves at our stoves, they had to lie under as many blankets as possible in crowded rooms with bare floors to try to keep warm. One or two suffered from mild frostbite from which they did not recover for months. If our houses had been properly built, warmed, and furnished, the winter would have been bearable for

a free man able to take adequate outdoor exercise at any time, but in our draughty rooms with thin walls and bare floors the cold was bitter unless our stoves were in full blast.

The flimsy nature of the houses showed conspicuously on January 17th, 1918, when there was an earthquake lasting ten seconds, for on that occasion and during the shocks which occurred in the next ten days the houses rocked in an alarming manner. As we were always locked into our houses after evening roll-call, which was then at 4.30 p.m., we could not escape into the street after dark even if we wished to do so. At 8 a.m. and about sunset daily the mulāzim or his bash-chaoush came round to count us, and all officers and orderlies were then expected to assemble outside their houses fully dressed—such at least was the Turkish order. Yet passive resistance, as usual, secured a partial relaxation of this rule—for instance, pyjamas came to be considered “full dress” in the morning; and as to the order to assemble outside the house, we obstructionists in No. 1 house never thought of doing so in the late summer and autumn of 1918, unless we happened to be so inclined—a half-shaved face displayed at a window sufficed.

There was no large room in our camp which could be used as a concert-hall or for theatrical performances, and consequently it was difficult during the winter to produce any plays. In the summer of 1918, however, a stage was erected in the courtyard of the French officers' house, and there several good pieces by Lieutenant Edmonds and others were performed. The chief difficulty in all theatricals was to find sufficiently fascinating girls, though there were several aspirants to feminine triumphs and some were quite passable if not scrutinised too closely. When one saw the blushing heroine solacing herself, after a touching love-scene, with a pipeful of strong tobacco and a powerful tot of raki, or elbowing her way energetically into the front rank of the bar loungers, one's faith in womankind received a rude shock, and the scenes in the mixed dressing-room for men and girls were so bohemian as to baffle description.

Newly captured officers arrived frequently from the Syrian or Mesopotamian fronts and gave us news about the general situation on their own fronts. In most cases they were aviators, and at the time of our release nearly

half the camp belonged to the Royal Air Force, as it is now called. Other officers left Afion occasionally to go to other camps—for instance, on March 19th ten senior officers went to Broussa, which was said to be the best camp in the country, though not very healthy. It was difficult to get a correct idea of the trend of events, for we were only allowed to take in three daily papers from Constantinople, and all these papers, which were printed in French, were exceedingly pro-German. The *Hilal*, the *Lloyd Ottoman*, and the *Soir*, which were the papers to which I have alluded, gave us nevertheless the German communiqués from the western front, and from these we were able to mark from day to day the changes in the line on German maps obtained from Constantinople, or on copies of such maps made by us. The Turkish communiqués were laughable. To the end of the war, as I have said, the Turks never openly admitted the loss of Baghdad, though they were forced, during General Sir Edmund Allenby's brilliant advance in the autumn of 1918, to admit the loss of Damascus and other towns. When the Turks were receiving the gravest defeats, the usual communiqué in the paper was, "No event of any importance on any front," or "In accordance with a pre-arranged plan we have withdrawn our advanced troops to a previously selected position. The English advanced hesitatingly and were repulsed by our brave troops, who captured one machine gun and six men." I do not think that even the Turkish public could have been deceived by such trash.

After the departure of Bimbashi Muslum in disgrace and the removal of the thieving kholasi, a new commandant, Kai-Makām (Lieutenant-Colonel) Usuf Zia Bey, arrived to take charge of the camp at Afion, where the senior British officer at the time was Lieutenant-Colonel Corbould-Warren, R.F.A. Immediately this change occurred our treatment improved. The new commandant was, I think, of Arab extraction, but was a good fellow at heart and a sportsman. He was without doubt the best Turk I came across in the country. When the maximum punishment for a simple attempt to escape was fixed at fourteen days' imprisonment, many fellows began to contemplate an attempt, so that the commandant's life was one full of anxiety. On August 31st several officers were arrested, charged with being about to escape, and

imprisoned for some days ; and on Sunday, September 8th, Captain Haight and Lieutenant Taylor of the R.F.C., and Flight-Lieutenant Jamieson of the R.N.A.S., actually accomplished their escape from the camp in broad daylight, Haight dressed as a Turkish peasant and the other two as Turkish women. A week later Haight and Taylor reappeared as prisoners. The party had been held up near Ouchak by brigands, who shot at, and wounded, one of them, and then refused to allow the other officers to help him. Haight and Taylor escaped from the brigands, but had to surrender to the authorities. When they were brought back to Afion the commandant, Kai-Makām Usuf Zia Bey, told them that he was going to shoot them, as they must have escaped on parole from the hillside near our houses, where we were then allowed to stroll during the daytime after giving our word not to escape from an area marked by flags. The officers stoutly denied that they had escaped from the hill and offered to produce witnesses who saw their escape, but they refused to say how or whence they had escaped as others might wish to follow in their footsteps. In the end the commandant relented and sentenced them to only fourteen days' imprisonment. He then went so far as to congratulate them on their plucky attempt and to apologise for having to imprison them. In spite of the fact that he had first accused British officers of breaking their parole, his sporting apology to, and treatment of, the two recaptured officers won us over to him, and I do not suppose there was a more popular commandant in the country after this episode. I have frequently exposed the unpleasant characteristics of the Turkish officer in this book, and it is a welcome change to be able to quote one instance of an officer who was just, courteous, and apparently honourable. On October 1st Captain Stephenson, A.V.C., and Captain Taylor, 13th Hussars, escaped at night, but were recaptured in a few days and brought back to serve their sentence. Soon after this the whole aspect of the war changed so rapidly that all schemes for escape were abandoned.

While on the subject of escape "stunts," I should mention the magnificent and partially successful attempt of a large party at Yozgad. On the night of August 7th/8th, 1918, twenty-five British officers and one orderly got out of the camp at Yozgad and trekked off in various

parties in different directions. Gradually all were recaptured except a party of eight officers, of whom the leader was Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane, D.S.O., R.N., one of the trio who first attempted to escape from Afion in 1916. This party made for the Mediterranean coast and succeeded in reaching the sea after a march of over 400 miles across rugged country in an incredibly short time, and, in a motor boat, made good their escape from Turkey. Their fellow-prisoners were proud of this achievement, which showed the Turks what British officers could do when put to the test.

After the escape of the twenty-six prisoners of war at Yozgad the remainder were closely confined, their health naturally suffering in consequence, and at the beginning of October the dreaded Spanish influenza attacked the camp. The whole town was ravaged by the disease and hundreds of the inhabitants died in a few weeks. Almost every prisoner in the camp was attacked, and before the middle of the month the sickness was at its height. Daily a small cortège wound its way up the street to the Armenian cemetery where the chaplain or the senior British officer read the Burial Service over the dead. Five British officers and seven orderlies succumbed to the pneumonia which complicated the influenza, in spite of every effort of their fellow-prisoners, who worked night and day to save the lives of the sufferers. A sad end indeed for so many good soldiers who had patiently endured years of captivity and were on the eve of release. In other camps, such as Afion, the disease appeared and attacked most prisoners but without such serious results. The altitude of Yozgad may have had something to do with the fatal termination of so many of the pneumonia cases.

At Afion Karahissar we managed to keep in good health by regular exercise and as bountiful a supply of food as could be obtained. During the winter there was either Rugby or Association football twice a week on a ground on the plain beyond the town, and during the summer many enthusiasts played hockey at least three days a week. For those who preferred less strenuous exercise there was a daily walk in the summer of 1918, when the conditions of our captivity were so much improved, though this walk was always along the "pipe-line" path leading round a spur of the hill to a small valley. On

these walks we were accompanied by one or more "postas" (guards), who carried no rifles, as we were considered to be on parole not to escape during walks. The scenery was pretty for Turkey, and we got plenty of fresh air in the two hours' outing. From May 19th onwards we also had the use all day of a portion of the hill south of our camp, where we could wander at any time between boundaries indicated by flags. This concession was very much appreciated. It was delightful to be able to get away from one's fellow-prisoners for a time with an interesting book from the library and some tobacco to smoke. Much as a man may like his fellows, he sees quite enough of them in two or three years of constant intercourse unrelieved by the attractions of feminine society. It was noticeable that when the hillside was first put at our disposal, most people installed themselves on it in secluded corners as far from others as possible, for every one wanted quiet and solitude for a change. We knew each other so well that every possible subject of conversation had been worn threadbare, and every possible and impossible story had been told and retold till we knew it literally by heart. Under the circumstances I think it was wonderful how well we all got on together and how every prisoner was willing to do his small best to interest, amuse, or instruct his comrades.

During the summer of 1918, as an additional concession, the commandant allowed us to go out in small parties to picnic for the day on the banks of a stream some four miles from the town, each party being accompanied of course by a "posta." There was a very pleasant bathing-pool in this stream with a few willows and rushes on its banks, and a certain number of small fish could be caught in the stream. Many people made fishing-rods from walking-sticks and canes, and enjoyed themselves thoroughly with their curious rods. The day's outing was an excellent antidote to the monotony of life at Afion. Lying under the willows near the bathing-pool, we almost forgot we were prisoners in Turkey, with (as we then thought) small prospect of early release.

Hopes of release, which fell to so low a level during the German offensives from March to July 1918, revived during September, but not a soul dreamed of the possibility of his being out of Turkey before December. Every mess laid in its supply of firewood for the next winter

and made its preparations for many more months of captivity. Our few pessimists foretold the probable date of our release as the spring of 1920; I am glad to say, however, that they did not convince the majority of prisoners. The extraordinary rapidity of the collapse of the Central Powers may have surprised the public in England, but they could not have been as astonished and delighted as were we in Turkey, where all news detrimental to the prestige of Germany and her allies was suppressed until there was no option but to publish it. The joy in our camp in October 1918 was positively delirious at times. The news seemed too good to be true. Rapidly the restrictions imposed on us were relaxed, more and more friendly became our guards, almost every night there was a dinner party, supper party, or a "sing-song" to celebrate something or other. We scarcely knew whether we stood on our heads or our heels. Large parties of sick left the camp to complete the 1,000 sick prisoners who were to be exchanged for 1,500 sick Turks, and medical boards to select these lucky people were of almost daily occurrence. Finally, on November 3rd, all roll-calls at Afion were abolished and officers were set completely at liberty to wander where they liked in the town. Those were happy days. We explored unknown streets adjoining our own; we climbed the rocky pinnacle overshadowing the town; we strolled down to the station for a drink; we wandered about on the hills near by, or in the town itself, without a guard; in fact, we basked in the sunshine of liberty. At last we were free men, though it was difficult to believe it. Instinctively at first one looked round for one's "posta," or expected to hear the order "Haidy" or the prohibition "Yussuk"; instinctively one avoided conversation with Greeks and Armenians, not because they were usually far from fascinating but because it had always been strictly forbidden; and indeed, after being herded about for so long in a party with other prisoners, one felt almost lonely by oneself. The Turks smiled on us and said, "Shindi memliket gelejek" ("You are going home now"), and haunted our houses to try to buy clothes and boots at cheap rates, to sell them later at a profit in the bazaar. The camp was no longer the depressing abode of prisoners of war; it was more like a beehive with the bees buzzing their loudest.

The Turkish authorities showered parcels and letters

on us at the end, when the former were of little use to us. Even when we reached Smyrna more parcels were thrust on us, and it was difficult to know what to do with all the tinned food which we should have prized so much a few months before. Thousands of parcels must have accumulated for us somewhere, for most of the parcels we received just before our departure were several months old. A very large number of parcels, of course, never reached us at all. They had probably been stolen by the Turks or their even more unscrupulous allies, yet some parcels arrived which one would never have expected to reach their destination intact. For instance, while at Yozgad I got a parcel containing only a pair of boots, which were actually protruding from one end of a flimsy paper wrapping.

On November 6th I left Afion Karahissar with a small party *en route* for Smyrna, whither other parties had gone a few days earlier. The last party of British officer-prisoners, with the exception of Major Forbes and three others, left Afion on November 7th. Major Forbes and his staff stayed behind for a time to see to the collection and entraining of the remainder of our rank and file. My party reached Ouchak on November 7th, where we were joined by the officers from the Geddos Camp, and next morning we steamed into Smyrna, waving handkerchiefs and caps from the windows of the train in answer to the cordial welcome of the Greeks in the suburbs through which we passed. In Smyrna a large number of British and Indian officers and men were accommodated in the Maclachlan College at a place called Paradise on a fine breezy site a few miles outside the town, while other British officers elected to live in hotels in the town. Dr. Maclachlan and his staff treated us with the greatest kindness and hospitality, and went out of their way to ensure that we were all comfortable and happy. We arranged for our own messing and lived in rooms and dormitories in the magnificent central building, the rank and file being housed for the most part in large subsidiary buildings. The fittings and arrangements of this college were a revelation to us; we had no idea that such perfection could be found on Turkish soil, though I need hardly say that the Turks were in no way responsible for it. While at the college we were proud to receive a gracious message from His Majesty the King, expressing

his pleasure at our liberation and his hope that we should have a good time at home among our own people.

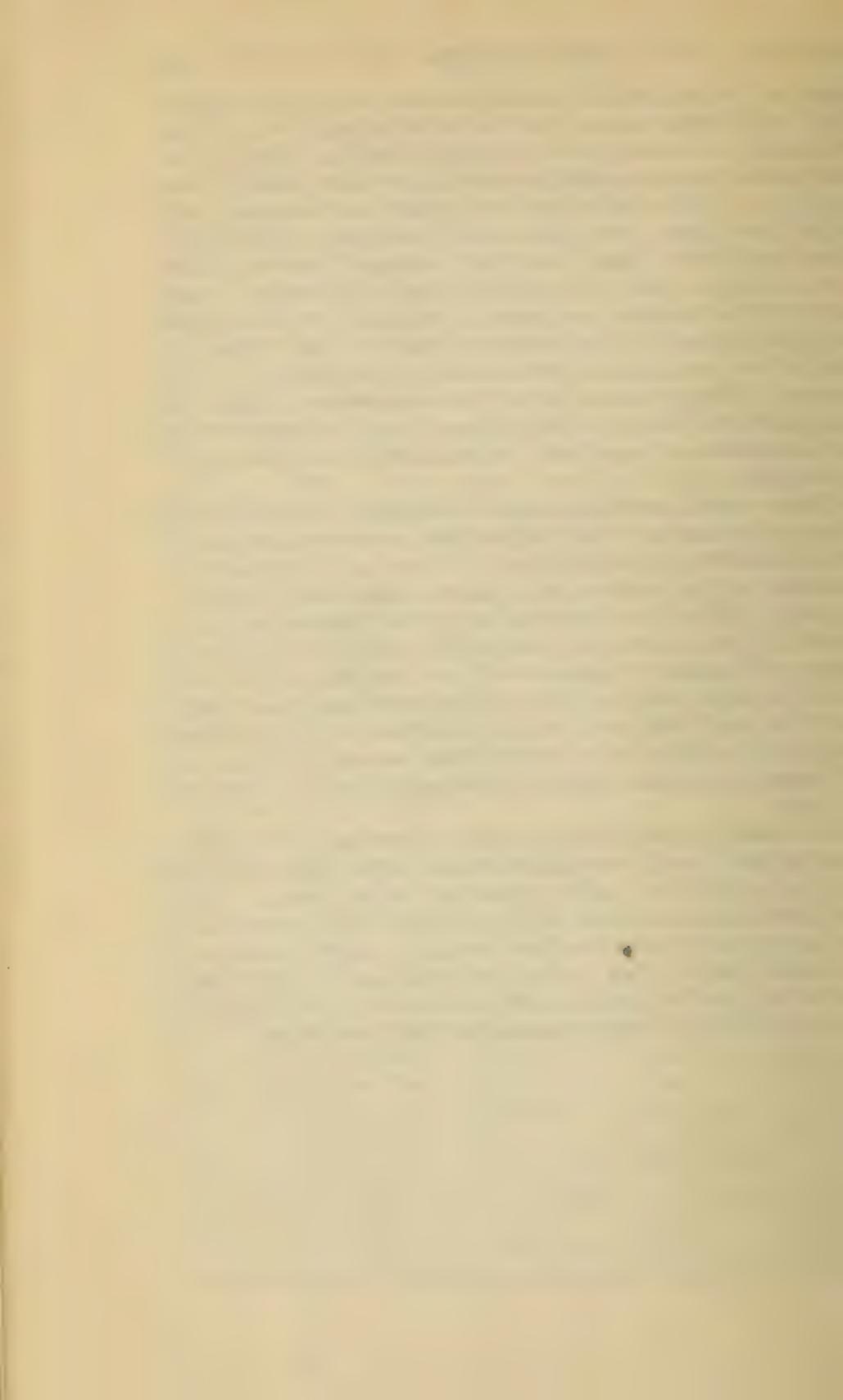
Smyrna struck me as a much overrated town. The fine sea-front is spoilt by the stone paving of the road, and the shops are mediocre and the hotels none too clean. At the time we were there prices ran prodigiously high (4 liras a day at a hotel), though I believe that in normal times one can live there cheaply. I think every one was pleased to see the last of the place when we left, for it represented the detestable country of our captivity where so many comrades had been done to death. On November 13th I embarked with others on small steamboats which were to take us out to the s.s. *Assaye* for transport to Alexandria. The Gulf of Smyrna was still full of mines, so that a large vessel could not enter the port, though H.M.S. Monitor No. 29, under Commander Dixon, R.N., had come in on November 5th and officially taken possession of the port. Our steamboat cruised for about four hours before we reached a bay where the ship awaited us. On this trip we passed through British, French, and Turkish minefields, and actually saw a loose British mine afloat close to us. The voyage in the *Assaye* was comfortable and uneventful, and we steamed into Alexandria on November 16th. One party of invalids had arrived already, and other parties of officers and men followed, and so all British prisoners were gradually evacuated from Turkey.

While at Alexandria we read in the newspapers of the pitiable condition of the starving prisoners returning from defeated and broken Germany after the signing of the Armistice. Before this we held the idea that the Hun was considerably superior to the Turk in the humane treatment of the prisoners of war, but I can confidently affirm that though, in the early stages of the war, our rank-and-file prisoners were murdered (there is no other word) by the Turks, towards the end of the war the treatment of our men by the Turks was much better than that shown by the Germans to their prisoners; and though the food given to our men was coarse and unpalatable, there was usually enough of it. Never since their ghastly march to Anatolia in 1916, and the winter following that march, did our men suffer the starvation borne by the prisoners of war in Germany, for supplies were always plentiful in Anatolia, and, as I have said, there was sufficient for the

prisoners when proper arrangements were made. Our chief indictment against the Turks is on account of their inhuman treatment of the famished rank and file of the surrendered garrison of Kut during the first year of our captivity. Those who survived their first autumn and winter in Turkey were of robust physique or otherwise they would have died, and they managed for the most part to keep in fair health when interned in camps which were not in malarial districts. But, alas! of the 2,592 British rank and file who surrendered in April 1916 at Kut, three men out of five found a grave in the desert wastes of Mesopotamia or the barren country of Anatolia during their first year as prisoners, and comparatively but a handful of these brave fellows lived to set foot again on British soil.

Many might have survived the rigours of their first winter as prisoners if they had not sold their boots, clothing, and blankets, to obtain food. They had starved for months in Kut and on the desert march to Anatolia, and the food ration given them by the Turks when they reached Anatolia was not sufficient to stay their continual pangs of hunger. Ignorant of the terrible cold of the winter months, they parted with their clothing in exchange for food, with the result that frostbite and pneumonia claimed them as victims, or they fell an easy prey to the epidemic of typhus which accompanies every winter in Turkey.

Our Indian rank and file suffered severely, it is true, but not to the extent of the British, who could not live on the rough food given them by their captors. The British soldiers and their Indian comrades who succumbed during captivity died for their country, and their officers join with their other comrades in mourning their loss. May they not be forgotten by the sons of the new and glorious British Empire created by the Great War!



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COMPOSITION OF THE SIXTH INDIAN DIVISION AND ATTACHED BRIGADES

SIXTH INDIAN DIVISION

General Officer commanding : Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Barrett till April 12th, 1915, and Major-General C. V. F. Townshend from April 1915 onwards.

16TH BRIGADE

(Brigadier-General W. S. Delamain)

2nd Dorset Regiment
20th Punjab Infantry
104th Rifles
117th Mahrattas

Later the 66th Punjabis replaced the 20th Punjabis, but at the Battle of Shaiba the 119th Infantry replaced the 20th Punjabis.

17TH BRIGADE

(Brigadier-General W. H. Dobbie till April 1915; Colonel Gamble from April till July 1915; Brigadier-General F. A. Hoghton thence till March 1916, and Colonel U. W. Evans onwards)

1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry
22nd Punjab Infantry
103rd Mahrattas
119th Infantry

18TH BRIGADE

(Major-General C. I. Fry till October 1915, and Brigadier-General W. G. Hamilton onwards)

2nd Norfolk Regiment
7th Rajputs
110th Mahratta Light Infantry
120th Rajputana Infantry

DIVISIONAL TROOPS

23rd Cavalry
 10th Brigade R.F.A. (63rd, 76th, and 82nd Batteries)
 86th Heavy Battery R.G.A.
 104th Heavy Battery R.G.A.
 Volunteer Artillery Battery
 23rd Mountain Artillery Battery
 30th Mountain Artillery Battery
 1/5th Hants Howitzer Battery (Territorial)
 Machine Gun Battery
 17th Company, 3rd Sappers and Miners
 22nd Company, 3rd Sappers and Miners
 48th Pioneers

The Hants Howitzer Battery joined the 6th Division before the Battle of Shaiba.

A wing of the Royal West Kent Regiment joined the 6th Division at Aziziah during the retreat from Ctesiphon in December 1915, and was attached to the 30th Brigade (of the 12th Division), then with the 6th Division.

ARMY TROOPS ATTACHED TO 6TH DIVISION

Bridging Train, 1st K.G.O. Sappers and Miners
 Wreck Party, 1st K.G.O. Sappers and Miners (during
 the early operations)
 Mechanical Transport Section (with motor-cars)
 Searchlight Section

The Division also included the 21st and 30th Mule Corps, portions of other Mule Corps, and some Imperial Service Transport. Also the 34th Signal Co., and the usual medical, veterinary, supply, ordnance, postal, and survey services, as well as a Wireless Telegraph Section and a section of the Royal Flying Corps.

In the advance from Amarah and subsequent operations two additional Brigades were attached to the 6th Division. These were—

30TH BRIGADE (OF THE 12TH DIVISION)

(Major-General Sir C. J. Melliss)

2/7th Gurkha Rifles
 67th Punjab Infantry
 76th Punjab Infantry
 24th Punjab Infantry

6TH CAVALRY BRIGADE

(Brigadier-General H. L. Roberts)

7th Haryana Lancers
16th Cavalry
33rd Cavalry
S Battery R.H.A.

The 14th Hussars joined the 6th Cavalry Brigade at Aziziah in November 1915, in the retreat from Ctesiphon. A wing of the 1/4th Hants Regiment (T.) joined the 30th Brigade at Kut after the retreat. The 6th Cavalry Brigade left Kut-el-Amarah on December 6th, 1915, after the retreat from Ctesiphon and joined the Relief Force under General Aylmer at Ali-al-Gharbi.

The 30th Brigade remained with the 6th Division during the siege of Kut. The Sirmoor Sapper Co. of the 12th Division was attached to the 6th Division during the siege of Kut; it was not with the Division during the operations north of Kut.

APPENDIX B

WAR ESTABLISHMENTS

(FROM THE F.S. POCKET-BOOK 1914)

(I) AN INDIAN DIVISION

(Of 3 Infantry Brigades and Divisional Troops)

British fighting men	3,548
Indian fighting men	9,606
Total (fighting men)	<u>13,154</u>
Followers, public	2,275
Followers, private	937
Total (followers)	<u>3,212</u>
Total number of animals	1,750

(II) AN INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE

British fighting men	887
Indian fighting men	2,259
Total (fighting men)	<u>3,146</u>
Followers, public	194
Followers, private	155
Total (followers)	<u>349</u>
Animals	129

Also attached transport 448 pack mules and 269 camels (or equivalent mules) and 248 drivers.

(III) AN INDIAN CAVALRY BRIGADE

Indian fighting men	1,865
Followers (of all sorts)	662
Animals	2,032

Also attached transport 523 drivers and 876 animals.

It should be noted that the foregoing figures as regards fighting men include all officers and all armed men employed in administrative services, but not usually available in the ranks as fighting men. An Indian Division could probably muster rather over 10,000 bayonets in the ranks.

The "followers" of Indian formations are camp-followers such as sweepers, dhobis, cooks, and servants. They bear no arms.

APPENDIX C

H.M. SHIPS-OF-WAR OPERATING WITH THE SIXTH DIVISION

H.M.S. <i>Espiègle</i> (sloop) . . .	Armament: six 4-in. B.L., four 3-pr. Q.F. and maxims
H.M.S. <i>Odin</i> (sloop) . . .	Armament: six 4-in. B.L., four 3-pr. Q.F. and maxims
H.M.S. <i>Clio</i> (sloop) . . .	Armament: four 4-in. B.L., four 3-pr. Q.F. and maxims
H.M.S. <i>Firefly</i> (monitor) . . .	Armament: one 4-in. B.L., one 6-pr. Q.F., five maxims
H.M.S. <i>Comet</i> (paddle steamer)	Armament: one 12-pr., one 6-pr., two 3-pr. Q.F., two maxims
H.M.S. <i>Sumana</i> (tug) . . .	Armament: one 12-pr., two 3-pr. Q.F., one maxim
H.M.S. <i>Sheitan</i> (tug) . . .	Armament: one 12-pr., one 3-pr. Q.F., one maxim
H.M.S. <i>Louis Pelly</i> (launch) . . .	Armament: two 3-pr. Q.F.
H.M.S. <i>Miner</i> (gunboat) . . .	Armament: two 3-pr. Q.F., one maxim

Several river-steamers carried machine guns or mounted field artillery guns at times, but did not fly the white ensign. The *Louis Pelly* and the *Miner* were taken out of commission at the end of May 1915, but the *Miner* was brought back into commission later. The s.s. *Shushan* and s.s. *Messudieh* were given a pompom each and Nordenfelt machine guns and flew the white ensign as they usually towed the 4·7-inch naval-gun barges (horse-boats). They were stern paddle-wheel vessels. Two launches, *R.N.1* and *R.N.2*, were manned by men of the Royal Navy for a time, and carried one maxim apiece.

The ships *Espiègle*, *Odin*, *Clio*, *Louis Pelly*, and *Miner* did not operate with the 6th Division after the Kurna-Amarah advance.

APPENDIX D

RIVER-STEAMERS AND BARGES WITH THE SIXTH DIVISION

s.s. <i>Julnar</i> (400 tons)	. . .	Twin screws in tunnels
s.s. <i>Mejidieh</i> (300 tons)	. . .	Paddle steamer
s.s. <i>Blosse Lynch</i> (300 tons)	. . .	Paddle steamer
s.s. <i>Malamir</i> (200 tons)	. . .	Paddle steamer
s.s. <i>Salimi</i> (200 tons)	. . .	Paddle steamer
s.s. <i>Mosul</i> (200 tons)	. . .	Paddle steamer (captured from the Turks in May 1915)
s.s. <i>Bhamashir</i> (yacht)	. . .	Screw
s.s. <i>Kazimi</i>	. . .	Screw
s.s. <i>Samarra</i> (tug)	. . .	Screws
s.s. <i>Shirur</i> (tug)	. . .	Screws
s.s. <i>Shihab</i> (tug)	. . .	Screws
s.s. <i>Shushan</i>	. . .	Stern paddle-wheel ship
s.s. <i>Messudieh</i>	. . .	Stern paddle-wheel ship
s.s. <i>Muzaffarie</i>	. . .	Stern paddle-wheel ship (used at Nasa riyeh chiefly)
s.s. <i>Sherin</i> (tug)	. . .	Screws
s.s. <i>Karun</i>	. . .	Paddle steamer

P.1, P.2, P.3, P.4, P.5, P.6, and P.7. All paddle steamers.

T.1, T.2, T.3, and T.4. Twin screw steamers, small but double decked.

L.1, L.2, L.3, L.4, L.5, L.6, L.7, L.8, L.9, R.N.1 and R.N.2. Launches.

The *Aerial*. Shallow-draught horseboat with aerial propeller.

The *Delawar*. A launch.

There were also several motor-boats.

BARGES

Barges of all capacities were available, the largest capable of carrying a load of about 175 tons each with a 3-foot draught of water. All were of steel. The smallest had a capacity of about 60 tons load. There was also a special double-decked barge of very large size called the *Lusitania*, and other special barges for carrying aeroplanes.

APPENDIX E

TYPES OF NATIVE CRAFT

MAHELA.—A dhow. This type of boat varies much in size, the largest being capable of carrying nearly 100 tons load and the smallest about 15 tons, but a common size carries about 30 to 35 tons. These medium-sized boats are roughly 70 feet long and 18 feet to 20 feet in beam, with a single spar mast 50 feet to 70 feet high, with a pronounced forward rake, and rigged with a large lateen sail. Built of a strong but inferior wooden framework nailed together with long, soft-iron spikes, and covered with second-rate $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch planking, caulked with cotton-wool soaked in linseed oil. Has a high prow and carries a lofty poop fitted with a cabin of sorts. Rigged with inferior cotton-rope and carries one or more anchors of grapnel shape. Has a keel. Costs in Busrah about £200.

BELLUM.—A name describing craft of various sizes usually without keels. Generally applied to the smaller sizes propelled by paddling. These smaller boats are about 30 feet to 40 feet long and 4 feet to 5 feet in beam. Built of a fairly strong wooden framework covered with $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch planking caulked with cotton-wool and linseed oil. Are strong and travel well, but are heavy. Have scrolls at bow and stern as ornamentation. Will carry fifteen to twenty-five men each. Cost about £40 each. The larger sizes of bellums carry masts and sails.

MASHOOF.—A tiny boat resembling a gondola. Usually about 30 feet long, 3 feet beam, and very shallow draught. Of the most flimsy construction, being made of a very light and inferior wooden framework covered with $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch planking coated outside with bitumen. Extremely light, and very fast when propelled by paddles. Will carry four or five men. Cost about £3 each.

DANACK.—A glorified mashoof of rather stronger build. About 36 feet to 40 feet length and 5 feet to 7 feet 6 inches beam. Propelled by paddles, and will hold fifteen men comfortably and safely—sometimes more. Cost about £12 each. Covered with bitumen obtained chiefly from Hit on the Euphrates.

SAFINA.—A large flat-bottomed wooden barge with square bow and stern, shaped like a pontoon but of inferior construction. Capacity roughly 20 to 50 tons.

GISSARA.—A type of boat used in Turkish and Arab bridges (Arabic for bridge is "gissar"). Size usually about 36 feet long and 10 feet beam. The boat is 6 feet high from flat bottom to gunwale. Framework of round bullies, cross-braced, and covered with poor $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch planking coated outside with bitumen. The gissaras in the big floating bridge at Baghdad were much larger than the size above stated.

GÜFFAH.—A round coracle of hurdlework coated with bitumen and of diameter varying from 4 feet to 12 feet in the largest sizes. A usual diameter is about 7 feet, and this size will carry fifteen or twenty people. The coracle is propelled by two men paddling with mashoof paddles. Gūffahs are rarely met with on the Tigris below Amarah, but are used in very large numbers near Kut and up to Baghdad.

APPENDIX F

AIRCRAFT WITH THE SIXTH DIVISION

The aeroplanes which accompanied the 6th Division in its advance were of the following types :

- (i) B.E.2.c.—by Weirs & Co., of Glasgow, with 90 h.p. Royal Aircraft Factory engine, and capable of a speed of about 85 miles per hour.
- (ii) Maurice Farman Longhorn, with 70 h.p. Renault engine.
- (iii) Maurice Farman Shorthorn, with 70 h.p. Renault engine.
- (iv) Martynside (Martin Handyside), with 80 h.p. Gnome engine.

N.B.—Two Short hydro-aeroplanes (commonly called sea-planes) also accompanied the 6th Division in the charge of the Royal Naval Air Service. They had 120 h.p. Sunbeam engines. In October 1915 their floats were unshipped and wheels fitted to convert them into aeroplanes for lightness. They were fitted with wireless. The naval seaplanes were in the charge of Major Gordon, R.M.L.I. The Army airmen were commanded by Major Massy, 29th Punjabis. Many casualties occurred to the machines, but few among the airmen.

Eight flying machines went up to Lajj for the Battle of Ctesiphon, viz. six aeroplanes and two seaplanes converted into aeroplanes. Of these one aeroplane, a B.E.2.c. (pilot Lieutenant Graves), was smashed in landing at Lajj ; and two other machines, viz. a Maurice Farman Shorthorn (pilot Major Reilly, observer Captain Yates-Brown) and a Martynside (pilot Captain White), were early brought down in the Turkish lines beyond Ctesiphon and were captured. Engine failure in both cases. This left three aeroplanes, viz. two B.E.2.c. machines and one Maurice Farman Longhorn, and also the two converted Short seaplanes, for use during the battle. After the battle these five machines flew to Aziziah and thence to Kut. There the two seaplanes were packed on a barge and sent downstream. On December 1st, 1915, one B.E.2.c. aeroplane arrived in Kut from Busrah, but damaged badly. One Martynside machine had been stored in Kut and was there on

the arrival of the retreating 6th Division, but was not in working order. On December 7th, 1915, two aeroplanes left Kut downstream, viz. one B.E.2.c. (pilot Captain Murray with an observer) and one Maurice Farman Longhorn (pilot Captain Peter, R.F.C., observer Major Massy, 29th Punjabis). Another aeroplane, viz. a B.E.2.c. (pilot Captain Winfield-Smith, R.F.C., observer Captain Corbett, 48th Pioneers) also attempted to leave Kut on December 7th, but the engine refused to start. Another attempt was made on December 8th without success. On December 9th it was decided that this machine must remain in Kut. Thus, for the siege, there were only three aeroplanes in Kut, viz. one B.E.2.c. which had flown from Ctesiphon but refused to start at Kut, one B.E.2.c. which had arrived damaged from Busrah, and one Martynside stored in Kut but out of order. There were two pilots in Kut during the siege, viz. Captain Winfield-Smith, R.F.C., and Captain Wells, 33rd Punjabis, and three observers—Captain Corbett, 48th Pioneers, Captain Munday, Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, and 2nd Lieutenant Munroe, 21st Cavalry.

APPENDIX G

COMMUNIQUÉS ISSUED IN KUT BY MAJOR-GENERAL C. V. F. TOWNSHEND, C.B., D.S.O., COMMANDING SIXTH DIVISION AND FORCES IN KUT

Note.—The communiqués given in this Appendix do not include all those issued by General Townshend to his troops in Kut, but those omitted are mostly very brief, and of no great importance. All the more interesting communiqués are included. A message received from H.M. the King-Emperor is given in one of the chapters describing the siege of Kut.

I

KUT-EL-AMARAH,
January 26th, 1916.

The relieving force under General Aylmer has been unsuccessful in its efforts to dislodge the Turks entrenched on the right bank of the river some fourteen miles from the position of Es-Sin, where we defeated them in September last when the Turkish strength was greater than it is now.

Our relieving force suffered severe loss, and had very bad weather to contend against. More reinforcements are on the way up river, and I confidently expect to be relieved some day during the first half of the month of February.

I desire all ranks to know why I decided to make a stand at Kut during the retirement from Ctesiphon. It was because, as long as we hold Kut, the Turks cannot get their ships, barges, stores, and munitions past this, and so cannot move down to attack Amarah, and thus we are holding up the whole of the Turkish advance.

It also gives time for our reinforcements to come up from Busrah, and so restore success to our arms. It gives time to our allies the Russians, who are now overrunning Persia, to move towards Baghdad, which a large force is now doing.

I had a personal message from General Baratoff in command of the Russian Expeditionary Force in Persia the other day, telling me of his admiration of what you men of the 6th Division, and troops attached, have done in the past two months, and

telling me of his own progress on the road from Kirmanshah towards Baghdad.

By standing at Kut I maintain the territory we have won in the past year at the expense of much blood, beginning with your glorious victory at Shaiba; and thus we maintain the campaign as a glorious one instead of letting disaster pursue its course to Amarah, and perhaps beyond. I have ample food for eighty-four days, and that is not counting the 3,000 animals which can be eaten. When I defended Chitral some twenty years ago we lived well on atta and horseflesh, . . . but, as I repeat above, I expect confidently to be relieved in the first half of the month of February. Our duty stands out plain and simple. It is our duty to our Empire, to our beloved King and Country, to stand here and hold up the Turkish advance as we are doing now; and with the help of all, heart and soul with me, together we will make this defence to be remembered in history as a glorious one. All in England and in India are watching us now, and are proud of the splendid courage and devotion you have shown; and I tell you, let all remember the glorious defence of Plevna, for that is in my mind. I am absolutely calm and confident as to the result. The Turk, though very good behind a trench, is of little value in the attack: they have tried it once, and their losses in one night in their attempt on the fort were 2,000 alone; they have already had very heavy losses from General Aylmer's musketry and guns, and I have no doubt they have had enough.

I want to tell you all now that when I was ordered to advance on Ctesiphon I officially demanded an Army Corps, or at least two Divisions to do the task successfully, having pointed out the grave danger of attempting to do this with one Division only. I had done my duty: you know the result, and, whether I was right or not, your names will go down to history as the heroes of Ctesiphon, for heroes you proved yourselves to be in that battle. I perhaps by right should not have told you of the above, but I feel I owe it to all of you to speak straight and openly and take you into my confidence, for God knows I felt our heavy losses and the sufferings of my poor wounded, and shall remember it as long as I live. No general I know of has been more loyally obeyed and served than I have been in command of the 6th Division.

These words are long, I am afraid, but I speak straight from the heart, and you will see that I have thrown officialdom overboard. We will succeed, mark my words, *but save your ammunition as if it were gold.*

(signed) CHARLES TOWNSHEND,
Major-General, Commanding 6th Division.

II

KUT-EL-AMARAH,
March 10th, 1916.

As on a former occasion, I take the troops of all ranks into my confidence, and repeat the two following telegrams from General Aylmer, from which they will see that our relieving force has again failed to relieve us.

First Telegram, March 8th

“To-day’s operations terminated in a gallant but unsuccessful attempt to storm the Dujailah Redoubt. Troops pushed home the attack, and carried out the operation with great gallantry; but the enemy was able to mass reinforcements which arrived from the left bank at Magasis and from Shumrān, and we were unable to break through. Unless the enemy retires from his present position on the right bank, which does not seem at all probable, we shall be unable to maintain ourselves in our present position owing to lack of water; and unless the enemy evacuates the Sinn position we shall be obliged to withdraw to our previous position at Wadi.”

Second Telegram, March 8th

“We have been unable to break through to relieve you to-day and may have to withdraw to Wadi to-morrow, but I hope to make another attempt before long and relieve you at an early date. Please wire movements of enemy, who in any case suffered most severely, as their repeated counter-attacks have been repulsed with heavy loss.”

I know you will all be deeply disappointed to hear this news. We have now stood a three months’ siege in a manner which has called upon you the praise of our beloved King, and our fellow-countrymen in England, Scotland, Ireland, and India; and all this after your brilliant battles of Kut-el-Amarah and Ctesiphon and your retirement to Kut, all of which feats of arms are now famous. Since December 5th you have spent three months of cruel uncertainty, and to all men and all people uncertainty is intolerable. I say on the top of this comes the second failure to relieve us; and I ask you to give a little sympathy to me also who have commanded you in these battles referred to, and having come to you as a stranger now love my command with a depth of feeling I have never known in my life before. When I mention myself, I would couple the names of the generals under me whose names are distinguished in the Army as leaders of men. I am speaking to you, as I did before, straight from the heart, and, as I say, ask

your sympathy for my feelings, having promised you relief on certain dates on the promise of those ordered to relieve us. Not their fault, no doubt—do not think that I blame them; they are giving their lives freely and deserve our gratitude and admiration. But I want you to help me again as before. I have asked General Aylmer for the next attempt, which must be made before the end of this month, to bring such numbers as will break down all resistance and leave no doubt of the issue. Large reinforcements are reaching him, including an English division of 17,000 men, the leading brigade of which must have reached Wadi by now—that is to say, General Aylmer's headquarters.

In order, then, to hold out, I am killing a large number of horses so as to reduce the quantity of grain eaten every day, and I have had to reduce your ration. It is necessary to do this in order to keep our flag flying. I am determined to hold out, and I know you are with me in this, heart and soul.

(signed) CHARLES TOWNSEND,
Major-General, Commanding the Garrison at Kut.

III

KUT-EL-AMARAH,
April 10th, 1916.

The result of the attack of the Relief Force on the Turks entrenched in the Sannaiyat position is that the Relief Force has not as yet won its way through, but is entrenched close up to the Turks in places some 200 to 300 yards distant. General Gorringe wired me last night that he was consolidating his position, as close to the enemy's trenches as he can get, with the intention of attacking again. He had had some difficulty with the flood which he had remedied. I have no other details. However, you will see that I must not run any risk over the date calculated to which our rations would last, namely, April 15th, as you will all understand well that digging means delay, though General Gorringe does not say so. I am compelled, therefore, to make an appeal to you all to make a determined effort to eke out our scanty means, so that I can hold out for certain till our comrades arrive, and I know I shall not appeal to you in vain.

I have, then, to reduce the rations to five ounces of meal for all ranks, British and Indian. In this way I can hold out till April 21st if it becomes necessary. I do not think it will become necessary, but it is my duty to take all precautions in my power. I am very sorry I can no longer favour the Indian soldiers in the matter of meal, but there is no possibility of doing so now. It must be remembered that

there is plenty of horseflesh which they have been authorised by their religious leaders to eat.

In my communiqué to you on January 26th I told you that our duty stood out plain and simple: it was to stand here and hold up the Turkish advance on the Tigris, working heart and soul together; and I expressed the hope that we would make this defence to be remembered in history as a glorious one; and I asked you in this connection to remember the defence of Plevna, which was longer than that even of Ladysmith.

Well, you have nobly carried out your mission; you have nobly answered the trust and appeal I put to you. The whole British Empire, let me tell you, is ringing now with our defence of Kut. You will all be proud to say one day, "I was one of the garrison of Kut"; and as for Plevna and Ladysmith, we have beaten them also. Whatever happens now, we have done our duty; in my report of the defence of this place which has now been telegraphed to headquarters, I said that it was not possible in despatches to mention every one, but I could safely say that every individual in this force had done his duty to his King and Country. I was absolutely calm and confident, as I told you on January 26th, of the ultimate result, and I am confident now; I ask you all, comrades of all ranks, British and Indian, to help me now in this food question.

(signed) CHARLES TOWNSHEND,
Major-General, Commanding the Garrison at Kut.

IV

KUT-EL-AMARAH,
April 11th, 1916.

General Sir Percy Lake, the Army Commander, wired me yesterday evening to say: "There can be no doubt that Gorringe can in time force his way through to Kut; in consequence of yesterday's failure, however, it is certainly doubtful if he can reach you by April 15th." This is in answer to a telegram from me yesterday morning to say that, as it appeared to me doubtful that General Gorringe would be here by the 15th, I had reluctantly still further reduced the rations so as to hold on till April 21st. I hope the Indian officers will help me now in my great need in using commonsense talk with the Indian soldiers to eat horseflesh, as the Arabs of the town are doing.

(signed) CHARLES TOWNSHEND,
Major-General, Commanding the Garrison at Kut.

V

KUT-EL-AMARAH,
April 28th, 1916.

It became clear, after General Gorrings's second repulse on April 22nd at Sannaiyat, of which I was informed by the Army Commander by wire, that the Relief Force could not win its way through in anything like time to relieve us, our limit of resistance as regards food being April 29th. It is hard to believe that the large forces comprising the Relief Force now could not fight their way to Kut, but there is the fact staring us in the face. I was then ordered to open negotiations for the surrender of Kut; in the words of the Army Commander's telegram, "the onus not lying on yourself. You are in the position of having conducted a gallant and successful defence, and you will be in a position to get better terms than any emissary of ours . . . the Admiral, who has been in consultation with the Army Commander, considers that you with your prestige are likely to get the best terms. . . . We can of course supply food as you may arrange."

Those considerations alone, namely that I can help my comrades of all ranks to the end, have decided me to overcome my bodily illness and the anguish of mind which I am suffering now, and I have interviewed the Turkish General-in-Chief yesterday, who is full of admiration at "an heroic defence of five months," as he put it. Negotiations are still in progress, but I hope to be able to announce your departure for India on parole not to serve against the Turks, since the Turkish Commander-in-Chief says he thinks it will be allowed, and has wired to Constantinople to ask for this; and the *Julnar*, which is lying with food for us at Magasis now, may be permitted to come to us.

Whatever has happened, my comrades, you can only be proud of yourselves. We have done our duty to King and Empire; the whole world knows we have done our duty.

I ask you to stand by me with your ready and splendid discipline, shown throughout, in the next few days for the expedition of all service I demand of you. We may possibly go into camp, I hope between the fort and town along the shore whence we can easily embark.

The following message has been received from the Army Commander: "The C.-in-C. has desired me to convey to you and your brave and devoted troops his appreciation of the manner in which you together have undergone the suffering and hardships of the siege, which he knows has been due to the high spirit of devotion to duty in which you have met the call of your Sovereign and Empire. The C.-in-C.'s sentiments are shared by myself, General Gorrings, and all the troops

of the Tigris column. We can only express extreme disappointment, and regret that our effort to relieve you should not have been crowned with success."

Copy of a telegram from Captain Nunn, C.M.G., R.N.

"We, the officers and men of the Royal Navy who have been associated with the Tigris Corps, and many of us so often worked with you and your gallant troops, desire to express our heartfelt regret at our inability to join hands with you and your comrades in Kut."

(signed) C. V. F. TOWNSHEND,
Major-General,
Commanding 6th Division and Forces at Kut.

VI

KUT-EL-AMARAH,
April 29th, 1916.

1. The G.O.C. has sent the following letter to the Turkish Commander-in-Chief :

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

Hunger forces me to lay down our arms, and I am ready to surrender to you my brave soldiers who have done their duty, as you have affirmed when you said "Your gallant troops will be our most sincere and precious guests." Be generous then; they have done their duty; you have seen them in the Battle of Ctesiphon; you have seen them during the retirement; and you have seen them during the Siege of Kut for the last five months, in which time I have played the strategical rôle of blocking your counter-offensive and allowed time for our reinforcements to arrive in Iraq. You have seen how they have done their duty, and I am certain that the military history of this war will affirm this in a decisive manner. I send two of my officers, Captain Morland and Major Gilchrist, to arrange details.

I am ready to put Kut into your hands at once and go into your camp as soon as you can arrange details, but I pray you to expedite the arrival of food.

I propose that your Chief Medical Officer should visit my hospitals with my P.M.O. He will be able to see for himself the state of many of my troops—there are some without arms and legs, some with scurvy. I do not suppose you wish to take these into captivity, and in fact the better course would be to let the wounded and sick go to India.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, London, wires me

that the exchange of prisoners of war is permitted. An equal number of Turks in Egypt and India would be liberated in exchange for the same number of my combatants.

Accept my highest regards.

(signed) GENERAL TOWNSHEND,
Major-General,
Commanding the 6th Division and the Force at Kut.

2. I would add to the above that there is strong ground for hoping that the Turks will eventually agree to all being exchanged. I have received notification from the Turkish Commander-in-Chief to say I can start for Constantinople; having arrived there, I shall petition to be allowed to go to London on parole, and see the Secretary of State for War and get you exchanged at once. In this way I hope to be of great assistance to you all. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your devotion and your discipline and bravery, and may we all meet soon in better times.

(signed) CHARLES TOWNSHEND,
Major-General,
Commanding the 6th Division and the Force at Kut.

APPENDIX H

RETURN OF BRITISH OFFICERS, INDIAN OFFICERS, N.C.O.'s AND MEN IN KUT-EL-AMARAH OR VICINITY ON MARCH 14TH, 1916

Unit.	Officers.		Other Ranks.		Followers.	Unit Totals.	Brigade, etc. Totals.	Brigades, etc.
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.				
H.Q. 6th Division	16	1	44	57	41	159	159	H.Q. 6th Division
H.Q. 16th Infy. Brigade .	3	—	11	13	13	40	1,984	16th Bde.
2nd Dorset Regt.	13	—	406	—	34	453		
66th Punjabis .	8	16	—	514	60	598		
104th Rifles .	5	10	—	358	44	417		
117th Mahrattas .	6	17	—	408	45	476		
H.Q. 17th Infy. Brigade .	2	—	11	7	15	35	1,926	17th Bde.
1st Oxford & Bucks L.I. .	9	—	381	—	25	415		
22nd Punjabis .	7	10	—	382	55	454		
103rd Mahratta L.I. .	6	18	—	427	50	501		
119th Infantry .	7	16	—	455	43	521		
H.Q. 18th Infy. Brigade .	4	—	2	—	9	15	1,866	18th Bde.
2nd Norfolk Regt.	10	—	371	—	32	413		
7th Rajputs .	7	7	—	363	49	425		
110th Mahratta L.I. .	7	13	—	428	51	499		
120th Infantry .	7	13	—	454	40	514		
H.Q. 30th Infy. Brigade .	3	—	1	—	6	10	2,500	30th Bde.
2nd R. W. Kent Regt. .	6	—	302	—	11	319		
1/4th Hants Regt.	10	—	182	—	14	206		
24th Punjabis .	9	12	—	508	38	567		
67th Punjabis .	6	9	—	302	27	344		
76th Punjabis .	8	18	—	424	55	505		
2/7th Gurkhas .	6	14	—	503	26	549		

Unit.	Officers.		Other Ranks.		Followers.	Unit Totals.	Brigade, etc. Totals.	Brigades, etc.
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.				
48th Pioneers	7	7	—	350	54	428	1,213	Divisional Troops (excluding cavalry)
H.Q. D.E.C.	6	—	4	1	18	29		
17th Co. S. & M.	4	3	2	161	15	185		
22nd Co. S. & M.	2	2	1	170	16	191		
Sirmoor Sappers	2	5	—	88	12	107		
Bridging Train	1	1	—	28	4	34		
Searchlight Section	1	—	10	—	1	12		
34th Divl. Signal Co.	5	2	51	100	19	177		
Wireless Signal Squad	1	—	16	—	2	19		
30th Bde. Signal Section	1	—	9	14	7	31		
23rd Divl. Cavalry Cavalry Depot	2	2	—	98	13	115	312	Cavalry
	1	6	8	171	11	197		
H.Q. C.R.A.	4	—	7	—	9	20	1,288	Artillery
H.Q. 10th Bde., R.F.A.	2	—	14	1	1	18		
63rd Battery R.F.A.	4	—	126	34	7	171		
76th Battery R.F.A.	4	—	136	34	10	184		
82nd Battery R.F.A.	4	—	123	30	14	171		
6th Ammn. Column 1/5th Hants. Howr. Battery	4	—	116	61	54	235		
H.Q. (H.) Bde., R.G.A.	1	—	4	—	4	9		
86th Heavy Battery R.G.A.	4	—	76	15	10	105		
104th Heavy Bty. R.G.A.	4	—	49	63	11	127		
Volr. Artillery Bty. No. 1 Indian Mountain Artillery Bde.	5	—	53	—	10	68		
Machine Gun Bty. R.A. details (under 17th Bde.)	1	—	—	8	—	9		
	1	—	8	19	4	32		
	2	—	99	—	3	104		
Army Corps Signal Co.	1	1	26	11	30	69	69	Army Troops
Medical Establishment	21	1	45	60	676	803	803	Medical
Supply Establishment	16	—	35	—	384	435	1,556	S. & T. Corps.
Transport Establishment	4	—	8	71	1,028	1,121		

Unit.	Officers.		Other Ranks.		Followers.	Unit Totals.	Brigade, etc. Totals.	Brigades, etc.
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.				
Veterinary Establishment . . .	2	—	3	1	34	40	198	Miscellaneous
Ordnance Establishment . . .	—	—	3	—	19	22		
Royal Flying Corps . . .	5	—	45	—	13	63		
Military Governor . . .	1	1	2	1	27	32		
Mech. Transport Corps . . .	2	—	9	2	2	15		
Survey Party . . .	—	2	—	—	14	16		
Post Office . . .	1	1	3	—	5	10		
Totals . . .	293	208	2,839	7,311	3,313			

SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS ON MARCH 14TH, 1916

	British.		Indian.		Followers.
	Officers.	Rank and File.	Officers.	Rank and File.	
Shown as with units . . .	236	2,400	192	5,985	
Extra-regimentally employed . . .	29	225	4	271	
In General Hospital or Field Ambulance	28	214	12	1,055	
	293	2,839	208	7,311	3,313
Deduct (approx.) accounted for in two places	11	183	—	91	3
	282	2,656	208	7,220	3,310
		282		208	
		3,310		3,310	
Totals	(approx.)	2,938	(approx.)	10,738	
Grand Total		13,676			

APPENDIX I
FOOD-SUPPLIES DURING THE SIEGE OF KUT

(i) BRITISH RATIONS
(From January 21st, 1916)

Date.	Jan. 21.	Jan. 22.	Jan. 23.	Jan. 26.	Jan. 31.	Feb. 3.	Feb. 8.	Feb. 15.	Feb. 23.	Mar. 5.	Mar. 8.	Mar. 10.	Mar. 12.	Mar. 27.	April 12.	April 16.	April 22
	Full Ration																
Bread	1 lb.	12 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.	12 oz.	10 oz.	10 oz.	8 oz.	6 oz.	5 oz.	4 oz.
Meat	1 lb.	1 lb.	1 lb.	1 lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 ½ lb.	1 lb.	1 lb.	1 lb.
{ Bacon or	3 oz.	3 oz.	3 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
{ Cheese or	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
{ Jam or	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	1 ½ oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
{ Butter	3 oz.	3 oz.	3 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Potatoes or																	
Vegetables	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sugar	2 ½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Dates	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Tea	1 oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Remarks.—Minor rations, such as pepper, salt, etc., are omitted. On the issue of the Reserve Rations on April 23, 1916, the bread ration became 6 oz. and the meat 6 oz. From April 26, 1916, till the end of the siege the bread ration (aeroplane) was 4 oz. again and the meat 1 lb. On April 26, 1916, there was a small issue of saccharine and chocolate.

(ii) INDIAN RATIONS
(From January 20th, 1916)

Date.	—	Jan. 21.	Feb. 24.	March 8.	March 18.	April 11.	April 16.	April 22 to April 29 (b)
	Full Ration.							
{ Rice or	1½ lb.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
{ Atta	1½ lb.	1½ lb.	4 oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	4 oz.
Barley meal	Nil	Nil	10 oz.	10 oz.	10 oz.	5 oz.	4 oz.	Nil
Barley to parch	Nil	Nil	Nil	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	4 oz.	Nil
Meat	(a)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	12 oz.	9 oz.	9 oz.
Vegetables	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Goor (sugar)	2 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1 oz.
Ghi (clarified butter)	2 oz.	2 oz.	½ oz.	½ oz.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Dhall	4 oz.	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)

Remarks.—(a) Horseflesh at 12 oz. was available from Jan. 21, 1916, but was not eaten by the Indians. Before that there was no meat for Indians.

(b) Reserve or aeroplane rations.

(c) Date on which Dhall failed uncertain.

Minor supplies omitted for brevity.

On the arrival of the 6th Division in Kut after the retreat from Ctesiphon the total supplies from various sources in the place were fifty-six days' rations (excluding meat) and ten days' preserved meat for British troops; and fifty-four days' rations for Indian troops. Also fourteen days' firewood and fourteen days' fodder. These figures exclude local supplies.

On December 6th the 6th Cavalry Brigade left Kut, taking with it three days' rations. This reduction in our strength made more food available for those left behind. The fodder actually lasted one month. When it was exhausted, it was replaced by palm leaves, chaff from mills, grass cut by night, and even palm trees sawn into sections which were greedily eaten by the starving horses.

For the first month the troops had full rations—in fact, for a few days in December the British bread ration was raised, though it dropped when the Relief Force was first checked. The men had hard work to do, and were exhausted. Local supplies were collected by the A.D.S., assisted by the Military Governor and Mr. Tod of Messrs. Lynch Brothers.

Of the 6,000 inhabitants most had their own food, but some had not. Food depots were opened where the Arabs could buy food, and in some cases food was issued free in exchange for tickets issued by the Military Governor. The limit per person was ½ oke (14 oz.) of grain per head. About 750 rations were issued daily, representing probably 3,000-3,300 souls. A soup-kitchen was also started. House-to-house searches

were made, and all food beyond that required to keep the owners alive up to May 1st was requisitioned. In this way the following amounts were collected :

Barley from Messrs. Lynch Bros.	267 tons
Barley from Woolpress Village	360 „
Barley from Kut town	300 „
Total	927 tons
Wheat	100 tons
Ghi	19½ „

Also small quantities of dates, etc.

Barley was at first used only for animals, but at the end of January it was evident that it must be used for men too. For grinding corn we had oil-engine mills and hand mills. At first wheat was ground and later barley. The oil-driven mills could grind about 2,200 lb. of grain a day and the donkey mills 1,680 lb.; the best day's work was 11,200 lb. running night and day. The mill-stones cracked and wore, and attempts to make others failed. Our aeroplanes dropped only one. When the last grain had been ground, there was just *five hours' fuel* left for the engines.

On February 9th we started brown bread (one-third flour and two-thirds atta) for the British troops. This made the atta run short, and later the Indian troops were put on barley meal and atta, and subsequently on barley meal and cleaned barley which they had to parch.

On December 2nd, 1915, we had about thirty days' slaughter cattle and ten days' preserved beef to consume, then the Heavy Battery oxen, and then the horses and mules. On January 22nd there were 3,000 horses and mules in Kut. This seemed too many, as our other supplies were then timed to finish on April 14th. The S. and T. Corps estimated at that time that we could last eighty-four days longer; but later we found that the barley was 200 tons short of the estimate, so rations had to be still further reduced. Eighteen hundred animals would give us enough meat to last till April 4th. Consequently permission was asked to kill 1,200 animals, but General Aylmer objected as he wished our animals to be ready for use when the Kut garrison co-operated with the Relief Force. Our animals were being killed at the rate of twelve to fifteen per diem for food for the British troops. On March 10th we had 2,400 animals left—an excessive number for our food up to April 15th, which was then considered the ultimate date for our grain rations. General Townshend then sanctioned the destruction of 417 animals. This was done and they were buried. Had the Indians begun to eat horseflesh in January, this wholesale slaughter would have

been unnecessary, and the Indian grain ration could have been reduced and our grain would have lasted longer. *But* we could not have ground more grain than we did owing to lack of fuel for the oil engines and insufficient mills.

Aeroplane Supplies.—The aeroplanes of the Relief Force dropped supplies as follows :—April 16th, 1,710 lbs. ; April 17th, 744 lbs. ; April 18th, 1,568 lbs. ; April 19th, 572 lbs ; April 20th, 1,535 lbs ; April 21st, 1,175 lbs. ; April 22nd, 777 lbs.; April 23rd, 2,159 lbs. ; April 24th, 2,117 lbs. ; April 25th, 1,667 lbs. ; April 26th, 1,715 lbs. ; April 27th, 442 lbs.—total, 15,975 lbs. Our requirements for a 4-oz. ration for all troops were 3,468 lbs. a day. The amount dropped gave us a 4-oz. ration for four days, *i.e.* 3 oz. flour = 4-oz. loaf, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. cocoa, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. sugar.

During the siege an Arab exchanged his donkey for a hen. The donkey cost him two annas a day to feed—the hen brought him in eight annas for each egg she laid ! Milk was procurable for sick men in small quantities even after all cattle and all animals except Government ones had been slaughtered. No questions were asked.

APPENDIX J

SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES AT KUT-EL-AMARAH DURING THE SIEGE, FROM DECEMBER 4TH, 1915, TO APRIL 28TH, 1916, INCLUSIVE

—	Killed.	Died of Wounds.	Wounded.	Missing.	Died of Disease.	Total.
British officers . . .	9	10	44	1	4	68
Indian officers . . .	8	7	21	1	5	42
British ranks . . .	84	105	351	2	68	610
Indian ranks . . .	369	278	1,253	64	531	2,495
Followers . . .	67	88	289	4	123	571
Totals . . .	537	488	1,958	72	731	3,786

The 1st Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry and the 119th Infantry did not submit their returns to headquarters for the last week of the siege in time to be included in the above return. Their totals, however, were very small in this period, as practically no men were killed or wounded. It should be noted that the number of wounded includes those shown in the column headed "Died of Wounds." Hence the total number of living wounded at the end of the siege was 1,958 — 488 = 1,470. In a few cases also a soldier was admitted wounded on more than one occasion and appears twice or more in the total of wounded.

APPENDIX K

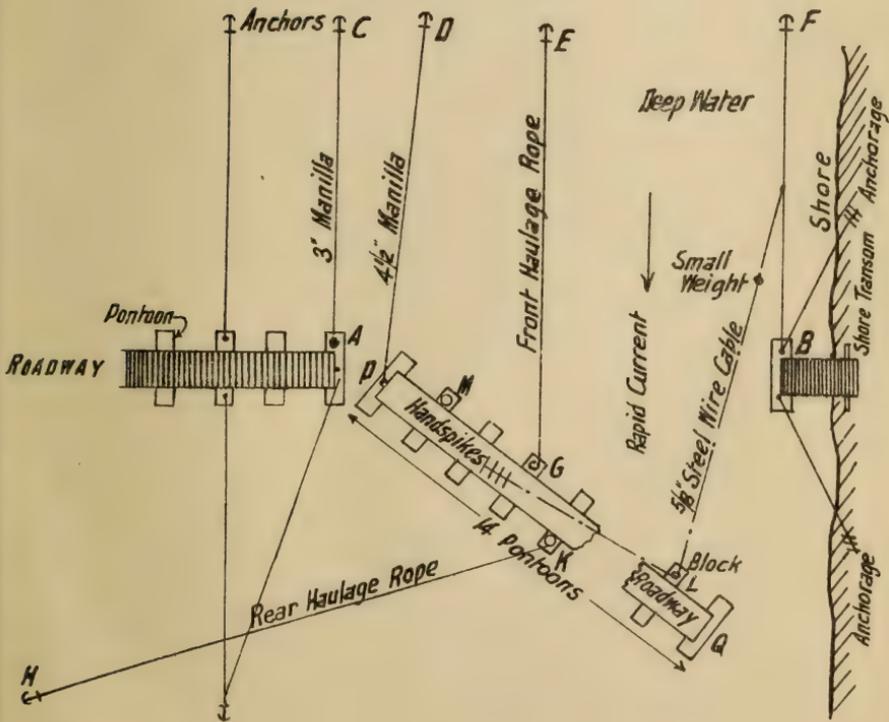
FLOATING BRIDGE CUT DESIGN

Description.—All anchor cables are of 3-inch Manilla rope except cable DP, which is of $4\frac{1}{2}$ -inch Manilla rope. The swinging cut PQ (see diagram) of fourteen pontoons is $13 \times 15 = 195$ feet in length. Pontoons P and Q swing up close alongside pontoons A and B respectively, and cut baulks are used for both these half-spans. P is the pivot point. The anchor cable DP is at a slight angle to the current, and is carried to the saddle at P and then under the decking to the next two saddles, being made fast to all. The angle of DP tends to swing pontoon P clear of pontoon A when the cut begins to open. The $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch steel wire cable for the haulage of the cut is attached to the anchor cable FB, runs through a single block at L, and has four hand-spikes attached to its end. These handspikes are manned by eight men who pull as a team and march along the swinging cut from Q towards P to close the cut. On arrival at M, when the cut will be about half closed, they continue on to P while one man slips the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch cable into the snatch-block at M. The team at once turns about and marches back towards Q, and the cut swings completely up into position. Two men assist by hauling on the rope EG, and finally make it fast at the sixth pontoon from P. Other men haul on short haulage ropes attached to the bow and stern of pontoon P, while sitting on pontoon A, so as to guide pontoon P into place laterally if required. The rope HK is used in opening the cut against a strong wind. The whole swinging cut is cross-braced with $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch steel wire rope from saddle-beam to saddle-beam throughout, and is sufficiently stiff in a current of 3 knots. Cut baulks are used at each end to quicken the work of completing the roadway.

FLOATING BRIDGE CUT DESIGN

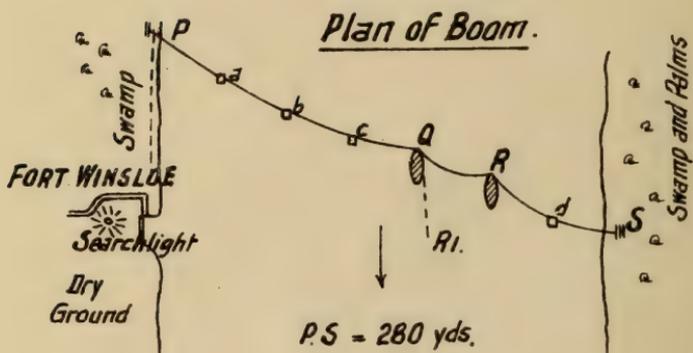
— Plan of —

SWINGING CUT FOR LARGE STEAMERS.

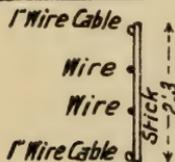


KURNA BOOM.

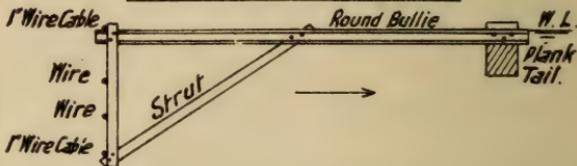
300 Yards above Bridge.



Section of Boom



Elevation of "Fish Float"



Wire cables & wires wired onto verticals. Bullie halved where tail attached

APPENDIX L

THE LOWER BOOM ACROSS THE TIGRIS RIVER AT KURNA

The rough diagram herewith gives a plan of the lower boom of the two constructed at Kurna. This boom was constructed 300 yards upstream of the floating bridge to protect it from floating, or slightly submerged, mines. Strong holdfasts at P and S formed attachments for the two 1-inch steel wire cables which took the strain due to the current. The boom was really a wire fence of the section shown, the steel cables and telegraph-wires being kept in place by small sticks lashed across vertically at intervals of 10 feet or so. Q and R were large mahelas with special bowsprits to which the boom cables were attached at water-level. Each mahela had a number of large anchors out to prevent dragging, for the strain was enormous. a, b, c, and d, were single-barrel rafts to support the cables, and each was securely anchored. I rigged a windlass inside mahela R so that I could release one end of the length QR and allow it to swing astern of Q to make a "cut" to allow ships to pass (as in QR₁). To keep the fence vertical in the water was a problem. This was solved by improvising what I christened "fish-floats." The diagram shows one of these. If the fence attempted to tilt, the plank-tail of the float, at the heavier end of the horizontal "bullie," was lifted from the water; the weight of the spar then forced the fence again into the vertical position as the tail fell back on to the water. The plank-tail kept the fish-float always pointing upstream. Fish-floats were placed every 10 yards. They acted excellently and caused considerable amusement at times by their porpoise-like dives. The boom was set at an angle so as to collect mines at the end S away from Kurna. Wire netting was first tried, but proved a failure owing to excessive obstruction.

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