مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

This PDF was generated on 23/07/2023 from online resources of the **Qatar Digital Library**

The online record can be viewed at:
http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100000001491.0x000220
It contains extra information, high resolution zoomable views and transcriptions.

Papers relating to the Mesopotamia Expedition

Holding Institution	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Reference	Mss Eur F112/163-164
Date(s)	18 Feb 1915-26 Aug 1917 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
Extent and Format	2 files (551 folios)
Copyright for document	Unknown

About this record

The file consists of two physical files of papers (Mss Eur F112/163 and 164), relating to the Mesopotamia [Iraq] Expedition of the First World War.

The first physical file (Mss Eur F112/163, ff 1-270), consists of: letters to Lord Curzon; printed copies of letters and telegrams, including telegrams from General Sir John (Eccles) Nixon, commanding the Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia, to the Chief of the General Staff, and between the Secretary of State for India, Austen Chamberlain, and the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge; Committee of Imperial Defence papers; India Office Military Department papers, including a 'Précis of Correspondence regarding the Mesopotamian Expedition-Its Genesis and Development'; some handwritten notes by Curzon; and other reports.

The other reports include:

- 'REPORT BY Major-General C.V.F. [Charles Vere Ferrers] Townshend, C.B. [Companion of the Bath], D.S.O. [Distinguished Service Order], on the operations of the Troops under his Command from 11th November to 3rd December 1915.', forwarded by Lieutenant-General Sir Percy (Henry Noel) Lake, Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force 'D', General Staff, India, 8-9 November 1915

- 'Collection of Papers relating to the Operations in Mesopotamia up to 5th December 1915', with an addendum

- ‘MESOPOTAMIAN OPERATIONS’, typed notes by Austen Chamberlain, 14 July 1916.

The letters to Curzon are from correspondents including: Hardinge; Townshend, commander of the 6th (Poona) Division; Chamberlain; Valentine Chirol; General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff; Lovat Fraser; Colonel Francis Richard Maunsell; and Percy Zachariah Cox, Chief Political Officer, Indian Expeditionary Force ‘D’.

The papers discuss matters including: the outbreak of the War to the occupation of Basra; the Battle of Ctesiphon; the occupation and siege of Kut-el-Amara [Al-Kut]; the advance on Bagdad [Baghdad]; the alleged underfunding of the Expedition and the breakdown of the transport, supply and medical departments; the views of Sir George Buchanan, adviser to the military authorities in Mesopotamia, on the need to improve the port of Busra [Basra] and lines of communication with the front; Lovat Fraser’s opinion that Lake should be replaced as commander-in-chief of the Mesopotamian Force by Sir James Willcocks; Maunsell’s views on a scheme for the division of Turkey-in-Asia [the Asian territories of the Ottoman Empire] after the War; and the War Committee approving in principle the transfer of responsibility for direction of operations in Mesopotamia from the Government of India to the War Office.

The second physical file (Mss Eur F112/164, ff 271-551), consists of reports, memoranda, and other papers, mostly of the Mesopotamia Commission, the War Cabinet, and the India Office, and letters to Curzon, relating to the report of the Mesopotamia Commission. It notably includes the following:

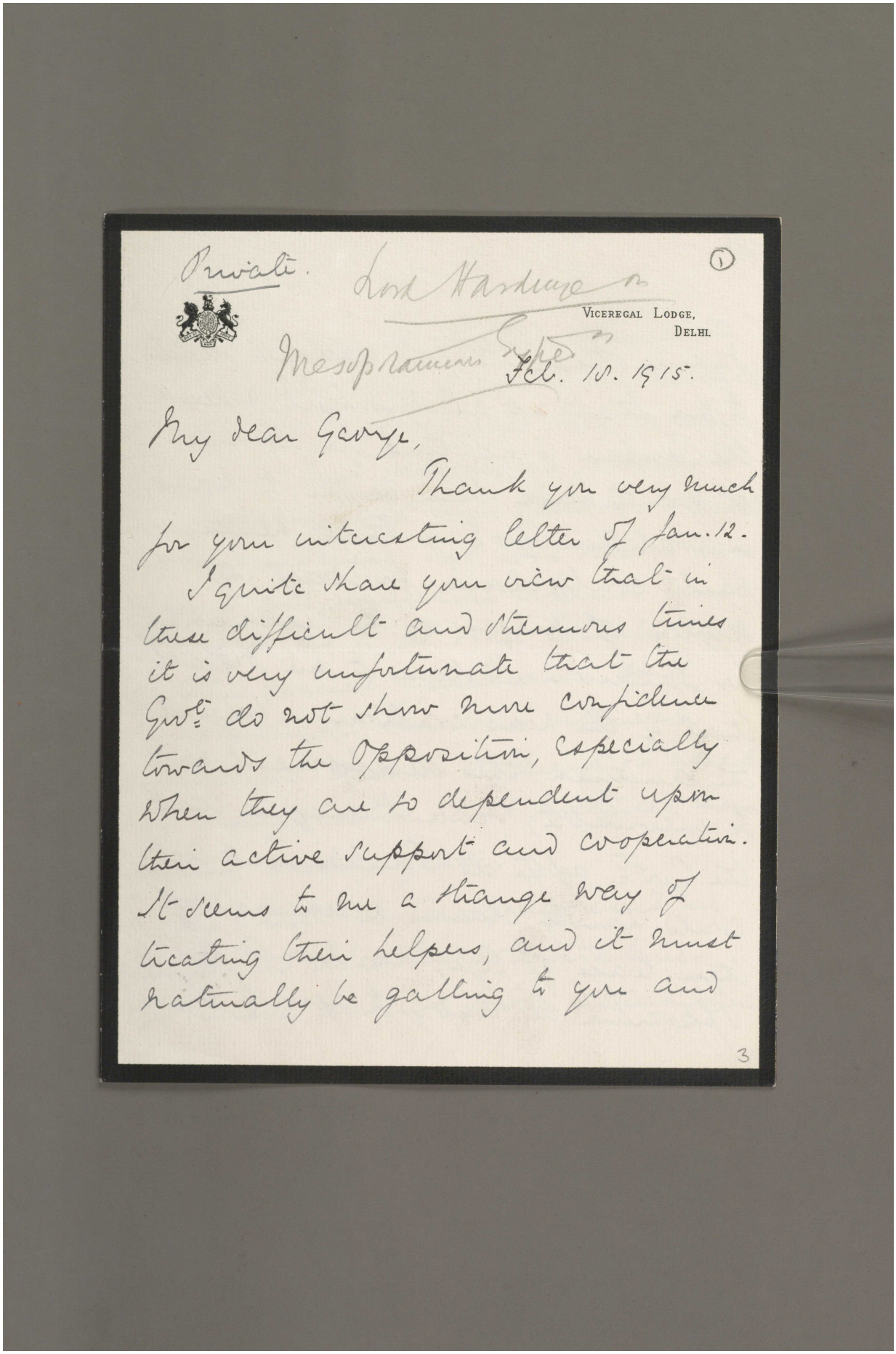
- A copy and proof copy of ‘MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION. REPORT of the Commission Appointed by Act of Parliament to Enquire into the Operations of War in MESOPOTAMIA, together with a Separate Report by Commander J. [Josiah Clement] Wedgwood, D.S.O., M.P., and Appendices.’, 1917 (ff 286-383, and ff 384-481)

- Memorandum by Curzon on the report of the Mesopotamia Commission, printed for the War Cabinet, 4 June 1917 (ff 484-489)

- Notes of a meeting held on 18 June 1917 at the Privy Council Office relating to disciplinary action in connection with the conclusions of the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission (ff 496-502)

- ‘Correspondence regarding the Deficiency of Troops in India.’, by General Edmund (George) Barrow, Military Secretary, India Office, 4 August 1916 (ff 527-541).

The letters to Curzon are from correspondents including: George Hamilton, Chairman of the Mesopotamia Commission; Chamberlain; Edwin Samuel Montagu, Secretary of State for India from 17 July 1917; and Barrow.



Private. Lord Hardinge on Mesopotamian Expedn

(1)

VICEREGAL LODGE,
DELHI.

Feb. 18. 1915.

My dear George,

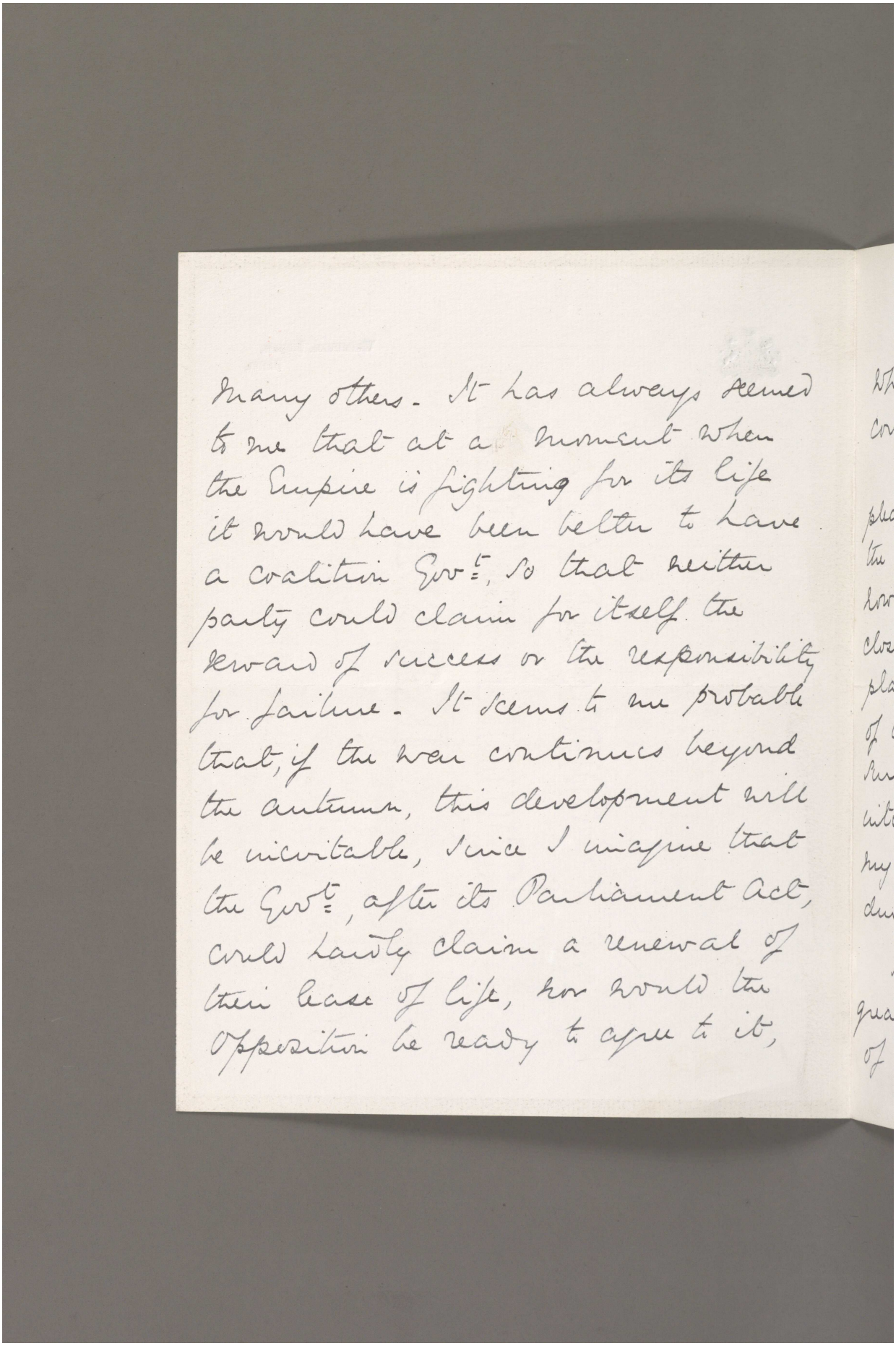
Thank you very much for your interesting letter of Jan. 12.

I quite share your view that in these difficult and strenuous times it is very unfortunate that the Govt. do not show more confidence towards the Opposition, especially when they are so dependent upon their active support and cooperation. It seems to me a strange way of treating their helpers, and it must naturally be galling to you and

3

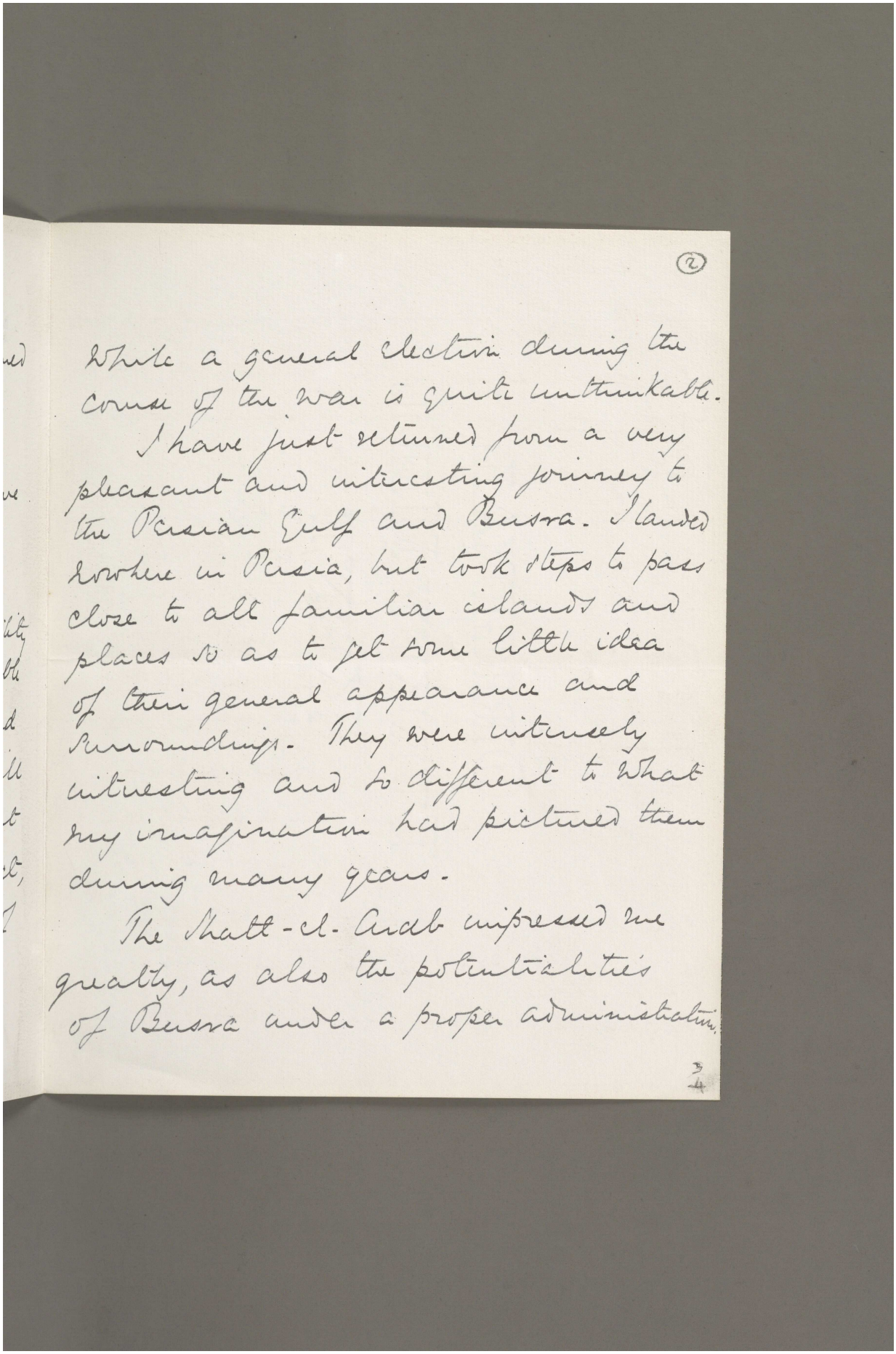
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000c5



many others. It has always seemed to me that at a moment when the Empire is fighting for its life it would have been better to have a coalition Govt., so that neither party could claim for itself the reward of success or the responsibility for failure. It seems to me probable that, if the war continues beyond the autumn, this development will be inevitable, since I imagine that the Govt., after its Parliament Act, could hardly claim a renewal of their lease of life, nor would the Opposition be ready to agree to it,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000010



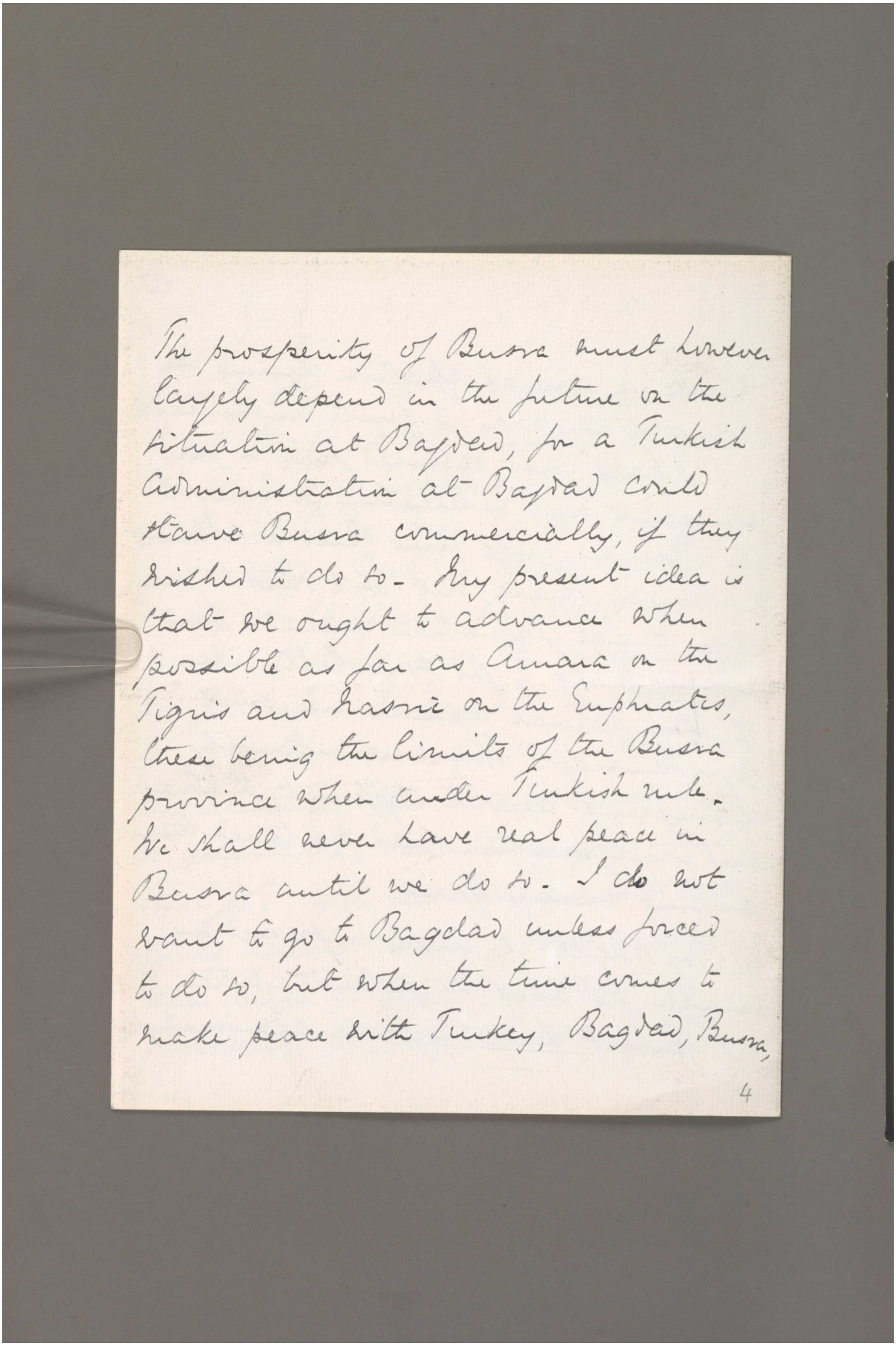
(2)

While a general election during the
course of the war is quite unthinkable.

I have just returned from a very
pleasant and interesting journey to
the Persian Gulf and Bussra. I landed
nowhere in Persia, but took steps to pass
close to all familiar islands and
places so as to get some little idea
of their general appearance and
surroundings. They were intensely
interesting and so different to what
my imagination had pictured them
during many years.

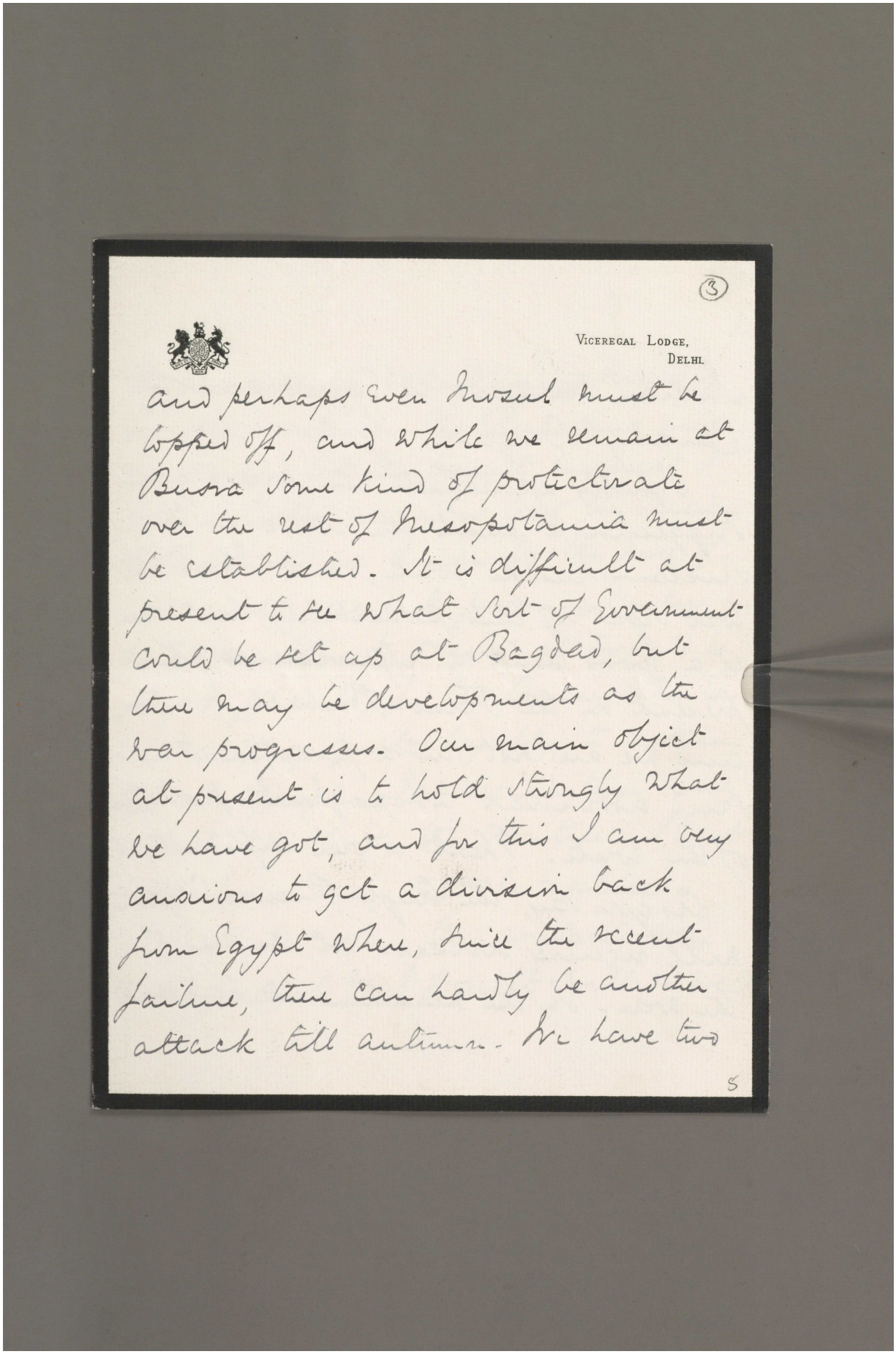
The Shatt-el-Arab impressed me
greatly, as also the potentialities
of Bussra under a proper administration.

3/4



The prosperity of Busra must however largely depend in the future on the situation at Bagdad, for a Turkish administration at Bagdad could starve Busra commercially, if they wished to do so. My present idea is that we ought to advance when possible as far as Amara on the Tigris and Nasrie on the Euphrates, these being the limits of the Busra province when under Turkish rule. We shall never have real peace in Busra until we do so. I do not want to go to Bagdad unless forced to do so, but when the time comes to make peace with Turkey, Bagdad, Busra,

4

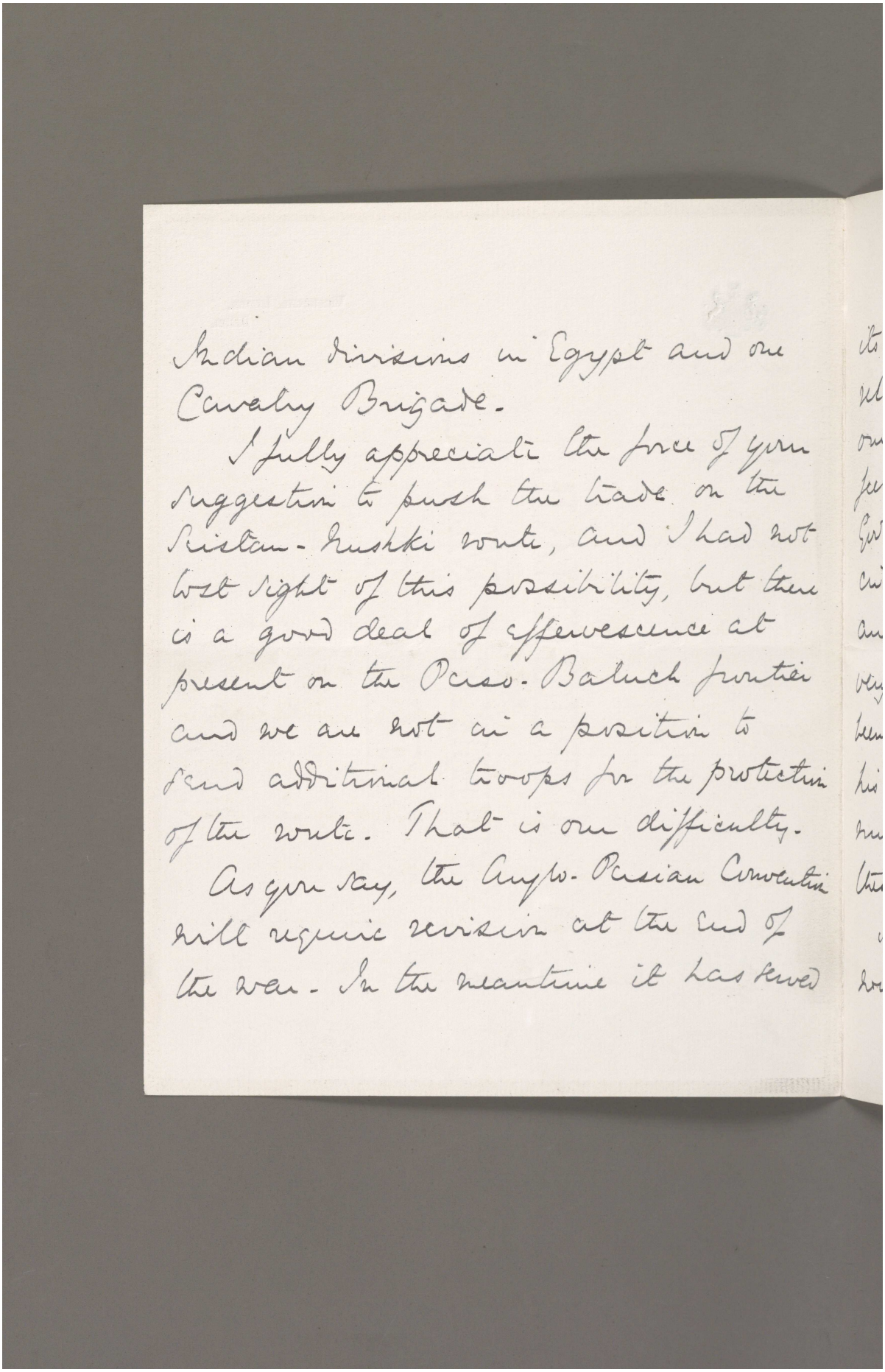


(3)

VICEREGAL LODGE,
DELHI.

and perhaps even Mosul must be
lopped off, and while we remain at
Basra some kind of protectorate
over the rest of Mesopotamia must
be established. It is difficult at
present to see what sort of Government
could be set up at Bagdad, but
there may be developments as the
war progresses. Our main object
at present is to hold strongly what
we have got, and for this I am very
anxious to get a division back
from Egypt where, until the recent
failure, there can hardly be another
attack till autumn. We have two

5

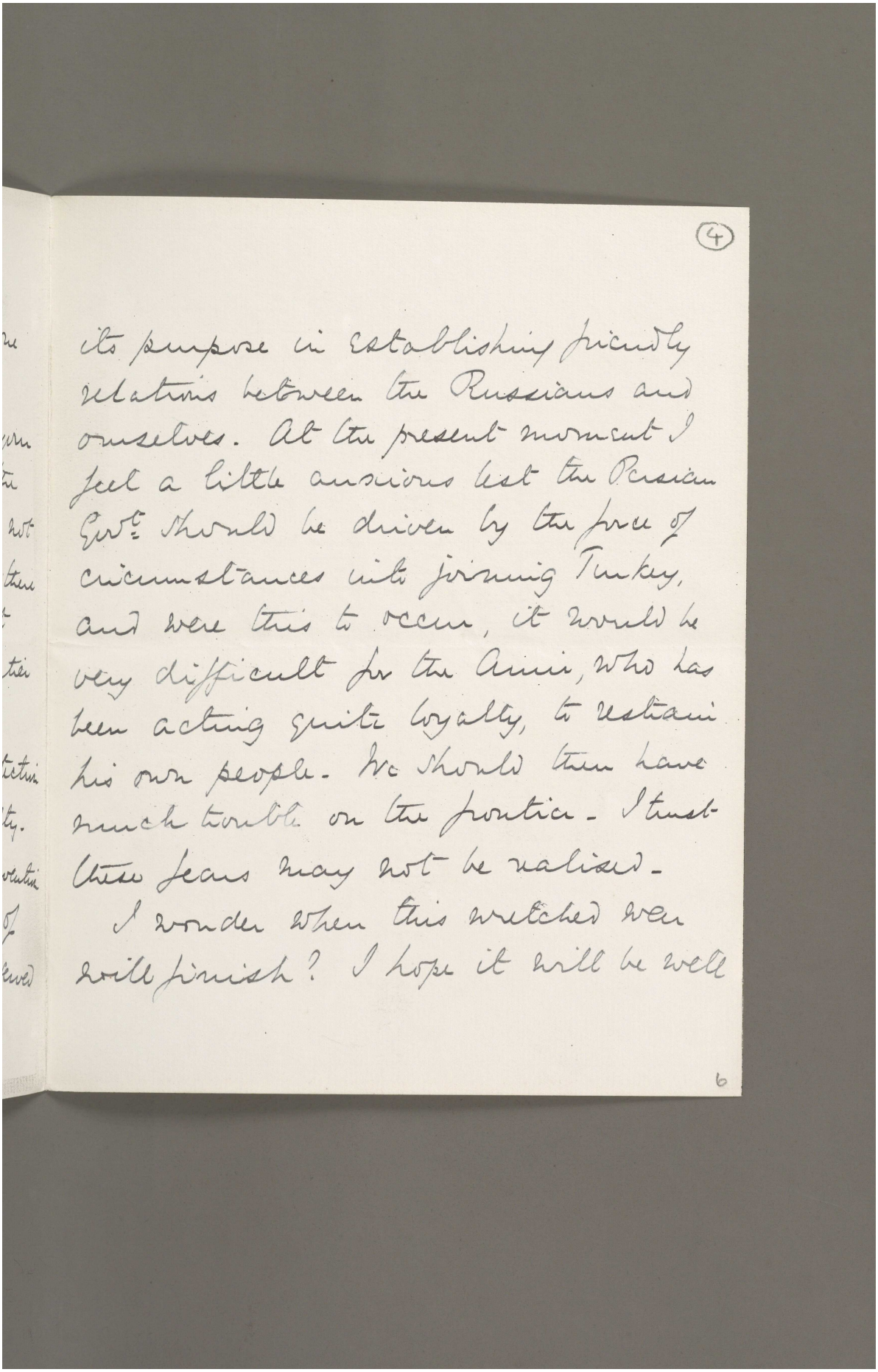


Indian divisions in Egypt and one Cavalry Brigade.

I fully appreciate the force of your suggestion to push the trade on the Seistan-Kushki route, and I had not lost sight of this possibility, but there is a good deal of effervescence at present on the Persian-Baluch frontier and we are not in a position to send additional troops for the protection of the route. That is our difficulty.

As you say, the Anglo-Persian Convention will require revision at the end of the war. In the meantime it has saved

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000051

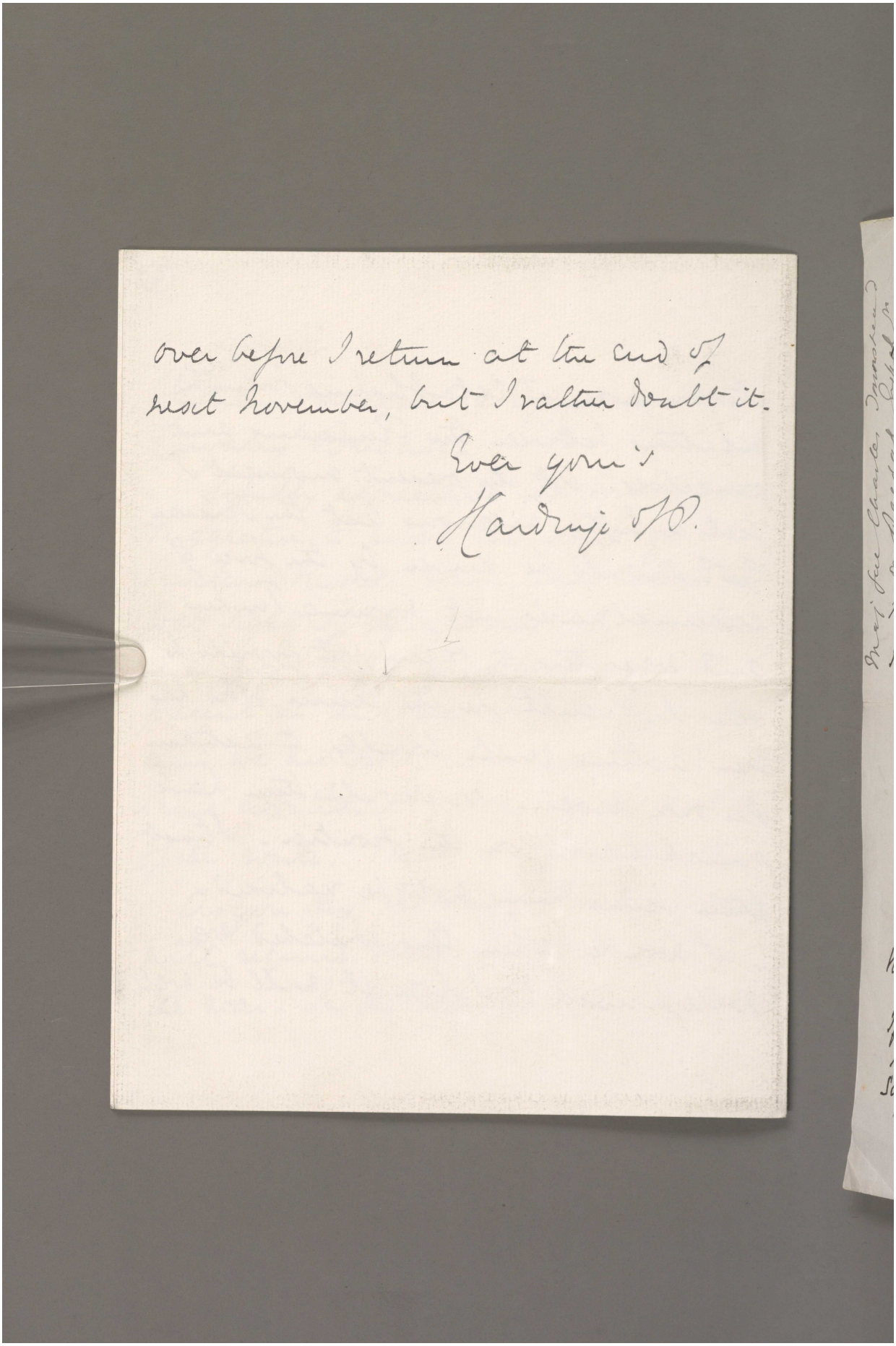


(4)

its purpose in establishing friendly
relations between the Russians and
ourselves. At the present moment I
feel a little anxious lest the Persian
Govt should be driven by the force of
circumstances into joining Turkey,
and were this to occur, it would be
very difficult for the Amir, who has
been acting quite loyally, to restrain
his own people. We should then have
much trouble on the frontier. I trust
these fears may not be realised.

I wonder when this wretched war
will finish? I hope it will be well

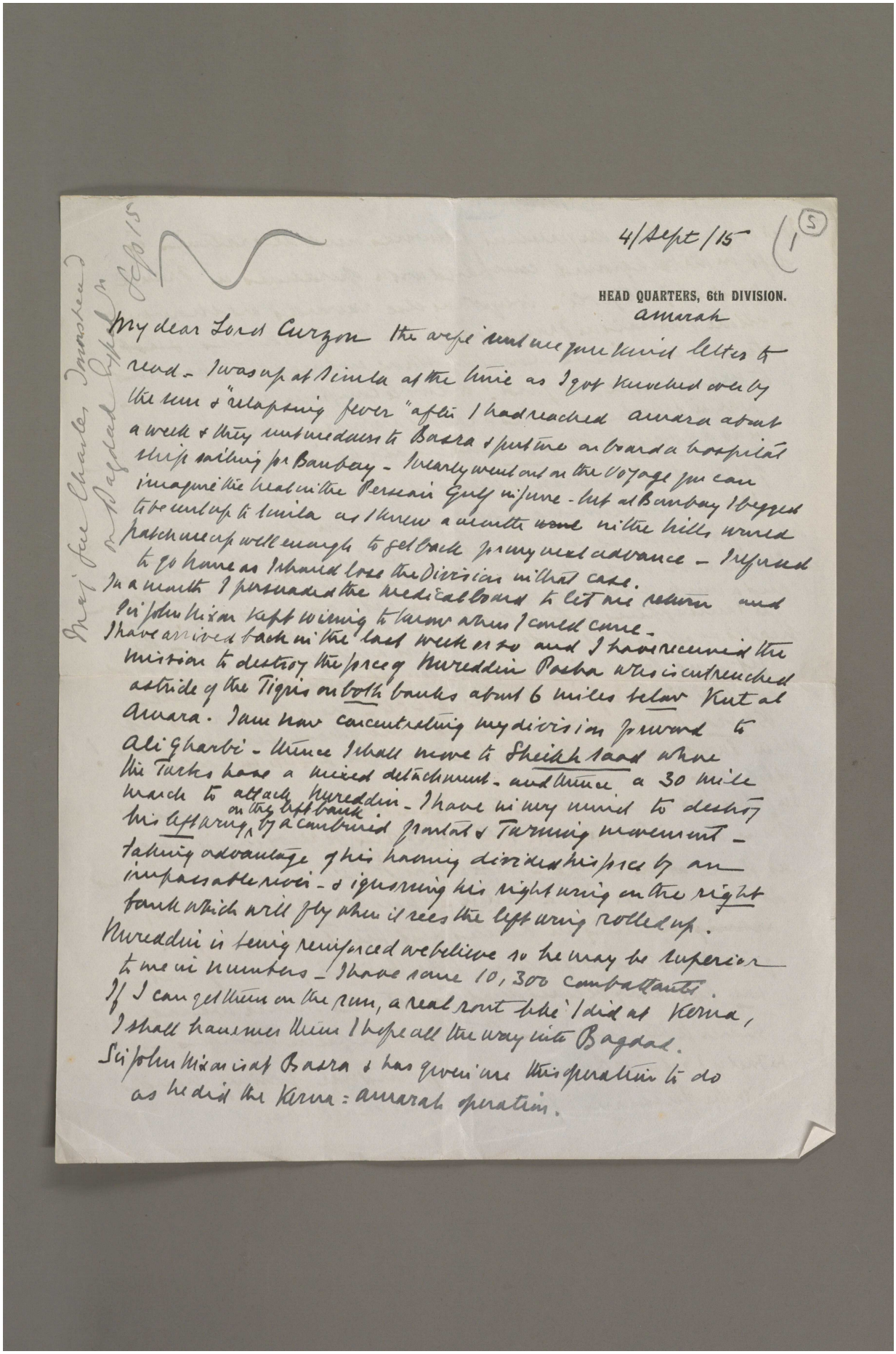
6



over before I return at the end of
next November, but I rather doubt it.

Ever yours
Hardinge of P.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000043



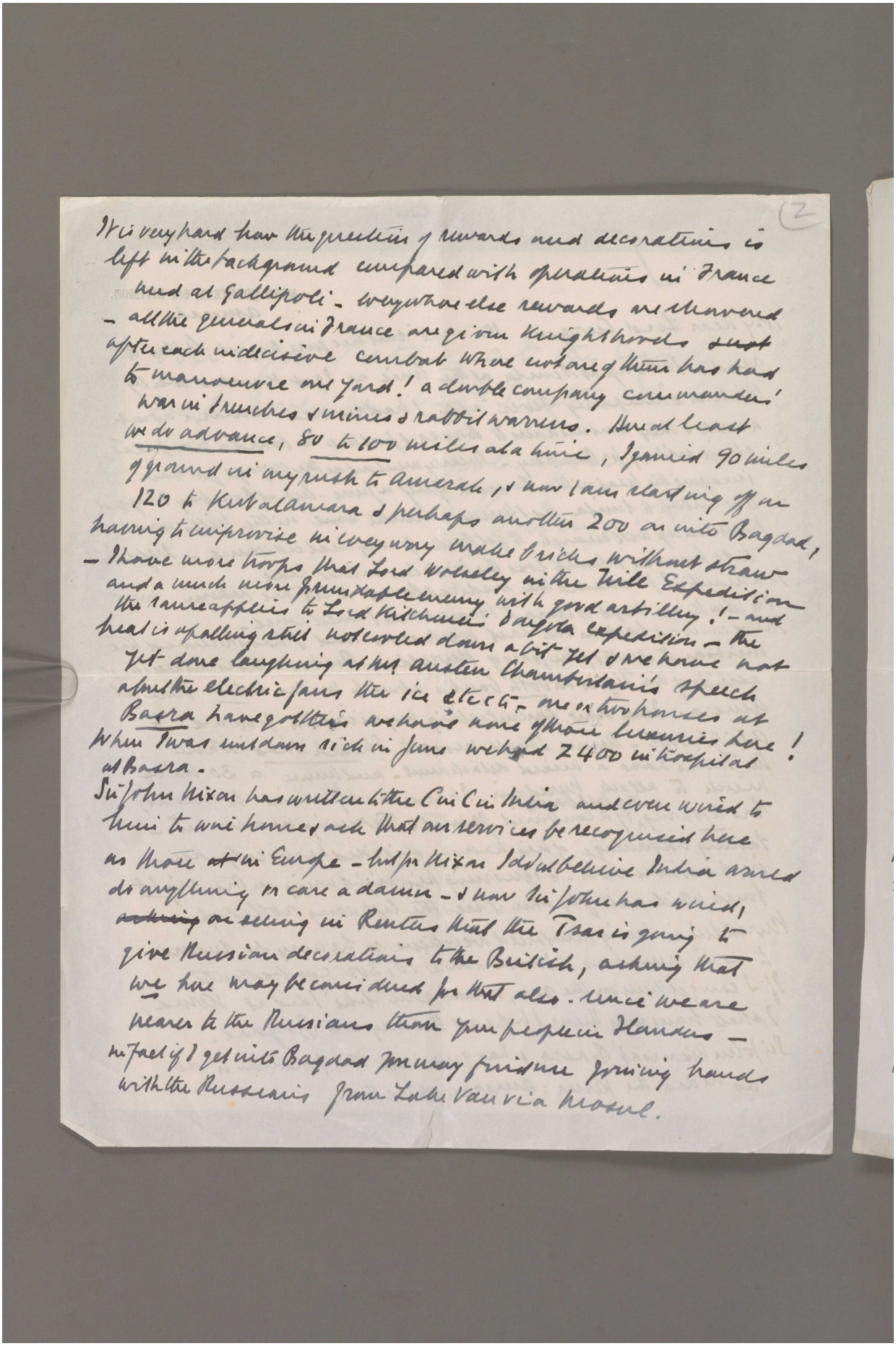
4/Sept/15

(5) 1

HEAD QUARTERS, 6th DIVISION.
amarah

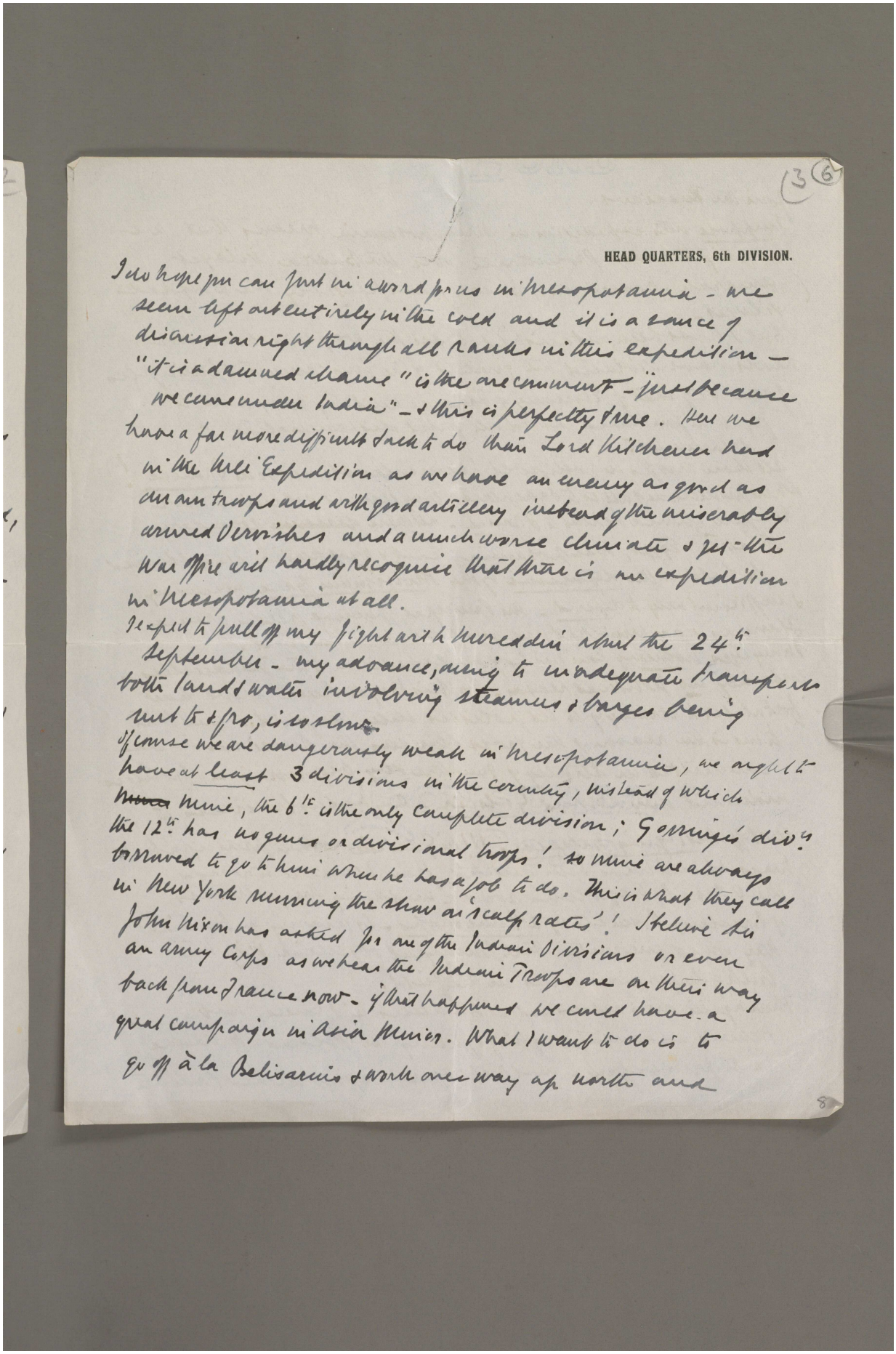
My dear Lord Curzon the ayah sent me your kind letter to read - I was up at Simla at the time as I got knocked over by the sun & "relapsing fever" after I had reached amara about a week & they sent me down to Basra & put me on board a hospital ship sailing for Bombay - I nearly went on the voyage you can imagine the heat in the Persian Gulf in June - but at Bombay I begged to be sent up to Simla as I knew a month or two in the hills would patch me up well enough to get back for any next advance - I feared to go home as I should lose the Division in that case.
In a month I persuaded the medical board to let me return and Sir John Nixon kept writing to know when I could come -
I have arrived back in the last week or so and I have succeeded the mission to destroy the force of Nureddin Pasha who is entrenched astride of the Tigris on both banks about 6 miles below Kut al amara. I am now concentrating my division forward to Ali Gharbi - thence I shall move to Sheikh Saad where the Turks have a mixed detachment - and thence a 30 mile march to attack Nureddin - I have in my mind to destroy his force on the left bank by a combined frontal & Turning movement - taking advantage of his having divided his force by an impassable river - & ignoring his right wing on the right bank which will fly when it sees the left wing rolled up.
Nureddin is being reinforced we believe so he may be superior to me in numbers - I have some 10,300 combatants.
If I can get them on the run, a real rout like I did at Kerna, I shall harass them I hope all the way into Bagdad.
Sir John Nixon is at Basra & has given me this operation to do as he did the Kerna : amarah operation.

(2



It is very hard how the question of rewards and decorations is left in the background compared with operations in France and at Gallipoli - everywhere else rewards are showered - all the generals in France are given knighthoods ~~and~~ after each indecisive combat where not one of them has had to manoeuvre one yard! a double company commander's war in trenches & mines & rabbit warrens. Here at least we do advance, 80 to 100 miles at a time, I gained 90 miles of ground in my rush to Amarah, & now I am starting off on 120 to Kut al Amara & perhaps another 200 on into Bagdad, having to improvise in every way make bricks without straw - I have more troops that Lord Wolseley in the Nile Expedition and a much more formidable enemy with good artillery! - and the same applies to Lord Kitchener's Dongola expedition - the heat is appalling still not cooled down a bit yet & we have not yet done laughing at Mr Austen Chamberlain's speech about the electric fans the ice etc etc - one or two houses at Basra have got this we have none of those luxuries here! When I was rent down sick in June we had 2400 in hospital at Basra.

Sir John Nixon has written to the C in C in India and even wired to him to wire home & ask that our services be recognised here as those ~~at~~ in Europe - but for Nixon I do not believe India would do anything or care a damn - & now Sir John has wired, ~~asking~~ on seeing in Reuters that the Tsar is going to give Russian decorations to the British, asking that we here may be considered for that also - since we are nearer to the Russians than your people in Flanders - in fact if I get into Bagdad you may find me joining hands with the Russians from Lake Van via Mosul.



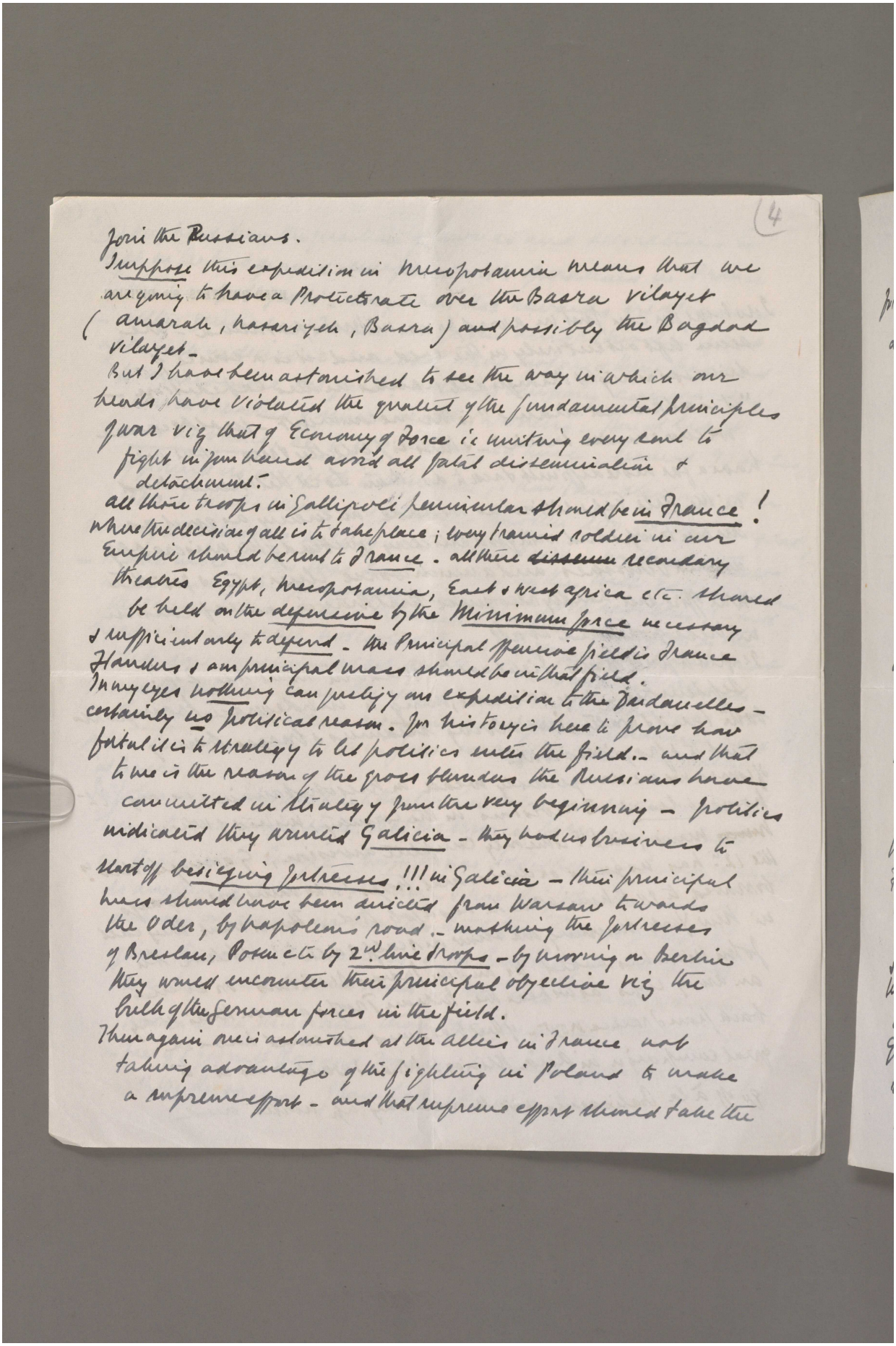
(36)

HEAD QUARTERS, 6th DIVISION.

I do hope you can put in a word for us in Mesopotamia - we seem left entirely in the cold and it is a source of discussion right through all ranks in this expedition - "it is a damned shame" is the one comment - "just because we came under India" - & this is perfectly true. Here we have a far more difficult task to do than Lord Kitchener had in the Nile Expedition as we have an enemy as good as our own troops and with good artillery instead of the miserably armed Dervishes and a much worse climate & yet - the War Office will hardly recognise that there is an expedition in Mesopotamia at all.

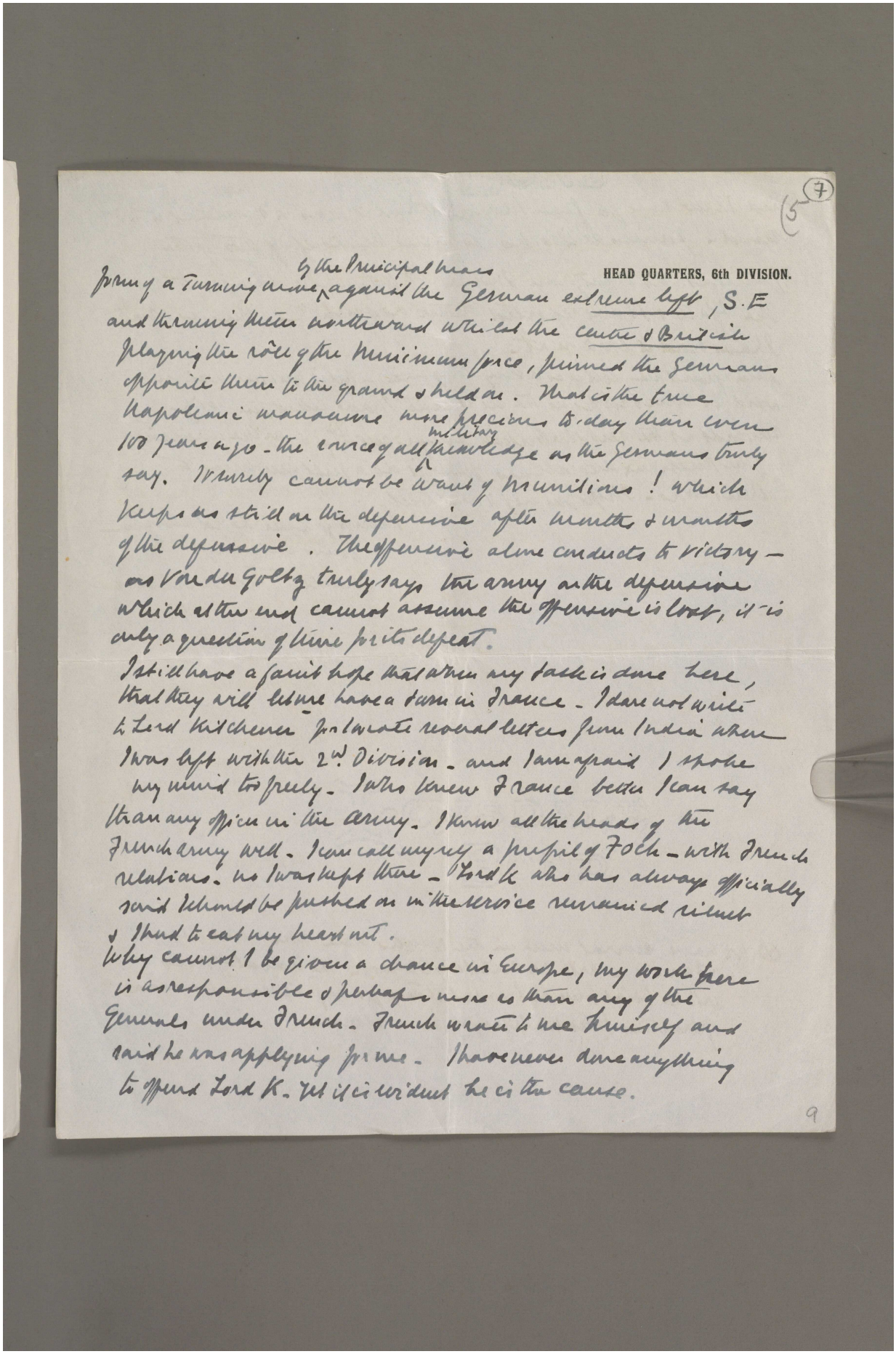
I expect to pull off my fight with Nureddin about the 24th September - my advance, owing to inadequate transport both land & water involving steamers & barges being sent to & fro, is too slow.

Of course we are dangerously weak in Mesopotamia, we ought to have at least 3 divisions in the country, instead of which mine, the 6th is the only complete division; Gorringe's div. the 12th has no guns or divisional troops! so mine are always borrowed to go to him when he has a job to do. This is what they call in New York running the show on "calf rates"! I believe Sir John Nixon has asked for one of the Indian divisions or even an army Corps as we hear the Indian Troops are on their way back from France now - if that happened we could have a great campaign in Asia Minor. What I want to do is to go off à la Belisarius & work over way up north and



(4)

join the Russians.
I suppose this expedition in Mesopotamia means that we are going to have a Protectorate over the Basra Vilayet (Amarah, Nasariyeh, Basra) and possibly the Bagdad Vilayet.
But I have been astonished to see the way in which our heads have violated the greatest of the fundamental principles of war viz that of Economy of Force i.e. uniting every man to fight in one theatre and all false dissemination & detachment.
all those troops in Gallipoli peninsular should be in France! where the decision of all is to take place; every trained soldier in our Empire should be sent to France. all these dissemm secondary theatres Egypt, Mesopotamia, East & west africa etc. should be held on the defensive by the Minimum force necessary & sufficient only to defend. the Principal offensive field is France Flanders & our principal mass should be in that field.
In my eyes nothing can justify our expedition to the Dardanelles - certainly no political reason. for history is here to prove how fatal it is to strategy to let politics enter the field.. and that to me is the reason of the gross blunders the Russians have committed in strategy from the very beginning - politics vindicated they invaded Galicia - they had no business to start off besieging fortresses !!! in Galicia - their principal mass should have been directed from Warsaw towards the Oder, by Napoleon's road.. masking the fortresses of Breslau, Posen etc by 2nd line troops - by moving on Berlin they would encounter their principal objective viz the bulk of the German forces in the field.
Then again am I astonished at the allies in France not taking advantage of the fighting in Poland to make a supreme effort - and that supreme effort should take the



(5 (7)

HEAD QUARTERS, 6th DIVISION.

form of a turning move by the Principal means against the German extreme left, S.E and throwing them northward whilst the centre & British playing the rôle of the minimum force, pinned the Germans opposite them to the ground & held on. That is the true Napoleonic manoeuvre more precious to-day than even 100 years ago - the source of all military knowledge as the Germans truly say. It surely cannot be want of munitions! which keeps us still on the defensive after months & months of the defensive. The offensive alone conducts to victory - as Von der Goltz truly says the army on the defensive which at the end cannot assume the offensive is lost, it is only a question of time for its defeat.

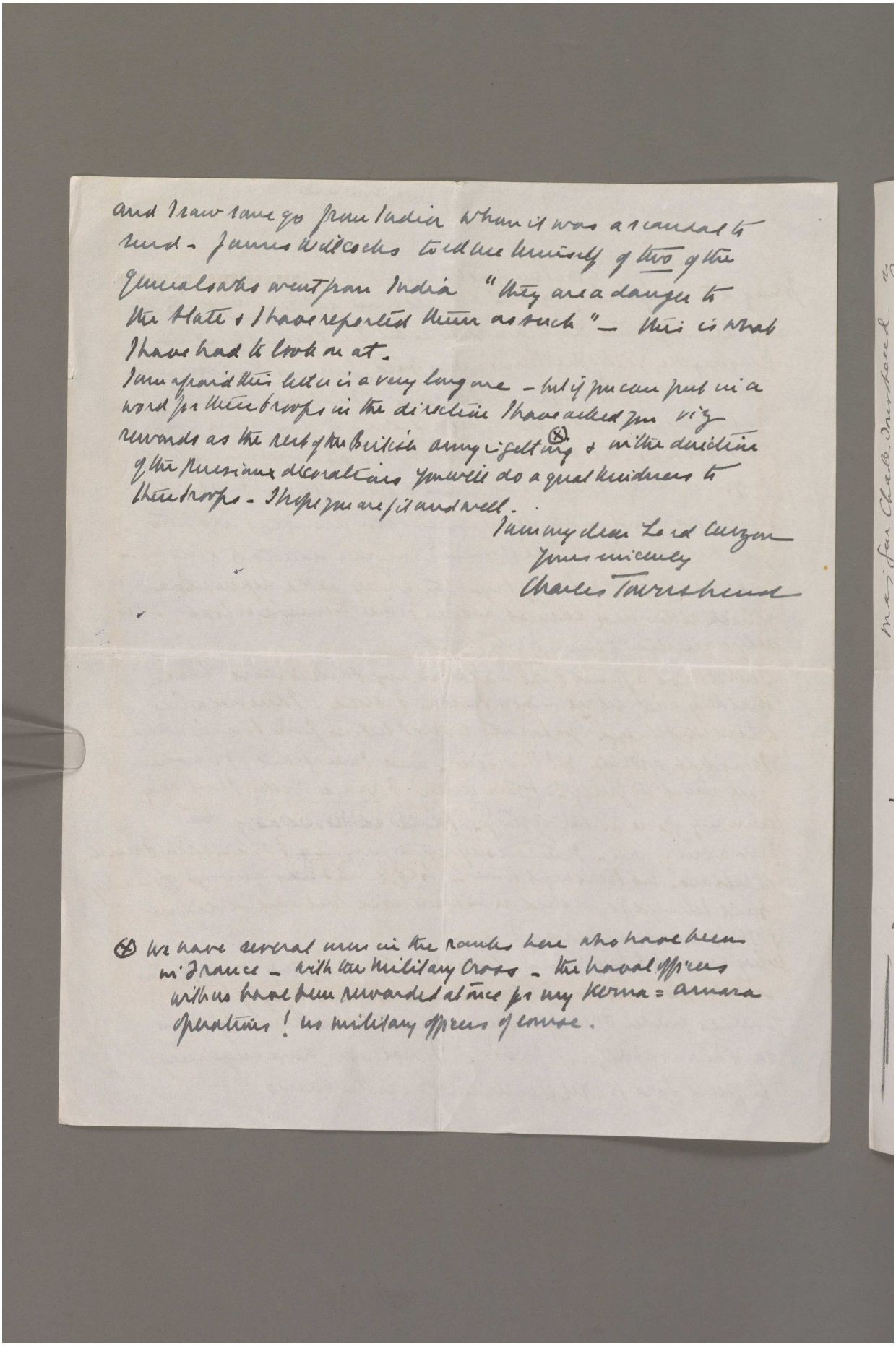
I still have a faint hope that when my task is done here, that they will let me have a turn in France - I dare not write to Lord Kitchener for I wrote several letters from India when I was left with the 2nd Division - and I am afraid I spoke my mind too freely - I who knew France better I can say than any officer in the army. I know all the heads of the French army well - I can call myself a pupil of Foch - with French relations - no I was kept there - Lord K who has always officially said I should be pushed on in the service remained silent & I had to eat my heart out.

Why cannot I be given a chance in Europe, my work here is as responsible & perhaps more so than any of the Generals under French - French wrote to me himself and said he was applying for me - I have never done anything to offend Lord K - yet it is evident he is the cause.

9

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00004a



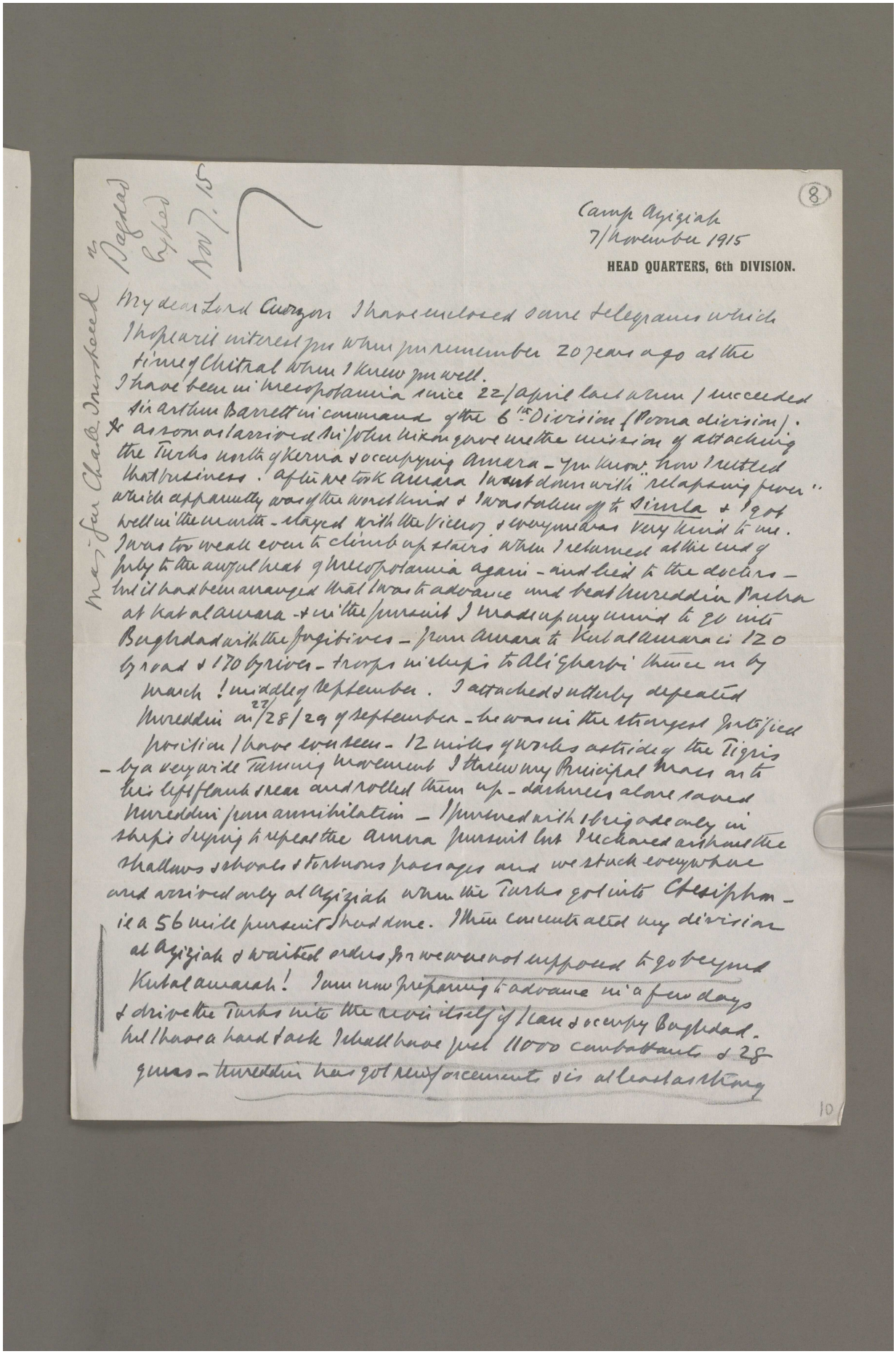
and I saw some go from India whom it was a scandal to send - James Wilcocks told me himself of two of the Generals who went from India "they are a danger to the State & I have reported them as such" - this is what I have had to look on at.

I am afraid this letter is a very long one - but if you can put in a word for these troops in the direction I have asked you viz rewards as the rest of the British army is getting (⊗) & in the direction of the Russian decorations you will do a great kindness to these troops - I hope you are fit and well.

I am my dear Lord Curzon
Yours sincerely
Charles Townshend

(⊗) We have several men in the ranks here who have been in France - with the Military Cross - the naval officers with us have been rewarded at once for my Kerna = Amara operations! no military officers of course.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000023
14



(8)

Camp Aziziah
7/November 1915

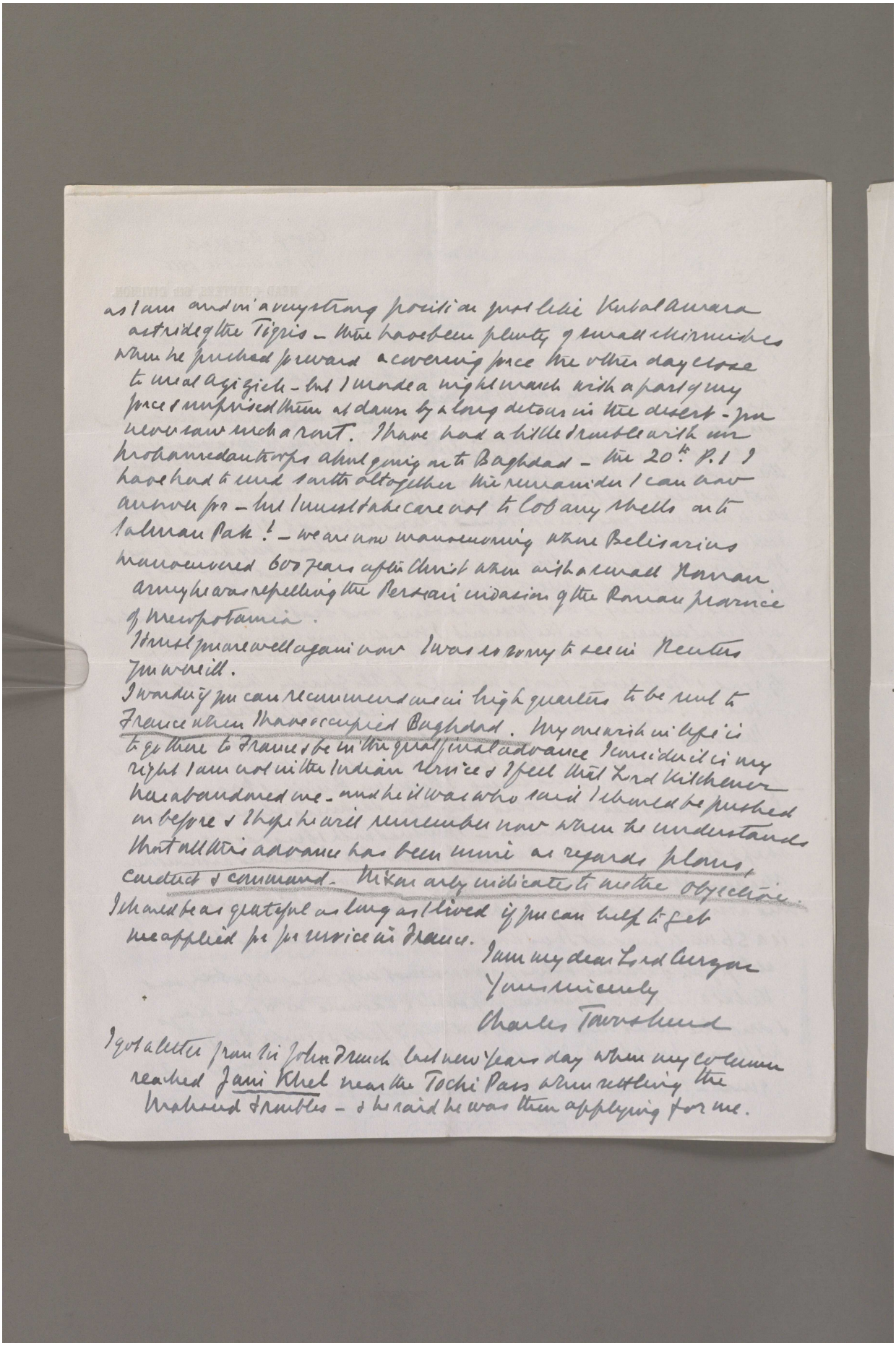
HEAD QUARTERS, 6th DIVISION.

Maj-Gen Chas. Townshend
Baghdad
Lighted
Nov 7. 15

My dear Lord Curzon I have enclosed some telegrams which I hope will interest you when you remember 20 years ago at the time of Chitral when I knew you well.

I have been in Mesopotamia since 22/April last when I succeeded Sir Arthur Barrett in command of the 6th Division (Poona division). As soon as I arrived Sir John Nixon gave me the mission of attacking the Turks north of Kerna & occupying Amara – you know how I settled that business. After we took Amara I went down with "relapsing fever" which apparently was of the worst kind & I was taken off to Simla & I got well in the month – stayed with the Viceroy & everyone was very kind to me. I was too weak even to climb up stairs when I returned at the end of July to the awful heat of Mesopotamia again – and lied to the doctors – but it had been arranged that I was to advance and beat Nureddin Pasha at Kut al Amara – & in the pursuit I made up my mind to go into Baghdad with the fugitives – from Amara to Kut al Amara is 120 by road & 170 by river – troops in ships to Ali Gharbi thence on by march! middle of September. I attacked & utterly defeated Nureddin on 27/28/29 of September – he was in the strongest fortified position I have ever seen – 12 miles of works astride of the Tigris – by a very wide turning movement I threw my Principal Mass on to his left flank & rear and rolled them up – darkness alone saved Nureddin from annihilation – I pursued with 1 brigade only in ships trying to repeat the Amara pursuit but I reckoned without the shallows & shoals & tortuous passages and we stuck everywhere and arrived only at Aziziah when the Turks got into Ctesiphon – ie a 56 mile pursuit I had done. I then concentrated my division at Aziziah & waited orders for we were not supposed to go beyond Kut al Amarah! I am now preparing to advance in a few days & drive the Turks into the river itself if I can & occupy Baghdad. but I have a hard task I shall have just 11000 combattants & 28 guns – Nureddin has got reinforcements & is at least as strong

10



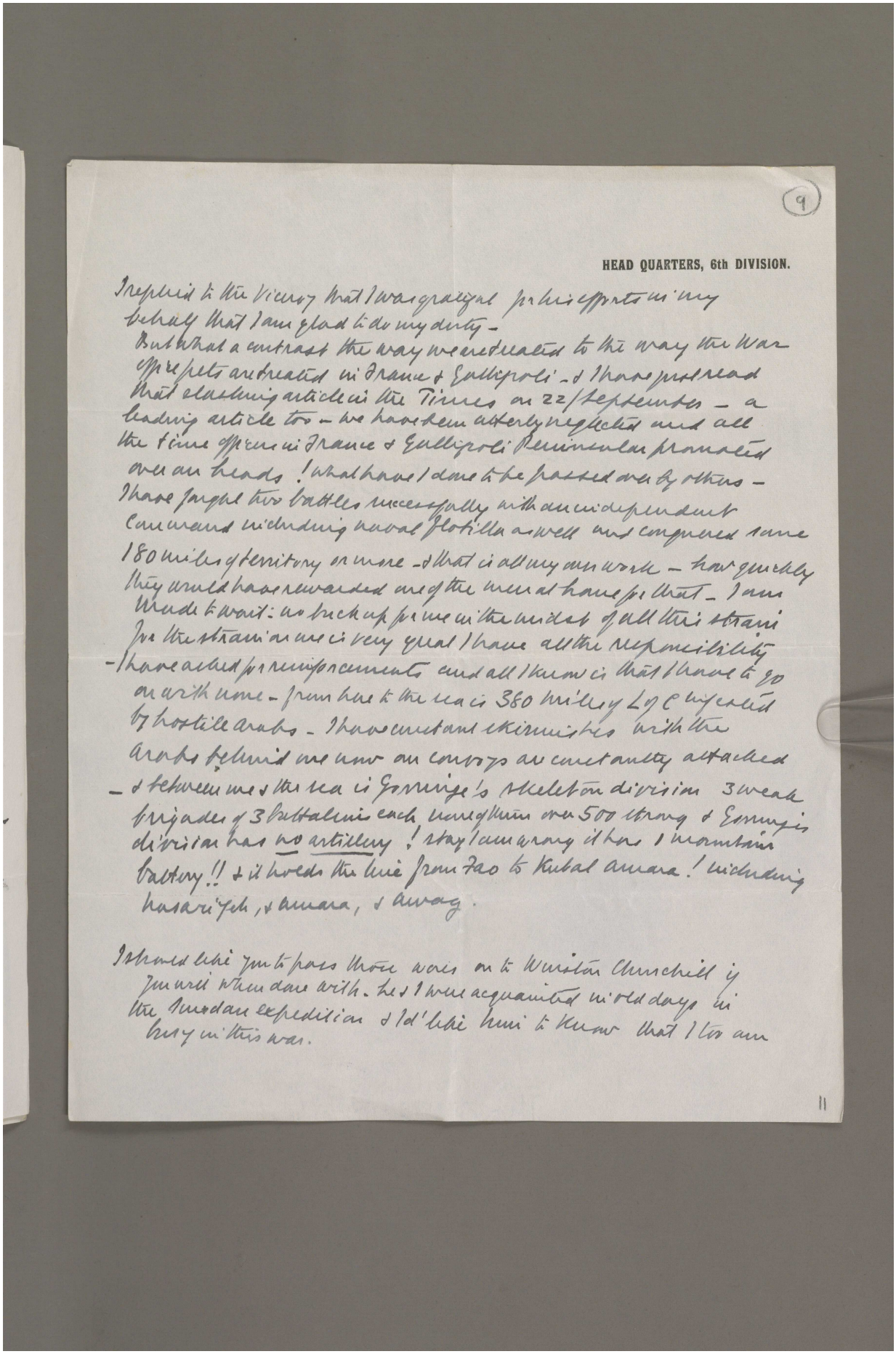
as I am and in a very strong position just like Kut al Amara
astride of the Tigris – there have been plenty of small skirmishes
when he pushed forward a covering force the other day close
to me at Azizieh – but I made a night march with a part of my
force & surprised them at dawn by a long detour in the desert – you
never saw such a rout. I have had a little trouble with our
Mohammedan troops about going on to Baghdad – the 20th P.I. I
have had to send south altogether the remainder I can now
answer for – but I must take care not to lob any shells on to
Salman Pak! – we are now manoeuvring where Belisarius
manoeuvred 600 years after Christ when with a small Roman
army he was repelling the Persian invasion of the Roman province
of Mesopotamia.
I trust you are well again now I was so sorry to see in Reuters
you were ill.
I wonder if you can recommend me in high quarters to be sent to
France when I have occupied Baghdad. My one wish in life is
to go there to France & be in the great final advance I consider it is my
right I am not in the Indian service & I feel that Lord Kitchener
has abandoned me – and he it was who said I should be pushed
on before & I hope he will remember now when he understands
that all this advance has been mine as regards plans,
conduct & command. Nixon only indicates to me the objective.
I should be as grateful as long as I lived if you can help to get
me applied for for service in France.

I am my dear Lord Curzon
Yours sincerely
Charles Townshend

I got a letter from Sir John French last new years day when my column
reached Jani Khel near the Tochi Pass when settling the
Mahsud troubles – & he said he was then applying for me.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000c3



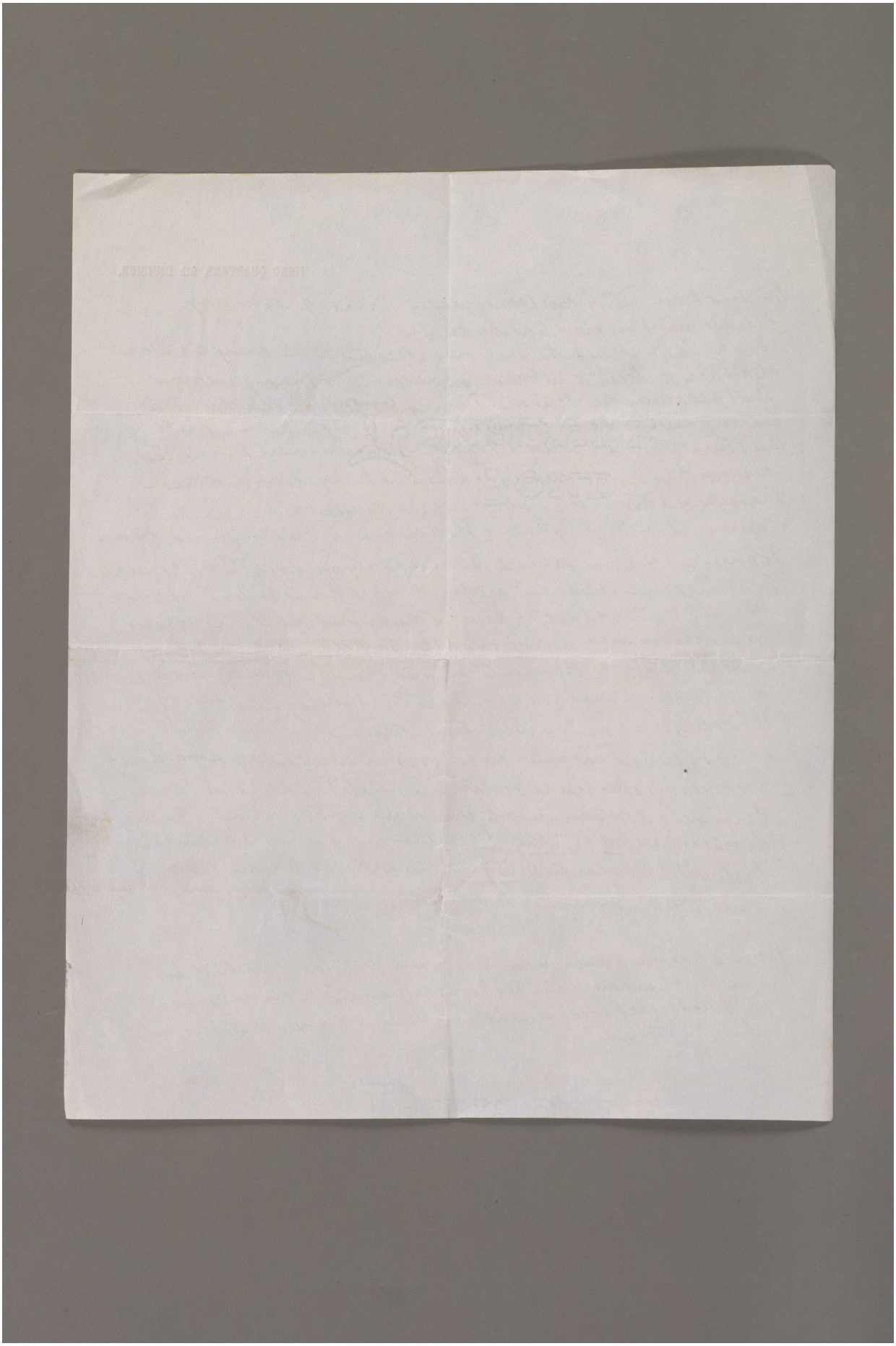
(9)

HEAD QUARTERS, 6th DIVISION.

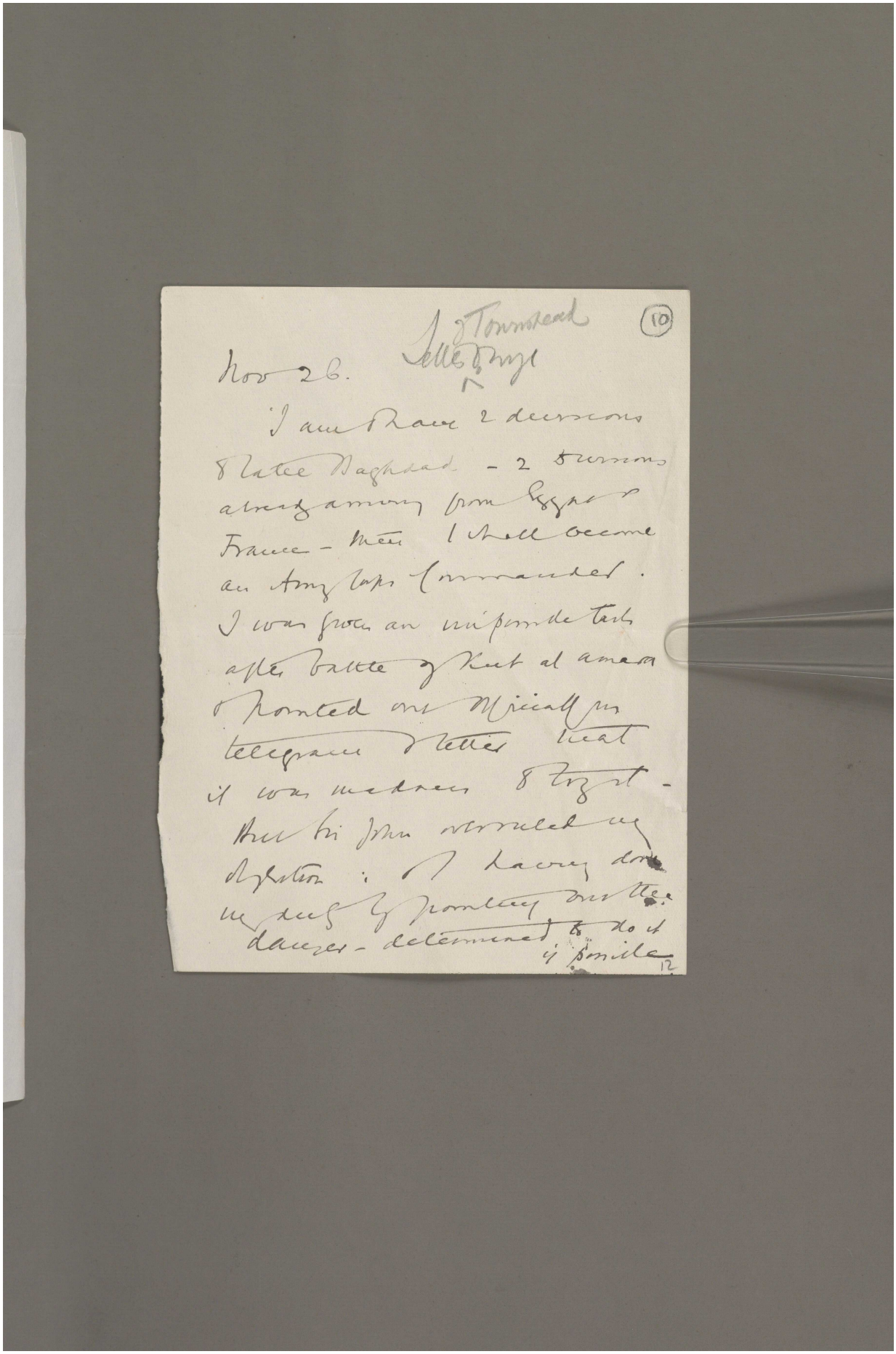
I replied to the Viceroy that I was grateful for his efforts in my behalf that I am glad to do my duty –
But what a contrast the way we are treated to the way the War office pets are treated in France & Gallipoli – & I have just read that slashing article in the Times on 22/September – a leading article too – we have been utterly neglected and all the time officers in France & Gallipoli Peninsular promoted over our heads! what have I done to be passed over by others – I have fought two battles successfully with an independent command including naval flotilla as well and conquered some 180 miles of territory or more – & that is all my own work – how quickly they would have rewarded one of the men at home for that – I am made to wait: no backup for me in the midst of all this strain for the strain on me is very great I have all the responsibility – I have asked for reinforcements and all I know is that I have to go on with none – from here to the sea is 380 miles of L of C infested by hostile arabs – I have constant skirmishes with the arabs behind me now our convoys are constantly attacked – & between me & the sea is Gorringe's skeleton division 3 weak brigades of 3 battalions each none of them over 500 strong & Gorringe's division has no artillery! stay I am wrong it has 1 mountain battery!! & it holds the line from Fao to Kubal amara! including Nasariyeh, & amara, & Amag.

I should like you to pass those words on to Winston Churchill if you will when done with. He & I were acquainted in old days in the Sudan expedition & I'd like him to know that I too am busy in this war.

11



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00004e



(10)

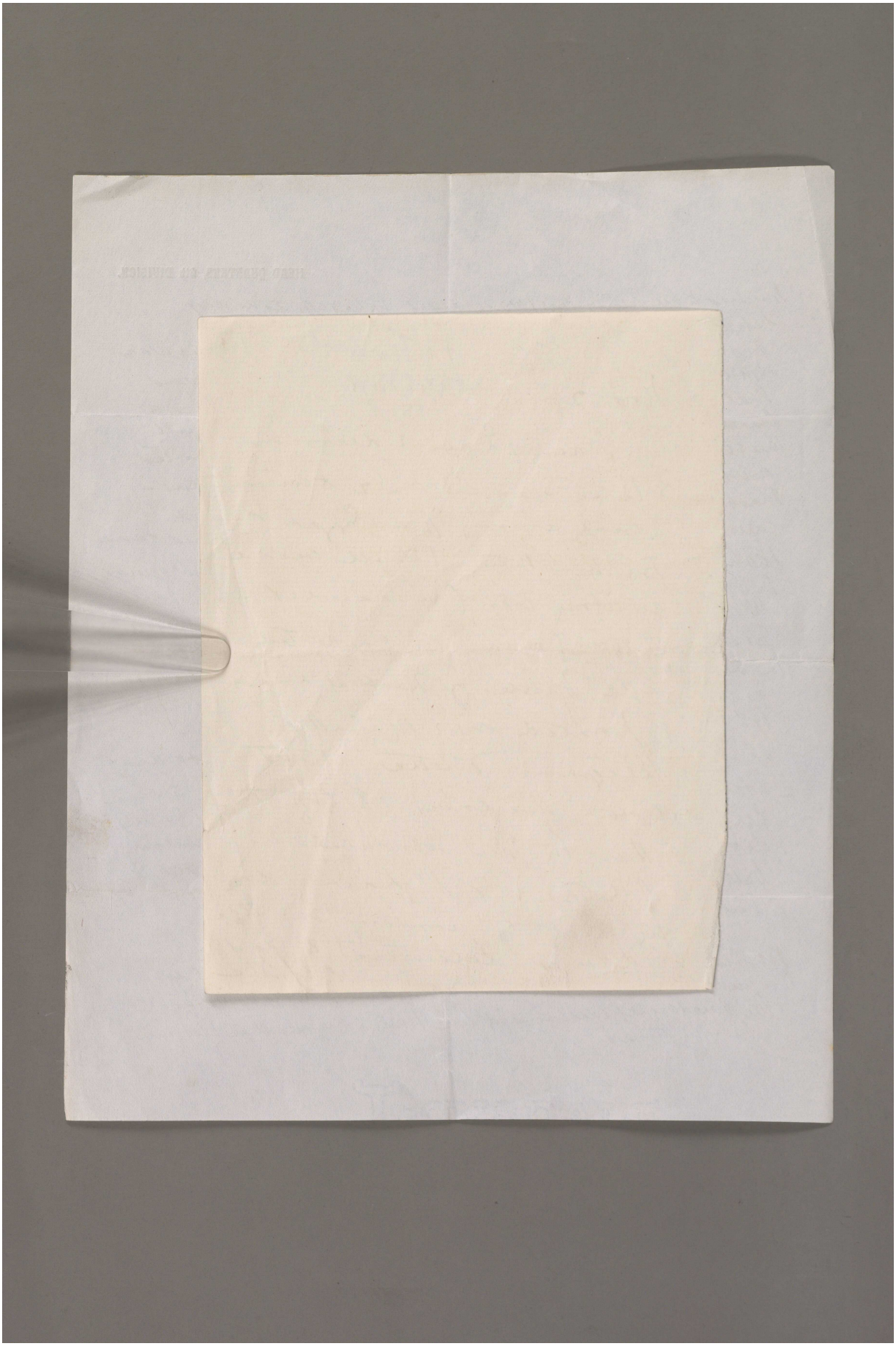
Nov 26. Letter of Townshend to Boyle

I am to have 2 divisions to take Baghdad - 2 divisions already arriving from Egypt & France - then I shall become an Army Corps Commander. I was given an impossible task after battle of Kut al amara & pointed out officially in telegram & letter that it was madness to try it - But Sir John overruled my objection: & I having done my duty by pointing out the danger - determined to do it if possible

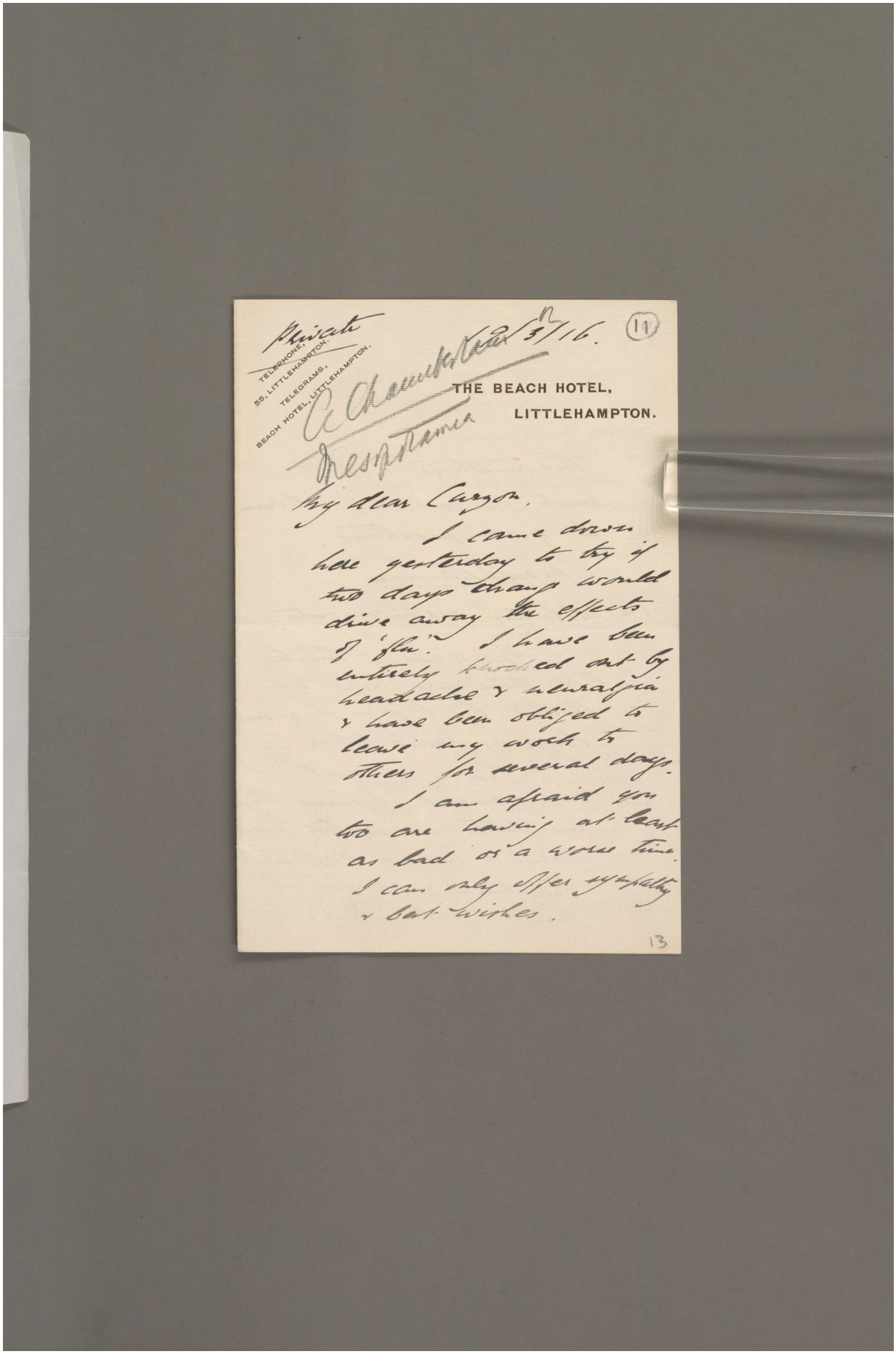
12

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000c8



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000004



Private

TELEPHONE, 55, LITTLEHAMPTON.
TELEGRAMS, BEACH HOTEL, LITTLEHAMPTON.

12/3/16. (11)

A Chamberlain
Mesopotamia

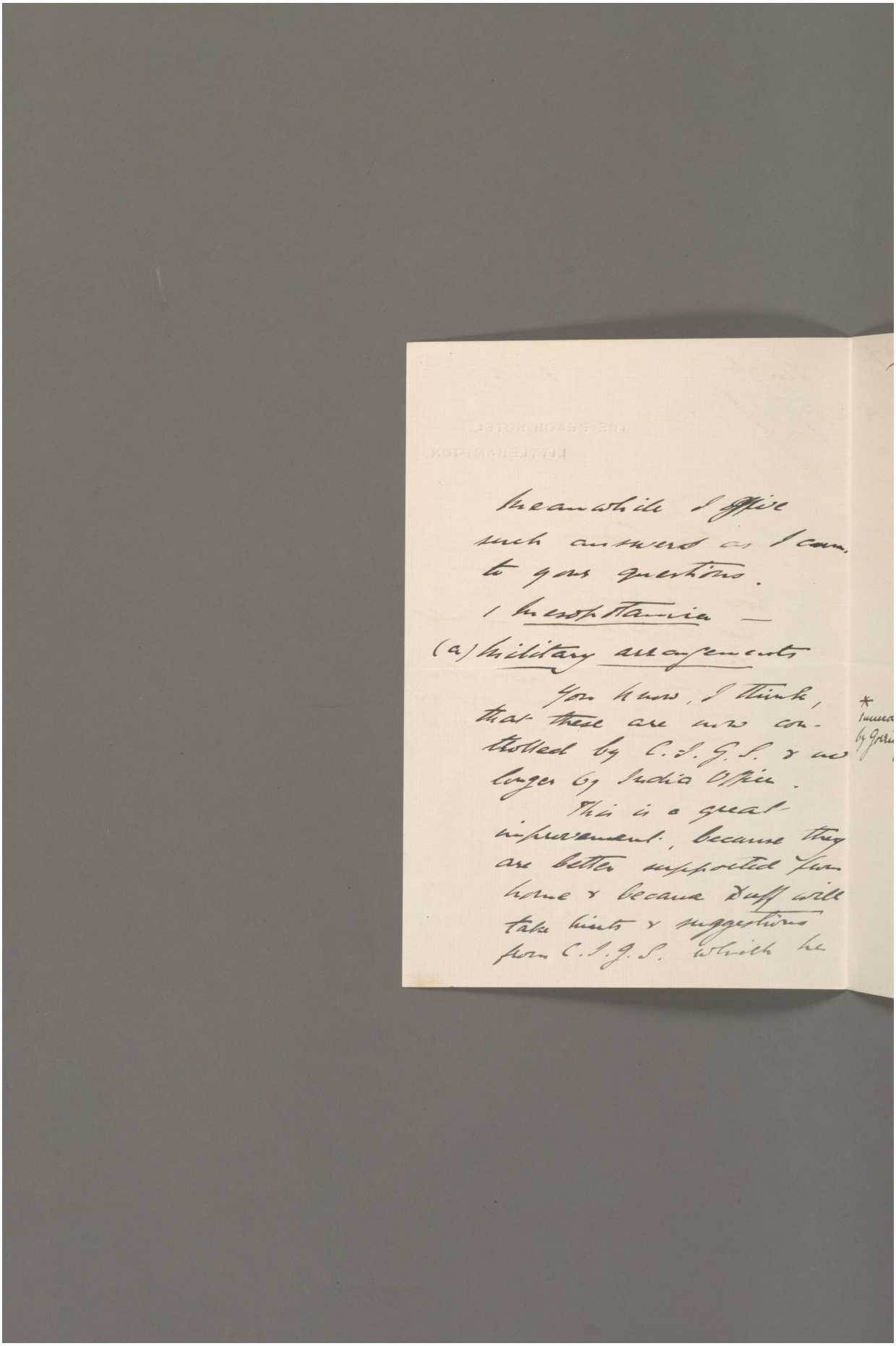
THE BEACH HOTEL,
LITTLEHAMPTON.

My dear Curzon,

I came down here yesterday to try if two days change would drive away the effects of 'flu'. I have been entirely knocked out by headache & neuralgia & have been obliged to leave my work to others for several days.

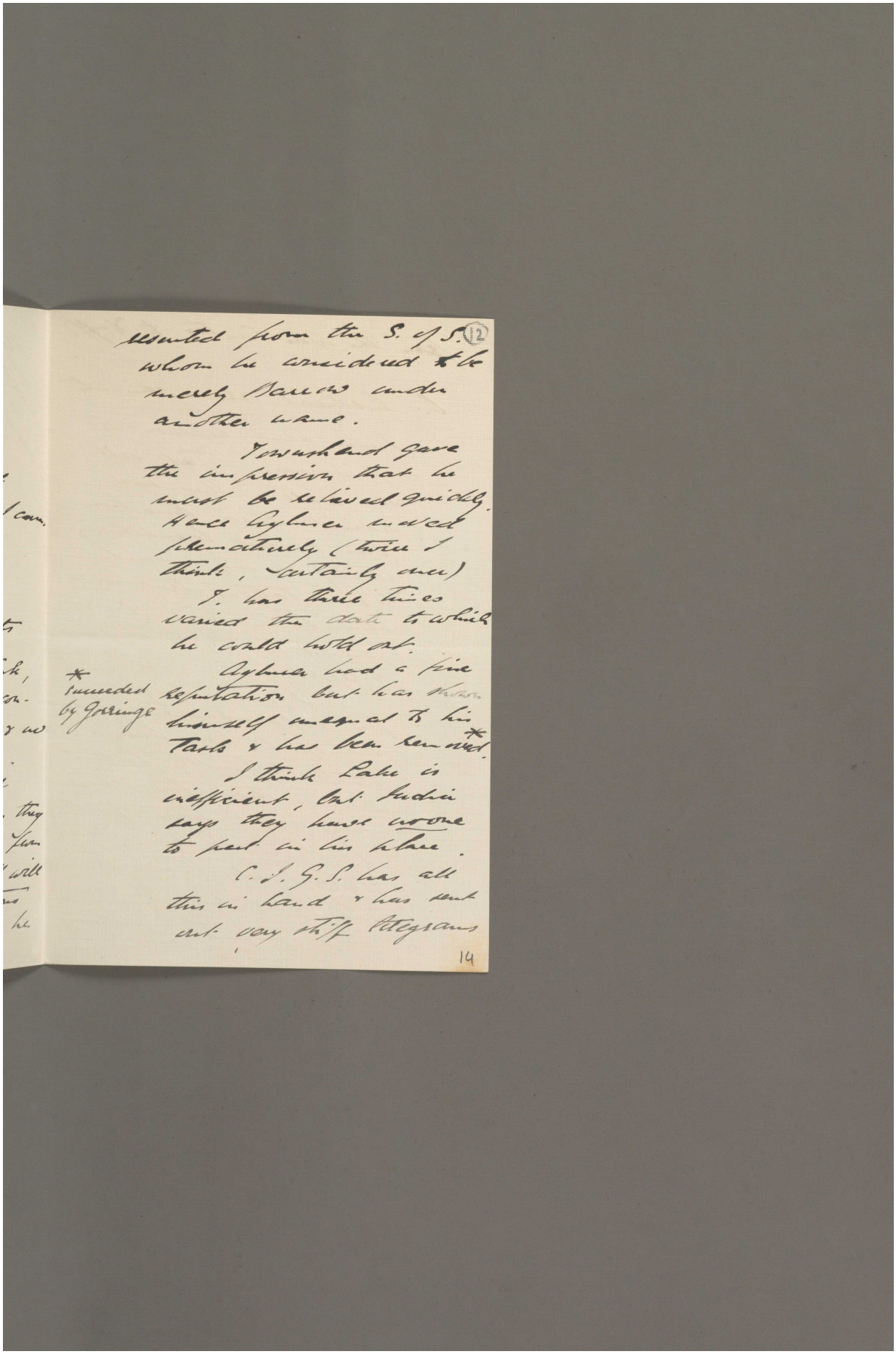
I am afraid you too are having at least as bad or a worse time. I can only offer sympathy & best wishes.

13



Meanwhile I offer
such answers as I can
to your questions.
1 Mesopotamia —
(a) Military arrangements
You know, I think,
that these are now con-
trolled by C. in C. G. S. & no
longer by India Office.
This is a great
improvement, because they
are better supported from
home & because Duff will
take hints & suggestions
from C. in C. G. S. which he

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000004



resented from the S. of S. (12)
whom he considered to be
merely Barrow under
another name.

Townshend gave
the impression that he
must be relieved quickly.
Hence Aylmer moved
prematurely (twice I
think, certainly once)

T. has three times
varied the date to which
he could hold out.

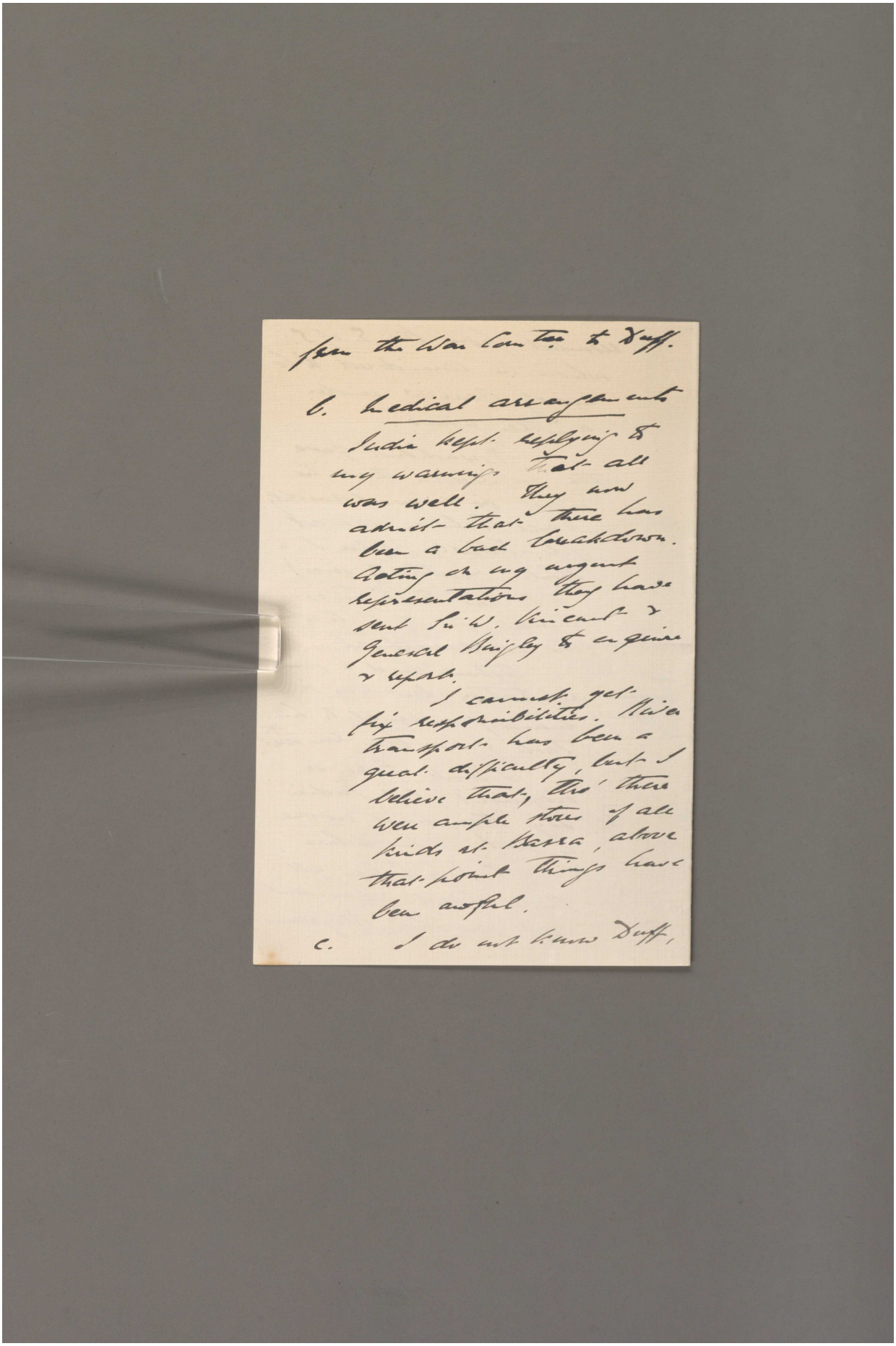
Aylmer had a fine
reputation but has shown
himself unequal to his
Task & has been removed.*

I think Lake is
inefficient, but Indian
says they have no one
to put in his place.

C. I. G. S. has all
this in hand & has sent
out very stiff telegrams

14

* succeeded by Gorringe



from the War Comtee to Duff.

b. Medical arrangements

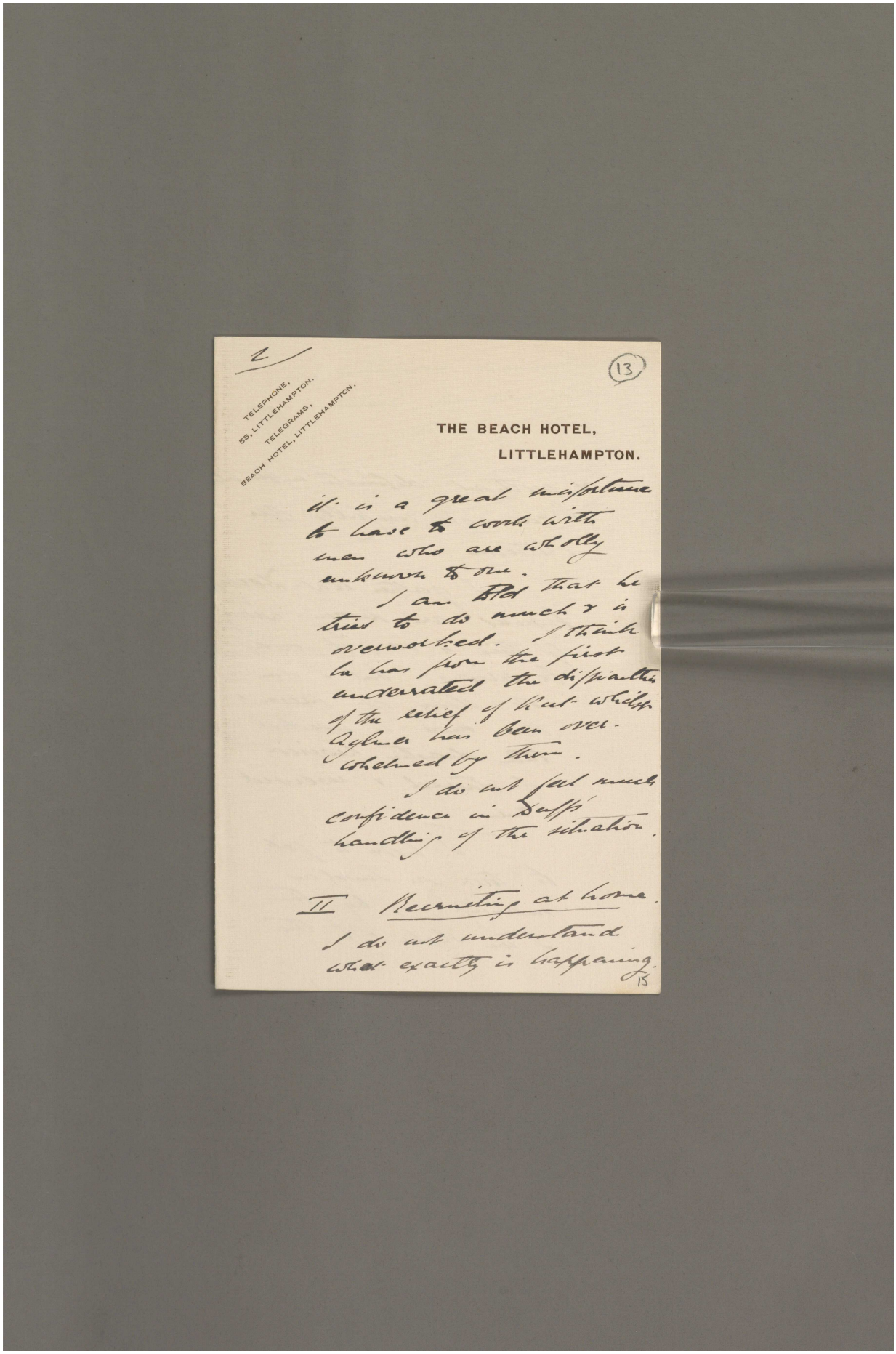
India kept replying to my warnings that all was well. They now admit that there has been a bad breakdown. Acting on my urgent representations they have sent Sir W. Vincent & General Bingley to enquire & report.

I cannot yet fix responsibilities. River transport has been a great difficulty, but I believe that, tho' there were ample stores of all kinds at Basra, above that point things have been awful.

c. I do not know Duff,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000093



TELEPHONE,
55, LITTLEHAMPTON.
TELEGRAMS,
BEACH HOTEL, LITTLEHAMPTON.

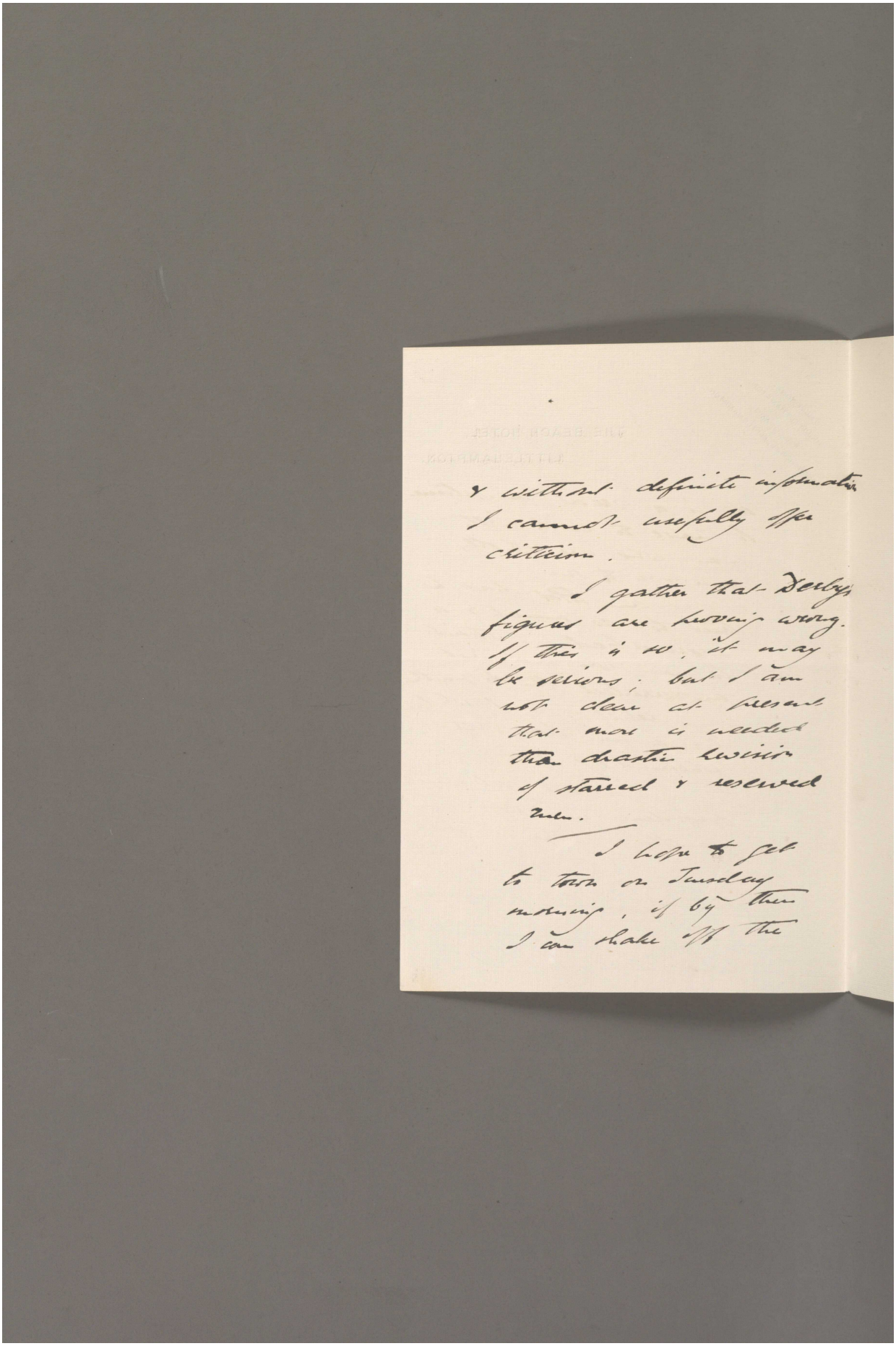
(13)

THE BEACH HOTEL,
LITTLEHAMPTON.

if it is a great misfortune
to have to work with
men who are wholly
unknown to me.
I am glad that he
tries to do much & is
overworked. I think
he has from the first
underrated the difficulties
of the chief of staff which
Aylmer has been overwhelmed by them.
I do not feel much
confidence in Barrow's
handling of the situation.

II Recruiting at home.
I do not understand
what exactly is happening.

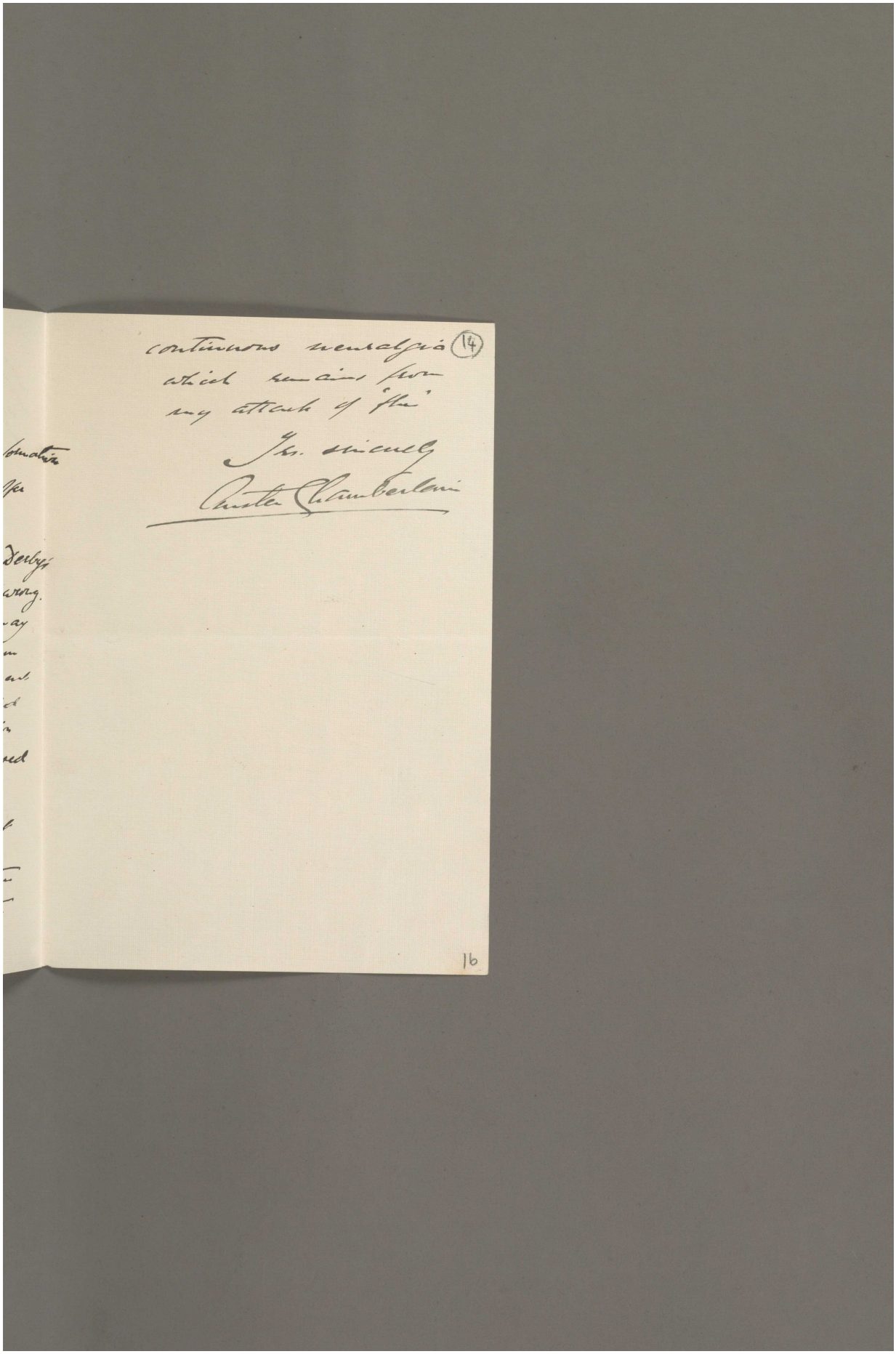
13



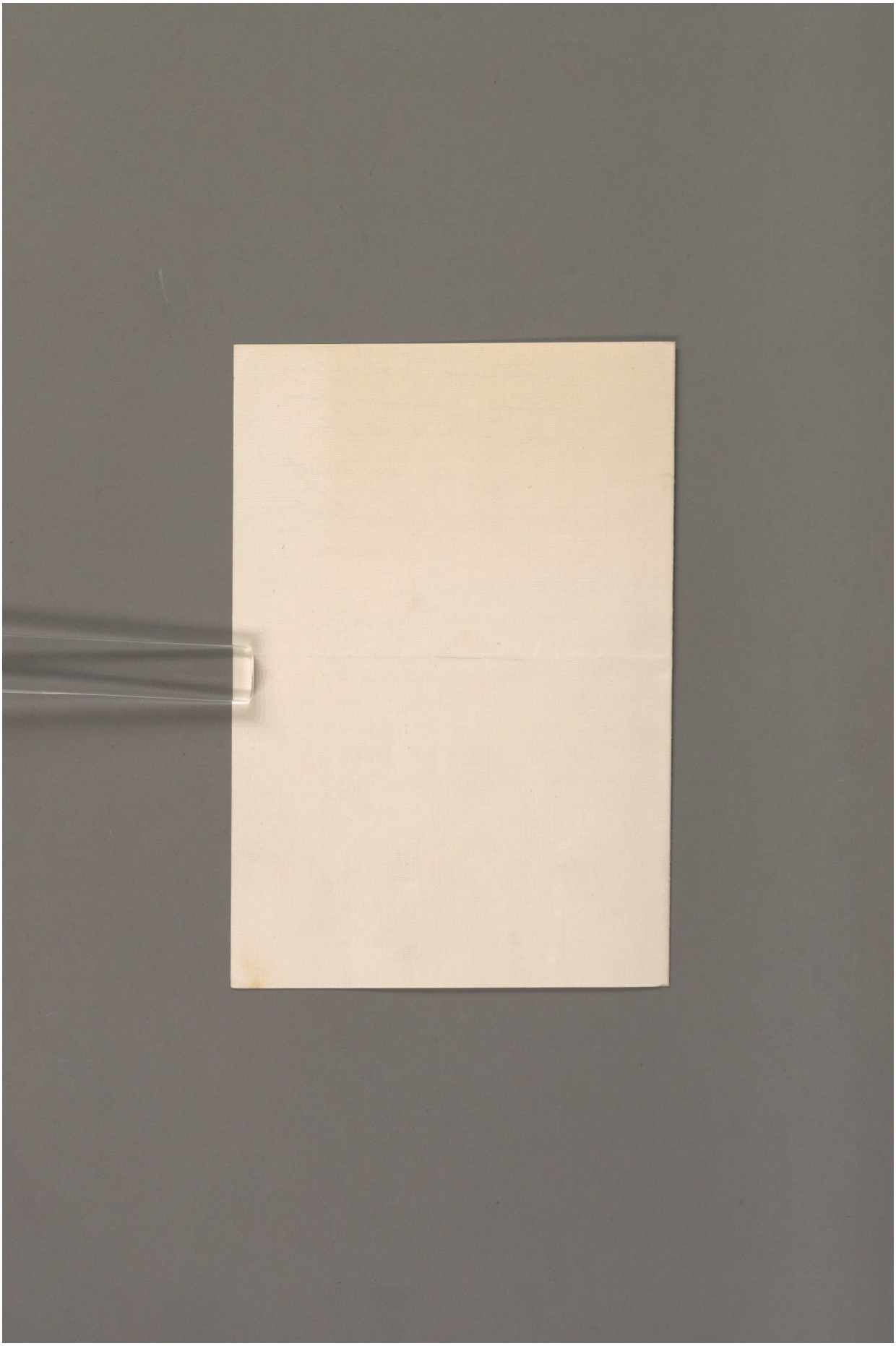
& without definite information
I cannot usefully offer
criticism.

I gather that Derby
figures are known wrong.
If this is so, it may
be serious; but I am
not clear at present
that more is needed
than drastic revision
of planned & reserved
men.

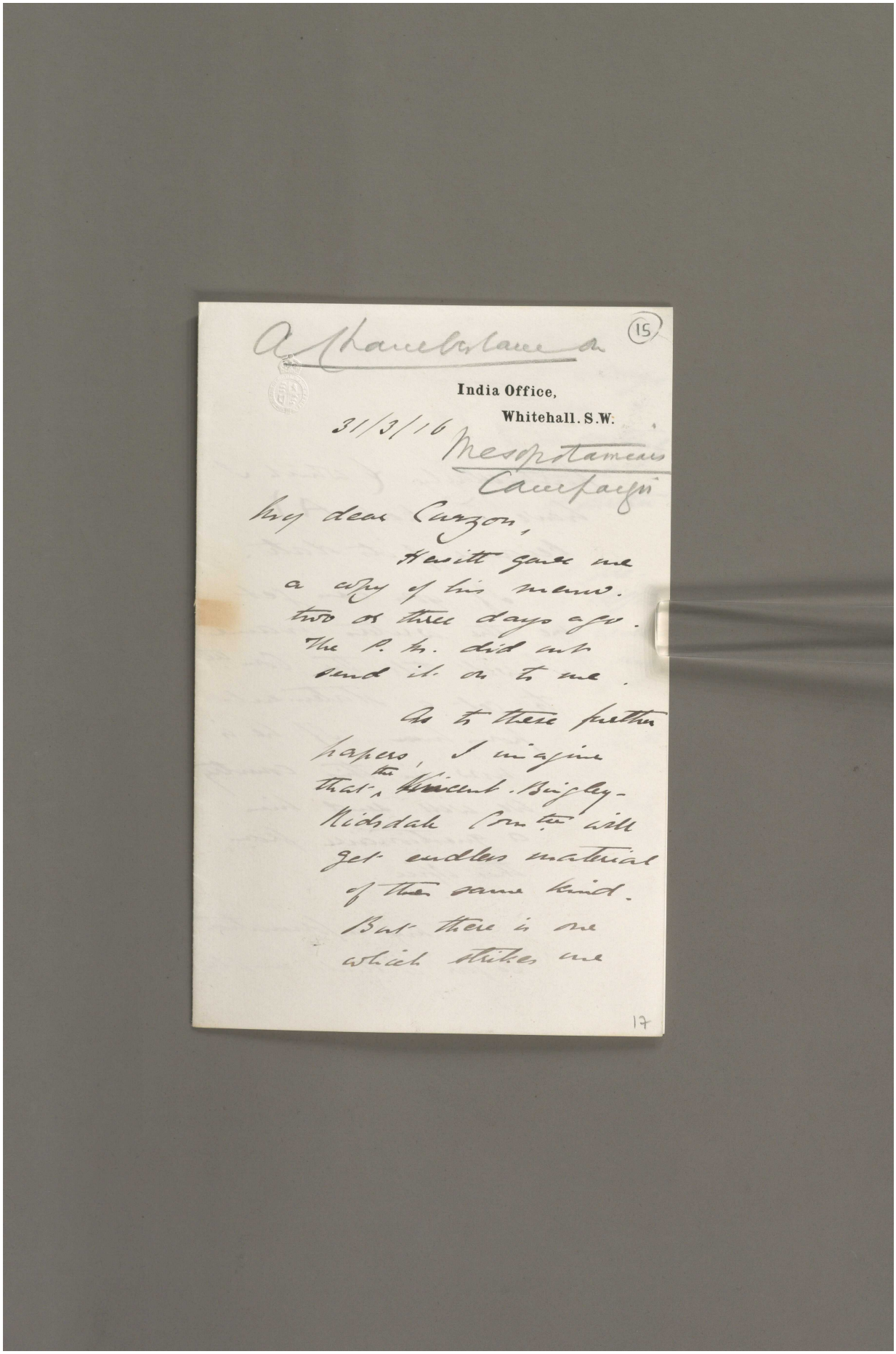
I hope to get
to town on Tuesday
morning, if by then
I can make up the



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000092



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00000f



A Chamberlain on

(15)

India Office,
Whitehall. S.W.

31/3/16

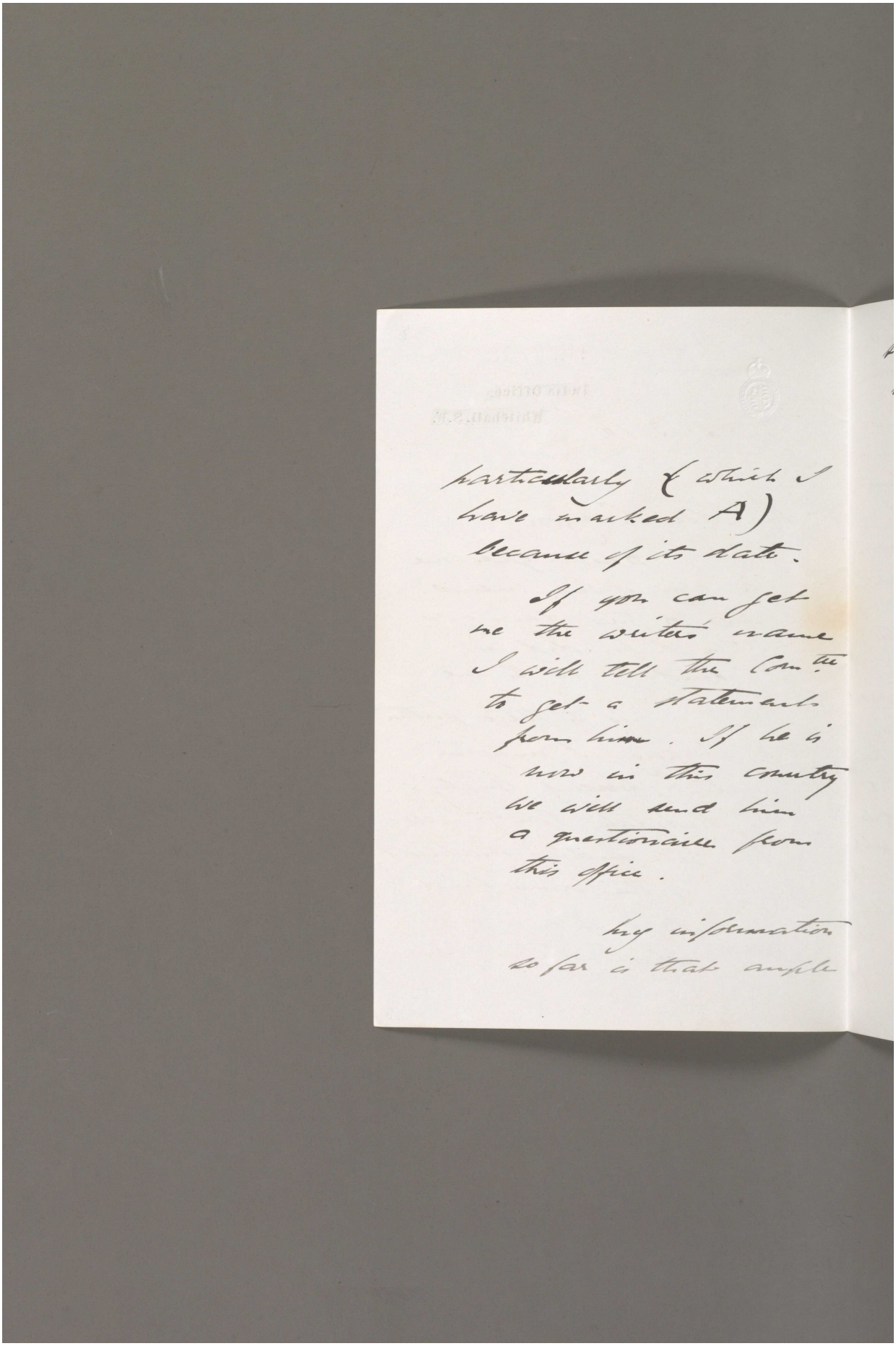
Mesopotamian Campaign

My dear Curzon,

Hewitt gave me a copy of his memo. two or three days ago. The P. M. did not send it on to me.

As to these further papers, I imagine that the Vincent-Bingley-Ridsdale Comtee will get endless material of the same kind. But there is one which strikes me

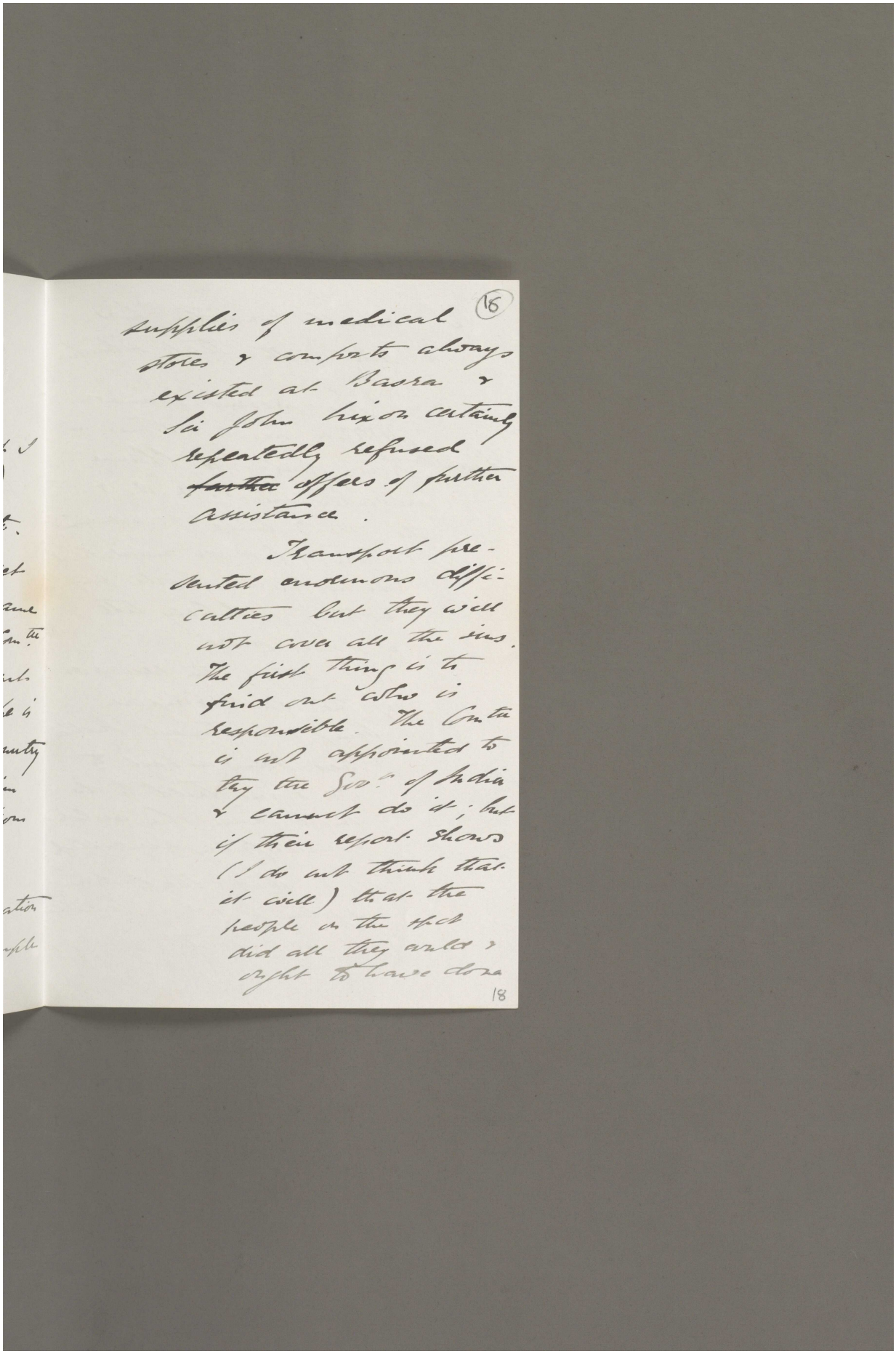
17



particularly (which I
have marked A)
because of its date.

If you can get
me the writer's name
I will tell the Comte
to get a statement
from him. If he is
now in this country
we will send him
a questionaire from
this office.

My information
so far is that ample



supplies of medical stores & comforts always existed at Basra & Sir John Nixon certainly repeatedly refused ~~further~~ offers of further assistance.

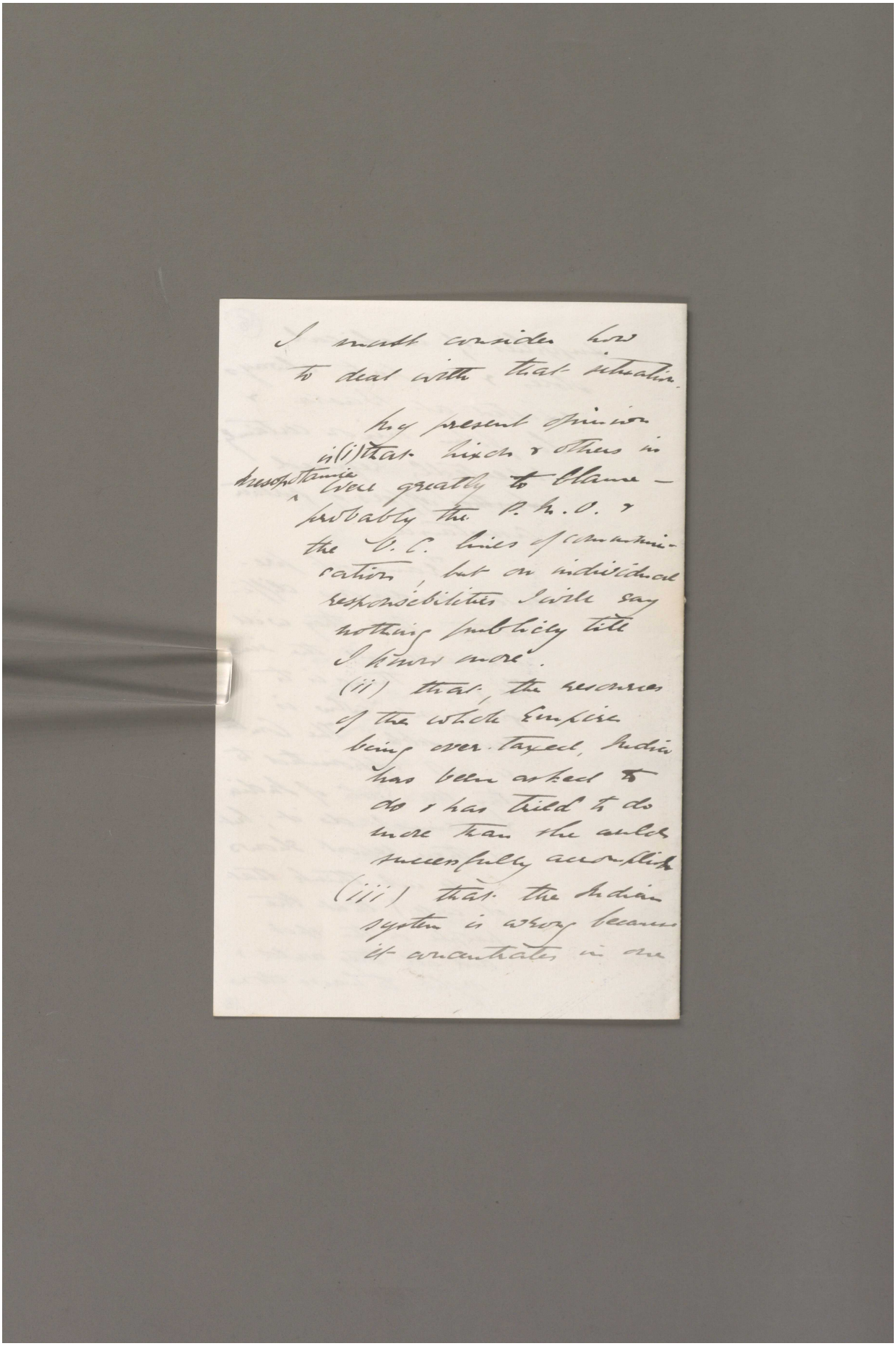
Transport presented enormous difficulties but they will not cover all the sins. The first thing is to find out who is responsible. The Cmtte is not appointed to try the Sec. of India & cannot do it; but if their report shows (I do not think that it will) that the people on the spot did all they could & ought to have done

16

18

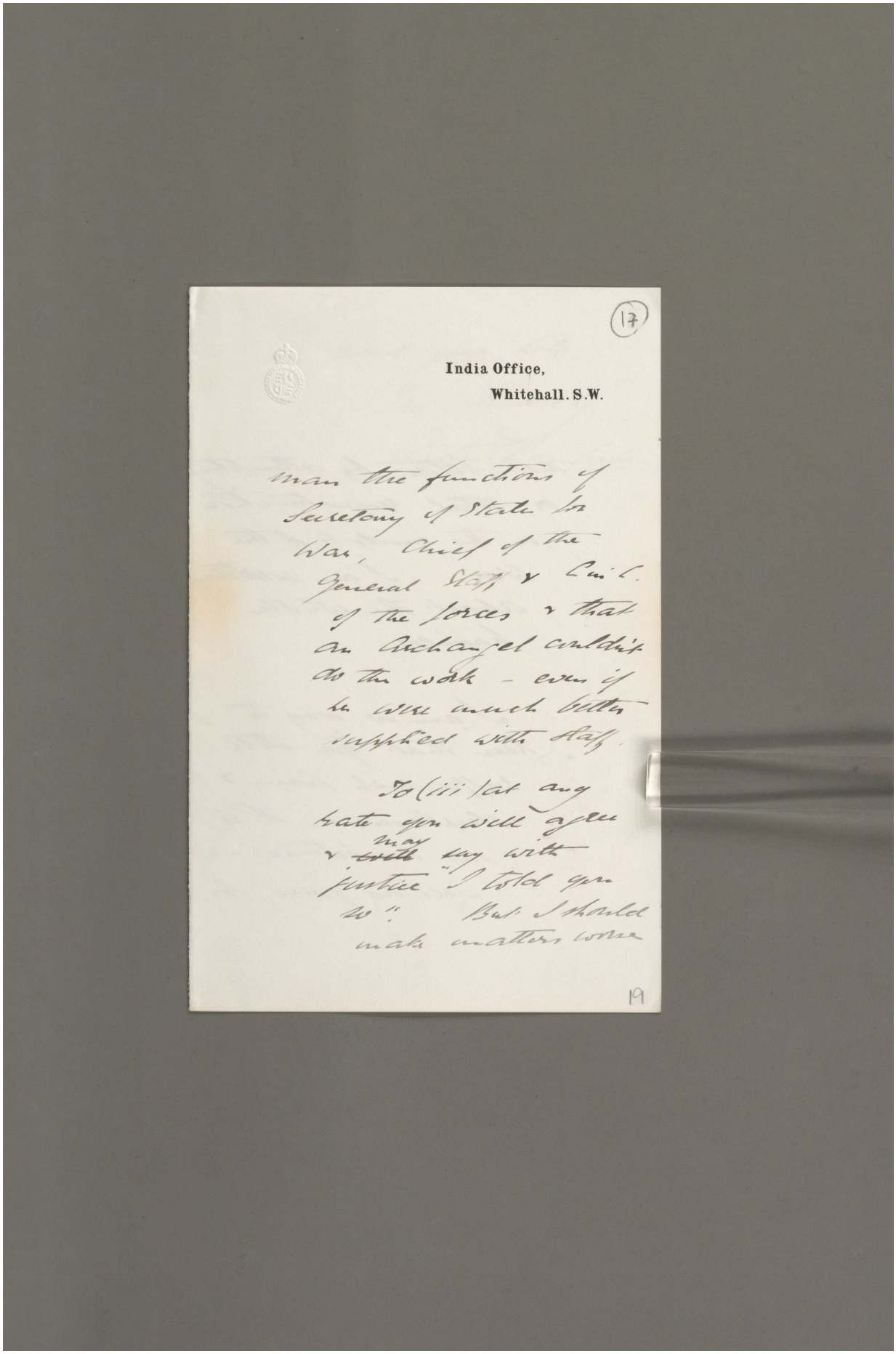
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000051



I must consider how
to deal with that situation.

My present opinion
is (i) that Nixon & others in
Mesopotamia were greatly to blame —
probably the P.W.O. &
the C.C. lines of communi-
cation, but on individual
responsibilities I will say
nothing publicly till
I know more.
(ii) that, the resources
of the whole Empire
being over-taxed, India
has been asked to
do & has tried to do
more than the units
successfully accomplish
(iii) that the Indian
system is wrong because
it accentuates in the



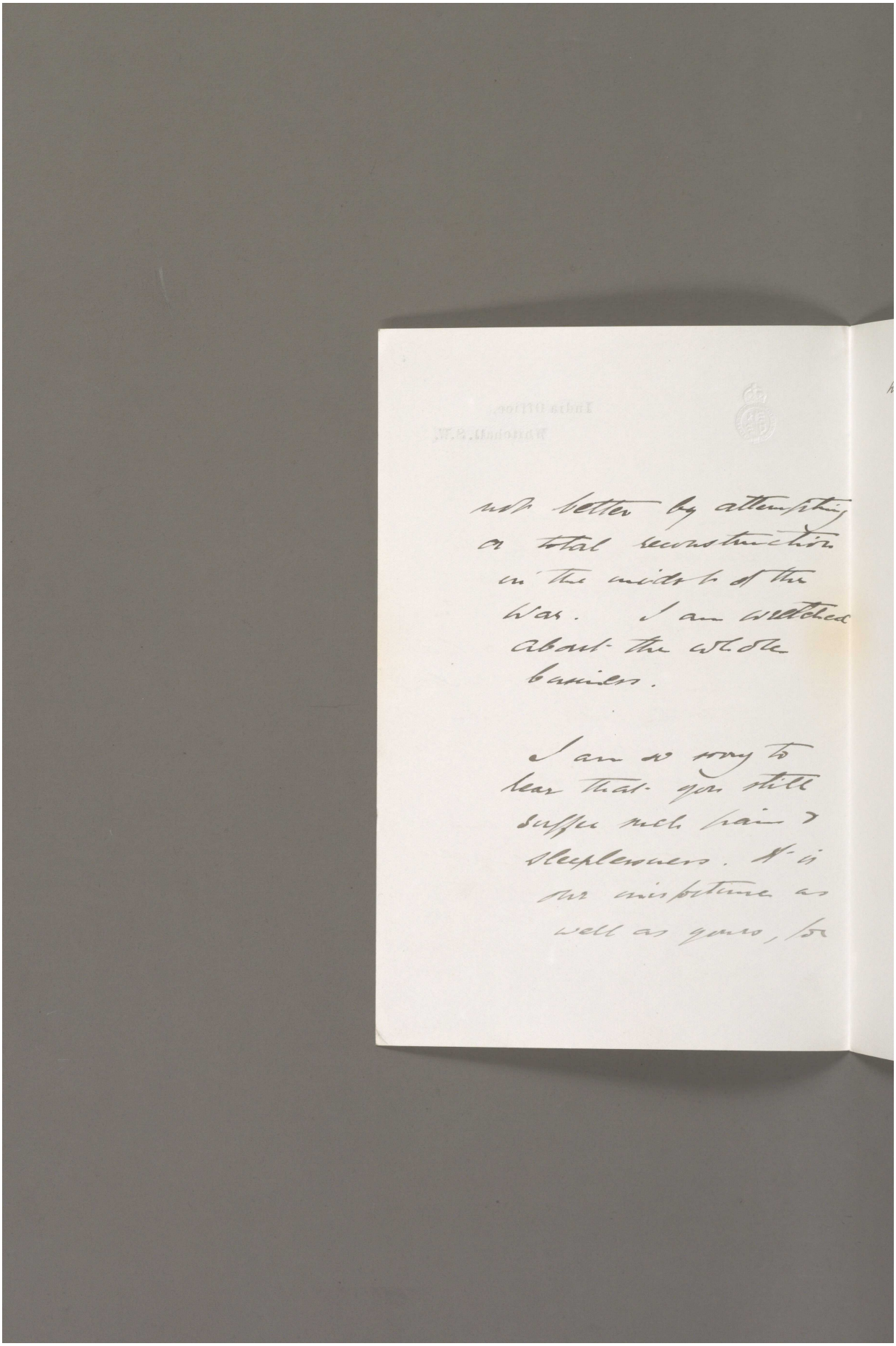
(17)

India Office,
Whitehall. S.W.

man the functions of
Secretary of State for
War, Chief of the
General Staff & C in C.
of the forces & that
an Archangel couldn't
do the work - even if
he were much better
supplied with staff.

To (iii) let any
hate you will give
& may say with
justice "I told you
so". But I should
make matters worse

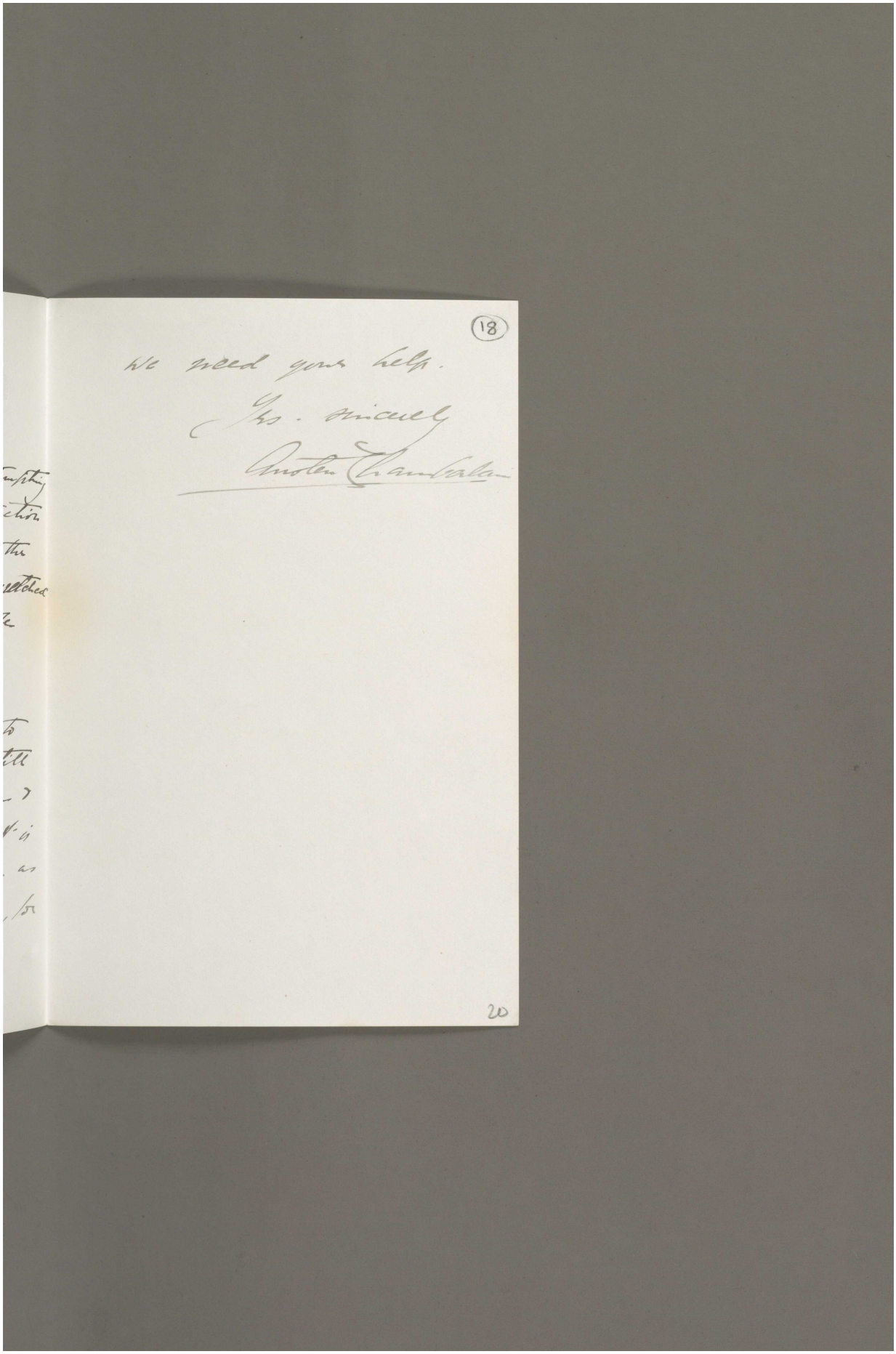
19



not better by attempting
a total reconstruction
in the middle of the
war. I am wretched
about the whole
business.

I am so sorry to
hear that you still
suffer much pain &
sleeplessness. It is
our misfortune as
well as yours, for

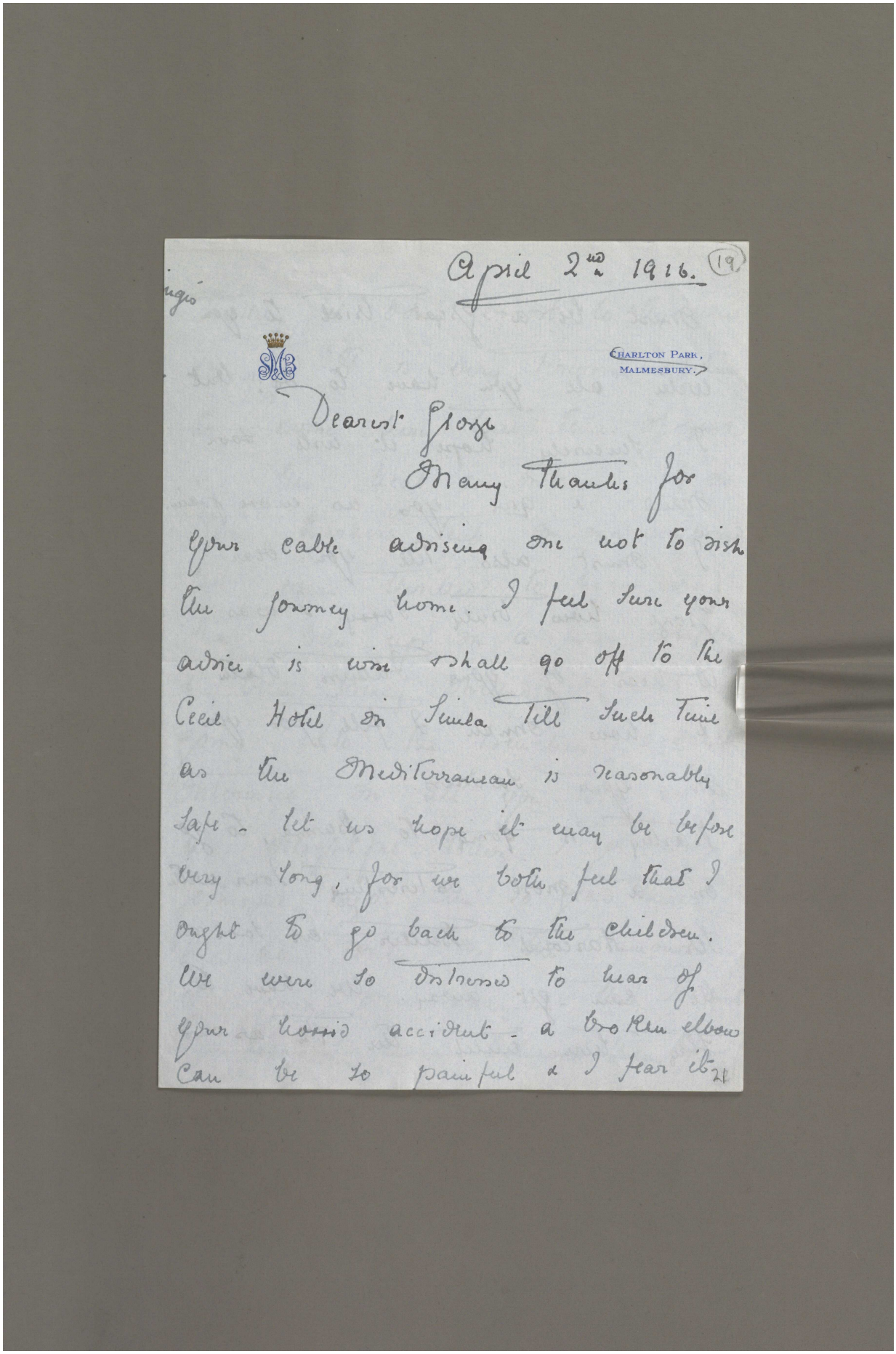
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000052



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000a4



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000034

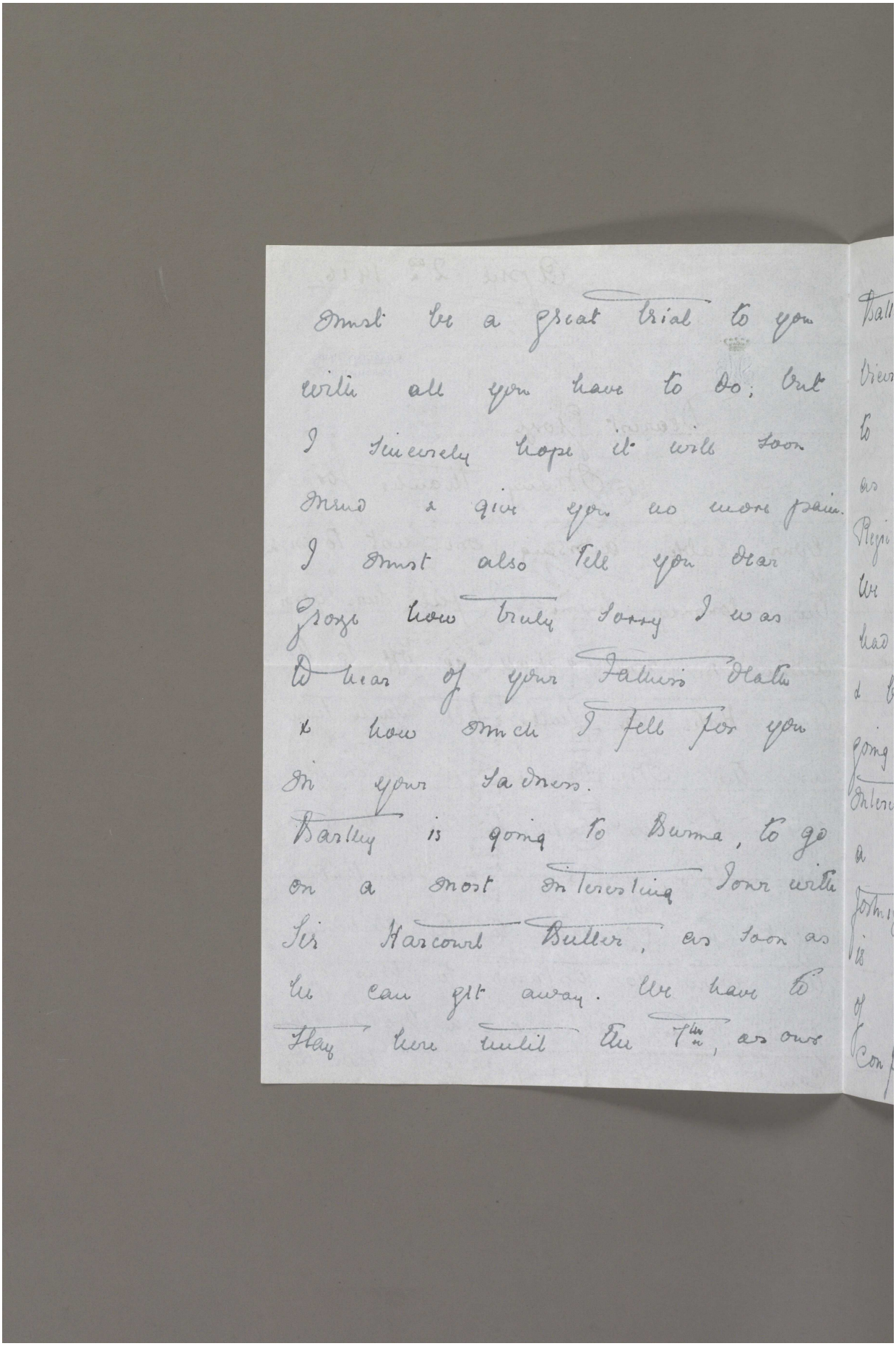


April 2nd 1916. (19)

CHARLTON PARK,
MALMESBURY.

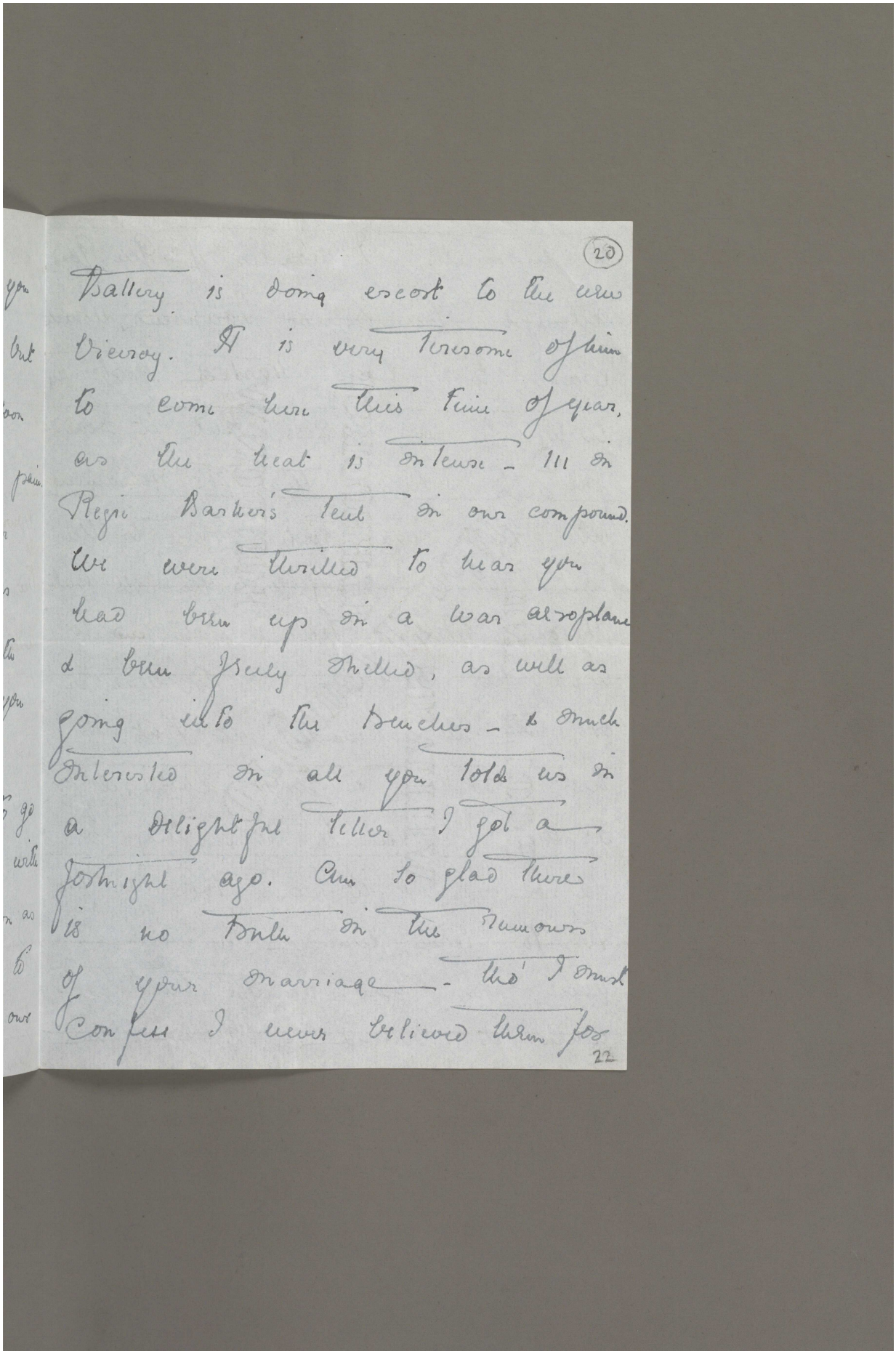
Dearest Gosse

Many thanks for your cable advising me not to risk the journey home. I feel sure your advice is wise & shall go off to the Cecil Hotel in Simla till such time as the Mediterranean is reasonably safe - let us hope it may be before very long, for we both feel that I ought to go back to the children. We were so distressed to hear of your horrid accident - a broken elbow can be so painful & I fear it



must be a great trial to you
with all you have to do; but
I sincerely hope it will soon
mend & give you no more pain.
I must also tell you dear
Grace how truly sorry I was
to hear of your Father's death
& how much I felt for you
in your sadness.
Barley is going to Burma, to go
on a most interesting tour with
Sir Harcourt Butler, as soon as
he can get away. We have to
stay here until the 7th, as our

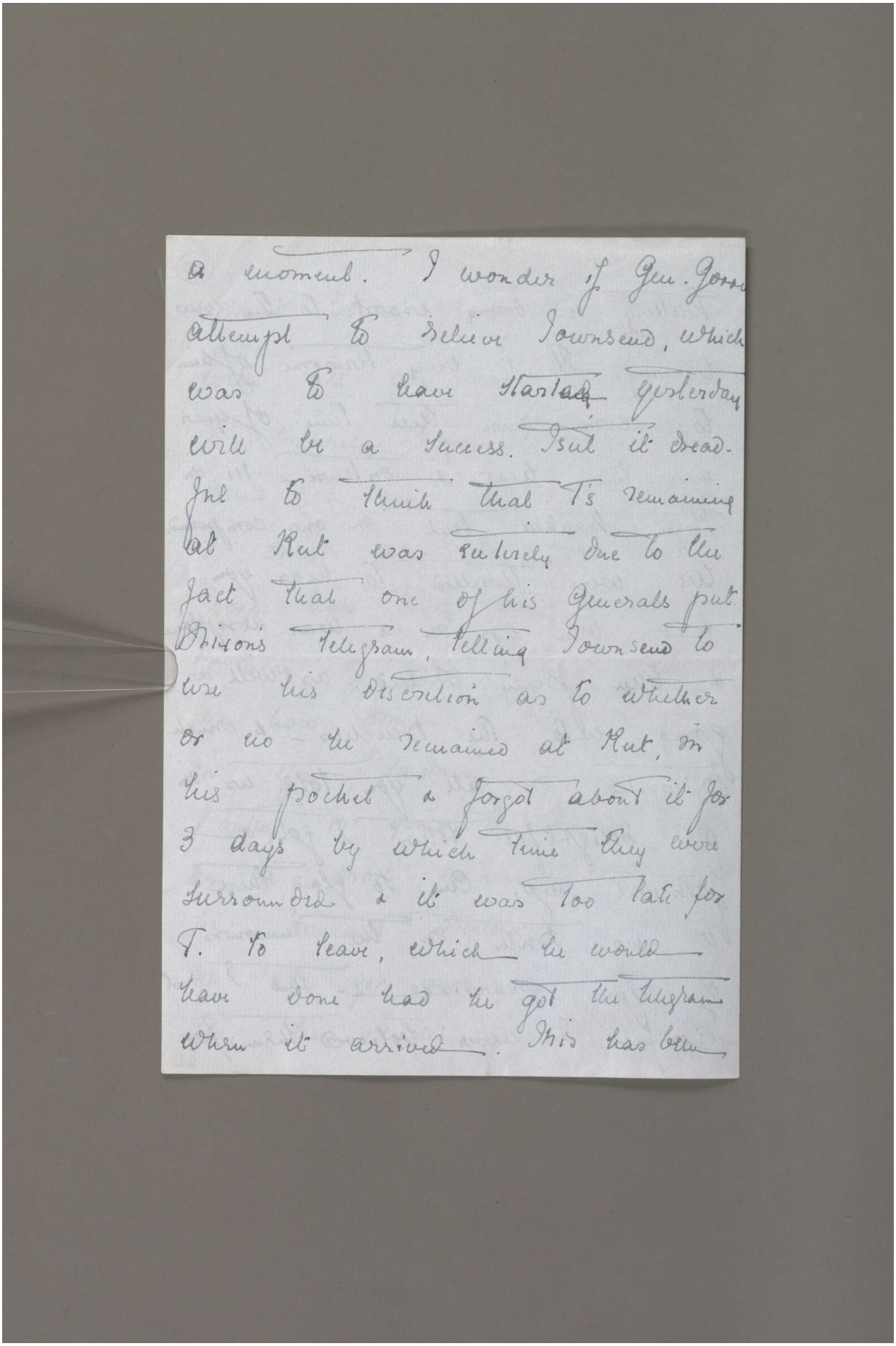
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00009e



(20)

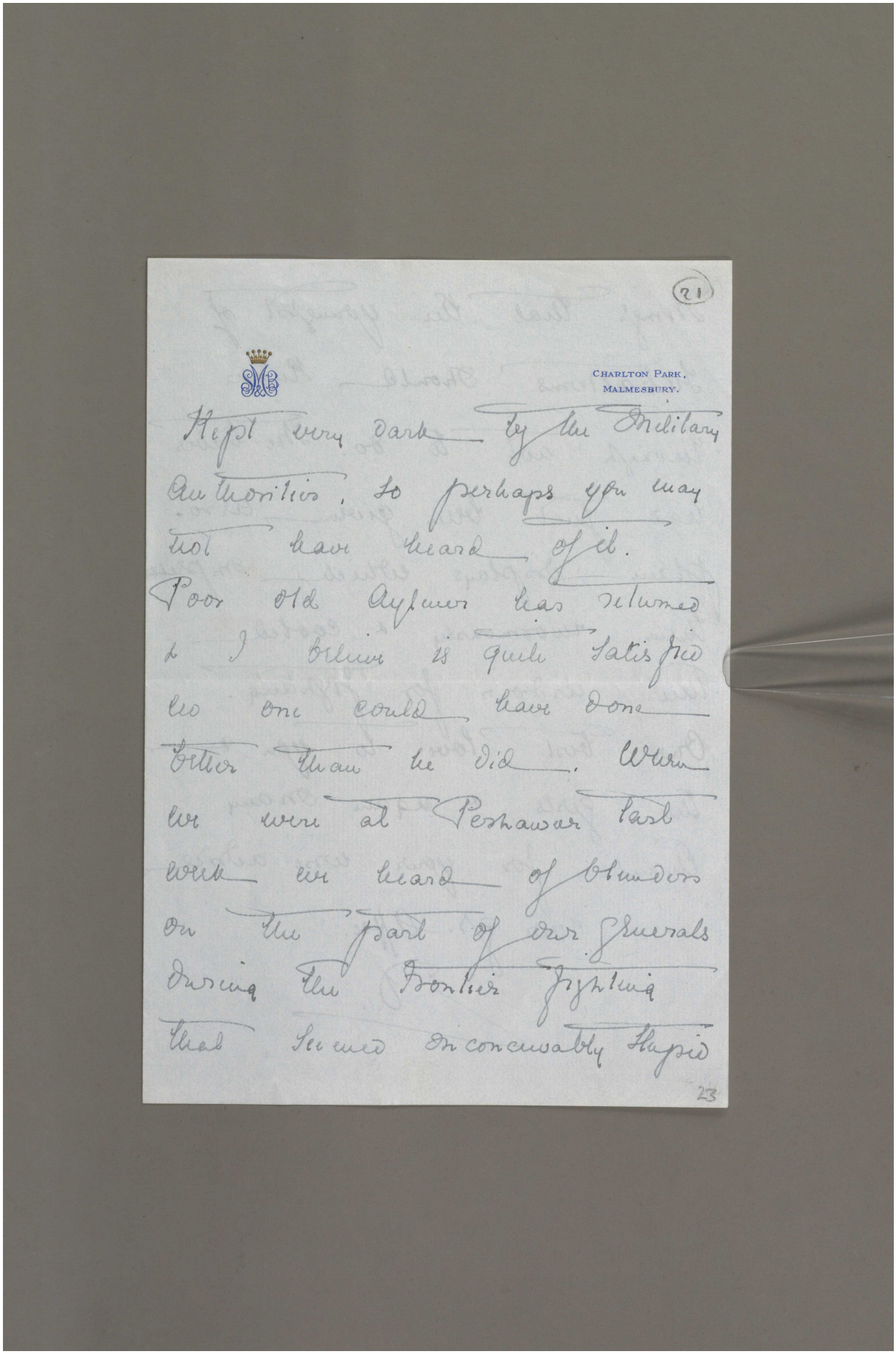
Bailey is doing escort to the new Viceroy. It is very tiresome of him to come here this time of year, as the heat is intense – 111 in Reg. Barker's tent in our compound. We were thrilled to hear you had been up in a war aeroplane & been fairly shelled, as well as going into the trenches – & much interested in all you told us in a delightful letter I got a fortnight ago. Am so glad there is no truth in the rumours of your marriage – tho' I must confess I never believed them for

22



a moment. I wonder if Gen. Gorre
attempt to relieve Townsend, which
was to have started yesterday
will be a success. Isn't it dread-
ful to think that T's remaining
at Kut was entirely due to the
fact that one of his Generals put
Nixon's telegram, telling Townsend to
use his discretion as to whether
or no he remained at Kut, in
his pocket & forgot about it for
3 days by which time they were
surrounded & it was too late for
T. to leave, which he would
have done had he got the telegram
when it arrived. This has been

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000ab

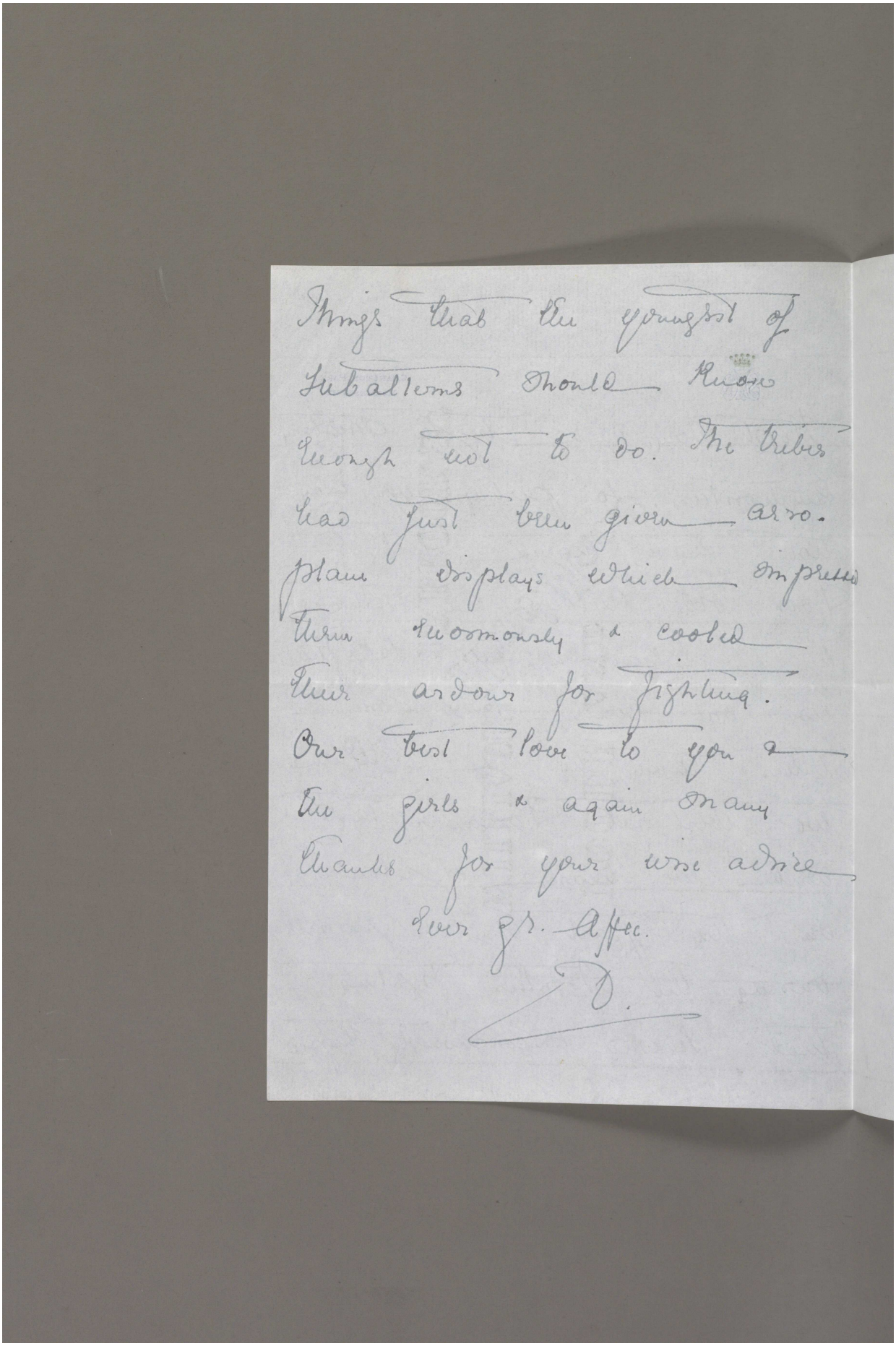


(21)

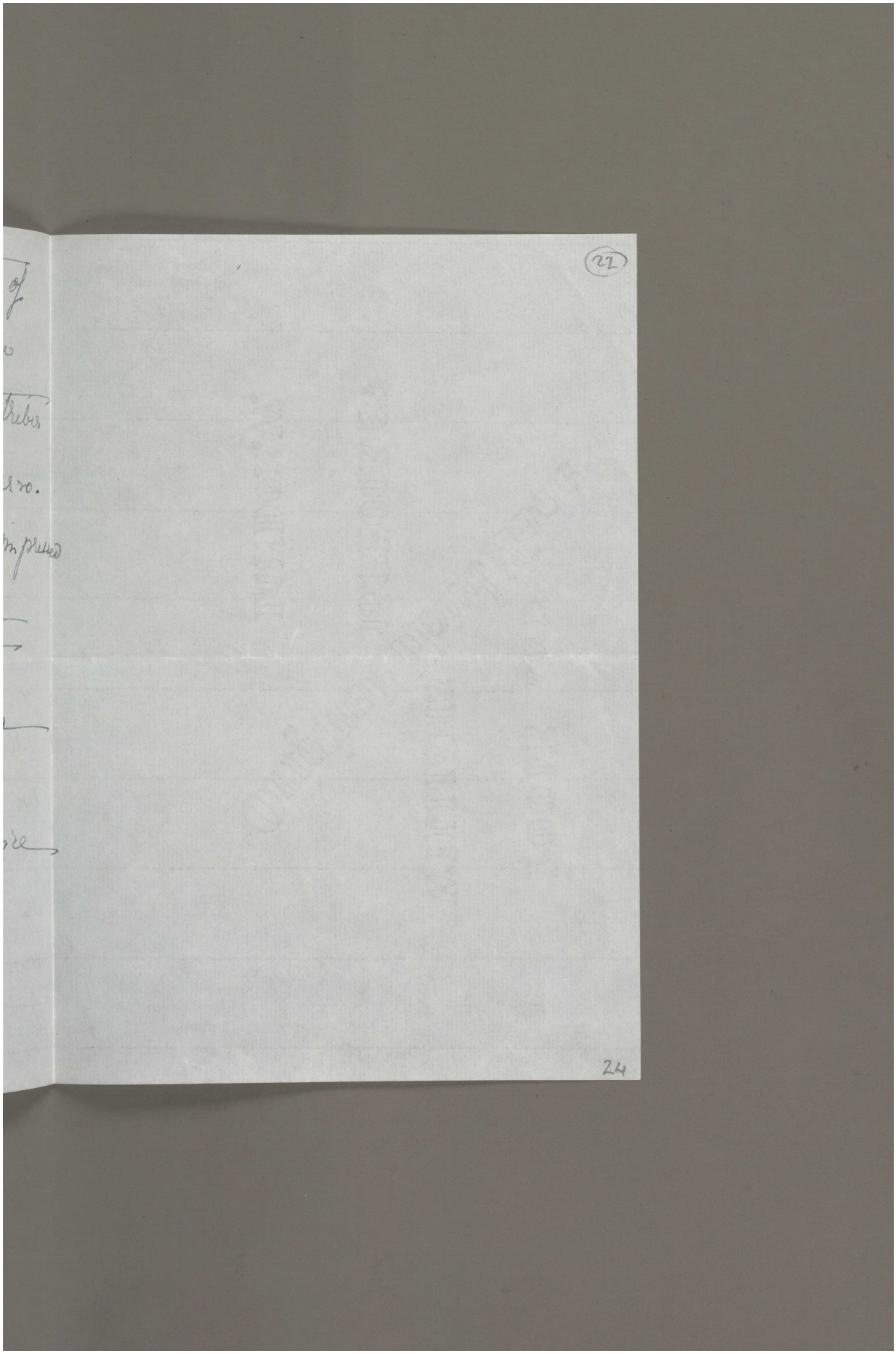
CHARLTON PARK,
MALMESBURY.

Kept very dark by the Military
Authorities, so perhaps you may
not have heard of it.
Poor old Aylmer has returned
& I believe is quite satisfied
no one could have done
better than he did. When
we were at Peshawar last
week we heard of blunders
on the part of our Generals
during the Frontier fighting
that seemed inconceivably stupid

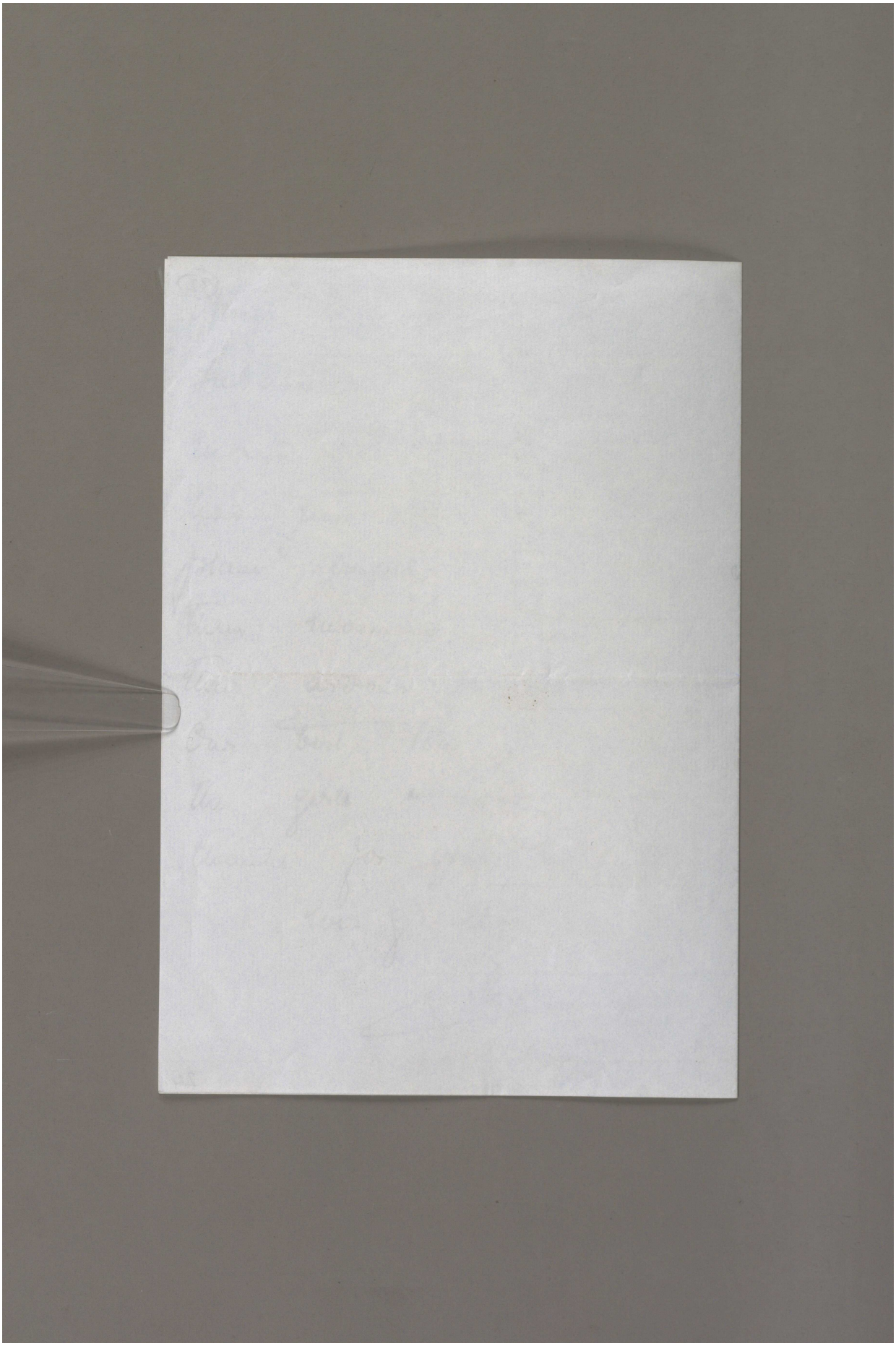
23



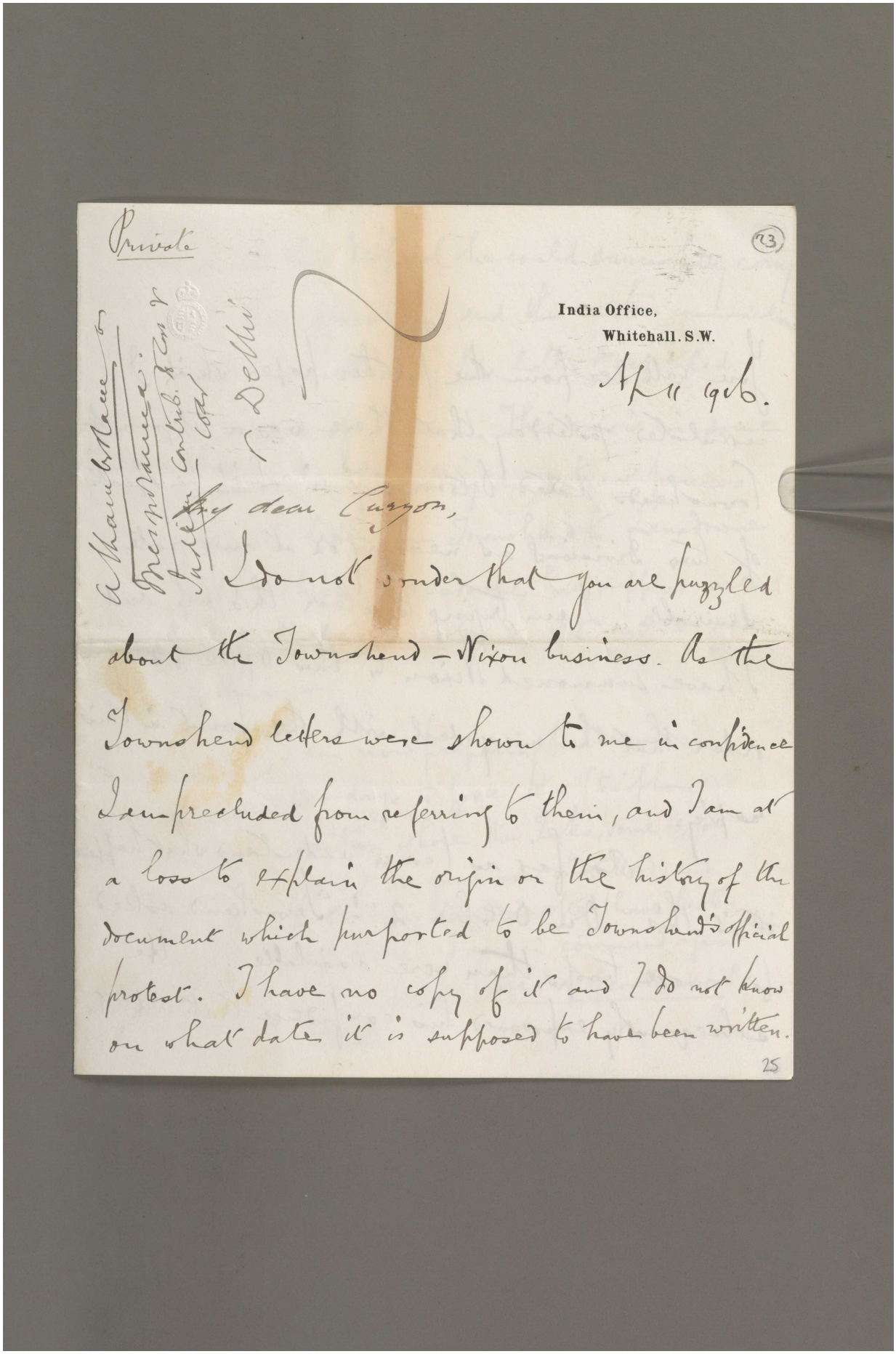
things that the youngest of
Subalterns should know
enough not to do. The tribes
had just been given a very
plain display which impressed
them enormously & cooled
their ardour for fighting.
Our best love to you &
the girls & again many
thanks for your wise advice
Ever yr. affec.
D.



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00002f



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00000e



Private

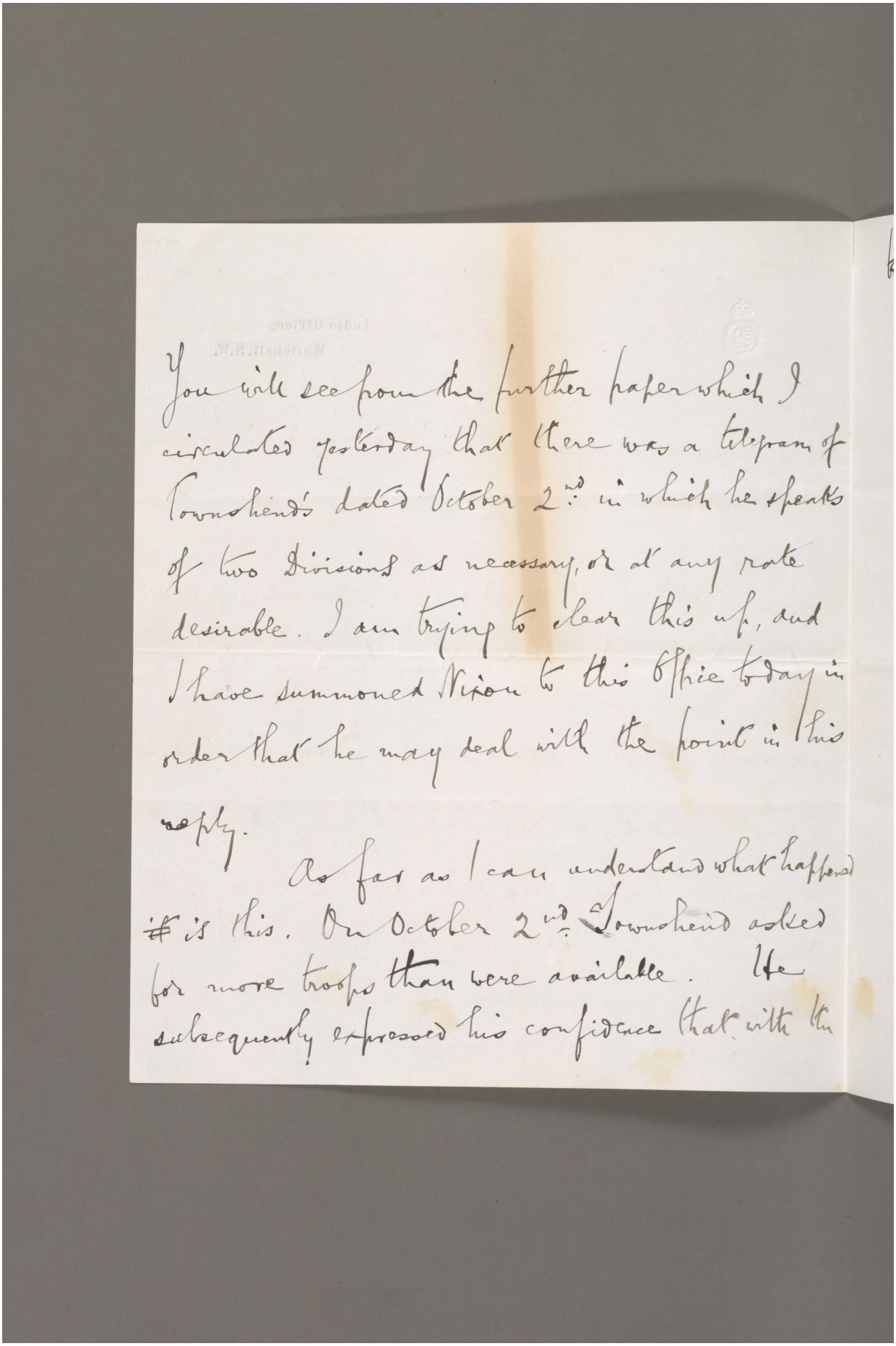
(23)

India Office,
Whitehall. S.W.
April 1916.

My dear Curzon,

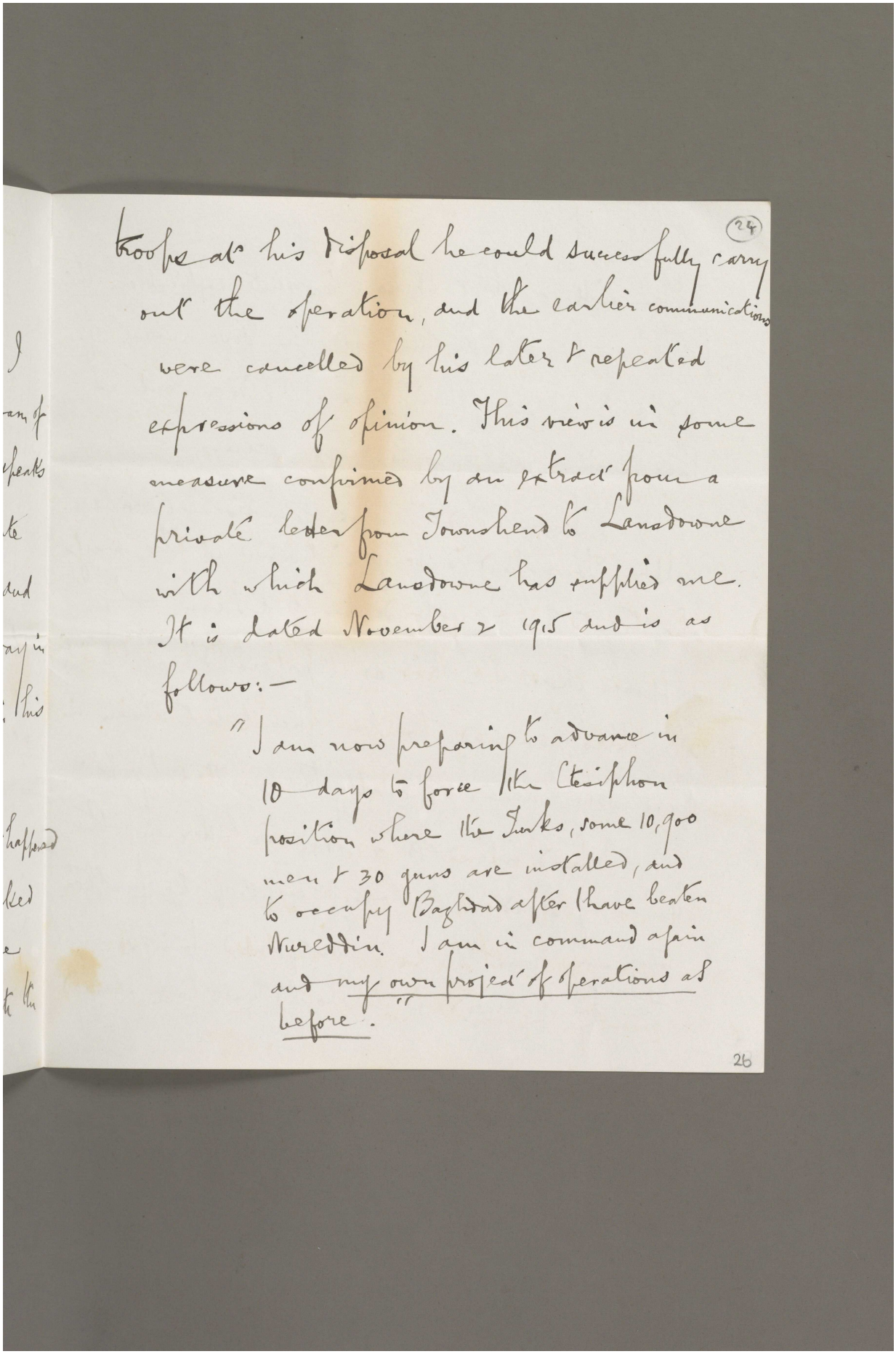
I do not wonder that you are puzzled about the Townshend – Nixon business. As the Townshend letters were shown to me in confidence I am precluded from referring to them, and I am at a loss to explain the origin or the history of the document which purported to be Townshend's official protest. I have no copy of it and I do not know on what date it is supposed to have been written.

25



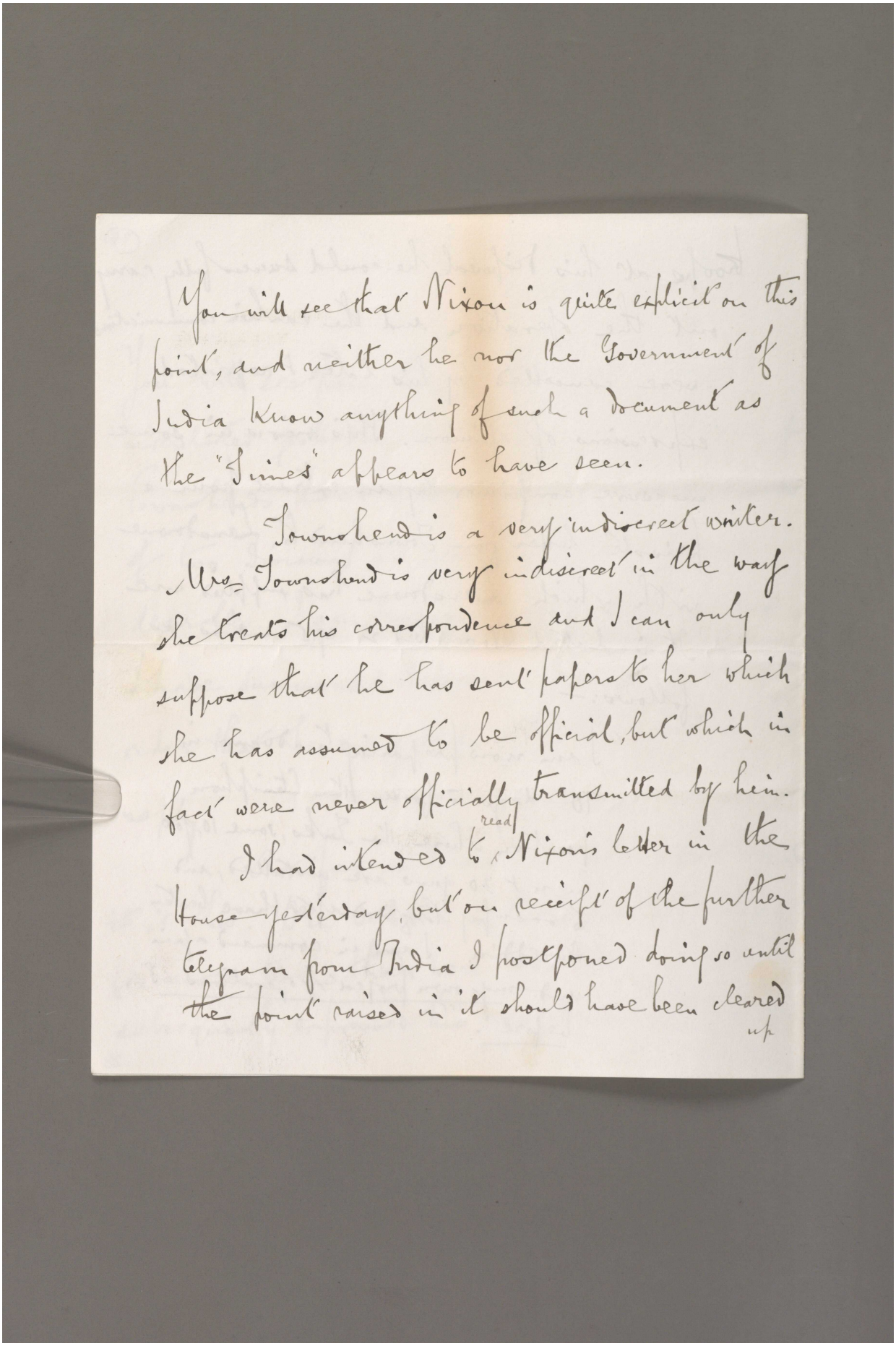
You will see from the further paper which I circulated yesterday that there was a telegram of Townshend's dated October 2nd in which he speaks of two Divisions as necessary, or at any rate desirable. I am trying to clear this up, and I have summoned Nixon to this Office today in order that he may deal with the point in his reply.

As far as I can understand what happened it is this. On October 2nd Townshend asked for more troops than were available. He subsequently expressed his confidence that with the



troops at his disposal he could successfully carry out the operation, and the earlier communications were cancelled by his later & repeated expressions of opinion. This view is in some measure confirmed by an extract from a private letter from Townshend to Lansdowne with which Lansdowne has supplied me. It is dated November 2 1915 and is as follows:—

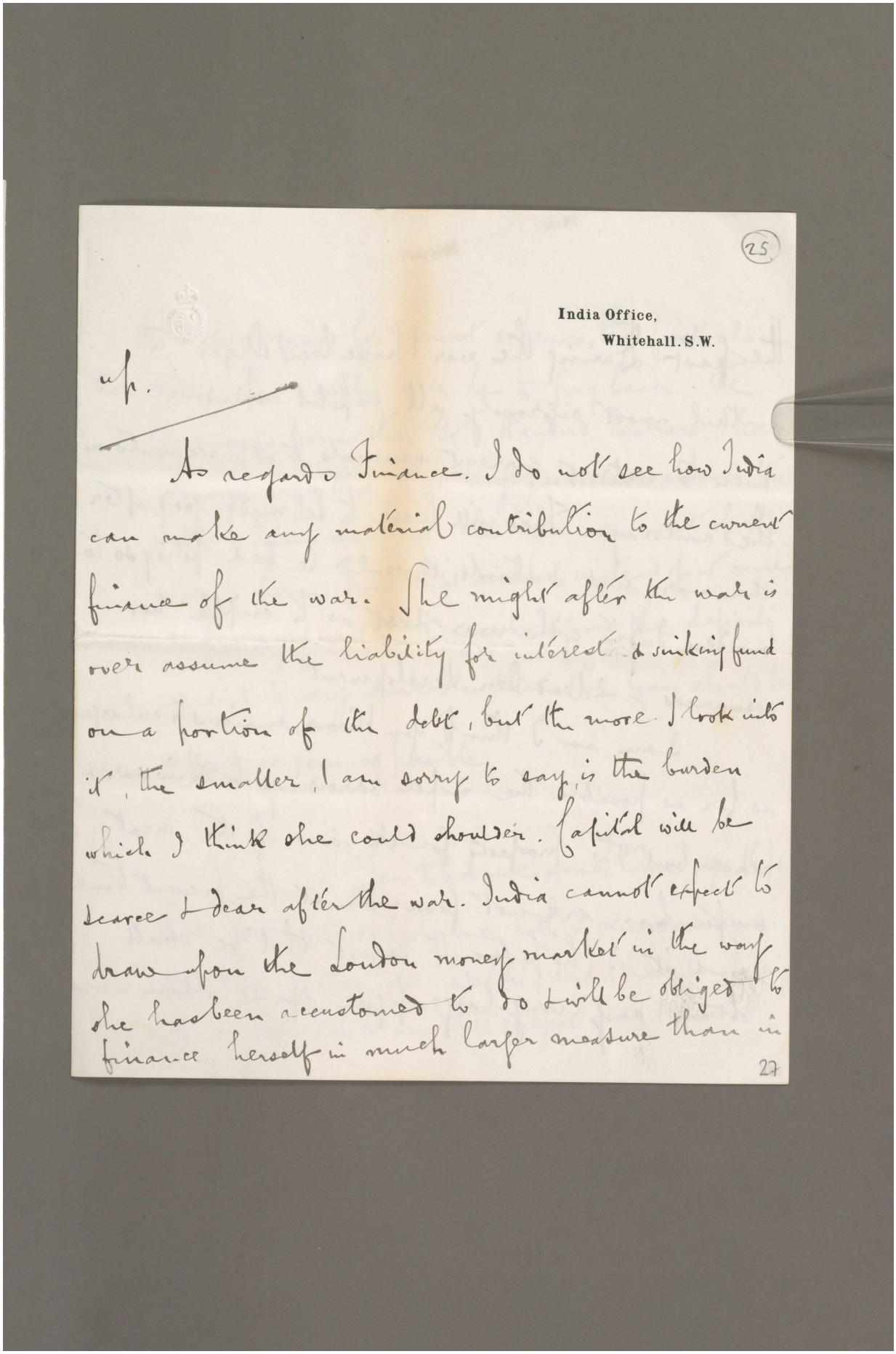
"I am now preparing to advance in 10 days to force the Ctesiphon position where the Turks, some 10,000 men & 30 guns are installed, and to occupy Baghdad after I have beaten Nureddin. I am in command again and my own project of operations as before."



You will see that Nixon is quite explicit on this point, and neither he nor the Government of India know anything of such a document as the "Times" appears to have seen.

Townshend is a very indiscreet writer. Mrs Townshend is very indiscreet in the way she treats his correspondence and I can only suppose that he has sent papers to her which she has assumed to be official, but which in fact were never officially transmitted by him.

I had intended to read Nixon's letter in the House yesterday, but on receipt of the further telegram from India I postponed doing so until the point raised in it should have been cleared up



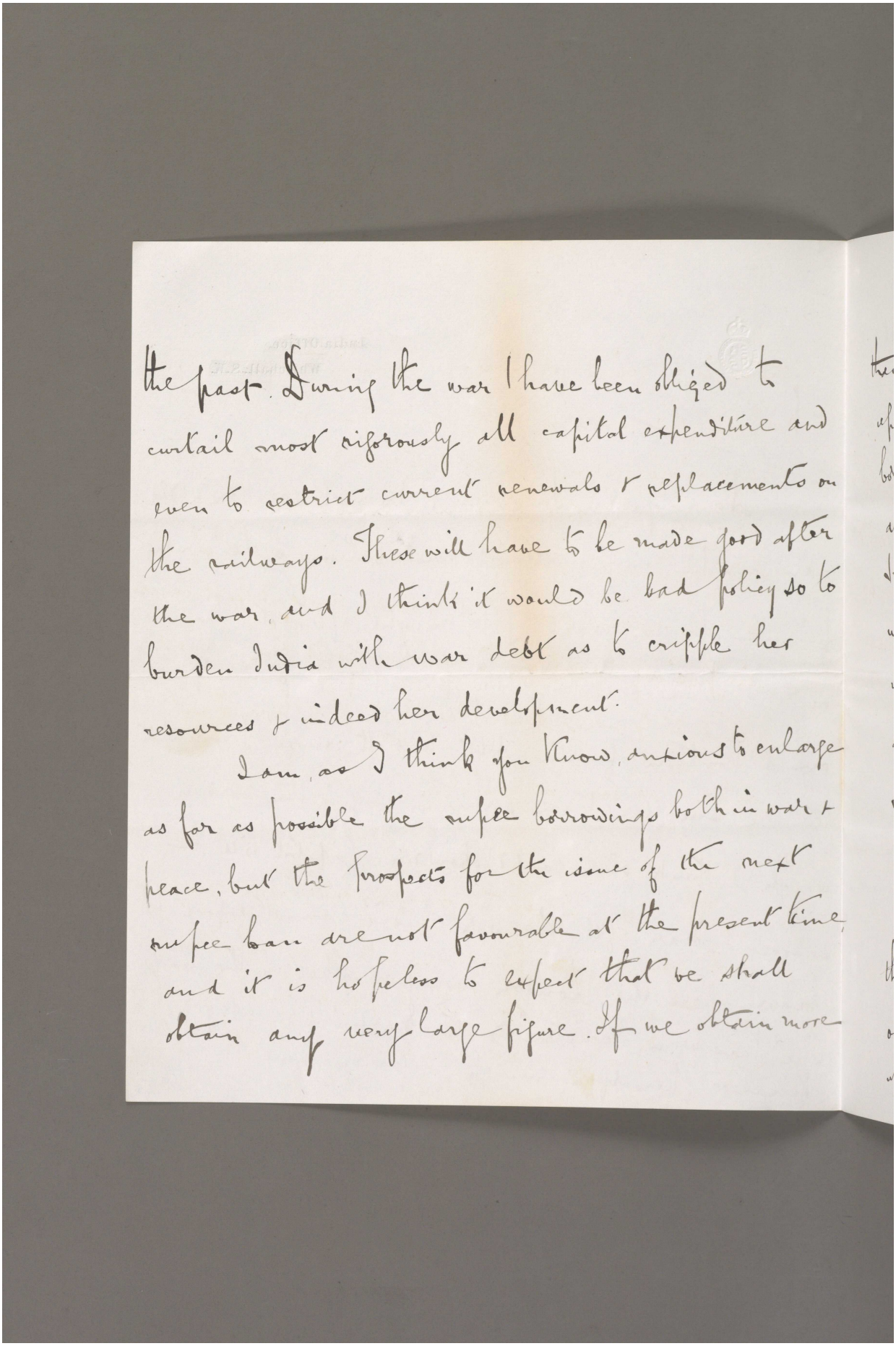
25

India Office,
Whitehall. S.W.

up.

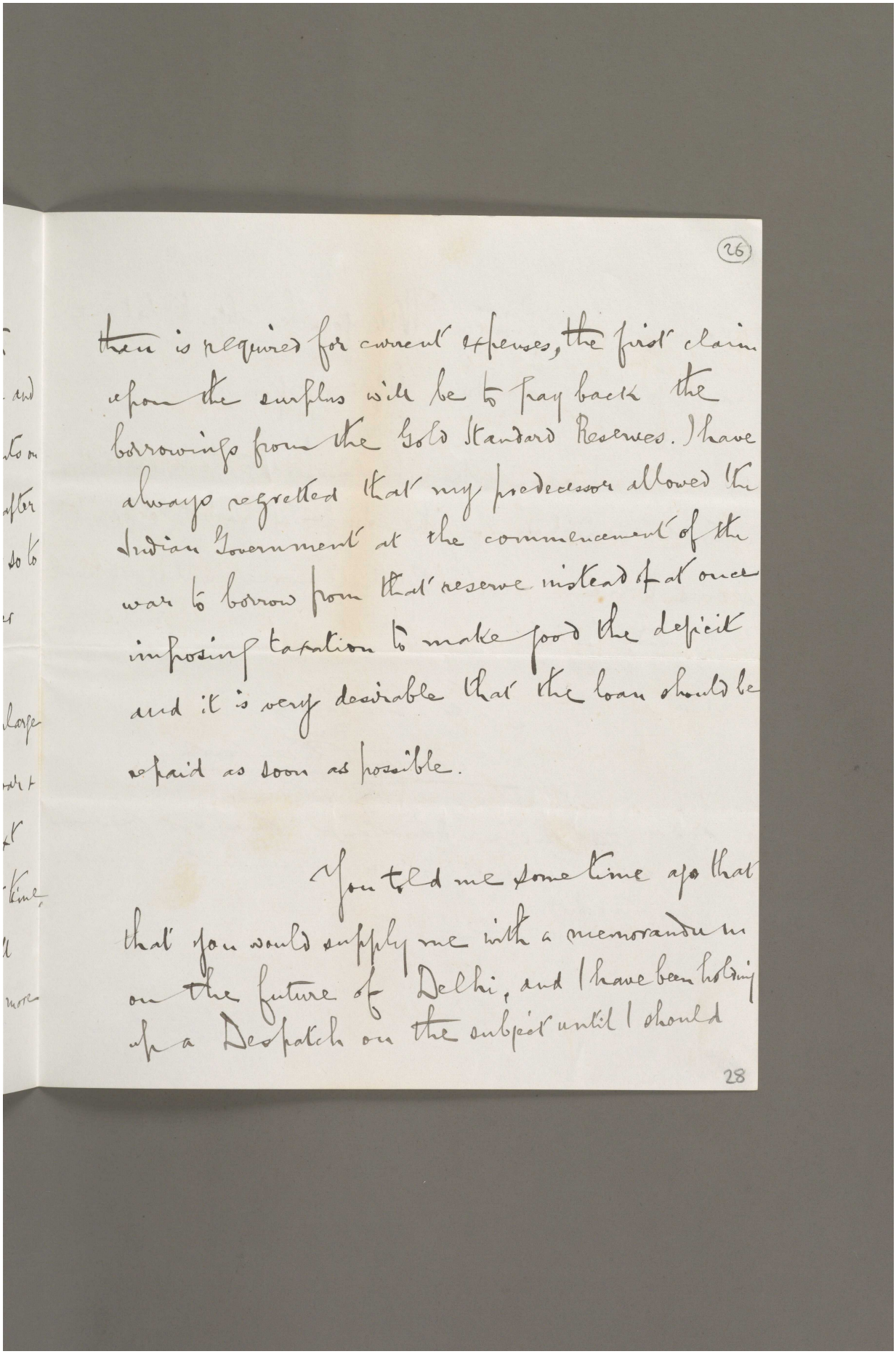
As regards Finance. I do not see how India can make any material contribution to the current finance of the war. She might after the war is over assume the liability for interest & sinking fund on a portion of the debt, but the more I look into it, the smaller, I am sorry to say, is the burden which I think she could shoulder. Capital will be scarce & dear after the war. India cannot expect to draw upon the London money market in the ways she has been accustomed to do & will be obliged to finance herself in much larger measure than in

27



the past. During the war I have been obliged to curtail most rigorously all capital expenditure and even to restrict current renewals & replacements on the railways. These will have to be made good after the war, and I think it would be bad policy so to burden India with war debt as to cripple her resources & indeed her development.

I am, as I think you know, anxious to enlarge as far as possible the rupee borrowings both in war & peace, but the prospects for the issue of the next rupee loan are not favourable at the present time, and it is hopeless to expect that we shall obtain any very large figure. If we obtain more

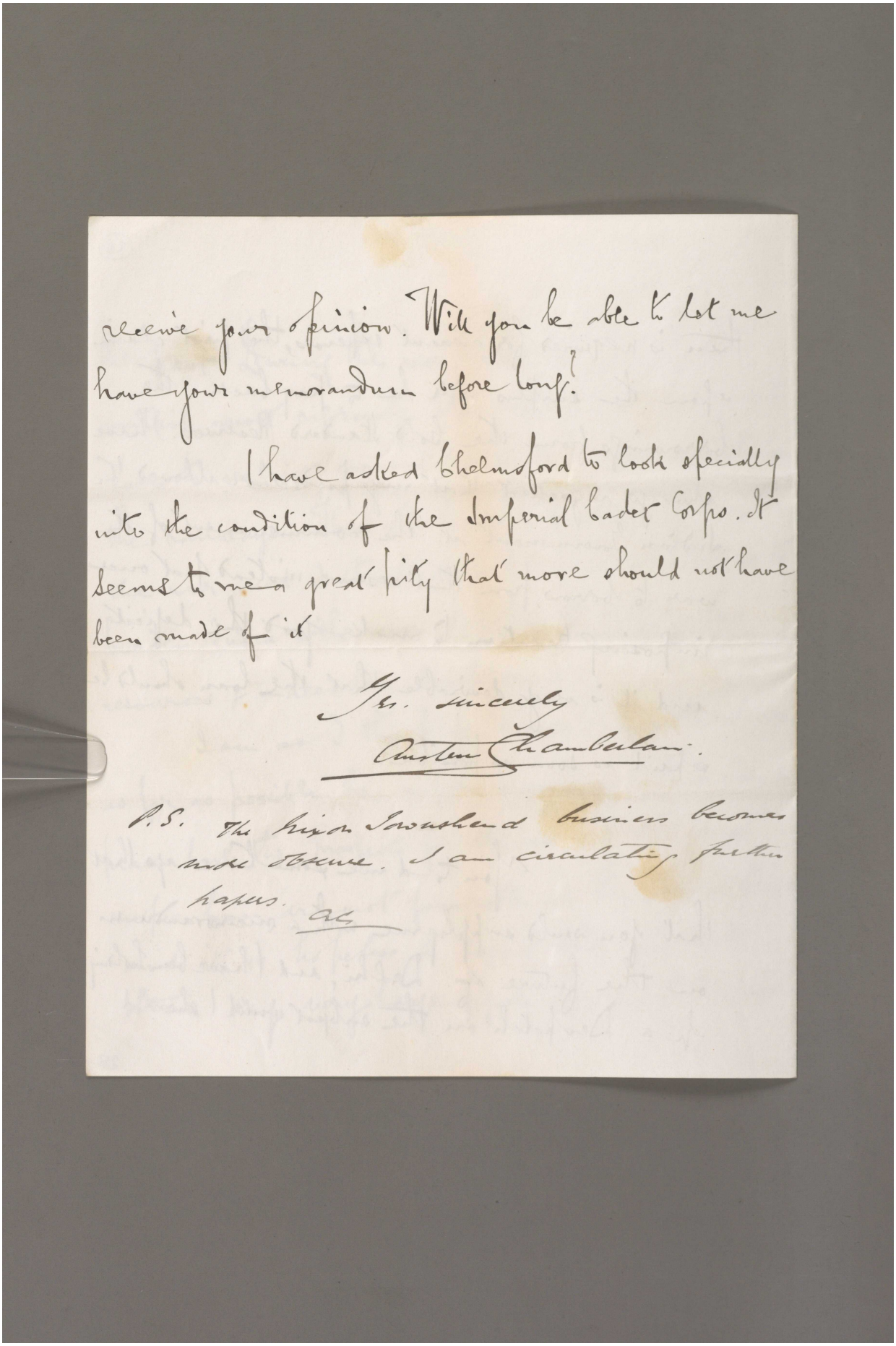


(26)

there is required for current expenses, the first claim upon the surplus will be to pay back the borrowings from the Gold Standard Reserves. I have always regretted that my predecessor allowed the Indian Government at the commencement of the war to borrow from that reserve instead of at once imposing taxation to make good the deficit and it is very desirable that the loan should be repaid as soon as possible.

You told me some time ago that that you would supply me with a memorandum on the future of Delhi, and I have been holding up a Despatch on the subject until I should

28

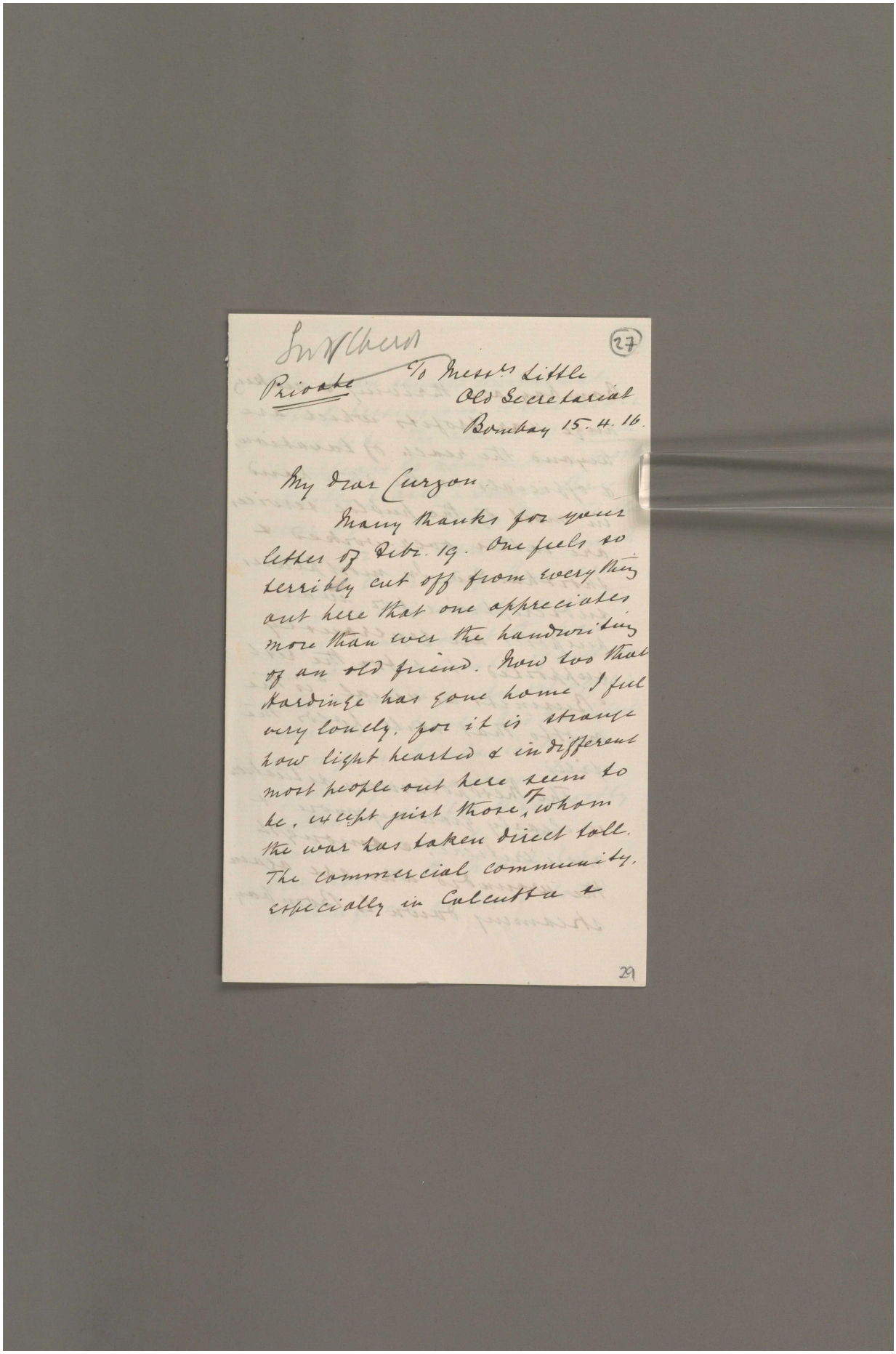


receive your opinion. Will you be able to let me have your memorandum before long?

I have asked Chelmsford to look specially into the condition of the Imperial Cadet Corps. It seems to me a great pity that more should not have been made of it

Yrs. sincerely
Austen Chamberlain.

P.S. The Irish Snowball business becomes more serious. I am circulating further papers. AC



Sir W Chers

(27)

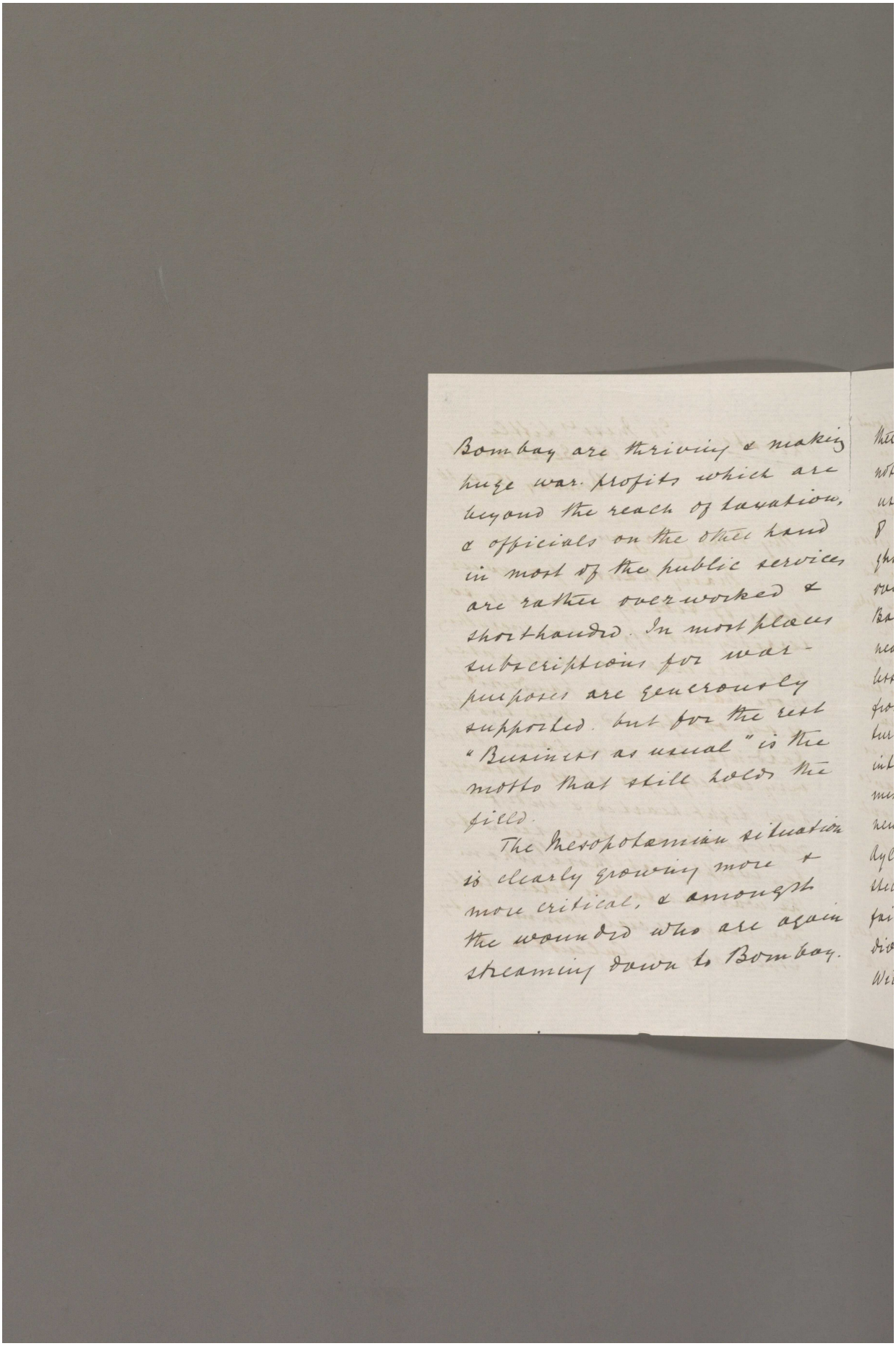
Private

To Messrs Little
Old Secretariat
Bombay 15. 4. 16.

My dear Curzon.

Many thanks for your letter of Febr. 19. One feels so terribly cut off from everything out here that one appreciates more than ever the handwriting of an old friend. Now too that Hardinge has gone home I feel very lonely, for it is strange how light hearted & indifferent most people out here seem to be, except just those of whom the war has taken direct toll. The commercial community, especially in Calcutta &

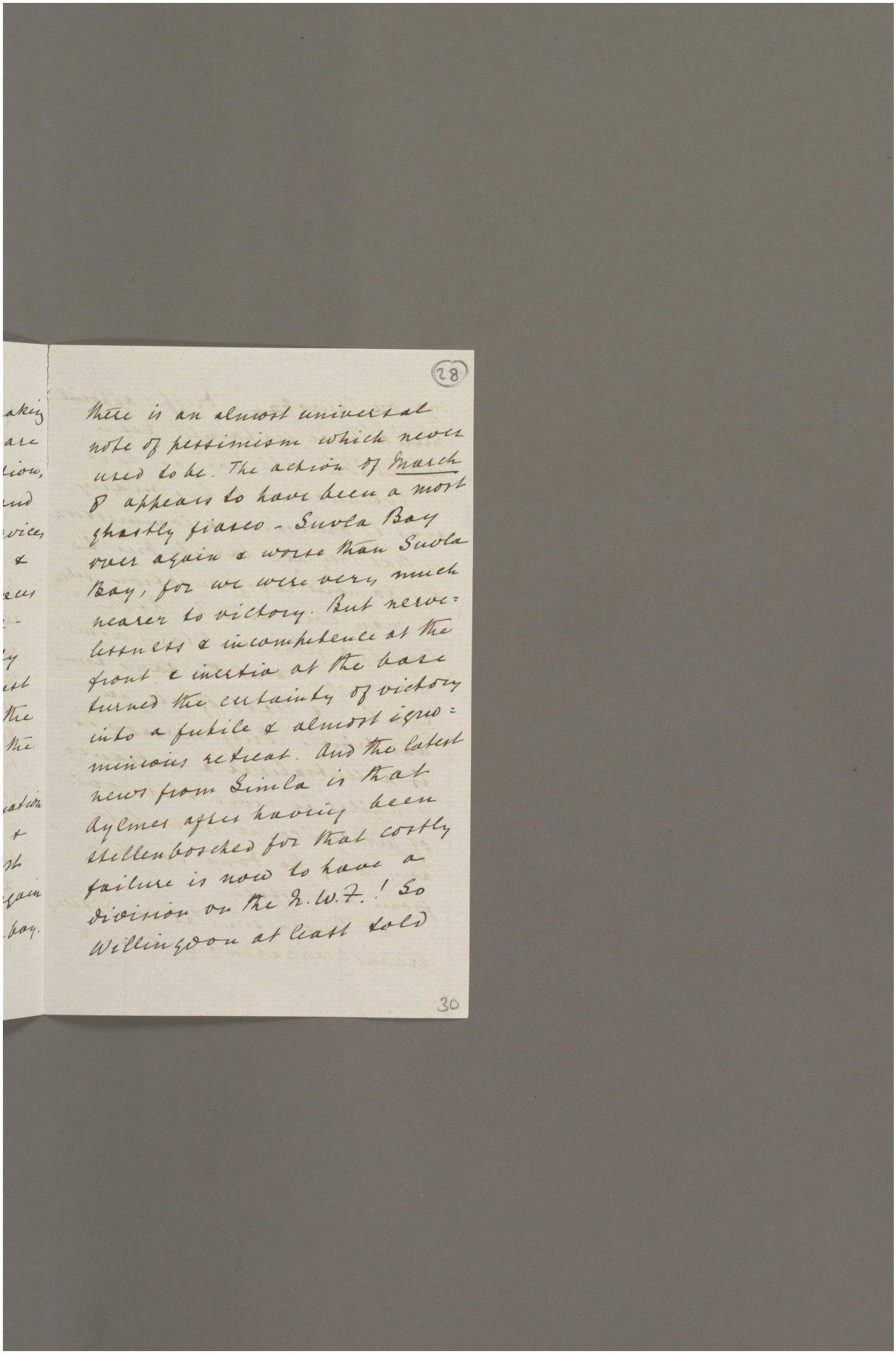
29



Bombay are thriving & making
huge war profits which are
beyond the reach of taxation,
& officials on the other hand
in most of the public services
are rather overworked &
shorthanded. In most places
subscriptions for war-
purposes are generously
supported. but for the rest
"Business as usual" is the
motto that still holds the
field.

The Mesopotamian situation
is clearly growing more &
more critical, & amongst
the wounded who are again
streaming down to Bombay.

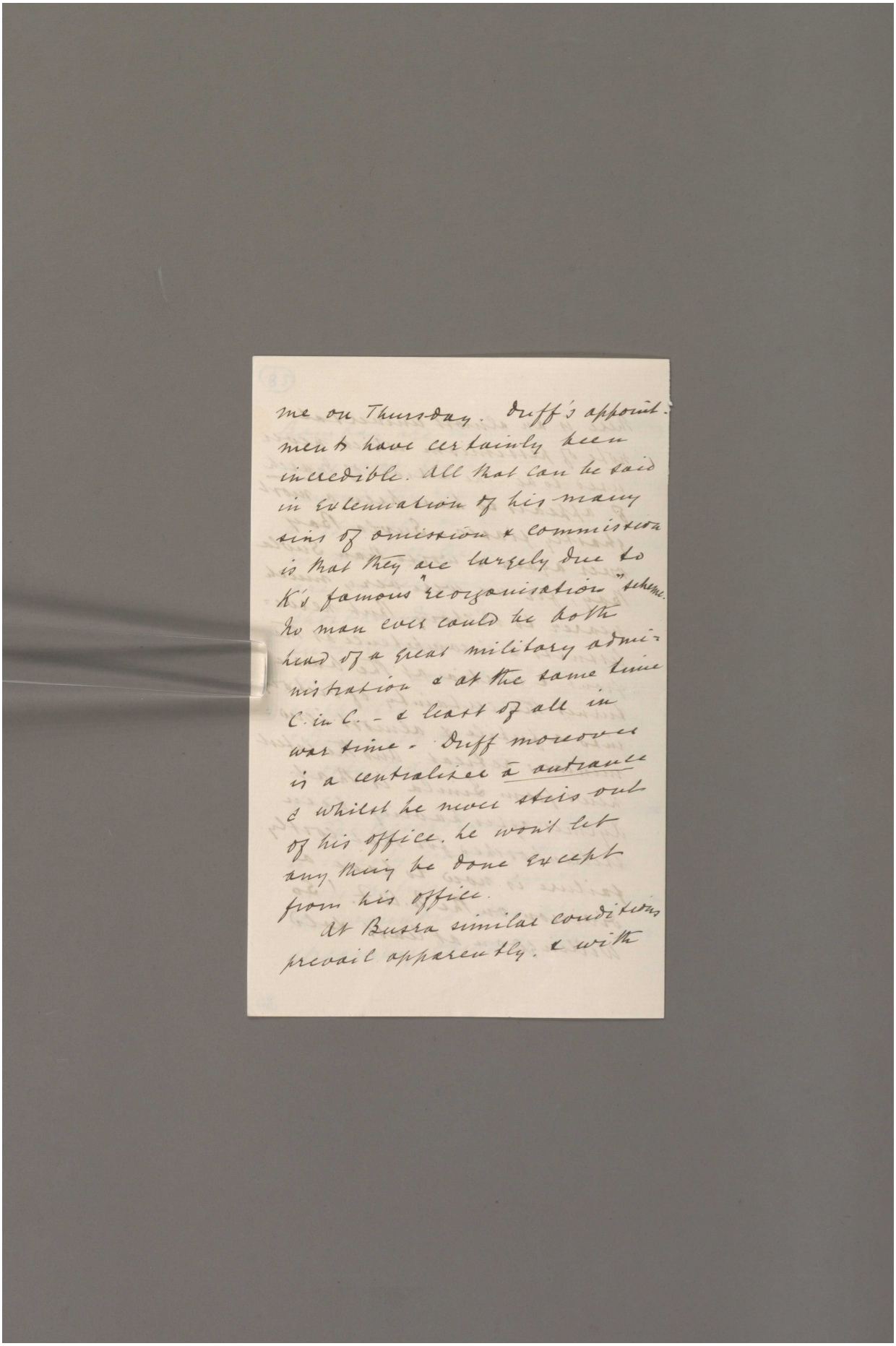
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000046



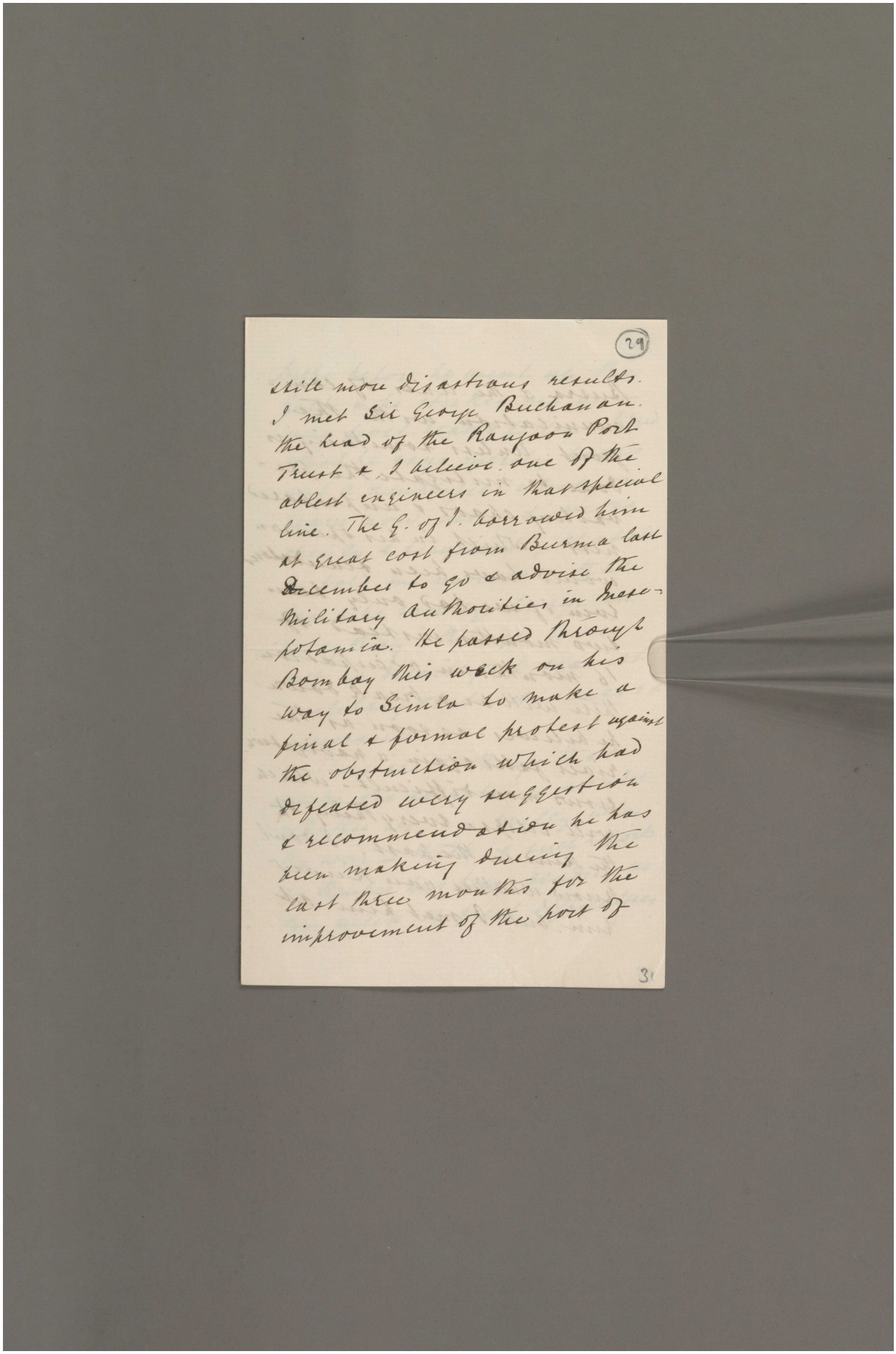
(28)

There is an almost universal
note of pessimism which never
used to be. The action of March
8 appears to have been a most
ghastly fiasco - Suvla Bay
over again & worse than Suvla
Bay, for we were very much
nearer to victory. But nerve-
lessness & incompetence at the
front & inertia at the base
turned the certainty of victory
into a futile & almost igno-
minious retreat. And the latest
news from Simla is that
Aylmer after having been
stellenbosched for that costly
failure is now to have a
division on the N.W.F.! So
Willingdon at least told

30



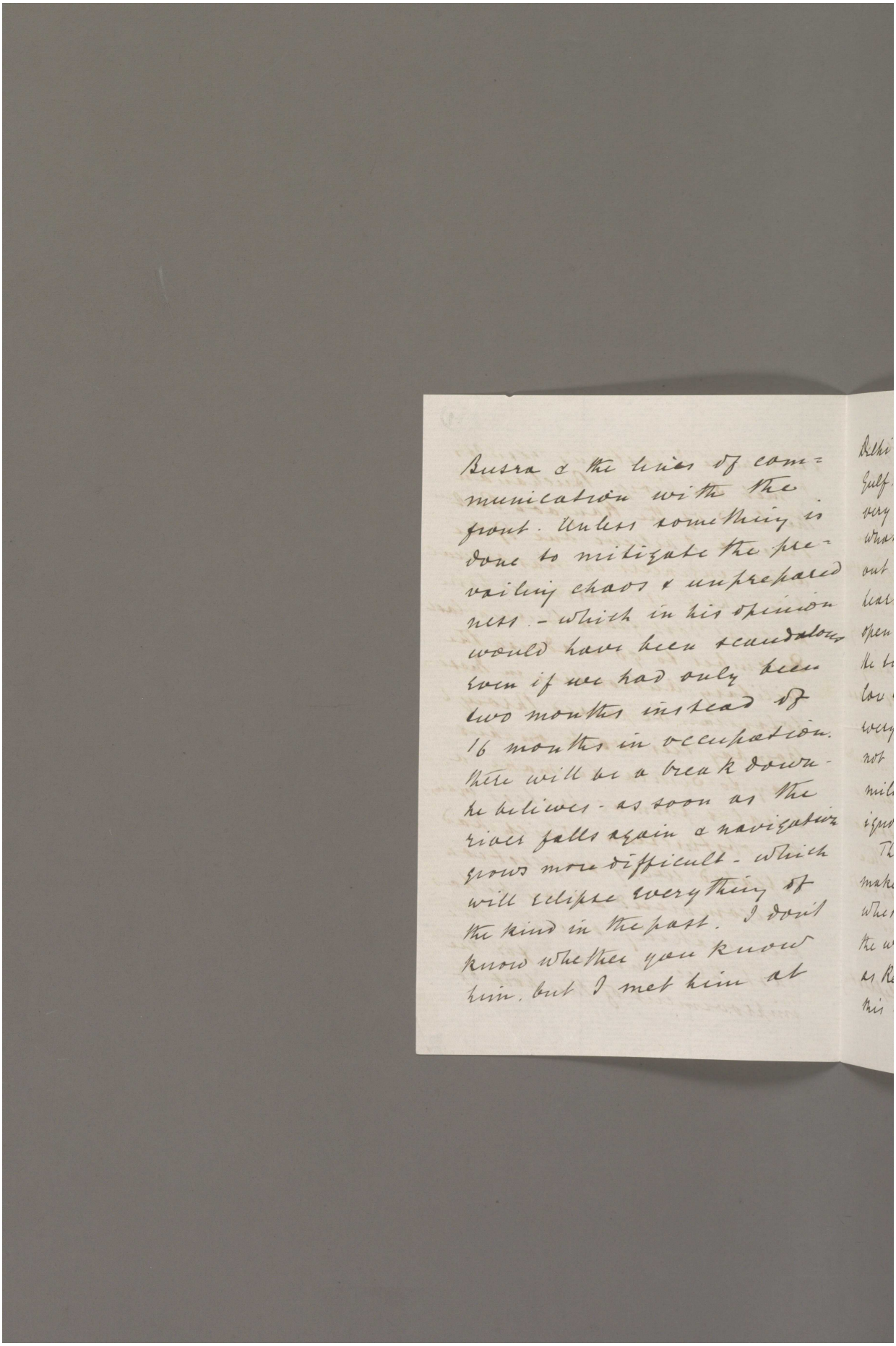
me on Thursday. Duff's appoint-
ment have certainly been
incredible. All that can be said
in extenuation of his many
sins of omission & commission
is that they are largely due to
K's famous "reorganisation" scheme.
No man ever could be both
head of a great military admi-
nistration & at the same time
C. in C. - & least of all in
war time. Duff moreover
is a centraliser à outrance
& whilst he never stirs out
of his office, he won't let
any thing be done except
from his office.
At Bussra similar conditions
prevail apparently. & with



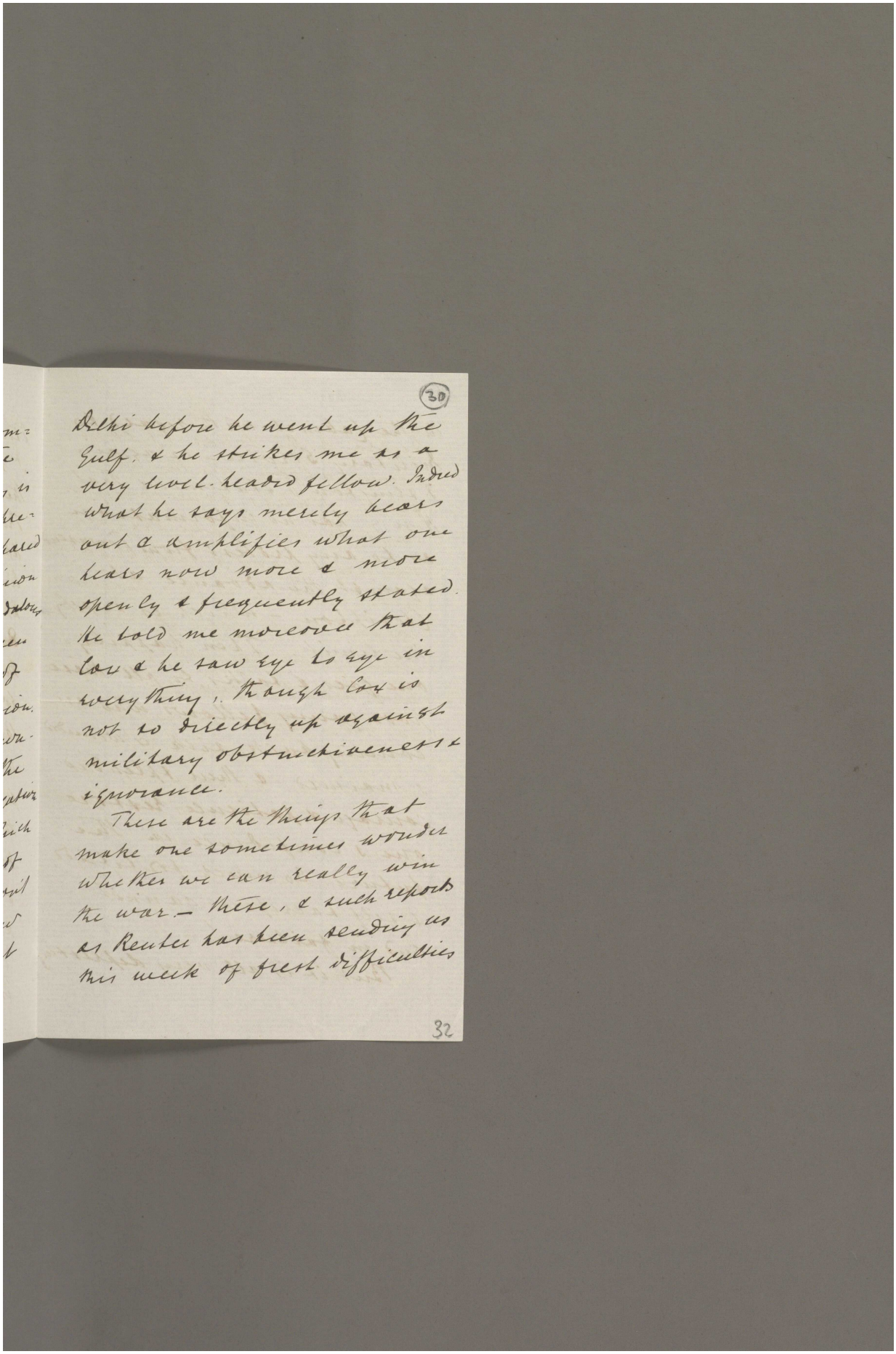
29

still more disastrous results.
I met Sir George Buchanan.
the head of the Rangoon Port
Trust & I believe one of the
ablest engineers in that special
line. The G. of I. borrowed him
at great cost from Burma last
December to go & advise the
Military Authorities in Mesop-
otamia. He passed through
Bombay this week on his
way to Simla to make a
final & formal protest against
the obstruction which had
defeated every suggestion
& recommendation he has
been making during the
last three months for the
improvement of the port of

31



Busra & the lines of com-
munication with the
front. Unless something is
done to mitigate the pre-
vailing chaos & unprepared
ness - which in his opinion
would have been scandalous
even if we had only been
two months instead of
16 months in occupation.
There will be a break down -
he believes - as soon as the
river falls again & navigation
grows more difficult - which
will eclipse everything of
the kind in the past. I don't
know whether you know
him, but I met him at

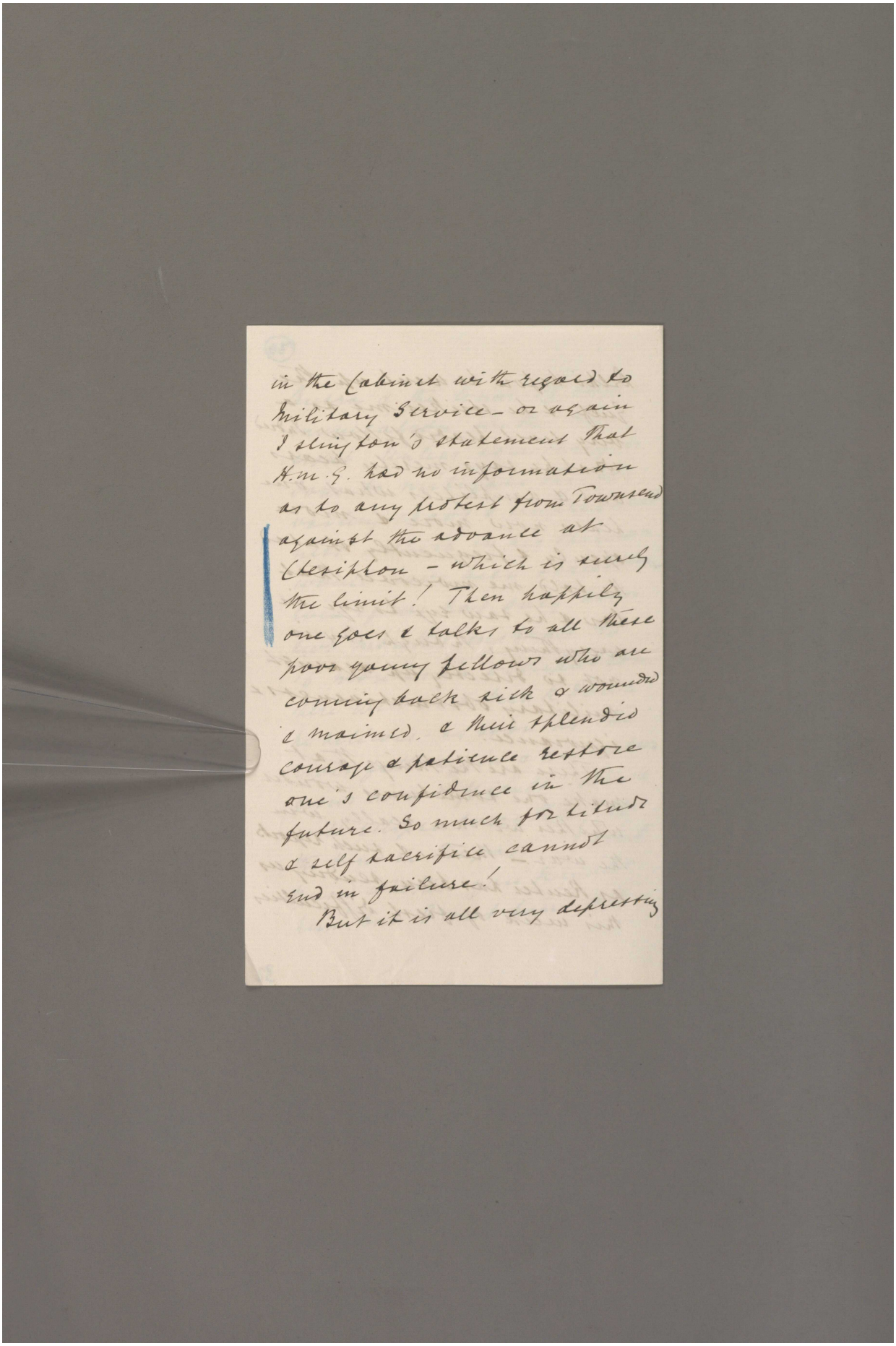


(30)

Delhi before he went up the
Gulf, & he strikes me as a
very level-headed fellow. Indeed
what he says merely bears
out & amplifies what one
hears now more & more
openly & frequently stated.
He told me moreover that
Cox & he saw eye to eye in
everything, though Cox is
not so directly up against
military obstructiveness &
ignorance.

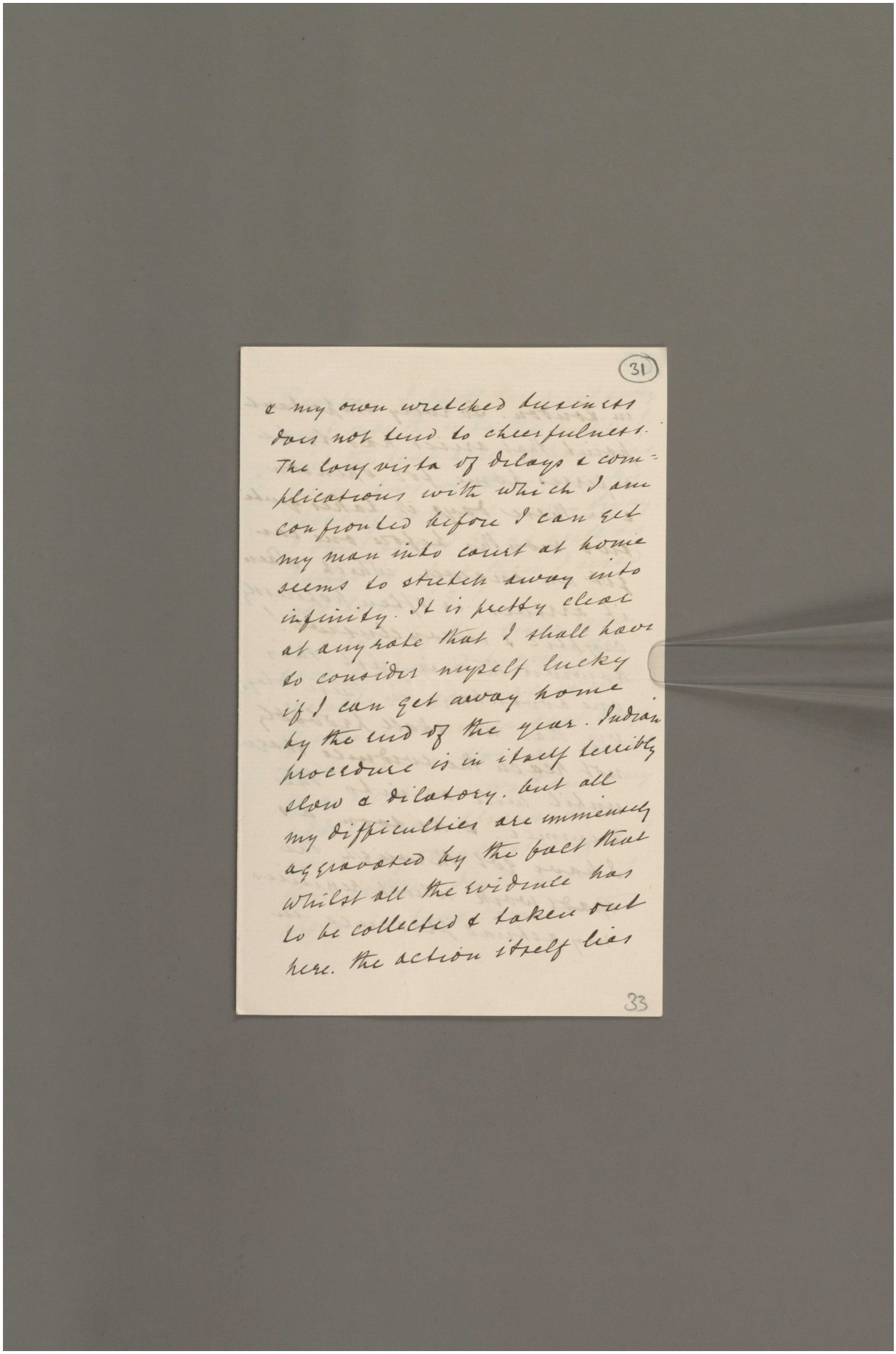
There are the things that
make one sometimes wonder
whether we can really win
the war. — These, & such reports
as Reuter has been sending us
this week of great difficulties

32



in the Cabinet with regard to
Military Service – or again
I slington's statement that
H.M.G. had no information
as to any protest from Townsend
against the advance at
Ctesiphon – which is surely
the limit! Then happily
one goes & talks to all these
poor young fellows who are
coming back sick & wounded
& maimed, & their splendid
courage & patience restore
one's confidence in the
future. So much fortitude
& self sacrifice cannot
end in failure!
But it is all very depressing

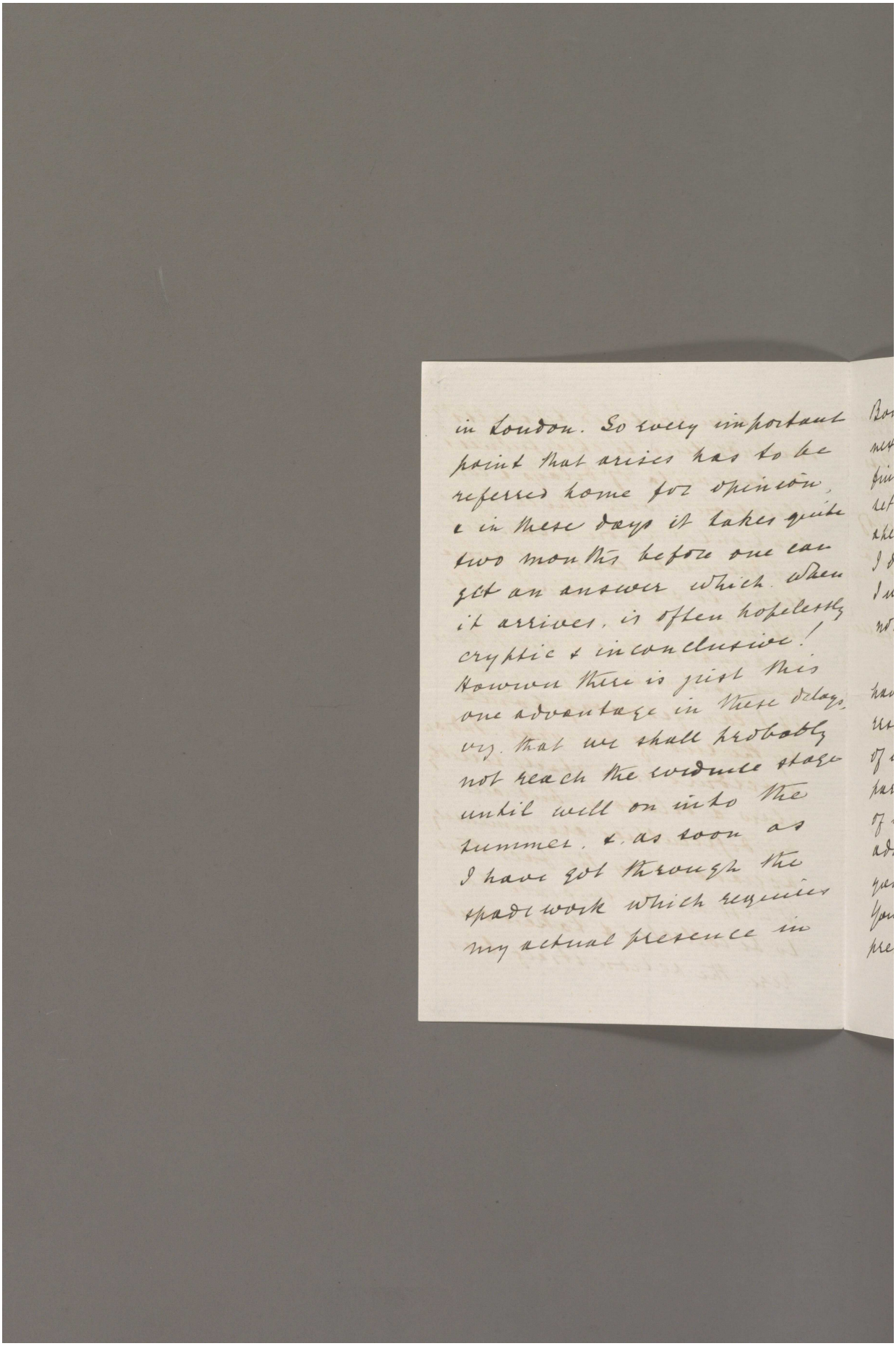
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000ba



(31)

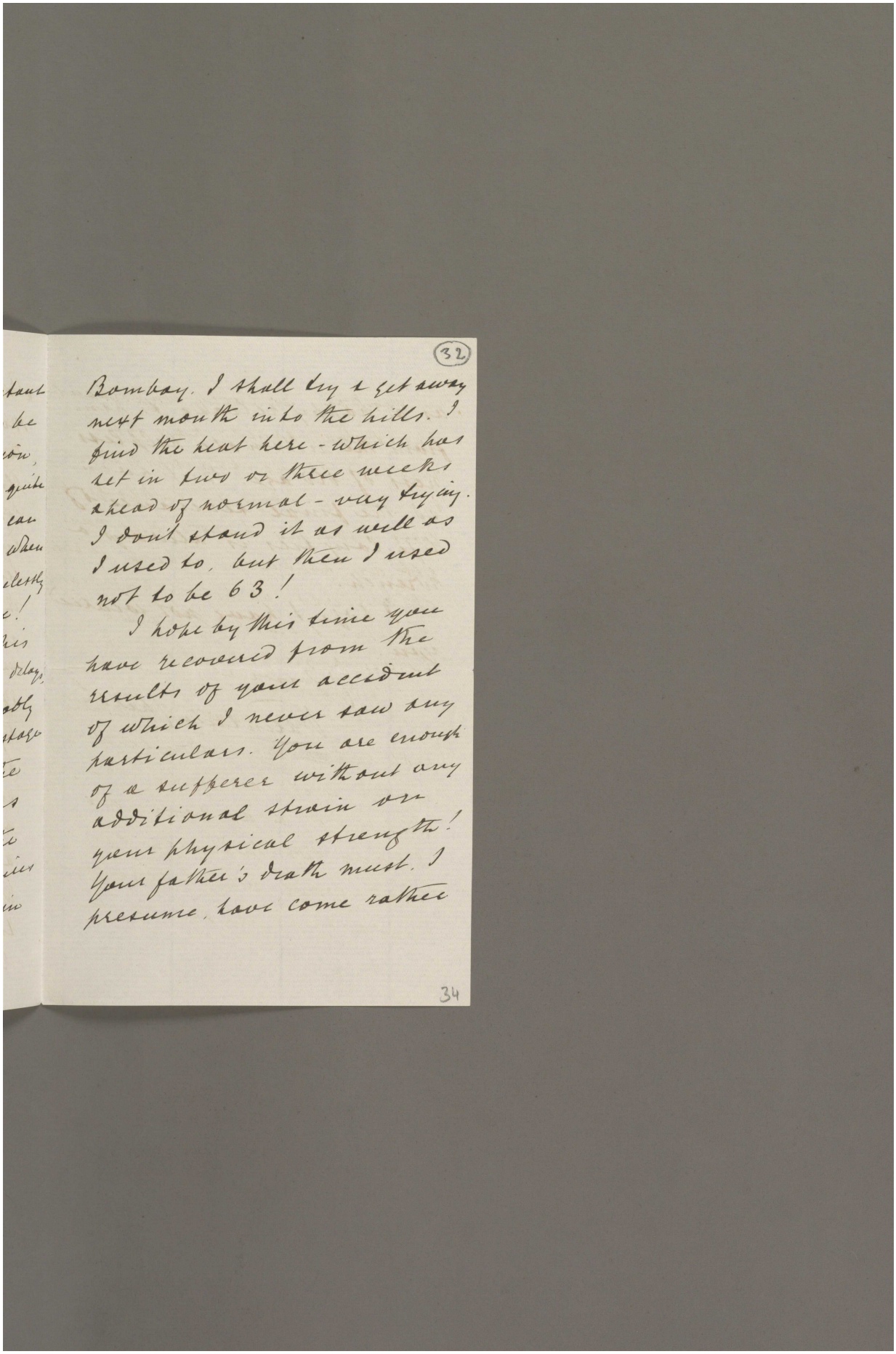
& my own wretched business does not tend to cheerfulness. The long vista of delays & complications with which I am confronted before I can get my man into court at home seems to stretch away into infinity. It is pretty clear at any rate that I shall have to consider myself lucky if I can get away home by the end of the year. Indian procedure is in itself terribly slow & dilatory, but all my difficulties are immensely aggravated by the fact that whilst all the evidence has to be collected & taken out here, the action itself lies

33



in London. So every important
point that arises has to be
referred home for opinion,
& in these days it takes quite
two months before one can
get an answer which. When
it arrives, is often hopelessly
cryptic & inconclusive!
However there is just this
one advantage in these delays,
viz. that we shall probably
not reach the evidence stage
until well on into the
summer, & as soon as
I have got through the
spade work which requires
my actual presence in

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00000a

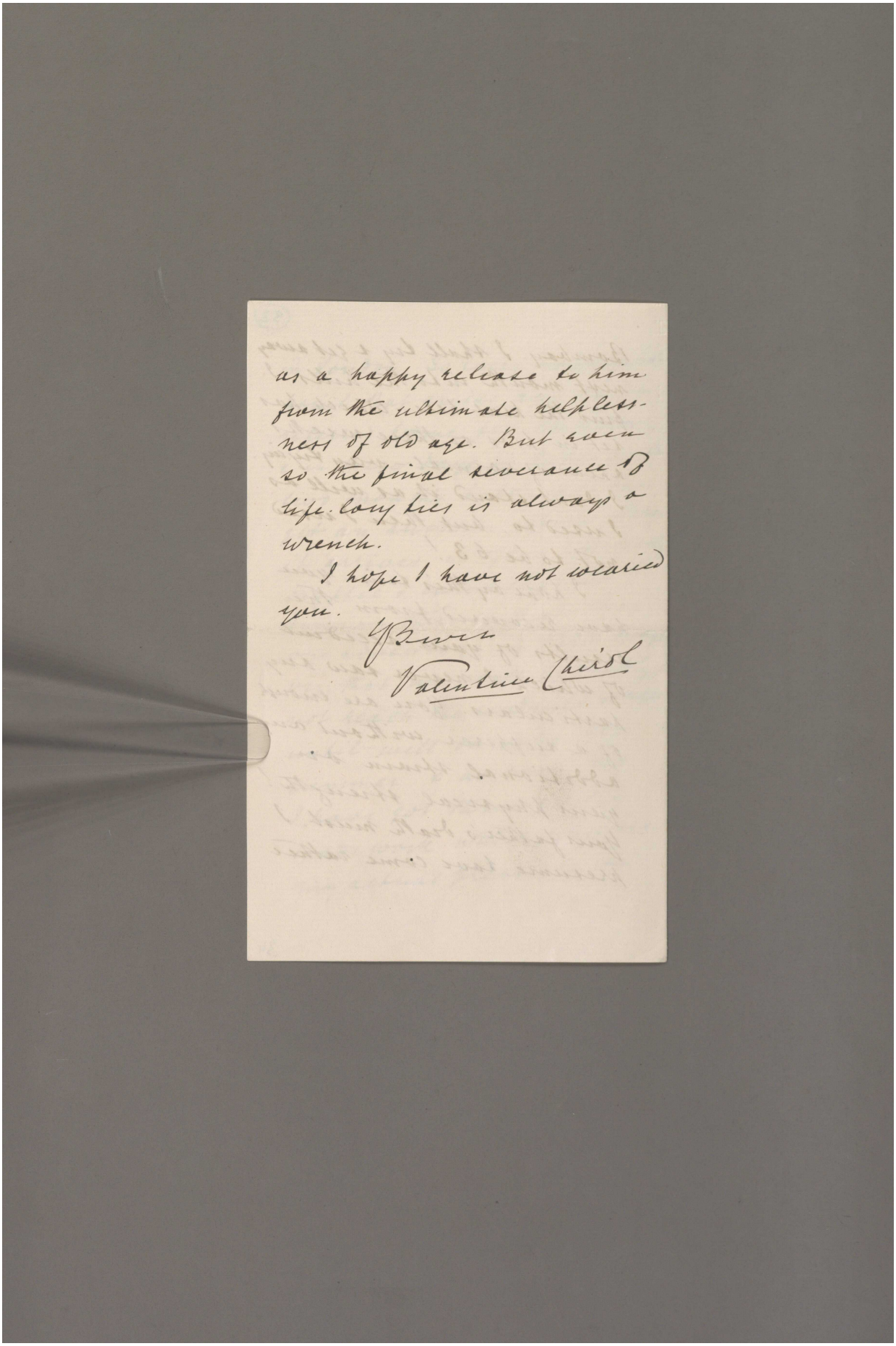


(32)

Bombay. I shall try & get away
next month into the hills. I
find the heat here - which has
set in two or three weeks
ahead of normal - very trying.
I don't stand it as well as
I used to, but then I used
not to be 63!

I hope by this time you
have recovered from the
results of your accident
of which I never saw any
particulars. You are enough
of a sufferer without any
additional strain on
your physical strength!
Your father's death must, I
presume, have come rather

34

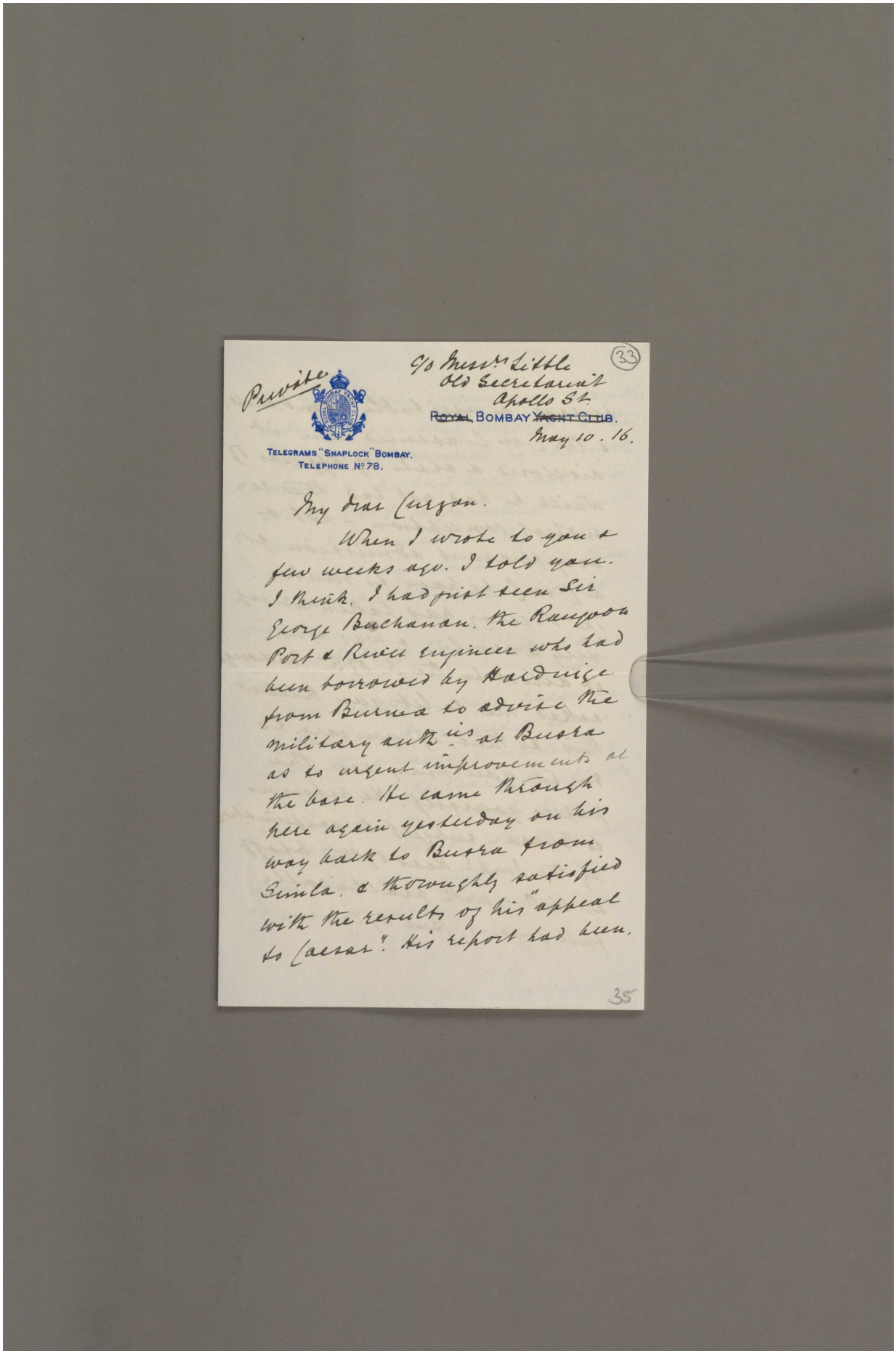


as a happy release to him from the ultimate helplessness of old age. But even so the final severance of life-long ties is always a wrench.

I hope I have not wearied you.

Yours

Valentine Chirol



Private

TELEGRAMS "SNAPLOCK" BOMBAY.
TELEPHONE No 78.

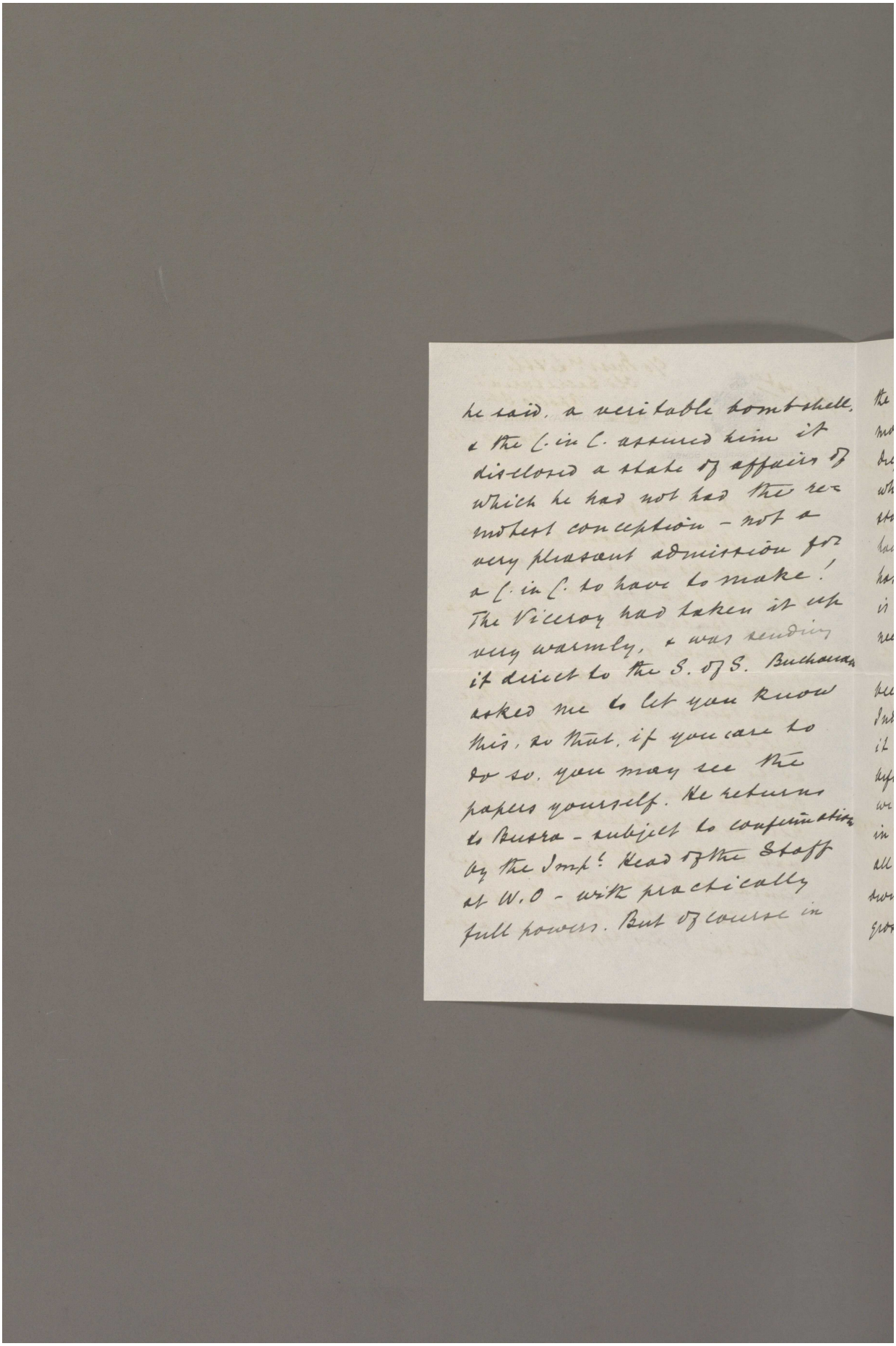
c/o Messrs Little
Old Secretariat
Apollo St.
ROYAL BOMBAY ~~YACHT CLUB~~.
May 10. 16.

(33)

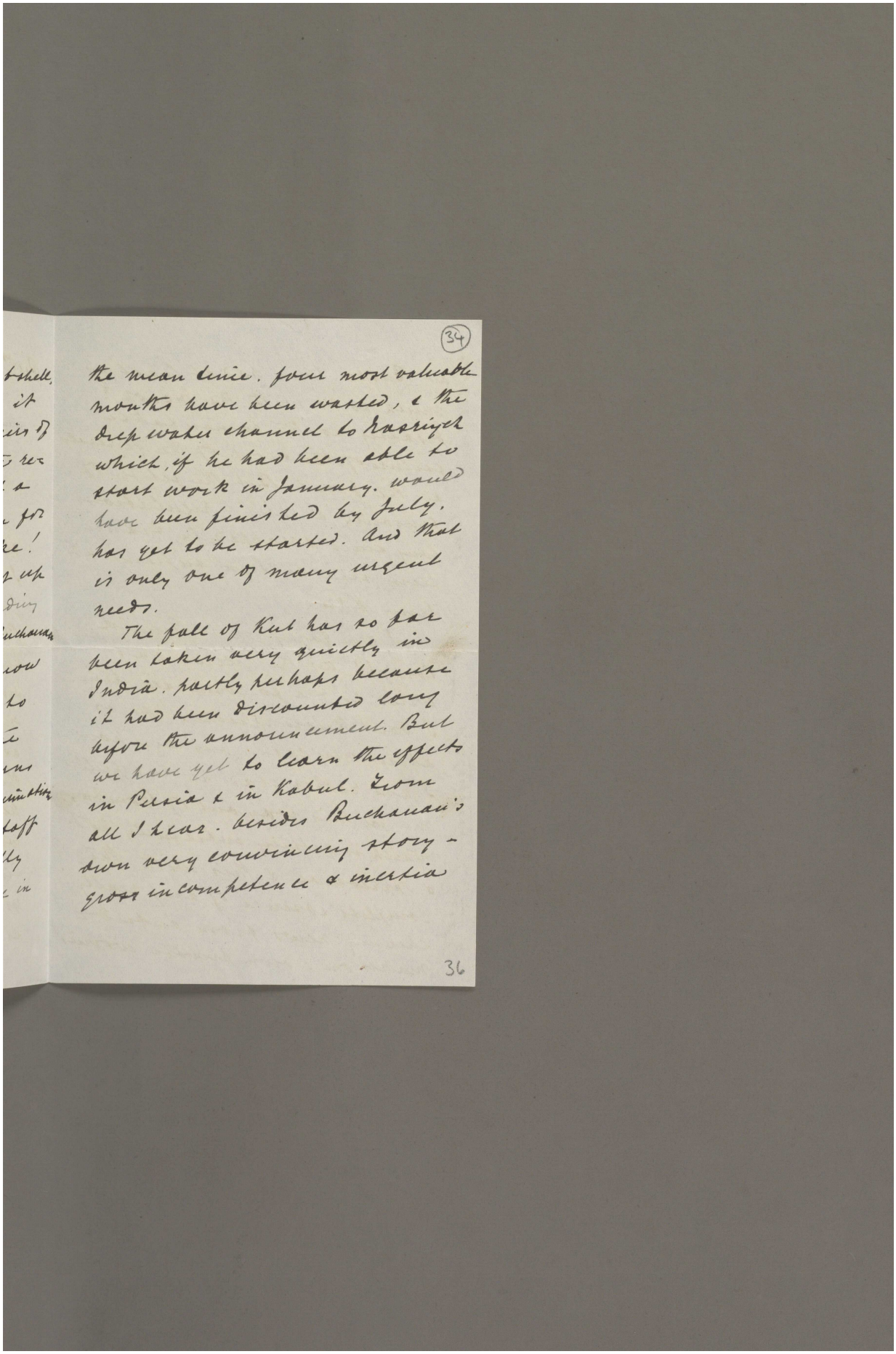
My dear Curzon.

When I wrote to you a few weeks ago. I told you. I think. I had just seen Sir George Buchanan. the Rangoon Port & River engineer who had been borrowed by Kitchener from Burma to advise the military authorities at Busra as to urgent improvements at the base. He came through here again yesterday on his way back to Busra from Simla. & thoroughly satisfied with the results of his "appeal to Caesar". His report had been.

35



he said, a veritable bombshell, & the C. in C. assured him it disclosed a state of affairs of which he had not had the remotest conception – not a very pleasant admission for a C. in C. to have to make! The Viceroy had taken it up very warmly, & was sending it direct to the S. of S. Buchanan asked me to let you know this, so that, if you care to do so, you may see the papers yourself. He returns to Basra – subject to confirmation by the Imp.l Head of the Staff at W.O – with practically full powers. But of course in

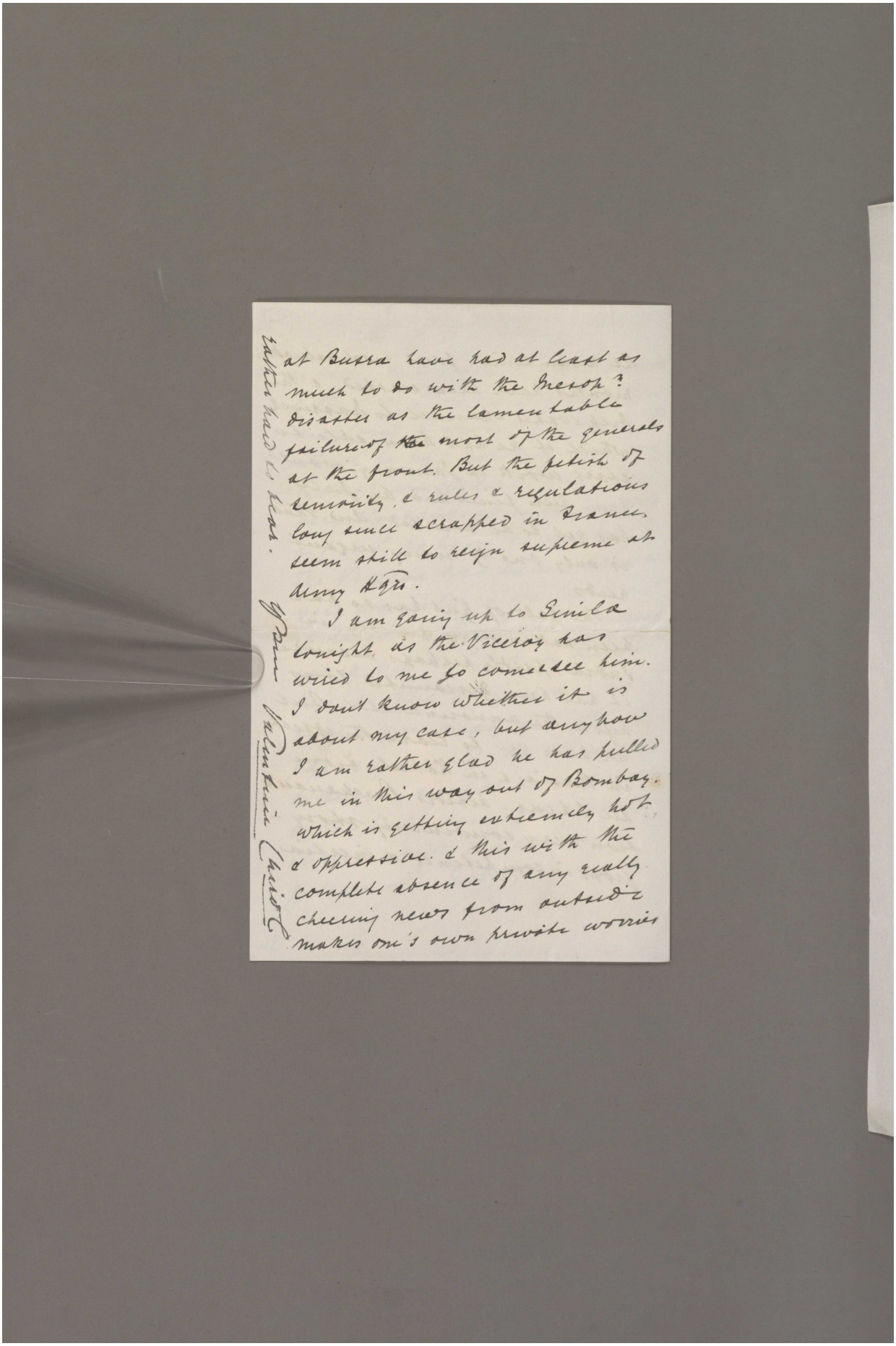


(34)

the mean time, four most valuable months have been wasted, & the deep water channel to Basrijeh which, if he had been able to start work in January, would have been finished by July, has yet to be started. And that is only one of many urgent needs.

The fall of Kut has so far been taken very quietly in India, partly perhaps because it had been discounted long before the announcement. But we have yet to learn the effects in Persia & in Kabul. From all I hear, besides Buchanan's own very convincing story - gross incompetence & inertia

36

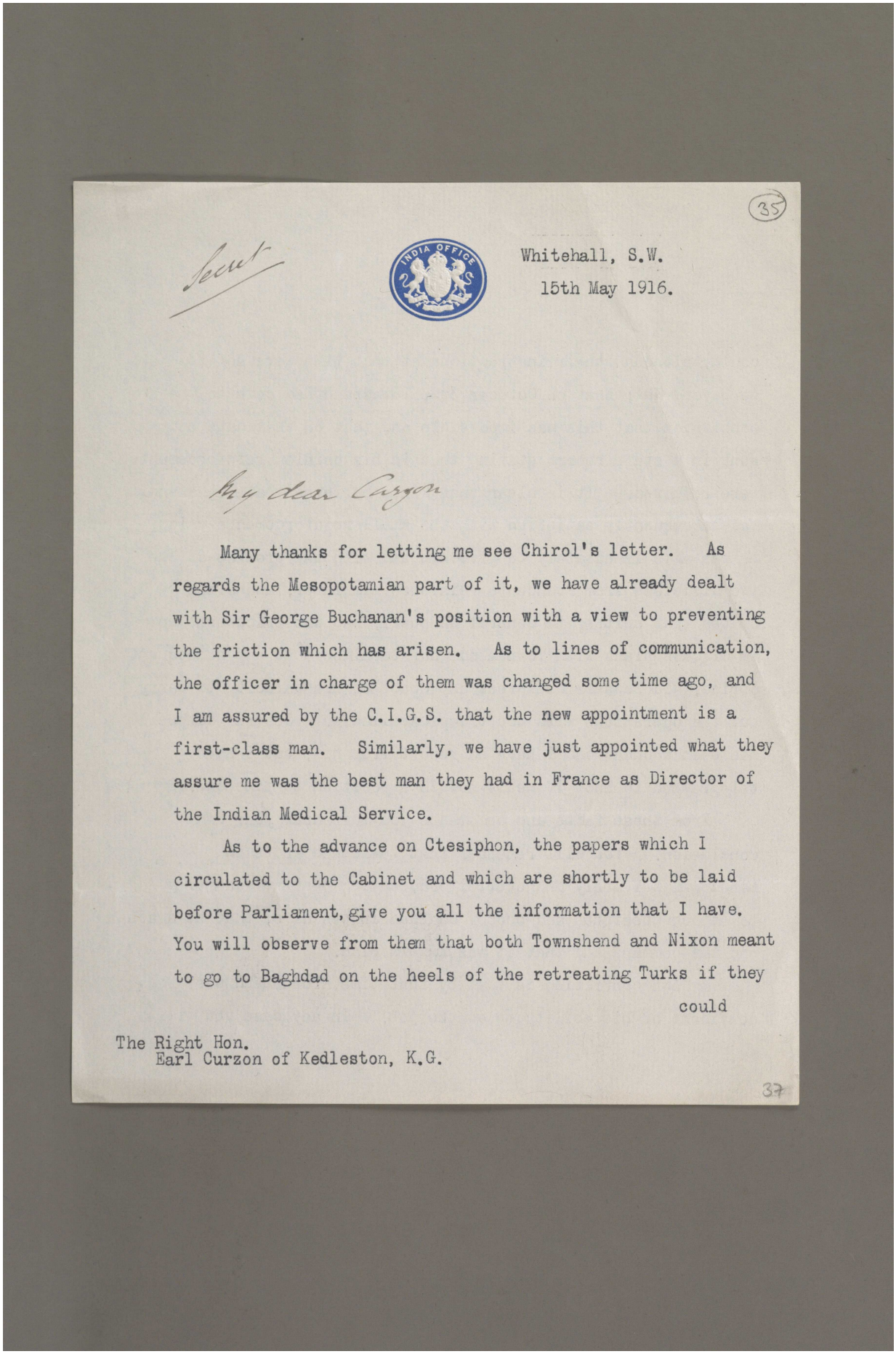


at Busra have had at least as much to do with the Mesop.n disaster as the lamentable failure of ~~the~~ most of the generals at the front. But the fetish of seniority, & rules & regulations long since scrapped in France, seem still to reign supreme at Army Hqrs.

I am going up to Simla tonight, as the Viceroy has wired to me to come see him. I don't know whether it is about my case, but anyhow I am rather glad he has pulled me in this way out of Bombay, which is getting extremely hot & oppressive. & this with the complete absence of any really cheering news from outside makes one's own private worries

rather hard to bear.

Yours Valentine Chirol



(35)

Secret

INDIA OFFICE

Whitehall, S.W.
15th May 1916.

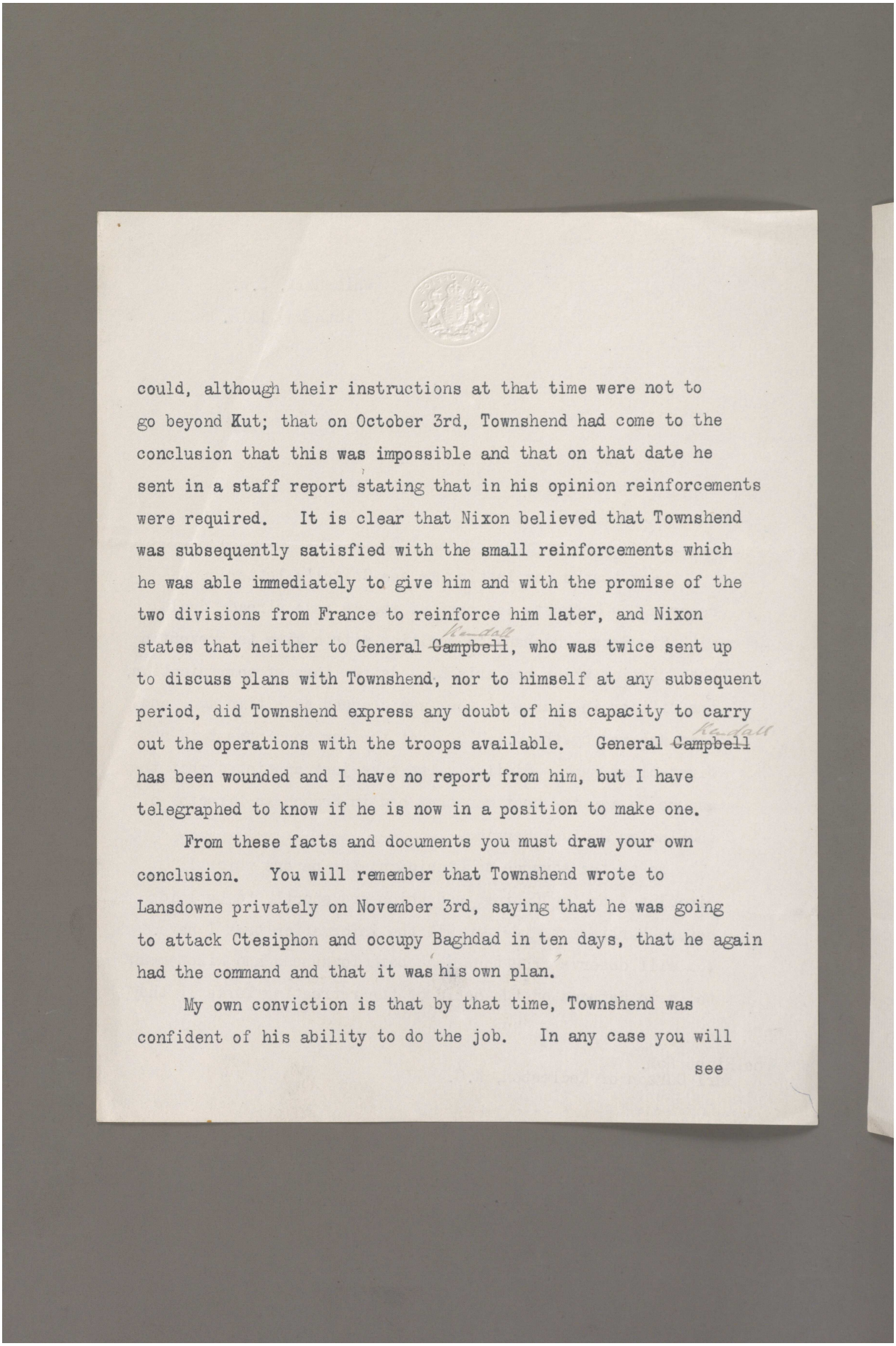
My dear Curzon

Many thanks for letting me see Chirol's letter. As regards the Mesopotamian part of it, we have already dealt with Sir George Buchanan's position with a view to preventing the friction which has arisen. As to lines of communication, the officer in charge of them was changed some time ago, and I am assured by the C.I.G.S. that the new appointment is a first-class man. Similarly, we have just appointed what they assure me was the best man they had in France as Director of the Indian Medical Service.

As to the advance on Ctesiphon, the papers which I circulated to the Cabinet and which are shortly to be laid before Parliament, give you all the information that I have. You will observe from them that both Townshend and Nixon meant to go to Baghdad on the heels of the retreating Turks if they could

The Right Hon.
Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G.

37

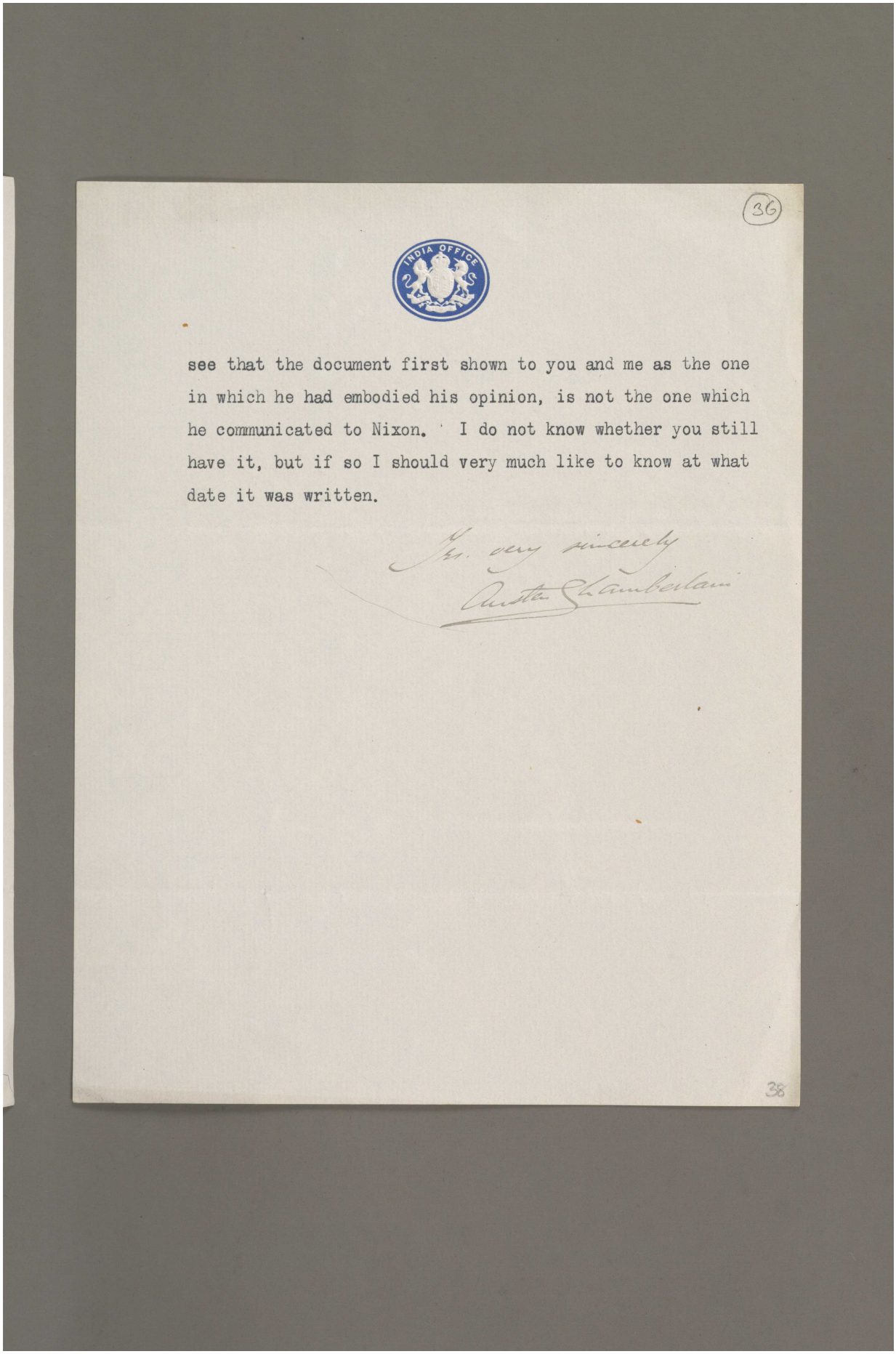


could, although their instructions at that time were not to go beyond Kut; that on October 3rd, Townshend had come to the conclusion that this was impossible and that on that date he sent in a staff report stating that in his opinion reinforcements were required. It is clear that Nixon believed that Townshend was subsequently satisfied with the small reinforcements which he was able immediately to give him and with the promise of the two divisions from France to reinforce him later, and Nixon states that neither to General ~~Campbell~~ Kendall, who was twice sent up to discuss plans with Townshend, nor to himself at any subsequent period, did Townshend express any doubt of his capacity to carry out the operations with the troops available. General ~~Campbell~~ Kendall has been wounded and I have no report from him, but I have telegraphed to know if he is now in a position to make one.

From these facts and documents you must draw your own conclusion. You will remember that Townshend wrote to Lansdowne privately on November 3rd, saying that he was going to attack Ctesiphon and occupy Baghdad in ten days, that he again had the command and that it was his own plan.

My own conviction is that by that time, Townshend was confident of his ability to do the job. In any case you will

see



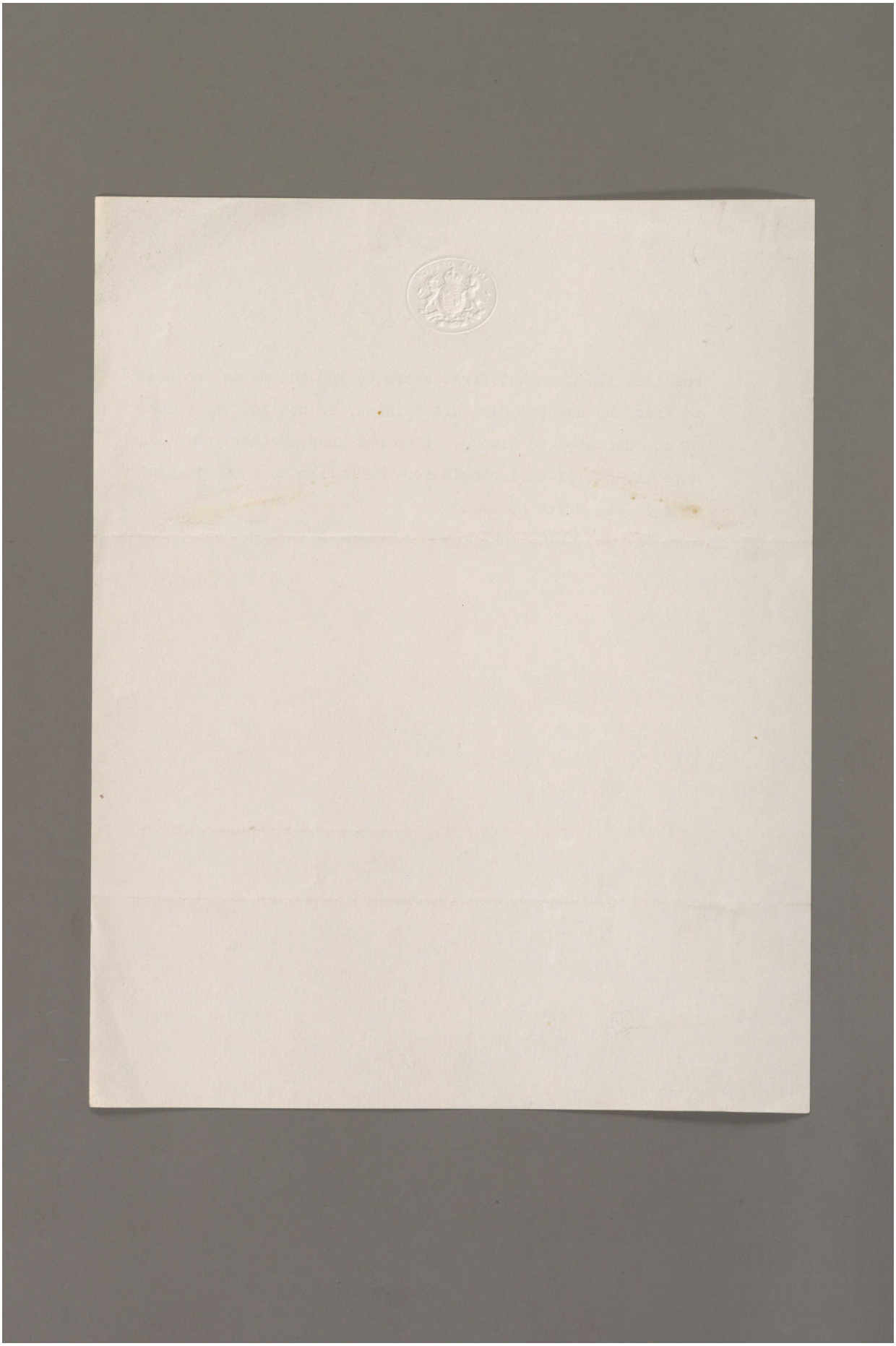
(36)

see that the document first shown to you and me as the one in which he had embodied his opinion, is not the one which he communicated to Nixon. I do not know whether you still have it, but if so I should very much like to know at what date it was written.

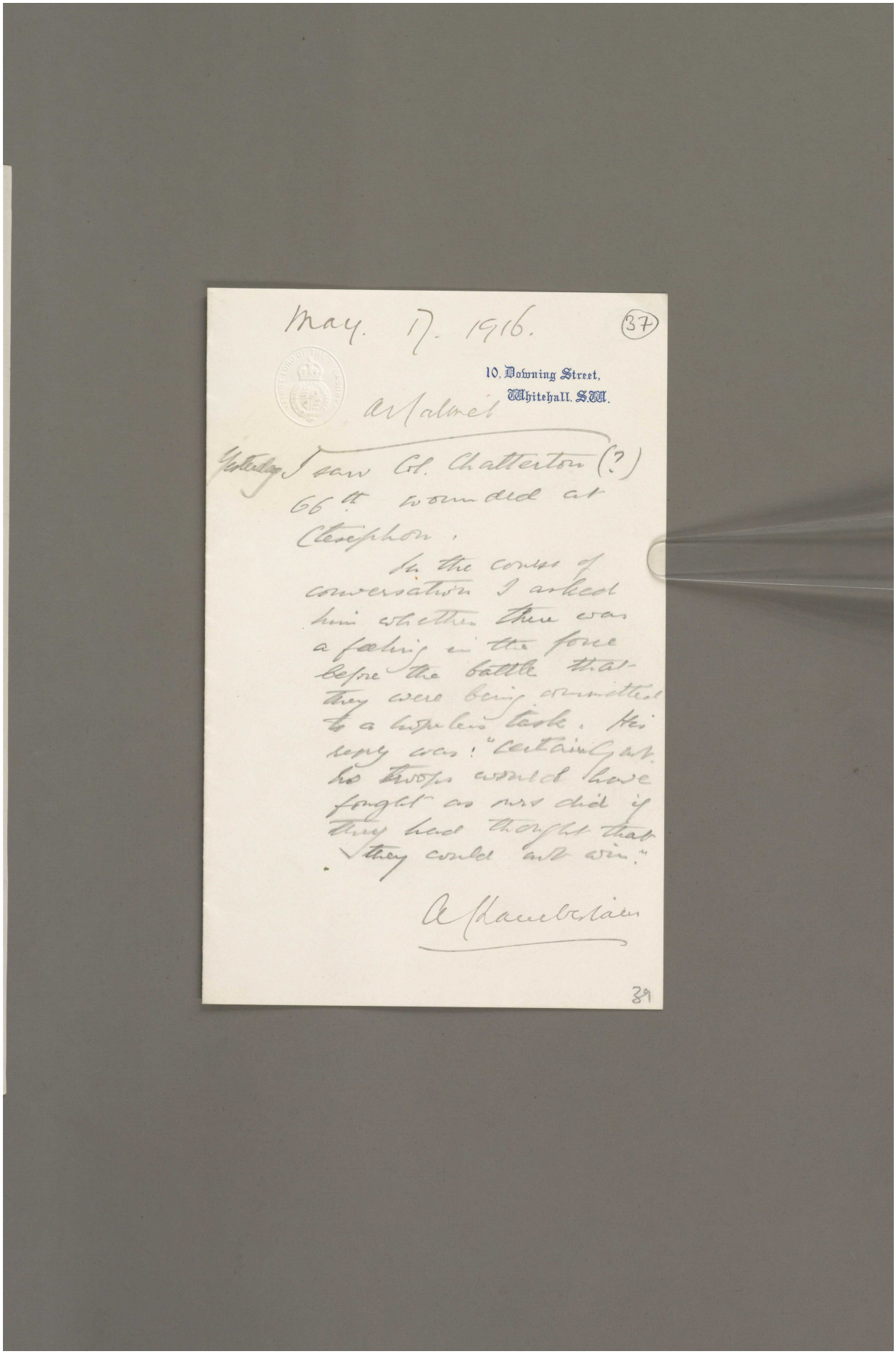
Yrs. very sincerely
Austen Chamberlain

38

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00008b



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000081



May. 17. 1916. (37)

10, Downing Street,
Whitehall. S.W.

A Cabinet

Yesterday I saw Col. Chatterton (?) 66th wounded at Ctesiphon.

In the course of conversation I asked him whether there was a feeling in the force before the battle that they were being committed to a hopeless task. His reply was: "Certainly not. No troops would have fought as ours did if they had thought that they could not win."

A Chamberlain

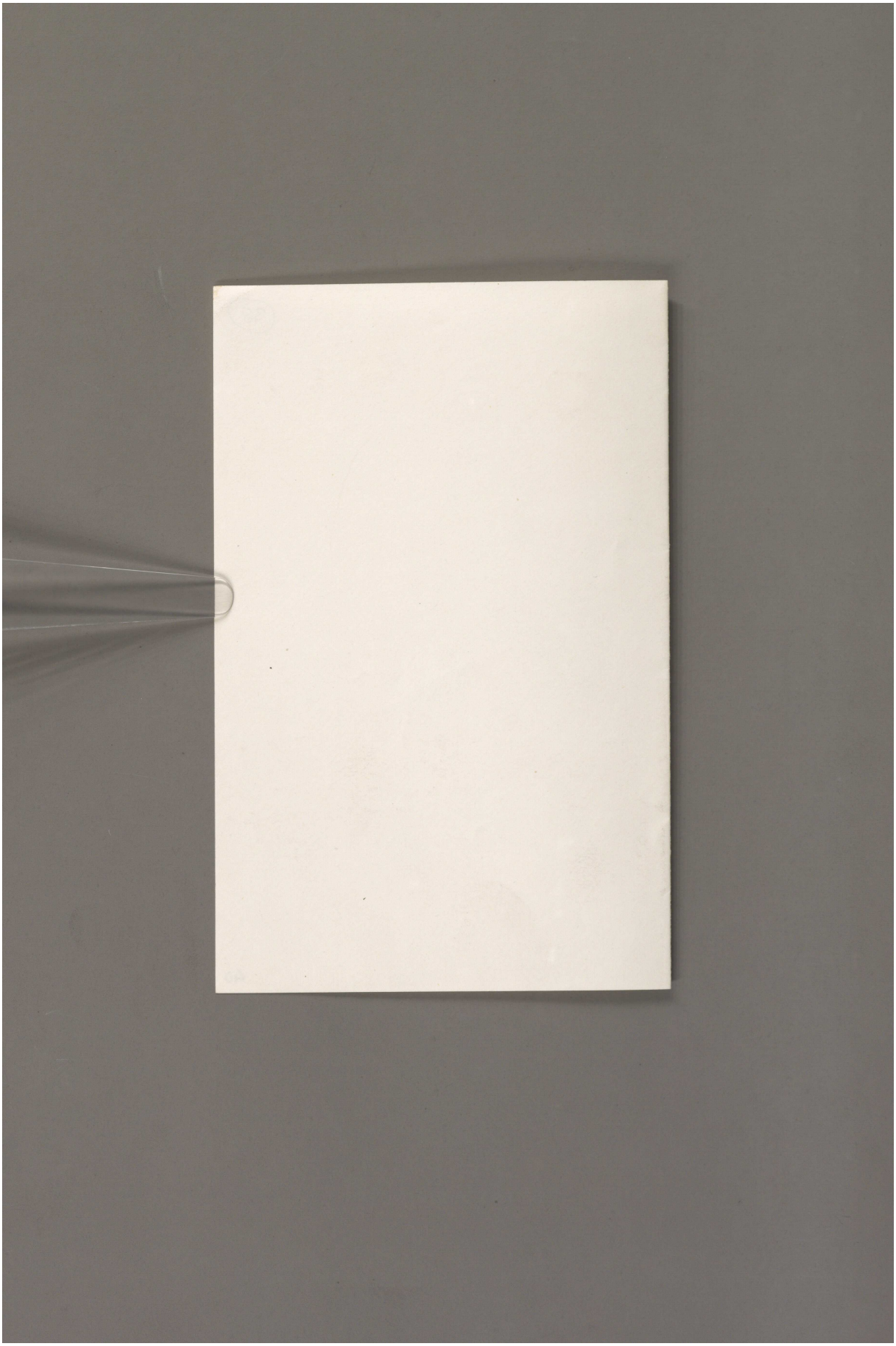
39



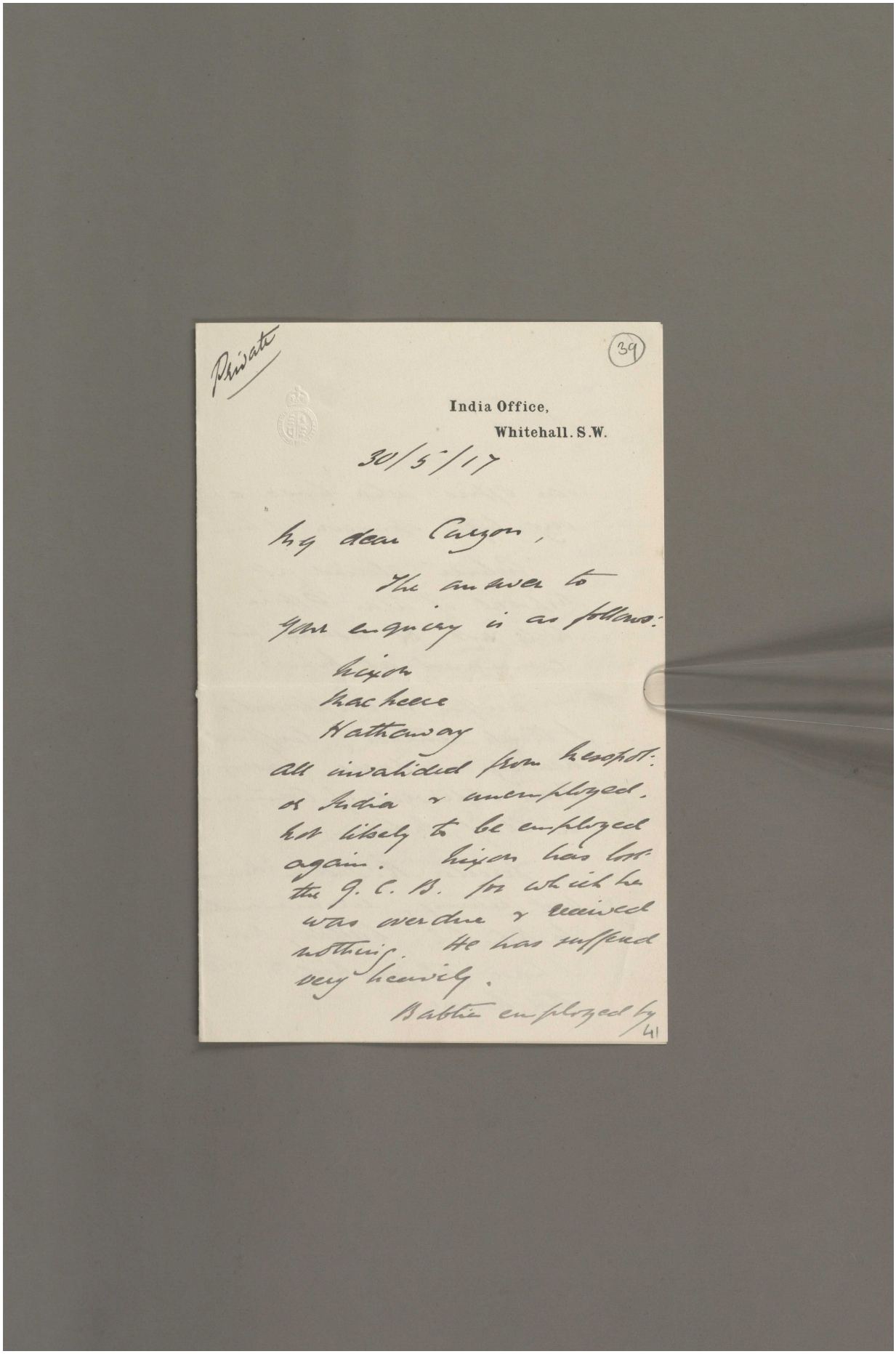
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000090



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000008



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000063



Private

(39)

India Office,
Whitehall. S.W.

30/5/17

My dear Curzon,

The answer to your enquiry is as follows:

Nixon
Mac Neece
Hathaway

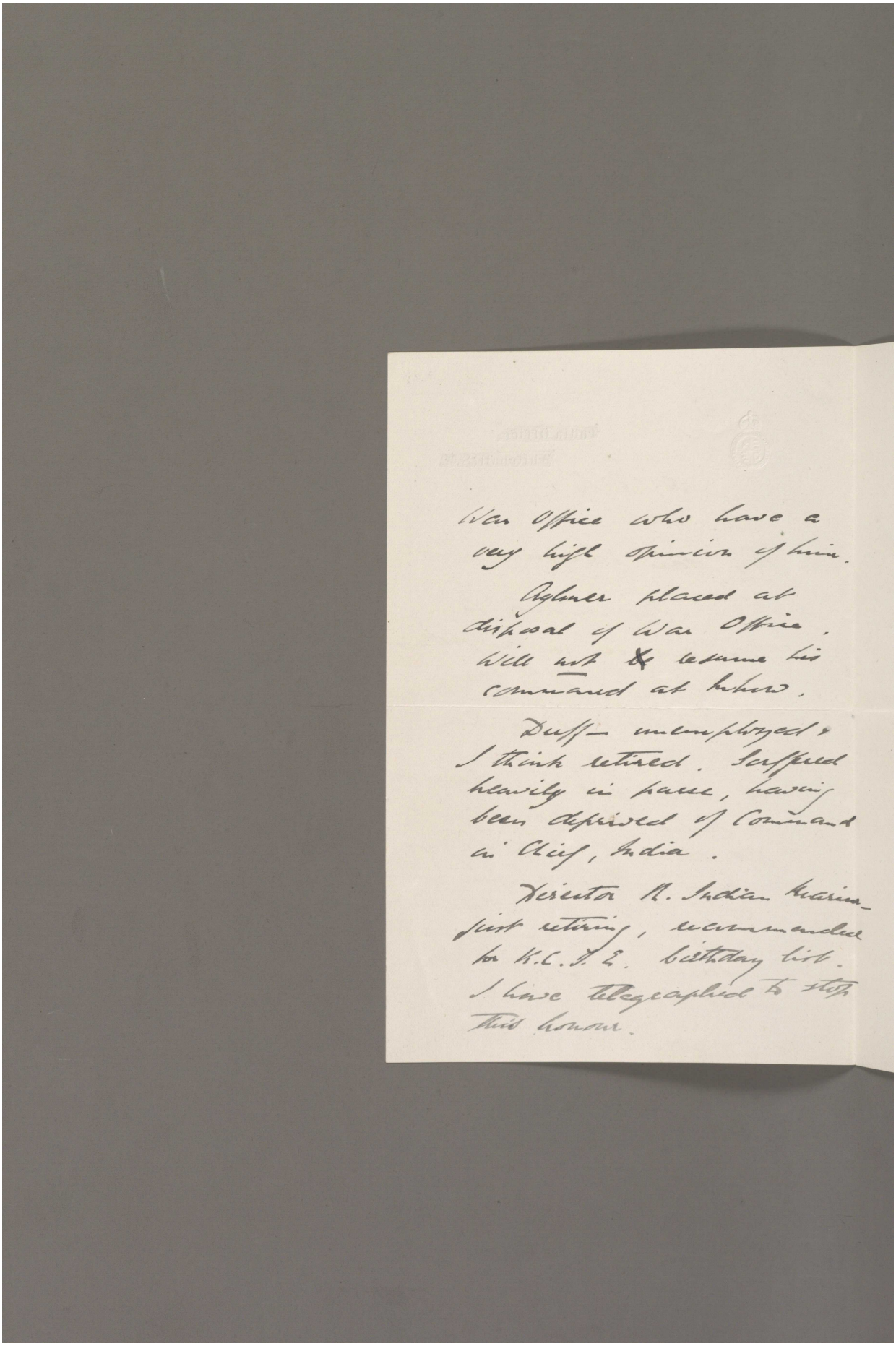
All invalided from Mesopot: or India & unemployed. Not likely to be employed again. Nixon has lost the G. C. B. for which he was overdue & received nothing. He has suffered very heavily.

Babtie employed by

41

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00004b



War Office who have a very high opinion of him.

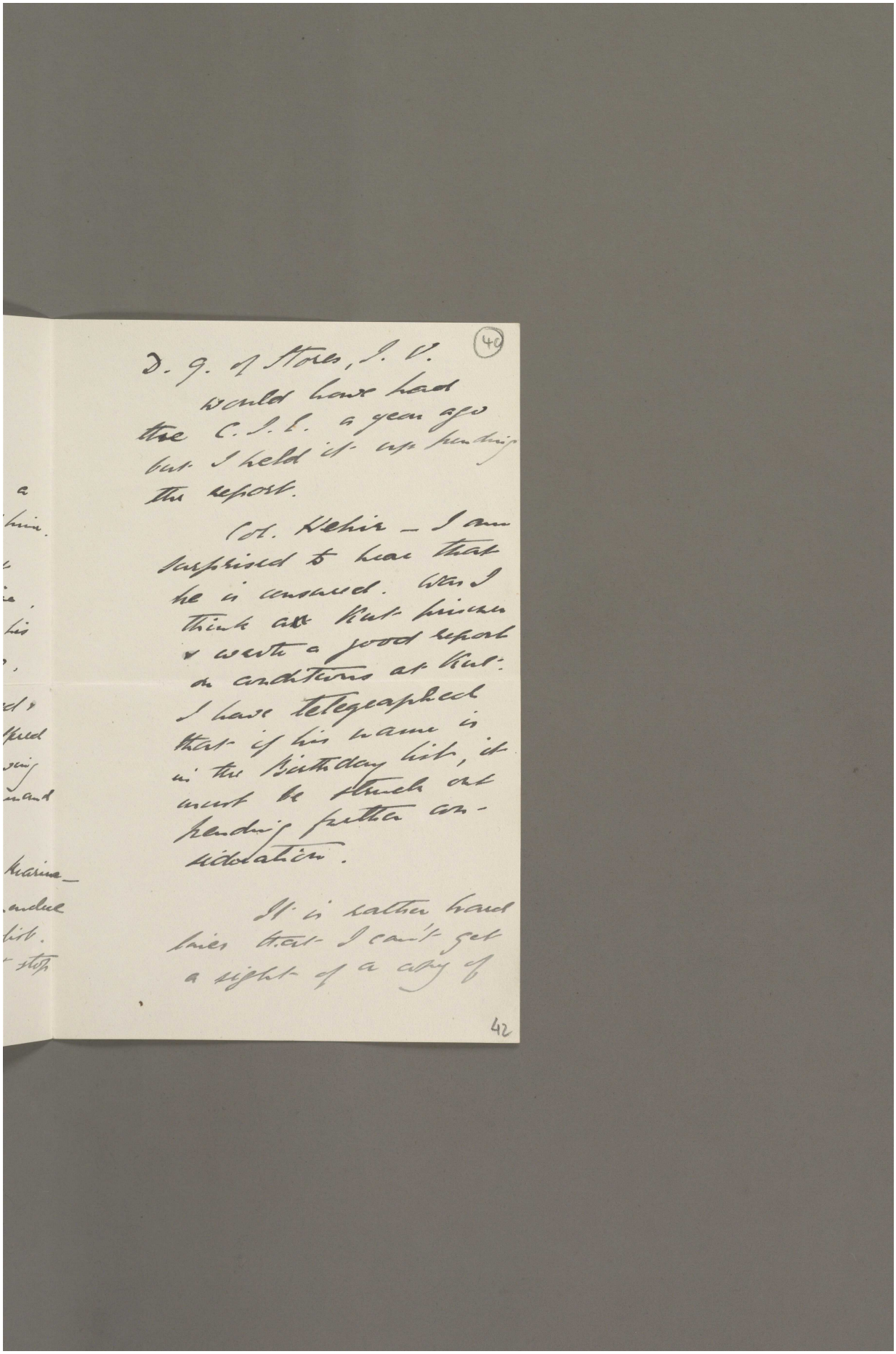
Aylmer placed at disposal of War Office. Will not resume his command at Mhow.

Duff unemployed & I think retired. Suffered heavily in purse, having been deprived of Command in Chief, India.

Director R. Indian Marine just retiring, recommended for K.C.I.E. birthday list. I have telegraphed to stop this honour.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000024



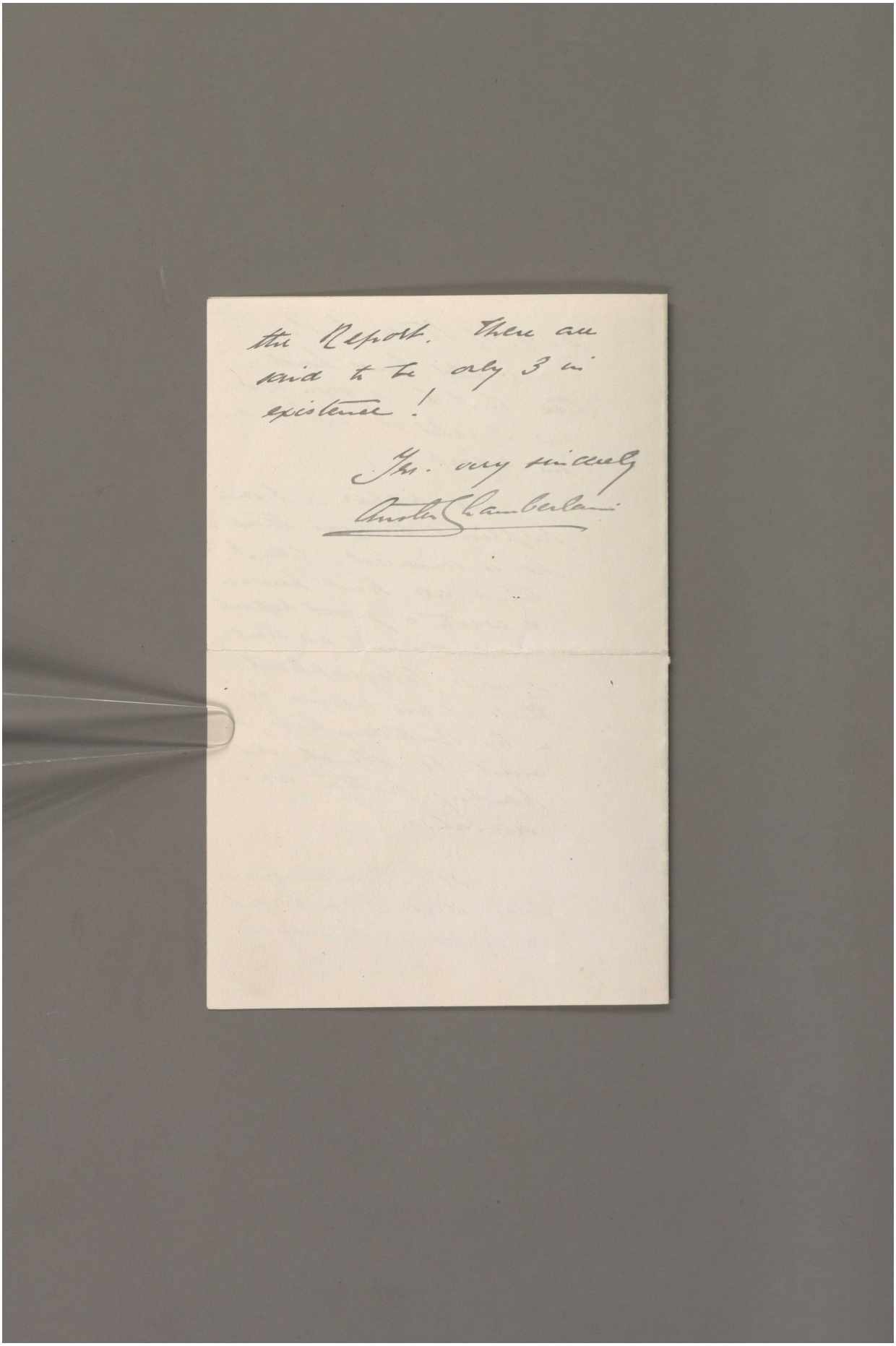
(40)

D. G. of Stores, I. V.
would have had
the C. I. E. a year ago
but I held it up pending
the report.

Col. Hehir – I am
surprised to hear that
he is censured. Was I
think at Kut prisoner
& wrote a good report
on conditions at Kut.
I have telegraphed
that if his name is
in the Birthday list, it
must be struck out
pending further con-
sideration.

It is rather hard
lines that I can't get
a sight of a copy of

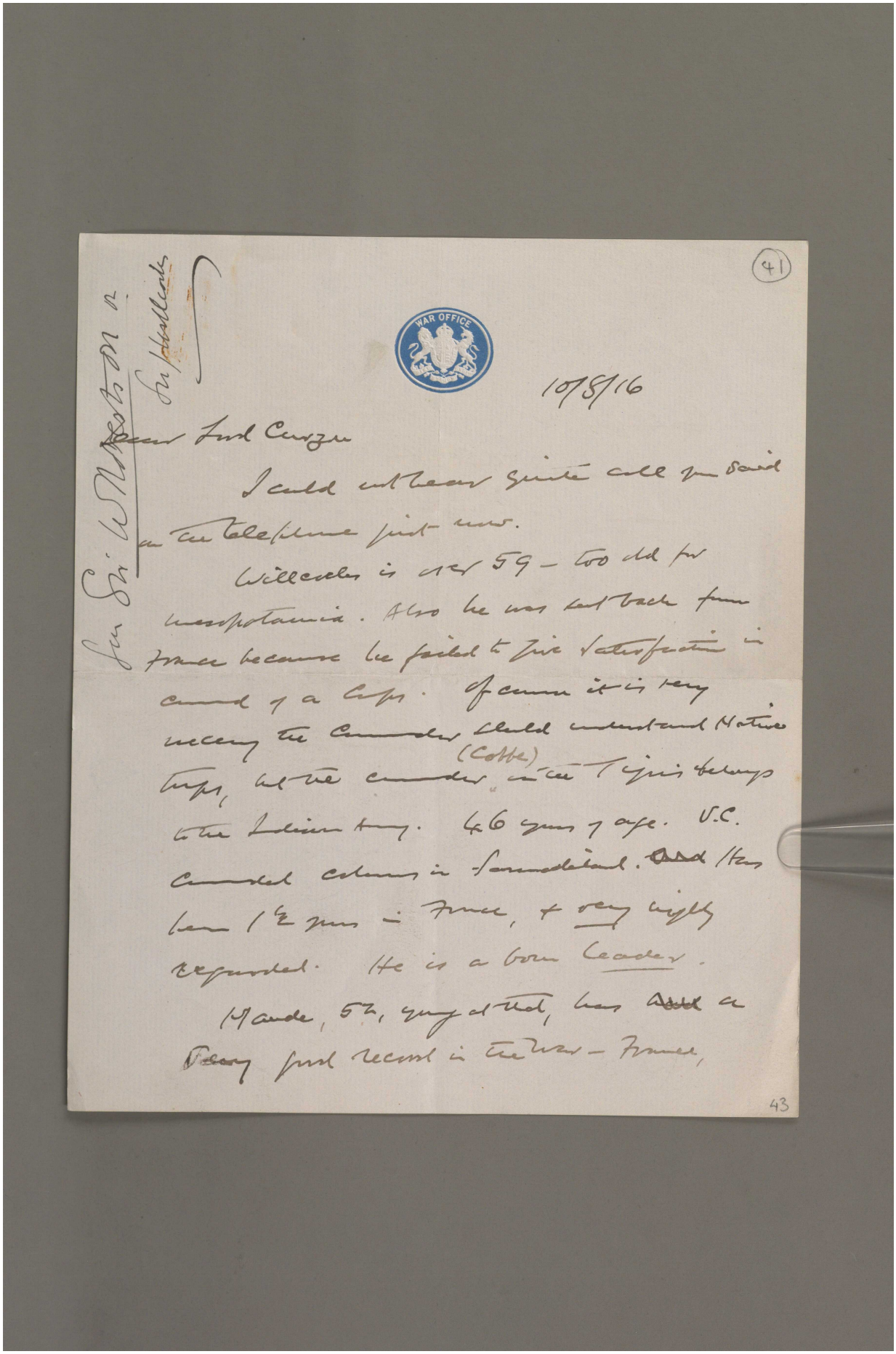
42



the Report. There are said to be only 3 in existence!

Yrs. very sincerely
Austen Chamberlain

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000005



(41)

WAR OFFICE

10/8/16

Dear Lord Curzon

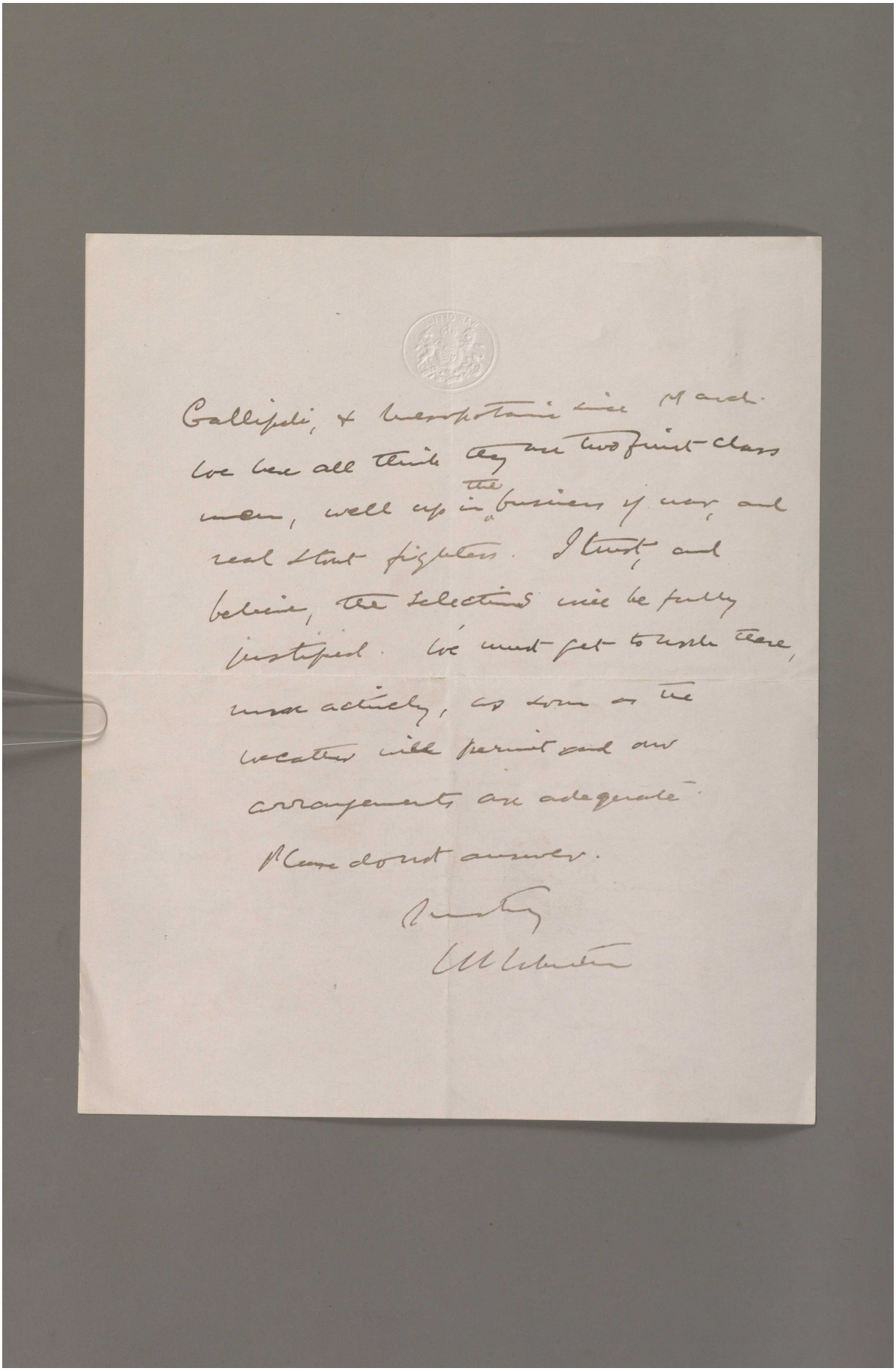
I could not hear quite all you said on the telephone just now.

Willcocks is over 59 – too old for Mesopotamia. Also he was sent back from France because he failed to give satisfaction in command of a Corps. Of course it is very necessary the Commander should understand Native troops, but the commander (Cobbe) in the Tigris belongs to the Indian Army. 46 years of age. V.C. commanded columns in Samaritland. ~~and~~ Has been 1½ years in France, & very highly regarded. He is a born leader.

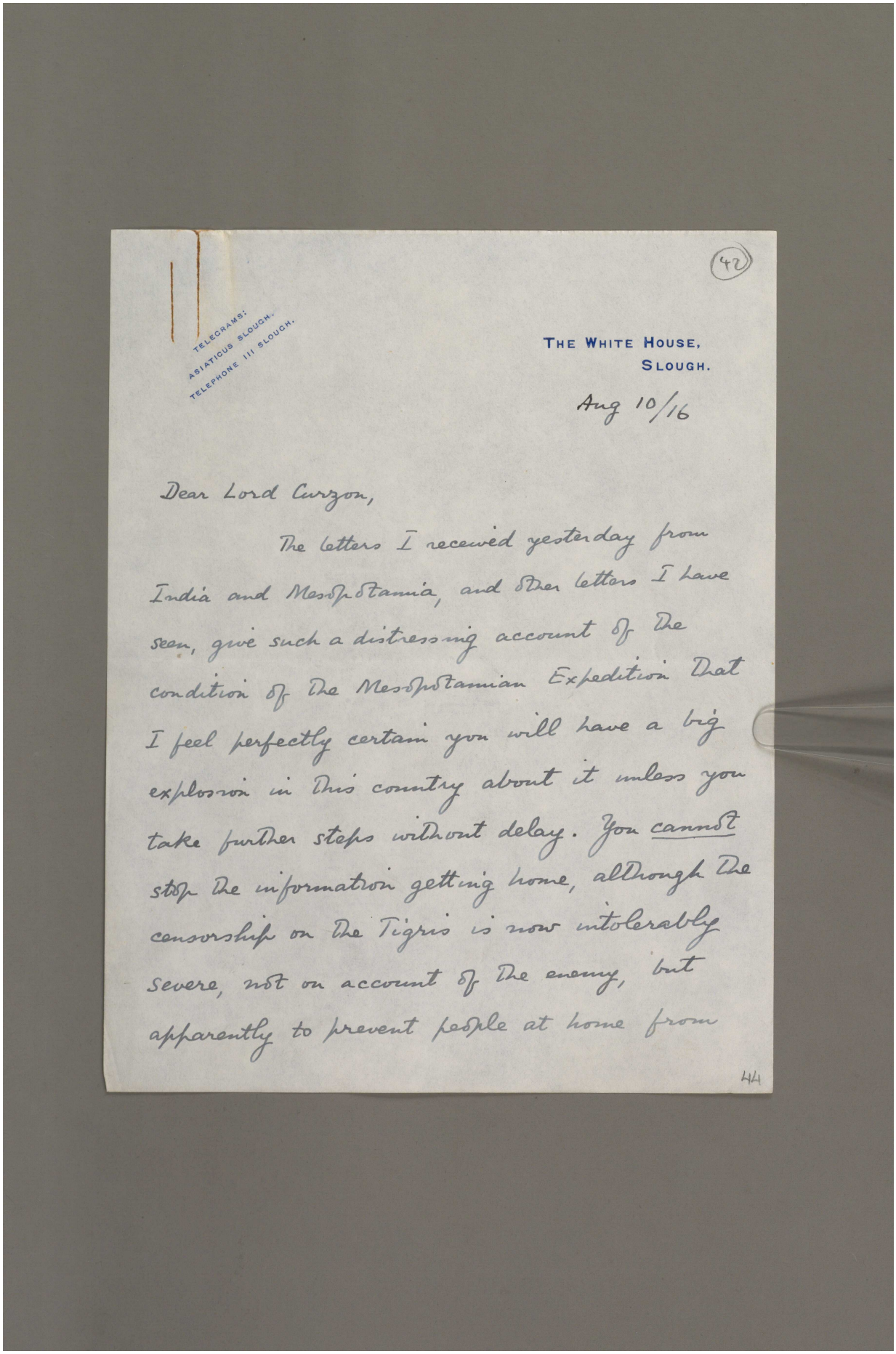
Maude, 52, young at that, has ~~had~~ a ~~very~~ good record in the War – France,

43

for Sir W Roberts M.D.
Sir Hollinder



Gallipoli & Mesopotamia like March.
We have all think they are two first-class
men, well up in the business of war, and
real stout fighters. I trust, and
believe, the selection will be fully
justified. We must get to work there,
most actively, as soon as the
weather will permit and our
arrangements are adequate.
Please don't answer.
Yours truly
W Robertson



(42)

TELEGRAMS:
ASIATICUS SLOUGH.
TELEPHONE 111 SLOUGH.

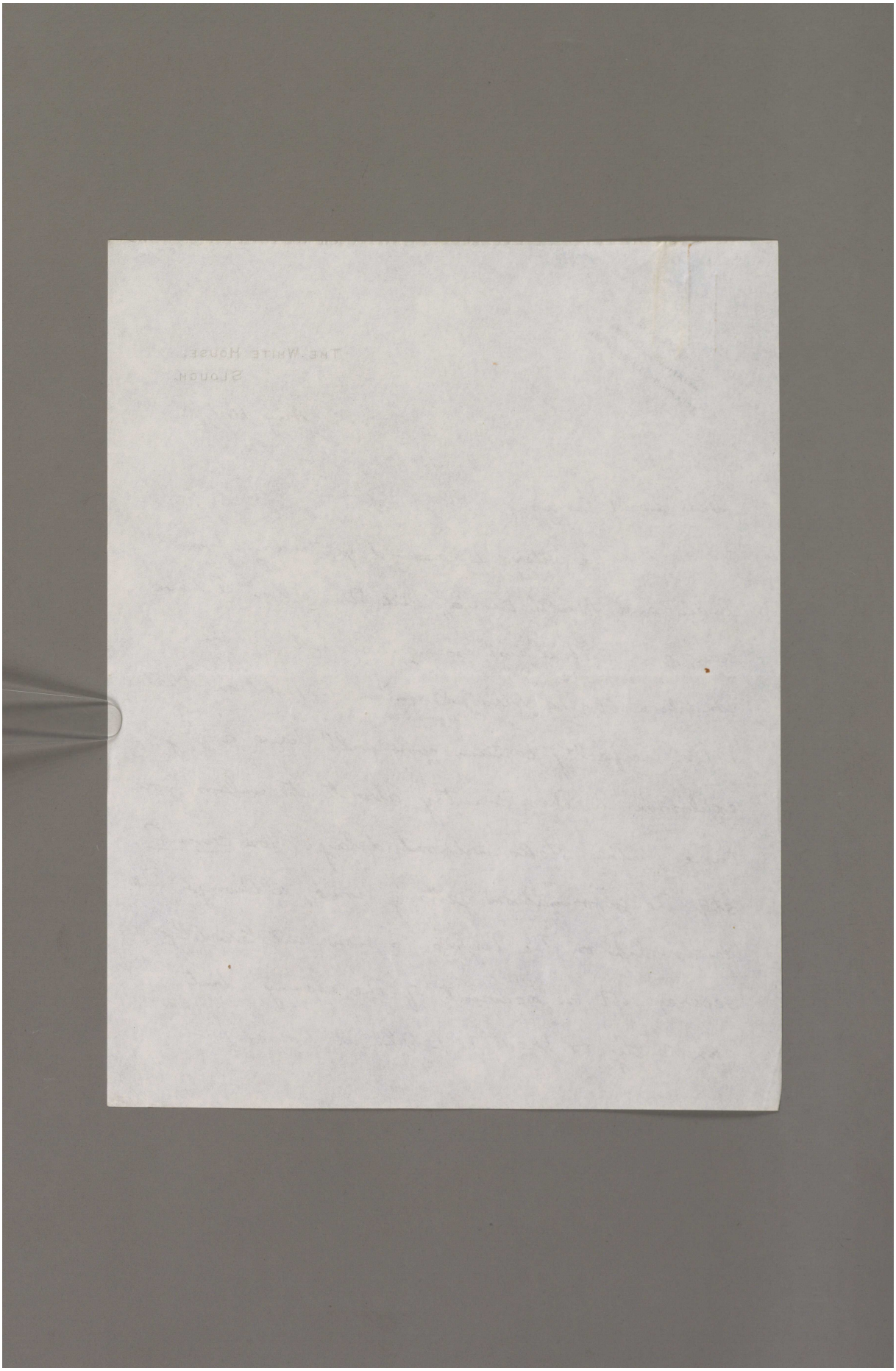
THE WHITE HOUSE,
SLOUGH.

Aug 10/16

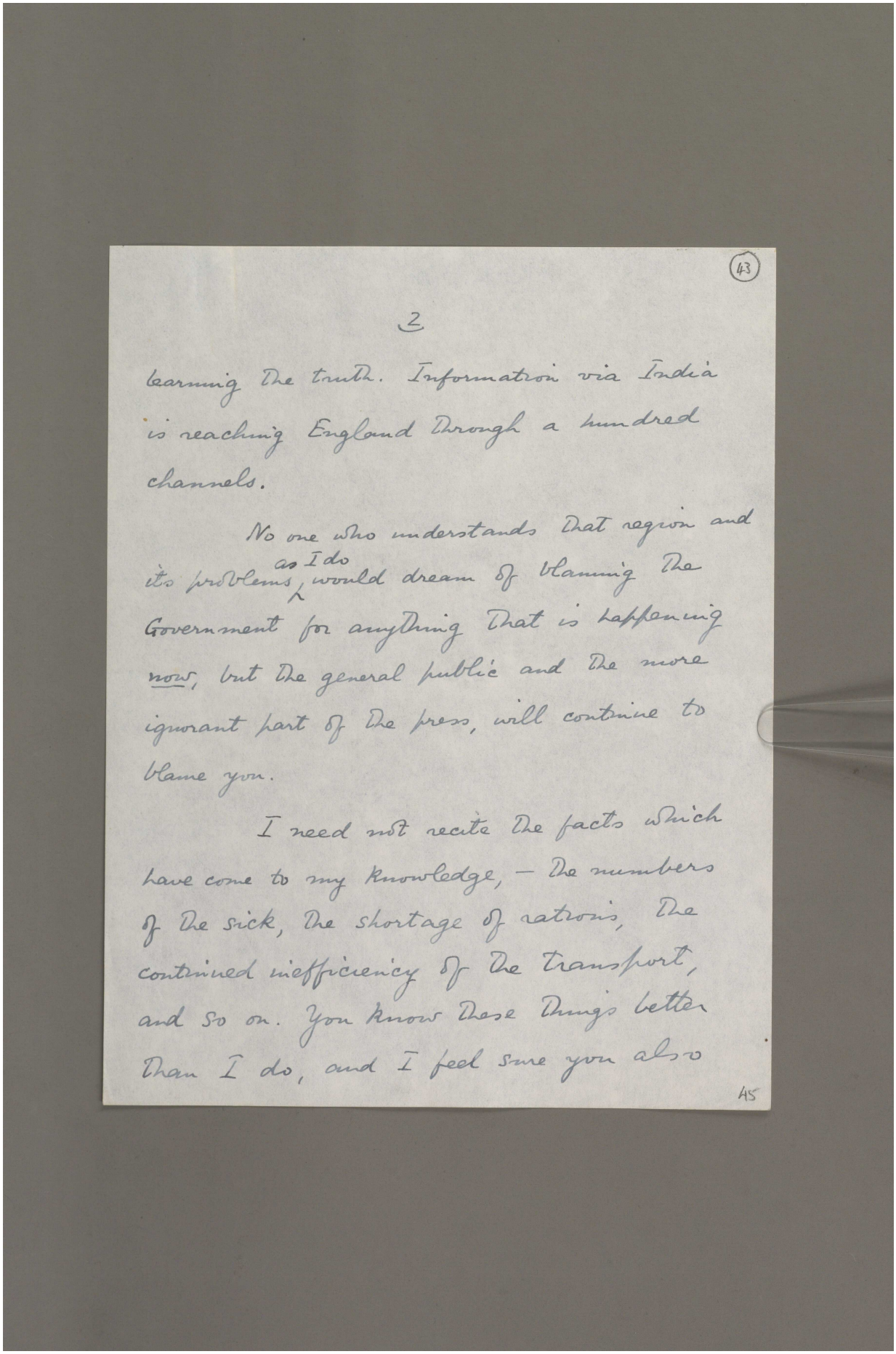
Dear Lord Curzon,

The letters I received yesterday from India and Mesopotamia, and other letters I have seen, give such a distressing account of the condition of the Mesopotamian Expedition that I feel perfectly certain you will have a big explosion in this country about it unless you take further steps without delay. You cannot stop the information getting home, although the censorship on the Tigris is now intolerably severe, not on account of the enemy, but apparently to prevent people at home from

44



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00003f



(43)

2

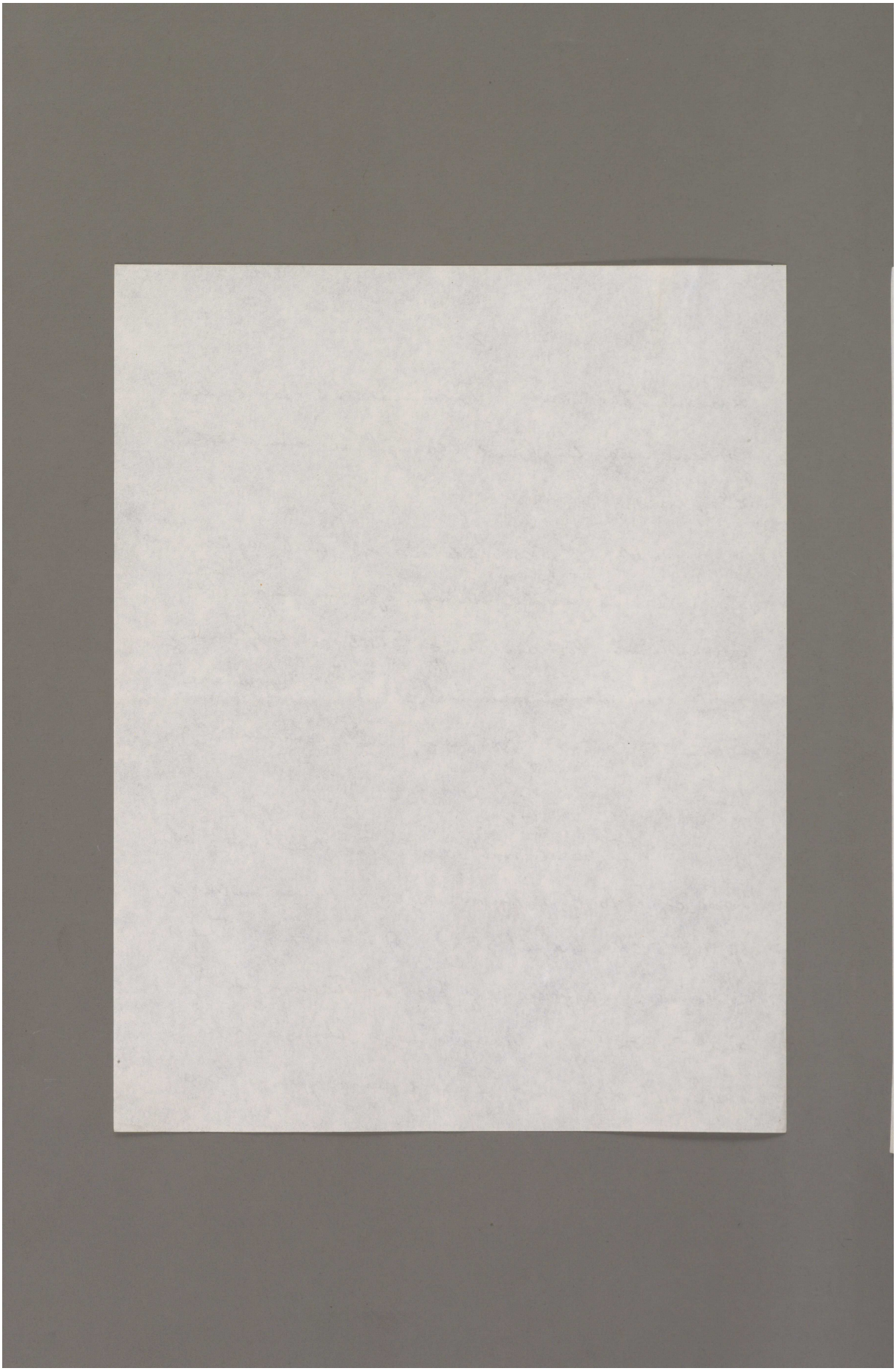
learning the truth. Information via India is reaching England through a hundred channels.

No one who understands that region and its problems, as I do, would dream of blaming the Government for anything that is happening now, but the general public and the more ignorant part of the press, will continue to blame you.

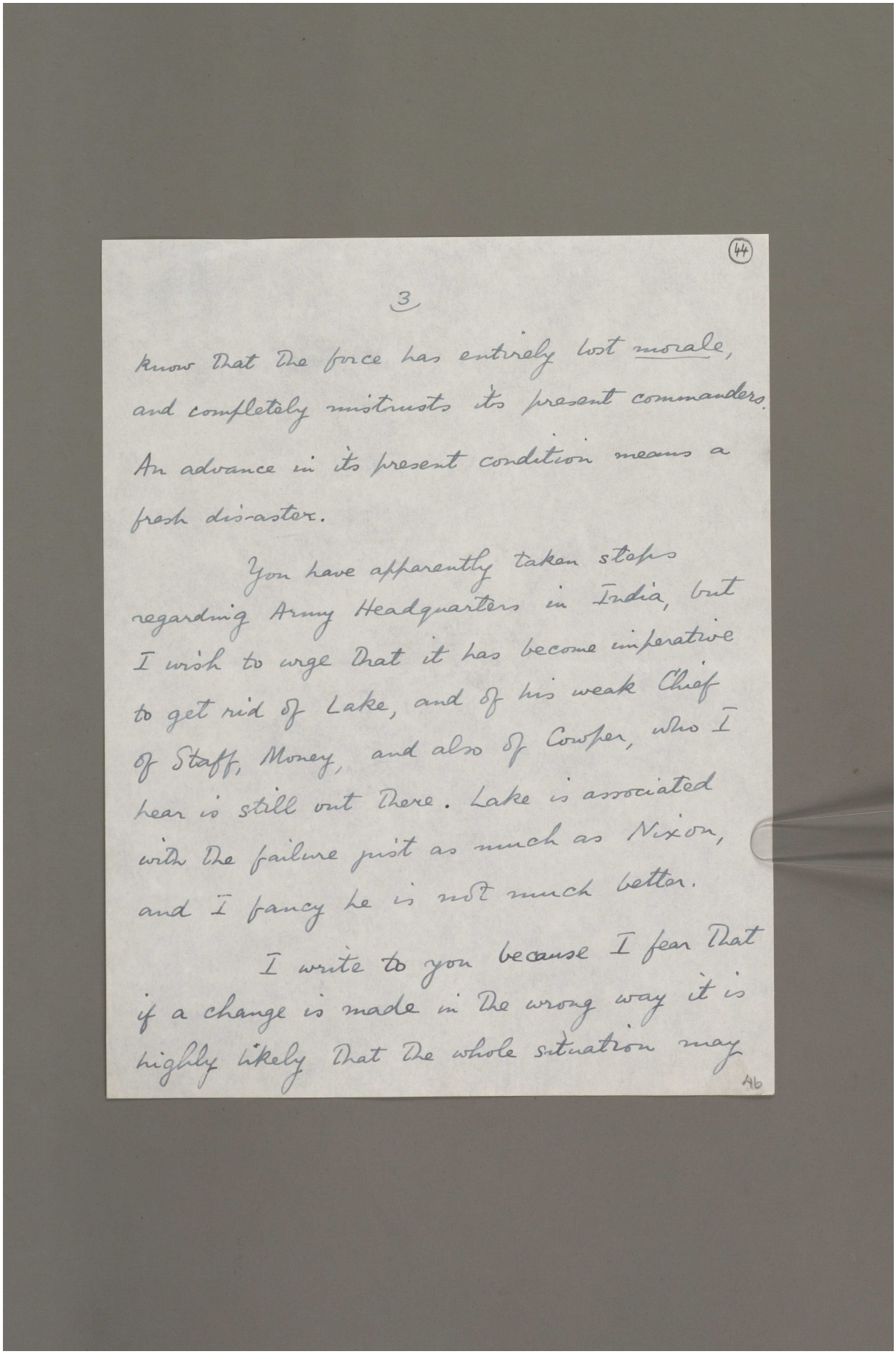
I need not recite the facts which have come to my knowledge, — the numbers of the sick, the shortage of rations, the continued inefficiency of the transport, and so on. You know these things better than I do, and I feel sure you also

45

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000a3



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000ba



(44)

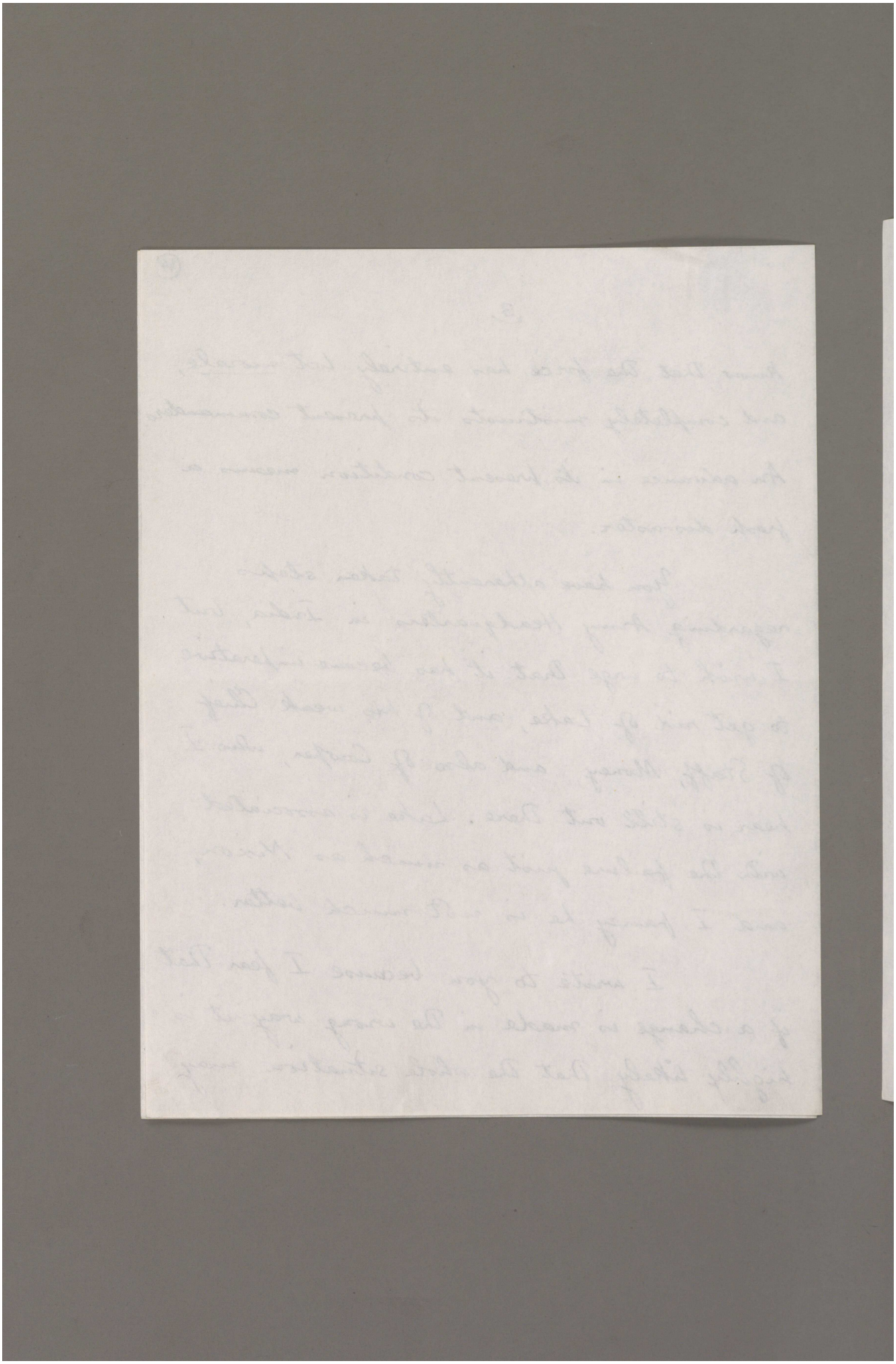
3

know that the force has entirely lost morale, and completely mistrusts its present commanders. An advance in its present condition means a fresh disaster.

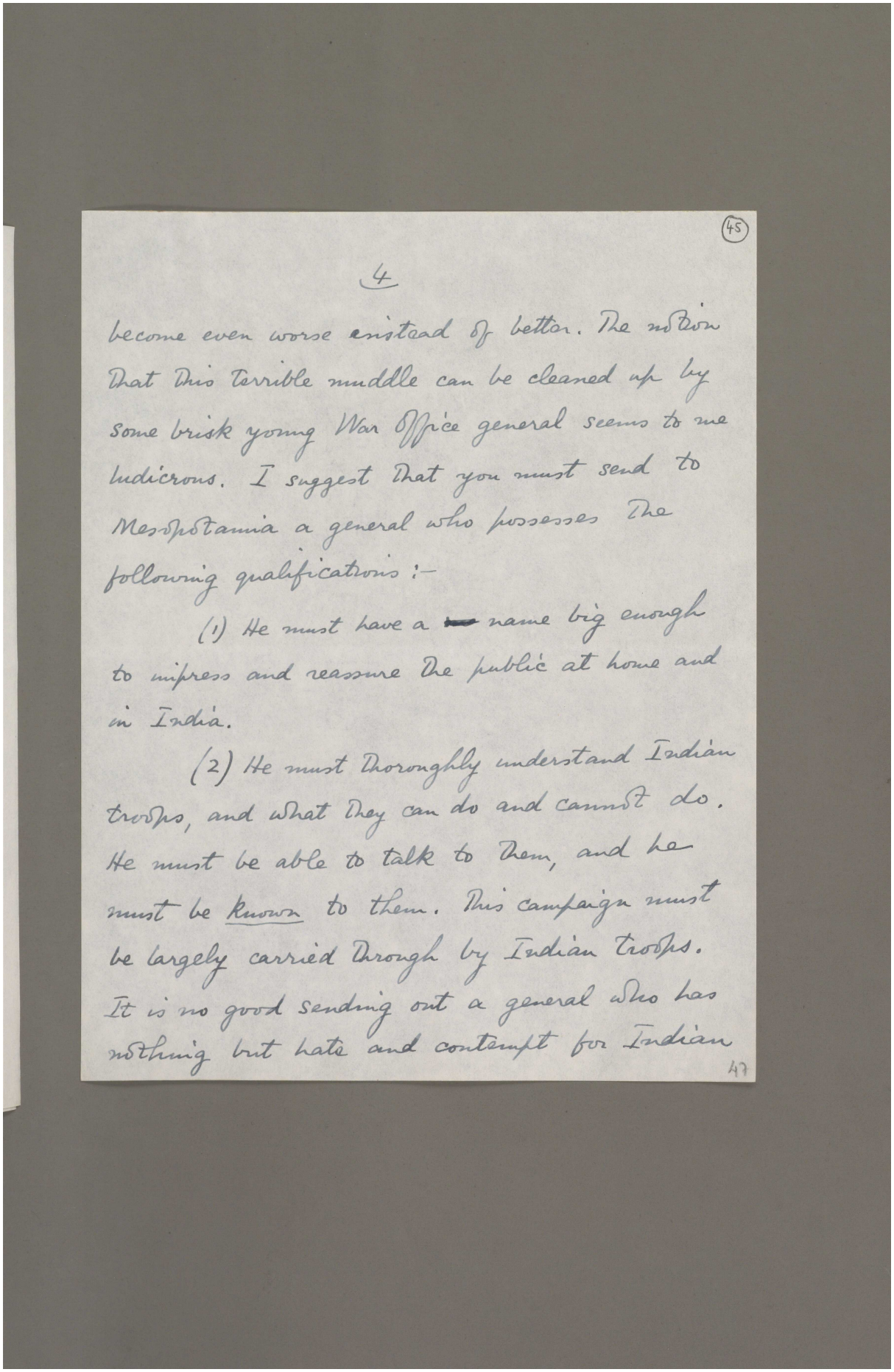
You have apparently taken steps regarding Army Headquarters in India, but I wish to urge that it has become imperative to get rid of Lake, and of his weak Chief of Staff, Money, and also of Cowper, who I hear is still out there. Lake is associated with the failure just as much as Nixon, and I fancy he is not much better.

I write to you because I fear that if a change is made in the wrong way it is highly likely that the whole situation may

AG



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000048



(45)

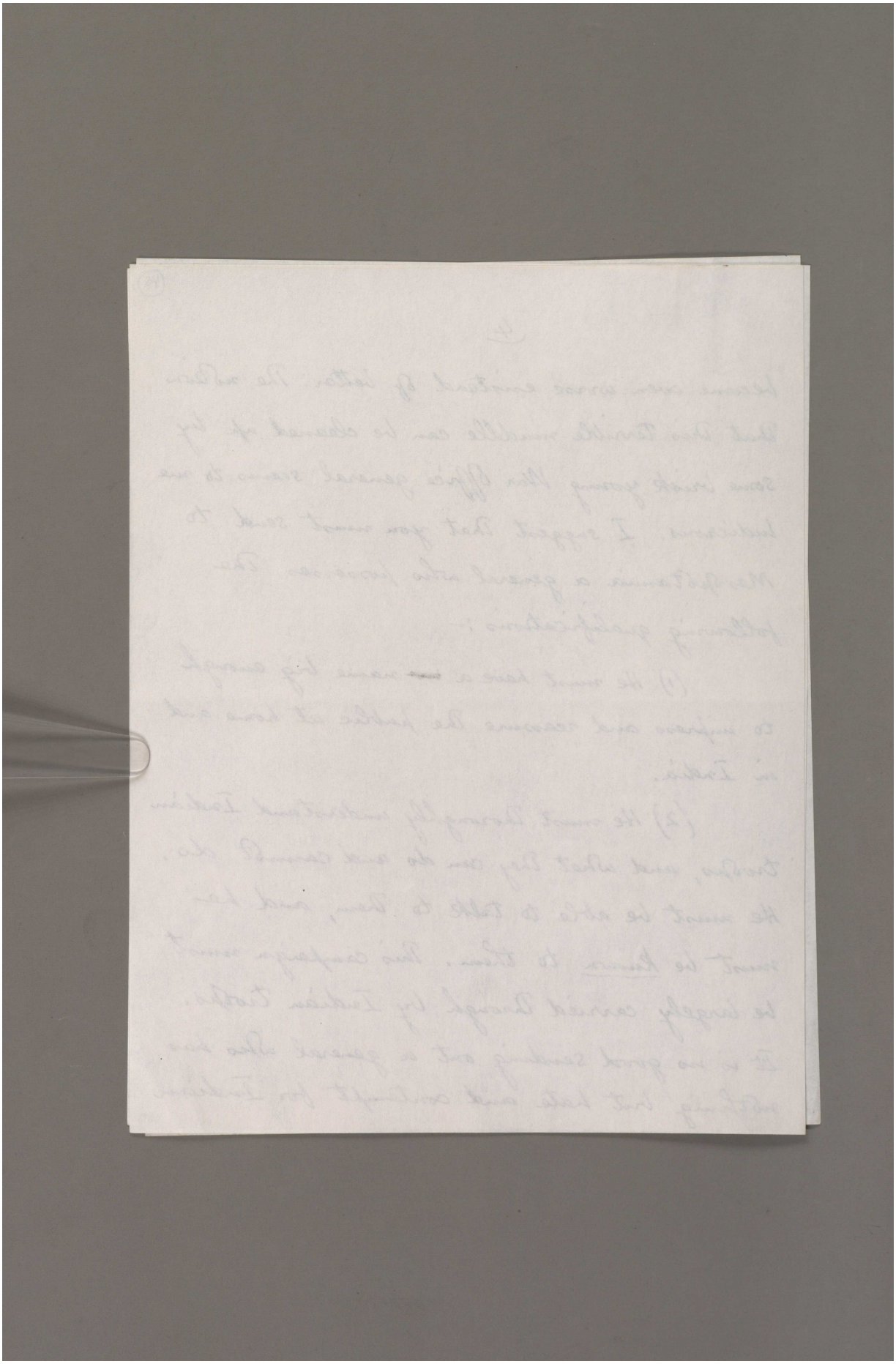
4

become even worse instead of better. The notion that this terrible muddle can be cleaned up by some brisk young War Office general seems to me ludicrous. I suggest that you must send to Mesopotamia a general who possesses the following qualifications :–

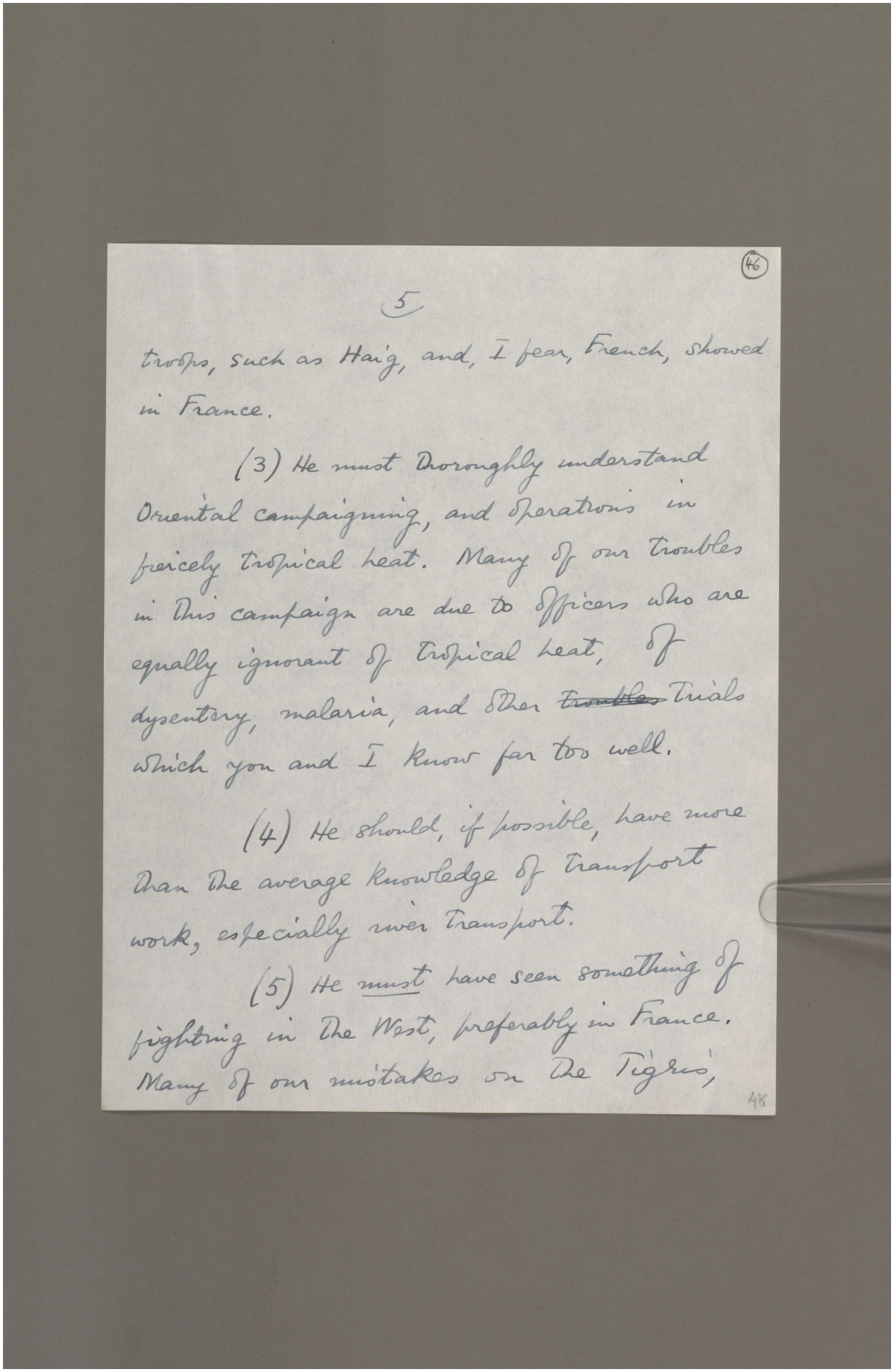
(1) He must have a [redacted] name big enough to impress and reassure the public at home and in India.

(2) He must thoroughly understand Indian troops, and what they can do and cannot do. He must be able to talk to them, and he must be known to them. This campaign must be largely carried through by Indian troops. It is no good sending out a general who has nothing but hate and contempt for Indian

47



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000056



(46)

5

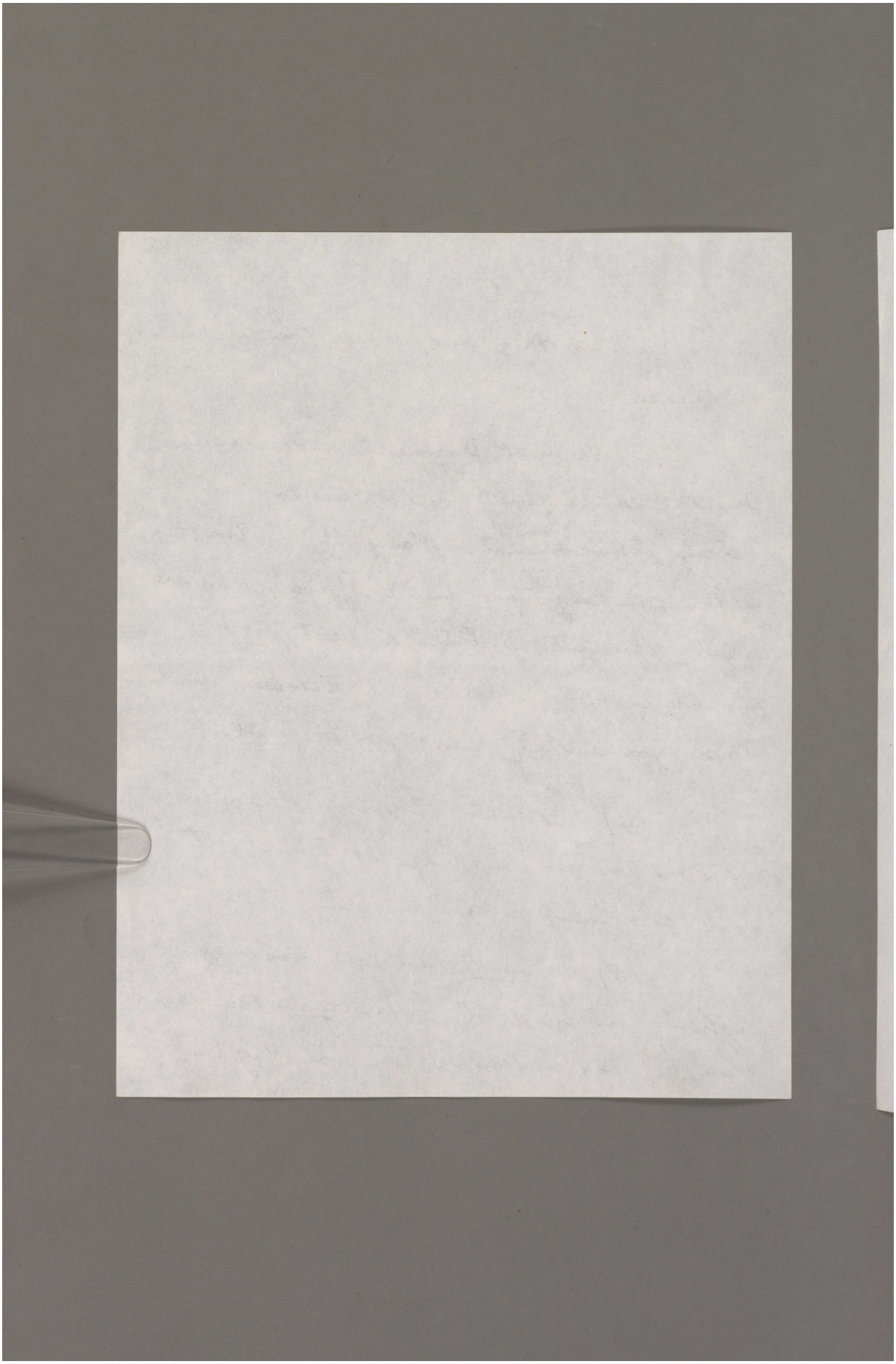
troops, such as Haig, and, I fear, French, showed in France.

(3) He must thoroughly understand Oriental campaigning, and operations in fiercely tropical heat. Many of our troubles in this campaign are due to officers who are equally ignorant of tropical heat, of dysentery, malaria, and other ~~troubles~~ trials which you and I know far too well.

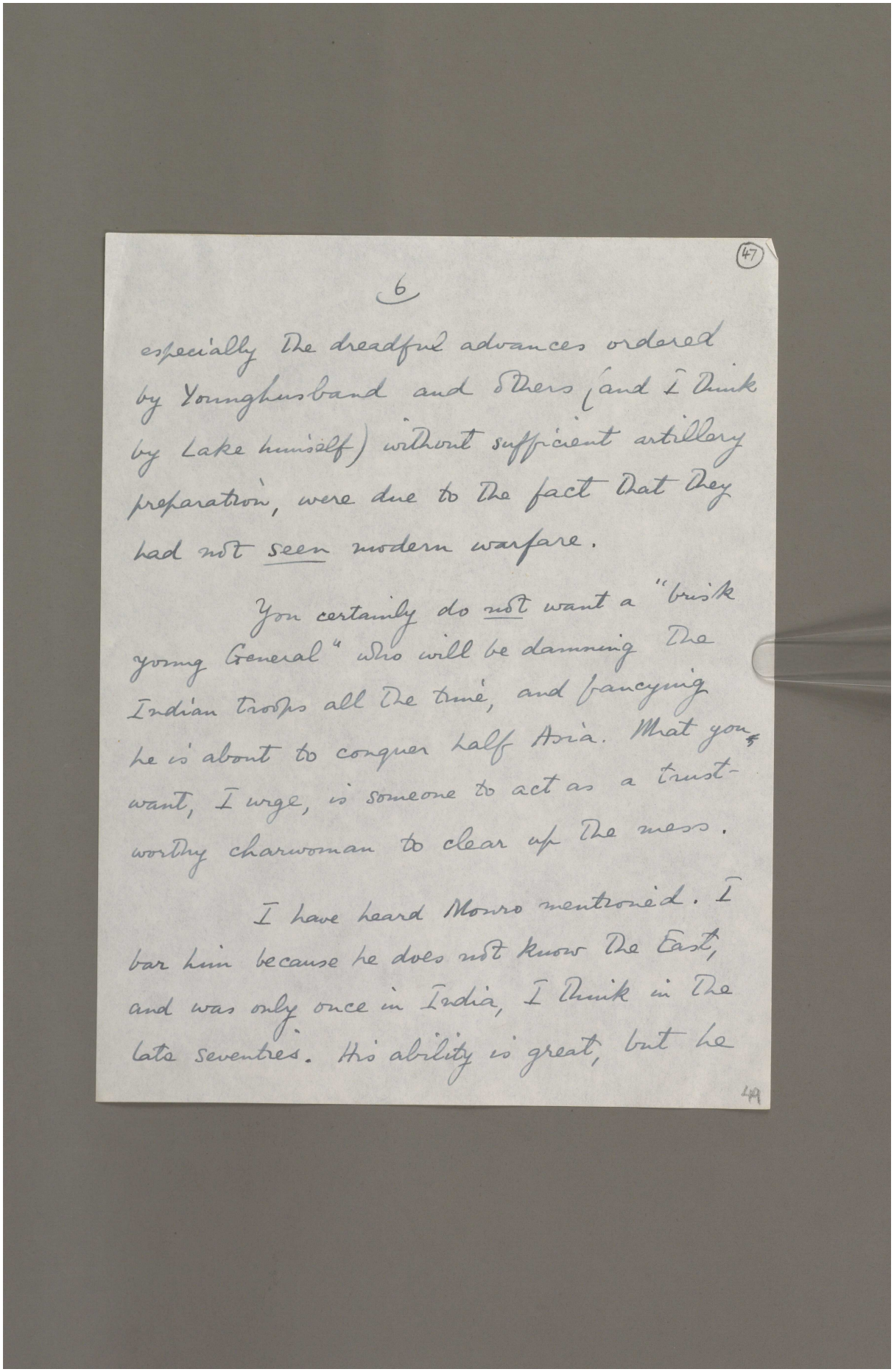
(4) He should, if possible, have more than the average knowledge of transport work, especially river transport.

(5) He must have seen something of fighting in the West, preferably in France. Many of our mistakes on the Tigris,

48



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00003e



(47)

6

especially the dreadful advances ordered by Younghusband and others (and I think by Lake himself) without sufficient artillery preparation, were due to the fact that they had not seen modern warfare.

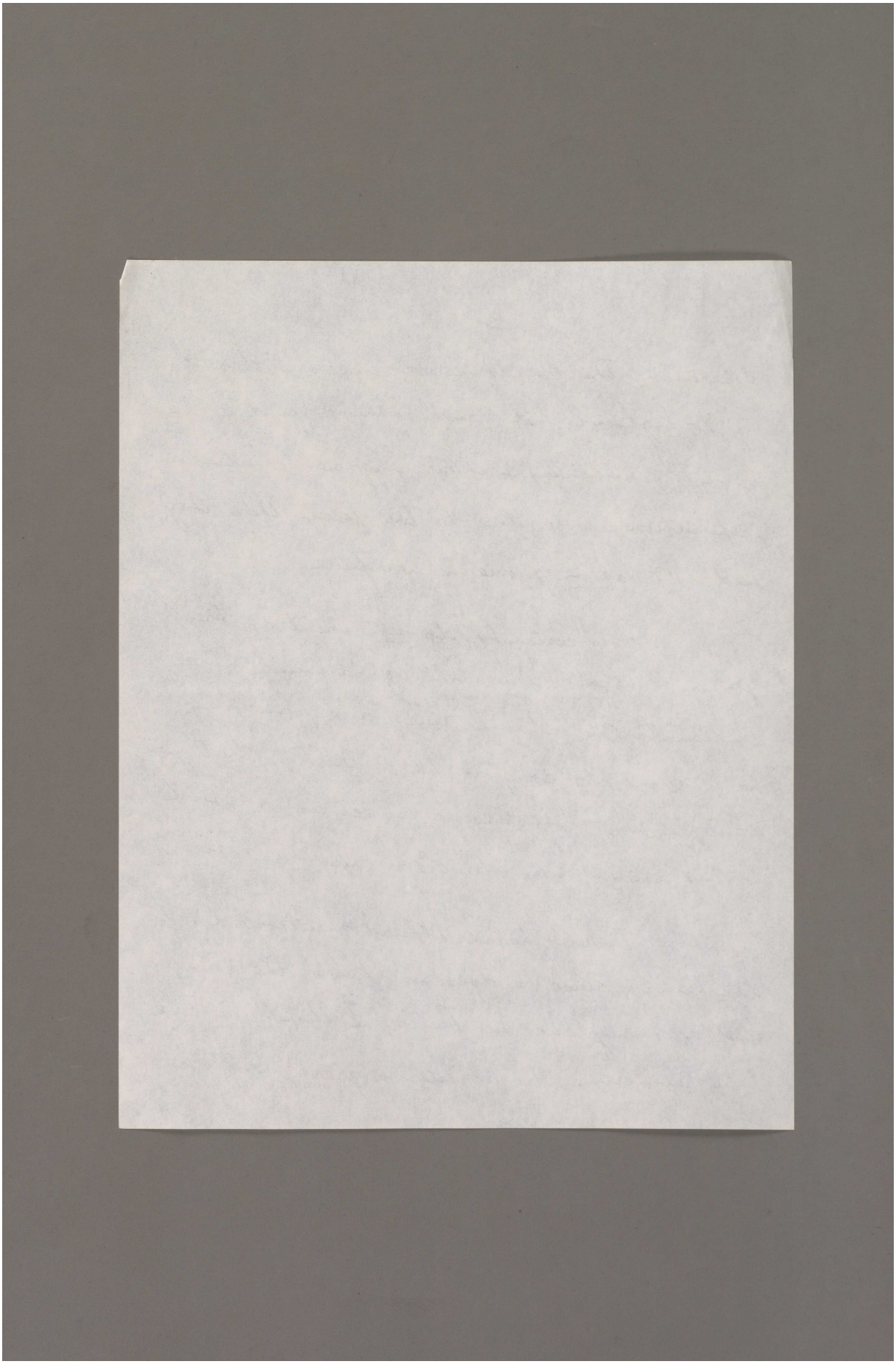
You certainly do not want a "brisk young General" who will be damning the Indian troops all the time, and fancying he is about to conquer half Asia. What you want, I urge, is someone to act as a trustworthy charwoman to clear up the mess.

I have heard Monro mentioned. I bar him because he does not know the East, and was only once in India, I think in the late seventies. His ability is great, but he

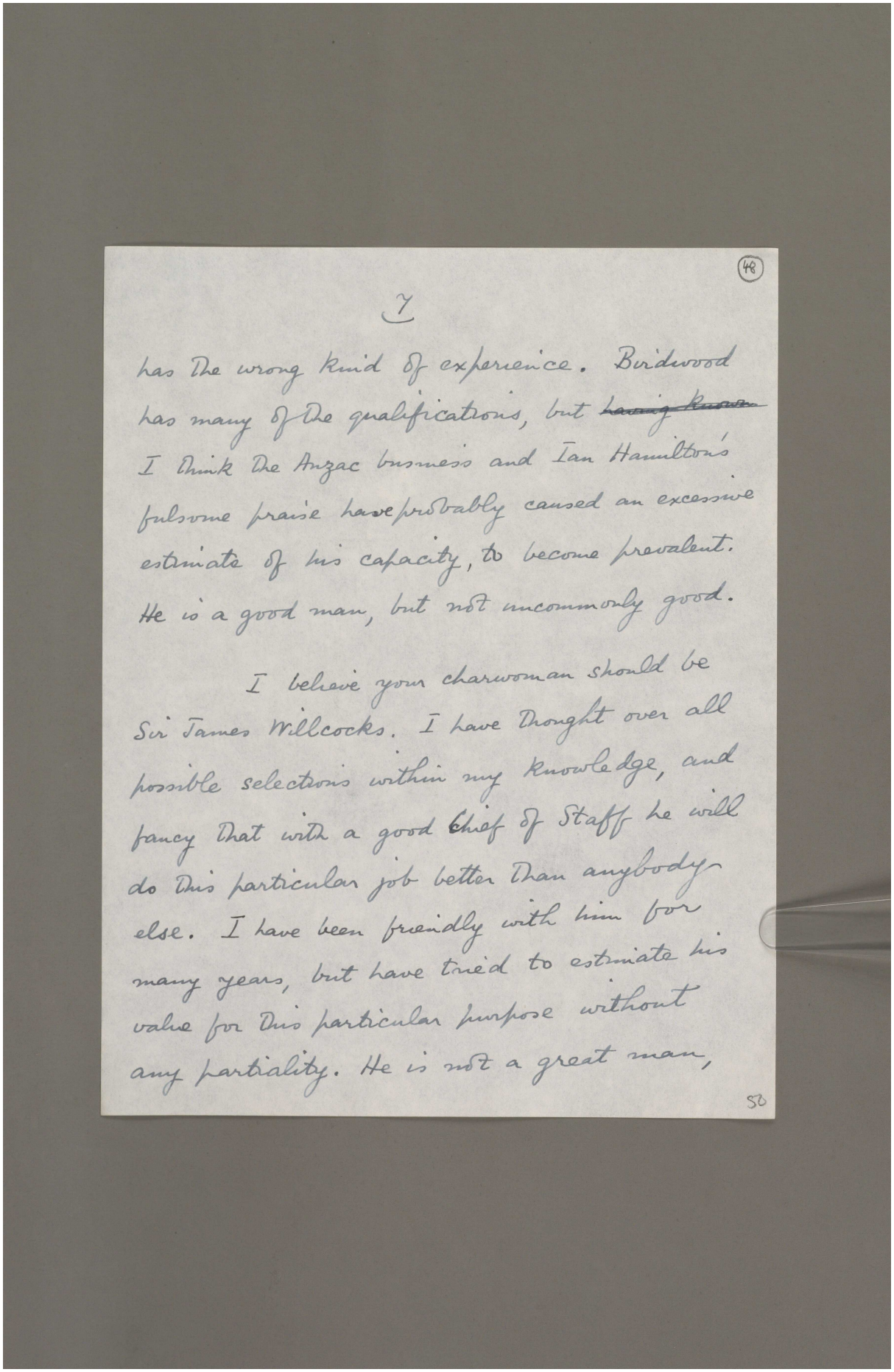
49

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000088



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000047



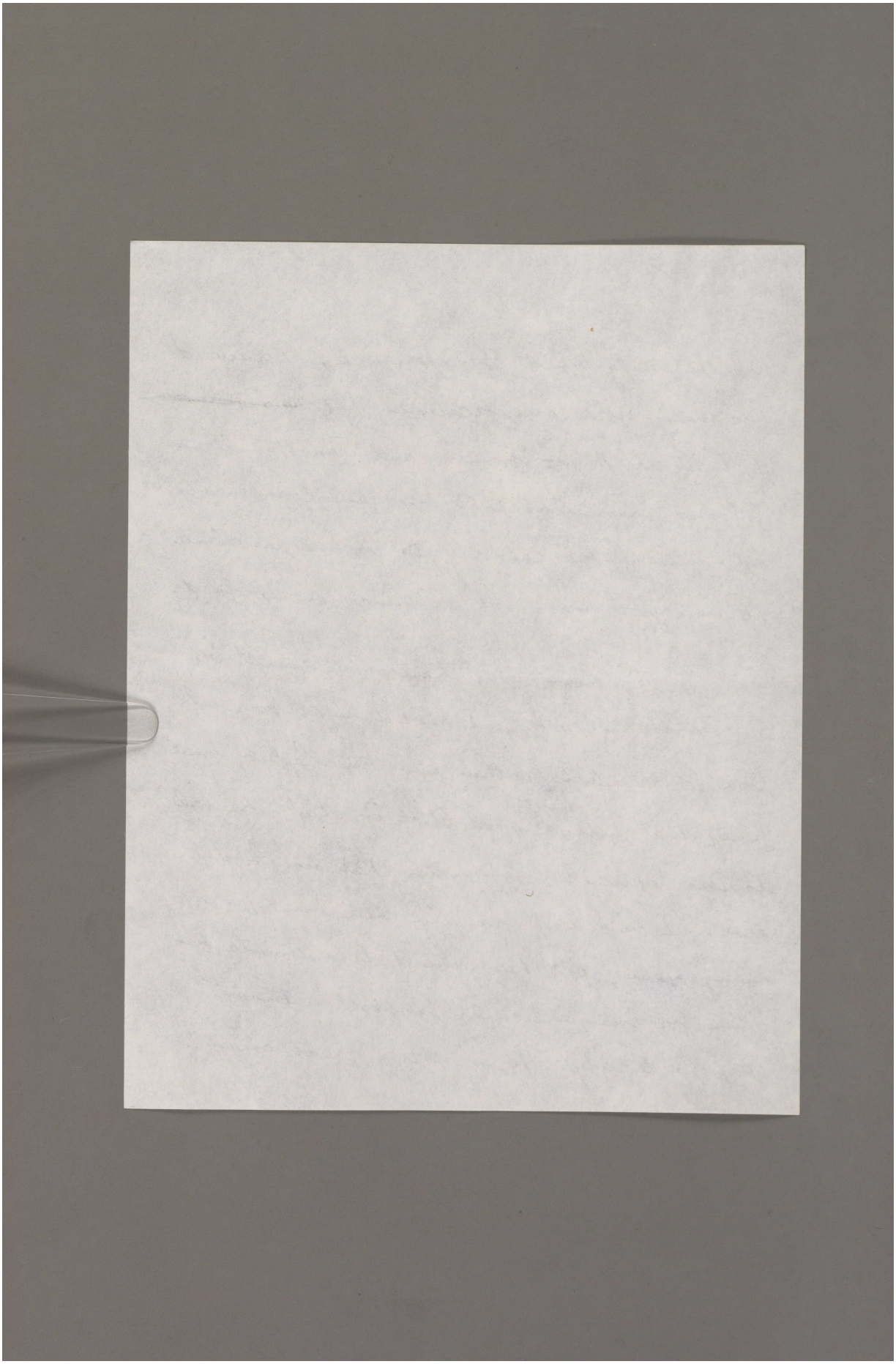
(48)

7

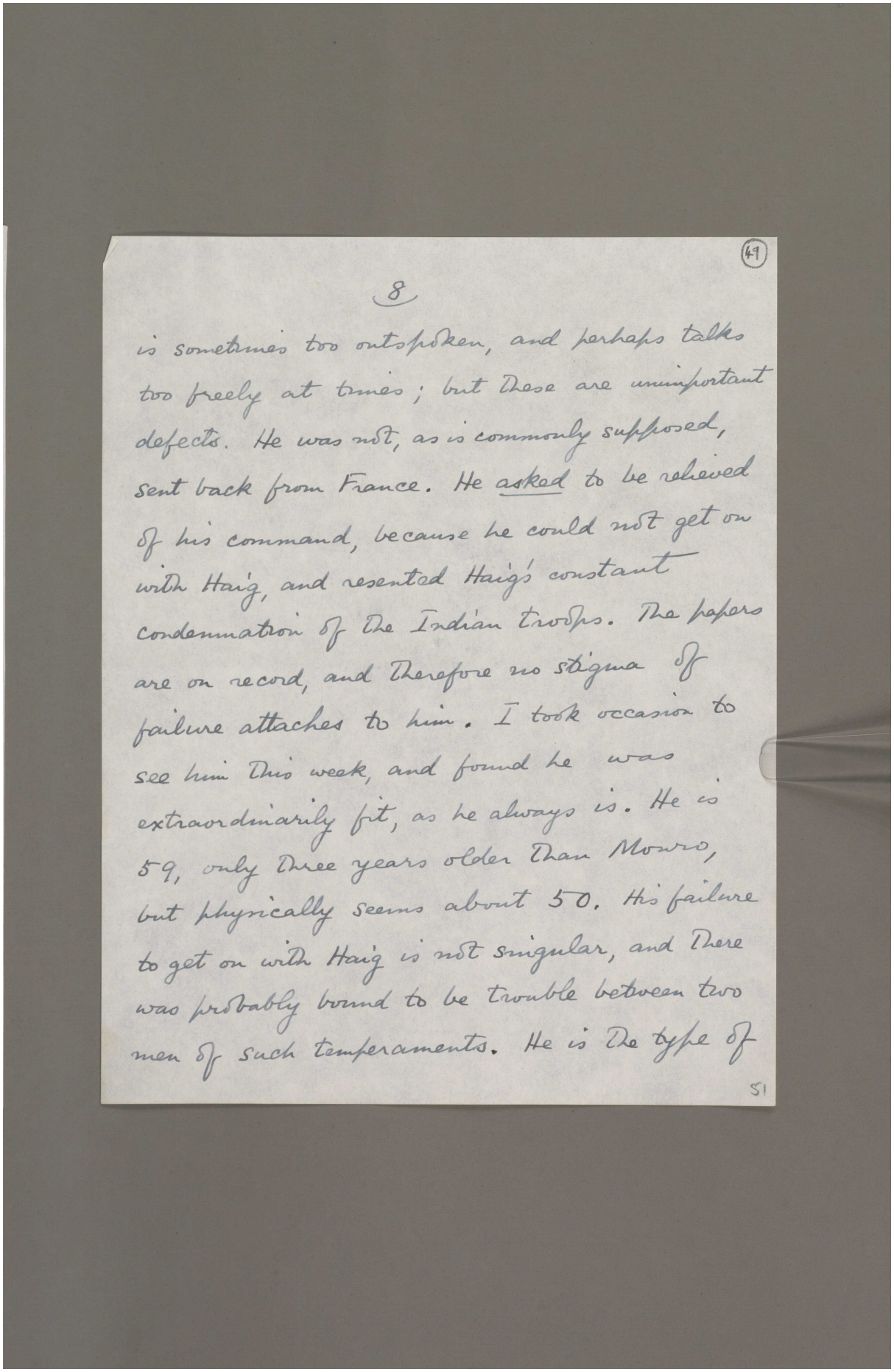
has the wrong kind of experience. Birdwood has many of the qualifications, but ~~having known~~ I think the Anzac business and Ian Hamilton's fulsome praise have probably caused an excessive estimate of his capacity, to become prevalent. He is a good man, but not uncommonly good.

I believe your charwoman should be Sir James Willcocks. I have thought over all possible selections within my knowledge, and fancy that with a good Chief of Staff he will do this particular job better than anybody else. I have been friendly with him for many years, but have tried to estimate his value for this particular purpose without any partiality. He is not a great man,

50



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000ae

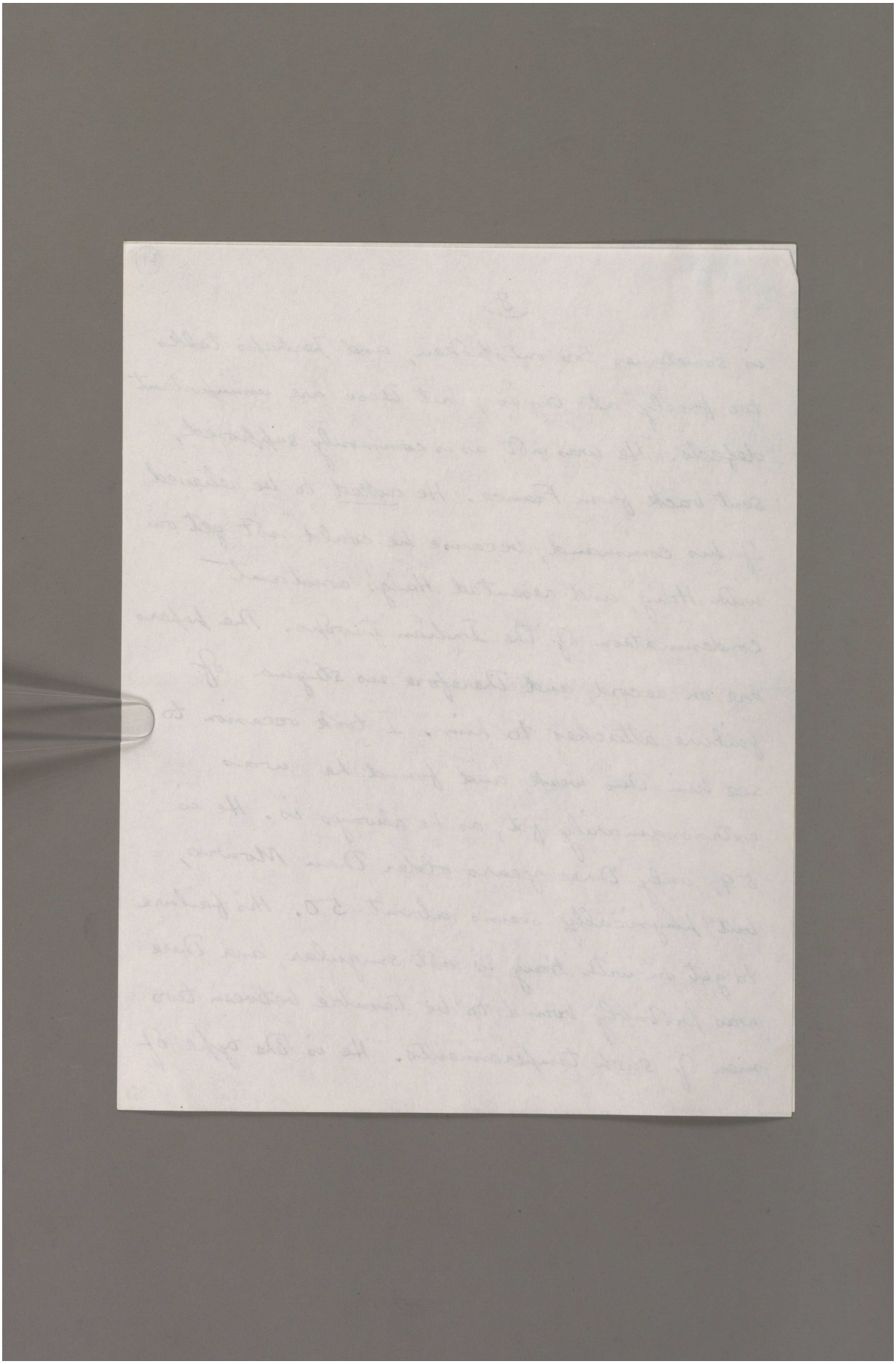


(49)

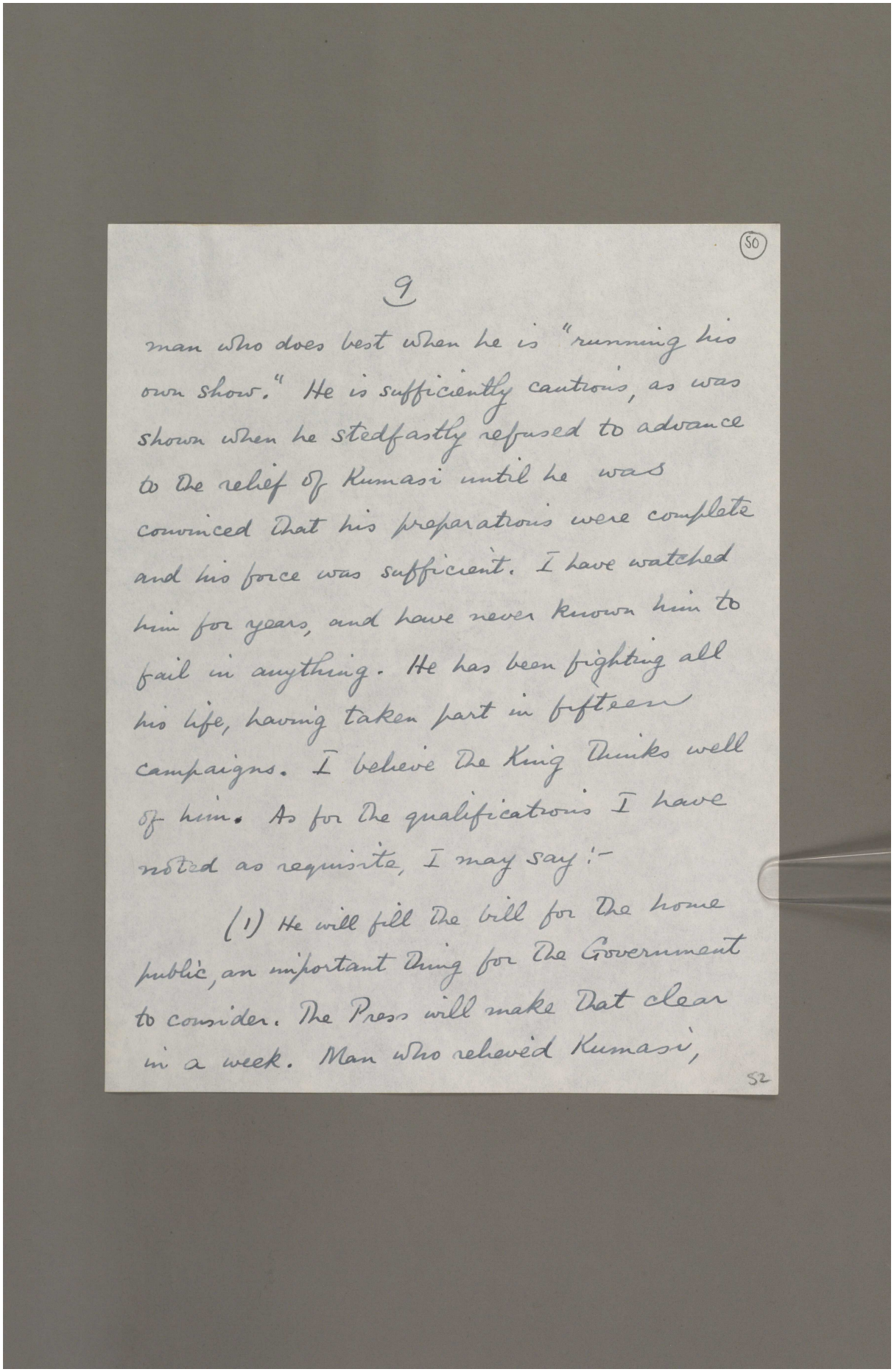
8

is sometimes too outspoken, and perhaps talks too freely at times; but these are unimportant defects. He was not, as is commonly supposed, sent back from France. He asked to be relieved of his command, because he could not get on with Haig, and resented Haig's constant condemnation of the Indian troops. The papers are on record, and therefore no stigma of failure attaches to him. I took occasion to see him this week, and found he was extraordinarily fit, as he always is. He is 59, only three years older than Monro, but physically seems about 50. His failure to get on with Haig is not singular, and there was probably bound to be trouble between two men of such temperaments. He is the type of

51



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b1



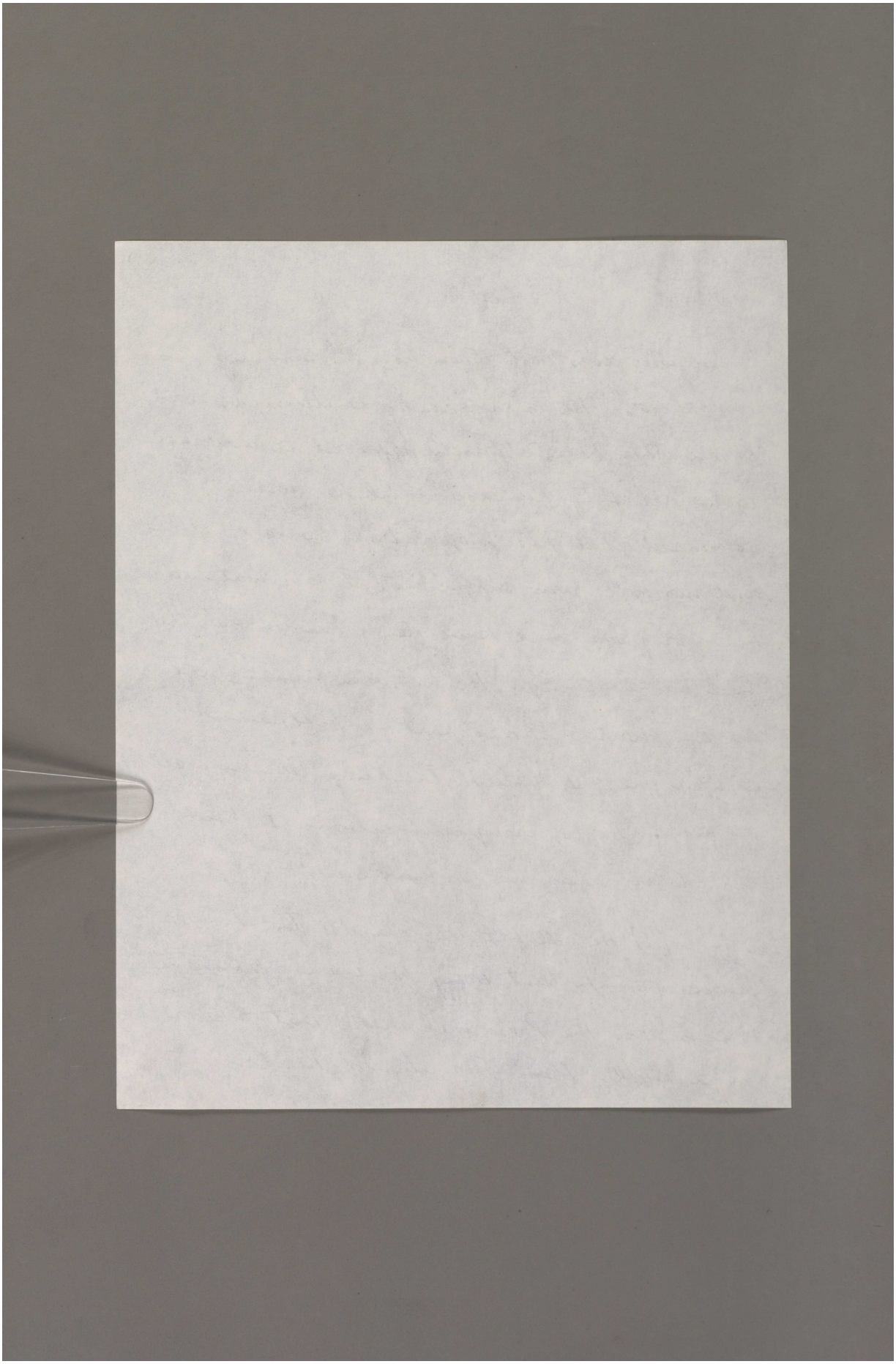
(50)

9

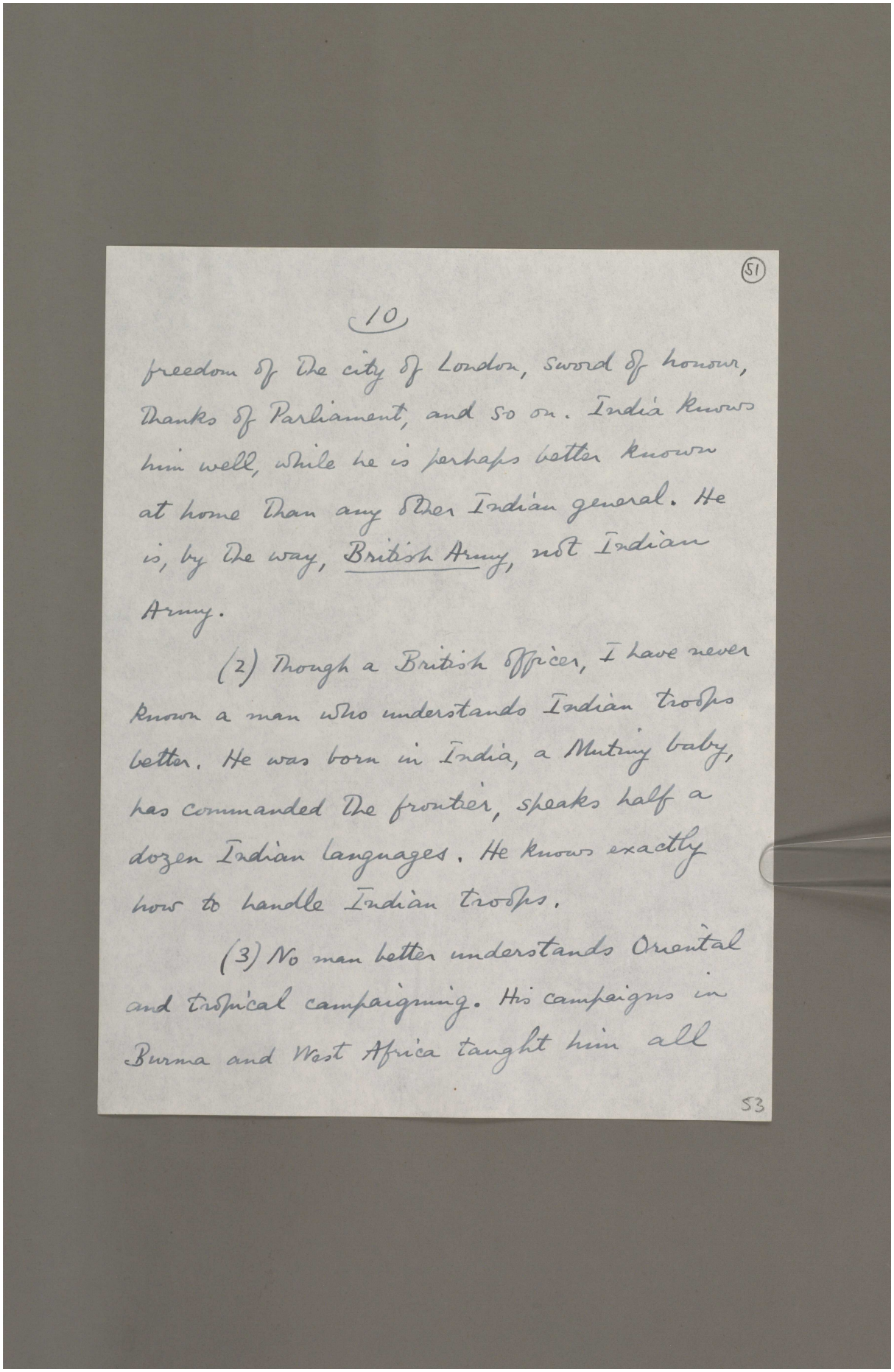
man who does best when he is "running his own show." He is sufficiently cautious, as was shown when he stedfastly refused to advance to the relief of Kumasi until he was convinced that his preparations were complete and his force was sufficient. I have watched him for years, and have never known him to fail in anything. He has been fighting all his life, having taken part in fifteen campaigns. I believe the King thinks well of him. As for the qualifications I have noted as requisite, I may say:-

(1) He will fill the bill for the home public, an important thing for the Government to consider. The Press will make that clear in a week. Man who relieved Kumasi,

52



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00006d



(51)

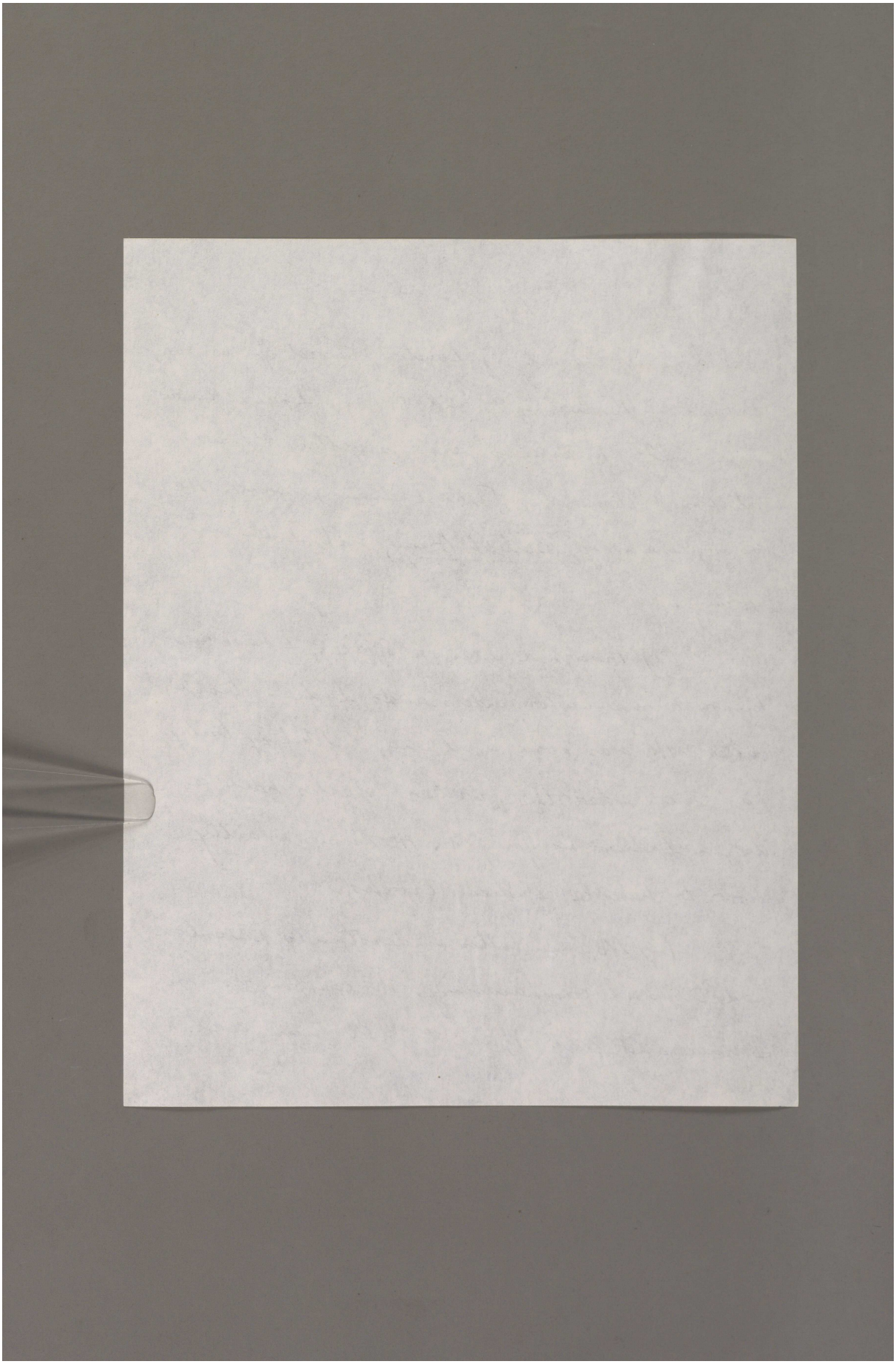
10

freedom of the city of London, Sword of honour, Thanks of Parliament, and so on. India knows him well, while he is perhaps better known at home than any other Indian general. He is, by the way, British Army, not Indian Army.

(2) Though a British officer, I have never known a man who understands Indian troops better. He was born in India, a Mutiny baby, has commanded the frontier, speaks half a dozen Indian languages. He knows exactly how to handle Indian troops.

(3) No man better understands Oriental and tropical campaigning. His campaigns in Burma and West Africa taught him all

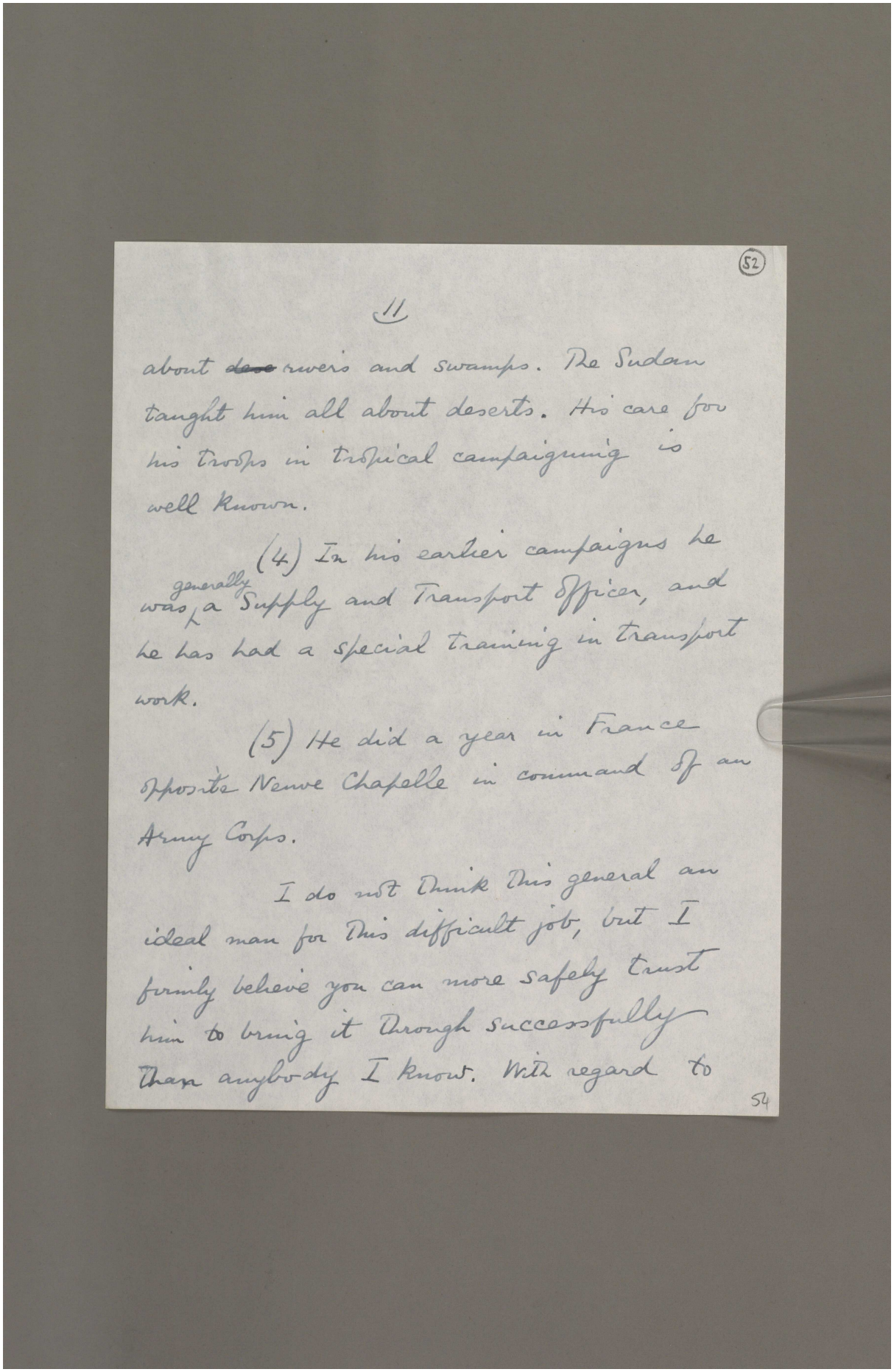
53



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00003e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



(52)

11

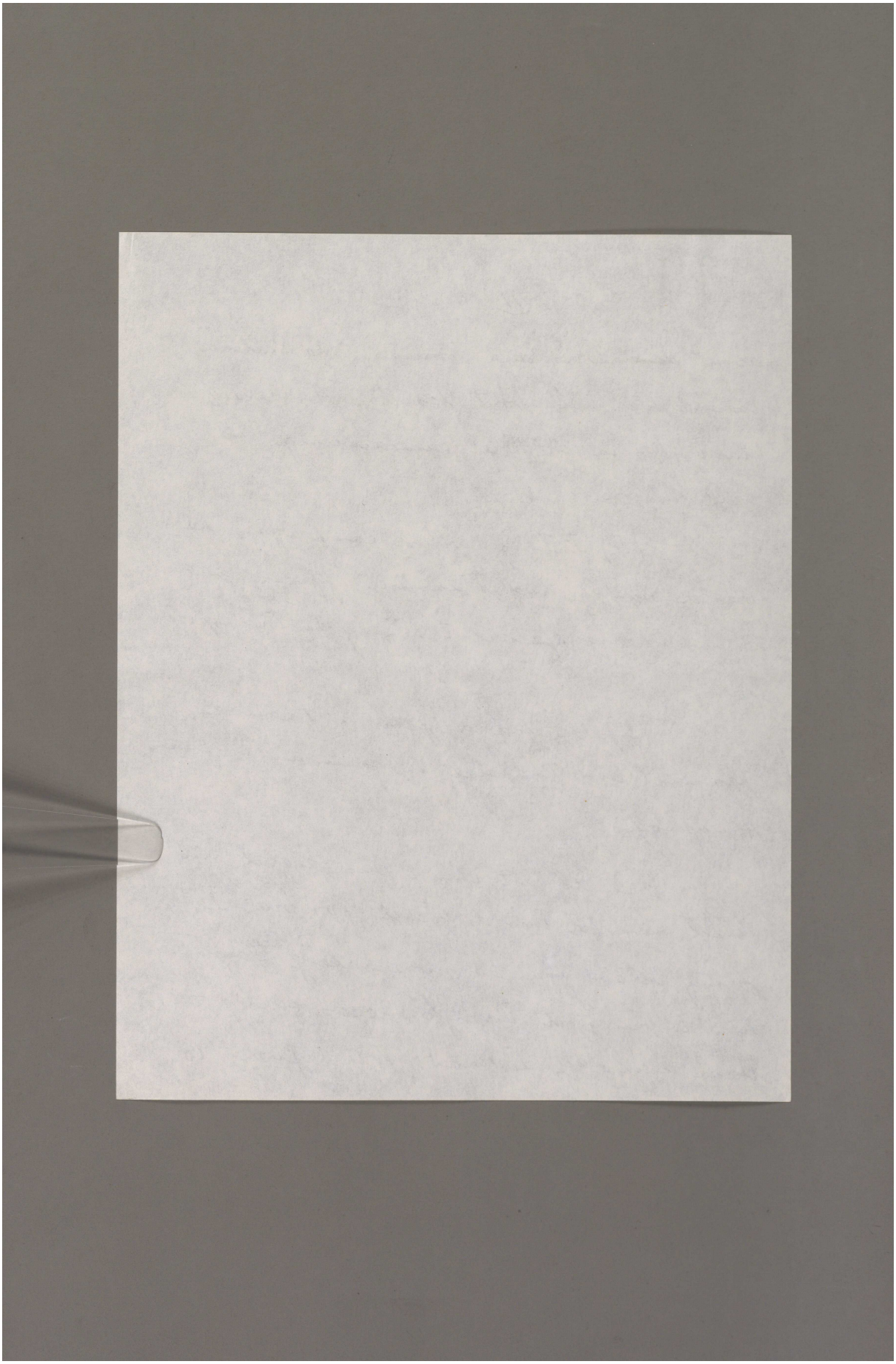
about ~~deso~~ rivers and swamps. The Sudan taught him all about deserts. His care for his troops in tropical campaigning is well known.

(4) In his earlier campaigns he was generally a Supply and Transport Officer, and he has had a special training in transport work.

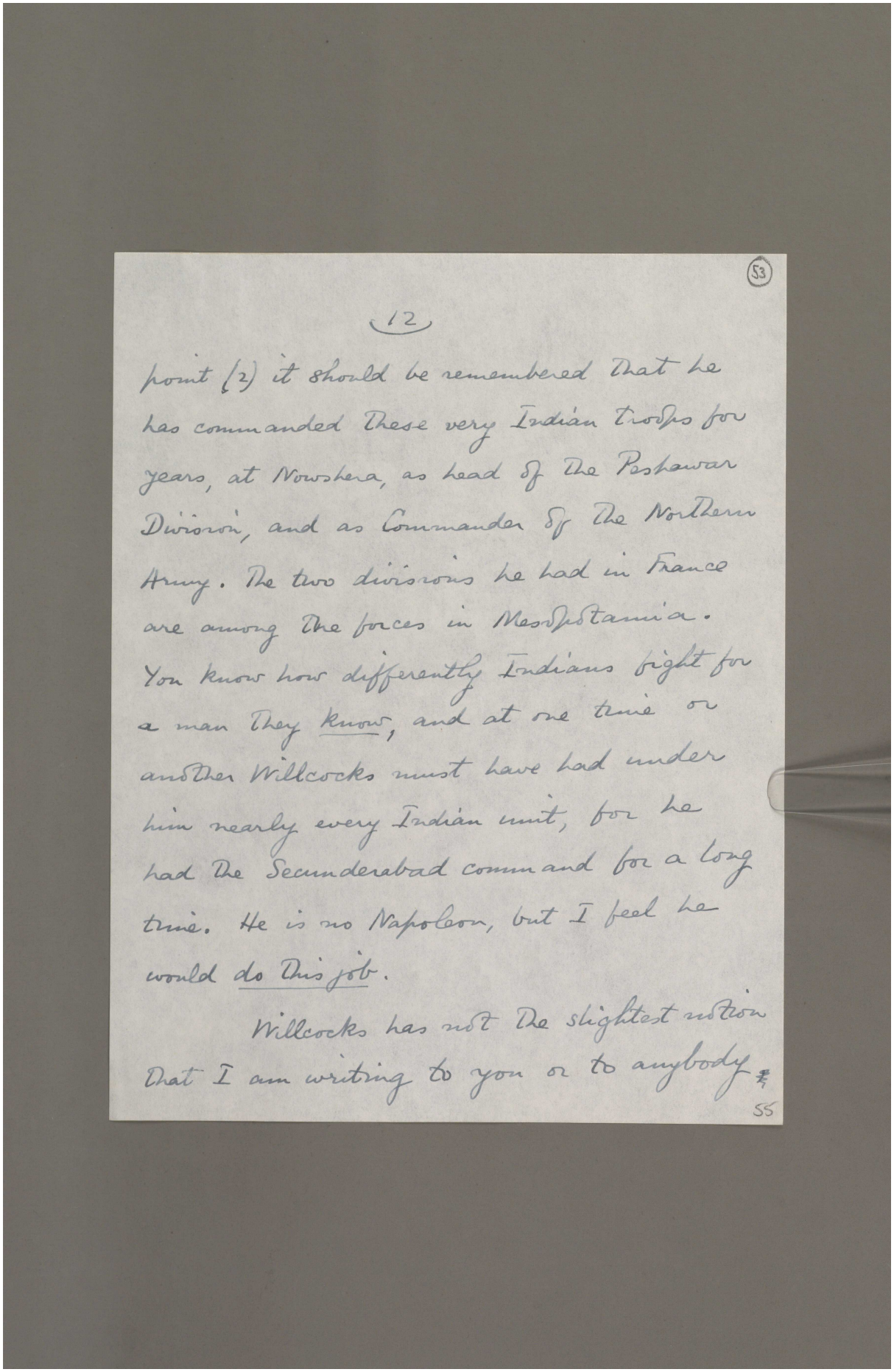
(5) He did a year in France opposite Neuve Chapelle in command of an Army Corps.

I do not think this general an ideal man for this difficult job, but I firmly believe you can more safely trust him to bring it through successfully than anybody I know. With regard to

54



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a6



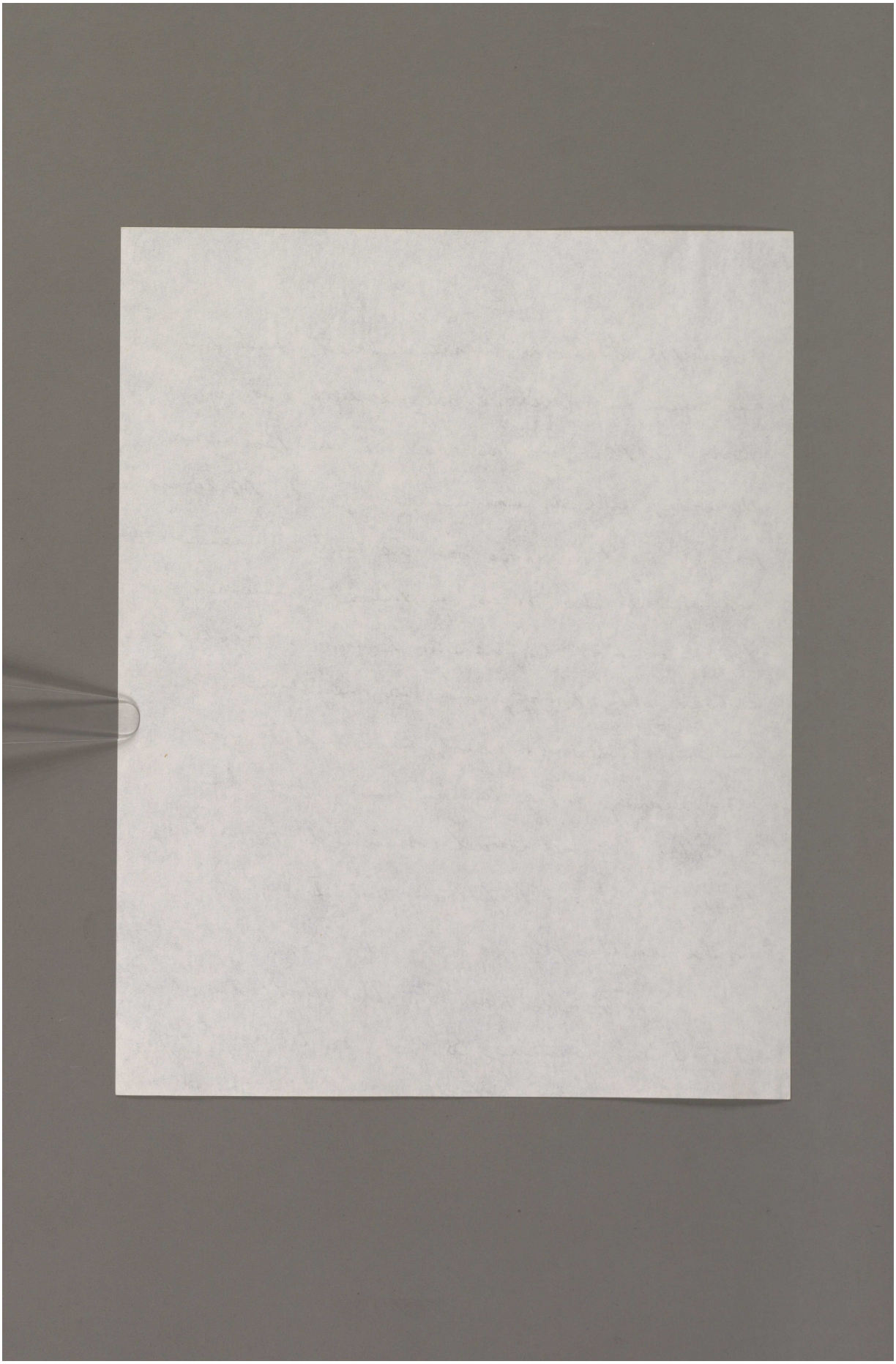
(53)

(12)

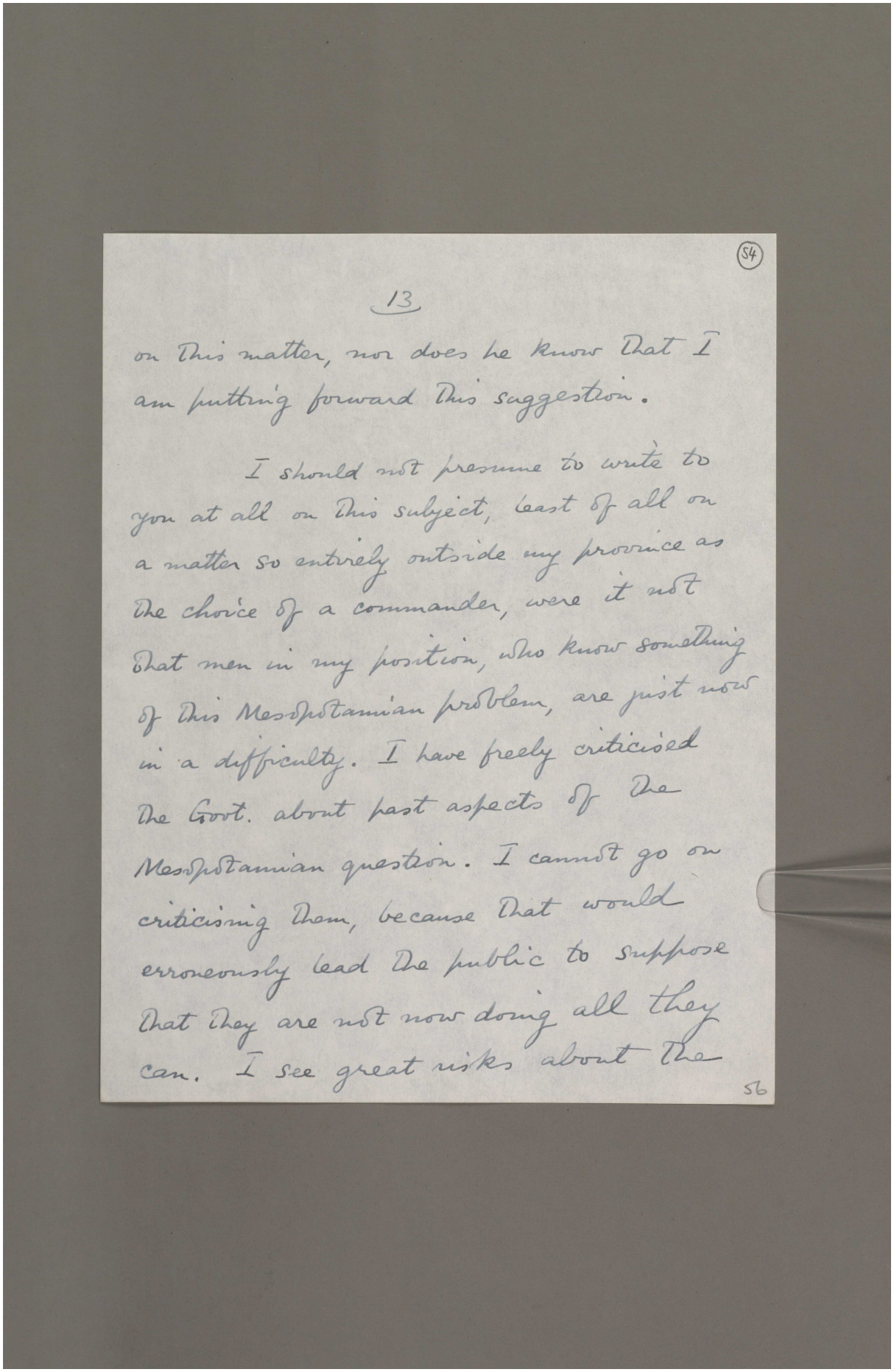
point (2) it should be remembered that he has commanded these very Indian troops for years, at Nowshera, as head of the Peshawar Division, and as Commander of the Northern Army. The two divisions he had in France are among the forces in Mesopotamia. You know how differently Indians fight for a man they know, and at one time or another Willcocks must have had under him nearly every Indian unit, for he had the Secunderabad command for a long time. He is no Napoleon, but I feel he would do this job.

Willcocks has not the slightest notion that I am writing to you or to anybody

55



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000011



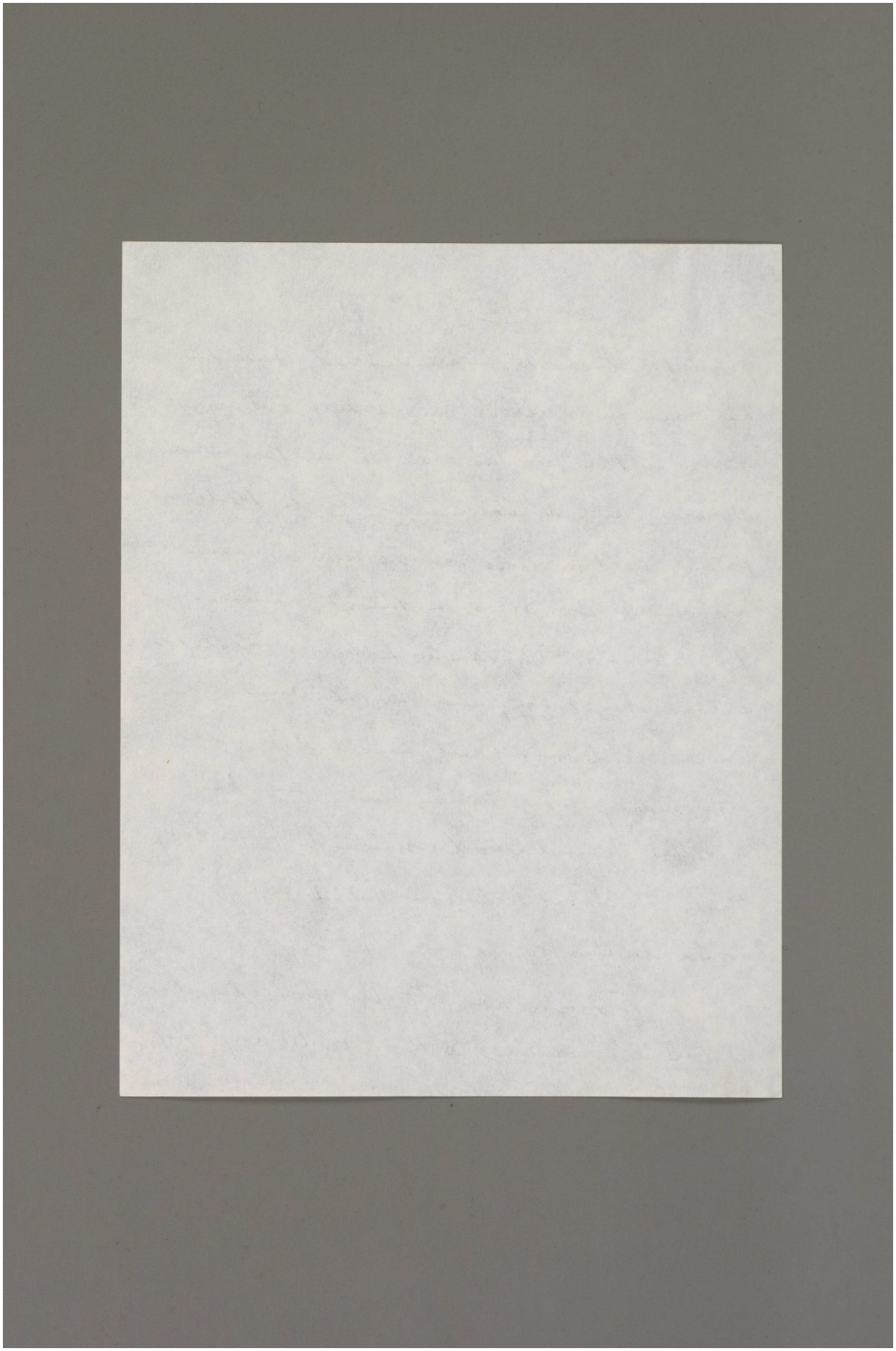
(54)

13

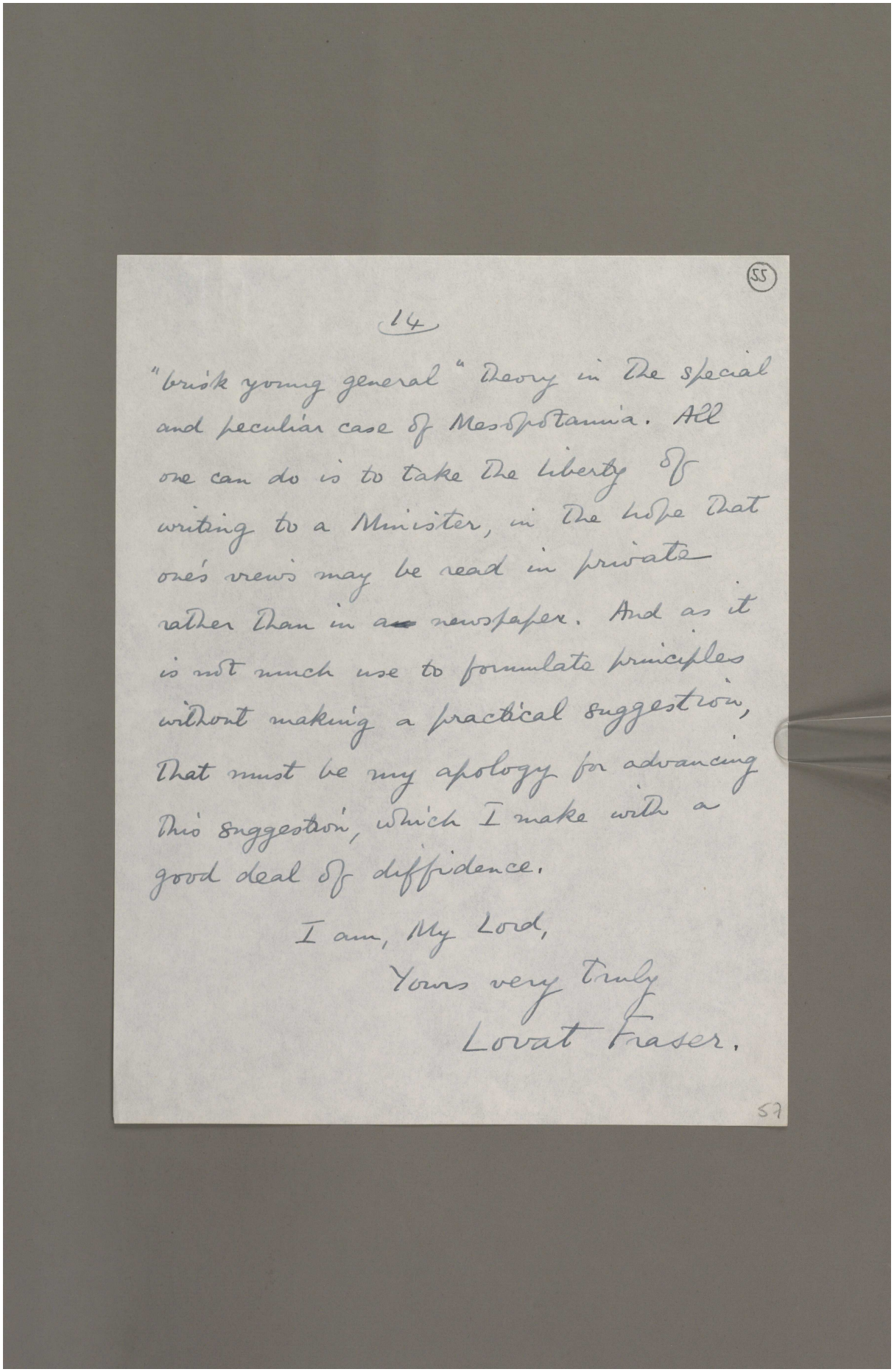
on this matter, nor does he know that I am putting forward this suggestion.

I should not presume to write to you at all on this subject, least of all on a matter so entirely outside my province as the choice of a commander, were it not that men in my position, who know something of this Mesopotamian problem, are just now in a difficulty. I have freely criticised the Govt. about past aspects of the Mesopotamian question. I cannot go on criticising them, because that would erroneously lead the public to suppose that they are not now doing all they can. I see great risks about the

56



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000055



(55)

14

"brisk young general" theory in the special and peculiar case of Mesopotamia. All one can do is to take the liberty of writing to a Minister, in the hope that one's views may be read in private rather than in a newspaper. And as it is not much use to formulate principles without making a practical suggestion, that must be my apology for advancing this suggestion, which I make with a good deal of diffidence.

I am, My Lord,

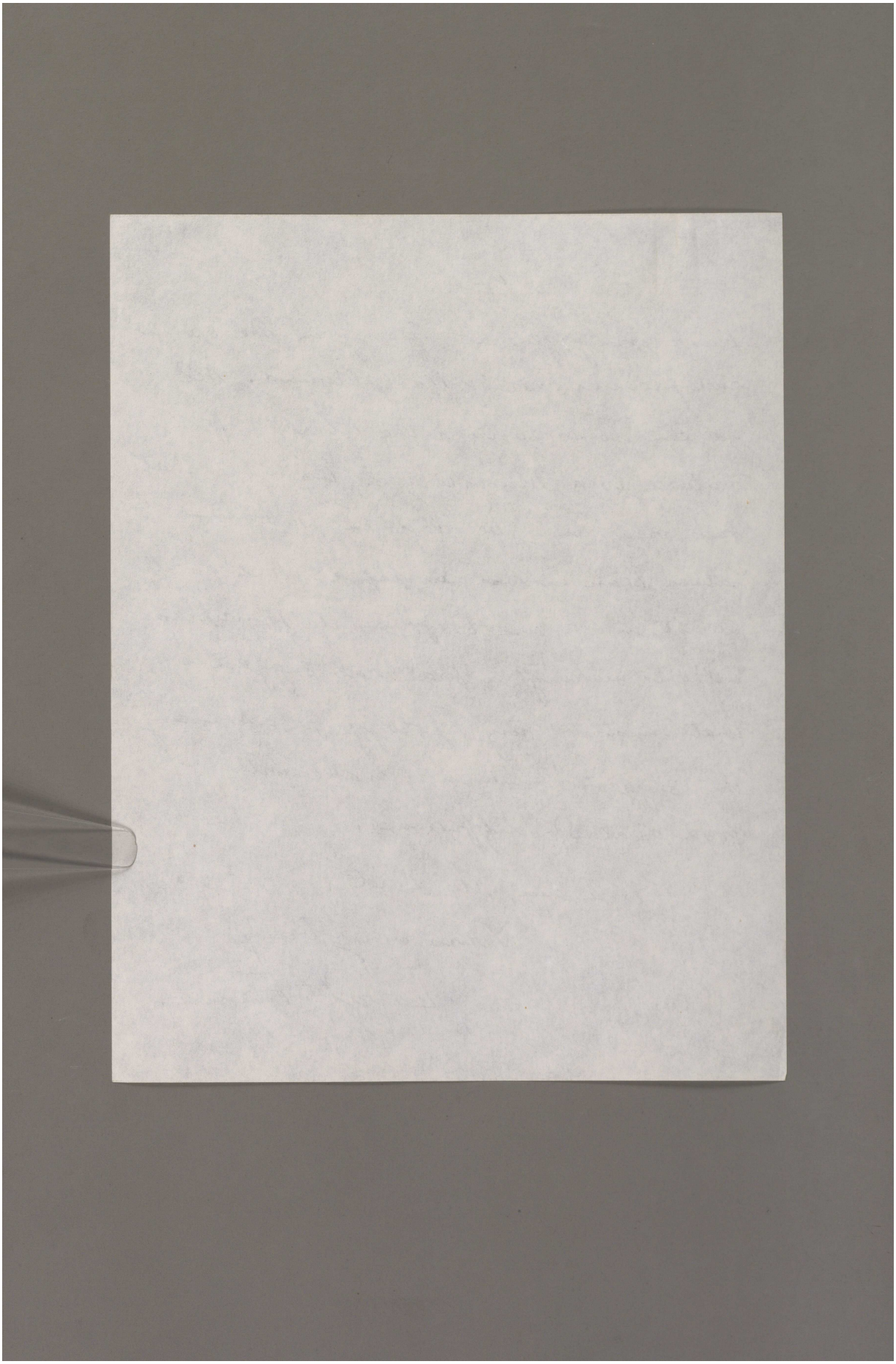
Yours very truly

Lovat Fraser.

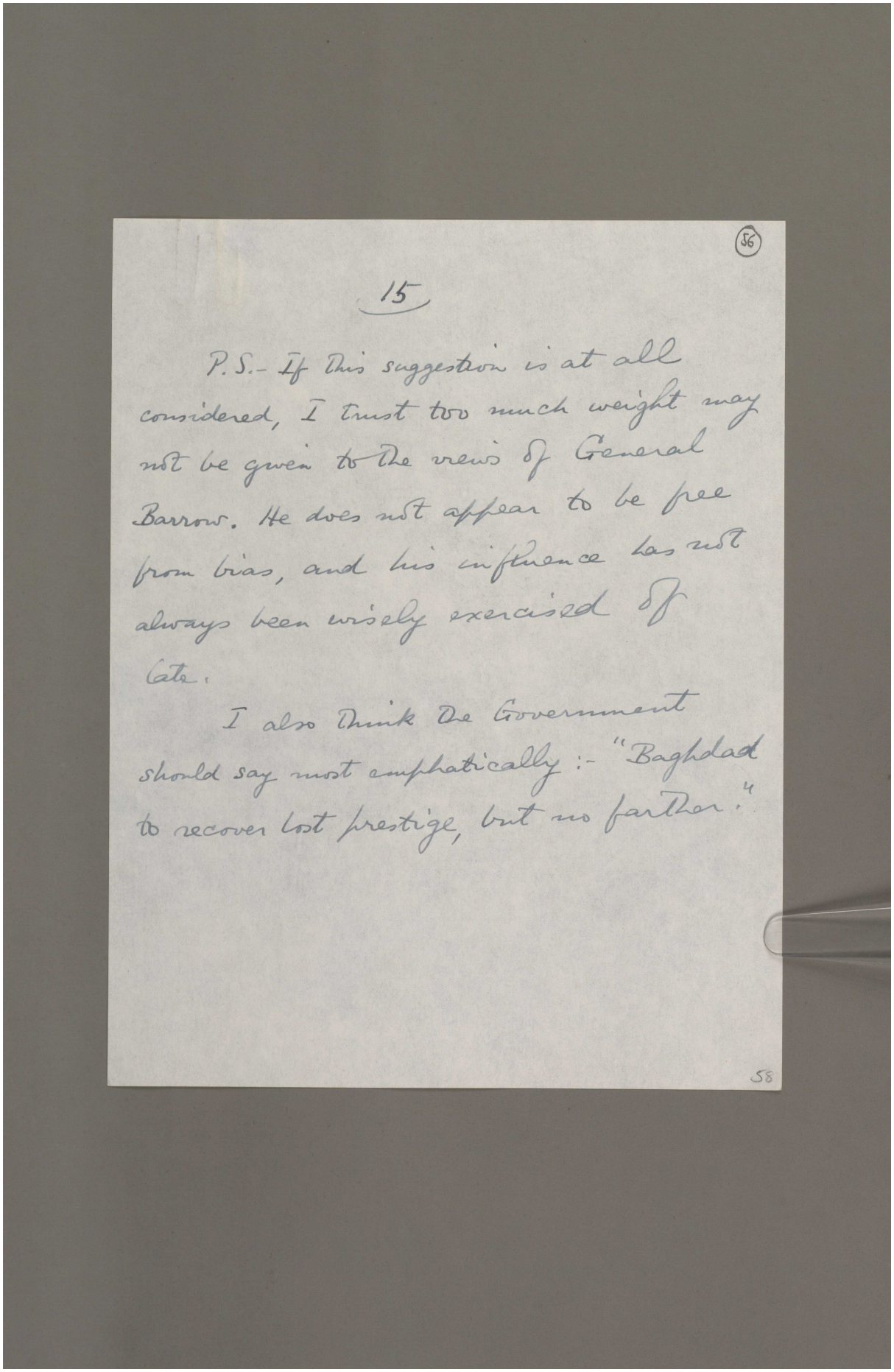
57

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000099



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000006



(56)

15

P.S.- If this suggestion is at all considered, I trust too much weight may not be given to the views of General Barrow. He does not appear to be free from bias, and his influence has not always been wisely exercised of late.

I also think the Government should say most emphatically :- "Baghdad to recover lost prestige, but no farther."

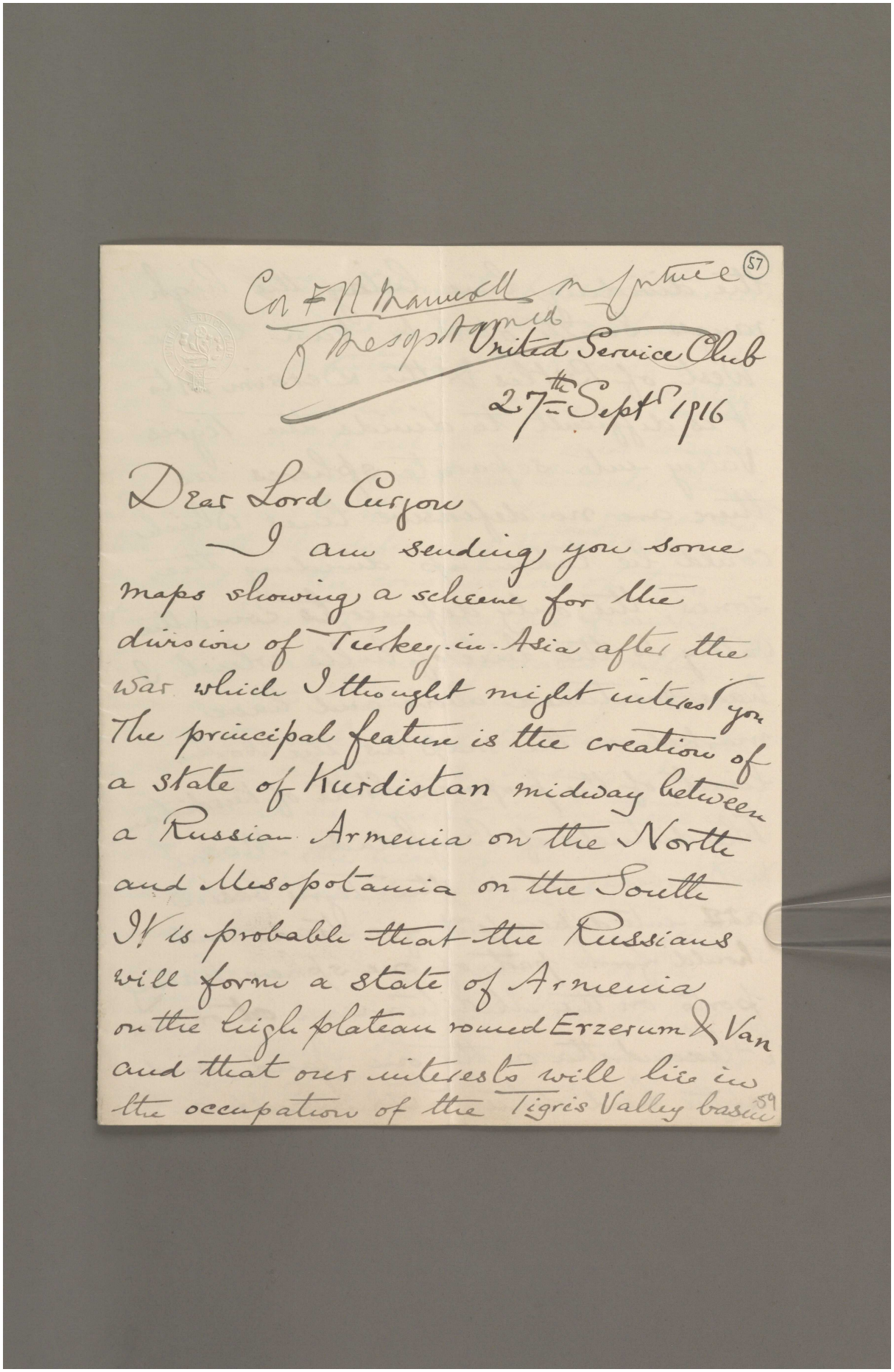
58

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000088



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000bc



(57)

Col F N Maunsell on Service of Mesopotamia

United Service Club

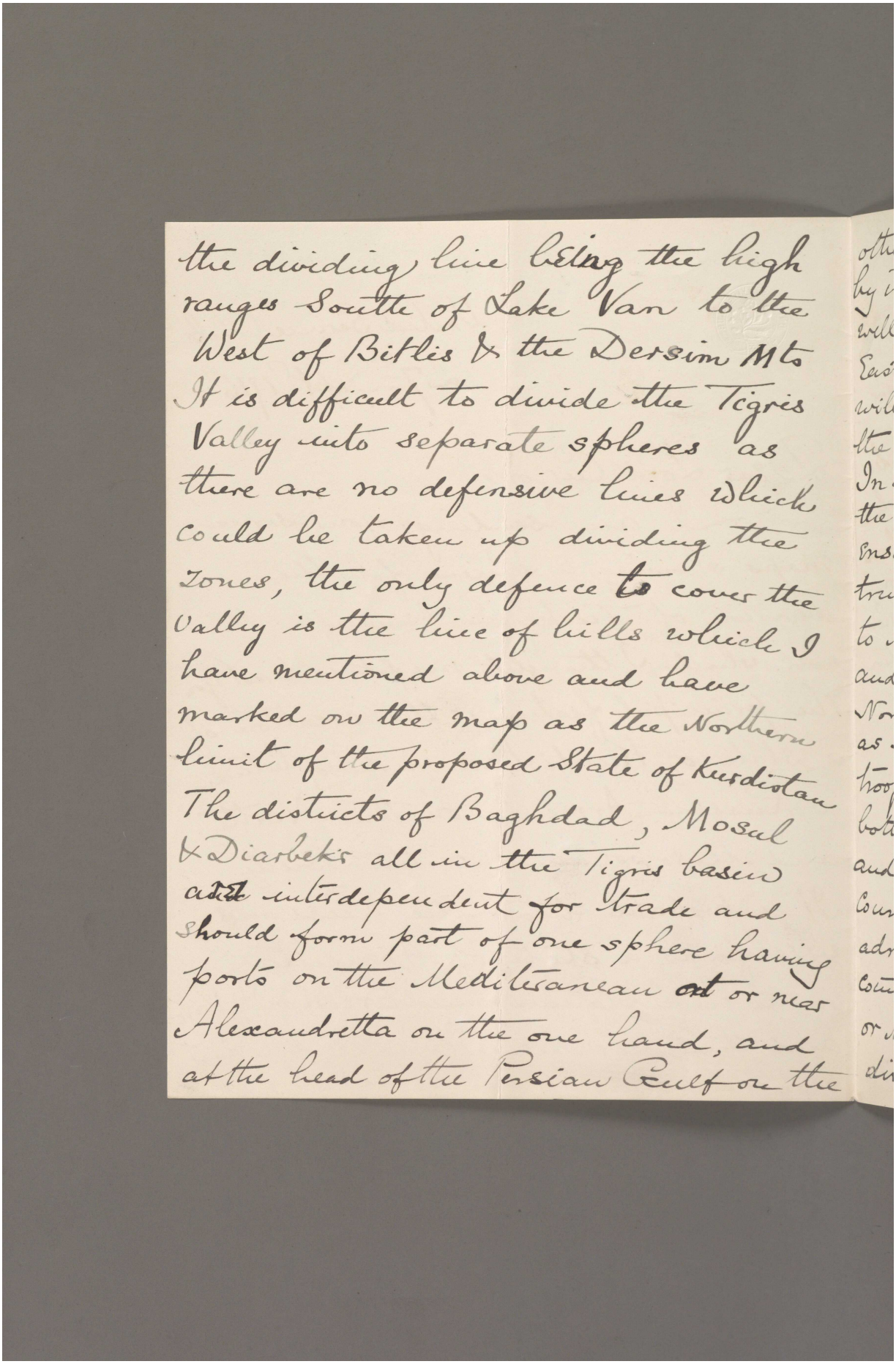
27th Sept 1916

Dear Lord Curzon

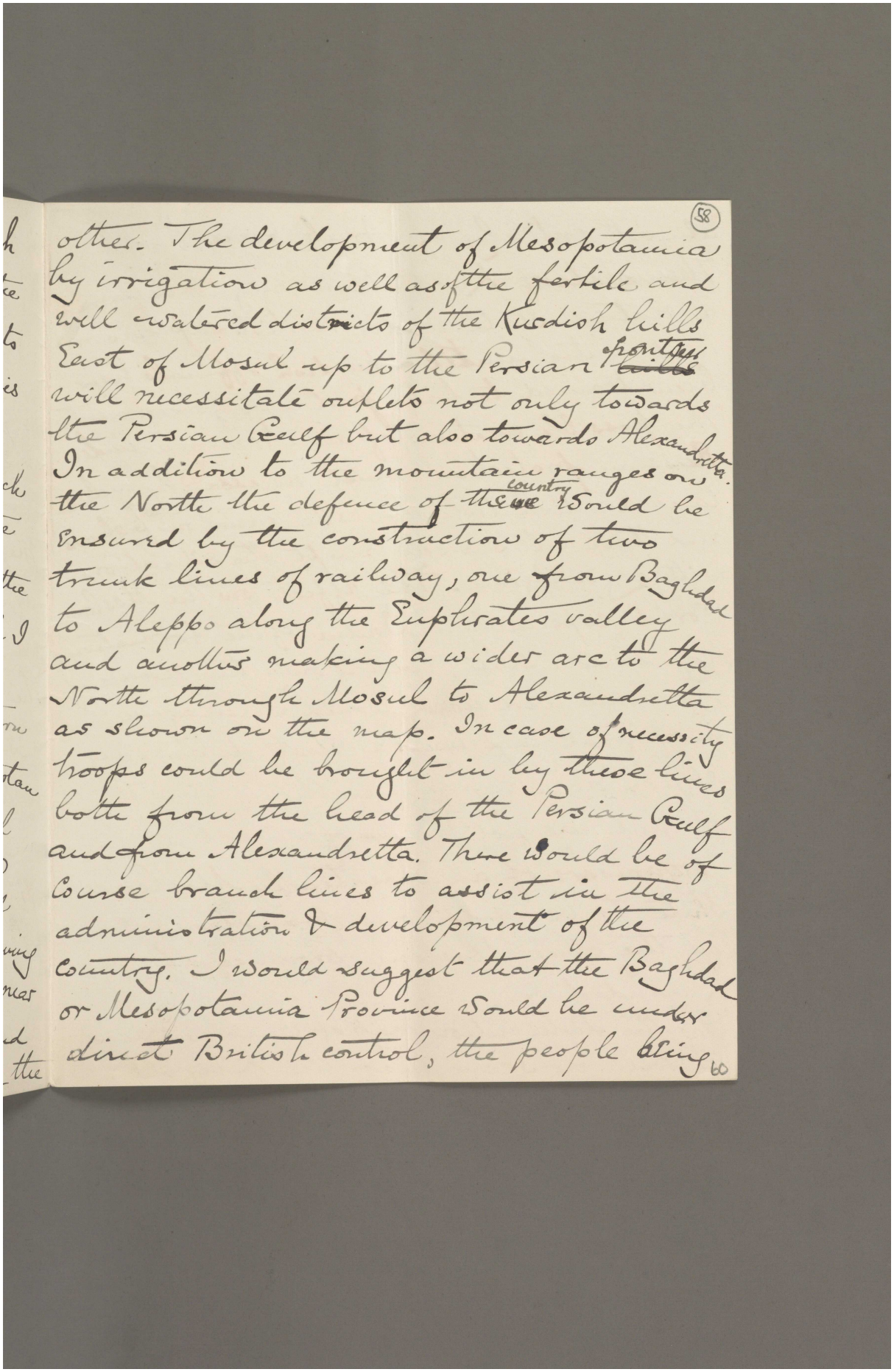
I am sending you some maps showing a scheme for the division of Turkey in Asia after the war which I thought might interest you. The principal feature is the creation of a state of Kurdistan midway between a Russian Armenia on the North and Mesopotamia on the South. It is probable that the Russians will form a state of Armenia on the high plateau round Erzerum & Van and that our interests will lie in the occupation of the Tigris Valley basin

59

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00003c



the dividing line being the high ranges South of Lake Van to the West of Bitlis & the Dersim Mts It is difficult to divide the Tigris Valley into separate spheres as there are no defensive lines which could be taken up dividing the zones, the only defence to cover the Valley is the line of hills which I have mentioned above and have marked on the map as the Northern limit of the proposed State of Kurdistan The districts of Baghdad, Mosul & Diarbekir all in the Tigris basin are interdependent for trade and should form part of one sphere having ports on the Mediterranean at or near Alexandretta on the one hand, and at the head of the Persian Gulf on the

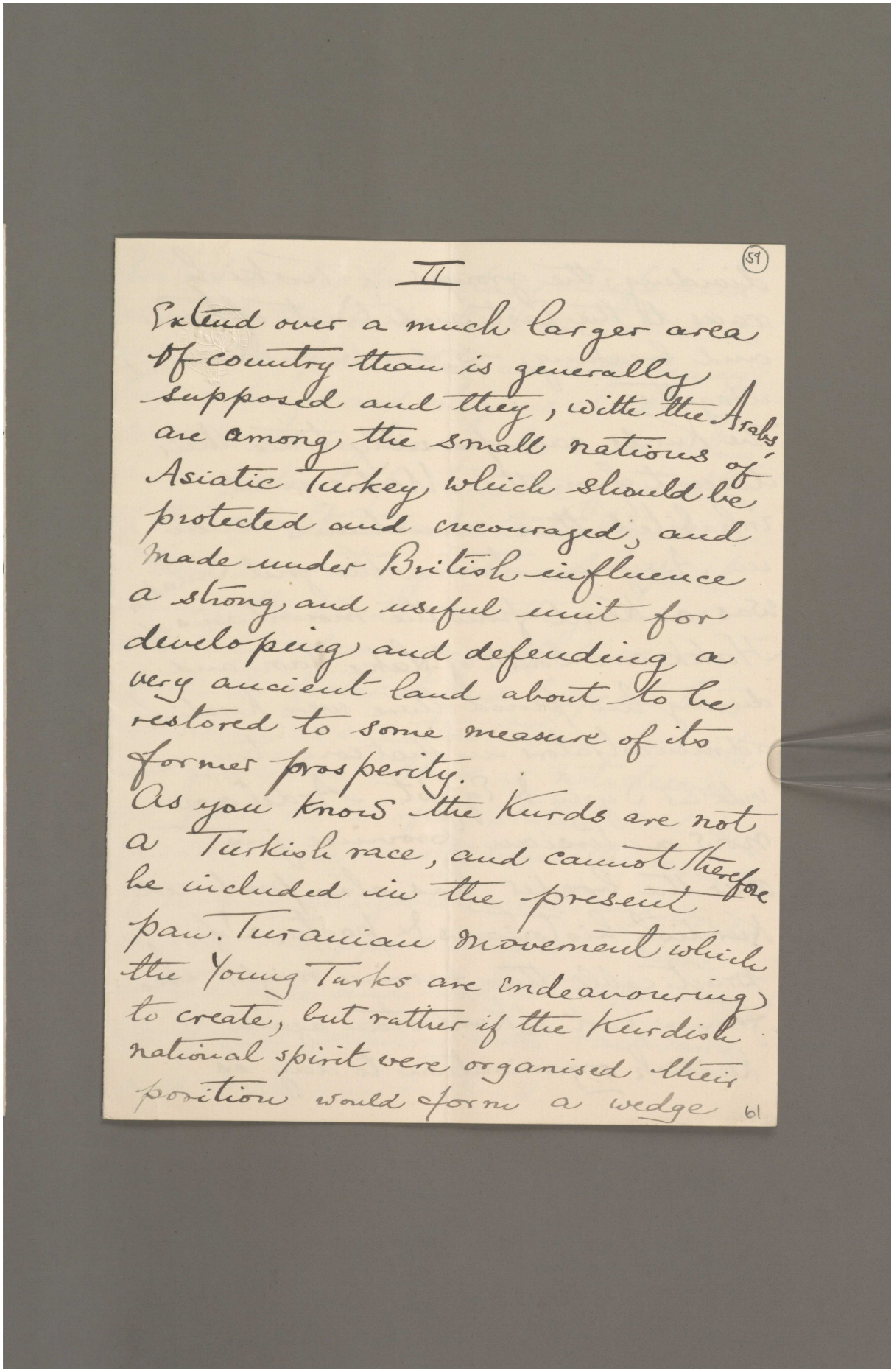


(58)

others. The development of Mesopotamia by irrigation as well as of the fertile and well watered districts of the Kurdish hills East of Mosul up to the Persian frontier will necessitate outlets not only towards the Persian Gulf but also towards Alexandretta. In addition to the mountain ranges on the North the defence of this country would be ensured by the construction of two trunk lines of railway, one from Baghdad to Aleppo along the Euphrates valley and another making a wider arc to the North through Mosul to Alexandretta as shown on the map. In case of necessity troops could be brought in by these lines both from the head of the Persian Gulf and from Alexandretta. There would be of course branch lines to assist in the administration & development of the country. I would suggest that the Baghdad or Mesopotamia Province would be under direct British control, the people being

60

almost entirely of Arab race here.
The State of Kurdistan might be termed
a native State under British supervision
and control until Kurdish officials have
been trained to take part in its government.
The possible creation of an Armenia under
Russian protection must necessarily include
large Kurdish districts (as the racial map shows)
and these will scarcely accept the situation
with a good grace. The effect on the Moslem
world especially in India of the formation
of such a State, even if only the name of
Armenia were used, would I imagine, be
very great and have a most depressing
effect on Islam generally. Why then
should we not come forward as the
organisers of an essentially Moslem
State to be under our protection as well
as the other Moslem province of
Baghdad.
In the distribution map of various races
it will be seen that the Kurds



II

59

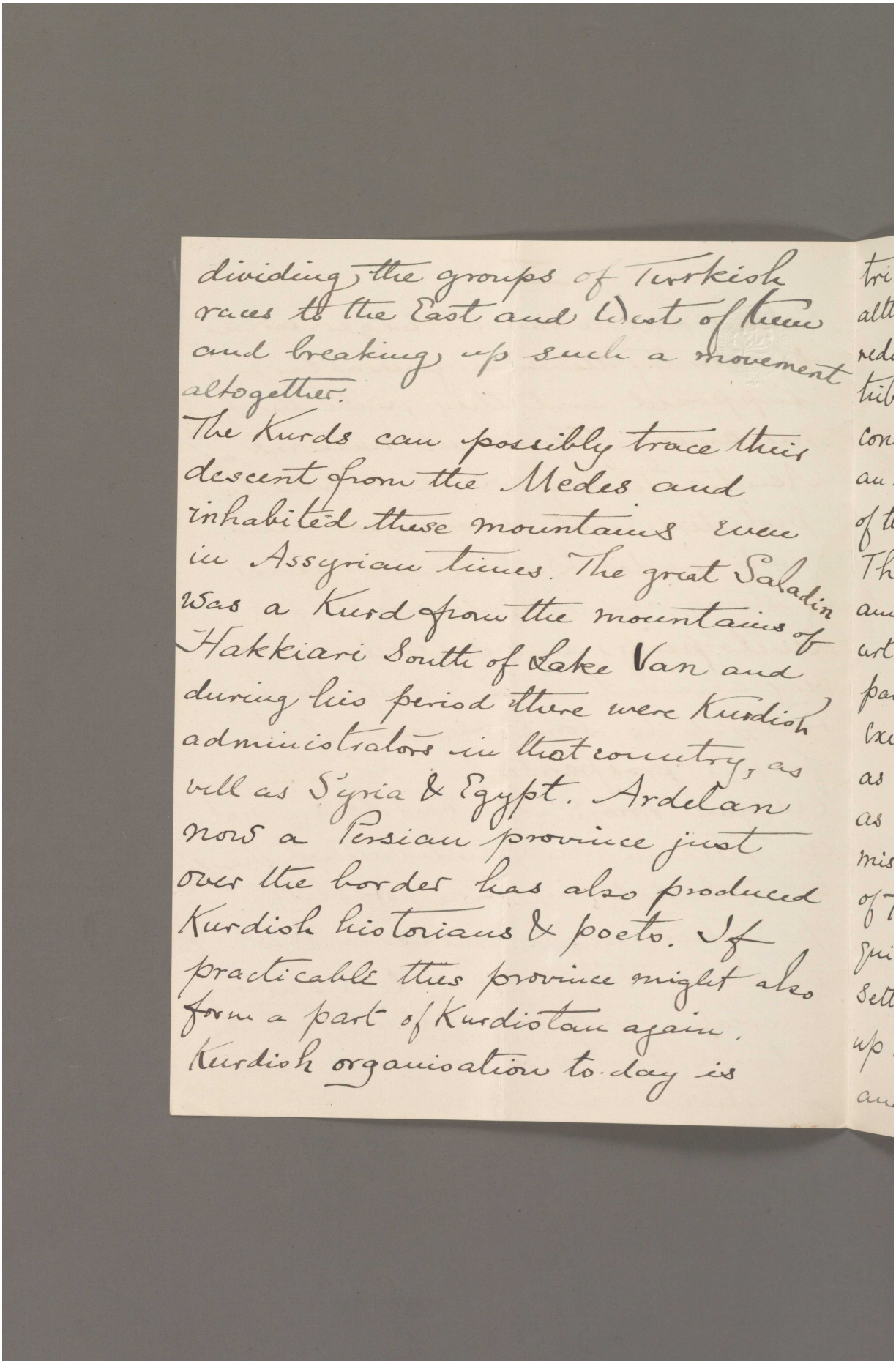
Extend over a much larger area of country than is generally supposed and they, with the Arabs are among the small nations of Asiatic Turkey which should be protected and encouraged, and made under British influence a strong and useful unit for developing and defending a very ancient land about to be restored to some measure of its former prosperity.

As you know the Kurds are not a Turkish race, and cannot therefore be included in the present pan. Turanian movement which the Young Turks are endeavouring to create, but rather if the Kurdish national spirit were organised their position would form a wedge

61

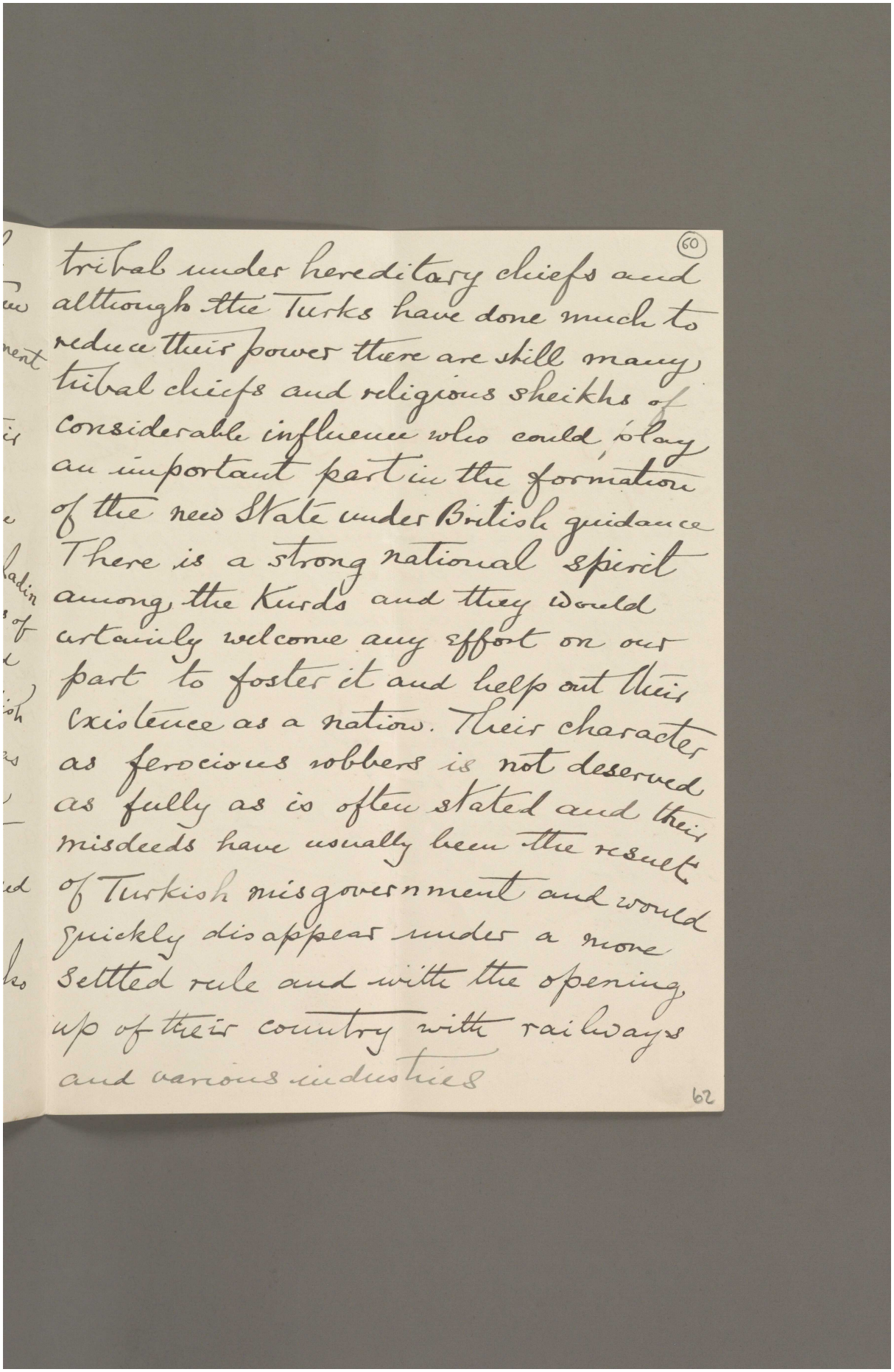
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000ac



dividing the groups of Turkish
races to the East and West of them
and breaking up such a movement
altogether.
The Kurds can possibly trace their
descent from the Medes and
inhabited these mountains even
in Assyrian times. The great Saladin
was a Kurd from the mountains of
Hakkiari South of Lake Van and
during his period there were Kurdish
administrators in that country, as
well as Syria & Egypt. Ardelan
now a Persian province just
over the border has also produced
Kurdish historians & poets. If
practicable this province might also
form a part of Kurdistan again.
Kurdish organisation to-day is

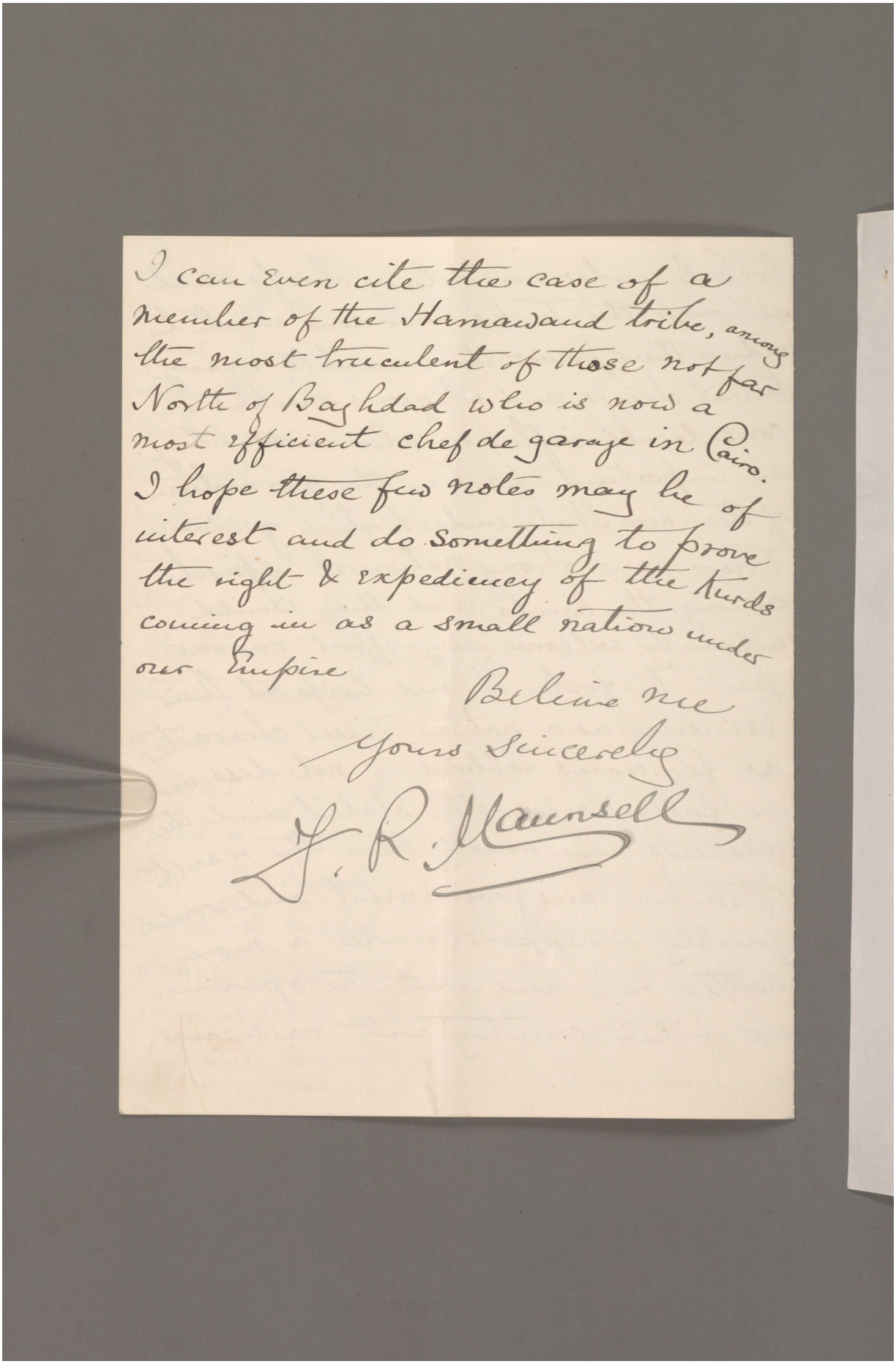
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00002a



(60)

tribal under hereditary chiefs and although the Turks have done much to reduce their power there are still many tribal chiefs and religious sheikhs of considerable influence who could play an important part in the formation of the new State under British guidance There is a strong national spirit among the Kurds and they would certainly welcome any effort on our part to foster it and help out their existence as a nation. Their character as ferocious robbers is not deserved as fully as is often stated and their misdeeds have usually been the result of Turkish misgovernment and would quickly disappear under a more settled rule and with the opening up of their country with railways and various industries

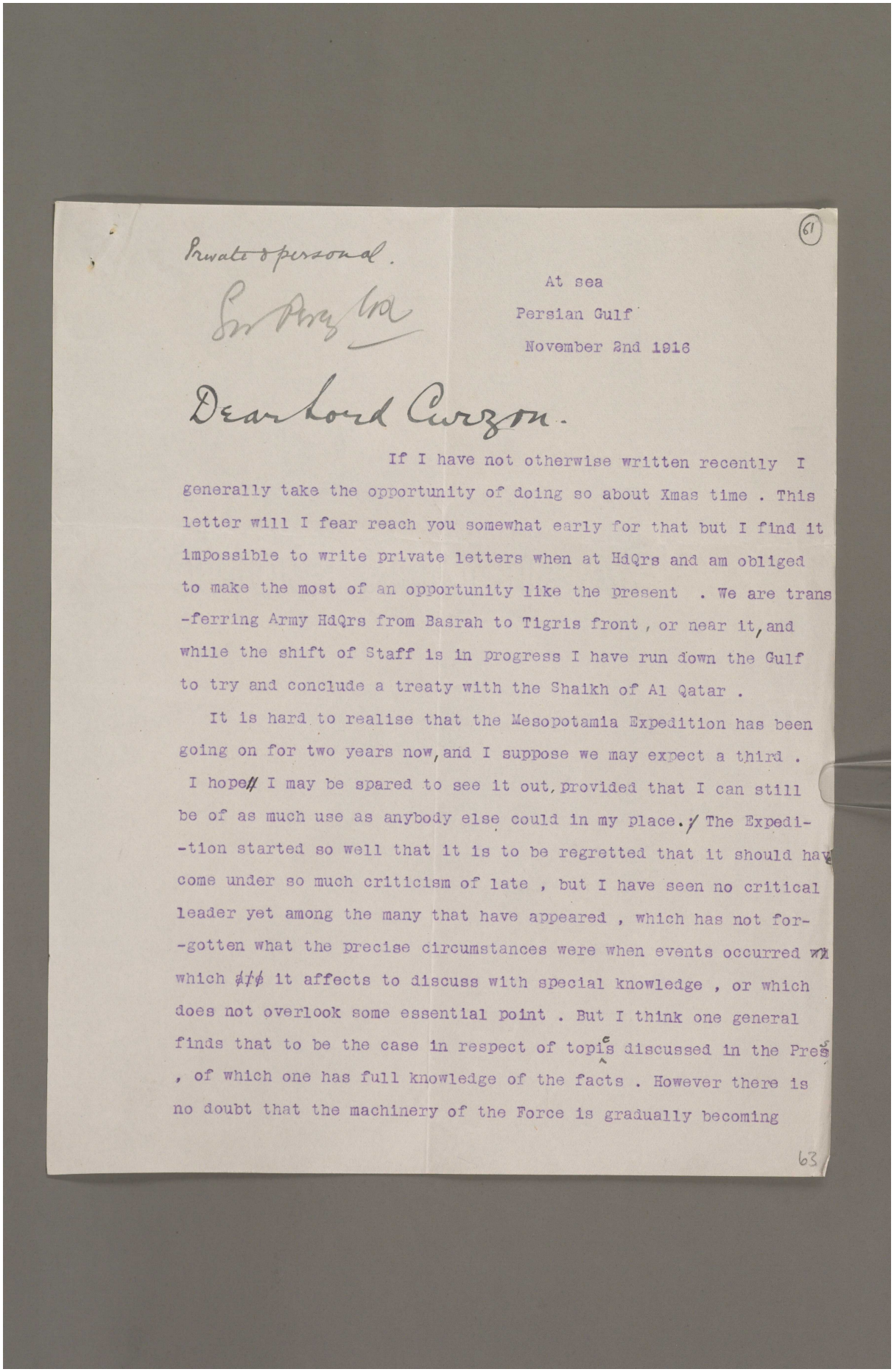
62



I can even cite the case of a member of the Hamawand tribe, among the most truculent of those not far North of Baghdad who is now a most efficient chef de garage in Cairo.
I hope these few notes may be of interest and do something to prove the right & expediency of the Kurds coming in as a small nation under our Empire

Believe me
Yours Sincerely
L. R. Maunsell

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Unknown
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000036



(61)

Private & personal.

Sir Percy Cox

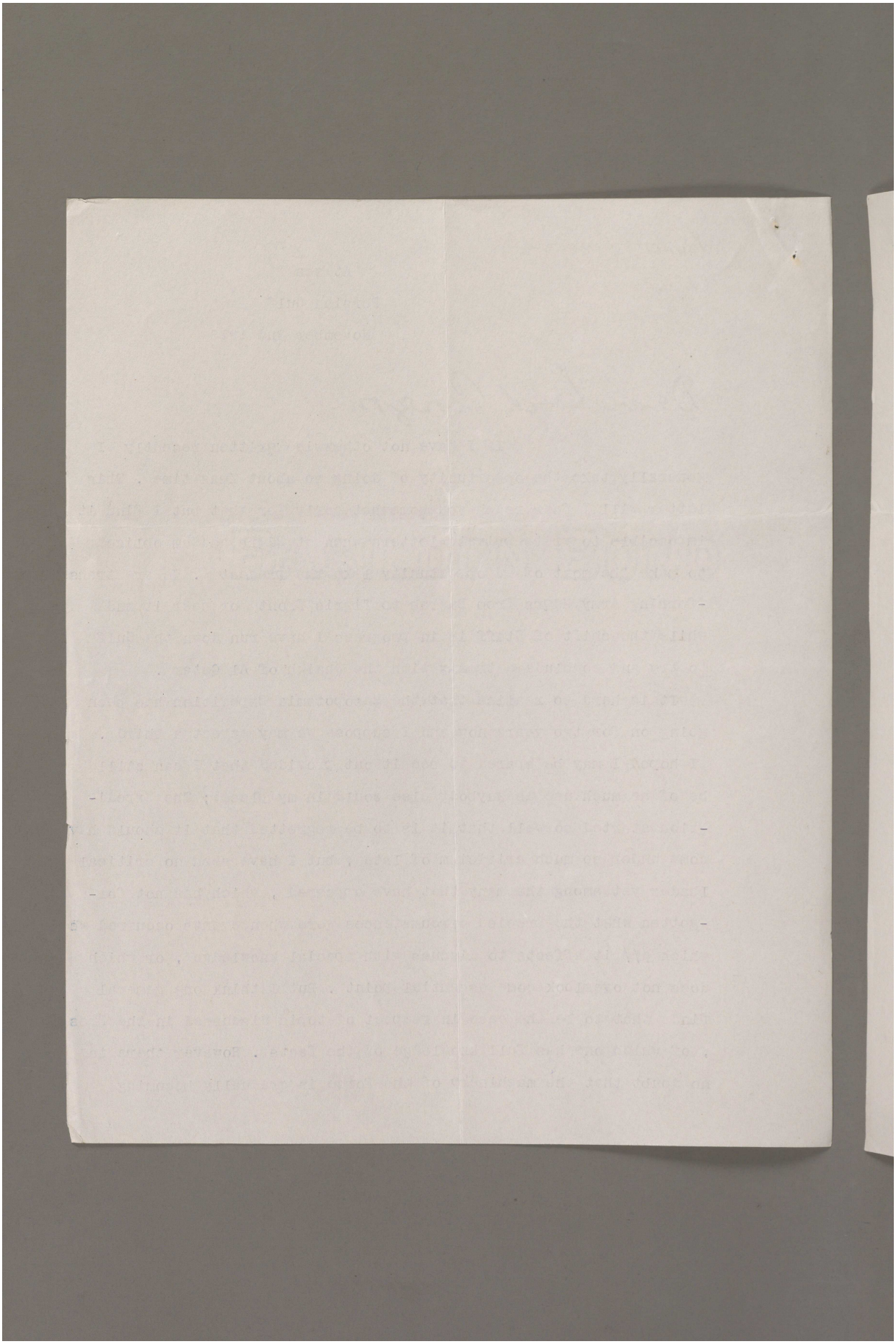
At sea
Persian Gulf
November 2nd 1916

Dear Lord Curzon.

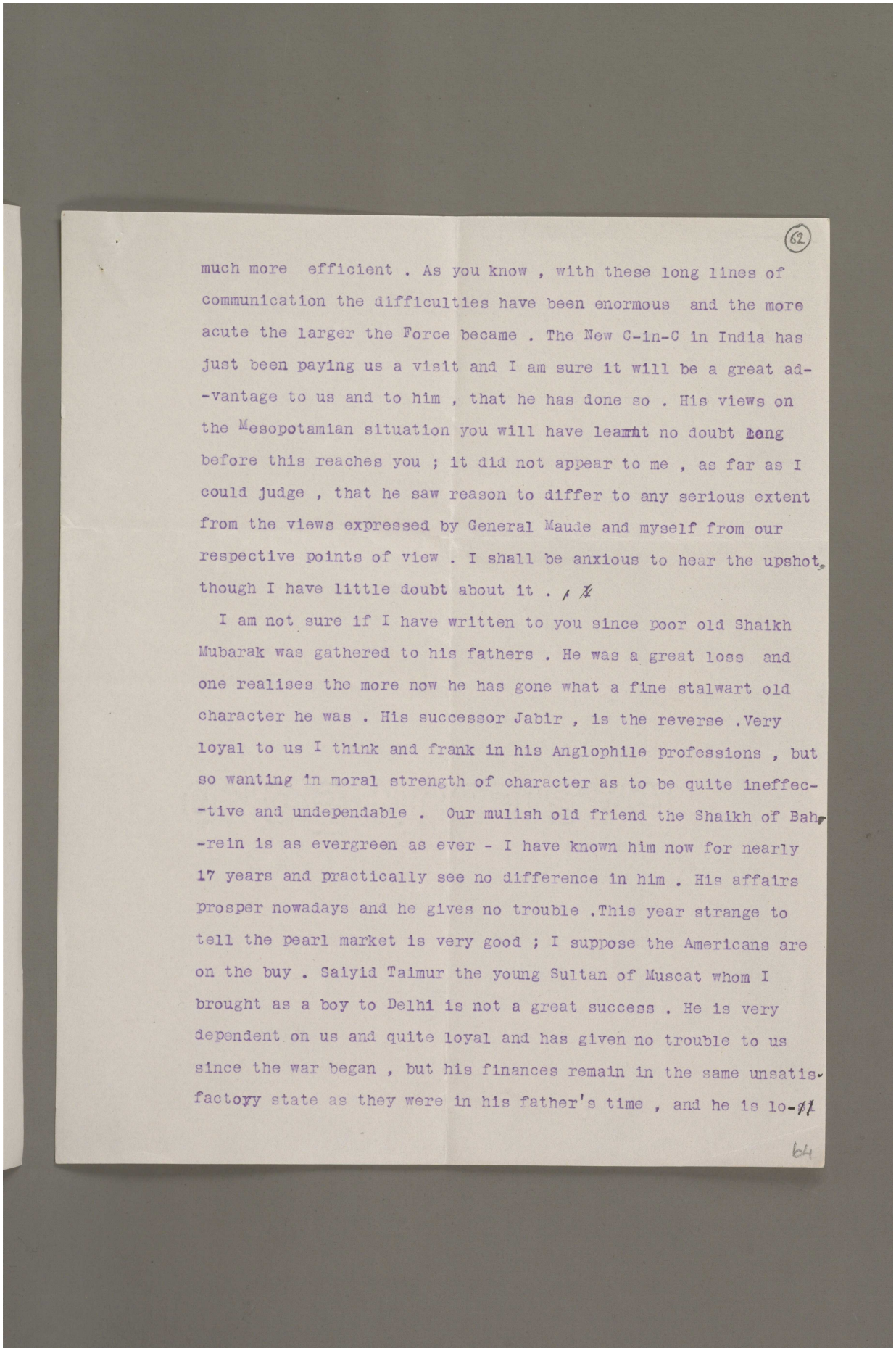
If I have not otherwise written recently I generally take the opportunity of doing so about Xmas time . This letter will I fear reach you somewhat early for that but I find it impossible to write private letters when at HdQrs and am obliged to make the most of an opportunity like the present . We are trans-ferring Army HdQrs from Basrah to Tigris front , or near it, and while the shift of Staff is in progress I have run down the Gulf to try and conclude a treaty with the Shaikh of Al Qatar .

It is hard to realise that the Mesopotamia Expedition has been going on for two years now, and I suppose we may expect a third . I hope I may be spared to see it out, provided that I can still be of as much use as anybody else could in my place. The Expedi-tion started so well that it is to be regretted that it should have come under so much criticism of late , but I have seen no critical leader yet among the many that have appeared , which has not for-gotten what the precise circumstances were when events occurred which it affects to discuss with special knowledge , or which does not overlook some essential point . But I think one general finds that to be the case in respect of topics discussed in the Press , of which one has full knowledge of the facts . However there is no doubt that the machinery of the Force is gradually becoming

63



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00007d



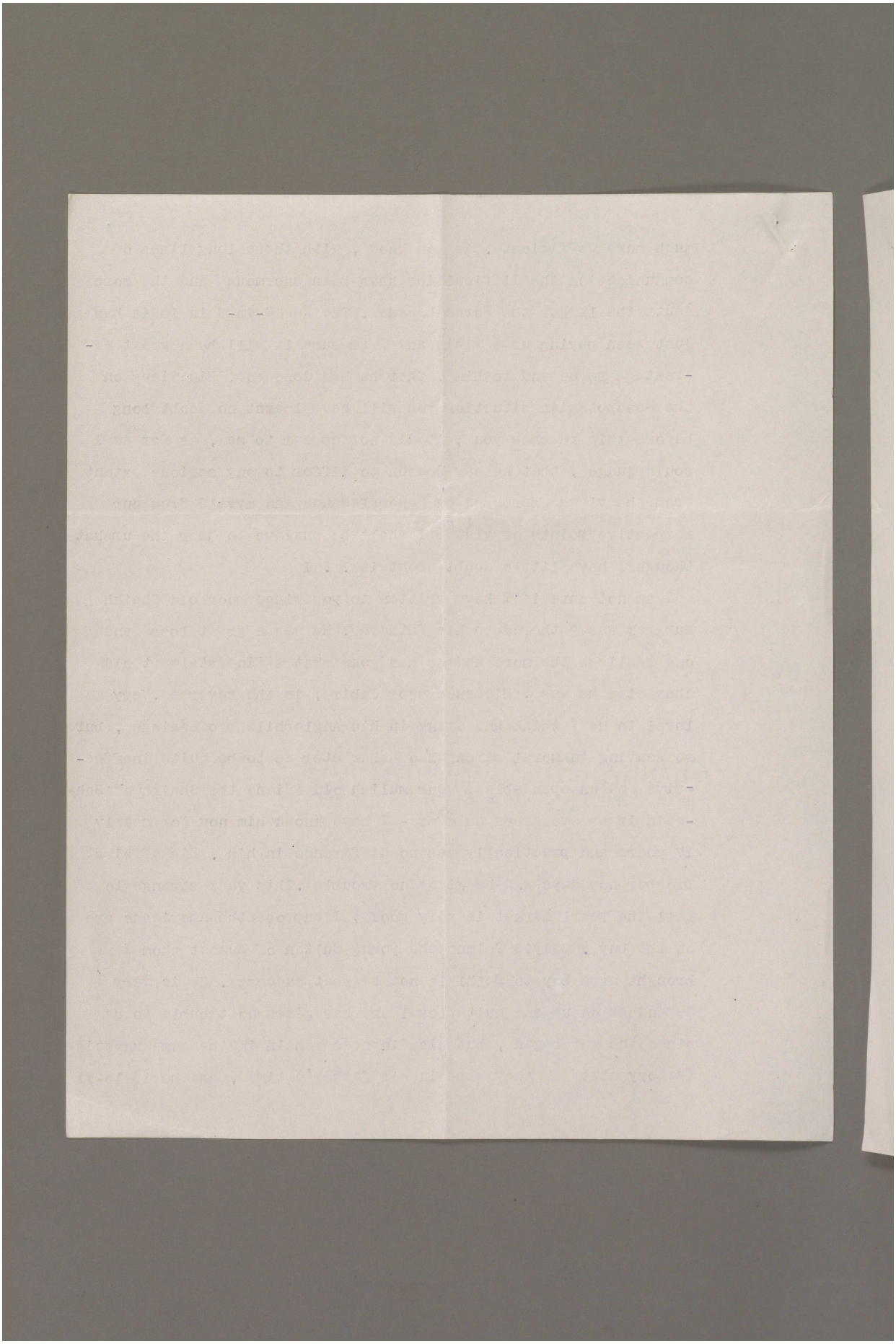
(62)

much more efficient . As you know , with these long lines of communication the difficulties have been enormous and the more acute the larger the Force became . The New C-in-C in India has just been paying us a visit and I am sure it will be a great ad--vantage to us and to him , that he has done so . His views on the Mesopotamian situation you will have learnt no doubt long before this reaches you ; it did not appear to me , as far as I could judge , that he saw reason to differ to any serious extent from the views expressed by General Maude and myself from our respective points of view . I shall be anxious to hear the upshot, though I have little doubt about it .

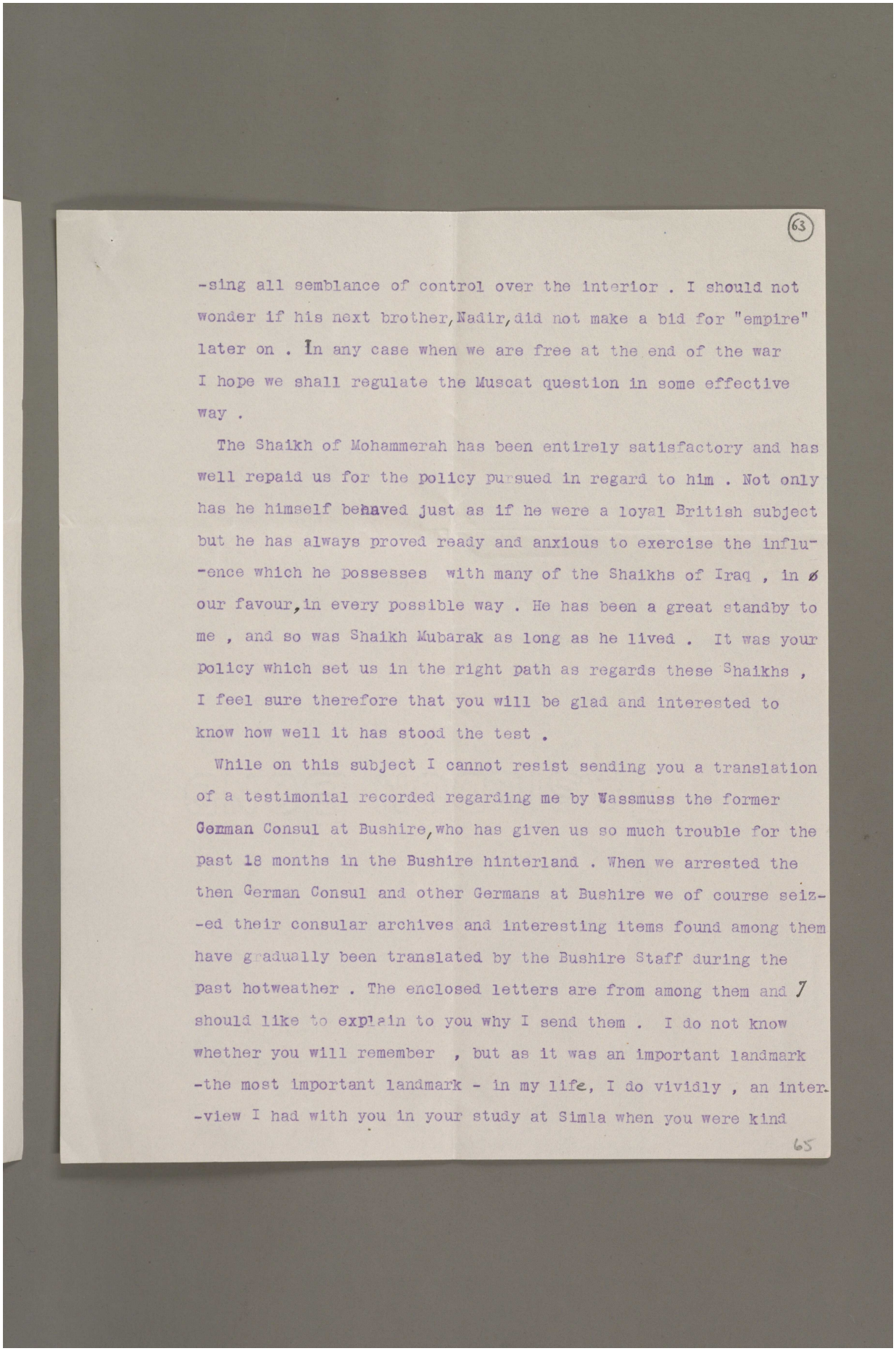
I am not sure if I have written to you since poor old Shaikh Mubarak was gathered to his fathers . He was a great loss and one realises the more now he has gone what a fine stalwart old character he was . His successor Jabir , is the reverse .Very loyal to us I think and frank in his Anglophile professions , but so wanting in moral strength of character as to be quite ineffec--tive and undependable . Our mulish old friend the Shaikh of Bah--rein is as evergreen as ever - I have known him now for nearly 17 years and practically see no difference in him . His affairs prosper nowadays and he gives no trouble .This year strange to tell the pearl market is very good ; I suppose the Americans are on the buy . Saiyid Taimur the young Sultan of Muscat whom I brought as a boy to Delhi is not a great success . He is very dependent on us and quite loyal and has given no trouble to us since the war began , but his finances remain in the same unsatis-factoyy state as they were in his father's time , and he is lo--

64

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00008c



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b7



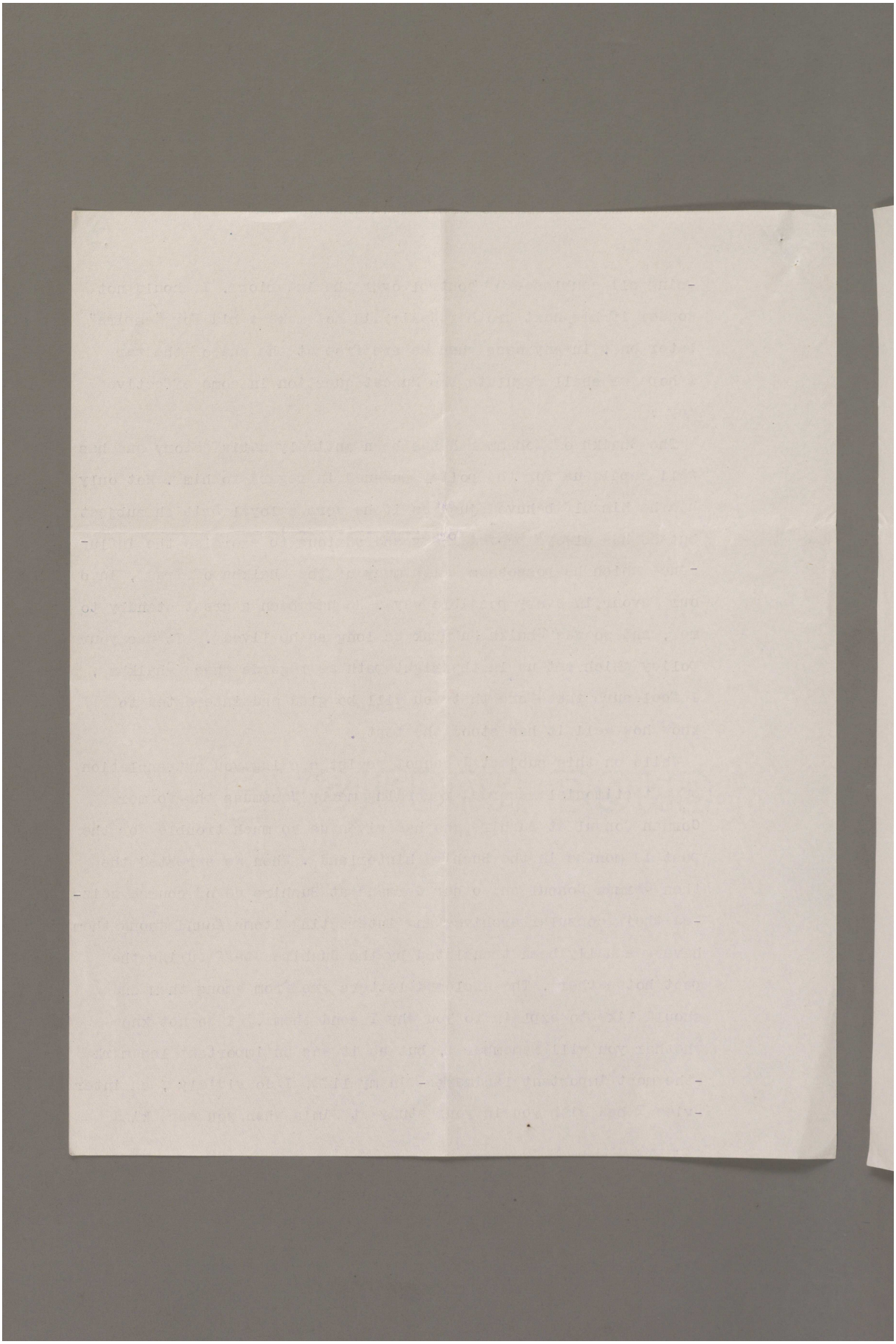
(63)

-sing all semblance of control over the interior . I should not wonder if his next brother, Nadir, did not make a bid for "empire" later on . In any case when we are free at the end of the war I hope we shall regulate the Muscat question in some effective way .

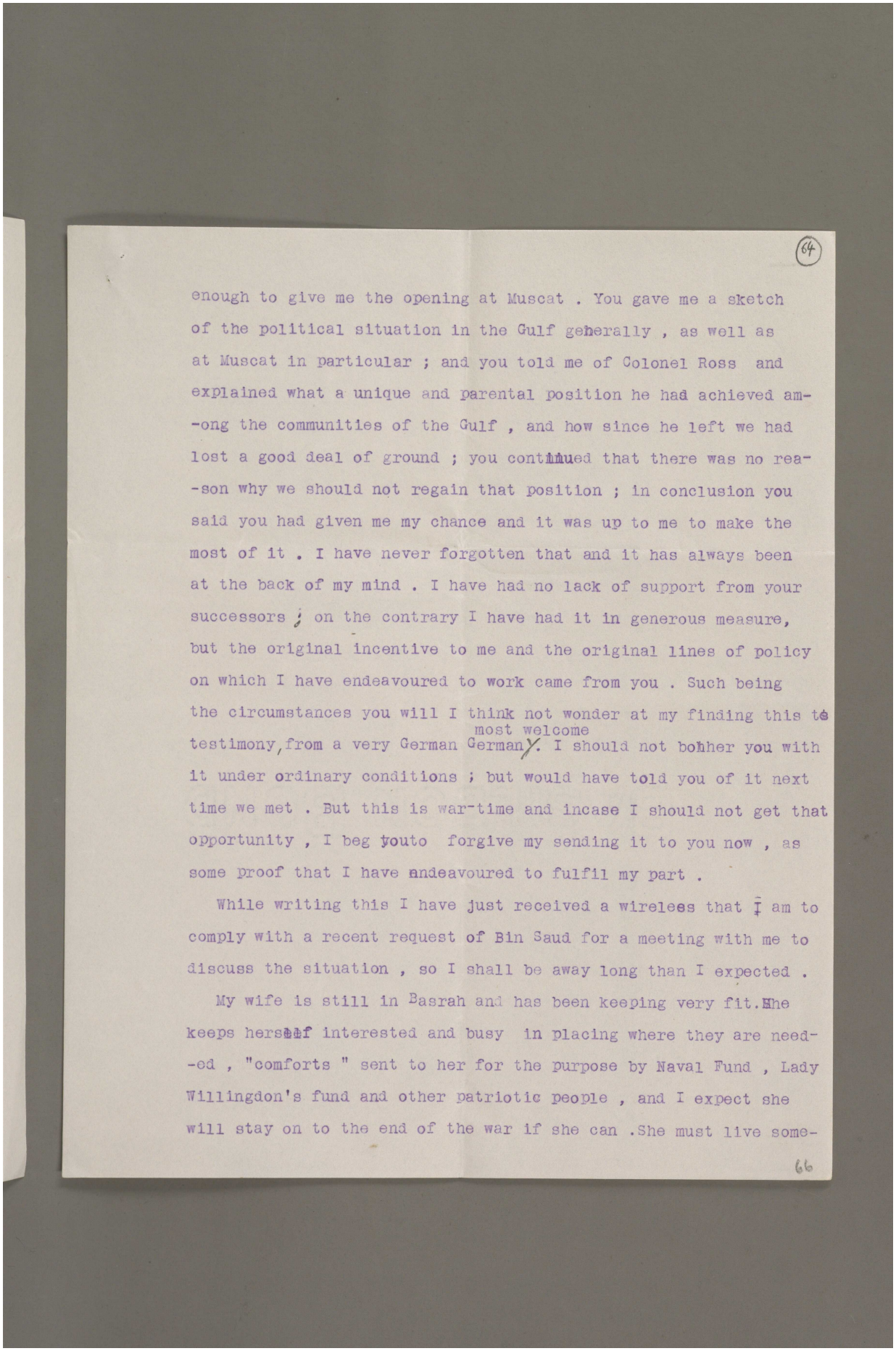
The Shaikh of Mohammerah has been entirely satisfactory and has well repaid us for the policy pursued in regard to him . Not only has he himself behaved just as if he were a loyal British subject but he has always proved ready and anxious to exercise the influ-ence which he possesses with many of the Shaikhs of Iraq , in our favour, in every possible way . He has been a great standby to me , and so was Shaikh Mubarak as long as he lived . It was your policy which set us in the right path as regards these Shaikhs , I feel sure therefore that you will be glad and interested to know how well it has stood the test .

While on this subject I cannot resist sending you a translation of a testimonial recorded regarding me by Wassmuss the former German Consul at Bushire, who has given us so much trouble for the past 18 months in the Bushire hinterland . When we arrested the then German Consul and other Germans at Bushire we of course seiz-ed their consular archives and interesting items found among them have gradually been translated by the Bushire Staff during the past hotweather . The enclosed letters are from among them and I should like to explain to you why I send them . I do not know whether you will remember , but as it was an important landmark -the most important landmark - in my life, I do vividly , an inter-view I had with you in your study at Simla when you were kind

65



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00009e



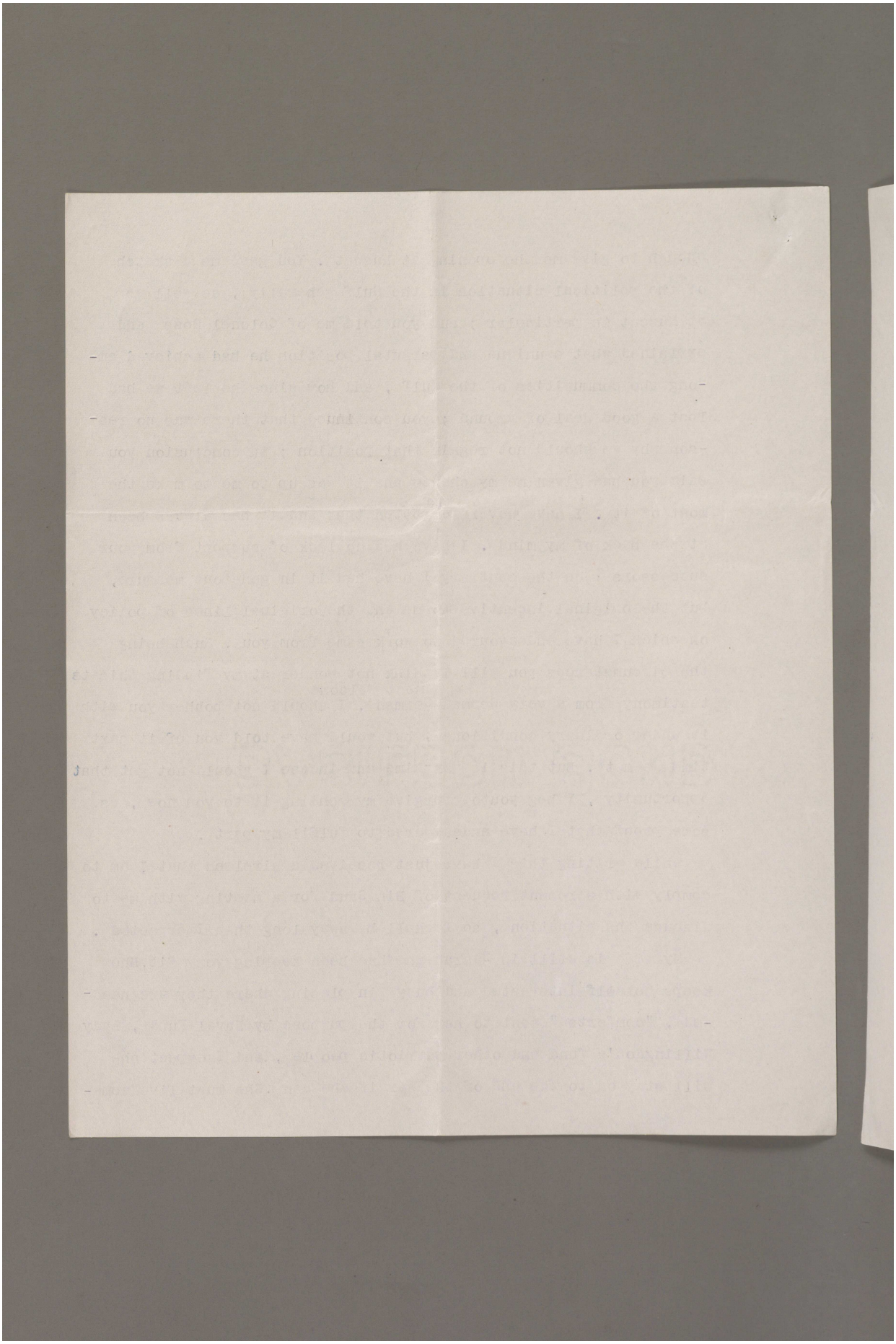
(64)

enough to give me the opening at Muscat . You gave me a sketch of the political situation in the Gulf generally , as well as at Muscat in particular ; and you told me of Colonel Ross and explained what a unique and parental position he had achieved am--ong the communities of the Gulf , and how since he left we had lost a good deal of ground ; you continued that there was no rea--son why we should not regain that position ; in conclusion you said you had given me my chance and it was up to me to make the most of it . I have never forgotten that and it has always been at the back of my mind . I have had no lack of support from your successors ; on the contrary I have had it in generous measure, but the original incentive to me and the original lines of policy on which I have endeavoured to work came from you . Such being the circumstances you will I think not wonder at my finding this to testimony, from a very German German most welcome. I should not bother you with it under ordinary conditions ; but would have told you of it next time we met . But this is war-time and incase I should not get that opportunity , I beg youto forgive my sending it to you now , as some proof that I have endeavoured to fulfil my part .

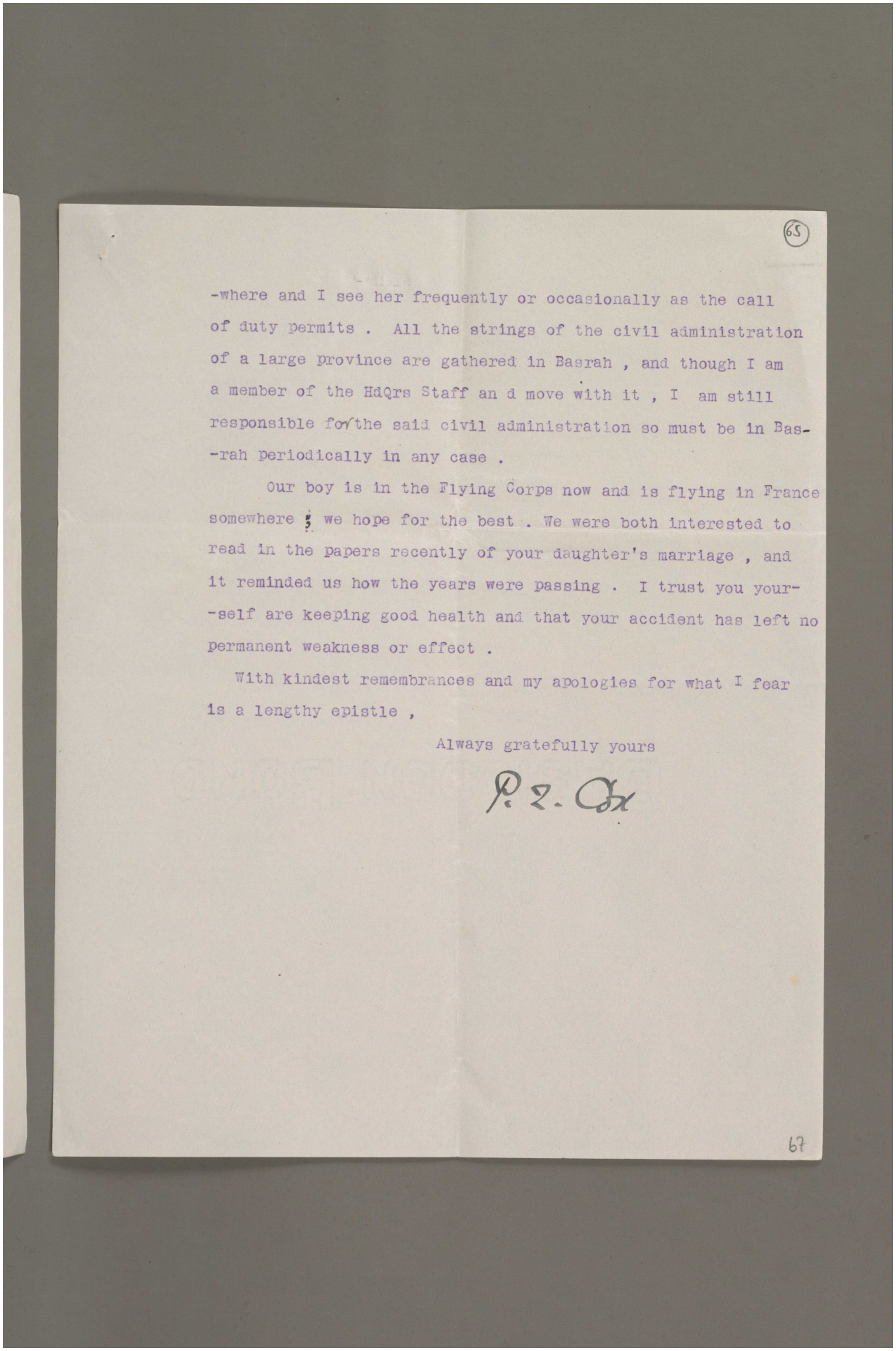
While writing this I have just received a wireless that I am to comply with a recent request of Bin Saud for a meeting with me to discuss the situation , so I shall be away long than I expected .

My wife is still in Basrah and has been keeping very fit. She keeps herself interested and busy in placing where they are need--ed , "comforts " sent to her for the purpose by Naval Fund , Lady Willingdon's fund and other patriotic people , and I expect she will stay on to the end of the war if she can .She must live some-

66



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00009f



65

-where and I see her frequently or occasionally as the call of duty permits . All the strings of the civil administration of a large province are gathered in Basrah , and though I am a member of the HdQrs Staff an d move with it , I am still responsible for the said civil administration so must be in Bas--rah periodically in any case .

Our boy is in the Flying Corps now and is flying in France somewhere ; we hope for the best . We were both interested to read in the papers recently of your daughter's marriage , and it reminded us how the years were passing . I trust you your--self are keeping good health and that your accident has left no permanent weakness or effect .

With kindest remembrances and my apologies for what I fear is a lengthy epistle ,

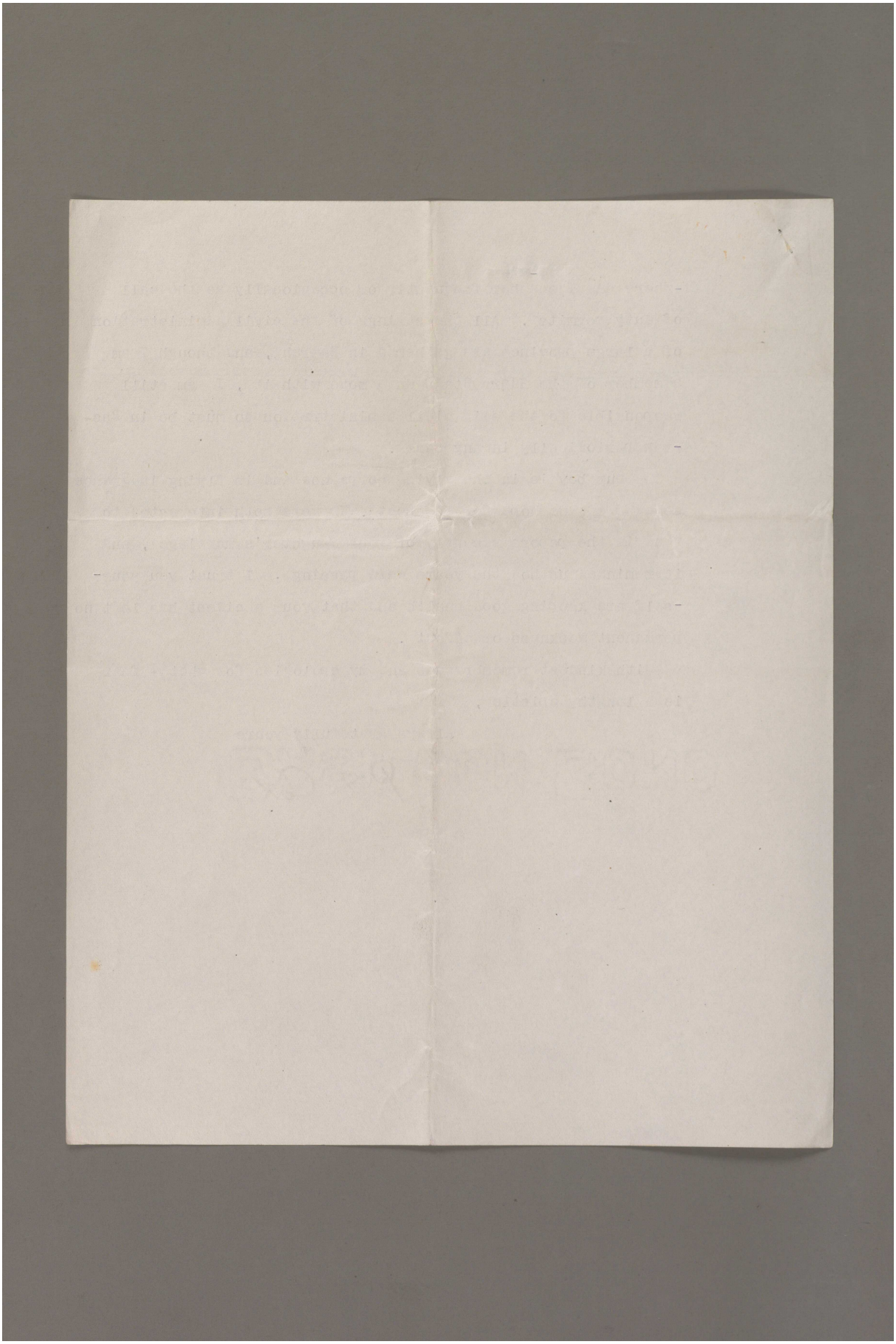
Always gratefully yours

P. Z. Cox

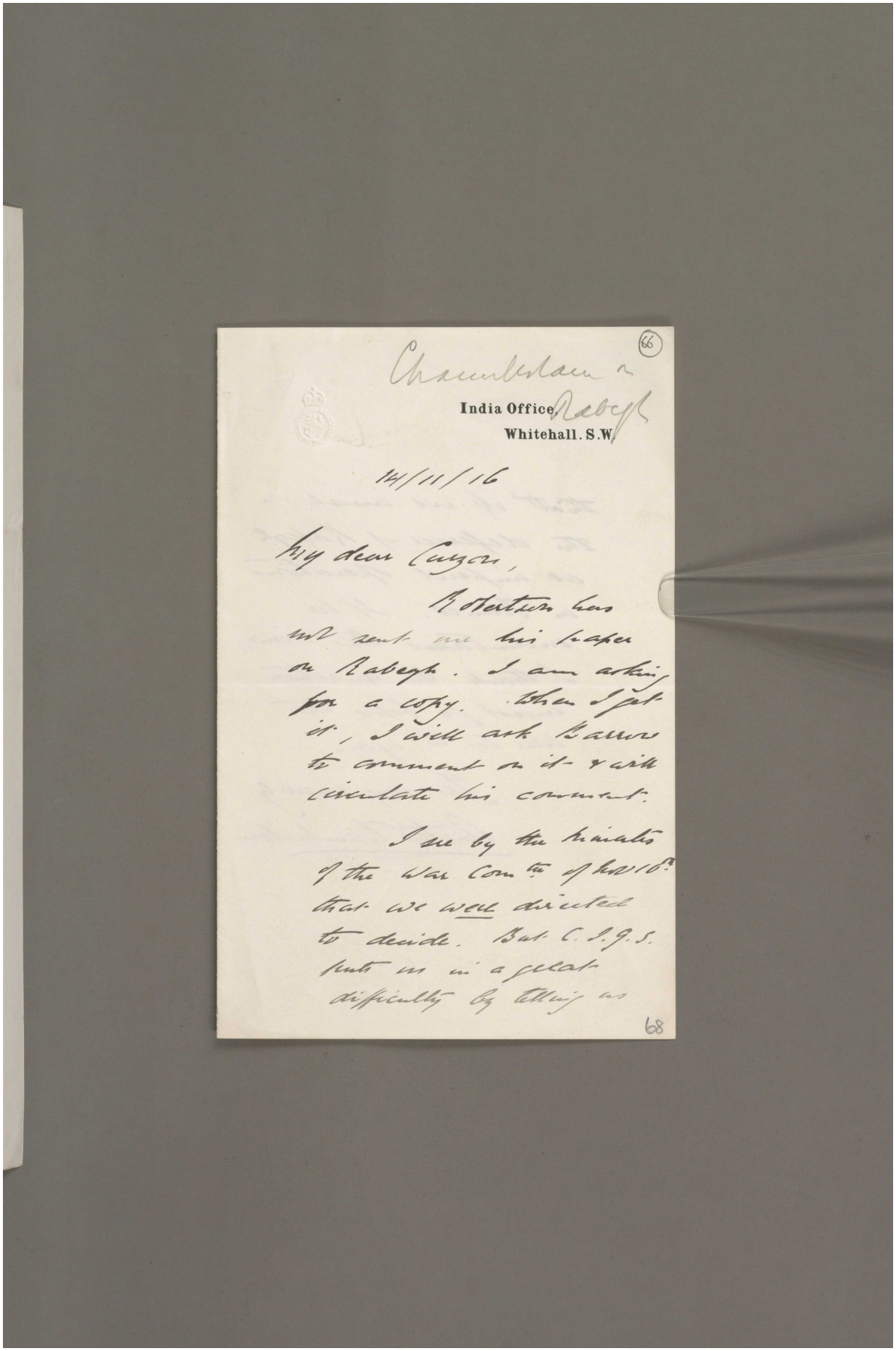
67

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000075



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00007d



(66)

Chamberlain

India Office,
Whitehall. S.W.

Rabegh

14/11/16

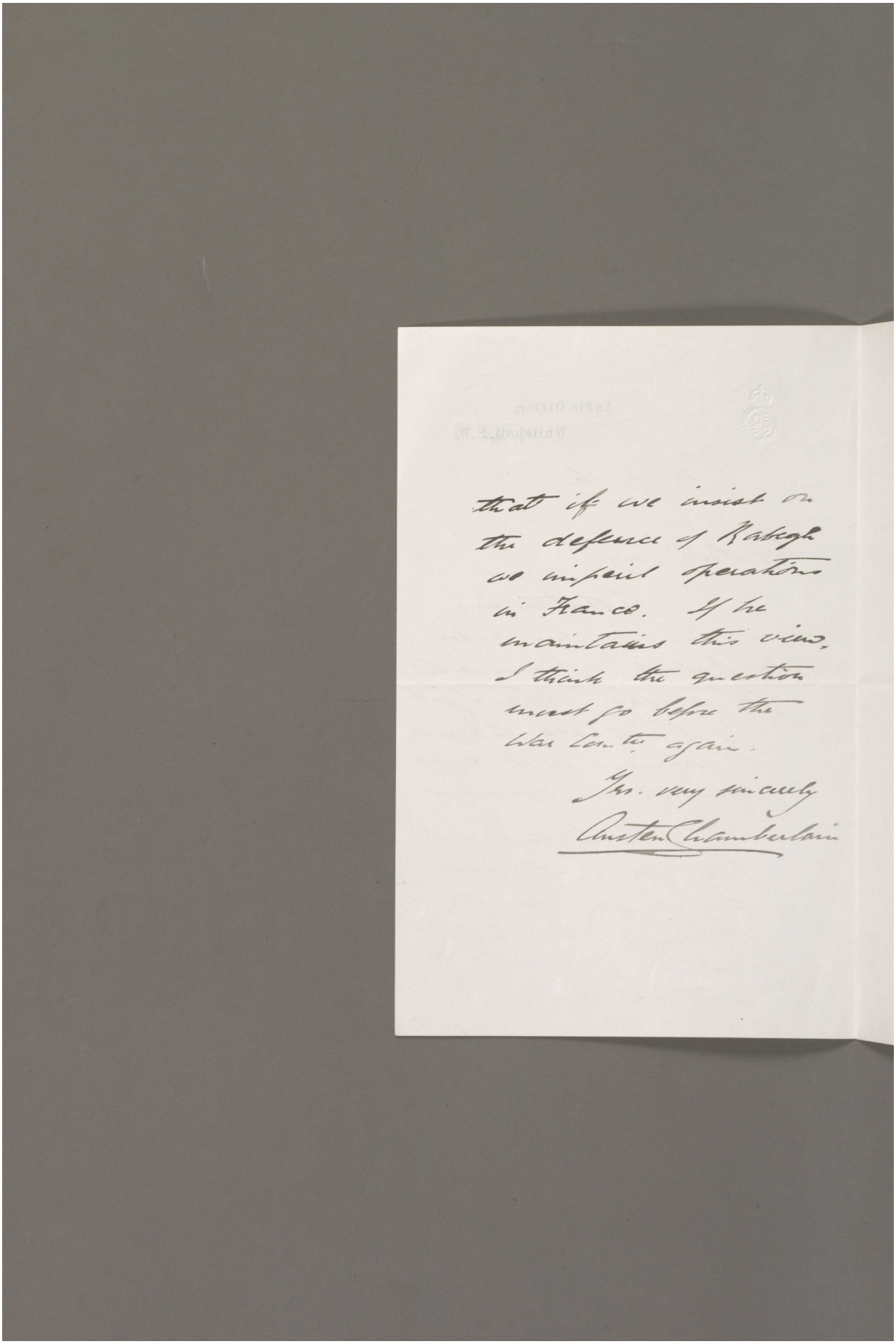
My dear Curzon,

Robertson has not sent me his paper on Rabegh. I am asking for a copy. When I get it, I will ask Barrow to comment on it & will circulate his comment.

I see by the minutes of the War Com^tee of Nov 10th that we were directed to decide. But C.I.G.S. puts us in a great difficulty by telling us

68

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000028



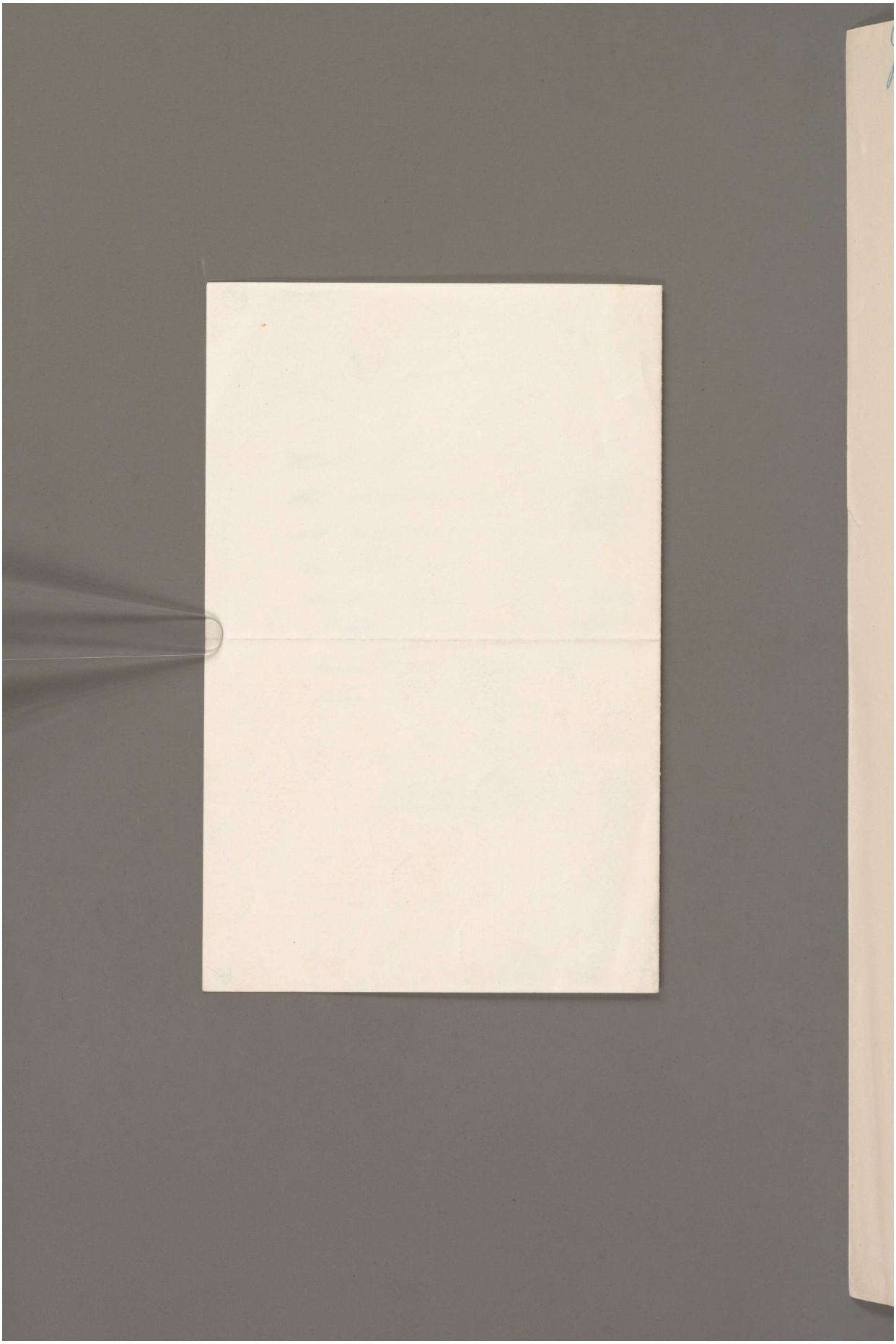
that if we insist on
the defence of Kabeyh
we imperil operations
in France. If he
maintains this view,
I think the question
must go before the
War Cabinet again.

Yrs. very sincerely
Austen Chamberlain

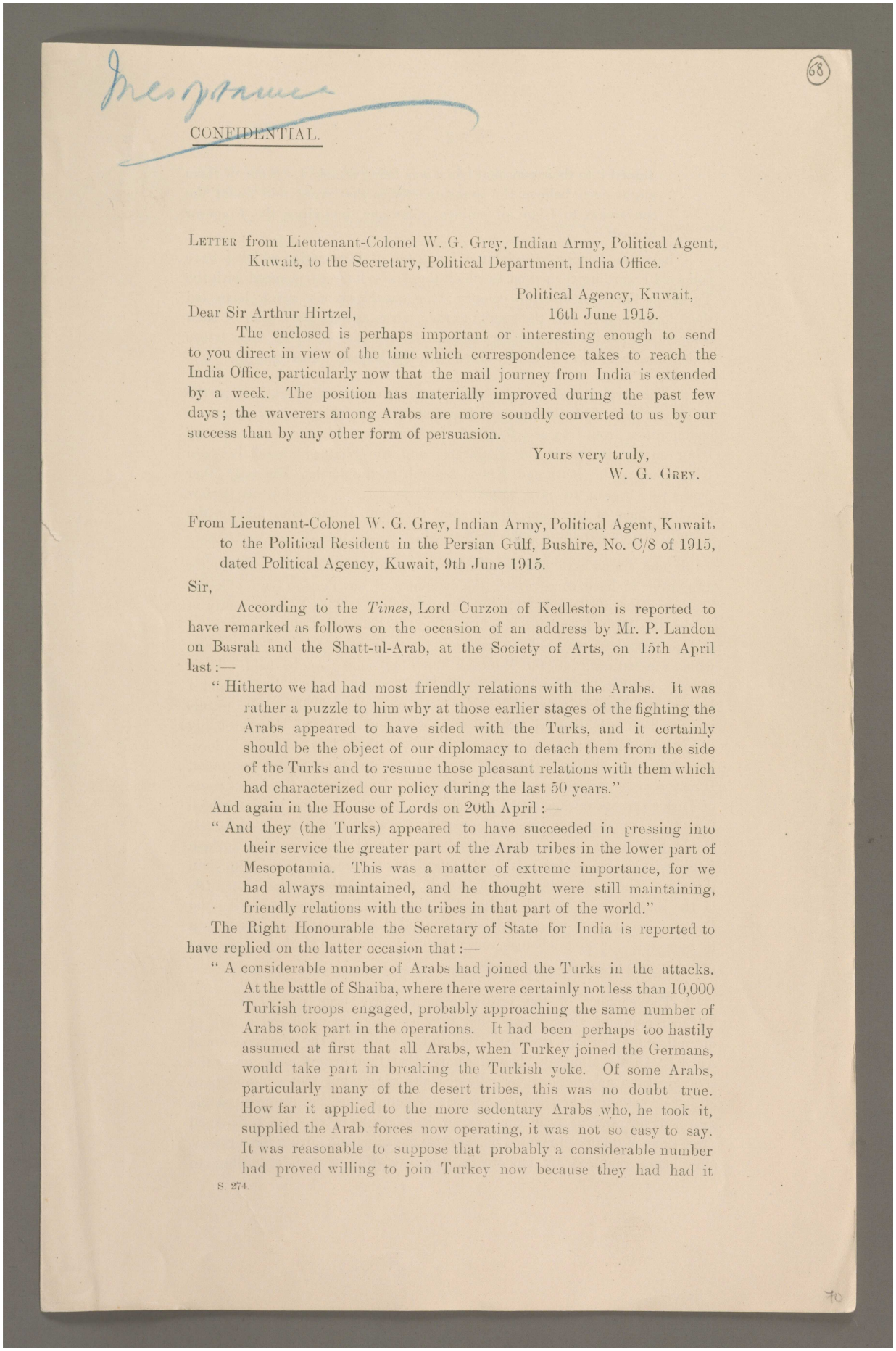
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000076



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00008f



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000065



Mesopotamia

(68)

CONFIDENTIAL.

LETTER from Lieutenant-Colonel W. G. Grey, Indian Army, Political Agent, Kuwait, to the Secretary, Political Department, India Office.

Political Agency, Kuwait,
16th June 1915.

Dear Sir Arthur Hirtzel,

The enclosed is perhaps important or interesting enough to send to you direct in view of the time which correspondence takes to reach the India Office, particularly now that the mail journey from India is extended by a week. The position has materially improved during the past few days; the waverers among Arabs are more soundly converted to us by our success than by any other form of persuasion.

Yours very truly,
W. G. GREY.

From Lieutenant-Colonel W. G. Grey, Indian Army, Political Agent, Kuwait, to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bushire, No. C/8 of 1915, dated Political Agency, Kuwait, 9th June 1915.

Sir,

According to the *Times*, Lord Curzon of Kedleston is reported to have remarked as follows on the occasion of an address by Mr. P. Landon on Basrah and the Shatt-ul-Arab, at the Society of Arts, on 15th April last:—

"Hitherto we had had most friendly relations with the Arabs. It was rather a puzzle to him why at those earlier stages of the fighting the Arabs appeared to have sided with the Turks, and it certainly should be the object of our diplomacy to detach them from the side of the Turks and to resume those pleasant relations with them which had characterized our policy during the last 50 years."

And again in the House of Lords on 20th April:—

"And they (the Turks) appeared to have succeeded in pressing into their service the greater part of the Arab tribes in the lower part of Mesopotamia. This was a matter of extreme importance, for we had always maintained, and he thought were still maintaining, friendly relations with the tribes in that part of the world."

The Right Honourable the Secretary of State for India is reported to have replied on the latter occasion that:—

"A considerable number of Arabs had joined the Turks in the attacks. At the battle of Shaiba, where there were certainly not less than 10,000 Turkish troops engaged, probably approaching the same number of Arabs took part in the operations. It had been perhaps too hastily assumed at first that all Arabs, when Turkey joined the Germans, would take part in breaking the Turkish yoke. Of some Arabs, particularly many of the desert tribes, this was no doubt true. How far it applied to the more sedentary Arabs who, he took it, supplied the Arab forces now operating, it was not so easy to say. It was reasonable to suppose that probably a considerable number had proved willing to join Turkey now because they had had it

S. 274.

70

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x00000c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

dinned into their ears that Islam was being attacked. Some of them might even believe the amazing stories that were told about the conversion to Islam of eminent Germans, including the Emperor himself."

I have the honour to submit a few notes of information which I have collected regarding the extent to which the Arabs have co-operated with the Turks in the Shatt-ul-Arab country; the considerations which have led them to co-operate, and the results to themselves and to the Turks of such co-operation; with some remarks upon the position of those Arab tribes which have held aloof or tacitly sided with His Majesty's Government.

2. The Arab forces which took part in the recent operations in the neighbourhood of Shaiba were composed mainly of 4,000 members of various communities from Iraq and 6,000 of the Muntafik tribes from the country lying on the banks of the Euphrates and the Shatt-ul-Gharaf between Khamisiah on the south and Kut-ul-Amarah on the north. The only other Arabs who appear to have helped the Turks on this occasion are a few hundred men of the Bani Hakam and the Bani Hasan who inhabit the swampy region adjoining Sukh-us-Shiyukh.

3. The Iraqis have had very little connection with us, and dwell too far away ever to have come under the influence of our Persian Gulf officials. The Resident at Baghdad has in all probability had little opportunity of cultivating their friendship or of making his influence felt amongst them, and no astonishment need be expressed at their having joined the Turks, which was natural. Of the Muntafik much the same may be said. Their country nowhere touches upon Persian Gulf administrative limits, and I learn that no decided efforts have ever been made by His Majesty's Consuls at Basrah to establish friendly relations with them; in fact, they probably did not consider such a proceeding to be part of their duty, as it would have been regarded by the Turks with grave suspicion if not with resentment. It may also be remembered that the Muntafik land lies in the direct route of Turkish troops advancing on Basrah from Baghdad and in districts which have for centuries been governed or misgoverned by Ottoman officials. It would have been strange indeed had they elected to oppose the Turkish forces with, so far as they could see, everything to lose and nothing to gain thereby. The small tribes west of Basrah mentioned above, who know little of the British, were bribed or forced to give what help they could like the Basravis, numbers of whom had been compelled some months earlier to join in opposing our first advance, on pain of destruction of their lives and property and those of their relatives.

4. The conduct of the Iraqis seems to have been correct from the Turkish point of view, except that they occasionally displayed a lack of discipline and perhaps courage. But in the course of the engagements of April 12–15, the Muntafik showed clearly that their hearts were not in the struggle from any national or religious enthusiasm, but that while motives of self-preservation had led the chiefs to take up arms, the common people were out for plunder from whomsoever it might be taken. On 13th April these same Muntafik plundered the Turkish encampment during their retreat after being repulsed by our troops, the ostensible reason, according to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000c6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

eye-witnesses, being that the Turks had promised them victory, whereas a severe rebuff was all they received.

5. In the circumstances detailed above, little need be said upon the subject of the Turkish efforts to arouse religious feeling among the Arabs of these regions. Such an aspect of the war has entered but little into the considerations of the Muntafik, and the Basravis seem to be quite unaffected by it. The attempt to raise a Jehad has had no effect upon the large and important tribes of Central and North-Central Arabia, and I have not met any Arab who has taken seriously the supposed conversion of prominent Germans to Islam.

6. In connection with the tribes and localities referred to in this communication, a reference is invited to the Gazetteer Map of Arabia which was compiled in the Foreign Office, Simla, during the years 1905–08; and I now pass on to some mention of the tribes further south, who have had more or less acquaintance with British officials, and have come more under the influence of our friends among the Arab chiefs and notables. First come the Zaffir, a large and scattered tribe who inhabit the country west and north-west of Kuwait, as far as Samawah. The Zaffir, who could probably put 5,000 fighting men into the field, have throughout declined all Turkish invitations to take up arms on their behalf, giving as their reason a feud which exists between them and the Muntafik, but they have also been advised by some of our friends to stand aloof. The Yuarin, who dwell nearer to the coast in about the same latitude, and whose strength is perhaps from 2,000 to 3,000 fighting men, have also remained neutral, partly owing to enmity with the Muntafik and partly to the influence of Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait, who has also induced the Bani Malik, a roving tribe who come from the left bank of the Shatt-ul-Arab to pass the spring and winter in Kuwait territory, to take a similar course.

7. For the neutrality of the Shammar, the numerous inhabitants of the eastern portion of the desert tract known as the Nafud which lies to the south-west of Kuwait, and the powerful Umm Tair who dwell in the Summan tract south-east of the Nafud, we are indebted partly to the influence of Shaikh Mubarak and partly to the skilful diplomacy of Bin Saud, the Amir of Nejd, who by organising a campaign against Ibn Rashid, the Shammar chief, and enlisting in his service the warriors of the Umm Tair, not only provided himself with an excellent excuse for declining to assist the Turks who were pouring invitations upon him, but compelled Ibn Rashid and the Shammar to attend to their own defence. There never was any doubt as to what line Bin Saud himself would take, but he might not have found it possible to induce his people to take up our cause at an early stage of the war, or to restrain them from assisting at our discomfiture had we suffered a severe reverse at the hands of the Turks at a similar period.

8. It is impossible to speak too highly of the conduct of His Excellency Shaikh Sir Mubarak of Kuwait, which has from the moment in which I informed him that war with Turkey was imminent been that of a loyal and honourable gentleman. He said on that occasion that all that he had was at our disposal and that he would be victorious with us or perish with us, and everything that he has said or done since has borne out the sincerity of his

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000009

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

professions of friendship. He has written to every Shaikh of importance throughout the country, urging him to maintain friendship with and confidence in His Majesty's Government, and the full effect of his efforts on our behalf will probably never be known. I conclude this report with the following extract from a letter sent by a Mr. Chandavarkar, of Malabar, to the *Times of India*, which speaks for itself:—

"Arab merchants, followers of the Shaikh of Kuwait, on the Arabian coast, who come here for the purpose of trade, are becoming helpful in enlightening the Mahomedans on the correct situation about the war and the folly of Turkey in allowing herself to be made a catspaw of German ambition."

9. A copy of this letter is being sent to Basrah.

I have, &c.,
W. G. Grey, Lieutenant-Colonel,
Political Agent, Kuwait.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00007d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This document is the property of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Telegrams relating to General Sir John Nixon's advance in Mesopotamia.

From Sir John Nixon, Basra, 29th September 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

308/172/0, 29/9/15. Continuation of my 129/195/J of 29th. Last night, 28th, Delamain when moving to attack rear of enemy's position became aware of strong Turkish reinforcements marching parallel to him. He attacked and routed these after severe fighting lasting till dark, capturing four guns [corrupt group] casualties were 1,200. Enemy's main position was found unoccupied early this morning. Aeroplane reconnaissance shows Turks in flight by river and road towards Baghdad, our cavalry entering Kat, river column moving in pursuit. Regret to report gallant officer, Lieutenant Commander E. C. Cookson, R.N., senior naval officer, was killed last night in gunboat attack on river obstruction while personally engaged in cutting wire. The naval gunboats had been handled by him with greatest daring and effect during two days' operations.

From Sir John Nixon, Basra, 29th September 19.5.
(Addressed Chief of General Staff; repeated Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/196/1. Tigris line. The pursuit of the defeated Turkish forces was taken up early morning 29th by naval gunboats and our cavalry. General Townshend follows with the leading infantry brigade in ships(?) 30th. Enemy's troops were seen by aeroplane morning 29th retreating in column four miles long up left bank Tigris about ten miles above Sukident(?) as crow flies. Aeroplane also dropped bombs on large steamer believed to be "Khalifa," which at once made for bank and is believed to have been injured. One brigade is clearing up battlefield. Total prisoners captured by us up to date 1,650; more coming in. Inspection of captured position shows defences have been designed and constructed on the latest and most approved principles and with remarkable thoroughness and study of detail. Communication trenches extended for miles, ranges marked by flags, arrangements were made for embarking troops and covering their retirement. There was an elaborate system of observation and contact mines. A number of these were exploded by our Engineers without accident, but severe casualties were caused by mines during action. The field of fire was everywhere flat and open. Nur-ed-din's force during late battle consisted of six squadrons cavalry, 26 guns and 35th, 38th Infantry battalions plus certain other formations aggregating some four extra battalions. His total force is estimated to have been some 7,000 to 8,000 regular troops assisted by considerable number of tribesmen. General headquarters are one mile down stream of Kut (?) Weather last two days decidedly cooler. Of our wounded a large proportion are only slightly injured and as a whole are doing well. Health and spirits of troops excellent.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000064

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

From General Nixon, Basra, 1st October 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/197/1. Tigris line. Personal inspection on 29th of enemy's position, described in my 129/196/1, greatly impressed me with skilful plan of its capture adopted by Major-General Townshend in his attack on 28th. I am convinced that his scheme of turning the Turkish left and getting in the rear of the centre of the position was the only manœuvre whereby the enemy could be dislodged without our incurring enormous losses. Any scheme entailing direct assault of any portion of line would have inevitably proved most costly. Three air reconnaissances from Kut have located the retreating Turkish force as follows: Cavalry advanced guard of main column was at 1 p.m. on Tigris right bank on point (sheet 2 B, square B 22, 2—2—1), and cavalry rearguard on point (B 2—5—6). Rearguard has two guns with it. One enemy steamer was seen, apparently in difficulties, close to Baglinkah. Our pursuit on 30th has been dogged by persistent bad luck. One of our three gunboats has stuck in shoal eight miles up-stream of Kut, and although foot channel in vicinity of Kut was reconnoitred on night of 29th–30th, shifting sandbanks held our river column throughout the daylight hours on 30th, and it was not till dusk that ships were got through. Our cavalry have, however, pushed ahead, and river column proceed up-stream from Kut at daylight 1st October. Remainder of division concentrate at Kut as soon as circumstances permit. Report just received from naval gunboats states "Samana" aground eight miles above Kut, with steering gear badly damaged. "Shaitan" and "Comet" at 10 a.m. 30th arrived point (sheet 2 H, C 238), and engaged Turkish steamer "Busrah" aground at C 237 at range of 6,500 yards. "Busrah" replied with four guns, but was apparently hit and at one time on fire. Pioneers returned to assist, and got her off. Gunboats then chased, but were fired on from C 208 at 11 a.m. by two guns of cavalry raiding party under Subri Bey returning from Sheikh Saad. Gunboats carried on, and came up with two boat-loads of ammunition abandoned by "Busrah," but getting into difficulties at bad crossing returned to avoid being caught aground by Subri. They got back safely, and observed Turks being hotly attacked by Arabs. One gunboat is standing by "Samana," but others returned here to report, and will lead Townshend's river column 1st October. Royal Navy reports navigation difficult above Kut, channel shifting, and several bad crossings over which ships must kedge.

From Sir John Nixon, Basra, 2nd October 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of the General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/198/1. *Euphrates line.* Four enemy battalions with two field guns and about five hundred camelry left Kefl in middle of September. The camelry joined Nur-ed-din at Kut shortly before the late battle, and the infantry and guns went to Baghdad, thus leaving the Euphrates line empty of enemy's troops.

Tigris line. Aeroplane reconnaissance shows that at 7.15 a.m. on 1st October advanced guard of Turkish column retreating up left bank of Tigris had reached "al" in Shidhaifalgharbi, and advanced guard of right bank column was at first "S" in Sharish. A steamer, believed to be the "Busrah," was five miles down stream of Aziziyah, and there was no enemy craft sighted down stream of her. At nightfall on 1st October our river column had reached point 27 miles up stream of Kut. Our cavalry had passed same point during previous night.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00007b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

From General Nixon, 2nd October 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/199/I. Tigris line: Retreating Turkish forces were located by aircraft reconnaissance afternoon of 2nd October as follows:—

Straggling column total length two miles, mostly infantry, head of column on Baghdad road 13 miles south-east of Sulman Pak. Infantry column two miles long halted with head midway between Daur Gherbi and Abdulla Abu Muatif. Majority of cavalry halted on right bank at mouth of Aziziyah loop. Three paddle steamers and a tug between Khannasah and Jubail. Our river column reached point three miles up stream of Baghaila at dusk on 2nd October, having been beset by navigation difficulties throughout the day. Officer lately arrived from campaign in France states that trenches captured by Dorset Regiment and 117th Mahrattas in battle of Kut on 28th September were superior to any German trenches (? that he) saw in France.

Officer Commanding, Bushire, reports that reliable information received that enemy at Chaghadak have been reinforced, and states that he expects attack any night now.

From General Nixon, 3rd October 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, 12th and 6th Divisions.*)

129/200/I. Tigris line. Aircraft reconnaissance by Major Reilly, morning 3rd October, observed both right and left bank infantry columns of the enemy to be within 20 miles of Sulman Pak. The enemy's three paddlers had reached Sulman Pak, and the reconnaissance observed partly prepared position there astride of Tigris. In vicinity of position was considerable camp which is judged to contain 3 Tabours and 4 guns lately moved from the Euphrates line *plus* a reinforcement of 4 Tabours and 4 guns from Mosul. It is therefore most probable that Nur-ed-din will stand and fight at Sulman Pak. Our river column is now only at Shidhaif Ash Sharqi, and no chance of surprising or stampeding their remainders. I consider I am strong enough to open road to Baghdad, and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Aziziyah. But this concentration must be partly by land. Families of Germans and Turkish officials are said to be leaving Baghdad for Aleppo. From military point of view it is highly desirable to capture enemy's steamers, which at this season cannot get far up stream of Baghdad.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, 4th October 1915.

3071. I shall be glad to know what Nixon's present intentions are, as if owing to navigation troubles there is no probability of catching and smashing the retreating enemy there is no object in continuing the pursuit.

The orders conveyed in my 1812 of 24th April,* and 3002 of 6th August* still hold good, subject to course of events at Baghdad and elsewhere and to the recommendations you may now make.

Please cable your estimate of enemy's present strength in Mesopotamia.

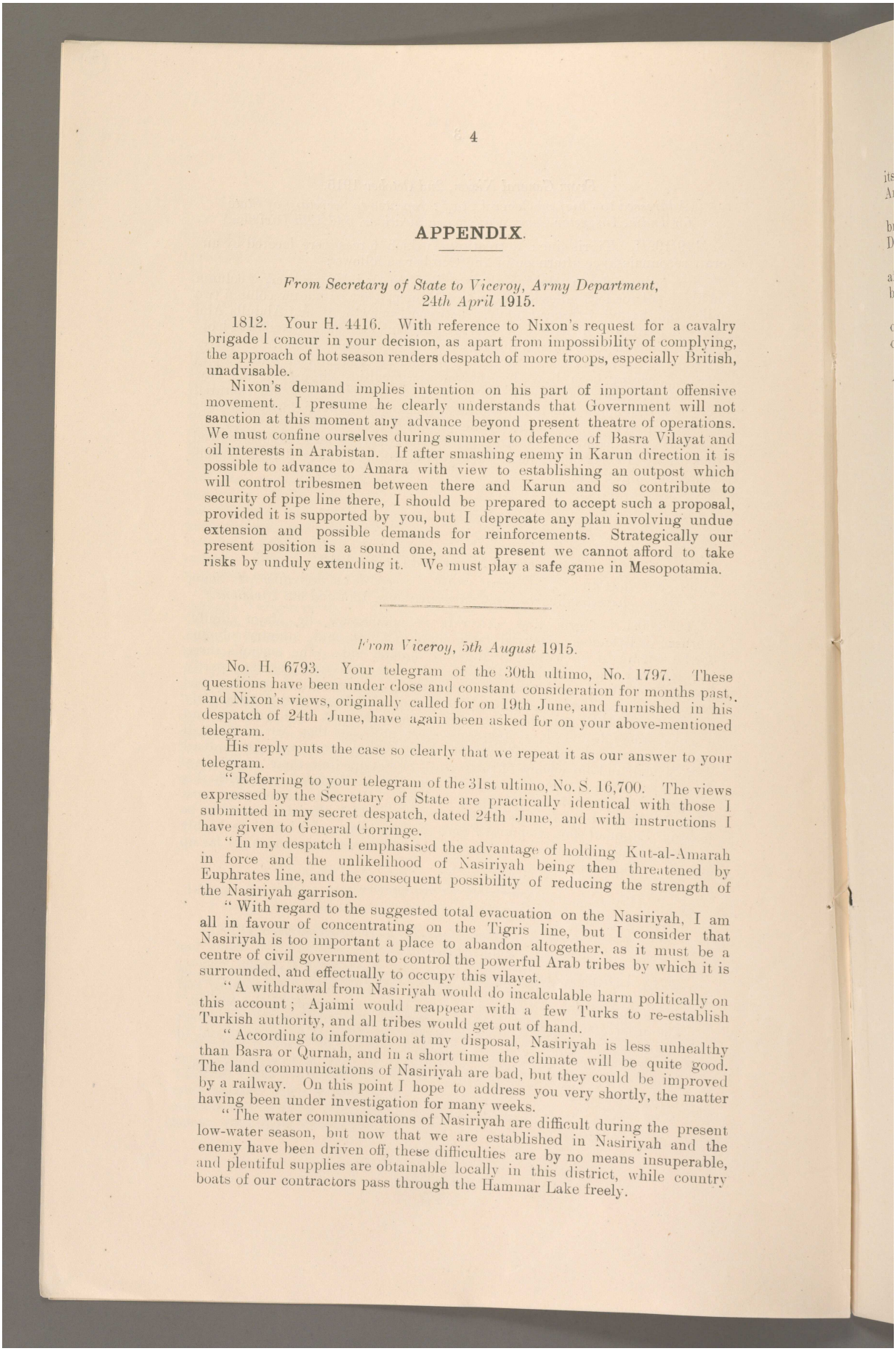
---

* *See* Appendix.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000c2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



APPENDIX.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, 24th April 1915.

1812. Your H. 4416. With reference to Nixon's request for a cavalry brigade I concur in your decision, as apart from impossibility of complying, the approach of hot season renders despatch of more troops, especially British, unadvisable.

Nixon's demand implies intention on his part of important offensive movement. I presume he clearly understands that Government will not sanction at this moment any advance beyond present theatre of operations. We must confine ourselves during summer to defence of Basra Vilayat and oil interests in Arabistan. If after smashing enemy in Karun direction it is possible to advance to Amara with view to establishing an outpost which will control tribesmen between there and Karun and so contribute to security of pipe line there, I should be prepared to accept such a proposal, provided it is supported by you, but I deprecate any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements. Strategically our present position is a sound one, and at present we cannot afford to take risks by unduly extending it. We must play a safe game in Mesopotamia.

From Viceroy, 5th August 1915.

No. H. 6793. Your telegram of the 30th ultimo, No. 1797. These questions have been under close and constant consideration for months past, and Nixon's views, originally called for on 19th June, and furnished in his despatch of 24th June, have again been asked for on your above-mentioned telegram.

His reply puts the case so clearly that we repeat it as our answer to your telegram.

"Referring to your telegram of the 31st ultimo, No. S. 16,700. The views expressed by the Secretary of State are practically identical with those I submitted in my secret despatch, dated 24th June, and with instructions I have given to General Gorringe.

"In my despatch I emphasised the advantage of holding Kut-al-Amarah in force and the unlikelihood of Nasiriyah being then threatened by Euphrates line, and the consequent possibility of reducing the strength of the Nasiriyah garrison.

"With regard to the suggested total evacuation on the Nasiriyah, I am all in favour of concentrating on the Tigris line, but I consider that Nasiriyah is too important a place to abandon altogether, as it must be a centre of civil government to control the powerful Arab tribes by which it is surrounded, and effectually to occupy this vilayet.

"A withdrawal from Nasiriyah would do incalculable harm politically on this account; Ajaimi would reappear with a few Turks to re-establish Turkish authority, and all tribes would get out of hand.

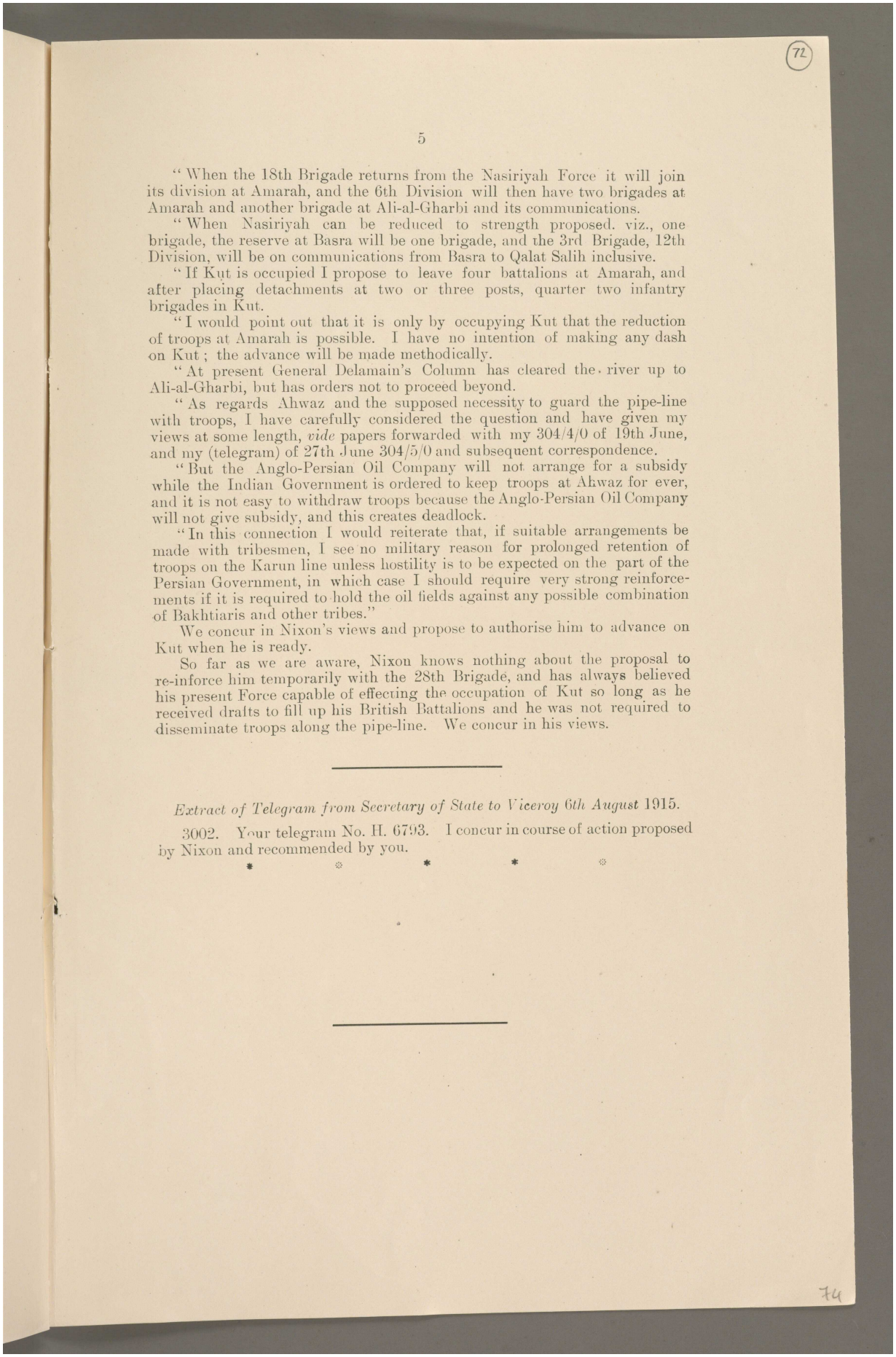
"According to information at my disposal, Nasiriyah is less unhealthy than Basra or Qurnah, and in a short time the climate will be quite good. The land communications of Nasiriyah are bad, but they could be improved by a railway. On this point I hope to address you very shortly, the matter having been under investigation for many weeks.

"The water communications of Nasiriyah are difficult during the present low-water season, but now that we are established in Nasiriyah and the enemy have been driven off, these difficulties are by no means insuperable, and plentiful supplies are obtainable locally in this district, while country boats of our contractors pass through the Hammar Lake freely.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00004a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



"When the 18th Brigade returns from the Nasiriyah Force it will join its division at Amarah, and the 6th Division will then have two brigades at Amarah and another brigade at Ali-al-Gharbi and its communications.

"When Nasiriyah can be reduced to strength proposed. viz., one brigade, the reserve at Basra will be one brigade, and the 3rd Brigade, 12th Division, will be on communications from Basra to Qalat Salih inclusive.

"If Kut is occupied I propose to leave four battalions at Amarah, and after placing detachments at two or three posts, quarter two infantry brigades in Kut.

"I would point out that it is only by occupying Kut that the reduction of troops at Amarah is possible. I have no intention of making any dash on Kut; the advance will be made methodically.

"At present General Delamain's Column has cleared the river up to Ali-al-Gharbi, but has orders not to proceed beyond.

"As regards Ahwaz and the supposed necessity to guard the pipe-line with troops, I have carefully considered the question and have given my views at some length, *vide* papers forwarded with my 304/4/0 of 19th June, and my (telegram) of 27th June 304/5/0 and subsequent correspondence.

"But the Anglo-Persian Oil Company will not arrange for a subsidy while the Indian Government is ordered to keep troops at Ahwaz for ever, and it is not easy to withdraw troops because the Anglo-Persian Oil Company will not give subsidy, and this creates deadlock.

"In this connection I would reiterate that, if suitable arrangements be made with tribesmen, I see no military reason for prolonged retention of troops on the Karun line unless hostility is to be expected on the part of the Persian Government, in which case I should require very strong reinforcements if it is required to hold the oil fields against any possible combination of Bakhtiaris and other tribes."

We concur in Nixon's views and propose to authorise him to advance on Kut when he is ready.

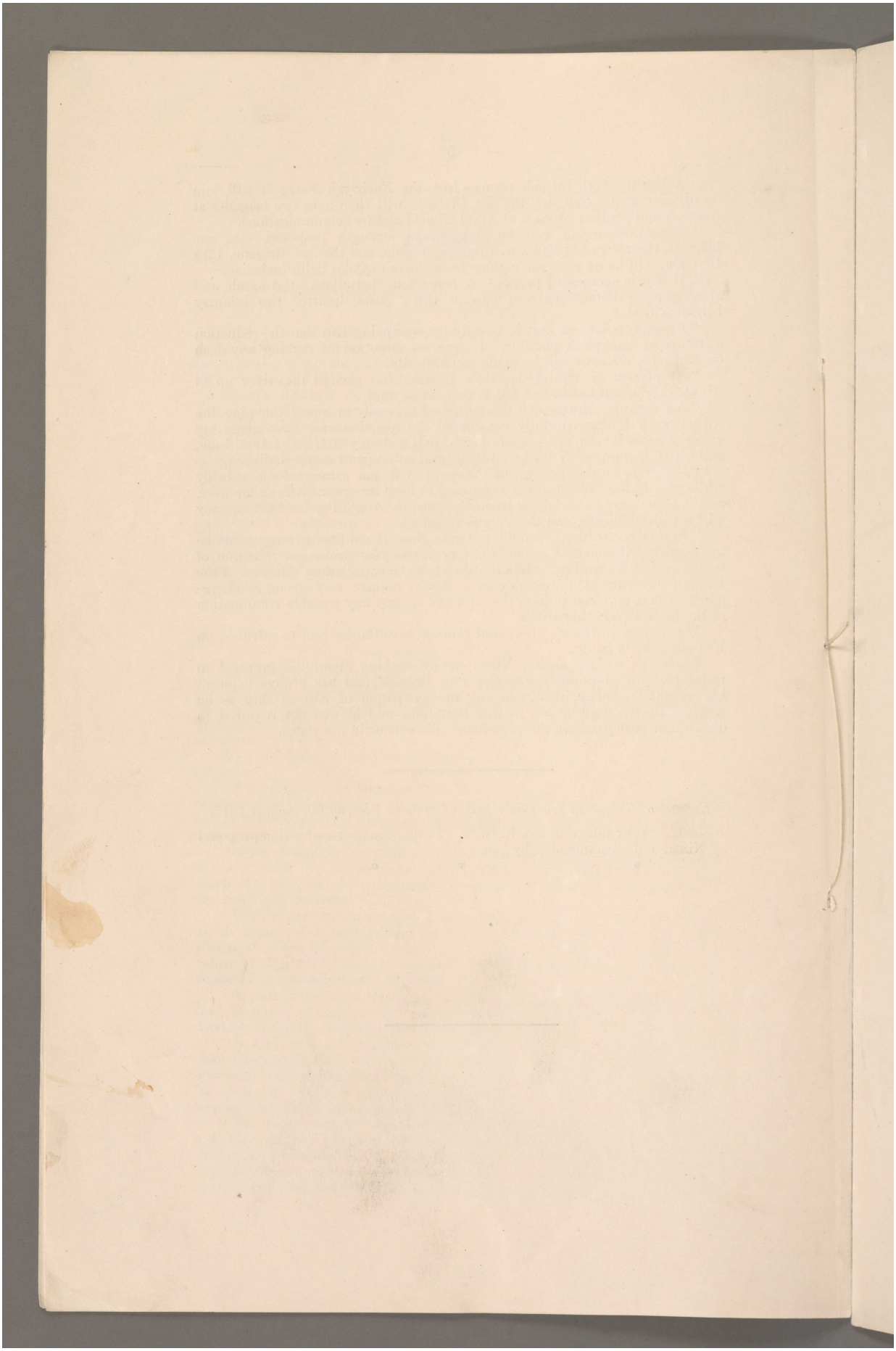
So far as we are aware, Nixon knows nothing about the proposal to re-inforce him temporarily with the 28th Brigade, and has always believed his present Force capable of effecting the occupation of Kut so long as he received drafts to fill up his British Battalions and he was not required to disseminate troops along the pipe-line. We concur in his views.

Extract of Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy 6th August 1915.

3002. Your telegram No. H. 6793. I concur in course of action proposed by Nixon and recommended by you.

* * * * *

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b4



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000032

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This Document is the property of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Official and Private Telegrams relating to General Sir John Nixon's advance in Mesopotamia (in continuation of those circulated on 4th October).

(*a*) OFFICIAL.

From General Nixon, Kut-el-Amara, 4th October 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/201/1. Tigris line. Reported that evening, 4th, our river column halted for night at S. in Sharhan. Our cavalry reached Aziziyah.

From General Nixon, 5th October 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/202/1. Tigris line. Our river column reached Aziziyah 5th October, and cavalry, supported by one battalion, pushed on to reconnoitre Zeur, where enemy's steamer observed by aircraft reconnaissance evening 5th. Same reconnaissance observed numbers of troops in the Ctesiphon position.

From General Nixon, Kut-al-Amara, 5th October 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of the General Staff; repeated to the Secretary of State for India, with reference to his telegram of 4th October to Chief of General Staff enquiring what my present intentions are.*)

308/203/0. Navigation difficulties have been overcome by lightening ships and utilising them for towing laden barges and by marching troops with land transport. The 16th Brigade with all field artillery left this morning for Aziziyah by road, preceded by headquarters Cavalry Brigade with three guns, "S" Battery, and 100 lances. Cavalry has orders to reach Aziziyah evening of the 7th. Enemy appears to be no longer retreating, but has occupied Ctesiphon position and thereby constitutes a threat to us. Our information is that his troops, especially those locally recruited, have been much demoralised by defeat at Kut-al-Amara, a position which they considered impregnable. They are now so near Baghdad that Nur-ud-din will have difficulty in making a determined stand with men who are close to their homes and wish to desert. I consider, therefore, that there is every probability of catching and smashing the enemy at Ctesiphon as soon as the 6th Division has fully concentrated at Aziziyah, and has been reinforced by drafts of cavalry now on their way from Basrah. If on the other hand we retire from Aziziyah to Kut-al-Amara, the enemy and whole of the tribes will place their own construction on such a move, and advance on Kut-al-Amara as he did on Amara in July last when troops were withdrawn from post above Amara in order to reinforce General Gorringe on Nasiriyah line. Then a powerful section of the tribes who had already submitted to us rejoined the Turks, and has been a continual source of trouble until British prestige was re-established by the victory at Kut-al-Amara. The Arab tribes now regard us as irresistible, and have been coming in from all directions to make submission; but if we withdraw will probably behave as before.

S.S.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000a7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

It is my view that we have in front of us a shaken enemy who has lost 13 guns and is deficient of ammunition, and for military reasons it is clearly desirable to smash him while we can. He has taken refuge in a position where we can manœuvre and I hope destroy him. I see nothing which would justify letting slip such an opportunity. From a military point of view Baghdad is a focus of Turkish lines of advance and a large supply centre, of which in our interests it is vital to deprive the enemy, and this quite apart from any political effect its occupation might have.

From Viceroy, 6th October 1915.

H. 8245. Reference your No. 3071 of 4th October. Nixon's intentions were as stated in his telegrams 129/200/I of 3rd October, and 129/201/I of 4th October, which were repeated to you. He has also telegraphed to India as follows :—

"With reference to my suggestion to open by another general action road to Baghdad, will you kindly let me know whether my force is to be reinforced to the extent of another division from France in order that my position there may be maintained. Effect of my occupying Baghdad would be more than nullified if subsequent events should compel me in course of time to retreat down the river in consequence of reinforcements not being forthcoming. Regarding operations in Van district, should like information thereof. Have Russians progressed sufficiently far to threaten Upper Tigris route from Asia Minor. Above refers to my 129/201/I of 3rd."

In these views we concur, and suggest that as the Indian troops are reported to have participated with credit in the recent fighting, the present moment, if there should be any intention of moving Indian troops from France before the winter sets in, would be opportune for doing so. In view of German activities in Persia, increasing pressure on Afghanistan, and the aspect in the Balkans and Dardanelles, we hold that the capture of Baghdad would have such an effect in the Near East and offers such important political and strategical advantages as to justify movement, but to do this at least an additional division would be required. Otherwise we do not propose to allow him to go beyond Kut-al-Amara.

Nixon has been given Russian position south of Van as reported in Marsh's No. T.P.L. 30 of 3rd October.

Our estimate of present strength of enemy in Mesopotamia is 8,500 rifles, 600 sabres and 28 guns under command of Nur-ud-din. Of the above, seven battalions amounting to approximately 3,500 rifles with eight guns are at or near Sulman Pak and have not been engaged against us. They include four battalions and four guns recently arrived from Mosul. Force under Hussain Raouf Bey which was near Qasr-i-Shirin may also shortly be at Sulman Pak. Remainder of enemy's force, numbering some 4,000 infantry, 500 camelry and six squadrons of cavalry with 21 guns constitutes the remnants of the troops defeated by us at Kut-al-Amara and is retreating up the Tigris towards Sulman Pak, where indications seem to show that it may make a fresh stand.

From General Nixon, 6th October 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of the General Staff ; repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/203/1. Tigris line. Townshend reports that reconnaissance by his cavalry on 6th October found one regiment of Turkish cavalry, three or four battalions and two field guns established two miles inland from river on left bank north-east of Zeur. Enemy's guns shelled our cavalry which left a squadron in touch (? therewith), remainder rejoined Townshend who

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000091

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

has disembarked river column at Aziziyah. On afternoon of (6th ?) October Roberts with Headquarters Cavalry Brigade and 7th (?) Lancers arrived at Imam Mahdi, and 16th Infantry Brigade with Field Artillery, under Delamain, reached point 12 miles by road from Kut *en route* for Aziziyah. One floating mine was destroyed by rifle fire from gunboat "Sumana," six miles down stream of Kut on 3rd October.

(*b*) PRIVATE.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 4th October 1915.

Private. My official telegram of to-day about Nixon's plans. Your private letter of 10th September seems to render it imperative to stop Nixon's further advance. I shall be grateful for early communication of your views.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 5th October 1915.

Private. My private telegram of 4th instant. Nixon's advance. Cabinet, to whom position was reported yesterday, decided to appoint Committee of General Staff, Admiralty, Foreign and India Offices to consider in all its aspects possibility and policy of advance on Baghdad. Political reasons were thought to make occupation desirable as isolating Germans in Persia, if forces available are sufficient to take and hold the place. Barrow thinks we might be able to capture Bagdad, but that forces weakened by further losses would be insufficient both to hold it securely against counter attack and to maintain communications. Kitchener can hold out no hope of reinforcements from Europe or Egypt. Let me know your views. It was suggested that Japan should be asked to send a division.

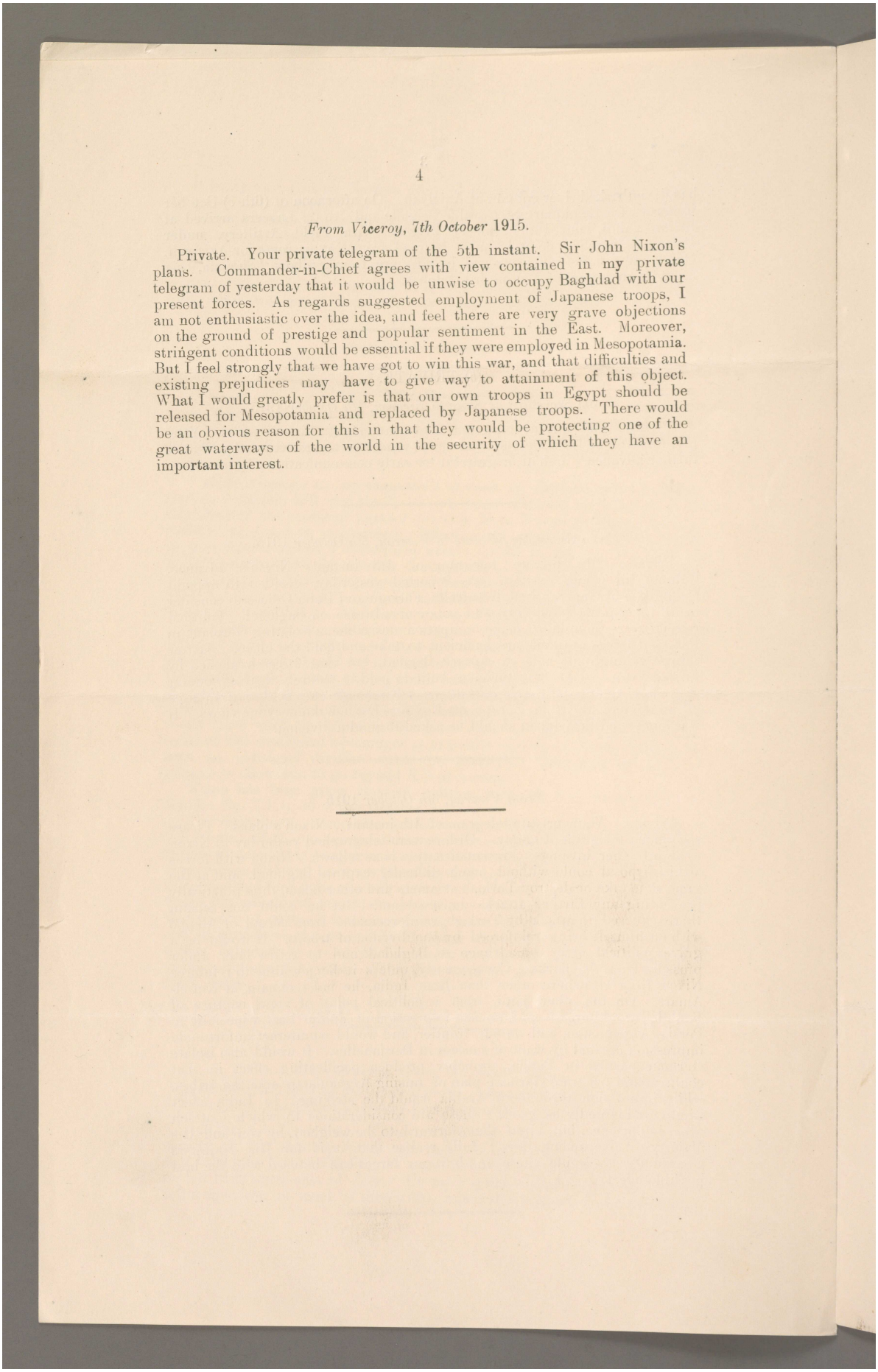
From Viceroy, 6th October 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of 4th instant. Nixon's plans. Please see official telegram of to-day. Orders were telegraphed yesterday to Nixon to stop further advance. Present situation is as follows. Nixon with forces at his disposal could without much difficulty capture Baghdad, and at the same time take or destroy Turkish steamers and other boats, thus practically preventing any further attacks down stream. But he could not remain there exposed to attack by Turkish reinforcements from Mosul or Aleppo without himself being reinforced by one division of troops. It would be a grave political error to advance to Baghdad and to retire later under pressure from the Turks. Consequently, unless it be possible to reinforce Nixon from elsewhere other than from India, he must remain at Kut-el-Amara. On the other hand, from a political point of view, capture of Baghdad would create an immense impression in Middle East, especially in Persia, Afghanistan, and on our frontier, and would counteract unfortunate impression created by want of success in Dardanelles. It would also isolate German parties in Persia, probably produce pacificating effect in that country, and frustrate German plan of raising Afghanistan and the tribes, while impression throughout Arabia would be striking. In India effect would undoubtedly be good. These are considerations to which I attach great importance, but I put them forward to be weighed by you and His Majesty's Government, for I fully realise that it is for His Majesty's Government to decide where and how our forces can be used with the best possible effect.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00003a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



From Viceroy, 7th October 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 5th instant. Sir John Nixon's plans. Commander-in-Chief agrees with view contained in my private telegram of yesterday that it would be unwise to occupy Baghdad with our present forces. As regards suggested employment of Japanese troops, I am not enthusiastic over the idea, and feel there are very grave objections on the ground of prestige and popular sentiment in the East. Moreover, stringent conditions would be essential if they were employed in Mesopotamia. But I feel strongly that we have got to win this war, and that difficulties and existing prejudices may have to give way to attainment of this object. What I would greatly prefer is that our own troops in Egypt should be released for Mesopotamia and replaced by Japanese troops. There would be an obvious reason for this in that they would be protecting one of the great waterways of the world in the security of which they have an important interest.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000c4

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This Document is the property of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Official and Private Telegrams relating to General Sir John Nixon's advance in Mesopotamia (in continuation of those circulated on 7th October).

From General Nixon, Basra, 7th October 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of the General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/204/1. 7th. Tigris line. Our cavalry is retaining touch with hostile force at Zeur. Aeroplane reconnaissance observes Baghdad City Bridge removed to Ctesiphon. Qararah Bridge is intact. Unconfirmed report states engineers have left Baghdad to commence defensive position at Samarra, 70 miles up stream. Our cavalry report numerous and constant fires in country bordering Tigris, above Aziziyah, which indicate systematic destruction of fodder. Our cavalry entirely destroyed ammunition in Mahelas abandoned by steamer "Busrah" as mentioned in my 129—197—I, as well as large quantities of rifles in villages along route. Townshend, with 18th Brigade and 63rd Battery, is at Aziziyah, where Roberts (?) joins him 8th, and Delamain 9th.

From Secretary of State to General Nixon, Basra, 8th October 1915.
(Repeated to India.)

3077. Very urgent. With what addition to your present force are you confident that you can both occupy and hold Baghdad? Reply direct and repeat reply to Government of India.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 8th October 1915.

Private and very urgent. Reference to my telegram of to-day to Nixon repeated to you. Cabinet are so impressed with great political and military advantages of occupation of Baghdad that we shall make every effort to supply necessary force. We do not wish to attempt it with insufficient forces. Are you satisfied that one Division is sufficient.

From General Nixon, 8th October 1915.
(Repeated to Chief of General Staff.)

308/218/0. 3077 of 8th. I am confident that I can beat Nur-ed-din and occupy Baghdad without any addition to my present force. But if Turks should turn their serious attention to the recovery of Baghdad and should send to Mesopotamia the large organised forces which would be necessary for such an operation, then I consider that I should require one Division (and I should like also one white Cavalry Regiment) in addition to my present force to watch both the Tigris and Euphrates lines of communication and defeat the enemy as he comes within reach. Further, the Baghdad position would be best from which to do this.

Kut is 103 miles, and Townshend at Aziziyah is 48 from Baghdad by road.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000078

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

From Major-General, General Staff, Kut (Basra), 8th October 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State.)

308/217/0. In continuation of my 308/203/0 of 6th October. Enemy at Zeur reported reinforced. I have told Townshend that in view of enemy's more forward action I must leave measures to be taken to his discretion. Headquarters, Cavalry Brigade, and half "S" Battery have reached him and 16th Brigade with two more field, one howitzer and one maxim battery (? ies) join him 9th. He has asked for 17th Brigade which has been despatched and should reach him 11th.

From General Nixon, 8th October 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications and 12th Division.)

129/205/1. Tigris line. Townshend reports on 8th Zeur now held by 3,500 enemy Infantry who are entrenching there, also two or three squadrons of Cavalry.

From General Nixon, Kut-al-Amara, 9th October 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications and 12th Division.)

129/206/1. Townshend reports on 9th, enemy at Zeur, strength as on 8th. Also that Delamain joined at Aziziyah on 9th.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 9th October 1915.

Private. My private telegrams of yesterday to you and Nixon.
Hope to give you definite information as to possibility of reinforcement in a few days. Meanwhile, Nixon should maintain his present position and be prepared to advance if reinforcements asked for can be sent to him. Please instruct him accordingly.

From Viceroy, 9th October 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 8th instant, and Nixon's telegram to you, No. 308/218/0 of the same date. I am glad of the decision of Cabinet. After consulting the Commander-in-Chief I think that Nixon is in the best position to judge as to the number of troops required, and when he mentions a division, we understand him to mean a fully organised division, with its proper proportion of British troops and guns and its divisional cavalry. In addition to this he asks for a cavalry regiment. We are prepared to accept his opinion, but think that it will also be necessary to ensure that British units now with him are kept up to strength by drafts from home, as India cannot supply these. We will keep the Indian units full. We may add that reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after its capture, as this is the period which we calculate must elapse before the Turks could concentrate in strength to attempt its recapture.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000071

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

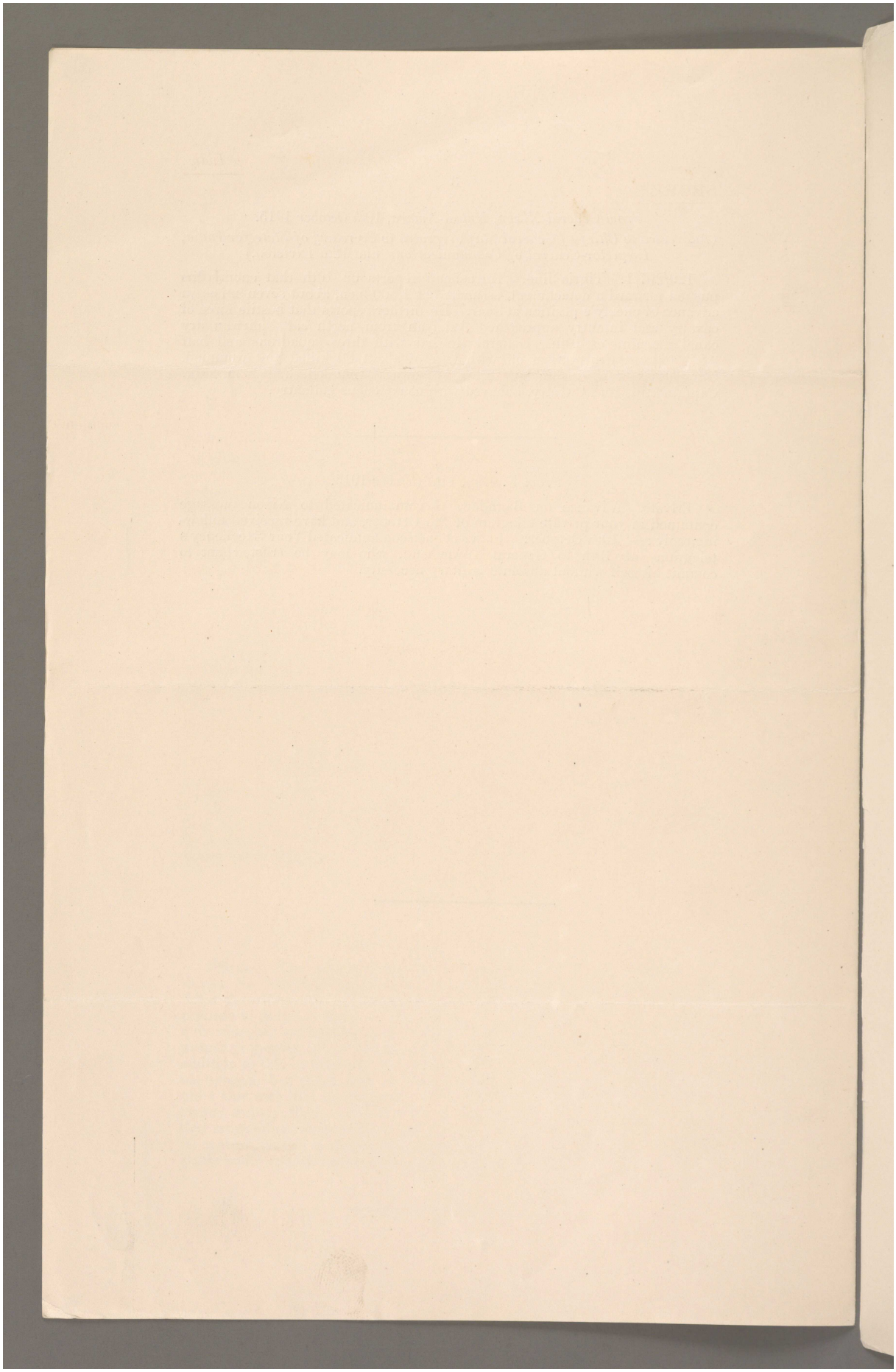
From General Nixon, Kut-al-Amara, 10th October 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/207/1. Tigris line. Townshend reports on 10th that enemy has pushed forward a detachment, estimated at 1,500 men, about seven miles in advance of enemy's position at Zeur. He further reports that hostile force of cavalry and infantry approached Aziziyah from north *viâ* Nahrwan dry canal morning of 10th. General Roberts with three squadrons and half "S" Battery drove them off with loss of about 20 killed and wounded. Our losses were 1 dafadar killed, 4 sowars wounded, and 1 missing. Captain Hill, 16th Cavalry, behaved with conspicuous gallantry.

From Viceroy, 11th October 1915.

Private. Advance on Baghdad. I communicated to Nixon message contained in your private telegram of 9th October, and have received following reply :—"10th October. I have at once communicated Your Excellency's telegram of 10th to General Townshend, who may be trusted not to commit himself without absolute military necessity."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00004f



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000062

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This document is the property of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Telegrams relating to General Sir John Nixon's advance in Mesopotamia (in continuation of those circulated on 11th October).

(*a*) PRIVATE.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 12th October 1915.

Private. My private telegram of the 9th instant. Reinforcements for Nixon. Kitchener is proposing to Sir John French removal of Indian Infantry from France to Egypt. He cannot give me definite answer till reply is received. I shall do my utmost to secure complete Division for Mesopotamia. I do not understand why Nixon asks for a *white* cavalry regiment. I do not think one is available, and my advisers consider Indian cavalry more suitable.

From Viceroy, 13th October 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 12th October. Force "D." Nixon has four native cavalry regiments which he has said more than once required stiffening with a British cavalry regiment. We do not press for a British regiment of cavalry.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 14th October 1915.

Private. A question has been raised as to sufficiency of reinforcements asked for by Nixon or even of two divisions to hold Baghdad against forces which Turks might eventually bring against him. This is now being considered by General Staff, and Cabinet hope to get their report in three days.

Are chances of eventual successful advance prejudiced by delay? We continue to attach greatest importance to capture of Baghdad if we can hold it securely.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 15th October 1915.

Private. In continuation of my private telegram of 14th instant.

War Office contemplate transfer of the two Indian Infantry Divisions from France to Egypt with the intention of placing them at your disposal in Mesopotamia if report of General Staff is favourable to occupation of Baghdad. But owing to uncertainty of position in the near East and possible need of transport for other purposes they cannot guarantee date of departure. Under these circumstances they do not consider that it would be safe for Nixon to advance on Baghdad before these troops have actually started from Egypt unless you can undertake to supply him temporarily with a division from India in the event of these reinforcements being unavoidably delayed.

I request early reply as to possibility of your undertaking this liability.

S.S. 399.—4.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b9

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

From Viceroy, 15th October 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 14th instant. Reinforcements for Force D.

Unless the Turks strongly reinforce Baghdad in the meantime, of which we see no immediate sign, delay will not prejudice the chances of eventual successful advance, though that success will be more costly owing to longer time at enemy's disposal for completion of defences.

(*b*) OFFICIAL.

From General Nixon, Kut-al-Amara, 11th October 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/208/1. Tigris line. Townshend reports that enemy's dispositions on 11th remain as before. On night of 10th–11th an attack was made by Arabs on post three miles south of Aziziyah garrisoned by 110th Mahrattas. Enemy effected an entrance but were ejected, leaving three dead. 110th had some 10 killed and wounded.

From General Nixon, 12th October 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Inspector-General of Communications, and Secretary of State for India.*)

129/209/1. Townshend reports that Turkish detachment pushed forward in advance of Zeur on 10th, was withdrawn back to that place at 2 p.m. 11th. Hoghton, with 17th Brigade, arrived at Aziziyah 11th. Column consisting of one troop 33rd Cavalry, half "S" Battery, and one double company 48th Pioneers, left Kut-al-Amara 12th, due Aziziyah 14th. In answer to query, Egypt wires 7th "continual movement of enemy troops from Syria and Anatolia to Constantinople, and no signs of anything important going to Mesopotamia." Reliable information received here indicates no garrison of any importance in Baghdad, October 5th.

From General Nixon, 13th October 1915.

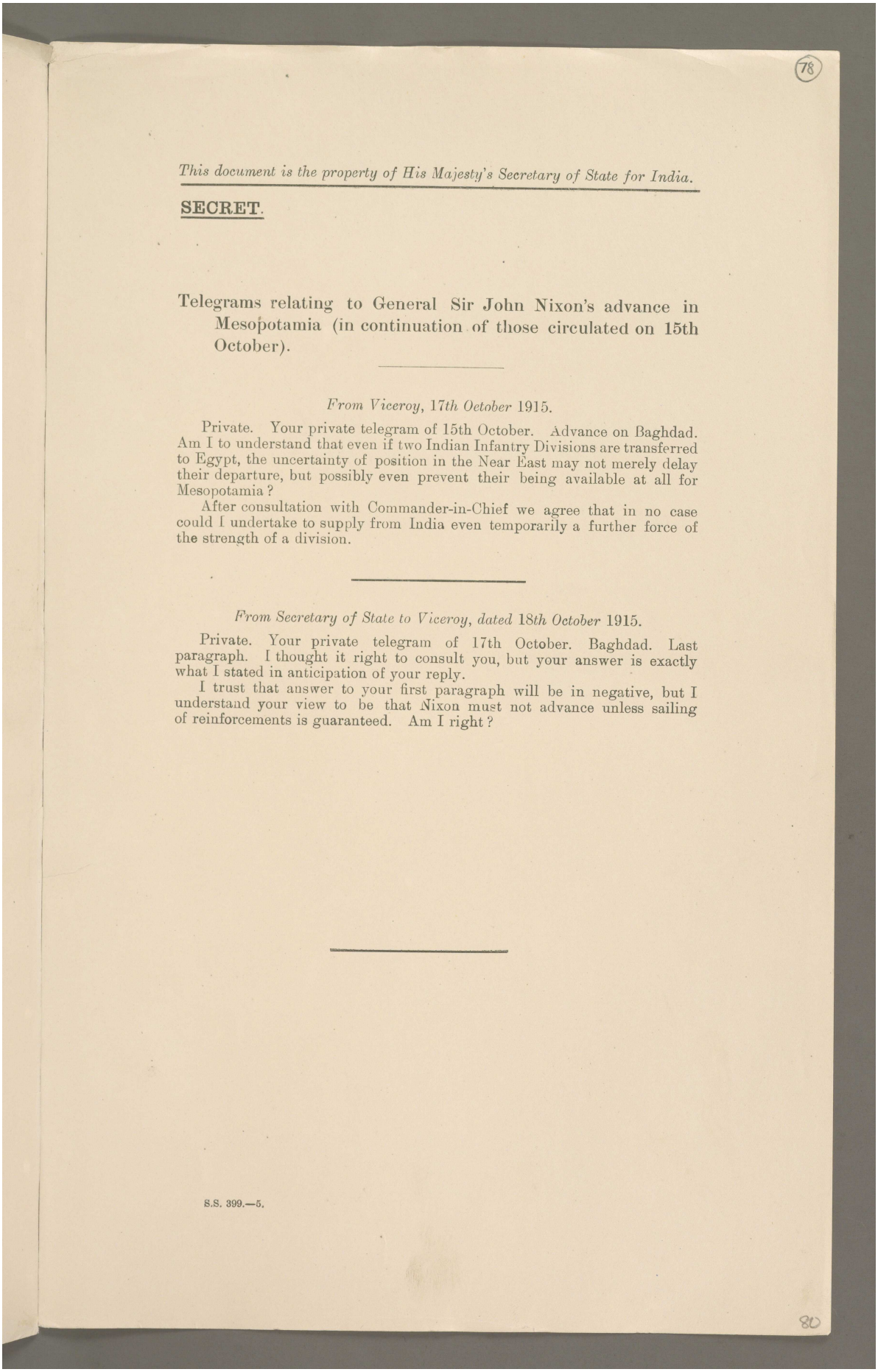
(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*

129/210/1. Tigris line. Townshend reports that at 11 a.m. on 13th October the advanced position known as El-Kutunie on Tigris left bank, seven miles south-east of the Zeur position, was again occupied by hostile mixed detachment of 2,000 infantry, 2 guns, and 300 cavalry. Fresh evidence tends to confirm that our aviators Treloar and Atkins were quite unhurt by their accident on 16th September, and were sent off in safety to Baghdad.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000038

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



78

This document is the property of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Telegrams relating to General Sir John Nixon's advance in Mesopotamia (in continuation of those circulated on 15th October).

From Viceroy, 17th October 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of 15th October. Advance on Baghdad. Am I to understand that even if two Indian Infantry Divisions are transferred to Egypt, the uncertainty of position in the Near East may not merely delay their departure, but possibly even prevent their being available at all for Mesopotamia?

After consultation with Commander-in-Chief we agree that in no case could I undertake to supply from India even temporarily a further force of the strength of a division.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 18th October 1915.

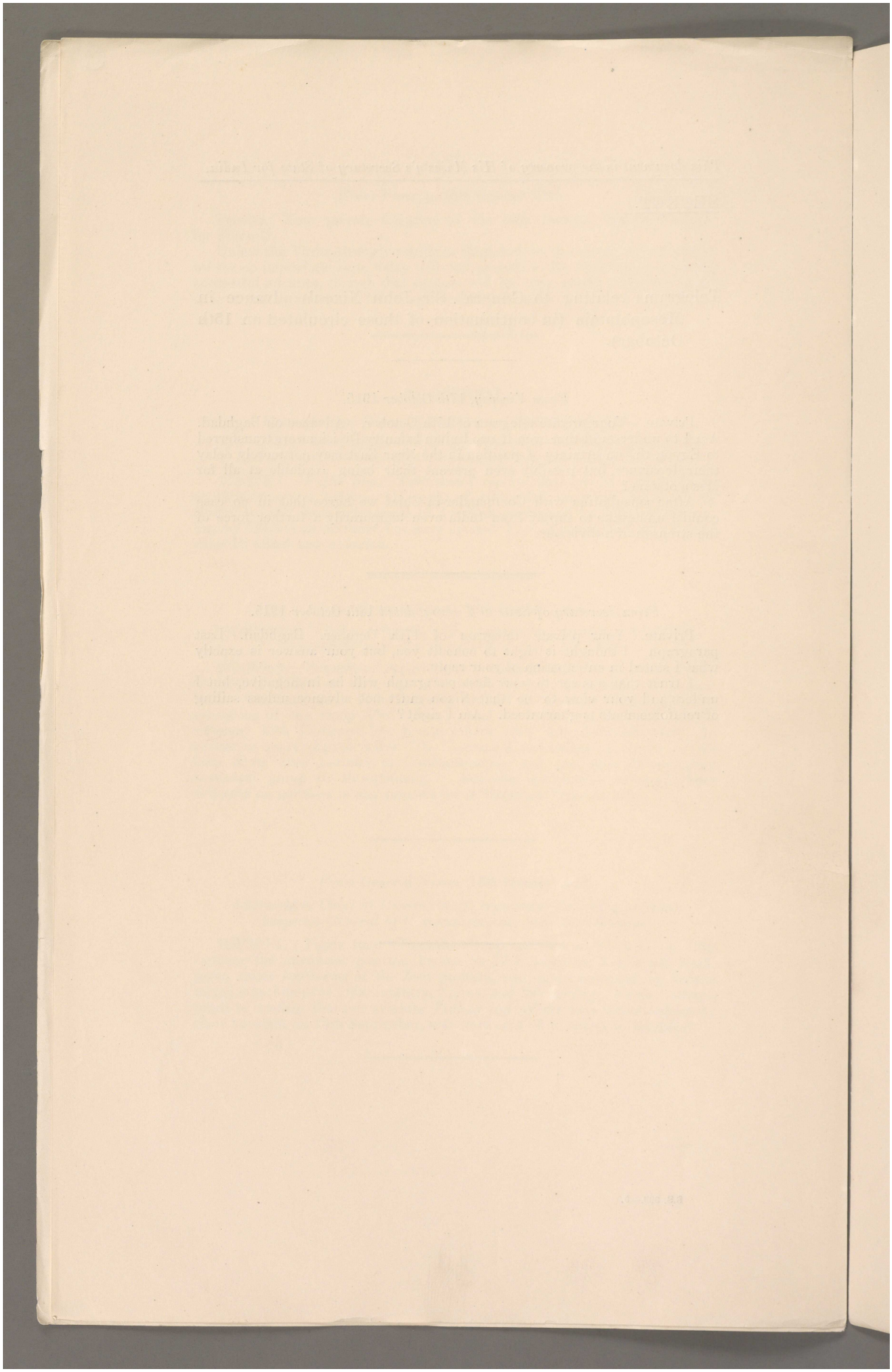
Private. Your private telegram of 17th October. Baghdad. Last paragraph. I thought it right to consult you, but your answer is exactly what I stated in anticipation of your reply.

I trust that answer to your first paragraph will be in negative, but I understand your view to be that Nixon must not advance unless sailing of reinforcements is guaranteed. Am I right?

S.S. 399.—5.

80

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000087



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000059

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

79

This document is the property of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Telegrams regarding the question of an advance to Baghdad.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 21st October 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of 21st October. Baghdad advance.

Report of Combined Staffs estimates that Nixon has only some 9,000 Turkish troops and some irregulars to deal with for next two months; that Turkish forces may be somewhat increased by end of year, and they might conceivably reach a total of 60,000 by end of January and even larger figures during 1916. They consider that if reinforced by two Indian divisions from France he might with assistance of river flotilla face risk of attack by 60,000, but there would remain possibility of enemy receiving further reinforcements at later date.

Staffs hold, therefore, that it would be unwise from purely military point of view to occupy Baghdad unless military authorities have power to withdraw troops at once without regard to political considerations if military exigencies make this necessary.

The War Office would give the two Indian divisions, but could not under any circumstances spare further reinforcements, and are doubtful of their capacity even to supply drafts if wastage from casualties or sickness is severe. They think Baghdad can be taken easily and held for some time, but as explained above it might become untenable later.

At present moment it seems that German attempt to break through to Constantinople will succeed, and our position and prospects in Gallipoli are most uncertain. Persia seems drifting into war on German side whilst Arabs are wavering, and unless we can offer them great inducement will probably join Turks. We are, therefore, in great need of striking success in the East both to check Persian movement and to win Arabs.

It is suggested that we should occupy Baghdad, giving assurances to Arab leaders that we favour creation of Arab State independent of Turks, and that we shall be prepared to consider future disposition of Baghdad in connection therewith. Is this practicable? Shereef of Mecca will certainly ask for declaration of our intentions as regards Baghdad if we occupy it. Unless you consider that possibility of eventual withdrawal is decisive against the advance, all other considerations seem to us to render it desirable, and we are prepared to order it.

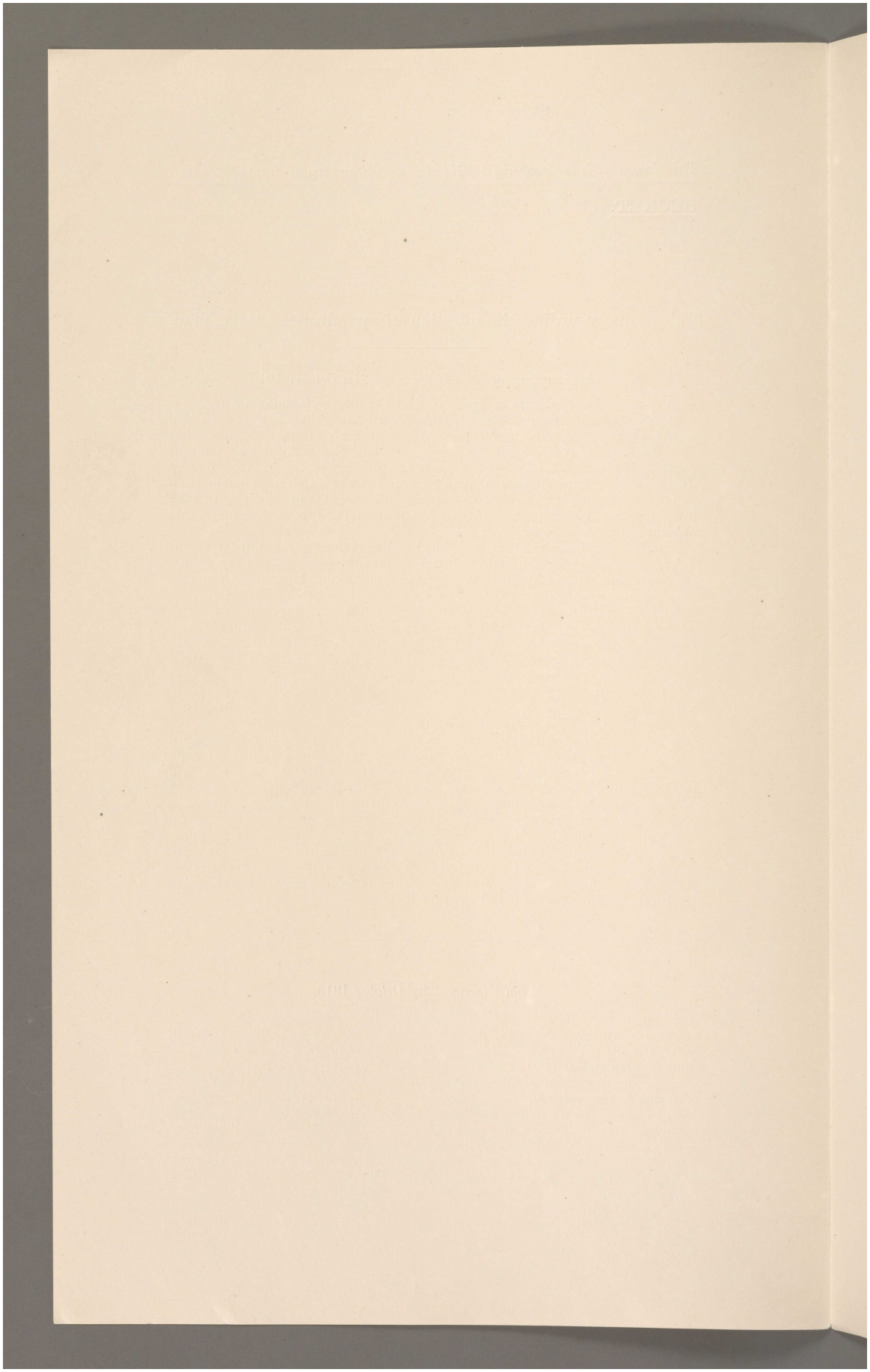
From Viceroy, 23rd October 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 21st instant. Baghdad advance. Your description of the situation in the Near East proves conclusively the necessity for action in the Middle East in order to prevent if possible Persia and Afghanistan declaring against us.

We accept the calculation of the combined staffs of possible strength of Turks that may with time be brought against us, but with reinforcement of two Indian divisions from France we believe that Sir J. Nixon has a reasonable prospect of being able to hold his own against 60,000 or 70,000 Turks, provided that he occupies Baghdad as soon as he is ready.

Although I realise that the occupation of Baghdad is a provocation that will probably determine the Turks to send large forces to attack us, which, however, will not be easy for them to do, and although the bad effect of a possible withdrawal in the future cannot be ignored, I am confident that the right policy at the present time is to take the risk and to occupy Baghdad

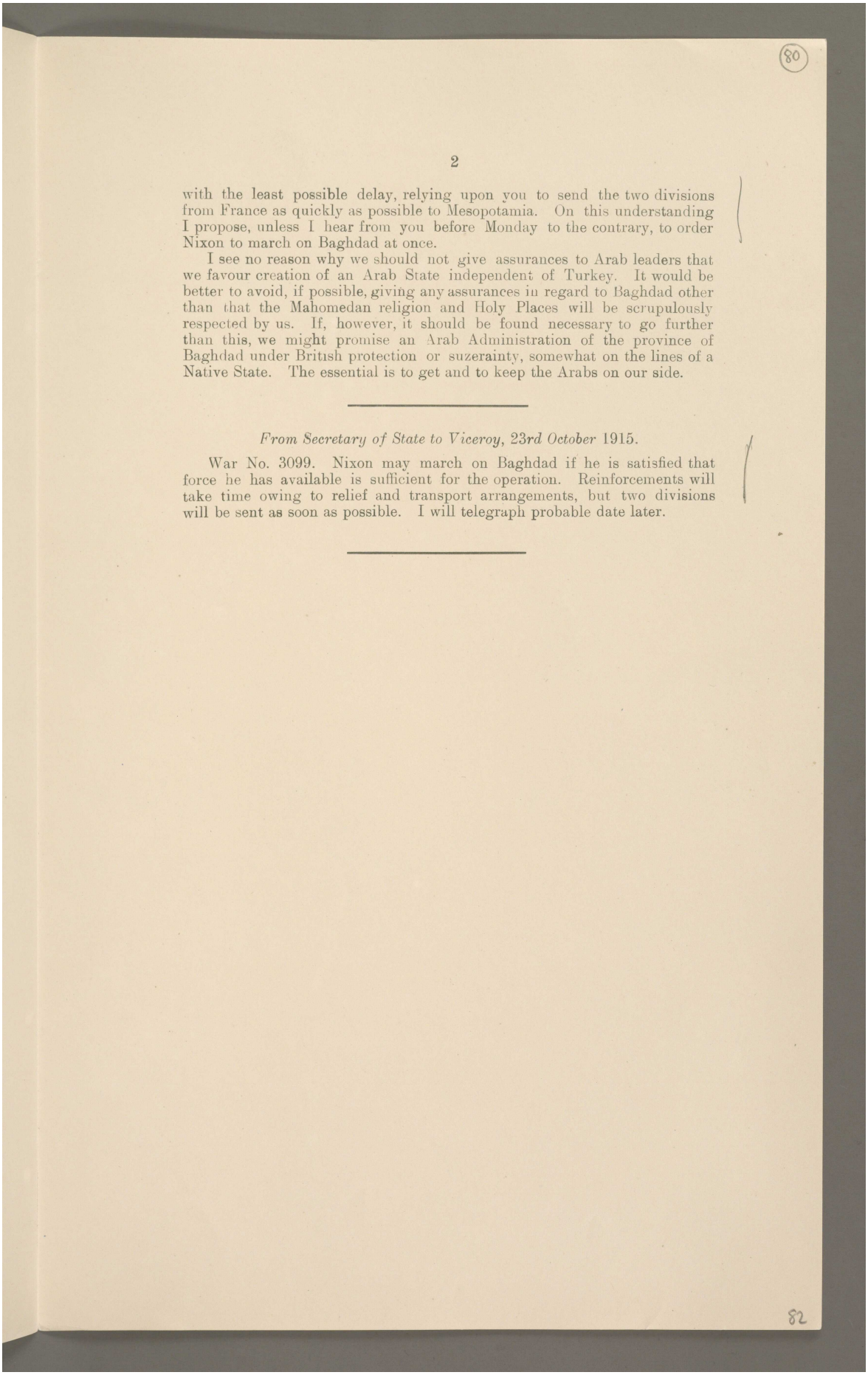
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b5



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000a8

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



(80)

with the least possible delay, relying upon you to send the two divisions from France as quickly as possible to Mesopotamia. On this understanding I propose, unless I hear from you before Monday to the contrary, to order Nixon to march on Baghdad at once.

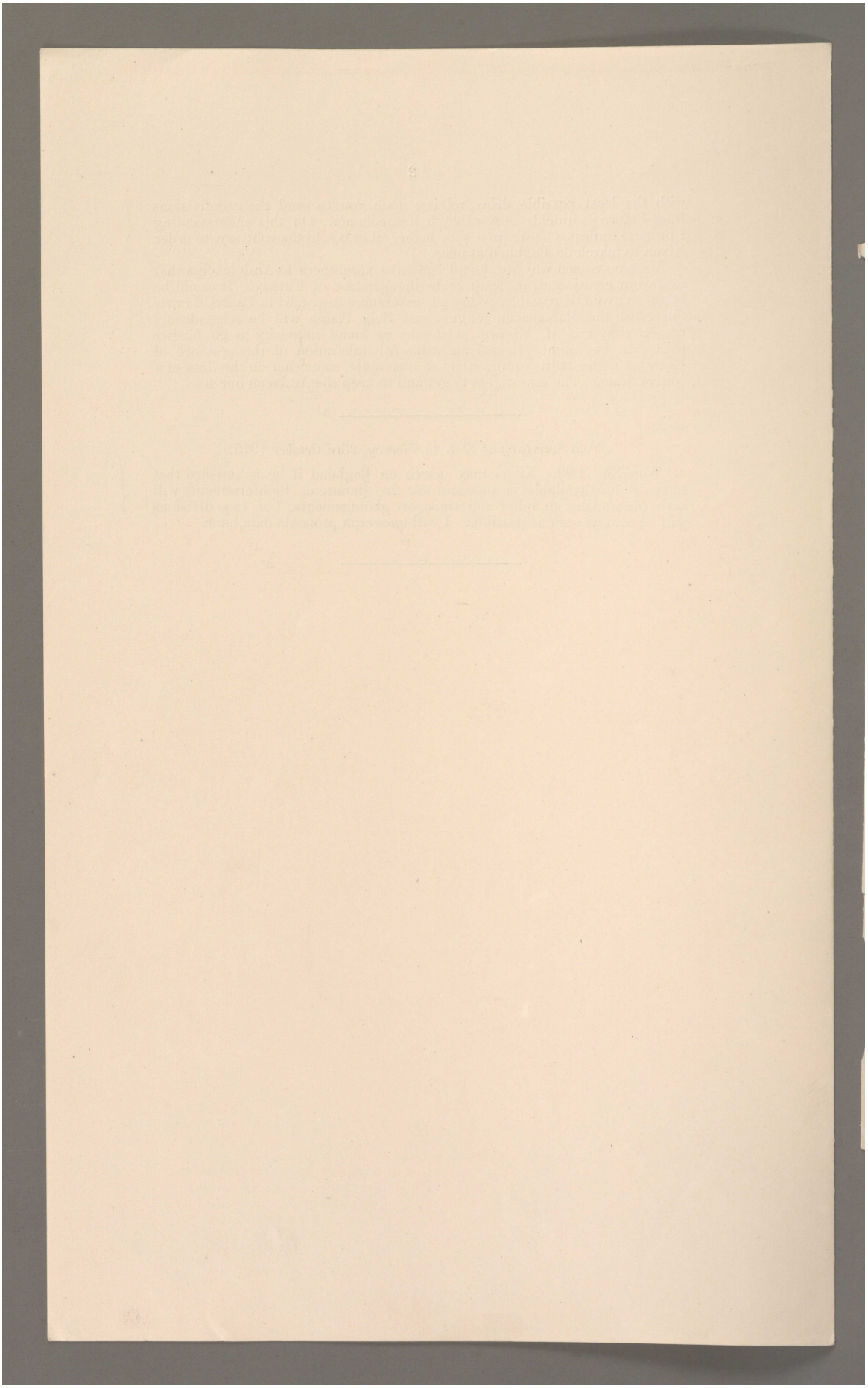
I see no reason why we should not give assurances to Arab leaders that we favour creation of an Arab State independent of Turkey. It would be better to avoid, if possible, giving any assurances in regard to Baghdad other than that the Mahomedan religion and Holy Places will be scrupulously respected by us. If, however, it should be found necessary to go further than this, we might promise an Arab Administration of the province of Baghdad under British protection or suzerainty, somewhat on the lines of a Native State. The essential is to get and to keep the Arabs on our side.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 23rd October 1915.

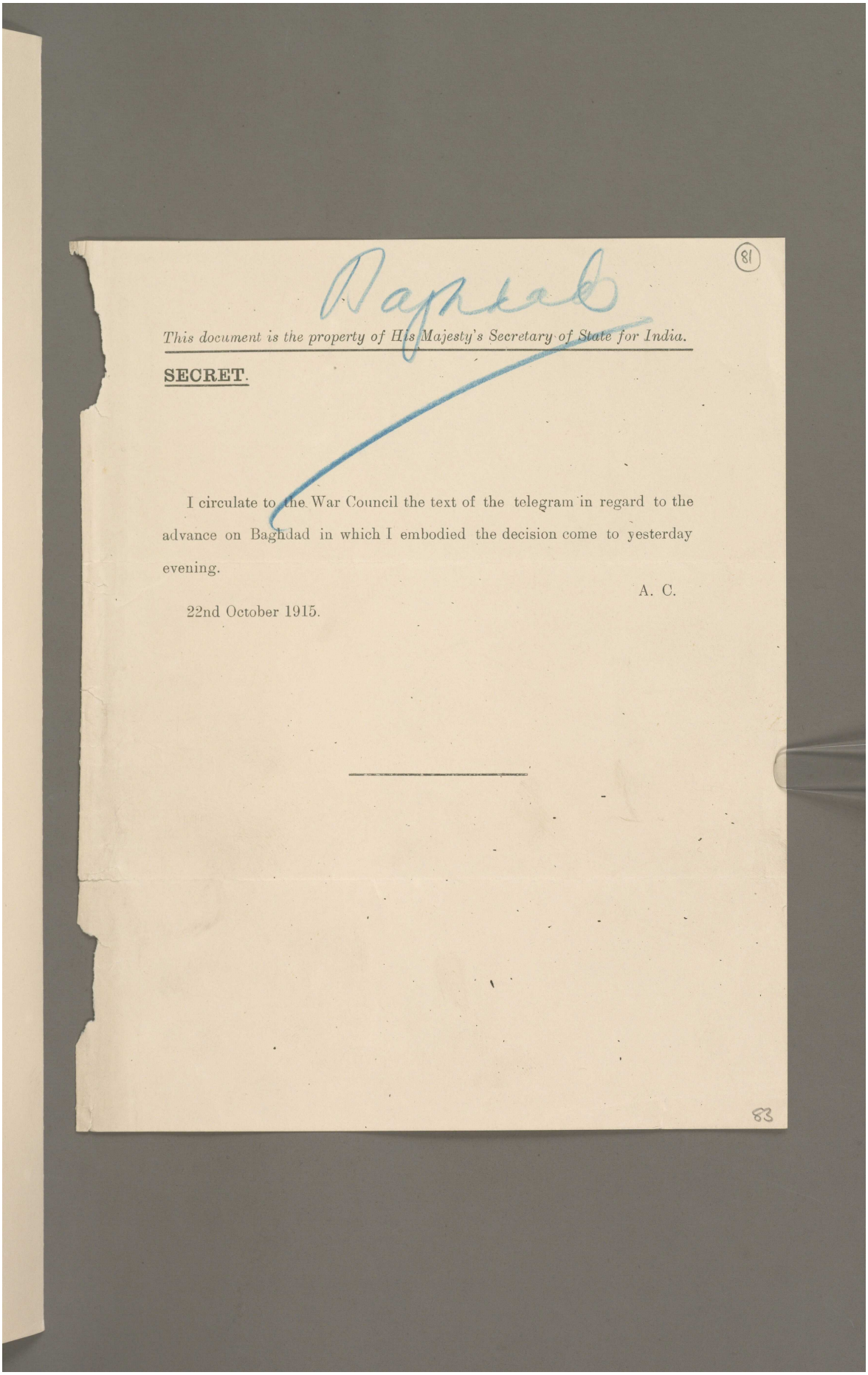
War No. 3099. Nixon may march on Baghdad if he is satisfied that force he has available is sufficient for the operation. Reinforcements will take time owing to relief and transport arrangements, but two divisions will be sent as soon as possible. I will telegraph probable date later.

82

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000099



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00009f



Baghdad

81

This document is the property of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

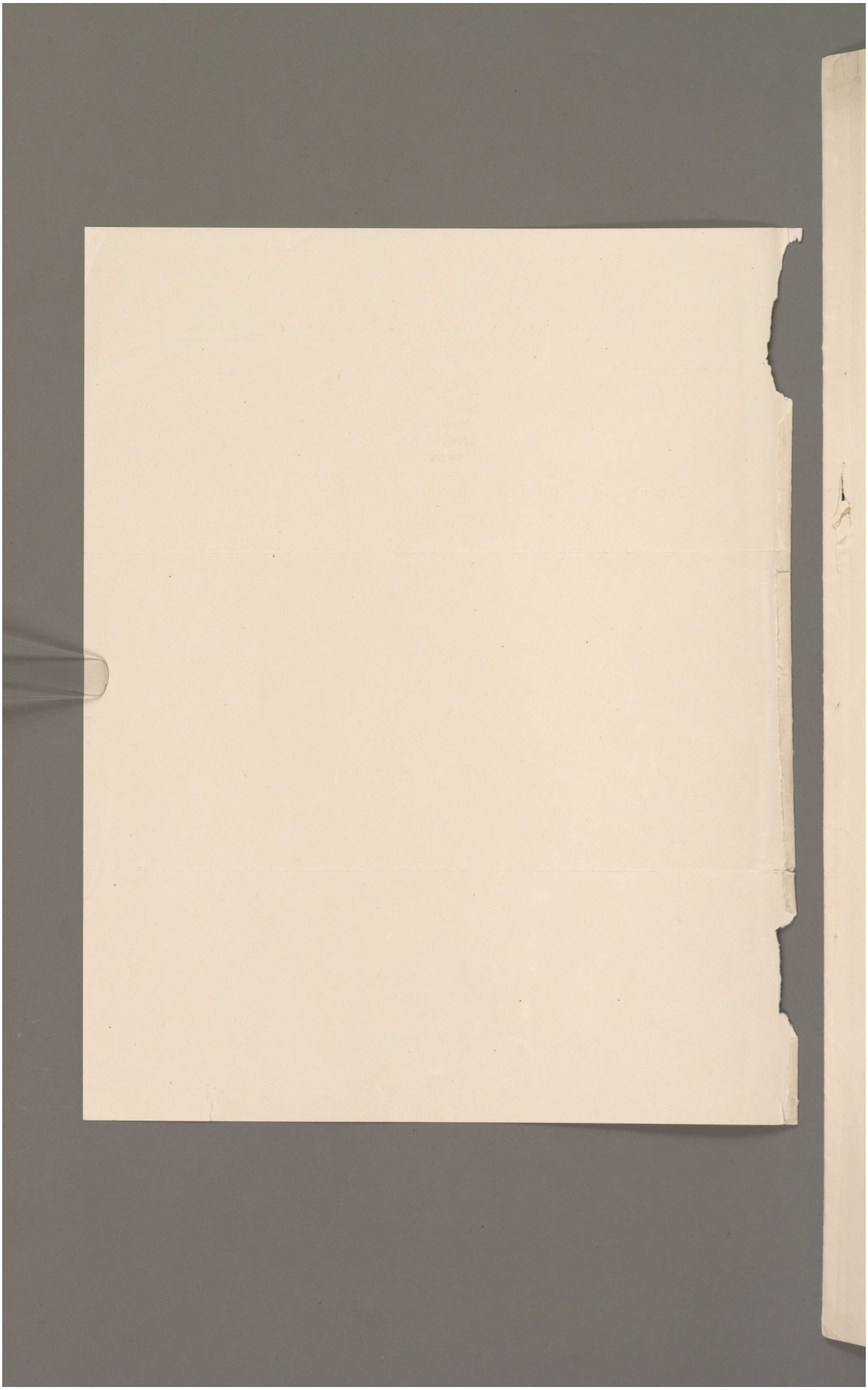
I circulate to the War Council the text of the telegram in regard to the advance on Baghdad in which I embodied the decision come to yesterday evening.

A. C.

22nd October 1915.

83

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000086



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00008d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(82)

SECRET.

Precis of Correspondence connected with the advance to Baghdad prepared in the Military Department of the India Office.

When on 24th April our troops were still at and south of Kurna, the Secretary of State in his telegram, No. 1812 of that date defined the policy of Government, as follows :—

"Nixon's demand (for a Cavalry Brigade) implies intention on his part of important offensive movement. I presume he clearly understands that Government will not sanction at this moment any advance beyond present theatre of operations. We must confine ourselves during summer to defence of Basra Vilayat and oil interests in Arabistan. If, after smashing enemy in Karun direction it is possible to advance to Amara with view to establishing an outpost which will control tribesmen between there and Karun, and so contribute to security of pipe-line there, I should be prepared to accept such a proposal, provided it is supported by you, but I deprecate any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements. Strategically, our present position is a sound one, and at present we cannot afford to take risks by unduly extending it. We must play a safe game in Mesopotamia."

In his No. H. 6582 of the 27th July, the Viceroy telegraphed :—

". . . . The occupation of Kut-el-Amara is considered by us to be a strategic necessity. . . . Once securely in possession we could probable reduce our garrison at Nasiriyeh and Amara, and thus economise our troops. . . . We request your sanction to our authorising Nixon to captue Kut-el-Amara. . . ."

On the 30th July in his 1797, the Secretary of State called attention to the previous orders.

The Viceroy replied on the 5th August, quoting at length General Nixon's views, urging the occupation of Kut-el-Amara. He endorsed those views and proposed to authorise the advance on Kut-el-Amara.

On the following day, Mr. Chamberlain in his 3002 of 6th August, sanctioned the advance to Kut. The result was the brilliant action of Kut-el-Amara and the complete rout of the Turks. By the 3rd October the head of the pursuit had reached as far as Bagheila, and on that date General Nixon telegraphed as follows :—

"I consider I am strong enough to open road to Baghdad, and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Aziziyeh. But this concentration must be partly by land. Families of Germans and Turkish Officials are said to be leaving Baghdad for Aleppo. From military point of view it is highly desirable to capture enemy's steamers, which at this season cannot get far up stream of Baghdad.

Thereupon the Secretary of State in his 3071 of 4th October replied as follows :—

"I shall be glad to know what Nixon's present intentions are, as if, owing to navigation troubles, there is no probability of catching and smashing the retreating enemy, there is no object in continuing the pursuit. The orders conveyed in my 1812 of 24th April, and 3002 of 6th August still hold good, subject to course of events at Baghdad and elsewhere, and to the recommendations you may now make. Please cable your estimate of enemy's present strength in Mesopotamia."

He also telegraphed privately as follows :—

"My official telegram of to-day about Nixon's plans. Your private letter of 10th September seems to render it imperative to stop Nixon's further advance. I shall be grateful for early communication of your views."

On the same day the Military Secretary submitted a Minute entitled "The Mesopotamian Question in its Military Aspect" *vide* Appendix IV. to C.I.D. G—, 28 of October which was circulated to the Cabinet.

The following extracts show its tenour :—

"The victory at Kut-el-Amara is of so complete a nature that the idea of pushing on to Baghdad will certainly be revived. Pressure will be brought on us, either directly by Sir

84

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000ae

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

John Nixon and Sir Percy Cox, who *primâ facie* are in the best position to judge of its feasibility, or indirectly by an agitation in the Press or in commercial circles. It may even be urged, and there is much force in the argument, that it is advisable on political grounds on account of the world-wide prestige which the occupation of Baghdad would confer. Certainly strong arguments can be advanced for its occupation, and the ease with which the operation can be carried out will be impressed on us with such cogency and insistance that the proposal will be difficult to resist. The very glamour attaching to so historic a city is in itself a temptation, and it is with extreme reluctance that I advocate a policy of caution, which will certainly be unpopular, and perhaps difficult to justify in the minds of those who are not intimate with the intricacies of the problem."

* * * *

"In my judgment it will not be wise to go to Baghdad *unless we can increase the force by a whole Division of Infantry and one or two Cavalry regiments*, and this we know is impracticable unless the Indian troops are withdrawn from France.

"The conclusion of the whole matter therefore is that we cannot under present circumstances go to Baghdad without incurring unjustifiable risks. It must be remembered that during the winter the Russians are not likely to be able to make any advance into Armenia, and consequently the Turks can very well spare a division or two from the Armenian army at this season to reinforce the Mesopotamian troops."

* * * *

"We have practically no reserves to depend on and we must play a safe game and husband our sorely strained military resources."

* * * * *

"If we do not stop him, General Nixon will soon be in Baghdad regardless of orders, and we shall then be faced by the grave alternative of either having to withdraw again or of making our occupation effective. Either course involves serious considerations, more especially in view of the gloomy situation in the near East."

The following day the Secretary of State cabled as follows :—

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 5th October 1915.

"Private. My private telegram of 4th instant. Nixon's advance. Cabinet, to whom position was reported yesterday, decided to appoint Committee of General Staff, Admiralty, Foreign and India Offices to consider in all its aspects possibility and policy of advance on Baghdad. Political reasons were thought to make occupation desirable as isolating Germans in Persia, if forces available are sufficient to take and hold the place. Barrow thinks we might be able to capture Baghdad, but that forces weakened by further losses would be insufficient both to hold it securely against counter attack and to maintain communications. Kitchener can hold out no hope of reinforcements from Europe or Egypt. Let me know your views. It was suggested that Japan should be asked to send a Division."

On the same day General Nixon telegraphed :—

"It is my view that we have in front of us a shaken enemy who has lost 13 guns and is deficient of ammunition, and for military reasons it is clearly desirable to smash him while we can. He has taken refuge in a position where we can manœuvre, and I hope, destroy him. I see nothing which would justify letting slip such an opportunity. From a military point of view, Baghdad is a focus of Turkish lines of advance and a large supply centre, of which, in our interests, it is vital to deprive the enemy and this quite apart from any political effect its occupation might have."

On 6th October in his H. 8245, the Viceroy quoted General Nixon's views as follows :—

"With reference to my suggestion to open by another general action road to Baghdad, will you kindly let me know whether my force is to be reinforced to the extent of another Division from France, in order that my position there may be maintained. Effect of my occupying Baghdad would be more than nullified if subsequent events should compel me, in course of time, to retreat down the river in consequence of reinforcements not being forthcoming."

The Viceroy concurred in the above views in the following words :—

"In view of German activities in Persia, increasing pressure on Afghanistan, and the aspect in the Balkans and Dardanelles, we hold that the capture of Baghdad would have such an effect in the Near East and offers such important political and strategical advantages as to justify movement, but to do this at least an additional Division would be required. Otherwise we do not propose to allow him to go beyond Kut-el-Amara."

* * * * *

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000006

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"Our estimate of present strength of enemy in Mesopotamia is 8,500 rifles, 600 sabres and 28 guns, under command of Nur-ud-din."

He also sent a private telegram on the same date to the Secretary of State in the following terms :—

"Private. Your private telegram of 4th instant. Nixon's plans. Please see official telegram of to-day. Orders were telegraphed yesterday to Nixon to stop further advance. Present situation is as follows: Nixon with forces at his disposal could without much difficulty capture Baghdad, and at the same time take or destroy Turkish steamers and other boats, thus practically preventing any further attacks down stream. But he could not remain there exposed to attack by Turkish reinforcements from Mosul or Aleppo without himself being reinforced by one division of troops. It would be a grave political error to advance to Baghdad and to retire later under pressure from the Turks. Consequently, unless it be possible to reinforce Nixon from elsewhere other than from India, he must remain at Kut-el-Amara. On the other hand, from a political point of view, capture of Baghdad would create an immense impression in Middle East, especially in Persia, Afghanistan, and on our frontier, and would counteract unfortunate impression created by want of success in Dardanelles. It would also isolate German parties in Persia, probably produce pacificating effect in that country, and frustrate German plan of raising Afghanistan and the tribes, while impression throughout Arabia would be striking. In India effect would undoubtedly be good. These are considerations to which I attach great importance, but I put them forward to be weighed by you and His Majesty's Government, for I fully realise that it is for His Majesty's Government to decide where and how our forces can be used with the best possible effect."

The telegram received the next day from Sir John Nixon regarding various movements confirmed the suspicion that he intended to push on.

The subject was considered by the Cabinet apparently on the 8th October, for on that day the following telegrams passed between the Secretary of State, the Viceroy, and General Nixon :—

"From Secretary of State to General Nixon, Basra, 8th October 1915.

"(Repeated to India.)

"3077. Very urgent. With what addition to your present force are you confident that you can both occupy and hold Baghdad? Reply direct and repeat reply to Government of India."

"From General Nixon, 8th October 1915.

"(Repeated to Chief of General Staff.)

"308/218/0. Your 3077 of 8th. I am confident that I can beat Nur-ud-din and occupy Baghdad without any addition to my present force. But if Turks should turn their serious attention to the recovery of Baghdad and should send to Mesopotamia the large organised forces which would be necessary for such an operation, then I consider that I should require one Division (and I should like also one British Cavalry Regiment, in addition to my present force to watch both the Tigris and Euphrates lines of communication and defeat the enemy as he comes within reach. Further, the Baghdad position would be best from which to do this."

"From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 8th October 1915.

"Private and very urgent. Reference to my telegram of to-day to Nixon repeated to you. Cabinet are so impressed with great political and military advantages of occupation of Baghdad that we shall make every effort to supply necessary force. We do not wish to attempt it with insufficient forces. Are you satisfied that one division is sufficient."

"From Viceroy to the Secretary of State, 9th October 1915.

"Private. Your private telegram of the 8th instant and Nixon's telegram to you, No. 308, of the same date. I am glad of the decisien of Cabinet. After consulting the Commander-in-Chief, I think that Nixon is in the best position to judge as to the number of troops required, and when he mentions a division we understand him to mean a fully organised division with its proper proportion of British troops and guns and its divisional Cavalry. In addition to this he asks for a Cavalry Regiment. We are prepared to accept his opinion, but think that it will also be necessary to ensure that British units now with him are kept up to strength by drafts from home, as India cannot supply these. We will keep the Indian units full. We may add that reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after its capture, as this is the period which we calculate must elapse before the Turks could concentrate in strength to attempt its recapture."

It will be observed that the Viceroy asked "that the reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after its capture," thus implying that Nixon was strong enough for the immediate task of capturing the city with his existing force.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000c7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

The War Committee decided on the 14th October that the combined staffs of the War Office and Admiralty should prepare a paper on the subject. This was submitted on the 19th October.

At the request of the Prime Minister an Inter-Departmental Committee held at the India Office also reported on the situation. Their report was submitted on the 16th October, *vide* Committee of Imperial Defence Paper, Secret, G. 28, of October 1915, entitled "Report of an Inter-Departmental Committee on the Strategical Situation in Mesopotamia."

The conclusions of the Inter-Departmental Committee are at page 3 of the paper quoted.

On the same date (16th October) the Military Secretary, India Office, submitted a supplementary minute in consequence of the information received from India and from General Nixon subsequent to the date on which the Committee had drafted its Report, *vide* Committee of Imperial Defence Paper, Secret, G. 31, of October 1915.

The following extracts indicate a certain modification of the views he had previously expressed :—

"*If, therefore, we have a firm promise of two divisions, I am entirely in favour of going to Baghdad*, while, if we get only one division added to Force 'D,' we might still consider the advisability of a raid and retirement. That is to say, General Nixon, with two divisions and three cavalry regiments in the Baghdad area, will be able, whatever the Turks may do—

"(1) To spoil their advanced base by removing or destroying all stores and transport now available in the area.

"(2) To cut them off from all communication with Persia for at least two or three months.

"(3) To postpone trouble from Afghanistan for that period.

"(4) To keep the Basra vilayet and the oilfields quiet for a like period."

* * * * *

"Before the three months have elapsed the position may have entirely changed in our favour elsewhere, but whatever we decide we must decide quickly or the moral effect of Kut-el-Amara will have worn off.

"I have described the advantages of offensive action, but I am not oblivious to its dangers. The political effect of eventual retirement will be bad, but there will have been compensatory advantages, and, moreover, we should have been given time to prepare a formidable Torres Vedras at Kut-el-Amara, and some of our gunboats will be ready to guard the river."

These various papers were considered by the War Council on the 21st October, and their conclusions were embodied in the Secretary of State's private telegram of the same date, which was also in reply to the Viceroy's private telegram of that date. The telegrams in question were as follows :—

"From Viceroy, 21st October 1915.

"Private. Your private telegram of 18th instant. Baghdad.

"Government of India are in entire agreement with His Majesty's Government as to political and strategic advantages of the capture and occupation of Baghdad which are emphasised by contents of Mr. Marling's telegram of 15th October, but we regard internal security of India and the security of our frontier as our first pre-occupation, and in our present depleted military situation are quite unable to send a further force of strength of a division of troops from India to Mesopotamia.

"After consulting Commander-in-Chief I consider that there are three alternatives before us :—

"(1) Take and occupy Baghdad. This will present no difficulty whatever, provided that we are guaranteed reinforcements of a full division of troops reaching Mesopotamia within two months from now. This will be the most satisfactory solution.

"(2) Attack the Turks, raid Baghdad, capturing the few steamers that remain and stores, releasing the English female captives, destroying the railway north of Baghdad and dominating the city by river patrols from a camp south of Baghdad. This would have a good political effect, and the fact that we were not in actual occupation of Baghdad might not precipitate the despatch of Turkish reinforcements to recapture it. This, from a political point of view, would be only the second best alternative, but it would not require addition of a whole division to carry it out.

"The Commander-in-Chief from a military point of view dislikes this solution, and would prefer either (1) or (3). He considers that Baghdad, being great centre of supplies and a valuable base for whichever side is in possession of it, we must either hold it ourselves or keep well away from it. He does not think that it is possible to (dominate ?) it from south. We should have to be camped close to the suburbs, which in his opinion gives us all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of occupation. His view is that unless we hold Baghdad, Turkish reinforcements will be gradually dribbled into it, and we may be attacked in strength without warning unless we are as far away as Kut-el-Amara. Nixon goes so far as to consider that even without reinforcements his army would be safer in and north of Baghdad than anywhere south of it, and Commander-in-Chief lays great stress on the value

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00009d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

of Baghdad-Samarra railway in that it would prevent any possibility of surprise attack on us. He considers that all our interests lie in our holding Baghdad, but recognises that without addition our present (forces) might be driven out of it, and that this might involve a very difficult and dangerous retreat down the river. Shortly, he is opposed to a raid on Baghdad followed by a withdrawal. He is strongly in favour of holding Baghdad if reinforcements are forthcoming. If they are not forthcoming, he prefers safety of Kut-el-Amara position. He feels, however, that present military situation is such that it may at any time become necessary to occupy Baghdad even with our existing forces, and accept the risk involved.

"My own comment upon the Commander-in-Chief's view is that from a political point of view it would be disastrous to be driven out of Baghdad.

"(3) Remain in a defensive position at Kut-el-Amara. This is a course that does not appeal to us, for it shows weakness which will be recognised both by Turks and the tribes, and may force our hands into advancing after all.

"Having placed these alternatives before you, I leave the question with confidence for His Majesty's Government to decide, but I trust that the decision will be in favour of the first alternative."

"From Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 21st October 1915.

"Private. Your private telegram of 21st October. Baghdad advance.

"Report of Combined Staffs estimates that Nixon has only some 9,000 Turkish troops and some irregulars to deal with for next two months; that Turkish forces may be somewhat increased by end of year, and they might conceivably reach a total of 60,000 by end of January and even larger figures during 1916. They consider that if reinforced by two Indian divisions from France he might with assistance of river flotilla face risk of attack by 60,000, but there would remain possibility of enemy receiving further reinforcements at later date.

"Staffs hold, therefore, that it would be unwise from purely military point of view to occupy Baghdad unless military authorities have power to withdraw troops at once without regard to political considerations if military exigencies make this necessary.

"The War Office would give the two Indian divisions, but could not under any circumstances spare further reinforcements, and are doubtful of their capacity even to supply drafts if wastage from casualties or sickness is severe. They think Baghdad can be taken easily and held for some time, but as explained above it might become untenable later.

"At present moment it seems that German attempt to break through to Constantinople will succeed, and our position and prospects in Gallipoli are most uncertain. Persia seems drifting into war on German side whilst Arabs are wavering, and unless we can offer them great inducement will probably join Turks. We are, therefore, in great need of striking success in the East both to check Persian movement and to win Arabs.

"It is suggested that we should occupy Baghdad, giving assurances to Arab leaders that we favour creation of Arab State independent of Turks, and that we shall be prepared to consider future disposition of Baghdad in connection therewith. Is this practicable? Shereef of Mecca will certainly ask for declaration of our intentions as regards Baghdad if we occupy it. Unless you consider that possibility of eventual withdrawal is decisive against the advance, all other considerations seem to us to render it desirable, and we are prepared to order it."

On the 23rd October another War Council was held, the result of which was the definite order contained in the following telegram :—

"From the Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 23rd October 1915.

"No. 3099. Nixon may march on Baghdad if he is satisfied that force he has available is sufficient for the operation. Reinforcements will take time owing to relief and transport arrangements, but two divisions will be sent as soon as possible. I will telegraph probable date later."

This telegram practically authorised the Viceroy to issue the necessary instructions to General Nixon, and on the 25th October the Chief of the General Staff, India, cabled to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, War Office : —

"From Chief of the General Staff, India, to War Office, dated 25th October.

"We have to be prepared to meet the Turks in superior numbers; and this being the case, Baghdad, the best position at which to meet them, should be immediately occupied, and a reinforcement of two divisions should reach the Tigris within two months . . . . the failure to seize what appears to be within our grasp would be interpreted throughout Asia, Persia, Afghanistan, and the East as weakness."

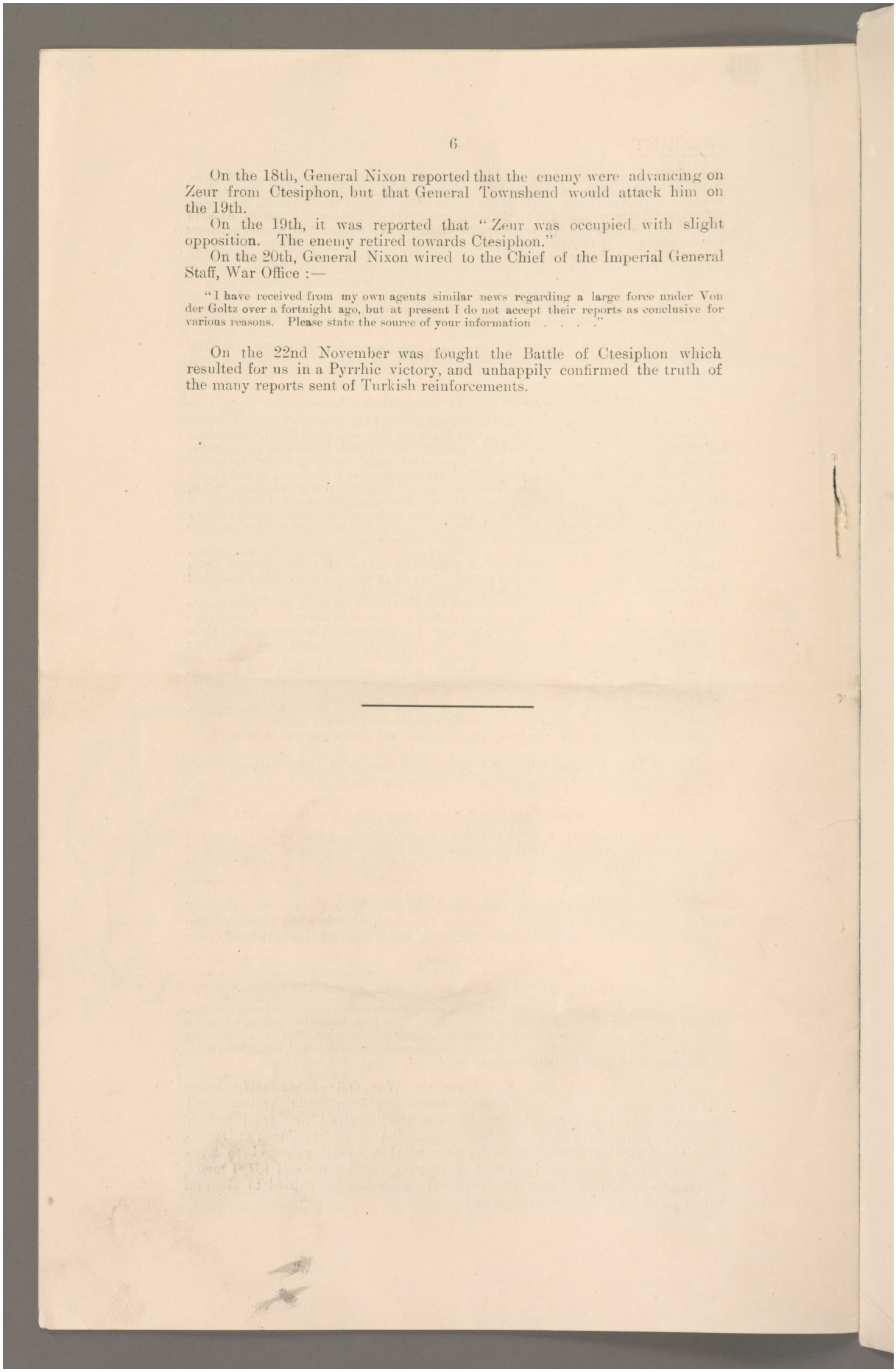
From the 1st to 11th November the War Office sent half-a-dozen telegrams reporting various Turkish movements from Syria, Armenia, and Mosul towards Baghdad. To this India replied on the 13th November in a telegram to the War Office that their information *re* 20,000 Turks at Dar-el-Zor was discredited, and that the only reinforcements reported to have reached Baghdad *viâ* the Euphrates route were 8 Q.F. guns and 1,000 men.

On the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th further intelligence was cabled to General Nixon regarding Turkish movements.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000a2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



On the 18th, General Nixon reported that the enemy were advancing on Zeur from Ctesiphon, but that General Townshend would attack him on the 19th.

On the 19th, it was reported that "Zeur was occupied with slight opposition. The enemy retired towards Ctesiphon."

On the 20th, General Nixon wired to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, War Office :—

"I have received from my own agents similar news regarding a large force under Von der Goltz over a fortnight ago, but at present I do not accept their reports as conclusive for various reasons. Please state the source of your information . . . . ."

On the 22nd November was fought the Battle of Ctesiphon which resulted for us in a Pyrrhic victory, and unhappily confirmed the truth of the many reports sent of Turkish reinforcements.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000af

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

From General Nixon, 23rd November 1915.

Dust storm blowing all the morning of the 23rd delayed reorganisation of Townshend's Force. Enemy's guns appear to have been drawn back quickly, but his second line of trenches, echeloned 2 miles in rear of left flank of position captured yesterday, are still held by infantry. Some cavalry and infantry detachments pushed forward by enemy to reconnoitre have been driven in, but enemy's guns on right bank still bar passage of our ships to Ctesiphon. Left flank of Townshend's Force will conduct 23rd–24th Punjabis on river, 2½ miles south of Ctesiphon, in order to cover establishment of boat bridge and evacuation of wounded by steamer. Casualties not yet fully reported, but expected to exceed 2,000. Two Martinsydes are missing with pilots, Major Reilly and Lieutenant Fulton. Enemy's dead are very numerous, and large quantities of arms and equipment have been captured. The eight guns mentioned in my Camp 1 of 22nd were captured and re-captured three times, and had to be abandoned by our troops at nightfall as they were not strong enough to maintain themselves in the forward position to which they had penetrated. The enemy has removed his bridge below Qu'saivah, and shows no offensive tendency at present.

From General Nixon, 24th November 1915.

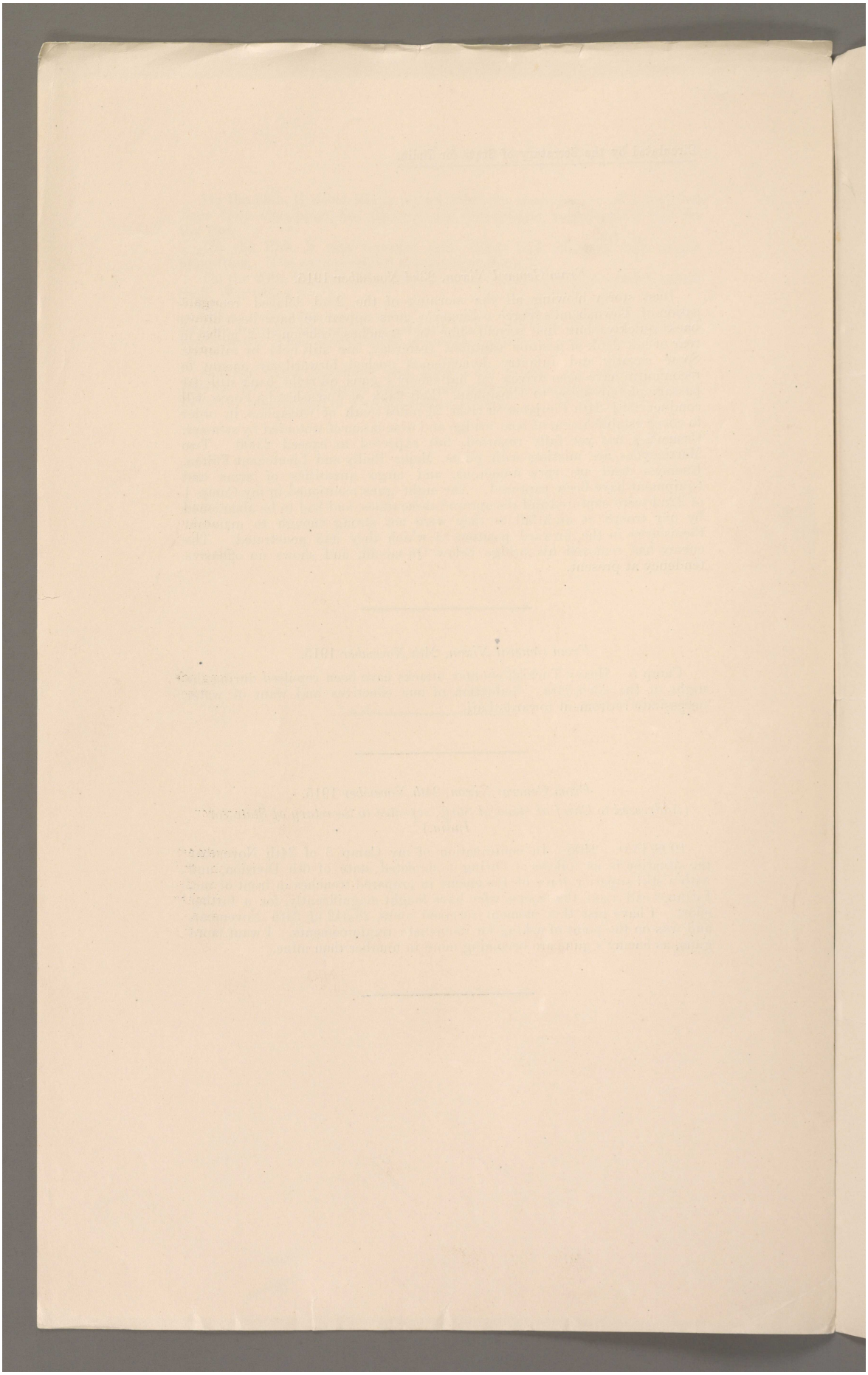
Camp 5. Heavy Turkish counter attacks have been repulsed during the night of the 23rd/24th. Reduction of our effectives and want of water necessitate retirement towards Lajj.

From General Nixon, 24th November 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India.*)

1008/45/0. 2405. In continuation of my Camp 5 of 24th November the situation is as follows:—Owing to depleted state of 6th Division, and with a still superior force of the enemy in prepared trenches in front of me, I cannot call upon the troops, who have fought magnificently, for a further effort. I have just this moment received yours, 28,342 of 24th November, and was on the point of asking for immediate reinforcements. I want more guns, as enemy's guns are becoming more in number than mine.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000032



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000010

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Lord Curzon (86)

13

This Document is the property of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Telegrams relating to General Sir John Nixon's advance in Mesopotamia.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
25th November 1915.

(*Addressed to Viceroy, repeated Sir John Nixon.*)

No. 3156. Younghusband's Brigade plus one battalion and cavalry regiment should reach Basra by end of first week December. Nine Indian battalions now in Egypt should reach Basra between 10th and 15th, and the last man of the two Divisions should have arrived by 31st December.

Drafts for British regiments to number of 1,600 or 2,000 will be sent as soon as transport available.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 25th November 1915.

Clear the line. No. 3157. My 3156. I also hope to secure drafts for eight Regular battalions on Frontier. Bill now before Parliament to authorise retention with colours of time-expired men. Should pass before session ends.

From Viceroy, 25th November 1915.

Private. In view of check near Baghdad I have agreed to Commander-in-Chief's proposal to despatch immediately two brigades of infantry and one of artillery from India as reinforcements. This makes us dangerously weak in India. When may I expect two divisions to arrive from France?

From Secretary of State to Sir John Nixon, 25th November 1915.

(*Repeated to Viceroy.*)

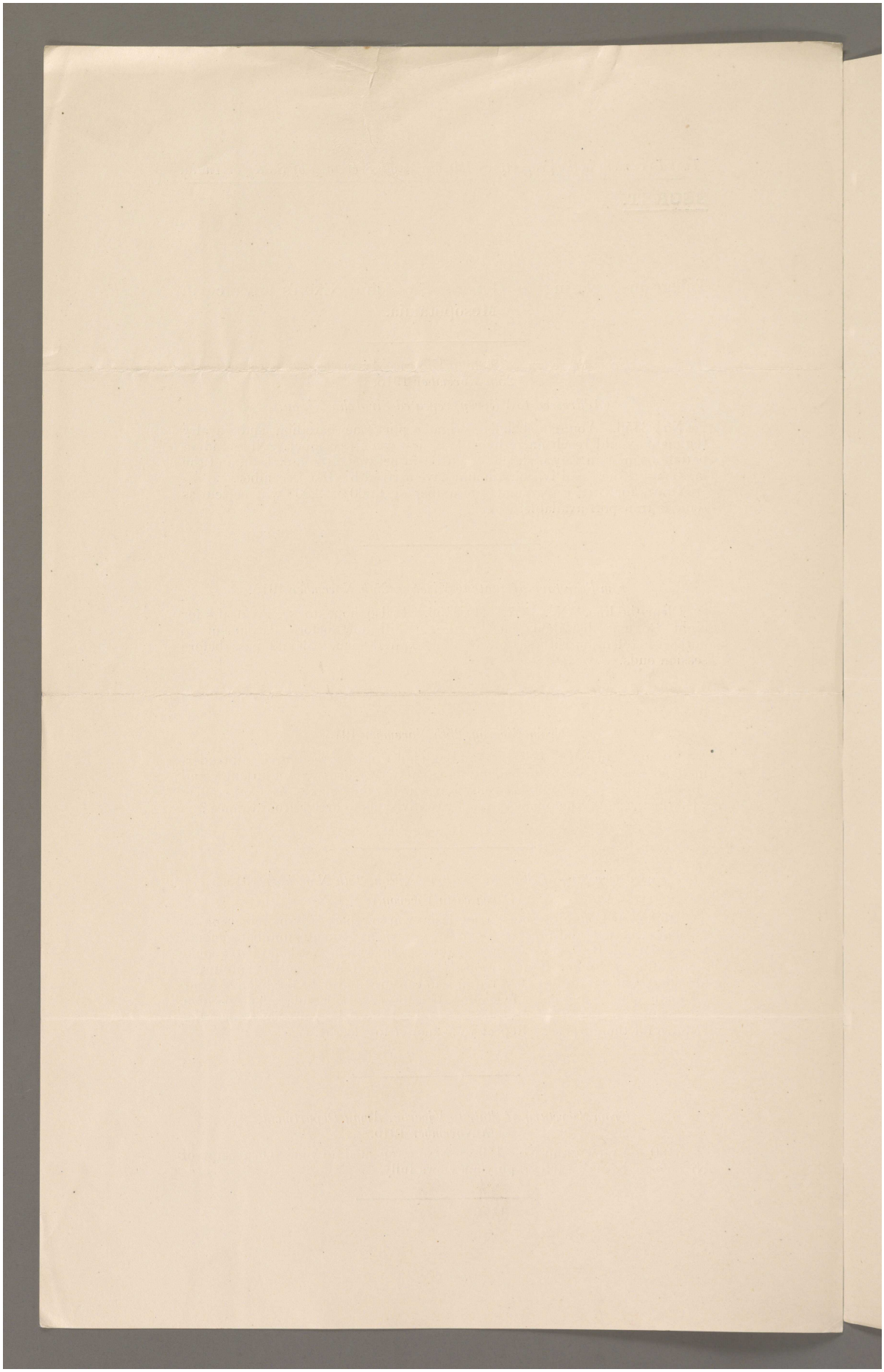
3159. War Committee of Cabinet desire you to report fully by telegraph on present situation and prospects. What is present estimate numbers enemy Ctesiphon and Baghdad? What reinforcements can he get before you could again attack? What, if any, troops, additional to reinforcements and drafts already promised do you now require to capture and hold Baghdad. Your estimate should be on safe side. If capture of Baghdad has become impossible, report what position you propose to hold and what troops you require for the purpose. Repeat your answer to Viceroy.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
25th November 1915.

3160. My telegram No. 3159 to Nixon repeated to you. On receipt of Nixon's reply please telegraph your views fully.

88

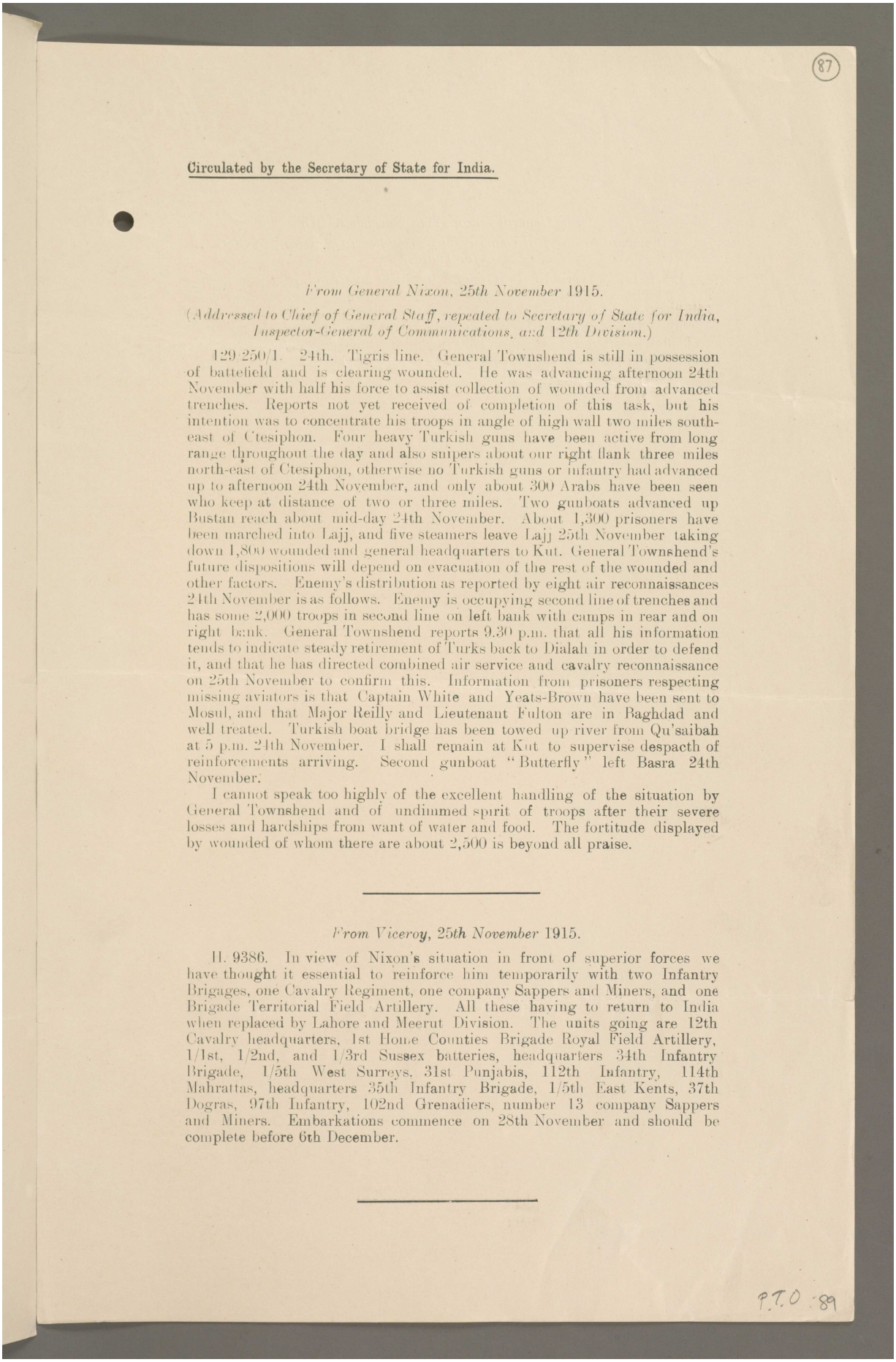
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b8



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000090

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



(87)

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

From General Nixon, 25th November 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/250/1. 24th. Tigris line. General Townshend is still in possession of battlefield and is clearing wounded. He was advancing afternoon 24th November with half his force to assist collection of wounded from advanced trenches. Reports not yet received of completion of this task, but his intention was to concentrate his troops in angle of high wall two miles south-east of Ctesiphon. Four heavy Turkish guns have been active from long range throughout the day and also snipers about our right flank three miles north-east of Ctesiphon, otherwise no Turkish guns or infantry had advanced up to afternoon 24th November, and only about 300 Arabs have been seen who keep at distance of two or three miles. Two gunboats advanced up Bustan reach about mid-day 24th November. About 1,300 prisoners have been marched into Lajj, and five steamers leave Lajj 25th November taking down 1,800 wounded and general headquarters to Kut. General Townshend's future dispositions will depend on evacuation of the rest of the wounded and other factors. Enemy's distribution as reported by eight air reconnaissances 24th November is as follows. Enemy is occupying second line of trenches and has some 2,000 troops in second line on left bank with camps in rear and on right bank. General Townshend reports 9.30 p.m. that all his information tends to indicate steady retirement of Turks back to Dialah in order to defend it, and that he has directed combined air service and cavalry reconnaissance on 25th November to confirm this. Information from prisoners respecting missing aviators is that Captain White and Yeats-Brown have been sent to Mosul, and that Major Reilly and Lieutenant Fulton are in Baghdad and well treated. Turkish boat bridge has been towed up river from Qu'saibah at 5 p.m. 24th November. I shall remain at Kut to supervise despacth of reinforcements arriving. Second gunboat "Butterfly" left Basra 24th November.

I cannot speak too highly of the excellent handling of the situation by General Townshend and of undimmed spirit of troops after their severe losses and hardships from want of water and food. The fortitude displayed by wounded of whom there are about 2,500 is beyond all praise.

From Viceroy, 25th November 1915.

H. 9386. In view of Nixon's situation in front of superior forces we have thought it essential to reinforce him temporarily with two Infantry Brigages, one Cavalry Regiment, one company Sappers and Miners, and one Brigade Territorial Field Artillery. All these having to return to India when replaced by Lahore and Meerut Division. The units going are 12th Cavalry headquarters, 1st Home Counties Brigade Royal Field Artillery, 1/1st, 1/2nd, and 1/3rd Sussex batteries, headquarters 34th Infantry Brigade, 1/5th West Surreys, 31st Punjabis, 112th Infantry, 114th Mahrattas, headquarters 35th Infantry Brigade, 1/5th East Kents, 37th Dogras, 97th Infantry, 102nd Grenadiers, number 13 company Sappers and Miners. Embarkations commence on 28th November and should be complete before 6th December.

P.T.O. 89

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000015

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

From General Nixon, 26th November 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India.)

129/251/1. Tigris line. General Townshend's force is still in position at Ctesiphon. Aeroplane reconnaissance morning of 25th November established fact that Turks in force are entrenched on line two miles east of Dialah. Three columns seen marching from Qusaibh towards above entrenched position. Two more B.E. machines have completed their flying tests. General headquarters reached Aziziyah evening of 25th November.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000065

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

From General Nixon, 26th November 1915.

(Repeated to Chief of General Staff for information of the Viceroy.)

1008/64/0. 3159 of 25th November.

General Townshend's force has suffered such severe losses and its units are so depleted of officers that it cannot be counted on for future operations as an effective Division for some time, but will be used on lines of communications and as a possible nucleus for increasing our striking force. Its effective strength in rifles and sabres probably does not exceed some 7,500, and its total casualties are now reported 4,300. General Townshend has evacuated all his wounded except about 600 from Lajj. These latter will be evacuated as soon as ships are available. As the enemy on afternoon of 25th November showed signs of moving against him in two columns, he has concentrated his force at Lajj, where he has a fortnight's supplies and a further four days' supplies at Aziziyah. All ships returning from Kut, after evacuation of wounded, will bring up further supplies and ammunition.

Enemy's effective strength at battle of Ctesiphon is now estimated to have been four Divisions or 20,000 men. One Division, the 45th, is stated by prisoners to have been practically wiped out, and this agrees with observation. The other three Divisions were probably all engaged, and of these the 38th Division is stated by prisoners to have bolted. Present estimated effective strength of enemy at Ctesiphon is now about 11,000 with 39 guns; but I have not had time to fully verify this. These troops are ill-supplied with transport and ships, and have no gunboats. They have many Arab auxiliaries who have not been in their pay, but these have so far shown no disposition to participate in a general action.

In my I.G. 1658/5, dated 21st November, addressed to Chief of the General Staff, I estimated a possible eventual concentration against us of nine Turkish divisions. Of these four were actually at Ctesiphon, and the heads of two more may now be arriving at Baghdad. Turks have already made arrangements for transporting these reinforcements to Baghdad by rafts from Mosul, and reports have been received of a forthcoming concentration *viâ* Euphrates, but this latter requires confirmation. Time taken to concentrate rear on head of a division moving thus is calculated at between a fortnight and three weeks. Any advance from Baghdad by land on part of Turks would necessitate collection of transport. Taking new divisions as arriving at full strength of nine battalions at 900 each, and consisting of Ottoman Turks who do not desert, the enemy's strength in the Baghdad concentration area may amount to 27,500 men and 55 guns by second week in December, by which time it is estimated that Townshend's force can be increased to between 11,000 and 12,000. By end of February Turks might assemble 50,000 men and 84 guns. This is deduced from War Office telegram No. 9977 cypher M.O. 6 dated 16th November, and Chief of General Staff's telegram No. S. 27,496/3. 63, of 16th November, on the assumption that the Turks can so afford to disregard the Russians as to allow for the re-grouping of their forces on the lines indicated in latter telegram.

We ourselves shall not be in a position to attack Baghdad until the beginning of March at earliest, and then with some 40,000 men with 114 land guns exclusive of 7,000 to 8,000 men on our lines of communication. Above numbers include Lahore and Meerut Divisions complete *plus* 34th and 35th Brigades from India *plus* extra Cavalry Regiment, British drafts and all Artillery promised. To effect above I have assumed that my fleet of ships will have been reinforced at a very early date by at least the additional craft recently asked for from India, about the arrival of which I am momentarily expecting to hear. The ruling factor in the rapidity with which our concentration can be effected is the supply of additional river transport. Had we succeeded in seizing Baghdad the question of additional ships would not have been so acute, as we could have brought up reinforcements by degrees with a smaller number of ships.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000045

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

To summarise. Provided that my river transport is immediately augmented to the maximum extent possible, and that all promised reinforcements *plus* drafts to make good present wastage reach me by middle of January, I consider that I shall be in a position to capture and hold Baghdad by the middle of March 1916 without any additional troops. Should the Russians be able to co-operate with me, my task will be proportionately simplified; and I ask for information as to how far I may expect such co-operation. As I feel confident of capturing Baghdad, I do not propose to discuss the alternative of taking up a defensive line in rear.

From Sir John Nixon, 27th November 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of the General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/152/1. 26th. Tigris line.—Aeroplane reconnaissance evening 25th reported Turks were moving forward from the Dialah position in two columns, one along Tigris left bank and the other at turning distance inland, while hostile cavalry brigade menaced Busten. General Townshend, to avoid being pinned in, skilfully withdrew during the night of 25th–26th to Lajj, where he is entrenching on the river and will demonstrate by the right bank. Air reconnaissance afternoon 26th reported Turks re-occupying front line trenches lightly and some 10,000 troops moving in the area between Dialah and Ctesiphon.

Euphrates line.—Nasiriyah reports that camels are being purchased by Turkish agents in co-operation with Ajaimi in the neighbourhood of Khamsieh and Samawa. Deduction is that some advance by Euphrates line may be intended. Ajaimi has recently been spreading reports of Turkish reinforcements on this line. General headquarters leave Aziziyah for Kut morning 27th.

From General Nixon, 28th November 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/253/1. Tigris line. General Townshend reports 27th November that enemy estimated at 12,000 advancing from Bustan and that he may have to fall back on Aziziyah.

From General Nixon, 28th November 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India.)

Tigris line. General Townshend withdrew his force unmolested during night of 27th–28th November to Aziziyah. Air service reports morning of 28th that large camps being at Ctesiphon. One division infantry with one cavalry and one artillery brigade reported moving on Lajj. Another column reported to be moving north and east of Lajj. General Townshend does not anticipate that enemy will advance beyond Zeur. Should they do so, he will retire on Kut to cover concentration of reinforcement. Reports indicate possibility of hostile force from Jassan moving to Sheikh Saad.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000085

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 24th November 1915.

Private. Please communicate following message from me to Nixon if you see no objection :—

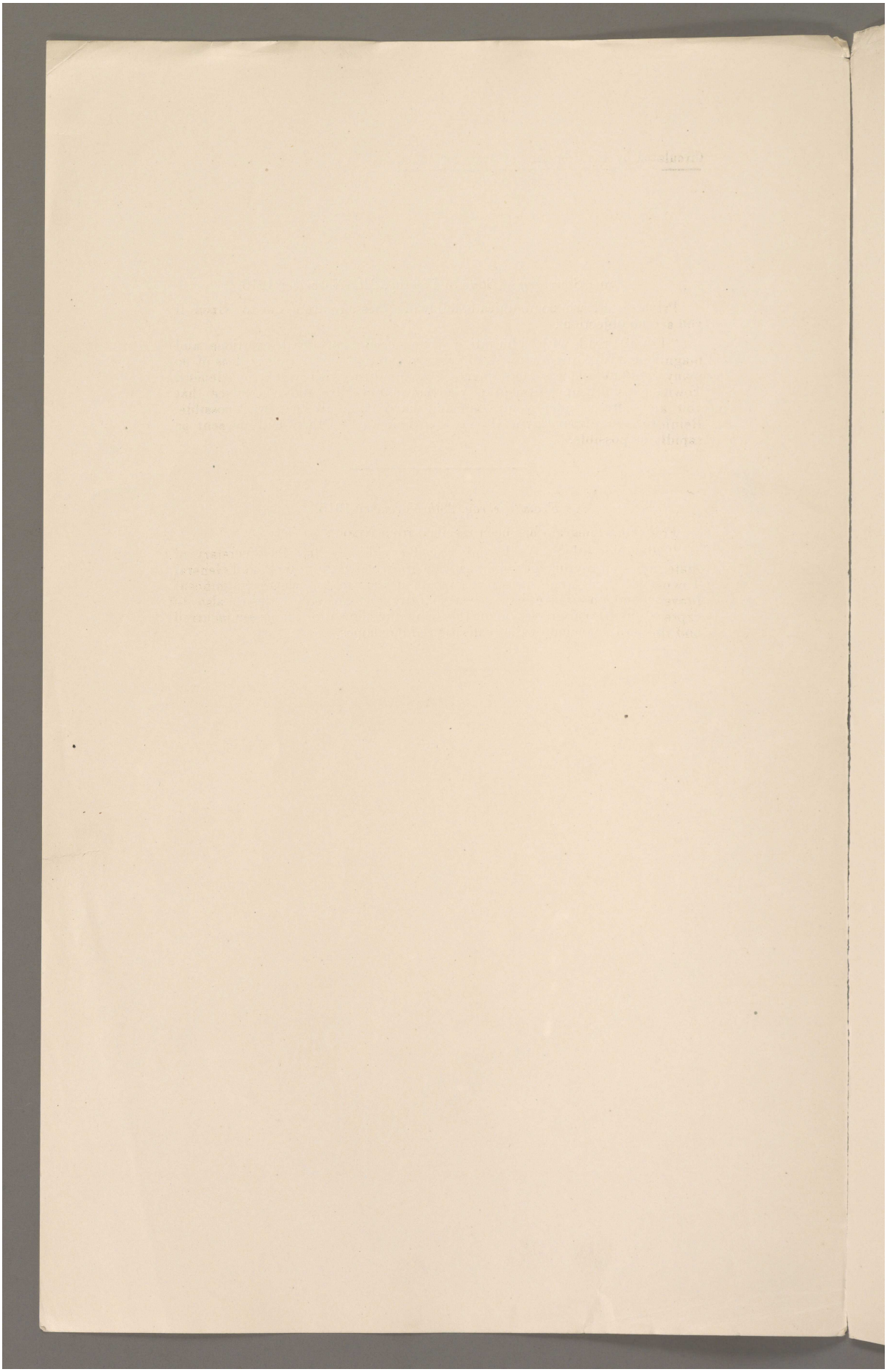
"I have read with admiration your account of great exertions and magnificient fighting qualities of your troops and deeply regret loss of so many gallant officers and men. I sympathise with you and General Townshend in disappointment of your hopes, but have full confidence that you and forces under your command have done all that was possible. Reinforcements from Egypt already on their way. Others will be sent as rapidly as possible."

From Viceroy, 28th November 1915.

Following telegram has been received from Nixon :—

"26th November. Will your Excellency kindly tell the Secretary of State how warmly his message has been appreciated by myself and General Townshend, and the effect it has had on the troops, whose magnificent bravery and endurance have been so fully recognised. I desire also to express the deep appreciation for the sympathy shown for the losses incurred and the postponement of the realisation of our hopes."

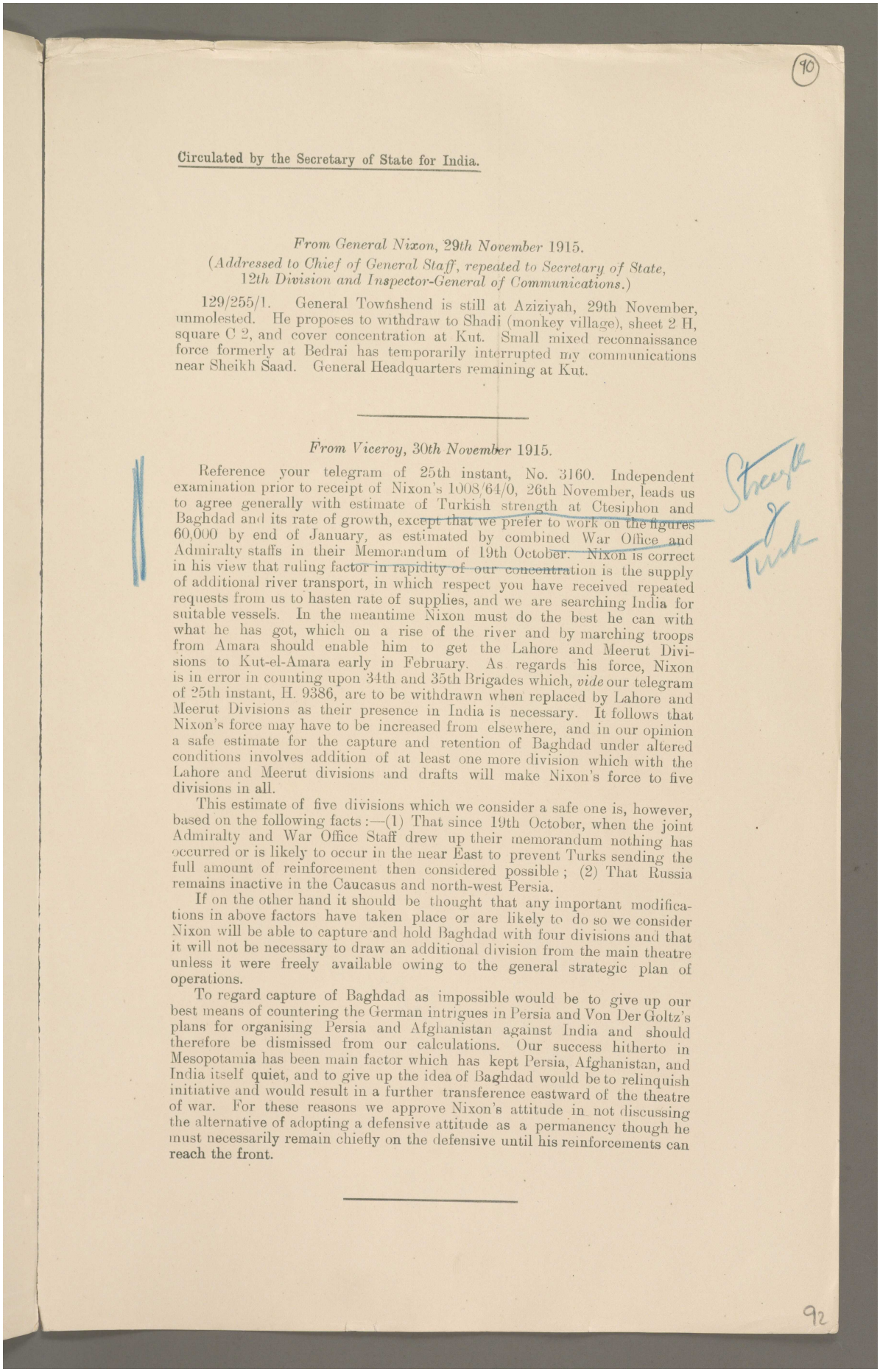
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000071



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000020

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



(90)

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

From General Nixon, 29th November 1915.
(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State, 12th Division and Inspector-General of Communications.)

129/255/1. General Townshend is still at Aziziyah, 29th November, unmolested. He proposes to withdraw to Shadi (monkey village), sheet 2 H, square C 2, and cover concentration at Kut. Small mixed reconnaissance force formerly at Bedrai has temporarily interrupted my communications near Sheikh Saad. General Headquarters remaining at Kut.

From Viceroy, 30th November 1915.

Reference your telegram of 25th instant, No. 3160. Independent examination prior to receipt of Nixon's 1008/64/0, 26th November, leads us to agree generally with estimate of Turkish strength at Ctesiphon and Baghdad and its rate of growth, except that we prefer to work on the figures 60,000 by end of January, as estimated by combined War Office and Admiralty staffs in their Memorandum of 19th October. Nixon is correct in his view that ruling factor in rapidity of our concentration is the supply of additional river transport, in which respect you have received repeated requests from us to hasten rate of supplies, and we are searching India for suitable vessels. In the meantime Nixon must do the best he can with what he has got, which on a rise of the river and by marching troops from Amara should enable him to get the Lahore and Meerut Divisions to Kut-el-Amara early in February. As regards his force, Nixon is in error in counting upon 34th and 35th Brigades which, *vide* our telegram of 25th instant, H. 9386, are to be withdrawn when replaced by Lahore and Meerut Divisions as their presence in India is necessary. It follows that Nixon's force may have to be increased from elsewhere, and in our opinion a safe estimate for the capture and retention of Baghdad under altered conditions involves addition of at least one more division which with the Lahore and Meerut divisions and drafts will make Nixon's force to five divisions in all.

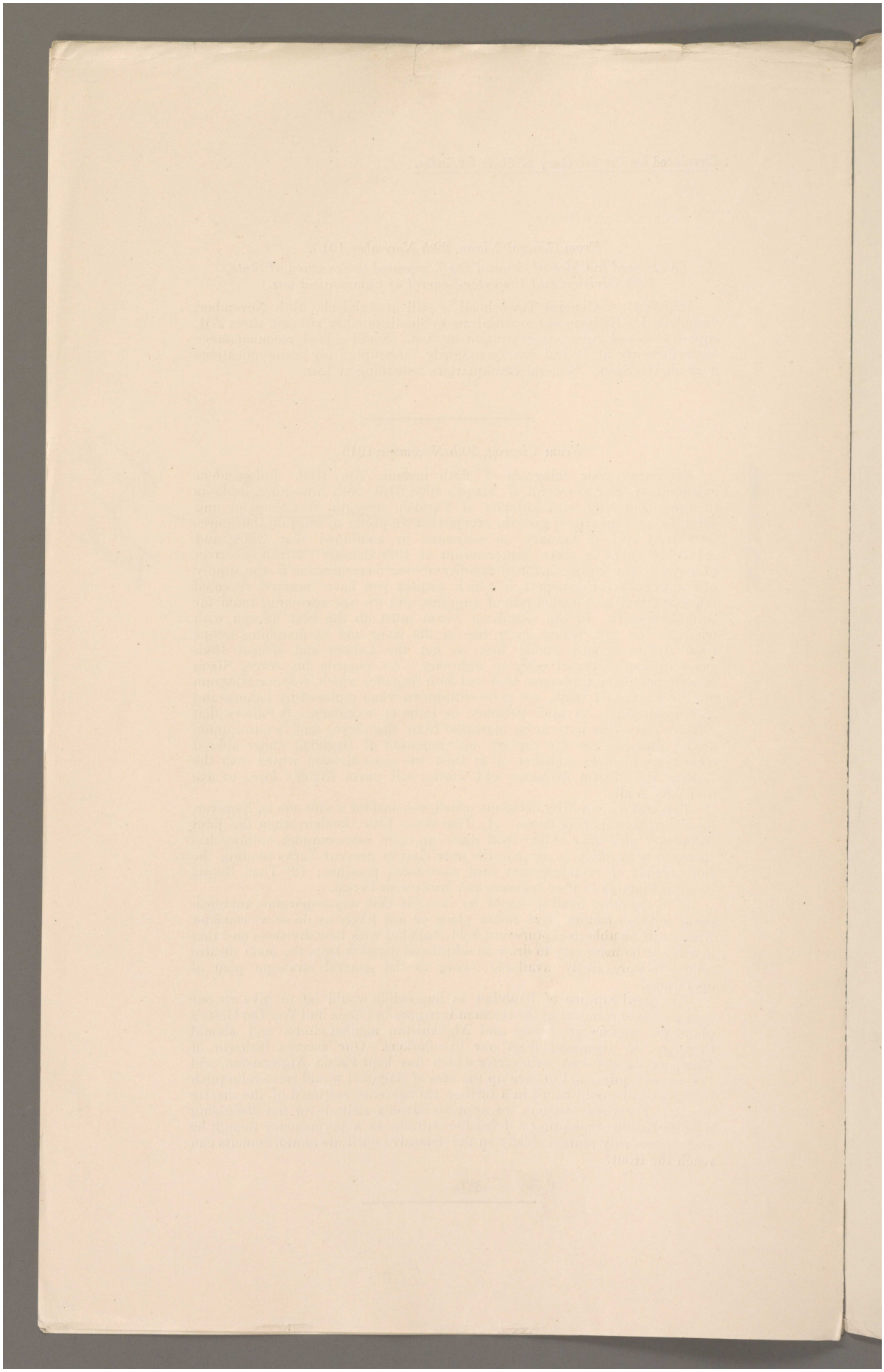
This estimate of five divisions which we consider a safe one is, however, based on the following facts:—(1) That since 19th October, when the joint Admiralty and War Office Staff drew up their memorandum nothing has occurred or is likely to occur in the near East to prevent Turks sending the full amount of reinforcement then considered possible; (2) That Russia remains inactive in the Caucasus and north-west Persia.

If on the other hand it should be thought that any important modifications in above factors have taken place or are likely to do so we consider Nixon will be able to capture and hold Baghdad with four divisions and that it will not be necessary to draw an additional division from the main theatre unless it were freely available owing to the general strategic plan of operations.

To regard capture of Baghdad as impossible would be to give up our best means of countering the German intrigues in Persia and Von Der Goltz's plans for organising Persia and Afghanistan against India and should therefore be dismissed from our calculations. Our success hitherto in Mesopotamia has been main factor which has kept Persia, Afghanistan, and India itself quiet, and to give up the idea of Baghdad would be to relinquish initiative and would result in a further transference eastward of the theatre of war. For these reasons we approve Nixon's attitude in not discussing the alternative of adopting a defensive attitude as a permanency though he must necessarily remain chiefly on the defensive until his reinforcements can reach the front.

92

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000086



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000030

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

From General Nixon, Amara, 4th December 1915.

1008/109/0, 4th December. General Townshend wires, dated 3rd, as follows :—

"88 G. I am grateful for your praise of the conduct of the retirement of the 6th Division. From Ctesiphon to Kut-al-Amarah is a distance of some 85 miles as the crow flies, in contact with a greatly superior force of the enemy, who managed to take me by the collar on 1st December, but we shook ourselves free. Regarding the action of 1st December details are as follows: Estimated 12,000 Turks advanced in long lines on us and we opened Artillery fire at 2,500 yards with crushing effect. He tried then to envelop my left, *i.e.*, my line of retreat, which I repulsed by again turning his envelop with the Cavalry and Horse Artillery guns, with result that his enveloping attack fled. I took this opportunity to break off the battle and commenced my retirement by echelons of brigades. We were heavily shelled by high explosive big guns. By midday we had shaken off the enemy, having lost 250 killed and wounded. Marched 30 miles on 1st December, one Brigade, the 30th, have marched 80 miles in three days including battle, and at the end of it their valour and discipline is is no way diminished and without loss of a gun or a single prisoner even. Never have I seen a retirement like that of 1st December even on Field Manœuvres better done as regards suppleness and steadiness, manœuvres under very heavy shell fire. I mean to defend Kut like I did Chitral." I entirely concur in his high commendation of the valour and discipline displayed by his troops.

From Sir John Nixon, 4th December 1915.

129/258/1. Tigris line. General Headquarters with ship convoy passed Ali-al-Gharbi, noon 3rd December.

General Townshend reports that he will hold Kut, and that he has issued all orders for putting his plan of defence into operation. General Younghusband, with Headquarters, 28th Brigade and 51st Sikhs, left Basra for Kut evening of 2nd December.

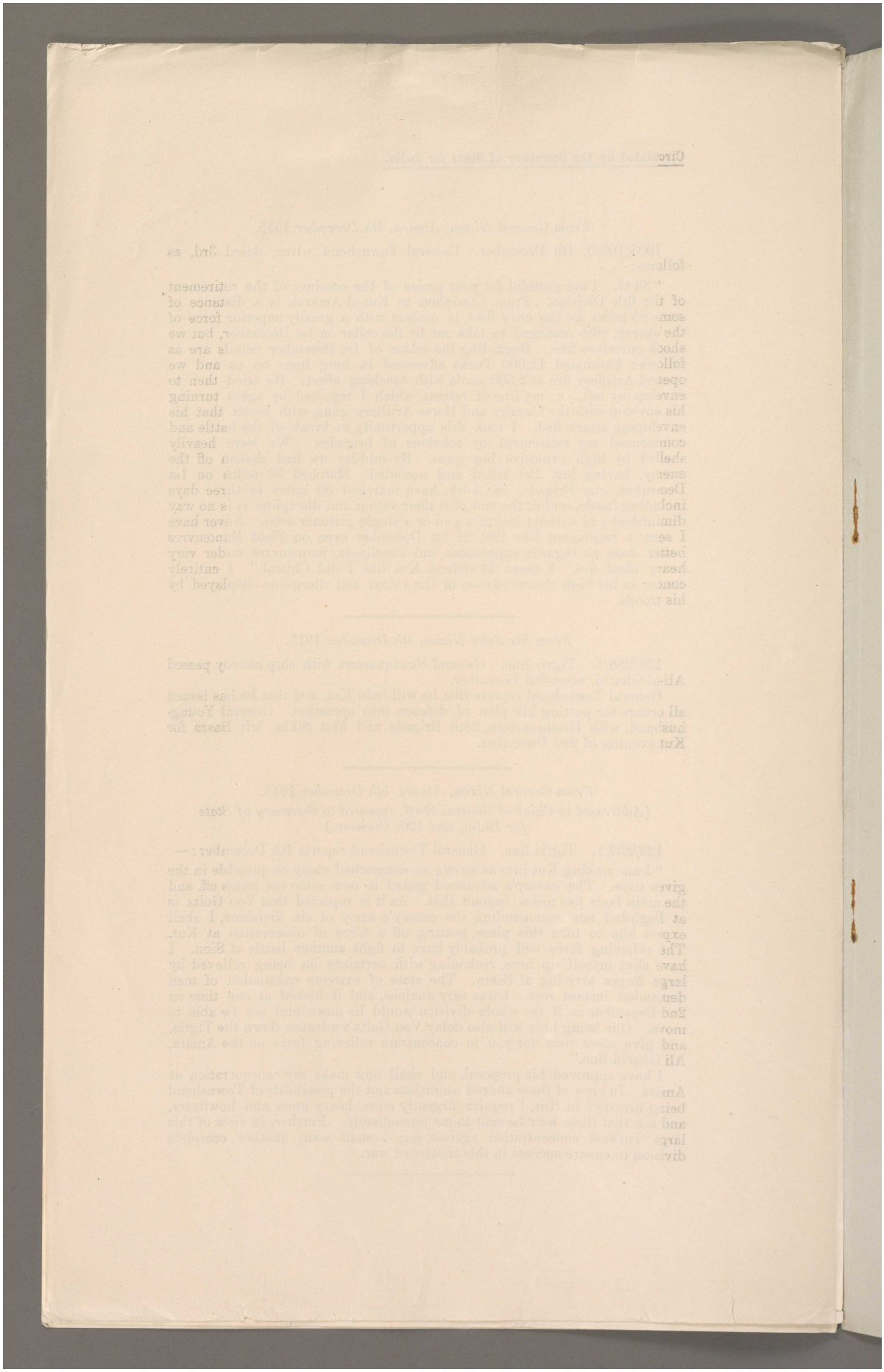
From General Nixon, Amara, 5th December 1915.
(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India, and 12th Division.*)

129/259/1. Tigris line. General Townshend reports 4th December :—

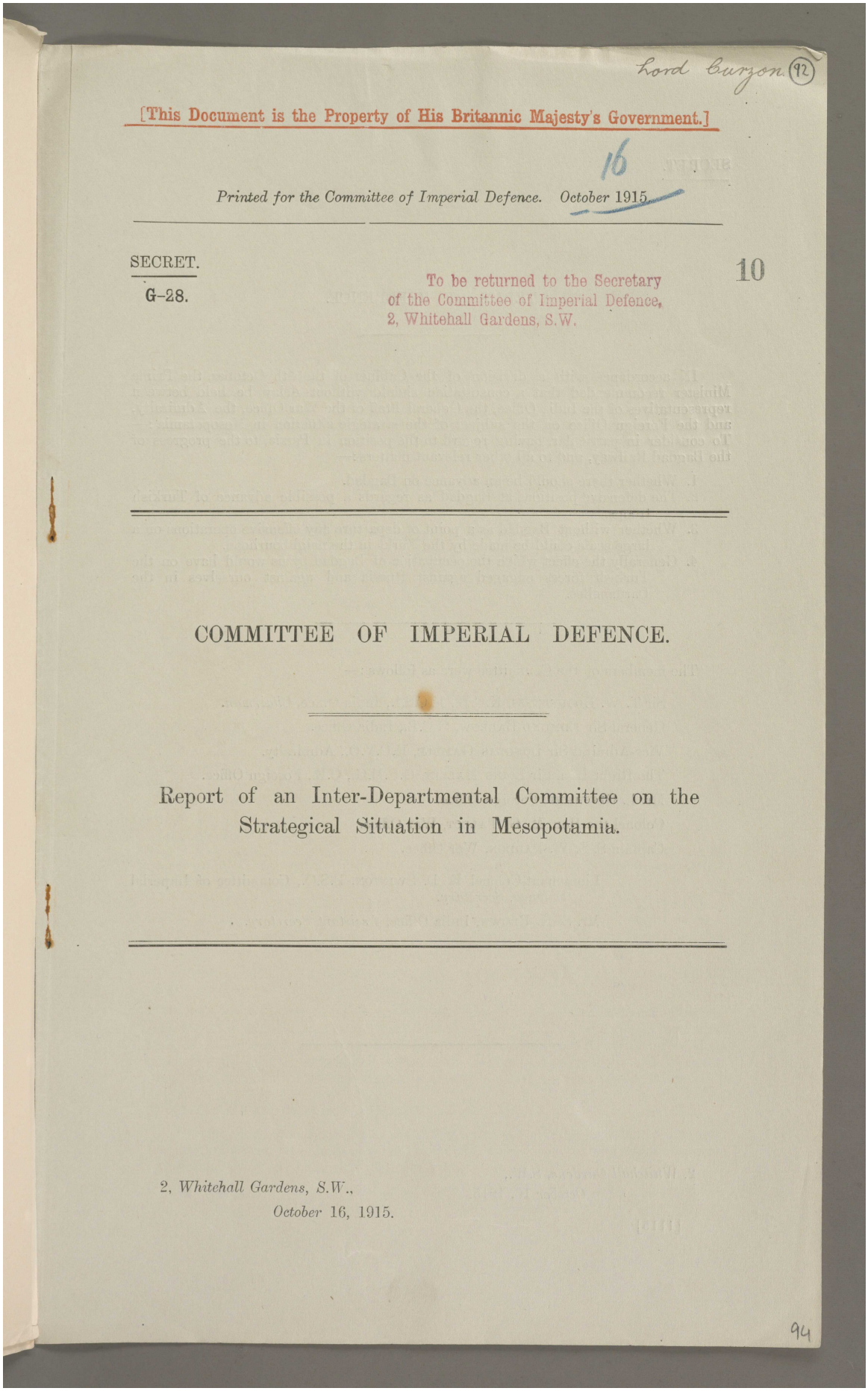
"I am making Kut into as strong an entrenched camp as possible in the given time. The enemy's advanced guard is now some ten miles off, and the main body five miles beyond that. As it is reported that Von Goltz is at Baghdad now commanding the enemy's army of six divisions, I shall expect him to turn this place, putting off a force of observation at Kut. The relieving force will probably have to fight another battle at Sinn. I have shut myself up here, reckoning with certainty on being relieved by large forces arriving at Basra. The state of extreme exhaustion of men demanded instant rest. I was very anxious, and it looked at one time on 2nd December as if the whole division would lie down and not be able to move. Our being here will also delay Von Goltz's advance down the Tigris, and give more time for you to concentrate relieving force on the Amara, Ali Gharbi line."

I have approved his proposal, and shall now make my concentration at Amara. In view of these altered conditions and the possibility of Townshend being invested in Kut, I require urgently more heavy guns and howitzers, and ask that these may be sent to me immediately. Further, in view of this large Turkish concentration against me, I shall want another complete division to ensure success in this theatre of war.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00009e



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000aa



Lord Curzon (92)

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

16

Printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence. *October* 1915.

SECRET.

G–28.

10

To be returned to the Secretary
of the Committee of Imperial Defence,
2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.

COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

Report of an Inter-Departmental Committee on the Strategical Situation in Mesopotamia.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 16, 1915.

94

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

SECRET.

TERMS OF REFERENCE.

IN accordance with a decision of the Cabinet of the 4th October, the Prime Minister recommended that a consultation should without delay be held between representatives of the India Office, the General Staff of the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Foreign Office on the subject of the strategic situation in Mesopotamia :— To consider in particular, having regard to the position in Persia, to the progress of the Bagdad Railway, and to all other relevant matters :—

1. Whether there should be an advance on Bagdad.
2. The defensive positions at Bagdad as regards a possible advance of Turkish troops.
3. Whether without Bagdad as a point of departure any offensive operations on a large scale could be made by the Turks in the neighbourhood.
4. Generally the effect which the occupation of Bagdad by us would have on the Turkish forces engaged against Russia and against ourselves in the Dardanelles.

The members of the Committee were as follows :—

Sir T. W. Holderness, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., India Office, *Chairman.*

General Sir Edmund Barrow, G.C.B., India Office.

Vice-Admiral Sir Douglas Gamble, K.C.V.O., Admiralty.

The Right Hon. Sir Louis Mallet, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. Oliphant, Foreign Office.

Colonel the Hon. M. G. Talbot, War Office.

Captain S. S. W. Paddon, War Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel E. D. Swinton, D.S.O., Committee of Imperial Defence, *Secretary.*

Mr. S. K. Brown, India Office, *Assistant Secretary.*

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
October 16, 1915.

[1115]

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000034

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

REPORT.

THE Committee had before them :—

(*a.*) Some former official telegraphic correspondence on the subject.*

(*b.*) Recent official telegraphic correspondence from the 29th September up to the 10th October between the Secretary of State for India, the Army Department of the Government of India, and General Sir John Nixon, the Commander of the British Forces in Mesopotamia, regarding the defeat of the Turkish Army at Kut-al-Amara, on the Tigris, on the 28th September, and the military situation created.†

(*c.*) Private telegrams from the 4th October up to the 9th October between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy regarding the further operations of the Mesopotamia Force, with Bagdad as the possible objective.‡

(*d.*) Memoranda by the Military Secretary, India Office, and the General Staff, War Office, dealing with the military aspects of an advance on and occupation of Bagdad.§

(*e.*) Memoranda by the Political Department of the India Office, the Foreign Office, and Sir Louis Mallet dealing with the political aspects of the question.‖

(*f.*) The views of the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief in India upon the military situation in that country as conveyed in a private letter from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India.

2. The question of whether an advance upon Bagdad should be undertaken can be considered from two aspects :—

DESIRABILITY AND PRACTICABILITY.

The Desirability of an Advance to Bagdad.

3. On political grounds the early capture and occupation of Bagdad are considered most desirable. This will relieve directly the existing situation in Asiatic Turkey, in Persia, and in Afghanistan.

To quote from the Foreign Office memorandum (see Appendix VII) :—

"'Bagdad is the centre of Government of the whole district, and controls the greater portion of the trade passing through.

"'The effect of such occupancy would weaken the power and prestige of the Turkish Government throughout the whole of Arabia, and would place within British control the sacred city of Kerbela. . . . .'"

"An advance to Bagdad may be regarded from the political or Foreign Office point of view as of the very greatest importance, not only on account of the situation in Asiatic Turkey, ... but more especially with regard to the present critical situation in Persia and even in Afghanistan."

"'The position of the Germans in Persia is entirely dependent on their being able to keep open the road to Bagdad viâ Kermanshah.'"

"In view of these reports, the material benefit to be obtained by an advance on Bagdad—if, thereby, as appears probable, the German ascendancy and the Allies' precarious position in Persia can be checked—seems to render this step essential, while if no such effective action be taken, the danger to British interests in Persia and in Afghanistan may be a matter of the most serious consequence."

Sir Louis Mallet writes (see Appendix VIII) :—

"My reason for attaching so much importance to the occupation of Bagdad is primarily that it is in Mesopotamia that we can inflict the maximum damage upon Turkey at the least cost to ourselves."

* See Appendix I. † See Appendix II. ‡ See Appendix III.
§ See Appendices IV and V. ‖ See Appendices VI, VII, and VIII.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000050

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

The political advantages of the occupation are fully described also in the memorandum by the Political Department, India Office (see Appendix VI), wherein it is pointed out that—

> ". . . . it appears to be of primary importance for the maintenance of our prestige in the East that we should get full value out of our military achievements wherever possible. If we stop short of Bagdad the political effect of our victorious advance into Mesopotamia will be largely discounted. The effect of our halting will undoubtedly be ascribed to weakness."

4. Though the Committee are unanimously in favour of the occupation of Bagdad, which, according to General Sir John Nixon, would not at present entail much difficulty, they are of opinion that the capture of the city followed by retirement would have an adverse political effect outweighing the advantages to be gained by occupation. For this reason the Committee are opposed to any idea of a temporary military occupation.

5. On military grounds the capture and occupation of Bagdad offer distinct and solid advantages. The enemy, apart from the blow which his prestige would sustain, would be deprived of an important trade centre, a valuable depôt, a base, and a railhead (of the section of the Bagdad railway now working from Samarra to Bagdad). Our forces would be astride the main route from Europe through Kermanshah to the interior of Persia, and would deprive the Germans of a base for their intrigues in the Middle East.

The Practicability of an Advance.

6. The General Staff, War Office, the Commander-in-Chief in India, the Military Secretary, India Office, and the local military authorities are all in agreement in the opinion, in which the Committee concur, that the British forces at present in Mesopotamia, though apparently adequate for the capture of Bagdad, are not sufficient to ensure its retention, which is regarded as essential. General Sir John Nixon has stated that if the Turks should turn their serious attention to the recovery of Bagdad, and should send to Mesopotamia the large organised forces that would be needed for such an operation, he would require one division and one British cavalry regiment in addition to his present force. The Committee consider that a force not less than this is immediately necessary to hold Bagdad, but they think that two regiments of Indian cavalry might be substituted if a British cavalry regiment is not available. It is essential that these troops should reach Basra at the earliest possible date, as their presence will be required at Bagdad to ensure its occupation against attempts on the part of the Turks to re-take the city. For this reason the Committee have recommended that the reinforcements should begin to arrive at Basra within four weeks of the issue of orders for the advance.

In order to provide for possible eventualities, a second division, or those units of a division which can be suitably employed in Mesopotamia, should be held in readiness to follow the first as soon as required. In the event of the Turks being in a position later on to concentrate forces from distant quarters on the Upper Tigris, with the object of offensive operations on a large scale, even these two divisions may prove insufficient, and it may be necessary in 1916 to send further reinforcements.

7. It is understood that the existing numbers of vessels on the Tigris is sufficient to enable this advance to be made and to ensure the supply of the advanced troops. The flotilla of shallow-draught gunboats now under construction will eventually be an important addition to the offensive power of General Nixon's force, and will greatly contribute to the safety of the communications by river. It is also understood that the transport over sea of these troops to the Persian Gulf can be undertaken by the Admiralty.

8. If we are to gain the greatest possible advantages, both political and military, from an advance to Bagdad, a very early decision on the matter should be made. The sooner Bagdad is in our hands the greater will be the effect.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000b9

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

CONCLUSIONS.

[These are given seriatim, and are numbered according to the headings of the Terms of Reference.]

1. THE Committee consider that, both on military and political grounds, an early advance upon and occupation of Bagdad is most desirable; but that, unless the Expeditionary Force now in Mesopotamia can be so reinforced that it can maintain its position after reaching Bagdad, no attempt should be made either to seize or occupy that city.

The immediate reinforcements necessary for the retention of Bagdad are at least the equivalent of one infantry division of the Indian Army and one or two regiments of cavalry. It is essential, if an advance on Bagdad be decided on, that reinforcements of this strength should at once be definitely assigned to Mesopotamia, and that they should without fail begin to arrive at Basra within four weeks of the issue of the orders for the advance.

The Committee are of opinion that these reinforcements cannot be furnished from the garrison in India.

If reinforcements on the scale mentioned above cannot be provided, and if, notwithstanding, the Indian Government are satisfied that General Nixon can defeat the enemy forces immediately fronting him, and that on military and other grounds an action is desirable, they should be allowed to give him the necessary permission to attack, but only on the clear understanding that he is not to attempt to enter or occupy Bagdad.

2. From the information before the Committee, there would appear to be no purely defensive position near Bagdad of any great strength. But it is thought that the Bagdad district, if occupied by a sufficient force, offers considerable strategic advantages.

3. Without Bagdad and the surrounding district as a base, the Turks could still assemble considerable forces and undertake offensive operations. But with Bagdad in their possession they would be much more favourably situated both for the concentration of force and the assumption of the offensive.

4. From their imperfect knowledge of events in other theatres of war the Committee are unable to foresee with any certainty the effect which a British occupation of Bagdad would have on the Turkish forces engaged against the Russians and against ourselves in the Dardanelles.

Though the capture by us of Bagdad would undoubtedly be an inducement to the Turks to withdraw force from other quarters in the hope of retaking that city, the extent to which they would be able to do this would depend on events elsewhere. The Committee accept the estimate of the General Staff that the Turks might in certain circumstances have 60,000 men at their disposal, but consider that, even if this number of men were available, it would be a very difficult operation to concentrate them in Mesopotamia and undertake offensive operations if Bagdad were in our possession.

T. W. HOLDERNESS, *Chairman.*
E. G. BARROW.
D. GAMBLE.
LOUIS MALLET.
LANCELOT OLIPHANT.
M. G. TALBOT.
S. S. W. PADDON.
E. D. SWINTON, *Secretary.*
S. K. BROWN, *Assistant Secretary.*

India Office,
October 16, 1915

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00006d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

APPENDIX I.

FORMER OFFICIAL TELEGRAMS BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA AND THE VICEROY RELATING TO THE OPERATIONS BY THE FORCE UNDER GENERAL SIR JOHN NIXON.

(1).

From the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy, Army Department, April 24, 1915.

1812. Your H. 4416. With reference to Nixon's request for a cavalry brigade I concur in your decision, as apart from impossibility of complying, the approach of hot season renders despatch of more troops, especially British, unadvisable.

Nixon's demand implies intention on his part of important offensive movement. I presume he clearly understands that Government will not sanction at this moment any advance beyond present theatre of operations. We must confine ourselves during summer to defence of Basra Vilayat and oil interests in Arabistan. If after smashing enemy in Karun direction it is possible to advance to Amara with view to establishing an outpost which will control tribesmen between there and Karun, and so contribute to security of pipe-line there, I should be prepared to accept such a proposal, provided it is supported by you, but I deprecate any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements. Strategically our present position is a sound one, and at present we cannot afford to take risks by unduly extending it. We must play a safe game in Mesopotamia.

(2.)

From the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, August 5, 1915.

No. H. 6793. Your telegram of the 30th ultimo, No. 1797. These questions have been under close and constant consideration for months past, and Nixon's views, originally called for on the 19th June, and furnished in his despatch of the 24th June, have again been asked for on your above-mentioned telegram.

His reply puts the case so clearly that we repeat it as our answer to your telegram :—

"Referring to your telegram of the 31st ultimo, No. S. 16,700. The views expressed by the Secretary of State are practically identical with those I submitted in my secret despatch, dated 24th June, and with instructions I have given to General Gorringe.

"In my despatch I emphasised the advantage of holding Kut-al-Amarah in force and the unlikelihood of Nasiriyah being then threatened by Euphrates line, and the consequent possibility of reducing the strength of the Nasiriyah garrison.

"With regard to the suggested total evacuation on the Nasiriyah, I am all in favour of concentrating on the Tigris line, but I consider that Nasiriyah is too important a place to abandon altogether, as it must be a centre of civil government to control the powerful Arab tribes by which it is surrounded, and effectually to occupy this vilayet.

"A withdrawal from Nasiriyah would do incalculable harm politically on this account; Ajaimi would reappear with a few Turks to re-establish Turkish authority, and all tribes would get out of hand.

"According to information at my disposal, Nasiriyah is less unhealthy than Basra or Qurnah, and in a short time the climate will be quite good. The land communications of Nasiriyah are bad, but they could be improved by a

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000ae

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

railway. On this point I hope to address you very shortly, the matter having been under investigation for many weeks.

"The water communications of Nasiriyah are difficult during the present low-water season, but now that we are established in Nasiriyah and the enemy have been driven off, these difficulties are by no means insuperable, and plentiful supplies are obtainable locally in this district, while country boats of our contractors pass through the Hammar Lake freely.

"When the 18th Brigade returns from the Nasiriyah Force it will join its division at Amarah, and the 6th Division will then have two brigades at Amarah and another brigade at Ali-al-Gharbi and its communications.

"When Nasiriyah can be reduced to strength proposed, viz., one brigade, the reserve at Basra will be one brigade, and the 3rd Brigade, 12th Division, will be on communications from Basra to Qalat Salih inclusive.

"If Kut is occupied I propose to leave four battalions at Amarah, and after placing detachments at two or three posts, quarter two infantry brigades in Kut.

"I would point out that it is only by occupying Kut that the reduction of troops at Amarah is possible. I have no intention of making any dash on Kut; the advance will be made methodically.

"At present General Delamain's Column has cleared the river up to Ali-al-Gharbi, but has orders not to proceed beyond.

"As regards Ahwaz and the supposed necessity to guard the pipe-line with troops, I have carefully considered the question and have given my views at some length, *vide* papers forwarded with my 304/4/0 of the 19th June, and my (telegram) of the 27th June 304/5/0 and subsequent correspondence.

"But the Anglo-Persian Oil Company will not arrange for a subsidy while the Indian Government is ordered to keep troops at Ahwaz for ever, and it is not easy to withdraw troops, because the Anglo-Persian Oil Company will not give subsidy, and this creates deadlock.

"In this connection I would reiterate that, if suitable arrangements be made with tribesmen, I see no military reason for prolonged retention of troops on the Karun line unless hostility is to be expected on the part of the Persian Government, in which case I should require very strong reinforcements if it is required to hold the oil fields against any possible combination of Bakhtiaris and other tribes."

We concur in Nixon's views, and propose to authorise him to advance on Kut when he is ready.

So far as we are aware, Nixon knows nothing about the proposal to re-inforce him temporarily with the 28th Brigade, and has always believed his present Force capable of effecting the occupation of Kut so long as he received drafts to fill up his British battalions and he was not required to disseminate troops along the pipe-line. We concur in his views.

(3.)

Extract of Telegram from the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy, August 6, 1915.

3002. Your telegram No. H. 6793. I concur in course of action proposed by Nixon and recommended by you.

* * * * *

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000bc

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

APPENDIX II.

RECENT OFFICIAL TELEGRAMS BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA, THE VICEROY, AND GENERAL SIR JOHN NIXON, RELATING TO THE LATTER'S ADVANCE IN MESOPOTAMIA.

(1.)

From General Sir John Nixon, Basra, September 29, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

308/172/0, 29/9/15. Continuation of my 129/195/1 of 29th. Last night, 28th, Delamain when moving to attack rear of enemy's position became aware of strong Turkish reinforcements marching parallel to him. He attacked and routed these after severe fighting lasting till dark, capturing four guns [corrupt group] casualties were 1,200. Enemy's main position was found unoccupied early this morning. Aeroplane reconnaissance shows Turks in flight by river and road towards Bagdad, our cavalry entering Kût, river column moving in pursuit. Regret to report gallant officer, Lieutenant Commander E. C. Cookson, R.N., senior naval officer, was killed last night in gunboat attack on river obstruction while personally engaged in cutting wire. The naval gunboats had been handled by him with greatest daring and effect during two days' operations.

(2.)

From General Sir John Nixon, Basra, September 29, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/196/1. *Tigris line.*—The pursuit of the defeated Turkish forces was taken up early morning 29th by naval gunboats and our cavalry. General Townshend follows with the leading infantry brigade in ships (?) 30th. Enemy's troops were seen by aeroplane morning 29th retreating in column 4 miles long up left bank Tigris about 10 miles above Sukident (?) as crow flies. Aeroplane also dropped bombs on large steamer believed to be "Khalifa," which at once made for bank and is believed to have been injured. One brigade is clearing up battlefield. Total prisoners captured by us up to date 1,650; more coming in. Inspection of captured position shows defences have been designed and constructed on the latest and most approved principles and with remarkable thoroughness and study of detail. Communication trenches extended for miles, ranges marked by flags, arrangements were made for embarking troops and covering their retirement. There was an elaborate system of observation and contact mines. A number of these were exploded by our Engineers without accident, but severe casualties were caused by mines during action. The field of fire was everywhere flat and open. Nur-ed-din's force during late battle consisted of six squadrons cavalry, twenty-six guns and 35th, 38th Infantry battalions plus certain other formations aggregating some four extra battalions. His total force is estimated to have been some 7,000 to 8,000 regular troops assisted by considerable number of tribesmen. General head-quarters are 1 mile down stream of Kut (?) Weather last two days decidedly cooler. Of our wounded a large proportion are only slightly injured and as a whole are doing well. Health and spirit of troops excellent.

(3.)

From General Sir John Nixon, Basra, October 1, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/197/1. *Tigris line.* Personal inspection on 29th of enemy's position, described in my 129/196/1, greatly impressed me with skilful plan of its capture

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00005b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

adopted by Major-General Townshend in his attack on 28th. I am convinced that his scheme of turning the Turkish left and getting in the rear of the centre of the position was the only manœuvre whereby the enemy could be dislodged without our incurring enormous losses. Any scheme entailing direct assault of any portion of line would have inevitably proved most costly. Three air reconnaissances from Kut have located the retreating Turkish force as follows: Cavalry advanced guard of main column was at 1 P.M. on Tigris right bank on point (sheet 2 B, square B 22, 2—2—1), and cavalry rearguard on point (B 2—5—6). Rearguard has two guns with it. One enemy steamer was seen, apparently in difficulties, close to Baglinkah. Our pursuit on 30th has been dogged with persistent bad luck. One of our three gunboats has stuck in shoal eight miles up-stream of Kut, and although foot channel in vicinity of Kut was reconnoitred on night of 29th–30th, shifting sandbanks held our river column throughout the daylight hours on 30th, and it was not till dusk that ships were got through. Our cavalry have, however, pushed ahead, and river column proceed up-stream from Kut at daylight 1st October. Remainder of division concentrate at Kut as soon as circumstances permit. Report just received from naval gunboats states "Samana" aground eight miles above Kut, with steering gear badly damaged. "Shaitan" and "Comet" at 10 A.M. 30th arrived point (sheet 2 H, C 238), and engaged Turkish steamer "Busrah" aground at C 237 at range of 6,500 yards. "Busrah" replied with four guns, but was apparently hit and at one time on fire. Pioneers returned to assist, and got her off. Gunboats then chased, but were fired on from C 208 at 11 A.M. by two guns of cavalry raiding party under Subri Bey returning from Sheikh Saad. Gunboats carried on, and came up with two boat-loads of ammunition abandoned by "Busrah," but getting into difficulties at bad crossing returned to avoid being caught aground by Subri. They got back safely, and observed Turks being hotly attacked by Arabs. One gunboat is standing by "Samana," but others returned here to report, and will lead Townshend's river column 1st October. Royal Navy reports navigation difficult above Kut, channel shifting, and several bad crossings over which ships must kedge.

(4.)

From General Sir John Nixon, Basra, October 2, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/198/1. *Euphrates line.*—Four enemy battalions with two field guns and about 500 camelry left Kefl in middle of September. The camelry joined Nur-ed-din at Kut shortly before the late battle, and the infantry and guns went to Bagdad, thus leaving the Euphrates line empty of enemy's troops.

Tigris line.—Aeroplane reconnaissance shows that at 7·15 A.M. on 1st October advanced guard of Turkish column retreating up left bank of Tigris had reached "al" in Shidhaifalgharbi, and advanced guard of right bank column was at first "S" in Sharish. A steamer, believed to be the "Busrah" was 5 miles down stream of Aziziyah, and there was no enemy craft sighted down stream of her. At nightfall on 1st October our river column had reached point 27 miles up stream of Kut. Our cavalry had passed same point during previous night.

(5.)

From General Sir John Nixon, October 2, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/199/1. *Tigris line.*—Retreating Turkish forces were located by air-craft reconnaissance afternoon of 2nd October as follows:—

Straggling column total length 2 miles, mostly infantry, head of column on Bagdad road 13 miles south-east of Sulman Pak. Infantry column 2 miles long,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000095

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

halted with head midway between Daur Gherbi and Abdulla Abu Muatif. Majority of cavalry halted on right bank at mouth of Aziziyah loop. Three paddle steamers and a tug between Khannasah and Jubail. Our river column reached point 3 miles up stream of Baghaila at dusk on the 2nd October, having been beset by navigation difficulties throughout the day. Officer lately arrived from campaign in France states that trenches captured by Dorset Regiment and 117th Mahrattas in battle of Kut on the 28th September were superior to any German trenches (? that he) saw in France.

Officer Commanding, Bushire, reports that reliable information received that enemy at Chaghadak have been reinforced, and states that he expects attack any night now.

(6.)

From General Sir John Nixon' October 3, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Foreign, Inspector-General of Communications, 12th and 6th Divisions.*)

129/200/1. Tigris line. Aircraft reconnaissance by Major Reilly, morning of the 3rd October, observed both right and left bank infantry columns of the enemy to be within 20 miles of Sulman Pak. The enemy's three paddlers had reached Sulman Pak, and the reconnaissance observed partly prepared position there astride of Tigris. In vicinity of position was considerable camp which is judged to contain three Tabours and four guns lately moved from the Euphrates line, plus a reinforcement of four Tabours and four guns from Mosul. It is therefore most probable that Nur-ed-din will stand and fight at Sulman Pak. Our river column is now only at Shidhaif Ash Sharqi, and no chance of surprising or stampeding their remainders. I consider I am strong enough to open road to Bagdad, and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Aziziyah. But this concentration must be partly by land. Families of Germans and Turkish officials are said to be leaving Bagdad for Aleppo. From military point of view it is highly desirable to capture enemy's steamers, which at this season cannot get far up stream of Bagdad.

(7.)

From the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy, Army Department, October 4, 1915.

3071. I shall be glad to know what Nixon's present intentions are, as if, owing to navigation troubles, there is no probability of catching and smashing the retreating enemy, there is no object in continuing the pursuit.

The orders conveyed in my 1812 of 24th April, and 3002 of 6th August* still hold good, subject to course of events at Bagdad and elsewhere and to the recommendations you may now make.

Please cable your estimate of enemy's present strength in Mesopotamia.

(8.)

From General Sir John Nixon, Kut-el-Amara, October 4, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/202/1. Tigris line. Reported that evening, 4th, our river column halted for night at S. in Sharhan. Our cavalry reached Aziziyah.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000072

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(9.)

From General Sir John Nixon, October 5, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/202/1. Tigris line. Our river column reached Aziziyah 5th October, and cavalry, supported by one battalion, pushed on to reconnoitre Zeur, where enemy's steamer observed by aircraft reconnaissance evening 5th. Same reconnaissance observed numbers of troops in the Ctesiphon position.

(10.)

From General Sir John Nixon, Kut-al-Amara, October 5, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State for India, with reference to his telegram of October 4 to Chief of General Staff enquiring what my present intentions are.*)

308/203/0. Navigation difficulties have been overcome by lightening ships and utilising them for towing laden barges and by marching troops with land transport. The 16th Brigade with all field artillery left this morning for Aziziyah by road, preceded by Headquarters Cavalry Brigade with three guns, "S" Battery, and 100 lances. Cavalry has orders to reach Aziziyah evening of the 7th. Enemy appears to be no longer retreating, but has occupied Ctesiphon position and thereby constitutes a threat to us. Our information is that his troops, especially those locally recruited, have been much demoralised by defeat at Kut-al-Amara, a position which they considered impregnable. They are now so near Bagdad that Nur-ud-din will have difficulty in making a determined stand with men who are close to their homes and wish to desert. I consider, therefore, that there is every probability of catching and smashing the enemy at Ctesiphon as soon as the 6th Division has fully concentrated at Aziziyah, and has been reinforced by drafts of cavalry now on their way from Basra. If, on the other hand, we retire from Aziziyah to Kut-al-Amara, the enemy and whole of the tribes will place their own construction on such a move, and advance on Kut-al-Amara as he did on Amara in July last, when troops were withdrawn from post above Amara in order to reinforce General Gorringe on Nasiriyah line. Then a powerful section of the tribes who had already submitted to us rejoined the Turks, and has been a continual source of trouble until British prestige was re-established by the victory at Kut-al-Amara. The Arab tribes now regard us as irresistible, and have been coming in from all directions to make submission; but if we withdraw will probably behave as before.

It is my view that we have in front of us a shaken enemy who has lost 13 guns and is deficient of ammunition, and for military reasons it is clearly desirable to smash him while we can. He has taken refuge in a position where we can manœuvre and I hope destroy him. I see nothing which would justify letting slip such an opportunity. From a military point of view Bagdad is a focus of Turkish lines of advance and a large supply centre, of which, in our interests, it is vital to deprive the enemy, and this quite apart from any political effect its occupation might have.

(11.)

From the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, October 6, 1915.

H. 8245. Reference your No. 3071 of the 4th October. Nixon's intentions were as stated in his telegrams 129/200/1 of the 3rd October and 129/201/1 of the 4th October, which were repeated to you. He has also telegraphed to India as follows:—

"With reference to my suggestion to open by another general action road to Bagdad, will you kindly let me know whether my force is to be reinforced

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00006a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

to the extent of another division from France, in order that my position there may be maintained. Effect of my occupying Bagdad would be more than nullified if subsequent events should compel me, in course of time, to retreat down the river in consequence of reinforcements not being forthcoming. Regarding operations in Van district, should like information thereof? Have Russians progressed sufficiently far to threaten Upper Tigris route from Asia Minor? Above refers to my 120/201/1 of the 3rd."

In these views we concur, and suggest that as the Indian troops are reported to have participated with credit in the recent fighting, the present moment, if there should be any intention of moving Indian troops from France before the winter sets in, would be opportune for doing so. In view of German activities in Persia, increasing pressure on Afghanistan, and the aspect in the Balkans and Dardanelles, we hold that the capture of Bagdad would have such an effect in the Near East and offers such important political and strategical advantages as to justify movement, but to do this at least an additional division would be required. Otherwise we do not propose to allow him to go beyond Kut-al-Amara.

Nixon has been given Russian position south of Van, as reported in Marsh's No. T.P.L. 30 of 3rd October.

Our estimate of present strength of enemy in Mesopotamia is 8,500 rifles, 600 sabres, and 28 guns, under command of Nur-ud-din. Of the above, 7 battalions, amounting to approximately 3,500 rifles with 8 guns, are at or near Sulman Pak, and have not been engaged against us. They include 4 battalions and 4 guns recently arrived from Mosul. Force under Hussain Raouf Bey, which was near Qasr-i-Shirin, may also shortly be at Sulman Pak. Remainder of enemy's force, numbering some 4,000 infantry, 500 camelry, and 6 squadrons of cavalry, with 21 guns, constitutes the remnants of the troops defeated by us at Kut-al-Amara, and is retreating up the Tigris towards Sulman Pak, where indications seem to show that it may make a fresh stand.

(12.)

From General Sir John Nixon, October 6, 1915.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.*)

129/203/1. Tigris line. Townshend reports that reconnaissance by his cavalry on the 6th October found 1 regiment of Turkish cavalry, 3 or 4 battalions and 2 field guns, established 2 miles inland from river on left bank north-east of Zeur. Enemy's guns shelled our cavalry which left a squadron in touch (? therewith), remainder rejoined Townshend, who has disembarked river column at Aziziyah. On afternoon of (6th ?) October Roberts with Headquarters Cavalry Brigade and 7th (?) Lancers arrived at Imam Mahdi, and 16th Infantry Brigade with field artillery, under Delamain, reached point 12 miles by road from Kut *en route* for Aziziyah. One floating mine was destroyed by rifle fire from gunboat "Sumana," 6 miles down stream of Kut on 3rd October.

(13.)

From the Secretary of State to General Sir John Nixon, Basra, October 8, 1915.

(*Repeated to India.*)

3077. Very urgent. With what addition to your present force are you confident that you both occupy and hold Bagdad? Reply direct and repeat reply to Government of India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00008c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(14.)

From General Sir John Nixon to the Secretary of State for India, October 8, 1915.

(Repeated to Chief of General Staff.)

308/218/0. 3077 of 8th. I am confident that I can beat Nur-ed-din and occupy Bagdad without any addition to my present force. But if Turks should turn their serious attention to the recovery of Bagdad and should send to Mesopotamia the large organised forces which would be necessary for such an operation, then I consider that I should require one Division (and I should like also one White Cavalry Regiment) in addition to my present force to watch both the Tigris and Euphrates lines of communication and defeat the enemy as he comes within reach. Further, the Bagdad position would be best from which to do this.

Kut is 103 miles, and Townshend at Aziziyah is 48 from Bagdad by road.

(15.)

From Major-General, General Staff, Kut (Basra), October 8, 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State.)

308/217/0. In continuation of my 308/203/0 of 6th October. Enemy at Zeur reported reinforced. I have told Townshend* that in view of enemy's more forward action I must leave measures to be taken to his discretion. Headquarters, Cavalry Brigade, and half "S" Battery have reached him and 16th Brigade with two more field, one howitzer and one maxim battery (? ies) join him 9th. He has asked for 17th Brigade which has been despatched and should reach him 11th.

(16.)

From General Sir John Nixon, October 8, 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/205/1. Tigris line. Townshend reports on 8th Zeur now held by 3,500 enemy Infantry who are entrenching there, also two or three squadrons of Cavalry.

(17.)

From General Sir John Nixon, Kut-al-Amara, October 9, 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/206/1. Townshend reports on 9th enemy at Zeur, strength as on 8th. Also that Delamain joined at Aziziyah on 9th.

(18.)

From General Sir John Nixon, Kut-al-Amara, October 10, 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of General Staff; repeated to Secretary of State for India, Inspector-General of Communications, and 12th Division.)

129/207/1. Tigris line. Townshend reports on 10th that enemy has pushed forward a detachment, estimated at 1,500 men, about 7 miles in advance of his

* At Aziziyah.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000082

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

position at Zeur. He further reports that hostile force of cavalry and infantry approached Aziziyah from north, viâ Nahrwan dry canal, morning of 10th. General Roberts, with three squadrons and a half S battery, drove them off with loss of about twenty killed and wounded. Our losses were: 1 dafadar killed, 4 sowars wounded, and 1 missing. Captain Hill, 16th Cavalry, behaved with conspicuous gallantry.

APPENDIX III.

Private Telegrams between Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Hardinge.

(1.)

From the Secretary of State to the Viceroy, October 4, 1915.

Private. My official telegram of to-day about Nixon's plans. Your private letter of 10th September seems to render it imperative to stop Nixon's further advance, I shall be grateful for early communication of your views.

(2.)

From the Secretary of State to the Viceroy, October 5, 1915.

Private. My private telegram of 4th instant. Nixon's advance. Cabinet, to whom position was reported yesterday, decided to appoint Committee of General Staff, Admiralty, Foreign and India Offices to consider in all its aspects possibility and policy of advance on Bagdad. Political reasons were thought to make occupation desirable as isolating Germans in Persia, if forces available are sufficient to take and hold the place. Barrow thinks we might be able to capture Bagdad, but that forces weakened by further losses would be insufficient both to hold it securely against counter attack and to maintain communications. Kitchener can hold out no hope of reinforcements from Europe or Egypt. Let me know your views. It was suggested that Japan should be asked to send a division.

(3.)

From the Viceroy to the Secretary of State, October 6, 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of 4th instant. Nixon's plans. Please see official telegram of to-day. Orders were telegraphed yesterday to Nixon to stop further advance. Present situation is as follows. Nixon with forces at his disposal could without much difficulty capture Bagdad, and at the same time take or destroy Turkish steamers and other boats, thus practically preventing any further attacks down stream. But he could not remain there exposed to attack by Turkish reinforcements from Mosul or Aleppo without himself being reinforced by one division of troops. It would be a grave political error to advance to Bagdad and to retire later under pressure from the Turks. Consequently, unless it be possible to reinforce Nixon from elsewhere other than from India, he must remain at Kut-el-Amara. On the other hand, from a political point of view, capture of Bagdad would create an immense impression in Middle East, especially in Persia, Afghanistan, and on our frontier, and would counteract unfortunate impression created by want of success in Dardanelles. It would also isolate German parties in Persia, probably produce pacificating effect in that country, and frustrate German plan of raising Afghanistan and the tribes, while impression throughout Arabia would be striking. In India effect would undoubtedly be good. These are considerations to which I attach great importance, but I put them forward to be weighed by you and His Majesty's Government, for I fully realise that it is for His Majesty's Government to decide where and how our forces can be used with the best possible effect.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000093

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(4.)

From the Viceroy to the Secretary of State, October 7, 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 5th instant. Sir John Nixon's plans. Commander-in-Chief agrees with view contained in my private telegram of yesterday that it would be unwise to occupy Bagdad with our present forces. As regards suggested employment of Japanese troops, I am not enthusiastic over the idea, and feel there are very grave objections on the ground of prestige and popular sentiment in the East. Moreover, stringent conditions would be essential if they were employed in Mesopotamia. But I feel strongly that we have got to win this war, and that difficulties and existing prejudices may have to give to attainment of this object. What I would greatly prefer is that our own troops in Egypt should be released for Mesopotamia and replaced by Japanese troops. There would be an obvious reason for this in that they would be protecting one of the great waterways of the world in the security of which they have an important interest.

(5.)

From the Secretary of State to the Viceroy, October 8, 1915. (Priority. Clear the line.

Private and very urgent. Reference to my telegram of to-day to Nixon repeated to you. Cabinet are so impressed with great political and military advantages of occupation of Bagdad that we shall make every effort to supply necessary force. We do not wish to attempt it with insufficient forces. Are you satisfied that one division is sufficient?

(6.)

From the Viceroy to the Secretary of State, October 9, 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 8th instant, and Nixon's telegram to you, No. 308, of the same date. I am glad of the decision of Cabinet. After consulting the Commander-in-Chief, I think that Nixon is in the best position to judge as to the number of troops required, and when he mentions a division we understand him to mean a fully-organised division with its proper proportion of British troops and guns and its divisional cavalry. In addition to this he asks for a cavalry regiment. We are prepared to accept his opinion, but think that it will also be necessary to ensure that British units now with him are kept up to strength by drafts from home, as India cannot supply these. We will keep the Indian units full. We may add that reinforcing troops should reach Bagdad not later than one month after its capture, as this is the period which we calculate must elapse before the Turks could concentrate in strength to attempt its recapture.

APPENDIX IV.

MEMORANDUM BY GENERAL SIR E. BARROW, MILITARY SECRETARY, INDIA OFFICE.

The Mesopotamia Question in its Military Aspect.

The victory at Kut-el-Amara is of so complete a nature that the idea of pushing on to Bagdad will certainly be revived. Pressure will be brought on us, either directly by Sir John Nixon and Sir Percy Cox, who *primâ facie* are in the best position to judge of its feasibility, or indirectly by an agitation in the press or in commercial circles. It may even be urged, and there is much force in the argument, that it is advisable on political grounds on account of the world-wide prestige which the occupation of Bagdad would confer. Certainly strong arguments can be advanced for its occupation,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000a6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

and the ease with which the operation can be carried out will be impressed on us with such cogency and insistence that the proposal will be difficult to resist. The very glamour attaching to so historic a city is in itself a temptation, and it is with extreme reluctance that I advocate a policy of caution, which will certainly be unpopular, and perhaps difficult to justify in the minds of those who are not intimate with the intricacies of the problem.

The force under General Nixon comprises two divisions of infantry and a brigade of cavalry. This force occupies a considerable area in the midst of a doubtful and possibly hostile population. It also has to protect important British interests in the Anglo-Persian oilfields as well as at Bushire and Basra. The consequence is it cannot be concentrated.

The following may be regarded as a reasonable, if not almost an obligatory minimum distribution of the troops :—

At Bushire, Ahwaz, Basra—1 brigade, 1 regiment of cavalry.
At Nasiriyah and Kurna—1 brigade.
At Amara and Kut-el-Amara—1 brigade, 1 cavalry regiment.

This leaves available for further operations towards Bagdad only one infantry division and two cavalry regiments.

Such a force may be sufficient to expel the Turks from Bagdad. That is a question which can only be answered by General Nixon on local information, but the problem does not end at the capture of Bagdad. The city will absorb a garrison of at least a brigade. This leaves us only two weak brigades to cope with any eventuality that may arise. I put the strength of the force that might possibly be available for operations outside Bagdad at :—

5,000 infantry, *i.e.*, 2 brigades,
800 cavalry, *i.e.*, 8 squadrons,
22 guns,
1 company sappers and miners,

which is probably sufficient to deal with any local disturbances that may arise in the Bagdad Vilayet, though even from this force we may have to make obligatory detachments. For instance, we may be compelled to find a garrison for the railhead at Samarra on the Tigris, 70 miles from Bagdad, and perhaps another on the high road to Persia viâ Khanikin; consequently I do not think we can count on having a mobile force of more than 4,000 or at the most 5,000 men all told for employment in advance of Bagdad.

This to my mind is insufficient.

The debris of the Mesopotamian Army Corps will probably retire towards Mosul, and if they were hereafter—say, three months hence—reinforced by a Turkish Division either from the Caucasus or Syria, our reduced division of 5,000 men would have a formidable task to resist the enemy's advance. If it were supported by disaffected Arabs or a religious rising we might have to evacuate Bagdad and retire to our present strong strategical position at the junction of the Tigris and Shatt-el-Hai. Such a sequel to the occupation of Bagdad would reverberate through the East from Constantinople to Delhi, and might have a disastrous political effect far outweighing the credit we would now acquire by its capture. The Arabs along our line of retreat would certainly rise against us, and our communications would probably be threatened all along the Tigris as far as Kurna. Whereas if we sit tight at Kut-el-Amara we can consolidate our control of the Basra Vilayet and fortify a strong position at the apex of the triangle formed by the Tigris and Shatt-el-Hai which with our naval command of the rivers would be unassailable by any but a very superior force accompanied by heavy artillery while it would at the same time completely cover the main approaches to the territory now occupied by us. By such a military policy we can ensure our present hold of the country with the troops now at our disposal, whereas under the more ambitious and alluring Bagdad policy we should be weak everywhere and unable to maintain our position without a considerable addition to our present strength.

In my judgment it will not be wise to go to Bagdad *unless we can increase the force by a whole Division of Infantry and one or two Cavalry regiments*, and this we know is impracticable unless the Indian troops are withdrawn from France.

The conclusion of the whole matter therefore is that we cannot under present circumstances go to Bagdad without incurring unjustifiable risks. It must be remembered that during the winter the Russians are not likely to be able to make any

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000088

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

advance into Armenia, and consequently the Turks can very well spare a division or two from the Armenian army at this season to reinforce the Mesopotamian troops.

We do not know what may now be the strength of the Mesopotamian force, but we have been told of a Brigade which was recently at Kifu and is now retiring to Bagdad, and presumably there is a Bagdad garrison apart from the force beaten at Kut-el-Amara, so probably, not counting Arabs, the Turks can still muster some 10,000 men at or near Bagdad. If we go to Bagdad and the enemy retires to Samarra, they may very possibly be reinforced there by another 10,000 men or more from Armenia, and yet another reinforcement from Aleppo,* so I greatly doubt whether we can hold Bagdad for any length of time with our present force.

We have practically no reserve to depend on and we must play a safe game and husband our sorely strained military resources.

I have felt it my duty to place these considerations before the Secretary of State because everything points to our hands being forced, unless we can arrest the present trend of events by a prompt and imperative decision.

Kut-el-Amara is only about 120 miles by road from Bagdad, although by river it is 220 miles, and General Nixon's advance guard, in boats, has already covered some 20 miles of that distance. I see no indication of a halt in the pursuit, though in the present state of the river I also see no probability of being able to overtake the enemy. If we do not stop him, General Nixon will soon be in Bagdad regardless of orders, and we shall then be faced by the grave alternative of either having to withdraw again or of making our occupation effective. Either course involves serious considerations, more especially in view of the gloomy situation in the Near East.

Of course, events may prove too strong for us. If the Turks abandon Bagdad altogether and general anarchy threatens the city, we may be implored to intervene by the inhabitants for their own protection. In that case, I think occupation would be justifiable both in our own interests and on grounds of humanity, while the event would doubtless have an immense effect both in Arabia and Persia. So that in this particular case I am in favour of taking the risks and going to Bagdad, though be it clearly understood, *only if we are invited to come and if the internal situation demands compliance.*

It is certain in such a case that the Turks will not be able to attack us for several months, and in that time we may be able to arrange for reinforcements, and as the inhabitants will have committed themselves to our side we may even expect their self-interested support.

E. G. B.

October 4, 1915.

APPENDIX V.

Memorandum by the General Staff, War Office.

1. IT is probably quite feasible for Sir J. Nixon's force to advance to and seize Bagdad. The question is whether he would be able to remain there.

For reasons stated in paragraph 4 below it appears quite possible for the Turks to assemble a very superior force, whose arrival would lead to active operations by the Arabs against our long and difficult line of communications.

It seems to us that to attempt to hold Bagdad, except with a force very much larger than Sir J. Nixon's, and with proportionately increased river transport, would be to court disaster. Even supposing that we were able to hold it in the face of any force the Turks could bring against it, it is doubtful if we should be able to maintain our supply service during the months when the Tigris is low.

2. We have not been able to discover from maps or reports any position in the neighbourhood of Bagdad which would enable us to hold the town or district against a superior enemy. Whatever line we took up would leave it open to the enemy to operate against our flank and line of communications.

* Mr. Marling has since reported in telegram No. 378, dated October 4, 1915, that Jamal Pasha is said to be leaving Syria for Bagdad with 6,000 men from the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

3. We see no reason why the Turks should not be able to concentrate a large force against us if we are holding a position at Bagdad. In fact it seems easier for them to concentrate against us there than it would be at Kut-el-Amara. There are no doubt difficulties in the way of transport and supply, but we think these could be overcome.

4. The occupation of Bagdad will incite offensive action on the part of the Turks, and they are in a position to do this without materially endangering their situation in any other theatre of war.

The Russians in the Caucasus cannot be relied on to pin down the whole of the Turkish force now opposed to them. If the Turks should move troops from the Caucasus to Bagdad, the Russians will more probably withdraw Caucasian troops to the main theatre than act offensively against the depleted Turkish force. We argue thus from past experience when the Dardanelles operations were initiated.

The Turks, knowing that our hands are full and that we are withdrawing troops from Gallipoli to the Balkans, can reduce their forces in Syria–Palestine, Hejaz and Asyr-Djemil could probably move 20,000 troops in this way from Syria to Mesopotamia, and 20,000 could easily be spared from the Gallipoli. The Russian inactivity in the Caucasus makes it quite feasible for the Turks to spare 15,000 or 20,000 from that front, especially in winter time.

It, therefore, will become possible for 60,000 Turks to be assembled from the three districts mentioned above, and to be conveyed in the course of some weeks to Bagdad. The occupation of Bagdad by British troops would impress the Oriental mind not only in Turkey, but also in Persia and India, and re-establish some of the prestige which we have lost by our failure to force the Dardanelles.

If, however, we are unable to hold Bagdad when 60,000 fresh troops assemble to co-operate with Turkish troops at present in Mesopotamia, our withdrawal from Bagdad might have as great and as unfortunate an effect on the Mohammedan world as our withdrawal from the Gallipoli Peninsula.

October 6, 1915.

APPENDIX VI.

Memorandum by the Political Department, India Office.

Advance to Bagdad: Political Considerations.

Sir Percy Cox, in a recent telegram (27th September, 1915) expressed the view that the fall of Constantinople or Bagdad were the only events likely to affect the situation in Persia. The fall of Constantinople appears, unfortunately, to be more remote than ever; but Bagdad is within our grasp, and its early occupation would apparently present little military difficulty, and could be accomplished without reinforcing the troops under Sir John Nixon's command.

There can be little question that the occupation by British troops of the ancient seat of the Khalifate would produce an immense impression, not only in Persia, but throughout the Middle East. Orientals are impressed by tangible success, which can be measured in square miles and demonstrated on the map, much more than by negative results, however brilliant or important, such as our armies have achieved in the West. Thus the conquest of German South-West Africa, to judge from the congratulatory messages and accounts of public rejoicings which have reached the India Office, caused much more stir in India, where it represented the first solid achievement of British arms after months of uncertainty, than it aroused in England where the relative unimportance of the event was better appreciated. During the present war, our enemies have achieved this kind of tangible success in many directions; we have done so in two theatres only, viz., Mesopotamia and South-West Africa, and have conspicuously failed in a third region where events have been watched with paramount interest throughout the Middle East. Sir G. Roos Keppel recently bore testimony to the effect produced by the fall of Warsaw, and German victories in Russia, upon the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier, where the impression of South-West Africa—our one decided success in local estimation—is beginning to fade.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000060

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

In these circumstances it appears to be of primary importance for the maintenance of our prestige in the East, that we should get full value out of our military achievements wherever possible. If we stop short of Bagdad, the political effect of our victorious advance into Mesopotamia will be largely discounted. The fact of our halting, when the whole world expects us to go on, will undoubtedly be ascribed to weakness. We shall be regarded as having "shot our bolt," and so far from seeing an end to our difficulties in Persia, we shall leave the Persians more firmly convinced than ever that they have nothing to fear from us, and can afford to ignore our interests and disregard our advice. Everywhere our friends will be discouraged and our enemies will gain confidence, and the decisive blow, which is to set us right in the eyes of the East, will remain unstruck. What prospect is there of its being struck in any other theatre of war in the near future?

Apart from more general considerations, the occupation of Bagdad will bring us one very definite strategical advantage, viz., control over the Bagdad–Kermanshah route, which is the sole channel by which the Germans in Persia can communicate with the outside world. We know from recent reports that the Germans themselves attach the utmost importance to the maintenance of this line of communication, which is vital to their position in Persia and to their projects in Afghanistan. Mr. Marling telegraphed from Tehran on the 1st October :—

> "All reports show that the Germans are bringing in very considerable quantities of arms and ammunition viâ Kermanshah to Ispahan, and that practically the whole of the Turkish force under Raouf Pasha that has been waiting at Saripul has been brought surreptitiously to Kermanshah, where German Vice-Consul is said to have also some 1,100 tribesmen in his pay. This may indicate an attempt to reach Afghanistan with a considerable force."

The danger here indicated is a real one. The Amir has hitherto behaved admirably, in the face of much adverse pressure; but it is impossible to say what would be the effect upon him of the arrival on the Afghan frontier of armed Turco-German forces in considerable numbers. If he gave way, and proclaimed *jihad* (as he has long been urged to do), we should have the North-West Frontier in a blaze, and might have to undertake operations which would strain our military resources to breaking point. If we close the Kermanshah-Bagdad route and isolate the Germans, we place it beyond their power to operate against us on any considerable scale either in Persia or Afghanistan.

The political advantages to be anticipated from the occupation of Bagdad are thus two-fold :—

(1.) It will revive British prestige in the Middle East; and
(2.) It will place us in a position to cut the German line of communication with Persia.

Once the occupation is a *fait accompli*, we may fairly expect a rapid improvement in the present highly unsatisfactory situation in Persia, and an easy solution of the various problems (defence of oil-fields, &c.), with which we are confronted in that country. The danger of *jihad* on the North-West Frontier will be greatly lessened, and the belief in our ultimate victory greatly strengthened both within and beyond our own borders.

These objects are clearly worth risking something to attain. The question is how much risk we are justified in taking. In the case of Bagdad the accomplishment of our immediate object presents no serious military difficulties. We can be certain of our *coup de théâtre*, whatever subsequent embarrassments may follow in its wake. Retreat from Bagdad would doubtless have most unfortunate results; but retreat from our present position at Kut-el-Amara (which surely is not outside the range of possibility in certain eventualities) would from the political point of view be almost equally disastrous. In any case, it must presumably be some months—in the most unfavourable event—before the Turks could collect sufficient troops seriously to threaten our position at Bagdad. In the interval, events may have happened elsewhere to ease the situation, or we may be in a better position than at present to reinforce Sir J. Nixon's army.

We are bound to take risks, whether we go to Bagdad or stay where we are. Either course may, conceivably, land us in embarrassing or even disastrous consequences. But as a choice has to be made, political considerations appear to point decidedly towards the adoption of the bolder course.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00002c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

It may be true that we can take up a position at Kut-el-Amara which may be locally impregnable. But if the Turco-Germans can put into the field a force capable of turning us out of Bagdad, it seems probable that the same force will be able, even if we do not occupy Bagdad, to produce a condition of affairs in Mesopotamia and Persia that will necessitate withdrawal from Kut-el-Amara. If that is so there is nothing to choose between the two, and the question is not whether Kut is more defensible than Bagdad, but what reasonable probability is there of the Turks being able to release a force sufficient for their purpose?

October 6, 1915.

APPENDIX VII.

Memorandum by the Foreign Office.

AN advance to Bagdad may be regarded from the political or Foreign Office point of view as of the very greatest importance, not only on account of the situation in Asiatic Turkey, for reasons which will be shown at the end of this memorandum, but more especially with regard to the present critical situation in Persia and even in Afghanistan. It will be within the recollection of the Committee that recently His Majesty's Minister at Tehran felt compelled actually to raise the question of the possibility of having to leave that capital on account of the attitude and behaviour of the Germans, and their acts of terror.

Two to three hundred armed Germans, Austrians, and paid ruffians, congregated in the neighbourhood of Ispahan, so intimidated that town that the consuls of the Allied Powers evacuated the place and withdrew elsewhere. In Shiraz the British vice-consul was shot, and died of his wounds, and at Bushire two British officers have been killed. In addition to this, the British and Russian consuls from Kermanshah, when about to return to their post from Hamadan, were threatened by the Germans and were unable to proceed. The means by which the Germans had been in a position to act in this way is concisely set forth in a telegram dated the 30th ultimo from His Majesty's Minister at Tehran. Mr. Marling therein states as follows:—

> "The position of the Germans here is entirely dependent on their being able to keep open the road to Bagdad viâ Kermanshah. On the 29th September the newly appointed Persian Governor of Kermanshah was informed by the German Minister that if he had any intention of bringing about the return of the British and Russian consuls, Prince Reuss would forcibly prevent the Governor's own arrival at Kermanshah, as in German interests he could not permit the possible closing of the only means of communication with the outside world through which the Germans receive news and money, &c.
>
> "If the Russians could send adequate troops both to Kazvin and Kermanshah until British troops were in a position to reach Bagdad and to control the Khanekin road, the Germans in Persia would be left *en l'air*.
>
> "At the present time Kermanshah is virtually in the possession of the Germans. The greater part of Turkish regulars under Raouf, who had hitherto been at Saripul, have been brought in surreptitiously to Kermanshah, where the German consul is busy proselytising and may now have altogether some 2,000 men in his pay."

In another telegram Mr. Marling reports that the Germans are bringing in very considerable quantities of arms and ammunition viâ Kermanshah and Ispahan.

He considers that the above-mentioned action on the part of the Germans may, perhaps, indicate an attempt to reach Afghanistan with a considerable force.

In view of these reports, the material benefit to be obtained by an advance on Bagdad—if, thereby, as appears probable, the German ascendancy and the Allies' precarious position in Persia can be checked—seems to render this step essential, while if no such effective action be taken, the danger to British interests in Persia and in Afghanistan may be a matter of the most serious consequence.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00003e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A further consideration is the information which has just come to hand from a reliable source that the Germans are attempting to engineer a loan to Persia, which if not checked—and to cut their communication at Bagdad is the only reliable means to this end—may also have disagreeable consequences to the Allies.

The occupation of Bagdad has also been urged, on what may be called the local or Turkish grounds, in several letters received at the Foreign Office. Among other writers in support of it is Lord Inchcape, who in his double capacity as a man of business, personally well acquainted with the local situation and conditions, and as a former member of the Government of India, speaks of these matters with considerable authority. He says:—

> "Bagdad is the centre of Government of the whole district, and controls the greater portion of the trade passing through. I do not know what action His Majesty's Government propose taking in regard to the extension of their military operations beyond Basra, but I venture to express the hope that they will be extended to Bagdad. The Turkish Government may naturally be expected to resist to the best of their ability the capture of Bagdad, but their military position there is understood to be of little account.
>
> "The effect of such occupancy would weaken the power and prestige of the Turkish Government throughout the whole of Arabia. It would place within British control the sacred city of Kerbela, which would be particularly acceptable to the Mahommedan population of India.
>
> "I think that I may say without fear of contradiction that the rule of the Turks in Mesopotamia has always been cruel and despotic, the one object of the officials being the enrichment of themselves."

The Bagdad vilayet includes, besides Kerbela, both Nejef and the shrine of Sheikh Abdul Kadia, visited by Sunnis from India, and the capture of the city might well enable the Mahommedans of India to feel that they were deriving some return from the war.

Sir John Nixon's telegram of the 5th October shows that he has achieved a considerable success, and that there is every prospect of the successful occupation of Bagdad if the advance is continued.

In view of the extremely important results which may be expected from such a victory both in Turkey and in Persia, it would seem imperative to sanction the advance and to supply them with sufficient troops to render the occupation and retention of Bagdad absolutely safe.

October 7, 1915.

APPENDIX VIII.

Memorandum by Sir L. Mallet.

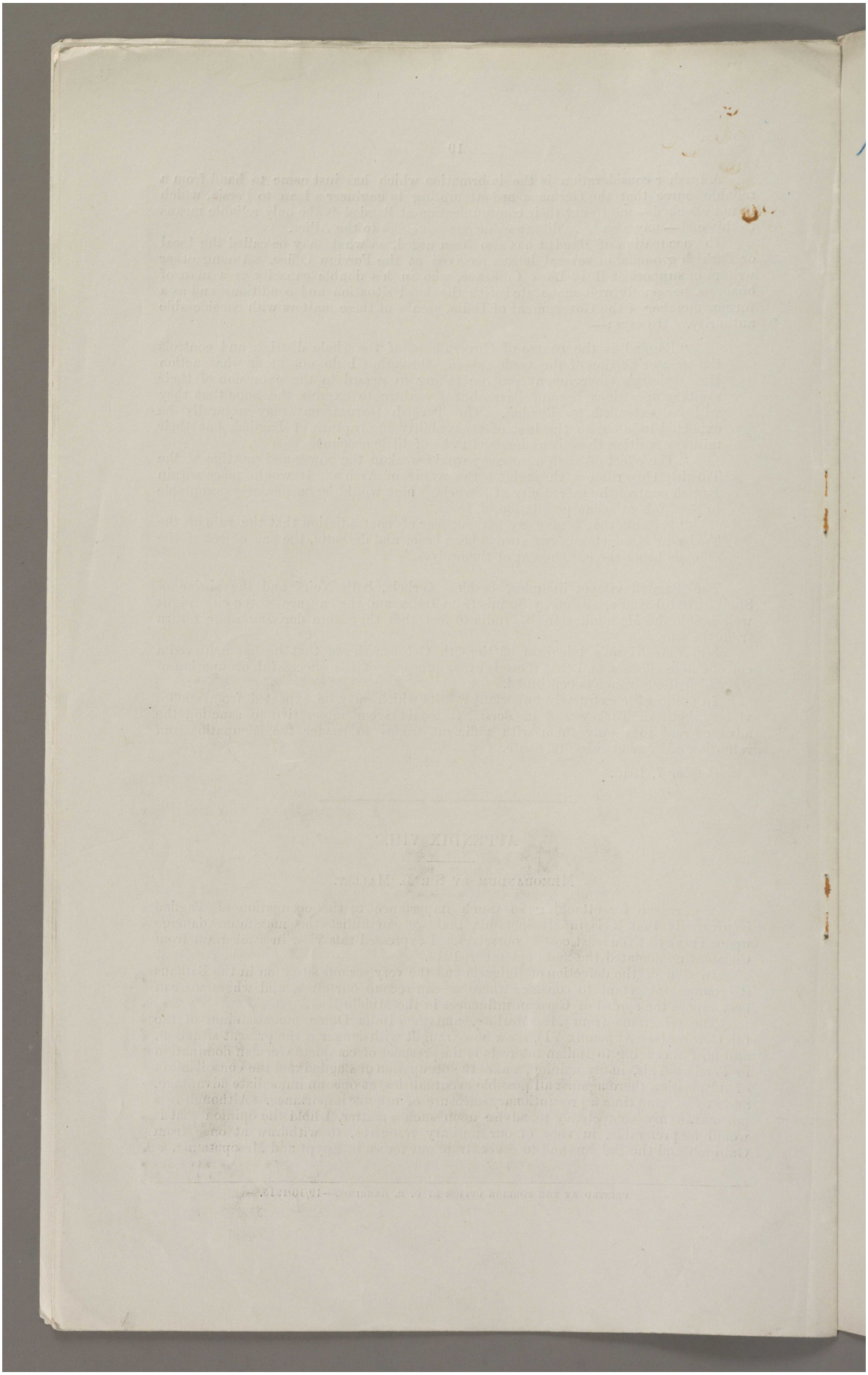
MY reason for attaching so much importance to the occupation of Bagdad is primarily that it is in Mesopotamia that we can inflict the maximum damage upon Turkey at the least cost to ourselves. I expressed this view in a telegram from Constantinople dated the 2nd September, 1914.

In view of the defection of Bulgaria and the very serious situation in the Balkans it becomes important to consider where we can recoup ourselves, and where we can best oppose the spread of German influences in the Middle East.

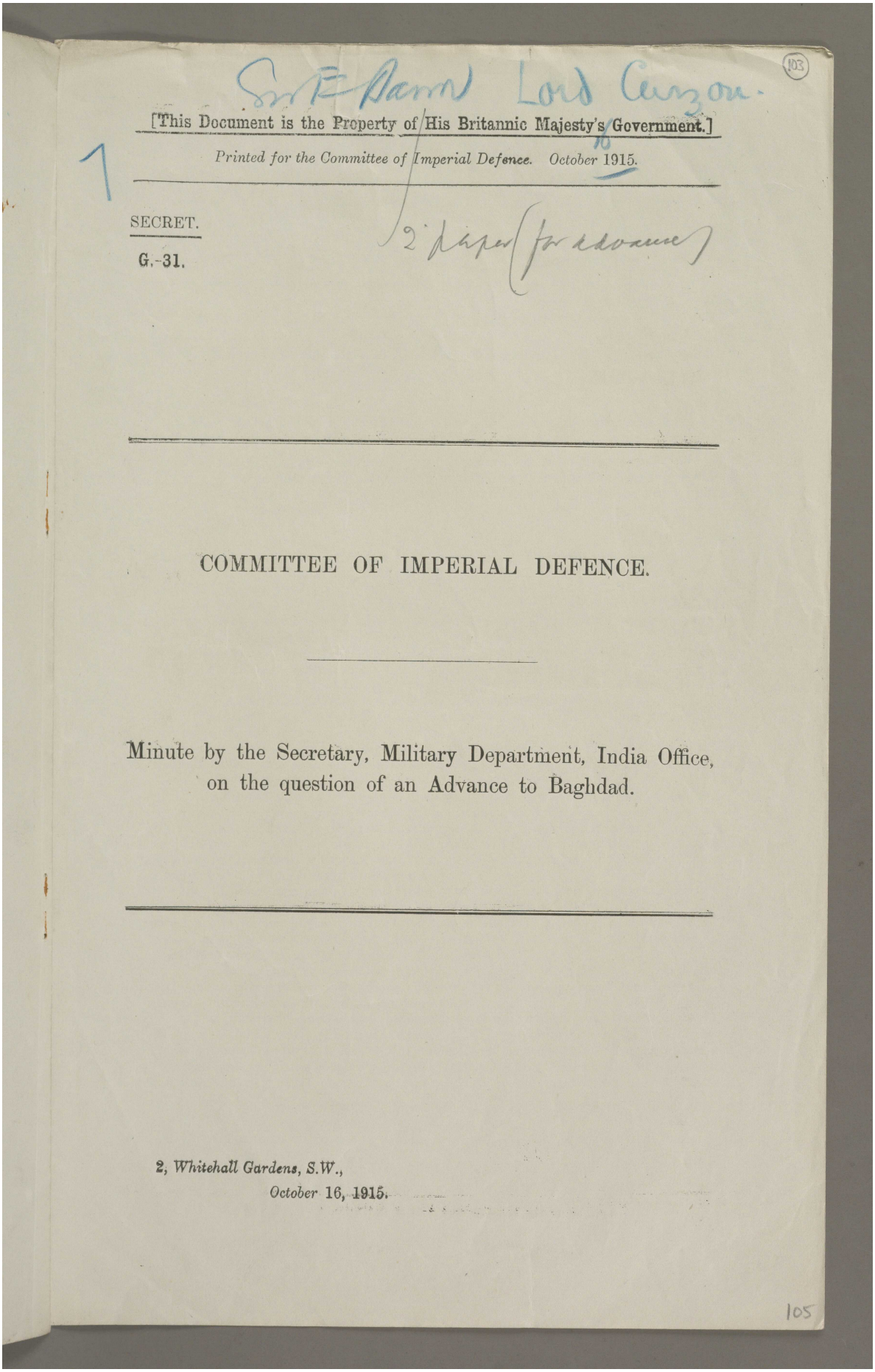
The telegrams from Mr. Marling, and the India Office memorandum of the 6th October (see Appendix VI), show how fraught with danger is the present situation, and how menacing to Indian interests is the prospect of complete German domination in Persia. This, in my opinion, makes the occupation of Bagdad and the consolidation of our position there against all possible eventualities, at once an immediate advantage, and at the same time a precautionary measure of urgent importance. Although it is not within my competency to advise upon such a matter, I hold the opinion that it would be preferable, in view of our military resources, to withdraw at once from Gallipoli and the Balkans and to concentrate our forces in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

PRINTED AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE BY C. R. HARRISON.—19/10/1915.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000070



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00000e



Sir E Barrow Lord Curzon.

103

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

Printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence. October 1915.

1

SECRET.

G.-31.

2 paper (for advance)

COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

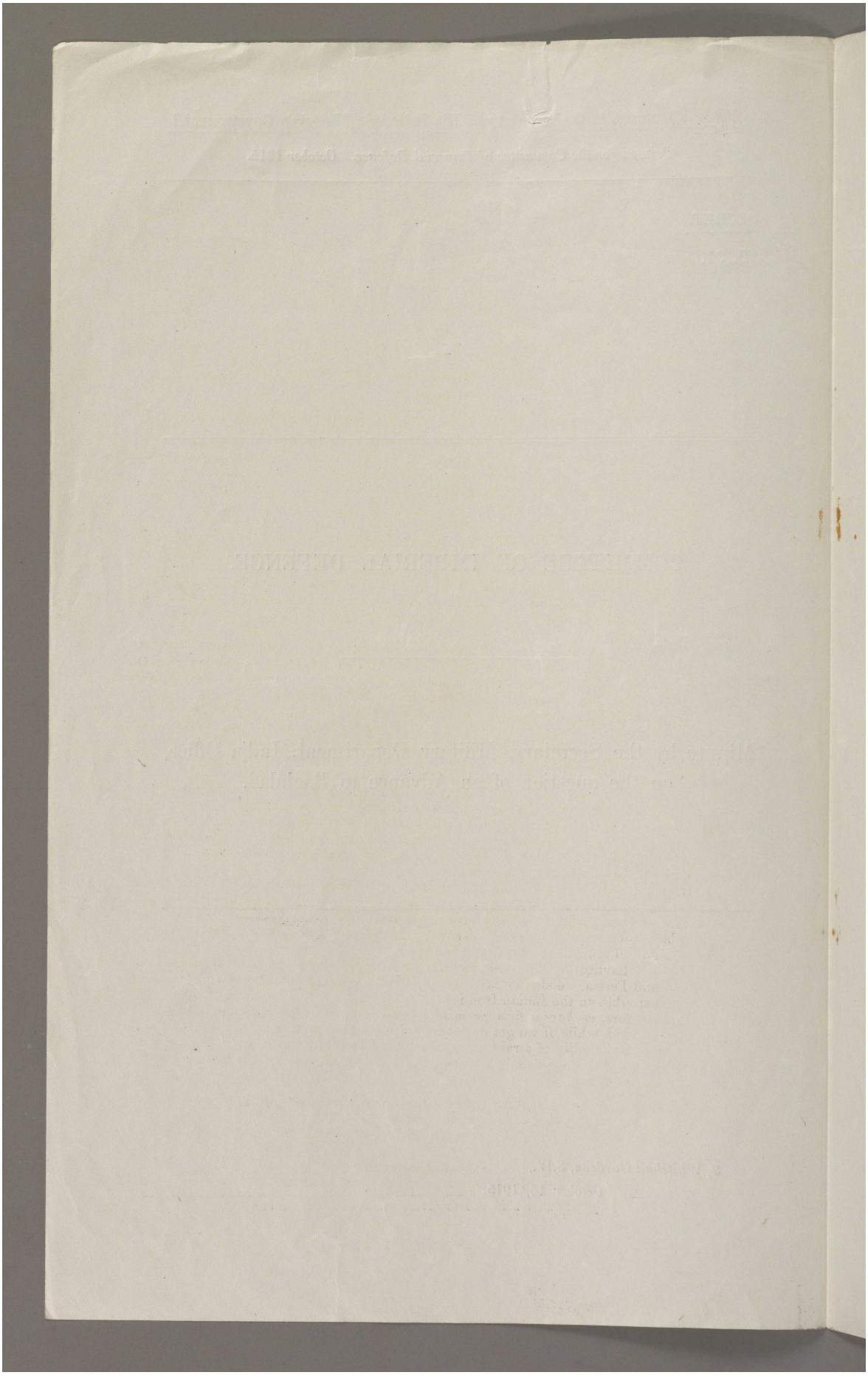
Minute by the Secretary, Military Department, India Office, on the question of an Advance to Baghdad.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,*
October 16, 1915.

105

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000038



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000094

104

SECRET.

MINUTE BY THE SECRETARY, MILITARY DEPARTMENT, INDIA OFFICE, ON THE QUESTION OF AN ADVANCE TO BAGHDAD.

NOW that it has been decided to send two divisions to Mesopotamia, the condition postulated in my note of the 4th October is fully met. I said therein :—

> "In my judgment it will not be wise to go to Baghdad *unless we can increase the force by a whole division of infantry* and one or two cavalry regiments, and this we know is impracticable unless the Indian troops are withdrawn from France."

The view I then held was that if we got an extra division it would be safe to go to Baghdad. *A fortiori*, if we get two divisions, it will be more than safe. We shall then have three divisions and four cavalry regiments in the Baghdad area, and one division and two cavalry regiments from Kut-el-Amara to the sea. This means a force of about 30,000 men within the Baghdad area, of which probably 25,000 could on emergency be concentrated for battle at Samarra or other suitable position between Samarra and Baghdad.

I understand that the General Staff hold the view that 60,000 Turks or more might be utilised to attack us, but though that number might be available, I doubt if they can be concentrated for battle in the face of an active commander with 25,000 men holding the interior lines in a selected and prepared position.

If the enemy operates by both the Euphrates and the Tigris lines he should be beaten in detail; if he operates only by the Tigris he will have great difficulty in concentrating within striking distance. I therefore hold that with this force at our disposal it will be worth our while to go to Baghdad, as, anyhow, the Turks would not be in a position to attack it under three months, and for three months we should have all the moral advantage of holding a great political centre and strategical position.

Further, if the Turks have not in the meanwhile gained a great success at the Dardanelles, that period of three months might well be prolonged to next April, when the hot season will be beginning and the Turks will not be tempted to embark on so serious an operation. In that case the moral and political advantage of holding Baghdad will be indefinitely prolonged.

If, on the other hand, I am wrong, and the Turks can concentrate 50,000 or 60,000 men against us, at the worst we should have to retire to Kut-el-Amara, having first deprived the enemy of many of the advantages Baghdad would ordinarily confer. We should have removed all shipping, destroyed the railway and rolling-stock, and taken possession of all munitions of war and transport.

Further, having for all those months interrupted the communications between Baghdad and Persia, we should have emasculated the German movement in Persia and postponed trouble on the Indian frontier.

If, therefore, we have a firm promise of two divisions, I am entirely in favour of going to Baghdad, while, if we get only one division added to Force "D," we might still consider the advisability of a raid and retirement. That is to say, General Nixon, with two divisions and three cavalry regiments in the Baghdad area, will be able, whatever the Turks may do :—

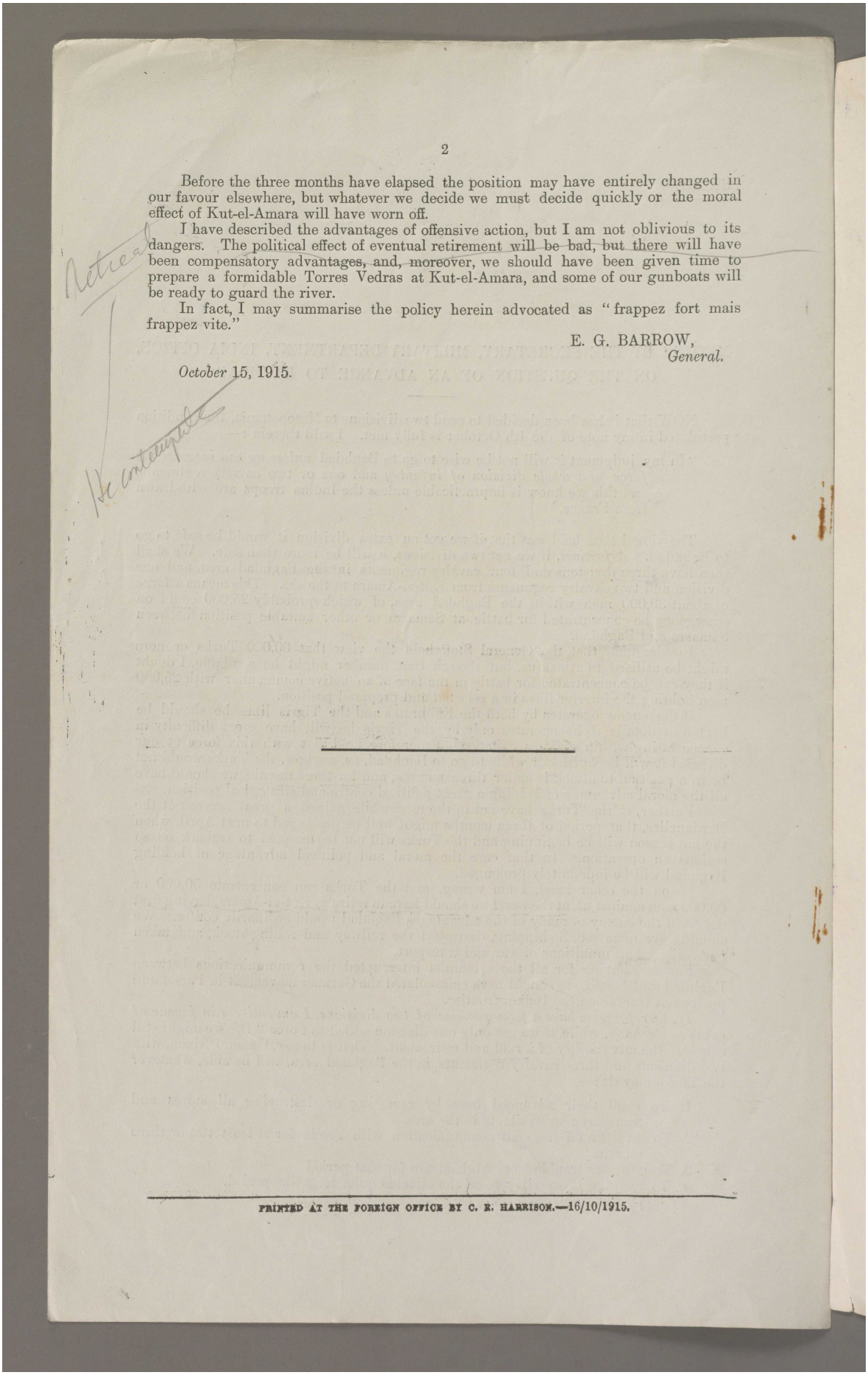
1. To spoil their advanced base by removing or destroying all stores and transport now available in the area.
2. To cut them off from all communication with Persia for at least two or three months.
3. To postpone trouble from Afghanistan for that period.
4. To keep the Basra vilayet and the oilfields quiet for a like period.

[1141]

106

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



Before the three months have elapsed the position may have entirely changed in our favour elsewhere, but whatever we decide we must decide quickly or the moral effect of Kut-el-Amara will have worn off.

I have described the advantages of offensive action, but I am not oblivious to its dangers. The political effect of eventual retirement will be bad, but there will have been compensatory advantages, and, moreover, we should have been given time to prepare a formidable Torres Vedras at Kut-el-Amara, and some of our gunboats will be ready to guard the river.

In fact, I may summarise the policy herein advocated as "frappez fort mais frappez vite."

E. G. BARROW,
General.

October 15, 1915.

PRINTED AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE BY C. R. HARRISON.—16/10/1915.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00001d

(105)

SECRET. 1915

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFFAIRS IN MESOPOTAMIA SINCE THE FRESH SITUATION CREATED BY THE VICTORY OVER THE TURKS ON 28th/29th SEPTEMBER.

Sep. 28. Defeat of Turks by British at Kut-al-Amara. (308/172/0)
29.
Oct. 1. General Nixon reported retreating Turks hotly attacked by Arabs (129/197/1).

" 2. British River Column reached point 27 miles up stream of Kut-al-Amara. (29/198/1).

" 3. General Nixon proposed to concentrate at Aziziyah and states that he is strong enough to open road to Bagdad and that it is highly desirable to capture enemy's steamers blocked below Bagdad. (129/200/1).

" 4. Secretary of State for India asks General Nixon's intentions and suggests that there is no object in pressing if no probability of catching and smashing enemy. (3071).

" 4. Secretary of State for India suggests to Viceroy to stop General Nixon's further advance. (Private telegram).

" 4. In accordance with decision of Cabinet Prime Minister summoned an interdepartmental conference to consider the strategic situation in Mesopotamia.

" 5. General Nixon reported British River Column at Aziziyah. (129/202/1).

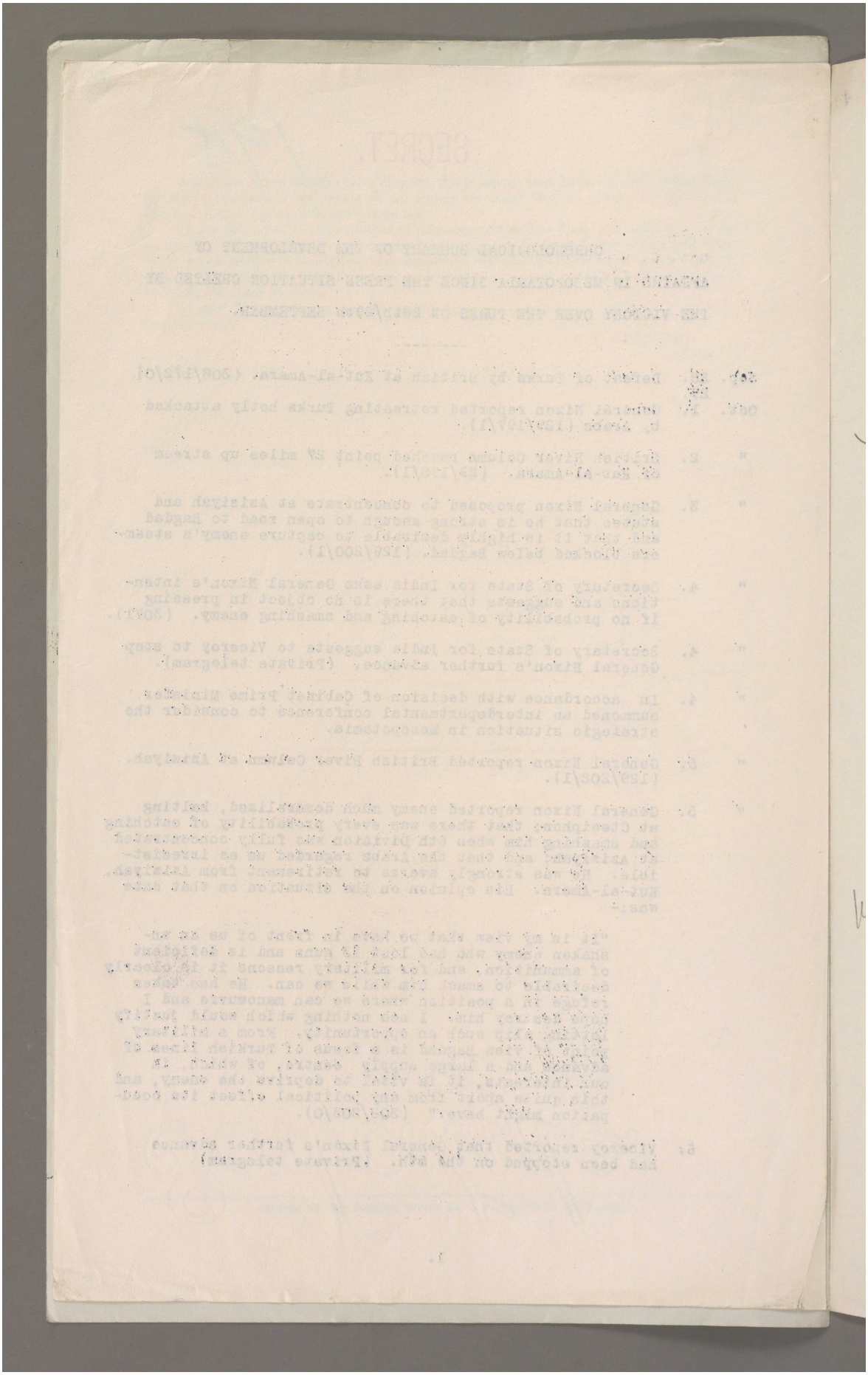
" 5. General Nixon reported enemy much demoralized, halting at Ctesiphon; that there was every probability of catching and smashing him when 6th Division was fully concentrated at Aziziyah; and that the Arabs regarded us as irresistible. He was strongly averse to retirement from Aziziyah, Kut-al-Amara. His opinion on the situation on that date was:-

> "It is my view that we have in front of us an unshaken enemy who has lost 13 guns and is deficient of ammunition, and for military reasons it is clearly desirable to smash him while we can. He has taken refuge in a position where we can manoeuvre and I hope destroy him. I see nothing which would justify letting slip such an opportunity. From a military point of view Bagdad is a focus of Turkish lines of advance and a large supply centre, of which, in our interests, it is vital to deprive the enemy, and this quite apart from any political effect its occupation might have." (308/203/0).

6. Viceroy reported that General Nixon's further advance had been stopped on the 5th. (Private telegram)

1.

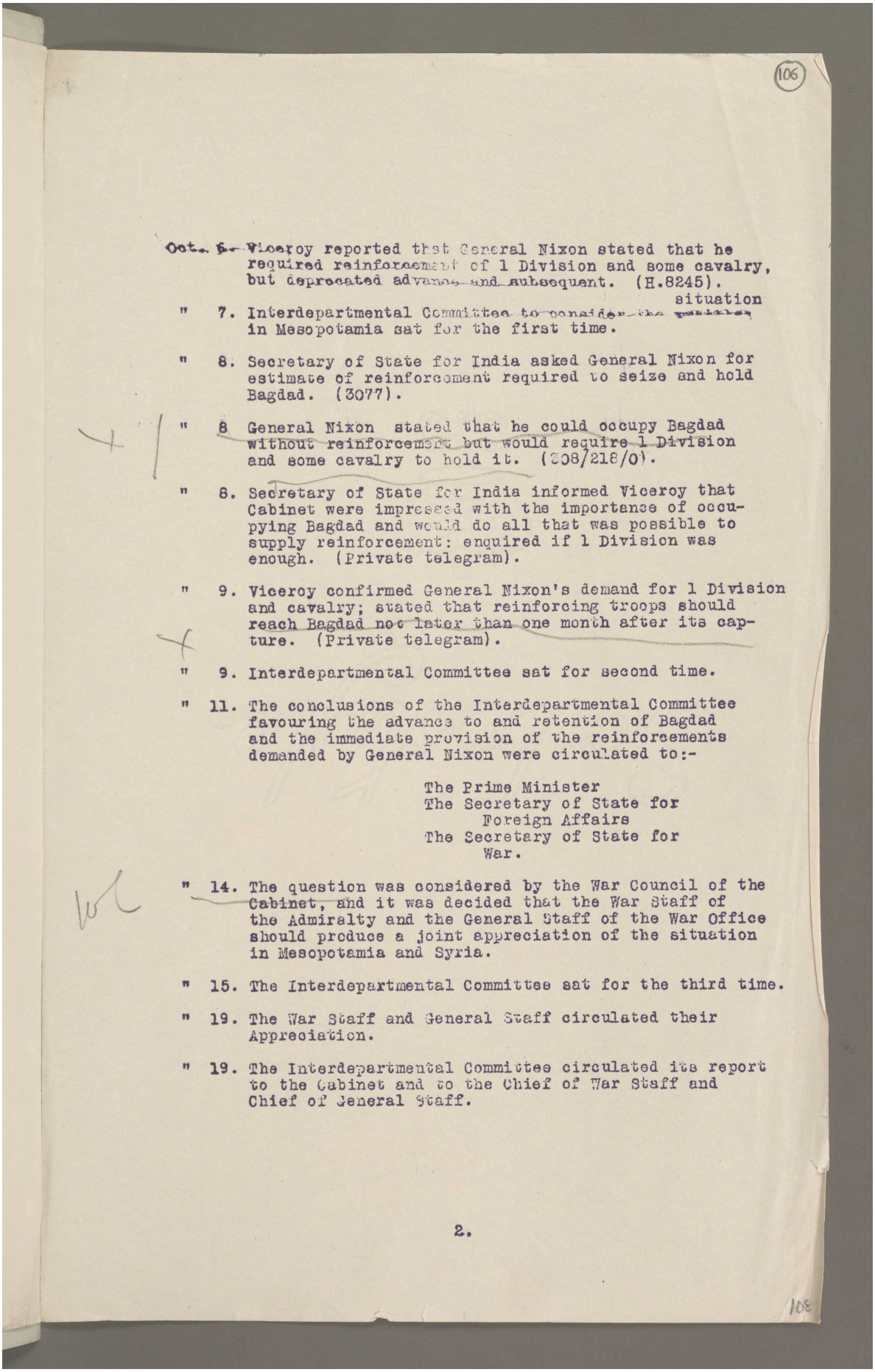
107



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000b6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



106

Oct. 6. Viceroy reported that General Nixon stated that he required reinforcement of 1 Division and some cavalry, but deprecated advance and subsequent. (H.8245).

" 7. Interdepartmental Committee to consider the situation in Mesopotamia sat for the first time.

" 8. Secretary of State for India asked General Nixon for estimate of reinforcement required to seize and hold Bagdad. (3077).

" 8 General Nixon stated that he could occupy Bagdad without reinforcement but would require 1 Division and some cavalry to hold it. (3038/218/0).

" 8. Secretary of State for India informed Viceroy that Cabinet were impressed with the importance of occupying Bagdad and would do all that was possible to supply reinforcement: enquired if 1 Division was enough. (Private telegram).

" 9. Viceroy confirmed General Nixon's demand for 1 Division and cavalry; stated that reinforcing troops should reach Bagdad not later than one month after its capture. (Private telegram).

" 9. Interdepartmental Committee sat for second time.

" 11. The conclusions of the Interdepartmental Committee favouring the advance to and retention of Bagdad and the immediate provision of the reinforcements demanded by General Nixon were circulated to:-

The Prime Minister
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
The Secretary of State for War.

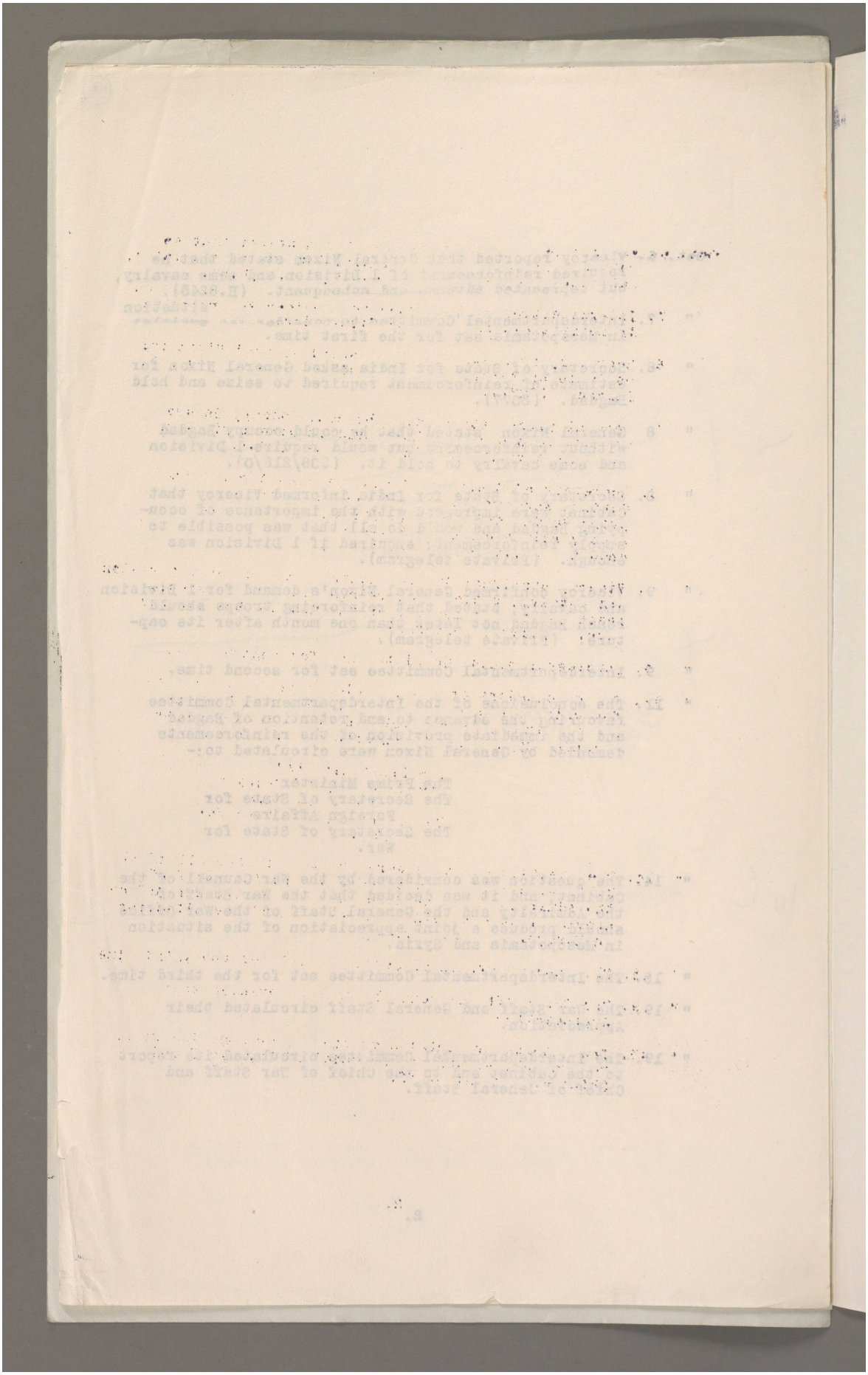
" 14. The question was considered by the War Council of the Cabinet, and it was decided that the War Staff of the Admiralty and the General Staff of the War Office should produce a joint appreciation of the situation in Mesopotamia and Syria.

" 15. The Interdepartmental Committee sat for the third time.

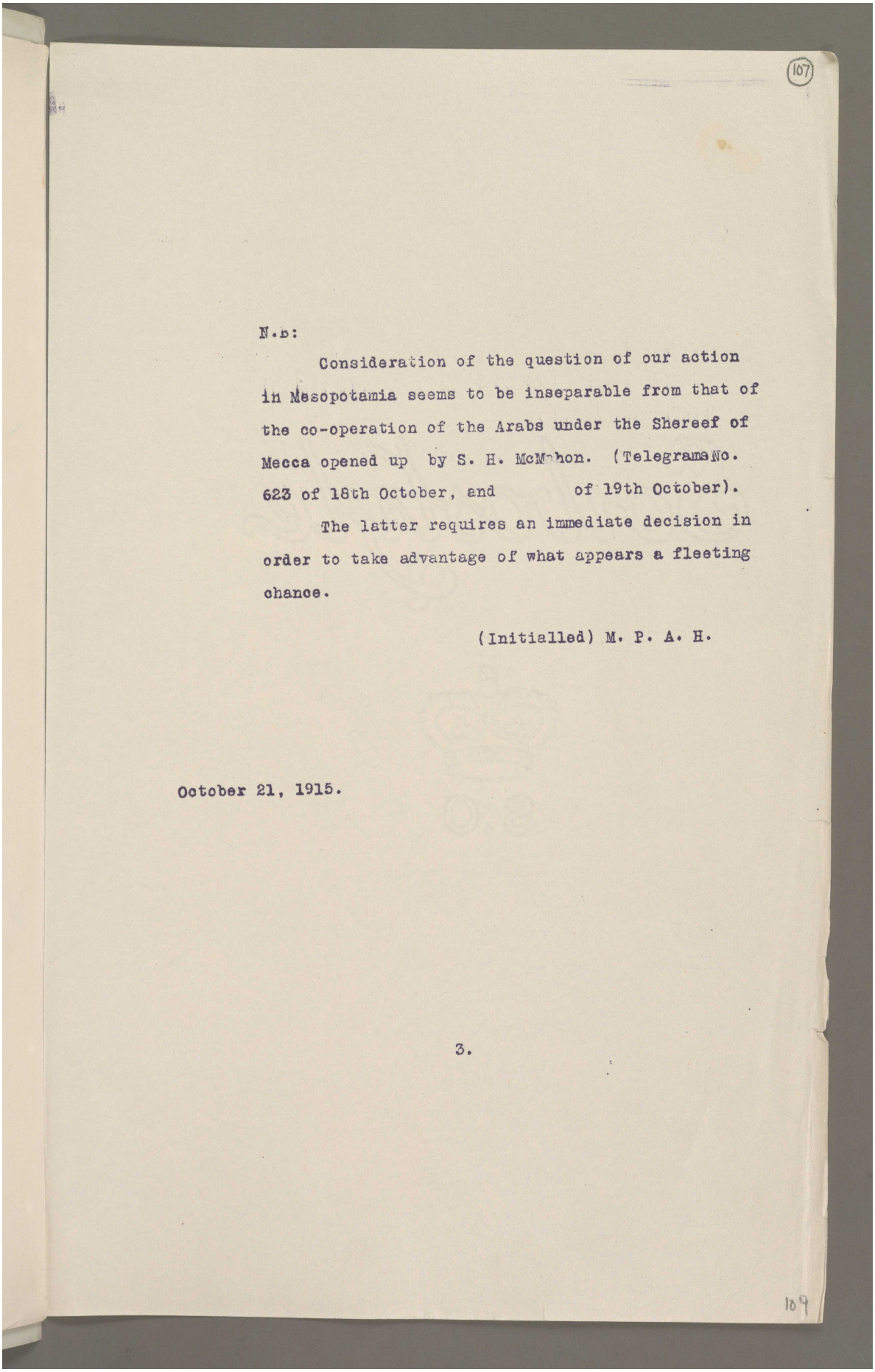
" 19. The War Staff and General Staff circulated their Appreciation.

" 19. The Interdepartmental Committee circulated its report to the Cabinet and to the Chief of War Staff and Chief of General Staff.

2.



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000007



(107)

N.B:

Consideration of the question of our action in Mesopotamia seems to be inseparable from that of the co-operation of the Arabs under the Shereef of Mecca opened up by S. H. McMahon. (Telegrams No. 623 of 18th October, and of 19th October).

The latter requires an immediate decision in order to take advantage of what appears a fleeting chance.

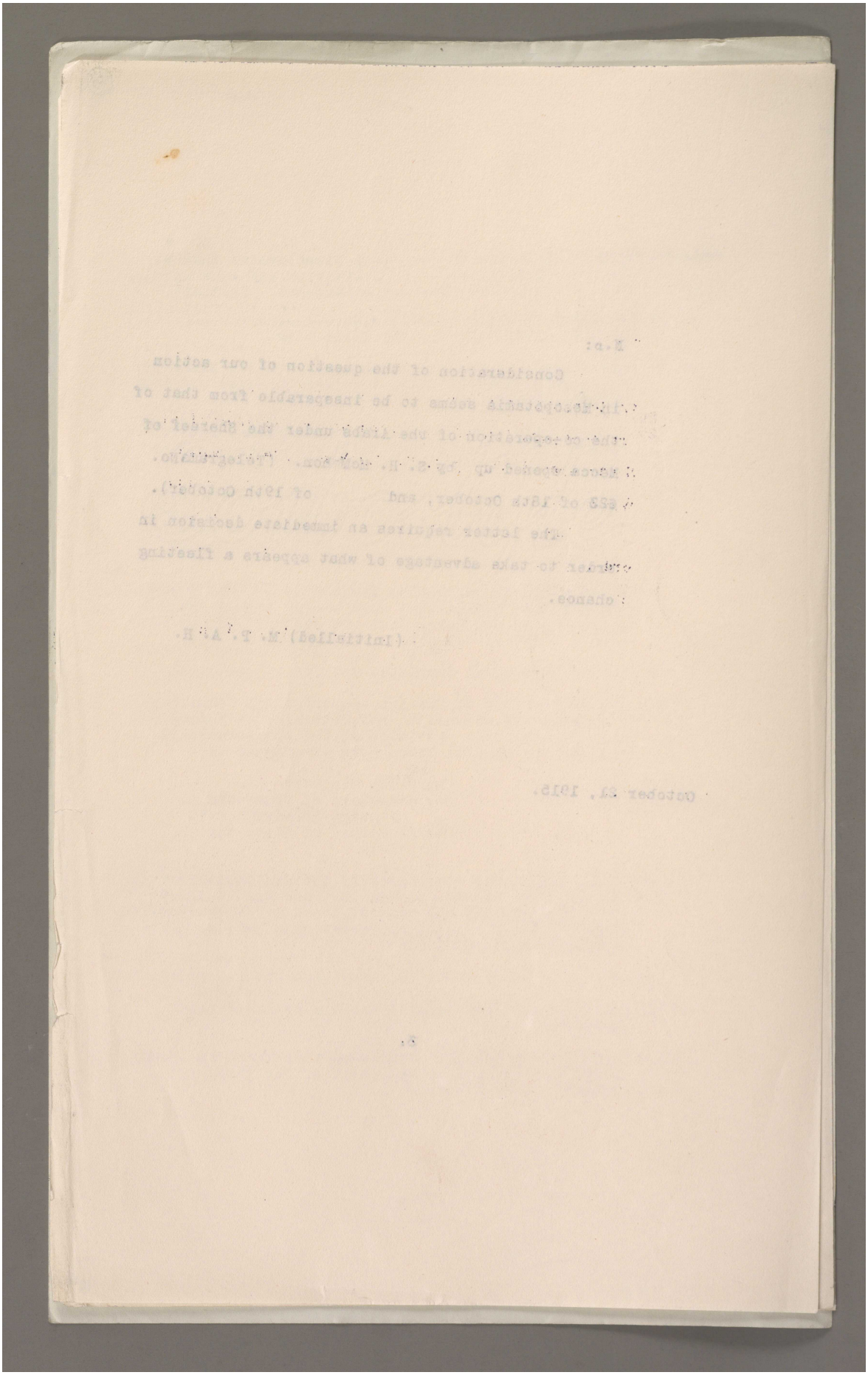
(Initialled) M. P. A. H.

October 21, 1915.

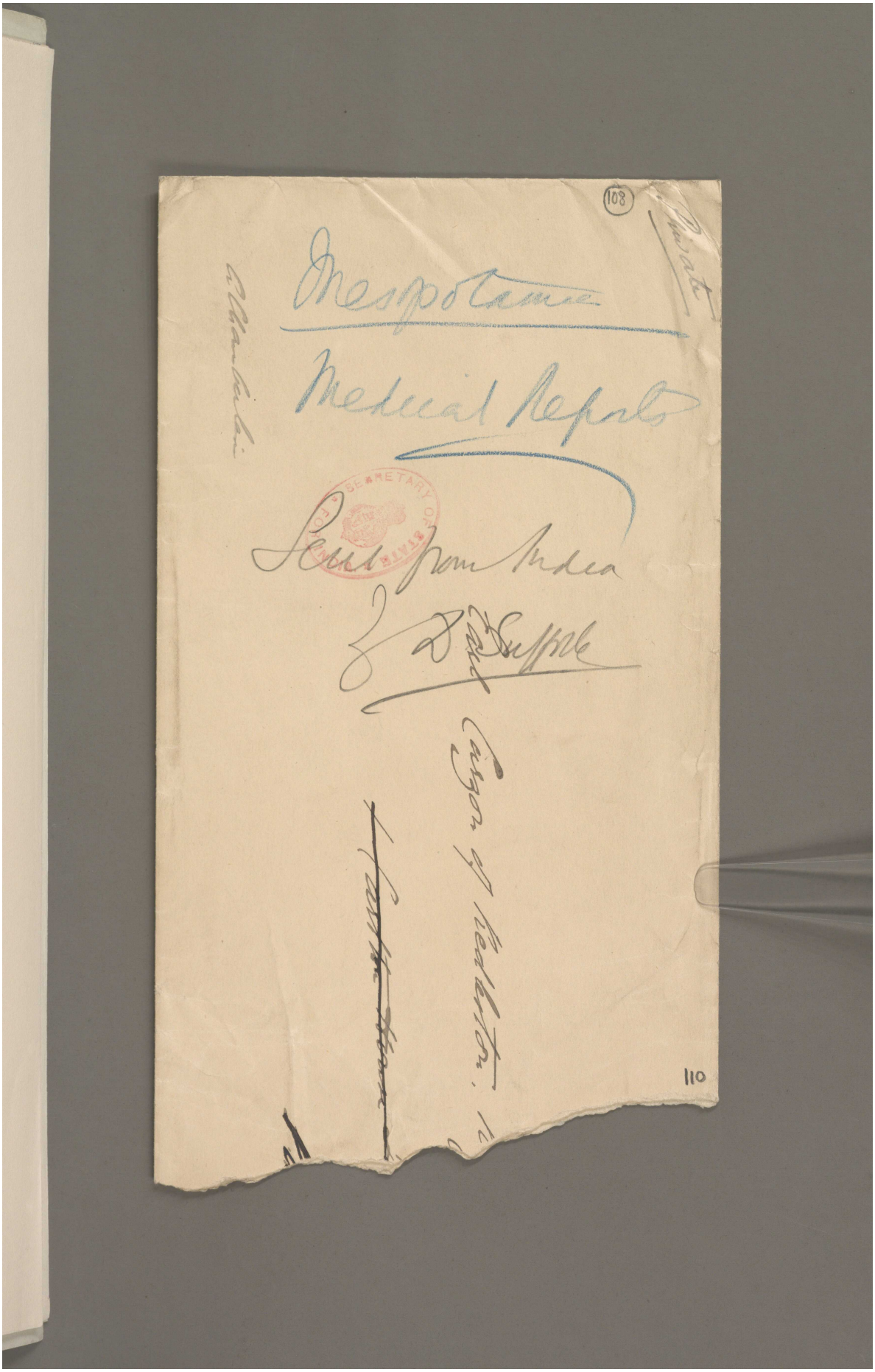
3.

109

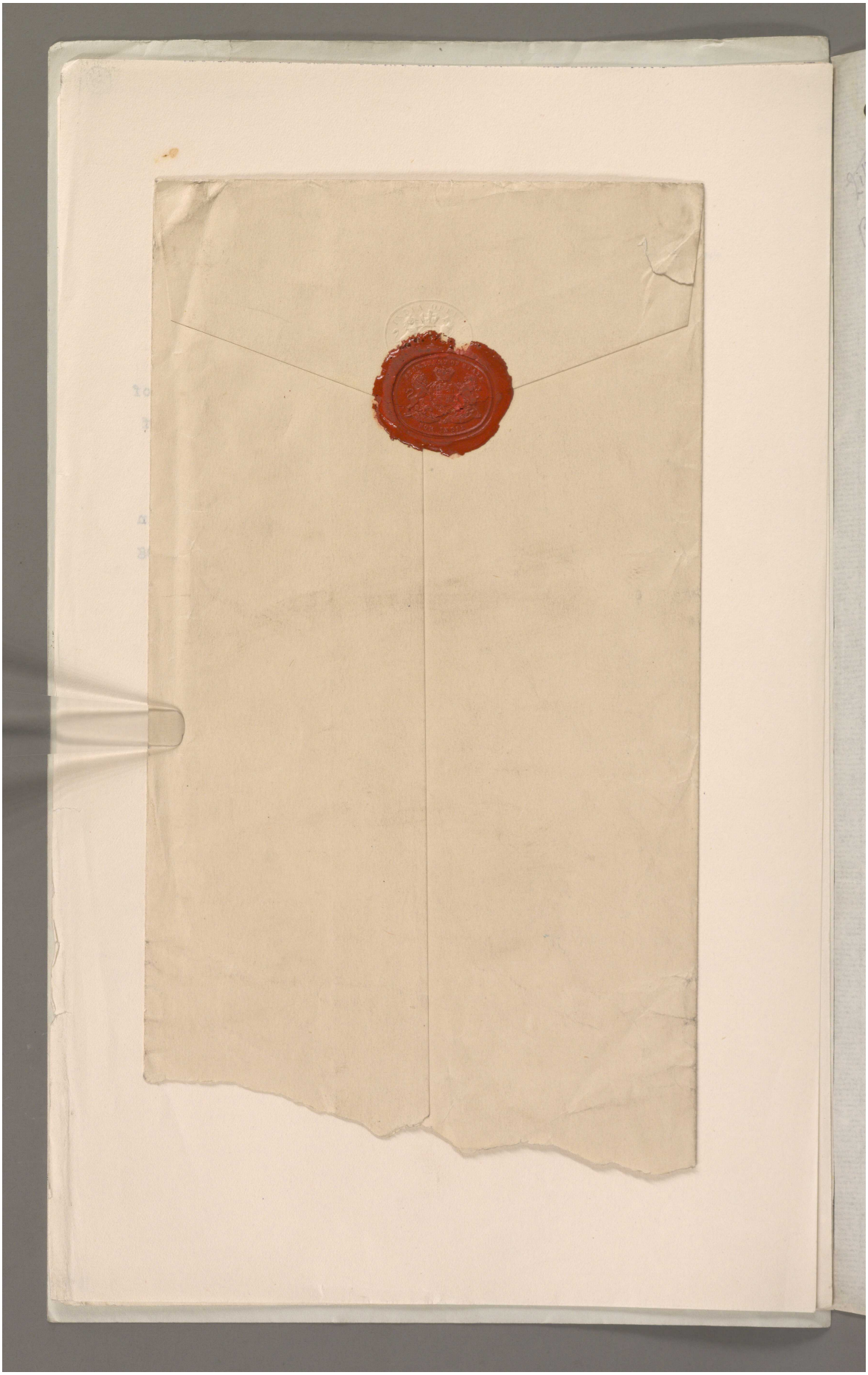
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000073



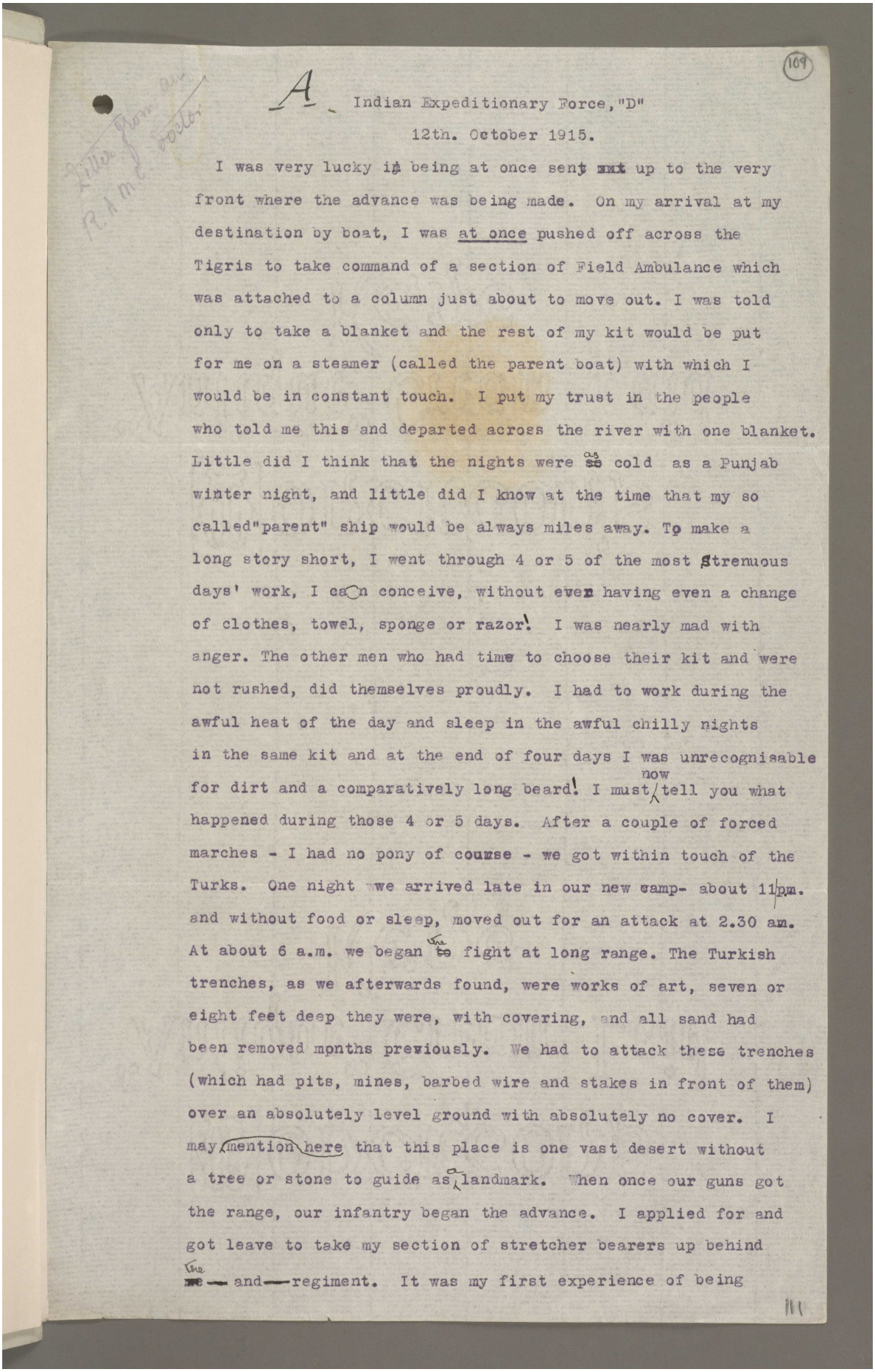
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000be



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00003d



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000075



(109)

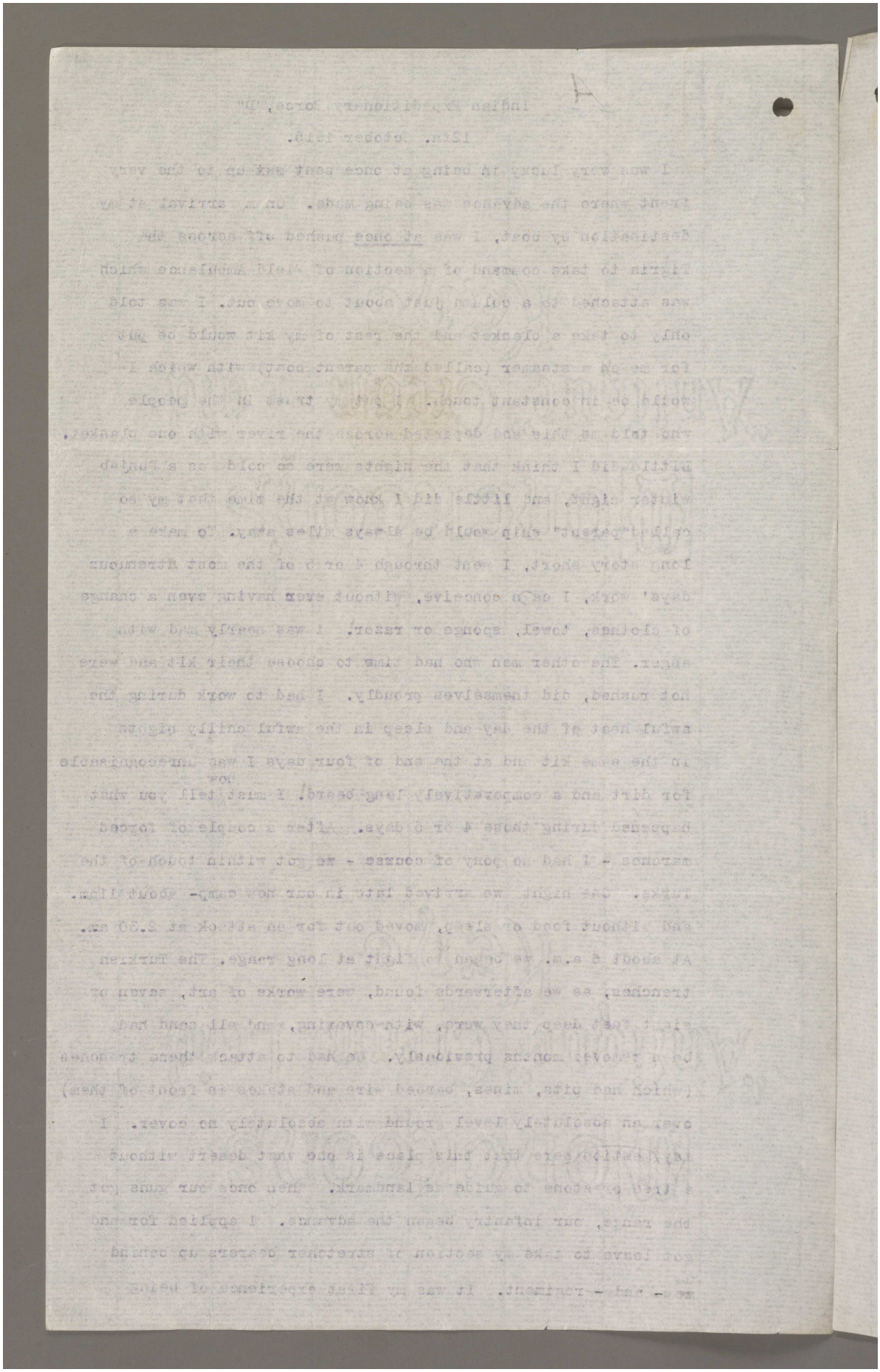
A

Indian Expeditionary Force, "D"

12th. October 1915.

I was very lucky in being at once sent up to the very front where the advance was being made. On my arrival at my destination by boat, I was at once pushed off across the Tigris to take command of a section of Field Ambulance which was attached to a column just about to move out. I was told only to take a blanket and the rest of my kit would be put for me on a steamer (called the parent boat) with which I would be in constant touch. I put my trust in the people who told me this and departed across the river with one blanket. Little did I think that the nights were as cold as a Punjab winter night, and little did I know at the time that my so called "parent" ship would be always miles away. To make a long story short, I went through 4 or 5 of the most strenuous days' work, I can conceive, without ever having even a change of clothes, towel, sponge or razor! I was nearly mad with anger. The other men who had time to choose their kit and were not rushed, did themselves proudly. I had to work during the awful heat of the day and sleep in the awful chilly nights in the same kit and at the end of four days I was unrecognisable for dirt and a comparatively long beard! I must now tell you what happened during those 4 or 5 days. After a couple of forced marches - I had no pony of course - we got within touch of the Turks. One night we arrived late in our new camp- about 11pm. and without food or sleep, moved out for an attack at 2.30 am. At about 6 a.m. we began the fight at long range. The Turkish trenches, as we afterwards found, were works of art, seven or eight feet deep they were, with covering, and all sand had been removed months previously. We had to attack these trenches (which had pits, mines, barbed wire and stakes in front of them) over an absolutely level ground with absolutely no cover. I may mention here that this place is one vast desert without a tree or stone to guide as landmark. When once our guns got the range, our infantry began the advance. I applied for and got leave to take my section of stretcher bearers up behind the — and — regiment. It was my first experience of being

111



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00000f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

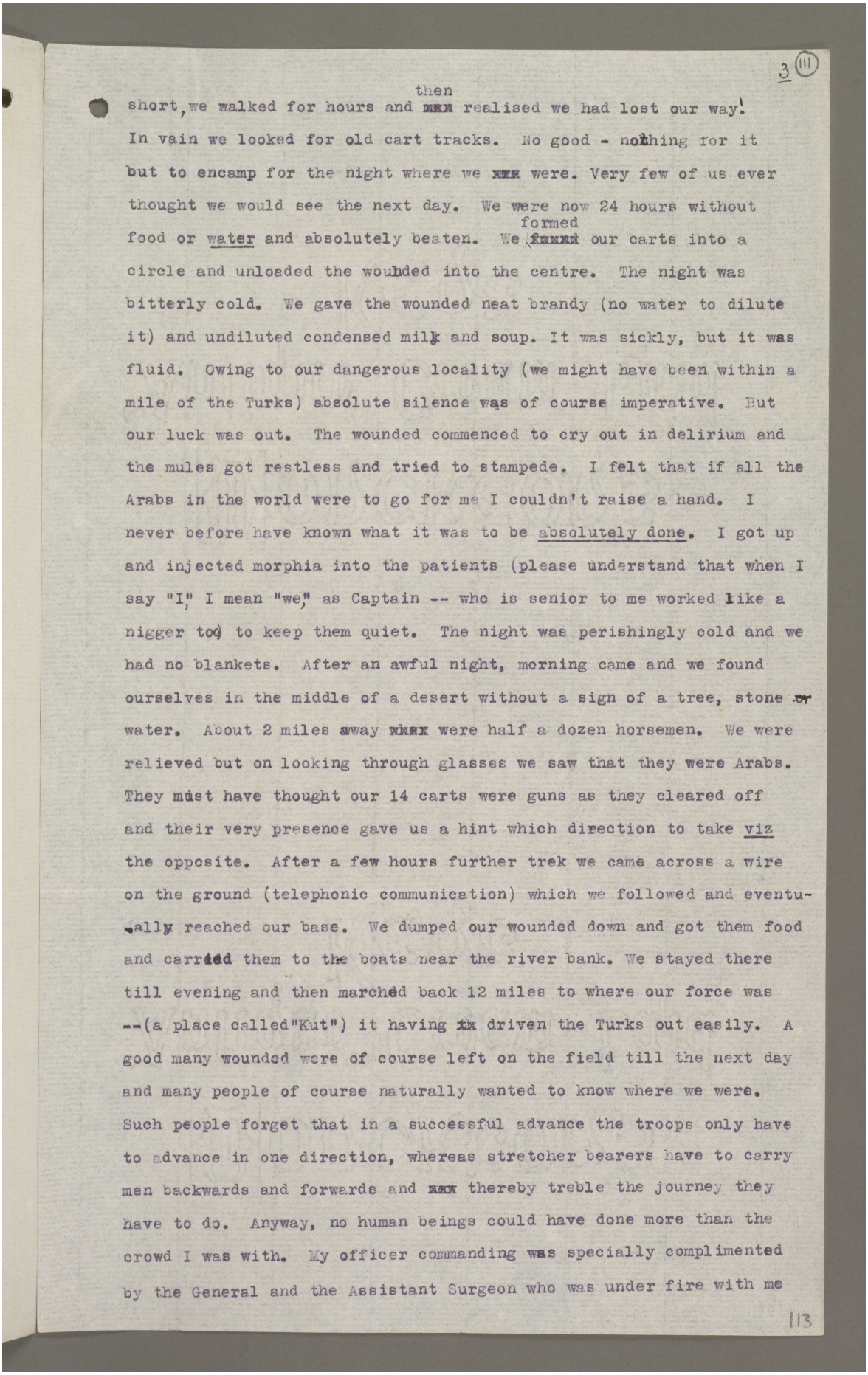
BRITISH LIBRARY

being under shell and rifle fire. For the whole long morning and afternoon the shells burst round us and rifle fire knocked up the dust at our feet and whirled past us. Only the Goodness of God kept the numbers of casualties as small as they were. It was an awful day- not a drop of water within miles - the men, wounded and others, crying for water. It was awful. Most of us had had no food either. Well, two other doctors and I got back about 400 wounded to our dressing station, ~~within~~ whither we expected carts to return them to the river bank six miles further back. The supply of carts was hopelessly insufficient. I borrowed a horse and galloped all over the place looking for someone who could signal to the General or Staff as carts were urgently needed. We only had 12 A.T. carts to remove hundreds of wounded - many with broken legs and arms - a distance of six miles. Eventually 80 carts began to roll up in larger numbers and the chap with me (Captain --) kept sending off cart-loads while I sent them to him from the field. Our troops were pushing on and the stretcher bearers who had been carrying wounded backwards and forwards all day and must have walked 20 miles without sleep or food or water , were absolutely done. They could'nt budge. It was now about 5 p.m. and we were left with wounded still all over the place. Our numbers were hopelessly insufficient to cope with it. Finally we got together all the wounded within reach (about fifty) and waited in the hope that more carts would come. Our troops were now pushing on and out of sight. We were left in the desert with 50 wounded and dying and the dead body of Major —, — Regiment.

The cries of the wounded for water were desperate. All our supplies had been used up by the first lot of wounded. Personally I would have given £20 for a bottle of soda water. I would really. Here we were now stranded with 50 wounded whom we could not leave and it was now dark and a few hours would see the Arabs coming down in shoals to plunder the wounded and do worse things. Fortunately, just as we had given up hope, up came 14 carts and in the dark we tried to load our 50 men onto 14 carts. Then we commenced to find our way back. We had no escort and were not looking forward to meeting Arabs. To make a long story short,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000038

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x00000a



3 (111)

short, we walked for hours and then realised we had lost our way! In vain we looked for old cart tracks. No good - nothing for it but to encamp for the night where we were. Very few of us ever thought we would see the next day. We were now 24 hours without food or water and absolutely beaten. We formed our carts into a circle and unloaded the wounded into the centre. The night was bitterly cold. We gave the wounded neat brandy (no water to dilute it) and undiluted condensed milk and soup. It was sickly, but it was fluid. Owing to our dangerous locality (we might have been within a mile of the Turks) absolute silence was of course imperative. But our luck was out. The wounded commenced to cry out in delirium and the mules got restless and tried to stampede. I felt that if all the Arabs in the world were to go for me I couldn't raise a hand. I never before have known what it was to be absolutely done. I got up and injected morphia into the patients (please understand that when I say "I," I mean "we," as Captain -- who is senior to me worked like a nigger too) to keep them quiet. The night was perishingly cold and we had no blankets. After an awful night, morning came and we found ourselves in the middle of a desert without a sign of a tree, stone or water. About 2 miles away were half a dozen horsemen. We were relieved but on looking through glasses we saw that they were Arabs. They must have thought our 14 carts were guns as they cleared off and their very presence gave us a hint which direction to take viz the opposite. After a few hours further trek we came across a wire on the ground (telephonic communication) which we followed and eventually reached our base. We dumped our wounded down and got them food and carried them to the boats near the river bank. We stayed there till evening and then marched back 12 miles to where our force was --(a place called"Kut") it having driven the Turks out easily. A good many wounded were of course left on the field till the next day and many people of course naturally wanted to know where we were. Such people forget that in a successful advance the troops only have to advance in one direction, whereas stretcher bearers have to carry men backwards and forwards and thereby treble the journey they have to do. Anyway, no human beings could have done more than the crowd I was with. My officer commanding was specially complimented by the General and the Assistant Surgeon who was under fire with me

113

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000097

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000041

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

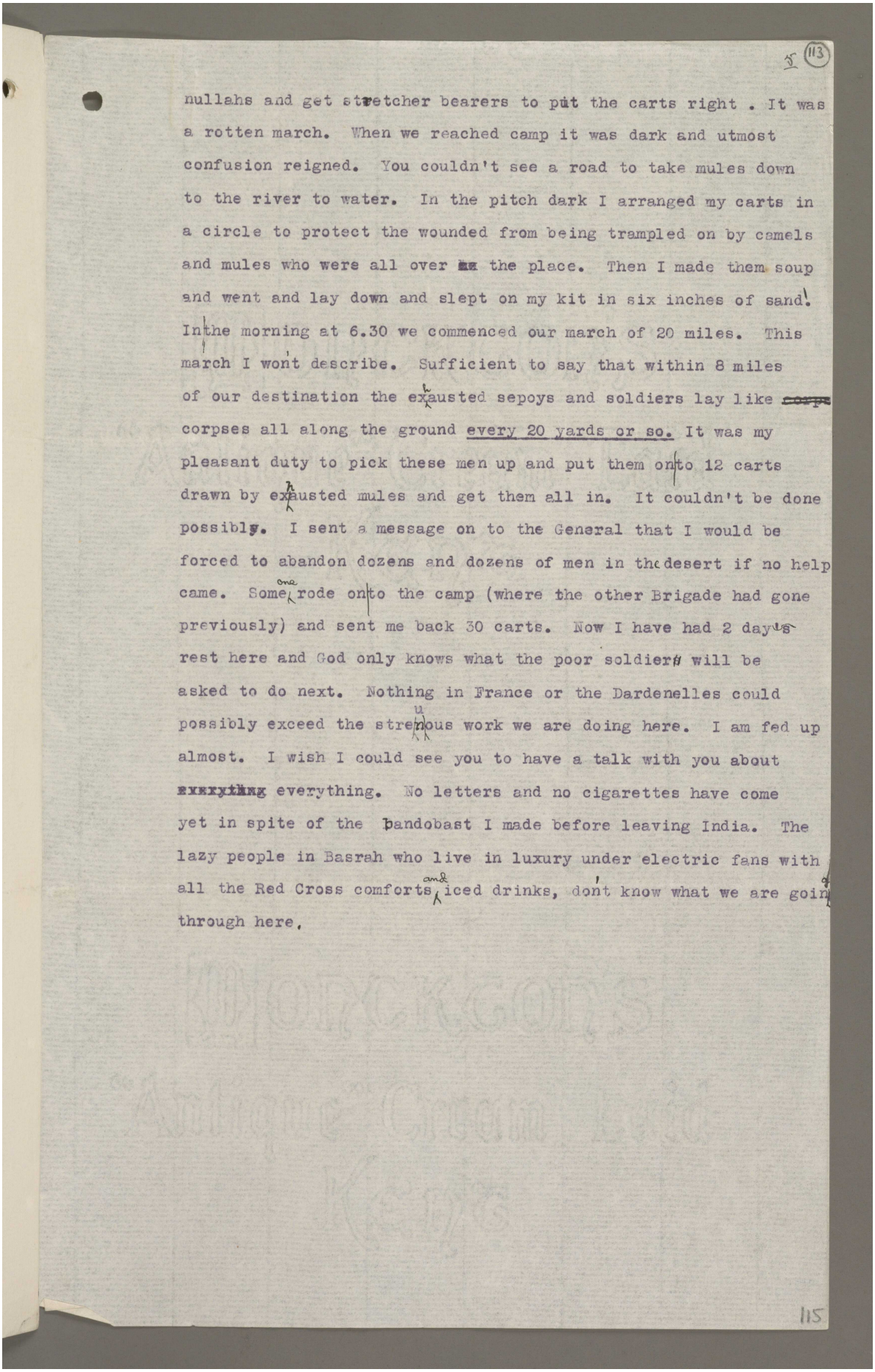
me all day and who had evidently done good work previously, has been recommended for the D.C.M.

It is not for me to say where the fault lay that all wounded were not immediately removed painlessly from the field, but until regulations lay down that a Field Ambulance shall have 200 carts instead of 20 A.T. carts to remove wounded the same will always occur. Anyway, as I say, I got into Kut, found chaps I knew, got a bath and shave, eventually got my bedding and towels etc., I remained there one week. I felt awfully glad that during that trying march we had hung on to the body of Major -- (killed in action) for 2 days and then had him decently buried with another officer who died on the way. The other officers of his regiment were awfully nice about it and thanked us for not leaving him to the tender mercies of the Arabs, but for carrying it on a stretcher by stretcher bearers who almost had to be beaten to get a move out of them as they were almost dead too.

At Kut we rested a week and then commenced a fresh advance to where we now are. The first day we only marched 11 miles, the second 24 miles and the third day 20 miles. Words almost fail me to describe this march too. I, with a Captain -- under me, were the only Field Ambulance Medical Officers to look after the men who fell out of an entire Brigade! We had 12 empty carts given us for the purpose. We might have had 120 with better chance of coping with it. The intense heat played havoc with the British soldiers on the second long march of 24 miles. Men fell out all along the road. I had to pick them up, kick them up, beat them up. It sounds cruel, but was absolutely necessary. Finally it became dark and I was still out with the transport about 8 miles from our proposed camp. I lifted men into carts, chucked others off to give them their places, joggled them about, carried some, dragged others and abandoned lots with whom I could do nothing. When darkness came on, bonfires in the distance were lit to show us the way in. My carts of exausted and heat striken men, had to go over awful nullahs in the dark. At length I had to get a pickaxe and actually cut away banks myself to let my carts get over. Carts were overturned and I would have to extricate sick men from nullahs

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000011

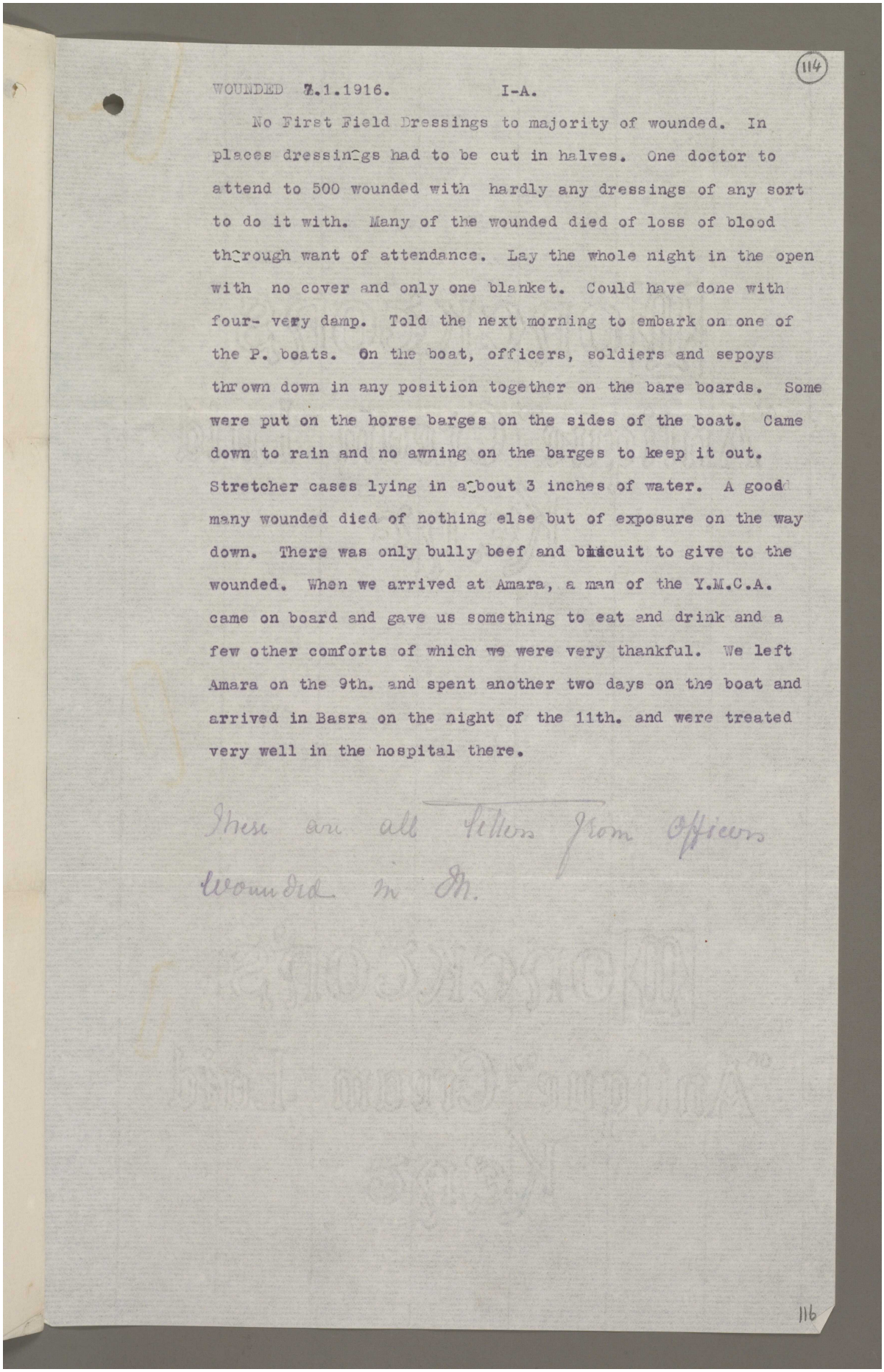
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000027



113

nullahs and get stretcher bearers to put the carts right . It was a rotten march. When we reached camp it was dark and utmost confusion reigned. You couldn't see a road to take mules down to the river to water. In the pitch dark I arranged my carts in a circle to protect the wounded from being trampled on by camels and mules who were all over the place. Then I made them soup and went and lay down and slept on my kit in six inches of sand! In the morning at 6.30 we commenced our march of 20 miles. This march I won't describe. Sufficient to say that within 8 miles of our destination the exhausted sepoys and soldiers lay like ~~corps~~ corpses all along the ground every 20 yards or so. It was my pleasant duty to pick these men up and put them onto 12 carts drawn by exhausted mules and get them all in. It couldn't be done possibly. I sent a message on to the General that I would be forced to abandon dozens and dozens of men in the desert if no help came. Some one rode onto the camp (where the other Brigade had gone previously) and sent me back 30 carts. Now I have had 2 days rest here and God only knows what the poor soldiers will be asked to do next. Nothing in France or the Dardenelles could possibly exceed the strenuous work we are doing here. I am fed up almost. I wish I could see you to have a talk with you about ~~everything~~ everything. No letters and no cigarettes have come yet in spite of the bandobast I made before leaving India. The lazy people in Basrah who live in luxury under electric fans with all the Red Cross comforts and iced drinks, don't know what we are going through here.

115



(114)

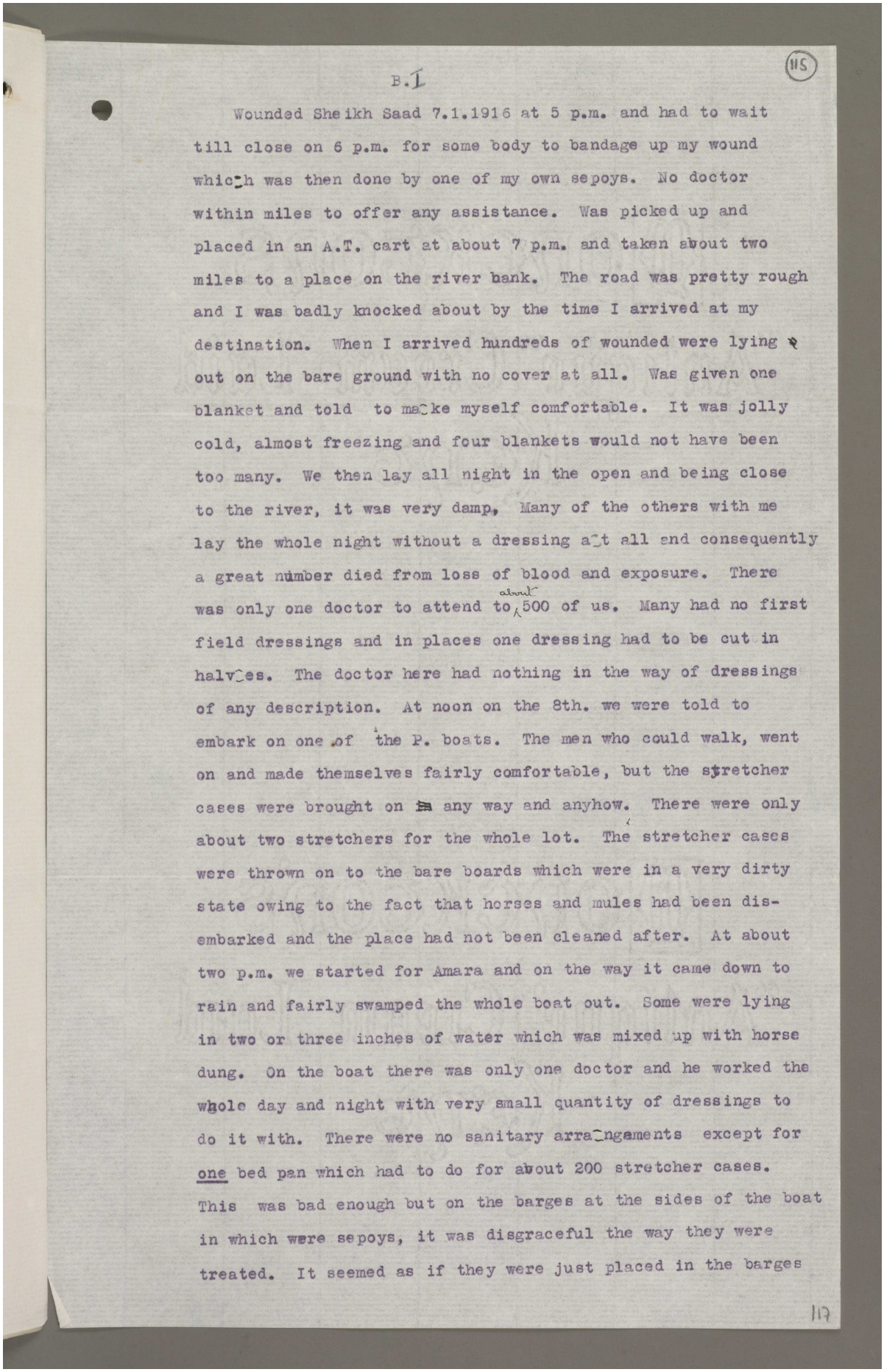
WOUNDED 7.1.1916. I-A.

No First Field Dressings to majority of wounded. In places dressings had to be cut in halves. One doctor to attend to 500 wounded with hardly any dressings of any sort to do it with. Many of the wounded died of loss of blood through want of attendance. Lay the whole night in the open with no cover and only one blanket. Could have done with four- very damp. Told the next morning to embark on one of the P. boats. On the boat, officers, soldiers and sepoys thrown down in any position together on the bare boards. Some were put on the horse barges on the sides of the boat. Came down to rain and no awning on the barges to keep it out. Stretcher cases lying in about 3 inches of water. A good many wounded died of nothing else but of exposure on the way down. There was only bully beef and biscuit to give to the wounded. When we arrived at Amara, a man of the Y.M.C.A. came on board and gave us something to eat and drink and a few other comforts of which we were very thankful. We left Amara on the 9th. and spent another two days on the boat and arrived in Basra on the night of the 11th. and were treated very well in the hospital there.

These are all letters from Officers wounded in M.

116

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000040



B.1

(115)

Wounded Sheikh Saad 7.1.1916 at 5 p.m. and had to wait till close on 6 p.m. for some body to bandage up my wound which was then done by one of my own sepoys. No doctor within miles to offer any assistance. Was picked up and placed in an A.T. cart at about 7 p.m. and taken about two miles to a place on the river bank. The road was pretty rough and I was badly knocked about by the time I arrived at my destination. When I arrived hundreds of wounded were lying out on the bare ground with no cover at all. Was given one blanket and told to make myself comfortable. It was jolly cold, almost freezing and four blankets would not have been too many. We then lay all night in the open and being close to the river, it was very damp. Many of the others with me lay the whole night without a dressing at all and consequently a great number died from loss of blood and exposure. There was only one doctor to attend to about 500 of us. Many had no first field dressings and in places one dressing had to be cut in halves. The doctor here had nothing in the way of dressings of any description. At noon on the 8th. we were told to embark on one of the P. boats. The men who could walk, went on and made themselves fairly comfortable, but the stretcher cases were brought on any way and anyhow. There were only about two stretchers for the whole lot. The stretcher cases were thrown on to the bare boards which were in a very dirty state owing to the fact that horses and mules had been disembarked and the place had not been cleaned after. At about two p.m. we started for Amara and on the way it came down to rain and fairly swamped the whole boat out. Some were lying in two or three inches of water which was mixed up with horse dung. On the boat there was only one doctor and he worked the whole day and night with very small quantity of dressings to do it with. There were no sanitary arrangements except for one bed pan which had to do for about 200 stretcher cases. This was bad enough but on the barges at the sides of the boat in which were sepoys, it was disgraceful the way they were treated. It seemed as if they were just placed in the barges

117

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000056

(116)

to die. They got no attendance at all. I myself saved one man who was trying to work his way to the side of the barge to commit suicide by dropping in the river. He told me that he had been wounded on the 5th. and had had no dressing at all put on him and on looking at the wound which was a large one in the side, it had turned septic. This was not the only case, they died like flies. When we arrived at Basra on the 11th. we were placed in hospital there and treated very well. We left hundreds behind and I was told the next lot that came down a few days later, that they had been treated exactly the same.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000055

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000063

(117)

C.1

Hit 4.30 p.m. 7.1.1916. Wounds roughly tied up. Carried 4 miles to Field Hospital, was very lucky to be taken away, as a great number of officers and men were not taken in till the following morning. Night very wet and cold. A large number must have suffered severely from exposure. Arrived at Field Hospital which was in awful confusion. About 2000 or 3000 wounded lying about without blankets, tents or any attention. Several doctors were working continuously dressing the undressed wounded that were continuously arriving. No dressings could be obtained. The hospital had little or no comforts and absolutely no arrangements had been made for feeding or pitching tents for the wounded. I with heaps of others had to stay out all night with no covering, not even a blanket. I was afterwards told that the medical arrangements were made for only 400 wounded, so you can imagine the state of affairs there. Some officers and men hit on the 7th. left Sheikh Saad on the 14th. (dressings had been changed once during that period). I left on a P. boat which had discharged a cargo of miles on the 12th. We had no cover on the barges and very little on the boat and as it rained practically the whole of the five days to Amara. The condition of all was appalling. Mere words cannot sufficiently describe the scenes on the boat, so I will not attempt it, but must say that we had only one doctor on board to Amara and he had absolutely no medical stores, not even a bandage. No arrangements were made for cooking and the diet for all consisted of Biscuits, Bully and Tea. These boats have no sanitary arrangements on board. The greater part of the journey we were lying in about 4 inches of water. After Amara the conditions were much better. A representative of the Y.M.C.A. came on board, also a doctor. All wounds were dressed there and much better feeding arrangements were made.

119

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000098

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00002b

(118)

D.I

Statement concerning ~~the~~ Medical Arrangements in the Mesopotamian Expedition after the battle of Sheikh Saad. January 6th.-8th.

---

1. On the morning of Saturday, January 7th. there was not sufficient fuel at the temporary dressing station on the river for purposes of boiling water or milk.

2. Neither were there sufficient blankets or even dressings.

3. At the semi-permanent hospital (Field) further down the river and quite close to the boats, dressings were extremely ~~sho~~ short, in fact so short that the medical authorities were asking wounded to give up their field dressings.

4. The only commodity of which there seemed to be an abundance was tents, though since there were so few orderlies, these were so badly pitched as to be almost useless, as water ran under the flies and soaked the floors of the tents.

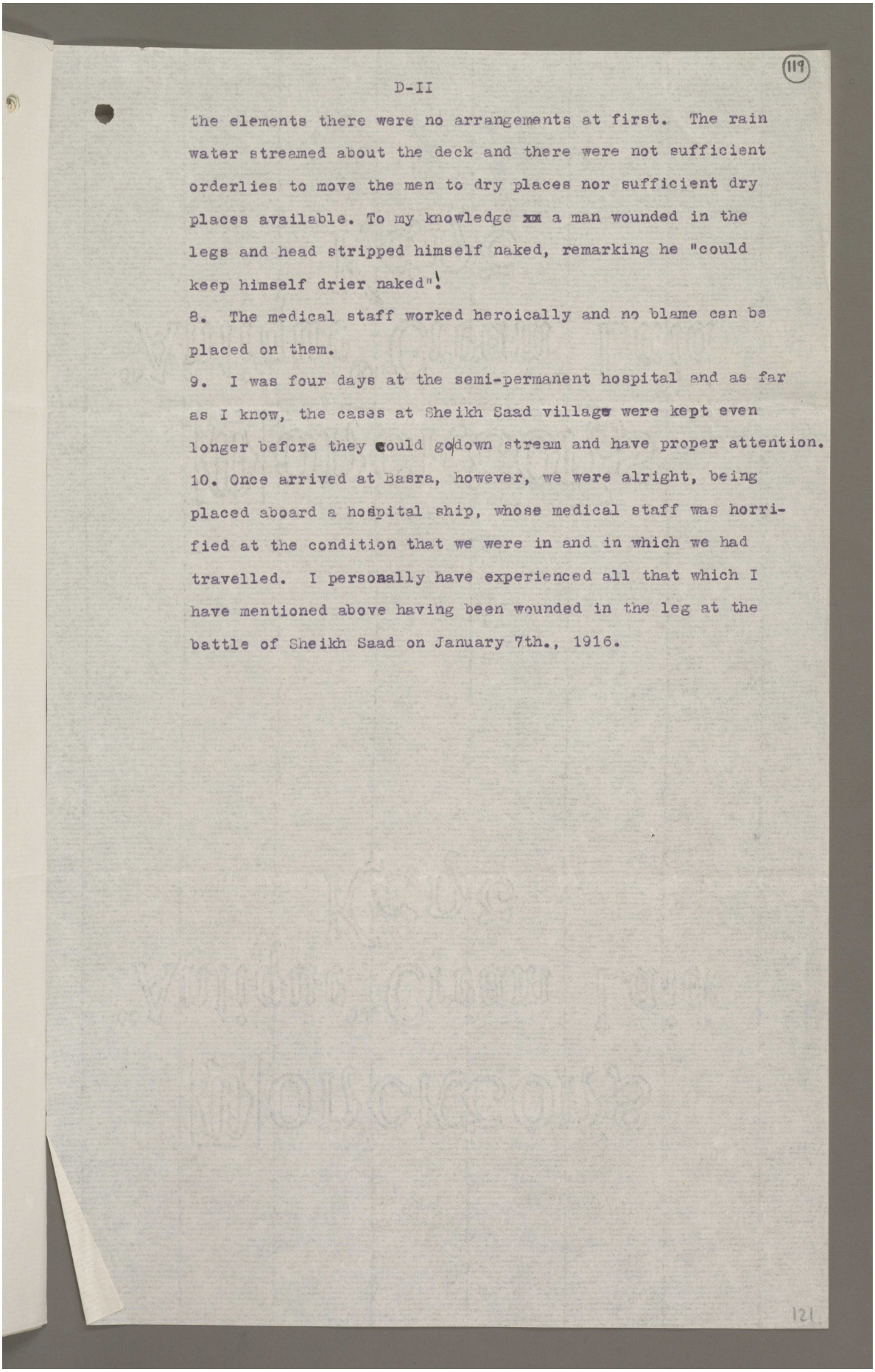
5. The cooking arrangements were also a failure, the number of degchies and orderlies being far too few.

6. After all the "walking" cases had moved up to Sheikh Saad I was given to understand by one of the remaining doctors that there were left behind, 1500 native cases and 500 British cases of which a very large percentage were stretcher cases. For this number, there were precisely four doctors, a few orderlies say ten and one sweeper. The sweeper was of course, worked off his legs, but still there were wounded men, unable to move, crying for the bottle or bed pan. The result is obvious. Men who could crawl a little, just crawled outside the tents and relieved nature there, others to my knowledge used their boots and handkerchieves and spare articles of clothing until the whole camp was turned into a human pig-stye! And all this on top of the fact that men's wounds were not being dressed, apart from the first field dressings they had put on when first hit.

7. When on board the river tugs bound for Basra, the cooking arrangements were a trifle better, but for protection against the

120

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000008



(119)

D-II

the elements there were no arrangements at first. The rain water streamed about the deck and there were not sufficient orderlies to move the men to dry places nor sufficient dry places available. To my knowledge xx a man wounded in the legs and head stripped himself naked, remarking he "could keep himself drier naked"!

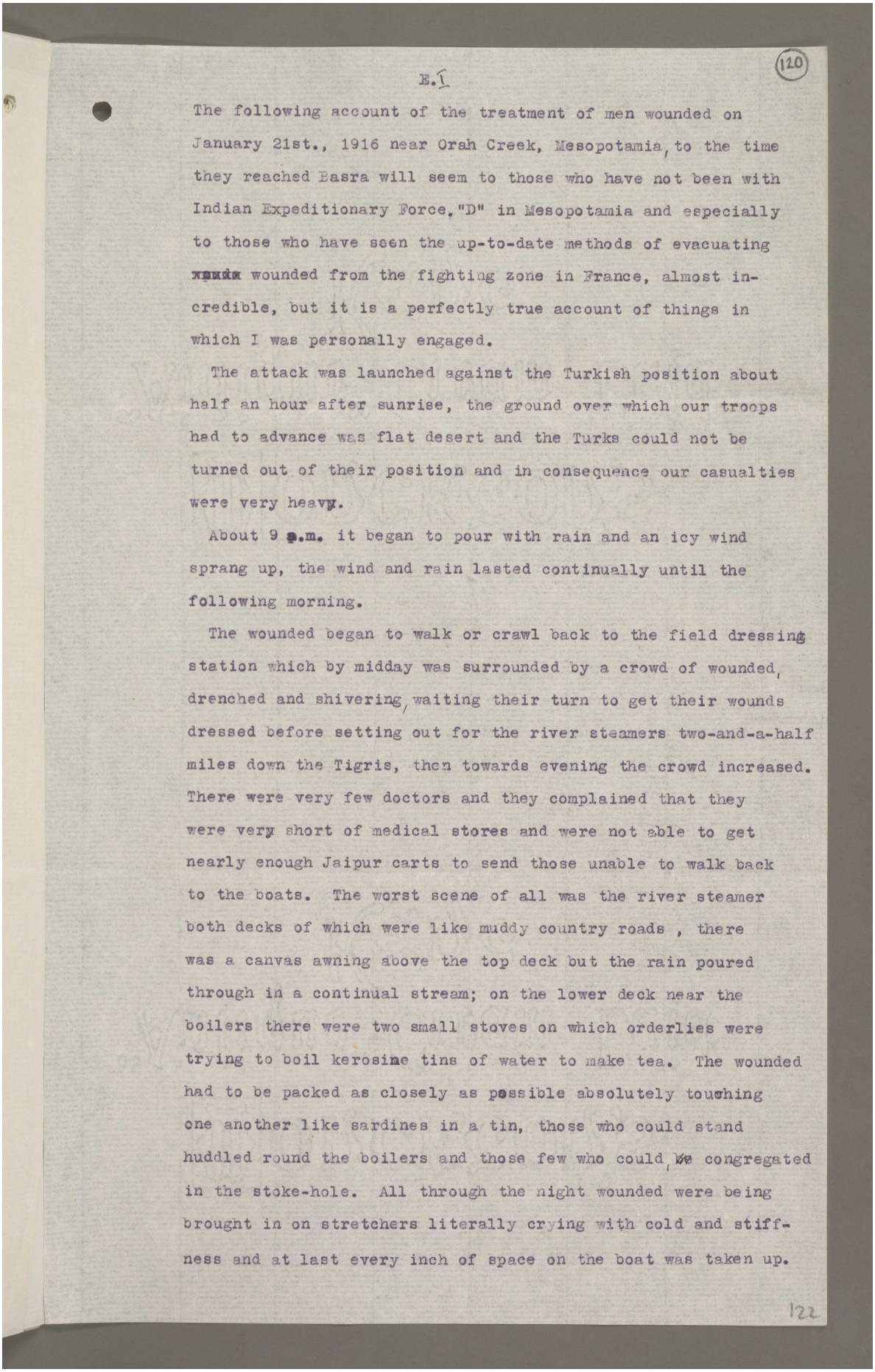
8. The medical staff worked heroically and no blame can be placed on them.

9. I was four days at the semi-permanent hospital and as far as I know, the cases at Sheikh Saad village were kept even longer before they could go down stream and have proper attention.

10. Once arrived at Basra, however, we were alright, being placed aboard a hospital ship, whose medical staff was horrified at the condition that we were in and in which we had travelled. I personally have experienced all that which I have mentioned above having been wounded in the leg at the battle of Sheikh Saad on January 7th., 1916.

121

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00008d



E.I

120

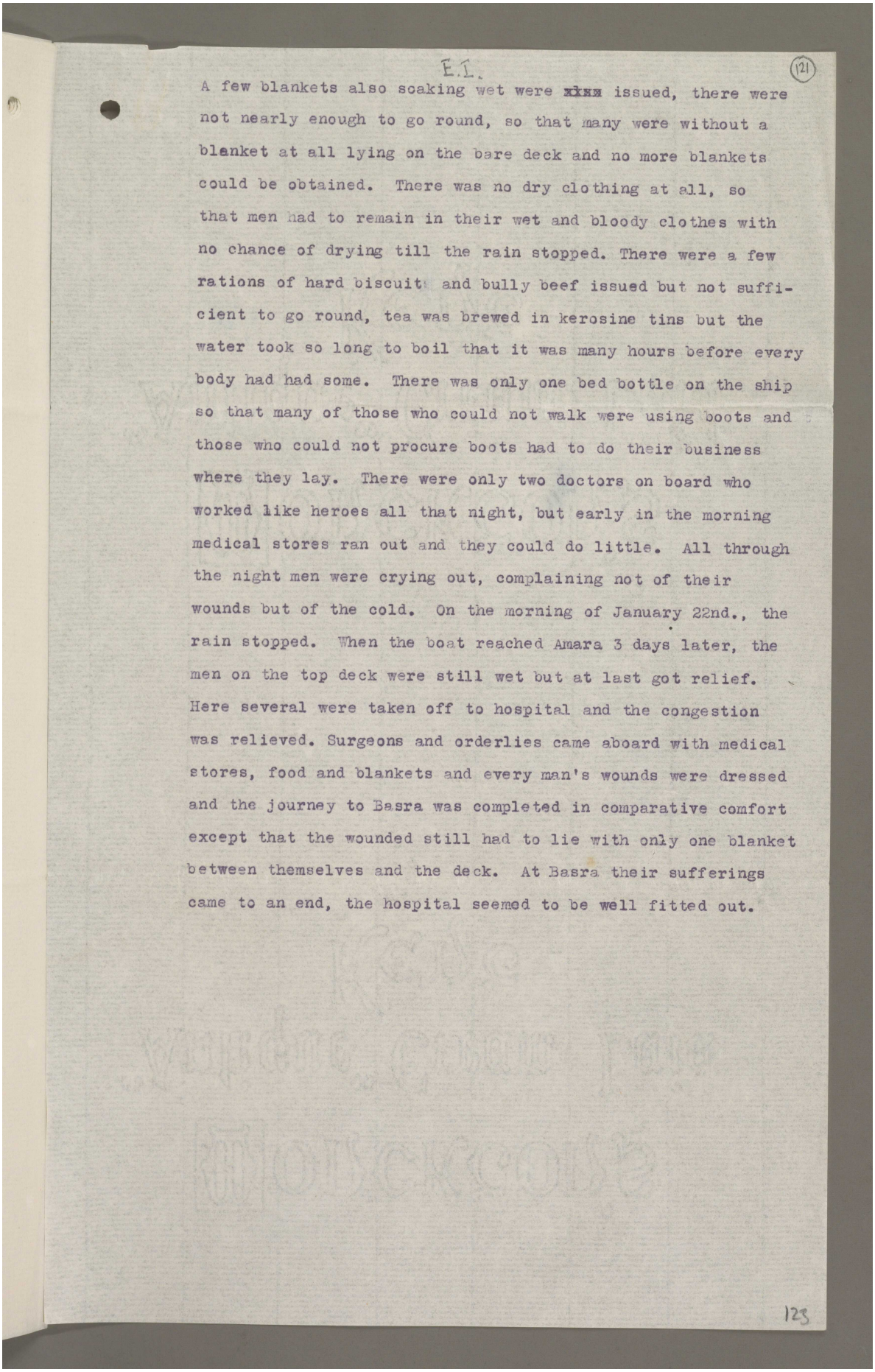
The following account of the treatment of men wounded on January 21st., 1916 near Orah Creek, Mesopotamia, to the time they reached Basra will seem to those who have not been with Indian Expeditionary Force, "D" in Mesopotamia and especially to those who have seen the up-to-date methods of evacuating wounded from the fighting zone in France, almost incredible, but it is a perfectly true account of things in which I was personally engaged.

The attack was launched against the Turkish position about half an hour after sunrise, the ground over which our troops had to advance was flat desert and the Turks could not be turned out of their position and in consequence our casualties were very heavy.

About 9 p.m. it began to pour with rain and an icy wind sprang up, the wind and rain lasted continually until the following morning.

The wounded began to walk or crawl back to the field dressing station which by midday was surrounded by a crowd of wounded, drenched and shivering, waiting their turn to get their wounds dressed before setting out for the river steamers two-and-a-half miles down the Tigris, then towards evening the crowd increased. There were very few doctors and they complained that they were very short of medical stores and were not able to get nearly enough Jaipur carts to send those unable to walk back to the boats. The worst scene of all was the river steamer both decks of which were like muddy country roads , there was a canvas awning above the top deck but the rain poured through in a continual stream; on the lower deck near the boilers there were two small stoves on which orderlies were trying to boil kerosine tins of water to make tea. The wounded had to be packed as closely as possible absolutely touching one another like sardines in a tin, those who could stand huddled round the boilers and those few who could congregated in the stoke-hole. All through the night wounded were being brought in on stretchers literally crying with cold and stiffness and at last every inch of space on the boat was taken up.

122



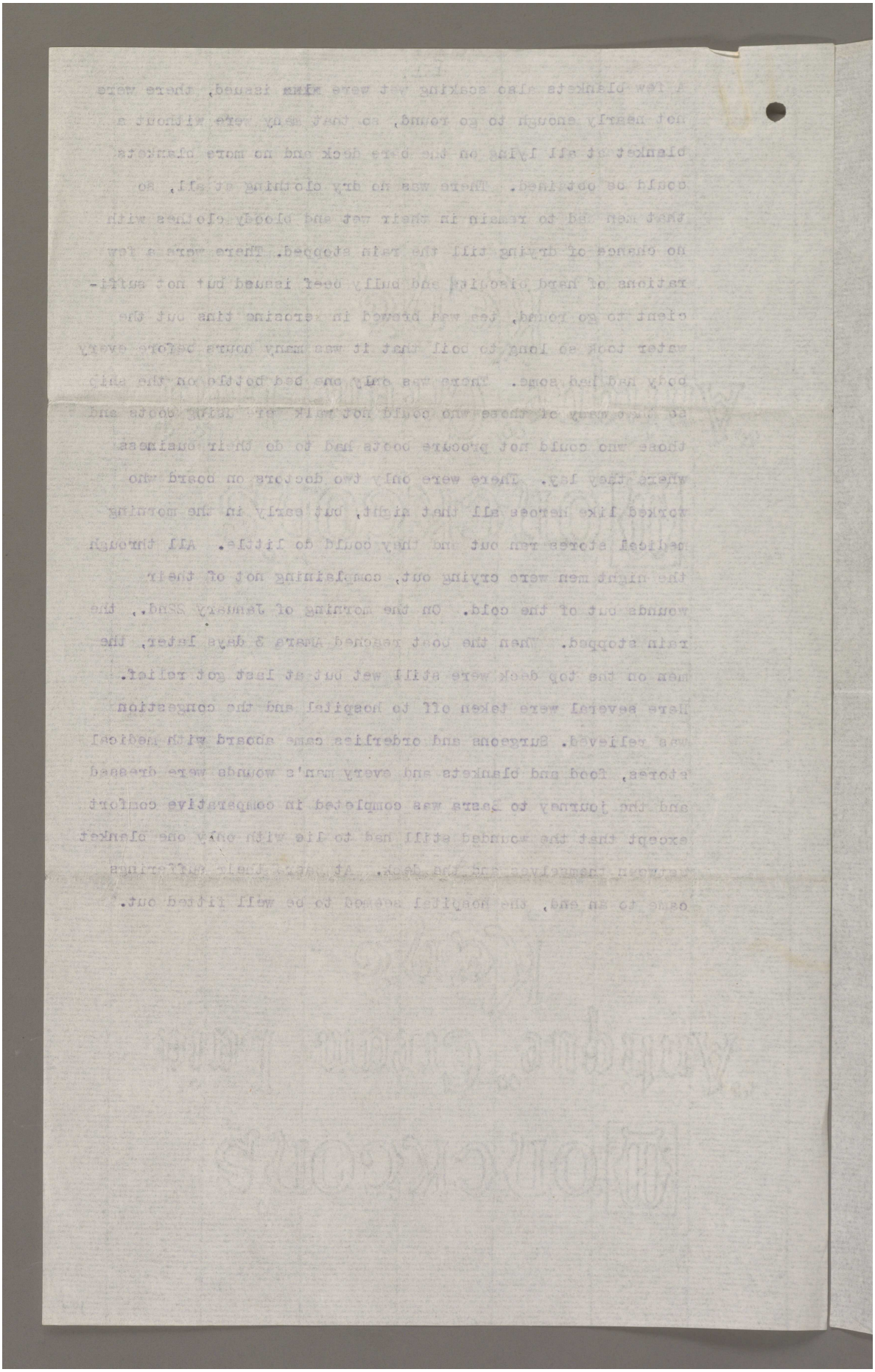
E.I.

(121)

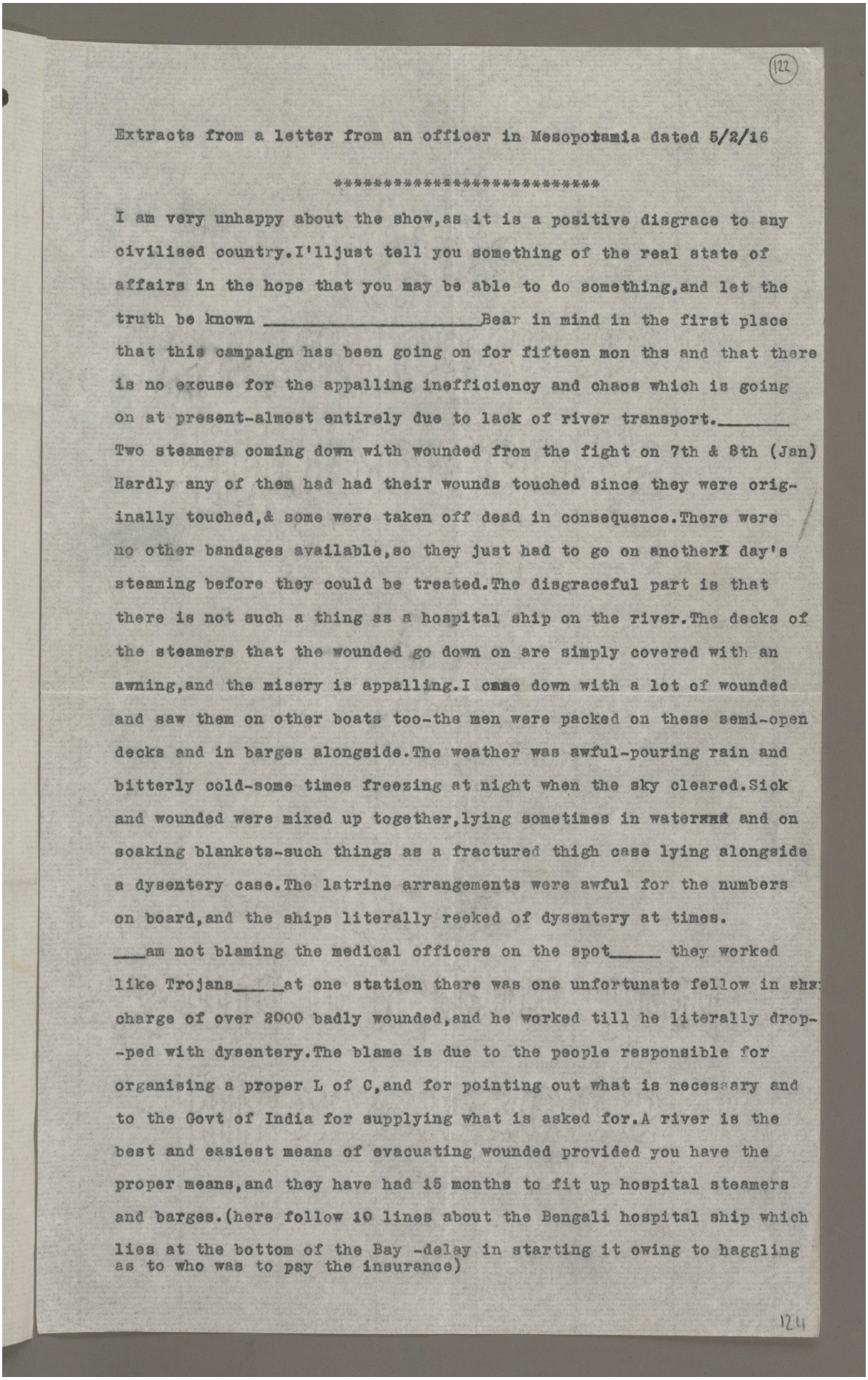
A few blankets also soaking wet were xkxx issued, there were not nearly enough to go round, so that many were without a blanket at all lying on the bare deck and no more blankets could be obtained. There was no dry clothing at all, so that men had to remain in their wet and bloody clothes with no chance of drying till the rain stopped. There were a few rations of hard biscuit and bully beef issued but not sufficient to go round, tea was brewed in kerosine tins but the water took so long to boil that it was many hours before every body had had some. There was only one bed bottle on the ship so that many of those who could not walk were using boots and those who could not procure boots had to do their business where they lay. There were only two doctors on board who worked like heroes all that night, but early in the morning medical stores ran out and they could do little. All through the night men were crying out, complaining not of their wounds but of the cold. On the morning of January 22nd., the rain stopped. When the boat reached Amara 3 days later, the men on the top deck were still wet but at last got relief. Here several were taken off to hospital and the congestion was relieved. Surgeons and orderlies came aboard with medical stores, food and blankets and every man's wounds were dressed and the journey to Basra was completed in comparative comfort except that the wounded still had to lie with only one blanket between themselves and the deck. At Basra their sufferings came to an end, the hospital seemed to be well fitted out.

123

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000084



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000017



(122)

Extracts from a letter from an officer in Mesopotamia dated 5/2/16

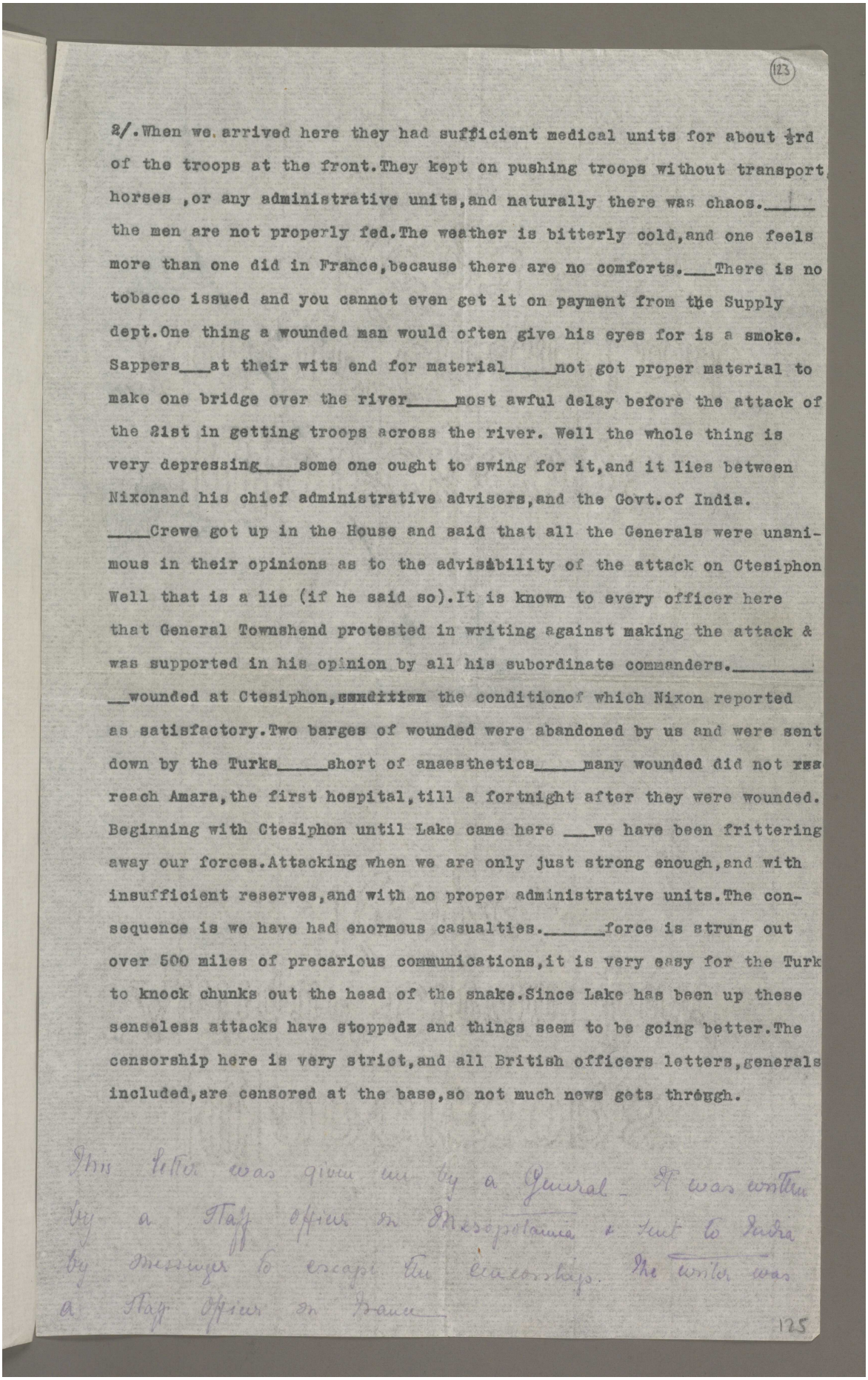
****

I am very unhappy about the show,as it is a positive disgrace to any civilised country.I'lljust tell you something of the real state of affairs in the hope that you may be able to do something,and let the truth be known _____Bear in mind in the first place that this campaign has been going on for fifteen mon ths and that there is no excuse for the appalling inefficiency and chaos which is going on at present-almost entirely due to lack of river transport._____ Two steamers coming down with wounded from the fight on 7th & 8th (Jan) Hardly any of them had had their wounds touched since they were originally touched,& some were taken off dead in consequence.There were no other bandages available,so they just had to go on another day's steaming before they could be treated.The disgraceful part is that there is not such a thing as a hospital ship on the river.The decks of the steamers that the wounded go down on are simply covered with an awning,and the misery is appalling.I came down with a lot of wounded and saw them on other boats too-the men were packed on these semi-open decks and in barges alongside.The weather was awful-pouring rain and bitterly cold-some times freezing at night when the sky cleared.Sick and wounded were mixed up together,lying sometimes in water and on soaking blankets-such things as a fractured thigh case lying alongside a dysentery case.The latrine arrangements were awful for the numbers on board,and the ships literally reeked of dysentery at times.

___am not blaming the medical officers on the spot_____ they worked like Trojans_____at one station there was one unfortunate fellow in charge of over 2000 badly wounded,and he worked till he literally dropped with dysentery.The blame is due to the people responsible for organising a proper L of C,and for pointing out what is necessary and to the Govt of India for supplying what is asked for.A river is the best and easiest means of evacuating wounded provided you have the proper means,and they have had 15 months to fit up hospital steamers and barges.(here follow 10 lines about the Bengali hospital ship which lies at the bottom of the Bay -delay in starting it owing to haggling as to who was to pay the insurance)

124

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000046



(123)

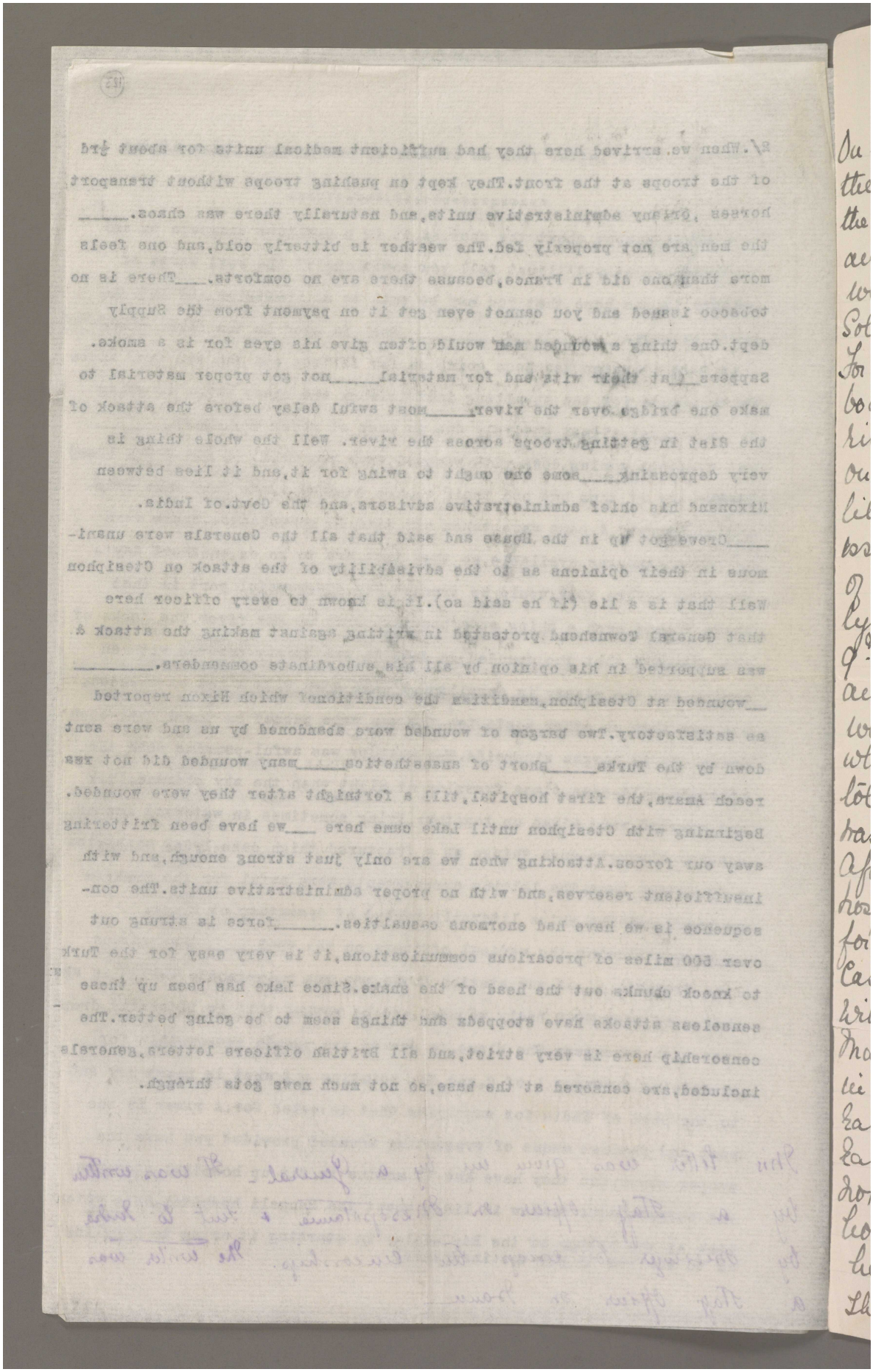
2/. When we arrived here they had sufficient medical units for about ⅓rd of the troops at the front. They kept on pushing troops without transport horses, or any administrative units, and naturally there was chaos.____ the men are not properly fed. The weather is bitterly cold, and one feels more than one did in France, because there are no comforts.___There is no tobacco issued and you cannot even get it on payment from the Supply dept. One thing a wounded man would often give his eyes for is a smoke. Sappers___at their wits end for material_____not got proper material to make one bridge over the river_____most awful delay before the attack of the 21st in getting troops across the river. Well the whole thing is very depressing____some one ought to swing for it, and it lies between Nixonand his chief administrative advisers, and the Govt. of India.

_____Crewe got up in the House and said that all the Generals were unanimous in their opinions as to the advisability of the attack on Ctesiphon Well that is a lie (if he said so). It is known to every officer here that General Townshend protested in writing against making the attack & was supported in his opinion by all his subordinate commanders._____

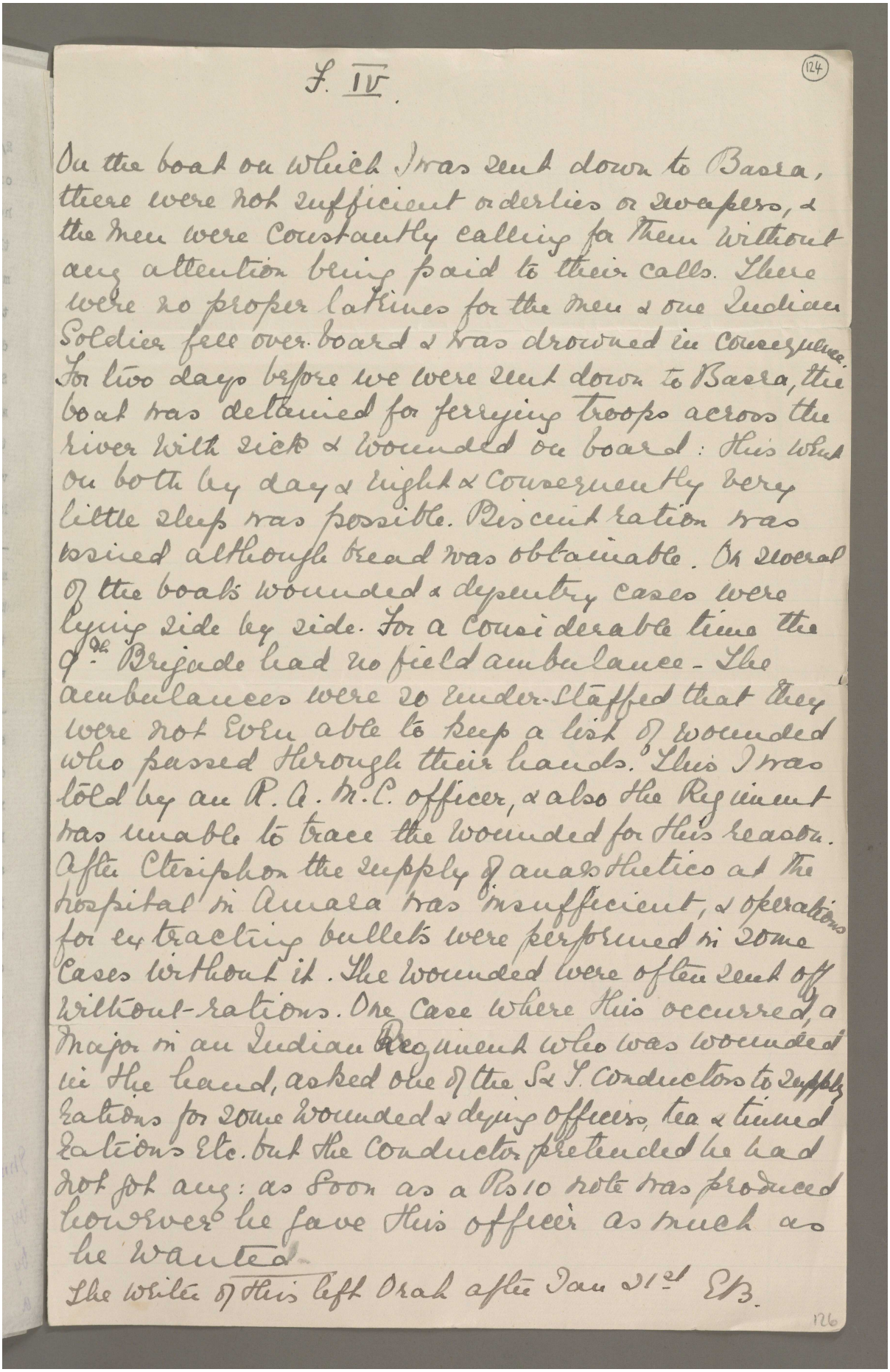
__wounded at Ctesiphon, ~~conditions~~ the condition of which Nixon reported as satisfactory. Two barges of wounded were abandoned by us and were sent down by the Turks_____short of anaesthetics_____many wounded did not ~~rea~~ reach Amara, the first hospital, till a fortnight after they were wounded. Beginning with Ctesiphon until Lake came here ___we have been frittering away our forces. Attacking when we are only just strong enough, and with insufficient reserves, and with no proper administrative units. The consequence is we have had enormous casualties._____force is strung out over 500 miles of precarious communications, it is very easy for the Turk to knock chunks out the head of the snake. Since Lake has been up these senseless attacks have stopped~~x~~ and things seem to be going better. The censorship here is very strict, and all British officers letters, generals included, are censored at the base, so not much news gets through.

This letter was given me by a General. It was written by a Staff officer in Mesopotamia & sent to India by messenger to escape the censorship. The writer was a Staff Officer in France

125



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00007a



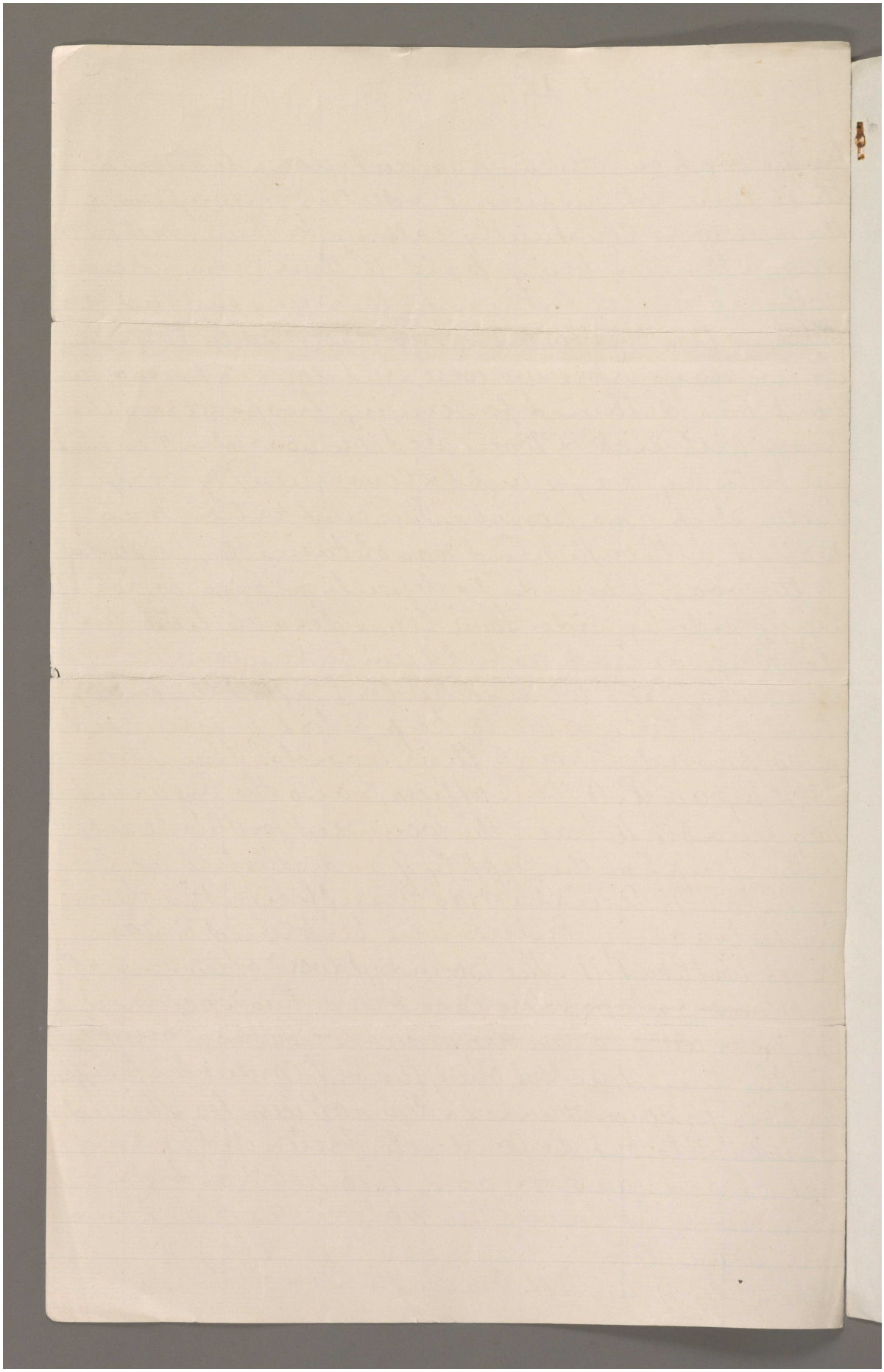
F. IV.

(124)

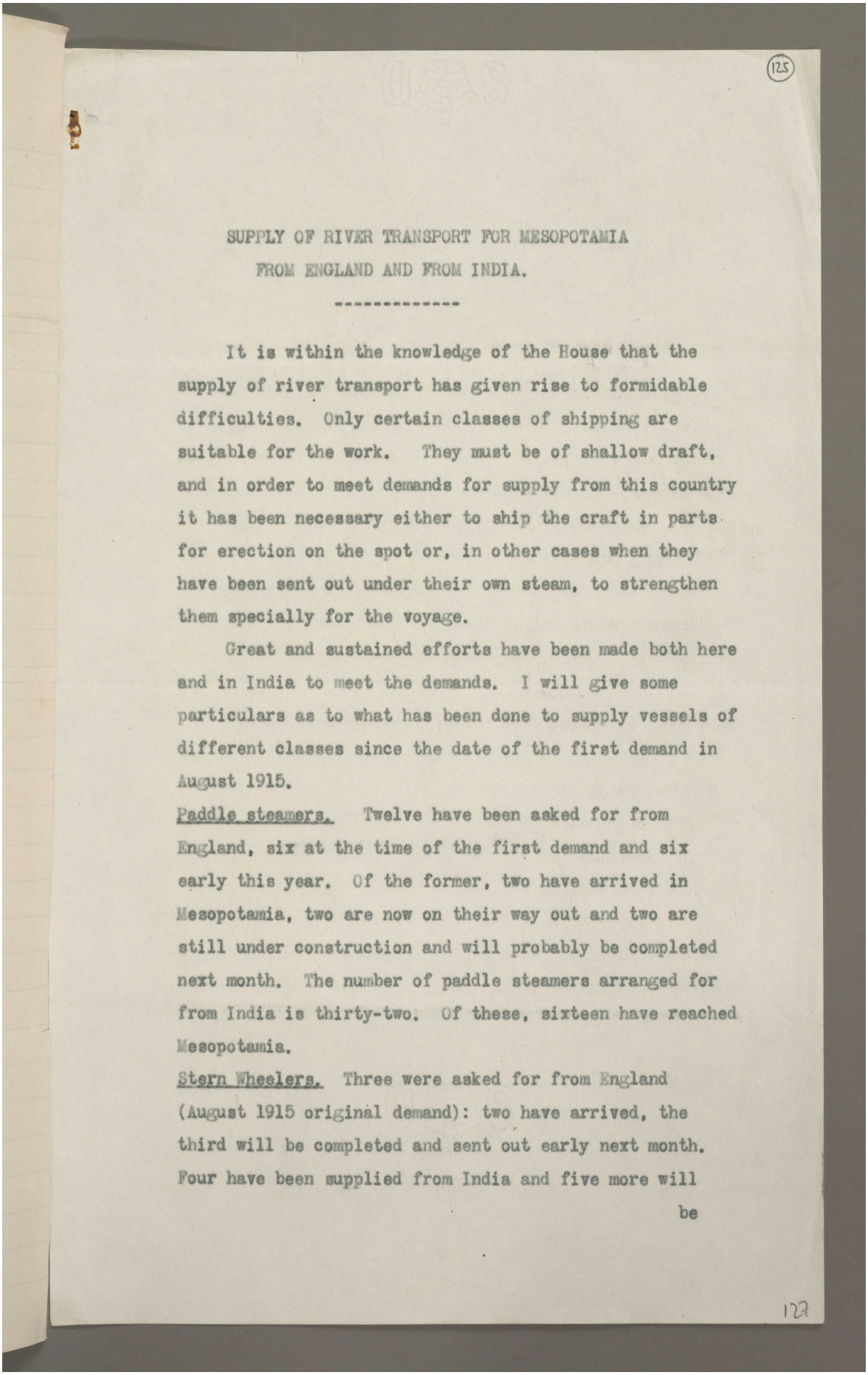
On the boat on which I was sent down to Basra, there were not sufficient orderlies or sweepers, & the men were constantly calling for them without any attention being paid to their calls. There were no proper latrines for the men & one Indian Soldier fell over board & was drowned in consequence. For two days before we were sent down to Basra, the boat was detained for ferrying troops across the river with sick & wounded on board: this went on both by day & night & consequently very little sleep was possible. Biscuit ration was issued although bread was obtainable. On several of the boats wounded & dysentry cases were lying side by side. For a considerable time the 9th Brigade had no field ambulance - the ambulances were so under-staffed that they were not even able to keep a list of wounded who passed through their hands. This I was told by an R. A. M. C. officer, & also the Regiment was unable to trace the wounded for this reason. After Ctesiphon the supply of anaesthetics at the hospital in Amara was insufficient, & operations for extracting bullets were performed in some cases without it. The wounded were often sent off without rations. One case where this occurred, a Major in an Indian Regiment who was wounded in the hand, asked one of the Sub. I. Conductors to supply rations for some wounded & dying officers, tea & tinned rations etc. but the Conductor pretended he had not got any: as soon as a Rs10 note was produced however he gave this officer as much as he wanted.

The wife of this left Orah after Jan 31st E.B.

126



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000a8



(125)

SUPPLY OF RIVER TRANSPORT FOR MESOPOTAMIA
FROM ENGLAND AND FROM INDIA.

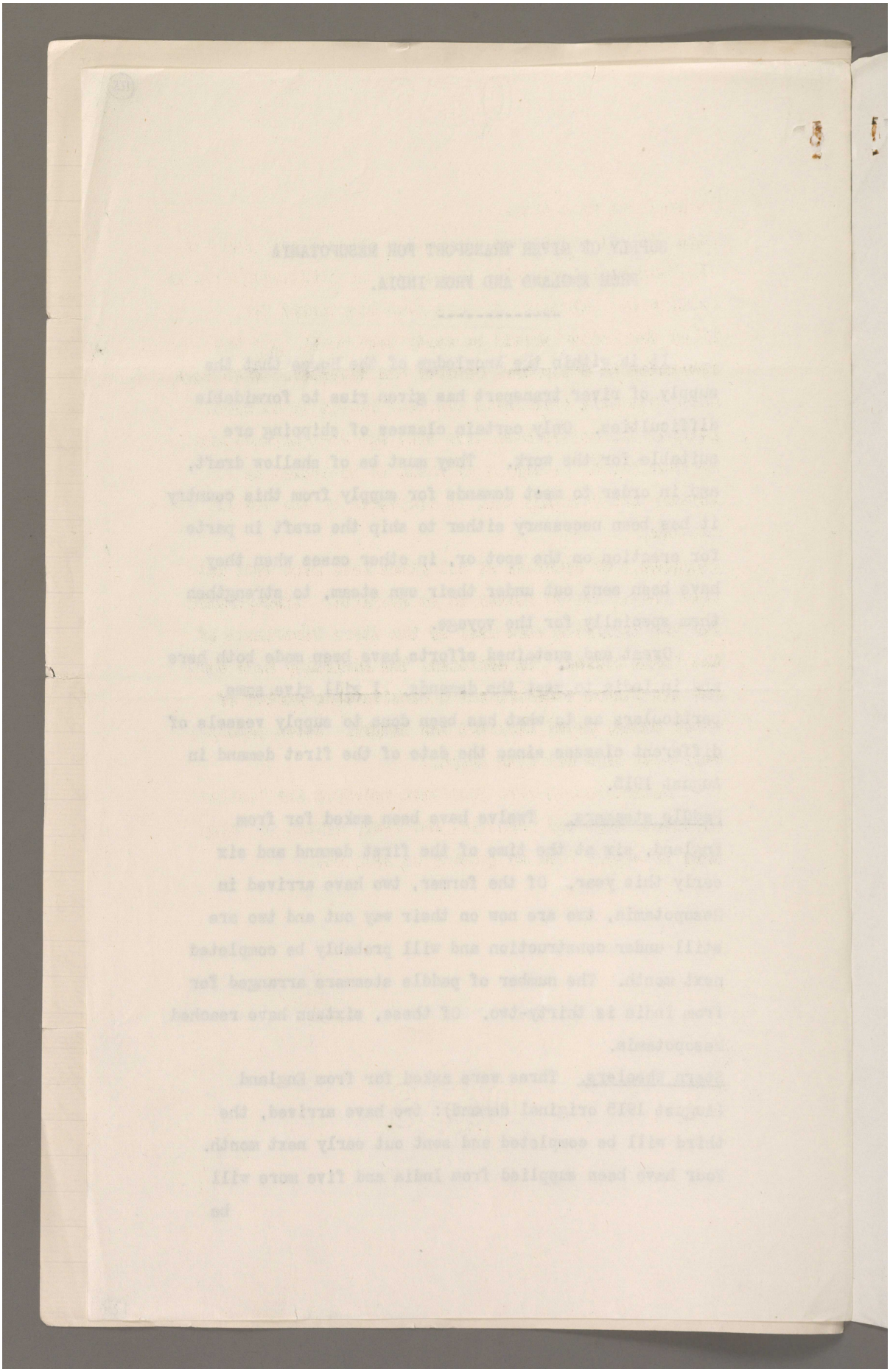
It is within the knowledge of the House that the supply of river transport has given rise to formidable difficulties. Only certain classes of shipping are suitable for the work. They must be of shallow draft, and in order to meet demands for supply from this country it has been necessary either to ship the craft in parts for erection on the spot or, in other cases when they have been sent out under their own steam, to strengthen them specially for the voyage.

Great and sustained efforts have been made both here and in India to meet the demands. I will give some particulars as to what has been done to supply vessels of different classes since the date of the first demand in August 1915.

Paddle steamers. Twelve have been asked for from England, six at the time of the first demand and six early this year. Of the former, two have arrived in Mesopotamia, two are now on their way out and two are still under construction and will probably be completed next month. The number of paddle steamers arranged for from India is thirty-two. Of these, sixteen have reached Mesopotamia.

Stern Wheelers. Three were asked for from England (August 1915 original demand): two have arrived, the third will be completed and sent out early next month. Four have been supplied from India and five more will be

127



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000001

be provided from there.

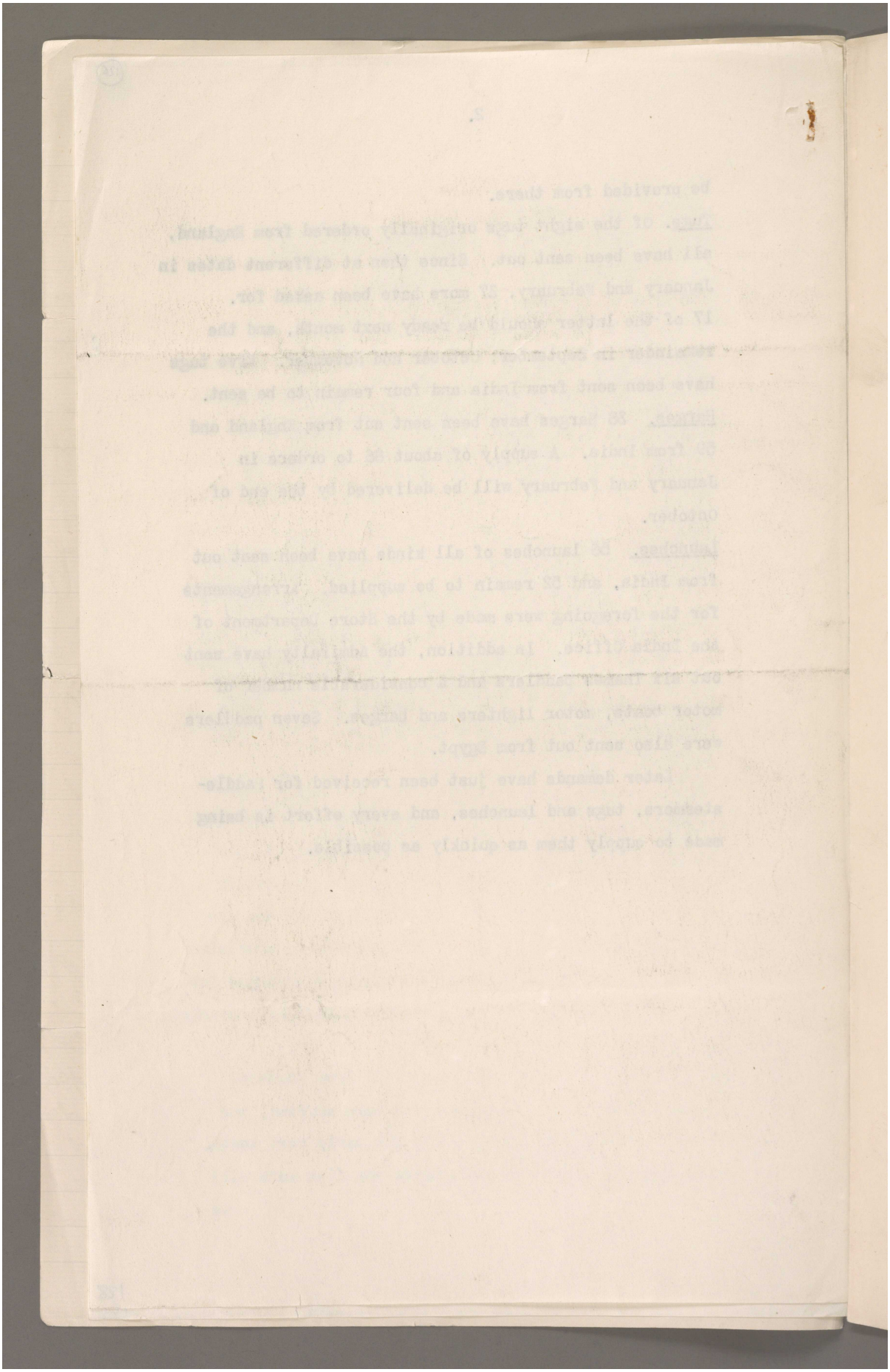
Tugs. Of the eight tugs originally ordered from England, all have been sent out. Since then at different dates in January and February, 37 more have been asked for. 17 of the latter should be ready next month, and the remainder in September, October and November. Five tugs have been sent from India and four remain to be sent.

Barges. 38 Barges have been sent out from England and 59 from India. A supply of about 86 to orders in January and February will be delivered by the end of October.

Launches. 56 launches of all kinds have been sent out from India, and 52 remain to be supplied. Arrangements for the foregoing were made by the Store Department of the India Office. In addition, the Admiralty have sent out six Thames paddlers and a considerable number of motor boats, motor lighters and barges. Seven paddlers were also sent out from Egypt.

Later demands have just been received for Paddle-steamers, tugs and launches, and every effort is being made to supply them as quickly as possible.

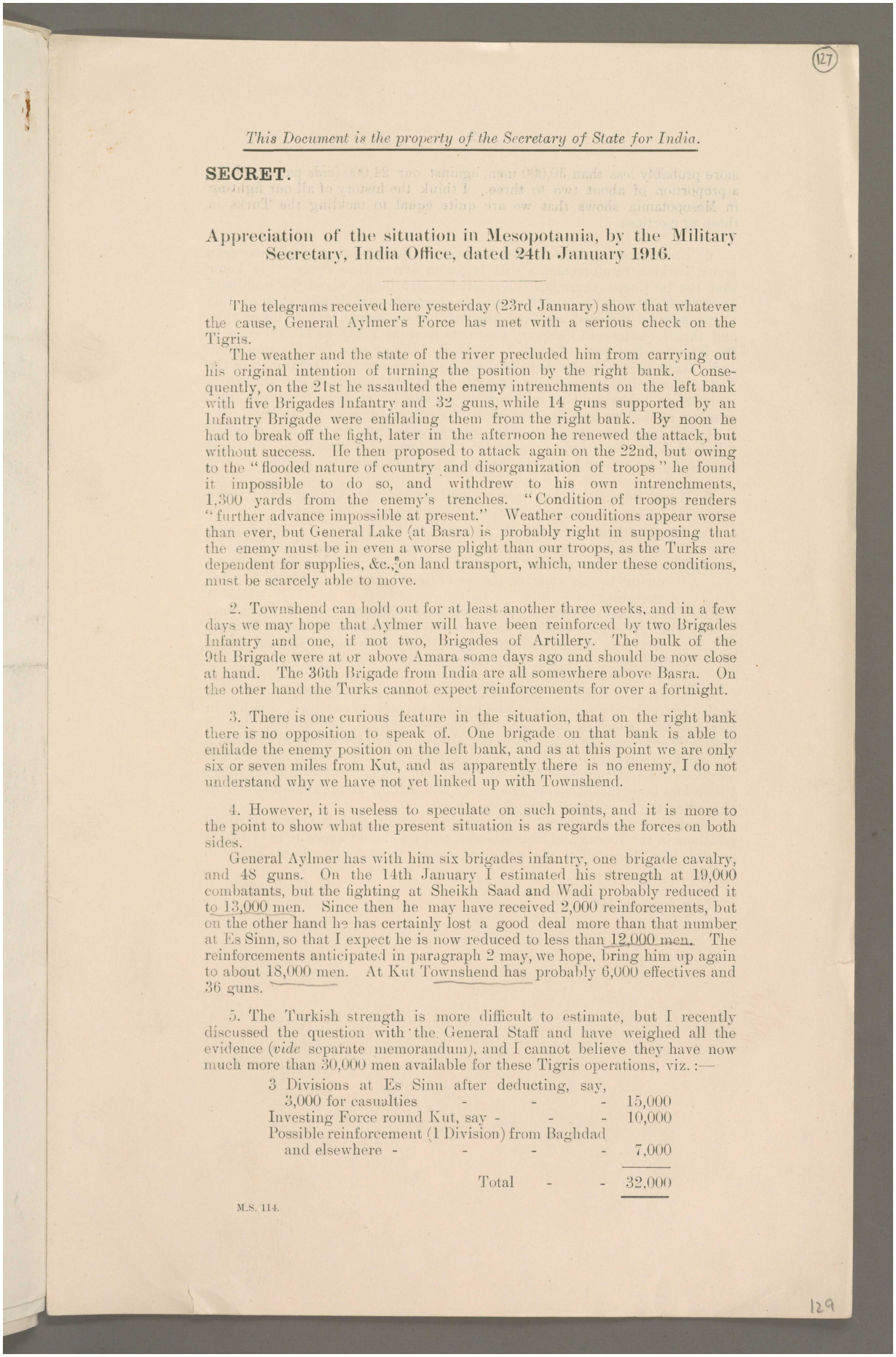
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000026



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000089

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



127

This Document is the property of the Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Appreciation of the situation in Mesopotamia, by the Military Secretary, India Office, dated 24th January 1916.

The telegrams received here yesterday (23rd January) show that whatever the cause, General Aylmer's Force has met with a serious check on the Tigris.

The weather and the state of the river precluded him from carrying out his original intention of turning the position by the right bank. Consequently, on the 21st he assaulted the enemy intrenchments on the left bank with five Brigades Infantry and 32 guns, while 14 guns supported by an Infantry Brigade were enfilading them from the right bank. By noon he had to break off the fight, later in the afternoon he renewed the attack, but without success. He then proposed to attack again on the 22nd, but owing to the "flooded nature of country and disorganization of troops" he found it impossible to do so, and withdrew to his own intrenchments, 1,300 yards from the enemy's trenches. "Condition of troops renders "further advance impossible at present." Weather conditions appear worse than ever, but General Lake (at Basra) is probably right in supposing that the enemy must be in even a worse plight than our troops, as the Turks are dependent for supplies, &c., on land transport, which, under these conditions, must be scarcely able to move.

2. Townshend can hold out for at least another three weeks, and in a few days we may hope that Aylmer will have been reinforced by two Brigades Infantry and one, if not two, Brigades of Artillery. The bulk of the 9th Brigade were at or above Amara some days ago and should be now close at hand. The 36th Brigade from India are all somewhere above Basra. On the other hand the Turks cannot expect reinforcements for over a fortnight.

3. There is one curious feature in the situation, that on the right bank there is no opposition to speak of. One brigade on that bank is able to enfilade the enemy position on the left bank, and as at this point we are only six or seven miles from Kut, and as apparently there is no enemy, I do not understand why we have not yet linked up with Townshend.

4. However, it is useless to speculate on such points, and it is more to the point to show what the present situation is as regards the forces on both sides.

General Aylmer has with him six brigades infantry, one brigade cavalry, and 48 guns. On the 14th January I estimated his strength at 19,000 combatants, but the fighting at Sheikh Saad and Wadi probably reduced it to 13,000 men. Since then he may have received 2,000 reinforcements, but on the other hand he has certainly lost a good deal more than that number at Es Sinn, so that I expect he is now reduced to less than 12,000 men. The reinforcements anticipated in paragraph 2 may, we hope, bring him up again to about 18,000 men. At Kut Townshend has probably 6,000 effectives and 36 guns.

5. The Turkish strength is more difficult to estimate, but I recently discussed the question with the General Staff and have weighed all the evidence (*vide* separate memorandum), and I cannot believe they have now much more than 30,000 men available for these Tigris operations, viz.:—

3 Divisions at Es Sinn after deducting, say, 3,000 for casualties - - -	15,000
Investing Force round Kut, say - - -	10,000
Possible reinforcement (1 Division) from Baghdad and elsewhere - - - -	7,000
Total - -	32,000

M.S. 114.

129

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

more probably less than 30,000 men, against our 24,000 (*vide* paragraph 4), a proportion of about two to three. I think the history of all our fighting in Mesopotamia shows that we are quite equal to tackling the Turks in those proportions.

6. The serious feature in the situation is that about two or three weeks hence Turkish reinforcements will begin to arrive from Syria. We know that the 1st Corps (three Divisions) left Constantinople about the middle of December. Owing to recent events in Armenia and Persia part of this Corps may be diverted to those regions, but we cannot yet count on this, and therefore, by mid February they may have as many as 60,000 men in the Baghdad-Kut area, though I doubt it. If our new 6th Division from India starts before the 1st February we may have another 10,000 men in the Kut region, which raises our strength to 34,000, but sick and casualties incurred in relieving Kut will certainly make heavy deductions from that number, so that we may find ourselves in the proportion of one to two.

Under these circumstances it is quite possible that General Lake, after the relief of Kut, may decide to abandon that forward position and retire at least to Amara, where I am told there is a possible defensive position.

6. It will be noticed that I assume that Kut *will* be relieved before many days, and I base my expectation on the following considerations :—

(*a*) My confidence in Generals Aylmer and Younghusband. Both these officers have served under me, so I know well their characters.

(*b*) The difficulties of the Turks in getting up supplies to the front owing to the state of the waterlogged country in which they are operating.

(*c*) The probable arrival of our reinforcements before those of the enemy.

(*d*) The dangerous position of the Turks between Kut and General Aylmer's Force with the liability of their main position being enfiladed or turned from the right bank.

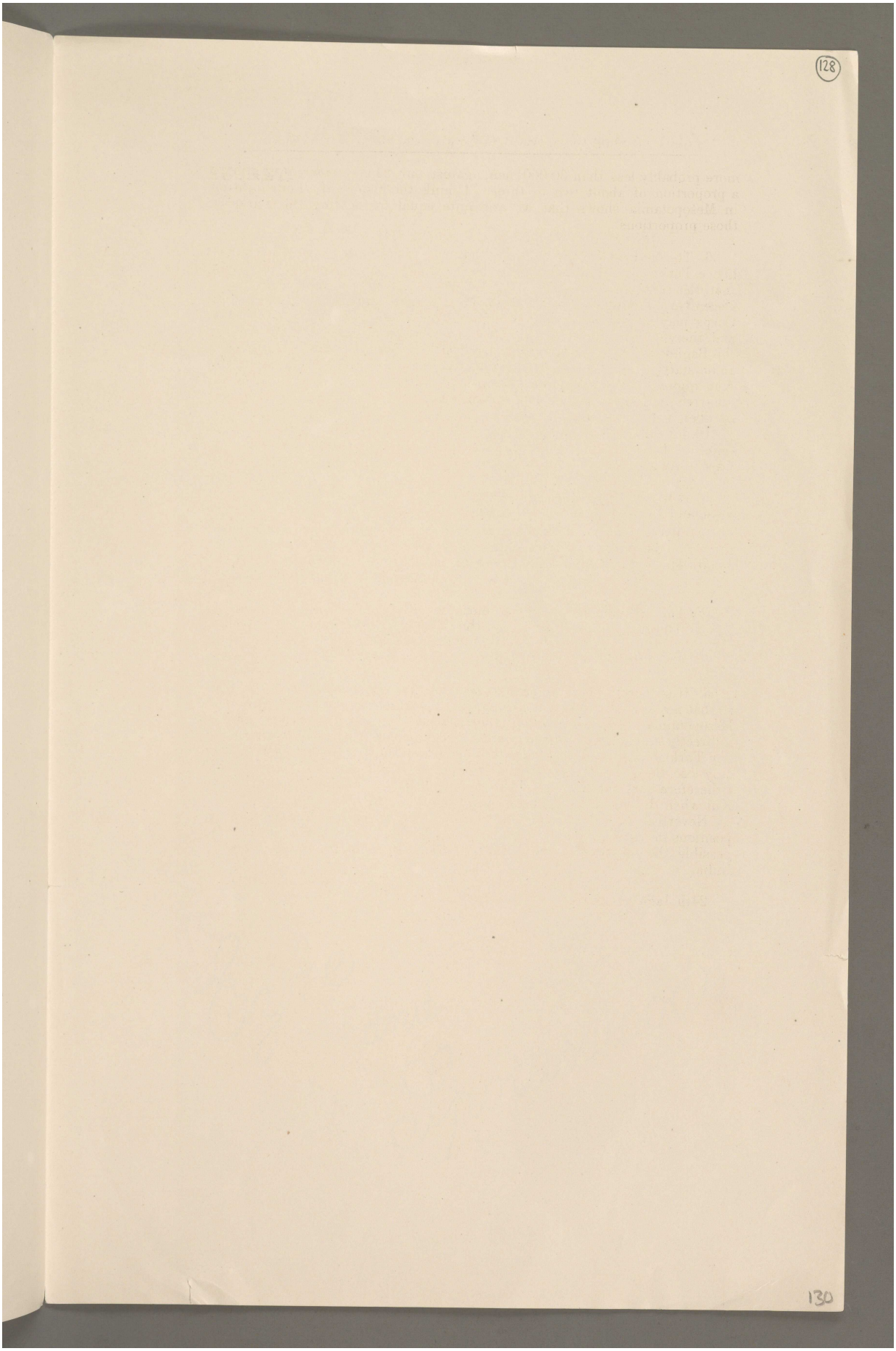
7. It is regrettable if we have to abandon our advanced position at Kut, as that not only offers certain strategical advantages to our own position in Mesopotamia, such as denying the Shatt-el-Hai to the enemy, but it indirectly supports the Russians in the direction of Kermanshah by menacing any Turkish advance into Persia through Kkanikin. If we fall back we not only lose these advantages, but we tempt the Arabs and Bakhtiaris to rise. I therefore hope that General Lake may feel strong enough to hold on at Kut when the Turks have been driven back.

Nevertheless, we should lose no time in preparing strong fortified positions in the Kurna and Shaiba areas, and we should expedite as much as possible the despatch of the promised troops from England and Egypt to India.

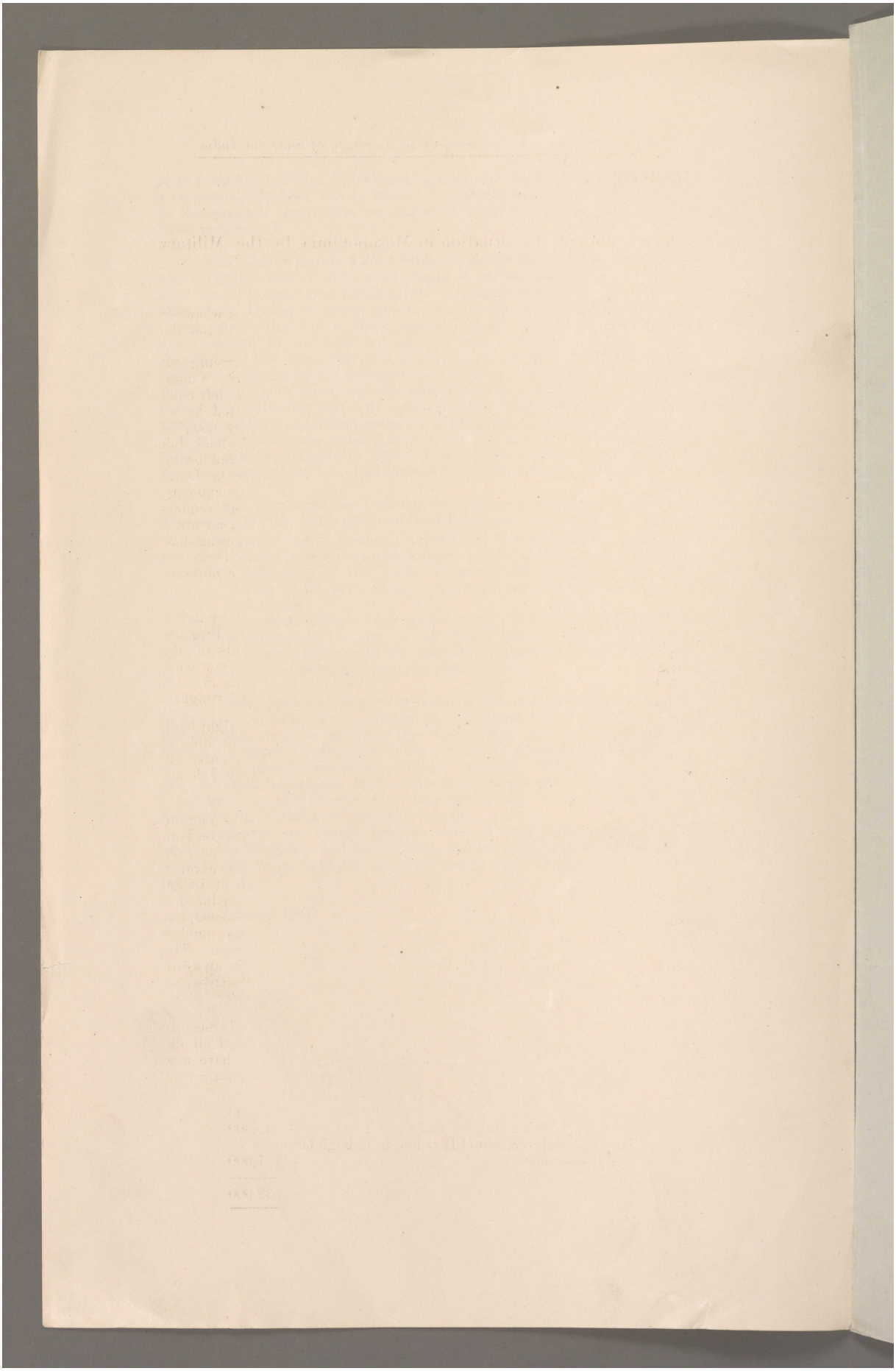
E. G. Barrow.

24th January 1916.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000c8



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000030



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000065

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

LORD CURZON.

(129)

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

Printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence. February 1916.

SECRET.

G.-51.

To be returned to the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, 2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.

23

THE SITUATION IN MESOPOTAMIA.

NOTE PREPARED BY THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF BY DIRECTION OF THE WAR COMMITTEE.

1. THE following is the best estimate I can make of the present and prospective strength and distribution of the opposing forces in Mesopotamia :—

Turks.

The following divisions are almost certainly all in Mesopotamia :—

2nd, 26th, 45th, 51st, 52nd, and a combined division made up of the 35th and 38th = six divisions.

Strength, all ranks, auxiliary services, &c. = 50,000 men.

The following *may* be in Mesopotamia :—

Two divisions from the 41st, 43rd, 44th, and 23rd = 16,000 to 20,000 men.

One other division may be following on from the west and may arrive early in February, if it has not been diverted to the Caucasus = 12,000 men.

Thus 50,000 men are there almost certainly, and it is possible that an additional 16,000 may be probably there now, while 12,000 more may be there early in February. I therefore estimate the maximum force the enemy would have in and around Bagdad by the 7th February at 78,000 men. The *fighting strength* of this force may probably not exceed 50,000 men, and a considerable portion of these consist of partially trained troops.

This force might be increased early in March by three more divisions, or to a maximum of 114,000 men, and towards the end of the month by two more divisions, bringing the total up to 130,000 men (or 90,000 fighting men), if the Turkish divisions which have begun to move east are all sent to Mesopotamia and none are diverted towards Egypt or towards Erzeroum to oppose the victorious Russians. We ought shortly to obtain information as to this. At present it is only possible to say that it is highly probable that some Turkish reinforcements are on the way to the Caucasus.

British Forces.

——	Rifles.	Sabres.	Guns.
Invested at Kut-el-Amara	8,500	..	34
Now with General Aylmer, after deducting estimated casualties to date	13,800	2,000	46
Reinforcements and drafts now *en route* up the Tigris	6,500	850	28
Reinforcements to be landed at Basra by the second week in February	5,100	..	..
Now reported arriving at Basra	..	..	18
At posts and on lines of communication ..	7,750	850	20
Grand total	41,650	3,700	146

In addition to the above, three infantry brigades (9,000 rifles) will leave India for Mesopotamia as soon as the relief units* arrive in India from Egypt and Home. It is also hoped that further drafts, about 3,000 strong, will be sent from England very shortly.

* These units are being sent to India in the course of the next few days, and India has been asked to expedite despatch from India of the three infantry brigades.

[228—1]

131

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00003a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Russian Forces.

In the area Hamadan–Kum–Tehran there are, it is believed, 10,000 infantry, 9,000 cavalry, 30 guns.

The Hamadan column was recently engaged at Kengawer with a force of Turks who first captured, but were subsequently driven from, this place.

2. From the above estimate it will be seen that the British relieving force now numbers 13,800 rifles, 2,000 sabres, and 46 guns, and that about 6,500 rifles, 850 sabres, and 28 guns are *en route* up the Tigris to reinforce it. Sir Percy Lake hoped that these would arrive by the 7th February, but his telegram No. 129/320/0 of the 28th January throws some doubt on this ; part of these reinforcements are marching, and the recent rains have made movement on foot difficult. General Townshend can hold out on half rations until some time after the 17th February (the exact date is uncertain), but is not well supplied with artillery ammunition. It is possible, if the weather conditions improve, or further river transport becomes available, that the remaining reinforcements of 5,100 men will have reached the front by the end of February, bringing the relieving troops up to 25,400 rifles, 2,850 sabres, and 92 guns.

The most satisfactory feature in the situation is the considerable reinforcement of artillery which is now on its way up the Tigris. The importance of this arm in an attack on entrenchments is well known, and while we hold Kut-el-Amara the enemy cannot use the river to supply his troops opposing the relieving force with ammunition and food. In the next fight both the number of guns and the amount of ammunition at our disposal should be greatly superior to any which the Turks can put in the field. The recent bad weather and the floods have made movement across country very difficult, and must therefore have affected the Turkish troops opposing General Aylmer more than they have our own men. Further, even if the weather improves, the numbers which the enemy can maintain below Kut-el-Amara must be limited by supply considerations as long as we can prevent him from using the river. On the other hand, it is reported by General Aylmer that the *moral* of some of the native regiments involved in the repulse of the 21st January has been shaken.

The position now held by the Turks is some 22 miles from Kut-el-Amara, and we may expect that they will have prepared at least one more position between it and that at Es-Sinn. Whether they would make any prolonged stand at the latter place, which is about 7 miles from Kut-el-Amara, so long as General Townshend has artillery ammunition and is capable of any effective action, is doubtful. It is not possible in the time available to do more than has been done already to strengthen the relieving force. While, therefore, there are grounds for hoping that General Aylmer will reach Kut-el-Amara before General Townshend is compelled by starvation to surrender, it is by no means certain that this will be the case, and we must be prepared for either eventuality.

3. If and when the relief has been effected, the alternatives before us will be to withdraw to the line Amarah–Nasiriyah, and there maintain an active defence, or to hold our position at Kut-el-Amara, or at some point near it, such as Ali-al-Gharbi, and thence act offensively as and when opportunity offers.

At present it is still uncertain whether the enemy intends to make his main effort against Mesopotamia or against Egypt, but the indications are strongly in favour of the former.

The line Amarah–Nasiriyah can probably be maintained without difficulty with the six divisions which will be available, when the three additional brigades arrive, against the largest force that the Turks can, according to our present information, bring against us. We should also be able to maintain the position at Kut-el-Amara so long as the marshes in its neighbourhood are in flood. Whether we can hold Kut-el-Amara after the floods subside will depend upon the extent of the Turkish defeat in the fighting which leads up to the relief of General Townshend, the condition of the latter's troops, whether the three brigades promised by the Government of India have or have not reached Mesopotamia, and upon the effect of the recent Russian success in the Caucasus.

4. The disadvantages of withdrawal from Kut-el-Amara are :—

(1.) The situation in Persia and Afghanistan is threatening, and may become increasingly so if we fall back again. This will increase the difficulty of defending India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00006c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(2.) The Amir has shown signs of adopting an unfriendly attitude. The whole policy of Afghanistan is believed to be under discussion, and some of the tribal leaders have been urging the Amir to proclaim a Jehad.

(3.) A Turkish invasion of Persia in strength may result in the defeat of the weak Russian detachments in Northern Persia, and the inhabitants would then probably join the Turks. The Shah may then be induced to declare war on us. In that event the Bakhtiari tribe, who inhabit the Persian oil-field district, would probably join our enemies. We might then lose the oil-fields.

(4.) We might, therefore, find that the number of troops required to maintain our positions in India, Persia, and Mesopotamia was considerably in excess of that now set aside for the purpose.

On the other hand, our position locally will be stronger on the Amarah-Nasiriyah line, and the Turks, owing to difficulties in regard to transport and distribution of supplies and ammunition will find that it will by no means be easy to attack us there in force.

5. The disadvantages of maintaining the forward position at Kut-el-Amara are that the force that can be kept there will, owing to the necessity for detachments to guard the longer line of communication, and also, perhaps, to difficulties of supply, be smaller than the force which we can keep at Amara. The force at Kut-el-Amara will also be exposed to attack by larger numbers of Turks, because the nearer the latter are to Bagdad the greater the force they can supply.

6. Whether to remain at Kut-el-Amara or whether to withdraw lower down the river is a question which must be decided after the conclusion of the relief operations. I would observe, however, that, by holding Kut-el-Amara, if it proves possible to do so, we may be able to carry out the defensive policy in the east laid down by the War Committee with greater economy of force than by withdrawing to some position lower down the Tigris. Sir Percy Lake may require more troops than are at present either with him or about to join him in order to hold Kut-el-Amara, but, even if that is so, it might be cheaper to send them than to run the risk of disturbance in Persia and Afghanistan. As pointed out in paragraph 1, no further large Turkish reinforcements are likely to reach Baghdad until the beginning of March, and it is improbable that these would be available at Kut-el-Amara before the end of that month. If the Turks move their reserves towards Mesopotamia their power to attack Egypt will be lessened, and we shall require fewer troops for the defence of that country. In accordance with the War Committee's decision of the 26th January, a division is being prepared in Egypt for despatch, if required, to Mesopotamia, and it will probably be a fortnight before it is ready to embark. No time will be lost, therefore, by deferring the decision as to the departure of this division for about ten days, and by that time it is possible that we may have some more definite news of the enemy's movements and intentions. A division starting from Egypt about the middle of February may be expected to reach Kut-el-Amara by the end of March.

7. I attach a telegram which I have received from the Commander-in-Chief in India giving his views of the situation, and from this it will be seen that he is in general agreement with me as to the importance of holding Kut, if it is possible to do so.

My estimate of the numbers which the Turks could put into the field in Mesopotamia differs from that of the Commander-in-Chief in India. The figures from India have been consistently lower than ours, and there is no means of judging which are correct. The difference in fighting strength is not very great.

In my opinion he has underestimated the difficulties which would be experienced by the Turks in maintaining a sufficiently large force on the Lower Tigris or Euphrates to prejudice our position there. Moreover, it is hardly conceivable that news of Turkish concentrations on one or other line should fail to reach us in sufficient time to enable adequate countermeasures to be taken.

Lastly, I do not agree that the moment is opportune to ask the Russians to undertake an offensive towards Khanikin. The Russian forces in Persia are not large, and we are not in a position to help them if they get into trouble. If the Russians were to suffer a reverse as the result of our invitation the relations between the Allied

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00004e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

forces in the east might be prejudiced. The most valuable assistance which the Russians can give us at the moment is to follow up their success in the neighbourhood of Erzerum.

January 31, 1916. W. R. ROBERTSON, *C.I.G.S.*

From the C.-in-C., India, to the C.I.G.S.

(No. 36369. Secret.) *January* 27, 1916, 10·40 P.M.

WITH reference to your telegram of 26th January, No. 12531, cypher. The following are my views on the military situation in Mesopotamia :—

The Turkish strength now at and below Baghdad is estimated to be 5 divisions, possibly totalling some 32,000 effectives with about 50 guns. Another Turkish division may be at Khanikin. In view of your 12325 cypher M.O. 1 of 21st January it seems possible that the Turks may by the beginning of March be able to increase their forces in the Baghdad region to a total of 11 divisions, or about 80,000 men, with, say, 132 guns, taking 12 guns per division. By 7th February the force under Aylmer, including the garrisons of posts on the river above Amara, should number 35 battalions, 19 squadrons, and 74 guns, including 8½ battalions and 28 guns now *en route* up the Tigris. Three more field batteries from France are now arriving at Basra. If Townshend be relieved by the middle of March, when we hope to have placed the three additional brigades from India in Mesopotamia, Lake should be able to concentrate a force of 45,000 rifles, 2,500 sabres, and 120 guns in his fighting line on the Tigris. But in the event of Kut falling, then this force will be reduced to 36,000 rifles, 2,500 sabres, and 86 guns. Of course the check to Aylmer on 21st January has prejudiced the prospects of relieving Townshend in time, that is, before 17th February, though I have just heard that Townshend now states that he can make his food supplies last for some time after that date. The immediate objective of the Turks is doubtless to capture Townshend's force. Whether they capture Kut or not they may subsequently decide (*a*) to continue operations against us; or (*b*) to secure Baghdad against us whilst operating against Russia with a view to penetrating into Persia.

In favour of (*a*) :—

1. With Kut in Turkish hands the Shatt-al-Hai is available from March to June as approach to Euphrates and Nasriyah, thus turning British position on Tigris above Qurna.
2. British force might have to concentrate to defend Basra to avoid risk of defeat in detail.
3. A British withdrawal down the Tigris below Amara opens oil-fields in South-West Persia to invasion, and exposes Pusht-i-Kuh, Bakhtiari, and other tribes to direct pressure.
4. If successful in driving British back below Amara the Turks could operate in Persia practically free from anxiety as to safety of Baghdad.

Against the above are :—

(*a*.) The flood season favours the defence.
(*b*.) Summer climatic conditions favour operations into Persia and militate against those in Lower Mesopotamia.

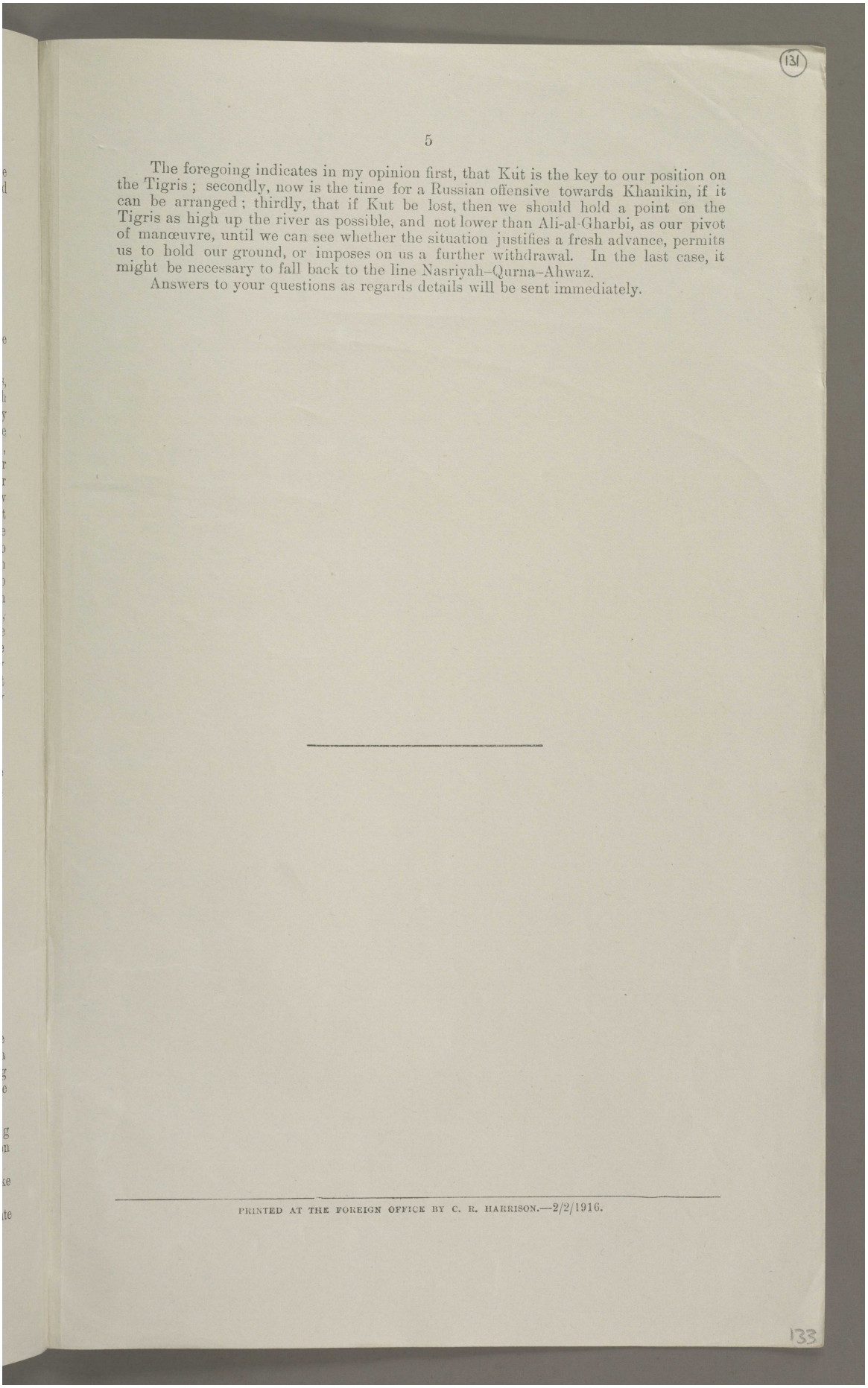
We must recognise, whatever course the Turks decide upon, we shall be unable to undertake advance on Baghdad in near future, especially as at present there is a shortage of river transport, which it is most difficult to remedy, though we are taking every possible step to this end. Should Kut fall, considerations affecting our future are :—

(*a*.) The nearer we are to Kut the greater the menace to any Turkish force using the Shatt-al-Hai, and the greater the moral effect of our position upon Pusht-i-Kuh, Persia, and the Bakhtiari.
(*b*.) Below Ali-al-Gharbi the above menace practically vanishes, as a sudden stroke against Kut is prohibited by the distance.
(*c*.) Ali-al-Gharbi in our possession gives a flank position as regardst he route through Pusht-i-Kuh to Amara and the oil-fields.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000042

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

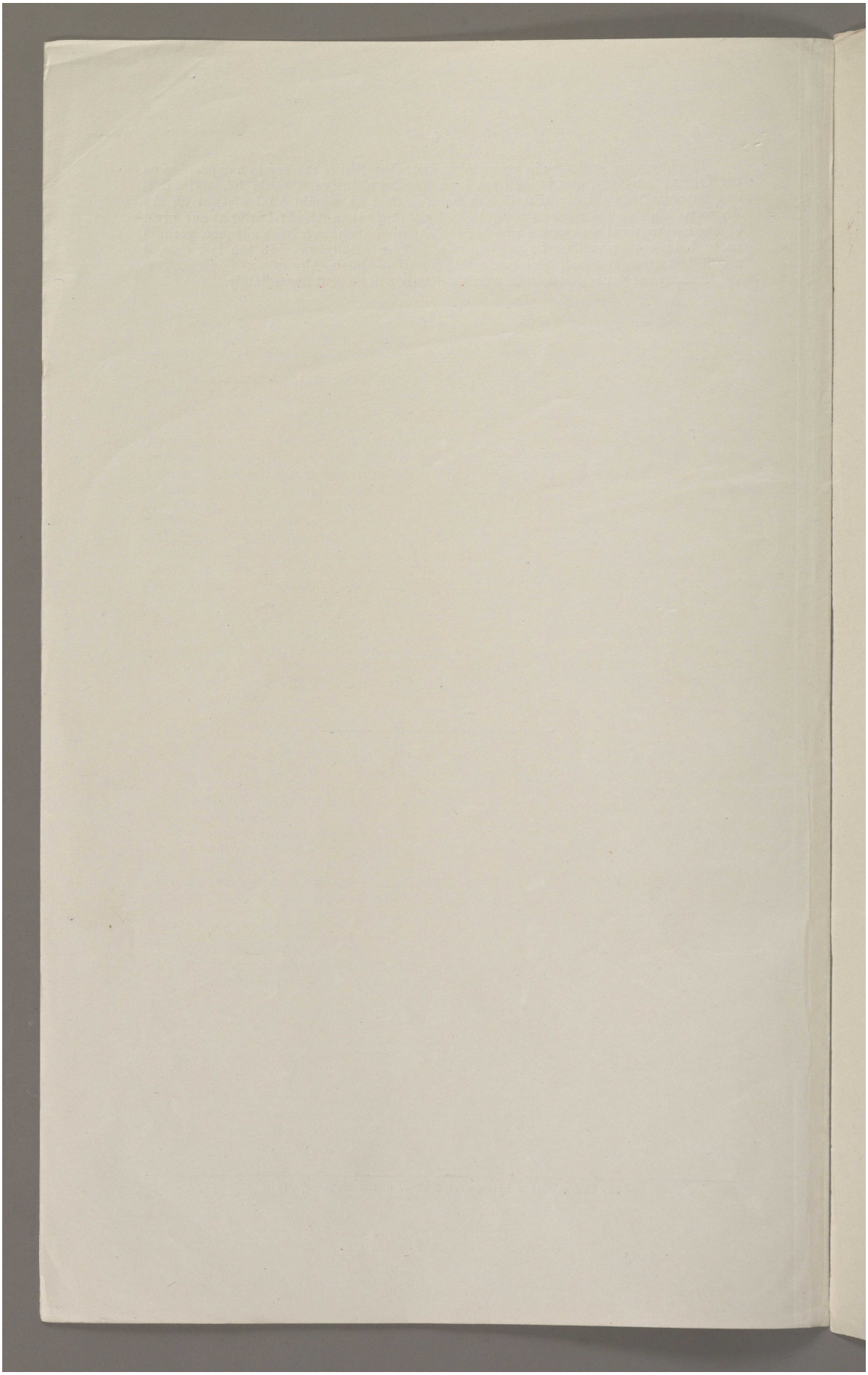


The foregoing indicates in my opinion first, that Kut is the key to our position on the Tigris; secondly, now is the time for a Russian offensive towards Khanikin, if it can be arranged; thirdly, that if Kut be lost, then we should hold a point on the Tigris as high up the river as possible, and not lower than Ali-al-Gharbi, as our pivot of manœuvre, until we can see whether the situation justifies a fresh advance, permits us to hold our ground, or imposes on us a further withdrawal. In the last case, it might be necessary to fall back to the line Nasriyah–Qurna–Ahwaz.

Answers to your questions as regards details will be sent immediately.

PRINTED AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE BY C. R. HARRISON.—2/2/1916.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000096



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00007c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(132)

LORD CURZON.

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

Printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence. February 1916.

SECRET.

G.–52.

To be returned to the Secretary
of the Committee of Imperial Defence,
2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.

23

THE CONTROL OF THE OPERATIONS IN MESOPOTAMIA.

NOTE PREPARED BY THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF BY DIRECTION OF THE WAR COMMITTEE.

1. IT has been a long-established custom for the Government of India to control and direct military operations which have been based upon that country. In the conduct of such operations it has, with rare exceptions, acted independently of the War Office, and His Majesty's Government has exercised such general control and supervision as have been required through the medium of the India Office. In effect, then, India has, from a military point of view, been treated as a country under British suzerainty.

2. This arrangement has had undoubted advantages in the past, when an intimate knowledge of local politics and local conditions has been of paramount importance; when India has herself been able to meet the requirements of the situation, and when there has been no question of the employment of the resources of the Empire as a whole in the attainment of a common end. In the present war, however, established custom and local conditions must, to some extent, give way to the general aim. India can no longer meet the requirements of the campaign in Mesopotamia without assistance from Home, and the co-ordination of military operations in every theatre of war in which we are concerned has become a matter of urgency.

3. The system by which the campaign in Mesopotamia is controlled at the present time is undoubtedly cumbersome. The decisions of the War Committee are communicated through the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy, who passes them on to the Commander-in-Chief in India, who in his turn issues his instructions to the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia. The War Office is not in as close a touch with the operations as is desirable, and has not at any given moment exact information as to the strength and distribution of the troops employed, yet it is called upon to provide reinforcements of men and munitions whenever the resources of India prove insufficient. These reinforcements can only come either from the reserves at Home or from other theatres of war, and events in Mesopotamia, over which the War Office has, up to the present time, had no control, thus react upon operations elsewhere which are under its direct supervision.

4. As an alternative to the existing system I recommend the following procedure:—

(1.) The Commander-in-Chief in India to receive instructions with regard to military operations in Mesopotamia and Persia from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, under the authority of the Secretary of State for War, in exactly the same manner as the Commanders-in-Chief in other theatres. These instructions will, of course, be based on the decisions of the War Committee.

(2.) India will remain, as at present, the main base of the force in Mesopotamia, which will continue to be administered by the Commander-in-Chief in India, such requirements of the force as India cannot meet being supplied from other parts of the Empire, subject to the general policy, at the time being, decided upon by the War Committee.

(3.) The General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia will send all reports of operations, states, returns, recommendations as to the higher appointments, and requests for additional units to the Commander-in-Chief

[228—2]

134

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

in India, and will repeat these to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

(4.) Demands for drafts to maintain Indian units now in Mesopotamia and for such war material as is being provided from India will, as at present, be made on the Commander-in-Chief, India.

(5.) The Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Commander-in-Chief, India, will, as required, correspond direct in regard to the requirements of the force in Mesopotamia, but all questions of principle likely to affect the security of India will continue to be referred by the Commander-in-Chief in India to the Viceroy and, if necessary, will be communicated by him to the Secretary of State for India.

(6.) Arrangements in regard to prisoners of war, our sick and wounded, and as to the finance of the campaign will remain as at present.

(7.) All press communiqués will be issued through the War Office and telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief, India.

(8.) Intelligence obtained in India which might affect the operations will be communicated by wire to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and repeated to the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia.

5. The above arrangement will, in my opinion, enable the War Committee to adjust more effectively the respective requirements of the campaign in Mesopotamia and of the campaigns in other theatres. We have already reached a stage in the war when our forces in Egypt have become a general strategic reserve for the Empire, and it is almost certain that any considerable reinforcements either for India or for Mesopotamia must come from Egypt. It is in accordance with sound military principles that the authority which controls the reserves should also control the operations which those reserves may be required to support. It is also in accordance with these principles that the base of operations should be under the same general control as the forces in the field. It does not, therefore, seem advisable that the War Office should attempt to conduct directly the operations in Mesopotamia so long as India remains the main base for the campaign in that country, and consequently I have recommended that these operations should be controlled by the War Office, through the Commander-in-Chief in India.

6. The system proposed can only work effectively if it is accepted whole-heartedly by the Government of India, and if precedent and established custom are, for the nonce, set aside in the general interest. No compromise or half measure will lead to any improvement on the existing arrangement; while, given good-will on both sides, central control over all the forces of the Empire in the field will lead both to greater efficiency and economy of force. As to this we may well learn from our chief enemy, who now directs with great advantage to himself not only the military forces of the various principalities which compose his Empire, but even the armies of his allies. The cause of the *Entente* has suffered greatly from the want of co-ordinated action, and this lack of co-ordination is increased by the existing system under which India is outside the control of the Imperial General Staff.

W. R. ROBERTSON, C.I.G.S.

War Office, January 31, 1916.

PRINTED AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE BY G. R. HARRISON.—2/2/1916.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00001f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Lord Curzon (133)

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

Printed for the use of the Cabinet. February 1916.

VERY SECRET. 13

W.C.-22.

[To be returned to the Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence, 2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.]

WAR COMMITTEE.

Extracts from the Proceedings of a Meeting of the War Committee held on Thursday, February 3, 1916.

The recent Conference on Munitions in Paris.

1. The Minister of Munitions undertook to circulate to the War Committee a statement based on documents prepared in connection with the recent Munitions Conference in Paris.

The Control of the Operations in Mesopotamia.

2. The War Committee approved in principle, provisionally and subject to confirmation after the views of the Viceroy of India have been received, of the transfer of the responsibility for the direction of the operations in Mesopotamia from the Government of India to the War Office, who will control them through the Commander-in-Chief in India by means of the following procedure :—

(1.) The Commander-in-Chief in India to receive instructions with regard to military operations in Mesopotamia and Persia from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, under the authority of the Secretary of State for War, in exactly the same manner as the Commanders-in-Chief in other theatres. These instructions will, of course, be based on the decisions of the War Committee.

(2.) India will remain, as at present, the main base of the force in Mesopotamia, which will continue to be administered by the Commander-in-Chief in India, such requirements of the force as India cannot meet being supplied by the War Office from other parts of the Empire, subject to the general policy at the time being decided upon by the War Committee.

(3.) The General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia will send all reports of operations, states, returns, recommendations as to the higher appointments, and requests for additional units to the Commander-in-Chief in India, and will repeat these to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

(4.) Demands for drafts to maintain Indian units now in Mesopotamia and for such war material as is being provided from India will, as at present, be made on the Commander-in-Chief, India.

(5.) The Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Commander-in-Chief, India, will, as required, correspond direct in regard to the requirements of the force in Mesopotamia, but all questions of principle or policy likely to affect the military or internal security of India will continue to be referred by the Commander-in-Chief in India to the Viceroy.

(6.) Copies of all telegrams exchanged with India will be supplied by the General Staff to the Secretary of State for India.

(7.) Arrangements in regard to prisoners of war, our sick and wounded, and as to the finance of the campaign will remain as at present.

[1240—21]

135

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000027

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(8.) All press communiqués will be issued through the War Office after communication with the India Office, and telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief, India.

(9.) Intelligence obtained in India which might affect the operations will be communicated by wire to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and repeated to the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia.

(10.) The foregoing provisions are to make no change in the control of the troops in India as at present exercised.

The transfer of design from the War Office to the Ministry of Munitions.

3. The War Committee approved of the following conclusions superseding those agreed to at the meeting held on the 26th January, 1916 :—

(*a.*) The responsibility for designs, patterns, and specifications, and for testing arms and ammunition, rests with the Ministry of Munitions.

(*b.*) The Army Council is responsible for the general nature and amount of the weapons and equipments required, but there shall be no Court of Appeal set up in the War Office from the decisions of the Ministry of Munitions under (*a*).

(*c.*) When it is necessary that new weapons, stores, or articles of equipment should undergo practical trials by troops, either at home or in the field, the co-operation of the Army Council should be sought by the Ministry.

(*d.*) The Army Council should be represented on Advisory Committees or bodies under the Ministry of Munitions to the extent that the Army Council think desirable.

(*e.*) The Experimental Officer and subordinate Experimental Staff at Hythe to be transferred to the Ministry of Munitions in accordance with the precedent of the School of Instruction, Shoeburyness.

Transport of Ammunition from America.

4. It was agreed that the Ministry of Munitions should communicate to the Foreign Office details of the extent to which the transport of British munitions from ports in North America is held up by delay on the part of the Allies in clearing ships which have precedence of our ships in these ports. The Foreign Office to take appropriate action with a view to removal of the causes of delay.

Proposed Storage of American manufactured Munitions in Canada.

5. As a preliminary to the consideration of the question of whether arrangements should be made in Canada for the storage of American-manufactured munitions, the Minister of Munitions undertook to ascertain the amount of war material now accumulated, and likely in the future to be accumulated, in the United States of America.

Swedish Ore.

6. The Minister of Munitions undertook to send the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs a note regarding the rate at which iron ore is being received from Sweden. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs undertook to take appropriate action for putting pressure on Sweden, if necessary, in order to secure reciprocity in the interchange of commodities.

Command in East Africa.

7. In view of the necessity for replacing General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, whose state of health does not enable him to continue in command of the operations in East Africa, it was decided that this command should be offered to General Smuts. The Colonial Office to communicate this decision to the Governor-General.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000c7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

The Arab Question.

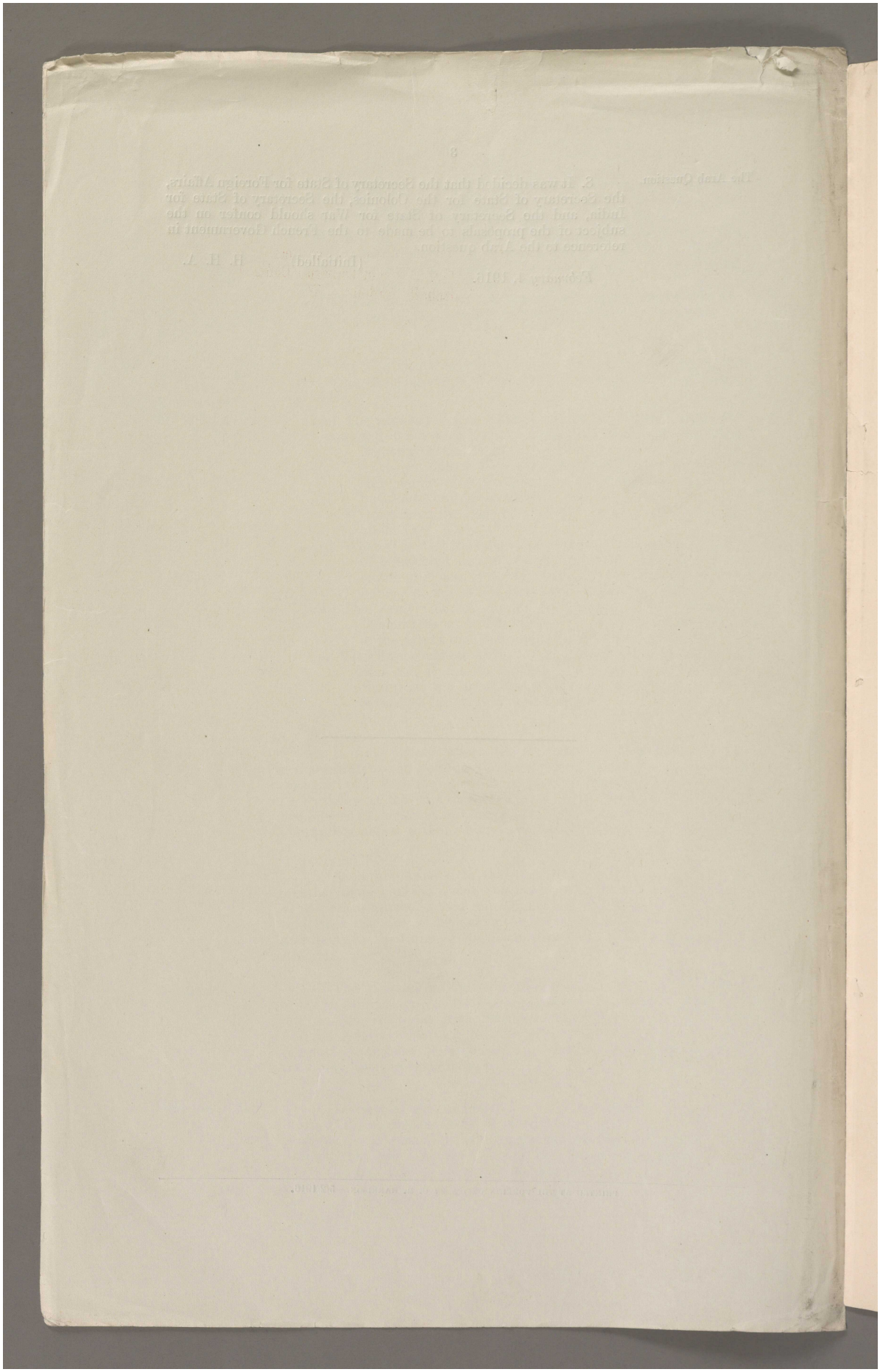
8. It was decided that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Secretary of State for India, and the Secretary of State for War should confer on the subject of the proposals to be made to the French Government in reference to the Arab question.

(Initialled) H. H. A.

February 4, 1916.

PRINTED AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE BY C. R. HARRISON.—5/2/1916.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000b6



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000006

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This Document is the property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.

SECRET.

Précis of Correspondence regarding the Mesopotamian Expedition—Its Genesis and Development.

Prepared in the Military Department of the India Office.

(I.)

This particular phase of the Great War though naturally and rightly regarded as a subsidiary issue, may have results either for good or evil, of the most far reaching consequence, it is therefore desirable to place on record the origin of the expedition, the causes which justified it, and the successive steps which have marked its progress, more especially as our recent reverses have been the signal for much ill-informed criticism of the Government, both by individuals and the Press.

During the earlier phases of the campaign each succeeding victory was greeted with applause, and was prematurely welcomed, not only in the Press but also in many influential quarters, as stages on the road to Baghdad. With equal omniscient emphasis both Press and the critics now condemn a policy which they have hitherto applauded, sometimes in extravagant terms as "the one campaign which had been brilliantly successful throughout."

For these reasons it is here attempted to give as briefly as possible in documentary form a connected account of the political history of the Mesopotamian campaign without dwelling unduly on its military episodes.

The India Office is more especially concerned with the responsibility of the Secretary of State for India, and consequently special prominence is given to that aspect of the case.

Although no actual rupture with Turkey took place until the 5th November, it will be seen from the White Paper* issued in that month that the Porte had shown signs of great hostility to England from the very outbreak of our war with Germany.

* No. 13 (1914).

As early as 11th August the Baghdad Army had begun to be mobilised, martial law had been proclaimed, and the property of British subjects had been seized. By 21st August the Government of India were contemplating sending H.M.S. "Odin" and "Lawrence" to the Shatt-el-Arab, and landing 100 sepoys at Abadan to protect the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's Settlement.

The Military Secretary, India Office, drew the attention of the Secretary of State to the facts in relation to India by two Minutes of the 24th August and the 26th September, laying stress on the dangers to our Persian Gulf interests, consolidated with so much care and effort in the past, and on the menace, not only to the security of the North-Western Frontier, but to our tranquillity and prestige in India itself, which hostilities with Turkey involved.

The Minute of the 26th September 1914 entitled "The Rôle of India in a Turkish War" is so germane to what followed, that it appears necessary to quote from it at some length.

"All the omens point to war with Turkey within a few weeks or even days. Such a contingency need not alarm us unless the Turks succeed in drawing the Arabs to their side, In that case they will probably proclaim a Jehad and endeavour to raise Afghanistan and the Frontier tribes against us, which might be a serious danger to India and would most certainly add enormously to our difficulties and responsibilities. This shows how important it is to us to avert a Turko-Arab coalition.

"It is known that Turkey has been intriguing right and left to win over the Arabs and it is even said that Bin Saood, the leading Arab chief, has been induced to join the Turks. If this is true, we may expect serious trouble, both in Mesopotamia and in Egypt.

"I have discussed this aspect of the case with Major Shakespear, and he feels sure that Bin Saood has not yet fully committed himself as his hatred of the Turks is too pronounced to admit of an easy surrender to their blandishments. Moreover, he is convinced that we have only to give some sure sign of our intention to support him and the Arabs generally against the Turks, to turn the balance in our favour. How can we give such a sign? My solution of the problem is that we must give the signal *before* war breaks out or it may be too late, and that the best way of doing so, is to send a force from India to the Shatt-el-Arab *at once*.

"We can easily do so at the present moment without arousing any suspicion. Troops and ships are in readiness at Bombay. The Navy can convoy them to the mouth of the Gulf, and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000095

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

the Expedition, if despatched under sealed orders, could arrive at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab without a soul knowing anything about its despatch for this purpose.

"On arrival the troops can be landed on Persian soil at Muhammerah or at Abadan Island, ostensibly to protect the oil installation, but in reality to notify to the Turks that we meant business and to the Arabs that we were ready to support them. So startling and unexpected a sign of our power to strike would at once determine the attitude of the Sheikhs of Muhammerah and Koweit as well as of Bin Saood, and the support of the Arabs would utterly destroy all prospect of Turkish success either in Mesopotamia or in Egypt. With the Arabs on our side a Jehad is impossible, and our Indian Frontier is safe from attack.

"The force that we might thus despatch in the first instance need not be large as it will be perfectly secure from attack by the Turkish Division at Basra in its position on the left bank of the Shatt-el-Arab. I am of opinion that it might be limited to one Brigade of the 6th Division, two Mountain Batteries, two Companies Sappers.

"If war breaks out it will be necessary to occupy Basra at once, and this force would not be sufficient for such a purpose if the Baghdad troops had also been brought down. This contingency might be provided for by bringing the necessary reinforcements later on to Basidu (Kishm), where they would be within two days sail of the Shatt-el-Arab. We should thus have a force more than sufficient to deal within any Turkish opposition south of Baghdad itself.

* * * * *

"This seems the psychological moment to take action. So unexpected a stroke at this moment would have a startling effect.

"(1) It would checkmate Turkish intrigues and demonstrate our ability to strike.

"(2) It would encourage the Arabs to rally to us, and confirms the Sheikhs of Muhammerah and Koweit in their allegiance.

"(3) It would safeguard Egypt, as without Arab support a Turkish invasion is impossible.

"(4) It would effectually protect the oil installation at Abadan.

Such results seem to justify fully the proposed action."

These views commended themselves to Lord Crewe, and the same evening the following telegram was despatched under his orders :—

"From Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, 26th September 1914.

"No. 1062. The situation as regards Turkey is most menacing, and it may be necessary to demonstrate at head of Persian Gulf.

"For this purpose 6th Division would suit admirably, but this should be kept absolutely secret and no hint given of possible change of destination.*

"Should Cabinet decide to take this action, one Brigade of 6th Division with two Mountain Batteries and Sappers should be shipped at once as if they were urgently required for Egypt, but with sealed orders to proceed to Shatt-el-Arab.

"Will communicate further on this subject to-morrow. Pending this take no action."

The following day the tension with Turkey relaxed somewhat, and on the 28th September 1914 the Secretary of State for India cabled to the Viceroy, Army Department :—

No. 1085. My No. 1062. The situation is still acute, but it is decided to take no action for a couple of days. Meanwhile be prepared to act as proposed.

The following telegrams still further elucidate the sequence of events. It will be seen that the situation rapidly became so critical that the Cabinet decided on the 2nd October to take precautionary measures, and to send a Force to the Shatt-el-Arab to guard our interests :—

"From Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 28th September 1914.

"Foreign Secret. Following from Resident at Bushire, No. 1149, dated 26th September :—

"'Informer Mahomet Amin supplied me with copies of what he declares are translations of three cypher telegrams sent in latter half of July by Enver Pasha, of Constantinople, to Bin Saood, warning latter of the despatch of arms and ammunition, and officers for training his Arabs, measures called for by the imminence of war in Europe.

"'In further telegrams Enver informed Vali of Basra that Turkish Government is prepared to help Germany in return for assistance received during Balkan War; that arms and ammunition are being sent to Basra under German flag, and that 32 secret emissaries, including German officers, are on their way to preach a Jehad in Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and India.'"

"From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
dated 2nd October 1914.

"No. 1134. Reference my telegrams Nos. 1062 and 1085.

"Government have decided to take action therein indicated. The force mentioned should be embarked so as to sail on 10th, together with Expedition "A," its real destination being only communicated by sealed orders after ships have sailed. Suggest you sending a special Staff Officer with Officer Commanding Force, who will be able to communicate your instructions and hand over books, maps, &c.

"Admiralty consider that no escort is required from Karachi onwards, nor from Bombay, if they leave with the main body, but on this point final decision should rest with Naval Commander-in-Chief, who, as officer on spot, has best information.

* The Division had previously been warned for service either in Egypt, Africa, or elsewhere.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00000e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"Please telegraph which Brigade and Commander will be sent; also, which Mountain Batteries.

"After Force has sailed get ready remainder of 6th Division for despatch, but with idea that they are destined for Europe or Egypt. Secrecy can be dropped after leading Brigade has reached Shatt-el-Arab.

"Will telegraph more precise instructions to-morrow as to action to be taken.

"Of course all ships utilized should be suitable for Shatt-el-Arab.

"Presume you will adopt Expedition "D" for description of this movement."

On the following day the Military Secretary, India Office, discussed the situation with the Political Department, the Foreign Office (Sir Eyre Crowe), and the Admiralty (Admiral Sir H. Jackson and Vice-Admiral Sir E. Slade). The net result of these discussions was embodied in the following telegram :—

"From Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 3rd October 1914.

"No. 1144. Private. My 1134 Expedition "D."

"Please instruct Officer Commanding that we are at peace with Turkey and on no account is he to land troops on Turkish territory or take any other hostile action against Turks without orders from you except in case of absolute military necessity. He may disembark if convenient to do so either on Abadan Island or at Muhammerah but preferably at Abadan. On this point, however, he should work in concert with Naval and Political authorities. He should endeavour to avoid any action which might cause friction with the Arabs either in Persian or Turkish territory, as we may have to rely on their co-operation in the event of a rupture with Turkey. He will of course take all steps to protect the oil tanks and other British interests in Persian territory.

"You will doubtless take measures in sufficient time to warn the Political Officers in Gulf of action contemplated, so that necessary communications may be made by them to Sheikhs of Muhammerah and Koweit, and to Bin Saood in good time so that they may have sufficient previous confidential intimation of approach of expedition.

"Resident, Baghdad, should also be warned and directed to communicate with consul at Basra, but it is most important that no information regarding expedition should leak out before it reaches Shatt-el-Arab.

"Admiralty are instructing Naval Authorities.

"I am communicating with Shakespear and will telegraph further about his movements."

"From Viceroy to Secretary of State to India, dated 3rd October 1914.

"H. 1285. Your 1134 of 3rd October.

"Expedition 'A' cannot start until 12th October and may be delayed until 14th, because some of its ships will have to be diverted to 6th Division owing to shortage of ships suitable for Shatt-el-Arab. We are sending 16th Brigade under Delamain, who has experience of Persian Gulf. The Mountain Batteries will be 23rd and 30th. All will sail with Force 'A.'

"We assume you are sure that this advanced Brigade is strong enough for its purpose. We cannot judge of this without knowing its instructions and objective. Do you intend that we should manage this expedition or do you mean to run it direct from India Office?"

On the 4th October the Political Department asked the Resident at Bushire to let Bin Saood know that Major Shakespear would visit him early in November on behalf of the British Government. This message was amplified on the 8th October, when India was informed that Major Shakespear would sail for Bushire *viâ* Bombay on the 10th October as Political officer on special duty. He had instructions to get into touch with Bin Saood with a view (1) to securing Arab goodwill in the event of war with Turkey, and (2) preventing disturbances among Arabs as a result of our proceedings. The Government of India was asked meantime to let Bin Saood know through the Sheikh of Koweit that German influence was being used to entangle England, the traditional friend of Islam, with Turkey, and that we had consequently been obliged to take precautionary measures. It was hoped that he and Sheikh Mubarak would assist in the maintenance of peace by using their influence not only with their own tribes but with Bin Sha'alam and the Sherif of Mecca. Major Shakespear was being sent to explain matters more fully, and meantime the Government relied on the Sheikhs not to take any action.

"rom Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 5th October 1914.

"No. 1158. Expedition D. Your H. 1285.

"*The force under orders is only intended to occupy Abadan, protect oil tanks and pipe line, cover landing of reinforcements, if these should be necessary, and show Arabs that we intend to support them against Turks.* With warship at Muhammerah troops detailed are considered ample for above purposes.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000014

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"Should Turkey become a belligerent management of expedition will devolve on you, but instructions as to scope of operations will, of course, come from me.

"Meanwhile you should prepare remainder of Division for despatch, but we do not propose to send more troops to Abadan till Turkey shows her hand, though it may be advisable to send a first reinforcement to Basidu as a near support.

"If political situation presages war the whole Division would be wanted and land transport would become necessary. With this in view you might think it convenient to move Division gradually by rail and sea to Karachi, where presumably you would be better able to equip with mule transport.

"Shakespear will leave by next mail for Bombay and I am instructing him to endeavour to communicate with Bin Saood.

"Presume you will detail a political officer to accompany leading troops.

"Admiralty requested to make arrangements for disembarkation with Naval Commander-in-Chief.

"Shall be glad to have a full expression of your views."

The above telegram is important. The portion in italics defines the exact scope of the expedition in its initial stage before Turkey became a belligerent.

"From Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th October 1914.

"Confidential. In reply to your telegram No. 1158 of 5th October in which you ask for a full expression of my views upon the Abadan project, I venture to put forward following considerations after consulting Commander-in-Chief.

"It appears to us perfectly clear that the policy of Turkey, which is not in a position to give real material assistance to the enemy, is dominated by Germany, whose aim is to create a situation in which it will appear that Turkey is the object of aggression of one or more Christian Powers. Violations of neutrality, as in case of Goeben, are too technical to be understood by the Mahomedan masses, but the presence of belligerent ships and the disembarkation of troops in Turkish waters are facts of which the provocative character are apparent to all. That such provocation should be given by Indian ships or troops will create a bad effect in India and Afghanistan and must be to play into the hands of Germany. I agree with Sir L. Mallet that at present moment, presence of three of our ships in the Shatt-el-Arab is not defensible from an international point of view, but to send troops into these neutral waters would probably be met by firing on our ships from the Fort at Fao.

"Materially this would do us no harm, but if we took no action our prestige in the Gulf would vanish, while if we retaliated we should place ourselves entirely in the wrong.

"Disembarkation at Abadan presents no difficulty from a military point of view, but to do so will be to walk deliberately into a trap not unskilfully laid for us. Before any final decision to disembark troops at Abadan is taken, I trust His Majesty's Government will consider very carefully the above aspect of the question and particularly effect which it is likely to have upon the attitude of Mahomedans in India, which is at present very satisfactory in every way, particularly in view of our weakened military position in India, and on the frontier, after the despatch to the theatre of war of bulk of the Army in India, with all our modern artillery, &c.

"It is quite clear nothing can really secure safety of oil works except the occupation of Abadan, but we see no reason to anticipate an attack upon them and we doubt their value being so great as to outweigh consequences of an apparent attack by us on Turkey.

"Again, the occupation of Abadan by a large military force would almost certainly evoke a protest by Persia, and in the event of hostilities with Turkey would constitute a violation of neutrality of Persia, and would afford a pretext to Turkey for the extension of the frontier at the expense of Persia.

"If, on the other hand, object in view is merely to demonstrate at the head of the Gulf, other alternatives present themselves.

"To land troops at Bassidu would be known immediately all over the Gulf, and would create an immense impression. To this there could be no possible political objection, but from a military point of view the difficulties of water supply on the island are almost insuperable.

"After Bassidu, Bahrein is politically the nearest approach to British territory in the Gulf, and there seem to be no serious objections to this alternative. The Sheikh is old and not likely to be obstructive, if the situation were explained to him. There is also an advantage in favour of Bahrein in the fact of our having a force there would strengthen our hands and assist our overtures to Bin Saood and the Sheikh of Katr. From a military point of view only objection to Bahrein is difficulty of embarking and disembarking troops, owing to shallowness of the water, but this could be mitigated by plentiful supply of boats. I propose to send Sir P. Cox as political officer with any expedition to the Gulf, since his knowledge of the Chiefs and of Gulf politics is unique."

As comments on the above telegram from the Viceroy the following may be read:—

"From Foreign Office to Sir L. Mallet (Constantinople), dated 7th October 1914.

"No. 644. His Majesty's Ships *Odin*, *Espiegle*, and *Dalhousie* are not in Turkish waters, and there can be no question of their being interned by Turkish Government and ordered out of waters which are not Turkish.

"Instructions are being sent that one of these ships is to remain at Muhammerah, which is not Turkish, and the other two are to keep outside Turkish territorial waters, which according to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000078

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

the generally accepted principle of international law extend to three miles out to sea from the coast.

"It must be recognised however that we reserve our long established right to pass freely up and down the Shatt-el-Arab at all times.

"We hear that a German merchant vessel, the *Ekbatana*, is at Basra. Transfer to a neutral flag of belligerent merchant vessels is not in accordance with international law recognised under ordinary circumstances. It will be well to mention this and to say that if the *Ekbatana* appears we shall regard her as liable to capture on the high seas."

"Note by Sir A. Hirtzel, Political Secretary, India Office, dated 8th October 1914.

"The question of the ships has been disposed of by the orders sent to Sir L. Mallet last night, copy attached, which have been repeated to the Government of India, and by orders issued by Admiralty to Naval Commander-in-Chief (copy not yet available), which he has been instructed to repeat to Government of India.

"I think Government of India overstate the Abadan question. The Oil Company's concession has been leased from the Persian Government, and though the Sheikh of Muhammerah is responsible for policing it, it is clear that he cannot protect it against threatened attack by Turkey, and in such circumstances public opinion should surely recognise our right to protect our own property. And we have to remember loss of prestige with the Arabs, whom we wish to encourage, if it is destroyed.

"As between Basidu and Bahrein, the water difficulty can presumably be got over by distillation. Bahrein has, however, great political advantages, if the difficulties of water and landing can be overcome, through its proximity to the Arabian Coast and Bin Saood. It is not a British Protectorate, though the Sheikh has ceded to us jurisdiction over foreigners. In the recent negotiations with Turkey, we undertook not to annex it, but they have never been ratified."

On the same day (8th October) the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy as follows:—

"No. 1187. Expedition "D." Your telegram of 7th October, and mine of same date.

"For the present it is not necessary to decide about Abadan, and I am most anxious to avoid disturbing Indian Mahomedans, but it is necessary to reassure Arabs, who will be agitated by reports that Turks will spread of our retirement at their dictation from Shatt-el-Arab. It is therefore important that an immediate demonstration should be made. You apparently incline to Bassidu as a suitable rendezvous but for scarcity of water. On the other hand Bahrein has great political advantages if difficulties of landing can be met. Probably water difficulty at Bassidu can be overcome by distillation.

"Shall be glad if you will send me your views at once. Meanwhile all preparations should continue."

Between the 8th and 13th October the following telegrams passed between the India Office and the Viceroy, with the result that Bahrein was finally chosen as the immediate objective of the expedition.

"From Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th October 1914.

"No. H. 1381. Your telegram No. 1187. Expedition "D."

"The difficulties of landing troops at Bahrein can be overcome, and there is good water and ample space for camping grounds. Distillation of water for a force landed at Bassidu would be very difficult.

"There is no doubt that Bahrein by its position near head of the Gulf has many advantages both material and political over Bassidu, while it has none of the disadvantages of Abadan as a place of disembarkation.

"The presence of our troops at Bahrein would be a sufficiently good reply to any boastings of the Turks and should reassure completely the Arabs.

"Preparations are being pushed forward and one Brigade will start on 14th or 15th."

"From Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th October 1914.

"Foreign Secret. Political Resident, Persian Gulf reports 8th October, following telegram sent to Ambassador, Constantinople, by Consul at Basra.

"'Sayyid Talib came to see me last night. He says Turkey seems resolved on war. This does not suit Arabs. He would like to enter into negotiations with regard to his attitude in case of hostilities between England and Turkey. He desired me to ask Your Excellency to remind Lord Kitchener of a conversation with him at Cairo three years ago, and to say that time has come. I promised to transmit message to you and to ask for instructions.'"

"From Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 10th October 1914

"Private 1207. Your H. 1381. Expedition "D."

"Shakespear says water difficulty is as great at Bahrein as at Basidu, but that the real objection to former is the difficulty of getting away if the wind is unfavourable. On this point I must leave decision to you. If you decide on Bahrein please wire date on which expedition should arrive there. It is still important to keep destination secret, as otherwise inconvenient protests might be made."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00009b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"From Viceroy, to Secretary of State for India, dated 13th October 1914.

"H. 1469. Reference your 1207 of 10th. Expedition "D."

"We realise that there certainly will be difficulties in dis-embarkation and re-embarkation at Bahrein, but as between it and Basidu our information derived from Sir P. Cox and Birdwood is that water is plentiful at Bahrein, even if not very good, while Basidu has none. We are therefore sending to Bahrein advanced Force mentioned in your No. 1062, of 26th September. Force will leave Bombay and Karachi on 16th October and 17th October, respectively, and should arrive at Bahrein about 23rd."

In accordance with the above the advanced Force under Brigadier-General Delamain left India with the convoy for Egypt on the 16th October, under sealed orders, and as previously arranged was diverted to Bahrein when three days out from Bombay.

General Delamain was informed in a letter, No. 10,093/1, of 8th October, from the Chief of General Staff, Simla, that the expedition would sail to the Persian Gulf under convoy; that he was to concert, in consultation with the Senior Naval Officer, his plan for disembarking and carrying out the rôle assigned to him, and for this purpose should arrange to travel in the same ship; that Major Smyth, Cheshire Regiment, had been appointed to his Staff on special service, and would furnish him with maps, books, and documents. He was also told that the plan of operations, which had been prepared by the General Staff, India, was not intended in any way to fetter his action, and that it was hoped that the local Consular Officials would be able to assist him. He was to report all important movements of troops to the Chief of the General staff.

With these orders was enclosed a paper of secret instructions following those conveyed in the Secretary of State's telegrams Nos. 1144 and 1158 of the 3rd and 5th October.

Brigadier-General Delamain was also informed that in the event of hostilities with Turkey the remainder of the 6th Division would follow in his support, and that in the meantime he should take such military and political action as he thought feasible to strengthen his position, and, if possible, to occupy Basra.

From the 15th to the 23rd October many indications of activity on the part of the Turks and of co-operation with Germany were reported. A son of the Kurdish Chief Issa left Constantinople for Basra to begin an anti-English propaganda, while Major Omar Fevzi Bey with some German officers was reported as passing through Aleppo with horses, money, and arms, together with two batteries of guns for the Arab Chief Ibn-el-Reshid. Mines were said to have been sent from Baghdad to Basra, Shamsumiya, Muhammerah, and Fao, and troops and munitions to various places.

On the 24th October 1914 the Political Resident, Bushire, telegraphed to the Secretary of State for India:—

"1279. Following from Consul at Muhammerah, dated 23rd October, No. 157:—

"'My telegram No. 155.

"'Sheikh's man informs me there are four guns and 300 men posted on the island opposite mouth of Karun.

"'Sheikh has moved a number of his household and quantity of his effects up the Karun.

"'These two events have had a disturbing effect on the town and there is considerable nervousness amongst (clerks ? and) other low class foreigners, who fear that an attack on the place is imminent. I think the position here is decidedly serious.'"

The telegram No. 155, dated 22nd October, above referred to was one which ended with the somewhat disquieting words:—"If any steps are going to be taken to protect Abadan and our interests in these parts I venture to urge that they should be taken promptly."

On the other hand the Viceroy reported on the 24th October that the Political Agent at Koweit had forwarded a letter from Bin Saood to the Sheikh of Koweit intimating that he would stand by him and the British Government in the event of war.

On the receipt of the above, the Secretary of State cabled on the 26th October in the Political Department as follows:—

"Presumably Expeditionary Force "D" has arrived at Bahrein. If so, instructions should be issued to the British representatives of Muhammerah, Kuweit, Basra and elsewhere who are in touch with Arabs that they should give utmost publicity to this fact, making it

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

known that the British Government do not intend to take any aggressive action, but have been compelled, for the eventual protection of British interests and those of their friends, to despatch this force to the Persian Gulf in view of the fact that under the direction of Germany the Turks are making continual military preparation which can only be directed against the British."

This was followed on the 27th October 1914 by a telegram from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India :—

"Foreign Secret. Political Agent, Bahrein, reports 23rd October Sheikh and notables approve despatch of troops to Bahrein and will probably send telegrams to Sheikh-ul-Islam deprecating provocative actions of Turkey."

Meanwhile General Delamain's armada arrived at Bahrein on the 23rd October and anchored off that island awaiting orders. On the 30th October, in consequence of the hostile action taken by the Turks against the Russians in the Black Sea, the flotilla at Bahrein was ordered to sail at once to the Shatt-el-Arab, but did not get away till the 2nd November. This order was supplemented by the following telegrams to the Viceroy :—

"From Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 30th October 1914.

"1299. Expeditionary Force "D." Order another Brigade of 6th Division to be got ready at once for despatch. Have you transports ready for this force irrespective of those already detailed for next convoy to Europe or Egypt.

"I will arrange with Admiralty for escort."

"Sir E. Barrow,

"Sir E. Grey agrees that this warning is desirable.

"(Signed) CREWE."

"30th October 1914."

"From Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 31st October 1914.

"No. 1306. Reference my telegram of 30th October, No. 1303. Expedition "D." Please instruct Brigade at Bahrein to proceed at once to Shatt-el-Arab and to concert measures with Naval authorities for immediate attack on Fao.

"Force will then clear Turks out of the Shatt and its vicinity as far as Shumsuniya if possible. After which it will await arrival of reinforcements from India.

"Admiralty advise that reinforcements may be sent without escort from Bombay unless Naval Commander-in-Chief has any reasons to contrary. *Königsberg* located on African coast south of equator. Take steps to inform Arab Chiefs in Gulf and on Aden side. Please telegraph probable date of despatch of reinforcements and composition."

On the 5th November war with Turkey was declared, and on the same day the expedition under General Delamain crossed the bar of the Shatt and anchored. The landing was delayed by bad weather, but on the morning of the 6th H.M.S. *Odin* bombarded Fao Fort after which a small force was landed which occupied the Fort without opposition. On the 7th the expedition reached Abadan.

On the 8th November, General Delamain began disembarking his force on Turkish soil above Abadan. There was an affair of outposts on the 11th. On the 13th, General Barrett arrived at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab with the 18th Brigade and some Artillery and Cavalry. On the 14th he reached Saniyah, and on the 15th Delamain's Brigade attacked and drove back the enemy from Saihan. On the 16th the Secretary of State despatched the following telegram to the Viceroy :—

"From Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 16th November 1914.

"1375. Barrett's No. 24. Please convey my congratulations to Force "D" on its initial success.

"Consequent on this if political situation as regards Arabs is favourable, and if military situation renders immediate advance both practicable and advisable with the force now at Barrett's disposal, I presume you will instruct him to continue movement, Cabinet having approved capture of Basra as immediate objective of Force. Otherwise Barrett should await arrival of remainder of Division before attacking Basra. How far can ships co-operate in movement considering obstructions in river ?

"Impress on Barrett necessity of conciliating Arabs in every possible way. Basra, if possible, should be treated as a friendly and not an enemy town, and every effort made to restore confidence."

On the 17th Sir A. Barrett advanced on Zain with two Brigades and found the enemy strongly entrenched at that point. The position was held by about 4,500 men with 12 guns. The Turks made a resolute defence, but

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000052

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

were driven from their entrenchments with the loss of two guns. This success was decisive, as is shown by the following telegrams :—

"From Sir Percy Cox to Secretary of State for India, dated 21st November 1914.

"47 B. Steam launch arrived Muhammerah bringing two Englishmen and deputation from notables of Basra to report that Walis of Basra and Baghdad and remnant of Turkish troops have fled up Tigris. All British prisoners safe."

"From General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 23rd November 1914.

"No. 54 G. Basra, 22nd November.

"Navy ships reached Basra last night and our river detachment at 9 a.m. to-day: remainder of force at noon.

"All quiet, and inhabitants well disposed and friendly. Little apparent damage done by looters, but Custom House partly (? burned). German Consul and five German subjects are under guard.

"Enemy abandoned four guns on river bank; four more found in Arsenal here. Many enemy wounded are in town. Apparently our actions on 15th and 17th had more important results than first appeared. Block in river channel likely to take some time to remove."

"From General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 24th November 1914.

"No. 57 G. 23rd November. Basra.

"Troops made ceremonial march through streets of Basra this morning to central point, where notables were assembled. Union Jack hoisted on roof of prominent buildings. Salutes fired by Navy. Arms presented and three cheers given for His Majesty the King. Proclamation prepared by Cox read in Arabic *announcing annexation*, and very well received by inhabitants. Major Brownlow appointed Military Governor.

"British merchants estimate 2,000 wounded came in after action of 17th instant. When Turks left Basra Arab soldiers recently mobilised were left behind, and many exchanged their arms and uniforms for civil clothing before going home. They are reported much dissatisfied with their treatment by Turks recently.

"Much indebted to Royal Navy, both for their important share in operations and also for prompt and hearty assistance always given us."

The words in italics somewhat overstated what was actually said. On the 24th November the Secretary of State asked for a brief summary of the Proclamation, and from the reply given on the 30th November it appeared that the real wording used was "the British flag has now replaced the Turkish flag and administration." In this connextion it should be added that on the outbreak of hostilities a general proclamation had been issued by the Political Resident to the Arab Rulers and Sheikhs of the Persian Gulf explaining the causes of the war and enjoining upon them to preserve order and quiet in their dominions. At the same time letters were sent to the Sheikhs of Koweit and Mohammera, to Bin Saood, and to Sayid Talib of Basra, assuring them, in return for their co-operation, that "Basra will never again be allowed to be subject to Turkish authority"; and the Sheikh of Koweit was informed that Koweit will be recognised as an independent principality under British protection.

The capture of Basra may be said to have completed the first phase in the Mesopotamian campaign. Our prestige was restored. A position of great strategical importance had been secured with little loss. The friendly Arabs were confirmed, at least for the time being, in their loyal attitude, and the oil works at Abadan had been saved from destruction.

Lord Crewe had good reason to send his congratulations to General Barrett, as so far his policy had been fully justified by events, while the secrecy and suddenness of our movements had not only ensured success, but had done so at the smallest possible cost to ourselves. On the 5th war was declared, and on the 6th the bolt from the blue descended on the astonished and ill-prepared defenders of the Shatt-el-Arab. In less than three weeks a British administration had been established at Basra, the key of Mesopotamia and the famous city of Sinbad the Sailor.

14th February 1916.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000072

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This Document is the property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.

SECRET.

Précis of Correspondence regarding the Mesopotamian Expedition—Its Genesis and Development.

Prepared in the Military Department of the India Office.

(II.)

The immediate and natural consequence of the capture of Basra was that the Government of India were at once faced with two problems of the utmost importance, viz.: (A) the administration of the town and its vicinity; (B) the military measures which should next be taken to consolidate our position. As regards (A) Sir P. Cox telegraphed to the Government of India on the 27th November as follows (No. 68 B):—

"As regards our occupation here, it would be convenient if we could make a public announcement definitely that it is permanent. Do you see any objection? Please see instructions recently issued by His Majesty's Foreign Office in the case of inhabitants of Egypt. I should like to know whether inhabitants of Basra, who were formerly subjects of Turkey, but now willing to become subjects of Great Britain, may be treated similarly."

Sir P. Cox also sent a long telegram giving his views as to the future administration of Basra. His telegram began by postulating that "as long as state of war exists or as long as Expeditionary Force occupies Basra the administration of the town must be a military one." He then proceeded to enumerate the various administrative offices and departments for which provision had to be made and the method by which he proposed to fill them.

On the 28th he sent a further telegram to the Government of India (No. 70-B):—

"We have been well received by the civil population of Basra, and mercantile element, separately, is quite ready to come under British protection. We have also issued a proclamation to the effect that we have no quarrel with friendly resident population.

"It would be wise, I consider, if in these circumstances we refrain from treating as enemy cargo consignments of Basra merchants now on high seas.

"May I be permitted to re-assure enquirers on this point?"

The Viceroy, on the 5th December, expressed his concurrence with Sir P. Cox's proposals and asked—

"For very early sanction to proceed on these lines. We assume that administration will be under Government of India whose interests in the Gulf are intimately involved. We propose to send at once Mr. Dobbs who has special qualifications, to take over departments mentioned in Cox's second telegram, subject to general control of General Officer Commanding."

In reply the following was sent:—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Foreign Department, dated 16th December 1914.

"Foreign Secret. Your telegrams dated 5th and 7th December. Basra. Presumably you refer to the vilayet as well as town and suburb. His Majesty's Government desire that no declaration of permanent annexation should be made, as it would arouse French and Russian suspicions and would be contrary to principle that occupation of conquered territories by allies is provisional pending final settlement at close of war. Subject to this remark, I approve generally proposals for temporary administration. As regards branches mentioned in Cox's second telegram, existing structure of administration and local agency should be retained as far as possible, and leniency observed in revenue collection. No attempt should be made at present to transform vilayet into an Indian district. As regards superior personnel, I approve Dobbs and Scott for present purpose. Administrative control will for time being rest with Indian Government. European staff should be kept as small as possible, and no promise of permanent employment in Mesopotamia should be given to any officer Please send by mail particulars of public debt, revenues and tobacco regie. What are your views as to the source from which expenses of administration will be met?"

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000059

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

On the 3rd January the Government of India telegraphed to Sir P. Cox :—

"Reference your telegram No. 68 B., dated 27th November 1914. The following telegram, dated the 1st instant, has been received from the Secretary of State for India :—'Foreign 'Office Circular regarding Egypt does not apply to Basra, whose inhabitants continue, from 'legal point of view, pending formal change of status by annexation or otherwise, to be 'Ottoman subjects, and cannot be considered as British protected persons. Such persons 'may, however, be treated by Sir P. Cox with special consideration, and he may give them 'all possible assistance unofficially.'"

It was also decided not to treat as enemy cargoes consignments of Basra merchants on the high seas, a concession which has since been extended to the cargoes of Amara merchants.

The administration ever since has been guided by the general sanction thus conveyed in the above telegrams.

As regards (B) the following telegram dated 25th November was received from the Viceroy.

"Private. I have received the following private telegram from Cox at Basra :—

"'Private. Dated 23rd November.

"'General Officer Commanding and I are studying the topographical details bearing on the question of advance to Bagdad in case that course be decided on.

"'Will Your Excellency kindly consider the problem. It would be convenient if we could learn the intentions of Government in this connection as soon as possible in order that thorough proposals may be submitted without delay.

"'The local outlook is as follows. According to general reports Turkish troops recently engaged with us were completely panic-stricken and very unlikely to oppose us again. Arab element in Bagdad is already friendly, and notables here volunteer opinion that we should be received in Bagdad with the same cordiality as we have been here, and that the Turkish troops would offer little if any opposition.

"'There remains the tribes between here and Bagdad. From among this element the well-known Muntafik Sheikh Ajaimi, who was ostensibly co-operating with the Turkish troops, has just sent in an emissary to convey his submission (?) and intimate his wish to come in and hand over 4,000 rifles received or seized by him from the Turks, and it is hoped that the neutrality if not the active co-operation of the tribes can be secured by judicious diplomacy.

"'Effect of the recent defeat has been very great, and if advance is made before it wears off and while cool season lasts Bagdad will in all probability fall into our hands very easily.

"'After earnest consideration of the arguments for and against I find it difficult to see how we can well avoid taking over Bagdad. We can hardly allow Jamshedi (?) to retain possession and make difficulties for us at Basra; nor can we allow any other Power to take it; but once in occupation we must remain, for we could not possibly allow the Turks to return after accepting from Arabs co-operation afforded on the understanding that the Turkish *régime* had disappeared for good.

"'It is perhaps a [groups omitted]. Moreover can we disregard consideration that there are some thirty British subjects detained there whom we need release.

"'I may mention that I sent Captain Shakespear to Bin Saud with instructions to get him to come north and to remain with him in case we wanted him to assist us with the tribes beyond Basra. I shall report officially in due course arrangements we are making for administration of Basra.' *Ends.*

"Before giving you my views I am consulting the Commander-in-Chief and will formulate them as soon as I know how far the proposal is feasible from a military point of view."

With reference to the above the Military Secretary, India Office, submitted on the 27th November the following Minute on the situation.

"Persian Gulf Operations.

"Now that the first phase in these operations has been successfully concluded it is advisable to decide what should be the next step, as a policy of passive inactivity is to be deprecated if we are to continue to impress the Arab and Indian world with our ability to defeat all designs against us.

"The 17th Brigade is due to arrive at the Shatt within the next week or so, and by the time it arrives General Barrett and Colonel Cox will have been able to form a sound appreciation of the position with regard to the Arabs. If this is favourable then it will be quite safe to move forward, though I think it would be at present premature to embark on any such ambitious project as the occupation of Baghdad. A suitable objective presents itself in Kurna, which is about 50 miles above Basra at the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris. Up to this point the navigation at this season is practicable for ships of war like the *Odin*, and for many of the transports which have brought the troops from India, as ships of 15 feet draft can ascend up to this point.

"So far as we know there is no obstacle to an advance by them to Kurna and it is most unlikely that there would be any opposition, so that it will probably be quite safe to go there with a brigade of infantry and a proportion of the other arms.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000039

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"The object of going to Kurna is to secure a strong strategical point and a dominating position. It will be seen from the map that Kurna is at the junction of the old channel of the Euphrates and Tigris, and that it covers and controls all the rich cultivated land along the Shatt. When we leave Kurna we enter the arid country which lies between it and Amara. The military position is extraordinarily strong, for both flanks are practically unassailable. On the right there are the marshes of the Khor Hawaize which trend right away to the Persian frontier, while on the left there is the Euphrates.

"The advantages of this position are:—

"(1.) Its commanding military value.
"(2.) The control it gives us of the whole navigable waterway to the Gulf.
"(3.) The possession of the whole of the rich cultivated area from Kurna to the sea.
"(4.) The fact that it completely covers Persian Arabistan and safeguards it from Turkish intrigues or incursions.
"(5.) The moral effect on the Arabs.
"(6.) The control of the telegraph up to this point and also of the passage of the Euphrates.

"When we have reached Kurna and fully established ourselves there it will be time enough to consider whether we should go further. We should know by then the attitude of Bin Saood and of the Arabs as a whole. We shall know the political situation at Baghdad and whether the Turks are in a condition to resist us. We shall have fully established ourselves in a military sense at Basra. I see no object in doing more than this at present. When we have consolidated ourselves in the Shatt-el-Arab region, we shall be in all the better position to take another step forward with Baghdad as its objective, but let nothing be done in haste. Time is on our side. It would be unwise to decide on going to Baghdad till we can frame a policy for the future, and this we cannot do till we see clearer the general trend of events and the inward attitude of the Arabs. But whatever we do, let us not stand still. Let us move on to Kurna directly General Barrett gets his 3rd Brigade and is ready for the move."

The Political Secretary, India Office, while recognising that these arguments were conclusive for the time being, noted that, from the point of view of his department, "the eventual occupation of Baghdad is so desirable as to be practically essential."

On the 27th and 30th November the following telegrams were sent by Lord Crewe to the Viceroy.

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 27th November 1914.

"No. 1418. Your private telegram of 25th, repeating telegram from Cox, dated 23rd November.

"We are not disposed to authorise an advance to Baghdad at present as there are grave international considerations involved, but as soon as General Barrett is ready to do so, we sanction an advance to Kurna with a Brigade or such portion of his force as may be necessary for the operation. Presumably he will await the arrival of his third Brigade for Basra and the whole region from Kurna to the sea will have to be controlled by us in both a military and political sense, and on such considerations it will probably be desirable to keep the bulk of the Division at Basra, which should for the present be regarded as the headquarters."

"Telegram from the Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 30th November 1914.

"Private. Your private telegram of 28th November. Baghdad. The words in my official telegram No. 1418, 'grave international considerations,' do not refer to possible occupation of Baghdad by Russia or another Power, and I quite agree as to our predominant interest there. But setting aside difficulty of force necessary to occupy and hold Baghdad, because if we once were there it would be unfortunate to retire under menace of superior force, I consider that it is premature to take action, which appears to oblige consideration both by Allies and by Arabs of ultimate settlement regarding Mesopotamia and other parts of Turkish Empire.

"It will be a most complicated matter, and we are not at present able to do more than assert, as we have, our paramount claims and powers at the head of the Persian Gulf.—CREWE."

The above telegrams are important as they define the scope of the operations as sanctioned by Lord Crewe at the end of November 1914. In spite of some pressure from ill-informed quarters he deprecated any idea of advancing on Baghdad and limited our operations to Kurna. The main considerations which governed his decision were the fact that our available military forces at that period were only one Division, and that our limited resources in river shipping and the difficulties of navigation at that season, practically precluded any further advance for the time being.

The operations against Kurna were begun on the 3rd December and culminated on the 9th December in the surrender of that town, together with the late Vali of Basrah, 1,200 prisoners and nine guns. Our authority was thus established over the whole of the rich riverain tract between Kurna and the sea, and also over the whole waterway navigable by seagoing steamers, Kurna being the limit of such navigation.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000054

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

On the 10th December it was reported that the Turkish garrison at Basra had mostly retired towards Suk-es-Shuyukh and Nasiriyah on the Euphrates. With reference to this a telegram was sent to the Viceroy on the 14th December asking him for his views as to the practicability of sending a force to eject the enemy and occupy the district, and the two following telegrams show that with the British force then in Mesopotamia any immediate extension of our sphere of action was considered undesirable.

"Telegram from Viceroy, dated 2nd January 1915.

"H. 2705. Your unnumbered telegram dated 14th December, regarding occupation of Nasiriyah district, has been considered, and up to the present our information is not sufficient to justify a final decision.

"We realise that a permanent occupation of Nasiriyah would consolidate our political position south of Euphrates, but our information as to actual military value of the place is at present scanty, and the question is complicated by recent reports from Egypt to the effect that the Turkish troops from Mosul and Baghdad are returning from Syria. This may lead eventually to our having to face superior numbers in Mesopotamia, and as we have no troops available to reinforce our Division there, we must be most careful not to disseminate our force without strong military reasons, by pushing troops up to place, which, once occupied, we cannot again evacuate without great loss of prestige. We would also remark that an advance on Nasiriyah would take us directly towards Kerbela and Holy Places, which might be used by Turks to excite religious opposition. Further, we should like Cox to meet Bin Saood or for us to hear more from Shakespear as to his attitude and the influence he can exert, before committing Barrett to a move on Nasiriyah. Meantime, we are taking steps to obtain all information we can as to value to the Turks of the Euphrates line of advance and of the value to us of Nasiriyah for checking such an advance.

"For these reasons we should prefer to defer our decision until the situation is clearer."

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 5th January 1915.

"1507. Your H. 2705. I quite agree in your views. We must await developments."

Prior to the despatch of the last telegram the situation had taken a disquieting turn, as will be seen from the telegrams that follow.

"Telegram from Sir G. Buchanan to Sir E. Grey, dated Petrograd, 28th December 1914.

"No. 854. Following from acting Military Attache:—

"Information has been received by Russian General Staff that 12th Turkish Corps, which moved from Mosul to Aleppo, is at present returning to Mesopotamia on account of occupation of Basra by us and our movement on Baghdad."

* * * * *

"Telegram from War Office to Chief of the General Staff, India, dated 29th December 1914.

"No. 2594 Cipher, M.O. 1. (d).

"It is reported by our Military Attaché at Sofia that 10,000 Turkish troops are moving from Constantinople to Baghdad. Information has also been received by the Russian General Staff to the effect that on account of our occupation of Basra, the 12th Turkish Corps, which moved from Mosul to Aleppo, is returning to Mesopotamia. This corps is estimated at 25,000 strong, with 72 old pattern guns. We have informed Egypt."

These and numerous other reports in the same sense made it obvious that the Turks intended to retrieve the situation in Mesopotamia, and on the 16th January the Commander-in-Chief in India cabled to the War Office:—

"1141. S. Would you kindly expedite a reply to my telegram of 6th January, No. S. 375.

"The need for reinforcements for the Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' is growing, and we are unable to send more troops from India. We shall therefore be grateful if you can place at our disposal the South Wales Borderers, who are believed to have been recently engaged in operations at Tsing-Tao, and any other troops that are available."

Later on the menace of a Turkish attack became still more pronounced and the need for early reinforcements presented itself.

The following telegrams elucidate this aspect of the situation.

"Telegram from the Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf, to the Admiralty, dated 22nd January 1915.

"Report received through Political Resident, Persian Gulf (Bushire), from Vice-Consul, Ahwaz, states that information received from Arabs that Turkish force amounting to 12,000, with 64 guns, two of which are large, is divided into three parts, of which one holds Azair, another Amara, while third intends crossing Euphrates and attacking Basra, *viâ* Zobeir.

"Latter force accompanied by large force of Arabs. 100 Germans are stated to be accompanying them, of whom six are on board *Marmariss*."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00005c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This was communicated by the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy who replied as below :—

"Telegram from Viceroy, dated 25th January 1915.

"H. 3012. Your telegram of the 23rd instant, 1595. Thanks for information conveyed therein, the military aspect of which had already been discussed with Barrett whose dispositions appeared to be suitable and whose cavalry reconnaissances had recently been 25 miles west of Zubeir. As regards reinforcements we have the 12th Brigade mobilised and transports standing by in readiness to go to Basra in the event of any really urgent call, although this necessarily weakens our troops for frontier defence. A cavalry regiment might also be spared if he wishes for it, but it will not be easy to arrange. A flight of aeroplanes from Egypt or Europe would lessen the necessity for a cavalry reinforcement. We are also sending him two armoured motor-cars and two light lorries for desert work."

"Telegram from Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, dated 25th January 1915.

"Foreign Secret. Basra. Cox repeats following message received by him from Vice-Consul at Ahwaz :—

"Two letters received from Sheikh of Muhammerah's Agent at Bisaitin, 20 miles north of Hawiza, dated night of 23rd and morning of 24th.

"He reports that one Turkish Cavalry regiment and one Infantry regiment, with Sheikh Ghasban of the Beni Lam and a large number of Arabs, crossed the river and landed at Markal, 20 miles from Bisaitin, on January 23rd, and should arrive Bisaitin to-day. Beni Turuf have all joined in response to Mullah's cry of holy war. It is thought that raid may be made towards Ahwaz or Muhammerah or possibly oilfields.

"Deputy Governor of Ahwaz says it will take 10 or 15 days to mobilize Sheikh's Arab forces."

"Telegram from General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 26th January 1915.

"No. 84 G. At present all quiet here and at Kurna, but Arab reports indicate probable advance from Nasiriyah direct against Basra."

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 26th January 1915.

"Foreign Secret. My telegram dated 25th January. Basra. Barrett telegraphed night of 25th. Primary object of raid would probably be attack on Ahwaz, and to protect Ahwaz and prevent enemy crossing river, I propose sending Royal Indian Marine S.S. "Comet."

"Report received from an Arab that a force consisting of about 2,000 Turks, with five guns, and about 15,000 Arabs, now at Nasiriyah, and that they intend to advance by desert route on Basra. Numbers are probably exaggerated.

"It may be that report is made with intention of making us withdraw from Kurna.

"This information, coupled with report of Arab activity on the north-east, indicates that Turks are exerting influence on Arabs, and that latter mean mischief."

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 27th January 1915.

"1603. Your H. 3012. The position regarding the Turko-Arab menace both on the Euphrates and the Tigris sides seems more threatening, while the pipe line in the Ahwaz direction may be an object of attack at an early date, and there can be no doubt that the Turks are sending reinforcements to Baghdad.

"Under these circumstances I authorise you to despatch the 12th Brigade to the Shatt if you think fit, and also a regiment of Cavalry if so desired. In any case it might be prudent to send a Cavalry regiment to Karachi in anticipation.

"I presume ships with horse fittings are now readily available.

"What are the regiments composing 12th Brigade, and who commands it ?

"I will let you know if my Colleagues sanction troops being sent to Karun Valley."

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 27th January 1915.

"H. 3053. Recent reports from Lower Mesopotamia have necessitated a careful review of the military situation with special reference to the adequacy or otherwise of the force at Barrett's disposal to meet eventualities. It would appear that the neighbouring Arabs have generally responded to *Jehad* and are at present inclined to co-operate with the Ottoman troops. We consider that above foreshadows further pressure on Barrett, to deal with which, reinforcements are advisable. We are, therefore, reinforcing him at once with the 12th Brigade, subject to your approval."

"Letter dated 29th January 1915, from Sir Eyre Crowe to the Military Secretary, India Office.

"Dear Sir Edmund,

"I have discussed with Sir Edward Grey the situation of the Expeditionary Force in the Persian Gulf and the threatening Arab movement against our oil-fields and the pipe line.

"I understand the Cabinet has not yet deliberated on the subject, but Sir Edward wishes Lord Crewe to know at once that he will raise no objection to the despatch of a force up the Karun, and will be prepared to instruct our Minister at Tehran to make the necessary communication to the Persian Government as soon as the move is decided upon."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000b8

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 29th January 1915.

"1607. Reference my 1603, your H. 3053, H. 3064, and Cox's telegram of 28th, and Barrett's of 29th.

"I presume 12th Brigade will not arrive Muhammerah till about 7th February. Considering reported movements of enemy and spread of *Jehad* this may be too late to protect pipe line and oil-fields, as without visible support friendly Arabs and Bakhtiaris may lose confidence in our power to assist them in defending same.

"Under these circumstances is it not possible to send some troops from Basra forthwith by river to Ahwaz? Lynch's steamers and other available transport can probably convey a few mountain guns and a couple of battalions which should suffice to hearten Sheikh and his adherents as the Turkish raid is probably more formidable as regards potential numbers than as regards its military value, while Ahwaz affords a good defensible *point d'appui*.

"I am asking Admiralty to send "Odin" back to Shatt without delay and am also pressing War Office for further reinforcements of second line troops from this side which would replace 12th Brigade in India and enable you to bring Barrett's force up to equivalent of two Divisions. It may be advisable to secure Bakhtiari loyalty by the promise of next half years oil dividend in advance.

"Please acquaint me fully with your views on above suggestions and of action you propose to take thereon. I assume that Barrett has now five battalions and two batteries at Basra, besides Cavalry and Sappers; so if Barrett sends force at once to Ahwaz as proposed above he may think it necessary to strengthen Basra garrison by troops from Kurna pending the arrival of 12th Brigade. I understand you can send no more troops from India except Cavalry as already suggested and probably some Sappers."

"Telegram from Viceroy, dated 30th January 1915.

"H. 3501. Your number 1607. 12th Brigade should arrive at Mohammerah about 7th February. It is possible that they may be too late to protect pipe-line and oil-fields but, in our opinion, their protection should not be regarded as our principal object, which is to crush any attacks on Kurna or Basra. Defeat at either of these places necessarily involves subsequent destruction of oil-fields and pipe-line. In our view Barrett should not detach troops to Ahwaz unless he feels confident that he can safely spare them, and we doubt whether this is his opinion. In any case the whole decision must be left to him as he alone is in a position to judge. We shall be glad to receive any reinforcements that can be sent us, but would prefer that this should if possible take form of the return of a Division of our own troops from Egypt. Second line troops from Home can hardly be regarded as suited to frontier defence. Without reinforcements can send no more troops to Mesopotamia except three squadrons of 16th Cavalry now under orders and perhaps a Territorial battery.

"We are repeating your telegram and this reply to Barrett and are asking for his views. Question of securing Bakhtiari loyalty by promise of next half-year's dividends in advance will be replied to separately."

The situation had grown so serious in Mesopotamia, and the resources in India were so strained that Lord Crewe felt it incumbent on him to press for reinforcements from home, and consequently under his orders the following letter was addressed to the War Office.

"No. 1610.

"To Secretary, War Office, dated 20th January 1915.

"Sir,

"I am directed by the Secretary of State to call attention to the serious military situation in India involved by the urgent necessity of sending reinforcements to the Persian Gulf.

"As you are aware a threatened attack on the Karun oilfields and pipe-line together with the increasing menace to our position on the Shatt-el-Arab owing to the co-operation of the Arabs with the Turkish troops has compelled the Government of India to despatch a Brigade from Karachi to meet the emergency.

"The Secretary of State is convinced that this reinforcement should be speedily followed by others if we are to maintain our position and that General Barrett's Force in the Persian Gulf should be raised without delay to the strength of two Divisions. He is further of opinion that we ought to have a Brigade in readiness in India to reinforce Aden at short notice; but I am to point out that India is totally unable to provide these reinforcements unless British troops can be despatched to India forthwith to ensure her internal security and adequate forces for the defence of her frontier.

"I am therefore to ask whether the Secretary of State for War can arrange for the very early despatch of at least eight battalions to India. Highly trained troops are not necessary for this purpose and Lord Crewe will be well satisfied if battalions of the New Armies, or Territorials, can be detailed for this duty. These troops will be able to complete their training in India and will then eventually be fitted to release other fully trained units.

"The attached table will show the inadequacy of the present garrison of India":—

* * * * *

On the 31st January the Viceroy arrived at Koweit. Thence he proceeded to the Shatt-el-Arab, visited Abadan on the 2nd, and on the following day made a trip by launch up the river Karun. On 4th February Lord Hardinge, after receiving the Sheikh of Muhammerah and investing him with the K.C.S.I., proceeded to Basra, which he made his headquarters until the 7th. In the course of his reply to an address presented by the British

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000c0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

community on the 4th, His Excellency made the following remarks regarding the future of Basra :—

"You are, of course, aware that, in the great struggle in which we are involved, we are not fighting single-handed, and we cannot therefore lay down plans for the future without a full exchange of views with the other great Powers who are our Allies, but in any case we may be permitted to indulge a very confident assurance that henceforth a more benign administration will bring back to Iraq that prosperity to which her rich potentialities give her so clear a title."

On the 5th February the Viceroy, escorted by a squadron of cavalry, rode out to Shaiba On the following day he proceeded up stream to Kurna, and on the 7th he re-embarked on his return journey to India.

At the end of January the general position was somewhat as follows :—At Nasariyeh Turks and Arabs were collecting for an attack on Basra by the desert route to Zobeir. In the Kurna direction the Turks were in considerable force, but unlikely to attack owing to the strength of the Kurna position. On the Karun side the menace was becoming formidable, the Turks were approaching, *Jehad* was being widely preached and the Arab tribesmen were ripe for an armed rising against the Sheikh of Muhammerah and ourselves. The Sheikh had meanwhile lodged a protest at Teheran against the Turkish violation of Persian territory. On our side the position was that we had approximately a Brigade in a strong defensive position at Kurna, and two Brigades at and around Basra, while a fourth Brigade was being got ready for embarkation in India. British subjects had been withdrawn from Ahwaz and the *Comet* and *Shushan* had been sent up the Karun to give moral support to the Vice-Consul and our adherents at Ahwaz. This, however, did not altogether satisfy the Secretary of State as sufficient considering the importance of the pipe line, the vital necessity of preventing the spread of *Jehad*, and the urgency of asserting our military superiority at the head of the Gulf. Accordingly on the 1st February he despatched the following telegram :—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 1st February 1915.

"No. 1615. Your 3501. I quite agree that Basra and Kurna are more important factors in military situation than Karun, and must be the first consideration; but if situation in Shatt region is, in Barrett's opinion, such that troops can be temporarily spared for defence of latter, it may be prudent to support the Sheikh, as Turkish success on that side might have a very far-reaching political effect, and directly endanger our military position at Basra and Kurna. It is to enable Barrett to act, if necessary, in Karun direction, that I have obtained concurrence of Foreign Office, who have informed Teheran.

"The question simply resolves itself into whether Barrett is confident that he can or not safely detach troops during this week pending arrival of 12th Brigade. Prompt support now may obviate larger military efforts later.

"As regards reinforcements from Egypt or England I will reply later."

On the 3rd February the Foreign Office telegraphed to our Minister at Teheran—

"No. 30. My telegram No. 27 (of 31st January).

"Owing to increased Turkish and Arab activity in the direction of our oil fields, it has become necessary to send small force of Infantry up the Karun. His Majesty's Ships *Shaitan* and *Comet* with Consul and 30 British Infantry arrived Ahwaz 31st January, where all was found quiet. The 7th Rajputs have now started up river. You should inform Persian Government, explaining that His Majesty's Government have been compelled to take these measures for the defence of their interests and property in default of any effective Persian force sufficient to guarantee those regions against Turkish invasion, and that this defensive measure, in the absence of any other possible means of protection, is the sole object of the movement."

To this Sir W. Townley replied on the same, and following day—

"No. 47, confidential, dated 3rd February 1915. Your telegram No. 28.

"Minister for Foreign Affairs informs me that necessary instructions have been sent to the Sheikh of Muhammerah and to Bakhtiaris to resist Turko-Arab incursion. His Highness infers Turkish objective would appear to be Muhammerah to punish Sheikh, who is accused of having assisted us to take Basra. Turkish Ambassador in saying this added that he would be punished as Sheikh of Koweit has been punished. Rumour is current that the latter has been killed. Minister was unwilling to commit himself definitely on question of possible defensive expedition up Karun."

"No. 52, dated 4th February 1915. My telegram No. 47.

"I could get no definite announcement from Minister for Foreign Affairs as to how the Persian Government would view a British expedition up the Karun, but he allowed that it was

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000053

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

only natural if it was seen that Persia could not protect interests that Great Britain is obliged to safeguard.

"Instructions have been sent to withstand Turks, but I gathered that Prime Minister and some other members of the Cabinet are afraid lest Persia may consequently find herself at war with Turkey.

* * * *

"Your telegram No. 30 since received. I have already informed both Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs that the *Comet* and *Shaitan*, with guns and troops on board, have proceeded to Ahwaz. No protest was made.

* * * *

"I will now make a similar verbal communication, stating that the 7th Rajputs are proceeding up the river, and would propose not to send in an official note unless it would appear from Persian answer that situation demands such communication."

It was evident that little assistance was to be expected from Persia, while no immediate aid could be given by the War Office. Consequently, on the 5th February the Secretary of State sent the following telegram:—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 5th February 1915.

"1628. Reference my 1607. War Office express inability to give any reinforcements, either to replace 12th Brigade or to enable you to complete a second Division for Gulf. I understand that under these circumstances you consider that it would be unsafe to send more troops to Gulf till reinforcements from home or Egypt are furnished. Please cable if this correctly represents case. It will make position perfectly clear if you express urgent need of reinforcements as well as inability to give it from existing Indian resources. I am quite convinced of necessity of reinforcing Barrett up to two Divisions, as apart from menace on Karun side, it is obvious that Turks are concentrating troops in Mesopotamia. In my view, the need of reinforcing India by a proportion of British units is a more important consideration than the risk run by you parting with the Indian complement of two more brigades, although the latter should not be ignored."

On the 6th February General Barrett telegraphed from Kurna—

"No. 201 G. General Barrett accompanied Viceroy here to-day.

"90th Punjabis have arrived at Mazera to reinforce garrison. All quiet there.

"Authentic reports from Arab source 29th confirm that Bawi tribesmen have risen and looted the Oil Company's stores at Mulasani, five miles south of Bandikir, and set oil alight at Girana, five miles north-east of Ahwaz."

and on the same day Sir P. Cox and the Viceroy sent the following telegrams:—

"From Sir P. Cox to the Viceroy, dated Kurna, 6th February 1915.

"203 B. Following from Consul at Muhammerah 6th February. Sheikh has received report from Chasib that Bawi have risen against him, and yesterday proceeded to loot unopposed Oil Company's store at Musane, and cut telephone line, shot holes in pipe line, and set oil alight at Girana.

"In the circumstances it seems advisable to strengthen force at Ahwaz as soon as possible."

"Telegram from Viceroy, dated 6th February 1915.

"H 3193. In view of increasing enemy forces confronting Force D, we consider it essential that S. Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, should be diverted to Basra. The Battery is therefore being despatched to Mesopotamia at the earliest opportunity instead of to England. We trust our action may be approved."

This was followed on the 7th by another telegram from the Viceroy in the Foreign Department.

"Foreign Secret. Ahwaz. Cox reports 5th February:—

"Developments came quickly, and matter was dealt with urgently on telephone.

"Vice Consul considered situation so imminently urgent owing to spread of *jehad* movement, instigated by Turks and Ghasban from Amara, that it was unsafe for Europeans to remain even until the arrival of *Comet* and they were withdrawn by *Shushan* 31st January and arrived Muhammerah safely. German representative Wonkhaus at Ahwaz, who was known to be in communication with enemy, elected to remain, which is in itself evidence of his complicity.

"Since then a battalion of Native Infantry has been sent up and is encamped at Aminia on opposite bank to Ahwaz.

"Sheikh of Muhammerah sent up about a thousand of his own particular tribesmen whom he hopes will be against *jehad*, but the powerful Bawi tribesmen who were also mobilised, have refused to oppose movement if they have not actually joined it. On 2nd February Warrant Officer of *Comet* was shot dead in the street by a Baluchi fanatic in Deputy Governor's employ. Since then no further developments have been reported.

"As soon as Sheikh expressed inability to guarantee security of Europeans, and Secretary of State ordered a battalion to be sent to Ahwaz to maintain order and resist expected raid by Turks from Bisaitin, it was decided Germans could not safely be allowed to remain at Ahwaz or Muhammerah. They were therefore placed under restraint and given passage to Basra. Their property, houses, and offices were sealed by local authorities and by a British Officer.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000003

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Correspondence seized is, in the case of agent at Ahwaz, Helmlich, so incriminating as to justify his treatment as a prisoner of war. Case of Muhammerah agent, named Holst, is still under consideration."

On the 8th the Secretary of State approved the diversion of "S" Battery, R.H.A., to Basra, and further telegraphed—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 8th February 1915.

"1640. In view of recent developments up Karun and arrival of 12th Brigade do you now propose to send reinforcement to 7th Rajputs at Ahwaz? if so, I authorise despatch, but please report at once so that I may inform Foreign Office."

It was evident that the executive authorities both in India and Mesopotamia were now alarmed, and might be expected to take all necessary military action. The Secretary of State therefore telegraphed as follows:—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 9th February 1915.

"1641. With reference to Cox's telegram 203 B, with Consul's recommendation to strengthen force at Ahwaz and Barrett's 129 G. My telegram 1640 authorising reinforcements disposes of necessity for further orders. The question now is purely military and may necessitate active military measures at once if strength and distribution of Barrett's Force admits of such with due regard to enemy's disposition in Kurna and Nasiriyeh directions."

By the 12th February the situation at Ahwaz had become still more threatening, and the Officer Commanding the 7th Rajputs at Ahwaz was pressing for early reinforcement. The Secretary of State was more than ever convinced that the immediate increase of the Force in Mesopotamia was expedient, and on that date he authorised the despatch of the following telegram:—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 12th February 1915.

"1646. Reference my 1615 of 1st February and my 1628 of 5th February to which no reply yet received. War Office now state definitely that they cannot provide reinforcements for India from either Egypt or England and that they cannot send any to Aden until it is certain that no serious attack is being made on the Canal. I should therefore be glad to have your views at once as to how, in case of emergency, you now propose to provide the troops necessary to make position in Mesopotamia secure as I am strongly of opinion that some such emergency is more than possible. The course of events on the Karun side exemplifies the necessity for prompt action. Had we been able to despatch an adequate force at once it is conceivable that the Arabs along Karun would not have risen against us and destroyed the pipe-line."

On the 17th Sir Arthur Barrett reported that he had sent a column under Brigadier-General Delamain to check the Turkish advance north-west of Shaiba. On the same date skirmishes were reported 11 miles north-west of Ahwaz between our cavalry patrols and Arabs. The pipe-line was cut in several places, and the manager at the Abadan works reported that the supply of oil stored at Abadan would be exhausted before the middle of March. Each day things looked blacker. News had been received of the untoward death in action of Captain Shakespear, who had been killed by a stray shot in a combat between our ally Bin Saood and his hated rival Bin Rashid. Prior to the war Captain Shakespear had been a pillar of strength in upholding our cause among the fickle Arab tribes, and his death at this juncture was a grievous misfortune. On the 21st February, Army Headquarters in India telegraphed that 3,000 Turks with 18 guns and numerous Arab horsemen from Nasariyeh were approaching Naikhaileh 20 miles north-west of Basra. Lord Crewe felt that the time had come to intervene and to insist on reinforcements being sent. Under his orders the following telegram was therefore despatched:—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 23rd February 1915.

"No. 1664. Your H. 3321. I am anxious regarding Force "D," as the enemy will every day get stronger, and it seems very desirable that we should smash their advanced forces as soon as possible, otherwise we may be confronted with a serious attack on Basra itself. I have endeavoured to get the War Office to send out further reinforcements to India, but it seems hopeless, and of course we must recognise the great issues that face us in Europe, which they regard as vital to success and of paramount importance.

"Under these circumstances I should be glad if you could see your way to form another brigade for the Persian Gulf without relief from home. You will be getting three battalions from China shortly, and we might anticipate their arrival by detailing three Indian battalions from India for service in Gulf, or perhaps you could now spare one battalion from Muscat.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000054

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

As regards the British battalion for this brigade could you not spare one of the best of the Territorial battalions ? This would still leave 41 British battalions in India, and Nicholson Committee estimated absolute requirements at 39, namely, 9 battalions for frontier divisions and 30 for internal defence.

"I am of course aware that we are very deficient in Indian Infantry, but this may not be altogether a disadvantage under present circumstances. You might also be able to give a Territorial battery for garrison duty at Basra even if not fit for field operations. I wish you could spare another Cavalry regiment, as I understand the country at this season is well adapted to that arm."

As we had failed to get troops from the War Office this telegram was followed up on the 26th by an appeal to the Admiralty for certain Marines who were believed to be available :—

"Letter from the Under Secretary of State for India, Military Department, to the Secretary, Admiralty, dated 26th February 1915, No. 1672.

"Sir,

"As you are aware, the Secretary of State for India has been desirous for some time past of increasing the British Force in Mesopotamia, as in his opinion the military situation there is not altogether free from anxiety. The Turkish forces in that region are constantly increasing, and everything points to the advantage of striking an early blow at their advanced positions before the menace becomes more serious.

"India appears to be quite unable under present circumstances to contribute more British troops, and the War Office have repeatedly expressed their inability to provide them. I am therefore to enquire whether, considering the very important naval interests involved at Abadan and in the Gulf generally, the Lords of the Admiralty are disposed to send one or more battalions of Marines for incorporation in the Expeditionary Force under Lieutenant-General Sir A. Barrett.

"Lord Crewe is well aware that the demands of the Fleet are the first consideration, but as the idea of sending 2,000 marines to German East Africa has now been abandoned, he thinks it possible that the above force might be spared for the Persian Gulf."

The Admiralty in their reply M. 01613 of the 1st March, regretted their inability to spare Marines. The following telegram was thereupon despatched :—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 3rd March 1915.

"1682. Reference your H. 3321 and C.G.S. telegram 4141 S. to C.I.G.S. Have now ascertained definitely that neither War Office nor Admiralty can give any assistance in troops or marines, so that whatever force is required to meet eventualities either in Persian Gulf or at Aden must be found from India.

"It seems to us here that considering the present relative proportions of British and Indian troops in India and now that three regiments are *en route* for India it might be possible to scrape up another brigade and concentrate it in readiness for despatch if occasion arises. You might consider whether a couple of Territorial battalions could not be detailed for this brigade in lieu of one Regular battalion from the frontier divisions. I hesitate to press you on this point, but I am absolutely convinced that we must take no risk in the Gulf region, especially on the eve of what we hope may be momentous and successful developments in the near East, the moral effect of which must not be marred by any untoward incident in the Gulf."

On the same date the Viceroy sent a long telegram explaining his views. The telegram is an important one as it clearly shows the light in which our difficulties presented themselves to the Government of India, it is therefore quoted *verbatim* :—

"Telegram from Viceroy, dated 3rd March 1915.

"H. 3517. Your telegram of the 23rd ultimo, No. 1664. We agree that the position of Force 'D' gives cause for great anxiety and that we may be faced shortly with a serious attack on Basra.

"It is difficult to obtain reliable information as to distribution of Turkish forces, but we hear of at least three divisions (other than the 35th) which cannot be precisely located and are reported to be destined for Mesopotamia. If this be so the enemy might attack Basra *via* the Euphrates with forces considerably superior to ours and with a large number of Arab auxiliaries and this might happen within the next month or six weeks. The rise of the Tigris above Kurna seems likely to prevent active operations by either side on that river and apparently the Turks are transferring troops to the Euphrates. It would be a difficult task to smash their advanced troops since their German advisers are not likely to allow the Turks to make the mistake of coming within striking distance of Basra until they have concentrated their forces. They could then advance on a wide front subject to suitable arrangements for supplying their right wing, which would be in the desert, which could probably be made. Barrett has at present 14,400 men and 40 guns including his detachment at Ahwaz and would stand little chance at Basra if widely outflanked.

"As regards our resources we are as you say to receive three battalions from China though the date of arrival of 36th Sikhs seems very doubtful. Even so we shall be better off by two battalions only since we have had to send the 18th Infantry to China to replace one of them. Assuming that we send Barrett another Brigade as you suggest this would give him 17,400 men only. Our position in India is deteriorating internally and trouble on the Frontier in the spring is probable enough and must be provided for.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000aa

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"Taking Maskat and the Persian Gulf together we can draw nothing from there. The 102nd are so inefficient from fever that we must withdraw and replace them. The 35th must take up all the Persian Gulf detachments which in the present position of affairs cannot be reduced and may have to be strengthened. Mussulman troops are in the main averse from fighting Turks and cannot be sent freely to Barrett while we cannot be sure what their attitude would be if called on to fight Mussulmans on the Frontier when a *Jehad* was being preached. It is therefore difficult to spare Hindus of any class. It seems to us that those who are directing the strategy of the Empire should give the situation in Mesopotamia their most careful consideration. A defeat there would be disastrous to our position in Asia and withdrawal from that country which might be only alternative would be little better. While we fully recognise the great issues in Europe we cannot (?) in East Africa as in any way vital compared to those in Mesopotamia. Such information as reaches us from East Africa seems to show that there is no serious threat to British East Africa. The withdrawal of one brigade of good troops from East Africa still leaves seven battalions there, most of them, it is true, of inferior quality, but still capable of being useful on the defensive. A certain amount of pressure from the Belgian Congo seems to be contemplated, and with the rainy season about to commence there seems no chance of serious operations against Colony for some time to come. In these circumstances we would press urgently that the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, 29th Punjabis, 2nd Kashmir Rifles, and 13th Rajputs should be sent to Mesopotamia with the least possible delay. This would leave Wapshare the 98th, 101st, 130th Baluchis, 61st, 63rd, 3rd Kashmir Rifles, and the Gwalior, Jhind, Bharatpur, Kapurthala and Rampur Infantry, besides his local white volunteers, the King's African Rifles, his other local troops, the contingent from Rhodesia and the Corps of Frontiersmen of which we have heard. We have ventured to make these suggestions in view of refusal of our proposal that Indian troops now in Egypt should be returned for the service and the protection of Indian interests in Mesopotamia and at Aden. Our military resources in India have now been reduced to bed-rock, and we are only able to reinforce Barrett with such items as two battalions which will be replaced by two battalions from China, the 7th Hariana Lancers and a second heavy battery now on their way to Basra, one battery Territorial Artillery, and possibly a battalion of Nabha Imperial Infantry. We share your view that it is imperative that Barrett's forces should be increased to two divisions. You are no doubt aware that since the outbreak of war we have sent overseas six divisions of infantry and nearly three divisions of cavalry, while in return for 33 battalions of British infantry we have received 35 battalions of Territorial infantry of mixed value. India has, therefore, done her duty to the Empire, and it is quite impossible, in view of situation on the Frontier and in interior, to do more. It is of no use to suggest to us that we should take further risks in India. We have heavy responsibilities towards European and native population that cannot be lightly set aside. Our conclusion, therefore, is that though we are at one with you in thinking that Barrett's force should be increased to at least two divisions, we are unable in consequence of our generosity towards His Majesty's Government in the early stages of the war to find the necessary troops to complete them, and that responsibility rests with His Majesty's Government not merely to find the necessary additional troops, but for any consequences that may arise due to their refusal to allow India the use of her own troops to protect her own interests."

On the 4th March, General Barrett reported the unfortunate result of a reconnaissance in force sent out from Ahwaz. In this affair we were driven back with the loss of two guns and over 160 casualties. Alarmed by this regrettable incident the General hastened the despatch to Ahwaz of much needed reinforcements.

On the same date he reported fighting in the Shaiba direction.

A telegram was also received from Sir Percy Cox, which described the general situation in Mesopotamia as it then presented itself to the military and political authorities on the spot.

"Telegram from Sir P. Cox to the Secretary of State for India, dated 4th March 1915.

"No. 382 B. General situation:—

"*Tigris line*:—Intelligence reports confirmed by re-commencement of overtures to me by Sheikhs between Kurna and Amara indicate with little doubt that we have no serious opposition to anticipate in that direction for the present.

"*Euphrates line*:—According to military information there are up to now some eight battalions between Nasiriyeh and Basra, but of these four battalions and a large but fluctuating force of Arabs are established some 16 miles west of Basra, but are believed to have received instructions not to attack pending the arrival of more troops. Attack on Basra by this force may be expected at any time, but their movements admit of their being watched from day to day so that there is no likelihood of surprise.

"*Karun line*:—Considerable force of Turks, estimated at about 1,000 together with large but fluctuating force of Arabs has established itself 10 miles west of Ahwaz. Former appear to be gradually gaining in strength. As regards this force Turkish Ambassador at Teheran has definitely given out that their intention is to outflank us at Basra.

"General Barrett has done what he found possible locally to prevent situation getting out of control, but I can but gather that grave possibilities of rapidly deteriorating situation resulting from Turkish intrusion into Arabistan are not yet fully appreciated.

"Position described in my telegram No. 354-B has since developed to the following extent. Disaffected Bawi have re-occupied Wais. Sheikh of Muhammerah's force at Ahwaz has been considerably reduced by desertions, and Muhaisin who remain have now intimated to Sheikh

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000021

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

that they now know the whole of Arabistan is against them, and that if they cannot be at once reinforced by a large force of Arabs or by more British troops they will abandon Ahwaz. Hardly any Chaab now remain loyal. Ramus has risen and rebels there have now overrun Jarrahi district. Meanwhile our small force on right bank of the Karun consisting of two battalions of infantry, one and a half troops of cavalry, two field guns and two mountain guns, though perhaps sufficiently strong to defend itself if attacked by Turkish force at present threatening it can do little or nothing to protect Ahwaz if attacked by Arabs from east.

"Regret to appear as an alarmist, but it is impossible to neglect the consideration that a seizure of Ahwaz by a hostile force, apart from providing the enemy with an excellent and well supplied base from which to threaten our flank, would mean the isolation of the oil-field settlement and threaten indefinite cessation of work at Abadan and loss of some millions of money. It would involve enormous loss of prestige to us and greatly stimulate native rising in Arabistan and extend its scope.

"It is possible that His Majesty's Government have reason to hope that Turkish activity in this direction will shortly collapse owing to pressure applied elsewhere; such a remedy, however, will operate too slowly to affect lively possibilities of the present situation in Arabistan, and I would earnestly urge that unless it is certain that we are at the end of our available resources such military measures may be at once sanctioned as will give us speedy control of the situation while it is still possible."

A Cabinet Council was held the same afternoon, and, in accordance with the views of the Government, the following telegram was despatched:—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 4th March 1915.

"1683. Your H. 3517 together with Barrett's telegram 224 G. regarding affair near Ahwaz has been fully considered to-day by the Cabinet, who have decided that as you find a difficulty in forming a normal mixed Brigade, you should despatch as soon as possible a Brigade of Territorials. The numerical deficiency thus caused in India will be replaced as soon as possible either from Egypt or East Africa, in accordance with the military situation. I hope the Dardanelles operations will shortly relieve the political tension, and enable us to give greater consideration to India."

Lord Crewe was not altogether satisfied with the above decision as it seriously diminished the European garrison of India, at what might prove a critical moment, and on the following day, after further consultation with his colleagues, he obtained the concurrence of His Majesty's Government to the following telegram:—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 5th March 1915.

"1689. In modification of my Military telegram, 1683. Further consideration of situation in Mesopotamia makes me believe it would be wiser to send mixed force composed of suitable units from India at once rather than four territorial battalions as His Majesty's Government originally desired; this both on general grounds and owing to approach of hot weather in Mesopotamia. Secretary of State for War has pressed Commander-in-Chief in Egypt to return you at any rate a brigade if he can regard Suez Canal as secured against present attack, but in any case you and Commander-in-Chief must understand that His Majesty's Government definitely order the strengthening of General Barrett's force at once, and that you are both entirely relieved of responsibility for consequences of further reduction of Indian internal defences for this purpose."

This decision, as will be seen later on in this narrative, probably saved the situation, as it ensured General Barrett's force being brought up to a strength of two Divisions.

The next day General Barrett reported that steps had been taken to concentrate a Brigade at Ahwaz, and also that the enemy in consequence of their heavy losses appeared to be abandoning the offensive.

The following appreciation of the situation was received from Simla the same day:—

"Telegram from Chief of the General Staff, India, to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, dated 6th March 1916.

"No. S. 4729 I. 42. Reports from Basra indicate that on the Euphrates line the main Turkish concentration is at Nasiriyeh, where on 28th February the strength was estimated at 7 battalions and 12 guns, besides tribesmen. It is estimated that advanced troops at Nakhailah number 8,000 men with eight guns, including 1,500 men, mostly regulars. Reinforcements of unknown strength with 12 guns are believed to have reached Nasiriyeh from Constantinople about the middle of January, and may possibly be included in the above totals.

"In the action near Shaiba on 3rd March only mounted men were seen. In the action on the 3rd March at Ghadir it was estimated that the enemy's strength was 500 Turkish troops, three field guns, and 12,000 Arabs, of whom about 200 were mounted. The Turkish Commander was Khalil Bey. Do you know anything about him? Said Nameh and Sheikh Ghadban were present also. It is reported that the enemy lost 300 killed, including the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000060

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

brother of Bani Taruf, and 500 to 600 wounded, including 10 to 12 Sheikhs, and brother of Sheikh Ghadban. The enemy has been quiescent since the action, and on 4th March our Cavalry patrols were not molested. In the actions near Ghadir and Shaiba no Germans were seen."

On the 7th, in compliance with the orders in Secretary of State's telegram 1689 above quoted, the Viceroy reported that they were sending the 33rd Brigade from India. By the 10th March the War Office had made arrangements for the despatch of an Indian Brigade from Egypt. This with the 12th and 33rd Brigades practically constituted the Second Division for which Lord Crewe had so repeatedly pressed. He at once sent the following:—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, 10th March 1915.

"1700. Reference my 1689 of 5th March. War Office have now agreed to despatch one Brigade Indian troops direct from Egypt to Persian Gulf and have selected 30th Infantry Brigade for this duty. Transport is being arranged and Brigade will probably sail early next week. The force will still be weak in Artillery, Pioneers, and Sappers. Please consider whether you cannot complete some of these deficiencies. I have no desire to press you unduly and you are the best judge of what India can safely spare. It will also be for your consideration whether with this increased force it would not be advisable to detail a General Officer and Staff to assist Barrett, who may find the executive command of the three Brigades concentrated in or near Basra too heavy a charge in addition to his other responsibilities. I think it would be quite unnecessary to constitute an Army Corps of two Divisions under present conditions of the Force's distribution."

On the 11th Lord Kitchener expedited matters by telegraphing to Lieutenant-General Sir J. Maxwell:—

"No. 3497. With reference to your No. E. 700 and our No. 3486. The departure of the brigade for Basra should be hastened and need not wait for further instructions. Please let me know definitely when they will start as soon as the arrangements have been made."

There was now some prospect of our having sufficient forces to meet the various dangers which loomed in front of us. Happily the Karun danger had partially dissipated itself and more by good luck than good management we escaped further serious trouble in that direction. Meantime the menace from the Euphrates side was rapidly increasing and only the 12th Brigade was near at hand. The following telegrams illustrate the nature of that menace:—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 10th March 1915.

"1701. Barrow met Soane Anglo-Persian Oil employé who has recently arrived from Baghdad *viâ* Aleppo and was much impressed by what he saw and heard en route. The Anatolian troops he saw marching to Euphrates are well equipped and well trained with a formidable Artillery including 20 six-inch guns and many German Officers, 40 of whom were said to be going to Afghanistan. Soane heard on all sides that they intended to attack Basra in force and were arranging to do so *viâ* Shatt-el-Hai and western flank. Barrow will see him again to-morrow and try to sift his statements some of which seem scarcely credible."

This was amplified by our telegram 1711 of the 13th March giving further information regarding strength and composition of Turkish reinforcements, boats and shipping on rivers and other details furnished by Messrs. Soane and Tod of Baghdad to the Military Secretary, India Office. The telegram ended thus:—

"Tod is positive Turks mean business and that attack will be formidable. This all points to necessity of preparing strong defensive position for a Division both on Karun side and at Shaiba."

The correctness of this view was shortly confirmed, as on the 16th General Barrett reported that our Cavalry outposts had been driven in to Shaiba. The crisis was rapidly developing and the far-reaching nature of the German plans to counteract our move in the middle East is summarised in the telegram below:—

"From Chief of General Staff, India, to Chief of Imperial General Staff, dated 16th March 1915.

"No. S. 5488. The following is a summary of recent telegrams from the Persian Gulf with regard to German plans:—

"Two Germans, one of whom is Wassmuss, formerly the German Consul at Baghdad and Bushire, on 16th February reached Shustar from Baghdad. They were reported to be endeavouring to stir up the people of Arabistan to join in an Holy War against the British. As they continued on their way towards Shiraz, *viâ* Ramuz and Behan, they endeavoured to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000097

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

stir up the tribes against us. Wassmuss's companion and his (Wassmuss) effects fell into our hand, but he himself escaped, and is now reported to be at Kazerun, which is midway between Bushire and Shiraz. He is endeavouring, with the assistance of the Persian Gendarmerie and local Mullahs, to bring about an attack on Bushire. It is clearly indicated by an examination of Wassmuss's papers that part of the German-Asiatic plan of campaign was to raise Afghanistan and Persia against us. Included in Wassmuss's papers were many pamphlets in various Indian dialects, which were intended to corrupt our Indian Army.

"The information which we have thus summarised strengthens the suspicion which we have had for some time, that the Turko-German movement eastward through Mesopotamia had India for its ultimate objective."

On the 17th March more desultory fighting was reported, and on the 20th, the India Office, at the instance of the Admiralty, again pressed on the Viceroy the great importance of safeguarding the oil supply.

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 20th March 1915.

"No. 1,728. Admiralty very anxious for repair and protection of pipe line as shortage of oil may effect Toluol supply and also seriously limit fuel supply for ships on Shatt, &c. Slade considers that regiment of Cavalry could safeguard line up to Bakhtiari limits and that Bakhtiaris would guard rest.

"Presume neither Barrett nor you could spare regiment for purpose, though I recognise desirability."

On the 1st April we were abruptly informed (telegram H. 3952 from Viceroy) that the Government of India had decided to reorganise Expeditionary Force "D" as an Army Corps, and that they had appointed General Sir John Nixon to the command. They also notified a large increase of the Staff in Mesopotamia. On the 9th April General Nixon landed at Basra and assumed command. Meanwhile, it became clearly obvious that an attack in force was about to be made on Basra from the Euphrates side, and to meet it General Barrett had gradually increased the British force at and beyond Zobeir to an approximate strength of 2 Infantry Brigades, 1 Cavalry Brigade and 24 guns. On the 10th, as his health had been indifferent for some time, Sir Arthur Barrett was granted leave by the Commander-in-Chief in India and at once left for Bombay. The Command of the 6th Division thereupon temporarily devolved on Major-General Melliss, V.C., C.B., and that officer with his Brigade marched to Shaiba.

On the 12th and 13th there was further fighting round Shaiba. On the 14th the decisive victory of Barjisiyah was gained and the whole Turkish Army put to flight. This brilliant engagement resulted in clearing what may be styled the delta of the Shatt-el-Arab, of all Turkish or Arab enemies. Basra was now secure and General Nixon was free to look around and decide on his next movements. The departure of General Barrett and the assumption of command by Sir John Nixon mark the end of a definite phase in the campaign, and suggest a convenient termination to this chapter.

Part I. ended with the capture of Basra. Part II. marks the consolidation of our position there. Whereas for the first operation a Division was ample, for the second two Divisions were by no means excessive. Indeed, the reinforcements only arrived just in time to avert what might easily have been an irreparable catastrophe. The timely advent of the 12th Brigade enabled General Barrett to send a sufficient force to stem the Turkish offensive on the Karun side, while the opportune arrival of the 30th Brigade on the battlefield in the very nick of time at the crisis of the fight converted a doubtful defensive engagement into a brilliant victory. Basra and Muhammerah were saved and our oil interests secured. For nearly a year since then this region has enjoyed peace and prosperity and for this happy conclusion to a period of unrest and anxiety, we have to thank the insistence of the Secretary of State for India on the augmentation of Force "D." The documentary evidence marshalled above shows irrefutably that so far the India Office had been fully justified throughout by events. It sent just the right force at the right moment to the Shatt-el-Arab. It increased that force to a sufficient strength in the face of much discouragement before it was too late. The one small reverse at Ahwaz would never have occurred, nor our oil supply have been interrupted for several months, had its views been accepted in time.

1st March 1916.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000025

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This Document is the property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.

SECRET.

Précis of Correspondence regarding the Mesopotamian Expedition—Its Genesis and Development.

Prepared in the Military Department of the India Office.

(III.)

Part II. of this Précis ended with the consolidation of our position at Basra and with the departure of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Barrett. In Part III. it is proposed to trace the steps which carried our arms from Kurna to the boundaries of the Basra Vilayat. During most of the period covered by these operations Lord Crewe was the responsible Minister, as it was not till the 27th May 1915 that he handed over the seals of Office to Mr. Austen Chamberlain.

The victory over the Turks at and around Shaiba had relieved all immediate anxiety for Basra, but there was still work to be done before the military position could be regarded as absolutely satisfactory.

Sir John Nixon had been given written instructions before leaving India for his guidance by Sir Beauchamp Duff. Those instructions which bear date the 24th March 1915 were as shown in the following extract :—

* * * *

"Your force is intended to retain complete control of the lower portion of Mesopotamia comprising the Basra Vilayat and including all outlets to the sea and such portions of the neighbouring territories as may affect your operations.

"2. So far as you may find feasible without prejudicing your main operations you should endeavour to secure the safety of the Oil fields, pipe line and refineries of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

"3. After acquainting yourself on the spot with the present situation you will submit :—

"(i) A plan for the effective occupation of the Basra Vilayat.

"(ii) A plan for a subsequent advance on Baghdad.

"4. In all operations you will respect the neutrality of Persia so far as military and political exigencies permit."

* * * *

These orders have an important bearing on the case. Paragraph 2, 3 (i), and 4, practically expressed the views of the Secretary of State, but paragraph 3 (ii) went rather beyond his intentions, and indeed his telegrams of the 27th and 30th November (page 11 of Part II.) distinctly precluded the contingency of an advance to Baghdad : nevertheless a Commander-in-Chief has to consider all possible eventualities and "a subsequent advance to Baghdad" was just such an eventuality as had to be studied, and therefore Sir Beauchamp Duff was justified in including the preparation of a plan in his orders.

As regards paragraph 2 of the Commander-in-Chief's orders, the question of the pipe line and oil fields had again become acute, and on the 19th April the Admiralty, through Admiral Slade, unofficially brought to the notice of the Military Secretary the serious consequences of a shortage of oil. On this the telegram below was despatched :—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 19th April 1915.

"1796. Reference my 1728. Admiralty most anxious for early repair pipe line as oil question becoming serious.

"Recent victory having averted danger from west, Government would welcome immediate move against enemy on Karun side if supply and transport render operating feasible. Moral effect of Shaiba followed up by successful attack from Ahwaz will probably terminate Arab disaffection and ensure future security of pipe line. Early expulsion of Turks from Persian Arabistan politically very desirable. Such service to Persian Government may enable us to negotiate for summer quarters in Bakhtiari Hills. I assume Nixon can concentrate 10,000 men near Ahwaz by end April for these operations."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00008e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

The unofficial representations of the Admiralty were confirmed the following day by an official letter :—

" Letter from the Secretary, Admiralty, to the Under Secretary of State, India Office,
No. M./N.S./2818 15, dated 20th April 1915.

" Sir,

" I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to request that you will be so good as to draw the attention of the Secretary of State for India to the present state of affairs in the neighbourhood of the Persian oil fields and the pipe line leading thence to the refining works at Abadan.

" 2. It has recently been established by experiment that Toluene can be extracted from Persian oil fuel in amounts which are economically highly satisfactory. There is a considerable demand for Toluene for the manufacture of important explosives, and it is, therefore, eminently desirable that a regular and sufficient supply of Persian oil fuel should be maintained throughout the war. The stock immediately available in this country is limited, and my Lords therefore desire to lay special stress on the importance of ensuing the adequacy of arrangements for procuring constant supplies from the Persian oil fields.

" 3. It is understood that the safety of the oil bearing districts is assured, but that the pipe line has been cut in several places between that locality and Ahwaz. The protection of the line while repairing operations are being carried out and the safeguarding of its whole length have doubtless been duly considered by the Secretary of State, but in view of recent information as to the successful operations in Lower Mesopotamia, my Lords consider that the present is a favourable opportunity for drawing his attention to the added importance attached to this industry by the part it has to play in the supply of munitions of war, and to the desirability of placing its defences on a satisfactory basis as soon as military exigencies permit."

" Letter from the Under Secretary of State for India to the Secretary, Admiralty,
No. 1804, dated 21st April 1915.

" Sir,

" In reply to your secret letter No. M./N.S. 2818/15, of the 20th April, the Secretary of State for India is fully alive to the importance of re-opening the pipe line, and I am to enclose, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty a copy of a telegram, (No. 1796 of 19th April) which was dispatched from this Office. A further telegram has been sent to the Viceroy urging the early despatch of a Cavalry Regiment for the special patrol and protection of the pipe line."

Meanwhile on the 19th April General Nixon had telegraphed as follows to Simla :—

" The Cavalry Brigade now with this Force cannot meet demands which will shortly be made on that arm. Despatch of another Cavalry Brigade which should include a British Cavalry Regiment is requested.

" It is very necessary that we should have British unit. In view of heavy work which obstructions in river and other works will cause, I also beg for the despatch of a battalion of Pioneers."

To this the Viceroy replied on the 23rd April :—

" Regret we are unable to supply any more Cavalry. We are so short of Pioneers that we are unable to send more, but we could raise a Coolie Corps for you or send Indus boatmen if these would be useful."

This indication of the ideas held by General Nixon drew the following expression of his views from the Secretary of State :—

" Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
dated 24th April 1915.

" 1812. Your H. 4416. With reference to Nixon's request for a Cavalry Brigade I concur in your decision as, apart from impossibility of complying, the approach of hot season renders despatch of more troops, especially British, unadvisable.

" Nixon's demand implies intention on his part of important offensive movement. I presume he clearly understands that Government will not sanction at this moment any advance beyond present theatre of operations. We must confine ourselves during summer to defence of Basra Vilayat and Oil interests in Arabistan. If after smashing enemy in Karun direction it is possible to advance to Amara with view to establishing an outpost which will control tribesmen between there and Karun and so contribute to security of pipe line, *I should be prepared to accept such a proposal provided it is supported by you, but I deprecate any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements. Strategically our present position is a sound one, and at present we cannot afford to take risks by unduly extending it. We must play a safe game in Mesopotamia.*"

Major-General Townshend arrived from India on the 22nd April and took over command of the 6th Division. On the 24th Sir John Nixon directed him to proceed at once to Kurna to reconnoitre the Turkish position north of that place and to form a plan of attack. (Despatch

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 168, dated 26th June). From this it is clear that at that time General Nixon contemplated using the 6th Division for clearing a way up the Tigris while the 12th Division was retained for operations in the Karun direction. These operations took time to materialize, and, in fact, the advance up the Tigris did not commence till the 31st May. Meanwhile the situation had developed on the Karun side, and it will be convenient to turn thereto before continuing the narrative of the advance to Amara.

Immediately after the conclusion of the Shaiba operations Sir J. Nixon took steps to deal with the situation on the Karun. Major-General Gorringe, with a force consisting of two Infantry Brigades and one Cavalry Brigade, was directed to reopen communications with Ahwaz and disperse the enemy, who were estimated to consist of about eight battalions of Turkish regulars and some 7,000 Arab tribesmen. On General Gorringe's advance the enemy retreated to the Karkheh river, which was crossed by us early in May, but too late to intercept the enemy, who had retired on Bisaitin. General Gorringe then proceeded to inflict punishment on the hostile Arabs, while at the same time demonstrating towards Bisaitin so as to co-operate with General Townshend's impending advance up the Tigris. This movement had the desired result of preventing reinforcements from joining the Turkish forces on the Tigris in time to oppose General Townshend's advance. The Turkish force opposing General Gorringe was so delayed in its march to Amarah, that when it eventually reached there it was surprised by General Townshend who was already in occupation of the town. A part of the Turkish advance guard was captured and the remainder had to seek safety in dispersion with the loss of two guns. General Gorringe's operations extended over a period of seven weeks. As a result Persian Arabistan had been cleared of the enemy and the Arab tribes forced to submit, thus enabling the pipe line to be repaired and normal conditions to be resumed at the oil fields.

These results were eminently satisfactory, but the Admiralty were not the less anxious that there should be no recurrence of stoppage to the oil supply on which so much depended, as will be seen from the following extract from an Admiralty letter dated the 23rd May 1915:—

"My Lords at the same time desire to urge the great importance of keeping the line safeguarded in the future. The interruption has already cost the State a very considerable sum, and Admiralty contracts with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company cover a large amount of Admiralty requirements for fuel oil, besides the quantity that is being redistilled for toluene. It is therefore considered of extreme urgency that no other breakdown should be experienced."

On this Lord Crewe telegraphed as follows to the Viceroy on the 24th May:—

"No. 1859. Reference my 1796.

"Admiralty attach great importance to uninterrupted maintenance of oil supply at Abadan. As they regard this as matter of extreme urgency please impress on Nixon necessity of protecting pipe line throughout."

Sir John Nixon would appear, however, to have regarded the Karun operations as subsidiary to the main advance along the Tigris. Indeed, the conception of that project dates from a period long anterior to his arrival. On the 20th December 1914 Sir Percy Cox in a telegram to the Government of India expressed the following views:—

"Amara town possesses considerable commercial importance and from an administrative point of view it would be convenient if the district came under our control as it is within the Basrah Vilayet. The country beyond Amara district comes under administration of Baghdad and different set of tribes; so that its possession by us need not, politically speaking, necessarily entail any further advance and question admits of being considered on its independent merits.

"No account is, however, taken in the above observations of present feasibility or non-feasibility of advance and retention but (?) amalgamation from a strategical and military point of view, but General Officer Commanding, who will arrive at Kurna shortly, will no doubt on arrival examine the question.

"In any case it is becoming urgently important to both of us to be in possession of fuller knowledge than we now possess as to present and ultimate intentions in regard to this region of His Majesty's Government."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00009c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Again, in a telegram, No. 12B, of the 3rd January, he said:—

"I beg that following further facts may be taken into account when the question of occupation of Amara is being considered on its independent merits apart from question of Baghdad, whether with a view to near future or some later juncture.

"*Firstly.*—Amara is the point on Tigris where Turco-Persian frontier approaches nearest, it being only 30 miles distant.

"*Secondly.*—Possession of Amara will enable us effectively to safeguard Arabistan frontier against Turkish aggression when necessary and at the same time to manage and influence Bani Lam who are dependent on Amara and are at present a chronic thorn in side of Sheikh of Mohammerah who has strong views on this aspect of question. So long as Bani Lam are free to harass Mohammerah territory Turks will not cease to use them for that purpose as hitherto.

"*Thirdly.*—There is reason to think that considerable trade could be worked up between Amara and Ahwaz Shuster Mohammerah Dizful, to which towns well recognised routes already exist.

"*Fourthly.*—From Amara we should control Dawairij neighbourhood which affords most promising field for modern irrigation scheme calculated to bring about pacification of settlement of Beni Lam in country which they formerly occupied and cultivated by irrigation. It is understood that irrigation works here were strongly recommended to the Porte by Turkish officials on spot last year.

"*Fifthly.*—Trade of Pusht-i-Kuh is nowadays mainly with Amara but is at present suspended owing to severance of communication with Basrah. With Amara in our hands this trade would resume its neutral course again (and) Vali would have strong inducement to persevere in and improve his present friendly relations with us. In contrary case he will be driven to draw up to Turks."

The advantages of occupying Amara are fully stated by Sir P. Cox in the above telegram, and as the authorities both in Mesopotamia and in India were agreed that the occupation of Amara was desirable the Secretary of State did not oppose it, especially as in his telegram 1812 of 24th April (p. 24 *ante*) he had given his conditional acceptance to this policy.

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 23rd May 1915.

"Your telegram of the 24th ultimo, 1812. Nixon proposes to take offensive from Kurna up Tigris on 24th, and does not consider any reinforcement will be required. We consider his move desirable in order to extend our control over Tigris Valley thereby securing the pipe line and protecting the Basra vilayat in accordance with his orders and do not propose to interfere with his intention. He will not of course proceed beyond Amara without your sanction."

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
dated 23rd May 1915.

"Your clear line telegram of to-day. I sanction proposed movement on the clear understanding that General Nixon is satisfied that he can concentrate a sufficient garrison at Amara to defy any attack from Baghdad during the summer when it may be difficult for him to reinforce so advanced a position. *He must clearly understand his action must be guided by the fact that we can send him no further troops.* As he must have made his arraugements for this move some days ago, I hold that he should have submitted his proposal before the last moment. Questions jointly involving civil and military policy should under present circumstances only be decided by the Cabinet."

In view of later events the passage in italics is important to remember.

"Telegram from Sir John Nixon, 129/63/1 G., dated 26th May 1915.

"General Townshend reports from Kurna that his arrangements for an offensive movement from that place against Rotah will be complete by 31st May, on which date he proposes commencing his move. By the time he has reorganised his river transport after this operation I hope to have received definite orders as to the policy to be adopted regarding advance towards Amara."

On the 27th May Lord Crewe left the India Office and was succeeded by Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who at once endorsed his predecessor's policy.

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
dated 28th May 1915.

"1867. Reference Nixon's telegram of 26th instant, No. 129/63/I.G. Please see my predecessor's telegram, No. 1812, of 24th April. I cannot give further instructions till I know with what force he is advancing, and immediate objects contemplated. Our policy must depend partly on local factors, forces locally available and resistance expected, and partly on situation elsewhere. If you contemplate occupation of Amara, I should like to know what force Nixon considers necessary for its garrison during summer, and how generally he proposes to distribute his troops during summer months."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000097

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"Telegram from Viceroy, dated 2nd June 1915.

"H. 5264. With reference to your 1867 dated 28th May, and General Nixon's 129/63/1 G. of 26th May. General Nixon was instructed on the 27th May that his first object is to expel Turks from the Lower Tigris below Amarah, thereby securing the safety of Basra and Qurnah from attack from the north, and at the same time guarding the oil supply, as directed in your 1859 of 24th May. He reports that this operation will begin on 31st May. Its progress, should give him data which will enable him to give us better the information you now request. We feel, however, that while military operations are actually in progress, and in present quite uncertain military situation in Lower Mesopotamia it would be undesirable and even dangerous to tie him down with precise orders which might not fit in with the local situation which confronts him He may possibly find himself opposed by superior military forces on the Tigris which may impose on him a defensive attitude, or he may find himself strong enough to dominate situation. But neither he nor we can yet say. We therefore think it desirable for the present not to alter our original instructions to him, which were sent to you by post on 7th April, except in so far as they have been modified by your subsequently received directions, and in particular those which directed safeguarding of Pipe Line, your 1859 of 24th May. Under the original instructions he will, as soon as he is in a position to do so, submit a plan for the occupation of the Basra Vilayet, which includes Amarah. This he will do with a far more complete knowledge of the local situation than is now available, and we will then report to you for further orders. We should not propose to authorise any advance beyond Amarah, for which his force is not adequate."

It will be observed from the above telegrams that Lord Crewe gave his consent to the advance to Amara with some reluctance. His view was that we were chiefly concerned with the maintenance of a secure base at Basra and the safety of our important interests in the oilfields. The India Office had been constantly reminded of those interests by the Admiralty while it was not without its own anxieties. It knew that in the circumstances of the moment in Europe no military assistance could reasonably be expected from the War Office. It recognised that India could send no further reinforcements, and though it was fully aware of the strategic and other advantages of holding the Tigris Valley up to Amara it was doubtful as to our capacity to do so, if the Turks mustered in force to attack us there. It was felt, however, that it was difficult to reject the considered opinion of those on the spot who were obviously in a better position to judge of the local conditions and the relative strength and value of the opposing forces than we were.

The "amphibious" operations that ensued were carried out under General Townshend between the 31st May and the 4th June by two Brigades of the 6th Division. The enemy were driven from their positions and pursued with unrelenting vigour in spite of sweltering heat and difficulties of navigation. On the 3rd June Amara was reached and its garrison of 700 Turks surrendered to General Townshend and 22 British sailors and soldiers. This audacious exploit was promptly rewarded the next day by the opportune arrival of the Norfolk Regiment and the immediate collapse of all opposition, Turkish or Arab. As a bold and well-planned military operation this brilliant episode of the war deserves high praise, while the immediate political results were all that we could wish for or were ever anticipated by the military and political authorities either in Mesopotamia or India.

With the occupation of Amara and the submission of all the tribes in the Karun valley, the gallant Mesopotamian Field Force might, without reproach, have rested on its laurels till the end of the blazing and enervating summer, but General Nixon with the full support of the Government of India, deemed it inexpedient to remain inactive whilst any Turks were within striking distance, he therefore next directed his activities towards the Euphrates side. There had been naval reconnaissances up the Euphrates channels both from Basra and Kurna, which indicated an eventual offensive movement in that direction, but the first positive intimation on the subject received at the India Office was the following—

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 13th June 1916.

"Nixon wires that he proposes that two Brigades should now move on Nasiriyeh in order to secure Euphrates portion of Basra Vilayet. We concur in this operation which should have a good effect on the Euphrates tribes and propose to instruct him to proceed as soon as his preparations are complete. His present force should be quite sufficient for the success of operation and the maintenance of new position."

This view of the situation was accepted by Mr. Chamberlain as though the broken Turkish force at Nasiriyeh could scarcely be regarded as a menace

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00000b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

to us, it was thought that it might offer a rallying point to Turkish reinforcements from Baghdad, in which case Basra might possibly be again threatened from the west, while unquestionably we could not expect the Arabs in the Euphrates to side with us so long as they had a Turkish garrison in their midst.

The Nasiriyeh operations were entrusted to Major-General Gorringe. His instructions were to secure the occupation of Nasiriyeh and the country in its vicinity with the object of obtaining an effective control over the western portion of the Basra vilayet and the neighbouring Arab tribes. The operations commenced on the 27th June and lasted about a month, Nasiriyeh being captured on the 25th July together with 951 prisoners and 17 guns, as well as much other "booty." Our casualties amounted to 533 of all ranks. As stated by Sir John Nixon, "seldom if ever have troops been called upon to campaign in such trying heat," and he accords high praise to the gallant and devoted manner in which they responded to the demands made upon them.

From this brief digression to the Euphrates we may revert once more to the main theatre of war along the Tigris. During June, the Tigris column in spite of the season had not been inactive and reconnaissances had been pushed up the river towards El Gharbi. This gradual extension of the sphere of our military operations, with its resultant attenuation of strength was regarded with some anxiety by the Secretary of State, more especially as it involved the withdrawal of troops from Basra and Ahwaz. General Nixon too had reported (24th June) the concentration of Turkish troops at Kut-el-Amara and their forward movement down the Tigris. The political situation in Persia and at Aden was also very critical about this period, and in view of all these circumstances Mr. Chamberlain considered that caution must be impressed. The following telegram was therefore despatched :—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 12th July 1915.

"1950. Reference protection of Anglo-Persian oil interests. The Admiralty are most anxious that there should be no further interruption of supply, and urge effective military protection irrespective of tribal guarantees. They are informed that military are proposing to withdraw troops from Ahwaz and pressing Oil Company to subsidise the Bawi tribe. Probably 2,000 cavalry, infantry and guns will suffice for this duty, but you in communication with Nixon can advise on this point.

"Nixon must be warned that the present situation in Persia and Aden renders it more than ever advisable not to rely entirely on Arab and Bakhtiari guarantees. I understand that as no further reinforcements for Persian Gulf are possible, you will not sanction further advance but will be content for the time to hold the Basra vilayet and the pipe line."

The capture of Nasiriyeh, however, had a stimulating effect on the authorities in Mesopotamia and India.—*L'appetit vient en mangeant !*

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 27th July 1915.

"No. H. 6582. Reference my telegram of 25th instant, No. H. 6543. Now that Nasiriyeh has been occupied the occupation of Kut-al-Amarah is considered by us to be a strategic necessity. Kut-al-Amarah is only four miles beyond limit of Basra Vilayet; it commands the lower reaches of the Tigris and also the Euphrates by way of Shatt-al-Hai and its occupation will facilitate the reinforcement of our position on either river and also enable us to control the powerful Bani Lam tribe and effectively safeguard the oilfields against aggression from the Tigris. Once securely in possession, we could probably reduce materially our garrisons at Nasiriyeh and Amara and thus economise our troops. Nixon has owing to sick (?) found it necessary to demand reinforcements. He is also being directed to despatch an Indian battalion to Bushire. In order to strengthen Nixon for the purpose of securing Kut-al-Amarah, we consider 28th Brigade should be moved from Aden to Force D, when this brigade can be spared from Aden. We agree with Younghusband, *vide* his telegrams Nos. 2363 G.O. and 2473 G.O. of 16th July and 24th July respectively, that an advance to Lahej should not be undertaken for the present. It will therefore be possible to spare 28th Brigade from Aden shortly in order to assist Nixon in the capture of Kut-al-Amarah, after which the brigade could again return to India. We request your sanction to our authorising Nixon to capture Kut-al-Amarah and to employ 28th Brigade in the operation, which we calculate would begin not later than early in September and should be completed in time for the 28th Brigade to be back in Aden by November."

This telegram did not allay our apprehensions, and further it was obvious that if reinforcements were necessary they would have to be drawn from Nasiriyeh or from Basra and Ahwaz, as the Secretary of State for War urgently required the 28th Brigade back in Egypt.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000a6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

The telegrams which follow show the attitude of the Secretary of State at this period and also how the advance to Kut-el-Amarah was eventually approved :—

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 30th July 1915.

"1797. Reference Mesopotamia operations as neither Younghusband's Brigade nor other reinforcements are available a cautious strategy is imposed upon us.

"I recognise fully strategic importance of Kut-el-Amara, but please let me know how it is proposed to distribute troops after its capture.

"If Kut-el-Amara is held in force, it seems unlikely enemy will take any further offensive on Euphrates side, but will concentrate on Tigris line, therefore, we must be strong at Kut.

"Assuming that defeated Turks are retiring by Shatt-el-Hai, do you think that any advantage is gained by retaining troops in so unhealthy an outpost as Nasiriyeh, with which communications are difficult, especially when river falls? Have you considered advisability of withdrawal from there and concentration of strentgh on Tigris side?

"Bushire and Ahwaz must continue to be held as outposts for political reasons, but would it not be well that remainder of troops should be at Basra and along Tigris?

"Please let me have your views before any decision is taken."

The reply to the above describes the grounds on which General Nixon and the Government of India decided on holding Nasiriyeh and advancing on Kut. The Secretary of State accepted their conclusions.

"Telegram from Viceroy, dated 5th August 1915.

"No. H. 6793. Your telegram of the 30th ultimo, No. 1797. These questions have been under close and constant consideration for months past, and Nixon's views, originally called for on 19th June, and furnished in his despatch of 24th June, have again been asked for on your above-mentioned telegram.

"His reply puts the case so clearly that we repeat it as our answer to your telegram.

"'Referring to your telegram of the 31st ultimo, No. S. 16700. The views expressed by the Secretary of State are practically identical with those I submitted in my secret despatch, dated 24th June, and with instructions I have given to General Gorringe.

"'In my despatch I emphasised the advantage of holding Kut-el-Amarah in force and the unlikelihood of Nasiriyah being then threatened by Euphrates line, and the consequent possibility of reducing the strength of the Nasiriyah garrison.

"'With regard to the suggested total evacuation on the Nasiriyah, I am all in favour of concentrating on the Tigris line; but I consider that Nasiriyah is too important a place to abandon altogether, as it must be a centre of civil government to control the powerful Arab tribes by which it is surrounded, and effectually to occupy this vilayet.

"'A withdrawal from Nasiriyah would do incalculable harm politically on this account; Ajaimi would reappear with a few Turks to re-establish Turkish authority, and all tribes would get out of hand.

"'According to information at my disposal, Nasiriyah is less unhealthy than Basra or Kurna, and in a short time the climate will be quite good. The land communications of Nasiriyah are bad, but they could be improved by a railway. On this point I hope to address you very shortly, the matter having been under investigation for many weeks.

"'The water communications of Nasiriyah are difficult during the present low-water season, but now that we are established in Nasiriyah and the enemy have been driven off, these difficulties are by no means insuperable, and plentiful supplies are obtainable locally in this district, while country boats of our contractors pass through the Hammar Lake freely.

"'When the 18th Brigade returns from the Nasiriyah Force it will join its division at Amarah, and the 6th Division will then have two brigades at Amarah and another Brigade at Ali-al-Gharbi and its communications.

"'When Nasiriyah can be reduced to strength proposed, viz., one brigade, the reserve at Basra will be one brigade, and the 3rd Brigade, 12th Division, will be on communications from Basra to Qalat Salih inclusive.

"'If Kut is occupied I propose to leave four battalions at Amarah and, after placing detachments at two or three posts, quarter two infantry brigades in Kut.

"'I would point out that it is only by occupying Kut that the reduction of troops at Amarah is possible. I have no intention of making any dash on Kut; the advance will be made methodically.

"'At present General Delamain's Column has cleared the river up to Ali-al-Gharbi, but has orders not to proceed beyond.

"'As regards Ahwaz and the supposed necessity to guard the pipe-line with troops, I have carefully considered the question and have given my views at some length, *vide* papers forwarded with my 304/4/0 of 19th June, and my (telegram) of 27th June 304/5/0 and subsequent correspondence.

"'But the Anglo-Persian Oil Company will not arrange for a subsidy while the Indian Government is ordered to keep troops at Ahwaz for ever, and it is not easy to withdraw troops because the Anglo-Persian Oil Company will not give subsidy, and this creates deadlock.

"'In this connection I would reiterate that, if suitable arrangements be made with tribesmen, I see no military reason for prolonged retention of troops on the Karun line unless hostility is to be expected on the part of the Persian Government, in which case I should require very strong reinforcements if it is required to hold the oil fields against any possible combination of Bakhtiaris and other tribes.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000003

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

"We concur in Nixon's views and propose to authorise him to advance on Kut when he is ready.

"So far as we are aware, Nixon knows nothing about the proposal to reinforce him temporarily with the 28th Brigade, and has always believed his present force capable of effecting the occupation of Kut so long as he received drafts to fill up his British battalions, and he was not required to disseminate troops along the pipe line. We concur in his views."

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 6th August 1916.

"No. 3002. Your telegram No. H. 6793. I concur in course of action proposed by Nixon and recommended by you unless you think fit to modify it in view of Marling's telegram of 3rd August and his surmise as to objective of Ispahan gathering What is strength and distribution of troops on Karun line? I presume that they are sufficient with local arrangements at Oil-fields for defence against raiders."

The Viceroy in his telegram H. 7094, dated 18th August, replied giving in detail General Nixon's reasons for not increasing the strength of the force in the Karun Valley and ending as follows:—

"Nixon therefore concludes that the safeguarding of Oil-Fields under such conditions would be beyond the powers of Force "D" without the withdrawal of so large a force of troops from the Tigris as would jeopardise the situation on that river, and he desires it to be made clear that with his present force he cannot render himself responsible for active operations in Persia so far inland as the Oil Fields. In this opinion we concur. We do not at present anticipate that the Bakhtiaris are likely to repudiate their agreement to protect the Oil Fields, but we attach great importance to the early conclusion of an agreement by which Bavi shall receive a subsidy either from the Oil Company or the Government for the protection of lower pipe line from raiders. If this be done we do not see any undue risk in Nixon's proposed advance to Kut-el-Amarah which strategically is desirable and will have a quieting influence on Persia and the Bakhtiaris."

The arguments seemed conclusive and the advance to Kut was finally sanctioned.

"Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 20th August 1915.

"3020. Your H. 7094 The penultimate sentence in my 3002 was with reference to local disorders and not to wider question of Persian or Bakhtiari hostilities. I therefore accept Nixon's military arrangements under existing circumstances. As regards political and financial arrangements see my Foreign Secret telegram, dated 19th August."

In September the forward movement was commenced. On the 14th the headquarters of the 6th Division reached Sheikh Saad, and on the 15th Abu Rummanah, six miles from the Es-Sinn position which had been very strongly fortified by the Turks. The next few days were occupied by reconnaissances prior to the final advance which began on the 26th September. By the 29th after severe fighting against strong opposition the Turks were in full flight and our cavalry had entered Kut-el-Amarah. During the action we captured more than 1,700 prisoners and 13 guns, and inflicted heavy losses in men and materiel.

This brilliant victory concluded a definite phase of the campaign, as by it the complete occupation of the Basra Vilayat was secured. Kut-el-Amarah had been specifically suggested by the Viceroy as the goal of our operations (*vide* telegram H. 6582, p. 28 *ante*), and it had been accepted as such by the Secretary of State. That goal had been attained by the endurance and valour of the 6th Division of the Indian Army.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000091

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(150)

This Document is the property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.

SECRET.

Précis of Correspondence regarding the Mesopotamian Expedition—Its Genesis and Development.

Prepared in the Military Department of the India Office.

(IV.)

Part III. brought this narrative down to the capture of Kut-el-Amara on the 29th September. Four days later the head of the pursuit had reached Bagheila about half way to Aziziyah.

On the same day (3rd October) General Nixon telegraphed, reporting various movements and details. His telegram ended thus :—

No. 129/200/1. "Our river column is now only at Shidhaif Ash Sharqi, and no chance of surprising or stampeding their remainders. I consider I am strong enough to open road to Baghdad, and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Aziziyah. But this concentration must be partly by land. Families of Germans and Turkish officials are said to be leaving Baghdad for Aleppo. From military point of view it is highly desirable to capture enemy's steamers which at this season cannot get far up stream of Baghdad."

On the 4th October the Military Secretary submitted a Minute to the Secretary of State, from which the following extracts are here given :—

"The victory at Kut-el-Amara is of so complete a nature that the idea of pushing on to Baghdad will certainly be revived. Pressure will be brought on us, either directly by Sir John Nixon and Sir Percy Cox, who *primâ facie* are in the best position to judge of its feasibility, or indirectly by an agitation in the Press or in commercial circles. It may even be urged, and there is much force in the argument, that it is advisable on political grounds on account of the world-wide prestige which the occupation of Baghdad would confer. Certainly strong arguments can be advanced for its occupation, and the ease with which the operation can be carried out will be impressed on us with such cogency and insistence that the proposal will be difficult to resist. The very glamour attaching to so historic a city is in itself a temptation, and it is with extreme reluctance that I advocate a policy of caution, which will certainly be unpopular, and perhaps difficult to justify in the minds of those who are not intimate with the intricacies of the problem.

"The force under General Nixon comprises two Divisions of Infantry and a Brigade of Cavalry. This force occupies a considerable area in the midst of a doubtful and possibly hostile population. It also has to protect important British interests in the Anglo-Persian Oilfields as well as at Bushire and Basra. The consequence is it cannot be concentrated.

* * * *

"Such a force may be sufficient to expel the Turks from Baghdad. That is a question which can only be answered by General Nixon on local information, but the problem does not end at the capture of Baghdad. The city will absorb a garrison of at least a Brigade. This leaves us only two weak Brigades to cope with any eventuality that may arise.

* * * *

"The *débris* of the Mesopotamian Army Corps will probably retire towards Mosul, and if they were hereafter—say, three months hence—reinforced by a Turkish Division either from the Caucasus or Syria, our reduced Division of 5,000 men would have a formidable task to resist the enemy's advance. If it were supported by disaffected Arabs or a religious rising we might have to evacuate Baghdad and retire to our present strong strategical position at the junction of the Tigris and Shatt-el-Hai. Such a sequel to the occupation of Baghdad would reverberate through the East from Constantinople to Delhi, and might have a disastrous political effect far outweighing the credit we would now acquire by its capture. The Arabs along our line of retreat would certainly rise against us, and our communications would probably be threatened all along the Tigris as far as Kurna. Whereas if we sit tight at Kut-el-Amara we can consolidate our control of the Basra Vilayat and fortify a strong position at the apex of the triangle formed by the Tigris and Shatt-el-Hai which with our Naval command of the rivers would be unassailable by any but a very superior force accompanied by heavy artillery, while it would be at the same time completely cover the main approaches to the territory now occupied by us. By such a military policy we can ensure our present hold of the country with the troops now at our disposal, whereas under the more ambitious and alluring Baghdad policy we should be weak everywhere and unable to maintain our position without a considerable addition to our present strength.

152

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000036

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

"In my judgment it will not be wise to go to Baghdad *unless we can increase the force by a whole Division of Infantry and one or two Cavalry regiments*, and this we know is impracticable unless the Indian troops are withdrawn from France.

"The conclusion of the whole matter therefore is that we cannot under present circumstances go to Baghdad without incurring unjustifiable risks. It must be remembered that during the winter the Russians are not likely to be able to make any advance into Armenia, and consequently the Turks can very well spare a division or two from the Armenian army at this season to reinforce the Mesopotamian troops.

"We do not know what may now be the strength of the Mesopotamian force, but we have been told of a Brigade which was recently at Kifri and is now retiring to Baghdad, and presumably there is a Baghdad garrison apart from the force beaten at Kut-el-Amara, so probably, not counting Arabs, the Turks can still muster some 10,000 men at or near Baghdad. If we go to Baghdad and the enemy retires to Samarra, they may very possibly be reinforced there by another 10,000 men or more from Armenia, and yet another reinforcement from Aleppo,[1] so I greatly doubt whether we can hold Baghdad for any length of time with our present force.

"We have practically no reserves to depend on and we must play a safe game and husband our sorely strained military resources.

"I have felt it my duty to place these considerations before the Secretary of State because everything points to our hands being forced, unless we can arrest the present trend of events by a prompt and imperative decision.

"Kut-el-Amara is only about 120 miles by road from Baghdad, although by river it is 220 miles, and General Nixon's advance guard, in boats, has already covered some 20 miles of that distance. I see no indication of a halt in the pursuit, though in the present state of the river I also see no probability of being able to overtake the enemy. If we do not stop him, General Nixon will soon be in Baghdad regardless of orders, and we shall then be faced by the grave alternative of either having to withdraw again or of making our occupation effective. Either course involves serious considerations, more especially in view of the gloomy situation in the near East."

* * * *

On that same evening (the 4th October) the Secretary of State telegraphed as follows to the Viceroy :—

"From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 4th October 1915.

"3071. I shall be glad to know what Nixon's present intentions are, as if, owing to navigation troubles, there is no probability of catching and smashing the retreating enemy there is no object in continuing the pursuit.

"The orders conveyed in my 1812 of 24th April, and 3002 of 6th August still hold good, subject to course of events at Baghdad and elsewhere and to the recommendations you may now make.

"Please cable your estimate of enemy's present strength in Mesopotamia."

The orders above referred to limited the operations to the Basra Vilayat, *vide* pp. 24 and 30, Part III.

About the same time a Memorandum dated 6th October was prepared by the General Staff, War Office, which though submitted a few days later may conveniently be entered here :—

"Extracts from Memorandum by the General Staff, War Office.

"It is probably quite feasible for Sir J. Nixon's force to advance to and seize Baghdad. The question is whether he would be able to remain there.

"For reasons stated in paragraph 4 below it appears quite possible for the Turks to assemble a very superior force, whose arrival would lead to active operations by the Arabs against our long and difficult line of communications.

"It seems to us that to attempt to hold Baghdad, except with a force very much larger than Sir J. Nixon's, and with proportionately increased river transport, would be to court disaster. Even supposing that we were able to hold it in the face of any force the Turks could bring against it, it is doubtful if we should be able to maintain our supply service during the months when the Tigris is low.

"We have not been able to discover from maps or reports any position in the neighbourhood of Baghdad which would enable us to hold the town or district against a superior enemy. Whatever line we took up would leave it open to the enemy to operate against our flank and line of communications.

"3. We see no reason why the Turks should not be able to concentrate a large force against us if we are holding a position at Baghdad. In fact it seems easier for them to concentrate against us there than it would be at Kut-el Amara. There are no doubt difficulties in the way of transport and supply, but we think these could be overcome.

"4. . . . . The Turks knowing that our hands are full and that we are withdrawing troops from Gallipoli to the Balkans, can reduce their forces in Syria—Palestine, Hedjaz and Asyr—Djemil could probably move 20,000 troops in this way from Syria to Mesopotamia, and 20,000 could easily be spared from the Gallipoli. The Russian inactivity in the Caucasus makes it quite feasible for the Turks to spare 15,000 or 20,000 from that front, especially in the winter time.

"It therefore will become possible for 60,000 Turks to be assembled from the three districts mentioned above, and to be conveyed in the course of some weeks to Baghdad. The occupation

[1] Mr. Marling has since reported in telegram No 378, dated 4th October 1915, that Jamal Pasha is said to be leaving Syria for Baghdad with 6,000 men from the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

of Baghdad by British troops would impress the Oriental mind not only in Turkey, but also in Persia and India, and re-establish some of the prestige which we have lost by our failure to force the Dardanelles.

"If, however, we are unable to hold Baghdad when 60,000 fresh troops assemble to co-operate with Turkish troops at present in Mesopotamia, our withdrawal from Baghdad might have as great and as unfortunate an effect on the Mohammedan world as our withdrawal from the Gallipoli Peninsula."

From the above it will be seen that at this date the India Office and the War Office were practically in agreement as to the risk involved.

Mr. Chamberlain also telegraphed privately on the subject observing that it seemed "imperative to stop Nixon's further advance."

On the 5th October the advance guard of General Townshend's Division had reached Aziziyah, nearly half-way to Baghdad, and on that date the Secretary of State telegraphed as follows:—

"From Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 5th October 1915.

"Private. My private telegram of 4th instant. Nixon's advance. Cabinet, to whom position was reported yesterday, decided to appoint Committee of General Staff, Admiralty, Foreign and India Offices to consider in all its aspects possibility and policy of advance on Baghdad. Political reasons were thought to make occupation desirable as isolating Germans in Persia, if forces available are sufficient to take and hold the place. Barrow thinks we might be able to capture Baghdad, but that forces weakened by further losses would be insufficient both to hold it securely against counter attack and to maintain communications. Kitchener can hold out no hope of reinforcements from Europe or Egypt. Let me know your views."

The above telegram was crossed by one from General Nixon which depicts the frame of mind produced on him by his recent notable victory:—

"From General Nixon, Kut-el-Amara, dated 5th October 1915.

"(Addressed to Chief of the General Staff; repeated to the Secretary of State for India, with reference to his telegram of 4th October.)

"308/203/0. Navigation difficulties have been overcome by lightening ships and utilising them for towing laden barges and by marching troops with land transport. The 16th Brigade with all field artillery left this morning for Aziziyah by road, preceded by headquarters Cavalry Brigade with three guns, "S" Battery, and 100 lances. Cavalry has orders to reach Aziziyah evening of the 7th. Enemy appears to be no longer retreating, but has occupied Ctesiphon position and thereby constitutes a threat to us. Our information is that his troops, especially those locally recruited, have been much demoralised by defeat at Kut-el-Amara, a position which they considered impregnable. They are now so near Baghdad that Nur-ed-din will have difficulty in making a determined stand with men who are close to their homes and wish to desert. I consider, therefore, that there is every probability of catching and smashing the enemy at Ctesiphon as soon as the 6th Division has fully concentrated at Aziziyah, and has been reinforced by drafts of cavalry now on their way from Basrah. If on the other hand we retire from Aziziyah to Kut-el-Amara, the enemy and the whole of the tribes will place their own construction on a such a move, and advance on Kut-el-Amara, as he did on Amara in July last, when troops were withdrawn from post above Amara in order to reinforce General Gorringe on Nasiriyah line. Then a powerful section of the tribes who had already submitted to us rejoined the Turks, and has been a continual source of trouble until British prestige was re-established by the victory at Kut-el-Amara. The Arab tribes now regard us as irresistible, and have been coming in from all directions to make submission; but if we withdraw will probably behave as before.

"It is my view that we have in front of us a shaken enemy who has lost 13 guns and is deficient of ammunition, and for military reasons it is clearly desirable to smash him while we can. He has taken refuge in a position where we can manœuvre and I hope destroy him. I see nothing which would justify letting slip such an opportunity. From a military point of view Baghdad is a focus of Turkish lines of advance and a large supply centre, of which in our interests it is vital to deprive the enemy, and this quite apart from any political effect its occupation might have."

On the 6th October in his H. 8245, the Viceroy quoted General Nixon's views as follows:—

"With reference to my suggestion to open by another general action road to Baghdad, will you kindly let me know whether my force is to be reinforced to the extent of another Division from France, in order that my position there may be maintained. Effect of my occupying Baghdad would be more than nullified if subsequent events should compel me, in course of time, to retreat down the river in consequence of reinforcements not being forthcoming."

The Viceroy concurred in the above views in the following words:—

* * * *

"In view of German activities in Persia, increasing pressure on Afghanistan, and the aspect in the Balkans and Dardanelles, we hold that the capture of Baghdad would have such an effect in the Near East, and offers such important political and strategical advantages as to justify movement, but to do this at least an additional Division would be required. Otherwise we do not propose to allow him to go beyond Kut-el-Amara.

* * * *

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00009c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Our estimate of present strength of enemy in Mesopotamia is 8,500 rifles, 600 sabres, and 28 guns, under command of Nur-ed-din."

The reference to the Balkans and Dardanelles is important to remember, as up to this date not a word had been said from here as to the influence these operations might have on the situation in the Levant.

The Viceroy also sent a private telegram on the same date (6th October) to the Secretary of State in the following terms:—

"Private. Your private telegram of 4th instant. Nixon's plans. Please see official telegram of to-day. Orders were telegraphed yesterday to Nixon to stop further advance. Present situation is as follows: Nixon with forces at his disposal could without much difficulty capture Baghdad, and at the same time take or destroy Turkish steamers and other boats, thus practically preventing any further attacks down stream. But he could not remain there exposed to attack by Turkish reinforcements from Mosul or Aleppo without himself being reinforced by one division of troops. It would be a grave political error to advance to Baghdad, and to retire later under pressure from the Turks. Consequently, unless it be possible to reinforce Nixon from elsewhere other than from India, he must remain at Kut-el-Amara. On the other hand, from a political point of view, capture of Baghdad would create an immense impression in Middle East, especially in Persia, Afghanistan, and on our frontier, and would counteract unfortunate impression created by want of success in Dardanelles. It would also isolate German parties in Persia, probably produce pacificating effect in that country, and frustrate German plan of raising Afghanistan and the tribes, while impression throughout Arabia would be striking. In India effect would undoubtedly be good. These are considerations to which I attach great importance, but I put them forward to be weighed by you and His Majesty's Government, for I fully realise that it is for His Majesty's Government to decide where and how our forces can be used with the best possible effect."

The telegram received the next day from Sir John Nixon regarding various movements strengthened the suspicion that he intended to push on.

The subject was considered by the Cabinet, on the 8th October, and on that day the following telegrams passed between the Secretary of State, the Viceroy, and General Nixon.

"From Secretary of State to General Nixon, Basra, dated 8th October 1915.

"(Repeated to India.)

"3077. Very urgent. With what addition to your present force are you confident that you can both occupy and hold Baghdad? Reply direct and repeat reply to Government of India.

"From Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 8th October 1915.

"Private and very urgent. Reference to my telegram of to-day to Nixon repeated to you. Cabinet are so impressed with great political and military advantages of occupation of Baghdad that we shall make every effort to supply necessary force. We do not wish to attempt it with insufficient forces. Are you satisfied that one Division is sufficient?

"From General Nixon, dated 8th October 1915.

"(Repeated to Chief of General Staff.)

"308/218/0. 3077 of 8th. I am confident that I can beat Nur-ed-din and occupy Baghdad without any addition to my present force. But if Turks should turn their serious attention to the recovery of Baghdad and should send to Mesopotamia the large organised forces which would be necessary for such an operation, then I consider that I should require one Division (and I should like also one white Cavalry Regiment) in addition to my present force to watch both the Tigris and Euphrates lines of communication and defeat the enemy as he comes within reach. Further, the Baghdad position would be best from which to do this.

"Kut is 103 miles, and Townshend at Aziziyah is 48 from Baghdad by road."

"From Viceroy to the Secretary of State, 9th October 1915.

"Private. Your private telegram of the 8th instant and Nixon's telegram to you, No. 308 of the same date. I am glad of the decision of Cabinet. After consulting the Commander-in-Chief, I think that Nixon is in the best position to judge as to the number of troops required, and when he mentions a division we understand him to mean a fully organised division with its proper proportion of British troops and guns and its divisional Cavalry. In addition to this he asks for a Cavalry Regiment. We are prepared to accept his opinion, but think that it will also be necessary to insure that British units now with him are kept up to strength by drafts from home, as India cannot supply these. We will keep the Indian units full. We may add that reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after its capture, as this is the period which we calculate must elapse before the Turks could concentrate in strength to attempt its recapture."

It will be observed that the Viceroy asked "that the reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after its capture," thus implying that Nixon was strong enough for the immediate task of capturing the city with his existing force.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000b5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

In this connection it is important to note that on the 12th October General Nixon cabled as follows:—

"No. 129/209/1. . . . In answer to query, Egypt wires 7th: 'Continual movement 'of enemy troops from Syria and Anatolia to Constantinople and no signs of anything 'important going to Mesopotamia.' Reliable information received here indicates no garrison of any importance in Baghdad (on) 5th October."

On the date on which this telegram was sent, General Townshend with the bulk of his division was half way to Ctesiphon, so might have been expected to get reliable information. On the 14th October the War Office submitted a paper drawn up by the General Staff on "The Question of occupying Baghdad." The following extracts from that Report are useful to record:—

"The position at present is that Sir J. Nixon, after a succession of victories over enemy forces, has pushed a considerable force to Azizieh (within 53 miles of the city). He has been ordered not to advance to it at present, and it is under consideration that no such advance shall take place unless a force of one complete division and a cavalry regiment be ensured to him as a reinforcement to reach the Shatt-el-Arab within one month of his undertaking the final advance. The first question to consider is, therefore, that of the time which it will take to convey a division of the Indian establishment from the theatre of war in France to Basrah."

* * * *

"The suggestion with regard to the period of one month has been discussed by an Inter-Departmental Conference which has been sitting at the India Office. It is understood that this period has been proposed after a review of the Turkish position in the theatre of operations at the present time. But as Baghdad is now clearly threatened it is possible that the Turks will hurry reinforcements to the spot, and that, within the next few weeks, the situation will have changed. It therefore seems very desirable that a decision should be arrived at as soon as possible, because otherwise the division, which it is proposed to send, may not prove sufficient for the purpose.

"To meet the possibility of the Turks assembling greater forces at Baghdad than is at present anticipated, and to ensure that sufficient force will be available to overcome the maximum resistance which it is estimated that the enemy can offer at Baghdad, the General Staff is of opinion that two Indian divisions should be added to Sir J. Nixon's army if he is to take and occupy Baghdad."

* * * *

"Unless India is prepared to supply the additional division which is required to justify the advance of Sir J. Nixon on to Baghdad, the General Staff are of opinion that such an advance should not be sanctioned until one or more divisions from France can leave Egypt for Mesopotamia. With the forces now at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding, a move to Baghdad would in their opinion be a dangerous operation."

* * * * * *

The Inter-Departmental Committee above referred to was assembled under the direction of the Prime Minister to consider certain definite questions regarding the strategic situation in Mesopotamia. The India Office, the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Foreign Office were represented on this Committee. The questions put by the Prime Minister and the conclusions thereon were as follows:—

QUESTIONS.

1. Whether there should be an advance on Baghdad.
2. The defensive positions at Baghdad as regards a possible advance of Turkish troops.
3. Whether without Baghdad as a point of departure any offensive operations on a large scale could be made by the Turks in the neighbourhood.
4. Generally the effect which the occupation of Baghdad by us would have on the Turkish forces engaged against Russia and against ourselves in the Dardanelles.

* * * *

"CONCLUSIONS.

"1. The Committee consider that, both on military and political grounds, an early advance upon and occupation of Baghdad is most desirable; but that, unless the Expeditionary Force now in Mesopotamia can be so reinforced that it can maintain its position after reaching Baghdad, no attempt should be made either to seize or occupy that city.

"The immediate reinforcements necessary for the retention of Baghdad are at least the equivalent of one infantry division of the Indian Army and one or two regiments of cavalry. It is essential, if an advance on Baghdad be decided on, that reinforcements of this strength should at once be definitely assigned to Mesopotamia, and that they should without fail begin to arrive at Basra within four weeks of the issue of the orders for the advance.

"The Committee are of opinion that these reinforcements cannot be furnished from the garrison in India.

"If reinforcements on the scale mentioned above cannot be provided, and if, notwithstanding, the Indian Government are satisfied that General Nixon can defeat the enemy forces immediately fronting him, and that on military and other grounds an action is desirable, they

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00002e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

should be allowed to give him the necessary permission to attack, but only on the clear understanding that he is not to attempt to enter or occupy Baghdad.

"2. From the information before the Committee, there would appear to be no purely defensive position near Baghdad of any great strength. But it is thought that the Baghdad district, if occupied by a sufficient force, offers considerable strategic advantages.

"3. Without Baghdad and the surrounding district as a base, the Turks could still assemble considerable forces and undertake offensive operations. But with Baghdad in their possession they would be much more favourably situated both for the concentration of force and the assumption of the offensive.

"4. From their imperfect knowledge of events in other theatres of war the Committee are unable to foresee with any certainty the effect which a British occupation of Baghdad would have on the Turkish forces engaged against the Russians and against ourselves in the Dardanelles.

"Though the capture by us of Baghdad would undoubtedly be an inducement to the Turks to withdraw force from other quarters in the hope of retaking that city, the extent to which they would be able to do this would depend on events elsewhere. The Committee accept the estimate of the General Staff that the Turks might in certain circumstances have 60,000 men at their disposal, but consider that, even if this number of men were available, it would be a very difficult operation to concentrate them in Mesopotamia and undertake offensive operations if Baghdad were in our possession."

The Committee also had before them a Memorandum submitted on the 6th October by the Political Department, India Office, advocating the advance to Baghdad, on general considerations and more especially because of the control which its occupation would give us over the Baghdad-Kermanshah route—the Germans' main line of communication with Persia. The danger of the existing situation in Persia was emphasised and its probable reaction on the attitude of Afghanistan and the north-west frontier. It was recognised, indeed, that retreat from Baghdad, after occupation, would have most unfortunate political results; but it appeared to the Political Secretary that if the Turks were strong enough to turn us out of Baghdad, they would be strong enough, if we refrained from occupying it, to create such a situation in Mesopotamia and Persia that withdrawal from Kut-el-Amara itself would be necessary, and the political consequences of this would be almost as disastrous as those of withdrawal from Baghdad. The conclusion was reached that "we are bound to take risks, whether we "go to Baghdad or stay where we are. . . . But political considerations "appear to point decidedly towards the adoption of the bolder course."

It is clear from this that both on political and military grounds the occupation of Baghdad was considered most desirable *if certain reinforcements could be assured*. Failing this General Nixon was not to attempt to occupy Baghdad.

It is unnecessary to quote here the Report in full, but the following extracts show the grounds on which the Committee arrived at conclusion 1 :—

The Desirability of an Advance to Baghdad.

"5. On military grounds the capture and occupation of Baghdad offer distinct and solid advantages. The enemy, apart from the blow which his prestige would sustain, would be deprived of an important trade centre, a valuable depôt, a base, and a railhead (of the section of the Baghdad railway now working from Samarra to Baghdad). Our forces would be astride the main route from Europe through Kermanshah to the interior of Persia, and would deprive the Germans of a base for their intrigues in the Middle East.

"*The Practicability of an Advance.*

"6. The General Staff, War Office, the Commander-in-Chief in India, the Military Secretary, India Office, and the local military authorities are all in agreement in the opinion, in which the Committee concur, that the British forces at present in Mesopotamia, though apparently adequate for the capture of Baghdad, are not sufficient to ensure its retention, which is regarded as essential. General Sir John Nixon has stated that if the Turks should turn their serious attention to the recovery of Baghdad, and should send to Mesopotamia the large organised forces that would be needed for such an operation, he would require one division and one British cavalry regiment in addition to his present force. The Committee consider that a force not less than this is immediately necessary to hold Baghdad, but they think that two regiments of Indian cavalry might be substituted if a British cavalry regiment is not available. It is essential that these troops should reach Basra at the earliest possible date, as their presence will be required at Baghdad to ensure its occupation against attempts on the part of the Turks to re-take the city. For this reason the Committee have recommended that the reinforcements should begin to arrive at Basra within four weeks of the issue of orders for the advance.

"In order to provide for possible eventualities, a second division, or those units of a division which can be suitably employed in Mesopotamia, should be held in readiness to follow the first as soon as required. In the event of the Turks being in a position later on to concentrate forces from distant quarters on the Upper Tigris, with the object of offensive operations on a large scale, even these two divisions may prove insufficient, and it may be necessary in 1916 to send further reinforcements."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000015

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

On the same date (16th October) the Military Secretary, India Office, submitted a supplementary minute in consequence of the information received from India and from General Nixon subsequent to the date on which the Committee had drafted its Report (*vide* Committee of Imperial Defence Paper, Secret, G. 31, of October 1915).

The following extracts indicate a certain modification of the views he had previously expressed:—

"If, therefore, we have a firm promise of two divisions, I am entirely in favour of going to Baghdad, while, if we get only one division added to Force 'D,' we might still consider the advisability of a raid and retirement. That is to say, General Nixon, with two divisions and three cavalry regiments in the Baghdad area, will be able, whatever the Turks may do—

"(1) To spoil their advanced base by removing or destroying all stores and transport now available in the area.

"(2) To cut them off from all communication with Persia for at least two or three months.

"(3) To postpone trouble from Afghanistan for that period.

"(4) To keep the Basra vilayet and the oilfields quiet for a like period."

* * * * *

"Before the three months have elapsed the position may have entirely changed in our favour elsewhere, but whatever we decide we must decide quickly or the moral effect of Kut-el-Amara will have worn off.

"I have described the advantages of offensive action, but I am not oblivious to its dangers. The political effect of eventual retirement will be bad, but there will have been compensatory advantages, and, moreover, we should have been given time to prepare a formidable Torres Vedras at Kut-el-Amara, and some of our gunboats will be ready to guard the river."

These various papers were considered by the War Council on the 21st October, and their conclusions were embodied in the Secretary of State's private telegram of the same date, which was also in reply to the Viceroy's private telegram of that date. The telegrams in question were as follows:—

"From Viceroy, 21st October 1915.

"Private. Your private telegram of 18th instant. Baghdad.

"Government of India are in entire agreement with His Majesty's Government as to political and strategic advantages of the capture and occupation of Baghdad which are emphasised by contents of Mr. Marling's telegram of 15th October, but we regard internal security of India and the security of our frontier as our first pre-occupation, and in our present depleted military situation are quite unable to send a further force of strength of a division of troops from India to Mesopotamia.

"After consulting Commander-in-Chief I consider that there are three alternatives before us:—

"(1) Take and occupy Baghdad. This will present no difficulty whatever, provided that we are guaranteed reinforcements of a full division of troops reaching Mesopotamia within two months from now. This will be the most satisfactory solution.

"(2) Attack the Turks, raid Baghdad, capturing the few steamers that remain and stores, releasing the English female captives, destroying the railway north of Baghdad and dominating the city by river patrols from a camp south of Baghdad. This would have a good political effect, and the fact that we were not in actual occupation of Baghdad might not precipitate the despatch of Turkish reinforcements to recapture it. This, from a political point of view, would be only the second best alternative, but it would not require addition of a whole division to carry it out.

"The Commander-in-Chief from a military point of view dislikes this solution, and would prefer either (1) or (3). He considers that Baghdad, being great centre of supplies and a valuable base for whichever side is in possession of it, we must either hold it ourselves or keep well away from it. He does not think that it is possible to (dominate?) it from south. We should have to be camped close to the suburbs, which in his opinion gives us all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of occupation. His view is that unless we hold Baghdad Turkish reinforcements will be gradually dribbled into it and we may be attacked in strength without warning unless we are as far away as Kut-el-Amara. Nixon goes so far as to consider that even without reinforcements his army would be safer in and north of Baghdad than anywhere south of it, and Commander-in-Chief lays great stress on the value of Baghdad-Samarra railway in that it would prevent any possibility of surprise attack on us. He considers that all our interests lie in our holding Baghdad, but recognises that without addition our present (forces) might be driven out of it, and that this might involve a very difficult and dangerous retreat down the river. Shortly, he is opposed to a raid on Baghdad followed by a withdrawal. He is strongly in favour of holding Baghdad if reinforcements are forthcoming. If they are not forthcoming, he prefers safety of Kut-el-Amara position. He feels, however, that present military situation is such that it may at any time become necessary to occupy Baghdad even with our existing forces, and accept the risk involved.

"My own comment upon the Commander-in-Chief's view is that from a political point of view it would be disastrous to be driven out of Baghdad.

"(3) Remain in a defensive position at Kut-el-Amara. This is a course that does not appeal to us, for it shows weakness which will be recognised both by Turks and the tribes, and may force our hands into advancing after all.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000047

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

"Having placed these alternatives before you, I leave the question with confidence for His Majesty's Government to decide, but I trust that the decision will be in favour of the first alternative."

"From Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 21st October 1915.

"Private. Your private telegram of 21st October. Baghdad advance.

"Report of Combined Staffs estimates that Nixon has only some 9,000 Turkish troops and some irregulars to deal with for next two months; that Turkish forces may be somewhat increased by end of year, and they might conceivably reach a total of 60,000 by end of January and even larger figures during 1916. They consider that if reinforced by two Indian divisions from France he might with assistance of river flotilla face risk of attack by 60,000, but there would remain possibility of enemy receiving further reinforcements at later date.

"Staffs hold, therefore, that it would be unwise from purely military point of view to occupy Baghdad unless military authorities have power to withdraw troops at once without regard to political considerations if military exigencies make this necessary.

"The War Office would give the two Indian divisions, but could not under any circumstances spare further reinforcements, and are doubtful of their capacity even to supply drafts if wastage from casualties or sickness is severe. They think Baghdad can be taken easily and held for some time, but as explained above it might become untenable later.

"At present moment it seems that German attempt to break through to Constantinople will succeed, and our position and prospects in Gallipoli are most uncertain. Persia seems drifting into war on German side whilst Arabs are wavering, and unless we can offer them great inducement will probably join Turks. We are, therefore, in great need of striking success in the East both to check Persian movement and to win Arabs.

"It is suggested that we should occupy Baghdad, giving assurances to Arab leaders that we favour creation of Arab State independent of Turks, and that we shall be prepared to consider future disposition of Baghdad in connection therewith. Is this practicable? Shereef of Mecca will certainly ask for declaration of our intentions as regards Baghdad if we occupy it. Unless you consider that possibility of eventual withdrawal is decisive against the advance, all other considerations seem to us to render it desirable, and we are prepared to order it."

On the 23rd October another War Council was held, the result of which was the definite order contained in the following telegram :—

"From the Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 23rd October 1915.

"No. 3099. Nixon may march on Baghdad if he is satisfied that force he has available is sufficient for the operation. Reinforcements will take time owing to relief and transport arrangements, but two divisions will be sent as soon as possible. I will telegraph probable date later."

The telegram was followed up the same day by official letters to the War Office and the Admiralty pressing for the immediate despatch of the sanctioned reinforcements, which were to bring the total force up to four Divisions and one Cavalry Brigade.

The decision thus arrived at was clearly in accordance with the views of the Commander-in-Chief in India, for on the 25th October in a telegram to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, he observed :—

"From Chief of the General Staff, India, to War Office, dated 25th October 1915.
(No. S. 25298.)

"We have to be prepared to meet the Turks in superior numbers; and this being the case, Baghdad, the best position at which to meet them, should be immediately occupied, and a reinforcement of two divisions should reach the Tigris within two months. Baghdad in Turkish hands becomes the base for Turkish operations by both the Tigris and Euphrates lines, and for the coercion of Persia; whilst politically the failure to seize what appears to be within our grasp would be interpreted throughout Asia, Persia, Afghanistan, and the East as weakness."

From the 1st to 11th November the War Office sent half-a-dozen telegrams reporting various Turkish movements from Syria, Armenia, and Mosul towards Baghdad. To this India replied on the 13th November in a telegram to the War Office that their information *re* 20,000 Turks at Dar-el-Zor was discredited, and that the only reinforcements reported to have reached Baghdad *viâ* the Euphrates route were 8 Q.F. guns and 1,000 men.

On the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th further intelligence was cabled to General Nixon regarding Turkish movements.

On the 18th, General Nixon reported that the enemy were advancing on Zeur from Ctesiphon, but that General Townshend would attack him on the morrow.

On the 19th, it was reported that "Zeur was occupied with slight opposition. The enemy retired towards Ctesiphon."

On the 20th, General Nixon wired to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, War Office :—

"I have received from my own agents similar news regarding a large force under Von der Goltz over a fortnight ago, but at present I do not accept their reports as conclusive for various reasons. Please state the source of your information . . . ."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000024

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

On the 22nd November was fought the Battle of Ctesiphon which resulted for us in a Pyrrhic victory, and unhappily confirmed the truth of the many reports sent of Turkish reinforcements.

On the night of the 23rd/24th the Turks counter-attacked, but were driven back with heavy loss. On the 24th and 25th the wounded were removed to the river, and on the night of the 25th the retreat to Kut-el-Amara commenced.

On the 27th General Nixon left Aziziyah for Kut, but before leaving, on the 26th November, he telegraphed a long appreciation of the position, from which the following are extracts :—

"Telegram from General Nixon, dated 26th November 1915.

"(Repeated to Chief of General Staff for information of the Viceroy.)

"1008/64/0. 3159 of 25th November.

"General Townshend's force has suffered such severe losses and its units are so depleted of officers that it cannot be counted on for future operations as an effective Division for some time, but will be used on lines of communications and as a possible nucleus for increasing our striking force. Its effective strength in rifles and sabres probably does not exceed some 7,500, and its total casualties are now reported 4,300.

* * * * *

"Present estimated effective strength of enemy at Ctesiphon is now about 11,000 with 39 guns; but I have not had time to fully verify this. These troops are ill-supplied with transport and ships, and have no gunboats. They have many Arab auxiliaries who have not been in their pay, but these have so far shown no disposition to participate in a general action.

"In my I.G. 1658/5, dated 21st November, addressed to Chief of the General Staff, I estimated a possible eventual concentration against us of nine Turkish divisions. Of these four were actually at Ctesiphon, and the heads of two more may now be arriving at Baghdad.

* * * *

"Taking new divisions as arriving at full strength of nine battalions at 900 each, and consisting of Ottoman Turks who do not desert, the enemy's strength in the Baghdad concentration area may amount to 27,500 men and 55 guns by second week in December, by which time it is estimated that Townshend's force can be increased to between 11,000 and 12,000. By end of February Turks might assemble 50,000 men and 84 guns. This is deduced from War Office telegram No. 9977 cypher M.O 6 dated 16th November, and Chief of General Staff's telegram No. S. 27,496/M. 63, of 16th November, on the assumption that the Turks can so afford to disregard the Russians as to allow for the re-grouping of their forces on the lines indicated in latter telegram.

"We ourselves shall not be in a position to attack Baghdad until the beginning of March at earliest, and then with some 40,000 men with 114 land guns exclusive of 7,000 to 8,000 men on our lines of communication.

* * * * *

"To summarise. Provided that my river transport is immediately augmented to the maximum extent possible, and that all promised reinforcements *plus* drafts to make good present wastage reach me by middle of January, I consider that I shall be in a position to capture and hold Baghdad by the middle of March 1916 without any additional troops. Should the Russians be able to co-operate with me, my task will be proportionately simplified, and I ask for information as to how far I may expect such co-operation. As I feel confident of capturing Baghdad, I do not propose to discuss the alternative of taking up a defensive line in rear.

The untoward result of the battle of Ctesiphon had failed to reveal to him the parlous situation in which his troops were involved!

By the morning of the 28th General Townshend's troops were all concentrated at Aziziyah, and on that day General Nixon reported—"General "Townshend does not anticipate that enemy will advance beyond Zeur. "Should they do so, he will retire on Kut to cover concentration of reinforce-"ments."

These optimistic views of the military position were apparently shared by the authorities in India as is shown by the following extracts from the Viceroy's telegram of the 30th November :—

"Telegram from Viceroy dated 30th November 1915.

"Reference your telegram of 25th instant, No. 3160. Independent examination prior to receipt of Nixon's 1008/64/0, 26th November, leads us to agree generally with estimate of Turkish strength at Ctesiphon and Baghdad and its rate of growth, except that we prefer to work on the figures 60,000 by end of January, as estimated by combined War Office and Admiralty staffs in their Memorandum of 19th October."

* * * *

"In our opinion a safe estimate for the capture and retention of Baghdad under altered conditions involves addition of at least one more division which with the Lahore and Meerut divisions and drafts will make Nixon's force to five divisions in all.

* * * *

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00007e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"If on the other hand it should be thought that any important modifications in above factors have taken place or are likely to do so we consider Nixon will be able to capture and hold Baghdad with four divisions and that it will not be necessary to draw an additional division from the main theatre unless it were freely available owing to the general strategic plan of operations.

"To regard capture of Baghdad as impossible would be to give up our best means of countering the German intrigues in Persia and Von der Goltz's plans for organising Persia and Afghanistan against India and should therefore be dismissed from our calculations. Our success hitherto in Mesopotamia has been main factor which has kept Persia, Afghanistan, and India itself quiet, and to give up the idea of Baghdad would be to relinquish initiative and would result in a further transference eastward of the theatre of war. For these reasons we approve Nixon's attitude in not discussing the alternative of adopting a defensive attitude as a permanency though he must necessarily remain chiefly on the defensive until his reinforcements can reach the front"

On the 1st December the Turks caught up Townshend and made a serious attack on his retiring column. The troops behaved magnificently and the attack was repulsed.

On the 3rd December General Townshend's sorely tried but indomitable Division had reached Kut-el-Amara, the point at which it had been decided to stem the Turkish advance and to await reinforcements, which it may be mentioned began to arrive at Basra on the 2nd December.

On the 5th Townshend reported :—

"All sick, wounded and prisoners have been evacuated from Kut. Cavalry Brigade is being sent back to Ali Gharbi to join hands with General Younghusband's Brigade."

With the rest of his force, four Brigades and 34 guns, General Townshend settled down to prepare for an investment, and to await relief. The offensive rôle so brilliantly begun by the 6th Division had come to an end. The bright anticipations formed on insufficient information and on a too eager and optimistic disregard of all difficulties or discouraging factors had been abruptly shattered. We were to pay the penalty of a too easy confidence in the fighting superiority of our gallant troops.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000017

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This Document is the property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.

SECRET.

Précis of Correspondence regarding the Mesopotamian Expedition—Its Genesis and Development.

Prepared in the Military Department of the India Office.

(V.)

Part IV. ended with the despatch from Kut of General Townshend's wounded on the 5th December 1915, from which date the investment of Kut may be said to have commenced. In Part V. it is proposed to carry the record up to the 16th February, the date on which the India Office transferred to the War Office the military control of the Mesopotamian operations.

On the 6th December General Nixon reached Basra and on the following day, presumably in complete ignorance of the real facts, he telegraphed as below to the Secretary of State:—

Telegram from General Nixon, dated 7th December 1915.

"940 28 A. Your C 243 of 4th. Wounded satisfactorily disposed of. Many likely to recover in country comfortably placed in hospitals at Amarah and Basrah. Those for invaliding are being placed direct on two Hospital Ships that were ready at Basrah on arrival river boats. General condition of wounded very satisfactory. Medical arrangements under circumstances of considerable difficulty worked splendidly."

This reassuring telegram naturally afforded great relief at the time. Unhappily it has since been entirely refuted by the facts brought to light. The telegram is recorded in this *précis* as it is the initial point, so to speak, in a controversy which has since unfortunately attained a somewhat deplorable political significance.

About this time the confidence hitherto displayed by the Indian Authorities in all concerning Mesopotamia began to be shaken, as will be seen from the following telegrams:—

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 6th December 1915.

"H. 9621. Your telegram of the 4th instant. It is now a matter of vital urgency that Nixon should receive a large accession of river craft without delay. Possibility of relieving Kut-el-Amara in time will depend on this."

How the deficiencies of river craft were now suddenly to be remedied from the other side of the globe is not explained!

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 6th December 1915.

"H. 9615. Please refer to Nixon's No. 129/259/I of 4th December. It seems certain that Townshend will be invested at Kut, and that he must be relieved. We understand he has rations for six weeks, which would enable him to hold out for approximately two months, but we are asking Nixon for definite information about food, forage, and ammunition available at Kut. It is essential that Nixon should be reinforced with great rapidity, as the distances in Mesopotamia are so great that two months is a very short period in which to relieve Kut.

"In your telegram of the 25th ultimo, No. 3156, it was stated all units of the Lahore and Meerut Divisions should have arrived in Mesopotamia by the end of December.

* * * * *

"Please inform us early if any delay in their departure is probable, as Nixon's plans are now based on two divisions being complete in Basra by the 31st.

"Immediate despatch of the eight Indian battalions from Egypt is also a matter of very great urgency.

"Moreover, Nixon now asks definitely for the additional Division, making five in all, the need for which we foreshadowed in our telegram of the 30th ultimo without number, and in altered circumstances we regard its provision as necessary, but cannot furnish it ourselves.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000020

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

"We suggest troops intended for East Africa might be diverted to Mesopotamia where need for them seems more urgent than in Africa."

This telegram and the situation generally were anxiously discussed between the India Office and War Office, with the result that on the 9th and 11th December the following telegrams were despatched :—

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 9th December 1915.

(Repeated to General Nixon.)

"3194. Essential that we should receive full information regarding situation in Mesopotamia for consideration by War Committee. Please instruct Nixon to telegraph his own and Townshend's views regarding measures to be adopted, feasibility of holding Kut pending reinforcement, or intention to retire to some other selected position. Would latter course mean grave loss of stores and munitions ?

"(2) Are communications now threatened or likely to be interrupted during passage of reinforcements or retirement, and, if so, in what area ?

"(3) What troops are now at Amara and en route ? Also at Kurna, Basra, Nasiriyeh and Ahwaz ?

"(4) Please indicate intrenched position at Kut with reference to Tigris, Shatt, Kut town and Sinn, and have we boat bridge giving command of both banks ?

"(5) Have we accumulated supplies and munitions at Amara or elsewhere on line, thus facilitating reinforcement ?

"(6) Have Turks heavy guns superior to ours ?

"(7) Besides *Firefly* and *Comet* have Turks captured or destroyed ships, barges and aeroplanes, and how many ? Enemy boasts many captures.

"(8) Any other points elucidating situation, such as health troops, temper of population, state of river and weather, number of steamers and flats available for transporting troops."

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 11th December 1915.

"3200. Your telegram of the 9th instant, H. 9687. Request for 5th Division for Nixon. Having regard to the pressing demands for troops in other theatres it will be most difficult for War Office to comply. Further, experience shows that newly-formed divisions of new armies must not be suddenly thrust into active operations without gradual training under fire among older troops."

"Having regard to above I suggest that I make following proposal to War Office :—India to form a fifth division by detailing a third brigade, which with the 34th and 35th Brigades and cavalry and artillery recently furnished by you would give a fairly complete division, and one better suited for Asiatic warfare than a newly-raised division from England or Australia. 28th Punjabis from Ceylon might be incorporated in the new brigade so that you would only now have to find one British and two Indian battalions. War Office for its part to detail 12 garrison or newly-raised battalions for garrison duty in India and to despatch them during next three months.

"The advantages of this proposal are (1) that it obviates asking the War Office for a fully-trained division which cannot be spared ; (2) that it expedites formation of fifth division ; (3) that it gives Nixon a trained force accustomed to work together instead of amateur troops ; (4) that it largely increases the British garrison of India though it decreases the Indian garrison.

"This is the best I can do for you. All transport here fully occupied at present.

"Please expedite reply giving your views."

The reply asked for was contained in the telegrams below, but only essential extracts are given here.

Telegram from General Nixon, No. 1008/149/0, dated 11th December 1915.

Your 3194 of 9th.

"*Paragraph* 1.—The question of abandoning Kut was fully considered and views exchanged between Townshend and myself. It was decided from every point of view, military and political, that it was not advisable or even possible looking to condition of troops on their arrival there, to withdraw from Kut. In this connection see my telegram 129/259/I of 5th December. To have abandoned Kut would have entailed grave loss of stores and munitions of war. Vide our telegrams 129/263/I and 129/264/I of 8th and 9th December. There is no question of Townshend withdrawing as he is virtually surrounded.

"*Paragraph* 2.—Communications are not now threatened down stream of Ali-al-Gharbi. I do not anticipate that they will be to any serious extent so long as Townshend remains at Kut. We have a strong post at Ali-al-Gharbi and reinforcements continue to move up river. The news of our inability to remain at Ctesiphon, the withdrawal to Kut, and the sight of so many ships coming down river have inevitably caused alarmist rumours which have doubtless been greatly exaggerated. This excitement should quickly subside when our ships are seen returning full of troops. Desert Arabs are always liable to threaten our communications with Nasiriyeh by right bank of Euphrates and any retirement from Kut would bring in the Arabs from Shatt-el-Hai on left bank.

"*Paragraph* 3.— . . . . Reinforcements are being pushed up both Tigris and Euphrates lines by land and water as soon as they arrive. It is essential to reinforce Nasiriyeh. To abandon it would mean laying open the Euphrates line and the Shatt-el-Hai and expose my left flank to a Turkish advance on Basra. At present the tribes in the vicinity of Nasiriyeh are well disposed but need signs of support."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000046

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Telegram from General Nixon, No. 1008/155/0, dated 12th December 1915.

* * * *

"*Paragraph* 9.—General summary. The situation is a grave one. Until I know how soon sufficient troops can be ? report. Want of adequate river transport is more acute than ever. The net result of my demands in this direction since July last is one ship from India promised at the end of this month It is hoped that a further supply will be forthcoming from the middle of January onwards.

"As a general question of communications the attitude of Persia cannot be overlooked. As long as present benevolent neutrality maintained there is no cause for anxiety. Attitude of Pusht-i-kuh is doubtful. Any concentrated hostile action on part of latter would be a menace to my communications on Tigris and Karun, but signs are at present inoperative. It is useless to disguise the fact that the troops of the 6th Division are warworn after a year of continuous campaigning, and the result of their recent heavy losses in officers and men has had inevitable result, rendering it desirable to employ them when relieved on communications rather than at the front. General Townshend may be depended on to do everything that is humanly possible to inspire those around him with his own wonderful spirits."

Telegram from Viceroy, dated 14th December 1915.

"H. 9767. With reference to Nixon's No. 1008/149/0 of 11th and 1008/155/0 of 12th December, we offer following remarks:—

"We agree that Townshend cannot now leave Kut. We consider however that Sheikh Said is too far forward for concentration of relieving troops, and are suggesting to Nixon that this is the case. As regards departure of troops from Egypt, Nixon has been informed at once of all sailings of which we have heard. You have been kept fully posted as to progress in obtaining river craft in India and their transfer to Mesopotamia. It has been very difficult to obtain suitable craft for river work there, and still more difficult to find among them vessels capable of making voyage from India to Basra."

Telegram from General Nixon, dated 14th December 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State.)

"1008/168/0. 14th. Continuation of my 1008/149/0 and 1008/155/0 of 11th and 12th December and I.G. 746 of 14th December. In view of facts that there are now four Divisions, 35th, 38th, 45th, 51st, in front of Townshend. That 5th Composite Division is now arriving Baghdad. That 36th Division is reported following it and due Baghdad second week in January. That 17th Division may be following. And that 26th Division is reported concentrating on Euphrates line, making total of eight Divisions as possible concentration against me within next two or three months, I must ask for another two Divisions to be sent to me as soon as possible, otherwise I may have to fight again without any reserve."

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 15th December 1915.

(Addressed to Viceroy, repeated to General Officer Commanding, Basra.)

"3204. War Committee met to-day. Orders given to hasten despatch of remaining Division from France. Transport difficulties are enormous and make it quite impossible to send now two additional Divisions ——as asked by Nixon. I doubt if they can be spared later, but this will be further considered."

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 15th December 1915.

(Addressed Viceroy, repeated Nixon.)

"3206. In continuation of my telegram 3204. I now learn from Admiralty that the greater part of the two promised Divisions will reach Basra by 31st December. Some details and horse ships will be a few days later. The delay is entirely due to French arrangements for Convoy.

"There are great difficulties in immediately finding either the two additional Divisions or the transport for carrying them in view of pressing necessities elsewhere but the matter will be considered."

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 20th December 1915.

"3226. Nixon's telegrams, 1008/155/0 of 12th December and 131/54/0 of 19th December, leave us in some uncertainty as to his plans and as to his reasons for his present dispositions. According to such information as we possess we should suppose that his first object should be relief of Townshend, and all available troops should be concentrated for that purpose. After relief of Townshend, protection of our position on Karun side seems to us most urgent matter. But we recognise that his local information may make a different course advisable. Can you throw any light on his plans and reasons for them ?"

The above telegram was inspired by the doubts raised at the India Office as to the wisdom of sending more troops to Nasiriyeh at such a moment and thus dispersing our resources.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000053

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Telegram from Viceroy, dated 25th December 1915.

"Reference to your No. 3226, 20th December, which we repeated to Nixon. Nixon has replied as follows:—

"'*Paragraph* 1.—Please see concluding portion of paragraph 3 of my 1008/149/0, 11th December, as regards Nasiriyah. The difficulty of reinforcing Nasiriyah under existing conditions is probably not realised.

"'*Paragraph* 2.—Ajaimi is reported to be about 50 miles above Nasiriyah on the right bank supported by Turkish cavalry and guns. (? So far as I can see) he is covering a Turkish concentration by the Euphrates line as he did last February and March before the battle at Shaiba. So far I have only had indefinite reports of Turkish concentration by the Euphrates, but by reinforcing Nasiriyah I am in a position to deal with Turkish concentration on this line as well as to hold line of approach by the Shat-el-Hai and to deceive enemy as to real direction of my own concentration.

"'*Paragraph* 3.—There is no question about relief of Townshend being my first object, and every unit that can be spared is being sent up the Tigris as soon as ever it arrives. But you will remember that I was originally promised whole of 3rd and 7th Divisions by the end of December; it now looks as if it would be the end of January before they all arrive.

"'*Paragraph* 4.—As regards Karun, I am well alive to possibility of a hostile movement in that direction, and it was with this eventuality in view that I have already asked for and will require two more Divisions. The Secretary of State I presume grasps fact that it takes nearly two months to transfer a force like a Division from one (? situation to) another under conditions as they exist here.'"

"The above telegram seems to indicate that while Nixon is emphatic that relief of Townshend is his first objective, yet apprehension for the safety of his detachment at Nasiriyah lest a Turkish advance down Euphrates should overwhelm that detachment and then threaten Basrah is his reason for his action in diverting reinforcements from Tigris. Nixon must be best judge of disposition necessitated by local information, but so far as he has reported to us there is no sign of any strong Turkish movement down Euphrates. With regard to Shat-el-Hai, so long as we hold Kut it is not clear how the Turks can use the Shat-el-Hai as line of approach to Basrah and we much doubt if reinforcements of Nasiriyah will deceive enemy as to real direction of Nixon's concentration.

"As regard Karun line so long as we are strong on the Tigris above Amara we thereby secure oilfields and impress Bakhtiari with sense of our military superiority, and it was understood that when Nixon asked for 6th and 7th Divisions, *vide* his telegram 1008/168/0, dated 14th December, he realised that the strongest argument to support his request was the probability of Turks in the Baghdad region being increased to 60,000 men and the vital necessity of his being able to maintain his position above Amara in the face of that force.

"It is this probability which might justify War Council in despatching two more Divisions from the main theatre of war."

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 29th December 1915.

"3237. Reference your telegram of 18th instant No. H. 9883.* War Office will despatch to India 12 additional garrison battalions, beginning next week, to enable you to complete and maintain the 5th Division for Force 'D.'

"War Committee taking note of this decision recommend that instructions be sent to Nixon in the following sense:—

"1. Under existing conditions no hope can be held out that two additional divisions can be spared.

"2. After relieving Townshend, Nixon's policy should be to act on defensive.

"3. Defensive positions should at once be prepared about Kurna and in the Shaiba area, in case withdrawal from Kut should become necessary.

"Nixon will be in the best position to decide whether Kut should be held after Townshend's relief or whether withdrawal to Amara or Kurna is desirable in the circumstances.

Another matter which at this time was greatly exercising General Nixon's mind was the possible co-operation of the Russians as will be seen by the following:—

Telegram from General Officer Commanding, Basra, dated 9th December 1915.

(Addressed to the Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India and Foreign.)

"I.G. 1724. In answer to S. 29554 and M. 85 S. 29974.

"In order to prevent the whole of the Turkish reinforcements being turned down the Tigris, the closest and speediest co-operation of the Russians is necessary. My reinforcements are arriving slowly and up-river transport is difficult and slow.

"The immediate object is the defeat of the Turks in the field. Unless this is speedily assured by every means at our disposal, issues of great political importance may be more prejudicially involved than by inviting the co-operation of the Russians.

"I urge that the Russians be asked to march on Baghdad in as strong force as possible *viâ* Kermanshah and Khanikin, which is stated by the Russians to be the only practicable winter route.

"Except between Hamadan and Kermanshah supplies and water are said to be plentiful.

"In order to further these ends, and to ensure co-operation, I request that I may be placed in direct communication with the Russian forces through Marsh."

* The telegram No. H. 9883 referred to was one dealing with the garrison of India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000076

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Telegram from Secretary of State to General Nixon, dated 11th December 1915.

(Repeated Viceroy, Army Department.)

"No. 3199. Your I. G. 1724. Representations to this effect have been made to St. Petersburg, and the Grand Duke has been informed in regard to your situation. Russian Government however state that troops at their disposal are not sufficient to enable them to undertake operations either at Khanikin or Kermanshah. Endeavours are being made to establish direct communication between India and Russian Turkestan, but you should communicate as heretofore."

Telegram from General, Force "D", Basra, dated 16th December 1915.

(Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State for India.)

"I.G. 1769/1605, S/30,758 M./94.

"Further advance by Russians on Kermanshah now clearly desirable. Such movement in addition to the effect on situation of Baghdad—Kut is calculated to close more effectually telegraphic communication between Germans in Persia and Germans and Turks outside Persia. Please wire my views to Russian General Staff and let me know if they will carry this out. Report has been received that some Turkish troops returned to Baghdad from lower down Tigris, and that this was on account of Russian advance to Hamadan, so further advance to Kermanshah may have greater effect."

Telegram from Secretary of State to General Nixon, dated 18th December 1915.

(Repeated to Viceroy, Army Department.)

"No. 3217. Your I.G. 1769/1605. Your reports Turkish troops returning to Baghdad tend to confirm enemy's invasion of Persia reported in Marling's 531 and 535 (K). Russians intend if possible to occupy Kum and Kermanshah, but the moment seems inopportune to press for further advance. We are keeping Grand Duke informed regarding your situation."

War Office to India Office.

"0149/4066 (M.O. 1). "War Office,

"Sir, "29th December 1915.

"With reference to telegram No. H. 10103, dated 28th December 1915, from His Excellency the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, on the subject of direct communication between the General Officer Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force "D" and the Russian Forces in Persia and on the Caucasus Front.

"I am commanded to state that the Army Council are of opinion that it would be undesirable for General Nixon to formulate plans of operations, in conjunction with the Grand Duke, since arrangements of this nature might adversely influence the general strategical situation and the conduct of operations in other theatres of war.

"I am therefore to suggest that General Nixon should be informed that intercommunication, without such previous reference to higher authority, should be confined to the exchange of Intelligence only.

"I am, &c.,

"The Under Secretary of State "B. B. CUBITT."
"for India."

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 30th December 1915.

"3239. War Office requests that Nixon be instructed that communications with Grand Duke must be confined to the exchange of Intelligence only. Questions of policy or strategy must be referred to you.

"This is with reference to your telegram of 28th instant, H. 10103."

From Chief of the Imperial General Staff to Petrograd, dated 5th January 1916.

"No. 11767.

"Your 128 of 2nd January. Captain Williams had no authority to discuss future operations with Grand Duke Nicholas and I know nothing about his report.

"As you know, *vide* our 11721 of 4th January 1915, our immediate objective in Mesopotamia is the relief of Townshend. The question of co-operation with the Russians in Persia will be reserved for consideration when this relief has been accomplished."

The above telegrams indicate that the responsible authorities, both British and Russian, held that a Russian march on Baghdad, with a view to relieving the Mesopotamian situation, was not at the moment a practicable proposition.

The question of how the turn of events on the Tigris would affect the Arab mind was also one which caused serious anxiety at this time, and Sir P. Cox took a favourable opportunity for meeting the redoubtable Bin Saud, and obtaining his signature to the treaty negotiations for which had

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000037

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

been begun by Captain Shakespear in the autumn of 1914. The telegram recounting this incident is interesting at the present moment, when negotiations with the Sheriff are in progress and when the whole Arab question is trembling in the balance.

Telegram from General, Force "D," dated Basra, 5th January 1916.

(*Addressed to Chief of General Staff, repeated to Secretary of State and Egypt*).

"No. I.G. 1912. 5th. Sir P. Cox had long interview with Bin Saud at Qatif near Bahrein on 26th December. Full note of the interview being posted you, meanwhile *resumé* is as follows:—'Though Turks are no doubt taking advantage of recent developments in Europe and of suspension of our advance on Baghdad to endeavour to re-kindle tribal and religious feeling against us in Central Arabia, Bin Saud does not anticipate much result.

* * * * *

"'He does not believe Bin Rashid would dare to advance far towards Koweit or Nasiriyah for fear than Bin Saud should cut in against (?) in his rear and that in any case absence of rain and grazing puts advance of any large force at present out of the question. Bin Saud's present relations with Sheriff of Mecca are quite normal and friendly but he characterizes Sheriff essentially unstable, trivial, undependable.

"'Bin Saud discredits any active understanding between Sheriff and Bin Rashid. Regarding general question of Caliphate, in the event of Turkey breaking up Bin Saud says nobody among ruling chiefs cares in the least who calls himself Caliph, and even if Sheriff claims title they would no more accept control from him then than they do now, but each chief would continue to control his own tribes and welcome immunity from Turkish oppression.'

"On 31st December Sir P. Cox interviewed new Sheikh of Koweit, viz., Jabar Bin Mubarak at his capital. Jabar's news of Bin Rashid was that he is now weakened and most unlikely to move towards Koweit or Zobeir. He was emphatic in view that neither he (Jabar) nor his dependants take any interest whatever in question of Caliphate. And Cox says that is general impression he has gained from all tribes this side of Arabia since start of war."

On the 6th January the first intimation was received that the Turks were preparing to interpose a force between Kut and the relieving column then concentrating under General Aylmer at Ali-al-Gharbi.

From the Chief of General Staff, India, to Chief of Imperial General Staff, dated 6th January 1916, 7.55 p.m.

"33,488. Basra has sent the following telegram dated 5th January, 9 p.m.:—

"No. 1008 251 0. It appears from reports received from Townshend and Aylmer that the enemy has transferred the bulk of his force from the neighbourhood of Kut down stream to opposite the relieving column. The enemy's strength is estimated by Townshend at 17,000 men with 32 guns of which he considers that 12,000 have passed down stream towards Essin and Sheikh Saad; this leaves at least 5,000 to contain him at Kut. According to my (Nixon's) intelligence the enemy forces stand at a higher figure. The total strength of Aylmer's relieving column is 16,000 bayonets, 1,500 sabres and 46 guns together with four gunboats of the new 'Fly' class."

On the same date news was received that General Nixon's health had broken down, and that Lieutenant-General Sir Percy Lake had been appointed to succeed him.

The period of General Nixon's command had been an eventful one. He landed at Basra on the 9th April 1915, while the fighting round Shaiba was in progress. The next three or four months were spent in the consolidation of our position in the Basra Vilayat. The Karun Valley was cleared of the enemy. Nasiriyah was occupied and a guard thus set on the Euphrates line of approach. Amarah was seized by a brilliant *coup de main*. At the end of July permission to push on to Kut was sought for by him and supported by the Viceroy, and in September the operations took place which ended (on the 29th September) in the capture of Kut-el-Amara. That notable fight marked the zenith of his tenure of command. The record of the remaining months is the eventful history of Ctesiphon and of the retreat to Kut.

Sir P. Lake did not reach Basra until the 18th January, but the British advance towards Kut which had begun on the 1st of that month was slowly proceeding. On the 6th January General Aylmer, under whose immediate command the operations were carried out, left Ali-al-Gharbi and on the 7th was heavily engaged three miles below Sheikh Saad, with the result that the Turkish position on the right bank was carried and 700 prisoners and two guns captured, but no progress could be made on the left bank. On the night of the 8th January, however, the enemy retired further up stream, but owing to the wet and stormy weather and the exhaustion of the troops reconnaissance and effective pursuit were difficult. The next advance brought us to Sheikh Saad, which was occupied on the 12th.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000082

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

On the 13th January close and continuous fighting took place near the Wadi nullah and the Turks again retired during that night, but although by the 15th we had fully occupied the Wadi position a renewal of bad weather prevented further attempts at progress for some days.

The disappointing results of these operations were anxiously discussed by the responsible authorities in Whitehall, and the Viceroy was then addressed thereon :—

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 14th January 1916.

"3260. Mesopotamian situation was discussed at War Council yesterday, and some anxiety was expressed. They decided that an Inter-Departmental conference should examine question and submit proposals.

"Conference proposes that you should at once prepare three Brigades for service on understanding that in addition to 12 Garrison regiments already promised War Office will detail 12 more battalions for early despatch to India. These will include eight Indian battalions from Egypt and four fully trained and equipped Territorial battalions from England. For this purpose War Office are prepared to detail a Brigade composed of battalions organised and trained from commencement of war.

"Lord Kitchener and I accept this proposal subject to your concurrence as it offers most ready solution.

"Indian regiments in question have suffered so severely in France or Gallipoli that rest in India desirable and their composition may make them specially acceptable to you, in view of Frontier unrest.

"Conference did not recommend a Divisional organisation for Mesopotamia reinforcements from India as probably you cannot spare artillery and may prefer to attach Brigades to Divisions weakened by losses."

The proposals contained in the above telegram were those suggested by the Secretary of State on the 11th December, *vide ante* page 42. Action on these lines was duly taken and reinforcements were prepared accordingly.

The Military Authorities in India and Mesopotamia were at this time still obsessed with the idea that these operations were to culminate in an advance to Baghdad, as will be seen from the following telegram :—

Telegram from Commander-in-Chief, India, to Chief Imperial General Staff, dated 15th January 1916.

"34,694. Following from Basra, dated 12th January :—

"'(1) Floods last year were abnormally high—greatest known for 28 years. This year normal conditions anticipated. Flood season, March to June inclusive.

"'(2) If normal conditions prevail movements by both banks should not be seriously hampered up stream, Kut, as far as junction Dialah with Tigris. Above this point a great deal depends on various bunds in the vicinity of Baghdad. If these are cut by Turks, or breached by floods, the immediately-surrounding country, both banks, can be inundated during the flood time, and also to a distance of 20 miles on left bank and of 5 miles up stream Baghdad, on right bank. This would hamper a direct Russian advance from ? Khanikin on Baghdad.

"'(3) Land operations, banks, would be rendered difficult for British and Turks if abnormally high flood conditions exist. Near Seleucia, on right bank, and from Laj to Aziziyah, on left bank, inundations are likely.

"'(4) As a result of high water gunboats will have greater command. River transport can carry heavier load. Our shipping should be vastly superior provided river craft asked for arrive before the flood season. Doubtful whether Turks have seaplanes, which we possess.

"'(5) Ctesiphon, Baghdad and Kut may be reckoned on to have considerable areas above flood level in case of high floods.

"'(6) *Summary*. Under normal conditions freedom of manœuvre curtailed, but no insurmountable difficulty of movement anticipated. Necessary to bear in mind danger of country surrounding Baghdad being flooded. This naturally favours defence. Advance on Baghdad so timed as to arrive there before the middle of March. On the whole, owing to superior shipping, gunboats, seaplanes, floods to our advantage.'"

Between the 15th and 18th January many difficulties had been caused by the excessively stormy weather, but it then moderated and on the night of the 18th two Brigades were pushed forward on the right bank to within 800 yards of the enemy's position at Hanneh and troops transferred to the left bank where the main attack was to take place.

On the 20th the Turkish trenches were bombarded and on the 21st the assault delivered in weather which Sir F. Aylmer described as atrocious.

By about noon on that day our attack although at first successful in occupying a portion of the enemy's first line eventually failed and after a

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00007e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

wet, stormy, and bitterly cold night spent in close contact with the enemy General Aylmer on the 22nd withdrew his force some 1,300 yards. The troops were not in a condition to assault again and on the 23rd, under orders from Sir P. Lake, they were entrenched astride the river to await reinforcements.

After the reverses sustained by General Aylmer the War Committee, feeling seriously concerned at the situation in Mesopotamia, called for detailed information thereon in a telegram dated 26th January from the Chief of Imperial General Staff to the Commander-in-Chief. This demand produced the following reply :—

Telegram from the Commander-in-Chief in India to Chief of Imperial General Staff, dated 27th January 1916, 10·40 p.m.

"36,369. With reference to your telegram of 26th January, No. 12,531 cypher. The following are my views on the military situation in Mesopotamia :—

"The Turkish strength now at and below Baghdad is estimated to be five divisions, possibly totalling some 32,000 effectives with about 50 guns. Another Turkish division may be at Khanikin. In view of your No. 12,325 cypher M.O. 1, of 21st January, it seems possible that the Turks may, by the beginning of March be able to increase their forces in the Baghdad region to a total of 11 divisions or about 80,000 men, with say 132 guns taking 12 guns per division. By 7th February the force under Aylmer, including the garrisons of posts on the river above Amarah, should number 35 battalions, 19 squadrons, and 74 guns, including 8½ battalions and 28 guns now *en route* up the Tigris. Three more field batteries from France are now arriving at Basra. If Townshend is relieved by the middle of March, when we hope to have placed the three additional brigades from India in Mesopotamia, Lake should be able to concentrate a force of 45,000 rifles, 2,500 sabres, and 120 guns in his fighting line on the Tigris. But in the event of Kut falling, then this force will be reduced to 36,000 rifles, 2,500 sabres, and 86 guns. Of course the check to Aylmer on the 21st January has prejudiced the prospects of relieving Townshend in time, that is, before 17th February, though I have just heard that Townshend now states that he can make his food supplies last for some time after that date. The immediate objective of the Turks is doubtless to capture Townshend's force. Whether they capture Kut or not, they may subsequently decide (*a*) to continue operations against us; or (*b*) to secure Baghdad against us while operating against Russia with a view to penetrating into Persia. In favour of (*a*). (1) With Kut in Turkish hands, the Shatt-al-Hai is available from March to June as approach to Euphrates and Nasiriyeh, thus turning British position on Tigris above Kurna.

"(2) British force might have to concentrate to defend Basra to avoid risk of defeat in detail.

"(3) A British withdrawal down the Tigris below Amarah opens oil fields in south west Persia to invasion, and exposes Pusht-i-Kuh, Bakhtiari, and other tribes to direct pressure.

"(4) If successful in driving British back below Amarah the Turks could operate in Persia practically free from anxiety as to safety of Baghdad. Against the above are (*a*) the flood season favours the defence; (*b*) Summer climatic conditions favour operations into Persia and militate against those in lower Mesopotamia. We must recognise, whatever course the Turks decide upon, we shall be unable to undertake advance on Baghdad in near future, especially as at present there is a shortage of river transport which it is most difficult to remedy, though we are taking every possible step to this end. Should Kut fall considerations affecting our future are (*a*) the nearer we are to Kut the greater the menace to any Turkish force using the Shatt-al-Hai and the greater the moral effect of our position Pusht-i-Kuh, Persia, and the Bakhtiari. (*b*) Below Ali-al-Gharbi the above menace practically vanishes as a sudden stroke against Kut is prohibited by the distance. (*c*) Ali-al-Gharbi in our possession gives a flank position as regards the route through Pusht-i-Kuh to Amara and the oil fields. The foregoing indicates, in my opinion, first, that Kut is the key to our position on the Tigris; secondly, now is the time for a Russian offensive towards Khanikin if it can be arranged; thirdly, that if Kut be lost, then we should hold a point on the Tigris as high up the river as possible, and not lower than Ali-al-Gharbi, as our pivot of manœuvre until we can see whether the situation justifies a fresh advance, permits us to hold our ground or imposes on us a further withdrawal.

"In the last case it might be necessary to fall back to the line Nasiriyah-Kurna-Ahwaz.

"Answers to your questions as regards details will be sent immediately."

In a further telegram, No. 36,378 of the 27th January giving the details referred to above, the aggregate strength of the British forces in Mesopotamia was given at 61,455 men and 146 guns. On the same date General Aylmer's force was estimated at about 28,000 men and 46 guns. This number included troops *en route* from Basra and drafts to units.

On the 1st February the Viceroy telegraphed as follows :—

Telegram from Viceroy, dated 1st February 1916.

"H. 809. Lake after visiting Aylmer has sent following :—

"'8/23/0. 29th January. I had long discussion with Aylmer upon situation to-day. His difficulties have been enormous, due to atrocious weather and the pressure upon him to advance promptly without waiting to organise his force properly. The weather destroyed his bridge, flooded his camp and trenches, and wore out his troops. The hurry of his advance was due to Townshend's appeals and neglect to state his true position regarding supplies.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000098

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"'The weather is somewhat better though still threatening, the river has fallen, but his men have suffered greatly and are not in a condition for strenuous work. Nevertheless matters are improving and he ought to be able to hold his present front until reinforcements, now in Mesopotamia, arrive.

"'The date upon which he will again be able to contemplate advance to relief of Kut depends mainly upon the arrival of a fresh bridging-train, which is his greatest need. Boats and superstructure are on their way up-river, but the local boats are proving quite unsuitable for the purpose, and a largely increased number of pontoons is essential from India at the earliest possible date.

"'As regards supplies we believe we can, largely on account of his heavy losses, keep him supplied until he is again made up to war establishment and the three new Brigades arrive.

"'By that time we hope sufficient river transport will have arrived from India and elsewhere to meet increased demand. I am answering your wire, 36/2/84 of 27th, regarding supplies, separately.

"'As bearing upon question of Aylmer's future advance, I trust arrival of at least a portion of three promised Brigades can be expedited; otherwise I shall have no reserve in hand to support in case of a reverse. Aylmer gives a somewhat unfavourable account of the moral of his Indian troops, but I am inclined to think this is largely due to bad weather and that with finer and warmer weather their spirits will return, especially if their severe losses in officers who understood them can be made good.'

"Commander-in-Chief adds that in Delhi his estimate was that 15th January was earliest date on which Aylmer could advance and he did not press Nixon to order an early advance.

"No appeals from Townshend have reached Commander-in-Chief. A true estimate of Townshend's position as regards supplies has been called for from Lake."

On the 2nd February the Chief of Imperial General Staff telegraphed (No. 12,788, S.D. 2) to the Commander-in-Chief that the 13th Division in Egypt was being prepared for despatch to Mesopotamia.

On the 3rd Sir B. Duff telegraphed:—

Telegram from Commander-in-Chief, India, to Chief of Imperial General Staff, dated 3rd February 1916.

"37,624. Your 12,748 cipher M.O. 2, of 1st February.

"General Aylmer has now over 18¾ squadrons, 28 battalions, and 46 guns with him at Um-Al-Hannah while reinforcements 7 battalions and 4 guns are en route between Amarah and Shaikh.[1] He should be quite strong enough to hold his present position in the existing circumstances. You were informed of the supply situation of Aylmer's Force in my 36,630 of 29th January, which was based on information supplied by General Lake and does not disclose any real grounds for apprehension on this score, though, of course, I should like Aylmer to have a larger reserve with him. With every desire to expedite the despatch of the three brigades it would be imprudent in view of the present situation on the frontier to send more troops away from India until troops to replace them have actually arrived."

On the 7th February he repeated a telegram (No. 37,761) from General Lake that General Townshend would, on short rations, have food up to April the 17th, both for the garrison and the civil population of 6,000 inhabitants. He also reported that scurvy had appeared among the Indian troops.

On the 8th the Chief of the Imperial General Staff telegraphed (No. 13,007) enquiring what orders had been given to General Lake. The reply is given below:—

From Commander-in-Chief, India, to Chief of Imperial General Staff, dated 11th February 1916.

38,439. The following telegram has been received from General Officer Commanding, Force "D":—

"1008/416/0. 10th February. 38,065 9th Feb. Very Secret. Aylmer's general plan is to advance with the maximum force for which land transport is available by night march up the right bank. The actual numbers are not yet decided, but he will be accompanied by a cavalry brigade and a strong force of artillery. On the left bank a minimum force will contain the Turks in the Hannah position. He will endeavour to defeat the Turks on the right bank at Es-Sinn position or wherever they may be found. If there should be a decisive success the advance will be continued across Hai to west of Shumran bend, so as to endeavour to capture the enemy's bridge and ships. Townshend will co-operate either by (*a*) crossing to the right bank, or (*b*) assisting with artillery fire from the left bank, or (*c*) attacking the enemy at Shumram bend by the left bank in co-operation with Aylmer on the right bank. It will depend on Aylmer's success which of these courses Townshend will adopt. Details as to crossing Townshend's force and evacuating sick and wounded to the right bank are being worked out between him and Aylmer. The supplies for Aylmer's force will be passed across the river by Townshend. The actual date of the movement is not yet settled definitely."

A reply was sent as follows:—"Reference your 1008/416/0. 38,393 10th February. It appears to me that the tactical plan is sound, except that I do not understand how it is proposed to cross the Hai, and should feel anxious as regards the feeding of Aylmer's troops if it must be dependent on Townshend being able to pass food out to him. This does not affect my views as stated in my 38,400 of 11th February"

[1] Probably about 18,000 combatants in all present and about 5,500 en route, so that he would have over 23,000 and 50 guns when he advanced.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00002a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

About this time grave doubts were felt as to the fitness of the generals in Mesopotamia to conduct such critical operations as those about to be undertaken, and the following telegrams passed between the War Office and the Commander-in-Chief:—

Telegram from Chief of Imperial General Staff to Commander-in-Chief, India, dated 11th February 1916.

"13,112 cipher. For the information of the War Committee please report whether in your opinion Lake is fitted in every respect for his present appointment. It appears to me that he is rather old considering the arduous and anxious work to be done, and I gather he is old for his years, and also rather tired. It is essential that we should have a strong and energetic commander who is not likely to break down. Our experience in France is that only young men can cope with the strain of modern war. Although Lake has just been appointed I am sure you will agree that we must not allow that or anything else to interfere with having a Commander on whom we can have thorough reliance, both as regards professional qualifications and physical fitness.

"Please also state your opinion with regard to Aylmer."

Telegram from Commander-in-Chief, India, to Chief of Imperial General Staff, dated 12th February 1916.

"38,594. Your 13,112. I am in full agreement that no personal or private consideration can for a moment be regarded in the selection of the commanders of our forces in the field. I admit that youth is *prima facie* an advantage with regard to the men you mention. General Lake is 60 years of age, but I do not consider that he is old for his age. He is a tall slight man, sparely built, who is fond of games, and who always makes a point of keeping himself in good physical training. I ordered my doctor to overhaul him, before I sent him to Mesopotamia, and make a special report to me. Therefore, physically, I feel quite sure of him. With regard to education he is a man who has read and thought, who understands soldiering from a professional point of view, and who is gifted with foresight. This is his first command in the field, and his strength of character and power of obtaining the best results from the means at his disposal have yet to be proved. So far I have not seen any signs of his failing in either of these respects. On the contrary, he assumed command in Mesopotamia at a time when everything seemed to be going wrong, and when depression was the keynote of local feeling. Since his arrival there has been a distinct improvement, and I think that we should await further experience before we consider any change in the command. As regards Aylmer, he is a man of brilliant personal courage, and has an invaluable gift of being able to win the devotion of those who serve under him. He has surprised me by his pessimistic attitude since he has arrived in Mesopotamia. In part, however, this was due to the pressure placed on him by Nixon to strike before he felt himself ready. At present I should not advise any (word omitted), but I am watching the case very carefully.

"Speaking generally as regards this matter of commanders and staff you must remember that at the beginning of the war I sent all the good men I could possibly spare to other theatres of war. For the most part, those who have done best have been retained abroad. I do not in any way complain of this, but obviously it limits my field of selection."

The eventual result of these telegrams was that Lieutenant-General Sir F. Aylmer was relieved of the command and was succeeded by Major-General Sir G. Gorringe.

As indicated on page 48, the conduct of the operations in Mesopotamia had already come under discussion in the War Committee about the end of January, and at one of their meetings Mr. Chamberlain represented that those operations had grown to such an extent that it was difficult for the India Office to control them, especially when the forces engaged comprised organisations such as New Army and Territorial troops, which were either not on the Indian establishment or not on an Indian basis. The result of the discussion was that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was requested to examine the question and to submit a Minute thereon. On the 3rd February this Minute was laid before the War Committee, and a decision was taken, the conclusions of which were embodied in the following telegram:—

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 3rd February 1916.

"Private. War Committee at meeting to-day had before them Note prepared by Chief of Imperial General Staff, by their direction, on control of operations in Mesopotamia. Note states that it is long-established custom for Government of India to control military operations based on that country. This arrangement had undoubted advantages on account of superior knowledge of local conditions, and because operations did not require employment of general Imperial resources. In present war, however, whole resources of the Empire are engaged, and all operations of war, except Mesopotamia, are now under control of Imperial General Staff, subject to decisions of War Committee. Any further reinforcements required for Mesopotamia must come from Home or other theatres of war, and events in Mesopotamia, over which War Office has up to now had no control, thus react upon operations elsewhere.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00004b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Note continues:—'It is in accordance with sound military principles that the authority 'which controls the reserves should also control the operations which those reserves may be 'required to support. It is also in accordance with these principles that the base of operations 'should be under the same general control as the forces in the field. It does not, therefore, 'seem advisable that the War Office should attempt to conduct directly the operations in 'Mesopotamia so long as India remains the main base for the campaign in that country, and, 'consequently, I have recommended that these operations should be controlled by the War 'Office, through the Commander-in-Chief in India.'

"Chief of General Staff therefore proposed alternative system which, as amended by War Committee on my suggestion, now reads as follows:—

"(1) The Commander-in-Chief in India to receive instructions with regard to military operations in Mesopotamia and Persia from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, under the authority of the Secretary of State for War, in exactly the same manner as the Commanders-in-Chief in other theatres. These instructions will, of course, be based on the decisions of the War Committee.

"(2) India will remain, as at present, the main base of the force in Mesopotamia, which will continue to be administered by the Commander-in-Chief in India, such requirements of the force as India cannot meet being supplied by the War Office from other parts of the Empire, subject to the general policy, at the time being, decided upon by the War Committee.

"(3) The General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia will send all reports of operations, states, returns, recommendations as to the higher appointments, and requests for additional units to the Commander-in-Chief in India, and will repeat these to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

"(4) Demands for drafts to maintain Indian units now in Mesopotamia and for such war material as is being provided from India will, as at present, be made on the Commander-in-Chief, India.

"(5) The Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Commander-in-Chief, India, will, as required, correspond direct in regard to the requirements of the force in Mesopotamia, but all questions of principle or policy likely to affect the military or internal security of India will continue to be referred by the Commander-in-Chief in India to the Viceroy.

"(6) Copies of all telegrams exchanged with India will be supplied by the General Staff to the Secretary of State for India.

"(7) Arrangements in regard to prisoners of war, our sick and wounded, and as to the finance of the campaign will remain as at present.

"(8) All press *communiqués* will be issued through the War Office after communication with the India Office, and telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief, India.

"(9) Intelligence obtained in India which might affect the operations will be communicated by wire to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and repeated to the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia.

"(10) The foregoing provisions are to make no change in the control of the troops in India as at present exercised.

"Subject to any observations you have to offer, War Committee of Cabinet propose to approve these arrangements. Chief of Imperial General Staff recognises that they can only work effectively if whole-heartedly accepted by the Government of India, but with goodwill on both sides central control over all the forces of the Empire in the Field will lead both to greater efficiency and economy of force, as shown by the example of our enemy. The cause of the entente has suffered greatly from the want of co-ordinated action, and the lack of co-ordination is increased by the existing system under which the Mesopotamian campaign is outside the control of the Imperial General Staff.

"I would add that I personally welcome these proposals, being convinced that they will lead to more efficient co-operation and better support from home. India cannot spare more troops, and you and I have therefore no reserves at our disposal, whilst for all military supplies I am practically dependent on supplies from War Office. At present responsibility and power are divided. By these proposals they will be united in General Staff subject to Cabinet control."

The correspondence which followed is also recorded here for convenience of reference, as an important departure from the Constitutional procedure in Indian military affairs is embodied therein. That change was only adopted to cope with a situation of abnormal and stupendous proportions.

Telegram from Viceroy, dated 10th February 1916.

"Private. Your private telegram of the 3rd instant. Control of military operations in Mesopotamia. I have consulted Commander-in Chief and we wish to assure you that we whole-heartedly accept new arrangement and will carry it out with all goodwill and in no grudging spirit.

"There are one or two points which require elucidation and possibly ammendment.

"For instance, it is not clear which authority is to make higher appointments referred to in Section 3.

"Section 5 applies only to India, but I think it is very desirable that, apart from Mesopotamia, the political control of the Viceroy in Persia and the Gulf should not be weakened.

"As regards Section 8 we must retain right to alter or even suppress War Office *communiqués* when necessary. It is seldom that a *communiqué*, as issued in London, is suitable for the Press in India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00003b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

"It is presumed that action defined in Section 9 will be reciprocal as at present.

"We already see signs of more efficient co-operation and better support from home, and we therefore welcome the change."

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 10th February 1916.

"Private. Your private telegram of 10th instant.

"Control of military operations in Mesopotamia.

"Please refer to my private telegram of the 3rd.

"To meet points raised in yours of the 10th, I have agreed with Chief of the Imperial General Staff, as follows:—Section 3, omit recommendations as to higher appointments and insert new section numbered 3 A, after 3 as follows:—

"'The General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia will make recommendations for the higher appointments to the Commander-in-Chief, India, and will repeat them to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. The appointments will be made by the Commander-in-Chief, India, subject to the approval of His Majesty's Government.

"'Higher appointments referred to are those down to Divisional Commanders inclusive and also Senior General Staff Officer.'

"Note object is to secure that Chief of the Imperial General Staff shall be consulted as to higher appointments. Only in case of difference arising between him and Commander-in-Chief, India, would Government intervene.

"Section 5. After 'security of India' insert 'or the political situation in Persia or the Gulf.'

"Sections 8 and 9. Your interpretation is accepted.

"Please bring new arrangements into force at once."

Letter from India Office to War Office, dated 14th February 1916. (No. 3293.)

"I am directed by the Secretary of State for India in Council to forward a Memorandum containing instructions for the future control of military operations in Mesopotamia, and to request that you will lay it before the Army Council.

"The instructions, as Lord Kitchener is aware, have been approved by His Majesty's Government, and they have the cordial assent of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief in India.

"Mr. Chamberlain has requested the Government of India to give effect to them at once, and he understands that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff has already been authorised to act on them.

Military (Secret) Despatch to the Government of India, No. 11, dated 18th February 1916.

"His Majesty's Government have had under their consideration the arrangements at present existing for the administration and control of military operations in Mesopotamia.

"These arrangements are in accordance with the long-established practice under which the Indian Government control and direct military operations that are based on India. In the conduct of such operations the Governor-General in Council acts as a rule independently of the War Office, and such general control and supervision as His Majesty's Government deem necessary is exercised through me.

"This system has obvious advantages when the operations are merely of local extent and importance, when India is able to meet from its own resources all demands for men and material, and when there has been no question of the employment of the resources of the Empire as a whole in the attainment of a common end. Circumstances are different in the present war. Your Excellency's Government can no longer meet the requirements of the campaign in Mesopotamia without assistance from this country, and the co-ordination of military operations in every theatre of war in which the British Empire is concerned is a matter of pressing necessity.

"His Majesty's Government have come to the conclusion that the administration and control of the operations in Mesopotamia must be adjusted to meet these conditions. The present arrangements are cumbersome. The decisions of the War Committee of the Cabinet are communicated to you through me. They are passed on by you to the Commander-in-Chief in India, who in his turn issues these instructions to the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia. The War Office is not in touch with the operations as closely as is desirable, and has not at any given moment exact information as to the strength and distribution of the troops employed, while it is called upon to provide reinforcements of men and munitions when the resources of India prove insufficient. These reinforcements can only come from the reserves in this country or from other theatres of war, and events in Mesopotamia over which the War Office has had no control react upon operations elsewhere that are under its direct supervision.

"I believe that Your Excellency is equally impressed by these considerations and is in complete agreement with His Majesty's Government as to the necessity for modifying existing arrangements for the conduct of operations in Mesopotamia, and as to the lines on which they should be modified.

"I enclose a memorandum setting out the arrangements which His Majesty's Government have now approved for the conduct of these operations, and request that the necessary steps may be taken by your Government to give effect to them. The War Office has already been instructed to bring them into force at once.

"AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000006

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

MEMORANDUM.

"(1) The Commander-in-Chief in India to receive instructions with regard to military operations in Mesopotamia and Persia from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, under the authority of the Secretary of State for War, in exactly the same manner as the Commanders-in-Chief in other theatres. These instructions will, of course, be based on the decisions of the War Committee.

"(2) India will remain, as at present, the main base of the force in Mesopotamia, which will continue to be administered by the Commander-in-Chief in India, such requirements of the force as India cannot meet being supplied by the War Office from other parts of the Empire, subject to the general policy, at the time being, decided upon by the War Committee.

"(3) The General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia will send all reports of operations, states, returns, and requests for additional units to the Commander-in-Chief in India, and will repeat these to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

"(3A) The General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia will make recommendations for the higher appointments to the Commander-in-Chief, India, and will repeat them to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. The appointments will be made by the Commander-in-Chief, India, subject to the approval of His Majesty's Government.

"Higher appointments referred to are those down to Divisional Commanders inclusive, and also Senior General Staff Officer.

"(4) Demands for drafts to maintain Indian units now in Mesopotamia, and for such war material as is being provided from India, will, as at present, be made on the Commander-in-Chief, India.

"(5.) The Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Commander-in-Chief, India, will, as required, correspond direct in regard to the requirements of the force in Mesopotamia, but all questions of principle or policy likely to affect the military or internal security of India or the political situation in Persia and the Gulf, will continue to be referred by the Commander-in-Chief in India to the Viceroy.

"(6.) Copies of all telegrams exchanged with India will be supplied by the General Staff to the Secretary of State for India.

"(7.) Arrangements in regard to prisoners of war, our sick and wounded,* and as to the finance of the campaign will remain as at present.

* This refers to the casualty lists and notifications.

"(8.) All press *communiqués* will be issued through the War Office after communication with the India Office and telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief, India.

"(9.) Intelligence obtained in India which might affect the operations will be communicated by wire to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and repeated to the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia.

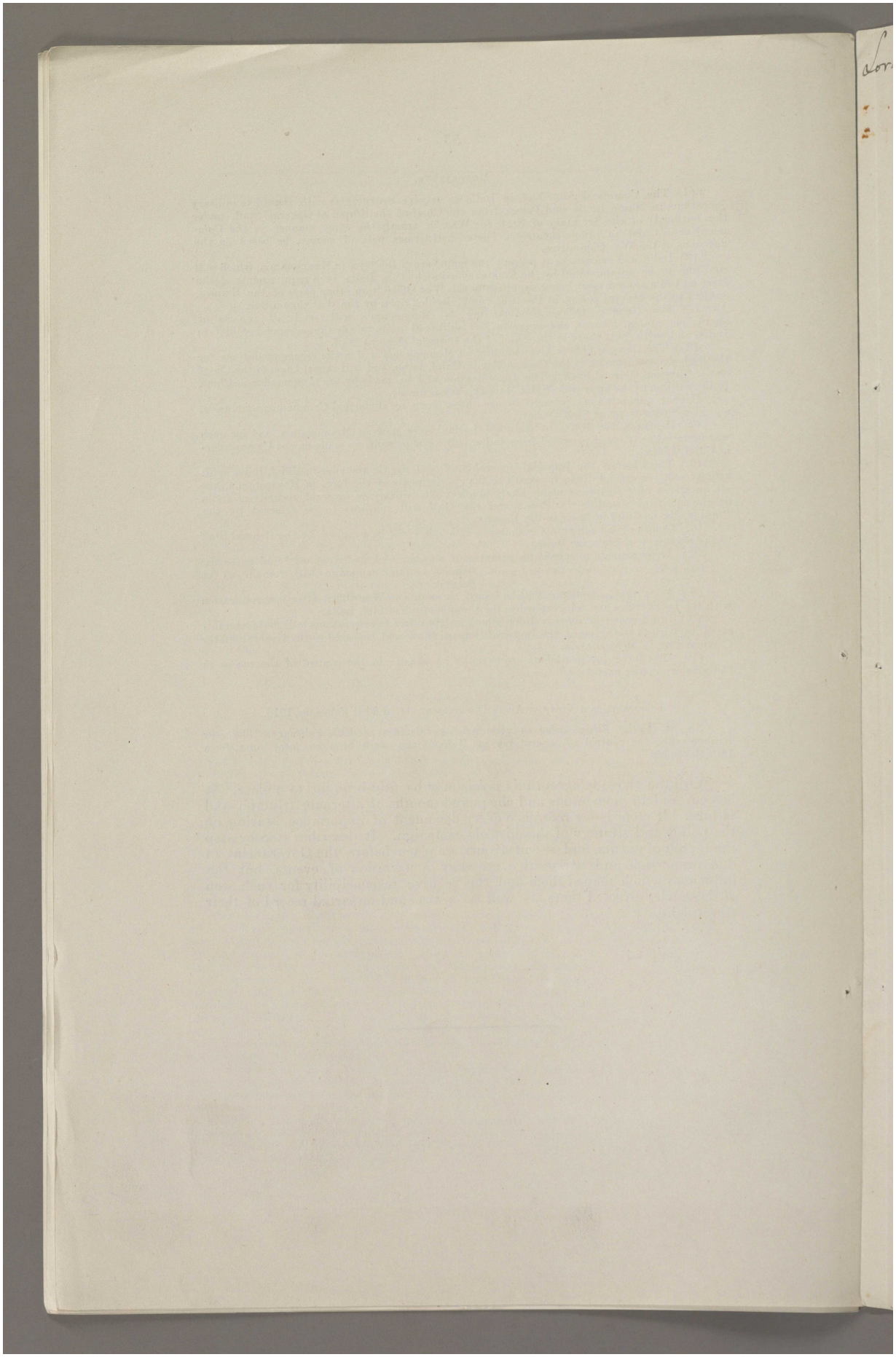
"(10.) The foregoing provisions are to make no change in the control of the troops in India as at present exercised."

"Telegram from Viceroy, Army Department, dated 23rd February 1916.

"No. H. 1401. Please refer to your private telegram of 10th February. The new arrangements for control of operations in Mesopotamia were brought into force from 16th February."

With the above telegram this *précis* may be fitly brought to a close. It has covered 16 momentous and chequered months of alternate triumph and failure. It records for reference every document of importance bearing on the policy and strategy of this historic campaign. It describes step by step the march of events, and it endeavours to place before the Government in due proportion and perspective not only a narration of events, but the influences which shaped them and the relative responsibility for each step of those who directed them, as well as a true and impartial record of their stewardship.

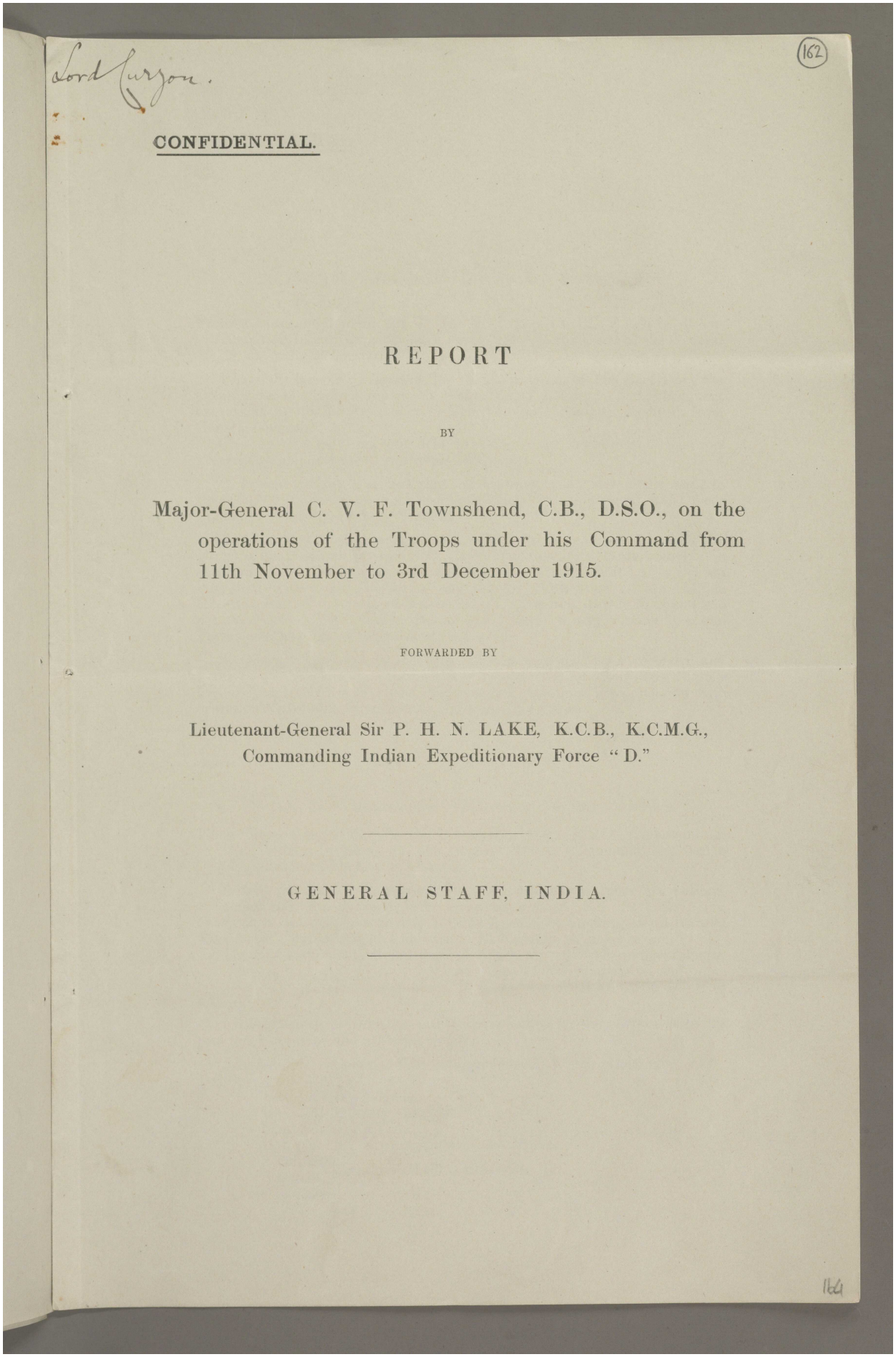
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000042



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000062

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



Lord Curzon.

162

CONFIDENTIAL.

REPORT

BY

Major-General C. V. F. Townshend, C.B., D.S.O., on the operations of the Troops under his Command from 11th November to 3rd December 1915.

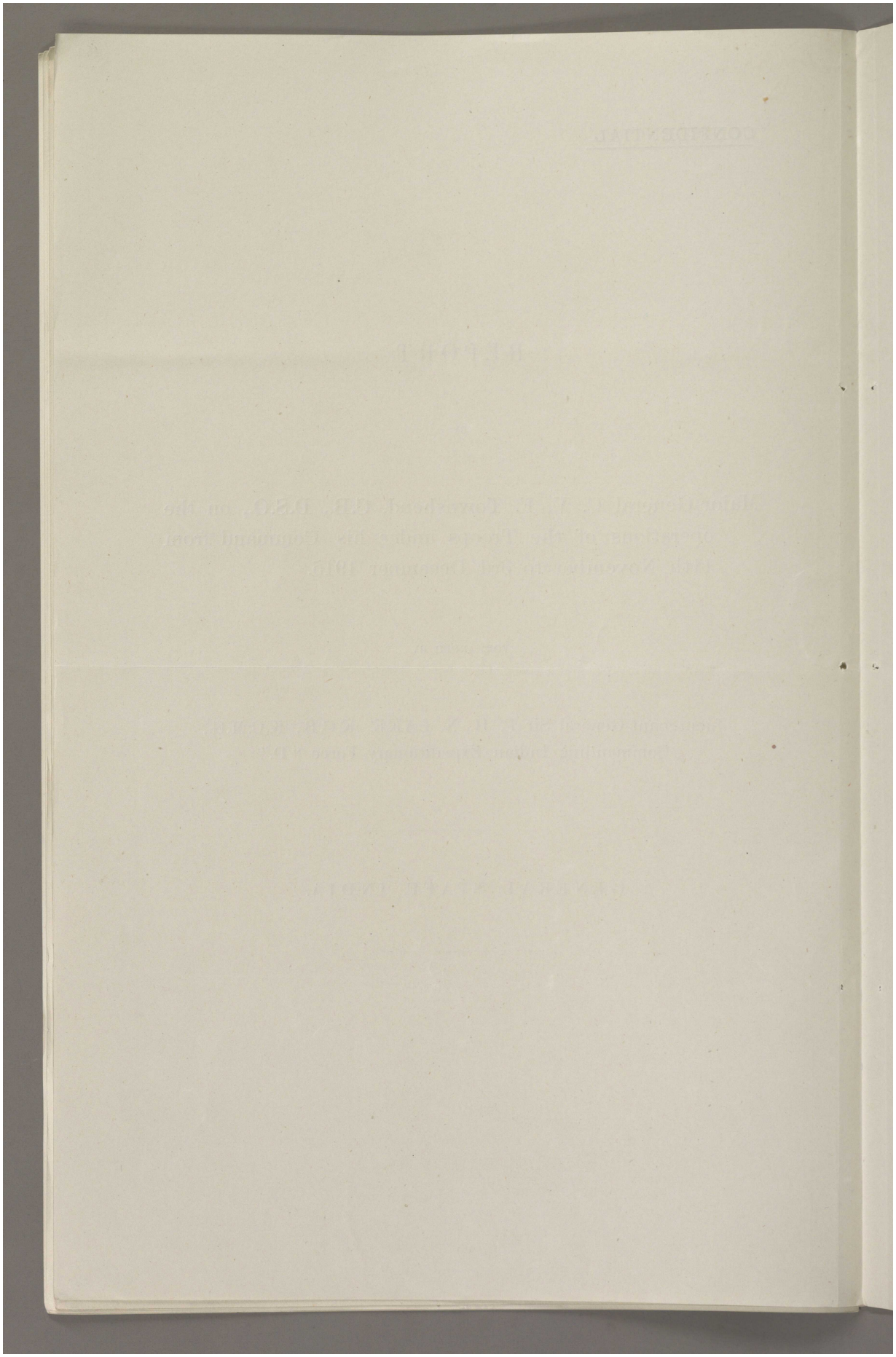
FORWARDED BY

Lieutenant-General Sir P. H. N. LAKE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.,
Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force "D."

GENERAL STAFF, INDIA.

164

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000c2



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000032

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

CONFIDENTIAL.

No. 168-21-O., dated General Headquarters I.E.F. "D," the 9th March 1916.

From Lieutenant-General Sir P. H. N. Lake, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force "D," to the Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters, India.

I have the honour to forward, for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, a report on the battle of Ctesiphon and subsequent operations up to 3rd December, which has been recently received from General Townshend.

The report, after being long delayed owing to the investment of Kut, was eventually communicated by wireless telegraphy.

2. I deem it right to remark that the accuracy of the statements made in paragraph 5 of the report is seriously challenged by the General Staff Officer in charge of the Intelligence Section.

3. A narrative of these operations has been already submitted by Sir John Nixon in his Despatch No. 168-11-O., dated 17th January. It was compiled in accordance with the rules contained in your No. 11,741-3, dated 10th December 1915, with a view to being suitable for publication in the London Gazette; but at the time of rendering his despatch, Sir John Nixon had not received a list of the officers and others serving under General Townshend who had distinguished themselves.

4. General Townshend's recommendations have now been received, and I am forwarding under separate cover, in continuation of Sir John Nixon's last despatch, a list of those deserving of mention in connection with operations from 11th November to 3rd December 1915.

No. 158-1-A., dated Headquarters VI. Division, the 20th December 1915.

From Major-General C. V. F. Townshend, C.B., D.S.O., Commanding, 6th Indian Division, to the General Officer Commanding, Indian Expeditionary Force "D," Basrah.

I have the honour to report that, in accordance with your instructions, I commenced the advance from Aziziyah against the Turkish Army entrenched at Ctesiphon, on the 11th November, by pushing the Advanced Guard (18th Mixed Brigade) forward to El Kutunie, some six miles.

The field state attached and marked Appendix "A"[1] shows our strength at about 14,000 combatants and some 40 guns, the order of battle being as follows:—

[1] Copy not available.

I had grouped the Division and troops attached for the purpose of battle into three Columns and a Flying Column.

Column "A."—Commanding—Major-General W. S. Delamain, C.B., D.S.O.—

16th Infantry Brigade.
Half 30th Infantry Brigade.
82nd Battery, R.F.A.
Half No. 22 Company, Sappers and Miners.
2 British } Sections, Field Ambulance.
3 Indian }

MS 206 50—5/1916

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000af

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Column "*B.*"—Commanding—Brigadier-General W. G. Hamilton, C.B., D.S.O.—

18th Infantry Brigade.
63rd Battery, R.F.A.
Half No. 22 Company, Sappers and Miners.
1 British } sections, Field Ambulance.
3 Indian }

Column "*C.*"—Commanding—Brigadier-General F. A. Hoghton—

17th Infantry Brigade.
Half No. 17 Company, Sappers and Miners.
1 British } sections, Field Ambulance.
2 Indian }

Flying Column.—Commanding—Major-General Sir C. J. Mellis, V.C., K.C.B.—

Cavalry Brigade (including "S" Battery, R.H.A.).
Cavalry Brigade Ammunition Column.
3 sections, Cavalry Brigade Field Ambulance.
Maxim Battery.
76th Punjabis, with 61 carts.
1 Pack Wireless Set.

Divisional Troops—

10th Brigade, R.F.A. (less 2 batteries).
1/5th Hants Howitzer Battery, R.F.A.
Heavy Battery—two 5-in. guns (Land Section).
Divisional Ammunition Column (Land Section).
Heavy Artillery (River Section)—two 4-in. guns on barges.
Divisional Ammunition Column (River Section).
Balance of Field Ambulances not allotted to Brigades (2 sections).
1 Squadron, 23rd Cavalry (Divisional Cavalry).
Aeroplanes.
No. 17 Company, Sappers and Miners (less ½ company).
Searchlight Section.
Advanced Ordnance Depôt (Barge No. 14).
100 bullocks } for two 5-in. guns.
24 carts }
Bridge Train.
48th Pioneers.
1 Wagon Wireless Set.
Divisional Supply Park.
Clearing Hospital—on "Blosse Lynch" (4 sections).
No. 34 Divisional Signal Company.
Army Corps Signal Company (1 section).

Naval Flotilla—

H.M.S. *Firefly.*
„ *Sumana.*
„ *Comet.*
„ *Shaitan.*

River Transport—

Mejidieh.
Blosse Lynch.
Mosul.
Julnar.
Salimi.

2. My principal objective was the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field entrenched astride of the Tigris in the fortified position of Ctesiphon, some 35 miles from Baghdad, and to destroy them, after which I should occupy Baghdad. *Vide* my plan of operations—Appendix "B" attached.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

3. A great source of anxiety to me was the safeguarding of the convoy of ships with barges, for the Arabs were actively hostile on both banks north, or up river, of Aziziyah, and brought heavy rifle fire to bear on ships rounding awkward bends and narrow shoal channels in the river.

Throughout my operations it will be observed I had to disseminate troops to hold river defiles, as in mountain warfare on North-West Frontier of India one has to disseminate a serious fraction of one's fighting force to safeguard the passage of one's supply convoys through mountain defiles and passes; in fact one is compelled to constantly violate the great principle of war of economy of force.

4. On the 15th November, having united my division at Aziziyah, I marched it to El Kutunie, a distance of seven miles, where I united it to the advanced guard pushed out on the 11th November, and all ships were brought to El Kutunie.

5. The Turkish Force at Ctesiphon was estimated by our Intelligence Department end aerial reconnaissance at roughly 10,900 combatants and some 36 guns, but it will be seen this was not half of the enemy's real strength, which undoubtedly amounted to well over 20,000 men and anything between 40 and 50 guns. Large reinforcements are now known to have come from Mosul and elsewhere and joined with Nur-ed-Din's army at Ctesiphon shortly before the battle.

6. On the evening of the 18th November I issued orders for my advance to Zeur the next morning, as one or two of my ships carrying essential munitions did not arrive till the afternoon of 18th November. The enemy's covering force of some 4,000 men was at Zeur entrenched and though under ordinary conditions it was indicated that the covering force would in accordance with tactical principles fall slowly back on its main body at Ctesiphon, still there is no knowing what the Turks will do or will not do, so I had to prepare for possible combat.

7. "A" and "B" Columns were to advance on Zeur along the main Baghdad road along the left bank—"A" and "B" and Flying Columns constituting my principal mass, whilst my minimum force, constituted by Column "C," moved by the right bank, accompanying the ships, in order to attack Jumeisa fort and village strongly held by the Arabs, under Sheikh Ajil, and which barred the passage of the ships at a dangerous loop in the river. 500 Turkish horsemen and two guns were said to be with Ajil.

After issuing operation orders at 6 p.m., I received news from air reconnaissance that some 4,000 to 5,000 of the enemy were on the march by the left bank from Ctesiphon to Zeur to reinforce the covering force entrenched in that locality, also that some 5,000 to 6,000 Turks were in motion towards us from Ctesiphon by the right bank, 3,000 of which were only some three or four miles away. This report was corroborated by another aerial reconnaissance conducted by Major Reilly, in whom I had implicit confidence.

8. I determined at once to entrench the minimum force represented by Column "C" on the right bank at El Kutunie covering the ships, whilst I marched at daylight with the principal mass ("A" and "B" and Flying Columns) to attack the enemy at Zeur, and on meeting them fight an encounter battle. As the enemy had divided his forces by an impassable river my tactics were clear, *i.e.*, to hold him on the right bank with my minimum force whilst with my maximum force I destroyed his force on the left bank.

9. In the early morning I advanced in two columns on Zeur about 5,000 yards apart, the cavalry working on the exterior flank of the exterior column. Should the progress of one column be arrested a turning movement of the other would assist it.

10. The enemy evacuated Zeur after a slight skirmish between the cavalry of both sides. I have reason to believe that their reported offensive

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000b4

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

movement of large bodies from Ctesiphon on both banks were merely feints of demonstrations. The aerial service is often deceived by a body of the enemy who on sighting the aeroplane move at once in a contrary direction to that of the real march, and as soon as the aeroplane is well away to give the news, the proper direction is resumed.

11. I wired for "C" Column and the ships to come on to Zeur; it was not till 9 p.m., that they arrived.

The bridge was thrown across during the night and "C" Column joined me at daylight.

At 9 a.m on 20th November I marched to Lajj Reach whence I would deliver the attack against the Turkish position at Ctesiphon.

12. I had at once decided that I would not cross to the right bank yet, *vide* my project of operations—Appendix "B"—as my shortest and most judicious road to my desired goal (the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field) lay on the left bank and I should compel him to fight with an impassable river on one flank and the equally impassable River Diala in his rear. He had of course one or two boat bridges available, but these could not avail him in a disorderly retreat.

13. I now prepared for battle. I herewith attach my general instructions. which show my plan of battle which I gave out in a lecture to all General Officers Commanding Brigades and Field Officers of units so that all should work in the ensuing battle with one "doctrine," and thus land with all their might and main. My plan of that battle was in brief the turning manœuvre with my main force, whilst I held him in front with my minimum force, as I had manœuvred at Kut-al-Amarah, but at Ctesiphon I manœuvred in four fractions instead of in two as at Kut-al-Amarah. These are soon being explained in the following General Instructions:—

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS AS REGARDS THE RÔLE TO BE PLAYED BY THE THREE ATTACKS.

Preparatory Attack—Minimum Force—
17th Mixed Brigade.

Turning Attack—
18th Mixed Brigade and mounted troops.

Decisive Attack—Principal Mass—
16th Mixed Brigade and mounted troops, and
30th Brigade (less one Battalion).

In the coming battle, whether it is fought on the right bank or on the left bank—for the sake of example let us take the left bank, since it is by this bank that I can best carry out the principle of rapidity or economy of direction—the manœuvre I shall use, as I did at the battle of Kut-al-Amarah, is the manœuvre against enemy's "flank and rear" (*vide* Section 102, paragraph 3, Field Service Regulations, Part I., 1909 (reprint 1914.))

(As there are some officers who do not have the book in their possession, I understand, I will quote the above reference.)

"Broadly speaking, success in battle may be sought by means of a converging movement of separated forces to strike the enemy's front and flank, few, if any, reserves being retained in hand by the General-in-Chief. A decisive attack against some portion of the enemy's front offers a possibility of breaking his army in two and may give great and far-reaching results. The long range, accuracy and rapidity of fire of modern weapons reduce, however, the chances of success of such an attack (the manœuvre against the enemy's centre) while failure may result in the attacking force being enveloped and destroyed. It will, usually, therefore be wiser to direct the decisive effort against one of the enemy's flanks, the choice of the objective being made either before or after deployment, according to circumstances. The development of fire attack is usually facilitated when

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000066

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

the plan of battle has for its object the envelopment of one, or if in very superior strength, both the enemy's flanks."

At Kut-al-Amarah I divided my force into two portions, viz., a minimum force, Column "B," and the principal mass or maximum force Column "A," and whilst I held on to the enemy with Column "B," I gave the round arm swing and punch with Column "A." The cavalry co-operated with the attack of the offensive wing of manœuvre, working on its exterior flank, which is the accepted position of the bulk of the cavalry in the battle in the French and German armies. It will be observed that in the coming battle I have added another portion, or rather divided my force into three portions, viz.:—

The Minimum Force or Preparatory attack.
The Turning attack, with which the mounted troops co-operate.
The Principal Mass or Decisive attack.

The reason for this is that the enemy will expect me now to repeat the distribution of troops in deployment as at Kut-al-Amarah and will endeavour to meet the turning attack with his reserve of some 3,000 to 4,000 placed back as far as Qusaibah, and I hope to surprise him with the powerful blow of the principal mass delivered on V.P. on the map, *i.e.*, the vital point, at a time when the turning attack is hotly engaged. If, during the attack of the principal mass, the enemy counter-attacks any other portion of my force, all the threatened troops have to do is to hold on, and the vigour of the principal mass or decisive attack would be increased. The success of the principal mass at the vital point means ultimate success at all points. In addition I trust to Column "C" (mounted troops) to paralyse all action of the enemy's general reserve by attacking him in rear.

Though the three attacks (in reality four, counting the attack of the mounted troops as being distinct from 18th Mixed Brigade's turning attack) appear to be separated, they are not so in reality, for I shall place them at distances apart not beyond effective field artillery range, *i.e.*, a distance of from 4,000 to 2,500 yards.

Rôle of the Preparatory Attack.—If I attack on the left bank, in all probability the preparatory attack (or minimum force) under General Hoghton with his 17th Mixed Brigade will move frontally against the enemy on a front of, say,[1] 1,500 yards with his right resting on the telegraph line, *vide* attached map. The Divisional Artillery (land section) will be with the preparatory attack so as to aid the preparatory attack with powerful artillery. General Hoghton's rôle will be thus to attack that wing of the enemy which is furthest from their line of retreat. His rôle is characterised by a defensive attitude and is analogous to our secondary or defensive field in strategy. Aided by the spade and entrenching tool and the Divisional Artillery he works his way forward to within long rifle range from the enemy if possible. Not only is his rôle to hold the enemy by the collar in his position, but, by making a great display and fight he should induce the enemy to use up his reserves. He will utilise all natural and artificial obstacles in the way of dry canals and water-cuts and accidented terrain. He will not make his attack a decisive one until it is seen that the principal mass is moving forward to the attack, which will be the signal for every able-bodied man in the force to move resolutely towards the enemy. The rôle of the minimum force can well be called a combat of immobilisation and usury.

[1] Appendix E.

Rôle of the Turning Attack.—After the battle has been well commenced by the minimum force, the turning attack, 18th Mixed Brigade and Divisional Cavalry (one squadron) under Brigadier-General Hamilton, will attack the enemy's left flank and rear (*vide* attached map)[2] which is a direct menace to the enemy's natural line of retreat. This attack must be pushed along with vigour and resolution, nothing must stop it. Column "C," mounted troops, comprising the Cavalry Brigade, "S" Battery, R.H.A., and 48th Pioneers under Major-General Sir C. J. Melliss, will co-operate by working on the exterior flank (north) of the 18th Mixed Brigade on a wide sweep of some 18 miles, so as to attack the enemy in rear with its horse

[2] Not reproduced.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000056

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

artillery guns, in the neighbourhood of Qusaibah, taking his second line of trenches *en enfilade*, and thus seriously menacing the enemy's line of retreat. Its attack should be vigorously pushed and the sound of its guns alone will cause the Turkish force south to at once look over their soldiers with a feeling of fear.

The Column "C" mounted troops will be in communication with Divisional Headquarters, which will be near the Divisional Artillery with the preparatory attack.

Rôle of the Principal Mass, or Decisive Attack.—I shall, on principle, order the principal mass forward as soon as the enemy seriously feel the attack of the turning attack, and this attack will be launched straight forward against the vital point marked V.P. on the map.

The advance of the principal mass will be the signal for the whole force to move forward against the enemy and every effort will be made by the Divisional Artillery Commander to bring a converging fire on V.P.; even the guns of the turning attack will direct their fire if possible on V.P. in order that a clear avenue of approach may be swept for the principal mass under General Delamain.

To sum up the system of this attack :—

(*a*) I make a frontal containing attack with the minimum force in order to take the wing of the enemy in front of it by the collar and pin it to the ground.

(*b*) When the minimum force is well engaged, the turning attack is launched against that flank and rear of the enemy which lies nearest his natural line of retreat.

(*c*) When the turning attack is taking effect I launch the principal mass or "hammer" blow against the same wing as that shaken by the turning attack; such dispositions carry out the two greatest of the fundamental principles of war, viz. :—

(A) Economy of force, *i.e.*, the judicious grouping of your force or forces for gaining victory; in other words you concentrate your principal mass or maximum force in your principal field of operations and your minimum force in your secondary (or defensive) field for secondary operations.

(B) The principle of the mass, which may be said to be part and parcel of economy of force.

It consists in operating with the greatest mass of your force on the decisive point, *i.e.*, the enemy's weakest point or vital point, *i.e.*, one of his flanks or his centre and which, on principle, must be on that flank which lies nearest his natural line of retreat.

These great principles won Napoleon and his greatest pupil—Moltke—all their great victories, and proves the doctrine of the great Continental armies of to-day; and the so-called French and German theories are nothing more or less than the application of Napoleon's two greatest principles of economy of force and mass. Napoleon preferred the bold wide sweeping turning movement or attack because its action is so decisive. Moltke, much more cautious, preferred the enveloping movement or attack as it is less risky, but it gives far less decisive results than the turning attack, and, as Napoleon observed "He who fears risks had better not play cards."

As a matter of fact, my dispositions for this attack by converging (*vide* map)[1] becomes finally an envelopment, only as at Kut-al-Amarah for the turning attack and principal mass converge.

[1] Not reproduced.

The German General Staff declare that there is no difference at all in their system and that of Napoleon's. The centre, they say, is practically impenetrable in these days and the flanks must be turned or enveloped in order to obtain a decisive and annihilating result. "Bind or fix the enemy in front whilst you turn and crush his wings." The strength of the attack lies in its convergent nature, consequently envelopment is naturally the most advantageous form of attack. "The enveloping troops have to face "the danger which threatens their outer flank and should therefore be "followed by reserves" (Von Der Goltz).

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00003d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

In this case the mounted troops will, I think, apply the remedy to the enemy's counter attack and the enemy has not the manœuvring power or the will to leave his entrenchments and counter attack the turning movement.

14. The account of the battle of Ctesiphon is briefly as follows:—

The troops composing the Flying Column, the turning attack, the principal mass or General Reserve, and the preparatory attack (minimum force) got into their assigned positions with no serious hitch, errors or delays, and the battle commenced as intended with a few unimportant delays, owing to which the attack was not actually commenced by the preparatory attack before the turning attack commenced, as I had intended.

15. The preparatory attack was delayed owing to reconnaissance in which it appeared doubtful if any enemy was in front of Column "C," so I ordered the turning attack to wait no longer in consequence and it attacked at 8 a.m.

16. The attack was then precipitated for the following reason:—The enemy, becoming aware of the extended turning movement around them, started evacuating his first line trenches opposite General Delamain's principal mass and then began retreating north. General Delamain signalled to me, then on the flank exterior of Column "C," that the enemy was in full retreat; might he proceed? I replied in the affirmative and galloped across to the General Reserve having signalled my change of station to the various columns.

17. But the situation rapidly changed. The enemy, who now could be seen were in immensely superior numbers, turned and fought, defending the group of redoubts at V.P. in a most tenacious manner, and faced the turning attacks of "B" Column and the Flying Column with menace and on the offensive.

18. General Delamain, with his customary energy in attack, would not be denied at V.P. redoubts and carried them in fine style, after a fierce fire fight ending up with a brilliant assault on the V.P. redoubts by the gallant 30th Brigade, under Colonel Climo, where many of his gallant brigade fell. The trenches were full of Turkish dead who had been bayonetted at their post.

19. Thus the vital point was broken in and the enemy retreated in mass on their second line of earthworks under cover of heavy artillery fire.

20. In the meantime the turning attack, comprising the Flying Column under General Mellis and the 18th Mixed Brigade under General Hamilton, had commenced their movement in attack at about 8 a.m. The Flying Column as will be seen in the map accompanying this report, was moving some 4,000 yards or so on the exterior flank, *i.e.*, north-west of General Hamilton.

[1] Not received.

The object of General Melliss was to turn the northern extremity of the Turkish second line trenches and thus enfilade the whole of these trenches with his horse artillery guns (*vide* my operation orders).

21. On nearing the second line trenches he was received by a close range fire from invisible trenches, and these he carried with his infantry battalion with Flying Column, viz., the 76th Punjabis, at the point of the bayonet. The Turks, about one or two battalions, fled out of the trenches.

22. Soon after that they came under heavy fire from the real second line trenches, and shell fire, and could make no further progress.

23. The Cavalry Brigade working round the enemy's second line trenches to the north-west were attacked by a large body of infantry advancing and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000049

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

pushed back to almost where they started from. Here they managed to hold this body of the enemy (thought to have come up from the Dialah river, some five miles off) by the splendid service of "S" battery, Royal Horse Artillery, but their casualties were very heavy; over 200 horses were hit, and about that number of men.

24. The turning attack of "B" Column, under Brigadier-General Hamilton, which attacked, had met with serious resistance by a greatly superior force. Hamilton had to attack over a perfectly flat terrain utterly devoid of all cover, and he directed it against the angle of the enemy's position in square H. 4, the 2nd Battalion Norfolk Regiment directing with the 110th Light Infantry on their left, the 120th Infantry and 7th Rajputs in reserve. His field battery—63rd—moved forward to support the attack.

25. By 12 a.m. General Hamilton had cleared the enemy out of two positions, but his troops had suffered severely, and he could make no further progress.

26. General Melliss on his right with the Flying Column had met with large numbers of the enemy who assumed the offensive and counter-attacked him.

27. In this way the whole of the turning attack was held up.

28. I will now return to the action of the principal mass which had carried the V.P. redoubts. The Turks in front of them in masses amounting to fully 4,000 men, fled from the first line in complete disorder, casting away their arms and equipment. Our infantry maintained a heavy fire at 200 yards and upwards, and a considerable amount of bayonet work was done. As soon as the bulk of the retreating Turks had withdrawn beyond effective range the 30th Brigade was rallied, reformed, and led forward against the enemy's second line of entrenchments.

29. Hundreds of Turkish prisoners had been taken, and the day appeared won. General Delamain directed a part of his command to sweep to the southward along the enemy's first line of trenches and redoubts to relieve the pressure from General Hoghton's Column "C," which was strenuously resisted and was suffering heavy losses.

30. I ordered Hoghton, who could not advance, to incline northward and unite with General Delamain. General Delamain was successful again in this move, and I witnessed a most gallant advance of the Dorset Regiment led by Major Utterson.

31. In the meantime the 30th Brigade, supported by other troops of General Delamain, had advanced against the enemy's second line of entrenchments which they carried, capturing some eight field guns, after a fierce resistance on the part of the Turks. The guns were captured by a crowd of the 7th Gurkhas, 24th and 66th Punjabis, and some of the Dorsets, who all raced to see who could put their Corps names on the guns first.

32. It was now about 12.15 p.m. when the enemy in great numbers, having withstood the attack of General Hamilton's turning attack, now counter-attacked along the whole of their second line of entrenchments, supported by a fierce bombardment of many guns, including heavy guns from the opposite bank of the river. This violent shell fire continued without cessation for some hours and was covering the ground in the vicinity of the V.P. redoubts. Constantly we had to shift the position of Divisional Headquarters and many of the heavy casualties of the 6th Division occurred at this period of the battle.

33. Our troops were at last compelled to give way from their position in front of the enemy's second line. Colonel Climo, being wounded three times, was taken to the rear and our troops were seen falling back on

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000081

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

V.P. redoubts. The captured guns were abandoned, the breech blocks being taken away.

34. The troops were rallied and freshly supported and the attacks renewed not once but twice more. But the troops were in front of overwhelming numbers, they had done all that men could do, and I realised I must hold on till darkness and bivouac on the battle-field, and hope that as at Shaiba the enemy would retreat in the night, first of all uniting my force —"B" Column and the Flying Column with "A" and "C" Columns—all on the line from V.P. redoubts by some 1¾ miles to the southward along the enemy's first line of trenches and redoubts.

35. Our casualties were very heavy, some 4,500 men killed, wounded and missing out of 14,000 combatants, whilst the Turks had lost enormously. Whole trenches were choked with their dead in the second line trenches.

36. When morning came, 23rd November, we discovered a part of the Turkish force, viz., the bulk had retired north to the Dialah river and was entrenching a position whilst a rear-guard force of unknown strength held on to the second line of entrenchments, and had removed the boat bridge (Square H. 5) and were towing it up river.

37. My troops, utterly mixed up and disorganised, were in no condition to attack earthworks and trenches again, and I resolved to hold on where I was, making my position as strong as I could. My chief and great difficulty was my enormous number of wounded, for whom I had to utilise all available transport carts; and the continued and violent shelling of our position continued all day. I had to reorganise the different brigades which had become almost hopelessly mixed up. The 17th Brigade, which had been thrown into the last attack on the enemy's second line of entrenchments, could only muster some 700 men; General Delamain and General Hamilton's Brigades were under 1,000 men each. All offensive action or dreaming of it was precluded until I had rested, reorganised and reached the river and water, for neither animals or men had watered since we had left Lajj (21st evening).

38. The position I selected then to hold with my shattered Division was from the left hand top corner of Square J. 5 to centre of Square J. 6. It included what is known as the high wall of Ctesiphon aligned roughly on existing works and trenches. There I was near the river and could water. I could bring up the ships and Naval Flotilla from Lajj, replenish ammunition and evacuate the wounded on the ships.

39. The Division was to move as soon as possible on the 23rd, and Column "C" was to move last, when it had covered the evacuation of the wounded.

40. The move was carried out, but the evacuation of the wounded was not nearly concluded by nightfall, and Column "C" was attacked at night and so pinned to the V.P. redoubts.

41. General Delamain's Brigade was also heavily attacked in the night. I was present at the time in the trenches at this point and brought up half General Hamilton's Brigade to support him. To show the violence of the attacks, one assault of the enemy reached to some 10 or 15 yards from our wire entanglements and the grenadiers of the Dorset Regiment killed 8 and wounded 15 Turks with their bombs. All attacks in the night were repulsed with heavy loss.

The situation of General Hoghton's Column "C" had caused me great anxiety, for his battery had run out of ammunition, but we managed in the night to send more carts to evacuate the wounded and I arranged an offensive movement forward towards V.P. redoubts in order to allow Column "C" to retire unmolested. This manœuvre was successfully carried out.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000b7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

42. On the morning of the 24th November, the enemy having retired to the second line of entrencements, the Division united was installed in the high walls of Ctesiphon. On the same morning I evacuated the wounded to Bastan where they were embarked on ships.

43. I may mention here that the Naval Flotilla had not been able to advance up river from Bastan owing to fire of big guns at the foot of the loop of the river (bottom of Square K. 6).

44. The day of the 24th November passed in quietness.
On the 25th November, our aerial service reported a fresh movement of large columns estimated at three divisions of enemy towards me from the Dialah. They occupied again the second line of trenches in their former position whilst an advanced guard of some 3,000 men moved towards Ctesiphon and a marching column was moving east in Squares I. and J.

45. It was clear to me that I was shortly to be attacked by superior numbers, which proved to be large reinforcements from the north who had last been engaged with the Russians.

46. We had already driven four divisions of Turks out of a very strong defensive position. We were too weak to deliver another battle against such odds and force our way to Baghdad, and I decided to fall back on my ships at Lajj under cover of darkness.

47. On the night of 25th November I sent a Staff Officer back to Lajj to allot the zone of my bivouac in a fighting positon at the top of the river bend, and the transport was ordered to move an hour before the main body. I considered that I had sufficiently waited in the worst tactical or strategical position that could be imagined for the sake of political reasons which, if allowed to clash with the reasons of the strategist or tactician, invariably bring disaster. My duty seemed clear to extricate and preserve my Division by a steady retirement until near enough to our own reinforcements to be able to make a stand. To stay at Ctesiphon meant annihilation, and such a shock to the Indian Empire as had not been felt since the Kabul disaster in the first Afghan War.

48. I marched at 8.30 p.m., the transport with escort of half a battalion preceding the main body by one hour's march. The rear-guard followed quietly without a single shot, although the enemy were close at hand. The manœuvre was carried out with precision and silence.

49. On the 27th November—at Lajj—the air service and cavalry reconnaissance reported the advance of large columns estimated at 12,000 infantry with guns, and a cavalry brigade, from Bastan on Lajj.

50. I moved off in retreat in the afternoon with two columns covering the move of the ships, the enemy being only some 6,000 yards distant when my columns moved off.

51. I marched through the night *viâ* Zeur and El Kutunie to Aziziyah where I halted the 28th and 29th November in order to evacuate wounded and accumulated stores out of Aziziyah in the *Mejidieh* and barges, which sailed for Kut on the 29th November.

52. The enemy's advanced guard occupied El Kutunie—6 miles distant—on this date and the gunboat *Shaitan* which had been beached near El Kutunie to prevent it sinking, as a plate had opened, had to be abandoned under a heavy artillery fire. The gun and machine gun on her were saved. The crew had tried to pump the water out, and I sent out the cavalry brigade, joined by the 14th Hussars at Aziziyah, to drive off the Arabs who from the left bank near El Kutunie were subjecting the Naval crew working on the *Shaitan* to a very heavy fire. The 14th Hussars and the 7th Lancers charged, accounting for some 140 Arabs, who fled in all directions.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000058

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

53. The enemy's main body was reported at Zeur.

I issued orders on the 29th November for retreat on Kut, to march at 11 a.m. on 30th. I had ordered General Melliss to precede me with the 30th Brigade to Kut in order to open the line of communications near Shaikh Saad which had been interrupted by a Turkish detachment and Arabs.

54. I decided to march only 10 miles to Umm-at-Tubul in order to assist the passage of the ships through the difficult reach, owing to the request of the Senior Naval Officer, who said that otherwise some of the ships would be captured. The ships arrived safely at Umm-at-Tubul in the afternoon. I ordered the march next morning at 9 a.m. to Nahr Killek, a distance of 14 miles, the transport to march at 7.30 a.m. and the ships to start at 7 a.m.

55. At 9 p.m. on the night of 30th November we were shelled by Camel Corps guns and I suspected that the enemy were following close. Moreover I thought I could hear the noise of cart wheels. I realised that it would be impossible to get the column off with its unwieldy transport in the middle of the night when not forewarned and the enemy probably close at hand, nor could the ships move till daylight.

56. I resolved therefore to await daylight, giving orders for the move at that hour, and made my dispositions to attack the enemy should he be found to be close on me, as soon as I could see, by using the 18th Brigade to frontally attack, whilst with the 16th and 17th I should deliver an eveloping attack against the enemy's left flank, the Cavalry Brigade co-operating with the enveloping attack.

I passed a very anxious night.

57. I sent for General Officers Commanding Brigades at 5 a.m., and explained what I should do and I accelerated the march of the transport. I sent a message at about 3 a.m. to General Melliss, encamped some 10 miles down river to come back at daylight to my assistance, telling him that I feared I had been overtaken by the enemy. I instructed him to move well into the desert to the north of the road so as to envelop, or turn the enemy pressing me.

Action at Umm-at-Tubul, 1st December 1915.

58. At daylight, 6.45 a.m., just as the transport began to move off, we saw about 12,000 Turkish troops in long lines advancing on us about 2,500 yards distant; their left wing was endeavouring to envelop or turn my retreat down river. I at once attacked, all my artillery opening with murderous effect and covering the hostile turning attack with shells. Never have I seen artillery shoot with the precision the 10th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, did on that morning. The effect was to bring the enemy's enveloping attack to a standstill.

59. I sent off an order rapidly by cavalry liaison officer for the Cavalry Brigade with Horse Artillery Battery to rapidly deliver a turning attack against and round the enemy's enveloping attack. This was done most rapidly and under excellent conditions, the effect being that the enemy's enveloping attack broke and ran.

I then took the opportunity rapidly to begin a retirement by alternate Brigades in echelon and this movement was carried out with the precision of clockwork in a gliding away move in steady continuous retirement under a most severe shell fire from the enemy's guns which were firing common shell and shrapnel.

60. Never have I, on manœuvres even, seen a better conducted retirement. It must be remembered I had good Brigade commanders. I may have played near the flame too close; I was not surprised but I was forced into fighting as Crauford with the Light Division was at the combat of the Coa in 1810, but I extricated myself with regularity and order whereas Crauford only escaped in the utmost disorder and confusion losing heavily especially in prisoners. The common shell was exploding all over the place amongst us

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00006f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

and several shaves I and my staff had, horses and wagons being knocked over and casualities quite numerous, but nothing disturbed our steady retirement over that flat bare terrain without a bush as cover for miles.

61. As I had intended, General Melliss arrived well out to the Northern flank about 9 a.m. The enemy had then given up the pursuit except by artillery, cavalry and Arab horsemen.

As the ground was absolutely open and bare I used a simultaneous retirement of columns in line all extended at first till the hostile infantry had given up the pursuit.

62. At night we reached Shadi (or Monkey village) having marched some 36 miles, the troops utterly exhausted.

It was pitch dark at Shadi. We lit some fires but there was no food to be distributed and the troops lay down and slept in column of route.

I marched on again at daylight, relieved to be able to see no sign of the enemy, but the troops were without food and worn out and the march was a most painful one, and towards midday the men fell out in scores. We utilised all transport carts available to carry them.

63. Arab horsemen continued to hang on to the skirts of the columns as on the previous day and a continuous dropping fire of musketry lasted till the afternoon. I refused to make any halt, *i.e.*, long halt, till 1 p.m. when I halted for 2 hours at a convenient bend of the river. At dusk I halted about 6 miles west of Kut.

The troops had now marched 43 miles in 34 hours which included 6 hours of rearguard fighting, the casualties being 513 killed and wounded, &c.

The next morning, 3rd December, I marched into Kut.

64. The entire march in retreat from Ctesiphon was between 80 and 90 miles with greatly superior forces on my heels all the way, and I had not lost a gun or a single prisoner (the Turks had captured some sick and wounded men on the barge which was captured by them on the river on 1st December and which I was informed afterwards had grounded on a sandbank and could not be got off). Moreover, I had brought with my column all the way the 1,200 Turkish prisoners I had captured at Ctesiphon.

The discipline of the Division, though it had suffered a loss of over 5,000 killed and wounded out of a total of 14,000 combatants with whom I had started from Aziziyah, remained admirable.

65. I did not learn till towards the end of the rearguard action on 1st December at Umm-at-Tubul that the gunboats "Firefly" and "Comet" had fallen into the hands of the enemy. The former got a shell through her boiler and was hard and fast on a mudbank, and the latter going to her assistance was hulled, rendered unmanageable and set on fire by shells, and so both were abandoned by the Senior Naval Officer. An aviation barge and a barge of supplies with sick men on board (referred to above in paragraph 64) also got aground and were captured.

66. Thus ended the operations I was ordered to carry out at Aziziyah, *viz.*, to beat the Turks at Ctesiphon and occupy Baghdad. I had been unable to carry out my mission simply from the fact that the Turks had been able to obtain large reinforcements from their principal field of operations in the Gallipoli Peninsula to their forces in their secondary or defensive field in Mesopotamia. I had been anxious on the subject of these reinforcements from Gallipoli even in September when I had to conduct operations from Amarah to beat the Turks at Kut-al-Amarah and occupy that strategic point, but I defeated Nur-ed-Din before he could receive important reinforcements, though actually when I delivered that battle reinforcements had reached Baghdad from the north.

67. Having brought my command then safely into Kut, I telegraphed to Sir John Nixon saying that I determined to make a stand at Kut and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00008e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

dig an entrenched camp in order to hold up the Turkish offensive counter-stroke at all costs, in order to enable him to concentrate reinforcements arriving at Basrah from India on the line Amarah—Ali-al-Gharbi.

I knew full well the fate that in history is usually dealt out to a force which shuts itself up voluntarily in an entrenched camp, but it was, I judged, of vital importance to the Empire to stop the Turkish offensive at all costs, whatever happened to my force. But I asked to be relieved in a month.

* * * * *

(Here follows a list of "mentions.")

CHARLES TOWNSHEND, *Major-General*,
Commanding 6th Division.

APPENDIX B.

PROJECT OF OPERATIONS.

Advance from Aziziyah.

(1) *My principal objective.*—In moving forward for the next stage my principal objective is to seek the *bulk* of the hostile force in the field and to destroy it, then to occupy Baghdad.

(2) To this end, the decisive victory having been gained, it must be put to profit by an unrelaxing pursuit, then to march on Baghdad and occupy it. Such was my intention in the Kut-al-Amarah operations, but a combination of circumstances rendered the victory indecisive as far as Baghdad is concerned; had the offensive wing of manœuvre progressed in the battle as I had planned, the Amarah to Baghdad phase of the campaign would have ended in an unopposed entry into Baghdad.

(3) (*a*) *The bulk of the enemy's forces* is on the *left bank of the Tigris* (as shown in the attached strategic[1] map), some four miles above (north of) Ctesiphon by the *Bridge of boats*, handy for transfer to either bank in his *Principal Mass* = 4,000 Infantry (? estimated). *See* Appendix A.[1] attached. Aircraft reconnaissance report.

(*b*) A *force de couverture* estimated at 2,500 Infantry, 700 Cavalry, and 400 Camel Corps is entrenched at Zeur on the left bank. *See* Appendix A.[1] attached. Aircraft reconnaissance report.

(*c*) On the *right bank*, holding a mile of entrenchments at Selucia (including one strong redoubt) is a garrison detachment of 1,500 Infantry and 500 Cavalry. *See* Appendix A.[1] Aircraft reconnaissance report.

(*d*) The lines of Ctesiphon on *left bank* are occupied by an estimated 1,500 Infantry and 500 Cavalry.

The total of the enemy's forces in the field I estimate at 10,900 *combatants and* 30 *guns*. [*Vide* Appendix (B[1]) attached.]

(4) Therefore it is indicated that I should advance from Aziziyah by the left bank if I march on my principal objective and combine it with the principle of war of *Ratidity or Economy of Direction*; being the shortest and most judicious road, viz., the Baghdad road, to gain my desired goal, which is, to defeat the bulk of the hostile forces in the field and to occupy Baghdad; my directing idea is to get Nur-ed-Din to fight me in the open if possible, as a continuous campaign of attacking entrenchments lessens the men's keenness for battle.

(5) In consequence then of the above principles and ideas I intend to unite all my force in my hand and move forward united to attack the

[1] Not received.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000c5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

enemy's force at *Zeur*, and this, according to tactical principles, *should retire on the main body at Ctesiphon* as soon as I advance to El Kutunie from here.

If, on the contrary, it stands to fight in the Zeur entrenchments, so much the better for me, it will enable me to take advantage of a tactical error, viz., dissemination, or violation of the principle economy of force, and destroy this detached force in consequence.

Zeur is distant from Ctesiphon some 16 miles (and even 19 from where the main body of the Ctesiphon troops is stationed), and when I reach Kutunie that place is only seven miles distant from Zeur, and so the main force at its station north of Ctesiphon will hardly be able to unite itself with the force at Zeur in time to prevent me destroying it.

I should march straight against the force at Zeur, drawing in my *Turning attack* like a net on to their left flank and rear.

(6) (*A*) *If the enemy on the other hand fell back on Ctesiphon.*—I should either follow as rapidly as possible (endeavouring with my Cavalry Brigade to cut off this rear guard) and attack the enemy in his position at Ctesiphon on the *left bank* of the river, by the same tactics of the turning move against the enemy's left (northern) flank; only attacking that part of his position which lies north of the Baghdad road (some $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles only of entrenchments and redoubts). My Cavalry Brigade, working on the exterior flank of the turning attack moving on a wide circle, would attack the enemy's left rear moving along the telegraph line from the north.

(*B*) Or in order to avoid the enemy's invitation to attack him in his entrenched position at Ctesiphon, and so make him cross after me to the other bank and thus draw him into the *open ground* where he will have no entrenchments, and so be far less formidable, I should throw my bridge of boats across the Tigris at Saisbannah some 5 miles west of Zeur in the night and cross when bridge ready to the *right bank*, and move on Baghdad.

This would, I think, compel Nur-ed-Din to cross the river by his bridge of boats above Ctesiphon and march some 5 miles in order to occupy the trenches on the right bank (*only 1 mile of trenches*) which can easily be turned by me, the great bulk of his force would be compelled to fight in that case in the open, and the remedy again to be applied would be the turning move against the enemy's rear and right (west) flank, the Cavalry and Horse Artillery guns moving in a wide sweep to the westward to occupy mounds 20 feet high 3 miles north of the enemy's position close to and commanding the bridge of boats; attacking the mound if held by the enemy.

(7) I prefer "B" plan as it should be very decisive if Nur-ed-Din gives battle in this way; there is no chance of having to force the unfordable Dialah river; I have my bridge of boats with me and can cross wherever I wish to enter Baghdad.

There is an existing bridge of boats at Qararah, the boat bridge at the mouth of the Dialah is not removed yet I think. Then another reason for not attacking the Ctesiphon position on the left bank is firstly because the enemy invites me to do so, and secondly the Shrine of Sulman Pak is there, a most sacred place to Mohammedans, and the Mohammedans of our Indian troops are already talking amongst themselves of the sacrilege in firing on such a holy place as Sulman Pak.

(8) Should Nur-ed-Din, on my adopting "B" plan, retire into Baghdad and call on the inhabitants to defend the Holy City, which I do not think probable, for once in the city his force would as regards the Arab battalions, &c., largely disband themselves, if he did so I should take up a position south-east of the city and act according to circumstances, by bombardment or assault after giving inhabitants time to think of consequences and use of secret service money with civilians for compelling Turkish force to retire without fighting and so spare city from horror of an assault.

If I had to attack city on left bank of Tigris, the frontal attack would be along the left bank of the river connected with my ships and gunboats, the offensive wing of manœuvre turning the city by the eastwards, forcing entrance by roads entering Baghdad at its north and north-east fronts.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000c3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(9) In the meantime the disposal of the enemy is given in Appendix "B." He has practically no transport but his steamers and barges.

(10) What is the enemy likely to do?

I think it is probable that he will continue his policy of the pure defensive since he has not the mobility nor the power of manœuvring necessary for him to change the defensive into the offensive.

Since I advanced to attack Qurnah the Turkish generals have been on the passive defensive throughout; as their history has been for the last century or more; from the time of the defence of Acre against Bonaparte up to the defence of Plevna and the defence yesterday of the famous lines of Tchataldtcha covering Constantinople, the Turk fights well and only well when behind defences and has been mediocre, to say the least of it, in the open.

His strategy in Mesopotamia after Shaiba has been to retire from defensive positions to defensive position into the interior of his country, so as to gain time, during which those factors which in Europe constantly tend to weaken the tide of the offensive (such as want of reinforcements, *i.e.*, a copious flow of them with munitions, &c.) and in the east in addition those factors peculiar to the East alone, such as heat, disease, &c., have time to operate on the attacker. He has been slowly withdrawing, but approaching meanwhile his source of supply, Baghdad. And in strategy the action of the Turks is absolutely in accordance with the fundamental principles of the art of war; the greatest principle of all *Economy of Force* demand that they should unite every soul to fight in their *Principal Field* wherein the real decision is being fought out, *i.e.*, the Gallipoli Peninsula and defence of Constantinople, whilst their secondary or defensive fields of action such as Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia should only be held on the *defensive* by the *Minimum Force*.

Therefore, I do not expect the Turks to take the offensive against us in Mesopotamia until they are successful in the Gallipoli Peninsula, and in that case the offensive in overwhelming numbers will be taken in Mesopotamia at once.

Such action as I sketch above would be good strategy (and in this connection I have always been amazed at our engaging those large forces of ours in a *secondary field* when every soul in the Empire should be in France and Flanders) and as their strategy is directed by German officers I think that the above is a correct appreciation.

(11) I hope the Army Commander will make every effort to bring in all those men detached from my Division at Basrah, and so forth, and urge the authorities in India to send at least another Division and quickly. As long as more troops come into the country even, the Arabs will remain tranquil and we have confidence; as it is now the British soldier and sepoy look over their shoulders uneasy at the great distance from the sea.

The grand total of my troops at Aziziyah, *i.e.*, 6th Division and some three or four squadrons of cavalry is 9,183 combatants and 365 weakly men in addition, not able to march for a few days, but able to use a rifle and hold a post.

Camp Aziziyah,
31st October 1915.

(Sd.) C. V. F. Townshend, *Major-General,*
Commanding 6th Division.

APPENDIX C.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR G.O.C., FLYING COLUMN.

Orders and Measures to be taken in the Pursuit on the Left Bank.

From the moment there is no more doubt that the enemy is retreating the Flying Column will be assembled for the pursuit in the direction of the enemy's lines or direction of retreat, on principle men and animals feed and rest until aerial reconnaissance indicates lines of retreat of enemy.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000c0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

2. Although Cavalry and Horse Artillery are the two principal arms in the pursuit, we must add Infantry to support them conveyed in carts, motor cars, &c., and to dislodge the enemy from defended localities. Consequently, I have added the 48th Pioneers to the Flying Column with 75 Jaipur Transport carts so that half the battalion can be riding in the carts.

3. The pursuit in this case will be a *Strategic Pursuit* which is directed in such a manner as to cut off the enemy from his principal line of communications, *i.e.*, the direction in which he will find reinforcements and the bulk of his resources, or which aims at preventing the enemy's separated portions from being able to unite again. It will also in another sense be a *Tactical Pursuit* which is a rapid parallel march to the enemy's line of retreat to forestall him at the Dialah bridges and put the enemy between two fires if possible; the *purely frontal* pursuit must be left to the Advanced Guard of the main body of the force, and the principle must be to menace the enemy's line of retreat, constantly endeavouring to gain the flank of the retreating bodies of troops. Often the sudden appearance of a regiment of cavalry or the sound of a distant cannonade to a flank spreads fear in the enemy and decides a rear-guard to abandon a position the attack of which would have caused great loss.

One of the most efficacious means to demoralise the hostile troops who are retreating after a defeat consists in shelling them in their cantonment at night time; the night is most favourable to the pursuers, for by opening fire with Artillery at night, even firing *en l'air*, causes the demoralisation, panic, and confusion amongst the tired and exhausted enemy bivouacked or in houses; their one idea is that they are cut off, and numbers at once seek safety in a disorderly flight. This was very apparent in our pursuit of the enemy to Amarah after the Qurnah action.

4. It must be remembered that a direct pursuit by cavalry is of no use whatever as they bump into the hostile rear-guard who easily check them in strong localities or mud villages.

5. It is only Divisional Cavalry with an Advanced Guard of an Infantry Column which should ever follow an enemy upon the direct road; the bulk of the Cavalry and Horse Artillery must be directed against the enemy's flank and rear.

6. I cannot understand how during the retreat of our army from Mons to the Marne they did not lose all the material and impedimenta at the first defile encountered, when one thinks of the great amount of Divisional Artillery, the Artillery Brigade Ammunition Column, the Divisional Train and Divisional Supply Column and Divisional Ammunition Column which goes to make up a British Division; when it is considered that it would take some hours to get them into a steady flow of retirement in, generally speaking in Europe, *one single road* running in the direction required for the retreat, one understands the confusion and disorder there must of necessity have been, and one can understand the anxiety and troubles of the rearguard commander.

7. The Flying Column in pursuit should endeavour to make a wide sweep round if possible, a portion of the Cavalry being used to cut the railway in rear of the beaten enemy so as to ensure all his rolling-stock and material being evacuated, and trains of wounded, &c., to fall into our hands.

8. The Army Commander indicates three points on the enemy's line of retreat, which would promise decisive results if the Cavalry managed to forestall the enemy there:—

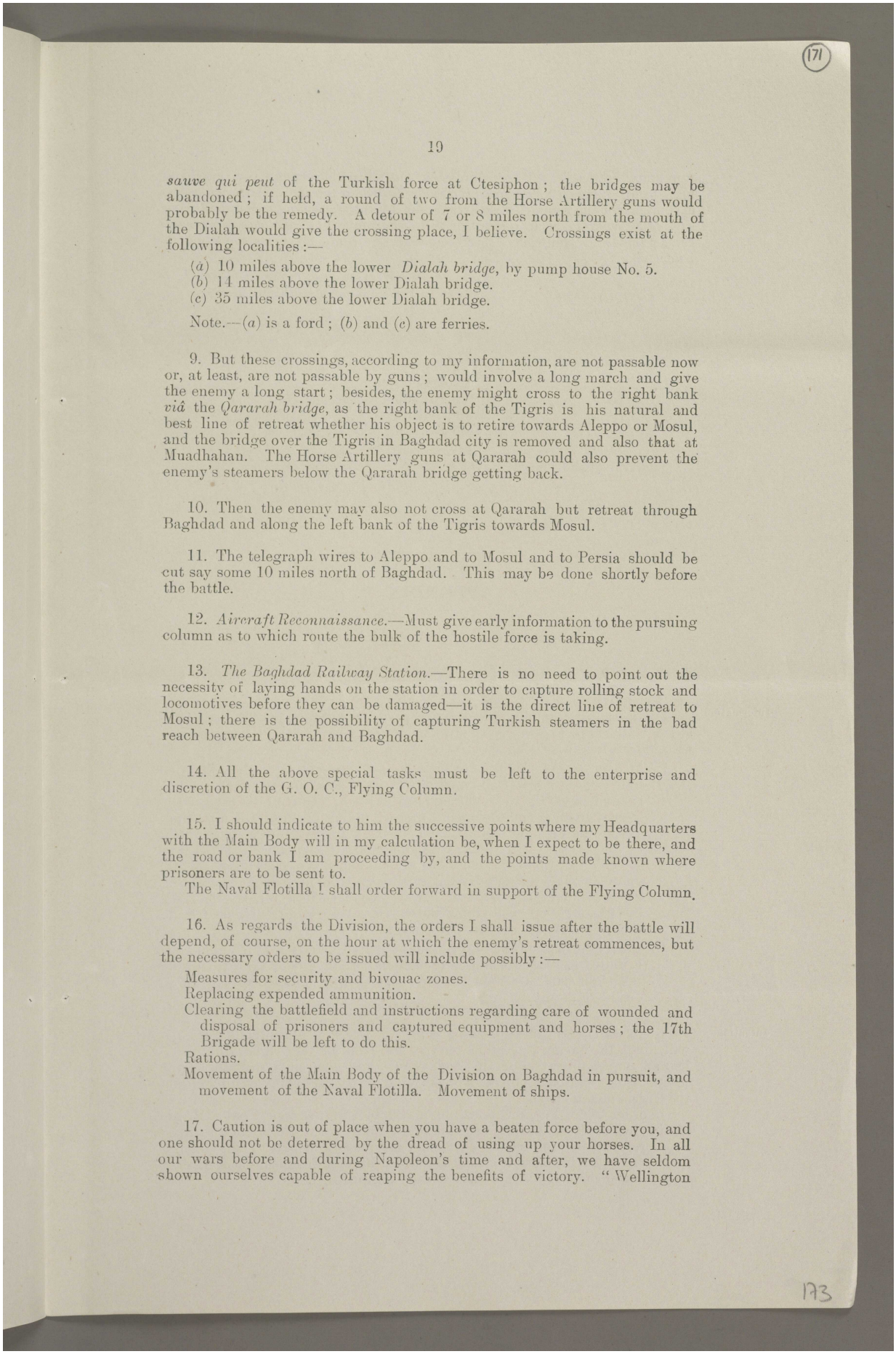
(I.) Dialah bridges.
(II.) Qararah bridge.
(III.) Baghdad railway station.

The enemy have entrenchments to defend the boat bridges of the Dialah, but they will probably cut those bridges and clear off if is there is a general

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00005e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



sauve qui peut of the Turkish force at Ctesiphon; the bridges may be abandoned; if held, a round of two from the Horse Artillery guns would probably be the remedy. A detour of 7 or 8 miles north from the mouth of the Dialah would give the crossing place, I believe. Crossings exist at the following localities:—

(*a*) 10 miles above the lower *Dialah bridge*, by pump house No. 5.
(*b*) 14 miles above the lower Dialah bridge.
(*c*) 35 miles above the lower Dialah bridge.

Note.—(*a*) is a ford; (*b*) and (*c*) are ferries.

9. But these crossings, according to my information, are not passable now or, at least, are not passable by guns; would involve a long march and give the enemy a long start; besides, the enemy might cross to the right bank *viâ* the *Qararah bridge*, as the right bank of the Tigris is his natural and best line of retreat whether his object is to retire towards Aleppo or Mosul, and the bridge over the Tigris in Baghdad city is removed and also that at Muadhahan. The Horse Artillery guns at Qararah could also prevent the enemy's steamers below the Qararah bridge getting back.

10. Then the enemy may also not cross at Qararah but retreat through Baghdad and along the left bank of the Tigris towards Mosul.

11. The telegraph wires to Aleppo and to Mosul and to Persia should be cut say some 10 miles north of Baghdad. This may be done shortly before the battle.

12. *Aircraft Reconnaissance.*—Must give early information to the pursuing column as to which route the bulk of the hostile force is taking.

13. *The Baghdad Railway Station.*—There is no need to point out the necessity of laying hands on the station in order to capture rolling stock and locomotives before they can be damaged—it is the direct line of retreat to Mosul; there is the possibility of capturing Turkish steamers in the bad reach between Qararah and Baghdad.

14. All the above special tasks must be left to the enterprise and discretion of the G. O. C., Flying Column.

15. I should indicate to him the successive points where my Headquarters with the Main Body will in my calculation be, when I expect to be there, and the road or bank I am proceeding by, and the points made known where prisoners are to be sent to.
The Naval Flotilla I shall order forward in support of the Flying Column.

16. As regards the Division, the orders I shall issue after the battle will depend, of course, on the hour at which the enemy's retreat commences, but the necessary orders to be issued will include possibly:—

Measures for security and bivouac zones.
Replacing expended ammunition.
Clearing the battlefield and instructions regarding care of wounded and disposal of prisoners and captured equipment and horses; the 17th Brigade will be left to do this.
Rations.
Movement of the Main Body of the Division on Baghdad in pursuit, and movement of the Naval Flotilla. Movement of ships.

17. Caution is out of place when you have a beaten force before you, and one should not be deterred by the dread of using up your horses. In all our wars before and during Napoleon's time and after, we have seldom shown ourselves capable of reaping the benefits of victory. "Wellington

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00001b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

won many battles," said Lord Wolseley, but never delivered a very crushing blow to his opponents, *because he always failed to pursue.* Waterloo is no exception, for the pursuit was carried out by the Prussians. Marshal Saxe says of a General sent in pursuit of a beaten army, "*Il faut poursuivre sans cesse ; toutes les manœuvres sont bonnes alors; il n'y a que les sages qui ne valent rien.*"

(Sd.) C. V. F. Townshend, *Major General,*
Commanding, 6th Division.

Camp Aziziyah,
8th November 1915.

To

The General Officer Commanding :—
Flying Column.
16th Brigade.
17th Brigade.
18th Brigade.
Cavalry Brigade.
The Brigadier-General, Royal Artillery.

(Sd.) B. G. Peel, *Captain,*
for *Colonel,*
General Staff.

9th November 1915.

APPENDIX D.

VI. DIVISION ORDER No. 60.

21*st November* 1915.

Reference Map 24 A and B.

Information. 1. According to intelligence and air service reports the enemy, estimated at some 10,000 to 11,000 troops and some 30 guns, is in position at Ctesiphon astride the river, and is distributed as follows :—

7,500 men on left bank of Tigris in the lines of Ctesiphon, *i.e.*, as follows :—1,500 to 2,500 men in the first line of entrenchments and a reserve of 4,000 to 5,000 men at Qusaibah, destined to occupy the second line of entrenchments some 2 miles north of the first line. These lines extend from the river bank to a distance of 6 miles inland respectively, *vide* Map 22,[1] the second line echeloned back at some 3,500 yards average distance from the first line, though longer in places. As these lines are written, aerial reconnaissance reports that this reserve of 4,000 men and a battery is advancing from Qusaibah to occupy the first line entrenchments at V.P.

[1] Not reproduced.

On the right bank of the Tigris an estimated garrison of 3,500 men is installed in redoubts and entrenchments on that bank, the troops on the right bank are connected by boat bridge at Qusaibah with those on the left bank.

Intention. 2. The General Officer Commanding VI. Division and attached troops, will attack the enemy's position on the left bank of the Tigris (this force has an impassable river on its right flank and also an impassable river in its rear), with the object of destroying it, by throwing it into either the Tigris or the Dialah.

In order to do this he will contain and hold the enemy in front with his Minimum Force, whilst with his Maximum Force he will execute a turning manœuvre against the enemy's extreme left flank and rear. This turning move will be preliminary to a decisive attack by the Principal Mass, against that flank of the enemy which has already been turned.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00005d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

In other words that decisive effort is directed against one of the enemy's flanks, viz., his left or eastern flank, the objectives being selected before deployment, and on which the different attacks by separated forces (at effective field artillery range from each other) will converge.

3. Commanding—Brigadier-General Hoghton. Preparatory attack. Minimum Force.

Column "C"
- 17th Infantry Brigade (less ½ battalion).
- 1 British and 2 Indian sections, Field Ambulance.
- *Divisional Troops*—
  - 10th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (less 2 batteries).
  - 86th Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery.
  - 48th Pioneers.
  - 17 Company, Sappers and Miners.
  - 1 Pack Wireless Set.
- Divisional Cavalry Squadron.

Column "C" will move forward at 2 p.m. to-day along the Baghdad road and progress as far as and inclusive of Square J.-8 (right-hand top corner). General Hoghton will move on a front of some 1,500 yards or a mile, and will endeavour in every way to make a display of force.

Time of attack.—At daylight 22nd November he will move forward and commence his preparatory attack, frontally against that part of the enemy's 1st line which extends from middle of Square H.-6 to near right-hand top corner Square G.-7.

Aided by spade and entrenching tool and the Divisional Artillery[1] he will work his way forward to within long rifle range of the enemy if possible. Not only is his role to pin the enemy down in his position, but by making a great display and pretence of force induce the enemy to bring reserves to this menaced part of his position. He will utilise all dry canals, water-cuts and accidented terrain for establishing himself thus solidly close to the enemy.

[1] 4 4·7-in. guns on horse boats.
76th Battery, Royal Field Artillery.
2 5-in. guns, 86th Heavy Battery.

N.B.—2—5-in. guns on barge with Naval Flotilla.

General Hoghton will not make his attack a decisive one until he sees the Principal Mass or General Reserve under General Delamain moving forward. Having got into the enemy's position General Hoghton should sweep to the southward in order to assist the Naval Flotilla in its passage through the new cut in the river, Square F.-11.

4. The Naval Flotilla will co-operate on the river in the attack of the enemy's position as follows :— Naval Flotilla.

Naval Flotilla Gunboats.—The 4·7-in. naval guns and two 5-in. guns on barges will co-operate from the river, taking up position south-east of Bustan in Square I.-9, Map 24 B. The zone of operations of the 4·7-in. naval guns and the Naval Flotilla gunboats and the objective zone to be swept by their fire, will be that portion of the hostile position south-west of where the Baghdad road runs through Square G.-7, Map 24 A.; they should endeavour to locate and engage all hostile guns which open fire within this area but should quit the guns to engage any moving infantry whether advancing or retiring and should carefully watch for any infantry moving up the right bank towards our boat bridge. As regards pursuit a free hand is left to the Senior Naval Officer.

Column "B."—Commanding—Brigadier-General Hamilton. Turning Attack. Column "B."
- 18th Infantry Brigade.
- 63rd Battery, Royal Field Artillery.
- 1 British and 3 Indian sections, Field Ambulance.
- ½ No. 22 Company, Sappers and Miners.
- 1 Pack Wireless Set.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000038

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Role of the turning attack.—After the battle has been well commenced the turning attack with whom the Flying Column[1] will work on its exterior flank (some 2 miles) will attack the left flank and rear of the enemy's second line of entrenchments, thus engaging the Turkish general reserve and drive it from the field. This turning attack, which is a wide turning manœuvre of some ten miles, must be pushed with boldness, vigour and resolution; nothing must stop it.

[1] *Flying Column*—
Commanding—Major-General Sir C. Melliss.
Troops—
Cavalry Brigade (Brigadier-General Roberts).
Maxim Battery.
76th Punjabis.
½ 24th Punjabis.
Motor Machine Gun Section.
1 Pack Wireless Set.
Cavalry Brigade Ammunition Column.
Cavalry Brigade Field Ambulance.

The objective is roughly Qusaibah village "camp" on river bank Square F.-3. This is behind the enemy's second line entrenchments. Although the Flying Column and 18th Mixed Brigade are independent commands, the two Commanders will work in intimate co-operation and understanding and mutual support and unity of doctrine. The Flying Column should be able to render second line of enemy's trenches untenable by enfilade and reverse horse artillery fire; and the effect should also be to cause the retreat of the garrison of the first line of entrenchments, when they hear our guns in their rear.

The General Officer Commanding Turning Attack Column, General Hamilton, should commence his attack about 7.30 a.m., *i.e.*, well after Column "C" should have commenced the frontal attack.

Principal Mass or General Reserve.

6. Commanding—Major-General Delamain.
Troops.—16th Infantry Brigade.
82nd Battery, Royal Field Artillery.
1/5th Hants. Howitzers.
½ No. 22 Company, Sappers and Miners.
½ 30th Brigade—Commanding, Colonel Climo.
2/7th Gurkhas.
½ 24th Punjabis.
2 British and 3 Indian sections, Field Ambulance.

Role of the Principal Mass or General Reserve.—The Principal Mass will be launched forward to the attack of the "Vital Point," marked V.P. on the map, by order of the General Officer Commanding Division, under whose direction the General Reserve remains until launched to the attack. The advance of the General Reserve or Principal Mass is the signal for the whole force to engage and move forward against the enemy. Every effort will be made by the artillery fire of the Divisional Artillery and General Reserve or Principal Mass to cover V P. with projectiles in order that a clear avenue of approach may be swept for the General Reserve or Principal Mass which is the hammer blow to give us the victory.

Action if counter-attacked, &c.

7. If any other portion of the force is counter-attacked, all it has to do is to hold on; the violence of the attack of the General Reserve or Principal Mass will be increased and success at the Vital Point must give victory everywhere.

Should any body of the troops loose its way in the dark it will be able to at daylight co-operate with the general great turning attack of the three attacks against the enemy's flank and rear.

Let all Commanding Officers impress on officers and men what our King and Country expect of us at this moment, for the news of impending battle has reached London and Simla, and that the half-trained Turk, and undisciplined Arab battalions have never yet stood for the bayonet when resolutely charged.

The attack of all must be characterised with vigour and resolution. As regards pursuit by the Flying Column special instructions have been issued.

Assembly.

8. The points of assembly for the Principal Mass, Turning Attack, Flying Column, have been communicated confidentially to General Officer Commanding

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000086

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

these columns, who are making their own arrangements to fix these points which will be reached under cover of darkness to-night. All will march as one body under arrangements of General Delamain, first to the position to be taken up by the Principal Mass, after which the remainder will proceed along the track or dry canal. The Turning Attack Column will reach its point, three miles beyond the position of the Principal Mass, and the Flying Column then proceed on to where General Melliss will take up his position. All concealment possible will be taken but the enemy's patrols will surely get news of the move and this cannot be helped.

Air Service.

9. The Flight Commander will receive special instructions *re* the role of the Air Service in battle, its principal role will be to give information as to the direction of retreat of the bulk of the enemy's force in the field and to ensure the service of observation and information *re* any reinforcements coming from Baghdad to assist the enemy, and any movement of the enemy on the right bank.

Divisional Ammunition Column.

10. Divisional Ammunition Column will be distributed according to the orders of the B.G.R.A., as follows :—

Cavalry Brigade Ammunition Column with Flying Column.
Divisional Ammunition Column (Land Section).
With Column "B."—(63rd Battery, Royal Field Artillery) 9 wagons.
With Column "A."—(82nd Battery) 5 wagons, 10 Army Transport carts.
(1/5th Hants Howitzers) 12 Army Transport carts.
With Column "C."—(76th Battery) 4 wagons, 10 Army Transport carts.
River Section.—(At Lajj.)

Medical.

11. Position of Advanced Dressing Stations will be selected by Column Commanders. The line of evacuation of wounded will be to the tent-divisions of field ambulances.

Divisional Head-quarters.

12. Will close at Lajj at 2 p.m., and open with the Divisional troops with Column "C" at that hour.
During the action Divisional Headquarters will be near the Divisional Artillery in rear of right flank Column "C."

PART II.

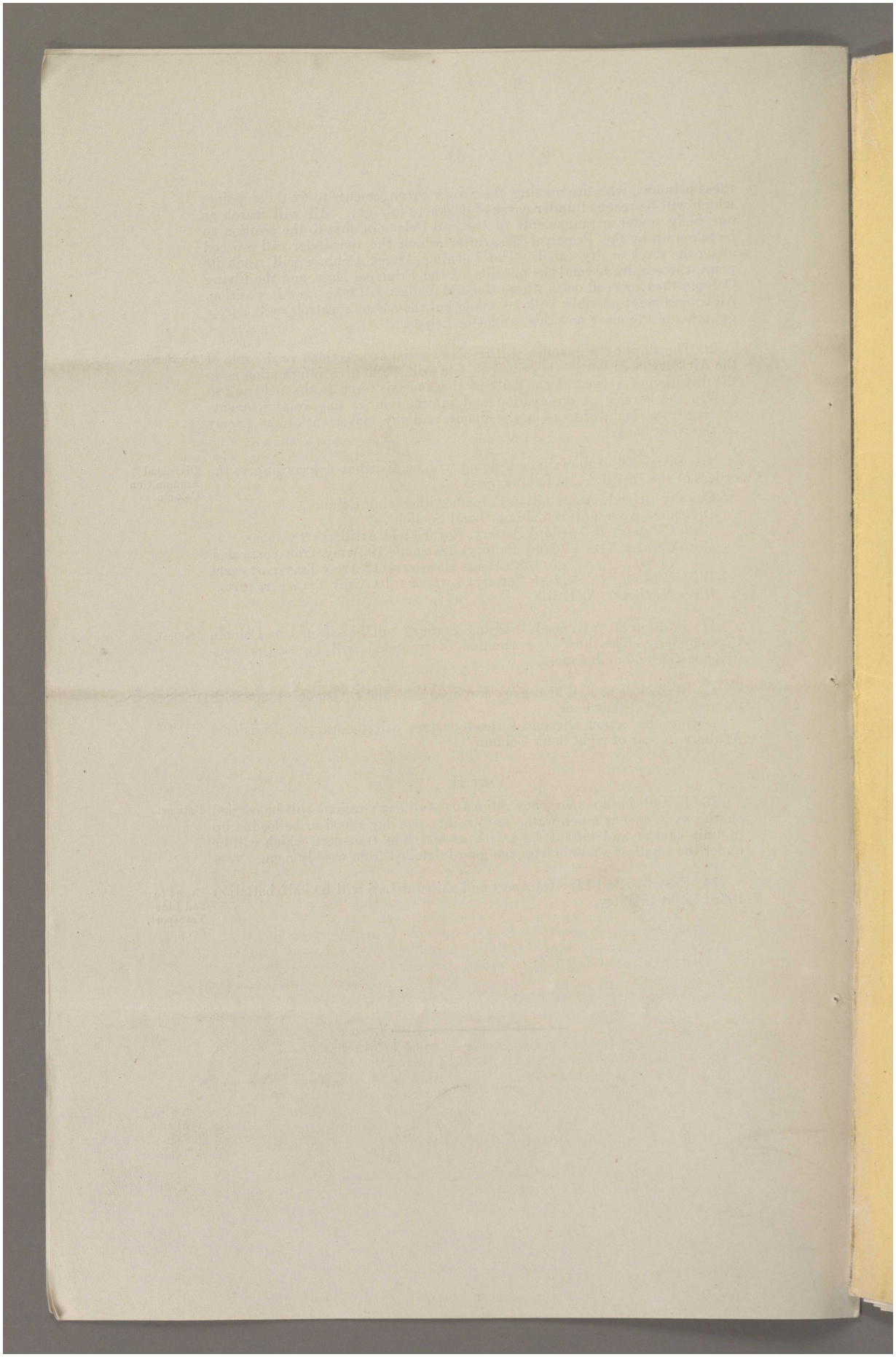
Rations.

13. In addition to emergency rations one full day's rations will be carried on the man, also as much water as possible, one day's food to be loaded up in unit charge and left at Lajj with second line transport, which will be under the smallest possible baggage guard detailed from weakly men.

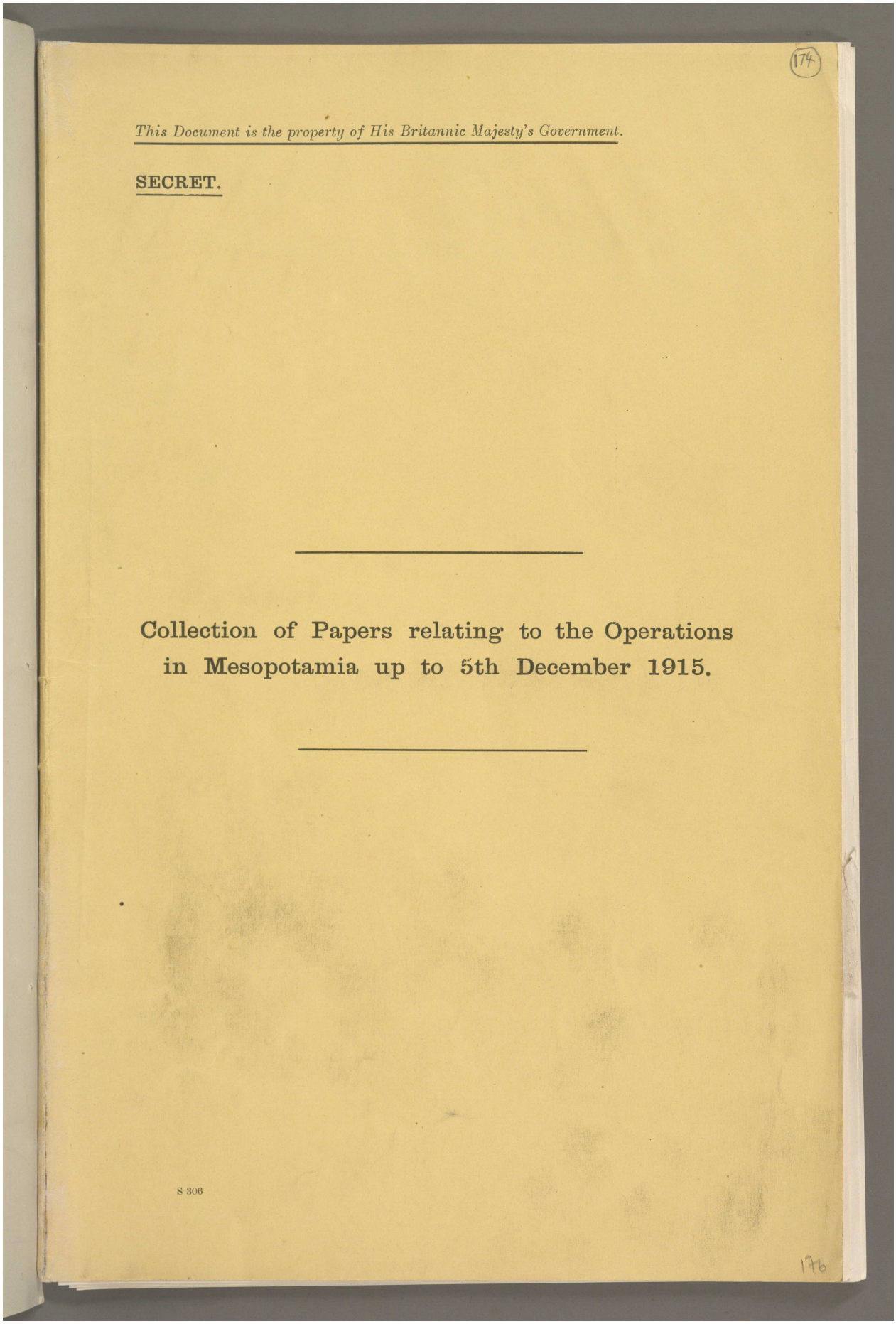
Escort to 2nd Line Transport, &c.

14. Escort to 2nd Line transport and ships at Lajj will be half battalion 103rd Light Infantry.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000035



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00005f



174

This Document is the property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.

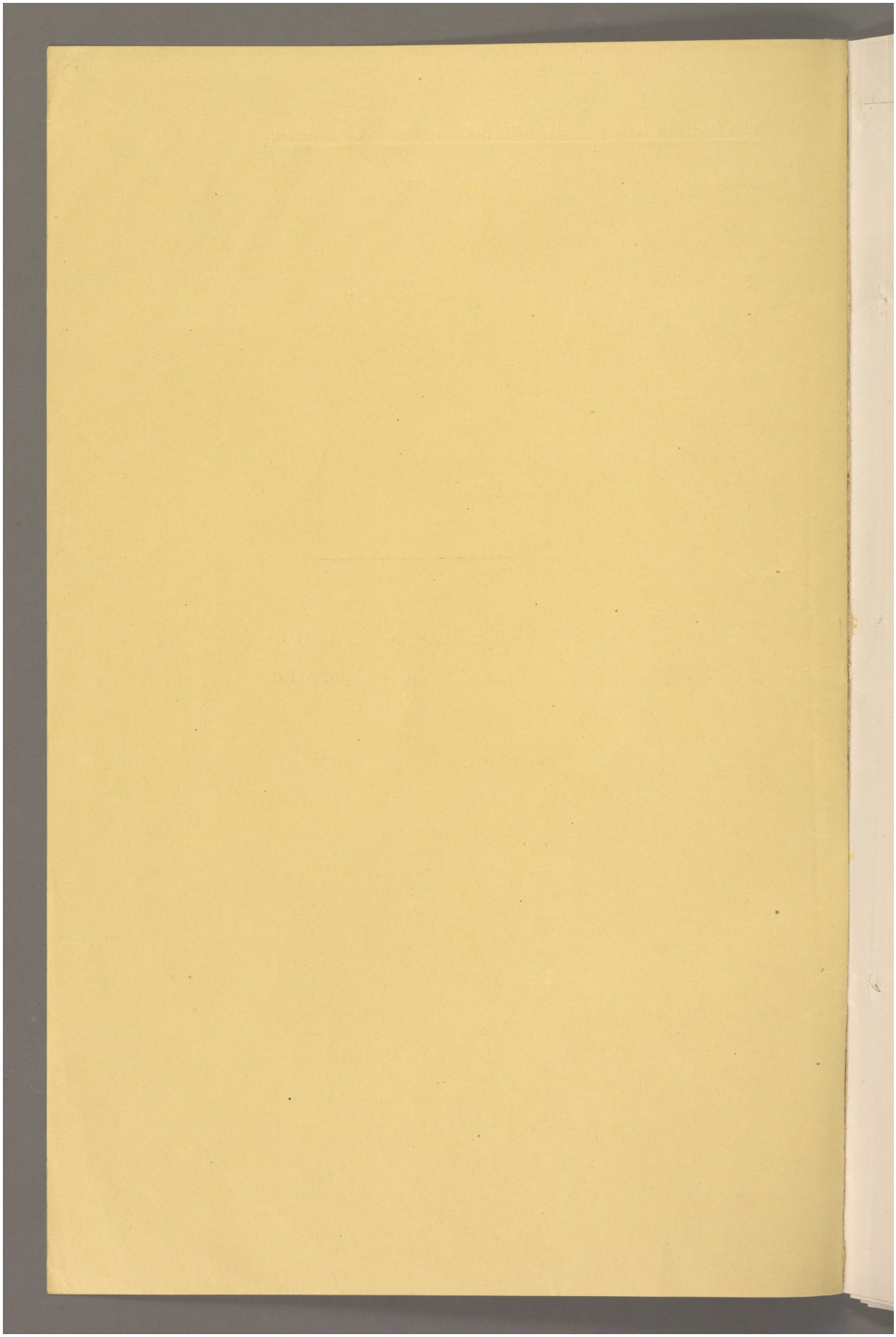
SECRET.

Collection of Papers relating to the Operations in Mesopotamia up to 5th December 1915.

S 306

176

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000012



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000a2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Reference letters refer to telegrams omitted or amended which will be found in the Addendum in chronological order.

(175)

SECRET.

Papers relating to the Operations in Mesopotamia.

PART I.

OUTBREAK OF WAR TO OCCUPATION OF BASRA.

No. 1.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 26th September 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

The situation as regards Turkey is most menacing, and it may be necessary to demonstrate at head of Persian Gulf. Should Cabinet decide to take this action, one Brigade of 6th Division with two Mountain Batteries and Sappers should be shipped at once as if they were urgently required for Egypt, but with sealed orders to proceed to Shatt-el-Arab. Will communicate further on this subject to-morrow. Pending this take no action."

No. 2.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 28th September 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

My telegram of 26th September. The situation is still acute, but it is decided to take no action for a couple of days. Meanwhile be prepared to act as proposed.

No. 3.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th September 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Following from Resident at Bushire, dated 26th September:—"Informer supplied me with copies of what he declares are translations of three cypher telegrams sent in latter half of July by Enver Pasha, of Constantinople, giving warning of the despatch of arms and ammunition, and officers for training Arabs, measures called for by the imminence of war in Europe. In further telegrams Enver informed Vali of Basra that Turkish Government is prepared to help Germany in return for assistance received during Balkan War; that arms and ammunition are being sent to Basra under German flag, and that 32 secret emissaries, including German officers, are on their way to preach a Jehad in Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and India."

No. 4.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 2nd October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference my telegrams of 26th and 28th September. Government have decided to take action therein indicated. The force mentioned should be embarked so as to sail on 10th. Please telegraph which Brigade and Commander will be sent; also which Mountain Batteries. After force has sailed get ready remainder of 6th Division for despatch. Will telegraph more precise instructions to-morrow as to action to be taken. Presume you will adopt Expedition "D" for description of this movement.

No. 5.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 3rd October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. My telegram of 2nd October. Please instruct Officer Commanding that we are at peace with Turkey and on no account is he to land troops on Turkish territory or take any other hostile action against Turks without orders from you except in case of absolute military necessity. He may disembark if convenient to do so either on Abadan Island or at Muhammerah, but preferably at Abadan. On this point, however, he should work in concert with Naval and Political authorities. He should endeavour to avoid any action which might cause friction with the Arabs either in Persian or Turkish territory. He will of course take all steps to protect the oil tanks and other British interests in Persian territory. You will doubtless take measures in sufficient time to warn the Political Officers in Gulf of action contemplated, so that necessary communications may be made by them to Sheikhs of Mohammerah and Koweit, in good time so that they may have sufficient previous confidential intimation of approach of expedition. Resident, Baghdad, should also be warned and directed to communicate with consul at Basra. Admiralty are instructing Naval Authorities.

S 306 2 12 20 12 50—6/1916

A

177

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00002d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

No. 6.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 5th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

The force under orders is only intended to occupy Abadan, protect oil tanks and pipe line, cover landing of reinforcements, if these should be necessary, and show Arabs that we intend to support them against Turks. With warship at Mohammerah troops detailed are considered ample for above purposes. Should Turkey become a belligerent management of expedition will devolve on you, but instructions as to scope of operations will, of course, come from me. Meanwhile you should prepare remainder of Division for despatch, but we do not propose to send more troops to Abadan till Turkey shows her hand, though it may be advisable to send a first reinforcement to Basidu as a near support. If political situation presages war the whole Division would be wanted and land transport would become necessary. With this in view you might think it convenient to move Division gradually by rail and sea to Karachi, where presumably you would be better able to equip with mule transport. Admiralty requested to make arrangements for disembarkation with Naval Commander-in-Chief. Shall be glad to have a full expression of your views.

No. 7.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

In reply to your telegram of 5th October in which you ask for a full expression of my views upon the Abadan project, I venture to put forward following considerations after consulting Commander-in-Chief. It appears to us perfectly clear that the policy of Turkey, which is not in a position to give real material assistance to the enemy, is dominated by Germany, whose aim is to create a situation in which it will appear that Turkey is the object of aggression of one or more Christian Powers. Violations of neutrality, as in case of *Goeben*, are too technical to be understood by the Muhammadan masses, but the presence of belligerent ships and the disembarkation of troops in Turkish waters are facts of which the provocative character are apparent to all. Disembarkation at Abadan presents no difficulty from a military point of view, but to do so will be to walk deliberately into a trap not unskilfully laid for us. Before any final decision to disembark troops at Abadan is taken, I trust His Majesty's Government will consider very carefully the above aspect of the question and particularly effect which it is likely to have upon the attitude of Muhammadans in India, which is at present very satisfactory in every way. It is quite clear nothing can really secure safety of oil works except the occupation of Abadan, but we see no reason to anticipate an attack upon them and we doubt their value being so great as to outweigh consequences of an apparent attack by us on Turkey. Again, the occupation of Abadan by a large military force would almost certainly evoke a protest by Persia, and in the event of hostilities with Turkey would constitute a violation of neutrality of Persia, and would afford a pretext to Turkey for the extension of the frontier at the expense of Persia. If, on the other hand, object in view is merely to demonstrate at the head of the Gulf, other alternatives present themselves.

To land troops at Bassidu would be known immediately all over the Gulf, and would create an immense impression. To this there could be no possible political objection, but from a military point of view the difficulties of water supply on the island are almost insuperable.

After Bassidu, Bahrein is politically most suitable, and there seems to be no serious objections to this alternative. From a military point of view only objection to Bahrein is difficulty of embarking and disembarking troops, owing to shallowness of the water, but this could be mitigated by plentiful supply of boats. I propose to send Sir P. Cox as political officer with any expedition to the Gulf, since his knowledge of the Chiefs and of Gulf politics is unique.

No. 8.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 6th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

His Majesty's consul at Basra telegraphs to-day as follows:—

"Vali says that he must obey the orders which he has received. He has communicated a copy of these to me. They are to the effect that the whole of the Shatt-el-Arab and sea within six miles of the shore are closed to warships, as they are territorial waters. Any men-of-war disregarding this prohibition will be fired upon by the guns at Fao. These regulations will be enforced from to-morrow evening, Wednesday, 7th October. They are somewhat obscure, but they mean that H.M.S. *Espiègle* in the Karun and H.M.S. *Dalhousie* at Abadan will be interned, unless they leave before the time fixed. No other British man-of-war is this side of Fao. H.M.S. *Lawrence* is in the Shatt-el-Arab to the best of my belief. His Majesty's consul at Mohammerah has been informed of the above."

No. 9.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir L. Mallet, dated 7th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

British warships in the Shatt-el-Arab.

H.M. Ships *Espiègle*, *Odin*, and *Dalhousie* are not in Turkish waters. There can be no question of their being ordered out of waters which are not Turkish nor of their being interned by the Turkish Government. According to generally accepted principles of international law, Turkish territorial waters extend to 3 miles out to sea from the coast. Two of His Majesty's ships are being instructed to keep outside the 3-mile limit, while the remaining ship is being told to remain at Mohammerah, which does not belong to Turkey. Our long established right to pass freely up and down Shatt-el-Arab at all times is not in question, and it must be recognised that we fully reserve that right.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000070

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 10.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 8th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 7th October. For the present it is not necessary to decide about Abadan, and I am most anxious to avoid disturbing Indian Muhammadans; but it is necessary to reassure Arabs, who will be agitated by reports that Turks will spread of our retirement at their dictation from Shatt-el-Arab. It is, therefore, important that an immediate demonstration should be made. You apparently incline to Bassidu as a suitable rendezvous but for scarcity of water. On the other hand, Bahrein has great political advantages if difficulties of landing can be met. Probably water difficulty at Bassidu can be overcome by distillation. Shall be glad if you will send your views at once. Meanwhile, all preparations should continue.

No. 11.

Chief of the General Staff, India, to Colonel W. S. Delamain, C.B., D.S.O., dated 8th October 1914.

I have the honour to send you herewith one sealed envelope containing:—

(*a*) Plan of operations for the protection of British interests at the head of the Persian Gulf.
(*b*) Plan of operations for the support of Mohammerah.
(*c*) Plan of operations in Turkish Mesopotamia.
(*d*) Copies, in sealed envelope marked "A," of the official correspondence which has passed between the Government of India and the Secretary of State in regard to the organisation, despatch and employment of Force "D."

2. You will at once place yourself in communication with His Excellency the Naval Commander-in-Chief and arrange a meeting as soon as possible after you have digested your orders.

3. Please report by telegraph that you have received and understood your instructions.

ANNEX.

Orders for Colonel W. S. Delamain, C.B., D.S.O., Commanding Force "D."

1. Under instructions from His Majesty's Government an Expeditionary Force consisting of:—

Force Headquarters,
16th Infantry Brigade,
Nos. 23 and 30 Indian Mountain Batteries,
One Company Sappers and Miners,
One "Combined" Field Ambulance,
Supply Establishment,

with their transport will be detached from the convoy which leaves Bombay and Karachi on 15th October and will proceed under naval convoy up the Persian Gulf.

2. You are appointed to command the Force which is known as Indian Expeditionary Force "D."

3. It will be necessary for you to concert in close consultation with the senior Naval Officer your plan for disembarking and carrying out the rôle assigned you. It will, therefore, be advisable, if the senior Naval Officer is agreeable, that you and some of your Staff should travel in the same ship with him.

4. The Plans of Operations forwarded have been prepared by the General Staff, India They are in no way intended to fetter your action. They are based on the latest information available in India which may be found to require revision in matters of detail. The local consular and other authorities will, it is hoped, be able to assist you in this.

5. You will keep the Chief of the General Staff, India, informed of all important movements of troops, and submit all ordinary reports and returns as prescribed in the Field Service regulations.

In the event of hostilities with Turkey, the remainder of the 6th Division is being held in readiness to support your force, and will follow as quickly as possible.

In the meantime you will take such military and political action as you think feasible to strengthen your position, and if possible, occupy Basra.

No. 12.

From Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 8th October. Expedition D. The difficulties of landing troops at Bahrein can be overcome, and there is good water and ample space for camping grounds. Distillation of water for a force landed at Bassider would be very difficult. There is no doubt that Bahrein by its position near head of Gulf has many advantages, both material and political, over Bassidu, while it has none of the disadvantages of Abadan as a place of disembarkation. The presence of our troops at Bahrein would be a sufficiently good reply to any boastings of the Turks, and should reassure completely the Arabs. Preparations are being pushed forward, and one Brigade will start on 14th or 15th.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000009

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

No. 13.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 12th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

I have received note dated 11th October from Porte, of which following is substance :—

"From information received by Porte, two British men-of-war have one after the other passed up the Shatt-el-Arab to anchor at Mohammerah. According to Treaty of Erzeroum, the town of Mohammerah and its port belong to Persia, whilst Shatt-el-Arab is under Turkish domination. This principle was reaffirmed by Turco-British Declaration of 29th July 1913, which specifies that from Nahr Nazaille, above Mohammerah, frontier follows river to sea, leaving under Turkish sovereignty river itself and all the islands except ten, and modern port and anchorage of Mohammerah. This port and the anchorage thus formed an enclave in Ottoman waters which must be traversed in order to reach them. Consequently men-of-war in question have not respected Imperial territory in penetrating into her internal waters, and have disregarded neutrality of the Porte, whose duty it is not to allow passage of foreign men-of-war. On these grounds the Porte asks me to cause instructions to be sent to commanders of men-of-war in question to leave the port of Mohammerah within eight days and to go to sea."

No. 14.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 12th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

I do not think that we could now leave Mohammerah without loss of prestige. In view of receipt of Vali's note respecting presence of British men-of-war in the Shatt-el-Arab, effect of moving His Majesty's ships at the request of the Turkish Government, once they were sent to Mohammerah, might have led the Arabs to misinterpret the action of His Majesty's Government. I would not regard the note in the light of an ultimatum, though it is not impossible that Turks might close the channel, and thus prevent His Majesty's ships from going out, except in agreement with the Turkish authorities. General belief is that Germans are at present applying considerable pressure upon the Turks to take part in the war, but that the Turks are so far resisting. My anxiety is lest the resistance which the Minister of War is encountering from the Moderates should be weakened by any act on our part which could be interpreted as aggressive by the Turks. Enver Pasha is said to be in favour of immediate co-operation with the Germans.

No. 15.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 12th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

My telegram of 12th October. I have informed Grand Vizier that I was surprised to receive His Highness's note inviting His Majesty's ships to leave Mohammerah within eight days. I knew His Highness had no intention of creating difficulties, but it sounded almost like an ultimatum. Mohammerah was, as His Highness was aware, a Persian port. Grand Vizier replied at once that there was no question of an ultimatum. I explained His Majesty's Government's point of view, and he said that he was at present awaiting your reply to Turkish note. In the course of ensuing conversation, His Highness seemed as confident as ever that he was able to resist German pressure, and he repeated that he was absolutely determined to avoid war in any case. In reply to some observations of mine in regard to Turkish fighting recently reported in Persia, he said that strict orders had been sent that no Turkish troops were to cross the frontier.

No. 16.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 13th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Consular officer at Basra telegraphs as follows :—

"I have been notified by Vali that H.M.S. *Espiègle* must be interned until the end of the war unless she departs from Mohammerah and the Shatt-el-Arab within eight days from the 11th instant. If she attempts to leave after the expiration of the said period, her passage through the Shatt-el-Arab will be stopped by force of arms. The *Dalhousie* departed several days ago. I have informed His Majesty's Consul at Mohammerah of the Vali's communication."

No. 17.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir L. Mallet, dated 13th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 12th October. Your Excellency should make the following reply to the Turkish note protesting against the presence of British men-of-war in the Shatt-el-Arab :—

"As regards the passage through the Shatt-el-Arab to and from the port of Mohammerah, His Majesty's Government maintain in principle the legitimacy of such passage, but express themselves quite ready to examine in a friendly spirit any representation that the Ottoman Government may make on the subject, if the Sublime Porte themselves strictly observe their neutrality, which they have gravely violated by continuing to retain the German officers and crews on the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, in spite of all assurances and promises to the contrary. His Majesty's Government are prepared to respond in a conciliatory spirit whenever the Ottoman

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000026

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Government shall have conformed, as a neutral, to the principles of international law prescribing the duties of neutral Powers. As regards the presence of British warships at the port of Mohammerah, this is a matter with which the Sublime Porte is in no wise concerned, since Mohammerah is not in Ottoman territory; Porte have, therefore, no right to request their departure."

No. 18.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 13th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

We realise that there certainly will be difficulties in disembarkation and re-embarkation at Bahrein, but as between it and Basidu our information derived from Sir P. Cox and Birdwood is that water is plentiful at Bahrein, even if not very good, while Basidu has none. We are therefore sending to Bahrein advanced Force mentioned in your telegram of 26th September. Force will leave Bombay and Karachi on 16th October and 17th October, respectively, and should arrive at Bahrein about 23rd.

No. 19.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 15th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Son of Kurdish Chief Issa, who is stated to have influence in Mesopotamia, and who has been in Constantinople for instructions, is said to have left for Basra to work anti-English propaganda, and other agents, including Germans, are said to be on their way to Afghanistan on similar errand. I learn that Zekki Pasha, commander of 8th corps, has lately received 5,000*l.* to distribute amongst Bedouins, and that as much as 35,000*l.* in gold left here by train on 12th for Syria. Senator Abdurrahman is working among Bedouins at Maan and Muntaz Bey on the west by Beersheba and Jerusalem. Party of Turkish sailors mentioned as having left here by train for Basra are now stated to be on the way to Akaba with consignment of metal boats. Another lot of boats is at Rayak, possibly on the way to Beirout. Quantities of dynamite have been sent to the coast towns of Syria, probably to serve for mining purposes of land defence. This is in addition to sea mines, which have also been forwarded. Numbers of "working battalions" (soldiers as yet untrained) are road constructing in southern Syria. All above and previous reports in a similar sense show that there is very considerable activity being directed in a sense hostile to us, and this activity is being worked by German influence and agents in every conceivable direction. Probably Government as a whole have little control over these activities, but do not disapprove of them. As regards actual military preparations, German element has sufficient power to persuade the authorities on certain points. German press is directing movement, and has obtained despatch of numbers of German officers to Syria to superintend preparations and training of corps there for war, concentration of stores and supplies at suitable spots, preparation of lines of communication and defence of coast.

No. 20.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 17th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Reliable information reaches me that mines are being sent to Basra, and will reach Baghdad in a day or two.

No. 21.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir L. Mallet, dated 17th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Any attack upon H.M.S. *Espiegle* by Turkish authorities will be a wanton attack of aggression, as she is not in Turkish territorial waters. You should inform Turkish Government that there is no present intentoin of her passing down the Shatt-el-Arab, but His Majesty's Government consider they have a right to claim that passage so long as *Goeben* and *Breslau*, with German crews and officers, have free use of Turkish territorial waters and the Straits.

No. 22.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir E. Grey, dated 6th October 1914. (Received 19th October 1914.)

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of a note I have addressed to the Grand Vizier on the subject of the measures the Porte propose to take against British warships in the Shatt-el-Arab, expressing the hope that no action be taken which might have serious consequences.

I have, &c.,
LOUIS MALLETT.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a8

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Enclosure in No 22.

Sir L. Mallet to Grand Vizier, dated 4th October 1914.

Your Highness,

I have just received a telegram from His Majesty's Consul at Basra stating that the Vali has written to him saying that the Porte have communicated to me the measures which they propose to take against a British man-of-war which is in the Shatt-el-Arab unless it leaves within 24 hours, and that the Shatt-el-Arab from Fao to Kurna is inland water, like the Dardanelles, and closed to foreign warships.

I am instructed by His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to enquire on what grounds the Sublime Porte base their objection to His Majesty's ship remaining in Mohammerah, a Persian port?

In the meantime, I would express the hope that your Highness will instruct the Vali without loss of time to avoid taking any measures against a British man-of-war which might have serious consequences at this critical period.

As a matter of fact, H.M.S. *Odin* left the Shatt-el-Arab some days ago, and I am not aware what British ship has taken her place.

I avail, &c.,
LOUIS MALLETT.

No. 23.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir E. Grey, dated 19th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

New Governor-General of Basra with six army officers, including two German officers, also six naval officers, including two Germans, and 150 Turkish sailors with three columns of ammunition, arrived at Alexandretta on morning of 18th October by railway from Constantinople. Their final destination is believed to be Basra. I am also informed that Maan is their true destination.

No. 24.

Mr. Cheetham to Sir E. Grey, dated 19th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

I am informed that Bimbashi Gamil, Staff Officer in Turkish Army, Khoga (Imam) Ali Haider, Khoga (Imam) Amin, and Khoga (Imam) Rustom, have left Smyrna in order to carry on a Turcophile propaganda in India.

No. 25.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 22nd October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

A manifesto, the authorship of which is attributed to Sheikh Aziz Shawish, is being secretly circulated at Beirout. Manifesto bears alleged signatures of 10 representatives of Moslem countries under foreign rule. It incites Moslem soldiers to mutiny in their respective countries in defence of Islam, and bids them desert the Allies and join Germany. Whole tenor is fanatical and inflammatory.

No. 26.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 22nd October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

My immediately preceding telegram. I understand that several thousand copies of manifesto are to be smuggled into Egypt and India and other Moslem countries through Syria.

No. 27.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 22nd October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

One of objects of Press campaign here now is to prove that Great Britain is aiming deliberate blows at Islam, as such, and a statement is being circulated here that British Government are preventing pilgrimages from Egypt this year. One form of this statement is that a Fetva has been issued prescribing that as Egyptian Government cannot protect pilgrims there shall be no pilgrimage. It is insinuated that this Fetva has been extorted by British.

No. 28.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir L. Mallet, dated 23rd October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Mining of the Shatt-el-Arab. Your telegram of 17th October. The ancient right of free navigation of the river was solemnly affirmed as late as 29th July 1913, in Article 1 of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement signed on that day. It is a right which His Majesty's Government cannot allow to be nullified by the mining of the channel. They will be forced to regard any attempt to lay mines in the river as an act of open hostility and provocation to this country, and they must reserve to themselves the right of taking their own measures, if necessary, to maintain the freedom of navigation. You should make a representation in these terms to the Turkish Government, and add a firm protest against the apparent intention of blocking the international waterway of the Shatt-el-Arab, which offers the only means of access to the port of Mohammerah and the neighbouring Persian littoral.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00002d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 29.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Cheetham, dated 23rd October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

I hear that Turkish Minister at Sophia has left his post for Germany. Reported object is to arrange with German Government for stirring up of Moslem fanaticism in India, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis.

No. 30.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 23rd October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

United efforts of Germans and Ottoman Government at Haifa are being concentrated on arousing anti-English feeling amongst the Moslems; German Consul is touring the district with this view. The worst offender is the Ottoman Telegraph Agency. Yesterday, for example, it announced that the Ameer of Afghanistan will start a Holy War, and that he is invading India.

No. 31.

Political Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary of State for India, dated 24th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Following from Consul at Muhammerah, dated 23rd October:—

"Sheikh's man informs me there are four guns and 300 men posted on the island opposite mouth of Karun.

"Sheikh has moved a number of his household and quantity of his effects up the Karun.

"These two events have had a disturbing effect on the town and there is considerable nervousness amongst (clerks ? and) other low-class foreigners, who fear that an attack on the place is imminent. I think the position here is decidedly serious."

No. 32.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 26th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Presumably Expeditionary Force "D" has arrived at Bahrein. If so, instructions should be issued to the British representatives of Mohammerah, Koweit, Basra and elsewhere who are in touch with Arabs that they should give utmost publicity to this fact, making it known that the British Government do not intend to take any aggressive action, but have been compelled, for the eventual protection of British interests and those of their friends, to despatch this force to the Persian Gulf in view of the fact that under the direction of Germany the Turks are making continual military preparation which can only be directed against the British.

No. 33.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 27th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Political Agent, Bahrein, reports 23rd October, Sheikh and other notables approve despatch of troops to Bahrein and will probably send telegrams to Sheikh-ul-Islam deprecating provocative actions of Turkey.

No. 34.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of the 26th. Expeditionary Force "D" arrived at Bahrein, 23rd October. Necessary instructions issued.

No. 35.

Mr. Roberts to Sir Edward Grey, dated 29th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Before dawn this morning two or three Turkish torpedo-boats raided Odessa harbour and sank Russian gunboat *Donetz*. French ship *Portugal* damaged; two of the crew killed, two wounded. Russian steamships *Vitiaz* and *Liazaref* and *Whanpao* damaged. Some loss of life was caused in the town itself by shell fire.

No. 36.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir L. Mallet, dated 30th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

In view of hostile acts that have been committed, Russian Government have instructed Russian Ambassador to leave Constantinople with all his staff. Should His Excellency leave, you should yourself send in a note to the Sublime Porte to say that His Majesty's Government have learnt with the utmost surprise of the wanton attacks made upon open and undefended

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000c5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

towns of a friendly country without any warning and without the slightest provocation, and that these acts constitute an unprecedented violation of the most ordinary rules of international law, usage, and comity. Russia has shown the utmost patience and forbearance in face of repeated violations of the rules of neutrality by Turkey, and in face of most provocative acts, amounting in reality to acts of hostility, and in this attitude of restraint her allies, Great Britain and France, have co-operated. It is evident that there is no chance of a return to a proper observance of neutrality so long as the German naval and military missions remain at Constantinople, and such a situation cannot be prolonged. Unless, therefore, the Turkish Government will divest themselves of all responsibility for these unprovoked acts of hostility by dismissing the German military and naval missions, and fulfilling their often repeated promises about the German crews of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, and will give you a satisfactory reply to this effect within twelve hours from the date of the delivery of the note, you should ask for your passports and leave Constantinople with the staff of the embassy.

No. 37.

Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, dated 30th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Russian Ambassador asked for his passports this afternoon and I and my French colleague have followed suit. Minister of the Interior, in conversation with a neutral colleague this afternoon, practically admitted that Turkey had thrown in her lot with Germany. I have had a very painful interview with the Grand Vizier, who had been kept in the dark as to his colleagues' intentions, and who will doubtless be set aside to-night.

No. 38.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 30th October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Expeditionary Force "D." Order another Brigade of 6th Division to be got ready at once for despatch. Have you transports ready for this force irrespective of those already detailed for next convoy to Europe or Egypt? I will arrange with Admiralty for escort.

No. 39.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 31st October 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference my telegram of 30th October. Expedition "D." Please instruct brigade at Bahrein to proceed at once to Shatt-el-Arab, and to concert measures with Naval authorities for immediate attack on Fao. Force will then clear Turks out of the Shatt and its vicinity as far as Shumshumiyah if possible. After which it will await arrival of reinforcements from India. Take steps to inform Arab Chiefs in Gulf and on Aden side. Please telegraph probable date of despatch of reinforcements and composition.

No. 40.

Political Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary of State for India, 1st November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Consul at Mohammerah telegraphs as follows with reference to his telegram dated 23rd October 1914:—"Turks have sunk three ships in place mentioned. Rumour says mines reached Baghdad; no confirmation. Turks are preventing British merchants from leaving Basrah."

No. 41.

Political Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Sheikh has received reliable information from Fao that mines intended for mouth of river have arrived there.

No. 42.

Notification of a state of War with Turkey.

Owing to hostile acts committed by Turkish forces under German officers, a state of war exists between Great Britain and Turkey as from to-day.

Foreign Office,
5th November 1914.

No. 43.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 6th November 1914.

Force "D." Admiralty report its arrival on 3rd instant. Have you any further information?

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00008f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 44.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

In addition to instructions contained in your telegram of 31st October following orders were given to Delamain on 2nd November:—

"Your force is not to go above Shumshumiyah, and is not to go to Mohammerah. You may leave detachments where necessary."

And on 6th November:—"Subject to military necessities, please see that neutrality of Persian territory is respected in every way."

No. 45.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Regarding despatch of reinforcements as ordered in your telegrams of 30th ultimo and 31st October the following units of 6th Division were at once detailed:—Divisional Headquarters:—18th Infantry Brigade, 10th Royal Field Artillery. Ammunition Column (less one sub-section). Half British and one-quarter Indian Field Ambulance. One combined clearing hospital. 48th Pioneers. No. 17 Company Sappers and Miners. Two squadrons 33rd Cavalry. Divisional Signal Company (less one section). To take these, three transports sailed from Bombay on 7th November with 7th Rajputs, 110th Infantry, 120th Infantry, and hospitals. Four more sailed 8th November with Headquarters, 6th Poona Division, and 18th Brigade, Norfolk Regiment, 63rd Battery and Divisional Ammunition Column. The remainder of these troops and mule transport now under orders will sail very shortly from Bombay. Camel transport for the Force has sailed from Karachi. The remainder of Division will embark as soon as transports are available.

No. 46.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 13th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference your telegram of 31st October and continuation of mine of 9th November. General Barrett with 18th Brigade and Divisional troops will begin to reach Shatt-el-Arab about 15th instant. We have given him discretion to move on Basra, if after consultation with Delamain he considers his present force strong enough. The remainder of 6th Division should reach Shatt-el-Arab about 28th November.

No. 47.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 16th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Hearing that the enemy, about 1,000 strong, were occupying post at Saihan, 4 miles distant. I sent General Delamain this morning with three battalions and two Mountain Batteries to turn them out, which was successfully accomplished after a sharp action in which H.M.S. *Odin* and *Espiègle* co-operated. Enemy's entrenched camp was captured and his losses were very heavy. We took several prisoners, including a Turkish Major, and destroyed two machine guns. I consider this action highly creditable to General Delamain and all engaged. Enemy had four mountain guns in action. I hope to advance shortly.

No. 48.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 16th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Barrett's telegram of 16th November. Please convey my congratulations to Force "D" on its initial success.

Consequent on this if political situation as regards Arabs is favourable, and if military situation renders immediate advance both practicable and advisable with the force now at Barrett's disposal, I presume you will instruct him to continue movement, Cabinet having approved capture of Basra as immediate objective of Force. Otherwise Barrett should await arrival of remainder of Division before attacking Basra. How far can ships co-operate in movement considering obstructions in river?

Impress on Barrett necessity of conciliating Arabs in every possible way. Basra, if possible, should be treated as a friendly and not an enemy town, and every effort made to restore confidence.

No. 49.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 16th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Disembarkation continued to-day. All troops now landed except two Field Batteries delayed by late arrival of ship. I propose moving camp 8 miles forwards on Turkish bank to-morrow to safeguard Sheikh of Mohammerah, who is threatened by Turks. We shall probably meet with resistance.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000051

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 50.

Brigadier-General W. S. Delamain, C.B., D.S.O., to Chief of General Staff, Simla, dated 16th November 1914.

(Extract.)

On the arrival of Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett at this camp, and on conclusion of my period of independent command, I have the honour to report as follows:—

The force under my command, known as I.E.F. "D," left Bombay on the 16th October in four transports, part of a large convoy. On 19th October we parted company and steered for Bahrein Islands, under escort of H.M.S. *Ocean*. No. 1 Brigade, Indian Mountain Artillery, joined the force off Jask on the 23rd. We arrived on the 21st and anchored off Manama. Here we remained until the 2nd November. On that date the Force sailed for the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab in compliance with instructions contained in your radio-telegram. Pilots were taken on board off Bushire, and the Force arrived at the outer bar of the river on the evening of the 3rd November. The 4th and 5th November were occupied with naval preparations, and the transports themselves were prepared with bullet-proof cover on the upper decks for the use of parties detailed for covering fire. Major Radcliffe, 2nd Dorset Regiment, returned from Koweit on 5th with information that the Fort was in ruins, but that guns were in position. A landing force was detailed for the capture of Fao, under Lieutenant-Colonel H. L. Rosher, 2nd Dorset Regiment, and orders issued. On the 5th the transports crossed the outer bar of the Shatt-el-Arab and anchored just outside the inner bar. At 6 a.m. on 6th November H.M.S. *Odin*, preceded by launches sweeping for mines, stood in and bombarded the Turkish guns outside the Fort, 3 miles south-east of the telegraph station at Fao. The hostile guns were soon silenced; they were well served for a time and hit the *Odin* twice. On the signal being made that the guns were silenced the transports *Umaria* and *Varela* advanced in that order, each towing eight boats full of troops alongside; the *Mashona* (armed launch) towed seven boats full of troops, and the Royal Navy steam launches towed the detachment of Marines from H.M.S. *Ocean*. Off the telegraph station the boats were cast off and made for the shore. Some 600 Infantry landed with one section, Mountain Artillery, complete with mules and one squad, Sappers and Miners. There was no opposition. When the 1st and 2nd reinforcements had also landed, Colonel Rosher assembled his force and marched south-eastwards to occupy the Fort. This was accomplished during the night of the 6th–7th, the guns were dismounted and thrown into the river, and Colonel Rosher's command returned to Fao. While the troops who had landed were being re-embarked on the 7th November, the General Officer Commanding with remaining transports proceeded up the river till within sight of the Oil Refinery on Abadan Island. On the 8th November the river was reconnoitred for a suitable landing place. A firm high bank, with deep water close up to it, was found at Saniyeh; the transports were called up and troops began to disembark. The disembarkation continued during 9th and 10th November, being practically complete by evening of latter date. On the evening of the 10th reliable news was received from the Sheikh of Mohammerah that Sami Bey, with a strong combined force of Turks and Arabs, had arrived from Basra at a point opposite Mohammerah with the intention of attacking our camp. At 3 a.m. on the 11th the Sheikh reported that Sami Bey had started to make the attack. Troops were turned out and outposts strengthened. The Turkish force, of whom over 300 were actually seen, delivered a determined attack at 5.30 a.m. on an advanced post held by one double company 117th Mahrattas, with two machine guns. They advanced to within 50 yards of the post, but were driven off by a dashing counter-attack delivered by the 20th Duke of Cambridge's Own Infantry, with the assistance of the 23rd Peshawar Mountain Battery. The enemy lost heavily in their retirement across the desert, 19 dead were counted, 14 wounded were brought in by us, and six prisoners were taken. Abandoned rifles and equipment were found. The Turks officially acknowledged the loss of 80 men. The defences of the camp were further strengthened and daily reconnaissances made. On the 14th November, Lieutenant-General Sir A. Barrett, with the 18th Brigade and Divisional Troops, arrived at this camp.

No. 51.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 18th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Yesterday we advanced 9 miles up right bank. Enemy was encountered strongly posted in entrenched position, his left resting on old fort, and right on village of Zain; strength about 4,500, with 12 guns. Enemy made determined resistance; his left flank was turned, and his entrenchments carried. Enemy retired with loss of 2 guns and a number of prisoners, including 3 officers; his camp, containing reserve ammunition and animals, was captured. I much regret our heavy losses, due to our advance being over open, level plain without cover, and to heavy rain which made surface impossible for rapid movement of men or horses. Casualties as follows:—Officers killed, 3; rank and file killed, about 35; officers wounded, about 15; rank and file wounded, about 300. Troops behaved splendidly and are proud of their success. Medical officers did excellent work under heavy fire.

No. 52.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 21st November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Information received from Mohammerah that Turks have evacuated Basra, and that Arabs from Abdul Kasis and intervening places are friendly and are sending deputations. Report says that Ajaimi faction of Arabs are looting Basra, and that British subjects, if not

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000053

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

removed by Turks, may be in danger. I am sending at once two battalions on Lynch's steamers, escorted by armed launches, to Basra. *Odin*, *Espiègle* and *Lawrence* will accompany these if they can get through obstruction in river, which Senior Naval Officer hopes to be able to effect. Remainder of my force marches for Basra this evening, leaving one battalion and one squadron here with the remaining Field Battery, the horses of which are not yet disembarked. All quiet here, and reconnaissance beyond Balayoneh confirms news that hostile force has evacuated its late position. First time since landing camp was not fired into last night, which is a further indication that neighbouring Arabs are no longer hostile.

No. 53.

Sir P. Cox to Secretary of State for India, dated 21st November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Steam launch arrived Mohammerah bringing two Englishmen and deputation from notables of Basra to report that Walis of Basra and Baghdad and remnant of Turkish troops have fled up Tigris. All British prisoners safe.

No. 54.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 23rd November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Basra, 22nd November.

Navy ships reached Basra last night and our river detachment at 9 a.m. to-day; remainder of force at noon.

All quiet, and inhabitants well disposed and friendly. Little apparent damage done by looters, but Custom House partly (? burned). German Consul and five German subjects are under guard.

Enemy abandoned four guns on river bank; four more found in Arsenal here. Many enemy wounded are in town. Apparently our actions on 15th and 17th had more important results than first appeared. Block in river channel likely to take some time to remove.

No. 55.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 24th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

23rd November. Basra.

Troops made ceremonial march through streets of Basra this morning to central point, where notables were assembled. Union Jack hoisted on roof of prominent buildings. Salutes fired by Navy. Arms presented and three cheers given for His Majesty the King. Proclamation prepared by Cox read in Arabic announcing that the British flag had now replaced the Turkish flag and administration, and very well received by inhabitants. Major Brownlow appointed Military Governor.

British merchants estimate 2,000 wounded came in after action of 17th instant. When Turks left Basra Arab soldiers recently mobilised were left behind, and many exchanged their arms and uniforms for civil clothing before going home. They are reported much dissatisfied with their treatment by Turks recently.

Much indebted to Royal Navy, both for their important share in operations and also for prompt and hearty assistance always given us.

PART II.

OCCUPATION OF BASRA TO BATTLE OF BARJISIYEH.

No. 56.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 25th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. I have received the following private telegram from Cox at Basra:—

"Private. Dated 23rd November.

"General Officer Commanding and I are studying the topographical details bearing on the question of advance to Bagdad in case that course be decided on.

"Will Your Excellency kindly consider the problem. It would be convenient if we could learn the intentions of Government in this connection as soon as possible in order that thorough proposals may be submitted without delay.

"The local outlook is as follows. According to general reports Turkish troops recently engaged with us were completely panic-stricken and very unlikely to oppose us again. Arab element in Bagdad is already friendly, and notables here volunteer opinion that we should be received in Bagdad with the same cordiality as we have been here, and that the Turkish troops would offer little if any opposition.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000025

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

"There remains the tribes between here and Bagdad. From among this element the well-known Muntafik Sheikh Ajaimi, who was ostensibly co-operating with the Turkish troops, has just sent in an emissary to convey his submission (?) and intimate his wish to come in and hand over 4,000 rifles received or seized by him from the Turks, and it is hoped that the neutrality if not the active co-operation of the tribes can be secured by judicious diplomacy.

"Effect of the recent defeat has been very great, and if advance is made before it wears off and while cool season lasts Bagdad will in all probability fall into our hands very easily.

"After earnest consideration of the arguments for and against I find it difficult to see how we can well avoid taking over Bagdad. We can hardly allow Turks (?) to retain possession and make difficulties for us at Basra; but once in occupation we must remain, for we could not possibly allow the Turks to return after accepting from Arabs co-operation afforded on the understanding that the Turkish *régime* had disappeared for good.

"Moreover can we disregard consideration that there are some thirty British subjects detained there whom we need release?"

Before giving you my views I am consulting the Commander-in-Chief and will formulate them as soon as I know how far the proposal is feasible from a military point of view.

No. 57.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 27th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Your private telegram of 25th, repeating telegram from Cox, dated 23rd November.

We are not disposed to authorise an advance to Bagdad at present, but as soon as General Barrett is ready to do so, we sanction an advance to Kurna with a Brigade or such portion of his force as may be necessary for the operation. Presumably he will await the arrival of his third Brigade for Basra and the whole region from Kurna to the sea will have to be controlled by us in both a military and political sense, and on such considerations it will probably be desirable to keep the bulk of the Division at Basra, which should for the present be regarded as the headquarters.

No. 58.

Sir P. Cox to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th November 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

We have been well received by the civil population of Basra, and the mercantile community is separately fully prepared to accept the protection of Great Britain. By proclamation, too, we have made it known that there is no quarrel between us and the friendly resident population. In my judgment it would in the circumstances be wise for us to refrain from treating as enemy cargo the consignments of merchants of Basra that are now on the high seas. I should be glad to know if I am authorised to give a reassuring reply to inquiries on the subject.

No. 59.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

The two following telegrams dated 27th November have been received from Sir P. Cox, regarding the administration of Basra:—

(1) "The General Officer Commanding and I considered that the administration of the town and suburb should be a military one while a state of war continues, or at any rate while Basra is occupied by the Expeditionary Force. In consequence, subject to the approval of the higher authority concerned, Major Brownlow has received the appointment of Military Governor, and a suitable military staff has been allotted to him, to which I have attached the late Consul at Basra, Mr. Bullard, as adviser for civil and local affairs, and Mr. Gregson of the Punjab Police, for the registration of arms and organisation of local police. Gregson can at the same time discharge his ordinary duties in connection with the arms traffic. If Government approve these appointments, I request that authority may be conveyed to me by telegraph to confirm them, and also to submit proposals for settling pay. In the event of Government holding different views from the above with regard to the duration of military administration, I beg to be informed. It is necessary to take measures for the conduct of customs, quarantine, and of the civil post office and the telegraph office, apart from those measures which the maintenance of order involves. As regards the post office, only the mails of the Force can be dealt with by the military postal section, and I suggest that military postal officers should be instructed by the Director-General to report as to the necessary requirements of staff and accessories. With regard to civil telegraph offices and their connected branch lines, I am asking for a report on requirements from by the traffic manager, Karachi, at present at Mohammerah on board the *Patrick Stewart*, who is being requested to come here for the purpose. On the assumption that the line will be managed by the Indo-European Telegraph Department, I request that Director-General may be instructed to arrange for the necessary staff to be sent up. In the commercial interests of the public it is of great importance that the work of posts and of telegraphs should be resumed at the earliest possible date. With regard to Customs it has been arranged that for the time being Messrs. Grey Mackenzie shall conduct them, in addition to agents working in conjunction with a military accounts officer, but I should be glad of the despatch of a Customs official who should advise as to future needs. In the matter of quarantine, arrangements will be made by the medical officer in communication with British quarantine authorities at Mohammerah."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000a9

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(2) "It is also necessary to replace as soon as possible the following Turkish Administrative Departments, with which the Military administration cannot cope properly:—(*a*) management of State property, (*b*) management of Waqf properties, (*c*) collection of land revenue generally, (*d*) collection of those revenues which are ear-marked for the public debt account, (*e*) management of tobacco Régie. In cases (*d*) and (*e*) we are responsible to bondholders despite state of war, and it will be well to place the management on a working footing as soon as possible. At an early date I will endeavour to state what establishment Turks employed in each case and what, *prima facie*, appears now to be required. Something similar to what is commonly employed in the case of an Indian district will probably meet the case. Meanwhile I presume that Basra will be administered by the Government of India. I recommend that an officer of suitable experience and standing, either civilian or political, be despatched as soon as possible, together with one or two trained accountants, for the examination of the working of these branches, and for making recommendations as to their conduct in future."

We request that very early sanction may be given to us to proceed on the lines of Sir P. Cox's recommendations for temporary adminstration, with which we are generally in agreement. As the interests of the Government of India in the Gulf are intimately involved we assume that they will direct administration. We propose that Mr. Dobbs, an officer with special qualifications, should be sent at once to take over the departments mentioned in telegram No. 2 above, on the understanding that the General Officer commanding the force of occupation will exercise general control.

No. 60.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

4th December. A force of two battalions and two guns covered by naval escort landed on left bank five miles below Kurna this morning. Reported enemy in considerable strength at Kurna. Force is establishing itself to-night and will be reinforced if necessary to-morrow when river flats return. Half battalion 20th Punjabis marched to Shaiba four miles north of Zubaide to-day where outpost is to be maintained.

No. 61.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Lieutenant-Colonel Frazer had a successful action with enemy on left bank of Tigris opposite Kurna. Enemy was driven off left bank losing heavily, and we took 2 guns and 70 prisoners, including 3 Turkish officers. 110th Mahrattas charged enemy's entrenchments with bayonet but latter surrendered on their approach. Village of Kurna on right bank was found strongly held by guns and infantry, and our troops having no means of crossing river as our boats came under shell fire, withdrew to bivouac four miles south. Armed sloops and field guns on flats gave great assistance. Steamers *Miner* and *Lawrence* hit by shells. I am sending reinforcements under General Fry this evening; he will have 4½ battalions and 10 Royal Field Artillery guns on flats. The 17th Brigade will complete disembarkation at Magil to-morrow. Both telegraph lines *viâ* Fao to India are now in working order.

No. 62.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 8th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Disembarkation of 17th Brigade at Magil completed. 119th disembarked at Basra. General Fry reported Mezera was occupied by Turks yesterday. They attacked his outposts at two in the afternoon, but were repulsed with some loss. To-day, Fry probably been engaged, but no details yet received.

No. 63.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

8th December. Yesterday, General Fry, after strenuous opposition recaptured Mesera and left bank Tigris, bivouacking on captured position. Three guns captured, two disabled, and about 100 prisoners, including three Turkish officers. To-day, 110th and 104th, and two mountain guns crossed Tigris by flying bridge and dhows, and made good north end (? of) Kurna. Remainder of force crosses to-morrow. One squadron of cavalry left for Kurna to-night.

No. 64.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

9th December. Subhi Bey, late Vali of Basra, commanding the forces at Kurna, surrendered unconditionally with 400 Turks to General Fry, this morning.

183

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00009d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 65.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

9th December. General Fry now reports number of Turks surrendered as follows:—Subhi Bey with 42 officers and 969 men. Also two field and two mountain guns.

No. 66.

Chief of General Staff, India, to Chief of Imperial General Staff, War Office, dated 10th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

From information given by three Turkish officers captured on 7th December at Mezera, we gather that after the action of 4th December the Turks were reinforced by some infantry, 2 guns, 160 gunners and 200 sappers. The combined Turkish strength at Mezera and Kurna was about 3,000, and consisted of gendarmerie Depôt battalion, and nine guns. Seven of the latter have been disabled or captured. The Turkish garrison at Basra has mostly retired towards Suk-es-Shuyukh and Naziriyah. The Turkish forces at Bagdad, when the above prisoners left there about 25th November, consisted of 4 Gendarme battalions, 1 Nizam battalion, 600 cavalry, and some field and mountain guns under the command of Abdul Hamid Pasha. Some guns and four battalions are said to be en route for Constantinople. One battery, two battalions regulars, all 12th Army Corps, together with some Kurdistan tribesmen, were also en route for Bagdad from Mosul. On 7th September a Division went to the North from Bagdad. There is no lack of food or ammunition according to the prisoners' statement.

No. 67.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 11th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

10th December. 1,000 prisoners arrived from Kurna to-day and were placed on board ship

No. 68.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 14th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference telegram of 10th instant from Chief of General Staff. It may be expedient to turn Turks out of Nasiriyah district, so please consider practicability of sending a force to eject enemy and occupy district which blocks approaches from Bagdad by either right bank Euphrates or Shat-el-Hai and which protects Muntafik Arabs from Turkish interference. I understand that Suk-es-Shuyukh can be reached by water from Kurna in two or three days.

The occupation of triangle Basra-Kurna-Nasiriyah would give us complete control of all approaches to Gulf and influence Arabs on both sides of Euphrates.

No. 69.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 16th December 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

In your telegram of the 5th instant regarding Basra, it is presumed that you refer not only to the town and its suburbs, but to the vilayet as well. It is the wish of His Majesty's Government that no declaration may be made of permanent annexation. Such an act would run counter to the principle that, pending a final settlement when the war is at an end, all occupation by allies of territories conquered is provisional. Subject to the foregoing remark, the proposals for temporary administration have my general approval. With reference to the departments mentioned in the second telegram from Sir P. Cox, it is desirable to retain, as far as possible, the existing structure of local agency and administration, and to observe leniency in the collection of revenue. For the present no attempt should be made to give the form of an Indian district to the vilayet. With reference to officers in charge, the appointments proposed for the present purpose are approved. For the time being control of the administration will be vested in the Government of India. It is desirable to keep down the European staff to the smallest dimensions possible, and no officer should receive a promise of being employed permanently in Mesopotamia.

No. 70.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd January 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram dated 14th December, regarding occupation of Nasiriyah district, has been considered, and up to the present our information is not sufficient to justify a final decision.

We realise that a permanent occupation of Nasiriyah would consolidate our political position south of Euphrates, but our information as to actual military value of the place is at present scanty, and the question is complicated by recent reports from Egypt to the effect that the Turkish troops from Mosul and Baghdad are returning from Syria. This may lead eventually to our having to face superior numbers in Mesopotamia, and as we have no troops available to reinforce our Division there, we must be most careful not to disseminate our force without strong military reasons, by pushing troops up to place, which, once occupied, we cannot again evacuate without great loss of prestige. We are taking steps to obtain all information

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000029

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

we can as to value to the Turks of the Euphrates line of advance and of the value to us of Nasiriyah for checking such an advance.

We should prefer to defer our decision until the situation is clearer.

No. 71.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 5th January 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 2nd January. I quite agree in your views. We must await developments.

No. 72.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 23rd January 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Following received to-day from Admiralty:—"Report received through Political Resident, "Persian Gulf (Bushire) from Vice Consul, Ahwaz, states that information received from "Arabs that Turkish Force amounting to 12,000 with 64 guns, two of which are large, is "divided into three parts, of which one holds Azair, another Amara, while third intends "crossing Euphrates and attacking Basra, *viâ* Zubeir. Latter forces accompanied by large "force of Arabs. One hundred Germans are stated to be accompanying them, of whom six "are on board *Marmariss*." As country between Nasiriyah and Zubeir is suitable for Cavalry, and Barrett wants reinforcements, would it be possible for you to reinforce him with Cavalry regiment?

No. 73.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 25th January 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of the 23rd instant. Thanks for information conveyed therein, the military aspect of which had already been discussed with Barrett, whose dispositions appeared to be suitable and whose cavalry reconnaissances had recently been 25 miles west of Zubeir. As regards reinforcements we have the 12th Brigade mobilised and transports standing by in readiness to go to Basra in the event of any really urgent call.

A cavalry regiment might also be spared if he wishes for it, but it will not be easy to arrange. A flight of aeroplanes from Egypt or Europe would lessen the necessity for a cavalry reinforcement. We are also sending him two armoured motor-cars and two light lorries for desert work.

No. 74.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 26th January 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

At present all quiet here and at Kurna, but Arab reports indicate probable advance from Nasiriyah direct against Basra.

No. 75.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 27th January 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Recent reports from Lower Mesopotamia have necessitated a careful review of the military situation with special reference to the adequacy or otherwise of the force at Barrett's disposal to meet eventualities. It would appear that the neighbouring Arabs have generally responded to *Jehad* and are at present inclined to co-operate with the Ottoman troops. We consider that above foreshadows further pressure on Barrett, to deal with which reinforcements are advisable. We are, therefore, reinforcing him at once with the 12th Brigade, subject to your approval.

No. 76.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 27th January 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 25th January. The position regarding the Turco-Arab menace both on the Euphrates and the Tigris sides seems more threatening, while the pipe line in the Ahwaz direction may be an object of attack at an early date, and there can be no doubt that the Turks are sending reinforcements to Bagdad.

Under these circumstances I authorise you to despatch the 12th Brigade to the Shatt if you think fit, and also a regiment of Cavalry if so desired. In any case it might be prudent to send a Cavalry regiment to Karachi in anticipation.

I presume ships with horse fittings are now readily available.

What are the regiments composing 12th Brigade, and who commands it?

I will let you know if my colleagues sanction troops being sent to Karun Valley.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00000b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

No. 77.

(Telegraphic.)

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 29th January 1915.

Reference my telegram of 27th January and yours of same date. I presume 12th Brigade will not arrive Mohammerah till about 7th February. Considering reported movements of enemy and spread of Jehad, this may be too late to protect pipe-line and oil-fields, as without visible support friendly Arabs and Bakhtiaris may lose confidence in our power to assist them in defending same. Under these circumstances is it not possible to send some troops from Basra forthwith by river to Ahwaz? Lynch's steamers and other available transport can probably convey a few mountain guns, and a couple of battalions which should suffice to hearten Sheikh and his adherents as the Turkish raid is probably more formidable as regards potential numbers than as regards its military value, while Ahwaz affords a good defensible point *d'appui*. I am asking Admiralty to send *Odin* back to Shatt without delay, and am also pressing War Office for further reinforcements of second line troops from this side which would replace 12th Brigade in India and enable you to bring Barrett's force up to equivalent of two Divisions. Please acquaint me fully with your views on above suggestions and with action you propose to take thereon.

No. 78.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 30th January 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 29th instant 12th Brigade should arrive at Mohammerah about 7th February. It is possible that they may be too late to protect pipe-line and oil-fields, but, in our opinion, their protection should not be regarded as our principal object, which is to crush any attacks on Kurna or Basra. Defeat at either of these places necessarily involves subsequent destruction of oil-fields and pipe-line. In our view Barrett should not detach troops to Ahwaz unless he feels confident that he can safely spare them, and we doubt whether this is his opinion. In any case the whole decision must be left to him as he alone is in a position to judge. We shall be glad to receive any reinforcements that can be sent us, but would prefer that this should if possible take form of the return of a Division of our own troops from Egypt.

No. 79.

Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 1st February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 30th January. I quite agree that Basra and Kurna are more important factors in military situation than Karun, and must be the first consideration; but if situation in Shatt region is, in Barrett's opinion, such that troops can be temporarily spared for defence of latter, it may be prudent to support the Sheikh, as Turkish success on that side might have a very far-reaching political effect, and directly endanger our military position at Basra and Kurna. It is to enable Barrett to act, if necessary, in Karun direction, that I have obtained concurrence of Foreign Office, who have informed Teheran.

The question simply resolves itself into whether Barrett is confident that he can or not safely detach troops during this week pending arrival of 12th Brigade. Prompt support now may obviate larger military efforts later.

As regards reinforcements from Egypt or England I will reply later.

No. 80.

Sir E. Grey to His Majesty's Minister at Tehran, dated 3rd February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Owing to increased Turkish and Arab activity in the direction of our oil-fields, it has become necessary to send small force of Infantry up the Karun. His Majesty's Ships *Shaitan* and *Comet* with Consul and 30 British Infantry arrived Ahwaz 31st January, where all was found quiet. The 7th Rajputs have now started up river. You should inform Persian Government, explaining that His Majesty's Government have been compelled to take these measures for the defence of their interests and property in default of any effective Persian force sufficient to guarantee those regions against Turkish invasion, and that this defensive measure, in the absence of any other possible means of protection, is the sole object of the movement.

No. 81.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 5th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference my telegram of 29th January. War Office express inability to give any reinforcements, either to replace 12th Brigade or to enable you to complete a second Division for Gulf. I understand that under these circumstances you consider that it would be unsafe to send more troops to Gulf till reinforcements from home or Egypt are furnished. Please cable if this correctly represents case. It will make position perfectly clear if you express urgent need of reinforcements as well as inability to give it from existing Indian resources. I am quite convinced of necessity of reinforcing Barrett up to two Divisions, as apart from menace on Karun side, it is obvious that Turks are concentrating troops in Mesopotamia.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000024

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 82.

Sir P. Cox, Kurna, to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Following from Consul at Mohammerah 6th February. "Sheikh has received report from Chasib that Bawi have risen against him, and yesterday proceeded to loot unopposed Oil Company's store at Musane, and cut telephone line, shot holes in pipe line, and set oil alight at Girana. In the circumstances it seems advisable to strengthen force at Ahwaz as soon as possible."

No. 83.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

In view of increasing enemy forces confronting Force D, we consider it essential that S. Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, should be diverted to Basra. The Battery is therefore being despatched to Mesopotamia at the earliest opportunity instead of to England. We trust our action may be approved.

No. 84.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Following telegram, dated the 5th instant, received from Sir P. Cox regarding Ahwaz :—

"Developments came quickly, and matter was dealt with urgently on telephone.

"Vice-Consul considered situation so imminently urgent owing to spread of *Jehad* movement, instigated by Turks and Ghasban from Amara, that it was unsafe for Europeans to remain even until the arrival of *Comet* and they were withdrawn by *Shushan* 31st January and arrived Mohammerah safely. German representative of Wönckhaus at Ahwaz, who was known to be in communication with enemy, elected to remain, which is in itself evidence of his complicity.

"Since then a battalion of Native Infantry has been sent up and is encamped at Aminia on opposite bank to Ahwaz.

"Sheikh of Mohammerah sent up about a thousand of his own particular tribesmen whom he hopes will be against *jehad*, but the powerful Bawi tribesmen, who were also mobilised, have refused to oppose movement if they have not actually joined it. On 2nd February Warrant Officer of *Comet* was shot dead in the street by a Baluchi fanatic in Deputy Governor's employ. Since then no further developments have been reported.

"As soon as Sheikh expressed inability to guarantee security of Europeans, and Secretary of State ordered a battalion to be sent to Ahwaz to maintain order and resist expected raid by Turks from Bisaitin, it was decided Germans could not safely be allowed to remain at Ahwaz or Mohammerah. They were therefore placed under restraint and given passage to Basra. Their property, houses, and offices were sealed by local authorities and by a British Officer. Correspondence seized is, in the case of agent at Ahwaz, Helmlich, so incriminating as to justify his treatment as a prisoner of war. Case of Mohammerah agent, named Holst, is still under consideration."

No. 85.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 8th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 6th February. "S." Battery. Your action approved.

No. 86.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 8th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

In view of recent developments up Karun and arrival of 12th Brigade do you now propose to send reinforcement to 7th Rajputs at Ahwaz? If so, I authorise despatch, but please report at once so that I may inform Foreign Office.

No. 87.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 9th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

With reference to Cox's telegram of 6th February with Consul's recommendation to strengthen force at Ahwaz. My telegram of 8th instant authorising reinforcements disposes of necessity for further orders. The question now is purely military and may necessitate active military measures at once if strength and distribution of Barrett's Force admits of such with due regard to enemy's disposition in Kurna and Nasiriyeh directions.

No. 88.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 12th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference my telegrams of 1st and 5th February to which no reply yet received. War Office now state definitely that they cannot provide reinforcements for India from either Egypt or

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00007a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

England and that they cannot send any to Aden until it is certain that no serious attack is being made on the Canal. I should therefore be glad to have your views at once as to how, in case of emergency, you now propose to provide the troops necessary to make position in Mesopotamia secure as I am strongly of opinion that some such emergency is more than possible. The course of events on the Karun side exemplifies the necessity for prompt action. Had we been able to despatch an adequate force at once it is conceivable that the Arabs along Karun would not have risen against us and destroyed the pipe-line.

No. 89.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 18th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Cavalry patrol from Ahwaz encountered Arab horsemen 11 miles north-west of Aminiyeh, inflicting some loss. Our casualties, two killed, two wounded. All quiet elsewhere.

No. 90.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 19th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

North of Ahwaz on the left bank of Karun the Sheikh of Mohammerah's levies have driven back the Bawi tribe to Wais. All quiet at Kurna. I have sent a force under General Delamain to-day from Basra to Shaiba to attack a mixed force of Turks and Arabs reported to have collected about 15 miles west of that place.

No. 91.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 20th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Delamain's force reached point some 8 miles south-west of Shaiba. He thinks it is not prudent to advance further with the force at his disposal, and returns to Basra *viâ* Shaiba. All quiet elsewhere. Floods increasing at Kurna.

No. 92.

Chief of General Staff, India, to War Office, dated 21st February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reports from Basra indicate that the Turks are sending reinforcements to Nasiriyeh by the Shat-el-Hai which is now reported navigable for large steamers with lighters between Kut-el-Amara and Shatrat-al-Muntafik; it is possible that the Euphrates line of advance is being used. It is stated that about 3,000 Turkish troops with 18 guns, as well as a large number of tribesmen, are approaching Basra from the direction of Nasiriyeh and that their advance guard is at Etwad Mounds.

No. 93.

Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf, to Admiralty, dated 22nd February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Comet and *Shaitan* and small force of troops at Ahwaz. 2,200 reported at Mushin 20 miles to the north-west of Ahwaz and more at Bisaitin with guns. 17th February, cavalry patrols had skirmishes with Arabs 11 miles to the north-west of Ahwaz. Oil pipe broken in several places and no oil now coming to Abadan. Oil Company's Manager at Abadan states present supply will be exhausted before middle of March. Turks to the north-west of Basra near Gubashiyeh estimated 5,000 with Arabs and 8 guns. Turks near Rotah about 8 miles to the north of Kurna about 2,500 with 6–8 guns and 2,500 Arabs.

No. 94.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 23rd February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

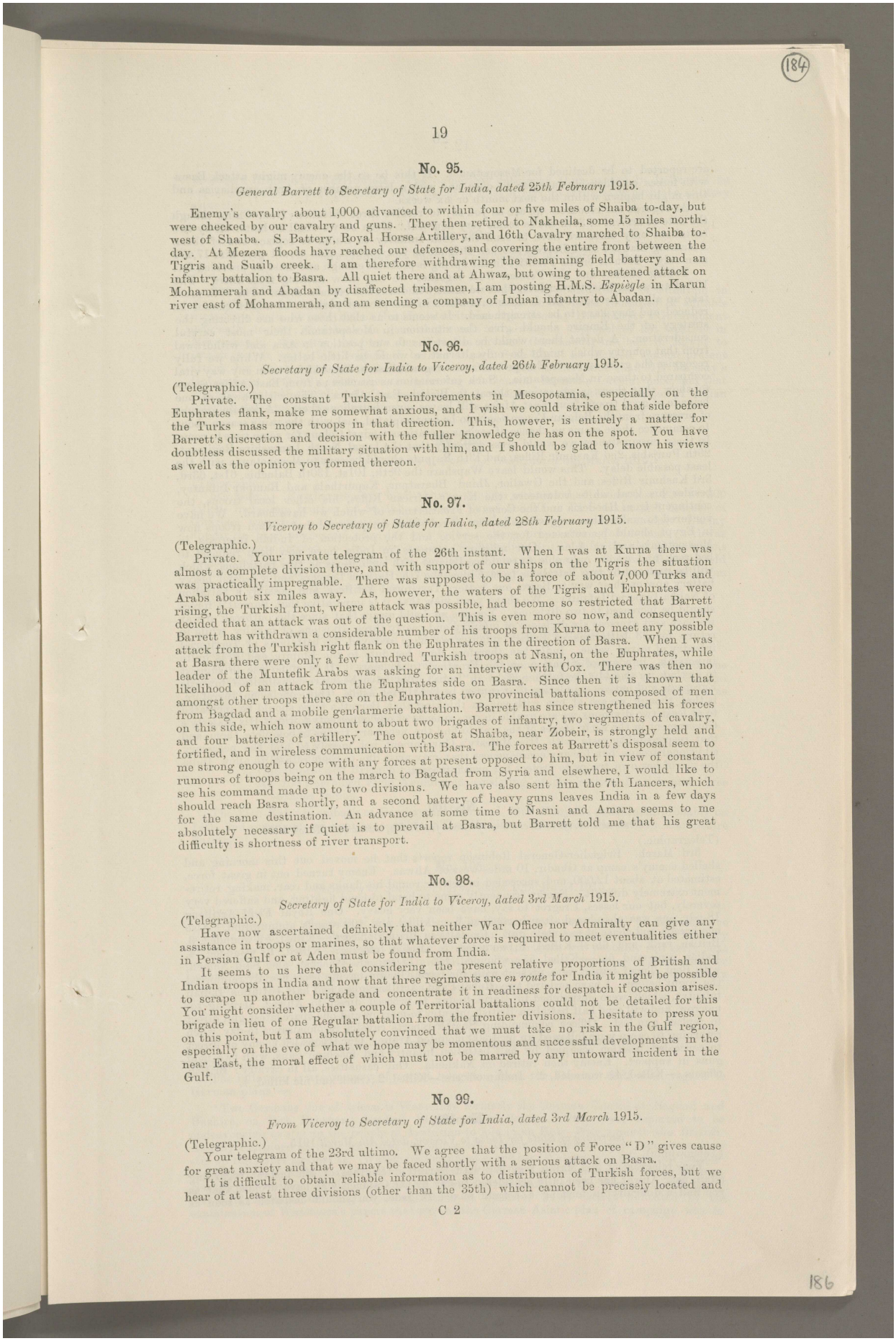
I am anxious regarding Force "D," as the enemy will every day get stronger, and it seems very desirable that we should smash their advanced forces as soon as possible, otherwise we may be confronted with a serious attack on Basra itself. I have endeavoured to get the War Office to send out further reinforcements to India, but it seems hopeless, and of course we must recognise the great issues that face us in Europe, which they regard as vital to success and of paramount importance.

Under these circumstances I should be glad if you could see your way to form another brigade for the Persian Gulf without relief from home. You will be getting three battalions from China shortly, and we might anticipate their arrival by detailing three Indian battalions from India for service in Gulf, or perhaps you could now spare one battalion from Muscat.

As regards the British battalion for this Brigade, could you not spare one of the best of the Territorial battalions? You might also be able to give a Territorial battery for garrison duty at Basra. I wish you could spare another cavalry regiment, as I understand the country at this season is well adapted to that arm.

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



No. 95.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 25th February 1915.

Enemy's cavalry about 1,000 advanced to within four or five miles of Shaiba to-day, but were checked by our cavalry and guns. They then retired to Nakheila, some 15 miles north-west of Shaiba. S. Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, and 16th Cavalry marched to Shaiba to-day. At Mezera floods have reached our defences, and covering the entire front between the Tigris and Suaib creek. I am therefore withdrawing the remaining field battery and an infantry battalion to Basra. All quiet there and at Ahwaz, but owing to threatened attack on Mohammerah and Abadan by disaffected tribesmen, I am posting H.M.S. *Espiègle* in Karun river east of Mohammerah, and am sending a company of Indian infantry to Abadan.

No. 96.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 26th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Private. The constant Turkish reinforcements in Mesopotamia, especially on the Euphrates flank, make me somewhat anxious, and I wish we could strike on that side before the Turks mass more troops in that direction. This, however, is entirely a matter for Barrett's discretion and decision with the fuller knowledge he has on the spot. You have doubtless discussed the military situation with him, and I should be glad to know his views as well as the opinion you formed thereon.

No. 97.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th February 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Private. Your private telegram of the 26th instant. When I was at Kurna there was almost a complete division there, and with support of our ships on the Tigris the situation was practically impregnable. There was supposed to be a force of about 7,000 Turks and Arabs about six miles away. As, however, the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates were rising, the Turkish front, where attack was possible, had become so restricted that Barrett decided that an attack was out of the question. This is even more so now, and consequently Barrett has withdrawn a considerable number of his troops from Kurna to meet any possible attack from the Turkish right flank on the Euphrates in the direction of Basra. When I was at Basra there were only a few hundred Turkish troops at Nasni, on the Euphrates, while leader of the Muntefik Arabs was asking for an interview with Cox. There was then no likelihood of an attack from the Euphrates side on Basra. Since then it is known that amongst other troops there are on the Euphrates two provincial battalions composed of men from Bagdad and a mobile gendarmerie battalion. Barrett has since strengthened his forces on this side, which now amount to about two brigades of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and four batteries of artillery. The outpost at Shaiba, near Zobeir, is strongly held and fortified, and in wireless communication with Basra. The forces at Barrett's disposal seem to me strong enough to cope with any forces at present opposed to him, but in view of constant rumours of troops being on the march to Bagdad from Syria and elsewhere, I would like to see his command made up to two divisions. We have also sent him the 7th Lancers, which should reach Basra shortly, and a second battery of heavy guns leaves India in a few days for the same destination. An advance at some time to Nasni and Amara seems to me absolutely necessary if quiet is to prevail at Basra, but Barrett told me that his great difficulty is shortness of river transport.

No. 98.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 3rd March 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Have now ascertained definitely that neither War Office nor Admiralty can give any assistance in troops or marines, so that whatever force is required to meet eventualities either in Persian Gulf or at Aden must be found from India.

It seems to us here that considering the present relative proportions of British and Indian troops in India and now that three regiments are *en route* for India it might be possible to scrape up another brigade and concentrate it in readiness for despatch if occasion arises. You might consider whether a couple of Territorial battalions could not be detailed for this brigade in lieu of one Regular battalion from the frontier divisions. I hesitate to press you on this point, but I am absolutely convinced that we must take no risk in the Gulf region, especially on the eve of what we hope may be momentous and successful developments in the near East, the moral effect of which must not be marred by any untoward incident in the Gulf.

No 99.

From Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 3rd March 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Your telegram of the 23rd ultimo. We agree that the position of Force "D" gives cause for great anxiety and that we may be faced shortly with a serious attack on Basra.

It is difficult to obtain reliable information as to distribution of Turkish forces, but we hear of at least three divisions (other than the 35th) which cannot be precisely located and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000016

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

are reported to be destined for Mesopotamia. If this be so the enemy might attack Basra with forces considerably superior to ours and with a large number of Arab auxiliaries and this might happen within the next month or six weeks.

As regards our resources we are as you say to receive three battalions from China though the date of arrival of 36th Sikhs seems very doubtful. Even so we shall be better off by two battalions only since we have to send the 18th Infantry to China to replace one of them. Assuming that we send Barrett another Brigade as you suggest this would give him 17,400 men only. Trouble on the Frontier in the spring is probable enough and must be provided for.

Taking Maskat and the Persian Gulf together we can draw nothing from there. The 102nd are so inefficient from fever that we must withdraw and replace them. The 35th must take up all the Persian Gulf detachments which in the present position of affairs cannot be reduced and may have to be strengthened. It seems to us that those who are directing the strategy of the Empire should give the situation in Mesopotamia their most careful consideration. A defeat there would be disastrous to our position in Asia and withdrawal from that country which might be only alternative would be little better. While we fully recognise the great issues in Europe we cannot regard those in East Africa as in any way vital compared to those in Mesopotamia. Such information as reaches us from East Africa seems to show that there is no serious threat to British East Africa. The withdrawal of one brigade of good troops from East Africa still leaves seven battalions there. A certain amount of pressure from the Belgian Congo seems to be contemplated, and with the rainy season about to commence there seems no chance of serious operations against Colony for some time to come. In these circumstances we would press urgently that the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, 29th Punjabis, 2nd Kashmir Rifles, and 13th Rajputs should be sent to Mesopotamia with the least possible delay. This would leave Wapshare the 98th, 101st, 130th Baluchis, 61st, 63rd, 3rd Kashmir Rifles, and the Gwalior, Jhind, Bharatpur, Kapurthala and Rampur Infantry, besides his local white volunteers, the King's African Rifles, his other local troops, the contingent from Rhodesia and the Corps of Frontiersmen of which we have heard. We have ventured to make these suggestions in view of refusal of our proposal that Indian troops now in Egypt should be returned for the service and the protection of Indian interests in Mesopotamia and at Aden. Our military resources in India have now been reduced to bed-rock, and we are only able to reinforce Barrett with such items as two battalions which will be replaced by two battalions from China, the 7th Hariana Lancers and a second heavy battery now on their way to Basra, one battery Territorial Artillery, and possibly a battalion of Nabha Imperial Infantry. We share your view that it is imperative that Barrett's forces should be increased to two divisions. You are no doubt aware that since the outbreak of war we have sent overseas six divisions of infantry and nearly three divisions of cavalry, while in return for 33 battalions of British infantry we have received 35 battalions of Territorial infantry of mixed value. India has, therefore, done her duty to the Empire, and it is quite impossible, in view of situation on the Frontier, to do more. It is of no use to suggest to us that we should take further risks in India. We have heavy responsibilities towards European and native population that cannot be lightly set aside. Our conclusion, therefore, is that though we are at one with you in thinking that Barrett's force should be increased to at least two divisions, we are unable in consequence of our generosity towards His Majesty's Government in the early stages of the war to find the necessary troops to complete them, and that responsibility rests with His Majesty's Government not merely to find the necessary additional troops, but for any consequences that may arise due to their refusal to allow India the use of her own troops to protect her own interests.

No. 100.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 4th March 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

3rd March. Brigadier-General Robinson reports that he moved out this morning and shelled enemy's camp at Ghadir, 10 miles west of Ahwaz. Enemy turned out in great force, estimated at about 12,000, and succeeded in getting round his flanks and rear, making retirement extremely difficult. Enemy frequently came to hand-to-hand fighting, and suffered very severely, but our losses, I regret to say, have been very heavy. One Royal Field Artillery 18-pdr. gun was abandoned after horses had been killed, and 400 rounds ammunition. Also one breach and chase of mountain gun. Casualties: British officers:—Killed, 5; wounded, 3. British rank and file:—Killed, 1; wounded, 5. Indian officers:—Killed, 1; wounded, 4. Indian rank and file:—Killed, 55; wounded, 115. It appears Ghazban and Said-Nameh, with Beni Turuf tribes, were present with the force, Ghadir having been heavily reinforced the night before. I have ordered two Royal Field Artillery guns and half battalion Indian infantry, which were despatched to Marid to-day, to proceed direct to Ahwaz, arriving to-morrow, and will send half battalion British infantry to-morrow and one spare latest gun direct to replace gun lost. Officer commanding Shaiba reports cavalry reconnaisance to-day when returning to camp were followed up by 1,500 mounted Arabs. Our troops led enemy on direct to concealed position occupied by half battalion infantry and machine guns, with two field guns in support. Enemy then retired on Nakheila. Our casualties, all in cavalry: British officers:—Killed, 4; wounded, 2. Indian officers:—Killed, 2; rank and file killed, 4.

No. 101.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 4th March 1915.

(Telegraphic).

Your telegram of 3rd March together with Barrett's telegram of 4th instant regarding affair near Ahwaz has been fully considered to-day by the Cabinet, who have decided that as you find a difficulty in forming a normal mixed Brigade, you should despatch as soon as

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000061

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

possible a Brigade of Territorials. The numerical deficiency thus caused in India will be replaced as soon as possible either from Egypt or East Africa, in accordance with the military situation.

No. 102.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 5th March 1915.

(Telegraphic).

In modification of my telegram of yesterday. Further consideration of situation in Mesopotamia makes me believe it would be wiser to send mixed force composed of suitable units from India at once rather than four territorial battalions as His Majesty's Government originally desired; this both on general grounds and owing to approach of hot weather in Mesopotamia. Secretary of State for War has pressed Commander-in-Chief in Egypt to return you at any rate a brigade if he can regard Suez Canal as secured against present attack, but in any case you and Commander-in-Chief must understand that His Majesty's Government definitely order the strengthening of General Barrett's force at once, and that you are both entirely relieved of responsibility for consequences of further reduction of Indian internal defences for this purpose.

No. 103.

General Barrett to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th March 1915.

(Telegraphic).

5th March. Further reports from Ahwaz confirm estimate that enemy lost 200 to 300 killed, including brother of Sheikh of Beni Turuf and 10 or 12 Sheikhs and brother of Ghazban wounded. All quiet at Ahwaz, all cavalry patrols unmolested to-day. Enemy appear to have abandoned offensive and to be making preparations for defence. Ahwaz reinforcements arrived, so force now consists of ½ battalion British Infantry and 2½ battalions Indian Infantry, 4 guns Royal Field Artillery, 2 mountain guns. The one Royal Field Artillery gun lost and one gun of mountain battery disabled have been replaced from Ordnance Depôt. All quiet elsewere.

No. 104.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th March 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

With reference to your telegram of the 5th instant, one Infantry Brigade and one Howitzer Battery is being despatched to Force "D." The Infantry Brigade under General Gorringe will be called the "33rd Indian Infantry Brigade" and will be composed as follows:—

1st/4th Hampshire Regiment.
11th Rajputs.
66th Punjabis.
67th Punjabis.
One improvised Brigade Signal Section.
No. 106 Combined Field Ambulance, consisting of one section British and three sections Indian.

The 11th Rajputs embark at Bombay on 11th, and 66th Punjabis at Karachi probably on 14th, and remainder as soon as possible. The Howitzer Battery is the 1st/5th Hampshire Battery.

No. 105.

Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 10th March 1915.

(Telegraphic).

Reference my telegram of 5th March. War Office have now agreed to despatch one Brigade Indian troops direct from Egypt to Persian Gulf and have selected 30th Infantry Brigade for this duty. Transport is being arranged and Brigade will probably sail early next week. The force will still be weak in Artillery, Pioneers, and Sappers. Please consider whether you cannot complete some of these deficiencies. I have no desire to press you unduly and you are the best judge of what India can safely spare.

No. 106.

Chief of General Staff, India, to War Office, dated 16th March 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

The following is a summary of recent telegrams from the Persian Gulf with regard to German plans:—

"Two Germans, one of whom is Wassmuss, formerly the German Consul at Bagdad and Bushire, on 16th February reached Shustar from Bagdad. They were reported to be endeavouring to stir up the people of Arabistan to join in an Holy War against the British. As they continued on their way towards Shiraz, *viâ* Ramuz and Behan, they endeavoured to stir up the tribes against us. Wassmuss's companion and his (Wassmuss's) effects fell into our hands, but he himself escaped, and is now reportad to be at Kazerun, which is midway between Bushire and Shiraz. He is endeavouring, with the assistance of the Persian Gendarmerie and local Mullahs, to bring about an attack on Bushire. It is clearly indicated by an examination of Wassmuss's papers that part of the German-Asiatic plan of campaign was to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00009f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

raise Afghanistan and Persia against us. Included in Wassmuss's papers were many pamphlets in various Indian dialects, which were intended to corrupt our Indian Army.

"The information which we have thus summarised strengthens the suspicion which we have had for some time, that the Turco-German movement eastward through Mesopotamia had India for its ultimate objective."

No. 107.

Instructions from Commander in Chief in India to General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B., dated 24th March 1915.

(Extract).

Your force is intended to retain complete control of the lower portion of Mesopotamia comprising the Basra Vilayet and including all outlets to the sea and such portions of the neighbouring territories as may affect your operations.

2. So far as you may find feasible without prejudicing your main operations you should endeavour to secure the safety of the Oil fields, pipe line and refineries of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

3. After acquainting yourself on the spot with the present situation you will submit :—

"(i) A plan for the effective occupation of the Basra Vilayet.

"(ii) A plan for a subsequent advance on Baghdad.

4. In all operations you will respect the neutrality of Persia so far as military and political exigencies permit.

No. 108.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 1st April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Indian Expeditionary Force "D" has been reorganised as an Army Corps of two divisions, with Corps troops as follows :—

Second Indian Army Corps :—Commander, General Nixon. Principal Staff Officers : Senior General Staff Officer, Major-General G. V. Kemball, British Service ; General Staff Officers, 1st Grade, Major G. R. Cassels, 35th Sikhs, Major W. H. Beach, Royal Engineers (additional) ; Deputy Assistant and Quartermaster-General, Brigadier-General W. G. Hamilton, British Service ; Assistant Quartermaster-General, Colonel J. A. Douglas, Indian Army ; Deputy Director, Army Signals, Major L. H. Queripel, Royal Artillery ; attached to Headquarters, Brigadier-General C. T. Robinson, Royal Artillery ; from Poona Division, Colonel J. P. Brewin, Royal Engineers ; Inspector-General of Communications, Major-General Davison from 12th Brigade ; Base Commandant, to be appointed when required from Force.

Poona Division :—Commander, Lieutenant-General Sir A. Barrett. Principal Staff Officers : General Staff Officer, 1st Grade, Colonel R. N. Gamble, British Service ; Assistant Quartermaster-General, Colonel L. W. Shakespeare, Indian Army.

Troops :—16th, 17th, and 18th Infantry Brigades under Brigadier-Generals Delamain, Dobbie, and Fry.

Divisional Troops :—33rd Cavalry (less two squadrons) ; 10th Royal Field Artillery Brigade ; No. 1 Indian Mountain Artillery Brigade ; Divisional Ammunition Column ; 17th and 22nd Field Companies, Sappers and Miners ; 34th Divisional Signal Company ; 48th Pioneers.

12th Indian Division :—Commander, Major-General Gorringe. Principal Staff Officers : General Staff Officer, 1st Grade, Major H. O. J. Browne, 5th Gurkhas ; Assistant Quarter-master-General, Colonel C. E. Hendley, Indian Army.

Troops :—12th, 30th, and 33rd Infantry Brigades. Lean succeeds Davison in 12th Brigade, Mellis commands 30th ; a successor to Gorringe in 33rd will shortly be appointed.

Divisional Troops :—Two squadrons 33rd Cavalry, 5th Hampshire Battery, 86th and 104th Heavy Batteries, 12th Field Company Sappers and Miners. Simur Sappers, 12th improvised divisional Signal company.

Corps Troops :—6th Cavalry Brigade less 33rd Cavalry under Brigadier-General Kennedy ; together with Headquarters and one troop wireless squadron, bridging train, printing and lithographic sections.

We have throughout borne in mind desirability of economy in staff.

No. 109.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

I have to-day assumed command of Indian Expeditionary Force "D."

No. 110.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 12th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Shaiba, Kurna and Ahwaz have all been attacked to-day. Shaiba attack commenced 5 a.m. from three sides, and was supported by guns from south and south-west and west. It continued thus till 8 a.m., when firing became intermittent, and enemy did some entrenching and made no further serious attack until 2.15 p.m., when attack from south was resumed and repulsed by 3 p.m. From actual observation, enemy's troops appeared to approximate closely to previous estimate of 12,000 regulars *plus* tribesmen up to probably 10,000, including 3,000 Kurds. Eight guns, all field, were actually observed, but there are thought to be at least 12, and probably more. I anticipated this early stage of the attack, and had accordingly ordered 30th Infantry Brigade to wade across water-logged plain from Basra to Zobeir, but owing to Turkish occupation of landing place at Zobeir, I decided to send only

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000044

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

one Battalion with General Mellis in all the small boats available, direct to Shaiba, and I propose sending more of that Brigade to-morrow. At Kurna, artillery duel was resumed at daylight to-day. Floating mines struck bridge and destroyed small portion of it. No infantry attack has developed so far, and guns ceased fire 2.30 p.m. Guns from *Odin*, and 4-inch guns from shore got good target on number of enemy in native boats. At Ahwaz, artillery shelled our camp from 5 a.m., and were still doing so at noon, and considerable body of cavalry showed themselves north and west and south, but no attack had developed by noon. Telegraph wires to Kurna and Ahwaz both now interrupted, but I am in communication with both by wireless.

No. 111.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 14th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

14th April 1915. Continued sniping, varied with heavy rifle and machine gun fire, covered by attempts to cut wire round whole of perimeter, occurred throughout night of 12th–13th. Cavalry reconnaissance early to-day found considerable strength towards Ana's Tomb, rising ground, and in houses mile north of our northern defences. I decided to take offensive and clear enemy from north of mound one-and-a-half miles north-west of Shaiba Fort. For this operation I detailed three battalions under General Delamain, supported by fire of four batteries. This was completely successful, and north mound was taken 11 a.m. Having driven enemy northward I decided to continue offensive and drive him westward, prolonging line to left with two battalions under Colonel Peebles, cavalry brigade protecting right flank. By 2 p.m. enemy had retired two miles west of Shaiba Fort. By 2.30 p.m., when I decided to stop pursuit, two guns, several standards, some 300 prisoners, and quantity of arms and ammunition, had been captured. Shaiba reported following captures:—18 officers, 300 men, 2 guns. Prisoners say further determined attacks will be made night and day. Expenditure of gun and rifle ammunition heavy; details not yet known. Shall probably have to make large demands. Return convoy from Shaiba was attacked by enemy in boats at 4 a.m. 13th. Outward convoy to Shaiba, afternoon of 13th, proceeded in boats molested with strong opposition from enemy armed boats, and had to return to Basra owing to desertion of all native boatmen. Passage of this convoy will be forced on 14th by guns, &c., on rafts as gunfire from shore found ineffectual. All quiet Kurna and Ahwaz 13th.

No. 112.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 15th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Following telegram received from General Mellis:—

"11.50 p.m., 14th. In order to continue the offensive movement yesterday, I moved out at 9 a.m. this morning with my whole force less 104th and 48th, and 1 section of each field battery. My advance was directed on south Mound 2 miles south-east of Shaiba Fort. This was found to be held by enemy's advanced troops. This position was made good at 10.30 a.m. and advance continued on enemy's position, which extended from high watch tower to north end of Birjisiyeh wood, their troops being in well-constructed and carefully sited trenches. Enemy was estimated at at least 15,000, including 6 regular battalions and 6 guns, of which 2 were of large calibre. They clung to the trenches with great tenacity and were eventually turned out at point of the bayonet at about 4.30 p.m. Retirement commenced at 5.30 p.m. and was entirely unmolested. Last troops reached Shaiba at 8.30 p.m. I regret casualties were heavy both in officers and men, but I am not yet able to give any numerical details. This will be furnished as soon as possible. All the troops behaved admirably, advancing with great gallantry under very hot shell and rifle fire. About 200 prisoners and some machine guns were captured."

Shaiba is 4 miles north of Zobeir. Birjisiyeh wood is 4½ miles west of Zobeir. High watch tower is 1½ miles east of Birjisiyeh wood.

No. 113.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 16th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Further information regarding battle at Birjisiyeh on 14th instant shows Turkish troops to be well disciplined, well trained, and brave, their machine guns to have been well concealed and used with great effect, and their trenches to have been admirably sited, part at 1,100, part at 800 yards, at foot of slope leading from us down to them. Heavy losses were experienced as our troops topped ridge and began to descend. Turks had no idea of being shot out of trenches, and had to be turned out by a charge of the whole line with the bayonet. If pluck and determination of our troops, both British and Indian, had not been of the sternest, and if they had not been handled with initiative and decision, battle would not have been won. Trenches were finally captured about 4.30 p.m., and being so well concealed, brunt of taking them fell on the infantry. Our losses are heavy: 11 British officers killed and 26 wounded, and our total casualties are believed to amount to 700, but enemy have been so severely handled that they retired night of 14th–15th to Nakheila, 19 miles north-west of Zobeir, where at present I cannot pursue them. Greatest credit is due to General Mellis for way in which he conducted operations, and conduct of troops as a whole worthy of all praise. Those engaged on 14th consisted of "S" Battery, 7th Lancers, 16th and 33rd Cavalry in General Kennedy's Brigade; 63rd and 76th Field Batteries, and 23rd Mountain Battery under Lieutenant-Colonel Cleeve, 17th and 22nd Companies Sappers and Miners under Lieutenant-Colonel Evans, Dorsetshire Regiment, 117th and 119th Infantry in General Delamain's Brigade, Norfolk Regiment, 110th, 120th, in General Fry's Brigade, and the 24th Punjabis from General Mellis' Brigade.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000a6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 114.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 16th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Mellis reports from Shaiba, 10.30 a.m., 15th:—

"Old Basra, Zobeir, and Birjisiyeh are clear of enemy. His abandoned camp, 500 yards south of high watch tower flanking his position of 14th, contains tents, 700,000 rounds small arm ammunition, and 453 cases gun ammunition, large quantity kit and munitions of war, and food cooked and uncooked. Am making arrangements for removal or destruction. Large columns of dust seen this afternoon about and beyond Honlah (?) point to enemy's retirement being continued north-west. I propose reconnoitring for site for camp and defensive position suitable for a brigade in neighbourhood of Zobeir to-morrow, and will report result. I am sending cavalry to ascertain whether Shwebda is entirely vacated."

Shwebda is seven miles west of Zobeir. I placed Staff of 6th Division at General Mellis's disposal when I sent General Mellis to reinforce Shaiba and take command there after General Barrett's departure. General Mellis reports in high terms of assistance he has received from Divisional Staff, and I propose to submit recommendations about them later.

No. 115.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 19th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Please communicate the following to Nixon:—"I congratulate all ranks on their brilliant victory, due to valour and discipline of the troops as well as to able leadership. The fame of the Indian Army is enhanced by the defeat inflicted by them on such superior numbers in this notable hand-to-hand engagement. I deplore the heavy casualty roll but the losses are not in vain. Please report arrival of all wounded at Basra."

No. 116.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 19th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Admiralty most anxious for early repair pipe line as oil question becoming serious.

Recent victory having averted danger from west, Government would welcome immediate move against enemy on Karun side if supply and transport render operating feasible. Moral effect of Shaiba followed up by successful attack from Ahwaz will probably terminate Arab disaffection and ensure future security of pipe line. Early expulsion of Turks from Persian Arabistan politically very desirable.

No. 117.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 23rd April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Receipt of your message of the 19th has been delayed by interruptions and mutilation of text. On behalf of the Second Indian Army Corps I offer our grateful thanks and appreciations for the very generous terms in which you convey your congratulations on the victory the troops of this Force have achieved. All our wounded arrived in Basra by the evening of the 21st. In addition about 180 Turkish wounded.

PART III.

BATTLE OF BIRJISIYEH TO OCCUPATION OF KUT-EL-AMARA.

No. 118.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 23rd April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Following telegram has been received from General, Force "D," dated 19th April:—

"The Cavalry Brigade now with this Force cannot meet demands which will shortly be made on that arm. Despatch of another Cavalry Brigade which should include a British Cavalry Regiment is requested.

"It is very necessary that we should have British unit. In view of heavy work which obstructions in river and other works will cause, I also beg for the despatch of a battalion of Pioneers."

Following reply has been sent to above this day:—

"Regret we are unable to supply any more Cavalry. We are so short of Pioneers that we are unable to send more, but we could raise a Coolie Corps for you or send Indus boatmen if these would be useful."

No. 119.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 24th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 23rd April. With reference to Nixon's request for a Cavalry Brigade I concur in your decision as, apart from impossibility of complying, the approach of hot season renders despatch of more troops, especially British, inadvisable.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00009b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Nixon's demand implies intention on his part of important offensive movement. I presume he clearly understands that Government will not sanction at this moment any advance beyond present theatre of operations. We must confine ourselves during summer to defence of Basra Vilayet and Oil interests in Arabistan. If after smashing enemy in Karun direction it is possible to advance to Amara with view to establishing an outpost which will control tribesmen between there and Karun and so contribute to security of pipe line, I should be prepared to accept such a proposal provided it is supported by you, but I deprecate any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements. Strategically our present position is a sound one, and at present we cannot afford to take risks by unduly extending it. We must play a safe game in Mesopotamia.

No. 120.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Gorringe's force marched 5 p.m. 28th from Sabeh on point on Karun right bank opposite Farsiat.

No. 121.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 29th April 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

From camp opposite Farsiat on Karun Gorringe reports at 12.30 p.m., 29th:—

"My whole force has arrived here less Lean's Brigade, which is still at Ahwaz. General Lean met me here last night. Am moving forward to near Braikeh to-day and reconnoitring Shaltagh and old bed of the Kharkeh for bivouac and depôt—within striking distance of the enemy. Lean's brigade at Ahwaz, less 4th Rajputs, is ready to join me, and bridging train is being prepared at Ahwaz. Latest reports are to the effect that Turks have not moved from Illa, and Kharkeh river is in flood, and is 300 yards broad down stream of Kut Nahr Hashim, but this is based on Arab information. I am arranging to get accurate information on this point by reconnaissance."

No. 122.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 1st May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Gorringe reports at 10.15 p.m., 29th, from vicinity of Braikeh:—

"Cavalry reconnaissance at about noon to-day came across Arab camp near Imam Zada Ali Ibn Husain. Sheikh of these Arabs professed himself friendly and gave information *re* position of Turks. Major Anderson, 33rd Cavalry, with two squadrons—one 33rd, one 7th—was conducting reconnaissance and taking full military precautions. After watering and feeding horses where pointed out by Sheikh he was attacked by considerable numbers of Arabs, and I regret to report following casualties:—33rd Cavalry: Major Anderson, Second Lieutenant Le Mesurier, Indian Army Reserve, and five Indian ranks all missing, two Indian ranks wounded; 7th Lancers: Lieutenant Baily, 26th Cavalry attached, and three Indian ranks, missing; four Indian ranks wounded. The reconnaissance then came under the command of Lieutenant Forbes, attached 7th Lancers, and extricated themselves from difficult position in creditable manner and retired on this camp, inflicting considerable loss on Arabs. Meanwhile support was sent out to them by General Officer Commanding Cavalry Brigade. Another of the officers of the patrol located considerable numbers of hostile Arabs in vicinity of Bamit Ramil Wells, south-west of Imam, and was followed and fired on for three miles."

Further report from Gorringe at 4.30 p.m., 30th:—

"12th Division, less Ahwaz garrison, is assembled at camp on bend two miles north of Braikeh. Arrangements for establishment of advanced depôt near Shaltagh are progressing. General Melliss, with Cavalry Brigade, 30th Infantry Brigade, 63rd Battery and one double company 48th Pioneers, will proceed early to-morrow morning to neighbourhood of Shaltagh. Political report is that Arabs who attacked cavalry patrol south-west of Imam have dispersed."

No. 123.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reports received 1st May from Gorringe show that Anderson, 33rd Cavalry, with one squadron 7th Lancers and one squadron 33rd Cavalry reached old bed Kharkeh near Imanzada Ali Ibn Husain on 29th April about noon. 150 Arabs seen whose Sheikh expressed friendliness and pointed out water. Cavalry watered in detachments with military precautions. More Arabs began to collect and draw in, and Anderson sent for Sheikh and ordered main body to mount and retire and remained himself to speak to Sheikh who came up and excitedly said troops must go. Lieutenant Forbes, Indian Army Reserve of Officers, attached 7th Lancers, was despatched to join main body, and Lieutenant Bailward, 26th Cavalry, to recall flank patrols and Le Mesurier, Indian Army Reserve of Officers, apparently to recall advanced guard. Main body was soon fired on from flanks and increased its pace. Anderson, Bailward

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000a0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

and Le Mesurier never succeeded in rejoining main body, and fell victims to misplaced confidence in Arabs. Remainder of reconnaissance under Lieutenant Forbes took up successive positions and fought their way back to Karun 3.30 p.m., 29th. Melliss with 6th Cavalry Brigade, 30th Brigade, 63rd Battery and convoy of supplies marched morning of 1st May beyond Shaltagh and recovered and buried bodies of all three missing officers. Melliss reports that he has found good situation for base depôt for supplies in vicinity of Shaltagh. Work of repairing oil pipe line is expected to commence within fortnight.

No. 124.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 3rd May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

On Karun line cavalry reconnaissance on 1st May came up with hostile Arabs in act of crossing Kharkeh four miles down stream Kut Nahr Hashim. Arabs got across but abandoned all their effects. Gorringe is continuing to put supplies into advanced base depôt in vicinity of Shaltagh and anticipates completion on 4th instant of concentration there of his whole force, less 4th Rajputs left to garrison Ahwaz, and commencement of crossing of Kharkeh on same date.

No. 125.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Gorringe reports at 12.26 a.m., 7th, from Kut Nahr Hashim:—

"Arrived here with bridge train evening of 6th and hope by dawn of 7th to commence passage of river at point four miles up stream, with cavalry demonstrating against Beni Turuf, west of Sayyid Ali. Latest information both here and from Ahwaz corroborates that all Turks and guns are still awaiting transport, and that Beni Turuf are urging Turks to support them in opposing our advance."

No. 126.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 15th May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

On Karun line General Gorringe carried out reconnaissance in force with cavalry brigade on 14th and found Bisaitin clear of Turks. Returning *viâ* Khafajiyah, reconnaissance co-operated with General Melliss' Brigade in operations against Beni Turuf who attacked our patrols on 12th. Heat intense.

No. 127.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 16th May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Gorringe reports from Khafajiyah at 16th, that on 15th operations were continued against Beni Turuf, the tribe who behaved treacherously on 29th April, and who have attacked us on several occasions before and since. General Mellis forced passage from right bank to left of Kharkeh river at Khajajiyah, being opposed by about 1,000 Arabs. A similar number opposed General Lean, who with two battalions forced his way down Kharkeh left bank and in spite of many obstacles, including Unmachiyeh canal, which his troops swam, joined hands with Mellis on night of 15th–16th. During Mellis's crossing, Subadar-Major of 76th Punjabis conspicuously distinguished himself. Some 50 Arabs stubbornly defended a fort from which they were finally dislodged by 76th Punjabis, covered by a heavy fire from guns, maxims, and rifles. The heat was intense throughout these operations.

No. 128.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 17th May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Anglo-Persian Oil Company have now got parties out repairing pipe line under tribal escort. On Karun line General Gorringe reports from Khafajiyah, 11.30 p.m., 16th, that operations against Beni Turuf were completed on 16th; small opposition was met, casualties only 2 wounded. Enemy's losses during whole operations uncertain, 100 bodies were found and several wounded. Maxim belts and other Government equipment lost on 3rd March have been recovered.

No. 129.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 18th May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

I directed General Gorringe to do what he could to make Turks think that he is advancing on Amara, and he is consequently demonstrating against Bisaitin with a force under General Lean and with remainder of his force is returning to Illa on 19th.

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 130.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 23rd May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of the 24th ultimo. Nixon proposes to take offensive from Kurna up Tigris on 24th, and does not consider any reinforcement will be required. We consider his move desirable in order to extend our control over Tigris Valley thereby securing the pipe line and protecting the Basra vilayet in accordance with his orders and do not propose to interfere with his intention. He will not of course proceed beyond Amara without your sanction.

No. 131.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 23rd May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of to-day. I sanction proposed movement on the clear understanding that General Nixon is satisfied that he can concentrate a sufficient garrison at Amara to defy any attack from Bagdad during the summer when it may be difficult for him to reinforce so advanced a position. He must clearly understand his action must be guided by the fact that we can send him no further troops. As he must have made his arrangements for this move some days ago, I hold that he should have submitted his proposal before the last moment. Questions jointly involving civil and military policy should under present circumstances only be decided by the Cabinet.

No. 132.

Secretary of State for India to Vicevoy, dated 24th May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference my telegram of 19th April. Admiralty attach great importance to uninterrupted maintenance of oil supply at Abadan. As they regard this as matter of extreme urgency, please impress on Nixon necessity of protecting pipe line throughout.

No. 133.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 26th May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Townshend reports from Kurna that his arrangements for an offensive movement from that place against Rotah will be complete by 31st May, on which date he proposes commencing his move. By the time he has reorganised his river transport after this operation I hope to have received definite orders as to the policy to be adopted regarding advance towards Amara.

No. 134.

Secretary of State for India[1] to Viceroy, dated 28th May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference Nixon's telegram of 26th instant. Please see my predecessor's telegram of 24th April. I cannot give further instructions till I know with what force he is advancing, and immediate objects contemplated. Our policy must depend partly on local factors, forces locally available and resistance expected, and partly on situation elsewhere. If you contemplate occupation of Amara, I should like to know what force Nixon considers necessary for its garrison during summer, and how generally he proposes to distribute his troops during summer months.

No. 135.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 31st May 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Townshend commenced combined operations this morning up Tigris from Kurna at 5 a.m. with Royal Navy including His Majesty's Ships *Espiegle*, *Odin*, *Clio*, *Lawrence*, and smaller vessels. Turning movement which started 1.30 a.m. on One Tree Hill was successfully made, partly by bellum and partly by wading. Bombardment of enemies' positions by naval guns, land guns, guns on barges, rafts, &c., started at 5 a.m., and principal infantry attack by 17th Brigade under Colonel Climo was made by troops in bellums. By noon this Brigade had successfully captured Norfolk Hill, One Tower Hill, Shrapnel Hill, and Gun Hill, after enemy's guns had been mastered by our artillery. An advance in all of about four miles. Our casualties not heavy. Two aeroplanes made useful reconnaissances. Heat excessive. Operations will be continued to-morrow. Further details later.

[1] Mr. Chamberlain succeeded the Marquess of Crewe as Secretary of State for India on the 27th May 1915

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00009a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 136.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 1st June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

5.30 a.m., 1st June 1915. Capture now reported three 16-pounder guns complete with 100 rounds of ammunition and 241 prisoners, including wounded. Our casualties slight. Returns not yet available. Naval mine sweepers picked up six submarine mines, and Royal Engineers discovered and exploded harmlessly several heavily charged land mines. Small number of casualties was largely due to concentrated artillery fire, in which accuracy of the naval guns and Hampshire Territorial howitzers was conspicuous.

No. 137.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 1st June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Advance continued this morning and Bahran, Meundveblah, Rotah, were found completely evacuated, many tents left standing. After considerable time spent in sweeping for mines which were all successfully located, and after reconnoitring obstruction below Rotah naval flotilla pushed on in pursuit of Turks who were seen in morning retiring in steamers and mahelas. Obstruction below Rotah was found to have good channel round it. Temperature to-day 103° in the shade, no wind.

No. 138.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

With reference to your telegram dated 28th May, and General Nixon's telegram of 26th May. General Nixon was instructed on the 27th May that his first object is to expel Turks from the Lower Tigris below Amara, thereby securing the safety of Basra and Kurna from attack from the north, and at the same time guarding the oil supply, as directed in your telegram of 24th May. He reports that this operation was to begin on 31st May. Its progress should give him data which will enable him to give us better the information you now request. We feel, however, that while military operations are actually in progress, and in present quite uncertain military situation in Lower Mesopotamia it would be undesirable and even dangerous to tie him down with precise orders which might not fit in with the local situation which confronts him. He may possibly find himself opposed by superior military forces on the Tigris which may impose on him a defensive attitude, or he may find himself strong enough to dominate situation. But neither he nor we can yet say. We therefore think it desirable for the present not to alter our original instructions to him, which were sent to you by post on 7th April, except in so far as they have been modified by your subsequently received directions, and in particular those which directed safeguarding of Pipe Line, your telegram of 24th May. Under the original instructions he will, as soon as he is in a position to do so, submit a plan for the occupation of the Basra Vilayet, which includes Amara. This he will do with a far more complete knowledge of the local situation than is now available, and we will then report to you for further orders. We should not propose to authorise any advance beyond Amara, for which his force is not adequate.

No. 139.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Townshend reports capture of Turkish river steamboat *Mosul* early morning 2nd June, in good condition. All steamers which were with Turks in this part appear to have been accounted for. About 12 mahelas were overtaken night 1st–2nd June, escaped into side creeks and were apparently attacked by marsh Arabs, much firing was heard. Quantity of rifles and ammunition has been taken besides 250 more regulars, including 15 officers. Prisoners generally concur in statement that 4,000 troops were opposed to us in front Kurna, comprising five regular battalions and ten field guns, of which seven have been captured. Lighter with German mines on board has been captured. It is reported that four Germans fled in a motor launch which broke down. Germans fled into the marshes where they have probably fallen into the hands of unfriendly Arabs. The naval sloops are unable to proceed upstream of Devil's Elbow, and General Townshend and Captain Nunn, R.N., in *Comet* (Flag), with *Miner*, *Shaitan*, *Semana*, *Lewis Pelly*, and four 4·7 guns in horse-boats have proceeded to Qalat Salih. Norfolk regiment follows them early morning 3rd June and a brigade will reach Qalat Salih same afternoon. Whole of these movements are taking place by echelons of flotillas as country traversed is entirely flooded. Enemy's retirements similarly took place by boats and steamers. General headquarters and land telegraph line will arrive at Qalat Salih, 3rd June.

No. 140.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

I arrived at Basra with general headquarters 6 p.m. 4th June, and found that General Townshend had received surrender of the Governor of Amara at 1.30 p.m. 3rd June. About 30 officers and 700 soldiers laid down their arms and have already been despatched to the base. Actual surrender was made to the very small force in the *Comet* and smaller gunboats in which General Townshend, Senior Naval Officer, and Sir Percy Cox had pushed rapidly ahead of the transport. Amara now held by two and a half battalions, four heavy guns, and six guns from naval gunboat flotilla. Transports returned morning 5th June to Ezra's Tomb to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00003c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

bring up more troops. This necessitated removal night, 4th June, wireless installation from transport and erection on shore and temporary interruption of telegraphic communication as marsh Arabs between this and Ezra's Tomb constantly cutting wires. Situation, however, well in hand, and Chief Political Officer is in touch with leading Sheikhs' local tribes, and matters should soon settle down and telegraphic communication be secured. After surrender of Amara small advanced guard of Daghastani's troops entered the town and were captured. About 2,000 in rear took alarm and turned off into the marshes. His forces are in very disorganised state and short of transport and I hope to capture or break them up. Arabs said to be deserting him. Our total captures to date believed about 80 officers and 2,000 men, seven field guns, six naval guns, twelve large steel barges and following steamers: passenger steamer *Mosul* and three small steamers (?) and gunboat *Marmariss* were sunk. About 1,000*l.* in gold, many rifles and much ammunition taken. Among the prisoners are three Germans and two others were killed by marsh Arabs.

No. 141.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

All quiet at Amara, at which place general headquarters remain for the present. Leading local Sheikhs are arriving to receive orders of Government, and on this head I will send more detailed telegram 6th June. Careful aeroplane reconnaissance morning of 5th June, radius of 30 miles from Amara, failed to discover any sign of the enemy. Daghastani's unimportant entrenchments facing north-east, about 15 miles east of Amara, were visited. Naval reconnaissance 40 miles up Tigris from Amara gained information that his forces are reported to have been retiring by land up Tigris in demoralised condition, part of them having thrown away their arms. A heavy field gun of Daghastani has been captured to-day. Land telegraph communications has been established. Local supplies of beef, sheep, fodder, and grain are abundant. Climate drier and far less trying than that of Basra and Qurnah. Health and spirits of the troops excellent.

No. 142.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 7th June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Please communicate to General Nixon and to naval and military forces engaged an expression of my cordial congratulations on the successful result of recent Tigris operations.

No. 143.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 11th June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of the 7th instant. Nixon asks me to convey to you, on behalf of himself and the naval and military forces engaged in the advance to Amara, their grateful appreciation of your congratulations.

No. 144.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 13th June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Nixon wires that he proposes that two Brigades should now move on Nasiriyeh in order to secure Euphrates portion of Basra Vilayet. We concur in this operation which should have a good effect on the Euphrates tribes and propose to instruct him to proceed as soon as his preparations are complete. His present force should be quite sufficient for the success of operation and the maintenance of new position.

No. 145.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 14th June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Euphrates line, nothing fresh. Tigris line, aeroplane reconnaissance from Amara, 14th June, observed camps and trenches on both banks of Tigris at Daqq al Hajjaj, eight miles down stream of Kut-el-Amara, and dropped three bombs on another camp six miles up stream of first. Troops in the vicinity were estimated at 3,000. Karun line, Anglo-Persian Oil Company re-commenced pumping 10th, and oil arrived at Abadan evening of 13th. Hired transport *Thogwa* has arrived at Basra with reinforcements and stores.

No. 146.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 15th June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

On Karun line, Sheikh of Mohammerah's force of 3,000 Muhaisin, under his son Chasib, advanced from Karun 3rd June against the rebellious Chaab tribesmen in their main settlement of Fallahieh. Action was joined against the Chaab collected in force on 5th June

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00004a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

near an outlying village of Fallahieh settlement, and after four hours fighting the Muhaisin scattered the enemy and occupied the village, incurring some 40 casualties. The enemy rallied at Buzieh, but in co-operation with an armed launch *Sheikh*, acting from Khor Musa direction, Chasib made good Fallahieh on 6th June and thence continued the success of his operations by defeating the Chaab at Buzieh. Understand that Muhaisin now engaged in settling the Jerrahi district. This lies east of Fallahieh and had been overrun by the Chaab rebels. This puts the Chaab business on a satisfactory footing, and the situation in Arabistan has now almost returned to normal.

No. 147.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th June 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

28th. General Gorringe's column consisting of Headquarters, 12th Division, 30th Infantry Brigade under General Mellis, 63rd Battery Royal Field Artillery, 30th Mountain Battery, two 4·7 guns, 12th Company Supply and Transport, sappers and wing of 48th Pioneers, all in steamers and on rafts and lighters, crossed Hamar Lake on 27th. Reconnaissance of Hakika channel was carried out against opposition from two armed Thorneycroft launches. Demolition of obstruction in Hakika channel commenced 5.30 p.m. 27th and continued all night. No further news at present. Nothing to report from Amara.

No. 148.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Gorringe telegraphs 6.15, 5th instant:—

"Have been heavily engaged all day; have succeeded in forcing our way to Euphrates, which was reached at 1 p.m. by 24th Punjabis moving along the left bank Gurma Safha. Turkish battery on right bank Euphrates surrendered. I am now sweeping the channel for mines to get steamers through to Euphrates. Casualties have been heavy; as far as is known at present one British officer killed, five wounded and about 70 other ranks killed and wounded. Several ships have been hit, but only *Sumana* disabled. Enemy made stubborn resistance, and evidently strongly reinforced from Nasiriyeh, also local Arabs also opposed us. Enemy's casualties were very heavy. All troops behaved gallantly. Will wire full details later."

No. 149.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Am glad to add fuller description of General Gorringe's successful action on 5th July, during which, in spite of determined resistance, he forced his way into the main Euphrates Channel. The physical obstacles formed by the deep creeks and inundations in the thick palm groves of that region could often only be overcome by boats which in some cases had to be dragged overland through the jungle. The 30th Brigade under General Mellis operated on both banks of the Hakika or Gurma Safha Channel which leads into the Euphrates from the obstruction, the passage of which had taken six days. The 2nd Battalion 7th Gurkhas (Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor) on the right bank of this channel had to be reinforced by the 1st Battalion 4th Hants (Lieutenant-Colonel Bowker) when they made good a position from which our artillery fire could be observed, after which the wing, 48th Pioneers (Major Riddell) and the Hants crossed a creek and pressed the enemy in flank. On the left bank of the Hakika, the gallant advance of the 76th Punjabis under Lieutenant-Colonel Smithett, who was severely wounded, and of the 24th Punjabis under Lieutenant-Colonel Climo was unable to overcome the enemy's opposition or to outflank him, though supported by the fire of the 30th Mountain Battery (Major Cotter) from rafts until the naval 4·7 guns and small armed steamers under Captain Nunn had pushed up the Hakika Channel into close range under heavy fire during which the *Sumana* was disabled by a shell, but continued in action. Eventually the 24th Punjabis dragged their bellums overland, outflanked the enemy opposing them and reached the left bank of the Euphrates, which they prepared to cross so as to take the enemy's gun position on the right bank of that river in rear. The enemy's guns thereupon surrendered, which led to similar action on the part of the enemy on the left bank who had suffered very heavily. We captured two 15-pdr. guns complete, besides seven officers and 83 regulars of Redif and 17 Arabs, most of those latter escaping by the creeks southwards. Our casualties already reported totalled 109 on the 5th, viz.:—Officers, one killed seven wounded; British ranks, three killed, four wounded; Indian ranks, 21 killed, 72 wounded and one follower wounded. Suk-es-Shuyukh and local Arabs have submitted. The minefield has been successfully crossed and Gorringe's force have followed up enemy to his position four miles below Nasir Yah. Another engagement expected to-day there. Want of powerful aeroplanes and especially waterplanes has been much felt throughout these operations and has been most prejudicial.

No. 150.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 8th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line. Armed launch *Shaitan* and paddle steamer *T* 2 reconnoitred up Tigris to Filaifilah on morning of 8th. On arrival there they encountered an enemy steamer armed

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

with guns and a Thorneycroft with pom-pom. Exchange of artillery fire took place resulting in retreat of enemy craft. Four guns and one pom-pom were in action against us; two of them in prepared position on bank. Enemy's fire was accurate but we had no casualties. Enemy occupied this Filaifilah position on 7th; their strength there is put at 200 infantry with guns above-mentioned and some cavalry. Enemy is reported to have at Ali Gharbi similar strength of cavalry and infantry with two guns, and to be expecting reinforcements. Attitude of Ghadban of Beni Lam regarded as doubtful. After observation of enemy's Filaifilah position reconnaissance returned to Kumait whence patrolling by Itan will be continued. Two 4·7 guns are being sent from Amara.

No. 151.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 11th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Euphrates line. During night of 10th–11th enemy opened rifle fire at intervals against General Gorringe's advanced positions. Again at 7 a.m. on 11th heavy rifle fire supported by gun fire was opened for two hours, but our advanced positions were maintained without difficulty. The first of our steamers with reinforcements reached Gorringe at 5 p.m. 11th. Tigris line: As result of our reconnaissances up river on 8th and 9th Ghadban's demeanour is now satisfactory, and he volunteers to co-operate in checking Turkish advance.

No. 152.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 12th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference protection of Anglo-Persian oil interests. The Admiralty are most anxious that there should be no further interruption of supply, and urge effective military protection irrespective of tribal guarantees. They are informed that military are proposing to withdraw troops from Ahwaz and pressing Oil Company to subsidise the Bawi tribe. Probably 2,000 cavalry, infantry and guns will suffice for this duty, but you in communication with Nixon can advise on this point.

Nixon must be warned that the present situation in Persia and Aden renders it more than ever advisable not to rely entirely on tribal guarantees. I understand that as no further reinforcements for Persian Gulf are possible, you will not sanction further advance but will be content for the time to hold the Basra vilayet and the pipe line.

No. 153.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 14th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Euphrates line. Gorringe attacked enemy's position on both banks of Euphrates night of 13th–14th. On right bank he succeeded in securing and entrenching advanced position within 400 yards of enemy's advanced trenches. Turning movement, commenced midnight by 24th Punjabis and two sections 30th Mountain Battery on right bank with some sandhills dominating rear of enemy's position as objective, was met unexpectedly by strong opposition from Arabs, and had to withdraw. Gorringe reported his intention to push forward at noon of 14th up left bank against enemy's entrenchments, from which they appeared to be partially withdrawing. Details not yet to hand, but casualties 24th Punjabis reported heavy. Nine enemy guns located, including one black powder heavy gun. Tigris line. Latest report of Filaifilah position confirms it to be strong and held by force.

No. 154.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 15th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Euphrates line. General Gorringe telegraphs on forenoon of 15th that during night of 14th–15th he again pushed forward working parties on right bank and extended his advanced entrenchments sufficient for one battalion. On left bank enemy again attacked as on three preceding nights. They were supported by artillery and very heavy rifle fire, but made little forward movement. They have extended their advanced trenches on the left bank and put more men into them, and opened a second line entrenchment some 1,400 yards in rear of them. In view of these facts Gorringe decided against attacking at dawn 15th. At 6.20 p.m. 15th he telegraphed:—

"Turks have been considerably reinforced and their strength, which on my arrival was 2,000 regular rifles with eight guns, is now estimated at not less than 5,000 regulars with nine guns. They yesterday morning received further reinforcements which is corroborated by movements seen by our advanced troops. Owing to casualties, sick, &c., among troops, my effective strength at present does not exceed 3,600 rifles. I had 140 casualties during last 24 hours and 300 sick. Information is that enemy have another position between that now held by them and Nasiriyeh and as reported in this morning's wire have already added to the position in my immediate front. To turn enemy out of his position further reinforcements will be required. Aeroplanes would be most valuable to locate enemy's concealed works

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000b8

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

and guns. My artillery have not yet been able to gain superiority of fire which calibre and ranges should reasonably be expected to give me. Enemy cannot be turned out of their position except by deliberate and systematic advances approximating to trench warfare. Pending arrival of reinforcements I shall continue to push forward trenches on both banks at every opportunity and consolidate our position here."

No. 155.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 24th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

I have the greatest pride and satisfaction in forwarding the following telegrams received from General Gorringe reporting the decisive victory he has gained. First telegram despatched 7.30 a.m. to-day:—"Our attack on enemy's advanced trenches on left bank successful. 30th Brigade now pushing attack up right bank." Second telegram despatched 10.30 a.m.:—"30th Brigade captured enemy advanced trenches right bank 9.30 a.m., forcing passages of Mejinineh Canal bridging by 17th Company Sappers and Miners, supported by gunboats, of which *Samana* fought her way with bridging materials up to entrance to creek. About 300 prisoners, one gun, two machine-guns already taken." Third telegram despatched 7.35 p.m.:—"After taking enemy's advanced positions we continued advance, and by 12 noon had captured enemy's main position. Enemy made most stubborn resistance, and many were shot in their trenches, in all some 500 were killed. We captured 10 guns and many prisoners. After short interval to reorganise we pushed forward to Sadanawiyah position to which enemy had retired, and succeeded in capturing this position with the remainder of enemy's guns. By 6.15 this evening bulk of enemy retired northwards into marshes. Troops are bivouacking to-night on captured position at Sadanawiyah, and to-morrow morning will occupy Nasiriyeh. Throughout action troops have displayed greatest gallantry and endurance. Our losses have been heavy, between three and four hundred, but reports not yet in."

No. 156.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 25th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Euphrates Line. In continuation of my telegram of 24th. In evidence of endurance displayed by General Gorringe's troops I would draw attention to the fact that they have been fighting night and day with little or no intermission since 5th July up to to-day. Shade temperature, 113 degrees, has been common in an atmosphere of heaviest and closest humidity. The exertions and hardships of trench warfare, where guns, ammunition, and stores had to be moved without the help of animals, under such conditions are difficult authentically to describe. Twenty days of such work, culminating in an attack on a series of entrenched positions form a test of the severity of which it would be difficult to over-estimate.

No. 157.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 25th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Gorringe wires from Nasiriyeh, 3 p.m. to-day:—

"At dusk last evening gunboats pushed on to Nasiriyeh and engaged Thorneycroft and disabled her. Gunboats were then heavily fired on from Nasiriyeh and were unable to salve Thorneycroft, which was then ablaze, and subsequently sank. This morning Nasiriyeh was occupied without opposition. Turks evacuated the place during the night, and retreated much disorganised and on foot towards Shatra, leaving 50 wounded."

No. 158.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 26th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Please communicate to General Nixon a message conveying my congratulations to General Gorringe's column on great success achieved by capture of Nasiriyeh, and my warm appreciation of gallantry and endurance of all ranks under unprecedented climatic conditions of warfare.

No. 159.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 27th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Euphrates Line. Approximate estimate of enemy's casualties—killed, wounded and prisoners, in action of 24th July, totals 2,500. Prisoners amount to 41 officers of whom five are wounded, and 690 men of whom 200. Details of captured arms and material still incomplete but expected. General Gorringe has received reports of rally of retreating Turks at point 26 miles north of Nasiriyeh under cover of a reinforcement from Kut-al-Amara of five guns and five fresh battalions. While not accepting this report without verification, I consider it emphasises great desirability of denying to enemy the use of so important a river junction as Kut. Gorringe is investigating report by means of aeroplane and other methods. Falling waters in Hammar is causing great difficulties in case of larger river steamers, one of which has been aground for three days.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000058

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 160.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 27th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Now that Nasiriyeh has been occupied the occupation of Kut-al-Amara is considered by us to be a strategic necessity. Kut-al-Amara is only four miles beyond limit of Basra Vilayet; it commands the lower reaches of the Tigris and also the Euphrates by way of Shatt-al-Hai and its occupation will facilitate the reinforcement of our position on either river and also enable us to control the powerful Beni Lam tribe and effectively safeguard the oil-fields against aggression from the Tigris. Once securely in possession, we could probably reduce materially our garrisons at Nasiriyeh and Amara and thus economise our troops. Nixon has owing to sick found it necessary to demand reinforcements. He is also being directed to despatch an Indian battalion to Bushire. In order to strengthen Nixon for the purpose of securing Kut-al-Amara, we consider 28th Brigade should be moved from Aden to Force "D." when this brigade can be spared from Aden. We agree with Younghusband that an advance to Lahej should not be undertaken for the present. It will therefore be possible to spare 28th Brigade from Aden shortly in order to assist Nixon in the capture of Kut-al-Amara, after which the brigade could again return to India. We request your sanction to our authorising Nixon to capture Kut-al-Amara and to employ 28th Brigade in the operation, which we calculate would begin not later than early in September and should be completed in time for the 28th Brigade to be back in Aden by November.

No. 161.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Euphrates Line. Evacuation of sick and wounded from Nasiriyeh has commenced. Navigation of Hammar Lake presents difficult problem. Transfer of units back to Tigris Line being carried out as shipping becomes available. Gorringe's experience leads him to recommend strongly more machine guns to keep down casualties, which were heavy on 24th July. On 20th instant I asked for 56 more Maxims of latest pattern, and from the experience of 24th July I request they may be sent me as soon as possible, but they should be of the new, light pattern.

No. 162.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 29th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of the 26th instant. I communicated your message to Nixon. He now asks me to convey following to you :—

"Our feelings of gratification at the appreciation expressed by the Secretary of State were never stronger than they are to-day, and Gorringe, his troops and myself—one and all—heartily thank you for your very kind and inspiriting message."

No. 163.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 30th July 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference Mesopotamia operations. As neither Younghusband's Brigade nor other reinforcements are available a cautious strategy is imposed upon us.

I recognise fully strategic importance of Kut-el-Amara, but please let me know how it is proposed to distribute troops after its capture.

If Kut-el-Amara is held in force, it seems unlikely enemy will take any further offensive on Euphrates side, but will concentrate on Tigris line, therefore, we must be strong at Kut.

Assuming that defeated Turks are retiring by Shatt-el-Hai, do you think that any advantage is gained by retaining troops in so unhealthy an outpost as Nasiriyeh, with which communications are difficult, especially when river falls? Have you considered advisability of withdrawal from there and concentration of strength on Tigris side?

Bushire and Ahwaz must continue to be held as outposts for political reasons, but would it not be well that remainder of troops should be at Basra and along Tigris?

Please let me have your views before any decision is taken.

No. 164.

His Majesty's Minister, Tehran, to Sir E. Grey, dated 3rd August 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Persian situation. His Majesty's Consul-General at Ispahan has reported that he has reason to believe that there will shortly be some 300 Germans and Austrians (latter being prisoners of war escaped from Transcaspia) assembled in that town. They are camped a short distance outside the town and possessed of large quantities of rifles and ammunition besides machine guns, bombs and a wireless telegraphy apparatus, and allow no one to approach their camp. They have also considerable number of Mutahid in their pay. Small parties of Germans are continually coming *viâ* Kermanshah and amongst them probably Oppenheim. Germans have more than once interrupted Indo-European Department wires south of Ispahan and German Consul there has even written to Department's officers threatening to do so. Acts of this kind and this considerable concentration at Ispahan

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000073

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

obviously implies more than a mere attack on our Consulates, and popular rumour here asserts that German design urged by democrats is to carry off the Shah and Government to Ispahan. This is far fetched, but it is not improbable that hostile Legations contemplate flight to Ispahan should Russian troops arrive at Kasvin and threaten the capital. Idea was currently talked of three months ago. From this centre with communications open to Turkey *viâ* Kermanshah they would hope to throw all Persia into disorder, and paralyse the Persian Government's action by destruction of telegraph lines, and trust to a chapter of accidents to involve her in war with us. It has also occurred to me that they might be contemplating an attack on oil-fields or threatening our position at Basrah. At least one party of Germans has left Ispahan for unknown destination by southern road, and they may be trying to rouse the tribes. These speculations may seem far fetched, but I can offer no better guess at the objects of German preparations at Ispahan.

No. 165.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th August 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of the 30th ultimo. These questions have been under close and constant consideration for months past, and Nixon's views have again been asked for on your above-mentioned telegram.

His reply puts the case so clearly that we repeat it as our answer to your telegram :—

"The views expressed by the Secretary of State are practically identical with instruction I have given to General Gorringe.

"I have emphasised the advantage of holding Kut-el-Amara in force and the unlikelihood of Nasiriyeh being then threatened by Euphrates line, and the consequent possibility of reducing the strength of the Nasiriyeh garrison.

"With regard to the suggested total evacuation on the Nasiriyeh, I am all in favour of concentrating on the Tigris line; but I consider that Nasiriyeh is too important a place to abandon altogether, as it must be a centre of civil government to control the powerful Arab tribes by which it is surrounded, and effectually to occupy this vilayet.

"A withdrawal from Nasiriyeh would do incalculable harm politically on this account; Ajaimi would reappear with a few Turks to re-establish Turkish authority, and all tribes would get out of hand.

"According to information at my disposal, Nasiriyeh is less unhealthy than Basra or Kurna, and in a short time the climate will be quite good. The land communications of Nasiriyeh are bad, but they could be improved by a railway. On this point I hope to address you very shortly, the matter having been under investigation for many weeks.

"The water communications of Nasiriyeh are difficult during the present low-water season, but now that we are established in Nasiriyeh and the enemy have been driven off, these difficulties are by no means insuperable, and plentiful supplies are obtainable locally in this district, while country boats of our contractors pass through the Hammar Lake freely.

"When the 18th Brigade returns from the Nasiriyeh Force it will join its division at Amara, and the 6th Division will then have two brigades at Amara and another Brigade at Ali Gharbi and its communications.

"When Nasiriyeh can be reduced to strength proposed, viz., one brigade, the reserve at Basra will be one brigade, and the 3rd Brigade, 12th Division, will be on communications from Basra to Qalat Salih inclusive.

"If Kut is occupied I propose to leave four battalions at Amara and, after placing detachments at two or three posts, quarter two infantry brigades in Kut.

"I would point out that it is only by occupying Kut that the reduction of troops at Amara is possible. I have no intention of making any dash on Kut; the advance will be made methodically.

"At present General Delamain's column has cleared the river up to Ali-al-Gharbi, but has orders not to proceed beyond.

"As regards Ahwaz and the supposed necessity to guard the pipe-line with troops, I have carefully considered the question and have given my views at some length.

"But the Anglo-Persian Oil Company will not arrange for a subsidy while the Indian Government is ordered to keep troops at Ahwaz for ever, and it is not easy to withdraw troops because the Anglo-Persian Oil Company will not give subsidy, and this creates deadlock.

"In this connection I would reiterate that, if suitable arrangements be made with tribesmen, I see no military reason for prolonged retention of troops on the Karun line unless hostility is to be expected on the part of the Persian Government, in which case I should require very strong reinforcements if it is required to hold the oil fields against any possible combination of tribes."

We concur in Nixon's views and propose to authorise him to advance on Kut when he is ready.

So far as we are aware, Nixon knows nothing about the proposal to reinforce him temporarily with the 28th Brigade, and has always believed his present force capable of effecting the occupation of Kut so long as he received drafts to fill up his British battalions, and he was not required to disseminate troops along the pipe line. We concur in his views.

No. 166.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 6th August 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 5th August. I concur in course of action proposed by Nixon and recommended by you unless you think fit to modify it in view of Marling's telegram of

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

3rd August and his surmise as to objective of Ispahan gathering. What is strength and distribution of troops on Karun line? I presume that they are sufficient with local arrangements at oil-fields for defence against raiders.

No. 167.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, 5th September 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line. Two troops, 7th Lancers, escorting telegraph party at Michriyah canal, on right bank of Tigris, seven miles up stream of Ali Gharbi, encountered 400 enemy cavalry on 4th September. After two hours' engagement enemy retired, carrying away five of their men. We had one horse wounded.

No. 168.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 8th September 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line. On 7th September a reconnaissance from Ali Gharbi consisting of two squadrons of 7th Lancers, one section of Royal Field Artillery, and one battalion of Indian Infantry supported by two gunboats encountered force of 600 to 700 enemy cavalry eight miles up stream of Ali Gharbi. Engagement resulted in retreat and four mile pursuit of enemy by our troops, who inflicted about a dozen casualties upon them. Our casualties one horse wounded; one man died of heat stroke. Heat was very severe. Complete flight of four aeroplanes is now at Ali Gharbi.

No. 169.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 16th September 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line. Combined aeroplane and naval reconnaissance made of Es-Sinn position morning of 16th. Townshend reports Caudron machine suddenly descended from height of at least 4,500 feet in front of enemy's lines and enemy swarmed out of hidden trenches. Ships opened fire at range of two miles, enemy went to ground, but one gun opened on our ships. Cause of descent believed to be engine trouble, not disablement. Captain W. N. Treloar, Australian Royal Flying Corps, pilot, and Captain B. S. Atkins, 11th Rajputs, observer, both missing. Enemy reported in strength. Another aerial reconnaissance sent out, and cavalry and infantry reconnaissance to-morrow. Three aeroplanes out of four now out of action, others being brought up from Basra, including two sea-planes.

No. 170.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 27th September 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line. Townshend's reconnaissance in force on both banks of Tigris on 27th drew fire from enemy's guns. These were located by our artillery. Fry's Brigade advancing on left bank made good and entrenched position within 3,500 yards of enemy's left centre. At dusk on 27th, Delamain with his own and Hoghton's Brigade crossed boat bridge to left bank and is moving into position on night of 27th–28th to envelop and attack enemy's extreme left at dawn of 28th. Heavy guns are being moved on night of 27th–28th into positions covered by Fry's Brigade; they will open at dawn of 28th. Our casualties on 26th and 27th amount to 26, principally shell fire, and in addition to these 9 sepoys of the 110th Mahrattas are missing. These latter were escort to civilian telegraph party who were captured on 27th by a raiding party of Turkish and Arab cavalry up stream of Sheikh Saad. The presence of these raiders on the Tigris has temporarily interrupted land telegraphic communication, which is therefore replaced by wireless. 7th Lancers captured one officer and 35 men on left bank during reconnaissance on 27th. Conditions are favourable for Townshend's attack on 28th. Bridgehead position on Tigris right bank is held by Colonel Climo with two battalions of the 30th Brigade.

No. 171.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 29th September 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

28th September 1915. Tigris line. 6th Division operations on 28th were completely successful. Enemy's position is long one astride river on both banks, seven miles east of Kut, extending six miles from left bank. The place of attack was well conceived, and detached force of two brigades under Delamain after demonstration on 27th crossed from the right bank, and by means of a night march gained enemy's left, the northern extremity of which was carried at 10 a.m. by a gallant attack. Remainder of this portion of position was carried by 2 p.m. after much opposition. By the evening force had advanced west of position strongly entrenched and wired in which another brigade had pinned enemy all day. Troops bivouacked in their position when darkness fell and operations will be resumed 29th. The cavalry and armoured motor cars guarded outer flank and were engaged against Turkish cavalry all day. The Turks fought with the greatest tenacity and had to be dislodged trench by trench. Their losses in dead were very severe, and the trenches were full of corpses. Several hundred prisoners and some guns were captured, also many rifles, and quantities of ammunition. Our casualties are believed to be under 500.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000084

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 172.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 29th September 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Last night, 28th, Delamain when moving to attack rear of enemy's position became aware of strong Turkish reinforcements marching parallel to him. He attacked and routed these after severe fighting lasting till dark, capturing four guns; casualties were 1,200. Enemy's main position was found unoccupied early this morning. Aeroplane reconnaissance shows Turks in flight by river and road towards Bagdad, our cavalry entering Kut, river column moving in pursuit. Regret to report gallant officer, Lieutenant-Commander E. C. Cookson, R.N., senior naval officer, was killed last night in gunboat attack on river obstruction while personally engaged in cutting wire. The naval gunboats had been handled by him with greatest daring and effect during two days' operations.

No. 173.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 29th September 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line. The pursuit of the defeated Turkish forces was taken up early morning 29th by naval gunboats and our cavalry. General Townshend follows with the leading infantry brigade. Enemy's troops were seen by aeroplane morning 29th, retreating in column 4 miles long up left bank Tigris, about 10 miles above Sukident (?) as crow flies. Aeroplane also dropped bombs on large steamer believed to be *Khalifa*, which at once made for bank, and is believed to have been injured. One brigade is clearing up battlefield. Total prisoners captured by us up to date, 1,650; more coming in. Inspection of captured position shows defences have been designed and constructed on the latest and most approved principles, and with remarkable thoroughness and study of detail. Communication trenches extended for miles, ranges marked by flags, arrangements were made for embarking troops and covering their retirement. There was an elaborate system of observation and contact mines. A number of these were exploded by our Engineers without a cident, but severe casualties were caused by mines during action. The field of fire was everywhere flat and open. Nur-ed-din's force during late battle consisted of six squadrons cavalry, 26 guns, and 35th, 38th Infantry battalions *plus* certain other formations, aggregating some four extra battalions. His total force is estimated to have been some 7,000 or 8,000 regular troops assisted by considerable number of tribesmen. General headquarters are one mile down stream of Kut. Weather last two days decidedly cooler. Of our wounded, a large proportion are only slightly injured, and as a whole are doing well. Health and spirits of troops excellent.

No. 174.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 30th September 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Please convey my congratulations to Sir John Nixon on the further brilliant success achieved by Force "D." I much regret to hear of the loss of Lieutenant-Commander Cookson.

No. 175.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 1st October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line. Personal inspection on 29th of enemy's position, described in my telegram of 29th September, greatly impressed me with skilful plan of its capture adopted by Major-General Townshend in his attack on 28th. I am convinced that his scheme of turning the Turkish left and getting in the rear of the centre of the position was the only manœuvre whereby the enemy could be dislodged without our incurring enormous losses. Any scheme entailing direct assault of any portion of line would have inevitably proved most costly. Three air reconnaissances from Kut have located the retreating Turkish force. Rearguard has two guns with it. One enemy steamer was seen, apparently in difficulties, close to Baglinkah. Our pursuit on 30th has been dogged by persistent bad luck. One of our three gunboats has stuck in shoal 8 miles up-stream at Kut, and although foot channel in vicinity of Kut was reconnoitred on night of 29th/30th, shifting sandbanks held our river column through the daylight hours on 30th, and it was not till dusk that ships were got through. Our cavalry have, however, pushed ahead, and river column proceed up-stream from Kut at daylight, 1st October. Ramainder of Division concentrate at Kut as soon as circumstances permit. Report just received from naval gunboats states *Samana* aground 8 miles above Kut with steering gear badly damaged. *Shaitan* and *Comet* at 10 a.m., 30th arrived, and engaged Turkish steamer *Busrah* aground at range of 6,500 yards. *Busrah* replied with four guns, but was apparently hit and at one time on fire. Pioneers returned to assist and got her off. Gunboats then chased, but were fired on at 11 a.m. by two guns of cavalry raiding party under Subri Bey returning from Sheikh Saad. Gunboats carried on and came up with two boat-loads of ammunition abandoned by *Busrah*, but getting into difficulties at bad crossing, returned to avoid being caught aground by Subri. They got back safely and observed Turks being hotly attacked by Arabs. One gunboat is standing by *Samana*, but others returned here to report, and will lead Townshend's river column 1st October. Royal Navy reports navigation difficult above Kut, channel shifting and several bad crossings over which ships must kedge.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000b0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 176.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line: Retreating Turkish forces were located by aircraft reconnaissance afternoon of 2nd October as follows:—Straggling column total length two miles, mostly infantry, head of column on Bagdad road 13 miles south-east of Suliman Pak. Infantry column two miles long halted with head midway between Daur Gherbi and Abdulla Abu Muatif. Majority of cavalry halted on right bank at mouth of Aziziyah loop. Three paddle steamers and a tug between Khannasah and Jubail. Our river column reached point three miles up stream of Baghaila at dusk on 2nd October, having been beset by navigation difficulties throughout the day. Officer lately arrived from campaign in France states that trenches captured by Dorset Regiment and 117th Mahrattas in battle of Kut on 28th September were superior to any German trenches that he saw in France.

No. 177.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 3rd October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Our river column is now only at Shidhaif Ash Sharqi, and no chance of surprising or stampeding their remainders. I consider I am strong enough to open road to Bagdad, and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Aziziyah. But this concentration must be partly by land. Families of Germans and Turkish officials are said to be leaving Bagdad for Aleppo. From military point of view it is highly desirable to capture enemy's steamers which at this season cannot get far up stream of Bagdad.

PART IV.

THE ADVANCE ON BAGDAD.

No. 178.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 4th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

I shall be glad to know what Nixon's present intentions are, as if, owing to navigation troubles, there is no probability of catching and smashing the retreating enemy there is no object in continuing the pursuit.

The orders conveyed in my telegrams of 24th April and 6th August still hold good, subject to course of events at Bagdad and elsewhere and to the recommendations you may now make.

Please cable your estimate of enemy's present strength in Mesopotamia.

No. 179.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 4th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reported that evening 4th our cavalry reached Aziziyah.

No. 180.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 5th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Nixon's advance. Cabinet, to whom position was reported yesterday, consider that political reasons were thought to make occupation of Bagdad desirable as isolating Germans in Persia, if forces available are sufficient to take and hold the place. Let me know your views.

No. 181.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Navigation difficulties have been overcome by lightening ships and utilising them for towing laden barges and by marching troops with land transport. The 16th Brigade with all field artillery left this morning for Aziziyah by road, preceded by headquarters Cavalry Brigade with three guns, "S" Battery, and 100 lances. Cavalry has orders to reach Aziziyah evening of the 7th. Enemy appears to be no longer retreating, but has occupied

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000096

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Ctesiphon position and thereby constitutes a threat to us. Our information is that his troops, especially those locally recruited, have been much demoralised by defeat at Kut-el-Amara, a position which they considered impregnable. They are now so near Bagdad that Nur-ed-din will have difficulty in making a determined stand with men who are close to their homes and wish to desert. I consider, therefore, that there is every probability of catching and smashing the enemy at Ctesiphon as soon as the 6th Division has fully concentrated at Aziziyah, and has been reinforced by drafts of cavalry now on their way from Basra. If on the other hand we retire from Aziziyah to Kut-el-Amara, the enemy and the whole of the tribes will place their own construction on a such a move, and advance on Kut-el-Amara, as he did on Amara in July last, when troops were withdrawn from post above Amara in order to reinforce General Gorringe on Nasiriyeh line. Then a powerful section of the tribes who had already submitted to us rejoined the Turks, and has been a continual source of trouble until British prestige was re-established by the victory at Kut-el-Amara. The Arab tribes now regard us as irresistible, and have been coming in from all directions to make submission; but if we withdraw will probably behave as before.

It is my view that we have in front of us a shaken enemy who has lost 13 guns and is deficient of ammunition, and for military reasons it is clearly desirable to smash him while we can. He has taken refuge in a position where we can manœuvre and I hope destroy him. I see nothing which would justify letting slip such an opportunity. From a military point of view Bagdad is a focus of Turkish lines of advance and a large supply centre, of which in our interests it is vital to deprive the enemy, and this quite apart from any political effect its occupation might have.

No. 182.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference your telegram of 4th October. Nixon's intentions were as stated in his telegrams of 3rd and 5th October which were repeated to you. He has also telegraphed to India as follows:—

"With reference to my suggestion to open by another general action road to Bagdad, will you kindly let me know whether my force is to be reinforced to the extent of another division from France in order that my position there may be maintained. Effect of my occupying Bagdad would be more than nullified if subsequent events should compel me in course of time to retreat down the river in consequence of reinforcements not being forthcoming. Regarding operations in Van district, should like information thereof. Have Russians progressed sufficiently far to threaten upper Tigris route from Asia Minor?"

In these views we concur, and suggest that, as the Indian troops are reported to have participated with credit in the recent fighting, the present moment, if there should be any intention of moving Indian troops from France before the winter sets in, would be opportune for doing so. In view of German activities in Persia, increasing pressure on Afghanistan, and the aspect in the Balkans and Dardanelles, we hold that the capture of Bagdad would have such an effect in the Near East and offers such important political and strategical advantages as to justify movement, but to do this at least an additional division would be required. Otherwise we do not propose to allow him to go beyond Kut-el-Amara. Nixon has been given Russian position south of Van as reported by Marsh. Our estimate of present strength of enemy in Mesopotamia is 8,500 rifles, 600 sabres, and 28 guns under command of Nur-ud-din. Of the above 7 battalions, amounting to approximately 3,500 rifles with 8 guns, are at or near Suliman Pak, and have not been engaged against us. They include 4 battalions and 4 guns recently arrived from Mosul. Force under Hussain Raouf Bey, which was near Kasr-i-Shirin, may also shortly be at Suliman Pak. Remainder of enemy's force, numbering some 4,000 infantry, 500 camelry, and 6 squadrons of cavalry with 21 guns, constitutes the remnants of the troops defeated by us at Kut-el-Amara, and is retreating up the Tigris towards Suliman Pak, where indications seem to show that it may make a fresh stand.

No. 183.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Nixon's plans. Please see telegram of to-day. Orders were telegraphed yesterday to Nixon to stop further advance. Present situation is as follows: Nixon with forces at his disposal could without much difficulty capture Bagdad, and at the same time take or destroy Turkish steamers and other boats, thus practically preventing any further attacks down stream. But he could not remain there exposed to attack by Turkish reinforcements from Mosul or Aleppo without himself being reinforced by one division of troops. It would be a grave political error to advance to Bagdad, and to retire later under pressure from the Turks. Consequently, unless it be possible to reinforce Nixon from elsewhere than from India, he must remain at Kut-el-Amara. On the other hand, from a political point of view, capture of Bagdad would create an immense impression in Middle East, and would counteract unfortunate impression created by want of success in Dardanelles. It would also isolate German parties in Persia, probably produce pacificating effect in that country, and frustrate German plan of raising the tribes, while impression throughout Arabia would be striking. In India effect would undoubtedly be good. These are considerations to which I attach great importance, but I put them forward to be weighed by you and His Majesty's Government, for I fully realise that it is for His Majesty's Government to decide where and how our forces can be used with the best possible effect.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00002e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 184.

Secretary of State for India to General Nixon, dated 8th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

With what addition to your present force are you confident that you can both occupy and hold Bagdad? Reply direct and repeat reply to Government of India.

No. 185.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 8th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Reference to my telegram of to-day to Nixon repeated to you. Cabinet are so impressed with great political and military advantages of occupation of Bagdad that we shall make every effort to supply necessary force. We do not wish to attempt it with insufficient forces. Are you satisfied that one division is sufficient?

No. 186.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 8th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of 8th. I am confident that I can beat Nur-ed-din and occupy Bagdad without any addition to my present force. But if Turks should turn their serious attention to the recovery of Bagdad and should send to Mesopotamia the large organised forces which would be necessary for such an operation, then I consider that I should require one division (and I should like also one white Cavalry Regiment) in addition to my present force to watch both the Tigris and Euphrates lines of communication and defeat the enemy as he comes within reach. Further, the Bagdad position would be best from which to do this.

Kut is 103 miles, and Townshend at Aziziyah is 48 from Bagdad by road.

No. 187.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 8th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Enemy at Zeur reported reinforced. I have told Townshend that in view of enemy's more forward action I must leave measures to be taken to his discretion. Headquarters, Cavalry Brigade, and half "S" Battery have reached him and 16th Brigade with two more field, one howitzer and one maxim battery, join him 9th. He has asked for 17th Brigade, which has been despatched and should reach him 11th.

No. 188.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of the 30th ultimo. Force "D." Your message was communicated by me to Nixon, who asks me to send the following reply:—

"Your kind and inspiriting message of 30th was delayed and only received to-day, and on behalf of General Townshend and the 6th Division, to whom the credit for the victory belongs, I desire to say how deeply it is appreciated by them and me."

No. 189.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 9th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Hope to give you definite information as to possibility of reinforcement in a few days. Meanwhile, Nixon should maintain his present position and be prepared to advance if reinforcements asked for can be sent to him. Please instruct him accordingly.

No. 190.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of the 8th instant and Nixon's telegram of the same date. I am glad of the decision of Cabinet. After consulting the Commander-in-Chief, I think that Nixon is in the best position to judge as to the number of troops required, and when he mentions a division we understand him to mean a fully organised division with its proper proportion of British troops and guns and its divisional Cavalry. In addition to this he asks for a Cavalry Regiment. We are prepared to accept his opinion, but think that it will also be necessary to insure that British units now with him are kept up to strength by drafts from home, as India cannot supply these. We will keep the Indian units full. We may add that reinforcing troops should reach Bagdad not later than one month after its capture, as this is the period which we calculate must elapse before the Turks could concentrate in strength to attempt its recapture.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000054

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

No. 191.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 10th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line. Townshend reports on 10th that enemy has pushed forward a detachment, estimated at 1,500 men, about seven miles in advance of his position at Zeur. He further reports that hostile force of cavalry and infantry approached Aziziyah from north *viâ* Nahrwan dry canal morning of 10th. General Roberts with three squadrons and half No. 3 Battery drove them off with loss of about 20 killed and wounded. Our losses were 1 Dafadar killed, 4 Sowars wounded, and 1 missing. Captain Hill, 16th Cavalry, behaved with conspicuous gallantry.

No. 192.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 11th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Advance on Bagdad. I communicated to Nixon message contained in your private telegram of 9th October, and have received following reply:—"10th October. I have at once communicated Your Excellency's telegram of 10th to General Townshend, who may be trusted not to commit himself without absolute military necessity."

No. 193.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 12th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Townshend reports that Turkish detachment pushed forward in advance of Zeur on 10th, was withdrawn back to that place at 2 p.m. 11th. Hoghton, with 17th Brigade, arrived at Aziziyah 11th. Column consisting of one troop 33rd Cavalry, half "S" Battery, and one double company 48th Pioneers, left Kut-al-Amara 12th, due Azizyah 14th. In answer to query, Egypt wires 7th "continual movement of enemy troops from Syria and Anatolia to Constantinople, and no signs of anything important going to Mesopotamia." Reliable information received here indicates no garrison of any importance in Baghdad, 5th October.

No. 194.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 14th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. A question has been raised as to sufficiency of reinforcements asked for by Nixon or even of two divisions to hold Bagdad against forces which Turks might eventually bring against him. This is now being considered by General Staff, and Cabinet hope to get their report in three days. Are chances of eventual successful advance prejudiced by delay? We continue to attach greatest importance to capture of Bagdad if we can hold it securely.

No. 195.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 15th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. In continuation of my private telegram of 14th instant. War Office contemplate transfer of the two Indian Infantry Divisions from France to Egypt with the intention of placing them at your disposal for Mesopotamia if report of General Staff is favourable to occupation of Bagdad. But owing to uncertainty of position in the near East and possible need of transport for other purposes they cannot guarantee date of departure. Under these circumstances they do not consider that it would be safe for Nixon to advance on Bagdad before these troops have actually started from Egypt unless you can undertake to supply him temporarily with a division from India in the event of these reinforcements being unavoidably delayed. I request early reply as to possibility of your undertaking this liability.

No. 196.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 15th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of the 14th instant. Reinforcements for Force "D." Unless the Turks strongly reinforce Bagdad in the meantime, of which we see no immediate sign, delay will not prejudice the chances of eventual successful advance, though that success will be more costly owing to longer time at enemy's disposal for completion of defences.

No. 197.

His Majesty's Minister Tehran to Sir E. Grey, dated 15th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

For last few days Germans have been showing great activity. Great quantities of arms and ammunition and, it is said, bombs are being imported and the number of German agents has been increased considerably. Exact figures are of course not to be obtained, but my

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000061

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

reports show that Germans in comparatively large numbers are constantly arriving, and, I think, in all Persia there cannot be less than 60 Germans, 250 Austrians, mostly prisoners of war escaped from Transcaspia, and perhaps 50 Turks, renegade Indians, &c., with 8,000 rifles, 7 or 8 machine guns, bombs, &c. Contemptible as this would be elsewhere, in Persia, with gendarmerie entirely, and police probably disaffected and with Yellow Press and all worst elements in enemy pay, it is formidable. Besides which money is being more lavishly spent than ever. This spurt is probably due to fear that Bagdad is about to fall into our hands, which event would interrupt their present relatively easy line of communication with Constantinople, and also to conjecture that arrival of Grand Duke in the Caucasus may imply more rigorous military measures in Persia. If this surmise is correct, German great effort would seem to be imminent. What direction it will take I have not enough indications to predict with certainty, but for the present Hamadan seems to be point of attack. German Consul there is openly threatening our Consuls to avenge arrest of Turkish Consul at Resht. He is said to have 300 tribesmen led by Germans in his pay against whom Governor has possibly 200 decently led men, while gendarmerie and police cannot be relied on. Government have sent 100 Persian Cossacks from Teheran, but they confess that position is very bad, and that position of Consuls is most precarious. Sultanabad is threatened. In Fars Wassmus is making great efforts to prevent new Governor of Bushire from taking up his post. That Germans intend an attempt of some kind in Teheran seems to be clear from the fact that Swedish Commandant of Gendarmerie has been inquiring of Armenians what their attitude would be if Persian Government should declare themselves on the side of one of belligerents, or, if an attack were made on Christians. Attempt would be certainly made in the month Moharem, which begins now when religious fanaticism is easily roused.

No. 198.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 17th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of 15th October. Advance on Bagdad. Am I to understand that even if two Indian Infantry Divisions are transferred to Egypt, the uncertainty of position in the Near East may not merely delay their departure, but possibly even prevent their being available at all for Mesopotamia?

After consultation with Commander-in-Chief we agree that in no case could I undertake to supply from India even temporarily a further force of the strength of a division.

No. 199.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 18th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of 17th October. Bagdad. Last paragraph. I thought it right to consult you, but your answer is exactly what I stated in anticipation of your reply.

I trust that answer to your first paragraph will be in negative, but I understand your view to be that Nixon must not advance unless sailing of reinforcements is guaranteed. Am I right?

No. 200.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 21st October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of 18th instant. Bagdad.

Government of India are in entire agreement with His Majesty's Government as to political and strategic advantages of the capture and occupation of Bagdad which are emphasised by contents of Mr. Marling's telegram of 15th October, but we regard internal security of India and the security of our frontier as our first pre-occupation, and are unable to send a further force of strength of a division of troops from India to Mesopotamia.

After consulting Commander-in-Chief I consider that there are three alternatives before us:—

(1) Take and occupy Bagdad. This will present no difficulty whatever, provided that we are guaranteed reinforcements of a full division of troops reaching Mesopotamia within two months from now. This will be the most satisfactory solution.

(2) Attack the Turks, raid Bagdad, capturing the few steamers that remain and stores, releasing the English female captives, destroying the railway north of Bagdad and dominating the city by river patrols from a camp south of Bagdad. This would have a good political effect, and the fact that we were not in actual occupation of Bagdad might not precipitate the despatch of Turkish reinforcements to recapture it. This, from a political point of view, would be only the second best alternative, but it would not require addition of a whole division to carry it out.

The Commander-in-Chief from a military point of view dislikes this solution, and would prefer either (1) or (3). He considers that Bagdad, being great centre of supplies and a valuable base for whichever side is in possession of it, we must either hold it ourselves or keep well away from it. He does not think that it is possible to dominate it from south. We should have to be camped close to the suburbs, which in his opinion gives us all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of occupation. His view is that unless we hold Bagdad Turkish reinforcements will be gradually dribbled into it and we may be attacked

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000ac

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

in strength without warning unless we are as far away as Kut-el-Amara. Nixon goes so far as to consider that even without reinforcements his army would be safer in and north of Bagdad than anywhere south of it, and Commander-in-Chief lays great stress on the value of Bagdad-Samarra railway in that it would prevent any possibility of surprise attack on us. He considers that all our interests lie in our holding Bagdad, but recognises that without addition our present forces might be driven out of it, and that this might involve a very difficult and dangerous retreat down the river. Shortly, he is opposed to a raid on Bagdad followed by a withdrawal. He is strongly in favour of holding Bagdad if reinforcements are forthcoming. If they are not forthcoming, he prefers safety of Kut-el-Amara position. He feels, however, that present military situation is such that it may at any time become necessary to occupy Bagdad even with our existing forces, and accept the risk involved.

My own comment upon the Commander-in-Chief's view is that from a political point of view it would be disastrous to be driven out of Bagdad.

(3) Remain in a defensive position at Kut-el-Amara. This is a course that does not appeal to us, for it shows weakness which will be recognised both by Turks and the tribes, and may force our hands into advancing after all.

Having placed these alternatives before you I leave the question with confidence for His Majesty's Government to decide, but I trust that the decision will be in favour of the first alternative.

No. 201.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 21st October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of 21st October. Baghdad advance. Report of combined Staffs estimates that Nixon has only some 9,000 Turkish troops and some irregulars to deal with for next two months; that Turkish forces may be somewhat increased by end of year, and they might conceivably reach a total of 60,000 by end of January and even larger figures during 1916. They consider that if reinforced by two Indian divisions from France he might with assistance of river flotilla face risk of attack by 60,000, but there would remain possibility of enemy receiving further reinforcements at later date. Staffs hold, therefore, that it would be unwise from purely military point of view to occupy Bagdad unless military authorities have power to withdraw troops at once without regard to political considerations if military exigencies make this necessary. The War Office would give the two Indian divisions, but could not under any circumstances spare further reinforcements, and are doubtful of their capacity even to supply drafts if wastage from casualties or sickness is severe. They think Bagdad can be taken easily and held for some time, but as explained above it might become untenable later. At present moment it seems that German attempt to break through to Constantinople will succeed, and our position and prospects in Gallipoli are most uncertain. Persia seems drifting into war on German side whilst Arabs are wavering, and unless we can offer them great inducement will probably join Turks. We are, therefore, in great need of striking success in the East both to check Persian movement and to win Arabs. Unless you consider that possibility of eventual withdrawal is decisive against the advance, all other considerations seem to us to render it desirable, and we are prepared to order it.

No. 202.

War Office to Commander-in-Chief, India, dated 22nd October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

An appreciation of intelligence in the Near East is as follows:—The Germans appear to be likely to succeed in their attempt to get through to Constantinople, their object being to supply munitions to enable the Turkish Army to drive us out of Gallipoli rather than to disseminate their own forces by tying up troops in the Balkans. Some 200,000 Turks would thus be freed and rendered available for operations against us either in Egypt or in Mesopotamia or in both. If our threats on Constantinople from the Dardanelles cease, the consequent Turkish movement on Mesopotamia could only be stopped at Alexandretta and the occupation of Aleppo, requiring a considerable force, would be entailed by operations there.

No. 203.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 23rd October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of the 21st instant. Bagdad advance. Your description of the situation in the Near East proves conclusively the necessity for action in the Middle East. We accept the calculation of the combined staffs of possible strength of Turks that may with time be brought against us, but with reinforcement of two Indian divisions from France we believe that Sir J. Nixon has a reasonable prospect of being able to hold his own against 60,000 or 70,000 Turks, provided that he occupies Bagdad as soon as he is ready. Although I realise that the occupation of Bagdad is a provocation that will probably determine the Turks to send large forces to attack us, which, however, will not be easy for them to do, and although the bad effect of a possible withdrawal in the future cannot be ignored, I am confident that the right policy at the present time is to take the risk and to occupy Bagdad with the least possible delay, relying upon you to send the two divisions from France as quickly as possible to Mesopotamia. On this understanding I propose, unless I hear from you before Monday to the contrary, to order Nixon to march on Bagdad at once.

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 204.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 23rd October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Nixon may march on Bagdad if he is satisfied that force he has available is sufficient for the operation. Reinforcements will take time owing to relief and transport arrangements, but two Divisions will be sent as soon as possible. I will telegraph probable date later.

No. 205.

Chief of General Staff, India, to War Office, dated 25th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Your telegram of 22nd October. We have to be prepared to meet the Turks in superior numbers, and this being the case, Bagdad, the best position at which to meet them, should be immediately occupied, and a reinforcement of two Divisions should reach the Tigris within two months. Bagdad in Turkish hands becomes the base for Turkish operations by both the Tigris and Euphrates lines, and for the coercion of Persia; whilst politically the failure to seize what appears to be within our grasp would be interpreted throughout the East as weakness.

No. 206.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th October 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. Townshend by night march 27th–28th surprised detathment of 400 camel corps, 1,000 horse, two quick-firing guns, four machine guns and one battalion at El Kutunie early morning of 28th. Enemy finding themselves outflanked retired rapidly in disorder, but carried off their two quick-firing guns on mules. Our rear-guard burnt enemy's camp and blew up fort. As far as known, our casualties, *nil*. Cavalry report as to enemy's casualties not yet received.

No. 207.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 1st November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. One brigade from Townshend's force went out 1st November and destroyed two Arab encampments near Fraser's post, where tribesmen have been molesting our shipping between Kut and Aziziyah. Brigade returned after carrying out this operation.

No. 208.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. Our cavalry and horse artillery from Aziziyah were sent on 6th November to disperse Arab horsemen 400 strong whose object was to raid our shipping on right bank of Tigris seven miles south of Fraser's post. Enemy was driven off with loss of five killed and several riderless horses. Our casualties, one horse wounded.

No. 209.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 13th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. General headquarters arrived at Aziziyah, 13th November. Elkutunie was occupied without opposition 11th November by Cavalry Brigade and 18th Infantry Brigade Reconnaissance towards Zeur was made 13th November by above force.

No. 210.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 16th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. General headquarters reached Elkutunie, 15th November, at which place the Cavalry Brigade, 6th Division (less 17th Brigade and Heavy Artillery) are now concentrated. Four floating mines were detected and destroyed on 15th in the neighbourhood of Elkutunie.

No. 211.

War Office to General Nixon, dated 16th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Reliable and authentic information has been received that a Turkish expedition is on its way to Bagdad.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000be

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 212.

War Office to General Nixon, dated 17th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
We have reliable information that Von der Goltz left for Bagdad on 10th November Halil Bey, the uncle of Enver Pasha, is marching from Erzeroum with 30,000 men to Irak. Marsh should confirm this.

No. 213.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 17th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. Latest air reconnaissance and Agent's reports indicate enemy's cavalry and camelry, combined strength 1,000, with 1,200 infantry and four guns holding advanced position at Zeur. Enemy's main position is astride the Tigris at Ctesiphon and his reserve is at Quwinbah. Near latter place he has established a boat bridge across Tigris. This bridge has lately been removed from its peace time location to Kadhimain close to Bagdad. Our 17th Infantry Brigade *plus* heavy artillery and the bulk of our shipping concentrated at Elkutunie on 17th November. The first two B.E. aeroplanes flew from Kut-al-Amara to Aziziyah, 17th November.

No. 214.

From General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 18th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. Aeroplane reconnaissance on afternoon of 18th November has ascertained and verified that enemy in force is advancing on both banks from Ctesiphon on Zeur. Enemy may attack on early morning of 19th November, but in any case General Townshend will move forward morning of 19th November to attack them.

No. 215.

Chief of General Staff, India, to War Office, dated 18th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
General Nixon has sent the following telegram :—

"Reference War Office telegram, dated November 16th. I would point out that the move of troops up the river to the front from Basra is a long business. Therefore in view of this latest news I urge that the arrival in Mesopotamia of the two Divisions promised me as reinforcements may be expedited."

The matter is regarded as being extremely urgent.

No. 216.

Chief of General Staff, India, to War Office, dated 18th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
With reference to your telegram of 17th November, it is presumed that Von der Goltz started from Constantinople on 10th November. From a telegram of Marsh's we gather that he confirms the information about Halil Bey's force, which he reports as having left Bitlis about 16th October for Bagdad.

No. 217.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 19th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. General Townshend's marching column advanced from Elkutunie during forenoon, 19th, and occupied Zeur with slight opposition. The enemy retired towards Ctesiphon. Colonel Thornton, 16th Cavalry, wounded, and there are about half-a-dozen other casualties. After occupation of Zeur our shipping was ordered up from Elkutunie.

No. 218.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 20th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. General Townshend's advance was continued 20th November to Lajj, which is within sight of Ctesiphon arch. Enemy's mounted troops were driven in by our cavalry, supported by infantry. We had no casualties reported. Townshend's force and General Headquarters are bivouacked on Tigris left bank at Lajj for night of 20th–21st. Arabs on right bank have raised white flags, and have not fired on 20th. Formed bodies of enemy on right bank have been seen retiring. Weather very good, and troops in good health and spirits.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000005

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 219.

General Nixon to War Office, dated 20th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
I have received from my own agents similar news regarding a large force under Von der Goltz over a fortnight ago, but at present I do not accept their reports as conclusive for various reasons.

No. 220.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 21st November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Private. In view of confirmation of news of impending arrival of Turkish reinforcements in Bagdad area, I think it is very important that the Divisions should start from France without delay, and that we should know how soon they can arrive at Basra. Could you kindly ascertain this for me?

No. 221.

War Office to General Nixon, dated 22nd November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
We had made various enquiries, and received corroborative evidence before sending you the information. As to aircraft we have no information, but there is no doubt that the Germans are sending six wireless stations for the expedition to Bagdad.

No. 222.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 22nd November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
General Townshend after night march 21st–22nd November attacked enemy's position at Ctesiphon on 22nd November. A severe fight lasted throughout the day, resulting in the capture of the enemy's position. Owing to failing light it has not been possible to complete the fight. General Headquarters and Townshend's force bivouac night of 22nd–23rd November in the captured position. Our casualties are heavy; no details yet received. Enemy's casualties believed heavy. We have captured eight guns and some six hundred prisoners as far as reported at present.

No. 223.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 23rd November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Dust storm blowing all the morning of the 23rd delayed reorganisation of Townshend's force. Enemy's guns appear to have been drawn back quickly, but his second line of trenches, echeloned two miles in rear of left flank of position captured yesterday, are still held by infantry. Some cavalry and infantry detachments pushed forward by enemy to reconnoitre have been driven in, but enemy's guns on right bank still bar passage of our ships to Ctesiphon. Left flank of Townshend's force will to night, 23rd–24th, attack on river, 2½ miles south of Ctesiphon, in order to cover establishment of boat bridge and evacuation of wounded by steamer. Casualties not yet fully reported, but expected to exceed 2,000. Two Martinsydes are missing with pilots, Major Reilly and Lieutenant Fulton. Enemy's dead are very numerous, and large quantities of arms and equipment have been captured. The eight guns mentioned in my telegram of 22nd were captured and re-captured three times, and had to be abandoned by our troops at nightfall as they were not strong enough to maintain themselves in the forward position to which they had penetrated. The enemy has removed his bridge below Qu'saivah, and shows no offensive tendency at present.

No. 224.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 24th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Heavy Turkish counter-attacks have been repulsed during the night of the 23rd–24th. Reduction of our effectives and want of water necessitate retirement towards Lajj.

No. 225.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 24th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
In continuation of my telegram of 24th November, the situation is as follows:—Owing to depleted state of 6th Division, and with a still superior force of the enemy in prepared trenches in front of me, I cannot call upon the troops, who have fought magnificently, for a further effort. I was on the point of asking for immediate reinforcements. I want more guns, as enemy's guns are becoming more in number than mine.

No. 226.

Chief of General Staff, India, to War Office, dated 24th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
General Nixon reports that the force opposed to our troops at Ctesiphon on 22nd November consisted of 4 divisions with 38 guns.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000080

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 227.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 24th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Private. Please communicate following message from me to Nixon if you see no objection :—

"I have read with admiration your account of great exertions and magnificent fighting qualities of your troops, and deeply regret loss of so many gallant officers and men. I sympathise with you and General Townshend in disappointment of your hopes, but have full confidence that you and forces under your command have done all that was possible. Reinforcements from Egypt already on their way. Others will be sent as rapidly as possible."

No. 228.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 25th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Private. In view of check near Bagdad I have agreed to Commander-in-Chief's proposal to despatch immediately two brigades of infantry and one of artillery from India as reinforcements. This makes us dangerously weak in India. When may I expect two divisions to arrive from France?

No. 229.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 25th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Private. Your private telegram of 25th instant. Reinforcements for Mesopotamia. See my official telegram No. 3156 of 25th instant. Troops from Egypt are waiting transports from Bombay.

No. 230.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 25th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
24th November. General Townshend is still in possession of battlefield and is clearing wounded. He was advancing afternoon, November 24th, with half his force to assist collection of wounded from advanced trenches. Reports not yet received of completion of this task, but his intention was to concentrate his troops in angle of high wall 2 miles south-east of Ctesiphon. Four heavy Turkish guns have been active from long range throughout the day, and also snipers about our right flank, 3 miles north-east of Ctesiphon, otherwise no Turkish guns or infantry had advanced up to afternoon November 24th, and only about 300 Arabs have been seen who keep at distance of 2 or 3 miles. Two gunboats advanced up Bustan reach about mid-day, November 24th. About 1,300 prisoners have been marched into Lajj, and five steamers leave Lajj November 25th, taking down 1,800 wounded and General Headquarters to Kut. General Townshend's future dispositions will depend on evacuation of the rest of the wounded and other factors. Enemy's distribution as reported by eight air reconnaissances, November 24th, is as follows :—Enemy is occupying second line of trenches, and has some 2,000 troops in second line on left bank, with camps in rear and on right bank. General Townshend reports, 9.30 p.m., that all his information tends to indicate steady retirement of Turks back to Dialah in order to defend it, and that he has directed combined air service and cavalry reconnaissance on November 25th to confirm this. Turkish boat bridge has been towed up river from Qusaibah at 5 p.m., November 24th. I shall remain at Kut to supervise despatch of reinforcements arriving. Second gunboat *Butterfly* left Basra November 24th. I cannot speak too highly of the excellent handling of the situation by General Townshend, and of undimmed spirit of troops after their severe losses and hardships from want of water and food. The fortitude displayed by wounded, of whom there are about 2,500, is beyond all praise.

No. 231.

Secretary of State for India to General Nixon, dated 25th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
War Committee of Cabinet desire you to report fully by telegraph on present situation and prospects. What is present estimate numbers enemy Ctesiphon and Bagdad? What reinforcements can he get before you could again attack? What, if any, troops, additional to reinforcements and drafts already promised, do you now require to capture and hold Bagdad? Your estimate should be on safe side. If capture of Bagdad has become impossible, report what position you propose to hold and what troops you require for the purpose.

No. 232.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 26th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)
Tigris line. General Townshend's force is still in position at Ctesiphon. Aeroplane reconnaissance morning of 25th November established fact that Turks in force are entrenched on line two miles east of Dialah. Three columns seen marching from Qusaibh towards above entrenched position. General headquarters reached Aziziyah evening of 25th November.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000a2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 233.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 26th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.) 25th November.

General Townshend's force has suffered such severe losses and its units are so depleted of officers that it cannot be counted on for future operations as an effective division for some time, but will be used on lines of communications and as a possible nucleus for increasing our striking force. Its effective strength in rifles and sabres probably does not exceed some 7,500, and its total casualties are now reported 4,300.

General Townshend has evacuated all his wounded except about 600 from Lajj. These latter will be evacuated as soon as ships are available. As the enemy on afternoon of 25th November showed signs of moving against him in two columns, he has concentrated his force at Lajj, where he has a fortnight's supplies and a further four days' supplies at Aziziyah. All ships returning from Kut, after evacuation of wounded, will bring up further supplies and ammunition. Enemy's effective strength at battle of Ctesiphon is now estimated to have been four divisions or 20,000 men. One division, the 45th, is stated by prisoners to have been practically wiped out, and this agrees with observation. The other three divisions were probably all engaged, and of these the 38th Division is stated by prisoners to have bolted.

Present estimated effective strength of enemy at Ctesiphon is now about 11,000 with 39 guns; but I have not had time to fully verify this. These troops are ill-supplied with transport and ships, and have no gunboats. They have many Arab auxiliaries who have not been in their pay, but these have so far shown no disposition to participate in a general action.

Telegraphing on 21st November to Chief of the General Staff, I estimated a possible eventual concentration against us of nine Turkish divisions. Of these four were actually at Ctesiphon, and the heads of two more may now be arriving at Bagdad.

Turks have already made arrangements for transporting these reinforcements to Bagdad by rafts from Mosul, and reports have been received of a forthcoming concentration *vid* Euphrates, but this latter requires confirmation. Time taken to concentrate rear on head of a division moving thus is calculated at between a fortnight and three weeks. Any advance from Bagdad by land on part of Turks would necessitate collection of transport.

Taking new divisions as arriving at full strength of nine battalions at 900 each, and consisting of Ottoman Turks who do not desert, the enemy's strength in the Baghdad concentration area may amount to 27,500 men and 55 guns by second week in December, by which time it is estimated that Townshend's force can be increased to between 11,000 and 12,000. By end of February Turks might assemble 50,000 men and 84 guns.

We ourselves shall not be in a position to attack Bagdad until the beginning of March at earliest, and then with some 40,000 men with 114 land guns exclusive of 7,000 to 8,000 men on our lines of communication.

Above numbers include Lahore and Meerut Divisions complete *plus* 34th and 35th Brigades from India *plus* extra cavalry regiment. British drafts and all artillery promised. To effect above I have assumed that my fleet of ships will have been reinforced at a very early date by at least the additional craft recently asked for from India, and about the arrival of which I am momentarily expecting to hear. The ruling factor in the rapidity with which our concentration can be effected is the supply of additional river transport. Had we succeeded in seizing Bagdad the question of additional ships would not have been so acute, as we could have brought up reinforcements by degrees with a smaller number of ships.

To summarise. Provided that my river transport is immediately augmented to the maximum extent possible, and that all promised reinforcements *plus* drafts to make good present wastage reach me by middle of January, I consider that I shall be in a position to capture and hold Baghdad by the middle of March 1916 without any additional troops. Should the Russians be able to co-operate with me, my task will be proportionately simplified, and I ask for information as to how far I may expect such co-operation. As I feel confident of capturing Baghdad, I do not propose to discuss the alternative of taking up a defensive line in rear.

No. 234.

Sir John Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 27th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

26th. Tigris line: Aeroplane reconnaissance evening 25th reported Turks were moving forward from the Dialah position in two columns, one along Tigris left bank and the other at turning distance inland, while hostile cavalry brigade menaced Bustan. General Townshend, to avoid being pinned in, skilfully withdrew during the night of 25th–26th to Lajj, where he is entrenching on the river and will demonstrate by the right bank. Air reconnaissance afternoon 26th reported Turks re-occupying front line trenches lightly and some 10,000 troops moving in the area between Dialah and Ctesiphon.

No. 235.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line: General Townshend reports 27th November that enemy estimated at 12,000 advancing from Bustan and that he may have to fall back on Aziziyah.

200

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000bf

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

No. 236.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line: General Townshend withdrew his force unmolested during night of 27th–28th November to Aziziyah. Air service reports morning of 28th that large camps being at Ctesiphon. One division infantry with one cavalry and one artillery brigade reported moving on Lajj. Another column reported to be moving north and east of Lajj. General Townshend does not anticipate that enemy will advance beyond Zeur. Should they do so, he will retire on Kut to cover concentration of reinforcement. Reports indicate possibility of hostile force from Jassan moving to Sheikh Saad.

No. 237.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 29th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Townshend is still at Aziziyah, 29th November, unmolested. He proposes to withdraw to Shadi and cover concentration at Kut. Small mixed reconnaissance force formerly at Bedrai has temporarily interrupted my communications near Sheikh Saad. General Headquarters remaining at Kut.

No. 238.

Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 30th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference your telegram of 25th instant. Independent examination prior to receipt of Nixon's telegram of 26th November, leads us to agree generally with estimate of Turkish strength at Ctesiphon and Bagdad and its rate of growth, except that we prefer to work on the figures 60,000 by end of January, as estimated by combined War Office and Admiralty staffs in October. Nixon is correct in his view that ruling factor in rapidity of our concentration is the supply of additional river transport, in which respect you have received repeated requests from us to hasten rate of supplies, and we are searching India for suitable vessels. In the meantime Nixon must do the best he can with what he has got, which on a rise of the river and by marching troops from Amara should enable him to get the Lahore and Meerut Divisions to Kut-el-Amara early in February. As regards his force, Nixon is in error in counting upon 34th and 35th Brigades which are to be withdrawn when replaced by Lahore and Meerut Divisions as their presence in India is necessary. It follows that Nixon's force may have to be increased from elsewhere, and in our opinion a safe estimate for the capture and retention of Bagdad under altered conditions involves addition of at least one more division which with the Lahore and Meerut Divisions and drafts will make Nixon's force to five divisions in all. This estimate of five divisions which we consider a safe one is, however, based on the following facts:—(1) That since 19th October, when the joint Admiralty and War Office Staff drew up their estimate, nothing has occurred or is likely to occur in the near East to prevent Turks sending the full amount of reinforcement then considered possible; (2) That Russia remains inactive in the Caucasus and north-west Persia. If on the other hand it should be thought that any important modifications in above factors have taken place or are likely to do so we consider Nixon will be able to capture and hold Bagdad with four divisions and that it will not be necessary to draw an additional division from the main theatre unless it were freely available owing to the general strategic plan of operations. To regard capture of Bagdad as impossible would be to give up our best means of countering the German intrigues in Persia and Von Der Goltz's plans against India and should therefore be dismissed from our calculations. Our success hitherto in Mesopotamia has been main factor which has kept things quiet, and to give up the idea of Bagdad would be to relinquish initiative and would result in a further transference eastward of the theatre of war. For these reasons we approve Nixon's attitude in not discussing the alternative of adopting a defensive attitude as a permanency though he must necessarily remain chiefly on the defensive until his reinforcements can reach the front.

No. 239.

Sir John Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 30th November 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

30th. General Townshend is slowly withdrawing on Kut. Column under Mellis left Aziziyah, 30th November, to reopen communications at Sheikh Saad. Enemy's advanced guard, strength 3,000, reported at Elkutunie, main body at Zeur, 30th November.

No. 240.

Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 30th November 1915.

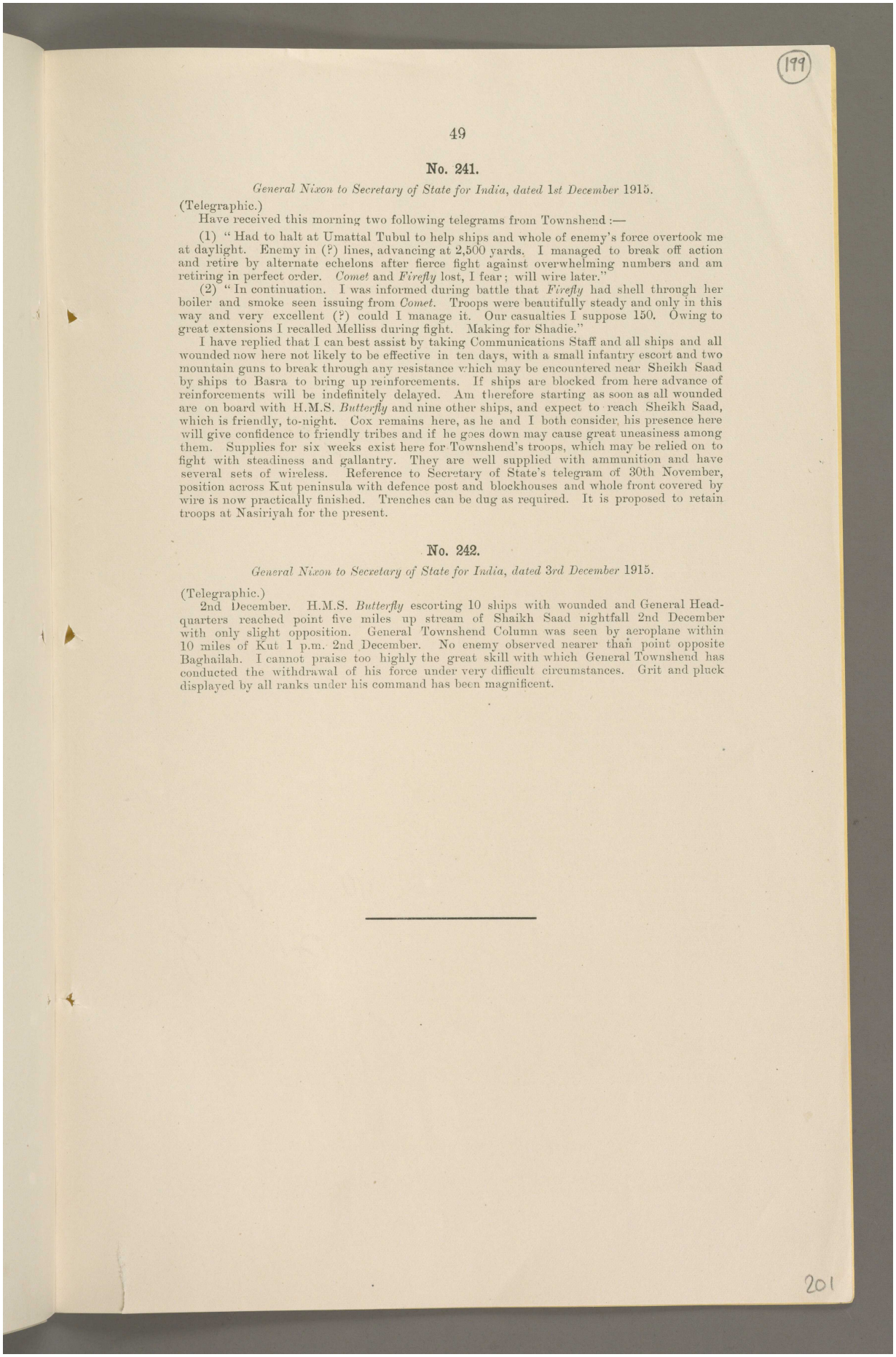
(Telegraphic.)

Reference Nixon's telegram of 29th November. Is he preparing strong defensive position at Kut? Does he still propose to retain troops at Nasiriyah?

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00004e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



No. 241.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 1st December 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Have received this morning two following telegrams from Townshend :—

(1) "Had to halt at Umattal Tubul to help ships and whole of enemy's force overtook me at daylight. Enemy in (?) lines, advancing at 2,500 yards. I managed to break off action and retire by alternate echelons after fierce fight against overwhelming numbers and am retiring in perfect order. *Comet* and *Firefly* lost, I fear; will wire later."

(2) "In continuation. I was informed during battle that *Firefly* had shell through her boiler and smoke seen issuing from *Comet*. Troops were beautifully steady and only in this way and very excellent (?) could I manage it. Our casualties I suppose 150. Owing to great extensions I recalled Melliss during fight. Making for Shadie."

I have replied that I can best assist by taking Communications Staff and all ships and all wounded now here not likely to be effective in ten days, with a small infantry escort and two mountain guns to break through any resistance which may be encountered near Sheikh Saad by ships to Basra to bring up reinforcements. If ships are blocked from here advance of reinforcements will be indefinitely delayed. Am therefore starting as soon as all wounded are on board with H.M.S. *Butterfly* and nine other ships, and expect to reach Sheikh Saad, which is friendly, to-night. Cox remains here, as he and I both consider his presence here will give confidence to friendly tribes and if he goes down may cause great uneasiness among them. Supplies for six weeks exist here for Townshend's troops, which may be relied on to fight with steadiness and gallantry. They are well supplied with ammunition and have several sets of wireless. Reference to Secretary of State's telegram of 30th November, position across Kut peninsula with defence post and blockhouses and whole front covered by wire is now practically finished. Trenches can be dug as required. It is proposed to retain troops at Nasiriyah for the present.

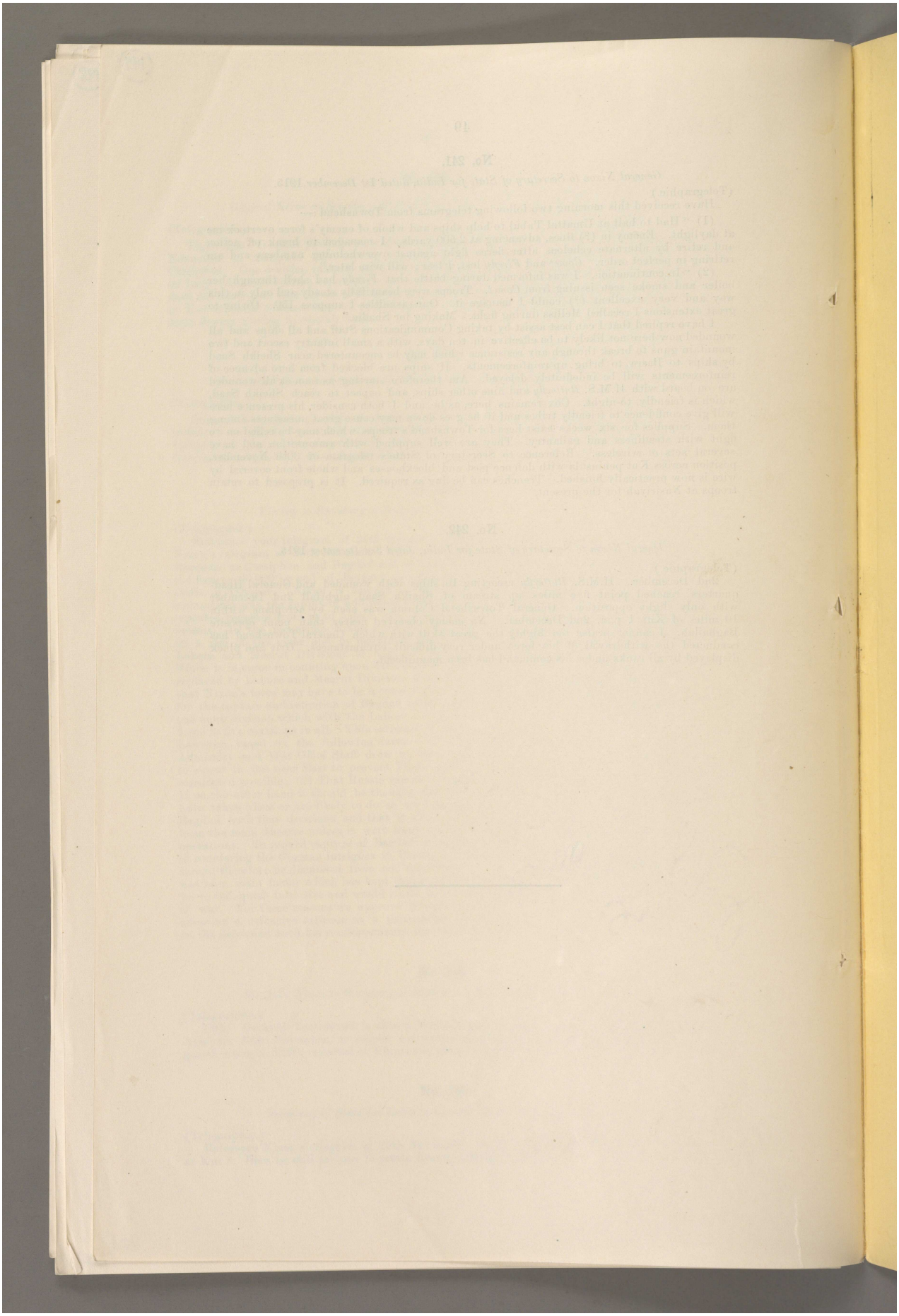
No. 242.

General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 3rd December 1915.

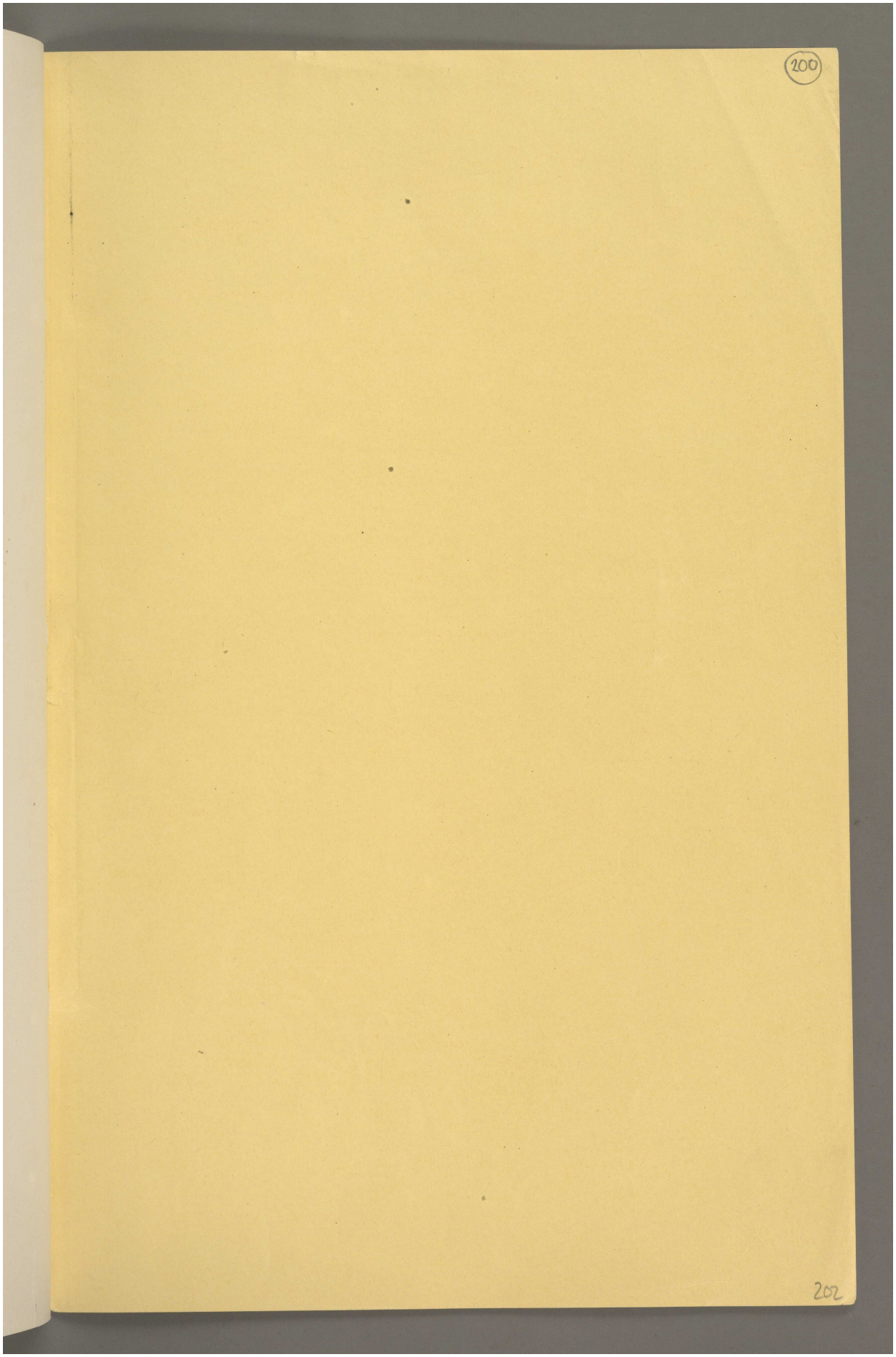
(Telegraphic.)

2nd December. H.M.S. *Butterfly* escorting 10 ships with wounded and General Headquarters reached point five miles up stream of Shaikh Saad nightfall 2nd December with only slight opposition. General Townshend Column was seen by aeroplane within 10 miles of Kut 1 p.m. 2nd December. No enemy observed nearer than point opposite Baghailah. I cannot praise too highly the great skill with which General Townshend has conducted the withdrawal of his force under very difficult circumstances. Grit and pluck displayed by all ranks under his command has been magnificent.

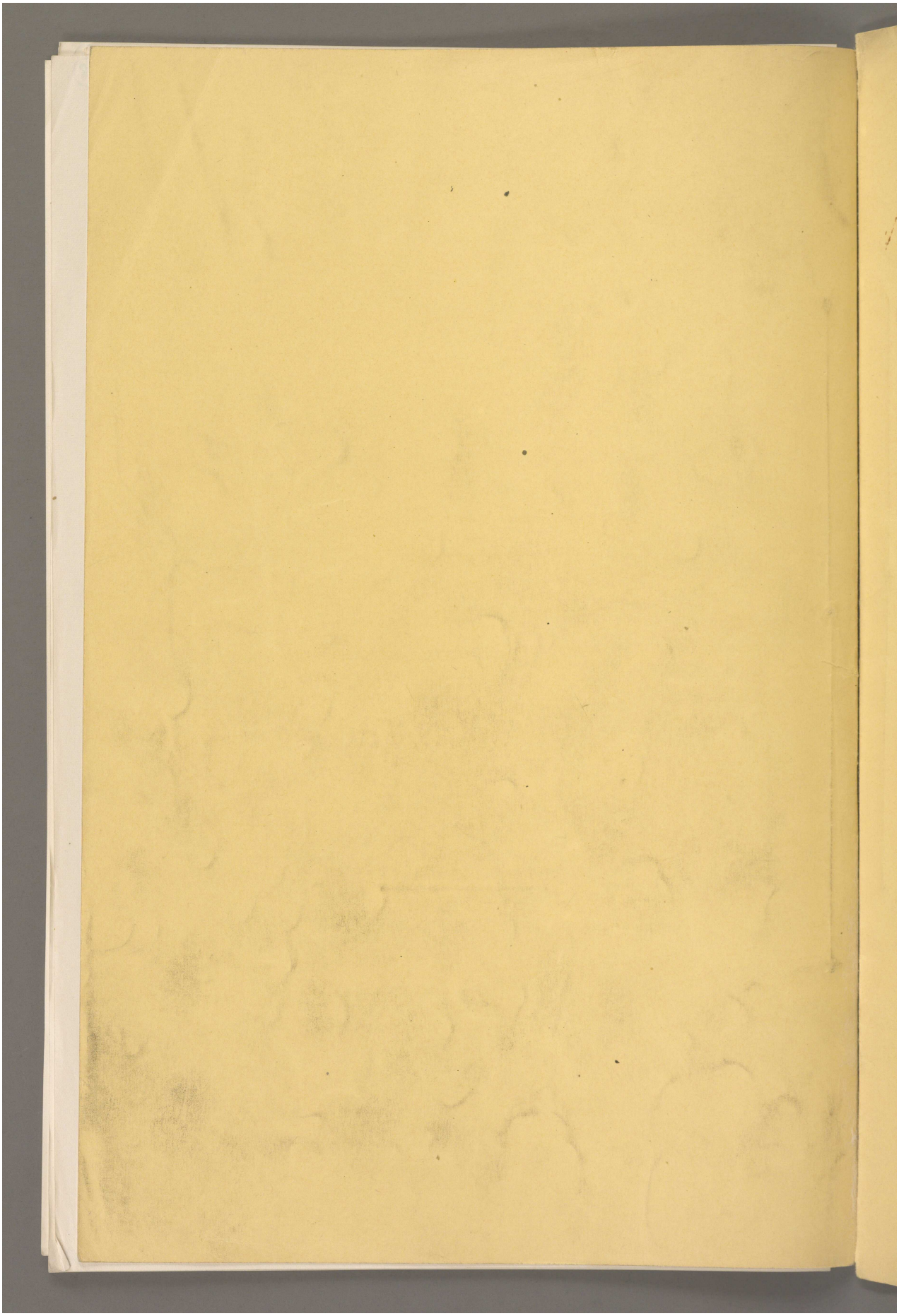
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000014



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00003f



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00000d



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00007b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This Document is the property of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

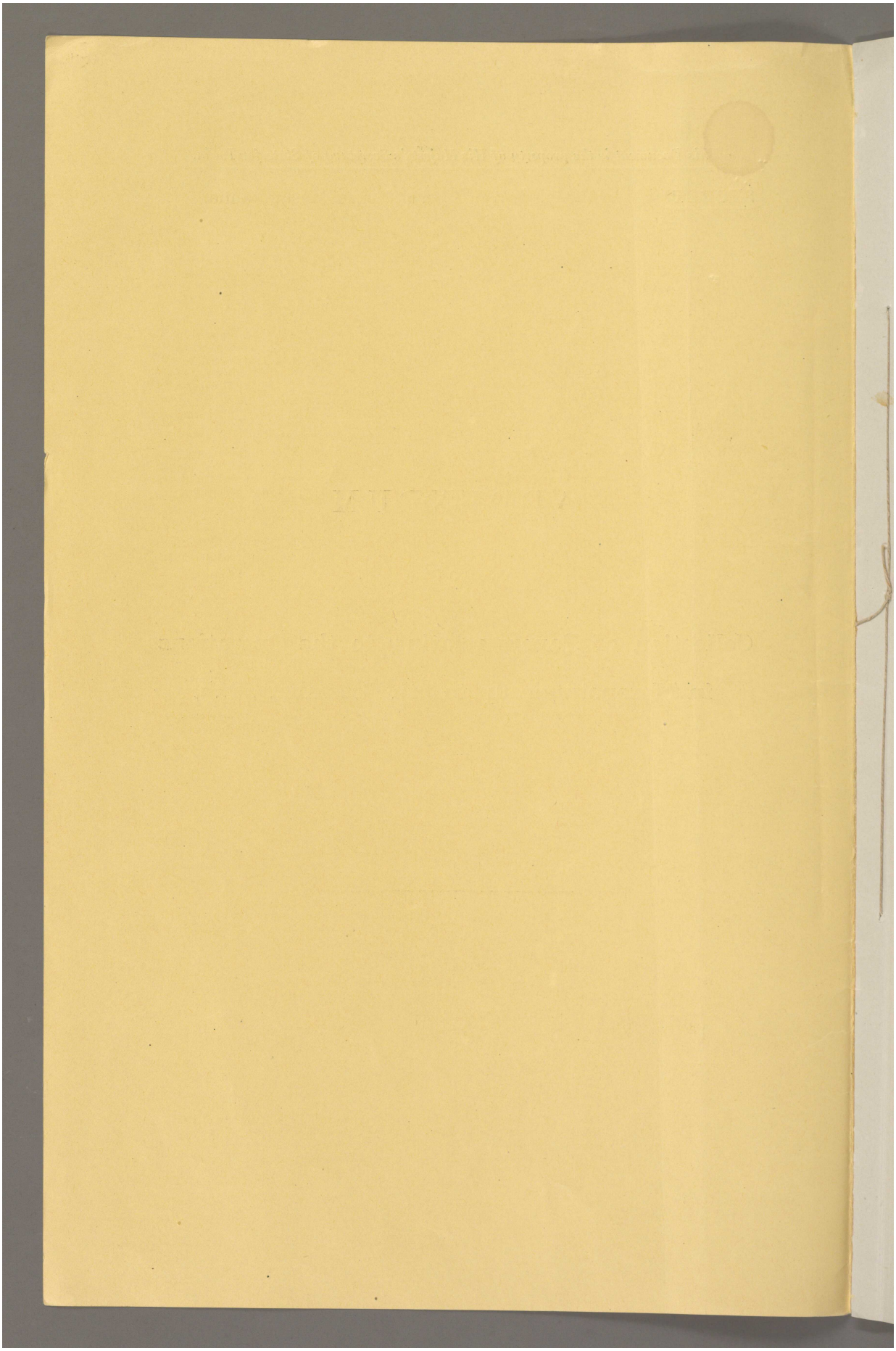
ADDENDUM

TO

Collection of Papers relating to the Operations in Mesopotamia up to 5th December 1915.

MS 256

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b9



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000bd

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

SECRET.

Papers relating to the Operations in Mesopotamia.

ADDENDUM.

A *Mr. Beaumont to Sir Edward Grey, dated 15th August* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Admiral Limpus and all officers of British Naval Mission have suddenly been replaced in their executive command by Turkish officers, and have been ordered to continue work at Ministry of Marine if they remain. Although I have been given to understand by a member of the Government that they are still anxious to get officers and crew of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* out of Turkey, this will probably mean retention of mechanics and technical experts at least, which will create most dangerous situation here.

B *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 18th August* 1914.

Private. In view of possibility of early rupture with Turkey, please consider what political and other measures can be taken in Persian Gulf, Nejd, and Yemen to create immediate diversion and secure our ultimate position. If Arabs rise, what will be attitude of Indian Moslems as between them and Turks? Our authorities in Egypt believe that they can exercise considerable influence in Arabia from their end.

C *Sir L. Mallett to Sir Edward Grey, dated 26th August* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Ninety German sailors passed through Sophia yesterday on their way to Constantinople. I have protested strongly, but Grand Vizier is unable to control the situation, which is dominated by the German Ambassador and generals. Weber Pasha, who is in command at the Dardanelles, is said to be urging closing of the Straits. I have brought this to the notice of the Grand Vizier. His Highness most positively repudiated any such idea, and begged me to have patience, as this situation would not last, and he was gaining authority. In the meantime general mobilisation is proceeding feverishly, and preparations are being pushed on in the fleet. Eighty pounds' worth of surgical appliances, dressings, &c., were bought by doctor of the *Corcovado* to-day. I am informed that there is a 5-inch gun hidden by canvas at her stern. She still lies at Therapia. It is not likely that the two German men-of-war will come out of the Dardanelles, but there are grounds for thinking that German plan is to urge Turkey to attack Russia after France is beaten—about ten days hence in their estimation. Straits would be entirely closed, and, according to the German Ambassador, quite impossible to force, since Germans have taken special measures to make them impregnable. To sum up, the situation is most unsatisfactory, though not actually desperate.

D *Mr. Cheetham to Sir Edward Grey, dated 28th August* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Ottoman forces are being mobilised in Hedjaz and further south, and existing military activity in Red Sea may thus be explained. About sixty Turkish officers arrived at Alexandria recently and passed through Egypt down Red Sea. Their destination was the Yemen. Twelve thousand Turkish troops are reported in Jeddah region. Signs are not lacking that, in case of war, an attack on Egypt is contemplated by Turkey. A few Turkish officers are now in the Delta. Steps have been taken to watch all those that are known. I learn from a good source that all information of Turkish mobilisation reported from Constantinople is correct. Meanwhile, emissaries are being sent to India, the Yemen, Senoussi, and Egypt, to stir up feeling against Great Britain. Activity at Gaza is reported, but it is uncertain whether this is more than raising of levies to replace regulars withdrawn from the north by mobilisation.

E *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 29th August* 1914.

Private. Foreign Office ask that you should repeat to Townley text of their statement about Turkey for him to hold in readiness for publication at Teheran when and only when published in India. Please do so, and make quite clear to Townley that he is not actually to publish it until he hears from you. The Foreign Office have not yet given the word to publish.

F *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 30th August* 1914.

Private. Publication of statement as to Turkey. Your private telegram of 29th August.

I have warned Townley and sent him text for publication.

If the necessity arises, I propose myself to make the statement public on authority of His Majesty's Government. It will have more effect, as there is a certain distrust of Reuter. That is why I lay stress on having Press Bureau telegrams for dissemination.

In the event of war being declared by Turkey, or hostile action being taken by her, I would like, if possible, to be able to announce publicly that no attack would be made by

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000032

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

British forces or those of Allies on the Holy Places or on Jeddah, provided that no hindrance is placed on arrival of pilgrims from India. There may be some difficulty about latter point, but the assurance of freedom of the Holy Places from molestation is a very important factor in the view of Indian Mohamedans, and may make all the difference in their attidude in the event of war with Turkey.

I should like an early answer on this suggestion.

G *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 2nd September* 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of the 30th ultimo. Holy Places. Foreign Office concur in the public announcement suggested by you so far as it applies to His Majesty's Government, and are requesting Governments of France and Russia to consent to similar assurance being given on their behalf.

Foreign Office also think that directly Turkey joins Germany, His Majesty's Government should at once give every support and encouragement to the Arabs to possess themselves of Arabia and the Holy Places. Please see my private telegram of the 18th August and report as soon as possible what can be done.

H *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 4th September* 1914.

Private. Your private telegrams of 18th ultimo and 2nd September. Diversions against Turkey. I am glad that you agree that simultaneously with our announcement of outbreak of war we should follow up the previously published statement of British case with public announcement that the Holy Places and Jeddah will be immune from molestation on our part so long as there is no serious interference with pilgrims to the holy shrines from India. This will create a good effect.

As regards other possible measures I offer the following suggestions after consulting Departments and local officers of experience.

Persian Gulf. We have already received loyal offers of co-operation from the Sheikhs of Koweit and Mohammerah [? and we are assured] that we could depend generally on a friendly or at all events correct attitude towards British interests on part of other Arab potentates of the Gulf, including Sultan of Muscat, to all of whom preliminary statement of the British case would be communicated.

It is difficult to see exactly to what extent Turks will be able to appeal to religious fanaticism, and how far such appeal is likely to discount or overcome hatred with which the Turk is normally regarded by the tribes of Mesopotamia and Central Arabia. Ordinarily the influence of the Sheikhs of Koweit and Mohammerah would enable them to engineer Arab rebellion against Turkish authority from Fao to Gurnah, but at present, unless we were in a position to take steps to maintain order in the river, all civilised interests and the safety of Europeans generally would be endangered by such a project. There is considerable likelihood of such a rising without any stimulation on our part. For this and other reasons I think presence of another warship besides *Odin* in the Gulf is of very great importance, as stated in my telegram of 1st instant. Assumption by us of control at Basrah would, of course, be the most effective and far-reaching measure possible, but it is impossible for us to say at present whether we should be in a position at any particular juncture to spare sufficient troops for the seizure of that place in the face of armed Turkish opposition. Short of that, however, it is asserted by Sheikh of Koweit, and there seem to be reasonable grounds to believe, Sheikhs of Koweit and Mohammerah, in collusion with certain notables of Basrah with whom they are in close touch, and with distant co-operation of Bin Saud, could (if given certain assurances) either prepare the way for our peaceful occupation of Basrah, or arrange to keep the place quiet and isolated until we were in a position to take effective action.

To secure these results I would offer the following inducements in addition to assurance that Basrah would never again be subjected to Turkish authority. To the Sheikh of Koweit we should offer full possession and immunity from taxation for his date gardens on Turkish bank between Fao and Gurna; immunity from the consequences of ejecting the present small Turkish military posts from Safwan Umm Kasr and Bubian and thereafter recognition of independence of principality of Koweit under British protection.

To the Sheikh of Mohammerah we should give the assurance already sanctioned in connection with the recent grant of decoration; undertake to maintain him in secure and untaxed possession of his date gardens on Turkish side of river, and perhaps a promise to do our best *vis-à-vis* Persia to maintain him in his present state of local autonomy.

To Bin Saud in return for his co-operation in the ejection of the Turks from Basrah, and peaceable assumption of control by us, and in eviction of Turks from Hassa and Katif, we should undertake to recognise and enter into treaty relations with him as independent ruler of Nejd and Hassa, and guarantee him against attack by sea.

As regards Sheikh of Katar it is probable that he could not and would not evict the Turkish garrison without active support from us, but their ejection in the event of war would be a simple matter, and if Sheikh were first informed and given an assurance that his position and privileges as ruling Sheikh of Katar would be thereafter recognised and maintained by us we should doubtless have his co-operation in effecting their bloodless expulsion.

As regards Western Arabia, Resident at Aden believes both the Imam and the Idrisi to be well disposed to us and considers that by judicious overtures and grants of money or arms it would be possible to unite them against the Turks. He adds that he is in a position to start overtures through reliable media. It is also probable that we could influence the Sherif of Mecca in the same direction through the medium of Bin Saud. Ports of Red Sea used by Imam and Idrisi might be exempted from hostile action as far as practically possible.

We should on the outbreak of war at once seize and hold Sheikh Said opposite Perim and Fao telegraph office. As you are aware the religion of the tribes of Central Arabia is Sunni,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000bf

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

while chief tribe of the Tigris Valley and about a moiety of the population of Basrah is Shiah. Apart from any question of Jehad, we do not think that the Mohammedan community in India of either persuasion would be much concerned at mere recrudescence of rebellion by the Arabs of Arabia against the Turk. It may be presumed that educated classes would view such disaffection with regret, but I doubt whether there would be active resentment. Action from Egypt against the Hedjaz railway of course suggests itself, but that quarter seems to be beyond scope of your telegram under reply.

I had already thought of best means of influencing leading Mohammedan chiefs in India in the event of Turkey making a general appeal to Moslems, and I will at once prepare the ground on the lines of your private telegram of 2nd September.

J *Sir L. Mallett to Sir Edward Grey, dated 5th September* 1914

(Telegraphic.)

I hear that Inspector from Constantinople of Committee of Union and Progress left Erzeroum on the 1st September for Persia, where he has previously lived. He was accompanied by three Persian revolutionists from Constantinople, one of them named Agha Mehemet Ali. They have ideas about Afghan and Indian Moslems, and also intend to stir up anti-Russian trouble in Persia.

K *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 6th September* 1914.

Your private telegram of 4th September. Turkey. Your suggestions are under consideration and I will reply as soon as possible.

Meanwhile I note as follows:—

Paragraph 1. French and Russian Governments have agreed to assurance being given in their names also.

Paragraph 4. I have already asked for another ship. Would force destined for German East Africa suffice for Basra and Abadan?

Paragraph 6. Assurance to Sheikh of Mohammerah has not yet been sanctioned. Foreign Office reply is awaited.

Paragraph 10. You have not referred to suggestion of encouraging Arabs to seize holy places, but from what you say I infer that seizure might have bad effect in India. In any case we must be prepared for Jehad, as Germans will probably not shrink from instigating it.

L *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 11th September* 1914.

Private. My private telegram of 4th September. Diversions against Turkey. Notables of Basra, with whom the Sheiks of Koweit and Mohammerah are in touch, are the family of Nakib and Seyyid Talib, whose adherence it is essential to secure.

In this connection Resident now telegraphs as follows:—

"It would be convenient in the event of war with Turkey for me to have authority to make certain assurances to Seyyid, who is all powerful in Basra town itself. May I be permitted to exercise my discretion provided that I do not go beyond first two assurances suggested in case of Sheikh of Koweit, to which a third might be added, namely, the maintenance in all their hereditary property and privilege of Seyyid and the family of Nakib of Basra. In the case of any further demands made by Seyyid, I think that I should promise to refer them to Government with my recommendations if I consider them legitimate."

I concur, and, subject to your approval, propose(d) to give Resident discretion asked for, subject, of course, to final authority to put plans into execution.

M *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 11th September* 1914.

Private. Your private telegrams of 2nd and 6th September. Holy places. I presume that assurance extends to Kerbela and other holy places of Mesopotamia.

N *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 12th September* 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 11th September. Turkey. I presume that two assurances to Koweit to which Resident refers are *first*, full possession and immunity from taxation for date gardens; *second*, immunity from consequences of ejecting Turkish posts.

O *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 14th September* 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 11th instant. Holy places. Assurance covers shrines in Mesopotamia.

P *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 16th September* 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 12th instant. Assurances to Basra notables. By "first two assurances to Sheikh of Koweit," referred to by Resident, we understood and meant, first, full possession of date gardens, and, secondly, immunity of same from taxation. It would seem that assurance of immunity for ejecting Turkish posts could hardly be needed in case of Basra notables, but Resident is being asked to remove ambiguity.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000055

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Q *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 19th September* 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 6th instant. Turkey. Force destined for German East Africa has since been definitely allocated to that destination. We are of opinion that with a force of similar strength *plus* some extra guns, we could seize Fao and Basra and protect Abadan, but whether we should be able to hold Basra with that force would depend on what force Turkey might be able and willing to concentrate for its recapture. If she could find an army corps we should certainly need a division with some extra guns. According to dispositions decided upon up to the moment we have sent or are sending overseas the equivalent of four full war divisions, and I am unable to consent to reduce the garrison of India below three divisions for the frontier *plus* troops required for internal defence. If therefore, action has to be taken at the head of the Gulf, we see no possibility of sending the sixth division to Europe, except at the cost of reducing our internal defence troops or our three frontier divisions, which latter at any rate must be kept intact. Secondly, as regards suggested seizure of holy places by Arabs, we think that an unfavourable impression might be caused among Mahomedan communities if we were to identify ourselves with open encouragement of Arabs to this end. We might, however, cautiously let it be known through the Sheikh of Koweit and other discreet friends that, while we had no intention of molesting the holy places ourselves, we should not be sorry to see them redeemed from the hands of the Turks owing to notorious misgovernment and spoilation of pilgrims which at present prevails under their *régime*.

No. 5 A *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th October* 1914.

Private. Your official telegram [vide *No. 5 of 3rd October*]. Expedition to Gulf. I suppose it has occurred to you and the Foreign Office that we cannot land troops at Abadan without the risk of a protest from the Persian Government and without in the event of war with Turkey violating the neutrality of Persia. Both these results would be regarded unfavourably by Indian Mahomedans. The latter eventuality would present an opportunity to Turkey of seizing Persian territory more to the north where Turks would meet with practically no resistance and from which it might be difficult to dislodge them.

Has the question of landing troops at Bassidu been considered? It is only 500 miles from head of Gulf. Bassidu is British territory and Persia could not object.

I still maintain that it is desirable that no action should be taken in the Persian Gulf that could be regarded by Turkey as a direct provocation and pretext for declaring war. The works at Abadan can be protected by "Odin" unless artillery is brought up by the Turks from Basra.

In the event of a landing at Abadan as suggested it will be necessary to consider what defensive measures should be taken for the protection of Koweit.

When the expedition starts I shall send Cox to the Gulf to control all political matters.

No. 7 A *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th October* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

In reply to your telegram of 5th October, in which you ask for a full expression of my views upon the Abadan project, I venture to put forward following considerations after consulting Commander-in-Chief. It appears to us perfectly clear that the policy of Turkey which is not in a position to give real material assistance to the enemy, is dominated by Germany, whose aim is to create a situation in which it will appear that Turkey is the object of aggression of one or more Christian Powers. Violations of neutrality, as in case of *Goeben*, are too technical to be understood by the Muhammadan masses, but the presence of belligerent ships and the disembarkation of troops in Turkish waters are facts of which the provocative character are apparent to all. That such provocation should be given by Indian ships or troops will create a bad effect in India and Afghanistan and must be to play into the hands of Germany. I agree with Sir L. Mallet that at present moment, presence of three of our ships in the Shatt-el-Arab is not defensible from an international point of view, but to send troops into these neutral waters would probably he met by firing on our ships from the Fort at Fao. Materially this would do us no harm, but if we took no action our prestige in the Gulf would vanish, while if we retaliated we should place ourselves entirely in the wrong. Disembarkation at Abadan presents no difficulty from a military point of view, but to do so will be to walk deliberately into a trap not unskilfully laid for us. Before any final decision to disembark troops at Abadan is taken, I trust His Majesty's Government will consider very carefully the above aspect of the question and particularly effect which it is likely to have upon the attitude of Muhammadans in India, which is at present very satisfactory in every way. It is quite clear nothing can really secure safety of oil works except the occupation of Abadan, but we see no reason to anticipate an attack upon them, and we doubt their value being so great as to outweigh consequences of an apparent attack by us on Turkey. Again, the occupation of Abadan by a large military force would almost certainly evoke a protest by Persia, and in the event of hostilities with Turkey would constitute a violation of neutrality of Persia, and would afford a pretext to Turkey for the extension of the frontier at the expense of Persia. If, on the other hand, object in view is merely to demonstrate at the head of the Gulf, other alternatives present themselves.

To land troops at Bassidu would be known immediately all over the Gulf, and would create an immense impression To this there could be no possible political objection, but from a military point of view the difficulties of water supply on the island are almost insuperable.

After Bassidu, Bahrein is politically the nearest approach to British territory in the Gulf, and there seems to be no serious objections to this alternative. The Sheikh is old and not likely to be obstructive, if the situation were explained to him. There is also an advantage in favour of Bahrein in the fact of our having a force there would strengthen our hands and

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

assist our overtures to Bin Saood and the Sheikh of Katr. From a military point of view only objection to Bahrein is difficulty of embarking and disembarking troops, owing to shallowness of the water, but this could be mitigated by plentiful supply of boats. I propose to send Sir P. Cox as political officer with any expedition to the Gulf, since his knowledge of the Chiefs and of Gulf politics is unique.

No. 7 B *Sir L. Mallett to Sir Edward Grey, dated 6th October* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Military attaché had a long interview with Minister of War yesterday, from which he derived the impression that his Excellency had ambitious schemes in the Arab world and in Egypt. These may perhaps refer more to the future, and possibly measures are now being taken so as to prepare for the eventuality of Great Britain being worsted in war with Germany; meanwhile the way is being paved indirectly for present or future action. During the conversation, Minister of War disclaimed any intention on the part of the Turks of initiating, themselves, any offensive movements against Egypt, and pointed out that ordinary Syrian garrison had not been reinforced. He said that, as in the case of other troops within the Empire, Syrian garrison had been fully mobilised. It was being equipped with necessary transport animals, &c., on a war scale, and it was being carefully trained with the help of the officers of the German mission as elsewhere throughout Turkey. Everything, he said, depended on the political situation, for which he was not responsible individually, and it was quite possible that the Syrian army corps might finally be moved in another direction, even, perhaps, to Constantinople. He scouted the idea of individual Germans undertaking enterprises against the Suez Canal or elsewhere, but he admitted that proposals had certainly been made to the Bedouin tribes to enlist their sympathies as supporters of the Empire in all eventualities. He defended the concentration of stores at Maan, Nablus, and Jerusalem, and he added that no troops, but only gendarmes, had been moved in the direction of Gaza. Nevertheless, he could not deny that some of the measures taken were certainly precautionary against Great Britain, and in justification of this, he pointed to the entrance of British men-of-war into the Shatt-el-Arab, to the arrival of Indian troops in Egypt, and to the presence of the British fleet in Turkish territorial waters outside the Dardanelles. Military attaché said that, as far as the action of the fleet and of His Majesty's Government were concerned, this was due to infringement of neutrality by Turks, and Great Britain certainly had not the slightest intention of making any attack upon Turkey. It was quite ridiculous to suppose that the arrival of Indian troops in Egypt had anything to do with hostility to Turkey. Minister of War at once advanced such arguments as that Turkey had maintained her neutrality; that German officers and men on auxiliary ships were entirely under Turkish control, indeed they were in the Turkish service. Military attaché said that Turks could not be surprised that Great Britain should be preoccupied if Turkish troops were assembled further south than Jerusalem or Beersheba on the one side, or Maan on the other.

No. 12 A *Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Mallet, dated 11th October* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

It seems to me that the key of the situation lies in Constantinople. It would be fatal to give way to Turkish demands beyond a certain point, especially in the Persian Gulf, but, nevertheless, I entirely share your view that His Majesty's Government should avoid giving even a plausible cause of offence to Turkey. I think that our attitude during the past eight weeks has shown irrefutably that we desire to avoid a rupture with Turkey.

No. 57 A *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 27th November* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Your private telegram of 25th, repeating telegram from Cox, dated 23rd November.

We are not disposed to authorise an advance to Baghdad at present as there are grave international considerations involved, but as soon as General Barrett is ready to do so, we sanction an advance to Kurna with a Brigade or such portion of his force as may be necessary for the operation. Presumably he will await the arrival of his third Brigade for Basra and the whole region from Kurna to the sea will have to be controlled by us in both a military and political sense, and on such considerations it will probably be desirable to keep the bulk of the Division at Basra, which should for the present be regarded as the headquarters.

No. 58 A *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 28th November* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Bagdad. Your telegram of 27th November. The words "grave international considerations involved" fill me with apprehension, for it would be disastrous were Russia or another Power to occupy Bagdad where British and Indian interests such as trade, irrigation, navigation, pilgrim traffic, a large Indian colony, and the Oudh bequest give us a predominant position.

No. 58 B *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 30th November* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of 28th November. Baghdad. The words in my telegram of 27th November, "grave international considerations," do not refer to possible occupation of Baghdad by Russia or another Power, and I quite agree as to our predominant

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000057

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

interest there. But setting aside difficulty of force necessary to occupy and hold Baghdad, because if we once were there it would be unfortunate to retire under menace of superior force, I consider that it is premature to take action which appears to oblige consideration both by Allies and by Arabs of ultimate settlement regarding Mesopotamia and other parts of Turkish Empire.

It will be a most complicated matter, and we are not at present able to do more than assert, as we have, our paramount claims and powers at the head of the Persian Gulf.

No. 58 C *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd December* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Basra: cargo consignments belonging to merchants of Basra and now on the high seas. We support the proposal made in Sir P. Cox's telegram of 28th November.

No. 61 A. *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th December* 1914.

Private. Basra. Cox has telegraphed saying that it will be convenient if he could now make a public announcement definitely that our occupation of Basra is permanent.

I fully realise that for international and political reasons it may be inconvenient at this stage to make a public announcement as suggested, but in view of great advantage of establishing at once a civil administration on a permanent rather than on a temporary basis, I think that this question should be decided at once.

My Government and I most strongly recommend permanent occupation for following reasons:—(1) It settles question of our supremacy in the Persian Gulf, and this happy chance may never occur again of consolidating our position there. (2) It ensures the safe-guarding of Abadan and Anglo-Persian Oil Company's works and facilitates their development. (3) It makes the position of Sheikhs of Koweit and Mohammerah secure. (4) It solves the question of Bagdad Railway terminus. (5) It will pay, as Basra and surrounding country capable of enormous commercial development. (6) To abandon Basrah after a short occupation would be to betray all those Arabs and tribes who are now in friendly co-operation with us, and would shake confidence felt in us by Bin Saud and Sheikhs of Persian Gulf. We believe that indications of the permanence of our rule are likely to stop possibility of intrigues and encourage population to settle down quietly, and we anticipate no local difficulty if the occupation is to be permanent. It would be quite sufficient if you could give me privately and confidentially early decision of His Majesty's Government upon this important point.

No. 62 A. *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 9th December* 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 7th December [*vide No.* 61 A]. Basra. After careful examination here and consideration by Cabinet I am certain that it would be unwise now to announce permanent occupation. It would be regarded as definite breach of the undertaking between allies that final settlement must await end of the war, and I can state confidentially that even our announcement about Cyprus was not too well regarded. Russia in particular would feel fairly entitled to a free hand both in Europe and Asia for parallel announcements, and apart from such difficulties, although we are absolutely confident of ultimate result, the war has not reached a stage which justifies annexations. The steps authorised for administration by our reply to your official telegram of the 5th December describing Cox's recommendations ought to suffice until we are in a position to say more. Meanwhile there is no necessity to define our occupation when dealing with local Arabs as either terminable or permanent. It should be a military occupation ensuring civil order and care of revenue with as few organic changes as possible for the time being.—CREWE.

No. 65 A *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 9th December* 1914.

(Telegraphic.)

Basra. With reference to your telegram of 2nd instant, Sir P. Cox is authorised to inform merchants that it is not intended to treat as enemy cargo any cargo belonging to merchants of Basra which is now on the high seas and that it should be released. Please make an intimation accordingly to the Prize Courts.

No. 69 A. *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 19th December* 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 9th instant [*vide No.* 62 *A.*]. Basra. I fully realise objections to announcement of permanent occupation, but would it not be possible to authorise Cox to let it be understood, in conversation but not in writing, in respect of places where we assume control with co-operation of inhabitants, that, whether we remain permanently or not, they will in any case not be handed back to mercies of Turks? This is what the people fear, and before declaration of war His Majesty's Government did not object to our reassuring Koweit, Mohammerah and notables of Basra on that score. Moreover, it is in accordance with policy adumbrated in Prime Minister's speech. I strongly urge that this should be permitted.

No. 70 A *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd January* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram dated 14th December, regarding occupation of Nasiriyah district, has been considered, and up to the present our information is not sufficient to justify a final decision.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000ab

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

We realise that a permanent occupation of Nasiriyah would consolidate our political position south of Euphrates, but our information as to actual military value of the place is at present scanty, and the question is complicated by recent reports from Egypt to the effect that the Turkish troops from Mosul and Baghdad are returning from Syria. This may lead eventually to our having to face superior numbers in Mesopotamia, and as we have no troops available to reinforce our Division there, we must be most careful not to disseminate our force without strong military reasons, by pushing troops up to place, which, once occupied, we cannot again evacuate without great loss of prestige. We would also remark that an advance on Nasiriyah would take us directly towards Kerbela and Holy Places, which might be used by Turks to excite religious opposition. Further, we should like Cox to meet Bin Saoud or for us to hear more from Shakespear as to his attitude and the influence he can exert, before committing Barrett to a move on Nasiriyah. Meantime, we are taking steps to obtain all information we can as to value to the Turks of the Euphrates line of advance and of the value to us of Nasiriyah for checking such an advance.

For these reasons we should prefer to defer our decision until the situation is clearer.

No. 78 A *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 1st February* 1915.

Private. After discussion with Cox I cannot too strongly emphasise the force of the views of the Army Department as contained in our telegram of 30th January (*vide* No. 78).

To reduce troops at Kurna or Basrah below margin of safety by detaching force for defence of Ahwaz is simply playing the game of the Turks who are doubtless threatening Ahwaz in order to secure that object

The Turkish troops were still at Bisaitin day before yesterday, and it seems hardly likely that such a small force will risk isolation or show such active hostility to Persia as to advance to Karun River themselves. They are more likely to content themselves by inciting Beni Lam and Sheikh of Mohammerah's disaffected tribesmen to threaten Ahwaz. As regards Jehad movement Sheikh of Mohammerah is still anxious about its effect, but as regards Ahwaz withdrawal of Europeans and British subjects has deprived fanatics of their main objective, and it is hoped that loyal tribesmen of his own clan whom the Sheikh has sent up from Mohammerah will suffice to prevent any serious raid on Ahwaz pending arrival of 12th Brigade. There seems to be no reason at present to anticipate spread of Jehad movement to oilfields, and it would be against the interests of Bakhtiari Khans and tribesmen to be drawn into it or allow any invasion of fields. The mere cutting of pipe line would not be a very serious matter.

I entirely agree with the view that Force "D" should be increased to two divisions. In that case we could advance to Nasiriyah and Amara should the military authorities consider this desirable. Cox maintains that Basrah will not settle down until this advance is made. When I have seen Barrett I will telegraph further on this point.

As regards nature of reinforcements, I am very strongly of opinion that India should now receive back from Egypt one of our two divisions that are there, and which would not have been allowed to go had we known the demands which would be made of us in the Gulf. We can spare no more Regular troops from India, and it would be madness to send Territorial troops to the north-west frontier. I may mention that the last lot of Territorials sent to India, the Wessex Reserve Division, have in my and the Commander-in-Chief's opinion, very small military value.

No. 81 A *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 5th February* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Reference my telegram of 29th January. War Office express inability to give any reinforcements, either to replace 12th Brigade or to enable you to complete a second Division for Gulf. I understand that under these circumstances you consider that it would be unsafe to send more troops to Gulf till reinforcements from home or Egypt are furnished. Please cable if this correctly represents case. It will make position perfectly clear if you express urgent need of reinforcements as well as inability to give it from existing Indian resources. I am quite convinced of necessity of reinforcing Barrett up to two Divisions, as apart from menace on Karun side, it is obvious that Turks are concentrating troops in Mesopotamia. In my view the need of reinforcing India by a proportion of British units is a more important consideration than the risk run by you parting with the Indian complement of two more brigades, although the latter should not be ignored.

No. 83 A. *Sir P. Cox to Secretary of State for India, dated 7th February* 1915.

(R.) My telegram of yesterday. Consul at Mohammerah reports by telegraph according to Oil Company's clerk Ahwaz pipe breached in two places Qraneh and near Wais. At any rate oil ceased to reach Abadan between 3 and 5 yesterday afternoon. Refinery can go on working for one month if no crude oil.

No. 83 B. *Viceroy (H.M.S. "Lawrence") to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th February* 1915.

(*Repeated to Foreign and Minister, Tehran.*)

Private. Since arrival of battalion at Ahwaz there have been no developments. Turkish troops remain at Bisaitin.

If any question should arise with the Persian Government as to the presence of our troops on the Karun it would be as well that they should understand that Sheikh of Mohammerah

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000c1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

declared his inability, in view of the spread of Jehad, to protect foreign lives and property, and asked us to co-operate by the despatch of ships and troops to Ahwaz. We are only too anxious to withdraw both ships and troops, and hope this may be possible very soon, provided that there is no spread of Jehad entailing an attack by the tribes on Ahwaz or further encroachments by the Turks.

I think Sir W. Townley should be informed, and asked, in explaining the position, not to put too much onus on the Sheikh who has been doing his utmost but cannot depend upon his tribes in view of Jehad.

No. 87 A *Viceroy to Secretary of Statefor India, dated 10th February* 1915.

(Repeated to Delhi, Tehran and Basra.)

Private. Cox's telegrams of 6th and 7th February (*vide* Nos. 82 and 83 A). Ahwaz. The breaching of the pipe was to be anticipated since it is impossible to protect 130 miles of pipe line. Additional troops, so long as Ahwaz is adequately protected by ships and troops there now, would be useless since the Arabs would be too elusive to punish. All that can be done at present is to carefully watch whether the Jihad continues to develop. The Sheikh of Mohammerah has asked the Bakhtiari chiefs to send down some horsemen.

No. 87 B *Viceroy, H.M.S. "Northbrook," to Secretary of State for India, dated 10th February* 1915.

(Addressed to Secretary of State for India, and repeated to Foreign Department, Tehran and Basra.)

Private. Sir W. Townley's telegram of 7th February, marked "Very confideutial." Please see the last paragraph.

The serious side of the situation, as far as India is concerned, is that if Persia joins Turkey it will be very difficult for the Amir to resist any longer influences in Afghanistan which are already preaching a Jihad amongst some of the tribes. This would create a critical situation on the frontier and amongst our frontier tribes, and it might so far affect our position as to necessitate recall of some of our troops from overseas. It is therefore very desirable in every way that Persia should maintain her neutrality.

No. 88 A *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 12th February* 1915.

(Addressed to Secretary of State for India, and repeated to Foreign Department and Basra.)

Private. My private telegram of the 10th instant. Neutrality of Persia. Cox has suggested that in return for neutrality of Persia and suppression of Jihad we should give following undertaking to the Persian Government:—

(1) That our troops shall be withdrawn from Ahwaz as soon as retirement of Turkish troops and cessation of Jihad admits of it.
(2) That in the event of our possessing good quantity (?) of Irak we will always maintain Shiah Governors at Kerbela and Najaf, reduce heavy quarantine impositions on corpses, and abolish taxes on pilgrims.
(3) That we will grant large loan without interest on security of islands in the Persian Gulf.

These suggestions strike me as useful, and if you approve they might be communicate(d) to Minister at Tehran for his views or for action in above sense.

The acquisition of Irak foreshadowed in the second suggestion is an eventuality that cannot be ignored in spite of the disadvantages of extending our responsibilities, for a Turkish administration at Baghdad would always be a source of trouble to us at Basra, and we could not admit presence of any other Power. It is therefore probable that Baghdad will become our possible objective, and there can be no harm in our contemplating that contingency in our dealings with Persia.—VICEROY.

No. 88 B *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 16th February* 1915.

Reference your official telegram of 12th February (*vide* No. 88.)

At an early period in the present crisis we promised to contribute two Indian divisions and one cavalry brigade for Imperial purposes, or, should a serious emergency arise, three divisions. We based our calculations on supposition that we should retain here remainder of our Regular British troops. We have actually sent abroad all our Regular British troops except eight battalions of infantry, thirteen batteries of Horse and Field Artillery, six mountain batteries, and sixteen companies of Garrison Artillery, and we have reduced Horse and Field batteries which remain to four guns each. We have also sent abroad following Indian Regular troops in all:—16¼ Indian cavalry, 64 battalions of infantry, six mountain batteries. In exchange we have received 35 battalions of Territorial infantry and 29 batteries of Territorial artillery, none of which are as yet efficient, and of those the units of the 2nd Wessex Division are in a very elementary condition. We receive disquieting reports as to the condition of rifles with which Territorial troops have been sent out, many being unserviceable, which we cannot replace. Little or no spare equipment came with the artillery. Hence it will be evident that we are now holding India with forces much below anything hitherto contemplated. We are strongly of opinion that we have reached limit of risk which can justifiably be imposed on people of India, who pay for the Indian Army. As to Mesopotamia, we regard position with grave anxiety, for all the news we receive of Turkish movements seem to foreshadow a great concentration on Baghdad for offensive action against Basra. The situation is now complicated by the diversion of troops to Ahwaz. So far as

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00004a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

protection of pipe-line is concerned, it is impossible to take offensive action with our small force, and no reinforcements we can send from India would suffice either for this or to render position at Basra safe. We regard it as essential that Basra should receive at least another complete division, and this we cannot provide. If, therefore, position in Mesopotamia is to be made secure, this must be done by sending troops from elsewhere than India itself. We are aware of strong objections of War Office to reducing the forces either in Egypt or East Africa at present time, but having regard to fact that a disaster in Mesopotamia must inevitably bring into the field against us both Persia and Afghanistan with the frontier tribes, and may seriously affect our Mussulman population and Mussulman troops, we consider that this danger justifies our pressing for a reconsideration of attitude of War Office. We also feel that India has a first claim on her own troops when they are required to avert a danger which is threatening her security. We therefore urge most strongly that a complete division, or its equivalent, of Indian troops should be at once returned to us, whether these are drawn from Egypt or East Africa. We entirely agree that prompt action is most necessary. Situation at Aden is also unsatisfactory. We are not strong enough there to do more than protect settlement itself, and we cannot send any troops to help tribes who are nominally under our protection to defend themselves against the Turks, who have invaded the Protectorate.

No. 89 A *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 19th February* 1915.

Private. Military situation. Your official telegram of 16th February (*vide* No. 88 B). War Office agree that it is important to complete second division in Mesopotamia as soon as possible, owing to serious effect in India of any failure there. They urge that you should take temporary risk of leaving internal defence force below due strength for period, which ought to be short, before at any rate one brigade can be returned from Egypt. I agree that all indications now point to abandonment of serious attack on Canal, so that you should receive this one brigade very soon, though War Office demand fuller confirmation of Turkish retirement before sending it. You will understand that I cannot express decisive opinion as to exact risk you ought to take in India, though I am anxious about position in Mesopotamia, and feel confident you will strengthen force there as far as you dare. Value of reinforcement is strikingly shown in Sir P. Cox's telegram, 305 B. of 18th February. Meanwhile I understand from Kitchener that he is replacing the Territorial battalion which you sent to Singapore. The War Office consider the Aden position less urgent, but I take care that it is borne in mind.

No. 91 A *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 21st February* 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 19th instant. Military situation.

I am glad that War Office now recognise serious effects in India of any failure in Mesopotamia. At present we have there four brigades of infantry, and apparently the War Office urge that we should at once send two more brigades to Basra so as to complete the force in Mesopotamia to two divisions of infantry, taking our risks here meanwhile. I agree that all indications point to the abandonment of serious attack on the Canal. Even should the threat there be serious, I understand that Egypt now contains 40,000 Colonial troops and a division of Territorials, in addition to the infantry portion of two Indian divisions. As compared to our position at Basra the Egyptian position can do (? without) one complete (? division) safely. Recent happenings in the 130th Baluchis and at Singapore seem to show that we must not trust our Musalman troops too far, that even in India they may decline to fight their co-religionists, and that it is unlikely that trans-frontier men would be much use to us if Afghanistan and the tribes went wrong. On the other hand we cannot send troops of this class to Mesopotamia, where they might be a burden rather than a help to Barrett. Should we send Indian troops or Territorials or both to Basra, we add much to the relative strength of the Mohamedan troops in India. We have already taken one brigade off our frontier, and have thus already infringed the important and necessary principle we have adopted of maintaining three divisions on the frontier intact. The Commander-in-Chief and I only agreed to this under great stress. In view of the general situation on the frontier we do not think that two divisions there sufficient, and the internal situation created by rising price of foodstuffs and sinister appearance of affairs in the Punjab, where Lieutenant-Governor thought it necessary yesterday to warn all stations to be prepared for trouble amongst the troops last night, I think it would be madness to take any further risks. The minimum we now require is one brigade to complete the depleted Quetta division and two brigades to reinforce Basra. Even then Mesopotamia will be lamentably and dangerously in want of more artillery. At the same time Aden is greatly in need of troops, and without the return of a fourth brigade we have no troops to meet an emergency. The Commander-in-Chief has seen this telegram and entirely concurs.

No. 99 A *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 3rd March* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Your telegram of the 23rd ultimo (*vide* No. 94). We agree that the position of Force 'D' gives cause for great anxiety and that we may be faced shortly with a serious attack on Basra.

'It is difficult to obtain reliable information as to distribution of Turkish forces, but we hear of at least three divisions (other than the 35th) which cannot be precisely located and are reported to be destined for Mesopotamia. If this be so the enemy might attack Basra *viâ* the Euphrates with forces considerably superior to ours and with a large number of Arab auxiliaries and this might happen within the next month or six weeks. The rise of the Tigris above Kurna seems likely to prevent active operations by either side on that river and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000076

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

apparently the Turks are transferring troops to the Euphrates. It would be a difficult task to smash their advanced troops since their German advisers are not likely to allow the Turks to make the mistake of coming within striking distance of Basra until they have concentrated their forces. They could then advance on a wide front subject to suitable arrangements for supplying their right wing, which would be in the desert, which could probably be made. Barrett has at present 14,400 men and 40 guns including his detachment at Ahwaz and would stand little chance at Basra if widely outflanked.

'As regards our resources we are as you say to receive three battalions from China though the date of arrival of 36th Sikhs seems very doubtful. Even so we shall be better off by two battalions only since we have had to send the 18th Infantry to China to replace one of them. Assuming that we send Barrett another Brigade as you suggest this would give him 17,400 men only. Our position in India is deteriorating internally and trouble on the Frontier in the spring is probable enough and must be provided for.

'Taking Maskat and the Persian Gulf together we can draw nothing from there. The 102nd are so inefficient from fever that we must withdraw and replace them. The 35th must take up all the Persian Gulf detachments which in the present position of affairs cannot be reduced and may have to be strengthened. Mussulman troops are in the main averse from fighting Turks and cannot be sent freely to Barrett while we cannot be sure what their attitude would be if called on to fight Mussulmans on the Frontier when a *Jehad* was being preached. It is therefore difficult to spare Hindus of any class. It seems to us that those who are directing the strategy of the Empire should give the situation in Mesopotamia their most careful consideration. A defeat there would be disastrous to our position in Asia and withdrawal from that country which might be only alternative would be little better. While we fully recognise the great issues in Europe we cannot (?) in East Africa as in any way vital compared to those in Mesopotamia. Such information as reaches us from East Africa seems to show that there is no serious threat to British East Africa. The withdrawal of one brigade of good troops from East Africa still leaves seven battalions there, most of them, it is true, of inferior quality, bnt still capable of being useful on the defensive. A certain amount of pressure from the Belgian Congo seems to be contemplated, and with the rainy season about to commence there seems no chance of serious operations against Colony for some time to come. In these circumstances we would press urgently that the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, 29th Punjabis, 2nd Kashmir Rifles, and 13th Rajputs should be sent to Mesopotamia with the least possible delay. This would leave Wapshare the 98th, 101st, 130th Baluchis, 61st, 63rd, 3rd Kashmir Rifles, and the Gwalior, Jhind, Bharatpur, Kapurthala and Rampur Infantry, besides his local white volunteers, the King's African Rifles, his other local troops, the contingent from Rhodesia and the Corps of Frontiersmen of which we have heard. We have ventured to make these suggestions in view of refusal of our proposal that Indian troops now in Egypt should be returned for the service and the protection of Indian interests in Mesopotamia and at Aden. Our military resources in India have now been reduced to bed-rock, and we are only able to reinforce Barrett with such items as two battalions which will be replaced by two battalions from China, the 7th Hariana Lancers and a second heavy battery now on their way to Basra, one battery Territorial Artillery, and possibly a battalion of Nabha Imperial Infantry. We share your view that it is imperative that Barrett's forces should be increased to two divisions. You are no doubt aware that since the outbreak of war we have sent overseas six divisions of infantry and nearly three divisions of cavalry, while in return for 33 battalions of British infantry we have received 35 battalions of Territorial infantry of mixed value. India has, therefore, done her duty to the Empire, and it is quite impossible, in view of situation on the Frontier and in interior, to do more. It is of no use to suggest to us that we should take further risks in India. We have heavy responsibilities towards European and native population that cannot be lightly set aside. Our conclusion, therefore, is that though we are at one with you in thinking that Barrett's force should be increased to at least two divisions, we are unable, in consequence of our generosity towards His Majesty's Government in the early stages of the war, to find the necessary troops to complete them, and that responsibility rests with His Majesty's Government not merely to find the necessary additional troops, but for any consequences that may arise due to their refusal to allow India the use of her own troops to protect her own interests.

No. 101 A *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 4th March* 1915.

(Telegraphic).

Your telegram of 3rd March together with Barrett's telegram of 4th instant regarding affair near Ahwaz has been fully considered to-day by the Cabinet, who have decided that as you find a difficulty in forming a normal mixed Brigade, you should despatch as soon as possible a Brigade of Territorials. The numerical deficiency thus caused in India will be replaced as soon as possible either from Egypt or East Africa, in accordance with the military situation. I hope the Dardanelles operations will shortly relieve the political tension and enable us to give greater consideration to India.

No. 104 A *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 8th March* 1915.

Private. Reinforcements for Mesopotamia. His Majesty's Government appreciate the prompt manner in which you are endeavouring to meet the need of the moment.

No. 116 A *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 21st April* 1915.

Private. Yeomanry regiment. I find that the War Office have become greatly adverse to sending one to India since it appears that most of this arm will be needed in connection with the new armies. I greatly dislike the appearance of breaking faith with you on a matter

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000b0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

affecting your defence, but I am unwilling to press War Office in view of their strong opinion, and also of the approaching hot weather which makes me doubt the expediency of the step at the moment. You can rely on my exercising all the influence I have for your being reinforced if any urgent need becomes evident, and as the War Office resources become available, but I hope you will agree for the time being, and that your military advisers will still think it very desirable to send an Indian Cavalry regiment to Mesopotamia. The protection of the Abadan pipe-line is regarded by the Admiralty as all the more important since it has been recently established by experiment that toluene, which is now the most important basis for manufacture of explosives, can be economically extracted from Persian oil fuel, so that the Department attaches the highest importance to the maintenance of the supply. I will explain in my next letter how a misunderstanding occurred with the War Office about the Yeomanry.

No. 119 A. *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 24th April* 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 21st instant. Yeomanry regiment. After consulting Commander-in-Chief we agree to the despatch of the 23rd Cavalry to Persian Gulf, but I am asking the Begum of Bhopal to allow her Imperial Service Cavalry to come to India for garrison duty. I regard this as desirable as a measure of precaution.

Nixon has applied within the last few days for an additional Brigade of Cavalry with a British unit, but we have had to tell him that he cannot have it. Would it not be possible to send the Patiala Lancers from Egypt to Mesopotamia? They would be very useful there.

No. 141 A. *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th June* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Following telegram received from General Nixon at Amara on 4th June :—

"General Townshend, accompanied by Captain Nunn, R.N., and Sir Percy Cox in small gunboat flotilla, received the surrender of the Governor of Amara, with some 30 officers and about 700 soldiers, at 1.30 p.m. on 3rd June. Amara is now occupied by us in force. Troops captured comprised advanced guard of Turkish forces retiring before Gorringe; main body following were seen to disperse into marshes. Our total captures up to date, including above, amount to about 80 officers, 2,000 men, 7 field guns, 6 naval guns on gunboat *Mamariss*, 12 large steel barges, 1 large river steamer, and 3 small steamers, and considerable number of rifles and ammunition of all sorts. Further surrenders expected. Of six Germans with Turks three are prisoners, two were killed by marsh Arabs, and fate of sixth is doubtful. I am sending this from Amara for Your Excellency's information at once *en clair* as wireless is not working well, and I may not be able to despatch further telegrams to-night."

No. 156 A. *General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 25th July* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Euphrates Line. In continuation of my telegram of 24th. In evidence of endurance displayed by General Gorringe's troops I would draw attention to the fact that they have been fighting night and day with little or no intermission since 5th July up to to-day. Shade temperature, 113 degrees, has been common in an atmosphere of heaviest and closest humidity. The exertions and hardships of trench warfare, where guns, ammunition, and stores had to be moved without the help of animals, under such conditions are difficult authentically to describe. Twenty days of such work, culminating in an attack on a series of entrenched positions form a test the severity of which it would be difficult to over-estimate.

Tigris Line. There continues to be some activity on part of enemy, mainly hostile tribesmen, around Kumait area. Unconfirmed report that five Turkish guns had been advanced to Ali-ash-Sharqi on 23rd. 7th Rajputs proceeded to Karna from Basra, 24th.

No. 168 A. *General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 14th September* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Headquarters, Sixth Division, reached Sheikh Saad 14th; no enemy there. General Officer Commanding Sixth Division made aeroplane reconnaissance of Sinn position without definite result. Reconnaissance by gunboats supported by infantry being carried out 15th. General Headquarters remain at Amara for the present.

No. 168 B. *General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 15th September* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Tigris line. Headquarters, 6th Division, reached Abu Rummanah 15th, six miles from Sinn position. Result of to-day's naval reconnaissance tends to show that Turks hold position in strength. Ships are being returned to Amara to fetch up 63rd and Howitzer Batteries and further supplies. This will take about a week. Further aeroplane reconnaissance being made 16th. Two machines have been seriously damaged by bad landing, wind has been unfavourable. Steps being taken to replace them from Basra. Am in communication by land line and wireless with Abu.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000bd

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 178 A. *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 4th October* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. My telegram of to-day about Nixon's plans. Your private letter of 10th September seems to render it imperative to stop Nixon's further advance. I shall be grateful for early communication of your views.

No. 180 A. *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 5th October* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. My private telegram of 4th instant. Nixon's advance. Cabinet, to whom position was reported yesterday, decided to appoint Committee of General Staff, Admiralty, Foreign and India Offices to consider in all its aspects possibility and policy of advance on Baghdad. Political reasons were thought to make occupation desirable as isolating Germans in Persia, if forces available are sufficient to take and hold the place. Barrow thinks we might be able to capture Baghdad, but that forces weakened by further losses would be insufficient both to hold it securely against counter attack and to maintain communications. Kitchener can hold out no hope of reinforcements from Europe or Egypt. Let me know your views.

No. 183 A. *From Viceroy, 7th October* 1915.

Private. Your private telegram of the 5th instant (*vide* No. 180 A). Sir John Nixon's plans. Commander-in-Chief agrees with view contained in my private telegram of yesterday that it would be unwise to occupy Baghdad with our present forces.

No. 193 A. *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 12th October* 1915.

Private. My private telegram of the 9th instant (*vide* No. 189). Reinforcements for Nixon. Kitchener is proposing to Sir John French removal of Indian Infantry from France to Egypt. He cannot give me definite answer till reply is received. I shall do my utmost to secure complete Division for Mesopotamia. I do not understand why Nixon asks for a *white* cavalry regiment. I do not think one is available, and my advisers consider Indian cavalry more suitable.

No. 201 A. *Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 21st October* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Private. Your private telegram of 21st October. Baghdad advance. Report of combined Staffs estimates that Nixon has only some 9,000 Turkish troops and some irregulars to deal with for next two months; that Turkish forces may be somewhat increased by end of year, and they might conceivably reach a total of 60,000 by end of January and even larger figures during 1916. They consider that if reinforced by two Indian divisions from France he might with assistance of river flotilla face risk of attack by 60,000, but there would remain possibility of enemy receiving further reinforcements at later date. Staffs hold, therefore, that it would be unwise from purely military point of view to occupy Baghdad unless military authorities have power to withdraw troops at once without regard to political considerations if military exigencies make this necessary. The War Office would give the two Indian divisions, but could not under any circumstances spare further reinforcements, and are doubtful of their capacity even to supply drafts if wastage from casualties or sickness is severe. They think Baghdad can be taken easily and held for some time, but, as explained above, it might become untenable later. At present moment it seems that German attempt to break through to Constantinople will succeed, and our position and prospects in Gallipoli are most uncertain. Persia seems drifting into war on German side, whilst Arabs are wavering, and unless we can offer them great inducement will probably join Turks. We are, therefore, in great need of striking success in the East both to check Persian movement and to win Arabs. It is suggested that we should occupy Baghdad, giving assurances to Arab leaders that we favour creation of Arab State independent of Turks, and that we shall be prepared to consider future disposition of Baghdad in connection therewith. Is this practicable? Unless you consider that possibility of eventual withdrawal is decisive against the advance, all other considerations seem to us to render it desirable, and we are prepared to order it.

No. 219 A. *General Nixon to War Office, dated 20th November* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

I have received from my own agents similar news regarding a large force under Von der Goltz over a fortnight ago, but at present I do not accept their reports as conclusive for various reasons. Please state the source of your information.

No. 221 A. *War Office to General Nixon, dated 22nd November* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

The sources of our information are secret service in the Near East. We had made various enquiries, and received corroborative evidence before sending you the information. As to aircraft we have no information, but there is no doubt that the Germans are sending six wireless stations for the expedition to Bagdad.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00002d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 242 A. *Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 3rd December* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

Following telegram dated 30th November has been received from Nixon :—

"Townshend reports that on 29th November east of Elkutunie 14th Hussars charged and got into enemy's mounted troops with sword, accounting for 140 Arabs while Turkish cavalry fled. 7th Lancers also charged. This clearly justifies my urgent request for British Cavalry and I would like another regiment of British Cavalry sent if it can possibly be spared."

It is regretted that no more British Cavalry can be spared from India.

No. 242 B. *General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 4th December* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

4th December. General Townshend wires, dated 3rd, as follows :—

"I am grateful for your praise of the conduct of the retirement of the 6th Division. From Ctesiphon to Kut-el-Amara is a distance of some 85 miles as the crow flies, in contact with a greatly superior force of the enemy, who managed to take me by the collar on 1st December, but we shook ourselves free. Regarding the action of 1st December details are as follows: Estimated 12,000 Turks advanced in long lines on us and we opened Artillery fire at 2,500 yards with crushing effect. He tried then to envelop my left, *i.e.*, my line of retreat, which I repulsed by again turning his envelop with the Cavalry and Horse Artillery guns, with result that his enveloping attack fled. I took this opportunity to break off the battle and commenced my retirement by echelons of brigades. We were heavily shelled by high explosive big guns. By midday we had shaken off the enemy, having lost 250 killed and wounded. Marched 30 miles on 1st December, one brigade, the 30th, have marched 80 miles in three days including battle, and at the end of it their valour and discipline is in no way diminished and without loss of a gun or a single prisoner even. Never have I seen a retirement like that of 1st December even on field manœuvres better done as regards suppleness and steadiness, manœuvres under very heavy shell fire. I mean to defend Kut like I did Chitral."

I entirely concur in his high commendation of the valour and discipline displayed by his troops.

No. 242 C. *General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th December* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Townshend reports 4th December :—

"I am making Kut into as strong an entrenched camp as possible in the given time. The enemy's advanced guard is now some 10 miles off, and the main body 5 miles beyond that. As it is reported that Von Goltz is at Baghdad now, commanding the enemy's army of six divisions, I shall expect him to turn this place, putting off a force of observation at Kut. The relieving force will probably have to fight another battle at Sinn. I have shut myself up here, reckoning with certainty on being relieved by large forces arriving at Basra. The state of extreme exhaustion of men demanded instant rest. I was very anxious, and it looked at one time on 2nd December as if the whole division would lie down and not be able to move. Our being here will also delay Von Goltz's advance down the Tigris, and give more time for you to concentrate relieving force on the Amara, Ali Gharbi line."

I have approved his proposal, and shall now make my concentration at Amara. In view of these altered conditions and the possibility of Townshend being invested in Kut, I require urgently more heavy guns and howitzers, and ask that these may be sent to me immediately. Further, in view of this large Turkish concentration against me, I shall want another complete division to secure success in this theatre of war.

No. 242 D. *General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th December* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

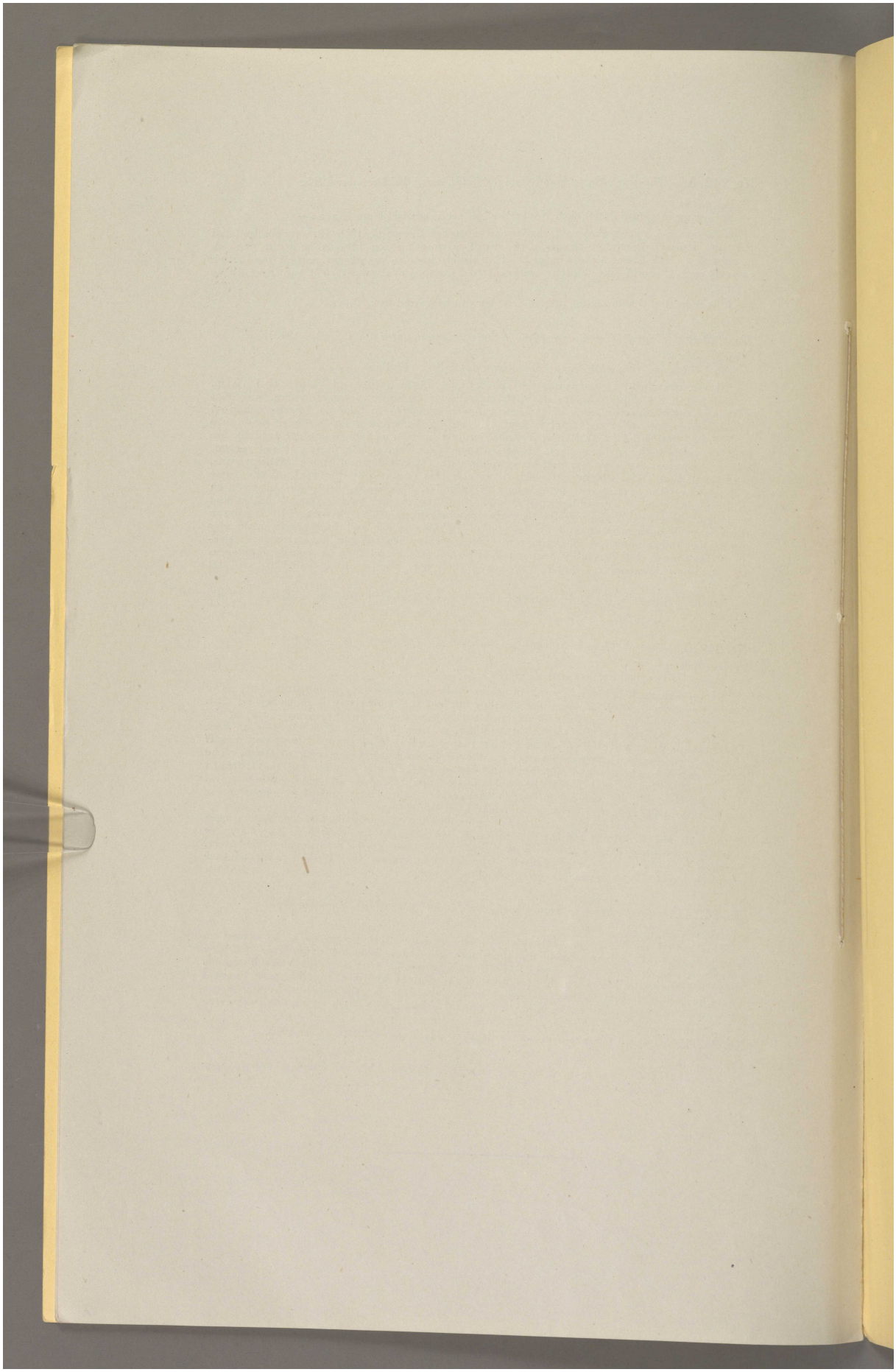
5th December. Tigris line. General Townshend reports, 5th December, no movement on enemy's part. All sick, wounded, and prisoners have been evacuated from Kut. Cavalry Brigade is being sent back to Ali Gharbi to join hands with General Younghusband's Brigade, three battalions of which, 51st, 53rd Sikhs, and 56th Rifles, together with General Younghusband and Brigade headquarters, are now en route to Alialgharbi. Arrangements for moving up reinforcements are in hand. General headqnarters reach Basra, 6th December.

No. 242 E. *General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 6th December* 1915.

(Telegraphic.)

General Headquarters arrived Basra, evening of 6th December. No change reported by General Townshend at Kut.

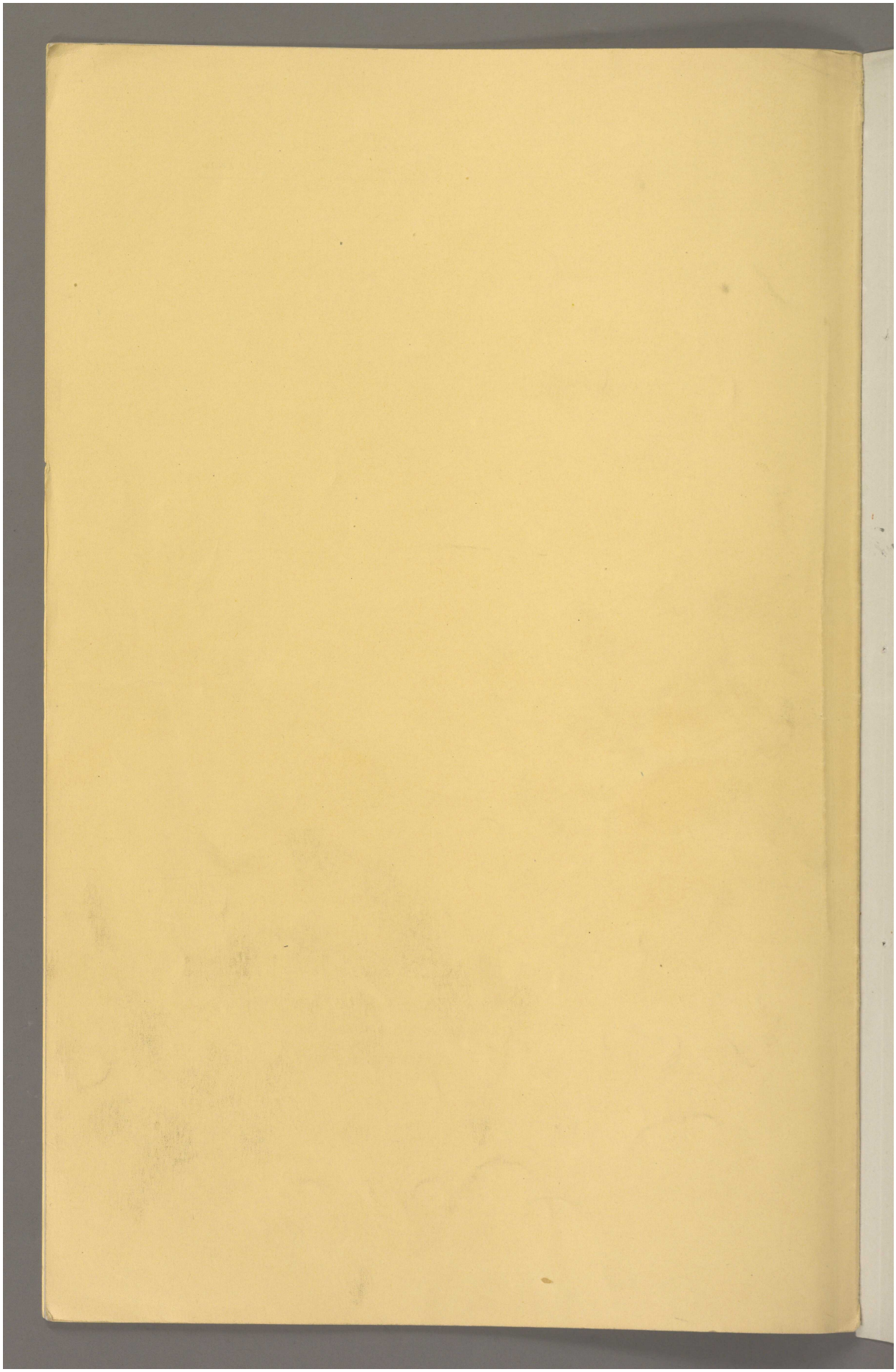
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000080



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00006f



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000a6



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00001a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

SECRET. (1)

Brief for the Defence of the Mesopotamian Campaign.

The Mesopotamian campaign having become a subject of acute political controversy, the Secretary of State for India considers that a short summary of each phase of our occupation of Mesopotamia in its political and administrative aspect rather than on its historical and military side may be of use hereafter.

I.—*Why we went to Mesopotamia.*

Although no actual rupture with Turkey took place until the 5th November, it will be seen from the White Paper[1] issued in that month that the Porte had shown signs of great hostility to England from the very outbreak of the war with Germany.

[1] No. 13 (1914).

As early as the 11th August the Baghdad Army had begun to mobilise, martial law had been proclaimed, and the property of British subjects had been seized.

The situation thus created caused grave anxiety both to the Admiralty and to Lord Crewe, then Secretary of State for India. Under his orders the subject was closely watched in the Military and Political Departments of the India Office.

In a Minute dated the 26th September 1914 the Military Secretary, India Office, reviewed the position as it then presented itself, laying stress on the danger to our interests in the Persian Gulf, interests which had been consolidated with so much care and prudence in the past, and on the menace, not only to the security of the Indian frontier, but to our tranquillity and prestige in India itself, which hostilities with Turkey would involve. The following extracts from this Minute are so germane to what followed, that they are here quoted.

"All the omens point to war with Turkey within a few weeks or even days. Such a contingency need not alarm us unless the Turks succeed in drawing the Arabs to their side. In that case they will probably proclaim a Jehad and endeavour to raise Afghanistan and the Frontier tribes against us, which might be a serious danger to India and would most certainly add enormously to our difficulties and responsibilities. This shows how important it is to us to avert a Turko-Arab coalition.

* * * *

"I have discussed this aspect of the case with Major Shakespear, and he feels sure that Bin Saood has not yet fully committed himself as his hatred of the Turks is too pronounced to admit of an easy surrender to their blandishments. Moreover, he is convinced that we have only to give some sure sign of our intention to support him and the Arabs generally against the Turks to turn the balance in our favour. How can we give such a sign? My solution of the problem is that we must give the signal *before* war breaks out or it may be too late, and that the best way of doing so is to send a force from India to the Shatt-el-Arab *at once*.

"We can easily do so at the present moment without arousing any suspicion. Troops and ships are in readiness at Bombay.[2] The Navy can convoy them to the mouth of the Gulf, and the Expedition, if despatched under sealed orders, could arrive at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab without a soul knowing anything about its despatch for this purpose.

"On arrival the troops can be landed on Persian soil at Muhammerah or at Abadan Island, ostensibly to protect the oil installation, but in reality to notify to the Turks that we meant business and to the Arabs that we were ready to support them. So startling and unexpected a sign of our power to strike would at once determine the attitude of the Sheikhs of Muhammerah and Koweit as well as of Bin Saood, and the support of the Arabs would utterly destroy all prospect of Turkish success either in Mesopotamia or in Egypt. With the Arabs on our side a Jehad is impossible, and our Indian Frontier is safe from attack.

"The force that we might thus despatch in the first instance need not be large as it will be perfectly secure from attack by the Turkish Division at Basrah in its position on the left bank of the Shatt-el-Arab. I am of opinion that it might be limited to one Brigade of the 6th Division, two Mountain Batteries, two Companies Sappers.

The Minute then went on to deal with the further military arrangements that would be necessary to meet the case of war.

[2] Troops were at the moment being got ready for despatch to Egypt.

MS 234 3 3 3 3 3 3—7/1916 A

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000099

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

It will be seen from the above that the primary and immediate objects in view were held to be :—

(1) To safeguard the Indian Frontier from the immediate effects of *Jehad*.
(2) To demonstrate our power to strike, and thus check Turkish intrigues amongst the Arabs.
(3) To confirm the Arab Chiefs of Muscat, Bahrein, Koweit and Mohammerah in their allegiance to us, and incidentally to encourage the Arabs generally.
(4) To protect the valuable oil installations at Abadan in which the Admiralty were so largely interested.

These objects commended themselves to Lord Crewe, and on that same evening he telegraphed warning instructions to the Viceroy on the subject.

On the 2nd October the Viceroy was informed that the Government had decided to take the action already indicated to him, and that he was to prepare a force accordingly. On the 3rd October further instructions were given defining the scope of the action to be taken. "Except under "absolute military necessity or orders from you no troops must be landed "on Turkish territory or other hostile action taken against Turkey," and on the 5th October the Viceroy was told specifically, in answer to a question, that the object of the Expedition was "to protect the pipe line and "oil tanks by the occupation of Abadan, to give support to Arabs against "Turks, and to cover landing of any necessary reinforcements."

Orders were also given for the despatch of the entire 6th Division should war with Turkey ensue. Meanwhile the Political Department gave instructions for Major Shakespear to visit Bin Saood and also laid down the policy to be followed with the Persian Gulf Arabs generally.

On the 16th October the advanced Force under Brigadier-General Delamain left India with the convoy for Egypt under sealed orders and as previously arranged was diverted to Bahrein, when three days out from Bombay.

Events marched rapidly ! During the last half of October many indications of activity on the part of the Turks and of co-operation with Germany were reported. On the other hand Bin Saood and the Arab Sheikhs of the Gulf declared themselves on our side. Meanwhile General Delamain arrived at Bahrein on the 23rd October and anchored off that island awaiting orders. On the 30th October, in consequence of the hostile action taken by the Turks against the Russians in the Black Sea, the flotilla at Bahrein was ordered to sail at once to the Shatt-el-Arab, but did not get away till the 2nd November.

On the 5th November war with Turkey was declared, and on the same day the expedition under General Delamain crossed the bar of the Shatt and anchored. The landing was delayed by bad weather, but on the morning of the 6th H.M.S. *Odin* bombarded Fao Fort after which a small force was landed which occupied the Fort without opposition. On the 7th the expedition reached Abadan.

On the 8th November, General Delamain began disembarking his force on Turkish soil above Abadan. There was an affair of outposts on the 11th. On the 13th, General Barrett arrived at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab with the 18th Brigade and some artillery and cavalry. On the 14th he reached Saniyah, and on the 15th Delamain's Brigade attacked and drove back the enemy from Saihan. On the 17th Sir A. Barrett advanced on Zain with two Brigades and found the enemy strongly entrenched at that point. The position was held by about 4,500 men with 12 guns. The Turks made a resolute defence, but were driven from their entrenchments with the loss of several guns. This success was decisive. The Turks hastily abandoned Basra, which was occupied by our troops on the 22nd November.

The capture of Basra may be said to have completed the first phase in the Mesopotamian campaign. Our prestige was restored. A position of great strategical importance had been secured with little loss. The friendly Arabs were confirmed, at least for the time being, in their loyal attitude, and the oil works at Abadan had been saved from destruction. So far our

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00000a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

policy had been fully justified by events, while the secrecy and suddenness of our movements had not only ensured success, but had done so at the smallest possible cost to ourselves. On the 5th war was declared, and on the 6th the bolt from the blue descended on the astonished and ill-prepared defenders of the Shatt-el-Arab. In less than three weeks a British administration had been established at Basra, the key of Mesopotamia.

This brief review of the events which led up to the occupation of Basra, at least shows that the objects we had in view were rapidly and fully attained, but as it may be urged that even complete success at this initial stage did not justify the despatch of the Expedition, as by it we were only wasting our energy and resources in a subsidiary issue, it is important to consider the probable trend of events if no such enterprise had been undertaken. In that case it is certain that Arabia would have abandoned all hope of liberation from Turkish rule and perforce have joined the Turks. The proclamation of *jehad* would have been endorsed by the Sherif of Mecca and the standard of Islam would have been raised against us throughout the East. Persia would have followed suit and Turko-German intrigues in that country would have met with immediate and popular response. A wave of fanaticism would have quickly engulfed Afghanistan, and on the Indian frontier the movement would have been hailed with all the eager enthusiasm that prospects of easy "loot" inspire in barbaric races.

Such a development would have meant war on a prodigious scale all along the Indian Frontier as well as a dangerous internal situation within India. Instead of continuing to send important forces to Europe, Egypt, East Africa and the Colonies, we might have been compelled to recall some of our troops and even to demand assistance from home. Our military resources would have been gravely strained at a most critical period. The menace to Egypt, also, would have been immeasurably more serious than it actually was as all Islam from the Nile to the Sahara would have been deeply stirred by the participation of Arabia in the war. Incidentally, of course, we should have lost our extremely valuable stake in the Oil Fields, while British interests, both commercial and political, would have been obliterated from the whole of the Middle East. The much-abused Mesopotamian venture at least saved us from all these untoward results during perhaps the most critical period of the war. In that simple fact lies the complete justification of the expedition.

II.—*Why we went on to Kurna and the Karun Valley.*

The capture of Basra was quickly followed by that of Kurna. The reason for this move is clearly explained in a Military Department Minute of the 27th November 1914, of which the following is an extract:—

"The object of going to Kurna is to secure a strong strategical point and a dominating position. It will be seen from the map that Kurna is at the junction of the old channel of the Euphrates and Tigris, and that it covers and controls all the rich cultivated land along the Shatt. When we leave Kurna we enter the arid country which lies between it and Amara. The military position is extraordinarily strong, for both flanks are practically unassailable. On the right there are the marshes of the Khor Hawaize which trend right away to the Persian frontier, while on the left there is the Euphrates.

"The advantages of this position are:—

"(1) Its commanding military value.
"(2) The control it gives us of the whole navigable waterway to the Gulf.
"(3) The possession of the whole of the rich cultivated area from Kurna to the sea.
"(4) The fact that it completely covers Persian Arabistan and safeguards it from Turkish intrigues or incursions.
"(5) The moral effect on the Arabs.
"(6) The control of the telegraph up to this point and also of the passage of the Euphrates.

"When we have reached Kurna and fully established ourselves there it will be time enough to consider whether we should go further."

Lord Crewe, in telegraphing[1] his sanction for this move, expressly stated *that he was not disposed to authorise an advance to Baghdad* as had been suggested in certain quarters, and limited our operations to Kurna. The main considerations which governed

[1] Telegram No. 57, dated 27th November 1914.

213

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000045

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

his decision were the fact that our available military forces at that period were only one Division, and that our limited resources in river shipping and the difficulties of navigation at that season, practically precluded any further advance for the time being.

The operations against Kurna were begun on the 3rd December and culminated on the 9th December in the surrender of that town, together with the late Vali of Basrah, 1,200 prisoners and nine guns. Our authority was thus established over the whole of the rich riverain tract between Kurna and the sea, and also over the whole waterway navigable by seagoing steamers, Kurna being the limit of such navigation.

By Christmas 1914 events had taken a somewhat disquieting turn. From information received it became obvious that the Turks intended if possible to retrieve the situation in Mesopotamia, and by the end of January it was evident that they were collecting forces, not only to attack us at Kurna and Basra, but also to threaten the oil fields in the Bakhtiari Hills, a movement which involved a Turkish invasion of Persian territory. Consequently, on the 27th January Lord Crewe despatched a telegram to the Viceroy in the following terms :—

"As there are indications of increasing Turko-Arab menace both on Tigris and on Euphrates, also of a possible early attack on the pipe line near Ahwaz, whilst Turkish reinforcements we know are being sent to Baghdad, you are authorised to despatch the 12th Brigade and also a cavalry regiment if you think fit. You will be informed in due course if Cabinet approves despatch of troops to Karun Valley."

At the same time Lord Crewe approached the Foreign Office on the subject of sending a force to the Karun Valley to protect the pipe line and thus indirectly safeguard the oil fields. The Foreign Office communicated with Teheran and explained that "His Majesty's Government were compelled to "take measures for the defence of their interests and property in default of "any effective Persian force sufficient to guarantee those regions against "Turkish invasion." The Persian Government tacitly acquiesced in the proposed action.

At the end of January the general position was somewhat as follows :—At Nasariyeh Turks and Arabs were collecting for an attack on Basra by the desert route to Zobeir. In the Kurna direction the Turks were in considerable force, but unlikely to attack owing to the strength of the Kurna position. On the Karun side the menace was becoming formidable, the Turks were approaching, *Jehad* was being widely preached and the Arab tribesmen were ripe for an armed rising against the Sheikh of Muhammerah and ourselves. The Sheikh had meanwhile lodged a protest at Teheran against the Turkish violation of Persian territory. On our side the position was that we had approximately a Brigade in a strong defensive position at Kurna, and two Brigades at and around Basra, while a fourth Brigade was being got ready for embarkation in India. British subjects had been withdrawn from Ahwaz and the *Comet* and *Shushan* had been sent up the Karun to give moral support to the Vice-Consul and our adherents at Ahwaz. This, however, did not altogether satisfy the Secretary of State as sufficient considering the importance of the pipe line, the vital necessity of preventing the spread of *Jehad* into Persian Arabistan and the urgency of asserting our military superiority at the head of the Gulf. Accordingly on the 1st February he despatched the following telegram to the Viceroy in reply to one from him :—

"With reference to your telegram of the 30th January, I agree with your conclusions, but if Barrett thinks he can spare troops temporarily to support the Sheikh such a course would have a good political effect and prevent a possible Turkish success which would endanger our military position on the Shatt-el-Arab. To enable Barrett to act in the Karun direction if necessary Foreign Office concurrence has been obtained and Tehran informed. Possibility of support within next few days, pending arrival of the 12th Brigade, will depend on Barrett's opinion as to whether he can spare the force required and so avoid necessity for larger efforts later on. I will telegraph again on the subject of reinforcements from home."

Developments came quickly. The Arabs in the Karun Valley rose in rebellion against the Sheikh of Muhammerah. On the 17th Sir Arthur Barrett reported that he had sent a column under Brigadier-General Delamain to check the Turkish advance north-west of Shaiba. On the same

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00002a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

date skirmishes were reported 11 miles north-west of Ahwaz between our cavalry patrols and Arabs. The pipe line was cut in several places, and the manager at the Abadan works reported that the supply of oil stored at Abadan would be exhausted before the middle of March. Each day things looked blacker. On the 21st February, Army Headquarters in India telegraphed that 3,000 Turks with 18 guns and numerous Arab horsemen from Nasariyeh were approaching Naikhaileh 20 miles north-west of Basra. Lord Crewe felt that the time had come to intervene and to insist on reinforcements being sent. On the 23rd he telegraphed to the Viceroy an expression of his views and his opinion that Force "D" should be at once increased to a strength of two divisions from India.

Reinforcements, however, took time to arrive, and meanwhile there was fighting both in the Karun Valley and near Shaiba, 14 miles west of Basra. Altogether the situation appeared critical.

On the 7th March, in compliance with the orders of the Secretary of State, the Viceroy reported that he was sending the 33rd Brigade from India. By the 10th March the War Office had made arrangements for the despatch of an Indian Brigade from Egypt. This with the 12th and 33rd Brigades practically constituted the Second Division for which Lord Crewe had so repeatedly pressed.

There was now some prospect of our having sufficient forces to meet the various dangers which loomed in front of us. Happily the Karun danger had partially dissipated itself and we escaped further serious trouble in that direction. Meantime the menace from the Euphrates side was rapidly increasing.

On the 17th March more desultory fighting was reported, and on the 20th the India Office at the instance of the Admiralty again pressed on the Viceroy the importance of safeguarding the oil supply.

On the 1st April we were informed that the Government of India had decided to reorganise the Force in Mesopotamia and had appointed General Sir John Nixon to the Command. On the 9th that officer landed at Basra and General Barrett was invalided home.

On the 12th and 13th there was further fighting round Shaiba. On the 14th the decisive victory of Barjisiyah was gained and the whole Turkish Army put to flight. This brilliant engagement resulted in clearing what may be styled the delta of the Shatt-el-Arab of all Turkish or Arab enemies. Basra was now secure and General Nixon was free to look around and decide on his next movements. The departure of General Barrett and the assumption of command by Sir John Nixon mark the end of a definite phase in the campaign.

The reinforcements had only arrived just in time to avert what might easily have been an irreparable catastrophe. The timely advent of the 12th Brigade enabled General Barrett to send a sufficient force to stem the Turkish offensive on the Karun side, while the opportune arrival of the 30th Brigade on the battlefield in the very nick of time at the crisis of the fight converted a doubtful defensive engagement into a brilliant victory. Basra and Muhammerah were saved and our oil interests secured. For more than a year since then this region has enjoyed peace and prosperity, and for this happy conclusion to a period of unrest and anxiety we are indebted to the insistence of the Secretary of State for India on the augmentation of Force "D." So far the India Office had been fully justified throughout by events. It sent just the right force at the right moment to the Shatt-el-Arab. It increased that force to a sufficient strength in the face of some opposition and much discouragement before it was too late. The one small reverse at Ahwaz would never have occurred, nor our oil supply have been interrupted for several months, had its views been accepted in time by the local authorities and the Government of India. Our strong position at Kurna had effectually stopped the Turkish advance down the Tigris while our Military occupation of the Karun Valley secured the safety of the pipe line. Had the extra Division not arrived and had we contented ourselves with the passive defence of Basra, we should not have had to our credit the prestige of the victory at Kurna, while the Turks would have been able to move by the Tigris line directly on Basra in

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000b5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

combination with flanking attacks both by the Euphrates and Shaiba line and by the Karun Valley. The Bakhtiaris and Arabs would certainly have wrecked the oil-fields and pipe line, and it is not too much to say that we might have suffered an irreparable disaster.

III.—*Why we went to Kut-el-Amara and Nasiriyah.*

The advance to Kut-el-Amara from our firm base at Kurna will doubtless be challenged as a definite indication of the firm intention of the Government to press on to Baghdad. Though easy to rebut this charge, so far as the Secretary of State and the Cabinet are concerned, it will be less easy to defend the authorities in Mesopotamia and India, as we are probably not in possession of all the facts bearing on the case. Up to Kurna we are able to produce proof for every statement made and ample justification for every action taken, as the entire military policy of the campaign had so far been initiated, influenced and controlled by the instructions or suggestions of the Secretary of State, but from Kurna onwards the initiative and the direction of events passed to the Government of India, though of course the ultimate responsibility remained with the Secretary of State. The consequence of this diminished control over events is that the India Office is not in possession of all the facts and has to rely on such telegraphic evidence as is before it.

On the 23rd April the Viceroy informed the Secretary of State that on the 19th General Nixon had telegraphed to Simla "that in view of the "increasing demands on the Cavalry now with the Force, he requests that "we should send him another Brigade, including a British Cavalry Regiment "and also a Pioneer battalion to work on river obstructions, &c.

The Viceroy replied on the 23rd April regretting his inability to supply either Cavalry or Pioneers.

This indication of the ideas held by General Nixon drew the following expression of his views from the Secretary of State in a telegram to the Viceroy dated the 24th April:—

"With reference to General Nixon's request of the 19th April, I agree with your view, because the approach of the hot weather makes it undesirable to send more troops, especially British, to Mesopotamia, quite apart from the impossibility of complying with the demand. An intention on the part of Nixon of undertaking important offensive operations beyond the present theatre is implied by his request, but the Government will not sanction such action at this moment, and during the hot season Nixon must clearly understand that he is to confine himself to the defence of oil interests in Arabistan and of the Basra Vilayet. If it should be possible to advance to Amara after destroying the enemy on the Karun side and so establish an outpost controlling the Arab tribesmen between the Karun and Amara, thus protecting the pipe line I should be disposed to agree to such an operation if proposed by Nixon and supported by you. Any scheme involving further demands for reinforcements and undue extension of operations is to be deprecated. We are now in a sound strategical position and should not take the risk of extending it unduly. A cautious policy in Mesopotamia is the correct one."

Major-General Townshend arrived from India on the 22nd April and took over command of the 6th Division. On the 24th Sir John Nixon directed him to proceed at once to Kurna to reconnoitre the Turkish position north of that place and to form a plan of attack.

From this it is clear that at that time General Nixon contemplated using the 6th Division for clearing the way up the Tigris while the 12th Division was retained for operations in the Karun direction. These operations took time to materialize, and, in fact, the advance up the Tigris did not commence till the 31st May. Meanwhile the situation had developed on the Karun side, and it will be convenient to turn thereto before continuing the narrative of the advance to Amara.

[Ahwaz.] Immediately after the conclusion of the Shaiba operations Sir J. Nixon, in accordance with Lord Crewe's instructions, took steps to deal with the situation on the Karun. Major-General Gorringe was directed to reopen communications with Ahwaz and disperse the enemy, who were estimated to consist of about eight battalions of Turkish regulars and some 7,000 Arab tribesmen. On General Gorringe's advance the Turks retreated north of the Karkheh river, which was crossed by us early in May, but too late to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00007f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

intercept them in their retirement towards Amara. As a result of General Gorringe's operations Persian Arabistan was cleared of the enemy and the Arab tribes forced to submit, thus enabling the pipe line to be repaired and normal conditions to be resumed at the oil fields.

These results were eminently satisfactory, but the Admiralty were not the less anxious that there should be no recurrence of stoppage to the oil supply on which so much depended, as may be seen from an Admiralty letter dated the 23rd May 1915. On receipt of this Lord Crewe telegraphed to the Viceroy :—

"The continuous maintenance at Abadan of the supply of oil is a matter to which the Admiralty attach great importance. The necessity of the protection of the pipe line throughout should be impressed on Nixon, it being regarded as a matter of extreme urgency."

[Amara.]

Sir John Nixon would appear, however, to have regarded the Karun operations as subsidiary to the main advance along the Tigris. Indeed, the conception of that project dates from a period long anterior to his arrival. On the 20th December 1914 Sir Percy Cox in a telegram to the Government of India had expressed the following views :—

"Amara town possesses considerable commercial importance and from an administrative point of view it would be convenient if the district came under our control as it is within the Basrah Vilayet. The country beyond Amara district comes under administration of Baghdad and different set of tribes ; so that its possession by us need not, politically speaking, necessarily entail any further advance and question admits of being considered on its independent merits."

Again in a telegram of the 3rd January 1915, the advantages commercial, political and administrative, of occupying Amara, were fully stated, and as the authorities both in Mesopotamia and in India were agreed that the occupation of Amara was desirable the Secretary of State did not oppose it, especially as in his telegram of 24th April (*ante*) he had given his conditional acceptance to this policy.

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 23rd May 1915.

"With reference to your telegram of 24th April. Offensive up the Tigris from Kurna is proposed by Nixon to take place on 24th He does not require any reinforcements for this purpose. It is, in our opinion, desirable that our control over the valley of the Tigris should be extended as proposed by him so as to protect both the pipe line and the vilayet of Basra. We therefore do not propose to interfere with his intention. Without your sanction no advance beyond Amara will, of course, be made."

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 23rd May 1915.

"Reference your telegram of this date. On the distinct understanding that General Nixon is satisfied that sufficient troops can be concentrated at Amarah to withstand any attack from Bagdad during the summer, I sanction the proposed movement. He must remember that it will possibly be difficult to provide reinforcements for so advanced a position, and the fact that no more troops can be sent him must guide his action. I consider that as this move must have been arranged for by him some days since, his proposal should not have been submitted at the last moment. Under existing conditions the Cabinet only can decide questions in which civil and military policy are jointly involved."

On the 26th May General Nixon telegraphed direct to the Secretary of State asking for definite orders as to his proposed advance to Amara. In the meantime Mr. Chamberlain had taken over the India Office.

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 28th May 1915.

"With regard to General Nixon's telegram of 26th May. Kindly refer to my predecessor's telegram of 24th ultimo. Until I am informed of the force with which he is advancing and objects immediately contemplated I am unable to issue further instructions. Local factors, locally available forces, the resistance expected, and situation elsewhere, must govern our policy. If the occupation of Amara is contemplated by you please inform me of the force considered necessary by Nixon for its garrison during summer and the general distribution of troops proposed during that season."

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd June 1915.

"In regard to General Nixon's telegram of 26th May and yours of 28th. The expulsion of the Turks from Lower Tigris below Amara with consequent security of Kurna and Basra from attack from north, and protection of oil supply were the objects to be attained by General Nixon as set forth in the instructions issued to him on 27th May in pursuance of your telegram. Reports from him state that on 31st May he was to commence operations. As he progresses he will be better able from data gained to give us the information asked

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000054

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

for by you. However, while military operations are actually progressing and whilst the military situation in Lower Mesopotamia is so uncertain we feel that it would not be desirable, but would even be dangerous, to restrict him by definite orders which might not fit in with local situation confronting him. * * * * For the present, therefore, any alteration of our original instructions to him is not thought desirable by us. Nixon will, under the original instructions, forward scheme for occupation of vilayet of Basra, inclusive of Amara, as soon as he is able to do so. He will then be in possession of a fuller knowledge of the local situation than is now possible and we will then ask you for further orders. Nixon's force being inadequate any advance beyond Amara would not be proposed by us."

It will be observed from the above telegrams that Lord Crewe gave his consent to the advance to Amara with some reluctance. His view was that we were chiefly concerned with the maintenance of a secure base at Basra and the safety of our important interests in the oilfields. The India Office had been constantly reminded of those interests by the Admiralty while it was not without its own anxieties. It knew that in the circumstances of the moment in Europe no military assistance could reasonably be expected from the War Office. It recognised that India could send no further reinforcements, and though it was fully aware of the strategic and other advantages of holding the Tigris Valley up to Amara, it was doubtful of our capacity to do so if the Turks mustered in force to attack us there. It was felt, however, that it was difficult to reject the considered opinion of those on the spot who were obviously in a better position to judge than we were of the local conditions and the relative strength and value of the opposing forces.

The operations that ensued were carried out by General Townshend with two Brigades. On the 3rd June Amara was reached and the garrison capitulated.

With the occupation of Amara and the submission of all the tribes in the Karun valley, the gallant Mesopotamian Field Force might, without reproach, have rested on its laurels during the blazing and enervating summer, but General Nixon, with the full support of the Government of India, deemed it inexpedient to remain inactive whilst any Turks were within striking distance, he therefore next directed his activities towards the Euphrates side. There had been naval reconnaissances up the Euphrates channels both from Basra and Kurna, which indicated an eventual offensive movement in that direction, but the first positive intimation on the subject received at the India Office was the following :—

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 13th June 1915.

[Nasiriyeh.] "Proposal by wire from Nixon to secure Euphrates portion of Vilayet of Basra by moving on Nasiriyeh with two Brigades. Concurring in this we propose to instruct him, as soon as his preparations are complete, to proceed with this operation, which should have a good effect on the tribes of the Euphrates. For the success of this operation and maintenance of his new position his present force should be quite sufficient."

This view of the situation was accepted by Mr. Chamberlain, as though the broken Turkish force at Nasiriyeh could scarcely be regarded as a menace to us, it was thought that it might offer a rallying point to Turkish reinforcements from Baghdad, in which case Basra might possibly be again threatened from the west, while unquestionably we could not expect the Arabs on the Euphrates to side with us so long as they had a Turkish garrison in their midst.

The Nasiriyeh operations were entrusted to Major-General Gorringe. His instructions were to secure the occupation of Nasiriyeh and the country in its vicinity. The operations commenced on the 27th June and ended with the capture of Nasiriyeh on the 25th July. During June, the Tigris column in spite of the season had not been inactive and reconnaissances had been pushed up the river towards El Gharbi. This gradual extension of the sphere of our military operations, with its resultant attenuation of strength, was regarded with some anxiety by the Secretary of State, more especially as it involved the withdrawal of troops from Basra and Ahwaz. General Nixon too had reported (24th June) the concentration of Turkish troops at Kut-el-Amara and an offensive movement down the Tigris. The political situation in Persia and at Aden was also very critical about this period, and in view of all these circumstances Mr. Chamberlain considered

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00003a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

that caution must be impressed. A telegram was therefore despatched on the 12th July which ended as follows :—

"It is understood that you will sanction no further advance, it being impossible to give further reinforcements for Persian Gulf, and that for the time being you will content yourself with holding the pipe line and the Vilayet of Basra."

The capture of Nasiriyeh, however, had a stimulating effect on the authorities in Mesopotamia and India.—*L'appetit vient en mangeant!*

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 27th July 1915.

"We consider now that the occupation of Nasiriyeh has been effected that it is strategically necessary to occupy Kut-el-Amara. The latter is only 4 miles outside the limit of the vilayet of Basra. By it both the Tigris lower reaches, and, by way of the Shat-el-Hai, the Euphrates, are commanded. The reinforcement of our position on either river will be facilitated by its occupation. We shall also be able to protect the oil fields effectively from attack from the direction of the Tigris and the powerful Beni Lam tribe will be brought under our control. Our garrisons at Amara and Nasiriyeh could probably be reduced and economy of our troops thus effected when once we occupy Kut-el-Amara securely. [Kut-el-Amara.]

* * * * *

This telegram did not allay our apprehensions, and further it was obvious that if reinforcements should be necessary they would have to be drawn from Nasiriyeh or from Basra and Ahwaz. The telegrams which follow show the attitude of the India Office at this period and also how the advance to Kut-el-Amara was eventually approved.

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 30th July 1915.

"Please inform me of proposed distribution of troops after capture of Kut-el-Amara, the strategic importance of which is fully recognized. It is necessary we should be strong at Kut, as it seems improbable that, if we hold it in force, any further offensive will be taken by enemy on the Euphrates line, but that he will concentrate on the line of the Tigris. On the assumption that the Shatt-el-Hai is the Turkish line of retreat from Nasiriyeh, are you of opinion that by holding Nasiriyeh, a very unhealthy outpost, any advantage is gained? Communications with it, especially on river falling, are difficult. Has advisability of withdrawing from Nasiriyeh and concentrating on the Tigris been considered by you?

"The retention for political reasons of Ahwaz and Bushire as outposts is necessary but would not the location of the remainder of troops along the Tigris and at Basra be advisable? I shall be glad, before you decide, to know your views."

The reply to the above describes the grounds on which General Nixon and the Government of India decided on holding Nasiriyeh and advancing on Kut. The Secretary of State accepted their conclusions.

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th August 1915.

"The questions in your wire of 30th July have for months past been closely and constantly considered. On receipt of your telegram we again asked for Nixon's views.

"The case is expressed so clearly in his reply that we reply to your telegram by repeating it :—

Begins. "'The instructions given by me to General Gorringe are to all intents identical with the views of the Secretary of State.

* * * * *

"'I entirely favour concentration on line of Tigris, but in respect to total evacuation of Nasiriyeh suggested, I am of opinion that the place is too important to abandon. In order to exercise control over the powerful Arab tribes surrounding it, and for the effective occupation of this vilayet, Nasiriyeh as a centre of civil government is essential.

"'For these reasons incalculable political harm would be done by withdrawing. The reappearance of Ajaimi with a few Turks would re-establish Turkish authority, and every tribe would be out of control. Nasiriyeh, I am informed, is healthier than Kurna or Basra, and the climate becomes quite good shortly. Communications to Nasiriyeh by land are not good, but a railway would make an improvement.

* * * * *

"'It should be borne in mind that the reduction of troops at Amara is only made possible by the occupation of Kut. The advance on Kut will be methodical, there is no intention of rushing it.

* * * * *

"'I have carefully considered, and already stated my views on Ahwaz and supposed necessity of guarding pipe line with troops.

* * * * *

"'I would again repeat that I see no military reason, providing proper arrangements are made with the tribesmen, for retaining troops on the line of the Karun for a prolonged period. If the oilfields are to be held against any possible combination of tribes, very strong reinforcements would be necessary.' *Ends.*

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00007b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

"We agree with Nixon and propose when he is prepared to give him authority to advance on Kut.

"As long as his British battalions were kept up to strength and troops were not scattered along pipe line, he has always considered, in which view we concur, that the occupation of Kut could be effected by his present force."

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 6th August 1915.

"The course of action put forward by Nixon, which you recommend, is concurred in by me, unless, taking into consideration Marling's telegram of 3rd August and his speculation as to objective of gathering at Ispahan, some modification should be thought requisite by you. As regards Karun, how are troops distributed and strength? It is presumed that the defence of the oilfields against raiders is sufficiently secured by local arrangements at oilfields and present strength of troops."

The Viceroy, in a telegram dated 18th August, replied giving in detail General Nixon's reasons for not increasing the strength of the force in the Karun Valley. The arguments employed seemed conclusive and the advance to Kut was finally sanctioned by a telegram from the Secretary of State, dated 20th August.

In September the forward movement was commenced. On the 15th the headquarters of the 6th Division reached Abu Rummanah, six miles from the Es-Sinn position which had been very strongly fortified by the Turks. The next few days were occupied by reconnaissances prior to the final advance which began on the 26th September. By the 29th, after severe fighting, the Turks were put to flight and our cavalry had entered Kut-el-Amara. During the action we captured more than 1,700 prisoners and 13 guns, and inflicted heavy losses in men and matériel.

This brilliant victory concluded a definite phase of the campaign, as by it the complete occupation of the Basra Vilayat was secured. Kut-el-Amara had been specifically suggested by the Viceroy as the goal of our operations and it had been accepted as such by the Secretary of State. That goal had been attained by the endurance and valour of the 6th Division of the Indian Army.

It has been necessary to refer in some detail to the telegrams which have passed, as they are the only record we have as to the reasons governing the advance to Kut-el-Amara and Nasiriyeh. Each step in that advance was apparently initiated by the military and political authorities in Mesopotamia with the full support of the Government of India, and though the Secretary of State gave his assent, it was with some reluctance, as in view of our limited resources he was not fully convinced of the wisdom of extending our operations so far afield.

The view of Lord Hardinge's Government was (1) that the occupation of Amara more completely protected the oil fields and Persian Arabistan; (2) that Nasiriyeh was necessary to us to counteract Turkish influences on the lower Euphrates and to protect Basra from another attack on that flank; (3) that Kut-el-Amara was a better position, as it controlled strategically the Shatt-el-Hai as well as the Tigris and, moreover, brought the whole Basra Vilayet within our political sway. Each one of these contentions is incontrovertible. Had we not occupied Amara, the Turkish inroad into Persian Arabistan would not have been dispersed with such crushing effect as it was, nor could we have felt certain that the attempt would not be repeated. Had we not gone to Nasiriyeh the predatory tribes on that flank might have been a perpetual thorn in our side, while we should have been constantly exposed to another Turkish attack on Shaiba and Basra. Had we not fought and beaten the Turks at Kul-el-Amara they would have themselves concentrated there in great force last October after the arrival of their reinforcements, and could then have operated at will either against Nasiriyeh or against Amara.

These considerations taken separately would appear to have fully justified at the time the course recommended by the Government of India and accepted by the Secretary of State.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00007a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

In substitution for print previously circulated. (215)
Part IV at page 11 has since been added.

SECRET.

(2)

Brief for the Defence of the Mesopotamian Campaign.

The Mesopotamian campaign having become a subject of acute political controversy, the Secretary of State for India considers that a short summary of each phase of our occupation of Mesopotamia in its political and administrative aspect rather than on its historical and military side may be of use hereafter.

I.—*Why we went to Mesopotamia.*

Although no actual rupture with Turkey took place until the 5th November, it will be seen from the White Paper[1] issued in that month that the Porte had shown signs of great hostility to England from the very outbreak of the war with Germany.

[1] No. 13 (1914).

As early as the 11th August the Baghdad Army had begun to mobilise, martial law had been proclaimed, and the property of British subjects had been seized.

The situation thus created caused grave anxiety both to the Admiralty and to Lord Crewe, then Secretary of State for India. Under his orders the subject was closely watched in the Military and Political Departments of the India Office.

In a Minute dated the 26th September 1914 the Military Secretary, India Office, reviewed the position as it then presented itself, laying stress on the danger to our interests in the Persian Gulf, interests which had been consolidated with so much care and prudence in the past, and on the menace, not only to the security of the Indian frontier, but to our tranquillity and prestige in India itself, which hostilities with Turkey would involve. The following extracts from this Minute are so germane to what followed, that they are here quoted.

"All the omens point to war with Turkey within a few weeks or even days. Such a contingency need not alarm us unless the Turks succeed in drawing the Arabs to their side. In that case they will probably proclaim a Jehad and endeavour to raise Afghanistan and the Frontier tribes against us, which might be a serious danger to India and would most certainly add enormously to our difficulties and responsibilities. This shows how important it is to us to avert a Turko-Arab coalition.

* * * *

"I have discussed this aspect of the case with Major Shakespear, and he feels sure that Bin Saood has not yet fully committed himself as his hatred of the Turks is too pronounced to admit of an easy surrender to their blandishments. Moreover, he is convinced that we have only to give some sure sign of our intention to support him and the Arabs generally against the Turks to turn the balance in our favour. How can we give such a sign? My solution of the problem is that we must give the signal *before* war breaks out or it may be too late, and that the best way of doing so is to send a force from India to the Shatt-el-Arab *at once*.

"We can easily do so at the present moment without arousing any suspicion. Troops and ships are in readiness at Bombay.[2] The Navy can convoy them to the mouth of the Gulf, and the Expedition, if despatched under sealed orders, could arrive at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab without a soul knowing anything about its despatch for this purpose.

"On arrival the troops can be landed on Persian soil at Muhammerah or at Abadan Island, ostensibly to protect the oil installation, but in reality to notify to the Turks that we meant business and to the Arabs that we were ready to support them. So startling and unexpected a sign of our power to strike would at once determine the attitude of the Sheikhs of Muhammerah and Koweit as well as of Bin Saood, and the support of the Arabs would utterly destroy all prospect of Turkish success either in Mesopotamia or in Egypt. With the Arabs on our side a Jehad is impossible, and our Indian Frontier is safe from attack.

"The force that we might thus despatch in the first instance need not be large as it will be perfectly secure from attack by the Turkish Division at Basrah in its position on the left bank of the Shatt-el-Arab. I am of opinion that it might be limited to one Brigade of the 6th Division, two Mountain Batteries, two Companies Sappers.

The Minute then went on to deal with the further military arrangements that would be necessary to meet the case of war.

[2] Troops were at the moment being got ready for despatch to Egypt.

27

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000086

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

It will be seen from the above that the primary and immediate objects in view were held to be :—

(1) To safeguard the Indian Frontier from the immediate effects of *Jehad*.
(2) To demonstrate our power to strike, and thus check Turkish intrigues amongst the Arabs.
(3) To confirm the Arab Chiefs of Muscat, Bahrein, Koweit and Mohammerah in their allegiance to us, and incidentally to encourage the Arabs generally.
(4) To protect the valuable oil installations at Abadan in which the Admiralty were so largely interested.

These objects commended themselves to Lord Crewe, and on that same evening he telegraphed warning instructions to the Viceroy on the subject.

On the 2nd October the Viceroy was informed that the Government had decided to take the action already indicated to him, and that he was to prepare a force accordingly. On the 3rd October further instructions were given defining the scope of the action to be taken. "Except under "absolute military necessity or orders from you no troops must be landed "on Turkish territory or other hostile action taken against Turkey," and on the 5th October the Viceroy was told specifically, in answer to a question, that the object of the Expedition was "to protect the pipe line and "oil tanks by the occupation of Abadan, to give support to Arabs against "Turks, and to cover landing of any necessary reinforcements."

Orders were also given for the despatch of the entire 6th Division should war with Turkey ensue. Meanwhile the Political Department gave instructions for Major Shakespear to visit Bin Saood and also laid down the policy to be followed with the Persian Gulf Arabs generally.

On the 16th October the advanced Force under Brigadier-General Delamain left India with the convoy for Egypt under sealed orders and as previously arranged was diverted to Bahrein, when three days out from Bombay.

Events marched rapidly ! During the last half of October many indications of activity on the part of the Turks and of co-operation with Germany were reported. On the other hand Bin Saood and the Arab Sheikhs of the Gulf declared themselves on our side. Meanwhile General Delamain arrived at Bahrein on the 23rd October and anchored off that island awaiting orders. On the 30th October, in consequence of the hostile action taken by the Turks against the Russians in the Black Sea, the flotilla at Bahrein was ordered to sail at once to the Shatt-el-Arab, but did not get away till the 2nd November.

On the 5th November war with Turkey was declared, and on the same day the expedition under General Delamain crossed the bar of the Shatt and anchored. The landing was delayed by bad weather, but on the morning of the 6th H.M.S. *Odin* bombarded Fao Fort after which a small force was landed which occupied the Fort without opposition. On the 7th the expedition reached Abadan.

On the 8th November, General Delamain began disembarking his force on Turkish soil above Abadan. There was an affair of outposts on the 11th. On the 13th, General Barrett arrived at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab with the 18th Brigade and some artillery and cavalry. On the 14th he reached Saniyah, and on the 15th Delamain's Brigade attacked and drove back the enemy from Saihan. On the 17th Sir A. Barrett advanced on Zain with two Brigades and found the enemy strongly entrenched at that point. The position was held by about 4,500 men with 12 guns. The Turks made a resolute defence, but were driven from their entrenchments with the loss of several guns. This success was decisive. The Turks hastily abandoned Basra, which was occupied by our troops on the 22nd November.

The capture of Basra may be said to have completed the first phase in the Mesopotamian campaign. Our prestige was restored. A position of great strategical importance had been secured with little loss. The friendly Arabs were confirmed, at least for the time being, in their loyal attitude, and the oil works at Abadan had been saved from destruction. So far our

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000065

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

policy had been fully justified by events, while the secrecy and suddenness of our movements had not only ensured success, but had done so at the smallest possible cost to ourselves. On the 5th war was declared, and on the 6th the bolt from the blue descended on the astonished and ill-prepared defenders of the Shatt-el-Arab. In less than three weeks a British administration had been established at Basra, the key of Mesopotamia.

This brief review of the events which led up to the occupation of Basra, at least shows that the objects we had in view were rapidly and fully attained, but as it may be urged that even complete success at this initial stage did not justify the despatch of the Expedition, as by it we were only wasting our energy and resources in a subsidiary issue, it is important to consider the probable trend of events if no such enterprise had been undertaken. In that case it is certain that Arabia would have abandoned all hope of liberation from Turkish rule and perforce have joined the Turks. The proclamation of *jehad* would have been endorsed by the Sherif of Mecca and the standard of Islam would have been raised against us throughout the East. Persia would have followed suit and Turko-German intrigues in that country would have met with immediate and popular response. A wave of fanaticism would have quickly engulfed Afghanistan, and on the Indian frontier the movement would have been hailed with all the eager enthusiasm that prospects of easy "loot" inspire in barbaric races.

Such a development would have meant war on a prodigious scale all along the Indian Frontier as well as a dangerous internal situation within India. Instead of continuing to send important forces to Europe, Egypt, East Africa and the Colonies, we might have been compelled to recall some of our troops and even to demand assistance from home. Our military resources would have been gravely strained at a most critical period. The menace to Egypt, also, would have been immeasurably more serious than it actually was as all Islam from the Nile to the Sahara would have been deeply stirred by the participation of Arabia in the war. Incidentally, of course, we should have lost our extremely valuable stake in the Oil Fields, while British interests, both commercial and political, would have been obliterated from the whole of the Middle East. The much-abused Mesopotamian venture at least saved us from all these untoward results during perhaps the most critical period of the war. In that simple fact lies the complete justification of the expedition.

II.—*Why we went on to Kurna and the Karun Valley.*

The capture of Basra was quickly followed by that of Kurna. The reason for this move is clearly explained in a Military Department Minute of the 27th November 1914, of which the following is an extract:—

"The object of going to Kurna is to secure a strong strategical point and a dominating position. It will be seen from the map that Kurna is at the junction of the old channel of the Euphrates and Tigris, and that it covers and controls all the rich cultivated land along the Shatt. When we leave Kurna we enter the arid country which lies between it and Amara. The military position is extraordinarily strong, for both flanks are practically unassailable. On the right there are the marshes of the Khor Hawaize which trend right away to the Persian frontier, while on the left there is the Euphrates.

"The advantages of this position are:—

"(1) Its commanding military value.
"(2) The control it gives us of the whole navigable waterway to the Gulf.
"(3) The possession of the whole of the rich cultivated area from Kurna to the sea.
"(4) The fact that it completely covers Persian Arabistan and safeguards it from Turkish intrigues or incursions.
"(5) The moral effect on the Arabs.
"(6) The control of the telegraph up to this point and also of the passage of the Euphrates.

"When we have reached Kurna and fully established ourselves there it will be time enough to consider whether we should go further."

Lord Crewe, in telegraphing[1] his sanction for this move, expressly stated *that he was not disposed to authorise an advance to Baghdad* as had been suggested in certain quarters, and limited our operations to Kurna. The main considerations which governed

[1] Telegram No. 57, dated 27th November 1914.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00002a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

his decision were the fact that our available military forces at that period were only one Division, and that our limited resources in river shipping and the difficulties of navigation at that season, practically precluded any further advance for the time being.

The operations against Kurna were begun on the 3rd December and culminated on the 9th December in the surrender of that town, together with the late Vali of Basrah, 1,200 prisoners and nine guns. Our authority was thus established over the whole of the rich riverain tract between Kurna and the sea, and also over the whole waterway navigable by seagoing steamers, Kurna being the limit of such navigation.

By Christmas 1914 events had taken a somewhat disquieting turn. From information received it became obvious that the Turks intended if possible to retrieve the situation in Mesopotamia, and by the end of January it was evident that they were collecting forces, not only to attack us at Kurna and Basra, but also to threaten the oil fields in the Bakhtiari Hills, a movement which involved a Turkish invasion of Persian territory. Consequently, on the 27th January Lord Crewe despatched a telegram to the Viceroy in the following terms :—

"As there are indications of increasing Turko-Arab menace both on Tigris and on Euphrates, also of a possible early attack on the pipe line near Ahwaz, whilst Turkish reinforcements we know are being sent to Baghdad, you are authorised to despatch the 12th Brigade and also a cavalry regiment if you think fit. You will be informed in due course if Cabinet approves despatch of troops to Karun Valley."

At the same time Lord Crewe approached the Foreign Office on the subject of sending a force to the Karun Valley to protect the pipe line and thus indirectly safeguard the oil fields. The Foreign Office communicated with Teheran and explained that "His Majesty's Government were compelled to "take measures for the defence of their interests and property in default of "any effective Persian force sufficient to guarantee those regions against "Turkish invasion." The Persian Government tacitly acquiesced in the proposed action.

At the end of January the general position was somewhat as follows :—At Nasariyeh Turks and Arabs were collecting for an attack on Basra by the desert route to Zobeir. In the Kurna direction the Turks were in considerable force, but unlikely to attack owing to the strength of the Kurna position. On the Karun side the menace was becoming formidable, the Turks were approaching, *Jehad* was being widely preached and the Arab tribesmen were ripe for an armed rising against the Sheikh of Muhammerah and ourselves. The Sheikh had meanwhile lodged a protest at Teheran against the Turkish violation of Persian territory. On our side the position was that we had approximately a Brigade in a strong defensive position at Kurna, and two Brigades at and around Basra, while a fourth Brigade was being got ready for embarkation in India. British subjects had been withdrawn from Ahwaz and the *Comet* and *Shushan* had been sent up the Karun to give moral support to the Vice-Consul and our adherents at Ahwaz. This, however, did not altogether satisfy the Secretary of State as sufficient considering the importance of the pipe line, the vital necessity of preventing the spread of *Jehad* into Persian Arabistan and the urgency of asserting our military superiority at the head of the Gulf. Accordingly on the 1st February he despatched the following telegram to the Viceroy in reply to one from him :—

"With reference to your telegram of the 30th January, I agree with your conclusions, but if Barrett thinks he can spare troops temporarily to support the Sheikh such a course would have a good political effect and prevent a possible Turkish success which would endanger our military position on the Shatt-el-Arab. To enable Barrett to act in the Karun direction if necessary Foreign Office concurrence has been obtained and Tehran informed. Possibility of support within next few days, pending arrival of the 12th Brigade, will depend on Barrett's opinion as to whether he can spare the force required and so avoid necessity for larger efforts later on. I will telegraph again on the subject of reinforcements from home."

Developments came quickly. The Arabs in the Karun Valley rose in rebellion against the Sheikh of Muhammerah. On the 17th Sir Arthur Barrett reported that he had sent a column under Brigadier-General Delamain to check the Turkish advance north-west of Shaiba. On the same

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000be

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

date skirmishes were reported 11 miles north-west of Ahwaz between our cavalry patrols and Arabs. The pipe line was cut in several places, and the manager at the Abadan works reported that the supply of oil stored at Abadan would be exhausted before the middle of March. Each day things looked blacker. On the 21st February, Army Headquarters in India telegraphed that 3,000 Turks with 18 guns and numerous Arab horsemen from Nasariyeh were approaching Naikhaileh 20 miles north-west of Basra. Lord Crewe felt that the time had come to intervene and to insist on reinforcements being sent. On the 23rd he telegraphed to the Viceroy an expression of his views and his opinion that Force "D" should be at once increased to a strength of two divisions from India.

Reinforcements, however, took time to arrive, and meanwhile there was fighting both in the Karun Valley and near Shaiba, 14 miles west of Basra. Altogether the situation appeared critical.

On the 7th March, in compliance with the orders of the Secretary of State, the Viceroy reported that he was sending the 33rd Brigade from India. By the 10th March the War Office had made arrangements for the despatch of an Indian Brigade from Egypt. This with the 12th and 33rd Brigades practically constituted the Second Division for which Lord Crewe had so repeatedly pressed.

There was now some prospect of our having sufficient forces to meet the various dangers which loomed in front of us. Happily the Karun danger had partially dissipated itself and we escaped further serious trouble in that direction. Meantime the menace from the Euphrates side was rapidly increasing.

On the 17th March more desultory fighting was reported, and on the 20th the India Office at the instance of the Admiralty again pressed on the Viceroy the importance of safeguarding the oil supply.

On the 1st April we were informed that the Government of India had decided to reorganise the Force in Mesopotamia and had appointed General Sir John Nixon to the Command. On the 9th that officer landed at Basra and General Barrett was invalided home.

On the 12th and 13th there was further fighting round Shaiba. On the 14th the decisive victory of Barjisiyah was gained and the whole Turkish Army put to flight. This brilliant engagement resulted in clearing what may be styled the delta of the Shatt-el-Arab of all Turkish or Arab enemies. Basra was now secure and General Nixon was free to look around and decide on his next movements. The departure of General Barrett and the assumption of command by Sir John Nixon mark the end of a definite phase in the campaign.

The reinforcements had only arrived just in time to avert what might easily have been an irreparable catastrophe. The timely advent of the 12th Brigade enabled General Barrett to send a sufficient force to stem the Turkish offensive on the Karun side, while the opportune arrival of the 30th Brigade on the battlefield in the very nick of time at the crisis of the fight converted a doubtful defensive engagement into a brilliant victory. Basra and Muhammerah were saved and our oil interests secured. For more than a year since then this region has enjoyed peace and prosperity, and for this happy conclusion to a period of unrest and anxiety we are indebted to the insistence of the Secretary of State for India on the augmentation of Force "D." So far the India Office had been fully justified throughout by events. It sent just the right force at the right moment to the Shatt-el-Arab. It increased that force to a sufficient strength in the face of some opposition and much discouragement before it was too late. The one small reverse at Ahwaz would never have occurred, nor our oil supply have been interrupted for several months, had its views been accepted in time by the local authorities and the Government of India. Our strong position at Kurna had effectually stopped the Turkish advance down the Tigris while our Military occupation of the Karun Valley secured the safety of the pipe line. Had the extra Division not arrived and had we contented ourselves with the passive defence of Basra, we should not have had to our credit the prestige of the victory at Kurna, while the Turks would have been able to move by the Tigris line directly on Basra in

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00002b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

combination with flanking attacks both by the Euphrates and Shaiba line and by the Karun Valley. The Bakhtiaris and Arabs would certainly have wrecked the oil-fields and pipe line, and it is not too much to say that we might have suffered an irreparable disaster.

III.—*Why we went to Kut-el-Amara and Nasiriyah.*

The advance to Kut-el-Amara from our firm base at Kurna will doubtless be challenged as a definite indication of the firm intention of the Government to press on to Baghdad. Though easy to rebut this charge, so far as the Secretary of State and the Cabinet are concerned, it will be less easy to defend the authorities in Mesopotamia and India, as we are probably not in possession of all the facts bearing on the case. Up to Kurna we are able to produce proof for every statement made and ample justification for every action taken, as the entire military policy of the campaign had so far been initiated, influenced and controlled by the instructions or suggestions of the Secretary of State, but from Kurna onwards the initiative and the direction of events passed to the Government of India, though of course the ultimate responsibility remained with the Secretary of State. The consequence of this diminished control over events is that the India Office is not in possession of all the facts and has to rely on such telegraphic evidence as is before it.

On the 23rd April the Viceroy informed the Secretary of State that on the 19th General Nixon had telegraphed to Simla "that in view of the "increasing demands on the Cavalry now with the Force, he requests that "we should send him another Brigade, including a British Cavalry Regiment "and also a Pioneer battalion to work on river obstructions, &c.

The Viceroy replied on the 23rd April regretting his inability to supply either Cavalry or Pioneers.

This indication of the ideas held by General Nixon drew the following expression of his views from the Secretary of State in a telegram to the Viceroy dated the 24th April:—

"With reference to General Nixon's request of the 19th April, I agree with your view, because the approach of the hot weather makes it undesirable to send more troops, especially British, to Mesopotamia, quite apart from the impossibility of complying with the demand. An intention on the part of Nixon of undertaking important offensive operations beyond the present theatre is implied by his request, but the Government will not sanction such action at this moment, and during the hot season Nixon must clearly understand that he is to confine himself to the defence of oil interests in Arabistan and of the Basra Vilayet. If it should be possible to advance to Amara after destroying the enemy on the Karun side and so establish an outpost controlling the Arab tribesmen between the Karun and Amara, thus protecting the pipe line I should be disposed to agree to such an operation if proposed by Nixon and supported by you. Any scheme involving further demands for reinforcements and undue extension of operations is to be deprecated. We are now in a sound strategical position and should not take the risk of extending it unduly. A cautious policy in Mesopotamia is the correct one."

Major-General Townshend arrived from India on the 22nd April and took over command of the 6th Division. On the 24th Sir John Nixon directed him to proceed at once to Kurna to reconnoitre the Turkish position north of that place and to form a plan of attack.

From this it is clear that at that time General Nixon contemplated using the 6th Division for clearing the way up the Tigris while the 12th Division was retained for operations in the Karun direction. These operations took time to materialize, and, in fact, the advance up the Tigris did not commence till the 31st May. Meanwhile the situation had developed on the Karun side, and it will be convenient to turn thereto before continuing the narrative of the advance to Amara.

[Ahwaz.] Immediately after the conclusion of the Shaiba operations Sir J. Nixon, in accordance with Lord Crewe's instructions, took steps to deal with the situation on the Karun. Major-General Gorringe was directed to reopen communications with Ahwaz and disperse the enemy, who were estimated to consist of about eight battalions of Turkish regulars and some 7,000 Arab tribesmen. On General Gorringe's advance the Turks retreated north of the Karkheh river, which was crossed by us early in May, but too late to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000005

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

intercept them in their retirement towards Amara. As a result of General Gorringe's operations Persian Arabistan was cleared of the enemy and the Arab tribes forced to submit, thus enabling the pipe line to be repaired and normal conditions to be resumed at the oil fields.

These results were eminently satisfactory, but the Admiralty were not the less anxious that there should be no recurrence of stoppage to the oil supply on which so much depended, as may be seen from an Admiralty letter dated the 23rd May 1915. On receipt of this Lord Crewe telegraphed to the Viceroy :—

"The continuous maintenance at Abadan of the supply of oil is a matter to which the Admiralty attach great importance. The necessity of the protection of the pipe line throughout should be impressed on Nixon, it being regarded as a matter of extreme urgency."

[Amara.]

Sir John Nixon would appear, however, to have regarded the Karun operations as subsidiary to the main advance along the Tigris. Indeed, the conception of that project dates from a period long anterior to his arrival. On the 20th December 1914 Sir Percy Cox in a telegram to the Government of India had expressed the following views :—

"Amara town possesses considerable commercial importance and from an administrative point of view it would be convenient if the district came under our control as it is within the Basrah Vilayet. The country beyond Amara district comes under administration of Baghdad and different set of tribes ; so that its possession by us need not, politically speaking, necessarily entail any further advance and question admits of being considered on its independent merits."

Again in a telegram of the 3rd January 1915, the advantages commercial, political and administrative, of occupying Amara, were fully stated, and as the authorities both in Mesopotamia and in India were agreed that the occupation of Amara was desirable the Secretary of State did not oppose it, especially as in his telegram of 24th April (*ante*) he had given his conditional acceptance to this policy.

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 23rd May 1915.

"With reference to your telegram of 24th April. Offensive up the Tigris from Kurna is proposed by Nixon to take place on 24th He does not require any reinforcements for this purpose. It is, in our opinion, desirable that our control over the valley of the Tigris should be extended as proposed by him so as to protect both the pipe line and the vilayet of Basra. We therefore do not propose to interfere with his intention. Without your sanction no advance beyond Amara will, of course, be made."

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 23rd May 1915.

"Reference your telegram of this date. On the distinct understanding that General Nixon is satisfied that sufficient troops can be concentrated at Amarah to withstand any attack from Bagdad during the summer, I sanction the proposed movement. He must remember that it will possibly be difficult to provide reinforcements for so advanced a position, and the fact that no more troops can be sent him must guide his action. I consider that as this move must have been arranged for by him some days since, his proposal should not have been submitted at the last moment. Under existing conditions the Cabinet only can decide questions in which civil and military policy are jointly involved."

On the 26th May General Nixon telegraphed direct to the Secretary of State asking for definite orders as to his proposed advance to Amara. In the meantime Mr. Chamberlain had taken over the India Office.

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 28th May 1915.

"With regard to General Nixon's telegram of 26th May. Kindly refer to my predecessor's telegram of 24th ultimo. Until I am informed of the force with which he is advancing and objects immediately contemplated I am unable to issue further instructions. Local factors, locally available forces, the resistance expected, and situation elsewhere, must govern our policy. If the occupation of Amara is contemplated by you please inform me of the force considered necessary by Nixon for its garrison during summer and the general distribution of troops proposed during that season."

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 2nd June 1915.

"In regard to General Nixon's telegram of 26th May and yours of 28th. The expulsion of the Turks from Lower Tigris below Amara with consequent security of Kurna and Basra from attack from north, and protection of oil supply were the objects to be attained by General Nixon as set forth in the instructions issued to him on 27th May in pursuance of your telegram. Reports from him state that on 31st May he was to commence operations. As he progresses he will be better able from data gained to give us the information asked

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000003

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

for by you. However, while military operations are actually progressing and whilst the military situation in Lower Mesopotamia is so uncertain we feel that it would not be desirable, but would even be dangerous, to restrict him by definite orders which might not fit in with local situation confronting him. * * * * For the present, therefore, any alteration of our original instructions to him is not thought desirable by us. Nixon will, under the original instructions, forward scheme for occupation of vilayet of Basra, inclusive of Amara, as soon as he is able to do so. He will then be in possession of a fuller knowledge of the local situation than is now possible and we will then ask you for further orders. Nixon's force being inadequate any advance beyond Amara would not be proposed by us."

It will be observed from the above telegrams that Lord Crewe gave his consent to the advance to Amara with some reluctance. His view was that we were chiefly concerned with the maintenance of a secure base at Basra and the safety of our important interests in the oilfields. The India Office had been constantly reminded of those interests by the Admiralty while it was not without its own anxieties. It knew that in the circumstances of the moment in Europe no military assistance could reasonably be expected from the War Office. It recognised that India could send no further reinforcements, and though it was fully aware of the strategic and other advantages of holding the Tigris Valley up to Amara, it was doubtful of our capacity to do so if the Turks mustered in force to attack us there. It was felt, however, that it was difficult to reject the considered opinion of those on the spot who were obviously in a better position to judge than we were of the local conditions and the relative strength and value of the opposing forces.

The operations that ensued were carried out by General Townshend with two Brigades. On the 3rd June Amara was reached and the garrison capitulated.

With the occupation of Amara and the submission of all the tribes in the Karun valley, the gallant Mesopotamian Field Force might, without reproach, have rested on its laurels during the blazing and enervating summer, but General Nixon, with the full support of the Government of India, deemed it inexpedient to remain inactive whilst any Turks were within striking distance, he therefore next directed his activities towards the Euphrates side. There had been naval reconnaissances up the Euphrates channels both from Basra and Kurna, which indicated an eventual offensive movement in that direction, but the first positive intimation on the subject received at the India Office was the following :—

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 13th June 1915.

[Nasiriyeh.] "Proposal by wire from Nixon to secure Euphrates portion of Vilayet of Basra by moving on Nasiriyeh with two Brigades. Concurring in this we propose to instruct him, as soon as his preparations are complete, to proceed with this operation, which should have a good effect on the tribes of the Euphrates. For the success of this operation and maintenance of his new position his present force should be quite sufficient."

This view of the situation was accepted by Mr. Chamberlain, as though the broken Turkish force at Nasiriyeh could scarcely be regarded as a menace to us, it was thought that it might offer a rallying point to Turkish reinforcements from Baghdad, in which case Basra might possibly be again threatened from the west, while unquestionably we could not expect the Arabs on the Euphrates to side with us so long as they had a Turkish garrison in their midst.

The Nasiriyeh operations were entrusted to Major-General Gorringe. His instructions were to secure the occupation of Nasiriyeh and the country in its vicinity. The operations commenced on the 27th June and ended with the capture of Nasiriyeh on the 25th July. During June, the Tigris column in spite of the season had not been inactive and reconnaissances had been pushed up the river towards El Gharbi. This gradual extension of the sphere of our military operations, with its resultant attenuation of strength, was regarded with some anxiety by the Secretary of State, more especially as it involved the withdrawal of troops from Basra and Ahwaz. General Nixon too had reported (24th June) the concentration of Turkish troops at Kut-el-Amara and an offensive movement down the Tigris. The political situation in Persia and at Aden was also very critical about this period, and in view of all these circumstances Mr. Chamberlain considered

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000092

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

that caution must be impressed. A telegram was therefore despatched on the 12th July which ended as follows :—

"It is understood that you will sanction no further advance, it being impossible to give further reinforcements for Persian Gulf, and that for the time being you will content yourself with holding the pipe line and the Vilayet of Basra."

The capture of Nasiriyeh, however, had a stimulating effect on the authorities in Mesopotamia and India.—*L'appetit vient en mangeant!*

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 27th July 1915.

"We consider now that the occupation of Nasiriyeh has been effected that it is strategically necessary to occupy Kut-el-Amara. The latter is only 4 miles outside the limit of the vilayet of Basra. By it both the Tigris lower reaches, and, by way of the Shat-el-Hai, the Euphrates, are commanded. The reinforcement of our position on either river will be facilitated by its occupation. We shall also be able to protect the oil fields effectively from attack from the direction of the Tigris and the powerful Beni Lam tribe will be brought under our control. Our garrisons at Amara and Nasiriyeh could probably be reduced and economy of our troops thus effected when once we occupy Kut-el-Amara securely. [Kut-el-Amara.]

* * * * *

This telegram did not allay our apprehensions, and further it was obvious that if reinforcements should be necessary they would have to be drawn from Nasiriyeh or from Basra and Ahwaz. The telegrams which follow show the attitude of the India Office at this period and also how the advance to Kut-el-Amara was eventually approved.

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 30th July 1915.

"Please inform me of proposed distribution of troops after capture of Kut-el-Amara, the strategic importance of which is fully recognized. It is necessary we should be strong at Kut, as it seems improbable that, if we hold it in force, any further offensive will be taken by enemy on the Euphrates line, but that he will concentrate on the line of the Tigris. On the assumption that the Shatt-el-Hai is the Turkish line of retreat from Nasiriyeh, are you of opinion that by holding Nasiriyeh, a very unhealthy outpost, any advantage is gained? Communications with it, especially on river falling, are difficult. Has advisability of withdrawing from Nasiriyeh and concentrating on the Tigris been considered by you?

"The retention for political reasons of Ahwaz and Bushire as outposts is necessary but would not the location of the remainder of troops along the Tigris and at Basra be advisable? I shall be glad, before you decide, to know your views."

The reply to the above describes the grounds on which General Nixon and the Government of India decided on holding Nasiriyeh and advancing on Kut. The Secretary of State accepted their conclusions.

"Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 5th August 1915.

"The questions in your wire of 30th July have for months past been closely and constantly considered. On receipt of your telegram we again asked for Nixon's views.

"The case is expressed so clearly in his reply that we reply to your telegram by repeating it :—

Begins. "'The instructions given by me to General Gorringe are to all intents identical with the views of the Secretary of State.

* * * * *

"'I entirely favour concentration on line of Tigris, but in respect to total evacuation of Nasiriyeh suggested, I am of opinion that the place is too important to abandon. In order to exercise control over the powerful Arab tribes surrounding it, and for the effective occupation of this vilayet, Nasiriyeh as a centre of civil government is essential.

"'For these reasons incalculable political harm would be done by withdrawing. The reappearance of Ajaimi with a few Turks would re-establish Turkish authority, and every tribe would be out of control. Nasiriyeh, I am informed, is healthier than Kurna or Basra, and the climate becomes quite good shortly. Communications to Nasiriyeh by land are not good, but a railway would make an improvement.

* * * * *

"'It should be borne in mind that the reduction of troops at Amara is only made possible by the occupation of Kut. The advance on Kut will be methodical, there is no intention of rushing it.

* * * * *

"'I have carefully considered, and already stated my views on Ahwaz and supposed necessity of guarding pipe line with troops.

* * * * *

"'I would again repeat that I see no military reason, providing proper arrangements are made with the tribesmen, for retaining troops on the line of the Karun for a prolonged period. If the oilfields are to be held against any possible combination of tribes, very strong reinforcements would be necessary.' *Ends.*

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000c4

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

"We agree with Nixon and propose when he is prepared to give him authority to advance on Kut.

"As long as his British battalions were kept up to strength and troops were not scattered along pipe line, he has always considered, in which view we concur, that the occupation of Kut could be effected by his present force."

"Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 6th August 1915.

"The course of action put forward by Nixon, which you recommend, is concurred in by me, unless, taking into consideration Marling's telegram of 3rd August and his speculation as to objective of gathering at Ispahan, some modification should be thought requisite by you. As regards Karun, how are troops distributed and strength? It is presumed that the defence of the oilfields against raiders is sufficiently secured by local arrangements at oilfields and present strength of troops."

The Viceroy, in a telegram dated 18th August, replied giving in detail General Nixon's reasons for not increasing the strength of the force in the Karun Valley. The arguments employed seemed conclusive and the advance to Kut was finally sanctioned by a telegram from the Secretary of State, dated 20th August.

In September the forward movement was commenced. On the 15th the headquarters of the 6th Division reached Abu Rummanah, six miles from the Es-Sinn position which had been very strongly fortified by the Turks. The next few days were occupied by reconnaissances prior to the final advance which began on the 26th September. By the 29th, after severe fighting, the Turks were put to flight and our cavalry had entered Kut-el-Amara. During the action we captured more than 1,700 prisoners and 13 guns, and inflicted heavy losses in men and matériel.

This brilliant victory concluded a definite phase of the campaign, as by it the complete occupation of the Basra Vilayat was secured. Kut-el-Amara had been specifically suggested by the Viceroy as the goal of our operations and it had been accepted as such by the Secretary of State. That goal had been attained by the endurance and valour of the 6th Division of the Indian Army.

It has been necessary to refer in some detail to the telegrams which have passed, as they are the only record we have as to the reasons governing the advance to Kut-el-Amara and Nasiriyeh. Each step in that advance was apparently initiated by the military and political authorities in Mesopotamia with the full support of the Government of India, and though the Secretary of State gave his assent, it was with some reluctance, as in view of our limited resources he was not fully convinced of the wisdom of extending our operations so far afield.

The view of Lord Hardinge's Government was (1) that the occupation of Amara more completely protected the oil fields and Persian Arabistan; (2) that Nasiriyeh was necessary to us to counteract Turkish influences on the lower Euphrates and to protect Basra from another attack on that flank; (3) that Kut-el-Amara was a better position, as it controlled strategically the Shatt-el-Hai as well as the Tigris and, moreover, brought the whole Basra Vilayet within our political sway. Each one of these contentions is incontrovertible. Had we not occupied Amara, the Turkish inroad into Persian Arabistan would not have been dispersed with such crushing effect as it was, nor could we have felt certain that the attempt would not be repeated. Had we not gone to Nasiriyeh the predatory tribes on that flank might have been a perpetual thorn in our side, while we should have been constantly exposed to another Turkish attack on Shaiba and Basra. Had we not fought and beaten the Turks at Kul-el-Amara they would have themselves concentrated there in great force last October after the arrival of their reinforcements, and could then have operated at will either against Nasiriyeh or against Amara.

These considerations taken separately would appear to have fully justified at the time the course recommended by the Government of India and accepted by the Secretary of State.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000030

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

IV.—*Why we went to Ctesiphon.*

The phase of the Mesopotamian campaign which ended at Ctesiphon is naturally the one which has excited the most hostile criticism. It is also the least easy to defend. As already shown, when we advanced from Kurna the initiative passed from the Secretary of State to the Government of India; similarly, after the battle of Kut-el-Amara the initiative passed from the Government of India to the General in Command. The hazardous adventure to which we were thus committed could only be justified by complete success. This fact alone increases the difficulty of presenting a logical and convincing defence, especially as the Government undoubtedly yielded to an inexorable sequence of events, combined with external political influences, strong local pressure, and above all the same fatal attraction of Baghdad which had lured on the General. It now only remains to explain the course of events which unhappily tempted the Government to abandon its original cautious policy.

Kut-el-Amara was captured on the 29th September. Four days later the head of the pursuit had reached half way to Aziziyah. On the same day (3rd October) General Nixon telegraphed, reporting various movements and details. His telegram ended thus:—

"*I consider I am strong enough to open road to Baghdad,** and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Aziziyah.

* * * * *

"From military point of view it is highly desirable to capture enemy's steamers which cannot get far above Baghdad at this season."

On the 4th October the Military Secretary submitted a Minute to the Secretary of State, from which the following extracts are taken:—

"The victory at Kut-el-Amara is of so complete a nature that the idea of pushing on to Baghdad will certainly be revived. Pressure will be brought on us, either directly by Sir John Nixon and Sir Percy Cox, who *primâ facie* are in the best position to judge of its feasibility, or indirectly by an agitation in the Press or in commercial circles. It may even be urged, and there is much force in the argument, that it is advisable on political grounds on account of the world-wide prestige which the occupation of Baghdad would confer."

* * * * *

"The force under General Nixon comprises two Divisions of Infantry and a Brigade of Cavalry. This force occupies a considerable area in the midst of a doubtful and possibly hostile population. It also has to protect important British interests in the Anglo-Persian oilfields as well as at Bushire and Basra. The consequence is it cannot be concentrated.

* * * * *

"Such a force may be sufficient to expel the Turks from Baghdad. That is a question which can only be answered by General Nixon on local information, but the problem does not end at the capture of Baghdad. The city will absorb a garrison of at least a Brigade. This leaves us only two weak Brigades to cope with any eventuality that may arise.

"In my judgment it will not be wise to go to Baghdad *unless we can increase the force by a whole Division of Infantry and one or two Cavalry regiments*, and this we know is impracticable unless the Indian troops are withdrawn from France.

"The conclusion of the whole matter therefore is that we cannot under present circumstances go to Baghdad without incurring unjustifiable risks. It must be remembered that during the winter the Russians are not likely to be able to make any advance into Armenia, and consequently the Turks can very well spare a division or two from the Armenian army at this season to reinforce the Mesopotamian troops * * * so I greatly doubt whether we can hold Baghdad for any length of time with our present force.

"We have practically no reserves to depend on and we must play a safe game and husband our sorely strained military resources.

* * * * *

"Kut-el-Amara is only about 120 miles by road from Baghdad, although by river it is 220 miles, and General Nixon's advance guard, in boats, has already covered some 20 miles of that distance. I see no indication of a halt in the pursuit, though in the present state of the river I also see no probability of being able to overtake the enemy. If we do not stop him, General Nixon will soon be in Baghdad regardless of orders, and we shall then be faced by the grave alternative of either having to withdraw again or of making our occupation effective. Either course involves serious considerations, more especially in view of the gloomy situation in the near East."

* * * *

On that same evening (the 4th October) the Secretary of State telegraphed as follows to the Viceroy:—

"P.—As it appears that owing to difficulties of navigation, there is now little chance of overtaking and breaking up the retreating Turks, there is no object in pursuing them any further, and so under these circumstances I shall be glad to learn what Nixon's present

* The *italics* were not in the original telegram, but as this is the first definite suggestion of going to Baghdad, attention is called to it.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000091

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

intentions are. Subject to what may occur in Baghdad and elsewhere and to any proposal you may now recommend, the orders which my telegrams of 24th April and 6th August conveyed to you are still in force. Kindly send me by telegram an estimate of what you consider to be the present strength in Mesopotamia of the enemy."

The orders above referred to limited the operations to the Basra Vilayat.

About the same time a Memorandum dated 6th October was prepared by the General Staff, War Office.

"Extracts from Memorandum by the General Staff, War Office.

"It is probably quite feasible for Sir J. Nixon's force to advance to and seize Baghdad. The question is whether he would be able to remain there.

* * * * *

"It seems to us that to attempt to hold Baghdad, except with a force very much larger than Sir J. Nixon's, and with proportionately increased river transport, would be to court disaster. Even supposing that we were able to hold it in the face of any force the Turks could bring against it, it is doubtful if we should be able to maintain our supply service during the months when the Tigris is low.

"We see no reason why the Turks should not be able to concentrate a large force against us if we are holding a position at Baghdad. In fact it seems easier for them to concentrate against us there than it would be at Kut-el-Amara. There are no doubt difficulties in the way of transport and supply, but we think these could be overcome.

* * * * *

"It therefore will become possible for 60,000 Turks to be assembled and to be conveyed in the course of some weeks to Baghdad. The occupation of Baghdad by British troops would impress the Oriental mind not only in Turkey, but also in Persia and India, and re-establish some of the prestige which we have lost by our failure to force the Dardanelles.

"If, however, we are unable to hold Baghdad when 60,000 fresh troops assemble to co-operate with Turkish troops at present in Mesopotamia, our withdrawal from Baghdad might have as great and as unfortunate an effect on the Mohammedan world as our withdrawal from the Gallipoli Peninsula."

From the above it will be seen that at this date the India Office and the War Office were practically in agreement as to the risk involved.

Mr. Chamberlain also telegraphed privately on the subject, observing that it seemed "imperative to stop Nixon's further advance."

On the 5th October the advance guard of General Townshend's Division had reached Aziziyah, nearly half-way to Baghdad, and on that date the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy :—

. . . . . "Cabinet, to whom position was reported yesterday, decided to appoint Committee of General Staff, Admiralty, Foreign and India Offices, to consider in all its aspects possibility and policy of advance on Baghdad. Political reasons were thought to make occupation desirable as isolating Germans in Persia, if forces available are sufficient to take and hold the place.

* * * * *

"Let me know your views."

The above telegram was crossed by one from General Nixon which depicts the frame of mind produced on him by his recent notable victory :—

"To Chief of General Staff from Nixon, dated 5th October 1915.

"P.—By moving troops with land transport and by lightening river steamers and using them as tugs for loaded barges we have got over navigation troubles . . . Turks' retreat appears to have stopped and they have taken up a position at Ctesiphon and are thus a menace to this force. I have received information that the Turks considered the position at Kut-el-Amara impregnable and so their troops, especially those recruited locally, are much demoralized by their defeat there. Nur-ed-Din's force is now close to Baghdad and, as those of his troops who live near will probably want to desert, he will find difficulty in making a determined stand. Therefore my opinion is that, as soon as the concentration at Aziziyah of the 6th Division is completed and the cavalry has been reinforced by drafts now en route from Basra there is every chance of overtaking the Turks at Ctesiphon and smashing them. On the contrary, should we retire to Kut-el-Amara from Aziziyah the tribes as well as the enemy will again advance on Kut-el-Amara. . . . . Arabs now look on us as resistless and from all sides have been again coming in to submit their allegiance. If however we fall back they will probably repeat their previous behaviour.

"My opinion is that having before us an enemy shaken by defeat who is short of ammunition and has lost 13 guns, it is obviously desirable for military reasons to finish him while the opportunity is present. I have hopes of annihilating him now that he has taken refuge in a position against which we can manœuvre. *I do not see any reason for not taking advantage of such a chance.** Baghdad, from the military standpoint, is the main junction in the enemy's lines of advance and a centre from which he obtains much of his supplies, which is vitally important for us to wrest from him, and this, in addition to the political effect that would be caused thereby, is a reason for its occupation."

---

* *Sentences in italics, both here and in subsequent telegrams or passages, are merely to call attention to what were vital factors in the ultimate decision.*

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000a3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

On the 6th October the Viceroy after quoting General Nixon's views expressed those of the Government of India in the following words :—

"P.—We are of opinion, taking into consideration the present conditions in the Dardanelles and the Balkans, the activities of the Germans in Persia, and the additional pressure on Afghanistan, that such an effect would be caused in the near East by the taking of Baghdad and such great strategical and political advantages present themselves thereby, that this operation is justified on these grounds, but the addition of at least another division is necessary to carry them out. If this division is not forthcoming then Kut-el-Amara is the forward limit to which we propose to restrict Nixon."

The Viceroy also sent a private telegram on the same date (6th October) to the Secretary of State, in which he said :—

"P.—Nixon has been ordered not to advance any further, this was telegraphed to him yesterday. This is the situation at present.

"With the troops he now has, Nixon could take Baghdad without much difficulty, capturing and destroying enemy river craft at the same time, by which means Turkish offensive down the river, in the near future, would be rendered practically impossible. Nevertheless, unless reinforced by one division, he would not be able to maintain himself there, exposed to attack by fresh troops from Aleppo or Mosul. To go to Baghdad and subsequently to withdraw through pressure from the enemy, would be a very great political mistake. Under these circumstances he must stay at Kut-el-Amara unless reinforcements can be sent him from somewhere else than India. At the same time, the fall of Baghdad would have a very great political effect in the middle East, and would to some extent balance the unfavourable impression which our lack of success in Gallipoli has created."

The telegram received the next day from Sir John Nixon regarding various movements strengthened the suspicion that he intended to push on.

The subject was considered by the Cabinet, on the 8th October, and on that day the following telegrams passed between the Secretary of State, the Viceroy, and General Nixon :—

"From Secretary of State for India to General Nixon, dated 8th October 1915.

"What addition to your present force will enable you to occupy and hold Baghdad ? Telegraph direct and repeat to India."

From Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 8th October 1915.

"P.—My telegram of this date to General Nixon repeated to you. The great military and political effects which would be created by occupying Baghdad have made such an impression on the Cabinet that we shall make every endeavour to send the additional force required. *Without the necessary troops we do not desire to embark on the operation. Is one division enough in your opinion ?*

From General Nixon to Secretary of State for India, dated 8th October 1915.

"P.—Without any addition to the forces I have here at present, *I am confident I can defeat Nur-ed-Din and occupy Baghdad.* But I consider that, if the Turks turn their attention seriously to recapturing Baghdad, and despatch the large organized forces which would be required for this purpose to Mesopotamia, I should want one division (also one British cavalry regiment) to watch both the Euphrates and Tigris communications, and beat the enemy as he approaches in addition to the force I have. I also consider that the best position from which to do this is Baghdad."

From Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 9th October 1915.

"P.—Reference to Nixon's telegram of 8th instant and yours of same date. Glad to hear of Cabinet's decision. Having consulted with Commander-in-Chief, I consider that Nixon can best form an opinion as to the number of troops he requires, so we understand that when he speaks of a division, he means a complete division with its divisional cavalry and guns and proper proportion of British troops. He asks for a regiment of cavalry in addition to this. Although we are ready to accept his opinion, we also think that, as India cannot supply the drafts to ensure the British units now with him being maintained up to full strength, it will be necessary for these to be sent from home. The Indian units will be kept up to strength by us. *Further, we are of opinion that the reinforcements should get to Baghdad not later than one month after it has been taken, for we calculate that this is the time that must elapse before the Turks can concentrate in sufficient strength to attempt to retake it.*

On the 14th October the War Office submitted a paper drawn up by the General Staff on "The Question of occupying Baghdad." The following extracts from that Report may be usefully quoted :—

"The position at present is that Sir J. Nixon after a succession of victories over enemy forces, has pushed a considerable force to Aziziyeh. He has been ordered not to advance to it at present, and it is under consideration that no such advance shall take place unless a force of one complete division and a cavalry regiment be ensured to him as a reinforcement to reach the Shatt-el-Arab within one month of his undertaking the final advance. The first question to consider is, therefore, that of the time which it will take to convey a division of the Indian establishment from the theatre of war in France to Basrah."

* * * *

"To meet the possibility of the Turks assembling greater forces at Baghdad than is at present anticipated, and to ensure that sufficient force will be available to overcome the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000036

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

maximum resistance which it is estimated that the enemy can offer at Baghdad, the General Staff is of opinion that two Indian divisions should be added to Sir J. Nixon's army if he is to take and occupy Baghdad."

* * * *

"Unless India is prepared to supply the additional division which is required to justify the advance of Sir J. Nixon to Baghdad, the General Staff are of opinion that such an advance should not be sanctioned until one or more divisions from France can leave Egypt for Mesopotamia. With the forces now at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding, a move to Baghdad would in their opinion be a dangerous operation."

* * * *

Meanwhile, an Inter-Department Committee was assembled under the direction of the Prime Minister to consider certain definite questions regarding the strategic situation in Mesopotamia. The India Office, the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Foreign Office were represented on this Committee. The questions put by the Prime Minister and the conclusions thereon were as follows:—

QUESTIONS.

1. Whether there should be an advance on Baghdad.
2. The defensive positions at Baghdad as regards a possible advance of Turkish troops.
3. Whether without Baghdad as a point of departure any offensive operations on a large scale could be made by the Turks in the neighbourhood.
4. Generally the effect which the occupation of Baghdad by us would have on the Turkish forces engaged against Russia and against ourselves in the Dardanelles.

* * * *

"CONCLUSIONS.

"1. The Committee consider that, both on military and political grounds, an early advance upon and occupation of Baghdad is most desirable; but that, *unless the Expeditionary Force now in Mesopotamia can be so reinforced that it can maintain its position after reaching Baghdad, no attempt should be made either to seize or occupy that city.*

"The immediate reinforcements necessary for the retention of Baghdad are at least the equivalent of one infantry division of the Indian Army and one or two regiments of cavalry. *It is essential, if an advance on Baghdad be decided on, that reinforcements* of this strength should at once be definitely assigned to Mesopotamia, and that they *should without fail begin to arrive at Basra within four weeks of the issue of the orders for the advance.*

"The Committee are of opinion that these reinforcements cannot be furnished from the garrison in India.

"If reinforcements on the scale mentioned above cannot be provided, and if, notwithstanding, the Indian Government are satisfied that General Nixon can defeat the enemy forces immediately fronting him, and that on military and other grounds an action is desirable, they should be allowed to give him the necessary permission to attack, but only on the clear understanding that he is not to attempt to enter or occupy Baghdad.

* * * * *

The Committee also had before them a Memorandum submitted on the 6th October by the Political Department, India Office, advocating the advance to Baghdad, on general considerations and more especially because of the control which its occupation would give us over the Baghdad-Kermanshah route—the Germans' main line of communication with Persia. The danger of the existing situation in Persia was emphasised and its probable reaction on the attitude of Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier. It was recognised, indeed, that retreat from Baghdad, after occupation, would have most unfortunate political results; but it appeared to the Political Secretary that if the Turks were strong enough to turn us out of, Baghdad, they would be strong enough, if we refrained from occupying it to create such a situation in Mesopotamia and Persia that withdrawal from Kut-el-Amara itself would be necessary, and the political consequences of this would be almost as disastrous as those of withdrawal from Baghdad. The conclusion was reached that "we are bound to take risks, whether we "go to Baghdad or stay where we are. . . . But political considerations "appear to point decidedly towards the adoption of the bolder course."

It is clear from this that both on political and military grounds the occupation of Baghdad was considered most desirable *if certain reinforcements could be assured.* Failing this General Nixon was not to attempt to occupy Baghdad.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000002

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

It is unnecessary to quote here the Report in full, but the following extracts show the grounds on which the Committee arrived at conclusion 1 :—

"*The Desirability of an Advance to Baghdad.*

"5. On military grounds the capture and occupation of Baghdad offer distinct and solid advantages. The enemy, apart from the blow which his prestige would sustain, would be deprived of an important trade centre, a valuable depôt, a base, and a railhead (of the section of the Baghdad railway now working from Samarra to Baghdad). Our forces would be astride the main route from Europe through Kermanshah to the interior of Persia, and would deprive the Germans of a base for their intrigues in the Middle East.

"*The Practicability of an Advance*

"6. The General Staff, War Office, the Commander-in-Chief in India, the Military Secretary, India Office, and the local military authorities are all in agreement in the opinion, in which the Committee concur, that the British forces at present in Mesopotamia, though apparently adequate for the capture of Baghdad, are not sufficient to ensure its retention, which is regarded as essential.

"In order to provide for possible eventualities, a second division, or those units of a division which can be suitably employed in Mesopotamia, should be held in readiness to follow the first as soon as required. In the event of the Turks being in a position later on to concentrate forces from distant quarters on the Upper Tigris, with the object of offensive operations on a large scale, even these two divisions may prove insufficient, and it may be necessary in 1916 to send further reinforcements."

This Report was considered by the War Council on the 21st October, and on the same date, the following private telegram was received :—

"From Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated 21st October 1915.

"While agreeing entirely with His Majesty's Government regarding strategical and political advantages following from capture and occupation of Baghdad, which the contents of Marling's telegram of 15th October emphasise, the Government of India look on the security of India and its frontiers as their first pre-occupation and it is not possible for us to send to Mesopotamia from India a further force of the strength of a division.

"Having consulted the Commander-in-Chief, three alternatives present themselves :—

"*First.*—The capture of Baghdad and its occupation. Provided that we receive a guarantee that a complete division of troops will arrive in Mesopotamia within two months from this date, this will present no difficulty. And this solution would be the most satisfactory one.

"*Second.*—To attack the Turks, make a raid on Baghdad, release the female English captives, capture the few stores and steamers that remain and from a position South of it, dominate the city by patrols up the river . . . . This would not require a whole additional division to accomplish, but would only be the second best alternative from a political point of view.

"*Third.*—Stay at Kut-el-Amara in a defensive position. Such a step does not commend itself to us, for it may force us to advance after all, because both the Turks and the Arabs will see that it is a weak measure.

"For military reasons the Commander-in-Chief would prefer the first or third and dislikes the second alternative. His opinion is that we must either hold Baghdad ourselves or keep well away from it, as it is a very valuable base and great centre of supplies for whichever side is in occupation. . . . . He is in short against making a raid on Baghdad which would involve a retirement. Should the required reinforcements be forthcoming, he favours strongly the holding of Baghdad. However he prefers the safer course of holding a position at Kut-el-Amara should they not be forthcoming.

"Nevertheless he feels that owing to the present situation we may at any time have to accept the risk involved and find it necessary to occupy Baghdad, even with our forces as they exist at present.

"From a political point of view my comment on the Commander-in-Chief's opinion is, that to be driven out of Baghdad would be disastrous.

"I will leave the question for the decision of His Majesty's Government with confidence, having placed before you these three alternatives, but I hope that the first alternative will be the one they decide to adopt."

On the 23rd October another War Council was held, the result of which was the definite order contained in the following telegram :—

"From Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated 23rd October 1915.

"*If Nixon is satisfied that the troops he has available are enough for the purpose, he may march on Baghdad.* On account of relief and transport arrangements reinforcements will take some time, but two divisions will be sent as early as possible."

The telegram was followed up the same day by official letters to the War Office and the Admiralty pressing for the immediate despatch of the sanctioned reinforcements.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000064

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

The decision thus arrived at was clearly in accordance with the views of the Commander-in-Chief in India, for on the 25th October, in a telegram to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, he observed :—

"From Chief of the General Staff, India, to War Office, dated 25th October 1915.
(No. S. 25298.)

"We have to be prepared to meet the Turks in superior numbers ; and this being the case, Baghdad, the best position at which to meet them, should be immediately occupied, and a reinforcement of two divisions should reach the Tigris within two months. Baghdad in Turkish hands becomes the base for Turkish operations by both the Tigris and Euphrates lines, and for the coercion of Persia ; whilst politically the failure to seize what appears to be within our grasp would be interpreted throughout Asia, Persia, Afghanistan, and the East as weakness."

From the 1st to 11th November the War Office sent half-a-dozen telegrams reporting various Turkish movements from Syria, Armenia, and Mosul towards Baghdad. To this India replied on the 13th November in a telegram to the War Office that their information was locally discredited.

On the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th further intelligence was cabled to General Nixon regarding Turkish movements.

On the 18th, General Nixon reported that the enemy were advancing on Zeur from Ctesiphon, but that General Townshend would attack him on the morrow.

On the 19th, it was reported that "Zeur was occupied with slight opposition. The enemy retired towards Ctesiphon."

On the 20th, General Nixon wired to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, War Office :—

"I have received, over a fortnight ago, from my own agents similar news regarding a large force under Von der Goltz, but at present I do not accept their reports as conclusive for various reasons. Please state the source of your information . . . ."

On the 22nd November was fought the Battle of Ctesiphon, which resulted for us in a Pyrrhic victory, and unhappily confirmed the truth of the many reports sent of Turkish reinforcements.

On the night of the 23rd/24th the Turks counter-attacked, but were driven back with heavy loss. On the 24th and 25th the wounded were removed to the river, and on the night of the 25th the retreat to Kut-el-Amara commenced.

The above précis shows how step by step the Government was lured on, and though nothing can justify failure it may at least be urged that had the Government adopted what, as is now obvious, would have been the more prudent course, and had they peremptorily stopped the march on Baghdad an impatient and unreasoning public would certainly have reproached them with untimely timidity at a moment when a splendid prize was within their grasp. They would have been accused of having culpably disregarded the advice of the "men on the spot," and when, subsequently, the Turks advanced in force a storm would have arisen over our lost opportunities. We should have been told by an "inspired" Press that it was precisely because we had not crushed the Turks in front of Baghdad that they were able to bring up reinforcements which enabled them to resume the offensive.

The position was a difficult one, and if the Government decided wrongly, at least no one can say that they acted contrary to the local advice.

Moreover, it may always be said in favour of General Nixon's idea of advancing to Baghdad, that a Turkish offensive in or through Persia was impossible if we could take and hold that position. At the time anarchy prevailed throughout Persia, and German intrigues were rampant, so that had the Turks been unopposed north of Kut-el-Amara, it is quite conceivable that, while containing us there, they would have pushed into Persia through Khanikin, and thereby have forestalled the Russians at Karmanshah and got into touch with Persian centres of disturbance. Such a result would have been no less disastrous than the surrender of Kut, as the whole of Persia would have gone against us, and possibly Afghanistan would have followed suit.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000017

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

This Document is the property of the Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Correspondence regarding the allegations made in the Press that General Townshend's objections to an advance from Kut-el-Amara were duly submitted to General Nixon, and were known to the Government of India.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
1st April 1916.

3329. Allegations are made here that Townshend protested formally against advance on Baghdad, stating force at his command quite insufficient. Please telegraph any information at your disposal.

In reply to question in House of Lords whether Townshend had recommended or was responsible for decision to advance on Ctesiphon, Islington stated on my behalf that if any representations were made by Townshend prior to his advance on Ctesiphon, they would have been addressed to Nixon, but no such recommendation or representation had been reported home. As had been stated by the Secretary of State for India, the advance was authorised by the Government on the advice of the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia, and the Government of India.

Islington added that we had no information whether Nixon consulted Townshend.

From Viceroy, Army Department, 4th April 1916.

H. 2466. Reference your telegram of 1st instant, 3329. No record of any such protest exists. Had a protest been made proper course would have been to record it in the War Diary, General Staff, 6th Division. (Field Service Regulations, 2nd Section, 140–5 I.) No such record has reached us. But reference to an appreciation, which may be basis of allegation you refer to, is made in entries 3rd October in the War Diary, G.S., 6th Division, which was received at Army Headquarters on 14th December 1915, and was sent to you under paragraph 22 of Army Despatch No. 15, dated 25th February last. We have no record of appreciation itself, which appears to have been addressed to Major-General, General Staff, Force "D," and no reference to it is made in G.S. Diary of General Headquarters in Mesopotamia. On the contrary, please see Nixon's telegram of 6th October, 308–203–0, to Chief of the General Staff, India, and repeated to you, and his 308–218–0 of 8th October, addressed to you, and repeated to Chief of the General Staff, India.

Reference is being made to General Officer Commanding, Force "D," to clear this up and to get Townshend's statement. On receipt of reply we will report further. No War Diaries subsequent to October have been received from 6th Division.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
4th April 1916.

3334. Your H. 2466. Saturday's "Times" alleges in leading article that "there can be no doubt that before he moved a step from Kut, Townshend had constantly declared that his force was insufficient." Article further alleges that Government of India were "informally acquainted with Townshend's strong objections," and asks, "Are we to understand that the important document in which Townshend declared advance on Baghdad

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000a5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

with his then force could only be demanded by persons absolutely ignorant of art of war was never seen informally by Government of India or the Army Department or any responsible member thereof, or only seen after march had begun?"

I understand your telegram to justify denial of inuendo conveyed by "Times."

I am calling on Nixon for explanation.

From Viceroy, Army Department, 6th April 1916.

No. H. 2563. Your telegram of the 4th April, No. 3334. We agree that denial of innuendo in "Times" is fully justified. We do not understand what is meant by statement that Government of India were informally acquainted with Townshend's strong objections.

Subordinate commanders, such as Townshend was, do not communicate with the Government of India either formally or informally. We have no knowledge whatever of the document referred to.

Sir John Nixon was not only in chief command, but was personally present on the spot.

It does not appear to us that he was bound to regard or to forward to us expressions of opinion by his subordinate officers with which he did not agree.

Nixon alone was responsible to us and for result achieved, and we were rightly and deliberately guided by his opinion and by his alone.

Military Department Letter, No. 3333, dated 4th April 1916, to General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B., A.D.C.

Sir,

I am directed to inform you that the attention of the Secretary of State for India has been called to statements made in the Press, and to reports current elsewhere, that prior to his advance on Ctesiphon, General Townshend, the Officer in immediate command of this phase of the operations, protested that the force at his disposal was inadequate for the purpose.

In this connection I am to invite your attention to the following passages from a leading article published in the "Times" of 1st April, viz.:—

"Whoever knew or did not know General Townshend's grave warnings of the risk of an advance to Baghdad, these warnings were fully and repeatedly expressed to Sir John Nixon." And again: "There can be no doubt that before he moved a step from Kut, General Townshend had constantly declared that his force was insufficient."

I am to say that Mr. Secretary Chamberlain is far from assuming the accuracy of the reports current in the Press and elsewhere, but considers it necessary that he should have definite knowledge of the facts.

I am, therefore, to enquire whether any such communications as referred to in the "Times'" article were actually made to you by General Townshend, and if so, I am to request that you will, if possible, furnish copies of any such correspondence that has passed with him on the subject, or failing these, your report on the statements made.

If any representations were made to you by General Townshend, the Secretary of State for India would further wish to be informed whether they were reported to the Government of India, and why no mention of them was made by you in replying to his telegram of 8th October 1915, a copy of which, and of your reply, is attached herewith.

I am, &c.,
T. W. Holderness.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000069

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(224)

(*Enclosure.*)

From General Nixon, 8th October 1915.

(*Repeated to Chief of General Staff.*)

308/218/0. 3077 of 8th. I am confident that I can beat Nur-ed-din and occupy Baghdad without any addition to my present force. But if Turks should turn their serious attention to the capture of Baghdad and should send

(224a)

FROM SECRETARY OF STATE TO GENERAL NIXON, BASRA, 8th OCTOBER 1915

(Repeated to India)

3077. Very urgent. With what addition to your present force are you confident that you can both occupy and hold Baghdad? Reply direct and repeat reply to Government of India.

[illegible] 1st September fought the action of Kut-el-Amarah. The pursuit of the Turks was carried out by General Townshend himself with his leading Brigade as far as Aziziyeh. As the Turks were still active in front of him on 8th October, he asked that all available troops should be sent up to him. This was done as rapidly as possible, and when he left Aziziyeh to advance against the enemy at Ctesiphon he had under his command one complete Division and a third of another Division, a Brigade of Cavalry, and an increased force of Artillery, a total larger than he had commanded at Kut-el-Amarah.

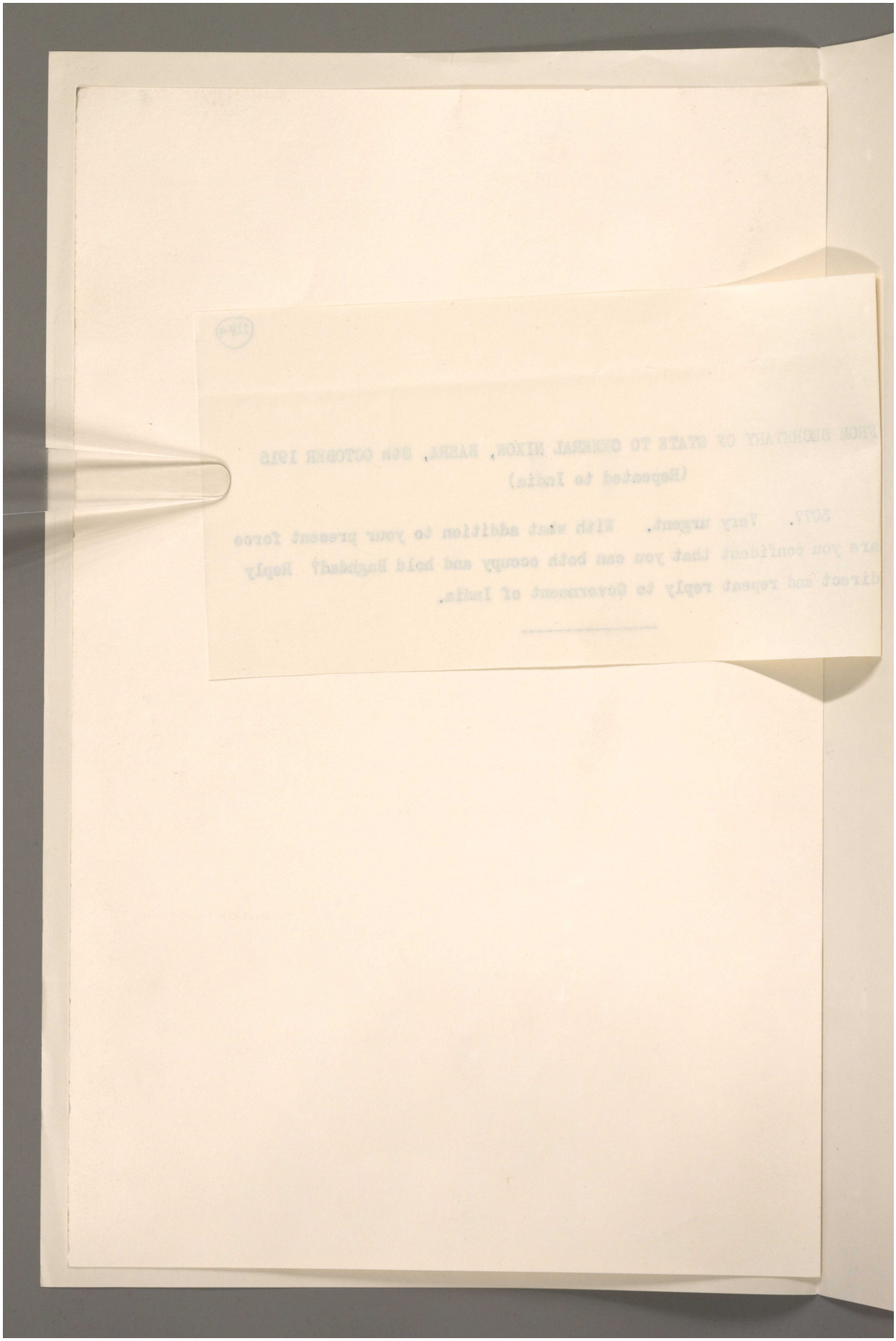
Neither up to this time nor subsequently did General Townshend express any doubt that he would with this available force be able to defeat the enemy in position at Ctesiphon and capture Baghdad, and I agreed with him. I was present at the battle of Kut-el-Amarah and afterwards established Army Headquarters in Kut. From here I despatched the Major-General, General Staff (Major-General Kemball), by aeroplane to see General Townshend personally on 19th October and again on 5th November. General Kemball reported on each occasion that General Townshend had entire confidence in his ability to carry out a further advance with the force which had been placed under his command, nor did General Townshend even hint that it was insufficient for the task before him. General Townshend believed that he could reach Baghdad with this force, and both he and I were of opinion that the capture of Baghdad could be effected, but we agreed that, if the Turks should turn their serious attention to the recovery of Baghdad, the force would require to be strengthened to hold this strategic point. Being of this opinion I despatched my telegram of the 8th October, which is attached to your letter.

On 13th November I joined General Townshend at Aziziyeh and accompanied him during the subsequent advance and battle of Ctesiphon. At no time during this period either did General Townshend express to me any opinion that his force was insufficient.

I have, &c.,
JOHN NIXON, General.

226

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000059



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000c3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(Enclosure.)

From General Nixon, 8th October 1915.

(Repeated to Chief of General Staff.)

308/218/0. 3077 of 8th. I am confident that I can beat Nur-ed-din and occupy Baghdad without any addition to my present force. But if Turks should turn their serious attention to the capture of Baghdad and should send to Mesopotamia the large organised forces which would be necessary for such an operation, then I consider that I should require one Division (and I should like also one white Cavalry Regiment) in addition to my present force to watch both the Tigris and Euphrates lines of communication and defeat the enemy as he comes within reach. Further, the Baghdad position would be best from which to do this.

Kut is 103 miles, and Townshend at Aziziyah is 48 from Baghdad by road.

From General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B., A.D.C., to the Under Secretary of State, India Office.

4, Mount Ephraim, Tunbridge Wells,
6th April 1916.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your 3333 of 4th instant, asking whether General Townshend prior to his advance on Ctesiphon protested that the force at his disposal was inadequate for the purpose and whether he fully and repeatedly expressed to me grave warnings of the risk of an advance to Baghdad, and whether before he moved a step from Kut he had constantly declared that his force was insufficient.

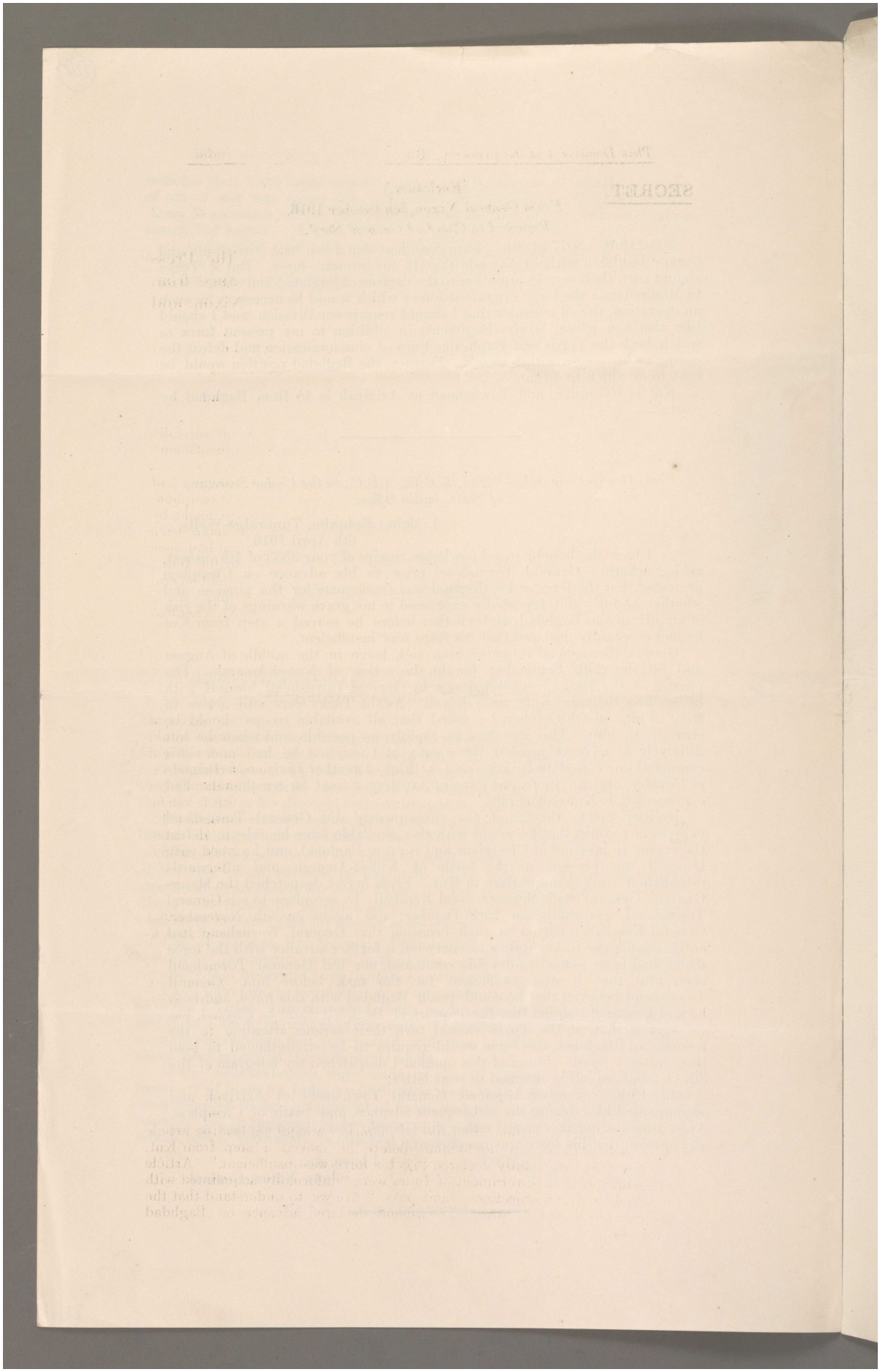
General Townshend returned from sick leave in the middle of August and on the 28th September fought the action of Kut-el-Amarah. The pursuit of the Turks was carried out by General Townshend himself with his leading Brigade as far as Aziziyeh. As the Turks were still active in front of him on 8th October, he asked that all available troops should be sent up to him. This was done as rapidly as possible, and when he left Aziziyeh to advance against the enemy at Ctesiphon he had under his command one complete Division and a third of another Division, a Brigade of Cavalry, and an increased force of Artillery, a total larger than he had commanded at Kut-el-Amarah.

Neither up to this time nor subsequently did General Townshend express any doubt that he would with this available force be able to defeat the enemy in position at Ctesiphon and capture Baghdad, and I agreed with him. I was present at the battle of Kut-el-Amarah and afterwards established Army Headquarters in Kut. From here I despatched the Major-General, General Staff (Major-General Kemball), by aeroplane to see General Townshend personally on 19th October and again on 5th November. General Kemball reported on each occasion that General Townshend had entire confidence in his ability to carry out a further advance with the force which had been placed under his command, nor did General Townshend even hint that it was insufficient for the task before him. General Townshend believed that he could reach Baghdad with this force, and both he and I were of opinion that the capture of Baghdad could be effected, but we agreed that, if the Turks should turn their serious attention to the recovery of Baghdad, the force would require to be strengthened to hold this strategic point. Being of this opinion I despatched my telegram of the 8th October, which is attached to your letter.

On 13th November I joined General Townshend at Aziziyeh and accompanied him during the subsequent advance and battle of Ctesiphon. At no time during this period either did General Townshend express to me any opinion that his force was insufficient.

I have, &c.,
JOHN NIXON, General.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000044



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00006a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

225

This Document is the property of the Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

In continuation of the correspondence which was circulated to the Cabinet on Saturday, the 8th instant, regarding the allegations made in the Press as to General Townshend's advance from Kut-el-Amara.

I circulate to my colleagues another telegram, dated 9th April, which has been received from the Viceroy.

I am asking Sir John Nixon for further explanations.

A. C.

10th April 1916.

From Viceroy, 9th April 1916.

H. 2658. In continuation of our telegram of the 4th instant, H. 2466, General Officer Commanding, Force "D," telegraphs as follows:—

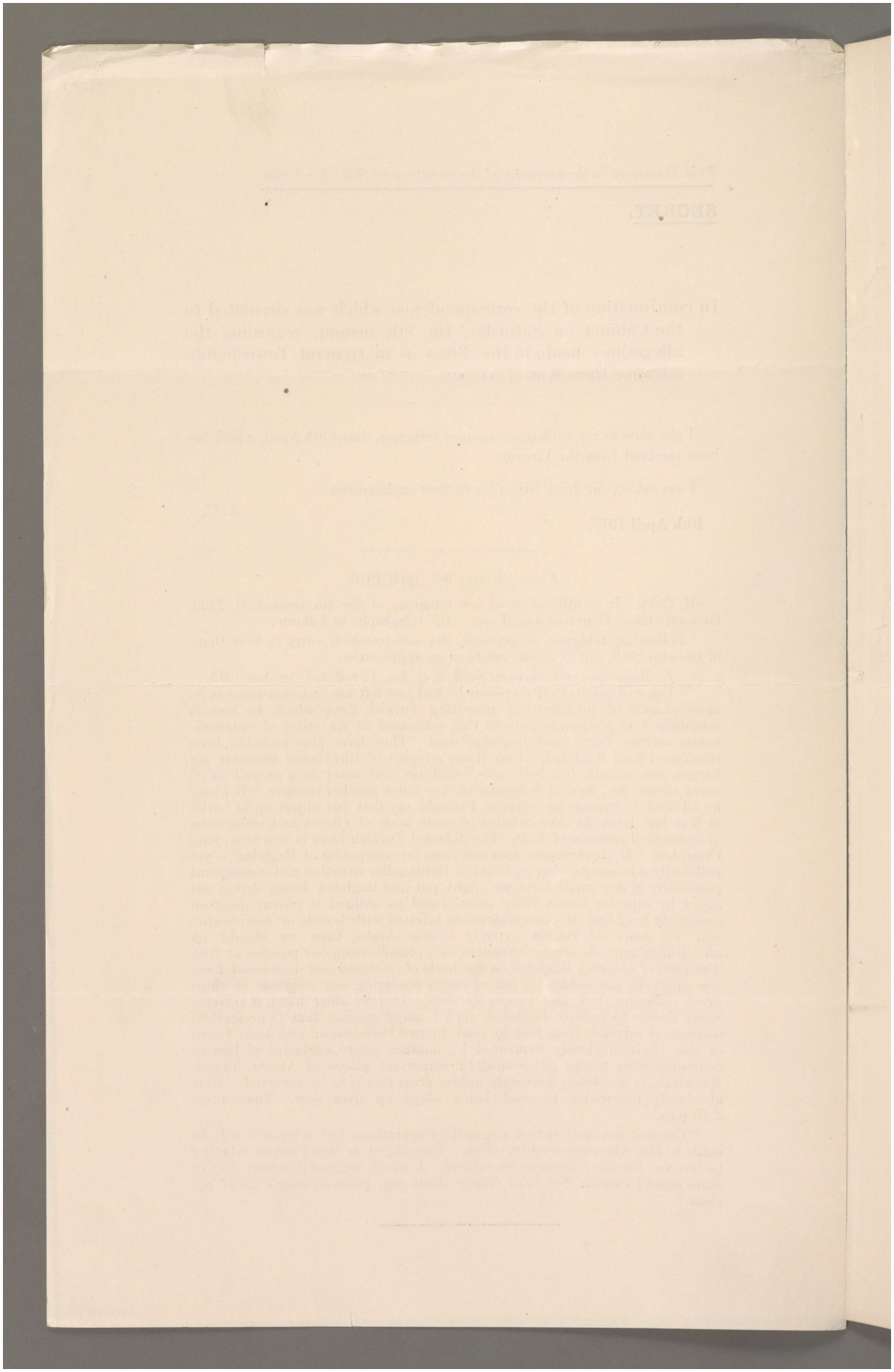
"Following telegram is probably the one to which entry in War Diary of General Staff, 6th Division, refers as an appreciation:—

"'To Major-General, General Staff, Kut, No. 120 of 3rd October 1915.

"'You will see by Reilly's report he had just left for Kut that there is no more chance of breaking up retreating Turkish force which by now is established in position at Sulman Pak, estimated at six miles of entrenchments astride Tigris and Baghdad road. They have also probably been reinforced from Baghdad. *Vide* Reilly's report of three more steamers, six barges, one mahela, 105 bell tents, buildings, and many men as well as (?) many stores, &c., west of Sulman Pak, five miles another steamer. If I may be allowed to express an opinion, I should say that our object up to battle at Kut has been the consolidation of main body of vilayet and occupation of strategical position of Kut. The defeated Turkish force is now occupying Ctesiphon. If Government does not consider occupation of Baghdad is yet politically advisable owing to doubt of Dardanelles situation and consequent possibility of any small force we might put into Baghdad being driven out again by superior forces from Anatolia and so obliged to retreat along an extremely long line of communications infested with hostile or semi-hostile and on news of retreat actively hostile Arabs, then we should on all military grounds occupy ourselves with consolidating our position at Kut. The plan of entering Baghdad on the heels of retreated and disordered force was upset by the sudden (?) fall of water rendering our progress in ships great difficulty, toil, and extremely slow. On the other hand, if Government desire to occupy Baghdad, then I am of opinion that (? preferable) method of advance from Kut by road by two Divisions or one Army Corps or one Division closely supported by another entire, exclusive of line of communication troops garrisoning the important places of Amara, Ahwaz, Nasiriyah, is absolutely necessary unless great risk is to be incurred. It is absolutely impossible to send laden ships up river now.—TOWNSHEND, 2.15 p.m.'

"General Kemball is now engaged in operations, but reference will be made to him when opportunity offers. Townshend is being asked whether he has any further references on subject. I would suggest that Secretary of State should consult Sir John Nixon about any point on which he is not clear."

227



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000bb

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

226

This Document is the property of the Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Revised collection circulated in substitution for prints of the correspondence which were circulated to the Cabinet on Saturday, the 8th instant, and Tuesday, the 11th instant, regarding the allegations made in the Press as to General Townshend's advance from Kut-el-Amara.

No. 1.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
1st April 1916.

3329. Allegations are made here that Townshend protested formally against advance on Baghdad, stating force at his command quite insufficient. Please telegraph any information at your disposal.

In reply to question in House of Lords whether Townshend had recommended or was responsible for decision to advance on Ctesiphon, Islington stated on my behalf that if any representations were made by Townshend prior to his advance on Ctesiphon, they would have been addressed to Nixon, but no such recommendation or representation had been reported home. As had been stated by the Secretary of State for India, the advance was authorised by the Government on the advice of the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia, and the Government of India.

Islington added that we had no information whether Nixon consulted Townshend.

No. 2.

From Viceroy, Army Department, 4th April 1916.

H. 2466. Reference your telegram of 1st instant, 3329. No record of any such protest exists. Had a protest been made proper course would have been to record it in the War Diary, General Staff, 6th Division. (Field Service Regulations, 2nd Section, 140–5 I.) No such record has reached us. But reference to an appreciation, which may be basis of allegation you refer to, is made in entries 3rd October in the War Diary, G.S., 6th Division, which was received at Army Headquarters on 14th December 1915, and was sent to you under paragraph 22 of Army Despatch No. 15, dated 25th February last. We have no record of appreciation itself, which appears to have been addressed to Major-General, General Staff, Force "D," and no reference to it is made in G.S. Diary of General Headquarters in Mesopotamia. On the contrary, please see Nixon's telegram of 6th October, 308–203–0, to Chief of the General Staff, India, and repeated to you, and his 308–218–0 of 8th October, addressed to you, and repeated to Chief of the General Staff, India.

Reference is being made to General Officer Commanding, Force "D," to clear this up and to get Townshend's statement. On receipt of reply we will report further. No War Diaries subsequent to October have been received from 6th Division.

No. 3.

From Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department,
4th April 1916.

3334. Your H. 2466. Saturday's "Times" alleges in leading article that "there can be no doubt that before he moved a step from Kut, Townshend had constantly declared that his force was insufficient." Article further alleges that Government of India were "informally acquainted with

SS 459 30—4/1916

228

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Townshend's strong objections," and asks, "Are we to understand that the important document in which Townshend declared advance on Baghdad with his then force could only be demanded by persons absolutely ignorant of art of war was never seen informally by Government of India or the Army Department or any responsible member thereof, or only seen after march had begun?"

I understand your telegram to justify denial of inuendo conveyed by "Times."

I am calling on Nixon for explanation.

No. 4.

From Viceroy, Army Department, 6th April 1916.

No. H. 2563. Your telegram of the 4th April, No. 3334. We agree that denial of innuendo in "Times" is fully justified. We do not understand what is meant by statement that Government of India were informally acquainted with Townshend's strong objections.

Subordinate commanders, such as Townshend was, do not communicate with the Government of India either formally or informally. We have no knowledge whatever of the document referred to.

Sir John Nixon was not only in chief command, but was personally present on the spot.

It does not appear to us that he was bound to regard or to forward to us expressions of opinion by his subordinate officers with which he did not agree.

Nixon alone was responsible to us and for result achieved, and we were rightly and deliberately guided by his opinion and by his alone.

No. 5.

Military Department Letter, No. 3333, dated 4th April 1916, to General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B., A.D.C.

Sir,

I am directed to inform you that the attention of the Secretary of State for India has been called to statements made in the Press, and to reports current elsewhere, that prior to his advance on Ctesiphon, General Townshend, the Officer in immediate command of this phase of the operations, protested that the force at his disposal was inadequate for the purpose.

In this connection I am to invite your attention to the following passages from a leading article published in the "Times" of 1st April, viz.:—

"Whoever knew or did not know General Townshend's grave warnings of the risk of an advance to Baghdad, these warnings were fully and repeatedly expressed to Sir John Nixon." And again: "There can be no doubt that before he moved a step from Kut, General Townshend had constantly declared that his force was insufficient."

I am to say that Mr. Secretary Chamberlain is far from assuming the accuracy of the reports current in the Press and elsewhere, but considers it necessary that he should have definite knowledge of the facts.

I am, therefore, to enquire whether any such communications as referred to in the "Times'" article were actually made to you by General Townshend, and if so, I am to request that you will, if possible, furnish copies of any such correspondence that has passed with him on the subject, or failing these, your report on the statements made.

If any representations were made to you by General Townshend, the Secretary of State for India would further wish to be informed whether they were reported to the Government of India, and why no mention of them was made by you in replying to his telegram of 8th October 1915, a copy of which, and of your reply, is attached herewith.

I am, &c.,
T. W. Holderness.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000c6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(*Enclosure* 1 *in No.* 5.)

From Secretary of State to General Nixon, Basra, 8th October 1915.

(*Repeated to India.*)

3077. Very urgent. With what addition to your present force are you confident that you can both occupy and hold Baghdad? Reply direct and repeat reply to Government of India.

(*Enclosure* 2 *in No.* 5.)

From General Nixon, 8th October 1915.

(*Repeated to Chief of General Staff.*)

308/218/0. 3077 of 8th. I am confident that I can beat Nur-ed-din and occupy Baghdad without any addition to my present force. But if Turks should turn their serious attention to the capture of Baghdad and should send to Mesopotamia the large organised forces which would be necessary for such an operation, then I consider that I should require one Division (and I should like also one white Cavalry Regiment) in addition to my present force to watch both the Tigris and Euphrates lines of communication and defeat the enemy as he comes within reach. Further, the Baghdad position would be best from which to do this.

Kut is 103 miles, and Townshend at Aziziyah is 48 from Baghdad by road.

No. 6.

From Viceroy, 9th April 1916.

H. 2658. In continuation of our telegram of the 4th instant, H. 2466, General Officer Commanding, Force "D," telegraphs as follows:—

"Following telegram is probably the one to which entry in War Diary of General Staff, 6th Division, refers as an appreciation:—

"'To Major-General, General Staff, Kut, No. 120 of 3rd October 1915.

"'You will see by Reilly's report he had just left for Kut that there is no more chance of breaking up retreating Turkish force which by now is established in position at Sulman Pak, estimated at six miles of entrenchments astride Tigris and Baghdad road. They have also probably been reinforced from Baghdad. *Vide* Reilly's report of three more steamers, six barges, one mahela, 105 bell tents, buildings, and many men as well as (?) many stores, &c., west of Sulman Pak, five miles another steamer. If I may be allowed to express an opinion, I should say that our object up to battle at Kut has been the consolidation of main body of vilayet and occupation of strategical position of Kut. The defeated Turkish force is now occupying Ctesiphon. If Government does not consider occupation of Baghdad is yet politically advisable owing to doubt of Dardanelles situation and consequent possibility of any small force we might put into Baghdad being driven out again by superior forces from Anatolia and so obliged to retreat along an extremely long line of communications infested with hostile or semi-hostile and on news of retreat actively hostile Arabs, then we should on all military grounds occupy ourselves with consolidating our position at Kut. The plan of entering Baghdad on the heels of retreated and disordered force was upset by the sudden (?) fall of water rendering our progress in ships great difficulty, toil, and extremely slow. On the other hand, if Government desire to occupy Baghdad, then I am of opinion that a methodical advance from Kut by road by two Divisions or one Army Corps or one Division closely supported by another entire, exclusive of line of communication troops garrisoning the important places of Amara, Ahwaz,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000b0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Nasiriyah, is absolutely necessary unless great risk is to be incurred. It is absolutely impossible to send laden ships up river now.—TOWNSHEND, 2.15 p.m.'

"General Kemball is now engaged in operations, but reference will be made to him when opportunity offers. Townshend is being asked whether he has any further references on subject. I would suggest that Secretary of State should consult Sir John Nixon about any point on which he is not clear."

No. 7.

From General Sir John Nixon to the Under Secretary of State for India, 11th April 1916.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your 3333 of the 4th instant, asking whether General Townshend, prior to his advance on Ctesiphon, protested that the force at his disposal was inadequate for the purpose, and whether he fully and repeatedly expressed to me grave warnings of the risk of an advance to Baghdad and whether before he moved a step from Kut he had constantly declared that his force was insufficient.

General Townshend returned from sick leave in the middle of August and on the 28th September fought the battle of Kut-el-Amara. The pursuit of the Turks was carried out by General Townshend himself with his leading Brigade as far as Aziziah. On the 3rd October he forwarded to the General Staff his opinion as to how the further advance on Baghdad, should Government desire it, should be conducted. In this document he expressed the opinion that if the Government desired to occupy Baghdad, two Divisions, or one closely supported by another, exclusive of communication troops, were necessary.

At that time he had under his command his own division with four or five squadrons and three batteries of 18-pounders and four heavy guns. The pursuit expended itself owing to the difficulty of getting on, and all question of an advance to Baghdad was in abeyance.

About the same day I was informed that another division would almost certainly be sent, and this was communicated to General Townshend. Accordingly I continued, as the tactical situation required, to bring up what reinforcements were available in the country, and in due course increased the force under General Townshend by another brigade of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and a horse battery, and to the Naval flotilla was added H.M.S. "Firefly," with a 4-inch gun. In addition, communication troops were provided for Kut.

The decision to send two divisions from France arrived on the 24th October, and General Townshend had proposed alternative schemes of advance with a view to the occupation of Baghdad, but General Townshend did not express to me the view that the force being placed at his disposal would be inadequate for the purpose.

From Kut I sent the Major-General, General Staff, by aeroplane to see General Townshend and discuss personally with him the plans submitted. Major-General Kemball thus visited him on the 19th October and the 5th November, and on return gave no inkling that General Townshend was in doubt as to the adequacy of the force that would be under his command. Whatever opinion General Townshend may have previously held before reinforcements were promised, it was quite clear that the final confirmation of the coming of two divisions from France had satisfied him that the conditions he mentioned at the beginning of the month were fulfilled.

I have, &c.,
JOHN NIXON, *General.*

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00001f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 8.

From Viceroy, Army Department, 10th April 1916.

H. 2702. In continuation of our telegram of the 8th instant, No. H. 2658. General Officer Commanding, Force "D," telegraphs as follows:—

"Continuation of my telegram of the 5th instant, 1008/598/0. With reference to last paragraph. Following telegram received from Townshend in reply to query addressed to him:—

"'69/381/1906, dated 7th April. Personal. This is my reply which I trust will be allowed to go verbatim, as there must be no misunderstanding. I most certainly considered we were running grave risk in continuing the strategic offensive on Baghdad with only my weak Division, of which my British battalions were reduced to mere half battalions, and all casualties at battle of Kut had been filled up with raw recruits from India and over 300 miles from the sea with no other troops to support me. Moreover, operations in Gallipoli theatre indicated our troops in that zone evidently contained and held by Turks who would undoubtly reinforce Mesopotamia to save Baghdad. Although Sir John Nixon had give me the entire conduct of operations beginning with Kurna and Amara in May up to date and gave me his confidence, it will be understood how difficult it was for me, a subordinate General, to give my opinions unasked to Army Commander. However, I considered it my absolute duty to indicate to him risk I ran in moving forward to attack the well-known strong position of Ctesiphon and occupy Baghdad with my present force. After having pointed out the risk I had my conscience clear and was ready to undertake any order he might give me. In consequence then I telegraphed my 120 G, not B, of 3rd October, from Azizieh, which place I had halted at in my pursuit of Turks after Kut battle finding they had rallied at Ctesiphon. The exact words in which I pointed out risk were as follows:—"On the other hand, if Government desire occupation of Baghdad, then I am of opinion that a methodical advance from Kut by two divisions or an army corps, or one division closely supported by another division, exclusive of line of communication troops garrisoning the important places of Amara, Ahwaz, Nasirieh, is absolutely necessary unless great risk is to be incurred." That, I consider, sufficiently indicated risk. In my opinion a subordinate commander cannot do more than that. To protest in full sense of the meaning of the word would not be discipline. I should like to add that previous to battle at Kut I told Sir John Nixon that I hoped not only to beat Turks in their position at Kut, but completely rout them as at Kurna, and if I saw a chance of running into Baghdad on heels of rout I should do so and take the risk, as I did in May in the case of occupying Amara, but the Turks rallied in formidable numbers at Ctesiphon, and so I halted at Azizieh. I had gained much more knowledge of Turkish reinforcements in Mesopotamia, and experience of battle of Kut showed me I had very different troops to deal with compared with those at Kurna, and saw it behoved me to be cautious and that to take Baghdad meant at least an army corps. I mention this to show that I had myself, in the first instance, contemplated getting into Baghdad, and that I am quite willing to undertake all responsibility for my actions.'

"General Kemball has been wounded. Reference has, therefore, not been made to him on the subject. This is sent in I.O.C.C. 1910, in which it was received from Townshend."

[P.T.O.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000043

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

No. 9.

From General E. G. Barrow to General Sir John Nixon.

3341. India Office,
11th April 1916.

Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 11th April 1916, I am directed to forward for your information the attached copy of a further telegram* received from the Government of India, and to say that Mr. Secretary Chamberlain would be glad to receive any observations you may have to make as early as possible.

* H. 2702.

I am, &c.,
E. G. Barrow.

General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B.

No. 10.

From General Sir John Nixon to the Under Secretary of State for India, 12th April 1916.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your 3341 of the 11th instant, enclosing the Viceroy's H. 2702 of the 10th instant and asking for my observations on General Townshend's telegram of the 7th instant.

This telegram confirms what I said in my letter of yesterday that I received no representation from General Townshend subsequent to his telegram of the 3rd October. We are personal friends and I cannot but think that, had not his opinion been modified by the information concerning the sending of reinforcements, he would have found no obstacle in communicating with me.

The Turkish troops he met at Kurna were not the same as those he met and defeated at Kut, but still some of the Kurna men were there at Kut and the remainder consisted of troops whom our forces had defeated before at Shaiba and Nasirieh.

I have, &c.,
John Nixon, *General.*

The Under Secretary of State
for India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000088

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

SECRET.

229

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

REPORT ON THE SIEGE OF KUT-EL-AMARA.

5th December 1915 *to* 29*th April* 1916.

By Lieutenant H. S. D. McNeal, R.F.A.

Late at night on 2nd December 1915 the 6th Division, commanded by Major-General Charles F. Townshend, D.S.O., arrived at Kut on the left bank of the Tigris at the junction of that river and the Shatt-el-Hai, about 70 miles below Ctesiphon and 160 miles above Amara, and camped outside the outer of the two lines of wire entanglements. No rations having arrived for the officers of the 63rd Battery of the Royal Field Artillery, I rode into Kut, and after some difficulty found our first-line transport inside the inner line of wire.

The morning of 3rd December I was ordered to join the advance guard with one section of the 63rd Battery, and we were the first artillery to enter Kut with the exception of "S" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, which had entered the previous night. The remainder of 63rd Battery went into action on the left bank to shell some Arabs who were making hostile demonstrations on the other side of the river. No one apparently knew where my battery was to go, and I remained halted inside the second line of entanglements for some considerable time. At about 9.30 a.m. the remainder of the battery, commanded by Major H. Broke-Smith, D.S.O., joined me, and, after the horses had been watered, we received orders to proceed to the river front and cover the crossing of the S.S. *Bloss-Lynch* to Woolpress on the right bank of the Tigris opposite Kut with the 110th and 120th Infantry. These regiments crossed to occupy the village, and dislodged some hostile Arabs who were sniping at our horses going down to water. The landing safely accomplished, we returned to our gun position which had been marked out between the inner and outer lines of entanglement.

The battery unharnessed and the horses having been tied to the first-line wagons, the guns were run into position and all hands turned to dig the gun-pits.

The river Tigris makes a large perimeter at Kut. After running practically due south for nearly a mile it turns round Kut and flows north-east for about 1,000 yards, after which it turns south again. At its turning-point is the fort built by the Turks some time ago and our outer wire entanglements reached from it to the river above Kut, a distance of 1,800 yards.

The 82nd, 63rd, and 76th Batteries, Royal Field Artillery, comprising the 10th Brigade, were placed equi-distant behind this line in the order named from left to right. The 82nd Battery about 200 yards in rear of the alignment behind a wall in a dead grove, and the other two batteries in the open 500 yards behind the outer defence.

200 yards behind the 63rd Battery inside the inner line of wire were two guns of the 104th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery; "S" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, was operating on the right flank outside Kut with the Cavalry Brigade under the command of Brigadier-General Roberts.

The Bombay Volunteer Battery of four guns was in the fort during the first two months of the siege, but was later moved behind the brick-kilns to cover the right bank of the river. This battery was armed with the old 15-pounder. The 86th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, had two guns on the river front and two at the brick-kilns, facing up-stream and the opening of the perimeter. The first 1/5th Hants Howitzer Battery of 4·5 inch guns was at the brick-kilns, and four naval 4·7 guns were on horse-boats in the river at Kut facing up-stream to stop any Turkish boats from making hostile demonstrations against the town and water-front.

One spare 18-pounder from the Divisional Ammunition Column was placed on the river front to cover Woolpress, and the gunboat *Semana* was

231

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000036

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

anchored at the Palm Grove below Kut with her guns also covering the village. The river at no place was narrower than 700 yards.

Along the outer line of wire were three blockhouses equi-distant apart, and just in rear of these our infantry were hard at work digging themselves in along the whole line. We knocked off work at the gunpits at dark, and officers and gunners slept at the guns while the drivers slept by their horses 300 yards in the rear. On the morning of the 4th December the horses were moved to a more sheltered position in some palm trees behind the bivouac of the Cavalry Brigade, and shortly afterwards the first shells from the enemy burst high over Kut without doing any damage. The enemy kept up a desultory fire all day, principally at the blockhouses, which were finally demolished, and it was not until 24th December that the Turks made a serious attack on that front. Had they attacked on their arrival it is extremely doubtful what the issue would have been, as we had no cover to fight from, and all ranks were worn out by the strenuous work of the retreat.

Our heavy guns replied to the enemy with effect, and we went on digging our gun-pits. On the afternoon of the 4th, Major Broke-Smith, D.S.O., commanding, my battery, the 63rd, received orders to move back and take up a new position in the brick-kilns. The new position was occupied on 5th December and became our permanent station for the remainder of the siege. The 82nd Battery stayed in the palm grove the whole time, but the 76th Battery moved their guns back and took up a position about 400 yards in front of us. They changed position at the end of January 1916. The distance from the brick-kilns to the front line was about 1,600 yards.

On 6th December the Cavalry Brigade, consisting of the 14th Hussars and the 7th, 22nd, and 33rd Cavalry, commanded by Brigadier-General Roberts, with four guns of "S" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, left Kut to join the relieving force at Amara. It was conjectured that the Turks would oppose their marching out, but they got away safely and crossed to the right bank of the Tigris by the bridge of boats between the brick-kilns and the fort. A small force of our native infantry held the bridge-head on the right bank, and it was generally supposed, after the cavalry had gone, the bridge would be dismantled, as it was of no practical value and only weakened our position. Strangely, no order for its destruction was given, and in consequence the Turks attacked our troops protecting it on the right bank, in an attempt to capture the bridge, on the morning of 8th December.

Major-General Sir John Mellis, V.C., K.C.B., was sent out to cope with the situation, and I was ordered out as Forward Observing Officer for the Artillery, with instructions to cover the retirement of our infantry from the bridge, and then direct the fire of the 1/5th Hants Howitzer Battery and the 63rd Battery, Royal Field Artillery, and destroy the bridge under General Melliss's orders.

The Turkish artillery fire in answer to ours was very accurate, and one gun of the 63rd Battery was put out of action, the enemy registering a direct hit on it. Their ammunition, however, was bad, nearly 50 per cent. of their shells either falling blind or bursting very high in the air. At this time they used a considerable amount of segment shell, which, however, did little damage.

At about 11.30 a.m. I received orders from General Melliss to blow up the bridge, but was unable to bring the fire of the howitzers on to the target as the guns were too inaccurate. We held the bridge from the left bank for the remainder of the day and that night two sapper officers swam out and blew it up with guncotton.

The following day, 9th December, I was detailed as Forward Observing Officer for the artillery for the front line. Though our men had worked hard during the six days we had been in Kut under fire, support and communication trenches were still in a very elementary state, and all movement had to be accomplished on hands and knees. It was noticeable that the trenches that had been dug by the British infantry were far more advanced than those worked on by the native troops with the exception of the trenches of the 2/7th Gurkhas. It was during these early days that our infantry suffered very heavily from Turkish snipers, a great number of whom had telescopic sights on their rifles.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000be

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Only half a battalion of the 1/4th Hants Infantry had garrisoned Kut prior to the arrival of the 6th Division and they had had enough work to do putting up the single-strand wire entanglements in conjunction with a detachment of pioneers.

The general scheme for defence of operations was as follows:—A fire trench extending the whole length of the opening of the perimeter, with four communication trenches leading to the billets and the town. Connected with the communication trenches and 150 yards behind the fire trench were the support trenches and Battalion Headquarters. These support trenches were occupied at night only. 400 yards behind the support trenches, and connected by the communication trenches, was the middle line, where the supports and reserves rendezvoused at night prior to going to their separate duties.

Along the fire trench were four redoubts D., C., B., and A. lettering from left to right defended by machine guns, and specially picked snipers, and in rear of these redoubts were the headquarters of the units occupying the fire trench and also the communication trenches.

The front line was divided into two sections, the north-west section commanded alternately by Major-General Sir John Melliss, V.C., K.C.B., and Major-General W. S. Delamain, C.B., D.S.O., reaching from the Tigris on the left up to and including B. redoubt, and the north-east section commanded by Brigadier-General Houghten, covering the ground between B. redoubt, the fort, and the pickets between the fort and the bridge head.

The north-west section was defended one week by the 30th Infantry Brigade commanded by Major-General Sir John Melliss, V.C., K.C.B., consisting of the West Kents, 2/7th Gurkhas, 104th Wellesley Rifles, and the 2/7th Punjabis; the succeeding week it was defended by the 18th Infantry Brigade commanded by Major-General W. S. Delamain, C.B., D.S.O., and composed of the 2/5th Hampshires, a detachment of the 4th Devons, 66th Punjabis, 76th Punjabis with whom was a detachment of the 99th Deccan Infantry, and the 117th Mahrattas. The town defences were commanded by Brigadier-General Hamilton and were garrisoned by the 48th Pioneers, the 7th Rajputs, and the Divisional Cavalry.

The Turkish infantry had sapped up to within 150 yards of our wire and started to build a fire trench parallel to our own. They seriously hampered our working parties with machine-gun fire and I was ordered to register the 63rd and 76th Batteries on their fire trench and knock out any machine guns that caused our troops trouble. The range to the enemy's trenches was barely 2,000 yards from the 63rd Battery which was the furthest away, and as the guns were supplied with both Mark I. and II. ammunition most of the registering was done with percussion shrapnel. During the next few days I registered the 63rd Battery on the most vulnerable portions of the Turkish trenches and machine-gun emplacements. As the 82nd Battery, Royal Field Artillery, was only 800 yards from the Turkish fire trench they were registered on the enemy's support and reserve trenches and several sandhills behind the enemy's position, which concealed heavy and field artillery gun emplacements. The 76th Battery covered the enemy trenches from B. redoubt to the fort, and the pickets to the right of it on the left bank of the river. The 63rd Battery covered the front from the river on the left to B. redoubt. In the daytime all batteries fired at targets which cropped up in their respective zones, but for night-fire all guns were laid on those portions of the enemy trenches from which attack might be expected.

The howitzers were registered on saps in both the north-west and north-east sections and several places on the right bank of the river behind Woolpress and the brick-kilns. The 104th Heavy Battery moved to some palm trees behind the old bivouac of the Cavalry Brigade and fired on a gun position which the Turks had built on the right bank of the river from which they could bombard the fort. The remainder of the artillery were disposed as on first entering Kut. The two guns left behind by the Royal Horse Artillery were placed on the river front, together with a spare 18-pounder, under the command of Captain Martin, Royal Field Artillery, Officer Commanding Ammunition Column. In addition to the Bombay Volunteer Battery already mentioned as occupying the fort, it was also defended by the Machine-Gun Battery commanded by Captain Stockley, 66th Punjabis, the Oxford Light Infantry, and the Norfolks. The brigade which

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000c3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

was not occupying the fire trench in the North-west Section was billetted in the town and composed the supports and reserves for that week.

I made my dug out and headquarters at C. redoubt, which was occupied alternately by the 2/7th Gurkhas and the 66th Punjabis. I ran telephone wires to all the Regimental Headquarters in the north-west section, so as to facilitate my being called at any time when a Regimental Commander wished to have the support of the artillery fire. From my dug out I also had a line running to the Headquarters of the North-west Section in the middle line and the Officer Commanding the 10th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, at the 82nd Battery, through whom I could communicate with the other 18-pounder batteries and the howitzers.

The inaccuracy of the old howitzers was greatly felt during the siege, for while they did excellent work on several occasions they could not be relied upon for accurate shooting. When registering these guns on enemy trenches within 150 yards of our own fire trench, it was necessary first to clear that part of our trench opposite the target to ensure the safety of our troops.

Four mountain artillery guns, which were left to garrison Kut during the advance on Baghdad, would have been invaluable for defensive work in the trenches and at the fort. These, however, had gone to Basra as escort for General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B., A.D.C.

It was decided that, in the event of the enemy getting into any part of our fire trench and making good their footing against counter attacks and bombing parties, the exits of that part of the trench were to be blocked with barbed-wire hurdles, made for that purpose, and the Turks dislodged by gun-fire.

The enemy repeatedly shelled the town during the third week in December, but their firing was erratic, and they made no attempts at registering. On 10th December all horses were moved to the town and placed in the Arab compounds, where they were well protected from shell fire.

On 24th December, Christmas Eve, the Turks attacked the fort in mass, and at the same time the town and brick-kilns were subjected to a very heavy artillery bombardment. The action at the fort was most bloody, and the way the men of the Bombay Artillery (*Eurasians*) handled their guns in its defence was worthy of the highest commendation. Twice the Turks gained a footing in the north-east salient of the fort, but each time they were driven back with heavy slaughter. Woolpress was heavily fired on by the enemy infantry but no attack was made on it. The attack on the fort continued throughout the day and night, but when Christmas morning dawned all was quiet except for the desultory sniping which went on all day long. Our casualties were heavy, but not nearly so heavy as the Turks' which were estimated at 5,000 killed and wounded.

On 29th December the first Turkish aeroplane was seen over Kut. It was a Moran monoplane, and after making an aerial reconnaissance returned to the Turkish lines.

On 30th December the fort and town were heavily shelled by the enemy, and on New Year's Eve the town was first bombed by Turkish aeroplanes. On the night of 3rd January the Turks attacked the North-west Section and Woolpress, but was repulsed with loss, excellent work being done by the artillery. I discovered by this time that star shell had a great moral effect on the enemy. On two or three occasions when Regimental Commanders reported to me that the enemy were firing heavily, generally the signal for an attack, and I had ordered star shells to be fired over the disturbed areas, the effect was surprising. All firing along that part of the enemy trench ceased, usually for the whole night. On the same day it was reported by the fort that two new Turkish Divisions had arrived, bringing the enemy strength to 3,000 men. Also on this day we had the first sprinkling of rain, which heralded the coming of the rainy season. On 4th December the Turks built two observation posts, one was a scaffolding made out of heavy timber far up on the right bank, and the other was made on the top of a sandhill in the middle front. Our observing was done from the tops of the brick-kilns, the fort, General Headquarters, the river

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000c3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

front, and an observation tower which was built in the palm grove behind the old cavalry bivouac.

On January 8th the guns of the relieving force were distinctly heard, and on this day the first heavy rain fell, and the trenches were in a frightful mess in a few hours. Rations were decreased on this date.

On January 17th Major General Townshend issued a communiqué to the troops desiring all ranks to be watchful, and informing the Division that the relieving force under General Aylmer had reached Wadi.

Wood fuel was finished on January 19th, and oil issued for cooking purposes to all troops except officers' messes, which were allowed two pounds of wood per officer a day. The river rose and flooded both our positions and the enemy's on January 21st. We retired to the middle line, which we fortified and held for the remainder of the siege. The Turks had to evacuate the whole of their trenches, and during their retirement our field guns shelled them with effect. They abandoned their trenches everywhere except at the fort, and retired behind the sandhills. The whole of their fire support and communication trenches fell in. The following day I went out on a reconnaissance but saw no sign of the enemy. I came across several dead Turks and Arabs, also some small arm ammunition in which the noses of the cartridges had been cut off to make them expand on impact.

The Turkish fire trenches were composed on an entirely different principle to ours. Each loophole in their trench had its own traverse, whereas our trenches had traverses every 10 or 15 yards. Every 20 yards in the Turkish trenches a flight of steps had been made running up to ground level. These steps were wide enough for four men to get up them abreast, and had evidently been made with the intention of being used in storming our trenches. I was informed later in Baghdad that if the rains had not washed out the trenches it was their intention to attack us with four battalions at the fort and eight battalions at the north-west section.

The wounds caused by the Turkish dum-dum bullets were bad enough, but not to be compared to the terrible holes made by the soft lead bullets, as large as a man's thumb, that the Arabs fired from the Sniders. I saw a man hit by one of these bullets between the eyes, and the whole of the top of his head was blown off.

All the work which had been done up to this time—registering enemy trenches and machine-gun emplacements—of course became nullified, and while the guns were laid at night so as to cover the most vulnerable places in our lines, during the day we fired on the enemy's batteries. It was at this time that the 76th Battery moved back to their position in front of the 63rd.

By this time the enemy had us thoroughly ringed in with their gun positions. They had eight batteries firing at us from the front, one from the right rear opposite the fort on the right bank of the Tigris, and two or three on the other side of Woolpress. One gun, however, "K," had seven different positions in rear of the Brick Kilns and the town, and gave us considerable trouble. Though it was fired at and damaged repeatedly, it always cropped up again a few days later in another position.

On 26th January General Townshend issued a communiqué stating that General Aylmer had failed to force his way through the Turks at Essim and we should have to wait another month. On this same day the Royal Artillery Drivers' Company was formed. It was made up of 25 drivers from each of the three 18-pounder batteries and the howitzers. The men were issued with rifles and infantry equipment and commanded by Captain Carlisle, 63rd Battery, Royal Field Artillery. Originally formed for police duty in the town among the Arabs, they afterwards did efficient work, garrisoning the fort and the pickets in rear of the Brick Kilns. On this day I rejoined the battery to act as Captain during the absence of Captain Carlisle.

The first ration of horse flesh was issued to the troops on 28th January. While the British troops and Gurkhas accepted without a murmer, the Punjabi Mussulmans refused to touch it and their atta ration was increased in lieu of the meat. This caused a shortening in our limit of resistance, it being partly owing to this large consumption of grain that a thousand animals

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000c7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

had to be destroyed, there not being enough to feed them. Even after permission was granted by their religious leaders in India, to eat horse, these Punjabis would only eat horse, but not mule. Consequently the whole of the horse ration was given to them and the British troops were fed on mule. It was not until the grain ration was decreased to the same amount for all troops that the Mussalmans eat horse flesh.

On 30th January the first of the rainy season fell, and the following morning there was a perceptable coating of ice on the water. On 9th February Turkish monoplanes bombed the river front and Brick Kilns in a vain effort to damage the guns. On 10th February an anti-aircraft air gun was put up by Staff-Sergeant Bonniker of the Ordnance Department. A suitable place was selected for the gun behind the 82nd Battery, Royal Field Artillery. A pole was firmly embedded in the ground and upon the the upper end of it was placed an inverted barrel, and a 13-pounder, Royal Horse Artillery, gun minus its wheels was firmly secured on the barrel; the trail of the gun rested in a circular wooden trough, well greased, and any big switch in deflection was accomplished by pushing the trail round in the trough. The outer edge of the trough prevented the trail from jumping out at the recoil of the gun.

On 23rd February it was announced that the relieving force would make another push shortly and as a result I was ordered to move four guns to the Palm Grove behind Kut. This movement was part of the operation in Scheme "E." It was expected that the Turks would retire up the right bank of the Tigris, and on word being received from General Aylmer that this was so, my guns with the 66th Punjabis, 2/7th Gurkhas, 76th Punjabis, Norfolks and West Kents were to cross a swinging bridge and hold up the retirement of the Turks until the relieving force could cope with them. I was hard put to it to get horses sufficiently strong to pull the guns, and had to take the best horses from the first line of waggons to make up my teams. The guns were moved at night and all movement was finished by 10 p.m. There was no sleep, however, as the whole night long the guns of the relieving force were both seen and heard pounding away at the enemies' positions.

On 25th February the project was called off, and that night I moved the guns back to their old position at the Kilns. On 1st March the Turks gave us a very heavy bombardment lasting all day. Enemy aeroplanes were very busy, two of them making eight trips and dropping bombs on the town and Brick Kilns. No damage was done at the Kilns, but at the town several of the Arab population were killed or wounded.

It was announced on 10th March that General Aylmer had failed again, and while the men were slightly downhearted they regained their spirits when it was announced on 15th March that General Gorringe had taken over the command of the relieving force.

On 18th March Turkish aeroplanes came over at night and while trying to bomb the 5-inch Royal Garrison Artillery guns on the river front, not far from the British General Hospital, dropped bombs on the latter. A terrible scene followed, some poor men lying in bed sick or wounded received further wounds, while others were killed outright.

A gunner in my battery had his right ear, right hand and left foot blown off. As a result of this castastrophe the two 5-inch guns were moved to the Kilns 200 hundred yards in rear of the other two guns of the same battery.

On 20th March Turkish aeroplanes dropped bombs on the first line waggon park in Kut and damaged nine limbers and waggon bodies, exploding several rounds of ammunition. The Turks gave us another heavy bombardment on 22nd March and kept it up throughout the day. The spirit of the men at this time was splendid. One of my gunners had half of his face blown away by a shell. He only spoke once before he died and then he said, "Give them hell, sir." The Turkish gunnery at this time was poor, and for the enormous number of rounds that were fired into Kut it was surprising what a small number of casualties resulted from shell fire.

On 23rd March the first British aeroplane came over Kut and dropped letters for the General Staff. Desultory firing by enemy's guns for the last days of March. By this time our rations were down to a minimum and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000073

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

there was nothing one could buy in the Bazaar. The Arabs of the town had reaped the harvest. Provisions that they had bought for a trifle during the advance they had sold during the siege at whatever price they liked, and it was a case of either paying or going without. S. and T. sugar, jam, tea, pickles, butter and cheese were openly sold in the streets to the troops at three and four times their normal prices. But now at the end of March this had all gone and the troops had to pick up a peculiar kind of weed, which when cooked tastes like spinach. This was the only addition to their diet of bread and horse.

On 3rd April the largest hailstones I have ever seen fell in Kut. They were as big as walnuts and made a noise on the roofs of the dugouts like shrapnel. We received splendid news on 5th April, when it was announced that General Gorringe had taken the first five lines of the enemies' trenches at Beit Aisa, between Sunnyat and Essin Ridge. On 10th April rations were cut to one pound of horseflesh and five ounces of bread for all troops, and it was on this date that the majority of the Mussalman soldiers started to eat horseflesh. This reduction of rations was made to enable us to hold out till 1st April (? 1st May).

On 12th April it was announced that an aeroplane would drop food in Kut in an effort to help us to eke out our rations. Undoubtedly, if the matter had been taken seriously and the work done systematically, we should have been able to hold out for some considerable time longer, as there was no scarcity of ammunition. The food-dropping, however, was done in such a desultory way and was started so late that it only gave us an additional two days' rations.

On 14th April bread was cut to four ounces, and on the 15th it was reported that General Gorringe had captured the entire Turkish position Bain Aisa.

Esmeralda, my charger, was killed and eaten on 18th April. Poor thing, she died in harness all right.

On 21st April we drew two days' reserve rations, which consisted of 12 ounces of mixed biscuits, a quarter of an ounce of tea, three ounces of jam, one ounce of sugar, half of which was sand, and 1¼ ounces of horseflesh. On the 23rd we drew S. and T. ration, four ounces of bread, one ounce of sugar, and half ounce of cheese.

Great excitement prevailed in Kut when it was heard that the relieving force would attempt to send the steamboat Julna through with rations on the night of 24th April. It was decided that if the boat got through undisabled it was to come up to Kut itself and be unloaded, but that if it was hit it was to be beached at the Fort. The artillery made special preparations to cover its arrival, and everyone was on edge with expectation. Shortly after midnight heavy rifle fire was heard down river, and we knew that the attempt had begun; for 15 minutes the firing was very rapid, then it died down and our spirits with it. Another burst of firing came and our spirits rose accordingly, but this also died away into silence and we knew that the attempt had failed. Afterwards we heard that every member of the crew was killed by rifle fire and the navigator, Captain Cowley, had dropped at the wheel with a bullet through his groin just as he was steering the ship through the most critical place in the whole river, a hairpin bend. While consciousness lasted he hung on, but the boat was swept into the bank and grounded. No one will ever know the agony Captain Cowley must have suffered trying to steer the boat with a bullet in his groin. When the Turkish officers boarded the boat they found him unconscious with his hands still gripping the steering-wheel and in spite of all the efforts of the Turkish doctors to save him he died without regaining consciousness. Another 15 minutes and the boat would have been through.

On the 25th April the Supply and Transport issued their reserve ration of six ounces of bully beef, half an ounce of cocoa, two ounces of sugar, and four ounces of bread. Finally, on the 26th April we gave up hope. On that day the destruction of ammunition was ordered, with the exception of that in the firing battery, waggons, and gun limbers. This job took the whole night. The ammunition was taken down to the river, decapped and thrown into the water. All the time during the siege we had been ordered to husband our ammunition, yet here, three days before we surrendered, in my battery alone I destroyed 1,200 rounds.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000059

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

The big guns also destroyed a large number of rounds which could have been used effectually to shell enemies' convoys going down to the Turkish position below.

On 27th of April General Townshend announced that after General Gorringe's failure on 27th April to dislodge the Turks it became apparent that he could not reach us in time. It was hoped that we should go back to India on parole. During the course of the day it was learnt by the men that the guns were being offered to the Turks as an inducement to allow us to go back to India on parole. They said they would rather go to Turkey as prisoners of war than leave the guns that they had used for so long for the Turks to use against our own people below.

On the morning of 29th April at 5 a.m. I received orders to blow up my guns, and with their destruction and the complete breaking up of all spare parts a weight seemed to be lifted from everyone's mind, and officers and men alike faced the final surrender with courage and fortitude. At about 9 a.m. a short *communiqué* was sent round by General Townshend, in which he said the negotiations had failed and we should all go as prisoners of war to Turkey. We had received so many disappointments in the last month that we took the last blow resignedly, and were even cheerful when the Turks came in at 11.30 a.m.

General Impressions.

From a military point of view it would seem to have been a mistake to keep the Arab population in Kut after the siege had commenced. All Arab grain was, of course, confiscated at the commencement, and undoubtedly, if the Arab population had been sent out, our powers of existence would have been increased immeasurably. 4,000 useless mouths were being fed on rations that should have gone to feed the fighting forces. Probably there were some political grounds on which the matter was decided, but looking at it purely from a military point of view, it seems deplorable.

The permission of Arabs to sell food at exorbitant prices, and the generous manner in which rations were issued during the first six weeks of the siege, undoubtedly also sapped our food supply. The Supply and Transport were so uncertain of the limit of the food supply that it was found, both at the fort and at Woolpress, that atta was being used in sacks for defensive purposes.

The Ordnance Department must have overlooked some ammunition in taking census, as two months after the siege started there was still 300 rounds per gun for the 18-pounders and 600 rounds per rifle, the same amount of ammunition as was officially announced to be the total during the early days. Several opportunities arose where ammunition could have been used with effect but were allowed to slip by owing to the strict orders about husbanding it.

When the Turks had entered Kut it was found that the horse-boats from which the 4·7-inch naval guns had been fired were intact, also eight or nine large Arab boats, known as mahallas, fell into their hands. With the shortage of wood fuel the mahallas would have added to the supply considerably, and surely it would have been an easy matter to have blown up the horse-boats at the same time as the guns they contained were demolished.

Nothing but the highest praise is due to the Medical Department. How the doctors managed to save so many lives and keep down disease with their limited supplies was perfectly marvellous.

The cheerfulness of the men under hardship was beyond praise, and I never saw any conduct in the artillery which was not in keeping with the highest traditions of the Royal regiment.

The want of modern quick-firing howitzers was keenly felt. On many occasions 18-pounders had to take on targets which would have been more effectively dealt with by modern howitzers with high explosive.

The 18-pounder again proved its worth as the ideal light field gun, and, with the addition of a split trail, larger traversing scale, and spring case under the barrel would be unbeatable. Many times when a big switch in deflection had to be made the new target had disappeared before the gun

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

could be brought to bear on it. After 18 months of steady, constant use these guns were almost as reliable as the day they left the arsenal.

The artillery horses did fine work and could always be relied upon in an emergency. The manner in which they achieved the retirement, going for 36 hours without water, and galloping in and out of action, speaks sufficiently well for their stamina and worth.

Was the sacrifice worth the end achieved? Yes! most certainly so. Of course the British arms lost prestige, but this lost prestige can be regained by administering a smashing defeat to the Turks. It would, however, have taken more than one smashing defeat if we had continued to retire.

If we had retreated beyond Kut the orderly retirement would in all probability have become a rout, and it is quite possible that the greater part of the division would have been lost without having achieved anything definite. As it is, however, six hundred miles of country are yet British, and we are still the attacking force, which generally gains the ascendancy over the defending one.

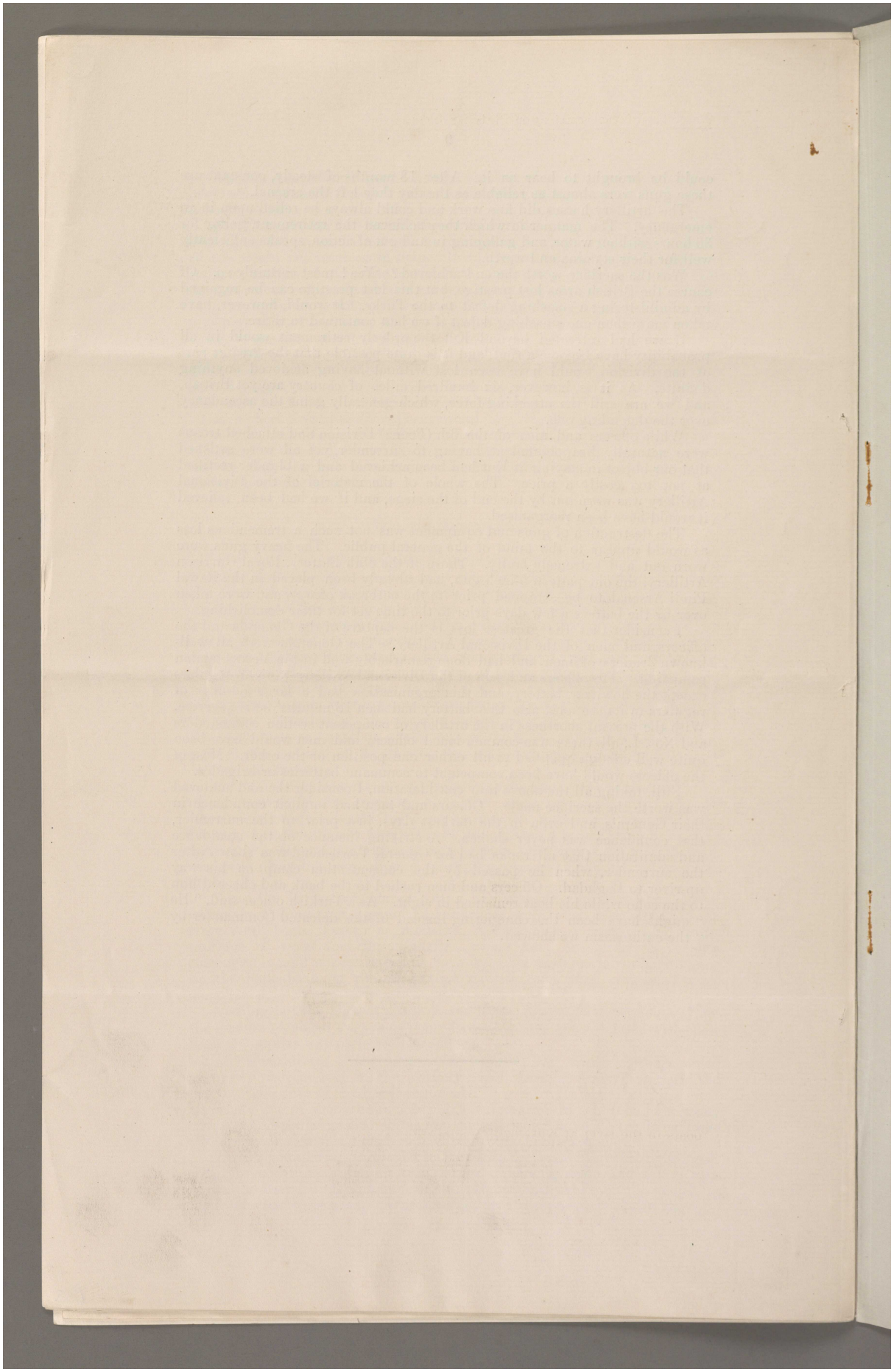
While officers and men of the 6th (Poona) Division and attached troops were naturally disappointed at having to surrender, yet all were satisfied that our object in staying at Kut had been achieved and a blunder rectified at not too costly a price. The whole of the materiel of the Divisional Artillery was worn out by the end of the siege, and if we had been relieved it would have been reorganised.

The destruction of guns and equipment was not such a tremendous loss as would appear to the mind of the general public. The heavy guns were worn out and extremely faulty. Those of the 86th Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, the old pattern 5-inch gun, had already been placed in the Rawal Pindi Arsenal to be scrapped prior to the outbreak of war, and were taken over by the battery a few days prior to the time set for their demolishing.

I consider that the greatest loss is the capture of the Generals and the officers and men of the Divisional Artillery. The Generals were all well-known leaders of men and had done remarkably well in the Mesopotamian campaign. The officers and men of the Divisional Artillery were all regulars except the howitzer battery, and this organisation had a large number of regulars in its sections, also this battery had seen 18 months' active service. With the present shortness in the artillery of competent section commanders and Nos. I., all these non-commissioned officers and men would have been quite well enough qualified to fill either one position or the other. Most of the officers would have been competent to command batteries or brigades.

Still, taking all the above into consideration, I consider the end achieved was worth the sacrifice made. Officers and men had implicit confidence in their Generals, and even in the darkest days, just prior to the surrender, that confidence was never shaken. A striking instance of the confidence and admiration that all ranks had for General Townshend was shown after the surrender, when he passed by the concentration camp on his way up-river to Baghdad. Officers and men rushed to the bank and cheered him to the echo while his boat remained in sight. As a Turkish officer said, "He "might have been the conquering instead of the defeated Commander by "the enthusiasm we showed."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00005e



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000009

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Lord Curzon. (234)

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

Printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence. July 1916.

SECRET.
G.-74.

12

THE PRESENTATION TO PARLIAMENT OF PAPERS IN REGARD TO THE MILITARY OPERATIONS IN MESOPOTAMIA AND THE DARDANELLES.

I.—Note by the Secretary.
II.—Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
Appendix.—Extract from the Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, June 1, 1916.

I.—Note by the Secretary.

THE Prime Minister desires that the War Committee shall consider the question of the presentation to Parliament of Papers relating to the military campaigns in Mesopotamia and the Dardanelles. This Memorandum has been prepared to give the Committee full information as to how these questions stand.

Mesopotamia.

2. The first promise to produce Papers on the subject of Mesopotamia was made by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government, voluntarily and not under any pressure, in the course of a statement on compulsory military service made in the House of Commons on the 2nd May, immediately after the fall of Kut. The actual reference in the Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates is as follows :—

> "At another moment it is told—as I feel sure it will be said *when the papers about Mesopotamia which we are about to produce are circulated*, that the Government was the too subservient tool of their military advisers."

On the following day Lord Crewe in the House of Lords stated in reply to a question by Lord Morley that some papers would be laid before the House as soon as possible in regard to General Townshend's appreciation of the position after the battle of Kut-el-Amara, and in a supplementary answer he agreed :—

> "That the public were entitled to the fullest information that could be given consistently with the necessity of safeguarding military operations, but he could not say precisely when the Papers would be ready."

On the 11th May, the Prime Minister stated that :—

> "As some time must elapse before the Papers dealing with the expedition as a whole can be laid, it is proposed to lay Papers dealing with this special point (namely, General Townshend's appreciation of the position after the battle of Kut-el-Amara) separately, and I hope very soon."

3. These latter Papers were laid on the 30th May. On the 1st June, on the Motion for the adjournment, the precedent of the publication of the Mesopotamian Papers was urged as a reason for publishing the Dardanelles Papers, Sir H. Dalziel said :—

> "For if it is right—and I am sure that it is—to publish Papers with regard to Mesopotamia, surely also it is right that the Papers with regard to the Dardanelles ought to be published. Indeed, I think so far as the Dardanelles is concerned, that case is much stronger than that of Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia is, after all, still in what you might call the active military zone, and conceivably it might be pleaded that in that case the enemy should not have any information at all."

236

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000a0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

4. In replying for the Government, the Secretary of State for the Colonies said in regard to the Mesopotamian Papers :—

> "We quite realise that in publishing those papers in regard to Mesopotamia we were taking a step which is open to criticism, but we came to that conclusion, and I think rightly, for I have not changed the view that I have always held since the war began, that the public and the House of Commons should be given all the information which can by any possibility be issued without detriment to the military service. We, therefore, carefully considered the question of these Papers, and decided that, though operations are still going on in this case, yet in regard to this particular phase of them, which is finished, Papers could be laid without detriment to the interests of the public service."

Mr. Bonar Law also promised a discussion on the Mesopotamian Expedition if there was a desire for it on the part of the House.

5. On the 21st June the Under-Secretary of State for India (Lord Islington) explained that the Papers regarding the opinions of Generals in the field as to the Ctesiphon episode had been issued in advance, as the Government knew that the preparation of the mass of Papers and correspondence in connection with the Mesopotamian campaign would take a long time.

Lord Midleton, on that occasion, gave the following reasons for the production of the Papers :—

> "I would only add that I press for their production, because, in the interests of the Government, I think it necessary to say that the continued reports we are receiving as individuals from Mesopotamia, showing that even now there appear to be great gaps to be filled up in preparedness, and points which show that some of those responsible for the provision of the troops have not yet risen to the full measure of their responsibility, make it highly desirable that there should not merely be a debate, but that there should be a full enquiry upon this question at the earliest possible moment."

6. The above extracts from the proceedings in Parliament have been given in order to enable the War Committee to judge as to the reasons urged for the publication of the Mesopotamian Papers, as to their scope, and as to the extent to which the Government were pressed by Parliament on the subject.

7. The preparation of the Mesopotamian Papers was undertaken in the India Office, and copies of the Papers when ready were sent to the Admiralty, War Office, and Foreign Office.

8. The Admiralty and Foreign Office were not very much concerned departmentally, but the War Office replied with the following strong protest against their publication :—

> "Sir, *War Office, S.W., June* 29, 1916.
>
> "I am commanded by the Army Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter (unnumbered and undated), enclosing a proof of the Papers relating to the operations in Mesopotamia which it is proposed to lay before Parliament, and to state for the information of Mr. Secretary Chamberlain that, after careful consideration, the Council find themselves strongly opposed to their publication. The Papers contain many indications as to the military problems which have still to be faced, notably the difficulties of navigation of the Tigris and of maintaining a force far up that river, the protection of the oil-fields and pipe line, and the question of the isolated garrison at Nasiriyeh.
>
> "I am to return the proof of the Papers with those portions marked in blue which, on purely military grounds, it will be most objectionable to publish at the present time; but even from the remainder the Council are of opinion that an astute enemy, reading between the lines, could obtain much information which would be of value to him. They therefore desire to urge that the publication of the Papers would involve serious military disadvantage, and that their publication should, therefore, be withheld; it being stated, if thought desirable, that, in the opinion of the Imperial General Staff, publication would prejudice the success of operations in Mesopotamia.
>
> "I am, &c.,
> "(Signed) R. H. BRADE.
>
> "The Under-Secretary of State,
> "Military Department, India Office, S.W."

9. The Secretary of State for India has forwarded to the Prime Minister his comments on the passages marked in blue by the General Staff, and his remarks illustrate the difficulty of publication. On some of the marked passages (No. 200 and No. 201, for example), Mr. Chamberlain has commented that they are necessary if the story is to be fairly told. This is precisely the difficulty, that the story cannot be told

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00005e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

fully and fairly without assisting the enemy. Even if the War Office were willing to agree to publication of Papers with the omission of the marked passages (which they are not), it is open to question whether to publish only a part of the story is not calculated to do more harm than good, as some persons are certain to consider themselves aggrieved by omissions.

10. The new factors introduced since the decision of the Government to publish these Papers are the death of Lord Kitchener, which is perhaps less important in connection with the Mesopotamian than with the Dardanelles Papers, and the retirement of General Baratoff's Russian force from their positions on the border of Mesopotamia.

Dardanelles.

11. The publication of the Dardanelles Papers differs from that of the Mesopotamian Papers in this respect; that whereas the promise in regard to the Mesopotamian was spontaneous on the part of the Government, in regard to the Dardanelles it was made under pressure and after it had been previously refused.

12. Even before the evacuation, the Dardanelles papers had been asked for in Parliament and were refused, on grounds which were stated by Mr. Tennant in the House of Commons, on the 15th November as follows:—

> "The reason why we are not able to lay Papers about the Dardanelles is because it would involve arguments in relation to policy covering the whole of our campaign over the world. It is precisely because we do not treat the Dardanelles, or any part of the operations in the field, as isolated operations, or treat them in watertight compartments, that we are not able to accede to the request to lay Papers on this subject on the Table of the House."

The difficulty mentioned by Mr. Tennant is proving a most formidable one, and will be referred to later in this Memorandum.

13. After inquiry into the Suvla Bay operations had been refused several times, another demand for publication of the Dardanelles Papers was made in the House of Commons in the debate on the Motion for Adjournment on the 1st June. The reasons for the demand and the scope of the ground which they desired should be covered by the proposed Papers are given in the statements by Sir H. Dalziel and Colonel Churchill, printed in full in the Appendix.

14. It will be seen that the publication of the Mesopotamian Papers was at once seized upon by both these members as a precedent for publishing the Dardanelles Papers. It was urged that though there might perhaps have been some case for keeping back the Mesopotamian Papers, since Mesopotamia was still an active military zone, the Dardanelles campaign was a closed book, and that nothing could be published now in regard to them which could give the enemy any useful information.

15. Regarding the scope of the Papers, it will be noticed that Colonel Churchill urged with considerable force that events such as the Battle of Suvla Bay could not be considered by a mere investigation of what befell the soldiers and generals on the spot, and that it was necessary to deal with these questions also from the point of view of the great decisions taken by the War Committee in Whitehall in regard to both the naval and military operations which governed the Dardanelles and Gallipoli enterprises. Sir H. Dalziel also hinted that the House of Commons would expect Papers which would clear up the question of the original naval attack and the first landing, and the time that elapsed between them.

16. The Secretary of State for the Colonies granted the request for the publication of Dardanelles Papers in the following terms:—

> "In regard to the Dardanelles and the publication of the Papers, what is the principle which should guide the Government in a matter of this kind? In the first place, what is the object of going into this, and what is to be gained by going into it? My right honourable friend puts one consideration to me, the importance of which I need not say I do not underestimate. He says that the publication of these Papers may probably show that there are people still exercising authority who may perhaps be proved to have made such mistakes that they should no longer be allowed to hold positions of authority. If that is true, the sooner the Papers are published the better. In regard to the Dardanelles, as in regard to Mesopotamia, the Government have come to the conclusion that it is better, on the whole, that the Papers should be published, and that the House of Commons should be given information. That being so, I need not say that it is the desire and intention of the Government to lay the papers on the Table as soon as possible. It is quite obvious that, if a story is to be told, then the whole of it should be told. There are only two limitations which I shall make in regard to the publication of these Papers. There may be documents of so confidential a character that they ought not to be published, and the other is, as I am sure the House will realise, that there is at least the possibility that some of the Papers might give

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b4

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

information which might be useful to the enemy in regard to operations which are still going on. All I can say, therefore, is that these two considerations will be kept in view by the Government, but their intention is that nothing shall be withheld which is not against public interests."

In reply to a question by Mr. Outhwaite, Mr. Bonar Law promised that if there were any relevant diplomatic correspondence it would certainly be considered as well.

It is understood that neither the Foreign Office, War Office, nor Admiralty were consulted before the decision in regard to the publication of these Papers was taken.

17. The Prime Minister has directed the Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence to act as a co-ordinating centre as regards the collection of the Dardanelles Papers. As soon as his instructions were received a communication was sent to the Foreign Office, Admiralty, and War Office, asking that each of these Departments would make its own collection and forward them to the Committee of Imperial Defence, where they would be arranged in the most convenient order.

18. The Foreign Office have notified the Secretary that all diplomatic documents must be excluded. They concern the Allies, and they could not, in the opinion of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, be laid without reference to them. The Allies, he considers, would certainly not consent to publication. It might be added that the diplomatic documents would very closely concern certain neutrals, such as Roumania, publication of the references to whom would be inexpedient.

19. However this may be, the decision of the Foreign Office immensely adds to the difficulty of making a suitable collection. Not only does it involve the consequence that every naval and military paper will have to be most carefully scrutinised to see that it contains no reference to diplomatic events (and such references are frequent throughout the whole series), but it removes the whole diplomatic background, without which the decisions taken by the Government at the time cannot be understood. It is as impossible to separate the various phases of the Dardanelles episode from the diplomatic history of that period, as it would be to separate from diplomatic considerations the present retention of the Allied forces at Salonica. In fact, the Foreign Office decision renders it impossible to carry out Mr. Bonar Law's proposal that "if a story is to be told, then the whole of it should be told."

20. The Admiralty have received from Colonel Churchill a set of the Papers which he considers ought to be published in regard to the naval attack on the Dardanelles. These Papers include a considerable number of staff memoranda, besides private telegrams which passed between Colonel Churchill when he was First Lord of the Admiralty and the Vice-Admiral commanding the Dardanelles, and memoranda prepared by Colonel Churchill for the Cabinet. It is understood that the selection of the Naval Papers, which are very voluminous, involves decisions of considerable difficulty, which in many cases will have eventually to be made by senior officers, whose whole time is absorbed in the conduct of the war. The Flag Officer who was designated to deal with these Papers in the first instance has unfortunately broken down in health.

21. It is understood that the War Office have made some progress in the preparation of their lists of Papers. General Sir Ian Hamilton has sent them a complete list of all his telegrams and despatches, and asks that the whole may be published. The Papers have, however, as yet, not been examined by the General Staff.

22. One very important question of principle has been raised in connection with these Dardanelles Papers. Mr. Churchill has urged on the Prime Minister that it is necessary to publish, in some form or another, the Secretary's notes of the meetings of the War Council which existed from November 1914 until the present Government took office, when it was superseded by the Dardanelles Committee, afterwards renamed the War Committee. It is probably true that the story of the Dardanelles operations cannot be told completely without these Minutes. On the other hand, there are a large number of objections to their publication.

23. In the first place, there is the question of principle. The War Committee is practically a Committee of the Cabinet, and the question arises whether its proceedings ought not to be as inviolable as those of the Cabinet. There is no precedent for the publication of the proceedings even of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

24. Apart, however, from the question of principle there are objections of detail. The first of these is that it would provide a precedent for the publication of all future proceedings of the War Committee, and this might tend to stifle free discussion at future meetings, and so limit the Committee's usefulness.

25. A second objection is that mentioned by Mr. Tennant (see paragraph 12) that

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00005e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

the Dardanelles operations did not stand alone. They were part of the general strategy of the Allies, and consequently the records of the War Council, Dardanelles Committee, and War Committee in regard to them are in places inextricably bound up with other naval and military operations, and with diplomatic negotiations, in both of which our Allies were often concerned as much as ourselves. In many cases the circumstances discussed could not be published without the consent of our Allies, and often not without detriment to public interest. To endeavour to edit the proceedings by the excision of all matter that cannot be published would be to deprive them at times of all coherence and continuity.

26. Another objection to the publication of these proceedings is that they are kept in the form of a summary of what each person said. For reasons of secrecy in a document concerned with the details of forthcoming naval and military operations, they have never been printed, and, consequently, they have never been passed round to be checked by members. Before they could be published it would be only fair that such opportunity should be given, though Lord Kitchener's death renders it impossible in his case, and it would be a serious responsibility for anyone to have to undertake the task on his behalf.

27. The objections to publication of the minutes *in extenso* being so strong, the Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, by the Prime Minister's directions, endeavoured to prepare a memorandum based on the proceedings of the War Council. Though very great pains have been taken in the preparation of a specimen memorandum covering the first four months of 1915, it must be frankly admitted that the document produced is not in the least degree suited for publication.

28. A difficulty of a different order met with in preparing these Papers is illustrated by the following letter from Lord Fisher to the Prime Minister, which is a good example of the sort of personal complications that will arise through their publication :—

"My dear Prime Minister, "36, *Berkeley Square London, June* 2, 1916.

"I see in 'The Times' of this morning that the Government have undertaken to publish Papers about the Dardanelles and Gallipoli operations. I have no objection in principle to such a publication provided the Papers give a fair representation of the facts, and I presume I shall be consulted as to any selection that may be made.

"Certain striking facts must be incorporated in these published Papers that do not of course appear in the written records, but nevertheless they are vital and verifiable by the participants in the drama. Such, for instance, as my abruptly rising from the War Council table at No. 10, Downing Street, and going to the window, determined to terminate my service at the Admiralty, and Lord Kitchener following me to the window with his professional remonstrance, appealing to me to continue and carry through the Dardanelles operation, which reluctantly caused me to resume my seat! There are also other vital incidents not recorded in writing, such as the visit of Mr. Churchill and myself to Lord Kitchener at the War Office respecting the urgency of the military steps imperative to be taken. Again, the fact must be brought out that Admiral de Robeck's telegrams of the 23rd March and the 26th March, recommending a joint military and naval operation, was the determining factor that absolutely decided my final stand against further naval action alone.

"Again, the attitude of Mr. Balfour and Admiral Sir Henry Jackson require to be recorded, as their influence was a most important factor in the decision which led to the Dardanelles operations. Mr. Balfour's Memorandum of the 29th February, 1915, and Sir H. Jackson's detailed plan of attack should (it seems to me) certainly be included. I have re-read my Memorandum on General Naval Policy which I sent you on the 25th January, 1915, and Mr. Churchill's remarks thereon dated the 27th January, in consequence of which we had the interview with you at which your decision in favour of the Dardanelles operations was given—there is a serious objection to the publication of these two documents because of the light they throw on our naval position and policy, therefore it may be sufficient (so far as I am concerned) to insert the following paragraph embodying briefly the main purport of the paper :—

"No. .

"'Memorandum by Lord Fisher on General Naval Policy deprecating the use of Naval Force in Coast Operations unsupported by Military Force, and emphasising the supreme importance of maintaining the unchallengable strength of the Grand Fleet in the decisive theatre.'

"Yours truly,
"FISHER.

"2.6.16."

29. The most important new factors in the situation affecting the publication of the Dardanelles Papers since the Government promise was made are : the refusal of the Foreign Office to publish the relevant diplomatic correspondence ; the death of Lord Kitchener ; and the Russian offensive and its reaction on tendencies in the Balkans.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00002c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Remarks.

30. It is understood that there is no precedent for the publication during the war of Papers (other than despatches) relating to a naval or military expedition, with the sole exception of the Expedition to the Scheldt, 1809, regarding which Papers were published in January 1810.*

31. In regard both to the Mesopotamian and Dardanelles operations, it must be borne in mind that the presentation of Papers, if they are to tell the whole story as Mr. Bonar Law said they should do, involves certain disadvantages, amongst which the following may be cited :—

(*a.*) The Mesopotamian Papers contain information bearing on problems still to be faced, and their publication would, in the opinion of the General Staff, prejudice the success of operations in Mesopotamia.

(*b.*) Both sets of Papers would throw a flood of light upon our general policy in the East.

(*c.*) The enemy would obtain an extraordinarily close knowledge of our Intelligence Services in the East at different phases of the campaign, which, in the aggregate, should give him an intimate acquaintance with their value ; it is only necessary to glance through the Mesopotamian collection to realise this.

(*d.*) The enemy might be able to discover a good deal of information as to his own weak points, for example, in regard to the coast defences at the Dardanelles.

(*e.*) A good of information would be given to Foreign Intelligence Departments, including those of the enemy, in regard to such matters as landing places, wells, water supply, state of rivers, &c., the collection of which in ordinary circumstances is an arduous and expensive task.

(*f.*) The enemy will be reassured from the fact of the publication of these Papers that there is no risk of a renewed attack on the Dardanelles, and will be able to base his military dispositions on this assumption. It may be true that all prospect of attack in this region has disappeared, but the question arises whether it is wise to tell him so.

32. The questions which the War Committee have to decide appear to be as follows :—

(i.) In the case of the Mesopotamian Papers do the political advantages of publication outweigh the "serious military disadvantage" which the General Staff state is involved.

(ii.) In regard to the Dardanelles Papers, the Committee will no doubt be advised by the Admiralty and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff whether serious naval and military disadvantage is or is not involved in publication. It will then be for them to decide whether in this case the political advantages of publication do or do not outweigh any naval or military disadvantages.

(iii.) A further question to be decided in regard to the Dardanelles Papers is whether justice can be done to anyone without the publication of the diplomatic correspondence, which the Foreign Office state they are unable to have published. Unquestionably, without these papers it is impossible to tell "the whole story."

---

* The precedent is not a happy one. The publication of the Walcheren Papers led immediately to debates in Parliament which lasted without intermission from the end of January to March 17, "absorbing thus," as Alison says, "nearly the whole time both of the Government and of the country at the very moment when the concentration of all the national thought and energies was required for the prosecution of the gigantic campaign in progress on the Continent." The Government escaped defeat by a small majority, but to quote Alison once more, "the obloquy which it brought upon the Government, and the narrow escape which they made from total shipwreck on its result, roused into a flame the ill-smothered embers of a conflagration in the Cabinet, and led at this critical moment to a change in the most important offices of the State."

The whole incident, which is related in considerable detail in Alison's "History of Europe," chapter LX, culminating as it did in the duel between Castlereagh and Canning, and the fall of the Portland Government, offers so many parallels to the Dardanelles campaign, both from a military and political point of view as to be worthy of study. It may be remarked that about this time the Duke of Wellington was constantly complaining of the amount of information useful to the enemy which the British Government allowed to be published, and that the French records express the value of this information to them, though this does not apply specifically to the Walcheren expedition.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000022

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(iv.) If it is decided to publish the Dardanelles Papers a decision will be required as to whether the related War Committee proceedings are to be published.

(v.) If these Papers are to be published it will also have to be decided whether they are to include such documents as Papers circulated by Ministers for the use of the Cabinet or War Committee only (as suggested by Colonel Churchill) and Staff Memoranda prepared in the Admiralty and General Staff.

M. P. A. HANKEY, *Secretary.*

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
July 8, 1916.

II.—Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

I am strongly opposed to the publication at the present time of any papers dealing with the Dardanelles operations, for the following reasons:—

1. Publication would call attention to a story which brings little credit to our methods of conducting war. It would, I am convinced, affect disadvantageously our prestige in the East, where moral factors have more than ordinary weight; and this at a time when we are beginning to reassert our influence.

2. It would not be possible to publish the whole of the documents and telegrams dealing with any one stage of the operations without disclosing the history of our negotiations with the various Balkan States, which would be most undesirable.

3. It would not be just to publish only a portion of the documents in question, and if a complete presentment of the case is to be made, Mr. Winston Churchill's Appreciations of the 25th February, 1915, and of the 1st June, 1915, and Lord Kitchener's Memoranda of the 14th May, 1915, and of the 28th May, 1915, amongst others, must appear. I would urge that on military grounds alone the publication of these documents during the course of the war would be most objectionable.

4. Mr. Winston Churchill's record and reputation are not the only ones involved in these operations, and if his case is to be put forward those of Sir Ian Hamilton and of other commanders should, in justice, also be published. This would involve the appearance of a large number of documents, which would give information to our enemies and lower our reputation in the eyes of the world.

5. On the above grounds, I urge that no further action should be taken in this matter until after the conclusion of the war.

(Initialled) W. R. R., *General,*
Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

War Office, July 9, 1916.

APPENDIX.

Extracts from the Official Report of Parliamentary Debates, June 1, 1916.

SIR H. DALZIEL: There are one or two points to which I desire to refer before the House adjourns. The first is Mesopotamia. I am glad that the Government have published voluntarily the Papers with regard to that expedition. I understand that there are more important Papers to be forthcoming, and I refer to the matter now simply to ask the Government if they will give us an opportunity of discussing those Papers and the whole situation with regard to Mesopotamia as early as possible after the House reassembles. I think that that is a very reasonable and wise demand. We have an enquiry in regard to medical arrangements, but I do not assume that we shall have the report in time for that Debate. I am sure that the Colonial Secretary, who is now leading the House, will recognise that we are not putting forward an unreasonable demand in asking that we should have an opportunity of discussing a matter of so much military and public interest at the present time. I would ask further that the Government should reconsider their decision with regard to the publication of the Dardanelles Papers, for if it is right—and I am sure that it is—to publish Papers with regard to Mesopotamia, surely also it is right that the Papers with regard to the Dardanelles ought also to be published. Indeed, I think that so far as the Dardanelles is concerned, that case is much stronger than that of Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia is, after all, still in what you might call the active military zone, and conceivably it might be pleaded that in that case the enemy should not have any information at all. But the Dardanelles is a closed book. Nothing can be published now which can give the enemy any information

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000032

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

whatever of military value. Therefore, the Government should reconsider their decision and give us all the Papers of value in order that we might come to a right decision with regard to the whole mystery of the Dardanelles.

I am not going to re-open the Dardanelles controversy to-day, but there are two schools of thought. One thinks that the Navy was principally to blame, and the other thinks that the military did not act sufficiently and promptly in supplying the forces necessary to back up the Navy. My right honourable friend, the late First Lord of the Admiralty (Colonel Churchill), has referred in this House to some of these documents. Conceivably the reputation of statesmen may be damaged by the publication of these documents. I am not sure what view my right honourable friend takes with regard to it. I can assure him that the public are anxious to know the truth, irrespective of what the result might be. There is also the further question of the Suvla Bay operations. We all know the tragedy in connection with that—in a few hours men dying for want of water because there were no guns to assist them. That ought to be the subject of information to the House and the subject of enquiry. A further point is the long delay of the Government in coming to a decision in order to evacuate that place, when, as we know, they were losing about 1,000 men a day. The Government have promised a full enquiry with regard to it, but say that that can only come after the war. We know how much importance to attach to enquiries after wars, and how long Royal Commissions drag out their proceedings. The importance of the matter is that men who were to blame in the Dardanelles may be to-day in charge of the lives of men when they ought not to be, and that they ought to face an enquiry with regard to the matter. There are two demands: that Papers should be published, and that an enquiry should, if possible, take place while the men are available. There are many of them available in London at the present time, elderly men, some of them, who might not be available after the war. I hope that my right honourable friend the Colonial Secretary will be good enough to tell us whether we may hope that the Government will reconsider their former decision with regard to that matter.

* * * * * *

COLONEL CHURCHILL: My right honourable friend the Member for Kirkcaldy gave me to understand some time ago that he intended to press for the publication of the documents in relation to the naval and military operations at the Dardanelles and Gallipoli, and I therefore had time to consider the matter myself. In these matters the decision is clearly one which must rest with the executive Government. They are responsible for carrying on the war, and the publication of documents relating to past affairs, however important to individuals, must be subordinated in importance to anything which affects prospective military or naval operations. But it does seem to me that the publication of the Mesopotamian Papers has made a breach of the rule which the Government has hitherto followed in regard to the publication of documents, and I have noticed that in regard to the military operations at Gallipoli attention has been very largely concentrated upon the question of Suvla Bay and the tactics of the various generals concerned. And we have had speeches and requests for an enquiry or for a publication of all documents with regard to that. The battle of Suvla Bay and the action of the generals on the spot were all preceded at the stage in this affair when the main factors were governed by the decisions which had been previously taken in London, and no mere investigation of what befell the soldiers and generals on the spot would be just or fair to them or give a true appreciation of the facts to the public. Great decisions both in regard to the naval and military operations which governed the Dardanelles and Gallipoli enterprises were taken here in Whitehall and examined by the War Committee, and it does seem to me that it would be very injurious to the reputation of Ministers, if it could be thought, or represented, that they were in some way trying, by delaying the publication of the Papers, to shield themselves, and to allow the whole burden of blame to fall upon the military or naval commanders at the scene of action. I say that the responsibility rests with the head of the Government, but, so far as I am concerned, I say to the right honourable gentleman who is representing the Prime Minister, publish everything; I make absolutely no stipulation of any kind, whether in regard to the military or naval operations. Publish everything that the public interests allows you to publish, and I am quite sure that that course is one which, if it is taken, will enable Ministers to free themselves altogether from the charge of being anxious to leave an undue burden upon General Sir Ian Hamilton and other generals who were concerned in the field. I hope the right honourable gentleman will consider this matter very carefully. I know that the Prime Minister was given notice of the intention of the right honourable gentlemen (Sir H. Dalziel) to raise it, and I trust that in his reply the Colonial Secretary will do his best to give effect to the appeal which has been made to him.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES (MR. BONAR LAW): The Prime Minister has asked me to give the reply of the Government to the request which we were informed was going to be made by my right honourable friend (Sir H. Dalziel). As he has pointed out, that in publishing the Papers already laid before the House in regard to the expedition in Mesopotamia the Government have taken a step which, in his view, makes it difficult to refuse to publish Papers in regard to the Dardanelles. We quite realise that in publishing those Papers in regard to Mesopotamia we were taking a step which was open to criticism, but we came to the conclusion, and I think rightly, for I have not changed the view I have always held since the war began, that the public and the House of Commons should be given all the information which can by any possibility be issued without detriment to the military service. We therefore carefully considered the question of these Papers, and decided that, though preparations are still going on in this case, yet in regard to this particular phase of them, which is finished, Papers could be laid without detriment to the interests of the public

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000081

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

service. My right honourable friend asks that some opportunity should be given for discussion in this House, and on that all I need say is that in publishing these Papers the Government recognised that the House of Commons were entitled to have this subject discussed, and if there is on the part of the House a desire for discussion on the Mesopotamia Expedition opportunity will be given after the recess.

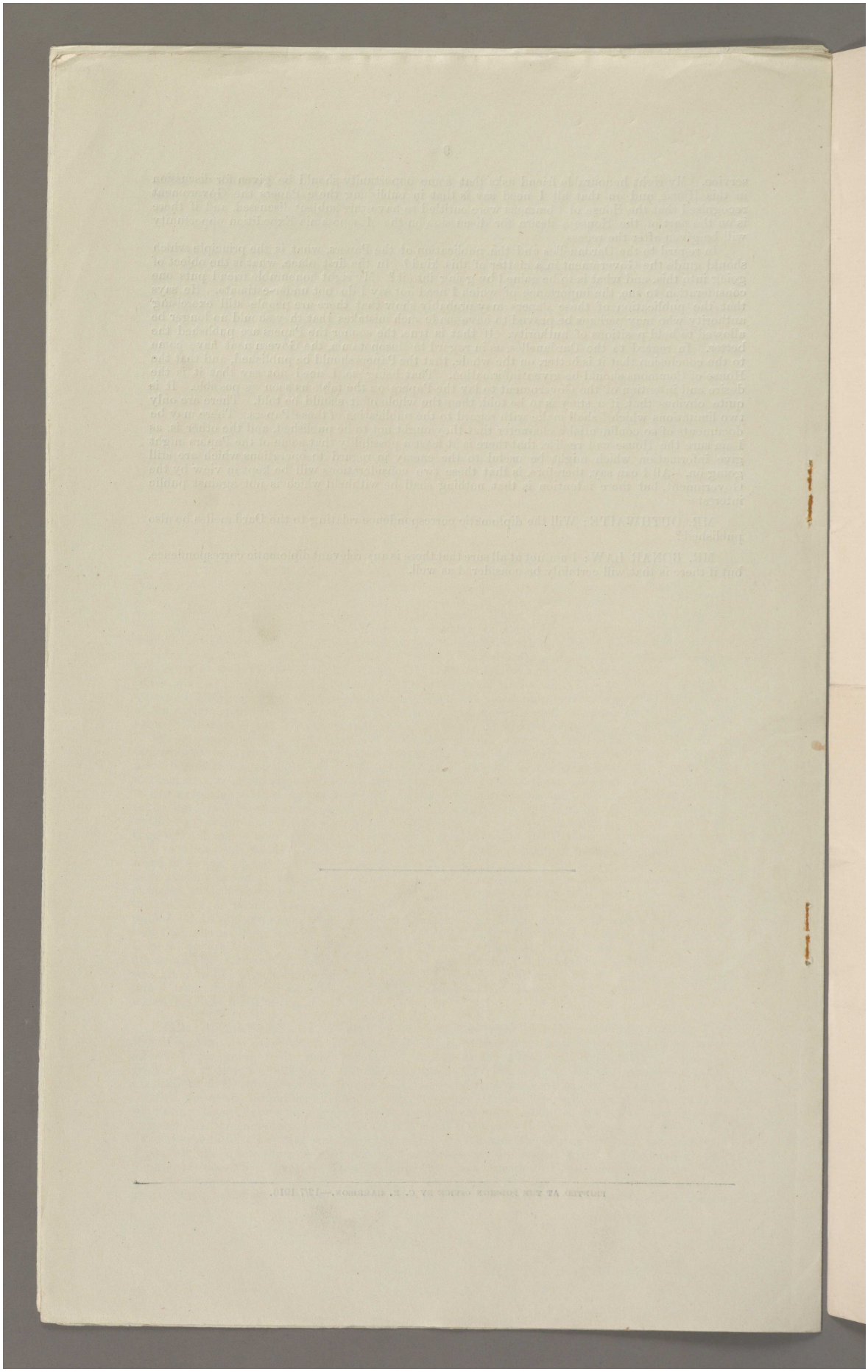
In regard to the Dardanelles and the publication of the Papers, what is the principle which should guide the Government in a matter of this kind? In the first place, what is the object of going into this, and what is to be gained by going into it? My right honourable friend puts one consideration to me, the importance of which I need not say I do not under-estimate. He says that the publication of these Papers may probably show that there are people still exercising authority who may perhaps be proved to have made such mistakes that they should no longer be allowed to hold positions of authority. If that is true, the sooner the Papers are published the better. In regard to the Dardanelles, as in regard to Mesopotamia, the Government have come to the conclusion that it is better, on the whole, that the Papers should be published, and that the House of Commons should be given information. That being so, I need not say that it is the desire and intention of the Government to lay the Papers on the table as soon as possible. It is quite obvious that, if a story is to be told, then the whole of it should be told. There are only two limitations which I shall make with regard to the publication of these Papers. There may be documents of so confidential a character that they ought not to be published, and the other is, as I am sure the House will realise, that there is at least a possibility that some of the Papers might give information which might be useful to the enemy in regard to operations which are still going on. All I can say, therefore, is that these two considerations will be kept in view by the Government, but there intention is that nothing shall be withheld which is not against public interests.

MR. OUTHWAITE: Will the diplomatic correspondence relating to the Dardanelles be also published?

MR. BONAR LAW: I am not at all sure that there is any relevant diplomatic correspondence, but if there is that will certainly be considered as well.

PRINTED AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE BY C. R. HARRISON.—12/7/1916.

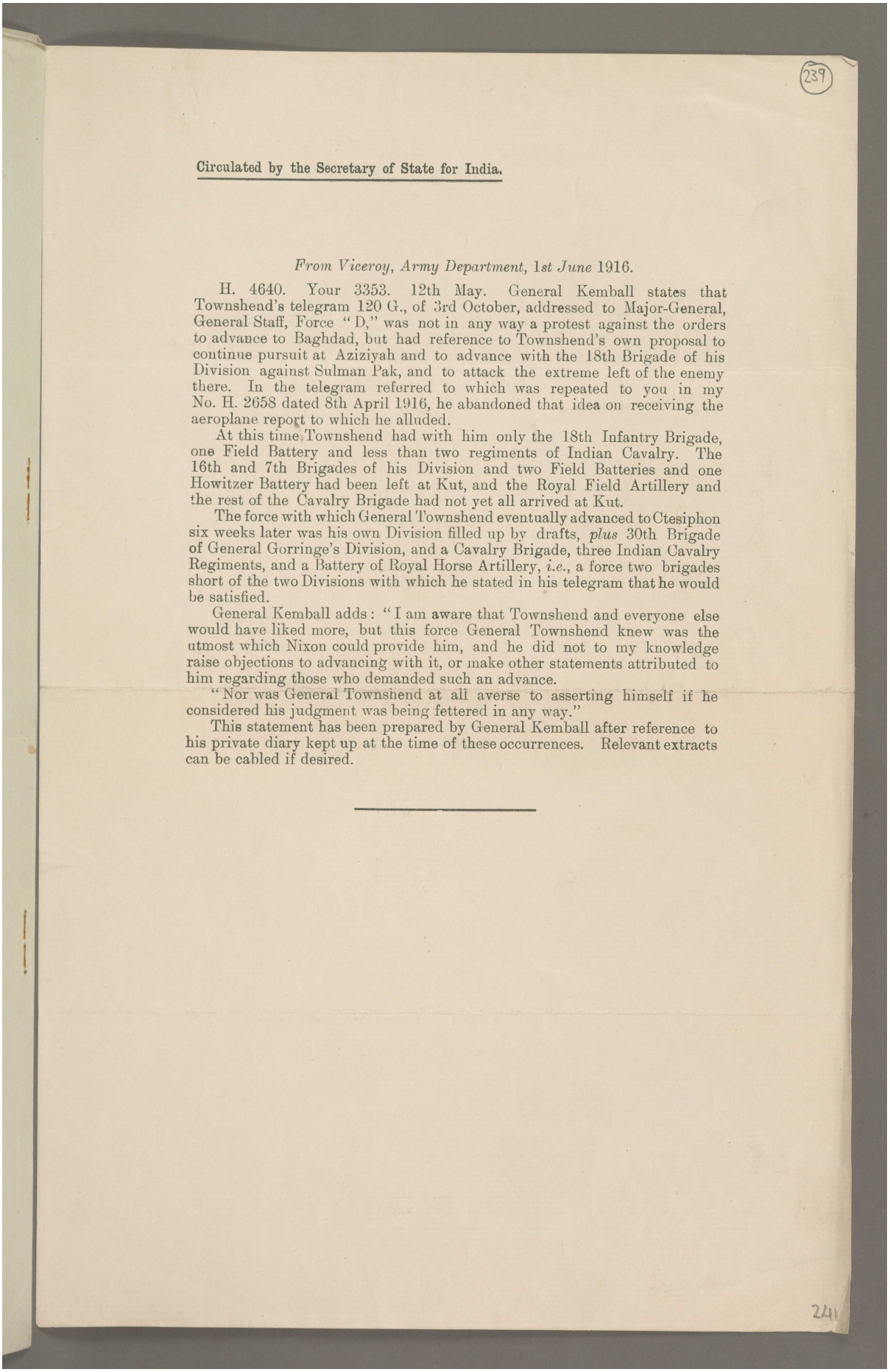
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000bb



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000071

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



239

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

From Viceroy, Army Department, 1st June 1916.

H. 4640. Your 3353. 12th May. General Kemball states that Townshend's telegram 120 G., of 3rd October, addressed to Major-General, General Staff, Force "D," was not in any way a protest against the orders to advance to Baghdad, but had reference to Townshend's own proposal to continue pursuit at Aziziyah and to advance with the 18th Brigade of his Division against Sulman Pak, and to attack the extreme left of the enemy there. In the telegram referred to which was repeated to you in my No. H. 2658 dated 8th April 1916, he abandoned that idea on receiving the aeroplane report to which he alluded.

At this time Townshend had with him only the 18th Infantry Brigade, one Field Battery and less than two regiments of Indian Cavalry. The 16th and 7th Brigades of his Division and two Field Batteries and one Howitzer Battery had been left at Kut, and the Royal Field Artillery and the rest of the Cavalry Brigade had not yet all arrived at Kut.

The force with which General Townshend eventually advanced to Ctesiphon six weeks later was his own Division filled up by drafts, *plus* 30th Brigade of General Gorringe's Division, and a Cavalry Brigade, three Indian Cavalry Regiments, and a Battery of Royal Horse Artillery, *i.e.*, a force two brigades short of the two Divisions with which he stated in his telegram that he would be satisfied.

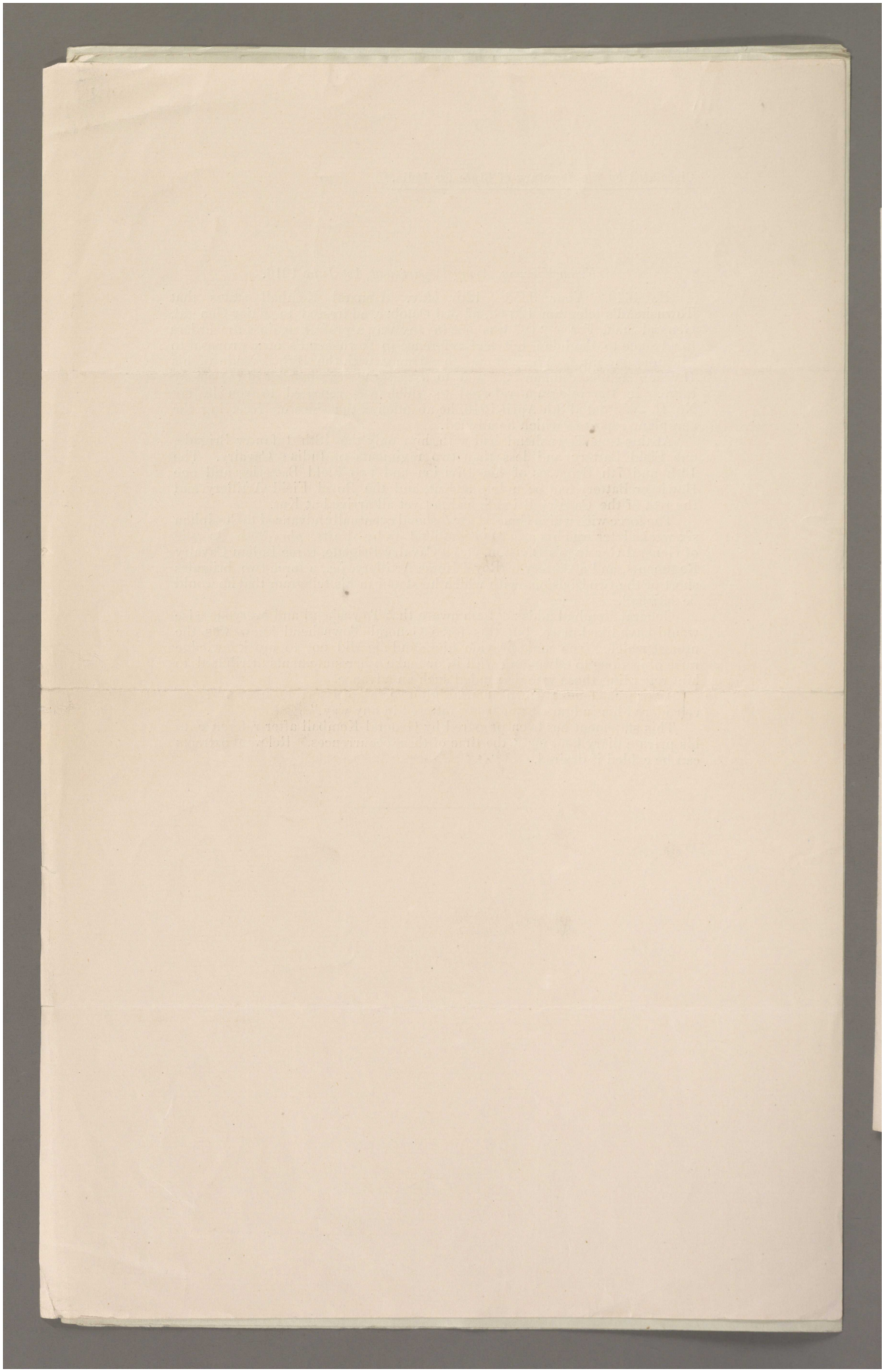
General Kemball adds: "I am aware that Townshend and everyone else would have liked more, but this force General Townshend knew was the utmost which Nixon could provide him, and he did not to my knowledge raise objections to advancing with it, or make other statements attributed to him regarding those who demanded such an advance.

"Nor was General Townshend at all averse to asserting himself if he considered his judgment was being fettered in any way."

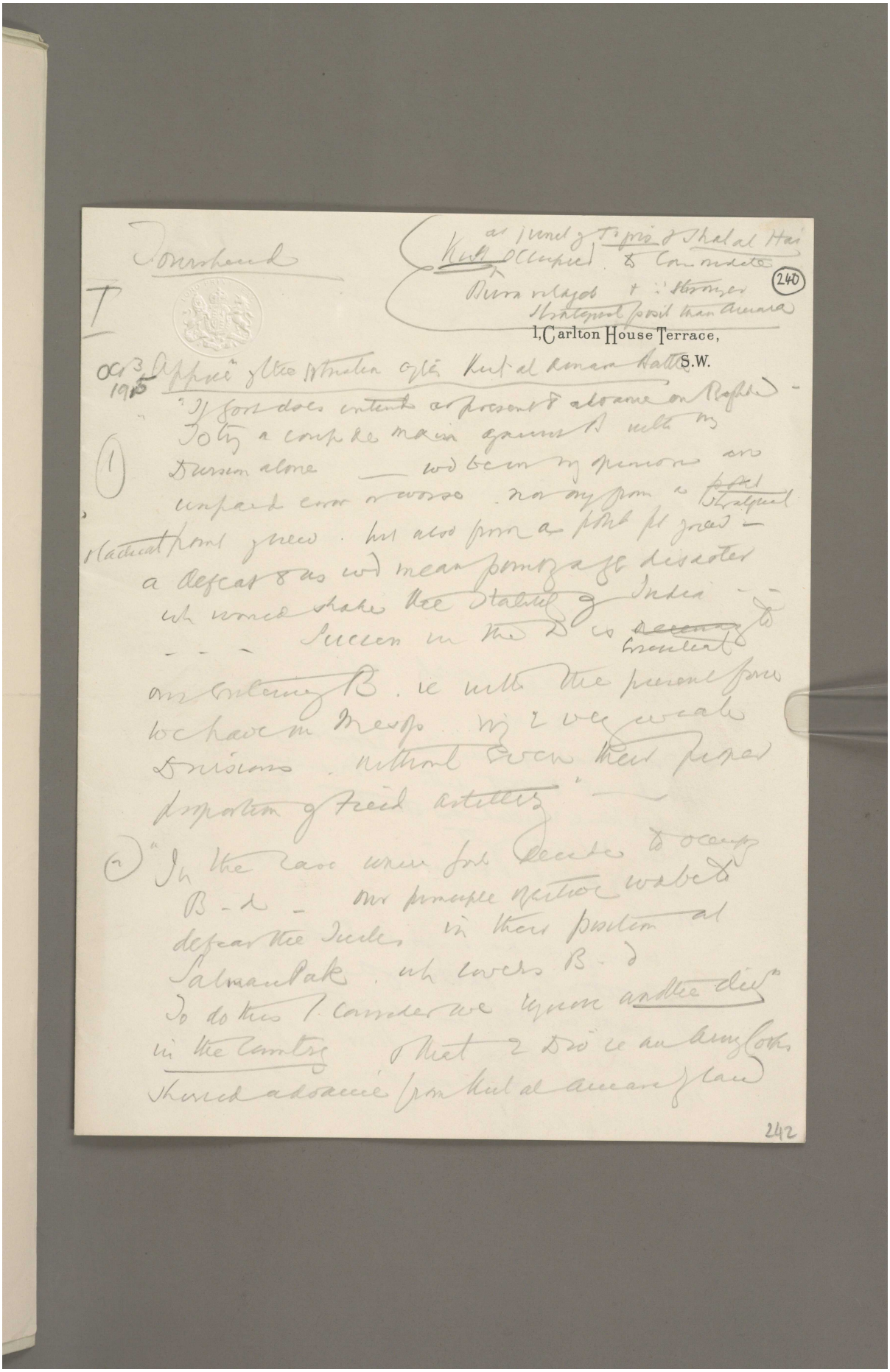
This statement has been prepared by General Kemball after reference to his private diary kept up at the time of these occurrences. Relevant extracts can be cabled if desired.

241

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000ad



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000092



Townshend

T

Kut occupied at junct of Tigris & Shat al Hai to consolidate Burn relayed & is stronger strategical posit than Amara

(240)

1, Carlton House Terrace,
S.W.

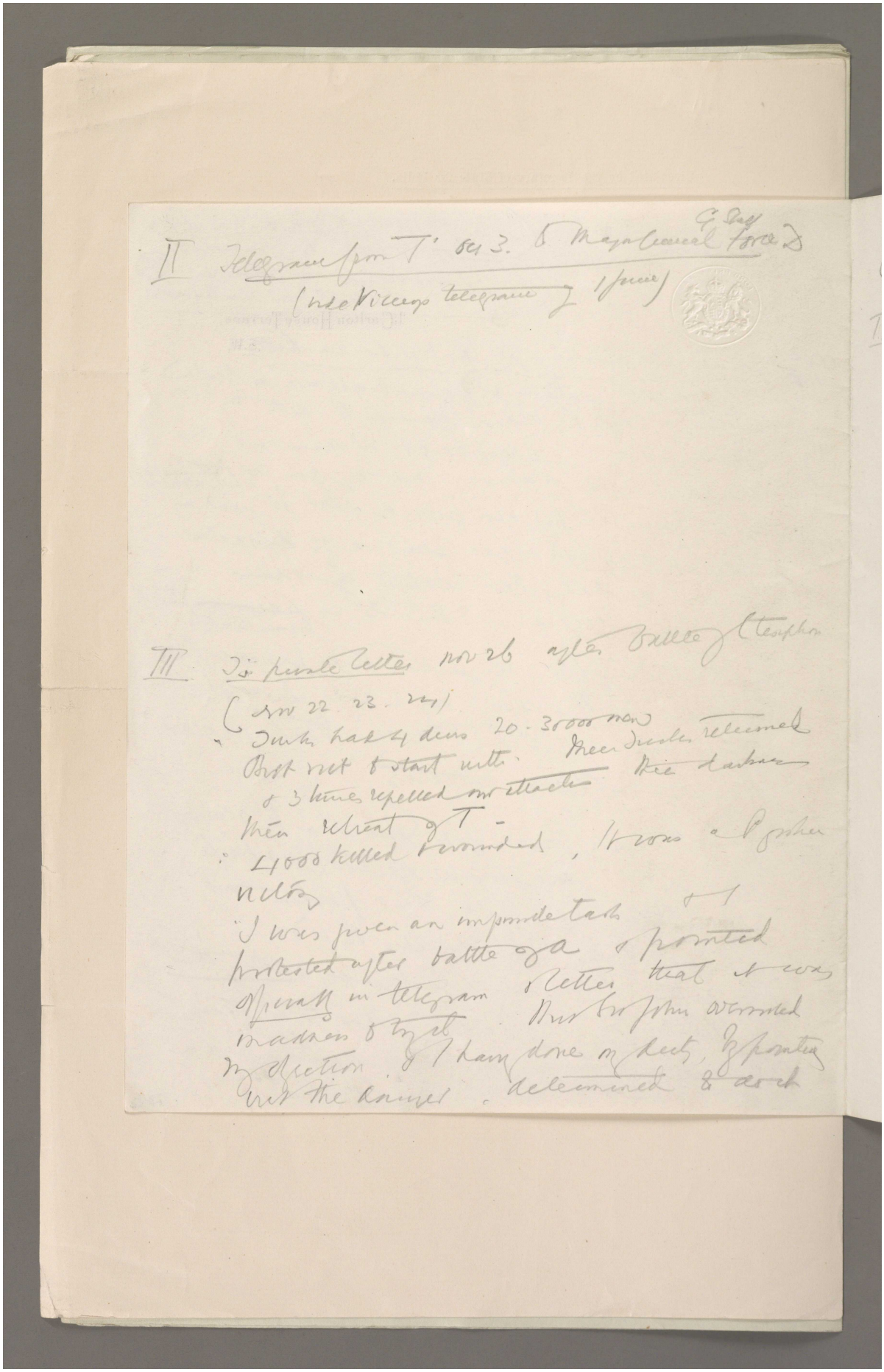
Oct 3 1915 Appreciation of the situation after Kut al Amara Battle

"If Govt does intend at present to advance on Baghdad - To try a coup de main against B with my Division alone — wd be in my opinion an unpaid error or worse. not only from a ~~pol~~ strategical & tactical point of view. but also from a pol pt of view — a defeat & as wd mean point of a gt disaster wh would shake the stability of India — — — Success in the D is ~~necessary~~ essential to our entering B. ie with the present force we have in Mesop. viz 2 very weak Divisions. without even their proper proportion of field artillery" —

(2) "In the case where Govt decide to occupy B-d — our principle objective wd be to defeat the Turks in their position at Salman Pak. wh covers B-d

To do this I consider we require another divn in the country & that 2 Div ie an Army Corps should advance from Kut al Amara of Law

242

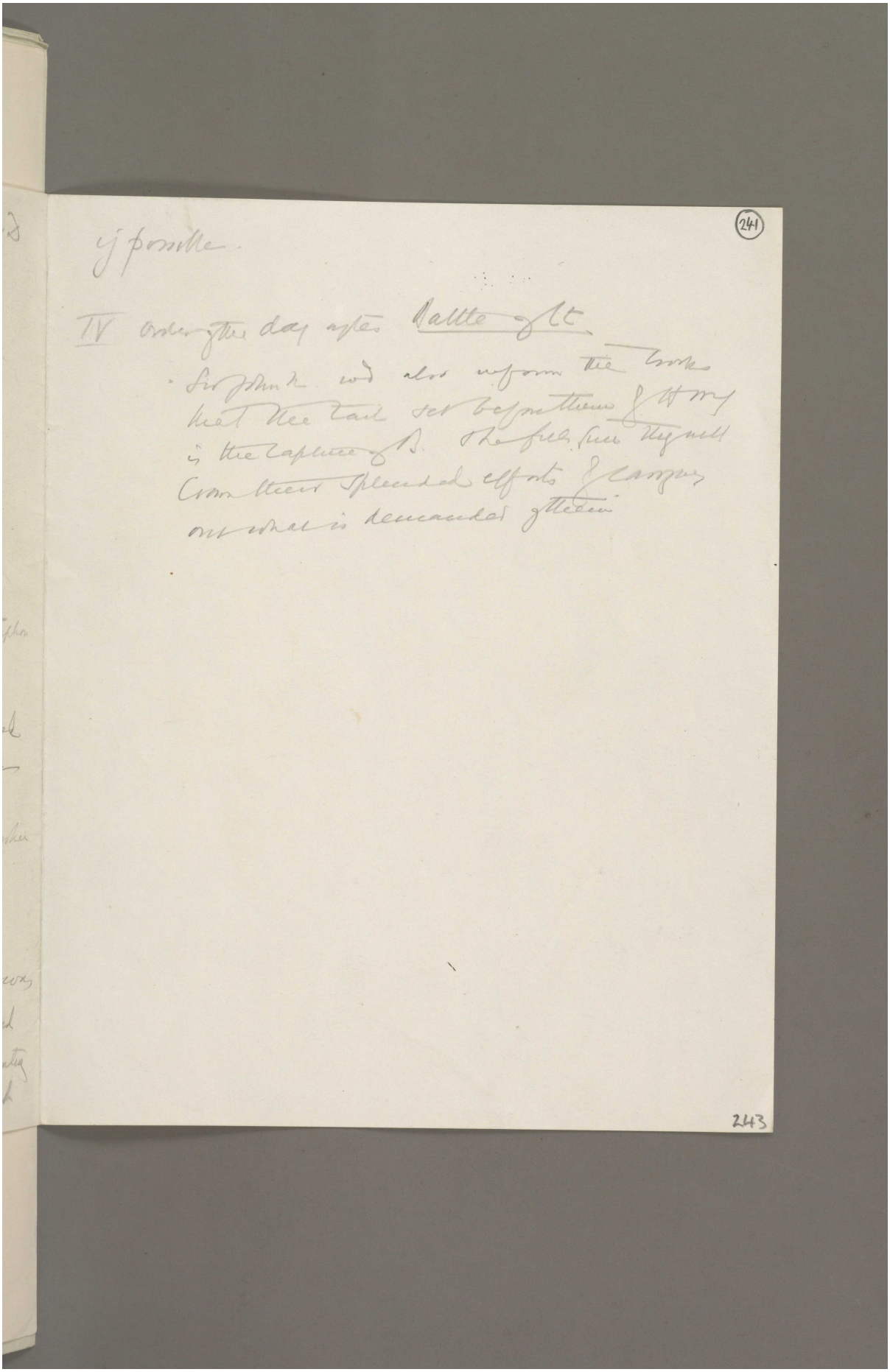


II Telegram from T' 843. to Major General G. Staff Force D
(vide Viceroy telegram of 1 June)

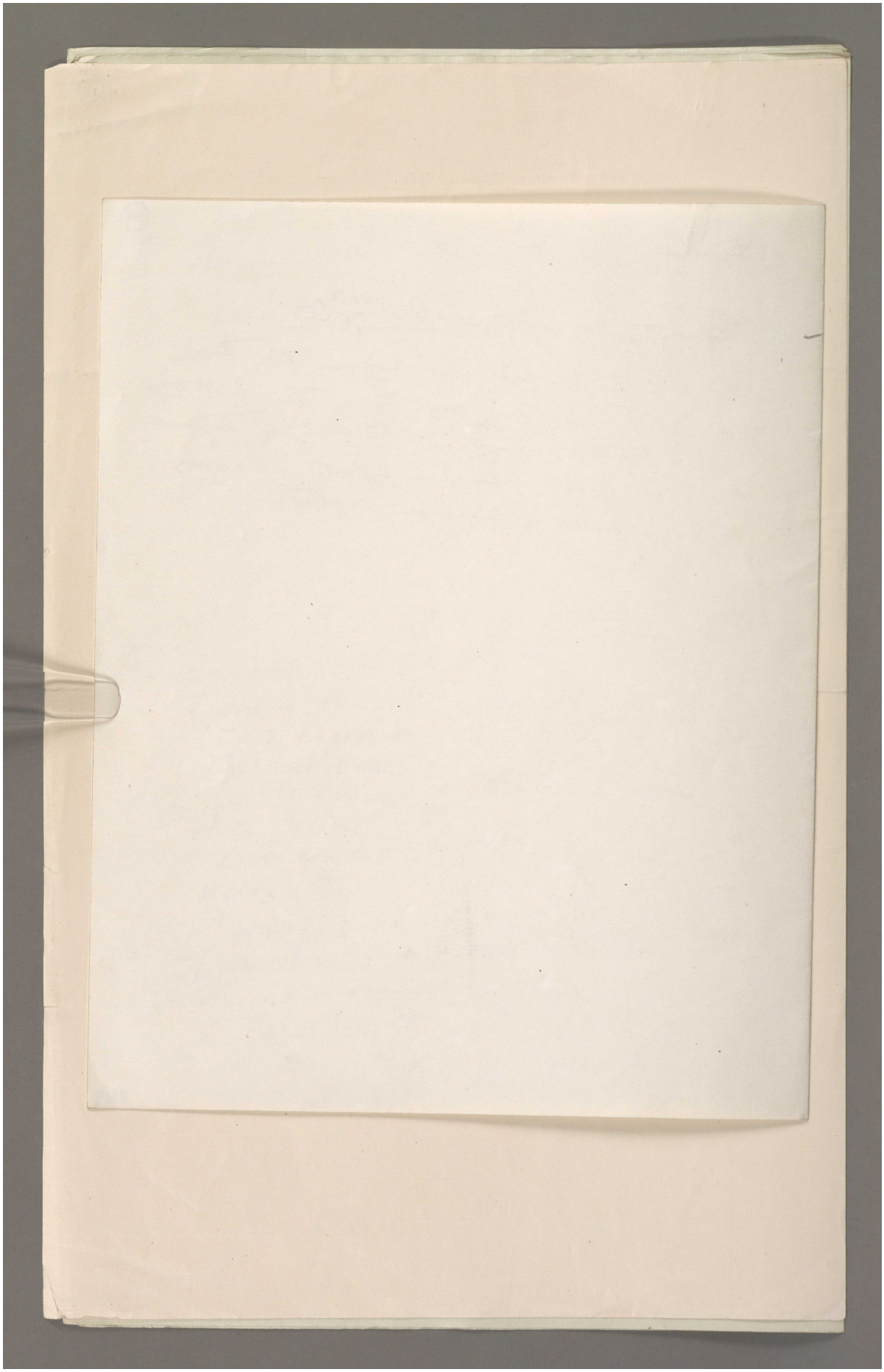
III To private letter nov 26 after battle of Ctesiphon
(nov 22. 23. 24)
Turks had 4 divs 20-30000 men
Brit not to start with. Three Turks returned
& 3 times repelled our attacks. Their darkness
their retreat of T -
4000 killed & wounded, It was a Pyrrhic
victory
I was given an impossible task & I
protested after battle of A & pointed
officially in telegram & letter that it was
madness to try it. But Sir John overruled
my objection. & I have done my duty, by pointing
out the danger. determined to do it

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

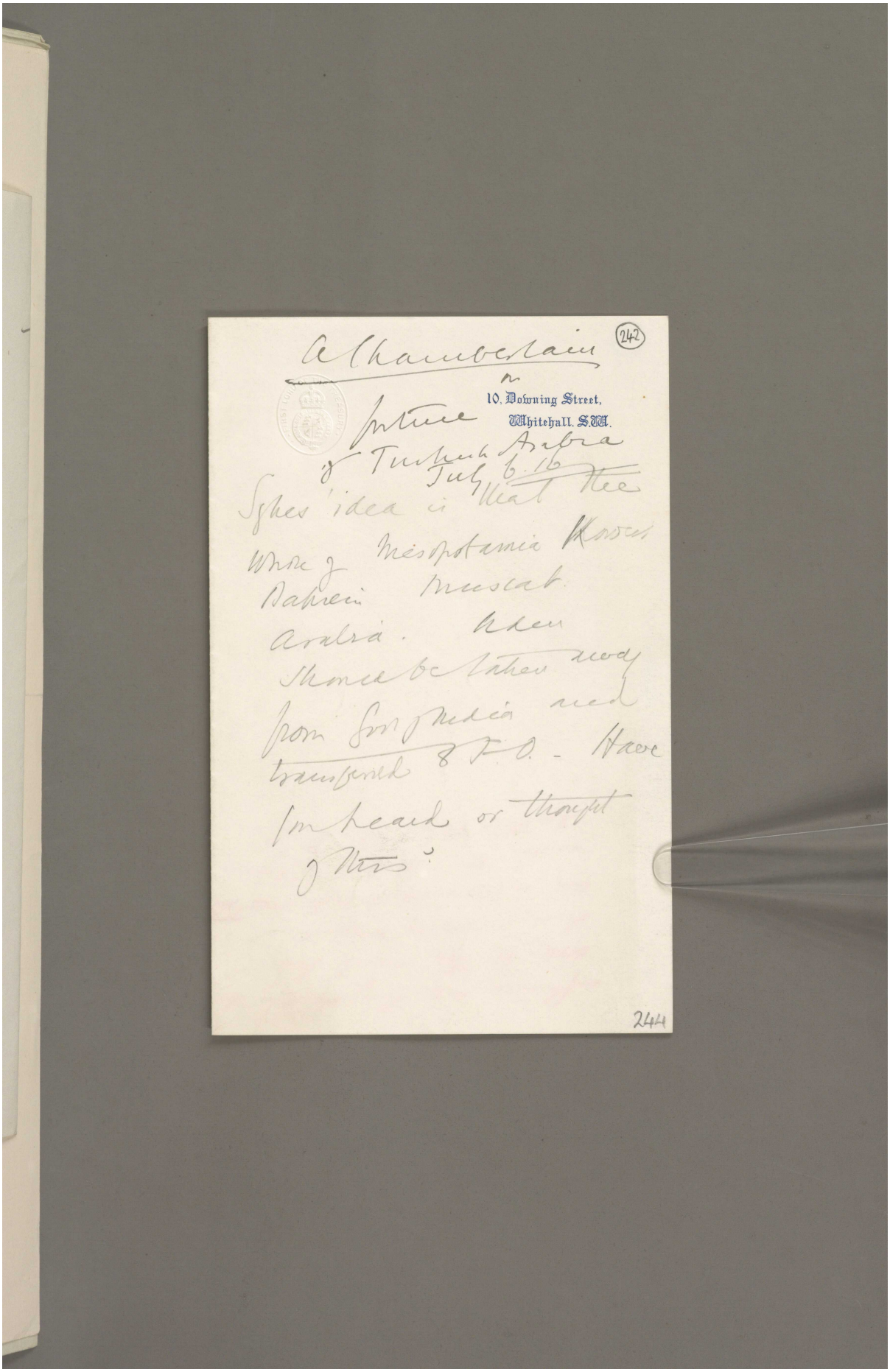
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000064



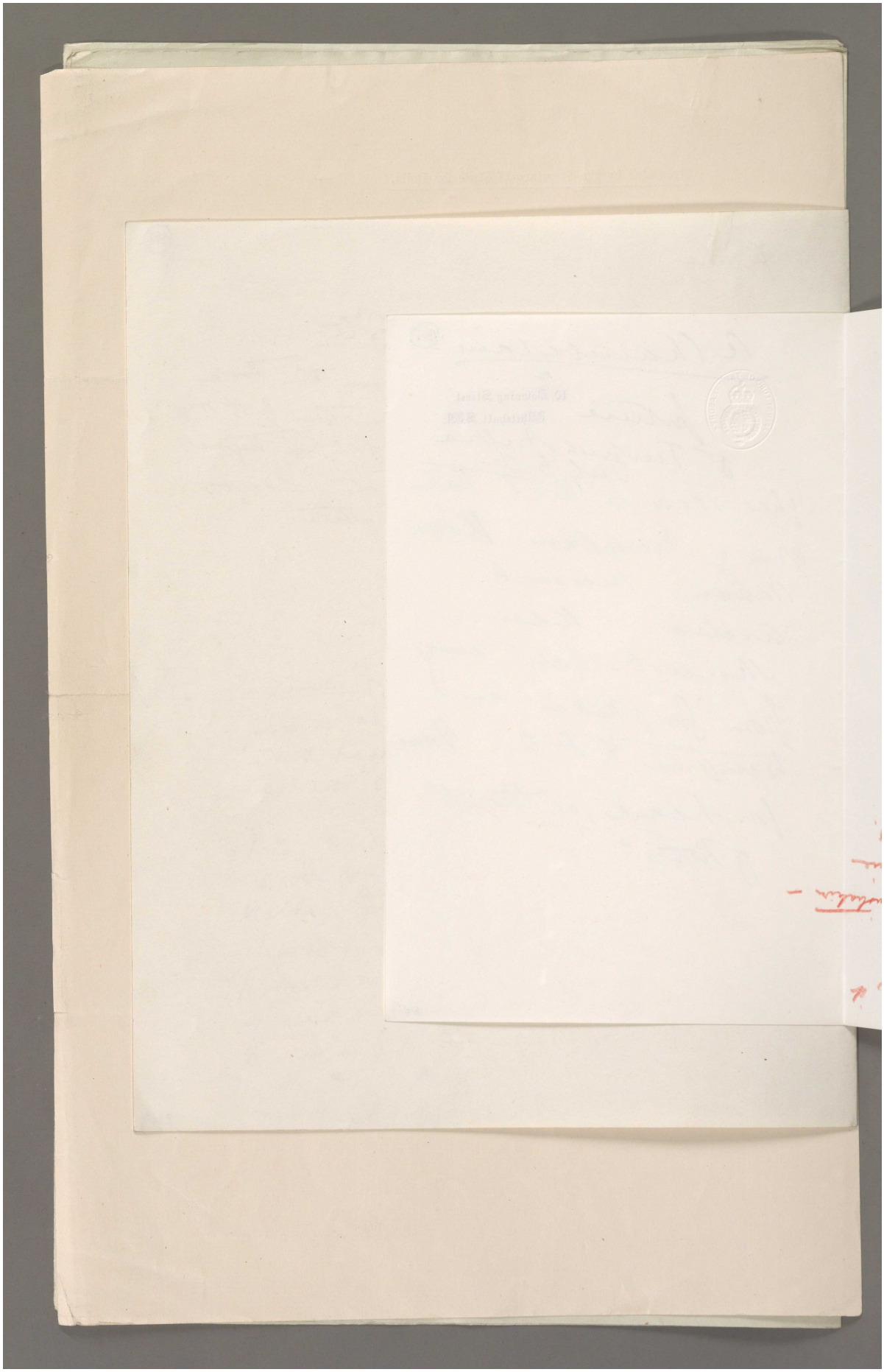
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00003c



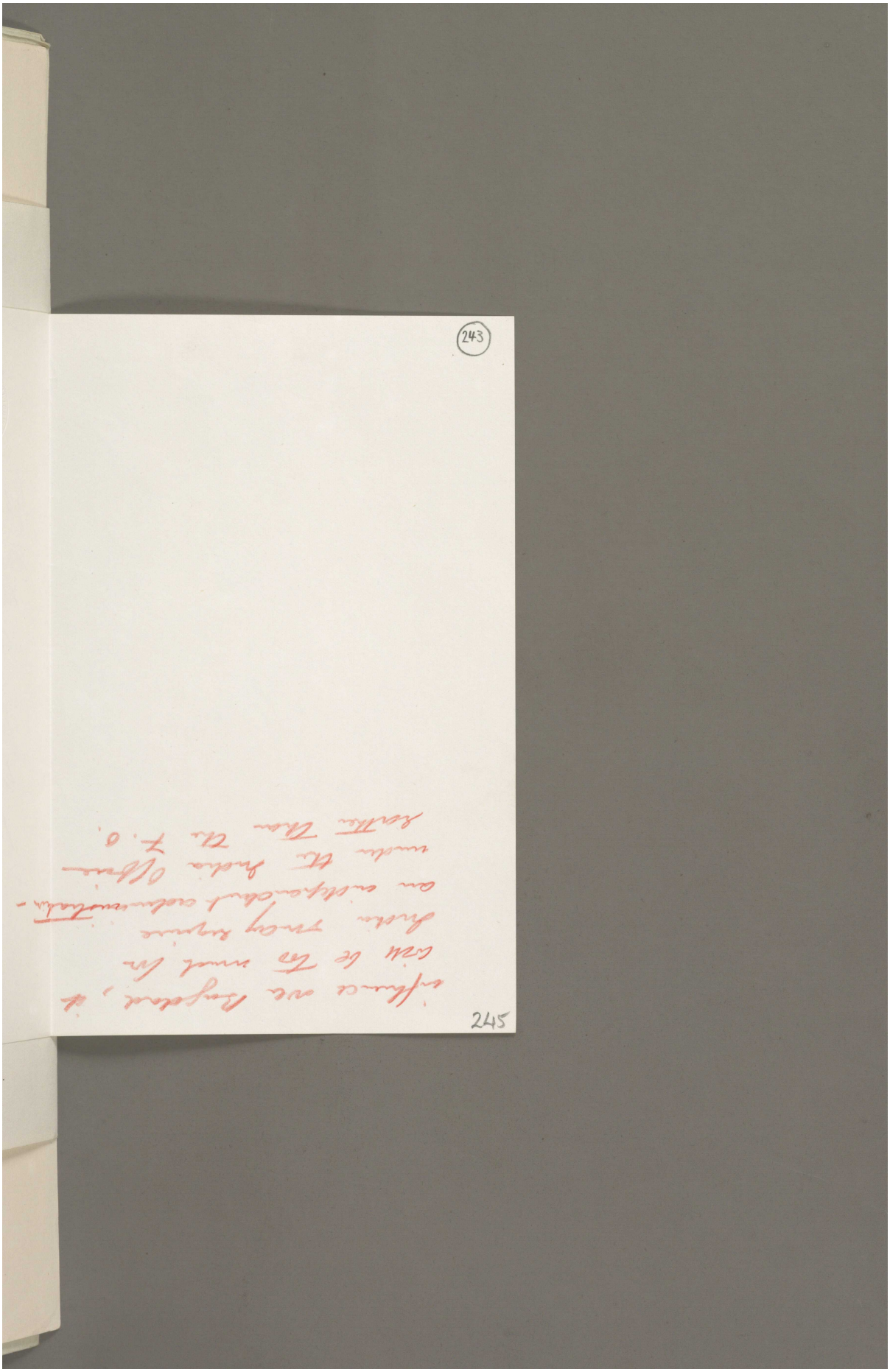
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000090



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000077



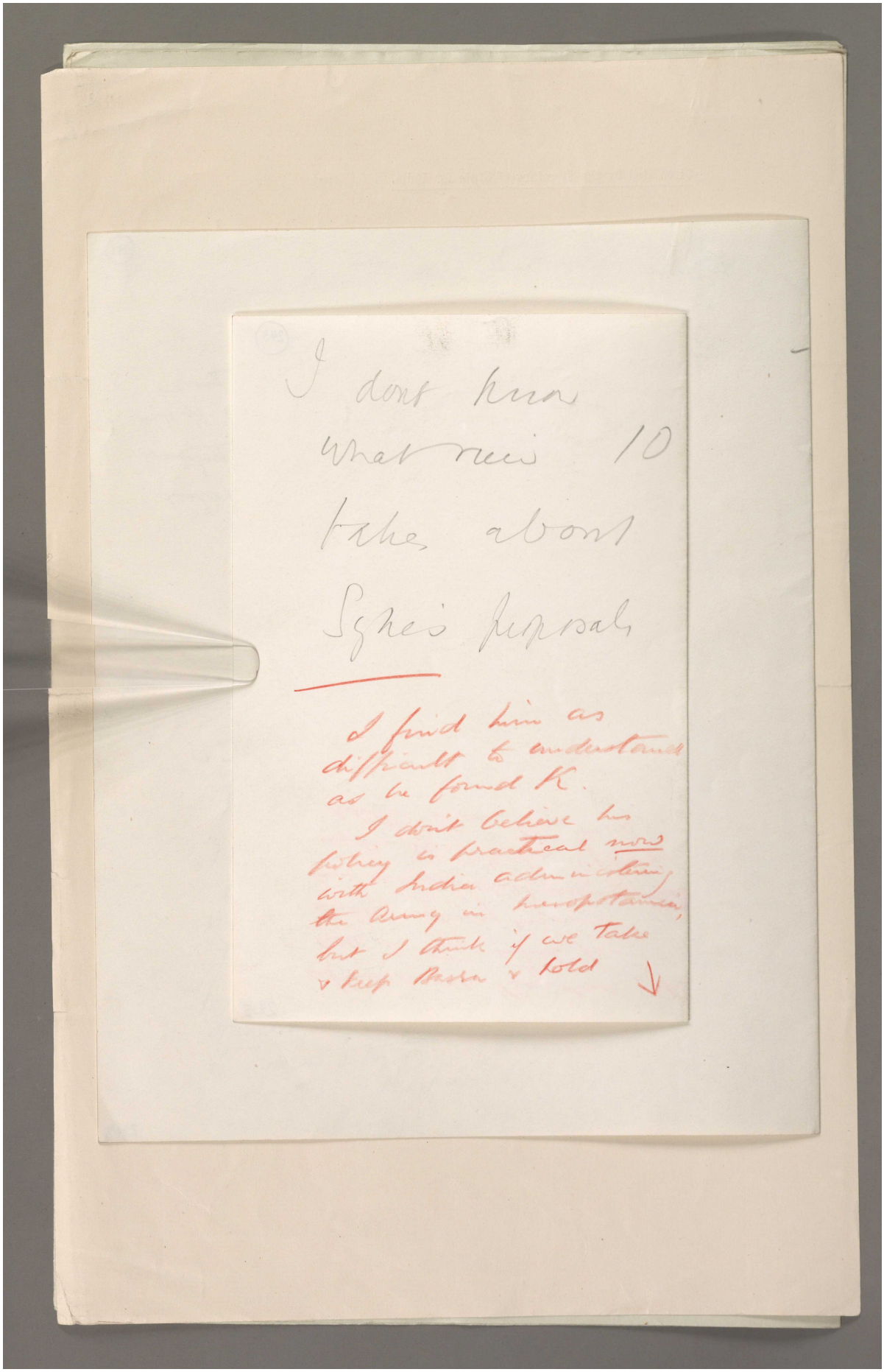
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000023



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000024

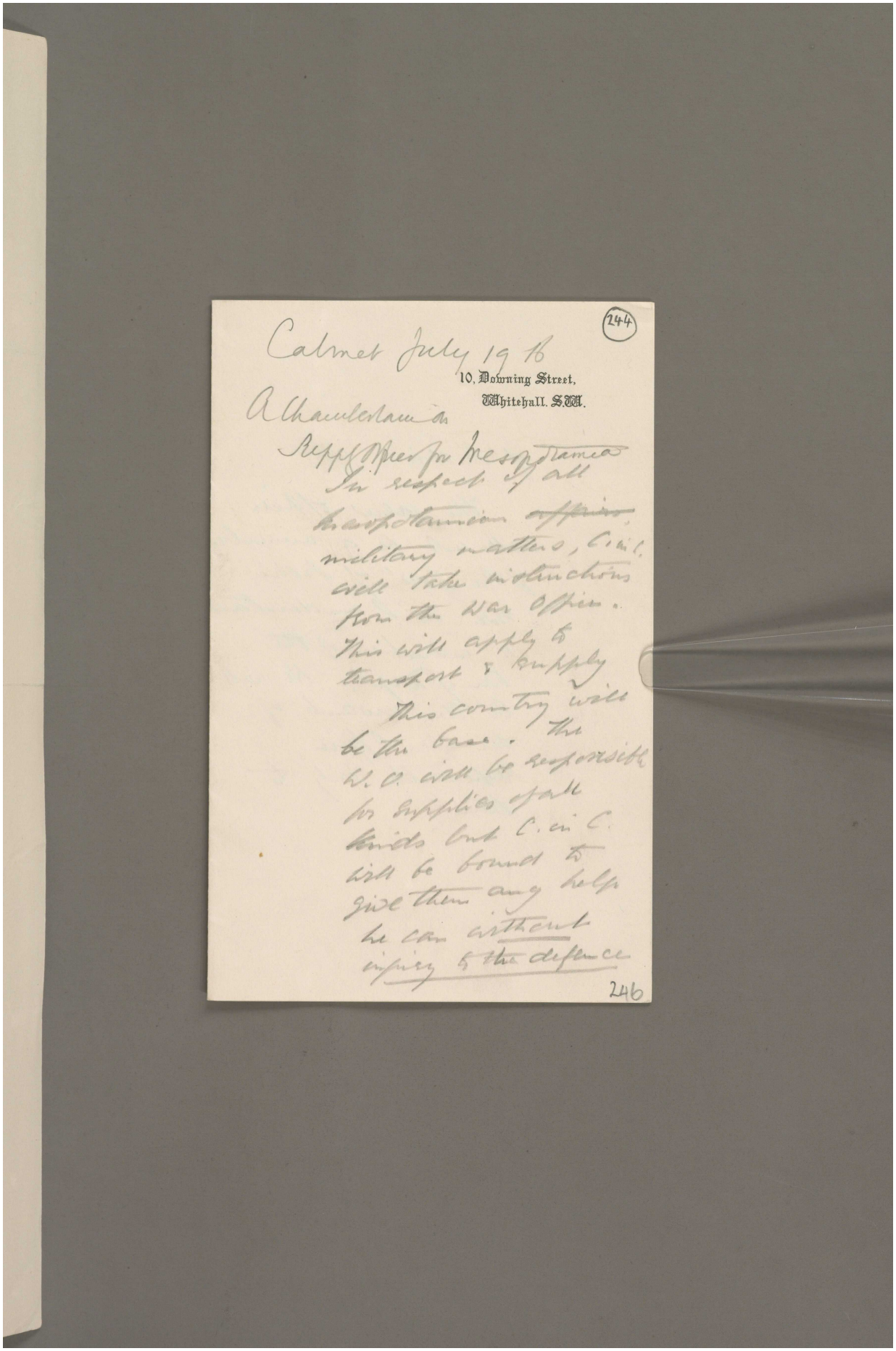
مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x00000f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library



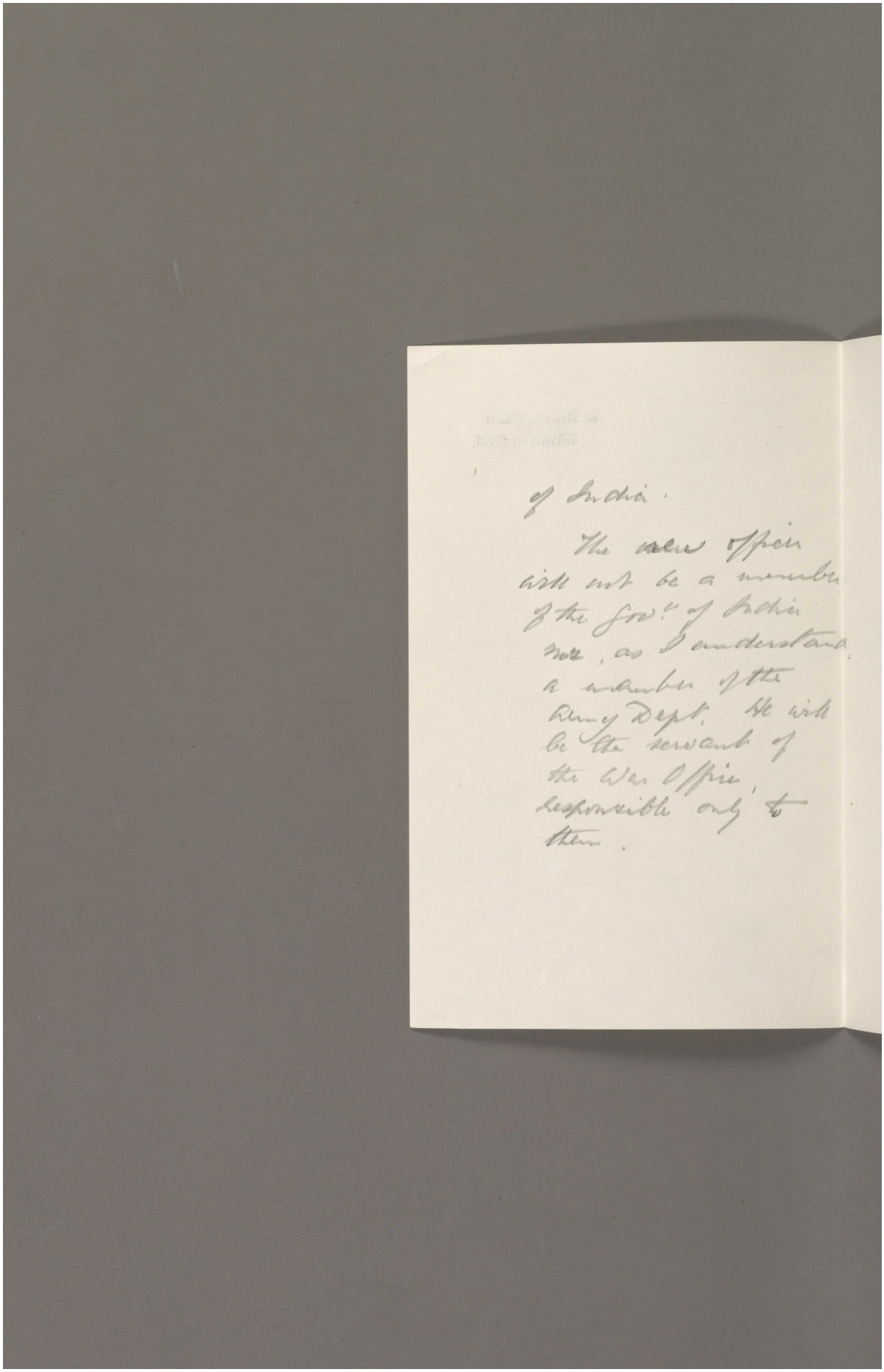
(244)

Cabinet July 19 16

10, Downing Street,
Whitehall. S.W.

A Chamberlain to
Supply Officer for Mesopotamia
In respect of all
Mesopotamian affairs
military matters, C. in C.
will take instructions
from the War Office.
This will apply to
transport & supply
This country will
be the base.
C. O. will be responsible
for supplies of all
kinds but C. in C.
will be bound to
give them any help
he can without
injury to the defence

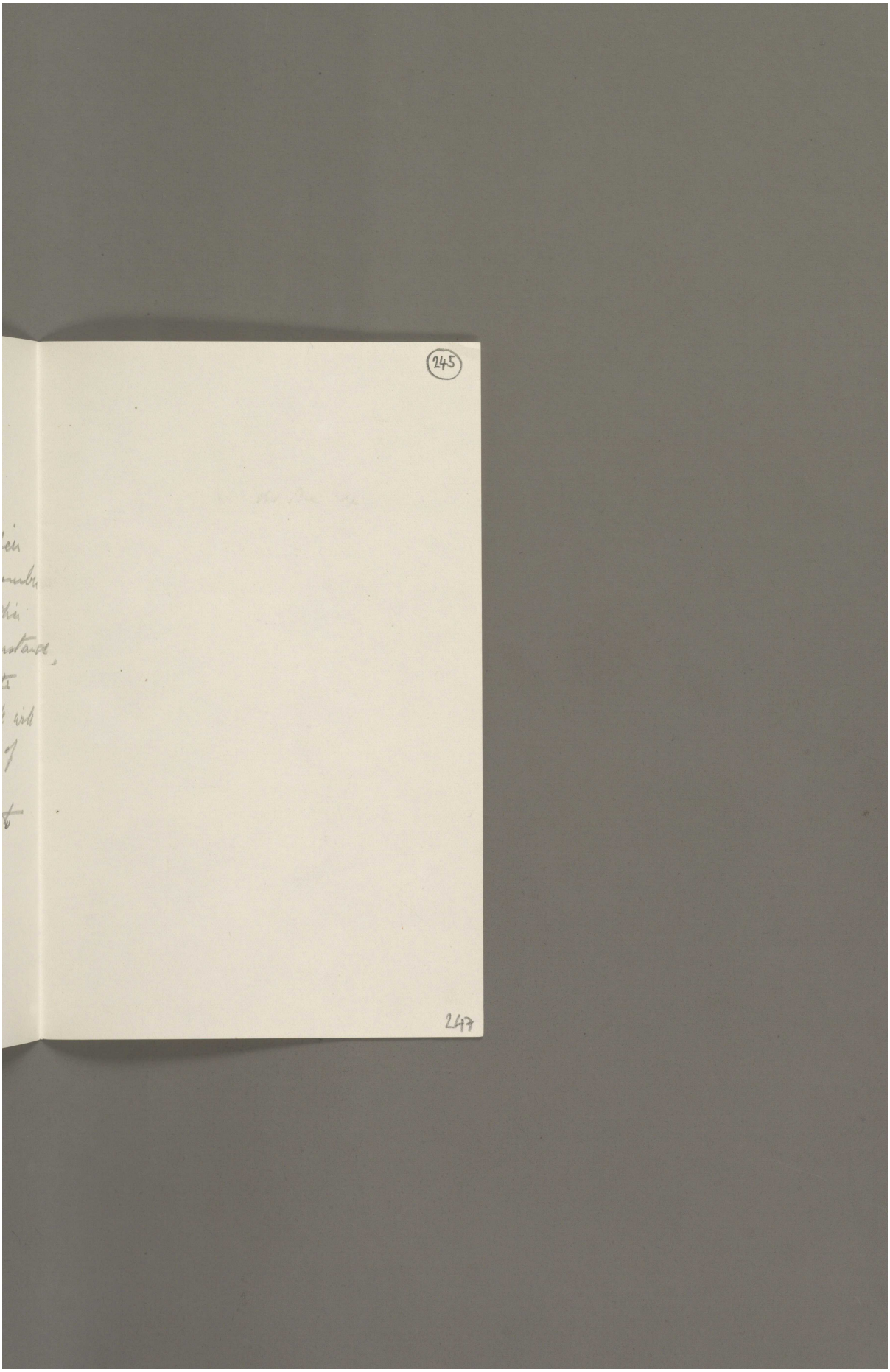
246



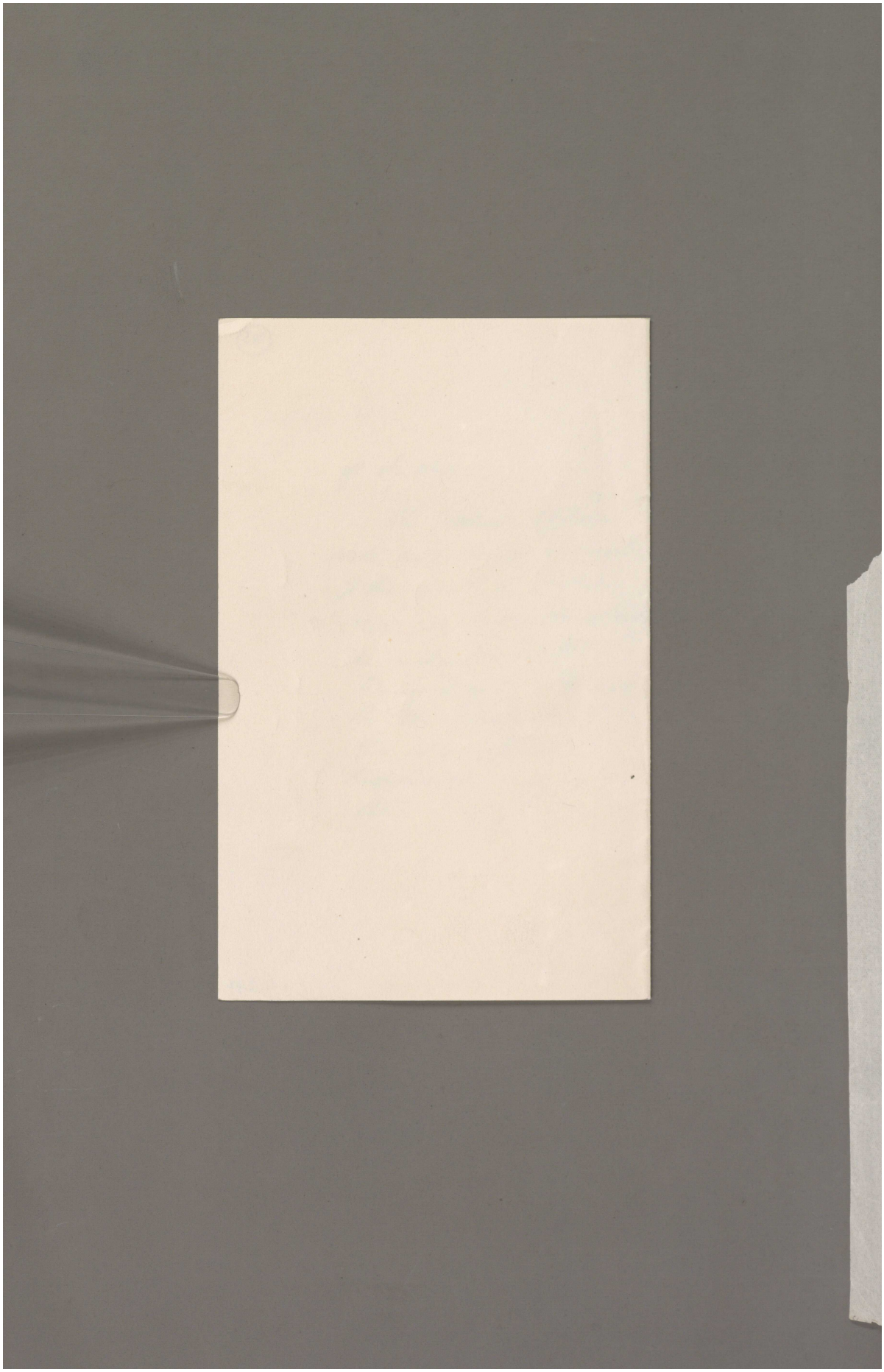
of India.

The new Office
will not be a member
of the Govt of India
nor, as I understand,
a member of the
Army Dept. He will
be the servant of
the War Office,
responsible only to
them.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000077



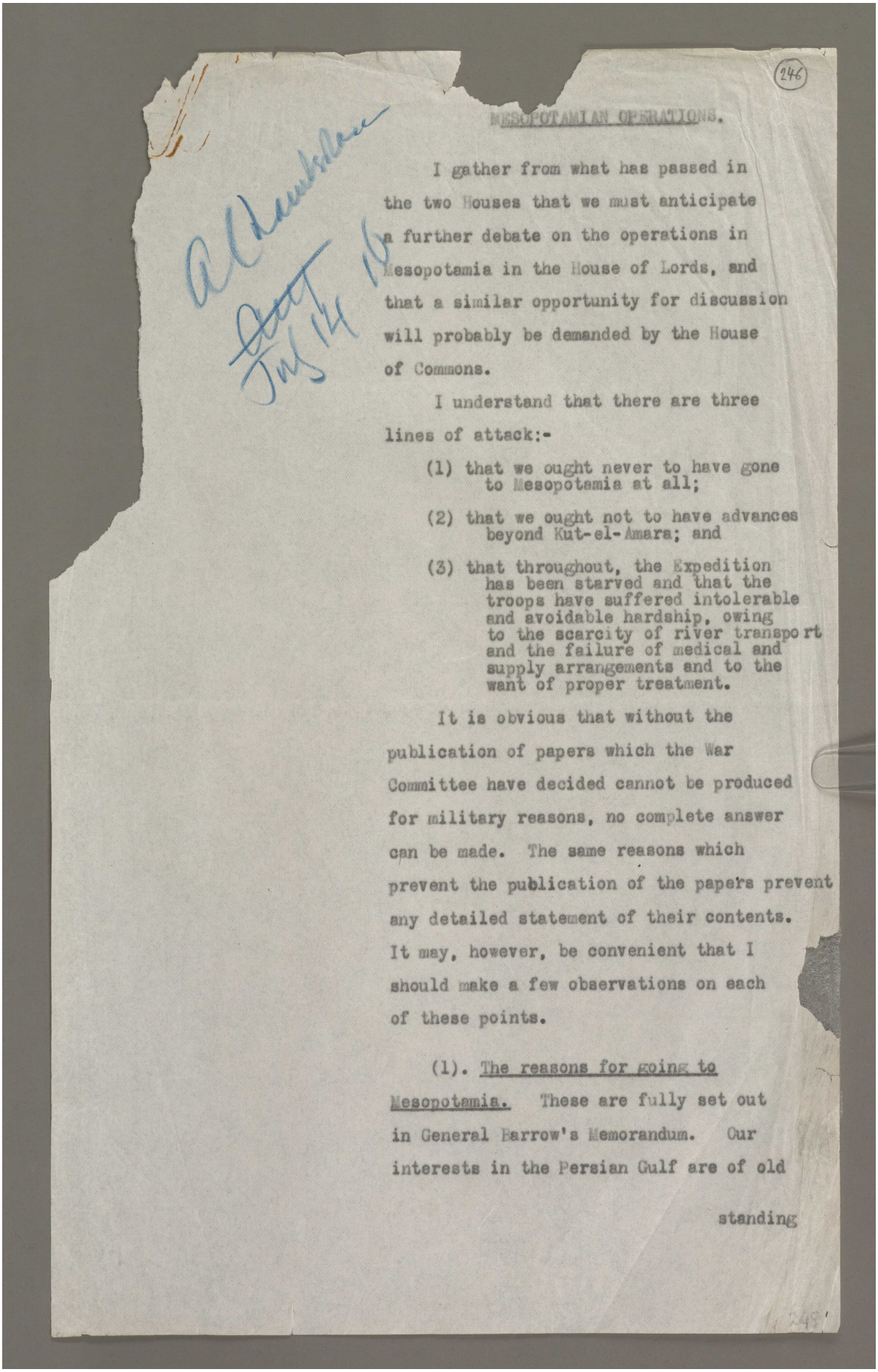
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000028



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00009f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



(246)

MESOPOTAMIAN OPERATIONS.

I gather from what has passed in the two Houses that we must anticipate a further debate on the operations in Mesopotamia in the House of Lords, and that a similar opportunity for discussion will probably be demanded by the House of Commons.

I understand that there are three lines of attack:-

(1) that we ought never to have gone to Mesopotamia at all;

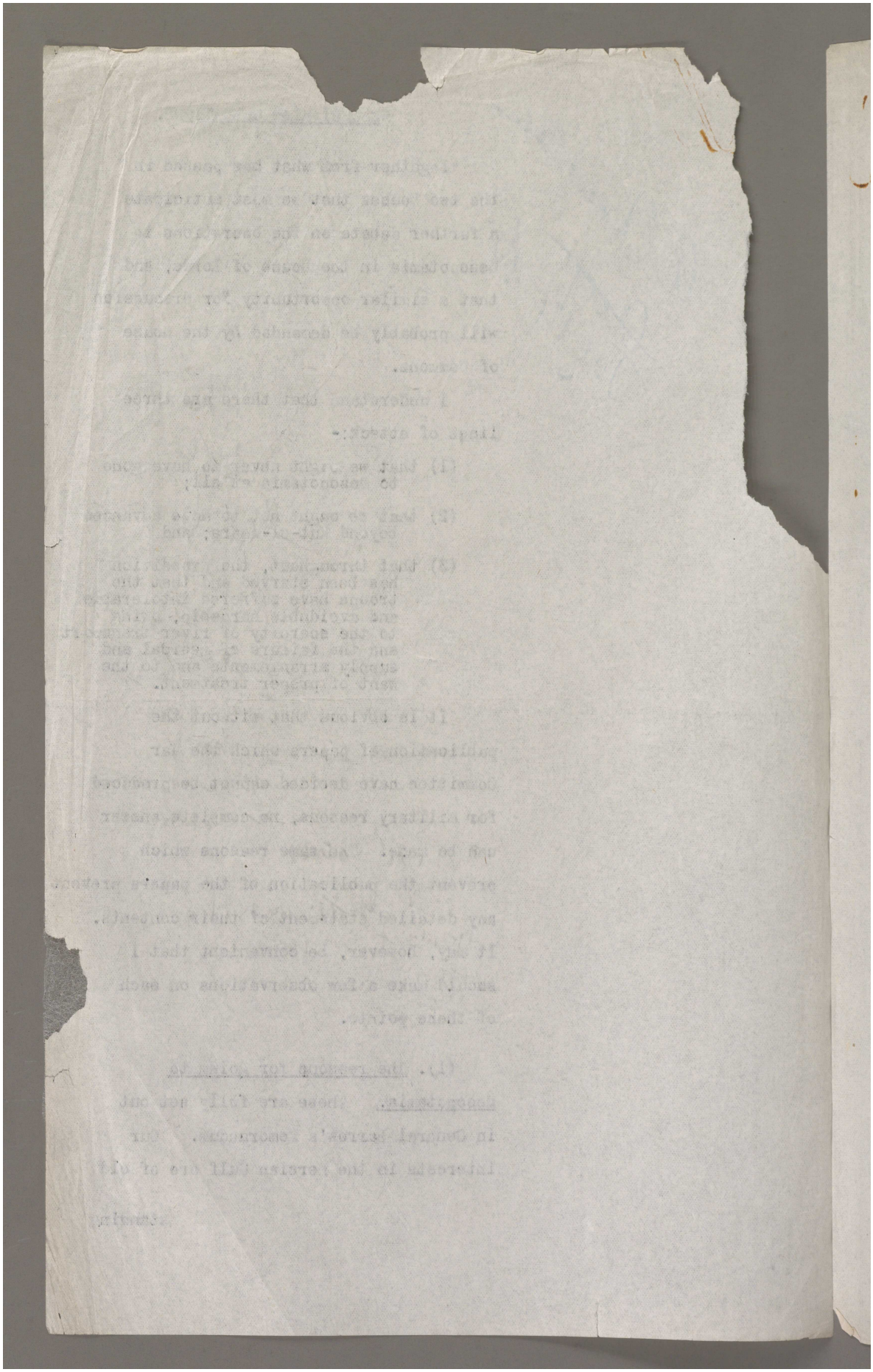
(2) that we ought not to have advances beyond Kut-el-Amara; and

(3) that throughout, the Expedition has been starved and that the troops have suffered intolerable and avoidable hardship, owing to the scarcity of river transport and the failure of medical and supply arrangements and to the want of proper treatment.

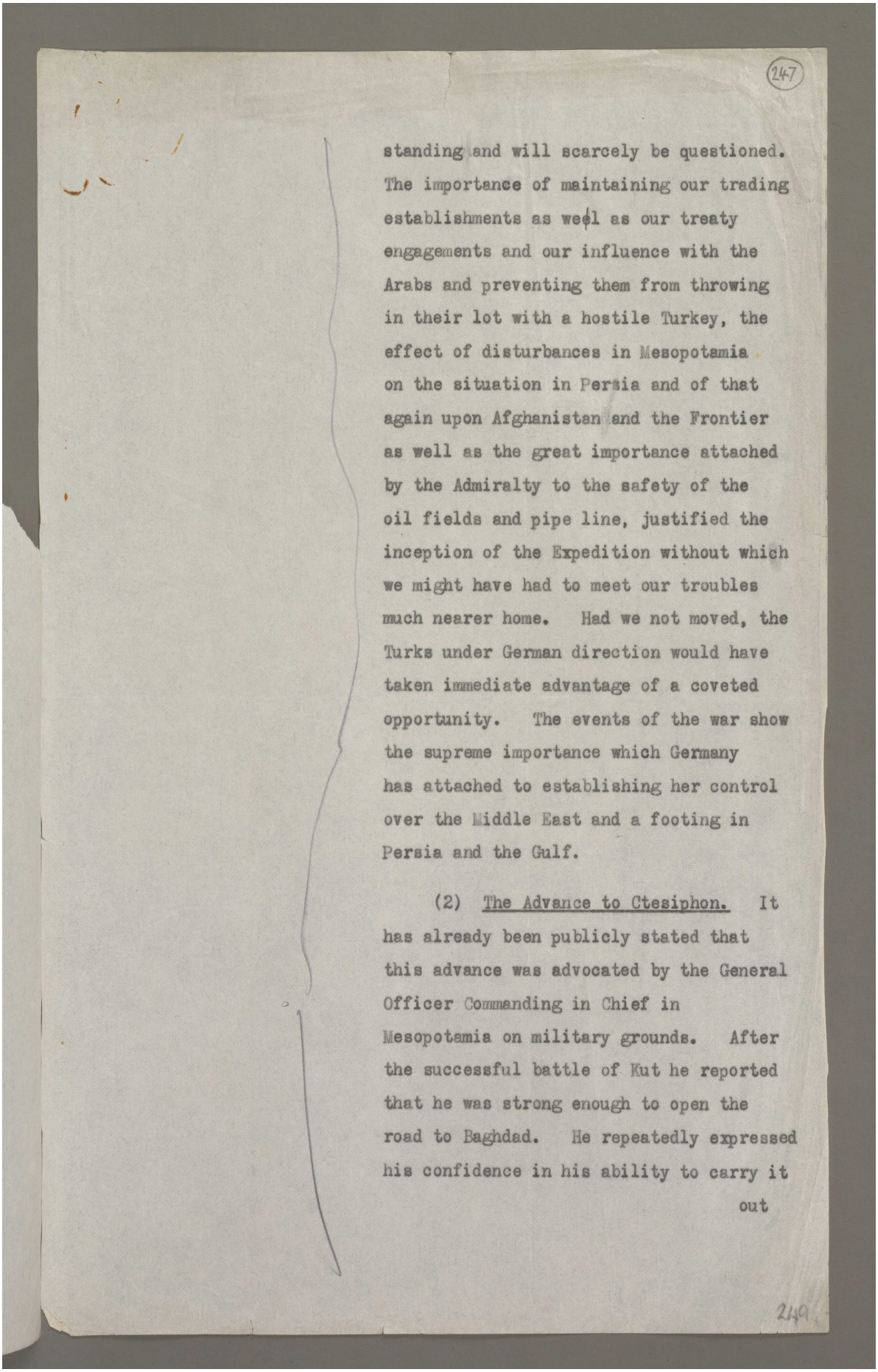
It is obvious that without the publication of papers which the War Committee have decided cannot be produced for military reasons, no complete answer can be made. The same reasons which prevent the publication of the papers prevent any detailed statement of their contents. It may, however, be convenient that I should make a few observations on each of these points.

(1). The reasons for going to Mesopotamia. These are fully set out in General Barrow's Memorandum. Our interests in the Persian Gulf are of old

standing



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00008a

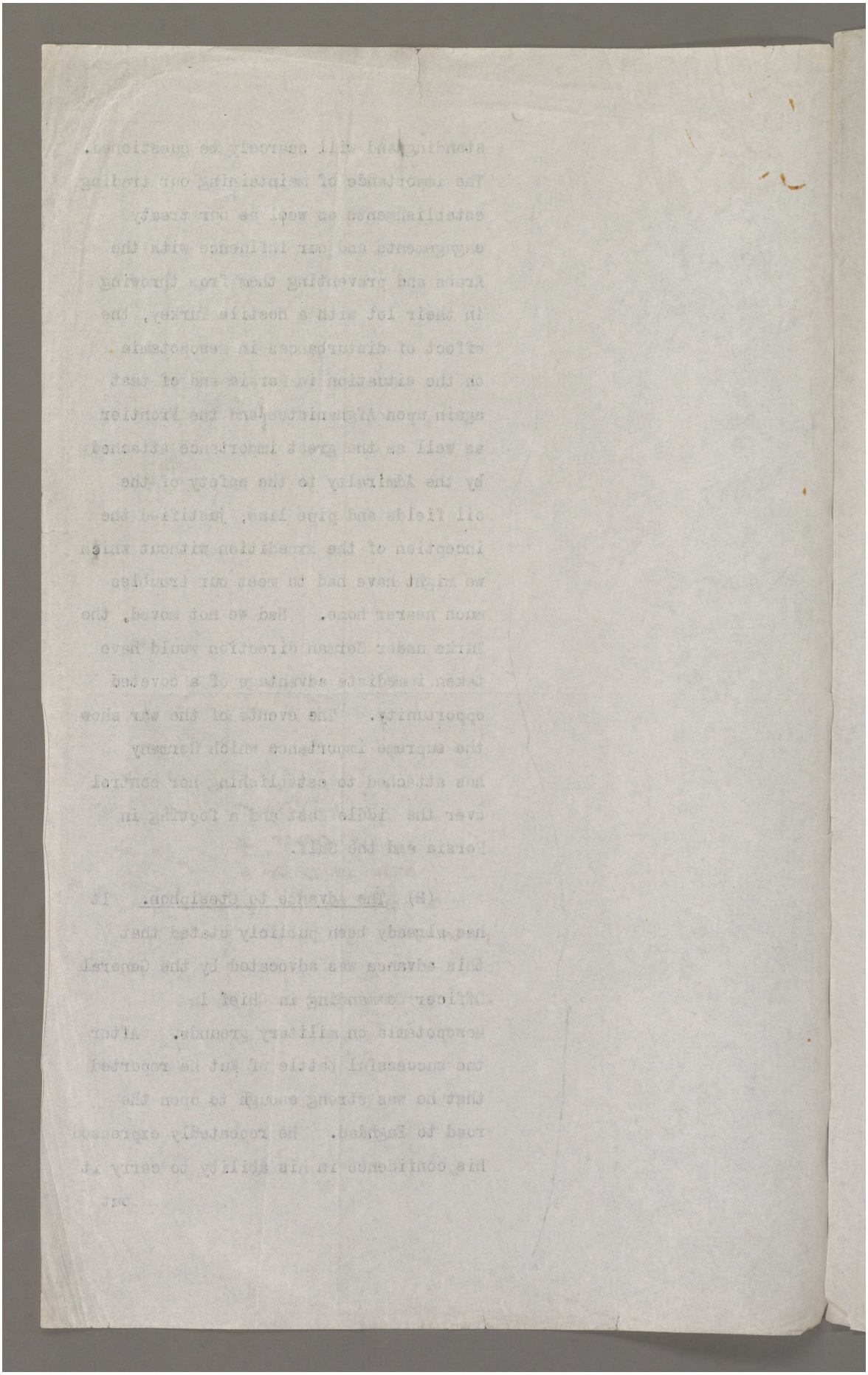


(247)

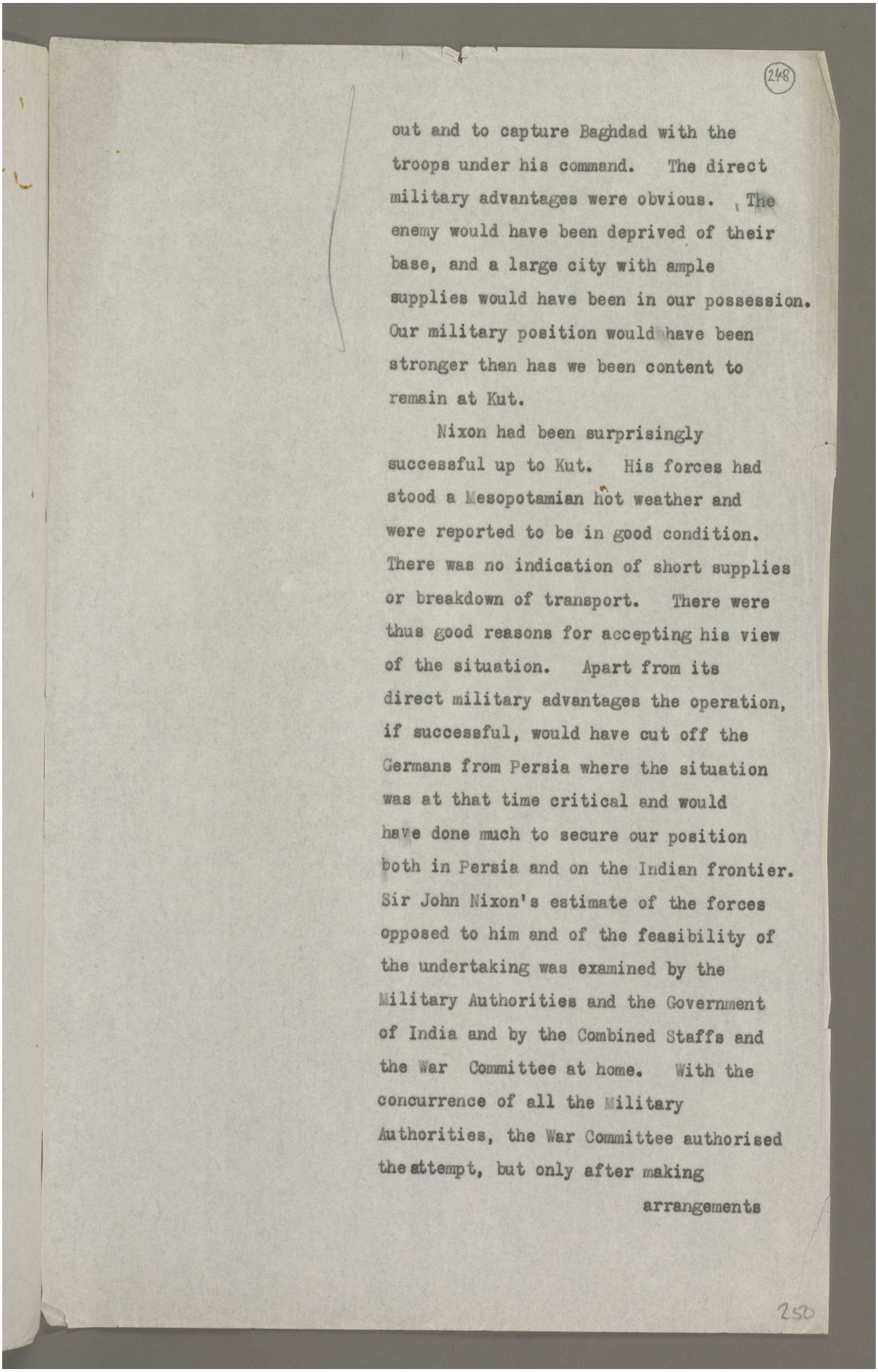
standing and will scarcely be questioned. The importance of maintaining our trading establishments as well as our treaty engagements and our influence with the Arabs and preventing them from throwing in their lot with a hostile Turkey, the effect of disturbances in Mesopotamia on the situation in Persia and of that again upon Afghanistan and the Frontier as well as the great importance attached by the Admiralty to the safety of the oil fields and pipe line, justified the inception of the Expedition without which we might have had to meet our troubles much nearer home. Had we not moved, the Turks under German direction would have taken immediate advantage of a coveted opportunity. The events of the war show the supreme importance which Germany has attached to establishing her control over the Middle East and a footing in Persia and the Gulf.

(2) The Advance to Ctesiphon. It has already been publicly stated that this advance was advocated by the General Officer Commanding in Chief in Mesopotamia on military grounds. After the successful battle of Kut he reported that he was strong enough to open the road to Baghdad. He repeatedly expressed his confidence in his ability to carry it out

249



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000002



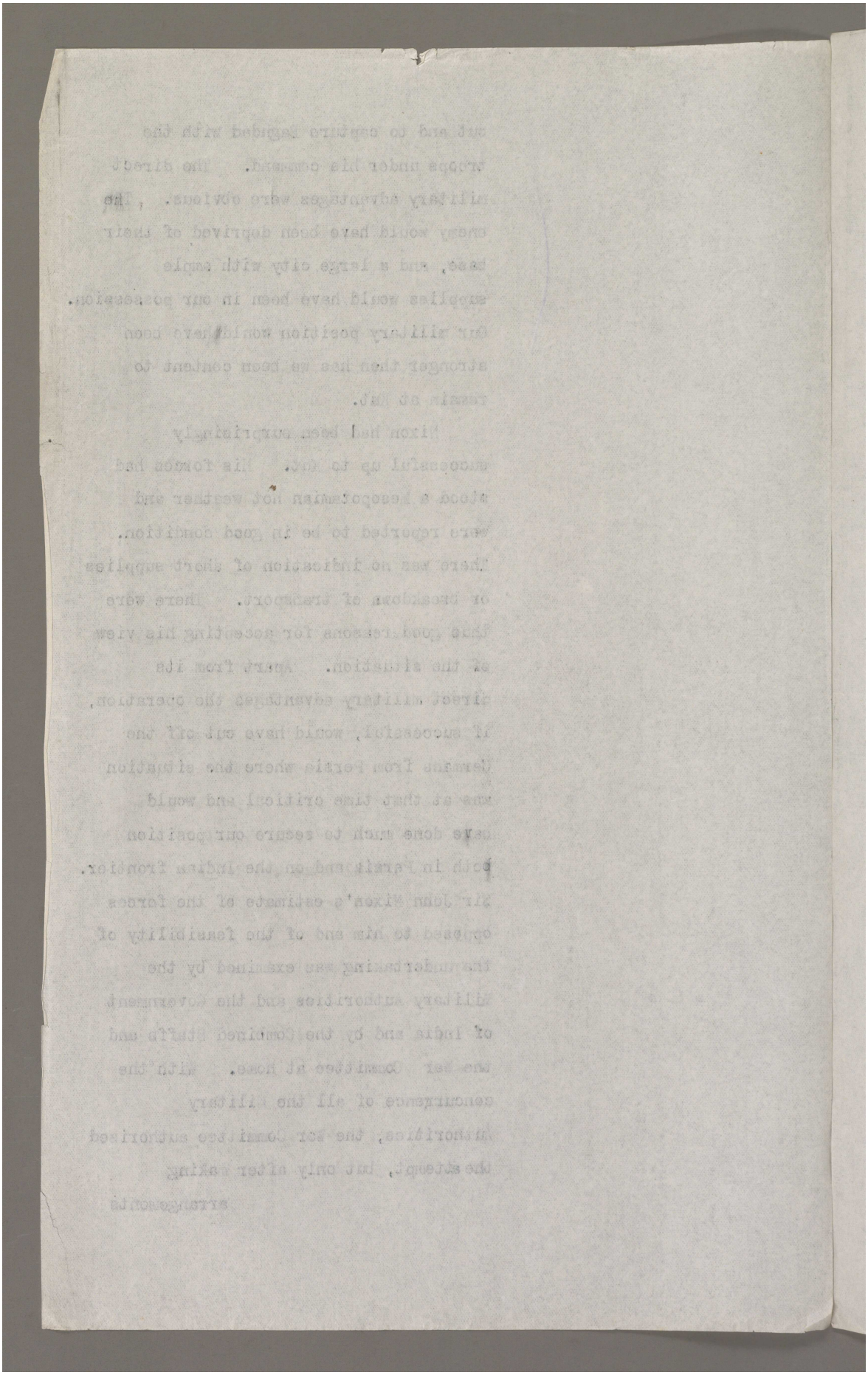
(248)

out and to capture Baghdad with the troops under his command. The direct military advantages were obvious. The enemy would have been deprived of their base, and a large city with ample supplies would have been in our possession. Our military position would have been stronger than has we been content to remain at Kut.

Nixon had been surprisingly successful up to Kut. His forces had stood a Mesopotamian hot weather and were reported to be in good condition. There was no indication of short supplies or breakdown of transport. There were thus good reasons for accepting his view of the situation. Apart from its direct military advantages the operation, if successful, would have cut off the Germans from Persia where the situation was at that time critical and would have done much to secure our position both in Persia and on the Indian frontier. Sir John Nixon's estimate of the forces opposed to him and of the feasibility of the undertaking was examined by the Military Authorities and the Government of India and by the Combined Staffs and the War Committee at home. With the concurrence of all the Military Authorities, the War Committee authorised the attempt, but only after making

arrangements

250



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000068

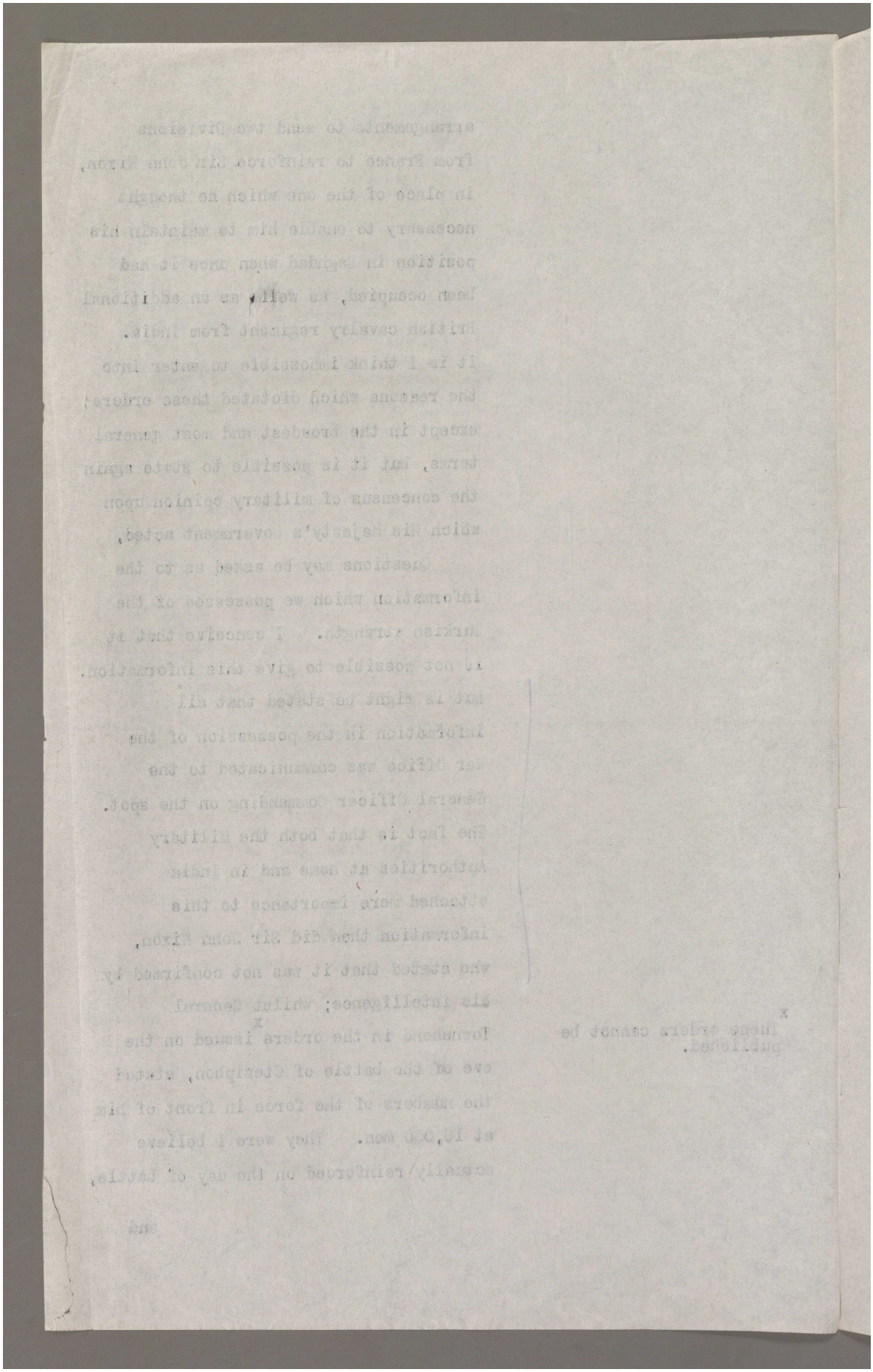
arrangements to send two Divisions from France to reinforce Sir John Nixon, in place of the one which he thought necessary to enable him to maintain his position in Baghdad when once it had been occupied, as well as an additional British cavalry regiment from India. It is I think impossible to enter into the reasons which dictated these orders except in the broadest and most general terms, but it is possible to state again the concensus of military opinion upon which His Majesty's Government acted,

Questions may be asked as to the information which we possessed of the Turkish strength. I conceive that it is not possible to give this information. But is might be stated that all information in the possession of the War Office was communicated to the General Officer Commanding on the spot. The fact is that both the Military Authorities at home and in India attached more importance to this information than did Sir John Nixon, who stated that it was not confirmed by his intelligence; whilst General Townshend in the orders x issued on the eve of the battle of Ctesiphon, stated the numbers of the force in front of him at 10,000 men. They were I believe actually reinforced on the day of battle,

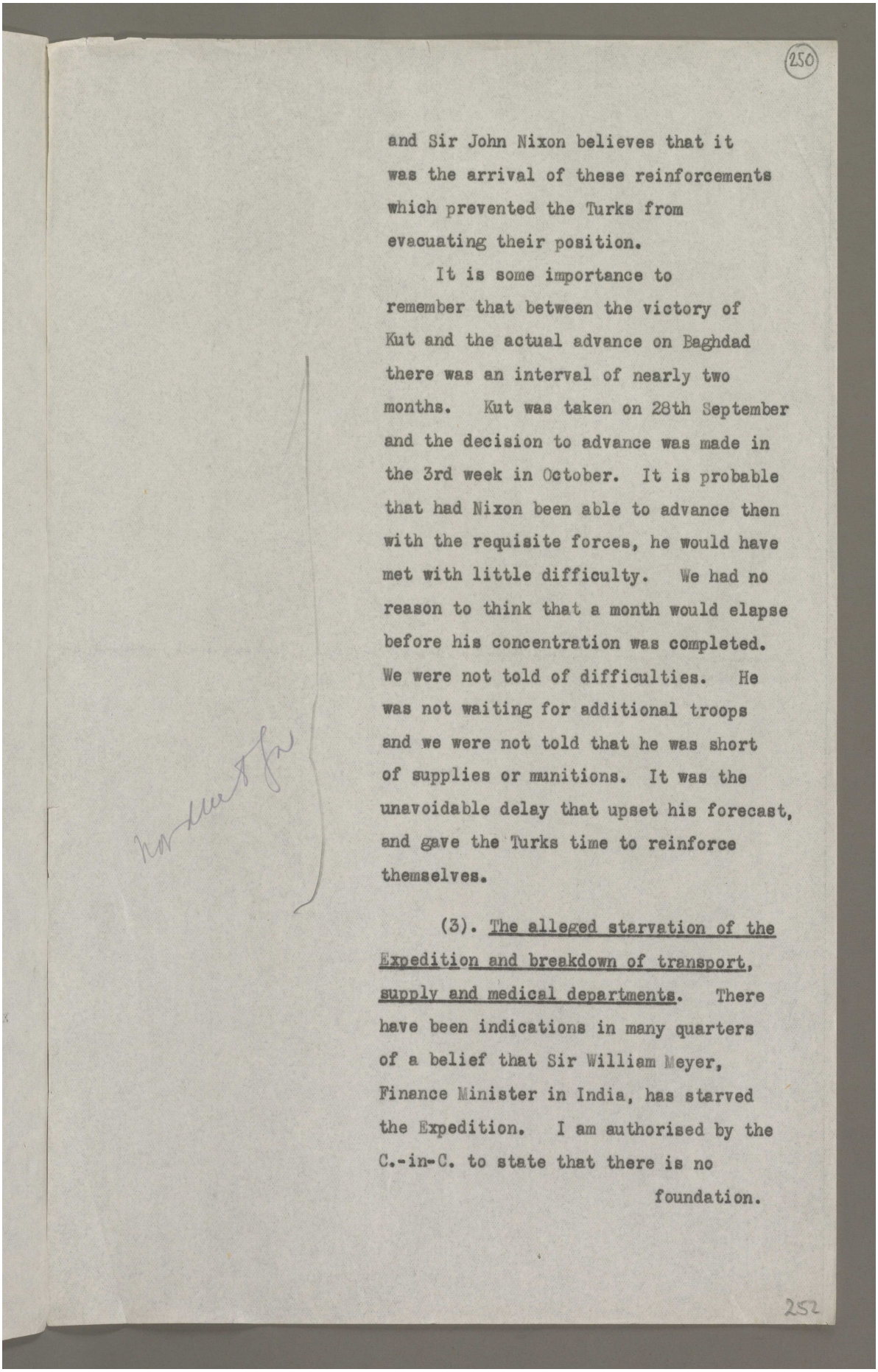
and

x These orders cannot be published.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000021



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000ac



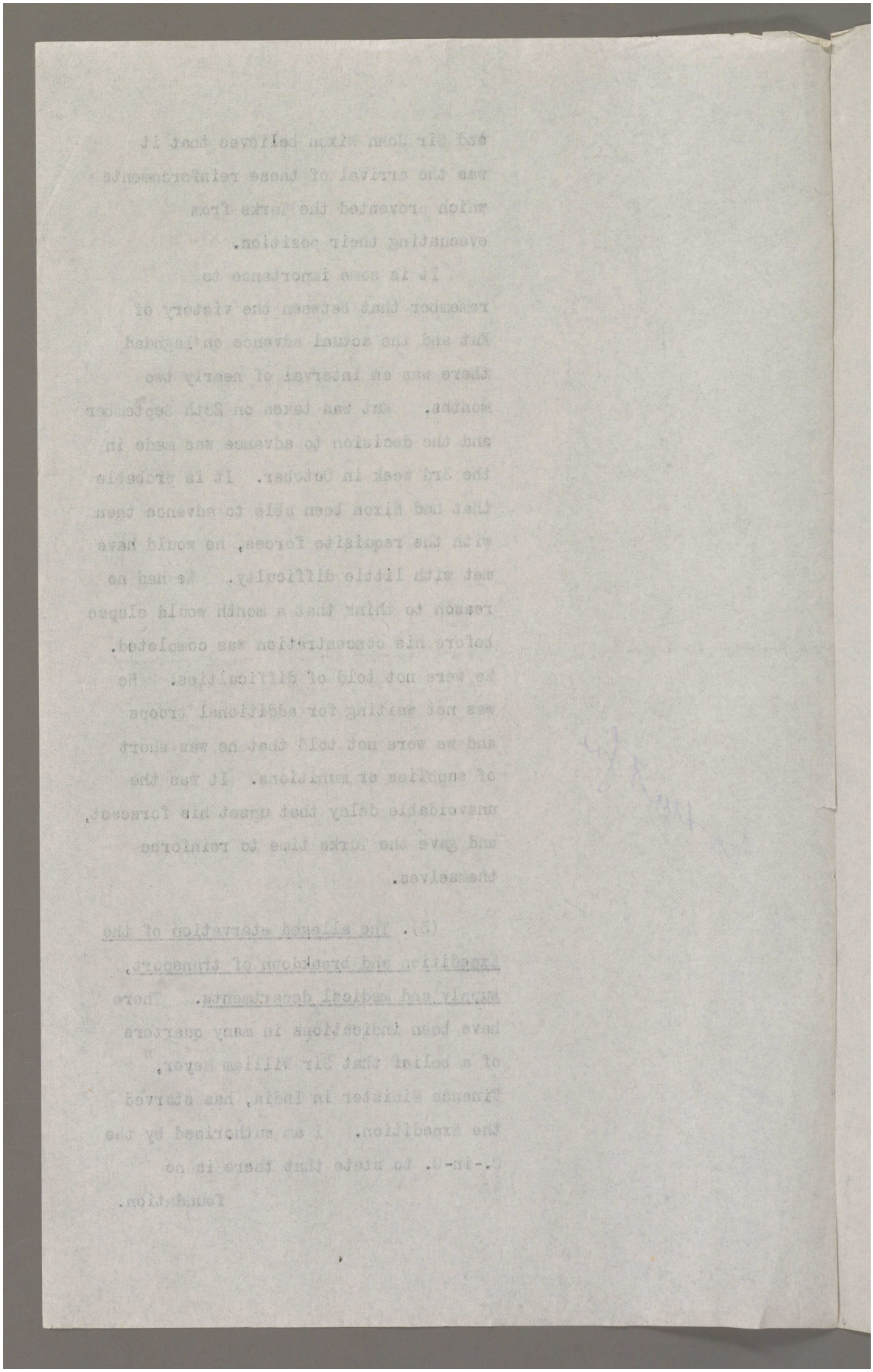
250

and Sir John Nixon believes that it was the arrival of these reinforcements which prevented the Turks from evacuating their position.

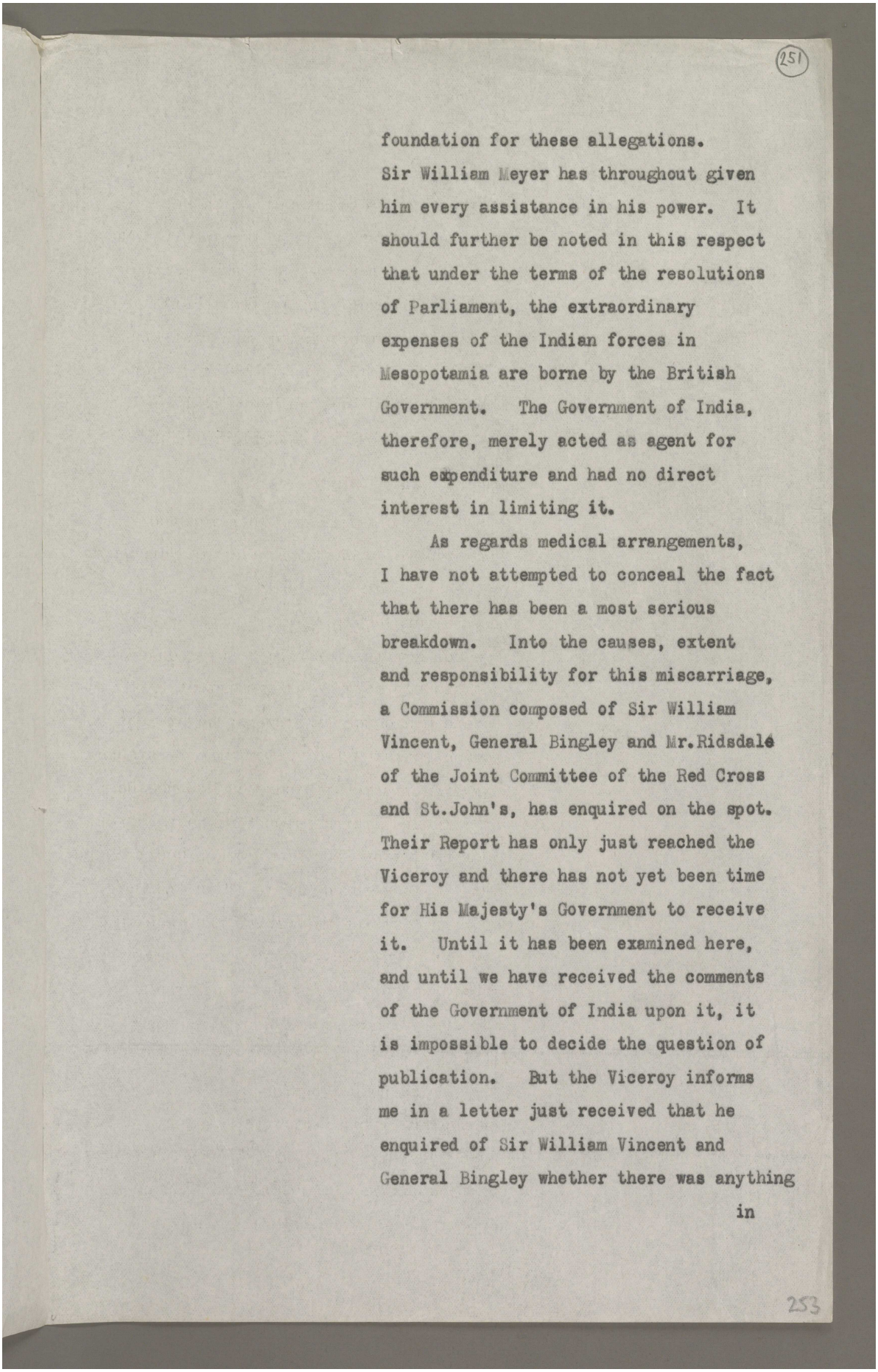
It is some importance to remember that between the victory of Kut and the actual advance on Baghdad there was an interval of nearly two months. Kut was taken on 28th September and the decision to advance was made in the 3rd week in October. It is probable that had Nixon been able to advance then with the requisite forces, he would have met with little difficulty. We had no reason to think that a month would elapse before his concentration was completed. We were not told of difficulties. He was not waiting for additional troops and we were not told that he was short of supplies or munitions. It was the unavoidable delay that upset his forecast, and gave the Turks time to reinforce themselves.

(3). The alleged starvation of the Expedition and breakdown of transport, supply and medical departments. There have been indications in many quarters of a belief that Sir William Meyer, Finance Minister in India, has starved the Expedition. I am authorised by the C.-in-C. to state that there is no foundation.

252



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000078



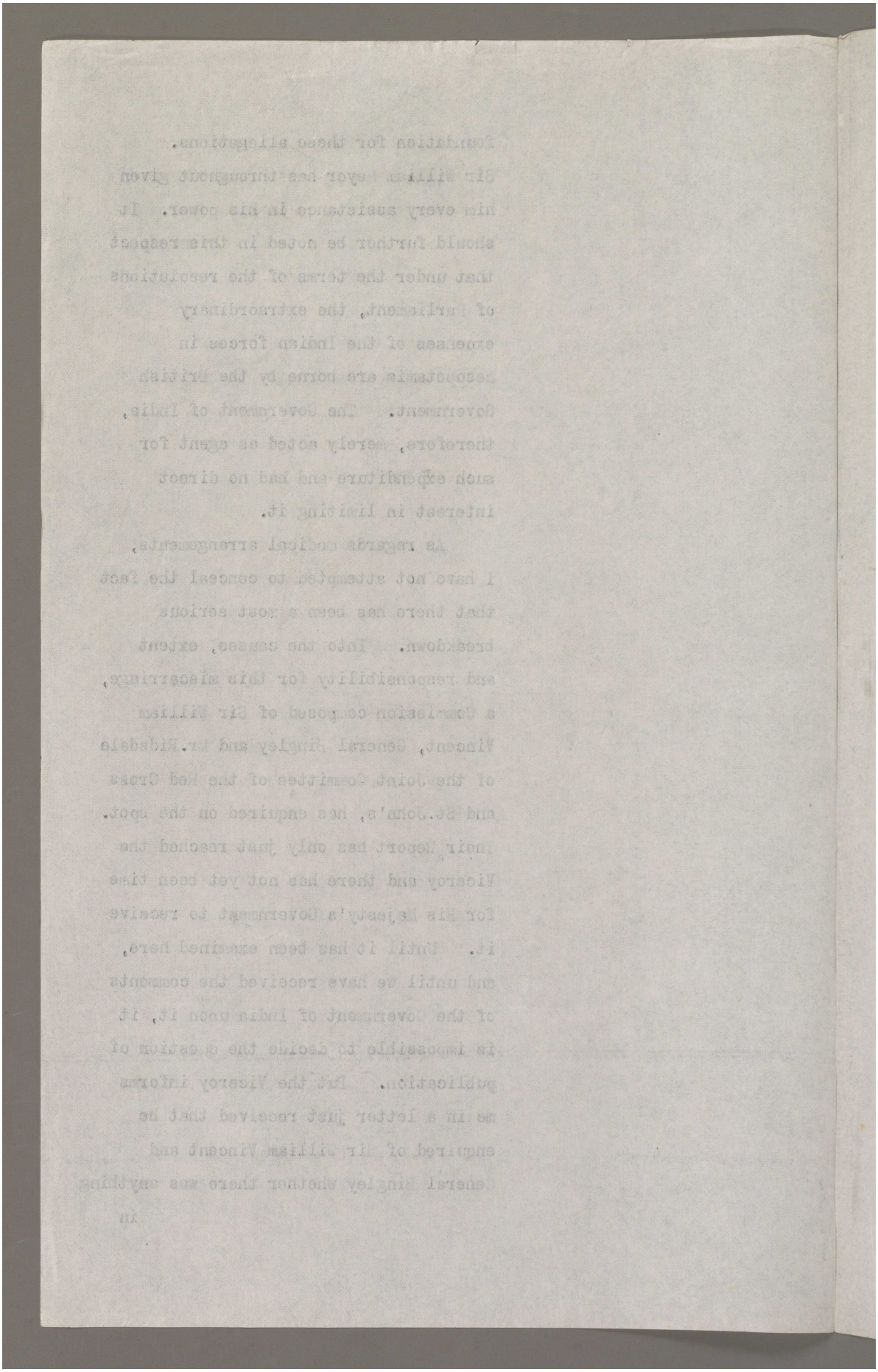
(251)

foundation for these allegations. Sir William Meyer has throughout given him every assistance in his power. It should further be noted in this respect that under the terms of the resolutions of Parliament, the extraordinary expenses of the Indian forces in Mesopotamia are borne by the British Government. The Government of India, therefore, merely acted as agent for such expenditure and had no direct interest in limiting it.

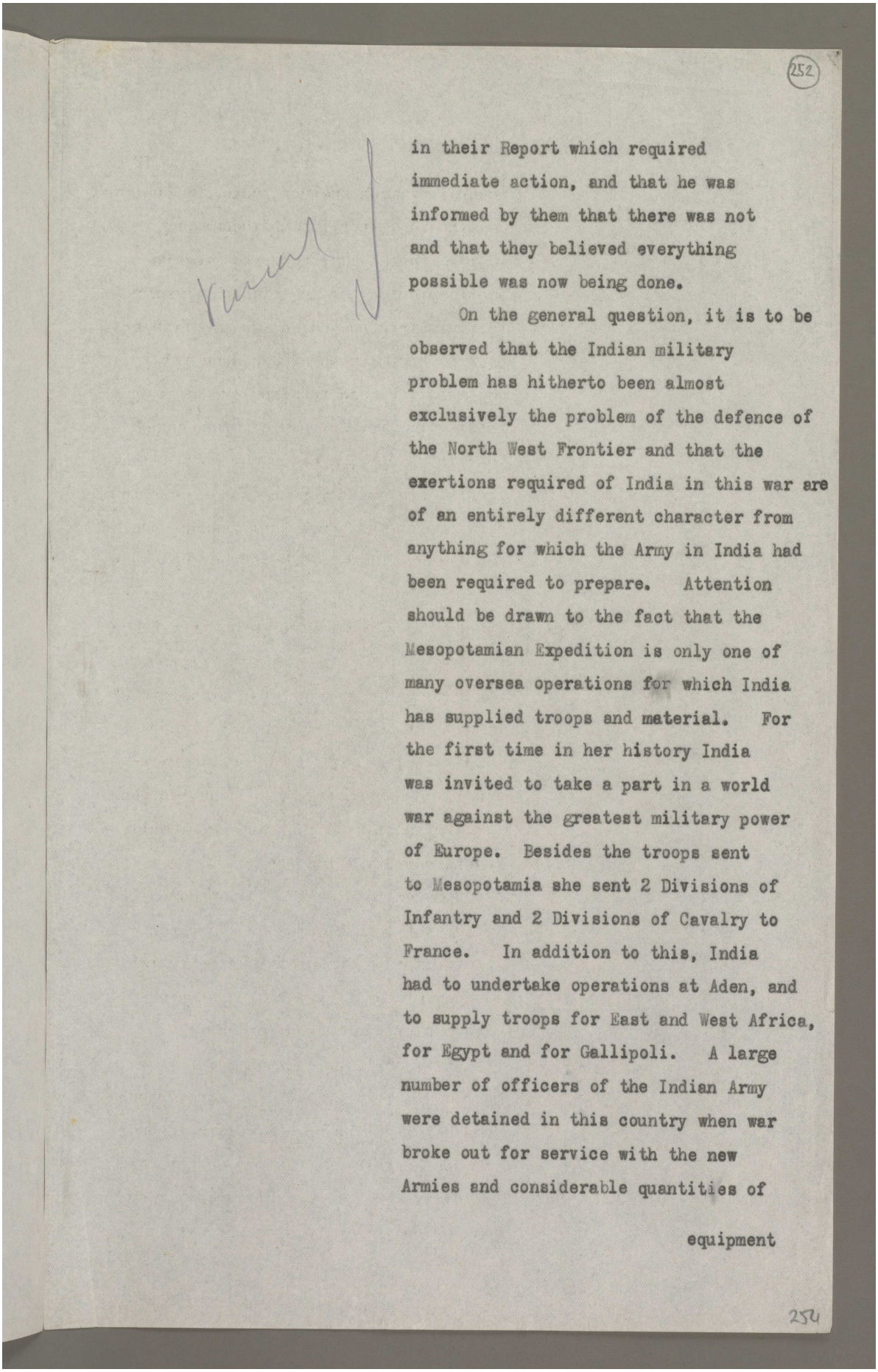
As regards medical arrangements, I have not attempted to conceal the fact that there has been a most serious breakdown. Into the causes, extent and responsibility for this miscarriage, a Commission composed of Sir William Vincent, General Bingley and Mr.Ridsdale of the Joint Committee of the Red Cross and St.John's, has enquired on the spot. Their Report has only just reached the Viceroy and there has not yet been time for His Majesty's Government to receive it. Until it has been examined here, and until we have received the comments of the Government of India upon it, it is impossible to decide the question of publication. But the Viceroy informs me in a letter just received that he enquired of Sir William Vincent and General Bingley whether there was anything

in

253



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00005a



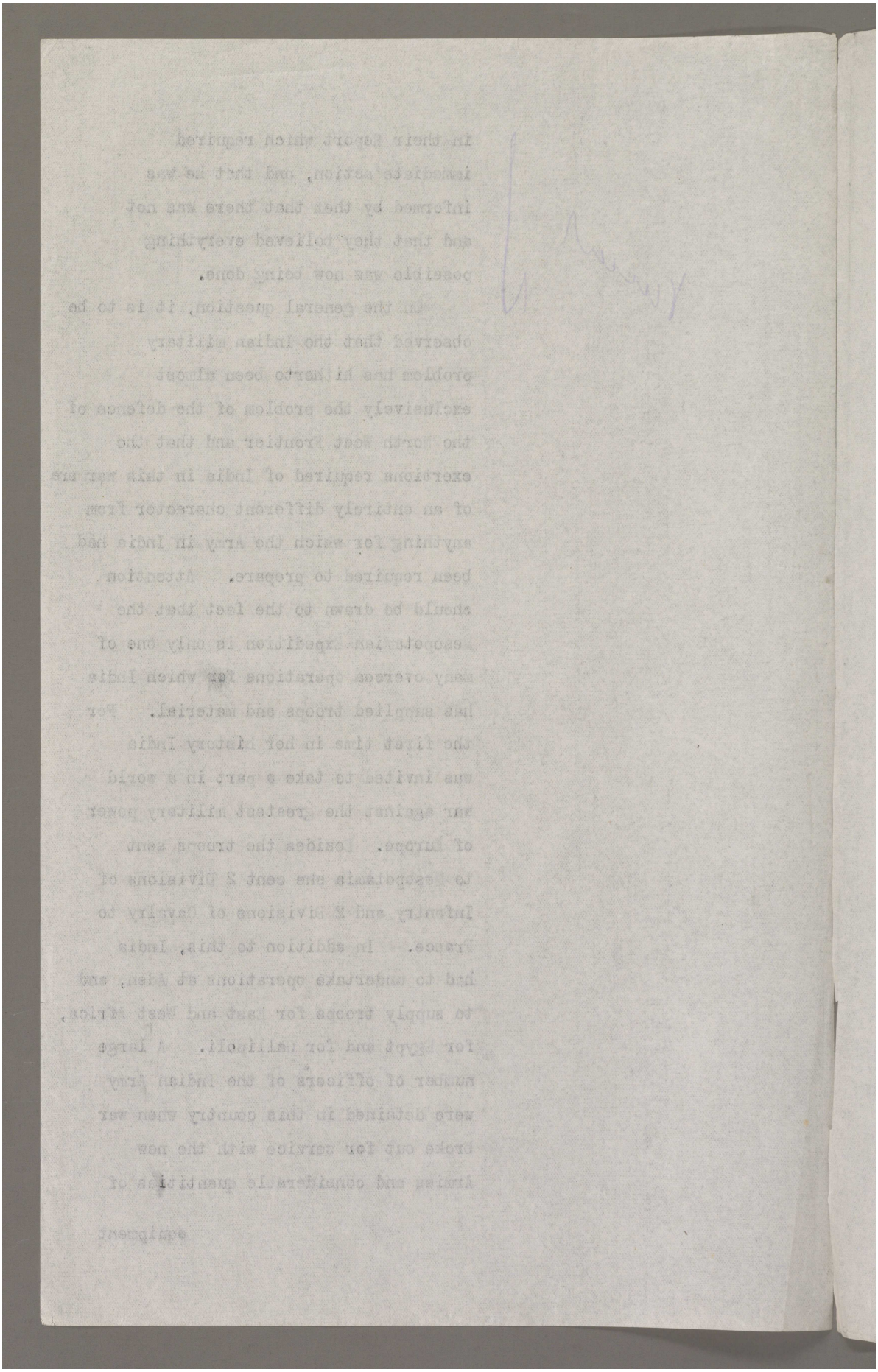
252

in their Report which required immediate action, and that he was informed by them that there was not and that they believed everything possible was now being done.

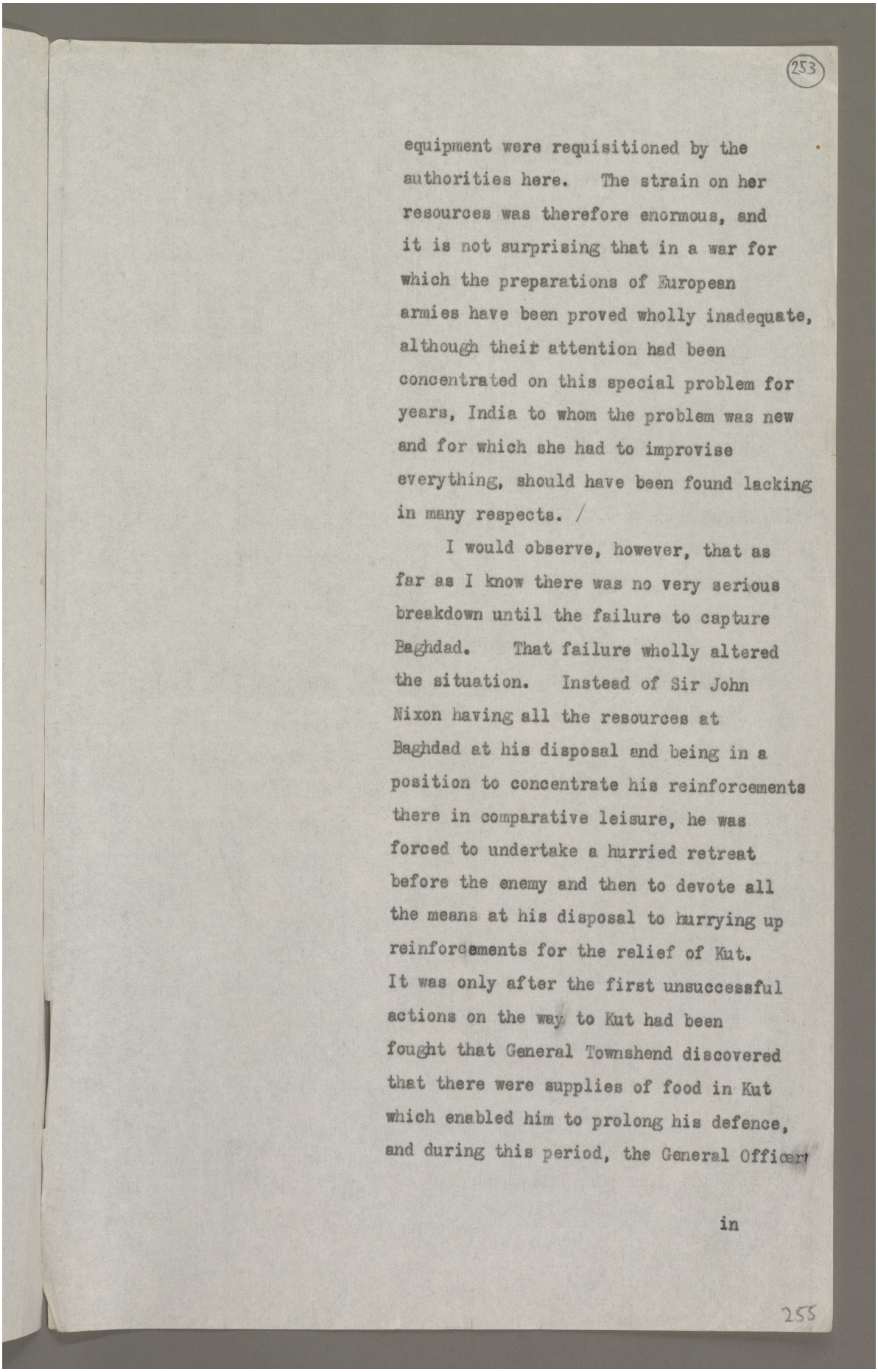
On the general question, it is to be observed that the Indian military problem has hitherto been almost exclusively the problem of the defence of the North West Frontier and that the exertions required of India in this war are of an entirely different character from anything for which the Army in India had been required to prepare. Attention should be drawn to the fact that the Mesopotamian Expedition is only one of many oversea operations for which India has supplied troops and material. For the first time in her history India was invited to take a part in a world war against the greatest military power of Europe. Besides the troops sent to Mesopotamia she sent 2 Divisions of Infantry and 2 Divisions of Cavalry to France. In addition to this, India had to undertake operations at Aden, and to supply troops for East and West Africa, for Egypt and for Gallipoli. A large number of officers of the Indian Army were detained in this country when war broke out for service with the new Armies and considerable quantities of

equipment

252



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000041



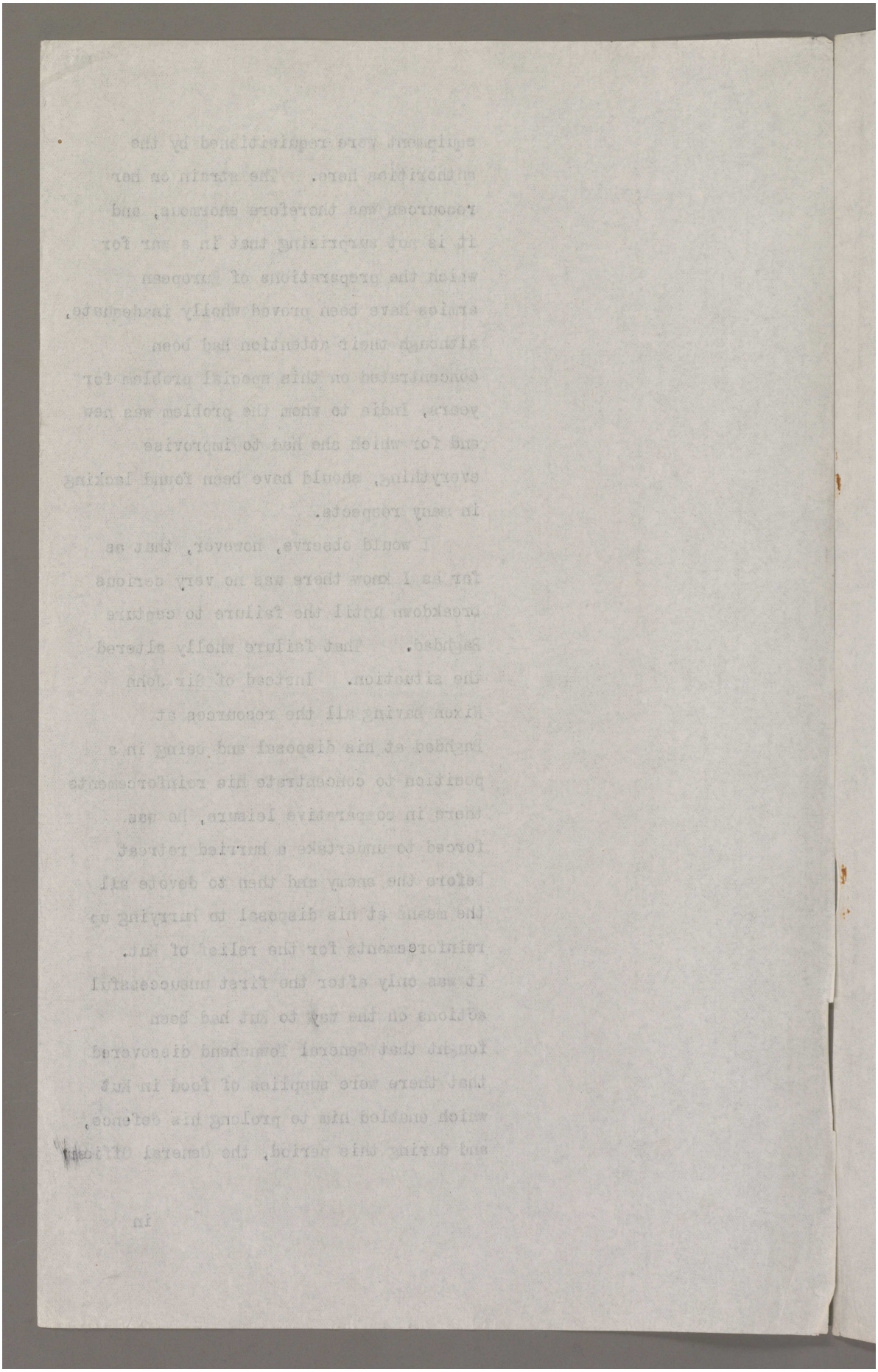
(253)

equipment were requisitioned by the authorities here. The strain on her resources was therefore enormous, and it is not surprising that in a war for which the preparations of European armies have been proved wholly inadequate, although their attention had been concentrated on this special problem for years, India to whom the problem was new and for which she had to improvise everything, should have been found lacking in many respects. /

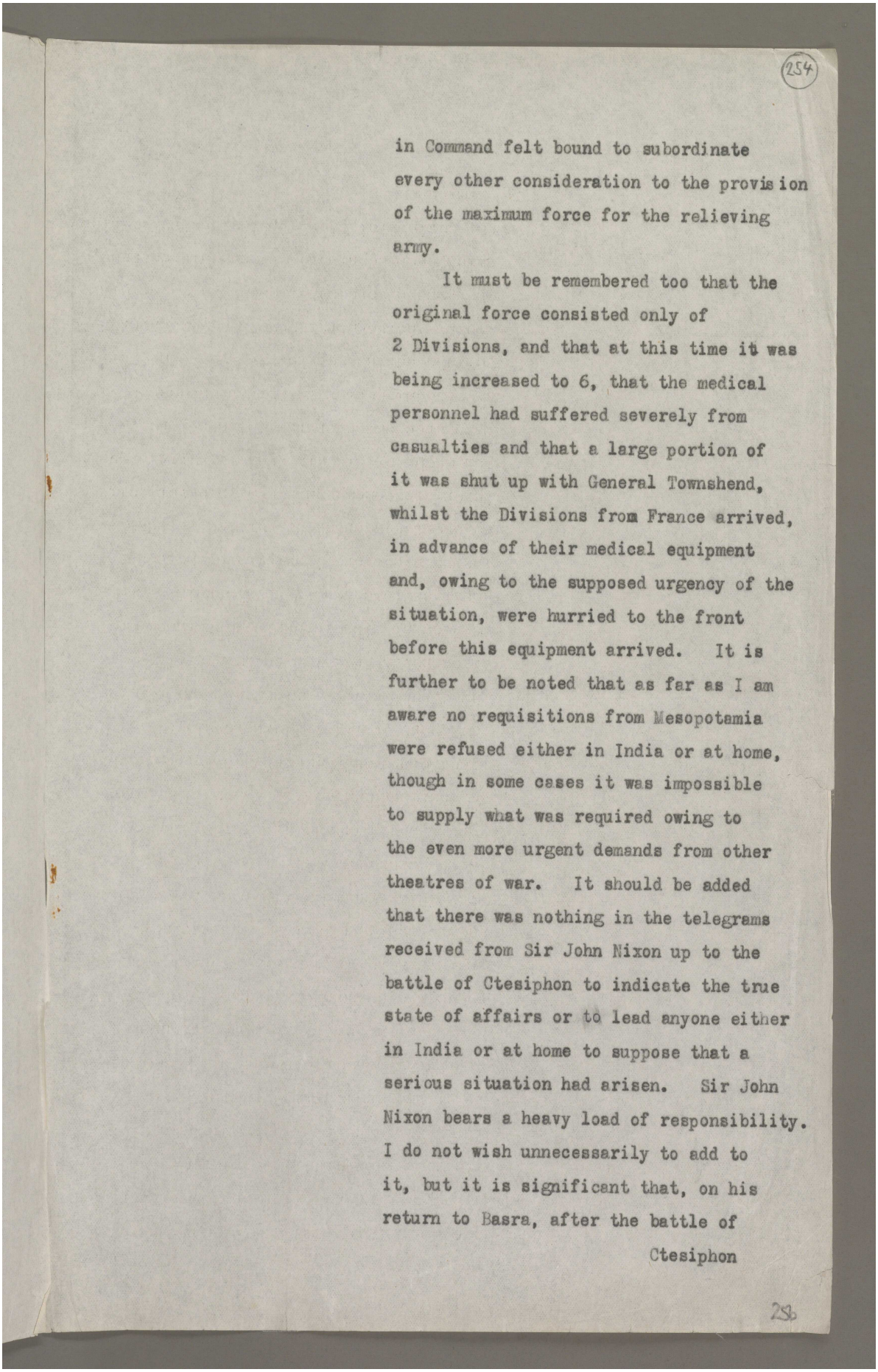
I would observe, however, that as far as I know there was no very serious breakdown until the failure to capture Baghdad. That failure wholly altered the situation. Instead of Sir John Nixon having all the resources at Baghdad at his disposal and being in a position to concentrate his reinforcements there in comparative leisure, he was forced to undertake a hurried retreat before the enemy and then to devote all the means at his disposal to hurrying up reinforcements for the relief of Kut. It was only after the first unsuccessful actions on the way to Kut had been fought that General Townshend discovered that there were supplies of food in Kut which enabled him to prolong his defence, and during this period, the General Officer

in

253



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000008



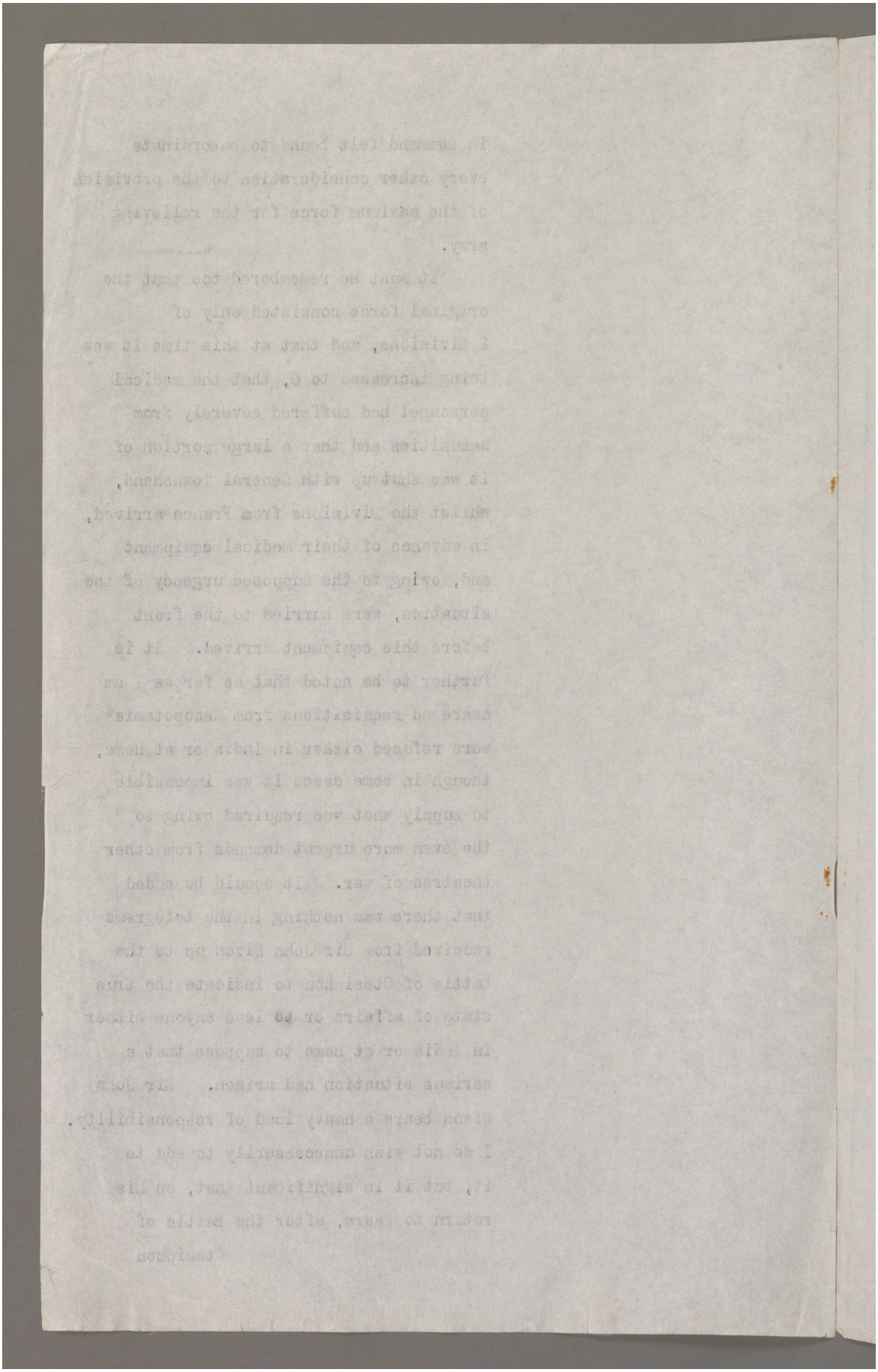
(254)

in Command felt bound to subordinate every other consideration to the provision of the maximum force for the relieving army.

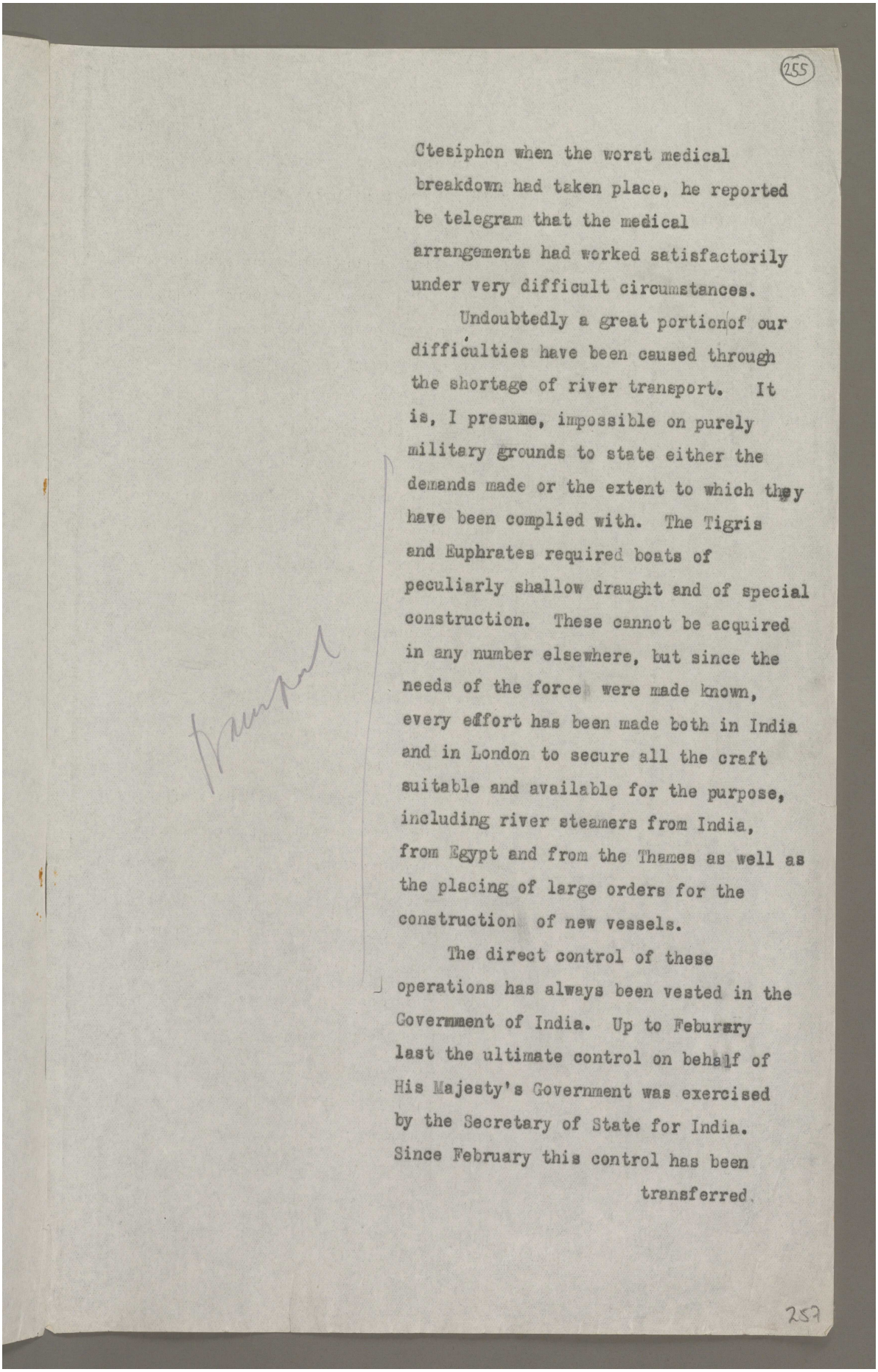
It must be remembered too that the original force consisted only of 2 Divisions, and that at this time it was being increased to 6, that the medical personnel had suffered severely from casualties and that a large portion of it was shut up with General Townshend, whilst the Divisions from France arrived, in advance of their medical equipment and, owing to the supposed urgency of the situation, were hurried to the front before this equipment arrived. It is further to be noted that as far as I am aware no requisitions from Mesopotamia were refused either in India or at home, though in some cases it was impossible to supply what was required owing to the even more urgent demands from other theatres of war. It should be added that there was nothing in the telegrams received from Sir John Nixon up to the battle of Ctesiphon to indicate the true state of affairs or to lead anyone either in India or at home to suppose that a serious situation had arisen. Sir John Nixon bears a heavy load of responsibility. I do not wish unnecessarily to add to it, but it is significant that, on his return to Basra, after the battle of

Ctesiphon

254



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000bc



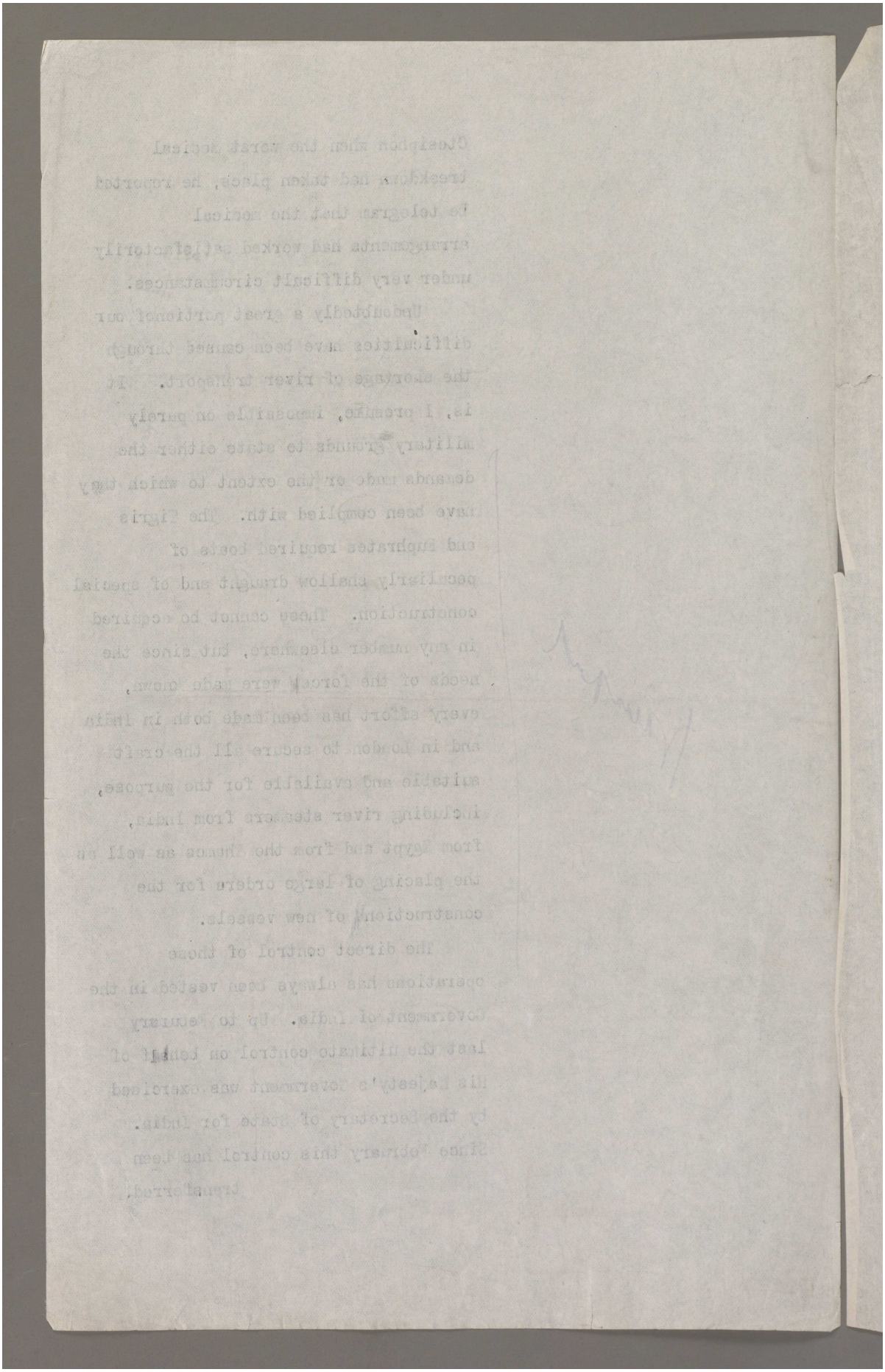
255

Ctesiphon when the worst medical breakdown had taken place, he reported be telegram that the medical arrangements had worked satisfactorily under very difficult circumstances.

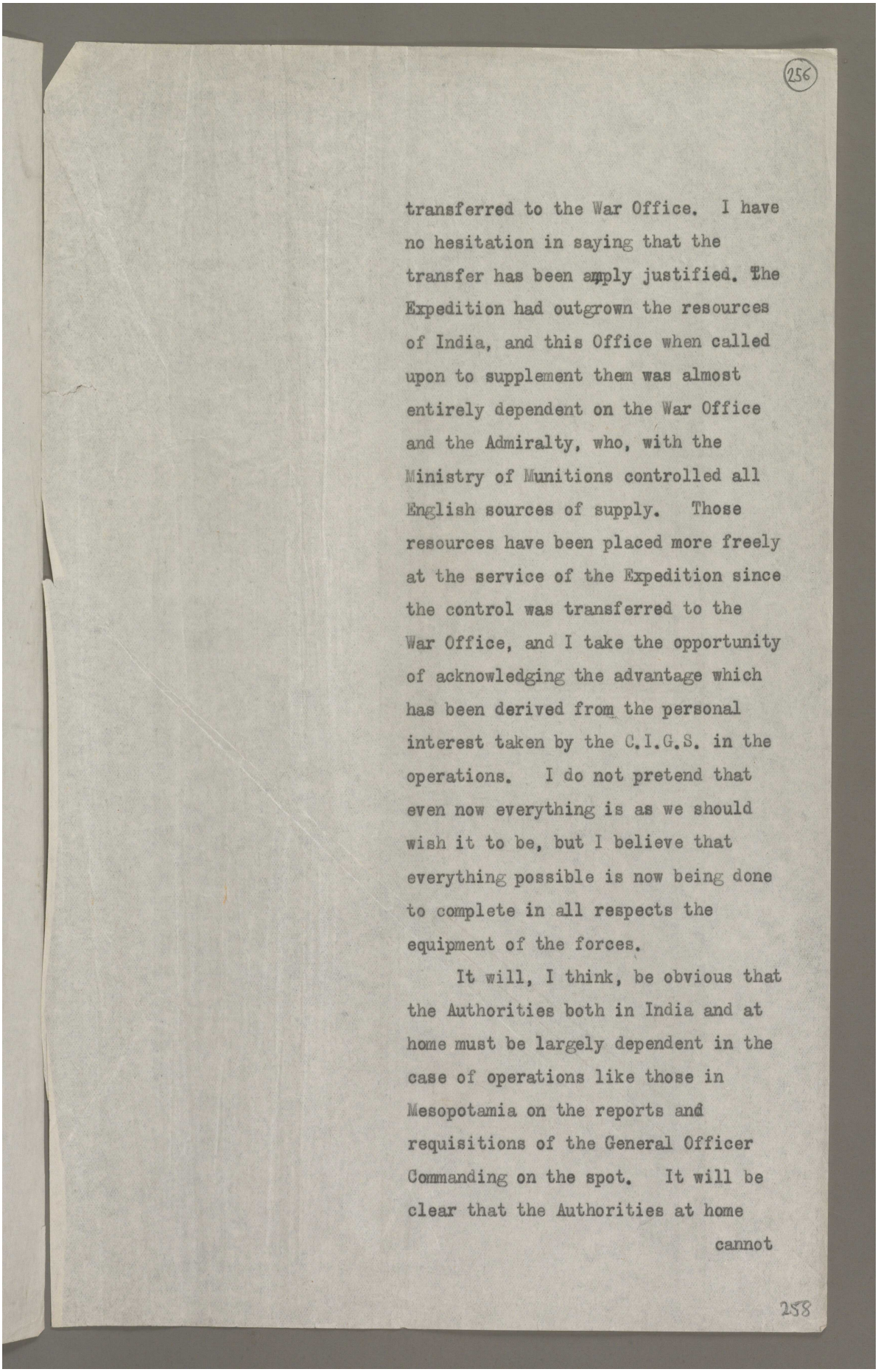
Undoubtedly a great portion of our difficulties have been caused through the shortage of river transport. It is, I presume, impossible on purely military grounds to state either the demands made or the extent to which they have been complied with. The Tigris and Euphrates required boats of peculiarly shallow draught and of special construction. These cannot be acquired in any number elsewhere, but since the needs of the force were made known, every effort has been made both in India and in London to secure all the craft suitable and available for the purpose, including river steamers from India, from Egypt and from the Thames as well as the placing of large orders for the construction of new vessels.

The direct control of these operations has always been vested in the Government of India. Up to Feburary last the ultimate control on behalf of His Majesty's Government was exercised by the Secretary of State for India. Since February this control has been transferred.

257



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b5



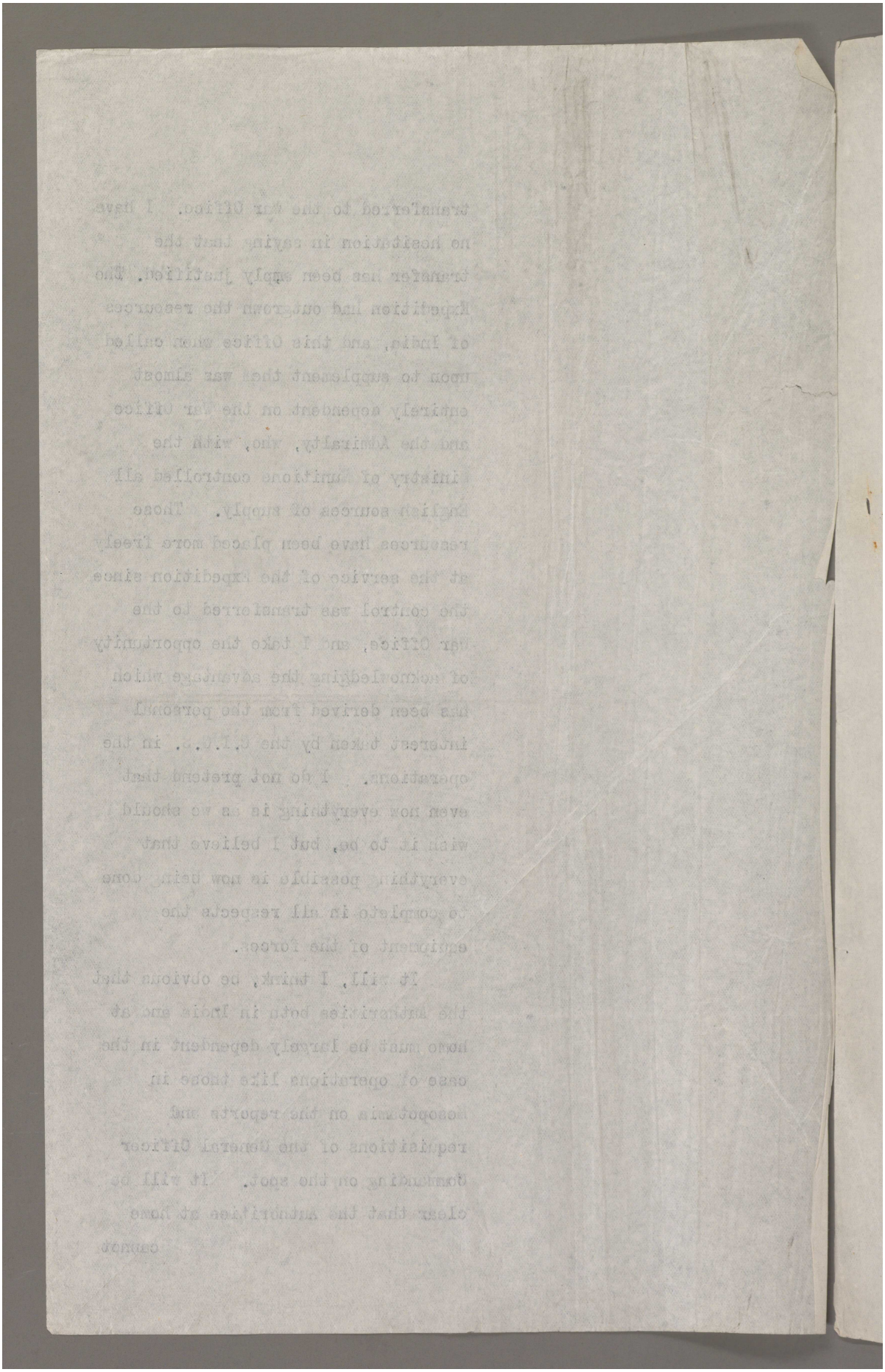
256

transferred to the War Office. I have no hesitation in saying that the transfer has been amply justified. The Expedition had outgrown the resources of India, and this Office when called upon to supplement them was almost entirely dependent on the War Office and the Admiralty, who, with the Ministry of Munitions controlled all English sources of supply. Those resources have been placed more freely at the service of the Expedition since the control was transferred to the War Office, and I take the opportunity of acknowledging the advantage which has been derived from the personal interest taken by the C.I.G.S. in the operations. I do not pretend that even now everything is as we should wish it to be, but I believe that everything possible is now being done to complete in all respects the equipment of the forces.

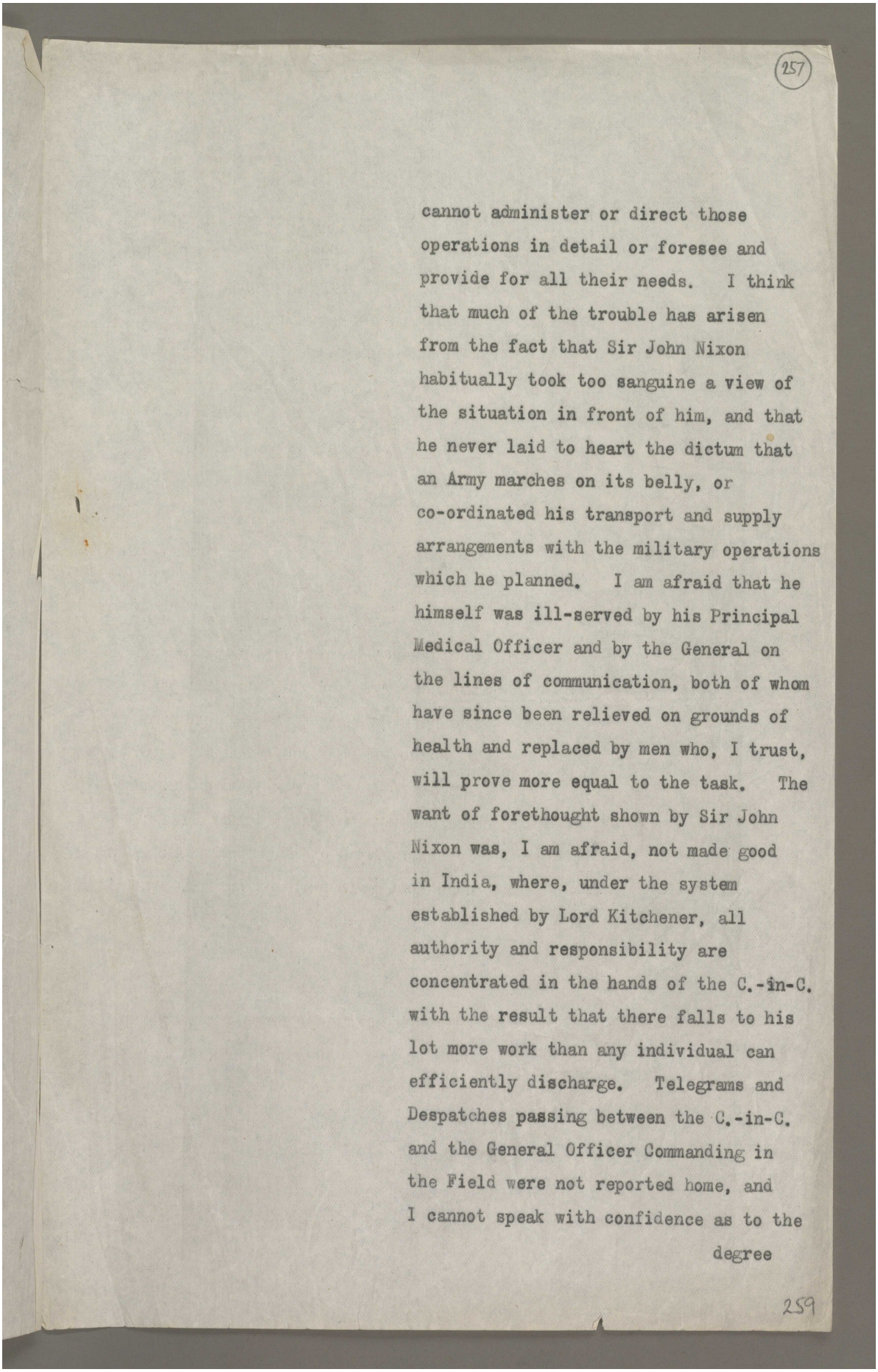
It will, I think, be obvious that the Authorities both in India and at home must be largely dependent in the case of operations like those in Mesopotamia on the reports and requisitions of the General Officer Commanding on the spot. It will be clear that the Authorities at home

cannot

258



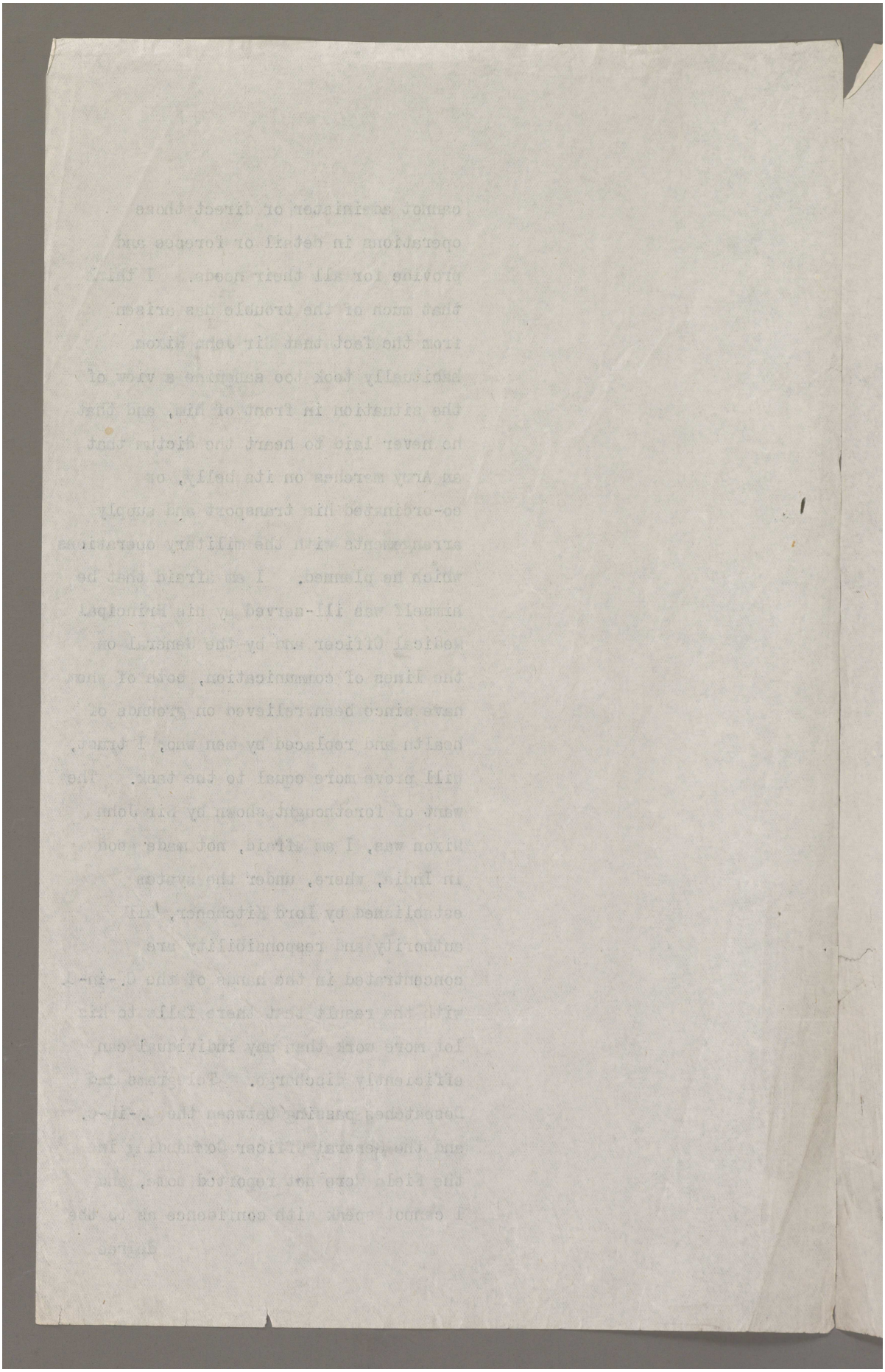
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000098



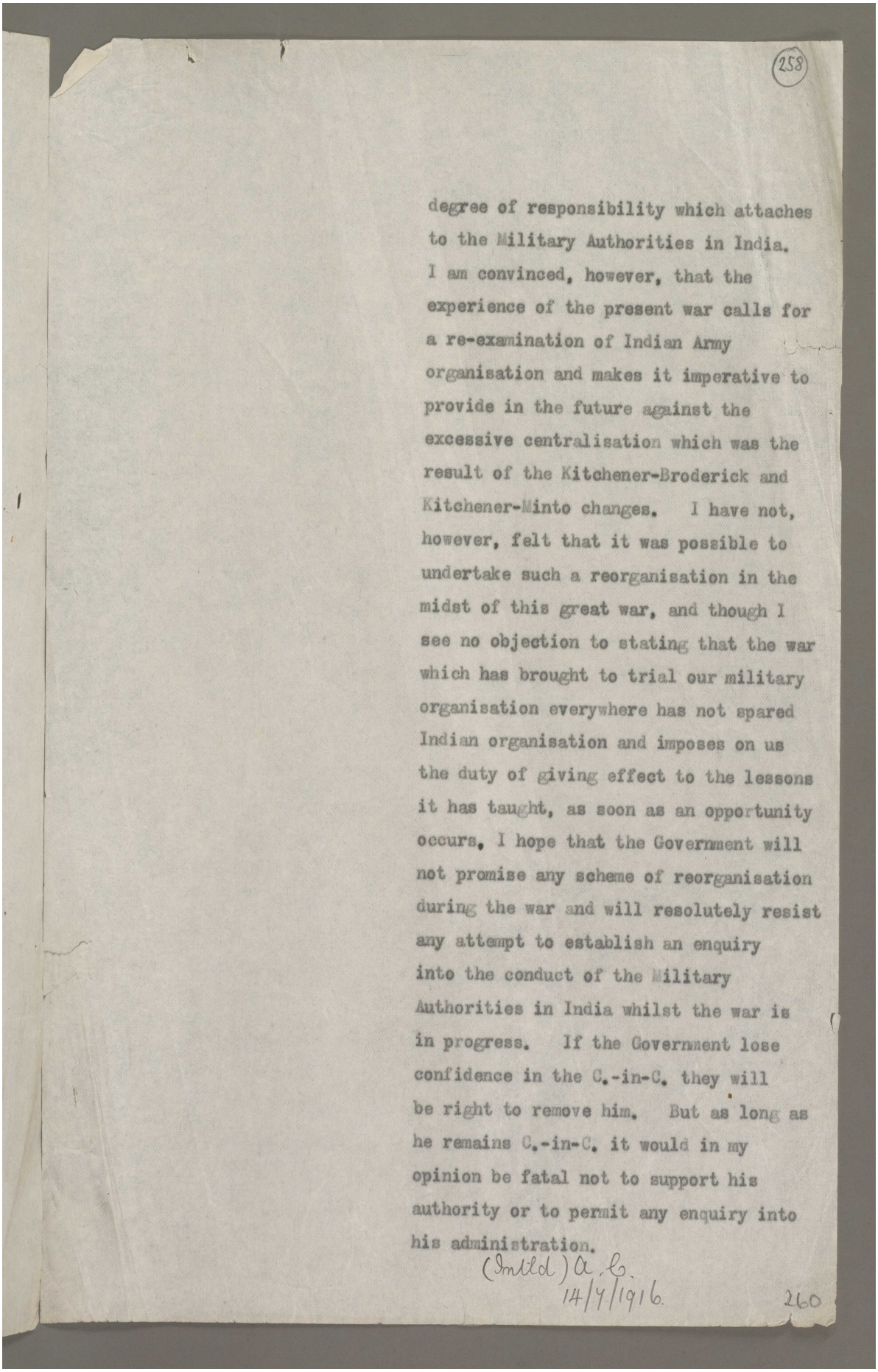
257

cannot administer or direct those operations in detail or foresee and provide for all their needs. I think that much of the trouble has arisen from the fact that Sir John Nixon habitually took too sanguine a view of the situation in front of him, and that he never laid to heart the dictum that an Army marches on its belly, or co-ordinated his transport and supply arrangements with the military operations which he planned. I am afraid that he himself was ill-served by his Principal Medical Officer and by the General on the lines of communication, both of whom have since been relieved on grounds of health and replaced by men who, I trust, will prove more equal to the task. The want of forethought shown by Sir John Nixon was, I am afraid, not made good in India, where, under the system established by Lord Kitchener, all authority and responsibility are concentrated in the hands of the C.-in-C. with the result that there falls to his lot more work than any individual can efficiently discharge. Telegrams and Despatches passing between the C.-in-C. and the General Officer Commanding in the Field were not reported home, and I cannot speak with confidence as to the degree

259



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000028

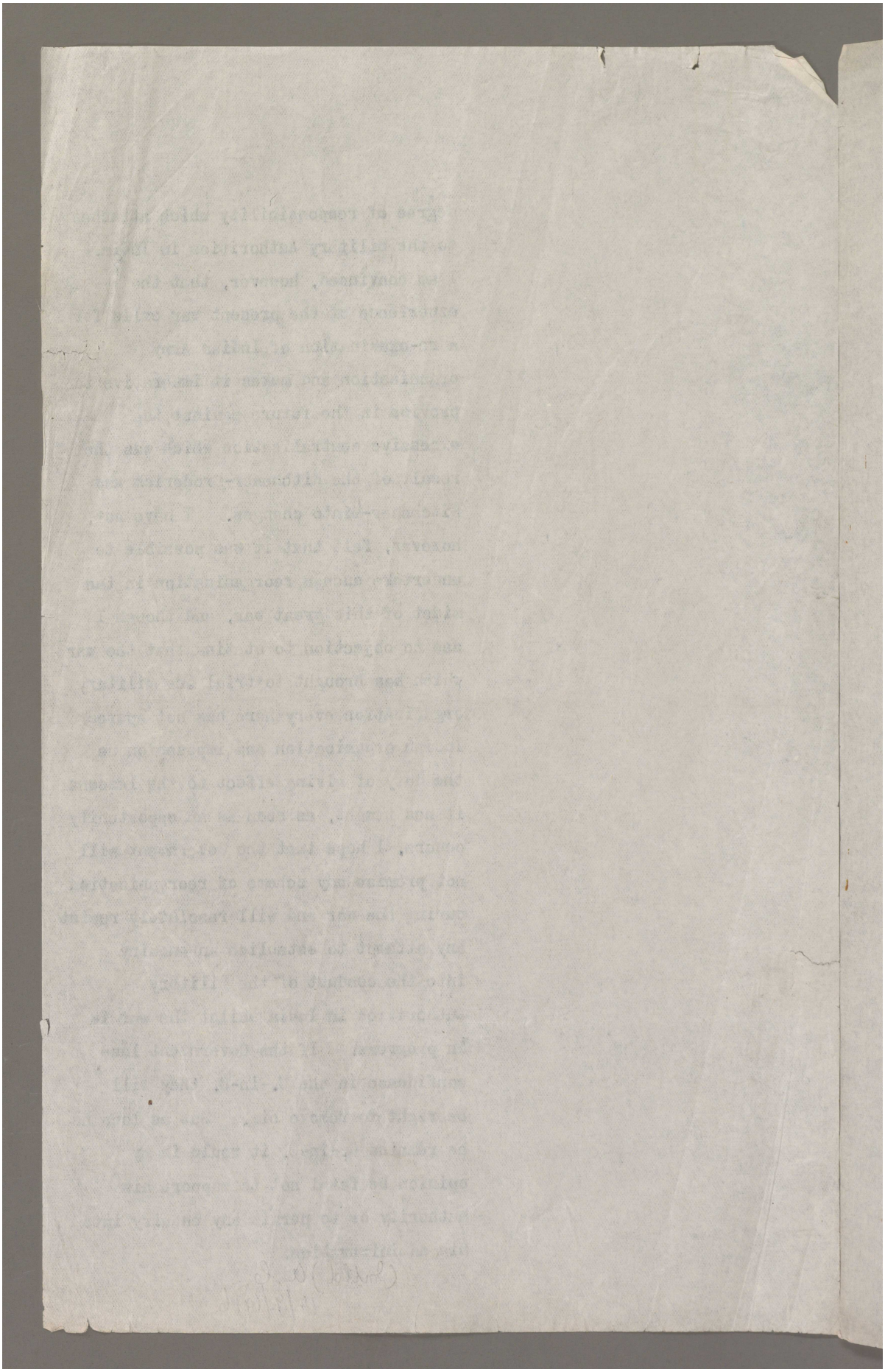


258

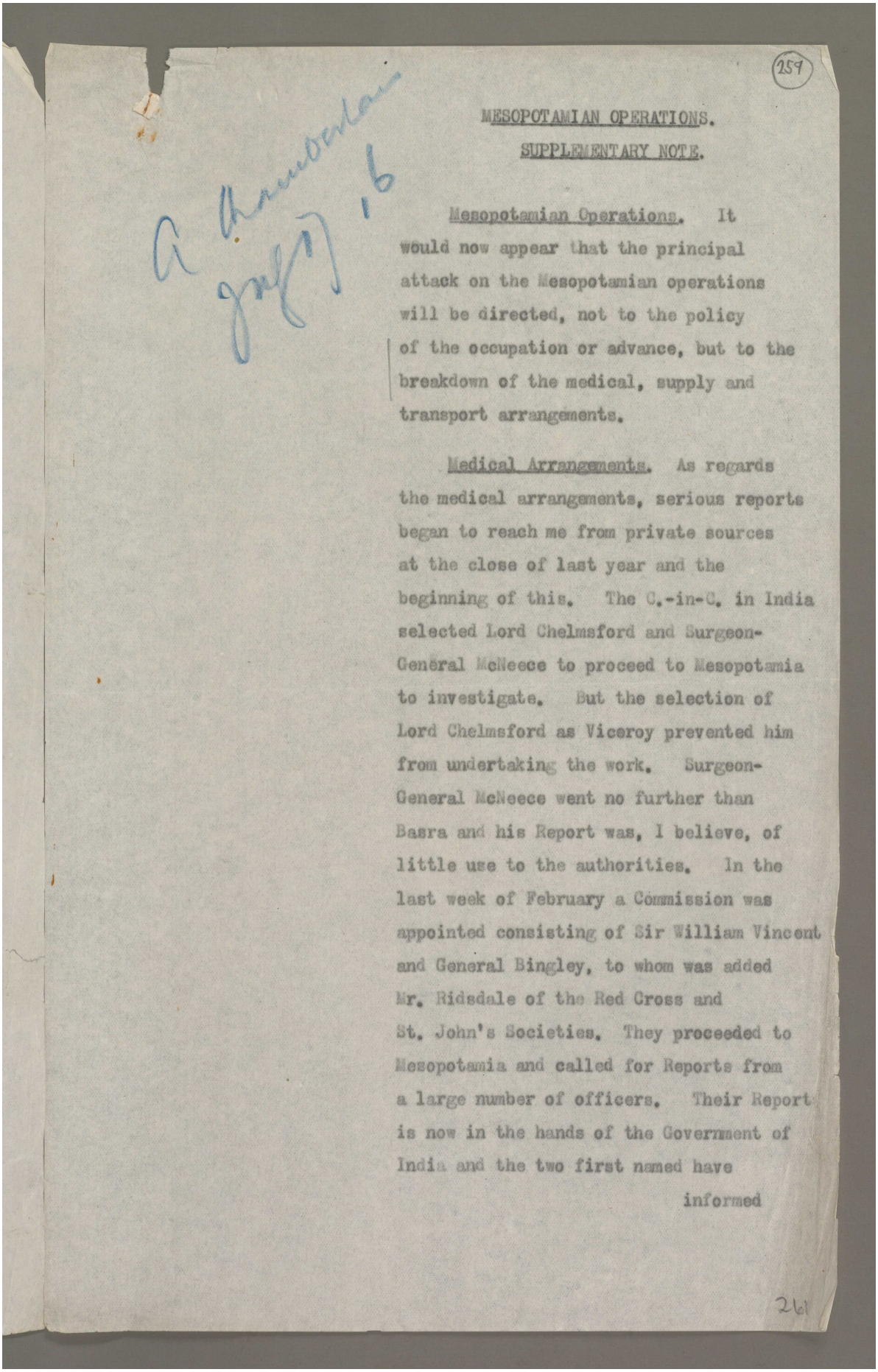
degree of responsibility which attaches to the Military Authorities in India. I am convinced, however, that the experience of the present war calls for a re-examination of Indian Army organisation and makes it imperative to provide in the future against the excessive centralisation which was the result of the Kitchener-Broderick and Kitchener-Minto changes. I have not, however, felt that it was possible to undertake such a reorganisation in the midst of this great war, and though I see no objection to stating that the war which has brought to trial our military organisation everywhere has not spared Indian organisation and imposes on us the duty of giving effect to the lessons it has taught, as soon as an opportunity occurs, I hope that the Government will not promise any scheme of reorganisation during the war and will resolutely resist any attempt to establish an enquiry into the conduct of the Military Authorities in India whilst the war is in progress. If the Government lose confidence in the C.-in-C. they will be right to remove him. But as long as he remains C.-in-C. it would in my opinion be fatal not to support his authority or to permit any enquiry into his administration.

(Initd) A. L.
14/4/1916.

260



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000031



259

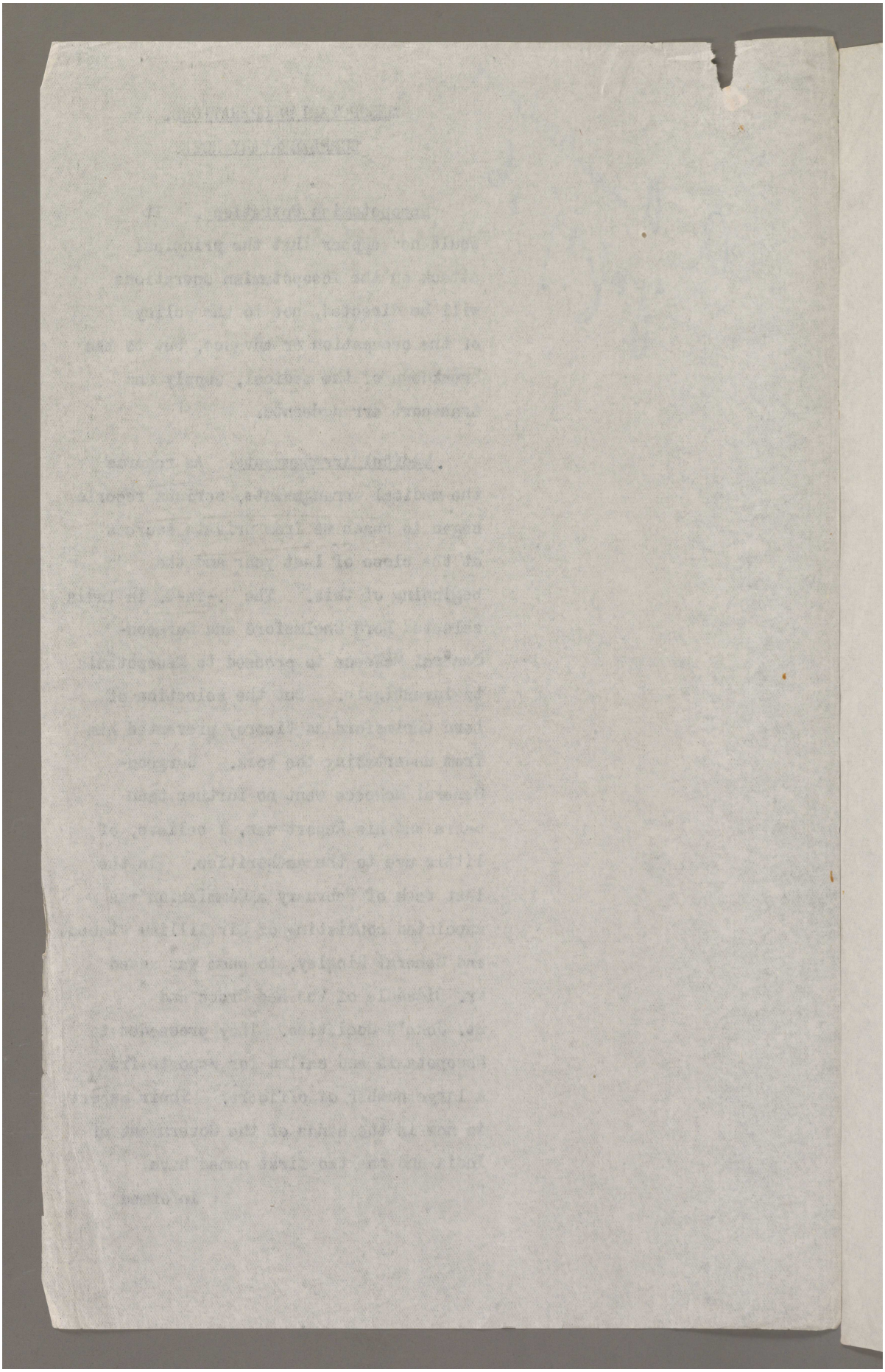
MESOPOTAMIAN OPERATIONS.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE.

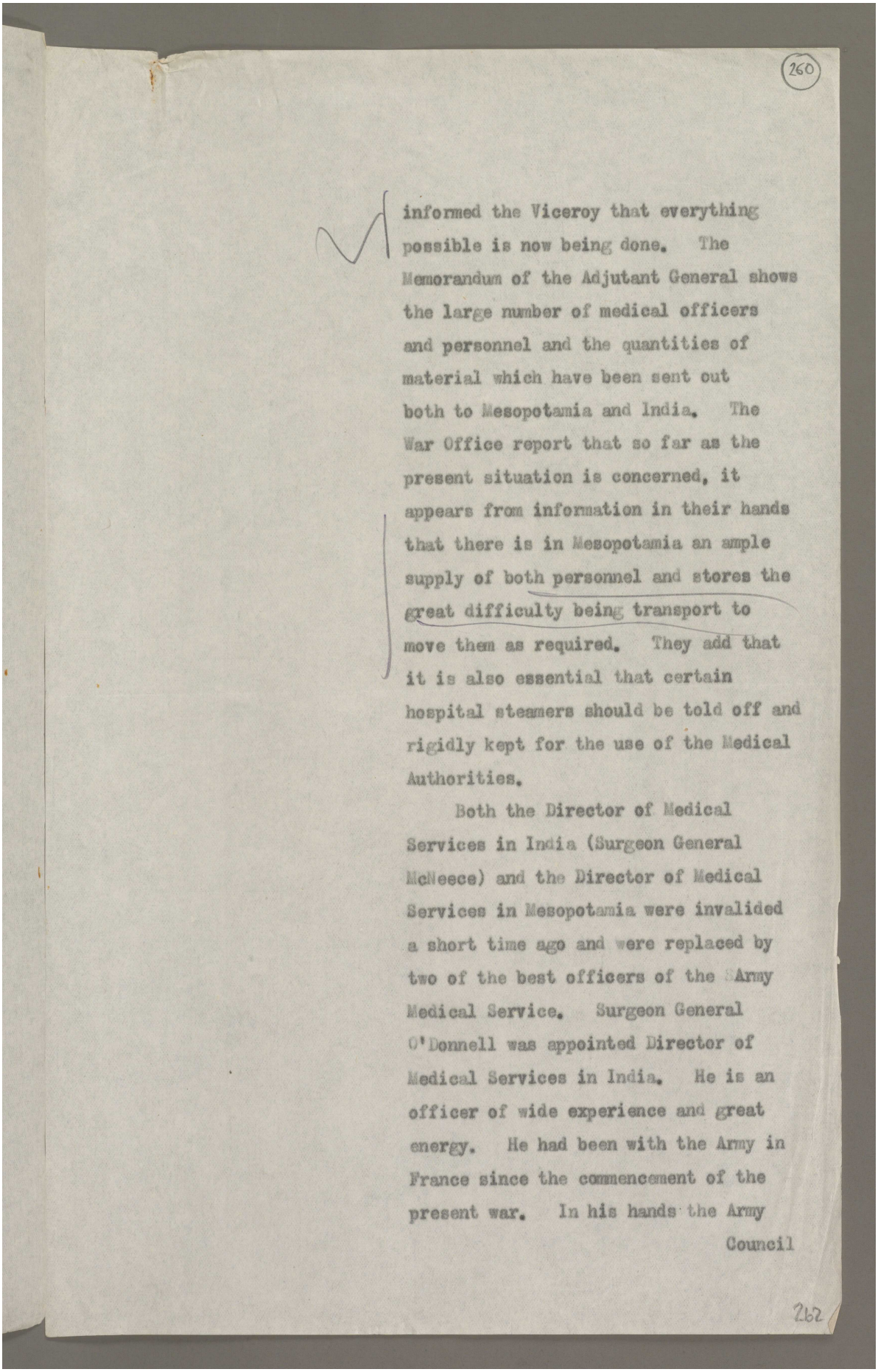
Mesopotamian Operations. It would now appear that the principal attack on the Mesopotamian operations will be directed, not to the policy of the occupation or advance, but to the breakdown of the medical, supply and transport arrangements.

Medical Arrangements. As regards the medical arrangements, serious reports began to reach me from private sources at the close of last year and the beginning of this. The C.-in-C. in India selected Lord Chelmsford and Surgeon-General McNeece to proceed to Mesopotamia to investigate. But the selection of Lord Chelmsford as Viceroy prevented him from undertaking the work. Surgeon-General McNeece went no further than Basra and his Report was, I believe, of little use to the authorities. In the last week of February a Commission was appointed consisting of Sir William Vincent and General Bingley, to whom was added Mr. Ridsdale of the Red Cross and St. John's Societies. They proceeded to Mesopotamia and called for Reports from a large number of officers. Their Report is now in the hands of the Government of India and the two first named have informed

261



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000063

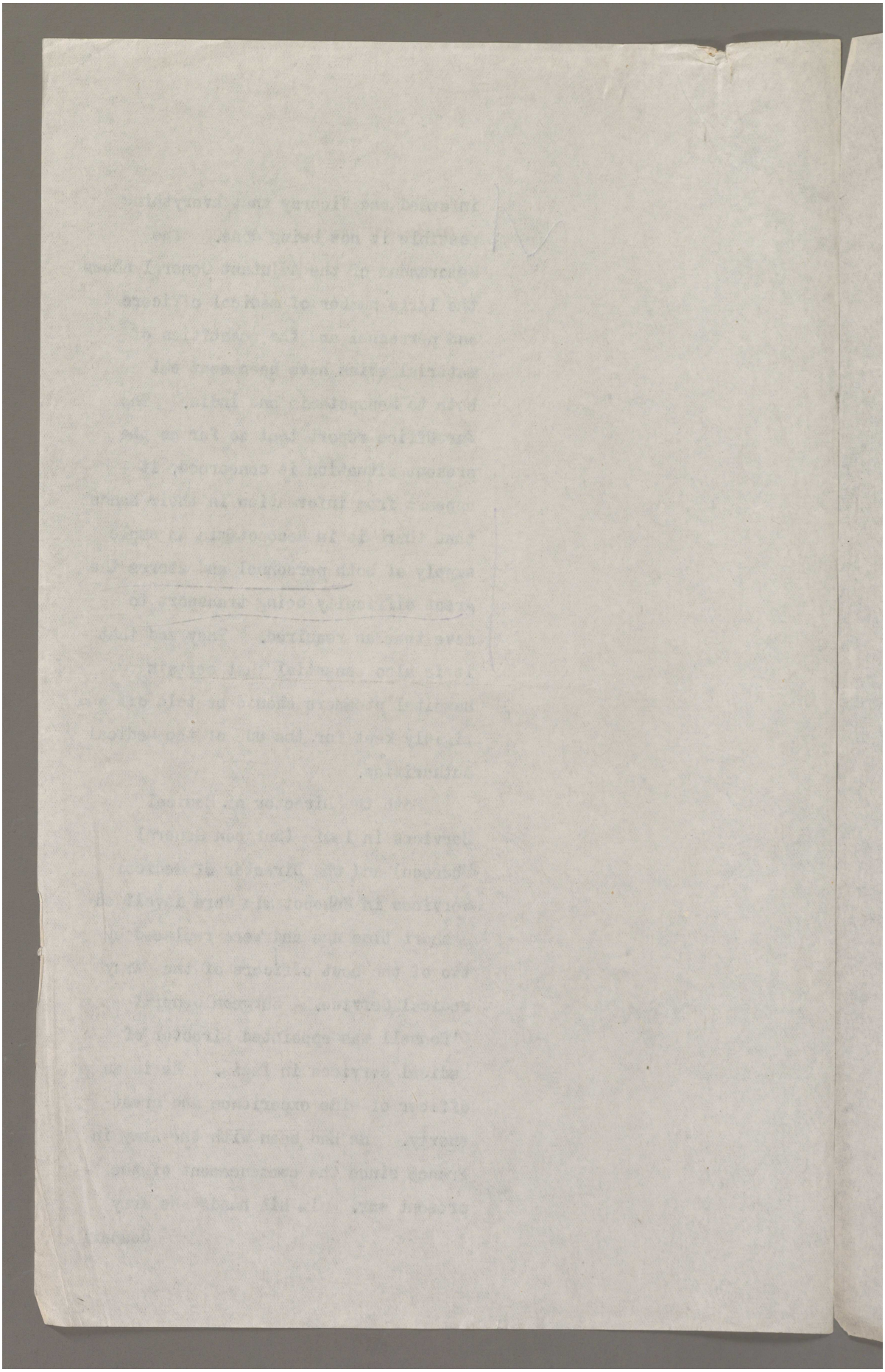


260

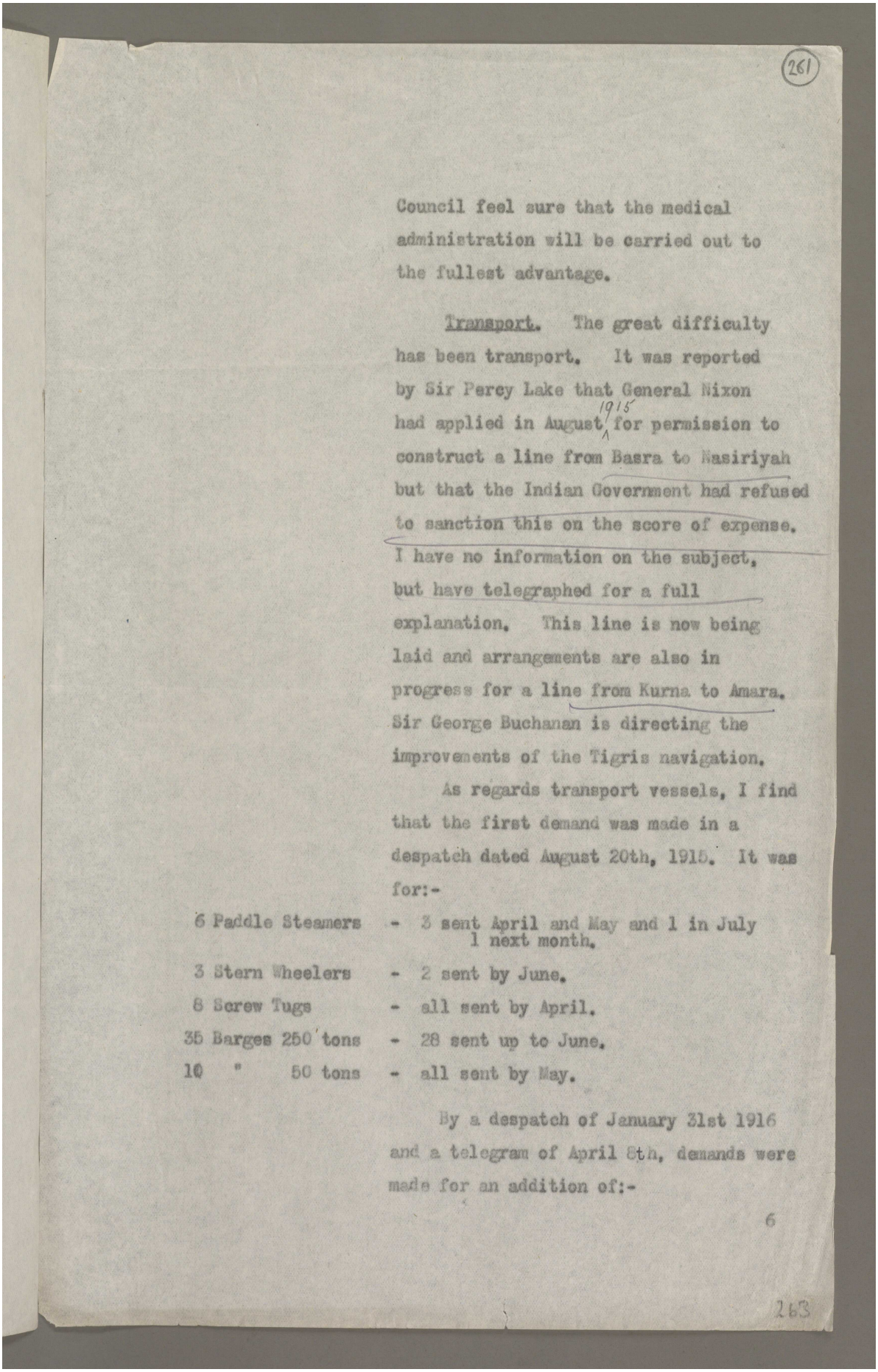
informed the Viceroy that everything possible is now being done. The Memorandum of the Adjutant General shows the large number of medical officers and personnel and the quantities of material which have been sent out both to Mesopotamia and India. The War Office report that so far as the present situation is concerned, it appears from information in their hands that there is in Mesopotamia an ample supply of both personnel and stores the great difficulty being transport to move them as required. They add that it is also essential that certain hospital steamers should be told off and rigidly kept for the use of the Medical Authorities.

Both the Director of Medical Services in India (Surgeon General McNeece) and the Director of Medical Services in Mesopotamia were invalided a short time ago and were replaced by two of the best officers of the Army Medical Service. Surgeon General O'Donnell was appointed Director of Medical Services in India. He is an officer of wide experience and great energy. He had been with the Army in France since the commencement of the present war. In his hands the Army Council

262



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000ba



261

Council feel sure that the medical administration will be carried out to the fullest advantage.

Transport. The great difficulty has been transport. It was reported by Sir Percy Lake that General Nixon had applied in August 1915 for permission to construct a line from Basra to Nasiriyah but that the Indian Government had refused to sanction this on the score of expense. I have no information on the subject, but have telegraphed for a full explanation. This line is now being laid and arrangements are also in progress for a line from Kurna to Amara. Sir George Buchanan is directing the improvements of the Tigris navigation.

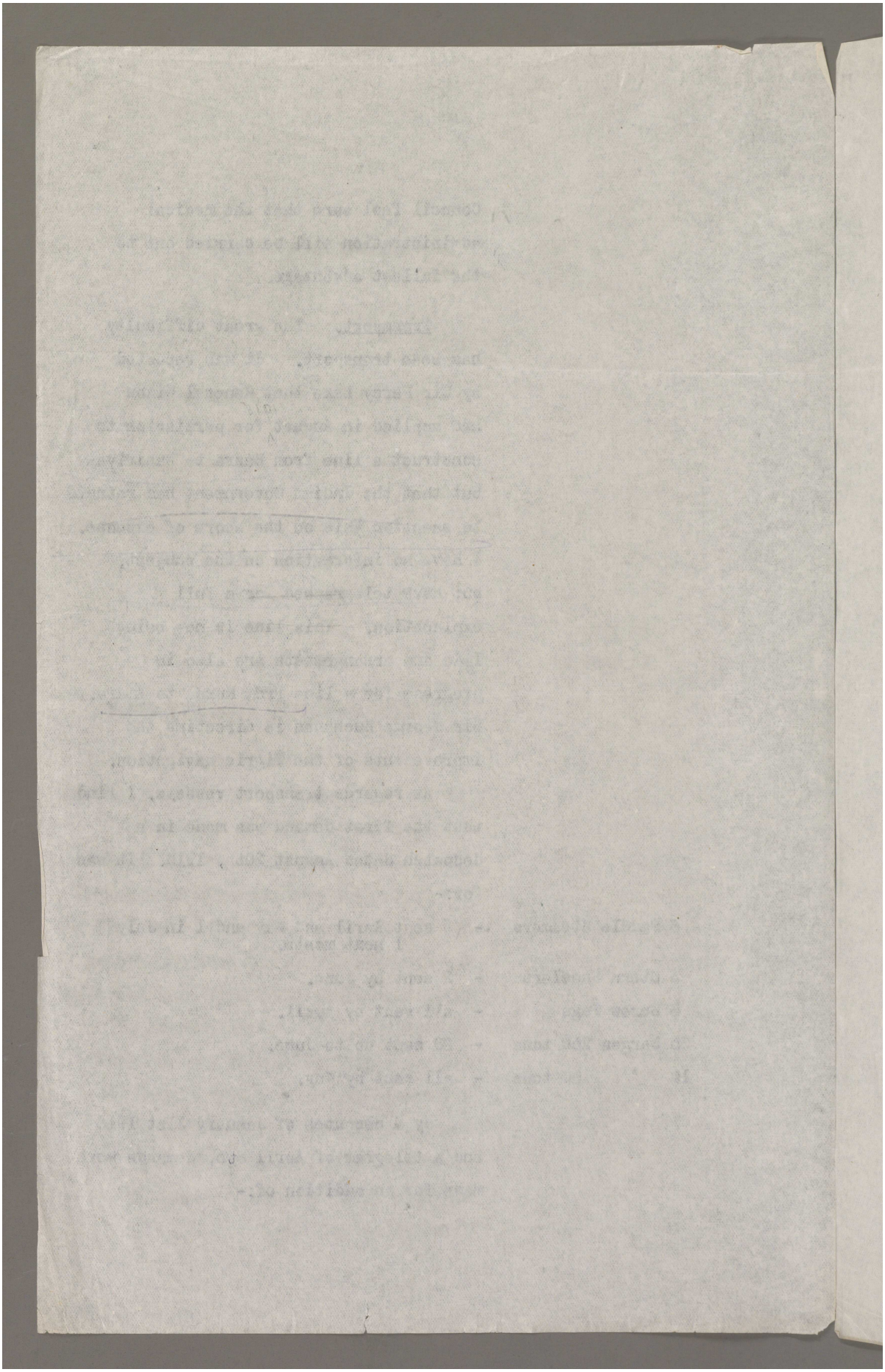
As regards transport vessels, I find that the first demand was made in a despatch dated August 20th, 1915. It was for:-

6 Paddle Steamers	-	3 sent April and May and 1 in July 1 next month.
3 Stern Wheelers	-	2 sent by June.
8 Screw Tugs	-	all sent by April.
35 Barges 250 tons	-	28 sent up to June.
10 " 50 tons	-	all sent by May.

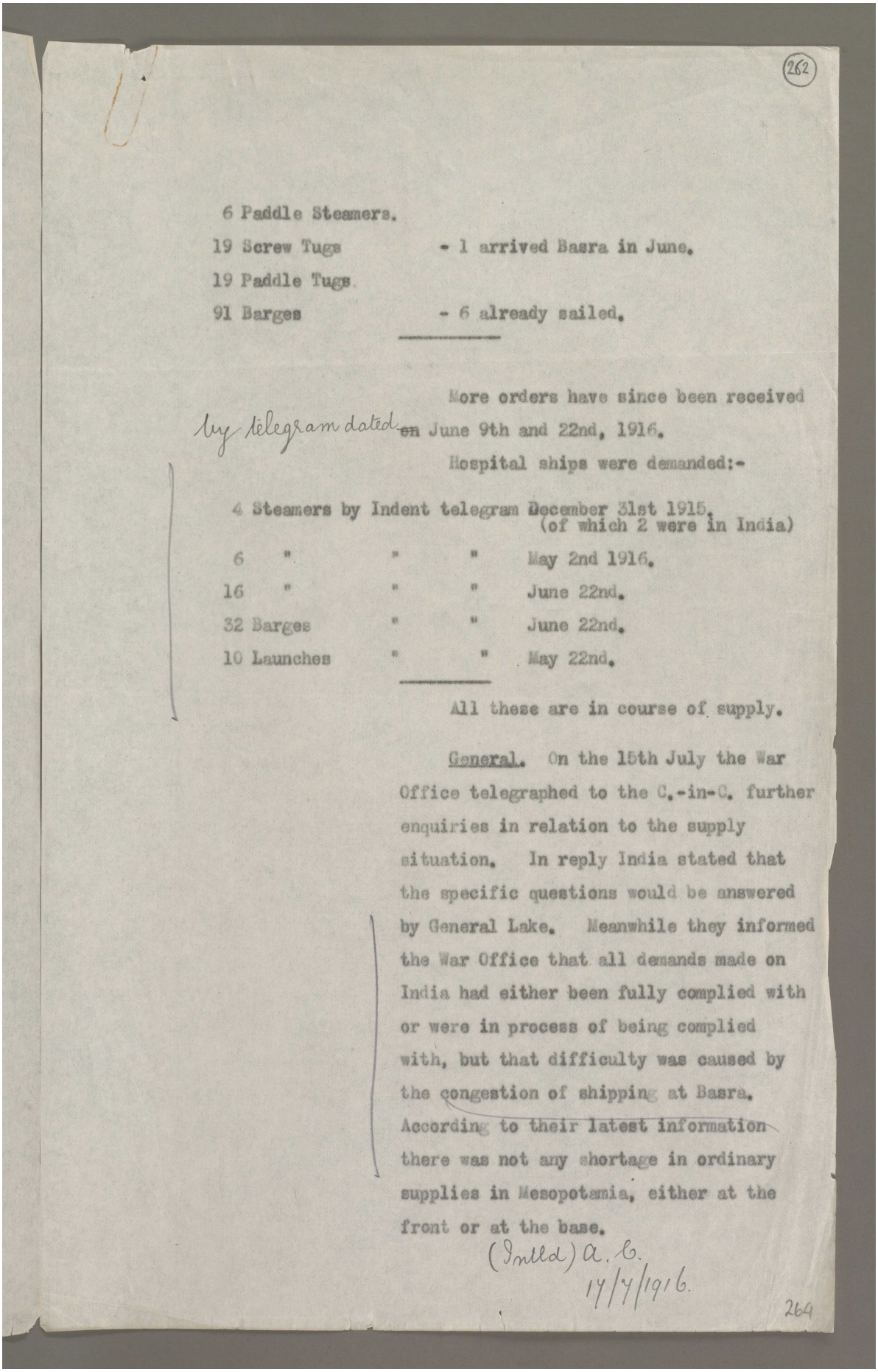
By a despatch of January 31st 1916 and a telegram of April 8th, demands were made for an addition of:-

6

163



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000067



(262)

6 Paddle Steamers.
19 Screw Tugs - 1 arrived Basra in June.
19 Paddle Tugs.
91 Barges - 6 already sailed.

More orders have since been received by telegram dated ~~on~~ June 9th and 22nd, 1916.

Hospital ships were demanded:-

4 Steamers by Indent telegram December 31st 1915. (of which 2 were in India)
6 " " " May 2nd 1916.
16 " " " June 22nd.
32 Barges " " June 22nd.
10 Launches " " May 22nd.

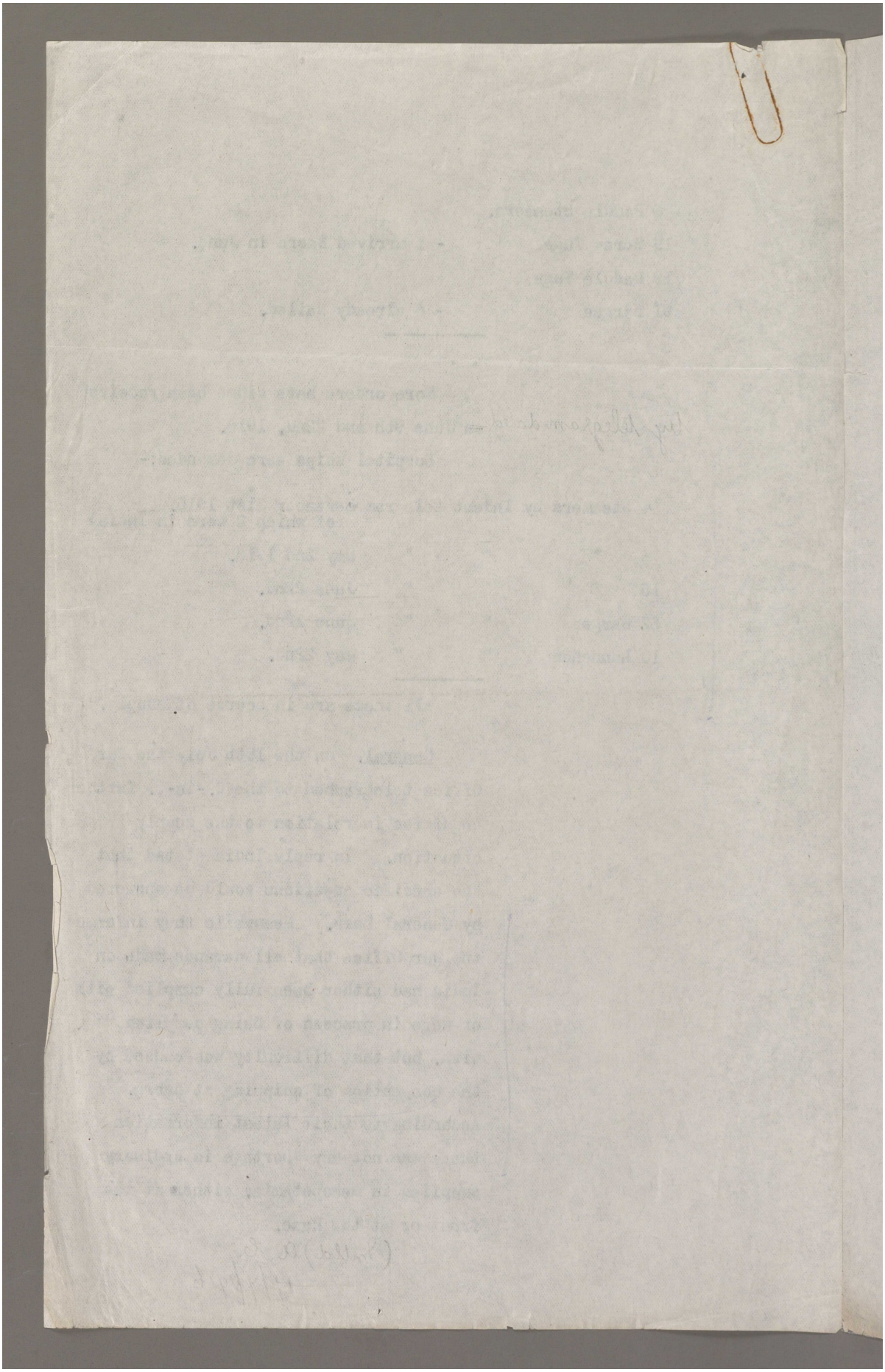
All these are in course of supply.

General. On the 15th July the War Office telegraphed to the C.-in-C. further enquiries in relation to the supply situation. In reply India stated that the specific questions would be answered by General Lake. Meanwhile they informed the War Office that all demands made on India had either been fully complied with or were in process of being complied with, but that difficulty was caused by the congestion of shipping at Basra. According to their latest information there was not any shortage in ordinary supplies in Mesopotamia, either at the front or at the base.

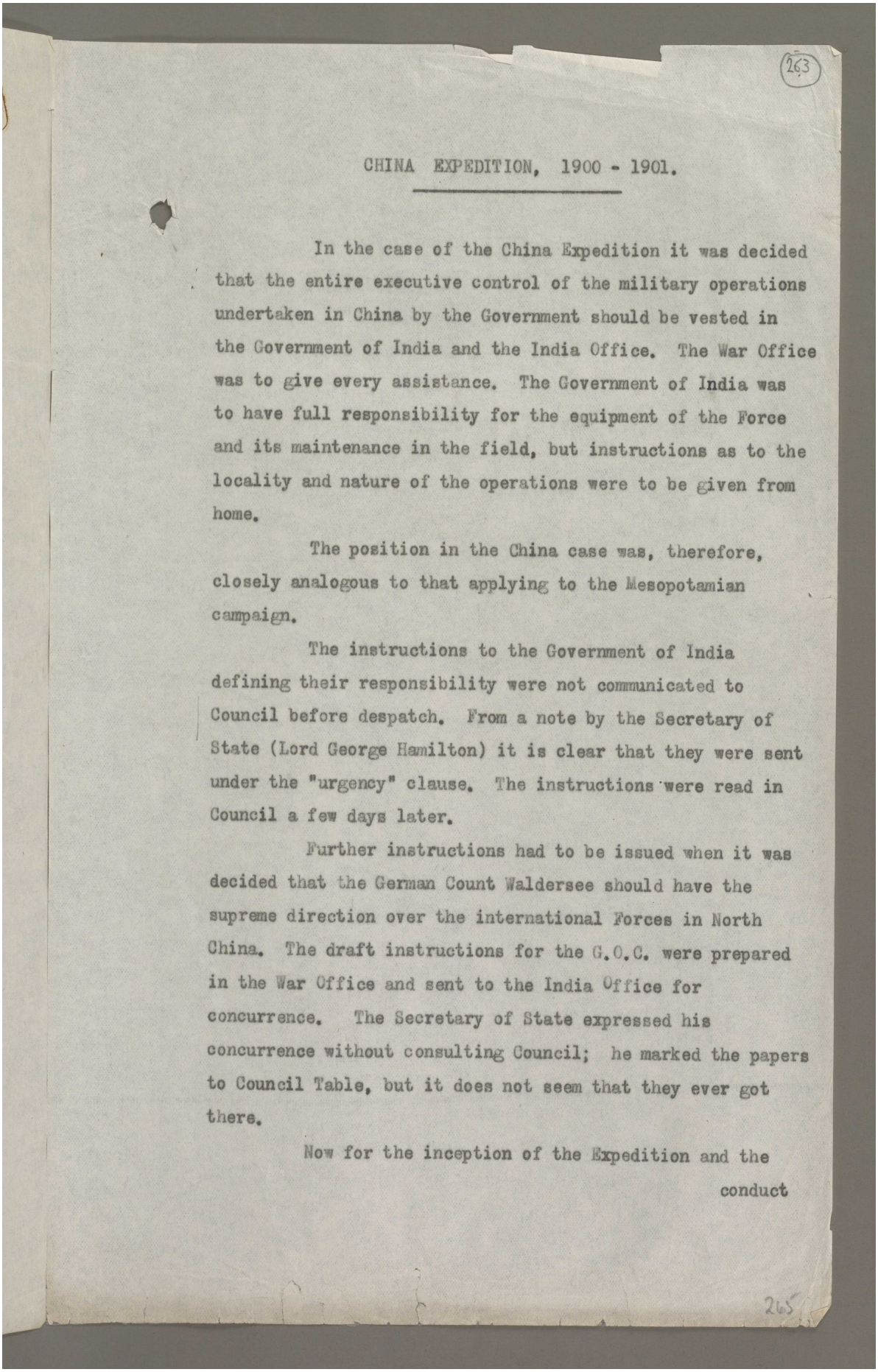
(Initd) a. c.
14/4/1916.

264

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000048



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00002e



263

CHINA EXPEDITION, 1900 - 1901.

In the case of the China Expedition it was decided that the entire executive control of the military operations undertaken in China by the Government should be vested in the Government of India and the India Office. The War Office was to give every assistance. The Government of India was to have full responsibility for the equipment of the Force and its maintenance in the field, but instructions as to the locality and nature of the operations were to be given from home.

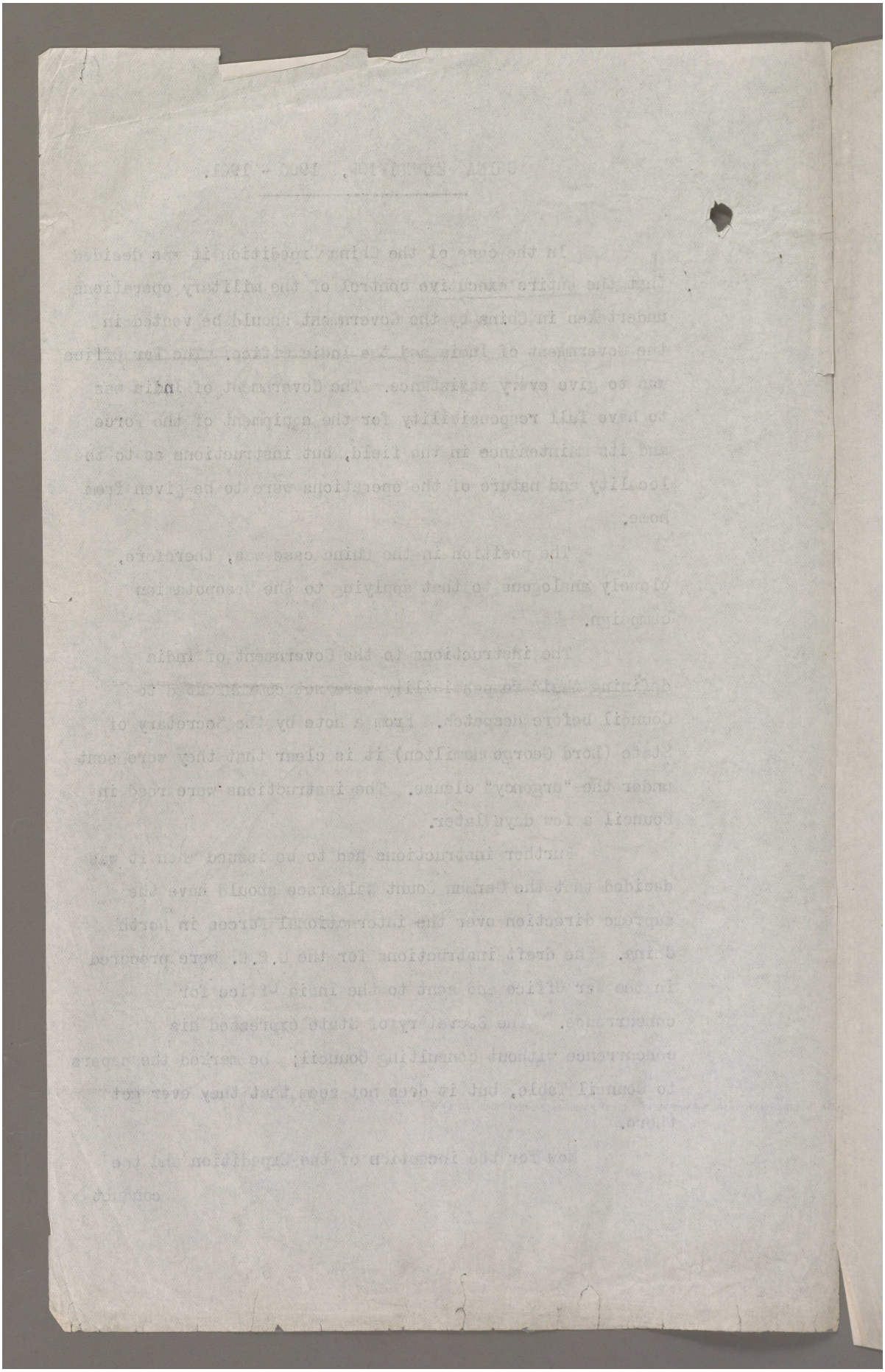
The position in the China case was, therefore, closely analogous to that applying to the Mesopotamian campaign.

The instructions to the Government of India defining their responsibility were not communicated to Council before despatch. From a note by the Secretary of State (Lord George Hamilton) it is clear that they were sent under the "urgency" clause. The instructions were read in Council a few days later.

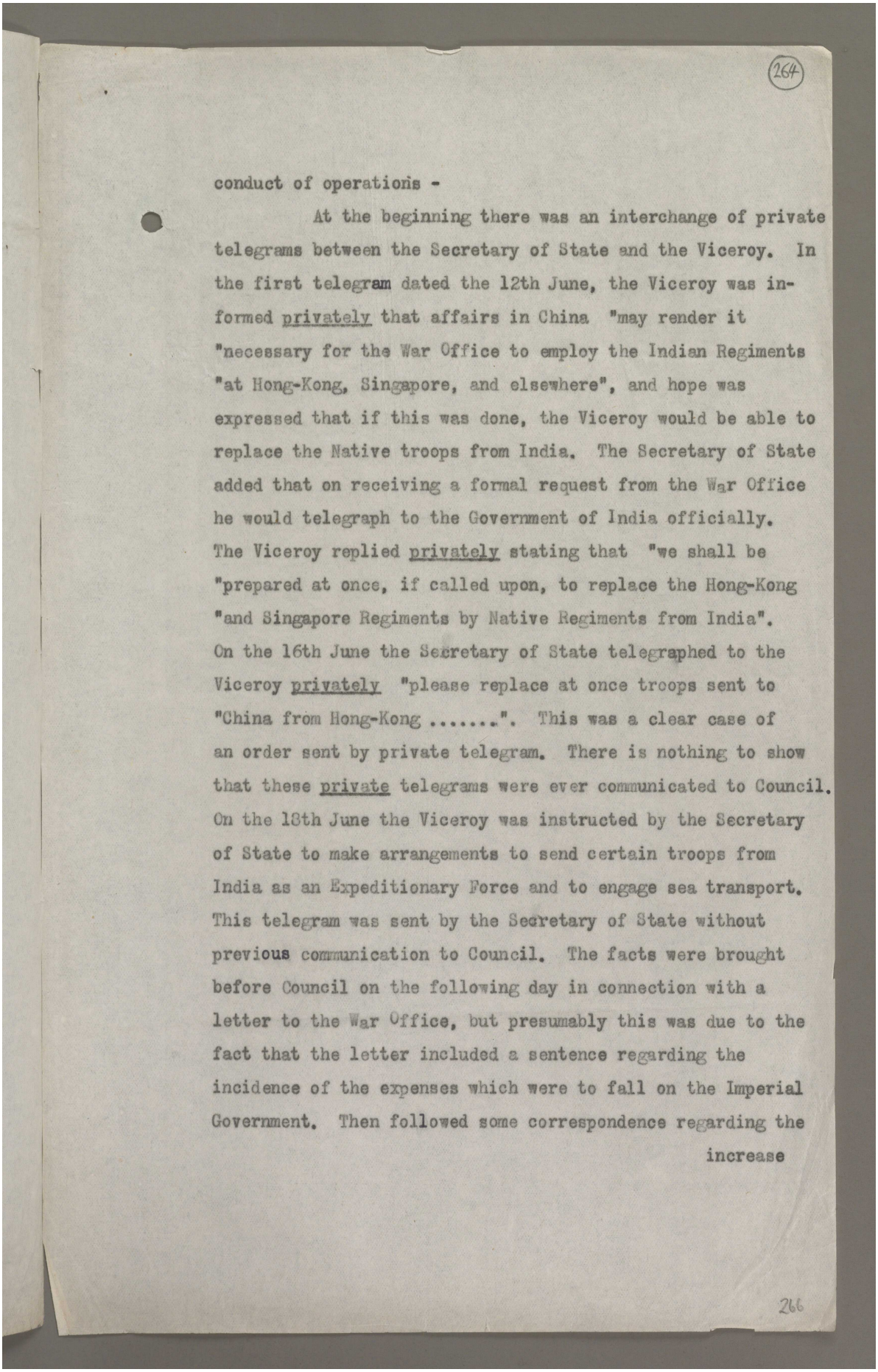
Further instructions had to be issued when it was decided that the German Count Waldersee should have the supreme direction over the international Forces in North China. The draft instructions for the G.O.C. were prepared in the War Office and sent to the India Office for concurrence. The Secretary of State expressed his concurrence without consulting Council; he marked the papers to Council Table, but it does not seem that they ever got there.

Now for the inception of the Expedition and the conduct

265



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00002e

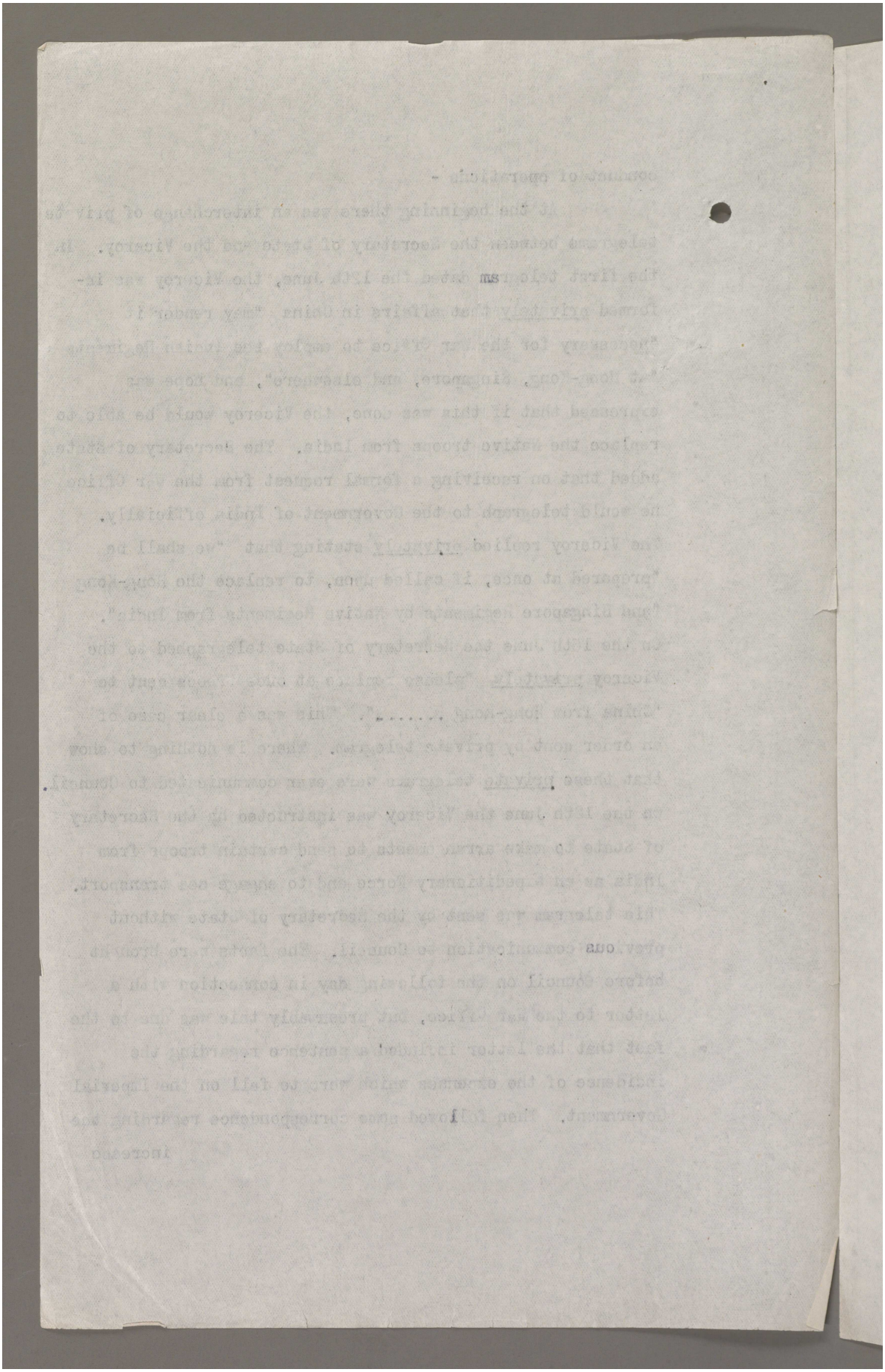


(264)

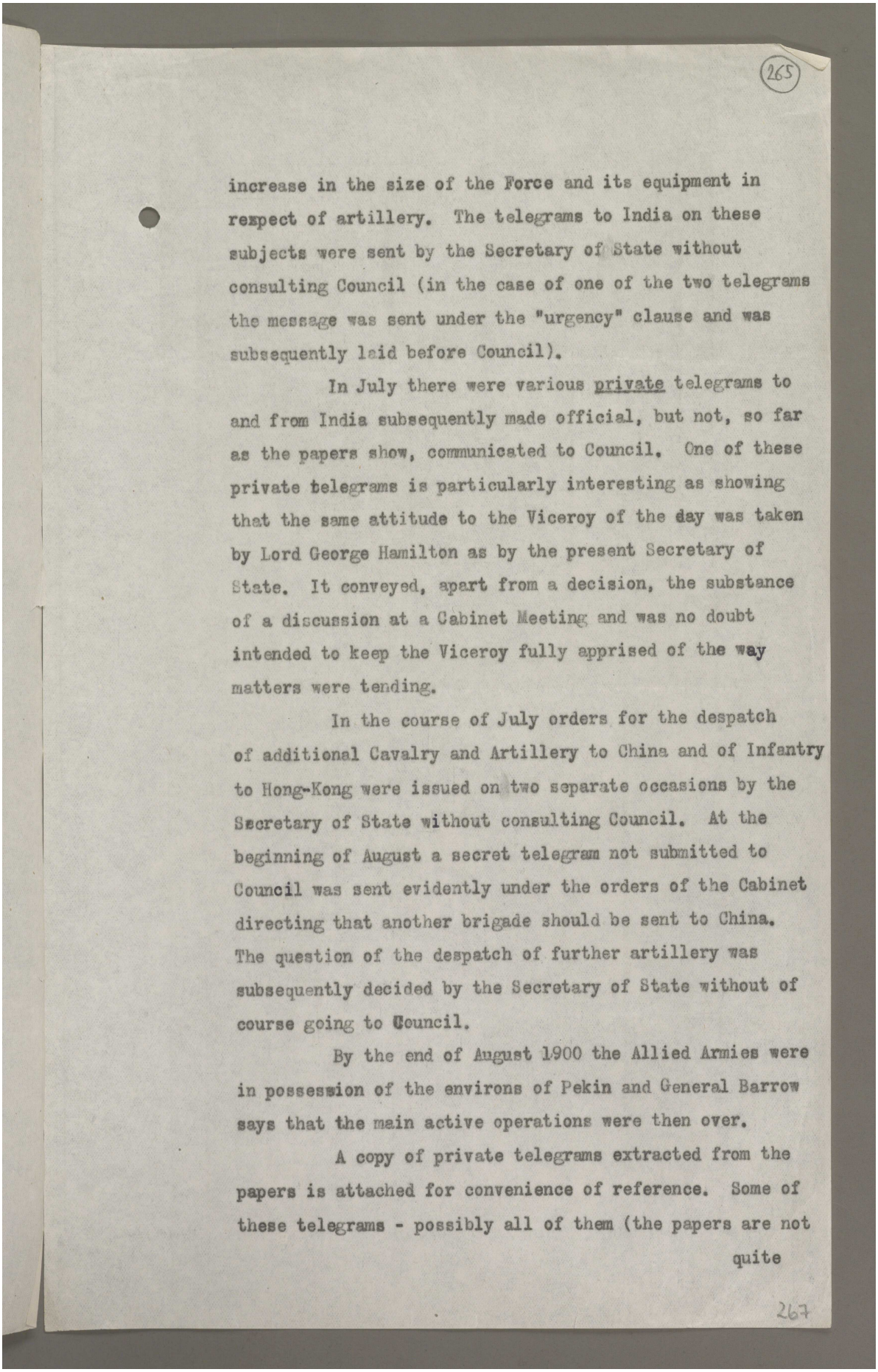
conduct of operations -

At the beginning there was an interchange of private telegrams between the Secretary of State and the Viceroy. In the first telegram dated the 12th June, the Viceroy was informed privately that affairs in China "may render it "necessary for the War Office to employ the Indian Regiments "at Hong-Kong, Singapore, and elsewhere", and hope was expressed that if this was done, the Viceroy would be able to replace the Native troops from India. The Secretary of State added that on receiving a formal request from the War Office he would telegraph to the Government of India officially. The Viceroy replied privately stating that "we shall be "prepared at once, if called upon, to replace the Hong-Kong "and Singapore Regiments by Native Regiments from India". On the 16th June the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy privately "please replace at once troops sent to "China from Hong-Kong .....". This was a clear case of an order sent by private telegram. There is nothing to show that these private telegrams were ever communicated to Council. On the 18th June the Viceroy was instructed by the Secretary of State to make arrangements to send certain troops from India as an Expeditionary Force and to engage sea transport. This telegram was sent by the Secretary of State without previous communication to Council. The facts were brought before Council on the following day in connection with a letter to the War Office, but presumably this was due to the fact that the letter included a sentence regarding the incidence of the expenses which were to fall on the Imperial Government. Then followed some correspondence regarding the increase

266



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000052



(265)

increase in the size of the Force and its equipment in respect of artillery. The telegrams to India on these subjects were sent by the Secretary of State without consulting Council (in the case of one of the two telegrams the message was sent under the "urgency" clause and was subsequently laid before Council).

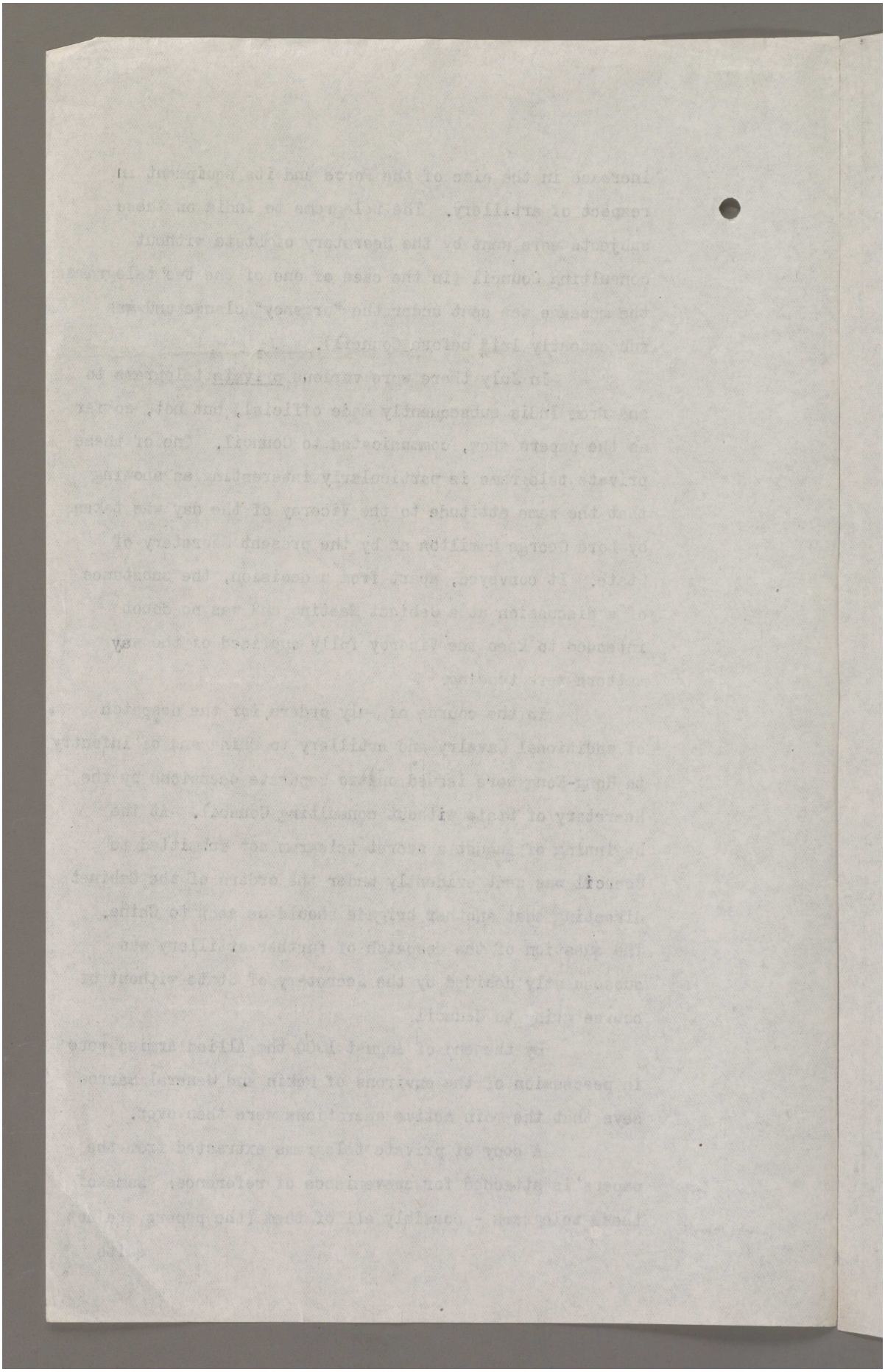
In July there were various private telegrams to and from India subsequently made official, but not, so far as the papers show, communicated to Council. One of these private telegrams is particularly interesting as showing that the same attitude to the Viceroy of the day was taken by Lord George Hamilton as by the present Secretary of State. It conveyed, apart from a decision, the substance of a discussion at a Cabinet Meeting and was no doubt intended to keep the Viceroy fully apprised of the way matters were tending.

In the course of July orders for the despatch of additional Cavalry and Artillery to China and of Infantry to Hong-Kong were issued on two separate occasions by the Secretary of State without consulting Council. At the beginning of August a secret telegram not submitted to Council was sent evidently under the orders of the Cabinet directing that another brigade should be sent to China. The question of the despatch of further artillery was subsequently decided by the Secretary of State without of course going to Council.

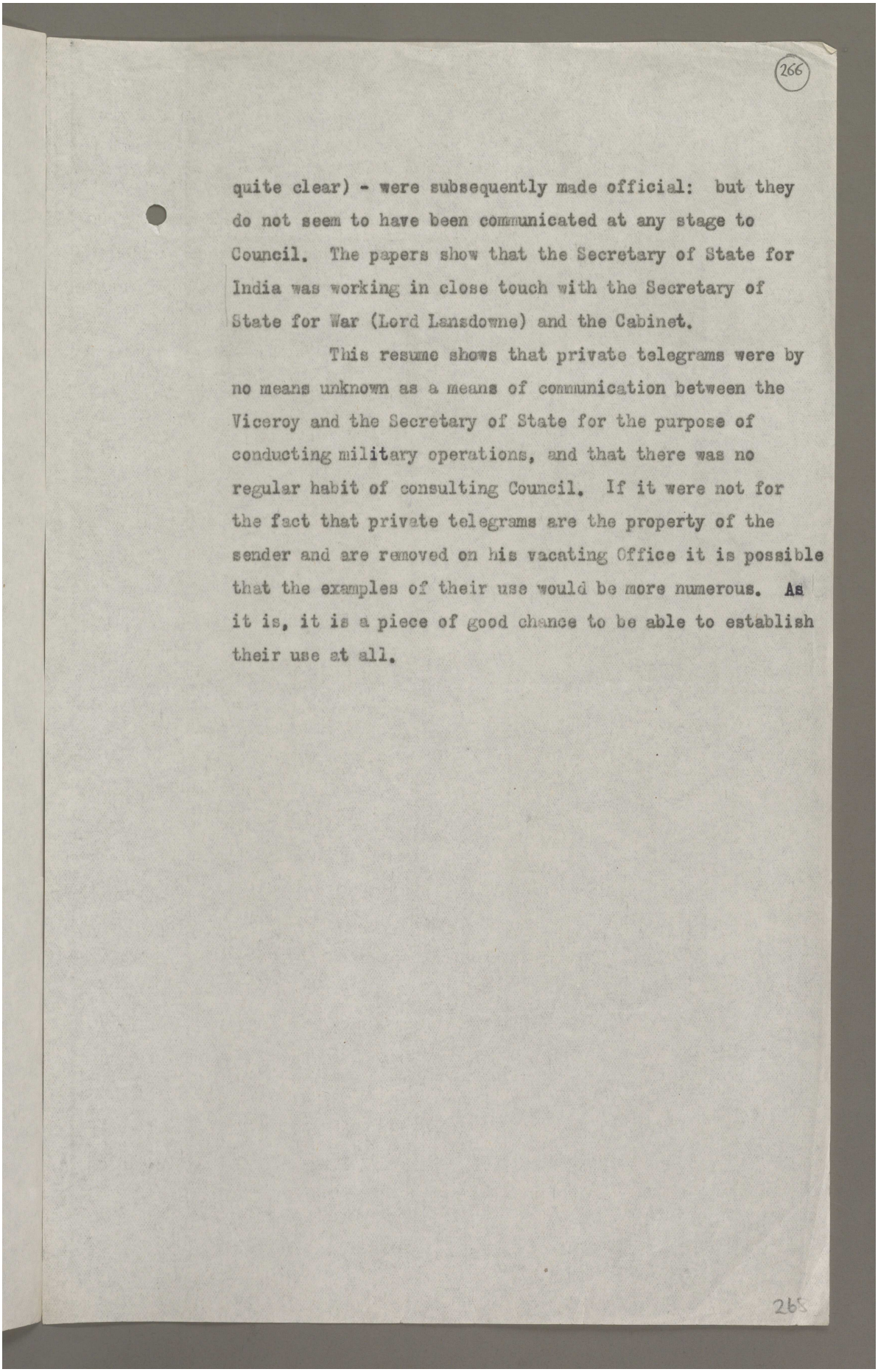
By the end of August 1900 the Allied Armies were in possession of the environs of Pekin and General Barrow says that the main active operations were then over.

A copy of private telegrams extracted from the papers is attached for convenience of reference. Some of these telegrams - possibly all of them (the papers are not quite

267



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00004d



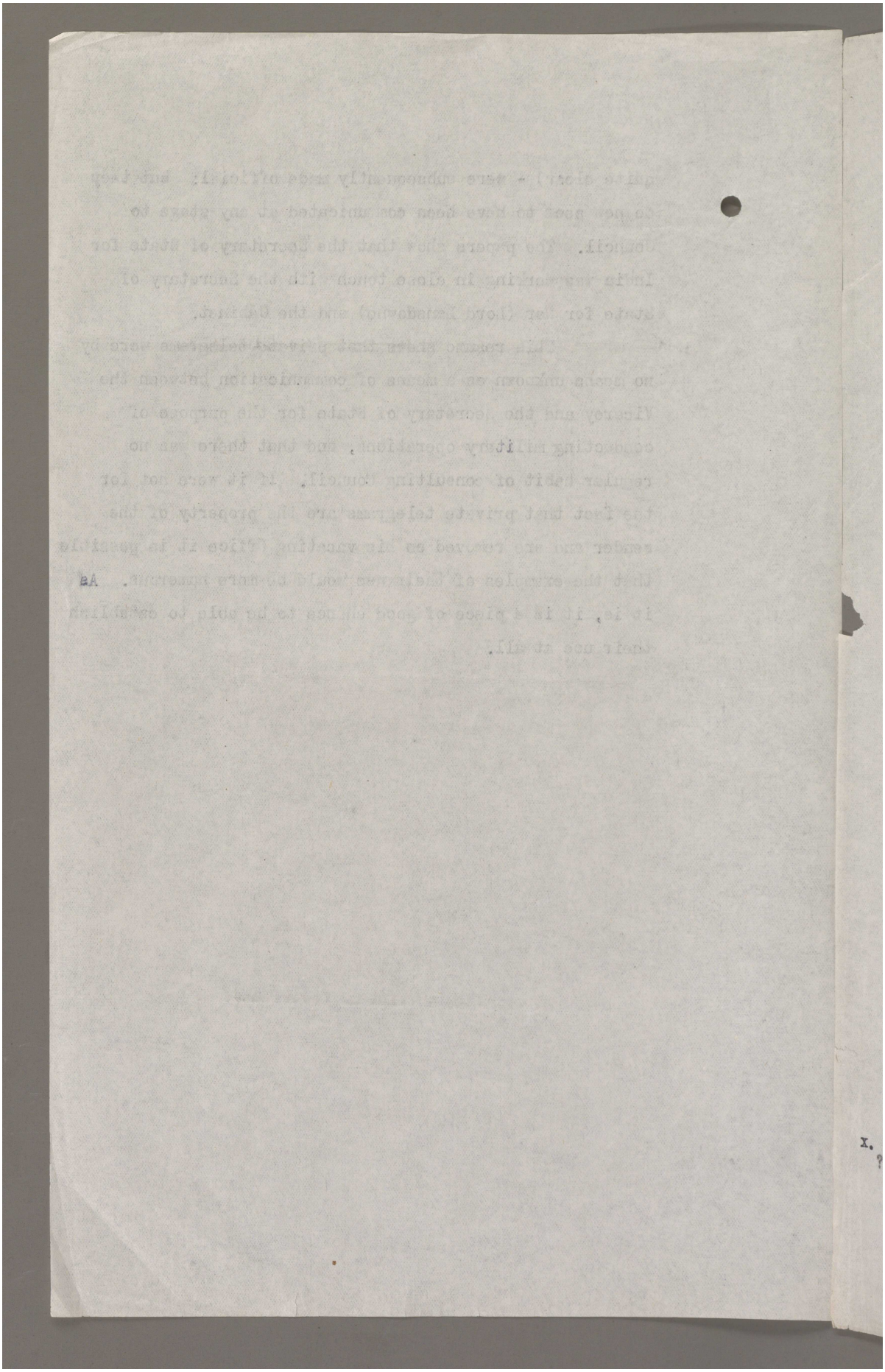
266

quite clear) - were subsequently made official: but they do not seem to have been communicated at any stage to Council. The papers show that the Secretary of State for India was working in close touch with the Secretary of State for War (Lord Lansdowne) and the Cabinet.

This resume shows that private telegrams were by no means unknown as a means of communication between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for the purpose of conducting military operations, and that there was no regular habit of consulting Council. If it were not for the fact that private telegrams are the property of the sender and are removed on his vacating Office it is possible that the examples of their use would be more numerous. As it is, it is a piece of good chance to be able to establish their use at all.

265

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00009c



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00005b

(267)

Extracts from Private Telegrams.

(1) From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 12th June 1900.

Private. Affairs in China may render it necessary for the War Office to employ elsewhere the Native Indian Regiments now stationed at Hong Kong and Singapore. If this is done they hope that you will be able to replace these Regiments by Native troops from India. I shall probably receive a formal request to this effect in course of few days and I will then telegraph to you officially. In the meantime I should be glad to have your views on the subject.

(2) From Viceroy, 15th June 1900.

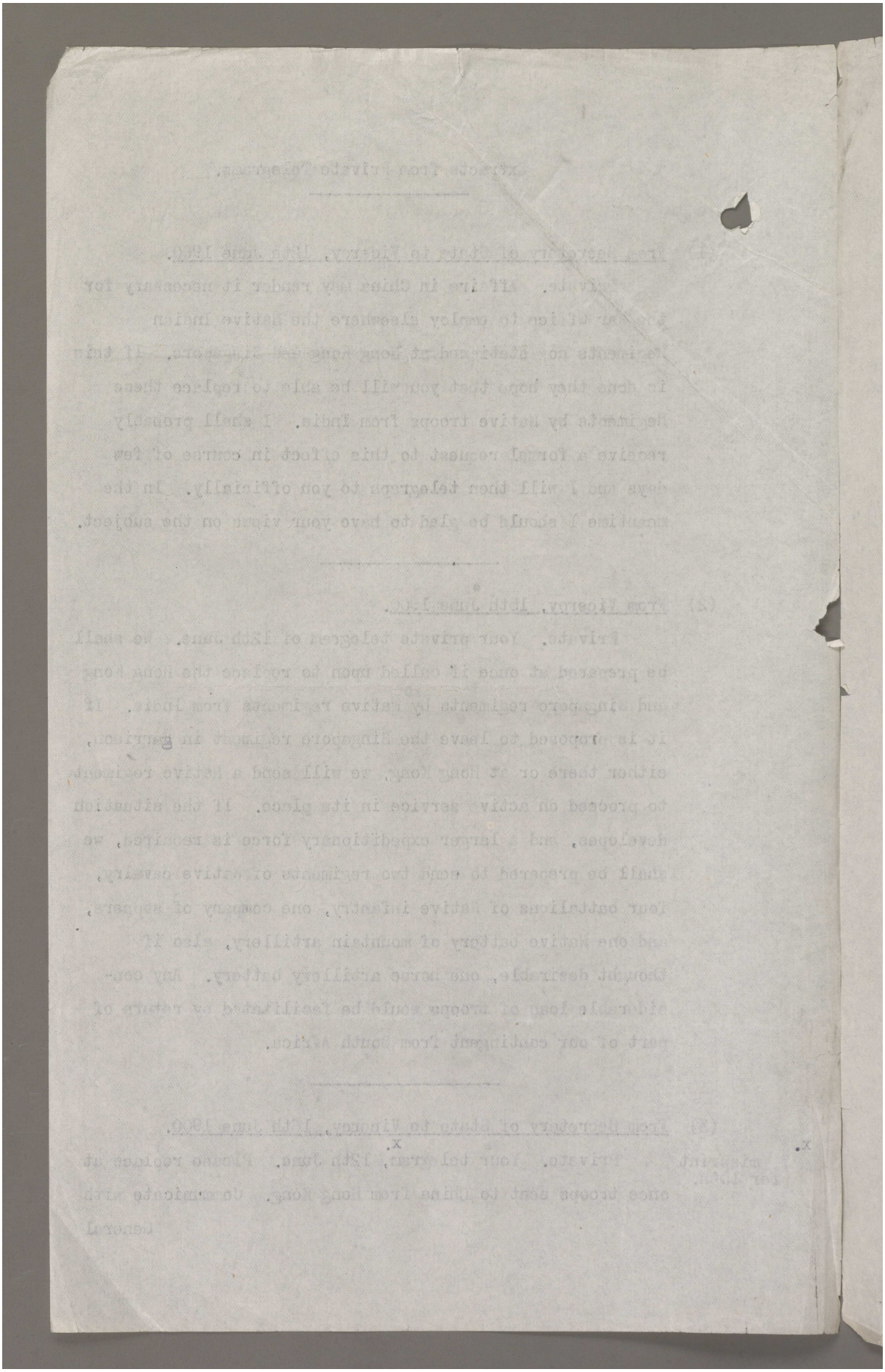
Private. Your private telegram of 12th June. We shall be prepared at once if called upon to replace the Hong Kong and Singapore regiments by Native regiments from India. If it is proposed to leave the Singapore regiment in garrison, either there or at Hong Kong, we will send a Native regiment to proceed on active service in its place. If the situation developes, and a larger expeditionary force is required, we shall be prepared to send two regiments of Native cavalry, four battalions of Native infantry, one company of sappers, and one Native battery of mountain artillery, also if thought desirable, one horse artillery battery. Any considerable loan of troops would be facilitated by return of part of our contingent from South Africa.

(3) From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 16th June 1900.

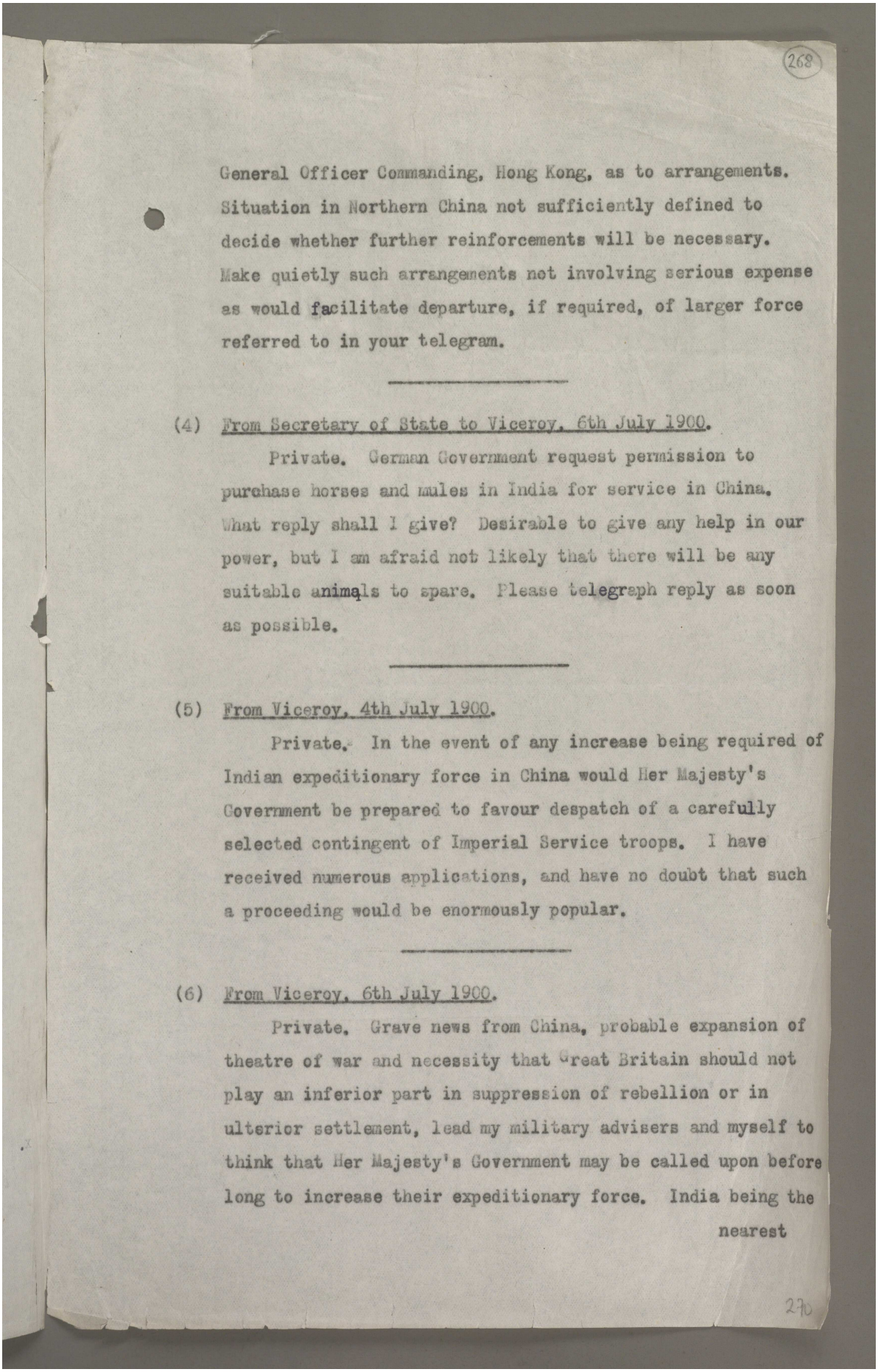
x. ? misprint for 15th.

Private. Your telegram, x. 12th June. Please replace at once troops sent to China from Hong Kong. Communicate with General

269



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000099



268

General Officer Commanding, Hong Kong, as to arrangements. Situation in Northern China not sufficiently defined to decide whether further reinforcements will be necessary. Make quietly such arrangements not involving serious expense as would facilitate departure, if required, of larger force referred to in your telegram.

---

(4) From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 6th July 1900.

Private. German Government request permission to purchase horses and mules in India for service in China. What reply shall I give? Desirable to give any help in our power, but I am afraid not likely that there will be any suitable animals to spare. Please telegraph reply as soon as possible.

---

(5) From Viceroy, 4th July 1900.

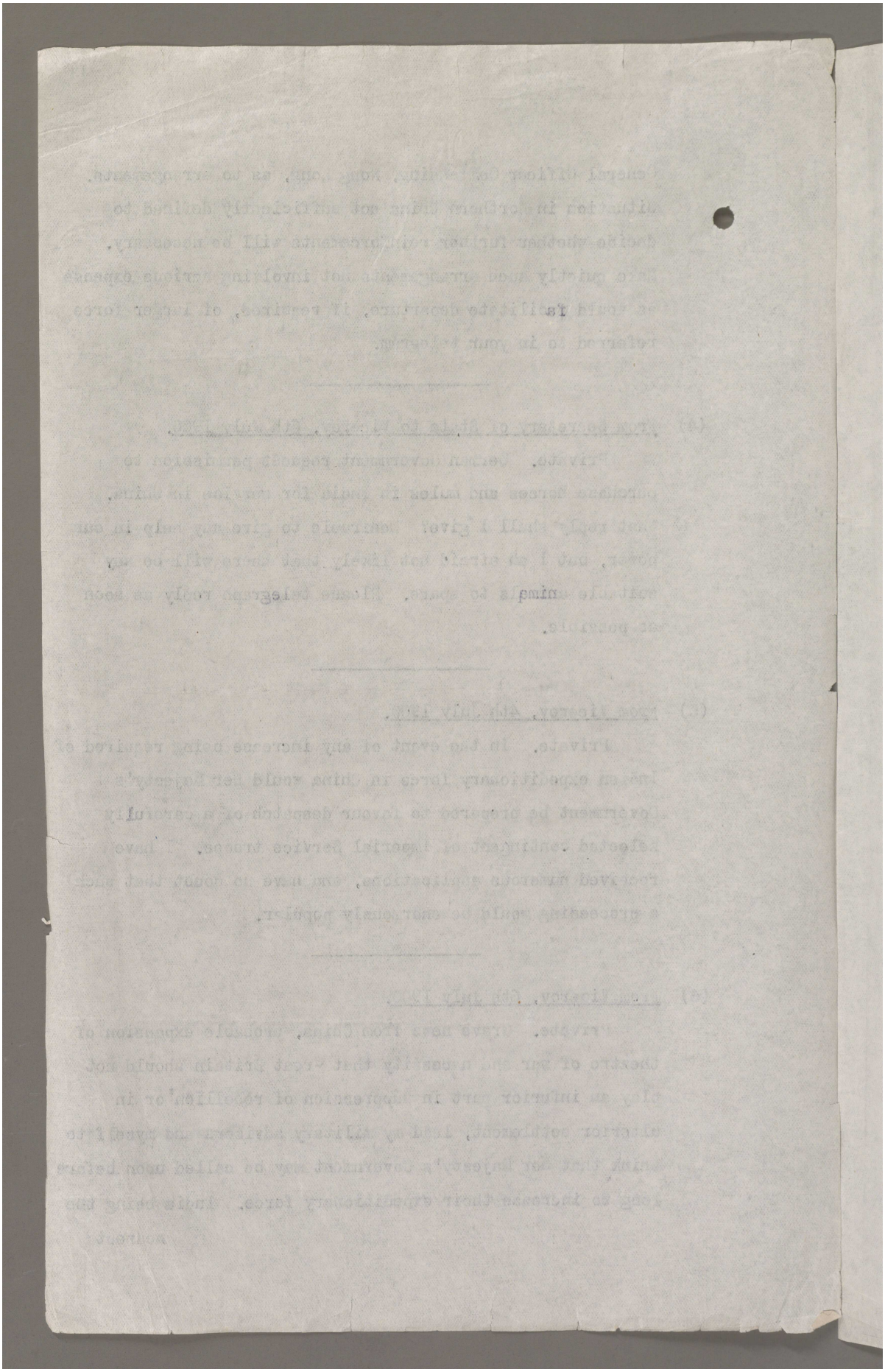
Private. In the event of any increase being required of Indian expeditionary force in China would Her Majesty's Government be prepared to favour despatch of a carefully selected contingent of Imperial Service troops. I have received numerous applications, and have no doubt that such a proceeding would be enormously popular.

---

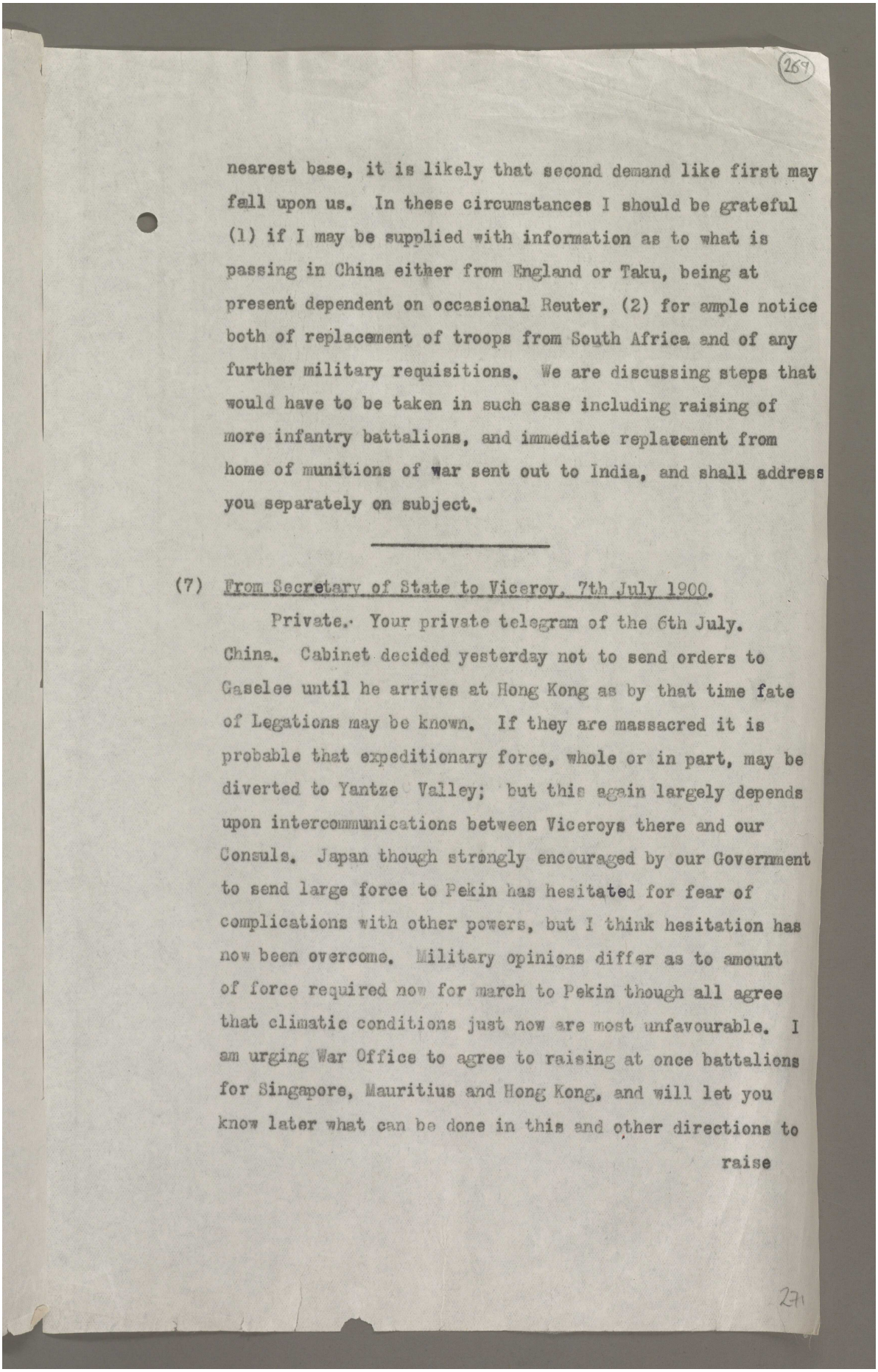
(6) From Viceroy, 6th July 1900.

Private. Grave news from China, probable expansion of theatre of war and necessity that Great Britain should not play an inferior part in suppression of rebellion or in ulterior settlement, lead my military advisers and myself to think that Her Majesty's Government may be called upon before long to increase their expeditionary force. India being the nearest

270



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00007a



269

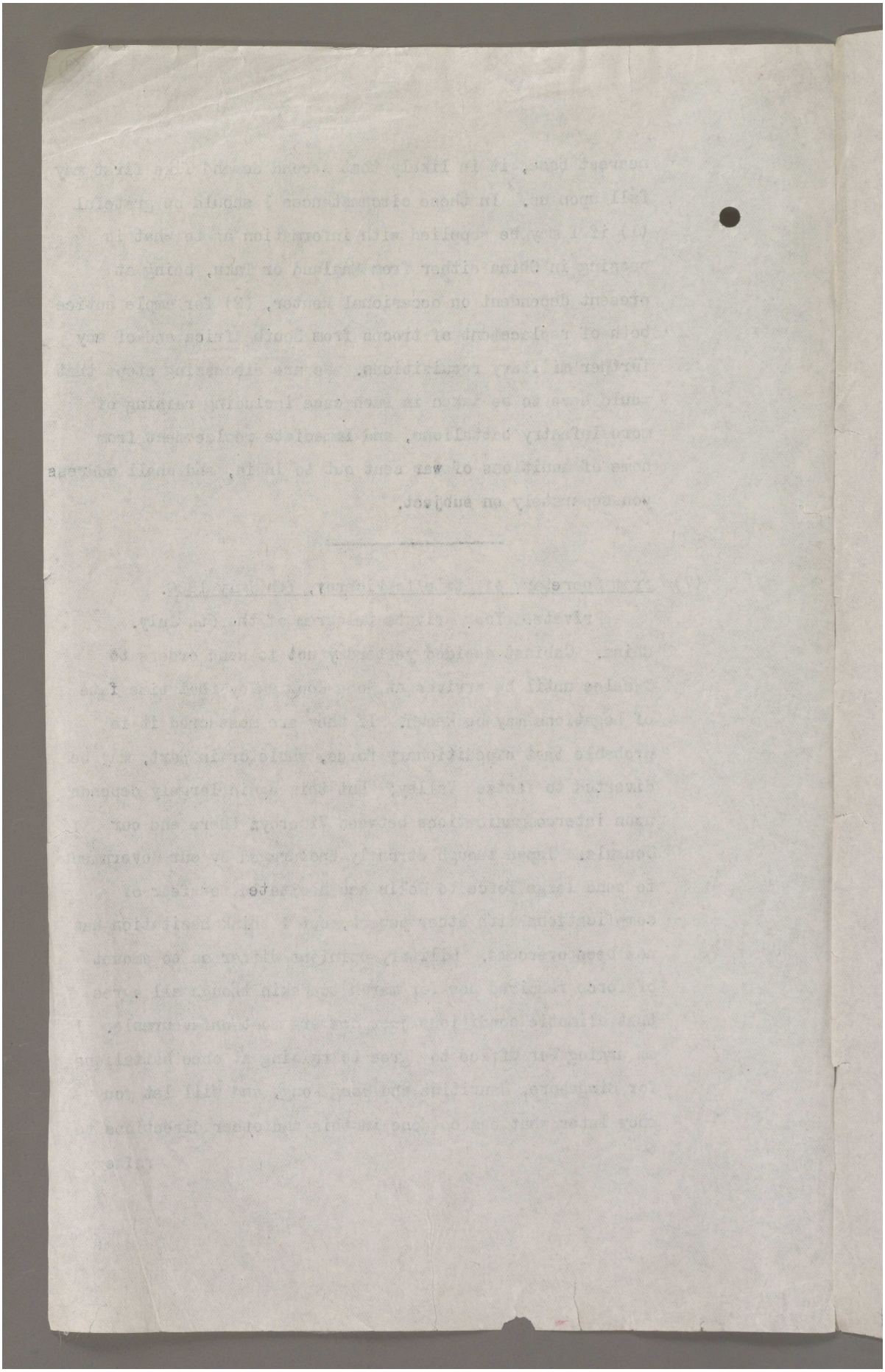
nearest base, it is likely that second demand like first may fall upon us. In these circumstances I should be grateful (1) if I may be supplied with information as to what is passing in China either from England or Taku, being at present dependent on occasional Reuter, (2) for ample notice both of replacement of troops from South Africa and of any further military requisitions. We are discussing steps that would have to be taken in such case including raising of more infantry battalions, and immediate replacement from home of munitions of war sent out to India, and shall address you separately on subject.

---

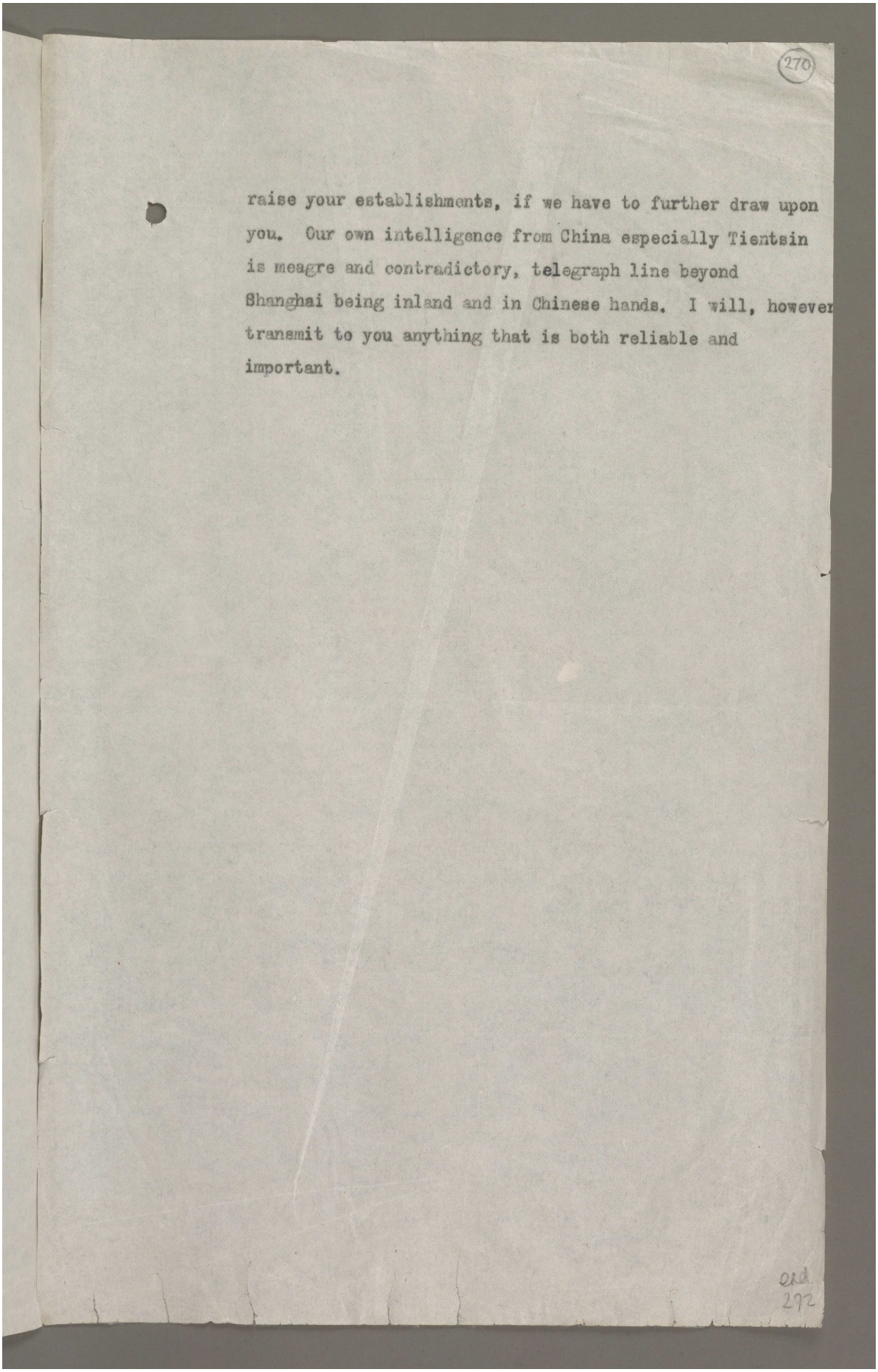
(7) From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 7th July 1900.

Private. Your private telegram of the 6th July. China. Cabinet decided yesterday not to send orders to Gaselee until he arrives at Hong Kong as by that time fate of Legations may be known. If they are massacred it is probable that expeditionary force, whole or in part, may be diverted to Yantze Valley; but this again largely depends upon intercommunications between Viceroys there and our Consuls. Japan though strongly encouraged by our Government to send large force to Pekin has hesitated for fear of complications with other powers, but I think hesitation has now been overcome. Military opinions differ as to amount of force required now for march to Pekin though all agree that climatic conditions just now are most unfavourable. I am urging War Office to agree to raising at once battalions for Singapore, Mauritius and Hong Kong, and will let you know later what can be done in this and other directions to raise

271

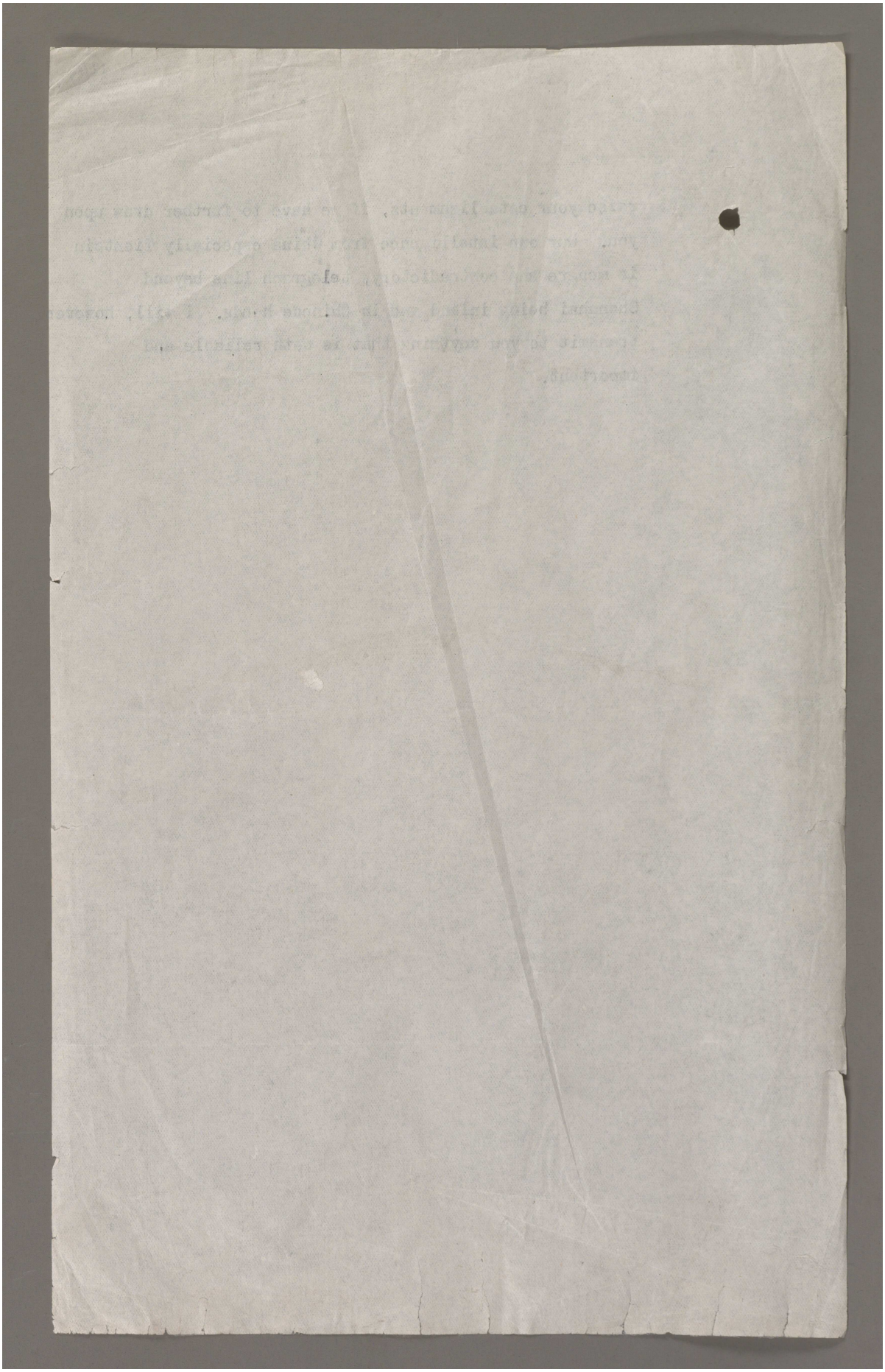


Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00007a

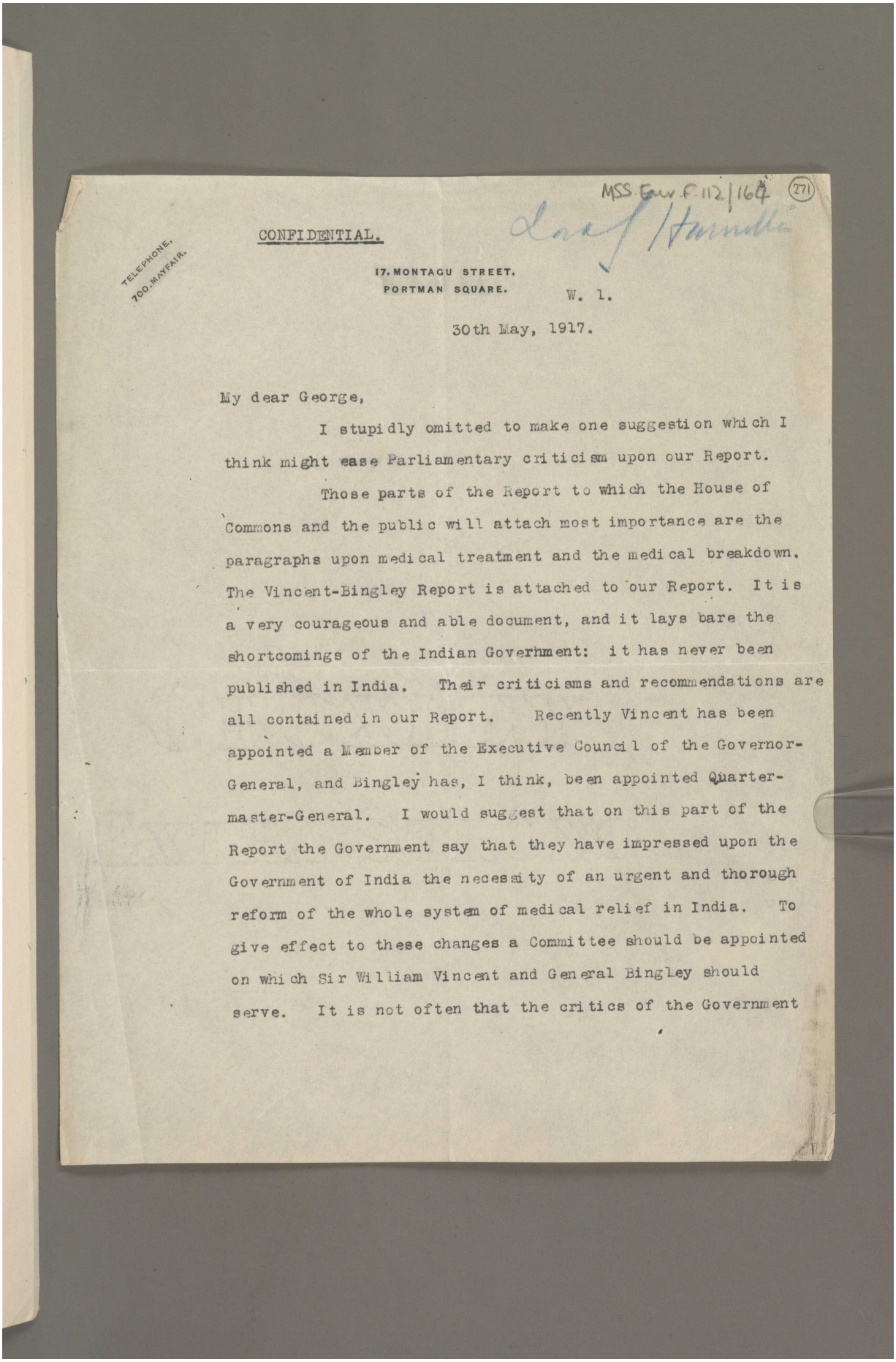


raise your establishments, if we have to further draw upon you. Our own intelligence from China especially Tientsin is meagre and contradictory, telegraph line beyond Shanghai being inland and in Chinese hands. I will, however transmit to you anything that is both reliable and important.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000b2



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000aa



MSS Eur F 112/164 (271)

CONFIDENTIAL.

TELEPHONE, 700, MAYFAIR.

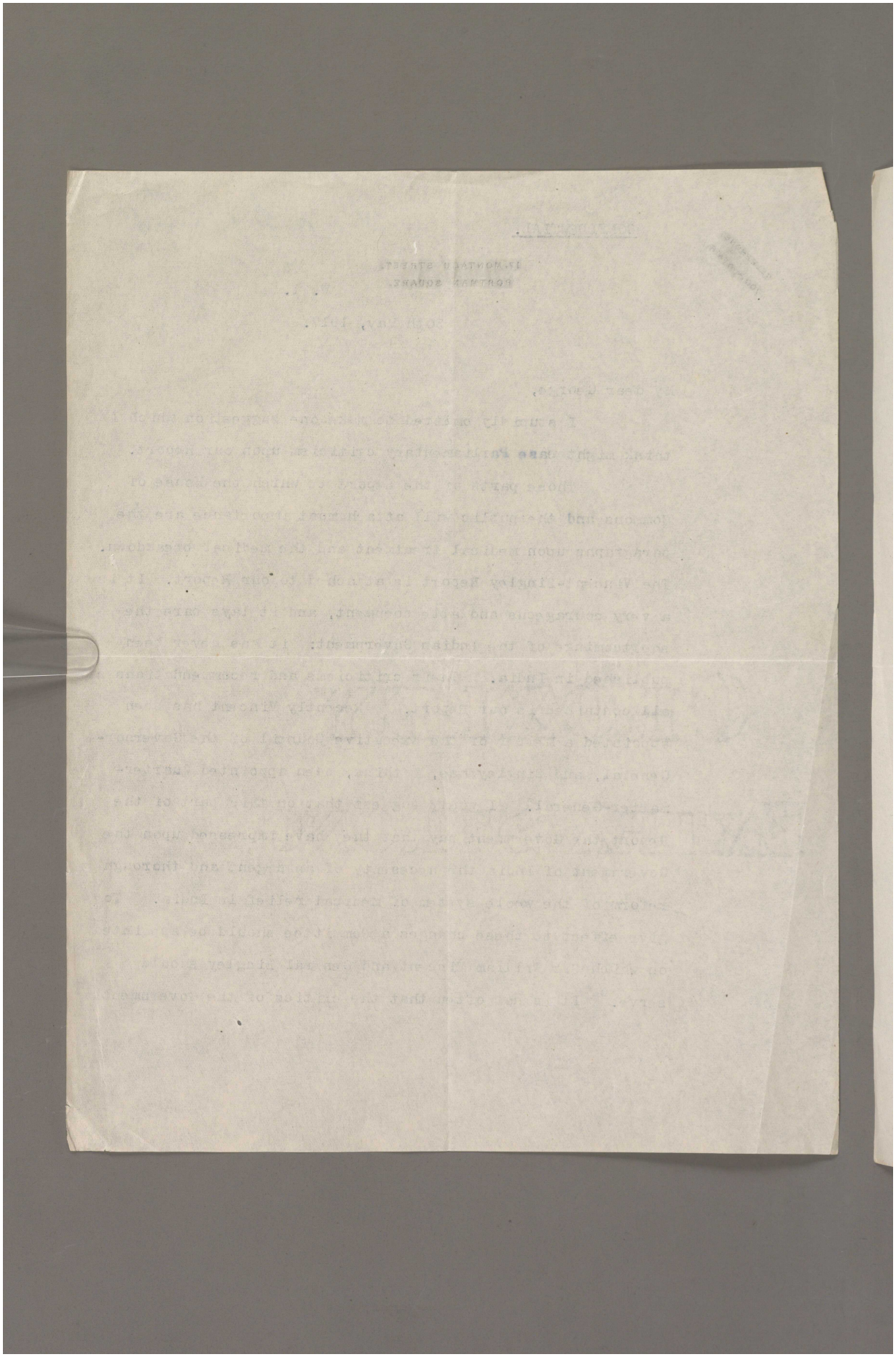
17, MONTAGU STREET,
PORTMAN SQUARE. W. 1.

30th May, 1917.

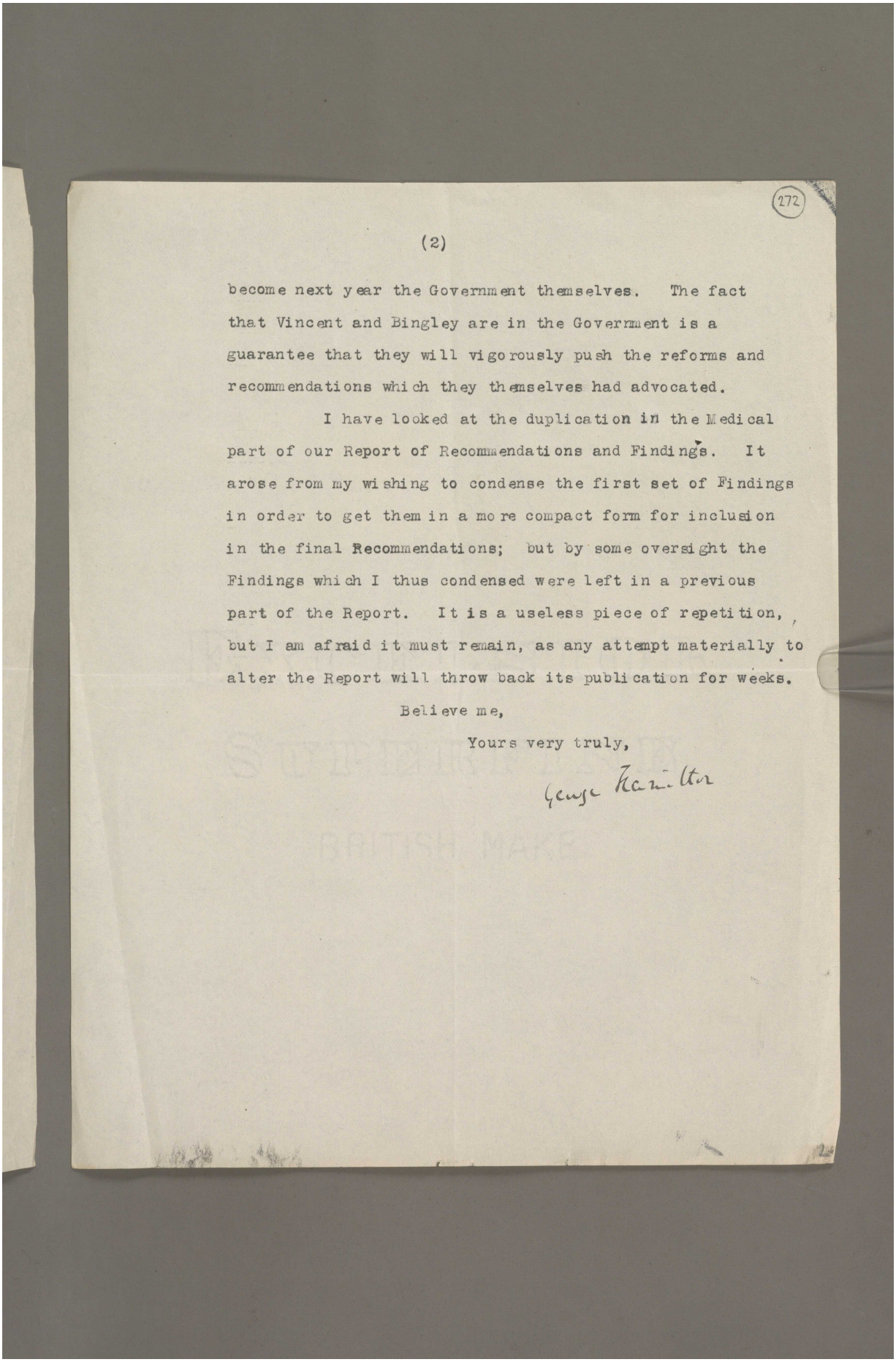
My dear George,

I stupidly omitted to make one suggestion which I think might ease Parliamentary criticism upon our Report.

Those parts of the Report to which the House of Commons and the public will attach most importance are the paragraphs upon medical treatment and the medical breakdown. The Vincent-Bingley Report is attached to our Report. It is a very courageous and able document, and it lays bare the shortcomings of the Indian Government: it has never been published in India. Their criticisms and recommendations are all contained in our Report. Recently Vincent has been appointed a Member of the Executive Council of the Governor-General, and Bingley has, I think, been appointed Quarter-master-General. I would suggest that on this part of the Report the Government say that they have impressed upon the Government of India the necessity of an urgent and thorough reform of the whole system of medical relief in India. To give effect to these changes a Committee should be appointed on which Sir William Vincent and General Bingley should serve. It is not often that the critics of the Government



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00005c



272

(2)

become next year the Government themselves. The fact that Vincent and Bingley are in the Government is a guarantee that they will vigorously push the reforms and recommendations which they themselves had advocated.

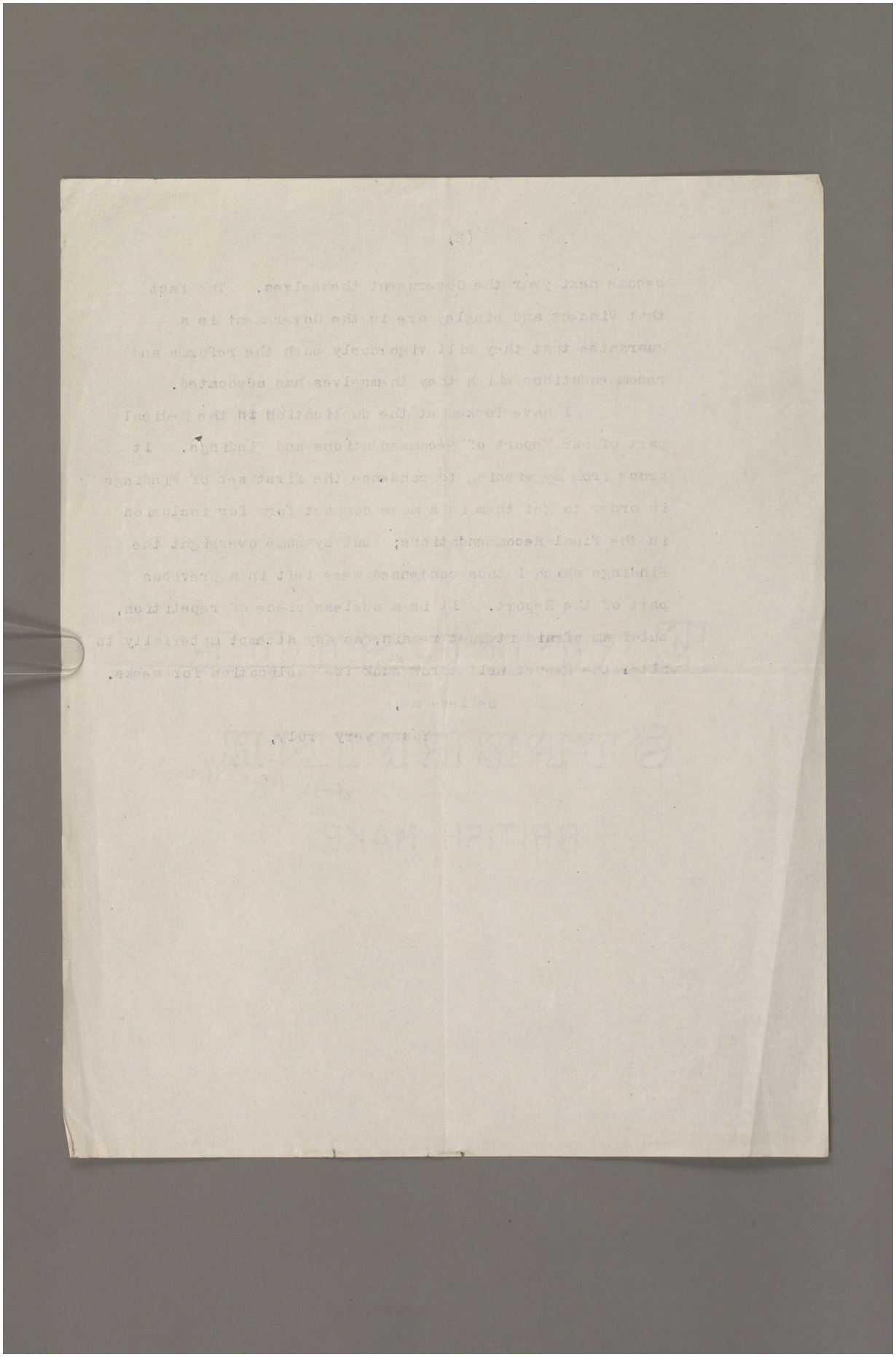
I have looked at the duplication in the Medical part of our Report of Recommendations and Findings. It arose from my wishing to condense the first set of Findings in order to get them in a more compact form for inclusion in the final Recommendations; but by some oversight the Findings which I thus condensed were left in a previous part of the Report. It is a useless piece of repetition, but I am afraid it must remain, as any attempt materially to alter the Report will throw back its publication for weeks.

Believe me,

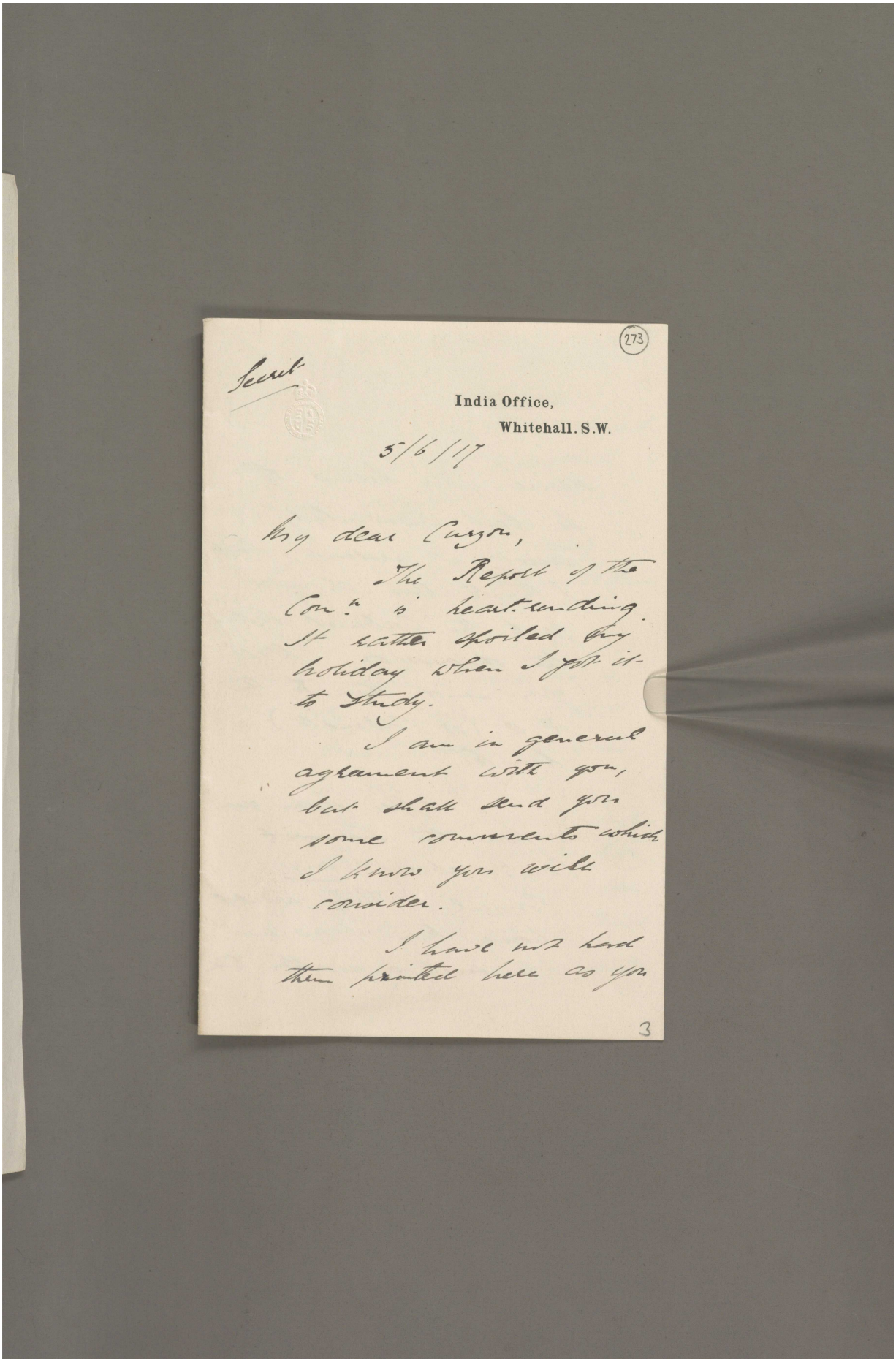
Yours very truly,

George Hamilton

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000028



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00002f



(273)

Secret

India Office,
Whitehall. S.W.

5/6/17

My dear Curzon,

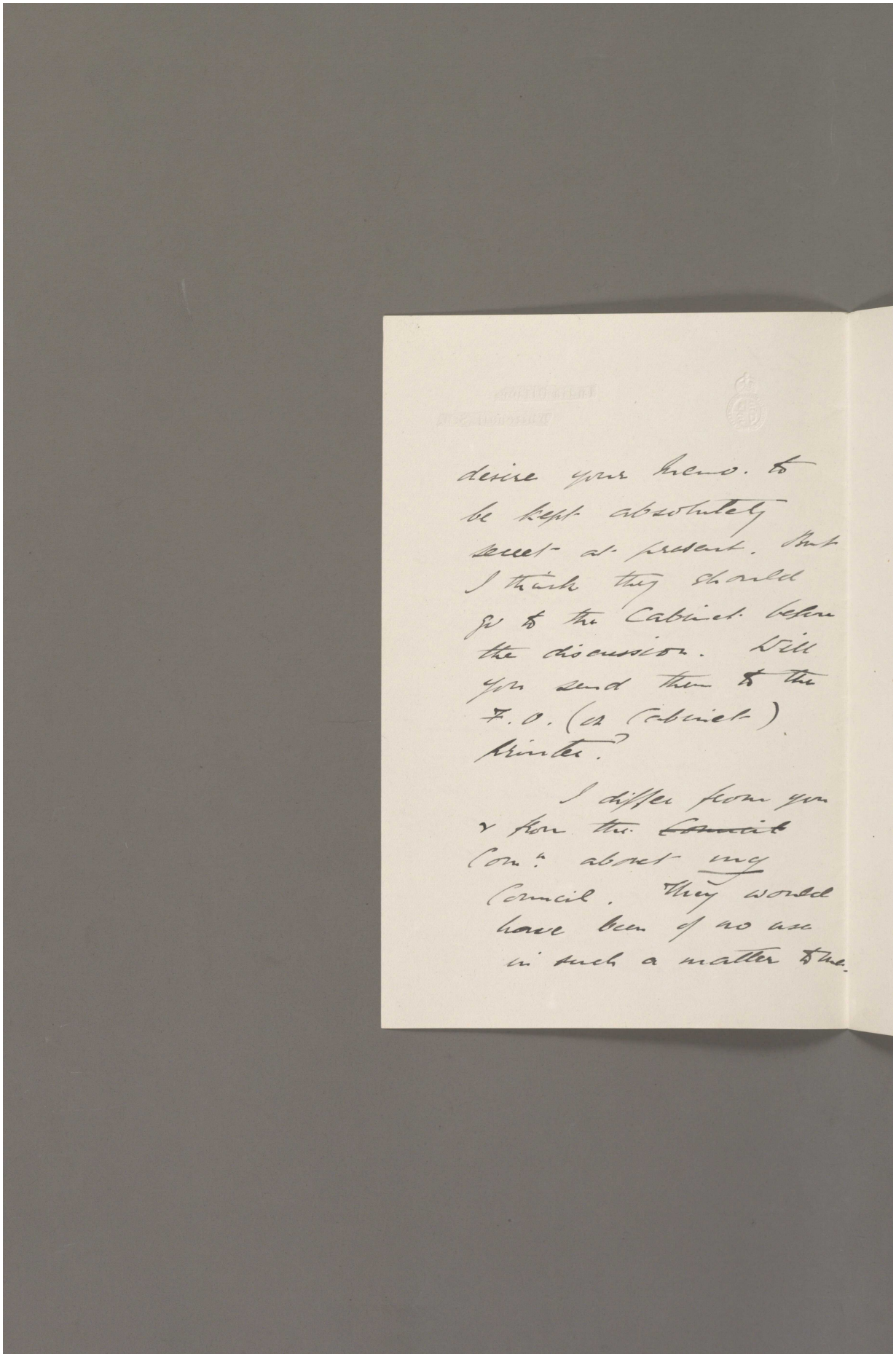
The Report of the Com^n is heart-rending. It rather spoiled my holiday when I got it to study.

I am in general agreement with you, but shall send you some comments which I know you will consider.

I have not had them printed here as you

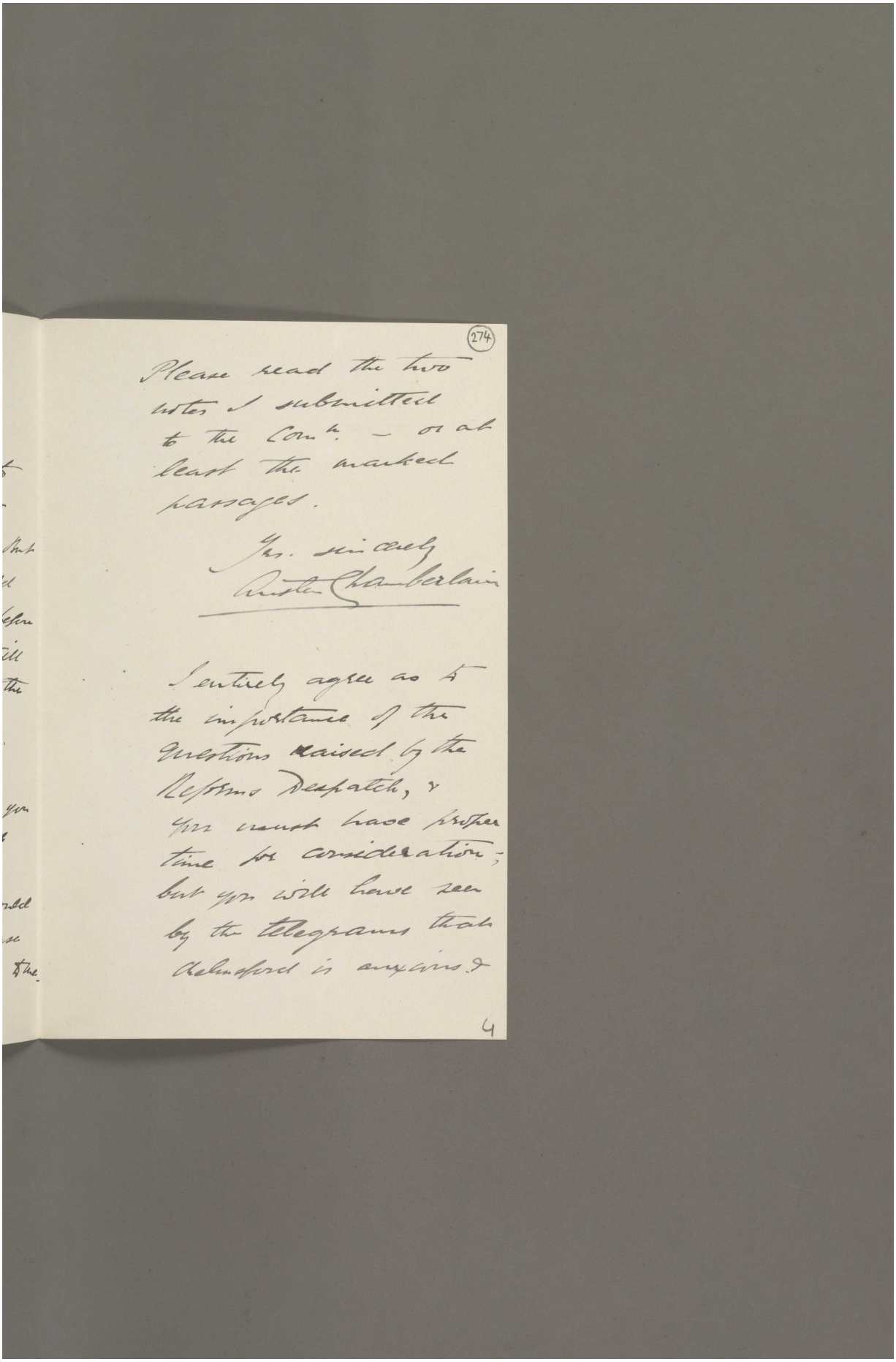
3

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000026



desire your Memo. to
be kept absolutely
secret at present. But
I think they should
go to the Cabinet before
the discussion. Will
you send them to the
F.O. (as Cabinet)
Printed?

I differ from you
& from the ~~Council~~
Com.ee about my
Council. They would
have been of no use
in such a matter as the



(274)

Please read the two notes I submitted to the Com^n. — or at least the marked passages.

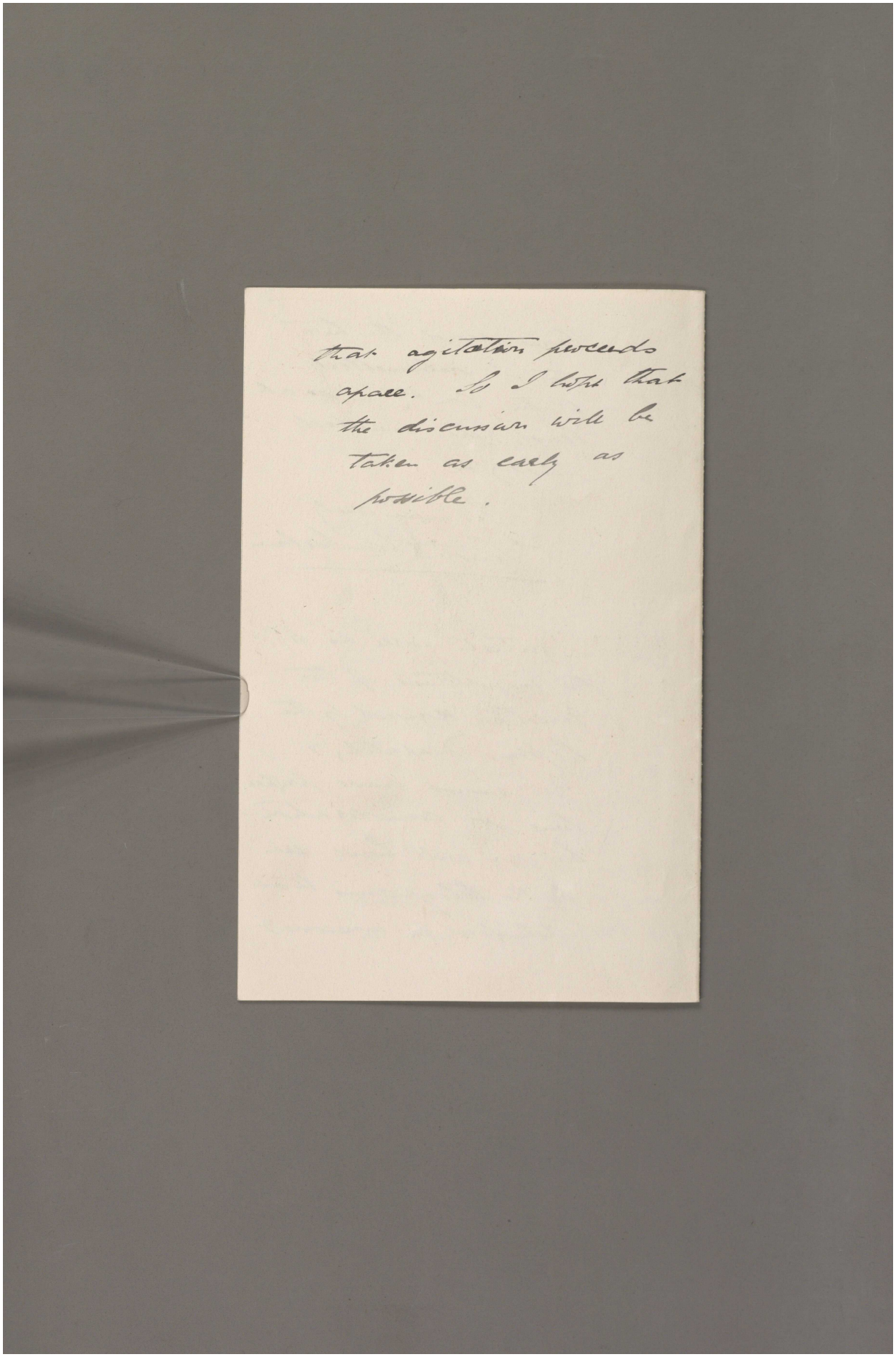
Yrs. sincerely
Austen Chamberlain

I entirely agree as to the importance of the questions raised by the Reforms Despatch, & you must have proper time for consideration; but you will have seen by the telegrams that Chelmsford is anxious &

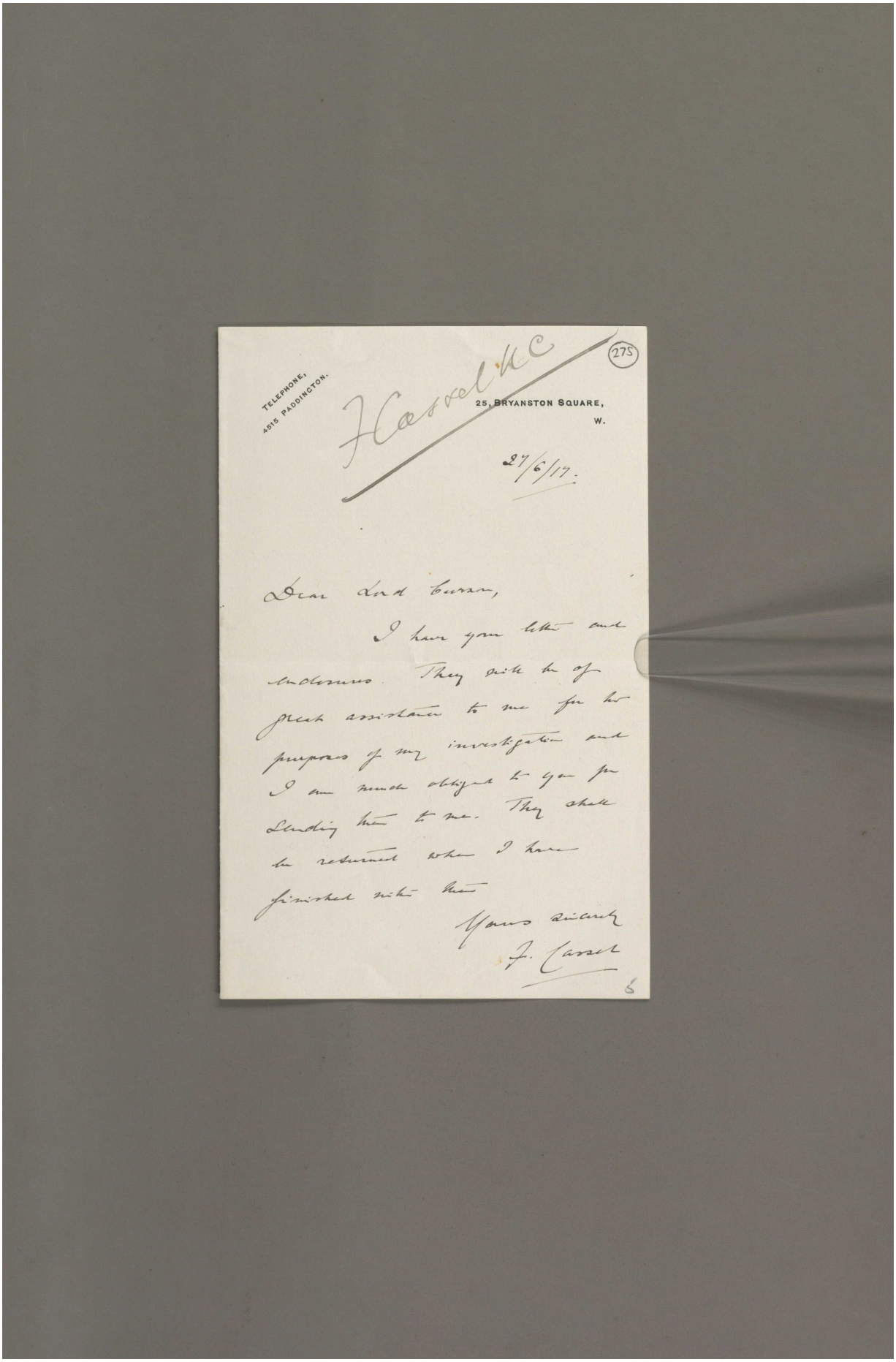
4

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000034


that agitation proceeds
apace. So I hope that
the discussion will be
taken as early as
possible.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000004



TELEPHONE,
4515 PADDINGTON.

F Cassel K C

275

25, BRYANSTON SQUARE,
W.

27/6/17.

Dear Lord Curzon,

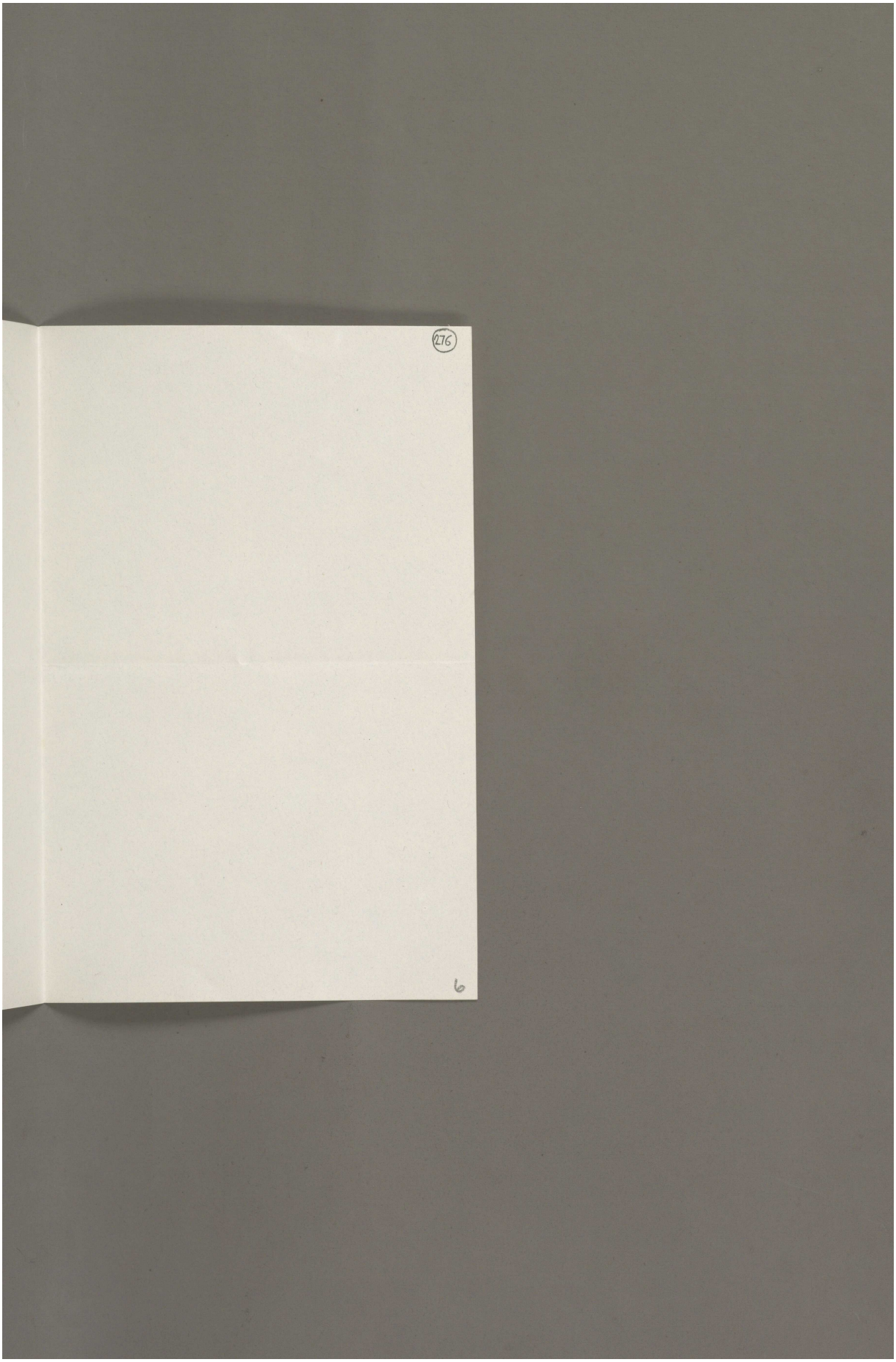
I have your letter and enclosures. They will be of great assistance to me for the purposes of my investigation and I am much obliged to you for sending them to me. They shall be returned when I have finished with them.

Yours sincerely
F. Cassel

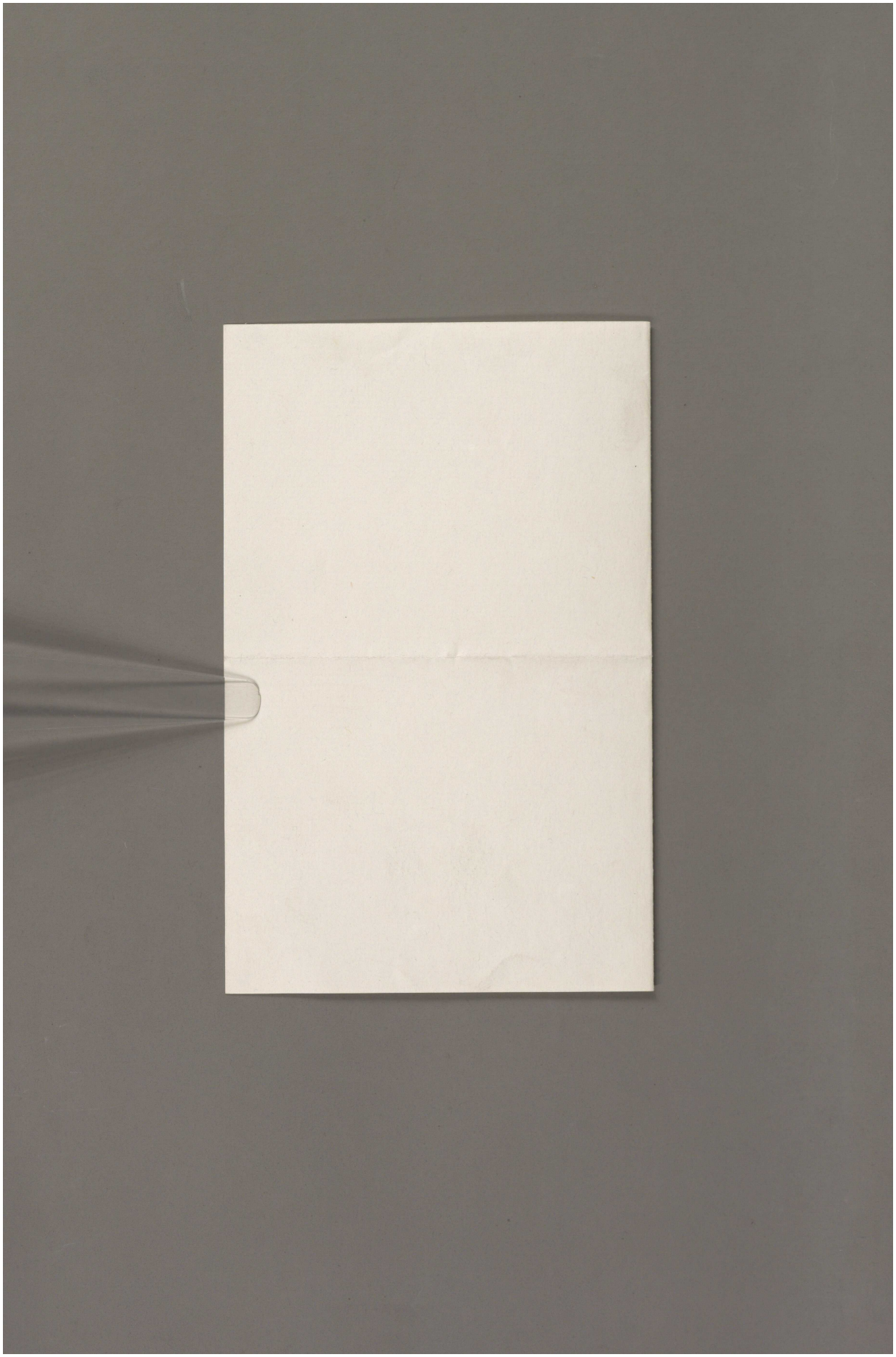
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00003e
551



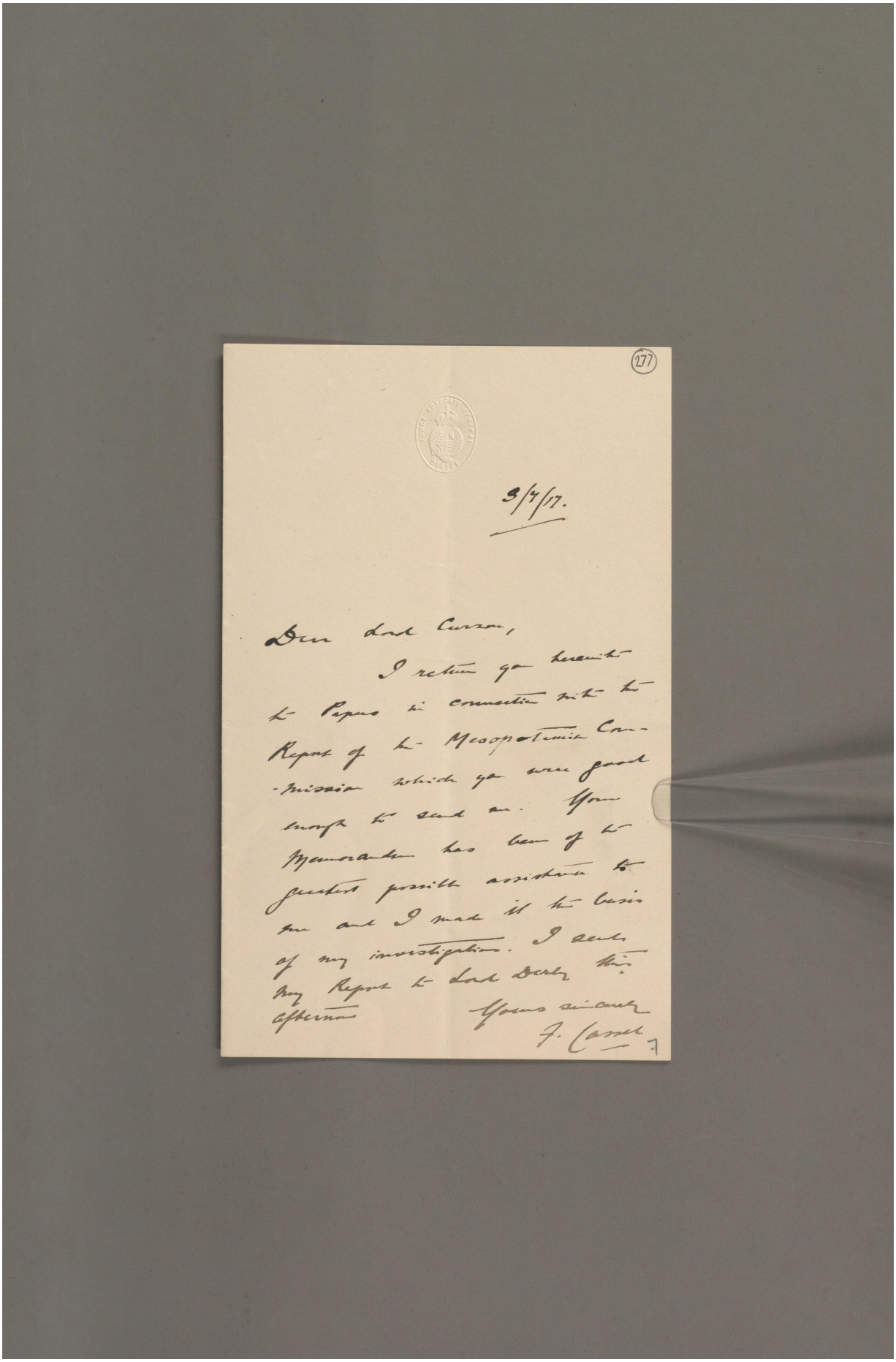
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000027



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000014



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000092



3/7/17.

Dear Lord Curzon,

I return you herewith the Papers in connection with the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission which you were good enough to send me. Your Memorandum has been of the greatest possible assistance to me and I made it the basis of my investigation. I send my Report to Lord Derby this afternoon

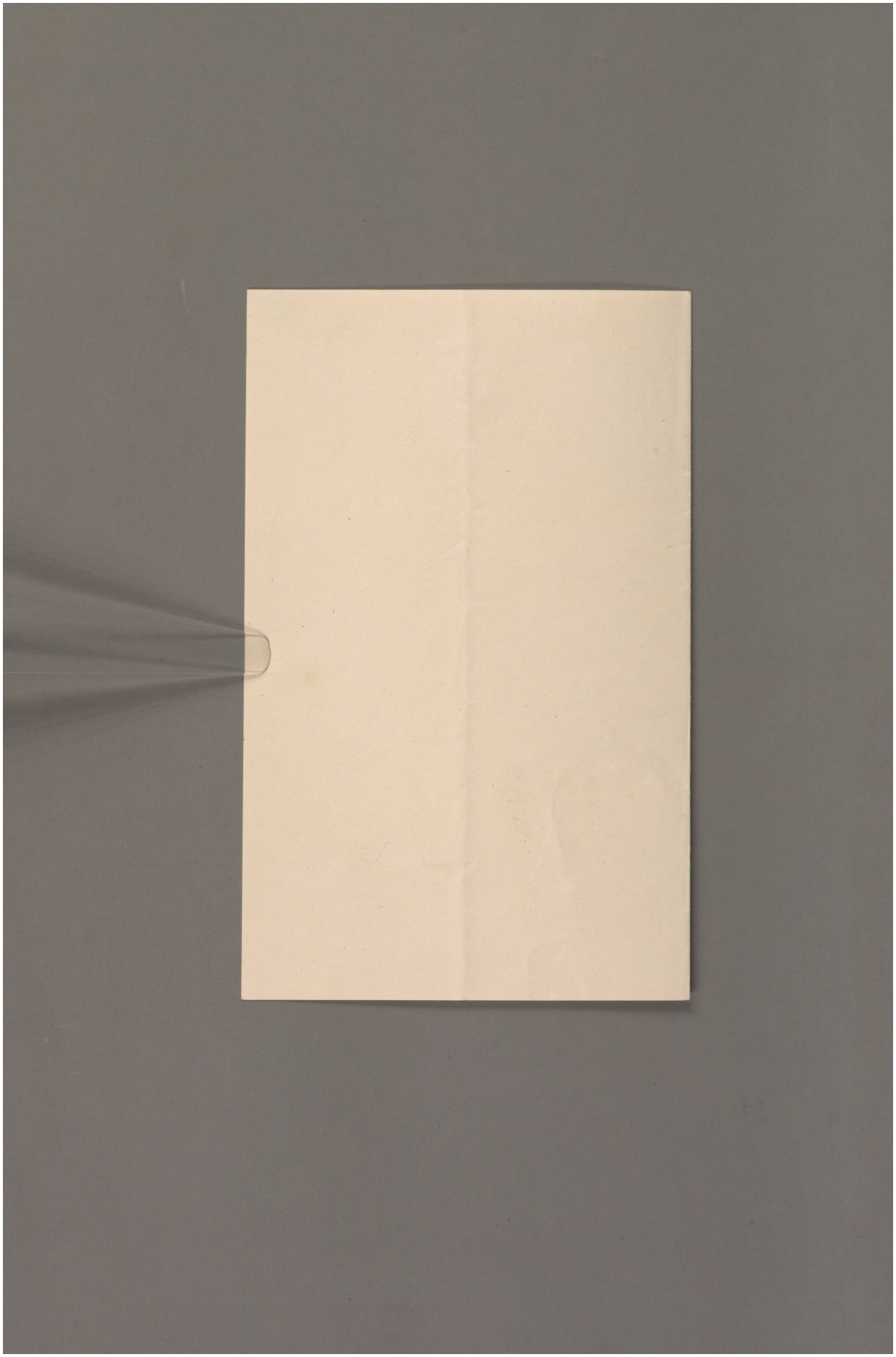
Yours sincerely
J. Cassel



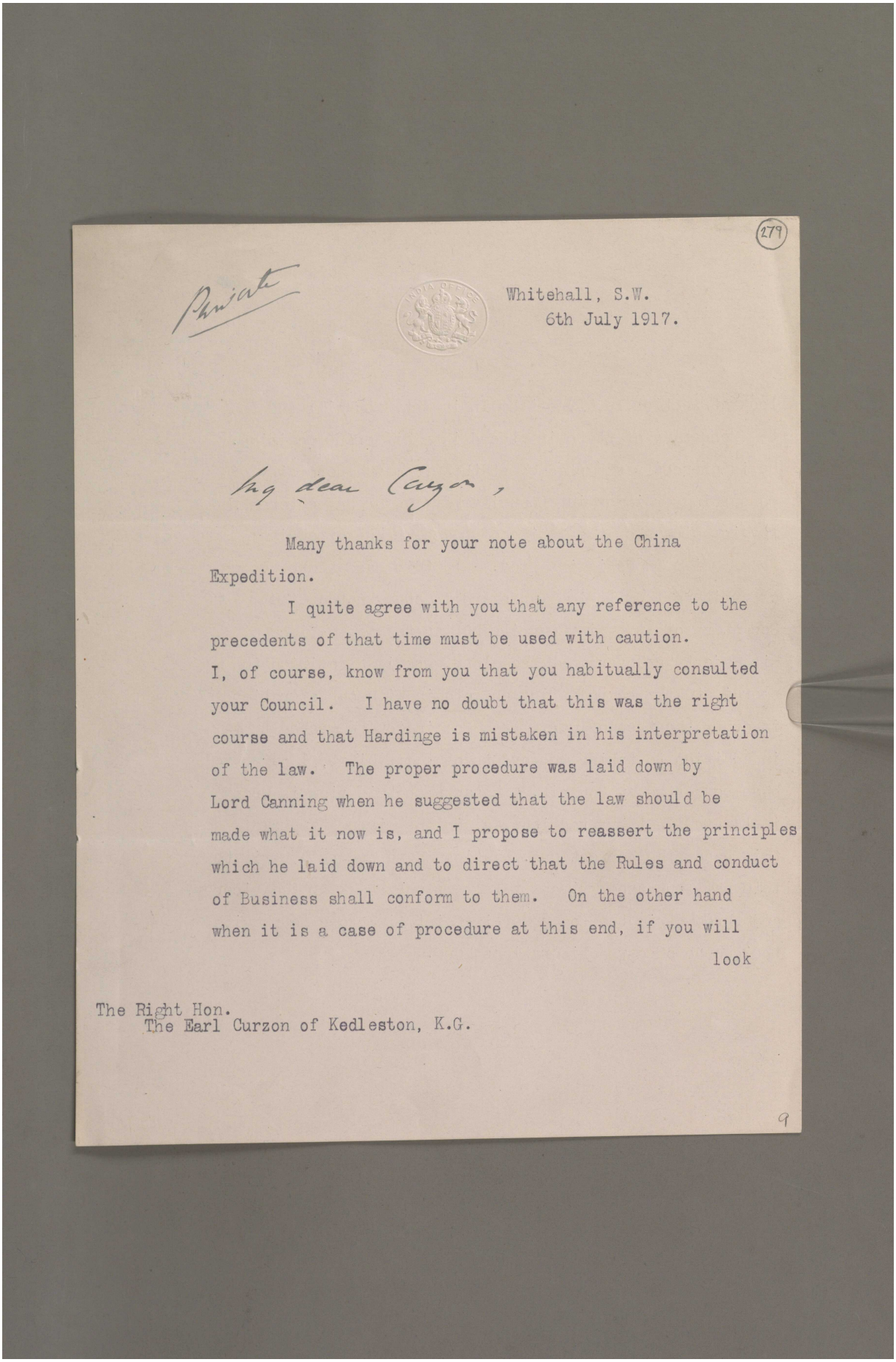
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00008a



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000035



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00007e



279

Private

Whitehall, S.W.
6th July 1917.

My dear Curzon,

Many thanks for your note about the China Expedition.

I quite agree with you that any reference to the precedents of that time must be used with caution. I, of course, know from you that you habitually consulted your Council. I have no doubt that this was the right course and that Hardinge is mistaken in his interpretation of the law. The proper procedure was laid down by Lord Canning when he suggested that the law should be made what it now is, and I propose to reassert the principles which he laid down and to direct that the Rules and conduct of Business shall conform to them. On the other hand when it is a case of procedure at this end, if you will look

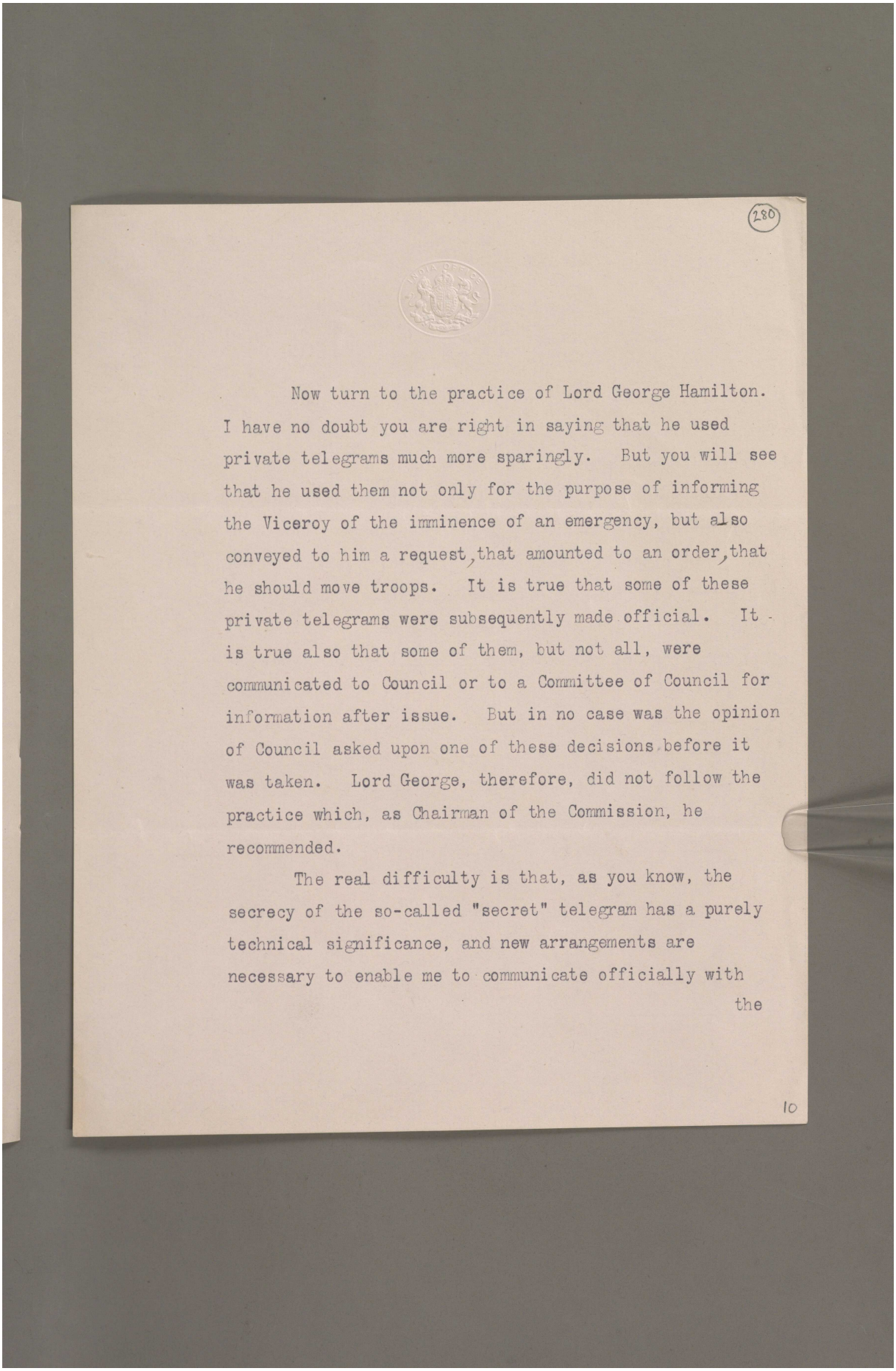
The Right Hon.
The Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G.

9

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000075

look at Section 13 (1) of the India Act, you will see that the Secretary of State is placed in a different position. He is expressly exempted by statute from the necessity of consulting or informing Council where an order concerns the levying of war or the making of peace unless expenditure from Indian funds is involved. In this case there was no expenditure from Indian funds and I acted, not as the Secretary of State in Council, but as the mouth-piece of His Majesty's Government who alone were in a position to coordinate the campaign in Mesopotamia with our operations in other theatres of war. The Commission suggested that in addition to taking the orders of the Cabinet, I ought to have consulted my Council. I say that this view is wrong in law and that my practice was, in the circumstances of this case, the correct one. I issued no orders by private telegram, but used private telegrams only to keep the Viceroy, and through him the Commander-in-Chief, in close touch with the course of our deliberations here.

Now

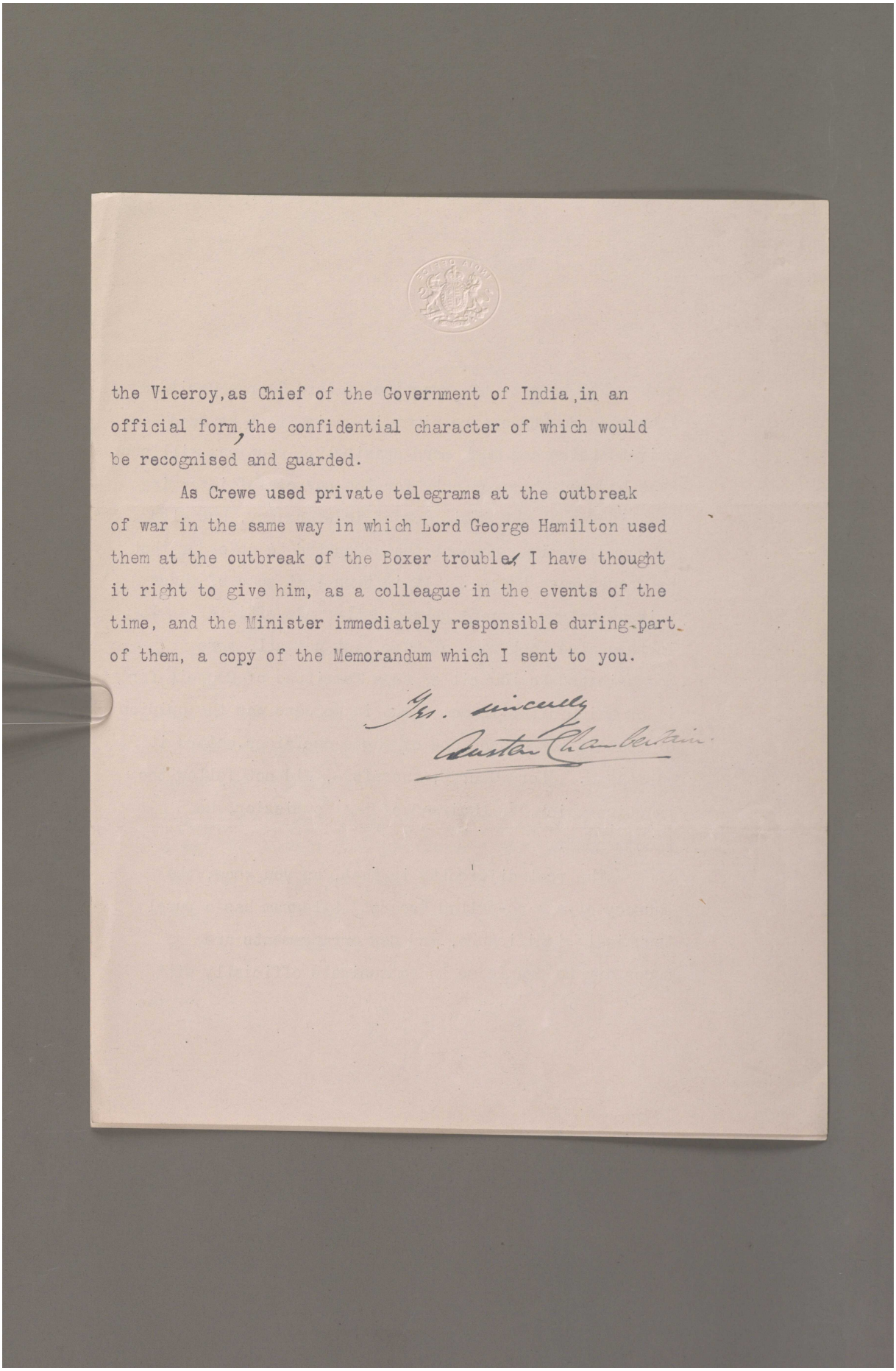


(280)

Now turn to the practice of Lord George Hamilton. I have no doubt you are right in saying that he used private telegrams much more sparingly. But you will see that he used them not only for the purpose of informing the Viceroy of the imminence of an emergency, but also conveyed to him a request, that amounted to an order, that he should move troops. It is true that some of these private telegrams were subsequently made official. It is true also that some of them, but not all, were communicated to Council or to a Committee of Council for information after issue. But in no case was the opinion of Council asked upon one of these decisions before it was taken. Lord George, therefore, did not follow the practice which, as Chairman of the Commission, he recommended.

The real difficulty is that, as you know, the secrecy of the so-called "secret" telegram has a purely technical significance, and new arrangements are necessary to enable me to communicate officially with the

10

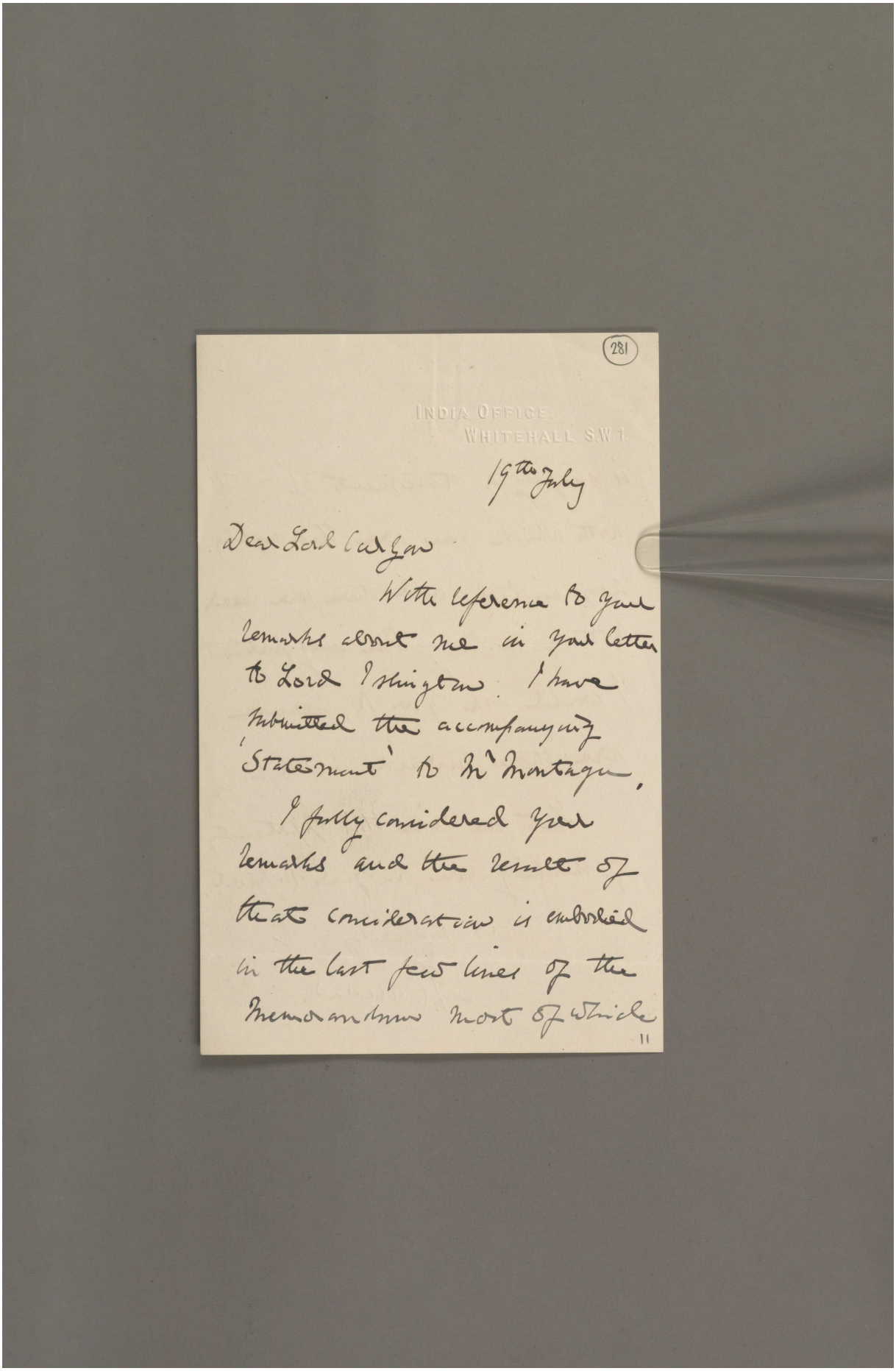


the Viceroy, as Chief of the Government of India, in an official form, the confidential character of which would be recognised and guarded.

As Crewe used private telegrams at the outbreak of war in the same way in which Lord George Hamilton used them at the outbreak of the Boxer trouble, I have thought it right to give him, as a colleague in the events of the time, and the Minister immediately responsible during part of them, a copy of the Memorandum which I sent to you.

Yrs. sincerely
Austen Chamberlain.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000094



281

INDIA OFFICE,
WHITEHALL, S.W.1.

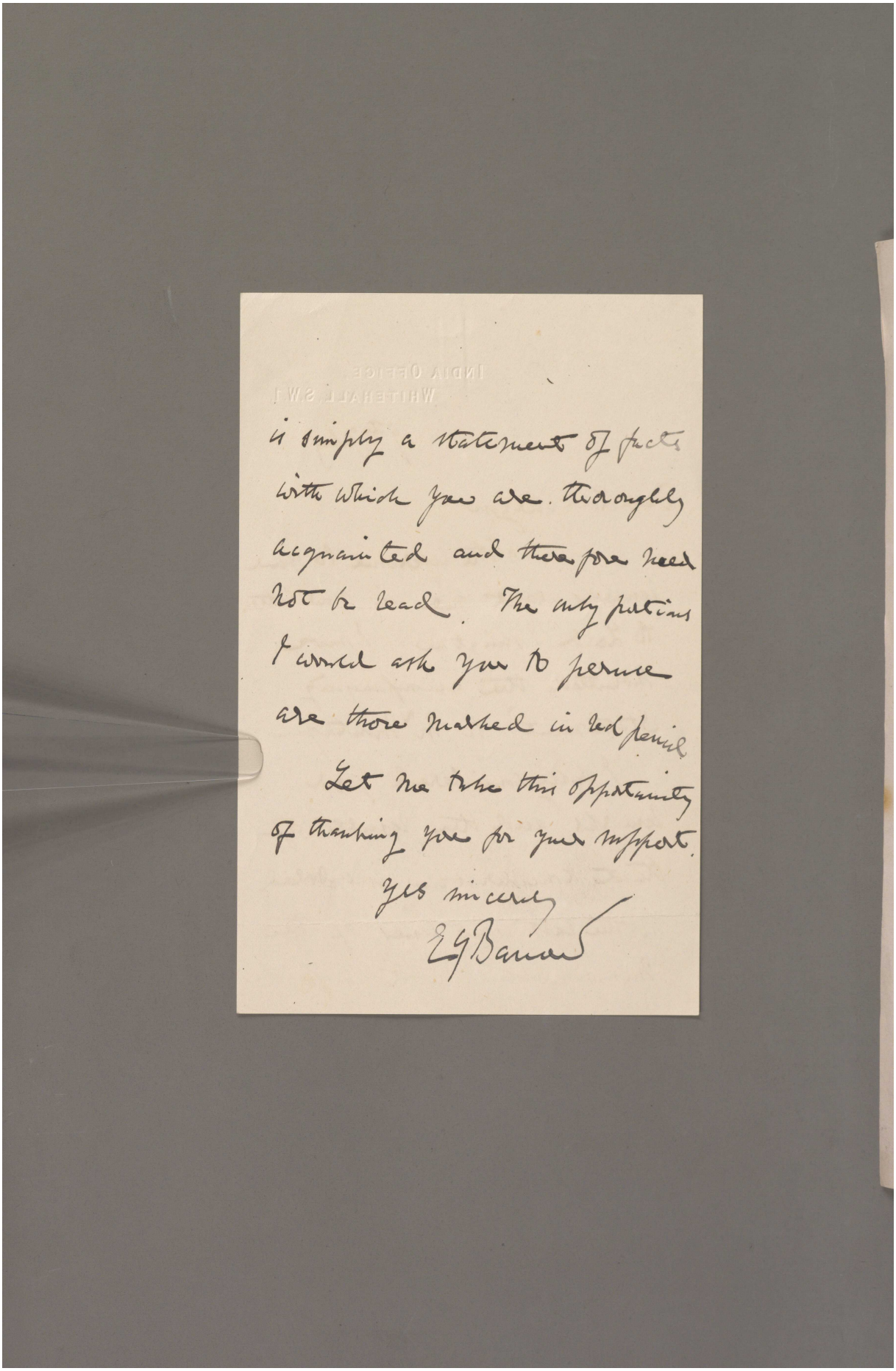
19th July

Dear Lord Curzon

With reference to your remarks about me in your letter to Lord Islington I have submitted the accompanying 'Statement' to Mr Montagu.

I fully considered your remarks and the result of that consideration is embodied in the last few lines of the Memorandum most of which

11

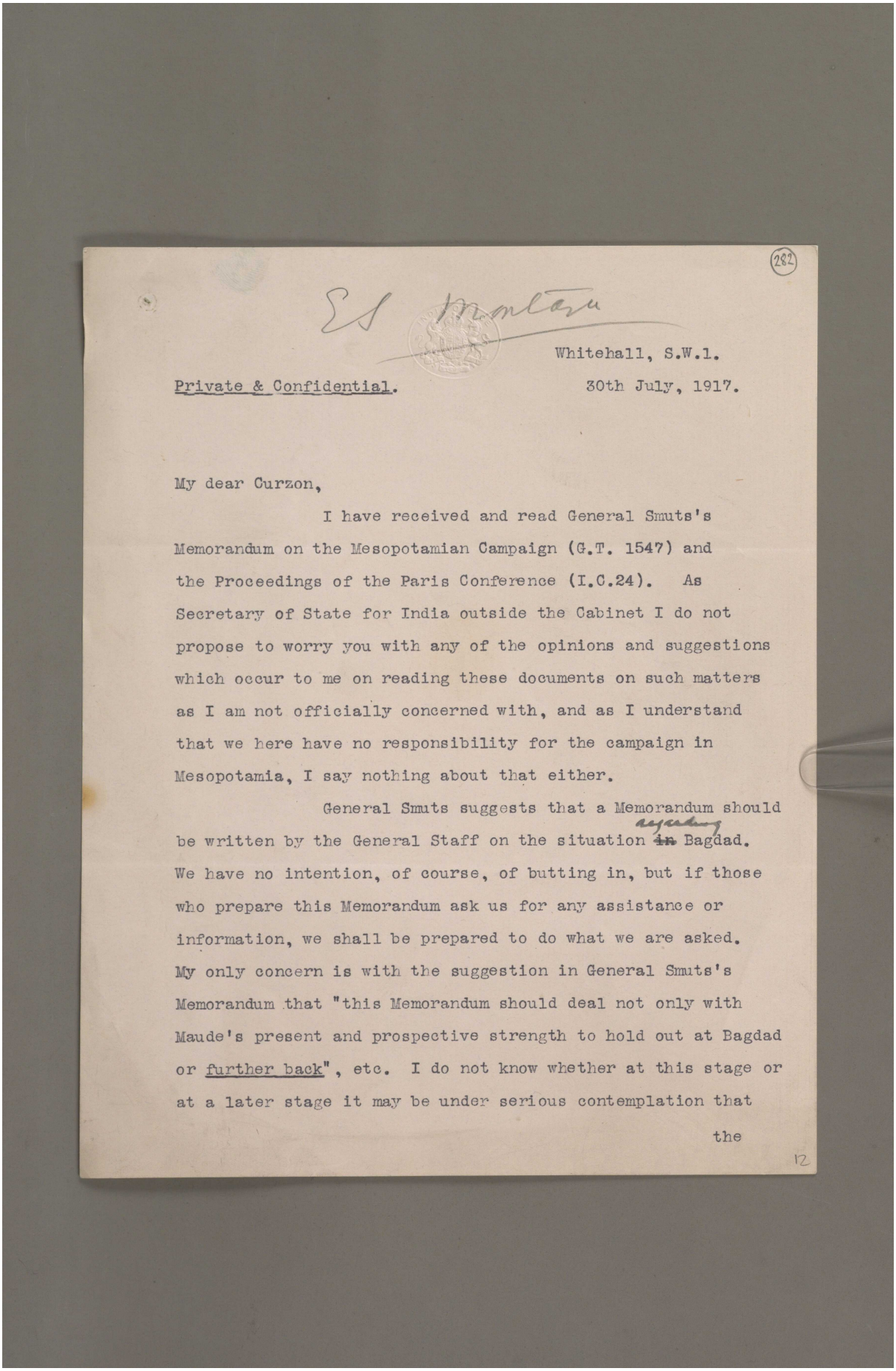


is simply a statement of facts with which you are thoroughly acquainted and therefore need not be read. The only portions I would ask you to peruse are those marked in red pencil.

Let me take this opportunity of thanking you for your support.

Yrs sincerely

E G Barnes



282

E S Montagu

Whitehall, S.W.1.

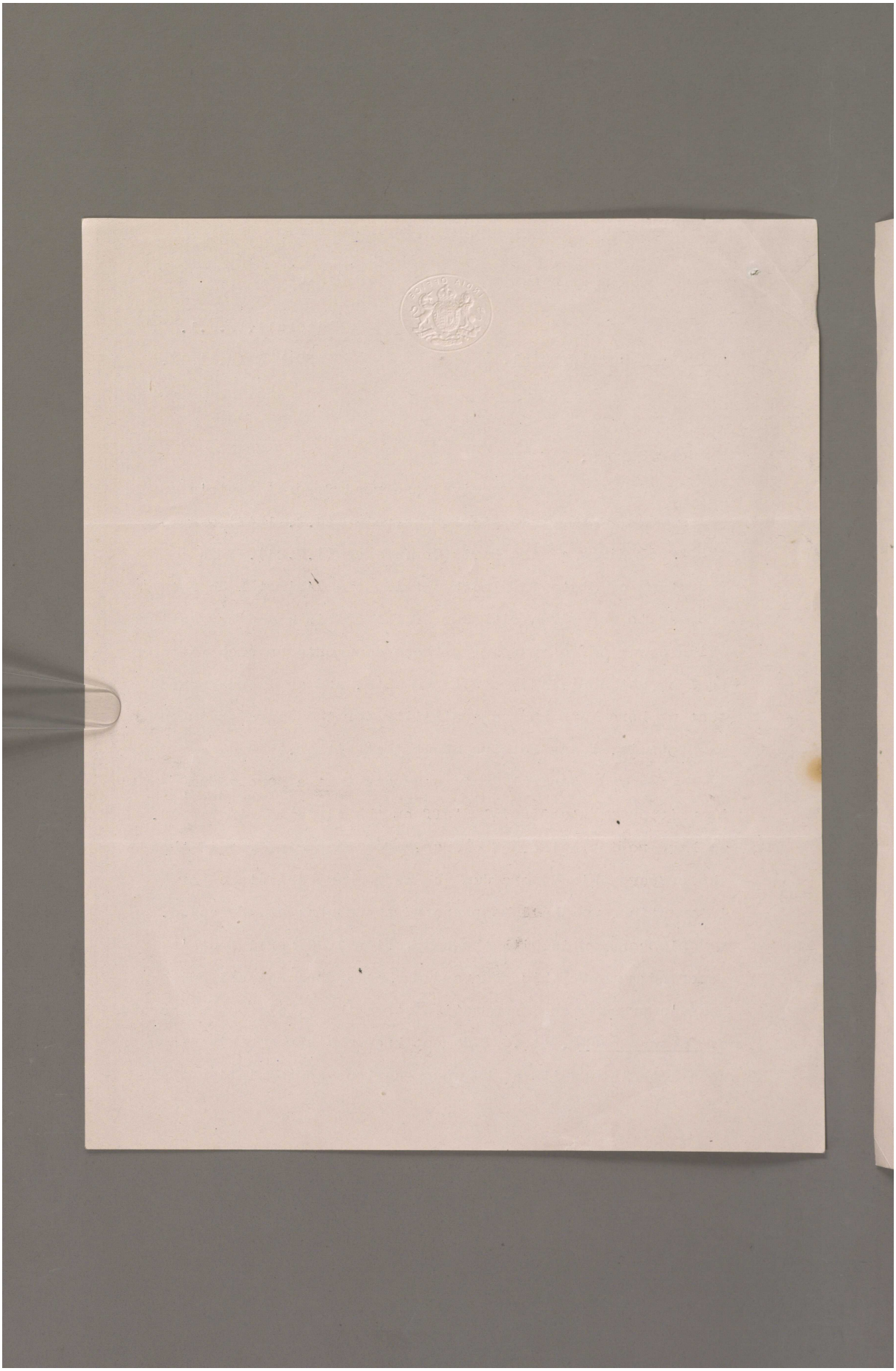
Private & Confidential. 30th July, 1917.

My dear Curzon,

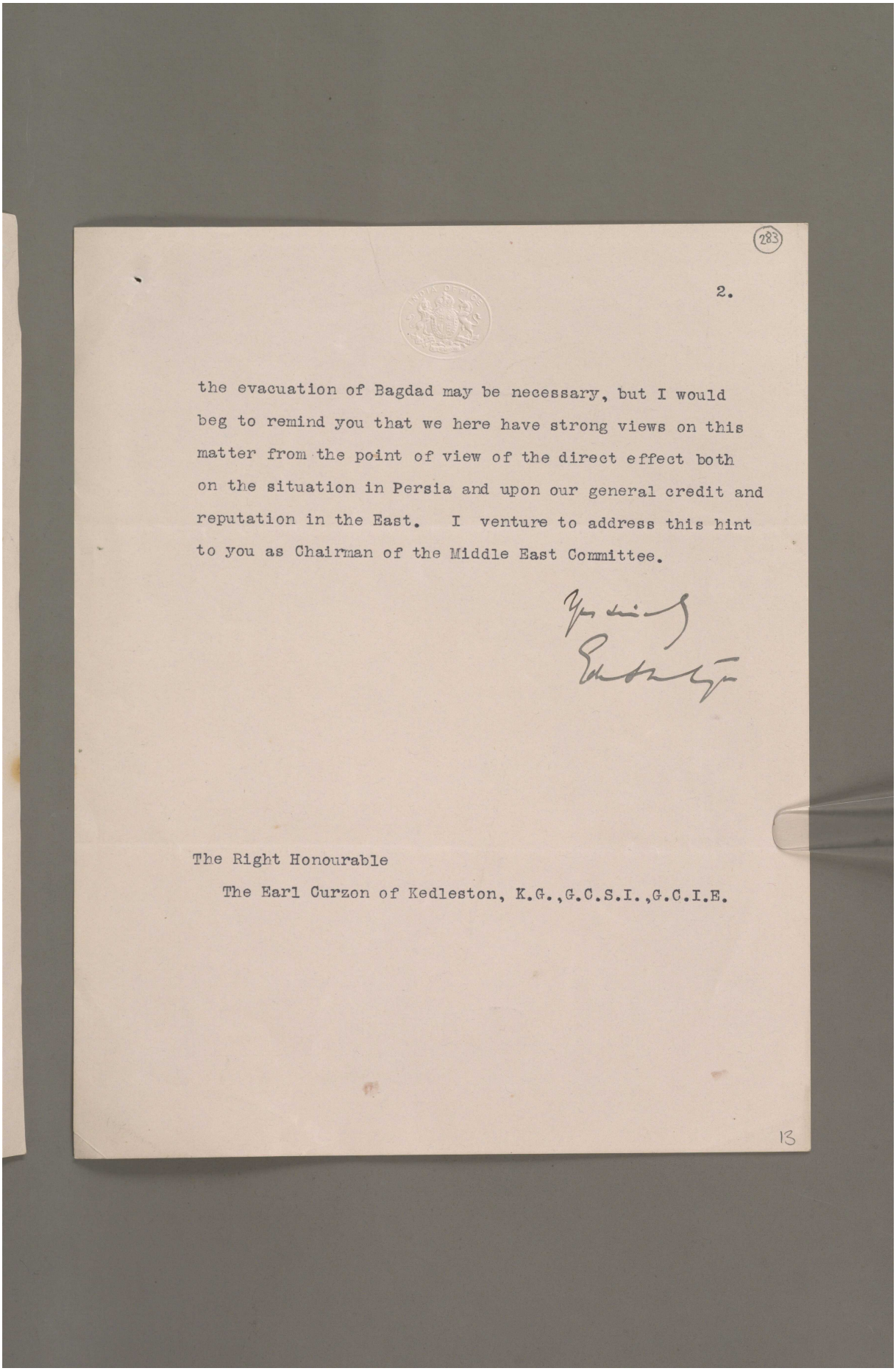
I have received and read General Smuts's Memorandum on the Mesopotamian Campaign (G.T. 1547) and the Proceedings of the Paris Conference (I.C.24). As Secretary of State for India outside the Cabinet I do not propose to worry you with any of the opinions and suggestions which occur to me on reading these documents on such matters as I am not officially concerned with, and as I understand that we here have no responsibility for the campaign in Mesopotamia, I say nothing about that either.

General Smuts suggests that a Memorandum should be written by the General Staff on the situation ~~in~~ regarding Bagdad. We have no intention, of course, of butting in, but if those who prepare this Memorandum ask us for any assistance or information, we shall be prepared to do what we are asked. My only concern is with the suggestion in General Smuts's Memorandum that "this Memorandum should deal not only with Maude's present and prospective strength to hold out at Bagdad or further back", etc. I do not know whether at this stage or at a later stage it may be under serious contemplation that the

12



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00005b



283

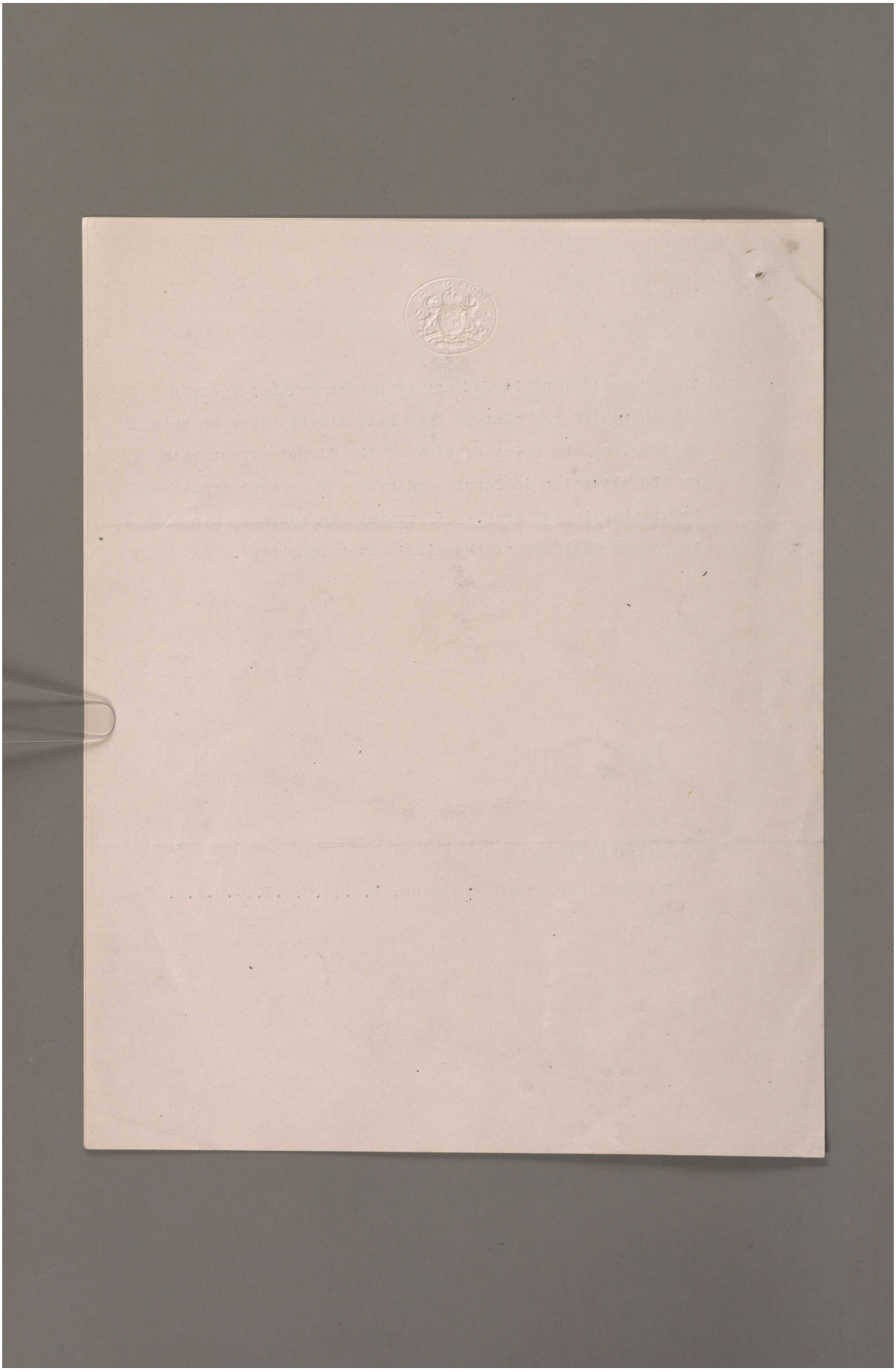
2.

the evacuation of Bagdad may be necessary, but I would beg to remind you that we here have strong views on this matter from the point of view of the direct effect both on the situation in Persia and upon our general credit and reputation in the East. I venture to address this hint to you as Chairman of the Middle East Committee.

Yours sincerely
Curzon

The Right Honourable
The Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G.,G.C.S.I.,G.C.I.E.

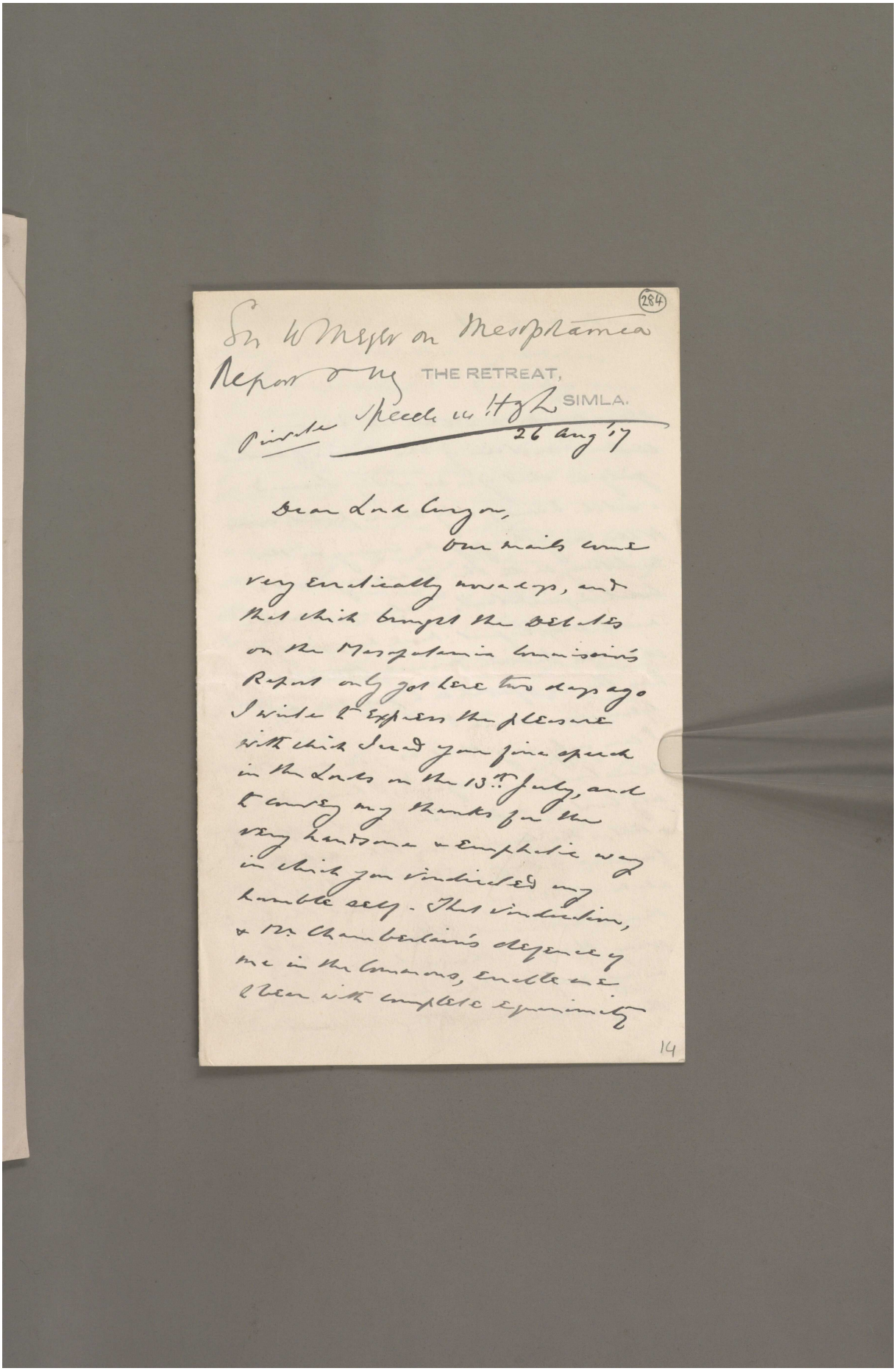
13



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000021

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



(284)

Sir W Meyer on Mesopotamia Report & my Private Speech in H of L

THE RETREAT,
SIMLA.

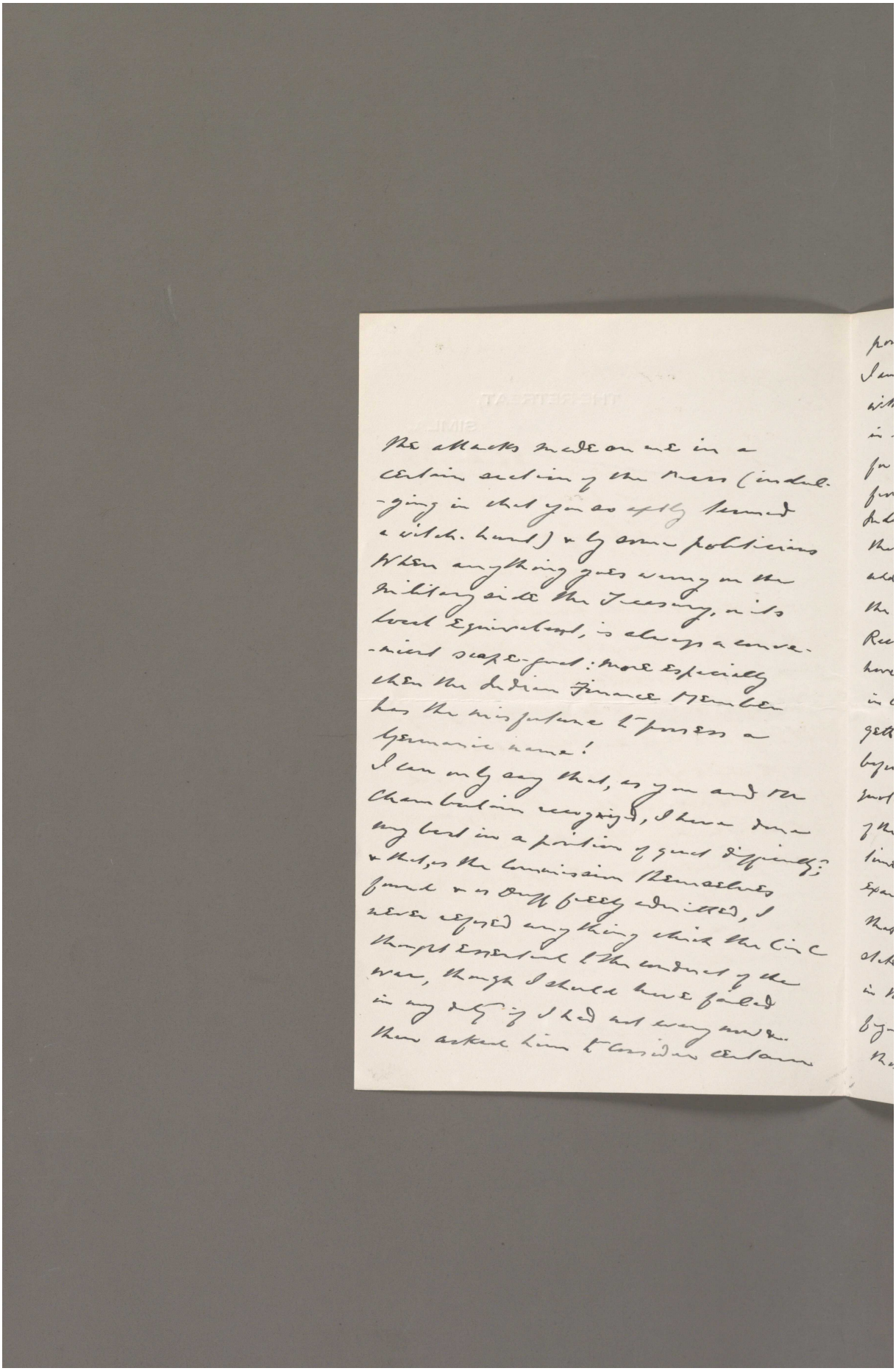
26 Aug '17

Dear Lord Curzon,

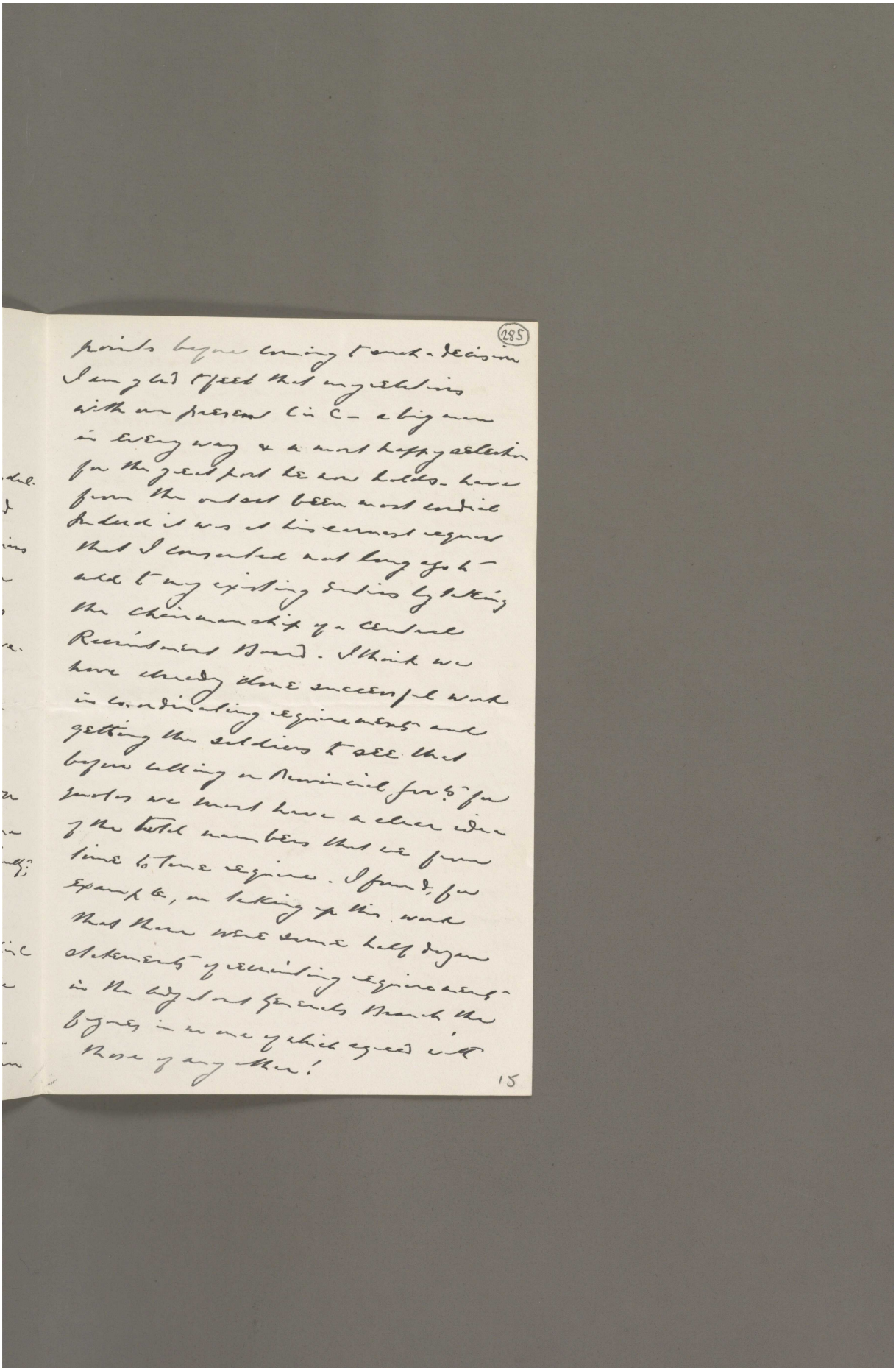
Our mails come very erratically nowadays, and that which brought the Debates on the Mesopotamia Commission's Report only got here two days ago. I write to express the pleasure with which I read your fine speech in the Lords on the 13th July, and to convey my thanks for the very handsome & emphatic way in which you vindicated my humble self. That vindication, & Mr Chamberlain's defence of me in the Commons, enable me to bear with complete equanimity

14

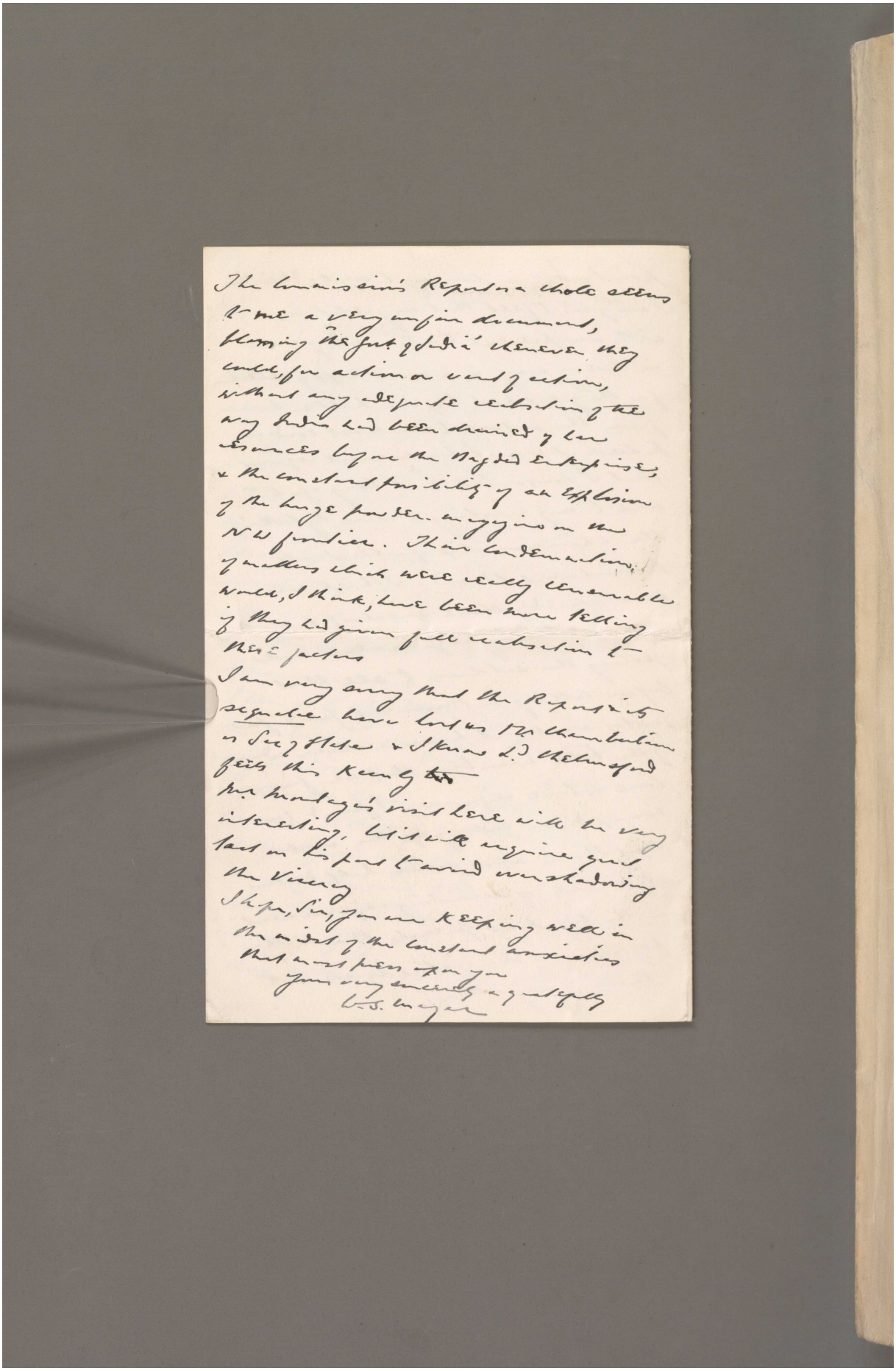
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000029



The attacks made on me in a
certain section of the Press (indul-
-ging in that you so aptly termed
a witch-hunt) & by some politicians
When anything goes wrong on the
military side the Treasury, or its
local Equivalent, is always a conve-
-nient scape-goat: more especially
when the Indian Finance Member
has the misfortune to possess a
Germanic name!
I can only say that, as you and Mr
Chamberlain recognized, I have done
my best in a position of great difficulty;
& that, as the Commission themselves
found & as Duff freely admitted, I
never refused anything which the Civil
thought essential to the conduct of the
war, though I should have failed
in my duty if I had not every now &
then asked him to consider certain



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000001



The Commission's Report as a whole seems
to me a very unfair document,
blaming the Govt. of India whenever they
could, for action or want of action,
without any adequate realisation of the
way India had been drained of her
resources before the Bagdad enterprise,
& the constant possibility of an explosion
of the huge powder-magazine on the
N.W. frontier. Their condemnation
of matters which were really censurable
would, I think, have been more telling
if they had given full realisation to
these factors

I am very sorry that the Report & its
sequelae have lost us Mr Chamberlain
as Sec. of State & I know Ld Chelmsford
feels this keenly too

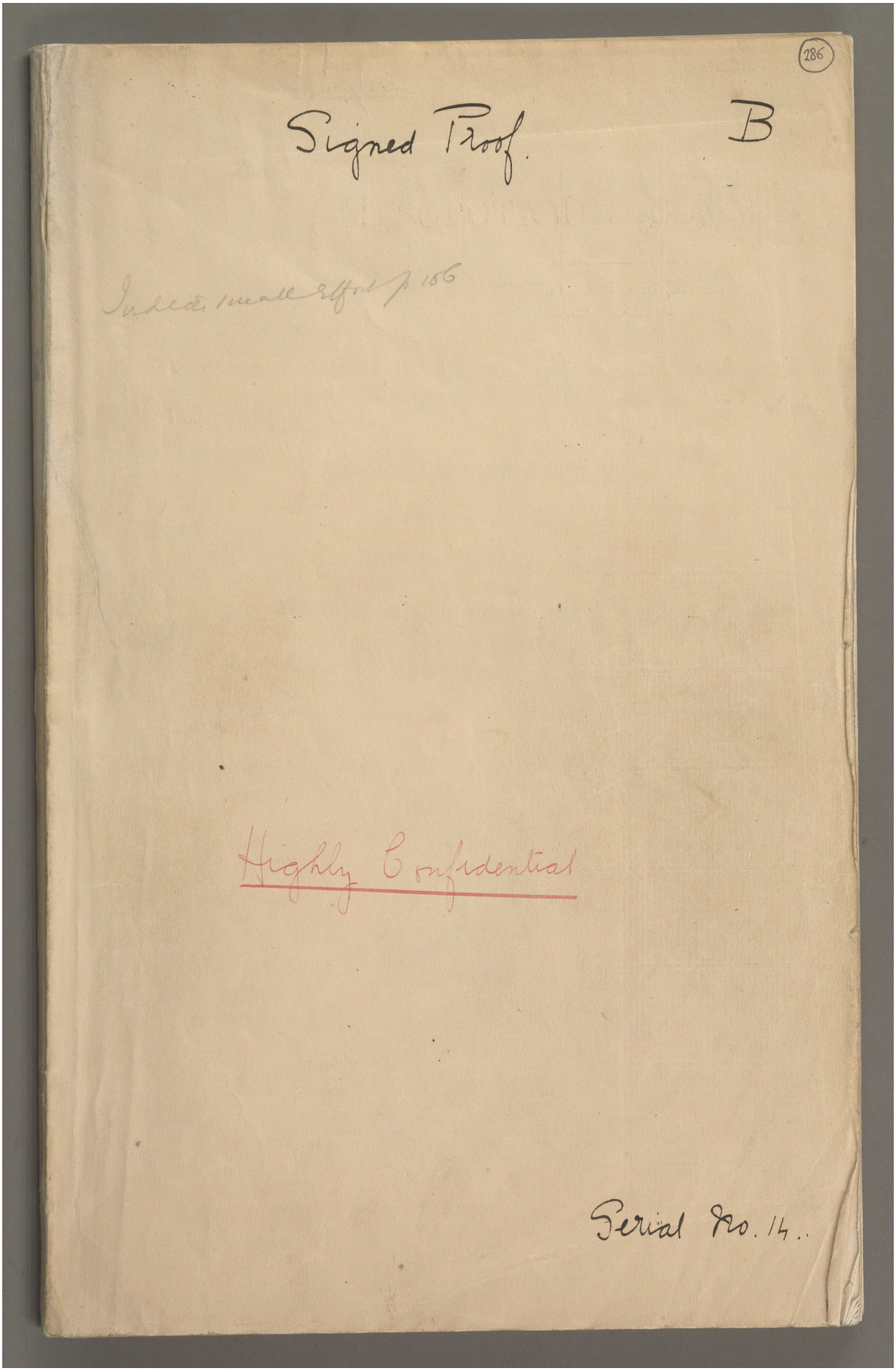
Mr Montagu's visit here will be very
interesting, but it will require great
tact on his part to avoid overshadowing
the Viceroy

I hope, Sir, you are keeping well in
the midst of the constant anxieties
that must press upon you

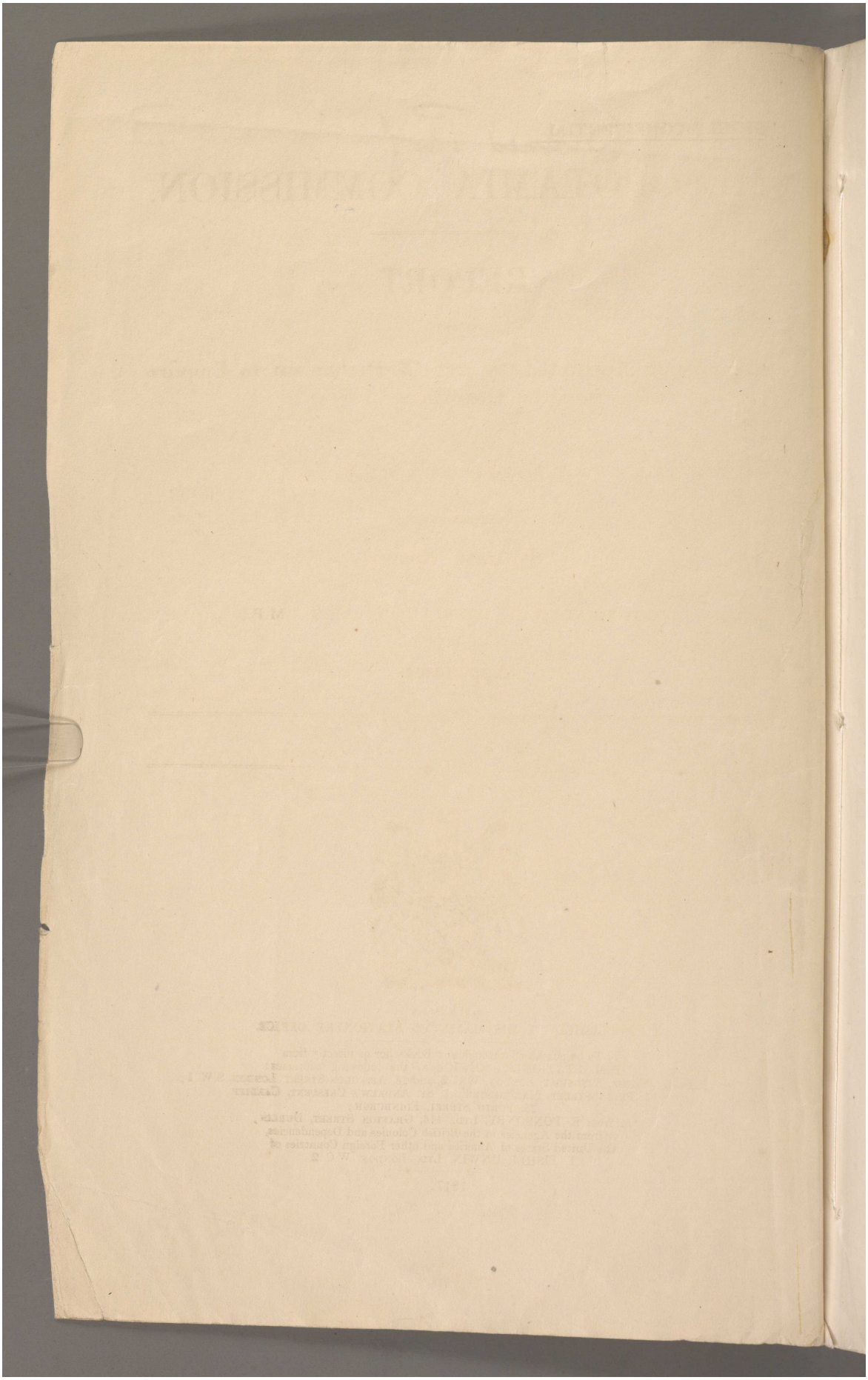
Yours very sincerely & gratefully
W. S. Meyer

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence

View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00008a



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00008c



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000035

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

287

HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL.

MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

REPORT

OF THE

Commission Appointed by Act of Parliament to Enquire into the Operations of War

IN

MESOPOTAMIA,

TOGETHER WITH A

Separate Report

BY

COMMANDER J. WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.,

AND

Appendices.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

To be purchased through any Bookseller or directly from
H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE at the following addresses:
IMPERIAL HOUSE, KINGSWAY, LONDON, W.C. 2, and 28, ABINGDON STREET, LONDON, S.W. 1;
37, PETER STREET, MANCHESTER; 1, ST. ANDREW'S CRESCENT, CARDIFF;
23, FORTH STREET, EDINBURGH;
or from E. PONSONBY, LTD., 116, GRAFTON STREET, DUBLIN;
or from the Agencies in the British Colonies and Dependencies,
the United States of America and other Foreign Countries of
T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD., LONDON, W.C. 2.

1917.

Price *Net.*

17

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00000c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE
TERMS OF APPOINTMENT AND REFERENCE	3
PART I.—PREFACE	5
A. Procedure	5
B. Physical and Climatic Peculiarities of Mesopotamia	8
C. Condition of Indian Army on Outbreak of War	10
D. India's Overseas Expeditions on Outbreak of War	11
PART II.—ORIGIN OF MESOPOTAMIA EXPEDITION	12
PART III.—ADVANCE FROM BASRA TO KURNA	15
PART IV.—THE ADVANCE TO AMARA AND KUT	16
PART V.—CORRESPONDENCE AND TELEGRAMS AS TO ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD	20
PART VI.—THE ADVANCE FROM KUT TO CTESIPHON	29
PART VII.—OPERATIONS FOR RELIEF OF KUT	31
PART VIII.—ARMAMENT, EQUIPMENT, REINFORCEMENTS, &C.	37
PART IX.—TRANSPORT	43
A. Shortage of River Transport	43
B. Railways	61
C. Royal Indian Marine	61
PART X.—MEDICAL BREAKDOWN	63
A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions	63
B. Medical Administration of Colonel Hehir	69
C. Medical Administration of Sir William Babtie	71
D. The Misuse of Reticence	74
E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy, and Commander-in-Chief	83
F. Supplementary	88
G. Medical Findings and Recommendations	93
PART XI.—CAUSES CONTRIBUTING TO THE ERRORS OF JUDGMENT AND SHORTCOMINGS OF RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	96
A. Division of Responsibility for Campaign	96
B. Faulty Organisation of Indian Military Administration	98
C. Relations between the Secretary of State and the Governor-General and their respective Councils—Private telegrams	101
D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War, and Effect upon Military Preparations in India	103
E. Sir John Nixon's Appointment, Instructions and Staff	107
F. Secretiveness and Lack of Co-ordination of Staffs	108
PART XII.—A. Findings and Conclusions	111
B. Recommendations	116
SEPARATE REPORT BY COMMANDER J. WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.	121
APPENDIX I.—VINCENT-BINGLEY REPORT	133
APPENDIX II.—MEMORANDUM BY SIR BEAUCHAMP DUFF	165
APPENDIX III.—COLONEL HEHIR'S ACCOUNT OF THE SIEGE OF KUT-EL-AMARA	169
INDEX TO COMMISSION'S REPORT	179

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00008b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

288

PAGE
.. 3
.. 5
.. 5
.. 8
.. 10
.. 11
.. 12
.. 15
.. 16
AD 20
.. 29
.. 31
.. 37
.. 43
.. 43
.. 61
.. 61
.. 63
.. 63
.. 69
. 71
. 74
. 83
88
93
96
96
98
101
103
107
108
111
116
121
. 133
. 165
A 169
. 179

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT AND REFERENCE.

Extract from Section I of Special Commissions (Dardanelles and Mesopotamia) Act, 1916.

Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :—

The following persons, namely :—

The Right Honourable Lord George Francis Hamilton, G.C.S.I.,

The Right Honourable the Earl of Donoughmore, K.P.,

Lord Hugh Cecil, Member of Parliament,

Sir Archibald Williamson, Baronet, Member of Parliament,

John Hodge, Esquire, Member of Parliament,

Commander Josiah C. Wedgwood, Member of Parliament,

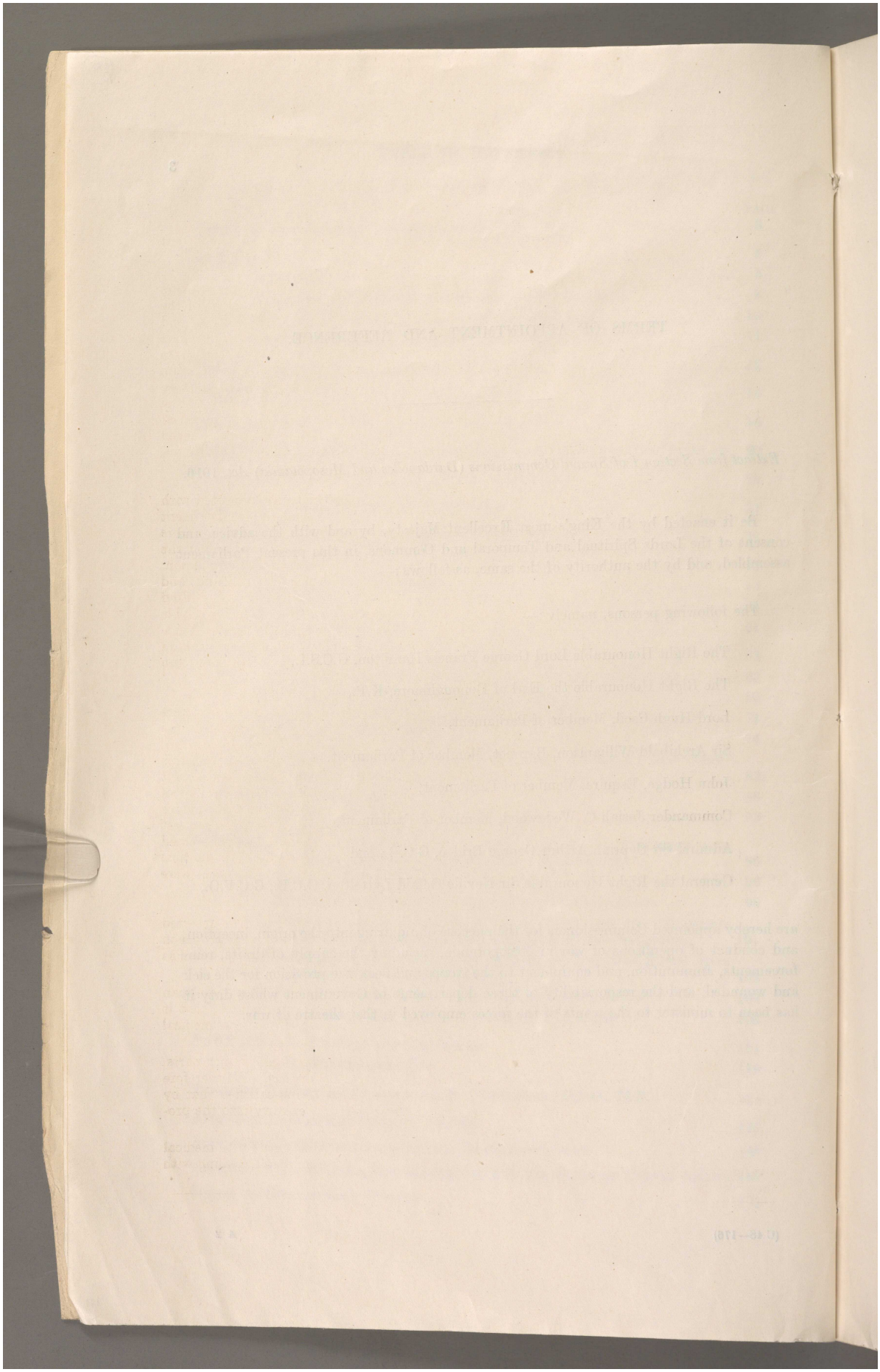
Admiral Sir Cyprian Arthur George Bridge, G.C.B., and

General the Right Honourable Sir Neville Gerald Lyttelton, G.C.B., G.C.V.O.,

are hereby appointed Commissioners for the purpose of inquiring into the origin, inception, and conduct of operations of war in Mesopotamia, including the supply of drafts, reinforcements, ammunition, and equipment to the troops and fleet, the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of those departments of Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the forces employed in that theatre of war.

18

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000055



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000085

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Procedure.

1. We, the Commissioners appointed by your Majesty under an Act of Parliament in August, 1916, have the honour to submit to your Majesty the following report:—

2. The Statute, from which we derive our authority, constituted us Commissioners for the purpose of enquiring into the origin, inception, and conduct of operations of the war in Mesopotamia, including the supply of drafts, reinforcements, ammunition, and equipment to the troops and fleet, the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of those departments of Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the Forces employed in that theatre of war. We were further invested with certain powers, rights and privileges of the High Court of Justice, and we have exercised those powers to the best of our ability in obtaining evidence upon oath and in enforcing the attendance of all witnesses and the production of all documents which in any way seemed to us relevant to the subject-matter of our enquiry. The Public Departments concerned showed the utmost readiness to assist us in our enquiry and furnished us so far as we are aware with copies of all material records and documents at their disposal.

3. In the course of our enquiry we ascertained that the chief persons connected with the campaign were either in England, or could be brought home without serious detriment to public interests. There were also at home a great number of wounded and sick officers of all ranks, returned from Mesopotamia, and we have had the advantage of seeing the voluminous evidence collected in Mesopotamia and India by the Vincent-Bingley Commission. We thus found that there was a large mass of evidence at our disposal in England, and we did not feel justified in incurring the great delay and expense, which must have resulted from proceeding to India and to Mesopotamia. But in addition to the evidence available in England, we summoned home, and there appeared before us, all witnesses whose evidence was in our judgment necessary for the elucidation of our task. In one case, however, in which urgent war duties prevented an officer from vacating his post, we accepted written evidence only, without causing him to appear in person before us.

4. Early in our proceedings, allegations against an officer of subordinate rank were made, which in our judgment required investigation. We felt that our primary duty was to adjudicate upon the conduct of the higher authorities responsible for the campaign. We were most desirous to prevent our energy and attention from being diverted from this task by enquiries into a number of minor complaints against subordinate officers, and we felt that we were neither intended nor well-fitted to undertake the functions of a number of Courts-Martial or Military Courts of Enquiry. We therefore decided that in such cases we would forward the evidence tendered to us to the Military Authorities with a request that they would themselves take such action in the matter as in their judgment seemed necessary. We adopted a similar procedure also in the few instances where the tactical manœuvring and dispositions of generals under the rank of divisional commanders were seriously called in question.

5. In the Act of Parliament constituting the Commission a proviso was inserted directing us to proceed with all possible expedition to enquire with regard to the provision for the sick and wounded, and to report the result of our enquiries on this matter as soon as they were completed.

We considered this direction, but found that the medical aspects of the Mesopotamian Campaign were so inextricably involved with the other branches of our enquiry, that it would be impossible to anticipate our general Report by an interim Report on medical matters.

To have attempted to separate the conduct of our Enquiry into two distinct parts, would have led to delay, confusion, and possibly contradictory conclusions. We therefore concentrated our attention upon the whole subject referred to us, being satisfied that by this procedure we could most effectively expedite and complete our enquiry into the provision made for the sick and wounded.

It will be seen, however, that we have devoted a separate section* entirely to medical arrangements and that this section is practically a complete Report in itself, dealing with the provision of the sick and wounded.

* See Part X.

19

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000070

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Procedure.

6. Under the Terms of our Reference, we might have investigated the conduct of the Mesopotamian campaign right up to the date of reporting. We believe—and we have acted on that belief—that our main duties were to enquire into the operations antecedent to our appointment, and that to investigate into and report upon pending or present operations might seriously hamper the action of those now in charge of the campaign. We have, however, as our Report will show, satisfied ourselves that in the latter part of the campaign a marked improvement has been effected in the provision for the sick and wounded, and also in the supplies and equipment of the troops.

7. We have held 60 meetings, and we have summoned before us over 100 witnesses, of whom the more important were :—

The Marquess of Crewe, K.G., P.C., M.A., F.S.A., late Secretary of State for India.

Rt. Hon. Joseph Austen Chamberlain, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Lord Hardinge, P.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., I.S.O., ex-Viceroy of India.

Lord Inchcape, G.C.M.G., K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., Director of Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

Sir Thomas William Holderness, K.C.S.I., K.C.B., I.C.S., B.A., Under Secretary of State for India.

General Sir Beauchamp Duff, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., K.C.S.I., C.B., C.I.E., ex-Commander-in-Chief in India.

General Sir O'Moore Creagh, V.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., K.C.B., ex-Commander-in-Chief in India.

General Sir Edmund George Barrow, G.C.B., Military Secretary at the India Office.

General Sir John Eccles Nixon, K.C.B., A.D.C., General, late G.O.C., Mesopotamian Expedition.

Major-General Sir George Gorringe, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., late G.O.C., Tigris Corps.

Lieut.-General Sir Percy Lake, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Chief of General Staff, India, late G.O.C., Force "D."

Lieut.-General Sir Fenton J. Aylmer, V.C., K.C.B., late G.O.C., Tigris Corps.

Major-General M. Cowper, C.I.E., late Deputy-Adjutant and Quartermaster General, Force "D."

Major-General K. S. Davison, C.B., late Inspector-General of Communications, Force "D."

Major-General G. V. Kemball, C.B., D.S.O., late Chief of General Staff, Force "D."

Major-General Sir George Younghusband, K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E., C.B., G.O.C., 7th Division.

Brevet-Colonel S. H. Climo, C.B., D.S.O.

The following officers of the Royal Indian Marine also gave evidence :—

Captain Walter Lumsden, C.V.O., C.I.E., R.N., Director Royal Indian Marine.

Commander A. Hamilton, R.I.M., late Principal Marine Transport Officer.

Captain W. B. Huddleston, R.I.M., late Principal Marine Transport Officer, Force "D."

As representing the War Office :—

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations.

Brigadier-General the Hon. R. Stuart-Wortley, Director of Movements.

Lieut.-Colonel H. F. P. Percival, D.S.O., Assistant Director of Supplies, appeared before us.

We have also examined a considerable number of medical witnesses, including :—

Sir Alfred Keogh, G.C.B., Director-General of the Army Medical Service.

Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie, V.C., K.C.M.G., C.B., M.B., K.H.S., late Director of Medical Services, India.

Surgeon-General H. G. Hathaway, C.B., late Assistant Director of Medical Services, Force "D."

Surgeon-General MacNeece, C.B., late Director of Medical Services, India.

Colonel P. Hehir, C.B., M.D., I.M.S., late Assistant Director of Medical Services, Force "D."

Major R. Markham Carter, F.R.C.S., I.M.S.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00001e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Procedure.

In addition evidence was also obtained from the following :—

Mr. E. A. Ridsdale, F.G.S., Red Cross Commissioner, Member of the Vincent-Bingley Commission.

Sir Robert Carlyle, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., late Member of the Council of the Viceroy in India.

Sir Mackenzie Chalmers, K.C.B., C.S.I., late Member of the Council of the Viceroy in India.

Sir John Hewett, G.C.S.I., late Member of the Council of the Viceroy in India, Chairman of Indian Soldiers' Fund, Member of Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross and Order of St. John.

Sir William Clark, K.C.S.I., late Member of Council of the Viceroy in India.

Mr. J. B. Brunyate, C.I.E., C.S.I., I.C.S., Financial Secretary to the Indian Government.

We have, in addition, heard or received statements from a large number of officers of all ranks, and wherever possible, have obtained the testimony of non-official witnesses. A complete list of our witnesses will be given in an Appendix. We have also had before us many hundreds of statements of evidence taken by the Vincent-Bingley Commission, both in Mesopotamia and India.

8. A great body of evidence, oral and written, has thus come before us. Amongst the evidence are included a number of written statements by witnesses which were sworn to, but not made the subject of oral examination. Where a witness' written statement only corroborated what had already been amply established in our evidence, we did not think it necessary to cross-examine him, but we required him to attend before us and swear to his written statement, in order that it might be in the same position as other sworn evidence. These statements thus partake of the nature of affidavits.

9. In accordance with the Statutory obligation imposed upon us by the Act of Parliament by which we were constituted a Commission, we present our Report for publication to both Houses of Parliament. There is no similar legal obligation upon us to publish the evidence which we have taken. We therefore leave to the discretion of His Majesty's Government the question of its publication.

10. We must here refer to what is known as the "Vincent-Bingley Commission." In March, 1916, the Indian Government appointed a Commission, composed of the Hon. Sir William Vincent, Kt., I.C.S., Major-General Bingley, C.B., C.I.E., and Mr. E. A. Ridsdale, F.G.S., with instructions to proceed to Mesopotamia and to make enquiry under the following Terms of Reference :—

"(1) The Government of India have appointed you Commissioners for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon the arrangements for dealing with the wounded and sick in Mesopotamia, in accordance with the Terms of Reference attached.

"(2) You will proceed to Basra where you will report to the General Officer Commanding, Force "D," who will give you every facility in the execution of your duties.

"(3) Copies of all war diaries, reports, despatches, books and maps, and other information that you may require will be provided both by Army Headquarters and General Officer Commanding, Force "D."

"(4) You are entitled to call and examine any witness whose evidence you consider necessary.

"(5) All communications, including your report, will be addressed to the Secretary to the Government of India, Army Department, Simla.

Delhi. "B. Holloway, Major-General,
"Secretary to the Government of India,
Army Department."

Terms of Reference.

"(1) The Commission is appointed with the object of inquiring into and recording the arrangements made for the collection, treatment and removal of the sick and wounded during the operations in Mesopotamia to the date of your departure from Mesopotamia.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000a5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Procedure.

"(2) The strategical situation in Mesopotamia during the above period and the tactical obligations arising therefrom will be borne in mind throughout your proceedings.

"(3) You will distinguish clearly between the following phases:—

"(i) From the battlefields to the line of communication.

"(ii) Down the line of communication to Basra.

"(iii) At Basra.

"(iv) From Basra overseas.

"(4) In each phase, the forecast of the preparations considered necessary, the preparations actually made, and the equipment, vehicles, stores and personnel actually available at the localities, and on the vessel, during the operations, will be investigated.

"(5) The amount of river transport allotted for the medical services will be examined with regard to the total amount available, and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition.

"(6) You will ascertain and record the relative order of arrival of the combatant and medical units coming with reinforcements from overseas, in order to fix the responsibility for any deficiencies in personnel, equipment, and stores which could be attributed to the order of embarkation for Mesopotamia.

"(7) Having reviewed the foregoing considerations your opinion is required on the following points:—

"(i) As to whether the wounded and sick underwent any avoidable suffering and hardships during any of the phases defined in paragraph 3 above. If so, you will state the phase and will ascertain and assign the responsibility, showing whether individuals or the system were to blame.

"(ii) As to whether any avoidable shortage in the personnel, equipment, vehicles and stores occurred during any of the four phases defined in paragraph (3) above. If so, you will state the phase, the shortage, and the reasons for it, ascertaining and assigning the responsibility as in (i).

"(iii) As to whether any shortages which may have existed have now been made good."

11. The report of the Vincent-Bingley Commission was concluded and sent to the Government of India at Simla on June 29th, 1916, but was not published. The Commissioners obtained a vast amount of documentary and oral evidence in Mesopotamia and from the wounded in hospitals at Bombay, and in India. The evidence, which is comprised in two volumes containing nearly 900 pages, has been forwarded to us. We have examined its contents, and we have also taken a large amount of independent evidence upon the subjects referred to this Commission. The report of the Vincent-Bingley Commission is a very able and comprehensive document, and we have no hesitation in adopting its main conclusions. The report is enclosed in the present volume, and attached to it is a Minute of Sir Beauchamp Duff, Commander-in-Chief in India, commenting upon its proceedings.

12. The work which these Commissioners so ably performed has greatly lightened our task. Their review of the military operations and of supply and medical shortcomings is thorough and detailed, and the information was obtained on the scene of operations. Therefore we have thought it inadvisable to traverse the same ground in much detail in our report, as it can be supplemented by a perusal of the Vincent-Bingley Report, and the published despatches of Sir Percy Lake, describing the military operations up to the end of August, 1916.

B. Physical and Climatic Peculiarities of Mesopotamia.

13. On the very threshold of our report, we desire to focus attention on the physical and climatic peculiarities of that tract of country known as Mesopotamia. The area generally so called includes not only the territory enclosed between the Tigris and the Euphrates, but the country surrounding those rivers. The sole access from the sea to this country is through a channel known as the Shatt-el-Arab, and the town of Basra is situated on this channel about 70 miles* from the sea. The banks of the channel are indented by numerous muddy creeks, which require to be bridged over for purposes of land communication. Vessels drawing not more than 19 feet can make their way up to

* The mileages given are approximate, and unless otherwise stated are by river. They have been kindly verified by the Intelligence Division of the Admiralty. A map of Mesopotamia will be found in Appendix I., Annexure II. in this Volume.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000c8

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Basra, where the channel of the river is about ½ mile wide. There were, in November, 1914, practically no quays or wharfage at Basra; nor were storehouses or go-downs of any size available for the accommodation of goods; vessels were unloaded in mid-stream by primitive methods into sailing craft known as Mahailas.

14. Kurna is some 50 miles higher up this channel at the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Between Basra and Kurna there is some 7½ feet of water in the dry season, and in the flood about 12 feet or even more. Beyond Kurna the River Tigris narrows rapidly, and between Ezra's Tomb and Kelat Sala, a stretch of 28 miles, the navigation of the river is very difficult. It twists and turns with sharp bends and hairpin corners, leaving at certain places little or no room for vessels towing a barge on either side to pass each other. The stream is strong, about four knots an hour, and it is difficult for steamers without independent paddles to avoid striking the banks when going round the corners down stream. Vessels under such conditions occasionally turn completely round, and it is a common experience to see lighters breaking adrift under the strain.

15. Amara is some 90 miles above Kurna on the Tigris, the depth of water between the two places averages 4½ feet in the low-water season, and it is estimated that in navigating this part of the river, boats should not draw more than 3 ft. 6 in.

16. Kut is again some 150 miles above Amara, but the navigation between the two places, apart from some shoal patches, is easier, and the river is broader. Baghdad is 112 miles above Kut by road and 212 miles by river, and the meandering of the river between these two places is more marked than in any other part of its tortuous course, while not more than 3 ft. 6 in. of water can be relied on. Baghdad is, distant by river, 502 miles from Basra.

Some 68 miles west of Kurna are the district and town of Nasariyeh, bordering upon the Euphrates, and access to this district is through the Hammar Lake, which in hot weather is so low as to be impracticable for vessels drawing any depth of water. The only trees in the country are date palms, wood for fuel or other purposes is unobtainable, and of stone there is not a trace, except a small quarry South-West of Basra.

17. The country traversed by these two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, is a vast plain intersected by swamps, and, generally speaking, without roads of any description. Above Kut, however, there is a caravan road to Baghdad. The soil is a sandy loam which under rainfall is converted into a tenacious mud. In wet weather and floods, none of the country bordering the river below Kut is fit for wheeled vehicles, being deep in water and mud; in the dry season wheeled transport is generally practicable, if the irrigation canals are bridged or filled up.

18. The Tigris is subject to sudden floods which overrun the banks, and convert the adjoining terrain into temporary and almost impassable quagmires. The climate is exceptionally hot, damp and enervating, with periodical snaps of icy storms in the winter. In the heat of the summer a double-fly tent is an inadequate protection against sunstroke. Military movements are exceptionally difficult, the rivers being practically the only means of transport, thus limiting the radius of activity of operating forces whose communications entirely depend upon the river.

19 The Karun river, which rises in South-east Persia, and along whose left bank the oil-pipe of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. runs, flows into the Shatt-el-Arab some 21 miles to the east-south-east of Basra. This river is more rapid than the Tigris, and though shallow in parts, is less winding and more easily navigated. The oil-pipe runs from the oil-fields down to the island of Abadan, which is situated not far from where the river joins the Shatt-el-Arab. On the island of Abadan are oil-refining works, and certain workshops belonging to the oil company.

20. There is little steam navigation upon these rivers, though Messrs. Lynch had a small fleet of steamers running up the Karun river and also plying between Basra and Baghdad. These steamers are of a peculiar type, being specially built and adapted to the eccentricities of Mesopotamian river navigation.

21. This brief account of the Mesopotamian plains shows that the provision of adequate and suitable river transport above Basra, and of sufficient wharfage and unloading facilities at Basra, was a necessity, if effective military operations were to be carried out inland. As an expeditionary army must be sea-borne, sea-supported and sea-victualled

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000019

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Physical and Climatic Peculiarities of Mesopotamia.

and well supplied with river transport, it was manifest from the outset that without these facilities the orderly despatch and distribution of the reinforcements, ammunition, stores and supplies necessary for the well-being and replenishment of an advancing force, would be almost impossible. The treacherous climate, and the alternation of sweltering heat and bitter cold in these regions made the continuous supply of such articles as warm clothing, double-fly tents, sun-helmets, spine-pads, goggles, ice, ventilating-fans, mosquito-nets, quinine and other tropical prophylactics indispensable, if the health and *moral* of the troops were to be maintained at their accustomed high standard. Full rations, varied from time to time to counteract the climatic diseases of the country, were very requisite. Sickness, even with a full supply of such palliatives, was certain to be high, necessitating abnormal hospital accommodation in addition to the ordinary provision for military casualties. Hence it is clear that all the conditions of the campaign indicated the necessity for very ample transport.

22. By the expression "transport" we mean, not only the provision of the necessary river steamers—in itself no easy task—but the conversion of Basra into such a port as would make it an adequate base of operations for a large inland expedition. The latter task required an experience and knowledge not possessed by the ordinary soldier and marine officer in the employ of the Indian Government. It necessitated the engagement of those who had a knowledge of the organisation of a port and were accustomed to the handling of large masses of traffic. But the mere engagement of such officials would not be enough in itself, unless they were authorised to incur heavy expenditure, and had at their disposal the necessary personnel and matériel. Such work, moreover, requires foresight and time for its effective fruition. Hasty improvisation on a large scale was not possible, and this criticism equally applies to the provision of river craft.

C. Condition of Indian Army on Outbreak of War.

23. For some years previous to the war a strong economy campaign had been carried on in India by the Indian and Home Governments, especially in connection with military expenditure. The gradual extinction of the opium revenue, amounting to three millions sterling, and the friendly understandings arrived at with Russia, were both treated as reasons for a reduction of military establishments in India. On September 9th, 1909, Lord Kitchener was succeeded by Sir O'Moore Creagh as Commander-in-Chief. During his regime a strong and continuous pressure in the direction of economy was exercised, with the support of the Viceroy, over the detailed demands of the Military Budget. Reductions were made on the assumption that the Indian Army need not contemplate the likelihood of a collision outside India with the army of a European power, and the provision for the equipment, organisation and transport of the Indian Army was regulated by the requirements of frontier warfare alone. The proportion of field guns per division was cut down to a very low point, and of guns of a large calibre there were practically none, as no increase to existing expenditure was to be sanctioned, while the number of divisions available for immediate mobilisation was reduced from nine to seven. There was a considerable exchange of opinions between the Home and Indian Governments upon these reductions, and the last of a series of despatches relating to the help which, in view of the economies effected, India would henceforward be able to afford the Empire in war time, was only written by the Government of India on July 30th, one day before the outbreak of war. An aircraft establishment had been started a few months before, but its scope was very limited.

24. The Indian Army was therefore relatively, as regards mechanical equipment, guns, etc., in a less favourable position to confront European troops than it was at the time of the South African War; but in no branch of military expenditure was the pressure so much felt as in connection with the medical establishments. According to high medical authorities the whole standard of medical establishments, of hospital equipment, and of field ambulances in India has been for years past much below that in vogue in the British Army. In consequence of the financial pressure alluded to, little or nothing was done to raise this standard, whilst reserves, both of personnel and matériel, had been reduced to a very low ebb when the war broke out.

25. The Indian Army was thus suddenly and unexpectedly called upon to participate largely in an external warfare for which no preparation had been made, as the contingency

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

C. Condition of Indian Army on Outbreak of War.

of such a conflict had been assumed both by the Home and Indian Governments to be outside the sphere of reasonable probability, and the possibility of it occurring was actually under discussion on the outbreak of war in August, 1914.

26. Under the existing organisation India was almost entirely dependent upon Great Britain for her supply of white officers, and a very large proportion of her war munitions come from the same source. British officers on the Indian establishment, who were on leave in England on the outbreak of war were impounded by the War Office, and an almost entire cessation of supply of war material was caused by the immense demands of the new armies raised in Great Britain. From this combination of untoward circumstances India found her resources for oversea expeditions somewhat exiguous, while the demands made upon her were large and comprehensive.

D. India's Oversea Expeditions on Outbreak of War.

27. A number of telegrams were laid before us showing the series of demands made upon India on the outbreak of war in connection with expeditions to be sent oversea. These expeditions were known as Expeditions A., B., and C.—A. being the expedition to France and Egypt, B. a defensive expedition to East Africa, and C. an offensive expedition to East Africa. The Indian Government strongly protested against being called upon to provide Expedition C., but they were overruled. Under protest they accepted the demands made upon them, but they pointed out that they would have extreme difficulty in supplying any expedition for work at Basra or in Mesopotamia. The composition and strength of these expeditions were settled by the end of September, 1914, *i.e.*, before the Mesopotamian Expedition, known as Force "D," was decided upon.

28. Generally speaking, the arrangements made were that the control and conduct of the expeditions A., B., and C. should be under the Home Government, who ultimately undertook to maintain the whole forces and provide the drafts and reinforcements for all troops other than native Indians. But at the beginning of the war the expeditions were equipped, and to a large extent maintained, out of India's resources, it being agreed that the whole expenditure over and above the ordinary cost to India of the forces engaged was to be borne by the Imperial funds. Certain other work in connection with sea transport and other branches of service was also given India, for which she was reimbursed.

29. It should be noted that practically the whole of the important telegrams which have been produced to us relating to Imperial demands upon the Indian Government for military expeditions outside India, and the replies of India to these demands, are "private" telegrams. A private telegram is the property of the person who sends it, and it is not the practice to record it on the file of any public Department, though this may be done at the option of the sender. Such telegrams are kept by the Private Secretaries and are, as a rule, taken away at the termination of office by the person who sends or receives them. Later on in our report we shall allude to this practice and its consequences.*

30. Before passing on to the consideration of the Mesopotamian Expedition, we think it right to draw attention to the demands which, in their totality, the overseas expeditions have imposed upon India. Lord Hardinge has told us that "Approximately 80,000 British Officers and men and 210,000 Indian officers and men were despatched overseas, inclusive of drafts and reinforcements." In considering, therefore, as we shall proceed to do, the Indian Government's responsibilities in Mesopotamia, it is fair to remember that the Mesopotamian Expedition was only part of a larger effort, which involved not only the maintenance in India of a considerable army for interior and frontier defence, but also the despatch overseas of troops approximating in number to the total army maintained in India before the war.

* See Part XI. (page 102).

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000034

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

1. Towards the close of September, 1914, it became self-evident that Turkey was likely to become a hostile belligerent, and in anticipation of this contingency Sir Edmund Barrow, Military Secretary of the India Office, wrote a Minute on September 26th, 1914, entitled: "The rôle of India in a Turkish War." He was strongly in favour of an expedition being sent to occupy Basra, and he concluded his Minute in the following words :—

> This seems the psychological moment to take action. So unexpected a stroke at this moment would have a startling effect :
>
> (1) It would checkmate Turkish intrigues and demonstrate our ability to strike.
>
> (2) It would encourage the Arabs to rally to us, and confirm the Sheikhs of Muhammerah and Koweit in their allegiance.
>
> (3) It would safeguard Egypt, and without Arab support a Turkish invasion is impossible.
>
> (4) It would effectually protect the oil-installation at Abadan.
>
> Such results seem to justify fully the proposed action.

2. With regard to the oil-installation referred to, we may explain that it belonged to the Anglo-Persian Oil Co., in which the British Government had recently become large shareholders on account of the importance attached by the Admiralty to the oil-supply from the Company's wells.

3. A considerable correspondence now took place between India and England, from which it appears that Enver Pasha and a number of German confederates were intriguing against the British Government, and that arms and ammunition were being sent to different places in Turkish territory, that many secret emissaries, including German officers, were about to try and raise a Jehad in the countries lying between Mesopotamia and India.

4. The Government ultimately decided, after consultation with India, that a part of Expedition A should be diverted to the Persian Gulf, and that it should land at Bahrein. The proposal seemed sound and justifiable in itself, as it was likely to prove an effective counter to German and Turkish intrigues. The force demanded by the India Office was originally only a brigade of the Sixth Division to be followed by the remainder of that division at a later date. In the telegrams which passed the Indian Government say :—

> It is assumed you are satisfied the advanced brigade is sufficiently strong for the purpose required, but, as we are unaware of its instructions and objective, we cannot judge of this.
> Is it your opinion that the expedition should be managed direct by the Indian Office, or do you desire it to be run by us ?

In reply to this request for information, the Secretary of State on October 5th, stated that —

> The intention is to occupy Abadan, with the Force under orders, protect the oil-tanks and pipe-line, cover the landing of reinforcements, in the event of such being necessary, and show Arabs that our intention is to support them against the Turks. With a warship at Muhammereh the troops detailed are considered ample for the purposes mentioned. In the event of Turkey becoming a belligerent the management of the expedition will devolve on you, but I will, of course, communicate with you regarding the scope of the operations. In the meanwhile you should make preparations for the despatch of the remainder of the Division.

5. But the Imperial Government, in initiating this expedition apparently did not fully realise that such an expedition, if once started, might require reinforcement and enlargement beyond the one division suggested, and was sure to provoke violent opposition from the Turks who, under German supervision and control, would make strenuous efforts to drive the British forces out of Mesopotamia.

6. The expedition, which started from Bombay under General Delamain, received sealed orders, and arrived at Bahrein on October 23rd. Every effort was made to quiet the Arabs' apprehensions, and our political officers were successful in securing that object. On the 5th November war with Turkey was declared. Two fresh brigades were sent out under Sir A. Barrett which arrived on November 14th, and on November 22nd Basra was occupied without much difficulty after a number of skirmishes. So far the expedition had been a complete success, and in less than three weeks Basra—the key to Mesopotamia—had been taken and occupied. The suddenness and secrecy of the move had not only ensured success, but it had done so at very small cost to the expedition.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000045

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

7. The force, which now amounted to a division, was armed and equipped as for a frontier expedition, and its medical equipment was even below that scale, but the conditions which this expedition had to face, both climatic and military, proved to be of a very different character from those which prevail on the frontiers of India.

8. General Delamain's instructions were as follows :—

INSTRUCTIONS.

For the Officer Commanding, I.E.F. " D."

(1) The rôle assigned to your force is that of demonstrating at the head of the Persian Gulf. You will bear in mind that Great Britain is at peace with Turkey, and that you are therefore on no account to land troops in Turkish territory or to take any hostile action against the Turks without orders from the Government of India, except in the case of absolute military necessity.

(2) You will occupy Abadan Island with the object of :—

(*a*) Protecting the oil refineries, tanks and pipe line.
(*b*) Covering the landing of reinforcements, should these be required.
(*c*) Assuring the local Arabs of our support against Turkey.

(3) With these objects you may disembark the whole or such part of your force as you consider necessary at Abadan Island or Muhammareh, preferably at Abadan. In deciding on the point of disembarkation, however, you will work in concert with the naval and political authorities.

(4) In your dealings with the Arabs in Persian or Turkish territory you should be careful to avoid any action which is likely to cause friction with them, as their co-operation may be required in the event of a rupture with Turkey.

Communication will be opened with :—

Bin Saud, Shaikh (Amir) of Najd,
The Shaikh of Muhammareh,
The Shaikh of Kuwait

with the object of informing them of the despatch of your force.

(5) You will notify the arrival of the force off Abadan Island, and thereafter the progress of the disembarkation to the Chief of the General Staff, Simla.

(6) The destination of your force is being communicated to the following only :—

Naval Commander-in-Chief,
Resident, Baghdad,
Consul, Basra,
The three chiefs above-mentioned,
Major Smyth,
Political Officer with your force (Sir P. Cox).

(7) In the event of hostilities with Turkey, the remainder of the 6th (Poona) Division is being held in readiness to support your force, and will follow as quickly as possible.

In the meantime you will take such military and political action as you think feasible to strengthen your position, and, if possible, occupy Basra.

9. As before stated, on November 14th, Lieut.-General Sir A. Barrett arrived in Mesopotamia and took over command. We enclose all the operative portions of his orders which are relevant to our enquiry :—

ORDERS.

(1) The 16th Brigade under General Delamain is now on board its transports off Bahrein, Persian Gulf; and has been directed to hold itself in readiness for immediate action as required.

(2) The troops named in the margin will embark as soon as possible to reinforce General Delamain. You, with your divisional headquarters, will accompany this reinforcement, and on arrival assume command of the whole force detailed for operations at the head of the Persian Gulf. This force is designated Indian Expeditionary Force " D."

(3) Your objective will be telegraphed to you . . . .

(4) Your disembarkation will be concerted in closest touch with the Senior Naval Officer, on whose ship you should travel if possible.

(5) Sir Percy Cox is now with General Delamain as Political Officer; he will come under your orders.

(6) Enclosed for your information and guidance are :—

(*a*) Copies of orders given to General Delamain.
(*b*) Copies of all subsequent correspondence with him and the Secretary of State.
(*c*) Plans of operations prepared by the General Staff, Simla, in the hope that they may be of assistance to you.

(7) Captain Pulley who takes these orders to you also carries ciphers, books and maps for the use of Force " D."

(10) You will satisfy yourself that the transports conveying your force are coaled to their full capacity, and that rations and fuel on the following scales have been placed on board.

23

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000062

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

In addition to rations for the voyage, two months' supplies for the whole force, including baled fodder for animals and fuel.

(12) You will acknowledge receipt of these orders and enclosures by wire to the Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters, Delhi.

These orders were supplemented by the following telegram from the Chief of the General Staff, India, to General Barrett, dated November 13th :—

Please see the third paragraph of your orders. Your objective is Basrah. If after discussion with and taking over from Delamain, you consider your present force strong enough, you will move on Basrah.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000015

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

1. As soon as we had established our occupation of Basra, it was suggested by our Political Agent on the spot, Sir Percy Cox, that an announcement should be made that the occupation would be permanent. This suggestion was peremptorily swept on one side by His Majesty's Government, on the ground that it would be utterly contrary to the agreement come to between the Allies, if occupation of any conquered country were at once announced to be permanent, without waiting for the final settlement to be made at the close of war. But whilst this proposal was stopped, the Military Secretary of the India Office submitted, on November 27th, that it would be advisable to push on and occupy Kurna, 50 miles above Basra at the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris. The advantages of this position were :—

(1) Its commanding military value.
(2) The control it gives us of the whole navigable waterway to the Gulf.
(3) The possession of the whole of the rich cultivated area from Kurna to the sea.
(4) The fact that it completely covers Persian Arabistan and safeguards it from Turkish intrigues or incursions.
(5) The moral effect on the Arabs.
(6) The control of the telegraph up to this point and also of the passage of the Euphrates.

2. Lord Crewe, who was Secretary of State for India at this time, whilst ready to assent to an advance on Kurna, deprecated any idea of a further advance for the present. Operations against Kurna were successfully concluded on December 9th by the surrender of the town together with the Wali and 1,200 prisoners and nine guns. Our authority was thus established over the whole of the river tract between Kurna and the sea.

3. Early in 1915 news was received of a Turkish concentration for an attack on Basra, and the oil-pipe was threatened up the Karun River. The threatened attack of the Turks and the unrest of the Arabs necessitated further reinforcements, and another brigade was sent from India, arriving on February 7th, 1915. The Indian Government, though reluctant at first to send any further troops, finally acquiesced in the despatch of this force. This reinforcement proved insufficient, and the position became somewhat critical. There was an unsuccessful skirmish up the Karun River near Ahwaz, and the situation became so acute that on March 5th the Government of India were peremptorily ordered by the Home Government to despatch another brigade. The Government in England at the same time entirely relieved the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief from any responsibility as to what subsequently might occur in India from this further depletion of their available military reserves. This brigade, with two others, made up the second Division in Mesopotamia, which is hereafter known as the Twelfth Division.

4. On April 1st, the Government of India decided, but without obtaining the consent of the India Office, to reorganise the expedition as an Army Corps, and General Nixon and Staff were landed on April 9th. At Basra, General Melliss, with the additional forces previously sent, achieved a brilliant victory at Barjisiyah near Basra on April 14th, 1915, and there had also been successful fighting two days previously, near Shaiba. These victories and the increase of force enabled the expedition to consolidate its position ; but, though the force was doubled, the medical equipment sent to the two last brigades was not up to the authorised scale of equipment, and practically two divisions had medical equipment for only one, and their equipment was upon the Indian and not the British scale. Neither was there made such an addition to the river steamer transport as to bring its proportions up to the requirements of the increased forces. These deficiencies do not seem to have had sufficient recognition by the Government of India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000001

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

PART IV.—THE ADVANCE TO AMARA AND KUT.

1. Sir John Nixon's assumption of the command of the Expedition makes a landmark in its history. The occupation of Kurna which had taken place in December, 1914, and the victory at Barjisiyah which coincided with his arrival, had realised the plan of the British Government in sending the Expedition, save that something still remained to be done to complete the protection of the supply of oil. Now we enter upon the story of operations which are distinguished from the earlier ones by three features.

First, the initiative (except in regard to the security of the oil-supply) no longer comes from London, but from Sir John Nixon, obeying the general instructions of the Indian Government, and sustained by their concurrence. Secondly, though the earlier advances up the Tigris are recommended only by the need for consolidating and defending what has already been gained, the influence of a desire to move forward towards Baghdad becomes more apparent. Thirdly, the problem of river transport becomes of crucial importance.

2. On the appointment of General Nixon as Commander of the Army Corps, he was given written instructions by Sir Beauchamp Duff before leaving India on March 24th, 1915, and these instructions were as follows :—

(1) Indian Expeditionary Force "D," now operating in Mesopotamia under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., has been reinforced and raised to an Army Corps Command, the details and organisation of which are shown in a proof copy of Organisation Orders, Force "D," attached.

(2) You will proceed to Basra, and take over command of I.E.F. "D" from Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett, who will retain command of the 6th Division.

(3) Please report by wire, both to the Chief of the General Staff, Simla, and to the Secretary of State for India, the date on which you take over the command.

(4) You will render a daily report of your operations to the Secretary of State and to the Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters, Simla.

(5) Sir Percy Cox, who is now with Lieutenant-General Sir A. Barrett as Political Officer, will come under your orders.

(6) Instructions as to the operations of your force are in a separate document.

Operations.

(1) Your force is intended to retain complete control of the lower portion of Mesopotamia, comprising the Basra vilayet and including all outlets to the sea and such portions of the neighbouring territories as may affect your operations.

(2) So far as you may find feasible, without prejudicing your main operations, you should endeavour to secure the safety of the oilfields, pipe-line and refineries of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

(3) After acquainting yourself on the spot with the present situation you will submit :—

(i) A plan for the effective occupation of Basra vilayet ;
(ii) A plan for a subsequent advance on Baghdad.

(4) In all operations you will respect the neutrality of Persia so far as military and political exigencies permit.

Reports on Special Points.

The following points are to be especially reported upon by you, after examination of the conditions in Mesopotamia :—

(i) The advisability of reinforcing 6th Cavalry Brigade by one regiment of Imperial Service Cavalry, which could be utilised for guarding the oil pipe-line.

(ii) The quantity and description of animal transport required for Force "D" in the operations contemplated.

(iii) The employment of a light railway, of which 137 miles of track, 20 locomotives, 240 trucks, 23 brake vans and 2 traction engines are reported available and in good condition.

(iv) The employment of armoured motors and mechanical transport.

(v) Aircraft.

(vi) The adequacy and suitability of the river gunboats and transports *en route*, namely :—

2 Nile gunboats, armament not yet known.

7 Paddlers from the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, with 2 flats from Eastern Bengal State Railway.

2 motor-boats.

4 tugs.

4 steam launches and 2 steam cutters and 2 horse-boats, understood to be coming from Egypt.

3. At the time these instructions were given to General Nixon they were not known to the Home Authorities, though they were subsequently sent by mail to the India Office, where they were received on May 2nd. In his evidence before us, the Viceroy also stated that he did not remember having seen these instructions.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000073

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

On April 22nd, General Townshend arrived in Mesopotamia, and took command of the 6th Division. On the 24th, General Nixon directed him to proceed at once to Kurna and reconnoitre the Turkish position north of that place with a view to attacking it.

In the meantime the Home Government was concerned as to the safety of the oil pipe and on the 19th, the Secretary of State urged an immediate move against the Turks in that region, and on the same day General Nixon asked India for another Cavalry Brigade in the following terms :—

The Cavalry Brigade now with this Force cannot meet the demands which will shortly be made on that arm. The despatch of another Cavalry Brigade which should include a British Cavalry Regiment is requested. It is very necessary that we should have the British unit. In view of heavy work which obstructions in the river, and other works will cause, I also beg for the despatch of a battalion of Pioneers.

4. In reply to Sir John Nixon's request the Viceroy regretted that he was unable to supply any more Cavalry, and on April 24th, the Secretary of State made the following communication to the Viceroy :—

Your decision in connexion with Nixon's request for a brigade of Cavalry is concurred in. To say nothing of the impossibility of complying with his request the approach of the hot season renders it undesirable to despatch any more troops, especially British. An important offensive movement is indicated by Nixon's demand. Any advance beyond the present theatre of operations will not be sanctioned by Government at this moment, and I presume Nixon clearly understands this. During the summer we must confine ourselves to the defence of oil-interests in Arabistan and of the Basra Vilayet.

If an advance to Amara with a view to establishing an outpost for the purpose of controlling tribesmen between there and Karun, thus adding to the security of the pipe-line is possible after smashing the enemy in the direction of Karun I should, if such a proposal received your support, be prepared to sanction it. Any proposal involving possible demands for reinforcements or undue extension is to be deprecated however.

Our present position is strategically a sound one and we cannot at present afford to take risks by extending it unduly. In Mesopotamia a safe game must be played.

This telegram was apparently sent in ignorance that Sir John Nixon's instructions from India involved the occupation of the vilayet of Basra, which includes both Amara and Nasariyeh, and extends to within a few miles of Kut-el-Amarah.

5. General Nixon at that time had two military objectives in view—one on the Karun and the other on the Tigris River. He had at his disposal the Sixth and Twelfth Divisions and a Cavalry Brigade. There had been trouble up the Karun River, and General Gorringe, with two Infantry Brigades of the Twelfth Division and one Cavalry Brigade, was sent up to reopen communications with Ahwaz and to punish the enemy. This he did very effectively, and he was able to demonstrate on his left flank towards Bisaitin. This operation greatly assisted the impending advance of General Townshend up the Tigris, and the floods prevented reinforcements from joining the Turkish forces on the Tigris in time to oppose General Townshend's advance. The Turkish forces facing General Gorringe were so delayed on their march to Amara, that when they eventually reached it they found General Townshend in occupation of the town. A portion of their advance guard was captured, and the remainder had to seek safety in dispersion with the loss of two guns.

6. The Viceroy had advocated the advance to and occupation of Amara. Amara town possessed importance, not only from an administrative and commercial point of view, but also as a strategical military post, and there were obvious advantages likely to accrue from its occupation. On May 23rd, the Viceroy indicated in a telegram that Sir John Nixon proposed to take the offensive towards Amara, but he would not proceed beyond Amara without the sanction of the Secretary of State. In reply, on May 23rd, the Secretary of State sanctioned the proposed movement—

On the clear understanding that the General Officer Commanding Force "D" is satisfied that he can concentrate a sufficient garrison at Amara to defy any attack from Baghdad during the summer. . . . We can send him no more troops and he must clearly understand that his action must be guided by this fact. Arrangements for the move in question must have been made some days back, and I am of opinion that General Nixon should have submitted his proposals before the last moment. Under present circumstances only the Cabinet should decide questions jointly affecting civil and military policy.

As in the case of the telegram of April 24th, this communication seems also to imply a lack of appreciation by the Home Government of the scope of Nixon's instructions from India.

7. On May 27th. Lord Crewe left the India Office and was succeeded by Mr. Chamberlain, who at once endorsed his predecessor's policy of caution in the following words on May 28th :—

Till I know the immediate objects contemplated and the force with which General Nixon is advancing, I am unable to give further instructions. Our policy must depend partly on local factors, forces locally available, and partly on situation elsewhere. I should like to be informed what force General Nixon considers necessary for garrisoning Amara, and how generally he proposes to distribute his troops during the summer if the occupation of that town is contemplated.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000083

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

In reply to that telegram the Viceroy, on June 2nd, generally supported the advance, and he added the opinion that it would be undesirable or dangerous to tie down General Nixon with precise orders in case they might not fit in with the local situation confronting him. "Under the original instructions he will, as soon as he is in a position to do so, submit a plan for the occupation of the Basra vilayet, which includes Amara. . . . We should not propose to authorise any advance beyond Amara for which his force is not adequate."

8. The advance on Amara—or "Townshend's Regatta," as it was called locally—was then very successfully carried out by that General. Boats of light draught were converted into light-armoured gunboats, and were very effective. The enemy were pursued with unrelenting vigour, in spite of the sweltering heat and the difficulties of navigation, and were driven from position to position. On June 3rd Amara was reached, and General Townshend with 22 sailors and soldiers achieved the surrender of a garrison of 700 Turks. Next day the Norfolk Regiment arrived, and all further opposition collapsed. As a military operation this action was audaciously planned and well-timed, and it deserves high praise, as it achieved great objects with comparatively small loss of life.

9. General Nixon now proposed, with the full support of the Government of India, to strike in the direction of Nasariyeh, a place which is 68 miles west of Kurnah, access to it being through the channel of the Euphrates and the Hammar Lake. The heat was terrific; still General Nixon deemed it expedient to carry on the enterprise. Major-General Gorringe, who was in charge of this column, succeeded in capturing Nasariyeh on July 25th, with 950 prisoners, 17 guns and much booty. These operations were initiated by the General on the spot, supported by the Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy of India, and acquiesced in by the Secretary of State. They appear to us to be sound from both a military and political point of view. Our casualties amounted to 533 of all ranks, but there was also much sickness.

10. This succession of victories seemed to stimulate the authorities in India to a fresh advance, and on July 27th the Viceroy sent a telegram to the Secretary of State to the effect that, "Now that Nasariyeh has been occupied the occupation of Kut-el-Amara is considered by us to be a strategic necessity." Communications ensued between the Secretary of State and the Viceroy, and ultimately the Secretary of State assented to the advance and accepted the military arrangements which General Nixon proposed to make after the advance.

11. On September 14th, the Headquarters of the Sixth Division reached Sheikh Saad, and on the 15th Abu Rummanah, which had been very strongly fortified by the Turks, was captured by us. On the 29th, after severe fighting, the Turks were in full flight, and our cavalry had entered Kut-el-Amara. During the fight we captured more than 1,700 prisoners and 13 guns, and inflicted heavy losses in men and material. This part of the campaign, again, was brilliantly executed by General Townshend and the Sixth Division of the Indian Army, and the whole series of military operations during the past three months had been so extraordinarily successful, that it is not surprising that a spirit of optimism and over-confidence as to what could be achieved overcame General Nixon and his Headquarter Staff. It is sometimes as dangerous to over-estimate victories as to under-rate them. These successes had been achieved by striking quickly and continuously, pursuit after victory being intense and persistent. Audacity had accomplished wonders; was there any limit to its possibilities?

12. Although the expedition had by hard fighting achieved externally a series of military successes, there had been even from the beginning of the campaign signs that the internal organisation, as regards river transport and the distribution of supplies through such transport, was working at its maximum capacity. From the time the expedition moved above Kurna, the river transport had been either insufficient or barely sufficient for its wants and could not sustain additional pressure. For reasons which we will subsequently examine, the provision of the type of steamer and barge specially adaptable to the Tigris had been delayed. Railway schemes had either been put on one side or not pressed by the Indian Government. On July 10th, Sir John Nixon forwarded to India a demand for six paddle-steamers, three stern-wheelers, eight tugs and forty-three barges. In making this demand, Sir John Nixon stated that—

"The inadequacy of the light-draught fleet available has, nevertheless, been a constant source of delay, uncertainty and anxiety. Now that it is clear that time and experience will not mend matters, but that wear and tear and the course of events must inevitably tend to steady diminution of the shipping fit for military operations in these rivers, I would strongly urge that the six paddlers, etc. . . . asked for in my telegram under reference, may be provided."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000099

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

13. A full and complete memorandum by General Kemball, Sir J. Nixon's Chief of the Staff, was forwarded with this request. In the memorandum he reviewed the whole position of the river transport, pointing out the inability of the present fleet to comply with the existing wants and the probability of a diminution in its effective number through breakdown and want of necessary repairs. He concluded by saying :—

> In short, more powerful light-draught river steamers and plenty of them, and not only ships, but personnel and material for their maintenance, are regarded by the general Staff of this Force as our principal need.
>
> It is also thought necessary to add the warning that if steps are not taken in good time to meet these requirements we are running grave risks of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment.
>
> At the present time we cannot make the most effective use of the troops available owing to want of ships, and in any crisis insufficiency of river transport would limit the scope of reinforcements, while a breakdown of shipping might have still more serious consequences.
>
> A properly equipped river fleet would double and treble the effective value of the Army in occupation of Mesopotamia at the present moment, and would continue to be an important military asset, even if a broad-gauge railway to Baghdad were built. The formation of this fleet is considered therefore as our special and most important need at the present time.

14. The additional transport asked for was sanctioned after a lengthy correspondence, but the execution of the order under any circumstances would have taken from 8 to 10 months before completion, and the ships would then have had to be conveyed either under their own steam or piecemeal to Basra. Under no circumstances could they have been available in Mesopotamia till towards the middle of the year 1916.

15. At this time the medical equipment of the expedition was not up to its proper strength, even according to the low scale of Indian regulation. Although there had been no actual breakdown, the wounded and sick, both in the actions on the Karun, at Nasariyeh, and at Kut-el-Amara had been put to considerable discomfort through lack of ambulance transport, stationary hospital accommodation and river hospital steamers. The medical personnel was barely sufficient. Any further forward movement up the river, associated with an influx of reinforcements at Basra, was almost certain to convert the existing deficiencies in medical personnel and *matériel* into a deadlock of the whole system, unless exceptional and continuous good luck should attend the new offensive movement.

16. General Nixon had now secured at Kut a highly convenient halting place. It was well described by Sir E: Barrow, Military Secretary at the India Office :—

> If we sit tight at Kut-el-Amara, we can consolidate our control of the Basra Vilayet, and fortify a strong position at the apex of the triangle formed by the Tigris and the Shatt-el-Hai, which with our naval command of the rivers, would be unassailable by any but a very superior force accompanied by heavy artillery, while it would at the same time completely cover the main approaches to the territory now occupied by us.

There were other considerations in favour of calling a halt. The 6th Division had had very hard work, and almost continuous fighting in a very trying climate, and though it had done all that was demanded of it, it was not the fine fighting machine it had been.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00005d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

PART V.—CORRESPONDENCE AND TELEGRAMS AS TO ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD.

1. Baghdad and the possibility of its becoming an objective of the expedition constantly crops up in the evidence before us. On October 8th, 1914, *i.e.*, a week before the expedition had actually left India, the Viceroy wrote unofficially to the Marquess of Crewe to the effect that he would be ready for an attempt on Basra "or even Baghdad" in the event of Turkey declaring war. On November 23rd, the day after Basra was occupied by General Barrett's forces, Sir Percy Cox, the Indian Government's Political Representative in Mesopotamia, telegraphed to the Viceroy: "With General Officer Commanding, I have been studying topographical details bearing on an advance to Baghdad in case such an advance should be decided upon," and he proceeded to outline a reasoned proposal for an advance on Baghdad; while three days later, on November 26th, the Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf wrote to the Indian Government indicating what his requirements in gunboats would be in the event of an advance up the Tigris to Baghdad.

2. The Viceroy forwarded Sir Percy Cox's proposal for an advance on Baghdad to the Secretary of State on November 25th, and on November 27th Lord Crewe telegraphed back: "We are not disposed to authorise an advance to Baghdad at present." This decision was arrived at before the Secretary of State was in possession of the Viceroy's views, but it appears from a subsequent letter that, after consulting the Commander-in-Chief in India, the Viceroy did not think Sir Percy Cox's project feasible at the time. The letter in question, which is dated December 2nd, contains such cogent reasons for rejecting a proposal which was subsequently almost enthusiastically accepted, that we think it instructive to quote the following passages:—

Viceroy to Secretary of State.

You did not give me time to send you our views on Cox's proposal to advance to Baghdad, for you sent me a telegram crushing it. As a matter of fact, after consultation with Beauchamp Duff, I had arrived at the conclusion that it would be impossible to execute at present. Unlike Basra, which is easy to capture from the south and very strong against any attack from the north, Baghdad has no advantages as a position against an attacking enemy, and, being an extensive town situated on both banks of the Tigris, would be particularly difficult to defend. All communications with Baghdad would have to be by water, and Baghdad is about 500 miles up the river from Basra and 570 from the Gulf. It would not be possible to entrust this long line of communications to the Arabs, since, if they failed, a disaster must result. To avoid undue risk, it would, in the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief, have been necessary to have a whole division in Baghdad and another on the line of communications, to keep them open in the first instance and also ready to reinforce Baghdad if attacked. In view of the large number of troops that we have sent overseas and the very reduced military forces remaining in India, it would be impossible for India to carry out this scheme even with reasonable safety. In the absence, therefore, of extraneous assistance, those political advantages, which are really considerable, that might accrue from the capture and occupation of Baghdad must be subordinated to the military objections that would be involved in such a course.

3. It will be seen that the terms of Lord Crewe's telegram of November 27th, whilst deprecating an advance on Baghdad at that time, did not specifically rule out such an advance as a possible operation in the future. It is quite clear that India at any rate did not consider this telegram as an absolute veto on Baghdad as a possible objective, for on February 12th, 1915, we find the Viceroy telegraphing to the Secretary of State: "Baghdad will consequently probably become our objective, and no harm will be done if in our dealings with Persian Government we contemplate that contingency."

4. We have already noticed that amongst the orders given by Sir Beauchamp Duff to Sir John Nixon on March 24th, 1915, was an instruction to "prepare a plan for a subsequent advance on Baghdad." This plan was not forwarded to India by Sir John until August 30th, 1915, but it is clear, from papers submitted to the Commission, that in December, 1914, and June, 1915, if not on other dates, appreciations were prepared by the General Staff in India on the subject of an advance to Baghdad. Sir John Nixon's plan was a reasoned appreciation of the military situation on the Tigris at the time. In it Sir John does not refer to his own difficulties in regard to transport, nor to the inevitable augmentation of these difficulties, which would result from prolonging his line of communications by over 200 miles. But he sets out very clearly the advantages of following on the heels of the Turkish Army fleeing into Baghdad after a defeat in the neighbourhood of Kut; and he contrasts with this plan, unfavourably and almost prophetically, the dangers of having to fight his way to Baghdad through a Turkish Army well entrenched above Kut. Such an operation, he says, "might be more difficult and costly than anything yet met with, and the result of a check be more serious for us."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00006e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

5. Sir John Nixon's plan was favourably endorsed by Sir Percy Lake, then Chief of the General Staff, at Simla, and sent by him, on September 9th, to the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff, who, however, minuted Sir Percy Lake's memorandum, "unless we can get back troops from France, Egypt, or elsewhere, I fear that Baghdad, invaluable as its capture would be, is out of the question."

6. It is not clear whether Sir John Nixon's plan and the Commander-in-Chief's Minute on it, were ever sent to England or submitted to the Viceroy, but it is clear that the latter never ruled out from his mind the possibility of advancing to Baghdad in the future. Thus, on August 27th, in writing to Sir Thomas Holderness, the Viceroy advocates an advance to Kut-el-Amara, and points out that "at Kut-el-Amara we are in a good position to strike at Baghdad should the necessity arise and more troops be available." Again, on September 17th, in writing to Mr. Chamberlain, he emphasises the desirability of advancing to Baghdad if only sufficient troops can be made available.

But whatever may have been in the minds of the authorities in England, India and Mesopotamia, with regard to Baghdad as an ultimate possibility, it does not appear to have been brought forward as an immediately practicable proposition until October 3rd.

7. The position of the Expeditionary Force at that time was as follows :—Kut had been occupied on September 28th, and General Townshend, with characteristic dash, had pushed on his cavalry in pursuit of the enemy, and on October 4th they were at Aziziyeh, some 50 miles beyond Kut on the road to Baghdad.

On October 3rd, General Nixon, as General Officer Commanding the expedition, telegraphed to the Secretary of State :—

"I consider I am strong enough to open road to Baghdad, and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Aziziyeh."

On the next day he telegraphed to India :—

"With reference to my suggestion to open by another general action the road to Baghdad, will you kindly let me know whether my force is to be reinforced to the extent of another division from France in order that my position there may be maintained."

These telegrams were despatched on the assumption that the demoralisation of the retreating force was such that our pursuing vanguard could get into Baghdad upon their heels. But only a day later it became clear from further communications that the enemy were not so disorganised as to prevent their making a serious stand, and General Townshend was cognisant of this fact.

8. On the 5th October General Nixon telegraphed that the enemy appeared to be no longer retreating, but had occupied the Ctesiphon position, and thereby constituted a threat to us. Still, he considered it desirable to smash him while he could, and he "saw nothing which would justify letting slip such an opportunity." It is necessary to emphasise this point, as it is clear from subsequent telegrams that the sanction of the Home Government to advance on Baghdad was given on the supposition that the Turks between Kut and Baghdad were not likely to offer really serious opposition. The policy of the Cabinet up to that date in Mesopotamia had been defined by Lord Crewe in a telegram dated April 24th, 1915, to the Viceroy, the concluding words of which were :

Any proposal involving possible demands for reinforcements or undue extension is to be deprecated however. Our position is strategically a sound one, and we cannot at present afford to take risks by extending it unduly. In Mesopotamia a safe game must be played.

9. This policy was endorsed by a telegram from Mr. Chamberlain, who had on May 27th succeeded Lord Crewe as Secretary of State for India. The relations of the Cabinet to the officers in the field were further defined in a telegram on May 23rd already alluded to, in which the Secretary of State, while sanctioning the advance to Amara, added :

Under present circumstances only the Cabinet should decide questions jointly affecting civil and military policy.

10. On October 4th, in accordance with that policy, the Secretary of State sent two telegrams to the Viceroy, one private and one official, which ran as follows :—

Private. Sir J. Nixon's plans. Please refer to my official telegram of to-day on this subject. Your private letter of the 10th ultimo seems to render it imperative to stop the further advance of General Nixon's force. If you will communicate to me your views early I shall be grateful.

and :—

Will you kindly inform me what General Nixon's present intentions are, as, if on account of navigation troubles there is no probability of the retreating enemy being caught up and smashed, there is no object in the pursuit being continued.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00004d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

The latter telegram was repeated to General Nixon from India in a telegram dated October 5th, which also stated :—

"At present no reinforcements can be spared from this country, so that unless arrangements can be made by the Secretary of State for the despatch of an Indian Division from France an advance on Baghdad cannot be carried out. Under these circumstances there seems to be no advantage in concentrating at present so far forward as Aziziyeh as the only gain in this is if a move toward Baghdad takes place. Commander-in-Chief considers that no advance in strength should be carried out beyond Kut-al-Amara until it is certain (and this appears to us very doubtful), that the reinforcements from France may be expected.

Finally on October 6th, the Viceroy sent the following telegram to the Secretary of State :—

"Orders to stop further advance were telegraphed yesterday to General Nixon."

Thus the plan of an immediate advance on Baghdad was apparently abandoned ; and that this was the belief at the front in Mesopotamia is evident from the following Divisional Order issued by General Townshend on October 11th, 1915 :—

The General Officer Commanding 6th Division wishes to tender his grateful thanks to all ranks of the division for the gallant and noble spirit in which they have advanced some 180 miles from Amara, defeated the enemy in an extremely strong position, and moved on another 50 miles or so in pursuit.

That we did not catch the retreating Turks is due to the fact of the shallow water of the river, and to the fact that the Turks are endowed by nature with strong knees.

He wishes he could have announced to the troops the end of their labours in Mesopotamia, but these operations naturally depend on those operations now being carried out in the Dardanelles, whence we now hope for good news.

He desires to tell the troops that orders have been received from Government in England that we are, for the present, to hold the position we have gained and thus our present orders are not to advance to Baghdad. It is the intention, therefore, of the G.O.C. to make the force as comfortable as it is possible to do under the circumstances ; tents, &c., will be brought up as soon as possible.

(Signed) R. G. PEEL,
Colonel, General Staff.

11. Meanwhile on October 4th the Cabinet met, and the Secretary of State reported the position to them, and the opinion of the Cabinet was conveyed to the Viceroy on October 5th in the following terms :—

The position was reported yesterday to the Cabinet, and they have decided to appoint a committee of Foreign Office, General Staff, Admiralty, and India Office, to consider in all its possibilities and policy advance on Baghdad.

If forces available are sufficient to take and hold the place, political reasons were thought to make occupation desirable. . . . It is thought by Barrow that we might be able to capture Baghdad, but that forces weakened by further losses would be insufficient both to hold it securely against counter-attacks and to maintain communication. Kitchener can hold out no hope of reinforcements from Europe or Egypt.

12. On the following day, October 5th, General Nixon replied to the Secretary of State's telegram of October 4th, as to "navigation troubles" in the following terms :—

By marching the troops with land transport and by lightening the vessels and employing them to tow loaded barges, we have overcome the difficulties of navigation . . . . . .

The view I take is that before us lies an enemy who has been shaken, who is short of ammunition and has lost 13 guns, and while we have the chance it is obviously profitable for military reasons to overwhelm him I hope I can destroy him, as the position in which he has taken refuge is one where we are able to manœuvre.

Should we let such an opportunity slip by us, I can see no arguments by which we could justify ourselves.

As will be subsequently seen, misunderstanding arose about the first sentence of this telegram. It was understood to affirm a general sufficiency of transport, but it really only answered the Viceroy's telegram of October 4th,* relating to the immediate local difficulties of navigation.

In a private telegram of the same day, the Viceroy stated :—

The following is the present situation :—

With the forces at his disposal General Nixon could, without much difficulty, capture Baghdad, and at the same time take or destroy the Turkish steamers and other boats thus practically preventing any further attacks down stream. But without himself being reinforced by one Division of troops he could not remain there exposed to attack by Turkish reinforcements from Mosul or Aleppo. To advance to Baghdad and to retire later, under pressure from the Turks, would be a grave error. Consequently Nixon must remain at Kut-el-Amara unless it be possible to reinforce him from elsewhere other than from India.

On the 7th, a telegram from the Viceroy stated that the Commander-in-Chief in India agreed that it would be unwise to occupy Baghdad with the present forces.

As regards this telegram, Sir Beauchamp Duff informed us that the telegram which he proposed to send was couched in somewhat different terms, and ran as follows :—

I have consulted the Commander-in-Chief, who has no doubt that as things stand at present we could capture Baghdad, but that our available troops would not be sufficient to hold it should the Turks mass troops for a counter-attack and that the effect of entering Baghdad and subsequently having to retire would be disastrous. Moreover, he doubts whether in the present state of the river, combined with our present

* See para. 10 *ante*. This telegram was communicated to General Nixon.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00003f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

insufficient number of light-draught steamers, we could adequately supply our troops there. As a military operation, therefore, he holds that to occupy Baghdad with our present forces would be most unwise.

(Then follow various reasons in justification of this contention.)

The Viceroy did not accept this telegram, and in his reply omitted all allusion to the Commander-in-Chief's doubts as regards the sufficiency of existing river transport, which doubts therefore were unknown to the Home Authorities.

13. On October 8th, the Secretary of State addressed the following question to General Nixon :—

Very urgent. To both occupy and hold Baghdad what addition to your present force are you confident will be necessary ?

and on the 8th the Secretary of State sent the following telegram to the Viceroy :—

Private. The Cabinet are so impressed with great political and military advantages of occupation of Baghdad that every effort will be made by us to supply the force that is necessary. We do not wish to attempt it with insufficient forces. I shall be glad to know whether you are satisfied that one division will suffice.

On the same day General Nixon telegraphed as follows : " No additions are necessary to my present force to beat Nur-ed-din and occupy Baghdad ; of this I am confident," but he added that he would require an additional division and one cavalry regiment to enable him permanently to occupy Baghdad.

14. On October 9th, in a telegram, the Secretary of State stated to the Viceroy :—

Private. I hope in a few days to give you definite information as to possibility of reinforcements. Meanwhile Nixon should maintain his present position and he should be prepared to advance if reinforcements asked for can be sent to him. I should be glad if you would instruct him accordingly.

On the same day the Viceroy in a telegram to the Secretary of State states as follows :—

Private. I am glad of the Cabinet's decision. After consultation with Sir B. Duff, I am of the opinion that Sir John Nixon is in the best position to judge as to the number of troops that will be required, and when a division is mentioned by him we understand him to mean a division fully organised with its proper proportion of British troops and guns and its divisional cavalry. He asks for a cavalry regiment in addition to this.

We are prepared to accept his opinion, but we consider that it will also be necessary to ensure that the British units now with him are to be kept up to strength by drafts from England, and these cannot be supplied by this country. The Indian units will be kept at full strength by us. We may add that the reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after the capture of that city, and this is the period which we calculate must elapse before the Turks could concentrate in strength to attempt its recapture.

15. On the 14th, the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy :—

Private. Reinforcements for Force " D." A question has been raised as to the sufficiency of the reinforcements which General Nixon has asked for, or even of two divisions to hold Baghdad against forces which might eventually be brought against him by the Turks. The General Staff are now considering this, and the Cabinet hope to be given their report in three days.

We continue to attach the greatest importance to the capture of Baghdad if we can hold it securely. Please let me know whether the chances of eventual successful advance are prejudiced by delay.

to which the Viceroy replied :—

Private. With reference to your private wire, regarding Baghdad, dated October 14th. Unless Baghdad is strongly reinforced by the Turks in the meantime, and of this we see no immediate signs, the chances of eventual successful advance will not be prejudiced by delay, although owing to the longer time the enemy will have at their disposal for completing their defences the step will be more costly.

16. On the 15th, the Secretary of State telegraphed to Viceroy :—

Private. Advance on Baghdad. If report of the General Staff is favourable to occupation of Baghdad, the War Office contemplate transfer of the two Indian Infantry divisions from France to Egypt with the intention of placing them at your disposal for Mesopotamia. But they cannot guarantee date of departure owing to uncertainty of position in Near East and possible need of transport for other purposes. They do not consider it would be safe under the circumstances for Nixon to advance to Baghdad before these troops have actually started from Egypt unless you can undertake to supply him temporarily with a division from India in the event of these reinforcements being unavoidably delayed. I request early reply as to the possibility of your undertaking the liability.

This is in continuation of my private telegram of October 14th.

17. On October 17th, the Viceroy telegraphed :—

After consultation with the Commander-in-Chief, we agree that in no case could I undertake to supply from India, even temporarily, a further force of the strength of a division.

On the 21st the Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy in a full and reasoned telegram marked " Private," discussed alternative courses of action and gave their opinion in favour of the plan of taking and occupying Baghdad. This, they stated, would present no difficulty whatever provided they were guaranteed reinforcements of a full division of troops reaching Mesopotamia in two months.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00008d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

18. On the 21st October the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy, as follows :—

Private. Baghdad advance. Report of combined Staffs estimates that General Nixon has only some 9,000 Turkish troops and some irregulars to deal with for next two months ; that Turkish forces may be somewhat increased by the end of the year, and they might conceivably reach a total of 60,000 by end of January, and even larger figures during 1916. They consider if reinforced by two Indian Divisions from France he might, with assistance of river flotilla, face risk of attack by 60,000, but there would remain possibility of enemy receiving at later date further reinforcements. The staffs hold, therefore, that from a military point of view it would be unwise to occupy Baghdad unless military authorities have power to withdraw troops at once without regard to political considerations if military exigencies make this necessary. The War Office would give the two Indian Divisions, but could not under any circumstances spare further reinforcements, and are doubtful of their capacity even to supply drafts if wastage from casualties or sickness is severe. They think Baghdad can be easily taken and held for some time, but it might become untenable later as explained above. At present moment it seems the German attempt to break through to Constantinople will succeed, and our position and prospects in Gallipoli are most uncertain. . . . Arabs are wavering, and will probably join Turks, unless we can offer them great inducement. We are therefore, in great need of striking success in the East. . . . It is suggested that we should occupy Baghdad, giving assurances to Arab leaders that we favour creation of Arab State independent of Turks. . . . Unless you consider possibility of eventual withdrawal is decisive against the advance, all other considerations seem to us to render it desirable, and we are prepared to order it.

On the 23rd October the Viceroy replied :—

Private. Your private telegram of the 21st instant. Baghdad advance. Your description of the situation in the Near East proves conclusively the necessity for action in the Middle East. We accept the calculation of the combined Staffs of possible strength of Turks that may with time be brought against us ; but with reinforcement of two Indian divisions from France we believe that Sir J. Nixon has a fair prospect of being able to hold his own against 60,000 or 70,000 Turks, provided he occupied Baghdad as soon as he is ready. Although I realise that the occupation of Baghdad is a provocation that will probably determine the Turks to send large forces to attack us, which however, will not be easy for them to do, and although the bad effect of a possible withdrawal in the future cannot be ignored, I am confident right policy at the present time is to take the risk and to occupy Baghdad with the least possible delay, relying upon you to send two divisions from France as quickly as possible to Mesopotamia. On this understanding I propose, unless I hear from you before Monday to the contrary, to order Nixon to march on Baghdad at once.

Finally, on the 23rd October, the Secretary of State sent the following telegram :—

If Nixon is satisfied that the force he has available is sufficient for the operation, he may march on Baghdad. Two divisions will be sent to him as soon as possible, but owing to relief and transport arrangements, reinforcements will take time to despatch. Probable date will be (? wired) later.

19. During the period of three weeks covered by these telegrams a number of meetings had been held, and memoranda written by the Military Advisers of the Government in London. These papers and consultations were less concerned with the taking of Baghdad than with the question whether it would be possible to hold it after it had been taken. On October 4th, General Barrow, the Military Secretary, India Office, had written a memorandum in which he expressed the opinion that to attempt to go to Baghdad with the present force was to incur unjustifiable risk.

On October 6th, the General Staff, in a memorandum, stated that to hold Baghdad, except with forces very much larger than at present with Sir John Nixon, and with proportionately increased river transport, would be to court disasters. 60,000 Turks could be assembled and conveyed within a few weeks to Baghdad, and to withdraw from Baghdad after occupation would have a most unfortunate effect.

On October 14th, another paper was drawn up by the General Staff on the question of occupying Baghdad. They estimated that if Baghdad was to be taken and occupied, General Nixon must have reinforcements of two Indian divisions. On the 19th the joint Naval and Military General Staff further considered the question, and came to the conclusion that if there were very strong political objections to a withdrawal from Baghdad then its occupation should not be attempted.

On October 16th General Barrow, the Military Secretary, India Office, modified his previous proposals by stating that if he had a firm promise of two divisions, he was entirely in favour of going to Baghdad.

20. Expert opinion was therefore unanimous on the point that to attempt to take and occupy Baghdad with the existing force would be an unjustifiable risk, and that for the task of holding Baghdad, General Nixon should have a reinforcement of two divisions. There was, however, a concurrence of expert opinion that Nixon's existing force was sufficient in the first instance to take Baghdad.

21. In addition to the ordinary Military Authorities with whom questions of this kind

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00009b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

are discussed by the Government, the Prime Minister summoned a special Inter-Departmental Committee, composed of members of the India Office, the War Office, the Admiralty and the Foreign Office, to which he submitted certain questions on the subject of the strategical situation in Mesopotamia. Mr. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, had some doubts as to whether he or Sir Thomas Holderness should be Chairman of this Committee, but he finally decided in favour of Sir Thomas Holderness in the belief that the other members of the Committee would more freely express their opinions before an Under-Secretary than a Secretary of State. Sir Thomas Holderness, though a distinguished civilian, had no special experience or training in the class of questions submitted to the Committee. The other members of the Committee were :—

Sir Edmund Barrow, Military Secretary, India Office.
Vice-Admiral Sir Douglas Gamble, Admiralty.
Sir Louis Mallet, Foreign Office.
Mr. Launcelot Oliphant, Foreign Office.
Colonel Talbot, War Office.
Captain Paddon, War Office.

22. The case was one of such high importance that, in our opinion, the Representatives of the War Office and the Admiralty on the Committee should have been officers of official position and experience more nearly on a par with those of Sir E. Barrow, who was the Senior General of the Indian Army and also Head of the Military Department of the India Office. During their discussions, the question of transport, as we ascertained from Sir Thomas Holderness, became quite a subsidiary subject. There were three communications from Mesopotamia—one contained in a despatch and memorandum, dated 10th July, 1915, and two in telegrams dated respectively 25th September, 1915, and 9th October,* 1915, which unmistakably expressed the inadequacy of the river transport even for the wants of the existing force of two divisions. These documents, though received at the India Office, were either unknown to the Committee or, if they were brought before them, were not seriously considered. Sir Thomas Holderness told us that his apprehensions as regards transport were largely removed by General Nixon's telegram of the 5th October,† stating that " by marching the troops with land transport and by lightening the vessels and employing them to tow loaded barges, we have overcome the difficulties of navigation." He did not appreciate the limitations of this assurance, and thought it applied to the general question of adequate river transport. After discussing the definite questions put to them, Sir Thomas Holderness's Committee came to the conclusion that, on both political and military grounds, the occupation of Baghdad was most desirable if the necessary reinforcements could be assured. Failing these, General Nixon was not to attempt it.

23. It was the promise of reinforcements that alone induced this Committee to advocate an advance to Baghdad, but, as in the case of the other authorities consulted, they apparently passed over the all-important problem of how these reinforcements, after arrival at Basra, were to be conveyed as fighting units to the front, a distance of some 500 miles. We lay stress upon this serious omission, especially in the case of the Committee presided over by Sir Thomas Holderness. The despatch of troops from France or Egypt could not affect any fighting around Baghdad after its capture, unless, after their arrival in Mesopotamia, they were conveyed as an organised force to the scene of action. The arrival of troops at Basra, without transport or their proper medical complement, with their Headquarter Staff scattered and disorganised and without the means of conveyance up the river, was not a reinforcement in the sense defined by the Viceroy in his private telegram of the 9th of October, in which he thus expressed himself :—

> We may add that the reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after the capture of that city, and this is the period which we calculate must elapse before the Turks could concentrate in strength to attempt its recapture.

24. It seems to us that it should have been a primary duty of the Military Advisers of the Government, both in India and in England, to have thoroughly investigated the conditions attending the dispatch of troops from Europe and Egypt and their transport up the Tigris, so as to be sure that they could perform the functions assigned to them of being a fighting addition to the advance columns located in Baghdad.

In this connection it should be noted that Sir Beauchamp Duff, in his examination before the Commission placed the same interpretation as did Sir Thomas Holderness, upon the telegram of General Nixon of the 5th† of October, in which he used the words : " We have overcome the difficulties of Navigation."

* See Part IX., paras. 8 and 10. † See paragraph 12, *ante*.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00006c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Sir Percy Lake, who at the time this telegram was received at Simla was Chief of the General Staff, did not accept Sir Beauchamp Duff's interpretation of the meaning of this telegram, and he told us so in his evidence. General Kemball, who, as Chief of Sir John Nixon's Staff in Mesopotamia, had sent the telegram, emphatically repudiated Sir Beauchamp's reading of it.

A reference to the telegraphic correspondence, makes it self-evident that General Nixon's reply referred to the delay caused to the pursuing river column by shoals and shifting banks, as reported by General Nixon to the Secretary of State on October the 1st. It in no sense counteracted or modified his previous statement that his transport was inadequate. Indeed, only four days later, on October 9th, he asked, as an urgent need, for more river craft to be procured from India and indicated that his operations were very seriously impeded by the insufficiency of his existing river craft.

25. The warning conveyed in a private telegram of October 21st* from the Secretary of State to the Viceroy of a possible concentration of 60,000 Turks at Baghdad in January, 1916, was acknowledged by the Viceroy in a private and reasoned telegram accepting the risk. The information thus conveyed introduced a new factor into the situation, and one which ought at once to have been forwarded to Sir John Nixon. Sir John Nixon in his evidence before us could not recollect receiving this information, and Sir Beauchamp Duff has informed us that this telegram was not transmitted to Mesopotamia. He accounted for this oversight by the fact that it was a private telegram to the Viceroy of which he had no official cognisance, nor was it filed in his Department. Sir John, however, intimated that if he had been warned in time he could have stopped the advance to Baghdad even on November 17th, *i.e.* a month later than this telegram. On that day, *i.e.* four days before the battle of Ctesiphon, the War Office telegraphed from London to General Nixon that General von der Goltz had left for Baghdad on November 10th, and that 30,000 Turks were marching from Anatolia to Irak. On the 20th General Nixon replied :—

> For more than a fortnight my own agents have been giving me similar news of a large force under Von der Goltz, but at present I do not accept these reports as conclusive for various reasons.

Sir John Nixon's over-confidence in his ability to crush the Turkish forces between him and Baghdad might have induced him in October to ignore the warning from London as to the large enemy reinforcements which might be brought down to Baghdad. Still, the neglect to convey to him so vital a piece of information reflects seriously on the system which allowed such inadvertence to be possible. If the substance of this important telegram had been conveyed to the Viceroy in an official instead of a private telegram, it would, as a matter of course, have been transmitted to Mesopotamia.

26. In alluding to the introduction by the Cabinet of political considerations into the consultations of their military advisers, we do not wish to imply that this widening of their survey is to be condemned or that it necessarily subjects those so acting to criticism or censure. In a world-wide war the views, wants and aims of allies must be considered and weighed, and operations may become necessary for the continuance and consolidation of existing alliances and of the co-operation which such alliance ensures. But when such considerations do obtrude themselves into a military campaign the incidence of responsibility tends to shift itself. The military experts cannot be made solely responsible for the consequences of a decision into the consideration of which outside political factors have necessarily entered.† Sir Beauchamp Duff in part of his evidence laid stress upon the introduction of outside political considerations into the conduct of the campaign, and he stated that when such political arguments were adduced by those above him in authority, he was ready to incur greater risks than would be justifiable if the matters under discussion were to be regarded solely from a military standpoint.

27. In the decision arrived at by the Home Authorities, they were doubtless largely influenced by the extreme confidence of those on the spot. There seems to have been a general idea—not only amongst the Headquarter Staff of General Nixon, but also amongst the Commander-in-Chief's Staff in India—that there would not be any serious fighting before Baghdad was reached. Even amongst the General Staff at Whitehall, the idea prevailed that the difficulty was not to get to Baghdad but to remain there. The retreating Turks were supposed to be thoroughly demoralised, and insufficient attention was paid to the warnings of the War Office Intelligence Department that a very large number of

* See paragraph 18, *ante*.
† See Secretary of State's telegrams of October 5th, 8th, and 21st, in paras. 11, 13, and, 18 *ante*.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00006c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Turkish reinforcements would shortly be concentrated at Baghdad. It might also have been surmised that these reinforcements under Marshal von der Goltz would be disciplined and trained under German officers and armed with the most modern equipment.

28. It is not very easy to fathom the interchange of views between General Townshend and General Kemball, Chief of the Staff to Sir John Nixon, as to the advisability of an advance to Baghdad. On October 3rd an important telegram was sent by General Townshend to General Kemball. Sir John Nixon states that he does not remember seeing it, but it is surprising if he did not. It certainly should not have been dealt with without reference to him, and in our opinion it should have been passed on to higher authorities. In it General Townshend says :—

> If on the other hand it is the desire of Government to occupy Baghdad, then, unless great risk is to be run, it is, in my opinion, absolutely necessary that the advance from Kut should be carried out methodically by two divisions or one Army Corps or by one Division supported closely by another complete Division, exclusive of the garrisons of the important places of Nasariyeh, Ahwaz, and Amara.

On the same day General Kemball answered this communication, and informed General Townshend that it was Sir John Nixon's intention "to open the way to Baghdad, as he understands another division will be sent here from France, and he would like to know your plan for effecting this object." General Townshend received this the same day, and noted on it in his diary : "There is nothing definite known about this, and no earthly chance of its being in this country in time." Nevertheless, in his answer, also dated October 3rd, he wires to General Kemball : "You did not mention the arrival of a division from France in this country, and that makes all the difference in my appreciation." These two statements are not easy to reconcile, but General Townshend, like many other born fighters, was somewhat mercurial and changeable in his views.

29. A fortnight later, on October 19th, General Kemball visited General Townshend on other business, and the above correspondence was discussed by them at this and at two subsequent interviews, viz., October 30th and November 5th. The matter is not quite clear, but General Kemball's opinion is that the reinforcements which General Townshend received—*i.e.*, five squadrons of cavalry, three battalions of infantry, and a R.H.A. battery —were very much what he asked for, and there was also the promise of two divisions from France, the leading troops of which General Kemball expected to arrive at Basra at the end of November. Whether General Townshend was satisfied or not is not certain, but he does not seem to have pressed his objections hard.

But misgivings were present in his mind as late as November 2nd, for on that day he wrote to the Viceroy a letter in which these expressions occur :—

> **These troops of mine are tired and their tails are not up, but slightly down ; the Mahomedans are not pleased at approaching the sacred precincts of Suliman Pak at Ctesiphon—the troops are not confident and have had enough ; as it is now, the British soldier and the Sepoy, as the Roman soldier did under Belisarius, look over their shoulders and are fearful of the distance from the sea, and go down, in consequence, with every imaginable disease.**

These are not the words of a General commanding a force in the field who has confidence in the capacity of his troops to achieve the task assigned to them.

Apparently the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff, did not at the time see these communications from General Townshend, but if he had, we have his word for it that they would not have materially changed his views as to the wisdom of the advance. But General Townshend was an experienced and successful commander, and in our opinion his words were well worth weighing, especially in connection with an enterprise of which he was the selected chief.

30. It should be added that several months later, on April 7th, 1916, General Townshend sent in an amplification of his appreciation of October 3rd, which seems to have been in his mind when he wrote that appreciation. On April 7th, he said : "My opinion most certainly was that we were taking a grave risk in continuing a strategic movement against Baghdad with my weak Division alone, the British battalions of which were reduced to half their strength, and besides this the drafts to replace casualties at the battle of Kut consisted of raw recruits from India, while there were no other troops to support me, and the distance to the sea was over 300 miles." General Kemball in giving evidence before us did not accept these statements as to the condition of the troops. He regarded them as exaggerated.

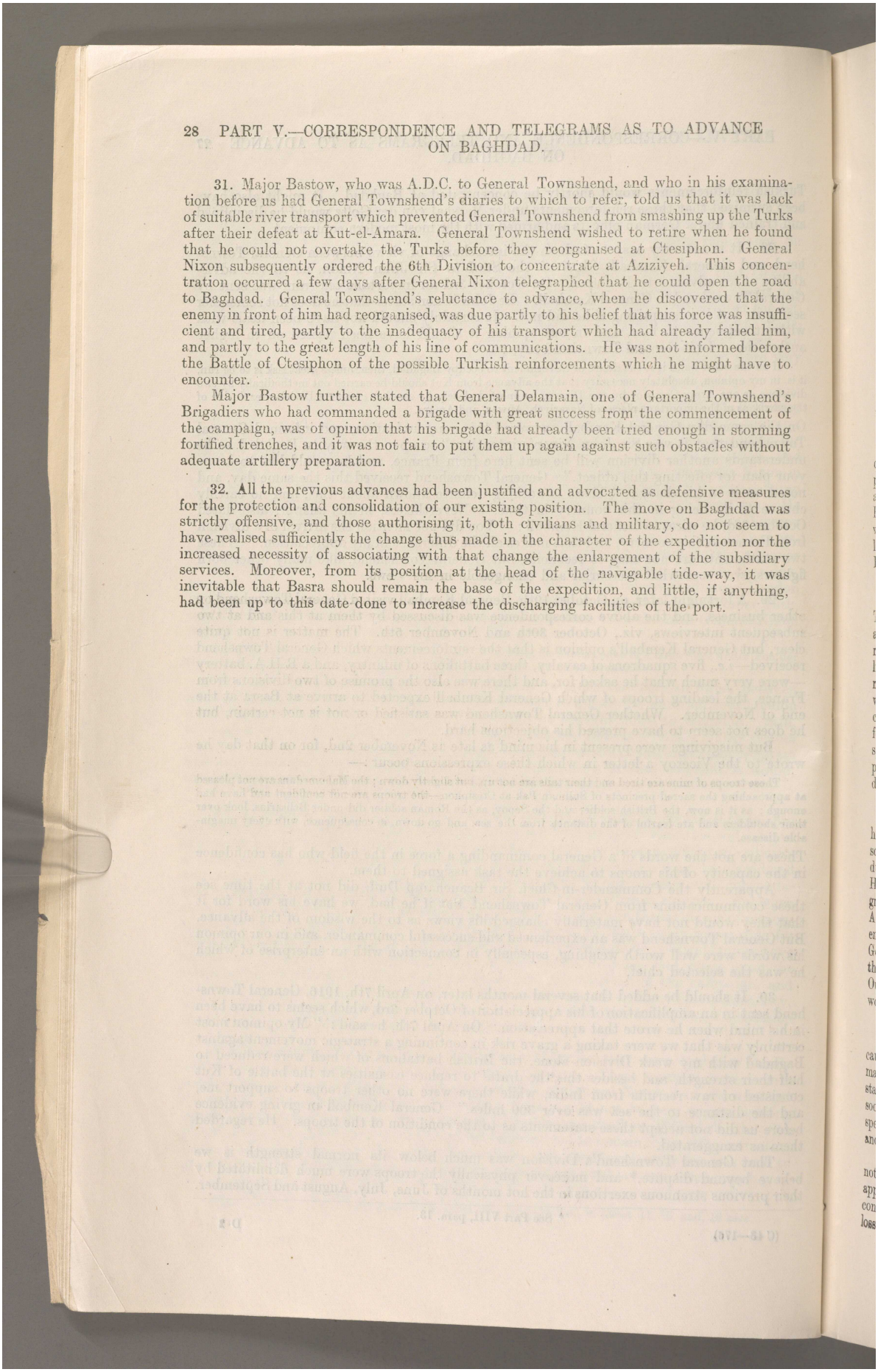
That General Townshend's Division was much below its normal strength is we believe beyond dispute,* and moreover physically the troops were much debilitated by their previous strenuous exertions in the hot months of June, July, August and September.

* See Part VIII, para. 13.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000096

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



31. Major Bastow, who was A.D.C. to General Townshend, and who in his examination before us had General Townshend's diaries to which to refer, told us that it was lack of suitable river transport which prevented General Townshend from smashing up the Turks after their defeat at Kut-el-Amara. General Townshend wished to retire when he found that he could not overtake the Turks before they reorganised at Ctesiphon. General Nixon subsequently ordered the 6th Division to concentrate at Aziziyeh. This concentration occurred a few days after General Nixon telegraphed that he could open the road to Baghdad. General Townshend's reluctance to advance, when he discovered that the enemy in front of him had reorganised, was due partly to his belief that his force was insufficient and tired, partly to the inadequacy of his transport which had already failed him, and partly to the great length of his line of communications. He was not informed before the Battle of Ctesiphon of the possible Turkish reinforcements which he might have to encounter.

Major Bastow further stated that General Delamain, one of General Townshend's Brigadiers who had commanded a brigade with great success from the commencement of the campaign, was of opinion that his brigade had already been tried enough in storming fortified trenches, and it was not fair to put them up again against such obstacles without adequate artillery preparation.

32. All the previous advances had been justified and advocated as defensive measures for the protection and consolidation of our existing position. The move on Baghdad was strictly offensive, and those authorising it, both civilians and military, do not seem to have realised sufficiently the change thus made in the character of the expedition nor the increased necessity of associating with that change the enlargement of the subsidiary services. Moreover, from its position at the head of the navigable tide-way, it was inevitable that Basra should remain the base of the expedition, and little, if anything, had been up to this date done to increase the discharging facilities of the port.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00006a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

1. The total force at the disposal of Sir John Nixon at the time the advance was made to Baghdad was only some two divisions or about 24,000 to 25,000 men. Of these there went up with General Townshend the Sixth Division, plus one Infantry Brigade and two and a half regiments of cavalry with a brigade and certain batteries of artillery, numbering in all from 15,000 to 17,000, according to the estimate of General Gorringe, who was at the time in command of the troops on the Lines of Communication. The remainder of the force, some 6,000 to 8,000 men, were left to guard the lines of communication and our positions on the Euphrates at Nasariyeh and on the Karun at Ahwaz. The line of communications from Basra to Baghdad via the River Tigris is 502 miles.

2. It will thus be seen that on General Gorringe's estimate, 75 per cent. of our total available force was required for the offensive. The remaining 25 per cent. were guarding the communications and rear positions and could not be looked upon as a reserve. The Turkish forces between Kut and Baghdad were believed to be about 9,000, and it was further assumed that they were considerably demoralised by a succession of defeats to which they had been subject.

3. Based upon these estimates, a spirit of intense optimism animated the Head, quarter and Administrative Staff. This is shown by their estimate of impending casualties, preparation being made for only 500 severely wounded. Two river steamers, the "Mosul" and the "Julnar," were put on one side to be temporarily fitted up by Surgeon-General Hathaway for the reception of wounded, the arrangements being that the more seriously wounded were to be moved down to Kut in these vessels and the more lightly wounded located in Baghdad. No apprehension of an effective repulse or of our inability to reach Baghdad seems to have been entertained by those directing the advance.

4. After some skirmishing, our advancing forces, consisting according to General Townshend of only some 11,000 effectives, were concentrated on the left bank of the Tigris at Laj. The enemy, estimated at 11,000 to 13,000 men, were entrenched a few miles up the river, their defences consisted of two strong lines of trenches, and between these two lines was the archway of Ctesiphon. General Townshend attacked this position on the morning of November 22nd, and after severe fighting he captured the first position, taking with it 1,300 prisoners. Our troops then penetrated the second line of trenches and captured eight guns. Here they were heavily attacked by Turkish reinforcements and forced back into the first line which they had previously captured. November 23rd was spent in reorganising these positions and collecting the wounded, and on the 24th and 25th prisoners and wounded were evacuated to Laj, where they were put in steamers and taken down stream.

5. In the meantime, the enemy was largely reinforced, and General Townshend found himself after his heavy casualties not only numerically very inferior to the enemy, but in some danger of being surrounded and cut off. He was also short of supplies. He retired during the night of November 25th to Laj, falling back further on the 27th to Aziziyeh. He there fought a rearguard action back to Umm-al-Tubal where several of his steamers grounded, and he had to remain there till December 1st, by which time they were refloated. A heavy attack by the Turks on the morning of the 1st was repulsed with great loss to the enemy, and, taking advantage of a successful counter-attack made by the cavalry brigade, General Townshend retired to Shadi, a distance of 30 miles, which place was reached on the same night. On December 3rd the troops, greatly exhausted, arrived at Kut-el-Amara. Our losses at and since the battle of Ctesiphon amounted to more than 690 killed and 3,800 wounded, a loss of over 30 per cent. of the total advancing force.

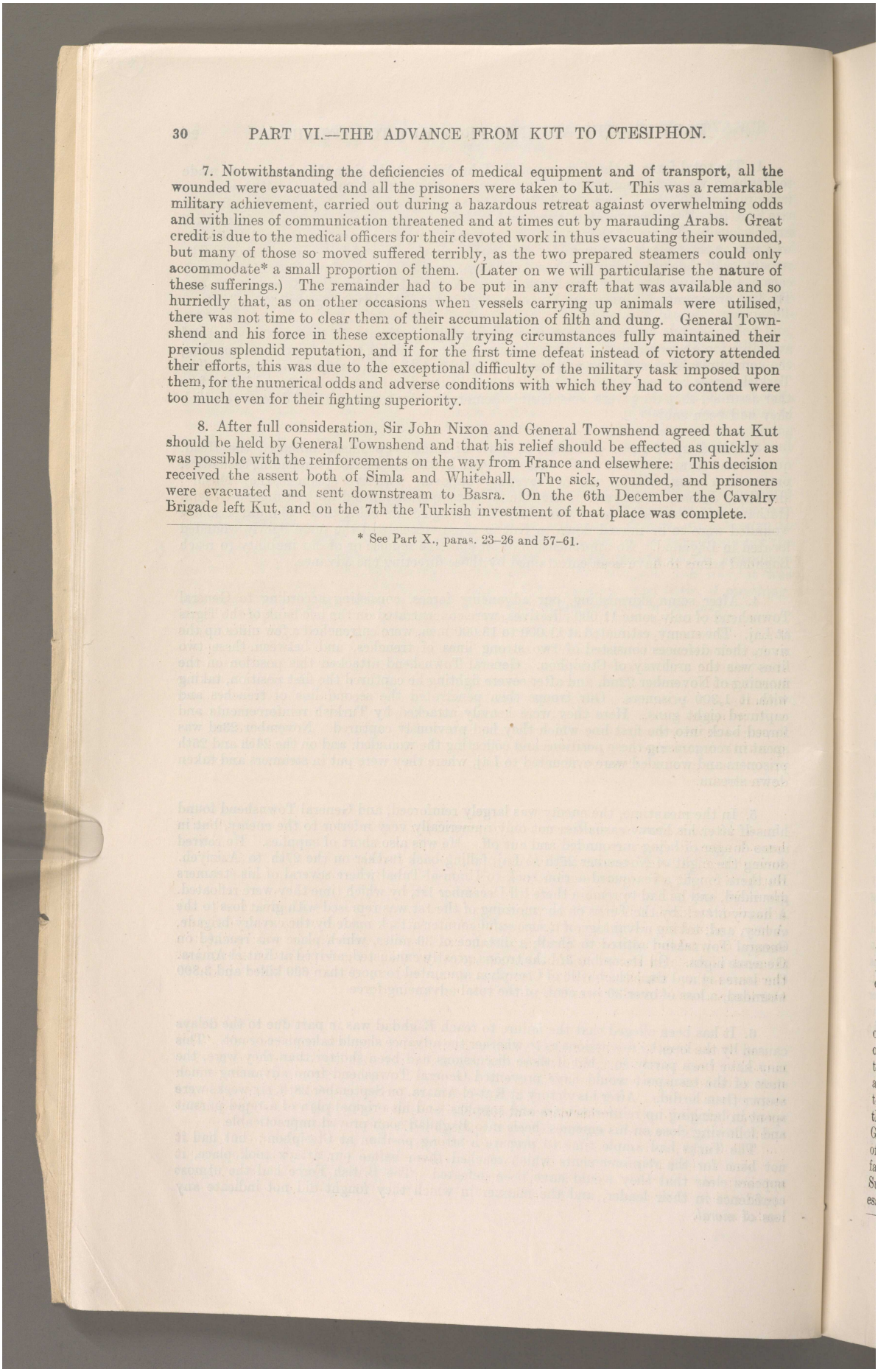
6. It has been alleged that the failure to reach Baghdad was in part due to the delays caused by the lengthy discussions as to whether the advance should take place or not. This may have been partly so; but if these discussions had been shorter than they were, the state of the transport would have prevented General Townshend from advancing much sooner than he did. After his victory at Kut-el-Amara, on September 28th, six weeks were spent in bringing up reinforcements and supplies, and his original plan of a rapid pursuit and following close on his enemies' heels into Baghdad soon proved impracticable.

The Turks had ample time to prepare a strong position at Ctesiphon; but had it not been for the reinforcements which reached them before our attack took place, it appears clear that they would have been defeated. The British Force had the utmost confidence in their leader, and the manner in which they fought did not indicate any loss of *moral*.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000022

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



7. Notwithstanding the deficiencies of medical equipment and of transport, all the wounded were evacuated and all the prisoners were taken to Kut. This was a remarkable military achievement, carried out during a hazardous retreat against overwhelming odds and with lines of communication threatened and at times cut by marauding Arabs. Great credit is due to the medical officers for their devoted work in thus evacuating their wounded, but many of those so moved suffered terribly, as the two prepared steamers could only accommodate* a small proportion of them. (Later on we will particularise the nature of these sufferings.) The remainder had to be put in any craft that was available and so hurriedly that, as on other occasions when vessels carrying up animals were utilised, there was not time to clear them of their accumulation of filth and dung. General Townshend and his force in these exceptionally trying circumstances fully maintained their previous splendid reputation, and if for the first time defeat instead of victory attended their efforts, this was due to the exceptional difficulty of the military task imposed upon them, for the numerical odds and adverse conditions with which they had to contend were too much even for their fighting superiority.

8. After full consideration, Sir John Nixon and General Townshend agreed that Kut should be held by General Townshend and that his relief should be effected as quickly as was possible with the reinforcements on the way from France and elsewhere: This decision received the assent both of Simla and Whitehall. The sick, wounded, and prisoners were evacuated and sent downstream to Basra. On the 6th December the Cavalry Brigade left Kut, and on the 7th the Turkish investment of that place was complete.

* See Part X., paras. 23–26 and 57–61.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00005d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

1. After the retreat from Ctesiphon, General Nixon returned to Basra to organise a force for the relief of Kut. He was in bad health at the time, and his ailments so grew upon him that in the subsequent month he was invalided home. Sir Percy Lake, the Chief of the General Staff in India, was appointed in his place, and took over the command on January 18th, 1916.

Sir John Nixon, upon his arrival at Basra in December, had at once ordered the 28th Infantry Brigade to strengthen the 6th Cavalry Brigade at Ali Gharbi. In anticipation of the arrival of the two divisions from oversea, Sir Fenton Aylmer, Adjutant-General of the Indian Army, was sent to take command of a force designated as the "Tigris Corps," in which were to be incorporated the two expected divisions, the troops located at Ali Gharbi and ultimately other reinforcements. The two Divisions, the bulk of which was still on the high seas, were gradually arriving at Basra, but their piece-meal embarkation and disembarkation were very detrimental to their efficiency as fighting units; their whole organisation was upset by the methods of their transmission and disembarkation, and there was no time for their proper re-organisation before advancing. The available transport in Mesopotamia was not sufficient even to carry the men and ammunition to the front, and it was in these disadvantageous circumstances that the military operations were commenced.

2. The history of the attempts to relieve Kut is melancholy reading enough—a record of a prolonged struggle carried on with inadequate means under abnormal conditions of atrocious weather, and terminating in failure.

3. The task which confronted General Aylmer, the General Officer commanding the relieving force, meant in most cases an advance over ground deep in mud and devoid of cover. Moreover, as a rule the position of the enemy made frontal attacks inevitable against trenches held by Turks whose tenacity on the defensive is proverbial.

His army had been hastily got together—there are numerous complaints about "scratch" staffs, and the equipment, especially in heavy artillery, was far below what was required. A large proportion of the reinforcements at Basra were unable to join the Army at the front through lack of transport. It therefore seemed all-important to wait until his army had been properly organised and deficiencies made good.

4. But before such reorganisation was possible an early start was made, and it is to this that the unfortunate result was mainly due. The reasons which thus precipitated matters are to be found in a succession of telegrams which General Townshend despatched from Kut during December. In these he urges, as reasons for his immediate relief, the dangers of enemy reinforcements and of a determined onslaught by superior numbers, the impaired *moral* of his troops, heavy losses in British officers, anxiety as to ammunition, etc., etc. But it is noteworthy that throughout this month he never, except on December 5th, puts forward deficiency of supplies as a reason for accelerating his relief. On December 5th, he wired, "I hope we can be relieved by a month, my rations for British troops are only one month, and 55 days Indian troops. I shall have to reduce a scale of rations, and commandeer all bazaar supplies." This estimate was, however, corrected two days later, by a telegram of December 7th, in which he says that he has 60 days' rations for both Indian and British troops, *i.e.*, enough to carry them on until the beginning of February. After this telegram of December 7th, the question of food and rations is never even mentioned by General Townshend until January 16th, *i.e.*, after the first attempt at relief had failed. As General Townshend is still a prisoner we have been unable to hear his explanation on this.

5. It is strange that neither General Nixon nor General Aylmer seem to have thought of definitely asking General Townshend how long his supplies would permit him to hold out; nor did General Townshend himself definitely ascertain this most important fact till several weeks after he was shut up in Kut. No doubt he had received positive assurances that he would be relieved within two months at the outside, and as he was satisfied that his supplies would easily last for that period, he did not attach so much importance to the food factor as he ought to have done. However this may be, telegrams from General Aylmer on January 25th, and General Lake on the 29th indicate that the neglect of General Townshend to intimate his true position as regards supplies was one of the main factors in the hurried advance; although it appears that the Assistant Director of Supplies in Kut, had ascertained on December 11th, that there were *full rations* in many essentials for 70 days, and large additional stocks were discovered later on.*

* See Appendix III., para. 117.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00008a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

6. General Townshend arrived at Kut on December 3rd, where, for what seem to be sufficient reasons, he determined to remain, and in this resolve he was supported by Sir John Nixon and by India. The Turks closed in on him on the 7th, and at first the assaults were numerous and severe, especially about Christmas, when there were three days' fighting, which terminated in the enemy being repulsed with such heavy losses that no serious attempts to storm were made for the remainder of the siege.

There was, however, plenty of shelling and sniping; but the real enemy was starvation, and it was this that compelled the surrender of the place on April 29th, 1916, after a most gallant and tenacious defence of 147 days.

7. This disaster would have been averted for a long time if the Arab population, about 6,000, had been expelled before the investment began. Sir P. Cox, the political adviser, was averse to such a measure, as he was unwilling to hand them over to the tender mercies of the Turks and hostile Arabs, but their retention undoubtedly added to the difficulties of supply.

8. The Tigris Army Corps, as the relief force was called, had been reinforced by two divisions which had taken part and been severely punished in the murderous fighting in France. In some quarters there was an impression that their *moral* had been impaired by the trench conditions of warfare prevailing there, and that they were not so ready to face the open as they might have been. However, we are of opinion that their conduct, under the very arduous conditions which prevailed in Mesopotamia, does not lay them open to this charge, and their heavy losses during the operations show how stoutly they fought.

9. It is not proposed to go at all thoroughly into the actions fought in the course of these operations. That would involve the study of strategic and tactical considerations which had better be left to the experts to whom the history of the war will be entrusted, when criticism will be easier than it is now. An exception is made in the case of the attempt to take the Dujailah Redoubt at the battle of Es-Sinn (March 8th, 1916), and to a certain extent in the case of the battle of Sanaiyat (April 6th and 8th, 1916), as the results were exceptionally unfortunate and perhaps decisive so far as the relief of Kut was concerned. We are indebted to our colleague, General the Hon. Sir N. Lyttelton, G.C.B., for the ensuing analysis of these two engagements which in our opinion is justified by the evidence placed before us.

10. The advance from Ali Gharbi took place on January 4th, 1915. Fighting of a severe description soon began. On January 6th, General Younghusband was heavily engaged on both banks of the River Tigris, and held his ground with difficulty. On reinforcements coming up, the attack met with some measure of success on the right bank, where the Turks were driven out of their entrenchments, and fell back from Sheikh Saad to a new position on the Wadi, 10 miles up stream. On the 9th this position was also forced, and the Turks again retreated 5 miles further to Hannah. These successes were dearly bought, the losses amounting to nearly 6,000. The next attack, on the Hannah position, January 21st, failed with considerable losses, 2,741, and for some time no very serious fighting took place. General Aylmer blames General Younghusband for not following his directions on January 4th, which were not to commit himself, but merely to hold the enemy. General Younghusband admits receiving the order, and says he advanced and "felt the enemy hard on both banks," which does not seem to have been quite in keeping with the order. General Aylmer says "he felt them too hard," and this seems to be true. General Aylmer also says that he fought the action on the Wadi against his better judgment, acting under superior order, and that he had proposed another plan of attack, which was not accepted by Headquarters. This seems to have been the case, and further it was clear that the hard fighting and heavy losses had told on the men. Moreover, there was a shortage of artillery ammunition.

11. The first attempts having thus failed, General Aylmer determined in March on another plan. An important keypoint was the Dujailah Redoubt, about the right centre of the Turkish lines. General Gorringe, Chief of the Staff, Tigris Corps, told us that it had been ascertained that owing to an insufficient water-supply this fort was very lightly held, the bulk of the troops told off for its defence having to camp on the bank of the river four or five miles off. Consequently it was hoped that by a night march a superior force could be moved across the Turkish front so as to arrive by daybreak near the redoubt and carry it by assault before the reinforcements could arrive. On the face of it the idea seemed practicable and sound; all depended on the element of surprise, and this could only be attained by strict punctuality. Let us see how the scheme worked out It must be

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000016

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

added that General Aylmer told us he knew nothing of the short water-supply and consequent weakness of the garrison—a bewildering statement in view of General Gorringe's evidence on this point.

12. A night march is far from being an easy operation at any time. The difficulties vary with the nature of the ground, the distance to be traversed, and the number of troops engaged. It requires good march discipline and first-rate staff work, especially when, as in this case, an attack is to follow immediately. To General Kemball was entrusted the task of turning the flank to be attacked in co-operation with a column on his right.

13. In a statement submitted by him to us General Kemball calls attention to the well-known night march in 1882 when a British force under Lord Wolseley successfully stormed the Egyptian entrenched camp at Tel-el-Kebir. On that occasion 13,000 men had to march about 3½ miles over easy ground, and for this Lord Wolseley allowed 3½ hours. In the official account of the campaign we read: " . . . from previous experience it was calculated that, making all allowances for delays, etc., during the night, the actual rate of progress . . . would be a mile per hour," and this proved exactly correct. There were 48 guns, but no other impedimenta worth mentioning.

14. At Es-Sinn the ground was also on the whole favourable, but other conditions widely differed. Nearly 20,000 men, with all sorts of impedimenta, transport, ambulances, animals, etc., had to march distances varying between 12 and 16 miles. Some of the troops had been on the move the night before, many had to march 1 or 2 miles from their bivouacs to the rendezvous, the artillery 5 or 6. A margin of one hour was allowed for unforeseen delays such as may occur in any night march.

15. The troops had to be concentrated at 8.30 p.m. on March 7th, in time to start at 9 p.m. and reach their objective by dawn, about 5.45 a.m.

In one very important particular Lord Wolseley had a marked advantage. His small army was entirely composed of well-trained British troops with a most efficient Staff. General Aylmer's force was heterogeneous, British and Indian troops being mixed up together, and he and other Generals make many complaints of the " scrappy " character of their Staffs. This army was expected to march about 14 miles in rather less than nine hours.

The uncertainties of a night march were speedily revealed. Many of the troops were late at the rendezvous, and the start did not take place till 10.22. Thus more than the one hour margin allowed was lost before the start. A second hour was lost through a division missing its way; the men were so weary that they fell dead asleep at the halts, and were with difficulty roused. Other delays occurred, and the result was that General Kemball's column, which had the farthest to go, instead of being at the point Z, where it was to deploy for attack, at 5.30 a.m., was still 1,500 yards short of it at 6.30, when it was broad daylight. This of course was fatal to the success of the operation so far as surprise was concerned.

16. General Gorringe holds that in spite of this, energetic and bold action on the part of General Kemball would still have forestalled the enemy in his attempts to reinforce Dujailah. General Kemball's excuse is that he received no proper support till late in the afternoon. He adds that when the enemy's weakness in the redoubt was discovered, Column C on his right should have been put in, in spite of Column A's late arrival. If Headquarters were correct in their assumption that there was only a small garrison in Dujailah, a long flank march was unnecessary, and a direct attack might have been made from Point Y, where the columns bifurcated.

17. It is pointed out by General Kemball that General Gorringe's statement that everything went well up to the time the columns separated (at point Y) is quite incorrect; they were 2½ hours late there. General Kemball also takes exception to other assertions of General Gorringe.

18. There is a good deal of technical evidence as to the proper formations for the march and the tactical dispositions for the fighting on the 9th March, and Generals Aylmer and Gorringe attribute great blame to General Kemball in these respects, and to a certain extent they are supported by General Lake, G.O.C. " D " Force. It is not our province to go exhaustively into these points; they are detailed at length in their evidence and statements, to which reference can be made. We may, however, point out that in a night march which is to be followed immediately by an assault, it is obvious that the troops should march in such a formation as to enable them to attack with the least possible delay when

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000015

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

the objective is reached. That was Lord Wolseley's intention at Tel-el-Kebir—to arrange the troops in such order that it should require no manœuvring to pass from the formation of march to the formation of attack, but although this intention was not fully carried out and the Divisional Commanders did not adopt the same formation, there was no serious difference, and the spirit of the Commander-in-Chief's order was not infringed. Lord Wolseley allowed more latitude to his Divisional Commanders than General Kemball enjoyed. Whether any such formation in a night march is possible under modern conditions is hard to imagine. We conceive that the question for us is whether the night march under the conditions already described offered a reasonable prospect of success.

19. General Aylmer himself admits that the march was a close run—that an hour's margin was scanty; but owing to the necessities of the situation he could not spare more, and that the plan of attack he adopted was the only one he could think of as likely to succeed. Our opinion is that the chances of A Column being up to time were slender; that the operation, to use a term that has cropped up elsewhere, was of the nature of a "gamble" in which the odds against success were high, but whether they were too high to justify the action taken cannot be stated in terms of certainty.

20. There is another matter which demands attention—whether it was necessary to break off the fight on March 9th, as was done by General Aylmer's orders. General Kemball declares that the Turks had been retiring in the night and he reported this to Headquarters. However, the report was not credited. General Gorringe, in his despatch, says the aeroplane reconnaissance showed no signs of withdrawal, and it may be that it was only partial.

21. General Kemball said that in spite of their severe losses, he had full confidence in his men; that he had been in a much tighter place at Sheikh Saad and had come out successfully, and was anxious to try again. Headquarters did not accept this offer, and it can hardly be said that they were wrong. The other reason given for not renewing the attack was the deficiency of water. General Kemball asserts that there was plenty where he was, and very likely there was enough for his men, but it is not clear there was for the whole force. On the whole we do not see sufficient reasons for imputing blame to the Corps Headquarters for the action they took.

22. We have gone at length into this controversy because much depended on this battle, and because we think that the unfortunate result had so much to do with the final catastrophe of the fall of Kut; and for the same reason we propose to go with some minuteness into the details of the defeat at Sanaiyat, which followed not long after.

23. The battle of Sanaiyat was in two parts. The first, on April 5th, on both banks of the river, was highly successful, the 13th British Division, under General Maude, recently arrived from Egypt, particularly distinguishing itself by carrying five lines of entrenchments in succession. General Gorringe commends General Maude and all under his command for the brilliant success of this assault.

24. This fine piece of work was followed on the evening of the same day by another equally good, carried out by the same division, of which General Gorringe speaks in these terms: "The highest praise is due to General Maude and his Brigade Commanders and all under their command for this successful night attack, a difficult operation at all times, requiring great dash and good leadership as well as personal bravery among the junior commissioned and non-commissioned ranks." These eulogiums are quoted to justify the belief that this new army division would prove itself equal to any duty that might be imposed upon it. It should be added that it was not without experience of war; it had served in Gallipoli and suffered heavy losses there.

25. There was no time to be lost; the sands were running out at Kut, and the situation there was very critical. The river was rising, and more floods were to be expected, and no intermission in active operations was possible. On April 6th, at 1 a.m., the 7th Division attacked the left of the Sanaiyat position under very unfavourable conditions; they could not break through, and in the afternoon they were flooded out of their trenches. It was evident that no attack by day over such sticky and open ground could succeed, nor even at night unless the assaulting force could be assembled under cover within assaulting distance, so preparations were made for this to be done. These were completed by evening on the 8th and the 13th Division were again selected to assault, and they started at 4.20 a.m., the 9th.

26. At first it seemed as if the successes won on the 5th were going to be repeated. The leading lines, moving with great dash, penetrated into the centre of the enemy's

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00008f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

front-line trench without suffering heavily in doing so. Unfortunately the supporting lines failed to maintain the advantage thus won, they were driven back and the Turks retook their lost trenches.

27. General Gorringe considered Sanaiyat to be the key to the position, and that if this attack had succeeded the relief of Kut in all probability would have followed. It appears that no such favourable opportunity recurred.

There was great cause for anxiety in the state of the supplies of the relieving force. The Army was living from hand to mouth, a state of things to which the usual deficiency of transport largely contributed. Still all hope was not abandoned; the Army Commander, Sir Percy Lake, had come up, and under his instructions further attempts were made. The troops responded to the call, and continuous fighting went on till the 22nd. Occasional successes were gained, the 3rd Division accomplishing some good fighting; but hardly any real progress was made. The heavy floods made all movements most difficult, and the men at times could not even use their rifles, which were clogged with mud. After 16 days' continuous fighting, not only against the Turks, but against the floods, all hope of relieving Kut had to be given up. The losses had exceeded 33 per cent., and were even greater in British officers, and the fighting efficiency of the force was seriously affected.

28. Kut managed to hold out for another week; then the inevitable happened, and it surrendered after a most determined defence on April 29th. Right up to the end of the siege General Townshend and his brigadiers retained the confidence and allegiance of their men. One witness informed us that after the terms of surrender had been settled and the Generals were departing in a steamboat as prisoners of war, their men formed up along the riverside and gave them a parting cheer as a proof of their unbroken loyalty.

The extremities to which the garrison was reduced during their long-drawn agony are vividly depicted in Colonel Hehir's report and in General Townshend's telegrams from Kut. The difficulties in rationing the Indian troops were much enhanced by caste prejudices as to food. For a long time many of them refused to eat horse or mule flesh. Had it not been for this, these animals could not only have been used as food for the men, but the grain they consumed could have been devoted to the same purpose. It is doubtful, however, if this would have done more than prolong the agony. The relieving force was not strong enough in artillery, high-explosive shells, and other appliances, without which attacks on modern entrenchments seem absolutely futile.

Sir Percy Lake summarised the three main causes of failure as being—premature attacks, inadequate transport, and exceptionally unfavourable weather. We endorse these findings, but we add to it another, namely, insufficient numerical superiority over a strongly-entrenched enemy. This drawback may be included under the head of "inadequate transport," for during the whole of this period of critical fighting, large numbers of troops and many guns were at Basra quite unable, for lack of transport, to be conveyed and take part in the fighting.

29. As stated above, Force "D" was not a homogeneous body. For instance, in each Cavalry Brigade of three regiments one was British, in each Infantry Brigade of four battalions one was British, the remaining units being Indian with a small proportion of British officers. In many a hard-fought field these Indian soldiers proved themselves worthy of standing shoulder to shoulder with their British comrades.

This army had been put to a severe test, the 6th Division in particular. It had been almost continuously fighting or marching or moving by water for the best part of a year. It had been repeatedly short of supplies, and owing to its frequent movements had felt acutely the want of adequate water transport. Nevertheless it had performed feats of fighting and endurance of which any army might have been proud. The part of the advance called by the troops "Townshend's Regatta*" was an astounding piece of work.

It may be that the *moral* of the troops fell off to a certain degree, but in what army would this not have occurred after such ordeals as the battle of Ctesiphon, the defence of Kut, and the series of stubbornly contested actions fought by the Tigris Army under exceptionally unfavourable conditions in the vain efforts to relieve their beleaguered comrades in Kut? Whatever faults of organisation and equipment there may have been, no discredit attaches to the fighting men for the failures of the operations in Mesopotamia.

30. During the hot season after the fall of Kut, the army suffered much from sickness, and the transport and supply arrangements, though improving, were still inadequate In

* See Part IV., para. 8.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00006e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

April, 1916, the immediate policy to be followed in Mesopotamia had been clearly indicated by the Imperial General Staff. Briefly summarized it was as follows :

At present our policy in Mesopotamia is defensive . . . Lake should . . . maintain as forward a position as can be made secure tactically, and be ready to take advantage of any weakening of the Turks on his front, so long as this can be effected without incurring heavy loss, whether caused by the enemy or by unhealthy conditions . . . His forces are superior to those of the enemy . . . he should, therefore, have no difficulty in carrying out the above policy until the Turks are strongly reinforced . . . he must be clearly shown that the security of his force is of primary importance.

These instructions were strictly adhered to during the summer and autumn, and Sir Percy Lake and his successor, Major-General Maude, confined themselves during this period to developing river and railway communications and the supply organisation, with very satisfactory results.

31. We have already pointed out that early in February, 1916, the War Office assumed control of the expedition. Later on, in July, 1916, all the administrative work in connection with the expedition was transferred to the War Office, and from that date they became solely responsible for the policy and management of the expedition. But the War Office have not, even under these arrangements, any control over Indian Military Establishments in the sense of being able to order reinforcements from India to Mesopotamia. We have not thought it desirable or necessary to make detailed investigation beyond the date of the operations which failed to relieve Kut. Since then new plans of campaign have been devised, and are in active operation. We have, however, satisfied ourselves that the transfer of the conduct of the expedition to the War Office had been most beneficial so far as the supplies and comfort of the troops are concerned. Officers selected for high and responsible command have shown both decision and ability in grappling with and surmounting difficulties, which face them : the transport has been greatly increased, and although a certain amount of hardship may still from time to time be experienced by the troops located in Mesopotamia, this is due more to the inconvenience inevitable in a campaign than to lack of prescience and organisation on the part of the administrative authorities. The medical equipment, both in personnel and material, is also altogether on a higher standard than in the past.

We may add that we have been very favourably impressed by the evidence of the representatives of the War Office, and from that evidence we deduce that the difficulties of campaigning in Mesopotamia are fully recognised by the War Office, and that in surmounting them neither time nor expenditure will be spared in future.

We were directed by the terms of our reference to enquire into the origin, inception and conduct of the operations in Mesopotamia. We have partially performed this task, so far as the origin and inception of the campaign are concerned, by the narrative we have given. We now propose to give fuller attention to the conduct of the campaign, and this task includes an investigation into the " supply of drafts, reinforcements, ammunition and equipment to the troops and Fleet, the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of those Departments of the Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the forces employed in the theatre of war."

As our narrative has already indicated, the main difficulties to be overcome in Mesopotamia were those connected with transport. This branch of our enquiry, practically covers questions connected with all classes of supplies and reinforcements, and it also materially affected the provision made for the sick and the wounded. We therefore intend to make a close and detailed examination (1) into transport requirements and the measures taken both in India and Great Britain to meet these requirements, and (2) the provision for and treatment of the sick and wounded.

The supply of armament, equipment, and reinforcements necessary for the expedition, will also require notice, and we will deal with this forthwith.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00008b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

1. Every General who appeared before us agreed that the Mesopotamian Expedition was badly equipped. Sir Beauchamp Duff informed us that the Indian Army, which furnished the expedition, was organised only for semi-savage fighting, was not well found for an overseas expedition, to a large extent used second rate equipment, and was "backward in every particular." He thought, however, that the equipment was adequate for an Indian Frontier campaign, but even in this very modified commendation he is not supported by Sir Percy Lake, for many years Chief of the General Staff in India, who declared that the Indian Army was badly equipped even for frontier warfare. Both General Nixon and his Chief of the Staff, General Kemball, maintained that the expedition was ill-equipped. Other witnesses, such as General Aylmer and General Younghusband, agreed in this view, the latter indeed asserting that the expedition was badly equipped in every essential, especially transport, ambulance and commissariat.

2. We have elsewhere* expressed our opinion that the unpreparedness of the Indian Army for its task in Mesopotamia was primarily due to a long standing policy of economy and restriction of military preparation to the needs of frontier warfare. For this policy and its results on the outbreak of war in 1914, the Home and Indian Governments were, of course, responsible, and not Sir Beauchamp Duff and the General Staff at Simla. But the unpreparedness for overseas warfare was well-known to the Indian Military Authorities, and when they undertook the management of an expedition which was to fight against Turkey supported by Germany, they ought immediately to have striven energetically to bring the equipment of the expedition up to the standard of modern warfare. We shall deal in the next two Parts of our report with their omissions in this respect as regards transport and medical provision and we regret to find similar omissions in nearly every other branch of military provision, with the exception of the commissariat, though even here the standard was low, and the distribution of food uneven. Serious defects in military equipment, resulting in unnecessary suffering and casualties among the troops, were allowed to persist month after month during the first fourteen months of the campaign, when the Indian Government were responsible for its management.

3. It is true that India was not herself in a position to supply some of the lacking material, such, for example, as heavy guns ; and it is also fair to recognise that before the Mesopotamian Expedition was despatched, India had already sent to Europe much of her finest artillery. But when the responsibility of the Mesopotamian Expedition was assumed by India, the Indian Military Authorities do not appear, for at least a year, to have appraised, anticipated or represented to England the needs of the expedition in this very important particular. From the evidence of Major-General Sir Stanley von Donop, late Master-General of the Ordnance in England, it would appear that it was not till December, 1915, after the reverse of Ctesiphon and more than twelve months after the expedition had landed at Basra, that any request for heavy guns for Mesopotamia was received by him, and it was not till May 26th, 1916, more than two months after the Chief of the General Staff at Whitehall had asked what were the requirements of Mesopotamia in guns, that the full artillery requirements in Mesopotamia were at last communicated by India to the War Office.

4. During these months the troops in Mesopotamia had, without adequate preparation by heavy artillery, to attack across the open and, at the cost of heavy casualties, strongly fortified trenches, and General Nixon in his evidence stated that his artillery was not only deficient in number, but out of date in quality. Major Bastow, who was General Townshend's Aide-de-Camp, stated that the advance against Ctesiphon was undertaken with only eighteen field guns, and six horse artillery guns ; and Sir Fenton Aylmer informed us that the lack of proper artillery contributed to the failure of the operations for the relief of Kut. We may note that the chief shortage felt was in howitzers.

5. But if it was outside the productive power of India to make good portions of the defective equipment such as aeroplanes, artillery, high explosive shells, machine-guns, etc., there were various other articles which India could have arranged to supply, but the supply of which was not seriously attempted until 1916. The list of deficient equipment disclosed by witnesses is long and multifarious, and we will only mention some of the chief items.

* See Part I., para. 23, and Part XI., D.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000085

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

There is a consensus of evidence that the force was deficient, even as late as the spring of 1916, in wire-cutters, telephones, watercarts, Véry lights, rockets, tents, mosquito-nets, sun-helmets, periscopes, telescopic sights, loophole plates, flares, bombs, hand-grenades, and even blankets and clothing. Our heavy casualties and reverses were in fact largely due to the lack of articles essential to the success of war carried on under modern conditions.

6. Sir Beauchamp Duff's apology for some of these defects is, that articles such as wire-cutters, rockets, Véry lights, etc., were not available or usually needed in India, or that they were not heard of before the war. This is no defence for the failure to provide them in Mesopotamia eighteen months after the beginning of the war, and we feel it a discredit to the Indian Military Authorities that such a modern device as Véry lights should have been in use by the Turks in Mesopotamia, before it was supplied to our own troops.

7. Our evidence abundantly shows how detrimental the absence of these modern requirements was to our men; but we wish to draw special attention to the suffering caused by the neglect to supply two articles of equipment, which the most ordinary foresight on the part of the Indian Authorities should have shown to be necessary. The power of the sun in Mesopotamia was well known in India, but the troops were normally only supplied with light-weight, single-fly tents, quite insufficient to keep out the sun. Sir Percy Lake and other witnesses informed us that sunstroke and heat-stroke were not uncommon amongst those using these tents, and Captain Herbert, M.P., stated that as late as April, 1916, "there were 21 lb. single-fly tents for four men, which would not have been healthy in a cold climate, and were intolerable in Mesopotamia. These tents have only one fly, and the casualties from sunstroke could be expected to be appalling." It may be added that the heat is so extreme that even in double-fly tents there is danger of casualties from the sun in Mesopotamia.

8. Even in such an obvious necessary as clothing, the Indian Government seems to have been unable adequately to supply the force in Mesopotamia, small as it was in comparison with our armies in France and elsewhere. Colonel Hehir tells us that there was a lack of proper clothing even for the patients in the hospitals in the summer of 1915, while Captain Herbert in April, 1916, heard many complaints that in the bitter winter months in Mesopotamia, troops had been sent from India in "shorts," and tropical clothing. The nights throughout a considerable part of the year are cold, and, during the winter and spring, the country is subject to cold winds and icy storms. Yet apparently the Commander-in-Chief in India originally intended to leave the provision of warm clothing for the troops to private benevolence, and only consented to undertake such provision after a protest by the Viceroy. Writing to Sir Thomas Holderness on October 21st, 1914, Lord Hardinge, who was then Viceroy, says:—

> When some weeks ago I enquired of the Commander-in-Chief whether proper provision had been made for warm clothing for the troops, he told me that he was relying on private charity for this. I told him at once that I could not possibly agree to our troops being dependent for warm clothing upon private charity, and that I insisted upon the troops being properly clad at the expense of the Government. It will cost six or seven lakhs, but in a war like this what does that matter? It is far better to have warm men in the field than men dying of pneumonia in the hospitals. It is the cheapest course in the long run.

9. Among the defects of equipment one of the most important was the want of aeroplanes. But for this the Indian military authorities were not responsible. When the war broke out, they were just beginning to organise an aviation service, and had established a Flying School. But at the request of the War Office they closed the school, and sent the officers who were pilots back to England. These were only three in number, as matters were in a very embryonic stage. But early in the Mesopotamia Expedition the need for aeroplanes was apparent. In January, 1915, General Barrett represented the importance of this matter more than once, and Lord Hardinge strongly urged the need for aeroplanes upon the War Office. But it was found impossible to supply any until May, 1915. Then two Maurice Farmans were sent, in July two Caudrons, and in August six Martinsyde Scouts. Somewhat later, three hydroplanes of the Short type were sent, and two naval aeroplanes, one a Voisin and one a Henry Farman, fitted with a Canton Unné engine. In October, four B.E.2 C's arrived. But there were many misfortunes. The hydroplanes were not a success, and among the aeroplanes there were losses through engine failure, through other accidents and through normal wear and tear. These misfortunes seem to have worked with aggravated effect by reason of the difficulties of repair, which in part

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

lepended on the difficulty of transport. The upshot was that at the date of the Battle of Ctesiphon there were only reckoned to be five aeroplanes belonging to the Royal Flying Corps in Mesopotamia, and of these only three seem to have been actually available at the battle—a Maurice Farman, a B.E.2 C. and a Martinsyde. This reckoning does not appear to include the naval aeroplanes, of which, however, only one was of any use. None of these machines were fitted either for photography or with wireless apparatus; and though valuable work was done, they were of course inadequate for what was required. The personnel of the Royal Flying Corps was organised as a Flight, and there were six flying officers and forty-four rank and file. During December, 1915, and January, 1916, owing to two machines being shut up in Kut, to accidents, and to the ill-health of pilots, sometimes only one aeroplane was available. Another Flight of aeroplanes was sent out in February, 1916, and from then onward, the Royal Flying Corps maintained a supply of new machines. After that date, there does not appear to have been a shortage in numbers of machines, and from the same time apparatus both for photography and wireless telegraphy came into use. But early in February, 1916, the Turkish troops, who till then had been without aeroplanes, were furnished with three fast aeroplanes of the Fokker type, which were much more formidable fighting mach nes than anything possessed by the British Army. The presence of these fast machines with the Turkish Army placed the British airmen at a great disadvantage; and the want of at least one efficient fast fighting machine was keenly felt.

10. It is clear that the lack of a sufficient supply of aeroplanes of any kind in the operations which led to the Battle of Ctesiphon seriously hindered our troops in the task they had to perform, and that the want of fast fighting aeroplanes later prevented the Royal Flying Corps being of as much service to the Expedition as they might have been. How far these defects were remediable by the War Office opens up the wide question of the general supply of aeroplanes for the purposes of the War, which has been the subject of an independent enquiry. We are not in a position to express any opinion upon that question, and we certainly should not deny that the first claim upon the resources of the Royal Flying Corps was in Europe and not in Mesopotamia. It is not, however, clear why a larger number of aeroplanes of a type not sufficiently fast for service in France should not have been available for the advance on Bagdad, nor why those which were sent were not equipped for photography and wireless telegraphy. The difficulty of sparing fast machines in the spring of 1916 to fight the three Turkish Fokkers is more intelligible. But we note the deficiency of aeroplanes as one of the defects of equipment which contributed to the ill-success of the British Army in Mesopotamia during the winter and spring of 1915-16.

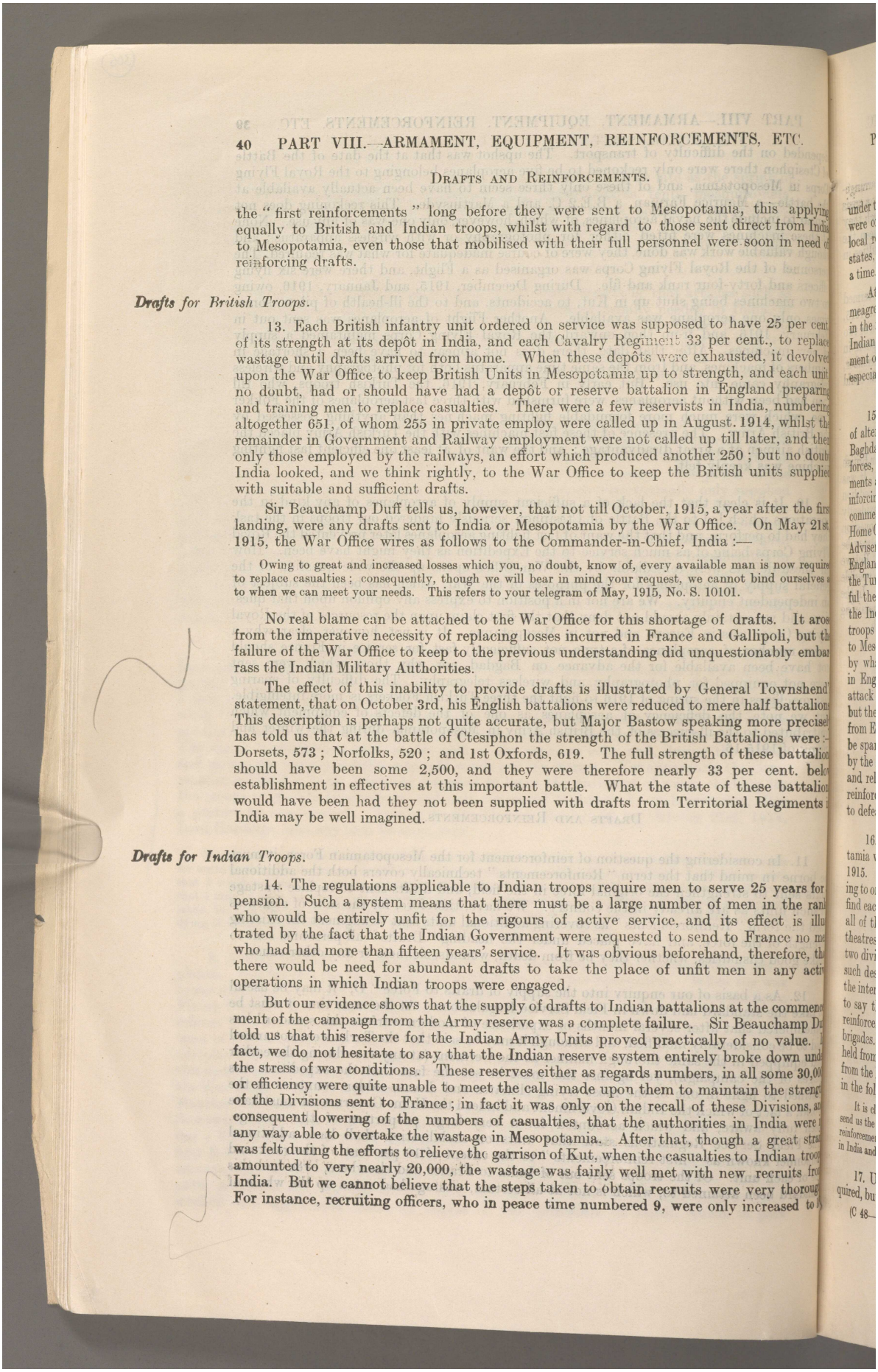
Drafts and Reinforcements.

11. In considering the question of reinforcement for the Mesopotamian Force, it must be borne in mind that the term "Reinforcements" technically covers both the additional units sent to strengthen the original force in the field, and drafts sent to replace wastage in such units as are already in the country. We have, therefore, for the sake of clearness used the term "Reinforcements" as covering additional units sent to augment the existing strength of the force, and have placed under the heading "Drafts" all personnel sent to make good casualties, whether they be from death, wounds, sickness or any other cause.

12. As a basis of our enquiry into the supply of drafts to Force "D," it may be useful to take the standard laid down in Field Service Regulations. At the same time it must be remembered that after several months of experience of modern warfare this standard has had to be considerably modified, and although it may be said that the Turks were not armed and equipped in the same thorough manner as the Germans (at any rate during the earlier stages of the campaign), yet against this must be set the fact that the expedition was destined to fight in one of the most trying climates and disease-ridden countries in the world, a fact of which the Indian Government and indeed the Home Government must have been fully aware, and which accounted for a very large proportion of the wastage. The Field Service Regulations state that units on mobilisation shall have additional personnel known as "first reinforcements" to the extent of 10 per cent. of the rank and file of each unit. Of the troops sent out of India to France and elsewhere, even had this standard been attained to, which is not at all certain, wastage had eaten up the whole of

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00001e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library



the "first reinforcements" long before they were sent to Mesopotamia, this applying equally to British and Indian troops, whilst with regard to those sent direct from India to Mesopotamia, even those that mobilised with their full personnel were soon in need of reinforcing drafts.

***Drafts** for British Troops.*

13. Each British infantry unit ordered on service was supposed to have 25 per cent of its strength at its depôt in India, and each Cavalry Regiment 33 per cent., to replace wastage until drafts arrived from home. When these depôts were exhausted, it devolved upon the War Office to keep British Units in Mesopotamia up to strength, and each unit no doubt, had or should have had a depôt or reserve battalion in England preparing and training men to replace casualties. There were a few reservists in India, numbering altogether 651, of whom 255 in private employ were called up in August. 1914, whilst the remainder in Government and Railway employment were not called up till later, and then only those employed by the railways, an effort which produced another 250; but no doubt India looked, and we think rightly, to the War Office to keep the British units supplied with suitable and sufficient drafts.

Sir Beauchamp Duff tells us, however, that not till October, 1915, a year after the first landing, were any drafts sent to India or Mesopotamia by the War Office. On May 21st, 1915, the War Office wires as follows to the Commander-in-Chief, India :—

> Owing to great and increased losses which you, no doubt, know of, every available man is now required to replace casualties; consequently, though we will bear in mind your request, we cannot bind ourselves as to when we can meet your needs. This refers to your telegram of May, 1915, No. S. 10101.

No real blame can be attached to the War Office for this shortage of drafts. It arose from the imperative necessity of replacing losses incurred in France and Gallipoli, but the failure of the War Office to keep to the previous understanding did unquestionably embarrass the Indian Military Authorities.

The effect of this inability to provide drafts is illustrated by General Townshend's statement, that on October 3rd, his English battalions were reduced to mere half battalions. This description is perhaps not quite accurate, but Major Bastow speaking more precisely has told us that at the battle of Ctesiphon the strength of the British Battalions were :— Dorsets, 573; Norfolks, 520; and 1st Oxfords, 619. The full strength of these battalions should have been some 2,500, and they were therefore nearly 33 per cent. below establishment in effectives at this important battle. What the state of these battalions would have been had they not been supplied with drafts from Territorial Regiments in India may be well imagined.

***Drafts** for Indian Troops.*

14. The regulations applicable to Indian troops require men to serve 25 years for pension. Such a system means that there must be a large number of men in the ranks who would be entirely unfit for the rigours of active service, and its effect is illustrated by the fact that the Indian Government were requested to send to France no men who had had more than fifteen years' service. It was obvious beforehand, therefore, that there would be need for abundant drafts to take the place of unfit men in any active operations in which Indian troops were engaged.

But our evidence shows that the supply of drafts to Indian battalions at the commencement of the campaign from the Army reserve was a complete failure. Sir Beauchamp Duff told us that this reserve for the Indian Army Units proved practically of no value. In fact, we do not hesitate to say that the Indian reserve system entirely broke down under the stress of war conditions. These reserves either as regards numbers, in all some 30,000 or efficiency were quite unable to meet the calls made upon them to maintain the strength of the Divisions sent to France; in fact it was only on the recall of these Divisions, and consequent lowering of the numbers of casualties, that the authorities in India were in any way able to overtake the wastage in Mesopotamia. After that, though a great strain was felt during the efforts to relieve the garrison of Kut, when the casualties to Indian troops amounted to very nearly 20,000, the wastage was fairly well met with new recruits from India. But we cannot believe that the steps taken to obtain recruits were very thorough. For instance, recruiting officers, who in peace time numbered 9, were only increased to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

under the stress of war, whilst assistant recruiting officers, who numbered 14 before the war, were only increased to 25. Other steps were certainly taken, such as the formation of local recruiting committees, obtaining of assistance from local Governments and native states, etc., but these seem to us somewhat inadequate methods for raising men at such a time.

At the same time it is only fair to say that although the means taken may seem rather meagre, yet the recruits obtained were sufficient to enable the ranks of the Indian forces in the field to be kept at a fairly generous numerical standard after the withdrawal of the Indian Divisions from France. These recruits were mostly utilised to increase the establishment of existing units. This process within limits is preferable to creating new formations, especially in view of the difficulty of obtaining British Officers.

Reinforcements.

15. The history of the supply of reinforcements to Force "D" is a melancholy tale of altercation between London and Simla. Although up to the time of the advance on Baghdad the expedition was always numerically strong enough to cope with the Turkish forces, yet this result was only attained after protracted wrangling between the Governments at home and in India, neither of whom appeared willing to accept the task of reinforcing an expedition, for the success of which they were jointly responsible. When at the commencement of the campaign the 6th Division was ordered to the Persian Gulf by the Home Government in October, 1914, we cannot find that the India Office or their Military Adviser, Sir Edmund Barrow, ever contemplated or arranged for its reinforcement from England in case of need, although it was obvious that even if the expedition were successful, the Turks would make strong efforts to oust it from Mesopotamia, whilst if it were unsuccessful the need for reinforcement would have been even more urgent. On the other hand, the Indian Government adopted the attitude that, having already denuded India of troops by overseas expeditions, it was impossible to send reinforcements from India to Mesopotamia. The danger and friction created by such a situation is well exemplified by what happened in the early part of 1915. At that period the military authorities in England and India were agreed that the Mesopotamia Expedition was in danger of attack by superior Turkish forces, and that its reinforcement by a Division was imperative; but the Secretary of State informed the Viceroy that no reinforcements could be despatched from England, and the Viceroy informed the Secretary of State that no further troops could be spared from India. The difficulty was only got over after much delay and discussion by the Home Government definitely ordering India to send reinforcements to Mesopotamia, and relieving the Viceroy of all responsibility for any consequent danger to India. The reinforcements were sent, though only at the last moment, and they enabled Sir J. Nixon to defeat and drive the Turks before him in the spring and summer of 1915.

16. The next occasion on which considerable reinforcements were required in Mesopotamia was in connection with the advance on Baghdad, which was sanctioned in October, 1915. Again both the Indian and Home Governments agreed that reinforcements amounting to one or two divisions were essential if the advance was to be undertaken, and again we find each Government trying to put upon the other the responsibility for providing part or all of the necessary troops. Owing to the uncertain position of the operations in other theatres of the war, the Imperial authorities found it difficult to guarantee the despatch of two divisions to Mesopotamia within the necessary time, and asked India whether, pending such despatch, she could not, in the meantime, herself provide another division. With the intention of evading this liability, the Indian Government resorted to procedure which, to say the least of it, was disingenuous. There were at the time available in India as reinforcements three batteries of artillery, three cavalry regiments, and two infantry brigades. Information as to the availability of these reinforcements was, however, withheld from the Home Government, and the explanation of this omission is given in a letter from the Military Secretary of Sir Beauchamp Duff to the Military Secretary of the Viceroy in the following words:—

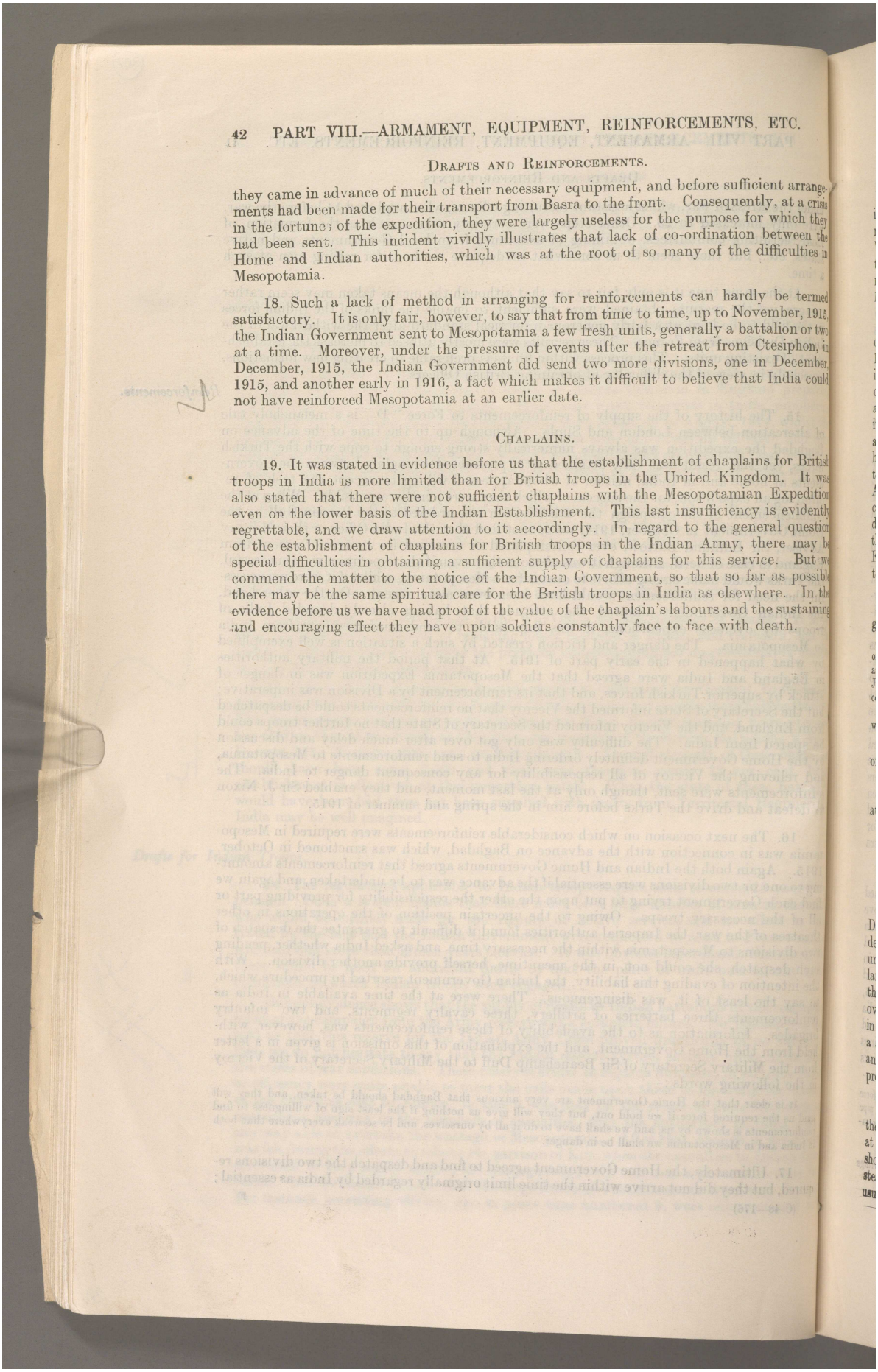
> It is clear that the Home Government are very anxious that Baghdad should be taken, and they will send us the required force if we hold out, but they will give us nothing if the least sign of willingness to find reinforcements is shown by us, and we shall have to do it all by ourselves, and be so weak everywhere that both in India and in Mesopotamia we shall be in danger.

17. Ultimately, the Home Government agreed to find and despatch the two divisions required, but they did not arrive within the time limit originally regarded by India as essential;

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000074

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



DRAFTS AND REINFORCEMENTS.

they came in advance of much of their necessary equipment, and before sufficient arrangements had been made for their transport from Basra to the front. Consequently, at a crisis in the fortunes of the expedition, they were largely useless for the purpose for which they had been sent. This incident vividly illustrates that lack of co-ordination between the Home and Indian authorities, which was at the root of so many of the difficulties in Mesopotamia.

18. Such a lack of method in arranging for reinforcements can hardly be termed satisfactory. It is only fair, however, to say that from time to time, up to November, 1915, the Indian Government sent to Mesopotamia a few fresh units, generally a battalion or two at a time. Moreover, under the pressure of events after the retreat from Ctesiphon, in December, 1915, the Indian Government did send two more divisions, one in December, 1915, and another early in 1916, a fact which makes it difficult to believe that India could not have reinforced Mesopotamia at an earlier date.

CHAPLAINS.

19. It was stated in evidence before us that the establishment of chaplains for British troops in India is more limited than for British troops in the United Kingdom. It was also stated that there were not sufficient chaplains with the Mesopotamian Expedition even on the lower basis of the Indian Establishment. This last insufficiency is evidently regrettable, and we draw attention to it accordingly. In regard to the general question of the establishment of chaplains for British troops in the Indian Army, there may be special difficulties in obtaining a sufficient supply of chaplains for this service. But we commend the matter to the notice of the Indian Government, so that so far as possible there may be the same spiritual care for the British troops in India as elsewhere. In the evidence before us we have had proof of the value of the chaplain's labours and the sustaining and encouraging effect they have upon soldiers constantly face to face with death.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000010

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

1. River transport was from the beginning of the campaign a dominant factor, as its sufficiency or insufficiency regulated the movements of the expedition. This fundamental matter has been treated at considerable length in paragraphs 73 to 87 of the Vincent-Bingley Report.* We concur with the finding therein, but as the terms of reference to that Commission were more limited than ours, they were not able to go so far into the matter as we have been able to do, nor to carry their investigations later than April, 1916.

2. Evidence is overwhelming that a shortage of river transport existed from the time of the occupation of Kurna in December, 1914, and became serious from and after May, 1915. Despite additions that were made, the shortage had become relatively even greater in April, 1916, than at any earlier period of the campaign, owing to the increased numbers of the force. Practically at no time after the advance above Kurna was river transport adequate to requirements. It greatly delayed military operations, in which celerity was an important factor for success, it affected the comfort and feeding of the troops, and it was a direct cause of suffering to the sick and wounded. As evidence of the shortage, we have been told that it took nearly two months to concentrate troops and supplies for the advance from Amara to Kut-el-Amara, and that again the advance from Kut and Aziziyeh towards Baghdad was fatally delayed from the same cause. It seems almost certain that, but for the shortage of river transport, the Turkish Army would have been destroyed between Amara and Ctesiphon; but the want was most acutely felt during the strenuous time when every day counted in the attempt to relieve the siege of Kut. Here, in view of the straits in which General Townshend reported his force to be, time was of the utmost importance.

3. General Lake, at that time General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia, telegraphed to the Chief of the General Staff, Delhi, on March 22nd, 1916, as follows:—

> I doubt firstly whether the paralysing effect which the inadequacy and late supply of river craft has had on the operations up the Tigris is fully realised by the General Staff at home, and secondly, why our forecasts as to what it will be possible to convey up river have varied, and of late have considerably developed. On January 21st, 1916, when Aylmer fought his action at Hannah, there were 10,000 infantry and 12 guns in the country available as reinforcements, but which, owing to this cause, could not be sent up to him in time.
>
> On March 8th, the date of his last operations, I had, approximately, 12,000 infantry and 26 guns which, for similar reasons, could not be forwarded.

The evidence shows conclusively that shortage of river transport was the chief cause of the failure to relieve Kut.

4. River tonnage available for transport from Basra up river, and the requirements at different periods, were as follows:—

	Daily tonnage available.	Daily requirements.
November, 1915	150 tons	.. 208 tons.
April, 1916	250 to 300 tons ..	.. 598 tons.
August, 1916	450 tons	.. 650 tons.

These figures are given in the Vincent-Bingley Report, and by Major-General Cowper D.A. and Q.M.G., though we make from the latter's calculation of tonnage available the deductions necessary according to evidence, on account of steamers broken down, or undergoing repair. It will be observed that in each case the requirements have been largely in excess of the tonnage available, without allowing for a further increase of the force or for loss of steamers. It may be well to note that since the War Office took over the management of the campaign in 1916, more foresight in preparation and energy in action are evident. To a recent estimate of requirements (namely, 800 tons per day), a 50 per cent. margin for possible increase of force or eventualities has been added, and a large fleet, capable of carrying up river 1,200 tons daily, now has been, or is being, provided, in addition to the transporting capacity of the railways.

5. The evidence before us tends to show that improved control and administration of the river craft available would have mitigated the evils arising from the shortage, although at no time could such improvement have entirely overcome them. In this connection it should be noted that the work of controlling and managing a miscellaneous fleet of river steamers, tugs and barges, with their crews, their upkeep and their traffic, was not in the usual line of Army or Royal Indian Marine experience. It is, we think, unfortunate that

* See Appendix I.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000011

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

PART IX.—TRANSPORT.

A. Shortage of River Transport.

someone with experience of the management of such flotillas on one of the rivers of India or Burma was not at an early date appointed to assist in this work. Being clearly of opinion that shortage of transport was one of the chief causes of the failure to capture Baghdad and to relieve Kut, as well as a cause of deplorable suffering of the sick and wounded, we have endeavoured to ascertain where the responsibility primarily lay.

6. In November, 1914, when General Barrett took possession of Basra, the river transport available consisted of three steamers, viz., the "Medjidieh," which was the most serviceable, the "Julnar," which required new engines, and the "Salimi," which was used as a ferry boat between Basra and Kurna. Besides these there were four lighters of 60 tons, one of 80 tons, two of 110 tons and ten of 200, making seventeen in all, and some country sailing boats, or mahailas, with a capacity of from 25 to 35 tons. In the words of a witness :—

"The mahailas were very useful for unloading ships in the stream, and bringing the contents to shore. But to go any distance they take a very long time indeed, and if the wind is against them and the tide is against them and the current is against them they cannot move at all. The mahailas that went from Basra to Kurna, about 30 miles roughly, used to start one day and get up there on the third day, or afterwards."

7. On November 23rd 1914, after Basra was occupied, at a conference held at Army Headquarters, Commander A. Hamilton, R.I.M., recommended to the General Staff that they should at once ask for 12 river steamers of the "Medjidieh" class. Commander Hamilton had previously been on the Tigris for two years, and had surveyed the river from Basra to Baghdad. He was, therefore, competent to speak with exceptional knowledge both of the river and of the class of steamer most suitable to its navigation. He urged the necessity of giving orders early, and, owing to the necessary delay in building the vessels, which he estimated at 12 months, he suggested that they should be got from India ready-built. There is reason to believe that had Commander Hamilton's foresight, knowledge, and advice at once been acted upon, subsequent difficulties would have been mitigated, if not altogether avoided. General Barrett does not remember the circumstances. He may perhaps have been influenced by the limited scope of the immediate operations then authorised, but we must note that it is clear from his evidence to us and the Vincent-Bingley Commission that he realised that the expedition would in all probability have to advance as far as Amara and Nasariyeh. At any rate, the Staff at that time did not consider the matter urgent, although it was allowed that six more steamers might be required. Nothing, however, was done until January 2nd, 1915, when, in reply to an enquiry as to the steamers available for use above Kurnah, General Barrett telegraphed to India that, in order to carry a force of one brigade, one squadron, one battery and one company of sappers and miners, with 500 mules and supplies for 10 days, seven steamers and one or two lighters would be required in addition to the existing flotilla. These seven steamers and two lighters were purchased in India during February, 1915. They arrived at Basra in May of the same year. On February 17th, 1915, General Barrett asked for four river tugs, which were purchased in India early in March, 1915, and arrived at Basra shortly after the seven steamers.

8. On May 27th, 1915, General Nixon, who had in April taken command, informed India that the paddle steamers and tugs sent could not be relied upon to work above Kurna, owing to their comparatively deep draught and to the lowness of the river at certain seasons, and asked for six more tugs of certain power, and with a draught not to exceed 3 feet, subsequently modified to 3 feet 6 inches. There were difficulties in finding in India tugs conforming to the specification, and the order was ultimately passed on to England and merged in the August demand* for river craft to be built there. On July 8th, 1915, a comprehensive memorandum was drawn up by General Kemball and forwarded to India by General Nixon. In this memorandum the shortage of river craft and the urgent need for further supplies of craft of a suitable type were strongly emphasized, and warnings given that if steps were not taken in good time to meet these requirements grave risks were being run of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment. General Kemball says :—

Had we had sufficient river transport we could have entered Nasiriyeh at the heels of the Turkish force defeated at Shaiba, and at the same time despatched troops to drive off the Turks then threatening the pipe line up the Karun. We had sufficient troops, but not sufficient steamers, to undertake simultaneous operations.

The same conditions have obtained ever since.

Before an advance could be made from Qurnah the return of the steamers taken by General Gorringe up the Karun had to be awaited.

* See paragraph 9 below.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000098

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

Before a force could be despatched against Nasiriyeh the vessels which transported the troops to Amara had to be brought back down the river.

At the present time, before the 6th Division can be fully concentrated at Amara in readiness for a further advance or to meet a forward movement of the Turks, the steamers with the Nasiriyeh expedition will have to be withdrawn.

Military exigencies have permitted no pause in our operations and the consequence has been that all the steamers have been used incessantly. Indeed, these vessels have only been sent for overhaul when they actually break down; but, in spite of these exertions, it has been impossible to prevent operations being prolonged into a season which on account of low water and heat adds difficulties which greater celerity might have avoided.

Such are the conditions to-day and there can be no doubt that river transport will continue to be the governing factor in any future operations.

From the nature of the country and the distribution of the population and political centres any operations against the Turks have to be made along rivers, and the ease and success with which operations can be carried out must naturally depend on the number of suitable steamers, tugs and barges available.

Now up to the present time we have never managed to transport more than 5 battalions with field and heavy guns (but without animals), at any one time. . . . . .

In short, more powerful light-draught river steamers and plenty of them, and not only ships, but personnel and material for their maintenance, are regarded by the General Staff of this Force as our principal need.

It is also thought necessary to add the warning that if steps are not taken in good time to meet these requirements we are running grave risks of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment.

At the present time we cannot make the most effective use of the troops available owing to want of ships, and in any crisis insufficiency of river transport would limit the scope of reinforcements, while a breakdown of shipping might have still more serious consequences."

It was thus pointed out that the most effective use of the troops available could not be made owing to want of river transport, and that in any crisis aid by reinforcements would be limited, while a breakdown of steamers might have still more serious consequences. With the memorandum came a pressing request for the building in England of :—

6 paddle steamers of the " Medjidieh " class.
3 stern-wheelers of lighter draught.
8 tugs of the " Sumana" class.
43 barges of specifications given.

9. The purport of these requirements was telegraphed to London on August 4th, 1915. Delay took place, and it was not until a mail despatch from the Government of India, dated August 20th, was received in London on September 9th, that active steps were taken to place the orders. Even after this date there was further delay—only in part unavoidable—and eventually orders for the six paddle steamers, three stern-wheel steamers and eight tugs were placed on November 3rd, 1915, orders for the barges being placed a few days later. The first of these tugs reached Abadan in April, 1916, the first paddlers and stern-wheelers in June, 1916, and the 43 barges arrived at different dates between April, 1916, and the end of the year. All except the six paddle steamers were shipped either in sections or in the form of plates, and had to be erected after arrival in Mesopotamia, so that a considerable period elapsed after their arrival before they were available for use. Some were not ready in January, 1917.

10. Finding that the order from England meant at least 12 months' delay, and in view of the supreme importance of meantime obtaining more river transport without delay, General Nixon telegraphed to India on October 9th, 1915, as follows :—

Please procure quickly some powerful light-draught tugs or stern-wheelers in India, which will serve present needs and thereby greatly strengthen military operations, which are very seriously impeded. This is a very urgent need.

and again on October 13th, 1915 :—

If anything of suitable draught and approximating to other requirements can be sent here soon they will serve as useful stopgaps till new craft arrives. Please, therefore, do whatever is possible to meet our urgent difficulties meanwhile.

In response to these pressing messages, the Indian Government eventually secured in India a large number of steamers and barges which did not, however, arrive till January to April, 1916. Subsequent orders followed during 1916 for the supply of many more river craft from England, but we do not think it in the public interest to give details as to these.

It will be sufficient to state generally that upwards of 700 river craft of all kinds have been sent or are on order, and that the margin over estimated requirements now provided for should safeguard the future. The foregoing summary of the demands for

39

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000078

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

tonnage up to the beginning of 1916, covers the period which is the main subject of our enquiry. Any vessels asked for after January, 1916, even if ready-made in India, could not have had any effect either upon the operations for the capture of Baghdad in 1915 or for the relief of Kut.

11. In order to appreciate the responsibility attaching to General Nixon, it is necessary to look at the position on the various dates on which he suggested the main moves up the river, or received authority to make these advances. The three most critical dates may be taken as those of the decisions to advance from Kurna to Amara, from Amara to Kut, and from Kut and Aziziyeh to Baghdad. Each of these advances, it must be remembered, involved a special demand on the River Transport in respect of the carriage of troops, ambulance transport, artillery, &c., and *pro tanto* diminished the amount of River Transport available for ordinary supply. The dates when these advances were authorised were May 23rd, 1915, August 7th, 1915, and October 23rd, 1915.

General Cowper gives the daily tonnage available on these three dates as 175 tons, less an allowance for vessels off work for repair, leaving, say, 150 tons daily available at each of the three dates.

General Lake, in the despatch describing the operations of the force under his command, writes as follows :—

> The number of steamers available in January, 1916, for river transport purposes was practically the same as when, in June, 1915, the first advance up the Tigris took place.

In addition to steamers and barges, a certain number of native sailing craft, called mahailas, were utilised, but were unreliable owing to their being unable to make progress up river against wind and current.

12. It is important to remember what General Nixon had before him in taking the first step from Kurna up the river. Each of the advances from Kurna to Amara, Kurna to Naseriyeh, Amara to Kut, and Kut towards Baghdad, was, it is true, only taken after it was recommended by the General, and authority obtained from the Government of India and the Government in London. Nevertheless it is our definite opinion that these advances—at least as far as Kut (just outside the limit of the Basra Vilayet)—should have been anticipated by General Nixon and provided for in time, seeing that even the possibility of an advance to Baghdad could not have been out of his mind, in view of the instructions given to him on his proceeding to Mesopotamia to take command.

13. The following is an extract from the orders given to him by the Commander-in-Chief in India, dated March 24th, 1915 :—

> "Operations. After acquainting yourself on the spot with the present situation, you will submit :—
> 1. A plan for the effective occupation of Basra Vilayet.
> 2. A plan for the subsequent advance on Baghdad."

It is clear, however, that the Government in London had no intention at this time of authorising an advance, so far as Baghdad. The correspondence shows that they deprecated too large a commitment in Mesopotamia, and the limits of action indicated by them were the protection of the pipe line from the Anglo-Persian oilfields to Abadan and the occupation of Basra Vilayet which extends to a point just below Kut-el-Amara. But in the case of military operations dependent on river transport, the need for timely preparation was of special importance. It would appear in these circumstances no more than ordinary prudence to prepare long in advance for all contingencies, and not to advance until the necessary transport had been provided.

14. The total tonnage on the river on May 23rd, 1915, was small—too small even for the existing force, if it was to advance and thereby lengthen the lines of communication. Moreover, of the steamers available more than half exceeded a draught of 3 feet 6 inches, and it had already been found that it was practically impossible to get suitable steamers from India, with a maximum draught not exceeding this limit. The only alternative, therefore, so far as river transport was concerned, was to build new steamers, and these could not be available under 12 months from the date of the order being despatched.

15. A great deal of correspondence and some misunderstanding took place between General Nixon and India as to the specification, and in particular the maximum draught of steamers suitable for Mesopotamia. It is difficult to visualise the conditions of the river and of the country. At certain times of the year the river overflows its low banks, and the plain is turned into a vast sea of water. Transport by road,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00001d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

therefore, cannot be relied on, although practicable with difficulties during part of the year. Just above Kurna are what may be called the Straits, where the passage of the river at all times is difficult, and particularly so at the season of low river. One witness —Commander Huddlestone, R.I.M., writes in an appendix to his evidence :—

The river between Kurna and Amara is roughly very narrow—some 85 to 250 feet broad—with real hairpin corners, and very shallow, and a very strong current, some 3 to 6 knots. The banks are from 3 to 5 feet high, and the bend so sharp that the advance of the vessel coming down, notwithstanding the helm, sends her—or rather, her barges* right smack against the banks. If she has not got barges she goes against them herself. The result is not so bad at this time of the year, as would be expected, because the bank gives way, and the vessel or barge bounds off again, cannons against the other side, and proceeds, and repeats the performance some two or three times an hour, sometimes more, sometimes less. In summer, when the banks are hard, the damage done to vessels and barges is immense, and even now they do a considerable amount of damage to themselves, and so, in designing vessels, I give you what I think are the chief points to be borne in mind :—

(1) Draught should not exceed 3 feet 6 inches for steamers, and 3 feet for barges.
(2) Length should not exceed 212 feet for steamers, and 170 feet for barges.
(3) The steamers should be made of steel, with independent paddles.

16. Another witness, Commander Hamilton, R.I.M., stated in his evidence :—

I doubt if steamers really suitable for the Tigris exist anywhere, especially as troop-ships. So the only ones that we can call really satisfactory (other than Lynch's), will be the ones specially built, or building, in England to our design on Lynch's pattern. It is the shallow draught required, combined with the necessary size of vessel and horsepower which renders any ready-made ones from other parts of the world more or less, and in many cases quite, unsuitable. It must be remembered that the Tigris in the low-river season (a normal low-river season) is, after all, only a glorified ditch in many parts. It is not yet fully realised by the Army, I think, that last low-river season (August to March, 1915), was abnormally high. The result was that the comparatively deep-draught steamers (about 5 feet actually), which we received from Burma were actually able to run regularly right up to the front during all the low seasons. We had stipulated, and still stipulate, that 3 feet 6 inches is the standard safe draught for that river in low season. It is so normally, but the Army have got so used to seeing the deeper-draught ones going successfully that I feel rather anxious about the outlook should the river take it into its head to fall as low, as it can do on occasions. Should it do so, I fear a large part of our ready-made imported fleet of paddlers would be out of action, as most of them are much over 3 feet 6 inches when loaded. . . It has been found by experience (Lynch Bros. records), that it is not worth risking a draught of over about 3 feet 6 inches in the low river. Besides which paddle-steamers "settle" 7 or 8 inches when moving in such shallow water, so that they always require several inches more water than their stationary draught would lead one to suppose.

Above the Kurna Straits navigation is easier as far as Kut, except for some shallow patches. Above that point the river is again difficult, and 3 feet 6 inches is the maximum draught suitable. It is evident from all the information before us, that to rely on the deeper draught vessels being able to navigate the river above Kurna at all times of the year was to take a great risk, and what this risk might involve it is not difficult to picture.

17. In our opinion General Nixon was perfectly right in insisting that the maximum draught of vessels supplied to him should not exceed 3 feet 6 inches, but he might have made it more clear to the authorities in India that, failing these, he could make use of deeper draught steamers during part of the year and during all the year on certain stretches of the river. On the other hand, General Nixon does not appear to have appreciated at an early stage in the operations that such vessels as he required were not obtainable ready-made, and would have to be specially built. The result was that demands were sent forward embodying cast-iron conditions which could not all be fulfilled by ready-made vessels, while the authorities in India showed little appreciation of General Nixon's difficulties, and were not very helpful in suggesting substitutes, many of which, it was afterwards found, were available, although not in all respects suitable. It was only on July 10th, 1915, that General Nixon sent forward General Kemball's survey of the situation, and recommended the building of steamers, tugs and barges suitable for the river. These could not reasonably have been expected to be available for use before the middle of 1916, and, as a matter of fact, they were not ready until later.

18. In making the advance from Kurna to Kut (a distance by river of 243 miles), we are of opinion that General Nixon took great risk (1) on account of the inadequacy of his river transport as a whole, and (2) on account of the inability of a large portion of it to navigate the river above Kurna in a normal low-water season. Our opinion in regard to this is even stronger when we come to consider the advance from Kut towards Baghdad, because, first, the river above Kut is shallow, secondly, the distance from the base is greater (an additional difficulty if river transport above Kut was to be relied on), and thirdly, General Nixon by that time knew of the large reinforcements which he was to

* Which are attached to her on either side.

40

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00000e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

PART IX.—TRANSPORT.

A. Shortage of River Transport.

receive, and that an amount of transport inadequate to a smaller force and shorter line of communication must be still more inadequate for a larger force and longer line of communication. We think the plea that steamers and barges had been asked for is not an answer. It was known that what had been asked for could not be available for a long time and certainly not until long after the operations referred to had been carried out. Moreover Sir John Nixon was informed on the 28th October by his Inspector-General of Communications that he estimated that in addition to the shipping already ordered, 12 more steamers and 24 barges would be required in view of the expected reinforcements. This estimate he did not apparently pass on to India or London. If he had done so, in view of the insistence by both the Indian and Home Governments on the necessity for the prompt arrival at Baghdad of the reinforcing two divisions, it is at least open to doubt whether the sanction to the advance would not have been countermanded.

19. The responsibility for making the respective advances with insufficient transport and for the military reverses, discomfort of the troops, and abnormal suffering of the sick and wounded which resulted from such insufficiency, attaches primarily to General Nixon whose estimate of the military exigencies of the moment must, however, be taken into account. At the same time we cannot exonerate the Commander-in-Chief and the General Staff in India, who had a survey of the river in their possession, knowledge of the difficulties of its navigation, a list of all the steamers available, knowledge that many of them were of too deep a draught for the low season, and information as to the lengthening of the communications and the reinforcements which were being sent In these circumstances to authorise and even recommend to the Government in London the various advances without satisfying themselves that the expedition was properly equipped with river transport, and, indeed, actually with the knowledge that it was not, involves Sir Beauchamp Duff in a large measure of responsibility. While a copy of General Nixon's despatch of July 10th, 1915, and of General Kemball's memorandum was received by the India Office and forwarded to the War Office in September, it was not laid before the Secretary of State for India. Moreover it does not appear that General Nixon's actual shortage of river transport was brought by the Military Department of the India Office before the various expert bodies subsequently consulted in such a way as to attract the attention, and in consequence the War Council or Cabinet when they were asked to sanction the advance on Baghdad were not cognisant of the risk. As these documents were attached to a requisition for a large amount of river transport the Military Branch of the India Office sent them all on to the Stores Branch of that Department as an indent; and though the memorandum was forwarded to the War Office, it was not accompanied by any letter calling special attention to the revelation made as to the grave shortage of transport. This blunder led to serious consequences, for which General Barrow cannot be exonerated as the head of the Military Department at the India Office. We have shown elsewhere that the advance on Baghdad was proposed and sanctioned on the understanding that there would be large reinforcements for General Nixon's forces, and such reinforcements were of little immediate value if the River Transport to convey them from Basra to the front was not available. It may well have been that had General Kemball's significant reminder of the correlation between reinforcements and transport been brought to the notice of the War Council, the Baghdad adventure and its attendant misfortunes would have been avoided.

Responsibility for Shortage of River Transport.

20. Important witnesses before us have differed widely as to the incidence of responsibility for the supply of river transport for the Mesopotamia Expedition. Sir Beauchamp Duff informed us that Sir J. Nixon in Mesopotamia rather than the General Staff in India was responsible for calculating how much river-transport was required. On the other hand Sir J. Nixon said, "It was the duty of India to ask and find out what was required for the forces, and not to impose the intolerable burden on me of having continually to fight to obtain the necessary supplies, etc.," and in support of this contention he referred us to the Field Service Regulations.

21. Under the Field Service Regulations the Commander-in-Chief in the Field (in this case, Sir John Nixon) is "relieved of direct responsibility for the conduct of the business of providing the requirements of the forces in the field." It is also laid down that "responsibility for the adoption, modification, or revision of plans of operations re-

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000053

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

ith the Government, who, on approving a plan assume responsibility in principle for the rovision of the requisite forces." Sir J. Nixon assumed, and we think justly, that requisite forces" must be held to include all the requisite auxiliary services. In the resent case, the management of the Expedition had been devolved by the Home Governent upon the Indian Government; it would seem, therefore, that the primary responsibility for providing the requisite river craft, not only for the original plan of campaign, ut also for the extension of such plans involved in the successive advances to Amara, Kut nd Baghdad, rested with the Indian Government.

22. On the other hand the Regulations provide that the Commander-in-hief in the Field "is responsible for the efficiency of the forces in the field," and anticipate hat he is to make demands for what he requires. Where, therefore, as in the present ase, the efficiency of the forces was absolutely dependent on the supply of river craft, would seem clear that Sir John Nixon was responsible for placing his needs in river raft before the Indian Government in an adequate manner and with anticipation.

23. Between the two authorities concerned, viz., the Government of India and the eneral Officer Commanding in the Field, in our opinion there was to a large extent joint nd mutual responsibility. In any case, the true test is to be found in common sense, nd not in questioning the legal interpretation of what is in a book of Field Service egulations, written, no doubt in contemplation of very different circumstances from those f the Mesopotamia campaign. In our view the situation called for co-operation, thoughtful nticipation of needs, mutual and ready helpfulness. General Nixon's expectations as o the existence of suitable steamers, and the promptness with which they, or others pecially built in England, could be delivered in Mesopotamia, erred on the side of optimism, ut he was necessarily devoid of the requisite information on which to form a correct dgment. The Government of India was in a position to know the facts, and, as regards ne all-important supply of river steamers, failed lamentably in co-operation, anticipation needs and ready helpfulness. We consider that responsibility for the shortage of river ransport rests mainly with the Government of India, in its various Departments. For eir failure in this matter, which was the foundation of all the troubles in Mesopotamia, censure could, in the circumstances, be too grave.

Provision of River Craft from India.

Bearing these considerations in mind, we now proceed to examine how the supply river craft for Mesopotamia was dealt with.

24. The general conditions in Mesopotamia were known in India at the beginning of e war. The absence of roads, the importance of the rivers as means of communication, any of the peculiar features of those rivers, and the number and class of river steamers the country in the autumn of 1914, are all noted in a small hand book of information rnished to the Expedition by the Indian General Staff. Moreover, further particulars to navigation of the Tigris were accessible to the Indian Government—the Royal Indian arine had for years maintained a "Station" ship at Baghdad, and one of their officers, ommander Hamilton, had made a survey of the Tigris in 1905-1907. We think, therefore, at it was incumbent on the Indian Government to have foreseen that a large supply special river craft would become a necessity for the Expedition directly it advanced bove Kurna, the limit on the Tigris for ocean-going steamers.

25. This necessity and a responsibility for meeting it was indeed to some extent cognised by the General Staff in India as early as December 30th, 1914, when they asked eneral Barrett to find out how many steamers he could procure locally for use above urna, and what number of craft he would require in the event of an advance up the igris or Euphrates. General Barrett replied that he would require 7 more steamers nd some lighters. It is important to remember that this estimate of General Barrett lated only to his then force of roughly one division, although later on, when these steamers ere provided, *viz.*, in April-May, 1915, it was apparently considered by the Indian Government that they constituted a sufficient increase of river transport to meet the needs of two visions. But in their communication to General Barrett the Indian Authorities did at y rate definitely recognise some responsibility for ascertaining what river craft would be quired in the event of an advance. From this time, however, up to the beginning of 916, they do not seem to have again recognised this responsibility. Before the advance om Kurna to Amara was sanctioned, they did not make any inquiries as to the sufficiency

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000017

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

of the transport; before the advance from Amara to Kut-el-Amara was sanctioned they contented themselves with obtaining general assurance from General Nixon that he was able to maintain the force of a division or more at Kut in all states of the river. They made no efforts to ascertain or estimate what the requirements in river craft would be for the advance to Baghdad, or for the reinforcements which they sent or asked to be sent to Mesopotamia. Indeed so much out of touch was Simla with the actual situation in Mesopotamia, that we find the Indian General Staff, in "appreciations" in June and September, 1915, definitely stating that the Expedition was well supplied with river craft, and using this among their arguments for the advance to Baghdad.

26. During the whole period of the most important developments of the campaign, *viz.*, from January, 1915, to January, 1916, the attitude of the Indian Government, therefore, seems to have been that they had little or no responsibility in the matter of providing river craft, beyond attending to the specific demands sent to them from Mesopotamia itself. We think that both the regulations and common sense demanded that the authority responsible for providing the requisite river craft should have taken greater care to ascertain what was requisite. The Indian Government did not in fact exercise that oversight and foresight over the needs of Mesopotamia in river craft which was demanded of them by their position and responsibilities as the authority placed in management of the campaign. On the other hand, General Nixon did not in our opinion sufficiently assist the Indian Government by informing them well beforehand of his anticipated needs in river craft.

27. With regard to delay in fulfilment of orders for river transport we made inquiry into the procedure, and investigated the causes of delay. Correspondence was usually conducted between the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia and the Chief of the Staff in Simla or Delhi. From the latter officer anything about river craft would be transmitted to the Quartermaster-General, who would thereafter communicate what he thought necessary to Captain Lumsden, the Director of the Royal Indian Marine at Bombay. The work falling upon Captain Lumsden, R.N., and an insufficient staff, in connection with ocean transport appertaining to four Indian Expeditionary Forces, has been heavy. He was not in touch with all that was going on in Mesopotamia, nor informed of the scope of the expedition. Neither the Quartermaster-General nor Captain Lumsden appears to have fully appreciated in time—certainly down to July, 1915—the seriousness of the river transport situation. Orders for craft involved a divided responsibility between the Quartermaster-General up-country, who was in touch with Mesopotamia but not with river craft, and the Director of the Royal Indian Marine in Bombay, who was to some extent in touch with river craft but not with Mesopotamia. The result has been lack of knowledge, initiative and resource, as well of helpful anticipation in the important first nine months of the campaign.

28. It was undoubtedly General Nixon's duty to formulate his own needs with regard to class of vessels and to specify what was required, but it is, we think, unfortunate that when difficulties first arose as to their specifications and draught, a competent person, preferably with experience of river craft, was not at once sent from India to look into the matter on the spot, and confer with General Nixon as to the usefulness or otherwise of what could be obtained ready-made in India. But this was not done. Captain Lumsden did not think it necessary to go himself, he failed to rise to the occasion, and in consequence it was not till late in 1915 that boats in large numbers were offered by India which might have been offered long before. Many of them were accepted by Mesopotamia, and although a number proved unsatisfactory, some have been of use. In consequence of the delay, however, none of these boats arrived in Mesopotamia until early in 1916. Had they been available for General Nixon between October and November, 1915, they would have materially lightened his transport problems, and might, perhaps have even altered the history of the campaign.

29. In response to General Barrett's request, the first craft, namely 4 tugs and 7 paddle steamers, had been sent by India. They arrived in April—May, 1915. The following is a paraphrase of the communications that ensued between General Nixon and the Chief of the General Staff in India:—

May 27th, 1915.—Mesopotamia asked that in view of deep draught of steamers and tugs received, rendering them unreliable for use above Kurna, 6 tugs of 3-ft. draught should be sent.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00004f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

June 14th.—India asked whether 4 named paddle steamers, 2 stern-wheeled steamers and 2 tugs, the draught of all being between 2 ft. 3 ins. to 3 ft. 6 ins., would be suitable if available.

June 16th.—Mesopotamia cabled accepting as many of the 8 as were procurable.

June 20th.—India telegraphed that some of them were found to be too deep, and that the others of suitable draught were not available (no reason given). They added—"no tugs, as asked for on May 27th, available in India."

June 20th.—Mesopotamia cabled asking for 4 tugs of 3-ft. 6-in. draught.

July 10th.—Mesopotamia asked for 6 paddle steamers, 3 stern wheelers, 8 tugs and 43 barges to be specially built (in England). The draught specified was 3 ft. 6 ins. for the steamers, and 3 ft. 5 ins. for the tugs.

(N.B.—Orders for these were placed with builders in the United Kingdom in November, 1915.)

July 17th.—India telegraphed that tugs suitable to the requirements cabled on June 20th were "not at present available."

October 9th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed to India: "Vessels over 3 ft. 9 ins. now useless; send quickly some light-draught tugs and stern wheelers to serve immediate needs."

October 12th.—India replied: "Have tried Indian rivers without success."

October 13th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed, draught admissible for tugs 3 ft. 5 ins., stern wheelers, 2 ft. 6 ins., adding, "if anything of suitable draught, and approximating to other requirements, can be sent here soon, they will serve as useful stop-gaps till new craft arrive. Please do whatever is possible to meet our urgent difficulties meanwhile."

October 26th.—India telegraphed, "No tugs of description given in your telegram of October 13th are procurable in India or Burma, and stern wheelers cannot make sea journey."

October 27th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed, "Please wire description of any tugs that are available, with draught."

November 6th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed, "Matter urgent, please wire details."

November 7th.—India wired that they were receiving such large lists of steamers that they were having them "whittled down by a special staff," with a view to selecting only such vessels as would be suitable. They promised to forward a list shortly.

November 9th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed, "Please telegraph the list of ships, details can follow by post. You know our requirements as regards dimensions. Draught should not exceed 3 ft. 6 ins. Please treat the matter as very urgent."

November 10th.—India telegraphed to Mesopotamia the names and particulars of no less than 48 river steamers.

30. Of these latter, according to the description, 9 fulfilled the requirements as to draught sent by Mesopotamia on May 27th, although on June 20th and October 12th the Indian authorities had telegraphed that no such tugs were available in India. Other 4 fulfilled the requirements of June 20th. It may be that some of these 13 tugs, while being of suitable draught, were not in all other less important respects exactly what was wanted, but, in view of Mesopotamia's urgent need, we are impressed by what appears to us as serious neglect on the part of the Director of the Royal Indian Marine in not offering these craft to Mesopotamia at a much earlier date. If they had been offered, and accepted in response to the requirements cabled on May 27th, June 20th and October 9th, they could have been strengthened and prepared for the sea voyage to Basra, in ample time to make the voyage as soon as the monsoon permitted—say in October or November, 1915—and have arrived in time to relieve the very critical condition as to transport which existed in December, 1915. It further appears to us that Captain Lumsden failed to appreciate his duty, in that he did not at an early date have a complete list and survey made of all the river steamers and light-draught tugs in India and Burma.

Placing of Orders for River Transport in England.

31. We have already referred to the order sent to the India Office for 6 paddle steamers of the "Medjidieh" class, 3 stern-wheel steamers of lighter draught, 8 tugs of the "Sumana" class, and 43 barges. The order was cabled on August 4th, 1915, and written despatches with full particulars were received in London on September 9th, 1915. The urgency of the order, and the necessity of adhering to the type, dimensions, and draught of the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000096

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

vessels required, were emphasized by Commander Hamilton, General Kemball, General Nixon, the Commander-in-Chief in India, and finally by the Viceroy and his whole Council. Previous experience had demonstrated the defects of ready-made craft received from India, and of any other boats not specially built to meet the exceptional conditions of the Tigris. Success and possibly the safety of the Expedition depended upon ability to get transport up and down the river at all times. After many years of experience, Messrs. Lynch Bros., who held a concession for a steamer line on the Tigris, had evolved a type of steamers, of tugs (to tow large flat barges, one lashed on either side), and of barges, which were considered by those with local knowledge to be the only types entirely suitable for the river.

32. It was a *sine qua non* of the order that these models only be sent, and the India Office was requested to contract for the building of the craft with Messrs. Lynch Bros.; or to engage their assistance, obtain the loan of their plans, and the benefit of their expert knowledge. Messrs. Lynch Bros. of London and Basra, not being shipbuilders themselves, and all yards being at the time precluded from accepting orders for early delivery from anyone but the Government, could not contract to supply the boats, but offered their assistance, plans and expert knowledge, including bringing home their supervising engineer from Basra, for a commission of 5 per cent. on the cost of the boats on this side, and to erect them at Basra at cost without any addition of profit. Finally, the India Office offered Messrs. Lynch 1,500 guineas, to which the latter replied that, while it was not on a commercial scale, on patriotic grounds they would give their services and plans for 2,000 guineas. The value of the order to be placed and supervised was about £600,000. To this offer no reply was sent for some weeks. Meantime, the India Office consulted Sir John Biles, their expert naval architect (who was employed on a commission basis), to assist them. With the power of a Government Department behind him, Sir John Biles was able to go direct to the builders of the "Medjidieh," belonging to Lynch Bros., and get a copy of the plan of their steamer. The transaction might perhaps be criticized from other points of view, but we are more concerned with the failure to make use of the unique knowledge, and to engage the expert assistance which was available, in the face of the strongly expressed wishes of the General in Command in Mesopotamia, and of the Viceroy, and in view of what ensued therefrom.

33. The six new paddle steamers asked for were to be duplicates of the "Medjidieh," with certain interior improvements in the arrangements. The India Office, no doubt acting on the advice of Sir John Biles, thought it well to give the boats more power. Without consulting Mesopotamia, they ordered heavier machinery, and altered the dimensions of the hulls. As a consequence, the new boats draw more water than the "Medjidieh," burn considerably more fuel, and are more difficult to manœuvre, particularly when navigating with two barges abreast through the Narrows. Even if barges are not required for cargo or troops, they are required for protection of steamers' paddle-wheels, which otherwise would be stripped of their floats by collision with the banks. Above Ezra's Tomb the river is very narrow for a distance of 28 miles. In this portion its maximum breadth does not exceed 200 ft., and in certain places is not more than 140 ft. from bank to bank. The difficulty, from the navigation point of view, is enhanced by the twistings and turnings of the river—which, in certain cases, amount to the sharpest of bends—and by the rapid current.

34. General Cowper informed us that—

> It is impossible to adequately convey or describe the extraordinary difficulties of this portion of the river. In short, they must be seen to be appreciated, especially the passage of them made both up and down in a river steamer, towing two barges abreast, and bumping her way, when coming down stream, from side to side as she rounds the various bends.

35. After these new vessels reached the Tigris, and were put into commission, a telegram dated August 26th, 1916, was sent from Mesopotamia to the Commander-in-Chief in India, in which, referring to the suitability of the new river vessels, it was stated :—

> "'Medjidieh' represents extreme in regard to limits for length, breadth, width. River vessels designed constructed in England, of new 'Medjidieh' class, are unsuitable for river, particularly during the low-water season; cannot navigate without barges to protect their paddles, and their beam is then too great for manœuvring either for Narrows or channels through all shoals up river."

36. With regard to the barges, the India Office, ignoring instructions that they were to be built 150 ft. long, and to be on Lynch's model, which have pointed bows, ordered them 170 ft. long and to have square or punt-shaped ends. While these square-ended barges may be suitable for other parts of the world, they were fatally unsuitable for the navigation of the Tigris, where, owing to the crashing of the barges into the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000c0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

river banks in the Narrows, and the collisions that frequently occurred with passing vessels, it was essential to have rounded or pointed ends. The matter might appear, at first sight, of minor importance, but it turned out otherwise. As soon as the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia became aware of the departure from the orders sent home, he telegraphed, on March 27th, 1916, protesting against the change, and against the omission to make use of Messrs. Lynch's assistance and experience, further asking that any barges that remained to be constructed should be of the model asked for. The India Office, in their reply of March 31st, refused to accept the General's view, and adhered to their opinion that the barges they had designed were "suitable for the Tigris, and in many respects superior to anything there." On April 6th, 1916, the General telegraphed re-stating his conviction as to the unsuitability of bows of square shape, which conviction he stated was based upon the best local expert advice. He pointed out that it was dangerous to make experiments, and better to adopt what had proved to be successful, beyond which, if the square-ended barges proved unsuitable, as he feared, the consequent delay and difficulty might have a paralysing effect on the success of future operations. In reply to this, the India Office not only declined to alter the barges which were being built, but directed that further 25 barges about to be built should also have the square-shaped pontoon bows.

37. Pressed as he was at that time by overwhelming difficulties, with a starving garrison in Kut hoping daily for succour, inadequate forces at the Front to effect their relief, and 10,000 men at Basra who could not be got up the river in time, owing to inadequacy of transport, it would be surprising if the General Officer in Command was not driven to something approaching desperation. This is indicated in the following extract from his telegram to the India Office, dated April 11th, 1916, in which he surveys the attitude of the India Office :—

It is incumbent on me to invite your attention to what, in my opinion, is an incontrovertible fact, but the relative importance of which it is difficult for anybody outside this country to estimate. In my judgment it is quite beyond the ability of anyone in England or elsewhere, unless he possesses a wide personal knowledge of this country, to form any correct estimate of the peculiarities of Mesopotamia or, in particular, of the idiosyncrasies of the Tigris. Full details of the specifications of what I required in regard to barges and river craft which were to be specially constructed for eventful use in this country were given in my telegrams dated 10th July, and July 17th, 1915 to the Chief of the General Staff, Simla, with the object of further ensuring that all vessels would be constructed on lines essential to successful employment in Mesopotamia. I recommended in my telegram of July 23rd, 1915 to the Chief of the General Staff, India, that the consulting engineer to Lynch Bros., Mr. Thomas, should be despatched to England to superintend the construction of steamers subsequently, vide my telegram of August 5th to the Chief of the General Staff, India. I suggested that ouragents in the matter should be Lynch Bros. In spite of the above and having regard to the fact that Tigris craft have been navigated for upwards of 70 years by Lynch Bros., and also that the practical experience gained by the Officers of the Royal Indian Marine since the beginning of military operations in Mesopotamia is coincident with Lynch Bros.' unique knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of the Tigris it seems that your naval architect has thought it desirable to design a type of barge which is suitable in his opinion. Having regard to the facts stated above and in the event of these barges, with square above? (bows), proving a failure which is expected here I think it very necessary that I should lay before you the fullest details of the case as it now stands. Not only is there the question of loss to the State, but what is of greater importance the possibility also of my being sent a large number of barges which although the intention was that they should be specially built for a particular purpose may not be found suitable for local requirements.

38. It was then too late to alter a large number of the barges appertaining to the first order sent home. Thirty-five barges, each of 250 tons capacity, and seven of smaller dimensions, all with square ends, were shipped. They were, after trial on the Tigris, condemned as totally unsuitable for navigation of the river. Much delay was involved in replacing them. Months of time were lost, and a large amount of public money.

39. Responsibility for these errors must rest with the India Office, who authorised or concurred in departure from the lines of an order laid down with so much emphasis in the despatch to which we have already referred. But the matter does not end here; barges, tugs and stern-wheel steamers were sent out in sections, or in plates and angles. Arrangements for their erection in Mesopotamia were made by the India Office, with little prevision of what would be required. The arrangements proved to be quite inadequate. It was a work of no little magnitude to discharge, assemble, erect and fit up complete, 11 steamers and 43 barges, with insufficient plant and mechanics and under trying local conditions. Much loss of valuable time occurred, and vessels expected to be ready for use a few weeks after arrival were not available for many months. Some of the craft were sent in very large and heavy sections. Means of handling them in Mesopotamia proved inadequate and when an attempt was made to put them together in the river it

43

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000072

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

was found almost impossible, and some sections sank in 30 ft. of water. Part of the remaining sections were the nordered to be sent on to Bombay for erection there, and thereafter to be towed back to Basra, involving much cost, risk and delay. Material for erection of the barges and other craft was sent out in large shipments. No descriptive note of contents of packages accompanied the first shipments, and no drawings or erection plans were sent with them. The latter were only received in September, 1916, for vessels, the materials for which had arrived four or five months previously. The confusion which arose from this unbusinesslike proceeding was almost unbelievable, and must have been heartbreaking, in view of the urgent need for the vessels. Cases were discharged up and down the bank of the river and stretched a long distance. To find a particular piece required for the completion of any particular barge, tug, or steamer was almost hopeless.

To sum up :—

(1) The paddle steamers sent were unhandy and otherwise unsuitable.
(2) The square-ended barges proved a complete failure.
(3) Arrangements for erection of craft were altogether inadequate.
(4) Sections sent were too heavy for the local facilities.
(5) Lists of the contents of packages were not sent.
(6) Necessary erection plans and drawings were not forthcoming.

More inept proceedings than those connected with the purchase and shipment of river craft in England in 1915 and early in 1916 would be hard to find.

It is difficult for us, owing to the divided organisation of the India Office, to exactly apportion personal blame for this series of blunders, which were not only costly but also caused regrettable delay. The Director-General of Stores apparently acted upon the advice of Sir John Biles in allowing the specifications of the steamers and barges to be altered. His action in other matters was unbusiness-like.

Erection and Repair Shops.

40. The workshops and slips which existed in Mesopotamia on the outbreak of war were naturally of small size and quite unfitted to cope with the erection and repair of the large fleet of river craft required by the Expeditionary Force. So far as normal conditions were concerned, and even with the outlook of greater trade after the War, there was nothing in prospect to induce the local firms largely to increase their workshops. In consequence of arrangements with the Admiralty and India Office some extensions were undoubtedly made, but these were far short of the needs. In our opinion, the importance of adequate provision of workshops, slips and docks for the erection and repair of river vessels was not apprehended by General Nixon, the Indian Government or the India Office. The undertaking turned out to be one of great magnitude, and involved very large expenditure. From incurring the latter General Nixon apparently shrank, and his demands towards the end of the period of his command appear to have been on too small a scale. The fact that provisions were not made at a much earlier date unfortunately greatly delayed the availability for service of river craft—old and new. After the War Office took control during 1916, the matter was comprehensively taken in hand. Since that time over 7,000 tons of plant for workshops have been sent from England, and large numbers of skilled mechanics from England, India and elsewhere.

Port of Basra.

41. Up to October, 1914, Basra was a comparatively small commercial port, at which the arrival of two or three steamers was a full weekly allowance. Owing to a bar at Fao, only vessels drawing not more than 18 to 19 feet can reach Basra. It was largely a port of transit for Baghdad and other places up the river, to and from which cargo was conveyed by Messrs. Lynch Bros.' steamers or by mahailas. The equipment of the port was primitive and barely in keeping with the modest volume of its trade. There were no wharves for ocean steamers, and the merchants' warehouses were of small dimensions.

42. The facilities were, from the first, inadequate to cope with the needs of the Expeditionary Force, and to give reasonably rapid despatch to steamers bringing supplies. As the force grew, and as the line of communications and voyages of the river steamers lengthened, congestion at the port became greater. Administration of the port, direction of the mooring of shipping, provision of lighters or mahailas, and discharge of cargo overside, were placed in the hands of an officer of the Royal Indian Marine, under the Inspector-General of Communications. Reception of cargo ashore was in the hands of various military authorities, who each had their depôts, such as Supplies and Transport,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000046

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

Ordnance, Medical, &c. When traffic grew, accommodation for receiving and storing cargo ashore proved more and more inadequate. Most of the land round Basra was subject to flooding at the period of high river, but it was not covered deeply, and if foundations were raised, or the water kept out by earth dykes, stores were free from risk of damage. After struggling with congestion at Basra, a decision was ultimately come to late in 1915 to handle a portion of the traffic at Magill, situated about 5 miles above Basra. Here the depth of water permitted ocean steamers to come close in to the bank. By the aid of moored mahailas and planks, improvised landing stages were constructed, across which cargo could be carried from ocean steamers to the stores. At a later date, December, 1915—it was decided to construct proper wharves and otherwise improve the facilities of the port. These improvements were in progress during the whole of 1916. We have been informed that delays to steamers were at first occasioned, not so much by inability to get cargo out and placed in lighters or mahailas, as by inability or unwillingness of the military departments ashore to receive it with sufficient rapidity. It is clear that management of the traffic of a port and discharge of cargo was not work to which officers of the Royal Indian Marine had previously been accustomed. They found themselves at Basra with a task on hand of which they had had no experience, with an inadequate and inexperienced staff, shortage of labour, a port where the facilities ashore were of the most meagre description, and where traffic was constantly increasing and congestion becoming greater. We are told that at one time there were 40 steamers waiting to discharge, and that they lay in a line 8 miles long up and down the river. Small wonder that arrangements broke down, despite the willing efforts of the officer in charge. Much of the difficulty could have been avoided, in our opinion, if, from the first, someone accustomed to traffic management of a commercial port, and the handling of cargoes, had been appointed to assist. Men with these qualifications were known to be employed in one or other of the great Indian and Burmese river ports. Their advice was not asked for; and their assistance was not utilised until more than a year after the landing of the Expedition in Mesopotamia when conditions at Basra had become serious.

43. In the words of General Davison :—

I doubt whether the training of Royal Indian Marine officers specially fits them for high administrative appointments or the control of so big a charge as we have here (Basra). It demands the training of a shipping expert, with large commercial experience, or a traffic expert, such as the Manager of a big railway.

As some indication of the volume of traffic handled at that period, we have been informed that the number of troops and followers disembarked in Mesopotamia in the four months December 1st, 1915, to March 31st, 1916, was :—

Personnel, number	129,500
Animals ,, ...	33,000
Vehicles ,, ...	4,100
Cargo, tons	71,500

While officers of the Royal Indian Marine were struggling with conditions at the port of Basra, which were, in our opinion, beyond their powers, we cannot omit to notice that the general organisation of traffic was under the Inspector-General of Communications, who from April, 1915, to April, 1916 was General Davison. He was also responsible for matters connected with improvement of the port, such as the building of additional warehouses or the provision of additional wharfage.

44. General Gorringe stated in this connection :—

I have no doubt that great improvements could and should have been effected during the first 12 months, and so on in proportion afterwards. There was reluctance to spend money on improvements which would at all partake of a permanent character. No improvement in the unloading wharves for ships was made until December, 1915, when the reinforcements of two divisions were coming out. Then, and not till then, was that taken in hand. That is to say, that as long as we had only two divisions there, although the accommodation was bad and congested for stores of every kind being unloaded, no attempt was made to improve the facilities for unloading until the latter part of December, 1915, beyond making temporary stages and so on. There was no building of new wharves.

We think the criticism implied is justified, and that General Davison did not show that prescience and enterprise which the situation demanded, especially during the second half of 1915.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000078

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

PART IX.—TRANSPORT.

A. Shortage of River Transport.

45. In January, 1916, the Government of India sent Sir George Buchanan, a civilian who had been in charge of the Port of Rangoon, with a view to his becoming Director-General of the Port of Basra, and reorganising the traffic and facilities of the port. He did not receive any formal or definite appointment indicating the position he was to hold or specifying his duty, though a titular designation was given to him, viz., that of Director-General of Port Administration and River Conservancy. It was, unfortunately, left to Sir John Nixon to arrange with Sir George Buchanan, after his arrival, exactly what the duties of the position were to be. Differences naturally ensued. Sir George Buchanan's powers were so limited by Sir John Nixon, that the former considered his services were not put to their proper use. After a short stay he returned to India. Meantime his report on the conditions as he found them on arrival at Basra was communicated to Simla. In this he makes the following observations :—

> I found it difficult to realise that we had been in occupation of Basra for a year, as the arrangements for the landing and storing of goods and stores of every description were of the most primitive order, and, in the absence of roads, the whole area was a huge quagmire. To a new-comer appearances were such that troops and stores might have been landed, for the first time, the previous week. . . . The military expedition to Basra is, I believe, unique, inasmuch as in no previous case has such an enormous force been landed and maintained without an adequately prepared base.

46. About the middle of 1916 Sir George Buchanan returned to Basra, the port and traffic management was radically reorganised, and Sir George Buchanan was placed in full control. Since that time and since the War Office took over the charge and responsibility of the expedition, energy has been shown in building wharves, increasing the facilities, and generally making the port more capable of meeting the growing demands upon it. But these operations mean heavy expenditure and take time. Much of the material required had to be manufactured in England or the United States ; consequently it is not surprising that the improvement visible during 1916 was not more rapid. We find, however, that there has been marked and consistent improvement during the period June to December, 1916. We have been supplied with statements showing the time occupied by vessels bringing supplies for the Expeditionary Force from the time of their crossing the bar at Fao, inward bound, until they, having completed their discharge, passed outwards. It appears that the average number of days in port of each ship bringing supplies to Basra was—

Month.	Average number of Days in Port of Vessels bringing Supplies.
July	39
August	23
September	26
October	24
November	20
December	20

47. From the full statement given to us it appears that while the number of ships bringing supplies increased threefold during the six months, the number of days in port, as above shown, had considerably diminished. The improvement is manifest and commendable. It cannot, however, be considered that 20 days in port is a satisfactory rate of discharge. With ample lighterage, wharfage and labour, despite the bad climate, it should be possible to reduce the detention by another 10 days, and every effort should be made to accomplish this. A reduction of a further 10 days on the number of steamers now arriving per month with cargo would save the country over £600,000 per annum.

River Hospital Steamers.

48. Early in the Mesopotamia campaign when operations were on a minor scale and not very far from tidal water, there seems to have been no thought of special river hospital steamers. The need had not then been felt and was not foreseen. In February, 1915, a hospital barge, the " Bengali," was offered by Bengal and accepted, but foundered on the voyage. Replacement was not asked for. Between February and August, 1915, various communications passed between Mesopotamia and India concerning motor launches and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000020

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

tugs to tow native boats called mahailas for removing sick and wounded. These arrangements concerned local or short-distance transport only. Sick and wounded were brought down river on steamers and barges which had taken up troops, animals or supplies. On August 13th, 1915, a special hospital steamer is mentioned for the first time. On that date Surgeon-General Hathaway made application to the Inspector-General of Communications at Basra for a steamer to be set apart and fitted for conveyance of sick and wounded, or alternatively a tug and two mahailas. The steamer and tug were refused on the ground that all were required for movement of troops and supplies, and Surgeon-General Hathaway did not carry the matter any further. Except some telegrams offering motor launches nothing further occurred until November 23rd, when India asked Mesopotamia if evacuation from the front was satisfactory, adding :

"There should be a well equipped fleet of boats or steamers on the lines of a hospital ship to be used exclusively for the transport of sick. Have you any suggestion to make? Wire what you require."

On December 7th Surgeon-General Hathaway replied approving the suggestion. On December 10th he telegraphed that local experience favoured steamers with independent paddles, towing a barge on each side. On December 31st India cabled London that four river hospital steamers would require to be built, and that plans were being sent. On March 1st it was finally settled that two should be built in England and two in Calcutta. Meantime India decided to improvise in addition several hospital steamers, and fit up barges from amongst those obtainable in India. The first hospital steamer on the river, the stern-wheel steamer "Sikkim," with accommodation for 144 cot cases, arrived at Basra about the middle of March, 1916—one year and five months after the campaign commenced, and three to four months after the battle of Ctesiphon, in which there were over 3,500 wounded. Owing, no doubt, to the complaints of what had happened at Ctesiphon, which were now spreading, the Indian Government during the first half of 1916, and the War Office after they took charge of the campaign during the second half, supplemented the provision largely. There were on March 1st, 1917, eight hospital steamers in Mesopotamia, four on the way, and twenty-nine on order, besides several specially fitted barges. It is manifest from this bare statement of the present position that the provision of hospital steamers was taken in hand much too late.

49. The awful sufferings of some of the sick and wounded during 1915 and the earlier part of 1916 caused by want of river hospital steamers have been referred to at length in another part of our Report.* Consideration of the evidence as to the causes of this want leads us to the following conclusions : General Nixon was responsible for advancing without sufficient river transport to meet all needs, which in turn involved inability to set aside special steamers to be fitted for hospital use. The outstanding importance of having such steamers before advancing does not appear to have been sufficiently realised by Surgeon-General Hathaway, or, if realised, was not impressed by him, as it should have been, upon General Nixon. Surgeon-General Hathaway showed little foresight ; even his small request of August 13th, 1915, for an improvised Hospital steamer or tug was not urged persistently or with sufficient emphasis. He never suggested building special hospital steamers. The suggestion came eventually from India. He failed to grasp the requirements of the situation. In the matter of river hospital transport the Commander-in-Chief in India showed solicitude and initiative, although too late. The absence of requests for hospital steamers from Surgeon-General Hathaway naturally prevented anxiety for a time.

50. Execution of orders for hospital transport was far from satisfactory. Mesopotamia had, after much insistence made it plain that steamers with independent paddles, towing a steel barge abreast on either side were the only vessels entirely suitable for the river. Nevertheless, stern-wheel steamers were sent which could not manœuvre with barges coming down stream at the narrow hair-pin corners. A number of the barges sent were built of wood and as they crushed in on collision with the banks, had to be replaced. The hospital steamers ordered in England were twin screw instead of independent paddles, as desired. The onus of making these deviations rests with the Director of the Royal Indian Marine at Bombay. It is difficult to find excuse for them, especially as there had been a similar experience with ordinary river craft a few months before. It always seemed that the Director thought he knew what was required better than those on the spot. Waste of money and delay were thus incurred.

* See Part X., paras. 57–63.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000b9

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Railways.

51. We have already considered the manner in which the Indian Government dealt with inland communications by water. We now turn to the question of communications by rail. In August, 1916, Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, informed the Committee of Imperial Defence: "As regards the question of communications the Committee is aware that India declined to sanction certain proposals for railway construction, and that in general operations were allowed in 1915 to develop without proper regard to the vital questions of supply and maintenance." The justice of this criticism on the Indian Government became apparent to us when we ascertained that two applications from the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia had been made to the Indian Government for the building of railways, that on each occasion the application was based either on the grounds of improving supplies or communications, and that on each occasion the application was not agreed to by the Indian Government.

52. The first mention of the desirability of a railway in Mesopotamia was made by General Barrett, then General Officer Commanding the Expedition, on February 28th, 1915. He wired to India:—

> I consider that the best solution for any advance towards Nasariyeh or even one or two marches beyond Shaiba would be a light railway. Once Nasiriyeh was reached, the railway would be much used for moving produce to and from Basrah. Thus, if it were once constructed, it would not only solve our supply difficulty, but would also tend towards pacifying the country.

In a subsequent telegram General Barrett explained that he had asked for the railway because he found it impossible otherwise to move any force larger than one brigade across the desert. On March 13th he sent in particulars of the route which he suggested the railway should follow, and added, "I recommend that personnel and material should be in Basra by May at latest, as I think it important that work should begin as soon as floods subside." So far as we can ascertain no action appears to have been taken by the Indian Government on this application, except that they instructed Sir John Nixon (who succeeded General Barrett in April, 1915) to report on the possibility of the employment of a light railway of which material for 137 miles was available in India. The Indian Government apparently did not attach importance to General Barrett's recommendation, although it was put forward on the military grounds of the desirability of facilitating supplies and communications and increasing the mobility of the force.

53. Owing to the flooded state of the country and other reasons into which it is not necessary to enter, it was not till the beginning of August, 1915, that Sir J. Nixon raised the question of railways with the Indian Government.

On August 2nd, 1915, he telegraphed to the Chief of the General Staff in India asking for particulars as to the 137 miles of light railway understood to be available. He asked if it was the railway—said to be very indifferent—which had been used at the Coronation Durbar.

He also wrote to tell the Chief of the General Staff that he did not want that material, but that he did want a railway. On August 11th, 1915, the Chief of the General Staff wrote to him that he had backed up his request for a railway, and had proposed standard light 2-ft. 6-in. material used by the North-Western Railway, and not the light military (Durbar) line.

On August 14th Sir J. Nixon forwarded to India a long despatch, supported by memoranda from his technical officers, in which he asked for a railway from Basra to Nasariyeh on (1) military, (2) political, and (3) commercial grounds. The military grounds were principally the necessity for quick communication between Basra and Nasariyeh. General Nixon added a demand for a suitable staff to carry out the preliminary work in October, and concluded—

> Finally it is most desirable that the general policy, as regards the railway, which I strongly recommend as necessary, shall be determined as early as possible and a decision communicated. Next cold weather, November to March inclusive, should be availed of to the fullest extent not only in preliminary investigation but in actual construction.

54. General Nixon's despatch reached Headquarters in India on August 25th, but as he had received no reply to it by October 24th, he then wired to India asking how the question of railway construction in Mesopotamia stood. He was informed on October 30th that the matter was still "under the consideration of the Government." A further reminder from General Nixon on November 1st at length produced a reply from the Chief of the General Staff, Delhi, on November 14th, that "for the present the Government

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00009f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

have decided not to proceed with the construction of the railway, on the ground of expense." Thus the Government of India's decision on Sir J. Nixon's application for a railway was not given until nearly three months after they had received his despatch asking for an early determination of the matter.

55. We have been unable to ascertain definitely the reason for this delay on the part of the Indian Government in dealing with so important an application from the General Officer Commanding the Mesopotamia Expedition. As the proposal involved considerable expenditure it was submitted to the Finance Department of the Government of India, but was not formally considered by Sir William Meyer, the Finance Member, until October 5th, when he forwarded to the Army Department the following note :—

"1. I confess to being somewhat sceptical as to the line being at all so remunerative as is at present represented, at any rate for some time to come. Apart from this too, it is perfectly clear that, in present financial circumstances, with which His Excellency the Army Member is acquainted, we cannot embark on large expenditure on such a project for other than the most urgent military reasons. We have already had to cut our coming railway programme in India to the quick, and may have to adopt other drastic measures to make both ends meet. Further, we have at present no right to act as if we were certain of getting Mesopotamia or a very considerable portion of it, after the war.

2. If, however, His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and Army Member can definitely assure me that this project is absolutely necessary for the safeguarding of our military position, having regard, *inter alia*, to the time which the line must take to construct, I cannot, of course, resist a reference home on this basis. (In regard to the time factor, it must be borne in mind that, although the Railway Board think that the line might be built in from 6 to 8 months, we know from past experience that the best provisional estimates of this character are liable to get considerably exceeded in practice.) In that event it will be necessary, as Mr. Fell says, to indicate to the Secretary of State that the cost, as a military measure, must, under present arrangements, fall on the Home Government.

3. We should not, of course, in the telegram say anything about the contingency which Mr. Fell adumbrates, and which I think not at all improbable, of our having eventually to pay the full cost of the Mesopotamia operations, or at any rate a very large part of it. But this contingency adds to the necessity for caution in proposing expenditure which may ultimately fall upon India.

4. His Excellency the Viceroy should of course see before final action is taken."

56. On receipt of this note the Commander-in-Chief discussed the question with Sir Percy Lake, the Chief of the General Staff, who put forward a memorandum on October 26th generally favourable to Sir John Nixon's proposal, and in the last paragraph of which he said—

It would be imprudent, to say the least of it, not to refer this proposal to the Secretary of State and the Cabinet, upon whose decision would then depend the ultimate responsibility for our capacity to hold Mesopotamia, a problem in which the security of Nasariyeh is an essential factor.

Sir Beauchamp Duff's decision on this memorandum was conveyed in the following note :—

"His Excellency considers that when the occupation of Baghdad and the reinforcement of Sir J. Nixon's force has taken place the necessity for the immediate construction of a railway to Nasariyeh will have largely lost its force."

57. The full grounds upon which the Government of India rejected the proposal are stated in a telegram from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State, dated July 24th, 1916, to have been as follows :—

Basrah-Nasariyeh Railway.—The proposal to construct this line was put forward by General Nixon on military, political and commercial grounds. The large expenditure involved could not in our opinion be justified on either political or commercial consideration. We had not acquired the status in Mesopotamia which would justify such a charge upon Indian resources nor had we the right to act as if we were sure of retaining Mesopotamia or a large portion of it after the war. We had to consider whether the project was absolutely necessary for the safeguarding of our military position before we could recommend the construction of the line as a definite war measure, the cost of which would fall on the Imperial Government. Having regard to the facts that sanction had recently been accorded to the advance on Baghdad, which would, we hoped, attain its objective, in which case the Basra-Nasariyeh line would cease to be essential from the military point of view owing to our command of the Euphrates line, and after weighing the various considerations we arrived at the conclusion that the necessity for the immediate construction of a railway to Nasiriyah had to a great extent lost its force and that the advantages to be gained would not be commensurate with the cost of its construction. We therefore decided not to recommend the proposal and informed you accordingly. *vide* paragraph 3 of Lord Hardinge's telegram of the 14th November last, No. H.-9125. The various considerations which influenced our decision were not, however, fully stated in that telegrams.

We do not ourselves feel called upon to criticise the military arguments in this telegram, but we cannot help noting that when the War Office took control of the operations, they pressed for and ultimately built this railway preliminarily to the second advance on Baghdad.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000047

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Railways.

58. Moreover, if military considerations really entered so largely into the Indian Government's decision to refuse the railway, it was most unfortunate that both the Home Government and Sir John Nixon were, at the time, informed that the railway was refused on the ground of expense. This aspect of the matter is well brought out by Sir J. Nixon, who says—

> The difficulties of the Hammar Lake crossing were known in India, the extreme heat prevailing in the summer was known in India, the discomfort and suffering not only to the wounded but to fit men was known in India, and this proposal was rejected on the score of expense. This single instance seems to me to disprove the claim that the Finance Department has not exerted a sinister influence on the operations.

The refusal of the railway and the terms in which the refusal was announced were in fact bound to create the impression that the Indian Government were unwilling, in the interests of economy, to provide Mesopotamia with what was desirable in the interests of the troops.

Our conclusion is that the railway was refused because Sir Beauchamp Duff did not agree with Sir John Nixon's estimate of its military necessity and, apart from an assurance from the Commander-in-Chief that the railway was absolutely necessary on military grounds, the Indian Government were not prepared even to put the proposal before the Secretary of State, because they were afraid that the expenditure might ultimately fall upon India.

59. In January, 1916, Sir Percy Lake (the author of the memorandum of October 26th in favour of the railway from Basra to Nasariyeh) had succeeded Sir John Nixon in command of the Mesopotamia Expedition. Sir Percy Lake was apparently so much impressed with the finality of the Indian Government's decision not to sanction the building of railways in Mesopotamia that he did not raise the matter until April, 1916, when specifically asked to do so by the War Office, who in the meantime had taken over from the India Office the control of military operations. Ultimately two railways were decided on in Mesopotamia, but it was not until the War Office took over the administration in addition to the control of the campaign in July, 1916, that the railways were really pressed forward with the vigour which the situation demanded. We think it would be inadvisable to go into details as to the exact position of the railway question at the present time, but we are satisfied that the War Office have taken and are taking all the steps which are necessary.

60. It is interesting to note that the cost of all the railways now being built in Mesopotamia is, according to the estimates, less than the cost of the river craft, and that if the railways had been authorised at an early date a portion of the river craft might have been unnecessary. Moreover, while it has required from one year to eighteen months to obtain specially built steamers, the railways have been completed in eight to nine months.

From this brief history of the railway question in Mesopotamia it is obvious that the Indian Government never paid to this vital matter the attention which the War Office considered so essential directly they became responsible for the military operations.

61. Although the railway from Basra to Nasariyeh was strongly recommended by General Barrett on February 28th, 1915, and by General Nixon on August 14th, 1915, the proposal was dealt with in a dilatory manner by the Indian Government, and was negatived by them in November, 1915, on the ground that it did not justify the expenditure involved. It was only when asked for by the third General Officer Commanding the expedition, General Lake, and under pressure from the War Office in April, 1916, that the Indian Government assented to the proposal, and awoke to the necessity of railways for the expedition. We feel that a grave responsibility attaches to the Indian Government for their failure to realise at an earlier date the importance of an energetic railway policy in Mesopotamia.

Conclusions as to Transport.

62. The enquiries we have made, and the evidence, both oral and documentary, which we have taken in this part of our investigation, lead us to the following conclusions regarding the critical period up to April, 1916:—

(*a*) From the first the paramount importance both of river and railway transport in Mesopotamia was insufficiently realised by the Military Authorities in India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000022

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

CONCLUSIONS AS TO TRANSPORT.

(*b*) A deficiency of river transport existed from the time the army left tidal water and advanced up river from Kurna. This deficiency became very serious as the lines of communication lengthened and the numbers of the force increased.

(*c*) Up to the end of 1915 the efforts made to rectify the deficiency of river transport were wholly inadequate.

(*d*) For want of comprehensive grasp of the transport situation, and insufficiency of river steamers, we find the Military Authorities in India are responsible. The responsibility is a grave one.

(*e*) River hospital steamers were an urgent requirement for the proper equipment of the Expedition, and were not ordered until much too late.

(*f*) With General Sir John Nixon rests the responsibility for recommending the advances in 1915 with insufficient transport and equipment. The evidence did not disclose an imperative need to advance without due preparation. For what ensued from shortage of steamers, General Sir John Nixon must, in such circumstances, be held to blame. The extent of his responsibility in relation to the sufferings of the wounded is considered in Part X. of our Report and in Part XII., paragraph 17.

(*g*) During the first four months of 1916, the shortage of transport was fatal to the operations undertaken for the relief of Kut. Large reinforcements could not be moved to the front in time to take part in critical battles. Based upon information received from General Townshend, as to the urgent necessity for his immediate relief, operations were undertaken, notwithstanding the extreme transport difficulty, but in all the circumstances we do not attach blame for this to the Generals in Mesopotamia directing the operations.

(*h*) Facilities for the discharge and handling of cargo at Basra, also provision of works for the erection and repair of river craft were hopelessly inadequate.

(*j*) Proceedings in connection with the filling of orders for river craft by the Director of the Royal Indian Marine in India, and the India Office in London, were far from satisfactory.

(*k*) Looking at the facts, which from the first must have been apparent to any administrator, military or civilian, who gave a few minutes consideration to the map, and to th conditions in Mesopotamia, the want of foresight and provision for the most fundamental needs of the Expedition reflects discredit upon the organising aptitude of all the authorities concerned. General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the General Staff, Whitehall, in a document to which we have already referred, states: "In general, the operations were allowed in 1915 to develop without proper regard to the vital questions of supply and maintenance," in which opinion our investigations lead us unreservedly to concur.

C. ROYAL INDIAN MARINE.

63. It is not easy to describe with anything like precision the status and functions of the Royal Indian Marine Department. It is enough here to say that its position is not considered satisfactory by its present Director, nor by the late Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe. The latter indeed informed us that he had been so impressed by the unsatisfactory position of the Marine Department that he had in contemplation changes in it when the War broke out.

64. The external communications of India have always been and still are sea-communications. No reinforcement from outside and no replenishing of military stores not produced in the country can reach India except by sea. It is evident that what may be called the maritime or marine side of the Indian Government should be strong, whereas it is admitted to be, and undeniably is, weak. This it will continue to be until a change is made in the status of the Marine Department.

65. In earlier days there was a regular Indian Navy, the officers and seamen of which were Europeans, the Marines—who were carried in the larger ships—being native Sepoys. This force was under the Bombay Government, and was called the Bombay Marine until the reign of William IV., who ordered it to be re-named the Indian Navy. Its reputation in both war and peace was high. Its headquarters were at Bombay. It remained in existence for some few years after the assumption of the Government of India by the Crown, and was then abolished.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00004f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

C. Royal Indian Marine.

66. After an interval the Royal Indian Marine Department was created. It was not a naval force in the real meaning of the term. It was largely occupied in transport work, the movement of troops by sea. Its headquarters were fixed at Bombay, certainly the most suitable place for them. Some of the officers of the Department were detailed for duty at great Indian seaports, and worked under the local Governments. These officers do not deal with the traffic or with the loading, unloading, or quick despatch of commercial vessels.

67. The Royal Indian Marine Department is under the Army Department at the centre of the Government, and gets orders from it. At the same time the Royal Indian Marine Department sometimes gets orders from the Quartermaster General, who is a member, so to speak, of the Commander-in-Chief's Department. Occasionally also the Royal Indian Marine receives something very like instructions from the Indian General Staff. There seem, therefore, to be in effect three sources from which orders to the Director, Royal Indian Marine, emanate. The Military Secretary to the Government of India in the Army Department, when sending communications to the Director Royal Indian Marine, heads them "Marine Department," and these two words are the only indication that the Central Government in India has any direct connection with maritime affairs. There is no one at the seat of Administration with nautical experience or knowledge. The Director of the Royal Indian Marine was not granted—at any rate did not exercise—any initiative in maritime or nautical matters. He had, in his own words, to wait until he was told what was wanted.

68. The time of the Director and Senior Officers of the Indian Marine is much taken up with mere office or desk work. The amount of writing which they have to get through—or at all events do get through—can only be described as enormous. This involves intolerably long hours of work in an office when open-air activity and supervision are of much greater importance. Much of the writing work requires no maritime experience or nautical knowledge, both of which are often necessary in the case of open-air supervision when a great war is in progress.

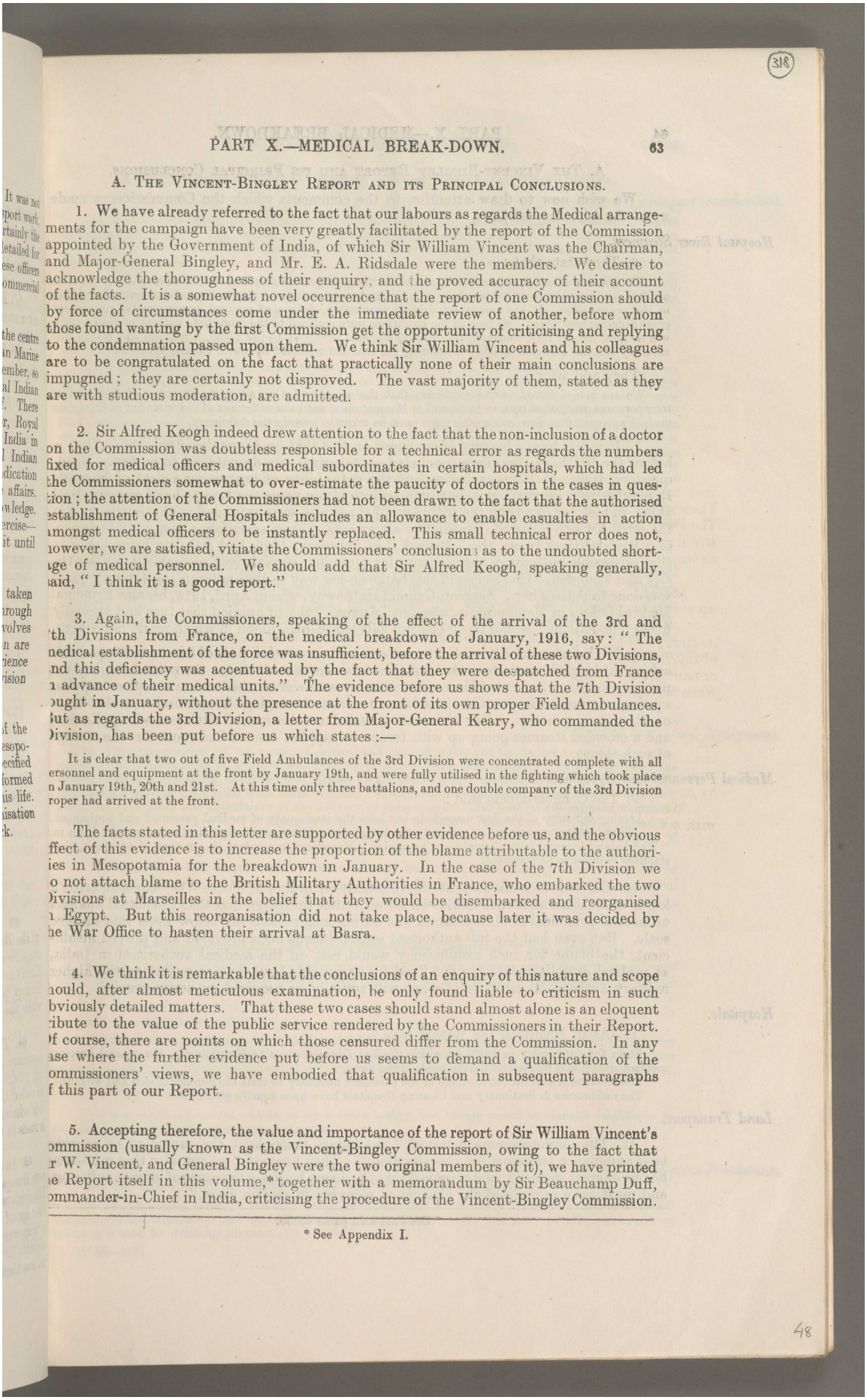
69. The Director of the Royal Indian Marine gave to the Commission a list of the duties, the discharge of which he considered rendered it impossible for him to visit Mesopotamia and see for himself the actual state of things there. Most of the duties specified required neither maritime experience nor nautical knowledge, and could have been performed by any alert business man, even though he may have never been on blue water in his life.

We feel strongly that the Royal Indian Marine Department requires reorganisation with a view to giving its Director a higher status and a staff adequate to his work.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000048

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

1. We have already referred to the fact that our labours as regards the Medical arrangements for the campaign have been very greatly facilitated by the report of the Commission appointed by the Government of India, of which Sir William Vincent was the Chairman, and Major-General Bingley, and Mr. E. A. Ridsdale were the members. We desire to acknowledge the thoroughness of their enquiry, and the proved accuracy of their account of the facts. It is a somewhat novel occurrence that the report of one Commission should by force of circumstances come under the immediate review of another, before whom those found wanting by the first Commission get the opportunity of criticising and replying to the condemnation passed upon them. We think Sir William Vincent and his colleagues are to be congratulated on the fact that practically none of their main conclusions are impugned; they are certainly not disproved. The vast majority of them, stated as they are with studious moderation, are admitted.

2. Sir Alfred Keogh indeed drew attention to the fact that the non-inclusion of a doctor on the Commission was doubtless responsible for a technical error as regards the numbers fixed for medical officers and medical subordinates in certain hospitals, which had led the Commissioners somewhat to over-estimate the paucity of doctors in the cases in question; the attention of the Commissioners had not been drawn to the fact that the authorised establishment of General Hospitals includes an allowance to enable casualties in action amongst medical officers to be instantly replaced. This small technical error does not, however, we are satisfied, vitiate the Commissioners' conclusions as to the undoubted shortage of medical personnel. We should add that Sir Alfred Keogh, speaking generally, said, "I think it is a good report."

3. Again, the Commissioners, speaking of the effect of the arrival of the 3rd and 7th Divisions from France, on the medical breakdown of January, 1916, say: "The medical establishment of the force was insufficient, before the arrival of these two Divisions, and this deficiency was accentuated by the fact that they were despatched from France in advance of their medical units." The evidence before us shows that the 7th Division fought in January, without the presence at the front of its own proper Field Ambulances. But as regards the 3rd Division, a letter from Major-General Keary, who commanded the Division, has been put before us which states:—

> It is clear that two out of five Field Ambulances of the 3rd Division were concentrated complete with all personnel and equipment at the front by January 19th, and were fully utilised in the fighting which took place on January 19th, 20th and 21st. At this time only three battalions, and one double company of the 3rd Division proper had arrived at the front.

The facts stated in this letter are supported by other evidence before us, and the obvious effect of this evidence is to increase the proportion of the blame attributable to the authorities in Mesopotamia for the breakdown in January. In the case of the 7th Division we do not attach blame to the British Military Authorities in France, who embarked the two Divisions at Marseilles in the belief that they would be disembarked and reorganised in Egypt. But this reorganisation did not take place, because later it was decided by the War Office to hasten their arrival at Basra.

4. We think it is remarkable that the conclusions of an enquiry of this nature and scope should, after almost meticulous examination, be only found liable to criticism in such obviously detailed matters. That these two cases should stand almost alone is an eloquent tribute to the value of the public service rendered by the Commissioners in their Report. Of course, there are points on which those censured differ from the Commission. In any case where the further evidence put before us seems to demand a qualification of the Commissioners' views, we have embodied that qualification in subsequent paragraphs of this part of our Report.

5. Accepting therefore, the value and importance of the report of Sir William Vincent's Commission (usually known as the Vincent-Bingley Commission, owing to the fact that Sir W. Vincent, and General Bingley were the two original members of it), we have printed the Report itself in this volume,* together with a memorandum by Sir Beauchamp Duff, Commander-in-Chief in India, criticising the procedure of the Vincent-Bingley Commission.

* See Appendix I.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00002b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

PART X.—MEDICAL BREAKDOWN.

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

We wish now to draw attention to the comments which the Commissioners made upon the following subjects.

Hospital River Steamers.

6. They state that :—

> The absence of any river steamers equipped for the transport of sick and wounded, and of any separate medical establishment for such vessels, ... has had more prejudicial results than almost any other defect in the organisation. It has constantly delayed evacuation, dislocated medical arrangements, and caused great suffering and injury. So long as the operations were confined to the immediate vicinity of Basra there was no need for any such transport, but directly columns advanced up the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun, the necessity of some means of speedily evacuating the sick and wounded by water became apparent.

They add later :—

> We are indeed forced to the conclusion that the necessity for an adequate provision of this kind of transport was overlooked both in India and in Mesopotamia, until the sufferings of the wounded in Ctesiphon made it apparent that some systematic steps must be taken to remedy the deficiency.

7. It is fair to say by way of comment on this that on November 23rd, 1915—that is before the battle of Ctesiphon concluded—a telegram was despatched from Army Headquarters, India, to Basra, pointing out the desirability of organising a fleet of Hospital River Steamers on the Tigris, but such an intimation came too late to be of any practical value, in meeting or easing the sufferings of those who were wounded in this battle, and in the retreat which followed immediately afterwards. Even acceptance from private donors of a hospital river barge, the "Bengali," in February, 1915, had failed to bring home to the responsible authorities the necessity for providing special river accommodation for the sick and wounded. On the loss of this barge on her way to Mesopotamia, nothing adequate was done to replace her. Surgeon-General Hathaway, who in April, 1915, became Principal Medical Officer in Mesopotamia, was, until August, 1915, of opinion that tugs and specially fitted "mahailahs" would be an efficient substitute, an opinion in which we do not concur.

8. We have stated our views at greater length in another part of our report* upon this subject of hospital river steamers, and therefore need not elaborate the point here, beyond pointing out that the use of the ordinary transport steamer which takes troops or supplies up the river can never provide a satisfactory means of bringing the sick and wounded down on the return journey. The sick and wounded require special fittings and appliances, and a crowded steamer going up with troops or supplies cannot find room for the storage of such things.

Medical Personnel and Equipment.

9. The Commissioners said :—

> Another difficulty of the first magnitude has been the inadequacy of medical personnel and equipment. . . . There was in our opinion no reason to think that the ordinary scale of medical units, as laid down in "War Establishments, India," would not be needed. Experience has indeed shown that, if anything, that standard requires to be increased.

10. Our evidence shows that the organisation orders of Force "D" contemplated a lower establishment than is laid down for a frontier campaign and that the actual amount of medical personnel in Mesopotamia was during long periods far below even this meagre scale. But even had the full authorised establishment been provided and proved insufficient, the blame for such insufficiency would rest on the medical authorities in India, as medical establishments are not fixed by immutable laws, but according to the higher military authorities' estimate of what will actually be required on active service.

Hospitals.

11. As to hospitals, the Report says :—

> From the date [early in 1915] on which the 2nd Division came to Mesopotamia, the general hospital accommodation was insufficient for the needs of the force.
>
> There has been a consistent shortage in the personnel necessary to treat the number of sick and wounded. The deficiencies in Stationary and Clearing Hospitals have been equally great.

Land Transport.

12. The Commissioners speak of "the failure throughout the campaign to provide land ambulance transport for the wounded." They proceed "we consider this matter to be one of great moment, as it is proved that the defect has been the cause of intense suffering, and must have prejudiced the chances of recovery in certain cases."

* See Part IX., paras 48–50.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00001c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

Land Transport **(conclusion).**

The original organisation orders of Indian Expeditionary Force "D" did not include any wheeled transport for the sick and wounded. According to "War Establishments, India," each field ambulance should have been accompanied by 8 ambulance tongas, in lieu of which the original orders for this force allotted an additional number of riding mules.

We have no evidence that these riding mules were ever used by the wounded, though their presence on one occasion in a very restive state is recorded by a witness. They are obviously useless for serious cases.

13. The Commissioners continue :—

The omission to send wheeled transport was probably due to the fact that operations for some time were likely to be confined to the immediate neighbourhood of the Shatt-el-Arab. The history of the campaign shows, however, that very shortly after the capture of Basra the operations extended to a considerable distance from any river, and no satisfactory reason has been assigned for the failure to provide the ordinary form of land ambulance transport for these operations. It is in evidence that on many occasions during the campaign wheeled ambulances could have been employed. In fact, a few motors were used in the Ahwaz operations in April and May, 1915, and again at Ctesiphon in November, and ambulance wagons of the English pattern were employed with conspicuous success, to our own knowledge, in the operations up the Tigris in the beginning of April, 1916. But throughout the campaign the usual form of ambulance transport has been the army transport cart, that is, a small, springless cart made of wood and iron, drawn by mules or ponies, and ordinarily employed for the carriage of supplies. When the evidence of the suffering caused by this means of conveyance, particularly in cases of fracture and severe injury, is considered, it is difficult to avoid criticising the action of those responsible for this deficiency in severe language.

We entirely concur in this view.

We have been told that one or two motor cars were at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding after the battle of Kut, and in the advance to Ctesiphon. We feel strongly that a country which was practicable for cars for the General Officer Commanding was equally practicable for motor convoys for the wounded. By April, 1916, a few motor ambulances were in use at the front, and Sir Beauchamp Duff's evidence is to the effect that ten were at the disposal of Force "D." We do not think they were all in use at the front. On the other hand, telegrams before us show that the Turks had twelve available at the front. We do not think it is creditable that in this matter the provision by the Turkish Army, situated as it was, should have exceeded our own.

Medical Stores and Equipment.

14. The arrangements for the supply of surgical and medical stores and appliances to meet the requirements of the various units in Mesopotamia were, up to March, 1916, unsatisfactory. In the first place the system of supply, laid down in the Medical Manual (War), India, was ill-adapted to meet the demands of a large force operating 1,600 miles from India overseas. In the second place, owing to lack of river transport, there was such delay and uncertainty in the delivery of these supplies, that medical officers have frequently been hampered in their work. For example, in the advance to Amara "there was, if we are to accept the evidence given us, a shortage of drugs, including castor oil, epsom salts, emetine, quinine and supply of medical comforts, and the supply of lime juice and fresh vegetables was deficient."

We ourselves are convinced by the evidence before us that, though there was never any general shortage of drugs, dressings, etc., at Basra, yet these and similar medical necessities were on many occasions either in insufficient quantities or altogether lacking at the front, when the need for them was great.

15. As regards electric fans, the Commissioners say (reporting in May, 1916)—

A certain number of fans were put into the general hospitals at Basra last year, but these were not sufficient for all the wards, and none of the new hospitals there had up to the time of our leaving Basra been fitted with these fans.

16. As regards ice, they say :—

We are informed that ice was available for all the hospitals in Basra during the hot weather of 1915, but it certainly was not regularly available at Ahwaz, Nasariyeh or Amara, and up to the time of our departure so far as we are aware, Government had not supplied any ice manufacturing plant to any station outside Basra.

17. The Commissioners add :—

This is a somewhat serious matter, as ice is not a luxury, but having regard to climatic conditions, an absolute necessary for the treatment of the sick.

and we concur.

Preventive Sanitation.

18. On the subject of water supply the Commissioners say :—

Generally speaking, however, the only source of water supply at present is the nearest river, and we are not satisfied that systematic and methodical attempts are made to render this water potable and innocuous before it is used for drinking purposes.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00001c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

PART X.—MEDICAL BREAKDOWN.

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

This refers to the state of things at the base at Basra. As regards the state of things elsewhere we quote the following :—

> On the river steamers and barges which are utilised both for the conveyance of troops and the sick, the arrangements for the supply of good drinking water appear to us to be defective. On some of the vessels there are no water tanks. On some the tanks supplied are useless, and on many steamers and barges there are no arrangements for purifying the drinking water that is used by the troops. . . . Water supply arrangements at the actual front were also, until recently, far from satisfactory. The recent outbreak of cholera is attributed by sanitary experts to the failure to supply the troops with a sufficient amount of purified drinking water.

The Commissioners state, however, that the failure to supply a good water supply to the trenches was (at the time of their making their report) "being rectified."

Elsewhere in this Report reference is made to the lack of sweepers for sanitary work, and the fact that a number of those sent out were not of the proper caste. For a considerable time also the Commissioners record "the absence of any suitable machinery for disinfecting clothing and other articles," but they state that this had been recently supplied.

19. The above are merely small quotations showing the general tenor of the report and of the defects which it discloses in almost every branch of the arrangements for dealing with the sick and wounded, and the health of the troops. Full appreciation of the case presented by the Commissioners can only be attained by reading the text of their report.

20. We agree generally in the Vincent-Bingley Commission's historical account of the manner in which the foregoing defects affected the various phases of the campaign; but, as regards the early period up to the summer of 1915, we have amplified that account in other parts of this Report.*

***Advance to** Amara and Nasariyeh.*

21. We agree that during May, June and July, 1915, in the advance to Amara and the operations round Nasariyeh, the first substantial lengthening of the lines of communications, the sick and wounded suffered considerable hardships. Hospital River Steamers had now become essential, and they were not even asked for. The general position can perhaps be best summed up in the words of one of our witnesses, Colonel Giffard, a senior officer of the Indian Medical Service who was in command of a hospital ship running between Bombay and Basra. He told us that up to June, 1915, "there was nothing either at Basra or Bombay that could be considered a breakdown," but that in May, 1915, it was "obvious to most of us medical officers, that even at Basra the breaking strain was nearly reached." He states that—

> The patients in the hospitals at Basra were not comfortable. The heat was almost unbearable, and they were largely housed in thatched sheds. I saw these sheds badly overcrowded, the attendants were too few, there was hardly any ice; electric fans, although offered by the Madras Fund in December, 1914, had not been installed, and in every way it was a poor performance.

***First Battle** of Es Sinn or Kut-el-Amara.*

22. At the battle of Kut-el-Amara (September 28th, 1915), the medical arrangements were not satisfactory. The Field Ambulances were insufficient and overcrowded. The river transport used for evacuating the wounded was unsuitable. The steamers used were insufficiently equipped. Part of the battlefield was eight miles distant from the river, two motor cars were available, but otherwise severe cases had to be evacuated in Army transport carts, a most inefficient substitute for motor ambulance transport or the light pony tongas sent to Mesopotamia later. The hardships, in fact, of the wounded, who numbered over 1,100, were considerable, though not nearly as severe as in later actions.

***Battle** of Ctesiphon.*

23. After the battle of Ctesiphon (November 22nd, &c.) we have no hesitation in saying there was a complete breakdown. The casualties (roughly 4,500 in a fighting force of 13,500) were heavily underestimated. Here again, the conclusions of the Vincent-Bingley Commission are abundantly supported by independent evidence submitted to us.

* See Part X., B and C.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00003b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

Battle of Ctesiphon.

24. They say that—

The medical establishment available on this occasion was inadequate to meet the demands made on it, and that the arrangements for collecting the wounded on the battlefield, and accommodating them, pending evacuation to the river bank, were far from satisfactory. It was very difficult for wounded men to ascertain where they had to go for medical aid, and when field ambulances and collecting stations were found, the supply of food, tents, blankets, hot water and any kind of comfort was insufficient. Further, owing to the shortage of medical personnel, many of the patients both in the field ambulances near the battlefield, and at the encampments by the river bank, did not receive proper treatment. There was some delay in evacuating the wounded to Laj, where the steamers to convey them to the base were moored, and it was not until the 25th that the last of the wounded were removed to this spot. In the meantime, many suffered from exposure, want of food and inadequate attention.

In the second place, save for two motor ambulances which were employed with great success, no proper ambulance land transport was provided for the removal of the wounded to the river bank. There were a number of steamers at Laj, some eight or nine miles from the battlefield, two only of which, however, had been in any way prepared for the reception of the sick. Many of the wounded were, it is true, able to walk or ride to the river bank, but for the conveyance of stretcher cases the two motors already mentioned, and ordinary transport carts, alone were available.

Thirdly, the lack of properly equipped river hospital steamers proved, as may be well understood, in the circumstances, disastrous.

The medical and subordinate personnel for these steamers, which was taken from field ambulances, was inadequate for the number of the patients. The supply of medical stores and appliances, and even of food, was in some cases insufficient. The arrangements for cooking the food were defective, and the personnel to distribute it was wanting. The arrangements for water-supply were unsatisfactory, the latrine accommodation was insufficient, and there were not enough sweepers and bed-pans for the necessities of those patients who could not struggle to the latrines. Finally, the wounded were huddled together as close as they could be packed on the decks, without beds or mattresses, and it was almost impossible for the medical officers to attend to them properly. In some cases the vessels had, moreover, been used for the carriage of animals, and it was impossible, in the time available, to clean and disinfect them.

Wounds which required dressing and re-dressing were not attended to, and the condition of many of the patients who travelled by these steamers was, when they reached Basra, deplorable. There the wounds of many were found to be in a septic condition, and in urgent need of re-dressing. In some cases bed-sores had developed, more than one patient arrived soaked in fæces and urine, and in a few cases, wounds were found to contain maggots.

Surgeon-General Hathaway admitted to us that the arrangements made "were absolutely inadequate," and that the "wounded suffered intolerable discomfort." Sir John Nixon when asked whether he dissented from the general proposition that the wounded did suffer very great hardships on this occasion replied "No, I do not dissent at all."

25. We shall comment later on the very different description of things telegraphed home to the Secretary of State at the time, but we would say here that, had the authorities in India or at home had any inkling of the true state of affairs at the beginning of December, special efforts might have been made at any rate to reinforce the medical personnel in Mesopotamia in view of future operations.

26. Full credit should be given to all concerned for the fact that the wounded were brought away in the retreat from Ctesiphon, and saved from Arab indignities and brutalities. At the same time, we believe that much of the sufferings of the wounded might have been avoided, if adequate forethought had been shown in the planning and preparations for the advance to Baghdad. For the actual arrangements on the battle-field Colonel Hehir was responsible. We have had the advantage (not open to the Vincent-Bingley Commission) of hearing Colonel Hehir's detailed evidence on the subject. Having regard to the inadequate means at his disposal we do not consider that his dispositions are open to serious criticism. We are of opinion, however, that he should have taken more vigorous steps to represent the shortages in medical personnel and equipment before both the battle of Kut and the battle of Ctesiphon.

Kut Relief Operations. ***January, 1916.***

27. The medical arrangements during the January fighting, that is to say the battles of Sheik Saad, Wadi and Hannah, resulted in the most complete breakdown of all.

The fact that the 7th Division had not its proper complement of Field Ambulances, has already been alluded to, but though this may have been a contributory cause, it cannot be accepted as an adequate explanation of the breakdown.

28. The testimony of our witnesses allows no shadow of doubt as to the accuracy of the description of the facts in paragraphs 135 to 140 of the report of Sir W. Vincent's Commission. The Field Ambulances were so overcrowded that patient after patient passed through them without receiving medical attention or food. The river steamers were short of equipment, sweepers, orderlies, bandages, medical comforts, blankets, bedpans,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00001d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

urine bottles, cutlery and crockery. Many patients got no treatment after the application of their field dressing until they reached Basra.

29. The Vincent-Bingley Commission state the main causes of the breakdown at this time as :—

(1.) The lack of proper hospital river steamers.
(2.) The lack of River Transport.
(3.) The insufficiency of the medical and subordinate staff and of medical stores and accessories, and
(4.) The weather conditions.

To this we would add a *5th* viz. :—The incorrect estimate as to the period for which General Townshend's food supplies would enable him to hold out, which caused General Aylmer to attack before his force could be organised complete at the front.

It was known when General Aylmer commenced the operations for the relief of Kut, that his columns were inadequately organised as regards transport, staff and, above all, that the medical complements were quite insufficient. Military exigencies were assumed to justify an advance in spite of these deficiencies, and it was with a full knowledge of such deficiencies that the advance commenced. The Vincent-Bingley Commission in their personal references to General Aylmer, acquit him of responsibility for these shortcomings. We concur with them. He was acting under peremptory orders, as time was then considered to be a paramount consideration.

***March—April*, 1916.**

30. As regards the March fighting, we again quote and adopt from the report of the Vincent-Bingley Commission :—

For various reasons the medical arrangements for the evacuation of the wounded at the battle of Es-Sinn were much more successful than during the operations of January.

The arrangements were in many respects far from ideal, but we have reason to believe that the improvement was realised by everyone and much appreciated.

The main sources of discomfort were twofold, the use of transport carts for the conveyance of wounded by land, and the lack of river hospital steamers.

Subject to these defects, we think that the arrangements were satisfactory, and that great credit is due to the officers directly responsible for the collection and evacuation of the wounded.

31. Speaking of the battles between April 5th and 24th, the Vincent-Bingley Commissioners say that the—

"Arrangements were carefully thought out and proved very successful. The number of stretcher bearers was sufficient, the collecting stations were conveniently situated, and ample provision was made for the comfort and medical treatment of the wounded, who were promptly evacuated to the camp at Wadi by the "Aerial" motor boat, and in motor cars and ambulance waggons. The organisation was methodical and worked smoothly and the Commission saw nothing to call for unfavourable criticism in the arrangements made, save that the provision of more motor boats and of additional ambulance transport would have been a convenience."

They add,

"We think that the administrative and executive medical officers deserve great credit for the successful collection and evacuation of the large numbers of wounded in the almost continuous fighting which took place during this month."

We would add ourselves that the force had by this time profited by the experience of medical officers who had served in France.

Elsewhere we print a memorandum* handed in to us by Colonel Hehir which explains the medical arrangements made by him and his subordinates during the siege of Kut. They seem to us to have been excellent.

B. Medical Administration of Colonel Hehir in Mesopotamia.

32. It was only at a comparatively late period of their enquiry that the terms of reference of the Vincent-Bingley Commission were enlarged so as to include the earlier part of the campaign. Moreover, the chief medical officers responsible during the early period, Colonel Hehir in Mesopotamia and Surgeon-General Babtie in India, were not available as witnesses before that Commission. For these and other reasons the Vincent-Bingley Report does not deal, as fully as it might otherwise have done, with the medical arrangements for the Mesopotamian Expedition up to the summer of 1915. The indications which the Report contains as to these arrangements are, however, amplified rather than contradicted by the evidence which we ourselves have taken.

* See Appendix III.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000081

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Medical Administration of Colonel Hehir in Mesopotamia.

33. Colonel Hehir's able statement of evidence gives his official account of the medical arrangements during the period up to April, 1915, when he was principal medical officer in Mesopotamia. He has submitted to us his periodical reports to Surgeon-General Babtie in India and in the direction of sanitary and preventive medicine they display a watchfulness and foresight over the needs of the situation, which are in refreshing contrast with the administration of his successor, Surgeon-General Hathaway. Thus at the very outset of the campaign he calls attention to the crying need for a proper water-supply at Basra and does his best to grapple with the insanitary conditions in that town and elsewhere. He suggests and obtains spine-pads, tinted glasses, mosquito-nets, soda-water, &c., &c. He asks for a dentist and a bacteriological expert. He takes scientific measures to cope with a possible outbreak of malaria, and he warns the Indian Government against the danger of scurvy arising from the deficient ration of the Indian troops. He cables early in February for typhoid and small-pox vaccine and anti-tetanus serum, and by using the latter is able to report that there was only one case of tetanus out of nearly a thousand wounded at Shaiba. We consider that Colonel Hehir worked with zeal and on the whole with success: and he can take credit for a remarkably low rate of sickness in the force during the winter of 1914–15. But it is quite clear from Colonel Hehir's evidence, and from other sources, that many of the defects in the care of the sick and wounded, which afterwards proved so disastrous, were existent during the earlier phases of the campaign, and were only prevented from becoming conspicuous, by a certain combination of good luck and good management, which distinguished Colonel Hehir's administration.

34. The battle of Sahil, November 17th, 1914, was the first battle in the campaign in which the casualties were considerable. The medical experience of this battle indicated defects, which, if they had been appreciated and remedied in time, would have saved much suffering later in the campaign. The battle was fought before the full medical personnel had arrived, the personnel had been separated from their equipment by the embarkation officers at Bombay, some of the wounded were left out all night, and the absence of any hospital ship necessitated wounded being sent back to India in an ordinary transport, which had previously carried animals. But the comparatively small number of casualties and the energy of Colonel Hehir in dealing with them would seem to have minimised in his own mind, and in those of the authorities in India and Mesopotamia the serious nature of the defects disclosed at this battle. At any rate every one of these mistakes was repeated later in the campaign with disastrous results.

35. Colonel Hehir had been D.D.M.S. at Simla and had worked out with Surgeon-General Babtie the medical requirements of Force "D." He must therefore have been aware that no British Stationary Hospital accompanied the force and also that the British General Hospital was 50 beds below the standard scale. He knew too that by the end of March the force had been doubled in size, and brought up to the strength of two divisions without any additional Stationary, Clearing, or General Hospitals being provided, and he made no protest against the omission to provide such hospitals. Owing to the fact that it was the cool weather and that such fighting as occurred was spasmodic and not as a rule severe, Colonel Hehir was able to manage normally with the existing hospital accommodation without serious overcrowding. But even so, he was forced at times into such doubtful expedients as the use of transports as overflow hospitals, the borrowing of medical personnel from the field ambulances, and the use of field ambulances as General Hospitals. All these measures diminished the pressure on the hospitals and their staffs in a manner which would have been impossible in times of widespread sickness or continuous fighting. Unfortunately, however, his success in overcoming these difficulties led Colonel Hehir not sufficiently to realise the danger of allowing the original shortage of medical personnel and equipment to persist. He was content to "make do" with the low scale of medical personnel provided and such deficiencies as he represented were only in respect of shortages on that scale. He even acquiesced in the failure of the Indian authorities to send out with the reinforcements at the beginning of 1915 their proper complement of field ambulances and hospitals, and it was not till towards the very end of his administration as Principal Medical Officer that he appears to have begun to realise the dangers of the situation. It is an ironic comment on Colonel Hehir's policy that, in giving evidence as to medical administration in periods of stress under his successor, Surgeon-General Hathaway, he is again and again forced to criticise the perpetuation and development of expedients which he himself initiated in easier times.

36. A case in point is the non-provision of hospital river steamers. In his evidence

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000095

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Medical Administration of Colonel Hehir in Mesopotamia.

before us (after the event) Colonel Hehir says: "The absence of special river transport for sick and wounded was felt from the earliest stage of the campaign and this want became progressively more pronounced as time went on." Yet General Barrett, speaking of the period of Colonel Hehir's administration, stated to the Vincent-Bingley Commission: "I was never asked by any of my medical officers to apply for any river hospital steamers." The fact was that Colonel Hehir was content to overcome the difficulty by securing from the A.Q.M.G. (often only after much importunity) ordinary river boats for the transport of the sick on special occasions. When the number of sick was small, as under Colonel Hehir's administration, this was a possible expedient and Colonel Hehir was able, he assures us, to see that the boats were properly cleaned and sanitated before being used for patients. But such a system was bound to fail when there came a large increase in the number of patients and in the demands upon the steamers for ordinary transport purposes. And Colonel Hehir points out that "these steamers were always unsatisfactory" and that (in Surgeon-General Hathaway's time) "their absence became more felt as the number of sick and wounded increased and at the battles of Kut and Ctesiphon we were in consequence faced with difficulties which could not be overcome satisfactorily."

37. Another defect, which was evident, though not accentuated, under Colonel Hehir's administration was the failure to supply the expedition with suitable vehicles for carrying the wounded. The only land ambulance transport provided were stretchers and riding mules. Stretchers are not suitable for distances beyond 2½ miles, if for no other reason because of the strain on and consequent failure of the stretcher bearers. This is a vital objection where, as in the Mesopotamian campaign there was often an actual shortage of bearers. Mules are, of course, impossible for severely wounded cases, and at one of the early engagements in the campaign (Rotah, January 20th, 1915) a R.A.M.C. officer informed the Vincent-Bingley Commission: "These animals were very restive and not suitable for wounded men to ride upon" with the consequence that the wounded, luckily very few in number, had to be carried back between 6 and 7 miles on stretchers. There were no motor vehicles available, except one or two provided from private sources. Consequently whenever it became necessary to carry the wounded any distance, resort was had to the ordinary army transport cart (usually known as A.T. carts), which is thus described by the A.D.M.S. of the 3rd Division:

> "The ambulance transport of these units consisted of the army transport cart, which is without springs has no cover to give protection against rain or the direct rays of the sun; and the bottom of which consists bars of iron which, even when liberally covered with mattresses or other padding, renders the placing of wounded man, especially cases of fracture, in such a conveyance, a practice which can only be designated barbarous and cruel."

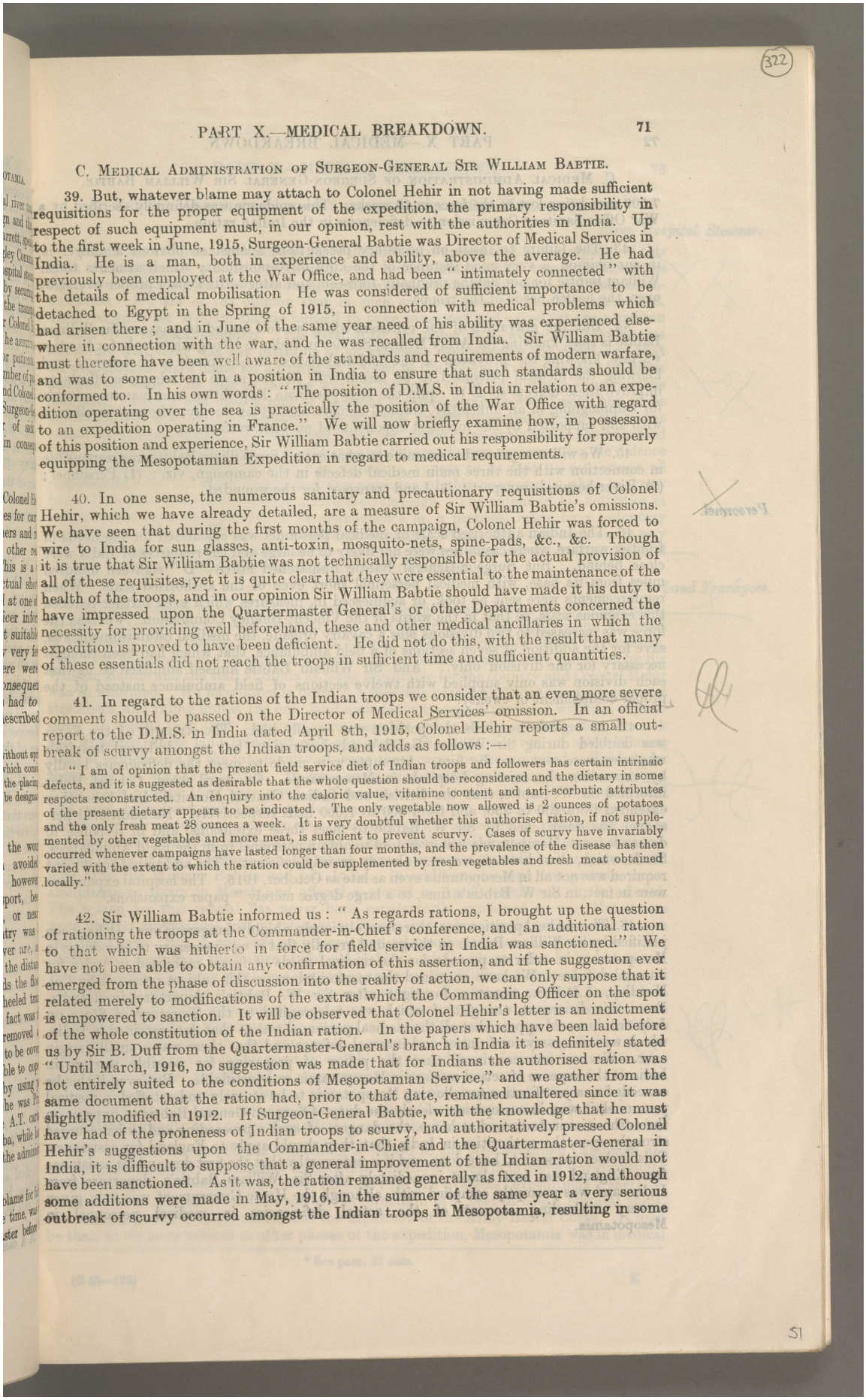
38. Colonel Hehir himself recognises that the use of A.T. carts for the wounded "gives rise to a vast amount of suffering that would have been avoided by the use of suitable vehicles with proper springs." He did not, however, as Principal Medical Officer, apply for any wheeled ambulance transport, because, as he told us, he thought the fighting would continue to be on, or near one of the rivers, and also because from February to June, the country was likely to be flooded. Our comment on this defence is that battles near a river are, as was seen at Es Sinn and Ctesiphon, likely to extend further from the river than the distance for which wounded can be properly carried by stretcher. While, as regards the floods, it would not have been too early to apply in January for a special form of wheeled transport to be prepared for the time when the floods would subside in July. The fact was that in the earlier fighting in the campaign the number of the wounded to be removed a long distance was either very small as at Rotah, or else as at Shaiba the distance to be covered by wheeled ambulances was not very great. Colonel Hehir was, therefore, able to cope with the situation, either by using only stretchers, as at Rotah and Sahil, or by using padded A.T. carts to supplement the stretchers as at Shaiba. Thus, when he was Principal Medical Officer, we find him writing to the D.M.S. in India that the A.T. carts were "invaluable in transporting the wounded from the battlefield" at Shaiba, while later on in his evidence before us, he frankly deplores having to use them (under the administration of General Hathaway) at the battles of Es Sinn and Ctesiphon.

In these and other instances, we think that Colonel Hehir was to blame for failing to requisition India for equipment, which, though not indispensable at the time, was certain to be indispensable in the future. It was a mistake to risk disaster before taking measures which ordinary foresight would have adopted long before.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a9

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



C. Medical Administration of Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie.

39. But, whatever blame may attach to Colonel Hehir in not having made sufficient requisitions for the proper equipment of the expedition, the primary responsibility in respect of such equipment must, in our opinion, rest with the authorities in India. Up to the first week in June, 1915, Surgeon-General Babtie was Director of Medical Services in India. He is a man, both in experience and ability, above the average. He had previously been employed at the War Office, and had been "intimately connected" with the details of medical mobilisation He was considered of sufficient importance to be detached to Egypt in the Spring of 1915, in connection with medical problems which had arisen there; and in June of the same year need of his ability was experienced elsewhere in connection with the war, and he was recalled from India. Sir William Babtie must therefore have been well aware of the standards and requirements of modern warfare, and was to some extent in a position in India to ensure that such standards should be conformed to. In his own words: "The position of D.M.S. in India in relation to an expedition operating over the sea is practically the position of the War Office with regard to an expedition operating in France." We will now briefly examine how, in possession of this position and experience, Sir William Babtie carried out his responsibility for properly equipping the Mesopotamian Expedition in regard to medical requirements.

40. In one sense, the numerous sanitary and precautionary requisitions of Colonel Hehir, which we have already detailed, are a measure of Sir William Babtie's omissions. We have seen that during the first months of the campaign, Colonel Hehir was forced to wire to India for sun glasses, anti-toxin, mosquito-nets, spine-pads, &c., &c. Though it is true that Sir William Babtie was not technically responsible for the actual provision of all of these requisites, yet it is quite clear that they were essential to the maintenance of the health of the troops, and in our opinion Sir William Babtie should have made it his duty to have impressed upon the Quartermaster General's or other Departments concerned the necessity for providing well beforehand, these and other medical ancillaries in which the expedition is proved to have been deficient. He did not do this, with the result that many of these essentials did not reach the troops in sufficient time and sufficient quantities.

41. In regard to the rations of the Indian troops we consider that an even more severe comment should be passed on the Director of Medical Services' omission. In an official report to the D.M.S. in India dated April 8th, 1915, Colonel Hehir reports a small outbreak of scurvy amongst the Indian troops, and adds as follows:—

"I am of opinion that the present field service diet of Indian troops and followers has certain intrinsic defects, and it is suggested as desirable that the whole question should be reconsidered and the dietary in some respects reconstructed. An enquiry into the caloric value, vitamine content and anti-scorbutic attributes of the present dietary appears to be indicated. The only vegetable now allowed is 2 ounces of potatoes and the only fresh meat 28 ounces a week. It is very doubtful whether this authorised ration, if not supplemented by other vegetables and more meat, is sufficient to prevent scurvy. Cases of scurvy have invariably occurred whenever campaigns have lasted longer than four months, and the prevalence of the disease has then varied with the extent to which the ration could be supplemented by fresh vegetables and fresh meat obtained locally."

42. Sir William Babtie informed us: "As regards rations, I brought up the question of rationing the troops at the Commander-in-Chief's conference, and an additional ration to that which was hitherto in force for field service in India was sanctioned." We have not been able to obtain any confirmation of this assertion, and if the suggestion ever emerged from the phase of discussion into the reality of action, we can only suppose that it related merely to modifications of the extras which the Commanding Officer on the spot is empowered to sanction. It will be observed that Colonel Hehir's letter is an indictment of the whole constitution of the Indian ration. In the papers which have been laid before us by Sir B. Duff from the Quartermaster-General's branch in India it is definitely stated "Until March, 1916, no suggestion was made that for Indians the authorised ration was not entirely suited to the conditions of Mesopotamian Service," and we gather from the same document that the ration had, prior to that date, remained unaltered since it was slightly modified in 1912. If Surgeon-General Babtie, with the knowledge that he must have had of the proneness of Indian troops to scurvy, had authoritatively pressed Colonel Hehir's suggestions upon the Commander-in-Chief and the Quartermaster-General in India, it is difficult to suppose that a general improvement of the Indian ration would not have been sanctioned. As it was, the ration remained generally as fixed in 1912, and though some additions were made in May, 1916, in the summer of the same year a very serious outbreak of scurvy occurred amongst the Indian troops in Mesopotamia, resulting in some

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00001d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

C. Medical Administration of Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie.

7,500 men being lost to the force in 19 weeks. This epidemic was definitely ascribed by a War Office Sanitary Commission to deficiencies in the Indian ration.

43. The failure to insist on necessary precautions against so obvious a danger is, in our opinion, a very good instance of the kind of responsibility which attaches to Sir William Babtie for not having originally foreseen, and afterwards kept a proper oversight over, the health needs of the troops.

44. But the gravamen of the criticism which we feel bound to pass on Sir William Babtie is that, knowing the Army Medical Service in India to be organised only for frontier warfare, knowing the provision of the field ambulances and hospitals to be deficient, and knowing the medical personnel to be insufficient, he yet made no adequate efforts to improve these defects so as to equip the Mesopotamian Expedition in a manner suitable for campaigning in an unhealthy, tropical climate against an enemy, who was in alliance with and supported by the foremost exponents of modern warfare.

45. We will now proceed to examine to what extent Sir William Babtie was responsible in connection with the three main medical defects in the campaign, viz.: (1) Personnel; (2) River hospital transport; (3) Land transport for the wounded.

Personnel.

46. The Indian authorised scale of medical personnel was calculated for the needs of frontier warfare, where casualties were not likely to be large and the resources of India were close behind. But Surgeon-General Babtie despatched Force "D" eighteen hundred miles from its base, with medical personnel short even of the authorised scale. When reinforcements were sent he took, or acquiesced in, measures which even further reduced this exiguous scale, so that in the words of the Vincent-Bingley Commission "whereas the force was increased to two divisions *plus* a cavalry brigade, the medical establishment was, save for the addition of seven sections of a field ambulance, that which had been thought necessary for one division only." And Sir William Babtie himself admitted to us that each division was only supplied with twelve sections of field ambulance instead of the proper complement of twenty.

47. As regards hospitals the position was equally bad. The strength of the Force was doubled during Sir William Babtie's administration, but no additional hospitals whatever were sent over by him. Attempts were made to meet the deficiencies locally by expanding the existing hospitals in Mesopotamia. On April 22nd, Colonel Hehir informed Sir W. Babtie, that the British and Indian General Hospitals had been thus extended from 250 to 350, and from 600 to 1,000 beds respectively. No additional personnel was despatched by Sir W. Babtie to meet these extensions, and in response to demands for it, Mesopotamia was even told to obtain personnel from the Field Ambulances' Staffs, which, as we have shown, were already gravely deficient. The additional equipment required was not all in Mesopotamia even as late as October, 1915. The hospital expansions were in fact, in Sir W. Babtie's time, to a large degree merely "paper expansions."

48. The medical position was, therefore, obviously a highly dangerous one It has been justified by Sir William Babtie on the ground broadly that it was necessary to economise in Mesopotamia in order to provide for the medical needs of forces mobilised in India for internal defence. We have examined the memorandum on this subject prepared by Col. Hendley, A.D.M.S., about a fortnight after Sir W. Babtie's departure from India. From this document, the gist of which was telegraphed to the Secretary of State on July 3rd, it would appear that all the medical personnel was at that date retained in India, which was necessary for frontier and internal defence and that there was a small margin over. We are not convinced that the policy of preparing for possible warfare in India at the expense of actual warfare in Mesopotamia was justifiable. But even if this be conceded as a justification for allowing Mesopotamia to be severely understaffed in medical personnel, it was, in our opinion, clearly the duty of Surgeon-General Babtie to impress on the authorities in India and at home, the dangers of such a proceeding and to have urged strongly upon the authorities in India that they should apply to England for assistance. This he does not seem to have done, and it is noteworthy that the first demand for assistance from England was sent almost immediately after Sir William Babtie's departure from India, and was promptly complied with, although the Home Government was only given a very misleading account of the actual deficiencies in medical personnel in Mesopotamia.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000087

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

C. Medical Administration of Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie.

River Hospital Steamers.

49. In his examination before us Sir William Babtie agreed that in a campaign of this kind, if casualties on a considerable scale were certain and the only transport along the river, the authorities on the spot ought to have pressed for special river hospital accommodation. We are of the opinion that in such circumstances it, to a certain extent, devolved upon Sir William Babtie himself to have suggested and asked for the provision of such river hospital steamers. His defence for not doing so is, we gather, that he was not aware that there was any intention of an extensive campaign up the rivers, and that his preparations were made for a campaign limited to the conquest and retention of Basra and the oil fields. He told us that he was not informed of Sir John Nixon's instructions and that "if there had been a hint of Baghdad the arrangements would have had to be absolutely put into the melting-pot." He was also unable to recollect being told of the actual advance to Amara. Subsequently, however, under cross-examination, he admitted that he knew from hearsay that both Amara and Nasariyeh were necessary for the defence of Basra and the oil-fields. It does not, therefore, appear to us that he can escape all responsibility for not having suggested the provision of this necessity in what he knew from the outset to be more or less a riverine campaign. The extent of his activities in this direction was a suggestion of, or acquiescence in, a proposal made by a voluntary association to provide and equip a hospital river barge. When this barge sank on its way out to Mesopotamia, Sir William Babtie took no further steps in the matter beyond offering one motor launch also provided by voluntary effort.

Land Transport.

50. His attitude in regard to land transport for the wounded was hardly more satisfactory. The only such special transport provided under the Indian organisation consisted of stretchers, riding mules and ambulance tongas, which are vehicles drawn by bullocks. When the equipment of the expedition was being considered tongas were ruled out by Sir William Babtie and the staff at Simla as being unsuitable for the country and Colonel Hehir was so informed. We have already dealt in a previous paragraph* with the inadequacy of stretchers, and riding mules, the only land ambulance transport provided with the expedition. It follows that army transport carts were the only vehicles available for the sick and wounded where land transport was necessary. We have received an overwhelming mass of evidence as to the inhumanity of using these carts for the wounded. Padding for them was not always available. In some cases dead bodies were even used as cushions. Even when padded they were cruel and dangerous for certain classes of wounded. All this must have been well-known to Surgeon-General Babtie, or might have been easily ascertained by enquiry or experiment. His only action in regard to developing a more suitable vehicle than the bullock-tonga was to ask the Maharajah of Benares to provide a special corps of pony tongas—none of which were, however, available in Mesopotamia till long after Sir William Babtie had left India. In addition, he sent one private motor ambulance to Basra in March and offered a second in April, which was curtly refused. The reason for this refusal has never been satisfactorily explained to us. Motor cars were used as ambulances just previously at Shaiba and subsequently both up the Karun and the Tigris. But in any case an unexplained telegraphic refusal of a particular motor cannot (any more than the failure of Colonel Hehir to ask for tongas after he had been told that they were not being sent) be accepted as relieving Sir William Babtie of his responsibility for not providing wheeled ambulance transport. Knowing it was not provided he does not seem to have even asked for any special report or made any special enquiries as to how the expedition were managing without it. Like Colonel Hehir, so long as no evident disaster or scandal arose, he was content to "carry on" with obviously insufficient equipment. Though the expedition must inevitably fight and push forward by land and by river, he provided no proper land or river transport for the sick and wounded. He was content to leave developments in this respect to the haphazard efforts of private benevolence, and he never pressed upon the Indian Government or the Quartermaster-General the necessity for an organised effort to modernise its out-of-date ambulance vehicles.

51. Surgeon-General Babtie's omissions in regard to the Mesopotamian Campaign are all the more remarkable because of his promptitude and firmness in pressing war-provisions on the Indian Government which were necessary for the overseas expeditions generally. Thus, on the outbreak of war, he urged the formation of a fleet of ocean hospital ships, the construction of hospital trains, and the expansion of the Army Bearer Corps. It may be that, as we have noticed in other phases of the expedition, Mesopotamia was in medical

* See para. 37 *ante*.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00006d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

C. Medical Administration of Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie.

matters also regarded as a "small side-show" and did not for that reason receive proper attention to its special and unique requirements. At any rate and for whatever reason, Surgeon-General Babtie's administration was marked by serious faults, for which he must be blamed, and the importance of which cannot be minimised. But we recognise that the shortness of his experience as Director of Medical Services when the war broke out, and the fact that he had to work in an atmosphere very unfavourable to reforming innovation, must be regarded as diminishing the weight of the censure he deserves. He is undoubtedly a man of great ability, and having regard to all the circumstances, we desire to say that the faults of his administration were not, in our judgment, such as to prove him unfit for important responsible administrative posts.

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

52. Elsewhere in our report, we have discussed the effects of the campaign of economy in India.* We have seen how it tended to create an indisposition to put forward, or to press demands involving expenditure, and we have quoted and endorsed in general terms the views of the Vincent-Bingley Commission in this connection. We now propose to detail from our own evidence a number of instances, in which there has been a failure to report to higher authorities serious defects in existing arrangements. In almost all these cases the reporting and remedying of the defects would have involved considerable expenditure, and possibly censure of the responsible officers. There is no proof that economy was the motive of the omissions to report. But economy, as we have seen, engendered a disposition to reticence, and when this was reinforced by the natural tendency in all men to avoid censure, we fear that there grew up a dangerous habit of concealment. In matters affecting the sick and wounded the want of frankness has painfully impressed us.

The Colaba Hospital

53. Until 1916, practically the only Military Hospital for British sick and wounded in Bombay, was the Colaba Station Hospital. In May, 1915, allegations were made that this hospital was poorly equipped, and in response to a telegram from the Secretary of State, Sir William Babtie, then Director of Medical Services in India, visited and reported on the hospital. The gist of his report was telegraphed to England, and we give in full the telegrams on the subject.

Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated May 26th, 1915.

1864. Allegations being made that Military Hospital at Bombay to which wounded from Persian Gulf are being sent, is unprovided with X-ray apparatus and otherwise poorly equipped. Please cable facts.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated June 3rd, 1915.

H. 5304. Your telegram of the 26th ultimo, No. 1864. The station hospital at Colaba is equipped according to regulation, but much additional equipment for officers and men has been provided through the agency of funds, local and others. Arrangements were made some months ago for the provision of electric fans and light, but the supply has been delayed, owing to shortages of material. The number of X-ray apparatus available for military use in India is at present limited to one portable set per division, the rest having been sent overseas, fresh supplies indented for not having been received from home. The Sixth Divisional apparatus with the specialist is sent to Bombay, when convoys of wounded are expected, and in addition use can be made of the apparatus in the civil hospitals. Director, Medical Services, will visit Colaba within a week and the gist of his report will be telegraphed to you.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated June 16th, 1915.

H. 5620. In continuation of our telegram of the 2nd instant, No. H. 5304. Surgeon-General Babtie inspected Station Hospital, Colaba, and confirms former report. X-ray apparatus and arrangements for X-raying patients previously reported. No risk of any failure in this respect. He has arranged officers' accommodation which will not materially affect soldiers. Cooking quite good and sufficiently varied, there were no complaints. Electric lights and fans should be working in a fortnight. Hospital well staffed with medical officers and nurses, but some shortage in assistant surgeons, nursing orderlies and menials, which, as far as present conditions allow, will be met. Director of Medical Services satisfied that all sick and wounded officers and men have been well looked after and well cared for in a good hospital, and, taken all in all, Colaba Hospital is better found than the majority of station hospitals in India.

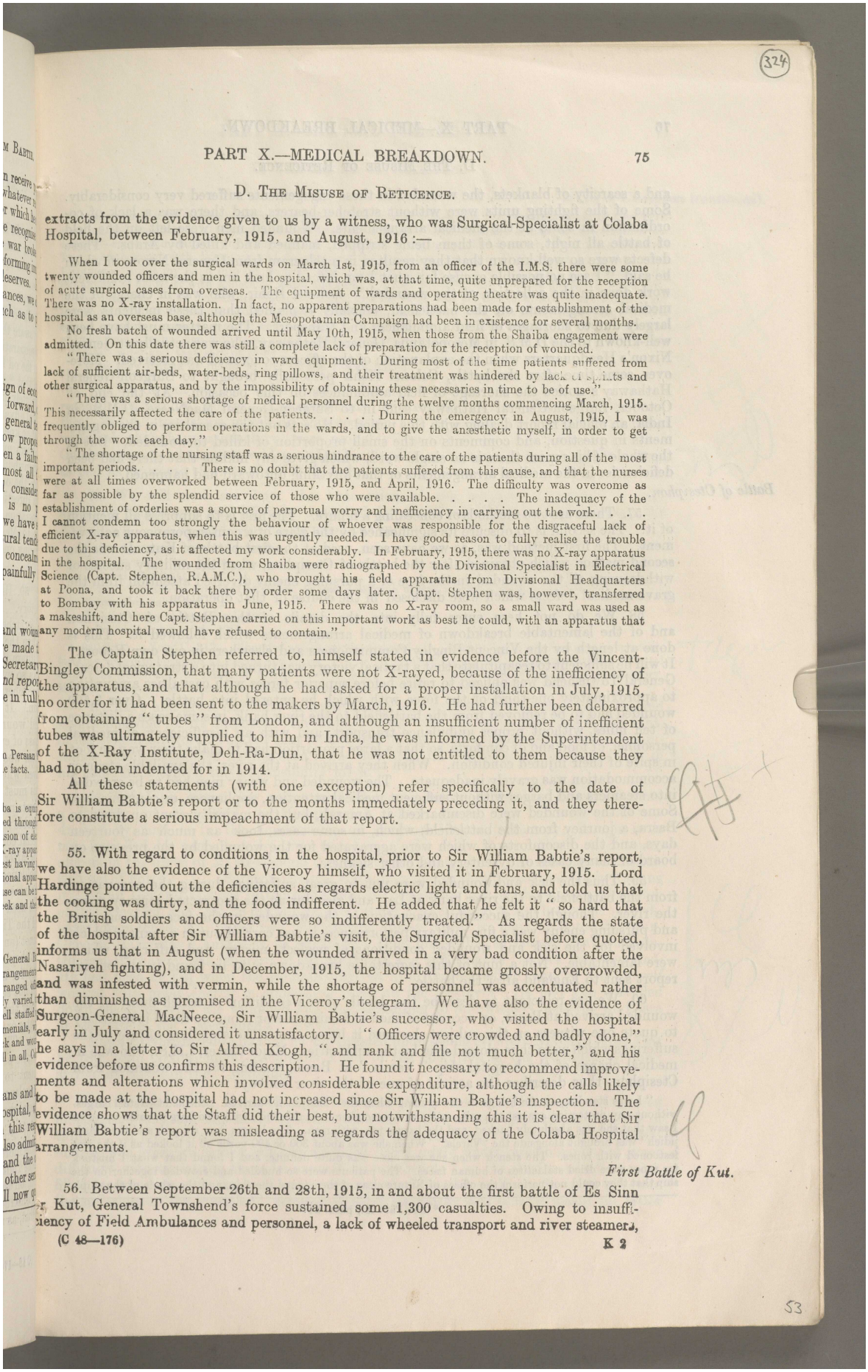
54. It will be observed that the failure up to date to supply electric fans and light is admitted. It is also admitted that X-ray apparatus is only sent to the hospital, when convoys of wounded are expected; but Sir William Babtie declares that in this respect "There is no risk of failure." A shortage of assistant surgeons and orderlies is also admitted, but there is a direct denial of any shortage of medical officers and nurses, and the concluding paragraph of the last telegram might easily be read as a denial of any other serious defects in equipment. Bearing these assertions and denials in mind, we will now quote

* ee Part I. C and Part XI. D.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000047

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



D. The Misuse of Reticence.

extracts from the evidence given to us by a witness, who was Surgical-Specialist at Colaba Hospital, between February, 1915, and August, 1916 :—

When I took over the surgical wards on March 1st, 1915, from an officer of the I.M.S. there were some twenty wounded officers and men in the hospital, which was, at that time, quite unprepared for the reception of acute surgical cases from overseas. The equipment of wards and operating theatre was quite inadequate. There was no X-ray installation. In fact, no apparent preparations had been made for establishment of the hospital as an overseas base, although the Mesopotamian Campaign had been in existence for several months.

No fresh batch of wounded arrived until May 10th, 1915, when those from the Shaiba engagement were admitted. On this date there was still a complete lack of preparation for the reception of wounded.

"There was a serious deficiency in ward equipment. During most of the time patients suffered from lack of sufficient air-beds, water-beds, ring pillows, and their treatment was hindered by lack of splints and other surgical apparatus, and by the impossibility of obtaining these necessaries in time to be of use."

"There was a serious shortage of medical personnel during the twelve months commencing March, 1915. This necessarily affected the care of the patients. . . . During the emergency in August, 1915, I was frequently obliged to perform operations in the wards, and to give the anæsthetic myself, in order to get through the work each day."

"The shortage of the nursing staff was a serious hindrance to the care of the patients during all of the most important periods. . . . There is no doubt that the patients suffered from this cause, and that the nurses were at all times overworked between February, 1915, and April, 1916. The difficulty was overcome as far as possible by the splendid service of those who were available. . . . . The inadequacy of the establishment of orderlies was a source of perpetual worry and inefficiency in carrying out the work. . . . I cannot condemn too strongly the behaviour of whoever was responsible for the disgraceful lack of efficient X-ray apparatus, when this was urgently needed. I have good reason to fully realise the trouble due to this deficiency, as it affected my work considerably. In February, 1915, there was no X-ray apparatus in the hospital. The wounded from Shaiba were radiographed by the Divisional Specialist in Electrical Science (Capt. Stephen, R.A.M.C.), who brought his field apparatus from Divisional Headquarters at Poona, and took it back there by order some days later. Capt. Stephen was, however, transferred to Bombay with his apparatus in June, 1915. There was no X-ray room, so a small ward was used as a makeshift, and here Capt. Stephen carried on this important work as best he could, with an apparatus that any modern hospital would have refused to contain."

The Captain Stephen referred to, himself stated in evidence before the Vincent-Bingley Commission, that many patients were not X-rayed, because of the inefficiency of the apparatus, and that although he had asked for a proper installation in July, 1915, no order for it had been sent to the makers by March, 1916. He had further been debarred from obtaining "tubes" from London, and although an insufficient number of inefficient tubes was ultimately supplied to him in India, he was informed by the Superintendent of the X-Ray Institute, Deh-Ra-Dun, that he was not entitled to them because they had not been indented for in 1914.

All these statements (with one exception) refer specifically to the date of Sir William Babtie's report or to the months immediately preceding it, and they therefore constitute a serious impeachment of that report.

55. With regard to conditions in the hospital, prior to Sir William Babtie's report, we have also the evidence of the Viceroy himself, who visited it in February, 1915. Lord Hardinge pointed out the deficiencies as regards electric light and fans, and told us that the cooking was dirty, and the food indifferent. He added that he felt it "so hard that the British soldiers and officers were so indifferently treated." As regards the state of the hospital after Sir William Babtie's visit, the Surgical Specialist before quoted, informs us that in August (when the wounded arrived in a very bad condition after the Nasariyeh fighting), and in December, 1915, the hospital became grossly overcrowded, and was infested with vermin, while the shortage of personnel was accentuated rather than diminished as promised in the Viceroy's telegram. We have also the evidence of Surgeon-General MacNeece, Sir William Babtie's successor, who visited the hospital early in July and considered it unsatisfactory. "Officers were crowded and badly done," he says in a letter to Sir Alfred Keogh, "and rank and file not much better," and his evidence before us confirms this description. He found it necessary to recommend improvements and alterations which involved considerable expenditure, although the calls likely to be made at the hospital had not increased since Sir William Babtie's inspection. The evidence shows that the Staff did their best, but notwithstanding this it is clear that Sir William Babtie's report was misleading as regards the adequacy of the Colaba Hospital arrangements.

First Battle of Kut.

56. Between September 26th and 28th, 1915, in and about the first battle of Es Sinn Kut, General Townshend's force sustained some 1,300 casualties. Owing to insufficiency of Field Ambulances and personnel, a lack of wheeled transport and river steamers,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000c7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

and a scarcity of blankets, the wounded in these engagements suffered very considerably. Some of the fighting units were without stretcher-bearers, and there was a lack of co-ordination in some of the medical arrangements. Wounded men were left on the field of battle all night, some of them being stripped, maimed and killed by Arabs. These defects were so well-known that they resulted in a telegram from General Nixon, in which he said, "I see no possible excuse for what I am forced to look on, as the most indifferent work done in the collection of the wounded." Colonel Hehir, who was in charge of the medical arrangements on the battlefield, officially explained that these incidents were largely due to shortages of field ambulances and transport. The matter must have been well-known to the D.M.S. in Mesopotamia, General Hathaway, who was actually at General Nixon's Headquarters when the explanation of the officers concerned was received. Moreover, some time after the battle, Colonel Hehir personally brought to Surgeon-General Hathaway's notice the shortage of field ambulances on this occasion. At the end of October, Surgeon-General Hathaway sent in to Surgeon-General MacNeece, D.M.S., in India, an official report dealing with this period. He sets out the casualties in the engagements in question, and comments on the small proportion of killed to wounded. But in the whole of his report there is no single word, which gives any inkling that there had been deficiencies in the medical arrangements or that anything untoward had happened.

Battle of Ctesiphon.

57. There are two methods of concealing a failure. The first is to suppress all mention of it. The second is to obscure its significance by the glare of a contemporaneous achievement. The first method was, as we have seen, used at the first battle of Kut. It was the second method which obtained after the battle of Ctesiphon, when the military success of withdrawing all the wounded in the face of a pursuing enemy diverted attention from the grave medical defects which were disclosed in the course of that operation.

58. We do not here enter fully into the details of the Battle of Ctesiphon and of the lamentable breakdown of medical arrangements which followed it. This is done at length by the Vincent-Bingley Commissioners and elsewhere in our own Report.* It will be sufficient to recapitulate that a tactical victory was turned into a strategical defeat: General Townshend was obliged to retire before superior forces with casualties amounting to approximately one-third of the force with which he entered into battle. Over 3,500 wounded had to be removed from the battlefield to the river bank, in some cases a distance of ten miles, without proper ambulance transport, and with an insufficiency of medical personnel, of food and of comforts, so that a large proportion had to make their way on foot in spite of their injured condition. When they arrived at the river, the available steamer accommodation was gravely inadequate. The wounded and weary men had to be crowded into steamers and barges without sufficient medical attention, appliances, or conveniences. Some of the wounded were disembarked at Amarah, but the majority went on down to Basra, a journey from the battlefield, which, in some cases, took as much as fourteen days, and the discomforts of which were aggravated for the wounded by the presence on board of many cases of dysentery and other sickness.

59. Thus the sick and wounded were put to great sufferings during the evacuation from the battlefield to the river bank at Laj, and also during the protracted journey down the river. Though the successful evacuation of the wounded in the face of a superior and pursuing enemy was a fine military performance, it was carried out in a manner which involved for the sick and wounded conditions of neglect, misery, and suffering, which were lamentable. Not a hint of this regrettable breakdown is to be found in the official report sent to England after the battle.

60. We are reluctant to describe the details of the condition in which many of the wounded arrived at Basra, on account of their sickening horror; but we deem it necessary to quote one witness on this subject, because it brings home the appalling nature of the sufferings which were thus glossed over by the authorities. Major Carter, I.M.S., who was in medical charge of the hospital ship "Varela" at Basra, waiting for the wounded from Ctesiphon, thus describes the arrival of one of the river convoys:—

"I was standing on the bridge in the evening when the 'Medjidieh' arrived. She had two steel barges, without any protection against the rain, as far as I remember. As this ship, with two barges, came up to us I saw that she was absolutely packed, and the barges too, with men. The barges were slipped, and the 'Medjidieh' was brought alongside the 'Varela.' When she was about 300 or 400 yards off it looked as if she was festooned with ropes. The stench when she was close was quite definite, and I found that what I mistook for ropes were dried stalactites of human fæces. The patients were so huddled and crowded together on the ship that they could not perform the offices of Nature clear of the edge of the ship, and the whole of the ship's

* See Part X., para. 24.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000019

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

Battle of Ctesiphon (continued).

side was covered with stalactites of human fæces. This is what I then saw. A certain number of men were standing and kneeling on the immediate perimeter of the ship. Then we found a mass of men huddled up anyhow—some with blankets and some without. They were lying in a pool of dysentery about 30 feet square. They were covered with dysentery and dejecta generally from head to foot. With regard to the first man I examined, I put my hand into his trousers, and I thought that he had a hæmorrhage. His trousers were full almost to his waist with something warm and slimy. I took my hand out, and thought it was blood clot. It was dysentery. The man had a fractured thigh, and his thigh was perforated in five or six places. He had apparently been writhing about the deck of the ship. Many cases were almost as bad. There were a certain number of cases of terribly bad bed sores. In my report I describe mercilessly to the Government of India how I found men with their limbs splinted with wood strips from 'Johnny Walker' whisky boxes, 'Bhoosa' wire, and that sort of thing."

Were they British or Indian ?—British and Indian mixed.

61. We do not wish it to be inferred that the conditions on all the river steamers reached this pitch of horror. The conditions, for example, in the "Blosse Lynch" and the "Mosul," two ships which on this occasion had been prepared beforehand for the wounded, though unsatisfactory, were probably superior to those in the "Medjidieh." On the other hand there is evidence that the conditions in some of the other boats were as bad as or worse than in the "Medjidieh."

62. We will now see how the evacuation of the wounded, resulting in such appalling conditions, was officially described by the General Officer Commanding the Expedition. We append two telegrams on the subject :—

From—Secretary of State for India.
To—General Nixon, Basra.
Dated December 4th, 1915.
C. 243. On arrival wounded at Basra. Please telegraph urgently particulars and progress.
From—General Nixon.
To—Secretary of State for India.
Dated December 7th, 1915.
940/28/A. Your C. 243. Wounded satisfactorily disposed of. Many likely to recover in country comfortably placed in hospitals at Amara and Basra. Those for invaliding are being placed direct on two hospital ships that were ready at Basra on arrival of river boats. General condition of wounded very satisfactory. Medical arrangements under circumstances of considerable difficulty worked splendidly.

We have had great difficulty in ascertaining who actually drafted this telegram and was responsible for its despatch. Sir John Nixon, who was ill at the time it was sent, in his evidence before us stated that he had only a dim, if any, recollection of the circumstance, but he admitted having seen it the day after its despatch, and as it was sent in his name he accepted the responsibility for it.

63. Sir John Nixon has communicated to us a letter he has lately received from a member of the Staff in Mesopotamia, which states that this telegram was drafted by, and is in the handwriting of, Surgeon-General Hathaway, though it is not initialled by him, but by two members of Sir John Nixon's Staff, subordinate officers in the office of Major-General Cowper, then Deputy Assistant and Quartermaster-General of Force "D." Surgeon-General Hathaway told us that he had assisted in framing it. Major General Cowper stated to us that he personally had no share in the despatch of this telegram, and that he did not himself submit it to Sir John Nixon before his subordinates despatched it. These two subordinate officers seem to have accepted Surgeon-General Hathaway's authority as sufficient. It is impossible to believe that Surgeon-General Hathaway was ignorant of the condition and sufferings of the sick and wounded. He had been at Laj when the wounded arrived from the battlefield, and he had himself worked with great energy in embarking them on the steamers. He had also travelled down the river with the wounded and was, according to one witness, actually at Basra at the date of the "Medjidieh's" arrival.

Major Carter stated to us that he had insisted upon seeing Sir John Nixon in order that he (Sir John Nixon) might personally know of the condition of the wounded on their arrival at Basra in the "Medjidieh."

64. Sir John Nixon, Major-General Cowper and Surgeon-General Hathaway all assured us that the telegram was not despatched with the object of misrepresenting the state of things. Sir John Nixon informed us that at the time the telegram was sent his "thankfulness was great at having got the wounded down safely under circumstances of great difficulty without letting them be exposed to mutilation" by the Arabs, and that what filled his mind was the resource and unceasing efforts of the medical officers to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded. Surgeon-General Hathaway said that he meant the latter

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000c5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

part of the telegram as "a tribute to the people who had really accomplished a mos wonderful achievement." It is very difficult to accept these explanations, for whatever may have been the motive for so wording the despatch, the effect was to conceal from the authorities outside Mesopotamia the real facts as to the medical breakdown in November, gravely to mislead the Secretary of State, and through him Parliament and the public, and to deceive all into a state of false security in view of future operations. If the full facts had been frankly reported immediately after the battle of Ctesiphon, it would have been possible for the authorities to make strong efforts to remove or mitigate many of the defects before the next fighting took place. But this was not done, with the result that for the wounded the horrors in January, 1916, equalled or even exceeded the horrors of Ctesiphon in November, 1915.

65. It is possible, of course, to assume that Sir John Nixon and Surgeon-General Hathaway's relief of mind on their safe arrival with the wounded at Basra may have eliminated from their perspective the defects in medical arrangements, and the sufferings of the wounded, which occurred during the evacuation. Yet even on this assumption, these defects and sufferings should have been reported to the authorities when there had been time to obtain reports from medical officers and from the wounded themselves, and thus generally to correct the first impressions of the evacuation. But nothing of the kind seems to have been done. On December 18th, Surgeon-General Hathaway sent in to the D.M.S. India a detailed report of the evacuation of the wounded from Ctesiphon. Nobody reading that report would gather that anything untoward had happened, or that the wounded had undergone any special or avoidable sufferings. On Christmas Day, General Nixon again wired to India, "Taking into account the large numbers of wounded, the very limited means at my disposal, the great difficulties entailed, I am of the opinion that the evacuation of the wounded after the battle of Ctesiphon was extraordinarily well carried out." As late as January 4th, when Surgeon-General MacNeece had called his attention to the condition in which the wounded arrived at Basra, and to the complaints as to the defects in the medical arrangements, Surgeon-General Hathaway persisted in regarding the evacuation as a "glorious achievement" which had received from Sir John Nixon the commendation it deserved.

66. The first, and so far as we know, the only official report, which disclosed the serious condition of the wounded after Ctesiphon, was sent in by an officer who was not in any way responsible for the arrangements for their evacuation from the battlefield to Basra. Major Carter, whose evidence we have already quoted, posted in Bombay on December 14th, his report on the third voyage of the hospital ship "Varela," addressed to the D.M.S. at Delhi. This report, which must have reached Delhi a few days later, emphasized the grave condition of the wounded as they arrived at Basra, and ascribed this condition to the absence of river hospital-steamers. The report* gave also indirectly a vivid account of the sufferings of the wounded on their passage down the river. On the day on which it was posted, Surgeon-General MacNeece himself visited the "Varela," on its arrival at Bombay, inspected and questioned the wounded, and therefore knew in some detail of the medical breakdown after Ctesiphon.

67. The next day (December 15th), Surgeon-General MacNeece wrote a letter to Sir Percy Lake, Chief of the General Staff at Delhi. In this letter he described the sufferings of the wounded. "The whole business," he said "is bad." He asked that this letter should be shown to Sir Beauchamp Duff. But Sir Beauchamp Duff denies that he saw either this letter or Major Carter's Report; nor is there any evidence that he did. Both documents were however accessible to him, and would doubtless have been furnished to him if he had made enquiries in his own Headquarter Office about the condition of the wounded; and that there was reason for enquiry he knew, because Surgeon-General MacNeece referred to the sufferings of the wounded after Ctesiphon at a conference at which the Commander-in-Chief was present on December 23rd. Surgeon-General MacNeece's recollection is quite definite on this point, and Sir Percy Lake, though unable to swear to the exact date of the conference, corroborates Surgeon-General MacNeece as to the fact that the matter was referred to in conference about that time. Moreover, private notes made at the time by Surgeon-General MacNeece, though they do not specifically mention the wounded at Ctesiphon, show that the affairs of Force "D" were much discussed at the conference on December 23rd.

68. Surgeon-General MacNeece also told us that the sufferings of the wounded after

* See Part X., para. 89.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

Ctesiphon were a matter of common talk at Delhi about this time. Though the events after Ctesiphon were still unknown in England, stories were coming from home as to the general unsatisfactory working of the medical arrangements. The private letters of the Secretary of State to the Viceroy as far back as October had expressed anxiety on this point. On December 3rd, Mr. Chamberlain wrote: "I do beg you to urge Duff to go thoroughly into this matter," and suggested that a special officer should be sent out to inquire into all the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia. The Viceroy pressed the suggestion on the Commander-in-Chief and prevailed on him to consent. Sir Beauchamp Duff's letter of December 30th we have quoted in full elsewhere.* He minimised the importance of the rumours that had alarmed Lord Hardinge. "My official reports," said he, "indicate nothing wrong except the shortage of river transport which we are straining every nerve to supplement, and even that has only become a burning question since "D" force began to grow larger." Such language cannot be justified. Though the breakdown after Ctesiphon was due partly to shortage of river transport, the reassuring impression given by this letter was profoundly misleading. The truth was partly known to Sir Beauchamp Duff, when he thus wrote; and if it was not more completely known, this was due to his own neglect to enquire. He might have read the Surgeon-General's letter to Sir Percy Lake and Major Carter's Report; and he admits that "about the end of December," he heard that the medical arrangements were breaking down. In the circumstances to reassure the Viceroy, and to let the Viceroy reassure the Secretary of State was a grave dereliction of duty.

69. But in deference to the Viceroy, Surgeon-General MacNeece was now sent to Mesopotamia. He was instructed to "confer as to medical requirements" with Sir J. Nixon. This was not in terms a mission of enquiry into the past, and he did not so interpret it. "My business was with the future," he writes to Sir Alfred Keogh. At any rate, for whatever reason, he went only to Basra, and his report, unlike his letter to Sir Percy Lake, was vague and colourless. Meantime the rumours of the breakdown were continuing, and so were the anxieties of the Secretary of State and the Viceroy. In March, therefore, Sir Beauchamp Duff appointed Sir William Vincent and General Bingley as a Commission to enquire into the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia during and subsequent to the month of January, 1916. This limitation of their terms of reference would have excluded the breakdown after Ctesiphon. But at the suggestion of the Commission, their terms of reference were extended, and their striking account of the sufferings of the wounded after Ctesiphon finally enabled the truth to break through the tough veil of official reticence.

Medical Personnel.

70. We shall refer in another connection to a telegram† sent by the Viceroy to the Secretary of State on August 16th, 1915. But this telegram so well exemplifies the evils of the system, we are criticising, that we would also direct attention to it here. The facts are as follows:—The expeditionary force had, as we have seen, been sent to Mesopotamia without a British Stationary Hospital, and the reinforcing Division which arrived in the spring of 1915 was unaccompanied by hospitals staff or field ambulances for two out of three of its brigades. In papers which he laid before us, General Duff states that owing to shortage of medical personnel it was, and had been, impossible to despatch these additional medical units. He seems to have thought that these units were not necessary until the advance to Kut-el-Amara was sanctioned; but he maintained that the deficiency at that date and the impossibility of meeting it ought to have been brought to his notice by Surgeon-General MacNeece. It is therefore admitted even by the Commander-in-Chief that on the date when the advance to Kut-el-Amara was sanctioned, *viz.* August 7th, 1915, there was a deficiency in medical personnel in Mesopotamia, which India could not make good from its own resources. Four days after that date, Mr. Chamberlain telegraphed to Lord Hardinge, a comprehensive enquiry as to the need of doctors, nurses, medicines, hospital comforts or anything else, in Mesopotamia. On August 16th the Viceroy replied, deprecating the need for assistance as regards any of these necessaries and added "My Government arranged for doctors and medicines." A more completely misleading estimate of the medical situation and of the shortage of personnel, etc., from which the Mesopotamian force was suffering, and about to suffer can hardly be imagined.

Shaikh Saad Hospital Camp.

71. Surgeon-General MacNeece returned to India from Basra, and made his report to the Indian Government on January 27th. This report was submitted to us and we have

* See Part X., para. 93. † See para. 82 below.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000c4

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

also seen a later document dated February 16th from Surgeon-General Hathaway. In this latter document, which was presented to the Indian Government, occurs the following statement :—

Shaikh Saad. The Meerut Stationary Hospital is under canvas here, under Major Goodbody, I.M.S. in excellent order, accommodating 607 cases, including 19 British ; 277 of these are suffering from dysentery of a mild type. This hospital is worked in a thoroughly efficient manner.

This is the only official reference Surgeon-General Hathaway made to his superior concerning Shaikh Saad Camp. Amongst the horrors connected with the medical breakdown, the condition of this camp up to January 18th, takes a foremost place. It is thus described by the Vincent-Bingley Commission :—

After the occupation of Shaikh Saad on the 9th January, about 2,000 of the wounded were moved to a new camp there, the remainder numbering 1,200 being left in a camp on the left bank of the river at Musandaq in charge of a small medical staff. The condition of the camps at Musandaq and Shaikh Saad have been described to us by various witnesses, and we are constrained to find that the arrangements for the accommodation and treatment of the wounded there were very defective The medical staff was so small that the wounds of many remained undressed for some days. The camps were in a very insanitary condition. The supply of surgical stores and appliances ran short, and there was practically no subordinate staff to see to the welfare of the patients The suffering and discomfort endured by the unfortunate wounded in these camps were very great, and even up to the 18th January, when the Meerut Stationary Hospital took over charge at Shaikh Saad, this condition of affairs continued there. The Officer Commanding this hospital describes the condition of that camp in the following words :—" On arrival here we found about 195 British and 800 Indian sick and wounded in an irregular camp situated on filthy muddy ground behind the village. . . . There was one Indian temporary I.M.S. Officer in charge of the Indians and he was ill. He had two sub-assistant surgeons and some of the personnel of an improvised cavalry field ambulance to help him. He had no dressings left, and many cases still had on the first field dressings which had been applied on the battlefield. About 200 of the patients had dysentery, and there were no proper latrine arrangements. The state of the camp was indescribable. Near the middle of the hospital tents was a pile of bags of atta, etc., mostly ruined by the rain, which I was told represented 10 days rations."

72. This appalling state of things continued during Surgeon-General MacNeece's stay at Basra. Apparently not a word was said to him by Surgeon-General Hathaway as regards this condition of things. Surgeon-General Hathaway took the opportunity afforded him by the enormous improvement which Major Goodbody with the Meerut Stationary Hospital effected in the camp, and attempted to utilise it to cover up the shocking state of things which had previously prevailed. Unless the Vincent-Bingley Commission had reported, the state of this camp during the greater part of January would never have been known, and it is impossible to acquit Surgeon-General Hathaway of keeping back the unpleasant facts connected with this camp from the knowledge of the Indian Government.

Conduct of Surgeon-General Hathaway.

73. In connection with the withholding of information from Headquarters, we must explain that a very important medium of communication between the chief medical officer in Mesopotamia, and the Director of Medical Services in India was afforded by the demi-official letters which it was customary for the former to send the latter at frequent intervals. These communications were very regularly resorted to by Colonel Hehir, the principal medical officer in Mesopotamia upto April, 1915. But Surgeon-General Hathaway did not make proper use either of this means, or of more formal reports, for the purpose of keeping the D.M.S. in India *au courant* with the situation. In contemporary letters which have been submitted to us, and in his evidence before us Surgeon-General MacNeece complained several times of the manner in which he was kept in the dark by Surgeon-General Hathaway as to the medical needs and difficulties of the Mesopotamian Expedition.

74. Indeed, in our opinion, Surgeon-General Hathaway has throughout the campaign been the chief offender in the policy of suppressing the unpleasant. He failed to inform the D.M.S. in India of the often deplorable conditions of the hospitals at Amara and at Orah. He sent in reports as to the rations of the troops which induced India to believe that a plentiful supply of vegetables, fresh meat, etc., was available. We have not seen a single report by Surgeon-General Hathaway emphasizing the dangers of the existing inadequate methods of water-purification. In a formal report to the D.M.S. in the middle of February, 1916, he wrote : " All water for drinking and cooking purposes is of course got from the river. . . . This water is absolutely safe, the only precaution being necessary is the sedimentation of it as above referred to. The ' Wadi ' water is precisely the Tigris water and correspondingly safe." And he had previously referred to some defects in the process

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00008e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

of sedimentation which he said were being rectified so as to meet all requirements. Barely a month later the Vincent-Bingley Commission were in the country and they report in strong terms of the inadequacy of the measures taken for purifying the water and the consequent danger to the troops. The evidence before us strengthens their criticisms and shows that the defects in water supply caused considerable illness in the forces and necessitated a large expenditure before it was remedied.

75. We are happy to be able to report that we can find no evidence that the want of frankness in medical matters continued after the departure from Mesopotamia of Surgeon-General Hathaway and General Nixon. We believe that Surgeon-General Treherne, General Lake, General Aylmer, and the other responsible officers all freely disclosed to Headquarters the medical defects and dangers with which they had to deal.

Resentment of Criticism.

76. It is also our duty to draw attention to another unpleasant feature in the Mesopotamian Campaign, *viz.*, the active intolerance of all criticism of defects or suggestions for reform. Colonel Hehir was especially asked by Sir William Babtie, D.M.S. in India, to give Surgeon-General Hathaway the benefit of his experiences in the earlier phases of the campaign. At the outset, Colonel Hehir accordingly made suggestions to Surgeon-General Hathaway, but his action in this respect was so resented that he subsequently desisted from making even representations, which it was his obvious duty to have made. Major Carter who, as we have seen was the first to disclose the medical debâcle after Ctesiphon, endeavoured to bring to the notice of the authorities in Mesopotamia, the real condition of the wounded. On this account he was treated with great rudeness. Surgeon-General Hathaway, in writing to the D.M.S. in India on this subject says, "The Army Commander realising the injustice ordered the D.A. and Q.M.G. and myself to deal with him (Major Carter), with reference to his objectionable remarks." And General Cowper, then D.A. and Q.M.G., told us "I threatened to put him under arrest, and I said that I would get his hospital ship taken away from him for a meddlesome interfering faddist." In another part of our Report* we refer to Sir Beauchamp Duff's threat to dismiss General Cowper for sending to India too insistent demands as to the need for River Transport. Such incidents as these indicate the atmosphere of repression of complaints which permeated Indian officialdom, and do much to explain the unfortunate suppressions of truth with which we have dealt in this section.

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

77. The main responsibility for the medical arrangements of the Mesopotamia Campaign rests upon the Government of India and its officers. According to the division of function which was laid down by the Home Government, it was only the policy of the expedition which was to be decided in London; the management of the expedition was to be in the hands of the Government of India. We have commented elsewhere upon this division of function. But since, whether wisely or unwisely, it was adopted, it would be plainly unreasonable to criticise the India Office for the details of medical administration over which they attempted to exercise no control. But one general responsibility does belong to the India Office, or perhaps it would be more proper to say, to the Cabinet. Whatever preparations were made in England for a European war before August, 1914, no preparations were made in India. The Home Government and the Indian Government were agreed that the greatest military requirements for which it was necessary to make provision were those which might arise in defending the North-West Frontier, and maintaining the internal security of India. This policy suggested by the Indian Government was approved by Lord Crewe in a despatch dated March 20th, 1914. Overseas expeditions of a minor character might be undertaken, and the Indian Army was to be mobilised so as to make such a use of the Indian Army possible, but no additional expenditure was to be incurred in anticipation of such expeditions. Accordingly, when the European War broke out in August, 1914, it found the Indian Army organisation altogether unsuited for the purpose of such expeditions as that to Mesopotamia.

The Indian Government was prepared only for a campaign on the North-West Frontier against Afghanistan and the tribes, and to maintain internal security in India. On no

* See Part XI., para. 44.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000b2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

part of the organisation did this limitation of function fall more hardly than on the medical service. In the all-important matter of medical personnel the establishment was kept below what would be necessary even for the mobilisation that was intended, because it was expected that it would be possible to obtain from England whatever additional personnel was necessary. The personnel was therefore short of the proper establishment, and the medical equipment was intended only for use in India and on its frontiers.

78. On the outbreak of the war, the Indian Government found it impossible to furnish the medical personnel required, and made no appeal to England for assistance in supplying it. It is true that they had in March, 1914, informed the Secretary of State of the deficiencies in medical personnel which would arise in case of mobilisation for war. Further in a telegram dated July 3rd, 1915, they called the Secretary of State's attention to their difficulties in meeting demands for medical reinforcements overseas, and also asked for sixteen R.A.M.C. officers in order to maintain Force "D" at its "authorised strength." The Indian Government never, however, explained to the Secretary of State that the "authorised strength" itself was gravely below what was required in Mesopotamia Nor was the Secretary of State himself in a position to appreciate this technical fact, inasmuch as, till the summer of 1916 he had no formal Medical Adviser at the India Office. Sir Havelock Charles was President of the Medical Board to the India Office, but he had no official status as Medical Adviser, and no administrative authority in regard to medical developments in Mesopotamia. Our evidence is that Sir Havelock Charles was not responsible for the medical telegrams despatched to Mesopotamia, and that these were, like other military matters, under the supervision of the Military Secretary, Sir Edmund Barrow, who had of course no special medical knowledge. The Secretary of State was unable therefore to give as much assistance and guidance to India in medical matters as he might have done if his office had been better organised. For this reason we welcome Mr. Chamberlain's appointment of Sir Havelock Charles as Medical Adviser in the summer of 1916.

79. The lack of preparation in India for a European war raises a larger question than concerns only the medical services and is dealt with elsewhere in our Report.* But in respect to the medical services, it is quite essentially important to realise that this lack of preparation made the medical equipment of the Mesopotamia Expedition from the very first scanty and deficient, a deficiency which grew more and more mischievous as the Mesopotamia Force became more and more numerous. Apart from river hospital steamers, the want of which had the most calamitous influence on the proper treatment of the sick and wounded, and apart from the lack of personnel, which ranks next in importance, there were other deficiencies in equipment, such as water-carts, operating-tents, ambulance transport and other necessaries.

80. During the whole of the first year of the campaign, that is, up to November, 1915, while there was no medical breakdown there was an increasing scantiness of medical provision, with regrettable hardship to the sick and wounded. The margin of security against breakdown was dangerously slight.

81. The responsibility for the general want of preparation at the outbreak of the war belongs both to the Home Government and the Indian Government. But the Indian Government, and particularly the Commander-in-Chief and his advisers, are specially responsible for not realising more completely that the medical provision intended for the North-West Frontier could not be sufficient or suitable for a campaign on the Tigris. Sir Beauchamp Duff in his evidence before us, put forward two main arguments in defence of his administration. He pointed out that the purpose and plan of the Mesopotamian Expedition were extended by the Home Government, by successive steps taken at very short notice, from an occupation of the estuary of the Shatt-el-Arab as far as Basra, to an advance to Ctesiphon on the road to Baghdad. The preparations which were sufficient or at least not disastrously insufficient for an expedition to Basra, were not sufficient for an expedition to Baghdad. But this consideration hardly serves as a defence for the Commander-in-Chief. The medical provision for the expedition was inadequate even from the outset, and it was the business of the Commander-in-Chief and his advisers to recognise and remedy this. Moreover, we had evidence that an advance even as far as Baghdad was known by the Commander-in-Chief to be a contingency as early as December, 1914, and each stage of the developments of the expedition beyond Kurna (which were precisely the developments which overstrained the scanty medical provision), were made not merely with his knowledge and consent, but as a result of suggestions by Sir John Nixon in which he con-

* See Parts I. C and XI. D.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000ab

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

curred. Secondly, Sir Beauchamp Duff argued that he met whatever demands came from Mesopotamia. This is not quite true, but if it had been, more than this was required of him and his advisers, the Directors of Medical Services, who successively held office under him. Their passive attitude was really negligent. To receive demands, to discuss them by correspondence, to do little or nothing except slowly under the propulsion of Mesopotamian requests, were not the right methods for meeting a deficiency which was inherent in the scale of preparation and ought to have been vividly present to the minds of the Commander-in-Chief and his advisers. From the moment the Mesopotamian Expedition started, and more and more as it grew in size, the Military and Medical Authorities should have been not merely responding to demands, but making enquiries, offering suggestions, improving organisation, and enlarging equipment. But these things they did not do. To distribute the responsibility exactly between the Commander-in-Chief and the Directors of Medical services is not easy. The direct responsibility is with Surgeon-General Babtie and Surgeon General MacNeece, but however heavy it may be, the responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief cannot be light. He was their superior, and authority was in his hands. It is true that in regard to Surgeon-General MacNeece, he states :—

> I had personally warned him in July, in the presence of my Staff at Conference, to go thoroughly into the question of the adequacy of the Medical arrangements in Mesopotamia. He should have brought to my notice the demands which had been received, and the impossibility of meeting them.

But such instructions, though good, were not enough. It was the Commander-in-Chief's duty in dealing with a matter of such great and continuing importance to satisfy himself by an active supervision that his subordinates were not neglecting their instructions. He must share in the blame of the Military Authorities in India, justly assigned by the Vincent-Bingley Commission, who say :—

> We cannot, however, absolve the Military and Medical Authorities in India from responsibility for many of these deficiencies, in particular for the continuing neglect to supply the expeditionary force with that separate transport for sick and wounded, both by land and water, which the teaching of experience has shown to be essential in a properly organised enterprise of this character.

And to this it may be added that notwithstanding the extreme need of medical personnel in Mesopotamia the Indian Government retained in India a large supply of Medical Officers for possible need in case of a war upon the North-West Frontier, or of internal disturbances. Sir William Babtie and the Commander-in-Chief have both admitted that in this respect, priority over Mesopotamia was given to India. It appears to us that a distinction may reasonably be drawn between maintaining the necessary combatant forces to meet all internal contingencies in India and keeping up to full strength the medical services there. As between the potential claims of India and the actual claims of Mesopotamia in respect to medical provision, it appears to us that the Indian Government might have attached less weight to the potential claims of India and more to the actual need of Mesopotamia.

82. Until the beginning of 1916 the Indian Government seem to have been altogether unappreciative of the real insufficiency of the medical service of Force "D." This is shown by the correspondence that took place between Mr. Chamberlain and the Viceroy in the latter part of 1915. On August 11th the Secretary of State sent the following private telegram to the Viceroy :—

> "Private. Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire enquires informally whether he can usefully raise funds for sick and wounded of regiments in Mesopotamia or India. Also whether voluntary aid societies can usefully help. Are doctors, nurses, medicines, hospital comforts required? Anything else needed? Please telegraph your reply."

Lord Hardinge told us in evidence that he showed this telegram to the Army Department and, he thinks, to the Commander-in-Chief, and that his answer was determined by the advice he received in consequence. The Commander-in-Chief had no recollection of the matter and suggested that the answer was framed on the advice of the Director-General of Indian Medical Services. But as Lord Hardinge definitely said that his answer was written by the advice of the Commander-in-Chief, and the Commander-in-Chief professed to no distinct recollection, we think it must be assumed that the Commander-in-Chief saw, and probably advised, Lord Hardinge's answer, the more so as they were constantly in communication and consultation about Mesopotamian affairs. The answer ran as follows :—

> "I much appreciate the thought which prompted kind offer of Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire.* Having regard, however, to the heavy demands on charity which must arise elsewhere, I am unwilling at present to

* The offer was really on behalf of Lord Northbrook.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00001c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

take advantage of it. Much voluntary assistance is being afforded from private sources in all directions in India. Money is ample and sufficient for supplying comforts for sick and wounded in Mesopotamia and in India. Voluntary aid societies here are doing all that is necessary. Climatic and other conditions render it undesirable to employ personnel of such societies in Mesopotamia. Arrangements have been made to provide lady nurses from India, as it is considered that the climatic and other conditions permit. My Government arranged for doctors and medicines."

By way of comment on the last sentence, we would note that only a fortnight later, Surgeon-General Hathaway informed India of a deficiency in his authorised establishment, amounting to 17 medical officers, and 50 Sub-Assistant Surgeons, a deficiency which was never completely made up during 1915.

83. On October 9th the Secretary of State telegraphed again, expressing anxiety as to the health of Force "D" and especially about precautions in the hospitals against malaria and the general provision about tropical diseases. Lord Hardinge replied to the Secretary of State's telegram on October 15th, giving details of the precautions that were being taken in Mesopotamia against heat-stroke, malaria and dysentery. The information that was put at his disposal seems not to have been as complete as could be wished:

"Preventives adopted are purification of water by clarifying and boiling o chlorination, prophylactic issue of quinine, treatment of mosquito breeding places, supply to all troops, British and native, of mosquito nets. A sanitary committee for whole force has been formed. . . . British and Indian General Hospitals at Basra are provided with electric lights and fans and each bed has a mosquito net, but buildings are not suitable for use of gauze netting."

The water supplied in Mesopotamia at this time was very far from being satisfactory, nor was the provision of electric lights, fans and mosquito nets so complete as Lord Hardinge's telegram would suggest.

84. On October 14th Mr. Chamberlain wrote in a private letter as follows:—

"I am most reluctant to appear to convey to you or the Commander-in-Chief any mistrust of the arrangements made by the medical authorities for the troops in Mesopotamia, but owing to reports which have reached me I felt it necessary to telegraph an enquiry as to the fulness of the precautions which had been taken. . . . I know that the difficulties must be great, and that it is impossible to foresee every contingency, but I trust that you will impress upon all concerned that in this matter of health they cannot take too many precautions, and that we shall not question expenditure required to safeguard the lives of our men."

85. On October 29th Mr. Chamberlain wrote again:—

"I continue to receive from Members of Parliament and others anxious enquiries about the health of the troops in Mesopotamia and the provision made for them. *Inter alia*, I have been sent a letter from some officer there in which he incidentally observes that my statement as to ice and other comforts provided at the base hospital 'was all eyewash.' I cannot go behind your assurance that all that is necessary and possible is being done, and you yourself are necessarily dependent on the reports of the military; but you will remember how we received the same assurances from military and medical authorities at the time of the South African War, and yet how much more might, after all, have been done—at any rate, in the early days of that campaign. As we must now look forward not only to a prolonged occupation of Mesopotamia, but to having increased numbers of troops there, I beg that you will take all the steps in your power to stimulate the ingenuity of the medical authorities in making provision for their health and for the comfort of the sick. No expense ought to be allowed to stand in the way of the best provision that science can suggest."

86. On December 3rd Mr. Chamberlain wrote again in very strong terms:—

"You know how anxious I am about the health of our forces in Mesopotamia. Apart from all feelings of humanity and the duty we owe to those who are giving their lives, men are too precious to be wasted.

"I wish to make all allowances for difficulties, perhaps only partly perceived by me, and not known to my correspondents, but I am very uneasy about the reports that reach me. . . .

"I beg you not to be content with easy assurances. On your advice, comforts, &c., are not being sent from here, and we shall have no defence if all that is possible is not done."

It is clear that these letters ought to have led to searching enquiries into the sufficiency of medical provisions in Mesopotamia.

87. As is natural at this distance of time, Lord Hardinge's recollection was not very distinct as to the precise steps he took in consequence of these communications from Mr. Chamberlain. But we have no doubt that he communicated to the Commander-in-Chief at any rate in substance, what Mr. Chamberlain had written. We are afraid there can equally be no doubt that the Commander-in-Chief and his staff did not respond to his representations with the zeal that the occasion required.

88. The only criticism to be made upon Lord Hardinge in the matter is that, wielding the supreme authority of Viceroy, he should have forced the Army Department to do more than it did. He wrote as late as February 18th, 1916, in a private letter to Mr. Chamberlain this significant sentence:—"I may mention here that I have at last succeeded

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000033

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

in convincing the military authorities that the medical arrangements up the Tigris are as bad as can be." This was, of course, after the calamitous events in December and January; and we think that it gravely reflects, not upon Lord Hardinge's good will or good intentions, but upon the manner in which he exercised his paramount authority.

89. The attitude of the Commander-in-Chief becomes vividly clear in connection with the terrible sufferings of the wounded in the retreat after Ctesiphon. He was at first naturally reassured by the very misleading telegram despatched from Mesopotamia on December 7th, on the character of which we have already commented.* But on December 14th, Major Carter, an officer of the I.M.S., who was in medical charge of a hospital ship plying between Bombay and Basra, sent to Surgeon-General MacNeece a Report in which, amongst much other matter, the following sentences occur:—

"These were all serious stretcher cases that had lain on the 'Medjidieh' for thirteen days after their first dressing on the field of battle. Their condition was grave, and the result of an unfortunate train of circumstances, the most serious of which was that *there is no distinct river service of hospital steamers used alone for the conveyance of our sick and wounded in Mesopotamia*. On the 'Medjidieh' alone 28 had died on the journey."

And:—

"Deaths during the voyage total 14. It is now necessary to explain the markedly increased death-rate on this the third journey. In the first place, we carried a high proportion of the most serious cases of gunshot and shell wounds brought by the 'Medjidieh,' the 'P. 5,' the steel boats and smaller steel barges from the front.

"Unless one had actually seen the condition of the wounded on arrival, one could have had no accurate standard by which to judge the extraordinarily difficult position in which the medical personnel have been recently placed in Mesopotamia. For example, on the 'Medjidieh,' a small river steamer, it was necessary to crowd over 600 sick and wounded from November 24th to the evening of December 6th, 1915. The equipment of the field hospitals at the front had to be abandoned to the enemy, and there was practically nothing left with which to dress wounds or treat medical cases.

"Everyone seems to consider that it was extremely fortunate that they got away at all. The men were loud in their praise of the devotion to duty shown by many of the medical officers under heavy fire, both in the field and at the point of attack on the Tigris. *There is but little chance of recovery for men with severe gunshot fractures, who lie on the bare decks of boats and barges for* 13 *days, amid septic discharges, diarrhœa and dysentery, swept at night by a wind that dropped nearly to zero, without any protection against the cold, save their clothes and country blankets, which in the cases of total cripples were sodden with their own discharges and dejecta.*

"I write this to protect from hostile criticism by the laity the members of the medical services, who in these primitive boats and cattle barges have struggled for 13 days against the difficulties of a task that is happily exceptional in the war history of our Imperial forces. There is no shadow of doubt that the medical staff who accompanied these sick and wounded from Ctesiphon did all that lay in their power to help and tend their patients, but it was attempting to make bricks without straw."

90. This Report was despatched from Bombay on December 14th. On the next day Surgeon-General MacNeece, who was at Bombay and who had seen and fully conferred with Major Carter, wrote as follows to Sir Percy Lake, the Chief of the General Staff, in a letter marked "Private and Confidential":—

"My dear Sir Percy Lake,

"I was in time to see sick and wounded on board hospital ship 'Varela' when she arrived on afternoon of Monday, and their transfer to local war hospitals and up country by hospital trains.

"There were many serious cases, and some fourteen deaths occurred on voyage. Many of the sick British and Indian, particularly latter, were brought on board in a terrible condition. They had been 17 to 22 days coming down the river from Ctesiphon. Between Kut and Amara the steamers and barges were stopped by Arabs, and had to go back three times. Barges and steamers were crowded, sanitary measures were deficient or wanting, and the men, particularly Indians, lay on the deck suffering from dysentery, passing their motions under them, and getting large bed-sores. The whole business is bad. The medical authorities were only given sufficient steamers and barges to turn into hospital ships for 500 casualties (so I am informed); then, when the crash came, over 4,000 had to be got down any way.

"Will you kindly show this letter to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, and say that I have been to the D.R.I.M. and seen the plans for river hospital steamers, and fully approve of the one which is being forwarded to-day to Army Headquarters, Delhi, for approval, which should be given without delay."

Sir Beauchamp Duff told us that he had never seen Major Carter's Report; but as we have seen he was made acquainted with the substance of Surgeon-General MacNeece's letter to Sir Percy Lake at a Conference on December 23rd.‡

91. Meantime, correspondence was still going on between the Secretary of State and the Viceroy on the general question of the health of the troops in Mesopotamia. And at the same time rumours were beginning to be heard about the breakdown after Ctesiphon. Lord Hardinge wrote in a private letter to Mr. Chamberlain on December 31st:—

"I am very glad you wrote and told me of the rumours you have heard of unsatisfactory arrangements in connection with the health and comfort of your troops in Mesopotamia, for I am now, with your letter and

* See Part X., para 62 *et seq.*

‡ See Part X., para 67.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000af

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

E. RESPONSIBILITY OF SECRETARY OF STATE, VICEROY AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

the evidence it contains, able to put pressure upon the Commander-in-Chief, and also upon Sir J. Nixon, who keeps on reporting that everything is well. It is quite clear to me that all is not well, and I have urged the Commander-in-Chief to send somebody to Mesopotamia to perform more or less the same duties as those which you have explained to me had been carried out by Colonel Lee in Flanders."

92. Sir Beauchamp Duff was asked by us—

"In connection with another matter, you spoke of getting to hear that things were not going very well. At what sort of period did you get to hear through what may be called private channels that the medical arrangements were breaking down?—About the end of December, 1915, I think."

In answer to further questions, Sir Beauchamp Duff modified this statement by denying that he had heard anything in unofficial conversation. But he had seen a memorandum by Major Carter before the battle of Ctesiphon, and had in consequence telegraphed to Mesopotamia to enquire about the provision of hospital ships. Plans for this were indeed being discussed. Moreover, at the Conference on December 23rd he had heard Surgeon-General MacNeece's account of the suffering of the wounded after Ctesiphon.

93. Nevertheless, when the Viceroy pressed him to have a full enquiry made, his letter of December 30th, while assenting to the enquiry, shows in our judgment a very unfortunate spirit. This letter was the more important, because the reassuring impression which it conveyed was repeated by the Viceroy in a telegram to London. The letter of December 30th is as follows:—

"I will certainly have the whole matter enquired into and reported on."

"I am quite sure that in India itself and between India and Basra everything is right. The flow of stores, supplies, and comforts is regular and as complete as we can make it, any deficiencies that may exist being confined to articles for which we are dependent on England and the prompt supply of which we cannot always ensure. As to what happens beyond Basra I am dependent on official reports. The private complaints which Your Excellency mentions do not reach me. It is one of the drawbacks of military discipline that officers will not mention such matters either to me or my Staff lest they should be looked on as throwing blame on those under whom they have been serving directly. My official reports indicate nothing wrong except the shortage of river transport which we are straining every nerve to supplement, and even that has only become a burning question since "D" Force began to grow larger. I feel sure that everyone in Mesopotamia is doing his best, but our very long river line is necessarily a great handicap, and we cannot reproduce there French conditions which are due to good railways, good roads and abundance of motor transport.

"But though I will leave no stone unturned to get at the actual facts, I would ask Your Excellency to remember that the experience of previous campaigns shows that such complaints are very often exaggerated by officers making general statements which are really based only on some particular incident. There are also a good many cases where the fault lies with the complainant himself. For instance, Captain Bowring's complaint that on his voyage up the Tigris he and his companions were short of food is clearly one of these. It was the business of these officers themselves to draw their rations for the voyage before they left Basra. No Staff can dry-nurse officers who neglect such elementary duties."

94. This attitude of incredulity about rumours and complaints Sir Beauchamp Duff maintained and defended before the Commission. He was asked:—

"The point I wish to put is that for a considerable time, perhaps six weeks or two months, you were in possession of warnings—the Indian Government were, at any rate—coming from home, and yet your attitude was incredulous, although you had not made any very drastic inquiry into the matter?—Our attitude was somewhat incredulous, certainly."

and being further pressed, he said:—

"The reports come in. In every campaign I have seen in my life there are complaints. A large number of complaints come in, many of which are extremely frivolous. When such reports are sent to you anonymously and the names of the people who make the complaints are refused you attach little weight to them. The moment I get a report with a name I pay strong attention to it. I find going into these anonymous reports is simply a waste of time."

He was further asked—

"You would treat a letter from the Secretary of State or the Viceroy on that footing?"

and replied—

"Unless the Secretary of State or the Viceroy should supply me with the name of the person who made the complaint."

95. We desire explicitly to dissent from the position thus taken up by Sir Beauchamp Duff. It is, of course, perfectly true that a great many rumours are untrustworthy and a great many complaints unreasonable; and this untrustworthiness and unreasonableness form a very good ground for refusing to take administrative action merely because of rumours and complaints. But rumours that may be an insufficient ground for action may be a good ground for enquiry. They may be in themselves likely; they may come from several sources; they may recur again and again; or they may be brought to notice by

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000094

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

some person whose character and position ensure that they deserve attention. These obvious considerations seem to have been absent from Sir Beauchamp Duff's mind. Even in giving evidence before us he hardly seemed to feel the crushing significance of the fact that the rumours he disdained were true. It ought, in our judgment, to be deeply impressed on all men of high official authority, that obstinate and exaggerated incredulity about defects and failures in the administration, over which they have control, is in itself a serious and mischievous fault.

96. The language of Sir Beauchamp Duff's letter of December 30th to the Viceroy reads very unpleasantly in the light of our knowledge of the sufferings that the troops had endured after Ctesiphon. But it is difficult to say how far his blindness to the sufferings of the troops after Ctesiphon delayed the introduction of effectual improvements. All that it is safe to affirm is that since, when the truth was fully disclosed, improvement was slowly but gradually effected—the sooner the full disclosure had been achieved, the sooner improvement would have begun.

97. The enquiry, to which Sir Beauchamp Duff at the instance of the Viceroy had assented, was first intended to be a mission entrusted to Lord Chelmsford and Surgeon-General MacNeece to go to Mesopotamia and look into the state of matters there. But when it became confidentially known to the Viceroy and Sir Beauchamp Duff that Lord Chelmsford was to be Lord Hardinge's successor in the Viceroyalty, it was naturally decided not to send him on a mission to Mesopotamia, but to send Surgeon-General MacNeece alone. The exact nature of his mission is not clear, but in any case it was no adequate fulfilment of Sir Beauchamp Duff's promise to the Viceroy that he would certainly have the whole matter enquired into and reported on, and would leave no stone unturned to get at the actual facts." Sir Beauchamp Duff's telegram to Sir J. Nixon as to this was in these terms : " Surgeon-General MacNeece is being sent to confer with you on the general question of medical requirements and sanitation of your force and the co-ordination of the medical requirements of other forces with those of Force 'D.'" These instructions seem to direct Surgeon-General MacNeece to consult rather than to make any thorough investigation. With this vague commission Surgeon-General MacNeece was sent to Mesopotamia in January, 1916. He did not go further north than Basra, and the enquiries made at Basra do not appear to have been of a very searching kind. Perhaps in consequence of his instructions the Report he sent in gave a very inadequate presentation of what had actually taken place. He said in evidence before us that he supplemented his report when he returned to Delhi by conversations with the Commander-in-Chief. However this may be, the upshot was that the Commander-in-Chief came to the conclusion that further enquiry was called for.

98. While Surgeon-General MacNeece's enquiry was going on matters were getting worse in Mesopotamia. The sufferings after the January battles were worse than those endured after Ctesiphon, and it seems that the rumours of what had been endured became stronger and stronger. At last it was decided to hold a new and more responsible enquiry and to entrust it to Sir William Vincent and Major-General A. H. Bingley. On February 22nd, 1916, Sir Beauchamp Duff telegraphed to Sir Percy Lake, who had taken over the command of the Mesopotamia Force, as follows :—

Terrible stories are being received here as to treatment of wounded after Sheikh Saad and later battles and total want of proper medical arrangements. I fear a serious scandal is impending and that I shall be compelled to send out a commission to enquire. It is imperative that all this should be improved before the next fight.

Accordingly the Vincent-Bingley Commission was appointed on March 2nd, but after all that had occurred it is surprising that its terms of reference should have been at first limited by the Commander-in-Chief, so as to exclude all enquiry into the Battle of Ctesiphon.

99. Our conclusions in regard to the responsibility of the India Office, the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, may be summarised as follows :—

(a) The Home Government agreed with the Indian Government in limiting the general military preparations of India before the war in the interests of retrenchment, and provision was accordingly not made for such an expedition as that to Mesopotamia. For the purpose of this part of our subject the importance of this policy lies in the consequent unpreparedness of the medical services in India, which was the original source of their failure in the Mesopotamian Campaign. Further, the deficient organisation of the India Office and the want of a Medical

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000026

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

Adviser to the Secretary of State in our judgment hindered the India Office giving all the assistance that it might have done in the difficulties that arose. Since the management of the Mesopotamia Expedition was in the hands of the Indian Government until it was transferred to the War Office, it does not appear to us that any responsibility for the medical services further than we have here stated rested with the India Office. We may add that Mr. Austen Chamberlain's communications to the Indian Government, so soon as he began to be aware that the medical provision for the Mesopotamia Campaign was not adequate, are, in our judgment, admirable in tone and purpose. Had they been responded to in India as they ought to have been, the medical administration in Mesopotamia would have been improved two or three months sooner than it was. We only regret that these communications did not at any time take the form of a formal despatch to the Government of India which it would have been impossible for the military administration to neglect.

(*b*) To Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, as Viceroy, belongs the general responsibility attaching to his position as the head of the Indian Government, to which had been entrusted the management of the Expedition, including the provision of medical services. In regard to the actual medical administration he appears to us to have shown throughout the utmost good will: but considering the paramount authority of his office, his action was not sufficiently strenuous and peremptory.

(*c*) The Commander-in-Chief was responsible for the well-being of the Army in Mesopotamia. He should have realised early in the campaign the necessity of enlarging and improving the medical provision of the troops fighting in that country, and should have seen that his Directors of Medical Services carried out such a policy. His failure to do so seems to have been due to his preoccupation with other claims upon the military resources of India, and to his want of knowledge of the true state of affairs in Mesopotamia. This ignorance would have been removed if he had thought himself able to visit Mesopotamia itself, and would have been mitigated if he could have spent some time at Bombay. But he remained at Simla or at Delhi relying on official reports, and refused to believe in the Mesopotamian deficiencies. He failed to respond quickly and effectively to the alarm raised by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy in the autumn and winter of 1915, and to institute such enquiries as the case demanded. It is impossible to acquit him of a dereliction of duty in deprecating evil reports about the medical provision in Mesopotamia at a time when information was in his office which more than justified the deepest anxiety.

F. Supplementary.

***Position since April*, 1916.**

100. Without going into too many details, we feel we should acknowledge the activities of the medical authorities during the summer of 1916. In India, on the departure of Surgeon-General MacNeece, Surgeon-General Sir Pardey Lukis, I.M.S., was appointed Director of Medical Services and held the post until (in accordance with the unwritten law that forbids a Surgeon-General of the I.M.S. to serve as D.M.S., India), Surgeon-General O'Donnell arrived to take his place.

101. Sir Pardey Lukis's term of office was one of energy—much additional hospital accommodation was provided, convalescent sections were established both for British and Indian troops, 16 stationary sets of X-ray apparatus were ordered for military hospitals in India, the provision hitherto being confined to mobile sets, five of which were now released for use in Mesopotamia; electric light and fans were ordered for several hospitals, and the status of Embarkation Medical Officers at Bombay and Karachi was improved. Final sanction was received for the increase of the Army Bearer Corps from 9,500 to 14,000. The Government of India was asked for the first time to purchase motor ambulance cars, instead of relying, as hitherto, on private donors.

102. Meanwhile, with an eye to things actually in Mesopotamia, additional staffs were despatched for river hospital steamers, active steps were taken to send increased apparatus for water sterilisation; a special "Mesopotamian" diet for British troops was drawn up and approved; additional river hospital steamers and barges were ordered from home;

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000069

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

F. SUPPLEMENTARY.

designs were prepared for ambulance trains on the railways in Mesopotamia then being constructed; additional hospitals were asked for and despatched.

103. Altogether the energy displayed and the speed with which new proposals were carried through compares well with previous conditions

104. As regards the state of things in Mesopotamia itself, it is evident that Surgeon-General Treherne, who succeeded Surgeon-General Hathaway as Principal Medical Officer to Force "D," dealt energetically and in a businesslike way with the problems facing him. The health records of the troops during this period show that there was much cause for anxiety, and that there was much disease, but this was met by good and systematic organisation. The work of the Army Sanitary Committee sent out by the War Office and supplementing that of the officers on the spot, has undoubtedly been valuable. Sanitation and the prevention of disease are now properly organised, and appliances of all kinds are being continually improved, as better transport facilities on the Tigris distribute the necessary machinery and apparatus. Altogether we believe that the public may be assured that a new spirit exists in the medical command in Mesopotamia.

Work of Executive Medical Officers.

105. There are two possible misapprehensions of this section of our Report which we should like to forestall. The first is that the severe criticisms and censures, to which we have been impelled, imply that the sick and wounded have been systematically and intentionally neglected. The very contrary is the case. We believe that, with the means at their disposal, and within the limits of their powers, the executive medical officers have unfailingly spent themselves in alleviation of the sufferings of their patients, and there have been but few isolated exceptions to this praiseworthy rule. When the disaster of Ctesiphon was upon him, Surgeon-General Hathaway, whose administrative capacity has been so seriously called in question by ourselves and the Vincent-Bingley Commission, took off his coat and worked strenuously at embarking the wounded. The trouble has been throughout failure to foresee, rather than failure to mitigate, disaster. Speaking of, perhaps, the worst period of the medical breakdown, the fighting in January, 1916, the Vincent-Bingley Commission say "the evidence before us abundantly proves that, generally speaking, the energy, kindness and industry of the executive medical officers . . . was beyond all praise." We endorse this encomium and would extend it to the whole campaign, in accordance with the consensus of the witnesses who have appeared before us.

Sanitary and Preventive Work in Mesopotamia.

106. Our second caveat is that we do not wish to be thought to belittle much good work done by the medical authorities in combating epidemics. Mesopotamia is a hot-bed of ravaging diseases. Plague, small-pox, cholera, malaria, dysentery and typhus, if not actually endemic, are always menacing in this swamp-ridden and unsanitated country. Each one of these diseases appeared amidst the forces, and any one might have decimated them. On every occasion the efforts of the medical authorities were successful in circumscribing the epidemic and limiting its incidence. These are not despicable results for a large force of British and Indian troops accompanied by a horde of oriental camp-followers and whose headquarters was a Turkish town of some 80,000 inhabitants. But the indictment against the authorities is not a lack of courage in dealing with disease so much as a lack of foresight in dealing with the predisposing conditions of disease. In such matters as water-supply, sanitation, diet, mosquito and sun-protection, &c., the evidence before both Commissions teems with instances of the failure to take up sufficiently early the weapons which existed in the armoury of modern science against the onslaught of disease Our opinion is that, though the protection of the Mesopotamian Expedition against disease was by no means ineffective, it might and ought to have been a good deal better, if the matter had been earlier taken in hand on a proper scale. The vigour and scope of the sanitary and preventive measures found necessary by Surgeon-General Treherne are the sternest criticism of the omissions of his predecessor, Surgeon-General Hathaway.

We are aware that the rate of sickness was comparatively low in the summer of 1915 under Surgeon-General Hathaway, and that such sick-rate was greatly exceeded in the summer of 1916 under Surgeon-General Treherne. In this connection we must, however, remember that the increased aggregation of troops in Mesopotamia doubtless made the medical problems of the summer of 1916 more difficult and increased the liability to disease.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000bb

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

F. SUPPLEMENTARY.

In view of the unsuitability of the Mesopotamian climate for the purposes of convalescence, the policy of shipping to India as many sick as possible was wisely pursued, though it, of course, increased the statistical total of men invalided to India. During the worst months of the hot season of 1916 a very large number of officers and men were thus invalided to India, though—we are glad to say—this high invaliding rate rapidly decreased as the weather became cooler. But in the battle against disease it is the preparatory work which tells, and if Surgeon-General Hathaway profited by the preparations of Colonel Hehir in the spring of 1915, so Surgeon-General Treherne was bound to suffer from any lack of preparations by Surgeon-General Hathaway in the spring of 1916.

***Statistical** Evidence of Colonel James.*

107. In this connection we would refer to the able evidence tendered to us almost at the end of our enquiry by Lieut.-Colonel James, who was appointed Chief Staff Officer for Sanitation in Mesopotamia early in 1916. Colonel James produced an interesting series of statistics of admissions to hospitals for sickness in Mesopotamia in the year 1915–1916, and he compared these with similar statistics for previous campaigns in a manner which shows up in a most favourable light the result of the medical authorities' work in Mesopotamia. But we do not agree with Colonel James that he has adopted a fair criterion. The latest of Colonel James' compared campaigns was in 1904, the earliest in 1847. No science has leapt forward more boldly and rapidly in recent years than preventive medicine. Many of the prophylactic and sanitary measures against disease which are now a commonplace were unknown in these earlier campaigns, and they are not, therefore, a fair basis for comparison. In one sense, indeed, the heavier sick-rates of earlier campaigns might even be held to aggravate the indictment. We have shown that the Indian authorities did not provide sufficient hospitals, personnel and equipment for the actual number of patients. But if, as Colonel James would seem to infer, they ought to have expected a vastly larger number of patients, the omission to provide even for the lesser number is all the more reprehensible.

108. We do not, however, ourselves consider that the Indian Medical Authorities should have provided for, or be judged by, the sick-rates of ten or twenty years ago. The real test is whether the measures taken are considered satisfactory tested by contemporary standards. Colonel James' calculated rate of admissions to hospital for sickness in a year in 1915–16 is 1,550 per 1,000 of the average strength of the force. If we understand Colonel James correctly, this means that, *supposing no reinforcements had been sent*, in one year every man in the force would have been incapacitated by illness once, and more than half of the men in the force would have been incapacitated by illness twice. In other words, the preventive measures adopted would not have succeeded in protecting from disease a single man in the force. We cannot believe that this is a standard, which can be considered satisfactory, or that it could not have been improved upon by the adoption of earlier and more energetic measures. In this our opinion is amply confirmed by the Report of the War Office Sanitary Commission and the other documents referred to in para. 104 above. We might add that the backwardness and obstruction of the authorities in Mesopotamia in regard to medical and sanitary reforms is the main subject of Colonel James' own evidence before the Vincent-Bingley Commission.

Neglect to apply to England for Assistance.

109. We have already referred to* a despatch of March, 1914, from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State which shows that shortly before the outbreak of war the deficiency in medical officers in India on mobilisation was placed at 360 and of military assistant surgeons at 246. The figures quoted to us elsewhere do not always agree with these, but it is quite evident, and, indeed, admitted, that the full military force in India could not be mobilised for war without considerable medical assistance from home. The effect of this was seen in the deficiencies in hospitals, personnel and equipment which existed from the first in Mesopotamia and culminated in the disaster after Ctesiphon and Sheikh Saad. It appears to us, therefore, extraordinary that not only was assistance in medical personnel and equipment not asked for from England on a large scale during the first year of the operations in Mesopotamia, but that, as we show elsewhere,† in August, 1915, such assistance was actually refused by the Indian Government. The Viceroy informed us that no shortage was reported to him. But the deficiencies on mobilisation had been known to the Indian Government for years. The Commander-in-Chief and the D.M.S. appear to have been actuated by the belief that nothing could be spared from England. Some ground for this belief is afforded

* See Part X., para. 78. † See Part X., para. 82.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00004d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

by the pessimistic tone of a demi-official letter from Sir A. Keogh to Surgeon-General MacNeece in August, 1915. But it can hardly be urged that so vital an omission by the Indian Government in a matter for which they were responsible can be excused on the grounds of chance expressions in a semi-private letter. Sir Alfred Keogh, who was Director-General of Medical Services, War Office, himself gave evidence before us that during 1916 all demands made upon him were met, and that he "could have complied with any demands made upon him at any time since the beginning of the Mesopotamian Expedition." Moreover, the only demand made to England for medical personnel before the battle of Ctesiphon (viz., on July 4th, 1915, for 16 R.A.M.C. officers) was promptly met, although the demand itself was couched in a form which gave no adequate indication of the deficiencies existing in Mesopotamia. We feel therefore that a grave responsibility rests with the Indian Government for not formally and fully placing the deficiencies in medical personnel and equipment before the home authorities and requesting assistance on an adequate scale.

Voluntary Aid from England.

110. We note with satisfaction the anxiety of various non-official bodies to help in Mesopotamia, and our evidence testifies to the liberality of the British and Indian communities in India, the activity of the Indian Branch of the St. John Ambulance Association, and the good work done by the Indian Soldiers' Fund, and other bodies on similar lines.

Some of our evidence on this point suggests that offers of voluntary aid were not too well received, but Lord Hardinge strongly maintains the contrary view. One regrettable failure to profit from voluntary assistance there can be no doubt about. The joint War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John in London have been active in Mesopotamia since the beginning of 1916; on July 17th, 1915, however, they cabled to Sir John Nixon:—

> Can British Red Cross help in any way with hospital supplies for your force?

Acceptance was confined to two petrol-driven motor launches. The offer was repeated on December 28th, and a reply sent:—

> Nothing required at present. If anything needed in future will not hesitate to ask you.

A startling answer in view of the recent breakdown after Ctesiphon.

Shortage of ordinary River Transport and Extent to which it excuses the Medical Breakdown.

111. There are passages in the evidence of Lord Hardinge, Surgeon-General Hathaway and other responsible witnesses which might lead to the inference that the medical breakdown in Mesopotamia was due to the shortage of ordinary river transport, for which, of course, the medical authorities were not responsible. If this were true, it would follow that the medical authorities must be relieved of blame for the results of the breakdown. We cannot agree with such a contention. No doubt the medical work, in common with every other branch of administration, was seriously hampered by the lack of river transport, and this lack may have been the immediate cause of some of the sufferings of the wounded on particular occasions, as, for example, when, early in 1916, it was found impossible to send up to the front with sufficient promptitude ambulances and transport which were actually at Basra. But many of the principal factors in the sufferings of the sick and wounded were not, or need not have been, materially affected by the shortage of river steamers. It was not such shortage which prevented sufficient doctors, assistant surgeons and sub-assistant surgeons being sent to the expedition up to the end of 1915, and yet the insufficiency of medical personnel was one of the worst features in the hardships, not only on the battle-field, but also on the journey down the river, notably after the retreat from Ctesiphon. It was not the shortage of river transport which prevented the expedition from being supplied in 1915 with sufficient hospitals; nor, as the Viceroy himself pointed out, could the insufficiency of river transport justify the omission to send to the front a proper supply of such unbulky necessaries as bandages, dressings and drugs.

112. In our opinion, the known shortage of ordinary river transport, if anything, aggravates rather than palliates the omissions of the medical authorities. If the ordinary boat-service had been adequate for the sick, there might have been some excuse for omitting to provide special river hospital steamers, but the ordinary boat service was known to be inadequate.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000062

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

F. SUPPLEMENTARY.

113. Similarly the device of eking out insufficient hospital accommodation by using the field ambulances as hospitals might have been less reprehensible, if it had been possible promptly to send all field-ambulance patients down river when necessary. But the inadequacy of transport upset all certainty of the proper evacuation of the field ambulances, with the result that they became congested with patients. In fact, the known lack of river transport accentuates, but does not excuse, the unwisdom of resorting to this practice.

114. Even in the case of the ambulances of the reinforcing divisions from France left behind at Basra, the difficulties of insufficient transport might have been largely overcome if the authorities in Mesopotamia had at an early date explained the situation to the authorities despatching the reinforcements, and had asked for the field ambulances to be sent on in advance so as to provide sufficient time for their conveyance to the front. But this was not done; and the omission is significant of the prevailing lack of foresight and organisation. Even in such an obvious matter as detailing an embarkation officer to see to the proper despatch of medical equipment, stores, etc., nothing was done till quite late in the campaign, and there are numerous instances of such equipment having failed to reach its destination, owing to the packages being insufficiently labelled or improperly packed in the steamers.

115. That the lack of ordinary river transport was not the principal cause of the sufferings of the wounded is also proved, as Sir Beauchamp Duff points out, by the great improvement which is noted by the Vincent-Bingley Commission and other witnesses in March, 1916. At that time the amount of river transport was proportionately no greater than it had been during the breakdown after Ctesiphon and Sheikh Saad; but the organisation had been improved and the personnel had been increased, with the consequences that the sufferings of the wounded were very materially decreased. We are convinced that very much of the avoidable sufferings of the sick and wounded in Mesopotamia was due, not so much to lack of ordinary river transport as to the lack of organisation and foresight. The difficulties of river transport were present from the first and should have stimulated the prevision and resourcefulness of the medical authorities; but instead, as we have seen, they remained supine, until galvanised into unavailing action by the disasters which at once disclosed their incompetence and aroused their fears.

***Frequent Changes** in Occupancy of Office of D.M.S. India.*

116. Between the summers of 1914 and 1916 no less than four individuals have held the post or administered the duties of D.M.S. in India—*viz.*, Sir W. Babtie, Surgeon-General MacNeece, Sir Pardey Lukis and Surgeon-General O'Donnell. Few systems of administration, even if good in themselves, could in time of war sustain the strain of such rapid dislocation of supreme authority.

***Responsibility** for Provision of Medical Necessities.*

117. It has been made clear to us that, according to the existing system and regulations, the higher military medical authorities themselves only directly provide doctors, nurses, instruments, drugs and dressings. All other things required for the medical treatment of the sick and wounded, or for their transport (many of these special to the medical service) have to be provided by and obtained from other departments often busy with the needs of combatant branches.

118. It is well known that the scientific treatment of sick and wounded has advanced by leaps and bounds of recent years, and we need not argue that any appliances or arrangements tending to assist or accelerate the healthy restoration of those in hospital to the Army or to civil life, are of national importance. The question, therefore, suggests itself whether the higher medical authorities should not in future be given greater responsibility as regards the purchase and provision of these matters. It is true that the Mesopotamia Campaign has not redounded greatly to their credit, but at the same time, it is clear that their difficulties were increased by the failures of other departments. We refrain from making a definite recommendation on this matter, recognising that very considerable experience elsewhere than in Mesopotamia is now available for guidance, but we think the time is ripe for the re-examination of the practice that has obtained hitherto, and that the distribution of responsibility amongst four departments, each of whom has to provide something, without which the contributions of the other three may be rendered futile, is an unwise application of collective effort.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000077

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

F. Supplementary.

Major R. M. Carter, I.M.S.

119. Before we leave this part of our report we wish to express our appreciation of the evidence given and the work done by Major R. M. Carter, I.M.S. He by his persistence brought to the notice of his superiors the terrible condition of the wounded when they arrived at Basra after Ctesiphon, and in other ways he revealed shortcomings which might have been ignored and left unremedied. His sense of duty seems to be most commendable, and he was fertile and resourceful in suggesting remedies.

G. Medical Findings and Recommendations.

Findings. *Findings.*

We find that :—

120. The medical provision for the Mesopotamia Campaign was from the beginning insufficient; by reason of the continuance of this insufficiency there was a lamentable breakdown in the care of the sick and wounded after the battle of Ctesiphon and after the battles in January, 1916; there was amelioration in March and April, 1916; but that since then the improvement has been continual, until it is reasonable to hope that now the medical provision is satisfactory.

121. The defects of medical provision caused avoidable suffering to the sick and wounded, and during the breakdown in the winter of 1915–16 this suffering was most lamentably severe.

122. The deficiencies, which were the main causes of the avoidable suffering of the sick and wounded, were in the provision of the following :—

(*a*) River hospital steamers.
(*b*) Medical personnel.
(*c*) River transport.
(*d*) Ambulance land transport.

To these fifth and sixth main causes may be added in respect to the operations in January, 1916 :—

(*e*) The absence of the medical and supply establishments of the 7th Division.
(*f*) The premature efforts to relieve Kut in consequence of the erroneous estimate of supplies in that place.

123. As to personal responsibility, the Vincent-Bingley Commission found—

That a grave responsibility for that part of the suffering which resulted from avoidable circumstances rests with the Senior Medical Officer of the Force, Surgeon-General G. H. Hathaway, and with General Sir John Nixon, the General Officer Commanding the Force, from April 9th, 1915, to January 19th, 1916. General Hathaway did not represent with sufficient promptitude and force the needs of the services for which he was responsible, and in particular failed to urge the necessity for adequate and suitable transport for the sick and wounded with that insistency which the situation demanded. General Nixon did not, in our opinion, appreciate the conditions which would necessarily arise if provision for the sick and wounded of his force were not made on a more liberal scale.

We endorse the finding as regards Surgeon-General Hathaway, who in our judgment showed himself unfit for the high administrative office which he held. We may add, however, as regards River and Land Transport, that, while it was the duty of Surgeon-General Hathaway to urge its necessity, it was actually the duty of the Quartermaster-General's Department and Sir John Nixon's staff to see that it was provided.

So far as Sir John Nixon is concerned, however, we think that he was throughout solicitous as to the condition of the wounded. The main mistake he made was to rely too absolutely on the statements made to him by his Deputy Director of Medical Service, Surgeon-General Hathaway; to that extent he may be blamed, but he stands, so far as responsibility is concerned, in a very different position from that occupied by Surgeon-General Hathaway.

124. The officer directly responsible for the deficiencies of medical provision in Mesopotamia is, however, the Director of Medical Services, India. This appointment was held at the beginning of the war by Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie, who held the office between March, 1914, and June, 1915, but was away from India for six weeks in February and March, 1915. He was succeeded by Surgeon-General J. G. MacNeece on July 8th, 1915, and the latter proceeded home on sick leave on April 15th, 1916. Sir William Babtie in his evidence before us impressed us as an officer of ability and knowledge, but we do not think that he brought these qualities sufficiently to bear

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000012

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

G. Medical Findings and Recommendations.

upon the task before him. He accepted obviously insufficient medical provision without protest and without any adequate effort to improve it. He cannot therefore be held blameless.

125. Surgeon-General MacNeece did not give evidence before the Vincent-Bingley Commission, but he appeared before us. He was, in our opinion, an officer thoroughly desirous of fulfilling the duties assigned to him; but he was a man of advancing years and diminishing strength, unequal to the position he was called upon to fill, and his administration appears to us to show no signs of the vigour and efficiency that were required.

126. We find that:—

(*a*) The Home Government agreed with the Indian Government in limiting their general military preparations of India before the war in the interests of retrenchment, and provision was accordingly not made for such an Expedition as that to Mesopotamia. The limitation of medical preparation and the low standard of medical treatment in the Indian Army at the outbreak of war were the natural outcome of this policy, which was pursued for many years, and was in force right up to the date of the war.

(*b*) The private letters of the Secretary of State to the Viceroy showed an earnest and continuous anxiety as to the condition of the wounded, and the only comment that can be made upon the Secretary of State's procedure is that he did not fully utilise the official powers at his disposal for the purpose of forcing at an earlier period an investigation into the treatment of the wounded in Mesopotamia.

(*c*) To Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, as Viceroy, belongs the general responsibility attaching to his position as the head of the Indian Government, to which had been entrusted the management of the Expedition, including the provision of medical services. In regard to the actual medical administration he appears to us to have shown throughout the utmost good will, but considering the paramount authority of his office, his action was not sufficiently strenuous and peremptory.

(*d*) A more severe censure must be passed upon the Commander-in-Chief, for not only did he, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India, fail closely to superintend the adequacy of medical provision in Mesopotamia, but he declined for a considerable time, until ultimately forced by the superior authority of the Viceroy, to give credence to rumours which proved to be true, and failed to take the measures which a subsequent experience shows would have saved the wounded from avoidable suffering.

127. There has been misuse of official reticence as to medical defects and the sufferings of the sick and wounded.

128. While the protective and sanitary work of the Medical Administration has in certain directions and at some periods (notably under Colonel Hehir) been commendable, yet there has not been generally sufficient promptitude in taking the precautions dictated by modern science for the protection of the troops against disease.

129. Throughout the campaign (with insignificant exceptions) the executive and regimental medical officers and personnel have devoted themselves with unremitting kindness, zeal and industry to the care of the sick and wounded with such means as were at their disposal.

Recommendations.

130. The evidence put before us indicates the necessity for certain immediate changes in the existing system of medical organisation in India, which we propose to enumerate. We are of the opinion that:—

(*a*) The Director of Medical Services in India, in war-time especially, should have far greater powers, than he at present possesses to authorise expenditure and make purchases, and to delegate such power to his subordinates. The present elaborate system of financial check and counter-check, and correspondence with other military departments, before what is wanted can be obtained has proved from its dilatoriness a real danger in war-time.

(*b*) Whenever an expedition is sent over-seas from India, responsible officers should at once be located at the Port of Embarkation, with wide power to act. We have referred elsewhere to the fact that the Commander-in-Chief never visited Bombay during the crisis of the campaign. Some of his staff did do so, but their visits

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

were spasmodic, and in no case had these officers power to give orders or settle important questions without further reference to Simla or Delhi. Further, all power being concentrated at Headquarters, the ruling authorities deprived themselves of the value of being in constant touch with those going to, or returning from, Mesopotamia. If it was true as alleged that the Headquarter Staff at Simla were tied to their secretariat work there, the Bombay Government was on the spot and common-sense would have suggested the delegation of authority to a Government so conveniently situated.

(*c*) At the Port of Embarkation the embarkation staffs should be responsible for seeing that the equipment and personnel of each medical unit should not be separated in different vessels, but embarked together in the same vessel. This rule was frequently neglected at Bombay.

(*d*) There should be an immediate and general improvement in the whole standard of comfort and accommodation in the hospitals for British troops in India. Surgeon-General MacNeece stated "even now there are practically not more than 2 or 3 up-to-date military hospitals in India." We are glad to note that the new war hospitals in Bombay are reported by the Vincent-Bingley Commission as bearing favourable comparison with any similar hospitals in the United Kingdom. This shows what can be done in India when there is impulse to reform. We think it discreditable to the Indian Government that the general standard of hospitals in India should fall below the standard of efficiency now demanded in Military Hospitals at home. To assist in reforming this state of things, we think that the R.A.M.C. or a corps on similar lines should be available for service in all British Hospitals in India, and that a better and more complete female nursing service should also be organised.

(*e*) As regards the medical treatment of Indian troops, no time should be lost in substituting a Station Hospital system for the present regimental treatment. "I doubt," one I.M.S. witness says to us, "whether you gentlemen would consider that the Sepoys' hospitals in peace time in India are hospitals at all." Sir Havelock Charles described them as "a disgrace to the Government of India." Surgeon-General MacNeece states "there are no well-equipped operating theatres, X-ray rooms, laboratories, etc." and Sir William Babtie, "they are so bad that I think it would be necessary to reform them *ab initio*." The new Indian hospitals should be staffed by enlisted personnel of all ranks, and should be used for building up trained reserves of menial establishments in peace time.

(*f*) All deficiencies usually allowed to prevail in peace-time in the mobilisation equipment of general hospitals should be made good. Sir W. Babtie told us that of the general hospitals in India, "Twelve were supposed to be mobilisable, but only four were complete in all the different Departments of supply." All such equipment should be stored and in readiness, and inspected, as is done now in the case of field ambulances, casualty clearing hospitals and stationary hospitals.

(*g*) Base Depôts of Medical Stores should be reintroduced into the Indian Field Service organisation and kept ready for mobilisation.

(*h*) At the outset of every campaign there should be provided a separate superior sanitary organisation and staff charged with the arrangements for preserving and safeguarding the health of the fighting troops, and responsible to the Principal Medical Officer of the force, but otherwise entirely separate from the organisation for the care of the sick and wounded. This implies a formation in peace time of an adequate reserve of sanitary officers enlisting in it, if necessary, the services of specialists in civil employment.

(*i*) The Field Service Ration should receive very careful reconsideration and alteration in the light of experience in Mesopotamia. This especially applies to the rations for Indian troops. The War Office Sanitary Committee found that even "the improved ration" sanctioned as late as October last was deficient in many respects.

The above are only some of the defects revealed by our investigations, but they are sufficient to prove the necessity for an urgent, and thorough reform by the Indian Government of the whole system upon which their medical services are based, and under which they are controlled. Sir Alfred Keogh, whose administration at the War Office as Director-General, Army Medical Services, has been very successful during this war, at the conclusion of his evidence made the following very strong statement:—

> I have no hesitation whatever in saying that the medical arrangements connected with the Army in India have been for years and years most disgraceful. I say that with a full sense of responsibility. I have served many years in India. I have not been there for some time now, but in my opinion things are not better than they were. Anything more disgraceful than the carelessness and want of attention with regard to the sick soldier in India it is impossible to imagine.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000003

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

PART XI.—CAUSES CONTRIBUTING TO THE ERRORS OF JUDGMENT AND SHORTCOMINGS OF RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES.

A. Division of Responsibility for Campaign.

Campaign in Mesopotamia—"No Man's Child."

1. In the story of the military successes and reverses of this campaign, there constantly crops up almost from the day of the landing of the force, evidence of shortage of transport of all kinds, of the antiquated equipment of the troops, of grave deficiencies in medical personnel and material, occasional shortage of rations at the front, and a great, if not total, lack of comforts. To use a current expression, the force from the first was "ill-found" to meet the privations and hardships inseparable from campaigning in Mesopotamia, and as its numbers increased bad went to worse. General Gorringe graphically gave expression to the feeling which he considered pervaded the force, when he said: "It was believed to be a side-show and 'no man's child.'" Though these colloquialisms undoubtedly err on the side of exaggeration, it is impossible to deny that there was some foundation for them. Indeed, in a sense such haphazard expressions go right to the root of the causes of the failures and reverses, as will become apparent when we investigate why this expedition did not receive from either of the great military supervising staffs in London or Simla that care and attention, which were necessary to surmount the exceptional difficulties of climate and country which it had to encounter.

2. When the war broke out in 1914, there were in the British Empire two great military administrative organisations—one in England, the other in India, at Simla. In our self-governing Dominions such as Canada, Australasia, New Zealand and South Africa there were self-supporting local forces under the control of their respective Governments. But the War Office in London and the military departments at Simla were the only complete military organisations equipped for the planning, despatch, control and supply of expeditions beyond their respective territories over the sea. As a preparation for such operations, the Intelligence Department of each of these organisations had assigned to it certain territories within and concerning which it had to collect and collate topographical and other information during times of peace, the assumption clearly being that the areas so defined for purposes of information would, in the event of their becoming theatres for warlike operations, be under the control of the organisation which had previously collected the information.

3. Under this arrangement, Asia was divided between the Imperial and Indian War Intelligence Departments. It is inadvisable to give the details of this delimitation; it will be sufficient for our immediate purpose to state that a line was drawn through Arabia from Akaba to Basra, all north of that line belonging to Whitehall, all south to Simla. Basra was thus given to India, Mesopotamia to Great Britain—a somewhat confused division of responsibility, inasmuch as Basra must inevitably become the base of any operations in Mesopotamia from the Persian Gulf. The collection of information relative to Persia fell within the duty of the Indian Intelligence Department, and the whole of the Persian Gulf is patrolled by war vessels, which are under the control and policy of the Indian Government. Mesopotamia, being at the head of the Persian Gulf, was not looked upon by the War Office as an area requiring their special attention, as it was within the radius of action of India, though outside their sphere of intelligence. The Simla Intelligence Department had not before 1914 prepared schemes for military operations north of Basra. The likelihood of a war with Turkey in alliance with Germany did not, previous to that date, seem to India to be a reasonable probability. It was also asserted by Sir Beauchamp Duff that, in order to prevent overlapping, there was an understanding that the Whitehall Intelligence Department would take Mesopotamia in hand, and that they deprecated the Indian Authorities preparing plans for a campaign in that country. The information which Whitehall had collected about the country was, however, sent to India and Mesopotamia.

4. In addition to these two Military Organisations there is a Military Department at the India Office under the authority of the Secretary of State for India, and with whose advice he controls and decides the general military policy of India, but this department is not organised for the purpose of directly managing a campaign. It was, however, through the instrumentality of this Department that the Mesopotamian campaign was started.

5. At the beginning of the war, from an Intelligence and General Staff point of view, Mesopotamia was "no man's child," or rather, was the foster-child of both Simla and Whitehall, the acknowledged child of neither. The War Office had its own gigantic task

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00003b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Division of Responsibility for Campaign.

of expanding a small army into one of national dimensions, and at the same time of organising a series of expeditions abroad, towards which the Indian Military Authorities were compelled to contribute largely both in the shape of personnel and material. Simla had, in addition to the task of providing these Oversea Expeditions, to guard against the ever-present danger of attacks on the North-West frontier and a recrudescence of disaffection instigated by German agents and money in parts of India. It was only in September, 1914, after the contributions of India to the expeditions to France, Egypt and East Africa had been settled, and their military establishments thus depleted, that the Secretary of State for India directed from Whitehall the Indian Government to send a brigade to the head of the Persian Gulf.

6. The subsequent correspondence clearly shows that the Indian Government was at first lukewarm on a proposition which it did not originate. The scope of the expedition grew, and its numbers increased, continuing to make a constant drain upon Indian resources. So reluctant were the Government of India to comply with these increased demands that in March, 1915, it was only under compulsion of a most imperative order from Whitehall that the reinforcements necessary to bring up the force to a strength of two Divisions were sent. This reinforcement secured victory and firmly established the expeditionary force. Sir John Nixon assumed command in April, 1915, and took out with him the Orders previously referred to, which included instructions to prepare (1) A plan for the effective occupation of Basra Vilayet, and (2) A plan for the subsequent advance on Baghdad.

7. The objects of the expedition up to this time had been defined to be (1) that it would checkmate Turkish intrigues, (2) that it would encourage the Arabs to rally round us and confirm the Sheiks of Muhammerah and Koweit in their allegiance, and (3) that it would protect the oil installation at Abadan. But these objects were not so precisely limited that they could not be expanded, so as to cover operations much more extensive than were originally contemplated by the Home Government. Almost from the very outset of the expedition, the political importance of occupying Baghdad was urged by Sir Percy Cox, the Indian Government's agent in the Persian Gulf. The political officers on the spot, in Simla and in Whitehall, both at the Foreign Office and the India Office, all at various times gave expression to a similar view, and it may be that the successive advances from Basra to Kurna, Kurna to Amarah, and Amarah to Kut, though put forward as necessary defensive operations, were partially prompted by this ambition. During the later of these advances, the attitude of the India Office was one of reluctant acceptance of the forward movements advocated by Simla. Simla and Whitehall were not pulling well together. Up to this date no full and frank exchange of opinion seems to have taken place either as to the scope and aim of the expedition, or as to the preparation and expenditure necessary to ensure its success.

8. During the first months of this campaign the India Office was stimulating the Indian Government to greater exertion by ordering them to send out additional troops. So soon as the troops sent out amounted to two Divisions, then the rôle was reversed, and it was the Indian Government who were constantly pressing upon the Home Authorities the necessity of advance. Sir John Nixon in his evidence before us criticised—and we think with justice—the discrepancy between his Orders of March 24th, 1915,* and the telegraphic criticism of his operations sent him a month later by the Secretary of State.

9. The Mesopotamian Expedition was one which during the early operations required the closest attention. It was only by a careful study of the abnormal nature of the conditions, under which any lengthened campaign would have to be carried on, that the inherent difficulty of establishing a reliable base at Basra could be overcome. Even if the base had been consolidated and made effective, there still remained the difficulty of providing steamer transport of a special character and if sufficient steamer transport could not be obtained in a given time, then railroads became a necessity. But the improvement of the harbour and the building of railroads meant permanent, and possibly unremunerative, outlay, and no matter what the outlay might be, it could not give an immediate response in the shape of improved communication. Makeshifts and hand-to-mouth contrivances therefore became the order of the day, as they gave at a less immediate expenditure a quicker though ephemeral return.

* See Part IV., para. 2.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000037

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Faulty Organisation of Indian Military Administration.

10. During recent years certain important changes had been made in the highest branch of Indian military administration, and certain influences were at work, which, in our judgment, were detrimental to the efficient supervision of this or any Oversea Expedition. Up to 1905 there had been two high officials in charge of the administrative and executive work of the Indian Army—namely, the Military Member of Council and the Commander-in-Chief. By "Indian Army" we mean Indian Military Establishments, as there is always a large proportion of the British Army stationed in India, and these troops, so long as they are there, are upon the Indian establishment. The Military Member of Council was in charge of what we may designate the administration of the Army, and it was through him that the demands of the Commander-in-Chief for the Army came to the Viceroy's Council, though the Commander-in-Chief himself was an extraordinary Member of that Council. Whatever may have been the drawbacks of this system, it had the advantage that by this division of work, the Commander-in-Chief was free to perform his important executive duties of inspection, and of reviewing and testing the efficiency and wants of the troops under him, while the Military Member remained at the seat of Government.

11. The Military Member was abolished, and in his place a Supply Member was appointed as one of the Viceroy's Council. This post was, however, extinguished a short time after its creation. Thus, the whole of the administrative and executive work of the Army became concentrated in the hands of one man, who has a duality of responsibility, for he is both Military Member of Council and Commander-in-Chief. Being the only military representative on the Viceroy's Council it is his duty to be present at the meetings of the Executive Council. The two Army Departments, namely, that of which the Commander-in-Chief in his capacity as such is the head, and that of which the Commander-in-Chief in his capacity as Military Member of Council is also the head, are both permanently located in Simla.

12. While there is centralisation at the head of the administration, a cumbrous dualism remains below. These two Departments, though under the same individual, are kept separate and distinct, and they are separately maintained in order to give substance to the fiction that one person is two persons. The Commander-in-Chief, in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, may think and order something in his department which in his subsequent capacity as Military Member in another Department he may like to unthink and counter order. The procedure under this unique form of military administration was described to us by Mr. Brunyate, the Financial Secretary to the Government of India. He had been for some years Financial Adviser to the Commander-in-Chief and Military Member of Council, and is a high expert upon the procedure which this dual system entails. His evidence was so clear and explicit that we reproduce it verbatim. When asked to give a concrete case of how a paper relating to a proposal for Army equipment would pass through the two Departments, he replied :—

> The Quartermaster-General, it may be supposed, wishes to have more mules. Probably before putting forward the proposal at all he sees the Commander-in-Chief personally as Commander-in-Chief, and ascertains from him that he is willing to have that proposal ventilated. He then writes a note stating his facts, probably supported by a note by the Director of the Army Remount Department, makes a definite recommendation, estimates the cost and marks his note to the Army Department of the Government of India. The office clerks of the Army Department note on the case, the Assistant Secretary notes, the Deputy Secretary may note, and it reaches the Army Secretary—we will call him General Holloway, though he is not actually Army Secretary now. He criticises the proposal if he thinks fit. . . . The Office of the Financial Adviser then note upon it. . . . The clerks in the Finance Adviser's office note, the Assistant or Deputy Financial Adviser notes, and the case then comes to the Financial Adviser, now Mr. Fell. Mr. Fell may be prepared at once to accept the proposal on behalf of the Finance Department, and may intimate that he does not intend to refer it to the Finance Member. The file then goes back to the Army Secretary, and in that case he at once arranges for the necessary orders to be issued to give effect to the Quartermaster-General's proposal, unless he thinks the case of sufficient importance to refer it to the Army Member.
>
> Such reference will, of course, practically always be required if the proposal is one requiring the sanction of the Secretary of State. In that case the Army Secretary would take the Army Member's orders at this stage, and a despatch to the Secretary of State would then be drafted in the Army Department. . . . Or again, Mr. Fell, when the case first reached him, might have criticised the proposal, and indicated a desire to see it modified or rejected. In that case the file would still go back to the Army Secretary, and he would doubtless at that stage take the orders of the Army Member unless before doing so he wished to have the opinion of the Quartermaster-General on the criticisms and suggestions which had been made in the Military Finance Branch. Mr. Fell, when criticising the proposal would probably have indicated whether he intended to refer the case eventually to the Finance Member. Thus when the Army Secretary brought these criticisms before the Army Member, the latter would know that if he decided to over-ride the Financial Adviser's criticisms,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000012

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

he might have to face opposition from the Finance Member. The Army Member would then pass his orders. If he adhered to the scheme as put forward by the Quartermaster-General and the Army Department he would record a note to that effect. The file would then go back to the Financial Adviser, and the latter would not note again, but would submit the case to the Finance Member. If the Finance Member decided not to press the objections raised by Mr. Fell, the proposal would become a fully accepted proposal, and orders would be issued for putting it into effect. If, however, the Finance Member definitely objected to the scheme, the case would then go back to Mr. Fell for return to the Army Secretary for re-submission to the Army Member. The Army Member might then defer to the Finance Member's objection, in which case the whole proposal would be dropped with the Army Member's concurrence, though a reluctant concurrence. If, however, the Army Member, in spite of the Finance Member's objections, considered that the proposal was a necessary one, he would intimate to the Army Secretary that the case should be referred to His Excellency the Viceroy, under our Rules of Business, which prescribe that when two members of Council differ, the case must be referred for the orders of the Viceroy. The Army Secretary would then lay the case before the Viceroy. The latter might very possibly indicate a personal opinion that in the circumstances, as a particular case he thought it perhaps desirable that the views of the Army Member should be deferred to, and any expression of the Viceroy's wish in an ordinary case is very frequently—I might almost say generally—deferred to. Or the Viceroy might, pursuing the ordinary procedure under our Statutory Rules of Business, simply instruct the Army Secretary that the case was to be brought up in Council the following week. It would then be discussed in Council, the Army Secretary being present, but not taking any part in the discussion, and would be settled by the views of the majority of the Council.

Asked how long a disputed case might take, he replied :—

At the best a disputed proposal would, I think, ordinarily take a good many weeks. I cannot put it more exactly than that, but a great deal depends upon whether the responsible secretary takes a grip of the case and prevents its being constantly remitted backwards and forwards between the Financial Adviser on the one side and the Administrative Authority, the Quartermaster-General, or whoever he may be, on the other, inviting each in turn to reply to the other's rejoinders and criticisms. Where a case was not taken hold of and put to an end, I have known it very lamentably protracted from this cause, but it is always within the power of the Army Secretary, at any time when a case reaches him on its perambulations, to say that it has been sufficiently discussed, and to take it up at once for the Orders of the Army Member; and that should be done after reasonable opportunity for meeting new criticisms has been given.

It was admitted by him that during the perambulations of this proposal, the Commander-in-Chief played little or no part. When further asked if this procedure would apply to any proposal for an increase of equipment—say, machine guns—he replied :—

It would apply equally well, but the procedure would be somewhat more cumbersome, because instead of our only having the Quartermaster-General's branch to deal with, it would probably involve also the General Staff, the Adjutant-General, and the Ordnance Department.

When further asked if this elaborate process of check and counter-check was not really carried on to keep up the fiction that there are two people as there used to be—the Military Member of Council and the Commander-in-Chief—whereas at present there is only one person in these capacities, he replied :—

I think that is largely the case, particularly if it is put in this way, that in order to maintain an adequate status and influence for the heads of the Army, the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, and so on, it is, or has been considered necessary to retain the fiction of the Commander-in-Chief's existence in this arrangement, it is through him that they derive their own status.

This astounding system has only to be described to be condemned. The Secretary of State for India, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, in his evidence adumbrated certain Army reforms that he had in his mind. We trust that amongst these reforms the fiction of one person being two, and the anomaly of two establishments being maintained at public expense to give effect to this fiction, will permanently disappear from the military system of India.

It is only fair to add that since the war began this lengthy procedure has, to a large extent, been put on one side. Still, during this period the Commander-in-Chief has had to perform the dual duties of the two offices which he nominally holds.

Isolation between an administrative department and its operating factors tends to give to the secretariat so isolated an undue sense of the importance of minute and memorandum writing. In the case of the Simla Departments, this is an evil which was constantly brought to our notice, and many of our witnesses bear testimony to the inordinate dimensions attained by minute-writing, check and counter-check, and the reference backward and forward of papers and proposals in the administrative departments of the Army. The present system of check urgently requires simplification and acceleration. It is difficult under it to ascertain where responsibility begins and ends, whilst the waste of time and energy involved must operate detrimentally to efficient administration. Those engaged in secretarial work seem to have forgotten that minute-writing is not the end all and be all

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000ae

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Faulty Organisation of Indian Military Administration.

of Army administration; it is only an instrument for the co-ordination of efficiency and economy, and for the prevention of waste and extravagance. If, by undue expansion, it fails to achieve these ends, it tends to promote the very administrative evils it was intended to counteract.

13. The removal of the seat of Government from Calcutta to Delhi greatly diminished, if it did not destroy, the contact between high officialdom and the commercial and business elements of India. At Delhi almost the entire European population is official and connected with Government departments. A few years back each Presidency had a separate Commander-in-Chief and a separate army, and their Headquarter Staffs were permanently located in the capitals of the respective Presidencies. These armies have all now been amalgamated, and their separate commands and staffs abolished.

14. It will thus be seen how great has become the centralisation of authority in one man's hands. Sir Edmund Barrow, the Senior General on the Indian List and Military Secretary at the India Office, and an officer of quite exceptional experience, expressed the view that the Commander-in-Chief is now trying to perform the work of six men, and he further added that the old duties of the Commander-in-Chief have completely fallen into abeyance. The late Commander-in-Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff, did not agree in this opinion. He contended that in times of peace one man could discharge the functions of both offices, especially if he were allowed a Deputy Chief of the Staff. But he admitted that there was more than one man could do in time of war, that during the war he had been able to give no time to the special work of Commander-in-Chief, and that the location of the Military department at Simla cut off the Commander-in-Chief in war time from contact with the combatant services.

15. Simla, as is well known, is a hill-top in the Himalayas on the borders of Nepal. Its remoteness from great towns and great cantonments of India and its inaccessibility render it singularly unsuitable for the residence, during the greater part of the year, of the one high official who has to discharge this unique mass of military responsibilities. When, however, in addition to his normal dual work, he is also in charge of an oversea expedition, his disconnection from the actualities of fighting and his want of contact with those who return to and from the stricken field, become a serious impediment to the knowledgeable discharge of this war work.

Sir Percy Lake was for some time Chief of the General Staff at Simla, and was in constant personal communication with the Commander-in-Chief. He was sent to Mesopotamia in January, 1916, to take Sir John Nixon's place, whose health had broken down. If there was anyone in India who from his daily work and communications might have been expected to have appreciated the difficulties confronting an army in Mesopotamia, it should have been Sir Percy Lake. In his evidence before us he frankly admitted that in no sense did he fully realise the nature of the obstacles to be overcome, or the magnitude of the exertions necessary to enable them to be surmounted, until he took over the command in that country.

16. The great mass of the troops, stores, and reinforcements for Mesopotamia embarked at Bombay, and at the same port the disembarkation of the huge number of sick and wounded returning from that country took place. Sir Beauchamp Duff as Commander-in-Chief never visited that port during the crisis of the war, nor has any permanent member of the Headquarter Staff been there stationed. Everything to be done was attempted from Simla. Requisitions and indents for stores, applications for leave, and other matters, all of which could have been easily settled in Bombay, had to go to Simla before they were complied with. The views and opinions of those returning sick or wounded as to the conduct and wants of the expedition do not seem to have filtered through to Simla until quite late in the campaign. Civilians and non-officials in Bombay knew more of what was going on in Mesopotamia than the Headquarter Staff in Simla. Ignorance at Headquarters produced scepticism, and this scepticism was supported by the very optimistic reports officially received from Basra. One witness who went from Basra straight to Delhi or Simla has informed us of the incredulity with which his statements were received, and how official despatches were brought out of portfolios which contradicted what he himself had seen and knew.

17. Lord Hardinge, in one of his letters to the Secretary of State to which we have already alluded, writes on the 18th February, 1916: "I may mention here that I have

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000068

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Faulty Organization of Indian Military Administration.

at last succeeded in convincing the military authorities that the medical arrangements up the Tigris are as bad as can be." A severer comment could not have been made upon the isolation and ignorance of those primarily responsible for the treatment of the wounded. Bombay, Calcutta, London, the Houses of Parliament, and private individuals, both in India and England, were all cognisant of what was going on. Simla and Delhi alone were unmoved. Simla has so long been the established summer quarters of the Government of India that it has almost become a tradition; but its inconvenience as the Army Headquarters in time of war and in the management of oversea expeditions can be well illustrated by imagining Thurso or Wick to be the headquarters of the British Army Departments during this war. The idea in its nakedness is grotesque, yet something like it was attempted in India for the first sixteen months of the Mesopotamia Expedition.

C. Relations between the Secretary of State and the Governor-General and their respective Councils.—Private Telegrams.

18. Almost concurrently with the adoption of the principle of centralisation in military administration, a gradual process of change in the methods of communication between the Secretary of State for India and the Governor-General of India has taken place which had an important bearing upon the management and conduct of the Mesopotamia Expedition.

19. The Government and Administration of India are vested in the Secretary of State for India in Council and in the Governor-General of India in Council, and the former body dominates the latter. The powers of the Secretary of State for India in Council are immense, greatly exceeding those exercised by an ordinary Secretary of State. So far as finance and expenditure are concerned, the Council stands to the Secretary of State for India much in the same relation as that in which Parliament stands to the other Secretaries of State. It may reasonably be assumed that Parliament would not have given these immense powers to any individual official if, in the exercise of such powers, he was dissociated from his Council.

20. The Governor-General in Council is subordinate to the Secretary of State for India in Council and rules are laid down in the Act of Parliament as to the procedure through which the Secretary of State's orders and communications to the Governor-General should be made. Those means of communication, according to the Statute, come under three heads:—

(*a*) "Public," or, as we prefer to designate them, official communications which pass through the Council.

(*b*) "Urgent" communications, which need not necessarily go to the Council and which the Secretary of State has the power of sending on his own authority, though he is subsequently under the obligation of explaining the causes for his so acting.

(*c*) "Secret" communications, on which the Secretary of State has the power of acting on his own authority, nor need he explain to his Council the reasons why he dispenses with their advice. But these "secret" communications are limited to certain subjects.

21. In India the power of the Governor-General to dispense with his Council is much more circumscribed. The Government of India is throughout the Statute invariably designated as the Governor-General in Council. If the Governor-General is away from his Council on tour he has all the powers which he could exercise if he was with his Council, and moreover he has the power, when with the Council, of over-ruling them on certain questions, if the majority of them differ from him. But the Members of the Secretary of State's Council and of the Governor-General's Council have a statutory right of protesting in writing against any action of which they disapprove. The protest must be in accordance with their expressed objections in Council, and such written protest can be called for and laid before Parliament.

22. The intention of Parliament in setting up the Government of India upon this basis seems to have been a wish to associate the Secretary of State and the Governor-General (who under the conditions existing in this country would probably be politicians), with Councils of trained Indian administrators; and the power of protest was doubtless given so that each Council might be a check upon the Secretary of State, or the Governor-General, against taking impulsive, or, in the view of the Council, improper action.

66

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000072

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

C. Relations between the Secretary of State and the Governor-General and their respective Councils.—Private Telegrams.

23. In addition to these authorised statutory communications it has always been the practice of the Secretary of State and the Governor-General to communicate privately, one with another, both by telegram and by letter. These telegrams have, up till quite recently, been supplementary to and explanatory of the official telegrams sent, which as a matter of course come before the Governor-General and Secretary of State in Council. They have also dealt with personal matters, which it is not advisable should be contained in official telegrams, and within certain limits they seem to us to be useful, if not necessary links of intercommunication.

24. All the Statutes relating to the Government of India were consolidated in Acts which received Royal Assent in 1915 and 1916; but in these consolidating Statutes no mention whatever is made of private communications, nor is authority given either to the Secretary of State, or the Governor-General to substitute private telegrams for the prescribed methods of communication laid down by the Statute. All private telegrams are the property of the sender, and they are not necessarily recorded on the files of the Department to which their contents may relate; though they are occasionally so recorded when the Secretary of State or Governor-General gives express orders to that effect. It is usually the practice of the Secretary of State and the Governor-General to take away their private telegrams at the close of their tenure of office, and Lord Crewe informed us that Lord Morley so acted on vacating the post of Secretary of State for India. There is therefore no public record of the purport of the vast majority of these private communications. The substitution of private for public telegrams in recent years has apparently so developed as to become almost the regular channel of official inter-communication.

25. A very important document was laid before us containing a number of telegrams of the gravest consequence relating to the Oversea Expeditions and Forces which the Indian Government were ordered at the instance of the Imperial Government to provide. Every telegram in the whole series, except one, on both sides was marked private, though it was stated by the Viceroy that the substance of the last telegram would be confirmed in an official telegram.

A large number—if not the larger proportion—of the telegrams quoted in our report referring to the advance on Baghdad are marked "Private." One of the most important of these private telegrams, conveying new and serious information as to the possible concentration of 60,000 Turkish troops near Baghdad, was, in consequence of its being marked "Private," not filed in the Military Department, and was not transmitted to Sir John Nixon in Mesopotamia.

26. The substitution of private for official telegrams tends to dispossess the Council of the functions, which by Statute they are entitled to exercise. Both the late Secretary of State for India and the late Governor-General justified recourse to these methods of communication on the ground that in time of war urgency and secrecy are of paramount importance. We at once accept that proposition; but it is clear in our mind that secrecy can be established by a properly regulated procedure; and as regards urgency, as both Councils are small in numbers, there seems to us no difficulty whatever, at any rate in times of emergency, in insisting on their meeting every day.

27. We have been informed by two Members of the Governor-General's Council that according to their recollection the Council was never consulted as to, nor were they privy to the campaign in Mesopotamia. Their opinion was not asked as regards the advance to Baghdad, though occasionally, from time to time, some information was given to them in the shape of conversation at the Council. This statement, though traversed in details by Lord Hardinge, is in the main, we believe, correct.

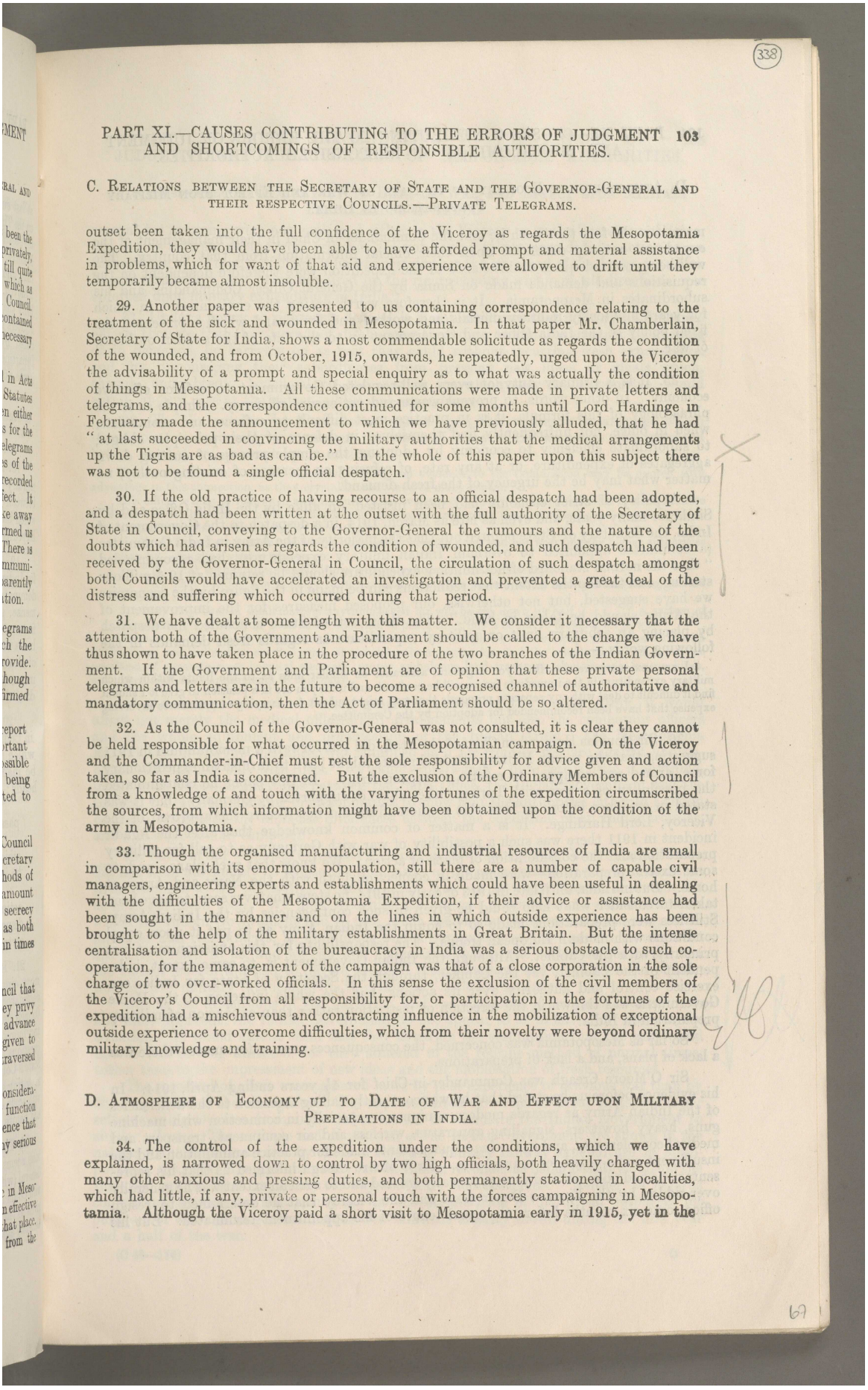
The despatch of any oversea expedition from India is largely regulated by considerations of internal security, and, as the maintenance of order in India is a primary function of the Council of the Governor-General, it would seem to us a necessary consequence that they ought to be consulted in connection with any oversea expedition or with any serious depletion of Indian military establishments.

28. As our report has already indicated, the main difficulty to be overcome in Mesopotamia was the provision of adequate river transport, and the establishment of an effective base at Basra for distribution of the reinforcements and supplies despatched to that place. We cannot but believe that, if the civilian Members of the Council had from the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000023

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



C. Relations between the Secretary of State and the Governor-General and their respective Councils.—Private Telegrams.

outset been taken into the full confidence of the Viceroy as regards the Mesopotamia Expedition, they would have been able to have afforded prompt and material assistance in problems, which for want of that aid and experience were allowed to drift until they temporarily became almost insoluble.

29. Another paper was presented to us containing correspondence relating to the treatment of the sick and wounded in Mesopotamia. In that paper Mr. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, shows a most commendable solicitude as regards the condition of the wounded, and from October, 1915, onwards, he repeatedly, urged upon the Viceroy the advisability of a prompt and special enquiry as to what was actually the condition of things in Mesopotamia. All these communications were made in private letters and telegrams, and the correspondence continued for some months until Lord Hardinge in February made the announcement to which we have previously alluded, that he had "at last succeeded in convincing the military authorities that the medical arrangements up the Tigris are as bad as can be." In the whole of this paper upon this subject there was not to be found a single official despatch.

30. If the old practice of having recourse to an official despatch had been adopted, and a despatch had been written at the outset with the full authority of the Secretary of State in Council, conveying to the Governor-General the rumours and the nature of the doubts which had arisen as regards the condition of wounded, and such despatch had been received by the Governor-General in Council, the circulation of such despatch amongst both Councils would have accelerated an investigation and prevented a great deal of the distress and suffering which occurred during that period.

31. We have dealt at some length with this matter. We consider it necessary that the attention both of the Government and Parliament should be called to the change we have thus shown to have taken place in the procedure of the two branches of the Indian Government. If the Government and Parliament are of opinion that these private personal telegrams and letters are in the future to become a recognised channel of authoritative and mandatory communication, then the Act of Parliament should be so altered.

32. As the Council of the Governor-General was not consulted, it is clear they cannot be held responsible for what occurred in the Mesopotamian campaign. On the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief must rest the sole responsibility for advice given and action taken, so far as India is concerned. But the exclusion of the Ordinary Members of Council from a knowledge of and touch with the varying fortunes of the expedition circumscribed the sources, from which information might have been obtained upon the condition of the army in Mesopotamia.

33. Though the organised manufacturing and industrial resources of India are small in comparison with its enormous population, still there are a number of capable civil managers, engineering experts and establishments which could have been useful in dealing with the difficulties of the Mesopotamia Expedition, if their advice or assistance had been sought in the manner and on the lines in which outside experience has been brought to the help of the military establishments in Great Britain. But the intense centralisation and isolation of the bureaucracy in India was a serious obstacle to such co-operation, for the management of the campaign was that of a close corporation in the sole charge of two over-worked officials. In this sense the exclusion of the civil members of the Viceroy's Council from all responsibility for, or participation in the fortunes of the expedition had a mischievous and contracting influence in the mobilization of exceptional outside experience to overcome difficulties, which from their novelty were beyond ordinary military knowledge and training.

D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

34. The control of the expedition under the conditions, which we have explained, is narrowed down to control by two high officials, both heavily charged with many other anxious and pressing duties, and both permanently stationed in localities, which had little, if any, private or personal touch with the forces campaigning in Mesopotamia. Although the Viceroy paid a short visit to Mesopotamia early in 1915, yet in the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00002c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

D; Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

main it is the fact that both he and the Commander-in-Chief in their management of the expedition entirely depended upon their official information from that country. The well-being and adequate maintenance of the expedition were therefore dependent on the requisitions and demands made on Simla by the General Officer Commanding and his subordinates in Mesopotamia. It is therefore worth noting the environment, in which for years previously military officials had worked and lived, and which represented the fixed policy of the India Office and Government up to the date of the sudden outbreak of war.

35. It is a primary duty of every well-regulated Government to enforce effective economy. In other words, to prevent waste and yet ensure efficiency. Simple as is the phraseology of this formula, it is in practice most difficult to enforce, and economists, when in office, not unfrequently find themselves in defence of their principles obliged to subordinate efficiency to economy by adopting the simple process of cutting down aggregates of expenditure, or at any rate, of refusing an increase of existing outlay, no matter what may be the urgency of the fresh demand.

A policy of strict economy had been insisted on alike by the India Office and by Simla for many years, and even as late as March, 1914, in a despatch to the Government of India, the Secretary of State pointed out that the majority of the Army in India Committee (a committee appointed to overhaul Indian military expenditure), had recommended "that the normal standard of net military expenditure should be retained at 19.5 millions sterling, and that to the extent that reductions can be made in the figure by the economies we have suggested, but not otherwise, our proposed measures for the improvement of the Army should be taken in hand." The Secretary of State concluded his despatch by placing an arbitrary limit on military expenditure as regards fresh demands in the following words :—

> I am anxious to receive from you a general assurance on similar lines as to the limits within which military expenditure in the immediate future will be confined, and until you are in a position to give it I should find it difficult to deal with any separate proposals that you might submit for carrying out measures involving expense that have been recommended for adoption by the Committee.

36. Sir Douglas Haig, when Chief of the Staff, did put forward a memorandum in 1911 suggesting that the Indian Military establishments might have to furnish an expeditionary force, armed and equipped to meet a European Army. In this paper he contemplated the possibility of a war with Turkey either alone or supported by Germany; but it was stated in evidence before us that this memorandum did not receive the approval of the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge. It is a matter of common knowledge that after the Agadir incident in 1911 there was such a possibility of war with Germany as to call for military preparation and the consideration of plans of action. We know that such plans—and, to some extent, preparation—were made in connection both with the Navy and Army at home. But in India, until late in 1913 or early in 1914, no steps whatever seem to have been taken to consider what help could be given in such contingencies by the Indian Army. Still less were preparations made so to equip the Indian Army as to put it upon equal conditions with modern European troops. The responsibility for this omission must rest primarily with the Cabinet. Although the Indian Government is, to some extent, independent of the Cabinet, yet the Cabinet, through the Secretary of State for India, can exercise control and authority over its actions, but the whole influence of the Home Government was thrown in the direction of restriction rather than expansion of military preparation in India.

So far as Mesopotamia was concerned, the consequences were unfortunate—there was a lack of plans, and a lack of preparations.

Sir O'Moore Creagh was Commander-in-Chief for 4½ years ending April, 1914. In his evidence before us he stated that he was constantly calling attention to the deficiencies of the Indian Army as regards modern equipment, especially in connection with machine guns, heavy howitzers, signalling apparatus, wireless and air equipment, transport and medical complements, and to the inadequate grants made for practice ammunition and the insufficient sums voted for manœuvres. Sir O'Moore Creagh informed us that his representations had no result and were practically ignored and to such an extent was he generally over-ridden by the Finance Department and the Viceroy that he determined to resign office some six months before the usual tenure of his appointment terminated. But his

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000013

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

reasons for resigning were not explained either to the Viceroy or to the Secretary of State, nor can he entirely escape from criticism for not having taken more definite action at an earlier stage of his tenure of office, if he was certain that the efficiency of the Army, for which he was responsible, was being impaired by the rigid economy which in all directions was enforced upon military expenditure in India.

37 Under a policy so rigorously defined, it is not unnatural that military and medical officers thought that they were best discharging their duty to the Government by keeping down demands, by carrying on as best they could without incurring fresh expenditure, and by discouraging their subordinates from pressing new ideas or ideals which, though undoubtedly beneficial to the service for which they are responsible, would entail, at any rate at the outset, additional expenditure.

38. The Vincent-Bingley Commission report upon this tendency in language which seems to us so accurately to represent the views of many of the witnesses who appeared before us that we quote it in its entirety :—

> The observations of a senior officer who has given evidence to the Commission may be quoted with advantage in this connection, as they crystallise the views of many others.
>
> This officer writes as follows in an annexure to his evidence : " In my opinion the Indian system is more to blame for the breakdown of the Mesopotamia medical arrangements than anything else—a system which allows officers to think, whether rightly or wrongly :—
>
> " (*a*) That there is more merit to be obtained by keeping quiet and not worrying the higher authorities than by asking for what is necessary ;
>
> " (*b*) That keeping down expenditure is more meritorious than efficiency ;
>
> " (*c*) That nothing new is likely to be sanctioned unless a corresponding saving in something else can be shown ; and
>
> " (*d*) That even in small matters anything asked for will be cut down by half. . . . A system of this nature will possibly be good and economical in peace time, but is bound to break down in war."
>
> There is, in our opinion, much force in this criticism, and though we do not accept this statement in its entirety, we are inclined to ascribe much of the delay in applying for, and the reluctance to insist on, the provision of separate river hospital steamers, proper ambulance land transport, electric fans, ice machines, and other essential requirements to this cause.

39. Assuming that such a feeling generally existed in the Indian Army, it would affect not merely the medical officers and arrangements but also the combatant officers and the whole equipment and organisation of the Indian Army. The Mesopotamia Expedition, in the first instance, was equipped as if for frontier warfare against undisciplined tribes armed only with rifles. Its wants rapidly grew ; but there is little, if anything, in the mass of communications between the India Office, the Indian Government and the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia to show that the authorities either in London or Simla recognised the immense differences between the conditions of an Indian frontier, and a Mesopotamian campaign.

40. Some of our witnesses expressed the opinion that the supreme Government of India did not seem adequately to realise the immensity of the issues raised by the war, and that their response to the necessities of the situation was not as whole-hearted and sufficient as it might have been. We fully recognise the internal difficulties and embarrassments which the Indian Government had to face, when the enemy to be encountered was, in his intrigues and conspiracies, as ubiquitous and unscrupulous as the German Government has shown itself to be, and we can well understand that in the earlier stages of the war the Indian Authorities had to devote much of their attention and a considerable proportion of their military establishments to counteract such machinations.

But as the dimensions of the war grew, and the character of its issues became more and more apparent, the Indian Government do not appear to us to have fully risen to the situation. It would almost seem that they acted on the assumption that the war would not be one of long duration, for they adhered to the routine method of normal times, rather than to the impressment of new ideas and the mobilisation of fresh resources.

The standard of effort was regulated more by past experience of previous war than by the magnitude of the emergency. The unprecedented exertions of Great Britain and her self-governing Oversea Dominions did not seem to stimulate the Indian Government to similar efforts. The attitude and disposition of the Indian Government are shown in the nature of the argument used by them in rejecting military railway expenditure in Mesopotamia, viz., that it might ultimately fall on Indian revenues as being possibly outside the Imperial guarantee of indemnity for extraordinary disbursements. Neither as regards compulsory service for Europeans, nor in the organisation of industrial resources for purposes of war, nor in general finance was sufficient alacrity shown during the first year and a half of the war.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000bf

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

41. As regards finance it must be remembered that the Indian Government Act, 1858 precluded the cost of overseas expeditions from being charged upon the revenues of India unless with the consent of both Houses of Parliament. In September and November, 1914, accordingly, resolutions were passed by Parliament empowering the Indian Government to defray the ordinary cost of the troops employed overseas, in so far as such ordinary cost would have been payable by India, had the troops remained in that country. Any excess over such ordinary cost was to be borne by the Imperial Government in addition to the full cost of any troops required to replace the troops sent overseas. The effect of these resolutions was that, so far as the overseas expeditions were concerned, India participated in the war without thereby incurring any direct increase of her normal military expenditure in peace time. Whatever may have been the justice of such an arrangement as regards the expedition to France, it clearly redounded to the advantage of India in the case of the expedition to Mesopotamia, which, as we have seen, was recognised by the Indian Government as a military measure protecting their North-Western Frontier from attack, and they obtained this advantage without cost to themselves. Their net military expenditure for the year 1914–15 was actually nearly £50,000 less than the estimate which had been made for that year before war was declared, and on the assumption that expenditure would be on a peace basis. In introducing the Indian Financial Statement for 1915–16, Sir W. Meyer, the Finance Member, stated: "Our chief economy occurs under the Military Services," and, though the war had already been waging for more than eight months, he budgeted for a military expenditure half a million less than the corresponding expenditure for the previous year. Although this estimate has, in fact, been exceeded by the actual expenditure, the excess, according to the latest figures available to us, has never amounted to more than £2,000,000, or 20 per cent. of the normal military expenditure in India. It is, of course, common knowledge that the United Kingdom's war expenditure represents an increase of more than 1,000 per cent., over the normal. During the period under our review no additional taxation and no loans were raised with a view to helping England in bearing the cost of a war in which the very existence of our Indian Empire was threatened. The disparity between the financial war burdens of India and the rest of the Empire was even the subject of comment in the Vice regal Council where there was a general expectation of new taxation. One member went so far as to say in Council, "Handsome as our offerings may have been, they have not, I regret to say, been on the same princely footing and basis as that of our fellow Colonials. However, I am confident that the demand has only to be made, and loyal India will rise as one man and offer to pay the expenses of our Expeditionary Forces, in the same way as Canada and Australia are doing," and he went on to suggest an increase in taxation to meet such expenditure.

But prosperous though the country was, the Indian Government refused to listen to such suggestions. Lord Hardinge and Sir William Meyer both recognised the financial strength of India's position, but, notwithstanding the financial needs of the war, they considered it permissible for India to continue to spend a sum of 9.4 million pounds (equal to about 18 per cent. of India's Imperial revenue) on capital works, railways, irrigation, etc. In fact, to quote the words of a native member of the Council, this budget "made the country almost forget the serious economic and financial effects of the war."

It has been argued that India had no cause to be sparing in expenditure on the overseas expeditions because the Imperial Government were bearing all the abnormal cost of the war. But Sir F. Aylmer informed us that when he was Adjutant-General at Simla, the Finance Department frequently demurred to proposed new war expenditure in the fear lest the expenditure should persist after the war, and become a charge upon India, and we know that a similar motive influenced the financial officials in their dealing with Sir J. Nixon's demand for a railway.

Thus the atmosphere and influence of economy continued at Simla long after the war broke out, and there are indications of a reluctance on the part of the Indian Government to recognise the indisputable fact that war meant extra expenditure. They seemed to have struggled hard to carry on war upon a peace budget, and it is hardly open to doubt that this tendency was one of the causes of the inadequate expenditure incurred, and the lack of provision made for the wants of the Mesopotamia Expedition during the first 16 months of its operations.

The Government, rather than the governed, were the laggards, and in our judgment the measures now taken by the present Viceroy and his Council in mobilising latent

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000080

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

resources should have been adopted some time past. Much of the bitterness felt by the Expeditionary Force against their inadequate supply and equipment can, we believe, be traced to the idea that the Indian Government did not early enough realise their responsibilities, or the strain which the climate and country of Mesopotamia imposed upon all those sent there to fight.

42. So long as the expedition's advance was confined to the Shatt-el-Arab its operations were neither difficult nor costly. Every advance increased the difficulties and cost, and both centred around the transport. We can quite understand that officers, bred up to resist fresh and new expenditure, would hesitate, when an advance was suggested, to insist at once upon the outlay necessary to ensure success and diminish risk. "Risk and economy" rather than "safety and expenditure" would be the natural bent of their past training and orders. It is quite true that no evidence has been produced to show that any urgent demand put forward by the Military Authorities was definitely refused by the Finance Department. The blame for inadequate attention to the special wants of the expedition must be attached to the Military Authorities rather than to the Finance Department.

43. Pertinacity in pressing or multiplying the requisitions from Mesopotamia upon the Simla authorities was, however, resented, and of this we will give a remarkable illustration.

General Cowper was Adjutant-General and Assistant Quartermaster-General of the Mesopotamia Force. In January, 1916, he, being the officer responsible for the transport, became seriously alarmed at the increasing difficulties, which the shortage of transport created in the employment of troops for the relief of Kut. In consultation with General Money, Chief of the General Staff, he drafted a telegram in which they stated plainly that unless they got adequate shipping transport, and personnel to man such transport, Sir Percy Lake, who had recently assumed command of the force, would have to abandon the idea of relieving Kut. They purposely had recourse to this language as they considered the position—to use General Cowper's own words—"So frightfully serious." Sir Percy Lake carefully considered the telegram, and transmitted it after some alterations. In reply Sir Percy Lake received a personal telegram from the Commander-in-Chief at Simla, severely rebuking him for the wording of the telegram, and the Commander-in-Chief added these words: "Please warn General Cowper that if anything of this sort again occurs, or I receive any more querulous or petulant demands for shipping, I shall at once remove him from the force, and will refuse him any further employment of any kind."

Sir Beauchamp Duff subsequently stated to us that this reply to Sir Percy Lake's telegram was founded upon a paraphrase, which distorted both the purport and language of the telegram, and that as soon as he became aware of this, he cancelled his censure. We asked General Duff for a copy of this paraphrase, but he told us it had been destroyed.

The warning conveyed in General Cowper's telegram was, as our narrative shows, unfortunately realised, for the failure to break through to Kut was largely due to insufficiency of numbers and of guns, there being, at the critical times of the attempted relief, large numbers of troops and guns at Basra which could not be moved to the front for want of transport.

In justice to General Cowper, we must add that it was with great difficulty that we extracted the above information from him. The incident was referred to in a letter from Lord Hardinge to the Secretary of State for India and it was in consequence of this allusion that we obtained the clue to the transaction.

It seems from this letter that Lord Hardinge had complained to Sir Beauchamp Duff of the tone of several recent telegrams from Mesopotamia to Simla. And doubtless this complaint partly accounts for Sir Beauchamp Duff's annoyance. But in our judgment Lord Hardinge's complaint was altogether unwarranted, and the reprimand which it led Sir Beauchamp Duff to address to General Cowper was both intemperate and ill-advised. We fear, however, that it must be regarded as an extreme but characteristic illustration of the attitude of the authorities at Simla towards demands which they did not like or did not consider necessary.

E. Sir John Nixon's Appointment, Instructions and Staff.

44. It is obvious from Lord Hardinge's evidence that, during his official visit to Mesopotamia, he was struck by the necessity of the offensive being assumed by our forces round

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000009

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

E. Sir John Nixon's Appointment, Instructions and Staff.

Basra, if their defensive position was to be consolidated and made secure. Sir John Nixon had the reputation of a successful and dashing Cavalry Officer. He told us in his evidence that he believed he was sent out in order that he might make this change in the attitude of our forces around Basra. He took with him a new Staff.

45. The change by an expeditionary force from defensive to offensive tactics may, under certain conditions, be possible without necessitating fundamental changes in the organisation of the force or in the base and line of communications. In Mesopotamia, if the offensive was pushed beyond a certain point, its success or failure was almost entirely governed by the extent to which the capacity of the port of Basra, and of the communications with it, were simultaneously developed.

46. This self-evident necessity was never realised either by the India Office at home or the Government at Simla until it was too late. It is no exaggeration to say that this was an undertaking utterly beyond the capacity of Sir John Nixon and his staff. To impose upon a Cavalry Officer with little more than the ordinary staff of a Division, such a duty was to try him altogether beyond his experience and strength.

47. The instructions to Sir John Nixon to prepare a scheme for an advance on Baghdad revolutionised the whole foundation and organisation of an expedition initiated and founded for much smaller and more limited objects, and this was neither recognised by Sir J. Nixon nor those who so instructed him. He looked at the matter from a purely fighting point of view, and the military successes which he had achieved induced him to underestimate the full risk involved in an advance from Kut to Baghdad. The Government of India never seemed to question his discretion or his want of experience of a campaign dependent on river transport. Implicit confidence in his judgment was the basis of their communications to the Home Government.

48. It was not merely that, through no fault of their own, Sir John Nixon's staff were unequal to the task of creating a practically new port, but they were seriously handicapped in the very important work of obtaining reliable intelligence as to the strength of their opponents. The armies against which Sir John Nixon was operating were recruited and drawn from a vast area of territory extending from Persia to Bulgaria and from Aden to Erzerum. The military movements inside this vast extent of country were very difficult to follow, and the sources of information were such that London was better supplied with news than Simla or Basra, as nearly the whole of this area was within the scope of the Intelligence organisation of the War Office. The local area from which Sir John Nixon's Intelligence Staff obtained information was limited, and did not comprise those portions of the Turkish Empire from which reinforcements to Irak could be sent. Sir John Nixon, having confidence in his own staff, was not disposed to subordinate their information to that which came from outside.

49. Upon the two essential considerations governing the attempt to capture Baghdad Sir J. Nixon was therefore seriously at fault. He underrated the difficulty of transporting reinforcements, as they arrived, from the port of embarkation to the scene of action, and he seriously under-estimated the number of his opponents and miscalculated the dates at which they would arrive. Sufficient allowance was not made either in London or Simla for the probability of such miscalculations. The extreme difficulty of the first task and the lack of reliable information do not seem to have been properly appreciated by those controlling the conduct of the campaign. But though grave blame must be attached to Sir John Nixon for his excessive optimism, those who shared in that optimism cannot be wholly free from criticism.

F. Secretiveness and Lack of Co-ordination of Staffs.

50. The character and scope of the task imposed upon General Nixon and his Staff made it one of exceptional difficulty, and it might have been assumed that there would have been full and frequent interchange of opinion between the Headquarters and the Administrative Staffs of the Army in Mesopotamia before any fresh move was made or, if reinforcements were expected, as to how the difficulties of maintaining and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00003f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

F. Secretiveness and Lack of Co-ordination of Staffs.

transporting such new forces could be met. General Nixon stated that Staff conferences were frequently held, but notwithstanding this, we have evidence that reticence was carried so far, that important Staff Officers were kept in ignorance of impending movements, and were consequently unable to make in time the requisite preparations.

51. Commander Hamilton who was Principal Marine Transport Officer from the beginning of the campaign until December, 1915, and, who was uneasy from the first as to the river transport situation, complained to us that the policy of the campaign was kept secret from him. At the outset of the campaign he made a proposal for providing river steamers in advance. This was not entertained by the staff at the time, and as he was not taken into their confidence as to the future movements of the expedition, he did not afterwards again press his proposal. In May, 1915, the Deputy-Director of Ordnance complained that he was never given information as to projected movements of troops. In the spring of the same year, Colonel Dallas, when Base Supply Officer at Basra, received no warning that his responsibilities were to be doubled by the arrival of a second division of reinforcements. He was not informed when advances were to be made, and he understood that other high administrative officers were also kept without sufficient information. Similarly General Davison, Inspector General of Lines of Communication, did not remember being referred to at all in connection with the transport necessary for the advance of General Townshend's force towards Baghdad. Nor was he consulted as to the provision of transport for the promised reinforcements of two divisions, until after the advance had been sanctioned, although it will be remembered that the availability of these divisions as reinforcements at Baghdad was a condition precedent to the sanction by the authorities of the advance on that place.

52. Information as to the arrival of these reinforcements was withheld until the beginning of November from so high an officer as General Cowper, the Deputy-Adjutant and Quartermaster-General in Mesopotamia, and even then he was not allowed for some time to communicate it to his administrative officers, with the result, as General Cowper admitted under cross-examination, that there was delay in making preparations for the reception of the reinforcements at Basra. According to General Cowper's evidence the reason given for keeping him in ignorance of the prospective arrival of reinforcements was fear that the news might reach the Turks, and that they would in consequence retreat without fighting.

53. Surgeon-General Hathaway, the Director of Medical Services in Mesopotamia, also contended that he was hampered in his work by his exclusion from the Staff Conferences. General Nixon disputed this, but we are convinced that, whether with or without General Nixon's knowledge, secrecy as to projected movements was maintained by the Staff to an extent detrimental to the interests of the expedition.

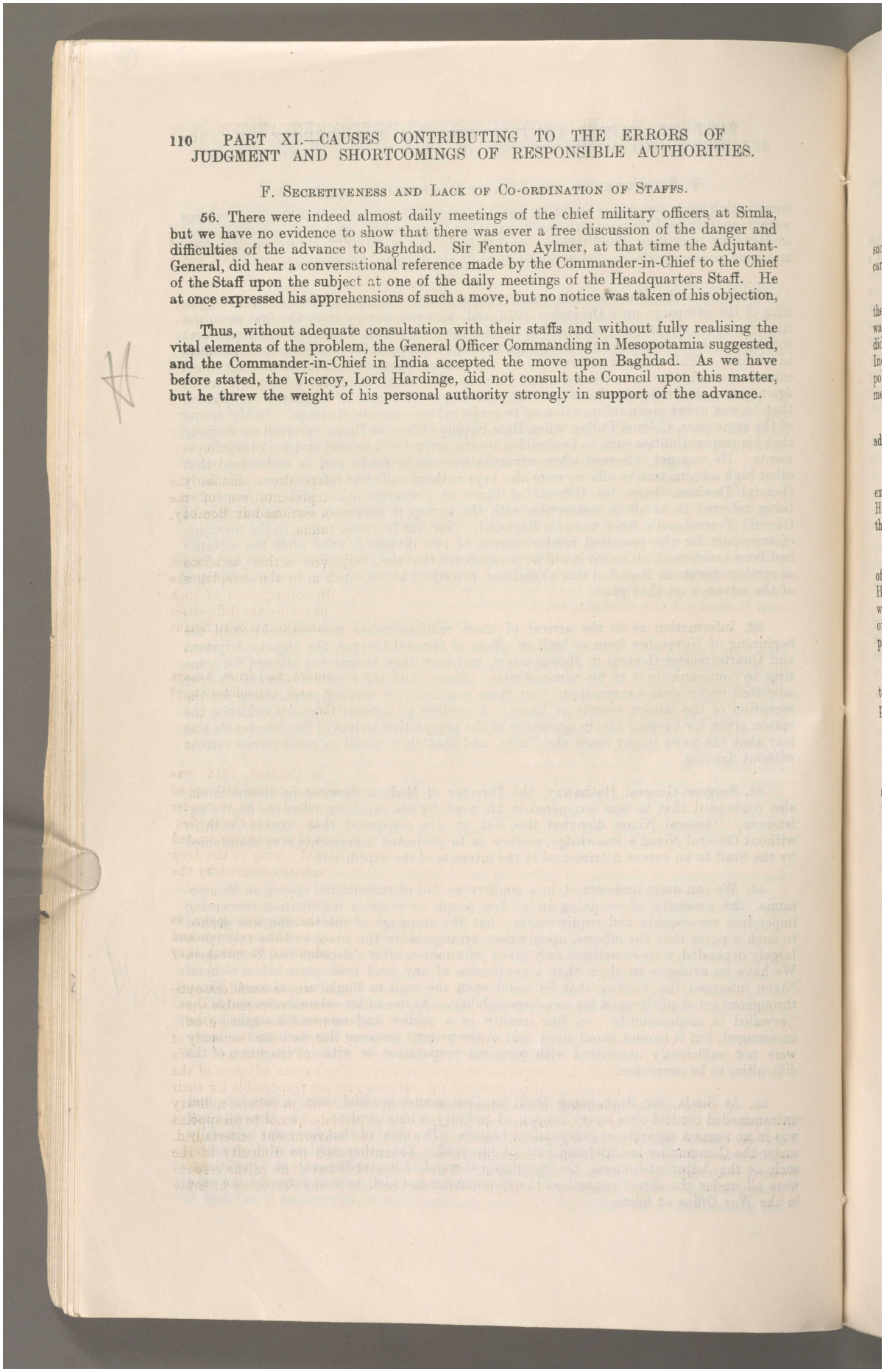
54. We can quite understand, in a country so full of rumour and spying as Mesopotamia, the necessity of confining to as few people as possible information concerning impending movements and requirements; but the stoppage of information was pushed to such a point that the officers, upon whose arrangements the success of the new move largely depended, were sometimes only given information after a decision had been taken. We have no evidence to show that a conference of any kind took place before General Nixon informed the Viceroy that he could open the road to Baghdad. General Nixon throughout acted solely upon his own responsibility. As one of his subordinates stated, he "revelled in responsibility"—a fine quality in a soldier and one which ought to be encouraged, but it cannot stand alone, and in the present instance this dash and audacity were not sufficiently associated with prescient preparation or with investigation of the difficulties to be overcome.

55. At Simla, Sir Beauchamp Duff, as Commander-in-Chief, was in absolute and untrammelled control over every branch of military administration. The General Staff was in no sense a separate or independent branch. The chief of that body was personally under the Commander-in-Chief and part of his staff. The other holders of high office, such as the Adjutant-General, Quartermaster-General, Director-General of Operations, were all under the direct control of the Commander-in-Chief, as was formerly the case in the War Office at home.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000044

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



F. Secretiveness and Lack of Co-ordination of Staffs.

56. There were indeed almost daily meetings of the chief military officers at Simla, but we have no evidence to show that there was ever a free discussion of the danger and difficulties of the advance to Baghdad. Sir Fenton Aylmer, at that time the Adjutant-General, did hear a conversational reference made by the Commander-in-Chief to the Chief of the Staff upon the subject at one of the daily meetings of the Headquarters Staff. He at once expressed his apprehensions of such a move, but no notice was taken of his objection,

Thus, without adequate consultation with their staffs and without fully realising the vital elements of the problem, the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia suggested, and the Commander-in-Chief in India accepted the move upon Baghdad. As we have before stated, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, did not consult the Council upon this matter, but he threw the weight of his personal authority strongly in support of the advance.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00000c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Findings and Conclusions.

Origin, Inception and Conduct of Campaign.

We find that :—

1. The expedition to Mesopotamia was a justifiable military enterprise, but one of such a character that it required, during its inception and development, the most careful watching and preparation.

2. The division of responsibility between the India Office and Indian Government, the former undertaking policy, and the latter the management of the expedition, was, in the circumstances, unworkable. The Secretary of State, who controlled the policy, did not have cognisance of the capacity of the expedition to carry out the policy. The Indian Government, who managed the expedition, did not accompany developments of policy with the necessary preparations, even when they themselves proposed those developments.

3. The scope of the objective of the expedition was never sufficiently defined in advance, so as to make each successive move part of a well-thought-out and matured plan.

4. The attempt in India entirely to control and regulate the wants of the expedition from Simla was an administrative mistake, and representatives of the Headquarter Staff with wide powers should from the first have been stationed at Bombay, the port of embarkation and disembarkation to and from Mesopotamia.

5. The Commander-in-Chief himself, or his representatives acting as liaison officers, should from time to time have visited Mesopotamia with a view to keeping the Headquarters Staff in touch with the needs of the expedition. In consequence of such want of touch, the Military Authorities at Simla did not appreciate or realise the difficulties of campaigning in Mesopotamia, and from such lack of knowledge failed to make sufficient provision for surmounting the difficulties and drawbacks.

6. The successive advances from Basra to Kurna, Kurna to Amara, and from Amara to Kut were sanctioned as being necessary for the protection and consolidation of positions already taken, and were therefore of a defensive character.

The Advance on Baghdad.

7. The advance to Baghdad under the conditions existing in October, 1915, was an offensive movement based upon political and military miscalculations and attempted with tired and insufficient forces, and inadequate preparation. It resulted in the surrender of more than a division of our finest fighting troops and the casualties incurred in the ineffective attempts to relieve Kut amounted to some 23,000 men. The loss of prestige associated with these military failures was less than might have been anticipated, owing to the deep impression made, throughout and beyond the localities where the combats occurred, by the splendid fighting power of the British and Indian forces engaged.

8. Various authorities and high officials are connected with the sanction given to this untoward advance. Each and all, in our judgment, according to their relative and respective positions, must be made responsible for the errors in judgment, to which they were parties, and which formed the basis of their advice or orders.

The weightiest share of responsibility lies with Sir John Nixon, whose confident optimism was the main cause of the decision to advance. The other persons responsible were : in India, the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge), and the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Beauchamp Duff) ; in England, the Military Secretary of the India Office (Sir Edmund Barrow), the Secretary of State for India (Mr. Austin Chamberlain), and the War Committee of the Cabinet. We put these names in the order and sequence of responsibility. The expert advisers of the Government, who were consulted, also approved the advance and are responsible for their advice, but the papers submitted to us suggest that the approval of the naval and military experts was reluctant and was perhaps partly induced by a natural desire not to disappoint the hopes of advantage to the general situation, which the Government entertained. It is, however, notable that the experts unanimously anticipated no difficulty in the advance on Baghdad, but only in holding it. We do not attach any share in the responsibility for the decision to advance to Baghdad to the Councils of the Secretary of State

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000037

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A.—Findings and Conclusions.

for India and of the Viceroy, as we have been unable to ascertain from the evidence laid before us that the advance to Baghdad was ever brought before them in such a manner as to allow them to give their personal advice and opinion upon it.

9. We have included the War Committee of the Cabinet and the Secretary of State for India amongst those upon whom responsibility for this misadventure rests. It is true that the War Committee and the Secretary of State acted upon the opinion of their expert military advisers, and that the Secretary of State only gave his assent to the advance after he had received an assurance from the General on the spot that he had an available force sufficient for his purpose. But so long as the system of responsible departmental administration exists in this country, those who are political heads of departments in time of war, whether they be civilian or military, cannot be entirely immune from the consequences of their own action. They have the option and power of accepting or rejecting the advice of their expert subordinates. The acceptance by a chief of wrong advice from expert subordinates may be an extenuation of, but cannot secure complete immunity from, the responsibility for the evils which may ensue.

The Cabinet from the first laid down the principle, from which they never departed, that questions jointly involving civil and military policy should, in existing circumstances, only be decided by the Cabinet. This authority they exercised throughout, though at times they largely delegated their powers to the War Committe of the Cabinet.

Supplies, Equipments, Reinforcements, etc.

The second portion of our Instructions refers to the supplies, equipment and reinforcements of the expedition, with special reference to the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of the departments whose duty it was to minister to such wants. Upon this part of our reference we find that :—

10. The general armament and equipment were on a scale intended for an Indian frontier expedition, were not up to the standard of modern European warfare, and were quite insufficient to meet the needs of the Mesopotamia Expedition. These shortcomings were the natural result of the policy of indiscriminate retrenchment pursued for some years before the war by the Indian Government under instructions from the Home Government, by which the Army was to be prepared and maintained for frontier and internal use.

11. During the period for which the Indian Government were responsible, the commissariat of the expedition cannot be said to have been up to the standard of our Army in France, but there was no general breakdown. Discomfort and want were at times experienced, mainly through lack of transport, and as we point out in our Medical Section, illness arose from serious deficiences in diet. The whole system of supply was on too low a standard, and was badly organised. We have reason to believe that it has been materially improved since the War Office became responsible for the commissariat.

The ration originally supplied to the Indian troops was deficient in nutritive qualities, and a serious outbreak of scurvy ensued. Since then this ration has twice been improved, but it still requires careful attention as to the adequacy of its nutritive powers.

In other essentials the expedition was badly and insufficiently equipped, and as we have shown in previous parts of our report, little, if any, effort was made to remedy deficiencies until the War Office took over the expedition. It is difficult to arrive at any conclusion in this part of our enquiry other than, that the wants of the expedition received meagre attention and illiberal treatment at the hands of the Simla authorities during the years 1914-1915.

12. As regards reinforcements, we find that up to the occupation of Kut in September, 1915, the Mesopotamian Expedition was, in fact, numerically strong enough to cope with the Turkish forces brought against it. The arrangements for drafts and reinforcements had, however, from the first, been lacking in co-ordination as between the Indian and Home authorities, and this want of co-ordination led to the failure to supply effective reinforcements in connection with the advance on Baghdad and the operations for the relief of Kut.

Transport.

13. The enquiries we have made, and the evidence, both oral and documentary, which we have taken in this part of our investigation, lead us to the following conclusions regarding the critical period up to April, 1916 :—

(*a*) From the first the paramount importance, both of river and railway transport in Mesopotamia, was insufficiently realised by the military authorities in India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00003d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Findings and Conclusions.

(*b*) A deficiency of river transport existed from the time the army left tidal water and advanced up-river from Kurna. This deficiency became very serious as the lines of communication lengthened and the numbers of the force increased.

(*c*) Up to the end of 1915 the efforts made to rectify the deficiency of river transport were wholly inadequate.

(*d*) For want of comprehensive grasp of the transport situation and insufficiency of river steamers we find the military authorities in India are responsible. The responsibility is a grave one.

(*e*) River hospital steamers were an urgent requirement for the proper equipment of the expedition, and were not ordered until much too late.

(*f*) With General Sir John Nixon rests the responsibility for recommending the advances in 1915 with insufficient transport and equipment. The evidence did not disclose an imperative need to advance without due preparation. For what ensued from shortage of steamers, General Sir John Nixon must, in such circumstances, be held to blame. The extent of his responsibility in relation to the sufferings of the wounded is considered in Part X. of our Report and in para. 17 below.

(*g*) During the first four months of 1916, the shortage of transport was fatal to the operations undertaken for the relief of Kut. Large reinforcements could not be moved to the front in time to take part in critical battles. Based upon information received from General Townshend, as to the urgent necessity for his immediate relief, operations were undertaken, notwithstanding the extreme transport difficulty, but in all the circumstances we do not attach blame for this to the Generals in Mesopotamia directing the operations.

(*h*) Facilities for the discharge and handling of cargo at Basra, also provision of works for the erection and repair of river craft, were hopelessly inadequate.

(*j*) Proceedings in connection with the filling of orders for river craft by the Director of the Royal Indian Marine in India, and the India Office in London, were far from satisfactory.

(*k*) Looking at the facts, which from the first must have been apparent to any administrator, military or civilian, who gave a few minutes' consideration to the map and to the conditions in Mesopotamia, the want of foresight and provision for the most fundamental needs of the expedition reflects discredit upon the organising aptitude of all the authorities concerned. General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the General Staff, Whitehall, in a document to which we have already referred, states: "In general, the operations were allowed in 1915 to develop without proper regard to the vital questions of supply and maintenance," in which opinion our investigations lead us unreservedly to concur.

Medical Provision.

As regards the treatment of the sick and the wounded, our conclusions are more lengthy and minute, as this part of our enquiry necessitates close examination into details.

We find that:—

14. The medical provision for the Mesopotamia Campaign was from the beginning insufficient; by reason of the continuance of this insufficiency there was a lamentable breakdown in the care of the sick and wounded after the battle of Ctesiphon and after the battles in January, 1916; there was amelioration in March and April, 1916; but that since then the improvement has been continual until it is reasonable to hope that now the medical provision is satisfactory.

15. The defects of medical provision caused avoidable suffering to the sick and wounded, and during the breakdown in the winter of 1915–16, this suffering was most lamentably severe.

16. The deficiencies, which were the main causes of the avoidable suffering of the sick and wounded, were in the provision of the following:—

(*a*) River hospital steamers.
(*b*) Medical personnel.
(*c*) River transport.
(*d*) Ambulance land transport.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000018

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A.—Findings and Conclusions.

To these fifth and sixth main causes may be added in respect to the operations in January 1916 :—

(*e*) The absence of the medical and supply establishments of the 7th Division.

(*f*.) The premature efforts to relieve Kut in consequence of the erroneous estimate of supplies in that place.

17. As to personal responsibility the Vincent-Bingley Commission found :—

That a grave responsibility for that part of the suffering which resulted from avoidable circumstances rests with the Senior Medical Officer of the Force, Surgeon-General G. H. Hathaway, and with General Sir John Nixon, the General Officer Commanding the Force, from April 9th, 1915, to January 19th, 1916. General Hathaway did not represent with sufficient promptitude and force the needs of the services for which he was responsible, and in particular failed to urge the necessity for adequate and suitable transport for the sick and wounded with that insistency which the situation demanded. General Nixon did not, in our opinion, appreciate the conditions which would necessarily arise if provision for the sick and wounded of his force were not made on a more liberal scale.

We endorse the finding as regards Surgeon-General Hathaway who in our judgment showed himself unfit for the high administrative office which he held.

We may add, however, as regards River and Land Transport, that while it was the duty of Surgeon-General Hathaway to urge its necessity, it was actually the duty of the Quarter-master General's Department and of Sir John Nixon's staff to see that it was provided.

So far as Sir John Nixon is concerned, however, we think that he was throughout solicitous as to the condition of the wounded. The main mistake he made, was to rely too absolutely on the statements made to him by his Deputy-Director of Medical Service, Surgeon-General Hathaway; to that extent he may be blamed, but he stands, so far as responsibility is concerned, in a very different position from that occupied by Surgeon-General Hathaway.

18. The officer directly responsible for the deficiencies of medical provision in Mesopotamia is, however, the Director of Medical Services, India. This appointment was held at the beginning of the war by Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie, who held the office between March, 1914, and June, 1915, but was away from India for six weeks in February and March, 1915. He was succeeded by Surgeon-General J. G. MacNeece on July 8th, 1915, and the latter proceeded home on sick leave on April 15th, 1916. Sir William Babtie in his evidence before us impressed us as an officer of ability and knowledge, but we do not think that he brought these qualities sufficiently to bear upon the task before him. He accepted obviously insufficient medical provision without protest, and without any adequate effort to improve it. He cannot therefore be held blameless.

Surgeon-General MacNeece did not give evidence before the Vincent-Bingley Commission, but he appeared before us. He was, in our opinion, an officer thoroughly desirous of fulfilling the duties assigned to him; but he was a man of advancing years and diminishing strength, unequal to the position he was called upon to fill, and his administration appears to us to show no signs of the vigour and efficiency that were required.

19. We find that :—

(*a*) The Home Government agreed with the Indian Government in limiting the general military preparations of India before the war in the interests of retrenchment, and provision was accordingly not made for such an expedition as that to Mesopotamia. The limitation of medical preparation and the low standard of medical treatment in the Indian Army at the outbreak of war were the natural outcome of this policy, which was pursued for many years and was in force right up to the date of the war.

(*b*) The private letters of the Secretary of State to the Viceroy showed an earnest and continuous anxiety as to the condition of the wounded, and the only comment that can be made upon the Secretary of State's procedure is that he did not fully utilize the official powers at his disposal for the purpose of forcing at an earlier period an investigation into the treatment of the wounded in Mesopotamia.

(*c*) To Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, as Viceroy, belongs the general responsibility attaching to his position as the head of the Indian Government, to which had been entrusted the management of the expedition, including the provision of medical services. In regard to the actual medical administration he appears to us to have shown throughout the utmost goodwill, but considering the paramount authority of his office, his action was not sufficiently strenuous and peremptory.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00004e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Findings and Conclusions.

(*d*) A more severe censure must be passed upon the Commander-in-Chief, for not only did he, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India, fail closely to superintend the adequacy of medical provision in Mesopotamia, but he declined for a considerable time, until ultimately forced by the superior authority of the Viceroy, to give credence to rumours which proved to be true, and failed to take the measures, which a subsequent experience shows would have saved the wounded from avoidable suffering.

20. There has been misuse of official reticence as to medical defects and the sufferings of the sick and wounded.

21. While the protective and sanitary work of the Medical Administration has in certain directions and at some periods (notably under Colonel Hehir) been commendable, yet there has not been generally sufficient promptitude in taking the precautions dictated by modern science for the protection of the troops against disease.

22. Throughout the campaign (with insignificant exceptions) the executive and regimental medical officers and personnel have devoted themselves with unremitting kindness, zeal and industry to the care of the sick and wounded with such means as were at their disposal.

Indian Frontier and Internal Troubles.

23. In the information laid before us by high authorities as to the military requirements of India, there was constant reference made to the ever-present risk of invasion on the North-West Frontier and the danger of simultaneous internal disturbance. We are satisfied of the reality of such dangers and of the necessity of keeping mobilised a large force on this frontier. There is little doubt that on more than one occasion since the outbreak of war the Indian Government passed through a period of grave anxiety, which they successfully surmounted. The preoccupation caused by this anxiety must not be forgotten in blaming the Indian Government for the inefficiency of the management of the Mesopotamian campaign.

General Results of the Expedition.

24. The character of the Instructions given to us as a Commission and the date of our appointment compelled us to devote a large proportion of our time and attention to that limited period of the campaign in Mesopotamia in which reverses were experienced by our troops. We have probed to the best of our ability the causes of these failures in order to make suggestions for their remedy and removal. Though we have spent so large a portion of our time in looking into a period of reverses, this should not overlay or obliterate the fact that the success of the campaign has, as a whole, been remarkable. The operations, have lasted over 2½ years, and, with the exception of a few months during which there was a serious setback, the war has been an unbroken success. Up to the date of the advance to Baghdad, in November, 1915, continuous victory had been achieved by the Expeditionary Force. During the last few months the river transport has been increased, port facilities improved, the force has been re-organised and adequately equipped for the task before it, and it has resumed its career of victory. We are of opinion—reviewing the operations as a whole—that it may now be truly asserted that in the many parts of the world in which the Allied Forces have been engaged, no more substantial results or more solid victories have been achieved than those won by the gallantry of the British and Indian Armies on the stricken plains of Mesopotamia.

Moral of Troops.

25. Our investigations show that what is in default is not the fighting capacity and efficiency of the combatant forces of the Indian Army, but the system of military administration in control of that Army. Rarely, if ever, have greater courage or pertinacity been shown by British and Indian troops than is recorded in the operations of the Expeditionary Force both during their successes and reverses. They had to operate under unfavourable conditions of climate, weather, flooded terrain, insufficient supplies and wholly inadequate transport, and they were surrounded by a hostile and marauding population. In our judgment, no praise can be too high for the gallantry and spirit evinced by the officers and men of all ranks of the British and Indian Armies under this accumulation of difficulties. It is most desirable that the governing machinery of the Indian Army should be so reformed as to enable it to be a help and not a drag on the fighting capacity of the armies it controls.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00006b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Findings and Conclusions.

Nature of Criticisms on Indian Government.

The criticisms which it has been our duty to make upon the Government of India divide themselves into two categories :—

26. Those relating to the error of judgment shown by their advocacy of an advance to Baghdad in October, 1915. In this mistake other authorities participated and we are not disposed to say more on this matter than that, lamentable as were the consequences, the blunder was one, which is not uncommon in a protracted campaign.

27. Our second criticisms are of a different character. They relate to the failure adequately to "minister to the wants of the forces employed in Mesopotamia." This failure was persistent and continuous and practically covered the whole of the period during which the Indian Government were entrusted with the management of the expedition. With the knowledge of the facts which we now possess and of the extent and scope of the preparations of the War Office since they undertook the management of the campaign, it is impossible to refrain from serious censure of the Indian Government for the lack of knowledge and foresight shown in the inadequacy of their preparations and for the lack of readiness to recognise and supply deficiencies. They ought to have known, and with proper touch with the expedition they could have known, what were its wants and requirements. It is true that their military system of administration was cumbrous and inept. It was, however, within the power of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief to have established a more effective procedure and a closer touch with the expedition itself.

B. Recommendations.

In the enquiry which we have made and the evidence which we have obtained we have received much information as regards the inner working of the highest branches of administration of the Indian Government both in England and India. We assume that it will not be outside our duty if we briefly refer to them for the purpose of making certain recommendations with a view to preventing a recurrence of the want of foresight and of efficiency, which our investigations have revealed.

Relations between Secretary of State and the Viceroy and Their Respective Councils.

28. We have more than once alluded to the great increase in the number of private telegrams exchanged on official business between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy. Whether intentionally or not, this method of communication must more or less deprive the Councils of both these high officials of the powers which, under Acts of Parliament, they have in common with the Secretary of State and Viceroy, been given in the government and administration of India. The Secretary of State informed us that he proposed to make some change so as to limit the scope and purport of such private communications. Some change is certainly constitutionally required, as the present practice seems to us to conflict with the intentions of Parliament. If the Councils of the Secretary of State and Viceroy are to be dispossessed of their old powers, such a change should be effected openly under an Act of Parliament and not by a change in the internal procedure of the India Office. Independently of the question of the legality of the present practice, the increase in the use of private telegrams must tend to accumulate work into the hands of an already heavily worked Viceroy. In our judgment, the aim of administrative reform in India, certainly in the military departments, should be a devolution of responsibilities and duties from the over-centralised bureaucracy of the Supreme Government at Simla.

Military Administration.

29. It is clear that the combination of the duties of Commander-in-Chief in India and Military Member of Council cannot adequately be performed by any one man in time of war, and that the existing organisation is at once over-centralised at its head, and cumbrous in its duality below. This was fully admitted by the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Chamberlain, and he gave us reason to believe that changes will be made enabling the official who ostensibly holds the post of Commander-in-Chief adequately to perform his functions of personal inspection, and investigation of the efficiency and requirements of

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00006b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. RECOMMENDATIONS.

the forces under him. We hope that amongst these changes there will be an amalgamation into one department of the two existing departments of the Commander-in-Chief and the Military Member of Council with a single and central registry, and that special efforts will be made to diminish the amount of minute-writing and to simplify the present elaborate system of clerical checking and counter-checking.

30. It is also clear that, so long as Simla remains the Headquarters of the Army Departments, it is essential that in the event of oversea expeditions, there should be established at the port of embarkation representatives of the Army Departments with wide power to act without reference back to Headquarters.

NECESSITY FOR ENQUIRING INTO CERTAIN MILITARY QUESTIONS.

31. We have heard some evidence to the effect that the Indian Army has lost its old popularity, and that it is no longer regarded as a satisfactory service from a professional point of view, and that officers anxious for advancement prefer serving at home on account of the better methods of instruction and training which the Home Army now affords. It may be that some such ideas have deterred senior officers from accepting employment in India; but we understand that the candidates for commissions in the Indian Army at the present moment show no falling off either in numbers or quality. There was undoubtedly a grievance as to the conditions of promotion in the Indian Army compared with those prevailing in what used to be known as "the King's Army," but this disparity has to some extent been recently modified. In both armies promotion in the lower ranks is practically by seniority (in the Indian Army with time limitations), and in the higher grades by selection. It has further come to our notice that there is little personal contact between the Secretariat Departments of the Indian Army and the combatant ranks, and that in consequence there is not that sympathetic exchange of opinion and knowledge between the administrative branches and the executive forces of the Army which is essential to harmonious co-operation. There seems to be so much writing, that military officials have inadequate time at their disposal for inspecting, training and testing the troops, for whose efficiency and equipment they are responsible. These are evils which can without much difficulty be corrected, if the Indian Government, profiting by experience, will seriously take into consideration the defects in their military methods.

32. But other and more important considerations have been brought prominently to our notice in the course of our enquiries. The dual system under which London and Simla tried to conduct the campaign in Mesopotamia has obvious drawbacks. The chain of responsibility is greatly lengthened by the number of authorities, who had necessarily to be consulted, and who had a voice in the direction of affairs. We will enumerate the various authorities who had to be consulted as regards the Mesopotamia Expedition: First, the General Officer Commanding on the spot in Mesopotamia, then the Commander-in-Chief in India, then the Viceroy, then the Secretary of State for India with his Military Secretary, then the War Council with the Imperial Staff, and finally the Cabinet. Such a subdivision of authoritative control must weaken the sense of responsibility of each authority consulted, and it certainly has made it very difficult accurately to apportion blame or credit. It was under the dual system that the administrative failures took place during 1915 and early in 1916 in Mesopotamia, and it was not until London took over the sole charge that there was any marked improvement in the management of the campaign. The improvement and success since effected are a striking illustration of the all-importance of unity of control in time of war.

We should also like to call attention to the manner in which the army in India suffered during the era of economy before the war, when the military estimates were ruthlessly cut down, often, it is to be feared, without due consideration. The result was that the army was inadequately equipped, not only for an oversea expedition, but even for frontier requirements. We also gather that there is general dissatisfaction at the system of microscopic financial control exercised over details of military expenditure, pay and allowances. We give in an appendix* a few illustrations of how hardly this system operates in individual cases.

Finally it has been admitted by practically all the witnesses examined upon the subject that the principles, upon which the system of reserves for the native army of India had been established had proved faulty and unreliable. The men were too old, and had forgotten their training. It was also conceded that a new scheme on different principles

* See Appendix IV.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000081

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Recommendations.

must be created, if this latent force was for the future to be considered a real and not a mere paper reserve.

We do not think that we have travelled outside our province in calling attention to these important points, or in suggesting that into them and other germane matters investigation should be made by the Secretary of State for India and the Secretary of State for War.

It is in our judgment most undesirable that the standard of efficiency in the Indian Army should in any sense become inferior to that of the Army at home, or that the popularity of the Indian Army should be allowed to deteriorate through an excess of economical zeal or a questionable system of supervision and control.

Royal Indian Marine.

33. We feel strongly that the Royal Indian Marine Department requires reorganisation with a view to giving its Director a higher status and a staff adequate to his work.

Medical Reform.

34. The evidence put before us indicates the necessity for certain immediate changes in the existing system of medical organisation in India, which we propose to enumerate.

35. We are of the opinion that:—

(*a*) The Director of Medical Services in India, in war-time especially, should have far greater powers, than he at present possesses, to authorise expenditure and make purchases, and to delegate such power to his subordinates. The present elaborate system of financial check and counter-check, and correspondence with other military departments, before what is wanted can be obtained, has proved from its dilatoriness a real danger in war-time.

(*b*) Whenever an expedition is sent overseas from India, responsible officers should at once be located at the port of embarkation, with wide power to act. We have referred elsewhere to the fact that the Commander-in-Chief never visited Bombay during the crisis of the campaign. Some of his staff did do so, but their visits were spasmodic, and in no case had these officers power to give orders or settle important questions without further reference to Simla or Delhi. Further, all power being concentrated at Headquarters the ruling authorities deprived themselves of the value of being in constant touch with those going to, or returning from, Mesopotamia. If it was true, as alleged, that the Headquarter Staff at Simla were tied to their secretariat work there, the Bombay Government was on the spot, and common-sense would have suggested the delegation of authority to a Government so conveniently situated.

(*c*) At the port of embarkation the embarkation staffs should be responsible for seeing that the equipment and personnel of each medical unit should not be separated in different vessels, but embarked together in the same vessel. This rule was frequently neglected at Bombay.

(*d*) There should be an immediate and general improvement in the whole standard of comfort and accommodation in the hospitals for British troops in India. Surgeon-General MacNeece stated "even now there are practically not more than two or three up-to-date military hospitals in India." We are glad to note that the new war hospitals in Bombay are reported by the Vincent-Bingley Commission as bearing favourable comparison with any similar hospitals in the United Kingdom. This shows what can be done in India when there is impulse to reform. We think it discreditable to the Indian Government that the general standard of hospita's in India should fall below the standard of efficiency now demanded in Military Hospitals at home. To assist in reforming this state of things, we think that the R.A.M.C. or a corps on similar lines should be available for service in all British Hospitals in India, and that a better and more complete female nursing service should also be organised.

(*e*) As regards the medical treatment of Indian troops, no time should be lost in substituting a Station Hospital system, for the present regimental treatment, "I doubt," one I.M.S witness says to us, "whether you gentlemen would consider that the Sepoys' hospitals in peace-time in India are hospitals at all." Sir Havelock Charles described them as "a disgrace to the Government of India." Surgeon-General MacNeece states "there are no well-equipped operating theatres, X-ray rooms, laboratories, etc.";

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000c1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Recommendations.

and Sir William Babtie, "they are so bad that I think it would be necessary to reform them *ab initio*." The new Indian hospitals should be staffed by enlisted personnel of all ranks, and should be used for building up trained reserves of menial establishments in peace time.

(*f*) All deficiencies usually allowed to prevail in peace-time in the mobilisation equipment of general hospitals should be made good. Sir W. Babtie told us that of the general hospitals in India. "Twelve were supposed to be mobilisable, but only four were complete in all the different Departments of supply." All such equipment should be stored and in readiness, and inspected, as is done now, in the case of field ambulances, casualty clearing hospitals and stationary hospitals.

(*g*) Base Depôts of Medical Stores should be reintroduced into the Indian Field Service organisation, and kept ready for mobilisation.

(*h*) At the outset of every campaign there should be provided a separate superior sanitary organisation and staff charged with the arrangements for preserving and safeguarding the health of the fighting troops, and responsible to the Principal Medical Officer of the force, but otherwise entirely separate from the organisation for the care of the sick and wounded. This implies a formation in peace-time of an adequate reserve of sanitary officers, enlisting in it, if necessary, the services of specialists in civil employment.

(*i*) The Field Service Ration should receive very careful reconsideration and alteration in the light of experience in Mesopotamia. This especially applies to the rations for Indian troops. The War Office Sanitary Committee found that even, "the improved ration" sanctioned as late as October last was deficient in many respects.

36. The above are only some of the defects revealed by our investigations, but they are sufficient to prove the necessity for an urgent, and thorough reform by the Indian Government of the whole system, upon which their medical services are based, and under which they are controlled. Sir Alfred Keogh, whose administration at the War Office as Director-General Army Medical Services has been very successful during this war, at the conclusion of his evidence made the following very strong statement :—

"I have no hesitation whatever in saying that the medical arrangements connected with the Army in India have been for years and years most disgraceful. I say that with a full sense of responsibility. I have served many years in India. I have not been there for some time now, but in my opinion things are not better than they were. Anything more disgraceful than the carelessness and want of attention with regard to the sick soldier in India it is impossible to imagine."

---

37. Our colleague, Commander Wedgwood, has written a dissentient Report. It contains much that is interesting and, in many important points, it differs from our own Report rather in emphasis than in substance. Thus, for example, in Part XI., paragraphs 40–41 of our Report we have called attention to the Indian Government's lack of alacrity in mobilising the resources of India for the assistance of the Empire in the war, a feature upon which Commander Wedgwood lays so much stress in his Report. But we do not think the evidence before us justifies attaching to Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff alone the blame for the mistakes and shortcomings connected with the Mesopotamia Expedition. We have given reasons for a wider, and, in our judgment, a more equitable apportionment of responsibility.

---

38. In our investigations we have been confronted by an enormous mass of written evidence. Sir Beauchamp Duff supported his oral evidence by over forty Blue-books and other documents drawn up by the Headquarters Staff in India. They were admirably edited and annotated. But this mass of written evidence, as well as the many other documents

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00005a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. RECOMMENDATIONS.

which poured in from all sides, and which had to be mastered before witnesses could be examined, at times made the work of the Commission very severe. It would have been impossible for us adequately to have discharged our duties and to issue a Report as quickly as we have done had it not been for the ability, industry and powers of organisation of our Secretary, Mr. R. G. Duff. His assistance was invaluable, and we wish to commend his services to the head of the Department to which he belongs. He was also well seconded by Mr. J. W. Fitzwilliam, our Assistant Secretary.

(Signed)—

GEORGE HAMILTON,
Chairman,

CYPRIAN A. G. BRIDGE.

DONOUGHMORE.

NEVILLE G. LYTTELTON.

HUGH CECIL.

JOHN HODGE.

ARCHIBALD WILLIAMSON.

Signed by the Commission,
May 17th, 1917.

R. G. DUFF,
Secretary.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000053

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

347

SEPARATE REPORT

BY

COMMANDER J. C. WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.

1. I was added to the Commission by direct vote of the House of Commons as a Member of Parliament who had seen a considerable amount of fighting. The fact of my having been fighting may unwittingly have led me to be unduly severe on those who sit behind and send other men to the front. Even making all allowance for this bias, I still find differences, and differences of principle, between myself and my colleagues that make the signing of their report impossible to me.

Minor points of difference.

2. It is not necessary to waste time over minor points of difference. To attribute the disasters in Mesopotamia to the use by the Secretary of State of private telegrams, or to Lord Kitchener's old changes in the army in India seems to me to shew some lack of a sense of proportion. If all the telegrams that were private had been public, and if there had been a Military Member of Council in addition to Sir Beauchamp Duff, I do not think even then, so long as the attitude of the Indian Administration remained the same, there would have been much difference in result; there might have been less decision, there might have been more friction.

Mistakes or Crimes?

3. My chief difference from my colleagues goes much deeper. They distribute blame over many, in India, in Mesopotamia, and at home; but censure for honest human error has nothing in common with the censure we should pass on an attitude of unwillingness to help in war. If we confound mistakes with crimes the result is a dangerous leniency towards crime.

The Decision to Advance.

4. As honest error I class any mistake that may have been made in authorising the 1915 advance on Baghdad, by the "Military Secretary of the India Office, the Secretary of State and the War Committee of the Cabinet." Indeed I maintain that the publication of the evidence will completely absolve from all blame both the Military Secretary, Sir Edmund Barrow, and the War Committee. With the material put before them from Mesopotamia and India they would have deserved as much, if not more, censure had they decided, not for, but against the advance. It will be a bad day for our Empire when soldiers and statesmen decline all risks, and withdraw confidence from the men on the spot.

General Nixon's Advice.

5. It is possible, too, to regard as honest error General Nixon's mistake in urging the Bagdad advance with wholly insufficient transport. He was at least enthusiastic and ready to take risks, and to do what I suppose he thought best for his country; while from another point of view it would be as futile to censure General Nixon as to censure any other of the 21 general officers of the Indian Army whom it has been found necessary to relieve of their commands in the field. They are the natural result of Indian Army Government, belonging to an old type, brought up to be what they are, and deprived by long residence among Eastern subjects of that energy, wider patriotism and education which is essential for the successful prosecution of a great war. An administration that was content with this type and selected the generals to command in Mesopotamia, that knew them for what they were and yet let the expedition be run as "nobody's child," must be held responsible for what happened in Mesopotamia.

Starving the Army in India.

6. One can hardly regard even as an error the effort made by Lord Crewe and the Cabinet to reduce the cost of the Indian Army before the war. My colleagues, in implying censure upon him and earlier Secretaries of State in this matter, seem to me to miss the point. Economy under the new conditions of friendship with Russia there might well

76

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000087

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

have been at that time; but it should have been directed by the authorities in India rather towards obtaining a smaller and efficient force than towards keeping the force large but starving it of modern military accessories. It was this latter policy, pursued by India for some years previous to the war, that made the Army as ill-found as indicated in my colleagues' report; and for this policy it was hardly the Government in England that was responsible. Further, the responsibility of the Indian Government in this respect is a responsibility, not for an error, but for reluctance to interfere with the vested interests of a corporation of their servants.

Personnel and Training.

7. If the equipment of the Indian Army when war began was inadequate and out of date, strictures hardly less severe must be passed upon the personnel. Evidence laid before us has shown that the standards for the higher commands have deteriorated since the Boer War, and the exceptionally long list of Anglo-Indian generals who have been relieved of their commands in the field cannot be entirely set down to the normal retirement of the aged in a war that demands young men. Nor are Mid-Victorian manœuvres, carried on without such modern accessories of warfare as mechanical transport, air park, wireless telegraphy, barbed wire, flares, entrenching tools, with wholly inadequate telephones, and with two-wheeled hospital tongas drawn by bullocks, likely to be of much help as training. And a considerable part of the Army in Southern India seem to have no manœuvres at all, even of this unsatisfactory nature.

Reserves.

8. The same feeling of security and eastern lassitude that was content with an Army of this description led to the acceptance of a system of reserves of officers and men which must in any case have completely broken down directly war came. The reserve system for the Native Army (rank and file) seems to have been well adapted to foster the loyalty of political pensioners, but the old men who returned to the colours were unsuitable for soldiers; a reserve scheme should be concerned principally with military efficiency.

A reserve scheme for white officers had been drawn up, but as little or no pecuniary inducement was held out to young white civilians to join the Indian Army Reserve, only 43 such officers existed at the beginning of the war. The Indian Government have since had to draw over 2,600 Indian Army Reserve officers out of India and to give them such hasty training as was possible.

If no provision was made for a reserve of white officers there was the less excuse for allowing old-fashioned prejudices against colour to stand in the way of the formation of an adequately trained cadre of Indian officers which the native rulers of India would willingly have supplied. From evidence tendered to us it is evident that a change in this direction would not be unwelcome to the English officers in the Indian Army.

Value of Indian Army.

9. In spite of being ill-equipped, ill-trained, and resting on paper reserves, the regimental officers and the rank and file of the Indian Army have fought in a manner to show that, with proper drafts and properly trained and equipped, they would have few or no superiors. The victories at Kut and Ctesiphon—at Ctesiphon where 35 per cent. of the whole army fell on the field and yet that army was victorious,—as well as the bloody attacks at Wadi and Sannah that were made again and again over an open plain through deep mud in the face of hopeless odds and almost certain failure, have led to an entire reconsideration of the value of the Indian Army. They are worth something better than management and control by eastern lethargy and bureaucratic incompetence. There is no fault to find with the younger men of the Anglo-Indian Army, but they lose stamina with long residence in the East.

The good change in the Control.

10. The success that has attended the Army of Mesopotamia since the conduct of the campaign was taken over by the War Office, the change that has come over the feeding, the cheerfulness, the morale, of that Army, are palpable to the public eye. That this is due in part to the energy of the War Office, and to the excellent officers they have sent out I should be the last to deny. But when all allowance has been made for this, the change cannot but be largely accounted for by the previous attitude of the Indian Government towards the expedition, an attitude which they adopted not only to the expedition but towards the war as a whole.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000009

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

11. It is precisely Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff whom I cannot merely charge with honest human error. They, and they alone, as is shown by my colleagues, formed and were the Indian Administration during that part of the war under consideration. Throughout their conduct of the war they seem to me to have shown little desire to help and some desire actually to obstruct the energetic prosecution of the war. As a reason for this obstruction they gave—the situation in India; and I for one feel no sense of obligation to them for placing "risks" in India above the dire necessities of the British Empire, and the welfare of their own troops in Mesopotamia.

To charge two high officials with "little desire to help and some desire actually to obstruct the energetic prosecution of the war" is a serious accusation, and one difficult to accept. I have therefore felt bound to support it by a considerable body of evidence. Such evidence must necessarily take the form of extracts without context (till the evidence is published in full), extracts from letters or cables from Lord Hardinge or Sir Beauchamp Duff, extracts from protests by Lord Kitchener or Lord Crewe, extracts from speeches by Lord Hardinge or his Financial Adviser, Sir William Meyer, extracts from evidence given to the Commission on oath as to the view taken by the War Office in England of the Indian attitude. Extracts are not a satisfactory method of carrying conviction, but the subsequent publication of the volumes of evidence will show that the full correspondence conveys no better impression, and that the extracts have been taken with all the fairness possible. Furthermore, I have felt it advisable to back up the extracted evidence with a list of the measures for helping the Empire that India has adopted since the departure of Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff, many of them having been previously waived aside as impracticable by these same officials in written evidence before the Commission. Such a list will confirm my finding.

Although I had the advantage of being able to cross-examine Sir Beauchamp Duff and the other Anglo-Indian officials that came before the Commission, I was unable to be present when Lord Hardinge himself came under examination. My colleagues examined him on none of the passages which I extract; he may be able to give satisfactory explanations for all of them; he may deny the implication I give to them in every case. But of the meaning of plain English the public can judge, and the effect of the attitude was such that it caused the very civilians in India to complain of the pretence that "India is not at war." Explanations given now do not efface the impression conveyed then.

A. EVIDENCE AS TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT FROM CABLES.

12. On the outbreak of war the Indian Government responded, liberally according to our then estimates of what the war was likely to be, and despatched considerable expeditions to France and to Egypt. Very soon, however, the grudging spirit made itself visible. On August 6th the loan of 15 Indian officers was refused, a small matter which was reversed two days later. Then, on August 12th, before indeed the defeats in France, the Viceroy wired—"Although we are ready to run some risk . . . The Commander-in-Chief complains that he is absolutely crippled by this last measure relating to officers."

In his next telegrams the Viceroy showed his position, safety of India must come first. August 15th—"We have, however, never wavered in our readiness to assist the Empire to the utmost of our power, limited only by considerations of the safety of India." August 27th—"We have spared no effort . . . running even a certain amount of risk by the depletion of our stock of rifles, ammunition." On August 27th he must have known of the disasters in France, but he may not have known how serious they were when he talked of "a certain amount of risk."

The appeals from home to which these telegrams were a reply have not been before the Commission, but we have a sample in Lord Kitchener's wire of September 3rd—"Can you manufacture any guns yourself;" and the reply was—"Our manufacture of guns is negligible."

No effort seems to have been made in these early times to do anything to increase the resources of the Empire in material or men. The Commander-in-Chief wired September 5th—"It was thought here politically inadvisable at present to agree to your request for Nepal troops for Egypt"; and this though the suggestion had been made by His Majesty himself.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000067

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

13. It is difficult to say whether Lord Hardinge or Sir Beauchamp Duff was primarily responsible for this attitude of negation. For instance, the Viceroy cabled, September 18th, 1914—"Although I have practically met all the demands that have been made upon me, even at some risk, there is a limit beyond which risk becomes a serious danger . . . the Commander-in-Chief will also never agree to any weakening of these frontier divisions." To which Lord Kitchener replied, September 19th—"You hardly seem to realise the seriousness of our position on the Continent . . . I cannot understand your refusal to accept the 15-pdr." This 15-pdr. gun has, of course, since been used by our troops on the Continent. The Viceroy replied, September 23rd—"Duff was so strong on the subject of the inconvenience of having two kinds of artillery in the country that I had to give way to him . . . Duff, though most willing and anxious to co-operate, is far more nervous than I am." Next day Lord Kitchener again appealed—"I do not think you yet quite realise in India what the war is going to be. If we lose it will be worse for India than any success of internal revolution or frontier attack." The Viceroy having spoken for the Commander-in-Chief, the Commander-in-Chief then spoke for the Viceroy and wired, September 25th—"A Governor-General can hardly sit quiet and see the whole control of Indian defence withdrawn from him altogether. You must remember that the Viceroy and his Council cannot be disregarded." . . . The evidence before us showed, however, that the Council was not consulted as to the war, and whenever India was asked for help she responded generously. This incident, connected not only with the question of the guns, but also with direct correspondence between the War Office and Sir Beauchamp Duff, ended as follows, the Viceroy wired, October 1st—"Duff objected strongly to Kitchener . . . and received an angry message in reply . . . We have now practically got to the bedrock."

14. It would almost seem as if jealousy for the conservation of the Army in India affected their attitude towards every attempt that Lord Kitchener might make to meet India's wishes. He offered Territorials to replace regiments of the Line, and the Viceroy replied, September 20th—"We cannot regard Territorials as fit to cope with Pathans in hill warfare. . . . We cannot raise new forces, because we have given up to the Imperial Army all our new rifles and practically all our artillery and owing to number of our officers given to meet demands in England we are already very short and with no possibility of replacing them. Of course, any idea of an expedition to Basra will be out of the question since we could not send Territorial Infantry and Artillery against the Turks." This cable was sent just at the moment that the rifle difficulty was most acute at home, but new forces were being raised here and training proceeding, with or without rifles. Two days later we are told that the Indian Government were "issuing an appeal to gentlemen in India to join the Reserve (I.A.R.)"; they had evidently made up their minds to try to deal with the "impossibility" of replacing officers.

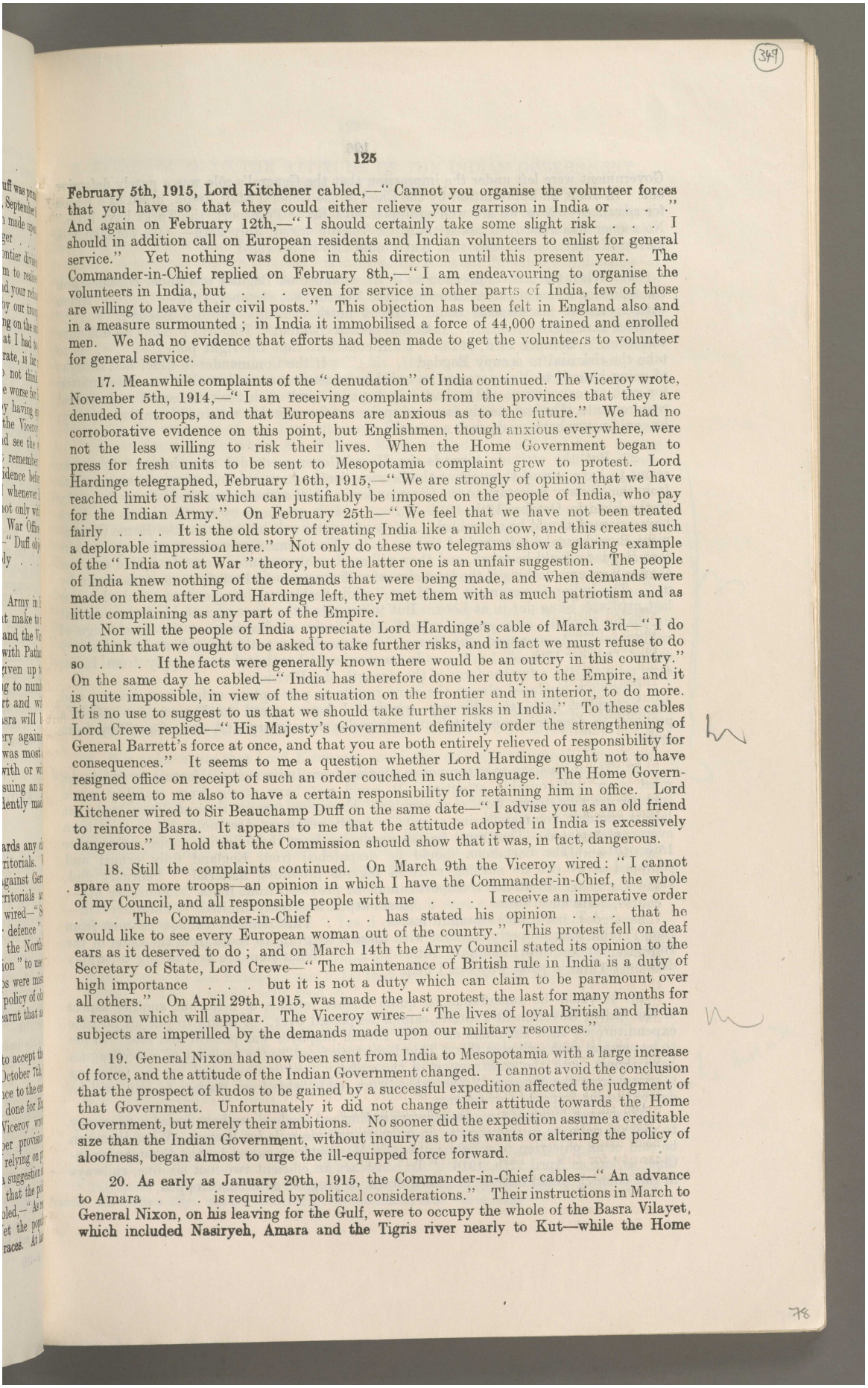
15. But what seems to me most symptomatic of their attitude towards any change in the established order of their world is their resentment of the Territorials. When these troops arrived, after Territorials had done good work in France against Germans, the Commander-in-Chief cabled, January 20th—"The . . . Territorials are, of course, quite unfit for frontier work"; on January 30th, the Viceroy wired—"Second Line troops from home can hardly be regarded as suited for frontier defence"; and on February 1st—"It would be madness to send Territorial troops to the North-West frontier." And we have seen that it was deemed "out of the question" to use them against Turks. It is not merely that their estimates of Territorial troops were mistaken, the serious point to my mind is that this estimate was one which suited a policy of obstruction. If Territorials were not fitted for frontier war, they could have learnt that as they have learnt worse forms of warfare.

16. If the Indian Government gave grudgingly and was reluctant to accept the help offered, it was also apathetic. We learn in a cable from the Viceroy, October 7th, 1914, that "Turkey . . . is not in a position to give real material assistance to the enemy." But in that matter Turkey has done more for Germany than India had done for England up to this present year. It was energy that was lacking. The Viceroy wrote on October 21st,—"I inquired of the Commander-in-Chief whether proper provision had been made for warm clothing for the troops. He told me that he was relying on private charity for this." This, of course, the Viceroy vetoed; but that such a suggestion should have been made shows, either that the matter had been forgotten, or that the policy of starvation had run mad. On January 5th the Commander-in-Chief cabled,—"As regards reinforcements, our reservists are turning out disappointing." Yet the population of India is 315,000,000, of whom some 50,000,000 belong to fighting races. At last, on

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000089

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



February 5th, 1915, Lord Kitchener cabled,—" Cannot you organise the volunteer forces that you have so that they could either relieve your garrison in India or . . ." And again on February 12th,—" I should certainly take some slight risk . . . I should in addition call on European residents and Indian volunteers to enlist for general service." Yet nothing was done in this direction until this present year. The Commander-in-Chief replied on February 8th,—" I am endeavouring to organise the volunteers in India, but . . . even for service in other parts of India, few of those are willing to leave their civil posts." This objection has been felt in England also and in a measure surmounted ; in India it immobilised a force of 44,000 trained and enrolled men. We had no evidence that efforts had been made to get the volunteers to volunteer for general service.

17. Meanwhile complaints of the " denudation" of India continued. The Viceroy wrote, November 5th, 1914,—" I am receiving complaints from the provinces that they are denuded of troops, and that Europeans are anxious as to the future." We had no corroborative evidence on this point, but Englishmen, though anxious everywhere, were not the less willing to risk their lives. When the Home Government began to press for fresh units to be sent to Mesopotamia complaint grew to protest. Lord Hardinge telegraphed, February 16th, 1915,—" We are strongly of opinion that we have reached limit of risk which can justifiably be imposed on the people of India, who pay for the Indian Army." On February 25th—" We feel that we have not been treated fairly . . . It is the old story of treating India like a milch cow, and this creates such a deplorable impression here." Not only do these two telegrams show a glaring example of the " India not at War " theory, but the latter one is an unfair suggestion. The people of India knew nothing of the demands that were being made, and when demands were made on them after Lord Hardinge left, they met them with as much patriotism and as little complaining as any part of the Empire.

Nor will the people of India appreciate Lord Hardinge's cable of March 3rd—" I do not think that we ought to be asked to take further risks, and in fact we must refuse to do so . . . If the facts were generally known there would be an outcry in this country." On the same day he cabled—" India has therefore done her duty to the Empire, and it is quite impossible, in view of the situation on the frontier and in interior, to do more. It is no use to suggest to us that we should take further risks in India." To these cables Lord Crewe replied—" His Majesty's Government definitely order the strengthening of General Barrett's force at once, and that you are both entirely relieved of responsibility for consequences." It seems to me a question whether Lord Hardinge ought not to have resigned office on receipt of such an order couched in such language. The Home Government seem to me also to have a certain responsibility for retaining him in office. Lord Kitchener wired to Sir Beauchamp Duff on the same date—" I advise you as an old friend to reinforce Basra. It appears to me that the attitude adopted in India is excessively dangerous." I hold that the Commission should show that it was, in fact, dangerous.

18. Still the complaints continued. On March 9th the Viceroy wired : " I cannot spare any more troops—an opinion in which I have the Commander-in-Chief, the whole of my Council, and all responsible people with me . . . I receive an imperative order . . . The Commander-in-Chief . . . has stated his opinion . . . that he would like to see every European woman out of the country." This protest fell on deaf ears as it deserved to do ; and on March 14th the Army Council stated its opinion to the Secretary of State, Lord Crewe—" The maintenance of British rule in India is a duty of high importance . . . but it is not a duty which can claim to be paramount over all others." On April 29th, 1915, was made the last protest, the last for many months for a reason which will appear. The Viceroy wires—" The lives of loyal British and Indian subjects are imperilled by the demands made upon our military resources."

19. General Nixon had now been sent from India to Mesopotamia with a large increase of force, and the attitude of the Indian Government changed. I cannot avoid the conclusion that the prospect of kudos to be gained by a successful expedition affected the judgment of that Government. Unfortunately it did not change their attitude towards the Home Government, but merely their ambitions. No sooner did the expedition assume a creditable size than the Indian Government, without inquiry as to its wants or altering the policy of aloofness, began almost to urge the ill-equipped force forward.

20. As early as January 20th, 1915, the Commander-in-Chief cables—" An advance to Amara . . . is required by political considerations." Their instructions in March to General Nixon, on his leaving for the Gulf, were to occupy the whole of the Basra Vilayet, which included Nasiryeh, Amara and the Tigris river nearly to Kut—while the Home

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000068

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Government were left under the impression that the General's rôle was a purely defensive one. In June, an appreciation by the Chief of the General Staff, India, urged as a reason for advance—" Now we are well equipped with River Transport, the Turks have little." No sooner was Nasiriyeh taken than the Viceroy wired, July 26th—" We consider it a matter of strategic necessity that Kut should also be occupied."

21. When the critical decision as to the advance on Bagdad was under consideration the following series of cables came from the Viceroy, 6th October, 1915—" . . . Nixon with forces at his disposal could without much difficulty capture Bagdad. . . ." October 21st, 1915—" . . . Take and occupy Bagdad. This will present no difficulty whatever." October 23rd, 1915—" I am confident that the right policy . . . is to take the risk and to occupy Bagdad . . ." If the Commander-in-Chief had thought of going himself to Mesopotamia he could have seen at once that the force was unfitted for such an expedition. If he had only kept in touch with their transport and medical requirements, if he had merely seen and spoken to the men that returned from that country, he could never have made such a mistake.

22. But the attitude towards the Home Government did not change. It almost seems to have spread throughout the Service, for we have the following amazing minute from the Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief addressed to the Military Secretary to the Viceroy, October 17th, 1915—" . . . It is proposed by the Chief that the force he has named should be assembled . . . for eventualities, but that the Home Government should not be informed of this . . . The Home Government are very anxious that Bagdad should be taken, and they will send us the required force if we hold out, but they will give us nothing if the least sign of willingness to find reinforcements is shown by us." The Indian Government " held out " while Serbia was being overrun, and while our last man was being put in at Loos. But to my mind the most regrettable feature is that no shame was felt, even among subordinate officers, at showing not the " least sign of willingness." As arranged, the Home Government was not informed, and the Viceroy cabled, October 17th—" . . . . In no case could I undertake to supply from India, even temporarily, a further force of the strength of a Division."

Ctesiphon produced almost the same results as peremptory orders from home ; and on November 25th, the Viceroy wired—" I have agreed to Commander-in-Chief's proposal to despatch immediately two brigades of infantry and one of artillery from India. . ."

23. The incapacity to extemporise supplies from India is also a feature to which one must draw unfavourable attention. It could not have arisen from inability, since supplies are now drawn from that country. Except as regards river steamers, and that late in the day, commandeering private or public resources does not seem to have been even contemplated. That must be the conclusion from the following cables : December 15th, 1915—" The battalions should be despatched from England fully armed and equipped as we can do nothing more as regards providing material." February 2nd, 1916—" . . . Additional transport cannot be provided from India." February 5th—" . . . Ordnance, stores . . . local output is strictly limited." February 7th—" . . . A.T. carts and draught mules . . . This demand cannot be met from India." One may properly contrast with these a telegram to India from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, February 10th—" . . . What steps are you taking to supply deficiencies and in what way can I help."

24. It would be superfluous to quote further refusals of help, but another aspect of the Indian Government attitude cannot be passed over. A desire to put all possible expenditure off their shoulders on to the British taxpayer was present and seems to me to be mean at such a time as this. This desire interfered, as the majority of my colleagues have shown, with the construction of the railway, and is illustrated by the following telegram from the Viceroy—" The expenditure (on a cable from Bushire to Fao) will be debited to the Imperial Government."

We are not building any new railways in England ; indeed, we have found it necessary to pull up railways in this country in order to provide rails for France. What then can be said of an objection to a light railway in Mesopotamia raised by the Commander-in-Chief as late as April 27th, 1916—" To construct an efficient two-foot six line, railways in this country would have to be closed down, or progress on others stopped."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000025

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. EVIDENCE AS TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT FROM SPEECHES.

25. The evidence of the attitude of the Indian Government is as clearly shown in speeches made before the Indian Council in March, 1915, on the Budget Debate at Simla. On March 2nd Sir William Meyer stated in Council—"In consequence of the war, expenditure is being restricted to what is considered essential for the maintenance of efficiency and the protection of this country." Lord Hardinge, in the Budget debate on March 30th said—"The imposition of additional taxation at the present time would not in our judgment have been justified either by financial requirements or by the present economic condition of the country." Mr. Bannerjee added—"Although it is a War Budget it does not add to the military expenditure; on the contrary, the military expenditure is slightly less than had been budgeted for." Mr. Abbott, of Jhansi, offered a mild protest, he said—"Handsome as our offerings may have been, . . . they have not, I regret to say, been on the same princely footing and basis as that of our fellow Colonials. However, I am confident that the demand has only to be made and loyal India will . . . offer to pay the expenses of our Expeditionary Forces in the same way as Canada and Australia are doing." To which Sir William Meyer replied—"India had been paying heavily for a splendid Army . . . for the defence of India . . . India had been maintaining this Army long before the Dominions thought of doing anything, to speak of, in the way of military expenditure."

While the above extracts show clearly enough the attitude of the Government towards expenditure on the war, two further speeches show as clearly the attitude of the same people towards borrowing on the London market. Lord Hardinge in the same Budget debate declared—"Our capital programme . . . *i.e.*, for railways and canals . . . . must be maintained on a scale bearing some reasonable relation to past standards if excessive hardship and dislocation are to be avoided. Our borrowing arrangements naturally follow." As late as October, 1915, Sir William Meyer, speaking in the Karachi Chamber of Commerce, explained the situation—"The lending capacities of India are very limited, and we cannot face the prospect of depriving ourselves of the aid, which we shall have to look to from them, by letting them be diverted to a War Loan."*

C. EVIDENCE SHOWING THE OPINION HELD BY RESPONSIBLE PERSONS ON THE ATTITUDE ADOPTED BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

26. It is unfortunate that Lord Kitchener could give no living testimony, but answers by Lord Crewe, General Sir Edmund Barrow and Major-General Maurice are given below :—

Lord Crewe : "From the first the Government of India kept complaining almost bitterly of the demands that were made on them. . . He (Lord Kitchener) took precisely the same view of the denudation of British troops in India. I quite well remember his going so far as to say, on one occasion that, even if we lost India through a mutiny, it would be better than losing the fight in France."

Lord Crewe, being asked : "They treated the crisis rather as though it were an extreme form of frontier campaign than as though it were a world-wide war for which there was no precedent," replied : "Yes, I do not think that is an unfair criticism."

General Sir Edmund Barrow, being asked : "'It is no use to suggest to us that we should take further risks in India.' Does not that indicate a rather curious spirit in connection with this European war ? Do they put India first and England second ?" replied : "Yes, it would really read so."

General Sir Edmund Barrow, being asked : "There does not seem to be any exceptional energy or initiative in India," answered : "I am inclined to agree."

General Sir Edmund Barrow, being asked if he would indicate what had caused "this breakdown of administration," replied : "Yes, but I think . . . the initial cause goes far beyond this Commission. I mean it strikes at the whole system of military administration in India."

Major-General Maurice, Director of Military Operations, being asked : "Do you think that the Indian Government have made full use of the resources of India as has been done in this country ?" replied : "My impression is, certainly not."

* This speech of Sir William Meyer's was not put before the Commission, but came privately into my hands. Sir William Meye was not examined by the Commission as he was in India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00004c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Major-General Maurice, being asked : " Have you heard suggestions that General Sykes is being starved as regards officers and equipment ? " replied : " Yes ; I hope things are satisfactory now, but there is no question he was starved, and it came to our notice and we pressed the India Office very strongly."

Even the Vincent-Bingley Commission (composed as to two out of three of its members of Anglo-Indian officials) found itself compelled to put the blame on the Indian Government. In Sir Beauchamp Duff's words : " The Commission have not followed the headings of the terms of reference in their report. . . The Commission have departed from their terms of reference and embarked upon criticism of the preparations for the campaign. . . The Commission have ended by reporting on the past and present action of the Government of India instead of carrying out their instructions."

The views of the civilians in India are even more frankly stated, and to clear them of responsibility the following examination of Mr. F. Carter, of Messrs. Turner, Morrison & Co., Ltd., is given :—

I gather from your evidence that there is a sort of feeling in India among the civilians that India is not pulling its full weight during the war—that the Indian Government is not doing all that it might do during the war ?—Yes.

Can you say whether that feeling is general among the civilians in Calcutta ?—Yes.

Did it never occur to the civilian population in Calcutta that more might have been done in making ammunition at the same time that the Ministry of Munitions was started over here ?—Yes.

You never heard that the difficulty was that they could not get machinery ?—No.

Is there any basis for that suggestion, considering that there were the American and Japanese markets available ?—No.

You could have got lathes from both those countries ?—Yes. How did we start making munitions at all ?

The other reason given for not making munitions in India on a considerable scale is that the Indian native is extremely difficult to teach to work in the workshops. Is that so ?—No.

Would you consider an Indian native quite as easy to teach the use of the ordinary lathe as a woman in England ?—Far better.

It has been stated by the Commander-in-Chief that India is a poor and backward country and that therefore it cannot be expected to help more than it has done. Is that your impression of India ?—No, it is not.

Is it your impression that it is a very poor country at the present time ?—No.

You have been in India for some years. Have you ever known India more prosperous than at the present time ?—No, never.

Do you regard—I will call it the *non possumus* attitude of the Government of India, as due to the Commander-in-Chief and the Viceroy, or is it due to the whole of the bureaucracy in India ?—I should think that it is the whole of the bureaucracy in India. I am speaking of the Imperial Government and not about Bengal or Bombay.

The whole of the Simla Government ?—Yes, the Simla Government.

D. EVIDENCE AS TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AS SHOWN BY MEASURES ADOPTED SINCE THE CHANGE IN THE PERSONNEL OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

27. These are the measures which were not taken by Lord Hardinge, but which, I believe, have subsequently been adopted :—

A War Loan.

28. We had evidence put before us as to the poverty of India. This was denied by all the witnesses who were questioned on the subject, and I cannot but think that the statement was made to excuse the inaction in this matter of the Indian Government. A loan is now being raised, for the first time.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000020

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Sharing the War Expenses.

29. The Indian Government have now offered £100,000,000. Previously the whole expenses of the Indian Expeditionary Forces in France, Egypt, East Africa and Mesopotamia, over and above the normal peace expenditure of the Indian Army, had fallen upon Great Britain alone; and the Indian Government was content to let this be so, making no protest, no offer even to help in our need.

War Taxation.

30. Till this year there has been no raising of the Indian income-tax, no war-profit tax.

Compulsory Service for Whites and Eurasians.

31. This too has come about only since Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff left India, 12 months after compulsory service was enacted in England.

Combing-out of the Civilian Officials.

32. At the time of the Return put before us, probably July, 1916, only 182 civilian officials, less than 1 per cent. of the available men, had been given leave to join the Indian Army Reserve, and then only, according to Sir Beauchamp Duff, for service in India itself. This Sir Beauchamp attributed to the India Office in this country. It may be so, and I am not clear that there has as yet been any marked change in this matter.

Mobilization of Industry.

33. We had evidence that the barge-building yards at Calcutta and Bombay were lying empty for the first year of the war. The Tata Steel Works were continuing to produce steel rails for Indian railways. It was only late in 1916 that Government control of the works of the Tata Company and the Bengal Iron and Steel Company was introduced as in Great Britain.

Restriction of Imports.

34. This seems not to have occurred to the Indian Government till this year, but they had no necessity to keep up the exchange. The series of Government demands that were, however, made on the home country without the perception that they could not possibly be carried out argues a lack of appreciation of the seriousness of war.

The raising of new Units for the Army.

35. No new units were raised till this year, although the population of India is 315,000,000, of whom about 50,000,000 come from fighting races.

Commissions for Native Officers.

36. Although they were very short of officers in the Indian regiments, executive commissions were still, as before the war, withheld from the natives of India. Indeed, even now it is not the King's commission, but the Viceroy's that is given to the native cadet in the new army. We had no evidence, however, that this omission was not the fault of the War Office at home.

Frank Co-operation with the Princes and People of India.

37. This, which would have meant so much to England and India, was not adopted. Instead even the Viceroy's Executive Council was passed over, and the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief governed and thought alone. No generous appeal for help was made to India, no more generous attitude shown to India. On the last point I do not know that there has as yet been any change.

Supply of Shell and Stores from India.

38. This has only recently been taken seriously in hand. With America, Japan and Australia to draw on by submarine-safe routes, the steps could have been taken as well in 1915, and a safe supply to Mesopotamia by a short route would now have been available. Colonel Collins, M.P., observed, even last September, that the clothes of the coolies in Mesopotamia were marked as coming from Manchester.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EVIDENCE AS TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

Effect of want of willingness to help.

39. I cannot resist the conclusion that the above evidence points to a want of willingness to help on the part of the Indian Government—that is on the part of Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff. That this unwillingness affected adversely the expedition to Mesopotamia is obvious. Had they thrown themselves heart and soul in to getting India to do all that was humanly possible both in men and material the whole course of the war might have been altered. That was not done even in this country at first, but the attitude of the Indian Government prevented the effort being made in the spring of 1915 as was done here, and it prevented the success of their own expedition in Mesopotamia.

The Defence of the Government.

40. The answer made by the Government of India to this charge is that the dangers in India were such that what might seem obstructiveness was in reality honest, if mistaken, caution. There was acutely present to their minds danger from (*a*) mutiny, (*b*) a native rising in India, (*c*) an invasion from Afghanistan or from the frontier tribes.

The Danger to India.

41. It is natural to assume that, since the attitude taken up by Lord Hardinge and the Commander-in-Chief has come under open criticism at home, every effort will have been made to colour the risks in India as darkly as possible. The Secretary of State has prepared and put before us a Memorandum detailing as fully as possible the internal troubles which India has gone through. It is difficult to summarise, and the whole cannot now be published. There have been more than the usual number of dacoities; there have been curious semi-religious theories about the Germans; Hindus have been murdered by Mohamedans; there have been rumours of gun-running plots; the police got wind of some general troop trouble, and a native post or two seem doubtfully to have thrown off their allegiance—less than a dozen men. But there has been no armed rising, and the capture of 50 revolvers by revolutionaries is singled out as the most serious incident. No mutiny has taken place in India sufficiently serious to call for disarmament or for corporate punishment of any unit. Germans were not interned in India till long after they were interned here in England, which omission testifies against any real fear of serious internal trouble. The Amir has shown great loyalty, and the seven "heavy" raids to which Sir Beauchamp Duff bore witness actually caused only 338 casualties. On July 2nd, 1915, after the period in which reluctance to help was most marked, Sir Beauchamp cabled to Lord Kitchener, "Though I have had to meet three heavy raids, the frontier has been fairly quiet." The other raids, such as they were, took place subsequently.

The Seriousness of the Risk.

42. Therefore it was not actual trouble but possible dangers to British rule in India behind which the Administration must shelter itself. Of these possible dangers both Lord Kitchener and General Sir Edmund Barrow should, from their long residence in India, be well able to judge; yet no administrators are more severe in their criticism of the attitude of the Indian Government than these two. There is always danger in this world: it is a question of degree.

The Council not consulted.

43. Had the possible dangers been of a serious character, it is to me inconceivable that the Viceroy should never have seen fit to consult his Council on the relative urgency of the demands made on the Indian Army by India and by the Home Government. Real danger in India must have entailed the consulting of the Council, more especially in March, 1915, when the peremptory order was issued from Whitehall. That they were not consulted is evidence that the danger did not then exist to the degree now put forward.

Suppression of a Modern Rebellion.

44. Danger to British rule in India from a rising of the people, or from a mutiny, has obviously become much less since the year 1857. Railways, the telegraph, the helio, wireless telegraphy, motor transport, magazine rifles, machine guns, aeroplanes, armoured cars, all these costly developments of modern warfare are beyond the reach of insurgents,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000056

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

and place even a few Regular troops in a position of immeasurable superiority. Furthermore, during a great war, the power of ruthless repression—falling on the just as well as on the unjust—is little likely to be too closely scrutinised, and adds greatly to the decisive power of the Executive.

Attitude displayed in other ways.

45. In any case it does not appear that the objection to the denuding of India of troops can be an excuse for the attitude of the Indian Government displayed in other matters. Danger in India cannot account for the want of energy shown in India, for the non-mobilisation of industry, for the selfish financial attitude, for the objection to building a Tigris railway (two-foot six-inches gauge) because "progress on railways in this country (India) would have to be stopped," for the reluctance to use British Territorials, for the want of touch with their own expedition, for the ignorant advice given as regards the advance on Bagdad. Nor even can it account for the medical breakdown, since surely the actual needs of an army in the field must come before the problematic needs of an army on the frontier. It would appear that, in fact, the Army Administration in India was jealous of the Army at home; they wished to retain the magnitude of their command; they felt they were neglected, "out of the picture," and they determined, perhaps unconsciously, to be obstructive. It will be unfortunate if an attitude of this sort is passed over.

Attitude a Calamity.

46. Such an attitude is held unpatriotic in a private citizen; it is worse than unpatriotic in a British official; and in men in the positions occupied by Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff it has been a calamity for England.

FINDINGS.

47. I find that, throughout the tenure of office of Lord Hardinge, the Government of India showed little desire to help and some desire actually to obstruct the successful prosecution of the war.

48. I find that the responsibility for the Mesopotamian failure of 1915-16 rests principally on the Government of India, in that they gave ill-informed advice and did not throw themselves and the resources of India into the energetic conduct of the war.

49. I find that the Government of India consisted in fact of the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, and the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff.

50. I find that no blame should be attributed to anyone, civil or military, in this country for the initiation, consideration or sanction of the advance to Bagdad in 1915. I am equally convinced that the delay caused by the consideration of the advance in this country did not retard or adversely affect in any way the chances of that advance.

51. I find that the advance on Bagdad failed because the transport was insufficient and the force ill-found.

52. I find that the relief of Kut failed because the transport was insufficient and the force ill-found.

53. I find that the troops maintained the best traditions of the Service, that the generalship at the front was fair, but that General Townshend alone inspired in his men that confidence and devotion without which victories such as the first battle of Kut and Ctesiphon are impossible.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Steps should be taken at once to put the Indian Army under the control of the War Office in Whitehall. During the conduct of a world war it is essential that there should be unity of control. To have an army in India (or an army in Egypt) independent of the orders of the War Office must lead to inefficiency. I, and I believe all my colleagues, were impressed very much with the energy displayed by the War Office directly they took over the control of the Army in Mesopotamia, and with the rapid improvement in the efficiency of that force. The same energy applied to the Army in India might yet provide us with new units and increased material from that country with its 315,000,000 inhabitants. The objections that were raised to such control by Sir Beauchamp Duff early in the war can no longer carry weight.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000073

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

2. All the evidence before us showed that the Indian Reserve system had completely broken down. The old system seems to have been quite unsound as a military expedient, and an inquiry should be initiated at once to report on the most suitable substitute, to provide reservists not only for the rank and file, but also for an efficient reserve of officers.

3. Either the inquiry suggested above or the Indian Administration itself should immediately consider whether the old-fashioned prejudice against giving the King's Commission to natives of India can not be set aside during this war. Even with the invaluable assistance given by the civilians who flocked to the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, the evidence given before us showed a lamentable shortage of officers with the Indian Regiments which must adversely affect their fighting value. There seems no reason to suppose from the Mesopotamian campaigns that Indians, as fighting men, are any less capable than Turks, who have their own officers under some German guidance. Indian officers under British guidance should do as well.

4. We had evidence that the use of the censorship in Mesopotamia did much to injure the morale of the troops. For some time after the medical breakdown no letters home were permitted except on the printed postcards, of which there were few or none available at the front. It seems clear to me that the censorship was used to prevent people at home from knowing what the troops were suffering. This is not the proper use of the censorship, and is a point that should be made clear now to all the various General Officers Commanding Expeditionary Forces.

5. While concurring in the Recommendations in Part XII, paragraphs 31 and 32 of the Majority Report (which relate to the officers of the Indian Army), I wish to record my conviction, drawn not from evidence before the Commission but from some experience of the two armies, that the system of officering the King's African Rifles in Africa is superior to the Indian system. The King's African Rifles officers are officers of British regiments who are attached to the well-paid African Rifles for a period which in the general case does not exceed five or six years, so that the officer never loses touch with his profession at home or acquires the oriental lethargy that saps the vitality of those kept too long in tropical countries.

6. The other recommendation made by the majority in which I concur is that in Part XII, paragraphs 34 and 35 (relating to medical matters). But I would urge that no re-organisation of the Indian (or other) medical service can be satisfactory which leaves the filling of the senior posts to the ordinary promotion of seniority. In no branch of the service is it more important that the higher direction should be filled by selecting the men who have kept up to date. Long and stereotyped service in a peace garrison may indeed give the organising experience necessary for a campaign—though even that by no means follows—but it certainly does not enable a doctor to keep in touch with the latest discoveries of a rapidly-changing science. I recommend that a Board of Selection, recruited in large part outside Army circles, should select for all promotion above the rank of Major. The same Board might well make recommendations on sanitary, hospital and equipment matters.

7. In one of the Papers put before us by the Indian Government, in order to justify the contrast between the attitude of India and the attitude of the self-governing Dominions, they write as follows—" The self-governing Dominions deny to India the full privileges of citizenship. India again, though not of her own volition, is practically a free market for the trade of the Empire, whereas the colonies impose upon her trade . . . . a heavy handicap in the shape of protective tariffs ; and are at liberty, as it would be urged, to equip themselves for an increased outlay on Imperial defence by methods from which India is debarred."

My last recommendation is that we should no longer deny to Indians " the full privileges of citizenship " ; but should allow them a large share in the government of their own country and in the control of that Bureaucracy which in this war, uncontrolled by public opinion, has failed to rise to British standards. Lord Kitchener said that it would be better to lose India than to lose the war. It would certainly be better to lose India than to lose that for which we are fighting the war—the glorious traditions of a people old in liberty.

(Signed) JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD.

17.5.17.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000045

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

APPENDIX I.

"VINCENT-BINGLEY" REPORT.

From

THE COMMISSION APPOINTED TO ENQUIRE INTO THE MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN MESOPOTAMIA.

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, ARMY DEPARTMENT.

SIMLA.
June 29, 1916.

SIR,

In accordance with the instructions conveyed in your letter No. H.-2418, dated March 31st, 1916, we have the honour to submit the following report on the arrangements made for the collection, treatment, and removal of the sick and wounded during the recent operations in Mesopotamia. As the Government of India are aware, the Commission, which was originally composed of two members only (Sir William Vincent and Major-General Bingley), was first appointed by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief on March 2nd, 1916, with directions to enquire into the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia during and subsequent to January, 1916, and to report the conclusions arrived at to the Chief of the General Staff.

2. On receipt of these orders the Commissioners then appointed proceeded at once to Bombay, where a number of sick and wounded who had recently come from Mesopotamia were detained in hospital. Several of the hospitals in Bombay were visited, and various witnesses were examined, many of whom, however, could not be questioned at any great length in the time available, as they were just about to sail for England in the hospital steamer "Assaye." After completing as far as possible their enquiries at Bombay, the Commissioners went to Basra and continued their investigations there. At this stage of the proceedings the terms of reference were modified so as to include in the scope of the enquiry the medical arrangements made for the campaign during the last four months of 1915. From Basra the Commissioners proceeded to Amara, 135 miles up the Tigris. There they recorded the statements of various witnesses, and inspected the arrangements made for the reception and accommodation of the wounded at the different hospitals. After finishing their investigations at Amara, they travelled by river steamer up the Tigris to Wadi, about 270 miles from Basra, where the headquarters of the Tigris Force were encamped. Here fresh evidence was recorded, the arrangements for accommodating sick and wounded were further investigated, and the Commissioners had an opportunity of testing, by personal observation, how far the arrangements for the evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield to the field ambulances and hospitals at Wadi were satisfactory. From Wadi the Commissioners returned to Basra, where revised instructions were received from the Government of India. A copy of the letter and of the enclosure containing these instructions is annexed to this report. These instructions made the following important changes in the terms of reference:—

(*a*) Mr. E. A. Ridsdale was appointed a member of the Commission.

(*b*) The Commission was directed to report the result of its enquiry to the Government of India.

(*c*) The scope of the enquiry was extended, so as to include the whole of the operations in Mesopotamia from November, 1914, up to date.

(*d*) The Commission was directed not only to enquire into the adequacy of the medical arrangements, but was instructed to ascertain and assign responsibility for any defects found and to state whether individuals or the system were to blame.

The addition of a new member at this stage placed the Commission in a difficult position, as by this time Sir William Vincent and Major-General Bingley had examined more than 130 witnesses and had completed their investigations up the Tigris. The inclusion of the earlier operations in the scope of the enquiry added a further complication. The enquiries hitherto made had been confined to operations subsequent to September, 1915, although many of the witnesses examined could have given evidence of value on previous phases of the campaign. By this time, moreover, two of the Commissioners had realised the difficulty of obtaining definite and accurate evidence on the detailed points referred to them, in respect of the operations of September, October, and November, 1915, as many of those intimately connected with this portion of the campaign were either besieged in Kut-el-Amara, or had left the country. The difficulty of securing such evidence in regard to still earlier operations was even greater, and it was clear that it would not be possible in many cases to ascertain all the details required by the reference, such for instance as the forecast of preparations considered necessary prior to each action. For these reasons, we asked that the terms of reference might be amended so as to require us to report on actions prior to Ctesiphon in general terms. This request was refused. We wish, therefore, to state that in dealing with the multiplicity of detail apparent in the report, we are necessarily dependent upon the memory of the witnesses for the accuracy of particular statements. A more serious complication arising from this amendment relates to a question of principle, in that it involved the examination of the medical arrangements of the whole expedition. The medical organisation of a force is an integral part of its military organisation, and cannot be considered apart from the latter. We have, therefore, at times found it impossible to examine the working of the medical organisation without at the same time criticising other arrangements which, though not under the control of the medical authorities, indirectly affected the well-being of the sick and wounded. We have endeavoured to avoid this as much as possible, but we have, throughout our enquiries, realised the difficulty of carrying out any comprehensive investigation of medical arrangements as apart from the general military organisation. It is true that any enquiry into the medical arrangements of the winter of 1915–16 would not have been entirely free from this difficulty, but except as regards transport, the causes which led to the breakdown at that period were largely of a temporary and local character, being due to unforeseen circumstances rather than to radical defects in organisation.

3. On receipt of these instructions the necessity of a second tour up the Tigris was carefully considered, and after discussion it was decided that Mr. Ridsdale should proceed to Amara to see the state of affairs there for himself and to collect further evidence, and that the other two members of the Commission should go up the Euphrates to Nasariyeh and continue their enquiries there. In pursuance of this decision, Mr. Ridsdale proceeded to Amara on May 5th, and Sir William Vincent and Major-General Bingley went to Nasariyeh. The

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000085

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

latter two members of the Commission returned to Basra on May 9th, visiting the hospital at Kurna *en route*. On May 13th Mr. Ridsdale rejoined the Commission, and after a short stay at Basra, in order to collect certain statistical information, we proceeded to Bombay, where we arrived on May 22nd. On May 26th we left for Simla, where we completed our investigations. In order to secure the fullest possible information on the points referred to us for enquiry, we have not only examined a large number of witnesses orally, but have endeavoured by personal inspection and enquiry to ascertain the actual state of affairs and to see for ourselves how far the medical arrangements now work satisfactorily. We have visited numerous hospitals and discussed various points with administrative and executive officers. Two of the Commissioners have personally witnessed the evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield, and scrutinised the arrangements made for their reception and accommodation at dressing stations, collecting stations and field ambulances, and all have travelled with convoys of sick and wounded down the Tigris. Further, we have invited many persons, in a position to give evidence of value, to submit written statements of their experiences and opinions, and by the courtesy of Lieut.-General Sir Percy Lake a notice was published in Force Orders inviting anyone who so desired to furnish a statement to the Commission. The 266 statements recorded in the appendix represent the results of our labours.

4. In spite of these efforts, however, we feel that we have laboured under great disadvantage in our enquiry, particularly in respect of the extended scope of our investigation. In the first place, many officers whose testimony would have been of great value—notably Major-General Townshend, Colonel Hehir, I.M.S., Assistant Director of Medical Services, and other officers of the Sixth Division—were, when the enquiry was being made, either besieged in Kut or prisoners of war. We are therefore at an obvious disadvantage in having to criticise their administration without affording them an opportunity of putting forward their views. Many officers intimately connected with particular phases of the campaign had left Mesopotamia before the Commission was appointed, and, being separated from official records, have not been able to give detailed information on particular points to the Commission. In the case of many other important witnesses we have had to be content with written statements, although it is probable that by personal examination detailed information, on various points not referred to in these statements, could have been elicited. Finally, many of the witnesses examined were officers who, when the Commission was conducting its enquiry, were so overwhelmed with current official work that it was impossible for them to collect and furnish detailed statistical information on particular points without real detriment to their public duties. It was manifestly undesirable to ask them during the active prosecution of the campaign to give up much of their time to collect such information. We also much regret that owing to Surgeon-General J. G. MacNeece having left India on sick leave, before our return from Mesopotamia, we were unable to examine him.

5. *Military synopsis.*—As we are required to record our opinions as to the sufficiency of the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia during each phase of the campaign up to the fall of Kut-el-Amara, and as we are directed to bear in mind throughout our proceedings the strategical situation during this period, and the tactical obligations arising therefrom, it seems desirable to preface our criticisms by a short historical *résumé*, so that the sequence of events may be followed and due importance paid to the military considerations involved. For facility of reference a sketch map is added, showing the position of places mentioned in the text.

The campaign in Mesopotamia up to the time of the departure of the Commission may be divided into four phases, viz.:—

I. The landing at Fao, the occupation of Basra and Kurna, and the defeat at Shaiba or Barjasiyah of the Turkish attempt to recapture Basra.
II. The expulsion of the Turks from Persian Arabistan followed by the occupation of Amara on the Tigris, and of Nasariyeh on the Euphrates.
[For convenience the later operations near Nasariyeh have been included in this phase.]
III. The capture of Kut-el-Amara, advance to Ctesiphon, and subsequent retreat to Kut.
IV. The defence of Kut-el-Amara and the unsuccessful attempts to relieve it.

PHASE I.

6. *Landing at Fao. Battle of Sahil. Capture of Basra.*—War was declared on Turkey on October 31st, 1914. Meanwhile preparations had been made for the occupation of Abadan and the protection of the Persian oil-fields by the organisation of a small force under Brigadier-General W. S. Delamain, for service at the head of the Persian Gulf. This force, consisting of the 16th Infantry Brigade with two Indian mountain batteries, was sent to the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab and directed to effect a landing near Fao. This was carried out on November 6th practically without opposition. The main disembarkation took place at Saniyah, opposite Abadan, on November 10th, and on the 15th General Delamain dispersed the Turkish advanced troops at Saihan. On November 16th Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Barrett, the Commander of the 6th Division, who had landed with the 17th Infantry Brigade two days before, defeated the Turks at Sahil or Zain, inflicting heavy losses. As the result of these operations Basra was occupied on November 23rd, its garrison having meanwhile retired to Kurna. Our casualties in these successful engagements amounted to about 800, of which some 500 occurred at Sahil.

Occupation of Kurna.—By the end of November the 18th Infantry Brigade and the remainder of the divisional troops had arrived at Basra, thus completing the concentration of the 6th Division which constituted the Expeditionary Force. Preparations were at once made for an advance on Kurna, 40 miles up the Tigris, which, being at the junction of the Tigris with the Euphrates, is a place of considerable strategic importance. Kurna was captured on December 8th by a force under Major-General C. I. Fry, with the assistance of a naval flotilla. Our losses amounted to 27 killed and 192 wounded. The Turkish Commander, Subhi Bey, late Vali of Basra, surrendered with most of the garrison. The Turks then established themselves near Rotah, six miles above Kurna, with a view to opposing any further advance.

7 *Operations round Ahwaz.*—At this time the Turkish forces were disposed in three areas, viz., on the Euphrates, on the Tigris, and on the Karun. A jehad was preached in Arabistan early in 1915, and a great gathering of Arabs, supported by eight battalions of Turkish regulars with some guns, invaded Persian territory and cut the pipe line leading from the oil-fields on the Karun to Abadan. A couple of Indian battalions with guns were despatched from Basra under Brigadier-General Robinson to protect Ahwaz and support the Sheikh of Mohammerah, whose tribesmen were giving trouble. On March 3rd this small force moved out a few miles to meet the enemy, who was encountered in greatly superior numbers. A retirement to Ahwaz was ordered, and our troops, being closely pressed by swarms of hostile Arabs, suffered somewhat severely. In consequence of this reverse, the 12th Infantry Brigade under Major-General K. S. Davison was sent to Ahwaz a few days later with orders to hold the place and keep the enemy in check until a sufficient force could be spared to expel the Turk and their Arab auxiliaries from Persian Arabistan.

8. Meanwhile it became evident that operations would have to be undertaken on the Euphrates, as well as on the Karun and the Tigris, necessitating the employment of a larger force. It was accordingly decided to reinforce the 6th Division by the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 12th Division, the latter consisting of the 12th, 30th and 33rd Infantry Brigades, together with a Heavy Artillery Brigade and various special units. The force in Mesopotamia was then organized as an Army Corps, the command of which was given to General Sir John Nixon.

9. General Nixon landed at Basra with the Army Corps Staff on April 9th, 1915, and took over command of the force from Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Barrett, who then proceeded to India on sick leave. Certain other changes were made about this time. The command of the 6th Division was given to Major-General C. V. F. Townshend, and that of the 12th Division to Major-

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000a5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

General G. F. Gorringe. Major-General K. S. Davison was replaced in command of the 12th Infantry Brigade by Brigadier-General K. E. Lean, and was appointed Inspector-General of Communications. A Commandant was also appointed for the Base at Basra, where work had considerably increased owing to the arrival of additional troops. Responsibility for the medical arrangements of the force, which had hitherto been vested in Colonel P. Hehir, I.M.S., Assistant Director of Medical Services, 6th Division, devolved on Surgeon-General H. G. Hathaway, Deputy-Director of Medical Services of the Army Corps, who, as in the case of other Heads of Administrative Services, was placed in the organization orders of the force, under Headquarters, Line of Communications.

10. *Battle of Shaiba or Barjasiyah.*—It was known some time before this that the main force of the enemy was concentrating at Nasariyeh on the Euphrates, with a view to an advance on Basra. A cavalry skirmish took place on March 16th, and on April 12th the Turks under Sulaiman Askari Bey attacked our position near Shaiba and were repulsed. The British force consisted of the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 16th and 17th Infantry Brigades with the divisional troops of the 6th Division, the whole under the command of Major-General Fry. On the following day the headquarters and one battalion of the 30th Infantry Brigade arrived at Shaiba under Major-General C. J. Melliss, and the latter as senior officer took over command. The enemy renewed his attacks, but was repulsed by a successful counterstroke. On April 14th our troops assumed the offensive, and after much hard fighting drove the Turks out of their position near Barjasiyah with a loss estimated at 6,000. Our cavalry followed up their retreat as far as Nakhailah, and the enemy fled to Khamisiyah, nearly 90 miles away, harassed in their flight by the Arabs, their former allies. Our losses in these brilliant and decisive operations amounted to 194 killed and 1,132 wounded.

PHASE II.

11. The security of the base at Basra having been assured by our victory at Barjasiyah, it was decided to despatch the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 12th Division under Major-General Gorringe to Ahwaz, which was blockaded by eight battalions of Turks with eight guns, supported by 10,000 hostile Arabs, under the command of Mahomed Daghestani Pasha. The latter's object was to get between Basra and the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab while threatening our communications with Ahwaz via the Karun River.

12. *Operations in Arabistan.*—Major-General Gorringe arrived at Ahwaz with the leading troops of his force on April 24th, and the Turks at once retreated to the Kharkeh River. General Gorringe followed in pursuit and crossed the Kharkeh River on May 7th, whereupon the Turks retreated towards Amara. He then turned his attention to the Bani Taruf, a recalcitrant and warlike Arab tribe which had identified itself strongly with the Turkish cause. Their stronghold at Khafajiyah was destroyed and the tribesmen defeated and dispersed. The operations of General Gorringe's force terminated with a series of demonstrations made with a portion of his troops from Bisaitin against the Turkish force which lay between him and Amara. They had the desired effect, which was to prevent reinforcements from joining the Turkish forces on the Tigris in time to oppose General Townshend's division, then about to advance from Kurna on Amara. By June 30th the task allotted to General Gorringe had been successfully completed. The operations covered a period of seven weeks, and were carried out in very hot weather under difficulties entailing severe exertions on the part of the troops. Casualties in action only amounted to 43, but there was much sickness, sunstroke and dysentery being the prevailing complaints.

13. While General Gorringe was clearing the Turks and their Arab auxiliaries out of Arabistan, Major-General Townshend and the 6th Division were preparing to move up the Tigris to Amara. No advance could be made until the end of May as all available river craft were employed on the Karun. Owing to the flooded state of the country no movements of troops were possible except afloat. This entailed the provision of *bellums** for the infantry and the preparation of specially constructed rafts for guns and ambulances.

14. *Action near Kurna and occupation of Amara.*—On May 31st Major-General Townshend attacked the enemy's positions, which consisted of two fortified localities, standing like islands on the face of the waters, from two to five miles north of Kurna. Supported by the fire of a naval flotilla and of guns mounted on barges, the operations were highly successful. The enemy's positions were captured with only 25 casualties, and the Turks retreated up the Tigris in steamers and *mahailas*,† pursued by our naval flotilla. General Townshend and the leading troops of the 6th Division reached Amara on June 3rd and occupied the town without opposition. The captures resulting from these operations included 17 guns, 1,773 prisoners, 4 river steamers, exclusive of 2 sunk, besides a number of lighters. The weather throughout these operations was intensely hot and caused considerable sickness.

15. As soon as the Karun operations were completed and Amara captured, instructions were issued for an advance up the Euphrates. The objective of the force, which consisted of the 12th Division under Major-General Gorringe, was Nasariyeh, some 85 miles from Kurna. The actions round Shaiba in April had shown that the possession of Nasariyeh by the Turks constituted a permanent menace to Basra.† Apart from this, Nasariyeh was the centre from which political influence could best be exercised over the powerful Arab tribes of the Euphrates plain. Moreover, it was a place of considerable strategic importance, as it commanded the southern exit of the Shatt-el-Hai, one of the few existing lines of communication between the Tigris and Euphrates.

16. The approach to Nasariyeh from Kurna is via the old course of the Euphrates and the Hammar Lake to Hakika, where a channel known as the Gurmah Safha gives access to the main stream of the Euphrates, some 25 miles below Nasariyeh. At the time of General Gorringe's advance the Hammar Lake could be navigated by steamers drawing 5 feet as far as Hakika. By the end of July the depth of water in the lake had fallen to 3 feet and only small stern-wheelers could be used. After July all steamer navigation stopped, and troops and stores had to be poled across the lake in *bellums*, which in places had to be dragged through the mud. It will be understood from this how great were the difficulties which General Gorringe had to overcome, especially in regard to the evacuation of the sick and wounded during the low-water season.

17. *Action at Gurmah Safha.*—By July 4th the vessels of the naval flotilla and the troops had been passed over an obstruction made by the Turks near Hakika, and collected at a point about 2½ miles below the junction of the Gurmah Safha with the Euphrates. On July 5th an attack was made on the enemy's advanced position, which was on both banks of the Euphrates, commanding the Gurmah Safha channel. The position was carried by the 30th Infantry Brigade under Major-General Melliss soon after mid-day. Our captures included 4 guns and 132 prisoners at a cost to us of 26 killed and 85 wounded.

18. *Battle of Nasariyeh.*—The Turks were now found to have taken up a series of positions astride the Euphrates about 5 miles below Nasariyeh, with both flanks resting on marshes. General Gorringe accordingly moved up to Asani, some two miles below the enemy's advanced defences and occupied entrenchments on both banks. An unsuccessful attack on the Turkish position was made on the night of July 13th. The next 10 days were spent by General Gorringe in perfecting arrangements for a decisive assault. This was delivered at 5 a.m. on July 24th, the 12th Infantry Brigade being on the left bank and the 30th Infantry Brigade on the right. By noon the enemy's main position was captured, some

* The term *bellum* is used to describe the small rowing boats used on the Shatt-el-Arab. On the Euphrates the term includes sailing boats carrying an average load of 20 tons.

† The term *mahaila* is used to describe the big sailing boats used on the Tigris, carrying an average load of 30 tons.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00008c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

500 of the enemy being killed in their trenches. The Sadanawiyah position, which constituted the enemy's last line of defence, was captured in the afternoon, and by 6.30 p.m. the Turks were in full retreat across the marshes. Nasariyeh was occupied without opposition on the 25th. Our losses in these skilfully planned and brilliantly executed operations amounted to 104 killed and 429 wounded. Our captures consisted of over 1,000 prisoners and 17 guns.

19. No further operations took place in the neighbourhood of Nasariyeh until January 7th ,1916, when a mixed force under Major-General Gorringe moved out 12 miles north-west to Butaniyah, for the purpose of demonstrating towards Shattra. It was hoped that the Turks might be induced to weaken their force opposing General Aylmer on the Tigris by detaching troops to guard the lines of approach along the Shatt-el-Hai. Although this demonstration failed to accomplish this, it succeeded in attracting large numbers of hostile Arabs who might otherwise have joined the Turkish forces round Kut.

20. *Minor operations round Nasariyeh.*—The fighting round Nasariyeh at this time included three minor actions. The first was an attack made on January 14th on a small force by some 3,000 Arabs, between Butaniyah and Suwaij, while General Gorringe was carrying out a personal reconnaissance. It took the form of a rear-guard action in which our troops fell back with great steadiness to their camp. The Arab casualties numbered close on 200, our own amounting to 4 killed and 36 wounded and missing. The next action took place on February 7th, during the withdrawal of the force from Butaniyah to Nasariyeh. Our troops, under the command of Brigadier-General E. C. Tidswell, were attacked by some 5,000 Arabs. As the column fell back, the enemy was reinforced by other Arabs from the villages along the line of retirement with the result that it was attacked in flank as well as in rear. The enemy's losses were heavy and amounted to about 1,000. Our casualties numbered 373, of whom 148 were killed. To punish certain Arabs who had previously been friendly, but who had treacherously turned on our troops during their retirement, a column was sent out by Brigadier-General H. T. Brooking before dawn on February 9th to surprise, attack and destroy their villages. This was carried out very successfully and with trifling losses.

PHASE III.

21. While General Gorringe was driving the enemy away from Nasariyeh, Turkish forces were concentrating under Nur-ud-din Pasha at Kut-el-Amara, a place of great strategic importance. This place accordingly became our principal objective.

22. Owing to shortage of river steamers and the difficulties of navigation during the low-water season, the transfer from the Euphrates of the troops and guns which were required on the Tigris, proved a slow process. The concentration of the force which consisted of the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 6th Division reinforced by various units, the whole under the command of Major-General Townshend, was not completed until September 12th when it moved forward by march route from Ali-el-Gharbi along the river bank, accompanied by its shipping. Sannaiyat was reached on the 15th and there a halt was made until the 25th. Intense heat prevailed with a temperature varying from 110 to 116 degrees in the shade.

23. *Battle of Es Sinn or Kut-el-Amara.*—Nur-ud-din Pasha's army was found to be occupying an entrenched position astride the Tigris at Es Sinn, some 8 miles from where our troops were then encamped. The position was some 12 miles in extent and consisted of skilfully concealed entrenchments commanding ground which was absolutely flat and devoid of cover. General Townshend decided to turn the enemy's left and so threaten his line of retreat to Baghdad. At the same time, in order to deceive Nur-ud-din Pasha as to the direction of the real attack, preparations were made with the object of giving the impression that the principal attack would be on the right bank against the southern portion of the enemy's position. This ruse proved completely successful. The 16th and 17th Infantry Brigades, under Brigadier-General Delamain, made a night march round the Turkish left flank, while the 18th Infantry Brigade, under Major-General Fry, held the enemy in front. By 2 p.m. on September 28th the greater portion of the enemy's northern defences were in our hands, and the remainder were evacuated by him during the night. A pursuit was organised on the 29th, and the cavalry came into touch with the Turks on October 1st, but had to wait for the support of the infantry which was coming up in steamers, and the progress of the latter was unfortunately delayed by difficulties of navigation. It was not till the 5th that the column reached Azizieh, and by then the enemy had retired into his defensive position at Ctesiphon where he was reinforced.

24. The Turks lost some 4,000 men in this battle, of whom 1,153 fell into our hands. They also lost 14 guns. Our casualties amounted to 94 killed and 1,113 wounded. The battle of Kut-el-Amara, or Es Sinn, as it is sometimes called, secured for us the whole of the Basra *vilayat*. It was the crowning point of an almost unbroken record of successes. The strength of the enemy's defences, the improved quality of his troops and the inconvenience caused by shortage of land and river transport had, by this time, become very apparent. Difficulties in regard to the collection and evacuation of the wounded owing to a higher percentage of losses, the inadequacy of the medical services, and the growing length of the line of communication had also come prominently to notice, thus foreshadowing the greater difficulties which were to be experienced in later battles.

25. The next six weeks, which were utilised by the Turks in bringing down additional troops from Mosul, were spent by General Townshend in bringing up supplies, transport and reinforcements from Basra, preparatory to a further advance as soon as orders on the subject were received. These preliminary measures were again delayed by the shortage of steamers and the difficulty of navigation during the low-water season. The advance was recommenced on November 19th, and by the 21st the force, with its shipping, was concentrated on the left bank of the Tigris at Laj. A reconnaissance of the enemy's position showed that his defences lay astride the Tigris covering the approaches to Baghdad which is situated some 18 miles to the north-west. They had been under construction for some months, and consisted of an extensive system of entrenchments forming two main positions. Close to the Tigris on the left bank and midway between the two defensive lines which were about two miles apart, was the Arch of Ctesiphon—a prominent landmark frequently referred to in the statements of witnesses.

26. *Battle of Ctesiphon.*—General Townshend, after a night march from Laj, attacked the Turkish position on the morning of the 22nd at its centre and on its north-east flank. His objective at the centre was a large redoubt referred to by witnesses and described in operation orders as the "V. P.," *i.e.*, "the Vital Point." There was severe fighting throughout the day resulting in the capture of the first position and more than 1,300 prisoners. Our troops then penetrated to the second position, capturing 8 guns, and established themselves in the enemy's trenches. Here they were subjected to heavy counter-attacks by fresh troops. Shortly before nightfall it was found necessary, owing to diminished numbers, to order the withdrawal of our troop to the first position which they had captured earlier in the day. November 23rd was spent in reorganising the force and in collecting the wounded. Owing to heavy losses, General Townshend deemed it inadvisable to renew the offensive. The Turks made heavy attacks all along the line during the night, but were everywhere repulsed. On the 24th and 25th the wounded and prisoners were evacuated to Laj where steamers were waiting to receive them, and General Townshend, under cover of an offensive movement, then shortened his line so as to bring his flank nearer the river. The enemy received numerous reinforcements on the 25th and on the afternoon of that day large columns were seen moving inland as if to turn the British right flank, while hostile cavalry threatened its rear.

27. Finding himself faced by superior forces and short of supplies, General Townshend withdrew to Laj under cover of darkness and remained there during the 26th. Laj, however, did not lend itself to defence, so he fell back during the night of the 27th to Azizieh. On the morning of the 30th, continuing his retirement, he halted at Umm-al-Tubal, where he had to remain, as several of his steamers were aground. The Turks attacked in great

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000041

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

strength at daylight on December 1st. A fierce fight ensued in which they lost heavily. Taking advantage of a successful counter-attack made by the Cavalry Brigade, General Townshend broke off the fight and retired. Shadi was reached on the night of December 1st after a march of 30 miles, and on the morning of the 3rd the 6th Division, greatly exhausted, reached Kut-el-Amara. General Townshend then decided, with Sir John Nixon's approval, to defend the place until its relief could be effected by the reinforcements which were known to be *en route* from oversea. Defences were improved, the sick and wounded were evacuated, and some 1,300 prisoners, who had been brought away from Ctesiphon, were despatched to Basra. On December 6th the 6th Cavalry Brigade left Kut and marched to Ali-el-Gharbi. By December 7th the Turks had closed round the defences, and the investment of Kut was complete.

28. Our losses in the battle of Ctesiphon and in subsequent operations up to the investment of Kut amounted to 692 killed and 3,852 wounded. The evacuation of the wounded from these actions was delayed by the attacks of Arabs on the line of communication below Kut-el-Amara, which compelled the steamers to turn back more than once. These attacks also held up Sir John Nixon and his staff, who were *en route* from Ctesiphon to Basra, and, pending the arrival of the troops sent to their assistance, the escort, soldier clerks, batmen and orderlies on the headquarters steamer, commanded by Major-General Kemball, had to be landed in order to repel these marauders.

PHASE IV.

29. The 6th Cavalry Brigade at Ali-el-Gharbi was at once reinforced by the 28th Infantry Brigade and some guns from Basra. Behind this covering detachment it was decided to organise for the relief of Kut a force composed of two divisions from overseas, designated the Tigris Corps, the command of which was entrusted to Lieut.-General Sir Fenton Aylmer. The Corps consisted of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, the 3rd Division under Major-General H. D'U. Keary, and the 7th Division under Major-General Sir George Younghusband, with corps and divisional troops.

30. General Aylmer informed Sir John Nixon on December 15th, 1915, that in his judgment it would be hazardous to rely on General Townshend's holding out beyond January 15th, and that it was therefore advisable to relieve Kut by January 10th. He accordingly recommended that the troops then concentrating at Ali-el-Gharbi should move about January 3rd. Sir John Nixon concurred, and on December 27th gave definite orders for the advance to commence on that date.

31. On January 4th, 1916, General Aylmer's leading troops under General Younghusband advanced towards Sheikh Saad, moving by both banks of the Tigris. The instructions given him were to hold the enemy to his position with sufficient vigour to make him show his hand, pending the arrival of the remainder of the Corps under General Aylmer himself. General Younghusband's column got in touch with the enemy on the morning of January 6th. The Turks were entrenched astride the Tigris some 4 or 5 miles east of Sheikh Saad. General Younghusband's plan was to hold the enemy's left and to attack and turn his right. This plan did not succeed, owing to the presence of hostile cavalry and the superior forces of the enemy on this flank.

32. *Battle of Sheikh Saad.*—General Aylmer arrived on the morning of January 7th with the rest of the Corps and ordered a general attack. Major-General Younghusband directed operations on the left bank and Major General Kemball on the right. Heavy fighting took place throughout the day, and by evening the enemy's trenches on the right bank had been captured together with 2 guns and some 600 prisoners. On the left bank, where our main attack was intended to develop, our troops were unable to make any progress. They had to entrench opposite to the Turks, who held tenaciously to their positions. All attempts to turn their left flank failed, owing to counter attacks and enveloping movements from the north. On the following day the troops were very fatigued and little progress was made. On January 9th the Turks abandoned their position and retired upstream. The pursuit proved very arduous owing to heavy rain throughout the day, which made the sodden and boggy ground difficult to march over. The losses of the enemy were estimated to be about 4,500, and our own casualties amounted to 4,262. Our losses in British officers were especially heavy, amounting to no less than 133. The exhaustion of the troops made it difficult to follow up the enemy, so for the next few days the force halted, while the Turks withdrew to the Wadi position, some 7 or 8 miles further up river from Sheikh Saad.

33. *Battle of the Wadi.*—On the 12th General Aylmer concentrated his whole force on the left bank, and on the 13th attacked the Wadi position. His plan was to turn this position by a wide outflanking movement to the north. This was to be carried out by General Younghusband with the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 19th, 21st and 35th Infantry Brigades, supported by field artillery, while Major-General Kemball with the 28th Infantry Brigade, supported by the heavy artillery of the Corps, was to hold the enemy to his front. The 9th Brigade was to remain in reserve at Sheikh Saad.

General Younghusband's force moved into position by a night march on the 12th-13th, and then advanced in a south-westerly direction towards Umm-el-Hannah, between the Suwaikieh marsh and the Tigris, with a view to cutting off the enemy's retreat. This movement was, however, checked by hostile troops occupying trenches facing north, and as our troops endeavoured to outflank the enemy they were in turn outflanked themselves. Before long, therefore, General Younghusband was held up on an east and west line to the rear of the enemy's main positions. Meanwhile General Kemball attacked on the Wadi itself. His troops came under a most destructive rifle and machine gun fire at close range, which soon brought his advance to a standstill. During the night of the 13th-14th the enemy evacuated the Wadi position and retired into the Umm-el-Hannah defile, some 3 miles further west, where a strong defensive position, stretching along a front of 1,300 yards from the Tigris to the Suwaikieh marsh, had been in preparation for some time.

34. On January 14th the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 7th Division, under General Younghusband, worked forward to a position from which they could observe the enemy's defences. The exhaustion of a considerable portion of the force and the necessity for evacuating the wounded precluded the idea of any immediate advance. So the day was spent in consolidating positions and in bringing the wounded down to the river bank. The latter operation was greatly impeded by heavy rain which made the ground slippery and difficult to traverse. The losses of the enemy in this action were not as heavy as our own, as they were well sheltered in trenches throughout the day, and retired in good order after dark. Our own casualties amounted to 1,601, including 40 British officers.

35. On January 19th Sir John Nixon had to relinquish command of the Force owing to ill-health, and was replaced by Sir Percy Lake.

36. *Unsuccessful attack on the Umm-el-Hannah position.*—The weather now became extraordinarily bad. Heavy rain caused the river to come down in flood, overflowing its banks in places and converting the ground on either bank into a veritable bog. The Wadi stream came down in spate, and boisterous winds greatly interfered with the construction of a bridge across the Tigris. In spite of these unfavourable conditions, the 19th and 35th Infantry Brigades advanced towards the Umm-el-Hannah defile and entrenched themselves facing the enemy. At the same time troops were ferried over gradually to Orah on the right bank, where they came under the orders of Major-General Keary, commanding the 3rd Division, part of which had arrived at the front. The object of this move was to establish our artillery in positions from which they could enfilade the enemy's trenches, as without such artillery co-operation the capture of the enemy's position presented extraordinary difficulties. By the morning of the 20th we had 14 guns in their emplacements ready to bombard the Turkish trenches. On the 16th, 17th and 18th weather conditions grew from bad to worse, and the men suffered great hardships from cold and exposure. On the nights of the 18th-19th and 20th-21st the 7th Division again moved forward and entrenched within 500 to 600 yards of the enemy's

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00002f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

line, while 30 guns were placed in positions suitable for a bombardment by direct fire. The 20th was devoted to systematic shelling of the Turkish position from both banks of the Tigris, and during the night of the 20-21st the infantry of the 7th Division pushed forward their advanced lines preparatory to the assault. By 6 a.m. all was ready for the attack, which was to be directed against the enemy's right, under cover of an intensive artillery bombardment. The main attack rushed the Turkish trenches near the river, and about 100 men got into them and held them for over an hour. Troops were moved forward to their support under heavy fire, but they drifted too far to the right, with the result that they failed to give the impetus required on the left, where their assistance was urgently needed. Profiting by this, the Turks made a vigorous local counter-attack, and our troops, overwhelmed by superior numbers, were forced back and compelled to vacate the trenches which they had captured. Orders were at once issued for a second assault. Meanwhile it had begun to rain, and it continued to do so without intermission until the next day. After another artillery bombardment the attack was renewed at 2 p.m.; but the heavy rain had made the ground difficult to move over, advances by rushes were impossible, the ground to be traversed was destitute of cover, and the enemy's fire was heavy and well directed. Thus, though every effort was made to press forward, not an inch of ground could be gained.

37. The weather conditions rapidly became worse, the ground being converted into a sea of mud over which progress was almost impossible. The troops could do no more than maintain themselves where they were until dark, when they were withdrawn to the trenches they had previously held. As far as possible all the wounded lying between our forward position and that in rear were brought in during the withdrawal. Some, however, were overlooked, and others could not be got at owing to their proximity to the enemy's trenches. Arrangements were accordingly made on the 22nd for a six hours' armistice in order to bring in the dead and remove any wounded who might have been left out. It was found that few but dead remained, as all the wounded who had fallen close to the enemy's trenches had been removed by the Turks. Any idea of an immediate offensive was prohibited by the need for giving the troops a rest after the heavy losses they had suffered. The enemy's casualties were estimated at 2,000. Our own amounted to 2,741, including 78 British officers.

38. The breakdown in the medical arrangements which undoubtedly occurred after these three battles would have been obviated to a great extent if the attempt to relieve Kut-el-Amara had been postponed until the arrival of the field ambulances and clearing hospitals of the 3rd and 7th Divisions from France. As it happened, the supposed necessity of relieving General Townshend's garrison by January 15th demanded an advance not later than January 4th, and the field ambulances of the Tigris Corps had accordingly to be improvised from any sources available at the time. As explained further on in this report, the arrangements made proved totally inadequate and led to the serious breakdown referred to.

39. When General Townshend decided, with Sir John Nixon's approval, to defend Kut-el-Amara, he did so on the understanding that he would be relieved within a month or six weeks, as he had only supplies with him for that period. Kut was completely invested on December 7th, so January 15th represented approximately the date up to which his supplies would last if issues were continued on the normal scale. Sir John Nixon and General Aylmer were thus, in our opinion, fully justified in assuming that it would be hazardous to rely on General Townshend's holding out beyond that date. Apart, however, from the question of supplies, General Townshend sent message after message urging the necessity for his early relief. Shortage of rifle ammunition, deficiencies in artillery ammunition, heavy losses, the reinforcement of the enemy, the falling-off in moral of some of his troops, and doubts as to the ability of the garrison to withstand a determined assault by superior numbers, were all urged by him as reason for the advance of the relief force at the earliest possible date.

40. On January 22nd General Townshend informed General Aylmer that by putting his troops on half rations he could last out for 27 days, i.e., up to February 18th. Three days later he intimated that by utilising additional supplies found in Kut, and by killing his horses and mules, he could hold out for another 84 days. He was then asked on February 3rd by Sir Percy Lake whether it would be correct to assume that he had sufficient supplies to feed his garrison up to April 17th. He replied on February 5th that by killing his animals and living on grain and horse flesh he could hold out up to that date. In point of fact he exceeded this limit by 12 days.

The period between January 21st and the first week of March was one of preparation. The concentration of the 3rd Division was completed, and the medical units of this and the 7th Division also reached the front, though without their transport. On March 7th orders were issued for an advance from the position held by the 3rd Division on the right bank of the Tigris near Orah to that portion of the enemy's line which lay between the Sinn Aftar and Dujailah redoubts. The troops detailed for this operation were grouped in three columns. The 9th, 28th and 36th Infantry Brigades under Major-General Kemball made up Columns "A" and "B," while Column "C" consisted of the 3rd Division under Major-General Keary.

41. *Attack on Es Sinn.*—General Aylmer's plan was to capture the Es Sinn position by turning its right flank and seizing the Dujailah redoubt. Column "C," mainly composed of the 3rd Division, was directed against the Sinn Aftar redoubt and the works to the south of it, while Column "B," composed of the 9th and 28th Infantry Brigades, was detailed to assault the Dujailah redoubt. Column "A," consisting of the 36th Infantry Brigade, was directed to clear some trenches which flanked the advance of Column "B." The 35th Infantry Brigade was to protect the right, and the 6th Cavalry Brigade the left flank of the force, and a brigade was held in reserve. Each column was allotted its proper proportion of guns, engineers, field ambulances and transport. The advance was made on the night of March 7th-8th. After a long and well-executed night march, the troops reached the positions of deployment. All the columns should have got there before dawn, but the march of Columns "A" and "B" was delayed owing to various unforeseen circumstances, with the result that it was broad daylight before they were ready to deploy, and this manœuvre had then to be executed under fire. An assault was made and a lodgment effected in the Dujailah redoubt, but our troops were eventually bombed out and had to retire. Orders were then given for a fresh assault, and at 5.15 p.m. the troops advanced according to orders, but could get no nearer to the redoubt than about 1,200 yards. The men by this time were exhausted, and about 6 p.m. orders were received to withdraw under cover of darkness. The night of the 8th-9th was spent in collecting and sending away the wounded, and by 9.30 a.m. on the 9th the evacuation was completed. The force then marched back to Orah and Wadi whence it had started. Our losses in these operations amounted to about 470 killed and 2,877 wounded and missing. The total casualties from January 6th to March 9th amounted to 12,116, of whom 2,412 were either killed or died of wounds. The casualties among British officers were 410.

42. *Attack on the Umm-el-Hannah and Falahiyah positions.*—On March 11th General Aylmer was replaced in command by Sir George Gorringe, and during the month the force was reinforced by the 13th Division under Major-General F. S. Maude, besides other troops. On April 5th General Gorringe commenced his operations for the relief of Kut. After the attack on Umm-el-Hannah on January 21st, which was made across the open, our trenches were pushed forward gradually to within 100 yards of the Turkish defences. After a heavy bombardment, to break down the enemy's entanglements, the assault was delivered at 4.45 a.m. on the 5th, and the first line captured by our troops soon after dawn. The other lines were captured in quick succession, the artillery fire being lifted from trench to trench until the last line was reached, fully a mile in rear. Our losses were slight and the enemy's resistance was not great, as most of his troops had been withdrawn to the Falahiyah position. The latter consisted of a system of entrenchments 2 miles deep, which were

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000050

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

rushed after dark the same day by the 13th Division. Our losses were not heavy considering the stubbornness of the enemy's resistance and the nature of the terrain.

43. *Attacks on the Sannaiyat position. Battle of Beit Aiessa.*—Meanwhile the 3rd Division had gained ground at Abu Roman on the right bank of the Tigris, and by April 7th was able to enfilade the Turkish position at Sannaiyat on the opposite shore. After a heavy bombardment, the attack of this position was made early on that day by the 7th Division, and again on the 9th by the 13th Division, but both attempts failed. Operations were much hampered by floods and bad weather. Our losses on these occasions were very heavy.* On the 12th further progress was made on the right bank. The enemy's advanced lines were forced back from 1½ to 3 miles, and our troops had to wade across an inundated belt from 500 to 1,200 yards wide, extending from the Tigris to the Umm-el-Brahm marshes. The advance was continued on the 15th, when more ground was gained and some of the enemy's forward trenches taken. On the 17th this success was followed by the capture of the Beit Aieesa position. The Turks lost heavily, and a number of prisoners were captured. That evening the Turks made a formidable counter-attack with some 10,000 men. The attack began at about 7 p.m., having been preceded by a bombardment, and continued throughout the night till 4.30 a.m. The enemy came on in dense formations and penetrated a part of our front. Six distinct assaults in mass were launched on one of our brigades. Within 500 yards of its front from 1,200 to 1,500 dead Turks were counted. Their losses in killed alone on the night of the 17th-18th are estimated at over 3,000. The number of wounded was no doubt proportionately high, and close on 400 prisoners were taken. The Turkish casualties on this occasion are believed to have been greater than in any of the previous actions for the relief of Kut. Our own losses from April 17th to 19th were 126 killed and 1,200 wounded or missing.

44. *Renewed attacks on the Sannaiyat position.*—After a systematic bombardment the Turkish position at Sannaiyat was again attacked on the 22nd. Owing to floods, which restricted the front, only one brigade could be utilised. The leading troops penetrated the enemy's first and second lines through bog and submerged trenches, and a few got up into the third line. They were, however, unable to maintain their position under the enemy's counter-attacks, and other brigades, pushed up on the right and left to reinforce, failed to reach their objectives, which had to be approached over flooded and boggy ground swept by fire. Although the attempt failed, the enemy lost heavily when they left their trenches to counter-attack, owing to the accurate fire of our machine guns in action on the right bank. Our losses at Sannaiyat between the 21st and the 24th amounted to 93 killed and 1,035 wounded or missing. Our total casualties in the attempt to relieve Kut amounted to 21,973.

45. *Capitulation of Kut.*—An effort was made on the night of April 24th to send the steamer "Julnar" through to Kut, laden with supplies. Though carried out with the utmost gallantry the attempt failed, the vessel being stopped by an obstacle and forced aground near Magasis, about 4 miles from Kut. On April 29th the garrison of Kut capitulated after a siege of five months, and about 2,750 British and 6,500 Indian soldiers became prisoners of war. The garrison had been put on half rations in January, and since February had subsisted on a meagre allowance of horseflesh and barley bread. The last day's ration was consumed on the day of the surrender. By an arrangement made with Khalil Bey, the Turkish Commander, sick and wounded British and Indian officers and men, who were in hospital when the capitulation took place, were exchanged for an equivalent number of Turkish prisoners. Excellent arrangements were made for their evacuation down river, and within a few days of their leaving Kut they were *en route* to India on well-equipped hospital ships, where they received every possible care and the comforts which they had been so long denied.

* The total casualties, including killed, wounded and missing, were 4,036 between April 4th and 8th, and 1,971 on April 9th.

46. *Medical arrangements of the campaign.*—Having given an epitome of the history of the campaign, we proceed to discuss the main question referred to us for enquiry, namely, the adequacy or inadequacy of the arrangements made for the collection, treatment and removal of sick and wounded during these operations, the causes of any defects found to exist, and the results which ensued therefrom.

47. We think it expedient to state our answer to this broad question at the outset. We are constrained to say that in our opinion these arrangements were manifestly inadequate and that, in consequence, the sick and wounded underwent great suffering which might have been avoided by better medical organisation.

Many of the defects which contributed to this result were of a general character, and have affected the whole or a great part of the campaign, and it will be convenient to discuss them before examining those which only affected particular phases of the operations.

48. *Hospital river steamers.*—The first deficiency to which we desire to draw attention is the absence of any river steamers equipped for the transport of sick and wounded, and of any separate medical establishments for such vessels. We believe that this has had more prejudicial results than almost any other defect in the organisation. It has constantly delayed evacuation, dislocated medical arrangements and caused great suffering and injury. So long as operations were confined to the immediate vicinity of Basra there was no need for any such transport; but directly columns advanced up the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun the necessity of some means of speedily evacuating the sick and wounded by water became apparent. In December, 1914, the expeditionary force advanced to Kurna, 40 miles up the Shatt-el-Arab from Basra. In February there were operations up the Karun river as far as Ahwaz, 139 miles from Basra. In May the campaign had extended up the Tigris to Amara, 135 miles from Basra; and in July, 1915, a force was despatched up the Euphrates to Nasariyeh. From all these columns the sick and wounded, the numbers of which were large, were evacuated, either in ordinary river steamers not properly fitted up for hospital work, or in *mahailas*, the requisite personnel and equipment being improvised from medical units on the spot. The culminating point was reached at the battle of Ctesiphon in November, 1915, and in the actions on the Tigris in January, 1916, when the number of wounded was very large.

49. It must be borne in mind that when these latter actions took place the medical personnel and equipment were insufficient for the due care of the wounded in the hospitals and field ambulances, and that from an early period of the war the number of river steamers and barges available for purely military requirements was entirely inadequate. It was, however, from this deficient staff and equipment, and from a steamer service not intended for the purpose, that some means of evacuating the wounded to the base had to be improvised. This journey was not a matter of a few hours, but of many days. Some vessels after the battle of Ctesiphon were, in fact, delayed a fortnight *en route* by various causes. It was, therefore, the more necessary that proper accommodation should be provided for the patients, and that the supply of medical and subordinate personnel, and of surgical and medical stores and comforts, should be complete. We have however ample evidence, much of it of a terrible kind, to show that the failure to provide proper hospital steamers and the necessary medical personnel and equipment caused great suffering. The steamers and barges employed for evacuating the wounded on these and other occasions had often been used for carrying animals to the front, and the decks were in some cases soaked with urine and dirt. There was no time to clean or disinfect them effectually, and they had to be used in this condition. They were not fitted with any effective protection from the sun or rain, and on many occasions the patients were for days together wet through. The arrangements for the supply of drinking water were very defective. The latrines were insufficient and insanitary. The vessels were overcrowded. The patients were not, save in few cases, provided with camp beds, and, according to the evidence, even rough mattresses stuffed with hay were not often available. On particular occasions even the supply of blankets gave

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00008b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

out. The medical personnel was insufficient to cope with the numbers on board, and the supply of surgical and medical stores and appliances was on occasions deficient. The cooking galleys were so few that food could not be prepared for all the patients, and the staff to prepare and distribute this food was too small to meet requirements. There was little or no crockery or cutlery, and a very small supply of cooking utensils. The number of sweepers and of bed-pans was often not sufficient for the comfort of the patients. The sufferings of many of those who travelled by these steamers were in consequence acute, and though the available staff was untiring in its efforts to cope with the difficulties of the situation, we cannot but come to the conclusion that in many cases the lack of proper accommodation and of adequate treatment retarded and prejudiced the chances of recovery. It ought, however, to be stated here that the sufferings of those who travelled on many of these steamers were often mitigated by the resource and foresight of the medical officers in charge. Further, when the number of patients was small and the medical and subordinate establishment proportionately large, the hardships of the patients were much reduced.

50. In some cases, notably on the Euphrates, the sick and wounded have frequently been evacuated in convoys of sailing boats, in which all the disadvantages experienced on river steamers are accentuated. The various boats in the convoy must from time to time separate, and it is impossible for the medical officer in charge to look after the patients in the different boats properly. Moreover, a voyage by country boat, for a long distance, must, if the wind is unfavourable, be a very slow matter. We were, in fact, so much impressed by the necessity for improving the methods for evacuating the sick and wounded from Nasariyeh, that we addressed the local military authorities on the subject, and have been informed that in future a hospital steamer will visit Nasariyeh from time to time for this purpose. This is the more necessary in view of the increased Force which is now stationed there.

51. We shall have to deal with this point further in discussing particular phases of the campaign, but generally it may be said that this lack of river hospital steamers properly equipped with medical personnel, stores and appliances, has been a frequent source of discomfort and suffering, which was accentuated in November, 1915, when the number of casualties increased, and in January, 1916, when the number of wounded was very large and the weather conditions were singularly unfavourable. In March, 1916, conditions improved immensely, because regular units of medical personnel and equipment were detailed for service on these steamers. Even when we left Mesopotamia, the arrangements were, however, in many respects far from satisfactory. It is true that a regular staff of medical officers and subordinates is now assigned to each steamer with a proper supply of medical accessories and comforts, and that such arrangements as are possible are improvised for the accommodation of patients. But the steamers cannot be delayed, and it is not possible to fit them up properly before they begin their return journey down river loaded with sick. They are not weather-proof, and patients get wet through when it rains. Cots are not provided, save usually for a few officers, and not always for them, and many of the other defects to which reference has already been made have not been removed or remedied.

52. We are informed by the Director of Royal Indian Marine that in January, 1916, he was directed to fit out hospital river steamers and barges to accommodate 2,000 patients. To give effect to this demand, he proposed to equip 8 sternwheel steamers and 16 barges, the intention being that each steamer should tow two of the barges. Of these 8 steamers, three only have hitherto arrived, namely—

The "Sikkim," with accommodation for 144 patients
The "Coromandel," with accommodation for 104 patients;
The "Ardhlui,"* with accommodation for 50 patients;

and of the 16 barges four only, with accommodation for 224 patients, have so far been supplied. We were, however, informed that it has been suggested that the complement of barges should be made up by utilising 11 barges already sent to Basra, and that the necessary fittings for the equipment of these vessels have been provided.

53. Of these steamers, the "Sikkim" is satisfactory though not very weather-proof; but it has been found that she cannot tow two barges up and down the Tigris with safety. The "Coromandel" is in many ways unsuitable. We were informed that on her first trip the engines frequently broke down, that she does not steer well, and that she is not built strongly enough for work on the rivers of Mesopotamia. From what we saw of her after this trip (and she had never been used again up to the date on which we left Basra), we think there is much force in this last criticism, unless she had been navigated in some unskilful manner. On inquiry from the Director, Royal Indian Marine, we were told that she could tow two barges at a rate of 4.5 miles per hour in still water. As the Tigris has a current of 4 miles and more in many places, it follows that this steamer is of very little use for towing up stream. The "Ardhlui" had not been used when we left Basra, but the medical authorities there have criticised her as unsuitable for the number of patients she was intended to carry, and also for other reasons. As to the barges, it is perhaps fortunate that the full complement has not been sent, as the evidence before us indicated that the four which have already been despatched are not in any way suitable for work in Mesopotamia. In the first place, they are composite barges of wood and iron, and though the Director maintains that barges of this kind are structurally as strong as iron barges, the fact remains that officers with local experience state that this is not so. It has been found also that these barges cannot be navigated with safety in certain reaches of the Tigris. They are, moreover, extremely hot and none of them are fitted with electric fans, which are a necessity for any hospital craft during the hot weather. Finally, they are not weather-proof. The number of barges and lighters available for work in Mesopotamia is insufficient to meet military requirements, and doubtless for this reason the 11 barges which the Director suggested should be fitted out as hospital barges, have not been so equipped. The result is that the only regular hospital river steamer which was at the time of our departure used for evacuating sick and wounded to Basra, nearly 18 months after the commencement of the war, was the "Sikkim," which can accommodate 144 patients, and that for the large majority of patients, ordinary river steamers and barges, which take troops and supplies up stream, were still employed.

54. In a telegram from the Army Commander to the Chief of the General Staff, dated April 24th, 1916, it was stated that, in addition to the steamers already mentioned, the "Ailee" was being fitted out to carry 50 patients, and that it was intended that three of the Nile paddle steamers should be used to tow hospital barges from the front, down the Tigris to Amara. It was anticipated that in this way 350 patients could be evacuated at one time to hospitals at that place. While we appreciate the desire of the local authorities to make the best of the material available, we doubt if these arrangements will prove entirely satisfactory. The Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, in a note to which this telegram is annexed, states that these barges are not suitable for use in the hot weather, and they certainly are not fitted with any electric plant, which we consider to be an absolute necessity for properly equipped river hospital steamers. The Nile steamers are also not fitted with this machinery. The intention, throughout, has been that hospital steamers should be fitted with electric machinery, and that this plant should provide the current necessary for electric fans on the barges, and much of the advantage of having properly equipped hospital barges will be lost if they are not provided with electric fans.

55. We find considerable difficulty in ascertaining the responsibility for the failure to provide hospital river steamers for the expeditionary force. We are not clear as to what the ultimate intentions of Government were in regard to this campaign. If it was contemplated that the expeditionary force should operate at a distance from Basra, up the rivers of Mesopotamia, we think that those responsible for the equipment of the expedition should have sent hospital river steamers either with, or immediately after, the force. Even if the advance from Basra was a later development, we consider that the necessity for this class of transport might have been realised earlier

* After structural alterations.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000009

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

both in India and in Mesopotamia. We have examined a mass of correspondence which has been submitted to us to ascertain why this question of river hospital steamers was not taken up earlier, and we have made definite inquiry from the Army Department as to when it was first raised. We have ascertained that the question of river transport for the sick was first considered in February, 1915, when a private organisation in Bengal offered to provide an ambulance steamer or barge for the use of the force in Mesopotamia. This offer was accepted, but the flat selected and equipped for the purpose was unfortunately lost at sea while *en route* from Calcutta. It was then suggested that motor launches should be used for the speedy evacuation of the sick and wounded, but for reasons which commend themselves to us as sound, the Military Authorities in Mesopotamia did not accept this offer. Motor launches are necessary, but they are not suitable means of evacuating large numbers of wounded from great distances, and can only be used profitably for taking patients for a short distance from one hospital to another, or to a hospital steamer. This correspondence is, however, of some importance, as it indicates that the attention of the authorities in India was drawn to this question of river hospital transport very early in the campaign. It is, in the circumstances, somewhat surprising that systematic efforts were not then made to put matters upon a proper footing.

56. The first indication which we have been able to discover of any definite steps to remedy this state of affairs, was in December, 1915, when a telegram was addressed to the Secretary of State stating the necessity for a number of regular hospital steamers. The figures before us indicate that previous to the date upon which this telegram was sent, more than 11,000 patients had been evacuated down the various rivers of Mesopotamia to Basra, and we feel, if the facts have been placed fully before us, that steps should have been taken earlier to remedy the want. As a result of the telegram to the Secretary of State, the Director, Royal Indian Marine, was in January, 1916, asked to provide four paddle steamers and 8 barges, each steamer with its two barges being sufficiently large to accommodate 500 patients. These were, however, not provided, and in lieu thereof, and in spite of the recommendations of the local officers, three stern wheel steamers which cannot tow barges down the Tigris, and four small composite barges which are for various reasons unsuitable, have been supplied.

57. While, however, we consider that the authorities in India are in great measure responsible for this defect in the organization, we think that the conduct of the medical and military authorities in Mesopotamia is also open to criticism, and we do not believe that they realised the serious danger that they were incurring by the failure to provide more suitable means of evacuating the sick and wounded by water; at least if they did realise this, we cannot find that, up to December, 1915, they had made any requisition on the Indian authorities for properly equipped river hospital steamers. In the early part of 1915, Surgeon-General Hathaway, then Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, had six or eight *mahailas* fitted out for hospital work; these were towed by tugs which accompanied the troops, and he stated that they met his requirements well. We cannot agree with the Surgeon-General that vessels of this kind ever were, or could have been suitable means of transporting sick and wounded on long journeys, particularly during the hot season. They may, no doubt, have been very useful as a makeshift, but we do not think that a few country boats could have been adequate for the evacuation of the sick and wounded of a force of 30,000 men operating in three different directions, that is, up the Euphrates, Tigris and Karun. It is right to say, however, that in June, 1915, Surgeon-General Hathaway applied to the authorities in India for four tugs for the purpose of towing these *mahailas*, and that this demand was refused on the plea that such vessels were not available. Shortly after this, Surgeon-General Hathaway apparently recognised that some more suitable arrangements were necessary, for we find that in August he asked the Inspector-General of Communications that a river steamer, capable of accommodating 150 patients, should be placed at the disposal of the medical services—a demand which was summarily rejected. The provision of such a steamer would no doubt have been useful for the evacuation of sick and wounded from Ahwaz and other minor garrisons, and also for the transport of medical units and stores; but it would obviously not have met the requirements of the situation in the operations on the Tigris in the winter of 1915-16, when the casualties ran to thousands. We consider that this demand, coupled with the one previously referred to, illustrates the failure of the head of the medical administration in Mesopotamia to appreciate the real needs of the situation, for what was wanted was not one small hospital steamer, but a number of vessels, properly equipped with necessary personnel and appliances, capable of accommodating 2,000 or 3,000 patients. It is, nevertheless, a matter for some regret that the refusal of the Inspector-General of Communications to concede this very moderate demand, and the reply of the authorities in India to the request for tugs, were so readily accepted as final. We believe that an officer of greater force of character would have pressed his demands for separate transport for the medical services much more strongly. The only other documentary evidence of any demand in 1915, for hospital steamers, is a telegram of December 7th, in which the Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, informs the authorities in India that recent experience (he refers to the evacuation of the wounded after Ctesiphon) had confirmed his opinion that well equipped river hospital steamers were absolutely necessary for the sick and wounded.

58. We also doubt whether the military authorities in Mesopotamia treated the medical services with much consideration in this matter, or whether they sufficiently realised the need of such steamers. We recognise that their difficulties in the matter of river transport were very great, and that they found it hard to meet the many urgent demands made upon them; but we think that there were occasions on which the medical requirements might have received more favourable treatment. Further, once the need for hospital river steamers was brought to the notice of the military authorities, we think that they ought to have informed the authorities in India of the position of affairs and of the imperative need for such vessels. We are indeed forced to the conclusion that the necessity for an adequate provision of this kind of transport was overlooked both in India and in Mesopotamia, until the sufferings of the wounded after Ctesiphon made it apparent that some systematic steps must be taken to remedy the deficiency. The delay in providing this form of transport is the more to be regretted because it is now difficult, indeed almost impossible, to get river hospital steamers towed across the Arabian Sea to Basra. The Director, Royal Indian Marine, has informed us that if he had had proper notice he could, in seven months, have had the requisite number of vessels built and equipped in this country, according to specification. Assuming this to be correct, if the necessary instructions had been given early in 1915, these vessels could have been built in the summer months and taken across the Arabian Sea to Basra in the most favourable season of the year.

59. In view of the fact that it will probably be impossible to send river hospital steamers from India during the present monsoon, some local arrangements ought, in our opinion, to be made for the evacuation of the wounded. We suggest that, as soon as military requirements admit of this course, two of the large steamers now in use on the Tigris and four commodious barges should be regularly fitted out and equipped for hospital work. We are informed that one steamer so fitted out could, with two barges, accommodate 500 patients, and if the vessel were properly equipped with electric fans and lights, and with ice machines or large ice chests, we think that it would probably be more convenient for hospital work in Mesopotamia than some of the hospital steamers which have been sent for that purpose.

60. For the evacuation of less serious cases, and as a temporary arrangement pending the equipment of these steamers, we consider that selected steamers and barges, out of those now available in Mesopotamia, should be used for hospital purposes and that systematic efforts should be made to improve the accommodation on these vessels. The awnings should be renewed and made water-tight, or, if this is not possible, replaced by some more adequate covering. Cots should be provided for all patients—folding beds of the "X" or American "gold medal" pattern, or some similar kind, would answer very well for this purpose. Proper arrangements should be made for the supply of pure drinking water, and a

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000057

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

sufficient number of sanitary latrines should be fitted on each vessel. Suitable and sufficient galleys should be provided for cooking food, and a supply of lamps, linen, pillows, cooking utensils and the requisite crockery and cutlery, should be stored on board each vessel. Finally, some responsible person should be put in charge of these articles of equipment and be detailed for permanent duty on the vessel with a small subordinate staff to keep both the vessel, and all the equipment, clean and ready for use. If these improvements were effected, and an adequate medical personnel with the necessary equipment supplied on each occasion on which the vessel was used for transporting sick and wounded, we believe that the discomfort at present caused would be much alleviated. We recognise that the real remedy, however, for this defect is the provision of properly equipped hospital steamers, and we only suggest the above as a temporary expedient and as a practical method for immediately improving the existing condition of affairs.

61. *Inadequacy of medical personnel and equipment.*—Another defect of the first magnitude has been the inadequacy of medical personnel and equipment. The force originally despatched to Mesopotamia consisted of one division, and the medical establishment was four combined field ambulances of five sections each (that is, two sections British and three sections Indian), one combined clearing hospital of 200 beds (one section British and three sections Indian), two and a half sections, comprising 250 beds, of a British general hospital, six sections of an Indian general hospital of 600 beds and one Indian stationary hospital of 200 beds. This establishment was possibly adequate for one division according to the authorised scale, though a comparison with the standard prescribed in the official manual entitled "War Establishments, India," shows that the British general hospital establishment was short of the personnel and equipment for 50 beds. On the other hand, it is fair to say that the Indian general hospital complement was 100 beds in excess of the authorised scale.

62. By February 1st, 1915, the expeditionary force had increased to 20,000 men, and in March it was decided to augment the strength to two divisions by the addition of the 12th, 30th and 33rd Infantry Brigades, and also to send the 6th Cavalry Brigade as a further reinforcement. No corresponding increase was made in the medical establishment. One combined field ambulance of four sections was despatched to Mesopotamia for service with the 33rd Infantry Brigade, and an Indian cavalry field ambulance consisting of three sections was sent with the 6th Cavalry Brigade. No field ambulances accompanied the 12th or 30th Infantry Brigades, and no additional clearing, stationary, or general hospitals were sent for the new division. In regard to one of these items, *viz.*, the field ambulance of the 30th Infantry Brigade, it is right to state that the military authorities in India addressed General Barrett, who was the General Officer Commanding the expeditionary force, as to the necessity of sending a field ambulance for this brigade, and that he replied that he could manage without it. No satisfactory explanation has, however, been offered as to the failure to send other units, and the net result was that whereas the force was increased to two divisions *plus* a cavalry brigade, the medical establishment was, save for the addition of seven sections of a field ambulance, that which had been thought necessary for one division only.

63. We find it difficult to understand the principle upon which this establishment was considered sufficient. It was known that the campaign in Mesopotamia would have to be conducted under singularly unfavourable conditions Much of the country is low-lying and marshy and is constantly liable to floods. The atmosphere is in many parts excessively humid, and the temperature is very high, rising in the hot weather, as we were informed, to 125 degrees. It might, therefore, have been anticipated that a high rate of sickness would prevail among the troops. Further, the Turkish force in occupation of the territory invaded was considerable and the countryside swarmed with hostile Arabs. There was, therefore, in our opinion, no reason to think that the ordinary scale of medical units as laid down in "War Establishments, India," would not be needed. Experience has indeed shown that, if anything, that standard requires to be increased.

64. In the early part of the war, the insufficient provision of field ambulances was, however, less serious than the insufficiency of hospital accommodation, which became evident as early as April, 1915. At this period, the British General Hospital of 250 beds and the Indian General Hospital of 600 beds, which had been established at Basra, were overcrowded. For some time the staff of these hospitals had been depleted by sickness, and by the fact that the personnel for transports, which were used for the evacuation of sick and wounded, had to be provided out of the medical units of the force. At the same time the sick and wounded began to increase alarmingly, so much so that after the battle of Shaiba the patients in the Indian General Hospital numbered over 1,000. The actual personnel available to treat these patients was 15 medical officers and 19 medical subordinates, against an authorised scale of 22 medical officers and 40 subordinates. During this month, the Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, was, it may be added, so impressed with the need for increasing the hospital accommodation, that he ordered the Indian General Hospital to expand to 1,000 beds and the British General Hospital to 500 beds. As, however, no personnel was at the time added to deal with the increased number of patients, this order was of little value in effecting any relief. It has been suggested, indeed, that the only result was that the hospital authorities were thereby empowered to draw cerain articles of equipment from the Supply and Transport Corps. But this is perhaps hardly just, as small additions to the establishment were subsequently made from time to time.

65. As the hot weather advanced, the deficiency in hospital accommodation became more and more marked and on June 15th we find the position was this, that the British General Hospital which had started as a 250 bed unit with 7 medical officers and 10 assistant surgeons, had a staff of 6 officers and 8 assistant surgeons to treat 635 sick; and that in the Indian General Hospital 13 medical officers, 1 assistant surgeon, 19 sub-assistant surgeons and 38 sepoy ward orderlies (that is, a staff smaller than the staff authorised for the treatment of 600 patients) was endeavouring to treat 1,671 sick and wounded. On June 17th the Officer Commanding the Indian General Hospital reported that he had only 12 sub-assistant surgeons fit for duty. These deficiencies were not completely made up throughout 1915, although from time to time additional officers and subordinates were sent out. The figures furnished to us by the office of the Adjutant General at the Base indicate that the only additional complete hospital units sent out to Mesopotamia, between November, 1914, and December, 1915, were the Bengal Stationary Hospital (which is an institution maintained by private subscription and equipped normally for the treatment of 200 patients) and one section of a British General Hospital, sufficient for the treatment of 100 patients.

During this period, the strength of the force increased approximately from 12,000 to 40,000 men, and the information which we have been able to collect makes it clear that, from the date on which a second division came to Mesopotamia, the general hospital accommodation was insufficient for the needs of the force. Fortunately, as the weather got cooler, sickness was not so prevalent, and after July and August the number of patients in the hospital decreased for a time, but even then the personnel was often insufficient. It is true that when the 3rd and 7th Divisions arrived in Mesopotamia during December and January, additional stationary, clearing and general hospitals were sent with them; but, as explained later, these units arrived so long after the fighting portions of the divisions, that for some time the lack of hospital accommodation and personnel was as apparent as it had been during the hot weather of 1915. Another cause which contributed to this result was the despatch of a number of additional brigades to Mesopotamia from India in the autumn of 1915 without any hospital units. Indeed the figures supplied to us show that the maximum number of patients in the British General Hospital at Basra in the month of January, 1916, was 1,038, the staff consisting at the time of 9 Royal Army Medical Corps officers, and 11 assistant surgeons. In the same month the average number of patients in the Indian General Hospital was 1,230, the establishment being 12 medical officers as against an authorised scale of 28, and 20 medical

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00004e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

subordinates as against an authorised scale of 48, for that number of beds. It can therefore safely be said that the officers in charge of the various hospitals have had, from an early stage in the campaign, to contend with great difficulties. Not only has it been impossible to secure proper buildings for the accommodation of all their patients, and difficult, in hospitals outside Basra, to obtain the necessary drugs and appliances with reasonable expedition, but there has been a consistent shortage in the personnel necessary to treat the number of sick and wounded. This shortage has been particularly felt in respect of assistant surgeons, sub-assistant surgeons and menial staff. We believe that the patients, especially in the British general hospitals, have suffered less from these inadequate arrangements than might have been expected, owing to the great resourcefulness, energy and devotion to duty of the medical personnel and subordinate staff. We cannot speak too highly of the efforts made by the available staff in all the hospitals to cope with the very difficult situation with which they were faced. At the same time, the evidence before us indicates that on particular occasions, despite the strenuous efforts of the hospital staff, the medical personnel available to treat the patients and to see to their comfort, especially in the Indian general hospital was so deficient that the patients underwent considerable discomfort, and that cases which required constant medical attention and nursing did not obtain them.

66. The deficiencies in stationary and clearing hospitals have been equally great. The Indian regulations contemplate the location of stationary hospitals at all small posts where general hospitals are not required; but during the whole of 1915 there was only one stationary hospital* in Mesopotamia, and the work which should have been done by stationary hospitals at various posts on the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun, such as Ali-al-Gharbi, Nasariyeh, and Ahwaz, has been done by field ambulances. Indeed at Kurna, where the daily number of sick was for some time large, there was for a great part of the year not even a field ambulance to receive or accommodate the patients, and regimental medical officers had to make the best arrangements they could. Similarly, in the case of clearing hospitals, the supply of these units has never been sufficient, with the result that hospitals of this class at the front have been frequently overcrowded, and that it has been necessary to supplement them by field ambulances.

67. *Dislocation of the medical organisation.*—Another consequence of the deficiency in hospital establishments has been a general dislocation of the medical organisation of the force. The Field Service Regulations contemplate the following medical units for the treatment of the sick and wounded:—

(1) Regimental medical officers.
(2) Field ambulances, which are divided into bearer and tent sub-divisions.
(3) Clearing hospitals.
(4) Stationary hospitals.
(5) General hospitals.

The duties of each of these units are described in the regulations on the subject. General hospitals are, according to these regulations, large hospitals placed at the base, or at any other post where they are required, for the treatment of severe and prolonged cases. They are equipped for the medical treatment and comfort of all classes of cases, and have the requisite stocks of beds, blankets, cooking utensils, crockery, stores and various appliances. Stationary hospitals are small units, generally posted at places on the line of communications where general hospitals are not needed, and are, according to the regulations, equipped to deal with 25, or in cases of emergency, 50 patients. Clearing hospitals are intended for the temporary reception of sick and wounded, pending and during evacuation from the front. Their functions are similar to those of the tent sub-divisions of a field ambulance, but on a larger scale, and they form the central point on which the collecting zone converges and from which the evacuating and distributing zones diverge. They are normally located at an advanced base and should be pushed up, so as to be in reach of the field ambulances. Field ambulances are supposed to accompany the force to which they are attached, to be in close touch with it during action, and to evacuate the sick and wounded without delay to the clearing hospitals. All of these units are equipped only for the particular duties which they are intended to perform. The supply of stores, appliances, clothing and furniture in field ambulances and clearing hospitals is, for obvious reasons, not large. The organisation prescribed in the regulations has, however, been in great measure abandoned in Mesopotamia. On the Tigris front there were, during the operations in April, 1916, two clearing hospitals only to clear the whole of the wounded of approximately four divisions, while a third hospital of this kind was acting as a general hospital at the base. At Nasariyeh, from July, 1915, to April, 1916, no hospital of any kind was established, and the whole medical work was done by the field ambulances. In consequence of this dislocation, the work of clearing and stationary hospitals has constantly been undertaken by field ambulances which are not equipped for this purpose, and which cannot be called upon to do the work of hospitals without detriment to their legitimate duties. Complaints of this misuse of the various medical units have been very frequent and we think justified. It is not possible to treat patients suffering from disease or wounds satisfactorily, for any prolonged period, in a field ambulance to which no beds and a very limited amount of clothing, cooking utensils, crockery, linen, blankets and medical appliances are supplied, and in which the strength of the subordinate staff appointed to see to the comfort of the sick is very limited. The same remarks apply *mutatis mutandis* also to clearing hospitals, which are only fitted out for the temporary accommodation of patients.

68. *Responsibility for deficiencies.*—As to the responsibility for these deficiencies, we think that the *causa causans* is the insufficiency of the medical establishment in India to meet the demands of a great war, in which troops from India have been largely employed overseas. There is abundant evidence that the available supply of medical officers and subordinates in India, including those in civil employment, has been very largely drawn on to bring medical establishments in Mesopotamia up to the normal scale. Of late, indeed, these resources have been depleted as far as is prudent, having regard to the requirements of India and other theatres of war. We cannot, however, avoid the finding that a serious responsibility attaches to the military authorities in India for despatching reinforcements to Mesopotamia insufficiently equipped with medical establishments. We also think that, during the early part of the war, the authorities in India were not as prompt as they might have been in complying with necessary demands, and that some of the expedients suggested for meeting deficiencies were unsound. We consider that if the medical staff available in India was not adequate to meet the demands of the expedition, assistance from sources outside India might have been sought earlier. The demands of the force, particularly in the way of hospital staff, were frequently put before the authorities in India from an early period in 1915. In April of that year, when the British and Indian general hospitals were expanded to 500 and 1,000 beds respectively, additional Royal Army Medical Corps and Indian Medical Service officers and assistant surgeons and sub-assistant surgeons were more than once asked for, without any result. It was not until the end of June, when the General Officer Commanding represented that there would be a breakdown if conditions were not improved, that additional officers were despatched, together with an Indian stationary hospital maintained by private generosity and one section of a British general hospital. Even then, however, the demands of the Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, were not completely met, and in reply to a request for sub-assistant surgeons, after a great deal of haggling as to what was the correct establishment for the force, the Director of Medical Services, India, came to the conclusion that there was an excess of assistant surgeons and suggested that, in estimating his needs in the matter of sub-assistant surgeons, the Deputy Director of Medical Services should reckon one assistant surgeon as equal to two sub-assistant surgeons. This suggestion, which was not accepted by the local authorities, is on a par with one previously made that in order to make good deficiencies in hospital personnel, the staffs of the

* Excluding the Bengal Stationary Hospital, which is maintained by private subscriptions and was being used as a General Hospital.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000090

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

field ambulances, which were already inadequate, should be further depleted. We do not think that demands of responsible officers in such a situation should have been met in this spirit. The correspondence on this subject illustrates, in our opinion, the danger of applying ordinary secretariat methods to urgent demands in war time. Instead of accepting the views of the local officers as to the necessity for additional personnel, their figures were challenged and suggestions made that one medical unit should be depleted in order to make good deficiencies in another, and that one man should be counted as equal to two. In the meantime, while this discussion went on, little or nothing was done to relieve the situation.

69. Again in July, the Deputy Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, submitted a full statement of his deficiencies and requirements and asked that 13 Royal Army Medical Corps officers, 12 Indian Medical Service officers, 1 assistant surgeon and 47 sub-assistant surgeons should be sent to his assistance. As to the first of these demands, the reply was to the effect that certain Royal Army Medical Corps officers were expected to arrive in India in August, and that some of them would be sent to Mesopotamia. As to the remaining deficiencies, after discussion as to the correctness of certain figures supplied by the Deputy Director, a reply was finally sent in October, that is, three months later, that steps were being taken to make good the deficiencies in Indian Medical Service officers and that 12 sub-assistant surgeons would be sent at the first opportunity. On August 27th, the Deputy Director of Medical Services again reported his deficiency in sub-assistant surgeons, but the authorities in India were unable to afford him any relief, and it was not until November, 1915, that 10 additional sub-assistant surgeons were actually sent.

70. Of late the demands of the expeditionary force have, we think, been more reasonably met, and the situation has certainly improved. In the first place, the deficiencies in the existing medical staff have been partly made up out of a 6 per cent. monthly reinforcement which was sent from June, 1915, and which proved to be more than was needed to replace actual wastage. In the second place the medical units of the 3rd and 7th Divisions, including well equipped hospitals of all classes, reached Mesopotamia early in 1916, and the medical staff of the force has been materially increased in other ways. While, however, we admit that the situation is now far better than it was in 1915, we cannot say that the medical arrangements when we left Mesopotamia were satisfactory in all respects. Not only were many of the patients unsuitably housed, but most of the medical units acting as hospitals were overcrowded and being used for purposes for which they were not equipped. Further, the paucity of the medical and subordinate personnel was, particularly in some hospitals, a cause of anxiety. According to a statement furnished to us by the Assistant Director, Medical Services, India, the total accommodation in general hospitals is now sufficient for 2,000 British and 2,100 Indian patients. In addition to the hospitals specified in this statement, we were informed by the authorities at Basra that the personnel of two additional Indian general hospitals of 500 beds each have arrived in Mesopotamia. The total accommodation in the Indian general hospitals is, therefore, 3,100 beds. The staff of some of these hospitals is, however, below the standard scale, and until reinforcements arrive the position will not be entirely safe. The strength of the force in April was 122,000 men, of whom 38,000 were British. The percentage of sick and wounded in April, 1915, was approximately 7 per cent. The accommodation provided in general hospitals, even taking into consideration the fact that a certain number of sick and wounded must always be detained in field ambulances and stationary and clearing hospitals, is thus barely sufficient for existing needs. The total number of clearing hospitals in the country is four, which is also insufficient according to the normal establishment of the force engaged. This deficiency is, however, engaging the attention of the Director, Medical Services, India.

71. *Future medical requirements.*—It may be advisable here to indicate the manner in which the local medical authorities propose to deal with the situation during the hot weather of 1916. In December, 1915, the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, submitted an estimate of medical requirements for the coming year. He then calculated that accommodation in general hospitals should be provided for 1,800 British and 5,200 Indian patients. He stated that, including the Bengal Stationary Hospital which, though normally equipped for 200 patients, can accommodate satisfactorily a very much larger number, the existing accommodation in general hospitals was adequate for 1,000 British and 2,400 Indians. This left a deficit of 800 British and 2,800 Indian beds, and this deficit the Government of India undertook to make good as early as possible. The position was, however, complicated in March, 1916, by the arrival of the 13th Division, and on March 23rd, 1916, on this account and presumably for other reasons, the Director of Medical Services submitted revised estimates of the requirements in the way of general hospitals, estimating that he needed equipment and personnel for 3,000 British and 6,000 Indian patients.

72. This estimate has been accepted by the Director of Medical Services, India, and to meet the demands for further accommodation for British patients, in addition to the medical units of the 13th Division, a large British general hospital on the English scale, accommodating 1,040 patients, has been despatched to Mesopotamia. To meet the deficiency in Indian general hospitals, one Indian general hospital of 500 beds has already been sent from Egypt, and the personnel and equipment of six complete hospitals* of 500 beds each, and also of three additional sections, each accommodating 100 patients, are being despatched from India. When the demands of the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, have been fully met, and the sick and wounded are accommodated in suitable buildings, provided with proper equipment and fitted with electric lights and fans, we think that the requirements of the situation will have been satisfied. The maximum average daily number of sick and wounded last year in any one month amounted to 9.5 per cent. of the strength, though on one particular date the percentage of sick and wounded exceeded 12.5 per cent. If 10 per cent. is taken as an approximate percentage for the coming year, we think that the proposed provision of accommodation in general hospitals will be sufficient, as a certain number of patients must always be retained in field ambulances and stationary and clearing hospitals. Further, it is probable that the evacuation of the sick and wounded by hospital ships this year will be effected more expeditiously than last year. In these circumstances we can see no reason to criticise this estimate, though at least one of us is a little apprehensive of the result of any sudden outbreak of disease and the effect of the hot weather on a large force of British troops not accustomed to tropical conditions. We ought to state here that a telegram has recently been received from the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, stating that he is about to submit revised estimates of his requirements, and that a further increase in the medical establishment will be required. We do not doubt that this proposal will receive careful consideration. As to clearing hospitals, the situation is not so satisfactory, the present number of hospitals of this class being, as already stated, insufficient for the needs of the force; the Director of Medical Services has, however, been asked to state what his requirements are in this respect. The number of stationary hospitals will really depend on the length of the lines of communication, and possibly when the general hospital accommodation is increased as proposed, and the existing stationary hospitals are available for their legitimate duties, no larger increase in their number will be necessary. We are glad to say that a number of Royal Army Medical Corps and Indian Medical Service officers have recently been sent to Mesopotamia, for employment in general hospitals and to furnish the necessary personnel for river steamers and transports used for the evacuation of sick and wounded. The despatch of these officers will afford great relief to medical units in that country. A large number of additional field ambulances have also been sent.

73. *River transport.*—In the course of our enquiry many witnesses, to whose evidence we attach great weight, have laid stress on the fact that nearly all the

* These include the personnel of two Indian general hospitals of 500 beds each, which have already arrived in Mesopotamia and are referred to in paragraph 70.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00006e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

difficulties experienced by the staff and administrative services in Mesopotamia have been due to the inadequacy of the river transport. We have been told, over and over again, that owing to the shortage of steamers and tugs of suitable draught and towing power, delays have constantly occurred in carrying out important strategic moves, in sending up reinforcements to the front, in providing the supplies required for the maintenance of the troops, in moving up medical units and their ambulance transport, and in sending up urgently needed medical stores and equipment. The same cause has delayed the despatch of comforts generously provided by the Order of St. John and the various funds organised in India, and by the Joint Committee of the Red Cross Society and Order of St. John in England, to lessen the hardships of the troops. It has also delayed the conveyance up river of the building material and engineering stores required for the construction of hospitals and quarters for medical personnel at places on the line of communications. The delays in providing the hospitals at Amara with electric lights and fans, in sending up disinfectors, water purifying apparatus, water carts and soda water machines, as well as in establishing a field force canteen where officers and men can purchase what they require at a reasonable cost, must also be attributed to the same reason. To this shortage also must be ascribed the unnecessary suffering caused to the wounded, through delays in effecting their evacuation down river, after the battle of Ctesiphon last year and the battles of Shaikh Saad, the Wadi, and Umm-el-Hannah in January last.

74. These views, which are supported by a mass of evidence of the most convincing character, agree with our own conclusions on the subject. We consider that there has been a shortage of river craft ever since the occupation of Kurna, and that despite the large number of steamers and barges now employed on the rivers of Mesopotamia the river transport at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding has never been adequate, and at times has been seriously deficient. Strenuous efforts have been made by the military authorities in India to remedy this defect, but though a large number of steamers and barges have been sent out from time to time, the additions to the river flotilla have not kept pace either with the additions made to the force, or with the increased demands for transport for the supplies, ammunition, medical equipment, engineering and aircraft stores entailed by such additions, as well as by the lengthening of the lines of communication. Thus, though the average river tonnage available in November, 1915, was about 150 tons a day as compared with about 250 tons a day available in April, 1916, the deficit in actual shipping requirements tended, until recently, to increase rather than diminish.

75. When it was decided in November, 1914, to send an expedition to the Persian Gulf, the objective of the force was Basra, and its *rôle* was to secure the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab and safeguard our interests in the oil-fields east of the Karun. The force employed only amounted to a division, and as its operations were at first confined to the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, the need for additional river transport was not felt. Supplies could be brought up to Basra and even Kurna by sea-going ships, and the local resources in the way of river shipping sufficed for the movement and maintenance of the small forces which had to be detached occasionally from headquarters. The policy of Government as regards Mesopotamia was one of caution, and the plan of operations prepared by the General Staff in India did not provide for more than the occupation of Basra, the country north of that place being, as we are informed, outside the sphere of military intelligence for which India is responsible. We mention this fact, as had an advance on Bagdad been contemplated from the outset, river transport of a suitable kind should, and no doubt would, have been provided on a scale sufficient for the number of troops which it was intended to employ.

76. Though the Turks were driven out of Basra, they remained within striking distance of Kurna, and it became evident early in 1915 that they were about to advance from Amara on Ahwaz and from Nasariyeh on Basra. With the prospect of having to detach forces for operations on the Karun and Euphrates, Sir Arthur Barrett, after consulting local experts, asked on January 4th for some steamers of the "Mejidieh" type, drawing not more than 3 feet 6 inches. Knowing, however, that this type was a special one, evolved by Messrs. Lynch Brothers as the result of half a century's experience of the navigation of the Tigris, he added that any river steamers obtainable in India or Burmah of 10 knot speed and not more than 4 feet 6 inches draught, capable of carrying from 500 to 800 men and towing two lighters, would satisfy his immediate requirements. The authorities in India met this demand with promptitude. By May 20th seven paddle steamers of the type suggested had reached Basra, and they were followed soon after by four tugs and four launches. These vessels formed the nucleus of the Government flotilla, consisting of the "P," "T," "L" and "S" classes of river craft, *i.e.*, the paddlers, tugs, launches and sternwheelers, which are constantly referred to in the statements of witnesses.

77. Owing to the nature of the country and the distribution of the population and political centres, any operations against the Turks have to be made along the Tigris, Euphrates or Karun, and in the absence of railways the success of these operations depends on the number and suitability of the steamers and barges available. The river steamers at Sir John Nixon's disposal in the spring of 1915 were sufficient so long as they were only required for the carriage of supplies; but when it became necessary, owing to the flooded state of the country and the expansion of the theatre of operations, to utilise them also for the conveyance of troops and the evacuation of an increasing number of sick and wounded, the shortage of shipping became apparent. This shortage, moreover, was aggravated by the fact that the steamers drawing 4 feet 6 inches, which Sir Arthur Barrett had accepted as suitable, could, during the low-water season, only be navigated with difficulty through the narrows of the Tigris above Kurna, and not at all on the Euphrates or Karun.

78. The navigation of the Tigris demands skill and local knowledge. Some of its reaches are straight, others are extraordinarily tortuous. Some are broad and others so narrow that steamers can only pass each other when one is moored to the bank. The difficulty of finding vessels suitable for employment on this troublesome waterway is very great, for the types evolved by Messrs. Lynch Brothers have, we believe, no counterpart on any other river in the East. The bends of the Tigris are so sharp and the current so strong that the navigation of vessels down stream is very difficult unless they are fitted with independent paddles. Steamers are swept from side to side and hurled against the bank. To protect them and their paddle wheels, and at the same time increase their carrying capacity, it is usual to attach a barge each side. These barges must be built of iron, which will dent on impact without breaking, as wooden barges are crushed like eggshells. Similarly, very few steamers are strong enough to bear the impact of the barges which protect them from the banks, and only steamers fitted with specially constructed cross stanchions can be used to take the stress. Vessels like the Nile and Thames steamers will not stand the pressure, and can only be used in the straighter reaches above Amara. A further complication is that steamers which can navigate the Tigris in flood, will not all go up river when the water is low. We mention these details as a river is generally regarded as an admirable line of communication, offering special facilities for the maintenance of a force and the evacuation of its sick and wounded. In the case of the Tigris, however, these advantages are heavily discounted by the local difficilties above mentioned.

79. Realising these difficulties, which we think were imperfectly appreciated in India, Sir John Nixon asked on May 27th for six powerful tugs, each capable of towing two large flats and with a draught not exceeding 3 feet in working trim. His reasons for asking for these tugs, and for reducing the draught limit from 4 feet 6 inches to 3 feet, have already been stated; but they were accepted in India only after much correspondence, and finally the Marine authorities replied that no vessels answering to the new specification were obtainable. The lack of success in meeting his requirements did not, however, make any real difference at the time to General Nixon's plans, for even if tugs of the type required had been found, it would not have been possible to send them across the Arabian Sea during the monsoon. Nor would it have been possible to send them in pieces to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000080

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

be put together in the Shatt-el-Arab, for apart from the delays which this would have entailed, the workshop resources of Mesopotamia were not, at this time, sufficiently developed to allow of this alternative. We mention this as many of those who complain about the delays which have taken place in sending out river craft forget that for six months of the year vessels of this type cannot be sent to sea. Indeed their despatch is always attended with considerable risks, as is proved by the fact that 3 paddlers, 5 tugs, 17 sternwheelers, 22 barges, 2 flats, and 1 floating dock, or a total of 50 vessels all told, have foundered between various Indian ports and Basra in the course of the last 14 months.

80. On July 8th, 10th and 17th, when the operations against Nasariyeh were in progress, and the navigation of the Hammar Lake was causing extraordinary difficulties, Sir John Nixon asked India to arrange for the construction of 6 paddlers, 3 sternwheelers, 8 tugs, and 43 barges, and at the same time laid down a very definite specification for each class of vessel. This request was complied with, and on August 3rd the Secretary of State for India was asked to place the order with shipbuilding firms at home. It was not considered advisable to order the construction of these vessels in India, as difficulties and delays connected with the importation of materials and machinery from England, owing to scarcity of freights, made it unlikely that locally built vessels would be completed as rapidly as those ordered from home.

81. A memorandum, prepared by Major-General Kemball, in which Sir John Nixon's requirements in shipping were very clearly explained, was forwarded to India about this time, *i.e.*, August, 1915. After stating that his principal need was light-draught steamers and the personnel and material requisite for their maintenance, he added the significant warning that "if steps are not taken in good time to meet these requirements we shall run the risk of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment. At present we cannot make the most effective use of the troops available owing to want of steamers, and in any crisis insufficiency of river transport would limit the scope of reinforcements."

82. Early in October—that is, just after the battle of Kut-el-Amara—Sir John Nixon asked that some powerful light-draught tugs or sternwheelers might be purchased in India with the least possible delay, for use as stop-gaps pending the arrival from England of the additional river craft ordered through the Secretary of State. He explained that the maximum draught should be 3 feet 5 inches for tugs and 2 feet 6 inches for sternwheelers. The Director of the Royal Indian Marine replied that tugs of this type were unobtainable. Sternwheelers of the kind required could be secured, but it was virtually impracticable to tow them from Rangoon to the Persian Gulf, as owing to their fragile construction they would break up in the slightest sea. The correctness of this statement is proved by the fact that out of 24 sternwheelers sent from time to time only 7 reached their destination. On October 24th General Nixon reported that the Tigris was rising and suggested that more Irrawaddy paddlers might be purchased—that is, steamers drawing 4 feet 6 inches—the very class of vessel to which he had previously objected. A great point was made by the authorities in India of the apparent inconsistency of this demand, but we do not consider that the criticism was of any great weight, as vessels which draw too much water in the shallow season might obviously be useful when the river was in flood and so might help to mitigate a shortage which threatened to become acute. At Sir John Nixon's request the Director, Royal Indian Marine, then furnished him with a list of all the river craft in India or Burma which, though differing widely from the specifications he had laid down, approximated to his revised requirements. As soon as he had made his selection of the craft available, steps were taken to requisition the vessels demanded, and towards the end of January they began to arrive at Basra. They have since been supplemented by steamers from England and Egypt, and by the beginning of May the total number of steamers at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia was 44, exclusive of 24 steamers, 52 tugs and 3 sternwheelers either *en route* from, or under construction in, England or India.

83. Apart from the provision of additional river craft, the introduction of better methods of control and administration on the lines of communication and at the base has recently improved the situation, and when the steamers under construction or ordered become available, there should be no recurrence of the serious shortage of shipping which existed between July, 1915, and April, 1916. The working margin is, however, still somewhat fine, as the number of steamers withdrawn from work for repairs tends to increase, owing to the excessive strain imposed on them during the past year. Having regard to the uncertainties of navigation on the Tigris and Euphrates, we consider that the position as regards transport will not be really satisfactory until a channel has been dredged across the Hammar Lake, and until the railways about to be constructed to Nasariyeh and Amara become available for the conveyance of the sick and wounded as well as of troops and stores.

84. We find that there has been some misunderstanding between the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia and the authorities in India on the subject of river transport. The local authorities were, in our opinion, unreasonable in their demands for steamers of a type which is special to the Tigris, and they hampered the action of the authorities in India by failing to state that the specifications to which they adhered with such insistence applied only to river craft which had to be built, and not to vessels obtainable by purchase. Further, had the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia explained that his objection to vessels drawing 4 feet 6 inches applied only to the low water season, and had he intimated earlier that he was prepared to accept steamers of good towing capacity with a maximum draught of 6 feet, a large number of vessels might have been sent to Basra during the fair weather season. It was the limitation as to draught, combined with the condition that they should be able to tow two large barges, that prevented the earlier offer, by the Royal Indian Marine, of many of the vessels which Sir John Nixon subsequently accepted.

85. On the other hand, the authorities in India appear to us to have been somewhat lacking in foresight. They must have been aware that the advance to Kut-el-Amara, with the possibility of an advance on Bagdad and the despatch of reinforcements from oversea, would be likely to create a demand for additional shipping. They must have realised that the river craft which had barely sufficed for two divisions would not suffice for four, especially with a line of communications some 150 miles longer than before. They must also have known that the steamers ordered from England were not likely to arrive in time to be of use in the contemplated advance, and that local resources would have, therefore, to be supplemented from India or Burma. They seem, however, to have done little to anticipate these difficulties, contenting themselves with trying to meet demands as they arose. The monsoon months, which might have been utilised in selecting river steamers, bringing them down to Calcutta and Rangoon and preparing them for the sea voyage to Basra as soon as the fair weather season set in, were allowed to slip by, little being done until Sir John Nixon made a number of fresh demands.

86. We have examined this question of river steamers in some detail, as we are required by our terms of reference to consider whether the amount of river transport allotted to the medical services was sufficient "with regard to the total amount available and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition." As we have already explained, the shortage of river transport on the Tigris has always been so great that prior to the arrival of the "Sikkim" and the "Coromandel" it was found impossible to make any permanent separate allotment of shipping for hospital purposes. The question of the sufficiency of the transport provided for the conveyance of the sick and wounded thus merges into the larger question of the transport available for the general purposes of the force, and this, as we have pointed out, was found to be inadequate so far back as when the troops moved from the vicinity of Basra. In support of this contention we cannot do better than quote the opinions of two distinguished commanders. Writing on January 12th, 1916, immediately after the battle of Shaikh Saad, Sir John Nixon remarked that "the wounded with Aylmer have been called upon to suffer unnecessarily owing to shortage of river transport. Not only is it

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000075

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

difficult to bring the wounded down, but it is equally difficult to get medical personnel and equipment up the river." Sir Percy Lake, writing on the same subject about May 12th, soon after the failure to relieve Kut, stated that "as the Commission is aware, the whole situation was dominated by the question of river transport. The amount available was totally inadequate for the ordinary requirements of the force. . . . As the result of this shortage of river craft it was impossible to allot any vessel wholly for hospital purposes or for the transport of the wounded. It was only by utilising every vessel on the river that it was possible to supply the troops at the front with food and ammunition. Even then I could not send up to them more than a portion of their land transport or all their guns, or even all their drafts of men to replace casualties." He concludes his remarks by saying, "I should like to record my opinion that such defects as have been brought to notice—and there were many—were due primarily to the inadequacy of the river transport which prejudicially affected many other services besides those dealing with the care of sick and wounded." In the circumstances so clearly explained by two General Officers who in succession have commanded the expeditionary force, we are of opinion that, prejudicial as the shortage of suitable river transport was to the proper working of the medical services, the latter could not, either at the time of General Townshend's advance from Kut-el-Amara or before General Aylmer's advance to the relief of that place, have been allotted steamers for their exclusive use. The paramount necessity of moving the troops and keeping them fed and supplied with munitions overrode all other demands, and necessitated the employment for general purposes of all the river craft available.

87. We consider that with better organisation and control of river craft on the lines of communication and at the base, greater use could have been made of the shipping available. Numerous instances have been brought to our notice of the miscarriage and overcarriage of stores, of delays to steamers through lack of arrangements for discharging cargo, and of other delays caused by bad staff work, such as the loading of reserve ammunition on the top of the tents, equipment and stores of field ambulances required for immediate use. Many of these mistakes were due to the inexperience of the staff at the base, including the marine transport officers, who were suddenly faced with all the difficulties incidental to the administration of a river flotilla and the control of a crowded port like Basra, which was then destitute of jetties, wharves, storage space and other facilities, and unable to produce even the labour required to unload the store ships which arrived in the Shatt-el-Arab almost daily. These defects are now being made good, and with the classification of river craft and the better system of traffic control recently introduced the working power of the river steamers has appreciably increased.

88. *Ambulance transport.*—The next matter to which we desire to draw the attention of Government is the failure, throughout the campaign, to provide land ambulance transport for the wounded. We consider this matter to be one of great moment, as it is proved that the defect has been the cause of intense suffering and must have prejudiced the chances of recovery in certain cases. The original organisation orders of Indian Expeditionary Force "D" did not include any wheeled transport for the sick and wounded. According to "War Establishments, India," each field ambulance should have been accompanied by eight ambulance tongas, in lieu of which the original orders for this force allotted an additional number of riding mules. The omission to send wheeled transport was probably due to the fact that operations for some time were likely to be confined to the immediate neighbourhood of the Shatt-el-Arab. The history of the campaign shows, however, that very shortly after the capture of Basra the operations extended to a considerable distance from any river, and no satisfactory reason has been assigned for the failure to provide the ordinary form of land ambulance transport for these operations. It is in evidence that on many occasions during the campaign wheeled ambulances could have been employed. In fact, a few motors were used in the Ahwaz operations in April and May, 1915, and again at Ctesiphon in November, and ambulance wagons of the English pattern were employed with conspicuous success to our own knowledge in the operations up the Tigris in the beginning of April, 1916. But throughout the campaign the usual form of ambulance transport has been the army transport cart—that is, a small springless cart made of wood and iron, drawn by mules or ponies, and ordinarily employed for the carriage of supplies. When the evidence of the suffering caused by this means of conveyance, particularly in cases of fracture and severe injury, is considered, it is difficult to avoid criticising the action of those responsible for this deficiency in severe language. It must be remembered that on occasions the wounded were brought in for distances of 12 and 15 miles in these carts. We have been told that at times patients suffered so much on these journeys that some fainted on the way, and others arrived at field ambulances covered with bruises. We have also been informed that in abdominal cases the jolting in such a cart would be likely to cause death, and that in the case of fractures of the femur it would endanger the chances of complete recovery. For these reasons we consider that the use of these carts for conveying sick and wounded, except as a means of supplementing proper ambulance transport, is to be condemned. Nor had this serious deficiency been remedied when we left Mesopotamia, for on April 9th, when there were nearly four divisions operating on the Tigris front, only nine ambulance wagons and four motor ambulances were available for the removal of the wounded from the battlefield. A few more motors, which were at that time at the base, have since been sent to the front; but in May, 1916, the majority of the wounded were still being conveyed from the battlefield to field ambulances in transport carts. It is true that, in certain conditions and in particular parts of the country, motor vehicles and ambulance wagons cannot be used; but on many occasions they can be employed, and tracks on which they can travel can often be improvised without difficulty. For such occasions the supply of suitable ambulance transport is, in our opinion, essential. We are aware that in many cases the removal of all the wounded after a battle in which the casualties are numerous cannot be effected entirely in ambulance motors or wagons; but we think that a sufficiency of these conveyances should be supplied for the evacuation of more serious cases.

89. An examination of the correspondence placed before us indicates that the necessity of providing proper land transport for the wounded was not apparently realised by the military authorities, either in Mesopotamia or in India, in the early part of the campaign; and even up to the present the force is, we believe, entirely dependent on private generosity for the supply of motor ambulances. In February, 1915, the General Officer Commanding, Indian Expeditionary Force "D," was asked by the authorities in India if he would like to have a motor ambulance, and the offer being accepted the ambulance was sent to Basra early in March of that year. No further action was taken until April 20th, when another motor ambulance was offered to the force, an offer which was rejected by Sir John Nixon; and it was not until October 20th that any demand was made by the medical or military authorities in Mesopotamia for a further supply of such vehicles. Four were then asked for, and three were sent. These three were supplemented by six more sent in December and January, but there is reason to believe that none of them were provided by the Government. We are informed, however, that 50 "Star" motor ambulances, which were offered by the Secretary of State in November, 1915, are now on their way to Mesopotamia and will shortly arrive there.

90. Similarly, in the case of ambulance tongas, we find that the first demand for this necessary item of equipment was made in November, 1915, when Surgeon-General Hathaway indented for 50, a demand which he supplemented in February, 1916, by a request for 250 more. Up to recently, however, the ambulance transport in Mesopotamia was composed of the ambulance motors above mentioned, a small number of ambulance wagons, and 50 ambulance tongas, very few of which were available at the front. Although, therefore, we think that the authorities in India are responsible for the failure to foresee the need of this transport, we consider that the inertia of the medical authorities in Mesopotamia in this matter is open to even more severe criticism. In dealing with this subject we must, however, admit that the lack of ambulance vehicles at the front was in great measure due to the shortage of river transport and to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000087

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

the flooded state of the country which delayed their movement by road. Indeed, it has for these reasons on many occasions not been possible to get the ambulance wagons and motor ambulances available in Basra moved to the front.

91. *Hospital buildings.*—Another point of importance is the unsuitable nature of the accommodation provided in many of the hospitals in Mesopotamia. Buildings in which a certain number of patients can be accommodated with comfort, have been taken over for the use of hospitals, but in many cases the accommodation thus provided is insufficient for all the patients under treatment, and it has not been supplemented by a sufficient number of suitable temporary buildings. At Basra a large number of sick and wounded at the General Hospitals are accommodated in temporary sheds made of matting. These buildings are not weatherproof, and we think that better accommodation might by this time have been provided. At Amara, where a large number of sick and wounded are detained in hospital, the accommodation is in some respects worse. Many hospitals are established in suitable buildings, but this is not always the case. In April, 1916, we found that all the patients of a large Indian general hospital were located in tents, pitched on low and marshy ground. The difficulty of securing a site on a high level at Amarah is insuperable, but there is, in our opinion, no sufficient reason, save the lack of river transport, why temporary sheds on raised plinths should not have been erected there for the accommodation of the sick. We were informed that 60 sheds of an approved pattern were being erected, but 16 months after the commencement of the war and nine months after the occupation of Amara, two of these only were approaching completion. These sheds appeared to be suitable for the purpose for which they were to be used, but up to the date on which we left Mesopotamia we were unable to obtain any definite information as to when the rest of these buildings would be completed. In the meantime the patients of this and some of the other hospitals have to remain in tents. With the climatic conditions that prevail in Mesopotamia during the hot weather this is likely to have a prejudicial effect on their health.

92. *Electric fans and supply of ice.*—Closely connected with the question of hospital accommodation, is the provision of electric fans and ice in hospitals. In cases of fever and heat stroke and for the comfort of many other patients, electric fans and ice are indispensable in a damp hot climate, and the lack of these essentials during the operations in 1915 was a serious drawback. A certain number of fans were put up in the General Hospitals at Basra last year, but these were not sufficient for all the wards, and none of the new hospitals there had, up to the time of our leaving Basra, been fitted with these fans. Up to the middle of May, 1916, there were no electric fans in any of the hospitals at Amara, although the number of patients accommodated there is several thousands. The same is true of Nasariyeh and Sheikh Saad. We are informed that the necessary plant for the hospitals at Basra and Amara was only indented for by the authorities in Mesopotamia on December 31st, 1915 (the letter being received on January 18th), and on February 21st, 1916. In our opinion, the demand for these installations might have been foreseen earlier. We think, at any rate so far as Basra is concerned, where no question of river transport arises, that every hospital should by this time have been supplied with electric lights and fans. As to ice, we are informed that ice was available for all the hospitals in Basra during the hot weather of 1915, but it certainly was not regularly available in hospitals at Ahwaz, Nasariyeh or Amara, and up to the time of our departure, so far as we are aware, Government had not supplied ice-manufacturing plant to any station in Mesopotamia outside Basra. At Nasariyeh, an old Turkish ice manufacturing plant has been taken out of the river and, through the energy of General Brooking, has been put into working order. It is now run by mechanics taken from a territorial regiment. At Ahwaz, we understand that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company has a machine which at times works satisfactorily. In Amara, the authorities have taken possession of an old ice-making machine, and some attempts to meet the hospital requirements have thus been made, though the machine is old, and last year, according to the evidence before us, it broke down for a long period. On inquiry as to the reason for this state of affairs, we find that on March 6th, 1915, Sir Arthur Barrett was asked if he required ice machines and replied that he did not need any. On June 14th, however, a request was received from Sir John Nixon for four ice machines capable of producing one ton of ice each a day. On July 26th one machine producing two tons of ice, one producing 26 cwts., and one small machine, were despatched to Basra with 2 engineers and 5 mechanics. The delay in despatching these machines to Basra was, we think, unavoidable. In the circumstances, we consider that the authorities in Mesopotamia were responsible for the delay in providing ice machines in 1915.

93. In November, 1915, the authorities in India again addressed the General Officer Commanding Force, "D," as to the number of ice machines he required for 1916. On December 11th a reply was received that five machines, each capable of producing two tons of ice daily, were wanted. On December 22nd these demands were revised and seven machines, capable of producing one ton of ice each day, were asked for. On January 6th a telegram was despatched to the Director-General of Stores, India Office, asking him to supply these machines. On January 19th, the Director-General of Stores telegraphed that four ice machines would be delivered in February and three at the end of March. On February 14th, the military authorities in Mesopotamia indented for three additional machines, each producing one ton of ice daily, and this indent was also forwarded to the Director-General of Stores. On April 1st, the Director-General cabled that the ice machines ordered were promised for shipment at the rate of one a week, commencing from the first week of May, 1916, and that they would be sent to Basra direct. In consequence of this information, steps were at once taken to procure ice machines in India, and in May, four machines, producing about five tons of ice, were despatched to Basra. On May 27th, the Director-General of Stores reported that four machines had been shipped on April 15th and May 11th respectively, and also stated that three would be shipped in June. On June 1st, 1916, another machine capable of producing 1¼ tons was shipped by Indian authorities from Bombay to Basra. In addition to this, the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John have ordered a number of ice machines which, however, up to the time of our leaving Mesopotamia, had not arrived there.

94. The result of all this is that the arrangements for the supply of ice, outside Basra, are at present very inadequate. This is a somewhat serious matter, as ice is not a luxury but, having regard to climatic conditions, an absolute necessity for the treatment of the sick. In our opinion this condition of affairs is in great measure due to the dilatoriness of the authorities in Mesopotamia and of the Director-General of Stores. It appears that no one in Mesopotamia moved in the matter until December, 1915, when the authorities in India asked what the requirements were. The General Officer Commanding, Force "D," then made demands, which he subsequently revised and supplemented. The Director-General of Stores, on the other hand, failed to supply the machines on the dates specified, possibly owing to difficulties in delivery.

95. *Medical stores and equipment.*—The arrangements for the supply of surgical and medical stores and appliances to meet the requirements of the various units in Mesopotamia were, up to March, 1916, unsatisfactory. In the first place the system of supply, laid down in the Medical Manual (War), India, was ill-adapted to meet the demands of a large force operating 1,600 miles from India overseas. In the second place, owing to the lack of river transport, there was such delay and uncertainty in the delivery of these supplies that medical officers have frequently been hampered in their work.

96. The system prescribed in the regulations for the supply of medical stores is that all general, stationary, and clearing hospitals and advanced medical store depôts indent on the nearest medical store depôt in India for their requirements, and, in their turn, the advanced medical store depôts attached to each division issue supplies to regimental and field medical units only. In case of need, the advanced medical store depôts are authorised to draw on general hospitals to meet urgent demands. The inconvenience of such a system, for an expedition operating overseas, is obvious and for such a large force

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000033

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

as was employed in Mesopotamia a complete depôt of medical stores, located within reasonable distance, upon which all units could draw, was clearly necessary. We are glad to say that this has now been realised and that such a store depôt, with ample supplies to meet demands from medical units of all descriptions, has been established at Basra. But it was not apparently until January, 1916, that the necessity for such a depôt was recognised, and the depôt was not actually opened until March. The arrangements for the supply of medical stores are, however, now satisfactory, and every effort is made to see that stores indented for are despatched to their destination as speedily as possible. Prior to the establishment of this depôt the inconvenience caused to medical units outside Basra, by the delay in the receipt of supplies, was great. It is difficult in ordinary circumstances to foresee many months ahead the exact requirements of a hospital when little is known of the climatic and other conditions; but the hospital authorities in Mesopotamia had other difficulties to contend with in this matter. In the first place, it was impossible for any hospital to foretell the number of patients which it might be called upon to accommodate. A 200-bed hospital might be expanded to 500, or a 600-bed hospital to 1,000. Further, the hospital stores were liable to depletion at any moment to supply advanced medical store depôts and river convoy units, and on occasions even field ambulances. In the second place, it was inconvenient that hospitals up-country, some of which were situated 200 miles up the Tigris, should have no depôt nearer than Bombay upon which to draw for supplies in an emergency. The inconvenience of this system was indeed such that the regulations were not adhered to. On inspection of the advanced medical depôt at Basra we found that, in practice, articles were frequently supplied to the various hospitals there, and the advanced depôt, which should normally have been equipped with 36 boxes of particular articles required for field and regimental medical units, supplied a number of hospitals with various requirements, thereby undertaking duties for which it had neither the requisite staff nor equipment. The attention of the Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, was apparently drawn to this on the 19th July, 1915, for we find that an application was made to the Director of Medical Services, India, for additional personnel for the advanced medical store depôt at Basra, on the ground that the stock of medicines there must be increased. To this demand the Director, Medical Services, India, replied that it would be more satisfactory if frequent and smaller indents for medical stores were made and that no additional personnel could be sanctioned until an increase in the stock was found to be necessary. We draw attention to this correspondence as it indicates, in our opinion, a failure to realise the danger and inconvenience of the system then followed. Surgeon-General Hathaway must have been congizant of the position of affairs and of the delay and inconvenience that constantly occurred in procuring medical supplies. He was also aware, from inspection, of the fact that the advanced depôt was being used in great measure as a general depôt, and that it was undertaking duties for which it was not equipped. He failed, however, to take the opportunity of placing the whole question of medical stores on a sound footing by asking for the establishment of a general medical store depôt at Basra. On the other hand, it appears to us that when the Director of Medical Services, India, criticised the accumulation of any reserve medical stores in Basra, he did not appreciate the importance of having, in Mesopotamia, a large reserve of medical stores from which urgent requirements could be met in time of need. It is only fair, however, to say that the facts were not clearly put to the medical authorities in India, and that the delays and inconvenience which the system then in force entailed, were not fully explained. We cannot but think that if the facts had been properly put, the necessity for doing what has since been done, namely, the establishment of a properly equipped depôt on the spot, would at once have been realised. The fact, however, remains that up to March, 1916, no such depôt was established.

97. Another and possibly a more potent cause of inconvenience in the case of hospitals outside Basra was the difficulty of securing prompt delivery of medical stores up-country. Under present arrangements, when indents are received by the medical store depôt, the articles required are packed for delivery without delay and are made over to the medical embarkation officer, whose duty it is to see that they are despatched to their destination with reasonable expedition. As soon as the indent is complied with, the consignee is advised by wire of the fact, and if delivery is delayed he can at once make inquiries as to the cause, from the authorities at the base. There are a certain number of steamers and barges which return up river at frequent intervals when sick and wounded have been disembarked at the base, and these afford reasonable facilities for the transport of medical stores if the embarkation officer is energetic and intelligent. The consequence is that, as a rule, medical stores are now delivered promptly. But this was not so under the system which prevailed before March, 1916. Throughout the campaign there has been a great shortage of river steamers and, in consequence, all consignments of articles by water have frequently been delayed. The first requirements of an army are food, ammunition, and men to replace casualties, and when there is a deficiency in transport, the despatch of all other articles has to be deferred until these demands have been met. It follows, necessarily, that in such circumstances the despatch of medical stores must be a difficult matter and the utmost vigilance and energy are necessary on the part of the head of the medical services if his demands are not to be overlooked and subordinated to the demands of other administrations. From what we have seen we doubt if the demands of the medical services were pressed with sufficient energy by Surgeon-General Hathaway, and the omission up to January, 1916, to appoint a medical embarkation officer to supervise the despatch of consignments of medical stores, was a serious oversight. Cases of medical stores from the advanced depôt, intended for units in the field, used to be made over to the transport authorities to be conveyed to the front and there the matter ended. Similarly cases from Bombay, consigned to the front, were landed at Basra and presumably made over to the transport authorities, the duty of forwarding these articles to their destinations being left to that agency. In such circumstances, and in the rush to secure space on the steamers, we fear that medical supplies were often neglected to meet the more insistent demands of other administrative services. We freely recognise the efforts made by particular officers of Surgeon-General Hathaway's staff in this matter; but it was clearly impossible for them to attend to this work in the midst of their multifarious other duties. In some cases also we fear that the delay in forwarding consignments was increased by a want of proper organisation. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the medical officers examined by us have complained of the delay that has occurred in the receipt of medical stores, and we think that much of this inconvenience might have been avoided by the establishment of a general medical store depôt at Basra early in the war, and by the employment of a medical embarkation officer to see that the despatch of consignments up-river was not delayed. It would not, we think, serve any useful purpose to quote instances of inconvenience caused by these delays, though it would not be difficult to do so. It is possible, indeed, that the citation of individual cases in which the delay was due to lack of organisation, might give rise to a more unfavourable impression than the facts warrant. We are content to say that, for the reasons given above, the supply of medical stores to various units in Mesopotamia was, up to recently, far from satisfactory.

98. *Hospital ships.*—Another point to which we draw attention is the question of suitable transport for the conveyance of sick and wounded from Basra to India. When the expeditionary force set out, it was not accompanied by any hospital ship or by any special staff for employment on a transport, in case it should be necessary to use such a vessel as a hospital. There was a certain amount of sickness among the troops on the journey, and the Turks did not surrender possession of the important city of Basra without a struggle. The consequence was that, in December, 1914, two ordinary transports had to be used for the evacuation of the sick and wounded to India, the necessary staff and equipment for these vessels being furnished from the limited medical resources of the expeditionary force. In January, 1915, the hospital ship "Madras," which was the gift of a private organisation, was sent to Basra, and in July a second hospital steamer was detailed to assist in the work of evacuating the sick and wounded. Since then, a number of other hospital ships have also been employed for this purpose; but the accommoda-

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000011

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

tion provided has not on all occasions been adequate, for we find that between December, 1914 and May 15th, 1916, over 9,500 sick and wounded travelled by ordinary transports to India. We realise that many of these were probably convalescents who did not need much attention. It is possible also that on some occasions a full medical staff was not necessary; but we cannot think that it was desirable that so many sick and wounded should have been sent back in these vessels. We are confirmed in this view by the evidence recorded at Bombay, which indicates that on particular occasions the staff detailed for these vessels was inadequate, and that the patients arrived in India in a condition which showed that they had not received proper care and attention. Transports not fitted up as hospital ships were used for this purpose on no less than twenty-two occasions, and the depletion of the medical staff and equipment at Basra, in order to furnish the personnel and stores for these vessels, has frequently been, and up to the time of our leaving Mesopotamia still was, a source of trouble and inconvenience. The employment of empty transports for conveying convalescents and light cases to India is, we recognise, probably necessary and open to no objection. In our opinion, however, no serious cases, demanding much medical care, should be placed on vessels of this kind, and we think that if the use of these transports is necessary, the requisite staffs should be drawn from India. Further, many of the hospital ships which have been employed on the Bombay to Basra run, have not been able, at certain seasons, to cross the bar of the Shatt-el-Arab, with the result that patients have had to be taken from Basra to the bar in transports and there transhipped. This transhipment has been the cause of discomfort and inconvenience. On one occasion, at least, the journey to the bar was so prolonged and the equipment of the vessel so inadequate, that the patients suffered considerably on the journey from want of proper food. We are glad, however, to observe that the number of hospital ships now employed is being increased, and that all the vessels which it is intended in the future to use as hospital ships will be able to cross the bar at all seasons.

99. The personnel and equipment provided on the hospital ships is ample and the accommodation is excellent. We have visited a number of these vessels and from our own observation, and the evidence of experts and others, we are satisfied that those now in use are admirably fitted out and that the patients receive the greatest care and attention. Between January, 1915, and May 15th, 1916, about 22,500 patients were, according to a statement furnished to us by the Director, Royal Indian Marine, evacuated to India in these ships and in the most favourable conditions possible.

100. *Water-supply.*—We now turn to the question of water-supply. The water for the troops and hospitals in Basra is drawn from the river, and the position is much the same in regard to places up the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun. It is possible that, at Basra, a better supply of water could be obtained from the new channel of the Euphrates which joins the Shatt-el-Arab at Gurmat Ali, and we understand that a scheme to obtain water from this source is under consideration by the authorities. Generally speaking, however, the only source of water-supply at present is the nearest river, and we are not satisfied that systematic and methodical attempts are made to render this water potable and innocuous before it is used for drinking purposes. This appears to us a matter of great importance in view of the prevalence of colitis and dysentery, and more particularly so owing to the recent outbreak of cholera. We are satisfied that most of the hospitals take great care to purify any water used, by sedimenting and then chlorinating or boiling it; but this is not always the case. The camp at Makina Masus, which is a very few miles from Basra, and incidentally a large Indian general hospital located there, are supplied with water which is not drawn from the middle of the Shatt-el-Arab but is taken from a neighbouring creek. We have the authority of a sanitary specialist for stating that the whole system of water-supply for this camp is unsafe. Further, the arrangements for pumping and sedimenting this water are so inadequate that, on some occasions, the water from the creek (in itself an unsuitable source of water-supply) is not purified in any way before it is used. Similarly, on the river steamers and barges, which are utilized both for the conveyance of troops and the sick, the arrangements for the supply of good drinking water appear to us to be defective. On some of the vessels there are no water tanks. On some the tanks supplied are useless, and on many steamers and barges there are no arrangements for purifying the drinking water that is used by the troops. It is true that in many vessels the energy of particular officers has been sufficient to ensure that reasonable precautions are taken to purify water used for drinking, but in others this is not the case and we cannot but think that this is a source of grave danger.

101. At Amara, we were informed that a scheme for the supply of drinking water was under consideration, but it has not yet materialised. We believe, however, that in the hospitals at Amara every possible precaution is takes to ensure that good drinking water only is supplied to the patients.

102. Generally speaking, we think that if the authorities are satisfied that the water in the various rivers in Mesopotamia can be rendered wholesome and potable by any simple process, systematic steps should be taken for the supply of water so purified to all hospitals as well as to all steamers used for the conveyance of troops, including sick and wounded. If this water cannot be rendered wholesome, the expediency of securing a supply of good water by means of tube wells or some other method should be considered.

103. Water supply arrangements at the actual front were also, until recently, far from satisfactory. The recent outbreak of cholera is attributed by sanitary experts to the failure to supply the troops with a sufficient amount of purified drinking water. It is well known that if the men cannot get an ample supply of good water, they will drink from any source available. The origin of the outbreak has been traced to the water of a ditch on a site previously occupied by Turkish troops among whom the disease was prevalent. The failure to provide a good water supply to the trenches was due to shortage of carts, pumps, tarpaulins and other material for the supply and storage of water, which could not be sent up to the front to begin with, owing to lack of river transport. These defects are now being rectified and the use of motor lorries has greatly facilitated the supply of purified drinking water to the troops.

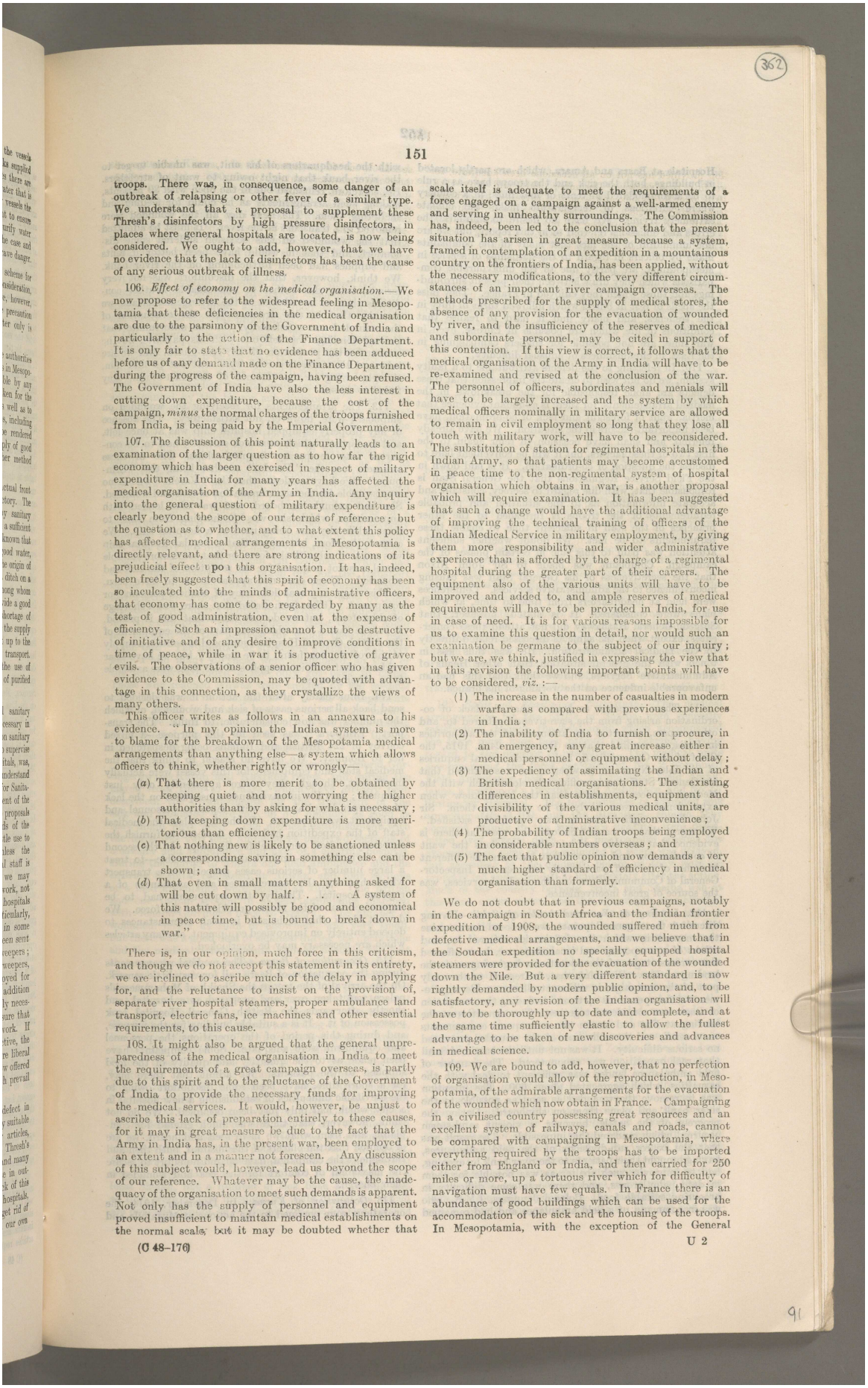
104. *Sanitation.*—The provision of special sanitary establishments on a liberal scale is very necessary in Mesopotamia and the absence of expert advice on sanitary questions, and of the necessary executive staff to supervise the sanitation of the various camps and hospitals, was, for some time, a source of inconvenience. We understand that the Assistant Director, Medical Services (for Sanitation) has submitted proposals for the employment of the necessary establishment, and we trust that these proposals will receive careful consideration at the hands of the military authorities. It will, however, be of little use to appoint administrative sanitary officers unless the necessary supervising establishment and menial staff is also largely increased. In this connection, we may observe that the lack of sweepers for sanitary work, not only in the different camps but also in the various hospitals and on river steamers, is a serious matter, particularly, since the recent outbreak of cholera. Further, in some cases, men who are not of the proper caste have been sent out with hospitals and sanitary sections as sweepers; in one hospital we were told that out of 39 sweepers, 10 only were men of the class ordinarily employed for conservancy work. We think that a very large addition to the staff of sweepers in Mesopotamia is urgently necessary, and that more care should be taken to ensure that men of the proper caste only are sent for this work. If the terms now offered are not sufficiently attractive, the expediency of employing temporary men on more liberal terms will have to be considered, as the wages now offered are barely adequate according to the rates which prevail in that country.

105. We are glad to say that a serious defect in some of the hospitals, namely the absence of any suitable machinery for disinfecting clothing and other articles, has recently been rectified. A number of Thresh's disinfectors are now available in Mesopotamia, and many of these have been despatched up-river for use in outstations. Formerly, for several months, the lack of this item of equipment was a defect in particular hospitals, as in its absence it was difficult effectively to get rid of lice, either from the Turkish prisoners, or from our own

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00004c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



troops. There was, in consequence, some danger of an outbreak of relapsing or other fever of a similar type. We understand that a proposal to supplement these Thresh's disinfectors by high pressure disinfectors, in places where general hospitals are located, is now being considered. We ought to add, however, that we have no evidence that the lack of disinfectors has been the cause of any serious outbreak of illness.

106. *Effect of economy on the medical organisation.*—We now propose to refer to the widespread feeling in Mesopotamia that these deficiencies in the medical organisation are due to the parsimony of the Government of India and particularly to the action of the Finance Department. It is only fair to state that no evidence has been adduced before us of any demand made on the Finance Department, during the progress of the campaign, having been refused. The Government of India have also the less interest in cutting down expenditure, because the cost of the campaign, *minus* the normal charges of the troops furnished from India, is being paid by the Imperial Government.

107. The discussion of this point naturally leads to an examination of the larger question as to how far the rigid economy which has been exercised in respect of military expenditure in India for many years has affected the medical organisation of the Army in India. Any inquiry into the general question of military expenditure is clearly beyond the scope of our terms of reference; but the question as to whether, and to what extent this policy has affected medical arrangements in Mesopotamia is directly relevant, and there are strong indications of its prejudicial effect upon this organisation. It has, indeed, been freely suggested that this spirit of economy has been so inculcated into the minds of administrative officers, that economy has come to be regarded by many as the test of good administration, even at the expense of efficiency. Such an impression cannot but be destructive of initiative and of any desire to improve conditions in time of peace, while in war it is productive of graver evils. The observations of a senior officer who has given evidence to the Commission, may be quoted with advantage in this connection, as they crystallize the views of many others.

This officer writes as follows in an annexure to his evidence. "In my opinion the Indian system is more to blame for the breakdown of the Mesopotamia medical arrangements than anything else—a system which allows officers to think, whether rightly or wrongly—

(*a*) That there is more merit to be obtained by keeping quiet and not worrying the higher authorities than by asking for what is necessary;
(*b*) That keeping down expenditure is more meritorious than efficiency;
(*c*) That nothing new is likely to be sanctioned unless a corresponding saving in something else can be shown; and
(*d*) That even in small matters anything asked for will be cut down by half. . . . A system of this nature will possibly be good and economical in peace time, but is bound to break down in war."

There is, in our opinion, much force in this criticism, and though we do not accept this statement in its entirety, we are inclined to ascribe much of the delay in applying for, and the reluctance to insist on the provision of, separate river hospital steamers, proper ambulance land transport, electric fans, ice machines and other essential requirements, to this cause.

108. It might also be argued that the general unpreparedness of the medical organisation in India to meet the requirements of a great campaign overseas, is partly due to this spirit and to the reluctance of the Government of India to provide the necessary funds for improving the medical services. It would, however, be unjust to ascribe this lack of preparation entirely to these causes, for it may in great measure be due to the fact that the Army in India has, in the present war, been employed to an extent and in a manner not foreseen. Any discussion of this subject would, however, lead us beyond the scope of our reference. Whatever may be the cause, the inadequacy of the organisation to meet such demands is apparent. Not only has the supply of personnel and equipment proved insufficient to maintain medical establishments on the normal scale, but it may be doubted whether that scale itself is adequate to meet the requirements of a force engaged on a campaign against a well-armed enemy and serving in unhealthy surroundings. The Commission has, indeed, been led to the conclusion that the present situation has arisen in great measure because a system, framed in contemplation of an expedition in a mountainous country on the frontiers of India, has been applied, without the necessary modifications, to the very different circumstances of an important river campaign overseas. The methods prescribed for the supply of medical stores, the absence of any provision for the evacuation of wounded by river, and the insufficiency of the reserves of medical and subordinate personnel, may be cited in support of this contention. If this view is correct, it follows that the medical organisation of the Army in India will have to be re-examined and revised at the conclusion of the war. The personnel of officers, subordinates and menials will have to be largely increased and the system by which medical officers nominally in military service are allowed to remain in civil employment so long that they lose all touch with military work, will have to be reconsidered. The substitution of station for regimental hospitals in the Indian Army, so that patients may become accustomed in peace time to the non-regimental system of hospital organisation which obtains in war, is another proposal which will require examination. It has been suggested that such a change would have the additional advantage of improving the technical training of officers of the Indian Medical Service in military employment, by giving them more responsibility and wider administrative experience than is afforded by the charge of a regimental hospital during the greater part of their careers. The equipment also of the various units will have to be improved and added to, and ample reserves of medical requirements will have to be provided in India, for use in case of need. It is for various reasons impossible for us to examine this question in detail, nor would such an examination be germane to the subject of our inquiry; but we are, we think, justified in expressing the view that in this revision the following important points will have to be considered, *viz.*:—

(1) The increase in the number of casualties in modern warfare as compared with previous experiences in India;
(2) The inability of India to furnish or procure, in an emergency, any great increase either in medical personnel or equipment without delay;
(3) The expediency of assimilating the Indian and British medical organisations. The existing differences in establishments, equipment and divisibility of the various medical units, are productive of administrative inconvenience;
(4) The probability of Indian troops being employed in considerable numbers overseas; and
(5) The fact that public opinion now demands a very much higher standard of efficiency in medical organisation than formerly.

We do not doubt that in previous campaigns, notably in the campaign in South Africa and the Indian frontier expedition of 1908, the wounded suffered much from defective medical arrangements, and we believe that in the Soudan expedition no specially equipped hospital steamers were provided for the evacuation of the wounded down the Nile. But a very different standard is now rightly demanded by modern public opinion, and, to be satisfactory, any revision of the Indian organisation will have to be thoroughly up to date and complete, and at the same time sufficiently elastic to allow the fullest advantage to be taken of new discoveries and advances in medical science.

109. We are bound to add, however, that no perfection of organisation would allow of the reproduction, in Mesopotamia, of the admirable arrangements for the evacuation of the wounded which now obtain in France. Campaigning in a civilised country possessing great resources and an excellent system of railways, canals and roads, cannot be compared with campaigning in Mesopotamia, where everything required by the troops has to be imported either from England or India, and then carried for 250 miles or more, up a tortuous river which for difficulty of navigation must have few equals. In France there is an abundance of good buildings which can be used for the accommodation of the sick and the housing of the troops. In Mesopotamia, with the exception of the General

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000061

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Hospitals at Basra and Amara, which are partly located in buildings, both the sick and the troops have as a rule to be accommodated in tents or mat huts, in a country where variations of temperature make the climate extremely trying. We have no desire to minimise the errors and omissions referred to in this report, but we are not unmindful of the fact that many of the complaints made by officers in regard to the hardships of service in Mesopotamia, are partly due to the unfavourable comparisons which they draw between their present surroundings and those which they enjoyed in France. They miss the spells of rest in billets which followed turns of duty in the trenches, and many find it hard to realise that conditions of life which are possible in Europe, even in war time, are not possible for soldiers campaigning in the East, in circumstances of unusual difficulty.

110. In referring to the defects attributable to a faulty system, we do not wish to create the impression that these defects are alone responsible for the breakdown in the medical arrangements, for there is abundant evidence that inertia, want of foresight and lack of co-ordination, have been important factors in the situation. We have already referred, and shall have occasion to refer again, to the first two of these factors, but it will be convenient here to discuss the question of co-ordination. It is laid down in the Field Service Regulations that the General Staff is responsible that, with due regard to secrecy, constant and accurate information as to the situation and probable requirements of the troops is furnished to the other branches of the staff in sufficient time to enable these requirements to be met. We doubt whether sufficient attention was paid to this rule in certain phases of the campaign. Complaint was made to Sir John Nixon that the secretiveness of his General Staff was causing inconvenience to the administrative services. Conferences were held at headquarters from time to time, at which plans were considered. It is stated, however, that Surgeon-General Hathaway did not attend these conferences, except when the subjects discussed related directly to the medical administration. He was thus less in touch with the general situation than other Heads of Administrative Services, and we think that this had an unfavourable influence on the working of his branch.

111. There is reason to believe that the lack of co-ordination arising from the secretiveness referred to, and other causes, attracted the attention of the authorities in India, as we find that on December 24th, 1915, the Chief of the General Staff, India, made special enquiries of Sir John Nixon as to whether he was satisfied that his General Staff was in sufficiently close touch with the Medical Services to ensure that the latter knew when extra demands were likely to be made on them. Sir John Nixon replied that he was "perfectly satisfied." We regret that we cannot endorse this view, as there is evidence that on this and on other occasions the want of co-ordination and co-operation between the different branches of the staff, particularly between the Inspector-General of Communications and the medical services, was the source of great inconvenience.

112. *Landing at Fao and battle of Sahil.*—Having discussed these general points, we proceed to examine the manner in which the deficiencies referred to, and others of a temporary and local character, have affected the various stages of the operations, beginning with the landing at Fao. We think that, in regard to the early part of the campaign, it will meet all reasonable requirements if the operations up to and including the occupation of Basra are considered together. The casualties at the landing at Fao and in the two subsequent engagements were small, and the collection of the wounded presented no serious difficulty. It was not until the battle of Sahil that real opposition was encountered. The number of field ambulances landed was sufficient to deal with the casualties, which aggregated about 500. The intention was to remove the wounded as soon as possible to the river bank and place them on shipboard. During the progress of the battle, however, a violent sand-storm occurred which rendered this impossible. The result was that the bearer sub-divisions of the field ambulances, having brought their patients to the river bank by evening, had to improvise such shelter as was possible for them in date palm groves, and there was some difficulty in procuring suitable food. Colonel Jennings, I.M.S., who was in command of a field ambulance and had remained with the headquarters of his unit, was unable to get to the river bank that night owing to want of stretchers. He, therefore, remained out in the open with 30 patients, making such arrangements as he could for feeding and sheltering them. The next day all the wounded were removed to a transport in the river. It must be admitted that the wounded on this occasion suffered some discomfort, and that it would have been better if tents and supplies had been forthcoming on the river bank. We think, however, that the discomfort was not very serious, being due rather to unavoidable weather conditions than to any defect in the arrangements, and we consider that in the circumstances the evacuation of the wounded was satisfactory. It was unfortunate that Colonel Jennings was left out with his patients, but he was under the protection of the rear-guard, and we are informed that search parties were sent out to find him, though, owing to the violence of the dust-storm, they failed to do so.

113. The arrangements for receiving the wounded on shipboard were, however, not satisfactory. The absence of any properly equipped hospital ship was at once felt, and transports, which were not suitable, had to be converted into temporary hospital ships. One of these steamers was the "Varela," another being the "Erinpura." We have evidence that the "Varela" was in no way suitable for the accommodation of sick and wounded. She had animals on board, and was also loaded with ammunition, which she was discharging from time to time, while she was being used as a hospital ship. We cannot, therefore, but regret that a regular hospital ship was not sent out with the force, or that some more suitable vessel was not prepared for the reception of the sick and wounded. There does not appear to us to have been, at this stage, any real deficiency of medical personnel or equipment. It has been stated that there was a shortage of chloroform, but we do not think that this is proved. It is true that a box which was part of the equipment of the British General Hospital, supposed to contain a supply of chloroform, was found to be empty; but we have clear evidence that sufficient supplies of this drug were available from other sources.

114. Immediately after the action it was decided to send back all serious cases of sick and wounded, of which the number was now considerable, to India. The transport "Erinpura" was used for this purpose—a mixed convoy of 224 British and Indians being despatched in her to Bombay. We have no reason to think that the medical staff and equipment for this vessel were actually insufficient, though they were apparently only just adequate; but the inconvenience consequent on the lack of a proper hospital ship, with separate personnel and equipment, was apparent. In the first place the medical staff of the expedition had to be depleted to furnish the necessary medical personnel for the ship. In the second place, it is difficult—indeed almost impossible—to treat a large number of serious cases properly on a transport which has not the conveniences and appliances of a regular hospital. Thirdly, the equipment had to be improvised out of the stores provided for the force. We do not think that it is safe in such circumstances to depend entirely on improvised equipment, as many articles which are necessary may be overlooked.

115. *Occupation of Basra.*—The medical arrangements during the occupation of Basra call for very little remark. On the arrival of the troops the Sheikh of Mohammerah's palace was taken over and prepared as a hospital, and shortly afterwards the British General Hospital took possession of it. It is a suitable building for the purpose, and during this period of the operations the personnel and equipment were adequate. Some complaints have been made as to the quantity and quality of the food supplied to the patients. We admit that there may, for a short time, have been some discomfort owing to the inevitable difficulties of establishing a new hospital in a city which had only just been occupied. We do not think, however, that there was much ground for complaint, and from what we have seen and heard, we are of opinion that the officers of the hospital, both then and throughout the campaign, have spared no effort to secure the maximum of comfort for the sick and wounded in their charge.

116. *Occupation of Kurna.*—In December, 1914, the operations were confined to the actions at Muzaibila and

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

the capture of Kurna. In these engagements the wounded numbered under 200, and the medical arrangements appear to have been generally adequate, the only serious defect being the lack of river hospital steamers to which reference has already been made. Owing to the climatic conditions during this season of the year, and the shortness of the journey, the discomfort thus caused was insignificant compared with the sufferings in later stages of the campaign.

117. The general hospitals at Basra were not overcrowded from December to March. The personnel and equipment were ample, and the food supplied, though not ideal, was the best procurable.

118. *Operations round Ahwaz.*—The next phase in the campaign to be considered is the operations up the Karun river, which began with the despatch in February of a small column under General Robinson to Ahwaz. This force, according to the evidence given to us, was accompanied by the bearer sub-division of a section of a field ambulance, and one section of a clearing hospital with four 160-lb. tents. The arrangements for the collection and evacuation of the wounded in the engagement of March 3rd cannot be said to have been satisfactory. No field ambulance establishment, as far as we have been able to ascertain, accompanied the column from Ahwaz to the battlefield, and the regiments engaged depended entirely on their own medical officers and stretcher-bearers. During the retreat, which was of a somewhat hurried character, a number of the severely wounded had to be abandoned, and there is little doubt but that they fell into the hands of hostile Arabs. Some wagons of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which had been commandeered, were taken out for the transport of the wounded back to Ahwaz; but the Persian drivers fled when the action began, and the carts were by some mistake driven into a nullah from which the mules could not be extricated. In consequence these vehicles could not be used for the purpose for which they had been taken out. The number of stretchers available was very limited and many of these were abandoned, so that of the seriously wounded a few only got back to camp. Those who reached Ahwaz were treated by the medical units there, and no complaints as to the arrangements at this period have been made to us. In the circumstances we think that the want of success in evacuating the wounded was due more to military reasons than to any defect in the medical arrangements.

119. During the subsequent operations of General Gorringe up the Karun and Kharkeh rivers, and during the march from Illah to Amara, which have already been described, the arrangements for the treatment of the sick and wounded were not, in our opinion, as good as they might have been. The medical establishment with the force was two field ambulances *plus* two sections of a cavalry field ambulance and part of a clearing hospital. During the march to Amara one field ambulance and the clearing hospital remained at Ahwaz, and four sections of a field ambulance were posted at Illah. One British and one Indian section of a field ambulance marched with General Gorringe's force to Amara. The number of wounded, either at Illah or elsewhere, was very small, but there was a good deal of sickness during the operations and the medical arrangements, though possibly the best that were feasible, were not satisfactory in some respects. The field ambulance at Illah was used as a stationary hospital, and with accommodation for 100 patients had to treat as many as 250 on one occasion. The hospital and field ambulance at Ahwaz were also overcrowded. The field ambulance at Ahwaz, according to the evidence, had to treat from May 27th up to the first week in August an average of 375 patients, British and Indian, daily. Indeed these operations illustrate very clearly the dislocation in the medical organisation to which we have already referred in criticising the general arrangements. The difficulties of the medical services were further increased, as the personnel was from time to time depleted by the detailing of officers and men for convoy duty, and by sickness and other causes. Nor was the accommodation provided for all the patients suitable. In Ahwaz, for a part of the time, the patients of the clearing hospital were accommodated in dug-outs and in the house of a local Sheikh, but a number of sick both at Ahwaz and at Illah were housed in single fly tents of 160 lbs. which are not, and cannot be rendered, suitable for sick persons in a temperature of 125 degrees. The discomfort of the patients was increased by a plague of flies, and at Illah and at other places by a lack of ice. From time to time the supply of medical comforts was barely sufficient. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the sick suffered considerably, but there is no evidence that the mortality among them was high or that this discomfort led to any fatal results.

120. In the march to Amara the amount of land transport supplied for medical purposes was inadequate. Up to Bisaitin the wounded of the column, which moved on one bank of the river, were apparently evacuated to Ahwaz via Illah in motor cars and transport carts, and if more motor cars had been available the use of transport carts would not have been necessary. For the column on the other side of the river an insufficient number of riding mules formed the only ambulance transport. From Bisaitin on to Amara the wounded were carried forward with the column in transport carts; the temperature was very high, and the patients suffered much from heatstroke. Owing to sickness among the transport ponies there was occasional difficulty in securing even transport carts for the sick. Fortunately the force met with little or no opposition from the Turks on its march, or the consequences might have been serious.

121. For the evacuation of patients from Ahwaz to Basra ordinary river steamers were used, and the general criticism of the use of this form of transport applies to this period of the campaign, though the patients were better off than those in the large convoys which came down the Tigris later. The evacuation from Ahwaz was, however, sometimes delayed because the medical staff at Ahwaz and Illah was so small that it was not always possible to find the necessary personnel for the steamers as promptly as was desirable.

122. Recently, the force in occupation of Ahwaz has been very small. There is nothing to lead us to think that the medical arangements do not work satisfactorily, though it would be more in accordance with the normal organisation if a small stationary hospital were located there. The lack, however, of proper land and water transport might at any time be a source of trouble.

123. *Battle of Shaiba or Barjasiyah.*—The medical arrangements for the battle of Shaiba were generally satisfactory, though the field units which accompanied the force must have been pressed very severely, having regard to the number of casualties. The medical units accompanying the force consisted of No. 2 Combined Field Ambulance, half of No. 3 Combined Field Ambulance, a portion of a Cavalry Field Ambulance, and No. 57 Stationary Hospital. The total number of wounded was approximately 1,100, but the casualties, though they occurred mainly in the last day's fighting, were distributed over several days. For unavoidable reasons the evacuation of some of the wounded to Basra was delayed, but according to the evidence before us they were all properly fed and attended to immediately after the action. Much of the country between Basra and Shaiba was at this time under water, and the evacuation was effected in very unfavourable conditions, as part of the journey had to be done by land and part by water. For the first part of the journey stretchers and transport carts were employed, and although the suffering caused by these carts must have been considerable, we doubt whether in the circumstances motor ambulances, or indeed any form of wheeled ambulance transport, could have been used. A clearing station was located at the point where the journey by water began. The wounded were fed and examined at this station, the wounds of such as required attention being re-dressed. They were then sent on in specially prepared *bellums* to the Zobeir Gate, the boat cushions being used as mattresses for lying down cases. No other form of conveyance could have been used, unless special motor boats of very shallow draught had been provided. At the Zobeir Gate the wounded were again fed and tended by the officers of No. 19 Clearing Hospital. They were then despatched either direct to the hospitals, or carried in motors and transport carts to a steamer which conveyed them to the General Hospitals at Basra. It has been suggested that there was, even at this stage of the campaign, a breakdown in the medical arrangements, and it has been said in particular that the Turkish wounded captured in the engagement did not receive prompt and proper attention. We are not pre-

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000b3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

pared to accept either of these contentions as correct. There was no doubt a shortage of medical personnel and some delay in treating such a large number of wounded, but much of the discomfort and suffering was of a kind that is unavoidable after a severe action. The arrangements made were well-considered and methodical, and considering the difficulties worked well, every effort being made to expedite the journey from Shaiba to Basra and to render the patients as comfortable as possible. We do not doubt that certain of the Turkish prisoners arrived at Basra in a bad state, but we cannot accept the view that this was caused by any neglect on the part of the British medical officers. We think that more probably their condition was due to the time which elapsed between the date on which they were wounded and the date on which they were captured, and to the inefficiency and callousness of the Turkish doctors, of which we have had ample evidence in the course of our enquiry. The evidence indeed indicates that throughout the campaign the Turkish wounded have been treated by our officers with the same consideration as our own.

124. At this period of the campaign the hospitals at Basra were crowded; but, as we have already stated in a previous part of this report, we are satisfied that the authorities made every effort, in spite of the large number of casualties, to treat their patients promptly and effectively. On the whole we think that in very unfavourable circumstances the medical arrangements during this phase were satisfactory.

125. *Battle of Nasariyeh.*—During the operations of General Gorringe up the Euphrates, the medical arrangements were in our opinion deficient. The medical units which accompanied the force did not include either clearing or stationary hospitals, and were insufficient to deal promptly or satisfactorily with the large numbers of sick and wounded. In the second place, no river hospital steamer accompanied the force, with the result that after the first engagement at Gurma Safha the wounded had to be accommodated on the "Mejidieh" which was at that time being used as a gun boat, and was in action and under shell fire. Less suitable accommodation for sick and wounded it would be difficult to conceive, although this was not the first time that this steamer had served this double purpose. The wounded were shortly afterwards evacuated in an ordinary river steamer to Basra. After the action of July 14th the wounded were collected successfully, though with great difficulty, by nightfall. They were accommodated in a field ambulance and were evacuated the next day, in a convoy, in charge of a medical officer. The evidence as to the number of patients in this convoy is not very consistent, but we have definite proof that the available staff could not cope with the work, that many of the wounds became septic, and that a certain number of the patients did not receive sufficient attention. The evidence of the officers at the base, who received the patients from Nasariyeh, also supports this statement; indeed it has been freely said that many of the sick who arrived from these operations up the Euphrates came to the hospitals in a very bad state. On July 24th conditions were still worse. The force by this time had been increased to three brigades and the whole medical staff, according to the evidence, was nine field ambulance sections, equipped to deal with 225 cases. During the action, the bearer sub-divisions of these ambulances were sent out to the front, and at their headquarters two medical officers only were left, with either one or two medical subordinates, to treat all the sick and wounded, numbering about 1,000. The accommodation for the reception of the wounded was insufficient, and it was not until the 25th that they were all placed under shelter. There was, for some time, a lack of food, and it was manifestly impossible for the available staff to treat this number of patients with proper care. There is a consensus of evidence that for some time after this action the wounded underwent considerable suffering and discomfort. As soon as the troops occupied Nasariyeh, the patients were removed there. Conditions immediately improved, and the arrangements for the comfort of patients were better organised; but we feel bound to say that, prior to this the arrangements were inadequate. We are satisfied that the officers on the spot did all that was possible to prevent suffering and to promote the comfort of their patients, but the fact is that the medical staff, the accommodation, and the supply of comforts, were alike insufficient. The wounded in this action were evacuated to the base in ordinary river steamers, with improvised medical personnel and equipment. The general objection to this use of these steamers has already been explained, and the evidence as to the condition of many of the patients, when they reached Basra, supports our criticism on the point.

126. There was no serious engagement on the Euphrates between July and February, and the medical staff at Nasariyeh, from July, 1915, onward, dealt mainly with medical cases only. These were accommodated in field ambulances, and the position here again illustrates the dislocation, with its corollary of discomfort to the patients, which the want of a sufficient number of hospitals in Mesopotamia has entailed. When we visited Nasariyeh in April, we thought it right to address the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, on the necessity of sending a stationary or at least a clearing hospital, to Nasariyeh. We have been informed that orders for the despatch of a stationary hospital have been issued, but on the occasion of our visit the position was this, that if the force there had been seriously engaged, the field ambulances would have had not only to deal with the wounded in the field, but also to provide personnel and equipment for their treatment in hospitals. We do not think that they could have performed these double duties satisfactorily.

127. Since the Hammar Lake fell last year *bellums* have been the only means for evacuating the sick and wounded from Nasariyeh. As has already been stated, we found it necessary to write to the medical authorities on this subject, and we have reason to believe that in future a river hospital steamer will visit Nasariyeh at regular intervals. We have already commented on the hardships caused by the evacuation of the sick and wounded in country boats. We need only say further, that it is a matter for regret that it was not found possible to provide some more suitable craft for this purpose. We are aware that the difficulty of crossing the Hammar Lake in certain seasons of the year is very great, but even accepting this, we do not see why, at least below the Hammar Lake, some more suitable form of water transport should not have been provided.

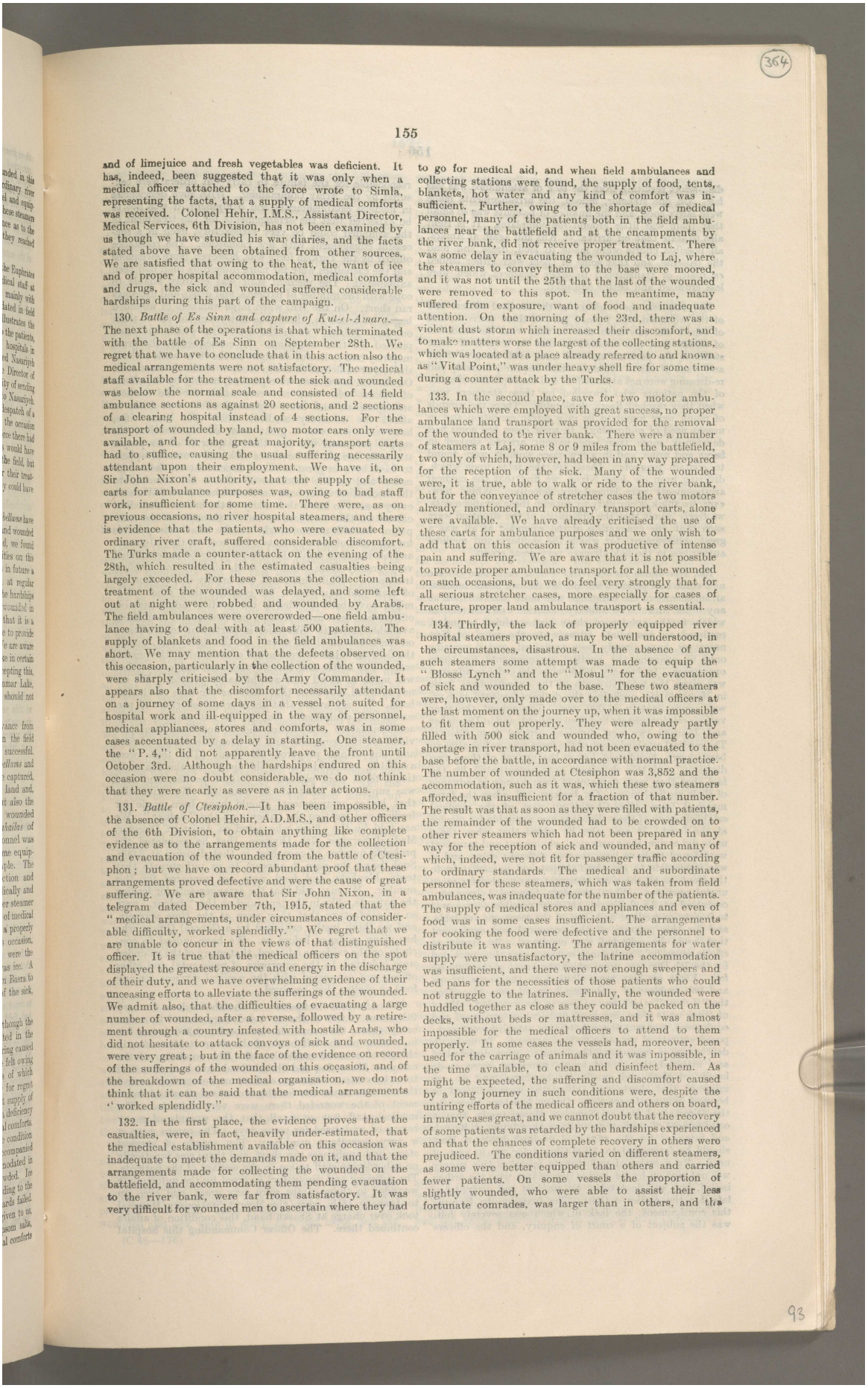
128. *Advance on Amara.*—During the advance from Kurna to Amara, the actual arrangements in the field for the collection of the wounded were highly successful. The medical units accompanied the force on *bellums* and rafts, and as soon as the Turkish positions were captured, some of these units established themselves on land and, without delay, treated not only the British, but also the Turkish wounded. For the collection of the wounded from the different creeks, large covered-in *mahailas* of light draught were specially prepared. The personnel was sufficient, and the equipment, which included some equipment captured from the enemy, was ample. The casualties were not numerous and the collection and treatment of the wounded was effected methodically and well. For the evacuation of the wounded, a river steamer was fitted up with improvised beds and a supply of medical stores and comforts. Though we consider that a properly equipped hospital steamer was needed on this occasion, we think that the local arrangements made were the best feasible. The great want at this time was ice. A certain quantity was sent up twice a week from Basra to Kurna, but it was not sufficient for the needs of the sick, many of whom were suffering from heat stroke.

129. When the force reached Ezra's Tomb, though the sick and wounded were at once accommodated in the coolest place possible, the discomfort and suffering caused by the want of ice continued and was the more felt owing to the prevalence of heat stroke, some cases of which proved fatal. It is, in our opinion, a matter for regret that steps were not taken to ensure a sufficient supply of ice being provided for the sick. There was also a deficiency in supplies of milk, beef essence and other medical comforts. At Amarah which was reached on June 4th, the condition of affairs was worse. No clearing hospital accompanied the force, and the sick had all to be accommodated in field ambulances which were much overcrowded. Ice was not procurable until June 21st, and, according to the evidence before us, the supply shortly afterwards failed. There was, if we are to accept the evidence given to us, a shortage of drugs, including castor oil, Epsom salts, emetine and quinine, and the supply of medical comforts

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000012

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



and of limejuice and fresh vegetables was deficient. It has, indeed, been suggested that it was only when a medical officer attached to the force wrote to Simla, representing the facts, that a supply of medical comforts was received. Colonel Hehir, I.M.S., Assistant Director, Medical Services, 6th Division, has not been examined by us though we have studied his war diaries, and the facts stated above have been obtained from other sources. We are satisfied that owing to the heat, the want of ice and of proper hospital accommodation, medical comforts and drugs, the sick and wounded suffered considerable hardships during this part of the campaign.

130. *Battle of Es Sinn and capture of Kut-el-Amara.*—The next phase of the operations is that which terminated with the battle of Es Sinn on September 28th. We regret that we have to conclude that in this action also the medical arrangements were not satisfactory. The medical staff available for the treatment of the sick and wounded was below the normal scale and consisted of 14 field ambulance sections as against 20 sections, and 2 sections of a clearing hospital instead of 4 sections. For the transport of wounded by land, two motor cars only were available, and for the great majority, transport carts had to suffice, causing the usual suffering necessarily attendant upon their employment. We have it, on Sir John Nixon's authority, that the supply of these carts for ambulance purposes was, owing to bad staff work, insufficient for some time. There were, as on previous occasions, no river hospital steamers, and there is evidence that the patients, who were evacuated by ordinary river craft, suffered considerable discomfort. The Turks made a counter-attack on the evening of the 28th, which resulted in the estimated casualties being largely exceeded. For these reasons the collection and treatment of the wounded was delayed, and some left out at night were robbed and wounded by Arabs. The field ambulances were overcrowded—one field ambulance having to deal with at least 500 patients. The supply of blankets and food in the field ambulances was short. We may mention that the defects observed on this occasion, particularly in the collection of the wounded, were sharply criticised by the Army Commander. It appears also that the discomfort necessarily attendant on a journey of some days in a vessel not suited for hospital work and ill-equipped in the way of personnel, medical appliances, stores and comforts, was in some cases accentuated by a delay in starting. One steamer, the "P. 4," did not apparently leave the front until October 3rd. Although the hardships endured on this occasion were no doubt considerable, we do not think that they were nearly as severe as in later actions.

131. *Battle of Ctesiphon.*—It has been impossible, in the absence of Colonel Hehir, A.D.M.S., and other officers of the 6th Division, to obtain anything like complete evidence as to the arrangements made for the collection and evacuation of the wounded from the battle of Ctesiphon; but we have on record abundant proof that these arrangements proved defective and were the cause of great suffering. We are aware that Sir John Nixon, in a telegram dated December 7th, 1915, stated that the "medical arrangements, under circumstances of considerable difficulty, worked splendidly." We regret that we are unable to concur in the views of that distinguished officer. It is true that the medical officers on the spot displayed the greatest resource and energy in the discharge of their duty, and we have overwhelming evidence of their unceasing efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded. We admit also, that the difficulties of evacuating a large number of wounded, after a reverse, followed by a retirement through a country infested with hostile Arabs, who did not hesitate to attack convoys of sick and wounded, were very great; but in the face of the evidence on record of the sufferings of the wounded on this occasion, and of the breakdown of the medical organisation, we do not think that it can be said that the medical arrangements "worked splendidly."

132. In the first place, the evidence proves that the casualties, were, in fact, heavily under-estimated, that the medical establishment available on this occasion was inadequate to meet the demands made on it, and that the arrangements made for collecting the wounded on the battlefield, and accommodating them pending evacuation to the river bank, were far from satisfactory. It was very difficult for wounded men to ascertain where they had to go for medical aid, and when field ambulances and collecting stations were found, the supply of food, tents, blankets, hot water and any kind of comfort was insufficient. Further, owing to the shortage of medical personnel, many of the patients both in the field ambulances near the battlefield and at the encampments by the river bank, did not receive proper treatment. There was some delay in evacuating the wounded to Laj, where the steamers to convey them to the base were moored, and it was not until the 25th that the last of the wounded were removed to this spot. In the meantime, many suffered from exposure, want of food and inadequate attention. On the morning of the 23rd, there was a violent dust storm which increased their discomfort, and to make matters worse the largest of the collecting stations, which was located at a place already referred to and known as "Vital Point," was under heavy shell fire for some time during a counter attack by the Turks.

133. In the second place, save for two motor ambulances which were employed with great success, no proper ambulance land transport was provided for the removal of the wounded to the river bank. There were a number of steamers at Laj, some 8 or 9 miles from the battlefield, two only of which, however, had been in any way prepared for the reception of the sick. Many of the wounded were, it is true, able to walk or ride to the river bank, but for the conveyance of stretcher cases the two motors already mentioned, and ordinary transport carts, alone were available. We have already criticised the use of these carts for ambulance purposes and we only wish to add that on this occasion it was productive of intense pain and suffering. We are aware that it is not possible to provide proper ambulance transport for all the wounded on such occasions, but we do feel very strongly that for all serious stretcher cases, more especially for cases of fracture, proper land ambulance transport is essential.

134. Thirdly, the lack of properly equipped river hospital steamers proved, as may be well understood, in the circumstances, disastrous. In the absence of any such steamers some attempt was made to equip the "Blosse Lynch" and the "Mosul" for the evacuation of sick and wounded to the base. These two steamers were, however, only made over to the medical officers at the last moment on the journey up, when it was impossible to fit them out properly. They were already partly filled with 500 sick and wounded who, owing to the shortage in river transport, had not been evacuated to the base before the battle, in accordance with normal practice. The number of wounded at Ctesiphon was 3,852 and the accommodation, such as it was, which these two steamers afforded, was insufficient for a fraction of that number. The result was that as soon as they were filled with patients, the remainder of the wounded had to be crowded on to other river steamers which had not been prepared in any way for the reception of sick and wounded, and many of which, indeed, were not fit for passenger traffic according to ordinary standards. The medical and subordinate personnel for these steamers, which was taken from field ambulances, was inadequate for the number of the patients. The supply of medical stores and appliances and even of food was in some cases insufficient. The arrangements for cooking the food were defective and the personnel to distribute it was wanting. The arrangements for water supply were unsatisfactory, the latrine accommodation was insufficient, and there were not enough sweepers and bed pans for the necessities of those patients who could not struggle to the latrines. Finally, the wounded were huddled together as close as they could be packed on the decks, without beds or mattresses, and it was almost impossible for the medical officers to attend to them properly. In some cases the vessels had, moreover, been used for the carriage of animals and it was impossible, in the time available, to clean and disinfect them. As might be expected, the suffering and discomfort caused by a long journey in such conditions were, despite the untiring efforts of the medical officers and others on board, in many cases great, and we cannot doubt that the recovery of some patients was retarded by the hardships experienced and that the chances of complete recovery in others were prejudiced. The conditions varied on different steamers, as some were better equipped than others and carried fewer patients. On some vessels the proportion of slightly wounded, who were able to assist their less fortunate comrades, was larger than in others, and this

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000047

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

discomfort resulting from the lack of attendance was less felt. On one steamer, indeed, the arrrangements made were fairly good, and the number of patients was so small that there was little ground for complaint. It is right also to state that on arrival at Kut and again at Amara, all possible efforts were made to feed, dress and tend the patients, and that some of them were either landed *en route*, or transhipped to other steamers which were less crowded and better equipped.

Nevertheless, the evidence of the medical officers and of the wounded who formed part of these convoys, and of others who saw from time to time what the condition of affairs was, has satisfied us that on several of these steamers the patients suffered from cold, hunger, thirst and want of care. Wounds which required dressing and re-dressing were not attended to, and the condition of many of the patients who travelled by these steamers was, when they reached Basra, deplorable. There the wounds of many were found to be in a septic condition and in urgent need of re-dressing. In some cases bed sores had developed, more than one patient arrived soaked in fæces and urine, and in a few cases wounds were found to contain maggots. These are the facts upon which, differing from Sir John Nixon, we find that the medical arrangements were lamentably defective. While, however, we think it our duty to criticise these arrangements, we freely admit that the difficulties of the situation were such that the evacuation of the wounded at all was a great achievement, for which the military and medical authorities in the field deserve very great credit.

135. *Operations for the relief of Kut in January.*—We now come to a period when the breakdown in the medical arrangements of the campaign was more marked than at any other time. The military situation and the reasons which, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, rendered an immediate advance to the relief of Kut necessary, have already been explained, and it remains only to examine the medical arrangements for these operations. In January, 1916, when the order to advance was given the total strength of the expeditionary force in Mesopotamia, excluding the division besieged in Kut, was approximately 51,000 men. Throughout the year various reinforcements had been sent out, and in December and January two new divisions arrived from France. The medical establishment of the force was, as has already been shown, insufficient before the arrival of these two divisions, and this deficiency was accentuated by the fact that they were despatched from France in advance of their medical units. On January 3rd, when the force marched from Ali-al-Gharbi, no part of the medical establishments of these divisions was available for service at the front. It may also be added that when these units did arrive, their personnel, equipment and transport were found to have been sent on different ships, and it was impossible to get them despatched immediately to the front, as all the river transport was needed for more urgent purposes. When, therefore, General Aylmer concentrated at Ali-al-Gharbi, his only possible course was to improvise medical units out of the resources available, and for this purpose all the personnel and equipment that could be collected was employed. By strenuous efforts seven field ambulance sections were thus provided for the 7th Division, upon which the brunt of the fighting fell. Eight sections were allotted to the corps troops and two sections of a clearing hospital were placed on the "Julnar," which was to receive the wounded. Many of these units were, however, deficient in personnel and equipment, nor was the subordinate establishment composed entirely of properly trained persons. To make up deficiencies in equipment the hospitals were depleted of any material they could spare, purchases were made locally of cloth and muslin for bandages, and we are informed that sheets and tablecloths were collected to be used in case of necessity. Orders had been issued by the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, that a consignment of medical accessories, then lying at Basrah and intended for the advanced medical depôt at Kut, should be forwarded to Ali-al-Gharbi for use in case of need. By a series of unfortunate mistakes this supply was not sent on by steamer in accordance with the orders issued, but was despatched by *mahaila* and arrived too late for the earlier actions. The omission to forward this consignment, the lack of which was severely felt, was the subject of a court of enquiry, and the officers responsible for the failure to carry out orders were censured by the Army Commander. With such deficiencies in medical establishments and equipment, it was not to be expected that the arrangements for the treatment of the wounded could be very satisfactory, even in a successful engagement with few casualties. The resistance offered by the Turkish force was, however, more strenuous and the casualties were far more numerous than had been anticipated. The medical staff was entirely unable to cope with the number of patients, and drugs and dressings ran short. On the 7th, when large numbers of wounded began to come in, there was not room for all of them on the "Julnar," or in the few tents which had been pitched for their reception. In consequence, the great majority had to lie out all night on the river bank without shelter, or sufficient clothing, food, or medical attendance. On the 8th more tents were pitched, mainly by the efforts of officers who were not responsible for the medical arrangements, and some organised effort was made to afford the necessary medical relief. For some time, however, there was a great want of organisation, the supply personnel was less than a quarter of its proper strength, and the unfortunate sick and wounded appear to have been in great measure dependant on their regiments and on the kindness of officers not attached to the medical services, both for shelter and food. We have every reason to know that many of the executive medical officers on this occasion, as indeed throughout the campaign, worked unremittingly to do what was possible for the relief of their patients; but both on the "Julnar" and on the river bank the latter appear to have suffered very greatly from want of food, shelter, and medical treatment. While this result was mainly due to shortage of staff and equipment, we consider that much of it might have been avoided if the medical administrative officers had been more prompt and resourceful in utilising available material. We refer in particular to conditions on the left bank of the river. On the right bank, though the field ambulances were much overcrowded, the organisation was better and more systematic, and every effort was made to do all that was humanly possible. We are not satisfied, however, that this was the case on the left bank. We are aware that there was a shortage of personnel and equipment; but we do not see why better accommodation and shelter should not have been provided for the wounded, and an adequate supply of food and hot drinks prepared for them. The tents were available, and food was on the spot. On the 8th additional tents were pitched by fatigue parties, and food was supplied to most of the wounded. We think also that better arrangements should have been made for feeding and treating the patients on the "Julnar." We are told by the officer who acted as Assistant Director, Medical Services, 7th Division, that he estimated the probable number of casualties in that division at 2,000. Such being the case it appears to us unfortunate that tents, blankets, and food were not prepared for this number. We may add that the arrangements for feeding the patients, alike in the tents and on the "Julnar," were so unsatisfactory that they were at the time severely, and we think justly, criticised by a General Officer who has given evidence before us. We have indeed to conclude, on the evidence adduced, that many of the wounded were indebted to the enterprise of regimental and other officers not connected with the medical services for any food or shelter they received.

136. After the occupation of Shaikh Saad on January 9th about 2,000 of the wounded were moved to a new camp there, the remainder numbering 1,200 being left in a camp on the left bank of the river at Musandaq in charge of a small medical staff. The condition of the camps at Musandaq and Shaikh Saad have been described to us by various witnesses, and we are constrained to find that the arrangements for the accommodation and treatment of the wounded there were very defective. The medical staff was so small that the wounds of many remained undressed for some days. The camps were in a very insanitary condition. The supply of surgical stores and appliances ran short, and there was practically no subordinate staff to see to the welfare of the patients. The suffering and discomfort endured by the unfortunate wounded in these camps were very great, and even up to January 18th, when the Meerut Stationary Hospital took over charge at Shaikh Saad, this condition of affairs continued there. The Officer Commanding this hospital

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000093

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

describes the condition of that camp in the following words:—"On arrival here we found about 195 British and 800 Indian sick and wounded in an irregular camp situated on filthy muddy ground behind the village. . . . There was one Indian temporary I.M.S. officer in charge of the Indians, and he was ill. He had two sub-assistant surgeons and some of the personnel of an improvised cavalry field ambulance to help him. He had no dressings left, and many cases still had on the first field dressings which had been applied on the battlefield. About 200 of the patients had dysentery, and there were no proper latrine arrangements. The state of the camp was indescribable. Near the middle of the hospital tents was a pile of bags of atta, &c., mostly ruined by the rain, which I was told represented 10 days' rations."

137. In the meantime, on the 13th, the camp at Musandaq was broken up, some of the patients being evacuated to Basra and others removed to Shaikh Saad. During this time the only medical staff for this hospital was 3 medical officers for 1,200 patients. For the hospital at Shaikh Saad, where the number of patients varied from 2,200 on the 11th to 1,000 on the 18th, 4 medical officers only were detailed. Of these 2 got ill, and for some time therefore 2 officers only were available for duty. It must also be remembered that this medical staff could ill be spared from the very small establishment of the field ambulances with the force. There was, besides, a great shortage in subordinates, and of various kinds of medical and surgical stores and appliances.

138. In the battle of January 13th and 14th the medical organisation continued to be equally unsatisfactory. The weather conditions had by this time become very bad. On the evening of the 8th it began to rain, and continued to do so intermittently from that date until the 21st, when very heavy rain fell for some days. Even at the time when the battle of Wadi was fought, the difficulty of moving sick and wounded in the rain and heavy mud was considerable, and the field ambulances attached to the force were still very inadequate. The evidence indicates, however, that the available medical staff did all that was possible to collect the wounded as soon as the action ended, and to give them such shelter as was available. Many were collected in an enclosure not far from the Wadi and were there detained for the night. We do not doubt that everything that was possible was done to assist them, but the suffering from want of food, cold, and lack of proper treatment was severe. On the following day they were evacuated to Shaikh Saad, and accommodated in the steamers moored there. On the 15th the steamers accompanying the force moved up to the Wadi, where they remained during the action of January 21st and 22nd, the hospital at Shaikh Saad being left in charge of the Meerut Stationary Hospital. The medical establishment had by this time been slightly reinforced, but was still much below normal. The action took place about 3 miles from the Wadi, and shortly after it began there was a heavy downpour of rain. This made the country, which was already difficult to move in, almost impassable. The attack on the enemy's position was unsuccessful, and the casualties were very heavy. The weather was extremely cold, and the whole country was practically a quagmire. In such circumstances the sufferings of the wounded would have been very great even with the best possible organisation. They were accentuated by the insufficiency of medical personnel, equipment and stores, and by the fact that there was also for some time considerable confusion and want of organisation. Throughout the day and the following night wounded and many unwounded men struggled back to the camp as best they could—walking, riding or carried on stretchers, or in transport carts. The whole country was a sea of mud, and many fell from exhaustion on the way. Those who were in the camp, and unwounded men returning from the battlefield, did their best to assist their wounded comrades to shelter, but we cannot doubt that a large number failed to reach their destination and died from exposure.

Evidence has indeed been given of one case in which not only a wounded man, but the stretcher-bearers bringing him in, died from this cause. We think that the condition of affairs is well illustrated by the following extract from the evidence of a medical officer who was present: "I shall never forget that journey. The wounded and sick were in army transport carts, and my personnel and myself on foot. We started off by crossing a nullah in which there was 3 feet of water, and then stumbled across country, sinking every step knee-deep in mud. We were obliged to take a zigzag course to enable the carts to avoid ditches and other obstacles. It was a terrible night, bitterly cold, with a driving sleet. We were wet through, and had had no food all day. I remember I had an attack of ague when I reached the ship. With great difficulty we got our sick and wounded up the two slippery steep planks which formed the only means of getting on the ship. The ship was overcrowded and understaffed." To add to the difficulties a number of tents which had been pitched for the accommodation of the wounded were, by an unfortunate error of judgment, struck, the officer in charge being under a misapprehension that orders had been issued for the force to advance. When, therefore, the wounded reached the camp the only shelter available was the hospital steamer "Julnar." To this steamer, and to any other steamer they could find, both wounded and unwounded crowded for shelter and warmth, but large numbers failed to secure any protection. The tents that had been struck were repitched, and a certain number of patients were accommodated in them; but as they had been pitched after the rain began to fall, and on ground knee-deep in mud, they were of little use to persons wet through and numb with cold. Nor were those on the steamers in much better case, for many of these vessels were not weather-proof; the men crowded anywhere they could, in gangways, in the stokehold and in the cabins for warmth; but many were and remained for some days wet through. The small medical staff on the spot, and officers and men not connected with the medical services, did all they could to improve matters, and to feed and assist the wounded. In spite of all these efforts the evidence conclusively shows that the sufferings of the wounded were so grievous that it would be difficult to exaggerate them.

139. It is impossible to deal separately with the evacuation of the wounded from these three engagements, for many individuals wounded in different battles travelled down the Tigris together. The hardships of the voyage were much increased during this period by the constant rain and cold that prevailed. As the steamers were not weatherproof, the patients were wet through and numb with cold, and remained in this condition for the whole journey. The steamers were overcrowded, and the defects in the arrangements, to which we have already referred, were more pronounced than on any previous occasion. We cite the following extract from the evidence of an officer as to his experiences on his way down. It would be easy to quote evidence of a more sensational character, but we think that the following is fairly typical:—

"I left Shaikh Saad on the morning of January 12th, on board the "P. 5," with about 300 other wounded. This boat had arrived at Shaikh Saad the previous day, and had just discharged the personnel and mules of a howitzer battery. There were no proper arrangements for food for the wounded on board, and we had to live on bully beef, biscuits and jam; tea was also issued, but there was no bread to be had. We all had to lie on the deck; blankets were issued out. The medical staff on board consisted of one doctor and one assistant surgeon of the Indian Subordinate Medical Department and two sweepers. On arrival at Amara the assistant surgeon was taken off this boat for duty on shore. No one was sent in his place, so from Amara to Basra the one doctor had to attend to some 300 wounded, the majority being stretcher cases. It was impossible for the two sweepers to attend to all the wounded properly, and I know of many cases of men urinating and defecating in their boots. It rained hard the whole of the voyage down from Shaikh Saad to Basra, and everybody on the boat, and those on the two barges, were soaked to the skin. Bread and meat rations were put on board at Amara, but owing to the want of cooking arrangements we never received a proper meal."

140. The conditions were indeed, in many ways, much worse than after Ctesiphon, and when the steamers arrived at Amara the wounded were in a pitiable state, wet through, dirty, without any dry clothes or covering, benumbed with cold and very hungry. Their wounds had not been properly dressed, and in some instances

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000bf

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

cases of fracture were not even in splints. Many of the steamers were overcrowded and filthy, not only with mud and remnants of food, but also with fæces and urine. The condition of things, indeed, was so bad that it is difficult to describe it.

141. We have now to consider the causes which led to this very serious breakdown in the medical organisation, and to state whether the officers on the spot were in any way to blame for this condition of affairs. In our opinion the main causes of the breakdown were fourfold:—

(1) The lack of proper hospital river steamers.
(2) The lack of river transport.
(3) The insufficiency of the medical and subordinate staff and of medical stores and accessories; and
(4) The weather conditions.

We have already discussed the want of provision of proper hospital steamers and the lack of river transport. The insufficiency of the medical and subordinate staff and equipment was, in our opinion, almost entirely due to the failure on the part of the embarkation authorities at Marseilles to despatch the medical units of the 3rd and 7th Divisions simultaneously with the fighting troops of those divisions. We think it necessary to set out the facts of this failure in some detail, as we regard it as one of the main causes of this breakdown.

142. We understand that it is a recognised principle in embarkation work that units despatched for service oversea should be embarked in the order in which they are required to land, and that each unit should be shipped complete, with its equipment, technical vehicles and transport. As each brigade has a field ambulance allotted to it on service, it follows that a field ambulance should have been despatched from Marseilles with every four battalions embarked, so as to enable each brigade to take the field as soon as it landed at Basrah. Instead of adhering to this well-known rule, the embarkation staff at Marseilles despatched the combatant units of each division first, keeping back the medical units till the last. Besides separating brigades from their field medical units, they added to the confusion so caused by breaking up the latter in order to economise shipping. The result of this was that, when the field ambulances arrived at Basra, it was found in most cases that their personnel was on one ship, their equipment on another and their transport in some cases on a third. To make matters worse, certain of the transports employed were of too deep draught to cross the bar at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, thus necessitating transhipment at Koweit. In consequence of these unbusinesslike arrangements, the medical units from France were not only late in arrival at Basra, but had to be detained there for some days, while their personnel and equipment was being sorted out and collected. Their transport had in every case to be sent up later, generally by march route, as the shortage of shipping precluded its despatch by river steamer. The length of the march and the delay caused by floods and other obstacles retarded progress considerably, so that the animals and vehicles of most of these field ambulances did not begin to reach the front until March.

143. We have found it difficult to ascertain why the embarkation staff at Marseilles adopted this unusual procedure, and we realise that there may have been reasons for their action of which we are not aware; but so far as they can be gathered, the facts of the case appear to be as follows. Troop trains in France are of two fixed types—the "type combatant" and the "type parc." The railway transport authorities would not despatch any "type parc" trains until all the "type combatant" trains had started. The "type combatant" trains are unsuited to the conveyance of units such as field ambulances which are equipped with a relatively large amount of transport. Similarly the "type parc" trains are unsuited to combatant units. The field ambulances were thus perforce the last units of the 7th Division to entrain, and though all the trains arrived at Marseilles from the front within a period of 26 hours, and a rearrangement at Marseilles would thus appear to have been feasible, the order of arrival seems to have governed the order of embarkation, with the result that the medical units were the last to be shipped.

144. No objection to this arrangement seems to have been made by the divisional commander concerned, firstly because the entraining arrangements were in the hands of the higher authorities, who presumably had full information as to the requirements of the situation, and secondly because the War Office, in a letter dated November 1st, 1915, had stated that the primary destination of both divisions was Egypt, where they would be reorganised, prior to despatch to Mesopotamia in vessels which could cross the Fao bar. This is borne out by the fact that the transports were only rationed for the voyage to Egypt, and that a camp was actually prepared at Tel-el-Kebir for the reception of these Indian divisions.

145. During the embarkation of the 7th Division the embarkation staff found it necessary to separate units from their 1st line transport and drivers from their horses. The divisional staff objected to this proceeding, but was told that the Base Commandant had strict orders to allow no transport to sail without her full complement of troops and animals. The splitting up of units was held to be unavoidable as, owing to differences in sanitary and cooking arrangements, some transports had to be reserved for British and others for Indian troops. We are informed that the recommendations of the divisional staff would have provided for the embarkation, with the headquarters of each field ambulance, of the whole of its equipment, and a sufficiently large portion of personnel to allow of its being employed as soon as it landed. Owing, however, to the non-arrival of certain ships, the whole trooping programme had to be recast, and the piecemeal embarkation of units was insisted on, so as to utilize shipping to the fullest possible extent. We gather that the confusion resulting from this arrangement must have been considerable, as the wagons and ambulance vehicles of two medical units were crowded out at the last moment and left on the quay at Marseilles. Besides breaking up units and delaying their embarkation, the order of despatch of medical units was changed so as to conform to shipping requirements. Thus, instead of giving priority to the field ambulances which would be required by their brigades immediately on landing, one of the first medical units of the 3rd Division to be embarked was the Secunderabad General Hospital, which could only be used at the base or on the lines of communication, and was less pressingly required than the mobile medical units.

146. The urgency of relieving General Townshend made it necessary to expedite the despatch of troops to Basra, and the orders for the disembarkation of the two Indian divisions in Egypt were accordingly cancelled. With the exception of two or three units which transhipped and were accommodated for a few days at Tel-el-Kebir, the troops proceeded direct to Mesopotamia, no opportunity being given them to reorganise or collect their scattered personnel and equipment. A statement is attached * giving full particulars as to the dates of despatch and arrival of each medical unit belonging to these two divisions. It will be observed that on the date of General Aylmer's starting for the relief of Kut, namely, January 4th, not a single complete field ambulance had disembarked at Basra, though portions of some units had just arrived there. The embarkation staff made great efforts to despatch these ambulances up-river as quickly as possible, for the need of medical reinforcements at the front was fully appreciated. None of them arrived, however, until after the battles of Shaikh Saad and the Wadi had been fought. The late arrival of the medical units of the 3rd and 7th Divisions thus created a temporary but very serious shortage of medical personnel and equipment in the Tigris Army Corps, which could not have been foreseen, either in Mesopotamia or in India. The earlier arrival of these units would not have removed the hardships caused to the wounded by rain, cold and exposure, or those arising from the lack of suitable river transport. It would, however, have secured the presence on the field of battle of a large number of fully staffed and well-equipped medical units, and so would have facilitated the rapid collection and removal of the wounded, besides providing the latter with the personnel required to cook and distribute their food and attend to their bodily wants. We consider that the breakdown which occurred after the January battles was largely, though indirectly, due to the unsatisfactory way in which the medical units of the 3rd and 7th Divisions were despatched from Marseilles.

147. We may explain that our remarks in regard to the despatch of medical units, apply also to supply units.

* Annexure III.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000011

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Instead of despatching the latter with their brigades, they were kept back in the same way as the field ambulances, with the result that General Aylmer had only nine supply and transport officers with him when he commenced his advance, instead of 40 which would have been the normal complement. The shortage in the subordinate and follower ranks was equally marked and the complaints made in regard to the feeding of the sick and wounded after the January battles, were partly due to this cause. The issue of rations was often delayed through the inadequacy of the supply personnel, which could not cope with the sudden demands created by the influx of hundreds of wounded. There was no lack of food and comforts on the steamers which acted as supply columns, but there was not the staff to provide for their rapid issue and distribution. This deficiency undoubtedly reacted on the sick and wounded and accounts to some extent for the complaints that patients in the ambulances were unable to get food. The staff of the Tigris Corps had been hurriedly formed, and the officer in charge of administration had not had much experience in this important work. The staff of the 7th Division did not arrive from France until after the battle of Shaikh Saad. Previous to that action, it was entirely extemporised. With such defective machinery, friction and lack of co-ordination were inevitable, and these, doubtless, tended to increase the difficulties of the overworked and understaffed medical services.

148. We believe that no action on the part of the officers responsible for the medical arrangements of the force could have prevented, to any great extent, the sufferings endured by the wounded on January 13th, 14th, 21st and 22nd; and the evidence before us abundantly proves that, generally speaking, the energy, kindness and industry of the executive medical officers who were directly in charge of the wounded, were beyond all praise. We do not, for reasons already stated, consider that the administrative officers of the medical services used available resources in the best manner possible in the engagement of the January 7th; but we do not think that they can be held responsible for the breakdown which occurred after the later actions. We desire also to place on record our opinion that the Corps Commander, General Aylmer, cannot in any way be held responsible for this failure. Military reasons, and the direct orders of his superior officer, made it incumbent on him to advance without delay to the relief of Kut with an improvised staff and a force not properly organised. His medical establishments were about one-third of the authorised scale, and the shortage in supply and transport establishments was greater still. These deficiencies he represented from time to time to the Army Commander, both before his advance and after the battle of Shaikh Saad, referring at the same time to the lack of river hospital steamers. In such circumstances it would, in our opinion be unfair to hold any man, much less an officer whose solicitude for the welfare of the soldier is so well known, in any way to blame for the sufferings which resulted from these deficiencies.

149. We have stated above, that the conduct of the executive medical officers, generally speaking, was beyond all praise; but we must refer to the case of an officer, whose conduct has been severely criticised by numerous witnesses. It has been freely stated that after the action of January 21st, when this officer was in medical charge of the steamship "Julnar," then used as a hospital steamer he was negligent in his duty, that the patients who were sent to him received insufficient food and no proper medical treatment, and that they were discharged from hospital with orders to return to their regiments when they were yet unfit for duty. These facts were reported at the time by General Kemball to Sir Fenton Aylmer, who found, after inquiry, that the charges were not proved. The evidence that we have recorded, and the written statements that we have received, do not in our opinion support this finding; but in view of the fact that the decision was arrived at after an inquiry made at the time, by an officer with first-hand knowledge of the facts, we do not think that we ought to differ expressly from it. We may say, however, that this officer was in our opinion very fortunate in being exonerated from blame.

150. *Attack on Es-Sinn.*—For various reasons the medical arrangements for the evacuation of the wounded at the battle of Es-Sinn were much more successful than during the operations of January. The weather conditions were more favourable, the field medical units attached to the 3rd and 7th Divisions had arrived at the front, and the increase in the medical establishments made it possible to detail a fairly adequate staff of medical officers and subordinates to each steamer used for the transport of sick and wounded to the base. The arrangements were in many respects far from ideal, but we have reason to believe that the improvement was realised by everyone and much appreciated. The battle took place on the right bank of the river and extended to a distance of 16 or 17 miles from Wadi where the force was encamped, the total number of wounded being approximately, 2,440. It appears that the original intention was to collect these wounded in a part of the enemy's position known as the Dujailah redoubt. As the attack was not successful, these plans had to be changed and ultimately the wounded were collected in a place called the Dujailah depression, at some distance from the redoubt. Throughout the day and during the night following the engagement, the wounded were brought into this collecting post and were there fed and tended at the field ambulances. On the following morning they were sent in a convoy to Wadi camp, a halt being made *en route* for water. The convoy reached Wadi the same night, and the patients were there accommodated in field ambulances and clearing hospitals. There was some delay in crossing to the left bank of the river by the bridge near the camp, but this delay was, we think, unavoidable. The evacuation from Wadi to the base was promptly effected in river steamers, to each of which a medical staff and a supply of medical stores, appliances and comforts was allotted. There was no delay in the evacuation, and the wounded were received in good condition at Basra. We think that the arrangements on this occasion were as satisfactory as circumstances permitted. The main sources of discomfort were twofold—the use of transport carts for the conveyance of wounded by land, and the lack of river hospital steamers. The want of ambulance wagons, tongas, or motor ambulances, was serious, owing to the great distance of the battlefield from the camp, and the sufferings of the wounded during this journey of 17 miles gave rise to great complaints.

151. Subject to these defects, we think that the arrangements were satisfactory and that great credit is due to the officers directly responsible for the collection and evacuation of the wounded. In arriving at this conclusion we are not unmindful of the criticism of a witness who has attacked the arrangements made on this occasion in somewhat severe language. We do not doubt that discomfort or suffering was undergone by individuals, and that certain patients received less attention than others at the collecting station and on arrival at the camp; but such experiences are unavoidable in the confusion following a battle, particularly when a reverse is experienced and the casualties are heavy. The great preponderance of evidence before us is to the effect that on March 8th there was a great improvement in the medical organisation, and that on the whole the evacuation of the wounded was effected expeditiously and methodically, and we are prepared to accept this as correct. We believe that this is also in accordance with the opinion of the Army Commander, Lieutenant-General Sir Percy Lake, an officer who has, if we may say so without impropriety, made every endeavour to secure the amelioration of the medical arrangements.

152. *Operations on the Tigris in April.*—The next action, that of April 5th, when the Umm-al-Hannah and Falahiyah positions were attacked, was witnessed by two of the Commissioners who personally investigated the working of the arrangements for the collection and evacuation of the wounded on the battlefield. These arrangements were carefully thought out and proved very successful. The number of stretcher bearers was sufficient, the collecting stations were conveniently situated, and ample provision was made for the comfort and medical treatment of the wounded, who were promptly evacuated to the camp at Wadi by the "Aerial" motor boat and in motor cars and ambulance wagons. The organisation was methodical and worked smoothly, and the Commission saw nothing to call for unfavourable criticism in the arrangements made, save that the provision of more motor boats and of additional ambulance transport would have been a convenience. The Turkish

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000050

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

wounded were treated at the collecting station and received the same attention as the British. The clearing hospitals and field ambulances were also visited. It was found that the latter were really acting as hospitals and with equipment for 100 patients, were accommodating 300 or even more, in the emergency. As these units are not equipped for so many patients, or to perform the duties of clearing hospitals, there was necessarily some discomfort; but the medical officers present worked unceasingly to minimise this inconvenience and to make their patients comfortable.

153. Fighting continued day by day, and on April 7th and 9th attacks on the Sannaiyat position, on the left bank of the Tigris, in which heavy casualties were incurred, were repulsed. Progress continued to be made on the right bank, but the medical conditions arising from this continuous fighting call for no special comment save that, on occasions, the lack of proper ambulance land transport was noticeable. On April 17th an attack was made on the Beit Aeesa position, on the right bank of the river. The fighting was very severe, especially when a heavy counter attack was made by the Turks. The firing was then so heavy, that it was very difficult to collect the wounded. Many lay all day in the Turkish trenches, into which they had penetrated. The ground behind these trenches was swept by fire, the Turks were sniping the stretcher bearers, and after several of the latter had been hit, all further attempts to move the wounded from such situations were abandoned till nightfall. The stretcher bearers had then to wade through a marsh which was deep in places, but performed the task with their accustomed devotion. We should like to take this opportunity of calling attention to the good work done by stretcher bearers throughout the campaign. The heroic conduct of the men of the Indian Army Bearer Corps has won the admiration of the whole force, and seems to justify their being granted a higher status than that which they enjoy at present.

154. The arrangements at Wadi were similar to those which obtained in the earlier fighting, but the strain on the establishments was greater as the casualties were very heavy. Many of the field ambulances, indeed, were accommodating for days at a time twice and thrice the number of patients they were equipped to deal with.

155. The arrangements on the steamers, while still leaving a great deal to be desired, showed a great advance, the deficiencies apparent in March having to some extent been made good. There was, however, still much room for systematic improvement, as is evidenced by the different conditions obtaining on different boats. Thus "P. 5," one of the vessels employed, had cots for nearly all lying down cases, the latrine accommodation was good, there was no insufficiency of sweepers or bed-pans, and the supply of food and comforts was satisfactory. On the other hand, the "P. 7" was very crowded and short of trained personnel and comforts; while the "Medjidieh," in addition to being overcrowded and not well supplied with comforts, was short of food and blankets.

156. The ineffectual effort to capture the Sannaiyat position, which took place on April 22nd, marked the termination of nearly three weeks' continuous fighting, designed to relieve the garrison of Kut. The medical arrangements for this action were similar to those made for the preceding engagements of the same month, and the gradual but steady improvement observed in the general medical conditions was fully maintained.

157. We think that the administrative and executive medical officers deserve great credit for the successful collection and evacuation of the large numbers of wounded in the almost continuous fighting which took place during this month. The casualties were very high, the available resources in the way of accommodation, personnel and supplies were often far from plentiful, and the difficulty of securing river steamers was frequently considerable. In spite of all these obstacles the wounded were, so far as we have been able to ascertain, treated promptly and adequately. Every effort was made to reduce discomfort to a minimum, and the patients were evacuated expeditiously to Amara and Basra and thence to India. The strain thrown upon the medical authorities will be the more readily appreciated when it is realised that in the month of April alone 5,747 sick and wounded were evacuated to the base.

158. *Supplementary considerations. Hospitals at Basra.*—We have not, in our detailed examination of certain phases of the campaign, discussed the treatment of the sick and wounded in the hospitals at Amarah and Basra, as we think it is more convenient to do so separately. The hospitals at Basra have, generally speaking, been well managed throughout. In the early stages of the war there was undoubtedly some difficulty in securing suitable food, but we think that complaints in regard to dieting have been somewhat exaggerated. In April, May and June there was considerable overcrowding, but the consequent discomfort was much reduced by the labour and energy of the staff. In the latter portion of the campaign conditions improved considerably, and we have ample testimony of the gratitude of numerous patients for the care and excellent treatment which they received in the British General Hospital. The introduction of Sisters of Queen Alexandra's Nursing Service into this hospital, as also into some of the hospitals at Amara, has added greatly to the comfort of the patients. There are deficiencies in the way of buildings, electric fans and personnel. These points have already been referred to, but otherwise we think that there is little room for unfavourable criticism, and we have every reason to commend the medical administration of the British General Hospital. The same observations apply generally to the Indian General Hospital. We think, however, that the standard of comfort is not so high in Indian as in British hospitals, and we consider that efforts might be made to copy the excellent models afforded by the Indian war hospitals in Bombay.

159. *Hospitals at Amara.*—The Amara hospitals have laboured under great disadvantages. Some of the accommodation is unsuitable, the hospitals are not fitted with electric fans, and they have frequently been overcrowded, particularly after heavy engagements up the Tigris. The personnel has from time to time been depleted to meet urgent demands at the front, and there has been occasional delay in obtaining supplies, stores and appliances. In spite of all these difficulties the officers of the hospitals have done excellent work, for which they deserve great praise. The administration of the Rawal Pindi Hospital is specially worthy of commendation.

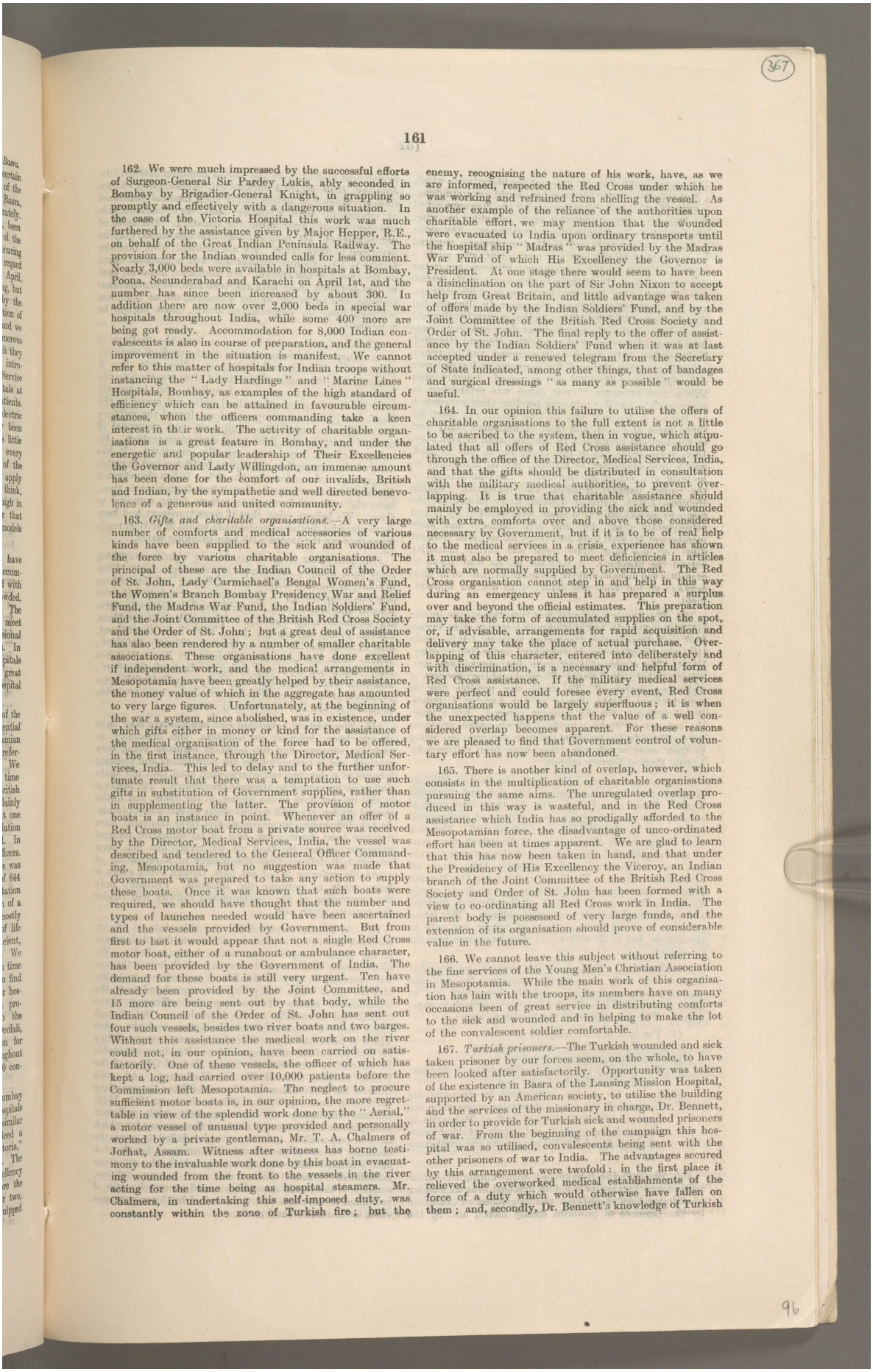
160. *Hospitals at Bombay.*—The accommodation of the sick and wounded on their arrival in India is so essential a part of the medical arrangements of the Mesopotamian force that, though not strictly within our terms of reference, we think it right to refer shortly to the matter. We are influenced in doing this by the fact that, at the time of our appointment, a substantial increase in the British war hospital accommodation at Bombay was plainly necessary. On April 1st there was in Bombay but one completed hospital of 500 beds for the accommodation of British troops, and this hospital was poorly found. In addition to this, provision had been made for 60 officers. At Deolali, Poona, Karachi and Secunderabad there was accommodation for 84 more patients, or a total of 644 beds. Other patients were distributed among the station hospitals throughout India. Owing to the addition of a British division to the force in Mesopotamia, mostly composed of young soldiers with no experience of life in the tropics, these preparations were clearly insufficient, especially in view of the approaching hot weather. We are glad to say that this danger was appreciated in time and on our return to Bombay we were pleased to find that in that city alone, four large new British war hospitals, accommodating 2,200 patients, had been provided. Moreover, additional accommodation, to the extent of 1,222 beds, had been prepared at Deolali, Secunderabad and Poona, and further provision for invalids had been made on a large scale throughout India. In selected hill stations provision for 5,000 convalescents was also being arranged.

161. The general standard of equipment at Bombay has been immensely raised, so that the new war hospitals there would bear favourable comparison with any similar hospitals in the United Kingdom. It was indeed a pleasure to visit such institutions as the "Victoria," "Alexandra" and "Freeman Thomas" hospitals. The latter, which has been the special care of Her Excellency Lady Willingdon, had been in preparation before the time under review, but in the case of the other two, business buildings were converted into splendidly-equipped hospitals in less than two months.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000042

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



162. We were much impressed by the successful efforts of Surgeon-General Sir Pardey Lukis, ably seconded in Bombay by Brigadier-General Knight, in grappling so promptly and effectively with a dangerous situation. In the case of the Victoria Hospital this work was much furthered by the assistance given by Major Hepper, R.E., on behalf of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. The provision for the Indian wounded calls for less comment. Nearly 3,000 beds were available in hospitals at Bombay, Poona, Secunderabad and Karachi on April 1st, and the number has since been increased by about 300. In addition there are now over 2,000 beds in special war hospitals throughout India, while some 400 more are being got ready. Accommodation for 8,000 Indian convalescents is also in course of preparation, and the general improvement in the situation is manifest. We cannot refer to this matter of hospitals for Indian troops without instancing the "Lady Hardinge" and "Marine Lines" Hospitals, Bombay, as examples of the high standard of efficiency which can be attained in favourable circumstances, when the officers commanding take a keen interest in their work. The activity of charitable organisations is a great feature in Bombay, and under the energetic and popular leadership of Their Excellencies the Governor and Lady Willingdon, an immense amount has been done for the comfort of our invalids, British and Indian, by the sympathetic and well directed benevolence of a generous and united community.

163. *Gifts and charitable organisations.*—A very large number of comforts and medical accessories of various kinds have been supplied to the sick and wounded of the force by various charitable organisations. The principal of these are the Indian Council of the Order of St. John, Lady Carmichael's Bengal Women's Fund, the Women's Branch Bombay Presidency War and Relief Fund, the Madras War Fund, the Indian Soldiers' Fund, and the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John; but a great deal of assistance has also been rendered by a number of smaller charitable associations. These organisations have done excellent if independent work, and the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia have been greatly helped by their assistance, the money value of which in the aggregate has amounted to very large figures. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the war a system, since abolished, was in existence, under which gifts either in money or kind for the assistance of the medical organisation of the force had to be offered, in the first instance, through the Director, Medical Services, India. This led to delay and to the further unfortunate result that there was a temptation to use such gifts in substitution of Government supplies, rather than in supplementing the latter. The provision of motor boats is an instance in point. Whenever an offer of a Red Cross motor boat from a private source was received by the Director, Medical Services, India, the vessel was described and tendered to the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, but no suggestion was made that Government was prepared to take any action to supply these boats. Once it was known that such boats were required, we should have thought that the number and types of launches needed would have been ascertained and the vessels provided by Government. But from first to last it would appear that not a single Red Cross motor boat, either of a runabout or ambulance character, has been provided by the Government of India. The demand for these boats is still very urgent. Ten have already been provided by the Joint Committee, and 15 more are being sent out by that body, while the Indian Council of the Order of St. John has sent out four such vessels, besides two river boats and two barges. Without this assistance the medical work on the river could not, in our opinion, have been carried on satisfactorily. One of these vessels, the officer of which has kept a log, had carried over 10,000 patients before the Commission left Mesopotamia. The neglect to procure sufficient motor boats is, in our opinion, the more regrettable in view of the splendid work done by the "Aerial," a motor vessel of unusual type provided and personally worked by a private gentleman, Mr. T. A. Chalmers of Jorhat, Assam. Witness after witness has borne testimony to the invaluable work done by this boat in evacuating wounded from the front to the vessels in the river acting for the time being as hospital steamers. Mr. Chalmers, in undertaking this self-imposed duty, was constantly within the zone of Turkish fire; but the enemy, recognising the nature of his work, have, as we are informed, respected the Red Cross under which he was working and refrained from shelling the vessel. As another example of the reliance of the authorities upon charitable effort, we may mention that the wounded were evacuated to India upon ordinary transports until the hospital ship "Madras" was provided by the Madras War Fund of which His Excellency the Governor is President. At one stage there would seem to have been a disinclination on the part of Sir John Nixon to accept help from Great Britain, and little advantage was taken of offers made by the Indian Soldiers' Fund, and by the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John. The final reply to the offer of assistance by the Indian Soldiers' Fund when it was at last accepted under a renewed telegram from the Secretary of State indicated, among other things, that of bandages and surgical dressings "as many as possible" would be useful.

164. In our opinion this failure to utilise the offers of charitable organisations to the full extent is not a little to be ascribed to the system, then in vogue, which stipulated that all offers of Red Cross assistance should go through the office of the Director, Medical Services, India, and that the gifts should be distributed in consultation with the military medical authorities, to prevent overlapping. It is true that charitable assistance should mainly be employed in providing the sick and wounded with extra comforts over and above those considered necessary by Government, but if it is to be of real help to the medical services in a crisis, experience has shown it must also be prepared to meet deficiencies in articles which are normally supplied by Government. The Red Cross organisation cannot step in and help in this way during an emergency unless it has prepared a surplus over and beyond the official estimates. This preparation may take the form of accumulated supplies on the spot, or, if advisable, arrangements for rapid acquisition and delivery may take the place of actual purchase. Overlapping of this character, entered into deliberately and with discrimination, is a necessary and helpful form of Red Cross assistance. If the military medical services were perfect and could foresee every event, Red Cross organisations would be largely superfluous; it is when the unexpected happens that the value of a well considered overlap becomes apparent. For these reasons we are pleased to find that Government control of voluntary effort has now been abandoned.

165. There is another kind of overlap, however, which consists in the multiplication of charitable organisations pursuing the same aims. The unregulated overlap produced in this way is wasteful, and in the Red Cross assistance which India has so prodigally afforded to the Mesopotamian force, the disadvantage of unco-ordinated effort has been at times apparent. We are glad to learn that this has now been taken in hand, and that under the Presidency of His Excellency the Viceroy, an Indian branch of the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John has been formed with a view to co-ordinating all Red Cross work in India. The parent body is possessed of very large funds, and the extension of its organisation should prove of considerable value in the future.

166. We cannot leave this subject without referring to the fine services of the Young Men's Christian Association in Mesopotamia. While the main work of this organisation has lain with the troops, its members have on many occasions been of great service in distributing comforts to the sick and wounded and in helping to make the lot of the convalescent soldier comfortable.

167. *Turkish prisoners.*—The Turkish wounded and sick taken prisoner by our forces seem, on the whole, to have been looked after satisfactorily. Opportunity was taken of the existence in Basra of the Lansing Mission Hospital, supported by an American society, to utilise the building and the services of the missionary in charge, Dr. Bennett, in order to provide for Turkish sick and wounded prisoners of war. From the beginning of the campaign this hospital was so utilised, convalescents being sent with the other prisoners of war to India. The advantages secured by this arrangement were twofold: in the first place it relieved the overworked medical establishments of the force of a duty which would otherwise have fallen on them; and, secondly, Dr. Bennett's knowledge of Turkish

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00008a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

and Arabic enabled him to do much for his patients which a doctor ignorant of those languages could not have done.

168. The hospital was at first under the management of Dr. Bennett, with a sufficient staff, including his wife, who was also a qualified medical practitioner. Any extra personnel or surgical and medical equipment required were provided by the military authorities, who made a capitation grant to the management of seven annas per day per prisoner. In addition to this a sum of Rs. 10,000 was allotted to Dr. Bennett for the needs of his patients, and in consideration of these allowances Dr. Bennett fed the prisoners until July, 1915. In that month Dr. Bennett proceeded to India, the hospital was shut, and its patients were interned in a ward of the Indian General Hospital. In December, 1915, Dr. Bennett returned, and his return coinciding with a demand for more space for our own sick, the Lansing Hospital was reopened. Shortly after this a new prisoners of war camp was established to accommodate healthy prisoners pending their evacuation to India. A hospital hut in this camp was used for slight cases of illness, the more serious ones being sent to the Lansing Hospital. In the first week of February, 1916, fever broke out in this camp and in the hospital, which, first diagnosed as malaria, proved ultimately to be fever of a malignant character. The commandant of the camp, Captain Burgess, was taken ill. Captain Hebbert, I.M.S., specially detailed to be resident in the camp to investigate the disease, was attacked by it and subsequently died. Dr. and Mrs. Bennett and some members of his staff were also taken ill, and Mrs. Bennett died. At the same time there was severe mortality among the prisoners. Systematic efforts were made to eradicate the disease, and the Assistant Director of Medical Services at the Base was removed to another appointment.

169. The Lansing Hospital was then taken over by the military authorities and staffed with a section of an Indian field ambulance under Lieutenant Stocker, I.M.S., while the prisoners of war camp was placed under Major Sealey, I.M.S. The abnormal death rate disappeared, and conditions in both the Lansing Hospital and the prisoners of war camp improved. To avoid any possible risk of recrudescence of the disease at the Lansing Hospital, that building is, for the moment, disused. For a time, the services of Turkish medical officers taken prisoners were utilized for the treatment of their own sick, but owing to their want of efficiency they have been replaced by Indian Medical Service officers.

170. On the capture of Nasariyeh, the Turkish Military Hospital was found to contain 125 sick and wounded Turks. These were looked after by their own medical officers, who seem to have been jealous of professional interference on the part of our medical staff. The sick from the prisoners of war camp at Nasariyeh were sent to this hospital, but the condition of the patients therein was not satisfactory, and eventually they were all evacuated to Basra. The death rate among the Turkish prisoners, generally, was high, being due no doubt partly to the inefficiency and neglect of the Turkish doctors, and partly to their own want of cleanliness. This latter trait has rendered them a source of danger, not only to themselves, but to all with whom they have been brought in contact.

171. *Summary.*—To sum up the position, we find that from a very early stage in the campaign, the sick and wounded have undergone avoidable discomfort and at times great suffering owing to defective medical arrangements. The main causes of the hardships were :—

(1) The lack of river hospital steamers ;
(2) Insufficiency of the medical personnel ;
(3) The shortage of river transport ;
(4) The omission to provide proper means of evacuating the wounded by land ; and
(5) In so far as the operations in January are concerned, the very unfortunate omission on the part of the embarkation staff at Marseilles to despatch the medical and supply establishments of the 3rd and 7th Divisions with the combatant units.

172. The suffering thus caused, slight during the earlier actions, and varying as it did on different occasions owing to differing local conditions, was intensified at Ctesiphon by the presence of powerful enemy forces, and by the length and insecurity of the line of communications. In January, 1916, when it culminated, the hurrying of two fresh divisions into action before their medical personnel or equipment were available, and very unfavourable weather, greatly aggravated the situation. The state of affairs after the action of January 21st can indeed only be described as deplorable. We are satisfied, also, that the failure in the medical organisation had a material effect on the moral of the troops. We recognize, however, that in Mesopotamia, even with the best medical organisation possible, the sufferings of the wounded, during cold, wet weather, after an unsuccessful action, must always be very great.

173. The fundamental defect has been the shortage of river transport which has reacted on the medical organisation, both directly and indirectly. Not only has it prevented a permanent allotment of river steamers to the medical services for use as hospitals, and frequently retarded the despatch of medical units and stores to the front, but it has, on many occasions, forced the military authorities to curtail the equipment and personnel of medical units in the field to a dangerous extent. Its indirect effects have been equally important. It has delayed the completion of hospital buildings and impeded the provision of comforts for the sick. It has also affected the health of the troops in that it has, from time to time, been the cause of incomplete rations being supplied to them. We believe, also, that if river transport had been more plentiful, better arrangements would have been made for supply ing the troops with pure drinking water.

174. There has never been, in our opinion, anything more than a minor and temporary shortage of any of the ordinary kinds of medical stores at Basra ; but, for various reasons, the shortage of these stores up country has from time to time been a cause of trouble, and the more expensive necessaries for hospitals in the tropics, such as ice machines, electric plant and electric fans, have been throughout, and were at the time of our leaving still very deficient., Where there has been any deficiency at Basra, this has been intensified up-river, owing to lack of transport ; and even when Basra has been fully supplied with some particular class of stores, this has not always been available at places on the line of communications.

175. The medical personnel and subordinate staff have always been deficient in numbers, the deficiency in assistant surgeons and sub-assistant surgeons being very marked, and it has only been the continuous and untiring labours of a devoted but overworked staff that has again and again prevented an absolute breakdown. The position in this respect both in the higher, in the lower, and in the menial grades, was still serious when we left Mesopotamia. As the deficiencies in personnel and river transport have not yet been made good, and as no adequate medical transport, either by land or by river, has yet been provided, it follows that the danger of a repetition of avoidable suffering is not yet past, though every effort is being made to improve the situation. Probably only the completion of the contemplated railway will render the position quite safe.

176. As to the responsibility for this state of affairs, we think that it was in great measure due to defects inherent in the medical organisation of the Army in India. We also consider that the rigid economy which before the war was exercised in respect of military expenditure in India, and the spirit which this policy has engendered as to the comparative merits of economy and efficiency, have contributed materially to the breakdown. But though much may be attributed to the system and the spirit which it has fostered, we feel that a grave responsibility for that part of the suffering which resulted from avoidable circumstances rests with the Senior Medical Officer of the Force, Surgeon-General H. G. Hathaway, and with General Sir John Nixon, the General Officer Commanding the Force, from April 9th, 1915, to January 19th, 1916. General Hathaway did not represent with sufficient promptitude and force the needs of the services for which he was responsible, and in particular failed to urge the necessity for adequate and suitable transport for the sick and wounded with that insistency which the situation demanded. General Nixon did not, in our opinion, appreciate the conditions which would necessarily arise if provision for the sick and wounded of his force were not made on a more liberal scale.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000013

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

177. The evidence also indicates that on various occasions the medical arrangements might have been improved by better organisation and co ordination between the different services, and for this defect the local officers are responsible. We cannot, however, absolve the military and medical authorities in India from responsibility for many of these deficiencies, in particular for the continuing neglect to supply the expeditionary force with that separate transport for sick and wounded, both by land and water, which the teaching of experience has shown to be essential in a properly organised enterprise of this character. We include the military authorities in India in this criticism, because the medical services are part of the military organisation. The officer directly responsible is, however, the Director of Medical Services, India. This appointment was held at the beginning of the war by Surgeon-General W. Babtie, who left India on June 6th, 1915. He was succeeded by Surgeon-General J. G. McNeece on July 8th, 1915, and the latter proceeded on sick leave on April 15th, 1916. We are informed that Surgeon-General McNeece was appointed by the Secretary of State without any reference to the military authorities in India. The responsibility for the want of river transport, on the other hand, is a matter which concerns the military authorities directly.

178. We realise the serious character of such findings, but in view of the fact that we are definitely required to assign the responsibility for the breakdown it is obviously our duty to do so to the best of our ability. We think, however, that the authorities referred to have been much hampered by changes in policy, and by lack of timely information as to the ultimate objective of the expedition. In criticising the action of the authorities in India, we think, further, that full consideration should be given to the unprecedented strain which has recently been put on all their available resources. Not only has it been necessary to supply the demands of at least four Expeditionary Forces overseas, and to make preparations for frontier and internal requirements on a large scale, but arrangements have also had to be made for the reception and treatment in India of invalids from France, Gallipoli, Egypt, and East Africa. Moreover, the assistance in the matter of personnel, equipment and stores which, in less abnormal times, might have been expected from outside India, has, until recently, seldom been available. We have, generally speaking, nothing but praise for the work of the executive medical officers in Mesopotamia, and we have abundant evidence that they have done marvellously well with little material. On the other hand, we consider that some of the administrative medical officers, though always anxious to do what was right, were at times wanting in foresight as to the probable needs of the force, less insistent than they should have been in pressing their demands for essential requirements, and on one or two occasions lacking in energy and power of resource in the measures taken for the accommodation and comfort of the sick and wounded.

179. We desire to express our grateful thanks to many officers who have assisted us in our inquiries. Where so many have helped, it is difficult to select particular persons; but we do not think that we ought to omit the names of Lieutenant-General Sir Percy Lake, Major-General Money, General Staff, Major-General Cowper, D.A. and Q.M.G., Colonel Irvine, D.D.M.S., Captain Hamilton, D.A.D.M.S., Colonel Winter, A.Q.M.G., Major W. N. Campbell, D.A.A.G., Captain Macrae, D.A.Q.M.G., and Captain T. Murphy, the officer in charge of the medical statistical branch of the Adjutant General's office at the Base. We have also to acknowledge the great assistance given us by all branches at Army Headquarters, India. We think it right to say that much of the evidence that has been given to the Commission has been marked confidential and we believe that many of the witnesses have given evidence under the impression that their statements would not be published. In these circumstances, we think that it would be a breach of confidence if the evidence contained in the appendix to this report were made public.

180. In conclusion we desire to say that we have, throughout our inquiry, been pressed by the consideration that time was of the essence of the matter, that substance was more important than form, and that it was expedient that we should formulate our conclusions as early as possible. In these circumstances, we have not thought it desirable to keep back the report to remove defects in form which, if time had been available, might have been remedied by more careful revision.

We have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient Servants,
W. H. VINCENT.
A. H. BINGLEY.
E. A. RIDSDALE.

ADDENDUM.

On my arrival at Bombay on April 4th, I was asked to join this Commission by His Excellency Lord Hardinge, who was leaving India that day. I consented and left for Basra on April 9th, where, on arrival, I at once got in touch with my colleagues. I found that they had been in Mesopotamia for a month, and that acting upon an earlier and restricted reference thay had already examined over 130 witnesses, and travelled by river to the firing line and back again in order to acquaint themselves at first hand with the medical conditions.

After discussion with them, since the value of the report must be diminished by every day's delay in its issue, we agreed to consider the work continuous, I joining in the inquiry at the point at which they were, and reading up at my leisure, and investigating when necessary, the evidence which they had already accumulated.

It follows from this that the great bulk of the very heavy work of detail involved in this investigation, and apparent in the appendix, has been the labour of my colleagues.

E. A. RIDSDALE.

ANNEXURE 1.

(*Referred to on page* 1.)

No. H.-2418, dated Delhi, March 31st, 1916.

From—Major-General B. Holloway, C.I.E., Secretary to the Government of India, Army Department.

To—The Hon. Sir William Vincent, Knt., I.C.S.

With reference to the correspondence ending with my telegram No. H.-2407, dated March 30th, 1916, I am to say that it has been decided that the commission to which you have been appointed will assemble under the orders of the Government of India.

2. I am directed therefore to forward revised orders and terms of reference for the commission appointed for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon the arrangements for dealing with the wounded and sick in Mesopotamia in substitution of the orders and terms of reference sent to you under letter No. 41551, dated March 2nd, 1916, from the Chief of the General Staff.

Copy of the foregoing is forwarded to:—

Lieut.-General Sir Percy Lake, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.
Major-General A. H. Bingley, C.B., C.I.E.
Mr. E. A. Ridsdale.

ORDERS FOR THE HON. SIR WILLIAM VINCENT, Knt., I.C.S., MAJOR-GENERAL A. H. BINGLEY, C.B., C.I.E., and Mr. E. A. RIDSDALE.

1. The Government of India have appointed you Commissioners for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon the arrangements for dealing with the wounded and sick in Mesopotamia, in accordance with the terms of reference attached.

2. You will proceed to Basra, where you will report to the General Officer Commanding, Force "D," who will give you every facility in the execution of your duties.

3. Copies of all war diaries, reports, despatches, books and maps, and other information that you may require, will be provided both by Army Headquarters and General Officer Commanding, Force "D."

4. You are entitled to call and examine any witness whose evidence you consider necessary.

5. All communications, including your report, will be addressed to the Secretary to the Government of India, Army Department, Simla.

B. HOLLOWAY, *Major-General,*
Secretary to the Government of India, Army Department.

Delhi.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00000c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Terms of Reference.

1. The commission is appointed with the object of enquiring into and recording the arrangements made for the collection, treatment and removal of the sick and wounded during the operations in Mesopotamia to the date of your departure from Mesopotamia.

2. The strategical situation in Mesopotamia during the above period, and the tactical obligations arising therefrom, will be borne in mind throughout your proceedings.

3. You will distinguish clearly between the following phases :—

(i) From the battlefields to the line of communication.
(ii) Down the line of communication to Basra.
(iii) At Basra.
(iv) From Basra overseas.

4. In each phase the forecast of the preparations considered necessary ; the preparations actually made ; and the equipment, vehicles, stores and personnel actually available at the localities, and on the vessel, during the operations, will be investigated.

5. The amount of river transport allotted for the medical services will be examined with regard to the total amount available, and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition.

6. You will ascertain and record the relative order of arrival of the combatant and medical units coming with reinforcements from overseas, in order to fix the responsibility for any deficiencies in personnel, equipment and stores which could be attributed to the order of embarkation for Mesopotamia.

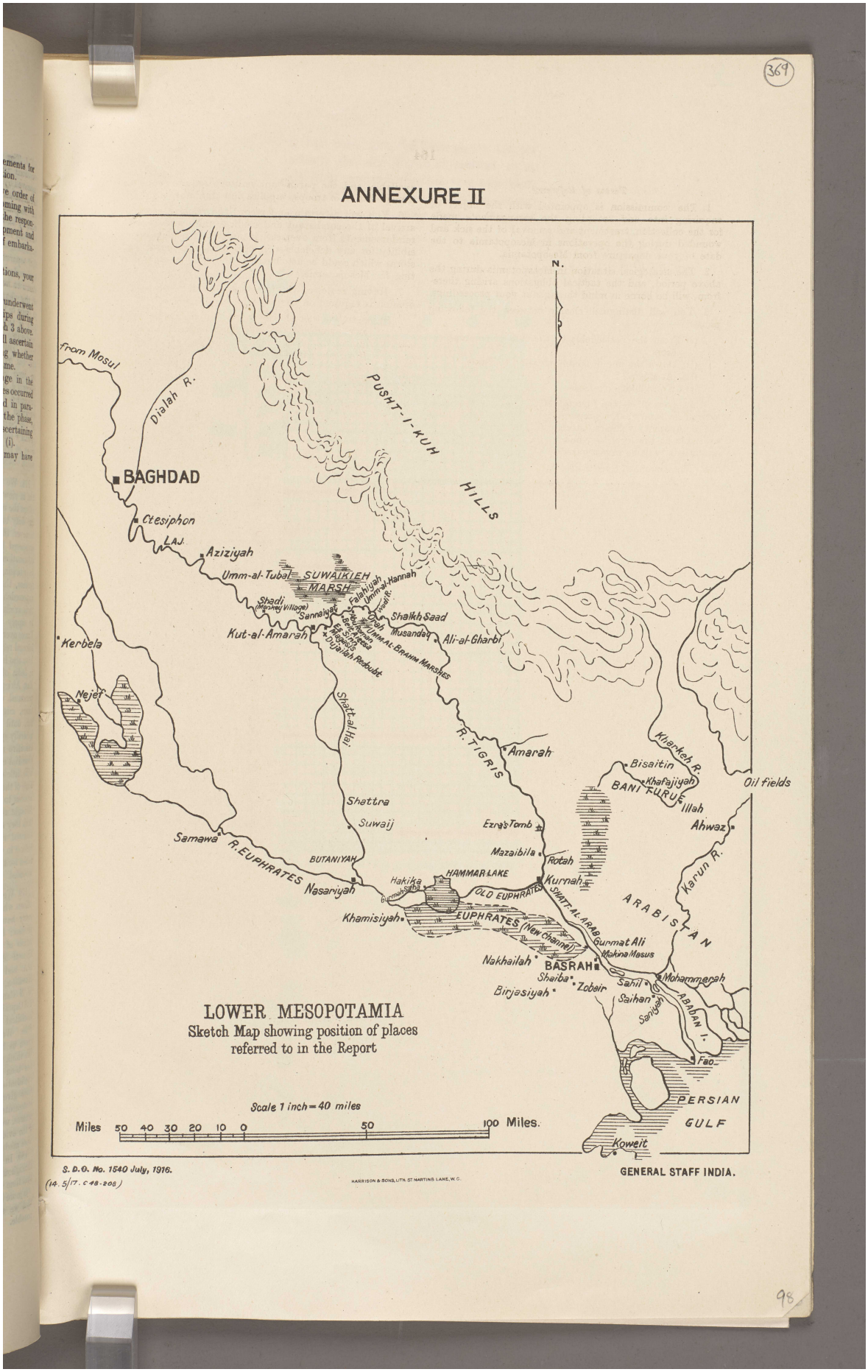
7. Having reviewed the foregoing considerations, your opinion is required on the following points :—

(i) As to whether the wounded and sick underwent any avoidable suffering and hardships during any of the phases defined in paragraph 3 above. If so, you will state the phase, and will ascertain and assign the responsibility, showing whether individuals or the system were to blame.
(ii) As to whether any avoidable shortage in the personnel, equipment, vehicles and stores occurred during any of the four phases defined in paragraph 3 above. If so, you will state the phase, the shortage, and the reasons for it, ascertaining and assigning the responsibility as in (i).
(iii) As to whether any shortages which may have existed have now been made good.

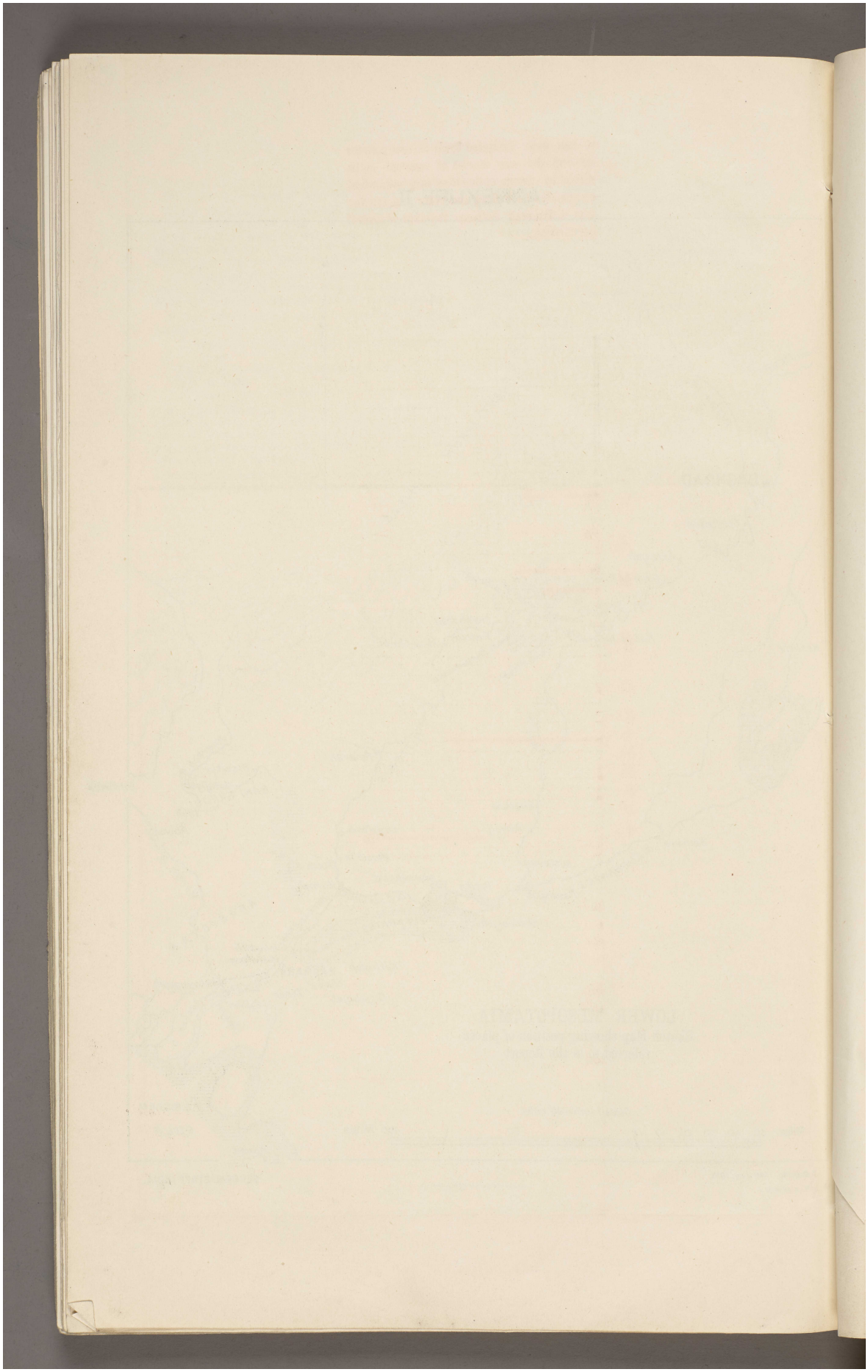
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00003e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00001a



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00008e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

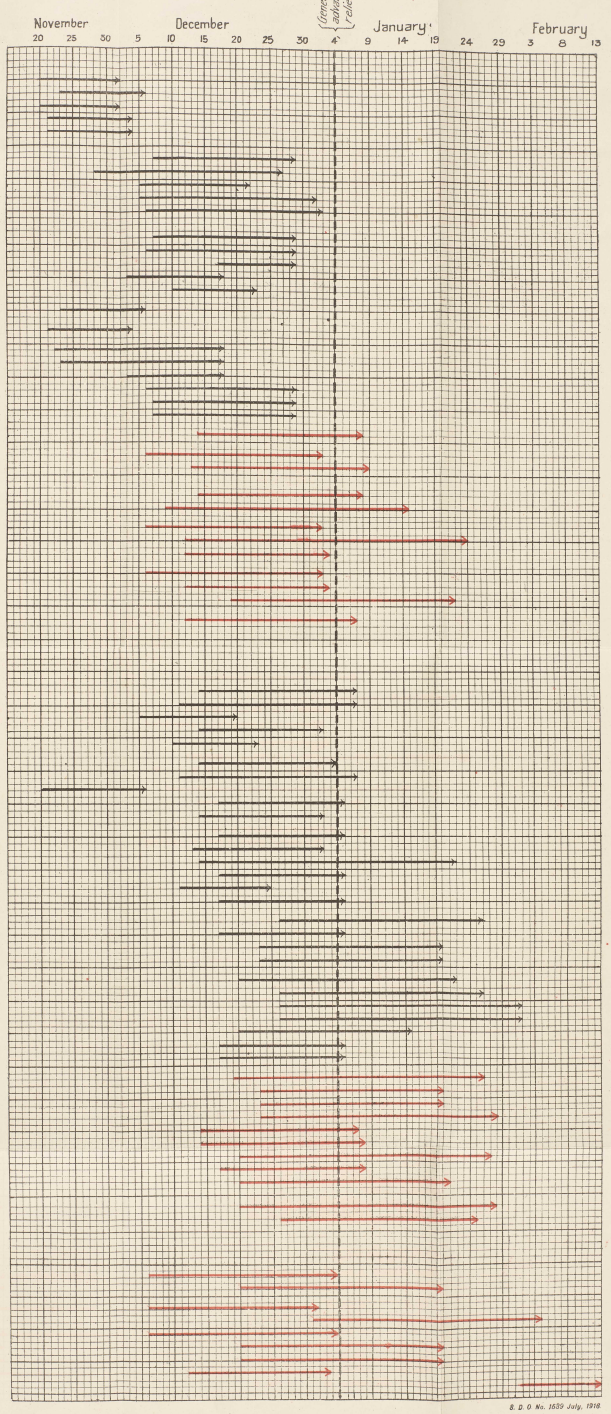
ANNEXURE III.

(Referred to on page 62 of the Report.)

Diagram showing progress of 7th & 3rd Divisions to Mesopotamia.
Combatant units are shown in black. Medical units in red
The arrows show dates of arrival at Basrah.

This statement has been compiled from several sources and has been checked with the war diaries of medical units. The particulars furnished by various authorities vary somewhat, but the discrepancies are all of a trifling character and are due in almost every case to differences between the date of arrival and the date of actual landing.

Unit.	Date of leaving Marseilles.	Date of leaving Suez.
7TH DIVISION		
28th Bde. — Headquarters	From Egypt	20 Nov. 15
2/Leicester Regt.	10 Nov. 15	23 Nov. 15
3rd Sikhs	From Egypt	20 Nov. 15
53rd Sikhs	" "	21 Nov. 15
36th Rifles	" "	21 Nov. 15
19th Bde. — Headquarters	7 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
1/Seaforth High.	28 Nov. 15	11 Dec. 15
4th Dogras	From Egypt	5 Dec. 15
33rd Infantry	5 Dec. 15	19 Dec. 15
1/9th Gurkhas	6 Dec. 15	19 Dec. 15
21st Bde. — Headquarters	7 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
2/Black Watch	6 Dec. 15	16 Dec. 15
2nd Rajputs	From Egypt	17 Dec. 15
6th Jats	" "	3 Dec. 15
32nd Punjabis	" "	10 Dec. 15
4th Cavalry, 107th Pioneers	From France but landed in Egypt	23 Nov. 15 / 21 Nov. 15
IX. Bde R.F.A. — 19th Battery	22 & 23 Nov. 15	30 Nov. 15
20th Battery		3 Dec. 15
21st Battery		3 Dec. 15
61st How. Battery	6 Dec. 15	16 Dec. 15
No. 3 Co. S. & M.	7 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
No. 4 Co. S. & M.	7 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
No. 19 B.F.A.	14 Dec. 15	25 Dec. 15
No. 20 B.F.A.	6 Dec. 15 / 13 Dec. 15	13 Dec. 15 / 28 Dec. 15
No. 128 I.F.A.	14 Dec. 15 / 9 Dec. 15	25 Dec. 15 / 30 Dec. 15
No. 129 I.F.A.	6 Dec. 15 / 12 Dec. 15 / 12 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15 / 19 Dec. 15 / 28 Dec. 15
No. 130 I.F.A.	6 Dec. 15 / 12 Dec. 15 / 19 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15 / 19 Dec. 15 / 28 Dec. 15
No. 20 C.C.H.	12 Dec. 15	27 Dec. 15
3RD DIVISION		
7th Bde. — Headquarters	14 Dec. 15	27 Dec. 15
1/Connaught R.	11 Dec. 15	24 Dec. 15
9th Bhopal Inf.	From Egypt	5 Dec. 15
89th Punjabis	14 Dec. 15	23 Dec. 15
125th Rifles	From Egypt	10 Dec. 15
8th Bde. — Headquarters	14 Dec. 15	23 Dec. 15
1/Manchester Regt.	11 Dec. 15	24 Dec. 15
28th Punjabis	From Colombo	
47th Sikhs	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
59th Rifles	14 Dec. 15	23 Dec. 15
9th Bde. — Headquarters	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
1/Highland L.I.	13 Dec. 15 / 14 Dec. 15	13 Dec. 15 / 8 Jan. 16
1/1st Gurkhas	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
3rd Brahmans	From Egypt	11 Dec. 15
27th Punjabis	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
15th Lancers	26 Dec. 15	8 Jan. 16
34th Pioneers	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
IV. Bde R.F.A. — 7th Battery	23 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
14th Battery	23 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
66th Battery	20 Dec. 15	10 Jan. 16
XII. Bde R.F.A. — 2nd Battery	26 Dec. 15	12 Jan. 16
8th Battery	26 Dec. 15	11 Jan. 16
44th Battery	26 Dec. 15	11 Jan. 16
60th How. Battery	20 Dec. 15	2 Jan. 16
No. 20 Co. S. & M.	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
No. 21 Co. S. & M.	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
No. 7 B.F.A.	19 Dec. 15 / 23 Dec. 15	12 Jan. 16 / 9 Jan. 16
No. 8 B.F.A.	23 Dec. 15 / 23 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16 / 11 Jan. 16
No. 111 I.F.A.	14 Dec. 15 / 14 Dec. 15 / 20 Dec. 15	27 Jan. 16 / 26 Dec. 15 / 12 Jan. 16
No. 112 I.F.A.	17 Dec. 15 / 20 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15 / 9 Jan. 16
No. 113 I.F.A.	20 Dec. 15	11 Jan. 16
No. 15 C.C.H.	26 Dec. 15	11 Jan. 16
OTHER MEDICAL DETAILS		
Rawal Pindi B.G.H. (A)	6 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
Rawal Pindi B.G.H. (B)	22 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
No. 10 I.G.H.	6 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
No. 12 I.G.H.	31 Dec. 15	19 Jan. 16
No. 61 Sta. H.	6 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
No. 83 Sta. H.	20 Dec. 15	3 Jan. 16
No. 3 San. Sec.	20 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
No. 4 San. Sec.	12 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
450 Medical Followers *		1 Feb. 16



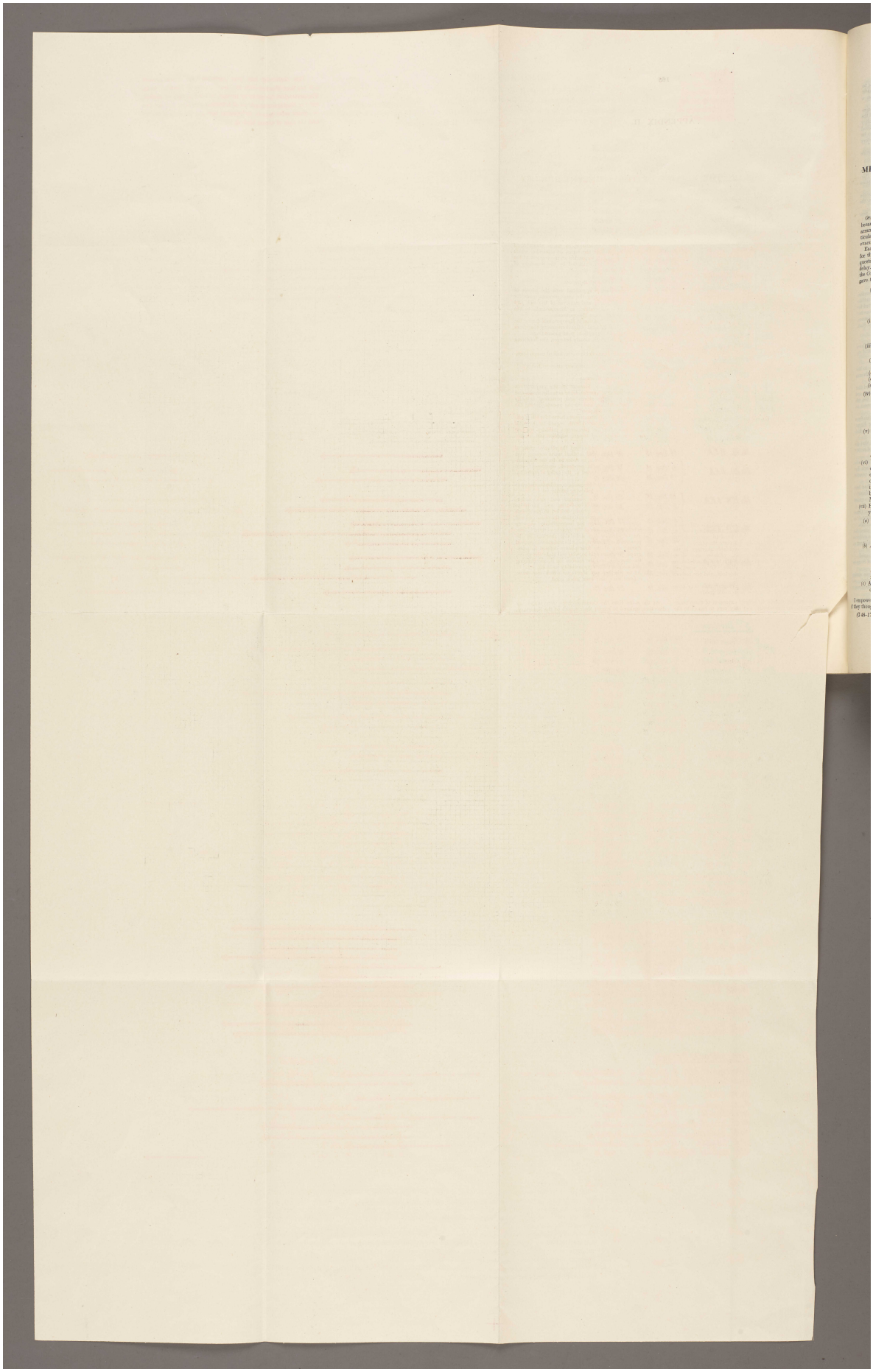
B. D. O. No. 1639 July, 1918.

NOTES:—

1. It will be observed that in the 7th Division, the medical units reached Basrah in almost every case after the combatant units and that they were split up into two or three detachments. In the 3rd Division, excluding the second half of the Highland Light Infantry, the 15th Lancers and the two Brigades of Field Artillery, the medical units also arrived after the combatant units and they were also split up into two or three detachments.
2. No. 10 Indian General Hospital (also known as the Secunderabad General Hospital) though a line of communication unit was despatched from Marseilles on the 6th December thus taking priority over field ambulances which were required much more urgently at the front.
3. * These medical followers were details of all the medical units sent from France.
4. The Vertical dotted line indicates the 4th January 1916, the date on which General Aylmer commenced his advance to the relief of Kut-al-Amarah.

(14.5)(17. C 48-208)

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000058



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000011

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

APPENDIX II.

MEMORANDUM ON THE REPORT OF THE "VINCENT-BINGLEY" COMMISSION.

By General SIR BEAUCHAMP DUFF, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., C.I.E.

Origin and Object of Commission.—Late in 1915 rumours became current in England and India that the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia were unsatisfactory, particularly in regard to the reception, treatment, and evacuation of the wounded.

Early in January, 1916, arrangements were in train for the appointment of a Commission to investigate the question, but circumstances beyond my control caused delay. Eventually, however, on March 2nd, I appointed the Commission, whose report has now been received, and gave them the following terms of reference; *viz.*:—

(i) The object of the Commission is to investigate and record the arrangements made for the collection, treatment and removal of the wounded and sick during the operations on the Tigris during and subsequent to January, 1916.

(ii) Throughout your proceedings the strategical situation in Mesopotamia during the month of January, 1916, and the tactical obligations arising therefrom will be borne in mind.

(iii) You will distinguish clearly between the following phases:—

(*a*) From the battlefield to the line of communication.

(*b*) Down the line of communication to Basra.

(*c*) At Basra.

(*d*) From Basra overseas.

(iv) In each phase the forecast of the preparations considered necessary, the preparations actually made, and the equipment, vehicles, stores and personnel actually available at the localities, and on the vessels, during the operations, will be investigated.

(v) The amount of river transport allotted for Medical services will be examined with regard to the total amount available and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition.

(vi) You will ascertain and record the relative order of arrival of the combatant and medical units coming with reinforcements from oversea, in order to fix the responsibility for any deficiencies in personnel, equipment, and stores, which could be attributed to the order of embarkation for Mesopotamia.

(vii) Having reviewed the foregoing considerations, your opinion is required on the following points:—

(*a*) As to whether the wounded and sick underwent any avoidable suffering and hardships during any of the phases defined in paragraph (iii) above. If so, you will state the phase.

(*b*) As to whether any avoidable shortage in the personnel, equipment, vehicles and stores occurred during any of the four phases defined in paragraph (iii) above. If so, you will state the phase, the shortage, and the reasons for it.

(*c*) As to whether any shortages which may have existed have now been made good.

I empowered them to suggest extension of these terms if they thought necessary, and they were to report to the Chief of the General Staff, for my information as Commander-in-Chief.

2. Under orders of His Excellency the Viceroy, Mr. Ridsdale joined the Commission at Basra about April 16th, and on March 29th the terms of reference, which had already been slightly expanded at the request of the Commission, were further extended by the Secretary of State to their final form; *viz.*:—

Terms of Reference.

(1). The Commission is appointed with the object of inquiring into and recording the arrangements made for the collection, treatment, and removal of the sick and wounded during the operations in Mesopotamia to the date of your departure from Mesopotamia.

(2) The strategical situation in Mesopotamia during the above period and the tactical obligations arising therefrom will be borne in mind throughout your proceedings.

(3) You will distinguish clearly between the following phases:—

(i) From the battlefields to the line of communication;

(ii) Down the line of communication to Basra;

(iii) At Basra;

(iv) From Basra overseas.

(4) In each phase, the forecast of the preparations considered necessary, the preparations actually made, and the equipment, vehicles, stores and personnel actually available at the localities, and on the vessels, during the operations, will be investigated.

(5) The amount of river transport allotted for the medical services will be examined with regard to the total amount available and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition.

(6) You will ascertain and record the relative order of arrival of the combatant and medical units coming with reinforcements from overseas, in order to fix the responsibility for any deficiencies in personnel, equipment, and stores which could be attributed to the order of embarkation for Mesopotamia.

(7). Having reviewed the foregoing considerations, your opinion is required on the following points:—

(i) As to whether the wounded and sick underwent any avoidable suffering and hardships during any of the phases defined in paragraph (3) above. If so, you will state the phase and will ascertain and assign the responsibility, showing whether individuals or the system were to blame.

(ii) As to whether any avoidable shortage in the personnel, equipment, vehicles and stores occurred during any of the four phases defined in paragraph (3) above. If so, you will state the phase, the shortage, and the reasons for it, ascertaining and assigning the responsibility as in (i).

(iii) As to whether any shortages which may have existed have now been made good.

At the same time the Commissioners were, under my direction, ordered to render their report to the Secretary,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000066

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Army Department, instead of the Chief of the General Staff, so as to enable me to deal with their report in my capacity as Army Member.

Throughout, and in their final form, the object of the terms of reference was to assist me in determining where there had been failure, what were the causes, and who was to blame, in India or in Mesopotamia.

I have never read, nor do I now read, the Secretary of State's instructions and additions as in any way altering the above original objects of the Commission.

3. The Commission have not followed the headings of the terms of reference in their report, though they state that the extension of these terms placed them at a great disadvantage in their inquiries.

However that may be, the result is unfortunate, since the Commission have departed from their terms of reference and embarked upon criticisms of the preparations for the campaign which were outside their purview, which they had neither the time, knowledge, nor the qualifications to discuss, and concerning which they did not even take the obvious and only just course of examining the Heads of Branches at Army Headquarters, nor of discussing with me, prior to the submission of their report, the difficulties they had experienced in adherence to their terms of reference.

In fact, the Commission have ended by reporting on the past and present action of the Government of India instead of carrying out their instructions to report to the Secretary, Army Department, for the information of myself, how certain definite arrangements had been carried out.

4. The issues they raise require reply, but up to the 17th July the appendices containing the evidence are not ready for examination, so that I cannot now deal with their value; nor does the report itself contain any explanation of their methods of receiving and appraising the evidence taken, except the general statement that the Commissioners regard the evidence given to them as confidential, which in itself is an unusual condition to make when assigning responsibility to officers by name for failure in their professional duties.

5. Until, therefore, there has been time to examine the evidence, I am not in a position to determine where the responsibility for any administrative failure lies, in Mesopotamia or in India.

I need not, however, wait for the evidence in order to review the policy which directed the campaign, so far as it is known in India, and which would determine the standard and pace of preparation of the force and consequently the forecasts to be made.

It is especially desirable to do this at once as relevant to those issues raised in the report which are outside the terms of reference, and which might be held to reflect upon my performance of my duties as Commander-in-Chief in India.

In this respect I have a two-fold outlook:—

(i) As director of my staff.
(ii) As supervisor of their work.

Later, when in possession of the evidence, it will be for me to investigate the execution of my orders by the Quartermaster-General's Branch, the Royal Indian Marine, and the Medical Services, which are the three Branches of the Army Department concerned in the matter both in Mesopotamia and in India.

6. In paragraph 55 of their report the Commission admit they do not know what the intentions of His Majesty's Government were in regard to this campaign. They had the fullest opportunity of ascertaining them, but did not attempt to do so. Without such knowledge all accusations of want of foresight are really worthless. I must examine this point. I would preface my remarks by saying (*a*) that before this war His Majesty's Government required India to be ready merely for a hill campaign against a semi-civilised enemy and for that alone, and (*b*) that in the present struggle the general policy of the Empire required that all our energies, commercial, financial, manufacturing, and military, be directed towards the strengthening of our position in Europe and the North Sea. It follows that all expenditure, all utilisation of manufacturing resources, and all interference with trade and commerce not directly required by this object should be reduced to the lowest possible limits, and that the equipment of forces not employed in the main theatre should be limited to a basis calculated to enable them to carry out the settled policy of Government; and that it would have been a waste of power to prepare upon a speculative scale.

Everything in Mesopotamia, including medical arrangements, depended on the supply of river transport, and the supply of this depended on foreknowledge of the policy of His Majesty's Government, both as to the geographical points to be aimed at and the number of troops to be employed. This involves an examination of the history of the campaign.

In paragraph 5 of their report the Commission divide the campaign in Mesopotamia into four phases, *viz.*:—

(i) The landing at Fao, the occupation of Basra and Kurna and the defeat at Shaiba or Barjasiyah of the Turkish attempt to recapture Basra.
(ii) The expulsion of the Turks from Persian Arabistan followed by the occupation of Amara on the Tigris, and of Nasariyeh on the Euphrates.
[For convenience, the later operations near Nasariyeh have been included in this phase.]
(iii) The capture of Kut-al-Amara, advance to Ctesiphon and subsequent retreat to Kut.
(iv) The defence of Kut-al-Amara and the unsuccessful attempts to relieve it.

I shall now state the policy in each phase as known at the time in India, and shall then explain the preparations made in order to keep pace with this policy. Having done this, those paragraphs of the Commission's report which express their views as to essential preparation for the campaign will be compared with the facts.

It should be noted that, so far as pre-war consideration of what might be necessary in any theatre of operations north of Basra was concerned, this area was reserved for the General Staff at the War Office, and India was not allowed to collect intelligence or formulate plans thereon. I received no plans of operation from the General Staff, War Office.

7. *Phase I.—The landing at Fao, the occupation of Basra and Kurna and the defeat at Shaiba or Barjasiyah of the Turkish attempt to recapture Basra.*

The original policy of Government, as known to the Government of India, did not contemplate an advance into Mesopotamia beyond the vicinity of Basra.

On the 26th September, 1914, India was informed that the situation as regards Turkey was most menacing and was ordered to hold in readiness one brigade of the 6th Division with two mountain batteries and sappers to move to the head of the Persian Gulf.

On the 2nd October secret orders to despatch this force were received, their ostensible destination being Egypt, and the transport and troops having sealed orders which were not opened until at sea.

On the 5th October, 1914, India was informed that the object of the expedition was to occupy Abadan and protect the oil tanks and pipe line.

On the 1st November the Secretary of State for India directed orders to be given for the force to attack Fao and clear the Turks out of the Shatt-al-Arab, if possible as far as Shamshumiya.

A second brigade of the 6th Division which had been prepared and despatched under orders from His Majesty's Government, reinforced the advanced portion and occupied Basra on November 22nd.

On the 23rd November, 1914, the Chief Political Officer at Basra, in a private telegram, urged an advance on Baghdad. This, however, was not supported in India.

On the 27th November the Secretary of State wired that His Majesty's Government were "not disposed to authorise an advance on Baghdad at present," but authorised an advance on Kurna.

On the 9th December, 1914, Kurna was occupied.

On the 14th December, 1914, the Secretary of State for India proposed the occupation of Nasariyeh.

On the 2nd January, 1915, India wired home stating military reasons against the movement to Nasariyeh; and on the 5th January, 1915, the Secretary of State agreed to await developments.

On the 29th January, 1915, the Secretary of State urged the sending of troops up the Karun at once for the protec-

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000018

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

tion of the oil-fields, and at the same time suggested the reinforcement of the force to a strength of two divisions.

On the 30th January India pointed out that the Karun and the oil-fields were a secondary objective only, and realising how greatly their responsibilities in Mesopotamia were growing, asked for the return of one of their divisions from Egypt. Meanwhile a small force was sent up the Karun.

On the 5th February, 1915, the Secretary of State told India that the War Office could give no help, but impressed on us the view that it was most important to bring the force in Mesopotamia up to two divisions.

India did not consider herself strong enough to do this without help from elsewhere but on the 5th March received direct orders to do so, it being definitely stated that the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief were relieved of all responsibility of possible consequences in India itself; consequently the 12th Division was hurriedly formed and despatched. This division was intended merely to strengthen the local defensive

On the 9th April, 1915, Sir J. Nixon assumed the command of Indian Expeditionary Force "D."

Our policy, then, up to the middle of April did not contemplate an advance up either the Tigris or the Euphrates beyond Kurna, and aimed only at the defence of the vicinity of Basra and of the oil-fields. The action at Shaiba and the occupation of Ahwaz were purely defensive measures due to the enemy's advance on Basra and his activity in the direction of the oil-fields area.

The Commission in referring to arrangements made in this phase give the impression (*vide* paragraphs 8 and 55) that offensive action was intended in the earlier stages of the campaign, that is, up to the end of this phase.

As shown above, such operations were not contemplated. Nevertheless, in view of possibilities, on December 30th, 1914, General Officer Commanding, Force "D," was asked by India for his requirements in river craft for use above Kurna, though he himself had not suggested any such need.

8. *Phase II.—The expulsion of the Turks from Persian Arabistan, followed by the occupation of Amara on the Tigris, and of Nasariyeh on the Euphrates.*

The policy of His Majesty's Government during this phase was still one of caution and in essence defensive. The operations, which included those in Arabistan, the advance to Amara and that to Nasariyeh, were designed merely to secure our hold on Basra and the oil-fields.

On the 24th April, 1915, the Secretary of State laid down that an advance beyond the then theatre of operations would not be sanctioned by Government at present; that during the summer we must confine ourselves to the defence of the oil interests in Arabistan and of the Basra *vilayet*; that he would be prepared to sanction an advance to Amara, with a view to adding to the security of the pipe line, should such an advance be possible after smashing the enemy in the direction of the Karun and should it receive the support of India; that, however, any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements was to be deprecated; that a safe game must be played in Mesopotamia.

On the 23rd May the Secretary of State sanctioned an advance on Amara, on the condition that no reinforcements were necessary for this.

On the 31st May the movement commenced and Amara was occupied on June 3rd.

On the 11th June General Nixon showed the necessity of occupying Nasariyeh for the effective protection of the Basra *vilayet*, and asked if an advance thither required the sanction of the Secretary of State.

On the 13th June India informed the Secretary of State of General Nixon's proposal to move on Nasariyeh and supported it.

On the 22nd June no objection having been raised by the Secretary of State, India informed General Nixon that he had full liberty of action with regard to advancing on Nasariyeh. Nasariyeh was occupied on the 25th July, 1915.

Paragraph 85 of the Commission's report, in taxing India with lack of foresight, implies that during this Phase II an advance to Kut-al-Amara, an advance beyond that place to Baghdad, and the despatch of reinforcements from oversea to Mesopotamia, should all have been foreseen, and preparations should have been made to meet such developments. It will be seen from the summary above that the policy of His Majesty's Government in regard to such an advance was quite indefinite and appears to have been guided by the situation rather than by an ultimate objective. If this is so, then preparations for a contingency which was not communicated to the Government of India could hardly be justified.

9. *Phase III.—The capture of Kut-al Amara, advance to Ctesiphon and subsequent retreat to Kut.*

Government policy in this phase cautiously sanctioned an advance to Kut-al-Amara and then, after the capture of that place, aimed boldly and without warning at the occupation of Baghdad.

On the 26th July, 1915, India proposed to the Secretary of State the occupation of Kut for strategical reasons and suggested that for this purpose a reinforcement of one brigade from Aden be sent to Force "D."

On the 30th July the Secretary of State wired that no reinforcements could be spared for Mesopotamia; that a cautious strategy was necessary; but that the strategic importance of Kut was recognised.

On the 2nd August General Nixon emphasised the advantages of occupying Kut. In this telegram General Nixon gave no indication of any anxiety as to his ability to carry out the operation or of any difficulty likely to be experienced owing to the shortage of river craft.

On the 4th August India informed the Secretary of State of General Nixon's views and supported him.

On the 7th August the Secretary of State sanctioned an advance on Kut.

On the 29th September, 1915, Kut-al-Amara was occupied.

After pursuing the Turks through Kut, General Nixon on the 3rd October stated that he proposed to concentrate at Aziziyeh, a good deal further up the river, with the intention of opening the road to Baghdad, for which object he considered his force was sufficient; and next day he asked whether he was to be reinforced by a division from France in order that his position at Baghdad might be maintained.

The question of an advance on Baghdad now suddenly came into prominence for the first time as a live possibility.

Much telegraphic correspondence between England, India, and General Nixon ensued, until on the 23rd October the Secretary of State wired to India that if General Nixon was satisfied that the force he had available was sufficient for the operation, he might march on Baghdad, and that two divisions would be sent to him as soon as possible. On the 24th October this telegram was repeated to General Nixon.

The effect of the indefinite policy underlying these three phases was:—

While operations were confined to the vicinity of Basra no special arrangements for the supply of river craft were made, for they were not required. General Barrett was asked on the 30th December, 1914, to report the number of craft he would require in the event of an advance, and his demands were completed by the end of May, 1915.

While the change in policy underlying the advance to Kut was under consideration, it was realised that the river fleet would have to be augmented considerably by vessels constructed in England and orders were placed in August, 1915.

An indication of the attitude of the Home Government at this time will be seen in the Secretary of State's proposal on the 7th September, 1915, that the number of steamers ordered from Home should be reduced in view of the probable towing capacity of the new naval gunboats, which turned out to have no such capacity.

Later, when the impending arrival of large reinforcements to support the policy of an advance on Baghdad demanded immediately large reinforcements of river craft, any class of river vessel at all suited to the river had to be taken up and despatched.

It is obvious that while the requirements in river craft depended on decisions in regard to policy, and had to be met from a distance, whether from India or home, ready made or built to specification, supply could not keep pace with rapid changes of policy.

This seems to have been lost sight of by the Commission in their remarks in paragraph 85, which appear to have reference to this third phase in particular.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00001a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

10. *Phase IV.—The defence of Kut-al-Amara and the unsuccessful attempts to relieve it.*

Policy in Mesopotamia during this period centred upon the relief of Kut. During this period, in addition to the two divisions from France which arrived in Mesopotamia in December, 1915, and January, 1916, and of which the fighting troops arrived greatly in advance of their medical organisation, the following reinforcements joined Force "D":—

34th Infantry Brigade	From India.
35th Ditto	
36th Ditto	
1 Cavalry Regiment	
1 brigade, Royal Field Artillery ...	
13th British Division	From Egypt.
No. Mountain Artillery Brigade (Indian)	
37th Infantry Brigade	From India.
41st Do.	
42nd Do.	

Simla, July 18th, 1916.

This increase to the force of the equivalent of practically 3 divisions naturally necessitated an increase in all transport and administrative arrangements. River transport, as before, was the most important item, and, as has been shown, was procurable only from India, of which the resources in this respect were becoming exhausted, or from Home after a considerable time.

The maintenance transport, in fact, could not be obtained, constructed and sent to the Tigris in time to keep pace with the increase of requirements.

11. Our difficulties in India throughout have been that the direction of the campaign in Mesopotamia has rested in London, and that we never could foresee the advances that might be ordered or the additional troops that might be allotted to the Tigris campaign. Working in semi-darkness we have produced results which I do not claim as satisfactory, but of which, when all the circumstances are known, India has reason to be proud rather than ashamed.

BEAUCHAMP DUFF, *General*,

Commander-in-Chief in India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

APPENDIX III.

ACCOUNT OF THE MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS, ETC., DURING SIEGE OF KUT-AL-AMARA.

By Colonel P. HEHIR, C.B., M.D., I.M.S.

THE DEFENCE OF KUT-AL-AMARA.

(*a*) Period from December 4th, 1915, to April 29th, 1916.

1. The following statements are made from my personal diaries and rough notes that were made for the Medical and Sanitary Report of the Defence of Kut.

Duration of Siege.

2. The siege of Kut-al-Amara lasted from December 4th, 1915, to April 29th, 1916—147 days.

Brief Description of Kut-al-Amara.

3. Kut-al-Amara is a small town on the left bank of the Tigris consisting of a dense collection of houses and huts built more or less promiscuously. The town contained about 650 houses, including 200 shops, several cafés and a few wool-presses. The better-class houses are built of burnt brick, but the majority of the habitations are larger or smaller mud huts. The main part of the town and most of the well-constructed houses stand near the bank of the river, but leave a broad river front.

The town is situated about half-way down the descending limb of a deep bend in the river. The area it covers is roughly oblong in shape, its length about 1,000, its breadth 600 yards. The distance between the south-eastern boundary of the town and the lowest part of the bend is about 300 yards.

4. There is no drainage system to the town. Each house has in the central yard a deep soakage pit, the refuse house water reaching it through a hole in the surface; it acts on the principle of a septic tank and is cleared out twice a year or so. Many of the houses have likewise a privy connected with a subterranean cess-pit which is often only 5 to 10 yards from the shallow house-well, the water of which is brackish and impure.

5. The Covered Bazaar, which contained several of our hospitals, consists of a series of intercommunicating colonnades with roofs, and a large number of small stalls. Its main avenue runs East and West, which joins another running North and South near the river front. On both sides of each colonnade are rows of small cubicles each of which accommodated from four to six patients.

6. On the North-West and South-East of the town there are date plantations and orchards of oranges, lemons, figs, peaches and pomegranates, and what used to be extensive vegetable gardens.

7. This town was the most insanitary place we occupied in Mesopotamia. The whole of the interior of the town, including the streets and lanes, the banks of the river and the surrounding area for a distance of 250 yards, were made use of as latrines, the surfaces of the streets and bye-lanes were the urinals. The town refuse was never systematically collected, and on our arrival to some extent blocked the roads and thoroughfares; mounds of it existed on the banks of the river and immediate confines of the town. No sanitation had been attempted.

8. The salient places of the defended area were: The town itself, the brick-kilns to the East of the town, the Old Fort about two miles North-East of the town, the line of block-houses extending from the Fort to the beginning of the descending limb of the bend running roughly from East to West.

9. Our defences extended from the fort on the left bank along the line of the four block-houses to the same bank, 1½ miles to the North-West of the town; this line roughly corresponded with our first line trenches, the second line trenches and reserve troops trenches being echeloned parallel to them in the rear. On the left bank of the river along the whole bend were a series of pickets in trenches covering the right bank. The guns of the different batteries were located at the brick-kilns, in front of these kilns and behind the trenches in the North-West Section, others being on the left bank near the town and on the barges. On the right bank, almost opposite the North-West angle of Kut is the village of Wool-Press which was occupied by two battalions of Indian Infantry; this force was, when necessary, supplemented by half a battalion British Infantry; its trenches were on the North-West and South of the village.

10. The enemy occupied trenches along the whole of the North-East, North and North-West front, also along the right bank around the village of Wool-Press and along the South and East of Kut opposite the fort. Enemy snipers operated from the whole of the right bank in the vicinity of Kut and the fort, except the part at Wool-Press and the bank of a few hundred yards North and South of it.

11. From December 5th the town of Kut was shelled more or less practically every day; periodically there were heavy bombardments; sniping was perpetual day and night, and high-explosive bombs were dropped from aeroplanes occasionally.

Strength of the Defence Garrison.

12. The garrison consisted of the 6th War Division with the 30th Infantry Brigade, one Howitzer and two heavy batteries.

The garrison on December 8th, 1915, was made up o the following:—

British Officers	206	Effectives.
,, rank and file ...	2,276	
Indian Officers	153	
,, rank and file	6,941	
Followers (about)	3,500	
	13,076	
In Hospitals:—		
British Officers	12	Sick and Wounded
,, rank and file ...	258	
Indian Officers	22	
,, rank and file ...	1,176	
Followers	42	
	1,510	
Total to be rationed ...	14,586	

13. The civil population of Kut at the commencement of the siege was roughly 6,400; at the end of February, 1916, it was 6,225, made up as follows:—

Natives of the town:	
Men	1,538
Women and children ...	3,803
Immigrants from Makina Village (called by us Wool-Press) ...	504
Maheillah men	316
Coolies (S. and T. employees) ...	64
	6,225

Location of the Troops.

14. The infantry force was distributed as follows:—(1) One brigade occupied the Fort and trenches to its North and North-West; (2) another the trenches extending from the left of the above, Westwards to the river bank forming the North-West Section; (3) one formed the reserve; (2) and (3) relieved each other weekly; (4) half a brigade guarded the town and picketted the bend, its other half being quartered in Wool-Press village on the right bank opposite the North-West angle of Kut.

15. The following were located in and near the town; two Indian infantry units and Headquarters of Division and Brigades, with followers, all billeted and numbering 1,200; General Hospitals, Field Ambulances, Indian Stationary Hospital, personnel and patients, in billets—2,100; General Reserve in camps and dug outs (on the North, North-East and East of the town), 1,800.

16. The troops on the right bank were cut off from Kut; and the only means of intercommunication were the steamer and motor launch which crossed at night with rations, and returned with any sick and wounded requiring admission into hospital.

State of Troops on arrival at Kut.

17. The 6th Division had gone through a severe hot weather, and an outbreak of malaria in Lower Mesopotamia, had experienced exceptional hardships, and privations for 17 days preceding the siege, and arrived in Kut in an exhausted state as will have been seen from the itinerary given in my statement for the period (*c*) During the early stage of the siege, the preparation of

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000c2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

the defence works threw a large amount of physical labour on the troops who were already in a somewhat worn-out condition.

General Health of the Garrison.

18. After arriving in Kut, the general health of the garrison up to the middle of January improved, especially that of British troops. It then remained fair up to the end of February, after which it gradually declined to the end of March, particularly in Indians. Up to this time the men were moderately cheerful and in fair spirits. One saw, however, how deeply they were disappointed each time the relief failed. From this time onwards there was a rapid lowering of stamina, vitality, physical condition and health generally to the end of the siege. When Kut capitulated the whole garrison was in an exceedingly low state of health.

19. During the last month of the siege, men at fatigues, such as trench-digging, after ten minutes work had to rest a while, and go at it again; men on sentry-go would drop down, those carrying loads would rest every few hundred yards; men availed themselves of every opportunity of lolling about or lying down. There were instances of Indians returning from trench duty in the evening seemingly with nothing the matter, who laid down and were found dead in the morning—death due to starvation asthenia. Men in such a low state of vitality can stand little in the shape of illness—an attack of diarrhœa that they would have got rid of in a day or so at the beginning of the siege, often ended fatally—all recuperative power had gone. At the end of the siege I doubt whether there was a single person equal to a five-mile march carrying his equipment. Personally up to the middle of March I could make a complete inspection of the front line trenches and Fort (about 5 miles) in the morning; I had then to halve it, and at the end of April while doing even half, I had to rest on the way. Practically all officers were in the same condition of physical incapacity

I make the following extracts from my diary:—

20. "30.12.15. Had a long conversation with the G.O.C. Division, regarding the present fighting capacity of the Force now at Kut. I strongly represented what the Force went through anterior to the battle of Ctesiphon and what they have endured since the siege began. I put the sick and wounded that will require evacuation down river at 2,000, and that at least 20 per cent. of the remainder will not be fit for active military operations for some time to come."

21. "20.1.16. The general health of the British troops has greatly improved; the men are looking well and many are putting on weight. There have been no fresh cases of beriberi for over a fortnight. The Indian troops are in better health then when they arrived here, but are fining down and not regaining stamina in the same way British are; this is due to: (1) absence of meat rations; (2) absence of potatoes and other vegetables; and (3) short allowance of atta"; further, they were less capable of standing the severe climatic conditions than the British, and as they were getting no meat or vegetable ration, they never recovered stamina.

22. On January 28th. I recommended to the G.O.C. Division that the reliefs in the trenches should not be prolonged beyond a week, because in the Kut bivouacs; "(1) men can get clean, and to a limited extent wash clothes; (2) they get their meals hot and have greater opportunities for supplementing rations by local purchase; (3) they get more rest and less exposure in covered bivouacs."

23. There were at first difficulties connected with feeding the troops in the trenches, especially in serving their meals hot, but every effort was made to overcome these. During the latter half of the siege practically all the troops in the firing line had their kitchens in the immediate vicinity of the trenches.

24. "On January 18th, 19th, and 20th, the 2/7 Gurkhas experienced overwhelming hardship. They were up to their waists in water in the trenches and when they came into their dug-outs in Kut on the 22nd they were absolutely done. A large number had swollen hands and feet due to blood stasis, and three men appeared to have collapsed and died from the 'effects of cold.'" When I inspected the battalion on January 26th they were better, but "looked very tucked up."

25. "April 5th, 1916. I have during the last week specially noted the rapid way in which all the young soldiers and recruits are fining down on the present very scanty rations."

26. On April 8th I entered in my diary: "I was markedly struck this evening with the change that has taken place in the 7th Rajputs, 76th Punjabis and 24th Punjabis; the men have lost flesh considerably during the last week; they are debilitated and somewhat apathetic, and whenever opportunity arises lie down; they look half starved. Sickness occurring in men in this state, if at all serious, is fatal, or at least dangerous to life." This prediction was unfortunately only too fully borne out during the remainder of the siege and even more emphasized after the fall.

27. On April 18th I noted: "There is a vast amount of suffering from hunger amongst the troops which is being borne with admirable patience and fortitude, and arouses enthusiastic praise at the pluck and grit displayed by both our British and Indian soldiers. As one is amongst the men daily one speaks with intimate knowledge of the conditions; the behaviour of the men in meeting these unfortunate conditions is heroic."

28. Between April 11th and 18th, 1916, I carried out a series of observations as to the effects of the semi-starvation on our British and Indian troops; these are dealt with in a special memorandum which I submitted under the title *State of Nutrition of the Kut Garrison between the 11th and 18th April*, 1916, to the Chief of the General Staff, India, and it was sent home as a special despatch. The paper is a scientific one dealing with the intimate physiological processes in the human economy during starvation; and it gives details regarding the low state of health of the Kut garrison at the time.

29. The British soldiers lost on an average, one stone in weight; Indians, about 20 lbs. In all the temperature was on an average 1.8° Fahr. below normal; in Indians it was frequently found to be between 95 and 96° Fahr.

30. At the beginning of April the duties of all brigades were made as light as possible, and sentry-go was reduced to one hour at a time.

31. In my inspections of the front line trenches during March and April, life was much healthier in the trenches than in the town and I was most favourably impressed with the excellent weather the troops enjoyed in them, the purity of the air, and the absence of smells and flies, to say nothing of the peaceful calm and freedom from the enemy's attentions.

32. The behaviour of the troops throughout the siege was splendid. The defaulter's sheets of the British soldier was a *carte blanche*, and there was no grumbling; there was almost a complete absence of suicide and insanity.

Disease and Wounds.

33. There were in Kut anterior to our arrival, 2,201 sick and wounded:—

British Officers	21
,, ranks	411
Indian Officers	29
,, ranks	1,665
Followers	40
Turkish wounded	35

Of these 709 were despatched down river on December 4th, 1915, leaving 1,492.

34. The total number of patients treated in the hospitals during the siege (excluding Arabs) was 7,423, including 2,446 wounded, and 4,977 sick.

35. The *wounded* were distributed as follows:—

British Officers	54
,, rank and file	456
Indian Officers	28
,, rank and file	1,531
Followers	377

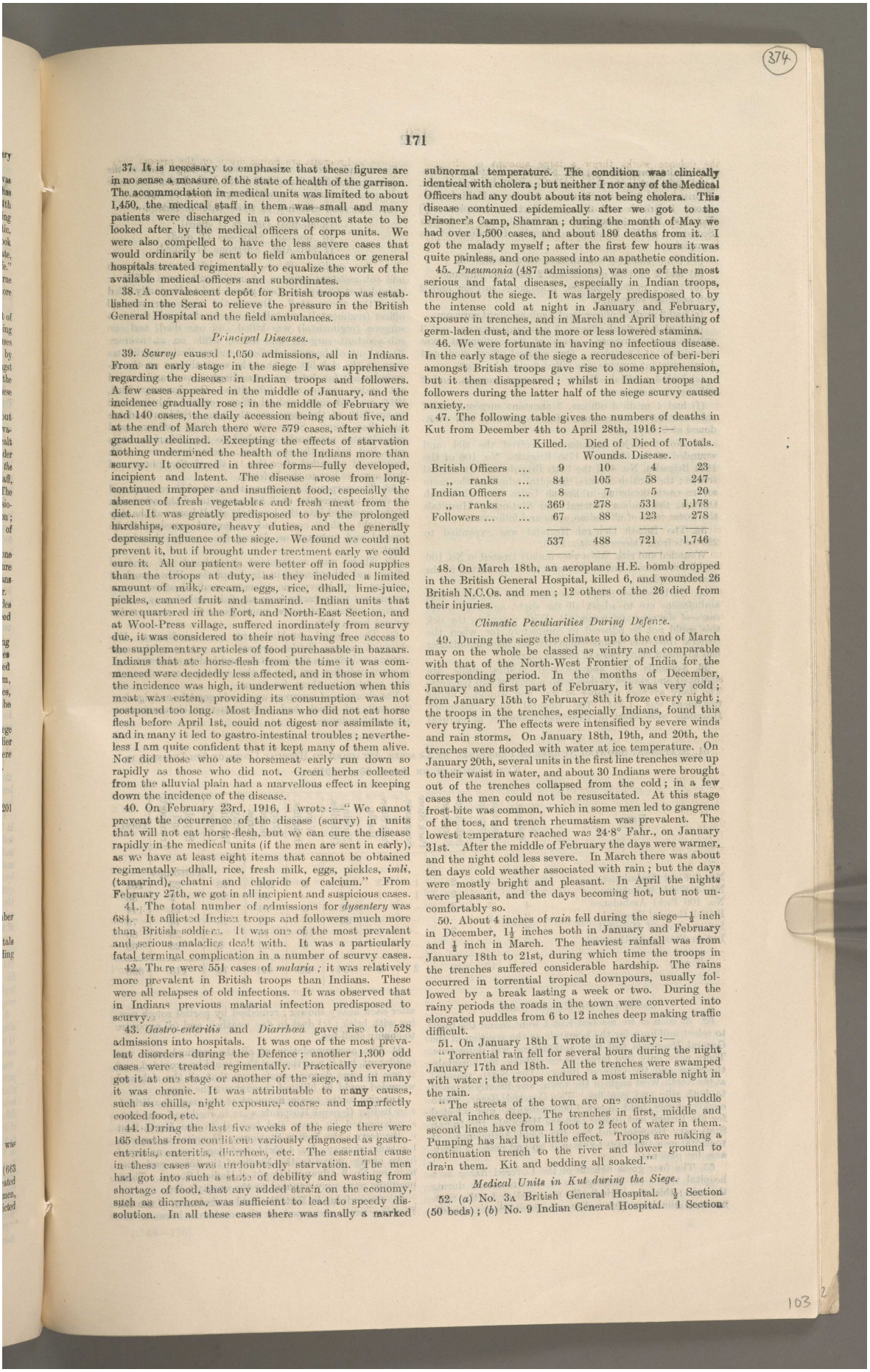
The admissions for *disease* were:—

British Officers	118
,, rank and file	1,090
Indian Officers	49
,, rank and file	3,054
Followers	666

The daily average number treated in the hospitals was 1,351.

36. There were in addition about 4,100 Arabs (663 wounded, 3,437 sick, men, women and children) treated by our medical units; 247 Arabs (102 men, 54 women, and 91 children) were killed or died of wounds inflicted by the enemy.

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library



37. It is necessary to emphasize that these figures are in no sense a measure of the state of health of the garrison. The accommodation in medical units was limited to about 1,450, the medical staff in them was small and many patients were discharged in a convalescent state to be looked after by the medical officers of corps units. We were also compelled to have the less severe cases that would ordinarily be sent to field ambulances or general hospitals treated regimentally to equalize the work of the available medical officers and subordinates.

38. A convalescent depôt for British troops was established in the Serai to relieve the pressure in the British General Hospital and the field ambulances.

Principal Diseases.

39. *Scurvy* caused 1,050 admissions, all in Indians. From an early stage in the siege I was apprehensive regarding the disease in Indian troops and followers. A few cases appeared in the middle of January, and the incidence gradually rose; in the middle of February we had 140 cases, the daily accession being about five, and at the end of March there were 579 cases, after which it gradually declined. Excepting the effects of starvation nothing undermined the health of the Indians more than scurvy. It occurred in three forms—fully developed, incipient and latent. The disease arose from long-continued improper and insufficient food, especially the absence of fresh vegetables and fresh meat from the diet. It was greatly predisposed to by the prolonged hardships, exposure, heavy duties, and the generally depressing influence of the siege. We found we could not prevent it, but if brought under treatment early we could cure it. All our patients were better off in food supplies than the troops at duty, as they included a limited amount of milk, cream, eggs, rice, dhall, lime-juice, pickles, canned fruit and tamarind. Indian units that were quartered in the Fort, and North-East Section, and at Wool-Press village, suffered inordinately from scurvy due, it was considered to their not having free access to the supplementary articles of food purchasable in bazaars. Indians that ate horse-flesh from the time it was commenced were decidedly less affected, and in those in whom the incidence was high, it underwent reduction when this meat was eaten, providing its consumption was not postponed too long. Most Indians who did not eat horse flesh before April 1st, could not digest nor assimilate it, and in many it led to gastro-intestinal troubles; nevertheless I am quite confident that it kept many of them alive. Nor did those who ate horsemeat early run down so rapidly as those who did not. Green herbs collected from the alluvial plain had a marvellous effect in keeping down the incidence of the disease.

40. On February 23rd, 1916, I wrote:—"We cannot prevent the occurrence of the disease (scurvy) in units that will not eat horse-flesh, but we can cure the disease rapidly in the medical units (if the men are sent in early), as we have at least eight items that cannot be obtained regimentally—dhall, rice, fresh milk, eggs, pickles, *imli*, (tamarind), chatni and chloride of calcium." From February 27th, we got in all incipient and suspicious cases.

41. The total number of admissions for *dysentery* was 684. It afflicted Indian troops and followers much more than British soldiers. It was one of the most prevalent and serious maladies dealt with. It was a particularly fatal terminal complication in a number of scurvy cases.

42. There were 551 cases of *malaria*; it was relatively more prevalent in British troops than Indians. These were all relapses of old infections. It was observed that in Indians previous malarial infection predisposed to scurvy.

43. *Gastro-enteritis* and *Diarrhœa* gave rise to 528 admissions into hospitals. It was one of the most prevalent disorders during the Defence; another 1,300 odd cases were treated regimentally. Practically everyone got it at one stage or another of the siege, and in many it was chronic. It was attributable to many causes, such as chills, night exposure, coarse and imperfectly cooked food, etc.

44. During the last five weeks of the siege there were 165 deaths from conditions variously diagnosed as gastro-enteritis, enteritis, diarrhœa, etc. The essential cause in these cases was undoubtedly starvation. The men had got into such a state of debility and wasting from shortage of food, that any added strain on the economy, such as diarrhœa, was sufficient to lead to speedy dissolution. In all these cases there was finally a marked subnormal temperature. The condition was clinically identical with cholera; but neither I nor any of the Medical Officers had any doubt about its not being cholera. This disease continued epidemically after we got to the Prisoner's Camp, Shamran; during the month of May we had over 1,500 cases, and about 180 deaths from it. I got the malady myself; after the first few hours it was quite painless, and one passed into an apathetic condition.

45. *Pneumonia* (487 admissions) was one of the most serious and fatal diseases, especially in Indian troops, throughout the siege. It was largely predisposed to by the intense cold at night in January and February, exposure in trenches, and in March and April breathing of germ-laden dust, and the more or less lowered stamina.

46. We were fortunate in having no infectious disease. In the early stage of the siege a recrudescence of beri-beri amongst British troops gave rise to some apprehension, but it then disappeared; whilst in Indian troops and followers during the latter half of the siege scurvy caused anxiety.

47. The following table gives the numbers of deaths in Kut from December 4th to April 28th, 1916:—

	Killed.	Died of Wounds.	Died of Disease.	Totals.
British Officers ...	9	10	4	23
,, ranks ...	84	105	58	247
Indian Officers ...	8	7	5	20
,, ranks ...	369	278	531	1,178
Followers	67	88	123	278
	537	488	721	1,746

48. On March 18th, an aeroplane H.E. bomb dropped in the British General Hospital, killed 6, and wounded 26 British N.C.Os. and men; 12 others of the 26 died from their injuries.

Climatic Peculiarities During Defence.

49. During the siege the climate up to the end of March may on the whole be classed as wintry and comparable with that of the North-West Frontier of India for the corresponding period. In the months of December, January and first part of February, it was very cold; from January 15th to February 8th it froze every night; the troops in the trenches, especially Indians, found this very trying. The effects were intensified by severe winds and rain storms. On January 18th, 19th, and 20th, the trenches were flooded with water at ice temperature. On January 20th, several units in the first line trenches were up to their waist in water, and about 30 Indians were brought out of the trenches collapsed from the cold; in a few cases the men could not be resuscitated. At this stage frost-bite was common, which in some men led to gangrene of the toes, and trench rheumatism was prevalent. The lowest temperature reached was 24·8° Fahr., on January 31st. After the middle of February the days were warmer, and the night cold less severe. In March there was about ten days cold weather associated with rain; but the days were mostly bright and pleasant. In April the nights were pleasant, and the days becoming hot, but not uncomfortably so.

50. About 4 inches of *rain* fell during the siege—½ inch in December, 1½ inches both in January and February and ½ inch in March. The heaviest rainfall was from January 18th to 21st, during which time the troops in the trenches suffered considerable hardship. The rains occurred in torrential tropical downpours, usually followed by a break lasting a week or two. During the rainy periods the roads in the town were converted into elongated puddles from 6 to 12 inches deep making traffic difficult.

51. On January 18th I wrote in my diary:—

"Torrential rain fell for several hours during the night January 17th and 18th. All the trenches were swamped with water; the troops endured a most miserable night in the rain.

"The streets of the town are one continuous puddle several inches deep. The trenches in first, middle and second lines have from 1 foot to 2 feet of water in them. Pumping has had but little effect. Troops are making a continuation trench to the river and lower ground to drain them. Kit and bedding all soaked."

Medical Units in Kut during the Siege.

52. (*a*) No. 3A British General Hospital. ½ Section (50 beds); (*b*) No. 9 Indian General Hospital. 1 Section

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00005c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

(100 beds) complete; (c) No. 57 Indian Stationary Hospital (200 beds) complete; (d) No. 2 Field Ambulance. 2 British and 3 Indian Sections. (e) No. 4 Field Ambulance. 1 British and 2 Indian Sections complete; (f) No. 106 Field Ambulance. 1 British and 3 Indian Sections. (g) No. 9 Advanced Depôt of Medical Stores complete.

(a), (b), (c), and (e) were in Kut when we arrived.

(a) had 2 medical officers and 2 assistant surgeons.

(b) had 2 medical officers, 1 assistant surgeon and 2 sub-assistant surgeon.

(c) had 2 medical officers and 2 sub-assistant surgeons.

(d) had 5 medical officers, 3 assistant surgeons and 3 sub-assistant surgeons; much of its equipment was abandoned at Ctesiphon. One medical officer died, and 1 sub-assistant surgeon was killed during the siege.

(e) had 3 medical officers, 1 assistant surgeon, and 2 sub-assistant surgeons.

(f) had 4 medical officers, 3 assistant surgeons and 2 sub-assistant surgeons; some of its equipment was abandoned at Ctesiphon.

53. No. 2 Field Ambulance received the sick and wounded of the 16th and 17th Brigades, No. 106 of the 18th Brigades, No. 4 of the 30th Brigade and Divisional troops; the British General Hospital admitted the more severe cases occurring in British Units, and all British Officers, the Indian General and Stationary Hospitals the worse cases of all Indian units and followers.

54. The British General Hospital was expanded to 200 beds from December 4th, 1915.

Wounded and sick Arabs were mainly treated in No. 106 Field Ambulance, but in emergencies were treated in the nearest hospital.

55. On December 8th, I issued an order that the "field ambulances are to admit all the slight and less severe cases of sickness and wounds." With regard to the sick this could not be adhered to completely, for when the General Hospitals became congested the field ambulances had to retain many cases of serious illness.

56. Normally the above-named medical units are equipped and staffed to deal with a total of 650 patients. The daily average number of sick and wounded under treatment was 1,351. The General and Stationary Hospitals were short of their usual number of medical officers and medical subordinates. A large part of the equipment of Nos. 2 and 106 Field Ambulances had to be relinquished during the withdrawal from Ctesiphon.

57. The staff attached to these units included:—

18 Medical Officers (1 died).
10 Assistant Surgeons (1 died).
11 Sub-Asst. Surgeons (1 killed).

As five medical officers, two assistant surgeons and one sub-assistant surgeon of corps units were killed or wounded at Ctesiphon their places had to be partly filled from the above staff. During the siege one medical officer (regimental) was killed and one died, one assistant surgeon (regimental) was killed and one died, and one sub-assistant surgeon was killed, while on an average 20 per cent. of the medical officers and medical subordinates were on the sick list, so that the work thrown on the remainder left for duty was exceedingly severe and carried out under exceptional difficulties. On January 23rd, 1916, we had eight medical officers on the sick list, and on the 28th of the same month, nine. Seldom had we less than four. Some of the medical officers and subordinates previously attached to the different units were, just before the siege began, sent down river with convoys of wounded after the battle of Ctesiphon, and their services lost to the Defence.

58. The perpetual sniping on the part of the enemy and his daily but irregular shell fire necessitated the admission of the wounded into the hospitals at all hours of the day and night; these cases had on several occasions to be dressed and operated on during the enemy's bombardment.

59. There was a constant interchange of medical officers and subordinates in the hospitals. When work of one got very heavy one or more medical officers were transferred temporarily from the field ambulances, whilst medical officers of corps units gave their services for several hours daily.

60. The menial establishment was insufficient. We obtained several British privates to act as cooks and nursing orderlies in the hospitals, and Indian soldiers to act as ward orderlies and help in the cooking; convalescents also assisted in these functions.

The shortage of sweepers was made good from brigades, the units of which had under existing circumstances a superabundance.

61. Statement Showing Number of Personnel by Classes Attached to Medical Units of 6th Division in Kut-al-Amarah on April 26th, 1916.

Unit.	British Officers.	Assistant Surgeons.	Sub-Asst. Surgeons.	Pack Store Sergeants.	Pack Store Havls.	Nursing Orderlies.	Ward Orderlies.	Army Bearer Corps.	Army Hospital Corps.	Supply and Transport.	Total.
										Personnel	
No. 2 Field Ambulance	4	3	2	1	3	5	3	200	18	23	262
No. 4 Field Ambulance	3	1	2	1	1	4	–	54	20	2	88
No. 106 Field Ambulance ...	4	3	2	–	–	2	5	94	13	21	144
British General Hospital	2	2	–	–	–	23	–	14	18	14	73
Indian General Hospital	2	1	2	–	1	–	10	16	–	28	60
Indian Stationary Hospital ...	2	–	2	–	4	–	8	23	5	25	69
Total	17	10	10	2	9	34	26	401	74	113	696

Location of the Medical Units.

62. As soon as we reached Kut I went round the town to select buildings for the hospitals as the position of the General Hospitals and field ambulances was dangerous. There were only two large places suitable for hospitals, the Serai and the Covered Bazar. The Serai, situated at the North-West angle of the town, was directly exposed to both rifle and gun fire. The Covered Bazar, which could roughly hold about 1,000 patients, was selected for the British and Indian General Hospitals, the Indian Stationary Hospital and No. 106 Field Ambulance. It took 200 men two days to clean it up and make it habitable for patients

63. The four great defects of the Covered Bazar as a hospital were: (a) Leakage to a certain extent during the rain; this was periodically attended to by the engineers; (b) the thoroughfares became converted into a paddle after each heavy shower; remedied by partial rough paving with brick; (c) dust in dry weather, and (d) exposure to enemy shell-fire.

64. The accommodation of all the medical units was indifferent, but it was the best that could be provided, and it was to some degree satisfactory that all the sick and wounded could be billeted throughout the siege.

Anterior to the commencement of the siege the British and Indian General Hospitals were in reed and mat huts supplemented by tents and located to the North-East of the town; the Indian Stationary Hospital in tents in the same vicinity; No. 4 Field Ambulance was encamped in an orange grove to the North of the town, and close to it was No. 9 Advanced Depôt of Medical Stores. These positions were very exposed to the enemy's fire.

65. On arriving in Kut, the field ambulances of the 6th Division were encamped in the orchards between the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000001

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

General Hospitals and the town. The position was exposed to both gun and rifle fire, and on December 5th, all field ambulances were billeted in the town, No. 2 in Third and Fourth Avenues, No. 4 in Signal Lane and No. 106 at the Southern part of the Covered Bazar. No. 131 Cavalry Field Ambulance, located in the same grove, left with the cavalry brigade on the morning of December 6th, 1915. The Advanced Depôt of Medical Stores was housed in No. 3 Avenue.

A few hours after all patients had been removed from the huts and camps, the enemy commenced shelling that quarter heavily.

66. *The Officers' Hospital* (which was part of the British General Hospital), consisted of two double storied houses in No. 2 Street. The accommodation was bad, especially in the ground floor, and at one time when there were over 30 officers being treated, it was overcrowded. They were, however, in a safe position, as neither block was hit by a shell throughout the siege.

67. Red Cross flags were hoisted over all the hospitals; in the Covered Bazar their positions defined the limits of where the hospitals were. The Covered Bazar extends over two acres of ground, and was bounded on the North by our Ordnance Park, and on the West (bank of river) we had 4 guns; we had about 95 shells into it. When aeroplanes began dropping high explosive bombs, specially large red cross emblems were laid flat on the roofs of all the hospitals, the white ground of the emblem being 16 feet square, and the limbs of the red cross 2½ feet in width and about 8 feet in length.

68. During the siege 103 of the enemy's shells, and 3 aeroplane bombs entered the hospitals killing 38 and wounding 42 patients, and killing 42 and wounding 36 of the personnel of the medical units; 11 of the hospital personnel were also wounded by snipers.

69. The general hospitals were used for the treatment of all severe wounds, and, as far as practicable, for cases of serious illness. The work in both these institutions was carried out under high pressure throughout the siege. The Indian Stationary Hospital was also overworked.

70. There were occasions when the strain thrown on the hospitals was overwhelming; *e.g.* on December 24th, No. 2 Field Ambulance was treating 202 sick, and 174 wounded, No. 4 (3 Sections) 40 sick and 177 wounded; No. 106 (4 Sections) 84 sick and 103 wounded, the British General Hospital (½ section) 112 sick and 93 wounded. The Indian Stationary Hospital had at one time 546 sick, and the Indian General Hospital (1 Section), 156 sick and 171 wounded.

71. I find the following entry in my diary for December 21st, 1915: "*Indian General Hospital.* The work here is under high pressure. One of the S.A.S. now ill and only 2 left to whole hospital. When an operation case comes in (now that Captain Barber is ill), all dressing of other cases has to cease. If possible have a regimental S.A.S. to assist."

72. "*Indian Stationary Hospital.*—316 cases under treatment. Of these 254 wounded. Here also work is at high pressure. O.C. (Major Bose) is crippled with a dilated heart and tachycardia.

73. "*No.* 106 *Field Ambulance.*—The work in this unit is very considerable. In addition to treating the 18th Brigade, they treat from 50 to 60 (men, women and children) of the civil population, and several of these wounded. At present both Major Pearson, O.C. and Capt. Puri are ill, and Major Aylen has charge of the Officers' Hospital.

74. "*No.* 2 *F.A.* Work in this unit is also under high pressure. There are 63 British and about 200 Indian sick. Major Lambert is ill, and there are only 2 S.A.S."

The medical personnel were getting worn out from overwork.

75. "December 28th, 1915. The general care of the sick and wounded and dressing, and the sanitation of the hospitals are as satisfactory as can be expected under the circumstances."

76. "January 1st, 1916. Sick and wounded coming in from the trenches in a most deplorable and miserable state—clothes wet and saturated with water and mud, and they are cold and shivering."

77. "January 28th, 1916. The hospitals are feeling the shortage of nursing and ward orderlies on account of the numbers of sick and wounded."

78. About the end of February the "cases of sickness did not respond to treatment as they used to do, which was attributed to the men's resisting power being lowered."

79. Great difficulty was experienced in connection with the supply of kerosine oil to hospitals from January 15th. It was then arranged that it be "limited to night hurricane lamps and the operation theatres. General wards to use heavy oil." (A large number of jam tins were converted into lamps for burning heavy oil.) The operating theatres were fitted up with acetylene lamps by the Flying Corps.

80. The shortage of fuel at one stage in January led to some difficulty in the sterilization processes necessary for surgical cases. This was remedied at once, and a special allowance of fuel sanctioned for the purpose.

On February 6th there were "50 cases of pneumonia under treatment in the Indian General Hospital" alone.

81. About March 20th parados were made in the British General Hospital and other medical units to prevent the effects of shell fire and bombs.

82. The *sanitation* of the hospitals was defective in many respects, especially during the rainy periods, but I believe it was carried out as satisfactorily as the circumstances allowed of. Night soil was partly incinerated and partly buried in deep pits. The water-supply arrangements were the best in the garrison and there was practically always sufficient water for drinking, cooking, and washing, but not for bathing. The plan of supply was: Several 200-gallon iron tanks were placed on platforms within the front shed of the Covered Bazar about 60 yards from the left bank of the river. A pump in a covered place on the river bank was connected by a hose (laid along a trench) with the tanks. From these front tanks the water was drawn and distributed to other tanks suitably located in each medical unit. Several adjacent combatant units got water from here. All water was chlorinated.

83. The conditions taken together were decidedly unfavourable for the sick and wounded. It was impossible for the available medical staff to give the patients all the care and attention they required. The improvised hospitals, especially those in the Covered Bazar were defectively ventilated, ill-lighted, and finally unhygienic generally. The patients were going through a process of slow starvation and we had but a limited amount of hospital comforts for them, indeed, at the last stage, practically none. Added to these were the depressing influences of daily shelling and of disappointed expectations as regards the relief.

Contraventions of the Geneva Convention.

84. (*a*) Shelling of hospitals. During the siege 103 shells entered the various hospitals. Seven 40-pound shells entered the Covered Bazar Hospitals on December 10th, 1915.

(*b*) Bombing of hospitals. Three bombs entered the hospitals, one bomb killing 18 and wounding 14 men.

(*c*) Killing of women and children while drawing water by snipers.

85. Regarding (*a*) and (*b*). It is only fair to state that we had four guns on the West and within 100 yards of the Covered Bazar and the Ordnance Park within 50 yards. The Turkish aviator who dropped the bomb on the British General Hospital subsequently apologised to me for doing so, and expressed his profound regret for what had happened.

Positions of Dressing Stations, etc.

86. *Dressing stations* were formed in the date grove to the North of the town for the wounded from the trenches. They consisted of excellently made dug-outs with shell-proof overhead cover. Here the wounded were re-dressed if necessary, fed and rested before being sent on to the hospitals. This place, however, was exposed to a certain amount of sniping and shell fire and had to be abandoned. After this bearer divisions went out to the front line trenches and Fort in the dusk of the evenings with stretchers and, if necessary A.T. carts, and brought the wounded to their field ambulances.

87. The *regimental aid posts* consisted of dug-outs provided with covered protection against shrapnel. The wounded were at first taken to the dressing stations along the communicating trenches, but when dressing stations were given up, to the field ambulances.

Field ambulances were throughout the siege daily employed in collecting the sick and wounded from the first line trenches and the fort. In the early stage of our investment, before communication trenches were completed, this work was carried out under constant sniping, and on a few occasions under heavy rifle fire, during which some of the Army Bearer Corps personnel were wounded.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000033

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Efficiency of Work of the Medical Services

88. The work of the medical services was carried out as efficiently as the limited equipment and short handedness allowed. I have already remarked on the more serious difficulties that had to be contended with and indicated that the duties of all ranks were heavy and conducted under high pressure continuously. Medical officers, assistant surgeons, sub-assistant surgeons, and every one on the staff of medical units were untiring in their efforts to ameliorate the sufferings and add to the comfort of the sick and wounded, and throughout the siege displayed most praiseworthy devotion to duty.

Regarding the lower establishments, on February 5th I entered in my diary: "I have been more and more struck by the way in which all parts of the menial establishments carry out their duties amidst the utmost continuous discomfort and under conditions by no means free from danger."

Embarkation Medical Officer.

89. An Embarkation Medical Officer was appointed for the evacuation of the 700 odd patients that were sent down on the "Mosul" and "Blosse Lynch," and for embarking the 1,100 sick and wounded sent down river on the capitulation of Kut.

Supply of Drugs, Dressings, etc.

90. No. 9 Advanced Depôt of Medical Stores, which we had ordered up as soon as Kut was captured by us, was able to provide medicines, surgical dressings and disinfectants throughout the siege, helped by the aeroplanes. Fortunately the possibility of requiring a good reserve in the depôt at so remote a town from our source of supply had been anticipated by the officer in charge and laid in. The medicines, dressings, etc. of two previous indents on Bombay had also just arrived in Kut. The British and Indian General Hospitals, Indian Stationary Hospitals and No. 4 Field Ambulance (already in Kut) were exceedingly well stocked with medicines, dressings etc., and their surplus came in most usefully.

91. On December 5th, 1915, I found 31 Reserve Dressing Boxes (Red Cross Gifts), for British infantry units, which with the permission of the Commanding Officers were taken over by the Medical Stores Depôt. On January 26th a few boxes of medical supplies were found in the Supply godowns and placed in the Medical Stores.

We had a large supply of formalin and flypaper in stock which were invaluable against the fly pest that occurred in April.

92. Our first task was to determine for what length of time the supply of the Advanced Depôt of Medical Stores would have to last out. Initially I put this at 3 months. On December 5th, 1915, I made a complete survey of the Medical Stores, and assured myself that so far as the supply of medicines and surgical dressings went, there would be sufficient for that period. When, however, the G.O.C. Division, about January 20th, intimated that the food of the garrison could hold out until April 17th, we were obliged to regulate the issues of our drugs, dressings, and disinfectants accordingly. There was a decided shortage of most drugs during the month of April, and throughout the siege the strictest economy had to be exercised, and the closest scrutiny on the expenditure kept up. We were able to be much more liberal with the dressings, which lasted out well.

93. The universal prevalence of diarrhœa and gastro-intestinal disorders led to an early exhaustion of astringents, whilst "fevers" and malarial relapses drained our diaphoretics. After the aeroplane service started we were almost always able to get the drugs and dressings more urgently required.

On December 11th, 1915, orders were given to limit compliance with indents to one week's requirements in corps units, and to 3 days' supply to medical units; all the latter were located in proximity to the Medical Depôt.

94. We had often to fall back on our own resources. For instance, in February we urgently required chloride of calcium for the treatment of scurvy. We had abundance of HCl (used with chlorate of potash for chlorinating water), and got some lime from the D.E.C. We issued nearly 2 lbs. of this drug daily for 2½ months, but it entailed an enormous amount of work on the Medical Depôt. The most used astringent was Dover's powder which we manufactured from opium, ipecacuanha powder and bicarbonate of soda. Castor oil we got from the Flying Corps, who were working the grain-grinding engines; Epsom salts from the Veterinary Section; cotton-wool was bought from the bazars, cleaned, teased, sterilized and used for our sceptic surgical cases; calico and other cloths were bought to use as gauze and bandages, and so forth.

95. By aeroplane we received large supplies of astringents (*e.g.* 20,000 lead and opium pills, 12,000 tabloids of Dover's Powder), phenacetin, salicylate of sodium, antitetanic serum, various surgical dressings, large-sized drainage tubes, etc.

The stock of medicines had gone down considerably by the end of March on the 27th of which month I wrote: "With the greatest economy it will last another 14 days. Had again to issue warning to medical units to exercise the greatest care in the issue of medicines and published a list of the various alternative drugs available for those that were running out."

96. On March 29th we sent a message to Corps Headquarters stating that or medicines and dressings were running low and that we should require the whole Advanced Depôt replenished on relief. On April 1st we were informed that a complete Advanced Depôt had arrived and was ready for us.

97. The manner in which the drugs and dressings lasted out was the most satisfactory part of the medical organization of the siege. It cannot be said that all patients got every drug that was required, but it may be stated that all serious cases of sickness got almost everything that was prescribed for them by medical officers, and that the dressings for the wounded were ample throughout.

The work of the No. 9 Advanced Depôt of Medical Stores was carried out with exemplary efficiency, and the issue of medicines, surgical dressings, medical equipment and disinfectants regulated with much judgment by Capt. Weston, who commanded this unit.

Medical Comforts.

98. As in the case of the Advanced Depôt of Medical Stores I ascertained the quantity of medical comforts in charge of Supply Service and regulated the issue for three months. The chief item with which we were concerned was tinned milk of which there were 14,500 lbs. in stock. This permitted of a liberal issue. When, however, the time limit was extended to April 17th, it made a most material difference. We found that we had been prodigal and from January 21st had to reduce our issues considerably and abruptly.

99. On January 30th we had the following medical comforts to fall back upon:—

Milk, condensed	2,353	lbs.
Oatmeal	1,593	,,
Cocoa	82	,,
Calves foot jelly	6	bottles
Brandy	8	,,
Beer	158	,,
Port wine...	4	,,
Whisky	52	,,
Cornflour	417	lbs.
Benger's food	15	bottles
Macaroni	16	lbs.
Mellin's food	11	,,
Essence, chicken	7½	,,
,, mutton	1	,,
Extract of beef	70	,,
Tapioca	21	,,
Pearl barley	60	,,
Lime-juice, Rose's	18	bottles

100. Throughout the siege I kept a close watch on the Supply Stores, where periodically various articles of food and comforts appeared in small quantities from previously undiscovered sources, and were secured for the hospitals. This, amongst other things, is shown in the following extracts from my diaries:—

January 25th, 1916. Conversation with A.D.S. (*re* rations); obtained the following for hospitals: 11 bottles of brandy; one case whisky, some vermicelli, macaroni, chocolate, coffee, preserved fruit, tinned soups, lime-juice cordial, etc.

"January 28th, 1916. Secured through A.D.S. 13 cases of lime juice to be reserved for treatment of scurvy cases in Indian troops.

101. The issue of white bread ceased on February 10th, 1916, after which British troops' bread was made from

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

flour and atta. We, however, were able to draw 20 one-pound loaves of white bread daily for issue to the hospitals for special cases after its general issue had ceased, and this continued throughout the siege. At the beginning of February I got a large supply of dhall from the Supply Stores for hospitals.

102. February 5th, 1916. "The number of eggs supplied to hospital has been reduced to 20. This appears to me to be ridiculously few considering that every mess and many troops in trenches are able to get them. To speak to A.D.S. *re* this; if it is a question of paying more, then it must be paid for the sick's food."

103. On March 16th, I secured for the hospitals, 600 lbs. preserved fresh fruit; 350 lbs. cornflour, 45 lbs. arrowroot.

Further list of articles secured for hospitals on March 23rd, 1916:—

Cocoa	33	lbs.
Lime-juice	18	gallons.
Pickles	22	sm. botts.
Rice	35	maunds.
Tamarind	40	lbs.
Cornflour	258	,,
Essence mutton	¼	,,
Calves foot jelly	2	,,
Extract of beef	4½	,,
Pearl barley	7	,,
Beef dripping	11	,,
Benger's food	1	,,
Sugar	19	,,
Vinegar	28	gallons.
Dhall	198	lbs.
Dry limes	66	,,
Arrowroot	25	,,
Horlick's M. milk	6	,,
Pineapple	337	tins
Beer	15	bottles
Preserved fruit	275	lbs.
Essence of chicken	1¾	,,
Fish, tins	260	,,

104. Early in February several acres of land around the town were converted into kitchen gardens and such rapidly growing vegetables as radishes, onions, cress, and a few varieties of spinach were sown. There was at first great difficulty in watering them which was overcome.

From March 31st 100 lbs. vegetables were supplied to hospitals daily from the gardens. They had previously been producing only 50 lbs. a day.

105. "March 2nd, 1916. Secured all the stores suitable for hospitals for issue to sick from the miscellaneous collection in E. Section S. and T. In consultation with A.D.S. allotted these to the British Officers Hospital, B.G.H., the lime juice to I.G.H. and I.S H."

"April 11th, 1916. 60 lbs. dates dropped by aeroplane, made over to hospitals."

"April 2nd, 1916. 4¾ lbs. of saccharin dropped by aeroplane. It was insufficient for whole garrison, so half given to hospitals, remainder to staffs' and officers' messes."

106. January 6th. "The supply of eggs is running down, also chickens. No potatoes nor onions now being issued."

"January 4th, 1916. Visited officers' hospital. Asked all officers if they were getting all they wanted as regards food, and they answered in the affirmative; also if they had any complaints to make and they said, 'No.'"

"January 5th. Saw and spoke to all patients of the B.G.N.; they all said food was quite satisfactory."

107. On February 7th I entered in my diary: "The Indian troops in medical units are now being much better fed than those of the rest of force. They are practically getting all their rations (including rice and dhall) with only a shortage of 8 oz atta, and tea. Told officers commanding medical units that they can buy tea in the bazar for their Indian troops and followers."

108. On March 6th I "directed officers commanding medical units to buy whatever food in bazars that they consider will improve the dietary of their patients."

109. We were, throughout the siege, able to obtain a limited supply of fresh milk, cream, eggs, chickens and fish, but only with considerable difficulty as the Arab vendors were consuming them or selling them surreptitiously.

110. The quantity of fresh milk varied, the average being about 120 pints per diem; at times for a week on end we got from 200 to 300 pints a day; it was nearly always of poor quality. Cream, about 8 lbs. a day was most useful. At the end of March several milch buffaloes and cows were wounded and the supply of fresh milk ran low, and this at a time when the stock of tinned milk was nearly exhausted. I insisted that the animals be not sent out to graze, but have the grass cut for them and that the husk of barley be given them. I told the A.D.S. on March 28th, 1916, that it was imperative that everything possible be done to maintain the supply of fresh milk. Until the last fortnight we were able to get on an average about 80 eggs daily. For a time, we were drawing 150-200 eggs a day. Fish was given to the British officers and selected cases amongst the British sick; it was very costly as the catches by Arabs had to be made in the presence of the enemy's snipers.

111. "February 24th, 1916 Diary. The supply of eggs to medical units has again been falling off. The quality of the milk has also undergone deterioration and lately has been adulterated with flour. Yesterday I found that the last half inch in a bucket consisted of a semi-glutinous mass. Represented these matters to the L.P.O. who stated that the eggs were being brought in at a later time—too late to be issued." They were then drawn at a later hour daily. "*Re* milk, he arraigned three contractors (suppliers) before the Military Governor, and had them punished."

"February 26th, 1916. Saw L.P.O. *re* milk and eggs. The milk was short but of better quality." On February 27th, 1916, the supply of milk had "improved in both quantity and quality."

112. At the end of March obtained 25 lbs. tea from Supply Stores; issued to British General Hospital.

On April 2nd "got for hospitals two maunds of gur and 7¾ maunds of dates."

"April 7th, 1916. Obtained for hospitals 50 lbs. tea from the Supply Service."

113. After April 7th no further extras could be obtained from the Supply Stores for the hospitals. We had then to rely on about 140 pints of milk and about 40 eggs daily, as the only medical comforts available.

114. The most that can be said of the medical comforts is that they would have been ample for a two months' supply. Strict economy had to be commenced as early as January 21st, and continued until they were exhausted —about the middle of April, which means that a good proportion of the sick and wounded who would normally have got them did not.

Clothing and Bedding.

115. The clothing and bedding that had been supplied to the troops supplemented by one blanket was suitable and sufficient. The third blanket had been provided and issued to some of the troops before the siege began. Unfortunately many of the men lost part of their clothing and blankets which were abandoned at Aziziyeh. All available blankets in the Supply Stores were issued to the garrison, which ensured that all men had two blankets, a certain proportion had three. We had a certain number of extra blankets on hand in the medical units, which, with the bedding patients brought in were sufficient to keep them warm.

Most of the troops had only one suit of clothes, so that it was difficult to arrange about washing them. Cotton suits were made for a large number to allow of this being done.

Rations of Garrison During the Defence.

116. As previously stated the 6th Division arrived in Kut after Ctesiphon in a worn out and exhausted condition. For over a fortnight the troops had got their rations irregularly, and had few opportunities of preparing hot meals. Under the circumstances it was not considered advisable to commence a reduction of their rations at once except in potatoes.

117. The main difficulty was to determine the length of time the siege would last. The following abstracts from my diaries indicate the estimated quantities of food in stock and the progressive reductions made in the rations.

"December 11th, 1915. Had a long conversation with A.D.S., regarding rations available during our defence. From his tables it appears that we have *full rations* of following for the period stated:—

Flour (bread, Br.)	70 days
Atta (Ind. tps. & folls.)	70 days
Rice ,, ,,	70 days
Dhall ,, ,,	70 days
Curry stuffs, do. (are put on half rations of this already)	1 month
Fresh meat	1 month

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000012

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

(exclusive of beef available from 78 bulls of bullock battery—each bull yields 600 lbs., *ergo* 18 additional days' rations at 3,000 lbs. per diem are available.)

Potatoes (at 6 oz. per diem.) ... ... 1 month
Onions (at 4 oz. per diem.) ... ... 1 month.
Tea and sugar, full supply.
Wood, deficiency, less than one month. (Troops put on short rations already.)
Medical comforts—with economy one month. (Abundance of tinned milk.)

"A.D.S. has purchased all tinned provisions (fish, sausages, etc.), procurable in bazars and from Sassoon & Co."

118. A large quantity of dates were found in the town, collected and issued from time to time, and served a very useful purpose when all sugar and butter were exhausted. An issue of 3 ounces twice a week was made from December 18th, 1915, and of 1½ oz. daily from March 1st until they were exhausted about March 20th, 1916.

From December 18th, 2 ounces of rice were given to British and Indian troops twice a week.

119. "December 29th. Had a long conversation with the A.D.S. as to how the rations were holding out. There are the following:—

"Abundance of flour, atta, ghi, dhall, bacon, butter, cheese; onions and potatoes (6 oz.) about 8 days. There is no more fresh meat so that from to-morrow tinned meat has to be issued. A certain number of animals are kept for the sick and wounded.

"There is over 14,000 lbs. condensed milk, abundance oatmeal, jam, dates, 48 lbs. Bovril, and a certain amount of stimulants.

"British troops have been receiving 12 oz. of fresh meat up to date daily; Indian troops have only had 3 issues. Beer has been issued to British troops up to date, but is now exhausted. A ration of rum can be issued. This is done at discretion of the G.O.C. Brigades."

120. Green vegetables were procurable in the bazars until the middle of January, but the regular issue of these to troops and followers had to be discontinued towards the end of December.

"January 20th, 1916. As tea is running short, issue to Indian troops and followers has been stopped and British troops put on half allowance (½ oz.) daily. The deprivation of tea was greatly felt by the Indian units and specially by the weak men in hospital." An issue of coffee was made every third day to British troops in lieu of tea from February 9th. Small supplies of tea for the sick and wounded were obtained a few days later, amd whenever it appeared in the bazars it was bought by the C.O.'s of Medical Units.

121. The beef of the 2 heavy battery bullocks and horse flesh were commenced on January 29th on alternate days. There was a prejudice against eating horse-flesh amongst all Indian troops except Gurkhas, who ate it from the first day of issue; gradually other classes of Indians began using it, especially Mohammedans; it was with difficulty that Mahrattas and Sikhs were induced to take to it; Rajpoots and Mahrattas held out longest and ran down most.

Under the G.O.C. Division's instructions, I issued the following:—

"Kut, February 5th, 1916. It has unfortunately become necessary to employ horse-flesh in the rations, and the following remarks are published with the view to remove any prejudices that may exist against it as an article of food.

"The horse is a clean animal, and essentially a vegetable feeder. It will not eat unclean food nor drink impure water. Its flesh is wholesome, digestible and practically in every respect as nutritious as that of any animal we are accustomed to eat. It contains all the nutritive principles or chemical constituents that the flesh of other edible mammalia does, and those troops who have already eaten it here, like it. In the absence of flesh food, troops will run down, be more susceptible to disease, especially to scurvy and beriberi. Both of these diseases have already given rise to a certain amount of inefficiency. In the case of Indian troops the absence of dhall and gur from the rations will have a detrimental effect on their condition in due course.

"It is natural that everything possible should be done to keep our troops in good health, and the use of horse-flesh is one of the means which will considerably aid in this direction."

122. On January 7th, I spoke to the A.D.S. again re rations. "The only fresh vegetable being issued was beans. I recommended that British troops receive pickles and that all Indian troops and followers get ½ oz. lime-juice every second day.

123. On January 22nd, the rations consisted of:—

British.

Bread	12	oz.
Meat	8	,,
Butter or cheese	3	,,
Potato meal	2	,,
Pickles	1	,,
Jam	3	,,
Dates	2	,,
Tea	½	,,
Sugar	2	,,
Salt	½	,,
Ginger	½	,,
Fuel	2	lbs

Indian.

Atta	8	oz.
Rice	8	,,
Gur	¼	,,
Ghee	2	,,
Ginger	⅓	,,
Dhall	2	,,
Chillies	⅛	,,
Garlic	⅛	,,
Dates	3	,,
Potato meal	2	,,
Salt	¼	,,
Fuel	1	lb.

"February 5th, 1916. Yesterday afternoon in consultation with the A.Q.M.G. and A.D.S., arranged that the cereal food for troops should consist of—*British*. ⅓ wheaten flour, ⅓ atta and ⅓ barley at once, and Indians ½ atta, ½ barley."

124. Great difficulty was experienced over fuel for cooking rations. After all brushwood had been cut, and all available timber of houses used, we had to employ crude oil (there was a large stock of this), for which special stoves had to be constructed.

An issue of ½ lb. of barley meal was made to Indian troops and followers from February 6th. This was in addition to that in the rations.

125. On February 8th I noted in my diary: "A few days ago, 367 kerosine oil tins full of *ghi* were found walled up in one of the Native Officers wards of the Indian General Hospital—taken over by Supply Service. Another ward is full of barley—directed attention of A.D.S. to this."

From February 10th, British troops' bread was made from ½ wheaten flour and half atta. This continued for 24 days, after which the bread consisted of ½ wheaten flour, and half barley flour for another 24 days.

From February 14th, Indian troops and followers received ½ lb. atta and ½ lb. barley flour; from February 19th, they received 1 lb. of barley flour only.

126. "February 14th, 1916. At present about 28 days jam in stock for British troops at 2 oz. per diem. As we have worked out the staple articles on a 48 days' further siege, I recommended that jam be reduced to 1¼ oz. for a week, and then to 1 oz. They are getting no sugar."

"February 21st, 1916. Two ounces of oatmeal issued every second day to British troops."

"February 21st, 1916. The further decrease of the cereal ration for Indian troops is being considered. The position appears to be that the present issue amounts to 160 maunds a day, and we can only grind 120 maunds per diem; there is a stored capital of (I understand), some 20 days' supply of ground cereals. This latter is now being expended to make up the difference between 120 and 160 maunds. If this arrangement continues the A.Q.M.G says he can carry on up to the end of March on the present ration. He does not hope to be able to grind more than 120 maunds per diem by any further improvements in mechanisms.

127. "In the original message sent by the G.O.C. to Corps Headquarters he stated that we had grain to carry on to April 17th. Personally I am strongly of opinion that the cereal ration cannot further be reduced without material deterioration in the physical condition, health and resisting power to disease in our Indian garrison.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000027

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Their ration has already been reduced to 1 lb. a day (and that only half barley, half atta), they receive only ¼ ration of ghee (1 oz. instead of 2), they get no gur, dhall or vegetables. Potentially the ration at present is only a trifle more than a subsistence diet (a diet of complete rest), yet the men have to carry out their full duties in trenches, piquets, and in maintaining the defensive works. On the present ration they may just be able to hold their ground, although I believe they will tend to lose stamina. With a further reduction they will lose weight rapidly, and be practically on a starvation ration." On February 27th, 1916, there were only 750 out of over 9,500 Indians eating horse-flesh. Early in April there was a rapid rise, and on the 14th of that month 9,239 were consuming it.

128. On February 28th, I recommended that the horse-flesh ration of British troops be increased to 1¼ lbs., per diem as the men were then getting no vegetables, butter or bacon, and only ¾ oz. cheese and 1 oz. jam. This increase began on March 1st.

129. The following are the rations issued to the garrison from March 4th, 1916 :—

British.

Bread	¾ lb.
Horseflesh	1¼ ,,
Jam	1 oz.
Salt	½ ,,
Dates	1½ ,,
Ginger	⅓ ,,
Oatmeal	2 ,,

Indian.

Barley meal	¾ lb.
,, whole	6 oz
Ghee	1 ,,
Salt	¼ ,,
Dates	1½ ,,
Ginger	⅓ ,,
Tumeric	⅓ ,,
Chillies	⅛ ,,
Meat (to those who draw it) ...	8 ,,

The tea had run out on March 4th.

"March 5th, 1916. The amount and variety of 'extras' that the men can now buy in the bazar is somewhat limited—consists chiefly of chappatties, cakes fried in fat, and a small amount of dhall. There is still apparently an abundance of country tobacco."

130. On March 11th, the rations consisted of :—

British.

Bread	10 oz.
Meat	1¼ lbs.
Jam	1 oz.
Salt	½ ,,
Ginger	⅓ ,,
Oatmeal	2 ,,
Dates	1½ ,,

Indian.

Barley flour	10 oz.
,, unhusked	4 ,,
Ghee	1 ,,
Ginger	⅓ ,,
Tumeric	⅓ ,,
Meat (to those who draw it) ...	8 ,,
Dates	1½ ,,

"For British this is just beyond a subsistence diet; for Indians it is less than a subsistence diet, and they will run down on it, lose stamina and scurvy will increase."

From March 11th, a concentrated soup was made for all British troops, and issued in the evening—it was greatly relished and appreciated.

131. From March 14th, British troops had the following added to their rations twice a week; butter 1½ oz.; bacon 1½ oz.; cheese 1 oz. This was continued for 14 days.

All units used the green herbs obtainable on the plain as vegetables, from about the middle of March. The chief of these herbs were: wild mustard, a species of clover, mint, wild carrots, small kind of thistle, dandelion, and plantain. Medical Officers were unanimously of opinion that the use of this green stuff had a marked influence for good in staying the progress of the epidemic of scurvy.

132. As there were some poisonous plants growing with the herbs, samples of the edible and poisonous ones were collected and placed in all Headquarters Offices for comparison.

133. From about March 10th there was a very appreciable decrease in the quantity of food cooked and sold in the bazars, and on March 25th I entered in my diary: "No cakes or kababs are now being sold in bazars and the amount of food-stuffs purchasable is quite nominal."

"March 29th, 1916. Interviewed A.D.S. *re* food supplies: "*Salt* is rapidly going down. I understand that there is sufficient for British troops for a fortnight and for Indians for only about five days. Advised that some be got by aeroplane." The A.D.S. after scouring the town obtained 800 lbs. of salt. The ration issued was about $\frac{1}{10}$ oz. daily per man. Aeroplane at a later date, dropped 80 lbs.

"March 30th, 1916. Owing to errors in calculations as to quantity of barley available for issue, it is much to be regretted that the 3 oz. now issued for parching will have to be stopped. This puts Indians on a regular starvation diet. The deductions will commence from April 1st, 1916."

"April 2nd, 1916. One of the main defects in the British troops' diet at present is the practical absence of hydro-carbons—there is no fat on the horseflesh, and the great deficiency of carbohydrates; they get an 8-oz. loaf which contains roughly only 6 ozs. of mixed wheaten flour and barley.

"In the Indian troops and followers' rations all the proximate principles are deficient to a marked degree; their diet consists solely of 10 ozs. very inferior barley flour and 1 oz. *ghi*."

134. On April 8th "the question of still further lowering the ration of barley flour was mooted by the A.Q.M.G. I told him that the men were now on starvation rations, in the technical sense of the income being greatly below the kinetic output, that even the present rations continued for a fortnight more would lead to many deaths. I suggested that the food grain of the town Arabs should be lowered instead of that of the troops who in every sense as our defenders, have greatest claim on it." The *ghi* ration ceased from April 8th, 1916.

135. From April 10th, Indians received 7 ozs. of barley flour per diem. "This (7 ozs. barley) with the green stuff collected is all that non-horse-flesh eaters now receive; it is an absolute starvation ration and represents, at most, 600 calories potential energy; the normal ration for field service for Indians is roughly 3,000 calories. It is anticipated that the men at the end of a week on this will be attenuated and many emaciated, that sickness will increase and a certain number of men will succumb. This reduction, however, has only been undertaken as the result of dire military necessity and to ensure the garrison holding out until the relief arrives. The Arabs of the town have already been reduced in grain to less than a subsistence scale."

About the middle of February we wired for 7 lbs. of saccharin. About 5 lbs. were dropped by aeroplane on April 2nd. It was insufficient to make a general issue and was reserved for the hospitals, staffs, and officers of the garrison.

136. As some men were suffering acutely from the pangs of hunger, 2 lbs. of *opium* was got up by aeroplane and 14,000 one-grain pills given to medical officers of corps units for issue to selected cases. It undoubtedly ameliorated the intensity of these men's sensations.

British troops felt the want of *tobacco* greatly. One day they told me that they were prepared to forego part of their ration if they could get enough tobacco for a few smokes a day. On April 14th I found the men of the 2nd Dorsets smoking three different kinds of substitutes—dried used tea-leaves, powdered dry ginger, and dried and broken-up orange leaves. Many officers were doing the same.

April 10th, 1916. "Still further reduction in rations will take place from to-morrow. British, 5 ozs. flour, 1¼ lbs. horse-flesh; Indians, 5 ozs. (barley) flour and 12 ozs. horse-flesh."

On the night of April 24th/25th the steamer "Julnar" failed to get through to Kut. She, I was informed, had 250 tons of food on board, which it was stated would have been sufficient for subsistence diet for from 16 to 20 days.

Sanitation of Garrison During the Defence.

137. The sanitation of the areas occupied by our troops and followers was conducted on the principles detailed in my statements for the periods (*a*), (*b*), and (*c*), and, even under the conditions of the siege, gave rise to little trouble and was carried out satisfactorily.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000086

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

On December 3rd a sanitary officer was appointed to each brigade, and the orders regarding chlorination of water, incineration of night-soil and animal rubbish, etc., republished. Units that had lost their chlorinating apparatus were supplied with others from the Medical Depôt. There were practically no difficulties encountered in the trenches and fort, where the complete absence of flies indicated that the sanitary work was conducted *secundum artem*—pan system of removal of night soil associated with deep burial, and absorption pits for urine; the water-supply was obtained from the river to which communicating trenches were made and the water drawn by hand pumps.

138. The sanitary task of the billeted areas was less simple. Previous to the siege several public latrines were erected for Arabs on the outskirts of the town. These were kept clean by Arab sweepers who deserted when the siege began. The latrines were taken over by the corps units billeted in and near the town, and kept clean by an establishment of our own. The night soil of these was consumed in adjacent incinerators. Other latrines and incinerators were erected to meet requirements. In the wet weather the incinerators failed and deep burial had to be resorted to. In the later stage of the siege incineration was relinquished; there was not enough stable refuse (which was used as fuel) to keep it up. Urine pits were employed throughout for the garrison in Kut.

Water-Supply of the Billeted Troops.

Throughout the siege the water-supply question was an exceedingly difficult one both as regards the billeted troops and those in the neighbourhood of the town. For the first few days water was drawn directly from the river, but subsequently this was impossible on account of the activity of the enemy's snipers. Then trenches communicating with the river were made and pumps protected by maheillahs, etc., were fixed. Even under this arrangement casualities were frequent.

140. Later the water-supply was from three excavations lined with canvas tarpaulins, each of 27,000 gallons capacity and about 200 yards from the river. They were connected with raised surface uncovered channels which ran to the river and were filled by an oil-engine pump working on the bank. Direct access to the channels was prevented by a barbed wire fence. The water from the reservoirs was drawn by hand pumps. Of the three troughs two were used as settling reservoirs whence the water was siphoned into the third from which the supply was drawn. This arrangement ceased when the level of the river fell below that of the suction pipe of the pump and the banks fell in and blocked the sump; then hand pumps on the river bank had once more to be resorted to. A similar reservoir excavated for the civilian people reduced the casualties from snipers. These reservoirs were under cover.

141. A water-supply scheme for animals, horses, mules, and battery bullocks, was also established in connection with reservoirs at the East end of the town; this was a great boon and saved many animals.

Disposal of the Dead.

142. As soon as the siege began separate burial places were selected for British and Indian troops and followers; the British were interned in a small cemetery to the N.E. of the town; the Indians in the old cemetery adjacent to the brick kilns.

Disposal of Dead Animals.

143. The disposal of carcases of dead animals (horses, mules, cattle, etc.) was associated with numerous difficulties. During the early stage of the siege, when the mortality from snipers and gun fire was high, the carcases were partially incinerated, and then deep buried, or they were thrown into the river. In the mid-period of the siege they were completely incinerated, heavy oil being used to help in the process—deep burial was too big a task to continue. Using the river became dangerous as the men dragging the animals were sniped. Finally, the carcases were deposited in a deep ravine, partially incinerated and covered with two feet of earth. At the time of capitulation we had to destroy a number of horses; these were placed in deep pits, shot *in situ*, and covered with earth.

Sanitation of the Civil Town of Kut.

144. On December 4th, I appointed a health officer, organized and started the sanitary work of the civil town. This proved to be one of my heaviest duties throughout the siege.

The *sanitary personnel* consisted of the health officer, one British and one Indian N.C.O., and some privates from British and Indian infantry units, several Indian and Arab sweepers, six donkey boys and 12 donkeys for removal of dry refuse; Arab coolies were employed when required to assist in the work. The sanitary squad supervised the work of the Arab sweepers and the donkey boys, and, as far as was practicable, saw that the elementary sanitary rules promulgated were duly observed.

The supervision of the *conservancy* was heavy; the civil population used the thoroughfares as latrines, and sweepers threw the night-soil in unauthorized places instead of into the deep pits for the purpose; disciplinary measures had to be resorted to frequently. Sniping and bombardment necessitated the trenching grounds being on the confines of the town, and carrying on conservancy work mainly at night when supervision was limited.

145. Rough latrines were improvised in various parts of the town from which the ordure was regularly removed to the deep trenches outside the town. Owing to the overcrowding in some quarters the latrine accommodation was insufficient; a large number of houses had no privies at all. To meet these cases latrines were erected on the roofs and the excreta removed daily and buried. This arrangement was greatly interfered with during rainy days. Urine pits were excavated, but the Arabs continued to use the thoroughfares and their own compounds as urinals.

When the siege began large quantities of *dry refuse* which had been collected in heaps promiscuously in various parts of the town for years had to be removed. As the donkeys could not remove all this A.T. carts were used, the refuse being put into gunny bags. The streets and bazars were daily swept and the refuse deposited at the dumping ground to the East of the town.

Flies.

146. For the first two months of the siege the flies were in small numbers only. During March and April, however, they increased very considerably, and before the capitulation were in swarms everywhere. Climatic conditions and use of disinfectants were, to some extent, unfavourable to their breeding to the end of February, then the rising temperature, shortage of disinfectants and insanitary condition of the town generally fostered their multiplication.

147. The Health Officer and Military Governor were in perpetual conflict with the Arabs of the town who persisted in their insanitary practices which have been already alluded to. The custom of using the alluvial plain on the outskirts of the town as a latrine having been interfered with by the enemy's snipers and bombardments, the people defæcated in any available spot within the town, mainly at night. The streets continued to be used as urinals. Corporal punishment had little effect in stopping these habits. Our sanitary squads went round the whole town regularly and cleared up all visible filth. The ultimate effect was that when the hot weather began, about the time of the capitulation, the whole town was distinctly malodorous. Kut was, of course, densely overcrowded and housed considerably more people than it did before the siege began.

148. The civil population experienced much difficulty regarding its water-supply. After the first few days of the siege all the approaches to the river were dangerous as they were covered by the enemy's snipers. This necessitated the inhabitants drawing water after dark. After December 20th, 1915, the enemy sniped everyone coming to the bank. On December 28th, one girl was shot dead, two women sustained gunshot fractures of the legs, one man was hit in the head and another in the chest. Covered trenches communicating with the river were made on the Western side of the town. We assisted them as mentioned in the last section.

149. Although the covered bazar was allocated to the General and other hospitals, some shops were opened in various parts of the town and the people started food stalls in several of the main streets. The chief of these was in No. 1 Avenue which was for the first three months thronged with vendors and purchasers. There was a much smaller bazar in No. 3 Avenue. These were the two bazars used by our troops and followers.

Separate shops for the sale of staple articles of food—atta, barley flour, lentils, dried beans, dates and meat, were opened for the sale of these articles to the civil population only; these were under the Military Governor.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00005c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

INDEX TO COMMISSION'S REPORT.

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

A.

Abadan Island :
Oil refining works ... ... I, 19
Abu Rummanah ... ... IV, 11
Admiralty ... ... II, 2
Ahwaz :
Fighting at ... ... III, 3 ; IV, 5
Aircraft :
Deficiency in ... ... VIII, 9-10
Nixon to report on ... ... IV, 2
Pre-war conditions ... ... I, 23
Allegations against officers ... ... I, 4
Amara :
Access to ... ... I, 15
Advance to IV
Medical Arrangements in ... ... X, 21
Reasons for ... ... IV, 4, 6, 7 ; XII, 6
Sanctioned ... ... IV, 6
Transport not considered in sanctioning ... ... IX, 25
Hospital ... ... X, 74
Occupation of ... ... IV, 5, 6, 8
Ambulance :
(*See* **Hospital Transport** (Land) ; **Field Ambulances.**)
Ammunition ... ... VII, 10 ; VIII, 5
Anglo-Persian Oil Company ... I, 19 ; II, 2
Arabs :
Effect on, as objective ... ... II, 1, 4, 8
Armament VIII
(*See also* **Artillery, Equipment.**)
Army in India Committee ... ... XI, 35
Army, Indian
(*See* **Indian Army.**)
Army Transport Carts, use for wounded
(*See* **Hospital Transport,** (Land).)
Artillery :
Delay in applying for ... ... VIII, 3
Delayed by lack of transport ... VII, 2
Manufacture in India ... ... VIII, 3
Sent to Europe ... ... VIII, 3
Shortage ... I, 23 ; VII, 3, 28 ; VIII, 3, 4, 5
Asia :
Delimitation for Intelligence purposes ... XI, 3
Aylmer, Lieut.-Gen. Sir Fenton J.
Command of Kut Relief Force ... ... VII, 1
Omission to ascertain Kut supplies ... VII, 5
Protest against advance to Baghdad XI, 56
Aziziyeh :
Advance to ... ... V, 7
Concentration at, protracted from lack of transport ... ... VI, 6
Retirement to ... ... VI, 5

B.

Babtie, Surgeon-General Sir William :
Medical Administration of ... ... X, 39–51
Report on Colaba Hospital, Bombay X, 53–55
Responsibility
Experience and, of ... ... X, 39, 45
For medical breakdown X, 39–51, 124 ; XII, 18
Baghdad :
Access to ... ... I, 16, 17
Advance to
As possible objective IV, 1 ; V, 1, 2, 3, 6 ; X, 81 ; XI, 7
Cause and effect of ... ... XII, 7
Character of ... ... V, 32 ; XI, 47
Correspondence as to V, 5–8, 12, 14, 17, 18
Delay, effect of, on ... ... V, 15 ; VI, 6
Inter-Departmental Committee on ... V, 11, 21–23, V, 4, 19
Memoranda on... ... ... V, 4, 19
Nixon's plan as to IV, 2 ; V, 4–6, XI, 47
Optimism as to ... ... V, 25, 27 ; VI, 3
Political motives for ... V, 13, 15, 18, 26
Responsibility for ... ... XII, 8, 9
Sanctioned by Secretary of State ... V, 20
Staffs not consulted as to ... ... XI, 54, 56
Stopping, Possibility of ... ... V, 10, 25
Townshend's protest against ... V, 28–31
Transport shortage and its effect on ... IX, 5, 18
Transport shortage ignored in sanctioning ... V, 22–24 ; IX, 25
Intelligence as to ... ... IX, 24
Bahrein :
Landing at ... ... II, 4, 6
Barges.
(*See* **Transport** (River). **Hospital Transport** (River).)
Barjisiyah ... ... III, 4
Barrett, Lieut. Gen. Sir A. :
Instructions ... ... II, 9
Occupation of Basra ... ... II, 6
Transport, Railway suggested ... IX, 52
Transport, River
Delay in ordering ... ... IX, 7
Estimate ... ... IX, 25
Barrow, General Sir Edmund :
Memoranda by ... ... II, 1 ; III, 1 ; V, 19
Responsibility for
Advance to Baghdad ... ... XII, 8
Medical telegrams ... ... X, 78
Neglect to consider transport IX, 19
Base Supply Officer, Basra :
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ... XI, 51
Basra :
Access to ... ... I, 13
Buchanan, Sir G., at ... ... IX, 45, 46
Congestion at ... ... IX, 42, 44
Description of ... ... I, 13
Hospital ... ... X, 21
Intelligence as to ... ... XI, 3
Objective of expedition ... ... II, 9
Occupation of ... ... II, 6
Port Facilities
Need of I, 21, 22 ; IX, 41–47, 62 ; XI, 9, 45, 46 ; XII, 13
Provision of ... ... V, 32 ; XI, 46
Statistics as to ... ... IX, 43, 46, 47
Time taken for discharge of supply vessels ... ... IX, 46, 47
War Office, result of control on IX, 46

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Basra Vilayet :
Limitation of operations to IV, 2, 4 ; IX, 13
Biles, Sir John ... ... IX, 32, 33, 39
Bingley, Major General A. H.... ... ... I, 10
Bisaitin ... ... IV, 5
Bombay :
HOSPITALS
Colaba ... ... X, 53–55
Reform in arrangements X, 130 (*d*) ; XII, 35 (*d*)
Not visited by Commander-in-Chief X, 130 (*b*) ; XI, 16 ; XII 35 (*b*)
Suitability as headquarters ... ... XII, 4
Brunyate, Mr. J. B. :
Account of Indian Military Procedure XI, 12
Buchanan, Sir George :
Report on Basra ... ... IX, 46
Visits to Basra ... ... IX, 45–46

C.

Cabinet :
Baghdad advance
Committee appointed to consider ... V, 11
Political motives for ... ... V, 13, 15, 26
Objective April, 1915 ... ... V, 8
Cabinet War Committee :
Responsibility for advance to Baghdad XII, 8, 9
Carter, Major R. Markham, I.M.S. :
CTESIPHON, WOUNDED FROM
Account of ... ... X, 60
Report to India on ... ... X, 66, 89
Report to Nixon on ... ... X, 63
Resentment caused by report on ... X, 76
TRIBUTE TO ... ... X, 119
Casualties :
Amara ... ... IV, 8
Basra... ... ... II, 6
Ctesiphon ... ... VI, 3, 5 ; X, 23
Hannah ... ... VII, 10
Kut Relief Force ... ... VII, 27
Nasariyeh ... ... IV, 9
Sheikh Saad ... ... VII, 10
Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. Austen :
Endorsed policy of Lord Crewe ... IV, 7 ; V, 9
Succeeded Lord Crewe as Secretary of State IV, 7 ; V, 9
(*See also* **Secretary of State.**)
Chaplains ... ... VIII 19
Charles, Sir Havelock :
Appointment as Medical Adviser to Secretary of State ... ... X, 78
Chief of General Staff, India :
Communications with Nixon as to river transport ... ... IX, 29
Cholera ... ... X, 106
Climate of Mesopotamia ... ... I, 18
Clothing for Troops :
Proposed supply from charitable sources VIII, 8
Unsuitable supplied ... ... VIII, 8
Colaba Hospital, Bombay :
Official reticence as to defects ... X, 53–55
Commander-in-Chief :
BAGHDAD, ADVANCE TO
Attitude to ... ... V, 2, 5, 12, 17
Responsibility for ... ... XII, 8
Staff not consulted on ... XI, 56
CLOTHING FOR TROOPS
Proposal to supply from charitable sources ... ... VIII, 8
DUALITY OF FUNCTION
Delegation of authority recommended X, 130(*b*) ; XII, 30, 35(*b*)
Effect of ... XI, 10–12, 14 ; XII, 29
Commander-in-Chief (*continued*) :
HOSPITAL TRANSPORT, RIVER
Attitude to ... ... IX, 49
MEDICAL BREAKDOWN
Attitude to ... ... X, 68, 89–96
Responsibility for, X, 81, 99, 126 ; XII, 19
MESOPOTAMIA, EXPEDITION
Attitude to ... ... XII, 27
Responsibility for ... ... XI, 32
REINFORCEMENTS
Sent under compulsion ... III, 3 ; XI, 6
SIMLA
Unsuitability as headquarters of XI, 15–17
TOWNSHEND'S PROTEST
Knowledge of ... ... V, 29
TRANSPORT, RAILWAY
Attitude to ... ... IX, 56
TRANSPORT, RIVER
Attitude to shortage ... V, 12, 24 ; XI, 43
Reference to shortage suppressed by Viceroy ... ... V, 12
Responsibility for shortage ... IX, 19
VINCENT-BINGLEY COMMISSION
Appointed by ... ... X, 69
Limitation of terms of reference ... X, 98
Memorandum on ... ... I, 11
(*See* APPENDIX II.)
VISITS TO BOMBAY AND MESOPOTAMIA
Need for ... X, 130 (*b*) ; XI, 16 ; ... ... XII, 5, 35 (*b*)
Communications between Secretary of State and Viceroy ... ... XI, 18–26
CLASSIFICATION OF ... ... XI, 20
PRIVATE ... ... XI, 23–26
Effect on Councils of ... ... XI, 26
Effect on medical arrangements of XI, 29–30
Need of statutory action as to ... XI, 31
TELEGRAMS, PRIVATE I, 29 ; V, 25 ; XI, 18–33 ; XII, 28
Conclusions :
Summary of ... ... XII, 1–27
Control :
Mesopotamia Expedition ... VII, 31 ; XII, 2, 4
Overseas expeditions from India ... I, 28
Co-ordination :
Effect of lack of VIII, 17 ; XI, 50–56 ; XII, ... 2, 12, 31
Council, India:
(*See* **Secretary of State. Council.**)
Council, Indian Executive.
(*See* **Viceroy. Council.**)
Cowper, Major-General M. :
Reprimand to ... ... X, 76 ; XI, 43
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ... XI, 52
Cox, Sir Percy :
Political Officer to Expedition II, 8, 9 ; III, 1 ; IV, 2
Suggestion of Advance to Baghdad V, 1, 2 ; ... ... XI, 7
Opposed expulsion of Arabs from Kut ... VII, 7
Creagh, General Sir O'Moore :
Appointment and régime ... ... I, 23
Protests against economy ... ...XI, 36
Crewe, The Most Honourable the Marquess of
Succeeded as Secretary of State by Mr. Chamberlain ... ... IV, 7 ; V, 9
(*See also* **Secretary of State.**)
Ctesiphon :
ACCOUNT OF ... ... VI, 4, 5
ADVANCE TO VI
CASUALTIES ... ... VI, 5
Under-estimation of ... VI, 3 ; X, 23
EVACUATION OF WOUNDED VI, 3, 7 ; X, 58-61

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000a0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Ctesiphon (*continued*) :
Forces at ... ... VIII, 13
Medical Arrangements at ... X, 23-26, 58
Official reticence as to X, 25, 57-68
Reports on condition of wounded from X, 66, 89, 90

D.

Dallas, Colonel :
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ...XI, 51
Davison, Major-General K. S.
Responsibility for port administration IX, 43, 44
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ... XI, 51
Delamain, Major-General W. S. :
Command of expedition ... ... II, 6
Instructions to ... ... II, 8
Delhi ... ... XI, 13
Despatches :
of Sir P. Lake ... ... I, 12
Director of Medical Services, India :
Changes in occupancy of office ... X, 116
Greater powers recommended X, 130(*a*) ; XII, 35
Director of the Royal Indian Marine :
Need of improved status ... IX, 69 ; XII, 33
(*See also* **Lumsden, Royal Indian Marine.**)
Disinfection ... ... X, 18
Drafts ... ... VIII, 11-14
For British troops ... ... V, 14 ; VIII, 13
For Indian troops ... ... I, 28 ; VIII, 14
Dressings ... ... X, 14
Drugs ... ... X, 14
Duff, General Sir Beauchamp :
(*See* **Commander-in-Chief.**)
Dujailah Redoubt :
Attack on ... ... VII, 11-22

E.

East Africa :
Expeditions to ... ... I, 27
(*See also* **Expeditions Overseas.**)
Economy : Policy of, in India I, 23 ; XI, 34-43
Effect on
Army ... ... VIII, 2 ; XI, 34-43 ; XII,32
Equipment ... VIII, 2 ; XI, 36 ; XII, 10
Medical Arrangements X, 126 (*a*); XII, 19 (*a*)
Officers X, 52 ; XI, 37-39, 42 ; XII, 31
Port Facilities ... ... IX, 40, 44 ; XI, 9
Transport, Railway ... IX, 54-58 ; XI, 9
Responsibility for VIII, 2 ; X, 126 ; XII, 10
Egypt :
Expedition to ... ... I, 27
Safety of, as objective ... ... II, 1
(*See also* **Expeditions Overseas.**)
Embarkation :
Duties of officers ... X, 130 (*c*) ; XII, 35 (*c*)
Officers recommended X, 130 (*b*) ; XII, 35 (*b*)
England :
Neglect to apply for help to ... X, 109
Offers of help from ... ... X, 110
Transport (river) ordered in IX, 8, 9, 31-39
Enver Pasha ... ... II, 3
Equipment VIII
Effect of economy on VIII, 2 ; XI, 36 ; XII, 10
Effect of War Office control on ... XII, 11
Expeditions overseas ... ... I, 28
Frontier warfare, suitability for I, 23-26 ; II, 7 ; VIII, 1 ; XI, 36, 39 ; XII, 10, 32
Inadequate I, 23, 24 ; VII, 3, 28 ; VIII, 1, 2, 5-10 ; XI, 1, 36 ; XII, 5

Equipment (*continued*) :
Need of, suited to climate ... ... I, 21
Sources of ... ... I, 26
Es Sinn :
Account of battle ... ... VII, 11-22
Medical arrangements ... ... X, 30
Euphrates :
Navigation difficulties ... ... I, 16
Evacuation of wounded.
(*See* **Wounded.**)
Evidence :
Principal sources of ... ... I, 3, 8
Publication of ... ... I, 9
Expeditions Overseas from India I, 27-30
Transport of I, 28 ; IX, 27 ; X, 130 ; XII, 35
(*See also* **Indian Army.** Military Objectives.)
Expedition to Mesopotamia.
(*See* **Mesopotamia Expedition.**)

F.

Fans, Electric ... ... X, 15
Field Ambulances :
Pre-war standard ... ... I, 24
Shortage of X, 3, 27, 35, 46, 114, 122 ; XII, 16
Use as general hospitals ... ... X, 35, 113
Field Service Regulations as to :
Reinforcements ... ... VIII, 12-14
Transport, River ... ... IX, 20-23
Finance :
Attitude of Indian Government to XI, 40-42 ; XII, 32
Expenditure on expeditions overseas ... I, 28
(*See also* **Economy.**)
Findings :
General ... ... XII, 1-27
Medical ... ... X, 120-129 ; XII, 14-22
Transport ... ... IX, 62 ; XII, 13
Floods :
Kut relief force delayed by ... VII, 25, 27
Tigris subject to ... ... I, 18 ; IX, 15
Turkish forces delayed by ... ... IV, 5
Food.
(*See* **Rations.**)
Forces, Size of ... ... XII, 12
October, 1914 ... ... II, 4
November, 1914 ... ... II, 6-7
March, 1915 ... ... III, 3
April, 1915 ... ... III, 4 ; IV, 5
October, 1915 ... ... V, 29
November, 1915 ... ... VI, 1, 2 ; VIII, 13
January, 1916 ... ... VI, 1
(*See also* **Reinforcements.**)
France :
Divisions from (*See* **Reinforcements.**)
Expedition to ... ... I, 27
(*See also* **Expeditions overseas.**)
Fuel ... ... I, 16

G.

Gorringe, Major-General Sir George F. :
Karun fighting ... ... IV, 5
Nasariyeh captured by ... ... IV, 9
Government of India Act.
(*See* **India.**)
Governor General of India.
(*See* **Viceroy.**)

H.

Haig, Sir Douglas :
Memorandum on military objectives XI, 36

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000b1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Hamilton, Commander Anthony, R.I.M.
Demands for river transport ... IX, 7
Secretiveness of staff to ... ... XI, 51
Survey of Tigris ... ... IX, 7, 24
Hammar Lake :
Navigation ... ... I, 16
Hannah, Battle of ... ... VII, 10
Medical arrangements at ... ... X, 27, 28
Hardinge of Penshurst, Lord.
(*See* **Viceroy.**)
Hathaway, Surgeon-General H. G. :
Misleading reports by ... X, 56–65, 71–74
Resentment of suggestions for reform ... X, 76
Responsibility for :
Hospital river transport ... IX, 48–49
Medical Breakdown ... X, 123 ; XII, 17
Reticence, Undue ... ... X, 73, 74
Sanitary work of ... ... X, 106
Secretiveness of staff to ... ... XI, 53
Hehir, Colonel P. :
Medical Administration of ... X, 32–38
Medical Arrangements
Ctesiphon ... ... X, 26
Kut Siege ... ... X, 31
(*See also* APPENDIX III.)
Suggestions for reform resented ... ... X, 76
Help :
Neglect to apply to England for ... X, 109
Offers of, from England ... ... X, 110
Holderness, Sir Thomas :
Chairman of Inter-Departmental Committee V, 21–23
Interpretation of Nixon's telegram on transport ... ... V, 22
Home Government :
Attitude to economy ... ... XI, 36
Co-ordination with Indian Govt., Lack of VIII, 17 ; XII, 12
Objective not realised by ... ... II, 5
Responsibility for advance to Baghdad XII, 8, 9
Hospitals in India (MILITARY) :
BOMBAY :
Colaba Hospital ... ... X 53–55
Reform in arrangements X, 130 (*d*) ; XII, 35 (*d*)
Reticence as to defects ... ... X, 53–55
Revision of mobilisation equipment recommended ... X, 130 (*f*) ; XII, 35 (*f*)
Standard, pre-war ... ... I, 24
FOR BRITISH TROOPS :
Improvement recommended X, 130 ; XII, 35
FOR INDIAN TROOPS
Station hospital system recommended X, 130 ; XII, 35
Training of menial reserves recommended ... ... X, 130 ; XII, 35
Hospitals in Mesopotamia :
Accommodation, required ... ... I, 21
Amara ... ... X, 74
Basra, May, 1915 ... ... X, 21
Orah ... ... X, 74
Sheikh Saad ... ... X, 71, 72
Shortage ... ... X, 11, 34–35, 47, 111–113
Hospital Transport (LAND) :
ARMY TRANSPORT CARTS, use of ... X, 37, 38, 50
MOTOR AMBULANCES ... ... X, 13
Used by Turks... ... ... X, 13
MULES, Riding ... ... X, 12, 37
RESPONSIBILITY for providing ... ... X, 50
SHORTAGE ... ... X, 12, 13, 38
Suffering caused by ... X, 122 ; XII, 16
STRETCHERS ... ... X, 37
TONGAS ... ... X, 12, 50
Hospital Transport (RIVER) :
BARGE "BENGALI" ... IX, 48 ; X, 7, 49
Hospital Transport (RIVER)—*continued :*
CONDITION OF WOUNDED on steamers VI, 7 ; X, 23, 28, 57–61, 89, 90
DEMANDS FOR IX, 48, 49, 62 ; X, 21, 36 ; XII, 13
LACK OF ... ... X, 6–8, 36
Effect of ... IX, 49 ; X, 79, 112, 122
Responsibility for ... IX, 49 ; X, 49
SUBSTITUTES ... ... X, 7, 8, 36
Barges used for ... IX, 48 ; X, 18
Mahailas used for ... ... IX, 48
SUPPLY OF ... ... IX, 48–50
Alteration of specifications for IX, 50
Howitzers ... ... VIII, 4

I.

Ice ... ... X, 16, 17
India :
Assistance to Empire ... ... I, 27–30
Government and administration of XI, 18–22
Government of India Act ... XI, 20–24
(*See also* **Indian Government.**)
Internal Troubles ... ... XI, 5, 40 ; XII 23
Resources ... ... I, 26 ; VIII, 3
Mobilisation of... ... ... XI, 28, 33, 41
Transport, River
Provision of ... IX, 7, 10, 14, 17, 24–30
Voluntary contributions to expedition IX, 48 ; X, 7, 49, 50, 110
India Council :
(*See* **Secretary of State. Council.**)
India Office :
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF STORES
Responsibility for transport ... ... IX, 39
MEDICAL ADVISER ... ... X, 78
MILITARY DEPARTMENT
Powers ... ... XI, 4
Responsibility as to transport ... IX, 19
MILITARY SECRETARY
(*See* **Barrow, General Sir E.**)
NIXON'S INSTRUCTIONS, Knowledge of IV, 3–4
POLICY OF ECONOMY ... ... XI, 35
TRANSPORT, RIVER
Knowledge of shortage ... IX, 19
Lynch Brothers not consulted IX, 31–32, 36, 37
Re-erection arrangements ... ... IX, 39
Supply of ... IX, 9, 33–39, 62 ; XII, 13
India Office and Indian Government :
Division of responsibility unworkable ... XII, 2
Discrepancies in attitude to campaign ... XI, 8
Indian Army :
CONDITION OF, at outbreak of war I, 23–26
DELHI as capital, effect on ... ... XI, 13
ECONOMY, effect on I, 23 ; VIII, 2 ; XI, 34–43 ; XII, 32
EQUIPMENT. (*See* **Equipment.**)
MILITARY OBJECTIVES VIII, 2 ; X, 77, 79, 81 ; XI, 36 ; XII, 10
OFFICERS
Allegations against ... ... I, 4
Economy, effect on ...X, 52 ; XI, 37-39, 42
Promotion ... ... XII, 31
Reticence ... ... X, 52, 76
Supply of ... ... I, 26
Taken by War Office ... ... I, 26
RESERVE SYSTEM ... ... VIII, 14 ; XII, 32
UNPOPULARITY ... ... XII, 31
(*See also* **Indian Military Administration.**)
Indian Executive Council.
(*See* **Viceroy. Council.**)
Indian Government :
Attitude to campaign III, 4 ; XI, 6, 40 ; XII, 5
Criticism of ... ... XII, 26, 27
Delay in applying for artillery ... VIII, 3

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00008f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Indian Government (*continued*).
Economy. (*See* **Economy.**)
Equipment. (*See* **Equipment.**)
Finance Department. (*See* **Finance.**)
Intelligence. (*See* **Intelligence.**)
Medical Personnel. (*See* **Medical Personnel.**)
Procedure. (*See* **Indian Military Administration.**)
Reinforcements. (*See* **Reinforcements.**)
Transport, Railway
Attitude to ... ... IV, 12 ; IX, 51–61
Responsibility for ... ... IX, 61
Transport, River
Failure to supply available IX, 28–30
Intelligence of available ... IX, 24–26
Responsibility for shortage ... ... IX, 23
Indian Military Administration :
Dualism ... ... XI, 10, 11, 12
Organisation ... ... XI, 10–17 ; XII, 27
Over-centralisation XI, 11, 13, 14 ; XII, 29
Indian Military Authorities :
Attitude to transport IX, 62 (*a*) ; XII, 13(*a*)
Responsibility for transport IX, 62 (*d*) ; XII, 13 (*d*)
Indian Soldiers' Fund ... ... X, 110
Inspector-General of Communications :
Hospital steamer refused by ... ... IX, 48
Responsibility for port administration IX, 42–44
Secretiveness of staff to ... ... XI, 51
Instructions to :
Barrett, Sir A. ... ... II, 9
Delamain, Major-General ... ... II, 8
Nixon, Sir J. IV, 2, 3, 4, 6 ; V, 4 ; IX, 13 ; XI, 6, 8, 44–50
Intelligence :
Delimitation of areas ... ... XI, 2, 3
Difficulty of obtaining ... ... XI, 48
Handbook on ... ... IX, 24
Inadequacy of ... ... XI, 3, 5
Indian Government ... ... IX, 24
Nixon's attitude to ... ...XI, 48
Inter-Departmental Committee :
Appointment of ... ... V, 11
Composition and procedure of ... V, 21–23

J.

James, Colonel :
Statistical evidence of, as to Sickness X, 107–108
Jehad :
Attempts to raise ... ... II, 3

K.

Karun River :
Navigation ... ... I, 19, 20
Operations on ... ... III, 3 ; IV, 5, 15
Kemball, Major-General G. V. :
Memorandum on river transport IV, 13 ; IX, 8, 17, 19
Operations against Dujailah Redoubt VII, 11–22
Visits to Townshend ... ... V, 29
Keogh, Sir Alfred :
Criticism of medical arrangements in India X, 130 ; XII, 35
Kurna :
Access to ... ... I, 14
Advance to III
Sanction of ... ... III, 2 ; XII, 6
Capture of ... ... III, 2
Occupation of ... ... III, 1
Kut :
Access to ... ... I, 16
Advance to IV
Correspondence as to ... IV, 10 ; V, 6
Sanction of ... ... IV, 10 ; XII, 6
Transport, shortage in ... IX, 18. 25
Advantages of possession of ... ... IV, 16
Capitulation ... ... VII, 6, 28
Capture ... ... IV, 11 ; V, 7
Medical Arrangements at IV, 15 ; X, 22, 56
Transport, effect of shortage... ... V, 31
Investment of ... ...VI, 8 ; VII, 6
Relief Operations VII
Casualties ... ... VII, 27
Causes of failure ... ... VII, 28
Causes of premature start ... VII, 4, 5
Difficulties and deficiencies VI, 3 ; VII, 25-27
Medical Arrangements ... X, 27–31
Transport, effect of shortage IX, 3, 5, 62 ; XII, 13
(*See also* **Tigris Corps.**)
Retirement to ... ... VI, 5
Siege :
Account of ... ... VII, 6, 7, 28
Caste difficulties ... ... VII, 28
Medical Arrangements ... ... X, 31
Moral ... ... VII, 28
Retention of Arab population VII, 7
Supplies in ... ... VII, 4, 5, ; X, 122
(*See also* Appendix III.)

L.

Lake, Lieutenant-General Sir P. :
Command taken by ... ... VII, 1
Despatches of ... ... I, 12
Knowledge of condition of wounded after Ctesiphon ... ... X, 67, 90
Nixon's plan of advance endorsed by ... V, 5
Policy after fall of Kut ... ... VII, 30
Transport, attitude to railway ... IX, 56, 59
Lukis, Sir Pardey ... ... X, 100–104
Lumsden, Captain W. :
Knowledge of :
Scope of expedition ... ... IX, 27
Transport available ... ... IX, 30
Transport shortage ... ... IX, 27
Supply of :
Hospital river transport ... ... IX, 50
River transport IX, 28, 30, 62 ; XII, 13
(*See also* **Director of the Royal Indian Marine.**)
Lynch Brothers :
Failure to consult ... ... IX, 32, 36, 37
Knowledge of Tigris river craft ... ... IX, 31
Steamer service ... ... I, 20

M.

Machine Guns ... ... VIII, 5
MacNeece, Surgeon-General J. G. :
Letter to Sir P. Lake on condition of wounded after Ctesiphon ... X, 67, 90
Responsibility for medical breakdown X, 125 ; XII, 18
Visit to Mesopotamia ... ... X, 69, 97, 98
Magill :
Port facilities ... ... IX, 42
Mahailas :
(*See* **Transport** (River).)

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000a1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Maude, Sir Stanley :
Operations at Sanaiyat ... ... VII, 23, 24
Policy after fall of Kut ... ... VII, 30
Medical Administration of :
Babtie, Surgeon-General ... ... X, 39–51
Hehir, Colonel ... ... X, 32–38
Medical Adviser TO SECRETARY OF STATE ... X, 78
Medical Arrangements :
To April, 1915 ... ... X, 33
May, 1915 ... ... X, 21
Summer, 1915 ... ... X, 32
To November, 1915 ... ... X, 80
January, 1916 ... ... X, 27–29
March, 1916, onward ... X, 30, 31, 100–104, 115, 120
Amara ... ... X, 21, 74
Commander-in-Chief :
Attitude to reports of deficiencies X, 89–96
Conclusions, findings and recommendations ... X, 100–130 ; XII, 14–22, 34–36
Ctesiphon ... ... X, 23–26, 58
Economy, effect on... ... ... X, 126
Insufficiency of ... ... X, 77, 79–81, 120
Effect of ... ... X, 115, 121, 122
Karun River operations ... ... IV, 15
Kut, first battle of ... ... IV, 15 ; X, 22, 56
Kut relief operations ... ... X, 27–31
Kut siege ... ... X, 31
(*See also* APPENDIX III.)
Nasariyeh ... ... IV, 15 ; X. 21
Recommendations as to ... X, 130 ; XII, 35
Responsibility as to
Economy ... ... X, 126
Redistribution recommended X, 117, 118
Telegrams as to ... ... X, 78
Reticence, Misuse of official ... X, 127
Sahil, Battle of ... ... X, 34
Sheikh Saad camp ... ... X, 71, 72
Secretary of State, Enquiries as to ... X, 68, 83–86 ; XI, 29, 30
(*See also* **Wounded,** EVACUATION OF)

Medical Arrangements in India :
Criticism by Sir A. Keogh X, 130 ; XII, 35
Medical Breakdown ... ... X, 21, 111–115, 120
Responsibility for ... ... X, 77–99 123–126
Medical Equipment :
INSUFFICIENCY OF ... I, 21 ; II, 7 ; III, 4 ; IV, 15 ; X, 9, 10, 14–17, 79, 111 ; XI, 1
Responsibility for ... ... X, 39
Misleading report as to ... ... X, 70
Medical Establishment :
At outbreak of war ... ... I, 24
Original for Force " D " ... ... X, 10
Medical Personnel :
Delay in asking England for ... X, 48, 78, 109
Praise of executive ... ... X, 105, 129
Recommendations as to, for hospitals in India ... X, 130 (d), (e) ; XII, 35 (d), (e)
Retained in India ... ... X, 48, 81
SHORTAGE ... I, 24 ; IV, 15 ; X, 2, 9, 10, 46, 77, 82, 109 ; XI, 1
Effect of ... ... X, 122
Misleading report on ... ... X, 70, 82
Responsibility for ... ... X, 10, 48
Secretary of State's knowledge of ... X, 78
Transport as affecting ... X, 111
Medical Stores :
Base Depôts recommended X, 130 ; XII, 35
Reserves ... ... I, 24
Shortage ... ... X, 14
Supply arrangements ... ... X, 14–17

" Medjidieh " :
Alteration of type ... ... IX, 31–35
Condition of wounded on, after Ctesiphon X, 60, 61
Melliss, Major-General Sir C. J. ... ... III, 4
Mesopotamia :
Commander-in-Chief, Omission to visit XII, 5
Intelligence as to ... ... IX, 24 ; XI, 3, 5
MacNeece, Visit to ... ...X, 69, 97, 98
Physical and Climatic peculiarities I, 13–22
Resultant diseases ... ... X, 106
Mesopotamia Expedition :
Control assumed by War Office ... VII, 31
Equipment. (*See* **Equipment.**)
Forces, Size of. (*See* **Forces.**)
Justification of ... ... XII, 1
Objectives. (*See* **Objectives.**)
Origin. (*See* **Origin.**)
Policy controlled by War Office ... VII, 31
Responsibility for
Division of ... ... X, 77 ; XI, 1–9
Of Viceroy's Council ... XI, 27, 28, 32
Results of ... ... XII, 24
Meyer, Sir William ... ... IX, 55 ; XI, 41
Military Department, India Office :
(*See* **India Office.**)
Military Member :
(*See* **Viceroy. Council.**)
Mobilisation of Resources :
(*See* **India.**)
Moral ... ... XI, 1 ; XII, 25
Kut Relief Force ... ... VII, 8, 29
Townshend's Force IV, 16 ; V, 29, 30 ; VI, 6, 7
Kut siege ... ... VII, 28

N.

Nasariyeh :
Access to ... ... I, 16
Capture of ... ... IV, 9
Medical arrangements at IV, 15 ; X, 21
Railway to, proposals for building IX, 52–61
Navigation :
Euphrates ... ... I, 16
Hammar Lake ... ... I, 16
Intelligence as to ... ... IX, 24
Karun River ... ... I, 19, 20
Shatt-el-Arab ... ... I, 13–14
Tigris... ... I, 14–18 ; IX, 15, 16, 33, 34
Nicholson Committee :
(*See* **Army in India Committee.**)
Nixon :
APPOINTMENT OF ... III, 4 ; IV, 1 ; XI, 6, 44–50
Change of tactics on ... XI, 1–4, 44–47
BAGHDAD, ADVANCE TO
Responsibility for ... ... XII, 8
Staff not consulted before ... XI, 54, 56
(*See also* **Baghdad.**)
INSTRUCTIONS TO ... IV, 2 ; V, 4 ; IX, 13 ; XI, 6, 8, 44–50
Knowledge of Viceroy and India Office of ... ... IV, 3
INTELLIGENCE as to Turkish forces V, 25 ; XI, 48
INVALIDED HOME ... ... VII, 1
MEDICAL BREAKDOWN
Knowledge of ... ... X, 63
Responsibility for ... IX, 49 ; X, 123
OPTIMISM ... IV, 11 ; V, 25 ; VI, 3 ; XI, 49
REINFORCEMENTS, Views as to ... ... V, 13
SUPPLIES IN KUT
Omission to ascertain ... VII, 5

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000ab

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Nixon (*continued*) :
TRANSPORT. PORT FACILITIES
Provision of ... ... IX, 40 ; XI, 46
TRANSPORT, RAILWAY
Demand for ... ... IX, 53–58 ; XI, 41
TRANSPORT, RIVER
Demands for ... IV, 12 ; V, 24 ; IX, 8–10, 26, 29
Miscalculations as to ... IX, 26 ; XI, 48, 49
Responsibility as to ... IX, 11–23, 28, 49, 62 ; XII, 13
Telegram on navigation difficulties ... V, 12
Interpretations of ... V, 22, 24
Northbrook, Lord :
Offer of medical personnel ... ... X, 82
Nursing Service in hospitals in India :
Improvement needed ... X, 130 ; XII, 35

O.

Objectives of Expedition :
26th September, 1914... ... ... II, 1
5th October, 1914 ... ... II, 4
March, 1915 ... ... IX, 13
April, 1915 ... ... IV, 4–6
After fall of Kut ... ... VII, 30
Baghdad. (*See* **Baghdad.**)
Barrett, Sir A., Instructions to ... ... II, 9
Basra... ... ... II, 9
Delamain, Major-General, Instructions to II, 8
Lack of defined ... II, 5 ; III, 1 ; XI, 7 ; XII, 3
Effect of, on medical arrangements ... X, 81
Nixon, Sir John, instructions to (*See* **Nixon.**)
Offensive, Change to ... IV, 1 ; XI, 44–47
Changes necessitated by ... XI, 45, 46
Political considerations, Effect of... ... V, 26
O'Donnell, Surgeon-General ... X, 100
Officers :
(*See* **Indian Army,** OFFICERS, *and* **Medical Personnel.**)
Oil Installation ... ... I, 19
As objective ... II, 1, 2, 4, 8 ; III, 3 ; IV, 2, 3, 4 ; IX, 13
Orah hospital ... ... X, 74
Ordnance, Deputy-Director of :
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ... XI, 51
Origin of campaign ... II, 1 ; XII, 1–9
Over-Centralisation.
(*See* **Indian Military Administration.**)
Overseas Expeditions.
(*See* **Expeditions Overseas.**)

P.

Parsimony :
(*See* **Economy.**)
Persia :
Neutrality to be respected... ... II, 8 ; IV, 2
Physical Peculiarities OF MESOPOTAMIA I, 13–22
Intelligence as to ... ... IX, 24
Policy :
(*See* **Objectives of Expedition.**)
Port Facilities :
(*See* **Basra, Magill, Transport.**)
Powers of Commission ... ... I, 2
Prestige :
Effect on, of failures of campaign... ... XII, 7
Principal Marine Transport Officer :
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ... XI, 51
Procedure of Commission ... ... I, 1–12
MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS
Inadvisability of interim report ... I, 5
REASONS FOR NOT VISITING INDIA OR MESOPOTAMIA ... ... I, 3

Q.

Quartermaster-General, India :
TRANSPORT, RIVER
Responsibility for ... ... IX, 27
Shortage not appreciated by... IX, 27

R.

Railway :
(*See* **Transport,** (LAND).)
Rations :
Kut siege. Caste difficulties ... VII, 28
Misleading reports on ... ... X, 74
Need of varied ... ... I, 21
Neglect to improve ... ... X, 41, 42
Recommendations as to ... X, 130 ; XII, 35
Shortage from lack of transport VIII, 2 ; XI, 1 ; XII, 11
Sickness due to ... ... X, 41 ; XII, 11
War Office control, effect on ... XII, 11
Recommendations :
General ... ... XII, 28–36
As to medical arrangements X, 130 ; XII, 35
Red Cross Society ... ...X, 110
Reinforcements ... VIII, 11, 15–18 ; XII, 12
November, 1914 ... ... II, 6
February, 1915 ... ... III, 3
March, 1915 ... ... III, 3 ; IV, 2
May, 1915 ... ... IV, 6
October, 1915 ... ... V, 14, 16, 28, 29
BAGHDAD, ADVANCE TO ... V, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20
DIVISIONS FROM FRANCE ... ... V, 16
Delay in arrival of medical units VII, 1 ; X, 3, 27, 114, 122
INDIAN GOVERNMENT
Attitude as to ... III, 3 ; V, 17 ; XI, 6
RESPONSIBILITY for ... ... VIII, 15–18
TRANSPORT, RIVER
Lack of, causes delay ... IV, 13 ; VI, 3 ; VII, 28 ; IX. 3, 8, 62 ; XI, 49 ; XII, 13
Increased need of to carry ... ... IX, 18
Report, Period covered by ... ... I, 8
Resources :
(*See* **India,** Resources.)
Reticence, Misuse of ... ... X, 52–76
HATHAWAY ... ... X, 74
INTOLERANCE of criticism ... ... X, 76
MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS ... X, 127 ; XII, 20
Colaba Hospital, Bombay ... X, 53–55
Ctesiphon ... ... X, 25, 57–68
Kut, First battle of ... ... X, 56
Sheikh Saad Camp ... ... X, 71, 72
MEDICAL BREAKDOWN ... ... X, 68
MEDICAL PERSONNEL and Equipment X, 70, 82
SANITATION ... ... X, 83
UNDUE, None in later stages of campaign ... ... X, 75
WATER SUPPLY ... ... X, 74
Reserve System.
(*See* **Indian Army.**)
Ridsdale, Mr. E. A. ... ... I, 10
River Hospital Steamers.
(*See* **Hospital Transport** (RIVER).)
River Steamers.
(*See* **Transport** (RIVER).)
Roads :
Absence of ... ... IX, 24
Kut to Baghdad ... ... I, 17
Rotah, Battle of ... ... X, 37, 38

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000088

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Maude, Sir Stanley :
Operations at Sanaiyat ... ... VII, 23, 24
Policy after fall of Kut ... ... VII, 30
Medical Administration of :
Babtie, Surgeon-General ... ... X, 39–51
Hehir, Colonel ... ... X, 32–38
Medical Adviser TO SECRETARY OF STATE ... X, 78
Medical Arrangements :
To April, 1915 ... ... X, 33
May, 1915 ... ... X, 21
Summer, 1915 ... ... X, 32
To November, 1915 ... ... X, 80
January, 1916 ... ... X, 27–29
March, 1916, onward ... X, 30, 31, 100–104, 115, 120
Amara ... ... X, 21, 74
Commander-in-Chief :
Attitude to reports of deficiencies X, 89–96
Conclusions, findings and recommendations ... X, 100–130 ; XII, 14–22, 34–36
Ctesiphon ... ... X, 23–26, 58
Economy, effect on... ... ... X, 126
Insufficiency of ... ... X, 77, 79–81, 120
Effect of ... ... X, 115, 121, 122
Karun River operations ... ... IV, 15
Kut, first battle of ... ... IV, 15 ; X, 22, 56
Kut relief operations ... ... X, 27–31
Kut siege ... ... X, 31
(*See also* APPENDIX III.)
Nasariyeh ... ... IV, 15 ; X. 21
Recommendations as to ... X, 130 ; XII, 35
Responsibility as to
Economy ... ... X, 126
Redistribution recommended X, 117, 118
Telegrams as to ... ... X, 78
Reticence, Misuse of official ... X, 127
Sahil, Battle of ... ... X, 34
Sheikh Saad camp ... ... X, 71, 72
Secretary of State, Enquiries as to ... X, 68, 83–86 ; XI, 29, 30
(*See also* **Wounded,** EVACUATION OF)

Medical Arrangements in India :
Criticism by Sir A. Keogh X, 130 ; XII, 35
Medical Breakdown ... ... X, 21, 111–115, 120
Responsibility for ... ... X, 77–99 123–126
Medical Equipment :
INSUFFICIENCY OF ... I, 21 ; II, 7 ; III, 4 ; IV, 15 ; X, 9, 10, 14–17, 79, 111 ; XI, 1
Responsibility for ... ... X, 39
Misleading report as to ... ... X, 70
Medical Establishment :
At outbreak of war ... ... I, 24
Original for Force " D " ... ... X, 10
Medical Personnel :
Delay in asking England for ... X, 48, 78, 109
Praise of executive ... ... X, 105, 129
Recommendations as to, for hospitals in India ... X, 130 (d), (e) ; XII, 35 (d), (e)
Retained in India ... ... X, 48, 81
SHORTAGE ... I, 24 ; IV, 15 ; X, 2, 9, 10, 46, 77, 82, 109 ; XI, 1
Effect of ... ... X, 122
Misleading report on ... ... X, 70, 82
Responsibility for ... ... X, 10, 48
Secretary of State's knowledge of ... X, 78
Transport as affecting ... X, 111
Medical Stores :
Base Depôts recommended X, 130 ; XII, 35
Reserves ... ... I, 24
Shortage ... ... X, 14
Supply arrangements ... ... X, 14–17

" Medjidieh " :
Alteration of type ... ... IX, 31–35
Condition of wounded on, after Ctesiphon X, 60, 61
Melliss, Major-General Sir C. J. ... ... III, 4
Mesopotamia :
Commander-in-Chief, Omission to visit XII, 5
Intelligence as to ... ... IX, 24 ; XI, 3, 5
MacNeece, Visit to ... ...X, 69, 97, 98
Physical and Climatic peculiarities I, 13–22
Resultant diseases ... ... X, 106
Mesopotamia Expedition :
Control assumed by War Office ... VII, 31
Equipment. (*See* **Equipment.**)
Forces, Size of. (*See* **Forces.**)
Justification of ... ... XII, 1
Objectives. (*See* **Objectives.**)
Origin. (*See* **Origin.**)
Policy controlled by War Office ... VII, 31
Responsibility for
Division of ... ... X, 77 ; XI, 1–9
Of Viceroy's Council ... XI, 27, 28, 32
Results of ... ... XII, 24
Meyer, Sir William ... ... IX, 55 ; XI, 41
Military Department, India Office :
(*See* **India Office.**)
Military Member :
(*See* **Viceroy. Council.**)
Mobilisation of Resources :
(*See* **India.**)
Moral ... ... XI, 1 ; XII, 25
Kut Relief Force ... ... VII, 8, 29
Townshend's Force IV, 16 ; V, 29, 30 ; VI, 6, 7
Kut siege ... ... VII, 28

N.

Nasariyeh :
Access to ... ... I, 16
Capture of ... ... IV, 9
Medical arrangements at IV, 15 ; X, 21
Railway to, proposals for building IX, 52–61
Navigation :
Euphrates ... ... I, 16
Hammar Lake ... ... I, 16
Intelligence as to ... ... IX, 24
Karun River ... ... I, 19, 20
Shatt-el-Arab ... ... I, 13–14
Tigris... ... I, 14–18 ; IX, 15, 16, 33, 34
Nicholson Committee :
(*See* **Army in India Committee.**)
Nixon :
APPOINTMENT OF ... III, 4 ; IV, 1 ; XI, 6, 44–50
Change of tactics on ... XI, 1–4, 44–47
BAGHDAD, ADVANCE TO
Responsibility for ... ... XII, 8
Staff not consulted before ... XI, 54, 56
(*See also* **Baghdad.**)
INSTRUCTIONS TO ... IV, 2 ; V, 4 ; IX, 13 ; XI, 6, 8, 44–50
Knowledge of Viceroy and India Office of ... ... IV, 3
INTELLIGENCE as to Turkish forces V, 25 ; XI, 48
INVALIDED HOME ... ... VII, 1
MEDICAL BREAKDOWN
Knowledge of ... ... X, 63
Responsibility for ... IX, 49 ; X, 123
OPTIMISM ... IV, 11 ; V, 25 ; VI, 3 ; XI, 49
REINFORCEMENTS, Views as to ... ... V, 13
SUPPLIES IN KUT
Omission to ascertain ... VII, 5

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000044

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Transport (Land) :
Ambulance. (*See* **Hospital Transport.**)
Animal ... ... IV, 2
Impracticable in wet weather ... I, 17 ; IX, 15
Motor ... ... IV, 2 ; X, 13
(*See also* **Hospital Transport.**)
Railway ... ... IX, 51–61
Barrett, suggested by ... IX, 52
Construction, Cost and time of IX, 60
Development of ... ... VII, 30
Indian Government :
Attitude to ... IV, 12 ; IX, 51–61
Responsibility for ... IX, 61
Need of ... ... XI, 9
Nixon to report on ... ... IV, 2
Nixon's demand for ... IX, 53–58 ; XI, 41
Position after July, 1916 ... IX, 59, 60
Roads, Absence of ... ... IX, 24

Transport (Port Facilities)
Economy as to ... ... IX, 40, 44
Erection and repair shops ... IX, 40, 62 ; XII, 13
(*See also* **Basra, Magill.**)

Transport (River) :
Barges
Alteration of specifications ... IX, 36–38
Use for wounded
(*See* **Hospital Transport** (River).)
Barrett, estimate of necessary ... ... IX, 25
Civilian experience not used ... ... XI, 28
Conclusions as to ... ... IX, 62 ; XII, 13
Cowper's telegram as to shortage X, 76 ; XI, 43
Definition ... ... I, 22
Difficulties ignored in Baghdad advance :
Home Government ... ... V, 23, 24
Inter-Departmental Committee V, 22, 23
Nixon ... ... V, 4
Risk from ... ... IX, 18
Draught limitations ... IX, 8, 14, 15, 17
Hospital. (*See* **Hospital Transport.**)
Indian Government :
Attitude to ... ... IX, 24, 62 ; XII, 13
Enquiries as to ... ... IX, 25
Intelligence as to ... ... IX, 24
Kemball's memorandum on IV, 8, 13, 17, 19
Kut, Risk of advance to, from shortage ... IX, 18
Mahailas ... ... IX, 6, 11, 48
Miscalculations as to ... IX, 25 ; XI, 49
Need of ... ... I, 21*; IX, 18, 62 ; XI, 9
XII, 13
Nixon :
Demands for ... IV, 12 ; V, 24 ; IX, 8–10, 26, 29
Report on ... ... IV, 2
Specification of ... ... IX, 28
Telegram on navigation difficulties ... V, 12
22, 24
Ordered :
November, 1914 ... ... IX, 7
After January, 1916 ... ... IX, 10
Ordered in England ... IV, 14 ; IX, 8, 9, 31–39
Delay in building ... ... IX, 9
Re-erection arrangements ... ... IX, 39
Specifications altered ... ... IX, 33–39
Ordered in India ... ... IX, 7, 10
Available ... ... IX, 28–30
Difficulty in obtaining ... IX, 14, 17
Procedure for obtaining ... ... IX, 27
Provision of ... ... IX, 24–30
Shortage ... ... IX, 1–52 ; XI, 1
After December, 1914... IV, 1, 12 ; IX, 2, 62 ; XII, 13
April, 1915 ... ... III, 4

Transport (River)—(*continued*).
Shortage :
May, 1915 ... ... IX, 14
January, 1916 ... ... VI, 1
Attempts to remedy ... IX, 62 ; XII, 13
Campaign, effect on ... IX, 2, 3, 5, 62 ; XII, 13
Concentration protracted by ... VI, 6
Information as to, withheld ... V, 12, 22 ; IX, 18
Kut, effect of, after battle of ... V, 31
Lack of appreciation of ... ... IX, 27
Medical breakdown, effect on ... X, 111–115, 122
Rations, effect on ... ... XII, 11
Reinforcements delayed by ... IV, 13 ; VI, 3 ; VII, 28 ; IX, 3, 62 ; XI, 49 ; XII, 13
Responsibility for ... IX, 11–23, 25–27, 39, 62 ; XII, 13
Responsibility for advance with IX, 19, 49, 62 ; XII, 13
Secretiveness of staff, effect on ... XI, 51
Statistics as to ... ... IX, 4, 6, 11
Supply of ... ... IX, 62 ; XII, 13
Time needed for building ... IV, 14 ; IX, 7, 14
War Office control, Effect of VII, 30 ; IX, 4

Transport (Sea) :
Expeditions overseas ... ... I, 28
Royal Indian Marine, Work as to IX, 27, 66
Time taken for discharge, Basra ... IX, 46, 47

Treherne, Surgeon-General ... ... X, 104, 106

Troops :
Composition of Force " D " ... VII, 29
Despatched overseas ... ... I, 30

Turkey :
War declared ... ... II, 6

Turkish Forces :
Delayed by floods ... ... IV, 5
Equipment ... ... VIII, 6, 9, 10 ; X, 13
Intelligence as to ... V, 18, 25, 31 ; VI, 2
Miscalculations as to ... ... XI, 48, 49
Moral ... ... V, 27 ; VI, 2 ; VII, 3
Size of ... ... V, 18 ; VI, 2

U.

Umm-el-Tubal, Battle of ... ... VI, 5

V.

Véry Lights ... ... VIII, 5, 6

Viceroy :
Amara, Attitude to advance to ... IV, 6, 7
Baghdad, Advance to
Attitude to ... ... V, 1, 2, 3, 6, 12, 17
Responsibility for ... ... XII, 8
Communications with Secretary of State.
(*See* **Communications.**)
Council. Relation to ... ... XI, 20–22
Recommendations ... ... XII, 28
Criticism of ... ... XII, 27
Economy, Attitude to ... X, 126 ; XI, 36 ; XII, 19
Kut, Attitude to advance to ... IV, 10
Medical Arrangements
Authority as to ... ... X, 88
Responsibility for X, 77–99, 126 ; XII, 19
Medical Personnel
Misleading report on ... ... X, 70, 82
Nixon's Instructions not seen by IV, 3 ; V, 6
Responsibility for campaign ... XI, 32

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000021

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Viceroy (*continued*).
RESPONSIBILITY for depleting Indian forces ... ... III, 3; XI, 6
SANITATION
Misleading report on ... ... X, 83
TRANSPORT SHORTAGE
Information as to, withheld by ... V, 12
VISIT TO MESOPOTAMIA ... ... XI, 34
Viceroy in Council :
Statutory powers ... ... XI, 20–22
Viceroy. Council :
Attitude to India's Finance policy ... XI, 41
Military member, position of ... XI, 10
Responsibility for :
Baghdad advance ... ... XII, 8
Campaign ... ... XI, 27, 28, 32
Statutory rights of members ... XI, 21
Status, Effect of private telegrams on XI, 26
Supply Member ... ... XI, 11
Vincent, The Hon. Sir William ... ... I, 10
Vincent-Bingley Commission :
Appointment ... ... I, 10; X, 69, 98
Date of conclusion ... ... I, 11
Members ... ... I, 10
Terms of reference ... ... I, 10; X, 69, 98
Vincent-Bingley Commission Report ... I, 11
Appreciation of ... ... I, 12; X, 1–5
Conclusions ... ... X, 1–31
Adopted ... ... I, 11; X, 1
Criticisms of ... ... X, 2, 3, 32, 123
Memorandum on ... ... I, 11
(*See* APPENDIX II.)
Quotation from, as to economy ... XI, 38
(*See* APPENDIX I.)
Voluntary aid :
Offers from England ... ... X, 110

W.

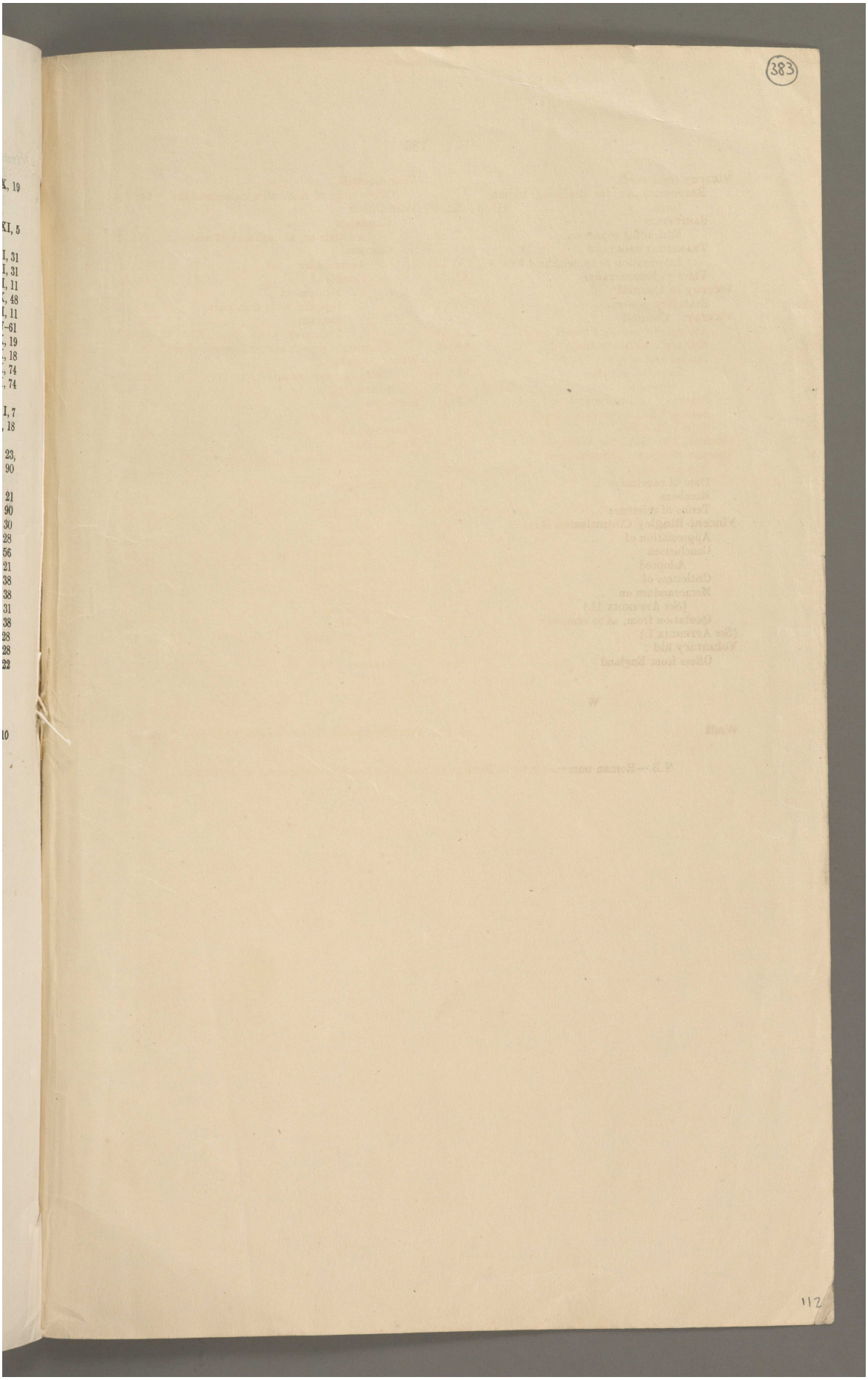
Wadi ... ... X, 27, 28
War Council :
Knowledge of Kemball's memorandum IX, 19
War Office :
CAMPAIGN
Attitude to, at outbreak of war ... XI, 5
CONTROL
Assumed by ... ... VII, 31
Results of ... ... VII, 31
Equipment ... ... XII, 11
Hospital river transport... IX, 48
Rations ... ... XII, 11
Transport ... IX, 4, 46, 57–61
KEMBALL'S MEMORANDUM forwarded to IX, 19
Water Supply ... ... X, 18
Misleading reports on ... ... X, 74
Sickness caused by ... ... X, 74
Witnesses :
Names of chief ... ... I, 7
Wolseley, Lord ... ... VII, 13, 15, 18
Wounded :
CONDITION ON RIVER STEAMERS VI, 7; X, 23, 28, 57–61, 89, 90
EVACUATION OF
Amara ... ... X, 21
Ctesiphon VI, 3, 7; X, 23, 57–61, 89, 90
Es Sinn ... ... X, 30
Hannah ... ... X, 27, 28
Kut, First battle ... ... X, 56
Nasariyeh ... ... X, 21
Rotah ... ... X, 37, 38
Sahil ... ... X, 38
Sanaiyat ... ... X, 31
Shaiba ... ... X, 38
Sheikh Saad ... ... X, 27, 28
Wadi ... ... X, 27, 28
HARDSHIPS TO ... ... X, 21, 121, 122

Y.

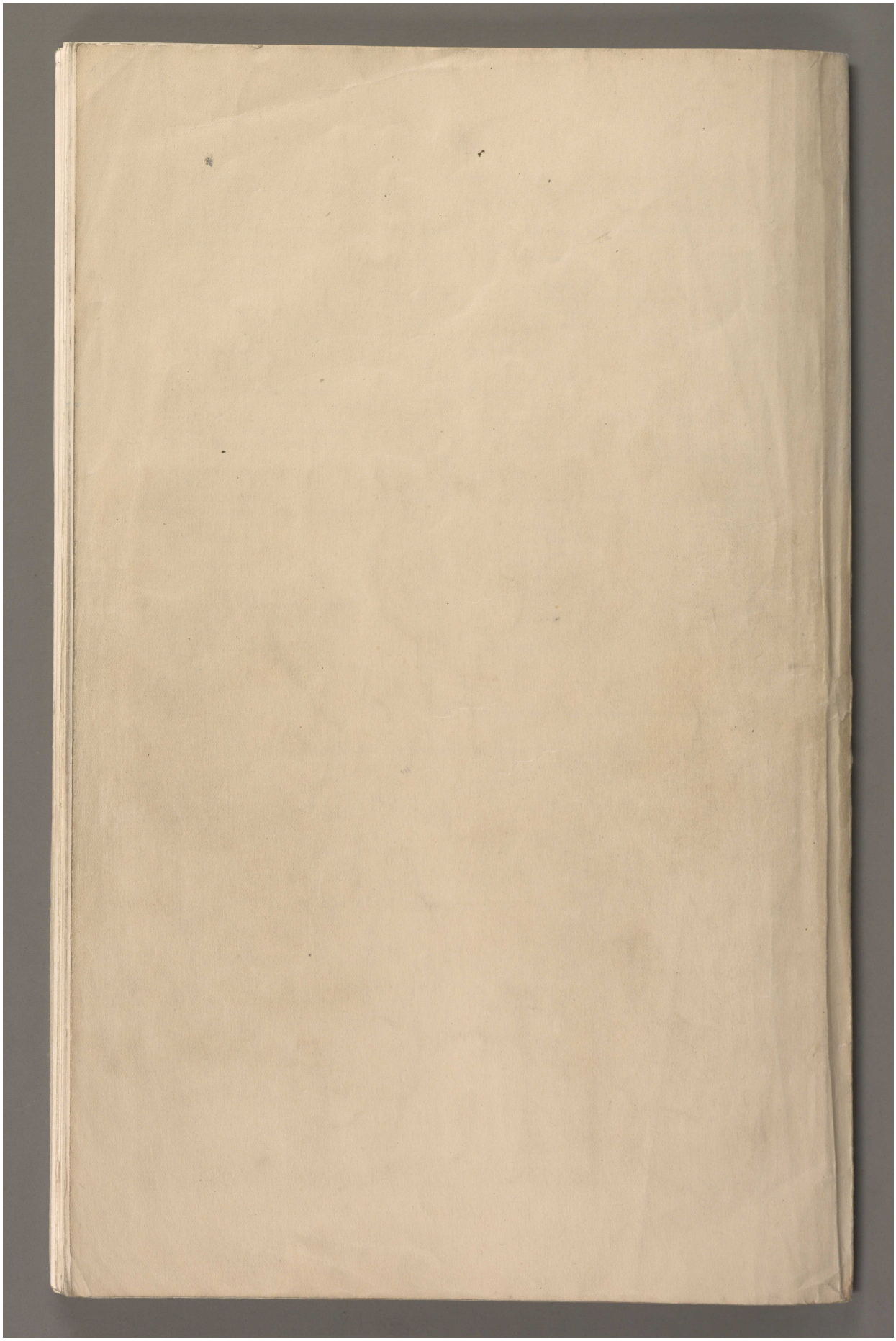
Younghusband, Major-General Sir George VII, 10

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00006b



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000027



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00001a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Mss Eur F112/164 (384)

MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

REPORT

OF THE

Commission Appointed by Act of Parliament to Enquire into the Operations of War

IN

MESOPOTAMIA,

TOGETHER WITH A

Separate Report

BY

COMMANDER J. WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.,

AND

Appendices.

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

To be purchased through any Bookseller or directly from
H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE at the following addresses:
IMPERIAL HOUSE, KINGSWAY, LONDON, W.C. 2, and 28, ABINGDON STREET, LONDON, S.W. 1;
37, PETER STREET, MANCHESTER; 1, ST. ANDREW'S CRESCENT, CARDIFF;
23, FORTH STREET, EDINBURGH;
or from E. PONSONBY, LTD., 116, GRAFTON STREET, DUBLIN;
or from the Agencies in the British Colonies and Dependencies,
the United States of America and other Foreign Countries of
T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD., LONDON, W.C. 2.

1917.

[Cd. 8610.] *Price Two Shillings Net.*

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00006e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS.

(with the undermentioned exceptions)

can be purchased in the manner indicated on the first page of this wrapper.

Hydrographical Publications of the Admiralty are sold by—
J. D. Potter, 145, Minories, London, E.1.

Patent Office Publications are sold at—
The Patent Office, 25, Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London, W.C.2.
(N.B.—Classified Abridgments of Patent Specifications are sold also by Wyman & Sons, Ltd., 29, Breams Buildings, Fetter Lane, London, E.C.4.

Ordnance Survey and Geological Survey Publications can be purchased from—
The Director General of the Ordnance Survey, Southampton; or
The Superintendent, Ordnance Survey, Dublin; or
Agents in most of the Chief Towns in the United Kingdom.
(N.B.—**Small Scale Maps** are, as a rule, procurable at Railway Bookstalls in England and Wales.)

The Journal of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries is published monthly by the Board, and is obtainable from 3, St. James's Square, London S.W.1. Price 4*d*., post free.

The London Gazette is published on Tuesday and Friday evenings by Wyman & Sons, Ltd. Price 1*s*.

The following is a list of some recent Parliamentary and Official Publications :—

DARDANELLES COMMISSION.

Royal Commission for the purpose of inquiring into the Origin, Inception and Conduct of Operations of War in the Dardanelles and Gallipoli, including the Supply of Drafts, Reinforcements, Ammunition and Equipment of the Troops and Fleet, the Provision for the Sick and Wounded, and the Responsibility of those Departments of Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the Forces employed in that Theatre of War.

REPORT. Part I.—Origin and Inception; Higher Organisation previous to the Outbreak of War; Higher Organisation adopted subsequent to the Outbreak of War—The War Council—The Admiralty—The War Office—Conclusions; Narrative of Events, with Summary of Transactions; Results of the Operations; Conclusions.

Minute of the Right Honourable Andrew Fisher; Dissent and Suggestion by the Honourable Sir Thomas Mackenzie, K.C.M.G.; Minute and Memorandum by Walter Francis Roch, Esq., M.P.

[Cd. 8490] of Session 1917. Price 6*d*., post free 8*d*.

COMMITTEE ON ALLEGED GERMAN OUTRAGES
appointed by His Majesty's Government and presided over by

THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT BRYCE, O.M., &c., &c.,
formerly British Ambassador at Washington.

REPORT.

Warrant of Appointment. Introductory Observations.

Part I. Conduct of German Troops in Belgium.

Part II. Breaches of Rules and Usages of War and Acts of Inhumanity in Invaded Territories. 1. Treatment of the Civil Population :—Killing of Non-Combatants; Treatment of Women and Children; Use of Civilians as Screens; Looting, Burning, and Destruction of Property. 2. Offences against Combatants :—Killing the Wounded or Prisoners; Firing on Hospitals; Abuse of the Red Cross and the White Flag.

Conclusions. With two maps.

[Cd. 7894] of Session 1914-15. Price 6*d*., post free 7½*d*.

APPENDIX.

Depositions, by Belgian, French, and British eye-witnesses of the Murder, Rape, Arson, Pillage, &c., by German Troops in Belgium and France.

Extracts from diaries and papers taken from German corpses or prisoners of war, with reproductions of photographs of some of those documents.

Copies of Proclamations issued by the Germans.

Convention concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Second Peace Conference held at the Hague in 1907—Section II. Of Hostilities. Section III. Military Authority over the Territory of the Hostile State).

Depositions taken and Papers forwarded by Professor Morgan.

[Cd. 7895] of Session 1914-15. Price 1*s*. 9*d*., post free 2*s*. 2*d*.

The above have been reproduced in 8vo. size, viz. :—

REPORT. Price 3*d*., post free 4½*d*. APPENDIX. Price 6*d*., post free 10*d*.

A cheap reprint of the Report, in smaller type, without Maps, is obtainable. Price 1d., post free 2d.

TREATMENT OF PRISONERS OF WAR IN ENGLAND AND GERMANY

during the first eight months of the War. (1915). Price 1*d*., post free 2*d*.

ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT OF GERMAN SUBJECTS CAPTURED IN THE CAMEROONS.

CORRESPONDENCE relative to.

[Cd. 7974.] Price 5*d*., post free 6½*d*.

GERMAN ATROCITIES, AND BREACHES OF THE RULES OF WAR IN AFRICA.

PAPERS relating to.

[Cd. 8306.] Price 9½*d*., post free 11½*d*.

TREATMENT OF ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1915-16.

Documents presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, by Viscount Bryce. With a Preface by Viscount Bryce.

[Cd. 8325] of Session 1916. Price 2*s*., post free 2*s*. 6*d*.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000a2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

385

MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

REPORT

OF THE

Commission Appointed by Act of Parliament to Enquire into the Operations of War

IN

MESOPOTAMIA,

TOGETHER WITH A

Separate Report

BY

COMMANDER J. WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.,

AND

Appendices.

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

To be purchased through any Bookseller or directly from
H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE at the following addresses:
IMPERIAL HOUSE, KINGSWAY, LONDON, W.C. 2, and 28, ABINGDON STREET, LONDON, S.W. 1;
37, PETER STREET, MANCHESTER; 1, ST. ANDREW'S CRESCENT, CARDIFF;
23, FORTH STREET, EDINBURGH;
or from E. PONSONBY, LTD., 116, GRAFTON STREET, DUBLIN;
or from the Agencies in the British Colonies and Dependencies,
the United States of America and other Foreign Countries of
T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD., LONDON, W.C. 2.

1917.

[Cd. 8610.] *Price Two Shillings Net.*

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE
TERMS OF APPOINTMENT AND REFERENCE	3
PART I.—PREFACE	5
A. Procedure	5
B. Physical and Climatic Peculiarities of Mesopotamia	8
C. Condition of Indian Army on Outbreak of War	10
D. India's Overseas Expeditions on Outbreak of War	11
PART II.—ORIGIN OF MESOPOTAMIA EXPEDITION	12
PART III.—ADVANCE FROM BASRA TO KURNA	15
PART IV.—THE ADVANCE TO AMARA AND KUT	16
PART V.—CORRESPONDENCE AND TELEGRAMS AS TO ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD	20
PART VI.—THE ADVANCE FROM KUT TO CTESIPHON	29
PART VII.—OPERATIONS FOR RELIEF OF KUT	31
PART VIII.—ARMAMENT, EQUIPMENT, REINFORCEMENTS, &C.	37
PART IX.—TRANSPORT	43
A. Shortage of River Transport	43
B. Railways	61
C. Royal Indian Marine	61
PART X.—MEDICAL BREAKDOWN	63
A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions	63
B. Medical Administration of Colonel Hehir	69
C. Medical Administration of Sir William Babtie	71
D. The Misuse of Reticence	74
E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy, and Commander-in-Chief	83
F. Supplementary	88
G. Medical Findings and Recommendations	93
PART XI.—CAUSES CONTRIBUTING TO THE ERRORS OF JUDGMENT AND SHORTCOMINGS OF RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	96
A. Division of Responsibility for Campaign	96
B. Faulty Organisation of Indian Military Administration	98
C. Relations between the Secretary of State and the Governor-General and their respective Councils—Private telegrams	101
D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War, and Effect upon Military Preparations in India	103
E. Sir John Nixon's Appointment, Instructions and Staff	107
F. Secretiveness and Lack of Co-ordination of Staffs	108
PART XII.—A. Findings and Conclusions	111
B. Recommendations	116
SEPARATE REPORT BY COMMANDER J. WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.	121
APPENDIX I.—VINCENT-BINGLEY REPORT	133
APPENDIX II.—MEMORANDUM BY SIR BEAUCHAMP DUFF	165
APPENDIX III.—COLONEL HEHIR'S ACCOUNT OF THE SIEGE OF KUT-EL-AMARA	169
INDEX TO COMMISSION'S REPORT	179

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00001b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

PAGE
3
5
5
8
10
11
12
15
16
20
9
1
6
21
33
65
69
79

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT AND REFERENCE.

Extract from Section I of Special Commissions (Dardanelles and Mesopotamia) Act, 1916.

Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :—

The following persons, namely :—

The Right Honourable Lord George Francis Hamilton, G.C.S.I.,

The Right Honourable the Earl of Donoughmore, K.P.,

Lord Hugh Cecil, Member of Parliament,

Sir Archibald Williamson, Baronet, Member of Parliament,

John Hodge, Esquire, Member of Parliament,

Commander Josiah C. Wedgwood, Member of Parliament,

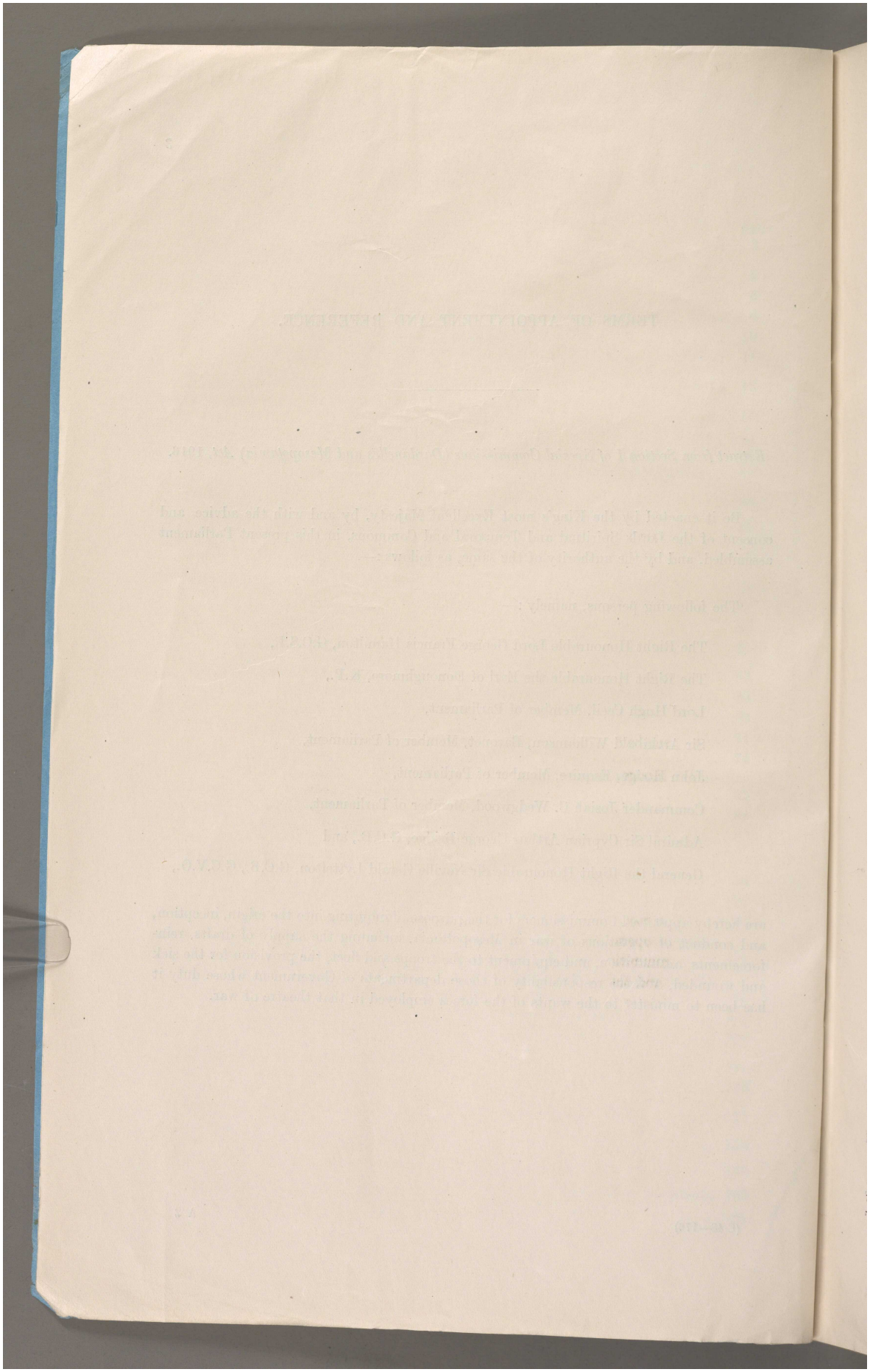
Admiral Sir Cyprian Arthur George Bridge, G.C.B., and

General the Right Honourable Sir Neville Gerald Lyttelton, G.C.B., G.C.V.O.,

are hereby appointed Commissioners for the purpose of inquiring into the origin, inception, and conduct of operations of war in Mesopotamia, including the supply of drafts, reinforcements, ammunition, and equipment to the troops and fleet, the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of those departments of Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the forces employed in that theatre of war.

115

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000017



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00009d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Procedure.

1. We, the Commissioners appointed by your Majesty under an Act of Parliament in August, 1916, have the honour to submit to your Majesty the following report:—

2. The Statute, from which we derive our authority, constituted us Commissioners for the purpose of enquiring into the origin, inception, and conduct of operations of the war in Mesopotamia, including the supply of drafts, reinforcements, ammunition, and equipment to the troops and fleet, the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of those departments of Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the Forces employed in that theatre of war. We were further invested with certain powers, rights and privileges of the High Court of Justice, and we have exercised those powers to the best of our ability in obtaining evidence upon oath and in enforcing the attendance of all witnesses and the production of all documents which in any way seemed to us relevant to the subject-matter of our enquiry. The Public Departments concerned showed the utmost readiness to assist us in our enquiry and furnished us so far as we are aware with copies of all material records and documents at their disposal.

3. In the course of our enquiry we ascertained that the chief persons connected with the campaign were either in England, or could be brought home without serious detriment to public interests. There were also at home a great number of wounded and sick officers of all ranks, returned from Mesopotamia, and we have had the advantage of seeing the voluminous evidence collected in Mesopotamia and India by the Vincent-Bingley Commission. We thus found that there was a large mass of evidence at our disposal in England, and we did not feel justified in incurring the great delay and expense, which must have resulted from proceeding to India and to Mesopotamia. But in addition to the evidence available in England, we summoned home, and there appeared before us, all witnesses whose evidence was in our judgment necessary for the elucidation of our task. In one case, however, in which urgent war duties prevented an officer from vacating his post, we accepted written evidence only, without causing him to appear in person before us.

4. Early in our proceedings, allegations against an officer of subordinate rank were made, which in our judgment required investigation. We felt that our primary duty was to adjudicate upon the conduct of the higher authorities responsible for the campaign. We were most desirous to prevent our energy and attention from being diverted from this task by enquiries into a number of minor complaints against subordinate officers, and we felt that we were neither intended nor well-fitted to undertake the functions of a number of Courts-Martial or Military Courts of Enquiry. We therefore decided that in such cases we would forward the evidence tendered to us to the Military Authorities with a request that they would themselves take such action in the matter as in their judgment seemed necessary. We adopted a similar procedure also in the few instances where the tactical manœuvring and dispositions of generals under the rank of divisional commanders were seriously called in question.

5. In the Act of Parliament constituting the Commission a proviso was inserted directing us to proceed with all possible expedition to enquire with regard to the provision for the sick and wounded, and to report the result of our enquiries on this matter as soon as they were completed.

We considered this direction, but found that the medical aspects of the Mesopotamian Campaign were so inextricably involved with the other branches of our enquiry, that it would be impossible to anticipate our general Report by an interim Report on medical matters.

To have attempted to separate the conduct of our Enquiry into two distinct parts, would have led to delay, confusion, and possibly contradictory conclusions. We therefore concentrated our attention upon the whole subject referred to us, being satisfied that by this procedure we could most effectively expedite and complete our enquiry into the provision made for the sick and wounded.

It will be seen, however, that we have devoted a separate section* entirely to medical arrangements and that this section is practically a complete Report in itself, dealing with the provision for the sick and wounded.

* See Part X.

116

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00001f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Procedure.

6. Under the Terms of our Reference, we might have investigated the conduct of the Mesopotamian campaign right up to the date of reporting. We believe—and we have acted on that belief—that our main duties were to enquire into the operations antecedent to our appointment, and that to investigate into and report upon pending or present operations might seriously hamper the action of those now in charge of the campaign. We have, however, as our Report will show, satisfied ourselves that in the latter part of the campaign a marked improvement has been effected in the provision for the sick and wounded, and also in the supplies and equipment of the troops.

7. We have held 60 meetings, and we have summoned before us over 100 witnesses, of whom the more important were :—

The Marquess of Crewe, K.G., P.C., M.A., F.S.A., late Secretary of State for India.

Rt. Hon. Joseph Austen Chamberlain, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Lord Hardinge, P.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., I.S.O., ex-Viceroy of India.

Lord Inchcape, G.C.M.G., K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., Director of Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

Sir Thomas William Holderness, K.C.S.I., K.C.B., I.C.S., B.A., Under Secretary of State for India.

General Sir Beauchamp Duff, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., K.C.S.I., C.B., C.I.E., ex-Commander-in-Chief in India.

General Sir O'Moore Creagh, V.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., K.C.B., ex-Commander-in-Chief in India.

General Sir Edmund George Barrow, G.C.B., Military Secretary at the India Office.

General Sir John Eccles Nixon, K.C.B., A.D.C., General, late G.O.C., Mesopotamian Expedition.

Major-General Sir George Gorringe, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., late G.O.C., Tigris Corps.

Lieut.-General Sir Percy Lake, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Chief of General Staff, India, late G.O.C., Force "D."

Lieut.-General Sir Fenton J. Aylmer, V.C., K.C.B., late G.O.C., Tigris Corps.

Major-General M. Cowper, C.I.E., late Deputy-Adjutant and Quartermaster General, Force "D."

Major-General K. S. Davison, C.B., late Inspector-General of Communications, Force "D."

Major-General G. V. Kemball, C.B., D.S.O., late Chief of General Staff, Force "D."

Major-General Sir George Younghusband, K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E., C.B., G.O.C., 7th Division.

Brevet-Colonel S. H. Climo, C.B., D.S.O.

The following officers of the Royal Indian Marine also gave evidence :—

Captain Walter Lumsden, C.V.O., C.I.E., R.N., Director Royal Indian Marine.

Commander A. Hamilton, R.I.M., late Principal Marine Transport Officer.

Captain W. B. Huddleston, R.I.M., late Principal Marine Transport Officer, Force "D."

As representing the War Office :—

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations.

Brigadier-General the Hon. R. Stuart-Wortley, Director of Movements.

Lieut.-Colonel H. F. P. Percival, D.S.O., Assistant Director of Supplies, appeared before us.

We have also examined a considerable number of medical witnesses, including :—

Sir Alfred Keogh, G.C.B., Director-General of the Army Medical Service.

Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie, V.C., K.C.M.G., C.B., M.B., K.H.S., late Director of Medical Services, India.

Surgeon-General H. G. Hathaway, C.B., late Assistant Director of Medical Services, Force "D."

Surgeon-General MacNeece, C.B., late Director of Medical Services, India.

Colonel P. Hehir, C.B., M.D., I.M.S., late Assistant Director of Medical Services, Force "D."

Major R. Markham Carter, F.R.C.S., I.M.S.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00008d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Procedure.

In addition evidence was also obtained from the following :—

Mr. E. A. Ridsdale, F.G.S., Red Cross Commissioner, Member of the Vincent-Bingley Commission.

Sir Robert Carlyle, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., late Member of the Council of the Viceroy in India.

Sir Mackenzie Chalmers, K.C.B., C.S.I., late Member of the Council of the Viceroy in India.

Sir John Hewett, G.C.S.I., late Member of the Council of the Viceroy in India, Chairman of Indian Soldiers' Fund, Member of the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross and Order of St. John.

Sir William Clark, K.C.S.I., late Member of Council of the Viceroy in India.

Mr. J. B. Brunyate, C.I.E., C.S.I., I.C.S., Financial Secretary to the Indian Government.

We have, in addition, heard or received statements from a large number of officers of all ranks, and wherever possible, have obtained the testimony of non-official witnesses. A complete list of our witnesses will be given in an Appendix. We have also had before us many hundreds of statements of evidence taken by the Vincent-Bingley Commission, both in Mesopotamia and India.

8. A great body of evidence, oral and written, has thus come before us. Amongst the evidence are included a number of written statements by witnesses which were sworn to, but not made the subject of oral examination. Where a witness' written statement only corroborated what had already been amply established in our evidence, we did not think it necessary to cross-examine him, but we required him to attend before us and swear to his written statement, in order that it might be in the same position as other sworn evidence. These statements thus partake of the nature of affidavits.

9. In accordance with the Statutory obligation imposed upon us by the Act of Parliament by which we were constituted a Commission, we present our Report for publication to both Houses of Parliament. There is no similar legal obligation upon us to publish the evidence which we have taken. We therefore leave to the discretion of His Majesty's Government the question of its publication.

10. We must here refer to what is known as the "Vincent-Bingley Commission." In March, 1916, the Indian Government appointed a Commission, composed of the Hon. Sir William Vincent, Kt., I.C.S., Major-General Bingley, C.B., C.I.E., and Mr. E. A. Ridsdale, F.G.S., with instructions to proceed to Mesopotamia and to make enquiry under the following Terms of Reference :—

"(1) The Government of India have appointed you Commissioners for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon the arrangements for dealing with the wounded and sick in Mesopotamia, in accordance with the Terms of Reference attached.

"(2) You will proceed to Basra where you will report to the General Officer Commanding, Force "D," who will give you every facility in the execution of your duties.

"(3) Copies of all war diaries, reports, despatches, books and maps, and other information that you may require will be provided both by Army Headquarters and General Officer Commanding, Force "D."

"(4) You are entitled to call and examine any witness whose evidence you consider necessary.

"(5) All communications, including your report, will be addressed to the Secretary to the Government of India, Army Department, Simla.

Delhi. "B. Holloway, Major-General,
"Secretary to the Government of India,
Army Department."

Terms of Reference.

"(1) The Commission is appointed with the object of inquiring into and recording the arrangements made for the collection, treatment and removal of the sick and wounded during the operations in Mesopotamia to the date of your departure from Mesopotamia.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000058

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Procedure.

"(2) The strategical situation in Mesopotamia during the above period and the tactical obligations arising therefrom will be borne in mind throughout your proceedings.

"(3) You will distinguish clearly between the following phases :—

"(i) From the battlefields to the line of communication.

"(ii) Down the line of communication to Basra.

"(iii) At Basra.

"(iv) From Basra overseas.

"(4) In each phase, the forecast of the preparations considered necessary, the preparations actually made, and the equipment, vehicles, stores and personnel actually available at the localities, and on the vessel, during the operations, will be investigated.

"(5) The amount of river transport allotted for the medical services will be examined with regard to the total amount available, and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition.

"(6) You will ascertain and record the relative order of arrival of the combatant and medical units coming with reinforcements from overseas, in order to fix the responsibility for any deficiencies in personnel, equipment, and stores which could be attributed to the order of embarkation for Mesopotamia.

"(7) Having reviewed the foregoing considerations your opinion is required on the following points :—

"(i) As to whether the wounded and sick underwent any avoidable suffering and hardships during any of the phases defined in paragraph 3 above. If so, you will state the phase and will ascertain and assign the responsibility, showing whether individuals or the system were to blame.

"(ii) As to whether any avoidable shortage in the personnel, equipment, vehicles and stores occurred during any of the four phases defined in paragraph (3) above. If so, you will state the phase, the shortage, and the reasons for it, ascertaining and assigning the responsibility as in (i).

"(iii) As to whether any shortages which may have existed have now been made good."

11. The report of the Vincent-Bingley Commission was concluded and sent to the Government of India at Simla on June 29th, 1916, but was not published. The Commissioners obtained a vast amount of documentary and oral evidence in Mesopotamia and from the wounded in hospitals at Bombay, and in India. The evidence, which is comprised in two volumes containing nearly 900 pages, has been forwarded to us. We have examined its contents, and we have also taken a large amount of independent evidence upon the subjects referred to this Commission. The report of the Vincent-Bingley Commission is a very able and comprehensive document, and we have no hesitation in adopting its main conclusions. The report is enclosed in the present volume, and attached to it is a Minute of Sir Beauchamp Duff, Commander-in-Chief in India, commenting upon its proceedings.

12. The work which these Commissioners so ably performed has greatly lightened our task. Their review of the military operations and of supply and medical shortcomings is thorough and detailed, and the information was obtained on the scene of operations. Therefore we have thought it inadvisable to traverse the same ground in much detail in our report, as it can be supplemented by a perusal of the Vincent-Bingley Report, and the published despatches of Sir Percy Lake, describing the military operations up to the end of August, 1916.

B. Physical and Climatic Peculiarities of Mesopotamia.

13. On the very threshold of our report, we desire to focus attention on the physical and climatic peculiarities of that tract of country known as Mesopotamia. The area generally so called includes not only the territory enclosed between the Tigris and the Euphrates, but the country surrounding those rivers. The sole access from the sea to this country is through a channel known as the Shatt-el-Arab, and the town of Basra is situated on this channel about 70 miles* from the sea. The banks of the channel are indented by numerous muddy creeks, which require to be bridged over for purposes of land communication. Vessels drawing not more than 19 feet can make their way up to

* The mileages given are approximate, and unless otherwise stated are by river. They have been kindly verified by the Intelligence Division of the Admiralty. A map of Mesopotamia will be found in Appendix I., Annexure II. in this Volume.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000093

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Physical and Climatic Peculiarities of Mesopotamia.

Basra, where the channel of the river is about ⅓ mile wide. There were, in November, 1914, practically no quays or wharfage at Basra; nor were storehouses or go-downs of any size available for the accommodation of goods; vessels were unloaded in mid-stream by primitive methods into sailing craft known as Mahailas.

14. Kurna is some 50 miles higher up this channel at the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Between Basra and Kurna there is some 7½ feet of water in the dry season, and in the flood about 12 feet or even more. Beyond Kurna the River Tigris narrows rapidly, and between Ezra's Tomb and Kelat Sala, a stretch of 28 miles, the navigation of the river is very difficult. It twists and turns with sharp bends and hairpin corners, leaving at certain places little or no room for vessels towing a barge on either side to pass each other. The stream is strong, about four knots an hour, and it is difficult for steamers without independent paddles to avoid striking the banks when going round the corners down stream. Vessels under such conditions occasionally turn completely round, and it is a common experience to see lighters breaking adrift under the strain.

15. Amara is some 90 miles above Kurna on the Tigris, the depth of water between the two places averages 4½ feet in the low-water season, and it is estimated that in navigating this part of the river, boats should not draw more than 3 ft. 6 in.

16. Kut is again some 150 miles above Amara, but the navigation between the two places, apart from some shoal patches, is easier, and the river is broader. Baghdad is 112 miles above Kut by road and 212 miles by river, and the meandering of the river between these two places is more marked than in any other part of its tortuous course, while not more than 3 ft. 6 in. of water can be relied on. Baghdad is, distant by river, 502 miles from Basra.

Some 68 miles west of Kurna are the district and town of Nasariyeh, bordering upon the Euphrates, and access to this district is through the Hammar Lake, which in hot weather is so low as to be impracticable for vessels drawing any depth of water. The only trees in the country are date palms, wood for fuel or other purposes is unobtainable, and of stone there is not a trace, except a small quarry South-West of Basra.

17. The country traversed by these two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, is a vast plain intersected by swamps, and, generally speaking, without roads of any description. Above Kut, however, there is a caravan road to Baghdad. The soil is a sandy loam which under rainfall is converted into a tenacious mud. In wet weather and floods, none of the country bordering the river below Kut is fit for wheeled vehicles, being deep in water and mud; in the dry season wheeled transport is generally practicable, if the irrigation canals are bridged or filled up.

18. The Tigris is subject to sudden floods which overrun the banks, and convert the adjoining terrain into temporary and almost impassable quagmires. The climate is exceptionally hot, damp and enervating, with periodical snaps of icy storms in the winter. In the heat of the summer a double-fly tent is an inadequate protection against sunstroke. Military movements are exceptionally difficult, the rivers being practically the only means of transport, thus limiting the radius of activity of operating forces whose communications entirely depend upon the river.

19 The Karun river, which rises in South-east Persia, and along whose left bank the oil-pipe of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. runs, flows into the Shatt-el-Arab some 21 miles to the east-south-east of Basra. This river is more rapid than the Tigris, and though shallow in parts, is less winding and more easily navigated. The oil-pipe runs from the oil-fields down to the island of Abadan, which is situated not far from where the river joins the Shatt-el-Arab. On the island of Abadan are oil-refining works, and certain workshops belonging to the oil company.

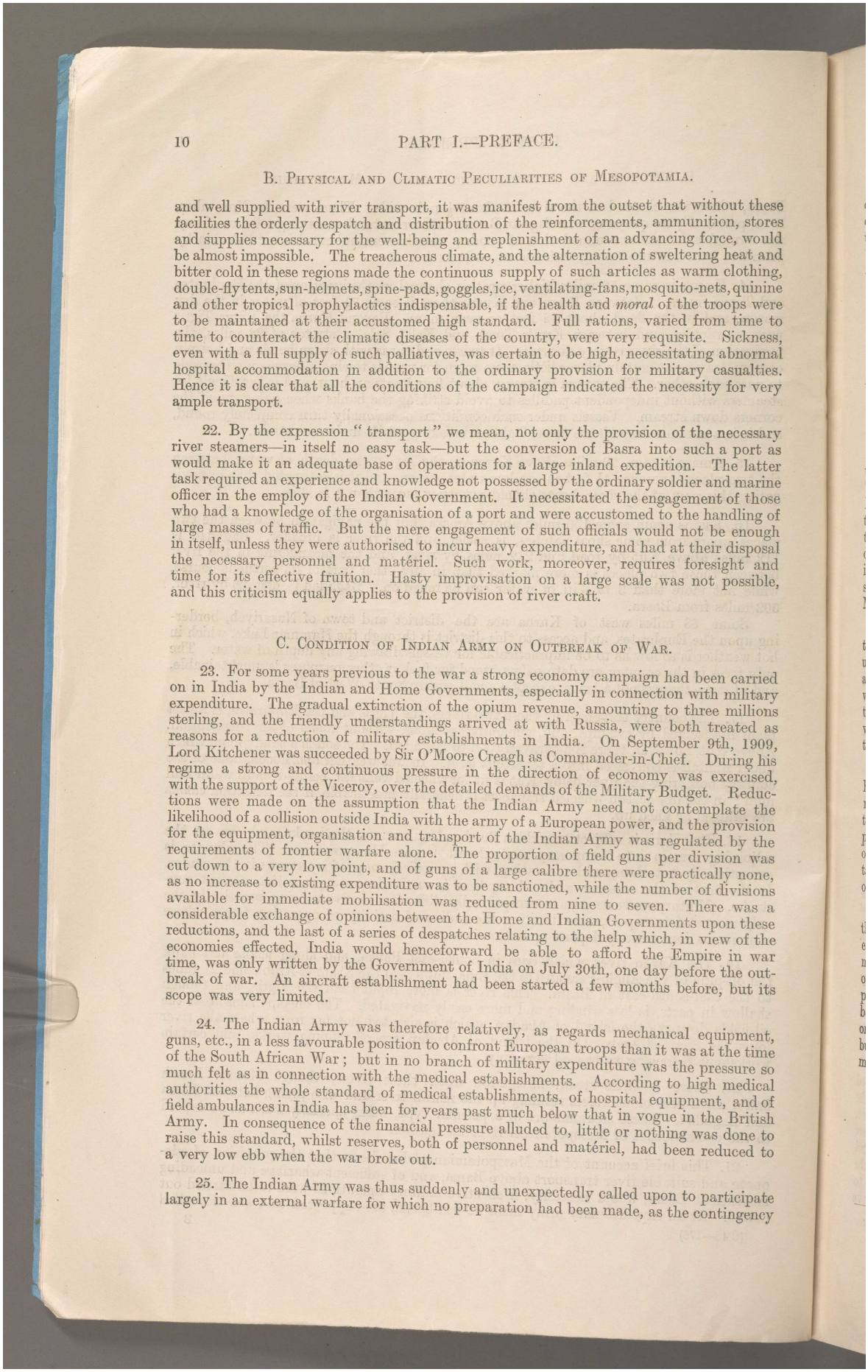
20. There is little steam navigation upon these rivers, though Messrs. Lynch had a small fleet of steamers running up the Karun river and also plying between Basra and Baghdad. These steamers are of a peculiar type, being specially built and adapted to the eccentricities of Mesopotamian river navigation.

21. This brief account of the Mesopotamian plains shows that the provision of adequate and suitable river transport above Basra, and of sufficient wharfage and unloading facilities at Basra, was a necessity, if effective military operations were to be carried out inland. As an expeditionary army must be sea-borne, sea-supported and sea-victualled

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000057

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



B. Physical and Climatic Peculiarities of Mesopotamia.

and well supplied with river transport, it was manifest from the outset that without these facilities the orderly despatch and distribution of the reinforcements, ammunition, stores and supplies necessary for the well-being and replenishment of an advancing force, would be almost impossible. The treacherous climate, and the alternation of sweltering heat and bitter cold in these regions made the continuous supply of such articles as warm clothing, double-fly tents, sun-helmets, spine-pads, goggles, ice, ventilating-fans, mosquito-nets, quinine and other tropical prophylactics indispensable, if the health and *moral* of the troops were to be maintained at their accustomed high standard. Full rations, varied from time to time to counteract the climatic diseases of the country, were very requisite. Sickness, even with a full supply of such palliatives, was certain to be high, necessitating abnormal hospital accommodation in addition to the ordinary provision for military casualties. Hence it is clear that all the conditions of the campaign indicated the necessity for very ample transport.

22. By the expression "transport" we mean, not only the provision of the necessary river steamers—in itself no easy task—but the conversion of Basra into such a port as would make it an adequate base of operations for a large inland expedition. The latter task required an experience and knowledge not possessed by the ordinary soldier and marine officer in the employ of the Indian Government. It necessitated the engagement of those who had a knowledge of the organisation of a port and were accustomed to the handling of large masses of traffic. But the mere engagement of such officials would not be enough in itself, unless they were authorised to incur heavy expenditure, and had at their disposal the necessary personnel and matériel. Such work, moreover, requires foresight and time for its effective fruition. Hasty improvisation on a large scale was not possible, and this criticism equally applies to the provision of river craft.

C. Condition of Indian Army on Outbreak of War.

23. For some years previous to the war a strong economy campaign had been carried on in India by the Indian and Home Governments, especially in connection with military expenditure. The gradual extinction of the opium revenue, amounting to three millions sterling, and the friendly understandings arrived at with Russia, were both treated as reasons for a reduction of military establishments in India. On September 9th, 1909, Lord Kitchener was succeeded by Sir O'Moore Creagh as Commander-in-Chief. During his regime a strong and continuous pressure in the direction of economy was exercised, with the support of the Viceroy, over the detailed demands of the Military Budget. Reductions were made on the assumption that the Indian Army need not contemplate the likelihood of a collision outside India with the army of a European power, and the provision for the equipment, organisation and transport of the Indian Army was regulated by the requirements of frontier warfare alone. The proportion of field guns per division was cut down to a very low point, and of guns of a large calibre there were practically none, as no increase to existing expenditure was to be sanctioned, while the number of divisions available for immediate mobilisation was reduced from nine to seven. There was a considerable exchange of opinions between the Home and Indian Governments upon these reductions, and the last of a series of despatches relating to the help which, in view of the economies effected, India would henceforward be able to afford the Empire in war time, was only written by the Government of India on July 30th, one day before the outbreak of war. An aircraft establishment had been started a few months before, but its scope was very limited.

24. The Indian Army was therefore relatively, as regards mechanical equipment, guns, etc., in a less favourable position to confront European troops than it was at the time of the South African War; but in no branch of military expenditure was the pressure so much felt as in connection with the medical establishments. According to high medical authorities the whole standard of medical establishments, of hospital equipment, and of field ambulances in India has been for years past much below that in vogue in the British Army. In consequence of the financial pressure alluded to, little or nothing was done to raise this standard, whilst reserves, both of personnel and matériel, had been reduced to a very low ebb when the war broke out.

25. The Indian Army was thus suddenly and unexpectedly called upon to participate largely in an external warfare for which no preparation had been made, as the contingency

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000c5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

C. Condition of Indian Army on Outbreak of War.

of such a conflict had been assumed both by the Home and Indian Governments to be outside the sphere of reasonable probability, and the possibility of it occurring was actually under discussion on the outbreak of war in August, 1914.

26. Under the existing organisation India was almost entirely dependent upon Great Britain for her supply of white officers, and a very large proportion of her war munitions come from the same source. British officers on the Indian establishment, who were on leave in England on the outbreak of war were impounded by the War Office, and an almost entire cessation of supply of war material was caused by the immense demands of the new armies raised in Great Britain. From this combination of untoward circumstances India found her resources for oversea expeditions somewhat exiguous, while the demands made upon her were large and comprehensive.

D. India's Oversea Expeditions on Outbreak of War.

27. A number of telegrams were laid before us showing the series of demands made upon India on the outbreak of war in connection with expeditions to be sent oversea. These expeditions were known as Expeditions A., B., and C.—A. being the expedition to France and Egypt, B. a defensive expedition to East Africa, and C. an offensive expedition to East Africa. The Indian Government strongly protested against being called upon to provide Expedition C., but they were overruled. Under protest they accepted the demands made upon them, but they pointed out that they would have extreme difficulty in supplying any expedition for work at Basra or in Mesopotamia. The composition and strength of these expeditions were settled by the end of September, 1914, *i.e.*, before the Mesopotamian Expedition, known as Force "D," was decided upon.

28. Generally speaking, the arrangements made were that the control and conduct of the expeditions A., B., and C. should be under the Home Government, who ultimately undertook to maintain the whole forces and provide the drafts and reinforcements for all troops other than native Indians. But at the beginning of the war the expeditions were equipped, and to a large extent maintained, out of India's resources, it being agreed that the whole expenditure over and above the ordinary cost to India of the forces engaged was to be borne by the Imperial funds. Certain other work in connection with sea transport and other branches of service was also given India, for which she was reimbursed.

29. It should be noted that practically the whole of the important telegrams which have been produced to us relating to Imperial demands upon the Indian Government for military expeditions outside India, and the replies of India to these demands, are "private" telegrams. A private telegram is the property of the person who sends it, and it is not the practice to record it on the file of any public Department, though this may be done at the option of the sender. Such telegrams are kept by the Private Secretaries and are, as a rule, taken away at the termination of office by the person who sends or receives them. Later on in our report we shall allude to this practice and its consequences.*

30. Before passing on to the consideration of the Mesopotamian Expedition, we think it right to draw attention to the demands which, in their totality, the overseas expeditions have imposed upon India. Lord Hardinge has told us that "Approximately 80,000 British Officers and men and 210,000 Indian officers and men were despatched overseas, inclusive of drafts and reinforcements." In considering, therefore, as we shall proceed to do, the Indian Government's responsibilities in Mesopotamia, it is fair to remember that the Mesopotamian Expedition was only part of a larger effort, which involved not only the maintenance in India of a considerable army for interior and frontier defence, but also the despatch overseas of troops approximating in number to the total army maintained in India before the war.

* See Part XI. (page 102).

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000035

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

1. Towards the close of September, 1914, it became self-evident that Turkey was likely to become a hostile belligerent, and in anticipation of this contingency Sir Edmund Barrow, Military Secretary of the India Office, wrote a Minute on September 26th, 1914, entitled: "The rôle of India in a Turkish War." He was strongly in favour of an expedition being sent to occupy Basra, and he concluded his Minute in the following words:—

> This seems the psychological moment to take action. So unexpected a stroke at this moment would have a startling effect:
>
> (1) It would checkmate Turkish intrigues and demonstrate our ability to strike.
>
> (2) It would encourage the Arabs to rally to us, and confirm the Sheikhs of Muhammerah and Koweit in their allegiance.
>
> (3) It would safeguard Egypt, and without Arab support a Turkish invasion is impossible.
>
> (4) It would effectually protect the oil-installation at Abadan.
>
> Such results seem to justify fully the proposed action.

2. With regard to the oil-installation referred to, we may explain that it belonged to the Anglo-Persian Oil Co., in which the British Government had recently become large shareholders on account of the importance attached by the Admiralty to the oil-supply from the Company's wells.

3. A considerable correspondence now took place between India and England, from which it appears that Enver Pasha and a number of German confederates were intriguing against the British Government, and that arms and ammunition were being sent to different places in Turkish territory, that many secret emissaries, including German officers, were about to try and raise a Jehad in the countries lying between Mesopotamia and India.

4. The Government ultimately decided, after consultation with India, that a part of Expedition A should be diverted to the Persian Gulf, and that it should land at Bahrein. The proposal seemed sound and justifiable in itself, as it was likely to prove an effective counter to German and Turkish intrigues. The force demanded by the India Office was originally only a brigade of the Sixth Division to be followed by the remainder of that division at a later date. In the telegrams which passed the Indian Government say:—

> It is assumed you are satisfied the advanced brigade is sufficiently strong for the purpose required, but, as we are unaware of its instructions and objective, we cannot judge of this.
>
> Is it your opinion that the expedition should be managed direct by the Indian Office, or do you desire it to be run by us?

In reply to this request for information, the Secretary of State on October 5th, stated that —

> The intention is to occupy Abadan, with the Force under orders, protect the oil-tanks and pipe-line, cover the landing of reinforcements, in the event of such being necessary, and show Arabs that our intention is to support them against the Turks. With a warship at Muhammereh the troops detailed are considered ample for the purposes mentioned. In the event of Turkey becoming a belligerent the management of the expedition will devolve on you, but I will, of course, communicate with you regarding the scope of the operations. In the meanwhile you should make preparations for the despatch of the remainder of the Division.

5. But the Imperial Government, in initiating this expedition apparently did not fully realise that such an expedition, if once started, might require reinforcement and enlargement beyond the one division suggested, and was sure to provoke violent opposition from the Turks who, under German supervision and control, would make strenuous efforts to drive the British forces out of Mesopotamia.

6. The expedition, which started from Bombay under General Delamain, received sealed orders, and arrived at Bahrein on October 23rd. Every effort was made to quiet the Arabs' apprehensions, and our political officers were successful in securing that object. On the 5th November war with Turkey was declared. Two fresh brigades were sent out under Sir A. Barrett which arrived on November 14th, and on November 22nd Basra was occupied without much difficulty after a number of skirmishes. So far the expedition had been a complete success, and in less than three weeks Basra—the key to Mesopotamia—had been taken and occupied. The suddenness and secrecy of the move had not only ensured success, but it had done so at very small cost to the expedition.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000089

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

7. The force, which now amounted to a division, was armed and equipped as for a frontier expedition, and its medical equipment was even below that scale, but the conditions which this expedition had to face, both climatic and military, proved to be of a very different character from those which prevail on the frontiers of India.

8. General Delamain's instructions were as follows :—

INSTRUCTIONS.

For the Officer Commanding, I.E.F. " D."

(1) The rôle assigned to your force is that of demonstrating at the head of the Persian Gulf. You will bear in mind that Great Britain is at peace with Turkey, and that you are therefore on no account to land troops in Turkish territory or to take any hostile action against the Turks without orders from the Government of India, except in the case of absolute military necessity.

(2) You will occupy Abadan Island with the object of :—

(*a*) Protecting the oil refineries, tanks and pipe line.
(*b*) Covering the landing of reinforcements, should these be required.
(*c*) Assuring the local Arabs of our support against Turkey.

(3) With these objects you may disembark the whole or such part of your force as you consider necessary at Abadan Island or Muhammareh, preferably at Abadan. In deciding on the point of disembarkation, however, you will work in concert with the naval and political authorities.

(4) In your dealings with the Arabs in Persian or Turkish territory you should be careful to avoid any action which is likely to cause friction with them, as their co-operation may be required in the event of a rupture with Turkey.

Communication will be opened with :—

Bin Saud, Shaikh (Amir) of Najd,
The Shaikh of Muhammareh,
The Shaikh of Kuwait

with the object of informing them of the despatch of your force.

(5) You will notify the arrival of the force off Abadan Island, and thereafter the progress of the disembarkation to the Chief of the General Staff, Simla.

(6) The destination of your force is being communicated to the following only :—

Naval Commander-in-Chief,
Resident, Baghdad,
Consul, Basra,
The three chiefs above-mentioned,
Major Smyth,
Political Officer with your force (Sir P. Cox).

(7) In the event of hostilities with Turkey, the remainder of the 6th (Poona) Division is being held in readiness to support your force, and will follow as quickly as possible.

In the meantime you will take such military and political action as you think feasible to strengthen your position, and, if possible, occupy Basra.

9. As before stated, on November 14th, Lieut.-General Sir A. Barrett arrived in Mesopotamia and took over command. We enclose all the operative portions of his orders which are relevant to our enquiry :—

ORDERS.

(1) The 16th Brigade under General Delamain is now on board its transports off Bahrein, Persian Gulf; and has been directed to hold itself in readiness for immediate action as required.

(2) The troops named in the margin will embark as soon as possible to reinforce Genera Delamain. You, with your divisional headquarters, will accompany this reinforcement, and on arrival assume command of the whole force detailed for operations at the head of the Persian Gulf. This force is designated Indian Expeditionary Force " D."

(3) Your objective will be telegraphed to you . . .

(4) Your disembarkation will be concerted in closest touch with the Senior Naval Officer, on whose ship you should travel if possible.

(5) Sir Percy Cox is now with General Delamain as Political Officer; he will come under your orders.

(6) Enclosed for your information and guidance are :—

(*a*) Copies of orders given to General Delamain.
(*b*) Copies of all subsequent correspondence with him and the Secretary of State.
(*c*) Plans of operations prepared by the General Staff, Simla, in the hope that they may be of assistance to you.

(7) Captain Pulley who takes these orders to you also carries ciphers, books and maps for the use of Force " D."

(10) You will satisfy yourself that the transports conveying your force are coaled to their full capacity, and that rations and fuel on the following scales have been placed on board.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00009a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

In addition to rations for the voyage, two months' supplies for the whole force, including baled fodder for animals and fuel.

(12) You will acknowledge receipt of these orders and enclosures by wire to the Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters, Delhi.

These orders were supplemented by the following telegram from the Chief of the General Staff, India, to General Barrett, dated November 13th :—

Please see the third paragraph of your orders. Your objective is Basrah. If after discussion with and taking over from Delamain, you consider your present force strong enough, you will move on Basrah.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00002c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

392

1. As soon as we had established our occupation of Basra, it was suggested by our Political Agent on the spot, Sir Percy Cox, that an announcement should be made that the occupation would be permanent. This suggestion was peremptorily swept on one side by His Majesty's Government, on the ground that it would be utterly contrary to the agreement come to between the Allies, if occupation of any conquered country were at once announced to be permanent, without waiting for the final settlement to be made at the close of war. But whilst this proposal was stopped, the Military Secretary of the India Office submitted, on November 27th, that it would be advisable to push on and occupy Kurna, 50 miles above Basra at the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris. The advantages of this position were :—

(1) Its commanding military value.
(2) The control it gives us of the whole navigable waterway to the Gulf.
(3) The possession of the whole of the rich cultivated area from Kurna to the sea.
(4) The fact that it completely covers Persian Arabistan and safeguards it from Turkish intrigues or incursions.
(5) The moral effect on the Arabs.
(6) The control of the telegraph up to this point and also of the passage of the Euphrates.

2. Lord Crewe, who was Secretary of State for India at this time, whilst ready to assent to an advance on Kurna, deprecated any idea of a further advance for the present. Operations against Kurna were successfully concluded on December 9th by the surrender of the town together with the Wali and 1,200 prisoners and nine guns. Our authority was thus established over the whole of the river tract between Kurna and the sea.

3. Early in 1915 news was received of a Turkish concentration for an attack on Basra, and the oil-pipe was threatened up the Karun River. The threatened attack of the Turks and the unrest of the Arabs necessitated further reinforcements, and another brigade was sent from India, arriving on February 7th, 1915. The Indian Government, though reluctant at first to send any further troops, finally acquiesced in the despatch of this force. This reinforcement proved insufficient, and the position became somewhat critical. There was an unsuccessful skirmish up the Karun River near Ahwaz, and the situation became so acute that on March 5th the Government of India were peremptorily ordered by the Home Government to despatch another brigade. The Government in England at the same time entirely relieved the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief from any responsibility as to what subsequently might occur in India from this further depletion of their available military reserves. This brigade, with two others, made up the second Division in Mesopotamia, which is hereafter known as the Twelfth Division.

4. On April 1st, the Government of India decided, but without obtaining the consent of the India Office, to reorganise the expedition as an Army Corps, and General Nixon and Staff were landed on April 9th. At Basra, General Melliss, with the additional forces previously sent, achieved a brilliant victory at Barjisiyah near Basra on April 14th, 1915, and there had also been successful fighting two days previously, near Shaiba. These victories and the increase of force enabled the expedition to consolidate its position; but, though the force was doubled, the medical equipment sent to the two last brigades was not up to the authorised scale of equipment, and practically two divisions had medical equipment for only one, and their equipment was upon the Indian and not the British scale. Neither was there made such an addition to the river steamer transport as to bring its proportions up to the requirements of the increased forces. These deficiencies do not seem to have had sufficient recognition by the Government of India.

121

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000be

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

PART IV.—THE ADVANCE TO AMARA AND KUT.

1. Sir John Nixon's assumption of the command of the Expedition makes a landmark in its history. The occupation of Kurna which had taken place in December, 1914, and the victory at Barjisiyah which coincided with his arrival, had realised the plan of the British Government in sending the Expedition, save that something still remained to be done to complete the protection of the supply of oil. Now we enter upon the story of operations which are distinguished from the earlier ones by three features.

First, the initiative (except in regard to the security of the oil-supply) no longer comes from London, but from Sir John Nixon, obeying the general instructions of the Indian Government, and sustained by their concurrence. Secondly, though the earlier advances up the Tigris are recommended only by the need for consolidating and defending what has already been gained, the influence of a desire to move forward towards Baghdad becomes more apparent. Thirdly, the problem of river transport becomes of crucial importance.

2. On the appointment of General Nixon as Commander of the Army Corps, he was given written instructions by Sir Beauchamp Duff before leaving India on March 24th, 1915, and those instructions were as follows :—

(1) Indian Expeditionary Force "D," now operating in Mesopotamia under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., has been reinforced and raised to an Army Corps Command, the details and organisation of which are shown in a proof copy of Organisation Orders, Force "D," attached.

(2) You will proceed to Basra, and take over command of I.E.F. "D" from Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett, who will retain command of the 6th Division.

(3) Please report by wire, both to the Chief of the General Staff, Simla, and to the Secretary of State for India, the date on which you take over the command.

(4) You will render a daily report of your operations to the Secretary of State and to the Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters, Simla.

(5) Sir Percy Cox, who is now with Lieutenant-General Sir A. Barrett as Political Officer, will come under your orders.

(6) Instructions as to the operations of your force are in a separate document

Operations.

(1) Your force is intended to retain complete control of the lower portion of Mesopotamia, comprising the Basra vilayet and including all outlets to the sea and such portions of the neighbouring territories as may affect your operations.

(2) So far as you may find feasible, without prejudicing your main operations, you should endeavour to secure the safety of the oilfields, pipe-line and refineries of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

(3) After acquainting yourself on the spot with the present situation you will submit :—

(i) A plan for the effective occupation of Basra vilayet ;
(ii) A plan for a subsequent advance on Baghdad.

(4) In all operations you will respect the neutrality of Persia so far as military and political exigencies permit.

Reports on Special Points.

The following points are to be especially reported upon by you, after examination of the conditions in Mesopotamia :—

(i) The advisability of reinforcing 6th Cavalry Brigade by one regiment of Imperial Service Cavalry, which could be utilised for guarding the oil pipe-line.

(ii) The quantity and description of animal transport required for Force "D" in the operations contemplated.

(iii) The employment of a light railway, of which 137 miles of track, 20 locomotives, 240 trucks, 23 brake vans and 2 traction engines are reported available and in good condition.

(iv) The employment of armoured motors and mechanical transport.

(v) Aircraft.

(vi) The adequacy and suitability of the river gunboats and transports *en route*, namely :—

2 Nile gunboats, armament not yet known.
7 Paddlers from the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, with 2 flats from Eastern Bengal State Railway.
2 motor-boats.
4 tugs.
4 steam launches and 2 steam cutters and 2 horse-boats, understood to be coming from Egypt.

3. At the time these instructions were given to General Nixon they were not known to the Home Authorities, though they were subsequently sent by mail to the India Office, where they were received on May 2nd. In his evidence before us, the Viceroy also stated that he did not remember having seen these instructions.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b8

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

On April 22nd, General Townshend arrived in Mesopotamia, and took command of the 6th Division. On the 24th, General Nixon directed him to proceed at once to Kurna and reconnoitre the Turkish position north of that place with a view to attacking it.

In the meantime the Home Government was concerned as to the safety of the oil pipe and on the 19th, the Secretary of State urged an immediate move against the Turks in that region, and on the same day General Nixon asked India for another Cavalry Brigade in the following terms :—

The Cavalry Brigade now with this Force cannot meet the demands which will shortly be made on that arm. The despatch of another Cavalry Brigade which should include a British Cavalry Regiment is requested. It is very necessary that we should have the British unit. In view of heavy work which obstructions in the river, and other works will cause, I also beg for the despatch of a battalion of Pioneers.

4. In reply to Sir John Nixon's request the Viceroy regretted that he was unable to supply any more Cavalry, and on April 24th, the Secretary of State made the following communication to the Viceroy :—

Your decision in connexion with Nixon's request for a brigade of Cavalry is concurred in. To say nothing of the impossibility of complying with his request the approach of the hot season renders it undesirable to despatch any more troops, especially British. An important offensive movement is indicated by Nixon's demand. Any advance beyond the present theatre of operations will not be sanctioned by Government at this moment, and I presume Nixon clearly understands this. During the summer we must confine ourselves to the defence of oil-interests in Arabistan and of the Basra Vilayet.

If an advance to Amara with a view to establishing an outpost for the purpose of controlling tribesmen between there and Karun, thus adding to the security of the pipe-line is possible after smashing the enemy in the direction of Karun I should, if such a proposal received your support, be prepared to sanction it. Any proposal involving possible demands for reinforcements or undue extension is to be deprecated however.

Our present position is strategically a sound one and we cannot at present afford to take risks by extending it unduly. In Mesopotamia a safe game must be played.

This telegram was apparently sent in ignorance that Sir John Nixon's instructions from India involved the occupation of the vilayet of Basra, which includes both Amara and Nasariyeh, and extends to within a few miles of Kut-el-Amarah.

5. General Nixon at that time had two military objectives in view—one on the Karun and the other on the Tigris River. He had at his disposal the Sixth and Twelfth Divisions and a Cavalry Brigade. There had been trouble up the Karun River, and General Gorringe, with two Infantry Brigades of the Twelfth Division and one Cavalry Brigade, was sent up to reopen communications with Ahwaz and to punish the enemy. This he did very effectively, and he was able to demonstrate on his left flank towards Bisaitin. This operation greatly assisted the impending advance of General Townshend up the Tigris, and the floods prevented reinforcements from joining the Turkish forces on the Tigris in time to oppose General Townshend's advance. The Turkish forces facing General Gorringe were so delayed on their march to Amara, that when they eventually reached it they found General Townshend in occupation of the town. A portion of their advance guard was captured, and the remainder had to seek safety in dispersion with the loss of two guns.

6. The Viceroy had advocated the advance to and occupation of Amara. Amara town possessed importance, not only from an administrative and commercial point of view, but also as a strategical military post, and there were obvious advantages likely to accrue from its occupation. On May 23rd, the Viceroy indicated in a telegram that Sir John Nixon proposed to take the offensive towards Amara, but he would not proceed beyond Amara without the sanction of the Secretary of State. In reply, on May 23rd, the Secretary of State sanctioned the proposed movement—

On the clear understanding that the General Officer Commanding Force "D" is satisfied that he can concentrate a sufficient garrison at Amara to defy any attack from Baghdad during the summer. . . . We can send him no more troops and he must clearly understand that his action must be guided by this fact. Arrangements for the move in question must have been made some days back, and I am of opinion that General Nixon should have submitted his proposals before the last moment. Under present circumstances only the Cabinet should decide questions jointly affecting civil and military policy.

As in the case of the telegram of April 24th, this communication seems also to imply a lack of appreciation by the Home Government of the scope of Nixon's instructions from India.

7. On May 27th, Lord Crewe left the India Office and was succeeded by Mr. Chamberlain, who at once endorsed his predecessor's policy of caution in the following words on May 28th :—

Till I know the immediate objects contemplated and the force with which General Nixon is advancing, I am unable to give further instructions. Our policy must depend partly on local factors, forces locally available, and partly on situation elsewhere. I should like to be informed what force General Nixon considers necessary for garrisoning Amara, and how generally he proposes to distribute his troops during the summer if the occupation of that town is contemplated.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000c0

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

In reply to that telegram the Viceroy, on June 2nd, generally supported the advance, and he added the opinion that it would be undesirable or dangerous to tie down General Nixon with precise orders in case they might not fit in with the local situation confronting him. "Under the original instructions he will, as soon as he is in a position to do so, submit a plan for the occupation of the Basra vilayet, which includes Amara. . . . We should not propose to authorise any advance beyond Amara for which his force is not adequate."

8. The advance on Amara—or "Townshend's Regatta," as it was called locally—was then very successfully carried out by that General. Boats of light draught were converted into light-armoured gunboats, and were very effective. The enemy were pursued with unrelenting vigour, in spite of the sweltering heat and the difficulties of navigation, and were driven from position to position. On June 3rd Amara was reached, and General Townshend with 22 sailors and soldiers achieved the surrender of a garrison of 700 Turks. Next day the Norfolk Regiment arrived, and all further opposition collapsed. As a military operation this action was audaciously planned and well-timed, and it deserves high praise, as it achieved great objects with comparatively small loss of life.

9. General Nixon now proposed, with the full support of the Government of India, to strike in the direction of Nasariyeh, a place which is 68 miles west of Kurnah, access to it being through the channel of the Euphrates and the Hammar Lake. The heat was terrific; still General Nixon deemed it expedient to carry on the enterprise. Major-General Gorringe, who was in charge of this column, succeeded in capturing Nasariyeh on July 25th, with 950 prisoners, 17 guns and much booty. These operations were initiated by the General on the spot, supported by the Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy of India, and acquiesced in by the Secretary of State. They appear to us to be sound from both a military and political point of view. Our casualties amounted to 533 of all ranks, but there was also much sickness.

10. This succession of victories seemed to stimulate the authorities in India to a fresh advance, and on July 27th the Viceroy sent a telegram to the Secretary of State to the effect that, "Now that Nasariyeh has been occupied the occupation of Kut-el-Amara is considered by us to be a strategic necessity." Communications ensued between the Secretary of State and the Viceroy, and ultimately the Secretary of State assented to the advance and accepted the military arrangements which General Nixon proposed to make after the advance.

11. On September 14th, the Headquarters of the Sixth Division reached Sheikh Saad, and on the 15th Abu Rummanah, which had been very strongly fortified by the Turks, was captured by us. On the 29th, after severe fighting, the Turks were in full flight, and our cavalry had entered Kut-el-Amara. During the fight we captured more than 1,700 prisoners and 13 guns, and inflicted heavy losses in men and material. This part of the campaign, again, was brilliantly executed by General Townshend and the Sixth Division of the Indian Army, and the whole series of military operations during the past three months had been so extraordinarily successful, that it is not surprising that a spirit of optimism and over-confidence as to what could be achieved overcame General Nixon and his Headquarter Staff. It is sometimes as dangerous to over-estimate victories as to under-rate them. These successes had been achieved by striking quickly and continuously, pursuit after victory being intense and persistent. Audacity had accomplished wonders; was there any limit to its possibilities?

12. Although the expedition had by hard fighting achieved externally a series of military successes, there had been even from the beginning of the campaign signs that the internal organisation, as regards river transport and the distribution of supplies through such transport, was working at its maximum capacity. From the time the expedition moved above Kurna, the river transport had been either insufficient or barely sufficient for its wants and could not sustain additional pressure. For reasons which we will subsequently examine, the provision of the type of steamer and barge specially adaptable to the Tigris had been delayed. Railway schemes had either been put on one side or not pressed by the Indian Government. On July 10th, Sir John Nixon forwarded to India a demand for six paddle-steamers, three stern-wheelers, eight tugs and forty-three barges. In making this demand, Sir John Nixon stated that—

"The inadequacy of the light-draught fleet available has, nevertheless, been a constant source of delay, uncertainty and anxiety. Now that it is clear that time and experience will not mend matters, but that wear and tear and the course of events must inevitably tend to steady diminution of the shipping fit for military operations in these rivers, I would strongly urge that the six paddlers, etc. . . . asked for in my telegram under reference, may be provided."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00001e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

13. A full and complete memorandum by General Kemball, Sir J. Nixon's Chief of the Staff, was forwarded with this request. In the memorandum he reviewed the whole position of the river transport, pointing out the inability of the present fleet to comply with the existing wants and the probability of a diminution in its effective number through breakdown and want of necessary repairs. He concluded by saying :—

In short, more powerful light-draught river steamers and plenty of them, and not only ships, but personnel and material for their maintenance, are regarded by the general Staff of this Force as our principal need.

It is also thought necessary to add the warning that if steps are not taken in good time to meet these requirements we are running grave risks of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment.

At the present time we cannot make the most effective use of the troops available owing to want of ships, and in any crisis insufficiency of river transport would limit the scope of reinforcements, while a breakdown of shipping might have still more serious consequences.

A properly equipped river fleet would double and treble the effective value of the Army in occupation of Mesopotamia at the present moment, and would continue to be an important military asset, even if a broad-gauge railway to Baghdad were built. The formation of this fleet is considered therefore as our special and most important need at the present time.

14. The additional transport asked for was sanctioned after a lengthy correspondence, but the execution of the order under any circumstances would have taken from 8 to 10 months before completion, and the ships would then have had to be conveyed either under their own steam or piecemeal to Basra. Under no circumstances could they have been available in Mesopotamia till towards the middle of the year 1916.

15. At this time the medical equipment of the expedition was not up to its proper strength, even according to the low scale of Indian regulation. Although there had been no actual breakdown, the wounded and sick, both in the actions on the Karun, at Nasariyeh, and at Kut-el-Amara had been put to considerable discomfort through lack of ambulance transport, stationary hospital accommodation and river hospital steamers. The medical personnel was barely sufficient. Any further forward movement up the river, associated with an influx of reinforcements at Basra, was almost certain to convert the existing deficiencies in medical personnel and *matériel* into a deadlock of the whole system, unless exceptional and continuous good luck should attend the new offensive movement.

16. General Nixon had now secured at Kut a highly convenient halting place. It was well described by Sir E. Barrow, Military Secretary at the India Office :—

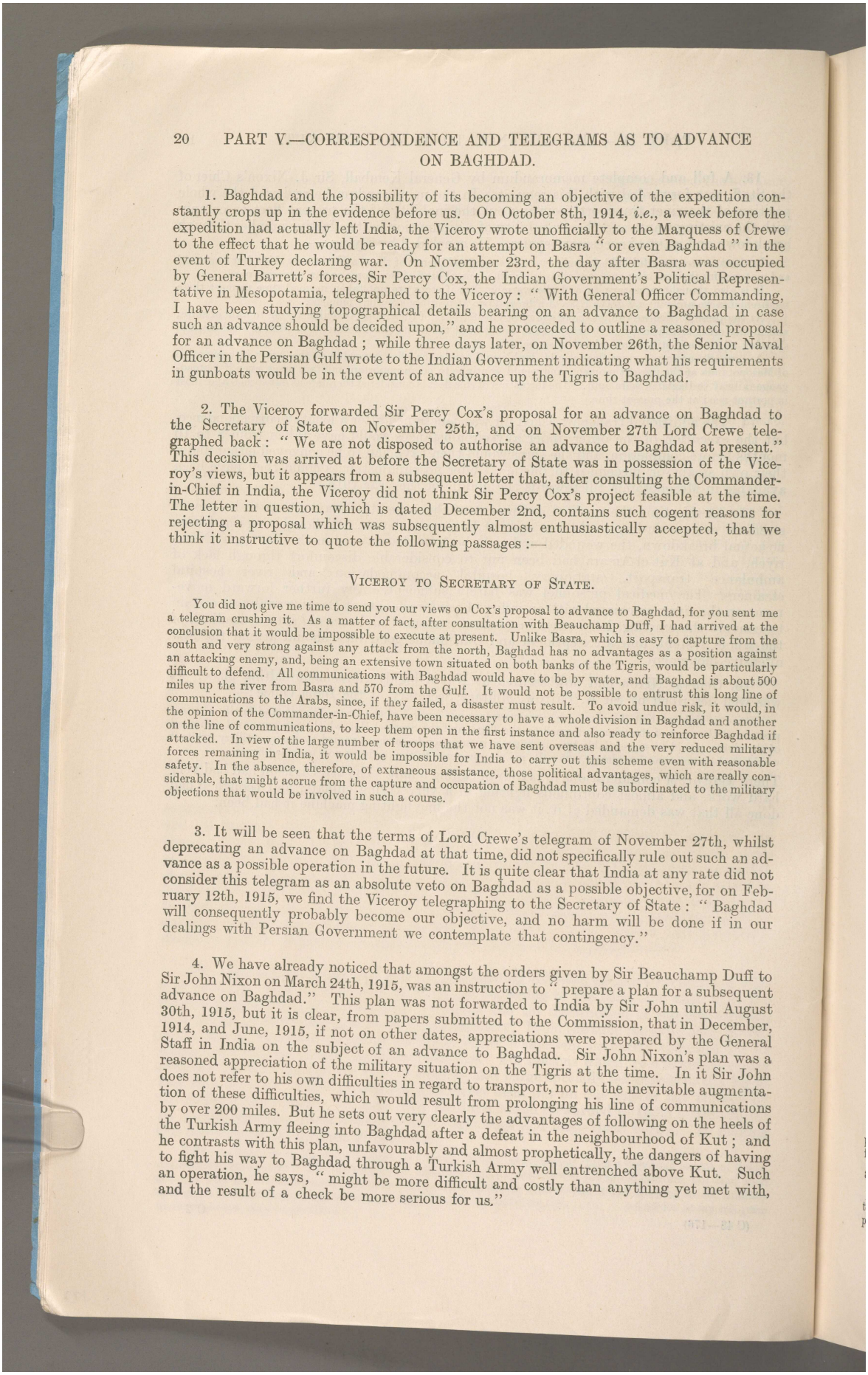
If we sit tight at Kut-el-Amara, we can consolidate our control of the Basra Vilayet, and fortify a strong position at the apex of the triangle formed by the Tigris and the Shatt-el-Hai, which with our naval command of the rivers, would be unassailable by any but a very superior force accompanied by heavy artillery, while it would at the same time completely cover the main approaches to the territory now occupied by us.

There were other considerations in favour of calling a halt. The 6th Division had had very hard work, and almost continuous fighting in a very trying climate, and though it had done all that was demanded of it, it was not the fine fighting machine it had been.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000085

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



PART V.—CORRESPONDENCE AND TELEGRAMS AS TO ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD.

1. Baghdad and the possibility of its becoming an objective of the expedition constantly crops up in the evidence before us. On October 8th, 1914, *i.e.*, a week before the expedition had actually left India, the Viceroy wrote unofficially to the Marquess of Crewe to the effect that he would be ready for an attempt on Basra " or even Baghdad " in the event of Turkey declaring war. On November 23rd, the day after Basra was occupied by General Barrett's forces, Sir Percy Cox, the Indian Government's Political Representative in Mesopotamia, telegraphed to the Viceroy : " With General Officer Commanding, I have been studying topographical details bearing on an advance to Baghdad in case such an advance should be decided upon," and he proceeded to outline a reasoned proposal for an advance on Baghdad ; while three days later, on November 26th, the Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf wrote to the Indian Government indicating what his requirements in gunboats would be in the event of an advance up the Tigris to Baghdad.

2. The Viceroy forwarded Sir Percy Cox's proposal for an advance on Baghdad to the Secretary of State on November 25th, and on November 27th Lord Crewe telegraphed back : " We are not disposed to authorise an advance to Baghdad at present." This decision was arrived at before the Secretary of State was in possession of the Viceroy's views, but it appears from a subsequent letter that, after consulting the Commander-in-Chief in India, the Viceroy did not think Sir Percy Cox's project feasible at the time. The letter in question, which is dated December 2nd, contains such cogent reasons for rejecting a proposal which was subsequently almost enthusiastically accepted, that we think it instructive to quote the following passages :—

Viceroy to Secretary of State.

You did not give me time to send you our views on Cox's proposal to advance to Baghdad, for you sent me a telegram crushing it. As a matter of fact, after consultation with Beauchamp Duff, I had arrived at the conclusion that it would be impossible to execute at present. Unlike Basra, which is easy to capture from the south and very strong against any attack from the north, Baghdad has no advantages as a position against an attacking enemy, and, being an extensive town situated on both banks of the Tigris, would be particularly difficult to defend. All communications with Baghdad would have to be by water, and Baghdad is about 500 miles up the river from Basra and 570 from the Gulf. It would not be possible to entrust this long line of communications to the Arabs, since, if they failed, a disaster must result. To avoid undue risk, it would, in the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief, have been necessary to have a whole division in Baghdad and another on the line of communications, to keep them open in the first instance and also ready to reinforce Baghdad if attacked. In view of the large number of troops that we have sent overseas and the very reduced military forces remaining in India, it would be impossible for India to carry out this scheme even with reasonable safety. In the absence, therefore, of extraneous assistance, those political advantages, which are really considerable, that might accrue from the capture and occupation of Baghdad must be subordinated to the military objections that would be involved in such a course.

3. It will be seen that the terms of Lord Crewe's telegram of November 27th, whilst deprecating an advance on Baghdad at that time, did not specifically rule out such an advance as a possible operation in the future. It is quite clear that India at any rate did not consider this telegram as an absolute veto on Baghdad as a possible objective, for on February 12th, 1915, we find the Viceroy telegraphing to the Secretary of State : " Baghdad will consequently probably become our objective, and no harm will be done if in our dealings with Persian Government we contemplate that contingency."

4. We have already noticed that amongst the orders given by Sir Beauchamp Duff to Sir John Nixon on March 24th, 1915, was an instruction to " prepare a plan for a subsequent advance on Baghdad." This plan was not forwarded to India by Sir John until August 30th, 1915, but it is clear, from papers submitted to the Commission, that in December, 1914, and June, 1915, if not on other dates, appreciations were prepared by the General Staff in India on the subject of an advance to Baghdad. Sir John Nixon's plan was a reasoned appreciation of the military situation on the Tigris at the time. In it Sir John does not refer to his own difficulties in regard to transport, nor to the inevitable augmentation of these difficulties, which would result from prolonging his line of communications by over 200 miles. But he sets out very clearly the advantages of following on the heels of the Turkish Army fleeing into Baghdad after a defeat in the neighbourhood of Kut ; and he contrasts with this plan, unfavourably and almost prophetically, the dangers of having to fight his way to Baghdad through a Turkish Army well entrenched above Kut. Such an operation, he says, " might be more difficult and costly than anything yet met with, and the result of a check be more serious for us."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000a5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

5. Sir John Nixon's plan was favourably endorsed by Sir Percy Lake, then Chief of the General Staff, at Simla, and sent by him, on September 9th, to the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff, who, however, minuted Sir Percy Lake's memorandum, "unless we can get back troops from France, Egypt, or elsewhere, I fear that Baghdad, invaluable as its capture would be, is out of the question."

6. It is not clear whether Sir John Nixon's plan and the Commander-in-Chief's Minute on it, were ever sent to England or submitted to the Viceroy, but it is clear that the latter never ruled out from his mind the possibility of advancing to Baghdad in the future. Thus, on August 27th, in writing to Sir Thomas Holderness, the Viceroy advocates an advance to Kut-el-Amara, and points out that "at Kut-el-Amara we are in a good position to strike at Baghdad should the necessity arise and more troops be available." Again, on September 17th, in writing to Mr. Chamberlain, he emphasises the desirability of advancing to Baghdad if only sufficient troops can be made available.

But whatever may have been in the minds of the authorities in England, India and Mesopotamia, with regard to Baghdad as an ultimate possibility, it does not appear to have been brought forward as an immediately practicable proposition until October 3rd.

7. The position of the Expeditionary Force at that time was as follows :—Kut had been occupied on September 28th, and General Townshend, with characteristic dash, had pushed on his cavalry in pursuit of the enemy, and on October 4th they were at Aziziyeh, some 50 miles beyond Kut on the road to Baghdad.

On October 3rd, General Nixon, as General Officer Commanding the expedition, telegraphed to the Secretary of State :—

"I consider I am strong enough to open road to Baghdad, and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Aziziyeh."

On the next day he telegraphed to India :—

"With reference to my suggestion to open by another general action the road to Baghdad, will you kindly let me know whether my force is to be reinforced to the extent of another division from France in order that my position there may be maintained."

These telegrams were despatched on the assumption that the demoralisation of the retreating force was such that our pursuing vanguard could get into Baghdad upon their heels. But only a day later it became clear from further communications that the enemy were not so disorganised as to prevent their making a serious stand, and General Townshend was cognisant of this fact.

8. On the 5th October General Nixon telegraphed that the enemy appeared to be no longer retreating, but had occupied the Ctesiphon position, and thereby constituted a threat to us. Still, he considered it desirable to smash him while he could, and he "saw nothing which would justify letting slip such an opportunity." It is necessary to emphasise this point, as it is clear from subsequent telegrams that the sanction of the Home Government to advance on Baghdad was given on the supposition that the Turks between Kut and Baghdad were not likely to offer really serious opposition. The policy of the Cabinet up to that date in Mesopotamia had been defined by Lord Crewe in a telegram dated April 24th, 1915, to the Viceroy, the concluding words of which were :

Any proposal involving possible demands for reinforcements or undue extension is to be deprecated however. Our position is strategically a sound one, and we cannot at present afford to take risks by extending it unduly. In Mesopotamia a safe game must be played.

9. This policy was endorsed by a telegram from Mr. Chamberlain, who had on May 27th succeeded Lord Crewe as Secretary of State for India. The relations of the Cabinet to the officers in the field were further defined in a telegram on May 23rd already alluded to, in which the Secretary of State, while sanctioning the advance to Amara, added :

Under present circumstances only the Cabinet should decide questions jointly affecting civil and military policy.

10. On October 4th, in accordance with that policy, the Secretary of State sent two telegrams to the Viceroy, one private and one official, which ran as follows :—

Private. Sir J. Nixon's plans. Please refer to my official telegram of to-day on this subject. Your private letter of the 10th ultimo seems to render it imperative to stop the further advance of General Nixon's force. If you will communicate to me your views early I shall be grateful.

and :—

Will you kindly inform me what General Nixon's present intentions are, as, if on account of navigation troubles there is no probability of the retreating enemy being caught up and smashed, there is no object in the pursuit being continued.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000022

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

The latter telegram was repeated to General Nixon from India in a telegram dated October 5th, which also stated :—

"At present no reinforcements can be spared from this country, so that unless arrangements can be made by the Secretary of State for the despatch of an Indian Division from France an advance on Baghdad cannot be carried out. Under these circumstances there seems to be no advantage in concentrating at present so far forward as Aziziyeh as the only gain in this is if a move toward Baghdad takes place. Commander-in-Chief considers that no advance in strength should be carried out beyond Kut-al-Amara until it is certain (and this appears to us very doubtful), that the reinforcements from France may be expected.

Finally on October 6th, the Viceroy sent the following telegram to the Secretary of State :—

"Orders to stop further advance were telegraphed yesterday to General Nixon."

Thus the plan of an immediate advance on Baghdad was apparently abandoned ; and that this was the belief at the front in Mesopotamia is evident from the following Divisional Order issued by General Townshend on October 11th, 1915 :—

The General Officer Commanding 6th Division wishes to tender his grateful thanks to all ranks of the division for the gallant and noble spirit in which they have advanced some 180 miles from Amara, defeated the enemy in an extremely strong position, and moved on another 50 miles or so in pursuit.

That we did not catch the retreating Turks is due to the fact of the shallow water of the river, and to the fact that the Turks are endowed by nature with strong knees.

He wishes he could have announced to the troops the end of their labours in Mesopotamia, but these operations naturally depend on those operations now being carried out in the Dardanelles, whence we now hope for good news.

He desires to tell the troops that orders have been received from Government in England that we are, for the present, to hold the position we have gained and thus our present orders are not to advance to Baghdad. It is the intention, therefore, of the G.O.C. to make the force as comfortable as it is possible to do under the circumstances ; tents, &c., will be brought up as soon as possible.

(Signed) R. G. PEEL,
Colonel, General Staff.

11. Meanwhile on October 4th the Cabinet met, and the Secretary of State reported the position to them, and the opinion of the Cabinet was conveyed to the Viceroy on October 5th in the following terms :—

The position was reported yesterday to the Cabinet, and they have decided to appoint a committee of Foreign Office, General Staff, Admiralty, and India Office, to consider in all its possibilities and policy advance on Baghdad.

If forces available are sufficient to take and hold the place, political reasons were thought to make occupation desirable. . . . It is thought by Barrow that we might be able to capture Baghdad, but that forces weakened by further losses would be insufficient both to hold it securely against counter-attacks and to maintain communication. Kitchener can hold out no hope of reinforcements from Europe or Egypt.

12. On the following day, October 5th, General Nixon replied to the Secretary of State's telegram of October 4th, as to "navigation troubles" in the following terms :—

By marching the troops with land transport and by lightening the vessels and employing them to tow loaded barges, we have overcome the difficulties of navigation . . . . . .

The view I take is that before us lies an enemy who has been shaken, who is short of ammunition and has lost 13 guns, and while we have the chance it is obviously profitable for military reasons to overwhelm him I hope I can destroy him, as the position in which he has taken refuge is one where we are able to manœuvre.

Should we let such an opportunity slip by us, I can see no arguments by which we could justify ourselves.

As will be subsequently seen, misunderstanding arose about the first sentence of this telegram. It was understood to affirm a general sufficiency of transport, but it really only answered the Viceroy's telegram of October 4th,* relating to the immediate local difficulties of navigation.

In a private telegram of the same day, the Viceroy stated :—

The following is the present situation :—

With the forces at his disposal General Nixon could, without much difficulty, capture Baghdad, and at the same time take or destroy the Turkish steamers and other boats thus practically preventing any further attacks down stream. But without himself being reinforced by one Division of troops he could not remain there exposed to attack by Turkish reinforcements from Mosul or Aleppo. To advance to Baghdad and to retire later, under pressure from the Turks, would be a grave error. Consequently Nixon must remain at Kut-el-Amara unless it be possible to reinforce him from elsewhere other than from India.

On the 7th, a telegram from the Viceroy stated that the Commander-in-Chief in India agreed that it would be unwise to occupy Baghdad with the present forces.

As regards this telegram, Sir Beauchamp Duff informed us that the telegram which he proposed to send was couched in somewhat different terms, and ran as follows :—

I have consulted the Commander-in-Chief, who has no doubt that as things stand at present we could capture Baghdad, but that our available troops would not be sufficient to hold it should the Turks mass troops for a counter-attack and that the effect of entering Baghdad and subsequently having to retire would be disastrous Moreover, he doubts whether in the present state of the river, combined with our present

* See para. 10 *ante*. This telegram was communicated to General Nixon.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000015

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

insufficient number of light-draught steamers, we could adequately supply our troops there. As a military operation, therefore, he holds that to occupy Baghdad with our present forces would be most unwise.

(Then follow various reasons in justification of this contention.)

The Viceroy did not accept this telegram, and in his reply omitted all allusion to the Commander-in-Chief's doubts as regards the sufficiency of existing river transport, which doubts therefore were unknown to the Home Authorities.

13. On October 8th, the Secretary of State addressed the following question to General Nixon :—

Very urgent. To both occupy and hold Baghdad what addition to your present force are you confident will be necessary ?

and on the 8th the Secretary of State sent the following telegram to the Viceroy :—

Private. The Cabinet are so impressed with great political and military advantages of occupation of Baghdad that every effort will be made by us to supply the force that is necessary. We do not wish to attempt it with insufficient forces. I shall be glad to know whether you are satisfied that one division will suffice.

On the same day General Nixon telegraphed as follows : " No additions are necessary to my present force to beat Nur-ed-din and occupy Baghdad ; of this I am confident," but he added that he would require an additional division and one cavalry regiment to enable him permanently to occupy Baghdad.

14. On October 9th, in a telegram, the Secretary of State stated to the Viceroy :—

Private. I hope in a few days to give you definite information as to possibility of reinforcements. Meanwhile Nixon should maintain his present position and he should be prepared to advance if reinforcements asked for can be sent to him. I should be glad if you would instruct him accordingly.

On the same day the Viceroy in a telegram to the Secretary of State states as follows :—

Private. I am glad of the Cabinet's decision. After consultation with Sir B. Duff, I am of the opinion that Sir John Nixon is in the best position to judge as to the number of troops that will be required, and when a division is mentioned by him we understand him to mean a division fully organised with its proper proportion of British troops and guns and its divisional cavalry. He asks for a cavalry regiment in addition to this.

We are prepared to accept his opinion, but we consider that it will also be necessary to ensure that the British units now with him are to be kept up to strength by drafts from England, and these cannot be supplied by this country. The Indian units will be kept at full strength by us. We may add that the reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after the capture of that city, and this is the period which we calculate must elapse before the Turks could concentrate in strength to attempt its recapture.

15. On the 14th, the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy :—

Private. Reinforcements for Force " D." A question has been raised as to the sufficiency of the reinforcements which General Nixon has asked for, or even of two divisions to hold Baghdad against forces which might eventually be brought against him by the Turks. The General Staff are now considering this, and the Cabinet hope to be given their report in three days.

We continue to attach the greatest importance to the capture of Baghdad if we can hold it securely. Please let me know whether the chances of eventual successful advance are prejudiced by delay.

to which the Viceroy replied :—

Private. With reference to your private wire, regarding Baghdad, dated October 14th. Unless Baghdad is strongly reinforced by the Turks in the meantime, and of this we see no immediate signs, the chances of eventual successful advance will not be prejudiced by delay, although owing to the longer time the enemy will have at their disposal for completing their defences the step will be more costly.

16. On the 15th, the Secretary of State telegraphed to Viceroy :—

Private. Advance on Baghdad. If report of the General Staff is favourable to occupation of Baghdad, the War Office contemplate transfer of the two Indian Infantry divisions from France to Egypt with the intention of placing them at your disposal for Mesopotamia. But they cannot guarantee date of departure owing to uncertainty of position in Near East and possible need of transport for other purposes. They do not consider it would be safe under the circumstances for Nixon to advance to Baghdad before these troops have actually started from Egypt unless you can undertake to supply him temporarily with a division from India in the event of these reinforcements being unavoidably delayed. I request early reply as to the possibility of your undertaking the liability.

This is in continuation of my private telegram of October 14th.

17. On October 17th, the Viceroy telegraphed :—

After consultation with the Commander-in-Chief, we agree that in no case could I undertake to supply from India, even temporarily, a further force of the strength of a division.

On the 21st the Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy in a full and reasoned telegram marked " Private," discussed alternative courses of action and gave their opinion in favour of the plan of taking and occupying Baghdad. This, they stated, would present no difficulty whatever provided they were guaranteed reinforcements of a full division of troops reaching Mesopotamia in two months.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000092

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

18. On the 21st October the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy, as follows :—

Private. Baghdad advance. Report of combined Staffs estimates that General Nixon has only some 9,000 Turkish troops and some irregulars to deal with for next two months ; that Turkish forces may be somewhat increased by the end of the year, and they might conceivably reach a total of 60,000 by end of January, and even larger figures during 1916. They consider if reinforced by two Indian Divisions from France he might, with assistance of river flotilla, face risk of attack by 60,000, but there would remain possibility of enemy receiving at later date further reinforcements. The staffs hold, therefore, that from a military point of view it would be unwise to occupy Baghdad unless military authorities have power to withdraw troops at once without regard to political considerations if military exigencies make this necessary. The War Office would give the two Indian Divisions, but could not under any circumstances spare further reinforcements, and are doubtful of their capacity even to supply drafts if wastage from casualties or sickness is severe. They think Baghdad can be easily taken and held for some time, but it might become untenable later as explained above. At present moment it seems the German attempt to break through to Constantinople will succeed, and our position and prospects in Gallipoli are most uncertain. . . . Arabs are wavering, and will probably join Turks, unless we can ffer them great inducement. We are therefore, in great need of striking success in the East. . . . It is suggested that we should occupy Baghdad, giving assurances to Arab leaders that we favour creation of Arab State independent of Turks. . . . Unless you consider possibility of eventual withdrawal is decisive against the advance, all other considerations seem to us to render it desirable, and we are prepared to order it.

On the 23rd October the Viceroy replied :—

Private. Your private telegram of the 21st instant. Baghdad advance. Your description of the situation in the Near East proves conclusively the necessity for action in the Middle East. We accept the calculation of the combined Staffs of possible strength of Turks that may with time be brought against us ; but with reinforcement of two Indian divisions from France we believe that Sir J. Nixon has a fair prospect of being able to hold his own against 60,000 or 70,000 Turks, provided he occupied Baghdad as soon as he is ready. Although I realise that the occupation of Baghdad is a provocation that will probably determine the Turks to send large forces to attack us, which however, will not be easy for them to do, and although the bad effect of a possible withdrawal in the future cannot be ignored, I am confident right policy at the present time is to take the risk and to occupy Baghdad with the least possible delay, relying upon you to send two divisions from France as quickly as possible to Mesopotamia. On this understanding I propose, unless I hear from you before Monday to the contrary, to order Nixon to march on Baghdad at once.

Finally, on the 23rd October, the Secretary of State sent the following telegram :—

If Nixon is satisfied that the force he has available is sufficient for the operation, he may march on Baghdad. Two divisions will be sent to him as soon as possible, but owing to relief and transport arrangements, reinforcements will take time to despatch. Probable date will be (? wired) later.

19. During the period of three weeks covered by these telegrams a number of meetings had been held, and memoranda written by the Military Advisers of the Government in London. These papers and consultations were less concerned with the taking of Baghdad than with the question whether it would be possible to hold it after it had been taken. On October 4th, General Barrow, the Military Secretary, India Office, had written a memorandum in which he expressed the opinion that to attempt to go to Baghdad with the present force was to incur unjustifiable risk.

On October 6th, the General Staff, in a memorandum, stated that to hold Baghdad, except with forces very much larger than at present with Sir John Nixon, and with proportionately increased river transport, would be to court disasters. 60,000 Turks could be assembled and conveyed within a few weeks to Baghdad, and to withdraw from Baghdad after occupation would have a most unfortunate effect.

On October 14th, another paper was drawn up by the General Staff on the question of occupying Baghdad. They estimated that if Baghdad was to be taken and occupied, General Nixon must have reinforcements of two Indian divisions. On the 19th the joint Naval and Military General Staff further considered the question, and came to the conclusion that if there were very strong political objections to a withdrawal from Baghdad then its occupation should not be attempted.

On October 16th General Barrow, the Military Secretary, India Office, modified his previous proposals by stating that if he had a firm promise of two divisions, he was entirely in favour of going to Baghdad.

20. Expert opinion was therefore unanimous on the point that to attempt to take and occupy Baghdad with the existing force would be an unjustifiable risk, and that for the task of holding Baghdad, General Nixon should have a reinforcement of two divisions. There was, however, a concurrence of expert opinion that Nixon's existing force was sufficient in the first instance to take Baghdad.

21. In addition to the ordinary Military Authorities with whom questions of this kind

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

are discussed by the Government, the Prime Minister summoned a special Inter-Departmental Committee, composed of members of the India Office, the War Office, the Admiralty and the Foreign Office, to which he submitted certain questions on the subject of the strategical situation in Mesopotamia. Mr. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, had some doubts as to whether he or Sir Thomas Holderness should be Chairman of this Committee, but he finally decided in favour of Sir Thomas Holderness in the belief that the other members of the Committee would more freely express their opinions before an Under-Secretary than a Secretary of State. Sir Thomas Holderness, though a distinguished civilian, had no special experience or training in the class of questions submitted to the Committee. The other members of the Committee were :—

Sir Edmund Barrow, Military Secretary, India Office.
Vice-Admiral Sir Douglas Gamble, Admiralty.
Sir Louis Mallet, Foreign Office.
Mr. Launcelot Oliphant, Foreign Office.
Colonel Talbot, War Office.
Captain Paddon, War Office.

22. The case was one of such high importance that, in our opinion, the Representatives of the War Office and the Admiralty on the Committee should have been officers of official position and experience more nearly on a par with those of Sir E. Barrow, who was the Senior General of the Indian Army and also Head of the Military Department of the India Office. During their discussions, the question of transport, as we ascertained from Sir Thomas Holderness, became quite a subsidiary subject. There were three communications from Mesopotamia—one contained in a despatch and memorandum, dated 10th July, 1915, and two in telegrams dated respectively 25th September, 1915, and 9th October,* 1915, which unmistakably expressed the inadequacy of the river transport even for the wants of the existing force of two divisions. These documents, though received at the India Office, were either unknown to the Committee or, if they were brought before them, were not seriously considered. Sir Thomas Holderness told us that his apprehensions as regards transport were largely removed by General Nixon's telegram of the 5th October,† stating that "by marching the troops with land transport and by lightening the vessels and employing them to tow loaded barges, we have overcome the difficulties of navigation." He did not appreciate the limitations of this assurance, and thought it applied to the general question of adequate river transport. After discussing the definite questions put to them, Sir Thomas Holderness's Committee came to the conclusion that, on both political and military grounds, the occupation of Baghdad was most desirable if the necessary reinforcements could be assured. Failing these, General Nixon was not to attempt it.

23. It was the promise of reinforcements that alone induced this Committee to advocate an advance to Baghdad, but, as in the case of the other authorities consulted, they apparently passed over the all-important problem of how these reinforcements, after arrival at Basra, were to be conveyed as fighting units to the front, a distance of some 500 miles. We lay stress upon this serious omission, especially in the case of the Committee presided over by Sir Thomas Holderness. The despatch of troops from France or Egypt could not affect any fighting around Baghdad after its capture, unless, after their arrival in Mesopotamia, they were conveyed as an organised force to the scene of action. The arrival of troops at Basra, without transport or their proper medical complement, with their Headquarter Staff scattered and disorganised and without the means of conveyance up the river, was not a reinforcement in the sense defined by the Viceroy in his private telegram of the 9th of October, in which he thus expressed himself :—

> We may add that the reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after the capture of that city, and this is the period which we calculate must elapse before the Turks could concentrate in strength to attempt its recapture.

24. It seems to us that it should have been a primary duty of the Military Advisers of the Government, both in India and in England, to have thoroughly investigated the conditions attending the dispatch of troops from Europe and Egypt and their transport up the Tigris, so as to be sure that they could perform the functions assigned to them of being a fighting addition to the advance columns located in Baghdad.

In this connection it should be noted that Sir Beauchamp Duff, in his examination before the Commission placed the same interpretation as did Sir Thomas Holderness, upon the telegram of General Nixon of the 5th† of October, in which he used the words: "We have overcome the difficulties of Navigation."

* See Part IX., paras. 8 and 10. † See paragraph 12, *ante*.

126

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00001e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Sir Percy Lake, who at the time this telegram was received at Simla was Chief of the General Staff, did not accept Sir Beauchamp Duff's interpretation of the meaning of this telegram, and he told us so in his evidence. General Kemball, who, as Chief of Sir John Nixon's Staff in Mesopotamia, had sent the telegram, emphatically repudiated Sir Beauchamp's reading of it.

A reference to the telegraphic correspondence, makes it self-evident that General Nixon's reply referred to the delay caused to the pursuing river column by shoals and shifting banks, as reported by General Nixon to the Secretary of State on October the 1st. It in no sense counteracted or modified his previous statement that his transport was inadequate. Indeed, only four days later, on October 9th, he asked, as an urgent need, for more river craft to be procured from India and indicated that his operations were very seriously impeded by the insufficiency of his existing river craft.

25. The warning conveyed in a private telegram of October 21st* from the Secretary of State to the Viceroy of a possible concentration of 60,000 Turks at Baghdad in January, 1916, was acknowledged by the Viceroy in a private and reasoned telegram accepting the risk. The information thus conveyed introduced a new factor into the situation, and one which ought at once to have been forwarded to Sir John Nixon. Sir John Nixon in his evidence before us could not recollect receiving this information, and Sir Beauchamp Duff has informed us that this telegram was not transmitted to Mesopotamia. He accounted for this oversight by the fact that it was a private telegram to the Viceroy of which he had no official cognisance, nor was it filed in his Department. Sir John, however, intimated that if he had been warned in time he could have stopped the advance to Baghdad even on November 17th, *i.e.* a month later than this telegram. On that day, *i.e.* four days before the battle of Ctesiphon, the War Office telegraphed from London to General Nixon that General von der Goltz had left for Baghdad on November 10th, and that 30,000 Turks were marching from Anatolia to Irak. On the 20th General Nixon replied :—

> For more than a fortnight my own agents have been giving me similar news of a large force under Von der Goltz, but at present I do not accept these reports as conclusive for various reasons.

Sir John Nixon's over-confidence in his ability to crush the Turkish forces between him and Baghdad might have induced him in October to ignore the warning from London as to the large enemy reinforcements which might be brought down to Baghdad. Still, the neglect to convey to him so vital a piece of information reflects seriously on the system which allowed such inadvertence to be possible. If the substance of this important telegram had been conveyed to the Viceroy in an official instead of a private telegram, it would, as a matter of course, have been transmitted to Mesopotamia.

26. In alluding to the introduction by the Cabinet of political considerations into the consultations of their military advisers, we do not wish to imply that this widening of their survey is to be condemned or that it necessarily subjects those so acting to criticism or censure. In a world-wide war the views, wants and aims of allies must be considered and weighed, and operations may become necessary for the continuance and consolidation of existing alliances and of the co-operation which such alliance ensures. But when such considerations do obtrude themselves into a military campaign the incidence of responsibility tends to shift itself. The military experts cannot be made solely responsible for the consequences of a decision into the consideration of which outside political factors have necessarily entered.† Sir Beauchamp Duff in part of his evidence laid stress upon the introduction of outside political considerations into the conduct of the campaign, and he stated that when such political arguments were adduced by those above him in authority, he was ready to incur greater risks than would be justifiable if the matters under discussion were to be regarded solely from a military standpoint.

27. In the decision arrived at by the Home Authorities, they were doubtless largely influenced by the extreme confidence of those on the spot. There seems to have been a general idea—not only amongst the Headquarter Staff of General Nixon, but also amongst the Commander-in-Chief's Staff in India—that there would not be any serious fighting before Baghdad was reached. Even amongst the General Staff at Whitehall, the idea prevailed that the difficulty was not to get to Baghdad but to remain there. The retreating Turks were supposed to be thoroughly demoralised, and insufficient attention was paid to the warnings of the War Office Intelligence Department that a very large number of

* See paragraph 18, *ante*.

† See Secretary of State's telegrams of October 5th, 8th, and 21st, in paras. 11, 13, and, 18 *ante*.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000051

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Turkish reinforcements would shortly be concentrated at Baghdad. It might also have been surmised that these reinforcements under Marshal von der Goltz would be disciplined and trained under German officers and armed with the most modern equipment.

28. It is not very easy to fathom the interchange of views between General Townshend and General Kemball, Chief of the Staff to Sir John Nixon, as to the advisability of an advance to Baghdad. On October 3rd an important telegram was sent by General Townshend to General Kemball. Sir John Nixon states that he does not remember seeing it, but it is surprising if he did not. It certainly should not have been dealt with without reference to him, and in our opinion it should have been passed on to higher authorities. In it General Townshend says :—

> If on the other hand it is the desire of Government to occupy Baghdad, then, unless great risk is to be run, it is, in my opinion, absolutely necessary that the advance from Kut should be carried out methodically by two divisions or one Army Corps or by one Division supported closely by another complete Division, exclusive of the garrisons of the important places of Nasariyeh, Ahwaz, and Amara.

On the same day General Kemball answered this communication, and informed General Townshend that it was Sir John Nixon's intention " to open the way to Baghdad, as he understands another division will be sent here from France, and he would like to know your plan for effecting this object." General Townshend received this the same day, and noted on it in his diary : " There is nothing definite known about this, and no earthly chance of its being in this country in time." Nevertheless, in his answer, also dated October 3rd, he wires to General Kemball : " You did not mention the arrival of a division from France in this country, and that makes all the difference in my appreciation." These two statements are not easy to reconcile, but General Townshend, like many other born fighters, was somewhat mercurial and changeable in his views.

29. A fortnight later, on October 19th, General Kemball visited General Townshend on other business, and the above correspondence was discussed by them at this and at two subsequent interviews, viz., October 30th and November 5th. The matter is not quite clear, but General Kemball's opinion is that the reinforcements which General Townshend received—*i.e.*, five squadrons of cavalry, three battalions of infantry, and a R.H.A. battery —were very much what he asked for, and there was also the promise of two divisions from France, the leading troops of which General Kemball expected to arrive at Basra at the end of November. Whether General Townshend was satisfied or not is not certain, but he does not seem to have pressed his objections hard.

But misgivings were present in his mind as late as November 2nd, for on that day he wrote to the Viceroy a letter in which these expressions occur :—

> These troops of mine are tired and their tails are not up, but slightly down ; the Mahomedans are not pleased at approaching the sacred precincts of Suliman Pak at Ctesiphon—the troops are not confident and have had enough ; as it is now, the British soldier and the Sepoy, as the Roman soldier did under Belisarius, look over their shoulders and are fearful of the distance from the sea, and go down, in consequence, with every imaginable disease.

These are not the words of a General commanding a force in the field who has confidence in the capacity of his troops to achieve the task assigned to them.

Apparently the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff, did not at the time see these communications from General Townshend, but if he had, we have his word for it that they would not have materially changed his views as to the wisdom of the advance. But General Townshend was an experienced and successful commander, and in our opinion his words were well worth weighing, especially in connection with an enterprise of which he was the selected chief.

30. It should be added that several months later, on April 7th, 1916, General Townshend sent in an amplification of his appreciation of October 3rd, which seems to have been in his mind when he wrote that appreciation. On April 7th, he said : " My opinion most certainly was that we were taking a grave risk in continuing a strategic movement against Baghdad with my weak Division alone, the British battalions of which were reduced to half their strength, and besides this the drafts to replace casualties at the battle of Kut consisted of raw recruits from India, while there were no other troops to support me, and the distance to the sea was over 300 miles." General Kemball in giving evidence before us did not accept these statements as to the condition of the troops. He regarded them as exaggerated.

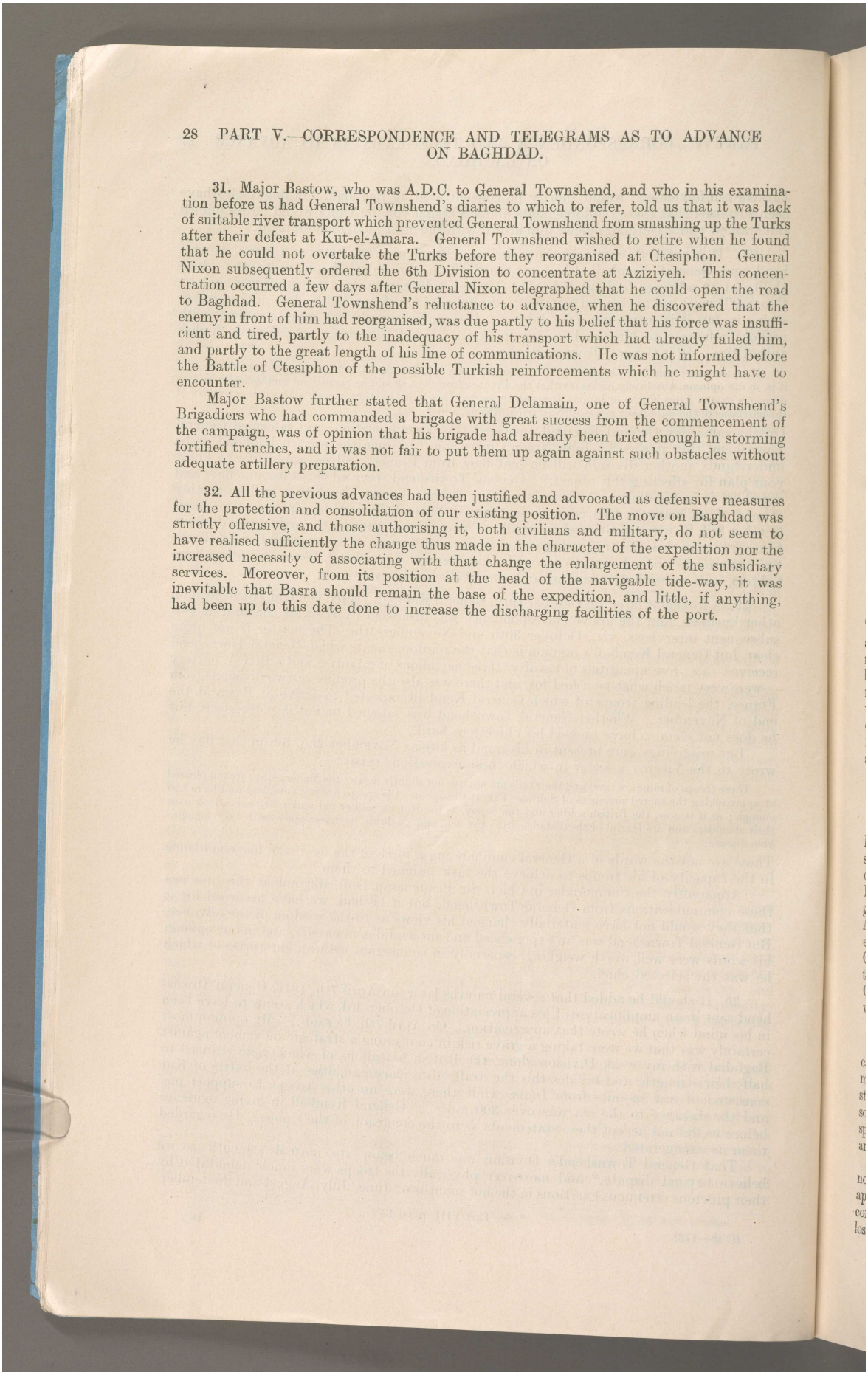
That General Townshend's Division was much below its normal strength is we believe beyond dispute,* and moreover physically the troops were much debilitated by their previous strenuous exertions in the hot months of June, July, August and September.

* See Part VIII, para. 13.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a4

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



31. Major Bastow, who was A.D.C. to General Townshend, and who in his examination before us had General Townshend's diaries to which to refer, told us that it was lack of suitable river transport which prevented General Townshend from smashing up the Turks after their defeat at Kut-el-Amara. General Townshend wished to retire when he found that he could not overtake the Turks before they reorganised at Ctesiphon. General Nixon subsequently ordered the 6th Division to concentrate at Aziziyeh. This concentration occurred a few days after General Nixon telegraphed that he could open the road to Baghdad. General Townshend's reluctance to advance, when he discovered that the enemy in front of him had reorganised, was due partly to his belief that his force was insufficient and tired, partly to the inadequacy of his transport which had already failed him, and partly to the great length of his line of communications. He was not informed before the Battle of Ctesiphon of the possible Turkish reinforcements which he might have to encounter.

Major Bastow further stated that General Delamain, one of General Townshend's Brigadiers who had commanded a brigade with great success from the commencement of the campaign, was of opinion that his brigade had already been tried enough in storming fortified trenches, and it was not fair to put them up again against such obstacles without adequate artillery preparation.

32. All the previous advances had been justified and advocated as defensive measures for the protection and consolidation of our existing position. The move on Baghdad was strictly offensive, and those authorising it, both civilians and military, do not seem to have realised sufficiently the change thus made in the character of the expedition nor the increased necessity of associating with that change the enlargement of the subsidiary services. Moreover, from its position at the head of the navigable tide-way, it was inevitable that Basra should remain the base of the expedition, and little, if anything, had been up to this date done to increase the discharging facilities of the port.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00005a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

1. The total force at the disposal of Sir John Nixon at the time the advance was made to Baghdad was only some two divisions or about 24,000 to 25,000 men. Of these there went up with General Townshend the Sixth Division, plus one Infantry Brigade and two and a half regiments of cavalry with a brigade and certain batteries of artillery, numbering in all from 15,000 to 17,000, according to the estimate of General Gorringe, who was at the time in command of the troops on the Lines of Communication. The remainder of the force, some 6,000 to 8,000 men, were left to guard the lines of communication and our positions on the Euphrates at Nasariyeh and on the Karun at Ahwaz. The line of communications from Basra to Baghdad via the River Tigris is 502 miles.

2. It will thus be seen that on General Gorringe's estimate, 75 per cent. of our total available force was required for the offensive. The remaining 25 per cent. were guarding the communications and rear positions and could not be looked upon as a reserve. The Turkish forces between Kut and Baghdad were believed to be about 9,000, and it was further assumed that they were considerably demoralised by a succession of defeats to which they had been subject.

3. Based upon these estimates, a spirit of intense optimism animated the Head-quarter and Administrative Staff. This is shown by their estimate of impending casualties, preparation being made for only 500 severely wounded. Two river steamers, the "Mosul" and the "Julnar," were put on one side to be temporarily fitted up by Surgeon-General Hathaway for the reception of wounded, the arrangements being that the more seriously wounded were to be moved down to Kut in these vessels and the more lightly wounded located in Baghdad. No apprehension of an effective repulse or of our inability to reach Baghdad seems to have been entertained by those directing the advance.

4. After some skirmishing, our advancing forces, consisting according to General Townshend of only some 11,000 effectives, were concentrated on the left bank of the Tigris at Laj. The enemy, estimated at 11,000 to 13,000 men, were entrenched a few miles up the river, their defences consisted of two strong lines of trenches, and between these two lines was the archway of Ctesiphon. General Townshend attacked this position on the morning of November 22nd, and after severe fighting he captured the first position, taking with it 1,300 prisoners. Our troops then penetrated the second line of trenches and captured eight guns. Here they were heavily attacked by Turkish reinforcements and forced back into the first line which they had previously captured. November 23rd was spent in reorganising these positions and collecting the wounded, and on the 24th and 25th prisoners and wounded were evacuated to Laj, where they were put in steamers and taken down stream.

5. In the meantime, the enemy was largely reinforced, and General Townshend found himself after his heavy casualties not only numerically very inferior to the enemy, but in some danger of being surrounded and cut off. He was also short of supplies. He retired during the night of November 25th to Laj, falling back further on the 27th to Aziziyeh. He there fought a rearguard action back to Umm-al-Tubal where several of his steamers grounded, and he had to remain there till December 1st, by which time they were refloated. A heavy attack by the Turks on the morning of the 1st was repulsed with great loss to the enemy, and, taking advantage of a successful counter-attack made by the cavalry brigade, General Townshend retired to Shadi, a distance of 30 miles, which place was reached on the same night. On December 3rd the troops, greatly exhausted, arrived at Kut-el-Amara. Our losses at and since the battle of Ctesiphon amounted to more than 690 killed and 3,800 wounded, a loss of over 30 per cent. of the total advancing force.

6. It has been alleged that the failure to reach Baghdad was in part due to the delays caused by the lengthy discussions as to whether the advance should take place or not. This may have been partly so; but if these discussions had been shorter than they were, the state of the transport would have prevented General Townshend from advancing much sooner than he did. After his victory at Kut-el-Amara, on September 28th, six weeks were spent in bringing up reinforcements and supplies, and his original plan of a rapid pursuit and following close on his enemies' heels into Baghdad soon proved impracticable.

The Turks had ample time to prepare a strong position at Ctesiphon; but had it not been for the reinforcements which reached them before our attack took place, it appears clear that they would have been defeated. The British Force had the utmost confidence in their leader, and the manner in which they fought did not indicate any loss of *moral*.

128

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000052

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

7. Notwithstanding the deficiencies of medical equipment and of transport, all the wounded were evacuated and all the prisoners were taken to Kut. This was a remarkable military achievement, carried out during a hazardous retreat against overwhelming odds and with lines of communication threatened and at times cut by marauding Arabs. Great credit is due to the medical officers for their devoted work in thus evacuating their wounded, but many of those so moved suffered terribly, as the two prepared steamers could only accommodate* a small proportion of them. (Later on we will particularise the nature of these sufferings.) The remainder had to be put in any craft that was available and so hurriedly that, as on other occasions when vessels carrying up animals were utilised, there was not time to clear them of their accumulation of filth and dung. General Townshend and his force in these exceptionally trying circumstances fully maintained their previous splendid reputation, and if for the first time defeat instead of victory attended their efforts, this was due to the exceptional difficulty of the military task imposed upon them, for the numerical odds and adverse conditions with which they had to contend were too much even for their fighting superiority.

8. After full consideration, Sir John Nixon and General Townshend agreed that Kut should be held by General Townshend and that his relief should be effected as quickly as was possible with the reinforcements on the way from France and elsewhere. This decision received the assent both of Simla and Whitehall. The sick, wounded, and prisoners were evacuated and sent downstream to Basra. On the 6th December the Cavalry Brigade left Kut, and on the 7th the Turkish investment of that place was complete.

* See Part X., paras. 23–26 and 57–61.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00005f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

1. After the retreat from Ctesiphon, General Nixon returned to Basra to organise a force for the relief of Kut. He was in bad health at the time, and his ailments so grew upon him that in the subsequent month he was invalided home. Sir Percy Lake, the Chief of the General Staff in India, was appointed in his place, and took over the command on January 18th, 1916.

Sir John Nixon, upon his arrival at Basra in December, had at once ordered the 28th Infantry Brigade to strengthen the 6th Cavalry Brigade at Ali Gharbi. In anticipation of the arrival of the two divisions from oversea, Sir Fenton Aylmer, Adjutant-General of the Indian Army, was sent to take command of a force designated as the "Tigris Corps," in which were to be incorporated the two expected divisions, the troops located at Ali Gharbi and ultimately other reinforcements. The two Divisions, the bulk of which was still on the high seas, were gradually arriving at Basra, but their piece-meal embarkation and disembarkation were very detrimental to their efficiency as fighting units; their whole organisation was upset by the methods of their transmission and disembarkation, and there was no time for their proper re-organisation before advancing. The available transport in Mesopotamia was not sufficient even to carry the men and ammunition to the front, and it was in these disadvantageous circumstances that the military operations were commenced.

2. The history of the attempts to relieve Kut is melancholy reading enough—a record of a prolonged struggle carried on with inadequate means under abnormal conditions of atrocious weather, and terminating in failure.

3. The task which confronted General Aylmer, the General Officer commanding the relieving force, meant in most cases an advance over ground deep in mud and devoid of cover. Moreover, as a rule the position of the enemy made frontal attacks inevitable against trenches held by Turks whose tenacity on the defensive is proverbial.

His army had been hastily got together—there are numerous complaints about "scratch" staffs, and the equipment, especially in heavy artillery, was far below what was required. A large proportion of the reinforcements at Basra were unable to join the Army at the front through lack of transport. It therefore seemed all-important to wait until his army had been properly organised and deficiencies made good.

4. But before such reorganisation was possible an early start was made, and it is to this that the unfortunate result was mainly due. The reasons which thus precipitated matters are to be found in a succession of telegrams which General Townshend despatched from Kut during December. In these he urges, as reasons for his immediate relief, the dangers of enemy reinforcements and of a determined onslaught by superior numbers, the impaired *moral* of his troops, heavy losses in British officers, anxiety as to ammunition, etc., etc. But it is noteworthy that throughout this month he never, except on December 5th, puts forward deficiency of supplies as a reason for accelerating his relief. On December 5th, he wired, "I hope we can be relieved by a month, my rations for British troops are only one month, and 55 days Indian troops. I shall have to reduce a scale of rations, and commandeer all bazaar supplies." This estimate was, however, corrected two days later, by a telegram of December 7th, in which he says that he has 60 days' rations for both Indian and British troops, *i.e.*, enough to carry them on until the beginning of February. After this telegram of December 7th, the question of food and rations is never even mentioned by General Townshend until January 16th, *i.e.*, after the first attempt at relief had failed. As General Townshend is still a prisoner we have been unable to hear his explanation on this.

5. It is strange that neither General Nixon nor General Aylmer seem to have thought of definitely asking General Townshend how long his supplies would permit him to hold out; nor did General Townshend himself definitely ascertain this most important fact till several weeks after he was shut up in Kut. No doubt he had received positive assurances that he would be relieved within two months at the outside, and as he was satisfied that his supplies would easily last for that period, he did not attach so much importance to the food factor as he ought to have done. However this may be, telegrams from General Aylmer on January 25th, and General Lake on the 29th indicate that the neglect of General Townshend to intimate his true position as regards supplies was one of the main factors in the hurried advance; although it appears that the Assistant Director of Supplies in Kut, had ascertained on December 11th, that there were *full rations* in many essentials for 70 days, and large additional stocks were discovered later on.*

* See Appendix III., para. 117.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000b4

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

6. General Townshend arrived at Kut on December 3rd ,where, for what seem to be sufficient reasons, he determined to remain, and in this resolve he was supported by Sir John Nixon and by India. The Turks closed in on him on the 7th, and at first the assaults were numerous and severe, especially about Christmas, when there were three days' fighting, which terminated in the enemy being repulsed with such heavy losses that no serious attempts to storm were made for the remainder of the siege.

There was, however, plenty of shelling and sniping; but the real enemy was starvation, and it was this that compelled the surrender of the place on April 29th, 1916, after a most gallant and tenacious defence of 147 days.

7. This disaster would have been averted for a long time if the Arab population, about 6,000, had been expelled before the investment began. Sir P. Cox, the political adviser, was averse to such a measure, as he was unwilling to hand them over to the tender mercies of the Turks and hostile Arabs, but their retention undoubtedly added to the difficulties of supply.

8. The Tigris Army Corps, as the relief force was called, had been reinforced by two divisions which had taken part and been severely punished in the murderous fighting in France. In some quarters there was an impression that their *moral* had been impaired by the trench conditions of warfare prevailing there, and that they were not so ready to face the open as they might have been. However, we are of opinion that their conduct, under the very arduous conditions which prevailed in Mesopotamia, does not lay them open to this charge, and their heavy losses during the operations show how stoutly they fought.

9. It is not proposed to go at all thoroughly into the actions fought in the course of these operations. That would involve the study of strategic and tactical considerations which had better be left to the experts to whom the history of the war will be entrusted, when criticism will be easier than it is now. An exception is made in the case of the attempt to take the Dujailah Redoubt at the battle of Es-Sinn (March 8th, 1916), and to a certain extent in the case of the battle of Sanaiyat (April 6th and 8th, 1916), as the results were exceptionally unfortunate and perhaps decisive so far as the relief of Kut was concerned. We are indebted to our colleague, General the Hon. Sir N. Lyttelton, G.C.B., for the ensuing analysis of these two engagements which in our opinion is justified by the evidence placed before us.

10. The advance from Ali Gharbi took place on January 4th, 1915. Fighting of a severe description soon began. On January 6th, General Younghusband was heavily engaged on both banks of the River Tigris, and held his ground with difficulty. On reinforcements coming up, the attack met with some measure of success on the right bank, where the Turks were driven out of their entrenchments, and fell back from Sheikh Saad to a new position on the Wadi, 10 miles up stream. On the 9th this position was also forced, and the Turks again retreated 5 miles further to Hannah. These successes were dearly bought, the losses amounting to nearly 6,000. The next attack, on the Hannah position, January 21st, failed with considerable losses, 2,741, and for some time no very serious fighting took place. General Aylmer blames General Younghusband for not following his directions on January 4th, which were not to commit himself, but merely to hold the enemy. General Younghusband admits receiving the order, and says he advanced and "felt the enemy hard on both banks," which does not seem to have been quite in keeping with the order. General Aylmer says "he felt them too hard," and this seems to be true. General Aylmer also says that he fought the action on the Wadi against his better judgment, acting under superior order, and that he had proposed another plan of attack, which was not accepted by Headquarters. This seems to have been the case, and further it was clear that the hard fighting and heavy losses had told on the men. Moreover, there was a shortage of artillery ammunition.

11. The first attempts having thus failed, General Aylmer determined in March on another plan. An important keypoint was the Dujailah Redoubt, about the right centre of the Turkish lines. General Gorringe, Chief of the Staff, Tigris Corps, told us that it had been ascertained that owing to an insufficient water-supply this fort was very lightly held, the bulk of the troops told off for its defence having to camp on the bank of the river four or five miles off. Consequently it was hoped that by a night march a superior force could be moved across the Turkish front so as to arrive by daybreak near the redoubt and carry it by assault before the reinforcements could arrive. On the face of it the idea seemed practicable and sound; all depended on the element of surprise, and this could only be attained by strict punctuality. Let us see how the scheme worked out It must be

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000023

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

added that General Aylmer told us he knew nothing of the short water-supply and consequent weakness of the garrison—a bewildering statement in view of General Gorringe's evidence on this point.

12. A night march is far from being an easy operation at any time. The difficulties vary with the nature of the ground, the distance to be traversed, and the number of troops engaged. It requires good march discipline and first-rate staff work, especially when, as in this case, an attack is to follow immediately. To General Kemball was entrusted the task of turning the flank to be attacked in co-operation with a column on his right.

13. In a statement submitted by him to us General Kemball calls attention to the well-known night march in 1882 when a British force under Lord Wolseley successfully stormed the Egyptian entrenched camp at Tel-el-Kebir. On that occasion 13,000 men had to march about 3½ miles over easy ground, and for this Lord Wolseley allowed 3½ hours. In the official account of the campaign we read: " . . . from previous experience it was calculated that, making all allowances for delays, etc., during the night, the actual rate of progress . . . would be a mile per hour," and this proved exactly correct. There were 48 guns, but no other impedimenta worth mentioning.

14. At Es-Sinn the ground was also on the whole favourable, but other conditions widely differed. Nearly 20,000 men, with all sorts of impedimenta, transport, ambulances, animals, etc., had to march distances varying between 12 and 16 miles. Some of the troops had been on the move the night before, many had to march 1 or 2 miles from their bivouacs to the rendezvous, the artillery 5 or 6. A margin of one hour was allowed for unforeseen delays such as may occur in any night march.

15. The troops had to be concentrated at 8.30 p.m. on March 7th, in time to start at 9 p.m. and reach their objective by dawn, about 5.45 a.m.

In one very important particular Lord Wolseley had a marked advantage. His small army was entirely composed of well-trained British troops with a most efficient Staff. General Aylmer's force was heterogeneous, British and Indian troops being mixed up together, and he and other Generals make many complaints of the " scrappy " character of their Staffs. This army was expected to march about 14 miles in rather less than nine hours.

The uncertainties of a night march were speedily revealed. Many of the troops were late at the rendezvous, and the start did not take place till 10.22. Thus more than the one hour margin allowed was lost before the start. A second hour was lost through a division missing its way; the men were so weary that they fell dead asleep at the halts, and were with difficulty roused. Other delays occurred, and the result was that General Kemball's column, which had the farthest to go, instead of being at the point Z, where it was to deploy for attack, at 5.30 a.m., was still 1,500 yards short of it at 6.30, when it was broad daylight. This of course was fatal to the success of the operation so far as surprise was concerned.

16. General Gorringe holds that in spite of this, energetic and bold action on the part of General Kemball would still have forestalled the enemy in his attempts to reinforce Dujailah. General Kemball's excuse is that he received no proper support till late in the afternoon. He adds that when the enemy's weakness in the redoubt was discovered, Column C on his right should have been put in, in spite of Column A's late arrival. If Headquarters were correct in their assumption that there was only a small garrison in Dujailah, a long flank march was unnecessary, and a direct attack might have been made from Point Y, where the columns bifurcated.

17. It is pointed out by General Kemball that General Gorringe's statement that everything went well up to the time the columns separated (at point Y) is quite incorrect; they were 2½ hours late there. General Kemball also takes exception to other assertions of General Gorringe.

18. There is a good deal of technical evidence as to the proper formations for the march and the tactical dispositions for the fighting on the 9th March, and Generals Aylmer and Gorringe attribute great blame to General Kemball in these respects, and to a certain extent they are supported by General Lake, G.O.C. " D " Force. It is not our province to go exhaustively into these points; they are detailed at length in their evidence and statements, to which reference can be made. We may, however, point out that in a night march which is to be followed immediately by an assault, it is obvious that the troops should march in such a formation as to enable them to attack with the least possible delay when

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000007

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

the objective is reached. That was Lord Wolseley's intention at Tel-el-Kebir—to arrange the troops in such order that it should require no manœuvring to pass from the formation of march to the formation of attack, but although this intention was not fully carried out and the Divisional Commanders did not adopt the same formation, there was no serious difference, and the spirit of the Commander-in-Chief's order was not infringed. Lord Wolseley allowed more latitude to his Divisional Commanders than General Kemball enjoyed. Whether any such formation in a night march is possible under modern conditions is hard to imagine. We conceive that the question for us is whether the night march under the conditions already described offered a reasonable prospect of success.

19. General Aylmer himself admits that the march was a close run—that an hour's margin was scanty; but owing to the necessities of the situation he could not spare more, and that the plan of attack he adopted was the only one he could think of as likely to succeed. Our opinion is that the chances of A Column being up to time were slender; that the operation, to use a term that has cropped up elsewhere, was of the nature of a "gamble" in which the odds against success were high, but whether they were too high to justify the action taken cannot be stated in terms of certainty.

20. There is another matter which demands attention—whether it was necessary to break off the fight on March 9th, as was done by General Aylmer's orders. General Kemball declares that the Turks had been retiring in the night and he reported this to Headquarters. However, the report was not credited. General Gorringe, in his despatch, says the aeroplane reconnaissance showed no signs of withdrawal, and it may be that it was only partial.

21. General Kemball said that in spite of their severe losses, he had full confidence in his men; that he had been in a much tighter place at Sheikh Saad and had come out successfully, and was anxious to try again. Headquarters did not accept this offer, and it can hardly be said that they were wrong. The other reason given for not renewing the attack was the deficiency of water. General Kemball asserts that there was plenty where he was, and very likely there was enough for his men, but it is not clear there was for the whole force. On the whole we do not see sufficient reasons for imputing blame to the Corps Headquarters for the action they took.

22. We have gone at length into this controversy because much depended on this battle, and because we think that the unfortunate result had so much to do with the final catastrophe of the fall of Kut; and for the same reason we propose to go with some minuteness into the details of the defeat at Sanaiyat, which followed not long after.

23. The battle of Sanaiyat was in two parts. The first, on April 5th, on both banks of the river, was highly successful, the 13th British Division, under General Maude, recently arrived from Egypt, particularly distinguishing itself by carrying five lines of entrenchments in succession. General Gorringe commends General Maude and all under his command for the brilliant success of this assault.

24. This fine piece of work was followed on the evening of the same day by another equally good, carried out by the same division, of which General Gorringe speaks in these terms: "The highest praise is due to General Maude and his Brigade Commanders and all under their command for this successful night attack, a difficult operation at all times, requiring great dash and good leadership as well as personal bravery among the junior commissioned and non-commissioned ranks." These eulogiums are quoted to justify the belief that this new army division would prove itself equal to any duty that might be imposed upon it. It should be added that it was not without experience of war; it had served in Gallipoli and suffered heavy losses there.

25. There was no time to be lost; the sands were running out at Kut, and the situation there was very critical. The river was rising, and more floods were to be expected, and no intermission in active operations was possible. On April 6th, at 1 a.m., the 7th Division attacked the left of the Sanaiyat position under very unfavourable conditions; they could not break through, and in the afternoon they were flooded out of their trenches. It was evident that no attack by day over such sticky and open ground could succeed, nor even at night unless the assaulting force could be assembled under cover within assaulting distance, so preparations were made for this to be done. These were completed by evening on the 8th and the 13th Division were again selected to assault, and they started at 4.20 a.m., the 9th.

26. At first it seemed as if the successes won on the 5th were going to be repeated. The leading lines, moving with great dash, penetrated into the centre of the enemy's

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000004

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

front-line trench without suffering heavily in doing so. Unfortunately the supporting lines failed to maintain the advantage thus won, they were driven back and the Turks retook their lost trenches.

27. General Gorringe considered Sanaiyat to be the key to the position, and that if this attack had succeeded the relief of Kut in all probability would have followed. It appears that no such favourable opportunity recurred.

There was great cause for anxiety in the state of the supplies of the relieving force. The Army was living from hand to mouth, a state of things to which the usual deficiency of transport largely contributed. Still all hope was not abandoned; the Army Commander, Sir Percy Lake, had come up, and under his instructions further attempts were made. The troops responded to the call, and continuous fighting went on till the 22nd. Occasional successes were gained, the 3rd Division accomplishing some good fighting; but hardly any real progress was made. The heavy floods made all movements most difficult, and the men at times could not even use their rifles, which were clogged with mud. After 16 days' continuous fighting, not only against the Turks, but against the floods, all hope of relieving Kut had to be given up. The losses had exceeded 33 per cent., and were even greater in British officers, and the fighting efficiency of the force was seriously affected.

28. Kut managed to hold out for another week; then the inevitable happened, and it surrendered after a most determined defence on April 29th. Right up to the end of the siege General Townshend and his brigadiers retained the confidence and allegiance of their men. One witness informed us that after the terms of surrender had been settled and the Generals were departing in a steamboat as prisoners of war, their men formed up along the riverside and gave them a parting cheer as a proof of their unbroken loyalty.

The extremities to which the garrison was reduced during their long-drawn agony are vividly depicted in Colonel Hehir's report and in General Townshend's telegrams from Kut. The difficulties in rationing the Indian troops were much enhanced by caste prejudices as to food. For a long time many of them refused to eat horse or mule flesh. Had it not been for this, these animals could not only have been used as food for the men, but the grain they consumed could have been devoted to the same purpose. It is doubtful, however, if this would have done more than prolong the agony. The relieving force was not strong enough in artillery, high-explosive shells, and other appliances, without which attacks on modern entrenchments seem absolutely futile.

Sir Percy Lake summarised the three main causes of failure as being—premature attacks, inadequate transport, and exceptionally unfavourable weather. We endorse these findings, but we add to it another, namely, insufficient numerical superiority over a strongly-entrenched enemy. This drawback may be included under the head of "inadequate transport," for during the whole of this period of critical fighting, large numbers of troops and many guns were at Basra quite unable, for lack of transport, to be conveyed and take part in the fighting.

29. As stated above, Force "D" was not a homogeneous body. For instance, in each Cavalry Brigade of three regiments one was British, in each Infantry Brigade of four battalions one was British, the remaining units being Indian with a small proportion of British officers. In many a hard-fought field these Indian soldiers proved themselves worthy of standing shoulder to shoulder with their British comrades.

This army had been put to a severe test, the 6th Division in particular. It had been almost continuously fighting or marching or moving by water for the best part of a year. It had been repeatedly short of supplies, and owing to its frequent movements had felt acutely the want of adequate water transport. Nevertheless it had performed feats of fighting and endurance of which any army might have been proud. The part of the advance called by the troops "Townshend's Regatta*" was an astounding piece of work.

It may be that the *moral* of the troops fell off to a certain degree, but in what army would this not have occurred after such ordeals as the battle of Ctesiphon, the defence of Kut, and the series of stubbornly contested actions fought by the Tigris Army under exceptionally unfavourable conditions in the vain efforts to relieve their beleaguered comrades in Kut? Whatever faults of organisation and equipment there may have been, no discredit attaches to the fighting men for the failures of the operations in Mesopotamia.

30. During the hot season after the fall of Kut, the army suffered much from sickness, and the transport and supply arrangements, though improving, were still inadequate. In

* See Part IV., para. 8.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000098

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

April, 1916, the immediate policy to be followed in Mesopotamia had been clearly indicated by the Imperial General Staff. Briefly summarized it was as follows:

> At present our policy in Mesopotamia is defensive . . . Lake should . . . maintain as forward a position as can be made secure tactically, and be ready to take advantage of any weakening of the Turks on his front, so long as this can be effected without incurring heavy loss, whether caused by the enemy or by unhealthy conditions . . . His forces are superior to those of the enemy . . . he should, therefore, have no difficulty in carrying out the above policy until the Turks are strongly reinforced . . . he must be clearly shown that the security of his force is of primary importance.

These instructions were strictly adhered to during the summer and autumn, and Sir Percy Lake and his successor, Major-General Maude, confined themselves during this period to developing river and railway communications and the supply organisation, with very satisfactory results.

31. We have already pointed out that early in February, 1916, the War Office assumed control of the expedition. Later on, in July, 1916, all the administrative work in connection with the expedition was transferred to the War Office, and from that date they became solely responsible for the policy and management of the expedition. But the War Office have not, even under these arrangements, any control over Indian Military Establishments in the sense of being able to order reinforcements from India to Mesopotamia. We have not thought it desirable or necessary to make detailed investigation beyond the date of the operations which failed to relieve Kut. Since then new plans of campaign have been devised, and are in active operation. We have, however, satisfied ourselves that the transfer of the conduct of the expedition to the War Office had been most beneficial so far as the supplies and comfort of the troops are concerned. Officers selected for high and responsible command have shown both decision and ability in grappling with and surmounting difficulties, which face them: the transport has been greatly increased, and although a certain amount of hardship may still from time to time be experienced by the troops located in Mesopotamia, this is due more to the inconvenience inevitable in a campaign than to lack of prescience and organisation on the part of the administrative authorities. The medical equipment, both in personnel and material, is also altogether on a higher standard than in the past.

We may add that we have been very favourably impressed by the evidence of the representatives of the War Office, and from that evidence we deduce that the difficulties of campaigning in Mesopotamia are fully recognised by the War Office, and that in surmounting them neither time nor expenditure will be spared in future.

We were directed by the terms of our reference to enquire into the origin, inception and conduct of the operations in Mesopotamia. We have partially performed this task, so far as the origin and inception of the campaign are concerned, by the narrative we have given. We now propose to give fuller attention to the conduct of the campaign, and this task includes an investigation into the "supply of drafts, reinforcements, ammunition and equipment to the troops and Fleet, the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of those Departments of the Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the forces employed in the theatre of war."

As our narrative has already indicated, the main difficulties to be overcome in Mesopotamia were those connected with transport. This branch of our enquiry, practically covers questions connected with all classes of supplies and reinforcements, and it also materially affected the provision made for the sick and the wounded. We therefore intend to make a close and detailed examination (1) into transport requirements and the measures taken both in India and Great Britain to meet these requirements, and (2) the provision for and treatment of the sick and wounded.

The supply of armament, equipment, and reinforcements necessary for the expedition, will also require notice, and we will deal with this forthwith.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00002b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

1. Every General who appeared before us agreed that the Mesopotamian Expedition was badly equipped. Sir Beauchamp Duff informed us that the Indian Army, which furnished the expedition, was organised only for semi-savage fighting, was not well found for an overseas expedition, to a large extent used second-rate equipment, and was "backward in every particular." He thought, however, that the equipment was adequate for an Indian Frontier campaign, but even in this very modified commendation he is not supported by Sir Percy Lake, for many years Chief of the General Staff in India, who declared that the Indian Army was badly equipped even for frontier warfare. Both General Nixon and his Chief of the Staff, General Kemball, maintained that the expedition was ill-equipped. Other witnesses, such as General Aylmer and General Younghusband, agreed in this view, the latter indeed asserting that the expedition was badly equipped in every essential, especially transport, ambulance and commissariat.

2. We have elsewhere* expressed our opinion that the unpreparedness of the Indian Army for its task in Mesopotamia was primarily due to a long standing policy of economy and restriction of military preparation to the needs of frontier warfare. For this policy and its results on the outbreak of war in 1914, the Home and Indian Governments were, of course, responsible, and not Sir Beauchamp Duff and the General Staff at Simla. But the unpreparedness for overseas warfare was well-known to the Indian Military Authorities, and when they undertook the management of an expedition which was to fight against Turkey supported by Germany, they ought immediately to have striven energetically to bring the equipment of the expedition up to the standard of modern warfare. We shall deal in the next two Parts of our report with their omissions in this respect as regards transport and medical provision and we regret to find similar omissions in nearly every other branch of military provision, with the exception of the commissariat, though even here the standard was low, and the distribution of food uneven. Serious defects in military equipment, resulting in unnecessary suffering and casualties among the troops, were allowed to persist month after month during the first fourteen months of the campaign, when the Indian Government were responsible for its management.

3. It is true that India was not herself in a position to supply some of the lacking material, such, for example, as heavy guns; and it is also fair to recognise that before the Mesopotamian Expedition was despatched, India had already sent to Europe much of her finest artillery. But when the responsibility of the Mesopotamian Expedition was assumed by India, the Indian Military Authorities do not appear, for at least a year, to have appraised, anticipated or represented to England the needs of the expedition in this very important particular. From the evidence of Major-General Sir Stanley von Donop, late Master-General of the Ordnance in England, it would appear that it was not till December, 1915, after the reverse of Ctesiphon and more than twelve months after the expedition had landed at Basra, that any request for heavy guns for Mesopotamia was received by him, and it was not till May 26th, 1916, more than two months after the Chief of the General Staff at Whitehall had asked what were the requirements of Mesopotamia in guns, that the full artillery requirements in Mesopotamia were at last communicated by India to the War Office.

4. During these months the troops in Mesopotamia had, without adequate preparation by heavy artillery, to attack across the open and, at the cost of heavy casualties, strongly fortified trenches, and General Nixon in his evidence stated that his artillery was not only deficient in number, but out of date in quality. Major Bastow, who was General Townshend's Aide-de-Camp, stated that the advance against Ctesiphon was undertaken with only eighteen field guns, and six horse artillery guns; and Sir Fenton Aylmer informed us that the lack of proper artillery contributed to the failure of the operations for the relief of Kut. We may note that the chief shortage felt was in howitzers.

5. But if it was outside the productive power of India to make good portions of the defective equipment such as aeroplanes, artillery, high explosive shells, machine-guns, etc., there were various other articles which India could have arranged to supply, but the supply of which was not seriously attempted until 1916. The list of deficient equipment disclosed by witnesses is long and multifarious, and we will only mention some of the chief items.

* See Part I., para. 23, and Part XI., D.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x00000e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

There is a consensus of evidence that the force was deficient, even as late as the spring of 1916, in wire-cutters, telephones, watercarts, Véry lights, rockets, tents, mosquito-nets, sun-helmets, periscopes, telescopic sights, loophole plates, flares, bombs, hand-grenades, and even blankets and clothing. Our heavy casualties and reverses were in fact largely due to the lack of articles essential to the success of war carried on under modern conditions.

6. Sir Beauchamp Duff's apology for some of these defects is, that articles such as wire-cutters, rockets, Véry lights, etc., were not available or usually needed in India, or that they were not heard of before the war. This is no defence for the failure to provide them in Mesopotamia eighteen months after the beginning of the war, and we feel it a discredit to the Indian Military Authorities that such a modern device as Véry lights should have been in use by the Turks in Mesopotamia, before it was supplied to our own troops.

7. Our evidence abundantly shows how detrimental the absence of these modern requirements was to our men; but we wish to draw special attention to the suffering caused by the neglect to supply two articles of equipment, which the most ordinary foresight on the part of the Indian Authorities should have shown to be necessary. The power of the sun in Mesopotamia was well known in India, but the troops were normally only supplied with light-weight, single-fly tents, quite insufficient to keep out the sun. Sir Percy Lake and other witnesses informed us that sunstroke and heat-stroke were not uncommon amongst those using these tents, and Captain Herbert, M.P., stated that as late as April, 1916, "there were 21 lb. single-fly tents for four men, which would not have been healthy in a cold climate, and were intolerable in Mesopotamia. These tents have only one fly, and the casualties from sunstroke could be expected to be appalling." It may be added that the heat is so extreme that even in double-fly tents there is danger of casualties from the sun in Mesopotamia.

8. Even in such an obvious necessary as clothing, the Indian Government seems to have been unable adequately to supply the force in Mesopotamia, small as it was in comparison with our armies in France and elsewhere. Colonel Hehir tells us that there was a lack of proper clothing even for the patients in the hospitals in the summer of 1915, while Captain Herbert in April, 1916, heard many complaints that in the bitter winter months in Mesopotamia, troops had been sent from India in "shorts," and tropical clothing. The nights throughout a considerable part of the year are cold, and, during the winter and spring, the country is subject to cold winds and icy storms. Yet apparently the Commander-in-Chief in India originally intended to leave the provision of warm clothing for the troops to private benevolence, and only consented to undertake such provision after a protest by the Viceroy. Writing to Sir Thomas Holderness on October 21st, 1914, Lord Hardinge, who was then Viceroy, says :—

> When some weeks ago I enquired of the Commander-in-Chief whether proper provision had been made for warm clothing for the troops, he told me that he was relying on private charity for this. I told him at once that I could not possibly agree to our troops being dependent for warm clothing upon private charity, and that I insisted upon the troops being properly clad at the expense of the Government. It will cost six or seven lakhs, but in a war like this what does that matter? It is far better to have warm men in the field than men dying of pneumonia in the hospitals. It is the cheapest course in the long run.

9. Among the defects of equipment one of the most important was the want of aeroplanes. But for this the Indian military authorities were not responsible. When the war broke out, they were just beginning to organise an aviation service, and had established a Flying School. But at the request of the War Office they closed the school, and sent the officers who were pilots back to England. These were only three in number, as matters were in a very embryonic stage. But early in the Mesopotamia Expedition the need for aeroplanes was apparent. In January, 1915, General Barrett represented the importance of this matter more than once, and Lord Hardinge strongly urged the need for aeroplanes upon the War Office. But it was found impossible to supply any until May, 1915. Then two Maurice Farmans were sent, in July two Caudrons, and in August six Martinsyde Scouts. Somewhat later, three hydroplanes of the Short type were sent, and two naval aeroplanes, one a Voisin and one a Henry Farman, fitted with a Canton Unné engine. In October, four B.E.2 C's arrived. But there were many misfortunes. The hydroplanes were not a success, and among the aeroplanes there were losses through engine failure, through other accidents and through normal wear and tear. These misfortunes seem to have worked with aggravated effect by reason of the difficulties of repair, which in part

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000c1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

depended on the difficulty of transport. The upshot was that at the date of the Battle of Ctesiphon there were only reckoned to be five aeroplanes belonging to the Royal Flying Corps in Mesopotamia, and of these only three seem to have been actually available at the battle—a Maurice Farman, a B.E.2 C. and a Martinsyde. This reckoning does not appear to include the naval aeroplanes, of which, however, only one was of any use. None of these machines were fitted either for photography or with wireless apparatus; and though valuable work was done, they were of course inadequate for what was required. The personnel of the Royal Flying Corps was organised as a Flight, and there were six flying officers and forty-four rank and file. During December, 1915, and January, 1916, owing to two machines being shut up in Kut, to accidents, and to the ill-health of pilots, sometimes only one aeroplane was available. Another Flight of aeroplanes was sent out in February, 1916, and from then onward, the Royal Flying Corps maintained a supply of new machines. After that date, there does not appear to have been a shortage in numbers of machines, and from the same time apparatus both for photography and wireless telegraphy came into use. But early in February, 1916, the Turkish troops, who till then had been without aeroplanes, were furnished with three fast aeroplanes of the Fokker type, which were much more formidable fighting mach nes than anything possessed by the British Army. The presence of these fast machines with the Turkish Army placed the British airmen at a great disadvantage; and the want of at least one efficient fast fighting machine was keenly felt.

10. It is clear that the lack of a sufficient supply of aeroplanes of any kind in the operations which led to the Battle of Ctesiphon seriously hindered our troops in the task they had to perform, and that the want of fast fighting aeroplanes later prevented the Royal Flying Corps being of as much service to the Expedition as they might have been. How far these defects were remediable by the War Office opens up the wide question of the general supply of aeroplanes for the purposes of the War, which has been the subject of an independent enquiry. We are not in a position to express any opinion upon that question, and we certainly should not deny that the first claim upon the resources of the Royal Flying Corps was in Europe and not in Mesopotamia. It is not, however, clear why a larger number of aeroplanes of a type not sufficiently fast for service in France should not have been available for the advance on Bagdad, nor why those which were sent were not equipped for photography and wireless telegraphy. The difficulty of sparing fast machines in the spring of 1916 to fight the three Turkish Fokkers is more intelligible. But we note the deficiency of aeroplanes as one of the defects of equipment which contributed to the ill-success of the British Army in Mesopotamia during the winter and spring of 1915-16.

Drafts and Reinforcements.

11. In considering the question of reinforcement for the Mesopotamian Force, it must be borne in mind that the term "Reinforcements" technically covers both the additional units sent to strengthen the original force in the field, and drafts sent to replace wastage in such units as are already in the country. We have, therefore, for the sake of clearness used the term "Reinforcements" as covering additional units sent to augment the existing strength of the force, and have placed under the heading "Drafts" all personnel sent to make good casualties, whether they be from death, wounds, sickness or any other cause.

12. As a basis of our enquiry into the supply of drafts to Force "D," it may be useful to take the standard laid down in Field Service Regulations. At the same time it must be remembered that after several months of experience of modern warfare this standard has had to be considerably modified, and although it may be said that the Turks were not armed and equipped in the same thorough manner as the Germans (at any rate during the earlier stages of the campaign), yet against this must be set the fact that the expedition was destined to fight in one of the most trying climates and disease-ridden countries in the world, a fact of which the Indian Government and indeed the Home Government must have been fully aware, and which accounted for a very large proportion of the wastage. The Field Service Regulations state that units on mobilisation shall have additional personnel known as "first reinforcements" to the extent of 10 per cent. of the rank and file of each unit. Of the troops sent out of India to France and elsewhere, even had this standard been attained to, which is not at all certain, wastage had eaten up the whole of

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00003d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

the "first reinforcements" long before they were sent to Mesopotamia, this applying equally to British and Indian troops, whilst with regard to those sent direct from India to Mesopotamia, even those that mobilised with their full personnel were soon in need of reinforcing drafts.

Drafts for British Troops.

13. Each British infantry unit ordered on service was supposed to have 25 per cent. of its strength at its depôt in India, and each Cavalry Regiment 33 per cent., to replace wastage until drafts arrived from home. When these depôts were exhausted, it devolved upon the War Office to keep British Units in Mesopotamia up to strength, and each unit, no doubt, had or should have had a depôt or reserve battalion in England preparing and training men to replace casualties. There were a few reservists in India, numbering altogether 651, of whom 255 in private employ were called up in August. 1914, whilst the remainder in Government and Railway employment were not called up till later, and then only those employed by the railways, an effort which produced another 250; but no doubt India looked, and we think rightly, to the War Office to keep the British units supplied with suitable and sufficient drafts.

Sir Beauchamp Duff tells us, however, that not till October, 1915, a year after the first landing, were any drafts sent to India or Mesopotamia by the War Office. On May 21st, 1915, the War Office wires as follows to the Commander-in-Chief, India :—

> Owing to great and increased losses which you, no doubt, know of, every available man is now required to replace casualties; consequently, though we will bear in mind your request, we cannot bind ourselves as to when we can meet your needs. This refers to your telegram of May, 1915, No. S. 10101.

No real blame can be attached to the War Office for this shortage of drafts. It arose from the imperative necessity of replacing losses incurred in France and Gallipoli, but the failure of the War Office to keep to the previous understanding did unquestionably embarrass the Indian Military Authorities.

The effect of this inability to provide drafts is illustrated by General Townshend's statement, that on October 3rd, his English battalions were reduced to mere half battalions. This description is perhaps not quite accurate, but Major Bastow speaking more precisely has told us that at the battle of Ctesiphon the strength of the British Battalions were :—Dorsets, 573; Norfolks, 520; and 1st Oxfords, 619. The full strength of these battalions should have been some 2,500, and they were therefore nearly 33 per cent. below establishment in effectives at this important battle. What the state of these battalions would have been had they not been supplied with drafts from Territorial Regiments in India may be well imagined.

Drafts for Indian Troops.

14. The regulations applicable to Indian troops require men to serve 25 years for a pension. Such a system means that there must be a large number of men in the ranks who would be entirely unfit for the rigours of active service, and its effect is illustrated by the fact that the Indian Government were requested to send to France no men who had had more than fifteen years' service. It was obvious beforehand, therefore, that there would be need for abundant drafts to take the place of unfit men in any active operations in which Indian troops were engaged.

But our evidence shows that the supply of drafts to Indian battalions at the commencement of the campaign from the Army reserve was a complete failure. Sir Beauchamp Duff told us that this reserve for the Indian Army Units proved practically of no value. In fact, we do not hesitate to say that the Indian reserve system entirely broke down under the stress of war conditions. These reserves either as regards numbers, in all some 30,000, or efficiency were quite unable to meet the calls made upon them to maintain the strength of the Divisions sent to France; in fact it was only on the recall of these Divisions, and consequent lowering of the numbers of casualties, that the authorities in India were in any way able to overtake the wastage in Mesopotamia. After that, though a great strain was felt during the efforts to relieve the garrison of Kut, when the casualties to Indian troops amounted to very nearly 20,000, the wastage was fairly well met with new recruits from India. But we cannot believe that the steps taken to obtain recruits were very thorough. For instance, recruiting officers, who in peace time numbered 9, were only increased to 10

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000020

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

DRAFTS AND REINFORCEMENTS.

under the stress of war, whilst assistant recruiting officers, who numbered 14 before the war, were only increased to 25. Other steps were certainly taken, such as the formation of local recruiting committees, obtaining of assistance from local Governments and native states, etc., but these seem to us somewhat inadequate methods for raising men at such a time.

At the same time it is only fair to say that although the means taken may seem rather meagre, yet the recruits obtained were sufficient to enable the ranks of the Indian forces in the field to be kept at a fairly generous numerical standard after the withdrawal of the Indian Divisions from France. These recruits were mostly utilised to increase the establishment of existing units. This process within limits is preferable to creating new formations, especially in view of the difficulty of obtaining British Officers.

Reinforcements.

15. The history of the supply of reinforcements to Force "D" is a melancholy tale of altercation between London and Simla. Although up to the time of the advance on Baghdad the expedition was always numerically strong enough to cope with the Turkish forces, yet this result was only attained after protracted wrangling between the Governments at home and in India, neither of whom appeared willing to accept the task of reinforcing an expedition, for the success of which they were jointly responsible. When at the commencement of the campaign the 6th Division was ordered to the Persian Gulf by the Home Government in October, 1914, we cannot find that the India Office or their Military Adviser, Sir Edmund Barrow, ever contemplated or arranged for its reinforcement from England in case of need, although it was obvious that even if the expedition were successful, the Turks would make strong efforts to oust it from Mesopotamia, whilst if it were unsuccessful the need for reinforcement would have been even more urgent. On the other hand, the Indian Government adopted the attitude that, having already denuded India of troops by overseas expeditions, it was impossible to send reinforcements from India to Mesopotamia. The danger and friction created by such a situation is well exemplified by what happened in the early part of 1915. At that period the military authorities in England and India were agreed that the Mesopotamia Expedition was in danger of attack by superior Turkish forces, and that its reinforcement by a Division was imperative; but the Secretary of State informed the Viceroy that no reinforcements could be despatched from England, and the Viceroy informed the Secretary of State that no further troops could be spared from India. The difficulty was only got over after much delay and discussion by the Home Government definitely ordering India to send reinforcements to Mesopotamia, and relieving the Viceroy of all responsibility for any consequent danger to India. The reinforcements were sent, though only at the last moment, and they enabled Sir J. Nixon to defeat and drive the Turks before him in the spring and summer of 1915.

16. The next occasion on which considerable reinforcements were required in Mesopotamia was in connection with the advance on Baghdad, which was sanctioned in October, 1915. Again both the Indian and Home Governments agreed that reinforcements amounting to one or two divisions were essential if the advance was to be undertaken, and again we find each Government trying to put upon the other the responsibility for providing part or all of the necessary troops. Owing to the uncertain position of the operations in other theatres of the war, the Imperial authorities found it difficult to guarantee the despatch of two divisions to Mesopotamia within the necessary time, and asked India whether, pending such despatch, she could not, in the meantime, herself provide another division. With the intention of evading this liability, the Indian Government resorted to procedure which, to say the least of it, was disingenuous. There were at the time available in India as reinforcements three batteries of artillery, three cavalry regiments, and two infantry brigades. Information as to the availability of these reinforcements was, however, withheld from the Home Government, and the explanation of this omission is given in a letter from the Military Secretary of Sir Beauchamp Duff to the Military Secretary of the Viceroy in the following words :—

> It is clear that the Home Government are very anxious that Baghdad should be taken, and they will send us the required force if we hold out, but they will give us nothing if the least sign of willingness to find reinforcements is shown by us, and we shall have to do it all by ourselves, and be so weak everywhere that both in India and in Mesopotamia we shall be in danger.

17. Ultimately, the Home Government agreed to find and despatch the two divisions required, but they did not arrive within the time limit originally regarded by India as essential;

134

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00004c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Drafts and Reinforcements.

they came in advance of much of their necessary equipment, and before sufficient arrangements had been made for their transport from Basra to the front. Consequently, at a crisis in the fortunes of the expedition, they were largely useless for the purpose for which they had been sent. This incident vividly illustrates that lack of co-ordination between the Home and Indian authorities, which was at the root of so many of the difficulties in Mesopotamia.

18. Such a lack of method in arranging for reinforcements can hardly be termed satisfactory. It is only fair, however, to say that from time to time, up to November, 1915, the Indian Government sent to Mesopotamia a few fresh units, generally a battalion or two at a time. Moreover, under the pressure of events after the retreat from Ctesiphon, in December, 1915, the Indian Government did send two more divisions, one in December, 1915, and another early in 1916, a fact which makes it difficult to believe that India could not have reinforced Mesopotamia at an earlier date.

Chaplains.

19. It was stated in evidence before us that the establishment of chaplains for British troops in India is more limited than for British troops in the United Kingdom. It was also stated that there were not sufficient chaplains with the Mesopotamian Expedition even on the lower basis of the Indian Establishment. This last insufficiency is evidently regrettable, and we draw attention to it accordingly. In regard to the general question of the establishment of chaplains for British troops in the Indian Army, there may be special difficulties in obtaining a sufficient supply of chaplains for this service. But we commend the matter to the notice of the Indian Government, so that so far as possible there may be the same spiritual care for the British troops in India as elsewhere. In the evidence before us we have had proof of the value of the chaplain's labours and the sustaining and encouraging effect they have upon soldiers constantly face to face with death.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00003a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

1. River transport was from the beginning of the campaign a dominant factor, as its sufficiency or insufficiency regulated the movements of the expedition. This fundamental matter has been treated at considerable length in paragraphs 73 to 87 of the Vincent-Bingley Report.* We concur with the finding therein, but as the terms of reference to that Commission were more limited than ours, they were not able to go so far into the matter as we have been able to do, nor to carry their investigations later than April, 1916.

2. Evidence is overwhelming that a shortage of river transport existed from the time of the occupation of Kurna in December, 1914, and became serious from and after May, 1915. Despite additions that were made, the shortage had become relatively even greater in April, 1916, than at any earlier period of the campaign, owing to the increased numbers of the force. Practically at no time after the advance above Kurna was river transport adequate to requirements. It greatly delayed military operations, in which celerity was an important factor for success, it affected the comfort and feeding of the troops, and it was a direct cause of suffering to the sick and wounded. As evidence of the shortage, we have been told that it took nearly two months to concentrate troops and supplies for the advance from Amara to Kut-el-Amara, and that again the advance from Kut and Aziziyeh towards Baghdad was fatally delayed from the same cause. It seems almost certain that, but for the shortage of river transport, the Turkish Army would have been destroyed between Amara and Ctesiphon; but the want was most acutely felt during the strenuous time when every day counted in the attempt to relieve the siege of Kut. Here, in view of the straits in which General Townshend reported his force to be, time was of the utmost importance.

3. General Lake, at that time General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia, telegraphed to the Chief of the General Staff, Delhi, on March 22nd, 1916, as follows:—

> I doubt firstly whether the paralysing effect which the inadequacy and late supply of river craft has had on the operations up the Tigris is fully realised by the General Staff at home, and secondly, why our forecasts as to what it will be possible to convey up river have varied, and of late have considerably developed. On January 21st, 1916, when Aylmer fought his action at Hannah, there were 10,000 infantry and 12 guns in the country available as reinforcements, but which, owing to this cause, could not be sent up to him in time.
>
> On March 8th, the date of his last operations, I had, approximately, 12,000 infantry and 26 guns which, for similar reasons, could not be forwarded.

The evidence shows conclusively that shortage of river transport was the chief cause of the failure to relieve Kut.

4. River tonnage available for transport from Basra up river, and the requirements at different periods, were as follows:—

	Daily tonnage available.	Daily requirements.
November, 1915	150 tons	.. 208 tons.
April, 1916	250 to 300 tons ..	.. 598 tons.
August, 1916	450 tons	.. 650 tons.

These figures are given in the Vincent-Bingley Report, and by Major-General Cowper D A. and Q.M.G., though we make from the latter's calculation of tonnage available the deductions necessary according to evidence, on account of steamers broken down, or undergoing repair. It will be observed that in each case the requirements have been largely in excess of the tonnage available, without allowing for a further increase of the force or for loss of steamers. It may be well to note that since the War Office took over the management of the campaign in 1916, more foresight in preparation and energy in action are evident. To a recent estimate of requirements (namely, 800 tons per day), a 50 per cent. margin for possible increase of force or eventualities has been added, and a large fleet, capable of carrying up river 1,200 tons daily, now has been, or is being, provided, in addition to the transporting capacity of the railways.

5. The evidence before us tends to show that improved control and administration of the river craft available would have mitigated the evils arising from the shortage, although at no time could such improvement have entirely overcome them. In this connection it should be noted that the work of controlling and managing a miscellaneous fleet of river steamers, tugs and barges, with their crews, their upkeep and their traffic, was not in the usual line of Army or Royal Indian Marine experience. It is, we think, unfortunate that

* See Appendix I.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000083

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

someone with experience of the management of such flotillas on one of the rivers of India or Burma was not at an early date appointed to assist in this work. Being clearly of opinion that shortage of transport was one of the chief causes of the failure to capture Baghdad and to relieve Kut, as well as a cause of deplorable suffering of the sick and wounded, we have endeavoured to ascertain where the responsibility primarily lay.

6. In November, 1914, when General Barrett took possession of Basra, the river transport available consisted of three steamers, viz., the "Medjidieh," which was the most serviceable, the "Julnar," which required new engines, and the "Salimi," which was used as a ferry boat between Basra and Kurna. Besides these there were four lighters of 60 tons, one of 80 tons, two of 110 tons and ten of 200, making seventeen in all, and some country sailing boats, or mahailas, with a capacity of from 25 to 35 tons. In the words of a witness :—

"The mahailas were very useful for unloading ships in the stream, and bringing the contents to shore. But to go any distance they take a very long time indeed, and if the wind is against them and the tide is against them and the current is against them they cannot move at all. The mahailas that went from Basra to Kurna, about 30 miles roughly, used to start one day and get up there on the third day, or afterwards."

7. On November 23rd 1914, after Basra was occupied, at a conference held at Army Headquarters, Commander A. Hamilton, R.I.M., recommended to the General Staff that they should at once ask for 12 river steamers of the "Medjidieh" class. Commander Hamilton had previously been on the Tigris for two years, and had surveyed the river from Basra to Baghdad. He was, therefore, competent to speak with exceptional knowledge both of the river and of the class of steamer most suitable to its navigation. He urged the necessity of giving orders early, and, owing to the necessary delay in building the vessels, which he estimated at 12 months, he suggested that they should be got from India ready-built. There is reason to believe that had Commander Hamilton's foresight, knowledge, and advice at once been acted upon, subsequent difficulties would have been mitigated, if not altogether avoided. General Barrett does not remember the circumstances. He may perhaps have been influenced by the limited scope of the immediate operations then authorised, but we must note that it is clear from his evidence to us and the Vincent-Bingley Commission that he realised that the expedition would in all probability have to advance as far as Amara and Nasariyeh. At any rate, the Staff at that time did not consider the matter urgent, although it was allowed that six more steamers might be required. Nothing, however, was done until January 2nd, 1915, when, in reply to an enquiry as to the steamers available for use above Kurnah, General Barrett telegraphed to India that, in order to carry a force of one brigade, one squadron, one battery and one company of sappers and miners, with 500 mules and supplies for 10 days, seven steamers and one or two lighters would be required in addition to the existing flotilla. These seven steamers and two lighters were purchased in India during February, 1915. They arrived at Basra in May of the same year. On February 17th, 1915, General Barrett asked for four river tugs, which were purchased in India early in March, 1915, and arrived at Basra shortly after the seven steamers.

8. On May 27th, 1915, General Nixon, who had in April taken command, informed India that the paddle steamers and tugs sent could not be relied upon to work above Kurna, owing to their comparatively deep draught and to the lowness of the river at certain seasons, and asked for six more tugs of certain power, and with a draught not to exceed 3 feet, subsequently modified to 3 feet 6 inches. There were difficulties in finding in India tugs conforming to the specification, and the order was ultimately passed on to England and merged in the August demand* for river craft to be built there. On July 8th, 1915, a comprehensive memorandum was drawn up by General Kemball and forwarded to India by General Nixon. In this memorandum the shortage of river craft and the urgent need for further supplies of craft of a suitable type were strongly emphasized, and warnings given that if steps were not taken in good time to meet these requirements grave risks were being run of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment. General Kemball says :—

Had we had sufficient river transport we could have entered Nasiriyeh at the heels of the Turkish force defeated at Shaiba, and at the same time despatched troops to drive off the Turks then threatening the pipe line up the Karun. We had sufficient troops, but not sufficient steamers, to undertake simultaneous operations.

The same conditions have obtained ever since.

Before an advance could be made from Qurnah the return of the steamers taken by General Gorringe up the Karun had to be awaited.

* See paragraph 9 below.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000b3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

Before a force could be despatched against Nasiriyeh the vessels which transported the troops to Amara had to be brought back down the river.

At the present time, before the 6th Division can be fully concentrated at Amara in readiness for a further advance or to meet a forward movement of the Turks, the steamers with the Nasiriyeh expedition will have to be withdrawn.

Military exigencies have permitted no pause in our operations and the consequence has been that all the steamers have been used incessantly. Indeed, these vessels have only been sent for overhaul when they actually break down; but, in spite of these exertions, it has been impossible to prevent operations being prolonged into a season which on account of low water and heat adds difficulties which greater celerity might have avoided.

Such are the conditions to-day and there can be no doubt that river transport will continue to be the governing factor in any future operations.

From the nature of the country and the distribution of the population and political centres any operations against the Turks have to be made along rivers, and the ease and success with which operations can be carried out must naturally depend on the number of suitable steamers, tugs and barges available.

Now up to the present time we have never managed to transport more than 5 battalions with field and heavy guns (but without animals), at any one time. . . . . .

In short, more powerful light-draught river steamers and plenty of them, and not only ships, but personnel and material for their maintenance, are regarded by the General Staff of this Force as our principal need.

It is also thought necessary to add the warning that if steps are not taken in good time to meet these requirements we are running grave risks of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment.

At the present time we cannot make the most effective use of the troops available owing to want of ships, and in any crisis insufficiency of river transport would limit the scope of reinforcements, while a breakdown of shipping might have still more serious consequences."

It was thus pointed out that the most effective use of the troops available could not be made owing to want of river transport, and that in any crisis aid by reinforcements would be limited, while a breakdown of steamers might have still more serious consequences. With the memorandum came a pressing request for the building in England of :—

6 paddle steamers of the "Medjidieh" class.
3 stern-wheelers of lighter draught.
8 tugs of the "Sumana" class.
43 barges of specifications given.

9. The purport of these requirements was telegraphed to London on August 4th, 1915. Delay took place, and it was not until a mail despatch from the Government of India, dated August 20th, was received in London on September 9th, that active steps were taken to place the orders. Even after this date there was further delay—only in part unavoidable—and eventually orders for the six paddle steamers, three stern-wheel steamers and eight tugs were placed on November 3rd, 1915, orders for the barges being placed a few days later. The first of these tugs reached Abadan in April, 1916, the first paddlers and stern-wheelers in June, 1916, and the 43 barges arrived at different dates between April, 1916, and the end of the year. All except the six paddle steamers were shipped either in sections or in the form of plates, and had to be erected after arrival in Mesopotamia, so that a considerable period elapsed after their arrival before they were available for use. Some were not ready in January, 1917.

10. Finding that the order from England meant at least 12 months' delay, and in view of the supreme importance of meantime obtaining more river transport without delay, General Nixon telegraphed to India on October 9th, 1915, as follows :—

Please procure quickly some powerful light-draught tugs or stern-wheelers in India, which will serve present needs and thereby greatly strengthen military operations, which are very seriously impeded. This is a very urgent need.

and again on October 13th, 1915 :—

If anything of suitable draught and approximating to other requirements can be sent here soon they will serve as useful stopgaps till new craft arrives. Please, therefore, do whatever is possible to meet our urgent difficulties meanwhile.

In response to these pressing messages, the Indian Government eventually secured in India a large number of steamers and barges which did not, however, arrive till January to April, 1916. Subsequent orders followed during 1916 for the supply of many more river craft from England, but we do not think it in the public interest to give details as to these.

It will be sufficient to state generally that upwards of 700 river craft of all kinds have been sent or are on order, and that the margin over estimated requirements now provided for should safeguard the future. The foregoing summary of the demands for

136

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00001d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

tonnage up to the beginning of 1916, covers the period which is the main subject of our enquiry. Any vessels asked for after January, 1916, even if ready-made in India, could not have had any effect either upon the operations for the capture of Baghdad in 1915 or for the relief of Kut.

11. In order to appreciate the responsibility attaching to General Nixon, it is necessary to look at the position on the various dates on which he suggested the main moves up the river, or received authority to make these advances. The three most critical dates may be taken as those of the decisions to advance from Kurna to Amara, from Amara to Kut, and from Kut and Aziziyeh to Baghdad. Each of these advances, it must be remembered, involved a special demand on the River Transport in respect of the carriage of troops, ambulance transport, artillery, &c., and *pro tanto* diminished the amount of River Transport available for ordinary supply. The dates when these advances were authorised were May 23rd, 1915, August 7th, 1915, and October 23rd, 1915.

General Cowper gives the daily tonnage available on these three dates as 175 tons, less an allowance for vessels off work for repair, leaving, say, 150 tons daily available at each of the three dates.

General Lake, in the despatch describing the operations of the force under his command, writes as follows :—

> The number of steamers available in January, 1916, for river transport purposes was practically the same as when, in June, 1915, the first advance up the Tigris took place.

In addition to steamers and barges, a certain number of native sailing craft, called mahailas, were utilised, but were unreliable owing to their being unable to make progress up river against wind and current.

12. It is important to remember what General Nixon had before him in taking the first step from Kurna up the river. Each of the advances from Kurna to Amara, Kurna to Naseriyeh, Amara to Kut, and Kut towards Baghdad, was, it is true, only taken after it was recommended by the General, and authority obtained from the Government of India and the Government in London. Nevertheless it is our definite opinion that these advances—at least as far as Kut (just outside the limit of the Basra Vilayet)—should have been anticipated by General Nixon and provided for in time, seeing that even the possibility of an advance to Baghdad could not have been out of his mind, in view of the instructions given to him on his proceeding to Mesopotamia to take command.

13. The following is an extract from the orders given to him by the Commander-in-Chief in India, dated March 24th, 1915 :—

> " Operations. After acquainting yourself on the spot with the present situation, you will submit :—
> 1. A plan for the effective occupation of Basra Vilayet.
> 2. A plan for the subsequent advance on Baghdad."

It is clear, however, that the Government in London had no intention at this time of authorising an advance, so far as Baghdad. The correspondence shows that they deprecated too large a commitment in Mesopotamia, and the limits of action indicated by them were the protection of the pipe line from the Anglo-Persian oilfields to Abadan and the occupation of Basra Vilayet which extends to a point just below Kut-el-Amara. But in the case of military operations dependent on river transport, the need for timely preparation was of special importance. It would appear in these circumstances no more than ordinary prudence to prepare long in advance for all contingencies, and not to advance until the necessary transport had been provided.

14. The total tonnage on the river on May 23rd, 1915, was small—too small even for the existing force, if it was to advance and thereby lengthen the lines of communication. Moreover, of the steamers available more than half exceeded a draught of 3 feet 6 inches, and it had already been found that it was practically impossible to get suitable steamers from India, with a maximum draught not exceeding this limit. The only alternative, therefore, so far as river transport was concerned, was to build new steamers, and these could not be available under 12 months from the date of the order being despatched.

15. A great deal of correspondence and some misunderstanding took place between General Nixon and India as to the specification, and in particular the maximum draught of steamers suitable for Mesopotamia. It is difficult to visualise the conditions of the river and of the country. At certain times of the year the river overflows its low banks, and the plain is turned into a vast sea of water. Transport by road,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000049

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

therefore, cannot be relied on, although practicable with difficulties during part of the year. Just above Kurna are what may be called the Straits, where the passage of the river at all times is difficult, and particularly so at the season of low river. One witness —Commander Huddlestone, R.I.M., writes in an appendix to his evidence :—

The river between Kurna and Amara is roughly very narrow—some 85 to 250 feet broad—with real hairpin corners, and very shallow, and a very strong current, some 3 to 6 knots. The banks are from 3 to 5 feet high, and the bend so sharp that the advance of the vessel coming down, notwithstanding the helm, sends her—or rather, her barges* right smack against the banks. If she has not got barges she goes against them herself. The result is not so bad at this time of the year, as would be expected, because the bank gives way, and the vessel or barge bounds off again, cannons against the other side, and proceeds, and repeats the performance some two or three times an hour, sometimes more, sometimes less. In summer, when the banks are hard, the damage done to vessels and barges is immense, and even now they do a considerable amount of damage to themselves, and so, in designing vessels, I give you what I think are the chief points to be borne in mind :—

(1) Draught should not exceed 3 feet 6 inches for steamers, and 3 feet for barges.
(2) Length should not exceed 212 feet for steamers, and 170 feet for barges.
(3) The steamers should be made of steel, with independent paddles.

16. Another witness, Commander Hamilton, R.I.M., stated in his evidence :—

I doubt if steamers really suitable for the Tigris exist anywhere, especially as troop-ships. So the only ones that we can call really satisfactory (other than Lynch's), will be the ones specially built, or building, in England to our design on Lynch's pattern. It is the shallow draught required, combined with the necessary size of vessel and horsepower which renders any ready-made ones from other parts of the world more or less, and in many cases quite, unsuitable. It must be remembered that the Tigris in the low-river season (a normal low-river season) is, after all, only a glorified ditch in many parts. It is not yet fully realised by the Army, I think, that last low-river season (August to March, 1915), was abnormally high. The result was that the comparatively deep-draught steamers (about 5 feet actually), which we received from Burma were actually able to run regularly right up to the front during all the low seasons. We had stipulated, and still stipulate, that 3 feet 6 inches is the standard safe draught for that river in low season. It is so normally, but the Army have got so used to seeing the deeper-draught ones going successfully that I feel rather anxious about the outlook should the river take it into its head to fall as low, as it can do on occasions. Should it do so, I fear a large part of our ready-made imported fleet of paddlers would be out of action, as most of them are much over 3 feet 6 inches when loaded. . . . It has been found by experience (Lynch Bros. records), that it is not worth risking a draught of over about 3 feet 6 inches in the low river. Besides which paddle-steamers "settle" 7 or 8 inches when moving in such shallow water, so that they always require several inches more water than their stationary draught would lead one to suppose.

Above the Kurna Straits navigation is easier as far as Kut, except for some shallow patches. Above that point the river is again difficult, and 3 feet 6 inches is the maximum draught suitable. It is evident from all the information before us, that to rely on the deeper draught vessels being able to navigate the river above Kurna at all times of the year was to take a great risk, and what this risk might involve it is not difficult to picture.

17. In our opinion General Nixon was perfectly right in insisting that the maximum draught of vessels supplied to him should not exceed 3 feet 6 inches, but he might have made it more clear to the authorities in India that, failing these, he could make use of deeper draught steamers during part of the year and during all the year on certain stretches of the river. On the other hand, General Nixon does not appear to have appreciated at an early stage in the operations that such vessels as he required were not obtainable ready-made, and would have to be specially built. The result was that demands were sent forward embodying cast-iron conditions which could not all be fulfilled by ready-made vessels, while the authorities in India showed little appreciation of General Nixon's difficulties, and were not very helpful in suggesting substitutes, many of which, it was afterwards found, were available, although not in all respects suitable. It was only on July 10th, 1915, that General Nixon sent forward General Kemball's survey of the situation, and recommended the building of steamers, tugs and barges suitable for the river. These could not reasonably have been expected to be available for use before the middle of 1916, and, as a matter of fact, they were not ready until later.

18. In making the advance from Kurna to Kut (a distance by river of 243 miles), we are of opinion that General Nixon took great risk (1) on account of the inadequacy of his river transport as a whole, and (2) on account of the inability of a large portion of it to navigate the river above Kurna in a normal low-water season. Our opinion in regard to this is even stronger when we come to consider the advance from Kut towards Baghdad, because, first, the river above Kut is shallow, secondly, the distance from the base is greater (an additional difficulty if river transport above Kut was to be relied on), and thirdly, General Nixon by that time knew of the large reinforcements which he was to

* Which are attached to her on either side.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000031

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

receive, and that an amount of transport inadequate to a smaller force and shorter line of communication must be still more inadequate for a larger force and longer line of communication. We think the plea that steamers and barges had been asked for is not an answer. It was known that what had been asked for could not be available for a long time, and certainly not until long after the operations referred to had been carried out. Moreover, Sir John Nixon was informed on the 28th October by his Inspector-General of Communications that he estimated that in addition to the shipping already ordered, 12 more steamers and 24 barges would be required in view of the expected reinforcements. This estimate he did not apparently pass on to India or London. If he had done so, in view of the insistence by both the Indian and Home Governments on the necessity for the prompt arrival at Baghdad of the reinforcing two divisions, it is at least open to doubt whether the sanction to the advance would not have been countermanded.

19. The responsibility for making the respective advances with insufficient transport and for the military reverses, discomfort of the troops, and abnormal suffering of the sick and wounded which resulted from such insufficiency, attaches primarily to General Nixon, whose estimate of the military exigencies of the moment must, however, be taken into account. At the same time we cannot exonerate the Commander-in-Chief and the General Staff in India, who had a survey of the river in their possession, knowledge of the difficulties of its navigation, a list of all the steamers available, knowledge that many of them were of too deep a draught for the low season, and information as to the lengthening of the communications and the reinforcements which were being sent In these circumstances to authorise and even recommend to the Government in London the various advances without satisfying themselves that the expedition was properly equipped with river transport, and, indeed, actually with the knowledge that it was not, involves Sir Beauchamp Duff in a large measure of responsibility. While a copy of General Nixon's despatch of July 10th, 1915, and of General Kemball's memorandum was received by the India Office and forwarded to the War Office in September, it was not laid before the Secretary of State for India. Moreover it does not appear that General Nixon's actual shortage of river transport was brought by the Military Department of the India Office before the various expert bodies subsequently consulted in such a way as to attract their attention, and in consequence the War Council or Cabinet when they were asked to sanction the advance on Baghdad were not cognisant of the risk. As these documents were attached to a requisition for a large amount of river transport the Military Branch of the India Office sent them all on to the Stores Branch of that Department as an indent; and though the memorandum was forwarded to the War Office, it was not accompanied by any letter calling special attention to the revelation made as to the grave shortage of transport. This blunder led to serious consequences, for which General Barrow cannot be exonerated as the head of the Military Department at the India Office. We have shown elsewhere that the advance on Baghdad was proposed and sanctioned on the understanding that there would be large reinforcements for General Nixon's forces, and such reinforcements were of little immediate value if the River Transport to convey them from Basra to the front was not available. It may well have been that had General Kemball's significant reminder of the correlation between reinforcements and transport been brought to the notice of the War Council, the Baghdad adventure and its attendant misfortunes would have been avoided.

Responsibility for Shortage of River Transport.

20. Important witnesses before us have differed widely as to the incidence of responsibility for the supply of river transport for the Mesopotamia Expedition. Sir Beauchamp Duff informed us that Sir J. Nixon in Mesopotamia rather than the General Staff in India was responsible for calculating how much river-transport was required. On the other hand Sir J. Nixon said, "It was the duty of India to ask and find out what was required for the forces, and not to impose the intolerable burden on me of having continually to fight to obtain the necessary supplies, etc.," and in support of this contention he referred us to the Field Service Regulations.

21. Under the Field Service Regulations the Commander-in-Chief in the Field (in this case, Sir John Nixon) is "relieved of direct responsibility for the conduct of the business of providing the requirements of the forces in the field." It is also laid down that "responsibility for the adoption, modification, or revision of plans of operations rests

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00003d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

with the Government, who, on approving a plan assume responsibility in principle for the provision of the requisite forces." Sir J. Nixon assumed, and we think justly, that "requisite forces" must be held to include all the requisite auxiliary services. In the present case, the management of the Expedition had been devolved by the Home Government upon the Indian Government; it would seem, therefore, that the primary responsibility for providing the requisite river craft, not only for the original plan of campaign, but also for the extension of such plans involved in the successive advances to Amara, Kut and Baghdad, rested with the Indian Government.

22. On the other hand the Regulations provide that the Commander-in-Chief in the Field "is responsible for the efficiency of the forces in the field," and anticipate that he is to make demands for what he requires. Where, therefore, as in the present case, the efficiency of the forces was absolutely dependent on the supply of river craft, it would seem clear that Sir John Nixon was responsible for placing his needs in river craft before the Indian Government in an adequate manner and with anticipation.

23. Between the two authorities concerned, viz., the Government of India and the General Officer Commanding in the Field, in our opinion there was to a large extent joint and mutual responsibility. In any case, the true test is to be found in common sense, and not in questioning the legal interpretation of what is in a book of Field Service Regulations, written, no doubt in contemplation of very different circumstances from those of the Mesopotamia campaign. In our view the situation called for co-operation, thoughtful anticipation of needs, mutual and ready helpfulness. General Nixon's expectations as to the existence of suitable steamers, and the promptness with which they, or others specially built in England, could be delivered in Mesopotamia, erred on the side of optimism, but he was necessarily devoid of the requisite information on which to form a correct judgment. The Government of India was in a position to know the facts, and, as regards the all-important supply of river steamers, failed lamentably in co-operation, anticipation of needs and ready helpfulness. We consider that responsibility for the shortage of river transport rests mainly with the Government of India, in its various Departments. For their failure in this matter, which was the foundation of all the troubles in Mesopotamia, no censure could, in the circumstances, be too grave.

Provision of River Craft from India.

Bearing these considerations in mind, we now proceed to examine how the supply of river craft for Mesopotamia was dealt with.

24. The general conditions in Mesopotamia were known in India at the beginning of the war. The absence of roads, the importance of the rivers as means of communication, many of the peculiar features of those rivers, and the number and class of river steamers in the country in the autumn of 1914, are all noted in a small hand book of information furnished to the Expedition by the Indian General Staff. Moreover, further particulars as to navigation of the Tigris were accessible to the Indian Government—the Royal Indian Marine had for years maintained a "Station" ship at Baghdad, and one of their officers, Commander Hamilton, had made a survey of the Tigris in 1905-1907. We think, therefore, that it was incumbent on the Indian Government to have foreseen that a large supply of special river craft would become a necessity for the Expedition directly it advanced above Kurna, the limit on the Tigris for ocean-going steamers.

25. This necessity and a responsibility for meeting it was indeed to some extent recognised by the General Staff in India as early as December 30th, 1914, when they asked General Barrett to find out how many steamers he could procure locally for use above Kurna, and what number of craft he would require in the event of an advance up the Tigris or Euphrates. General Barrett replied that he would require 7 more steamers and some lighters. It is important to remember that this estimate of General Barrett related only to his then force of roughly one division, although later on, when these steamers were provided, *viz.*, in April-May, 1915, it was apparently considered by the Indian Government that they constituted a sufficient increase of river transport to meet the needs of two divisions. But in their communication to General Barrett the Indian Authorities did at any rate definitely recognise some responsibility for ascertaining what river craft would be required in the event of an advance. From this time, however, up to the beginning of 1916, they do not seem to have again recognised this responsibility. Before the advance from Kurna to Amara was sanctioned, they did not make any inquiries as to the sufficiency

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00006f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

of the transport; before the advance from Amara to Kut-el-Amara was sanctioned they contented themselves with obtaining general assurance from General Nixon that he was able to maintain the force of a division or more at Kut in all states of the river. They made no efforts to ascertain or estimate what the requirements in river craft would be for the advance to Baghdad, or for the reinforcements which they sent or asked to be sent to Mesopotamia. Indeed so much out of touch was Simla with the actual situation in Mesopotamia, that we find the Indian General Staff, in "appreciations" in June and September, 1915, definitely stating that the Expedition was well supplied with river craft, and using this among their arguments for the advance to Baghdad.

26. During the whole period of the most important developments of the campaign, *viz.*, from January, 1915, to January, 1916, the attitude of the Indian Government, therefore, seems to have been that they had little or no responsibility in the matter of providing river craft, beyond attending to the specific demands sent to them from Mesopotamia itself. We think that both the regulations and common sense demanded that the authority responsible for providing the requisite river craft should have taken greater care to ascertain what was requisite. The Indian Government did not in fact exercise that oversight and foresight over the needs of Mesopotamia in river craft which was demanded of them by their position and responsibilities as the authority placed in management of the campaign. On the other hand, General Nixon did not in our opinion sufficiently assist the Indian Government by informing them well beforehand of his anticipated needs in river craft.

27. With regard to delay in fulfilment of orders for river transport we made inquiry into the procedure, and investigated the causes of delay. Correspondence was usually conducted between the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia and the Chief of the Staff in Simla or Delhi. From the latter officer anything about river craft would be transmitted to the Quartermaster-General, who would thereafter communicate what he thought necessary to Captain Lumsden, the Director of the Royal Indian Marine at Bombay. The work falling upon Captain Lumsden, R.N., and an insufficient staff in connection with ocean transport appertaining to four Indian Expeditionary Forces has been heavy. He was not in touch with all that was going on in Mesopotamia, nor informed of the scope of the expedition. Neither the Quartermaster-General nor Captain Lumsden appears to have fully appreciated in time—certainly down to July, 1915—the seriousness of the river transport situation. Orders for craft involved a divided responsibility between the Quartermaster-General up-country, who was in touch with Mesopotamia but not with river craft, and the Director of the Royal Indian Marine in Bombay, who was to some extent in touch with river craft but not with Mesopotamia. The result has been lack of knowledge, initiative and resource, as well of helpful anticipation in the important first nine months of the campaign.

28. It was undoubtedly General Nixon's duty to formulate his own needs with regard to class of vessels and to specify what was required, but it is, we think, unfortunate that when difficulties first arose as to their specifications and draught, a competent person, preferably with experience of river craft, was not at once sent from India to look into the matter on the spot, and confer with General Nixon as to the usefulness or otherwise of what could be obtained ready-made in India. But this was not done. Captain Lumsden did not think it necessary to go himself, he failed to rise to the occasion, and in consequence it was not till late in 1915 that boats in large numbers were offered by India which might have been offered long before. Many of them were accepted by Mesopotamia, and although a number proved unsatisfactory, some have been of use. In consequence of the delay, however, none of these boats arrived in Mesopotamia until early in 1916. Had they been available for General Nixon between October and November, 1915, they would have materially lightened his transport problems, and might, perhaps have even altered the history of the campaign.

29. In response to General Barrett's request, the first craft, namely 4 tugs and 7 paddle steamers, had been sent by India. They arrived in April—May, 1915. The following is a paraphrase of the communications that ensued between General Nixon and the Chief of the General Staff in India:—

May 27th, 1915.—Mesopotamia asked that in view of deep draught of steamers and tugs received, rendering them unreliable for use above Kurna, 6 tugs of 3-ft. draught should be sent.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000045

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

June 14th.—India asked whether 4 named paddle steamers, 2 stern-wheeled steamers and 2 tugs, the draught of all being between 2 ft. 3 ins. to 3 ft. 6 ins., would be suitable if available.

June 16th.—Mesopotamia cabled accepting as many of the 8 as were procurable.

June 20th.—India telegraphed that some of them were found to be too deep, and that the others of suitable draught were not available (no reason given). They added—" no tugs, as asked for on May 27th, available in India."

June 20th.—Mesopotamia cabled asking for 4 tugs of 3-ft. 6-in. draught.

July 10th.—Mesopotamia asked for 6 paddle steamers, 3 stern wheelers, 8 tugs and 43 barges to be specially built (in England). The draught specified was 3 ft. 6 ins. for the steamers, and 3 ft. 5 ins. for the tugs.

(N.B.—Orders for these were placed with builders in the United Kingdom in November, 1915.)

July 17th.—India telegraphed that tugs suitable to the requirements cabled on June 20th were " not at present available."

October 9th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed to India: " Vessels over 3 ft. 9 ins. now useless; send quickly some light-draught tugs and stern wheelers to serve immediate needs."

October 12th.—India replied: " Have tried Indian rivers without success."

October 13th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed, draught admissible for tugs 3 ft. 5 ins., stern wheelers, 2 ft. 6 ins., adding, " if anything of suitable draught, and approximating to other requirements, can be sent here soon, they will serve as useful stop-gaps till new craft arrive. Please do whatever is possible to meet our urgent difficulties meanwhile."

October 26th.—India telegraphed, " No tugs of description given in your telegram of October 13th are procurable in India or Burma, and stern wheelers cannot make sea journey."

October 27th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed, " Please wire description of any tugs that are available, with draught."

November 6th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed, " Matter urgent, please wire details."

November 7th.—India wired that they were receiving such large lists of steamers that they were having them " whittled down by a special staff," with a view to selecting only such vessels as would be suitable. They promised to forward a list shortly.

November 9th.—Mesopotamia telegraphed, " Please telegraph the list of ships, details can follow by post. You know our requirements as regards dimensions. Draught should not exceed 3 ft. 6 ins. Please treat the matter as very urgent."

November 10th.—India telegraphed to Mesopotamia the names and particulars of no less than 48 river steamers.

30. Of these latter, according to the description, 9 fulfilled the requirements as to draught sent by Mesopotamia on May 27th, although on June 20th and October 12th the Indian authorities had telegraphed that no such tugs were available in India. Other 4 fulfilled the requirements of June 20th. It may be that some of these 13 tugs, while being of suitable draught, were not in all other less important respects exactly what was wanted, but, in view of Mesopotamia's urgent need, we are impressed by what appears to us as serious neglect on the part of the Director of the Royal Indian Marine in not offering these craft to Mesopotamia at a much earlier date. If they had been offered, and accepted in response to the requirements cabled on May 27th, June 20th and October 9th, they could have been strengthened and prepared for the sea voyage to Basra, in ample time to make the voyage as soon as the monsoon permitted—say in October or November, 1915—and have arrived in time to relieve the very critical condition as to transport which existed in December, 1915. It further appears to us that Captain Lumsden fai'ed to appreciate his duty, in that he did not at an early date have a complete list and survey made of all the river steamers and light-draught tugs in India and Burma.

Placing of Orders for River Transport in England.

31. We have already referred to the order sent to the India Office for 6 paddle steamers of the " Medjidieh " class, 3 stern-wheel steamers of lighter draught, 8 tugs of the " Sumana " class, and 43 barges. The order was cabled on August 4th, 1915, and written despatches with full particula s were received in London on September 9th, 1915. The urgency of the order, and the necessity of adhering to the type, dimensions, and draught of the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00002d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

vessels required, were emphasized by Commander Hamilton, General Kemball, General Nixon, the Commander-in-Chief in India, and finally by the Viceroy and his whole Council. Previous experience had demonstrated the defects of ready-made craft received from India, and of any other boats not specially built to meet the exceptional conditions of the Tigris. Success and possibly the safety of the Expedition depended upon ability to get transport up and down the river at all times. After many years of experience, Messrs. Lynch Bros., who held a concession for a steamer line on the Tigris, had evolved a type of steamers, of tugs (to tow large flat barges, one lashed on either side), and of barges, which were considered by those with local knowledge to be the only types entirely suitable for the river.

32. It was a *sine qua non* of the order that these models only be sent, and the India Office was requested to contract for the building of the craft with Messrs. Lynch Bros.; or to engage their assistance, obtain the loan of their plans, and the benefit of their expert knowledge. Messrs. Lynch Bros. of London and Basra, not being shipbuilders themselves, and all yards being at the time precluded from accepting orders for early delivery from anyone but the Government, could not contract to supply the boats, but offered their assistance, plans and expert knowledge, including bringing home their supervising engineer from Basra, for a commission of 5 per cent. on the cost of the boats on this side, and to erect them at Basra at cost without any addition of profit. Finally, the India Office offered Messrs. Lynch 1,500 guineas, to which the latter replied that, while it was not on a commercial scale, on patriotic grounds they would give their services and plans for 2,000 guineas. The value of the order to be placed and supervised was about £600,000. To this offer no reply was sent for some weeks. Meantime, the India Office consulted Sir John Biles, their expert naval architect (who was employed on a commission basis), to assist them. With the power of a Government Department behind him, Sir John Biles was able to go direct to the builders of the "Medjidieh," belonging to Lynch Bros., and get a copy of the plan of their steamer. The transaction might perhaps be criticized from other points of view, but we are more concerned with the failure to make use of the unique knowledge, and to engage the expert assistance which was available, in the face of the strongly expressed wishes of the General in Command in Mesopotamia, and of the Viceroy, and in view of what ensued therefrom.

33. The six new paddle steamers asked for were to be duplicates of the "Medjidieh," with certain interior improvements in the arrangements. The India Office, no doubt acting on the advice of Sir John Biles, thought it well to give the boats more power. Without consulting Mesopotamia, they ordered heavier machinery, and altered the dimensions of the hulls. As a consequence, the new boats draw more water than the "Medjidieh," burn considerably more fuel, and are more difficult to manœuvre, particularly when navigating with two barges abreast through the Narrows. Even if barges are not required for cargo or troops, they are required for protection of steamers' paddle-wheels, which otherwise would be stripped of their floats by collision with the banks. Above Ezra's Tomb the river is very narrow for a distance of 28 miles. In this portion its maximum breadth does not exceed 200 ft., and in certain places is not more than 140 ft. from bank to bank. The difficulty, from the navigation point of view, is enhanced by the twistings and turnings of the river—which, in certain cases, amount to the sharpest of bends—and by the rapid current.

34. General Cowper informed us that—

> It is impossible to adequately convey or describe the extraordinary difficulties of this portion of the river. In short, they must be seen to be appreciated, especially the passage of them made both up and down in a river steamer, towing two barges abreast, and bumping her way, when coming down stream, from side to side as she rounds the various bends.

35. After these new vessels reached the Tigris, and were put into commission, a telegram dated August 26th, 1916, was sent from Mesopotamia to the Commander-in-Chief in India, in which, referring to the suitability of the new river vessels, it was stated :—

> "'Medjidieh' represents extreme in regard to limits for length, breadth, width. River vessels designed constructed in England, of new 'Medjidieh' class, are unsuitable for river, particularly during the low-water season ; cannot navigate without barges to protect their paddles, and their beam is then too great for manœuvring either for Narrows or channels through all shoals up river."

36. With regard to the barges, the India Office, ignoring instructions that they were to be built 150 ft. long, and to be on Lynch's model, which have pointed bows, ordered them 170 ft. long and to have square or punt-shaped ends. While these square-ended barges may be suitable for other parts of the world, they were fatally unsuitable for the navigation of the Tigris, where, owing to the crashing of the barges into the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000091

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

river banks in the Narrows, and the collisions that frequently occurred with passing vessels, it was essential to have rounded or pointed ends. The matter might appear, at first sight, of minor importance, but it turned out otherwise. As soon as the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia became aware of the departure from the orders sent home, he telegraphed, on March 27th, 1916, protesting against the change, and against the omission to make use of Messrs. Lynch's assistance and experience, further asking that any barges that remained to be constructed should be of the model asked for. The India Office, in their reply of March 31st, refused to accept the General's view, and adhered to their opinion that the barges they had designed were "suitable for the Tigris, and in many respects superior to anything there." On April 6th, 1916, the General telegraphed re-stating his conviction as to the unsuitability of bows of square shape, which conviction he stated was based upon the best local expert advice. He pointed out that it was dangerous to make experiments, and better to adopt what had proved to be successful, beyond which, if the square-ended barges proved unsuitable, as he feared, the consequent delay and difficulty might have a paralysing effect on the success of future operations. In reply to this, the India Office not only declined to alter the barges which were being built, but directed that further 25 barges about to be built should also have the square-shaped pontoon bows.

37. Pressed as he was at that time by overwhelming difficulties, with a starving garrison in Kut hoping daily for succour, inadequate forces at the Front to effect their relief, and 10,000 men at Basra who could not be got up the river in time, owing to inadequacy of transport, it would be surprising if the General Officer in Command was not driven to something approaching desperation. This is indicated in the following extract from his telegram to the India Office, dated April 11th, 1916, in which he surveys the attitude of the India Office :—

> It is incumbent on me to invite your attention to what, in my opinion, is an incontrovertible fact, but the relative importance of which it is difficult for anybody outside this country to estimate. In my judgment it is quite beyond the ability of anyone in England or elsewhere, unless he possesses a wide personal knowledge of this country, to form any correct estimate of the peculiarities of Mesopotamia or, in particular, of the idiosyncrasies of the Tigris. Full details of the specifications of what I required in regard to barges and river craft which were to be specially constructed for eventful use in this country were given in my telegrams dated 10th July, and July 17th, 1915 to the Chief of the General Staff, Simla, with the object of further ensuring that all vessels would be constructed on lines essential to successful employment in Mesopotamia. I recommended in my telegram of July 23rd, 1915 to the Chief of the General Staff, India, that the consulting engineer to Lynch Bros., Mr. Thomas, should be despatched to England to superintend the construction of steamers subsequently, vide my telegram of August 5th to the Chief of the General Staff, India. I suggested that our agents in the matter should be Lynch Bros. In spite of the above and having regard to the fact that Tigris craft have been navigated for upwards of 70 years by Lynch Bros., and also that the practical experience gained by the Officers of the Royal Indian Marine since the beginning of military operations in Mesopotamia is coincident with Lynch Bros.' unique knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of the Tigris it seems that your naval architect has thought it desirable to design a type of barge which is suitable in his opinion. Having regard to the facts stated above and in the event of these barges, with square above? (bows), proving a failure which is expected here I think it very necessary that I should lay before you the fullest details of the case as it now stands. Not only is there the question of loss to the State, but what is of greater importance the possibility also of my being sent a large number of barges which although the intention was that they should be specially built for a particular purpose may not be found suitable for local requirements.

38. It was then too late to alter a large number of the barges appertaining to the first order sent home. Thirty-five barges, each of 250 tons capacity, and seven of smaller dimensions, all with square ends, were shipped. They were, after trial on the Tigris, condemned as totally unsuitable for navigation of the river. Much delay was involved in replacing them. Months of time were lost, and a large amount of public money.

39. Responsibility for these errors must rest with the India Office, who authorised or concurred in departure from the lines of an order laid down with so much emphasis in the despatch to which we have already referred. But the matter does not end here; barges, tugs and stern-wheel steamers were sent out in sections, or in plates and angles. Arrangements for their erection in Mesopotamia were made by the India Office, with little prevision of what would be required. The arrangements proved to be quite inadequate. It was a work of no little magnitude to discharge, assemble, erect and fit up complete, 11 steamers and 43 barges, with insufficient plant and mechanics and under trying local conditions Much loss of valuab'e time occurred, and vessels expected to be ready for use a few weeks after arrival were not available for many months. Some of the craft were sent in very large and heavy sections. Means of handling them in Mesopotamia proved inadequate and when an attempt was made to put them together in the river it

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000a1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

was found almost impossible, and some sections sank in 30 ft. of water. Part of the remaining sections were the nordered to be sent on to Bombay for erection there, and thereafter to be towed back to Basra, involving much cost, risk and delay. Material for erection of the barges and other craft was sent out in large shipments. No descriptive note of contents of packages accompanied the first shipments, and no drawings or erection plans were sent with them. The latter were only received in September, 1916, for vessels, the materials for which had arrived four or five months previously. The confusion which arose from this unbusinesslike proceeding was almost unbelievable, and must have been heartbreaking, in view of the urgent need for the vessels. Cases were discharged up and down the bank of the river and stretched a long distance. To find a particular piece required for the completion of any particular barge, tug, or steamer was almost hopeless.

To sum up :—

(1) The paddle steamers sent were unhandy and otherwise unsuitable.
(2) The square-ended barges proved a complete failure.
(3) Arrangements for erection of craft were altogether inadequate.
(4) Sections sent were too heavy for the local facilities.
(5) Lists of the contents of packages were not sent.
(6) Necessary erection plans and drawings were not forthcoming.

More inept proceedings than those connected with the purchase and shipment of river craft in England in 1915 and early in 1916 would be hard to find.

It is difficult for us, owing to the divided organisation of the India Office, to exactly apportion personal blame for this series of blunders, which were not only costly but also caused regrettable delay. The Director-General of Stores apparently acted upon the advice of Sir John Biles in allowing the specifications of the steamers and barges to be altered. His action in other matters was unbusiness-like.

Erection and Repair Shops.

40. The workshops and slips which existed in Mesopotamia on the outbreak of war were naturally of small size and quite unfitted to cope with the erection and repair of the large fleet of river craft required by the Expeditionary Force. So far as normal conditions were concerned, and even with the outlook of greater trade after the War, there was nothing in prospect to induce the local firms largely to increase their workshops. In consequence of arrangements with the Admiralty and India Office some extensions were undoubtedly made, but these were far short of the needs. In our opinion, the importance of adequate provision of workshops, slips and docks for the erection and repair of river vessels was not apprehended by General Nixon, the Indian Government or the India Office. The undertaking turned out to be one of great magnitude, and involved very large expenditure. From incurring the latter General Nixon apparently shrank, and his demands towards the end of the period of his command appear to have been on too small a scale. The fact that provisions were not made at a much earlier date unfortunately greatly delayed the availability for service of river craft—old and new. After the War Office took control during 1916, the matter was comprehensively taken in hand. Since that time over 7,000 tons of plant for workshops have been sent from England, and large numbers of skilled mechanics from England, India and elsewhere.

Port of Basra.

41. Up to October, 1914, Basra was a comparatively small commercial port, at which the arrival of two or three steamers was a full weekly allowance. Owing to a bar at Fao, only vessels drawing not more than 18 to 19 feet can reach Basra. It was largely a port of transit for Baghdad and other places up the river, to and from which cargo was conveyed by Messrs. Lynch Bros.' steamers or by mahailas. The equipment of the port was primitive and barely in keeping with the modest volume of its trade. There were no wharves for ocean steamers, and the merchants' warehouses were of small dimensions.

42. The facilities were, from the first, inadequate to cope with the needs of the Expeditionary Force, and to give reasonably rapid despatch to steamers bringing supplies. As the force grew, and as the line of communications and voyages of the river steamers lengthened, congestion at the port became greater. Administration of the port, direction of the mooring of shipping, provision of lighters or mahailas, and discharge of cargo overside, were placed in the hands of an officer of the Royal Indian Marine, under the Inspector-General of Communications. Reception of cargo ashore was in the hands of various military authorities, who each had their depôts, such as Supplies and Transport,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000016

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

Ordnance, Medical, &c. When traffic grew, accommodation for receiving and storing cargo ashore proved more and more inadequate. Most of the land round Basra was subject to flooding at the period of high river, but it was not covered deeply, and if foundations were raised, or the water kept out by earth dykes, stores were free from risk of damage. After struggling with congestion at Basra, a decision was ultimately come to late in 1915 to handle a portion of the traffic at Magill, situated about 5 miles above Basra. Here the depth of water permitted ocean steamers to come close in to the bank. By the aid of moored mahailas and planks, improvised landing stages were constructed, across which cargo could be carried from ocean steamers to the stores. At a later date, December, 1915—it was decided to construct proper wharves and otherwise improve the facilities of the port. These improvements were in progress during the whole of 1916. We have been informed that delays to steamers were at first occasioned, not so much by inability to get cargo out and placed in lighters or mahailas, as by inability or unwillingness of the military departments ashore to receive it with sufficient rapidity. It is clear that management of the traffic of a port and discharge of cargo was not work to which officers of the Royal Indian Marine had previously been accustomed. They found themselves at Basra with a task on hand of which they had had no experience, with an inadequate and inexperienced staff, shortage of labour, a port where the facilities ashore were of the most meagre description, and where traffic was constantly increasing and congestion becoming greater. We are told that at one time there were 40 steamers waiting to discharge, and that they lay in a line 8 miles long up and down the river. Small wonder that arrangements broke down, despite the willing efforts of the officer in charge. Much of the difficulty could have been avoided, in our opinion, if, from the first, someone accustomed to traffic management of a commercial port, and the handling of cargoes, had been appointed to assist. Men with these qualifications were known to be employed in one or other of the great Indian and Burmese river ports. Their advice was not asked for; and their assistance was not utilised until more than a year after the landing of the Expedition in Mesopotamia when conditions at Basra had become serious.

43. In the words of General Davison :—

I doubt whether the training of Royal Indian Marine officers specially fits them for high administrative appointments or the control of so big a charge as we have here (Basra). It demands the training of a shipping expert, with large commercial experience, or a traffic expert, such as the Manager of a big railway.

As some indication of the volume of traffic handled at that period, we have been informed that the number of troops and followers disembarked in Mesopotamia in the four months December 1st, 1915, to March 31st, 1916, was :—

Personnel, number	129,500
Animals ,, ...	33,000
Vehicles ,, ...	4,100
Cargo, tons	71,500

While officers of the Royal Indian Marine were struggling with conditions at the port of Basra, which were, in our opinion, beyond their powers, we cannot omit to notice that the general organisation of traffic was under the Inspector-General of Communications, who from April, 1915, to April, 1916 was General Davison. He was also responsible for matters connected with improvement of the port, such as the building of additional warehouses or the provision of additional wharfage.

44. General Gorringe stated in this connection :—

I have no doubt that great improvements could and should have been effected during the first 12 months, and so on in proportion afterwards. There was reluctance to spend money on improvements which would at all partake of a permanent character. No improvement in the unloading wharves for ships was made until December, 1915, when the reinforcements of two divisions were coming out. Then, and not till then, was that taken in hand. That is to say, that as long as we had only two divisions there, although the accommodation was bad and congested for stores of every kind being unloaded, no attempt was made to improve the facilities for unloading until the latter part of December, 1915, beyond making temporary stages and so on. There was no building of new wharves.

We think the criticism implied is justified, and that General Davison did not show that prescience and enterprise which the situation demanded, especially during the second half of 1915.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000041

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Shortage of River Transport.

45. In January, 1916, the Government of India sent Sir George Buchanan, a civilian who had been in charge of the Port of Rangoon, with a view to his becoming Director-General of the Port of Basra, and reorganising the traffic and facilities of the port. He did not receive any formal or definite appointment indicating the position he was to hold or specifying his duty, though a titular designation was given to him, viz., that of Director-General of Port Administration and River Conservancy. It was, unfortunately, left to Sir John Nixon to arrange with Sir George Buchanan, after his arrival, exactly what the duties of the position were to be. Differences naturally ensued. Sir George Buchanan's powers were so limited by Sir John Nixon, that the former considered his services were not put to their proper use. After a short stay he returned to India. Meantime his report on the conditions as he found them on arrival at Basra was communicated to Simla. In this he makes the following observations :—

> I found it difficult to realise that we had been in occupation of Basra for a year, as the arrangements for the landing and storing of goods and stores of every description were of the most primitive order, and, in the absence of roads, the whole area was a huge quagmire. To a new-comer appearances were such that troops and stores might have been landed, for the first time, the previous week. . . . The military expedition to Basra is, I believe, unique, inasmuch as in no previous case has such an enormous force been landed and maintained without an adequately prepared base.

46. About the middle of 1916 Sir George Buchanan returned to Basra, the port and traffic management was radically reorganised, and Sir George Buchanan was placed in full control. Since that time and since the War Office took over the charge and responsibility of the expedition, energy has been shown in building wharves, increasing the facilities, and generally making the port more capable of meeting the growing demands upon it. But these operations mean heavy expenditure and take time. Much of the material required had to be manufactured in England or the United States ; consequently it is not surprising that the improvement visible during 1916 was not more rapid. We find, however, that there has been marked and consistent improvement during the period June to December, 1916. We have been supplied with statements showing the time occupied by vessels bringing supplies for the Expeditionary Force from the time of their crossing the bar at Fao, inward bound, until they, having completed their discharge, passed outwards. It appears that the average number of days in port of each ship bringing supplies to Basra was—

Month.	Average number of Days in Port of Vessels bringing Supplies.
July	39
August	23
September	26
October	24
November	20
December	20

47. From the full statement given to us it appears that while the number of ships bringing supplies increased threefold during the six months, the number of days in port, as above shown, had considerably diminished. The improvement is manifest and commendable. It cannot, however, be considered that 20 days in port is a satisfactory rate of discharge. With ample lighterage, wharfage and labour, despite the bad climate, it should be possible to reduce the detention by another 10 days, and every effort should be made to accomplish this. A reduction of a further 10 days on the number of steamers now arriving per month with cargo would save the country over £600,000 per annum.

River Hospital Steamers.

48. Early in the Mesopotamia campaign when operations were on a minor scale and not very far from tidal water, there seems to have been no thought of special river hospital steamers. The need had not then been felt and was not foreseen. In February, 1915, a hospital barge, the " Bengali," was offered by Bengal and accepted, but foundered on the voyage. Replacement was not asked for. Between February and August, 1915, various communications passed between Mesopotamia and India concerning motor launches and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000074

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Shortage of River Transport.

tugs to tow native boats called mahailas for removing sick and wounded. These arrangements concerned local or short-distance transport only. Sick and wounded were brought down river on steamers and barges which had taken up troops, animals or supplies. On August 13th, 1915, a special hospital steamer is mentioned for the first time. On that date Surgeon-General Hathaway made application to the Inspector-General of Communications at Basra for a steamer to be set apart and fitted for conveyance of sick and wounded, or alternatively a tug and two mahailas. The steamer and tug were refused on the ground that all were required for movement of troops and supplies, and Surgeon-General Hathaway did not carry the matter any further. Except some telegrams offering motor launches nothing further occurred until November 23rd, when India asked Mesopotamia if evacuation from the front was satisfactory, adding :

"There should be a well equipped fleet of boats or steamers on the lines of a hospital ship to be used exclusively for the transport of sick. Have you any suggestion to make ? Wire what you require."

On December 7th Surgeon-General Hathaway replied approving the suggestion. On December 10th he telegraphed that local experience favoured steamers with independent paddles, towing a barge on each side. On December 31st India cabled London that four river hospital steamers would require to be built, and that plans were being sent. On March 1st it was finally settled that two should be built in England and two in Calcutta. Meantime India decided to improvise in addition several hospital steamers, and fit up barges from amongst those obtainable in India. The first hospital steamer on the river, the stern-wheel steamer "Sikkim," with accommodation for 144 cot cases, arrived at Basra about the middle of March, 1916—one year and five months after the campaign commenced, and three to four months after the battle of Ctesiphon, in which there were over 3,500 wounded. Owing, no doubt, to the complaints of what had happened at Ctesiphon, which were now spreading, the Indian Government during the first half of 1916, and the War Office after they took charge of the campaign during the second half, supplemented the provision largely. There were on March 1st, 1917, eight hospital steamers in Mesopotamia, four on the way, and twenty-nine on order, besides several specially fitted barges. It is manifest from this bare statement of the present position that the provision of hospital steamers was taken in hand much too late.

49. The awful sufferings of some of the sick and wounded during 1915 and the earlier part of 1916 caused by want of river hospital steamers have been referred to at length in another part of our Report.* Consideration of the evidence as to the causes of this want leads us to the following conclusions : General Nixon was responsible for advancing without sufficient river transport to meet all needs, which in turn involved inability to set aside special steamers to be fitted for hospital use. The outstanding importance of having such steamers before advancing does not appear to have been sufficiently realised by Surgeon-General Hathaway, or, if realised, was not impressed by him, as it should have been, upon General Nixon. Surgeon-General Hathaway showed little foresight ; even his small request of August 13th, 1915, for an improvised Hospital steamer or tug was not urged persistently or with sufficient emphasis. He never suggested building special hospital steamers. The suggestion came eventually from India. He failed to grasp the requirements of the situation. In the matter of river hospital transport the Commander-in-Chief in India showed solicitude and initiative, although too late. The absence of requests for hospital steamers from Surgeon-General Hathaway naturally prevented anxiety for a time.

50. Execution of orders for hospital transport was far from satisfactory. Mesopotamia had, after much insistence made it plain that steamers with independent paddles, towing a steel barge abreast on either side were the only vessels entirely suitable for the river. Nevertheless, stern-wheel steamers were sent which could not manœuvre with barges coming down stream at the narrow hair-pin corners. A number of the barges sent were built of wood and as they crushed in on collision with the banks, had to be replaced. The hospital steamers ordered in England were twin screw instead of independent paddles, as desired. The onus of making these deviations rests with the Director of the Royal Indian Marine at Bombay. It is difficult to find excuse for them, especially as there had been a similar experience with ordinary river craft a few months before. It always seemed that the Director thought he knew what was required better than those on the spot. Waste of money and delay were thus incurred.

* See Part X., paras. 57–63.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00000a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Railways.

51. We have already considered the manner in which the Indian Government dealt with inland communications by water. We now turn to the question of communications by rail. In August, 1916, Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, informed the Committee of Imperial Defence: "As regards the question of communications the Committee is aware that India declined to sanction certain proposals for railway construction, and that in general operations were allowed in 1915 to develop without proper regard to the vital questions of supply and maintenance." The justice of this criticism on the Indian Government became apparent to us when we ascertained that two applications from the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia had been made to the Indian Government for the building of railways, that on each occasion the application was based either on the grounds of improving supplies or communications, and that on each occasion the application was not agreed to by the Indian Government.

52. The first mention of the desirability of a railway in Mesopotamia was made by General Barrett, then General Officer Commanding the Expedition, on February 28th, 1915. He wired to India:—

> I consider that the best solution for any advance towards Nasariyeh or even one or two marches beyond Shaiba would be a light railway. Once Nasiriyeh was reached, the railway would be much used for moving produce to and from Basrah. Thus, if it were once constructed, it would not only solve our supply difficulty, but would also tend towards pacifying the country.

In a subsequent telegram General Barrett explained that he had asked for the railway because he found it impossible otherwise to move any force larger than one brigade across the desert. On March 13th he sent in particulars of the route which he suggested the railway should follow, and added, "I recommend that personnel and material should be in Basra by May at latest, as I think it important that work should begin as soon as floods subside." So far as we can ascertain no action appears to have been taken by the Indian Government on this application, except that they instructed Sir John Nixon (who succeeded General Barrett in April, 1915) to report on the possibility of the employment of a light railway of which material for 137 miles was available in India. The Indian Government apparently did not attach importance to General Barrett's recommendation, although it was put forward on the military grounds of the desirability of facilitating supplies and communications and increasing the mobility of the force.

53. Owing to the flooded state of the country and other reasons into which it is not necessary to enter, it was not till the beginning of August, 1915, that Sir J. Nixon raised the question of railways with the Indian Government.

On August 2nd, 1915, he telegraphed to the Chief of the General Staff in India asking for particulars as to the 137 miles of light railway understood to be available. He asked if it was the railway—said to be very indifferent—which had been used at the Coronation Durbar.

He also wrote to tell the Chief of the General Staff that he did not want that material, but that he did want a railway. On August 11th, 1915, the Chief of the General Staff wrote to him that he had backed up his request for a railway, and had proposed standard light 2-ft. 6-in. material used by the North-Western Railway, and not the light military (Durbar) line.

On August 14th Sir J. Nixon forwarded to India a long despatch, supported by memoranda from his technical officers, in which he asked for a railway from Basra to Nasariyeh on (1) military, (2) political, and (3) commercial grounds. The military grounds were principally the necessity for quick communication between Basra and Nasariyeh. General Nixon added a demand for a suitable staff to carry out the preliminary work in October, and concluded—

> Finally it is most desirable that the general policy, as regards the railway, which I strongly recommend as necessary, shall be determined as early as possible and a decision communicated. Next cold weather, November to March inclusive, should be availed of to the fullest extent not only in preliminary investigation but in actual construction.

54. General Nixon's despatch reached Headquarters in India on August 25th, but as he had received no reply to it by October 24th, he then wired to India asking how the question of railway construction in Mesopotamia stood. He was informed on October 30th that the matter was still "under the consideration of the Government." A further reminder from General Nixon on November 1st at length produced a reply from the Chief of the General Staff, Delhi, on November 14th, that "for the present the Government

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00005c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

have decided not to proceed with the construction of the railway, on the ground of expense." Thus the Government of India's decision on Sir J. Nixon's application for a railway was not given until nearly three months after they had received his despatch asking for an early determination of the matter.

55. We have been unable to ascertain definitely the reason for this delay on the part of the Indian Government in dealing with so important an application from the General Officer Commanding the Mesopotamia Expedition. As the proposal involved considerable expenditure it was submitted to the Finance Department of the Government of India, but was not formally considered by Sir William Meyer, the Finance Member, until October 5th, when he forwarded to the Army Department the following note :—

"1. I confess to being somewhat sceptical as to the line being at all so remunerative as is at present represented, at any rate for some time to come. Apart from this too, it is perfectly clear that, in present financial circumstances, with which His Excellency the Army Member is acquainted, we cannot embark on large expenditure on such a project for other than the most urgent military reasons. We have already had to cut our coming railway programme in India to the quick, and may have to adopt other drastic measures to make both ends meet. Further, we have at present no right to act as if we were certain of getting Mesopotamia or a very considerable portion of it, after the war.

2. If, however, His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and Army Member can definitely assure me that this project is absolutely necessary for the safeguarding of our military position, having regard, *inter alia*, to the time which the line must take to construct, I cannot, of course, resist a reference home on this basis. (In regard to the time factor, it must be borne in mind that, although the Railway Board think that the line might be built in from 6 to 8 months, we know from past experience that the best provisional estimates of this character are liable to get considerably exceeded in practice.) In that event it will be necessary, as Mr. Fell says, to indicate to the Secretary of State that the cost, as a military measure, must, under present arrangements, fall on the Home Government.

3. We should not, of course, in the telegram say anything about the contingency which Mr. Fell adumbrates, and which I think not at all improbable, of our having eventually to pay the full cost of the Mesopotamia operations, or at any rate a very large part of it. But this contingency adds to the necessity for caution in proposing expenditure which may ultimately fall upon India.

4. His Excellency the Viceroy should of course see before final action is taken."

56. On receipt of this note the Commander-in-Chief discussed the question with Sir Percy Lake, the Chief of the General Staff, who put forward a memorandum on October 26th generally favourable to Sir John Nixon's proposal, and in the last paragraph of which he said—

It would be imprudent, to say the least of it, not to refer this proposal to the Secretary of State and the Cabinet, upon whose decision would then depend the ultimate responsibility for our capacity to hold Mesopotamia, a problem in which the security of Nasariyeh is an essential factor.

Sir Beauchamp Duff's decision on this memorandum was conveyed in the following note :—

"His Excellency considers that when the occupation of Baghdad and the reinforcement of Sir J. Nixon's force has taken place the necessity for the immediate construction of a railway to Nasariyeh will have largely lost its force."

57. The full grounds upon which the Government of India rejected the proposal are stated in a telegram from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State, dated July 24th, 1916, to have been as follows :—

Basrah-Nasariyeh Railway.—The proposal to construct this line was put forward by General Nixon on military, political and commercial grounds. The large expenditure involved could not in our opinion be justified on either political or commercial consideration. We had not acquired the status in Mesopotamia which would justify such a charge upon Indian resources nor had we the right to act as if we were sure of retaining Mesopotamia or a large portion of it after the war. We had to consider whether the project was absolutely necessary for the safeguarding of our military position before we could recommend the construction of the line as a definite war measure, the cost of which would fall on the Imperial Government. Having regard to the facts that sanction had recently been accorded to the advance on Baghdad, which would, we hoped, attain its objective, in which case the Basra-Nasariyeh line would cease to be essential from the military point of view owing to our command of the Euphrates line, and after weighing the various considerations we arrived at the conclusion that the necessity for the immediate construction of a railway to Nasiriyah had to a great extent lost its force and that the advantages to be gained would not be commensurate with the cost of its construction. We therefore decided not to recommend the proposal and informed you accordingly, *vide* paragraph 3 of Lord Hardinge's telegram of the 14th November last, No. H.-9125. The various considerations which influenced our decision were not, however, fully stated in that telegrams.

We do not ourselves feel called upon to criticise the military arguments in this telegram, but we cannot help noting that when the War Office took control of the operations, they pressed for and ultimately built this railway preliminarily to the second advance on Baghdad.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000029

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Railways.

58. Moreover, if military considerations really entered so largely into the Indian Government's decision to refuse the railway, it was most unfortunate that both the Home Government and Sir John Nixon were, at the time, informed that the railway was refused on the ground of expense. This aspect of the matter is well brought out by Sir J. Nixon, who says—

> The difficulties of the Hammar Lake crossing were known in India, the extreme heat prevailing in the summer was known in India, the discomfort and suffering not only to the wounded but to fit men was known in India, and this proposal was rejected on the score of expense. This single instance seems to me to disprove the claim that the Finance Department has not exerted a sinister influence on the operations.

The refusal of the railway and the terms in which the refusal was announced were in fact bound to create the impression that the Indian Government were unwilling, in the interests of economy, to provide Mesopotamia with what was desirable in the interests of the troops.

Our conclusion is that the railway was refused because Sir Beauchamp Duff did not agree with Sir John Nixon's estimate of its military necessity and, apart from an assurance from the Commander-in-Chief that the railway was absolutely necessary on military grounds, the Indian Government were not prepared even to put the proposal before the Secretary of State, because they were afraid that the expenditure might ultimately fall upon India.

59. In January, 1916, Sir Percy Lake (the author of the memorandum of October 26th in favour of the railway from Basra to Nasariyeh) had succeeded Sir John Nixon in command of the Mesopotamia Expedition. Sir Percy Lake was apparently so much impressed with the finality of the Indian Government's decision not to sanction the building of railways in Mesopotamia that he did not raise the matter until April, 1916, when specifically asked to do so by the War Office, who in the meantime had taken over from the India Office the control of military operations. Ultimately two railways were decided on in Mesopotamia, but it was not until the War Office took over the administration in addition to the control of the campaign in July, 1916, that the railways were really pressed forward with the vigour which the situation demanded. We think it would be inadvisable to go into details as to the exact position of the railway question at the present time, but we are satisfied that the War Office have taken and are taking all the steps which are necessary.

60. It is interesting to note that the cost of all the railways now being built in Mesopotamia is, according to the estimates, less than the cost of the river craft, and that if the railways had been authorised at an early date a portion of the river craft might have been unnecessary. Moreover, while it has required from one year to eighteen months to obtain specially built steamers, the railways have been completed in eight to nine months.

From this brief history of the railway question in Mesopotamia it is obvious that the Indian Government never paid to this vital matter the attention which the War Office considered so essential directly they became responsible for the military operations.

61. Although the railway from Basra to Nasariyeh was strongly recommended by General Barrett on February 28th, 1915, and by General Nixon on August 14th, 1915, the proposal was dealt with in a dilatory manner by the Indian Government, and was negatived by them in November, 1915, on the ground that it did not justify the expenditure involved. It was only when asked for by the third General Officer Commanding the expedition, General Lake, and under pressure from the War Office in April, 1916, that the Indian Government assented to the proposal, and awoke to the necessity of railways for the expedition. We feel that a grave responsibility attaches to the Indian Government for their failure to realise at an earlier date the importance of an energetic railway policy in Mesopotamia.

Conclusions as to Transport.

62. The enquiries we have made, and the evidence, both oral and documentary, which we have taken in this part of our investigation, lead us to the following conclusions regarding the critical period up to April, 1916:—

(*a*) From the first the paramount importance both of river and railway transport in Mesopotamia was insufficiently realised by the Military Authorities in India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000016

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

CONCLUSIONS AS TO TRANSPORT.

(*b*) A deficiency of river transport existed from the time the army left tidal water and advanced up river from Kurna. This deficiency became very serious as the lines of communication lengthened and the numbers of the force increased.

(*c*) Up to the end of 1915 the efforts made to rectify the deficiency of river transport were wholly inadequate.

(*d*) For want of comprehensive grasp of the transport situation, and insufficiency of river steamers, we find the Military Authorities in India are responsible. The responsibility is a grave one.

(*e*) River hospital steamers were an urgent requirement for the proper equipment of the Expedition, and were not ordered until much too late.

(*f*) With General Sir John Nixon rests the responsibility for recommending the advances in 1915 with insufficient transport and equipment. The evidence did not disclose an imperative need to advance without due preparation. For what ensued from shortage of steamers, General Sir John Nixon must, in such circumstances, be held to blame. The extent of his responsibility in relation to the sufferings of the wounded is considered in Part X. of our Report and in Part XII., paragraph 17.

(*g*) During the first four months of 1916, the shortage of transport was fatal to the operations undertaken for the relief of Kut. Large reinforcements could not be moved to the front in time to take part in critical battles. Based upon information received from General Townshend, as to the urgent necessity for his immediate relief, operations were undertaken, notwithstanding the extreme transport difficulty, but in all the circumstances we do not attach blame for this to the Generals in Mesopotamia directing the operations.

(*h*) Facilities for the discharge and handling of cargo at Basra, also provision of works for the erection and repair of river craft were hopelessly inadequate.

(*j*) Proceedings in connection with the filling of orders for river craft by the Director of the Royal Indian Marine in India, and the India Office in London, were far from satisfactory.

(*k*) Looking at the facts, which from the first must have been apparent to any administrator, military or civilian, who gave a few minutes consideration to the map, and to th conditions in Mesopotamia, the want of foresight and provision for the most fundamental needs of the Expedition reflects discredit upon the organising aptitude of all the authorities concerned. General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the General Staff, Whitehall, in a document to which we have already referred, states: "In general, the operations were allowed in 1915 to develop without proper regard to the vital questions of supply and maintenance," in which opinion our investigations lead us unreservedly to concur.

C. ROYAL INDIAN MARINE.

63. It is not easy to describe with anything like precision the status and functions of the Royal Indian Marine Department. It is enough here to say that its position is not considered satisfactory by its present Director, nor by the late Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe. The latter indeed informed us that he had been so impressed by the unsatisfactory position of the Marine Department that he had in contemplation changes in it when the War broke out.

64. The external communications of India have always been and still are sea-communications. No reinforcement from outside and no replenishing of military stores not produced in the country can reach India except by sea. It is evident that what may be called the maritime or marine side of the Indian Government should be strong, whereas it is admitted to be, and undeniably is, weak. This it will continue to be until a change is made in the status of the Marine Department.

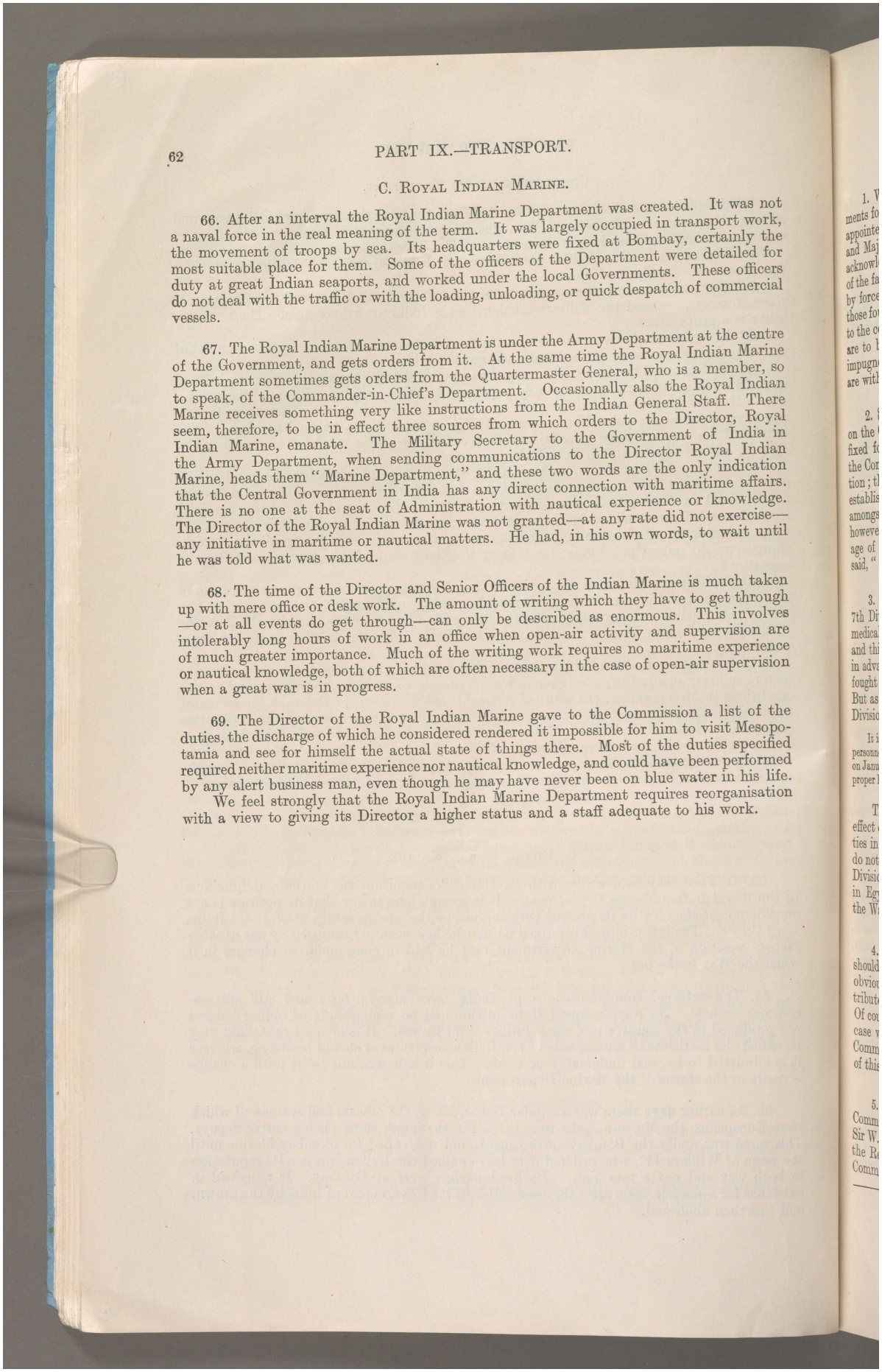
65. In earlier days there was a regular Indian Navy, the officers and seamen of which were Europeans, the Marines—who were carried in the larger ships—being native Sepoys. This force was under the Bombay Government, and was called the Bombay Marine until the reign of William IV., who ordered it to be re-named the Indian Navy. Its reputation in both war and peace was high. Its headquarters were at Bombay. It remained in existence for some few years after the assumption of the Government of India by the Crown, and was then abolished.

144

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000aa

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



PART IX.—TRANSPORT.

C. Royal Indian Marine.

66. After an interval the Royal Indian Marine Department was created. It was not a naval force in the real meaning of the term. It was largely occupied in transport work, the movement of troops by sea. Its headquarters were fixed at Bombay, certainly the most suitable place for them. Some of the officers of the Department were detailed for duty at great Indian seaports, and worked under the local Governments. These officers do not deal with the traffic or with the loading, unloading, or quick despatch of commercial vessels.

67. The Royal Indian Marine Department is under the Army Department at the centre of the Government, and gets orders from it. At the same time the Royal Indian Marine Department sometimes gets orders from the Quartermaster General, who is a member, so to speak, of the Commander-in-Chief's Department. Occasionally also the Royal Indian Marine receives something very like instructions from the Indian General Staff. There seem, therefore, to be in effect three sources from which orders to the Director, Royal Indian Marine, emanate. The Military Secretary to the Government of India in the Army Department, when sending communications to the Director Royal Indian Marine, heads them "Marine Department," and these two words are the only indication that the Central Government in India has any direct connection with maritime affairs. There is no one at the seat of Administration with nautical experience or knowledge. The Director of the Royal Indian Marine was not granted—at any rate did not exercise—any initiative in maritime or nautical matters. He had, in his own words, to wait until he was told what was wanted.

68. The time of the Director and Senior Officers of the Indian Marine is much taken up with mere office or desk work. The amount of writing which they have to get through —or at all events do get through—can only be described as enormous. This involves intolerably long hours of work in an office when open-air activity and supervision are of much greater importance. Much of the writing work requires no maritime experience or nautical knowledge, both of which are often necessary in the case of open-air supervision when a great war is in progress.

69. The Director of the Royal Indian Marine gave to the Commission a list of the duties, the discharge of which he considered rendered it impossible for him to visit Mesopotamia and see for himself the actual state of things there. Most of the duties specified required neither maritime experience nor nautical knowledge, and could have been performed by any alert business man, even though he may have never been on blue water in his life.

We feel strongly that the Royal Indian Marine Department requires reorganisation with a view to giving its Director a higher status and a staff adequate to his work.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000b2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

1. We have already referred to the fact that our labours as regards the Medical arrangements for the campaign have been very greatly facilitated by the report of the Commission appointed by the Government of India, of which Sir William Vincent was the Chairman, and Major-General Bingley, and Mr. E. A. Ridsdale were the members. We desire to acknowledge the thoroughness of their enquiry, and the proved accuracy of their account of the facts. It is a somewhat novel occurrence that the report of one Commission should by force of circumstances come under the immediate review of another, before whom those found wanting by the first Commission get the opportunity of criticising and replying to the condemnation passed upon them. We think Sir William Vincent and his colleagues are to be congratulated on the fact that practically none of their main conclusions are impugned; they are certainly not disproved. The vast majority of them, stated as they are with studious moderation, are admitted.

2. Sir Alfred Keogh indeed drew attention to the fact that the non-inclusion of a doctor on the Commission was doubtless responsible for a technical error as regards the numbers fixed for medical officers and medical subordinates in certain hospitals, which had led the Commissioners somewhat to over-estimate the paucity of doctors in the cases in question; the attention of the Commissioners had not been drawn to the fact that the authorised establishment of General Hospitals includes an allowance to enable casualties in action amongst medical officers to be instantly replaced. This small technical error does not, however, we are satisfied, vitiate the Commissioners' conclusions as to the undoubted shortage of medical personnel. We should add that Sir Alfred Keogh, speaking generally, said, "I think it is a good report."

3. Again, the Commissioners, speaking of the effect of the arrival of the 3rd and 7th Divisions from France, on the medical breakdown of January, 1916, say: "The medical establishment of the force was insufficient, before the arrival of these two Divisions, and this deficiency was accentuated by the fact that they were despatched from France in advance of their medical units." The evidence before us shows that the 7th Division fought in January, without the presence at the front of its own proper Field Ambulances. But as regards the 3rd Division, a letter from Major-General Keary, who commanded the Division, has been put before us which states:—

> It is clear that two out of five Field Ambulances of the 3rd Division were concentrated complete with all personnel and equipment at the front by January 19th, and were fully utilised in the fighting which took place on January 19th, 20th and 21st. At this time only three battalions, and one double company of the 3rd Division proper had arrived at the front.

The facts stated in this letter are supported by other evidence before us, and the obvious effect of this evidence is to increase the proportion of the blame attributable to the authorities in Mesopotamia for the breakdown in January. In the case of the 7th Division we do not attach blame to the British Military Authorities in France, who embarked the two Divisions at Marseilles in the belief that they would be disembarked and reorganised in Egypt. But this reorganisation did not take place, because later it was decided by the War Office to hasten their arrival at Basra.

4. We think it is remarkable that the conclusions of an enquiry of this nature and scope should, after almost meticulous examination, be only found liable to criticism in such obviously detailed matters. That these two cases should stand almost alone is an eloquent tribute to the value of the public service rendered by the Commissioners in their Report. Of course, there are points on which those censured differ from the Commission. In any case where the further evidence put before us seems to demand a qualification of the Commissioners' views, we have embodied that qualification in subsequent paragraphs of this part of our Report.

5. Accepting therefore, the value and importance of the report of Sir William Vincent's Commission (usually known as the Vincent-Bingley Commission, owing to the fact that Sir W. Vincent, and General Bingley were the two original members of it), we have printed the Report itself in this volume,* together with a memorandum by Sir Beauchamp Duff, Commander-in-Chief in India, criticising the procedure of the Vincent-Bingley Commission.

* See Appendix I

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000048

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

We wish now to draw attention to the comments which the Commissioners made upon the following subjects.

Hospital River Steamers.

6. They state that :—

> The absence of any river steamers equipped for the transport of sick and wounded, and of any separate medical establishment for such vessels, ... has had more prejudicial results than almost any other defect in the organisation. It has constantly delayed evacuation, dislocated medical arrangements, and caused great suffering and injury. So long as the operations were confined to the immediate vicinity of Basra there was no need for any such transport, but directly columns advanced up the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun, the necessity of some means of speedily evacuating the sick and wounded by water became apparent.

They add later :—

> We are indeed forced to the conclusion that the necessity for an adequate provision of this kind of transport was overlooked both in India and in Mesopotamia, until the sufferings of the wounded in Ctesiphon made it apparent that some systematic steps must be taken to remedy the deficiency.

7. It is fair to say by way of comment on this that on November 23rd, 1915—that is before the battle of Ctesiphon concluded—a telegram was despatched from Army Headquarters, India, to Basra, pointing out the desirability of organising a fleet of Hospital River Steamers on the Tigris, but such an intimation came too late to be of any practical value, in meeting or easing the sufferings of those who were wounded in this battle, and in the retreat which followed immediately afterwards. Even acceptance from private donors of a hospital river barge, the "Bengali," in February, 1915, had failed to bring home to the responsible authorities the necessity for providing special river accommodation for the sick and wounded. On the loss of this barge on her way to Mesopotamia, nothing adequate was done to replace her. Surgeon-General Hathaway, who in April, 1915, became Principal Medical Officer in Mesopotamia, was, until August, 1915, of opinion that tugs and specially fitted "mahailahs" would be an efficient substitute, an opinion in which we do not concur.

8. We have stated our views at greater length in another part of our report* upon this subject of hospital river steamers, and therefore need not elaborate the point here, beyond pointing out that the use of the ordinary transport steamer which takes troops or supplies up the river can never provide a satisfactory means of bringing the sick and wounded down on the return journey. The sick and wounded require special fittings and appliances, and a crowded steamer going up with troops or supplies cannot find room for the storage of such things.

Medical Personnel and Equipment.

9. The Commissioners say :—

> Another difficulty of the first magnitude has been the inadequacy of medical personnel and equipment. . . . There was in our opinion no reason to think that the ordinary scale of medical units, as laid down in "War Establishments, India," would not be needed. Experience has indeed shown that, if anything, that standard requires to be increased.

10. Our evidence shows that the organisation orders of Force "D" contemplated a lower establishment than is laid down for a frontier campaign and that the actual amount of medical personnel in Mesopotamia was during long periods far below even this meagre scale. But even had the full authorised establishment been provided and proved insufficient, the blame for such insufficiency would rest on the medical authorities in India, as medical establishments are not fixed by immutable laws, but according to the higher military authorities' estimate of what will actually be required on active service.

Hospitals.

11. As to hospitals, the Report says :—

> From the date [early in 1915] on which the 2nd Division came to Mesopotamia, the general hospita accommodation was insufficient for the needs of the force.
>
> There has been a consistent shortage in the personnel necessary to treat the number of sick and wounded.
>
> The deficiencies in Stationary and Clearing Hospitals have been equally great.

Land Transport.

12. The Commissioners speak of "the failure throughout the campaign to provide land ambulance transport for the wounded." They proceed "we consider this matter to be one of great moment, as it is proved that the defect has been the cause of intense suffering, and must have prejudiced the chances of recovery in certain cases."

* See Part IX., paras 48–50.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000c7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

Land Transport (conclusion).

The original organisation orders of Indian Expeditionary Force "D" did not include any wheeled transport for the sick and wounded. According to "War Establishments, India," each field ambulance should have been accompanied by 8 ambulance tongas, in lieu of which the original orders for this force allotted an additional number of riding mules.

We have no evidence that these riding mules were ever used by the wounded, though their presence on one occasion in a very restive state is recorded by a witness. They are obviously useless for serious cases.

13. The Commissioners continue :—

The omission to send wheeled transport was probably due to the fact that operations for some time were likely to be confined to the immediate neighbourhood of the Shatt-el-Arab. The history of the campaign shows, however, that very shortly after the capture of Basra the operations extended to a considerable distance from any river, and no satisfactory reason has been assigned for the failure to provide the ordinary form of land ambulance transport for these operations. It is in evidence that on many occasions during the campaign wheeled ambulances could have been employed. In fact, a few motors were used in the Ahwaz operations in April and May, 1915, and again at Ctesiphon in November, and ambulance wagons of the English pattern were employed with conspicuous success, to our own knowledge, in the operations up the Tigris in the beginning of April, 1916. But throughout the campaign the usual form of ambulance transport has been the army transport cart, that is, a small, springless cart made of wood and iron, drawn by mules or ponies, and ordinarily employed for the carriage of supplies. When the evidence of the suffering caused by this means of conveyance, particularly in cases of fracture and severe injury, is considered, it is difficult to avoid criticising the action of those responsible for this deficiency in severe language.

We entirely concur in this view.

We have been told that one or two motor cars were at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding after the battle of Kut, and in the advance to Ctesiphon. We feel strongly that a country which was practicable for cars for the General Officer Commanding was equally practicable for motor convoys for the wounded. By April, 1916, a few motor ambulances were in use at the front, and Sir Beauchamp Duff's evidence is to the effect that ten were at the disposal of Force "D." We do not think they were all in use at the front. On the other hand, telegrams before us show that the Turks had twelve available at the front. We do not think it is creditable that in this matter the provision by the Turkish Army, situated as it was, should have exceeded our own.

Medical Stores and Equipment.

14. The arrangements for the supply of surgical and medical stores and appliances to meet the requirements of the various units in Mesopotamia were, up to March, 1916, unsatisfactory. In the first place the system of supply, laid down in the Medical Manual (War), India, was ill-adapted to meet the demands of a large force operating 1,600 miles from India overseas. In the second place, owing to lack of river transport, there was such delay and uncertainty in the delivery of these supplies, that medical officers have frequently been hampered in their work.

For example, in the advance to Amara there was, if we are to accept the evidence given us, a shortage of drugs, including castor oil, epsom salts, emetine, quinine and supply of medical comforts, and the supply of lime juice and fresh vegetables was deficient.

We ourselves are convinced by the evidence before us that, though there was never any general shortage of drugs, dressings, etc., at Basra, yet these and similar medical necessities were on many occasions either in insufficient quantities or altogether lacking at the front, when the need for them was great.

15. As regards electric fans, the Commissioners say (reporting in May, 1916)—

A certain number of fans were put into the general hospitals at Basra last year, but these were not sufficient for all the wards, and none of the new hospitals there had up to the time of our leaving Basra been fitted with these fans.

16. As regards ice, they say :—

We are informed that ice was available for all the hospitals in Basra during the hot weather of 1915, but it certainly was not regularly available at Ahwaz, Nasariyeh or Amara, and up to the time of our departure so far as we are aware, Government had not supplied any ice manufacturing plant to any station outside Basra.

17. The Commissioners add :—

This is a somewhat serious matter, as ice is not a luxury, but having regard to climatic conditions, an absolute necessary for the treatment of the sick,

and we concur.

Preventive Sanitation.

18. On the subject of water supply the Commissioners say :—

Generally speaking, however, the only source of water supply at present is the nearest river, and we are not satisfied that systematic and methodical attempts are made to render this water potable and innocuous before it is used for drinking purposes.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00007b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

PART X.—MEDICAL BREAKDOWN.

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

This refers to the state of things at the base at Basra. As regards the state of things elsewhere we quote the following :—

> On the river steamers and barges which are utilised both for the conveyance of troops and the sick, the arrangements for the supply of good drinking water appear to us to be defective. On some of the vessels there are no water tanks. On some the tanks supplied are useless, and on many steamers and barges there are no arrangements for purifying the drinking water that is used by the troops. . . . Water supply arrangements at the actual front were also, until recently, far from satisfactory. The recent outbreak of cholera is attributed by sanitary experts to the failure to supply the troops with a sufficient amount of purified drinking water.

The Commissioners state, however, that the failure to supply a good water supply to the trenches was (at the time of their making their report) "being rectified."

Elsewhere in this Report reference is made to the lack of sweepers for sanitary work, and the fact that a number of those sent out were not of the proper caste. For a considerable time also the Commissioners record "the absence of any suitable machinery for disinfecting clothing and other articles," but they state that this had been recently supplied.

19. The above are merely small quotations showing the general tenor of the report and of the defects which it discloses in almost every branch of the arrangements for dealing with the sick and wounded, and the health of the troops. Full appreciation of the case presented by the Commissioners can only be attained by reading the text of their report.

20. We agree generally in the Vincent-Bingley Commission's historical account of the manner in which the foregoing defects affected the various phases of the campaign; but, as regards the early period up to the summer of 1915, we have amplified that account in other parts of this Report.*

Advance to Amara and Nasariyeh.

21. We agree that during May, June and July, 1915, in the advance to Amara and the operations round Nasariyeh, the first substantial lengthening of the lines of communications, the sick and wounded suffered considerable hardships. Hospital River Steamers had now become essential, and they were not even asked for. The general position can perhaps be best summed up in the words of one of our witnesses, Colonel Giffard, a senior officer of the Indian Medical Service who was in command of a hospital ship running between Bombay and Basra. He told us that up to June, 1915, "there was nothing either at Basra or Bombay that could be considered a breakdown," but that in May, 1915, it was "obvious to most of us medical officers, that even at Basra the breaking strain was nearly reached." He states that—

> The patients in the hospitals at Basra were not comfortable. The heat was almost unbearable, and they were largely housed in thatched sheds. I saw these sheds badly overcrowded, the attendants were too few, there was hardly any ice; electric fans, although offered by the Madras Fund in December, 1914, had not been installed, and in every way it was a poor performance.

First Battle of Es Sinn or Kut-el-Amara.

22. At the battle of Kut-el-Amara (September 28th, 1915), the medical arrangements were not satisfactory. The Field Ambulances were insufficient and overcrowded. The river transport used for evacuating the wounded was unsuitable. The steamers used were insufficiently equipped. Part of the battlefield was eight miles distant from the river, two motor cars were available, but otherwise severe cases had to be evacuated in Army transport carts, a most inefficient substitute for motor ambulance transport or the light pony tongas sent to Mesopotamia later. The hardships, in fact, of the wounded, who numbered over 1,100, were considerable, though not nearly as severe as in later actions.

Battle of Ctesiphon.

23. After the battle of Ctesiphon (November 22nd, &c.) we have no hesitation in saying there was a complete breakdown. The casualties (roughly 4,500 in a fighting force of 13,500) were heavily underestimated. Here again, the conclusions of the Vincent-Bingley Commission are abundantly supported by independent evidence submitted to us.

* See Part X., B and C.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00001f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

Battle of Ctesiphon.

24. They say that—

The medical establishment available on this occasion was inadequate to meet the demands made on it, and that the arrangements for collecting the wounded on the battlefield, and accommodating them, pending evacuation to the river bank, were far from satisfactory. It was very difficult for wounded men to ascertain where they had to go for medical aid, and when field ambulances and collecting stations were found, the supply of food, tents, blankets, hot water and any kind of comfort was insufficient. Further, owing to the shortage of medical personnel, many of the patients both in the field ambulances near the battlefield, and at the encampments by the river bank, did not receive proper treatment. There was some delay in evacuating the wounded to Laj, where the steamers to convey them to the base were moored, and it was not until the 25th that the last of the wounded were removed to this spot. In the meantime, many suffered from exposure, want of food and inadequate attention.

In the second place, save for two motor ambulances which were employed with great success, no proper ambulance land transport was provided for the removal of the wounded to the river bank. There were a number of steamers at Laj, some eight or nine miles from the battlefield, two only of which, however, had been in any way prepared for the reception of the sick. Many of the wounded were, it is true, able to walk or ride to the river bank, but for the conveyance of stretcher cases the two motors already mentioned, and ordinary transport carts, alone were available.

Thirdly, the lack of properly equipped river hospital steamers proved, as may be well understood, in the circumstances, disastrous.

The medical and subordinate personnel for these steamers, which was taken from field ambulances, was inadequate for the number of the patients. The supply of medical stores and appliances, and even of food, was in some cases insufficient. The arrangements for cooking the food were defective, and the personnel to distribute it was wanting. The arrangements for water-supply were unsatisfactory, the latrine accommodation was insufficient, and there were not enough sweepers and bed-pans for the necessities of those patients who could not struggle to the latrines. Finally, the wounded were huddled together as close as they could be packed on the decks, without beds or mattresses, and it was almost impossible for the medical officers to attend to them properly. In some cases the vessels had, moreover, been used for the carriage of animals, and it was impossible, in the time available, to clean and disinfect them.

Wounds which required dressing and re-dressing were not attended to, and the condition of many of the patients who travelled by these steamers was, when they reached Basra, deplorable. There the wounds of many were found to be in a septic condition, and in urgent need of re-dressing. In some cases bed-sores had developed, more than one patient arrived soaked in fæces and urine, and in a few cases, wounds were found to contain maggots.

Surgeon-General Hathaway admitted to us that the arrangements made "were absolutely inadequate," and that the "wounded suffered intolerable discomfort." Sir John Nixon when asked whether he dissented from the general proposition that the wounded did suffer very great hardships on this occasion replied "No, I do not dissent at all."

25. We shall comment later on the very different description of things telegraphed home to the Secretary of State at the time, but we would say here that, had the authorities in India or at home had any inkling of the true state of affairs at the beginning of December, special efforts might have been made at any rate to reinforce the medical personnel in Mesopotamia in view of future operations.

26. Full credit should be given to all concerned for the fact that the wounded were brought away in the retreat from Ctesiphon, and saved from Arab indignities and brutalities. At the same time, we believe that much of the sufferings of the wounded might have been avoided, if adequate forethought had been shown in the planning and preparations for the advance to Baghdad. For the actual arrangements on the battle-field Colonel Hehir was responsible. We have had the advantage (not open to the Vincent-Bingley Commission) of hearing Colonel Hehir's detailed evidence on the subject. Having regard to the inadequate means at his disposal we do not consider that his dispositions are open to serious criticism. We are of opinion, however, that he should have taken more vigorous steps to represent the shortages in medical personnel and equipment before both the battle of Kut and the battle of Ctesiphon.

Kut Relief Operations. January, 1916.

27. The medical arrangements during the January fighting, that is to say the battles of Sheik Saad, Wadi and Hannah, resulted in the most complete breakdown of all.

The fact that the 7th Division had not its proper complement of Field Ambulances, has already been alluded to, but though this may have been a contributory cause, it cannot be accepted as an adequate explanation of the breakdown.

28. The testimony of our witnesses allows no shadow of doubt as to the accuracy of the description of the facts in paragraphs 135 to 140 of the report of Sir W. Vincent's Commission. The Field Ambulances were so overcrowded that patient after patient passed through them without receiving medical attention or food. The river steamers were short of equipment, sweepers, orderlies, bandages, medical comforts, blankets, bedpans,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000c1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. The Vincent-Bingley Report and its Principal Conclusions.

urine bottles, cutlery and crockery. Many patients got no treatment after the application of their field dressing until they reached Basra.

29. The Vincent-Bingley Commission state the main causes of the breakdown at this time as :—

(1.) The lack of proper hospital river steamers.
(2.) The lack of River Transport.
(3.) The insufficiency of the medical and subordinate staff and of medical stores and accessories, and
(4.) The weather conditions.

To this we would add a *5th* viz. :—The incorrect estimate as to the period for which General Townshend's food supplies would enable him to hold out, which caused General Aylmer to attack before his force could be organised complete at the front.

It was known when General Aylmer commenced the operations for the relief of Kut, that his columns were inadequately organised as regards transport, staff and, above all, that the medical complements were quite insufficient. Military exigencies were assumed to justify an advance in spite of these deficiencies, and it was with a full knowledge of such deficiencies that the advance commenced. The Vincent-Bingley Commission in their personal references to General Aylmer, acquit him of responsibility for these shortcomings. We concur with them. He was acting under peremptory orders, as time was then considered to be a paramount consideration.

March—April, 1916.

30. As regards the March fighting, we again quote and adopt from the report of the Vincent-Bingley Commission :—

For various reasons the medical arrangements for the evacuation of the wounded at the battle of Es-Sinn were much more successful than during the operations of January.

The arrangements were in many respects far from ideal, but we have reason to believe that the improvement was realised by everyone and much appreciated.

The main sources of discomfort were twofold, the use of transport carts for the conveyance of wounded by land, and the lack of river hospital steamers.

Subject to these defects, we think that the arrangements were satisfactory, and that great credit is due to the officers directly responsible for the collection and evacuation of the wounded.

31. Speaking of the battles between April 5th and 24th, the Vincent-Bingley Commissioners say that the—

"Arrangements were carefully thought out and proved very successful. The number of stretcher bearers was sufficient, the collecting stations were conveniently situated, and ample provision was made for the comfort and medical treatment of the wounded, who were promptly evacuated to the camp at Wadi by the "Aerial" motor boat, and in motor cars and ambulance waggons. The organisation was methodical and worked smoothly and the Commission saw nothing to call for unfavourable criticism in the arrangements made, save that the provision of more motor boats and of additional ambulance transport would have been a convenience."

They add,

"We think that the administrative and executive medical officers deserve great credit for the successful collection and evacuation of the large numbers of wounded in the almost continuous fighting which took place during this month."

We would add ourselves that the force had by this time profited by the experience of medical officers who had served in France.

Elsewhere we print a memorandum* handed in to us by Colonel Hehir which explains the medical arrangements made by him and his subordinates during the siege of Kut. They seem to us to have been excellent.

B. Medical Administration of Colonel Hehir in Mesopotamia.

32. It was only at a comparatively late period of their enquiry that the terms of reference of the Vincent-Bingley Commission were enlarged so as to include the earlier part of the campaign. Moreover, the chief medical officers responsible during the early period, Colonel Hehir in Mesopotamia and Surgeon-General Babtie in India, were not available as witnesses before that Commission. For these and other reasons the Vincent-Bingley Report does not deal, as fully as it might otherwise have done, with the medical arrangements for the Mesopotamian Expedition up to the summer of 1915. The indications which the Report contains as to these arrangements are, however, amplified rather than contradicted by the evidence which we ourselves have taken.

* See Appendix III.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000061

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Medical Administration of Colonel Hehir in Mesopotamia.

33. Colonel Hehir's able statement of evidence gives his official account of the medical arrangements during the period up to April, 1915, when he was principal medical officer in Mesopotamia. He has submitted to us his periodical reports to Surgeon-General Babtie in India and in the direction of sanitary and preventive medicine they display a watchfulness and foresight over the needs of the situation, which are in refreshing contrast with the administration of his successor, Surgeon-General Hathaway. Thus at the very outset of the campaign he calls attention to the crying need for a proper water-supply at Basra and does his best to grapple with the insanitary conditions in that town and elsewhere. He suggests and obtains spine-pads, tinted glasses, mosquito-nets, soda-water, &c., &c. He asks for a dentist and a bacteriological expert. He takes scientific measures to cope with a possible outbreak of malaria, and he warns the Indian Government against the danger of scurvy arising from the deficient ration of the Indian troops. He cables early in February for typhoid and small-pox vaccine and anti-tetanus serum, and by using the latter is able to report that there was only one case of tetanus out of nearly a thousand wounded at Shaiba. We consider that Colonel Hehir worked with zeal and on the whole with success: and he can take credit for a remarkably low rate of sickness in the force during the winter of 1914–15. But it is quite clear from Colonel Hehir's evidence, and from other sources, that many of the defects in the care of the sick and wounded, which afterwards proved so disastrous, were existent during the earlier phases of the campaign, and were only prevented from becoming conspicuous, by a certain combination of good luck and good management, which distinguished Colonel Hehir's administration.

34. The battle of Sahil, November 17th, 1914, was the first battle in the campaign in which the casualties were considerable. The medical experience of this battle indicated defects, which, if they had been appreciated and remedied in time, would have saved much suffering later in the campaign. The battle was fought before the full medical personnel had arrived, the personnel had been separated from their equipment by the embarkation officers at Bombay, some of the wounded were left out all night, and the absence of any hospital ship necessitated wounded being sent back to India in an ordinary transport, which had previously carried animals. But the comparatively small number of casualties and the energy of Colonel Hehir in dealing with them would seem to have minimised in his own mind, and in those of the authorities in India and Mesopotamia the serious nature of the defects disclosed at this battle. At any rate every one of these mistakes was repeated later in the campaign with disastrous results.

35. Colonel Hehir had been D.D.M.S. at Simla and had worked out with Surgeon-General Babtie the medical requirements of Force "D." He must therefore have been aware that no British Stationary Hospital accompanied the force and also that the British General Hospital was 50 beds below the standard scale. He knew too that by the end of March the force had been doubled in size, and brought up to the strength of two divisions without any additional Stationary, Clearing, or General Hospitals being provided, and he made no protest against the omission to provide such hospitals. Owing to the fact that it was the cool weather and that such fighting as occurred was spasmodic and not as a rule severe, Colonel Hehir was able to manage normally with the existing hospital accommodation without serious overcrowding. But even so, he was forced at times into such doubtful expedients as the use of transports as overflow hospitals, the borrowing of medical personnel from the field ambulances, and the use of field ambulances as General Hospitals. All these measures diminished the pressure on the hospitals and their staffs in a manner which would have been impossible in times of widespread sickness or continuous fighting. Unfortunately, however, his success in overcoming these difficulties led Colonel Hehir not sufficiently to realise the danger of allowing the original shortage of medical personnel and equipment to persist. He was content to "make do" with the low scale of medical personnel provided and such deficiencies as he represented were only in respect of shortages on that scale. He even acquiesced in the failure of the Indian authorities to send out with the reinforcements at the beginning of 1915 their proper complement of field ambulances and hospitals, and it was not till towards the very end of his administration as Principal Medical Officer that he appears to have begun to realise the dangers of the situation. It is an ironic comment on Colonel Hehir's policy that, in giving evidence as to medical administration in periods of stress under his successor, Surgeon-General Hathaway, he is again and again forced to criticise the perpetuation and development of expedients which he himself initiated in easier times.

36. A case in point is the non-provision of hospital river steamers. In his evidence

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000002

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Medical Administration of Colonel Hehir in Mesopotamia.

before us (after the event) Colonel Hehir says: "The absence of special river transport for sick and wounded was felt from the earliest stage of the campaign and this want became progressively more pronounced as time went on." Yet General Barrett, speaking of the period of Colonel Hehir's administration, stated to the Vincent-Bingley Commission: "I was never asked by any of my medical officers to apply for any river hospital steamers." The fact was that Colonel Hehir was content to overcome the difficulty by securing from the A.Q.M.G. (often only after much importunity) ordinary river boats for the transport of the sick on special occasions. When the number of sick was small, as under Colonel Hehir's administration, this was a possible expedient and Colonel Hehir was able, he assures us, to see that the boats were properly cleaned and sanitated before being used for patients. But such a system was bound to fail when there came a large increase in the number of patients and in the demands upon the steamers for ordinary transport purposes. And Colonel Hehir points out that "these steamers were always unsatisfactory" and that (in Surgeon-General Hathaway's time) "their absence became more felt as the number of sick and wounded increased and at the battles of Kut and Ctesiphon we were in consequence faced with difficulties which could not be overcome satisfactorily."

37. Another defect, which was evident, though not accentuated, under Colonel Hehir's administration was the failure to supply the expedition with suitable vehicles for carrying the wounded. The only land ambulance transport provided were stretchers and riding mules. Stretchers are not suitable for distances beyond 2½ miles, if for no other reason, because of the strain on and consequent failure of the stretcher bearers. This is a vital objection where, as in the Mesopotamian campaign there was often an actual shortage of bearers. Mules are, of course, impossible for severely wounded cases, and at one of the early engagements in the campaign (Rotah, January 20th, 1915) a R.A.M.C. officer informed the Vincent-Bingley Commission: "These animals were very restive and not suitable for wounded men to ride upon" with the consequence that the wounded, luckily very few in number, had to be carried back between 6 and 7 miles on stretchers. There were no motor vehicles available, except one or two provided from private sources. Consequently, whenever it became necessary to carry the wounded any distance, resort was had to the ordinary army transport cart (usually known as A.T. carts), which is thus described by the A.D.M.S. of the 3rd Division:

> "The ambulance transport of these units consisted of the army transport cart, which is without springs; has no cover to give protection against rain or the direct rays of the sun; and the bottom of which consists of bars of iron which, even when liberally covered with mattresses or other padding, renders the placing of a wounded man, especially cases of fracture, in such a conveyance, a practice which can only be designated as barbarous and cruel."

38. Colonel Hehir himself recognises that the use of A.T. carts for the wounded "gives rise to a vast amount of suffering that would have been avoided by the use of suitable vehicles with proper springs." He did not, however, as Principal Medical Officer, apply for any wheeled ambulance transport, because, as he told us, he thought the fighting would continue to be on, or near one of the rivers, and also because from February to June, the country was likely to be flooded. Our comment on this defence is that battles near a river are, as was seen at Es Sinn and Ctesiphon, likely to extend further from the river than the distance for which wounded can be properly carried by stretcher. While, as regards the floods, it would not have been too early to apply in January for a special form of wheeled transport to be prepared for the time when the floods would subside in July. The fact was that in the earlier fighting in the campaign the number of the wounded to be removed a long distance was either very small as at Rotah, or else as at Shaiba the distance to be covered by wheeled ambulances was not very great. Colonel Hehir was, therefore, able to cope with the situation, either by using only stretchers, as at Rotah and Sahil, or by using padded A.T. carts to supplement the stretchers as at Shaiba. Thus, when he was Principal Medical Officer, we find him writing to the D.M.S. in India that the A.T. carts were "invaluable in transporting the wounded from the battlefield" at Shaiba, while later on, in his evidence before us, he frankly deplores having to use them (under the administration of General Hathaway) at the battles of Es Sinn and Ctesiphon.

In these and other instances, we think that Colonel Hehir was to blame for failing to requisition India for equipment, which, though not indispensable at the time, was certain to be indispensable in the future. It was a mistake to risk disaster before taking measures which ordinary foresight would have adopted long before.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00009d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

C. Medical Administration of Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie.

39. But, whatever blame may attach to Colonel Hehir in not having made sufficient requisitions for the proper equipment of the expedition, the primary responsibility in respect of such equipment must, in our opinion, rest with the authorities in India. Up to the first week in June, 1915, Surgeon-General Babtie was Director of Medical Services in India. He is a man, both in experience and ability, above the average. He had previously been employed at the War Office, and had been "intimately connected" with the details of medical mobilisation He was considered of sufficient importance to be detached to Egypt in the Spring of 1915, in connection with medical problems which had arisen there; and in June of the same year need of his ability was experienced elsewhere in connection with the war, and he was recalled from India. Sir William Babtie must therefore have been well aware of the standards and requirements of modern warfare, and was to some extent in a position in India to ensure that such standards should be conformed to. In his own words: "The position of D.M.S. in India in relation to an expedition operating over the sea is practically the position of the War Office with regard to an expedition operating in France." We will now briefly examine how, in possession of this position and experience, Sir William Babtie carried out his responsibility for properly equipping the Mesopotamian Expedition in regard to medical requirements.

40. In one sense, the numerous sanitary and precautionary requisitions of Colonel Hehir, which we have already detailed, are a measure of Sir William Babtie's omissions. We have seen that during the first months of the campaign, Colonel Hehir was forced to wire to India for sun glasses, anti-toxin, mosquito-nets, spine-pads, &c., &c. Though it is true that Sir William Babtie was not technically responsible for the actual provision of all of these requisites, yet it is quite clear that they were essential to the maintenance of the health of the troops, and in our opinion Sir William Babtie should have made it his duty to have impressed upon the Quartermaster General's or other Departments concerned the necessity for providing well beforehand, these and other medical ancillaries in which the expedition is proved to have been deficient. He did not do this, with the result that many of these essentials did not reach the troops in sufficient time and sufficient quantities.

41. In regard to the rations of the Indian troops we consider that an even more severe comment should be passed on the Director of Medical Services' omission. In an official report to the D.M.S. in India dated April 8th, 1915, Colonel Hehir reports a small outbreak of scurvy amongst the Indian troops, and adds as follows:—

"I am of opinion that the present field service diet of Indian troops and followers has certain intrinsic defects, and it is suggested as desirable that the whole question should be reconsidered and the dietary in some respects reconstructed. An enquiry into the caloric value, vitamine content and anti-scorbutic attributes of the present dietary appears to be indicated. The only vegetable now allowed is 2 ounces of potatoes and the only fresh meat 28 ounces a week. It is very doubtful whether this authorised ration, if not supplemented by other vegetables and more meat, is sufficient to prevent scurvy. Cases of scurvy have invariably occurred whenever campaigns have lasted longer than four months, and the prevalence of the disease has then varied with the extent to which the ration could be supplemented by fresh vegetables and fresh meat obtained locally."

42. Sir William Babtie informed us: "As regards rations, I brought up the question of rationing the troops at the Commander-in-Chief's conference, and an additional ration to that which was hitherto in force for field service in India was sanctioned." We have not been able to obtain any confirmation of this assertion, and if the suggestion ever emerged from the phase of discussion into the reality of action, we can only suppose that it related merely to modifications of the extras which the Commanding Officer on the spot was empowered to sanction. It will be observed that Colonel Hehir's letter is an indictment of the whole constitution of the Indian ration. In the papers which have been laid before us by Sir B. Duff from the Quartermaster-General's branch in India it is definitely stated that "Until March, 1916, no suggestion was made that for Indians the authorised ration was not entirely suited to the conditions of Mesopotamian Service," and we gather from the same document that the ration had, prior to that date, remained unaltered since it was slightly modified in 1912. If Surgeon-General Babtie, with the knowledge that he must have had of the proneness of Indian troops to scurvy, had authoritatively pressed Colonel Hehir's suggestions upon the Commander-in-Chief and the Quartermaster-General in India, it is difficult to suppose that a general improvement of the Indian ration would not have been sanctioned. As it was, the ration remained generally as fixed in 1912, and though some additions were made in May, 1916, in the summer of the same year a very serious outbreak of scurvy occurred amongst the Indian troops in Mesopotamia, resulting in some

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000031

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

C. Medical Administration of Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie.

7,500 men being lost to the force in 19 weeks. This epidemic was definitely ascribed by a War Office Sanitary Commission to deficiencies in the Indian ration.

43. The failure to insist on necessary precautions against so obvious a danger is, in our opinion, a very good instance of the kind of responsibility which attaches to Sir William Babtie for not having originally foreseen, and afterwards kept a proper oversight over, the health needs of the troops.

44. But the gravamen of the criticism which we feel bound to pass on Sir William Babtie is that, knowing the Army Medical Service in India to be organised only for frontier warfare, knowing the provision of the field ambulances and hospitals to be deficient, and knowing the medical personnel to be insufficient, he yet made no adequate efforts to improve these defects so as to equip the Mesopotamian Expedition in a manner suitable for campaigning in an unhealthy, tropical climate against an enemy, who was in alliance with and supported by the foremost exponents of modern warfare.

45. We will now proceed to examine to what extent Sir William Babtie was responsible in connection with the three main medical defects in the campaign, viz.: (1) Personnel; (2) River hospital transport; (3) Land transport for the wounded.

Personnel.

46. The Indian authorised scale of medical personnel was calculated for the needs of frontier warfare, where casualties were not likely to be large and the resources of India were close behind. But Surgeon-General Babtie despatched Force "D" eighteen hundred miles from its base, with medical personnel short even of the authorised scale. When reinforcements were sent he took, or acquiesced in, measures which even further reduced this exiguous scale, so that in the words of the Vincent-Bingley Commission "whereas the force was increased to two divisions *plus* a cavalry brigade, the medical establishment was, save for the addition of seven sections of a field ambulance, that which had been thought necessary for one division only." And Sir William Babtie himself admitted to us that each division was only supplied with twelve sections of field ambulance instead of the proper complement of twenty.

47. As regards hospitals the position was equally bad. The strength of the Force was doubled during Sir William Babtie's administration, but no additional hospitals whatever were sent over by him. Attempts were made to meet the deficiencies locally by expanding the existing hospitals in Mesopotamia. On April 22nd, Colonel Hehir informed Sir W. Babtie, that the British and Indian General Hospitals had been thus extended from 250 to 350, and from 600 to 1,000 beds respectively. No additional personnel was despatched by Sir W. Babtie to meet these extensions, and in response to demands for it, Mesopotamia was even told to obtain personnel from the Field Ambulances' Staffs, which, as we have shown, were already gravely deficient. The additional equipment required was not all in Mesopotamia even as late as October, 1915. The hospital expansions were in fact, in Sir W. Babtie's time, to a large degree merely "paper expansions."

48. The medical position was, therefore, obviously a highly dangerous one It has been justified by Sir William Babtie on the ground broadly that it was necessary to economise in Mesopotamia in order to provide for the medical needs of forces mobilised in India for internal defence. We have examined the memorandum on this subject prepared by Col. Hendley, A.D.M.S., about a fortnight after Sir W. Babtie's departure from India. From this document, the gist of which was telegraphed to the Secretary of State on July 3rd, it would appear that all the medical personnel was at that date retained in India, which was necessary for frontier and internal defence and that there was a small margin over. We are not convinced that the policy of preparing for possible warfare in India at the expense of actual warfare in Mesopotamia was justifiable. But even if this be conceded as a justification for allowing Mesopotamia to be severely understaffed in medical personnel, it was, in our opinion, clearly the duty of Surgeon-General Babtie to impress on the authorities in India and at home, the dangers of such a proceeding and to have urged strongly upon the authorities in India that they should apply to England for assistance. This he does not seem to have done, and it is noteworthy that the first demand for assistance from England was sent almost immediately after Sir William Babtie's departure from India, and was promptly complied with, although the Home Government was only given a very misleading account of the actual deficiencies in medical personnel in Mesopotamia.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000033

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

C. Medical Administration of Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie.

River Hospital Steamers

49. In his examination before us Sir William Babtie agreed that in a campaign of this kind, if casualties on a considerable scale were certain and the only transport along the river, the authorities on the spot ought to have pressed for special river hospital accommodation. We are of the opinion that in such circumstances it, to a certain extent, devolved upon Sir William Babtie himself to have suggested and asked for the provision of such river hospital steamers. His defence for not doing so is, we gather, that he was not aware that there was any intention of an extensive campaign up the rivers, and that his preparations were made for a campaign limited to the conquest and retention of Basra and the oil fields. He told us that he was not informed of Sir John Nixon's instructions and that "if there had been a hint of Baghdad the arrangements would have had to be absolutely put into the melting-pot." He was also unable to recollect being told of the actual advance to Amara. Subsequently, however, under cross-examination, he admitted that he knew from hearsay that both Amara and Nasariyeh were necessary for the defence of Basra and the oil-fields. It does not, therefore, appear to us that he can escape all responsibility for not having suggested the provision of this necessity in what he knew from the outset to be more or less a riverine campaign. The extent of his activities in this direction was a suggestion of, or acquiescence in, a proposal made by a voluntary association to provide and equip a hospital river barge. When this barge sank on its way out to Mesopotamia, Sir William Babtie took no further steps in the matter beyond offering one motor launch also provided by voluntary effort.

Land Transport.

50. His attitude in regard to land transport for the wounded was hardly more satisfactory. The only such special transport provided under the Indian organisation consisted of stretchers, riding mules and ambulance tongas, which are vehicles drawn by bullocks. When the equipment of the expedition was being considered tongas were ruled out by Sir William Babtie and the staff at Simla as being unsuitable for the country and Colonel Hehir was so informed. We have already dealt in a previous paragraph* with the inadequacy of stretchers, and riding mules, the only land ambulance transport provided with the expedition. It follows that army transport carts were the only vehicles available for the sick and wounded where land transport was necessary. We have received an overwhelming mass of evidence as to the inhumanity of using these carts for the wounded. Padding for them was not always available. In some cases dead bodies were even used as cushions. Even when padded they were cruel and dangerous for certain classes of wounded. All this must have been well-known to Surgeon-General Babtie, or might have been easily ascertained by enquiry or experiment. His only action in regard to developing a more suitable vehicle than the bullock-tonga was to ask the Maharajah of Benares to provide a special corps of pony tongas—none of which were, however, available in Mesopotamia till long after Sir William Babtie had left India. In addition, he sent one private motor ambulance to Basra in March and offered a second in April, which was curtly refused. The reason for this refusal has never been satisfactorily explained to us. Motor cars were used as ambulances just previously at Shaiba and subsequently both up the Karun and the Tigris. But in any case an unexplained telegraphic refusal of a particular motor cannot (any more than the failure of Colonel Hehir to ask for tongas after he had been told that they were not being sent) be accepted as relieving Sir William Babtie of his responsibility for not providing wheeled ambulance transport. Knowing it was not provided he does not seem to have even asked for any special report or made any special enquiries as to how the expedition were managing without it. Like Colonel Hehir, so long as no evident disaster or scandal arose, he was content to "carry on" with obviously insufficient equipment. Though the expedition must inevitably fight and push forward by land and by river, he provided no proper land or river transport for the sick and wounded. He was content to leave developments in this respect to the haphazard efforts of private benevolence, and he never pressed upon the Indian Government or the Quartermaster-General the necessity for an organised effort to modernise its out-of-date ambulance vehicles.

51. Surgeon-General Babtie's omissions in regard to the Mesopotamian Campaign are all the more remarkable because of his promptitude and firmness in pressing war-provisions on the Indian Government which were necessary for the overseas expeditions generally. Thus, on the outbreak of war, he urged the formation of a fleet of ocean hospital ships, the construction of hospital trains, and the expansion of the Army Bearer Corps. It may be that, as we have noticed in other phases of the expedition, Mesopotamia was in medical

* See para. 37 *ante*.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000054

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

C. Medical Administration of Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie.

matters also regarded as a "small side-show" and did not for that reason receive proper attention to its special and unique requirements. At any rate and for whatever reason, Surgeon-General Babtie's administration was marked by serious faults, for which he must be blamed, and the importance of which cannot be minimised. But we recognise that the shortness of his experience as Director of Medical Services when the war broke out, and the fact that he had to work in an atmosphere very unfavourable to reforming innovation, must be regarded as diminishing the weight of the censure he deserves. He is undoubtedly a man of great ability, and having regard to all the circumstances, we desire to say that the faults of his administration were not, in our judgment, such as to prove him unfit for important responsible administrative posts.

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

52. Elsewhere in our report, we have discussed the effects of the campaign of economy in India.* We have seen how it tended to create an indisposition to put forward, or to press demands involving expenditure, and we have quoted and endorsed in general terms, the views of the Vincent-Bingley Commission in this connection. We now propose to detail from our own evidence a number of instances, in which there has been a failure to report to higher authorities serious defects in existing arrangements. In almost all these cases the reporting and remedying of the defects would have involved considerable expenditure, and possibly censure of the responsible officers. There is no proof that economy was the motive of the omissions to report. But economy, as we have seen, engendered a disposition to reticence, and when this was reinforced by the natural tendency in all men to avoid censure, we fear that there grew up a dangerous habit of concealment. In matters affecting the sick and wounded the want of frankness has painfully impressed us.

The Colaba Hospital.

53. Until 1916, practically the only Military Hospital for British sick and wounded in Bombay, was the Colaba Station Hospital. In May, 1915, allegations were made that this hospital was poorly equipped, and in response to a telegram from the Secretary of State, Sir William Babtie, then Director of Medical Services in India, visited and reported on the hospital. The gist of his report was telegraphed to England, and we give in full the telegrams on the subject.

Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, dated May 26th, 1915.

1864. Allegations being made that Military Hospital at Bombay to which wounded from Persian Gulf are being sent, is unprovided with X-ray apparatus and otherwise poorly equipped. Please cable facts.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated June 3rd, 1915.

H. 5304. Your telegram of the 26th ultimo, No. 1864. The station hospital at Colaba is equipped according to regulation, but much additional equipment for officers and men has been provided through the agency of funds, local and others. Arrangements were made some months ago for the provision of electric fans and light, but the supply has been delayed, owing to shortages of material. The number of X-ray apparatus available for military use in India is at present limited to one portable set per division, the rest having been sent overseas, fresh supplies indented for not having been received from home. The Sixth Divisional apparatus with the specialist is sent to Bombay, when convoys of wounded are expected, and in addition use can be made of the apparatus in the civil hospitals. Director, Medical Services, will visit Colaba within a week and the gist of his report will be telegraphed to you.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, dated June 16th, 1915.

H. 5620. In continuation of our telegram of the 2nd instant, No. H. 5304. Surgeon-General Babtie inspected Station Hospital, Colaba, and confirms former report. X-ray apparatus and arrangements for X-raying patients previously reported. No risk of any failure in this respect. He has arranged officers' accommodation which will not materially affect soldiers. Cooking quite good and sufficiently varied, there were no complaints. Electric lights and fans should be working in a fortnight. Hospital well staffed with medical officers and nurses, but some shortage in assistant surgeons, nursing orderlies and menials, which, as far as present conditions allow, will be met. Director of Medical Services satisfied that all sick and wounded officers and men have been well looked after and well cared for in a good hospital, and, taken all in all, Colaba Hospital is better found than the majority of station hospitals in India.

54. It will be observed that the failure up to date to supply electric fans and light is admitted. It is also admitted that X-ray apparatus is only sent to the hospital, when convoys of wounded are expected; but Sir William Babtie declares that in this respect "There is no risk of failure." A shortage of assistant surgeons and orderlies is also admitted, but there is a direct denial of any shortage of medical officers and nurses, and the concluding paragraph of the last telegram might easily be read as a denial of any other serious defects in equipment. Bearing these assertions and denials in mind, we will now quote

* See Part I. C and Part XI. D.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000043

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

extracts from the evidence given to us by a witness, who was Surgical-Specialist at Colaba Hospital, between February, 1915, and August, 1916 :—

When I took over the surgical wards on March 1st, 1915, from an officer of the I.M.S. there were some twenty wounded officers and men in the hospital, which was, at that time, quite unprepared for the reception of acute surgical cases from overseas. The equipment of wards and operating theatre was quite inadequate. There was no X-ray installation. In fact, no apparent preparations had been made for establishment of the hospital as an overseas base, although the Mesopotamian Campaign had been in existence for several months.

No fresh batch of wounded arrived until May 10th, 1915, when those from the Shaiba engagement were admitted. On this date there was still a complete lack of preparation for the reception of wounded.

"There was a serious deficiency in ward equipment. During most of the time patients suffered from lack of sufficient air-beds, water-beds, ring pillows, and their treatment was hindered by lack of splints and other surgical apparatus, and by the impossibility of obtaining these necessaries in time to be of use."

"There was a serious shortage of medical personnel during the twelve months commencing March, 1915. This necessarily affected the care of the patients. . . . During the emergency in August, 1915, I was frequently obliged to perform operations in the wards, and to give the anæsthetic myself, in order to get through the work each day."

"The shortage of the nursing staff was a serious hindrance to the care of the patients during all of the most important periods. . . . There is no doubt that the patients suffered from this cause, and that the nurses were at all times overworked between February, 1915, and April, 1916. The difficulty was overcome as far as possible by the splendid service of those who were available. . . . . The inadequacy of the establishment of orderlies was a source of perpetual worry and inefficiency in carrying out the work. . . . I cannot condemn too strongly the behaviour of whoever was responsible for the disgraceful lack of efficient X-ray apparatus, when this was urgently needed. I have good reason to fully realise the trouble due to this deficiency, as it affected my work considerably. In February, 1915, there was no X-ray apparatus in the hospital. The wounded from Shaiba were radiographed by the Divisional Specialist in Electrical Science (Capt. Stephen, R.A.M.C.), who brought his field apparatus from Divisional Headquarters at Poona, and took it back there by order some days later. Capt. Stephen was, however, transferred to Bombay with his apparatus in June, 1915. There was no X-ray room, so a small ward was used as a makeshift, and here Capt. Stephen carried on this important work as best he could, with an apparatus that any modern hospital would have refused to contain."

The Captain Stephen referred to, himself stated in evidence before the Vincent-Bingley Commission, that many patients were not X-rayed, because of the inefficiency of the apparatus, and that although he had asked for a proper installation in July, 1915, no order for it had been sent to the makers by March, 1916. He had further been debarred from obtaining "tubes" from London, and although an insufficient number of inefficient tubes was ultimately supplied to him in India, he was informed by the Superintendent of the X-Ray Institute, Deh-Ra-Dun, that he was not entitled to them because they had not been indented for in 1914.

All these statements (with one exception) refer specifically to the date of Sir William Babtie's report or to the months immediately preceding it, and they therefore constitute a serious impeachment of that report.

55. With regard to conditions in the hospital, prior to Sir William Babtie's report, we have also the evidence of the Viceroy himself, who visited it in February, 1915. Lord Hardinge pointed out the deficiencies as regards electric light and fans, and told us that the cooking was dirty, and the food indifferent. He added that he felt it "so hard that the British soldiers and officers were so indifferently treated." As regards the state of the hospital after Sir William Babtie's visit, the Surgical Specialist before quoted, informs us that in August (when the wounded arrived in a very bad condition after the Nasariyeh fighting), and in December, 1915, the hospital became grossly overcrowded, and was infested with vermin, while the shortage of personnel was accentuated rather than diminished as promised in the Viceroy's telegram. We have also the evidence of Surgeon-General MacNeece, Sir William Babtie's successor, who visited the hospital early in July and considered it unsatisfactory. "Officers were crowded and badly done," he says in a letter to Sir Alfred Keogh, "and rank and file not much better," and his evidence before us confirms this description. He found it necessary to recommend improvements and alterations which involved considerable expenditure, although the calls likely to be made at the hospital had not increased since Sir William Babtie's inspection. The evidence shows that the Staff did their best, but notwithstanding this it is clear that Sir William Babtie's report was misleading as regards the adequacy of the Colaba Hospital arrangements.

First Battle of Kut.

56. Between September 26th and 28th, 1915, in and about the first battle of Es Sinn or Kut, General Townshend's force sustained some 1,300 casualties. Owing to insufficiency of Field Ambulances and personnel, a lack of wheeled transport and river steamers,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00006e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

and a scarcity of blankets, the wounded in these engagements suffered very considerably. Some of the fighting units were without stretcher-bearers, and there was a lack of co-ordination in some of the medical arrangements. Wounded men were left on the field of battle all night, some of them being stripped, maimed and killed by Arabs. These defects were so well-known that they resulted in a telegram from General Nixon, in which he said, "I see no possible excuse for what I am forced to look on, as the most indifferent work done in the collection of the wounded." Colonel Hehir, who was in charge of the medical arrangements on the battlefield, officially explained that these incidents were largely due to shortages of field ambulances and transport. The matter must have been well-known to the D.M.S. in Mesopotamia, General Hathaway, who was actually at General Nixon's Headquarters when the explanation of the officers concerned was received. Moreover, some time after the battle, Colonel Hehir personally brought to Surgeon-General Hathaway's notice the shortage of field ambulances on this occasion. At the end of October, Surgeon-General Hathaway sent in to Surgeon-General MacNeece, D.M.S., in India, an official report dealing with this period. He sets out the casualties in the engagements in question, and comments on the small proportion of killed to wounded. But in the whole of his report there is no single word, which gives any inkling that there had been deficiencies in the medical arrangements or that anything untoward had happened.

Battle of Ctesiphon.

57. There are two methods of concealing a failure. The first is to suppress all mention of it. The second is to obscure its significance by the glare of a contemporaneous achievement. The first method was, as we have seen, used at the first battle of Kut. It was the second method which obtained after the battle of Ctesiphon, when the military success of withdrawing all the wounded in the face of a pursuing enemy diverted attention from the grave medical defects which were disclosed in the course of that operation.

58. We do not here enter fully into the details of the Battle of Ctesiphon and of the lamentable breakdown of medical arrangements which followed it. This is done at length by the Vincent-Bingley Commissioners and elsewhere in our own Report.* It will be sufficient to recapitulate that a tactical victory was turned into a strategical defeat; General Townshend was obliged to retire before superior forces with casualties amounting to approximately one-third of the force with which he entered into battle. Over 3,500 wounded had to be removed from the battlefield to the river bank, in some cases a distance of ten miles, without proper ambulance transport, and with an insufficiency of medical personnel, of food and of comforts, so that a large proportion had to make their way on foot in spite of their injured condition. When they arrived at the river, the available steamer accommodation was gravely inadequate. The wounded and weary men had to be crowded into steamers and barges without sufficient medical attention, appliances, or conveniences. Some of the wounded were disembarked at Amarah, but the majority went on down to Basra, a journey from the battlefield, which, in some cases, took as much as fourteen days, and the discomforts of which were aggravated for the wounded by the presence on board of many cases of dysentery and other sickness.

59. Thus the sick and wounded were put to great sufferings during the evacuation from the battlefield to the river bank at Laj, and also during the protracted journey down the river. Though the successful evacuation of the wounded in the face of a superior and pursuing enemy was a fine military performance, it was carried out in a manner which involved for the sick and wounded conditions of neglect, misery, and suffering, which were lamentable. Not a hint of this regrettable breakdown is to be found in the official report sent to England after the battle.

60. We are reluctant to describe the details of the condition in which many of the wounded arrived at Basra, on account of their sickening horror; but we deem it necessary to quote one witness on this subject, because it brings home the appalling nature of the sufferings which were thus glossed over by the authorities. Major Carter, I.M.S., who was in medical charge of the hospital ship "Varela" at Basra, waiting for the wounded from Ctesiphon, thus describes the arrival of one of the river convoys:—

"I was standing on the bridge in the evening when the 'Medjidieh' arrived. She had two steel barges without any protection against the rain, as far as I remember. As this ship, with two barges, came up to us I saw that she was absolutely packed, and the barges too, with men. The barges were slipped, and the 'Medjidieh' was brought alongside the 'Varela.' When she was about 300 or 400 yards off it looked as if she was festooned with ropes. The stench when she was close was quite definite, and I found that what I mistook for ropes were dried stalactites of human fæces. The patients were so huddled and crowded together on the ship that they could not perform the offices of Nature clear of the edge of the ship, and the whole of the ship's

* See Part X., para. 24.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000049

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

Battle of Ctesiphon (continued).

side was covered with stalactites of human fæces. This is what I then saw. A certain number of men were standing and kneeling on the immediate perimeter of the ship. Then we found a mass of men huddled up anyhow—some with blankets and some without. They were lying in a pool of dysentery about 30 feet square. They were covered with dysentery and dejecta generally from head to foot. With regard to the first man I examined, I put my hand into his trousers, and I thought that he had a hæmorrhage. His trousers were full almost to his waist with something warm and slimy. I took my hand out, and thought it was blood clot. It was dysentery. The man had a fractured thigh, and his thigh was perforated in five or six places. He had apparently been writhing about the deck of the ship. Many cases were almost as bad. There were a certain number of cases of terribly bad bed sores. In my report I describe mercilessly to the Government of India how I found men with their limbs splinted with wood strips from 'Johnny Walker' whisky boxes, 'Bhoosa' wire, and that sort of thing."

Were they British or Indian?—British and Indian mixed.

61. We do not wish it to be inferred that the conditions on all the river steamers reached this pitch of horror. The conditions, for example, in the "Blosse Lynch" and the "Mosul," two ships which on this occasion had been prepared beforehand for the wounded, though unsatisfactory, were probably superior to those in the "Medjidieh." On the other hand there is evidence that the conditions in some of the other boats were as bad as or worse than in the "Medjidieh."

62. We will now see how the evacuation of the wounded, resulting in such appalling conditions, was officially described by the General Officer Commanding the Expedition. We append two telegrams on the subject:—

From—Secretary of State for India
To—General Nixon, Basra.
Dated December 4th, 1915.
C. 243. On arrival wounded at Basra. Please telegraph urgently particulars and progress.
From—General Nixon.
To—Secretary of State for India.
Dated December 7th, 1915.

940/28/A. Your C. 243. Wounded satisfactorily disposed of. Many likely to recover in country comfortably placed in hospitals at Amara and Basra. Those for invaliding are being placed direct on two hospital ships that were ready at Basra on arrival of river boats. General condition of wounded very satisfactory. Medical arrangements under circumstances of considerable difficulty worked splendidly.

We have had great difficulty in ascertaining who actually drafted this telegram and was responsible for its despatch. Sir John Nixon, who was ill at the time it was sent, in his evidence before us stated that he had only a dim, if any, recollection of the circumstance, but he admitted having seen it the day after its despatch, and as it was sent in his name he accepted the responsibility for it.

63. Sir John Nixon has communicated to us a letter he has lately received from a member of the Staff in Mesopotamia, which states that this telegram was drafted by, and is in the handwriting of, Surgeon-General Hathaway, though it is not initialled by him, but by two members of Sir John Nixon's Staff, subordinate officers in the office of Major-General Cowper, then Deputy Assistant and Quartermaster-General of Force "D." Surgeon-General Hathaway told us that he had assisted in framing it. Major General Cowper stated to us that he personally had no share in the despatch of this telegram, and that he did not himself submit it to Sir John Nixon before his subordinates despatched it. These two subordinate officers seem to have accepted Surgeon-General Hathaway's authority as sufficient. It is impossible to believe that Surgeon-General Hathaway was ignorant of the condition and sufferings of the sick and wounded. He had been at Laj when the wounded arrived from the battlefield, and he had himself worked with great energy in embarking them on the steamers. He had also travelled down the river with the wounded and was, according to one witness, actually at Basra at the date of the "Medjidieh's" arrival.

Major Carter stated to us that he had insisted upon seeing Sir John Nixon in order that he (Sir John Nixon) might personally know of the condition of the wounded on their arrival at Basra in the "Medjidieh."

64. Sir John Nixon, Major-General Cowper and Surgeon-General Hathaway all assured us that the telegram was not despatched with the object of misrepresenting the state of things. Sir John Nixon informed us that at the time the telegram was sent his "thankfulness was great at having got the wounded down safely under circumstances of great difficulty without letting them be exposed to mutilation" by the Arabs, and that what filled his mind was the resource and unceasing efforts of the medical officers to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded. Surgeon-General Hathaway said that he meant the latter

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000bc

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

part of the telegram as "a tribute to the people who had really accomplished a mos wonderful achievement." It is very difficult to accept these explanations, for whatever may have been the motive for so wording the despatch, the effect was to conceal from the authorities outside Mesopotamia the real facts as to the medical breakdown in November, gravely to mislead the Secretary of State, and through him Parliament and the public, and to deceive all into a state of false security in view of future operations. If the full facts had been frankly reported immediately after the battle of Ctesiphon, it would have been possible for the authorities to make strong efforts to remove or mitigate many of the defects before the next fighting took place. But this was not done, with the result that for the wounded the horrors in January, 1916, equalled or even exceeded the horrors of Ctesiphon in November, 1915.

65. It is possible, of course, to assume that Sir John Nixon and Surgeon-General Hathaway's relief of mind on their safe arrival with the wounded at Basra may have eliminated from their perspective the defects in medical arrangements, and the sufferings of the wounded, which occurred during the evacuation. Yet even on this assumption, these defects and sufferings should have been reported to the authorities when there had been time to obtain reports from medical officers and from the wounded themselves, and thus generally to correct the first impressions of the evacuation. But nothing of the kind seems to have been done. On December 18th, Surgeon-General Hathaway sent in to the D.M.S. India a detailed report of the evacuation of the wounded from Ctesiphon. Nobody reading that report would gather that anything untoward had happened, or that the wounded had undergone any special or avoidable sufferings. On Christmas Day, General Nixon again wired to India, "Taking into account the large numbers of wounded, the very limited means at my disposal, the great difficulties entailed, I am of the opinion that the evacuation of the wounded after the battle of Ctesiphon was extraordinarily well carried out." As late as January 4th, when Surgeon-General MacNeece had called his attention to the condition in which the wounded arrived at Basra, and to the complaints as to the defects in the medical arrangements, Surgeon-General Hathaway persisted in regarding the evacuation as a "glorious achievement" which had received from Sir John Nixon the commendation it deserved.

66. The first, and so far as we know, the only official report, which disclosed the serious condition of the wounded after Ctesiphon, was sent in by an officer who was not in any way responsible for the arrangements for their evacuation from the battlefield to Basra. Major Carter, whose evidence we have already quoted, posted in Bombay on December 14th, his report on the third voyage of the hospital ship "Varela," addressed to the D.M.S. at Delhi. This report, which must have reached Delhi a few days later, emphasized the grave condition of the wounded as they arrived at Basra, and ascribed this condition to the absence of river hospital-steamers. The report* gave also indirectly a vivid account of the sufferings of the wounded on their passage down the river. On the day on which it was posted, Surgeon-General MacNeece himself visited the "Varela," on its arrival at Bombay, inspected and questioned the wounded, and therefore knew in some detail of the medical breakdown after Ctesiphon.

67. The next day (December 15th), Surgeon-General MacNeece wrote a letter to Sir Percy Lake, Chief of the General Staff at Delhi. In this letter he described the sufferings of the wounded. "The whole business," he said "is bad." He asked that this letter should be shown to Sir Beauchamp Duff. But Sir Beauchamp Duff denies that he saw either this letter or Major Carter's Report; nor is there any evidence that he did. Both documents were however accessible to him, and would doubtless have been furnished to him if he had made enquiries in his own Headquarter Office about the condition of the wounded; and that there was reason for enquiry he knew, because Surgeon-General MacNeece referred to the sufferings of the wounded after Ctesiphon at a conference at which the Commander-in-Chief was present on December 23rd. Surgeon-General MacNeece's recollection is quite definite on this point, and Sir Percy Lake, though unable to swear to the exact date of the conference, corroborates Surgeon-General MacNeece as to the fact that the matter was referred to in conference about that time. Moreover, private notes made at the time by Surgeon-General MacNeece, though they do not specifically mention the wounded at Ctesiphon, show that the affairs of Force "D" were much discussed at the conference on December 23rd.

68. Surgeon-General MacNeece also told us that the sufferings of the wounded after

* See Part X., para. 89.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000083

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

Ctesiphon were a matter of common talk at Delhi about this time. Though the events after Ctesiphon were still unknown in England, stories were coming from home as to the general unsatisfactory working of the medical arrangements. The private letters of the Secretary of State to the Viceroy as far back as October had expressed anxiety on this point. On December 3rd, Mr. Chamberlain wrote: "I do beg you to urge Duff to go thoroughly into this matter," and suggested that a special officer should be sent out to inquire into all the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia. The Viceroy pressed the suggestion on the Commander-in-Chief and prevailed on him to consent. Sir Beauchamp Duff's letter of December 30th we have quoted in full elsewhere.* He minimised the importance of the rumours that had alarmed Lord Hardinge. "My official reports," said he, "indicate nothing wrong except the shortage of river transport which we are straining every nerve to supplement, and even that has only become a burning question since "D" force began to grow larger." Such language cannot be justified. Though the breakdown after Ctesiphon was due partly to shortage of river transport, the reassuring impression given by this letter was profoundly misleading. The truth was partly known to Sir Beauchamp Duff, when he thus wrote; and if it was not more completely known, this was due to his own neglect to enquire. He might have read the Surgeon-General's letter to Sir Percy Lake and Major Carter's Report; and he admits that "about the end of December," he heard that the medical arrangements were breaking down. In the circumstances to reassure the Viceroy, and to let the Viceroy reassure the Secretary of State was a grave dereliction of duty.

69. But in deference to the Viceroy, Surgeon-General MacNeece was now sent to Mesopotamia. He was instructed to "confer as to medical requirements" with Sir J. Nixon. This was not in terms a mission of enquiry into the past, and he did not so interpret it. "My business was with the future," he writes to Sir Alfred Keogh. At any rate, for whatever reason, he went only to Basra, and his report, unlike his letter to Sir Percy Lake, was vague and colourless. Meantime the rumours of the breakdown were continuing, and so were the anxieties of the Secretary of State and the Viceroy. In March, therefore, Sir Beauchamp Duff appointed Sir William Vincent and General Bingley as a Commission to enquire into the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia during and subsequent to the month of January, 1916. This limitation of their terms of reference would have excluded the breakdown after Ctesiphon. But at the suggestion of the Commission, their terms of reference were extended, and their striking account of the sufferings of the wounded after Ctesiphon finally enabled the truth to break through the tough veil of official reticence.

Medical Personnel.

70. We shall refer in another connection to a telegram† sent by the Viceroy to the Secretary of State on August 16th, 1915. But this telegram so well exemplifies the evils of the system, we are criticising, that we would also direct attention to it here. The facts are as follows:—The expeditionary force had, as we have seen, been sent to Mesopotamia without a British Stationary Hospital, and the reinforcing Division which arrived in the spring of 1915 was unaccompanied by hospitals staff or field ambulances for two out of three of its brigades. In papers which he laid before us, General Duff states that owing to shortage of medical personnel it was, and had been, impossible to despatch these additional medical units. He seems to have thought that these units were not necessary until the advance to Kut-el-Amara was sanctioned; but he maintained that the deficiency at that date and the impossibility of meeting it ought to have been brought to his notice by Surgeon-General MacNeece. It is therefore admitted even by the Commander-in-Chief that on the date when the advance to Kut-el-Amara was sanctioned, *viz.* August 7th, 1915, there was a deficiency in medical personnel in Mesopotamia, which India could not make good from its own resources. Four days after that date, Mr. Chamberlain telegraphed to Lord Hardinge, a comprehensive enquiry as to the need of doctors, nurses, medicines, hospital comforts or anything else, in Mesopotamia. On August 16th the Viceroy replied, deprecating the need for assistance as regards any of these necessaries and added "My Government arranged for doctors and medicines." A more completely misleading estimate of the medical situation and of the shortage of personnel, etc., from which the Mesopotamian force was suffering, and about to suffer can hardly be imagined.

Shaikh Saad Hospital Camp.

71. Surgeon-General MacNeece returned to India from Basra, and made his report to the Indian Government on January 27th. This report was submitted to us and we have

* See Part X., para. 93. † See para. 82 below.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000069

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

also seen a later document dated February 16th from Surgeon-General Hathaway. In this latter document, which was presented to the Indian Government, occurs the following statement :—

Shaikh Saad. The Meerut Stationary Hospital is under canvas here, under Major Goodbody, I.M.S., in excellent order, accommodating 607 cases, including 19 British ; 277 of these are suffering from dysentery of a mild type. This hospital is worked in a thoroughly efficient manner.

This is the only official reference Surgeon-General Hathaway made to his superior concerning Shaikh Saad Camp. Amongst the horrors connected with the medical breakdown, the condition of this camp up to January 18th, takes a foremost place. It is thus described by the Vincent-Bingley Commission :—

After the occupation of Shaikh Saad on the 9th January, about 2,000 of the wounded were moved to a new camp there, the remainder numbering 1,200 being left in a camp on the left bank of the river at Musandaq in charge of a small medical staff. The condition of the camps at Musandaq and Shaikh Saad have been described to us by various witnesses, and we are constrained to find that the arrangements for the accommodation and treatment of the wounded there were very defective The medical staff was so small that the wounds of many remained undressed for some days. The camps were in a very insanitary condition. The supply of surgical stores and appliances ran short, and there was practically no subordinate staff to see to the welfare of the patients. The suffering and discomfort endured by the unfortunate wounded in these camps were very great, and even up to the 18th January, when the Meerut Stationary Hospital took over charge at Shaikh Saad, this condition of affairs continued there. The Officer Commanding this hospital describes the condition of that camp in the following words :—" On arrival here we found about 195 British and 800 Indian sick and wounded in an irregular camp situated on filthy muddy ground behind the village . . . There was one Indian temporary I.M.S. Officer in charge of the Indians and he was ill. He had two sub-assistant surgeons and some of the personnel of an improvised cavalry field ambulance to help him. He had no dressings left, and many cases still had on the first field dressings which had been applied on the battlefield. About 200 of the patients had dysentery, and there were no proper latrine arrangements. The state of the camp was indescribable. Near the middle of the hospital tents was a pile of bags of atta, etc., mostly ruined by the rain, which I was told represented 10 days' rations."

72. This appalling state of things continued during Surgeon-General MacNeece's stay at Basra. Apparently not a word was said to him by Surgeon-General Hathaway as regards this condition of things. Surgeon-General Hathaway took the opportunity afforded him by the enormous improvement which Major Goodbody with the Meerut Stationary Hospital effected in the camp, and attempted to utilise it to cover up the shocking state of things which had previously prevailed. Unless the Vincent-Bingley Commission has reported, the state of this camp during the greater part of January would never have been known, and it is impossible to acquit Surgeon-General Hathaway of keeping back the unpleasant facts connected with this camp from the knowledge of the Indian Government.

Conduct of Surgeon-General Hathaway.

73. In connection with the withholding of information from Headquarters, we must explain that a very important medium of communication between the chief medical officer in Mesopotamia, and the Director of Medical Services in India was afforded by the demi-official letters which it was customary for the former to send the latter at frequent intervals. These communications were very regularly resorted to by Colonel Hehir, the principal medical officer in Mesopotamia upto April, 1915. But Surgeon-General Hathaway did not make proper use either of this means, or of more formal reports, for the purpose of keeping the D.M.S. in India *au courant* with the situation. In contemporary letters which have been submitted to us, and in his evidence before us Surgeon-General MacNeece complained several times of the manner in which he was kept in the dark by Surgeon-General Hathaway as to the medical needs and difficulties of the Mesopotamian Expedition.

74. Indeed, in our opinion, Surgeon-General Hathaway has throughout the campaign been the chief offender in the policy of suppressing the unpleasant. He failed to inform the D.M.S. in India of the often deplorable conditions of the hospitals at Amara and at Orah. He sent in reports as to the rations of the troops which induced India to believe that a plentiful supply of vegetables, fresh meat, etc., was available. We have not seen a single report by Surgeon-General Hathaway emphasizing the dangers of the existing inadequate methods of water-purification. In a formal report to the D.M.S. in the middle of February 1916, he wrote : " All water for drinking and cooking purposes is of course got from the river . . . This water is absolutely safe, the only precaution being necessary is the sedimentation of it as above referred to. The ' Wadi ' water is precisely the Tigris water and correspondingly safe." And he had previously referred to some defects in the process

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. The Misuse of Reticence.

of sedimentation which he said were being rectified so as to meet all requirements. Barely a month later the Vincent-Bingley Commission were in the country and they report in strong terms of the inadequacy of the measures taken for purifying the water and the consequent danger to the troops. The evidence before us strengthens their criticisms and shows that the defects in water supply caused considerable illness in the forces and necessitated a large expenditure before it was remedied.

75. We are happy to be able to report that we can find no evidence that the want of frankness in medical matters continued after the departure from Mesopotamia of Surgeon-General Hathaway and General Nixon. We believe that Surgeon-General Treherne, General Lake, General Aylmer, and the other responsible officers all freely disclosed to Headquarters the medical defects and dangers with which they had to deal.

Resentment of Criticism.

76. It is also our duty to draw attention to another unpleasant feature in the Mesopotamian Campaign, *viz.*, the active intolerance of all criticism of defects or suggestions for reform. Colonel Hehir was especially asked by Sir William Babtie, D.M.S. in India, to give Surgeon-General Hathaway the benefit of his experiences in the earlier phases of the campaign. At the outset, Colonel Hehir accordingly made suggestions to Surgeon-General Hathaway, but his action in this respect was so resented that he subsequently desisted from making even representations, which it was his obvious duty to have made. Major Carter who, as we have seen was the first to disclose the medical debâcle after Ctesiphon, endeavoured to bring to the notice of the authorities in Mesopotamia, the real condition of the wounded. On this account he was treated with great rudeness. Surgeon-General Hathaway, in writing to the D.M.S. in India on this subject says, "The Army Commander realising the injustice ordered the D.A. and Q.M.G. and myself to deal with him (Major Carter), with reference to his objectionable remarks." And General Cowper, then D.A. and Q.M.G., told us "I threatened to put him under arrest, and I said that I would get his hospital ship taken away from him for a meddlesome interfering faddist." In another part of our Report* we refer to Sir Beauchamp Duff's threat to dismiss General Cowper for sending to India too insistent demands as to the need for River Transport. Such incidents as these indicate the atmosphere of repression of complaints which permeated Indian officialdom, and do much to explain the unfortunate suppressions of truth with which we have dealt in this section.

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

77. The main responsibility for the medical arrangements of the Mesopotamia Campaign rests upon the Government of India and its officers. According to the division of function which was laid down by the Home Government, it was only the policy of the expedition which was to be decided in London; the management of the expedition was to be in the hands of the Government of India. We have commented elsewhere upon this division of function. But since, whether wisely or unwisely, it was adopted, it would be plainly unreasonable to criticise the India Office for the details of medical administration over which they attempted to exercise no control. But one general responsibility does belong to the India Office, or perhaps it would be more proper to say, to the Cabinet. Whatever preparations were made in England for a European war before August, 1914, no preparations were made in India. The Home Government and the Indian Government were agreed that the greatest military requirements for which it was necessary to make provision were those which might arise in defending the North-West Frontier, and maintaining the internal security of India. This policy suggested by the Indian Government was approved by Lord Crewe in a despatch dated March 20th, 1914. Overseas expeditions of a minor character might be undertaken, and the Indian Army was to be mobilised so as to make such a use of the Indian Army possible, but no additional expenditure was to be incurred in anticipation of such expeditions. Accordingly, when the European War broke out in August, 1914, it found the Indian Army organisation altogether unsuited for the purpose of such expeditions as that to Mesopotamia.

The Indian Government was prepared only for a campaign on the North-West Frontier against Afghanistan and the tribes, and to maintain internal security in India. On no

* See Part XI., para. 44.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000c4

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

part of the organisation did this limitation of function fall more hardly than on the medical service. In the all-important matter of medical personnel the establishment was kept below what would be necessary even for the mobilisation that was intended, because it was expected that it would be possible to obtain from England whatever additional personnel was necessary. The personnel was therefore short of the proper establishment, and the medical equipment was intended only for use in India and on its frontiers.

78. On the outbreak of the war, the Indian Government found it impossible to furnish the medical personnel required, and made no appeal to England for assistance in supplying it. It is true that they had in March, 1914, informed the Secretary of State of the deficiencies in medical personnel which would arise in case of mobilisation for war. Further in a telegram dated July 3rd, 1915, they called the Secretary of State's attention to their difficulties in meeting demands for medical reinforcements overseas, and also asked for sixteen R.A.M.C. officers in order to maintain Force "D" at its "authorised strength." The Indian Government never, however, explained to the Secretary of State that the "authorised strength" itself was gravely below what was required in Mesopotamia Nor was the Secretary of State himself in a position to appreciate this technical fact, inasmuch as, till the summer of 1916 he had no formal Medical Adviser at the India Office. Sir Havelock Charles was President of the Medical Board to the India Office, but he had no official status as Medical Adviser, and no administrative authority in regard to medical developments in Mesopotamia. Our evidence is that Sir Havelock Charles was not responsible for the medical telegrams despatched to Mesopotamia, and that these were, like other military matters, under the supervision of the Military Secretary, Sir Edmund Barrow, who had of course no special medical knowledge. The Secretary of State was unable therefore to give as much assistance and guidance to India in medical matters as he might have done if his office had been better organised. For this reason we welcome Mr. Chamberlain's appointment of Sir Havelock Charles as Medical Adviser in the summer of 1916.

79. The lack of preparation in India for a European war raises a larger question than concerns only the medical services and is dealt with elsewhere in our Report.* But in respect to the medical services, it is quite essentially important to realise that this lack of preparation made the medical equipment of the Mesopotamia Expedition from the very first scanty and deficient, a deficiency which grew more and more mischievous as the Mesopotamia Force became more and more numerous. Apart from river hospital steamers, the want of which had the most calamitous influence on the proper treatment of the sick and wounded, and apart from the lack of personnel, which ranks next in importance, there were other deficiencies in equipment, such as water-carts, operating-tents, ambulance transport and other necessaries.

80. During the whole of the first year of the campaign, that is, up to November, 1915, while there was no medical breakdown there was an increasing scantiness of medical provision, with regrettable hardship to the sick and wounded. The margin of security against breakdown was dangerously slight.

81. The responsibility for the general want of preparation at the outbreak of the war belongs both to the Home Government and the Indian Government. But the Indian Government, and particularly the Commander-in-Chief and his advisers, are specially responsible for not realising more completely that the medical provision intended for the North-West Frontier could not be sufficient or suitable for a campaign on the Tigris. Sir Beauchamp Duff in his evidence before us, put forward two main arguments in defence of his administration. He pointed out that the purpose and plan of the Mesopotamian Expedition were extended by the Home Government, by successive steps taken at very short notice, from an occupation of the estuary of the Shatt-el-Arab as far as Basra, to an advance to Ctesiphon on the road to Baghdad. The preparations which were sufficient or at least not disastrously insufficient for an expedition to Basra, were not sufficient for an expedition to Baghdad. But this consideration hardly serves as a defence for the Commander-in-Chief. The medical provision for the expedition was inadequate even from the outset, and it was the business of the Commander-in-Chief and his advisers to recognise and remedy this. Moreover, we had evidence that an advance even as far as Baghdad was known by the Commander-in-Chief to be a contingency as early as December, 1914, and each stage of the developments of the expedition beyond Kurna (which were precisely the developments which overstrained the scanty medical provision), were made not merely with his knowledge and consent, but as a result of suggestions by Sir John Nixon in which he con-

* See Parts I. C and XI. D

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000c1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

curred. Secondly, Sir Beauchamp Duff argued that he met whatever demands came from Mesopotamia. This is not quite true, but if it had been, more than this was required of him and his advisers, the Directors of Medical Services, who successively held office under him. Their passive attitude was really negligent. To receive demands, to discuss them by correspondence, to do little or nothing except slowly under the propulsion of Mesopotamian requests, were not the right methods for meeting a deficiency which was inherent in the scale of preparation and ought to have been vividly present to the minds of the Commander-in-Chief and his advisers. From the moment the Mesopotamian Expedition started, and more and more as it grew in size, the Military and Medical Authorities should have been not merely responding to demands, but making enquiries, offering suggestions, improving organisation, and enlarging equipment. But these things they did not do. To distribute the responsibility exactly between the Commander-in-Chief and the Directors of Medical services is not easy. The direct responsibility is with Surgeon-General Babtie and Surgeon General MacNeece, but however heavy it may be, the responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief cannot be light. He was their superior, and authority was in his hands. It is true that in regard to Surgeon-General MacNeece, he states :—

> I had personally warned him in July, in the presence of my Staff at Conference, to go thoroughly into the question of the adequacy of the Medical arrangements in Mesopotamia. He should have brought to my notice the demands which had been received, and the impossibility of meeting them.

But such instructions, though good, were not enough. It was the Commander-in-Chief's duty in dealing with a matter of such great and continuing importance to satisfy himself by an active supervision that his subordinates were not neglecting their instructions. He must share in the blame of the Military Authorities in India, justly assigned by the Vincent-Bingley Commission, who say :—

> We cannot, however, absolve the Military and Medical Authorities in India from responsibility for many of these deficiencies, in particular for the continuing neglect to supply the expeditionary force with that separate transport for sick and wounded, both by land and water, which the teaching of experience has shown to be essential in a properly organised enterprise of this character.

And to this it may be added that notwithstanding the extreme need of medical personnel in Mesopotamia the Indian Government retained in India a large supply of Medical Officers for possible need in case of a war upon the North-West Frontier, or of internal disturbances. Sir William Babtie and the Commander-in-Chief have both admitted that in this respect, priority over Mesopotamia was given to India. It appears to us that a distinction may reasonably be drawn between maintaining the necessary combatant forces to meet all internal contingencies in India and keeping up to full strength the medical services there. As between the potential claims of India and the actual claims of Mesopotamia in respect to medical provision, it appears to us that the Indian Government might have attached less weight to the potential claims of India and more to the actual need of Mesopotamia.

82. Until the beginning of 1916 the Indian Government seem to have been altogether unappreciative of the real insufficiency of the medical service of Force "D." This is shown by the correspondence that took place between Mr. Chamberlain and the Viceroy in the latter part of 1915. On August 11th the Secretary of State sent the following private telegram to the Viceroy :—

> "Private. Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire enquires informally whether he can usefully raise funds for sick and wounded of regiments in Mesopotamia or India. Also whether voluntary aid societies can usefully help. Are doctors, nurses, medicines, hospital comforts required ? Anything else needed ? Please telegraph your reply."

Lord Hardinge told us in evidence that he showed this telegram to the Army Department and, he thinks, to the Commander-in-Chief, and that his answer was determined by the advice he received in consequence. The Commander-in-Chief had no recollection of the matter and suggested that the answer was framed on the advice of the Director-General of Indian Medical Services. But as Lord Hardinge definitely said that his answer was written by the advice of the Commander-in-Chief, and the Commander-in-Chief professed to no distinct recollection, we think it must be assumed that the Commander-in-Chief saw, and probably advised, Lord Hardinge's answer, the more so as they were constantly in communication and consultation about Mesopotamian affairs. The answer ran as follows :—

> "I much appreciate the thought which prompted kind offer of Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire.* Having regard, however, to the heavy demands on charity which must arise elsewhere, I am unwilling at present to

* The offer was really on behalf of Lord Northbrook.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000048

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

take advantage of it. Much voluntary assistance is being afforded from private sources in all directions in India. Money is ample and sufficient for supplying comforts for sick and wounded in Mesopotamia and in India. Voluntary aid societies here are doing all that is necessary. Climatic and other conditions render it undesirable to employ personnel of such societies in Mesopotamia. Arrangements have been made to provide lady nurses from India, as it is considered that the climatic and other conditions permit. My Government arranged for doctors and medicines."

By way of comment on the last sentence, we would note that only a fortnight later, Surgeon-General Hathaway informed India of a deficiency in his authorised establishment, amounting to 17 medical officers, and 50 Sub-Assistant Surgeons, a deficiency which was never completely made up during 1915.

83. On October 9th the Secretary of State telegraphed again, expressing anxiety as to the health of Force "D" and especially about precautions in the hospitals against malaria and the general provision about tropical diseases. Lord Hardinge replied to the Secretary of State's telegram on October 15th, giving details of the precautions that were being taken in Mesopotamia against heat-stroke, malaria and dysentery. The information that was put at his disposal seems not to have been as complete as could be wished:

"Preventives adopted are purification of water by clarifying and boiling or chlorination, prophylactic issue of quinine, treatment of mosquito breeding places, supply to all troops, British and native, of mosquito nets. A sanitary committee for whole force has been formed. . . . British and Indian General Hospitals at Basra are provided with electric lights and fans and each bed has a mosquito net, but buildings are not suitable for use of gauze netting."

The water supplied in Mesopotamia at this time was very far from being satisfactory, nor was the provision of electric lights, fans and mosquito nets so complete as Lord Hardinge's telegram would suggest.

84. On October 14th Mr. Chamberlain wrote in a private letter as follows:—

"I am most reluctant to appear to convey to you or the Commander-in-Chief any mistrust of the arrangements made by the medical authorities for the troops in Mesopotamia, but owing to reports which have reached me I felt it necessary to telegraph an enquiry as to the fulness of the precautions which had been taken. . . . I know that the difficulties must be great, and that it is impossible to foresee every contingency, but I trust that you will impress upon all concerned that in this matter of health they cannot take too many precautions, and that we shall not question expenditure required to safeguard the lives of our men."

85. On October 29th Mr. Chamberlain wrote again:—

"I continue to receive from Members of Parliament and others anxious enquiries about the health of the troops in Mesopotamia and the provision made for them. *Inter alia*, I have been sent a letter from some officer there in which he incidentally observes that my statement as to ice and other comforts provided at the base hospital 'was all eyewash.' I cannot go behind your assurance that all that is necessary and possible is being done, and you yourself are necessarily dependent on the reports of the military; but you will remember how we received the same assurances from military and medical authorities at the time of the South African War, and yet how much more might, after all, have been done—at any rate, in the early days of that campaign. As we must now look forward not only to a prolonged occupation of Mesopotamia, but to having increased numbers of troops there, I beg that you will take all the steps in your power to stimulate the ingenuity of the medical authorities in making provision for their health and for the comfort of the sick. No expense ought to be allowed to stand in the way of the best provision that science can suggest."

86. On December 3rd Mr. Chamberlain wrote again in very strong terms:—

"You know how anxious I am about the health of our forces in Mesopotamia. Apart from all feelings of humanity and the duty we owe to those who are giving their lives, men are too precious to be wasted.

"I wish to make all allowances for difficulties, perhaps only partly perceived by me, and not known to my correspondents, but I am very uneasy about the reports that reach me. . . .

"I beg you not to be content with easy assurances. On your advice, comforts, &c., are not being sent from here, and we shall have no defence if all that is possible is not done."

It is clear that these letters ought to have led to searching enquiries into the sufficiency of medical provisions in Mesopotamia.

87. As is natural at this distance of time, Lord Hardinge's recollection was not very distinct as to the precise steps he took in consequence of these communications from Mr. Chamberlain. But we have no doubt that he communicated to the Commander-in-Chief at any rate in substance, what Mr. Chamberlain had written. We are afraid there can equally be no doubt that the Commander-in-Chief and his staff did not respond to his representations with the zeal that the occasion required.

88. The only criticism to be made upon Lord Hardinge in the matter is that, wielding the supreme authority of Viceroy, he should have forced the Army Department to do more than it did. He wrote as late as February 18th, 1916, in a private letter to Mr. Chamberlain this significant sentence:—"I may mention here that I have at last succeeded

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00006a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

in convincing the military authorities that the medical arrangements up the Tigris are as bad as can be." This was, of course, after the calamitous events in December and January; and we think that it gravely reflects, not upon Lord Hardinge's good will or good intentions, but upon the manner in which he exercised his paramount authority.

89. The attitude of the Commander-in-Chief becomes vividly clear in connection with the terrible sufferings of the wounded in the retreat after Ctesiphon. He was at first naturally reassured by the very misleading telegram despatched from Mesopotamia on December 7th, on the character of which we have already commented.* But on December 14th, Major Carter, an officer of the I.M.S., who was in medical charge of a hospital ship plying between Bombay and Basra, sent to Surgeon-General MacNeece a Report in which, amongst much other matter, the following sentences occur :—

"These were all serious stretcher cases that had lain on the 'Medjidieh' for thirteen days after their first dressing on the field of battle. Their condition was grave, and the result of an unfortunate train of circumstances, the most serious of which was that *there is no distinct river service of hospital steamers used alone for the conveyance of our sick and wounded in Mesopotamia.* On the 'Medjidieh' alone 28 had died on the journey."

And :—

"Deaths during the voyage total 14. It is now necessary to explain the markedly increased death-rate on this the third journey. In the first place, we carried a high proportion of the most serious cases of gunshot and shell wounds brought by the 'Medjidieh,' the 'P. 5,' the steel boats and smaller steel barges from the front.

"Unless one had actually seen the condition of the wounded on arrival, one could have had no accurate standard by which to judge the extraordinarily difficult position in which the medical personnel have been recently placed in Mesopotamia. For example, on the 'Medjidieh,' a small river steamer, it was necessary to crowd over 600 sick and wounded from November 24th to the evening of December 6th, 1915. The equipment of the field hospitals at the front had to be abandoned to the enemy, and there was practically nothing left with which to dress wounds or treat medical cases.

"Everyone seems to consider that it was extremely fortunate that they got away at all. The men were loud in their praise of the devotion to duty shown by many of the medical officers under heavy fire, both in the field and at the point of attack on the Tigris. *There is but little chance of recovery for men with severe gunshot fractures, who lie on the bare decks of boats and barges for* 13 *days, amid septic discharges, diarrhœa and dysentery, swept at night by a wind that dropped nearly to zero, without any protection against the cold, save their clothes and country blankets, which in the cases of total cripples were sodden with their own discharges and dejecta.*

"I write this to protect from hostile criticism by the laity the members of the medical services, who in these primitive boats and cattle barges have struggled for 13 days against the difficulties of a task that is happily exceptional in the war history of our Imperial forces. There is no shadow of doubt that the medical staff who accompanied these sick and wounded from Ctesiphon did all that lay in their power to help and tend their patients, but it was attempting to make bricks without straw."

90. This Report was despatched from Bombay on December 14th. On the next day Surgeon-General MacNeece, who was at Bombay and who had seen and fully conferred with Major Carter, wrote as follows to Sir Percy Lake, the Chief of the General Staff, in a letter marked "Private and Confidential" :—

"My dear Sir Percy Lake,

"I was in time to see sick and wounded on board hospital ship 'Varela' when she arrived on afternoon of Monday, and their transfer to local war hospitals and up country by hospital trains.

"There were many serious cases, and some fourteen deaths occurred on voyage. Many of the sick British and Indian, particularly latter, were brought on board in a terrible condition. They had been 17 to 22 days coming down the river from Ctesiphon. Between Kut and Amara the steamers and barges were stopped by Arabs, and had to go back three times. Barges and steamers were crowded, sanitary measures were deficient or wanting, and the men, particularly Indians, lay on the deck suffering from dysentery, passing their motions under them, and getting large bed-sores. The whole business is bad. The medical authorities were only given sufficient steamers and barges to turn into hospital ships for 500 casualties (so I am informed); then, when the crash came, over 4,000 had to be got down any way.

"Will you kindly show this letter to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, and say that I have been to the D.R.I.M. and seen the plans for river hospital steamers, and fully approve of the one which is being forwarded to-day to Army Headquarters, Delhi, for approval, which should be given without delay."

Sir Beauchamp Duff told us that he had never seen Major Carter's Report; but as we have seen he was made acquainted with the substance of Surgeon-General MacNeece's letter to Sir Percy Lake at a Conference on December 23rd.‡

91. Meantime, correspondence was still going on between the Secretary of State and the Viceroy on the general question of the health of the troops in Mesopotamia. And at the same time rumours were beginning to be heard about the breakdown after Ctesiphon. Lord Hardinge wrote in a private letter to Mr. Chamberlain on December 31st :—

"I am very glad you wrote and told me of the rumours you have heard of unsatisfactory arrangements in connection with the health and comfort of your troops in Mesopotamia, for I am now, with your letter and

* See Part X., para. 62 *et seq.*

‡ See Part X., para. 67.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000069

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

the evidence it contains, able to put pressure upon the Commander-in-Chief, and also upon Sir J. Nixon, who keeps on reporting that everything is well. It is quite clear to me that all is not well, and I have urged the Commander-in-Chief to send somebody to Mesopotamia to perform more or less the same duties as those which you have explained to me had been carried out by Colonel Lee in Flanders."

92. Sir Beauchamp Duff was asked by us—

"In connection with another matter, you spoke of getting to hear that things were not going very well. At what sort of period did you get to hear through what may be called private channels that the medical arrangements were breaking down?—About the end of December, 1915, I think."

In answer to further questions, Sir Beauchamp Duff modified this statement by denying that he had heard anything in unofficial conversation. But he had seen a memorandum by Major Carter before the battle of Ctesiphon, and had in consequence telegraphed to Mesopotamia to enquire about the provision of hospital ships. Plans for this were indeed being discussed. Moreover, at the Conference on December 23rd he had heard Surgeon-General MacNeece's account of the suffering of the wounded after Ctesiphon.

93. Nevertheless, when the Viceroy pressed him to have a full enquiry made, his letter of December 30th, while assenting to the enquiry, shows in our judgment a very unfortunate spirit. This letter was the more important, because the reassuring impression which it conveyed was repeated by the Viceroy in a telegram to London. The letter of December 30th is as follows :—

"I will certainly have the whole matter enquired into and reported on."

"I am quite sure that in India itself and between India and Basra everything is right. The flow of stores, supplies, and comforts is regular and as complete as we can make it, any deficiencies that may exist being confined to articles for which we are dependent on England and the prompt supply of which we cannot always ensure. As to what happens beyond Basra I am dependent on official reports. The private complaints which Your Excellency mentions do not reach me. It is one of the drawbacks of military discipline that officers will not mention such matters either to me or my Staff lest they should be looked on as throwing blame on those under whom they have been serving directly. My official reports indicate nothing wrong except the shortage of river transport which we are straining every nerve to supplement, and even that has only become a burning question since "D" Force began to grow larger. I feel sure that everyone in Mesopotamia is doing his best, but our very long river line is necessarily a great handicap, and we cannot reproduce there French conditions which are due to good railways, good roads and abundance of motor transport.

"But though I will leave no stone unturned to get at the actual facts, I would ask Your Excellency to remember that the experience of previous campaigns shows that such complaints are very often exaggerated by officers making general statements which are really based only on some particular incident. There are also a good many cases where the fault lies with the complainant himself. For instance, Captain Bowring's complaint that on his voyage up the Tigris he and his companions were short of food is clearly one of these. It was the business of these officers themselves to draw their rations for the voyage before they left Basra. No Staff can dry-nurse officers who neglect such elementary duties."

94. This attitude of incredulity about rumours and complaints Sir Beauchamp Duff maintained and defended before the Commission. He was asked :—

"The point I wish to put is that for a considerable time, perhaps six weeks or two months, you were in possession of warnings—the Indian Government were, at any rate—coming from home, and yet your attitude was incredulous, although you had not made any very drastic inquiry into the matter?—Our attitude was somewhat incredulous, certainly."

and being further pressed, he said :—

"The reports come in. In every campaign I have seen in my life there are complaints. A large number of complaints come in, many of which are extremely frivolous. When such reports are sent to you anonymously and the names of the people who make the complaints are refused you attach little weight to them. The moment I get a report with a name I pay strong attention to it. I find going into these anonymous reports is simply a waste of time."

He was further asked—

"You would treat a letter from the Secretary of State or the Viceroy on that footing?"

and replied—

"Unless the Secretary of State or the Viceroy should supply me with the name of the person who made the complaint."

95. We desire explicitly to dissent from the position thus taken up by Sir Beauchamp Duff. It is, of course, perfectly true that a great many rumours are untrustworthy and a great many complaints unreasonable; and this untrustworthiness and unreasonableness form a very good ground for refusing to take administrative action merely because of rumours and complaints. But rumours that may be an insufficient ground for action may be a good ground for enquiry. They may be in themselves likely; they may come from several sources; they may recur again and again; or they may be brought to notice by

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000049

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

some person whose character and position ensure that they deserve attention. These obvious considerations seem to have been absent from Sir Beauchamp Duff's mind. Even in giving evidence before us he hardly seemed to feel the crushing significance of the fact that the rumours he disdained were true. It ought, in our judgment, to be deeply impressed on all men of high official authority, that obstinate and exaggerated incredulity about defects and failures in the administration, over which they have control, is in itself a serious and mischievous fault.

96. The language of Sir Beauchamp Duff's letter of December 30th to the Viceroy reads very unpleasantly in the light of our knowledge of the sufferings that the troops had endured after Ctesiphon. But it is difficult to say how far his blindness to the sufferings of the troops after Ctesiphon delayed the introduction of effectual improvements. All that it is safe to affirm is that since, when the truth was fully disclosed, improvement was slowly but gradually effected—the sooner the full disclosure had been achieved, the sooner improvement would have begun.

97. The enquiry, to which Sir Beauchamp Duff at the instance of the Viceroy had assented, was first intended to be a mission entrusted to Lord Chelmsford and Surgeon-General MacNeece to go to Mesopotamia and look into the state of matters there. But when it became confidentially known to the Viceroy and Sir Beauchamp Duff that Lord Chelmsford was to be Lord Hardinge's successor in the Viceroyalty, it was naturally decided not to send him on a mission to Mesopotamia, but to send Surgeon-General MacNeece alone. The exact nature of his mission is not clear, but in any case it was no adequate fulfilment of Sir Beauchamp Duff's promise to the Viceroy that he would certainly have the whole matter enquired into and reported on, and would leave no stone unturned to get at the actual facts." Sir Beauchamp Duff's telegram to Sir J. Nixon as to this was in these terms : " Surgeon-General MacNeece is being sent to confer with you on the general question of medical requirements and sanitation of your force and the co-ordination of the medical requirements of other forces with those of Force ' D.' " These instructions seem to direct Surgeon-General MacNeece to consult rather than to make any thorough investigation. With this vague commission Surgeon-General MacNeece was sent to Mesopotamia in January, 1916. He did not go further north than Basra, and the enquiries made at Basra do not appear to have been of a very searching kind. Perhaps in consequence of his instructions the Report he sent in gave a very inadequate presentation of what had actually taken place. He said in evidence before us that he supplemented his report when he returned to Delhi by conversations with the Commander-in-Chief. However this may be, the upshot was that the Commander-in-Chief came to the conclusion that further enquiry was called for.

98. While Surgeon-General MacNeece's enquiry was going on matters were getting worse in Mesopotamia. The sufferings after the January battles were worse than those endured after Ctesiphon, and it seems that the rumours of what had been endured became stronger and stronger. At last it was decided to hold a new and more responsible enquiry and to entrust it to Sir William Vincent and Major-General A. H. Bingley. On February 22nd, 1916, Sir Beauchamp Duff telegraphed to Sir Percy Lake, who had taken over the command of the Mesopotamia Force, as follows :—

> Terrible stories are being received here as to treatment of wounded after Sheikh Saad and later battles and total want of proper medical arrangements. I fear a serious scandal is impending and that I shall be compelled to send out a commission to enquire. It is imperative that all this should be improved before the next fight.

Accordingly the Vincent-Bingley Commission was appointed on March 2nd, but after all that had occurred it is surprising that its terms of reference should have been at first limited by the Commander-in-Chief, so as to exclude all enquiry into the Battle of Ctesiphon.

99. Our conclusions in regard to the responsibility of the India Office, the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, may be summarised as follows :—

(*a*) The Home Government agreed with the Indian Government in limiting the general military preparations of India before the war in the interests of retrenchment, and provision was accordingly not made for such an expedition as that to Mesopotamia. For the purpose of this part of our subject the importance of this policy lies in the consequent unpreparedness of the medical services in India, which was the original source of their failure in the Mesopotamian Campaign. Further, the deficient organisation of the India Office and the want of a Medical

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000c8

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

E. Responsibility of Secretary of State, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

Adviser to the Secretary of State in our judgment hindered the India Office giving all the assistance that it might have done in the difficulties that arose. Since the management of the Mesopotamia Expedition was in the hands of the Indian Government until it was transferred to the War Office, it does not appear to us that any responsibility for the medical services further than we have here stated rested with the India Office. We may add that Mr. Austen Chamberlain's communications to the Indian Government, so soon as he began to be aware that the medical provision for the Mesopotamia Campaign was not adequate, are, in our judgment, admirable in tone and purpose. Had they been responded to in India as they ought to have been, the medical administration in Mesopotamia would have been improved two or three months sooner than it was. We only regret that these communications did not at any time take the form of a formal despatch to the Government of India which it would have been impossible for the military administration to neglect.

(*b*) To Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, as Viceroy, belongs the general responsibility attaching to his position as the head of the Indian Government, to which had been entrusted the management of the Expedition, including the provision of medical services. In regard to the actual medical administration he appears to us to have shown throughout the utmost good will: but considering the paramount authority of his office, his action was not sufficiently strenuous and peremptory.

(*c*) The Commander-in-Chief was responsible for the well-being of the Army in Mesopotamia. He should have realised early in the campaign the necessity of enlarging and improving the medical provision of the troops fighting in that country, and should have seen that his Directors of Medical Services carried out such a policy. His failure to do so seems to have been due to his preoccupation with other claims upon the military resources of India, and to his want of knowledge of the true state of affairs in Mesopotamia. This ignorance would have been removed if he had thought himself able to visit Mesopotamia itself, and would have been mitigated if he could have spent some time at Bombay. But he remained at Simla or at Delhi relying on official reports, and refused to believe in the Mesopotamian deficiencies. He failed to respond quickly and effectively to the alarm raised by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy in the autumn and winter of 1915, and to institute such enquiries as the case demanded. It is impossible to acquit him of a dereliction of duty in deprecating evil reports about the medical provision in Mesopotamia at a time when information was in his office which more than justified the deepest anxiety.

F. Supplementary.

Position since April, 1916.

100. Without going into too many details, we feel we should acknowledge the activities of the medical authorities during the summer of 1916. In India, on the departure of Surgeon-General MacNeece, Surgeon-General Sir Pardey Lukis, I.M.S., was appointed Director of Medical Services and held the post until (in accordance with the unwritten law that forbids a Surgeon-General of the I.M.S. to serve as D.M.S., India), Surgeon-General O'Donnell arrived to take his place.

101. Sir Pardey Lukis's term of office was one of energy—much additional hospital accommodation was provided, convalescent sections were established both for British and Indian troops, 16 stationary sets of X-ray apparatus were ordered for military hospitals in India, the provision hitherto being confined to mobile sets, five of which were now released for use in Mesopotamia; electric light and fans were ordered for several hospitals, and the status of Embarkation Medical Officers at Bombay and Karachi was improved. Final sanction was received for the increase of the Army Bearer Corps from 9,500 to 14,000. The Government of India was asked for the first time to purchase motor ambulance cars, instead of relying, as hitherto, on private donors.

102. Meanwhile, with an eye to things actually in Mesopotamia, additional staffs were despatched for river hospital steamers, active steps were taken to send increased apparatus for water sterilisation; a special "Mesopotamian" diet for British troops was drawn up and approved; additional river hospital steamers and barges were ordered from home;

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000055

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

designs were prepared for ambulance trains on the railways in Mesopotamia then being constructed; additional hospitals were asked for and despatched.

103. Altogether the energy displayed and the speed with which new proposals were carried through compares well with previous conditions.

104. As regards the state of things in Mesopotamia itself, it is evident that Surgeon-General Treherne, who succeeded Surgeon-General Hathaway as Principal Medical Officer to Force "D," dealt energetically and in a businesslike way with the problems facing him. The health records of the troops during this period show that there was much cause for anxiety, and that there was much disease, but this was met by good and systematic organisation. The work of the Army Sanitary Committee sent out by the War Office and supplementing that of the officers on the spot, has undoubtedly been valuable. Sanitation and the prevention of disease are now properly organised, and appliances of all kinds are being continually improved, as better transport facilities on the Tigris distribute the necessary machinery and apparatus. Altogether we believe that the public may be assured that a new spirit exists in the medical command in Mesopotamia.

Work of Executive Medical Officers.

105. There are two possible misapprehensions of this section of our Report which we should like to forestall. The first is that the severe criticisms and censures, to which we have been impelled, imply that the sick and wounded have been systematically and intentionally neglected. The very contrary is the case. We believe that, with the means at their disposal, and within the limits of their powers, the executive medical officers have unfailingly spent themselves in alleviation of the sufferings of their patients, and there have been but few isolated exceptions to this praiseworthy rule. When the disaster of Ctesiphon was upon him, Surgeon-General Hathaway, whose administrative capacity has been so seriously called in question by ourselves and the Vincent-Bingley Commission, took off his coat and worked strenuously at embarking the wounded. The trouble has been throughout failure to foresee, rather than failure to mitigate, disaster. Speaking of, perhaps, the worst period of the medical breakdown, the fighting in January, 1916, the Vincent-Bingley Commission say "the evidence before us abundantly proves that, generally speaking, the energy, kindness and industry of the executive medical officers . . . was beyond all praise." We endorse this encomium and would extend it to the whole campaign, in accordance with the consensus of the witnesses who have appeared before us.

Sanitary and Preventive Work in Mesopotamia.

106. Our second caveat is that we do not wish to be thought to belittle much good work done by the medical authorities in combating epidemics. Mesopotamia is a hot-bed of ravaging diseases. Plague, small-pox, cholera, malaria, dysentery and typhus, if not actually endemic, are always menacing in this swamp-ridden and unsanitated country. Each one of these diseases appeared amidst the forces, and any one might have decimated them. On every occasion the efforts of the medical authorities were successful in circumscribing the epidemic and limiting its incidence. These are not despicable results for a large force of British and Indian troops accompanied by a horde of oriental camp-followers and whose headquarters was a Turkish town of some 80,000 inhabitants. But the indictment against the authorities is not a lack of courage in dealing with disease so much as a lack of foresight in dealing with the predisposing conditions of disease. In such matters as water-supply, sanitation, diet, mosquito and sun-protection, &c., the evidence before both Commissions teems with instances of the failure to take up sufficiently early the weapons which existed in the armoury of modern science against the onslaught of disease Our opinion is that, though the protection of the Mesopotamian Expedition against disease was by no means ineffective, it might and ought to have been a good deal better, if the matter had been earlier taken in hand on a proper scale. The vigour and scope of the sanitary and preventive measures found necessary by Surgeon-General Treherne are the sternest criticism of the omissions of his predecessor, Surgeon-General Hathaway.

We are aware that the rate of sickness was comparatively low in the summer of 1915 under Surgeon-General Hathaway, and that such sick-rate was greatly exceeded in the summer of 1916 under Surgeon-General Treherne. In this connection we must, however, remember that the increased aggregation of troops in Mesopotamia doubtless made the medical problems of the summer of 1916 more difficult and increased the liability to disease.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000012

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

F. SUPPLEMENTARY.

In view of the unsuitability of the Mesopotamian climate for the purposes of convalescence, the policy of shipping to India as many sick as possible was wisely pursued, though it, of course, increased the statistical total of men invalided to India. During the worst months of the hot season of 1916 a very large number of officers and men were thus invalided to India, though—we are glad to say—this high invaliding rate rapidly decreased as the weather became cooler. But in the battle against disease it is the preparatory work which tells, and if Surgeon-General Hathaway profited by the preparations of Colonel Hehir in the spring of 1915, so Surgeon-General Treherne was bound to suffer from any lack of preparations by Surgeon-General Hathaway in the spring of 1916.

Statistical Evidence of Colonel James.

107. In this connection we would refer to the able evidence tendered to us almost at the end of our enquiry by Lieut.-Colonel James, who was appointed Chief Staff Officer for Sanitation in Mesopotamia early in 1916. Colonel James produced an interesting series of statistics of admissions to hospitals for sickness in Mesopotamia in the year 1915–1916, and he compared these with similar statistics for previous campaigns in a manner which shows up in a most favourable light the result of the medical authorities' work in Mesopotamia. But we do not agree with Colonel James that he has adopted a fair criterion. The latest of Colonel James' compared campaigns was in 1904, the earliest in 1847. No science has leapt forward more boldly and rapidly in recent years than preventive medicine. Many of the prophylactic and sanitary measures against disease which are now a commonplace were unknown in these earlier campaigns, and they are not, therefore, a fair basis for comparison. In one sense, indeed, the heavier sick-rates of earlier campaigns might even be held to aggravate the indictment. We have shown that the Indian authorities did not provide sufficient hospitals, personnel and equipment for the actual number of patients. But if, as Colonel James would seem to infer, they ought to have expected a vastly larger number of patients, the omission to provide even for the lesser number is all the more reprehensible.

108. We do not, however, ourselves consider that the Indian Medical Authorities should have provided for, or be judged by, the sick-rates of ten or twenty years ago. The real test is whether the measures taken are considered satisfactory tested by contemporary standards. Colonel James' calculated rate of admissions to hospital for sickness in a year in 1915–16 is 1,550 per 1,000 of the average strength of the force. If we understand Colonel James correctly, this means that, *supposing no reinforcements had been sent*, in one year every man in the force would have been incapacitated by illness once, and more than half of the men in the force would have been incapacitated by illness twice. In other words, the preventive measures adopted would not have succeeded in protecting from disease a single man in the force. We cannot believe that this is a standard, which can be considered satisfactory, or that it could not have been improved upon by the adoption of earlier and more energetic measures. In this our opinion is amply confirmed by the Report of the War Office Sanitary Commission and the other documents referred to in para. 104 above. We might add that the backwardness and obstruction of the authorities in Mesopotamia in regard to medical and sanitary reforms is the main subject of Colonel James' own evidence before the Vincent-Bingley Commission.

Neglect to apply to England for Assistance.

109. We have already referred to* a despatch of March, 1914, from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State which shows that shortly before the outbreak of war the deficiency in medical officers in India on mobilisation was placed at 360 and of military assistant surgeons at 246. The figures quoted to us elsewhere do not always agree with these, but it is quite evident, and, indeed, admitted, that the full military force in India could not be mobilised for war without considerable medical assistance from home. The effect of this was seen in the deficiencies in hospitals, personnel and equipment which existed from the first in Mesopotamia and culminated in the disaster after Ctesiphon and Sheikh Saad. It appears to us, therefore, extraordinary that not only was assistance in medical personnel and equipment not asked for from England on a large scale during the first year of the operations in Mesopotamia, but that, as we show elsewhere,† in August, 1915, such assistance was actually refused by the Indian Government. The Viceroy informed us that no shortage was reported to him. But the deficiencies on mobilisation had been known to the Indian Government for years. The Commander-in-Chief and the D.M.S. appear to have been actuated by the belief that nothing could be spared from England. Some ground for this belief is afforded

* See Part X., para. 78. † See Part X., para. 82.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000057

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

F. Supplementary.

by the pessimistic tone of a demi-official letter from Sir A. Keogh to Surgeon-General MacNeece in August, 1915. But it can hardly be urged that so vital an omission by the Indian Government in a matter for which they were responsible can be excused on the grounds of chance expressions in a semi-private letter. Sir Alfred Keogh, who was Director-General of Medical Services, War Office, himself gave evidence before us that during 1916 all demands made upon him were met, and that he "could have complied with any demands made upon him at any time since the beginning of the Mesopotamian Expedition." Moreover, the only demand made to England for medical personnel before the battle of Ctesiphon (viz., on July 4th, 1915, for 16 R.A.M.C. officers) was promptly met, although the demand itself was couched in a form which gave no adequate indication of the deficiencies existing in Mesopotamia. We feel therefore that a grave responsibility rests with the Indian Government for not formally and fully placing the deficiencies in medical personnel and equipment before the home authorities and requesting assistance on an adequate scale.

Voluntary Aid from England

110. We note with satisfaction the anxiety of various non-official bodies to help in Mesopotamia, and our evidence testifies to the liberality of the British and Indian communities in India, the activity of the Indian Branch of the St. John Ambulance Association, and the good work done by the Indian Soldiers' Fund, and other bodies on similar lines.

Some of our evidence on this point suggests that offers of voluntary aid were not too well received, but Lord Hardinge strongly maintains the contrary view. One regrettable failure to profit from voluntary assistance there can be no doubt about. The joint War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John in London have been active in Mesopotamia since the beginning of 1916; on July 17th, 1915, however, they cabled to Sir John Nixon :—

Can British Red Cross help in any way with hospital supplies for your force ?

Acceptance was confined to two petrol-driven motor launches. The offer was repeated on December 28th, and a reply sent :—

Nothing required at present. If anything needed in future will not hesitate to ask you.

A startling answer in view of the recent breakdown after Ctesiphon.

Shortage of ordinary River Transport and Extent to which it excuses the Medical Breakdown.

111. There are passages in the evidence of Lord Hardinge, Surgeon-General Hathaway and other responsible witnesses which might lead to the inference that the medical breakdown in Mesopotamia was due to the shortage of ordinary river transport, for which, of course, the medical authorities were not responsible. If this were true, it would follow that the medical authorities must be relieved of blame for the results of the breakdown. We cannot agree with such a contention. No doubt the medical work, in common with every other branch of administration, was seriously hampered by the lack of river transport, and this lack may have been the immediate cause of some of the sufferings of the wounded on particular occasions, as, for example, when, early in 1916, it was found impossible to send up to the front with sufficient promptitude ambulances and transport which were actually at Basra. But many of the principal factors in the sufferings of the sick and wounded were not, or need not have been, materially affected by the shortage of river steamers. It was not such shortage which prevented sufficient doctors, assistant surgeons and sub-assistant surgeons being sent to the expedition up to the end of 1915, and yet the insufficiency of medical personnel was one of the worst features in the hardships, not only on the battle-field, but also on the journey down the river, notably after the retreat from Ctesiphon. It was not the shortage of river transport which prevented the expedition from being supplied in 1915 with sufficient hospitals; nor, as the Viceroy himself pointed out, could the insufficiency of river transport justify the omission to send to the front a proper supply of such unbulky necessaries as bandages, dressings and drugs.

112. In our opinion, the known shortage of ordinary river transport, if anything, aggravates rather than palliates the omissions of the medical authorities. If the ordinary boat-service had been adequate for the sick, there might have been some excuse for omitting to provide special river hospital steamers, but the ordinary boat service was known to be inadequate.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000079

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

F. Supplementary.

113. Similarly the device of eking out insufficient hospital accommodation by using the field ambulances as hospitals might have been less reprehensible, if it had been possible promptly to send all field-ambulance patients down river when necessary. But the inadequacy of transport upset all certainty of the proper evacuation of the field ambulances, with the result that they became congested with patients. In fact, the known lack of river transport accentuates, but does not excuse, the unwisdom of resorting to this practice.

114. Even in the case of the ambulances of the reinforcing divisions from France left behind at Basra, the difficulties of insufficient transport might have been largely overcome if the authorities in Mesopotamia had at an early date explained the situation to the authorities despatching the reinforcements, and had asked for the field ambulances to be sent on in advance so as to provide sufficient time for their conveyance to the front. But this was not done; and the omission is significant of the prevailing lack of foresight and organisation. Even in such an obvious matter as detailing an embarkation officer to see to the proper despatch of medical equipment, stores, etc., nothing was done till quite late in the campaign, and there are numerous instances of such equipment having failed to reach its destination, owing to the packages being insufficiently labelled or improperly packed in the steamers.

115. That the lack of ordinary river transport was not the principal cause of the sufferings of the wounded is also proved, as Sir Beauchamp Duff points out, by the great improvement which is noted by the Vincent-Bingley Commission and other witnesses in March, 1916. At that time the amount of river transport was proportionately no greater than it had been during the breakdown after Ctesiphon and Sheikh Saad; but the organisation had been improved and the personnel had been increased, with the consequences that the sufferings of the wounded were very materially decreased. We are convinced that very much of the avoidable sufferings of the sick and wounded in Mesopotamia was due, not so much to lack of ordinary river transport as to the lack of organisation and foresight. The difficulties of river transport were present from the first and should have stimulated the prevision and resourcefulness of the medical authorities; but instead, as we have seen, they remained supine, until galvanised into unavailing action by the disasters which at once disclosed their incompetence and aroused their fears.

Frequent Changes in Occupancy of Office of D.M.S. India.

116. Between the summers of 1914 and 1916 no less than four individuals have held the post or administered the duties of D.M.S. in India—*viz.*, Sir W. Babtie, Surgeon-General MacNeece, Sir Pardey Lukis and Surgeon-General O'Donnell. Few systems of administration, even if good in themselves, could in time of war sustain the strain of such rapid dislocation of supreme authority.

Responsibility for Provision of Medical Necessities.

117. It has been made clear to us that, according to the existing system and regulations, the higher military medical authorities themselves only directly provide doctors, nurses, instruments, drugs and dressings. All other things required for the medical treatment of the sick and wounded, or for their transport (many of these special to the medical service) have to be provided by and obtained from other departments often busy with the needs of combatant branches.

118. It is well known that the scientific treatment of sick and wounded has advanced by leaps and bounds of recent years, and we need not argue that any appliances or arrangements tending to assist or accelerate the healthy restoration of those in hospital to the Army or to civil life, are of national importance. The question, therefore, suggests itself whether the higher medical authorities should not in future be given greater responsibility as regards the purchase and provision of these matters. It is true that the Mesopotamia Campaign has not redounded greatly to their credit, but at the same time, it is clear that their difficulties were increased by the failures of other departments. We refrain from making a definite recommendation on this matter, recognising that very considerable experience elsewhere than in Mesopotamia is now available for guidance, but we think the time is ripe for the re-examination of the practice that has obtained hitherto, and that the distribution of responsibility amongst four departments, each of whom has to provide something, without which the contributions of the other three may be rendered futile, is an unwise application of collective effort.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000043

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

F. Supplementary.

Major R. M. Carter, I.M.S.

119. Before we leave this part of our report we wish to express our appreciation of the evidence given and the work done by Major R. M. Carter, I.M.S. He by his persistence brought to the notice of his superiors the terrible condition of the wounded when they arrived at Basra after Ctesiphon, and in other ways he revealed shortcomings which might have been ignored and left unremedied. His sense of duty seems to be most commendable, and he was fertile and resourceful in suggesting remedies.

G. Medical Findings and Recommendations.

Findings.

Findings.

We find that :—

120. The medical provision for the Mesopotamia Campaign was from the beginning insufficient ; by reason of the continuance of this insufficiency there was a lamentable breakdown in the care of the sick and wounded after the battle of Ctesiphon and after the battles in January, 1916 ; there was amelioration in March and April, 1916 ; but that since then the improvement has been continual, until it is reasonable to hope that now the medical provision is satisfactory.

121. The defects of medical provision caused avoidable suffering to the sick and wounded, and during the breakdown in the winter of 1915–16 this suffering was most lamentably severe.

122. The deficiencies, which were the main causes of the avoidable suffering of the sick and wounded, were in the provision of the following :—

(*a*) River hospital steamers.
(*b*) Medical personnel.
(*c*) River transport.
(*d*) Ambulance land transport.

To these fifth and sixth main causes may be added in respect to the operations in January, 1916 :—

(*e*) The absence of the medical and supply establishments of the 7th Division.
(*f*) The premature efforts to relieve Kut in consequence of the erroneous estimate of supplies in that place.

123. As to personal responsibility, the Vincent-Bingley Commission found—

That a grave responsibility for that part of the suffering which resulted from avoidable circumstances rests with the Senior Medical Officer of the Force, Surgeon-General G. H. Hathaway, and with General Sir John Nixon, the General Officer Commanding the Force, from April 9th, 1915, to January 19th, 1916. General Hathaway did not represent with sufficient promptitude and force the needs of the services for which he was responsible, and in particular failed to urge the necessity for adequate and suitable transport for the sick and wounded with that insistency which the situation demanded. General Nixon did not, in our opinion, appreciate the conditions which would necessarily arise if provision for the sick and wounded of his force were not made on a more liberal scale.

We endorse the finding as regards Surgeon-General Hathaway, who in our judgment showed himself unfit for the high administrative office which he held. We may add, however, as regards River and Land Transport, that, while it was the duty of Surgeon-General Hathaway to urge its necessity, it was actually the duty of the Quartermaster-General's Department and Sir John Nixon's staff to see that it was provided.

So far as Sir John Nixon is concerned, however, we think that he was throughout solicitous as to the condition of the wounded. The main mistake he made was to rely too absolutely on the statements made to him by his Deputy Director of Medical Service, Surgeon-General Hathaway ; to that extent he may be blamed, but he stands, so far as responsibility is concerned, in a very different position from that occupied by Surgeon-General Hathaway.

124. The officer directly responsible for the deficiencies of medical provision in Mesopotamia is, however, the Director of Medical Services, India. This appointment was held at the beginning of the war by Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie, who held the office between March, 1914, and June, 1915, but was away from India for six weeks in February and March, 1915. He was succeeded by Surgeon-General J. G. MacNeece on July 8th, 1915, and the latter proceeded home on sick leave on April 15th, 1916. Sir William Babtie in his evidence before us impressed us as an officer of ability and knowledge, but we do not think that he brought these qualities sufficiently to bear

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000040

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

G. Medical Findings and Recommendations.

upon the task before him. He accepted obviously insufficient medical provision without protest and without any adequate effort to improve it. He cannot therefore be held blameless.

125. Surgeon-General MacNeece did not give evidence before the Vincent-Bingley Commission, but he appeared before us. He was, in our opinion, an officer thoroughly desirous of fulfilling the duties assigned to him; but he was a man of advancing years and diminishing strength, unequal to the position he was called upon to fill, and his administration appears to us to show no signs of the vigour and efficiency that were required.

126. We find that:—

(*a*) The Home Government agreed with the Indian Government in limiting their general military preparations of India before the war in the interests of retrenchment, and provision was accordingly not made for such an Expedition as that to Mesopotamia. The limitation of medical preparation and the low standard of medical treatment in the Indian Army at the outbreak of war were the natural outcome of this policy, which was pursued for many years, and was in force right up to the date of the war.

(*b*) The private letters of the Secretary of State to the Viceroy showed an earnest and continuous anxiety as to the condition of the wounded, and the only comment that can be made upon the Secretary of State's procedure is that he did not fully utilise the official powers at his disposal for the purpose of forcing at an earlier period an investigation into the treatment of the wounded in Mesopotamia.

(*c*) To Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, as Viceroy, belongs the general responsibility attaching to his position as the head of the Indian Government, to which had been entrusted the management of the Expedition, including the provision of medical services. In regard to the actual medical administration he appears to us to have shown throughout the utmost good will, but considering the paramount authority of his office, his action was not sufficiently strenuous and peremptory.

(*d*) A more severe censure must be passed upon the Commander-in-Chief, for not only did he, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India, fail closely to superintend the adequacy of medical provision in Mesopotamia, but he declined for a considerable time, until ultimately forced by the superior authority of the Viceroy, to give credence to rumours which proved to be true, and failed to take the measures which a subsequent experience shows would have saved the wounded from avoidable suffering.

127. There has been misuse of official reticence as to medical defects and the sufferings of the sick and wounded.

128. While the protective and sanitary work of the Medical Administration has in certain directions and at some periods (notably under Colonel Hehir) been commendable, yet there has not been generally sufficient promptitude in taking the precautions dictated by modern science for the protection of the troops against disease.

129. Throughout the campaign (with insignificant exceptions) the executive and regimental medical officers and personnel have devoted themselves with unremitting kindness, zeal and industry to the care of the sick and wounded with such means as were at their disposal.

Recommendations.

130. The evidence put before us indicates the necessity for certain immediate changes in the existing system of medical organisation in India, which we propose to enumerate. We are of the opinion that:—

(*a*) The Director of Medical Services in India, in war-time especially, should have far greater powers, than he at present possesses to authorise expenditure and make purchases, and to delegate such power to his subordinates. The present elaborate system of financial check and counter-check, and correspondence with other military departments, before what is wanted can be obtained has proved from its dilatoriness a real danger in war-time.

(*b*) Whenever an expedition is sent over-seas from India, responsible officers should at once be located at the Port of Embarkation, with wide power to act. We have referred elsewhere to the fact that the Commander-in-Chief never visited Bombay during the crisis of the campaign. Some of his staff did do so, but their visits

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000004

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

were spasmodic, and in no case had these officers power to give orders or settle important questions without further reference to Simla or Delhi. Further, all power being concentrated at Headquarters, the ruling authorities deprived themselves of the value of being in constant touch with those going to or returning from Mesopotamia. If it was true as alleged that the Headquarter Staff at Simla were tied to their secretariat work there, the Bombay Government was on the spot and common-sense would have suggested the delegation of authority to a Government so conveniently situated.

(*c*) At the Port of Embarkation the embarkation staffs should be responsible for seeing that the equipment and personnel of each medical unit should not be separated in different vessels, but embarked together in the same vessel. This rule was frequently neglected at Bombay.

(*d*) There should be an immediate and general improvement in the whole standard of comfort and accommodation in the hospitals for British troops in India. Surgeon-General MacNeece stated "even now there are practically not more than 2 or 3 up-to-date military hospitals in India." We are glad to note that the new war hospitals in Bombay are reported by the Vincent-Bingley Commission as bearing favourable comparison with any similar hospitals in the United Kingdom. This shows what can be done in India when there is impulse to reform. We think it discreditable to the Indian Government that the general standard of hospitals in India should fall below the standard of efficiency now demanded in Military Hospitals at home. To assist in reforming this state of things, we think that the R.A.M.C. or a corps on similar lines should be available for service in all British Hospitals in India, and that a better and more complete female nursing service should also be organised.

(*e*) As regards the medical treatment of Indian troops, no time should be lost in substituting a Station Hospital system for the present regimental treatment, "I doubt," one I.M.S. witness says to us, "whether you gentlemen would consider that the Sepoys' hospitals in peace time in India are hospitals at all." Sir Havelock Charles described them as "a disgrace to the Government of India." Surgeon-General MacNeece states "there are no well-equipped operating theatres, X-ray rooms, laboratories, etc." and Sir William Babtie, "they are so bad that I think it would be necessary to reform them *ab initio*." The new Indian hospitals should be staffed by enlisted personnel of all ranks, and should be used for building up trained reserves of menial establishments in peace time.

(*f*) All deficiencies usually allowed to prevail in peace-time in the mobilisation equipment of general hospitals should be made good. Sir W. Babtie told us that of the general hospitals in India, "Twelve were supposed to be mobilisable, but only four were complete in all the different Departments of supply." All such equipment should be stored and in readiness, and inspected, as is done now in the case of field ambulances, casualty clearing hospitals and stationary hospitals.

(*g*) Base Depôts of Medical Stores should be reintroduced into the Indian Field Service organisation and kept ready for mobilisation.

(*h*) At the outset of every campaign there should be provided a separate superior sanitary organisation and staff charged with the arrangements for preserving and safeguarding the health of the fighting troops, and responsible to the Principal Medical Officer of the force, but otherwise entirely separate from the organisation for the care of the sick and wounded This implies a formation in peace time of an adequate reserve of sanitary officers enlisting in it, if necessary, the services of specialists in civil employment.

(*i*) The Field Service Ration should receive very careful reconsideration and alteration in the light of experience in Mesopotamia. This especially applies to the rations for Indian troops. The War Office Sanitary Committee found that even "the improved ration" sanctioned as late as October last was deficient in many respects.

The above are only some of the defects revealed by our investigations, but they are sufficient to prove the necessity for an urgent, and thorough reform by the Indian Government of the whole system upon which their medical services are based, and under which they are controlled. Sir Alfred Keogh, whose administration at the War Office as Director-General, Army Medical Services, has been very successful during this war, at the conclusion of his evidence made the following very strong statement:—

> I have no hesitation whatever in saying that the medical arrangements connected with the Army in India have been for years and years most disgraceful. I say that with a full sense of responsibility. I have served many years in India. I have not been there for some time now, but in my opinion things are not better than they were. Anything more disgraceful than the carelessness and want of attention with regard to the sick soldier in India it is impossible to imagine.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00009a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

PART XI.—CAUSES CONTRIBUTING TO THE ERRORS OF JUDGMENT AND SHORTCOMINGS OF RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES.

A. Division of Responsibility for Campaign.

Campaign in Mesopotamia—"No Man's Child."

1. In the story of the military successes and reverses of this campaign, there constantly crops up almost from the day of the landing of the force, evidence of shortage of transport of all kinds, of the antiquated equipment of the troops, of grave deficiencies in medical personnel and material, occasional shortage of rations at the front, and a great, if not total, lack of comforts. To use a current expression, the force from the first was "ill-found" to meet the privations and hardships inseparable from campaigning in Mesopotamia, and as its numbers increased bad went to worse. General Gorringe graphically gave expression to the feeling which he considered pervaded the force, when he said: "It was believed to be a side-show and 'no man's child.'" Though these colloquialisms undoubtedly err on the side of exaggeration, it is impossible to deny that there was some foundation for them. Indeed, in a sense such haphazard expressions go right to the root of the causes of the failures and reverses, as will become apparent when we investigate why this expedition did not receive from either of the great military supervising staffs in London or Simla that care and attention, which were necessary to surmount the exceptional difficulties of climate and country which it had to encounter.

2. When the war broke out in 1914, there were in the British Empire two great military administrative organisations—one in England, the other in India, at Simla. In our self-governing Dominions such as Canada, Australasia, New Zealand and South Africa there were self-supporting local forces under the control of their respective Governments. But the War Office in London and the military departments at Simla were the only complete military organisations equipped for the planning, despatch, control and supply of expeditions beyond their respective territories over the sea. As a preparation for such operations, the Intelligence Department of each of these organisations had assigned to it certain territories within and concerning which it had to collect and collate topographical and other information during times of peace, the assumption clearly being that the areas so defined for purposes of information would, in the event of their becoming theatres for warlike operations, be under the control of the organisation which had previously collected the information.

3. Under this arrangement, Asia was divided between the Imperial and Indian War Intelligence Departments. It is inadvisable to give the details of this delimitation; it will be sufficient for our immediate purpose to state that a line was drawn through Arabia from Akaba to Basra, all north of that line belonging to Whitehall, all south to Simla. Basra was thus given to India, Mesopotamia to Great Britain—a somewhat confused division of responsibility, inasmuch as Basra must inevitably become the base of any operations in Mesopotamia from the Persian Gulf. The collection of information relative to Persia fell within the duty of the Indian Intelligence Department, and the whole of the Persian Gulf is patrolled by war vessels, which are under the control and policy of the Indian Government. Mesopotamia, being at the head of the Persian Gulf, was not looked upon by the War Office as an area requiring their special attention, as it was within the radius of action of India, though outside their sphere of intelligence. The Simla Intelligence Department had not before 1914 prepared schemes for military operations north of Basra. The likelihood of a war with Turkey in alliance with Germany did not, previous to that date, seem to India to be a reasonable probability. It was also asserted by Sir Beauchamp Duff that, in order to prevent overlapping, there was an understanding that the Whitehall Intelligence Department would take Mesopotamia in hand, and that they deprecated the Indian Authorities preparing plans for a campaign in that country. The information which Whitehall had collected about the country was, however, sent to India and Mesopotamia.

4. In addition to these two Military Organisations there is a Military Department at the India Office under the authority of the Secretary of State for India, and with whose advice he controls and decides the general military policy of India, but this department is not organised for the purpose of directly managing a campaign. It was, however, through the instrumentality of this Department that the Mesopotamian campaign was started.

5. At the beginning of the war, from an Intelligence and General Staff point of view, Mesopotamia was "no man's child," or rather, was the foster-child of both Simla and Whitehall, the acknowledged child of neither. The War Office had its own gigantic task

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00006c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Division of Responsibility for Campaign.

of expanding a small army into one of national dimensions, and at the same time of organising a series of expeditions abroad, towards which the Indian Military Authorities were compelled to contribute largely both in the shape of personnel and material. Simla had, in addition to the task of providing these Oversea Expeditions, to guard against the ever-present danger of attacks on the North-West frontier and a recrudescence of disaffection instigated by German agents and money in parts of India. It was only in September, 1914, after the contributions of India to the expeditions to France, Egypt and East Africa had been settled, and their military establishments thus depleted, that the Secretary of State for India directed from Whitehall the Indian Government to send a brigade to the head of the Persian Gulf.

6. The subsequent correspondence clearly shows that the Indian Government was at first lukewarm on a proposition which it did not originate. The scope of the expedition grew, and its numbers increased, continuing to make a constant drain upon Indian resources. So reluctant were the Government of India to comply with these increased demands that in March, 1915, it was only under compulsion of a most imperative order from Whitehall that the reinforcements necessary to bring up the force to a strength of two Divisions were sent. This reinforcement secured victory and firmly established the expeditionary force. Sir John Nixon assumed command in April, 1915, and took out with him the Orders previously referred to, which included instructions to prepare (1) A plan for the effective occupation of Basra Vilayet, and (2) A plan for the subsequent advance on Baghdad.

7. The objects of the expedition up to this time had been defined to be (1) that it would checkmate Turkish intrigues, (2) that it would encourage the Arabs to rally round us and confirm the Sheiks of Muhammerah and Koweit in their allegiance, and (3) that it would protect the oil installation at Abadan. But these objects were not so precisely limited that they could not be expanded, so as to cover operations much more extensive than were originally contemplated by the Home Government. Almost from the very outset of the expedition, the political importance of occupying Baghdad was urged by Sir Percy Cox, the Indian Government's agent in the Persian Gulf. The political officers on the spot, in Simla and in Whitehall, both at the Foreign Office and the India Office, all at various times gave expression to a similar view, and it may be that the successive advances from Basra to Kurna, Kurna to Amarah, and Amarah to Kut, though put forward as necessary defensive operations, were partially prompted by this ambition. During the later of these advances, the attitude of the India Office was one of reluctant acceptance of the forward movements advocated by Simla. Simla and Whitehall were not pulling well together. Up to this date no full and frank exchange of opinion seems to have taken place either as to the scope and aim of the expedition, or as to the preparation and expenditure necessary to ensure its success.

8. During the first months of this campaign the India Office was stimulating the Indian Government to greater exertion by ordering them to send out additional troops. So soon as the troops sent out amounted to two Divisions, then the rôle was reversed, and it was the Indian Government who were constantly pressing upon the Home Authorities the necessity of advance. Sir John Nixon in his evidence before us criticised—and we think with justice—the discrepancy between his Orders of March 24th, 1915,* and the telegraphic criticism of his operations sent him a month later by the Secretary of State.

9. The Mesopotamian Expedition was one which during the early operations required the closest attention. It was only by a careful study of the abnormal nature of the conditions, under which any lengthened campaign would have to be carried on, that the inherent difficulty of establishing a reliable base at Basra could be overcome. Even if the base had been consolidated and made effective, there still remained the difficulty of providing steamer transport of a special character and if sufficient steamer transport could not be obtained in a given time, then railroads became a necessity. But the improvement of the harbour and the building of railroads meant permanent, and possibly unremunerative, outlay, and no matter what the outlay might be, it could not give an immediate response in the shape of improved communication. Makeshifts and hand-to-mouth contrivances therefore became the order of the day, as they gave at a less immediate expenditure a quicker though ephemeral return.

* See Part IV., para. 2

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000023

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Faulty Organisation of Indian Military Administration.

10. During recent years certain important changes had been made in the highest branch of Indian military administration, and certain influences were at work, which, in our judgment, were detrimental to the efficient supervision of this or any Oversea Expedition. Up to 1905 there had been two high officials in charge of the administrative and executive work of the Indian Army—namely, the Military Member of Council and the Commander-in-Chief. By "Indian Army" we mean Indian Military Establishments, as there is always a large proportion of the British Army stationed in India, and these troops, so long as they are there, are upon the Indian establishment. The Military Member of Council was in charge of what we may designate the administration of the Army, and it was through him that the demands of the Commander-in-Chief for the Army came to the Viceroy's Council, though the Commander-in-Chief himself was an extraordinary Member of that Council. Whatever may have been the drawbacks of this system, it had the advantage that by this division of work, the Commander-in-Chief was free to perform his important executive duties of inspection, and of reviewing and testing the efficiency and wants of the troops under him, while the Military Member remained at the seat of Government.

11. The Military Member was abolished, and in his place a Supply Member was appointed as one of the Viceroy's Council. This post was, however, extinguished a short time after its creation. Thus, the whole of the administrative and executive work of the Army became concentrated in the hands of one man, who has a duality of responsibility, for he is both Military Member of Council and Commander-in-Chief. Being the only military representative on the Viceroy's Council it is his duty to be present at the meetings of the Executive Council. The two Army Departments, namely, that of which the Commander-in-Chief in his capacity as such is the head, and that of which the Commander-in-Chief in his capacity as Military Member of Council is also the head, are both permanently located in Simla.

12. While there is centralisation at the head of the administration, a cumbrous dualism remains below. These two Departments, though under the same individual, are kept separate and distinct, and they are separately maintained in order to give substance to the fiction that one person is two persons. The Commander-in Chief, in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, may think and order something in his department which in his subsequent capacity as Military Member in another Department he may like to unthink and counter order. The procedure under this unique form of military administration was described to us by Mr. Brunyate, the Financial Secretary to the Government of India. He had been for some years Financial Adviser to the Commander-in-Chief and Military Member of Council, and is a high expert upon the procedure which this dual system entails. His evidence was so clear and explicit that we reproduce it verbatim. When asked to give a concrete case of how a paper relating to a proposal for Army equipment would pass through the two Departments, he replied :—

> The Quartermaster-General, it may be supposed, wishes to have more mules. Probably before putting forward the proposal at all he sees the Commander-in-Chief personally as Commander-in-Chief, and ascertains from him that he is willing to have that proposal ventilated. He then writes a note stating his facts, probably supported by a note by the Director of the Army Remount Department, makes a definite recommendation, estimates the cost and marks his note to the Army Department of the Government of India. The office clerks of the Army Department note on the case, the Assistant Secretary notes, the Deputy Secretary may note, and it reaches the Army Secretary—we will call him General Holloway, though he is not actually Army Secretary now. He criticises the proposal if he thinks fit. . . . The Office of the Financial Adviser then note upon it. . . . The clerks in the Finance Adviser's office note, the Assistant or Deputy Financial Adviser notes, and the case then comes to the Financial Adviser, now Mr. Fell. Mr. Fell may be prepared at once to accept the proposal on behalf of the Finance Department, and may intimate that he does not intend to refer it to the Finance Member. The file then goes back to the Army Secretary, and in that case he at once arranges for the necessary orders to be issued to give effect to the Quartermaster-General's proposal, unless he thinks the case of sufficient importance to refer it to the Army Member.
>
> Such reference will, of course, practically always be required if the proposal is one requiring the sanction of the Secretary of State. In that case the Army Secretary would take the Army Member's orders at this stage, and a despatch to the Secretary of State would then be drafted in the Army Department. . . . Or again, Mr. Fell, when the case first reached him, might have criticised the proposal, and indicated a desire to see it modified or rejected. In that case the file would still go back to the Army Secretary, and he would doubtless at that stage take the orders of the Army Member unless before doing so he wished to have the opinion of the Quartermaster-General on the criticisms and suggestions which had been made in the Military Finance Branch. Mr. Fell, when criticising the proposal would probably have indicated whether he intended to refer the case eventually to the Finance Member. Thus when the Army Secretary brought these criticisms before the Army Member, the latter would know that if he decided to over-ride the Financial Adviser's criticisms,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000008

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Faulty Organisation of Indian Military Administration.

he might have to face opposition from the Finance Member. The Army Member would then pass his orders. If he adhered to the scheme as put forward by the Quartermaster-General and the Army Department he would record a note to that effect. The file would then go back to the Financial Adviser, and the latter would not note again, but would submit the case to the Finance Member. If the Finance Member decided not to press the objections raised by Mr. Fell, the proposal would become a fully accepted proposal, and orders would be issued for putting it into effect. If, however, the Finance Member definitely objected to the scheme, the case would then go back to Mr. Fell for return to the Army Secretary for re-submission to the Army Member. The Army Member might then defer to the Finance Member's objection, in which case the whole proposal would be dropped with the Army Member's concurrence, though a reluctant concurrence. If, however, the Army Member, in spite of the Finance Member's objections, considered that the proposal was a necessary one, he would intimate to the Army Secretary that the case should be referred to His Excellency the Viceroy, under our Rules of Business, which prescribe that when two members of Council differ, the case must be referred for the orders of the Viceroy. The Army Secretary would then lay the case before the Viceroy. The latter might very possibly indicate a personal opinion that in the circumstances, as a particular case he thought it perhaps desirable that the views of the Army Member should be deferred to, and any expression of the Viceroy's wish in an ordinary case is very frequently—I might almost say generally—deferred to. Or the Viceroy might, pursuing the ordinary procedure under our Statutory Rules of Business, simply instruct the Army Secretary that the case was to be brought up in Council the following week. It would then be discussed in Council, the Army Secretary being present, but not taking any part in the discussion, and would be settled by the views of the majority of the Council.

Asked how long a disputed case might take, he replied :—

At the best a disputed proposal would, I think, ordinarily take a good many weeks. I cannot put it more exactly than that, but a great deal depends upon whether the responsible secretary takes a grip of the case and prevents its being constantly remitted backwards and forwards between the Financial Adviser on the one side and the Administrative Authority, the Quartermaster-General, or whoever he may be, on the other, inviting each in turn to reply to the other's rejoinders and criticisms. Where a case was not taken hold of and put to an end, I have known it very lamentably protracted from this cause, but it is always within the power of the Army Secretary, at any time when a case reaches him on its perambulations, to say that it has been sufficiently discussed, and to take it up at once for the Orders of the Army Member ; and that should be done after reasonable opportunity for meeting new criticisms has been given.

It was admitted by him that during the perambulations of this proposal, the Commander-in-Chief played little or no part. When further asked if this procedure would apply to any proposal for an increase of equipment—say, machine guns—he replied :—

It would apply equally well, but the procedure would be somewhat more cumbersome, because instead of our only having the Quartermaster-General's branch to deal with, it would probably involve also the General Staff, the Adjutant-General, and the Ordnance Department.

When further asked if this elaborate process of check and counter-check was not really carried on to keep up the fiction that there are two people as there used to be—the Military Member of Council and the Commander-in-Chief—whereas at present there is only one person in these capacities, he replied :—

I think that is largely the case, particularly if it is put in this way, that in order to maintain an adequate status and influence for the heads of the Army, the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, and so on, it is, or has been considered necessary to retain the fiction of the Commander-in-Chief's existence in this arrangement, it is through him that they derive their own status.

This astounding system has only to be described to be condemned. The Secretary of State for India, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, in his evidence adumbrated certain Army reforms that he had in his mind. We trust that amongst these reforms the fiction of one person being two, and the anomaly of two establishments being maintained at public expense to give effect to this fiction, will permanently disappear from the military system of India.

It is only fair to add that since the war began this lengthy procedure has, to a large extent, been put on one side. Still, during this period the Commander-in-Chief has had to perform the dual duties of the two offices which he nominally holds.

Isolation between an administrative department and its operating factors tends to give to the secretariat so isolated an undue sense of the importance of minute and memorandum writing. In the case of the Simla Departments, this is an evil which was constantly brought to our notice, and many of our witnesses bear testimony to the inordinate dimensions attained by minute-writing, check and counter-check, and the reference backward and forward of papers and proposals in the administrative departments of the Army. The present system of check urgently requires simplification and acceleration. It is difficult under it to ascertain where responsibility begins and ends, whilst the waste of time and energy involved must operate detrimentally to efficient administration. Those engaged in secretarial work seem to have forgotten that minute-writing is not the end all and be all

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00006d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Faulty Organisation of Indian Military Administration.

of Army administration; it is only an instrument for the co-ordination of efficiency and economy, and for the prevention of waste and extravagance. If, by undue expansion, it fails to achieve these ends, it tends to promote the very administrative evils it was intended to counteract.

13. The removal of the seat of Government from Calcutta to Delhi greatly diminished, if it did not destroy, the contact between high officialdom and the commercial and business elements of India. At Delhi almost the entire European population is official and connected with Government departments. A few years back each Presidency had a separate Commander-in-Chief and a separate army, and their Headquarter Staffs were permanently located in the capitals of the respective Presidencies. These armies have all now been amalgamated, and their separate commands and staffs abolished.

14. It will thus be seen how great has become the centralisation of authority in one man's hands. Sir Edmund Barrow, the Senior General on the Indian List and Military Secretary at the India Office, and an officer of quite exceptional experience, expressed the view that the Commander-in-Chief is now trying to perform the work of six men, and he further added that the old duties of the Commander-in-Chief have completely fallen into abeyance. The late Commander-in-Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff, did not agree in this opinion. He contended that in times of peace one man could discharge the functions of both offices, especially if he were allowed a Deputy Chief of the Staff. But he admitted that there was more than one man could do in time of war, that during the war he had been able to give no time to the special work of Commander-in-Chief, and that the location of the Military department at Simla cut off the Commander-in-Chief in war time from contact with the combatant services.

15. Simla, as is well known, is a hill-top in the Himalayas on the borders of Nepal. Its remoteness from great towns and great cantonments of India and its inaccessibility. render it singularly unsuitable for the residence, during the greater part of the year, of the one high official who has to discharge this unique mass of military responsibilities. When, however, in addition to his normal dual work, he is also in charge of an oversea expedition, his disconnection from the actualities of fighting and his want of contact with those who return to and from the stricken field, become a serious impediment to the knowledgeable discharge of this war work.

Sir Percy Lake was for some time Chief of the General Staff at Simla, and was in constant personal communication with the Commander-in-Chief. He was sent to Mesopotamia in January, 1916, to take Sir John Nixon's place, whose health had broken down. If there was anyone in India who from his daily work and communications might have been expected to have appreciated the difficulties confronting an army in Mesopotamia, it should have been Sir Percy Lake. In his evidence before us he frankly admitted that in no sense did he fully realise the nature of the obstacles to be overcome, or the magnitude of the exertions necessary to enable them to be surmounted, until he took over the command in that country.

16. The great mass of the troops, stores, and reinforcements for Mesopotamia embarked at Bombay, and at the same port the disembarkation of the huge number of sick and wounded returning from that country took place. Sir Beauchamp Duff as Commander-in-Chief never visited that port during the crisis of the war, nor has any permanent member of the Headquarter Staff been there stationed. Everything to be done was attempted from Simla. Requisitions and indents for stores, applications for leave, and other matters, all of which could have been easily settled in Bombay, had to go to Simla before they were complied with. The views and opinions of those returning sick or wounded as to the conduct and wants of the expedition do not seem to have filtered through to Simla until quite late in the campaign. Civilians and non-officials in Bombay knew more of what was going on in Mesopotamia than the Headquarter Staff in Simla. Ignorance at Headquarters produced scepticism, and this scepticism was supported by the very optimistic reports officially received from Basra. One witness who went from Basra straight to Delhi or Simla has informed us of the incredulity with which his statements were received, and how official despatches were brought out of portfolios which contradicted what he himself had seen and knew.

17. Lord Hardinge, in one of his letters to the Secretary of State to which we have already alluded, writes on the 18th February, 1916: "I may mention here that I have

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00001b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Faulty Organization of Indian Military Administration.

at last succeeded in convincing the military authorities that the medical arrangements up the Tigris are as bad as can be." A severer comment could not have been made upon the isolation and ignorance of those primarily responsible for the treatment of the wounded. Bombay, Calcutta, London, the Houses of Parliament, and private individuals, both in India and England, were all cognisant of what was going on. Simla and Delhi alone were unmoved. Simla has so long been the established summer quarters of the Government of India that it has almost become a tradition; but its inconvenience as the Army Headquarters in time of war and in the management of oversea expeditions can be well illustrated by imagining Thurso or Wick to be the headquarters of the British Army Departments during this war. The idea in its nakedness is grotesque, yet something like it was attempted in India for the first sixteen months of the Mesopotamia Expedition.

C. Relations between the Secretary of State and the Governor-General and their respective Councils.—Private Telegrams.

18. Almost concurrently with the adoption of the principle of centralisation in military administration, a gradual process of change in the methods of communication between the Secretary of State for India and the Governor-General of India has taken place which had an important bearing upon the management and conduct of the Mesopotamia Expedition.

19. The Government and Administration of India are vested in the Secretary of State for India in Council and in the Governor-General of India in Council, and the former body dominates the latter. The powers of the Secretary of State for India in Council are immense, greatly exceeding those exercised by an ordinary Secretary of State. So far as finance and expenditure are concerned, the Council stands to the Secretary of State for India much in the same relation as that in which Parliament stands to the other Secretaries of State. It may reasonably be assumed that Parliament would not have given these immense powers to any individual official if, in the exercise of such powers, he was dissociated from his Council.

20. The Governor-General in Council is subordinate to the Secretary of State for India in Council and rules are laid down in the Act of Parliament as to the procedure through which the Secretary of State's orders and communications to the Governor-General should be made. Those means of communication, according to the Statute, come under three heads:—

(*a*) "Public," or, as we prefer to designate them, official communications which pass through the Council.

(*b*) "Urgent" communications, which need not necessarily go to the Council and which the Secretary of State has the power of sending on his own authority, though he is subsequently under the obligation of explaining the causes for his so acting.

(*c*) "Secret" communications, on which the Secretary of State has the power o acting on his own authority, nor need he explain to his Council the reasons why he dispenses with their advice. But these "secret" communications are limited to certain subjects.

21. In India the power of the Governor-General to dispense with his Council is much more circumscribed. The Government of India is throughout the Statute invariably designated as the Governor-General in Council. If the Governor-General is away from his Council on tour he has all the powers which he could exercise if he was with his Council, and moreover he has the power, when with the Council, of over-ruling them on certain questions, if the majority of them differ from him. But the Members of the Secretary of State's Council and of the Governor-General's Council have a statutory right of protesting in writing against any action of which they disapprove. The protest must be in accordance with their expressed objections in Council, and such written protest can be called for and laid before Parliament.

22. The intention of Parliament in setting up the Government of India upon this basis seems to have been a wish to associate the Secretary of State and the Governor-General (who under the conditions existing in this country would probably be politicians), with Councils of trained Indian administrators; and the power of protest was doubtless given so that each Council might be a check upon the Secretary of State, or the Governor-General, against taking impulsive, or, in the view of the Council, improper action.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00000a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

C. Relations between the Secretary of State and the Governor-General and their respective Councils.—Private Telegrams.

23. In addition to these authorised statutory communications it has always been the practice of the Secretary of State and the Governor-General to communicate privately, one with another, both by telegram and by letter. These telegrams have, up till quite recently, been supplementary to and explanatory of the official telegrams sent, which as a matter of course come before the Governor-General and Secretary of State in Council. They have also dealt with personal matters, which it is not advisable should be contained in official telegrams, and within certain limits they seem to us to be useful, if not necessary links of intercommunication.

24. All the Statutes relating to the Government of India were consolidated in Acts which received Royal Assent in 1915 and 1916; but in these consolidating Statutes no mention whatever is made of private communications, nor is authority given either to the Secretary of State, or the Governor-General to substitute private telegrams for the prescribed methods of communication laid down by the Statute. All private telegrams are the property of the sender, and they are not necessarily recorded on the files of the Department to which their contents may relate; though they are occasionally so recorded when the Secretary of State or Governor-General gives express orders to that effect. It is usually the practice of the Secretary of State and the Governor-General to take away their private telegrams at the close of their tenure of office, and Lord Crewe informed us that Lord Morley so acted on vacating the post of Secretary of State for India. There is therefore no public record of the purport of the vast majority of these private communications. The substitution of private for public telegrams in recent years has apparently so developed as to become almost the regular channel of official inter-communication.

25. A very important document was laid before us containing a number of telegrams of the gravest consequence relating to the Oversea Expeditions and Forces which the Indian Government were ordered at the instance of the Imperial Government to provide. Every telegram in the whole series, except one, on both sides was marked private, though it was stated by the Viceroy that the substance of the last telegram would be confirmed in an official telegram.

A large number—if not the larger proportion—of the telegrams quoted in our report referring to the advance on Baghdad are marked "Private." One of the most important of these private telegrams, conveying new and serious information as to the possible concentration of 60,000 Turkish troops near Baghdad, was, in consequence of its being marked "Private," not filed in the Military Department, and was not transmitted to Sir John Nixon in Mesopotamia.

26. The substitution of private for official telegrams tends to dispossess the Council of the functions, which by Statute they are entitled to exercise. Both the late Secretary of State for India and the late Governor-General justified recourse to these methods of communication on the ground that in time of war urgency and secrecy are of paramount importance. We at once accept that proposition; but it is clear in our mind that secrecy can be established by a properly regulated procedure; and as regards urgency, as both Councils are small in numbers, there seems to us no difficulty whatever, at any rate in times of emergency, in insisting on their meeting every day.

27. We have been informed by two Members of the Governor-General's Council that according to their recollection the Council was never consulted as to, nor were they privy to the campaign in Mesopotamia. Their opinion was not asked as regards the advance to Baghdad, though occasionally, from time to time, some information was given to them in the shape of conversation at the Council. This statement, though traversed in details by Lord Hardinge, is in the main, we believe, correct.

The despatch of any oversea expedition from India is largely regulated by considerations of internal security, and, as the maintenance of order in India is a primary function of the Council of the Governor-General, it would seem to us a necessary consequence that they ought to be consulted in connection with any oversea expedition or with any serious depletion of Indian military establishments.

28. As our report has already indicated, the main difficulty to be overcome in Mesopotamia was the provision of adequate river transport, and the establishment of an effective base at Basra for distribution of the reinforcements and supplies despatched to that place. We cannot but believe that, if the civilian Members of the Council had from the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000bb

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

C. Relations between the Secretary of State and the Governor-General and their respective Councils.—Private Telegrams.

outset been taken into the full confidence of the Viceroy as regards the Mesopotamia Expedition, they would have been able to have afforded prompt and material assistance in problems, which for want of that aid and experience were allowed to drift until they temporarily became almost insoluble.

29. Another paper was presented to us containing correspondence relating to the treatment of the sick and wounded in Mesopotamia. In that paper Mr. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, shows a most commendable solicitude as regards the condition of the wounded, and from October, 1915, onwards, he repeatedly, urged upon the Viceroy the advisability of a prompt and special enquiry as to what was actually the condition of things in Mesopotamia. All these communications were made in private letters and telegrams, and the correspondence continued for some months until Lord Hardinge in February made the announcement to which we have previously alluded, that he had "at last succeeded in convincing the military authorities that the medical arrangements up the Tigris are as bad as can be." In the whole of this paper upon this subject there was not to be found a single official despatch.

30. If the old practice of having recourse to an official despatch had been adopted, and a despatch had been written at the outset with the full authority of the Secretary of State in Council, conveying to the Governor-General the rumours and the nature of the doubts which had arisen as regards the condition of wounded, and such despatch had been received by the Governor-General in Council, the circulation of such despatch amongst both Councils would have accelerated an investigation and prevented a great deal of the distress and suffering which occurred during that period.

31. We have dealt at some length with this matter. We consider it necessary that the attention both of the Government and Parliament should be called to the change we have thus shown to have taken place in the procedure of the two branches of the Indian Government. If the Government and Parliament are of opinion that these private personal telegrams and letters are in the future to become a recognised channel of authoritative and mandatory communication, then the Act of Parliament should be so altered.

32. As the Council of the Governor-General was not consulted, it is clear they cannot be held responsible for what occurred in the Mesopotamian campaign. On the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief must rest the sole responsibility for advice given and action taken, so far as India is concerned. But the exclusion of the Ordinary Members of Council from a knowledge of and touch with the varying fortunes of the expedition circumscribed the sources, from which information might have been obtained upon the condition of the army in Mesopotamia.

33. Though the organised manufacturing and industrial resources of India are small in comparison with its enormous population, still there are a number of capable civil managers, engineering experts and establishments which could have been useful in dealing with the difficulties of the Mesopotamia Expedition, if their advice or assistance had been sought in the manner and on the lines in which outside experience has been brought to the help of the military establishments in Great Britain. But the intense centralisation and isolation of the bureaucracy in India was a serious obstacle to such co-operation, for the management of the campaign was that of a close corporation in the sole charge of two over-worked officials. In this sense the exclusion of the civil members of the Viceroy's Council from all responsibility for, or participation in the fortunes of the expedition had a mischievous and contracting influence in the mobilization of exceptional outside experience to overcome difficulties, which from their novelty were beyond ordinary military knowledge and training.

D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

34. The control of the expedition under the conditions, which we have explained, is narrowed down to control by two high officials, both heavily charged with many other anxious and pressing duties, and both permanently stationed in localities, which had little, if any, private or personal touch with the forces campaigning in Mesopotamia. Although the Viceroy paid a short visit to Mesopotamia early in 1915, yet in the

165

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000021

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

main it is the fact that both he and the Commander-in-Chief in their management of the expedition entirely depended upon their official information from that country. The well-being and adequate maintenance of the expedition were therefore dependent on the requisitions and demands made on Simla by the General Officer Commanding and his subordinates in Mesopotamia. It is therefore worth noting the environment, in which for years previously military officials had worked and lived, and which represented the fixed policy of the India Office and Government up to the date of the sudden outbreak of war.

35. It is a primary duty of every well-regulated Government to enforce effective economy. In other words, to prevent waste and yet ensure efficiency. Simple as is the phraseology of this formula, it is in practice most difficult to enforce, and economists, when in office, not unfrequently find themselves in defence of their principles obliged to subordinate efficiency to economy by adopting the simple process of cutting down aggregates of expenditure, or at any rate, of refusing an increase of existing outlay, no matter what may be the urgency of the fresh demand.

A policy of strict economy had been insisted on alike by the India Office and by Simla for many years, and even as late as March, 1914, in a despatch to the Government of India, the Secretary of State pointed out that the majority of the Army in India Committee (a committee appointed to overhaul Indian military expenditure), had recommended "that the normal standard of net military expenditure should be retained at 19.5 millions sterling, and that to the extent that reductions can be made in the figure by the economies we have suggested, but not otherwise, our proposed measures for the improvement of the Army should be taken in hand." The Secretary of State concluded his despatch by placing an arbitrary limit on military expenditure as regards fresh demands in the following words :—

> I am anxious to receive from you a general assurance on similar lines as to the limits within which military expenditure in the immediate future will be confined, and until you are in a position to give it I should find it difficult to deal with any separate proposals that you might submit for carrying out measures involving expense that have been recommended for adoption by the Committee.

36. Sir Douglas Haig, when Chief of the Staff, did put forward a memorandum in 1911 suggesting that the Indian Military establishments might have to furnish an expeditionary force, armed and equipped to meet a European Army. In this paper he contemplated the possibility of a war with Turkey either alone or supported by Germany; but it was stated in evidence before us that this memorandum did not receive the approval of the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge. It is a matter of common knowledge that after the Agadir incident in 1911 there was such a possibility of war with Germany as to call for military preparation and the consideration of plans of action. We know that such plans—and, to some extent, preparation—were made in connection both with the Navy and Army at home. But in India, until late in 1913 or early in 1914, no steps whatever seem to have been taken to consider what help could be given in such contingencies by the Indian Army. Still less were preparations made so to equip the Indian Army as to put it upon equal conditions with modern European troops. The responsibility for this omission must rest primarily with the Cabinet. Although the Indian Government is, to some extent, independent of the Cabinet, yet the Cabinet, through the Secretary of State for India, can exercise control and authority over its actions, but the whole influence of the Home Government was thrown in the direction of restriction rather than expansion of military preparation in India.

So far as Mesopotamia was concerned, the consequences were unfortunate—there was a lack of plans, and a lack of preparations.

Sir O'Moore Creagh was Commander-in-Chief for 4½ years ending April, 1914. In his evidence before us he stated that he was constantly calling attention to the deficiencies of the Indian Army as regards modern equipment, especially in connection with machine guns, heavy howitzers, signalling apparatus, wireless and air equipment, transport and medical complements, and to the inadequate grants made for practice ammunition and the insufficient sums voted for manœuvres. Sir O'Moore Creagh informed us that his representations had no result and were practically ignored and to such an extent was he generally over-ridden by the Finance Department and the Viceroy that he determined to resign office some six months before the usual tenure of his appointment terminated. But his

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000007

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

reasons for resigning were not explained either to the Viceroy or to the Secretary of State, nor can he entirely escape from criticism for not having taken more definite action at an earlier stage of his tenure of office, if he was certain that the efficiency of the Army, for which he was responsible, was being impaired by the rigid economy which in all directions was enforced upon military expenditure in India.

37. Under a policy so rigorously defined, it is not unnatural that military and medical officers thought that they were best discharging their duty to the Government by keeping down demands, by carrying on as best they could without incurring fresh expenditure, and by discouraging their subordinates from pressing new ideas or ideals which, though undoubtedly beneficial to the service for which they are responsible, would entail, at any rate at the outset, additional expenditure.

38. The Vincent-Bingley Commission report upon this tendency in language which seems to us so accurately to represent the views of many of the witnesses who appeared before us that we quote it in its entirety :—

> The observations of a senior officer who has given evidence to the Commission may be quoted with advantage in this connection, as they crystallise the views of many others.
>
> This officer writes as follows in an annexure to his evidence : "In my opinion the Indian system is more to blame for the breakdown of the Mesopotamia medical arrangements than anything else—a system which allows officers to think, whether rightly or wrongly :—
>
> "(*a*) That there is more merit to be obtained by keeping quiet and not worrying the higher authorities than by asking for what is necessary ;
>
> "(*b*) That keeping down expenditure is more meritorious than efficiency ;
>
> "(*c*) That nothing new is likely to be sanctioned unless a corresponding saving in something else can be shown ; and
>
> "(*d*) That even in small matters anything asked for will be cut down by half. . . . A system of this nature will possibly be good and economical in peace time, but is bound to break down in war."
>
> There is, in our opinion, much force in this criticism, and though we do not accept this statement in its entirety, we are inclined to ascribe much of the delay in applying for, and the reluctance to insist on, the provision of separate river hospital steamers, proper ambulance land transport, electric fans, ice machines, and other essential requirements to this cause.

39. Assuming that such a feeling generally existed in the Indian Army, it would affect not merely the medical officers and arrangements but also the combatant officers and the whole equipment and organisation of the Indian Army. The Mesopotamia Expedition, in the first instance, was equipped as if for frontier warfare against undisciplined tribes armed only with rifles. Its wants rapidly grew ; but there is little, if anything, in the mass of communications between the India Office, the Indian Government and the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia to show that the authorities either in London or Simla recognised the immense differences between the conditions of an Indian frontier, and a Mesopotamian campaign.

40. Some of our witnesses expressed the opinion that the supreme Government of India did not seem adequately to realise the immensity of the issues raised by the war, and that their response to the necessities of the situation was not as whole-hearted and sufficient as it might have been. We fully recognise the internal difficulties and embarrassments which the Indian Government had to face, when the enemy to be encountered was, in his intrigues and conspiracies, as ubiquitous and unscrupulous as the German Government has shown itself to be, and we can well understand that in the earlier stages of the war the Indian Authorities had to devote much of their attention and a considerable proportion of their military establishments to counteract such machinations.

But as the dimensions of the war grew, and the character of its issues became more and more apparent, the Indian Government do not appear to us to have fully risen to the situation. It would almost seem that they acted on the assumption that the war would not be one of long duration, for they adhered to the routine method of normal times, rather than to the impressment of new ideas and the mobilisation of fresh resources.

The standard of effort was regulated more by past experience of previous war than by the magnitude of the emergency. The unprecedented exertions of Great Britain and her self-governing Oversea Dominions did not seem to stimulate the Indian Government to similar efforts. The attitude and disposition of the Indian Government are shown in the nature of the argument used by them in rejecting military railway expenditure in Mesopotamia, viz., that it might ultimately fall on Indian revenues as being possibly outside the Imperial guarantee of indemnity for extraordinary disbursements. Neither as regards compulsory service for Europeans, nor in the organisation of industrial resources for purposes of war, nor in general finance was sufficient alacrity shown during the first year and a half of the war.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000038

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

41. As regards finance it must be remembered that the Indian Government Act, 1858 precluded the cost of overseas expeditions from being charged upon the revenues of India unless with the consent of both Houses of Parliament. In September and November, 1914, accordingly, resolutions were passed by Parliament empowering the Indian Government to defray the ordinary cost of the troops employed overseas, in so far as such ordinary cost would have been payable by India, had the troops remained in that country. Any excess over such ordinary cost was to be borne by the Imperial Government in addition to the full cost of any troops required to replace the troops sent overseas. The effect of these resolutions was that, so far as the overseas expeditions were concerned, India participated in the war without thereby incurring any direct increase of her normal military expenditure in peace time. Whatever may have been the justice of such an arrangement as regards the expedition to France, it clearly redounded to the advantage of India in the case of the expedition to Mesopotamia, which, as we have seen, was recognised by the Indian Government as a military measure protecting their North-Western Frontier from attack, and they obtained this advantage without cost to themselves. Their net military expenditure for the year 1914–15 was actually nearly £50,000 less than the estimate which had been made for that year before war was declared, and on the assumption that expenditure would be on a peace basis. In introducing the Indian Financial Statement for 1915–16, Sir W. Meyer, the Finance Member, stated: "Our chief economy occurs under the Military Services," and, though the war had already been waging for more than eight months, he budgeted for a military expenditure half a million less than the corresponding expenditure for the previous year. Although this estimate has, in fact, been exceeded by the actual expenditure, the excess, according to the latest figures available to us, has never amounted to more than £2,000,000, or 20 per cent. of the normal military expenditure in India. It is, of course, common knowledge that the United Kingdom's war expenditure represents an increase of more than 1,000 per cent., over the normal. During the period under our review no additional taxation and no loans were raised with a view to helping England in bearing the cost of a war in which the very existence of our Indian Empire was threatened. The disparity between the financial war burdens of India and the rest of the Empire was even the subject of comment in the Vice regal Council where there was a general expectation of new taxation. One member went so far as to say in Council; "Handsome as our offerings may have been, they have not, I regret to say, been on the same princely footing and basis as that of our fellow Colonials. However, I am confident that the demand has only to be made, and loyal India will rise as one man and offer to pay the expenses of our Expeditionary Forces, in the same way as Canada and Australia are doing," and he went on to suggest an increase in taxation to meet such expenditure.

But prosperous though the country was, the Indian Government refused to listen to such suggestions. Lord Hardinge and Sir William Meyer both recognised the financial strength of India's position, but, notwithstanding the financial needs of the war, they considered it permissible for India to continue to spend a sum of 9.4 million pounds (equal to about 18 per cent. of India's Imperial revenue) on capital works, railways, irrigation, etc. In fact, to quote the words of a native member of the Council, this budget "made the country almost forget the serious economic and financial effects of the war."

It has been argued that India had no cause to be sparing in expenditure on the overseas expeditions because the Imperial Government were bearing all the abnormal cost of the war. But Sir F. Aylmer informed us that when he was Adjutant-General at Simla, the Finance Department frequently demurred to proposed new war expenditure in the fear lest the expenditure should persist after the war, and become a charge upon India, and we know that a similar motive influenced the financial officials in their dealing with Sir J. Nixon's demand for a railway.

Thus the atmosphere and influence of economy continued at Simla long after the war broke out, and there are indications of a reluctance on the part of the Indian Government to recognise the indisputable fact that war meant extra expenditure. They seemed to have struggled hard to carry on war upon a peace budget, and it is hardly open to doubt that this tendency was one of the causes of the inadequate expenditure incurred, and the lack of provision made for the wants of the Mesopotamia Expedition during the first 16 months of its operations.

The Government, rather than the governed, were the laggards, and in our judgment the measures now taken by the present Viceroy and his Council in mobilising latent

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00000e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

D. Atmosphere of Economy up to Date of War and Effect upon Military Preparations in India.

resources should have been adopted some time past. Much of the bitterness felt by the Expeditionary Force against their inadequate supply and equipment can, we believe, be traced to the idea that the Indian Government did not early enough realise their responsibilities, or the strain which the climate and country of Mesopotamia imposed upon all those sent there to fight.

42. So long as the expedition's advance was confined to the Shatt-el-Arab its operations were neither difficult nor costly. Every advance increased the difficulties and cost, and both centred around the transport. We can quite understand that officers, bred up to resist fresh and new expenditure, would hesitate, when an advance was suggested, to insist at once upon the outlay necessary to ensure success and diminish risk. "Risk and economy" rather than "safety and expenditure" would be the natural bent of their past training and orders. It is quite true that no evidence has been produced to show that any urgent demand put forward by the Military Authorities was definitely refused by the Finance Department. The blame for inadequate attention to the special wants of the expedition must be attached to the Military Authorities rather than to the Finance Department.

43. Pertinacity in pressing or multiplying the requisitions from Mesopotamia upon the Simla authorities was, however, resented, and of this we will give a remarkable illustration.

General Cowper was Adjutant-General and Assistant Quartermaster-General of the Mesopotamia Force. In January, 1916, he, being the officer responsible for the transport, became seriously alarmed at the increasing difficulties, which the shortage of transport created in the employment of troops for the relief of Kut. In consultation with General Money, Chief of the General Staff, he drafted a telegram in which they stated plainly that unless they got adequate shipping transport, and personnel to man such transport, Sir Percy Lake, who had recently assumed command of the force, would have to abandon the idea of relieving Kut. They purposely had recourse to this language as they considered the position—to use General Cowper's own words—"So frightfully serious." Sir Percy Lake carefully considered the telegram, and transmitted it after some alterations. In reply Sir Percy Lake received a personal telegram from the Commander-in-Chief at Simla, severely rebuking him for the wording of the telegram, and the Commander-in-Chief added these words: "Please warn General Cowper that if anything of this sort again occurs, or I receive any more querulous or petulant demands for shipping, I shall at once remove him from the force, and will refuse him any further employment of any kind."

Sir Beauchamp Duff subsequently stated to us that this reply to Sir Percy Lake's telegram was founded upon a paraphrase, which distorted both the purport and language of the telegram, and that as soon as he became aware of this, he cancelled his censure. We asked General Duff for a copy of this paraphrase, but he told us it had been destroyed.

The warning conveyed in General Cowper's telegram was, as our narrative shows, unfortunately realised, for the failure to break through to Kut was largely due to insufficiency of numbers and of guns, there being, at the critical times of the attempted relief, large numbers of troops and guns at Basra which could not be moved to the front for want of transport.

In justice to General Cowper, we must add that it was with great difficulty that we extracted the above information from him. The incident was referred to in a letter from Lord Hardinge to the Secretary of State for India and it was in consequence of this allusion that we obtained the clue to the transaction.

It seems from this letter that Lord Hardinge had complained to Sir Beauchamp Duff of the tone of several recent telegrams from Mesopotamia to Simla. And doubtless this complaint partly accounts for Sir Beauchamp Duff's annoyance. But in our judgment Lord Hardinge's complaint was altogether unwarranted, and the reprimand which it led Sir Beauchamp Duff to address to General Cowper was both intemperate and ill-advised. We fear, however, that it must be regarded as an extreme but characteristic illustration of the attitude of the authorities at Simla towards demands which they did not like or did not consider necessary.

E. Sir John Nixon's Appointment, Instructions and Staff.

44. It is obvious from Lord Hardinge's evidence that, during his official visit to Mesopotamia, he was struck by the necessity of the offensive being assumed by our forces round

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00004f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

E. Sir John Nixon's Appointment, Instructions and Staff.

Basra, if their defensive position was to be consolidated and made secure. Sir John Nixon had the reputation of a successful and dashing Cavalry Officer. He told us in his evidence that he believed he was sent out in order that he might make this change in the attitude of our forces around Basra. He took with him a new Staff.

45. The change by an expeditionary force from defensive to offensive tactics may, under certain conditions, be possible without necessitating fundamental changes in the organisation of the force or in the base and line of communications. In Mesopotamia, if the offensive was pushed beyond a certain point, its success or failure was almost entirely governed by the extent to which the capacity of the port of Basra, and of the communications with it, were simultaneously developed.

46. This self-evident necessity was never realised either by the India Office at home or the Government at Simla until it was too late. It is no exaggeration to say that this was an undertaking utterly beyond the capacity of Sir John Nixon and his staff. To impose upon a Cavalry Officer with little more than the ordinary staff of a Division, such a duty was to try him altogether beyond his experience and strength.

47. The instructions to Sir John Nixon to prepare a scheme for an advance on Baghdad revolutionised the whole foundation and organisation of an expedition initiated and founded for much smaller and more limited objects, and this was neither recognised by Sir J. Nixon nor those who so instructed him. He looked at the matter from a purely fighting point of view, and the military successes which he had achieved induced him to underestimate the full risk involved in an advance from Kut to Baghdad. The Government of India never seemed to question his discretion or his want of experience of a campaign dependent on river transport. Implicit confidence in his judgment was the basis of their communications to the Home Government.

48. It was not merely that, through no fault of their own, Sir John Nixon's staff were unequal to the task of creating a practically new port, but they were seriously handicapped in the very important work of obtaining reliable intelligence as to the strength of their opponents. The armies against which Sir John Nixon was operating were recruited and drawn from a vast area of territory extending from Persia to Bulgaria and from Aden to Erzerum. The military movements inside this vast extent of country were very difficult to follow, and the sources of information were such that London was better supplied with news than Simla or Basra, as nearly the whole of this area was within the scope of the Intelligence organisation of the War Office. The local area from which Sir John Nixon's Intelligence Staff obtained information was limited, and did not comprise those portions of the Turkish Empire from which reinforcements to Irak could be sent. Sir John Nixon, having confidence in his own staff, was not disposed to subordinate their information to that which came from outside.

49. Upon the two essential considerations governing the attempt to capture Baghdad Sir J. Nixon was therefore seriously at fault. He underrated the difficulty of transporting reinforcements, as they arrived, from the port of embarkation to the scene of action, and he seriously under-estimated the number of his opponents and miscalculated the dates at which they would arrive. Sufficient allowance was not made either in London or Simla for the probability of such miscalculations. The extreme difficulty of the first task and the lack of reliable information do not seem to have been properly appreciated by those controlling the conduct of the campaign. But though grave blame must be attached to Sir John Nixon for his excessive optimism, those who shared in that optimism cannot be wholly free from criticism.

F. Secretiveness and Lack of Co-ordination of Staffs.

50. The character and scope of the task imposed upon General Nixon and his Staff made it one of exceptional difficulty, and it might have been assumed that there would have been full and frequent interchange of opinion between the Headquarters and the Administrative Staffs of the Army in Mesopotamia before any fresh move was made or, if reinforcements were expected, as to how the difficulties of maintaining and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00001c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

F. Secretiveness and Lack of Co-ordination of Staffs.

transporting such new forces could be met. General Nixon stated that Staff conferences were frequently held, but notwithstanding this, we have evidence that reticence was carried so far, that important Staff Officers were kept in ignorance of impending movements, and were consequently unable to make in time the requisite preparations.

51. Commander Hamilton who was Principal Marine Transport Officer from the beginning of the campaign until December, 1915, and, who was uneasy from the first as to the river transport situation, complained to us that the policy of the campaign was kept secret from him. At the outset of the campaign he made a proposal for providing river steamers in advance. This was not entertained by the staff at the time, and as he was not taken into their confidence as to the future movements of the expedition, he did not afterwards again press his proposal. In May, 1915, the Deputy-Director of Ordnance complained that he was never given information as to projected movements of troops. In the spring of the same year, Colonel Dallas, when Base Supply Officer at Basra, received no warning that his responsibilities were to be doubled by the arrival of a second division of reinforcements. He was not informed when advances were to be made, and he understood that other high administrative officers were also kept without sufficient information. Similarly General Davison, Inspector General of Lines of Communication, did not remember being referred to at all in connection with the transport necessary for the advance of General Townshend's force towards Baghdad. Nor was he consulted as to the provision of transport for the promised reinforcements of two divisions, until after the advance had been sanctioned, although it will be remembered that the availability of these divisions as reinforcements at Baghdad was a condition precedent to the sanction by the authorities of the advance on that place.

52. Information as to the arrival of these reinforcements was withheld until the beginning of November from so high an officer as General Cowper, the Deputy-Adjutant and Quartermaster-General in Mesopotamia, and even then he was not allowed for some time to communicate it to his administrative officers, with the result, as General Cowper admitted under cross-examination, that there was delay in making preparations for the reception of the reinforcements at Basra. According to General Cowper's evidence the reason given for keeping him in ignorance of the prospective arrival of reinforcements was fear that the news might reach the Turks, and that they would in consequence retreat without fighting.

53. Surgeon-General Hathaway, the Director of Medical Services in Mesopotamia, also contended that he was hampered in his work by his exclusion from the Staff Conferences. General Nixon disputed this, but we are convinced that, whether with or without General Nixon's knowledge, secrecy as to projected movements was maintained by the Staff to an extent detrimental to the interests of the expedition.

54. We can quite understand, in a country so full of rumour and spying as Mesopotamia, the necessity of confining to as few people as possible information concerning impending movements and requirements; but the stoppage of information was pushed to such a point that the officers, upon whose arrangements the success of the new move largely depended, were sometimes only given information after a decision had been taken. We have no evidence to show that a conference of any kind took place before General Nixon informed the Viceroy that he could open the road to Baghdad. General Nixon throughout acted solely upon his own responsibility. As one of his subordinates stated, he "revelled in responsibility"—a fine quality in a soldier and one which ought to be encouraged, but it cannot stand alone, and in the present instance this dash and audacity were not sufficiently associated with prescient preparation or with investigation of the difficulties to be overcome.

55. At Simla, Sir Beauchamp Duff, as Commander-in-Chief, was in absolute and untrammelled control over every branch of military administration. The General Staff was in no sense a separate or independent branch. The chief of that body was personally under the Commander-in-Chief and part of his staff. The other holders of high office, such as the Adjutant-General, Quartermaster-General, Director-General of Operations, were all under the direct control of the Commander-in-Chief, as was formerly the case in the War Office at home.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000013

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

F. Secretiveness and Lack of Co-ordination of Staffs.

56. There were indeed almost daily meetings of the chief military officers at Simla, but we have no evidence to show that there was ever a free discussion of the danger and difficulties of the advance to Baghdad. Sir Fenton Aylmer, at that time the Adjutant-General, did hear a conversational reference made by the Commander-in-Chief to the Chief of the Staff upon the subject at one of the daily meetings of the Headquarters Staff. He at once expressed his apprehensions of such a move, but no notice was taken of his objection,

Thus, without adequate consultation with their staffs and without fully realising the vital elements of the problem, the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia suggested, and the Commander-in-Chief in India accepted the move upon Baghdad. As we have before stated, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, did not consult the Council upon this matter, but he threw the weight of his personal authority strongly in support of the advance.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000006

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Findings and Conclusions.

Origin, Inception and Conduct of Campaign.

We find that:—

1. The expedition to Mesopotamia was a justifiable military enterprise, but one of such a character that it required, during its inception and development, the most careful watching and preparation.

2. The division of responsibility between the India Office and Indian Government, the former undertaking policy, and the latter the management of the expedition, was, in the circumstances, unworkable. The Secretary of State, who controlled the policy, did not have cognisance of the capacity of the expedition to carry out the policy. The Indian Government, who managed the expedition, did not accompany developments of policy with the necessary preparations, even when they themselves proposed those developments.

3. The scope of the objective of the expedition was never sufficiently defined in advance, so as to make each successive move part of a well-thought-out and matured plan.

4. The attempt in India entirely to control and regulate the wants of the expedition from Simla was an administrative mistake, and representatives of the Headquarter Staff with wide powers should from the first have been stationed at Bombay the port of embarkation and disembarkation to and from Mesopotamia.

5. The Commander-in-Chief himself, or his representatives acting as liaison officers, should from time to time have visited Mesopotamia with a view to keeping the Headquarters Staff in touch with the needs of the expedition. In consequence of such want of touch, the Military Authorities at Simla did not appreciate or realise the difficulties of campaigning in Mesopotamia, and from such lack of knowledge failed to make sufficient provision for surmounting the difficulties and drawbacks.

6. The successive advances from Basra to Kurna, Kurna to Amara, and from Amara to Kut were sanctioned as being necessary for the protection and consolidation of positions already taken, and were therefore of a defensive character.

The Advance on Baghdad.

7. The advance to Baghdad under the conditions existing in October, 1915, was an offensive movement based upon political and military miscalculations and attempted with tired and insufficient forces, and inadequate preparation. It resulted in the surrender of more than a division of our finest fighting troops and the casualties incurred in the ineffective attempts to relieve Kut amounted to some 23,000 men. The loss of prestige associated with these military failures was less than might have been anticipated, owing to the deep impression made, throughout and beyond the localities where the combats occurred, by the splendid fighting power of the British and Indian forces engaged.

8. Various authorities and high officials are connected with the sanction given to this untoward advance. Each and all, in our judgment, according to their relative and respective positions, must be made responsible for the errors in judgment, to which they were parties, and which formed the basis of their advice or orders.

The weightiest share of responsibility lies with Sir John Nixon, whose confident optimism was the main cause of the decision to advance. The other persons responsible were: in India, the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge), and the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Beauchamp Duff); in England, the Military Secretary of the India Office (Sir Edmund Barrow), the Secretary of State for India (Mr. Austin Chamberlain), and the War Committee of the Cabinet. We put these names in the order and sequence of responsibility. The expert advisers of the Government, who were consulted, also approved the advance and are responsible for their advice, but the papers submitted to us suggest that the approval of the naval and military experts was reluctant and was perhaps partly induced by a natural desire not to disappoint the hopes of advantage to the general situation, which the Government entertained. It is, however, notable that the experts unanimously anticipated no difficulty in the advance on Baghdad, but only in holding it. We do not attach any share in the responsibility for the decision to advance to Baghdad to the Councils of the Secretary of State

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00007b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A.—Findings and Conclusions.

for India and of the Viceroy, as we have been unable to ascertain from the evidence laid before us that the advance to Baghdad was ever brought before them in such a manner as to allow them to give their personal advice and opinion upon it.

9. We have included the War Committee of the Cabinet and the Secretary of State for India amongst those upon whom responsibility for this misadventure rests. It is true that the War Committee and the Secretary of State acted upon the opinion of their expert military advisers, and that the Secretary of State only gave his assent to the advance after he had received an assurance from the General on the spot that he had an available force sufficient for his purpose. But so long as the system of responsible departmental administration exists in this country, those who are political heads of departments in time of war, whether they be civilian or military, cannot be entirely immune from the consequences of their own action. They have the option and power of accepting or rejecting the advice of their expert subordinates. The acceptance by a chief of wrong advice from expert subordinates may be an extenuation of, but cannot secure complete immunity from, the responsibility for the evils which may ensue.

The Cabinet from the first laid down the principle, from which they never departed, that questions jointly involving civil and military policy should, in existing circumstances, only be decided by the Cabinet. This authority they exercised throughout, though at times they largely delegated their powers to the War Committe of the Cabinet.

Supplies, Equipments, Reinforcements, etc.

The second portion of our Instructions refers to the supplies, equipment and reinforcements of the expedition, with special reference to the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of the departments whose duty it was to minister to such wants. Upon this part of our reference we find that :—

10. The general armament and equipment were on a scale intended for an Indian frontier expedition, were not up to the standard of modern European warfare, and were quite insufficient to meet the needs of the Mesopotamia Expedition. These shortcomings were the natural result of the policy of indiscriminate retrenchment pursued for some years before the war by the Indian Government under instructions from the Home Government, by which the Army was to be prepared and maintained for frontier and internal use.

11. During the period for which the Indian Government were responsible, the commissariat of the expedition cannot be said to have been up to the standard of our Army in France, but there was no general breakdown. Discomfort and want were at times experienced, mainly through lack of transport, and as we point out in our Medical Section, illness arose from serious deficiences in diet. The whole system of supply was on too low a standard, and was badly organised. We have reason to believe that it has been materially improved since the War Office became responsible for the commissariat.

The ration originally supplied to the Indian troops was deficient in nutritive qualities, and a serious outbreak of scurvy ensued. Since then this ration has twice been improved, but it still requires careful attention as to the adequacy of its nutritive powers.

In other essentials the expedition was badly and insufficiently equipped, and as we have shown in previous parts of our report, little, if any, effort was made to remedy deficiencies until the War Office took over the expedition. It is difficult to arrive at any conclusion in this part of our enquiry other than, that the wants of the expedition received meagre attention and illiberal treatment at the hands of the Simla authorities during the years 1914-1915.

12. As regards reinforcements, we find that up to the occupation of Kut in September, 1915, the Mesopotamian Expedition was, in fact, numerically strong enough to cope with the Turkish forces brought against it. The arrangements for drafts and reinforcements had, however, from the first, been lacking in co-ordination as between the Indian and Home authorities, and this want of co-ordination led to the failure to supply effective reinforcements in connection with the advance on Baghdad and the operations for the relief of Kut.

Transport.

13. The enquiries we have made, and the evidence, both oral and documentary, which we have taken in this part of our investigation, lead us to the following conclusions regarding the critical period up to April, 1916 :—

(*a*) From the first the paramount importance, both of river and railway transport in Mesopotamia, was insufficiently realised by the military authorities in India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00002d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Findings and Conclusions.

(*b*) A deficiency of river transport existed from the time the army left tidal water and advanced up-river from Kurna. This deficiency became very serious as the lines of communication lengthened and the numbers of the force increased.

(*c*) Up to the end of 1915 the efforts made to rectify the deficiency of river transport were wholly inadequate.

(*d*) For want of comprehensive grasp of the transport situation and insufficiency of river steamers we find the military authorities in India are responsible. The responsibility is a grave one.

(*e*) River hospital steamers were an urgent requirement for the proper equipment of the expedition, and were not ordered until much too late.

(*f*) With General Sir John Nixon rests the responsibility for recommending the advances in 1915 with insufficient transport and equipment. The evidence did not disclose an imperative need to advance without due preparation. For what ensued from shortage of steamers, General Sir John Nixon must, in such circumstances, be held to blame. The extent of his responsibility in relation to the sufferings of the wounded is considered in Part X. of our Report and in para. 17 below.

(*g*) During the first four months of 1916, the shortage of transport was fatal to the operations undertaken for the relief of Kut. Large reinforcements could not be moved to the front in time to take part in critical battles. Based upon information received from General Townshend, as to the urgent necessity for his immediate relief, operations were undertaken, notwithstanding the extreme transport difficulty, but in all the circumstances we do not attach blame for this to the Generals in Mesopotamia directing the operations.

(*h*) Facilities for the discharge and handling of cargo at Basra, also provision of works for the erection and repair of river craft, were hopelessly inadequate.

(*j*) Proceedings in connection with the filling of orders for river craft by the Director of the Royal Indian Marine in India, and the India Office in London, were far from satisfactory.

(*k*) Looking at the facts, which from the first must have been apparent to any administrator, military or civilian, who gave a few minutes' consideration to the map and to the conditions in Mesopotamia, the want of foresight and provision for the most fundamental needs of the expedition reflects discredit upon the organising aptitude of all the authorities concerned. General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the General Staff, Whitehall, in a document to which we have already referred, states: "In general, the operations were allowed in 1915 to develop without proper regard to the vital questions of supply and maintenance," in which opinion our investigations lead us unreservedly to concur.

Medical Provision.

As regards the treatment of the sick and the wounded, our conclusions are more lengthy and minute, as this part of our enquiry necessitates close examination into details.

We find that:—

14. The medical provision for the Mesopotamia Campaign was from the beginning insufficient; by reason of the continuance of this insufficiency there was a lamentable breakdown in the care of the sick and wounded after the battle of Ctesiphon and after the battles in January, 1916; there was amelioration in March and April, 1916; but that since then the improvement has been continual until it is reasonable to hope that now the medical provision is satisfactory.

15. The defects of medical provision caused avoidable suffering to the sick and wounded, and during the breakdown in the winter of 1915–16, this suffering was most lamentably severe.

16. The deficiencies, which were the main causes of the avoidable suffering of the sick and wounded, were in the provision of the following:—

(*a*) River hospital steamers.
(*b*) Medical personnel.
(*c*) River transport.
(*d*) Ambulance land transport.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000030

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A.—Findings and Conclusions.

To these fifth and sixth main causes may be added in respect to the operations in January 1916 :—

(*e*) The absence of the medical and supply establishments of the 7th Division.

(*f*) The premature efforts to relieve Kut in consequence of the erroneous estimate of supplies in that place.

17. As to personal responsibility the Vincent-Bingley Commission found :—

That a grave responsibility for that part of the suffering which resulted from avoidable circumstances rests with the Senior Medical Officer of the Force, Surgeon-General G. H. Hathaway, and with General Sir John Nixon, the General Officer Commanding the Force, from April 9th, 1915, to January 19th, 1916. General Hathaway did not represent with sufficient promptitude and force the needs of the services for which he was responsible, and in particular failed to urge the necessity for adequate and suitable transport for the sick and wounded with that insistency which the situation demanded. General Nixon did not, in our opinion, appreciate the conditions which would necessarily arise if provision for the sick and wounded of his force were not made on a more liberal scale.

We endorse the finding as regards Surgeon-General Hathaway who in our judgment showed himself unfit for the high administrative office which he held.

We may add, however, as regards River and Land Transport, that while it was the duty of Surgeon-General Hathaway to urge its necessity, it was actually the duty of the Quarter-master General's Department and of Sir John Nixon's staff to see that it was provided.

So far as Sir John Nixon is concerned, however, we think that he was throughout solicitous as to the condition of the wounded. The main mistake he made, was to rely too absolutely on the statements made to him by his Deputy-Director of Medical Service, Surgeon-General Hathaway ; to that extent he may be blamed, but he stands, so far as responsibility is concerned, in a very different position from that occupied by Surgeon-General Hathaway.

18. The officer directly responsible for the deficiencies of medical provision in Mesopotamia, is however, the Director of Medical Services, India. This appointment was held at the beginning of the war by Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie, who held the office between March, 1914, and June, 1915, but was away from India for six weeks in February and March, 1915. He was succeeded by Surgeon-General J. G. MacNeece on July 8th, 1915, and the latter proceeded home on sick leave on April 15th, 1916. Sir William Babtie in his evidence before us impressed us as an officer of ability and knowledge, but we do not think that he brought these qualities sufficiently to bear upon the task before him. He accepted obviously insufficient medical provision without protest, and without any adequate effort to improve it. He cannot therefore be held blameless.

Surgeon-General MacNeece did not give evidence before the Vincent-Bingley Commission, but he appeared before us. He was, in our opinion, an officer thoroughly desirous of fulfilling the duties assigned to him ; but he was a man of advancing years and diminishing strength, unequal to the position he was called upon to fill, and his administration appears to us to show no signs of the vigour and efficiency that were required.

19. We find that :—

(*a*) The Home Government agreed with the Indian Government in limiting the general military preparations of India before the war in the interests of retrenchment, and provision was accordingly not made for such an expedition as that to Mesopotamia. The limitation of medical preparation and the low standard of medical treatment in the Indian Army at the outbreak of war were the natural outcome of this policy, which was pursued for many years and was in force right up to the date of the war.

(*b*) The private letters of the Secretary of State to the Viceroy showed an earnest and continuous anxiety as to the condition of the wounded, and the only comment that can be made upon the Secretary of State's procedure is that he did not fully utilize the official powers at his disposal for the purpose of forcing at an earlier period an investigation into the treatment of the wounded in Mesopotamia.

(*c*) To Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, as Viceroy, belongs the general responsibility attaching to his position as the head of the Indian Government, to which had been entrusted the management of the expedition, including the provision of medical services. In regard to the actual medical administration he appears to us to have shown throughout the utmost goodwill, but considering the paramount authority of his office, his action was not sufficiently strenuous and peremptory.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00000d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

A. Findings and Conclusions.

(*d*) A more severe censure must be passed upon the Commander-in-Chief, for not only did he, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India, fail closely to superintend the adequacy of medical provision in Mesopotamia, but he declined for a considerable time, until ultimately forced by the superior authority of the Viceroy, to give credence to rumours which proved to be true, and failed to take the measures, which a subsequent experience shows would have saved the wounded from avoidable suffering.

20. There has been misuse of official reticence as to medical defects and the sufferings of the sick and wounded.

21. While the protective and sanitary work of the Medical Administration has in certain directions and at some periods (notably under Colonel Hehir) been commendable, yet there has not been generally sufficient promptitude in taking the precautions dictated by modern science for the protection of the troops against disease.

22. Throughout the campaign (with insignificant exceptions) the executive and regimental medical officers and personnel have devoted themselves with unremitting kindness, zeal and industry to the care of the sick and wounded with such means as were at their disposal.

Indian Frontier and Internal Troubles.

23. In the information laid before us by high authorities as to the military requirements of India, there was constant reference made to the ever-present risk of invasion on the North-West Frontier and the danger of simultaneous internal disturbance. We are satisfied of the reality of such dangers and of the necessity of keeping mobilised a large force on this frontier. There is little doubt that on more than one occasion since the outbreak of war the Indian Government passed through a period of grave anxiety, which they successfully surmounted. The preoccupation caused by this anxiety must not be forgotten in blaming the Indian Government for the inefficiency of the management of the Mesopotamian campaign.

General Results of the Expedition.

24. The character of the Instructions given to us as a Commission and the date of our appointment compelled us to devote a large proportion of our time and attention to that limited period of the campaign in Mesopotamia in which reverses were experienced by our troops. We have probed to the best of our ability the causes of these failures in order to make suggestions for their remedy and removal. Though we have spent so large a portion of our time in looking into a period of reverses, this should not overlay or obliterate the fact that the success of the campaign has, as a whole, been remarkable. The operations have lasted over 2½ years, and, with the exception of a few months during which there was a serious setback, the war has been an unbroken success. Up to the date of the advance to Baghdad, in November, 1915, continuous victory had been achieved by the Expeditionary Force. During the last few months the river transport has been increased, port facilities improved, the force has been re-organised and adequately equipped for the task before it, and it has resumed its career of victory. We are of opinion—reviewing the operations as a whole—that it may now be truly asserted that in the many parts of the world in which the Allied Forces have been engaged, no more substantial results or more solid victories have been achieved than those won by the gallantry of the British and Indian Armies on the stricken plains of Mesopotamia.

Moral of Troops.

25. Our investigations show that what is in default is not the fighting capacity and efficiency of the combatant forces of the Indian Army, but the system of military administration in control of that Army. Rarely, if ever, have greater courage or pertinacity been shown by British and Indian troops than is recorded in the operations of the Expeditionary Force both during their successes and reverses. They had to operate under unfavourable conditions of climate, weather, flooded terrain insufficient supplies and wholly inadequate transport, and they were surrounded by a hostile and marauding population. In out judgment, no praise can be too high for the gallantry and spirit evinced by the officers and men of all ranks of the British and Indian Armies under this accumulation of difficulties. It is most desirable that the governing machinery of the Indian Army should be so reformed as to enable it to be a help and not a drag on the fighting capacity of the armies it controls.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00007f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

A. Findings and Conclusions.

Nature of Criticisms on Indian Government.

The criticisms which it has been our duty to make upon the Government of India divide themselves into two categories :—

26. Those relating to the error of judgment shown by their advocacy of an advance to Baghdad in October, 1915. In this mistake other authorities participated and we are not disposed to say more on this matter than that, lamentable as were the consequences, the blunder was one, which is not uncommon in a protracted campaign.

27. Our second criticisms are of a different character. They relate to the failure adequately to "minister to the wants of the forces employed in Mesopotamia." This failure was persistent and continuous and practically covered the whole of the period during which the Indian Government were entrusted with the management of the expedition. With the knowledge of the facts which we now possess and of the extent and scope of the preparations of the War Office since they undertook the management of the campaign. it is impossible to refrain from serious censure of the Indian Government for the lack of knowledge and foresight shown in the inadequacy of their preparations and for the lack of readiness to recognise and supply deficiencies. They ought to have known, and with proper touch with the expedition they could have known, what were its wants and requirements. It is true that their military system of administration was cumbrous and inept. It was, however, within the power of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief to have established a more effective procedure and a closer touch with the expedition itself.

B. Recommendations.

In the enquiry which we have made and the evidence which we have obtained we have received much information as regards the inner working of the highest branches of administration of the Indian Government both in England and India. We assume that it will not be outside our duty if we briefly refer to them for the purpose of making certain recommendations with a view to preventing a recurrence of the want of foresight and of efficiency, which our investigations have revealed.

Relations between Secretary of State and the Viceroy and Their Respective Councils.

28. We have more than once alluded to the great increase in the number of private telegrams exchanged on official business between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy. Whether intentionally or not, this method of communication must more or less deprive the Councils of both these high officials of the powers which, under Acts of Parliament, they have in common with the Secretary of State and Viceroy, been given in the government and administration of India. The Secretary of State informed us that he proposed to make some change so as to limit the scope and purport of such private communications. Some change is certainly constitutionally required, as the present practice seems to us to conflict with the intentions of Parliament. If the Councils of the Secretary of State and Viceroy are to be dispossessed of their old powers, such a change should be effected openly under an Act of Parliament and not by a change in the internal procedure of the India Office. Independently of the question of the legality of the present practice, the increase in the use of private telegrams must tend to accumulate work into the hands of an already heavily worked Viceroy. In our judgment, the aim of administrative reform in India, certainly in the military departments, should be a devolution of responsibilities and duties from the over-centralised bureaucracy of the Supreme Government at Simla.

Military Administration.

29. It is clear that the combination of the duties of Commander-in-Chief in India and Military Member of Council cannot adequately be performed by any one man in time of war, and that the existing organisation is at once over-centralised at its head, and cumbrous in its duality below. This was fully admitted by the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Chamberlain, and he gave us reason to believe that changes will be made enabling the official who ostensibly holds the post of Commander-in-Chief adequately to perform his functions of personal inspection, and investigation of the efficiency and requirements of

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000019

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Recommendations.

the forces under him. We hope that amongst these changes there will be an amalgamation into one department of the two existing departments of the Commander-in-Chief and the Military Member of Council with a single and central registry, and that special efforts will be made to diminish the amount of minute-writing and to simplify the present elaborate system of clerical checking and counter-checking.

30. It is also clear that, so long as Simla remains the Headquarters of the Army Departments, it is essential that in the event of oversea expeditions, there should be established at the port of embarkation representatives of the Army Departments with wide power to act without reference back to Headquarters.

Necessity for Enquiring into Certain Military Questions.

31. We have heard some evidence to the effect that the Indian Army has lost its old popularity, and that it is no longer regarded as a satisfactory service from a professional point of view, and that officers anxious for advancement prefer serving at home on account of the better methods of instruction and training which the Home Army now affords. It may be that some such ideas have deterred senior officers from accepting employment in India; but we understand that the candidates for commissions in the Indian Army at the present moment show no falling off either in numbers or quality. There was undoubtedly a grievance as to the conditions of promotion in the Indian Army compared with those prevailing in what used to be known as "the King's Army," but this disparity has to some extent been recently modified. In both armies promotion in the lower ranks is practically by seniority (in the Indian Army with time limitations), and in the higher grades by selection. It has further come to our notice that there is little personal contact between the Secretariat Departments of the Indian Army and the combatant ranks, and that in consequence there is not that sympathetic exchange of opinion and knowledge between the administrative branches and the executive forces of the Army which is essential to harmonious co-operation. There seems to be so much writing, that military officials have inadequate time at their disposal for inspecting, training and testing the troops, for whose efficiency and equipment they are responsible. These are evils which can without much difficulty be corrected, if the Indian Government, profiting by experience, will seriously take into consideration the defects in their military methods.

32. But other and more important considerations have been brought prominently to our notice in the course of our enquiries. The dual system under which London and Simla tried to conduct the campaign in Mesopotamia has obvious drawbacks. The chain of responsibility is greatly lengthened by the number of authorities, who had necessarily to be consulted, and who had a voice in the direction of affairs. We will enumerate the various authorities who had to be consulted as regards the Mesopotamia Expedition: First, the General Officer Commanding on the spot in Mesopotamia, then the Commander-in-Chief in India, then the Viceroy, then the Secretary of State for India with his Military Secretary, then the War Council with the Imperial Staff, and finally the Cabinet. Such a subdivision of authoritative control must weaken the sense of responsibility of each authority consulted, and it certainly has made it very difficult accurately to apportion blame or credit. It was under the dual system that the administrative failures took place during 1915 and early in 1916 in Mesopotamia, and it was not until London took over the sole charge that there was any marked improvement in the management of the campaign. The improvement and success since effected are a striking illustration of the all-importance of unity of control in time of war.

We should also like to call attention to the manner in which the army in India suffered during the era of economy before the war, when the military estimates were ruthlessly cut down, often, it is to be feared, without due consideration. The result was that the army was inadequately equipped, not only for an oversea expedition, but even for frontier requirements. We also gather that there is general dissatisfaction at the system of microscopic financial control exercised over details of military expenditure, pay and allowances. We give in an appendix* a few illustrations of how hardly this system operates in individual cases.

Finally it has been admitted by practically all the witnesses examined upon the subject that the principles, upon which the system of reserves for the native army of India had been established had proved faulty and unreliable. The men were too old, and had forgotten their training. It was also conceded that a new scheme on different principles

* See Appendix IV.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000029

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Recommendations.

must be created, if this latent force was for the future to be considered a real and not a mere paper reserve.

We do not think that we have travelled outside our province in calling attention to these important points, or in suggesting that into them and other germane matters investigation should be made by the Secretary of State for India and the Secretary of State for War.

It is in our judgment most undesirable that the standard of efficiency in the Indian Army should in any sense become inferior to that of the Army at home, or that the popularity of the Indian Army should be allowed to deteriorate through an excess of economical zeal or a questionable system of supervision and control.

Royal Indian Marine.

33. We feel strongly that the Royal Indian Marine Department requires reorganisation with a view to giving its Director a higher status and a staff adequate to his work.

Medical Reform.

34 The evidence put before us indicates the necessity for certain immediate changes in the existing system of medical organisation in India, which we propose to enumerate.

35. We are of the opinion that :—

(*a*) The Director of Medical Services in India, in war-time especially, should have far greater powers, than he at present possesses, to authorise expenditure and make purchases, and to delegate such power to his subordinates. The present elaborate system of financial check and counter-check, and correspondence with other military departments, before what is wanted can be obtained, has proved from its dilatoriness a real danger in war-time.

(*b*) Whenever an expedition is sent overseas from India, responsible officers should at once be located at the port of embarkation, with wide power to act. We have referred elsewhere to the fact that the Commander-in-Chief never visited Bombay during the crisis of the campaign. Some of his staff did do so, but their visits were spasmodic, and in no case had these officers power to give orders or settle important questions without further reference to Simla or Delhi. Further, all power being concentrated at Headquarters the ruling authorities deprived themselves of the value of being in constant touch with those going to, or returning from, Mesopotamia. If it was true, as alleged, that the Headquarter Staff at Simla were tied to their secretariat work there, the Bombay Government was on the spot, and common-sense would have suggested the delegation of authority to a Government so conveniently situated,

(*c*) At the port of embarkation the embarkation staffs should be responsible for seeing that the equipment and personnel of each medical unit should not be separated in different vessels, but embarked together in the same vessel. This rule was frequently neglected at Bombay.

(*d*) There should be an immediate and general improvement in the whole standard of comfort and accommodation in the hospitals for British troops in India. Surgeon-General MacNeece stated " even now there are practically not more than two or three up-to-date military hospitals in India." We are glad to note that the new war hospitals in Bombay are reported by the Vincent-Bingley Commission as bearing favourable comparison with any similar hospitals in the United Kingdom. This shows what can be done in India when there is impulse to reform. We think it discreditable to the Indian Government that the general standard of hospitals in India should fall below the standard of efficiency now demanded in Military Hospitals at home. To assist in reforming this state of things, we think that the R.A.M.C. or a corps on similar lines should be available for service in all British Hospitals in India, and that a better and more complete female nursing service should also be organised.

(*e*) As regards the medical treatment of Indian troops, no time should be lost in substituting a Station Hospital system, for the present regimental treatment, "I doubt," one I.M.S witness says to us, " whether you gentlemen would consider that the Sepoys' hospitals in peace-time in India are hospitals at all." Sir Havelock Charles described them as " a disgrace to the Government of India." Surgeon-General MacNeece states " there are no well-equipped operating theatres, X-ray rooms, laboratories, etc." ;

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000062

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. Recommendations.

and Sir William Babtie, "they are so bad that I think it would be necessary to reform them *ab initio*." The new Indian hospitals should be staffed by enlisted personnel of all ranks, and should be used for building up trained reserves of menial establishments in peace time.

(*f*) All deficiencies usually allowed to prevail in peace-time in the mobilisation equipment of general hospitals should be made good. Sir W. Babtie told us that of the general hospitals in India. "Twelve were supposed to be mobilisable, but only four were complete in all the different Departments of supply." All such equipment should be stored and in readiness, and inspected, as is done now, in the case of field ambulances, casualty clearing hospitals and stationary hospitals.

(*g*) Base Depôts of Medical Stores should be reintroduced into the Indian Field Service organisation, and kept ready for mobilisation.

(*h*) At the outset of every campaign there should be provided a separate superior sanitary organisation and staff charged with the arrangements for preserving and safeguarding the health of the fighting troops, and responsible to the Principal Medical Officer of the force, but otherwise entirely separate from the organisation for the care of the sick and wounded. This implies a formation in peace-time of an adequate reserve of sanitary officers, enlisting in it, if necessary, the services of specialists in civil employment.

(*i*) The Field Service Ration should receive very careful reconsideration and alteration in the light of experience in Mesopotamia. This especially applies to the rations for Indian troops. The War Office Sanitary Committee found that even, "the improved ration" sanctioned as late as October last was deficient in many respects.

36. The above are only some of the defects revealed by our investigations, but they are sufficient to prove the necessity for an urgent, and thorough reform by the Indian Government of the whole system, upon which their medical services are based, and under which they are controlled. Sir Alfred Keogh, whose administration at the War Office as Director-General Army Medical Services has been very successful during this war, at the conclusion of his evidence made the following very strong statement :—

"I have no hesitation whatever in saying that the medical arrangements connected with the Army in India have been for years and years most disgraceful. I say that with a full sense of responsibility. I have served many years in India. I have not been there for some time now, but in my opinion things are not better than they were. Anything more disgraceful than the carelessness and want of attention with regard to the sick soldier in India it is impossible to imagine."

---

37. Our colleague, Commander Wedgwood, has written a dissentient Report. It contains much that is interesting and, in many important points, it differs from our own Report rather in emphasis than in substance. Thus, for example, in Part XI., paragraphs 40–41 of our Report we have called attention to the Indian Government's lack of alacrity in mobilising the resources of India for the assistance of the Empire in the war, a feature upon which Commander Wedgwood lays so much stress in his Report. But we do not think the evidence before us justifies attaching to Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff alone the blame for the mistakes and shortcomings connected with the Mesopotamia Expedition. We have given reasons for a wider, and, in our judgment, a more equitable apportionment of responsibility.

---

38. In our investigations we have been confronted by an enormous mass of written evidence. Sir Beauchamp Duff supported his oral evidence by over forty Blue-books and other documents drawn up by the Headquarters Staff in India. They were admirably edited and annotated. But this mass of written evidence, as well as the many other documents

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00004d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

B. Recommendations.

which poured in from all sides, and which had to be mastered before witnesses could be examined, at times made the work of the Commission very severe. It would have been impossible for us adequately to have discharged our duties and to issue a Report as quickly as we have done had it not been for the ability, industry and powers of organisation of our Secretary, Mr. R. G. Duff. His assistance was invaluable, and we wish to commend his services to the head of the Department to which he belongs. He was also well seconded by Mr. J. W-Fitzwilliam, our Assistant Secretary.

(Signed)—

GEORGE HAMILTON,
Chairman,

CYPRIAN A. G. BRIDGE.

DONOUGHMORE.

NEVILLE G. LYTTELTON.

HUGH CECIL.

JOHN HODGE.

ARCHIBALD WILLIAMSON.

Signed by the Commission,
May 17th, 1917.

R. G. DUFF,
Secretary.

BRITISH LIBRARY

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000095

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

SEPARATE REPORT

BY

COMMANDER J. C. WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.

1. I was added to the Commission by direct vote of the House of Commons as a Member of Parliament who had seen a considerable amount of fighting. The fact of my having been fighting may unwittingly have led me to be unduly severe on those who sit behind and send other men to the front. Even making all allowance for this bias, I still find differences, and differences of principle, between myself and my colleagues that make the signing of their report impossible to me.

Minor points of difference.

2. It is not necessary to waste time over minor points of difference. To attribute the disasters in Mesopotamia to the use by the Secretary of State of private telegrams, or to Lord Kitchener's old changes in the army in India seems to me to shew some lack of a sense of proportion. If all the telegrams that were private had been public, and if there had been a Military Member of Council in addition to Sir Beauchamp Duff, I do not think even then, so long as the attitude of the Indian Administration remained the same, there would have been much difference in result; there might have been less decision, there might have been more friction.

Mistakes or Crimes?

3. My chief difference from my colleagues goes much deeper. They distribute blame over many, in India, in Mesopotamia, and at home; but censure for honest human error has nothing in common with the censure we should pass on an attitude of unwillingness to help in war. If we confound mistakes with crimes the result is a dangerous leniency towards crime.

The Decision to Advance.

4. As honest error I class any mistake that may have been made in authorising the 1915 advance on Baghdad, by the "Military Secretary of the India Office, the Secretary of State and the War Committee of the Cabinet." Indeed I maintain that the publication of the evidence will completely absolve from all blame both the Military Secretary, Sir Edmund Barrow, and the War Committee. With the material put before them from Mesopotamia and India they would have deserved as much, if not more, censure had they decided, not for, but against the advance. It will be a bad day for our Empire when soldiers and statesmen decline all risks, and withdraw confidence from the men on the spot.

General Nixon's Advice.

5. It is possible, too, to regard as honest error General Nixon's mistake in urging the Bagdad advance with wholly insufficient transport. He was at least enthusiastic and ready to take risks, and to do what I suppose he thought best for his country; while from another point of view it would be as futile to censure General Nixon as to censure any other of the 21 general officers of the Indian Army whom it has been found necessary to relieve of their commands in the field. They are the natural result of Indian Army Government, belonging to an old type, brought up to be what they are, and deprived by long residence among Eastern subjects of that energy, wider patriotism and education which is essential for the successful prosecution of a great war. An administration that was content with this type and selected the generals to command in Mesopotamia, that knew them for what they were and yet let the expedition be run as "nobody's child," must be held responsible for what happened in Mesopotamia.

Starving the Army in India.

6. One can hardly regard even as an error the effort made by Lord Crewe and the Cabinet to reduce the cost of the Indian Army before the war. My colleagues, in implying censure upon him and earlier Secretaries of State in this matter, seem to me to miss the point. Economy under the new conditions of friendship with Russia there might well

(C 48—176)

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x000007

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

have been at that time; but it should have been directed by the authorities in India rather towards obtaining a smaller and efficient force than towards keeping the force large but starving it of modern military accessories. It was this latter policy, pursued by India for some years previous to the war, that made the Army as ill-found as indicated in my colleagues' report; and for this policy it was hardly the Government in England that was responsible. Further, the responsibility of the Indian Government in this respect is a responsibility, not for an error, but for reluctance to interfere with the vested interests of a corporation of their servants.

Personnel and Training.

7. If the equipment of the Indian Army when war began was inadequate and out of date, strictures hardly less severe must be passed upon the personnel. Evidence laid before us has shown that the standards for the higher commands have deteriorated since the Boer War, and the exceptionally long list of Anglo-Indian generals who have been relieved of their commands in the field cannot be entirely set down to the normal retirement of the aged in a war that demands young men. Nor are Mid-Victorian manœuvres, carried on without such modern accessories of warfare as mechanical transport, air park, wireless telegraphy, barbed wire, flares, entrenching tools, with wholly inadequate telephones, and with two-wheeled hospital tongas drawn by bullocks, likely to be of much help as training. And a considerable part of the Army in Southern India seem to have no manœuvres at all, even of this unsatisfactory nature.

Reserves.

8. The same feeling of security and eastern lassitude that was content with an Army of this description led to the acceptance of a system of reserves of officers and men which must in any case have completely broken down directly war came. The reserve system for the Native Army (rank and file) seems to have been well adapted to foster the loyalty of political pensioners, but the old men who returned to the colours were unsuitable for soldiers; a reserve scheme should be concerned principally with military efficiency.

A reserve scheme for white officers had been drawn up, but as little or no pecuniary inducement was held out to young white civilians to join the Indian Army Reserve, only 43 such officers existed at the beginning of the war. The Indian Government have since had to draw over 2,600 Indian Army Reserve officers out of India and to give them such hasty training as was possible.

If no provision was made for a reserve of white officers there was the less excuse for allowing old-fashioned prejudices against colour to stand in the way of the formation of an adequately trained cadre of Indian officers which the native rulers of India would willingly have supplied. From evidence tendered to us it is evident that a change in this direction would not be unwelcome to the English officers in the Indian Army.

Value of Indian Army.

9. In spite of being ill-equipped, ill-trained, and resting on paper reserves, the regimental officers and the rank and file of the Indian Army have fought in a manner to show that, with proper drafts and properly trained and equipped, they would have few or no superiors. The victories at Kut and Ctesiphon—at Ctesiphon where 35 per cent. of the whole army fell on the field and yet that army was victorious,—as well as the bloody attacks at Wadi and Sannah that were made again and again over an open plain through deep mud in the face of hopeless odds and almost certain failure, have led to an entire reconsideration of the value of the Indian Army. They are worth something better than management and control by eastern lethargy and bureaucratic incompetence. There is no fault to find with the younger men of the Anglo-Indian Army, but they lose stamina with long residence in the East.

The good change in the Control.

10. The success that has attended the Army of Mesopotamia since the conduct of the campaign was taken over by the War Office, the change that has come over the feeding, the cheerfulness, the morale, of that Army, are palpable to the public eye. That this is due in part to the energy of the War Office, and to the excellent officers they have sent out I should be the last to deny. But when all allowance has been made for this, the change cannot but be largely accounted for by the previous attitude of the Indian Government towards the expedition, an attitude which they adopted not only to the expedition but towards the war as a whole.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000063

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

11. It is precisely Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff whom I cannot merely charge with honest human error. They, and they alone, as is shown by my colleagues, formed and were the Indian Administration during that part of the war under consideration. Throughout their conduct of the war they seem to me to have shown little desire to help and some desire actually to obstruct the energetic prosecution of the war. As a reason for this obstruction they gave—the situation in India; and I for one feel no sense of obligation to them for placing "risks" in India above the dire necessities of the British Empire, and the welfare of their own troops in Mesopotamia.

To charge two high officials with "little desire to help and some desire actually to obstruct the energetic prosecution of the war" is a serious accusation, and one difficult to accept. I have therefore felt bound to support it by a considerable body of evidence. Such evidence must necessarily take the form of extracts without context (till the evidence is published in full), extracts from letters or cables from Lord Hardinge or Sir Beauchamp Duff, extracts from protests by Lord Kitchener or Lord Crewe, extracts from speeches by Lord Hardinge or his Financial Adviser, Sir William Meyer, extracts from evidence given to the Commission on oath as to the view taken by the War Office in England of the Indian attitude. Extracts are not a satisfactory method of carrying conviction, but the subsequent publication of the volumes of evidence will show that the full correspondence conveys no better impression, and that the extracts have been taken with all the fairness possible. Furthermore, I have felt it advisable to back up the extracted evidence with a list of the measures for helping the Empire that India has adopted since the departure of Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff, many of them having been previously waived aside as impracticable by these same officials in written evidence before the Commission. Such a list will confirm my finding.

Although I had the advantage of being able to cross-examine Sir Beauchamp Duff and the other Anglo-Indian officials that came before the Commission, I was unable to be present when Lord Hardinge himself came under examination. My colleagues examined him on none of the passages which I extract; he may be able to give satisfactory explanations for all of them; he may deny the implication I give to them in every case. But of the meaning of plain English the public can judge, and the effect of the attitude was such that it caused the very civilians in India to complain of the pretence that "India is not at war." Explanations given now do not efface the impression conveyed then.

A. EVIDENCE AS TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT FROM CABLES.

12. On the outbreak of war the Indian Government responded, liberally according to our then estimates of what the war was likely to be, and despatched considerable expeditions to France and to Egypt. Very soon, however, the grudging spirit made itself visible. On August 6th the loan of 15 Indian officers was refused, a small matter which was reversed two days later. Then, on August 12th, before indeed the defeats in France, the Viceroy wired—"Although we are ready to run some risk . . . . The Commander-in-Chief complains that he is absolutely crippled by this last measure relating to officers."

In his next telegrams the Viceroy showed his position, safety of India must come first. August 15th—"We have, however, never wavered in our readiness to assist the Empire to the utmost of our power, limited only by considerations of the safety of India." August 27th—"We have spared no effort . . . running even a certain amount of risk by the depletion of our stock of rifles, ammunition." On August 27th he must have known of the disasters in France, but he may not have known how serious they were when he talked of "a certain amount of risk."

The appeals from home to which these telegrams were a reply have not been before the Commission, but we have a sample in Lord Kitchener's wire of September 3rd—"Can you manufacture any guns yourself;" and the reply was—"Our manufacture of guns is negligible."

No effort seems to have been made in these early times to do anything to increase the resources of the Empire in material or men. The Commander-in-Chief wired September 5th—"It was thought here politically inadvisable at present to agree to your request for Nepal troops for Egypt"; and this though the suggestion had been made by His Majesty himself.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000025

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

13. It is difficult to say whether Lord Hardinge or Sir Beauchamp Duff was primarily responsible for this attitude of negation. For instance, the Viceroy cabled, September 18th, 1914—"Although I have practically met all the demands that have been made upon me, even at some risk, there is a limit beyond which risk becomes a serious danger . . . the Commander-in-Chief will also never agree to any weakening of these frontier divisions." To which Lord Kitchener replied, September 19th—"You hardly seem to realise the seriousness of our position on the Continent . . . I cannot understand your refusal to accept the 15-pdr." This 15-pdr. gun has, of course, since been used by our troops on the Continent. The Viceroy replied, September 23rd—"Duff was so strong on the subject of the inconvenience of having two kinds of artillery in the country that I had to give way to him . . . Duff, though most willing and anxious to co-operate, is far more nervous than I am." Next day Lord Kitchener again appealed—"I do not think you yet quite realise in India what the war is going to be. If we lose it will be worse for India than any success of internal revolution or frontier attack." The Viceroy having spoken for the Commander-in-Chief, the Commander-in-Chief then spoke for the Viceroy and wired, September 25th—"A Governor-General can hardly sit quiet and see the whole control of Indian defence withdrawn from him altogether. You must remember that the Viceroy and his Council cannot be disregarded." . . . The evidence before us showed, however, that the Council was not consulted as to the war, and whenever India was asked for help she responded generously. This incident, connected not only with the question of the guns, but also with direct correspondence between the War Office and Sir Beauchamp Duff, ended as follows, the Viceroy wired, October 1st—"Duff objected strongly to Kitchener . . . and received an angry message in reply . . . We have now practically got to the bedrock."

14. It would almost seem as if jealousy for the conservation of the Army in India affected their attitude towards every attempt that Lord Kitchener might make to meet India's wishes. He offered Territorials to replace regiments of the Line, and the Viceroy replied, September 20th—"We cannot regard Territorials as fit to cope with Pathans in hill warfare. . . . We cannot raise new forces, because we have given up to the Imperial Army all our new rifles and practically all our artillery and owing to number of our officers given to meet demands in England we are already very short and with no possibility of replacing them. Of course, any idea of an expedition to Basra will be out of the question since we could not send Territorial Infantry and Artillery against the Turks." This cable was sent just at the moment that the rifle difficulty was most acute at home, but new forces were being raised here and training proceeding, with or without rifles. Two days later we are told that the Indian Government were "issuing an appeal to gentlemen in India to join the Reserve (I.A.R.)"; they had evidently made up their minds to try to deal with the "impossibility" of replacing officers.

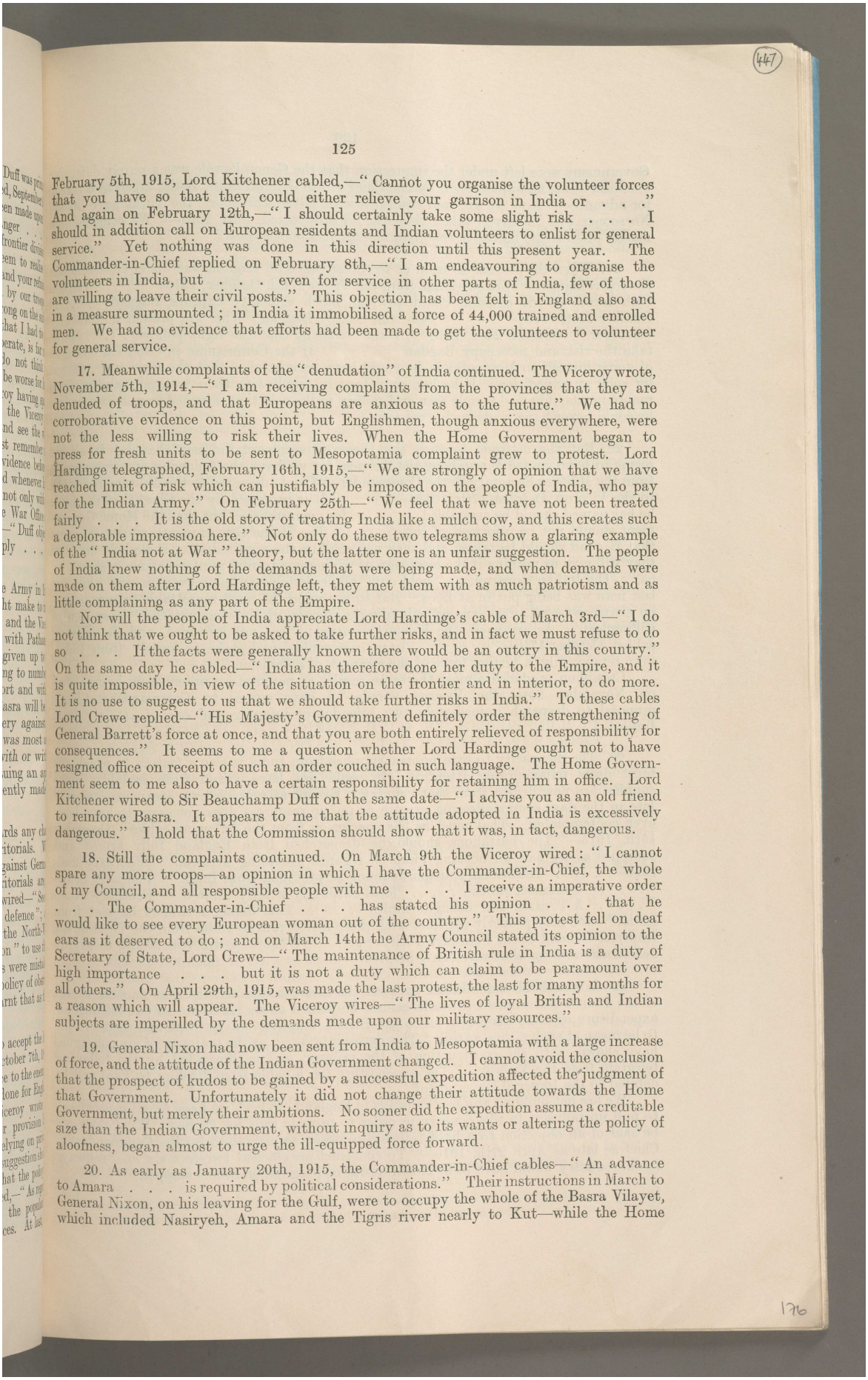
15. But what seems to me most symptomatic of their attitude towards any change in the established order of their world is their resentment of the Territorials. When these troops arrived, after Territorials had done good work in France against Germans, the Commander-in-Chief cabled, January 20th—"The . . . Territorials are, of course, quite unfit for frontier work"; on January 30th, the Viceroy wired—"Second Line troops from home can hardly be regarded as suited for frontier defence"; and on February 1st—"It would be madness to send Territorial troops to the North-West frontier." And we have seen that it was deemed "out of the question" to use them against Turks. It is not merely that their estimates of Territorial troops were mistaken, the serious point to my mind is that this estimate was one which suited a policy of obstruction. If Territorials were not fitted for frontier war, they could have learnt that as they have learnt worse forms of warfare.

16. If the Indian Government gave grudgingly and was reluctant to accept the help offered, it was also apathetic. We learn in a cable from the Viceroy, October 7th, 1914, that "Turkey . . . is not in a position to give real material assistance to the enemy." But in that matter Turkey has done more for Germany than India had done for England up to this present year. It was energy that was lacking. The Viceroy wrote on October 21st,—"I inquired of the Commander-in-Chief whether proper provision had been made for warm clothing for the troops. He told me that he was relying on private charity for this." This, of course, the Viceroy vetoed; but that such a suggestion should have been made shows, either that the matter had been forgotten, or that the policy of starvation had run mad. On January 5th the Commander-in-Chief cabled,—"As regards reinforcements, our reservists are turning out disappointing." Yet the population of India is 315,000,000, of whom some 50,000,000 belong to fighting races. At last, on

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000b7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



February 5th, 1915, Lord Kitchener cabled,—" Cannot you organise the volunteer forces that you have so that they could either relieve your garrison in India or . . ." And again on February 12th,—" I should certainly take some slight risk . . . I should in addition call on European residents and Indian volunteers to enlist for general service." Yet nothing was done in this direction until this present year. The Commander-in-Chief replied on February 8th,—" I am endeavouring to organise the volunteers in India, but . . . even for service in other parts of India, few of those are willing to leave their civil posts." This objection has been felt in England also and in a measure surmounted ; in India it immobilised a force of 44,000 trained and enrolled men. We had no evidence that efforts had been made to get the volunteers to volunteer for general service.

17. Meanwhile complaints of the " denudation" of India continued. The Viceroy wrote, November 5th, 1914,—" I am receiving complaints from the provinces that they are denuded of troops, and that Europeans are anxious as to the future." We had no corroborative evidence on this point, but Englishmen, though anxious everywhere, were not the less willing to risk their lives. When the Home Government began to press for fresh units to be sent to Mesopotamia complaint grew to protest. Lord Hardinge telegraphed, February 16th, 1915,—" We are strongly of opinion that we have reached limit of risk which can justifiably be imposed on the people of India, who pay for the Indian Army." On February 25th—" We feel that we have not been treated fairly . . . It is the old story of treating India like a milch cow, and this creates such a deplorable impression here." Not only do these two telegrams show a glaring example of the " India not at War " theory, but the latter one is an unfair suggestion. The people of India knew nothing of the demands that were being made, and when demands were made on them after Lord Hardinge left, they met them with as much patriotism and as little complaining as any part of the Empire.

Nor will the people of India appreciate Lord Hardinge's cable of March 3rd—" I do not think that we ought to be asked to take further risks, and in fact we must refuse to do so . . . If the facts were generally known there would be an outcry in this country." On the same day he cabled—" India has therefore done her duty to the Empire, and it is quite impossible, in view of the situation on the frontier and in interior, to do more. It is no use to suggest to us that we should take further risks in India." To these cables Lord Crewe replied—" His Majesty's Government definitely order the strengthening of General Barrett's force at once, and that you are both entirely relieved of responsibility for consequences." It seems to me a question whether Lord Hardinge ought not to have resigned office on receipt of such an order couched in such language. The Home Government seem to me also to have a certain responsibility for retaining him in office. Lord Kitchener wired to Sir Beauchamp Duff on the same date—" I advise you as an old friend to reinforce Basra. It appears to me that the attitude adopted in India is excessively dangerous." I hold that the Commission should show that it was, in fact, dangerous.

18. Still the complaints continued. On March 9th the Viceroy wired : " I cannot spare any more troops—an opinion in which I have the Commander-in-Chief, the whole of my Council, and all responsible people with me . . . I receive an imperative order . . . The Commander-in-Chief . . . has stated his opinion . . . that he would like to see every European woman out of the country." This protest fell on deaf ears as it deserved to do ; and on March 14th the Army Council stated its opinion to the Secretary of State, Lord Crewe—" The maintenance of British rule in India is a duty of high importance . . . but it is not a duty which can claim to be paramount over all others." On April 29th, 1915, was made the last protest, the last for many months for a reason which will appear. The Viceroy wires—" The lives of loyal British and Indian subjects are imperilled by the demands made upon our military resources."

19. General Nixon had now been sent from India to Mesopotamia with a large increase of force, and the attitude of the Indian Government changed. I cannot avoid the conclusion that the prospect of kudos to be gained by a successful expedition affected the judgment of that Government. Unfortunately it did not change their attitude towards the Home Government, but merely their ambitions. No sooner did the expedition assume a creditable size than the Indian Government, without inquiry as to its wants or altering the policy of aloofness, began almost to urge the ill-equipped force forward.

20. As early as January 20th, 1915, the Commander-in-Chief cables—" An advance to Amara . . . is required by political considerations." Their instructions in March to General Nixon, on his leaving for the Gulf, were to occupy the whole of the Basra Vilayet, which included Nasiryeh, Amara and the Tigris river nearly to Kut—while the Home

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000002

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Government were left under the impression that the General's rôle was a purely defensive one. In June, an appreciation by the Chief of the General Staff, India, urged as a reason for advance—" Now we are well equipped with River Transport, the Turks have little." No sooner was Nasiriyeh taken than the Viceroy wired, July 26th—" We consider it a matter of strategic necessity that Kut should also be occupied."

21. When the critical decision as to the advance on Bagdad was under consideration the following series of cables came from the Viceroy, 6th October, 1915—" . . . Nixon with forces at his disposal could without much difficulty capture Bagdad. . . ." October 21st, 1915—" . . . Take and occupy Bagdad. This will present no difficulty whatever." October 23rd, 1915—" I am confident that the right policy . . . is to take the risk and to occupy Bagdad . . ." If the Commander-in-Chief had thought of going himself to Mesopotamia he could have seen at once that the force was unfitted for such an expedition. If he had only kept in touch with their transport and medical requirements, if he had merely seen and spoken to the men that returned from that country, he could never have made such a mistake.

22. But the attitude towards the Home Government did not change. It almost seems to have spread throughout the Service, for we have the following amazing minute from the Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief addressed to the Military Secretary to the Viceroy, October 17th, 1915—" . . . It is proposed by the Chief that the force he has named should be assembled . . . for eventualities, but that the Home Government should not be informed of this . . . The Home Government are very anxious that Bagdad should be taken, and they will send us the required force if we hold out, but they will give us nothing if the least sign of willingness to find reinforcements is shown by us." The Indian Government " held out " while Serbia was being overrun, and while our last man was being put in at Loos. But to my mind the most regrettable feature is that no shame was felt, even among subordinate officers, at showing not the " least sign of willingness." As arranged, the Home Government was not informed, and the Viceroy cabled, October 17th—" . . . . In no case could I undertake to supply from India, even temporarily, a further force of the strength of a Division."

Ctesiphon produced almost the same results as peremptory orders from home; and on November 25th, the Viceroy wired—" I have agreed to Commander-in-Chief's proposal to despatch immediately two brigades of infantry and one of artillery from India. . . ."

23. The incapacity to extemporise supplies from India is also a feature to which one must draw unfavourable attention. It could not have arisen from inability, since supplies are now drawn from that country. Except as regards river steamers, and that late in the day, commandeering private or public resources does not seem to have been even contemplated. That must be the conclusion from the following cables: December 15th, 1915—" The battalions should be despatched from England fully armed and equipped as we can do nothing more as regards providing material." February 2nd, 1916—" . . . Additional transport cannot be provided from India." February 5th—" . . . Ordnance, stores . . . local output is strictly limited." February 7th—" . . . A.T. carts and draught mules . . . This demand cannot be met from India." One may properly contrast with these a telegram to India from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, February 10th—" . . . What steps are you taking to supply deficiencies and in what way can I help."

24. It would be superfluous to quote further refusals of help, but another aspect of the Indian Government attitude cannot be passed over. A desire to put all possible expenditure off their shoulders on to the British taxpayer was present and seems to me to be mean at such a time as this. This desire interfered, as the majority of my colleagues have shown, with the construction of the railway, and is illustrated by the following telegram from the Viceroy—" The expenditure (on a cable from Bushire to Fao) will be debited to the Imperial Government."

We are not building any new railways in England; indeed, we have found it necessary to pull up railways in this country in order to provide rails for France. What then can be said of an objection to a light railway in Mesopotamia raised by the Commander-in-Chief as late as April 27th, 1916—" To construct an efficient two-foot six line, railways in this country would have to be closed down, or progress on others stopped."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000af

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

B. EVIDENCE AS TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT FROM SPEECHES.

25. The evidence of the attitude of the Indian Government is as clearly shown in speeches made before the Indian Council in March, 1915, on the Budget Debate at Simla. On March 2nd Sir William Meyer stated in Council—"In consequence of the war, expenditure is being restricted to what is considered essential for the maintenance of efficiency and the protection of this country." Lord Hardinge, in the Budget debate on March 30th said—"The imposition of additional taxation at the present time would not in our judgment have been justified either by financial requirements or by the present economic condition of the country." Mr. Bannerjee added—"Although it is a War Budget it does not add to the military expenditure; on the contrary, the military expenditure is slightly less than had been budgeted for." Mr. Abbott, of Jhansi, offered a mild protest, he said—"Handsome as our offerings may have been, . . . they have not, I regret to say, been on the same princely footing and basis as that of our fellow Colonials. However, I am confident that the demand has only to be made and loyal India will . . . offer to pay the expenses of our Expeditionary Forces in the same way as Canada and Australia are doing." To which Sir William Meyer replied—"India had been paying heavily for a splendid Army . . . for the defence of India . . . India had been maintaining this Army long before the Dominions thought of doing anything, to speak of, in the way of military expenditure."

While the above extracts show clearly enough the attitude of the Government towards expenditure on the war, two further speeches show as clearly the attitude of the same people towards borrowing on the London market. Lord Hardinge in the same Budget debate declared—"Our capital programme . . . *i.e.*, for railways and canals . . . . must be maintained on a scale bearing some reasonable relation to past standards if excessive hardship and dislocation are to be avoided. Our borrowing arrangements naturally follow." As late as October, 1915, Sir William Meyer, speaking in the Karachi Chamber of Commerce, explained the situation—"The lending capacities of India are very limited, and we cannot face the prospect of depriving ourselves of the aid, which we shall have to look to from them, by letting them be diverted to a War Loan."*

C. EVIDENCE SHOWING THE OPINION HELD BY RESPONSIBLE PERSONS ON THE ATTITUDE ADOPTED BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

26. It is unfortunate that Lord Kitchener could give no living testimony, but answers by Lord Crewe, General Sir Edmund Barrow and Major-General Maurice are given below :—

Lord Crewe : "From the first the Government of India kept complaining almost bitterly of the demands that were made on them. . . He (Lord Kitchener) took precisely the same view of the denudation of British troops in India. I quite well remember his going so far as to say, on one occasion that, even if we lost India through a mutiny, it would be better than losing the fight in France."

Lord Crewe, being asked : "They treated the crisis rather as though it were an extreme form of frontier campaign than as though it were a world-wide war for which there was no precedent," replied : "Yes, I do not think that is an unfair criticism."

General Sir Edmund Barrow, being asked : "'It is no use to suggest to us that we should take further risks in India.' Does not that indicate a rather curious spirit in connection with this European war ? Do they put India first and England second ?" replied : "Yes, it would really read so."

General Sir Edmund Barrow, being asked : "There does not seem to be any exceptional energy or initiative in India," answered : "I am inclined to agree."

General Sir Edmund Barrow, being asked if he would indicate what had caused "this breakdown of administration," replied : "Yes, but I think . . . the initial cause goes far beyond this Commission. I mean it strikes at the whole system of military administration in India."

Major-General Maurice, Director of Military Operations, being asked : "Do you think that the Indian Government have made full use of the resources of India as has been done in this country ?" replied : "My impression is, certainly not."

* This speech of Sir William Meyer's was not put before the Commission, but came privately into my hands. Sir William Meyer was not examined by the Commission as he was in India.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00001b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Major-General Maurice, being asked : " Have you heard suggestions that General Sykes is being starved as regards officers and equipment ? " replied : " Yes ; I hope things are satisfactory now, but there is no question he was starved, and it came to our notice and we pressed the India Office very strongly."

Even the Vincent-Bingley Commission (composed as to two out of three of its members of Anglo-Indian officials) found itself compelled to put the blame on the Indian Government. In Sir Beauchamp Duff's words : " The Commission have not followed the headings of the terms of reference in their report. . . The Commission have departed from their terms of reference and embarked upon criticism of the preparations for the campaign. . . The Commission have ended by reporting on the past and present action of the Government of India instead of carrying out their instructions."

The views of the civilians in India are even more frankly stated, and to clear them of responsibility the following examination of Mr. F. Carter, of Messrs. Turner, Morrison & Co., Ltd., is given :—

I gather from your evidence that there is a sort of feeling in India among the civilians that India is not pulling its full weight during the war—that the Indian Government is not doing all that it might do during the war ?—Yes.

Can you say whether that feeling is general among the civilians in Calcutta ?—Yes.

Did it never occur to the civilian population in Calcutta that more might have been done in making ammunition at the same time that the Ministry of Munitions was started over here ?—Yes.

You never heard that the difficulty was that they could not get machinery ?—No.

Is there any basis for that suggestion, considering that there were the American and Japanese markets available ?—No.

You could have got lathes from both those countries ?—Yes. How did we start making munitions at all ?

The other reason given for not making munitions in India on a considerable scale is that the Indian native is extremely difficult to teach to work in the workshops. Is that so ?—No.

Would you consider an Indian native quite as easy to teach the use of the ordinary lathe as a woman in England ?—Far better.

It has been stated by the Commander-in-Chief that India is a poor and backward country and that therefore it cannot be expected to help more than it has done. Is that your impression of India ?—No, it is not.

Is it your impression that it is a very poor country at the present time ?—No.

You have been in India for some years. Have you ever known India more prosperous than at the present time ?—No, never.

Do you regard—I will call it the *non possumus* attitude of the Government of India, as due to the Commander-in-Chief and the Viceroy, or is it due to the whole of the bureaucracy in India ?—I should think that it is the whole of the bureaucracy in India. I am speaking of the Imperial Government and not about Bengal or Bombay.

The whole of the Simla Government ?—Yes, the Simla Government.

D. EVIDENCE AS TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AS SHOWN BY MEASURES ADOPTED SINCE THE CHANGE IN THE PERSONNEL OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

27. These are the measures which were not taken by Lord Hardinge, but which, I believe, have subsequently been adopted :—

A War Loan.

28. We had evidence put before us as to the poverty of India. This was denied by all the witnesses who were questioned on the subject, and I cannot but think that the statement was made to excuse the inaction in this matter of the Indian Government. A loan is now being raised, for the first time.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x00000d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Sharing the War Expenses.

29. The Indian Government have now offered £100,000,000. Previously the whole expenses of the Indian Expeditionary Forces in France, Egypt, East Africa and Mesopotamia, over and above the normal peace expenditure of the Indian Army, had fallen upon Great Britain alone; and the Indian Government was content to let this be so, making no protest, no offer even to help in our need.

War Taxation.

30. Till this year there has been no raising of the Indian income-tax, no war-profit tax.

Compulsory Service for Whites and Eurasians.

31. This too has come about only since Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff left India, 12 months after compulsory service was enacted in England.

Combing-out of the Civilian Officials.

32. At the time of the Return put before us, probably July, 1916, only 182 civilian officials, less than 1 per cent. of the available men, had been given leave to join the Indian Army Reserve, and then only ,according to Sir Beauchamp Duff, for service in India itself. This Sir Beauchamp attributed to the India Office in this country. It may be so, and I am not clear that there has as yet been any marked change in this matter.

Mobilization of Industry.

33. We had evidence that the barge-building yards at Calcutta and Bombay were lying empty for the first year of the war. The Tata Steel Works were continuing to produce steel rails for Indian railways. It was only late in 1916 that Government control of the works of the Tata Company and the Bengal Iron and Steel Company was introduced as in Great Britain.

Restriction of Imports.

34. This seems not to have occurred to the Indian Government till this year, but they had no necessity to keep up the exchange. The series of Government demands that were, however, made on the home country without the perception that they could not possibly be carried out argues a lack of appreciation of the seriousness of war.

The raising of new Units for the Army.

35. No new units were raised till this year, although the population of India is 315,000,000, of whom about 50,000,000 come from fighting races.

Commissions for Native Officers.

36. Although they were very short of officers in the Indian regiments, executive commissions were still, as before the war, withheld from the natives of India. Indeed, even now it is not the King's commission, but the Viceroy's that is given to the native cadet in the new army. We had no evidence, however, that this omission was not the fault of the War Office at home.

Frank Co-operation with the Princes and People of India.

37. This, which would have meant so much to England and India, was not adopted. Instead even the Viceroy's Executive Council was passed over, and the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief governed and thought alone. No generous appeal for help was made to India, no more generous attitude shown to India. On the last point I do not know that there has as yet been any change.

Supply of Shell and Stores from India.

38. This has only recently been taken seriously in hand. With America, Japan and Australia to draw on by submarine-safe routes, the steps could have been taken as well in 1915, and a safe supply to Mesopotamia by a short route would now have been available. Colonel Collins, M.P., observed, even last September, that the clothes of the coolies in Mesopotamia were marked as coming from Manchester.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00009e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EVIDENCE AS TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

Effect of want of willingness to help.

39. I cannot resist the conclusion that the above evidence points to a want of willingness to help on the part of the Indian Government—that is on the part of Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff. That this unwillingness affected adversely the expedition to Mesopotamia is obvious. Had they thrown themselves heart and soul in to getting India to do all that was humanly possible both in men and material the whole course of the war might have been altered. That was not done even in this country at first, but the attitude of the Indian Government prevented the effort being made in the spring of 1915 as was done here, and it prevented the success of their own expedition in Mesopotamia.

The Defence of the Government.

40. The answer made by the Government of India to this charge is that the dangers in India were such that what might seem obstructiveness was in reality honest, if mistaken, caution. There was acutely present to their minds danger from (*a*) mutiny, (*b*) a native rising in India, (*c*) an invasion from Afghanistan or from the frontier tribes.

The Danger to India.

41. It is natural to assume that, since the attitude taken up by Lord Hardinge and the Commander-in-Chief has come under open criticism at home, every effort will have been made to colour the risks in India as darkly as possible. The Secretary of State has prepared and put before us a Memorandum detailing as fully as possible the internal troubles which India has gone through. It is difficult to summarise, and the whole cannot now be published. There have been more than the usual number of dacoities; there have been curious semi-religious theories about the Germans; Hindus have been murdered by Mohamedans; there have been rumours of gun-running plots; the police got wind of some general troop trouble, and a native post or two seem doubtfully to have thrown off their allegiance—less than a dozen men. But there has been no armed rising, and the capture of 50 revolvers by revolutionaries is singled out as the most serious incident. No mutiny has taken place in India sufficiently serious to call for disarmament or for corporate punishment of any unit. Germans were not interned in India till long after they were interned here in England, which omission testifies against any real fear of serious internal trouble. The Amir has shown great loyalty, and the seven "heavy" raids to which Sir Beauchamp Duff bore witness actually caused only 338 casualties. On July 2nd, 1915, after the period in which reluctance to help was most marked, Sir Beauchamp cabled to Lord Kitchener, "Though I have had to meet three heavy raids, the frontier has been fairly quiet." The other raids, such as they were, took place subsequently.

The Seriousness of the Risk.

42. Therefore it was not actual trouble but possible dangers to British rule in India behind which the Administration must shelter itself. Of these possible dangers both Lord Kitchener and General Sir Edmund Barrow should, from their long residence in India, be well able to judge; yet no administrators are more severe in their criticism of the attitude of the Indian Government than these two. There is always danger in this world: it is a question of degree.

The Council not consulted.

43. Had the possible dangers been of a serious character, it is to me inconceivable that the Viceroy should never have seen fit to consult his Council on the relative urgency of the demands made on the Indian Army by India and by the Home Government. Real danger in India must have entailed the consulting of the Council, more especially in March, 1915, when the peremptory order was issued from Whitehall. That they were not consulted is evidence that the danger did not then exist to the degree now put forward.

Suppression of a Modern Rebellion.

44. Danger to British rule in India from a rising of the people, or from a mutiny, has obviously become much less since the year 1857. Railways, the telegraph, the helio, wireless telegraphy, motor transport, magazine rifles, machine guns, aeroplanes, armoured cars, all these costly developments of modern warfare are beyond the reach of insurgents,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000014

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

and place even a few Regular troops in a position of immeasurable superiority. Furthermore, during a great war, the power of ruthless repression—falling on the just as well as on the unjust—is little likely to be too closely scrutinised, and adds greatly to the decisive power of the Executive.

Attitude displayed in other ways.

45. In any case it does not appear that the objection to the denuding of India of troops can be an excuse for the attitude of the Indian Government displayed in other matters. Danger in India cannot account for the want of energy shown in India, for the non-mobilisation of industry, for the selfish financial attitude, for the objection to building a Tigris railway (two-foot six-inches gauge) because "progress on railways in this country (India) would have to be stopped," for the reluctance to use British Territorials, for the want of touch with their own expedition, for the ignorant advice given as regards the advance on Bagdad. Nor even can it account for the medical breakdown, since surely the actual needs of an army in the field must come before the problematic needs of an army on the frontier. It would appear that, in fact, the Army Administration in India was jealous of the Army at home; they wished to retain the magnitude of their command; they felt they were neglected, "out of the picture," and they determined, perhaps unconsciously, to be obstructive. It will be unfortunate if an attitude of this sort is passed over.

Attitude a Calamity.

46. Such an attitude is held unpatriotic in a private citizen; it is worse than unpatriotic in a British official; and in men in the positions occupied by Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff it has been a calamity for England.

FINDINGS.

47. I find that, throughout the tenure of office of Lord Hardinge, the Government of India showed little desire to help and some desire actually to obstruct the successful prosecution of the war.

48. I find that the responsibility for the Mesopotamian failure of 1915-16 rests principally on the Government of India, in that they gave ill-informed advice and did not throw themselves and the resources of India into the energetic conduct of the war.

49. I find that the Government of India consisted in fact of the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, and the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff.

50. I find that no blame should be attributed to anyone, civil or military, in this country for the initiation, consideration or sanction of the advance to Bagdad in 1915. I am equally convinced that the delay caused by the consideration of the advance in this country did not retard or adversely affect in any way the chances of that advance.

51. I find that the advance on Bagdad failed because the transport was insufficient and the force ill-found.

52. I find that the relief of Kut failed because the transport was insufficient and the force ill-found.

53. I find that the troops maintained the best traditions of the Service, that the generalship at the front was fair, but that General Townshend alone inspired in his men that confidence and devotion without which victories such as the first battle of Kut and Ctesiphon are impossible.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Steps should be taken at once to put the Indian Army under the control of the War Office in Whitehall. During the conduct of a world war it is essential that there should be unity of control. To have an army in India (or an army in Egypt) independent of the orders of the War Office must lead to inefficiency. I, and I believe all my colleagues, were impressed very much with the energy displayed by the War Office directly they took over the control of the Army in Mesopotamia, and with the rapid improvement in the efficiency of that force. The same energy applied to the Army in India might yet provide us with new units and increased material from that country with its 315,000,000 inhabitants. The objections that were raised to such control by Sir Beauchamp Duff early in the war can no longer carry weight.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00005f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

2. All the evidence before us showed that the Indian Reserve system had completely broken down. The old system seems to have been quite unsound as a military expedient, and an inquiry should be initiated at once to report on the most suitable substitute, to provide reservists not only for the rank and file, but also for an efficient reserve of officers.

3. Either the inquiry suggested above or the Indian Administration itself should immediately consider whether the old-fashioned prejudice against giving the King's Commission to natives of India can not be set aside during this war. Even with the invaluable assistance given by the civilians who flocked to the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, the evidence given before us showed a lamentable shortage of officers with the Indian Regiments which must adversely affect their fighting value. There seems no reason to suppose from the Mesopotamian campaigns that Indians, as fighting men, are any less capable than Turks, who have their own officers under some German guidance. Indian officers under British guidance should do as well.

4. We had evidence that the use of the censorship in Mesopotamia did much to injure the morale of the troops. For some time after the medical breakdown no letters home were permitted except on the printed postcards, of which there were few or none available at the front. It seems clear to me that the censorship was used to prevent people at home from knowing what the troops were suffering. This is not the proper use of the censorship, and is a point that should be made clear now to all the various General Officers Commanding Expeditionary Forces.

5. While concurring in the Recommendations in Part XII, paragraphs 31 and 32 of the Majority Report (which relate to the officers of the Indian Army), I wish to record my conviction, drawn not from evidence before the Commission but from some experience of the two armies, that the system of officering the King's African Rifles in Africa is superior to the Indian system. The King's African Rifles officers are officers of British regiments who are attached to the well-paid African Rifles for a period which in the general case does not exceed five or six years, so that the officer never loses touch with his profession at home or acquires the oriental lethargy that saps the vitality of those kept too long in tropical countries.

6. The other recommendation made by the majority in which I concur is that in Part XII, paragraphs 34 and 35 (relating to medical matters). But I would urge that no re-organisation of the Indian (or other) medical service can be satisfactory which leaves the filling of the senior posts to the ordinary promotion of seniority. In no branch of the service is it more important that the higher direction should be filled by selecting the men who have kept up to date. Long and stereotyped service in a peace garrison may indeed give the organising experience necessary for a campaign—though even that by no means follows—but it certainly does not enable a doctor to keep in touch with the latest discoveries of a rapidly-changing science. I recommend that a Board of Selection, recruited in large part outside Army circles, should select for all promotion above the rank of Major. The same Board might well make recommendations on sanitary, hospital and equipment matters.

7. In one of the Papers put before us by the Indian Government, in order to justify the contrast between the attitude of India and the attitude of the self-governing Dominions, they write as follows—" The self-governing Dominions deny to India the full privileges of citizenship. India again, though not of her own volition, is practically a free market for the trade of the Empire, whereas the colonies impose upon her trade . . . a heavy handicap in the shape of protective tariffs ; and are at liberty, as it would be urged, to equip themselves for an increased outlay on Imperial defence by methods from which India is debarred."

My last recommendation is that we should no longer deny to Indians " the full privileges of citizenship " ; but should allow them a large share in the government of their own country and in the control of that Bureaucracy which in this war, uncontrolled by public opinion, has failed to rise to British standards. Lord Kitchener said that it would be better to lose India than to lose the war. It would certainly be better to lose India than to lose that for which we are fighting the war—the glorious traditions of a people old in liberty.

(Signed) JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD.

17.5.17.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000084

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

APPENDIX I.

"VINCENT-BINGLEY" REPORT.

From

THE COMMISSION APPOINTED TO ENQUIRE INTO THE MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN MESOPOTAMIA.

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, ARMY DEPARTMENT.

SIMLA.
June 29, 1916.

SIR,

In accordance with the instructions conveyed in your letter No. H.-2418, dated March 31st, 1916, we have the honour to submit the following report on the arrangements made for the collection, treatment, and removal of the sick and wounded during the recent operations in Mesopotamia. As the Government of India are aware, the Commission, which was originally composed of two members only (Sir William Vincent and Major-General Bingley), was first appointed by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief on March 2nd, 1916, with directions to enquire into the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia during and subsequent to January, 1916, and to report the conclusions arrived at to the Chief of the General Staff.

2. On receipt of these orders the Commissioners then appointed proceeded at once to Bombay, where a number of sick and wounded who had recently come from Mesopotamia were detained in hospital. Several of the hospitals in Bombay were visited, and various witnesses were examined, many of whom, however, could not be questioned at any great length in the time available, as they were just about to sail for England in the hospital steamer "Assaye." After completing as far as possible their enquiries at Bombay, the Commissioners went to Basra and continued their investigations there. At this stage of the proceedings the terms of reference were modified so as to include in the scope of the enquiry the medical arrangements made for the campaign during the last four months of 1915. From Basra the Commissioners proceeded to Amara, 135 miles up the Tigris. There they recorded the statements of various witnesses, and inspected the arrangements made for the reception and accommodation of the wounded at the different hospitals. After finishing their investigations at Amara, they travelled by river steamer up the Tigris to Wadi, about 270 miles from Basra, where the headquarters of the Tigris Force were encamped. Here fresh evidence was recorded, the arrangements for accommodating sick and wounded were further investigated, and the Commissioners had an opportunity of testing, by personal observation, how far the arrangements for the evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield to the field ambulances and hospitals at Wadi were satisfactory. From Wadi the Commissioners returned to Basra, where revised instructions were received from the Government of India. A copy of the letter and of the enclosure containing these instructions is annexed to this report. These instructions made the following important changes in the terms of reference:—

(*a*) Mr. E. A. Ridsdale was appointed a member of the Commission.

(*b*) The Commission was directed to report the result of its enquiry to the Government of India.

(*c*) The scope of the enquiry was extended, so as to include the whole of the operations in Mesopotamia from November, 1914, up to date.

(*d*) The Commission was directed not only to enquire into the adequacy of the medical arrangements, but was instructed to ascertain and assign responsibility for any defects found and to state whether individuals or the system were to blame.

The addition of a new member at this stage placed the Commission in a difficult position, as by this time Sir William Vincent and Major-General Bingley had examined more than 130 witnesses and had completed their investigations up the Tigris. The inclusion of the earlier operations in the scope of the enquiry added a further complication. The enquiries hitherto made had been confined to operations subsequent to September, 1915, although many of the witnesses examined could have given evidence of value on previous phases of the campaign. By this time, moreover, two of the Commissioners had realised the difficulty of obtaining definite and accurate evidence on the detailed points referred to them, in respect of the operations of September, October, and November, 1915, as many of those intimately connected with this portion of the campaign were either besieged in Kut-el-Amara, or had left the country. The difficulty of securing such evidence in regard to still earlier operations was even greater, and it was clear that it would not be possible in many cases to ascertain all the details required by the reference, such for instance as the forecast of preparations considered necessary prior to each action. For these reasons, we asked that the terms of reference might be amended so as to require us to report on actions prior to Ctesiphon in general terms. This request was refused. We wish, therefore, to state that in dealing with the multiplicity of detail apparent in the report, we are necessarily dependent upon the memory of the witnesses for the accuracy of particular statements. A more serious complication arising from this amendment relates to a question of principle, in that it involved the examination of the medical arrangements of the whole expedition. The medical organisation of a force is an integral part of its military organisation, and cannot be considered apart from the latter. We have, therefore, at times found it impossible to examine the working of the medical organisation without at the same time criticising other arrangements which, though not under the control of the medical authorities, indirectly affected the well-being of the sick and wounded. We have endeavoured to avoid this as much as possible, but we have, throughout our enquiries, realised the difficulty of carrying out any comprehensive investigation of medical arrangements as apart from the general military organisation. It is true that any enquiry into the medical arrangements of the winter of 1915–16 would not have been entirely free from this difficulty, but except as regards transport, the causes which led to the breakdown at that period were largely of a temporary and local character, being due to unforeseen circumstances rather than to radical defects in organisation.

3. On receipt of these instructions the necessity of a second tour up the Tigris was carefully considered, and after discussion it was decided that Mr. Ridsdale should proceed to Amara to see the state of affairs there for himself and to collect further evidence, and that the other two members of the Commission should go up the Euphrates to Nasariyeh and continue their enquiries there. In pursuance of this decision, Mr. Ridsdale proceeded to Amara on May 5th, and Sir William Vincent and Major-General Bingley went to Nasariyeh. The

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000082

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

latter two members of the Commission returned to Basra on May 9th, visiting the hospital at Kurna *en route*. On May 13th Mr. Ridsdale rejoined the Commission, and after a short stay at Basra, in order to collect certain statistical information, we proceeded to Bombay, where we arrived on May 22nd. On May 26th we left for Simla, where we completed our investigations. In order to secure the fullest possible information on the points referred to us for enquiry, we have not only examined a large number of witnesses orally, but have endeavoured by personal inspection and enquiry to ascertain the actual state of affairs and to see for ourselves how far the medical arrangements now work satisfactorily. We have visited numerous hospitals and discussed various points with administrative and executive officers. Two of the Commissioners have personally witnessed the evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield, and scrutinised the arrangements made for their reception and accommodation at dressing stations, collecting stations and field ambulances, and all have travelled with convoys of sick and wounded down the Tigris. Further, we have invited many persons, in a position to give evidence of value, to submit written statements of their experiences and opinions, and by the courtesy of Lieut.-General Sir Percy Lake a notice was published in Force Orders inviting anyone who so desired to furnish a statement to the Commission. The 266 statements recorded in the appendix represent the results of our labours.

4. In spite of these efforts, however, we feel that we have laboured under great disadvantage in our enquiry, particularly in respect of the extended scope of our investigation. In the first place, many officers whose testimony would have been of great value—notably Major-General Townshend, Colonel Hehir, I.M.S., Assistant Director of Medical Services, and other officers of the Sixth Division—were, when the enquiry was being made, either besieged in Kut or prisoners of war. We are therefore at an obvious disadvantage in having to criticise their administration without affording them an opportunity of putting forward their views. Many officers intimately connected with particular phases of the campaign had left Mesopotamia before the Commission was appointed, and, being separated from official records, have not been able to give detailed information on particular points to the Commission. In the case of many other important witnesses we have had to be content with written statements, although it is probable that by personal examination detailed information, on various points not referred to in these statements, could have been elicited. Finally, many of the witnesses examined were officers who, when the Commission was conducting its enquiry, were so overwhelmed with current official work that it was impossible for them to collect and furnish detailed statistical information on particular points without real detriment to their public duties. It was manifestly undesirable to ask them during the active prosecution of the campaign to give up much of their time to collect such information. We also much regret that owing to Surgeon-General J. G. MacNeece having left India on sick leave, before our return from Mesopotamia, we were unable to examine him.

5. *Military synopsis.*—As we are required to record our opinions as to the sufficiency of the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia during each phase of the campaign up to the fall of Kut-el-Amara, and as we are directed to bear in mind throughout our proceedings the strategical situation during this period, and the tactical obligations arising therefrom, it seems desirable to preface our criticisms by a short historical *résumé*, so that the sequence of events may be followed and due importance paid to the military considerations involved. For facility of reference a sketch map is added, showing the position of places mentioned in the text.

The campaign in Mesopotamia up to the time of the departure of the Commission may be divided into four phases, viz. :—

I. The landing at Fao, the occupation of Basra and Kurna, and the defeat at Shaiba or Barjasiyah of the Turkish attempt to recapture Basra.
II. The expulsion of the Turks from Persian Arabistan followed by the occupation of Amara on the Tigris, and of Nasariyeh on the Euphrates.
[For convenience the later operations near Nasariyeh have been included in this phase.]
III. The capture of Kut-el-Amara, advance to Ctesiphon, and subsequent retreat to Kut.
IV. The defence of Kut-el-Amara and the unsuccessful attempts to relieve it.

PHASE I.

6. *Landing at Fao. Battle of Sahil. Capture of Basra.*—War was declared on Turkey on October 31st, 1914. Meanwhile preparations had been made for the occupation of Abadan and the protection of the Persian oil-fields by the organisation of a small force under Brigadier-General W. S. Delamain, for service at the head of the Persian Gulf. This force, consisting of the 16th Infantry Brigade with two Indian mountain batteries, was sent to the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab and directed to effect a landing near Fao. This was carried out on November 6th practically without opposition. The main disembarkation took place at Saniyah, opposite Abadan, on November 10th, and on the 15th General Delamain dispersed the Turkish advanced troops at Saihan. On November 16th Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Barrett, the Commander of the 6th Division, who had landed with the 17th Infantry Brigade two days before, defeated the Turks at Sahil or Zain, inflicting heavy losses. As the result of these operations Basra was occupied on November 23rd, its garrison having meanwhile retired to Kurna. Our casualties in these successful engagements amounted to about 800, of which some 500 occurred at Sahil.

Occupation of Kurna.—By the end of November the 18th Infantry Brigade and the remainder of the divisional troops had arrived at Basra, thus completing the concentration of the 6th Division which constituted the Expeditionary Force. Preparations were at once made for an advance on Kurna, 40 miles up the Tigris, which, being at the junction of the Tigris with the Euphrates, is a place of considerable strategic importance. Kurna was captured on December 8th by a force under Major-General C. I. Fry, with the assistance of a naval flotilla. Our losses amounted to 27 killed and 192 wounded. The Turkish Commander, Subhi Bey, late Vali of Basra, surrendered with most of the garrison. The Turks then established themselves near Rotah, six miles above Kurna, with a view to opposing any further advance.

7 *Operations round Ahwaz.*—At this time the Turkish forces were disposed in three areas, viz., on the Euphrates, on the Tigris, and on the Karun. A jehad was preached in Arabistan early in 1915, and a great gathering of Arabs, supported by eight battalions of Turkish regulars with some guns, invaded Persian territory and cut the pipe line leading from the oil-fields on the Karun to Abadan. A couple of Indian battalions with guns were despatched from Basra under Brigadier-General Robinson to protect Ahwaz and support the Sheikh of Mohammerah, whose tribesmen were giving trouble. On March 3rd this small force moved out a few miles to meet the enemy, who was encountered in greatly superior numbers. A retirement to Ahwaz was ordered, and our troops, being closely pressed by swarms of hostile Arabs, suffered somewhat severely. In consequence of this reverse, the 12th Infantry Brigade under Major-General K. S. Davison was sent to Ahwaz a few days later with orders to hold the place and keep the enemy in check until a sufficient force could be spared to expel the Turk and their Arab auxiliaries from Persian Arabistan.

8. Meanwhile it became evident that operations would have to be undertaken on the Euphrates, as well as on the Karun and the Tigris, necessitating the employment of a larger force. It was accordingly decided to reinforce the 6th Division by the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 12th Division, the latter consisting of the 12th, 30th and 33rd Infantry Brigades, together with a Heavy Artillery Brigade and various special units. The force in Mesopotamia was then organized as an Army Corps, the command of which was given to General Sir John Nixon.

9. General Nixon landed at Basra with the Army Corps Staff on April 9th, 1915, and took over command of the force from Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Barrett, who then proceeded to India on sick leave. Certain other changes were made about this time. The command of the 6th Division was given to Major-General C. V. F. Townshend, and that of the 12th Division to Major-

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

General G. F. Gorringe. Major-General K. S. Davison was replaced in command of the 12th Infantry Brigade by Brigadier-General K. E. Lean, and was appointed Inspector-General of Communications. A Commandant was also appointed for the Base at Basra, where work had considerably increased owing to the arrival of additional troops. Responsibility for the medical arrangements of the force, which had hitherto been vested in Colonel P. Hehir, I.M.S., Assistant Director of Medical Services, 6th Division, devolved on Surgeon-General H. G. Hathaway, Deputy-Director of Medical Services of the Army Corps, who, as in the case of other Heads of Administrative Services, was placed in the organization orders of the force, under Headquarters, Line of Communications.

10. *Battle of Shaiba or Barjasiyah.*—It was known some time before this that the main force of the enemy was concentrating at Nasariyeh on the Euphrates, with a view to an advance on Basra. A cavalry skirmish took place on March 16th, and on April 12th the Turks under Sulaiman Askari Bey attacked our position near Shaiba and were repulsed. The British force consisted of the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 16th and 17th Infantry Brigades with the divisional troops of the 6th Division, the whole under the command of Major-General Fry. On the following day the headquarters and one battalion of the 30th Infantry Brigade arrived at Shaiba under Major-General C. J. Melliss, and the latter as senior officer took over command. The enemy renewed his attacks, but was repulsed by a successful counterstroke. On April 14th our troops assumed the offensive, and after much hard fighting drove the Turks out of their position near Barjasiyah with a loss estimated at 6,000. Our cavalry followed up their retreat as far as Nakhailah, and the enemy fled to Khamisiyah, nearly 90 miles away, harassed in their flight by the Arabs, their former allies. Our losses in these brilliant and decisive operations amounted to 194 killed and 1,132 wounded.

PHASE II.

11. The security of the base at Basra having been assured by our victory at Barjasiyah, it was decided to despatch the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 12th Division under Major-General Gorringe to Ahwaz, which was blockaded by eight battalions of Turks with eight guns, supported by 10,000 hostile Arabs, under the command of Mahomed Daghestani Pasha. The latter's object was to get between Basra and the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab while threatening our communications with Ahwaz via the Karun River.

12. *Operations in Arabistan.*—Major-General Gorringe arrived at Ahwaz with the leading troops of his force on April 24th, and the Turks at once retreated to the Kharkeh River. General Gorringe followed in pursuit and crossed the Kharkeh River on May 7th, whereupon the Turks retreated towards Amara. He then turned his attention to the Bani Taruf, a recalcitrant and warlike Arab tribe which had identified itself strongly with the Turkish cause. Their stronghold at Khafajiyah was destroyed and the tribesmen defeated and dispersed. The operations of General Gorringe's force terminated with a series of demonstrations made with a portion of his troops from Bisaitin against the Turkish force which lay between him and Amara. They had the desired effect, which was to prevent reinforcements from joining the Turkish forces on the Tigris in time to oppose General Townshend's division, then about to advance from Kurna on Amara. By June 30th the task allotted to General Gorringe had been successfully completed. The operations covered a period of seven weeks, and were carried out in very hot weather under difficulties entailing severe exertions on the part of the troops. Casualties in action only amounted to 43, but there was much sickness, sunstroke and dysentery being the prevailing complaints.

13. While General Gorringe was clearing the Turks and their Arab auxiliaries out of Arabistan, Major-General Townshend and the 6th Division were preparing to move up the Tigris to Amara. No advance could be made until the end of May as all available river craft were employed on the Karun. Owing to the flooded state of the country no movements of troops were possible except afloat. This entailed the provision of *bellums** for the infantry and the preparation of specially constructed rafts for guns and ambulances.

14. *Action near Kurna and occupation of Amara.*—On May 31st Major-General Townshend attacked the enemy's positions, which consisted of two fortified localities, standing like islands on the face of the waters, from two to five miles north of Kurna. Supported by the fire of a naval flotilla and of guns mounted on barges, the operations were highly successful. The enemy's positions were captured with only 25 casualties, and the Turks retreated up the Tigris in steamers and *mahailas*,† pursued by our naval flotilla. General Townshend and the leading troops of the 6th Division reached Amara on June 3rd and occupied the town without opposition. The captures resulting from these operations included 17 guns, 1,773 prisoners, 4 river steamers, exclusive of 2 sunk, besides a number of lighters. The weather throughout these operations was intensely hot and caused considerable sickness.

15. As soon as the Karun operations were completed and Amara captured, instructions were issued for an advance up the Euphrates. The objective of the force, which consisted of the 12th Division under Major-General Gorringe, was Nasariyeh, some 85 miles from Kurna. The actions round Shaiba in April had shown that the possession of Nasariyeh by the Turks constituted a permanent menace to Basra.† Apart from this, Nasariyeh was the centre from which political influence could best be exercised over the powerful Arab tribes of the Euphrates plain. Moreover, it was a place of considerable strategic importance, as it commanded the southern exit of the Shatt-el-Hai, one of the few existing lines of communication between the Tigris and Euphrates.

16. The approach to Nasariyeh from Kurna is via the old course of the Euphrates and the Hammar Lake to Hakika, where a channel known as the Gurmah Safha gives access to the main stream of the Euphrates, some 25 miles below Nasariyeh. At the time of General Gorringe's advance the Hammar Lake could be navigated by steamers drawing 5 feet as far as Hakika. By the end of July the depth of water in the lake had fallen to 3 feet and only small stern-wheelers could be used. After July all steamer navigation stopped, and troops and stores had to be poled across the lake in *bellums*, which in places had to be dragged through the mud. It will be understood from this how great were the difficulties which General Gorringe had to overcome, especially in regard to the evacuation of the sick and wounded during the low-water season.

17. *Action at Gurmah Safha.*—By July 4th the vessels of the naval flotilla and the troops had been passed over an obstruction made by the Turks near Hakika, and collected at a point about 2½ miles below the junction of the Gurmah Safha with the Euphrates. On July 5th an attack was made on the enemy's advanced position, which was on both banks of the Euphrates, commanding the Gurmah Safha channel. The position was carried by the 30th Infantry Brigade under Major-General Melliss soon after mid-day. Our captures included 4 guns and 132 prisoners at a cost to us of 26 killed and 85 wounded.

18. *Battle of Nasariyeh.*—The Turks were now found to have taken up a series of positions astride the Euphrates about 5 miles below Nasariyeh, with both flanks resting on marshes. General Gorringe accordingly moved up to Asani, some two miles below the enemy's advanced defences and occupied entrenchments on both banks. An unsuccessful attack on the Turkish position was made on the night of July 13th. The next 10 days were spent by General Gorringe in perfecting arrangements for a decisive assault. This was delivered at 5 a.m. on July 24th, the 12th Infantry Brigade being on the left bank and the 30th Infantry Brigade on the right. By noon the enemy's main position was captured, some

* The term *bellum* is used to describe the small rowing boats used on the Shatt-el-Arab. On the Euphrates the term includes sailing boats carrying an average load of 20 tons.

† The term *mahaila* is used to describe the big sailing boats used on the Tigris, carrying an average road of 30 tons.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000052

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

500 of the enemy being killed in their trenches. The Sadanawiyah position, which constituted the enemy's last line of defence, was captured in the afternoon, and by 6.30 p.m. the Turks were in full retreat across the marshes. Nasariyeh was occupied without opposition on the 25th. Our losses in these skilfully planned and brilliantly executed operations amounted to 104 killed and 429 wounded. Our captures consisted of over 1,000 prisoners and 17 guns.

19. No further operations took place in the neighbourhood of Nasariyeh until January 7th, 1916, when a mixed force under Major-General Gorringe moved out 12 miles north-west to Butaniyah, for the purpose of demonstrating towards Shattra. It was hoped that the Turks might be induced to weaken their force opposing General Aylmer on the Tigris by detaching troops to guard the lines of approach along the Shatt-el-Hai. Although this demonstration failed to accomplish this, it succeeded in attracting large numbers of hostile Arabs who might otherwise have joined the Turkish forces round Kut.

20. *Minor operations round Nasariyeh.*—The fighting round Nasariyeh at this time included three minor actions. The first was an attack made on January 14th on a small force by some 3,000 Arabs, between Butaniyah and Suwaij, while General Gorringe was carrying out a personal reconnaissance. It took the form of a rear-guard action in which our troops fell back with great steadiness to their camp. The Arab casualties numbered close on 200, our own amounting to 4 killed and 36 wounded and missing. The next action took place on February 7th, during the withdrawal of the force from Butaniyah to Nasariyeh. Our troops, under the command of Brigadier-General E. C. Tidswell, were attacked by some 5,000 Arabs. As the column fell back, the enemy was reinforced by other Arabs from the villages along the line of retirement with the result that it was attacked in flank as well as in rear. The enemy's losses were heavy and amounted to about 1,000. Our casualties numbered 373, of whom 148 were killed. To punish certain Arabs who had previously been friendly, but who had treacherously turned on our troops during their retirement, a column was sent out by Brigadier-General H. T. Brooking before dawn on February 9th to surprise, attack and destroy their villages. This was carried out very successfully and with trifling losses.

PHASE III.

21. While General Gorringe was driving the enemy away from Nasariyeh, Turkish forces were concentrating under Nur-ud-din Pasha at Kut-el-Amara, a place of great strategic importance. This place accordingly became our principal objective.

22. Owing to shortage of river steamers and the difficulties of navigation during the low-water season, the transfer from the Euphrates of the troops and guns which were required on the Tigris proved a slow process. The concentration of the force which consisted of the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 6th Division reinforced by various units, the whole under the command of Major-General Townshend, was not completed until September 12th when it moved forward by march route from Ali-el-Gharbi along the river bank, accompanied by its shipping. Sannaiyat was reached on the 15th and there a halt was made until the 25th. Intense heat prevailed with a temperature varying from 110 to 116 degrees in the shade.

23. *Battle of Es Sinn or Kut-el-Amara.*—Nur-ud-din Pasha's army was found to be occupying an entrenched position astride the Tigris at Es Sinn, some 8 miles from where our troops were then encamped. The position was some 12 miles in extent and consisted of skilfully concealed entrenchments commanding ground which was absolutely flat and devoid of cover. General Townshend decided to turn the enemy's left and so threaten his line of retreat to Baghdad. At the same time, in order to deceive Nur-ud-din Pasha as to the direction of the real attack, preparations were made with the object of giving the impression that the principal attack would be on the right bank against the southern portion of the enemy's position. This ruse proved completely successful. The 16th and 17th Infantry Brigades, under Brigadier-General Delamain, made a night march round the Turkish left flank, while the 18th Infantry Brigade, under Major-General Fry, held the enemy in front. By 2 p.m. on September 28th the greater portion of the enemy's northern defences were in our hands, and the remainder were evacuated by him during the night. A pursuit was organised on the 29th, and the cavalry came into touch with the Turks on October 1st, but had to wait for the support of the infantry which was coming up in steamers, and the progress of the latter was unfortunately delayed by difficulties of navigation. It was not till the 5th that the column reached Azizieh, and by then the enemy had retired into his defensive position at Ctesiphon where he was reinforced.

24. The Turks lost some 4,000 men in this battle, of whom 1,153 fell into our hands. They also lost 14 guns. Our casualties amounted to 94 killed and 1,113 wounded. The battle of Kut-el-Amara, or Es Sinn, as it is sometimes called, secured for us the whole of the Basra *vilayat*. It was the crowning point of an almost unbroken record of successes. The strength of the enemy's defences, the improved quality of his troops and the inconvenience caused by shortage of land and river transport had, by this time, become very apparent. Difficulties in regard to the collection and evacuation of the wounded owing to a higher percentage of losses, the inadequacy of the medical services, and the growing length of the line of communication had also come prominently to notice, thus foreshadowing the greater difficulties which were to be experienced in later battles.

25. The next six weeks, which were utilised by the Turks in bringing down additional troops from Mosul, were spent by General Townshend in bringing up supplies, transport and reinforcements from Basra, preparatory to a further advance as soon as orders on the subject were received. These preliminary measures were again delayed by the shortage of steamers and the difficulty of navigation during the low-water season. The advance was recommenced on November 19th, and by the 21st the force, with its shipping, was concentrated on the left bank of the Tigris at Laj. A reconnaissance of the enemy's position showed that his defences lay astride the Tigris covering the approaches to Baghdad which is situated some 18 miles to the north-west. They had been under construction for some months, and consisted of an extensive system of entrenchments forming two main positions. Close to the Tigris on the left bank and midway between the two defensive lines which were about two miles apart, was the Arch of Ctesiphon—a prominent landmark frequently referred to in the statements of witnesses.

26. *Battle of Ctesiphon.*—General Townshend, after a night march from Laj, attacked the Turkish position on the morning of the 22nd at its centre and on its north-east flank. His objective at the centre was a large redoubt referred to by witnesses and described in operation orders as the "V. P.," *i.e.*, "the Vital Point." There was severe fighting throughout the day resulting in the capture of the first position and more than 1,300 prisoners. Our troops then penetrated to the second position, capturing 8 guns, and established themselves in the enemy's trenches. Here they were subjected to heavy counter-attacks by fresh troops. Shortly before nightfall it was found necessary, owing to diminished numbers, to order the withdrawal of our troop to the first position which they had captured earlier in the day. November 23rd was spent in reorganising the force and in collecting the wounded. Owing to heavy losses, General Townshend deemed it inadvisable to renew the offensive. The Turks made heavy attacks all along the line during the night, but were everywhere repulsed. On the 24th and 25th the wounded and prisoners were evacuated to Laj where steamers were waiting to receive them, and General Townshend, under cover of an offensive movement, then shortened his line so as to bring his flank nearer the river. The enemy received numerous reinforcements on the 25th and on the afternoon of that day large columns were seen moving inland as if to turn the British right flank, while hostile cavalry threatened its rear.

27. Finding himself faced by superior forces and short of supplies, General Townshend withdrew to Laj under cover of darkness and remained there during the 26th. Laj, however, did not lend itself to defence, so he fell back during the night of the 27th to Azizieh. On the morning of the 30th, continuing his retirement, he halted at Umm-al-Tubal, where he had to remain, as several of his steamers were aground. The Turks attacked in great

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000051

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

strength at daylight on December 1st. A fierce fight ensued in which they lost heavily. Taking advantage of a successful counter-attack made by the Cavalry Brigade, General Townshend broke off the fight and retired. Shadi was reached on the night of December 1st after a march of 30 miles, and on the morning of the 3rd the 6th Division, greatly exhausted, reached Kut-el-Amara. General Townshend then decided, with Sir John Nixon's approval, to defend the place until its relief could be effected by the reinforcements which were known to be *en route* from oversea. Defences were improved, the sick and wounded were evacuated, and some 1,300 prisoners, who had been brought away from Ctesiphon, were despatched to Basra. On December 6th the 6th Cavalry Brigade left Kut and marched to Ali-el-Gharbi. By December 7th the Turks had closed round the defences, and the investment of Kut was complete.

28. Our losses in the battle of Ctesiphon and in subsequent operations up to the investment of Kut amounted to 692 killed and 3,852 wounded. The evacuation of the wounded from these actions was delayed by the attacks of Arabs on the line of communication below Kut-el-Amara, which compelled the steamers to turn back more than once. These attacks also held up Sir John Nixon and his staff, who were *en route* from Ctesiphon to Basra, and, pending the arrival of the troops sent to their assistance, the escort, soldier clerks, batmen and orderlies on the headquarters steamer, commanded by Major-General Kemball, had to be landed in order to repel these marauders.

PHASE IV

29. The 6th Cavalry Brigade at Ali-el-Gharbi was at once reinforced by the 28th Infantry Brigade and some guns from Basra. Behind this covering detachment it was decided to organise for the relief of Kut a force composed of two divisions from overseas, designated the Tigris Corps, the command of which was entrusted to Lieut.-General Sir Fenton Aylmer. The Corps consisted of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, the 3rd Division under Major-General H. D'U. Keary, and the 7th Division under Major-General Sir George Younghusband, with corps and divisional troops.

30. General Aylmer informed Sir John Nixon on December 15th, 1915, that in his judgment it would be hazardous to rely on General Townshend's holding out beyond January 15th, and that it was therefore advisable to relieve Kut by January 10th. He accordingly recommended that the troops then concentrating at Ali-el-Gharbi should move about January 3rd. Sir John Nixon concurred, and on December 27th gave definite orders for the advance to commence on that date.

31. On January 4th, 1916, General Aylmer's leading troops under General Younghusband advanced towards Sheikh Saad, moving by both banks of the Tigris. The instructions given him were to hold the enemy to his position with sufficient vigour to make him show his hand, pending the arrival of the remainder of the Corps under General Aylmer himself. General Younghusband's column got in touch with the enemy on the morning of January 6th. The Turks were entrenched astride the Tigris some 4 or 5 miles east of Sheikh Saad. General Younghusband's plan was to hold the enemy's left and to attack and turn his right. This plan did not succeed, owing to the presence of hostile cavalry and the superior forces of the enemy on this flank.

32. *Battle of Sheikh Saad.*—General Aylmer arrived on the morning of January 7th with the rest of the Corps and ordered a general attack. Major-General Younghusband directed operations on the left bank and Major General Kemball on the right. Heavy fighting took place throughout the day, and by evening the enemy's trenches on the right bank had been captured together with 2 guns and some 600 prisoners. On the left bank, where our main attack was intended to develop, our troops were unable to make any progress. They had to entrench opposite to the Turks, who held tenaciously to their positions. All attempts to turn their left flank failed, owing to counter-attacks and enveloping movements from the north. On the following day the troops were very fatigued and little progress was made. On January 9th the Turks abandoned their position and retired upstream. The pursuit proved very arduous owing to heavy rain throughout the day, which made the sodden and boggy ground difficult to march over. The losses of the enemy were estimated to be about 4,500, and our own casualties amounted to 4,262. Our losses in British officers were especially heavy, amounting to no less than 133. The exhaustion of the troops made it difficult to follow up the enemy, so for the next few days the force halted, while the Turks withdrew to the Wadi position, some 7 or 8 miles further up river from Sheikh Saad.

33. *Battle of the Wadi.*—On the 12th General Aylmer concentrated his whole force on the left bank, and on the 13th attacked the Wadi position. His plan was to turn this position by a wide outflanking movement to the north. This was to be carried out by General Younghusband with the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 19th, 21st and 35th Infantry Brigades, supported by field artillery, while Major-General Kemball with the 28th Infantry Brigade, supported by the heavy artillery of the Corps, was to hold the enemy to his front. The 9th Brigade was to remain in reserve at Sheikh Saad.

General Younghusband's force moved into position by a night march on the 12th-13th, and then advanced in a south-westerly direction towards Umm-el-Hannah, between the Suwaikieh marsh and the Tigris, with a view to cutting off the enemy's retreat. This movement was, however, checked by hostile troops occupying trenches facing north, and as our troops endeavoured to outflank the enemy they were in turn outflanked themselves. Before long, therefore, General Younghusband was held up on an east and west line to the rear of the enemy's main positions. Meanwhile General Kemball attacked on the Wadi itself. His troops came under a most destructive rifle and machine gun fire at close range, which soon brought his advance to a standstill. During the night of the 13th-14th the enemy evacuated the Wadi position and retired into the Umm-el-Hannah defile, some 3 miles further west, where a strong defensive position, stretching along a front of 1,300 yards from the Tigris to the Suwaikieh marsh, had been in preparation for some time.

34. On January 14th the 6th Cavalry Brigade and the 7th Division, under General Younghusband, worked forward to a position from which they could observe the enemy's defences. The exhaustion of a considerable portion of the force and the necessity for evacuating the wounded precluded the idea of any immediate advance. So the day was spent in consolidating positions and in bringing the wounded down to the river bank. The latter operation was greatly impeded by heavy rain which made the ground slippery and difficult to traverse. The losses of the enemy in this action were not as heavy as our own, as they were well sheltered in trenches throughout the day, and retired in good order after dark. Our own casualties amounted to 1,601, including 40 British officers.

35. On January 19th Sir John Nixon had to relinquish command of the Force owing to ill-health, and was replaced by Sir Percy Lake.

36. *Unsuccessful attack on the Umm-el-Hannah position.*—The weather now became extraordinarily bad. Heavy rain caused the river to come down in flood, overflowing its banks in places and converting the ground on either bank into a veritable bog. The Wadi stream came down in spate, and boisterous winds greatly interfered with the construction of a bridge across the Tigris. In spite of these unfavourable conditions, the 19th and 35th Infantry Brigades advanced towards the Umm-el-Hannah defile and entrenched themselves facing the enemy. At the same time troops were ferried over gradually to Orah on the right bank, where they came under the orders of Major-General Keary, commanding the 3rd Division, part of which had arrived at the front. The object of this move was to establish our artillery in positions from which they could enfilade the enemy's trenches, as without such artillery co-operation the capture of the enemy's position presented extraordinary difficulties. By the morning of the 20th we had 14 guns in their emplacements ready to bombard the Turkish trenches. On the 16th, 17th and 18th weather conditions grew from bad to worse, and the men suffered great hardships from cold and exposure. On the nights of the 18th-19th and 20th-21st the 7th Division again moved forward and entrenched within 500 to 600 yards of the enemy's

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000077

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

line, while 30 guns were placed in positions suitable for a bombardment by direct fire. The 20th was devoted to a systematic shelling of the Turkish position from both banks of the Tigris, and during the night of the 20th-21st the infantry of the 7th Division pushed forward their advanced lines preparatory to the assault. By 6 a.m. all was ready for the attack, which was to be directed against the enemy's right, under cover of an intensive artillery bombardment. The main attack rushed the Turkish trenches near the river, and about 100 men got into them and held them for over an hour. Troops were moved forward to their support under heavy fire, but they drifted too far to the right, with the result that they failed to give the impetus required on the left, where their assistance was urgently needed. Profiting by this, the Turks made a vigorous local counter-attack, and our troops, overwhelmed by superior numbers, were forced back and compelled to vacate the trenches which they had captured. Orders were at once issued for a second assault. Meanwhile it had begun to rain, and it continued to do so without intermission until the next day. After another artillery bombardment the attack was renewed at 2 p.m.; but the heavy rain had made the ground difficult to move over, advances by rushes were impossible, the ground to be traversed was destitute of cover, and the enemy's fire was heavy and well directed. Thus, though every effort was made to press forward, not an inch of ground could be gained.

37. The weather conditions rapidly became worse, the ground being converted into a sea of mud over which progress was almost impossible. The troops could do no more than maintain themselves where they were until dark, when they were withdrawn to the trenches they had previously held. As far as possible all the wounded lying between our forward position and that in rear were brought in during the withdrawal. Some, however, were overlooked, and others could not be got at owing to their proximity to the enemy's trenches. Arrangements were accordingly made on the 22nd for a six hours' armistice in order to bring in the dead and remove any wounded who might have been left out. It was found that few but dead remained, as all the wounded who had fallen close to the enemy's trenches had been removed by the Turks. Any idea of an immediate offensive was prohibited by the need for giving the troops a rest after the heavy losses they had suffered. The enemy's casualties were estimated at 2,000. Our own amounted to 2,741, including 78 British officers.

38. The breakdown in the medical arrangements which undoubtedly occurred after these three battles would have been obviated to a great extent if the attempt to relieve Kut-el-Amara had been postponed until the arrival of the field ambulances and clearing hospitals of the 3rd and 7th Divisions from France. As it happened, the supposed necessity of relieving General Townshend's garrison by January 15th demanded an advance not later than January 4th, and the field ambulances of the Tigris Corps had accordingly to be improvised from any sources available at the time. As explained further on in this report, the arrangements made proved totally inadequate and led to the serious breakdown referred to.

39. When General Townshend decided, with Sir John Nixon's approval, to defend Kut-el-Amara, he did so on the understanding that he would be relieved within a month or six weeks, as he had only supplies with him for that period. Kut was completely invested on December 7th, so January 15th represented approximately the date up to which his supplies would last if issues were continued on the normal scale. Sir John Nixon and General Aylmer were thus, in our opinion, fully justified in assuming that it would be hazardous to rely on General Townshend's holding out beyond that date. Apart, however, from the question of supplies, General Townshend sent message after message urging the necessity for his early relief. Shortage of rifle ammunition, deficiencies in artillery ammunition, heavy losses, the reinforcement of the enemy, the falling-off in moral of some of his troops, and doubts as to the ability of the garrison to withstand a determined assault by superior numbers, were all urged by him as reason for the advance of the relief force at the earliest possible date.

40. On January 22nd General Townshend informed General Aylmer that by putting his troops on half rations he could last out for 27 days, *i.e.*, up to February 18th. Three days later he intimated that by utilising additional supplies found in Kut, and by killing his horses and mules, he could hold out for another 84 days. He was then asked on February 3rd by Sir Percy Lake whether it would be correct to assume that he had sufficient supplies to feed his garrison up to April 17th. He replied on February 5th that by killing his animals and living on grain and florse flesh he could hold out up to that date. In point of fact he exceeded this limit by 12 days.

The period between January 21st and the first week of March was one of preparation. The concentration of the 3rd Division was completed, and the medical units of this and the 7th Division also reached the front, though without their transport. On March 7th orders were issued for an advance from the position held by the 3rd Division on the right bank of the Tigris near Orah to that portion of the enemy's line which lay between the Sinn Aftar and Dujailah redoubts. The troops detailed for this operation were grouped in three columns. The 9th, 28th and 36th Infantry Brigades under Major-General Kemball made up Columns "A" and "B," while Column "C" consisted of the 3rd Division under Major-General Keary.

41. *Attack on Es Sinn.*—General Aylmer's plan was to capture the Es Sinn position by turning its right flank and seizing the Dujailah redoubt. Column "C," mainly composed of the 3rd Division, was directed against the Sinn Aftar redoubt and the works to the south of it, while Column "B," composed of the 9th and 28th Infantry Brigades, was detailed to assault the Dujailah redoubt. Column "A," consisting of the 36th Infantry Brigade, was directed to clear some trenches which flanked the advance of Column "B." The 35th Infantry Brigade was to protect the right, and the 6th Cavalry Brigade the left flank of the force, and a brigade was held in reserve. Each column was allotted its proper proportion of guns, engineers, field ambulances and transport. The advance was made on the night of March 7th-8th. After a long and well-executed night march, the troops reached the positions of deployment. All the columns should have got there before dawn, but the march of Columns "A" and "B" was delayed owing to various unforeseen circumstances, with the result that it was broad daylight before they were ready to deploy, and this manœuvre had then to be executed under fire. An assault was made and a lodgment effected in the Dujailah redoubt, but our troops were eventually bombed out and had to retire. Orders were then given for a fresh assault, and at 5.15 p.m. the troops advanced according to orders, but could get no nearer to the redoubt than about 1,200 yards. The men by this time were exhausted, and about 6 p.m. orders were received to withdraw under cover of darkness. The night of the 8th-9th was spent in collecting and sending away the wounded, and by 9.30 a.m. on the 9th the evacuation was completed. The force then marched back to Orah and Wadi whence it had started. Our losses in these operations amounted to about 470 killed and 2,877 wounded and missing. The total casualties from January 6th to March 9th amounted to 12,116, of whom 2,412 were either killed or died of wounds. The casualties among British officers were 410.

42. *Attack on the Umm-el-Hannah and Falahiyah positions.*—On March 11th General Aylmer was replaced in command by Sir George Gorringe, and during the month the force was reinforced by the 13th Division under Major-General F. S. Maude, besides other troops. On April 5th General Gorringe commenced his operations for the relief of Kut. After the attack on Umm-el-Hannah on January 21st, which was made across the open, our trenches were pushed forward gradually to within 100 yards of the Turkish defences. After a heavy bombardment, to break down the enemy's entanglements, the assault was delivered at 4.45 a.m. on the 5th, and the first line captured by our troops soon after dawn. The other lines were captured in quick succession, the artillery fire being lifted from trench to trench until the last line was reached, fully a mile in rear. Our losses were slight and the enemy's resistance was not great, as most of his troops had been withdrawn to the Falahiyah position. The latter consisted of a system of entrenchments 2 miles deep, which were

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000071

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

rushed after dark the same day by the 13th Division. Our losses were not heavy considering the stubbornness of the enemy's resistance and the nature of the terrain.

43. *Attacks on the Sannaiyat position. Battle of Beit Aiessa.*—Meanwhile the 3rd Division had gained ground at Abu Roman on the right bank of the Tigris, and by April 7th was able to enfilade the Turkish position at Sannaiyat on the opposite shore. After a heavy bombardment, the attack of this position was made early on that day by the 7th Division, and again on the 9th by the 13th Division, but both attempts failed. Operations were much hampered by floods and bad weather. Our losses on these occasions were very heavy.* On the 12th further progress was made on the right bank. The enemy's advanced lines were forced back from 1½ to 3 miles, and our troops had to wade across an inundated belt from 500 to 1,200 yards wide, extending from the Tigris to the Umm-el-Brahm marshes. The advance was continued on the 15th, when more ground was gained and some of the enemy's forward trenches taken. On the 17th this success was followed by the capture of the Beit Aiessa position. The Turks lost heavily, and a number of prisoners were captured. That evening the Turks made a formidable counter-attack with some 10,000 men. The attack began at about 7 p.m., having been preceded by a bombardment, and continued throughout the night till 4.30 a.m. The enemy came on in dense formations and penetrated a part of our front. Six distinct assaults in mass were launched on one of our brigades. Within 500 yards of its front from 1,200 to 1,500 dead Turks were counted. Their losses in killed alone on the night of the 17th-18th are estimated at over 3,000. The number of wounded was no doubt proportionately high, and close on 400 prisoners were taken. The Turkish casualties on this occasion are believed to have been greater than in any of the previous actions for the relief of Kut. Our own losses from April 17th to 19th were 126 killed and 1,200 wounded or missing.

44. *Renewed attacks on the Sannaiyat position.*—After a systematic bombardment the Turkish position at Sannaiyat was again attacked on the 22nd. Owing to floods, which restricted the front, only one brigade could be utilised. The leading troops penetrated the enemy's first and second lines through bog and submerged trenches, and a few got up into the third line. They were, however, unable to maintain their position under the enemy's counter-attacks, and other brigades, pushed up on the right and left to reinforce, failed to reach their objectives, which had to be approached over flooded and boggy ground swept by fire. Although the attempt failed, the enemy lost heavily when they left their trenches to counter-attack, owing to the accurate fire of our machine guns in action on the right bank. Our losses at Sannaiyat between the 21st and the 24th amounted to 93 killed and 1,035 wounded or missing. Our total casualties in the attempt to relieve Kut amounted to 21,973.

45. *Capitulation of Kut.*—An effort was made on the night of April 24th to send the steamer "Julnar" through to Kut, laden with supplies. Though carried out with the utmost gallantry the attempt failed, the vessel being stopped by an obstacle and forced aground near Magasis, about 4 miles from Kut. On April 29th the garrison of Kut capitulated after a siege of five months, and about 2,750 British and 6,500 Indian soldiers became prisoners of war. The garrison had been put on half rations in January, and since February had subsisted on a meagre allowance of horseflesh and barley bread. The last day's ration was consumed on the day of the surrender. By an arrangement made with Khalil Bey, the Turkish Commander, sick and wounded British and Indian officers and men, who were in hospital when the capitulation took place, were exchanged for an equivalent number of Turkish prisoners. Excellent arrangements were made for their evacuation down river, and within a few days of their leaving Kut they were *en route* to India on well-equipped hospital ships, where they received every possible care and the comforts which they had been so long denied.

* The total casualties, including killed, wounded and missing, were 4,036 between April 4th and 8th, and 1,971 on April 9th.

46. *Medical arrangements of the campaign.*—Having given an epitome of the history of the campaign, we proceed to discuss the main question referred to us for enquiry, namely, the adequacy or inadequacy of the arrangements made for the collection, treatment and removal of sick and wounded during these operations, the causes of any defects found to exist, and the results which ensued therefrom.

47. We think it expedient to state our answer to this broad question at the outset. We are constrained to say that in our opinion these arrangements were manifestly inadequate and that, in consequence, the sick and wounded underwent great suffering which might have been avoided by better medical organisation.

Many of the defects which contributed to this result were of a general character, and have affected the whole or a great part of the campaign, and it will be convenient to discuss them before examining those which only affected particular phases of the operations.

48. *Hospital river steamers.*—The first deficiency to which we desire to draw attention is the absence of any river steamers equipped for the transport of sick and wounded, and of any separate medical establishments for such vessels. We believe that this has had more prejudicial results than almost any other defect in the organisation. It has constantly delayed evacuation, dislocated medical arrangements and caused great suffering and injury. So long as operations were confined to the immediate vicinity of Basra there was no need for any such transport; but directly columns advanced up the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun the necessity of some means of speedily evacuating the sick and wounded by water became apparent. In December, 1914, the expeditionary force advanced to Kurna, 40 miles up the Shatt-el-Arab from Basra. In February there were operations up the Karun river as far as Ahwaz, 139 miles from Basra. In May the campaign had extended up the Tigris to Amara, 135 miles from Basra; and in July, 1915, a force was despatched up the Euphrates to Nasariyeh. From all these columns the sick and wounded, the numbers of which were large, were evacuated, either in ordinary river steamers not properly fitted up for hospital work, or in *mahailas*, the requisite personnel and equipment being improvised from medical units on the spot. The culminating point was reached at the battle of Ctesiphon in November, 1915, and in the actions on the Tigris in January, 1916, when the number of wounded was very large.

49. It must be borne in mind that when these latter actions took place the medical personnel and equipment were insufficient for the due care of the wounded in the hospitals and field ambulances, and that from an early period of the war the number of river steamers and barges available for purely military requirements was entirely inadequate. It was, however, from this deficient staff and equipment, and from a steamer service not intended for the purpose, that some means of evacuating the wounded to the base had to be improvised. This journey was not a matter of a few hours, but of many days. Some vessels after the battle of Ctesiphon were, in fact, delayed a fortnight *en route* by various causes. It was, therefore, the more necessary that proper accommodation should be provided for the patients, and that the supply of medical and subordinate personnel, and of surgical and medical stores and comforts, should be complete. We have however ample evidence, much of it of a terrible kind, to show that the failure to provide proper hospital steamers and the necessary medical personnel and equipment caused great suffering. The steamers and barges employed for evacuating the wounded on these and other occasions had often been used for carrying animals to the front, and the decks were in some cases soaked with urine and dirt. There was no time to clean or disinfect them effectually, and they had to be used in this condition. They were not fitted with any effective protection from the sun or rain, and on many occasions the patients were for days together wet through. The arrangements for the supply of drinking water were very defective. The latrines were insufficient and insanitary. The vessels were overcrowded. The patients were not, save in few cases, provided with camp beds, and, according to the evidence, even rough mattresses stuffed with hay were not often available. On particular occasions even the supply of blankets gave

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000077

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

out. The medical personnel was insufficient to cope with the numbers on board, and the supply of surgical and medical stores and appliances was on occasions deficient. The cooking galleys were so few that food could not be prepared for all the patients, and the staff to prepare and distribute this food was too small to meet requirements. There was little or no crockery or cutlery, and a very small supply of cooking utensils. The number of sweepers and of bed-pans was often not sufficient for the comfort of the patients. The sufferings of many of those who travelled by these steamers were in consequence acute, and though the available staff was untiring in its efforts to cope with the difficulties of the situation, we cannot but come to the conclusion that in many cases the lack of proper accommodation and of adequate treatment retarded and prejudiced the chances of recovery. It ought, however, to be stated here that the sufferings of those who travelled on many of these steamers were often mitigated by the resource and foresight of the medical officers in charge. Further, when the number of patients was small and the medical and subordinate establishment proportionately large, the hardships of the patients were much reduced.

50. In some cases, notably on the Euphrates, the sick and wounded have frequently been evacuated in convoys of sailing boats, in which all the disadvantages experienced on river steamers are accentuated. The various boats in the convoy must from time to time separate, and it is impossible for the medical officer in charge to look after the patients in the different boats properly. Moreover, a voyage by country boat, for a long distance, must, if the wind is unfavourable, be a very slow matter. We were, in fact, so much impressed by the necessity for improving the methods for evacuating the sick and wounded from Nasariyeh, that we addressed the local military authorities on the subject, and have been informed that in future a hospital steamer will visit Nasariyeh from time to time for this purpose. This is the more necessary in view of the increased Force which is now stationed there.

51. We shall have to deal with this point further in discussing particular phases of the campaign, but generally it may be said that this lack of river hospital steamers properly equipped with medical personnel, stores and appliances, has been a frequent source of discomfort and suffering, which was accentuated in November, 1915, when the number of casualties increased, and in January, 1916, when the number of wounded was very large and the weather conditions were singularly unfavourable. In March, 1916, conditions improved immensely, because regular units of medical personnel and equipment were detailed for service on these steamers. Even when we left Mesopotamia, the arrangements were, however, in many respects far from satisfactory. It is true that a regular staff of medical officers and subordinates is now assigned to each steamer with a proper supply of medical accessories and comforts, and that such arrangements as are possible are improvised for the accommodation of patients. But the steamers cannot be delayed, and it is not possible to fit them up properly before they begin their return journey down river loaded with sick. They are not weather-proof, and patients get wet through when it rains. Cots are not provided, save usually for a few officers, and not always for them, and many of the other defects to which reference has already been made have not been removed or remedied.

52. We are informed by the Director of Royal Indian Marine that in January, 1916, he was directed to fit out hospital river steamers and barges to accommodate 2,000 patients. To give effect to this demand, he proposed to equip 8 sternwheel steamers and 16 barges, the intention being that each steamer should tow two of the barges. Of these 8 steamers, three only have hitherto arrived, namely—

The "Sikkim," with accommodation for 144 patients
The "Coromandel," with accommodation for 104 patients;
The "Ardhlui,"* with accommodation for 50 patients;

and of the 16 barges four only, with accommodation for 224 patients, have so far been supplied. We were, however, informed that it has been suggested that the complement of barges should be made up by utilising 11 barges already sent to Basra, and that the necessary fittings for the equipment of these vessels have been provided.

53. Of these steamers, the "Sikkim" is satisfactory though not very weather-proof; but it has been found that she cannot tow two barges up and down the Tigris with safety. The "Coromandel" is in many ways unsuitable. We were informed that on her first trip the engines frequently broke down, that she does not steer well, and that she is not built strongly enough for work on the rivers of Mesopotamia. From what we saw of her after this trip (and she had never been used again up to the date on which we left Basra), we think there is much force in this last criticism, unless she had been navigated in some unskilful manner. On inquiry from the Director, Royal Indian Marine, we were told that she could tow two barges at a rate of 4.5 miles per hour in still water. As the Tigris has a current of 4 miles and more in many places, it follows that this steamer is of very little use for towing up stream. The "Ardhlui" had not been used when we left Basra, but the medical authorities there have criticised her as unsuitable for the number of patients she was intended to carry, and also for other reasons. As to the barges, it is perhaps fortunate that the full complement has not been sent, as the evidence before us indicated that the four which have already been despatched are not in any way suitable for work in Mesopotamia. In the first place, they are composite barges of wood and iron, and though the Director maintains that barges of this kind are structurally as strong as iron barges, the fact remains that officers with local experience state that this is not so. It has been found also that these barges cannot be navigated with safety in certain reaches of the Tigris. They are, moreover, extremely hot and none of them are fitted with electric fans, which are a necessity for any hospital craft during the hot weather. Finally, they are not weather-proof. The number of barges and lighters available for work in Mesopotamia is insufficient to meet military requirements, and doubtless for this reason the 11 barges which the Director suggested should be fitted out as hospital barges, have not been so equipped. The result is that the only regular hospital river steamer which was at the time of our departure used for evacuating sick and wounded to Basra, nearly 18 months after the commencement of the war, was the "Sikkim," which can accommodate 144 patients, and that for the large majority of patients, ordinary river steamers and barges, which take troops and supplies up stream, were still employed.

54. In a telegram from the Army Commander to the Chief of the General Staff, dated April 24th, 1916, it was stated that, in addition to the steamers already mentioned, the "Ailee" was being fitted out to carry 50 patients, and that it was intended that three of the Nile paddle steamers should be used to tow hospital barges from the front, down the Tigris to Amara. It was anticipated that in this way 350 patients could be evacuated at one time to hospitals at that place. While we appreciate the desire of the local authorities to make the best of the material available, we doubt if these arrangements will prove entirely satisfactory. The Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, in a note to which this telegram is annexed, states that these barges are not suitable for use in the hot weather, and they certainly are not fitted with any electric plant, which we consider to be an absolute necessity for properly equipped river hospital steamers. The Nile steamers are also not fitted with this machinery. The intention, throughout, has been that hospital steamers should be fitted with electric machinery, and that this plant should provide the current necessary for electric fans on the barges, and much of the advantage of having properly equipped hospital barges will be lost if they are not provided with electric fans.

55. We find considerable difficulty in ascertaining the responsibility for the failure to provide hospital river steamers for the expeditionary force. We are not clear as to what the ultimate intentions of Government were in regard to this campaign. If it was contemplated that the expeditionary force should operate at a distance from Basra, up the rivers of Mesopotamia, we think that those responsible for the equipment of the expedition should have sent hospital river steamers either with, or immediately after, the force. Even if the advance from Basra was a later development, we consider that the necessity for this class of transport might have been realised earlier

* After structural alterations.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000041

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

both in India and in Mesopotamia. We have examined a mass of correspondence which has been submitted to us to ascertain why this question of river hospital steamers was not taken up earlier, and we have made definite inquiry from the Army Department as to when it was first raised. We have ascertained that the question of river transport for the sick was first considered in February, 1915, when a private organisation in Bengal offered to provide an ambulance steamer or barge for the use of the force in Mesopotamia. This offer was accepted, but the flat selected and equipped for the purpose was unfortunately lost at sea while *en route* from Calcutta. It was then suggested that motor launches should be used for the speedy evacuation of the sick and wounded, but for reasons which commend themselves to us as sound, the Military Authorities in Mesopotamia did not accept this offer. Motor launches are necessary, but they are not suitable means of evacuating large numbers of wounded from great distances, and can only be used profitably for taking patients for a short distance from one hospital to another, or to a hospital steamer. This correspondence is, however, of some importance, as it indicates that the attention of the authorities in India was drawn to this question of river hospital transport very early in the campaign. It is, in the circumstances, somewhat surprising that systematic efforts were not then made to put matters upon a proper footing.

56. The first indication which we have been able to discover of any definite steps to remedy this state of affairs, was in December, 1915, when a telegram was addressed to the Secretary of State stating the necessity for a number of regular hospital steamers. The figures before us indicate that previous to the date upon which this telegram was sent, more than 11,000 patients had been evacuated down the various rivers of Mesopotamia to Basra, and we feel, if the facts have been placed fully before us, that steps should have been taken earlier to remedy the want. As a result of the telegram to the Secretary of State, the Director, Royal Indian Marine, was in January, 1916, asked to provide four paddle steamers and 8 barges, each steamer with its two barges being sufficiently large to accommodate 500 patients. These were, however, not provided, and in lieu thereof, and in spite of the recommendations of the local officers, three stern wheel steamers which cannot tow barges down the Tigris, and four small composite barges which are for various reasons unsuitable, have been supplied.

57. While, however, we consider that the authorities in India are in great measure responsible for this defect in the organization, we think that the conduct of the medical and military authorities in Mesopotamia is also open to criticism, and we do not believe that they realised the serious danger that they were incurring by the failure to provide more suitable means of evacuating the sick and wounded by water; at least if they did realise this, we cannot find that, up to December, 1915, they had made any requisition on the Indian authorities for properly equipped river hospital steamers. In the early part of 1915, Surgeon-General Hathaway, then Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, had six or eight *mahailas* fitted out for hospital work; these were towed by tugs which accompanied the troops, and he stated that they met his requirements well. We cannot agree with the Surgeon-General that vessels of this kind ever were, or could have been suitable means of transporting sick and wounded on long journeys, particularly during the hot season. They may, no doubt, have been very useful as a makeshift, but we do not think that a few country boats could have been adequate for the evacuation of the sick and wounded of a force of 30,000 men operating in three different directions, that is, up the Euphrates, Tigris and Karun. It is right to say, however, that in June, 1915, Surgeon-General Hathaway applied to the authorities in India for four tugs for the purpose of towing these *mahailas*, and that this demand was refused on the plea that such vessels were not available. Shortly after this, Surgeon-General Hathaway apparently recognised that some more suitable arrangements were necessary, for we find that in August he asked the Inspector-General of Communications that a river steamer, capable of accommodating 150 patients, should be placed at the disposal of the medical services—a demand which was summarily rejected. The provision of such a steamer would no doubt have been useful for the evacuation of sick and wounded from Ahwaz and other minor garrisons and also for the transport of medical units and stores; but it would obviously not have met the requirements of the situation in the operations on the Tigris in the winter of 1915-16, when the casualties ran to thousands. We consider that this demand, coupled with the one previously referred to, illustrates the failure of the head of the medical administration in Mesopotamia to appreciate the real needs of the situation, for what was wanted was not one small hospital steamer, but a number of vessels, properly equipped with necessary personnel and appliances, capable of accommodating 2,000 or 3,000 patients. It is, nevertheless, a matter for some regret that the refusal of the Inspector-General of Communications to concede this very moderate demand, and the reply of the authorities in India to the request for tugs, were so readily accepted as final. We believe that an officer of greater force of character would have pressed his demands for separate transport for the medical services much more strongly. The only other documentary evidence of any demand in 1915, for hospital steamers, is a telegram of December 7th, in which the Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, informs the authorities in India that recent experience (he refers to the evacuation of the wounded after Ctesiphon) had confirmed his opinion that well equipped river hospital steamers were absolutely necessary for the sick and wounded.

58. We also doubt whether the military authorities in Mesopotamia treated the medical services with much consideration in this matter, or whether they sufficiently realised the need of such steamers. We recognise that their difficulties in the matter of river transport were very great, and that they found it hard to meet the many urgent demands made upon them; but we think that there were occasions on which the medical requirements might have received more favourable treatment. Further, once the need for hospital river steamers was brought to the notice of the military authorities, we think that they ought to have informed the authorities in India of the position of affairs and of the imperative need for such vessels. We are indeed forced to the conclusion that the necessity for an adequate provision of this kind of transport was overlooked both in India and in Mesopotamia, until the sufferings of the wounded after Ctesiphon made it apparent that some systematic steps must be taken to remedy the deficiency. The delay in providing this form of transport is the more to be regretted because it is now difficult, indeed almost impossible, to get river hospital steamers towed across the Arabian Sea to Basra. The Director, Royal Indian Marine, has informed us that if he had had proper notice he could, in seven months, have had the requisite number of vessels built and equipped in this country, according to specification. Assuming this to be correct, if the necessary instructions had been given early in 1915, these vessels could have been built in the summer months and taken across the Arabian Sea to Basra in the most favourable season of the year.

59. In view of the fact that it will probably be impossible to send river hospital steamers from India during the present monsoon, some local arrangements ought, in our opinion, to be made for the evacuation of the wounded. We suggest that, as soon as military requirements admit of this course, two of the large steamers now in use on the Tigris and four commodious barges should be regularly fitted out and equipped for hospital work. We are informed that one steamer so fitted out could, with two barges, accommodate 500 patients, and if the vessel were properly equipped with electric fans and lights, and with ice machines or large ice chests, we think that it would probably be more convenient for hospital work in Mesopotamia than some of the hospital steamers which have been sent for that purpose.

60. For the evacuation of less serious cases, and as a temporary arrangement pending the equipment of these steamers, we consider that selected steamers and barges, out of those now available in Mesopotamia, should be used for hospital purposes and that systematic efforts should be made to improve the accommodation on these vessels. The awnings should be renewed and made water-tight, or, if this is not possible, replaced by some more adequate covering. Cots should be provided for all patients—folding beds of the "X" or American "gold medal" pattern, or some similar kind, would answer very well for this purpose. Proper arrangements should be made for the supply of pure drinking water, and a

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000076

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

sufficient number of sanitary latrines should be fitted on each vessel. Suitable and sufficient galleys should be provided for cooking food, and a supply of lamps, linen, pillows, cooking utensils and the requisite crockery and cutlery, should be stored on board each vessel. Finally, some responsible person should be put in charge of these articles of equipment and be detailed for permanent duty on the vessel with a small subordinate staff to keep both the vessel, and all the equipment, clean and ready for use. If these improvements were effected, and an adequate medical personnel with the necessary equipment supplied on each occasion on which the vessel was used for transporting sick and wounded, we believe that the discomfort at present caused would be much alleviated. We recognise that the real remedy, however, for this defect is the provision of properly equipped hospital steamers, and we only suggest the above as a temporary expedient and as a practical method for immediately improving the existing condition of affairs.

61. *Inadequacy of medical personnel and equipment.*—Another defect of the first magnitude has been the inadequacy of medical personnel and equipment. The force originally despatched to Mesopotamia consisted of one division, and the medical establishment was four combined field ambulances of five sections each (that is, two sections British and three sections Indian), one combined clearing hospital of 200 beds (one section British and three sections Indian), two and a half sections, comprising 250 beds, of a British general hospital, six sections of an Indian general hospital of 600 beds and one Indian stationary hospital of 200 beds. This establishment was possibly adequate for one division according to the authorised scale, though a comparison with the standard prescribed in the official manual entitled "War Establishments, India," shows that the British general hospital establishment was short of the personnel and equipment for 50 beds. On the other hand, it is fair to say that the Indian general hospital complement was 100 beds in excess of the authorised scale.

62. By February 1st, 1915, the expeditionary force had increased to 20,000 men, and in March it was decided to augment the strength to two divisions by the addition of the 12th, 30th and 33rd Infantry Brigades, and also to send the 6th Cavalry Brigade as a further reinforcement. No corresponding increase was made in the medical establishment. One combined field ambulance of four sections was despatched to Mesopotamia for service with the 33rd Infantry Brigade, and an Indian cavalry field ambulance consisting of three sections was sent with the 6th Cavalry Brigade. No field ambulances accompanied the 12th or 30th Infantry Brigades, and no additional clearing, stationary, or general hospitals were sent for the new division. In regard to one of these items, *viz.*, the field ambulance of the 30th Infantry Brigade, it is right to state that the military authorities in India addressed General Barrett, who was the General Officer Commanding the expeditionary force, as to the necessity of sending a field ambulance for this brigade, and that he replied that he could manage without it. No satisfactory explanation has, however, been offered as to the failure to send other units, and the net result was that whereas the force was increased to two divisions *plus* a cavalry brigade, the medical establishment was, save for the addition of seven sections of a field ambulance, that which had been thought necessary for one division only.

63. We find it difficult to understand the principle upon which this establishment was considered sufficient. It was known that the campaign in Mesopotamia would have to be conducted under singularly unfavourable conditions Much of the country is low-lying and marshy and is constantly liable to floods. The atmosphere is in many parts excessively humid, and the temperature is very high, rising in the hot weather, as we were informed, to 125 degrees. It might, therefore, have been anticipated that a high rate of sickness would prevail among the troops. Further, the Turkish force in occupation of the territory invaded was considerable and the countryside swarmed with hostile Arabs. There was, therefore, in our opinion, no reason to think that the ordinary scale of medical units as laid down in "War Establishments, India," would not be needed. Experience has indeed shown that, if anything, that standard requires to be increased.

64. In the early part of the war, the insufficient provision of field ambulances was, however, less serious than the insufficiency of hospital accommodation, which became evident as early as April, 1915. At this period, the British General Hospital of 250 beds and the Indian General Hospital of 600 beds, which had been established at Basra, were overcrowded. For some time the staff of these hospitals had been depleted by sickness, and by the fact that the personnel for transports, which were used for the evacuation of sick and wounded, had to be provided out of the medical units of the force. At the same time the sick and wounded began to increase alarmingly, so much so that after the battle of Shaiba the patients in the Indian General Hospital numbered over 1,000. The actual personnel available to treat these patients was 15 medical officers and 19 medical subordinates, against an authorised scale of 22 medical officers and 40 subordinates. During this month, the Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, was, it may be added, so impressed with the need for increasing the hospital accommodation, that he ordered the Indian General Hospital to expand to 1,000 beds and the British General Hospital to 500 beds. As, however, no personnel was at the time added to deal with the increased number of patients, this order was of little value in effecting any relief. It has been suggested, indeed, that the only result was that the hospital authorities were thereby empowered to draw cerain articles of equipment from the Supply and Transport Corps. But this is perhaps hardly just, as small additions to the establishment were subsequently made from time to time.

65. As the hot weather advanced, the deficiency in hospital accommodation became more and more marked and on June 15th we find the position was this, that the British General Hospital which had started as a 250 bed unit with 7 medical officers and 10 assistant surgeons, had a staff of 6 officers and 8 assistant surgeons to treat 635 sick; and that in the Indian General Hospital 13 medical officers, 1 assistant surgeon, 19 sub-assistant surgeons and 38 sepoy ward orderlies (that is, a staff smaller than the staff authorised for the treatment of 600 patients) was endeavouring to treat 1,671 sick and wounded. On June 17th the Officer Commanding the Indian General Hospital reported that he had only 12 sub-assistant surgeons fit for duty. These deficiencies were not completely made up throughout 1915, although from time to time additional officers and subordinates were sent out. The figures furnished to us by the office of the Adjutant General at the Base indicate that the only additional complete hospital units sent out to Mesopotamia, between November, 1914, and December, 1915, were the Bengal Stationary Hospital (which is an institution maintained by private subscription and equipped normally for the treatment of 200 patients) and one section of a British General Hospital, sufficient for the treatment of 100 patients

During this period, the strength of the force increased approximately from 12,000 to 40,000 men, and the information which we have been able to collect makes it clear that, from the date on which a second division came to Mesopotamia, the general hospital accommodation was insufficient for the needs of the force. Fortunately, as the weather got cooler, sickness was not so prevalent, and after July and August the number of patients in the hospital decreased for a time, but even then the personnel was often insufficient. It is true that when the 3rd and 7th Divisions arrived in Mesopotamia during December and January, additional stationary, clearing and general hospitals were sent with them; but, as explained later, these units arrived so long after the fighting portions of the divisions, that for some time the lack of hospital accommodation and personnel was as apparent as it had been during the hot weather of 1915. Another cause which contributed to this result was the despatch of a number of additional brigades to Mesopotamia from India in the autumn of 1915 without any hospital units. Indeed the figures supplied to us show that the maximum number of patients in the British General Hospital at Basra in the month of January, 1916, was 1,038, the staff consisting at the time of 9 Royal Army Medical Corps officers, and 11 assistant surgeons. In the same month the average number of patients in the Indian General Hospital was 1,230, the establishment being 12 medical officers as against an authorised scale of 28, and 20 medical

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000031

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

subordinates as against an authorised scale of 48, for that number of beds. It can therefore safely be said that the officers in charge of the various hospitals have had, from an early stage in the campaign, to contend with great difficulties. Not only has it been impossible to secure proper buildings for the accommodation of all their patients, and difficult, in hospitals outside Basra, to obtain the necessary drugs and appliances with reasonable expedition, but there has been a consistent shortage in the personnel necessary to treat the number of sick and wounded. This shortage has been particularly felt in respect of assistant surgeons, sub-assistant surgeons and menial staff. We believe that the patients, especially in the British general hospitals, have suffered less from these inadequate arrangements than might have been expected, owing to the great resourcefulness, energy and devotion to duty of the medical personnel and subordinate staff. We cannot speak too highly of the efforts made by the available staff in all the hospitals to cope with the very difficult situation with which they were faced. At the same time, the evidence before us indicates that on particular occasions, despite the strenuous efforts of the hospital staff, the medical personnel available to treat the patients and to see to their comfort, especially in the Indian general hospital was so deficient that the patients underwent considerable discomfort, and that cases which required constant medical attention and nursing did not obtain them.

66. The deficiencies in stationary and clearing hospitals have been equally great. The Indian regulations contemplate the location of stationary hospitals at all small posts where general hospitals are not required; but during the whole of 1915 there was only one stationary hospital* in Mesopotamia, and the work which should have been done by stationary hospitals at various posts on the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun, such as Ali-al-Gharbi, Nasariyeh, and Ahwaz, has been done by field ambulances. Indeed at Kurna, where the daily number of sick was for some time large, there was for a great part of the year not even a field ambulance to receive or accommodate the patients, and regimental medical officers had to make the best arrangements they could. Similarly, in the case of clearing hospitals, the supply of these units has never been sufficient, with the result that hospitals of this class at the front have been frequently overcrowded, and that it has been necessary to supplement them by field ambulances.

67. *Dislocation of the medical organisation.*—Another consequence of the deficiency in hospital establishments has been a general dislocation of the medical organisation of the force. The Field Service Regulations contemplate the following medical units for the treatment of the sick and wounded :—

(1) Regimental medical officers.
(2) Field ambulances, which are divided into bearer and tent sub-divisions.
(3) Clearing hospitals.
(4) Stationary hospitals.
(5) General hospitals.

The duties of each of these units are described in the regulations on the subject. General hospitals are, according to these regulations, large hospitals placed at the base, or at any other post where they are required, for the treatment of severe and prolonged cases. They are equipped for the medical treatment and comfort of all classes of cases, and have the requisite stocks of beds, blankets, cooking utensils, crockery, stores and various appliances. Stationary hospitals are small units, generally posted at places on the line of communications where general hospitals are not needed, and are, according to the regulations, equipped to deal with 25, or in cases of emergency, 50 patients. Clearing hospitals are intended for the temporary reception of sick and wounded, pending and during evacuation from the front. Their functions are similar to those of the tent sub-divisions of a field ambulance, but on a larger scale, and they form the central point on which the collecting zone converges and from which the evacuating and distributing zones diverge. They are normally located at an advanced base and should be pushed up, so as to be in reach of the field ambulances. Field ambulances are supposed to accompany the force to which they are attached, to be in close touch with it during action, and to evacuate the sick and wounded without delay to the clearing hospitals. All of these units are equipped only for the particular duties which they are intended to perform. The supply of stores, appliances, clothing and furniture in field ambulances and clearing hospitals is, for obvious reasons, not large. The organisation prescribed in the regulations has, however, been in great measure abandoned in Mesopotamia. On the Tigris front there were, during the operations in April, 1916, two clearing hospitals only to clear the whole of the wounded of approximately four divisions, while a third hospital of this kind was acting as a general hospital at the base. At Nasariyeh, from July, 1915, to April, 1916, no hospital of any kind was established, and the whole medical work was done by the field ambulances. In consequence of this dislocation, the work of clearing and stationary hospitals has constantly been undertaken by field ambulances which are not equipped for this purpose, and which cannot be called upon to do the work of hospitals without detriment to their legitimate duties. Complaints of this misuse of the various medical units have been very frequent and we think justified. It is not possible to treat patients suffering from disease or wounds satisfactorily, for any prolonged period, in a field ambulance to which no beds and a very limited amount of clothing, cooking utensils, crockery, linen, blankets and medical appliances are supplied, and in which the strength of the subordinate staff appointed to see to the comfort of the sick is very limited. The same remarks apply *mutatis mutandis* also to clearing hospitals, which are only fitted out for the temporary accommodation of patients.

68. *Responsibility for deficiencies.*—As to the responsibility for these deficiencies, we think that the *causa causans* is the insufficiency of the medical establishment in India to meet the demands of a great war, in which troops from India have been largely employed overseas. There is abundant evidence that the available supply of medical officers and subordinates in India, including those in civil employment, has been very largely drawn on to bring medical establishments in Mesopotamia up to the normal scale. Of late, indeed, these resources have been depleted as far as is prudent, having regard to the requirements of India and other theatres of war. We cannot, however, avoid the finding that a serious responsibility attaches to the military authorities in India for despatching reinforcements to Mesopotamia insufficiently equipped with medical establishments. We also think that, during the early part of the war, the authorities in India were not as prompt as they might have been in complying with necessary demands, and that some of the expedients suggested for meeting deficiencies were unsound. We consider that if the medical staff available in India was not adequate to meet the demands of the expedition, assistance from sources outside India might have been sought earlier. The demands of the force, particularly in the way of hospital staff, were frequently put before the authorities in India from an early period in 1915. In April of that year, when the British and Indian general hospitals were expanded to 500 and 1,000 beds respectively, additional Royal Army Medical Corps and Indian Medical Service officers and assistant surgeons and sub-assistant surgeons were more than once asked for, without any result. It was not until the end of June, when the General Officer Commanding represented that there would be a breakdown if conditions were not improved, that additional officers were despatched, together with an Indian stationary hospital maintained by private generosity and one section of a British general hospital. Even then, however, the demands of the Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, were not completely met, and in reply to a request for sub-assistant surgeons, after a great deal of haggling as to what was the correct establishment for the force, the Director of Medical Services, India, came to the conclusion that there was an excess of assistant surgeons and suggested that, in estimating his needs in the matter of sub-assistant surgeons, the Deputy Director of Medical Services should reckon one assistant surgeon as equal to two sub-assistant surgeons. This suggestion, which was not accepted by the local authorities, is on a par with one previously made that in order to make good deficiencies in hospital personnel, the staffs of the

* Excluding the Bengal Stationary Hospital, which is maintained by private subscriptions and was being used as a General Hospital.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00003f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

field ambulances, which were already inadequate, should be further depleted. We do not think that demands of responsible officers in such a situation should have been met in this spirit. The correspondence on this subject illustrates, in our opinion, the danger of applying ordinary secretariat methods to urgent demands in war time. Instead of accepting the views of the local officers as to the necessity for additional personnel, their figures were challenged and suggestions made that one medical unit should be depleted in order to make good deficiencies in another, and that one man should be counted as equal to two. In the meantime, while this discussion went on, little or nothing was done to relieve the situation.

69. Again in July, the Deputy Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, submitted a full statement of his deficiencies and requirements and asked that 13 Royal Army Medical Corps officers, 12 Indian Medical Service officers, 1 assistant surgeon and 47 sub-assistant surgeons should be sent to his assistance. As to the first of these demands, the reply was to the effect that certain Royal Army Medical Corps officers were expected to arrive in India in August, and that some of them would be sent to Mesopotamia. As to the remaining deficiencies, after discussion as to the correctness of certain figures supplied by the Deputy Director, a reply was finally sent in October, that is, three months later, that steps were being taken to make good the deficiencies in Indian Medical Service officers and that 12 sub-assistant surgeons would be sent at the first opportunity. On August 27th, the Deputy Director of Medical Services again reported his deficiency in sub-assistant surgeons, but the authorities in India were unable to afford him any relief, and it was not until November, 1915, that 10 additional sub-assistant surgeons were actually sent.

70. Of late the demands of the expeditionary force have, we think, been more reasonably met, and the situation has certainly improved. In the first place, the deficiencies in the existing medical staff have been partly made up out of a 6 per cent. monthly reinforcement which was sent from June, 1915, and which proved to be more than was needed to replace actual wastage. In the second place the medical units of the 3rd and 7th Divisions, including well equipped hospitals of all classes, reached Mesopotamia early in 1916, and the medical staff of the force has been materially increased in other ways. While, however, we admit that the situation is now far better than it was in 1915, we cannot say that the medical arrangements when we left Mesopotamia were satisfactory in all respects. Not only were many of the patients unsuitably housed, but most of the medical units acting as hospitals were overcrowded and being used for purposes for which they were not equipped. Further, the paucity of the medical and subordinate personnel was, particularly in some hospitals, a cause of anxiety. According to a statement furnished to us by the Assistant Director, Medical Services, India, the total accommodation in general hospitals is now sufficient for 2,000 British and 2,100 Indian patients. In addition to the hospitals specified in this statement, we were informed by the authorities at Basra that the personnel of two additional Indian general hospitals of 500 beds each have arrived in Mesopotamia. The total accommodation in the Indian general hospitals is, therefore, 3,100 beds. The staff of some of these hospitals is, however, below the standard scale, and until reinforcements arrive the position will not be entirely safe. The strength of the force in April was 122,000 men, of whom 38,000 were British. The percentage of sick and wounded in April, 1915, was approximately 7 per cent. The accommodation provided in general hospitals, even taking into consideration the fact that a certain number of sick and wounded must always be detained in field ambulances and stationary and clearing hospitals, is thus barely sufficient for existing needs. The total number of clearing hospitals in the country is four, which is also insufficient according to the normal establishment of the force engaged. This deficiency is, however, engaging the attention of the Director, Medical Services, India.

71. *Future medical requirements.*—It may be advisable here to indicate the manner in which the local medical authorities propose to deal with the situation during the hot weather of 1916. In December, 1915, the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, submitted an estimate of medical requirements for the coming year. He then calculated that accommodation in general hospitals should be provided for 1,800 British and 5,200 Indian patients. He stated that, including the Bengal Stationary Hospital which, though normally equipped for 200 patients, can accommodate satisfactorily a very much larger number, the existing accommodation in general hospitals was adequate for 1,000 British and 2,400 Indians. This left a deficit of 800 British and 2,800 Indian beds, and this deficit the Government of India undertook to make good as early as possible. The position was, however, complicated in March, 1916, by the arrival of the 13th Division, and on March 23rd, 1916, on this account and presumably for other reasons, the Director of Medical Services submitted revised estimates of the requirements in the way of general hospitals, estimating that he needed equipment and personnel for 3,000 British and 6,000 Indian patients.

72. This estimate has been accepted by the Director of Medical Services, India, and to meet the demands for further accommodation for British patients, in addition to the medical units of the 13th Division, a large British general hospital on the English scale, accommodating 1,040 patients, has been despatched to Mesopotamia. To meet the deficiency in Indian general hospitals, one Indian general hospital of 500 beds has already been sent from Egypt, and the personnel and equipment of six complete hospitals* of 500 beds each, and also of three additional sections, each accommodating 100 patients, are being despatched from India. When the demands of the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, have been fully met, and the sick and wounded are accommodated in suitable buildings, provided with proper equipment and fitted with electric lights and fans, we think that the requirements of the situation will have been satisfied. The maximum average daily number of sick and wounded last year in any one month amounted to 9.5 per cent. of the strength, though on one particular date the percentage of sick and wounded exceeded 12.5 per cent. If 10 per cent. is taken as an approximate percentage for the coming year, we think that the proposed provision of accommodation in general hospitals will be sufficient, as a certain number of patients must always be retained in field ambulances and stationary and clearing hospitals. Further, it is probable that the evacuation of the sick and wounded by hospital ships this year will be effected more expeditiously than last year. In these circumstances we can see no reason to criticise this estimate, though at least one of us is a little apprehensive of the result of any sudden outbreak of disease and the effect of the hot weather on a large force of British troops not accustomed to tropical conditions. We ought to state here that a telegram has recently been received from the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, stating that he is about to submit revised estimates of his requirements, and that a further increase in the medical establishment will be required. We do not doubt that this proposal will receive careful consideration. As to clearing hospitals, the situation is not so satisfactory, the present number of hospitals of this class being, as already stated, insufficient for the needs of the force; the Director of Medical Services has, however, been asked to state what his requirements are in this respect. The number of stationary hospitals will really depend on the length of the lines of communication, and possibly when the general hospital accommodation is increased as proposed, and the existing stationary hospitals are available for their legitimate duties, no larger increase in their number will be necessary. We are glad to say that a number of Royal Army Medical Corps and Indian Medical Service officers have recently been sent to Mesopotamia, for employment in general hospitals and to furnish the necessary personnel for river steamers and transports used for the evacuation of sick and wounded. The despatch of these officers will afford great relief to medical units in that country. A large number of additional field ambulances have also been sent.

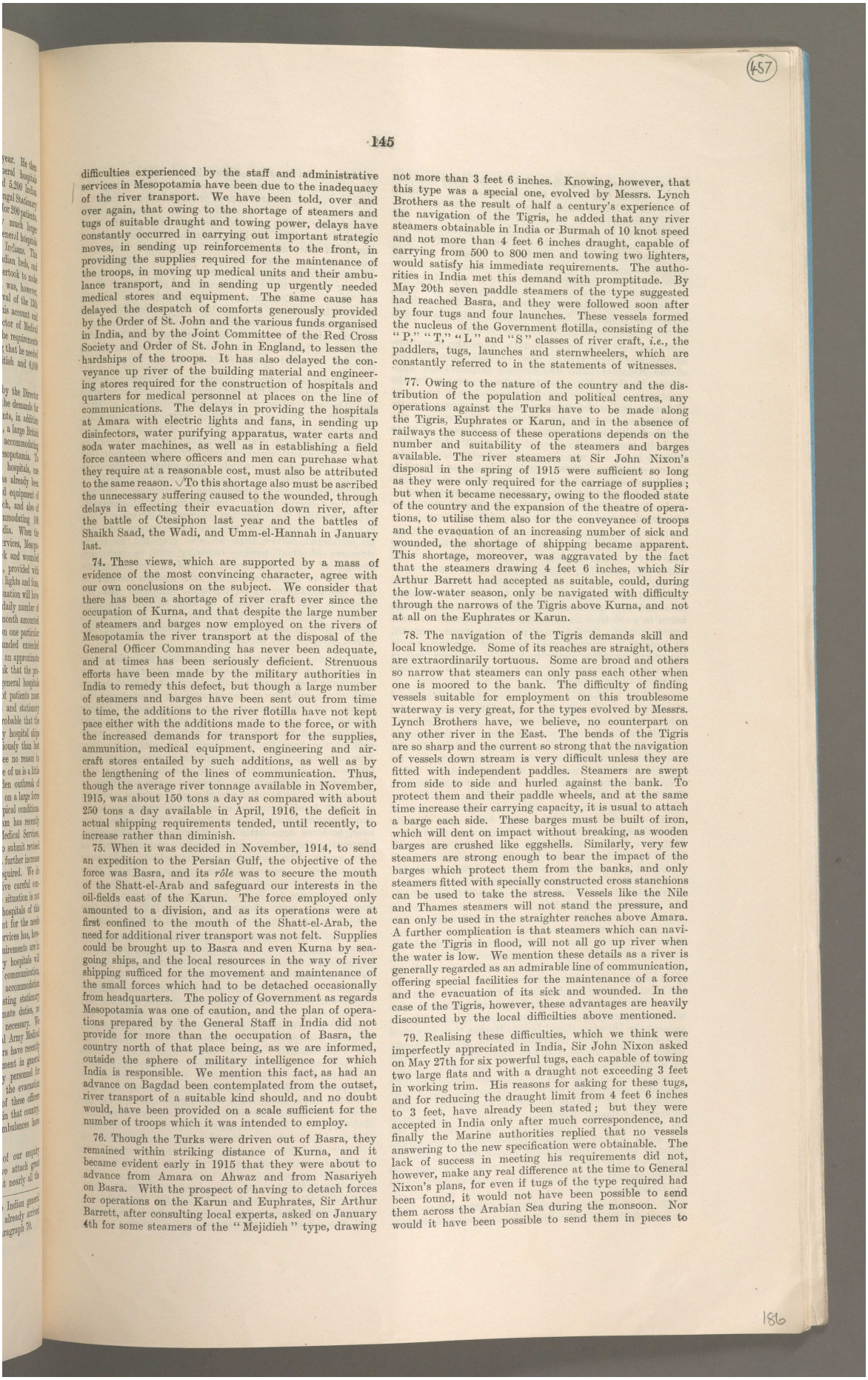
73. *River transport.*—In the course of our enquiry many witnesses, to whose evidence we attach great weight, have laid stress on the fact that nearly all the

* These include the personnel of two Indian general hospitals of 500 beds each, which have already arrived in Mesopotamia and are referred to in paragraph 70.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00005e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



difficulties experienced by the staff and administrative services in Mesopotamia have been due to the inadequacy of the river transport. We have been told, over and over again, that owing to the shortage of steamers and tugs of suitable draught and towing power, delays have constantly occurred in carrying out important strategic moves, in sending up reinforcements to the front, in providing the supplies required for the maintenance of the troops, in moving up medical units and their ambulance transport, and in sending up urgently needed medical stores and equipment. The same cause has delayed the despatch of comforts generously provided by the Order of St. John and the various funds organised in India, and by the Joint Committee of the Red Cross Society and Order of St. John in England, to lessen the hardships of the troops. It has also delayed the conveyance up river of the building material and engineering stores required for the construction of hospitals and quarters for medical personnel at places on the line of communications. The delays in providing the hospitals at Amara with electric lights and fans, in sending up disinfectors, water purifying apparatus, water carts and soda water machines, as well as in establishing a field force canteen where officers and men can purchase what they require at a reasonable cost, must also be attributed to the same reason. To this shortage also must be ascribed the unnecessary suffering caused to the wounded, through delays in effecting their evacuation down river, after the battle of Ctesiphon last year and the battles of Shaikh Saad, the Wadi, and Umm-el-Hannah in January last.

74. These views, which are supported by a mass of evidence of the most convincing character, agree with our own conclusions on the subject. We consider that there has been a shortage of river craft ever since the occupation of Kurna, and that despite the large number of steamers and barges now employed on the rivers of Mesopotamia the river transport at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding has never been adequate, and at times has been seriously deficient. Strenuous efforts have been made by the military authorities in India to remedy this defect, but though a large number of steamers and barges have been sent out from time to time, the additions to the river flotilla have not kept pace either with the additions made to the force, or with the increased demands for transport for the supplies, ammunition, medical equipment, engineering and aircraft stores entailed by such additions, as well as by the lengthening of the lines of communication. Thus, though the average river tonnage available in November, 1915, was about 150 tons a day as compared with about 250 tons a day available in April, 1916, the deficit in actual shipping requirements tended, until recently, to increase rather than diminish.

75. When it was decided in November, 1914, to send an expedition to the Persian Gulf, the objective of the force was Basra, and its *rôle* was to secure the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab and safeguard our interests in the oil-fields east of the Karun. The force employed only amounted to a division, and as its operations were at first confined to the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, the need for additional river transport was not felt. Supplies could be brought up to Basra and even Kurna by seagoing ships, and the local resources in the way of river shipping sufficed for the movement and maintenance of the small forces which had to be detached occasionally from headquarters. The policy of Government as regards Mesopotamia was one of caution, and the plan of operations prepared by the General Staff in India did not provide for more than the occupation of Basra, the country north of that place being, as we are informed, outside the sphere of military intelligence for which India is responsible. We mention this fact, as had an advance on Bagdad been contemplated from the outset, river transport of a suitable kind should, and no doubt would, have been provided on a scale sufficient for the number of troops which it was intended to employ.

76. Though the Turks were driven out of Basra, they remained within striking distance of Kurna, and it became evident early in 1915 that they were about to advance from Amara on Ahwaz and from Nasariyeh on Basra. With the prospect of having to detach forces for operations on the Karun and Euphrates, Sir Arthur Barrett, after consulting local experts, asked on January 4th for some steamers of the "Mejidieh" type, drawing not more than 3 feet 6 inches. Knowing, however, that this type was a special one, evolved by Messrs. Lynch Brothers as the result of half a century's experience of the navigation of the Tigris, he added that any river steamers obtainable in India or Burmah of 10 knot speed and not more than 4 feet 6 inches draught, capable of carrying from 500 to 800 men and towing two lighters, would satisfy his immediate requirements. The authorities in India met this demand with promptitude. By May 20th seven paddle steamers of the type suggested had reached Basra, and they were followed soon after by four tugs and four launches. These vessels formed the nucleus of the Government flotilla, consisting of the "P," "T," "L" and "S" classes of river craft, *i.e.*, the paddlers, tugs, launches and sternwheelers, which are constantly referred to in the statements of witnesses.

77. Owing to the nature of the country and the distribution of the population and political centres, any operations against the Turks have to be made along the Tigris, Euphrates or Karun, and in the absence of railways the success of these operations depends on the number and suitability of the steamers and barges available. The river steamers at Sir John Nixon's disposal in the spring of 1915 were sufficient so long as they were only required for the carriage of supplies; but when it became necessary, owing to the flooded state of the country and the expansion of the theatre of operations, to utilise them also for the conveyance of troops and the evacuation of an increasing number of sick and wounded, the shortage of shipping became apparent. This shortage, moreover, was aggravated by the fact that the steamers drawing 4 feet 6 inches, which Sir Arthur Barrett had accepted as suitable, could, during the low-water season, only be navigated with difficulty through the narrows of the Tigris above Kurna, and not at all on the Euphrates or Karun.

78. The navigation of the Tigris demands skill and local knowledge. Some of its reaches are straight, others are extraordinarily tortuous. Some are broad and others so narrow that steamers can only pass each other when one is moored to the bank. The difficulty of finding vessels suitable for employment on this troublesome waterway is very great, for the types evolved by Messrs. Lynch Brothers have, we believe, no counterpart on any other river in the East. The bends of the Tigris are so sharp and the current so strong that the navigation of vessels down stream is very difficult unless they are fitted with independent paddles. Steamers are swept from side to side and hurled against the bank. To protect them and their paddle wheels, and at the same time increase their carrying capacity, it is usual to attach a barge each side. These barges must be built of iron, which will dent on impact without breaking, as wooden barges are crushed like eggshells. Similarly, very few steamers are strong enough to bear the impact of the barges which protect them from the banks, and only steamers fitted with specially constructed cross stanchions can be used to take the stress. Vessels like the Nile and Thames steamers will not stand the pressure, and can only be used in the straighter reaches above Amara. A further complication is that steamers which can navigate the Tigris in flood, will not all go up river when the water is low. We mention these details as a river is generally regarded as an admirable line of communication, offering special facilities for the maintenance of a force and the evacuation of its sick and wounded. In the case of the Tigris, however, these advantages are heavily discounted by the local difficilties above mentioned.

79. Realising these difficulties, which we think were imperfectly appreciated in India, Sir John Nixon asked on May 27th for six powerful tugs, each capable of towing two large flats and with a draught not exceeding 3 feet in working trim. His reasons for asking for these tugs, and for reducing the draught limit from 4 feet 6 inches to 3 feet, have already been stated; but they were accepted in India only after much correspondence, and finally the Marine authorities replied that no vessels answering to the new specification were obtainable. The lack of success in meeting his requirements did not, however, make any real difference at the time to General Nixon's plans, for even if tugs of the type required had been found, it would not have been possible to send them across the Arabian Sea during the monsoon. Nor would it have been possible to send them in pieces to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774581.0x00000b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

be put together in the Shatt-el-Arab, for apart from the delays which this would have entailed, the workshop resources of Mesopotamia were not, at this time, sufficiently developed to allow of this alternative. We mention this as many of those who complain about the delays which have taken place in sending out river craft forget that for six months of the year vessels of this type cannot be sent to sea. Indeed their despatch is always attended with considerable risks, as is proved by the fact that 3 paddlers, 5 tugs, 17 sternwheelers, 22 barges, 2 flats, and 1 floating dock, or a total of 50 vessels all told, have foundered between various Indian ports and Basra in the course of the last 14 months.

80. On July 8th, 10th and 17th, when the operations against Nasariyeh were in progress, and the navigation of the Hammar Lake was causing extraordinary difficulties, Sir John Nixon asked India to arrange for the construction of 6 paddlers, 3 sternwheelers, 8 tugs, and 43 barges, and at the same time laid down a very definite specification for each class of vessel. This request was complied with, and on August 3rd the Secretary of State for India was asked to place the order with shipbuilding firms at home. It was not considered advisable to order the construction of these vessels in India, as difficulties and delays connected with the importation of materials and machinery from England, owing to scarcity of freights, made it unlikely that locally built vessels would be completed as rapidly as those ordered from home.

81. A memorandum, prepared by Major-General Kemball, in which Sir John Nixon's requirements in shipping were very clearly explained, was forwarded to India about this time, *i.e.*, August, 1915. After stating that his principal need was light-draught steamers and the personnel and material requisite for their maintenance, he added the significant warning that "if steps are not taken in good time to meet these requirements we shall run the risk of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment. At present we cannot make the most effective use of the troops available owing to want of steamers, and in any crisis insufficiency of river transport would limit the scope of reinforcements."

82. Early in October—that is, just after the battle of Kut-el-Amara—Sir John Nixon asked that some powerful light-draught tugs or sternwheelers might be purchased in India with the least possible delay, for use as stop-gaps pending the arrival from England of the additional river craft ordered through the Secretary of State. He explained that the maximum draught should be 3 feet 5 inches for tugs and 2 feet 6 inches for sternwheelers. The Director of the Royal Indian Marine replied that tugs of this type were unobtainable. Sternwheelers of the kind required could be secured, but it was virtually impracticable to tow them from Rangoon to the Persian Gulf, as owing to their fragile construction they would break up in the slightest sea. The correctness of this statement is proved by the fact that out of 24 sternwheelers sent from time to time only 7 reached their destination. On October 24th General Nixon reported that the Tigris was rising and suggested that more Irrawaddy paddlers might be purchased—that is, steamers drawing 4 feet 6 inches—the very class of vessel to which he had previously objected. A great point was made by the authorities in India of the apparent inconsistency of this demand, but we do not consider that the criticism was of any great weight, as vessels which draw too much water in the shallow season might obviously be useful when the river was in flood and so might help to mitigate a shortage which threatened to become acute. At Sir John Nixon's request the Director, Royal Indian Marine, then furnished him with a list of all the river craft in India or Burma which, though differing widely from the specifications he had laid down, approximated to his revised requirements. As soon as he had made his selection of the craft available, steps were taken to requisition the vessels demanded, and towards the end of January they began to arrive at Basra. They have since been supplemented by steamers from England and Egypt, and by the beginning of May the total number of steamers at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia was 44, exclusive of 24 steamers, 52 tugs and 3 sternwheelers either *en route* from, or under construction in, England or India.

83. Apart from the provision of additional river craft, the introduction of better methods of control and administration on the lines of communication and at the base has recently improved the situation, and when the steamers under construction or ordered become available, there should be no recurrence of the serious shortage of shipping which existed between July, 1915, and April, 1916. The working margin is, however, still somewhat fine, as the number of steamers withdrawn from work for repairs tends to increase, owing to the excessive strain imposed on them during the past year. Having regard to the uncertainties of navigation on the Tigris and Euphrates, we consider that the position as regards transport will not be really satisfactory until a channel has been dredged across the Hammar Lake, and until the railways about to be constructed to Nasariyeh and Amara become available for the conveyance of the sick and wounded as well as of troops and stores.

84. We find that there has been some misunderstanding between the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia and the authorities in India on the subject of river transport. The local authorities were, in our opinion, unreasonable in their demands for steamers of a type which is special to the Tigris, and they hampered the action of the authorities in India by failing to state that the specifications to which they adhered with such insistence applied only to river craft which had to be built, and not to vessels obtainable by purchase. Further, had the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia explained that his objection to vessels drawing 4 feet 6 inches applied only to the low water season, and had he intimated earlier that he was prepared to accept steamers of good towing capacity with a maximum draught of 6 feet, a large number of vessels might have been sent to Basra during the fair weather season. It was the limitation as to draught, combined with the condition that they should be able to tow two large barges, that prevented the earlier offer, by the Royal Indian Marine, of many of the vessels which Sir John Nixon subsequently accepted.

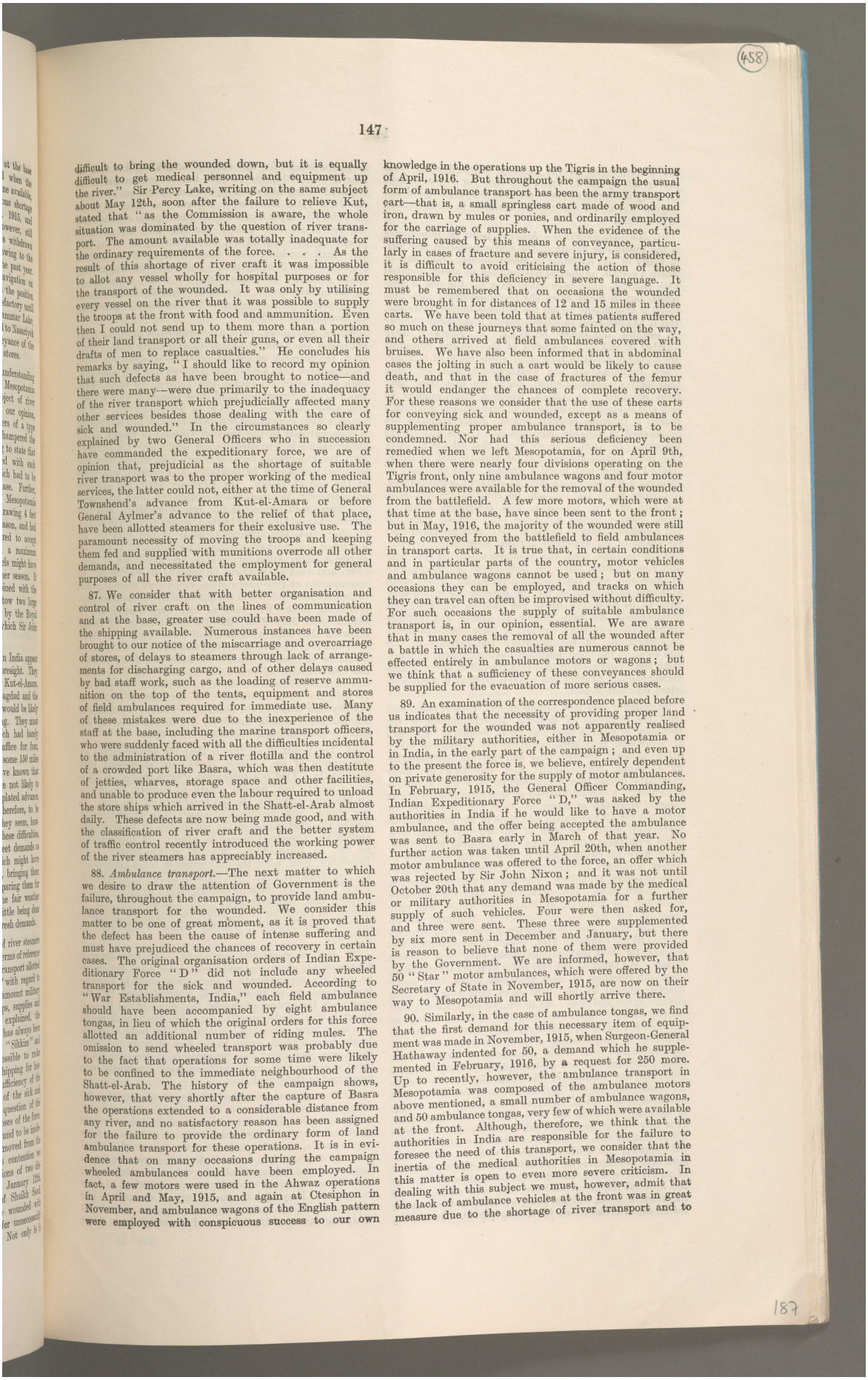
85. On the other hand, the authorities in India appear to us to have been somewhat lacking in foresight. They must have been aware that the advance to Kut-el-Amara, with the possibility of an advance on Bagdad and the despatch of reinforcements from oversea, would be likely to create a demand for additional shipping. They must have realised that the river craft which had barely sufficed for two divisions would not suffice for four, especially with a line of communications some 150 miles longer than before. They must also have known that the steamers ordered from England were not likely to arrive in time to be of use in the contemplated advance, and that local resources would have, therefore, to be supplemented from India or Burma. They seem, however, to have done little to anticipate these difficulties, contenting themselves with trying to meet demands as they arose. The monsoon months, which might have been utilised in selecting river steamers, bringing them down to Calcutta and Rangoon and preparing them for the sea voyage to Basra as soon as the fair weather season set in, were allowed to slip by, little being done until Sir John Nixon made a number of fresh demands.

86. We have examined this question of river steamers in some detail, as we are required by our terms of reference to consider whether the amount of river transport allotted to the medical services was sufficient "with regard to the total amount available and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition." As we have already explained, the shortage of river transport on the Tigris has always been so great that prior to the arrival of the "Sikkim" and the "Coromandel" it was found impossible to make any permanent separate allotment of shipping for hospital purposes. The question of the sufficiency of the transport provided for the conveyance of the sick and wounded thus merges into the larger question of the transport available for the general purposes of the force, and this, as we have pointed out, was found to be inadequate so far back as when the troops moved from the vicinity of Basra. In support of this contention we cannot do better than quote the opinions of two distinguished commanders. Writing on January 12th, 1916, immediately after the battle of Shaikh Saad, Sir John Nixon remarked that "the wounded with Aylmer have been called upon to suffer unnecessarily owing to shortage of river transport. Not only is it

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000c6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



difficult to bring the wounded down, but it is equally difficult to get medical personnel and equipment up the river." Sir Percy Lake, writing on the same subject about May 12th, soon after the failure to relieve Kut, stated that "as the Commission is aware, the whole situation was dominated by the question of river transport. The amount available was totally inadequate for the ordinary requirements of the force. . . . As the result of this shortage of river craft it was impossible to allot any vessel wholly for hospital purposes or for the transport of the wounded. It was only by utilising every vessel on the river that it was possible to supply the troops at the front with food and ammunition. Even then I could not send up to them more than a portion of their land transport or all their guns, or even all their drafts of men to replace casualties." He concludes his remarks by saying, "I should like to record my opinion that such defects as have been brought to notice—and there were many—were due primarily to the inadequacy of the river transport which prejudicially affected many other services besides those dealing with the care of sick and wounded." In the circumstances so clearly explained by two General Officers who in succession have commanded the expeditionary force, we are of opinion that, prejudicial as the shortage of suitable river transport was to the proper working of the medical services, the latter could not, either at the time of General Townshend's advance from Kut-el-Amara or before General Aylmer's advance to the relief of that place, have been allotted steamers for their exclusive use. The paramount necessity of moving the troops and keeping them fed and supplied with munitions overrode all other demands, and necessitated the employment for general purposes of all the river craft available.

87. We consider that with better organisation and control of river craft on the lines of communication and at the base, greater use could have been made of the shipping available. Numerous instances have been brought to our notice of the miscarriage and overcarriage of stores, of delays to steamers through lack of arrangements for discharging cargo, and of other delays caused by bad staff work, such as the loading of reserve ammunition on the top of the tents, equipment and stores of field ambulances required for immediate use. Many of these mistakes were due to the inexperience of the staff at the base, including the marine transport officers, who were suddenly faced with all the difficulties incidental to the administration of a river flotilla and the control of a crowded port like Basra, which was then destitute of jetties, wharves, storage space and other facilities, and unable to produce even the labour required to unload the store ships which arrived in the Shatt-el-Arab almost daily. These defects are now being made good, and with the classification of river craft and the better system of traffic control recently introduced the working power of the river steamers has appreciably increased.

88. *Ambulance transport.*—The next matter to which we desire to draw the attention of Government is the failure, throughout the campaign, to provide land ambulance transport for the wounded. We consider this matter to be one of great moment, as it is proved that the defect has been the cause of intense suffering and must have prejudiced the chances of recovery in certain cases. The original organisation orders of Indian Expeditionary Force "D" did not include any wheeled transport for the sick and wounded. According to "War Establishments, India," each field ambulance should have been accompanied by eight ambulance tongas, in lieu of which the original orders for this force allotted an additional number of riding mules. The omission to send wheeled transport was probably due to the fact that operations for some time were likely to be confined to the immediate neighbourhood of the Shatt-el-Arab. The history of the campaign shows, however, that very shortly after the capture of Basra the operations extended to a considerable distance from any river, and no satisfactory reason has been assigned for the failure to provide the ordinary form of land ambulance transport for these operations. It is in evidence that on many occasions during the campaign wheeled ambulances could have been employed. In fact, a few motors were used in the Ahwaz operations in April and May, 1915, and again at Ctesiphon in November, and ambulance wagons of the English pattern were employed with conspicuous success to our own knowledge in the operations up the Tigris in the beginning of April, 1916. But throughout the campaign the usual form of ambulance transport has been the army transport cart—that is, a small springless cart made of wood and iron, drawn by mules or ponies, and ordinarily employed for the carriage of supplies. When the evidence of the suffering caused by this means of conveyance, particularly in cases of fracture and severe injury, is considered, it is difficult to avoid criticising the action of those responsible for this deficiency in severe language. It must be remembered that on occasions the wounded were brought in for distances of 12 and 15 miles in these carts. We have been told that at times patients suffered so much on these journeys that some fainted on the way, and others arrived at field ambulances covered with bruises. We have also been informed that in abdominal cases the jolting in such a cart would be likely to cause death, and that in the case of fractures of the femur it would endanger the chances of complete recovery. For these reasons we consider that the use of these carts for conveying sick and wounded, except as a means of supplementing proper ambulance transport, is to be condemned. Nor had this serious deficiency been remedied when we left Mesopotamia, for on April 9th, when there were nearly four divisions operating on the Tigris front, only nine ambulance wagons and four motor ambulances were available for the removal of the wounded from the battlefield. A few more motors, which were at that time at the base, have since been sent to the front; but in May, 1916, the majority of the wounded were still being conveyed from the battlefield to field ambulances in transport carts. It is true that, in certain conditions and in particular parts of the country, motor vehicles and ambulance wagons cannot be used; but on many occasions they can be employed, and tracks on which they can travel can often be improvised without difficulty. For such occasions the supply of suitable ambulance transport is, in our opinion, essential. We are aware that in many cases the removal of all the wounded after a battle in which the casualties are numerous cannot be effected entirely in ambulance motors or wagons; but we think that a sufficiency of these conveyances should be supplied for the evacuation of more serious cases.

89. An examination of the correspondence placed before us indicates that the necessity of providing proper land transport for the wounded was not apparently realised by the military authorities, either in Mesopotamia or in India, in the early part of the campaign; and even up to the present the force is, we believe, entirely dependent on private generosity for the supply of motor ambulances. In February, 1915, the General Officer Commanding, Indian Expeditionary Force "D," was asked by the authorities in India if he would like to have a motor ambulance, and the offer being accepted the ambulance was sent to Basra early in March of that year. No further action was taken until April 20th, when another motor ambulance was offered to the force, an offer which was rejected by Sir John Nixon; and it was not until October 20th that any demand was made by the medical or military authorities in Mesopotamia for a further supply of such vehicles. Four were then asked for, and three were sent. These three were supplemented by six more sent in December and January, but there is reason to believe that none of them were provided by the Government. We are informed, however, that 50 "Star" motor ambulances, which were offered by the Secretary of State in November, 1915, are now on their way to Mesopotamia and will shortly arrive there.

90. Similarly, in the case of ambulance tongas, we find that the first demand for this necessary item of equipment was made in November, 1915, when Surgeon-General Hathaway indented for 50, a demand which he supplemented in February, 1916, by a request for 250 more. Up to recently, however, the ambulance transport in Mesopotamia was composed of the ambulance motors above mentioned, a small number of ambulance wagons, and 50 ambulance tongas, very few of which were available at the front. Although, therefore, we think that the authorities in India are responsible for the failure to foresee the need of this transport, we consider that the inertia of the medical authorities in Mesopotamia in this matter is open to even more severe criticism. In dealing with this subject we must, however, admit that the lack of ambulance vehicles at the front was in great measure due to the shortage of river transport and to

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00007c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

the flooded state of the country which delayed their movement by road. Indeed, it has for these reasons on many occasions not been possible to get the ambulance wagons and motor ambulances available in Basra moved to the front.

91. *Hospital buildings.*—Another point of importance is the unsuitable nature of the accommodation provided in many of the hospitals in Mesopotamia. Buildings in which a certain number of patients can be accommodated with comfort, have been taken over for the use of hospitals, but in many cases the accommodation thus provided is insufficient for all the patients under treatment, and it has not been supplemented by a sufficient number of suitable temporary buildings. At Basra a large number of sick and wounded at the General Hospitals are accommodated in temporary sheds made of matting. These buildings are not weatherproof, and we think that better accommodation might by this time have been provided. At Amara, where a large number of sick and wounded are detained in hospital, the accommodation is in some respects worse. Many hospitals are established in suitable buildings, but this is not always the case. In April, 1916 we found that all the patients of a large Indian general hosptal were located in tents, pitched on low and marshy ground. The difficulty of securing a site on a high level at Amarah is insuperable, but there is, in our opinion, no sufficient reason, save the lack of river transport, why temporary sheds on raised plinths should not have been erected there for the accommodation of the sick. We were informed that 60 sheds of an approved pattern were being erected, but 16 months after the commencement of the war and nine months after the occupation of Amara, two of these only were approaching completion. These sheds appeared to be suitable for the purpose for which they were to be used, but up to the date on which we left Mesopotamia we were unable to obtain any definite information as to when the rest of these buildings would be completed. In the meantime the patients of this and some of the other hospitals have to remain in tents. With the climatic conditions that prevail in Mesopotamia during the hot weather this is likely to have a prejudicial effect on their health.

92. *Electric fans and supply of ice.*—Closely connected with the question of hospital accommodation, is the provision of electric fans and ice in hospitals. In cases of fever and heat stroke and for the comfort of many other patients, electric fans and ice are indispensable in a damp hot climate, and the lack of these essentials during the operations in 1915 was a serious drawback. A certain number of fans were put up in the General Hospitals at Basra last year, but these were not sufficient for all the wards, and none of the new hospitals there had, up to the time of our leaving Basra, been fitted with these fans. Up to the middle of May, 1916, there were no electric fans in any of the hospitals at Amara, although the number of patients accommodated there is several thousands. The same is true of Nasariyeh and Sheikh Saad. We are informed that the necessary plant for the hospitals at Basra and Amara was only indented for by the authorities in Mesopotamia on December 31st, 1915 (the letter being received on January 18th), and on February 21st, 1916. In our opinion, the demand for these installations might have been foreseen earlier. We think, at any rate so far as Basra is concerned, where no question of river transport arises, that every hospital should by this time have been supplied with electric lights and fans. As to ice, we are informed that ice was available for all the hospitals in Basra during the hot weather of 1915, but it certainly was not regularly available in hospitals at Ahwaz, Nasariyeh or Amara, and up to the time of our departure, so far as we are aware, Government had not supplied ice-manufacturing plant to any station in Mesopotamia outside Basra. At Nasariyeh, an old Turkish ice manufacturing plant has been taken out of the river and, through the energy of General Brooking, has been put into working order. It is now run by mechanics taken from a territorial regiment. At Ahwaz, we understand that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company has a machine which at times works satisfactorily. In Amara, the authorities have taken possession of an old ice-making machine, and some attempts to meet the hospital requirements have thus been made, though the machine is old, and last year, according to the evidence before us, it broke down for a long period. On inquiry as to the reason for this state of affairs, we find that on March 6th, 1915, Sir Arthur Barrett was asked if he required ice machines and replied that he did not need any. On June 14th, however, a request was received from Sir John Nixon for four ice machines capable of producing one ton of ice each a day. On July 26th one machine producing two tons of ice, one producing 26 cwts., and one small machine, were despatched to Basra with 2 engineers and 5 mechanics. The delay in despatching these machines to Basra was, we think, unavoidable. In the circumstances, we consider that the authorities in Mesopotamia were responsible for the delay in providing ice machines in 1915.

93. In November, 1915, the authorities in India again addressed the General Officer Commanding Force, "D," as to the number of ice machines he required for 1916. On December 11th a reply was received that five machines, each capable of producing two tons of ice daily, were wanted. On December 22nd these demands were revised and seven machines, capable of producing one ton of ice each day, were asked for. On January 6th a telegram was despatched to the Director-General of Stores, India Office, asking him to supply these machines. On January 19th, the Director-General of Stores telegraphed that four ice machines would be delivered in February and three at the end of March. On February 14th, the military authorities in Mesopotamia indented for three additional machines, each producing one ton of ice daily, and this indent was also forwarded to the Director-General of Stores. On April 1st, the Director-General cabled that the ice machines ordered were promised for shipment at the rate of one a week, commencing from the first week of May, 1916, and that they would be sent to Basra direct. In consequence of this information, steps were at once taken to procure ice machines in India, and in May, four machines, producing about five tons of ice, were despatched to Basra. On May 27th, the Director-General of Stores reported that four machines had been shipped on April 15th and May 11th respectively, and also stated that three would be shipped in June. On June 1st, 1916, another machine capable of producing 1¼ tons was shipped by Indian authorities from Bombay to Basra. In addition to this, the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John have ordered a number of ice machines which, however, up to the time of our leaving Mesopotamia, had not arrived there.

94. The result of all this is that the arrangements for the supply of ice, outside Basra, are at present very inadequate. This is a somewhat serious matter, as ice is not a luxury but, having regard to climatic conditions, an absolute necessity for the treatment of the sick. In our opinion this condition of affairs is in great measure due to the dilatoriness of the authorities in Mesopotamia and of the Director-General of Stores. It appears that no one in Mesopotamia moved in the matter until December, 1915, when the authorities in India asked what the requirements were. The General Officer Commanding, Force "D," then made demands, which he subsequently revised and supplemented. The Director-General of Stores, on the other hand, failed to supply the machines on the dates specified, possibly owing to difficulties in delivery.

95. *Medical stores and equipment.*—The arrangements for the supply of surgical and medical stores and appliances to meet the requirements of the various units in Mesopotamia were, up to March, 1916, unsatisfactory. In the first place the system of supply, laid down in the Medical Manual (War), India, was ill-adapted to meet the demands of a large force operating 1,600 miles from India overseas. In the second place, owing to the lack of river transport, there was such delay and uncertainty in the delivery of these supplies that medical officers have frequently been hampered in their work.

96. The system prescribed in the regulations for the supply of medical stores is that all general, stationary, and clearing hospitals and advanced medical store depôts indent on the nearest medical store depôt in India for their requirements, and, in their turn, the advanced medical store depôts attached to each division issue supplies to regimental and field medical units only. In case of need, the advanced medical store depôts are authorised to draw on general hospitals to meet urgent demands. The inconvenience of such a system, for an expedition operating overseas, is obvious and for such a large force

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000b7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

as was employed in Mesopotamia a complete depôt of medical stores, located within reasonable distance, upon which all units could draw, was clearly necessary. We are glad to say that this has now been realised and that such a store depôt, with ample supplies to meet demands from medical units of all descriptions, has been established at Basra. But it was not apparently until January, 1916, that the necessity for such a depôt was recognised, and the depôt was not actually opened until March. The arrangements for the supply of medical stores are, however, now satisfactory, and every effort is made to see that stores indented for are despatched to their destination as speedily as possible. Prior to the establishment of this depôt the inconvenience caused to medical units outside Basra, by the delay in the receipt of supplies, was great. It is difficult in ordinary circumstances to foresee many months ahead the exact requirements of a hospital when little is known of the climatic and other conditions; but the hospital authorities in Mesopotamia had other difficulties to contend with in this matter. In the first place, it was impossible for any hospital to foretell the number of patients which it maight be called upon to accommodate. A 200-bed hospital might be expanded to 500, or a 600-bed hospital to 1,000. Further, the hospital stores were liable to depletion at any moment to supply advanced medical store depôts and river convoy units, and on occasions even field ambulances. In the second place, it was inconvenient that hospitals up-country, some of which were situated 200 miles up the Tigris, should have no depôt nearer than Bombay upon which to draw for supplies in an emergency. The inconvenience of this system was indeed such that the regulations were not adhered to. On inspection of the advanced medical depôt at Basra we found that, in practice, articles were frequently supplied to the various hospitals there, and the advanced depôt, which should normally have been equipped with 36 boxes of particular articles required for field and regimental medical units, supplied a number of hospitals with various requirements, thereby undertaking duties for which it had neither the requisite staff nor equipment. The attention of the Deputy Director, Medical Services, Mesopotamia, was apparently drawn to this on the 19th July, 1915, for we find that an application was made to the Director of Medical Services, India, for additional personnel for the advanced medical store depôt at Basra, on the ground that the stock of medicines there must be increased. To this demand the Director, Medical Services, India, replied that it would be more satisfactory if frequent and smaller indents for medical stores were made and that no additional personnel could be sanctioned until an increase in the stock was found to be necessary. We draw attention to this correspondence as it indicates, in our opinion, a failure to realise the danger and inconvenience of the system then followed. Surgeon-General Hathaway must have been congizant of the position of affairs and of the delay and inconvenience that constantly occurred in procuring medical supplies. He was also aware, from inspection, of the fact that the advanced depôt was being used in great measure as a general depôt, and that it was undertaking duties for which it was not equipped. He failed, however, to take the opportunity of placing the whole question of medical stores on a sound footing by asking for the establishment of a general medical store depôt at Basra. On the other hand, it appears to us that when the Director of Medical Services, India, criticised the accumulation of any reserve medical stores in Basra, he did not appreciate the importance of having, in Mesopotamia, a large reserve of medical stores from which urgent requirements could be met in time of need. It is only fair, however, to say that the facts were not clearly put to the medical authorities in India, and that the delays and inconvenience which the system then in force entailed, were not fully explained. We cannot but think that if the facts had been properly put, the necessity for doing what has since been done, namely, the establishment of a properly equipped depôt on the spot, would at once have been realised. The fact, however, remains that up to March, 1916, no such depôt was established.

97. Another and possibly a more potent cause of inconvenience in the case of hospitals outside Basra was the difficulty of securing prompt delivery of medical stores up-country. Under present arrangements, when indents are received by the medical store depôt, the articles required are packed for delivery without delay and are made over to the medical embarkation officer, whose duty it is to see that they are despatched to their destination with reasonable expedition. As soon as the indent is complied with, the consignee is advised by wire of the fact, and if delivery is delayed he can at once make inquiries as to the cause, from the authorities at the base. There are a certain number of steamers and barges which return up river at frequent intervals when sick and wounded have been disembarked at the base, and these afford reasonable facilities for the transport of medical stores if the embarkation officer is energetic and intelligent. The consequence is that, as a rule, medical stores are now delivered promptly. But this was not so under the system which prevailed before March, 1916. Throughout the campaign there has been a great shortage of river steamers and, in consequence, all consignments of articles by water have frequently been delayed. The first requirements of an army are food, ammunition, and men to replace casualties, and when there is a deficiency in transport, the despatch of all other articles has to be deferred until these demands have been met. It follows, necessarily, that in such circumstances the despatch of medical stores must be a difficult matter and the utmost vigilance and energy are necessary on the part of the head of the medical services if his demands are not to be overlooked and subordinated to the demands of other administrations. From what we have seen we doubt if the demands of the medical services were pressed with sufficient energy by Surgeon-General Hathaway, and the omission up to January, 1916, to appoint a medical embarkation officer to supervise the despatch of consignments of medical stores, was a serious oversight. Cases of medical stores from the advanced depôt, intended for units in the field, used to be made over to the transport authorities to be conveyed to the front and there the matter ended. Similarly cases from Bombay, consigned to the front, were landed at Basra and presumably made over to the transport authorities, the duty of forwarding these articles to their destinations being left to that agency. In such circumstances, and in the rush to secure space on the steamers, we fear that medical supplies were often neglected to meet the more insistent demands of other administrative services. We freely recognise the efforts made by particular officers of Surgeon-General Hathaway's staff in this matter; but it was clearly impossible for them to attend to this work in the midst of their multifarious other duties. In some cases also we fear that the delay in forwarding consignments was increased by a want of proper organisation. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the medical officers examined by us have complained of the delay that has occurred in the receipt of medical stores, and we think that much of this inconvenience might have been avoided by the establishment of a general medical store depôt at Basra early in the war, and by the employment of a medical embarkation officer to see that the despatch of consignments up-river was not delayed. It would not, we think, serve any useful purpose to quote instances of inconvenience caused by these delays, though it would not be difficult to do so. It is possible, indeed, that the citation of individual cases in which the delay was due to lack of organisation, might give rise to a more unfavourable impression than the facts warrant. We are content to say that, for the reasons given above, the supply of medical stores to various units in Mesopotamia was, up to recently, far from satisfactory.

98. *Hospital ships.*—Another point to which we draw attention is the question of suitable transport for the conveyance of sick and wounded from Basra to India. When the expeditionary force set out, it was not accompanied by any hospital ship or by any special staff for employment on a transport, in case it should be necessary to use such a vessel as a hospital. There was a certain amount of sickness among the troops on the journey, and the Turks did not surrender possession of the important city of Basra without a struggle. The consequence was that in December, 1914, two ordinary transports had to be used for the evacuation of the sick and wounded to India, the necessary staff and equipment for these vessels being furnished from the limited medical resources of the expeditionary force. In January, 1915, the hospital ship "Madras," which was the gift of a private organisation, was sent to Basra, and in July a second hospital steamer was detailed to assist in the work of evacuating the sick and wounded. Since then, a number of other hospital ships have also been employed for this purpose; but the accommoda-

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000071

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

tion provided has not on all occasions been adequate, for we find that between December, 1914 and May 15th, 1916, over 9,500 sick and wounded travelled by ordinary transports to India. We realise that many of these were probably convalescents who did not need much attention. It is possible also that on some occasions a full medical staff was not necessary; but we cannot think that it was desirable that so many sick and wounded should have been sent back in these vessels. We are confirmed in this view by the evidence recorded at Bombay, which indicates that on particular occasions the staff detailed for these vessels was inadequate, and that the patients arrived in India in a condition which showed that they had not received proper care and attention. Transports not fitted up as hospital ships were used for this purpose on no less than twenty-two occasions, and the depletion of the medical staff and equipment at Basra, in order to furnish the personnel and stores for these vessels, has frequently been, and up to the time of our leaving Mesopotamia still was, a source of trouble and inconvenience. The employment of empty transports for conveying convalescents and light cases to India is, we recognise, probably necessary and open to no objection. In our opinion, however, no serious cases, demanding much medical care, should be placed on vessels of this kind, and we think that if the use of these transports is necessary, the requisite staffs should be drawn from India. Further, many of the hospital ships which have been employed on the Bombay to Basra run, have not been able, at certain seasons, to cross the bar of the Shatt-el-Arab, with the result that patients have had to be taken from Basra to the bar in transports and there transhipped. This transhipment has been the cause of discomfort and inconvenience. On one occasion, at least, the journey to the bar was so prolonged and the equipment of the vessel so inadequate, that the patients suffered considerably on the journey from want of proper food. We are glad, however, to observe that the number of hospital ships now employed is being increased, and that all the vessels which it is intended in the future to use as hospital ships will be able to cross the bar at all seasons.

99. The personnel and equipment provided on the hospital ships is ample and the accommodation is excellent. We have visited a number of these vessels and from our own observation, and the evidence of experts and others, we are satisfied that those now in use are admirably fitted out and that the patients receive the greatest care and attention. Between January, 1915, and May 15th, 1916, about 22,500 patients were, according to a statement furnished to us by the Director, Royal Indian Marine, evacuated to India in these ships and in the most favourable conditions possible.

100. *Water-supply.*—We now turn to the question of water-supply. The water for the troops and hospitals in Basra is drawn from the river, and the position is much the same in regard to places up the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun. It is possible that, at Basra, a better supply of water could be obtained from the new channel of the Euphrates which joins the Shatt-el-Arab at Gurmat Ali, and we understand that a scheme to obtain water from this source is under consideration by the authorities. Generally speaking, however, the only source of water-supply at present is the nearest river, and we are not satisfied that systematic and methodical attempts are made to render this water potable and innocuous before it is used for drinking purposes. This appears to us a matter of great importance in view of the prevalence of colitis and dysentery, and more particularly so owing to the recent outbreak of cholera. We are satisfied that most of the hospitals take great care to purify any water used, by sedimenting and then chlorinating or boiling it; but this is not always the case. The camp at Makina Masus, which is a very few miles from Basra, and incidentally a large Indian general hospital located there, are supplied with water which is not drawn from the middle of the Shatt-el-Arab but is taken from a neighbouring creek. We have the authority of a sanitary specialist for stating that the whole system of water-supply for this camp is unsafe. Further, the arrangements for pumping and sedimenting this water are so inadequate that, on some occasions, the water from the creek (in itself an unsuitable source of water-supply) is not purified in any way before it is used. Similarly, on the river steamers and barges, which are utilized both for the conveyance of troops and the sick, the arrangements for the supply of good drinking water appear to us to be defective. On some of the vessels there are no water tanks. On some the tanks supplied are useless, and on many steamers and barges there are no arrangements for purifying the drinking water that is used by the troops. It is true that in many vessels the energy of particular officers has been sufficient to ensure that reasonable precautions are taken to purify water used for drinking, but in others this is not the case and we cannot but think that this is a source of grave danger.

101. At Amara, we were informed that a scheme for the supply of drinking water was under consideration, but it has not yet materialised. We believe, however, that in the hospitals at Amara every possible precaution is takes to ensure that good drinking water only is supplied to the patients.

102. Generally speaking, we think that if the authorities are satisfied that the water in the various rivers in Mesopotamia can be rendered wholesome and potable by any simple process, systematic steps should be taken for the supply of water so purified to all hospitals as well as to all steamers used for the conveyance of troops, including sick and wounded. If this water cannot be rendered wholesome, the expediency of securing a supply of good water by means of tube wells or some other method should be considered.

103. Water supply arrangements at the actual front were also, until recently, far from satisfactory. The recent outbreak of cholera is attributed by sanitary experts to the failure to supply the troops with a sufficient amount of purified drinking water. It is well known that if the men cannot get an ample supply of good water, they will drink from any source available. The origin of the outbreak has been traced to the water of a ditch on a site previously occupied by Turkish troops among whom the disease was prevalent. The failure to provide a good water supply to the trenches was due to shortage of carts, pumps, tarpaulins and other material for the supply and storage of water, which could not be sent up to the front to begin with, owing to lack of river transport. These defects are now being rectified and the use of motor lorries has greatly facilitated the supply of purified drinking water to the troops.

104. *Sanitation.*—The provision of special sanitary establishments on a liberal scale is very necessary in Mesopotamia and the absence of expert advice on sanitary questions, and of the necessary executive staff to supervise the sanitation of the various camps and hospitals, was, for some time, a source of inconvenience. We understand that the Assistant Director, Medical Services (for Sanitation) has submitted proposals for the employment of the necessary establishment, and we trust that these proposals will receive careful consideration at the hands of the military authorities. It will, however, be of little use to appoint administrative sanitary officers unless the necessary supervising establishment and menial staff is also largely increased. In this connection, we may observe that the lack of sweepers for sanitary work, not only in the different camps but also in the various hospitals and on river steamers, is a serious matter, particularly, since the recent outbreak of cholera. Further, in some cases, men who are not of the proper caste have been sent out with hospitals and sanitary sections as sweepers; in one hospital we were told that out of 39 sweepers, 10 only were men of the class ordinarily employed for conservancy work. We think that a very large addition to the staff of sweepers in Mesopotamia is urgently necessary, and that more care should be taken to ensure that men of the proper caste only are sent for this work. If the terms now offered are not sufficiently attractive, the expediency of employing temporary men on more liberal terms will have to be considered, as the wages now offered are barely adequate according to the rates which prevail in that country.

105. We are glad to say that a serious defect in some of the hospitals, namely the absence of any suitable machinery for disinfecting clothing and other articles, has recently been rectified. A number of Thresh's disinfectors are now available in Mesopotamia, and many of these have been despatched up-river for use in out-stations. Formerly, for several months, the lack of this item of equipment was a defect in particular hospitals, as in its absence it was difficult effectively to get rid of lice, either from the Turkish prisoners, or from our own

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000039

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

troops. There was, in consequence, some danger of an outbreak of relapsing or other fever of a similar type. We understand that a proposal to supplement these Thresh's disinfectors by high pressure disinfectors, in places where general hospitals are located, is now being considered. We ought to add, however, that we have no evidence that the lack of disinfectors has been the cause of any serious outbreak of illness

106. *Effect of economy on the medical organisation.*—We now propose to refer to the widespread feeling in Mesopotamia that these deficiencies in the medical organisation are due to the parsimony of the Government of India and particularly to the action of the Finance Department. It is only fair to state that no evidence has been adduced before us of any demand made on the Finance Department, during the progress of the campaign, having been refused. The Government of India have also the less interest in cutting down expenditure, because the cost of the campaign, *minus* the normal charges of the troops furnished from India, is being paid by the Imperial Government.

107. The discussion of this point naturally leads to an examination of the larger question as to how far the rigid economy which has been exercised in respect of military expenditure in India for many years has affected the medical organisation of the Army in India. Any inquiry into the general question of military expenditure is clearly beyond the scope of our terms of reference; but the question as to whether, and to what extent this policy has affected medical arrangements in Mesopotamia is directly relevant, and there are strong indications of its prejudicial effect upon this organisation. It has, indeed, been freely suggested that this spirit of economy has been so inculcated into the minds of administrative officers, that economy has come to be regarded by many as the test of good administration, even at the expense of efficiency. Such an impression cannot but be destructive of initiative and of any desire to improve conditions in time of peace, while in war it is productive of graver evils. The observations of a senior officer who has given evidence to the Commission, may be quoted with advantage in this connection, as they crystallize the views of many others.

This officer writes as follows in an annexure to his evidence. "In my opinion the Indian system is more to blame for the breakdown of the Mesopotamia medical arrangements than anything else—a system which allows officers to think, whether rightly or wrongly—

(*a*) That there is more merit to be obtained by keeping quiet and not worrying the higher authorities than by asking for what is necessary;
(*b*) That keeping down expenditure is more meritorious than efficiency;
(*c*) That nothing new is likely to be sanctioned unless a corresponding saving in something else can be shown; and
(*d*) That even in small matters anything asked for will be cut down by half. . . . A system of this nature will possibly be good and economical in peace time, but is bound to break down in war."

There is, in our opinion, much force in this criticism, and though we do not accept this statement in its entirety, we are inclined to ascribe much of the delay in applying for, and the reluctance to insist on the provision of, separate river hospital steamers, proper ambulance land transport, electric fans, ice machines and other essential requirements, to this cause.

108. It might also be argued that the general unpreparedness of the medical organisation in India to meet the requirements of a great campaign overseas, is partly due to this spirit and to the reluctance of the Government of India to provide the necessary funds for improving the medical services. It would, however, be unjust to ascribe this lack of preparation entirely to these causes, for it may in great measure be due to the fact that the Army in India has, in the present war, been employed to an extent and in a manner not foreseen. Any discussion of this subject would, however, lead us beyond the scope of our reference. Whatever may be the cause, the inadequacy of the organisation to meet such demands is apparent. Not only has the supply of personnel and equipment proved insufficient to maintain medical establishments on the normal scale, but it may be doubted whether that scale itself is adequate to meet the requirements of a force engaged on a campaign against a well-armed enemy and serving in unhealthy surroundings. The Commission has, indeed, been led to the conclusion that the present situation has arisen in great measure because a system, framed in contemplation of an expedition in a mountainous country on the frontiers of India, has been applied, without the necessary modifications, to the very different circumstances of an important river campaign overseas. The methods prescribed for the supply of medical stores, the absence of any provision for the evacuation of wounded by river, and the insufficiency of the reserves of medical and subordinate personnel, may be cited in support of this contention. If this view is correct, it follows that the medical organisation of the Army in India will have to be re-examined and revised at the conclusion of the war. The personnel of officers, subordinates and menials will have to be largely increased and the system by which medical officers nominally in military service are allowed to remain in civil employment so long that they lose all touch with military work, will have to be reconsidered. The substitution of station for regimental hospitals in the Indian Army, so that patients may become accustomed in peace time to the non-regimental system of hospital organisation which obtains in war, is another proposal which will require examination. It has been suggested that such a change would have the additional advantage of improving the technical training of officers of the Indian Medical Service in military employment, by giving them more responsibility and wider administrative experience than is afforded by the charge of a regimental hospital during the greater part of their careers. The equipment also of the various units will have to be improved and added to, and ample reserves of medical requirements will have to be provided in India, for use in case of need. It is for various reasons impossible for us to examine this question in detail, nor would such an examination be germane to the subject of our inquiry; but we are, we think, justified in expressing the view that in this revision the following important points will have to be considered, *viz.*:—

(1) The increase in the number of casualties in modern warfare as compared with previous experiences in India;
(2) The inability of India to furnish or procure, in an emergency, any great increase either in medical personnel or equipment without delay;
(3) The expediency of assimilating the Indian and British medical organisations. The existing differences in establishments, equipment and divisibility of the various medical units, are productive of administrative inconvenience;
(4) The probability of Indian troops being employed in considerable numbers overseas; and
(5) The fact that public opinion now demands a very much higher standard of efficiency in medical organisation than formerly.

We do not doubt that in previous campaigns, notably in the campaign in South Africa and the Indian frontier expedition of 1908, the wounded suffered much from defective medical arrangements, and we believe that in the Soudan expedition no specially equipped hospital steamers were provided for the evacuation of the wounded down the Nile. But a very different standard is now rightly demanded by modern public opinion, and, to be satisfactory, any revision of the Indian organisation will have to be thoroughly up to date and complete, and at the same time sufficiently elastic to allow the fullest advantage to be taken of new discoveries and advances in medical science.

109. We are bound to add, however, that no perfection of organisation would allow of the reproduction, in Mesopotamia, of the admirable arrangements for the evacuation of the wounded which now obtain in France. Campaigning in a civilised country possessing great resources and an excellent system of railways, canals and roads, cannot be compared with campaigning in Mesopotamia, where everything required by the troops has to be imported either from England or India, and then carried for 250 miles or more, up a tortuous river which for difficulty of navigation must have few equals. In France there is an abundance of good buildings which can be used for the accommodation of the sick and the housing of the troops. In Mesopotamia, with the exception of the General

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00007e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Hospitals at Basra and Amara, which are partly located in buildings, both the sick and the troops have as a rule to be accommodated in tents or mat huts, in a country where variations of temperature make the climate extremely trying. We have no desire to minimise the errors and omissions referred to in this report, but we are not unmindful of the fact that many of the complaints made by officers in regard to the hardships of service in Mesopotamia, are partly due to the unfavourable comparisons which they draw between their present surroundings and those which they enjoyed in France. They miss the spells of rest in billets which followed turns of duty in the trenches, and many find it hard to realise that conditions of life which are possible in Europe, even in war time, are not possible for soldiers campaigning in the East, in circumstances of unusual difficulty.

110. In referring to the defects attributable to a faulty system, we do not wish to create the impression that these defects are alone responsible for the breakdown in the medical arrangements, for there is abundant evidence that inertia, want of foresight and lack of co-ordination, have been important factors in the situation. We have already referred, and shall have occasion to refer again, to the first two of these factors, but it will be convenient here to discuss the question of co-ordination. It is laid down in the Field Service Regulations that the General Staff is responsible that, with due regard to secrecy, constant and accurate information as to the situation and probable requirements of the troops is furnished to the other branches of the staff in sufficient time to enable these requirements to be met. We doubt whether sufficient attention was paid to this rule in certain phases of the campaign. Complaint was made to Sir John Nixon that the secretiveness of his General Staff was causing inconvenience to the administrative services. Conferences were held at headquarters from time to time, at which plans were considered. It is stated, however, that Surgeon-General Hathaway did not attend these conferences, except when the subjects discussed related directly to the medical administration. He was thus less in touch with the general situation than other Heads of Administrative Services, and we think that this had an unfavourable influence on the working of his branch.

111. There is reason to believe that the lack of co-ordination arising from the secretiveness referred to, and other causes, attracted the attention of the authorities in India, as we find that on December 24th, 1915, the Chief of the General Staff, India, made special enquiries of Sir John Nixon as to whether he was satisfied that his General Staff was in sufficiently close touch with the Medical Services to ensure that the latter knew when extra demands were likely to be made on them. Sir John Nixon replied that he was "perfectly satisfied." We regret that we cannot endorse this view, as there is evidence that on this and on other occasions the want of co-ordination and co-operation between the different branches of the staff, particularly between the Inspector-General of Communications and the medical services, was the source of great inconvenience.

112. *Landing at Fao and battle of Sahil.*—Having discussed these general points, we proceed to examine the manner in which the deficiencies referred to, and others of a temporary and local character, have affected the various stages of the operations, beginning with the landing at Fao. We think that, in regard to the early part of the campaign, it will meet all reasonable requirements if the operations up to and including the occupation of Basra are considered together. The casualties at the landing at Fao and in the two subsequent engagements were small, and the collection of the wounded presented no serious difficulty. It was not until the battle of Sahil that real opposition was encountered. The number of field ambulances landed was sufficient to deal with the casualties, which aggregated about 500. The intention was to remove the wounded as soon as possible to the river bank and place them on shipboard. During the progress of the battle, however, a violent sand-storm occurred which rendered this impossible. The result was that the bearer sub-divisions of the field ambulances, having brought their patients to the river bank by evening, had to improvise such shelter as was possible for them in date palm groves, and there was some difficulty in procuring suitable food. Colonel Jennings, I.M.S., who was in command of a field ambulance and had remained with the headquarters of his unit, was unable to get to the river bank that night owing to want of stretchers. He, therefore, remained out in the open with 30 patients, making such arrangements as he could for feeding and sheltering them. The next day all the wounded were removed to a transport in the river. It must be admitted that the wounded on this occasion suffered some discomfort, and that it would have been better if tents and supplies had been forthcoming on the river bank. We think, however, that the discomfort was not very serious, being due rather to unavoidable weather conditions than to any defect in the arrangements, and we consider that in the circumstances the evacuation of the wounded was satisfactory. It was unfortunate that Colonel Jennings was left out with his patients, but he was under the protection of the rear-guard, and we are informed that search parties were sent out to find him, though, owing to the violence of the dust-storm, they failed to do so.

113. The arrangements for receiving the wounded on shipboard were, however, not satisfactory. The absence of any properly equipped hospital ship was at once felt, and transports, which were not suitable, had to be converted into temporary hospital ships. One of these steamers was the "Varela," another being the "Erinpura." We have evidence that the "Varela" was in no way suitable for the accommodation of sick and wounded. She had animals on board, and was also loaded with ammunition, which she was discharging from time to time, while she was being used as a hospital ship. We cannot, therefore, but regret that a regular hospital ship was not sent out with the force, or that some more suitable vessel was not prepared for the reception of the sick and wounded. There does not appear to us to have been, at this stage, any real deficiency of medical personnel or equipment. It has been stated that there was a shortage of chloroform, but we do not think that this is proved. It is true that a box which was part of the equipment of the British General Hospital, supposed to contain a supply of chloroform, was found to be empty; but we have clear evidence that sufficient supplies of this drug were available from other sources.

114. Immediately after the action it was decided to send back all serious cases of sick and wounded, of which the number was now considerable, to India. The transport "Erinpura" was used for this purpose—a mixed convoy of 224 British and Indians being despatched in her to Bombay. We have no reason to think that the medical staff and equipment for this vessel were actually insufficient, though they were apparently only just adequate; but the inconvenience consequent on the lack of a proper hospital ship, with separate personnel and equipment, was apparent. In the first place the medical staff of the expedition had to be depleted to furnish the necessary medical personnel for the ship. In the second place, it is difficult—indeed almost impossible—to treat a large number of serious cases properly on a transport which has not the conveniences and appliances of a regular hospital. Thirdly, the equipment had to be improvised out of the stores provided for the force. We do not think that it is safe in such circumstances to depend entirely on improvised equipment, as many articles which are necessary may be overlooked.

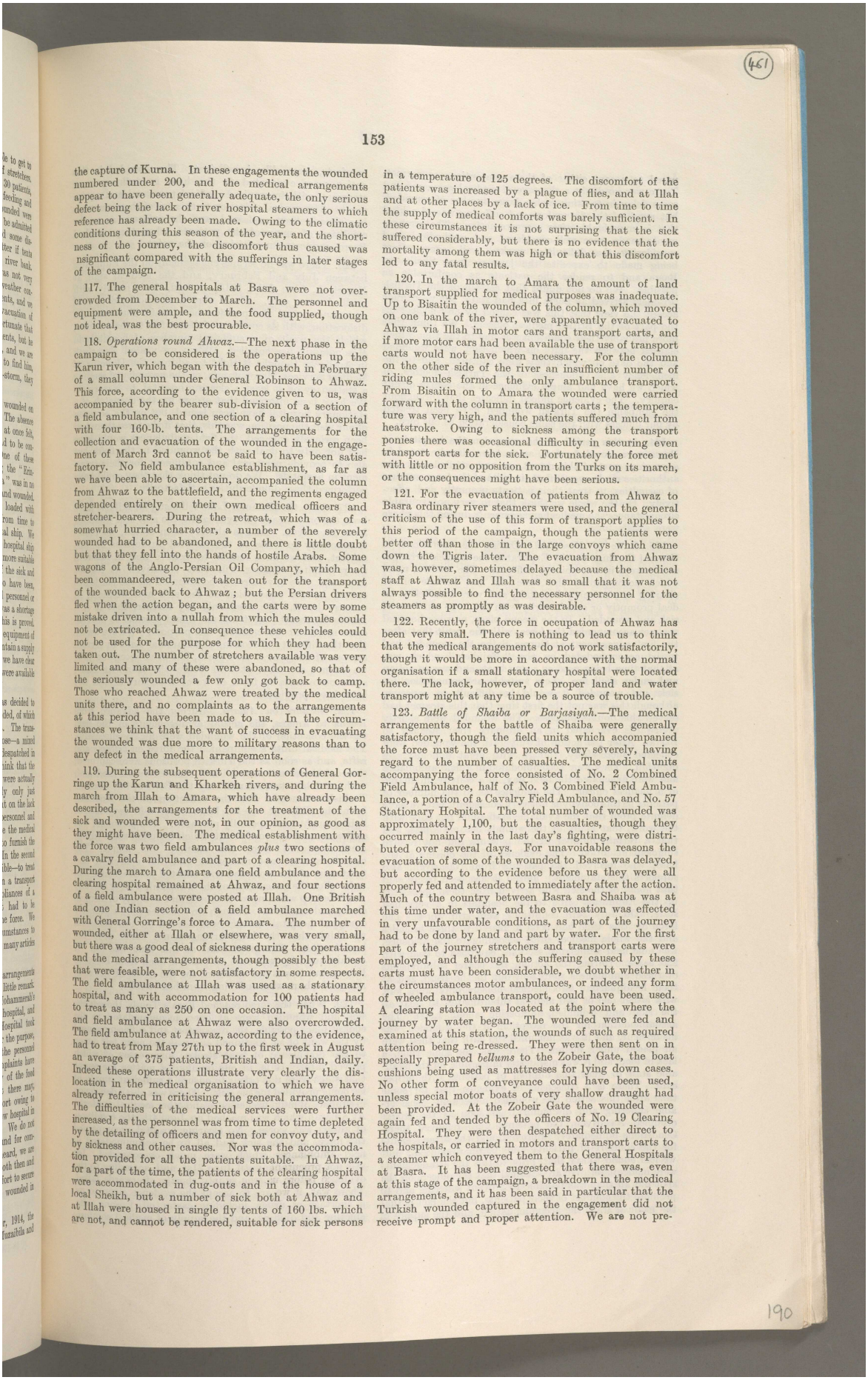
115. *Occupation of Basra.*—The medical arrangements during the occupation of Basra call for very little remark. On the arrival of the troops the Sheikh of Mohammerah's palace was taken over and prepared as a hospital, and shortly afterwards the British General Hospital took possession of it. It is a suitable building for the purpose, and during this period of the operations the personnel and equipment were adequate. Some complaints have been made as to the quantity and quality of the food supplied to the patients. We admit that there may, for a short time, have been some discomfort owing to the inevitable difficulties of establishing a new hospital in a city which had only just been occupied. We do not think, however, that there was much ground for complaint, and from what we have seen and heard, we are of opinion that the officers of the hospital, both then and throughout the campaign, have spared no effort to secure the maximum of comfort for the sick and wounded in their charge.

116. *Occupation of Kurna.*—In December, 1914, the operations were confined to the actions at Muzaibila and

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000087

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



the capture of Kurna. In these engagements the wounded numbered under 200, and the medical arrangements appear to have been generally adequate, the only serious defect being the lack of river hospital steamers to which reference has already been made. Owing to the climatic conditions during this season of the year, and the shortness of the journey, the discomfort thus caused was insignificant compared with the sufferings in later stages of the campaign.

117. The general hospitals at Basra were not overcrowded from December to March. The personnel and equipment were ample, and the food supplied, though not ideal, was the best procurable.

118. *Operations round Ahwaz.*—The next phase in the campaign to be considered is the operations up the Karun river, which began with the despatch in February of a small column under General Robinson to Ahwaz. This force, according to the evidence given to us, was accompanied by the bearer sub-division of a section of a field ambulance, and one section of a clearing hospital with four 160-lb. tents. The arrangements for the collection and evacuation of the wounded in the engagement of March 3rd cannot be said to have been satisfactory. No field ambulance establishment, as far as we have been able to ascertain, accompanied the column from Ahwaz to the battlefield, and the regiments engaged depended entirely on their own medical officers and stretcher-bearers. During the retreat, which was of a somewhat hurried character, a number of the severely wounded had to be abandoned, and there is little doubt but that they fell into the hands of hostile Arabs. Some wagons of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which had been commandeered, were taken out for the transport of the wounded back to Ahwaz; but the Persian drivers fled when the action began, and the carts were by some mistake driven into a nullah from which the mules could not be extricated. In consequence these vehicles could not be used for the purpose for which they had been taken out. The number of stretchers available was very limited and many of these were abandoned, so that of the seriously wounded a few only got back to camp. Those who reached Ahwaz were treated by the medical units there, and no complaints as to the arrangements at this period have been made to us. In the circumstances we think that the want of success in evacuating the wounded was due more to military reasons than to any defect in the medical arrangements.

119. During the subsequent operations of General Gorringe up the Karun and Kharkeh rivers, and during the march from Illah to Amara, which have already been described, the arrangements for the treatment of the sick and wounded were not, in our opinion, as good as they might have been. The medical establishment with the force was two field ambulances *plus* two sections of a cavalry field ambulance and part of a clearing hospital. During the march to Amara one field ambulance and the clearing hospital remained at Ahwaz, and four sections of a field ambulance were posted at Illah. One British and one Indian section of a field ambulance marched with General Gorringe's force to Amara. The number of wounded, either at Illah or elsewhere, was very small, but there was a good deal of sickness during the operations and the medical arrangements, though possibly the best that were feasible, were not satisfactory in some respects. The field ambulance at Illah was used as a stationary hospital, and with accommodation for 100 patients had to treat as many as 250 on one occasion. The hospital and field ambulance at Ahwaz were also overcrowded. The field ambulance at Ahwaz, according to the evidence, had to treat from May 27th up to the first week in August an average of 375 patients, British and Indian, daily. Indeed these operations illustrate very clearly the dislocation in the medical organisation to which we have already referred in criticising the general arrangements. The difficulties of the medical services were further increased, as the personnel was from time to time depleted by the detailing of officers and men for convoy duty, and by sickness and other causes. Nor was the accommodation provided for all the patients suitable. In Ahwaz, for a part of the time, the patients of the clearing hospital were accommodated in dug-outs and in the house of a local Sheikh, but a number of sick both at Ahwaz and at Illah were housed in single fly tents of 160 lbs. which are not, and cannot be rendered, suitable for sick persons in a temperature of 125 degrees. The discomfort of the patients was increased by a plague of flies, and at Illah and at other places by a lack of ice. From time to time the supply of medical comforts was barely sufficient. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the sick suffered considerably, but there is no evidence that the mortality among them was high or that this discomfort led to any fatal results.

120. In the march to Amara the amount of land transport supplied for medical purposes was inadequate. Up to Bisaitin the wounded of the column, which moved on one bank of the river, were apparently evacuated to Ahwaz via Illah in motor cars and transport carts, and if more motor cars had been available the use of transport carts would not have been necessary. For the column on the other side of the river an insufficient number of riding mules formed the only ambulance transport. From Bisaitin on to Amara the wounded were carried forward with the column in transport carts; the temperature was very high, and the patients suffered much from heatstroke. Owing to sickness among the transport ponies there was occasional difficulty in securing even transport carts for the sick. Fortunately the force met with little or no opposition from the Turks on its march, or the consequences might have been serious.

121. For the evacuation of patients from Ahwaz to Basra ordinary river steamers were used, and the general criticism of the use of this form of transport applies to this period of the campaign, though the patients were better off than those in the large convoys which came down the Tigris later. The evacuation from Ahwaz was, however, sometimes delayed because the medical staff at Ahwaz and Illah was so small that it was not always possible to find the necessary personnel for the steamers as promptly as was desirable.

122. Recently, the force in occupation of Ahwaz has been very small. There is nothing to lead us to think that the medical arangements do not work satisfactorily, though it would be more in accordance with the normal organisation if a small stationary hospital were located there. The lack, however, of proper land and water transport might at any time be a source of trouble.

123. *Battle of Shaiba or Barjasiyah.*—The medical arrangements for the battle of Shaiba were generally satisfactory, though the field units which accompanied the force must have been pressed very severely, having regard to the number of casualties. The medical units accompanying the force consisted of No. 2 Combined Field Ambulance, half of No. 3 Combined Field Ambulance, a portion of a Cavalry Field Ambulance, and No. 57 Stationary Hospital. The total number of wounded was approximately 1,100, but the casualties, though they occurred mainly in the last day's fighting, were distributed over several days. For unavoidable reasons the evacuation of some of the wounded to Basra was delayed, but according to the evidence before us they were all properly fed and attended to immediately after the action. Much of the country between Basra and Shaiba was at this time under water, and the evacuation was effected in very unfavourable conditions, as part of the journey had to be done by land and part by water. For the first part of the journey stretchers and transport carts were employed, and although the suffering caused by these carts must have been considerable, we doubt whether in the circumstances motor ambulances, or indeed any form of wheeled ambulance transport, could have been used. A clearing station was located at the point where the journey by water began. The wounded were fed and examined at this station, the wounds of such as required attention being re-dressed. They were then sent on in specially prepared *bellums* to the Zobeir Gate, the boat cushions being used as mattresses for lying down cases. No other form of conveyance could have been used, unless special motor boats of very shallow draught had been provided. At the Zobeir Gate the wounded were again fed and tended by the officers of No. 19 Clearing Hospital. They were then despatched either direct to the hospitals, or carried in motors and transport carts to a steamer which conveyed them to the General Hospitals at Basra. It has been suggested that there was, even at this stage of the campaign, a breakdown in the medical arrangements, and it has been said in particular that the Turkish wounded captured in the engagement did not receive prompt and proper attention. We are not pre-

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00000f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

pared to accept either of these contentions as correct. There was no doubt a shortage of medical personnel and some delay in treating such a large number of wounded, but much of the discomfort and suffering was of a kind that is unavoidable after a severe action. The arrangements made were well-considered and methodical, and considering the difficulties worked well, every effort being made to expedite the journey from Shaiba to Basra and to render the patients as comfortable as possible. We do not doubt that certain of the Turkish prisoners arrived at Basra in a bad state, but we cannot accept the view that this was caused by any neglect on the part of the British medical officers. We think that more probably their condition was due to the time which elapsed between the date on which they were wounded and the date on which they were captured, and to the inefficiency and callousness of the Turkish doctors, of which we have had ample evidence in the course of our enquiry. The evidence indeed indicates that throughout the campaign the Turkish wounded have been treated by our officers with the same consideration as our own.

124. At this period of the campaign the hospitals at Basra were crowded; but, as we have already stated in a previous part of this report, we are satisfied that the authorities made every effort, in spite of the large number of casualties, to treat their patients promptly and effectively. On the whole we think that in very unfavourable circumstances the medical arrangements during this phase were satisfactory.

125. *Battle of Nasariyeh.*—During the operations of General Gorringe up the Euphrates, the medical arrangements were in our opinion deficient. The medical units which accompanied the force did not include either clearing or stationary hospitals, and were insufficient to deal promptly or satisfactorily with the large numbers of sick and wounded. In the second place, no river hospital steamer accompanied the force, with the result that after the first engagement at Gurma Safha the wounded had to be accommodated on the "Mejidieh" which was at that time being used as a gun boat, and was in action and under shell fire. Less suitable accommodation for sick and wounded it would be difficult to conceive, although this was not the first time that this steamer had served this double purpose. The wounded were shortly afterwards evacuated in an ordinary river steamer to Basra. After the action of July 14th the wounded were collected successfully, though with great difficulty, by nightfall. They were accommodated in a field ambulance and were evacuated the next day, in a convoy, in charge of a medical officer. The evidence as to the number of patients in this convoy is not very consistent, but we have definite proof that the available staff could not cope with the work, that many of the wounds became septic, and that a certain number of the patients did not receive sufficient attention. The evidence of the officers at the base, who received the patients from Nasariyeh, also supports this statement; indeed it has been freely said that many of the sick who arrived from these operations up the Euphrates came to the hospitals in a very bad state. On July 24th conditions were still worse. The force by this time had been increased to three brigades and the whole medical staff, according to the evidence, was nine field ambulance sections, equipped to deal with 225 cases. During the action, the bearer sub-divisions of these ambulances were sent out to the front, and at their headquarters two medical officers only were left, with either one or two medical subordinates, to treat all the sick and wounded, numbering about 1,000. The accommodation for the reception of the wounded was insufficient, and it was not until the 25th that they were all placed under shelter. There was, for some time, a lack of food, and it was manifestly impossible for the available staff to treat this number of patients with proper care. There is a consensus of evidence that for some time after this action the wounded underwent considerable suffering and discomfort. As soon as the troops occupied Nasariyeh, the patients were removed there. Conditions immediately improved, and the arrangements for the comfort of patients were better organised; but we feel bound to say that, prior to this the arrangements were inadequate. We are satisfied that the officers on the spot did all that was possible to prevent suffering and to promote the comfort of their patients, but the fact is that the medical staff, the accommodation, and the supply of comforts, were alike insufficient. The wounded in this action were evacuated to the base in ordinary river steamers, with improvised medical personnel and equipment. The general objection to this use of these steamers has already been explained, and the evidence as to the condition of many of the patients, when they reached Basra, supports our criticism on the point.

126. There was no serious engagement on the Euphrates between July and February, and the medical staff at Nasariyeh, from July, 1915, onward, dealt mainly with medical cases only. These were accommodated in field ambulances, and the position here again illustrates the dislocation, with its corollary of discomfort to the patients, which the want of a sufficient number of hospitals in Mesopotamia has entailed. When we visited Nasariyeh in April, we thought it right to address the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, on the necessity of sending a stationary or at least a clearing hospital, to Nasariyeh. We have been informed that orders for the despatch of a stationary hospital have been issued, but on the occasion of our visit the position was this, that if the force there had been seriously engaged, the field ambulances would have had not only to deal with the wounded in the field, but also to provide personnel and equipment for their treatment in hospitals. We do not think that they could have performed these double duties satisfactorily.

127. Since the Hammar Lake fell last year *bellums* have been the only means for evacuating the sick and wounded from Nasariyeh. As has already been stated, we found it necessary to write to the medical authorities on this subject, and we have reason to believe that in future a river hospital steamer will visit Nasariyeh at regular intervals. We have already commented on the hardships caused by the evacuation of the sick and wounded in country boats. We need only say further, that it is a matter for regret that it was not found possible to provide some more suitable craft for this purpose. We are aware that the difficulty of crossing the Hammar Lake in certain seasons of the year is very great, but even accepting this, we do not see why, at least below the Hammar Lake, some more suitable form of water transport should not have been provided.

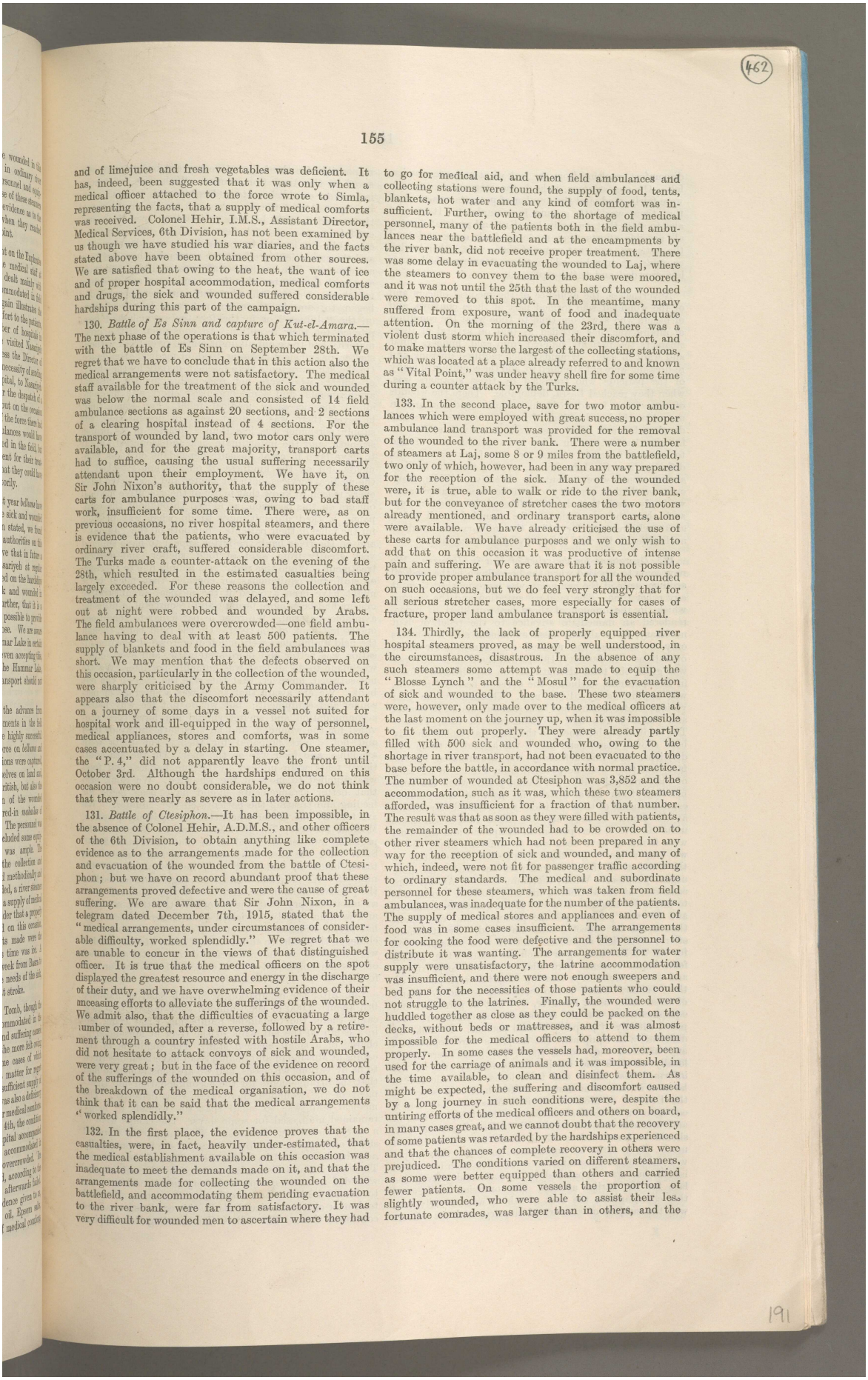
128. *Advance on Amara.*—During the advance from Kurna to Amara, the actual arrangements in the field for the collection of the wounded were highly successful. The medical units accompanied the force on *bellums* and rafts, and as soon as the Turkish positions were captured, some of these units established themselves on land and, without delay, treated not only the British, but also the Turkish wounded. For the collection of the wounded from the different creeks, large covered-in *mahailas* of light draught were specially prepared. The personnel was sufficient, and the equipment, which included some equipment captured from the enemy, was ample. The casualties were not numerous and the collection and treatment of the wounded was effected methodically and well. For the evacuation of the wounded, a river steamer was fitted up with improvised beds and a supply of medical stores and comforts. Though we consider that a properly equipped hospital steamer was needed on this occasion, we think that the local arrangements made were the best feasible. The great want at this time was ice. A certain quantity was sent up twice a week from Basra to Kurna, but it was not sufficient for the needs of the sick, many of whom were suffering from heat stroke.

129. When the force reached Ezra's Tomb, though the sick and wounded were at once accommodated in the coolest place possible, the discomfort and suffering caused by the want of ice continued and was the more felt owing to the prevalence of heat stroke, some cases of which proved fatal. It is, in our opinion, a matter for regret that steps were not taken to ensure a sufficient supply of ice being provided for the sick. There was also a deficiency in supplies of milk, beef essence and other medical comforts. At Amarah which was reached on June 4th, the condition of affairs was worse. No clearing hospital accompanied the force, and the sick had all to be accommodated in field ambulances which were much overcrowded. Ice was not procurable until June 21st, and, according to the evidence before us, the supply shortly afterwards failed. There was, if we are to accept the evidence given to us, a shortage of drugs, including castor oil, Epsom salts, emetine and quinine, and the supply of medical comforts

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00007c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



and of limejuice and fresh vegetables was deficient. It has, indeed, been suggested that it was only when a medical officer attached to the force wrote to Simla, representing the facts, that a supply of medical comforts was received. Colonel Hehir, I.M.S., Assistant Director, Medical Services, 6th Division, has not been examined by us though we have studied his war diaries, and the facts stated above have been obtained from other sources. We are satisfied that owing to the heat, the want of ice and of proper hospital accommodation, medical comforts and drugs, the sick and wounded suffered considerable hardships during this part of the campaign.

130. *Battle of Es Sinn and capture of Kut-el-Amara.*—The next phase of the operations is that which terminated with the battle of Es Sinn on September 28th. We regret that we have to conclude that in this action also the medical arrangements were not satisfactory. The medical staff available for the treatment of the sick and wounded was below the normal scale and consisted of 14 field ambulance sections as against 20 sections, and 2 sections of a clearing hospital instead of 4 sections. For the transport of wounded by land, two motor cars only were available, and for the great majority, transport carts had to suffice, causing the usual suffering necessarily attendant upon their employment. We have it, on Sir John Nixon's authority, that the supply of these carts for ambulance purposes was, owing to bad staff work, insufficient for some time. There were, as on previous occasions, no river hospital steamers, and there is evidence that the patients, who were evacuated by ordinary river craft, suffered considerable discomfort. The Turks made a counter-attack on the evening of the 28th, which resulted in the estimated casualties being largely exceeded. For these reasons the collection and treatment of the wounded was delayed, and some left out at night were robbed and wounded by Arabs. The field ambulances were overcrowded—one field ambulance having to deal with at least 500 patients. The supply of blankets and food in the field ambulances was short. We may mention that the defects observed on this occasion, particularly in the collection of the wounded, were sharply criticised by the Army Commander. It appears also that the discomfort necessarily attendant on a journey of some days in a vessel not suited for hospital work and ill-equipped in the way of personnel, medical appliances, stores and comforts, was in some cases accentuated by a delay in starting. One steamer, the "P. 4," did not apparently leave the front until October 3rd. Although the hardships endured on this occasion were no doubt considerable, we do not think that they were nearly as severe as in later actions.

131. *Battle of Ctesiphon.*—It has been impossible, in the absence of Colonel Hehir, A.D.M.S., and other officers of the 6th Division, to obtain anything like complete evidence as to the arrangements made for the collection and evacuation of the wounded from the battle of Ctesiphon; but we have on record abundant proof that these arrangements proved defective and were the cause of great suffering. We are aware that Sir John Nixon, in a telegram dated December 7th, 1915, stated that the "medical arrangements, under circumstances of considerable difficulty, worked splendidly." We regret that we are unable to concur in the views of that distinguished officer. It is true that the medical officers on the spot displayed the greatest resource and energy in the discharge of their duty, and we have overwhelming evidence of their unceasing efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded. We admit also, that the difficulties of evacuating a large number of wounded, after a reverse, followed by a retirement through a country infested with hostile Arabs, who did not hesitate to attack convoys of sick and wounded, were very great; but in the face of the evidence on record of the sufferings of the wounded on this occasion, and of the breakdown of the medical organisation, we do not think that it can be said that the medical arrangements "worked splendidly."

132. In the first place, the evidence proves that the casualties, were, in fact, heavily under-estimated, that the medical establishment available on this occasion was inadequate to meet the demands made on it, and that the arrangements made for collecting the wounded on the battlefield, and accommodating them pending evacuation to the river bank, were far from satisfactory. It was very difficult for wounded men to ascertain where they had to go for medical aid, and when field ambulances and collecting stations were found, the supply of food, tents, blankets, hot water and any kind of comfort was insufficient. Further, owing to the shortage of medical personnel, many of the patients both in the field ambulances near the battlefield and at the encampments by the river bank, did not receive proper treatment. There was some delay in evacuating the wounded to Laj, where the steamers to convey them to the base were moored, and it was not until the 25th that the last of the wounded were removed to this spot. In the meantime, many suffered from exposure, want of food and inadequate attention. On the morning of the 23rd, there was a violent dust storm which increased their discomfort, and to make matters worse the largest of the collecting stations, which was located at a place already referred to and known as "Vital Point," was under heavy shell fire for some time during a counter attack by the Turks.

133. In the second place, save for two motor ambulances which were employed with great success, no proper ambulance land transport was provided for the removal of the wounded to the river bank. There were a number of steamers at Laj, some 8 or 9 miles from the battlefield, two only of which, however, had been in any way prepared for the reception of the sick. Many of the wounded were, it is true, able to walk or ride to the river bank, but for the conveyance of stretcher cases the two motors already mentioned, and ordinary transport carts, alone were available. We have already criticised the use of these carts for ambulance purposes and we only wish to add that on this occasion it was productive of intense pain and suffering. We are aware that it is not possible to provide proper ambulance transport for all the wounded on such occasions, but we do feel very strongly that for all serious stretcher cases, more especially for cases of fracture, proper land ambulance transport is essential.

134. Thirdly, the lack of properly equipped river hospital steamers proved, as may be well understood, in the circumstances, disastrous. In the absence of any such steamers some attempt was made to equip the "Blosse Lynch" and the "Mosul" for the evacuation of sick and wounded to the base. These two steamers were, however, only made over to the medical officers at the last moment on the journey up, when it was impossible to fit them out properly. They were already partly filled with 500 sick and wounded who, owing to the shortage in river transport, had not been evacuated to the base before the battle, in accordance with normal practice. The number of wounded at Ctesiphon was 3,852 and the accommodation, such as it was, which these two steamers afforded, was insufficient for a fraction of that number. The result was that as soon as they were filled with patients, the remainder of the wounded had to be crowded on to other river steamers which had not been prepared in any way for the reception of sick and wounded, and many of which, indeed, were not fit for passenger traffic according to ordinary standards. The medical and subordinate personnel for these steamers, which was taken from field ambulances, was inadequate for the number of the patients. The supply of medical stores and appliances and even of food was in some cases insufficient. The arrangements for cooking the food were defective and the personnel to distribute it was wanting. The arrangements for water supply were unsatisfactory, the latrine accommodation was insufficient, and there were not enough sweepers and bed pans for the necessities of those patients who could not struggle to the latrines. Finally, the wounded were huddled together as close as they could be packed on the decks, without beds or mattresses, and it was almost impossible for the medical officers to attend to them properly. In some cases the vessels had, moreover, been used for the carriage of animals and it was impossible, in the time available, to clean and disinfect them. As might be expected, the suffering and discomfort caused by a long journey in such conditions were, despite the untiring efforts of the medical officers and others on board, in many cases great, and we cannot doubt that the recovery of some patients was retarded by the hardships experienced and that the chances of complete recovery in others were prejudiced. The conditions varied on different steamers, as some were better equipped than others and carried fewer patients. On some vessels the proportion of slightly wounded, who were able to assist their less fortunate comrades, was larger than in others, and the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000b3

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

discomfort resulting from the lack of attendance was less felt. On one steamer, indeed, the arrrangements made were fairly good, and the number of patients was so small that there was little ground for complaint. It is right also to state that on arrival at Kut and again at Amara, all possible efforts were made to feed, dress and tend the patients, and that some of them were either landed *en route*, or transhipped to other steamers which were less crowded and better equipped.

Nevertheless, the evidence of the medical officers and of the wounded who formed part of these convoys, and of others who saw from time to time what the condition of affairs was, has satisfied us that on several of these steamers the patients suffered from cold, hunger, thirst and want of care. Wounds which required dressing and re-dressing were not attended to, and the condition of many of the patients who travelled by these steamers was, when they reached Basra, deplorable. There the wounds of many were found to be in a septic condition and in urgent need of re-dressing. In some cases bed sores had developed, more than one patient arrived soaked in fæces and urine, and in a few cases wounds were found to contain maggots. These are the facts upon which, differing from Sir John Nixon, we find that the medical arrangements were lamentably defective. While, however, we think it our duty to criticise these arrangements, we freely admit that the difficulties of the situation were such that the evacuation of the wounded at all was a great achievement, for which the military and medical authorities in the field deserve very great credit.

135. *Operations for the relief of Kut in January.*—We now come to a period when the breakdown in the medical arrangements of the campaign was more marked than at any other time. The military situation and the reasons which, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, rendered an immediate advance to the relief of Kut necessary, have already been explained, and it remains only to examine the medical arrangements for these operations. In January, 1916, when the order to advance was given the total strength of the expeditionary force in Mesopotamia, excluding the division besieged in Kut, was approximately 51,000 men. Throughout the year various reinforcements had been sent out, and in December and January two new divisions arrived from France The medical establishment of the force was, as has already been shown, insufficient before the arrival of these two divisions, and this deficiency was accentuated by the fact that they were despatched from France in advance of their medical units. On January 3rd, when the force marched from Ali-al-Gharbi, no part of the medical establishments of these divisions was available for service at the front. It may also be added that when these units did arrive, their personnel, equipment and transport were found to have been sent on different ships, and it was impossible to get them despatched immediately to the front, as all the river transport was needed for more urgent purposes. When, therefore, General Aylmer concentrated at Ali-al-Gharbi, his only possible course was to improvise medical units out of the resources available, and for this purpose all the personnel and equipment that could be collected was employed. By strenuous efforts seven field ambulance sections were thus provided for the 7th Division, upon which the brunt of the fighting fell. Eight sections were allotted to the corps troops and two sections of a clearing hospital were placed on the "Julnar," which was to receive the wounded. Many of these units were, however, deficient in personnel and equipment, nor was the subordinate establishment composed entirely of properly trained persons. To make up deficiencies in equipment the hospitals were depleted of any material they could spare, purchases were made locally of cloth and muslin for bandages, and we are informed that sheets and tablecloths were collected to be used in case of necessity. Orders had been issued by the Director of Medical Services, Mesopotamia, that a consignment of medical accessories, then lying at Basrah and intended for the advanced medical depôt at Kut, should be forwarded to Ali-al-Gharbi for use in case of need. By a series of unfortunate mistakes this supply was not sent on by steamer in accordance with the orders issued, but was despatched by *mahaila* and arrived too late for the earlier actions. The omission to forward this consignment, the lack of which was severely felt, was the subject of a court of enquiry, and the officers responsible for the failure to carry out orders were censured by the Army Commander. With such deficiencies in medical establishments and equipment, it was not to be expected that the arrangements for the treatment of the wounded could be very satisfactory, even in a successful engagement with few casualties. The resistance offered by the Turkish force was, however, more strenuous and the casualties were far more numerous than had been anticipated. The medical staff was entirely unable to cope with the number of patients, and drugs and dressings ran short. On the 7th, when large numbers of wounded began to come in, there was not room for all of them on the "Julnar," or in the few tents which had been pitched for their reception. In consequence, the great majority had to lie out all night on the river bank without shelter, or sufficient clothing, food, or medical attendance. On the 8th more tents were pitched, mainly by the efforts of officers who were not responsible for the medical arrangements, and some organised effort was made to afford the necessary medical relief. For some time, however, there was a great want of organisation, the supply personnel was less than a quarter of its proper strength, and the unfortunate sick and wounded appear to have been in great measure dependant on their regiments and on the kindness of officers not attached to the medical services, both for shelter and food. We have every reason to know that many of the executive medical officers on this occasion, as indeed throughout the campaign, worked unremittingly to do what was possible for the relief of their patients; but both on the "Julnar" and on the river bank the latter appear to have suffered very greatly from want of food, shelter, and medical treatment. While this result was mainly due to shortage of staff and equipment, we consider that much of it might have been avoided if the medical administrative officers had been more prompt and resourceful in utilising available material. We refer in particular to conditions on the left bank of the river. On the right bank, though the field ambulances were much overcrowded, the organisation was better and more systematic, and every effort was made to do all that was humanly possible. We are not satisfied, however, that this was the case on the left bank. We are aware that there was a shortage of personnel and equipment; but we do not see why better accommodation and shelter should not have been provided for the wounded, and an adequate supply of food and hot drinks prepared for them. The tents were available, and food was on the spot. On the 8th additional tents were pitched by fatigue parties, and food was supplied to most of the wounded. We think also that better arrangements should have been made for feeding and treating the patients on the "Julnar." We are told by the officer who acted as Assistant Director, Medical Services, 7th Division, that he estimated the probable number of casualties in that division at 2,000. Such being the case it appears to us unfortunate that tents, blankets, and food were not prepared for this number. We may add that the arrangements for feeding the patients, alike in the tents and on the "Julnar," were so unsatisfactory that they were at the time severely, and we think justly, criticised by a General Officer who has given evidence before us. We have indeed to conclude, on the evidence adduced, that many of the wounded were indebted to the enterprise of regimental and other officers not connected with the medical services for any food or shelter they received.

136. After the occupation of Shaikh Saad on January 9th about 2,000 of the wounded were moved to a new camp there, the remainder numbering 1,200 being left in a camp on the left bank of the river at Musandaq in charge of a small medical staff. The condition of the camps at Musandaq and Shaikh Saad have been described to us by various witnesses, and we are constrained to find that the arrangements for the accommodation and treatment of the wounded there were very defective. The medical staff was so small that the wounds of many remained undressed for some days. The camps were in a very insanitary condition. The supply of surgical stores and appliances ran short, and there was practically no subordinate staff to see to the welfare of the patients. The suffering and discomfort endured by the unfortunate wounded in these camps were very great, and even up to January 18th, when the Meerut Stationary Hospital took over charge at Shaikh Saad, this condition of affairs continued there. The Officer Commanding this hospital

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000097

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

describes the condition of that camp in the following words:—"On arrival here we found about 195 British and 800 Indian sick and wounded in an irregular camp situated on filthy muddy ground behind the village. . . . There was one Indian temporary I.M.S. officer in charge of the Indians, and he was ill. He had two sub-assistant surgeons and some of the personnel of an improvised cavalry field ambulance to help him. He had no dressings left, and many cases still had on the first field dressings which had been applied on the battlefield. About 200 of the patients had dysentery, and there were no proper latrine arrangements. The state of the camp was indescribable. Near the middle of the hospital tents was a pile of bags of atta, &c., mostly ruined by the rain, which I was told represented 10 days' rations."

137. In the meantime, on the 13th, the camp at Musandaq was broken up, some of the patients being evacuated to Basra and others removed to Shaikh Saad. During this time the only medical staff for this hospital was 3 medical officers for 1,200 patients. For the hospital at Shaikh Saad, where the number of patients varied from 2,200 on the 11th to 1,000 on the 18th, 4 medical officers only were detailed. Of these 2 got ill, and for some time therefore 2 officers only were available for duty. It must also be remembered that this medical staff could ill be spared from the very small establishment of the field ambulances with the force. There was, besides, a great shortage in subordinates, and of various kinds of medical and surgical stores and appliances.

138. In the battle of January 13th and 14th the medical organisation continued to be equally unsatisfactory. The weather conditions had by this time become very bad. On the evening of the 8th it began to rain, and continued to do so intermittently from that date until the 21st, when very heavy rain fell for some days. Even at the time when the battle of Wadi was fought, the difficulty of moving sick and wounded in the rain and heavy mud was considerable, and the field ambulances attached to the force were still very inadequate. The evidence indicates, however, that the available medical staff did all that was possible to collect the wounded as soon as the action ended, and to give them such shelter as was available. Many were collected in an enclosure not far from the Wadi and were there detained for the night. We do not doubt that everything that was possible was done to assist them, but the suffering from want of food, cold, and lack of proper treatment was severe. On the following day they were evacuated to Shaikh Saad, and accommodated in the steamers moored there. On the 15th the steamers accompanying the force moved up to the Wadi, where they remained during the action of January 21st and 22nd, the hospital at Shaikh Saad being left in charge of the Meerut Stationary Hospital. The medical establishment had by this time been slightly reinforced, but was still much below normal. The action took place about 3 miles from the Wadi, and shortly after it began there was a heavy downpour of rain. This made the country, which was already difficult to move in, almost impassable. The attack on the enemy's position was unsuccessful, and the casualties were very heavy. The weather was extremely cold, and the whole country was practically a quagmire. In such circumstances the sufferings of the wounded would have been very great even with the best possible organisation. They were accentuated by the insufficiency of medical personnel, equipment and stores, and by the fact that there was also for some time considerable confusion and want of organisation. Throughout the day and the following night wounded and many unwounded men struggled back to the camp as best they could—walking, riding or carried on stretchers, or in transport carts. The whole country was a sea of mud, and many fell from exhaustion on the way. Those who were in the camp, and unwounded men returning from the battlefield, did their best to assist their wounded comrades to shelter, but we cannot doubt that a large number failed to reach their destination and died from exposure.

Evidence has indeed been given of one case in which not only a wounded man, but the stretcher-bearers bringing him in, died from this cause. We think that the condition of affairs is well illustrated by the following extract from the evidence of a medical officer who was present: "I shall never forget that journey. The wounded and sick were in army transport carts, and my personnel and myself on foot. We started off by crossing a nullah in which there was 3 feet of water, and then stumbled across country, sinking every step knee-deep in mud. We were obliged to take a zigzag course to enable the carts to avoid ditches and other obstacles. It was a terrible night, bitterly cold, with a driving sleet. We were wet through, and had had no food all day. I remember I had an attack of ague when I reached the ship. With great difficulty we got our sick and wounded up the two slippery steep planks which formed the only means of getting on the ship. The ship was overcrowded and understaffed." To add to the difficulties a number of tents which had been pitched for the accommodation of the wounded were, by an unfortunate error of judgment, struck, the officer in charge being under a misapprehension that orders had been issued for the force to advance. When, therefore, the wounded reached the camp the only shelter available was the hospital steamer "Julnar." To this steamer, and to any other steamer they could find, both wounded and unwounded crowded for shelter and warmth, but large numbers failed to secure any protection. The tents that had been struck were repitched, and a certain number of patients were accommodated in them; but as they had been pitched after the rain began to fall, and on ground knee-deep in mud, they were of little use to persons wet through and numb with cold. Nor were those on the steamers in much better case, for many of these vessels were not weather-proof; the men crowded anywhere they could, in gangways, in the stokehold and in the cabins for warmth; but many were and remained for some days wet through. The small medical staff on the spot, and officers and men not connected with the medical services, did all they could to improve matters, and to feed and assist the wounded. In spite of all these efforts the evidence conclusively shows that the sufferings of the wounded were so grievous that it would be difficult to exaggerate them.

139. It is impossible to deal separately with the evacuation of the wounded from these three engagements, for many individuals wounded in different battles travelled down the Tigris together. The hardships of the voyage were much increased during this period by the constant rain and cold that prevailed. As the steamers were not weatherproof, the patients were wet through and numb with cold, and remained in this condition for the whole journey. The steamers were overcrowded, and the defects in the arrangements, to which we have already referred, were more pronounced than on any previous occasion. We cite the following extract from the evidence of an officer as to his experiences on his way down. It would be easy to quote evidence of a more sensational character, but we think that the following is fairly typical:—

"I left Shaikh Saad on the morning of January 12th, on board the "P. 5," with about 300 other wounded. This boat had arrived at Shaikh Saad the previous day, and had just discharged the personnel and mules of a howitzer battery. There were no proper arrangements for food for the wounded on board, and we had to live on bully beef, biscuits and jam; tea was also issued, but there was no bread to be had. We all had to lie on the deck; blankets were issued out. The medical staff on board consisted of one doctor and one assistant surgeon of the Indian Subordinate Medical Department and two sweepers. On arrival at Amara the assistant surgeon was taken off this boat for duty on shore. No one was sent in his place, so from Amara to Basra the one doctor had to attend to some 300 wounded, the majority being stretcher cases. It was impossible for the two sweepers to attend to all the wounded properly, and I know of many cases of men urinating and defecating in their boots. It rained hard the whole of the voyage down from Shaikh Saad to Basra, and everybody on the boat, and those on the two barges, were soaked to the skin. Bread and meat rations were put on board at Amara, but owing to the want of cooking arrangements we never received a proper meal."

140. The conditions were indeed, in many ways, much worse than after Ctesiphon, and when the steamers arrived at Amara the wounded were in a pitiable state, wet through, dirty, without any dry clothes or covering, benumbed with cold and very hungry. Their wounds had not been properly dressed, and in some instances

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000043

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

cases of fracture were not even in splints. Many of the steamers were overcrowded and filthy, not only with mud and remnants of food, but also with fæces and urine. The condition of things, indeed, was so bad that it is difficult to describe it.

141. We have now to consider the causes which led to this very serious breakdown in the medical organisation, and to state whether the officers on the spot were in any way to blame for this condition of affairs. In our opinion the main causes of the breakdown were fourfold :—

(1) The lack of proper hospital river steamers.
(2) The lack of river transport.
(3) The insufficiency of the medical and subordinate staff and of medical stores and accessories ; and
(4) The weather conditions.

We have already discussed the want of provision of proper hospital steamers and the lack of river transport. The insufficiency of the medical and subordinate staff and equipment was, in our opinion, almost entirely due to the failure on the part of the embarkation authorities at Marseilles to despatch the medical units of the 3rd and 7th Divisions simultaneously with the fighting troops of those divisions. We think it necessary to set out the facts of this failure in some detail, as we regard it as one of the main causes of this breakdown.

142. We understand that it is a recognised principle in embarkation work that units despatched for service oversea should be embarked in the order in which they are required to land, and that each unit should be shipped complete, with its equipment, technical vehicles and transport. As each brigade has a field ambulance allotted to it on service, it follows that a field ambulance should have been despatched from Marseilles with every four battalions embarked, so as to enable each brigade to take the field as soon as it landed at Basrah. Instead of adhering to this well-known rule, the embarkation staff at Marseilles despatched the combatant units of each division first, keeping back the medical units till the last. Besides separating brigades from their field medical units, they added to the confusion so caused by breaking up the latter in order to economise shipping. The result of this was that, when the field ambulances arrived at Basra, it was found in most cases that their personnel was on one ship, their equipment on another and their transport in some cases on a third. To make matters worse, certain of the transports employed were of too deep draught to cross the bar at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, thus necessitating transhipment at Koweit. In consequence of these unbusinesslike arrangements, the medical units from France were not only late in arrival at Basra, but had to be detained there for some days, while their personnel and equipment was being sorted out and collected. Their transport had in every case to be sent up later, generally by march route, as the shortage of shipping precluded its despatch by river steamer. The length of the march and the delay caused by floods and other obstacles retarded progress considerably, so that the animals and vehicles of most of these field ambulances did not begin to reach the front until March.

143. We have found it difficult to ascertain why the embarkation staff at Marseilles adopted this unusual procedure, and we realise that there may have been reasons for their action of which we are not aware ; but so far as they can be gathered, the facts of the case appear to be as follows. Troop trains in France are of two fixed types—the "type combatant" and the "type parc." The railway transport authorities would not despatch any "type parc" trains until all the "type combatant" trains had started. The "type combatant" trains are unsuited to the conveyance of units such as field ambulances which are equipped with a relatively large amount of transport. Similarly the "type parc" trains are unsuited to combatant units. The field ambulances were thus perforce the last units of the 7th Division to entrain, and though all the trains arrived at Marseilles from the front within a period of 26 hours, and a rearrangement at Marseilles would thus appear to have been feasible, the order of arrival seems to have governed the order of embarkation, with the result that the medical units were the last to be shipped.

144. No objection to this arrangement seems to have been made by the divisional commander concerned, firstly because the entraining arrangements were in the hands of the higher authorities, who presumably had full information as to the requirements of the situation, and secondly because the War Office, in a letter dated November 1st, 1915, had stated that the primary destination of both divisions was Egypt, where they would be reorganised, prior to despatch to Mesopotamia in vessels which could cross the Fao bar. This is borne out by the fact that the transports were only rationed for the voyage to Egypt, and that a camp was actually prepared at Tel-el-Kebir for the reception of these Indian divisions.

145. During the embarkation of the 7th Division the embarkation staff found it necessary to separate units from their 1st line transport and drivers from their horses. The divisional staff objected to this proceeding, but was told that the Base Commandant had strict orders to allow no transport to sail without her full complement of troops and animals. The splitting up of units was held to be unavoidable as, owing to differences in sanitary and cooking arrangements, some transports had to be reserved for British and others for Indian troops. We are informed that the recommendations of the divisional staff would have provided for the embarkation, with the headquarters of each field ambulance, of the whole of its equipment, and a sufficieutly large portion of personnel to allow of its being employed as soon as it landed. Owing, however, to the non-arrival of certain ships, the whole trooping programme had to be recast, and the piecemeal embarkation of units was insisted on, so as to utilize shipping to the fullest possible extent. We gather that the confusion resulting from this arrangement must have been considerable, as the wagons and ambulance vehicles of two medical units were crowded out at the last moment and left on the quay at Marseilles. Besides breaking up units and delaying their embarkation, the order of despatch of medical units was changed so as to conform to shipping requirements. Thus, instead of giving priority to the field ambulances which would be required by their brigades immediately on landing, one of the first medical units of the 3rd Division to be embarked was the Secunderabad General Hospital, which could only be used at the base or on the lines of communication, and was less pressingly required than the mobile medical units.

146. The urgency of relieving General Townshend made it necessary to expedite the despatch of troops to Basra, and the orders for the disembarkation of the two Indian divisions in Egypt were accordingly cancelled. With the exception of two or three units which transhipped and were accommodated for a few days at Tel-el-Kebir, the troops proceeded direct to Mesopotamia, no opportunity being given them to reorganise or collect their scattered personnel and equipment. A statement is attached * giving full particulars as to the dates of despatch and arrival of each medical unit belonging to these two divisions. It will be observed that on the date of General Aylmer's starting for the relief of Kut, namely, January 4th, not a single complete field ambulance had disembarked at Basra, though portions of some units had just arrived there. The embarkation staff made great efforts to despatch these ambulances up-river as quickly as possible, for the need of medical reinforcements at the front was fully appreciated. None of them arrived, however, until after the battles of Shaikh Saad and the Wadi had been fought. The late arrival of the medical units of the 3rd and 7th Divisions thus created a temporary but very serious shortage of medical personnel and equipment in the Tigris Army Corps, which could not have been foreseen, either in Mesopotamia or in India. The earlier arrival of these units would not have removed the hardships caused to the wounded by rain, cold and exposure, or those arising from the lack of suitable river transport. It would, however, have secured the presence on the field of battle of a large number of fully staffed and well-equipped medical units, and so would have facilitated the rapid collection and removal of the wounded, besides providing the latter with the personnel required to cook and distribute their food and attend to their bodily wants. We consider that the breakdown which occurred after the January battles was largely, though indirectly, due to the unsatisfactory way in which the medical units of the 3rd and 7th Divisions were despatched from Marseilles.

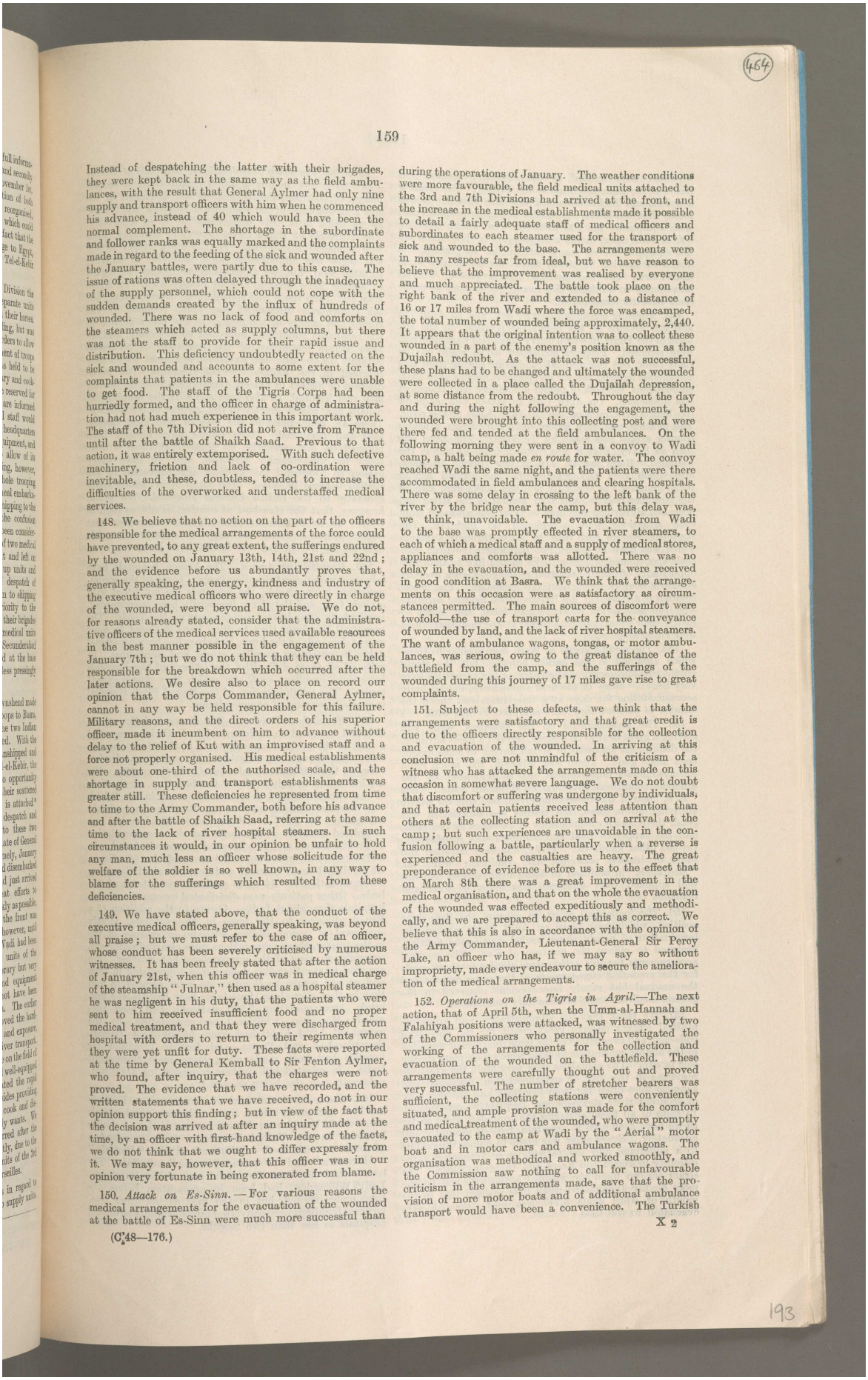
147. We may explain that our remarks in regard to the despatch of medical units, apply also to supply units.

* Annexure III.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x000064

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



Instead of despatching the latter with their brigades, they were kept back in the same way as the field ambulances, with the result that General Aylmer had only nine supply and transport officers with him when he commenced his advance, instead of 40 which would have been the normal complement. The shortage in the subordinate and follower ranks was equally marked and the complaints made in regard to the feeding of the sick and wounded after the January battles, were partly due to this cause. The issue of rations was often delayed through the inadequacy of the supply personnel, which could not cope with the sudden demands created by the influx of hundreds of wounded. There was no lack of food and comforts on the steamers which acted as supply columns, but there was not the staff to provide for their rapid issue and distribution. This deficiency undoubtedly reacted on the sick and wounded and accounts to some extent for the complaints that patients in the ambulances were unable to get food. The staff of the Tigris Corps had been hurriedly formed, and the officer in charge of administration had not had much experience in this important work. The staff of the 7th Division did not arrive from France until after the battle of Shaikh Saad. Previous to that action, it was entirely extemporised. With such defective machinery, friction and lack of co-ordination were inevitable, and these, doubtless, tended to increase the difficulties of the overworked and understaffed medical services.

148. We believe that no action on the part of the officers responsible for the medical arrangements of the force could have prevented, to any great extent, the sufferings endured by the wounded on January 13th, 14th, 21st and 22nd; and the evidence before us abundantly proves that, generally speaking, the energy, kindness and industry of the executive medical officers who were directly in charge of the wounded, were beyond all praise. We do not, for reasons already stated, consider that the administrative officers of the medical services used available resources in the best manner possible in the engagement of the January 7th; but we do not think that they can be held responsible for the breakdown which occurred after the later actions. We desire also to place on record our opinion that the Corps Commander, General Aylmer, cannot in any way be held responsible for this failure. Military reasons, and the direct orders of his superior officer, made it incumbent on him to advance without delay to the relief of Kut with an improvised staff and a force not properly organised. His medical establishments were about one-third of the authorised scale, and the shortage in supply and transport establishments was greater still. These deficiencies he represented from time to time to the Army Commander, both before his advance and after the battle of Shaikh Saad, referring at the same time to the lack of river hospital steamers. In such circumstances it would, in our opinion be unfair to hold any man, much less an officer whose solicitude for the welfare of the soldier is so well known, in any way to blame for the sufferings which resulted from these deficiencies.

149. We have stated above, that the conduct of the executive medical officers, generally speaking, was beyond all praise; but we must refer to the case of an officer, whose conduct has been severely criticised by numerous witnesses. It has been freely stated that after the action of January 21st, when this officer was in medical charge of the steamship "Julnar," then used as a hospital steamer he was negligent in his duty, that the patients who were sent to him received insufficient food and no proper medical treatment, and that they were discharged from hospital with orders to return to their regiments when they were yet unfit for duty. These facts were reported at the time by General Kemball to Sir Fenton Aylmer, who found, after inquiry, that the charges were not proved. The evidence that we have recorded, and the written statements that we have received, do not in our opinion support this finding; but in view of the fact that the decision was arrived at after an inquiry made at the time, by an officer with first-hand knowledge of the facts, we do not think that we ought to differ expressly from it. We may say, however, that this officer was in our opinion very fortunate in being exonerated from blame.

150. *Attack on Es-Sinn.*—For various reasons the medical arrangements for the evacuation of the wounded at the battle of Es-Sinn were much more successful than during the operations of January. The weather conditions were more favourable, the field medical units attached to the 3rd and 7th Divisions had arrived at the front, and the increase in the medical establishments made it possible to detail a fairly adequate staff of medical officers and subordinates to each steamer used for the transport of sick and wounded to the base. The arrangements were in many respects far from ideal, but we have reason to believe that the improvement was realised by everyone and much appreciated. The battle took place on the right bank of the river and extended to a distance of 16 or 17 miles from Wadi where the force was encamped, the total number of wounded being approximately, 2,440. It appears that the original intention was to collect these wounded in a part of the enemy's position known as the Dujailah redoubt. As the attack was not successful, these plans had to be changed and ultimately the wounded were collected in a place called the Dujailah depression, at some distance from the redoubt. Throughout the day and during the night following the engagement, the wounded were brought into this collecting post and were there fed and tended at the field ambulances. On the following morning they were sent in a convoy to Wadi camp, a halt being made *en route* for water. The convoy reached Wadi the same night, and the patients were there accommodated in field ambulances and clearing hospitals. There was some delay in crossing to the left bank of the river by the bridge near the camp, but this delay was, we think, unavoidable. The evacuation from Wadi to the base was promptly effected in river steamers, to each of which a medical staff and a supply of medical stores, appliances and comforts was allotted. There was no delay in the evacuation, and the wounded were received in good condition at Basra. We think that the arrangements on this occasion were as satisfactory as circumstances permitted. The main sources of discomfort were twofold—the use of transport carts for the conveyance of wounded by land, and the lack of river hospital steamers. The want of ambulance wagons, tongas, or motor ambulances, was serious, owing to the great distance of the battlefield from the camp, and the sufferings of the wounded during this journey of 17 miles gave rise to great complaints.

151. Subject to these defects, we think that the arrangements were satisfactory and that great credit is due to the officers directly responsible for the collection and evacuation of the wounded. In arriving at this conclusion we are not unmindful of the criticism of a witness who has attacked the arrangements made on this occasion in somewhat severe language. We do not doubt that discomfort or suffering was undergone by individuals, and that certain patients received less attention than others at the collecting station and on arrival at the camp; but such experiences are unavoidable in the confusion following a battle, particularly when a reverse is experienced and the casualties are heavy. The great preponderance of evidence before us is to the effect that on March 8th there was a great improvement in the medical organisation, and that on the whole the evacuation of the wounded was effected expeditiously and methodically, and we are prepared to accept this as correct. We believe that this is also in accordance with the opinion of the Army Commander, Lieutenant-General Sir Percy Lake, an officer who has, if we may say so without impropriety, made every endeavour to secure the amelioration of the medical arrangements.

152. *Operations on the Tigris in April.*—The next action, that of April 5th, when the Umm-al-Hannah and Falahiyah positions were attacked, was witnessed by two of the Commissioners who personally investigated the working of the arrangements for the collection and evacuation of the wounded on the battlefield. These arrangements were carefully thought out and proved very successful. The number of stretcher bearers was sufficient, the collecting stations were conveniently situated, and ample provision was made for the comfort and medical treatment of the wounded, who were promptly evacuated to the camp at Wadi by the "Aerial" motor boat and in motor cars and ambulance wagons. The organisation was methodical and worked smoothly, and the Commission saw nothing to call for unfavourable criticism in the arrangements made, save that the provision of more motor boats and of additional ambulance transport would have been a convenience. The Turkish

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000a7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

wounded were treated at the collecting station and received the same attention as the British. The clearing hospitals and field ambulances were also visited. It was found that the latter were really acting as hospitals and with equipment for 100 patients, were accommodating 300 or even more, in the emergency. As these units are not equipped for so many patients, or to perform the duties of clearing hospitals, there was necessarily some discomfort; but the medical officers present worked unceasingly to minimise this inconvenience and to make their patients comfortable.

153. Fighting continued day by day, and on April 7th and 9th attacks on the Sannaiyat position, on the left bank of the Tigris, in which heavy casualties were incurred, were repulsed. Progress continued to be made on the right bank, but the medical conditions arising from this continuous fighting call for no special comment save that, on occasions, the lack of proper ambulance land transport was noticeable. On April 17th an attack was made on the Beit Aeesa position, on the right bank of the river. The fighting was very severe, especially when a heavy counter attack was made by the Turks. The firing was then so heavy, that it was very difficult to collect the wounded. Many lay all day in the Turkish trenches, into which they had penetrated. The ground behind these trenches was swept by fire, the Turks were sniping the stretcher bearers, and after several of the latter had been hit, all further attempts to move the wounded from such situations were abandoned till nightfall. The stretcher bearers had then to wade through a marsh which was deep in places, but performed the task with their accustomed devotion. We should like to take this opportunity of calling attention to the good work done by stretcher bearers throughout the campaign. The heroic conduct of the men of the Indian Army Bearer Corps has won the admiration of the whole force, and seems to justify their being granted a higher status than that which they enjoy at present.

154. The arrangements at Wadi were similar to those which obtained in the earlier fighting, but the strain on the establishments was greater as the casualties were very heavy. Many of the field ambulances, indeed, were accommodating for days at a time twice and thrice the number of patients they were equipped to deal with.

155. The arrangements on the steamers, while still leaving a great deal to be desired, showed a great advance, the deficiencies apparent in March having to some extent been made good. There was, however, still much room for systematic improvement, as is evidenced by the different conditions obtaining on different boats. Thus "P. 5," one of the vessels employed, had cots for nearly all lying down cases, the latrine accommodation was good, there was no insufficiency of sweepers or bed-pans, and the supply of food and comforts was satisfactory. On the other hand, the "P. 7" was very crowded and short of trained personnel and comforts; while the "Medjidieh," in addition to being overcrowded and not well supplied with comforts, was short of food and blankets.

156. The ineffectual effort to capture the Sannaiyat position, which took place on April 22nd, marked the termination of nearly three weeks' continuous fighting, designed to relieve the garrison of Kut. The medical arrangements for this action were similar to those made for the preceding engagements of the same month, and the gradual but steady improvement observed in the general medical conditions was fully maintained.

157. We think that the administrative and executive medical officers deserve great credit for the successful collection and evacuation of the large numbers of wounded in the almost continuous fighting which took place during this month. The casualties were very high, the available resources in the way of accommodation, personnel and supplies were often far from plentiful, and the difficulty of securing river steamers was frequently considerable. In spite of all these obstacles the wounded were, so far as we have been able to ascertain, treated promptly and adequately. Every effort was made to reduce discomfort to a minimum, and the patients were evacuated expeditiously to Amara and Basra and thence to India. The strain thrown upon the medical authorities will be the more readily appreciated when it is realised that in the month of April alone 5,747 sick and wounded were evacuated to the base.

158. *Supplementary considerations. Hospitals at Basra.*—We have not, in our detailed examination of certain phases of the campaign, discussed the treatment of the sick and wounded in the hospitals at Amarah and Basra, as we think it is more convenient to do so separately. The hospitals at Basra have, generally speaking, been well managed throughout. In the early stages of the war there was undoubtedly some difficulty in securing suitable food, but we think that complaints in regard to dieting have been somewhat exaggerated. In April, May and June there was considerable overcrowding, but the consequent discomfort was much reduced by the labour and energy of the staff. In the latter portion of the campaign conditions improved considerably, and we have ample testimony of the gratitude of numerous patients for the care and excellent treatment which they received in the British General Hospital. The introduction of Sisters of Queen Alexandra's Nursing Service into this hospital, as also into some of the hospitals at Amara, has added greatly to the comfort of the patients. There are deficiencies in the way of buildings, electric fans and personnel. These points have already been referred to, but otherwise we think that there is little room for unfavourable criticism, and we have every reason to commend the medical administration of the British General Hospital. The same observations apply generally to the Indian General Hospital. We think, however, that the standard of comfort is not so high in Indian as in British hospitals, and we consider that efforts might be made to copy the excellent models afforded by the Indian war hospitals in Bombay.

159. *Hospitals at Amara.*—The Amara hospitals have laboured under great disadvantages. Some of the accommodation is unsuitable, the hospitals are not fitted with electric fans, and they have frequently been overcrowded, particularly after heavy engagements up the Tigris. The personnel has from time to time been depleted to meet urgent demands at the front, and there has been occasional delay in obtaining supplies, stores and appliances. In spite of all these difficulties the officers of the hospitals have done excellent work, for which they deserve great praise. The administration of the Rawal Pindi Hospital is specially worthy of commendation.

160. *Hospitals at Bombay.*—The accommodation of the sick and wounded on their arrival in India is so essential a part of the medical arrangements of the Mesopotamian force that, though not strictly within our terms of reference, we think it right to refer shortly to the matter. We are influenced in doing this by the fact that, at the time of our appointment, a substantial increase in the British war hospital accommodation at Bombay was plainly necessary. On April 1st there was in Bombay but one completed hospital of 500 beds for the accommodation of British troops, and this hospital was poorly found. In addition to this, provision had been made for 60 officers. At Deolali, Poona, Karachi and Secunderabad there was accommodation for 84 more patients, or a total of 644 beds. Other patients were distributed among the station hospitals throughout India. Owing to the addition of a British division to the force in Mesopotamia, mostly composed of young soldiers with no experience of life in the tropics, these preparations were clearly insufficient, especially in view of the approaching hot weather. We are glad to say that this danger was appreciated in time and on our return to Bombay we were pleased to find that in that city alone, four large new British war hospitals, accommodating 2,200 patients, had been provided. Moreover, additional accommodation, to the extent of 1,222 beds, had been prepared at Deolali, Secunderabad and Poona, and further provision for invalids had been made on a large scale throughout India. In selected hill stations provision for 5,000 convalescents was also being arranged.

161. The general standard of equipment at Bombay has been immensely raised, so that the new war hospitals there would bear favourable comparison with any similar hospitals in the United Kingdom. It was indeed a pleasure to visit such institutions as the "Victoria," "Alexandra" and "Freeman Thomas" hospitals. The latter, which has been the special care of Her Excellency Lady Willingdon, had been in preparation before the time under review, but in the case of the other two, business buildings were converted into splendidly-equipped hospitals in less than two months.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x00006c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

162. We were much impressed by the successful efforts of Surgeon-General Sir Pardey Lukis, ably seconded in Bombay by Brigadier-General Knight, in grappling so promptly and effectively with a dangerous situation. In the case of the Victoria Hospital this work was much furthered by the assistance given by Major Hepper, R.E., on behalf of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. The provision for the Indian wounded calls for less comment. Nearly 3,000 beds were available in hospitals at Bombay, Poona, Secunderabad and Karachi on April 1st, and the number has since been increased by about 300. In addition there are now over 2,000 beds in special war hospitals throughout India, while some 400 more are being got ready. Accommodation for 8,000 Indian convalescents is also in course of preparation, and the general improvement in the situation is manifest. We cannot refer to this matter of hospitals for Indian troops without instancing the "Lady Hardinge" and "Marine Lines" Hospitals, Bombay, as examples of the high standard of efficiency which can be attained in favourable circumstances, when the officers commanding take a keen interest in their work. The activity of charitable organisations is a great feature in Bombay, and under the energetic and popular leadership of Their Excellencies the Governor and Lady Willingdon, an immense amount has been done for the comfort of our invalids, British and Indian, by the sympathetic and well directed benevolence of a generous and united community.

163. *Gifts and charitable organisations.*—A very large number of comforts and medical accessories of various kinds have been supplied to the sick and wounded of the force by various charitable organisations. The principal of these are the Indian Council of the Order of St. John, Lady Carmichael's Bengal Women's Fund, the Women's Branch Bombay Presidency War and Relief Fund, the Madras War Fund, the Indian Soldiers' Fund, and the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John; but a great deal of assistance has also been rendered by a number of smaller charitable associations. These organisations have done excellent if independent work, and the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia have been greatly helped by their assistance, the money value of which in the aggregate has amounted to very large figures. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the war a system, since abolished, was in existence, under which gifts either in money or kind for the assistance of the medical organisation of the force had to be offered, in the first instance, through the Director, Medical Services, India. This led to delay and to the further unfortunate result that there was a temptation to use such gifts in substitution of Government supplies, rather than in supplementing the latter. The provision of motor boats is an instance in point. Whenever an offer of a Red Cross motor boat from a private source was received by the Director, Medical Services, India, the vessel was described and tendered to the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, but no suggestion was made that Government was prepared to take any action to supply these boats. Once it was known that such boats were required, we should have thought that the number and types of launches needed would have been ascertained and the vessels provided by Government. But from first to last it would appear that not a single Red Cross motor boat, either of a runabout or ambulance character, has been provided by the Government of India. The demand for these boats is still very urgent. Ten have already been provided by the Joint Committee, and 15 more are being sent out by that body, while the Indian Council of the Order of St. John has sent out four such vessels, besides two river boats and two barges. Without this assistance the medical work on the river could not, in our opinion, have been carried on satisfactorily. One of these vessels, the officer of which has kept a log, had carried over 10,000 patients before the Commission left Mesopotamia. The neglect to procure sufficient motor boats is, in our opinion, the more regrettable in view of the splendid work done by the "Aerial," a motor vessel of unusual type provided and personally worked by a private gentleman, Mr. T. A. Chalmers of Jorhat, Assam. Witness after witness has borne testimony to the invaluable work done by this boat in evacuating wounded from the front to the vessels in the river acting for the time being as hospital steamers. Mr. Chalmers, in undertaking this self-imposed duty, was constantly within the zone of Turkish fire; but the enemy, recognising the nature of his work, have, as we are informed, respected the Red Cross under which he was working and refrained from shelling the vessel. As another example of the reliance of the authorities upon charitable effort, we may mention that the wounded were evacuated to India upon ordinary transports until the hospital ship "Madras" was provided by the Madras War Fund of which His Excellency the Governor is President. At one stage there would seem to have been a disinclination on the part of Sir John Nixon to accept help from Great Britain, and little advantage was taken of offers made by the Indian Soldiers' Fund, and by the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John. The final reply to the offer of assistance by the Indian Soldiers' Fund when it was at last accepted under a renewed telegram from the Secretary of State indicated, among other things, that of bandages and surgical dressings "as many as possible" would be useful.

164. In our opinion this failure to utilise the offers of charitable organisations to the full extent is not a little to be ascribed to the system, then in vogue, which stipulated that all offers of Red Cross assistance should go through the office of the Director, Medical Services, India, and that the gifts should be distributed in consultation with the military medical authorities, to prevent overlapping. It is true that charitable assistance should mainly be employed in providing the sick and wounded with extra comforts over and above those considered necessary by Government, but if it is to be of real help to the medical services in a crisis, experience has shown it must also be prepared to meet deficiencies in articles which are normally supplied by Government. The Red Cross organisation cannot step in and help in this way during an emergency unless it has prepared a surplus over and beyond the official estimates. This preparation may take the form of accumulated supplies on the spot, or, if advisable, arrangements for rapid acquisition and delivery may take the place of actual purchase. Overlapping of this character, entered into deliberately and with discrimination, is a necessary and helpful form of Red Cross assistance. If the military medical services were perfect and could foresee every event, Red Cross organisations would be largely superfluous; it is when the unexpected happens that the value of a well considered overlap becomes apparent. For these reasons we are pleased to find that Government control of voluntary effort has now been abandoned.

165. There is another kind of overlap, however, which consists in the multiplication of charitable organisations pursuing the same aims. The unregulated overlap produced in this way is wasteful, and in the Red Cross assistance which India has so prodigally afforded to the Mesopotamian force, the disadvantage of unco-ordinated effort has been at times apparent. We are glad to learn that this has now been taken in hand, and that under the Presidency of His Excellency the Viceroy, an Indian branch of the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John has been formed with a view to co-ordinating all Red Cross work in India. The parent body is possessed of very large funds, and the extension of its organisation should prove of considerable value in the future.

166. We cannot leave this subject without referring to the fine services of the Young Men's Christian Association in Mesopotamia. While the main work of this organisation has lain with the troops, its members have on many occasions been of great service in distributing comforts to the sick and wounded and in helping to make the lot of the convalescent soldier comfortable.

167. *Turkish prisoners.*—The Turkish wounded and sick taken prisoner by our forces seem, on the whole, to have been looked after satisfactorily. Opportunity was taken of the existence in Basra of the Lansing Mission Hospital, supported by an American society, to utilise the building and the services of the missionary in charge, Dr. Bennett, in order to provide for Turkish sick and wounded prisoners of war. From the beginning of the campaign this hospital was so utilised, convalescents being sent with the other prisoners of war to India. The advantages secured by this arrangement were twofold: in the first place it relieved the overworked medical establishments of the force of a duty which would otherwise have fallen on them; and, secondly, Dr. Bennett's knowledge of Turkish

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000059

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

and Arabic enabled him to do much for his patients which a doctor ignorant of those languages could not have done.

168. The hospital was at first under the management of Dr. Bennett, with a sufficient staff, including his wife, who was also a qualified medical practitioner. Any extra personnel or surgical and medical equipment required were provided by the military authorities, who made a capitation grant to the management of seven annas per day per prisoner. In addition to this a sum of Rs. 10,000 was allotted to Dr. Bennett for the needs of his patients, and in consideration of these allowances Dr. Bennett fed the prisoners until July, 1915. In that month Dr. Bennett proceeded to India, the hospital was shut, and its patients were interned in a ward of the Indian General Hospital. In December, 1915, Dr. Bennett returned, and his return coinciding with a demand for more space for our own sick, the Lansing Hospital was reopened. Shortly after this a new prisoners of war camp was established to accommodate healthy prisoners pending their evacuation to India. A hospital hut in this camp was used for slight cases of illness, the more serious ones being sent to the Lansing Hospital. In the first week of February, 1916, fever broke out in this camp and in the hospital, which, first diagnosed as malaria, proved ultimately to be fever of a malignant character. The commandant of the camp, Captain Burgess, was taken ill. Captain Hebbert, I.M.S., specially detailed to be resident in the camp to investigate the disease, was attacked by it and subsequently died. Dr. and Mrs. Bennett and some members of his staff were also taken ill, and Mrs. Bennett died. At the same time there was severe mortality among the prisoners. Systematic efforts were made to eradicate the disease, and the Assistant Director of Medical Services at the Base was removed to another appointment.

169. The Lansing Hospital was then taken over by the military authorities and staffed with a section of an Indian field ambulance under Lieutenant Stocker, I.M.S., while the prisoners of war camp was placed under Major Sealey, I.M.S. The abnormal death rate disappeared, and conditions in both the Lansing Hospital and the prisoners of war camp improved. To avoid any possible risk of recrudescence of the disease at the Lansing Hospital, that building is, for the moment, disused. For a time, the services of Turkish medical officers taken prisoners were utilized for the treatment of their own sick, but owing to their want of efficiency they have been replaced by Indian Medical Service officers.

170. On the capture of Nasariyeh, the Turkish Military Hospital was found to contain 125 sick and wounded Turks. These were looked after by their own medical officers, who seem to have been jealous of professional interference on the part of our medical staff. The sick from the prisoners of war camp at Nasariyeh were sent to this hospital, but the condition of the patients therein was not satisfactory, and eventually they were all evacuated to Basra. The death rate among the Turkish prisoners, generally, was high, being due no doubt partly to the inefficiency and neglect of the Turkish doctors, and partly to their own want of cleanliness. This latter trait has rendered them a source of danger, not only to themselves, but to all with whom they have been brought in contact.

171. *Summary.*—To sum up the position, we find that from a very early stage in the campaign, the sick and wounded have undergone avoidable discomfort and at times great suffering owing to defective medical arrangements. The main causes of the hardships were :—

(1) The lack of river hospital steamers ;
(2) Insufficiency of the medical personnel ;
(3) The shortage of river transport ;
(4) The omission to provide proper means of evacuating the wounded by land ; and
(5) In so far as the operations in January are concerned, the very unfortunate omission on the part of the embarkation staff at Marseilles to despatch the medical and supply establishments of the 3rd and 7th Divisions with the combatant units.

172. The suffering thus caused, slight during the earlier actions, and varying as it did on different occasions owing to differing local conditions, was intensified at Ctesiphon by the presence of powerful enemy forces, and by the length and insecurity of the line of communications. In January, 1916, when it culminated, the hurrying of two fresh divisions into action before their medical personnel or equipment were available, and very unfavourable weather, greatly aggravated the situation. The state of affairs after the action of January 21st can indeed only be described as deplorable. We are satisfied, also, that the failure in the medical organisation had a material effect on the moral of the troops. We recognize, however, that in Mesopotamia, even with the best medical organisation possible, the sufferings of the wounded, during cold, wet weather, after an unsuccessful action, must always be very great.

173. The fundamental defect has been the shortage of river transport which has reacted on the medical organisation, both directly and indirectly. Not only has it prevented a permanent allotment of river steamers to the medical services for use as hospitals, and frequently retarded the despatch of medical units and stores to the front, but it has, on many occasions, forced the military authorities to curtail the equipment and personnel of medical units in the field to a dangerous extent. Its indirect effects have been equally important. It has delayed the completion of hospital buildings and impeded the provision of comforts for the sick. It has also affected the health of the troops in that it has, from time to time, been the cause of incomplete rations being supplied to them. We believe, also, that if river transport had been more plentiful, better arrangements would have been made for supply ing the troops with pure drinking water.

174. There has never been, in our opinion, anything more than a minor and temporary shortage of any of the ordinary kinds of medical stores at Basra ; but, for various reasons, the shortage of these stores up country has from time to time been a cause of trouble, and the more expensive necessaries for hospitals in the tropics, such as ice machines, electric plant and electric fans, have been throughout, and were at the time of our leaving still very deficient., Where there has been any deficiency at Basra, this has been intensified up-river, owing to lack of transport ; and even when Basra has been fully supplied with some particular class of stores, this has not always been available at places on the line of communications.

175. The medical personnel and subordinate staff have always been deficient in numbers, the deficiency in assistant surgeons and sub-assistant surgeons being very marked, and it has only been the continuous and untiring labours of a devoted but overworked staff that has again and again prevented an absolute breakdown. The position in this respect both in the higher, in the lower, and in the menial grades, was still serious when we left Mesopotamia. As the deficiencies in personnel and river transport have not yet been made good, and as no adequate medical transport, either by land or by river, has yet been provided, it follows that the danger of a repetition of avoidable suffering is not yet past, though every effort is being made to improve the situation. Probably only the completion of the contemplated railway will render the position quite safe.

176. As to the responsibility for this state of affairs, we think that it was in great masure due to defects inherent in the medical organisation of the Army in India. We also consider that the rigid economy which before the war was exercised in respect of military expenditure in India, and the spirit which this policy has engendered as to the comparative merits of economy and efficiency, have contributed materially to the breakdown. But though much may be attributed to the system and the spirit which it has fostered, we feel that a grave responsibility for that part of the suffering which resulted from avoidable circumstances rests with the Senior Medical Officer of the Force, Surgeon-General H. G. Hathaway, and with General Sir John Nixon, the General Officer Commanding the Force, from April 9th, 1915, to January 19th, 1916. General Hathaway did not represent with sufficient promptitude and force the needs of the services for which he was responsible, and in particular failed to urge the necessity for adequate and suitable transport for the sick and wounded with that insistency which the situation demanded. General Nixon did not, in our opinion, appreciate the conditions which would necessarily arise if provision for the sick and wounded of his force were not made on a more liberal scale.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000065

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

177. The evidence also indicates that on various occasions the medical arrangements might have been improved by better organisation and co ordination between the different services, and for this defect the local officers are responsible. We cannot, however, absolve the military and medical authorities in India from responsibility for many of these deficiencies, in particular for the continuing neglect to supply the expeditionary force with that separate transport for sick and wounded, both by land and water, which the teaching of experience has shown to be essential in a properly organised enterprise of this character. We include the military authorities in India in this criticism, because the medical services are part of the military organisation. The officer directly responsible is, however, the Director of Medical Services, India. This appointment was held at the beginning of the war by Surgeon-General W. Babtie, who left India on June 6th, 1915. He was succeeded by Surgeon-General J. G. McNeece on July 8th, 1915, and the latter proceeded on sick leave on April 15th, 1916. We are informed that Surgeon-General McNeece was appointed by the Secretary of State without any reference to the military authorities in India. The responsibility for the want of river transport, on the other hand, is a matter which concerns the military authorities directly.

178. We realise the serious character of such findings, but in view of the fact that we are definitely required to assign the responsibility for the breakdown it is obviously our duty to do so to the best of our ability. We think, however, that the authorities referred to have been much hampered by changes in policy, and by lack of timely information as to the ultimate objective of the expedition. In criticising the action of the authorities in India, we think, further, that full consideration should be given to the unprecedented strain which has recently been put on all their available resources. Not only has it been necessary to supply the demands of at least four Expeditionary Forces overseas, and to make preparations for frontier and internal requirements on a large scale, but arrangements have also had to be made for the reception and treatment in India of invalids from France, Gallipoli, Egypt, and East Africa. Moreover, the assistance in the matter of personnel, equipment and stores which, in less abnormal times, might have been expected from outside India, has, until recently, seldom been available. We have, generally speaking, nothing but praise for the work of the executive medical officers in Mesopotamia, and we have abundant evidence that they have done marvellously well with little material. On the other hand, we consider that some of the administrative medical officers, though always anxious to do what was right, were at times wanting in foresight as to the probable needs of the force, less insistent than they should have been in pressing their demands for essential requirements, and on one or two occasions lacking in energy and power of resource in the measures taken for the accommodation and comfort of the sick and wounded.

179. We desire to express our grateful thanks to many officers who have assisted us in our inquiries. Where so many have helped, it is difficult to select particular persons; but we do not think that we ought to omit the names of Lieutenant-General Sir Percy Lake, Major-General Money, General Staff, Major-General Cowper, D.A. and Q.M.G., Colonel Irvine, D.D.M.S., Captain Hamilton, D.A.D.M.S., Colonel Winter, A.Q.M.G., Major W. N. Campbell, D.A.A.G., Captain Macrae, D.A.Q.M.G., and Captain T. Murphy, the officer in charge of the medical statistical branch of the Adjutant General's office at the Base. We have also to acknowledge the great assistance given us by all branches at Army Headquarters, India. We think it right to say that much of the evidence that has been given to the Commission has been marked confidential and we believe that many of the witnesses have given evidence under the impression that their statements would not be published. In these circumstances, we think that it would be a breach of confidence if the evidence contained in the appendix to this report were made public.

180. In conclusion we desire to say that we have, throughout our inquiry, been pressed by the consideration that time was of the essence of the matter, that substance was more important than form, and that it was expedient that we should formulate our conclusions as early as possible. In these circumstances, we have not thought it desirable to keep back the report to remove defects in form which, if time had been available, might have been remedied by more careful revision.

We have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient Servants,
W. H. VINCENT.
A. H. BINGLEY.
E. A. RIDSDALE.

ADDENDUM.

On my arrival at Bombay on April 4th, I was asked to join this Commission by His Excellency Lord Hardinge, who was leaving India that day. I consented and left for Basra on April 9th, where, on arrival, I at once got in touch with my colleagues. I found that they had been in Mesopotamia for a month, and that acting upon an earlier and restricted reference thay had already examined over 130 witnesses, and travelled by river to the firing line and back again in order to acquaint themselves at first hand with the medical conditions.

After discussion with them, since the value of the report must be diminished by every day's delay in its issue, we agreed to consider the work continuous, I joining in the inquiry at the point at which they were, and reading up at my leisure, and investigating when necessary, the evidence which they had already accumulated.

It follows from this that the great bulk of the very heavy work of detail involved in this investigation, and apparent in the appendix, has been the labour of my colleagues.

E. A. RIDSDALE.

ANNEXURE 1.

(*Referred to on page* 1.)

No. H.-2418, dated Delhi, March 31st, 1916.

From—Major-General B. Holloway, C.I.E., Secretary to the Government of India, Army Department.

To—The Hon. Sir William Vincent, Knt., I.C.S.

With reference to the correspondence ending with my telegram No. H.-2407, dated March 30th, 1916, I am to say that it has been decided that the commission to which you have been appointed will assemble under the orders of the Government of India.

2. I am directed therefore to forward revised orders and terms of reference for the commission appointed for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon the arrangements for dealing with the wounded and sick in Mesopotamia in substitution of the orders and terms of reference sent to you under letter No. 41551, dated March 2nd, 1916, from the Chief of the General Staff.

Copy of the foregoing is forwarded to:—

Lieut.-General Sir Percy Lake, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.
Major-General A. H. Bingley, C.B., C.I.E.
Mr. E. A. Ridsdale.

ORDERS FOR THE HON. SIR WILLIAM VINCENT, Knt., I.C.S., MAJOR-GENERAL A. H. BINGLEY, C.B., C.I.E., and Mr. E. A. RIDSDALE.

1. The Government of India have appointed you Commissioners for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon the arrangements for dealing with the wounded and sick in Mesopotamia, in accordance with the terms of reference attached.

2. You will proceed to Basra, where you will report to the General Officer Commanding, Force "D," who will give you every facility in the execution of your duties.

3. Copies of all war diaries, reports, despatches, books and maps, and other information that you may require, will be provided both by Army Headquarters and General Officer Commanding, Force "D."

4. You are entitled to call and examine any witness whose evidence you consider necessary.

5. All communications, including your report, will be addressed to the Secretary to the Government of India, Army Department, Simla.

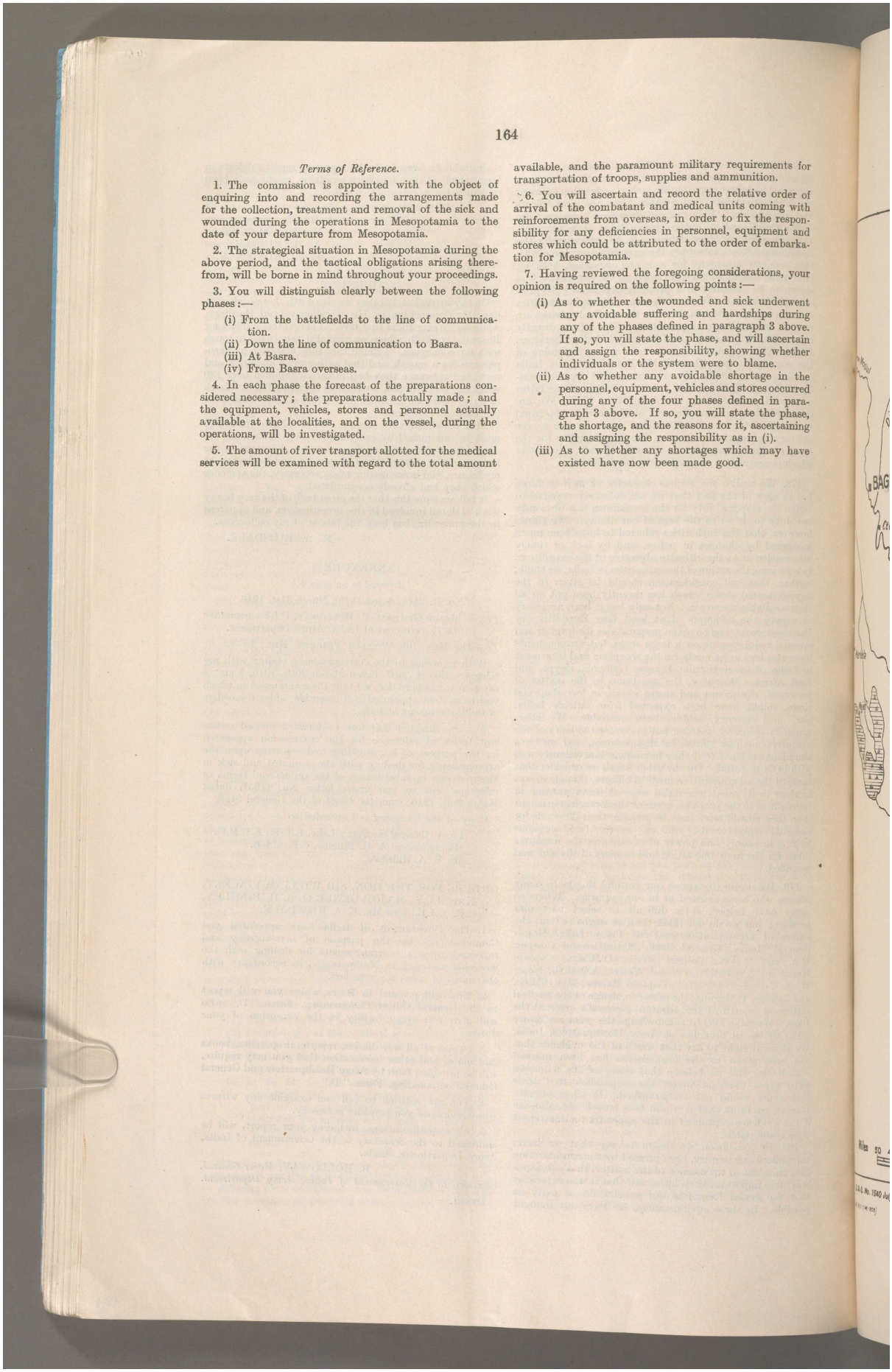
B. HOLLOWAY, *Major-General,*
Secretary to the Government of India, Army Department.

Delhi.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774580.0x0000c6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



Terms of Reference.

1. The commission is appointed with the object of enquiring into and recording the arrangements made for the collection, treatment and removal of the sick and wounded during the operations in Mesopotamia to the date of your departure from Mesopotamia.

2. The strategical situation in Mesopotamia during the above period, and the tactical obligations arising therefrom, will be borne in mind throughout your proceedings.

3. You will distinguish clearly between the following phases :—

(i) From the battlefields to the line of communication.
(ii) Down the line of communication to Basra.
(iii) At Basra.
(iv) From Basra overseas.

4. In each phase the forecast of the preparations considered necessary ; the preparations actually made ; and the equipment, vehicles, stores and personnel actually available at the localities, and on the vessel, during the operations, will be investigated.

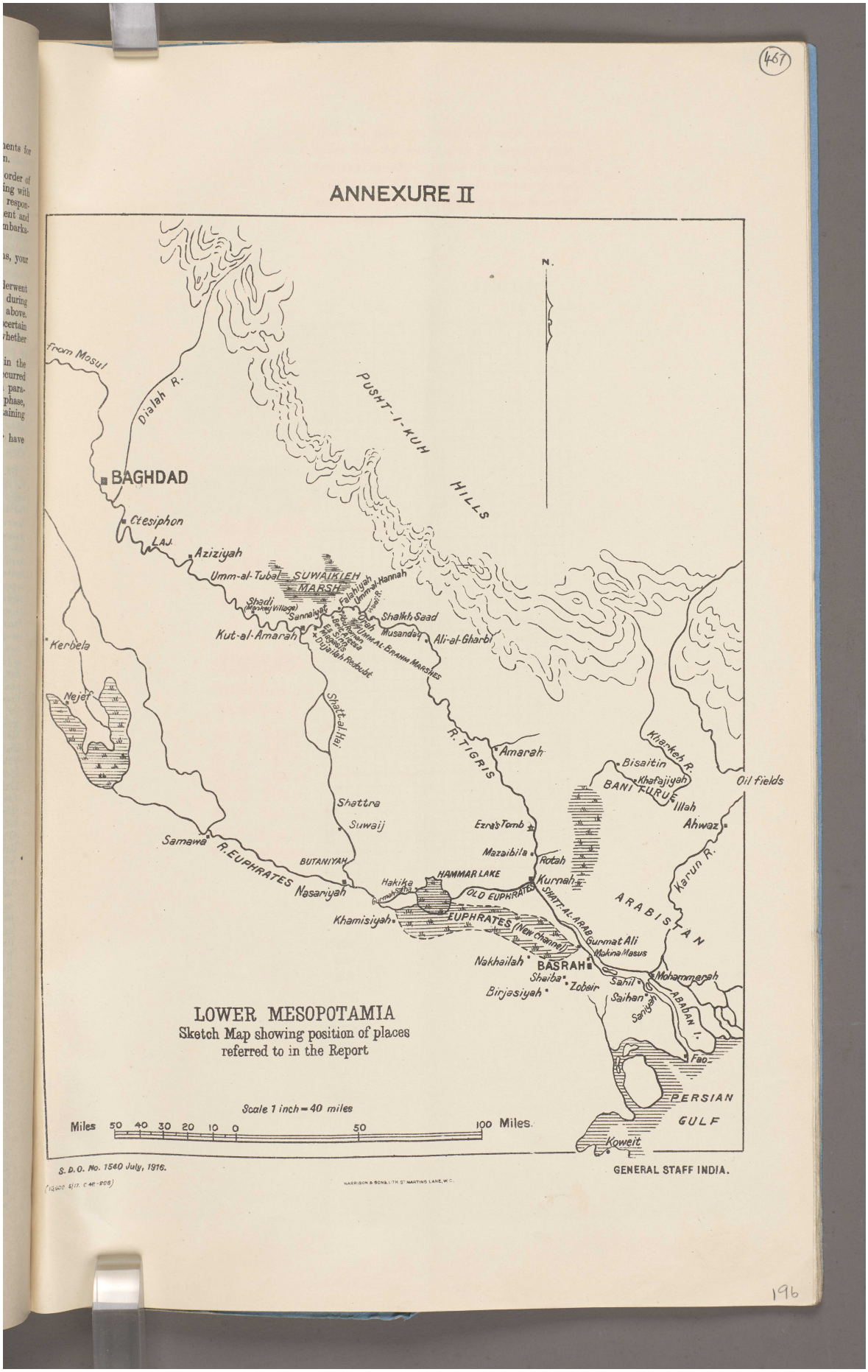
5. The amount of river transport allotted for the medical services will be examined with regard to the total amount available, and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition.

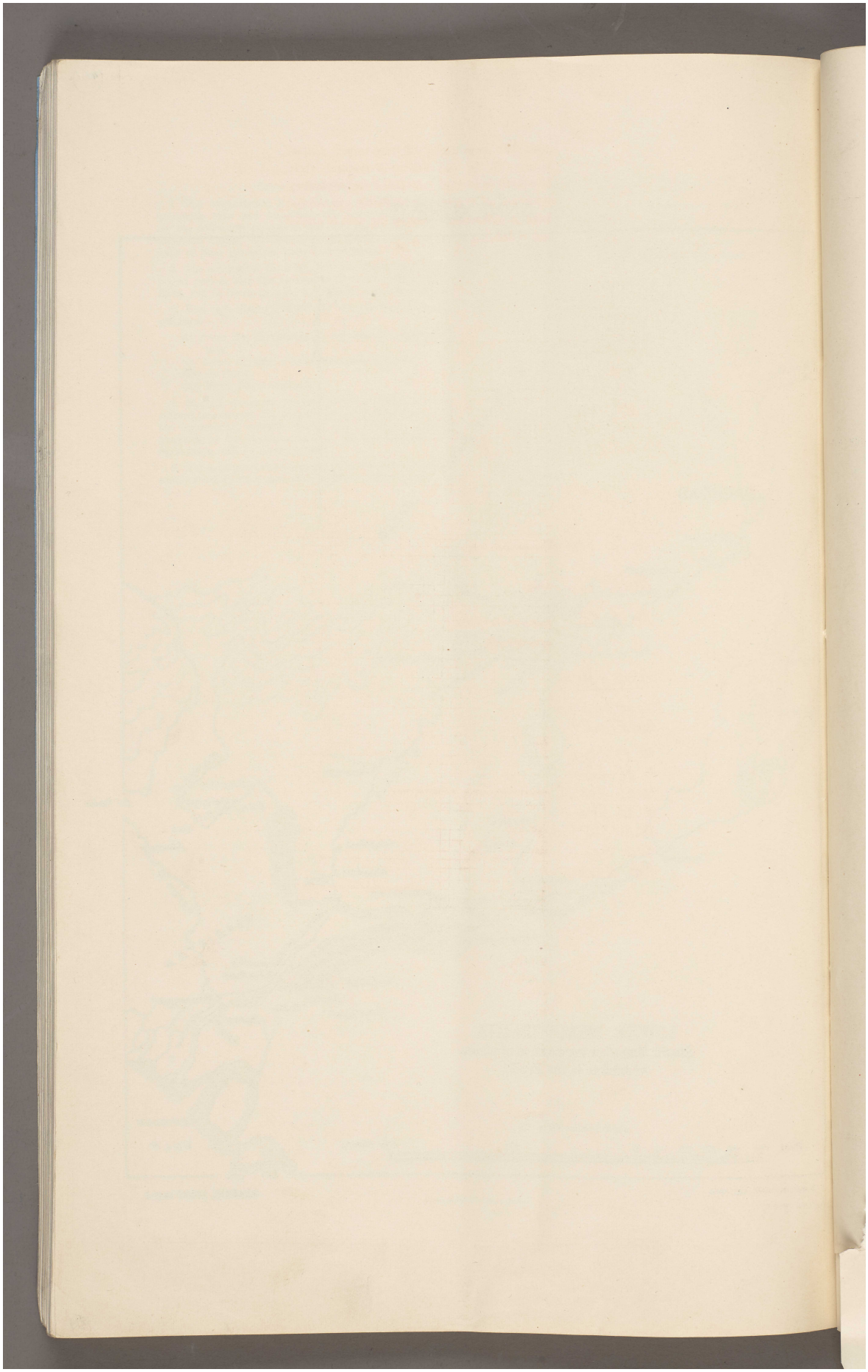
6. You will ascertain and record the relative order of arrival of the combatant and medical units coming with reinforcements from overseas, in order to fix the responsibility for any deficiencies in personnel, equipment and stores which could be attributed to the order of embarkation for Mesopotamia.

7. Having reviewed the foregoing considerations, your opinion is required on the following points :—

(i) As to whether the wounded and sick underwent any avoidable suffering and hardships during any of the phases defined in paragraph 3 above. If so, you will state the phase, and will ascertain and assign the responsibility, showing whether individuals or the system were to blame.
(ii) As to whether any avoidable shortage in the personnel, equipment, vehicles and stores occurred during any of the four phases defined in paragraph 3 above. If so, you will state the phase, the shortage, and the reasons for it, ascertaining and assigning the responsibility as in (i).
(iii) As to whether any shortages which may have existed have now been made good.

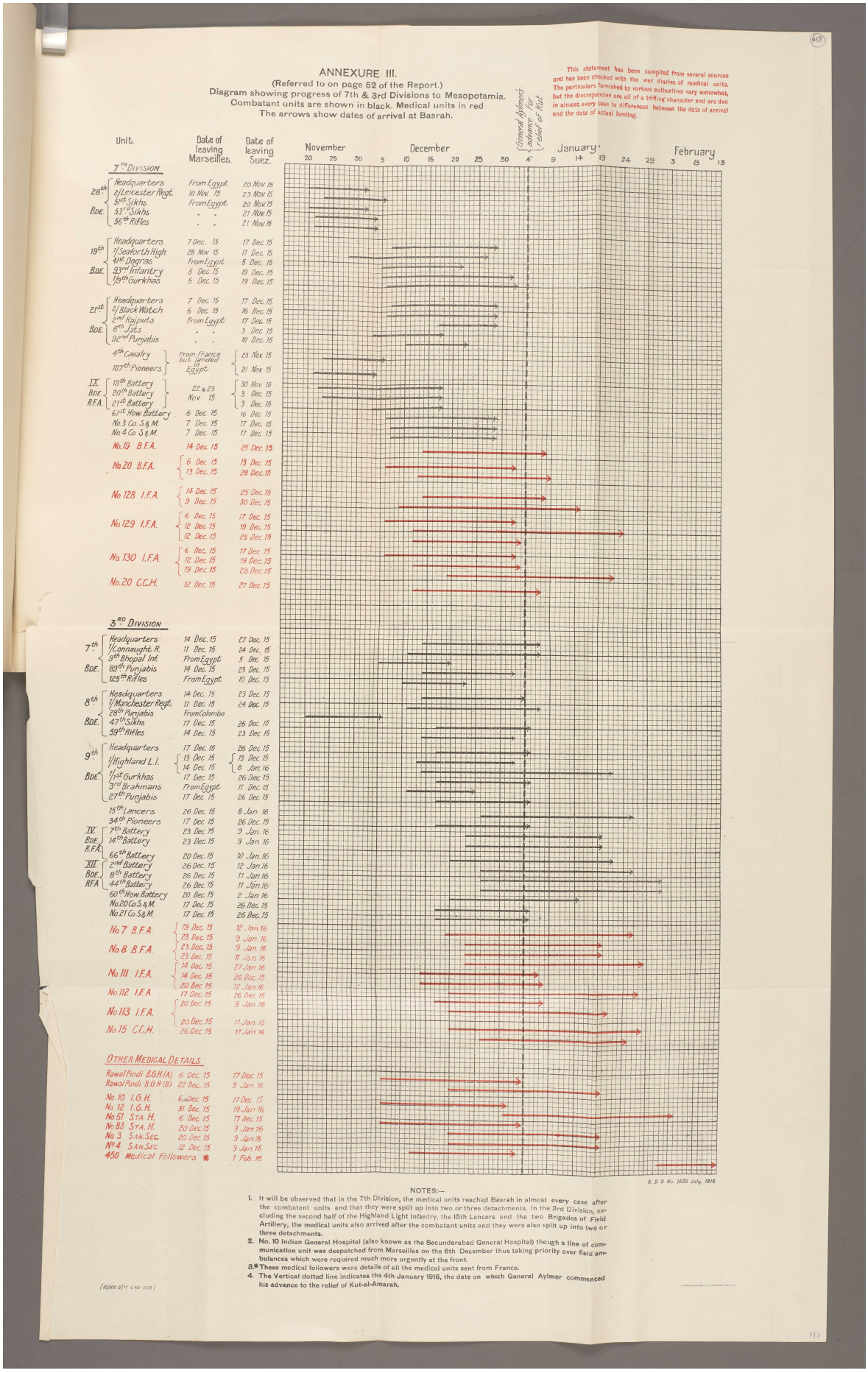
Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00009e


467
ANNEXURE II
N.
from Mosul
Dialah R.
PUSHT-I-KUH HILLS
BAGHDAD
Ctesiphon
LAJ.
Aziziyah
Umm-al-Tubal
SUWAIKIEH MARSH
Falahiyah
Umm-al-Hannah
Shadi (Monkey Village)
Sannaiyat
Shalkh Saad
Musandaq
Ali-al-Gharbi
Kut-al-Amarah
UMM-AL-BRAHM MARSHES
Kerbela
Nejef
Shatt-al-Hai
R. TIGRIS
Amarah
Kharkeh R.
Bisaitin
Khafajiyah
BANI TURUF
Illah
Oil fields
Ahwaz
Shattra
Suwaij
Ezra's Tomb
Mazaibila
Rotah
Samawa
R. EUPHRATES
BUTANIYAH
Nasariyah
Hakika
HAMMAR LAKE
Kurnah
OLD EUPHRATES
SHATT-AL-ARAB
Karun R.
ARABISTAN
Khamisiyah
EUPHRATES (New Channel)
Gurmat Ali
Makina Masus
Nakhailah
BASRAH
Shaiba
Zobeir
Birjasiyah
Sahil
Saihan
Mohammerah
ABADAN I.
Fao
PERSIAN GULF
Koweit
LOWER MESOPOTAMIA
Sketch Map showing position of places referred to in the Report
Scale 1 inch = 40 miles
Miles 50 40 30 20 10 0 50 100 Miles.
S. D. O. No. 1540 July, 1916.
GENERAL STAFF INDIA.
196



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000a1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library



ANNEXURE III.

(Referred to on page 52 of the Report.)

Diagram showing progress of 7th & 3rd Divisions to Mesopotamia.
Combatant units are shown in black. Medical units in red
The arrows show dates of arrival at Basrah.

This statement has been compiled from several sources and has been checked with the war diaries of medical units. The particulars furnished by various authorities vary somewhat, but the discrepancies are all of a trifling character and are due in almost every case to differences between the date of arrival and the date of actual landing.

(General Aylmer's advance for relief of Kut)

November December January February

20 25 30 5 10 15 20 25 30 4 9 14 19 24 29 3 8 13

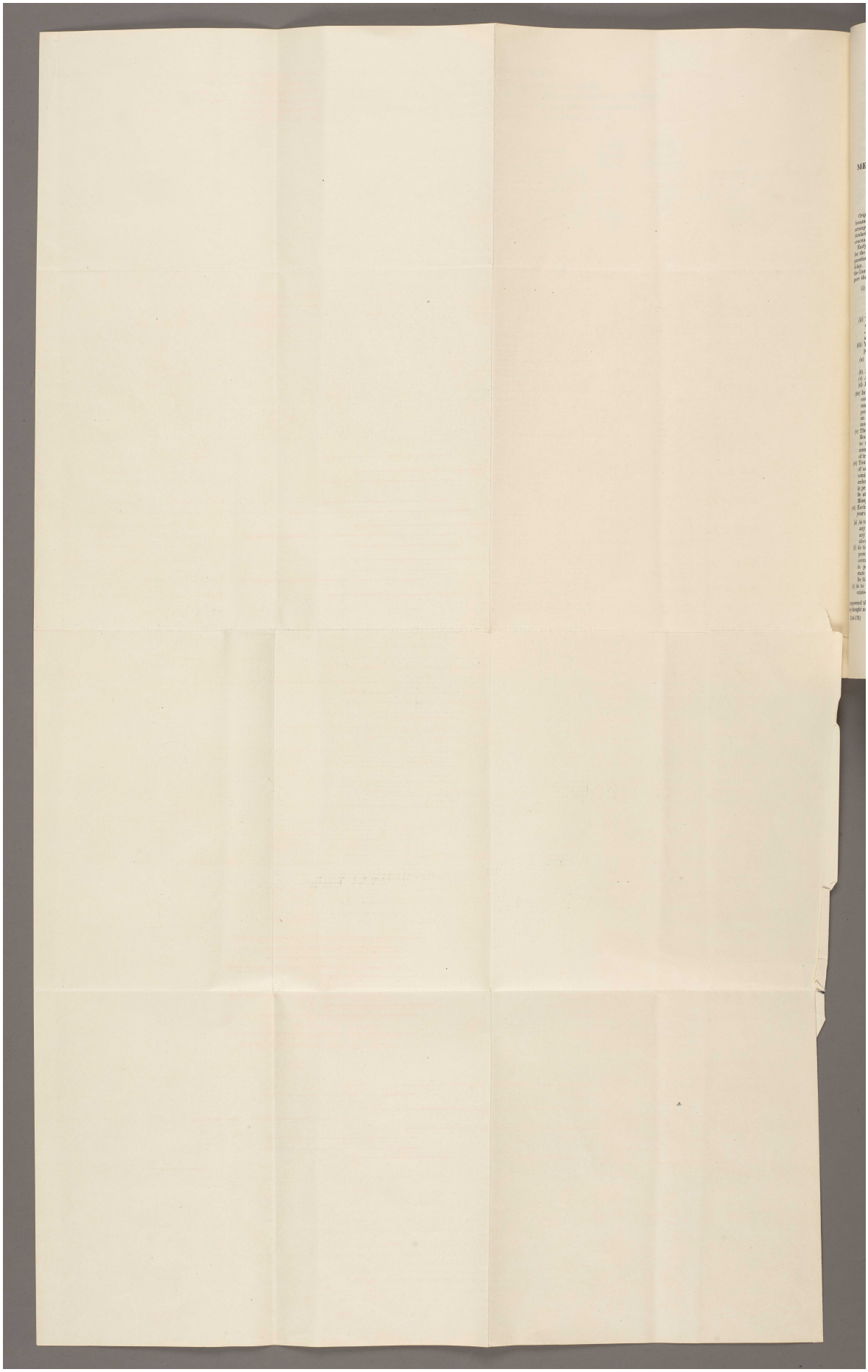
Unit.	Date of leaving Marseilles.	Date of leaving Suez.
7TH DIVISION		
28th Bde. Headquarters	From Egypt	20 Nov 15
2/Leicester Regt.	10 Nov 15	23 Nov 15
4/5th Sikhs	From Egypt	20 Nov 15
53rd Sikhs	" "	21 Nov 15
56th Rifles	" "	21 Nov 15
19th Bde. Headquarters	7 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
1/Seaforth High.	28 Nov 15	11 Dec. 15
4/1st Dogras	From Egypt	5 Dec. 15
93rd Infantry	5 Dec. 15	13 Dec. 15
1/5th Gurkhas	6 Dec. 15	19 Dec. 15
21st Bde. Headquarters	7 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
2/Black Watch	6 Dec. 15	16 Dec. 15
2nd Rajputs	From Egypt	17 Dec. 15
6th Jats	" "	3 Dec. 15
92nd Punjabis	" "	10 Dec. 15
4th Cavalry	From France but landed in Egypt	23 Nov 15
107th Pioneers		21 Nov 15
IX Bde. R.F.A. 19th Battery	22 & 23 Nov 15	30 Nov 15
20th Battery		3 Dec 15
21st Battery		3 Dec 15
61st How Battery	6 Dec 15	16 Dec 15
No 3 Co S & M.	7 Dec 15	17 Dec 15
No 4 Co S & M.	7 Dec 15	17 Dec 15
No 19 B.F.A.	14 Dec 15	25 Dec 15
No 20 B.F.A.	6 Dec 15	13 Dec 15
	13 Dec 15	28 Dec 15
No 128 I.F.A.	14 Dec 15	25 Dec 15
	9 Dec 15	30 Dec 15
No 129 I.F.A.	6 Dec 15	17 Dec 15
	12 Dec 15	19 Dec 15
	12 Dec 15	28 Dec 15
No 130 I.F.A.	6 Dec 15	17 Dec 15
	12 Dec 15	19 Dec 15
	19 Dec 15	28 Dec 15
No 20 C.C.H.	12 Dec 15	27 Dec 15
3RD DIVISION		
7th Bde. Headquarters	14 Dec. 15	27 Dec. 15
1/Connaught R.	11 Dec. 15	24 Dec. 15
9th Bhopal Inf.	From Egypt	5 Dec. 15
89th Punjabis	14 Dec. 15	23 Dec. 15
125th Rifles	From Egypt	10 Dec. 15
8th Bde. Headquarters	14 Dec. 15	23 Dec. 15
1/Manchester Regt.	11 Dec. 15	24 Dec. 15
28th Punjabis	From Colombo	
47th Sikhs	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
59th Rifles	14 Dec. 15	23 Dec. 15
9th Bde. Headquarters	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
1/Highland L.I.	13 Dec. 15	13 Dec. 15
	14 Dec. 15	8 Jan. 16
1/1st Gurkhas	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
3rd Brahmans	From Egypt	11 Dec. 15
27th Punjabis	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
15th Lancers	26 Dec. 15	8 Jan. 16
34th Pioneers	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
IV Bde. R.F.A. 7th Battery	23 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
14th Battery	23 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
66th Battery	20 Dec. 15	10 Jan. 16
XII Bde. R.F.A. 2nd Battery	26 Dec. 15	12 Jan. 16
8th Battery	26 Dec. 15	11 Jan. 16
44th Battery	26 Dec. 15	11 Jan. 16
60th How Battery	20 Dec. 15	2 Jan. 16
No 20 Co S & M.	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
No 21 Co S & M.	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
No 7 B.F.A.	19 Dec. 15	12 Jan. 16
	23 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
No 8 B.F.A.	23 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
	23 Dec. 15	11 Jan. 16
No 111 I.F.A.	14 Dec. 15	27 Jan. 16
	14 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
	20 Dec. 15	12 Jan. 16
No 112 I.F.A.	17 Dec. 15	26 Dec. 15
No 113 I.F.A.	20 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
	20 Dec. 15	11 Jan. 16
No 15 C.C.H.	26 Dec. 15	11 Jan. 16
OTHER MEDICAL DETAILS		
Rawal Pindi B.G.H.(A)	6 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
Rawal Pindi B.G.H.(B)	22 Dec. 15	9 Jan. 16
No 10 I.G.H.	6 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
No 12 I.G.H.	31 Dec. 15	19 Jan 16
No 61 STA. H.	6 Dec. 15	17 Dec. 15
No 83 STA. H.	20 Dec. 15	3 Jan 16
No 3 SAN. SEC.	20 Dec. 15	3 Jan 16
No 4 SAN. SEC.	12 Dec. 15	3 Jan 16
450 Medical Followers *		1 Feb. 16

B. D. O. No. 1639 July, 1918.

NOTES:—

1. It will be observed that in the 7th Division, the medical units reached Basrah in almost every case after the combatant units and that they were split up into two or three detachments. In the 3rd Division, excluding the second half of the Highland Light Infantry, the 15th Lancers and the two Brigades of Field Artillery, the medical units also arrived after the combatant units and they were also split up into two or three detachments.
2. No. 10 Indian General Hospital (also known as the Secunderabad General Hospital) though a line of communication unit was despatched from Marseilles on the 6th December thus taking priority over field ambulances which were required much more urgently at the front.
3. * These medical followers were details of all the medical units sent from France.
4. The Vertical dotted line indicates the 4th January 1916, the date on which General Aylmer commenced his advance to the relief of Kut-al-Amarah.

(10,000.6)11 C 48-208)



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00000c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

APPENDIX II.

MEMORANDUM ON THE REPORT OF THE "VINCENT-BINGLEY" COMMISSION.

By General SIR BEAUCHAMP DUFF, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., C.I.E.

Origin and Object of Commission.—Late in 1915 rumours became current in England and India that the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia were unsatisfactory, particularly in regard to the reception, treatment, and evacuation of the wounded.

Early in January, 1916, arrangements were in train for the appointment of a Commission to investigate the question, but circumstances beyond my control caused delay. Eventually, however, on March 2nd, I appointed the Commission, whose report has now been received, and gave them the following terms of reference; *viz*:—

(i) The object of the Commission is to investigate and record the arrangements made for the collection, treatment and removal of the wounded and sick during the operations on the Tigris during and subsequent to January, 1916.

(ii) Throughout your proceedings the strategical situation in Mesopotamia during the month of January, 1916, and the tactical obligations arising therefrom will be borne in mind.

(iii) You will distinguish clearly between the following phases:—

(*a*) From the battlefield to the line of communication.
(*b*) Down the line of communication to Basra.
(*c*) At Basra.
(*d*) From Basra overseas.

(iv) In each phase the forecast of the preparations considered necessary, the preparations actually made, and the equipment, vehicles, stores and personnel actually available at the localities, and on the vessels, during the operations, will be investigated.

(v) The amount of river transport allotted for Medical services will be examined with regard to the total amount available and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition.

(vi) You will ascertain and record the relative order of arrival of the combatant and medical units coming with reinforcements from oversea, in order to fix the responsibility for any deficiencies in personnel, equipment, and stores, which could be attributed to the order of embarkation for Mesopotamia.

(vii) Having reviewed the foregoing considerations, your opinion is required on the following points:—

(*a*) As to whether the wounded and sick underwent any avoidable suffering and hardships during any of the phases defined in paragraph (iii) above. If so, you will state the phase.

(*b*) As to whether any avoidable shortage in the personnel, equipment, vehicles and stores occurred during any of the four phases defined in paragraph (iii) above. If so, you will state the phase, the shortage, and the reasons for it.

(*c*) As to whether any shortages which may have existed have now been made good.

I empowered them to suggest extension of these terms if they thought necessary, and they were to report to the Chief of the General Staff, for my information as Commander-in-Chief.

2. Under orders of His Excellency the Viceroy, Mr. Ridsdale joined the Commission at Basra about April 16th, and on March 29th the terms of reference, which had already been slightly expanded at the request of the Commission, were further extended by the Secretary of State to their final form; *viz*.:—

Terms of Reference.

(1). The Commission is appointed with the object of inquiring into and recording the arrangements made for the collection, treatment, and removal of the sick and wounded during the operations in Mesopotamia to the date of your departure from Mesopotamia.

(2) The strategical situation in Mesopotamia during the above period and the tactical obligations arising therefrom will be borne in mind throughout your proceedings.

(3) You will distinguish clearly between the following phases:—

(i) From the battlefields to the line of communication;
(ii) Down the line of communication to Basra;
(iii) At Basra;
(iv) From Basra overseas.

(4) In each phase, the forecast of the preparations considered necessary, the preparations actually made, and the equipment, vehicles, stores and personnel actually available at the localities, and on the vessels, during the operations, will be investigated.

(5) The amount of river transport allotted for the medical services will be examined with regard to the total amount available and the paramount military requirements for transportation of troops, supplies and ammunition.

(6) You will ascertain and record the relative order of arrival of the combatant and medical units coming with reinforcements from overseas, in order to fix the responsibility for any deficiencies in personnel, equipment, and stores which could be attributed to the order of embarkation for Mesopotamia.

(7). Having reviewed the foregoing considerations, your opinion is required on the following points:—

(i) As to whether the wounded and sick underwent any avoidable suffering and hardships during any of the phases defined in paragraph (3) above. If so, you will state the phase and will ascertain and assign the responsibility, showing whether individuals or the system were to blame.

(ii) As to whether any avoidable shortage in the personnel, equipment, vehicles and stores occurred during any of the four phases defined in paragraph (3) above. If so, you will state the phase, the shortage, and the reasons for it, ascertaining and assigning the responsibility as in (i).

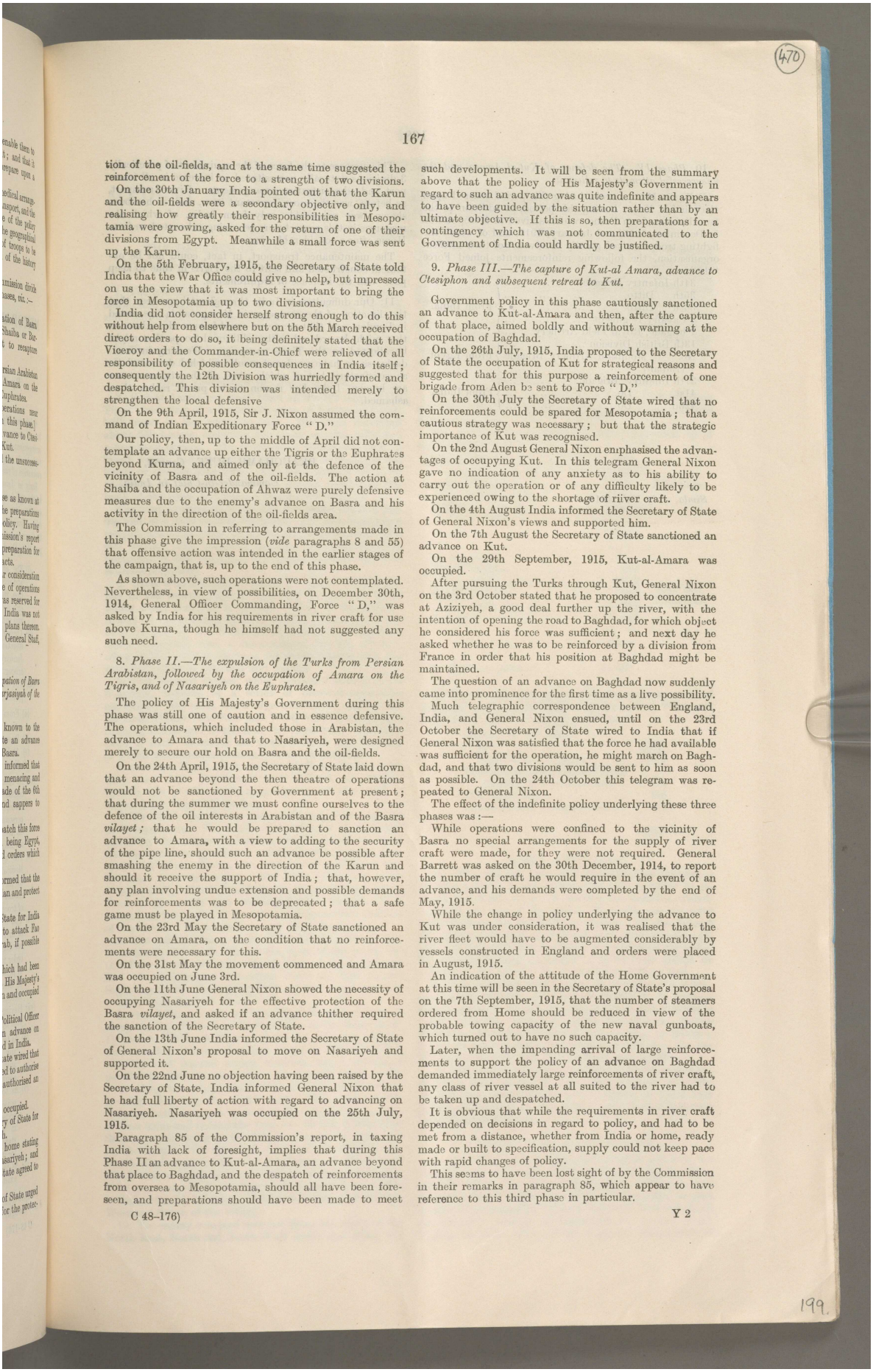
(iii) As to whether any shortages which may have existed have now been made good.

At the same time the Commissioners were, under my direction, ordered to render their report to the Secretary,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000060

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



tion of the oil-fields, and at the same time suggested the reinforcement of the force to a strength of two divisions.

On the 30th January India pointed out that the Karun and the oil-fields were a secondary objective only, and realising how greatly their responsibilities in Mesopotamia were growing, asked for the return of one of their divisions from Egypt. Meanwhile a small force was sent up the Karun.

On the 5th February, 1915, the Secretary of State told India that the War Office could give no help, but impressed on us the view that it was most important to bring the force in Mesopotamia up to two divisions.

India did not consider herself strong enough to do this without help from elsewhere but on the 5th March received direct orders to do so, it being definitely stated that the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief were relieved of all responsibility of possible consequences in India itself; consequently the 12th Division was hurriedly formed and despatched. This division was intended merely to strengthen the local defensive

On the 9th April, 1915, Sir J. Nixon assumed the command of Indian Expeditionary Force "D."

Our policy, then, up to the middle of April did not contemplate an advance up either the Tigris or the Euphrates beyond Kurna, and aimed only at the defence of the vicinity of Basra and of the oil-fields. The action at Shaiba and the occupation of Ahwaz were purely defensive measures due to the enemy's advance on Basra and his activity in the direction of the oil-fields area.

The Commission in referring to arrangements made in this phase give the impression (*vide* paragraphs 8 and 55) that offensive action was intended in the earlier stages of the campaign, that is, up to the end of this phase.

As shown above, such operations were not contemplated. Nevertheless, in view of possibilities, on December 30th, 1914, General Officer Commanding, Force "D," was asked by India for his requirements in river craft for use above Kurna, though he himself had not suggested any such need.

8. *Phase II.—The expulsion of the Turks from Persian Arabistan, followed by the occupation of Amara on the Tigris, and of Nasariyeh on the Euphrates.*

The policy of His Majesty's Government during this phase was still one of caution and in essence defensive. The operations, which included those in Arabistan, the advance to Amara and that to Nasariyeh, were designed merely to secure our hold on Basra and the oil-fields.

On the 24th April, 1915, the Secretary of State laid down that an advance beyond the then theatre of operations would not be sanctioned by Government at present; that during the summer we must confine ourselves to the defence of the oil interests in Arabistan and of the Basra *vilayet*; that he would be prepared to sanction an advance to Amara, with a view to adding to the security of the pipe line, should such an advance be possible after smashing the enemy in the direction of the Karun and should it receive the support of India; that, however, any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements was to be deprecated; that a safe game must be played in Mesopotamia.

On the 23rd May the Secretary of State sanctioned an advance on Amara, on the condition that no reinforcements were necessary for this.

On the 31st May the movement commenced and Amara was occupied on June 3rd.

On the 11th June General Nixon showed the necessity of occupying Nasariyeh for the effective protection of the Basra *vilayet*, and asked if an advance thither required the sanction of the Secretary of State.

On the 13th June India informed the Secretary of State of General Nixon's proposal to move on Nasariyeh and supported it.

On the 22nd June no objection having been raised by the Secretary of State, India informed General Nixon that he had full liberty of action with regard to advancing on Nasariyeh. Nasariyeh was occupied on the 25th July, 1915.

Paragraph 85 of the Commission's report, in taxing India with lack of foresight, implies that during this Phase II an advance to Kut-al-Amara, an advance beyond that place to Baghdad, and the despatch of reinforcements from oversea to Mesopotamia, should all have been foreseen, and preparations should have been made to meet such developments. It will be seen from the summary above that the policy of His Majesty's Government in regard to such an advance was quite indefinite and appears to have been guided by the situation rather than by an ultimate objective. If this is so, then preparations for a contingency which was not communicated to the Government of India could hardly be justified.

9. *Phase III.—The capture of Kut-al Amara, advance to Ctesiphon and subsequent retreat to Kut.*

Government policy in this phase cautiously sanctioned an advance to Kut-al-Amara and then, after the capture of that place, aimed boldly and without warning at the occupation of Baghdad.

On the 26th July, 1915, India proposed to the Secretary of State the occupation of Kut for strategical reasons and suggested that for this purpose a reinforcement of one brigade from Aden be sent to Force "D."

On the 30th July the Secretary of State wired that no reinforcements could be spared for Mesopotamia; that a cautious strategy was necessary; but that the strategic importance of Kut was recognised.

On the 2nd August General Nixon emphasised the advantages of occupying Kut. In this telegram General Nixon gave no indication of any anxiety as to his ability to carry out the operation or of any difficulty likely to be experienced owing to the shortage of river craft.

On the 4th August India informed the Secretary of State of General Nixon's views and supported him.

On the 7th August the Secretary of State sanctioned an advance on Kut.

On the 29th September, 1915, Kut-al-Amara was occupied.

After pursuing the Turks through Kut, General Nixon on the 3rd October stated that he proposed to concentrate at Aziziyeh, a good deal further up the river, with the intention of opening the road to Baghdad, for which object he considered his force was sufficient; and next day he asked whether he was to be reinforced by a division from France in order that his position at Baghdad might be maintained.

The question of an advance on Baghdad now suddenly came into prominence for the first time as a live possibility.

Much telegraphic correspondence between England, India, and General Nixon ensued, until on the 23rd October the Secretary of State wired to India that if General Nixon was satisfied that the force he had available was sufficient for the operation, he might march on Baghdad, and that two divisions would be sent to him as soon as possible. On the 24th October this telegram was repeated to General Nixon.

The effect of the indefinite policy underlying these three phases was:—

While operations were confined to the vicinity of Basra no special arrangements for the supply of river craft were made, for they were not required. General Barrett was asked on the 30th December, 1914, to report the number of craft he would require in the event of an advance, and his demands were completed by the end of May, 1915.

While the change in policy underlying the advance to Kut was under consideration, it was realised that the river fleet would have to be augmented considerably by vessels constructed in England and orders were placed in August, 1915.

An indication of the attitude of the Home Government at this time will be seen in the Secretary of State's proposal on the 7th September, 1915, that the number of steamers ordered from Home should be reduced in view of the probable towing capacity of the new naval gunboats, which turned out to have no such capacity.

Later, when the impending arrival of large reinforcements to support the policy of an advance on Baghdad demanded immediately large reinforcements of river craft, any class of river vessel at all suited to the river had to be taken up and despatched.

It is obvious that while the requirements in river craft depended on decisions in regard to policy, and had to be met from a distance, whether from India or home, ready made or built to specification, supply could not keep pace with rapid changes of policy.

This seems to have been lost sight of by the Commission in their remarks in paragraph 85, which appear to have reference to this third phase in particular.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000019

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

APPENDIX III.

ACCOUNT OF THE MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS, ETC., DURING SIEGE OF KUT-AL-AMARA.

By Colonel P. HEHIR, C.B., M.D., I.M.S.

THE DEFENCE OF KUT-AL-AMARA.

(*a*) PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 4TH, 1915, TO APRIL 29TH, 1916.

1. The following statements are made from my personal diaries and rough notes that were made for the Medical and Sanitary Report of the Defence of Kut.

Duration of Siege.

2. The siege of Kut-al-Amara lasted from December 4th, 1915, to April 29th, 1916—147 days.

Brief Description of Kut-al-Amara.

3. Kut-al-Amara is a small town on the left bank of the Tigris consisting of a dense collection of houses and huts built more or less promiscuously. The town contained about 650 houses, including 200 shops, several cafés and a few wool-presses. The better-class houses are built of burnt brick, but the majority of the habitations are larger or smaller mud huts. The main part of the town and most of the well-constructed houses stand near the bank of the river, but leave a broad river front.

The town is situated about half-way down the descending limb of a deep bend in the river. The area it covers is roughly oblong in shape, its length about 1,000, its breadth 600 yards. The distance between the south-eastern boundary of the town and the lowest part of the bend is about 300 yards.

4. There is no drainage system to the town. Each house has in the central yard a deep soakage pit, the refuse house water reaching it through a hole in the surface; it acts on the principle of a septic tank and is cleared out twice a year or so. Many of the houses have likewise a privy connected with a subterranean cess-pit which is often only 5 to 10 yards from the shallow house-well, the water of which is brackish and impure.

5. The Covered Bazaar, which contained several of our hospitals, consists of a series of intercommunicating colonnades with roofs, and a large number of small stalls. Its main avenue runs East and West, which joins another running North and South near the river front. On both sides of each colonnade are rows of small cubicles each of which accommodated from four to six patients.

6. On the North-West and South-East of the town there are date plantations and orchards of oranges, lemons, figs, peaches and pomegranates, and what used to be extensive vegetable gardens.

7. This town was the most insanitary place we occupied in Mesopotamia. The whole of the interior of the town, including the streets and lanes, the banks of the river and the surrounding area for a distance of 250 yards, were made use of as latrines, the surfaces of the streets and bye-lanes were the urinals. The town refuse was never systematically collected, and on our arrival to some extent blocked the roads and thoroughfares; mounds of it existed on the banks of the river and immediate confines of the town. No sanitation had been attempted.

8. The salient places of the defended area were: The town itself, the brick-kilns to the East of the town, the Old Fort about two miles North-East of the town, the line of block-houses extending from the Fort to the beginning of the descending limb of the bend running roughly from East to West.

9. Our defences extended from the fort on the left bank along the line of the four block-houses to the same bank, 1½ miles to the North-West of the town; this line roughly corresponded with our first line trenches, the second line trenches and reserve troops trenches being echeloned parallel to them in the rear. On the left bank of the river along the whole bend were a series of pickets in trenches covering the right bank. The guns of the different batteries were located at the brick-kilns, in front of these kilns and behind the trenches in the North-West Section, others being on the left bank near the town and on the barges. On the right bank, almost opposite the North-West angle of Kut is the village of Wool-Press which was occupied by two battalions of Indian Infantry; this force was, when necessary, supplemented by half a battalion British Infantry; its trenches were on the North-West and South of the village.

10. The enemy occupied trenches along the whole of the North-East, North and North-West front, also along the right bank around the village of Wool-Press and along the South and East of Kut opposite the fort. Enemy snipers operated from the whole of the right bank in the vicinity of Kut and the fort, except the part at Wool-Press and the bank of a few hundred yards North and South of it.

11. From December 5th the town of Kut was shelled more or less practically every day; periodically there were heavy bombardments; sniping was perpetual day and night, and high-explosive bombs were dropped from aeroplanes occasionally.

Strength of the Defence Garrison.

12. The garrison consisted of the 6th War Division with the 30th Infantry Brigade, one Howitzer and two heavy batteries.

The garrison on December 8th, 1915, was made up of the following:—

British Officers	206	Effectives.
,, rank and file ...	2,276	
Indian Officers	153	
,, rank and file	6,941	
Followers (about)	3,500	
	13,076	
In Hospitals:—		
British Officers	12	Sick and Wounded
,, rank and file ...	258	
Indian Officers	22	
,, rank and file ...	1,176	
Followers	42	
	1,510	
Total to be rationed ...	14,586	

13. The civil population of Kut at the commencement of the siege was roughly 6,400; at the end of February, 1916, it was 6,225, made up as follows:—

Natives of the town:	
Men	1,538
Women and children ...	3,803
Immigrants from Makina Village (called by us Wool-Press) ...	504
Maheillah men	316
Coolies (S. and T. employees) ...	64
	6,225

Location of the Troops.

14. The infantry force was distributed as follows:—(1) One brigade occupied the Fort and trenches to its North and North-West; (2) another the trenches extending from the left of the above, Westwards to the river bank forming the North-West Section; (3) one formed the reserve; (2) and (3) relieved each other weekly; (4) half a brigade guarded the town and picketted the bend, its other half being quartered in Wool-Press village on the right bank opposite the North-West angle of Kut.

15. The following were located in and near the town; two Indian infantry units and Headquarters of Division and Brigades, with followers, all billeted and numbering 1,200; General Hospitals, Field Ambulances, Indian Stationary Hospital, personnel and patients, in billets—2,100; General Reserve in camps and dug outs (on the North, North-East and East of the town), 1,800.

16. The troops on the right bank were cut off from Kut; and the only means of intercommunication were the steamer and motor launch which crossed at night with rations, and returned with any sick and wounded requiring admission into hospital.

State of Troops on arrival at Kut.

17. The 6th Division had gone through a severe hot weather, and an outbreak of malaria in Lower Mesopotamia, had experienced exceptional hardships, and privations for 17 days preceding the siege, and arrived in Kut in an exhausted state as will have been seen from the itinerary given in my statement for the period (*c*). During the early stage of the siege, the preparation of

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000050

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

37. It is necessary to emphasize that these figures are in no sense a measure of the state of health of the garrison. The accommodation in medical units was limited to about 1,450, the medical staff in them was small and many patients were discharged in a convalescent state to be looked after by the medical officers of corps units. We were also compelled to have the less severe cases that would ordinarily be sent to field ambulances or general hospitals treated regimentally to equalize the work of the available medical officers and subordinates.

38. A convalescent depôt for British troops was established in the Serai to relieve the pressure in the British General Hospital and the field ambulances.

Principal Diseases.

39. *Scurvy* caused 1,050 admissions, all in Indians. From an early stage in the siege I was apprehensive regarding the disease in Indian troops and followers. A few cases appeared in the middle of January, and the incidence gradually rose; in the middle of February we had 140 cases, the daily accession being about five, and at the end of March there were 579 cases, after which it gradually declined. Excepting the effects of starvation nothing undermined the health of the Indians more than scurvy. It occurred in three forms—fully developed, incipient and latent. The disease arose from long-continued improper and insufficient food, especially the absence of fresh vegetables and fresh meat from the diet. It was greatly predisposed to by the prolonged hardships, exposure, heavy duties, and the generally depressing influence of the siege. We found we could not prevent it, but if brought under treatment early we could cure it. All our patients were better off in food supplies than the troops at duty, as they included a limited amount of milk, cream, eggs, rice, dhall, lime-juice, pickles, canned fruit and tamarind. Indian units that were quartered in the Fort, and North-East Section, and at Wool-Press village, suffered inordinately from scurvy due, it was considered to their not having free access to the supplementary articles of food purchasable in bazaars. Indians that ate horse-flesh from the time it was commenced were decidedly less affected, and in those in whom the incidence was high, it underwent reduction when this meat was eaten, providing its consumption was not postponed too long. Most Indians who did not eat horse flesh before April 1st, could not digest nor assimilate it, and in many it led to gastro-intestinal troubles; nevertheless I am quite confident that it kept many of them alive. Nor did those who ate horsemeat early run down so rapidly as those who did not. Green herbs collected from the alluvial plain had a marvellous effect in keeping down the incidence of the disease.

40. On February 23rd, 1916, I wrote:—"We cannot prevent the occurrence of the disease (scurvy) in units that will not eat horse-flesh, but we can cure the disease rapidly in the medical units (if the men are sent in early), as we have at least eight items that cannot be obtained regimentally—dhall, rice, fresh milk, eggs, pickles, *imli*, (tamarind), chatni and chloride of calcium." From February 27th, we got in all incipient and suspicious cases.

41. The total number of admissions for *dysentery* was 684. It afflicted Indian troops and followers much more than British soldiers. It was one of the most prevalent and serious maladies dealt with. It was a particularly fatal terminal complication in a number of scurvy cases.

42. There were 551 cases of *malaria*; it was relatively more prevalent in British troops than Indians. These were all relapses of old infections. It was observed that in Indians previous malarial infection predisposed to scurvy.

43. *Gastro-enteritis* and *Diarrhœa* gave rise to 528 admissions into hospitals. It was one of the most prevalent disorders during the Defence; another 1,300 odd cases were treated regimentally. Practically everyone got it at one stage or another of the siege, and in many it was chronic. It was attributable to many causes, such as chills, night exposure, coarse and imperfectly cooked food, etc.

44. During the last five weeks of the siege there were 165 deaths from conditions variously diagnosed as gastro-enteritis, enteritis, diarrhœa, etc. The essential cause in these cases was undoubtedly starvation. The men had got into such a state of debility and wasting from shortage of food, that any added strain on the economy, such as diarrhœa, was sufficient to lead to speedy dissolution. In all these cases there was finally a marked subnormal temperature. The condition was clinically identical with cholera; but neither I nor any of the Medical Officers had any doubt about its not being cholera. This disease continued epidemically after we got to the Prisoner's Camp, Shamran; during the month of May we had over 1,500 cases, and about 180 deaths from it. I got the malady myself; after the first few hours it was quite painless, and one passed into an apathetic condition.

45. *Pneumonia* (487 admissions) was one of the most serious and fatal diseases, especially in Indian troops, throughout the siege. It was largely predisposed to by the intense cold at night in January and February, exposure in trenches, and in March and April breathing of germ-laden dust, and the more or less lowered stamina.

46. We were fortunate in having no infectious disease. In the early stage of the siege a recrudescence of beri-beri amongst British troops gave rise to some apprehension, but it then disappeared; whilst in Indian troops and followers during the latter half of the siege scurvy caused anxiety.

47. The following table gives the numbers of deaths in Kut from December 4th to April 28th, 1916:—

	Killed.	Died of Wounds.	Died of Disease.	Totals.
British Officers ...	9	10	4	23
,, ranks ...	84	105	58	247
Indian Officers ...	8	7	5	20
,, ranks ...	369	278	531	1,178
Followers	67	88	123	278
	537	488	721	1,746

48. On March 18th, an aeroplane H.E. bomb dropped in the British General Hospital, killed 6, and wounded 26 British N.C.Os. and men; 12 others of the 26 died from their injuries.

Climatic Peculiarities During Defence.

49. During the siege the climate up to the end of March may on the whole be classed as wintry and comparable with that of the North-West Frontier of India for the corresponding period. In the months of December, January and first part of February, it was very cold; from January 15th to February 8th it froze every night; the troops in the trenches, especially Indians, found this very trying. The effects were intensified by severe winds and rain storms. On January 18th, 19th, and 20th, the trenches were flooded with water at ice temperature. On January 20th, several units in the first line trenches were up to their waist in water, and about 30 Indians were brought out of the trenches collapsed from the cold; in a few cases the men could not be resuscitated. At this stage frost-bite was common, which in some men led to gangrene of the toes, and trench rheumatism was prevalent. The lowest temperature reached was 24·8° Fahr., on January 31st. After the middle of February the days were warmer, and the night cold less severe. In March there was about ten days cold weather associated with rain; but the days were mostly bright and pleasant. In April the nights were pleasant, and the days becoming hot, but not uncomfortably so.

50. About 4 inches of *rain* fell during the siege—$\frac{1}{2}$ inch in December, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches both in January and February and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in March. The heaviest rainfall was from January 18th to 21st, during which time the troops in the trenches suffered considerable hardship. The rains occurred in torrential tropical downpours, usually followed by a break lasting a week or two. During the rainy periods the roads in the town were converted into elongated puddles from 6 to 12 inches deep making traffic difficult.

51. On January 18th I wrote in my diary:—

"Torrential rain fell for several hours during the night January 17th and 18th. All the trenches were swamped with water; the troops endured a most miserable night in the rain.

"The streets of the town are one continuous puddle several inches deep. The trenches in first, middle and second lines have from 1 foot to 2 feet of water in them. Pumping has had but little effect. Troops are making a continuation trench to the river and lower ground to drain them. Kit and bedding all soaked."

Medical Units in Kut during the Siege.

52. (*a*) No. 3A British General Hospital. $\frac{1}{2}$ Section (50 beds); (*b*) No. 9 Indian General Hospital. 1 Section

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00007e

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

General Hospitals and the town. The position was exposed to both gun and rifle fire, and on December 5th, all field ambulances were billeted in the town, No. 2 in Third and Fourth Avenues, No. 4 in Signal Lane and No. 106 at the Southern part of the Covered Bazar. No. 131 Cavalry Field Ambulance, located in the same grove, left with the cavalry brigade on the morning of December 6th, 1915. The Advanced Depôt of Medical Stores was housed in No. 3 Avenue.

A few hours after all patients had been removed from the huts and camps, the enemy commenced shelling that quarter heavily.

66. *The Officers' Hospital* (which was part of the British General Hospital), consisted of two double-storied houses in No. 2 Street. The accommodation was bad, especially in the ground floor, and at one time when there were over 30 officers being treated, it was overcrowded. They were, however, in a safe position, as neither block was hit by a shell throughout the siege.

67. Red Cross flags were hoisted over all the hospitals; in the Covered Bazar their positions defined the limits of where the hospitals were. The Covered Bazar extends over two acres of ground, and was bounded on the North by our Ordnance Park, and on the West (bank of river) we had 4 guns; we had about 95 shells into it. When aeroplanes began dropping high explosive bombs, specially large red cross emblems were laid flat on the roofs of all the hospitals, the white ground of the emblem being 16 feet square, and the limbs of the red cross 2½ feet in width and about 8 feet in length.

68. During the siege 103 of the enemy's shells, and 3 aeroplane bombs entered the hospitals killing 38 and wounding 42 patients, and killing 42 and wounding 36 of the personnel of the medical units; 11 of the hospital personnel were also wounded by snipers.

69. The general hospitals were used for the treatment of all severe wounds, and, as far as practicable, for cases of serious illness. The work in both these institutions was carried out under high pressure throughout the siege. The Indian Stationary Hospital was also overworked.

70. There were occasions when the strain thrown on the hospitals was overwhelming; *e.g.* on December 24th, No. 2 Field Ambulance was treating 202 sick, and 174 wounded, No. 4 (3 Sections) 40 sick and 177 wounded; No. 106 (4 Sections) 84 sick and 103 wounded, the British General Hospital (½ section) 112 sick and 93 wounded. The Indian Stationary Hospital had at one time 546 sick, and the Indian General Hospital (1 Section), 156 sick and 171 wounded.

71. I find the following entry in my diary for December 21st, 1915: "*Indian General Hospital.* The work here is under high pressure. One of the S.A.S. now ill and only 2 left to whole hospital. When an operation case comes in (now that Captain Barber is ill), all dressing of other cases has to cease. If possible have a regimental S.A.S. to assist."

72. "*Indian Stationary Hospital.*—316 cases under treatment. Of these 254 wounded. Here also work is at high pressure. O.C. (Major Bose) is crippled with a dilated heart and tachycardia.

73. "*No. 106 Field Ambulance.*—The work in this unit is very considerable. In addition to treating the 18th Brigade, they treat from 50 to 60 (men, women and children) of the civil population, and several of these wounded. At present both Major Pearson, O.C. and Capt. Puri are ill, and Major Aylen has charge of the Officers' Hospital.

74. "*No. 2 F.A.* Work in this unit is also under high pressure. There are 63 British and about 200 Indian sick. Major Lambert is ill, and there are only 2 S.A.S."

The medical personnel were getting worn out from overwork.

75. "December 28th, 1915. The general care of the sick and wounded and dressing, and the sanitation of the hospitals are as satisfactory as can be expected under the circumstances."

76. "January 1st, 1916. Sick and wounded coming in from the trenches in a most deplorable and miserable state—clothes wet and saturated with water and mud, and they are cold and shivering."

77. "January 28th, 1916. The hospitals are feeling the shortage of nursing and ward orderlies on account of the numbers of sick and wounded."

78. About the end of February the "cases of sickness did not respond to treatment as they used to do, which was attributed to the men's resisting power being lowered."

79. Great difficulty was experienced in connection with the supply of kerosine oil to hospitals from January 15th. It was then arranged that it be "limited to night hurricane lamps and the operation theatres. General wards to use heavy oil." (A large number of jam tins were converted into lamps for burning heavy oil.) The operating theatres were fitted up with acetylene lamps by the Flying Corps.

80. The shortage of fuel at one stage in January led to some difficulty in the sterilization processes necessary for surgical cases. This was remedied at once, and a special allowance of fuel sanctioned for the purpose.

On February 6th there were "50 cases of pneumonia under treatmen in the Indian General Hospital" alone.

81. About March 20th parados were made in the British General Hospital and other medical units to prevent the effects of shell fire and bombs.

82. The *sanitation* of the hospitals was defective in many respects, especially during the rainy periods, but I believe it was carried out as satisfactorily as the circumstances allowed of. Night soil was partly incinerated and partly buried in deep pits. The water-supply arrangements were the best in the garrison and there was practically always sufficient water for drinking, cooking, and washing, but not for bathing. The plan of supply was: Several 200-gallon iron tanks were placed on platforms within the front shed of the Covered Bazar about 60 yards from the left bank of the river. A pump in a covered place on the river bank was connected by a hose (laid along a trench) with the tanks. From these front tanks the water was drawn and distributed to other tanks suitably located in each medical unit. Several adjacent combatant units got water from here. All water was chlorinated.

83. The conditions taken together were decidedly unfavourable for the sick and wounded. It was impossible for the available medical staff to give the patients all the care and attention they required. The improvised hospitals, especially those in the Covered Bazar were defectively ventilated, ill-lighted, and finally unhygienic generally. The patients were going through a process of slow starvation and we had but a limited amount of hospital comforts for them, indeed, at the last stage, practically none. Added to these were the depressing influences of daily shelling and of disappointed expectations as regards the relief.

Contraventions of the Geneva Convention.

84. (*a*) Shelling of hospitals. During the siege 103 shells entered the various hospitals. Seven 40-pound shells entered the Covered Bazar Hospitals on December 10th, 1915.

(*b*) Bombing of hospitals. Three bombs entered the hospitals, one bomb killing 18 and wounding 14 men.

(*c*) Killing of women and children while drawing water by snipers.

85. Regarding (*a*) and (*b*). It is only fair to state that we had four guns on the West and within 100 yards of the Covered Bazar and the Ordnance Park within 50 yards. The Turkish aviator who dropped the bomb on the British General Hospital subsequently apologised to me for doing so, and expressed his profound regret for what had happened.

Positions of Dressing Stations, etc.

86. *Dressing stations* were formed in the date grove to the North of the town for the wounded from the trenches. They consisted of excellently made dug-outs with shell-proof overhead cover. Here the wounded were re-dressed if necessary, fed and rested before being sent on to the hospitals. This place, however, was exposed to a certain amount of sniping and shell fire and had to be abandoned. After this bearer divisions went out to the front line trenches and Fort in the dusk of the evenings with stretchers and, if necessary A.T. carts, and brought the wounded to their field ambulances.

87. The *regimental aid posts* consisted of dug-outs provided with covered protection against shrapnel. The wounded were at first taken to the dressing stations along the communicating trenches, but when dressing stations were given up, to the field ambulances.

Field ambulances were throughout the siege daily employed in collecting the sick and wounded from the first line trenches and the fort. In the early stage of our investment, before communication trenches were completed, this work was carried out under constant sniping, and on a few occasions under heavy rifle fire, during which some of the Army Bearer Corps personnel were wounded.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00001c

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

flour and atta. We, however, were able to draw 20 one-pound loaves of white bread daily for issue to the hospitals for special cases after its general issue had ceased, and this continued throughout the siege. At the beginning of February I got a large supply of dhall from the Supply Stores for hospitals.

102. February 5th, 1916. "The number of eggs supplied to hospital has been reduced to 20. This appears to me to be ridiculously few considering that every mess and many troops in trenches are able to get them. To speak to A.D.S. *re* this; if it is a question of paying more, then it must be paid for the sick's food."

103. On March 16th, I secured for the hospitals, 600 lbs. preserved fresh fruit; 350 lbs. cornflour, 45 lbs. arrowroot.

Further list of articles secured for hospitals on March 23rd, 1916:—

Cocoa	33	lbs.
Lime-juice	18	gallons.
Pickles	22	sm. botts.
Rice	35	maunds.
Tamarind	40	lbs.
Cornflour	258	,,
Essence mutton	¼	,,
Calves foot jelly	2	,,
Extract of beef	4½	,,
Pearl barley	7	,,
Beef dripping	11	,,
Benger's food	1	,,
Sugar	19	,,
Vinegar	28	gallons.
Dhall	198	lbs.
Dry limes...	66	,,
Arrowroot...	25	,,
Horlick's M. milk	6	,,
Pineapple	337	tins
Beer	15	bottles
Preserved fruit	275	lbs.
Essence of chicken	1¾	,,
Fish, tins	260	,,

104. Early in February several acres of land around the town were converted into kitchen gardens and such rapidly growing vegetables as radishes, onions, cress, and a few varieties of spinach were sown. There was at first great difficulty in watering them which was overcome.

From March 31st 100 lbs. vegetables were supplied to hospitals daily from the gardens. They had previously been producing only 50 lbs. a day.

105. "March 2nd, 1916. Secured all the stores suitable for hospitals for issue to sick from the miscellaneous collection in E. Section S. and T. In consultation with A.D.S. allotted these to the British Officers Hospital, B.G.H., the lime juice to I.G.H. and I.S H."

"April 11th, 1916. 60 lbs. dates dropped by aeroplane, made over to hospitals."

"April 2nd, 1916. 4¾ lbs. of saccharin dropped by aeroplane. It was insufficient for whole garrison, so half given to hospitals, remainder to staffs' and officers' messes."

106. January 6th. "The supply of eggs is running down, also chickens. No potatoes nor onions now being issued."

"January 4th, 1916. Visited officers' hospital. Asked all officers if they were getting all they wanted as regards food, and they answered in the affirmative; also if they had any complaints to make and they said, 'No.'"

"January 5th. Saw and spoke to all patients of the B.G.N.; they all said food was quite satisfactory."

107. On February 7th I entered in my diary: "The Indian troops in medical units are now being much better fed than those of the rest of force. They are practically getting all their rations (including rice and dhall) with only a shortage of 8 oz atta, and tea. Told officers commanding medical units that they can buy tea in the bazar for their Indian troops and followers."

108. On March 6th I "directed officers commanding medical units to buy whatever food in bazars that they consider will improve the dietary of their patients."

109. We were, throughout the siege, able to obtain a limited supply of fresh milk, cream, eggs, chickens and fish, but only with considerable difficulty as the Arab vendors were consuming them or selling them surreptitiously.

110. The quantity of fresh milk varied, the average being about 120 pints per diem; at times for a week on end we got from 200 to 300 pints a day; it was nearly always of poor quality. Cream, about 8 lbs. a day was most useful. At the end of March several milch buffaloes and cows were wounded and the supply of fresh milk ran low, and this at a time when the stock of tinned milk was nearly exhausted. I insisted that the animals be not sent out to graze, but have the grass cut for them and that the husk of barley be given them. I told the A.D.S. on March 28th, 1916, that it was imperative that everything possible be done to maintain the supply of fresh milk. Until the last fortnight we were able to get on an average about 80 eggs daily. For a time, we were drawing 150-200 eggs a day. Fish was given to the British officers and selected cases amongst the British sick; it was very costly as the catches by Arabs had to be made in the presence of the enemy's snipers.

111. "February 24th, 1916 Diary. The supply of eggs to medical units has again been falling off. The quality of the milk has also undergone deterioration and lately has been adulterated with flour. Yesterday I found that the last half inch in a bucket consisted of a semi-glutinous mass. Represented these matters to the L.P.O. who stated that the eggs were being brought in at a later time—too late to be issued." They were then drawn at a later hour daily. "*Re* milk, he arraigned three contractors (suppliers) before the Military Governor, and had them punished."

"February 26th, 1916. Saw L.P.O. *re* milk and eggs. The milk was short but of better quality." On February 27th, 1916, the supply of milk had "improved in both quantity and quality."

112. At the end of March obtained 25 lbs. tea from Supply Stores; issued to British General Hospital.

On April 2nd "got for hospitals two maunds of gur and 7¾ maunds of dates."

"April 7th, 1916. Obtained for hospitals 50 lbs. tea from the Supply Service."

113. After April 7th no further extras could be obtained from the Supply Stores for the hospitals. We had then to rely on about 140 pints of milk and about 40 eggs daily, as the only medical comforts available.

114. The most that can be said of the medical comforts is that they would have been ample for a two months' supply. Strict economy had to be commenced as early as January 21st, and continued until they were exhausted —about the middle of April, which means that a good proportion of the sick and wounded who would normally have got them did not.

Clothing and Bedding.

115. The clothing and bedding that had been supplied to the troops supplemented by one blanket was suitable and sufficient. The third blanket had been provided and issued to some of the troops before the siege began. Unfortunately many of the men lost part of their clothing and blankets which were abandoned at Aziziyeh. All available blankets in the Supply Stores were issued to the garrison, which ensured that all men had two blankets, a certain proportion had three. We had a certain number of extra blankets on hand in the medical units, which, with the bedding patients brought in were sufficient to keep them warm.

Most of the troops had only one suit of clothes, so that it was difficult to arrange about washing them. Cotton suits were made for a large number to allow of this being done.

Rations of Garrison During the Defence.

116. As previously stated the 6th Division arrived in Kut after Ctesiphon in a worn out and exhausted condition. For over a fortnight the troops had got their rations irregularly, and had few opportunities of preparing hot meals. Under the circumstances it was not considered advisable to commence a reduction of their rations at once except in potatoes.

117. The main difficulty was to determine the length of time the siege would last. The following abstracts from my diaries indicate the estimated quantities of food in stock and the progressive reductions made in the rations.

"December 11th, 1915. Had a long conversation with A.D.S., regarding rations available during our defence. From his tables it appears that we have *full rations* of following for the period stated:—

Flour (bread, Br.)	70 days
Atta (Ind. tps. & folls.)	70 days
Rice ,, ,, ...	70 days
Dhall ,, ,, ...	70 days
Curry stuffs, do. (are put on half rations of this already)	1 month
Fresh meat...	1 month

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00000b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Their ration has already been reduced to 1 lb. a day (and that only half barley, half atta), they receive only ½ ration of ghee (1 oz. instead of 2), they get no gur, dhall or vegetables. Potentially the ration at present is only a trifle more than a subsistence diet (a diet of complete rest), yet the men have to carry out their full duties in trenches, piquets, and in maintaining the defensive works. On the present ration they may just be able to hold their ground, although I believe they will tend to lose stamina. With a further reduction they will lose weight rapidly, and be practically on a starvation ration." On February 27th, 1916, there were only 750 out of over 9,500 Indians eating horse-flesh. Early in April there was a rapid rise, and on the 14th of that month 9,239 were consuming it.

128. On February 28th, I recommended that the horse-flesh ration of British troops be increased to 1¼ lbs., per diem as the men were then getting no vegetables, butter or bacon, and only ¾ oz. cheese and 1 oz. jam. This increase began on March 1st.

129. The following are the rations issued to the garrison from March 4th, 1916:—

British.

Bread	¾ lb.
Horseflesh	1¼ ,,
Jam	1 oz.
Salt	½ ,,
Dates	1½ ,,
Ginger	½ ,,
Oatmeal	2 ,,

Indian.

Barley meal	¾ lb.
,, whole	6 oz.
Ghee	1 ,,
Salt	½ ,,
Dates	1½ ,,
Ginger	½ ,,
Tumeric	⅛ ,,
Chillies	⅛ ,,
Meat (to those who draw it) ...	8 ,,

The tea had run out on March 4th.

"March 5th, 1916. The amount and variety of 'extras' that the men can now buy in the bazar is somewhat limited—consists chiefly of chappatties, cakes fried in fat, and a small amount of dhall. There is still apparently an abundance of country tobacco."

130. On March 11th, the rations consisted of:—

British.

Bread	10 oz.
Meat	1¼ lbs.
Jam	1 oz.
Salt	½ ,,
Ginger	⅓ ,,
Oatmeal	2 ,,
Dates	1½ ,,

Indian.

Barley flour	10 oz.
,, unhusked	4 ,,
Ghee	1 ,,
Ginger	½ ,,
Tumeric	⅛ ,,
Meat (to those who draw it) ...	8 ,,
Dates	1½ ,,

"For British this is just beyond a subsistence diet; for Indians it is less than a subsistence diet, and they will run down on it, lose stamina and scurvy will increase."

From March 11th, a concentrated soup was made for all British troops, and issued in the evening—it was greatly relished and appreciated.

131. From March 14th, British troops had the following added to their rations twice a week; butter 1½ oz.; bacon 1½ oz.; cheese 1 oz. This was continued for 14 days.

All units used the green herbs obtainable on the plain as vegetables, from about the middle of March. The chief of these herbs were: wild mustard, a species of clover, mint, wild carrots, small kind of thistle, dandelion, and plantain. Medical Officers were unanimously of opinion that the use of this green stuff had a marked influence for good in staying the progress of the epidemic of scurvy.

132. As there were some poisonous plants growing with he herbs, samples of the edible and poisonous ones were collected and placed in all Headquarters Offices for comparison.

133. From about March 10th there was a very appreciable decrease in the quantity of food cooked and sold in the bazars, and on March 25th I entered in my diary:

"No cakes or kababs are now being sold in bazars and the amount of food-stuffs purchasable is quite nominal."

"March 29th, 1916. Interviewed A.D.S. *re* food supplies: "*Salt* is rapidly going down. I understand that there is sufficient for British troops for a fortnight and for Indians for only about five days. Advised that some be got by aeroplane." The A.D.S. after scouring the town obtained 800 lbs. of salt. The ration issued was about $\frac{1}{10}$ oz. daily per man. Aeroplane at a later date, dropped 80 lbs.

"March 30th, 1916. Owing to errors in calculations as to quantity of barley available for issue, it is much to be regretted that the 3 oz. now issued for parching will have to be stopped. This puts Indians on a regular starvation diet. The deductions will commence from April 1st, 1916."

"April 2nd, 1916. One of the main defects in the British troops' diet at present is the practical absence of hydro-carbons—there is no fat on the horseflesh, and the great deficiency of carbohydrates; they get an 8-oz. loaf which contains roughly only 6 ozs. of mixed wheaten flour and barley.

"In the Indian troops and followers' rations all the proximate principles are deficient to a marked degree; their diet consists solely of 10 ozs. very inferior barley flour and 1 oz. *ghi*."

134. On April 8th "the question of still further lowering the ration of barley flour was mooted by the A.Q.M.G. I told him that the men were now on starvation rations, in the technical sense of the income being greatly below the kinetic output, that even the present rations continued for a fortnight more would lead to many deaths. I suggested that the food grain of the town Arabs should be lowered instead of that of the troops who in every sense as our defenders, have greatest claim on it." The *ghi* ration ceased from April 8th, 1916.

135. From April 10th, Indians received 7 ozs. of barley flour per diem. "This (7 ozs. barley) with the green stuff collected is all that non-horse-flesh eaters now receive; it is an absolute starvation ration and represents, at most, 600 calories potential energy; the normal ration for field service for Indians is roughly 3,000 calories. It is anticipated that the men at the end of a week on this will be attenuated and many emaciated, that sickness will increase and a certain number of men will succumb. This reduction, however, has only been undertaken as the result of dire military necessity and to ensure the garrison holding out until the relief arrives. The Arabs of the town have already been reduced in grain to less than a subsistence scale."

About the middle of February we wired for 7 lbs. of saccharin. About 5 lbs. were dropped by aeroplane on April 2nd. It was insufficient to make a general issue and was reserved for the hospitals, staffs, and officers of the garrison.

136. As some men were suffering acutely from the pangs of hunger, 2 lbs. of *opium* was got up by aeroplane and 14,000 one-grain pills given to medical officers of corps units for issue to selected cases. It undoubtedly ameliorated the intensity of these men's sensations.

British troops felt the want of *tobacco* greatly. One day they told me that they were prepared to forego part of their ration if they could get enough tobacco for a few smokes a day. On April 14th I found the men of the 2nd Dorsets smoking three different kinds of substitutes—dried used tea-leaves, powdered dry ginger, and dried and broken-up orange leaves. Many officers were doing the same.

April 10th, 1916. "Still further reduction in rations will take place from to-morrow. British, 5 ozs. flour, 1¼ lbs. horse-flesh; Indians, 5 ozs. (barley) flour and 12 ozs. horse-flesh."

On the night of April 24th/25th the steamer "Julnar" failed to get through to Kut. She, I was informed, had 250 tons of food on board, which it was stated would have been sufficient for subsistence diet for from 16 to 20 days.

Sanitation of Garrison During the Defence.

137. The sanitation of the areas occupied by our troops and followers was conducted on the principles detailed in my statements for the periods (*a*), (*b*), and (*c*), and, even under the conditions of the siege, gave rise to little trouble and was carried out satisfactorily.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000044

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

INDEX TO COMMISSION'S REPORT.

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

A.

Abadan Island :
Oil refining works ... ... I, 19
Abu Rummanah ... ... IV, 11
Admiralty ... ... II, 2
Ahwaz :
Fighting at ... ... III, 3 ; IV, 5
Aircraft :
Deficiency in ... ... VIII, 9-10
Nixon to report on ... ... IV, 2
Pre-war conditions ... ... I, 23
Allegations against officers ... ... I, 4
Amara :
Access to ... ... I, 15
Advance to IV
Medical Arrangements in ... ... X, 21
Reasons for ... ... IV, 4, 6, 7 ; XII, 6
Sanctioned ... ... IV, 6
Transport not considered in sanctioning ... ... IX, 25
Hospital ... ... X, 74
Occupation of ... ... IV, 5, 6, 8
Ambulance :
(*See* **Hospital Transport** (Land) ; **Field Ambulances.**)
Ammunition ... ... VII, 10 ; VIII, 5
Anglo-Persian Oil Company ... I, 19 ; II, 2
Arabs :
Effect on, as objective ... ... II, 1, 4, 8
Armament VIII
(*See also* **Artillery, Equipment.**)
Army in India Committee ... ... XI, 35
Army, Indian
(*See* **Indian Army.**)
Army Transport Carts, use for wounded
(*See* **Hospital Transport,** (Land).)
Artillery :
Delay in applying for ... ...VIII, 3
Delayed by lack of transport ... VII, 2
Manufacture in India ... ... VIII, 3
Sent to Europe ... ... VIII, 3
Shortage ... I, 23 ; VII, 3, 28 ; VIII, 3, 4, 5
Asia :
Delimitation for Intelligence purposes ... XI, 3
Aylmer, Lieut.-Gen. Sir Fenton J.
Command of Kut Relief Force ... ... VII, 1
Omission to ascertain Kut supplies ... VII, 5
Protest against advance to Baghdad ... XI, 56
Aziziyeh :
Advance to ... ... V, 7
Concentration at, protracted from lack of transport ... ... VI, 6
Retirement to ... ... VI, 5

B.

Babtie, Surgeon-General Sir William :
Medical Administration of ... X, 39–51
Report on Colaba Hospital, Bombay X, 53–55
Responsibility
Experience and, of ... ... X, 39, 45
For medical breakdown X, 39–51, 124 ; XII, 18
Baghdad :
Access to ... ... I, 16, 17
Advance to
As possible objective IV, 1 ; V, 1, 2, 3, 6 ; X, 81 ; XI, 7
Cause and effect of ... ... XII, 7
Character of ... ... V, 32 ; XI, 47
Correspondence as to V, 5–8, 12, 14, 17, 18
Delay, effect of, on ... ... V, 15 ; VI, 6
Inter-Departmental Committee on ... V, 11, 21–23,
Memoranda on... ... ... V, 4, 19
Nixon's plan as to IV, 2 ; V, 4–6, XI, 47
Optimism as to ... V, 25, 27 ; VI, 3
Political motives for ... V, 13, 15, 18, 26
Responsibility for ... ... XII, 8, 9
Sanctioned by Secretary of State ... V, 20
Staffs not consulted as to ... XI, 54, 56
Stopping, Possibility of ... V, 10, 25
Townshend's protest against V, 28–31
Transport shortage and its effect on IX, 5, 18
Transport shortage ignored in sanctioning ... V, 22–24 ; IX, 25
Intelligence as to ... ...IX, 24
Bahrein :
Landing at ... ... II, 4, 6
Barges.
(*See* **Transport** (River). **Hospital Transport** (River).)
Barjisiyah ... ... III, 4
Barrett, Lieut. Gen. Sir A. :
Instructions ... ... II, 9
Occupation of Basra ... ... II, 6
Transport, Railway suggested ... IX, 52
Transport, River
Delay in ordering ... ... IX, 7
Estimate ... ...IX, 25
Barrow, General Sir Edmund :
Memoranda by ... ... II, 1 ; III, 1 ; V, 19
Responsibility for
Advance to Baghdad ... ... XII, 8
Medical telegrams ... ... X, 78
Neglect to consider transport IX, 19
Base Supply Officer, Basra :
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ... XI, 51
Basra :
Access to ... ... I, 13
Buchanan, Sir G., at ... ... IX, 45, 46
Congestion at ... ... IX, 42, 44
Description of ... ... I, 13
Hospital ... ... X, 21
Intelligence as to ... ... XI, 3
Objective of expedition ... ... II, 9
Occupation of ... ... II, 6
Port Facilities
Need of I, 21, 22 ; IX, 41–47, 62 ; XI, 9, 45, 46 ; XII, 13
Provision of ... ...V, 32 ; XI, 46
Statistics as to ... IX, 43, 46, 47
Time taken for discharge of supply vessels ... ... IX, 46, 47
War Office, result of control on IX, 46

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00002f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Ctesiphon (*continued*) :
FORCES at ... ... VIII, 13
MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS AT ... X, 23-26, 58
Official reticence as to X, 25, 57-68
REPORTS on condition of wounded from X, 66, 89, 90

D.

Dallas, Colonel :
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ...XI, 51
Davison, Major-General K. S.
Responsibility for port administration IX, 43, 44
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ... XI, 51
Delamain, Major-General W. S. :
Command of expedition ... ... II, 6
Instructions to ... ... II, 8
Delhi ... ... XI, 13
Despatches :
of Sir P. Lake ... ... I, 12
Director of Medical Services, India :
Changes in occupancy of office ... X, 116
Greater powers recommended X, 130(*a*) ; XII, 35
Director of the Royal Indian Marine :
Need of improved status ... IX, 69 ; XII, 33
(*See also* **Lumsden, Royal Indian Marine.**)
Disinfection ... ... X, 18
Drafts ... ... VIII, 11–14
For British troops ... ... V, 14 ; VIII, 13
For Indian troops ... ... I, 28 ; VIII, 14
Dressings ... ... X, 14
Drugs ... ... X, 14
Duff, General Sir Beauchamp :
(*See* **Commander-in-Chief.**)
Dujailah Redoubt :
Attack on ... ... VII, 11-22

E.

East Africa :
Expeditions to ... ... I, 27
(*See also* **Expeditions Overseas.**)
Economy : POLICY OF, IN INDIA I, 23 ; XI, 34–43
EFFECT ON
Army ... ... VIII, 2 ; XI, 34-43 ; XII,32
Equipment ... VIII, 2 ; XI, 36 ; XII, 10
Medical Arrangements X, 126 (*a*); XII, 19 (*a*)
Officers X, 52 ; XI, 37–39, 42 ; XII, 31
Port Facilities ... ... IX, 40, 44 ; XI, 9
Transport, Railway ... IX, 54–58 ; XI, 9
RESPONSIBILITY FOR VIII, 2 ; X, 126 ; XII, 10
Egypt :
Expedition to ... ... I, 27
Safety of, as objective ... ... II, 1
(*See also* **Expeditions Overseas.**)
Embarkation :
Duties of officers ... X, 130 (*c*) ; XII, 35 (*c*)
Officers recommended X, 130 (*b*) ; XII, 35 (*b*)
England :
Neglect to apply for help to ... X, 109
Offers of help from ... ... X, 110
Transport (river) ordered in IX, 8, 9, 31–39
Enver Pasha ... ... II, 3
Equipment VIII
Effect of economy on VIII, 2 ; XI, 36 ; XII, 10
Effect of War Office control on ... XII, 11
Expeditions overseas ... ... I, 28
Frontier warfare, suitability for I, 23–26 ; II, 7 ; VIII, 1 ; XI, 36, 39 ; XII, 10, 32
Inadequate I, 23, 24 ; VII, 3, 28 ; VIII, 1, 2, 5–10 ; XI, 1, 36 ; XII, 5
Equipment (*continued*) :
Need of, suited to climate ... ... I, 21
Sources of ... ... I, 26
Es Sinn :
Account of battle ... ... VII, 11–22
Medical arrangements ... ... X, 30
Euphrates :
Navigation difficulties ... ... I, 16
Evacuation of wounded.
(*See* **Wounded.**)
Evidence :
Principal sources of ... ... I, 3, 8
Publication of ... ... I, 9
Expeditions Overseas from India I, 27–30
Transport of I, 28 ; IX, 27 ; X, 130 ; XII, 35
(*See also* **Indian Army.** MILITARY OBJECTIVES.)
Expedition to Mesopotamia.
(*See* **Mesopotamia Expedition.**)

F.

Fans, Electric ... ... X, 15
Field Ambulances :
Pre-war standard ... ... I, 24
Shortage of X, 3, 27, 35, 46, 114, 122 ; XII, 16
Use as general hospitals ... ... X, 35, 113
Field Service Regulations as to :
Reinforcements ... ... VIII, 12–14
Transport, River ... ... IX, 20–23
Finance :
Attitude of Indian Government to XI, 40–42 ; XII, 32
Expenditure on expeditions overseas ... I, 28
(*See also* **Economy.**)
Findings :
General ... ... XII, 1–27
Medical ... ... X, 120–129 ; XII, 14–22
Transport ... ... IX, 62 ; XII, 13
Floods :
Kut relief force delayed by ... VII, 25, 27
Tigris subject to ... ... I, 18 ; IX, 15
Turkish forces delayed by ... ... IV, 5
Food.
(*See* **Rations.**)
Forces, Size of ... ... XII, 12
October, 1914 ... ... II, 4
November, 1914 ... ... II, 6–7
March, 1915 ... ... III, 3
April, 1915 ... ... III, 4 ; IV, 5
October, 1915 ... ... V, 29
November, 1915 ... ... VI, 1, 2 ; VIII, 13
January, 1916 ... ... VI, 1
(*See also* **Reinforcements.**)
France :
Divisions from (*See* **Reinforcements.**)
Expedition to ... ... I, 27
(*See also* **Expeditions overseas.**)
Fuel ... ... I, 16

G.

Gorringe, Major-General Sir George F. :
Karun fighting ... ... IV, 5
Nasariyeh captured by ... ... IV, 9
Government of India Act.
(*See* **India.**)
Governor General of India.
(*See* **Viceroy.**)

H.

Haig, Sir Douglas :
Memorandum on military objectives XI, 36

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000ae

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Indian Government (*continued*).
Economy. (*See* **Economy.**)
Equipment. (*See* **Equipment.**)
Finance Department. (*See* **Finance.**)
Intelligence. (*See* **Intelligence.**)
Medical Personnel. (*See* **Medical Personnel.**)
Procedure. (*See* **Indian Military Administration.**)
Reinforcements. (*See* **Reinforcements.**)
Transport, Railway
Attitude to ... ... IV, 12; IX, 51–61
Responsibility for ... ... IX, 61
Transport, River
Failure to supply available IX, 28–30
Intelligence of available ... IX, 24–26
Responsibility for shortage ... ... IX, 23
Indian Military Administration:
Dualism ... ... XI, 10, 11, 12
Organisation ... ... XI, 10–17; XII, 27
Over-centralisation XI, 11, 13, 14; XII, 29
Indian Military Authorities:
Attitude to transport IX, 62 (*a*); XII, 13(*a*)
Responsibility for transport IX, 62 (*d*); XII, 13 (*d*)
Indian Soldiers' Fund ... ... X, 110
Inspector-General of Communications:
Hospital steamer refused by ... ... IX, 48
Responsibility for port administration IX, 42–44
Secretiveness of staff to ... ... XI, 51
Instructions to:
Barrett, Sir A. ... ... II, 9
Delamain, Major-General ... ... II, 8
Nixon, Sir J. IV, 2, 3, 4, 6; V, 4; IX, 13; XI, 6, 8, 44–50
Intelligence:
Delimitation of areas ... ... XI, 2, 3
Difficulty of obtaining ... ... XI, 48
Handbook on ... ... IX, 24
Inadequacy of ... ... XI, 3, 5
Indian Government ... ... IX, 24
Nixon's attitude to ... ...XI, 48
Inter-Departmental Committee:
Appointment of ... ... V, 11
Composition and procedure of ... V, 21–23

J.

James, Colonel:
Statistical evidence of, as to Sickness X, 107–108
Jehad:
Attempts to raise ... ... II, 3

K.

Karun River:
Navigation ... ... I, 19, 20
Operations on ... ... IH, 3; IV, 5, 15
Kemball, Major-General G. V.:
Memorandum on river transport IV, 13; IX, 8, 17, 19
Operations against Dujailah Redoubt VII, 11–22
Visits to Townshend ... ... V, 29
Keogh, Sir Alfred:
Criticism of medical arrangements in India X, 130; XII, 35
Kurna:
Access to ... ... I, 14
Advance to III
Sanction of ... ... III, 2; XII, 6
Capture of ... ... III, 2
Occupation of ... ... III, 1
Kut:
Access to ... ... I, 16
Advance to IV
Correspondence as to ... IV, 10; V, 6
Sanction of ... ... IV, 10; XII, 6
Transport, shortage in ... IX, 18. 25
Advantages of possession of ... ... IV, 16
Capitulation ... ... VII, 6, 28
Capture ... ... IV, 11; V, 7
Medical Arrangements at IV, 15; X, 22, 56
Transport, effect of shortage... ... V, 31
Investment of ... ...VI, 8; VII, 6
Relief Operations VII
Casualties ... ... VII, 27
Causes of failure ... ... VII, 28
Causes of premature start ... VII, 4, 5
Difficulties and deficiencies VI, 3; VII, 25-27
Medical Arrangements ... X, 27–31
Transport, effect of shortage IX, 3, 5, 62; XII, 13
(*See also* **Tigris Corps.**)
Retirement to ... ... VI, 5
Siege:
Account of ... ... VII, 6, 7, 28
Caste difficulties ... ... VII, 28
Medical Arrangements ... ... X, 31
Moral ... ... VII, 28
Retention of Arab population VII, 7
Supplies in ... ... VII, 4, 5, ; X, 122
(*See also* Appendix III.)

L.

Lake, Lieutenant-General Sir P.:
Command taken by ... ... VII, 1
Despatches of ... ... I, 12
Knowledge of condition of wounded after Ctesiphon ... ... X, 67, 90
Nixon's plan of advance endorsed by ... V, 5
Policy after fall of Kut ... ... VII, 30
Transport, attitude to railway ... IX, 56, 59
Lukis, Sir Pardey ... ... X, 100–104
Lumsden, Captain W.:
Knowledge of:
Scope of expedition ... ... IX, 27
Transport available ... ... IX, 30
Transport shortage ... ... IX, 27
Supply of:
Hospital river transport ... ... IX, 50
River transport IX, 28, 30, 62; XII, 13
(*See also* **Director of the Royal Indian Marine.**)
Lynch Brothers:
Failure to consult ... ... IX, 32, 36, 37
Knowledge of Tigris river craft ... ... IX, 31
Steamer service ... ... I, 20

M.

Machine Guns ... ... VIII, 5
MacNeece, Surgeon-General J. G.:
Letter to Sir P. Lake on condition of wounded after Ctesiphon ... X, 67, 90
Responsibility for medical breakdown X, 125; XII, 18
Visit to Mesopotamia ... ... X, 69, 97, 98
Magill:
Port facilities ... ... IX, 42
Mahailas:
(*See* **Transport** (River).)

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000029

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Nixon (*continued*) :
TRANSPORT. PORT FACILITIES
Provision of ... ... IX, 40 ; XI, 46
TRANSPORT, RAILWAY
Demand for ... ... IX, 53–58 ; XI, 41
TRANSPORT, RIVER
Demands for ... IV, 12 ; V, 24 ; IX, 8–10, 26, 29
Miscalculations as to ... IX, 26 ; XI, 48, 49
Responsibility as to ... IX, 11–23, 28, 49, 62 ; XII, 13
Telegram on navigation difficulties ... V, 12
Interpretations of ... V, 22, 24
Northbrook, Lord :
Offer of medical personnel ... ... X, 82
Nursing Service in hospitals in India :
Improvement needed ... X, 130 ; XII, 35

O.

Objectives of Expedition :
26th September, 1914... ... ... II, 1
5th October, 1914 ... ... II, 4
March, 1915 ... ... IX, 13
April, 1915 ... ... IV, 4–6
After fall of Kut ... ... VII, 30
Baghdad. (*See* **Baghdad.**)
Barrett, Sir A., Instructions to ... ... II, 9
Basra... ... ... II, 9
Delamain, Major-General, Instructions to II, 8
Lack of defined ... II, 5 ; III, 1 ; XI, 7 ; XII, 3
Effect of, on medical arrangements ... X, 81
Nixon, Sir John, instructions to (*See* **Nixon.**)
Offensive, Change to ... IV, 1 ; XI, 44–47
Changes necessitated by ... XI, 45, 46
Political considerations, Effect of... ... V, 26
O'Donnell, Surgeon-General ... X, 100
Officers :
(*See* **Indian Army,** OFFICERS, *and* **Medical Personnel.**)
Oil Installation ... ... I, 19
As objective ... II, 1, 2, 4, 8 ; III, 3 ; IV, 2, 3, 4 ; IX, 13
Orah hospital ... ... X, 74
Ordnance, Deputy-Director of :
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ... XI, 51
Origin of campaign ... II, 1 ; XII, 1–9
Over-Centralisation.
(*See* **Indian Military Administration.**)
Overseas Expeditions.
(*See* **Expeditions Overseas.**)

P.

Parsimony :
(*See* **Economy.**)
Persia :
Neutrality to be respected... ... II, 8 ; IV, 2
Physical Peculiarities OF MESOPOTAMIA I, 13–22
Intelligence as to ... ... IX, 24
Policy :
(*See* **Objectives of Expedition.**)
Port Facilities :
(*See* **Basra, Magill, Transport.**)
Powers of Commission ... ... I, 2
Prestige :
Effect on, of failures of campaign... ... XII, 7
Principal Marine Transport Officer :
Secretiveness of Staff to ... ... XI, 51
Procedure of Commission ... ... I, 1–12
MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS
Inadvisability of interim report ... I, 5
REASONS FOR NOT VISITING INDIA OR MESOPOTAMIA ... ... I, 3

Q.

Quartermaster-General, India :
TRANSPORT, RIVER
Responsibility for ... ... IX, 27
Shortage not appreciated by... IX, 27

R.

Railway :
(*See* **Transport,** (LAND).)
Rations :
Kut siege. Caste difficulties ... VII, 28
Misleading reports on ... ... X, 74
Need of varied ... ... I, 21
Neglect to improve ... ... X, 41, 42
Recommendations as to ... X, 130 ; XII, 35
Shortage from lack of transport VIII, 2 ; XI, 1 ; XII, 11
Sickness due to ... ... X, 41 ; XII, 11
War Office control, effect on ... XII, 11
Recommendations :
General ... ... XII, 28–36
As to medical arrangements X, 130 ; XII, 35
Red Cross Society ... ...X, 110
Reinforcements ... VIII, 11, 15–18 ; XII, 12
November, 1914 ... ... II, 6
February, 1915 ... ... III, 3
March, 1915 ... ... III, 3 ; IV, 2
May, 1915 ... ... IV, 6
October, 1915 ... ... V, 14, 16, 28, 29
BAGHDAD, ADVANCE TO ... V, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20
DIVISIONS FROM FRANCE ... ... V, 16
Delay in arrival of medical units VII, 1 ; X, 3, 27, 114, 122
INDIAN GOVERNMENT
Attitude as to ... III, 3 ; V, 17 ; XI, 6
RESPONSIBILITY for ... ... VIII, 15–18
TRANSPORT, RIVER
Lack of, causes delay ... IV, 13 ; VI, 3 ; VII, 28 ; IX. 3, 8, 62 ; XI, 49 ; XII, 13
Increased need of to carry ... ... IX, 18
Report, Period covered by ... ... I, 8
Resources :
(*See* **India,** Resources.)
Reticence, Misuse of ... ... X, 52–76
HATHAWAY ... ... X, 74
INTOLERANCE of criticism ... ... X, 76
MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS ... X, 127 ; XII, 20
Colaba Hospital, Bombay ... X, 53–55
Ctesiphon ... ... X, 25, 57–68
Kut, First battle of ... ... X, 56
Sheikh Saad Camp ... ... X, 71, 72
MEDICAL BREAKDOWN ... ... X, 68
MEDICAL PERSONNEL and Equipment X, 70, 82
SANITATION ... ... X, 83
UNDUE, None in later stages of campaign ... ... X, 75
WATER SUPPLY ... ... X, 74
Reserve System.
(*See* **Indian Army.**)
Ridsdale, Mr. E. A. ... ... I, 10
River Hospital Steamers.
(*See* **Hospital Transport** (RIVER).)
River Steamers.
(*See* **Transport** (RIVER).)
Roads :
Absence of ... ... IX, 24
Kut to Baghdad ... ... I, 17
Rotah, Battle of ... ... X, 37, 38

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00006b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Transport (Land) :
Ambulance. (*See* **Hospital Transport.**)
Animal ... ... IV, 2
Impracticable in wet weather ... I, 17 ; IX, 15
Motor ... ... IV, 2 ; X, 13
(*See also* **Hospital Transport.**)
Railway ... ... IX, 51–61
Barrett, suggested by ... IX, 52
Construction, Cost and time of IX, 60
Development of ... ... VII, 30
Indian Government :
Attitude to ... IV, 12 ; IX, 51–61
Responsibility for ... IX, 61
Need of ... ... XI, 9
Nixon to report on ... ... IV, 2
Nixon's demand for ... IX, 53–58 ; XI, 41
Position after July, 1916 ... IX, 59, 60
Roads, Absence of ... ... IX, 24

Transport (Port Facilities)
Economy as to ... ... IX, 40, 44
Erection and repair shops ... IX, 40, 62 ; XII, 13
(*See also* **Basra, Magill.**)

Transport (River) :
Barges
Alteration of specifications ... IX, 36–38
Use for wounded
(*See* **Hospital Transport** (River).)
Barrett, estimate of necessary ... ... IX, 25
Civilian experience not used ... ... XI, 28
Conclusions as to ... ... IX, 62 ; XII, 13
Cowper's telegram as to shortage X, 76 ; XI, 43
Definition ... ... I, 22
Difficulties ignored in Baghdad advance :
Home Government ... ... V, 23, 24
Inter-Departmental Committee V, 22, 23
Nixon ... ... V, 4
Risk from ... ... IX, 18
Draught limitations ... IX, 8, 14, 15, 17
Hospital. (*See* **Hospital Transport.**)
Indian Government :
Attitude to ... ... IX, 24, 62 ; XII, 13
Enquiries as to ... ... IX, 25
Intelligence as to ... ... IX, 24
Kemball's memorandum on IV, 8, 13, 17, 19
Kut, Risk of advance to, from shortage ... IX, 18
Mahailas ... ... IX, 6, 11, 48
Miscalculations as to ... IX, 25 ; XI, 49
Need of ... ... I, 21 ; IX, 18, 62 ; XI, 9 ; XII, 13
Nixon :
Demands for ... IV, 12 ; V, 24 ; IX, 8–10, 26, 29
Report on ... ... IV, 2
Specification of ... ... IX, 28
Telegram on navigation difficulties ... V, 12 22, 24
Ordered :
November, 1914 ... ... IX, 7
After January, 1916 ... ... IX, 10
Ordered in England ... IV, 14 ; IX, 8, 9, 31–39
Delay in building ... ... IX, 9
Re-erection arrangements ... ... IX, 39
Specifications altered ... ... IX, 33–39
Ordered in India ... ... IX, 7, 10
Available ... ... IX, 28–30
Difficulty in obtaining ... IX, 14, 17
Procedure for obtaining ... ... IX, 27
Provision of ... ... IX, 24–30
Shortage ... ... IX, 1–52 ; XI, 1
After December, 1914... IV, 1, 12 ; IX, 2, 62 ; XII, 13
April, 1915 ... ... III, 4

Transport (River)—(*continued*).
Shortage :
May, 1915 ... ... IX, 14
January, 1916 ... ... VI, 1
Attempts to remedy ... IX, 62 ; XII, 13
Campaign, effect on ... IX, 2, 3, 5, 62 ; XII, 13
Concentration protracted by ... VI, 6
Information as to, withheld ... V, 12, 22 ; IX, 18
Kut, effect of, after battle of ... V, 31
Lack of appreciation of ... ... IX, 27
Medical breakdown, effect on ... X, 111–115, 122
Rations, effect on ... ... XII, 11
Reinforcements delayed by ... IV, 13 ; VI, 3 ; VII, 28 ; IX, 3, 62 ; XI, 49 ; XII, 13
Responsibility for ... IX, 11–23, 25–27, 39, 62 ; XII, 13
Responsibility for advance with IX, 19, 49, 62 ; XII, 13
Secretiveness of staff, effect on ... XI, 51
Statistics as to ... ... IX, 4, 6, 11
Supply of ... ... IX, 62 ; XII, 13
Time needed for building ... IV, 14 ; IX, 7, 14
War Office control, Effect of VII, 30 ; IX, 4

Transport (Sea) :
Expeditions overseas ... ... I, 28
Royal Indian Marine, Work as to IX, 27, 66
Time taken for discharge, Basra ... IX, 46, 47
Treherne, Surgeon-General ... ... X, 104, 106
Troops :
Composition of Force " D " ... VII, 29
Despatched overseas ... ... I, 30
Turkey :
War declared ... ... II, 6
Turkish Forces :
Delayed by floods ... ... IV, 5
Equipment ... ... VIII, 6, 9, 10 ; X, 13
Intelligence as to ... V, 18, 25, 31 ; VI, 2
Miscalculations as to ... ... XI, 48, 49
Moral ... ... V, 27 ; VI, 2 ; VII, 3
Size of ... ... V, 18 ; VI, 2

U.

Umm-el-Tubal, Battle of ... ... VI, 5

V.

Very Lights ... ... VIII, 5, 6
Viceroy :
Amara, Attitude to advance to ... IV, 6, 7
Baghdad, Advance to
Attitude to ... ... V, 1, 2, 3, 6, 12, 17
Responsibility for ... ... XII, 8
Communications with Secretary of State.
(*See* **Communications.**)
Council. Relation to ... ... XI, 20–22
Recommendations ... ... XII, 28
Criticism of ... ... XII, 27
Economy, Attitude to ... X, 126 ; XI, 36 ; XII, 19
Kut, Attitude to advance to ... IV, 10
Medical Arrangements
Authority as to ... ... X, 88
Responsibility for X, 77–99, 126 ; XII, 19
Medical Personnel
Misleading report on ... ... X, 70, 82
Nixon's Instructions not seen by IV, 3 ; V, 6
Responsibility for campaign ... XI, 32

N.B.—Roman numerals refer to Parts, and Arabic numerals to paragraphs of the Report.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000030

(481)

VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF NATIONS AND OF THE LAWS AND CUSTOMS OF WAR IN BELGIUM.

Reports of the Official Commission of the Belgian Government.

Preface by Monsieur J. Van Den Heuvel, Minister of State. Names of the Commission of Enquiry. Reports, Nos. 1 to 12, of the Commission; with Illustrations. Appendix:—Instructions to Belgian Authorities issued on 4th August, 1914, and Advice to Civilians; Extracts from the Pastoral Letter of His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, Primate of Belgium.

Price 6*d*., post free 8½*d*.

Reports, Nos. 13 to 22. Facsimiles of German Soldiers' Diaries; Correspondence between His Eminence Cardinal Mercier and the German Authorities; Solemn Protest of Monseigneur Heylen, Bishop of Namur.

Price 6*d*., post free 8½*d*.

FOREIGN OFFICE.

Miscellaneous, 1917.

No. 1.—Proposed Release of Civilians Interned in the British and German Empires. Further Correspondence respecting the.

[Cd. 8437.] Price 1*d*., post free 1½*d*.

No. 2.—Examination of Parcels and Letter Mails. Memorandum addressed by the French and British Governments to the United States Government respecting the.

[Cd. 8438.] Price 2*d*., post free 2½*d*.

No. 3.—The Allied Note of 10th January, 1917. Despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington respecting the.

[Cd. 8439.] Price 1*d*., post free 1½*d*.

No. 4.—German Peace Note. Reply communicated by the French Government, on behalf of the Allied Powers, to the United States Ambassador in Paris, 30th December, 1916.

[Cd. 8467.] Price 1*d*., post free 1½*d*.

No. 5.—Reply of the Allied Governments to the Note communicated by the United States Ambassador on 20th December, 1916, containing the suggestion by the President of the United States of America that the Belligerents in the present European War may state the terms on which the War might be concluded.

[Cd. 8468.] Price 1*d*., post free 1½*d*.

No. 6.—Methods hitherto adopted for dealing with Ships and Cargoes brought into British Ports under the Order in Council of 11th March, 1915. Report of the Committee appointed to enquire whether any avoidable delay is caused by the.

[Cd. 8469.] Price 1*d*., post free 1½*d*.

No. 7.—Treatment of British Prisoners of War and Interned Civilians in Germany. Further Correspondence with the United States Ambassador respecting the.

[Cd. 8477.] Price 3*d*., post free 4*d*.

No. 8.—Mining of the Kogrund Passage. Correspondence with the Swedish Government respecting the.

[Cd. 8478.] Price 2*d*., post free 2½*d*.

No. 9.—Prisoners' Camps in Germany. Correspondence respecting the Use of Police Dogs.

[Cd. 8480.] Price 2*d*., post free 2½*d*.

PROTEST BY THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT

against the German allegation that Belgium had forfeited her Neutrality before the Outbreak of War.

Price 1*d*., post free 1½*d*.

THE SECOND BELGIAN GREY BOOK.

English Translation, containing only those portions of the book which are material to the position of Great Britain, viz.:—Part I.—Certain Documents relating to the War and Correspondence on the Subject of the Rupture of Diplomatic Relations between Belgium and Turkey; Part II. (Section 10 only) deals with the Accusations brought against Belgium of having concluded a Military Agreement with Great Britain. (1915.)

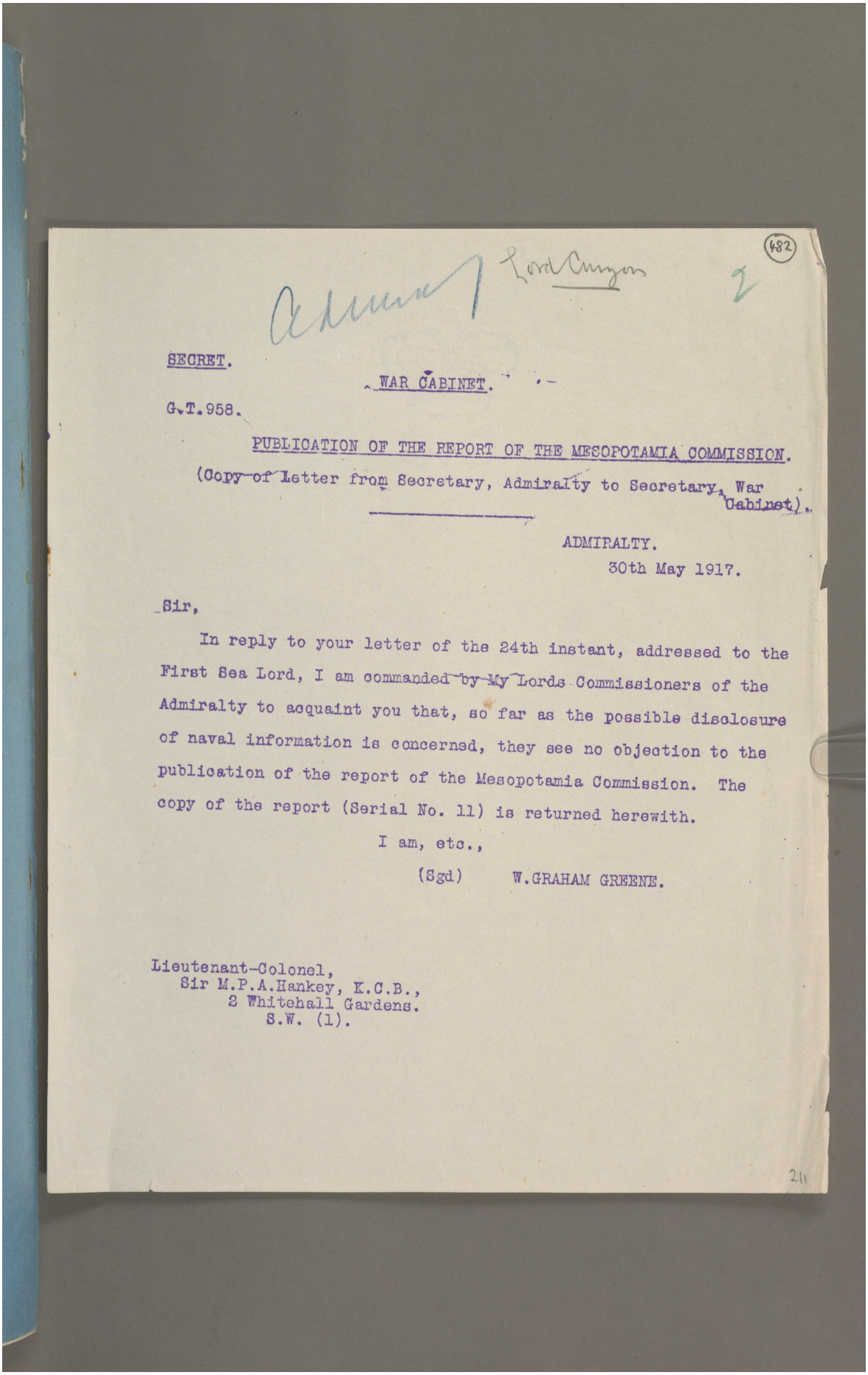
Price 3*d*., post free 4½*d*.

COLLECTED DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS

relating to the Outbreak of the European War.

This volume includes the British Diplomatic Correspondence and Translations of the French Yellow Book, the Russian Orange Book, and the Belgian Grey Book, each of which has already been published in separate form. It also contains Translations of the Serbian Blue Book, the German White Book, and the Austro-Hungarian Red Book, together with Telegrams and Letters published officially in the Press by the Governments of Great Britain, Russia, and Germany. There are also included, as an appendix to the German White Book, the Report of the Speech delivered by the German Imperial Chancellor before the Reichstag on 4th August, 1914, and, as an appendix to the Serbian Blue Book, the Speech of Signor Giolitti before the Italian Chamber of Deputies on 5th December, 1914. The preface furnishing a tentative guide to a comparison of the various Official Documents and to their value as a whole; and a list is given of the principal persons mentioned in the Correspondence, showing their official positions.

Price, in paper boards, with cloth back, 1*s*., post free 1*s*. 5*d*.



(482)

Admiralty / Lord Curzon 2

SECRET.

WAR CABINET.

G.T.958.

PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT OF THE MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

(Copy of Letter from Secretary, Admiralty to Secretary, War Cabinet).

ADMIRALTY.
30th May 1917.

Sir,

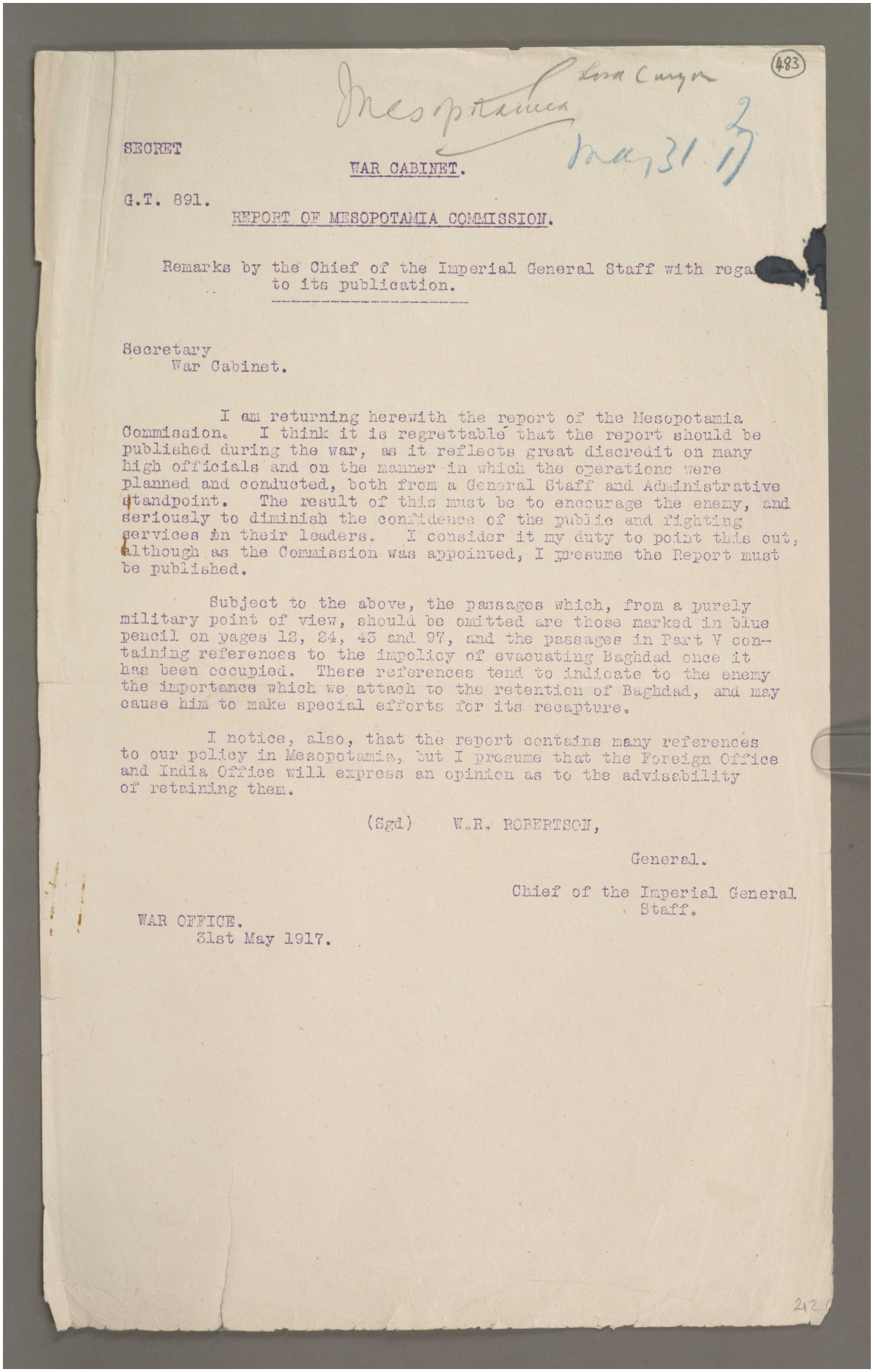
In reply to your letter of the 24th instant, addressed to the First Sea Lord, I am commanded by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint you that, so far as the possible disclosure of naval information is concerned, they see no objection to the publication of the report of the Mesopotamia Commission. The copy of the report (Serial No. 11) is returned herewith.

I am, etc.,

(Sgd) W.GRAHAM GREENE.

Lieutenant-Colonel,
Sir M.P.A.Hankey, K.C.B.,
2 Whitehall Gardens.
S.W. (1).

21



483

Mesopotamia Com^n

May 31 17

SECRET

WAR CABINET.

G.T. 891.

REPORT OF MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

Remarks by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff with rega[illegible] to its publication.

Secretary
War Cabinet.

I am returning herewith the report of the Mesopotamia Commission. I think it is regrettable that the report should be published during the war, as it reflects great discredit on many high officials and on the manner in which the operations were planned and conducted, both from a General Staff and Administrative standpoint. The result of this must be to encourage the enemy, and seriously to diminish the confidence of the public and fighting services in their leaders. I consider it my duty to point this out, although as the Commission was appointed, I presume the Report must be published.

Subject to the above, the passages which, from a purely military point of view, should be omitted are those marked in blue pencil on pages 12, 24, 43 and 97, and the passages in Part V containing references to the impolicy of evacuating Baghdad once it has been occupied. These references tend to indicate to the enemy the importance which we attach to the retention of Baghdad, and may cause him to make special efforts for its recapture.

I notice, also, that the report contains many references to our policy in Mesopotamia, but I presume that the Foreign Office and India Office will express an opinion as to the advisability of retaining them.

(Sgd) W.R. ROBERTSON,

General.

Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

WAR OFFICE,
31st May 1917.

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

Printed for the War Cabinet. June 1917.

VERY SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL.

6

MEMORANDUM BY LORD CURZON ON THE REPORT OF THE MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

1. I HAVE three times read carefully through this Report, which I have been asked to analyse and report upon for the War Cabinet. I have also seen the Chairman, Lord George Hamilton, upon the findings of the Commission and the action that may require to be taken thereon.

2. I regret to have to say that a more shocking exposure of official blundering and incompetence has not in my opinion been made, at any rate since the Crimean War, and that in this record many high officials are involved. If the Government does not, of its own initiative, take action, both with regard to individuals and to the system which has been thus remorselessly exposed. I cannot doubt that it will be subject to the severest criticism from Parliament and from the country.

3. The first question to be decided is that of publication (*a*) of the Report, (*b*) of the Evidence. The two cases are different, and can fairly be distinguished. On *a priori* grounds no one will disagree with Sir William Robertson that "it is regrettable that the Report should be published during the war, as it reflects great discredit on many high officials and on the manner in which the operations were planned and conducted, both from a General Staff and Administrative standpoint. The result of this must be to encourage the enemy and seriously to diminish the confidence of the public and fighting services in their leaders." There can, in my judgment, be no doubt as to the correctness of this remark. It will be an equal delight to the enemy and shock to our own people and to our Allies to know that, even in a secondary theatre of war, we should have conducted operations with such an amazing lack of foresight and organisation, and that the Indian Government and the Indian army in its administrative capacity—both hitherto credited with no small degree of efficiency—should have emerged so tragically from the test of warfare. Nor will these reflections be sensibly abated by the knowledge that the army itself fought splendidly, and that since the campaign was taken over by the War Office there is nothing but praise both for the arrangements and for the fighting.

4. The question is: Can publication of the Report be avoided or ought it to be avoided? This appears to me to be a question not so much of principle as of date. That the Report must ultimately appear cannot, I think, be doubted. The question is whether its appearance should be immediate or should be postponed till the end of the war. There are several difficulties connected with the latter alternative:—

(*a*.) Parliament, in the Act constituting the Commission, laid down that it should be published, "as soon as may be," and these words appear to contemplate an earlier rather than a later publication.

(*b*.) In the same Act the Commission were instructed to enquire into the medical aspects of the campaign "with all possible expedition," and "to report the results of their enquiries as soon as they were completed." The Chairman told me that the medical case was so interwoven with the other branches that it was impossible to separate them or to carry out the above instructions. There appears, therefore, to be a statutory obligation for immediate publication which would not be met by the independent issue of Part X of the Report.

(*c*.) The precedent of the Dardanelles Report, unfortunate as in many respects it was, will be difficult to abandon, and will probably be insisted upon by the House of Commons and by the four members of that House who had seats upon the Mesopotamia Commission.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000010

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

10. Commander Wedgwood, M.P., in his separate Report, goes much further, and accuses them not merely of having misconducted the Mesopotamia Campaign, but of having, in the interests of India, thwarted the prosecution of the war, and behaved in a manner which was both unpatriotic and calamitous. I do not consider that we are called upon to take note of Commander Wedgwood's independent conclusions except where they were endorsed by his colleagues; and, speaking from my own experience, I should say that he has attached insufficient weight to the peculiar responsibility attaching to the Viceroy in estimating the interior condition of India and making due provision for its internal and external safety. That the Government of India failed, however, to appreciate the real character and dimensions of the struggle; that they took too narrow and selfish a view of India's obligations with regard to it; and that they meant India's military contribution to be as small and as cheaply rendered as possible, seems to me to have been established. On one occasion (pp. 15, 41, and 97) the Government of India had to be peremptorily ordered by the Home Government to send another brigade to the front. On another occasion (pp. 41 and 126) they attempted to evade a similar obligation, and, in the words of the Report, "resorted to procedure which, to say the least of it, was disingenuous." With regard to the construction of a railway in Mesopotamia to help the advance, they declined even to put the proposal before the Secretary of State for fear that the expenditure might ultimately fall upon India (p. 60). The general lack of energy and effort shown by the Government of India during the first year and a half of the war is summarised on p. 105–6 of the Report.

11. The charges made by the Commission—for their findings as a rule assume that form—may be classified under the following heads:—

I. Undue economy in military matters enforced both in India and in England in the decade preceding the war.
II. General responsibility of the Government of India for the mistakes or disasters of the Mesopotamia Campaign.
III. Responsibiliy of individuals.
IV. Responsibility of the India Office.
V. Methods of Indian Government in England and in India.
VI. System of Indian Military Administration.
VII. Necessary enquiries or reforms.

I will deal with each of these.

1.—*Undue Economy before the War.*

12. The Commission constantly reiterates the charge that for some years previous to the war a policy of ruthless and culpable retrenchment of military expenditure in India had been enforced both by the India Office, and in India. The principal references are to be found on pp. 10, 37, 87, 104, 113, 117. It was not thought that the Indian army would be required for any other purpose than that of frontier warfare, and its equipment and organisation were accordingly regulated by that standard. As a consequence, when the present war broke out in 1914, the Indian army was unprepared for oversea warfare, and no provision existed for such an expedition as that to Mesopotamia. It is established by the evidence that field guns had been cut down, big guns there were none, the number of divisions available for immediate mobilisation had been reduced, medical establishment and ambulances were at a dangerously low ebb. The responsibility for this general shortage must be shared between England and India. But it rests mainly with the former. Commencing with the régime of Lord Morley as Secretary of State, there can be no doubt that a policy of excessive retrenchment was imposed upon the Government of India, and weakly accepted by the latter, which has borne lamentable fruit in the experiences of the present campaign.

II.—*General Responsibility of the Government of India.*

13. It cannot, I fear, be denied that a very special burden of responsibility rests upon the Government of India for the Mesopotamia failures, or rather upon those Departments and officials of that Government who were directly concerned, since the Report repeatedly excuses the Viceroy's Council from blame on the ground that they were not, as they ought to have been, cognizant of what was being done. The measure of this responsibility may be determined from the following passages:—

P. 37. "Serious defects in military equipment, resulting in unnecessary suffering and casualties among the troops, were allowed to persist during the first fourteen months of the campaign, when the Indian Government was responsible for its management."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00004b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

are to be found on p. 23 (paragraph 12), p. 26 (paragraph 25), p. 41 (paragraph 16), p. 79 (paragraph 70), p. 84 (paragraphs 83, 87, 88), pp. 88, 94, 110, and 114.

16. *The Commander-in-Chief (Sir Beauchamp Duff).*—This officer, under the system of Military Administration set up by Lord Kitchener, was not only the executive chief of the Indian Army, but also the head of the administrative system, or Minister for War, as well as the sole military adviser of the Viceroy, with whom, as has been pointed out, he constituted the Government for the purposes of the Mesopotamia Campaign. No Army Council exists in India and no General Staff in the English sense; and the practical autocracy of the C.-in-C. is thus emphasised in the Report, p. 109, paragraph 55:—

> "At Simla Sir B. Duff was in absolute and untrammelled control over every branch of military administration. The General Staff was in no sense a separate or independent branch. The chief of that body was personally under the C.-in-C. and part of his staff. The other holders of high office, such as the A.G., Q.M.G., D.G.O., were all under the direct control of the C.-in-C., as was formerly the case in the War Office at home."

17. Exercising the above authority Sir B. Duff conducted the entire Mesopotamian Campaign from the remote distance of Simla or Delhi, mainly the former, a point to which the Report calls attention in scathing language (p. 100). "The inconvenience of Simla as the G.H.Q. in time of war and in the management of oversea expeditions can be well illustrated by imagining Thurso or Wick to be the headquarters of the British Army Departments during this war. The idea in its nakedness is grotesque, yet something like it was attempted in India for the first sixteen months of the Expedition." Further, General Duff never once visited Bombay during the crisis of the war (p. 100), although Bombay was the Indian base of the Campaign, from which everything was sent, and to which everyone returned. Such were the surroundings and atmosphere in which the C.-in-C. conducted the Campaign. The general results have already been revealed under the last heading (II). Here I deal with more specific charges of negligence, incompetence, and direct evasion.

P. 48. With regard to the shortage of river transport on the Tigris, which resulted in so much military failure and personal suffering, the Commission, while attributing the primary responsibility to General Nixon, add, "at the same time we cannot exonerate the C.-in-C. and the General Staff in India, who had a survey of the river in their possession, &c., &c. In these circumstances to authorise and even recommend to the Government in London the various advances without satisfying themselves that the expedition was properly equipped with river transport, and, indeed, actually with the knowledge that it was not, involves Sir B. Duff in a large measure of responsibility."

On pp. 79 and 86 are allusions to a letter addressed by General Duff to the Viceroy on the 30th December, 1915, with reference to serious anxieties as to the medical situation which had been expressed by the Secretary of State (Mr. Chamberlain). The letter is printed on p. 86. The comments of the Commission upon it are as follows:—

P. 79. "He minimised the importance of the rumours that had alarmed Lord Hardinge. 'My official reports, said he, 'indicate nothing wrong except the shortage of river transport, which we are straining every nerve to supplement . . . . .' Such language cannot be justified. Though the breakdown after Ctesiphon was due partly to shortage of river transport, the reassuring impression given by this letter was profoundly misleading. The truth was partly known to Sir B. Duff when he thus wrote, and if it was not more completely known this was due to his own neglect to enquire . . . . . To reassure the Viceroy and to let the Viceroy reassure the Secretary of State was a grave dereliction of duty."

P. 86. The examination of Sir B. Duff with regard to the letter bring him a further rebuke from the Commission for having defended his incredulity on the subject of complaints, and his refusal even to enquire, unless he were supplied with the name of the author of the complaint. He is censured for "his blindness to the sufferings of the troops after Ctesiphon," and is told that "obstinate and exaggerated incredulity about defects and failures in the administration over which he has control is in itself a serious and mischievous fault."

On p. 81 occurs the first mention of an extraordinary incident which is further expanded on p. 107. Major Carter, I.M.S., who was the first Indian officer to disclose the deplorable medical débâcle after Ctesiphon, and who receives well-deserved praise in the Report, incurred the displeasure of General Cowper (D.A. and Q.M.G. in Mesopotamia), who "threatened to put him under arrest and to get his hospital-ship taken away from him for a meddlesome interfering faddist." A little later General Cowper, having himself realised "the frightful seriousness" of the position, was to experience a similar treatment at the hands of Sir B. Duff. For, having urged the despatch of a telgram to India in the above sense, he received the following message from the C.-in-C.: "Please warn General Cowper that if anything of this sort again occurs, or I receive any more querulous or petulant demands for shipping, I shall at once remove him from the force, and will refuse him any further employment of any kind. The report does not assuredly err on the side of severity when it remarks of this

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000040

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

P. 93. General Nixon's personal solicitude for the wounded is duly acknowledged, and his degree of culpability is sharply differentiated from that of Surgeon-General Hathaway.

Pp. 108, 109, 111, 113, 114. The findings of the Commission upon the conduct of General Nixon are repeated in so many almost identical forms towards the close of the Report that it is difficult to know which to select for quotation. Perhaps the following will suffice: "Upon the two essential considerations governing the attempt to capture Baghdad Sir J. Nixon was therefore seriously at fault. He underrated the difficulty of transporting reinforcements as they arrived from the port of embarkation to the scene of action, and he seriously underestimated the number of his opponents and miscalculated the dates at which they would arrive. But though grave blame must be attached to Sir John Nixon for his excessive optimism, those who shared in that optimism cannot be wholly free from criticism."

20. General Nixon was invalided home from Mesopotamia early in 1916, and is now unemployed. It would be impossible, on the face of this Report, to employ him again. He has lost the G.C.B., to which in happier circumstances he might have aspired. He has probably received sufficient punishment.

21. *General Aylmer* (pp. 31–34).—The tale of General Aylmer's failure to relieve Kut is told in these pages. Military critics will be better able to appraise the degree of responsibility attaching to the commander. His venture was "of the nature of a gamble in which the odds against success were high." General Aylmer appears to have lost much of the fire and force which distinguished him in the days when he won the V.C.

22. *Surgeon-General Hathaway.*—This is by far the most culpable of any of the cases dealt with in the Report, and it is impossible to exaggerate the degree of blame attaching to this officer, who was Assistant-Director of Medical Services to Force D. The case against him is one of progressive gravity.

P. 57.—We first hear of him in connection with the dearth of hospital steamers as "showing little foresight," and "failing to grasp the requirements of the situation."

P. 76.—In October 1915 he sends an official report to India after the first battle of Kut, "in the whole of which there is no single word which gives any inkling that there had been deficiencies in the medical arrangements, or that anything untoward had happened."

P. 77.—On the 7th December, 1915, he drafts the amazing telegram, after the horrors of the Ctesiphon retreat, which ended thus: "General condition of wounded very satisfactory, medical arrangements, under circumstances of considerable difficulty, worked splendidly. The Commission use mild language when they say that "it is impossible to believe that he was ignorant of the condition and sufferings of the sick and wounded"; while as to the effect of the telegram they add that it was "to conceal from the authorities outside Mesopotamia the real facts as to the medical breakdown in November, gravely to mislead the Secretary of State, and, through him, Parliament and the public."

On p. 80 is the no less shocking case of the Shaikh Saad Camp, which was hushed up by Surgeon-General Hathaway, who consistently concealed from his superior officers the true state of affairs, and "throughout the campaign was the chief offender in the policy of suppressing the unpleasant."

On p. 81 we find him treating with rudeness and insolence anyone who ventured to make representations to him.

P. 87. "The vigour and scope of the sanitary and preventive measures found necessary by Surgeon-General Treherne are the sternest measure of the concessions of his predecessor, Surgeon-General Hathaway."

P. 93. The Report of the Vincent-Bingley Commission is endorsed, that "a grave responsibility for that part of the suffering which resulted from avoidable circumstances rests with Surgeon-General Hathaway," with the addition that "he showed himself unfit for the high administrative office which he held," and the verdict is repeated on p. 114.

23. Surgeon-General Hathaway is, I believe, doing some medical work in England. I have discussed his case with Lord George Hamilton, and it is our joint opinion that an example ought to be made of incapacity so flagrant and disastrous, and that he should be dismissed the service.

24. *Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie, D.M.S. in India.*—This is a distinguished officer, to whose abilities and service the Commission render full credit (p. 71). His record would seem to render his delinquencies in Mesopotamia more and not less surprising.

P. 71. "The numerous sanitary and precautionary requisitions of Colonel Hehir are a measure of Sir W. Babtie's omissions. . . . . He should have made it his duty to have impressed upon the Departments concerned the necessity for providing these articles. He did not do this."

P. 71. In regard to the rations of the Indian troops, we consider that an even more severe comment should be passed on the D.M.S.'s omission. . . . . The failure to insist on necessary precautions against so obvious a danger (*re* scurvy) is, in our opinion, a very good instance of the kind of responsibility which attaches to Sir W. Babtie. . . . . The gravamen

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000c6

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

expert bodies subsequently consulted, in such a way as to attract their attention. Nor was the notice of the War Office called to the matter, "a blunder which led to serious consequences, and for which General Barrow cannot be exonerated as the head of the Military Department at the India Office."

Pp. 52, 53. The worst case is, however, that of the order for paddle-steamers for the Tigris. Messrs. Lynch's offer of expert assistance in the construction of these steamers (which were a vital necessity) was not answered for some weeks and was then declined. Acting upon the advice of Sir John Biles, whom they employed as their naval architect, and as to whom it is impossible to escape the impression that he was affected by the consideration of a commission upon new and independent designs, the India Office not only altered the plans as asked for, but persisted in adhering to their own model in spite of earnest protests from Mesopotamia, with the result that forty-two barges were shipped to the Tigris which after trial there were condemned as totally unsuitable for navigation of the river. "Months of time were lost and a large amount of public money." It seems to me that the most serious blame attaches to Sir John Biles, and some portion of it to the Department in the India Office, which was responsible. The Report is emphatic on these points. Further "barges, tugs, and stern-wheel steamers were sent out in sections or in plates and angles." Arrangements for their erection in Mesopotamia were made by the India Office with little prevision of what would be required, and proved to be quite inadequate. . . . . "The confusion which arose from this unbusinesslike proceeding was almost unbelievable, and must have been heartbreaking in view of the urgent need for the vessels." . . . . "More inept proceedings than those connected with the purchase and shipment of river craft in England in 1915 and early in 1916 would be hard to find."

P. 37. As regards the medical breakdown, "the deficient organisation of the India Office and the want of a medical adviser to the Secretary of State in our judgment hindered the India Office giving all the assistance that it might have done in the difficulties that arose."

In the same paragraph a hearty tribute is paid to the communications with India of the Secretary of State (Mr. Chamberlain), which are described as "admirable in tone and purpose," and which are one of the few bright spots in this dismal document.

31. There remain three subjects upon which, if and when this Report is discussed in Parliament, the Government will certainly be called upon for an expression of their views, and upon which it will be impossible either to maintain silence or indefinitely to delay action. I will deal with them briefly in turn.

V.—*Methods of Indian Government in England and in India.*

32. The Commission comment in language of considerable gravity upon a danger that has been growing up in recent years in the administration of the Government of India, both in London and in India. The Government of India in both countries is intended by statute to be—and until a few years ago was—Government by Council, *i.e.*, what we should call Cabinet Government, although Cabinet responsibility is even more strictly enforced in some respects in India than in English political life, inasmuch as all despatches of any importance either to or from the Government of India are signed by the whole Council. In the India Office there are certain conditions laid down by Statute in which the Secretary of State can withdraw matters from his Council. In India the Viceroy has the general conduct of foreign affairs as member for the Foreign Department, but if he acts wisely he takes his Council into consultation on all important matters, and indeed in former days the members would have protested vigorously had he not done so. This is the Government of India as it has been known to all Viceroys and Secretaries of State since the assumption of the Government by the Crown until recent years. Lord Morley and Lord Minto were the first to initiate the practice of governing to a large extent independently of their Councils, and by means of private telegrams and correspondence. This practice, once started and acquiesced in, is so easy and so convenient for the two parties principally concerned that it tends to become a convention, into which a Secretary of State or a Viceroy insensibly and contentedly glides. Private telegrams (intended for questions concerning appointments, and other personal matters of which the Secretary of State and Viceroy should alone have cognisance)gradually take the place of public telegrams. Private letters are substituted for official despatches, and the Government of India is presently converted into a secret arrangement between two high officials, subject to little or no check, and fraught with possible danger. The unconstitutional character of this procedure is pointed out by the Commission, whose chairman was an ex-Secretary of State, and several instances are given of the unfortunate consequences in the course of the Mesopotamian campaign. Thus the exceedingly important telegram from the Secretary of State of the 21st October, 1915, giving the opinion of the General Staff that a force

217

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00005f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

feeling serious disquietude in this connection. The anxieties of the Commission are summed up on pp. 117–118 of the Report, and they are emphasised by a comparison of the conduct of operations in Mesopotamia, while they were in the hands of the Indian military authorities, with the later experience of War Office control. No one who has served in India would cheerfully contemplate the loss by the Indian Army of its splendid reputation for efficiency, its independence, or its glorious traditions. But if these are to be maintained, it seems clear that one of the first sequels to the conclusion of the war should be a thorough enquiry into every aspect of the case: and for this I expect that public opinion will show no reluctance to press.

39. The ruthless exposure of the defects in the existing system of medical organisation in India, with which the Report is rife, has led the Commission to propose a number of immediate changes, which they enumerate on pp. 118–119. "The necessity," they say, "is proved for an urgent and thorough reform by the Indian Government of the whole system, upon which their medical services are based, and under which they are controlled."

40. Here it may be noted that the Vincent-Bingley Report, which is a very courageous and able document, but which has never been published in India, is attached to the Report of the Commission, who have endorsed both its criticisms and its recommendations. Sir William Vincent has recently been appointed Home Member of Council in India; and General Bingley is now Q.M.G. at Simla. It is not often that the critics of Government in one year become in the next year the Government themselves. Lord George Hamilton made to me what appeared the excellent suggestion that a committee should be appointed at once in India to carry out the necessary reforms, and that these officers should be invited to serve upon it. I venture to pass on this suggestion to the Secretary of State.

41. I have now completed my examination of the Report, which I have done little more than analyse and annotate for the benefit of my colleagues. I hope that my investigation may help them to arrive at a decision on the many points of capital importance which arise.

C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
June 4, 1917.

---

o

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000079

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Lord Curzon 2 (490)

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

Printed for the War Cabinet. June 1917.

June 5/17

VERY SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL.

THE REPORT OF THE MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

Note by Secretary of State for India.

LORD CURZON has been good enough to supply me with a copy of his Memorandum on this Report. It will, I think, be convenient that I should make a few comments upon it before the subject is discussed by the Cabinet.

1. As regards publication, I agree with Lord Curzon. The Report is a heart-rending document, and I share Sir William Robertson's view that it is regrettable that it should be necessary to publish it. But as to the necessity, subject to such small omissions as he may require on military grounds, I think there can be no question. In any case it is clearly not for me, who am to some extent a subject of criticism by the Commission, to raise any objection to the publication.

2. Publication of the evidence stands on a different footing. I agree with Lord Curzon and the Chairman that it cannot be published. It is probable that much of it ought never to see the light, though there are other portions which all of us who are criticised no doubt would desire to have published.

3. The Commission have appended to their Report the Report of the Vincent-Bingley Commission. They constantly refer to this document, and it will be difficult, if not impossible, to avoid its publication. At the same time it contains a military summary of the war, to the publication of which the General Staff objected at the time the Report was made. Sir William Robertson does not refer to the subject in his note. I suggest that his attention should be specially called to it. I believe it would be possible to omit those passages dealing with military movements to which he took exception and yet to present the whole of the very serious indictment framed by Sir William Vincent and his colleagues.

4. I turn now to the charges.

(a.) *Undue Economy before the War.*

It is to be noted that this is a charge against the home Government of the day quite as much as against the Indian Government. The same is true of the charge that during the first year and a half of the war the Government of India did not show sufficient alacrity "as regards compulsory service for Europeans, organisation of industrial resources for the purposes of the war or in general finance." If this censure is well merited a part of it falls upon us at home. Their financial policy was approved by my predecessor and myself in consultation, so far as it concerned the war, with the then Chancellor of the Exchequer. As regards the organisation of military resources I enquired of the Ministry of Munitions and of the Cabinet whether India could do anything more, and I repeated my enquiry on several occasions, expressing the willingness of India to help if those concerned with the provision of warlike supplies would inform me in what way she could render assistance. I received hardly any response to these enquiries until the Quarter-Master-General called upon me after Colonel Collins returned from India.

(b.) *Responsibility of Individuals.*

(1.) *The Viceroy.*—I think that the Commission underrate the anxieties and responsibilities which confronted Lord Hardinge and the extent to which he was necessarily dependent on his military advisers, and that undue stress is laid upon a communication from the Military Secretary of the Commander-in-Chief to the Military Secretary of the Viceroy, printed in paragraph 16, p. 41. It is very easy after the event, and when there has been no serious trouble in India, to criticise the

219

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000039

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

the Report of the combined General Staffs and not on that of this Interdepartmental Committee.

Page 41.—This refers to what took place in Lord Crewe's time. I could suggest an answer, but it had better be left to him.

Page 48.—This is the one serious oversight in my Office. It took place when General Barrow was away on a few days' leave, and I am bound to say that the form in which the Army Department in India sent the information home contributed to conceal its importance, and to render such an oversight explicable if not excusable.

Pages 52 and 53.—I should like to discuss the conclusions of the Commission on this subject with Lord George Hamilton. I am not sure that the Commission appreciate the facts, and I certainly am not clear as to the censure which they intend to convey. Sir John Biles was the independent expert employed by us, and he gave bad advice. We were also ill-advised by the Admiralty, whom it was our business to consult. But I do not know upon what ground the Director of Stores at the India Office is censured, and I doubt whether the censure is justified. I am going into this carefully.

Page 37.—I had already appointed a Medical Adviser to the Secretary of State before I was called to give evidence to the Commission.

(d.) *Methods of Government in England and in India.*

The position of the Governor-General and the Secretary of State in relation to their respective Councils is different, and the Commission have not sufficiently observed the distinction. By statute the Secretary of State is expressly empowered to treat certain questions without reference to Council. Among these are matters of peace and war, even though they be matters of peace and war in India or on the Indian frontier; *à fortiori* the Secretary of State is absolved from the necessity of consulting his Council in regard to military operations carried on by Indian troops outside India, while the Government of India acts only as the agent of the home Government. Apart from this, the India Council is not constituted as a War Council, and would not be suitable for the purpose. Elsewhere in their Report the Commission comment adversely on the number of authorities who shared responsibility for the Mesopotamia Expedition. The suggestion that the Secretary of State should have daily consulted his Council on the operations of the war, in addition to all its other defects, is thus contrary to the opinion expressed in another connection by the Commission. Undoubtedly, if I had the work to do over again, with my present knowledge, I should alter many things. Amongst others, I should, and as a matter of fact I shall, alter the rules governing private telegrams. I was under the impression that these were treated in a more secret and confidential way, but were as official, and remained on record in the same way, as official telegrams. I only learned that they were treated as the private property of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State at the moment when Lord Hardinge was leaving India. This is, however, a small matter, and can easily be dealt with.

As regards the Council in India, the present Viceroy has, I believe, taken them much more freely into consultation, and he has, in addition, arranged for a Committee for the discussion of problems of defence on the lines of the old Imperial Defence Committee in this country. These are, I think, the proper steps to take. It must be remembered that in these days secrecy cannot always be preserved as to what is said or done in the Viceroy's Executive Council.

I ought to add, as regards my use of private letters and private telegrams to the Viceroy about the rumours of medical breakdown, that until about December 1915—that is, after all the horrors of the Ctesiphon retreat, and long after the breakdown was complete—I had nothing but the slenderest evidence to go upon, and even when the breakdown began to be common talk I received information only on condition that I never betrayed the source from which it came. Up to December 1915 my only reason for doubt, apart from recollections of the South African war and the dangers of every campaign, were three notes from Selborne enclosing letters from his son, and one letter from an officer in Mesopotamia, written after the battle of Kut-el-Amara, who was killed at Ctesiphon, and handed by the recipient (his sister) to my wife. It is difficult to found a formal despatch on such scanty evidence.

(e.) *Military Administration in India.*

I need not say that I agree that the military system established in India by Lord Kitchener has finally broken down. I propose, as soon as the Report is available,

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000083

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

Lord Cromer 2

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

Printed for the War Cabinet. June 1917.

VERY SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL.

MEMORANDUM ON THE REPORT OF THE MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

By the Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

1. I DO not think the economies prior to the war need be emphasised in connection with the Mesopotamia expedition. They may have been wrong, but they had little or no bearing upon the subsequent misfortunes that befell such expedition. There were ample resources both at home and in India, a fact which is on record by admissions from India to be found more than once in the Commission Report. Moreover, the India Government when, on more than one occasion, offered assistance in the way of additional supplies and equipment, declined such offers. It is on record that the Mesopotamia expedition was deliberately starved of support by the Indian headquarters in an effort to force the Home Government to supply it. This was on the 17th October, 1915, just at the psychological moment when support would have been of most service.

2. Nor does the Home Government appear to be much blame-worthy excepting in the manner of its instructions or advice, and in persisting against advice in sending unsuitable transport. The despatches were less definite than they ought to have been, and the use of private telegrams was, of course, a cause of trouble. But the Home Government appear to have been badly informed from the start. Lord Crewe, on the 24th April, 1915, believed that we were only committed to go to Basra, and expressly warned the Indian Government against undue extension of operations beyond that, yet Sir John Nixon appears to have been sent from India a month before with instructions, which included the submission by him of a plan for subsequent advance on Baghdad, and immediate advance much beyond Basra.

3. The Government of India were to blame in the summer of 1915 in not communicating to Sir John Nixon the fact that 60,000 Turks were then being gathered in or about Baghdad. The plea put forward that the telegram in which the information came to them was marked "private" is no excuse at all. The fact of a telegram coming from the Secretary of State should have led the Indian authorities to make enquiry, and, as a result, to have warned Nixon from information they could easily have gathered.

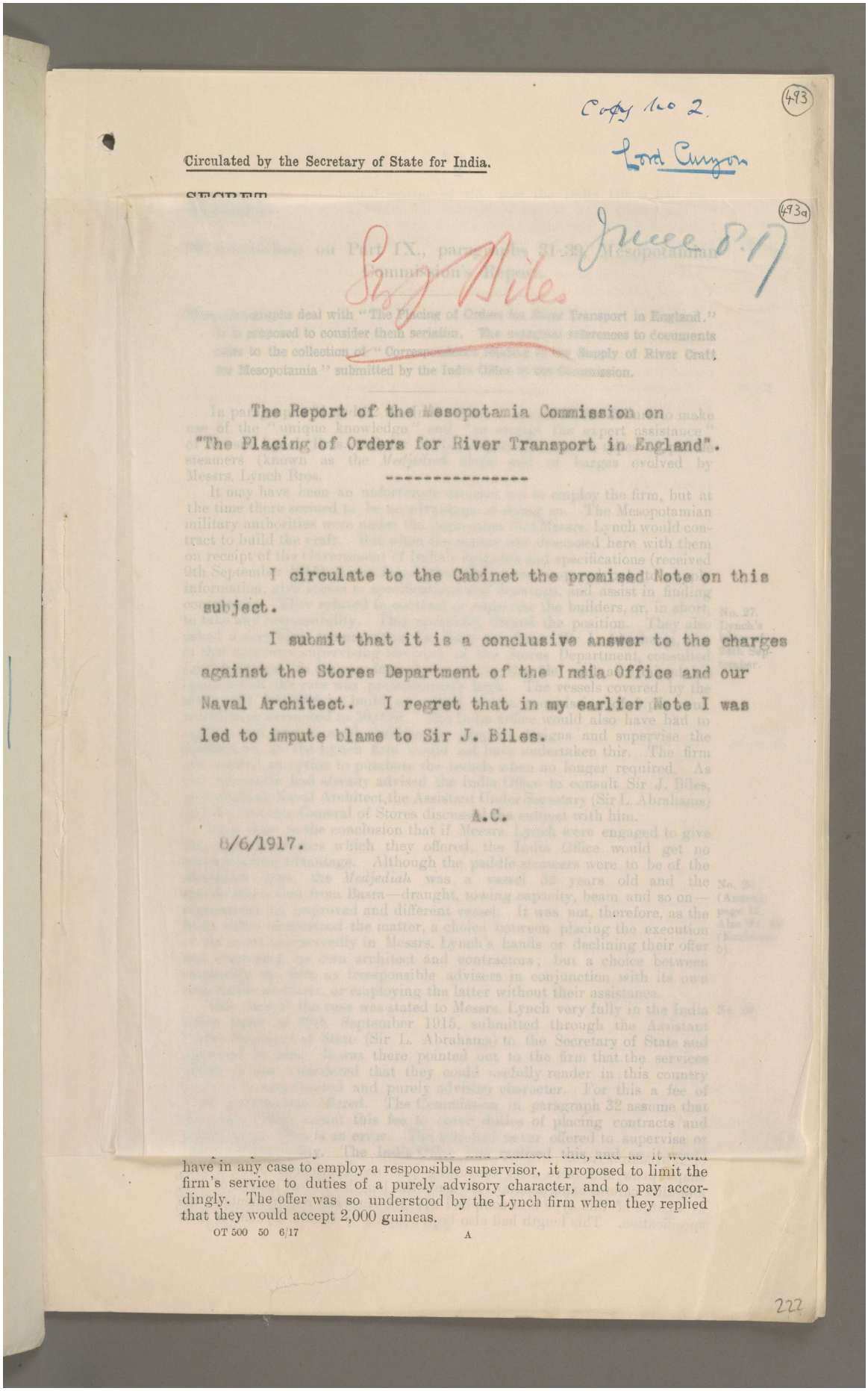
4. The Commander-in-Chief in India was gravely at fault throughout. He was responsible for the proper organisation of the expedition and for supplying it with equipment and support generally after it had been despatched. He appears to have done nothing to provide proper equipment until forced to do it. Mr. Chamberlain's letters, covering a period of three months at the back end of 1915, which stand out conspicuously to his credit, were practically ignored by the Commander-in-Chief.

5. The next error was also one on the part of the Indian Government in not properly organising Basra as a base early in the operations. Engineers should have been employed to have gone there at once to organise it, so as to provide for the supply of the necessary transport.

6. General Nixon seems to have lost his head very early, and began to impose impossible conditions upon his men. He appears to have taken no adequate steps to provide for his advance, and although, in his original instructions, a plan was contemplated for advance to Baghdad, I have looked in vain for such plan. He allowed himself to get committed to the impossible.

7. General Townshend also seems to have been incompetent. He appears to have entered lightheartedly into the operations. He does not appear to have made representations to headquarters so as to ascertain the possible strength opposed to him. Neither does he appear to have made any effort himself to ascertain. Then, on being

[676]



Copy No 2.

(493)

Lord Curzon

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

(493a)

June 8.17

Sir J. Biles.

The Report of the Mesopotamia Commission on "The Placing of Orders for River Transport in England".

I circulate to the Cabinet the promised Note on this subject.

I submit that it is a conclusive answer to the charges against the Stores Department of the India Office and our Naval Architect. I regret that in my earlier Note I was led to impute blame to Sir J. Biles.

A.C.

8/6/1917.

have in any case to employ a responsible supervisor, it proposed to limit the firm's service to duties of a purely advisory character, and to pay accordingly. The offer was so understood by the Lynch firm when they replied that they would accept 2,000 guineas.

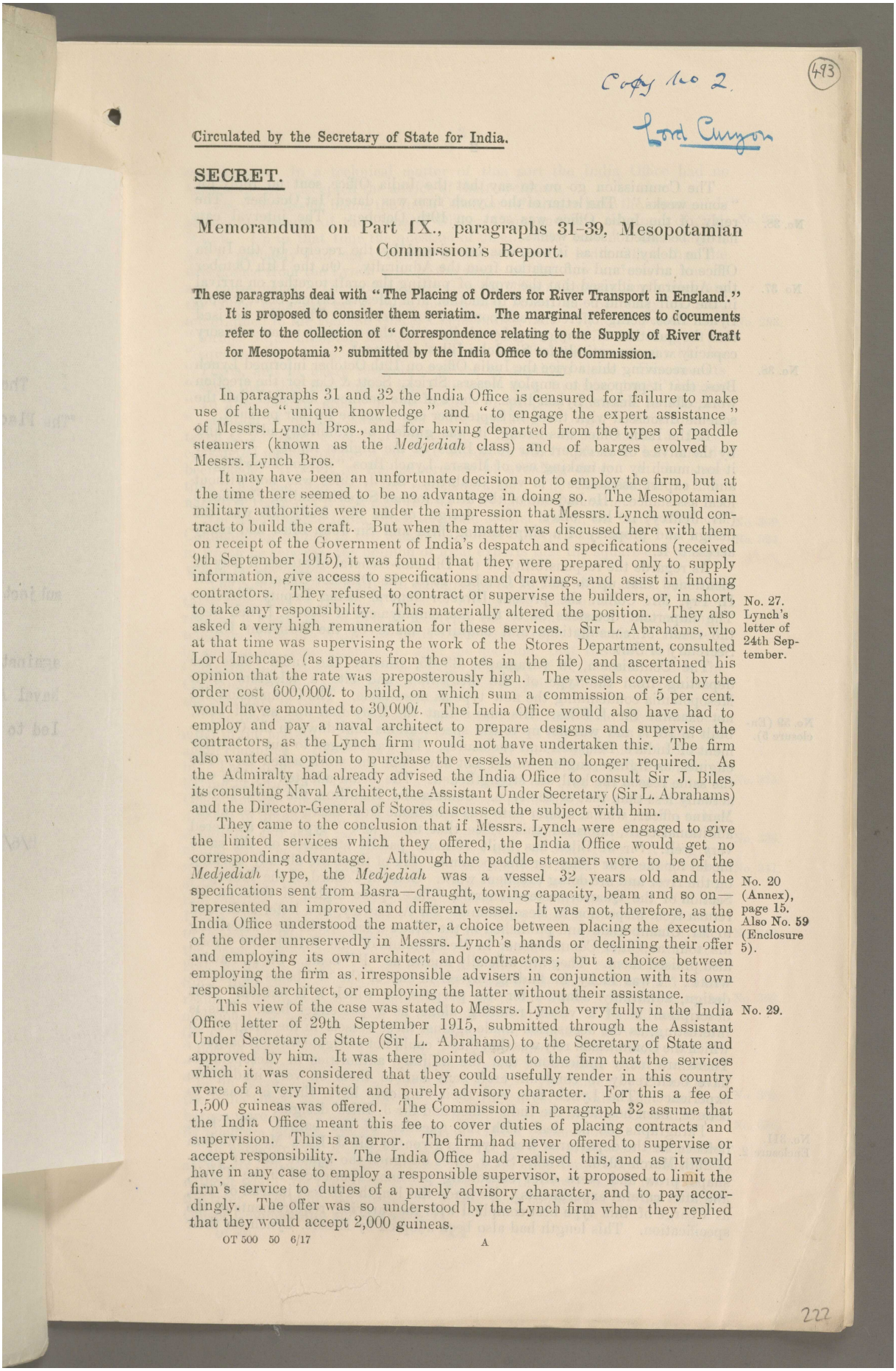
OT 500 50 6/17 A

222

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00000b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



Copy No 2.

(493)

Lord Curzon

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India.

SECRET.

Memorandum on Part IX., paragraphs 31–39, Mesopotamian Commission's Report.

These paragraphs deal with "The Placing of Orders for River Transport in England." It is proposed to consider them seriatim. The marginal references to documents refer to the collection of "Correspondence relating to the Supply of River Craft for Mesopotamia" submitted by the India Office to the Commission.

In paragraphs 31 and 32 the India Office is censured for failure to make use of the "unique knowledge" and "to engage the expert assistance" of Messrs. Lynch Bros., and for having departed from the types of paddle steamers (known as the *Medjediah* class) and of barges evolved by Messrs. Lynch Bros.

It may have been an unfortunate decision not to employ the firm, but at the time there seemed to be no advantage in doing so. The Mesopotamian military authorities were under the impression that Messrs. Lynch would contract to build the craft. But when the matter was discussed here with them on receipt of the Government of India's despatch and specifications (received 9th September 1915), it was found that they were prepared only to supply information, give access to specifications and drawings, and assist in finding contractors. They refused to contract or supervise the builders, or, in short, to take any responsibility. This materially altered the position. They also asked a very high remuneration for these services. Sir L. Abrahams, who at that time was supervising the work of the Stores Department, consulted Lord Inchcape (as appears from the notes in the file) and ascertained his opinion that the rate was preposterously high. The vessels covered by the order cost 600,000*l.* to build, on which sum a commission of 5 per cent. would have amounted to 30,000*l.* The India Office would also have had to employ and pay a naval architect to prepare designs and supervise the contractors, as the Lynch firm would not have undertaken this. The firm also wanted an option to purchase the vessels when no longer required. As the Admiralty had already advised the India Office to consult Sir J. Biles, its consulting Naval Architect, the Assistant Under Secretary (Sir L. Abrahams) and the Director-General of Stores discussed the subject with him.

No. 27. Lynch's letter of 24th September.

They came to the conclusion that if Messrs. Lynch were engaged to give the limited services which they offered, the India Office would get no corresponding advantage. Although the paddle steamers were to be of the *Medjediah* type, the *Medjediah* was a vessel 32 years old and the specifications sent from Basra—draught, towing capacity, beam and so on—represented an improved and different vessel. It was not, therefore, as the India Office understood the matter, a choice between placing the execution of the order unreservedly in Messrs. Lynch's hands or declining their offer and employing its own architect and contractors; but a choice between employing the firm as irresponsible advisers in conjunction with its own responsible architect, or employing the latter without their assistance.

No. 20 (Annex), page 15. Also No. 59 (Enclosure 5).

This view of the case was stated to Messrs. Lynch very fully in the India Office letter of 29th September 1915, submitted through the Assistant Under Secretary of State (Sir L. Abrahams) to the Secretary of State and approved by him. It was there pointed out to the firm that the services which it was considered that they could usefully render in this country were of a very limited and purely advisory character. For this a fee of 1,500 guineas was offered. The Commission in paragraph 32 assume that the India Office meant this fee to cover duties of placing contracts and supervision. This is an error. The firm had never offered to supervise or accept responsibility. The India Office had realised this, and as it would have in any case to employ a responsible supervisor, it proposed to limit the firm's service to duties of a purely advisory character, and to pay accordingly. The offer was so understood by the Lynch firm when they replied that they would accept 2,000 guineas.

No. 29.

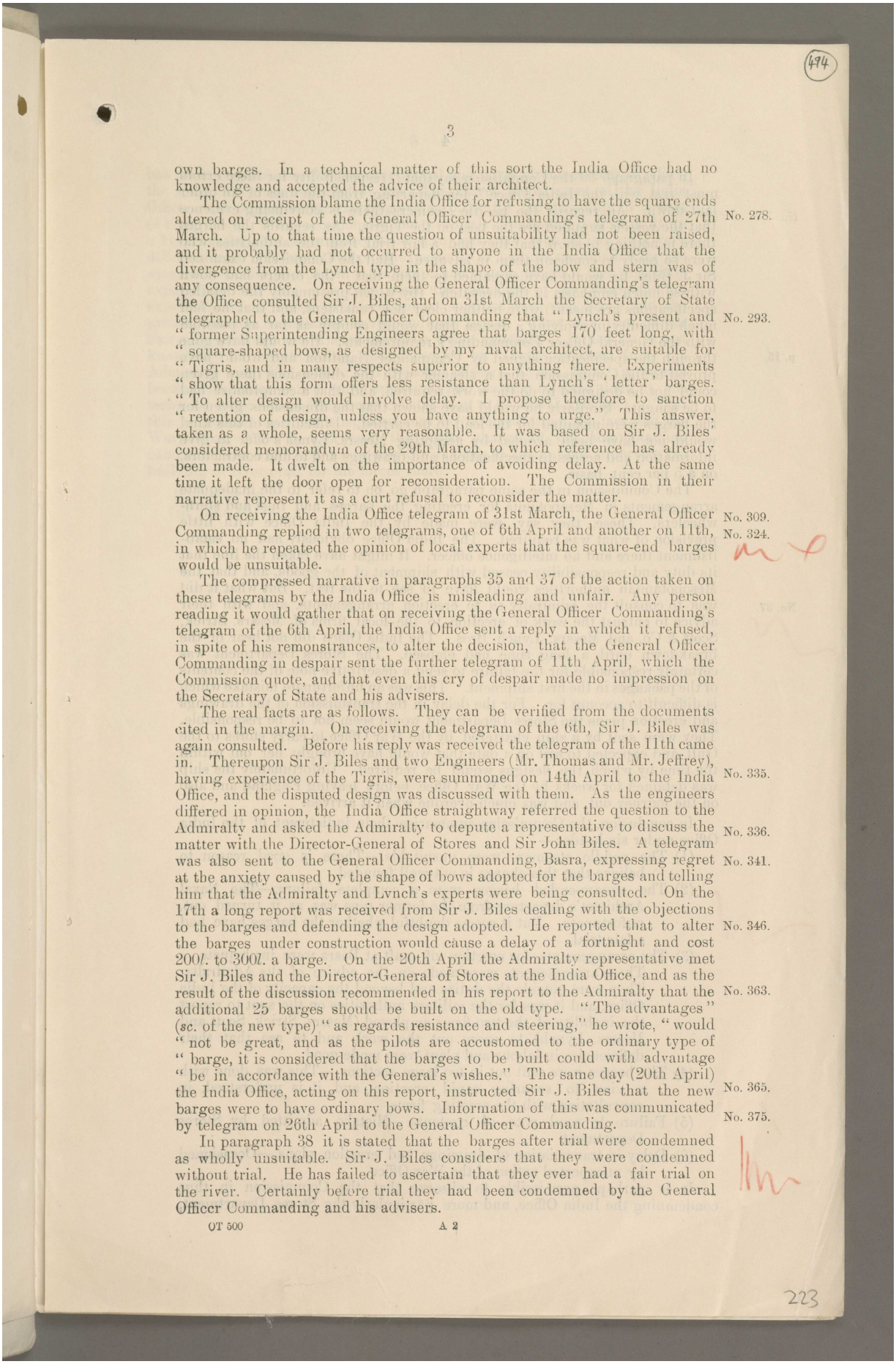
OT 500 50 6/17

222

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00006d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



own barges. In a technical matter of this sort the India Office had no knowledge and accepted the advice of their architect.

The Commission blame the India Office for refusing to have the square ends altered on receipt of the General Officer Commanding's telegram of 27th March. Up to that time the question of unsuitability had not been raised, and it probably had not occurred to anyone in the India Office that the divergence from the Lynch type in the shape of the bow and stern was of any consequence. On receiving the General Officer Commanding's telegram the Office consulted Sir J. Biles, and on 31st March the Secretary of State telegraphed to the General Officer Commanding that "Lynch's present and former Superintending Engineers agree that barges 170 feet long, with square-shaped bows, as designed by my naval architect, are suitable for Tigris, and in many respects superior to anything there. Experiments show that this form offers less resistance than Lynch's 'letter' barges. To alter design would involve delay. I propose therefore to sanction retention of design, unless you have anything to urge." This answer, taken as a whole, seems very reasonable. It was based on Sir J. Biles' considered memorandum of the 29th March, to which reference has already been made. It dwelt on the importance of avoiding delay. At the same time it left the door open for reconsideration. The Commission in their narrative represent it as a curt refusal to reconsider the matter.

No. 278. No. 293.

On receiving the India Office telegram of 31st March, the General Officer Commanding replied in two telegrams, one of 6th April and another on 11th, in which he repeated the opinion of local experts that the square-end barges would be unsuitable.

No. 309. No. 324.

The compressed narrative in paragraphs 35 and 37 of the action taken on these telegrams by the India Office is misleading and unfair. Any person reading it would gather that on receiving the General Officer Commanding's telegram of the 6th April, the India Office sent a reply in which it refused, in spite of his remonstrances, to alter the decision, that the General Officer Commanding in despair sent the further telegram of 11th April, which the Commission quote, and that even this cry of despair made no impression on the Secretary of State and his advisers.

The real facts are as follows. They can be verified from the documents cited in the margin. On receiving the telegram of the 6th, Sir J. Biles was again consulted. Before his reply was received the telegram of the 11th came in. Thereupon Sir J. Biles and two Engineers (Mr. Thomas and Mr. Jeffrey), having experience of the Tigris, were summoned on 14th April to the India Office, and the disputed design was discussed with them. As the engineers differed in opinion, the India Office straightway referred the question to the Admiralty and asked the Admiralty to depute a representative to discuss the matter with the Director-General of Stores and Sir John Biles. A telegram was also sent to the General Officer Commanding, Basra, expressing regret at the anxiety caused by the shape of bows adopted for the barges and telling him that the Admiralty and Lynch's experts were being consulted. On the 17th a long report was received from Sir J. Biles dealing with the objections to the barges and defending the design adopted. He reported that to alter the barges under construction would cause a delay of a fortnight and cost 200*l.* to 300*l.* a barge. On the 20th April the Admiralty representative met Sir J. Biles and the Director-General of Stores at the India Office, and as the result of the discussion recommended in his report to the Admiralty that the additional 25 barges should be built on the old type. "The advantages" (*sc.* of the new type) "as regards resistance and steering," he wrote, "would not be great, and as the pilots are accustomed to the ordinary type of barge, it is considered that the barges to be built could with advantage be in accordance with the General's wishes." The same day (20th April) the India Office, acting on this report, instructed Sir J. Biles that the new barges were to have ordinary bows. Information of this was communicated by telegram on 26th April to the General Officer Commanding.

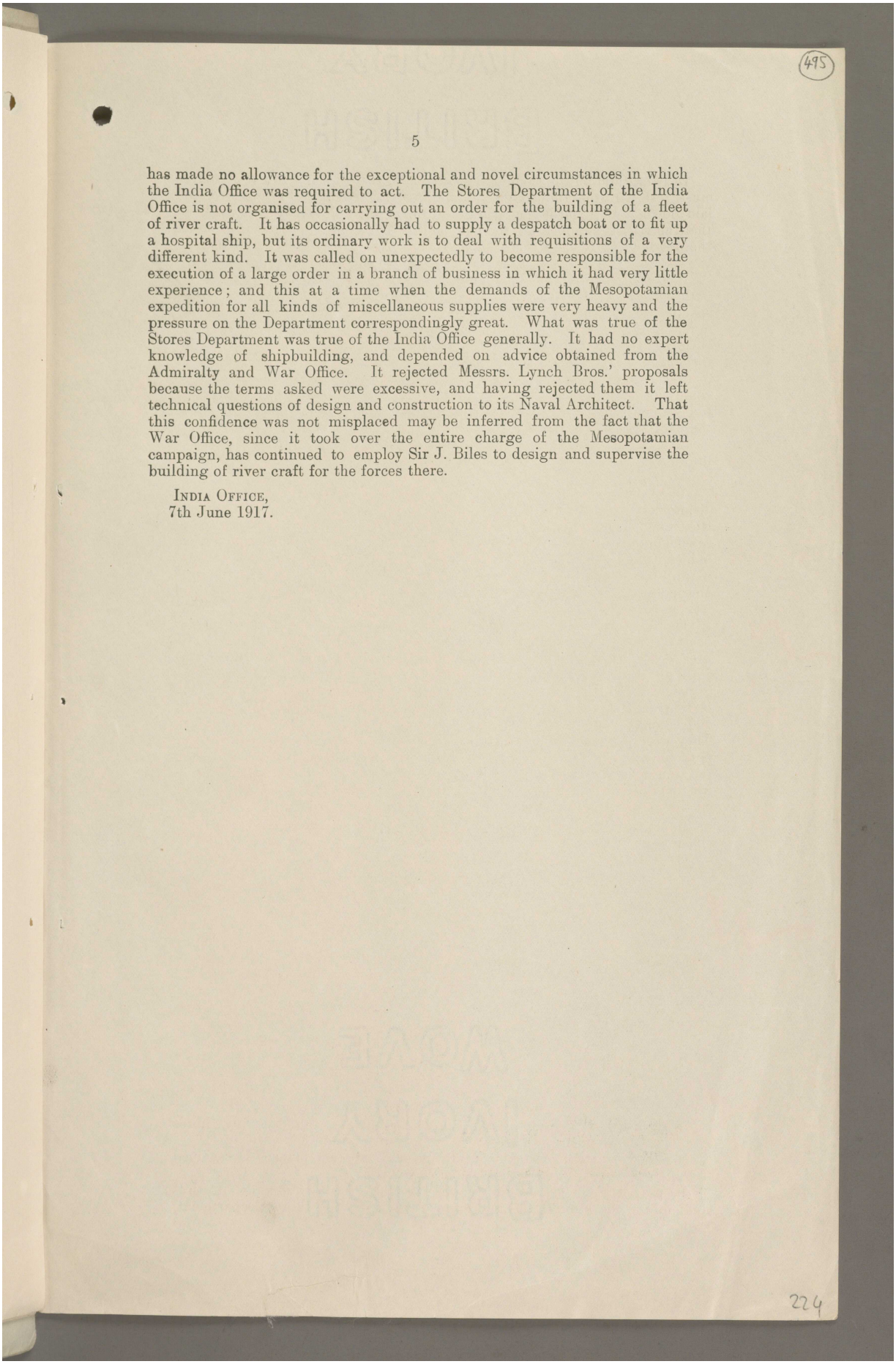
No. 335. No. 336. No. 341. No. 346. No. 363. No. 365. No. 375.

In paragraph 38 it is stated that the barges after trial were condemned as wholly unsuitable. Sir J. Biles considers that they were condemned without trial. He has failed to ascertain that they ever had a fair trial on the river. Certainly before trial they had been condemned by the General Officer Commanding and his advisers.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000089

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

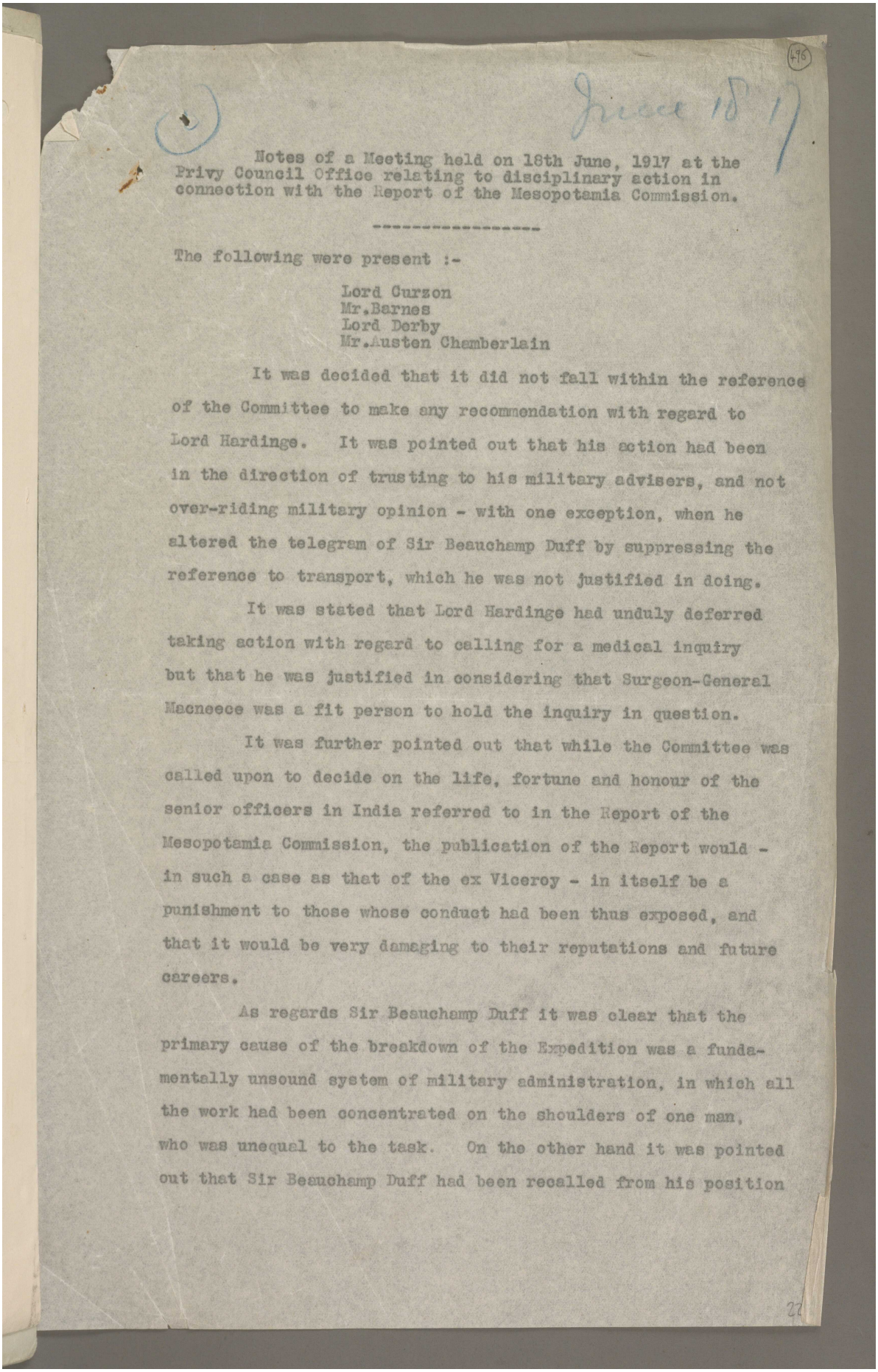
BRITISH LIBRARY



has made no allowance for the exceptional and novel circumstances in which the India Office was required to act. The Stores Department of the India Office is not organised for carrying out an order for the building of a fleet of river craft. It has occasionally had to supply a despatch boat or to fit up a hospital ship, but its ordinary work is to deal with requisitions of a very different kind. It was called on unexpectedly to become responsible for the execution of a large order in a branch of business in which it had very little experience; and this at a time when the demands of the Mesopotamian expedition for all kinds of miscellaneous supplies were very heavy and the pressure on the Department correspondingly great. What was true of the Stores Department was true of the India Office generally. It had no expert knowledge of shipbuilding, and depended on advice obtained from the Admiralty and War Office. It rejected Messrs. Lynch Bros.' proposals because the terms asked were excessive, and having rejected them it left technical questions of design and construction to its Naval Architect. That this confidence was not misplaced may be inferred from the fact that the War Office, since it took over the entire charge of the Mesopotamian campaign, has continued to employ Sir J. Biles to design and supervise the building of river craft for the forces there.

India Office,
7th June 1917.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00002c



Greece 18/7

Notes of a Meeting held on 18th June, 1917 at the Privy Council Office relating to disciplinary action in connection with the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission.

The following were present :-

Lord Curzon
Mr.Barnes
Lord Derby
Mr.Austen Chamberlain

It was decided that it did not fall within the reference of the Committee to make any recommendation with regard to Lord Hardinge. It was pointed out that his action had been in the direction of trusting to his military advisers, and not over-riding military opinion - with one exception, when he altered the telegram of Sir Beauchamp Duff by suppressing the reference to transport, which he was not justified in doing.

It was stated that Lord Hardinge had unduly deferred taking action with regard to calling for a medical inquiry but that he was justified in considering that Surgeon-General Macneece was a fit person to hold the inquiry in question.

It was further pointed out that while the Committee was called upon to decide on the life, fortune and honour of the senior officers in India referred to in the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission, the publication of the Report would - in such a case as that of the ex Viceroy - in itself be a punishment to those whose conduct had been thus exposed, and that it would be very damaging to their reputations and future careers.

As regards Sir Beauchamp Duff it was clear that the primary cause of the breakdown of the Expedition was a fundamentally unsound system of military administration, in which all the work had been concentrated on the shoulders of one man, who was unequal to the task. On the other hand it was pointed out that Sir Beauchamp Duff had been recalled from his position

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

as Commander-in-Chief in India after only between two and three years' service, that financially he had lost considerably as the result, and that after the publication of the Report he would be a ruined man in public estimation.

The Committee considered Article 525 in the "Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion and Non-effective Pay of the Army", which reads as follows:-

"Misconduct. 525. An Officer shall be liable to be removed from Our Army at any time for misconduct."

General Childs of the War Office, who was called before the Committee, explained that -

(a) Officers were sometimes arbitrarily removed from His Majesty's Service under this Article, but almost invariably after the verdict of a civil Court.

(b) Incapacity did not come under the heading of "Misconduct"

(c) If, for instance, a case of culpable neglect of duty were to arise at any time, while an officer could legally be removed under this Article, in practice this was never done, because such action would be usurping the functions of a Court of Law.

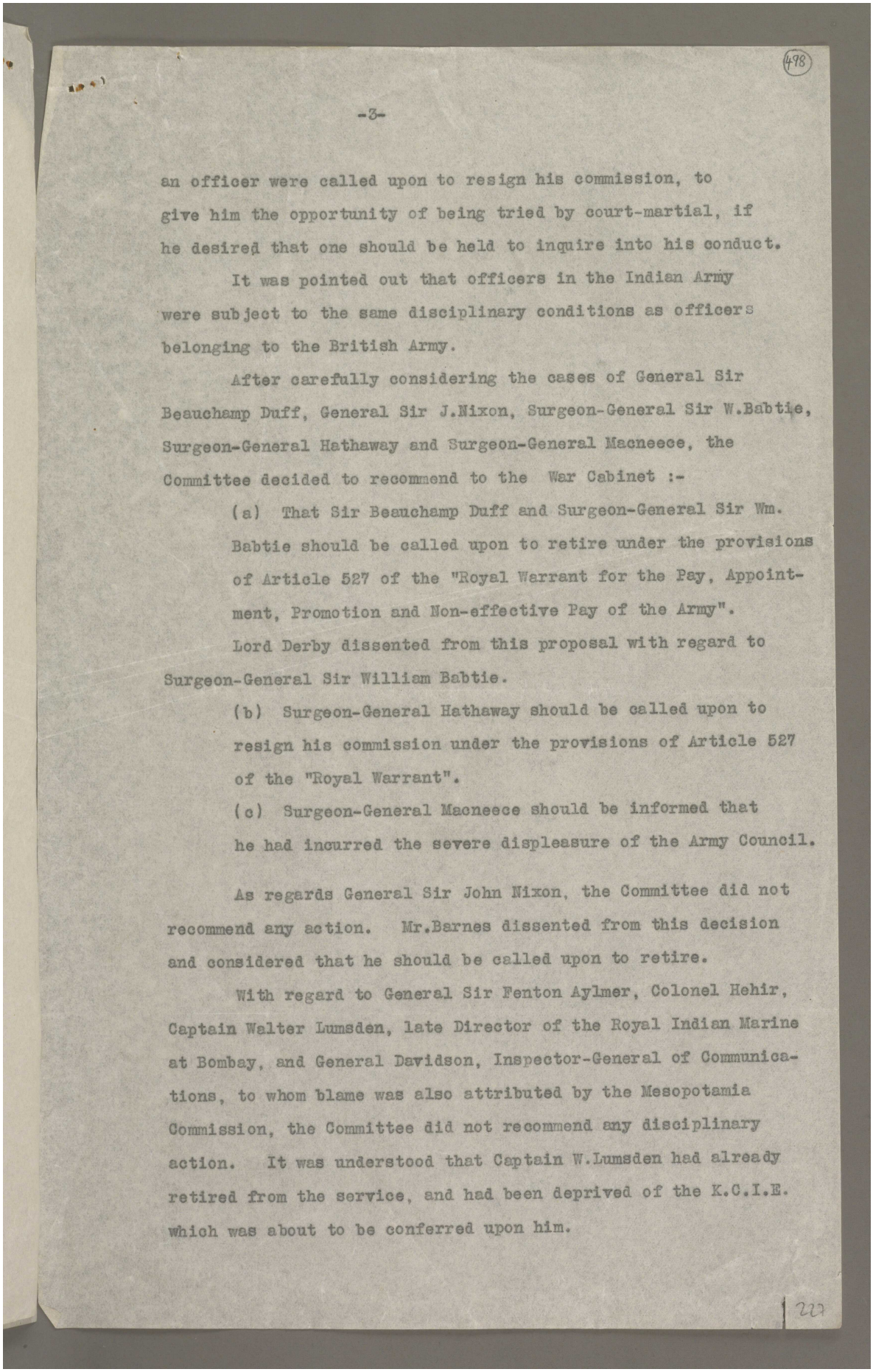
(d) So far as his own experience went, no case of such negligence had ever been dealt with under the terms of this Article.

Article 527 of the "Royal Warrant" reads as follows :-

"Grounds other than misconduct. 527. An officer who has not been guilty of misconduct may at any time be called upon to retire, or to resign his commission, should the circumstances of the case, in the opinion of our Army Council, require it".

General Childs explained that the powers contained in this Article were very frequently utilised. An officer might be called upon to retire, in which case he would retain any pension he might have earned; or he might be called upon to resign his commission, in which case he would forfeit his pension. In neither case had the officer any right to demand a Court Martial, but it was the universal practice, if

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000ad



an officer were called upon to resign his commission, to give him the opportunity of being tried by court-martial, if he desired that one should be held to inquire into his conduct.

It was pointed out that officers in the Indian Army were subject to the same disciplinary conditions as officers belonging to the British Army.

After carefully considering the cases of General Sir Beauchamp Duff, General Sir J.Nixon, Surgeon-General Sir W.Babtie, Surgeon-General Hathaway and Surgeon-General Macneece, the Committee decided to recommend to the War Cabinet :-

(a) That Sir Beauchamp Duff and Surgeon-General Sir Wm. Babtie should be called upon to retire under the provisions of Article 527 of the "Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion and Non-effective Pay of the Army".

Lord Derby dissented from this proposal with regard to Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie.

(b) Surgeon-General Hathaway should be called upon to resign his commission under the provisions of Article 527 of the "Royal Warrant".

(c) Surgeon-General Macneece should be informed that he had incurred the severe displeasure of the Army Council.

As regards General Sir John Nixon, the Committee did not recommend any action. Mr.Barnes dissented from this decision and considered that he should be called upon to retire.

With regard to General Sir Fenton Aylmer, Colonel Hehir, Captain Walter Lumsden, late Director of the Royal Indian Marine at Bombay, and General Davidson, Inspector-General of Communications, to whom blame was also attributed by the Mesopotamia Commission, the Committee did not recommend any disciplinary action. It was understood that Captain W.Lumsden had already retired from the service, and had been deprived of the K.C.I.E. which was about to be conferred upon him.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000b7

(499)

EXTRACTS FROM ARMY ACT &C.

Neglect to report and signing in blank.

Section 26. Every person subject to military law who commits any of the following offences; that is to say,

(1). When signing any document relating to pay, arms, ammunition, equipments, clothing, regimental necessaries, provisions, furniture, bedding, blankets, sheets, utensils, forage, or stores, leaves in blank any material part for which his signature is a voucher; or

(2). Refuses, or by culpable neglect omits, to make or send a report or return which it is his duty to make or send,

shall on conviction by court-martial be liable, if an officer, to be cashiered, or to suffer such less punishment as is in this Act mentioned, and if a soldier, to suffer imprisonment, or such less punishment as is in this Act mentioned.

Note.

Para.(2) The particulars must show that it was the duty of the accused to make the report or return, but where the situation of the accused is proved the court may use their military knowledge to infer his duty. See note 4 to s.25. If the report or return was one for which the superior had no right to call, there is no punishment for a refusal to make it. The neglect must be something more than mere forgetfulness or mistake.

CHARGE.

By culpable neglect omitting to make a report which it was his duty to make.

Conduct to prejudice of military discipline.

Section 40. Every person subject to military law who commits any of the following offences; that is to say,

Is guilty of any act, conduct, disorder, or neglect, to the prejudice of good order and military discipline,

shall on conviction by court-martial be liable, if an officer, to be cashiered, or to suffer such less punishment as is in this Act mentioned .....

Note.

To sustain a charge under this section it is absolutely necessary that the charge should incite the words of the Act. That is to say, there must be charged an "act" or "conduct", or "disorder", or "neglect", as the case may be, "to the prejudice of good order and military discipline."

But the mere use of these words as a description of certain conduct does not warrant a court in assuming that such conduct is legally an offence. A court is not warranted in convincing unless of

228

opinion that the conduct charged was to the prejudice both of good order and of military discipline, having regard to the conduct itself and to the circumstances in which it took place. It is only in such a case that an offence of a non-military character falls within this section.

Neglect must be wilful or culpable, and not merely arising from ordinary forgetfulness or error of judgment, or inadvertence; and where the use of certain words regard superiors is made the subject of a charge under this section, the words must have been said meaningly, i.e. with a guilty intent.

CHARGE.

Conduct) to the prejudice of good order
Neglect) and military discipline.

ROYAL WARRANT

for the

Pay, Appointment, Promotion, and Non-Effective Pay.

of

THE ARMY.

Misconduct. 525. An officer shall be liable to be removed from Our Army at any time for misconduct.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00004b

501

EXTRACTS FROM ARMY ACT &C.

Section 26. Every person subject to military law who commits any of the following offences; that is to say,

Neglect to report and signing in blank.

(1). When signing any document relating to pay, arms, ammunition, equipments, clothing, regimental necessaries, provisions, furniture, bedding, blankets, sheets, utensils, forage, or stores, leaves in blank any material part for which his signature is a voucher; or

(2). Refuses, or by culpable neglect omits, to make or send a report or return which it is his duty to make or send,

shall on conviction by court-martial be liable, if an officer, to be cashiered, or to suffer such less punishment as is in this Act mentioned, and if a soldier, to suffer imprisonment, or such less punishment as is in this Act mentioned.

Note.

Para.(2) The particulars must show that it was the duty of the accused to make the report or return, but where the situation of the accused is proved the court may use their military knowledge to infer his duty. See note 4 to s.25. If the report or return was one for which the superior had no right to call, there is no punishment for a refusal to make it. The neglect must be something more than mere forgetfulness or mistake.

CHARGE.

By culpable neglect omitting to make a report which it was his duty to make.

Section 40.

Conduct to prejudice of military discipline.

Every person subject to military law who commits any of the following offences; that is to say,

Is guilty of any act, conduct, disorder, or neglect, to the prejudice of good order and military discipline,

shall on conviction by court-martial be liable, if an officer, to be cashiered, or to suffer such less punishment as is in this Act mentioned .....

Note.

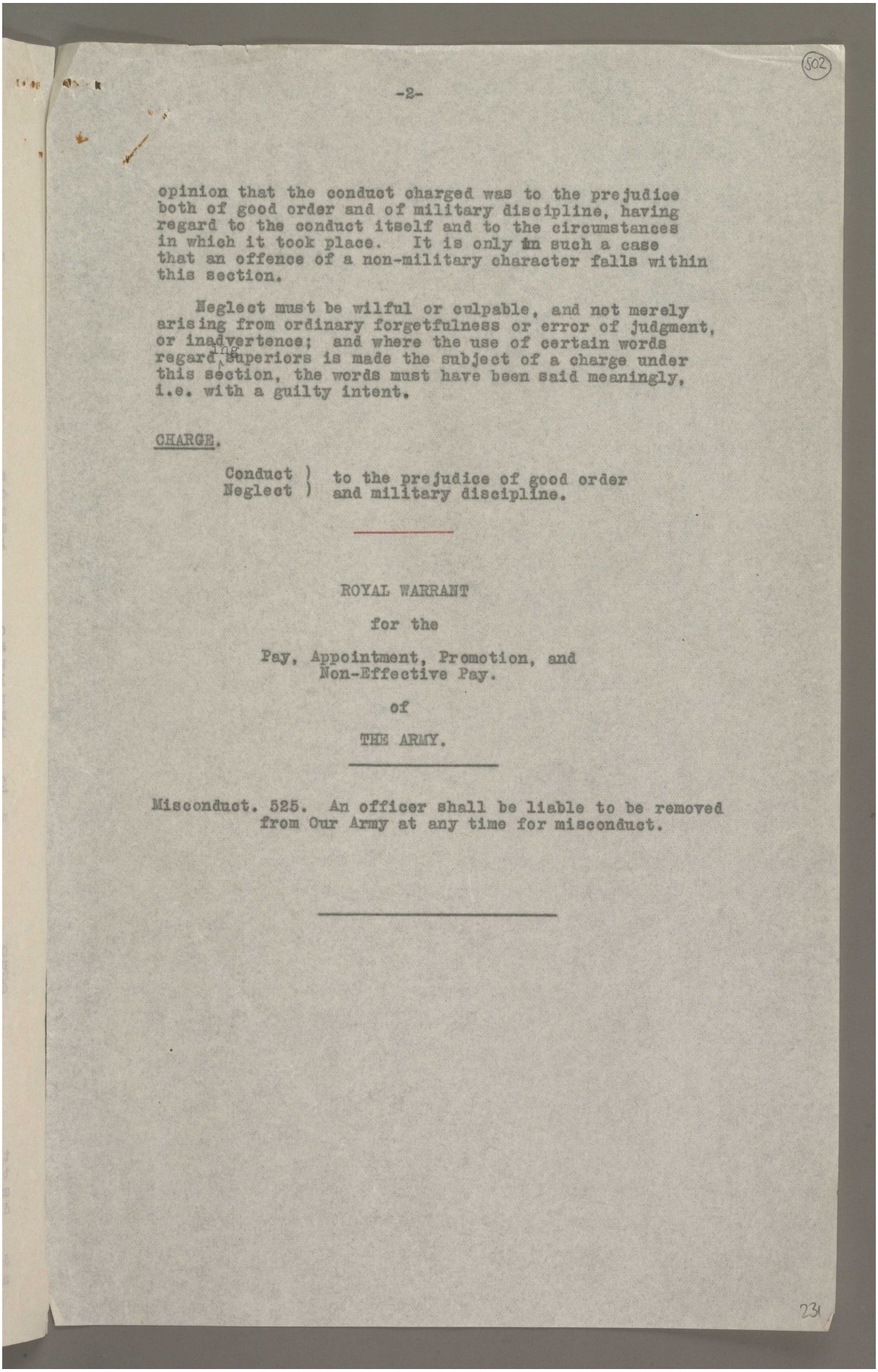
To sustain a charge under this section it is absolutely necessary that the charge should incite the words of the Act. That is to say, there must be charged an "act" or "conduct", or "disorder", or "neglect", as the case may be, "to the prejudice of good order and military discipline."

But the mere use of these words as a description of certain conduct does not warrant a court in assuming that such conduct is legally an offence. A court is not warranted in convincing unless of

230

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



502

opinion that the conduct charged was to the prejudice both of good order and of military discipline, having regard to the conduct itself and to the circumstances in which it took place. It is only in such a case that an offence of a non-military character falls within this section.

Neglect must be wilful or culpable, and not merely arising from ordinary forgetfulness or error of judgment, or inadvertence; and where the use of certain words regarding superiors is made the subject of a charge under this section, the words must have been said meaningly, i.e. with a guilty intent.

CHARGE.

Conduct) to the prejudice of good order
Neglect) and military discipline.

ROYAL WARRANT

for the

Pay, Appointment, Promotion, and Non-Effective Pay.

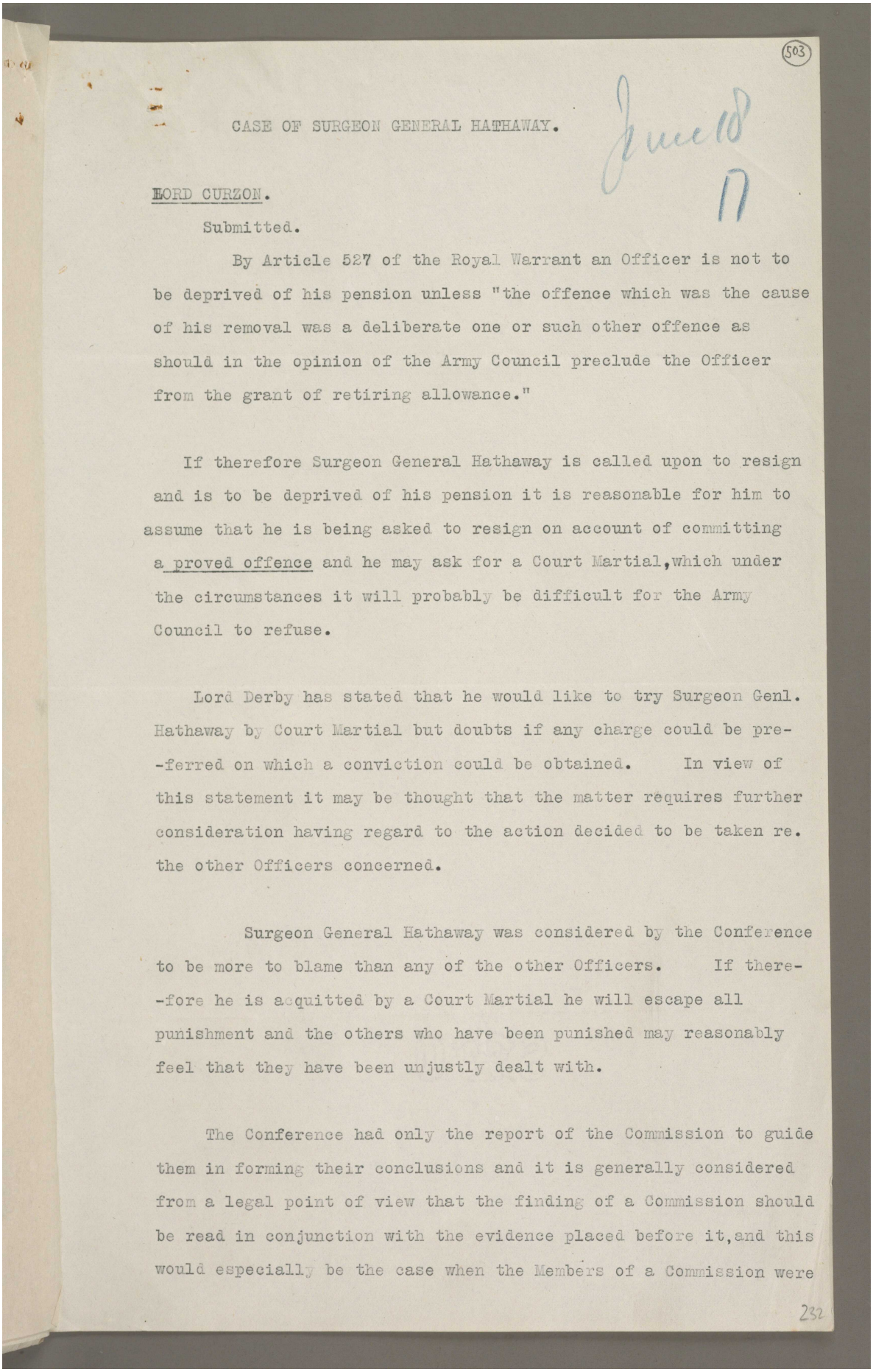
of

THE ARMY.

Misconduct. 525. An officer shall be liable to be removed from Our Army at any time for misconduct.

231

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000005



(503)

CASE OF SURGEON GENERAL HATHAWAY.

June 18
17

LORD CURZON.

Submitted.

By Article 527 of the Royal Warrant an Officer is not to be deprived of his pension unless "the offence which was the cause of his removal was a deliberate one or such other offence as should in the opinion of the Army Council preclude the Officer from the grant of retiring allowance."

If therefore Surgeon General Hathaway is called upon to resign and is to be deprived of his pension it is reasonable for him to assume that he is being asked to resign on account of committing a proved offence and he may ask for a Court Martial, which under the circumstances it will probably be difficult for the Army Council to refuse.

Lord Derby has stated that he would like to try Surgeon Genl. Hathaway by Court Martial but doubts if any charge could be pre--ferred on which a conviction could be obtained. In view of this statement it may be thought that the matter requires further consideration having regard to the action decided to be taken re. the other Officers concerned.

Surgeon General Hathaway was considered by the Conference to be more to blame than any of the other Officers. If there--fore he is acquitted by a Court Martial he will escape all punishment and the others who have been punished may reasonably feel that they have been unjustly dealt with.

The Conference had only the report of the Commission to guide them in forming their conclusions and it is generally considered from a legal point of view that the finding of a Commission should be read in conjunction with the evidence placed before it, and this would especially be the case when the Members of a Commission were

232

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000093

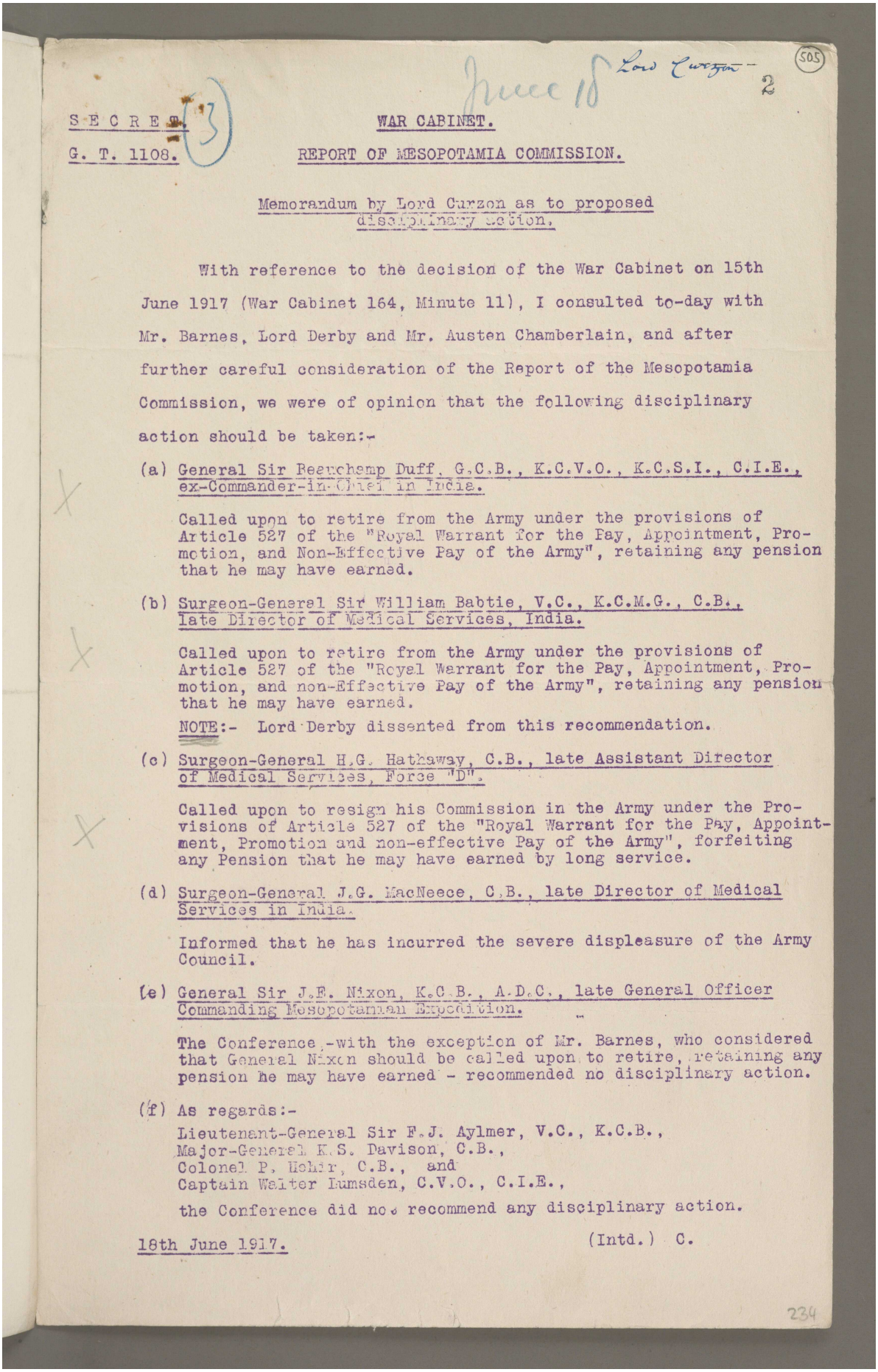
not legal authorities or even, as a body, Military experts.

It is therefore submitted for consideration as to whether ~~that~~ the case of Surgeon General Hathaway should be referred to the Judge Advocate General with directions that he should study the evidence and report as soon as possible whether it would reasonably support charges for the trial of Surgeon Hathawy by Court Martial.

If such is not the case then Surgeon General Hathaway can be called upon to retire whilst retaining his pension.

18 June 1917.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000068



505

June 18 Lord Curzon — 2

SECRET. (3)

G. T. 1108.

WAR CABINET.

REPORT OF MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

Memorandum by Lord Curzon as to proposed disciplinary action.

With reference to the decision of the War Cabinet on 15th June 1917 (War Cabinet 164, Minute 11), I consulted to-day with Mr. Barnes, Lord Derby and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, and after further careful consideration of the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission, we were of opinion that the following disciplinary action should be taken:-

(a) General Sir Beauchamp Duff, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., K.C.S.I., C.I.E., ex-Commander-in-Chief in India.

Called upon to retire from the Army under the provisions of Article 527 of the "Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion, and Non-Effective Pay of the Army", retaining any pension that he may have earned.

(b) Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie, V.C., K.C.M.G., C.B., late Director of Medical Services, India.

Called upon to retire from the Army under the provisions of Article 527 of the "Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion, and non-Effective Pay of the Army", retaining any pension that he may have earned.

NOTE:- Lord Derby dissented from this recommendation.

(c) Surgeon-General H.G. Hathaway, C.B., late Assistant Director of Medical Services, Force "D".

Called upon to resign his Commission in the Army under the Provisions of Article 527 of the "Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion and non-effective Pay of the Army", forfeiting any Pension that he may have earned by long service.

(d) Surgeon-General J.G. MacNeece, C.B., late Director of Medical Services in India.

Informed that he has incurred the severe displeasure of the Army Council.

(e) General Sir J.E. Nixon, K.C.B., A.D.C., late General Officer Commanding Mesopotamian Expedition.

The Conference, with the exception of Mr. Barnes, who considered that General Nixon should be called upon to retire, retaining any pension he may have earned - recommended no disciplinary action.

(f) As regards:-

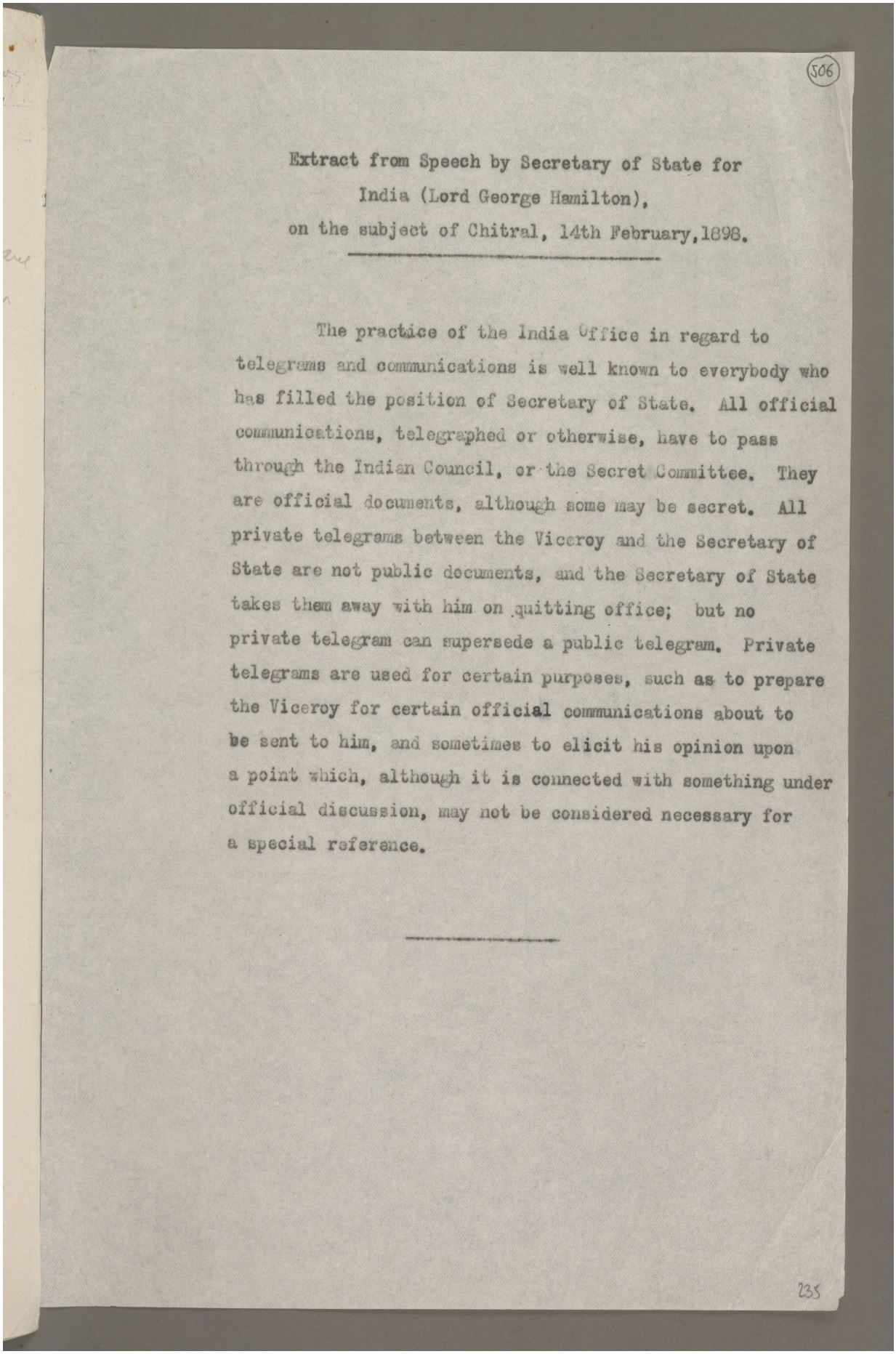
Lieutenant-General Sir F.J. Aylmer, V.C., K.C.B.,
Major-General K.S. Davison, C.B.,
Colonel P. Mehir, C.B., and
Captain Walter Lumsden, C.V.O., C.I.E.,

the Conference did not recommend any disciplinary action.

18th June 1917. (Intd.) C.

234

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000a9



(506)

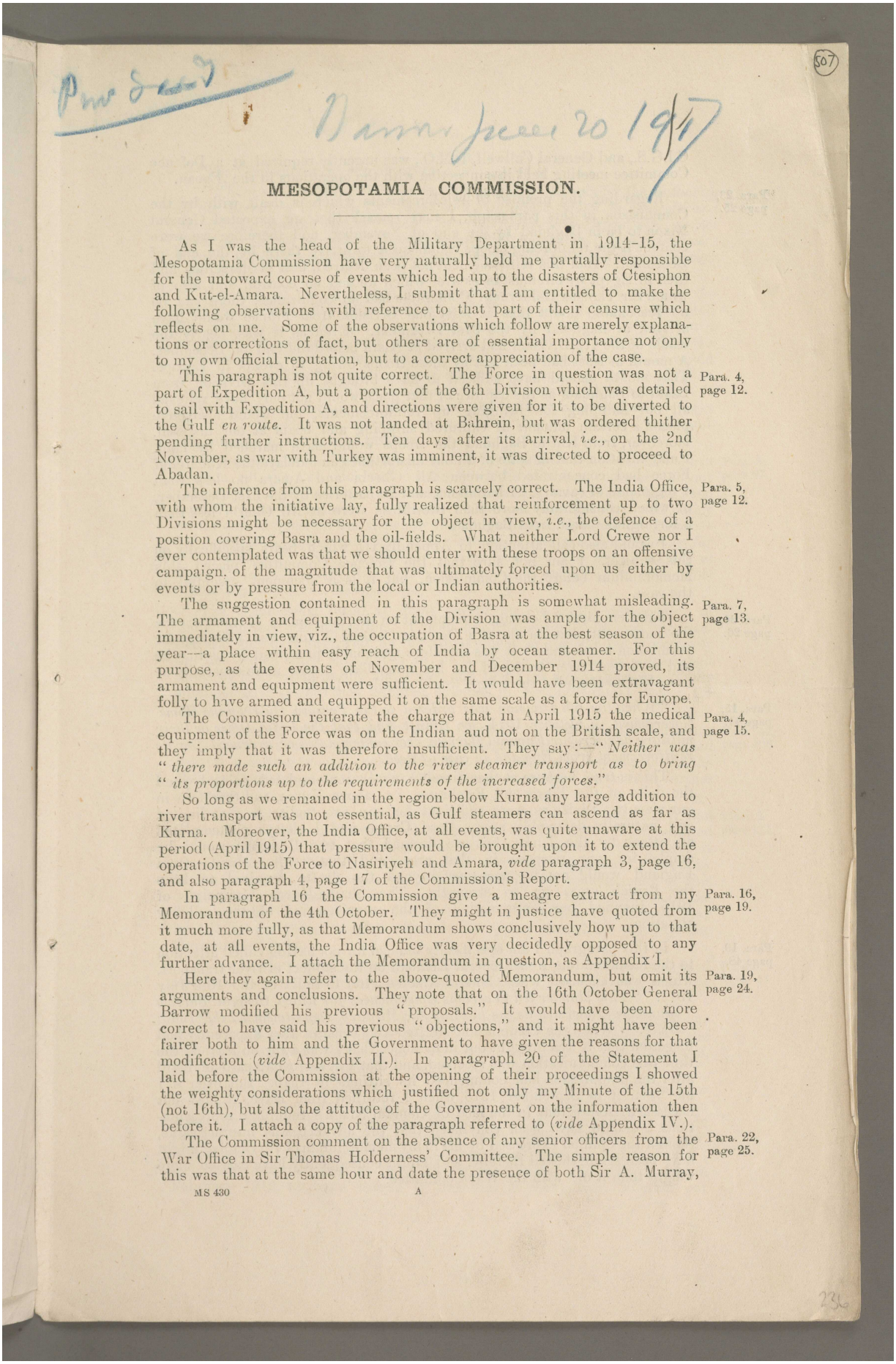
Extract from Speech by Secretary of State for India (Lord George Hamilton), on the subject of Chitral, 14th February, 1898.

The practice of the India Office in regard to telegrams and communications is well known to everybody who has filled the position of Secretary of State. All official communications, telegraphed or otherwise, have to pass through the Indian Council, or the Secret Committee. They are official documents, although some may be secret. All private telegrams between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State are not public documents, and the Secretary of State takes them away with him on quitting office; but no private telegram can supersede a public telegram. Private telegrams are used for certain purposes, such as to prepare the Viceroy for certain official communications about to be sent to him, and sometimes to elicit his opinion upon a point which, although it is connected with something under official discussion, may not be considered necessary for a special reference.

235

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



(507)

Pre Dec 20

Dunn Jan 20 1917

MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

As I was the head of the Military Department in 1914-15, the Mesopotamia Commission have very naturally held me partially responsible for the untoward course of events which led up to the disasters of Ctesiphon and Kut-el-Amara. Nevertheless, I submit that I am entitled to make the following observations with reference to that part of their censure which reflects on me. Some of the observations which follow are merely explanations or corrections of fact, but others are of essential importance not only to my own official reputation, but to a correct appreciation of the case.

This paragraph is not quite correct. The Force in question was not a part of Expedition A, but a portion of the 6th Division which was detailed to sail with Expedition A, and directions were given for it to be diverted to the Gulf *en route*. It was not landed at Bahrein, but was ordered thither pending further instructions. Ten days after its arrival, *i.e.*, on the 2nd November, as war with Turkey was imminent, it was directed to proceed to Abadan. Para. 4, page 12.

The inference from this paragraph is scarcely correct. The India Office, with whom the initiative lay, fully realized that reinforcement up to two Divisions might be necessary for the object in view, *i.e.*, the defence of a position covering Basra and the oil-fields. What neither Lord Crewe nor I ever contemplated was that we should enter with these troops on an offensive campaign of the magnitude that was ultimately forced upon us either by events or by pressure from the local or Indian authorities. Para. 5, page 12.

The suggestion contained in this paragraph is somewhat misleading. The armament and equipment of the Division was ample for the object immediately in view, viz., the occupation of Basra at the best season of the year—a place within easy reach of India by ocean steamer. For this purpose, as the events of November and December 1914 proved, its armament and equipment were sufficient. It would have been extravagant folly to have armed and equipped it on the same scale as a force for Europe. Para. 7, page 13.

The Commission reiterate the charge that in April 1915 the medical equipment of the Force was on the Indian and not on the British scale, and they imply that it was therefore insufficient. They say:—"*Neither was "there made such an addition to the river steamer transport as to bring "its proportions up to the requirements of the increased forces.*"

So long as we remained in the region below Kurna any large addition to river transport was not essential, as Gulf steamers can ascend as far as Kurna. Moreover, the India Office, at all events, was quite unaware at this period (April 1915) that pressure would be brought upon it to extend the operations of the Force to Nasiriyeh and Amara, *vide* paragraph 3, page 16, and also paragraph 4, page 17 of the Commission's Report. Para. 4, page 15.

In paragraph 16 the Commission give a meagre extract from my Memorandum of the 4th October. They might in justice have quoted from it much more fully, as that Memorandum shows conclusively how up to that date, at all events, the India Office was very decidedly opposed to any further advance. I attach the Memorandum in question, as Appendix I. Para. 16, page 19.

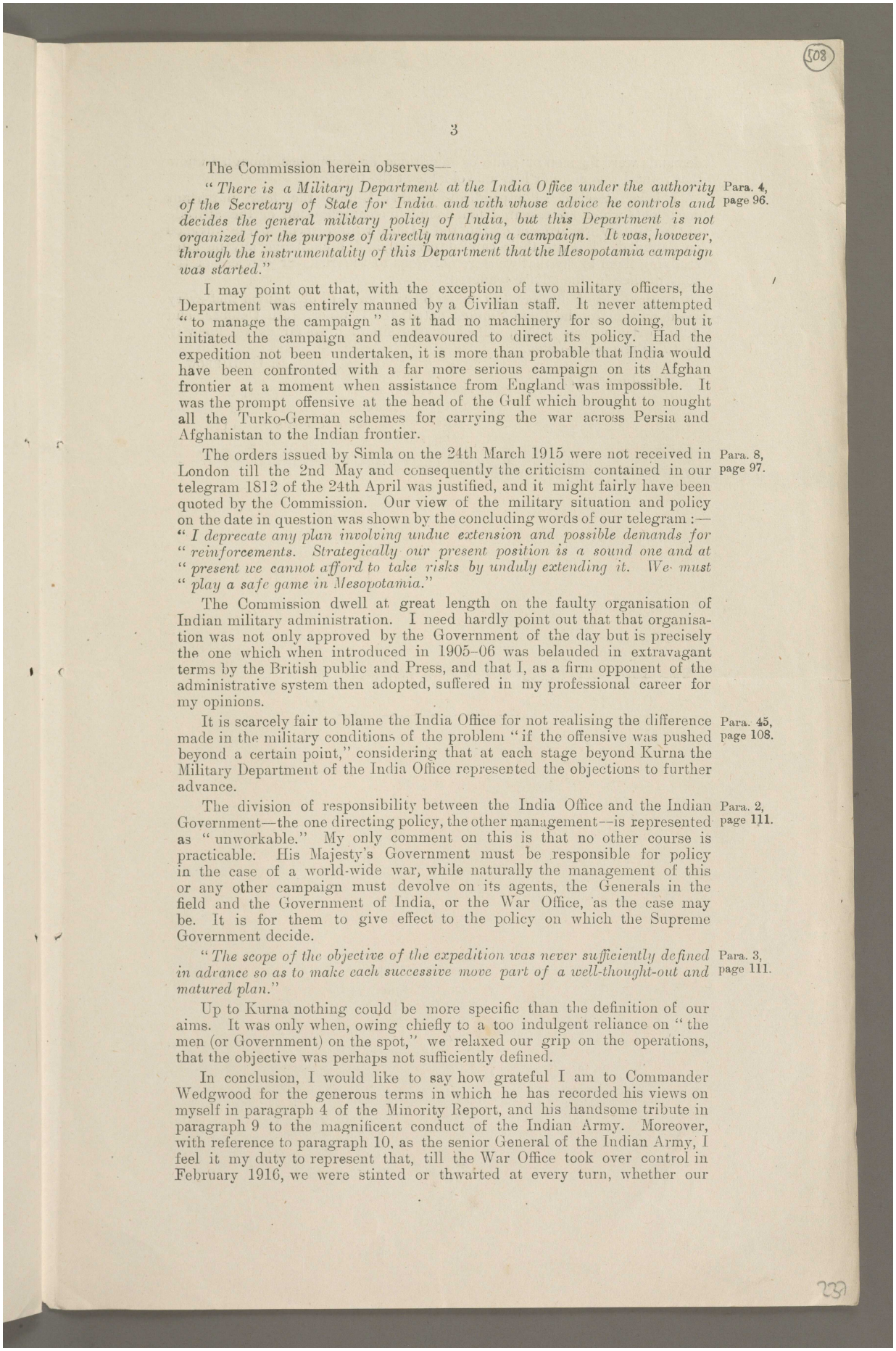
Here they again refer to the above-quoted Memorandum, but omit its arguments and conclusions. They note that on the 16th October General Barrow modified his previous "proposals." It would have been more correct to have said his previous "objections," and it might have been fairer both to him and the Government to have given the reasons for that modification (*vide* Appendix II.). In paragraph 20 of the Statement I laid before the Commission at the opening of their proceedings I showed the weighty considerations which justified not only my Minute of the 15th (not 16th), but also the attitude of the Government on the information then before it. I attach a copy of the paragraph referred to (*vide* Appendix IV.). Para. 19, page 24.

The Commission comment on the absence of any senior officers from the War Office in Sir Thomas Holderness' Committee. The simple reason for this was that at the same hour and date the presence of both Sir A. Murray, Para. 22, page 25.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000013

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



The Commission herein observes—

"*There is a Military Department at the India Office under the authority of the Secretary of State for India and with whose advice he controls and decides the general military policy of India, but this Department is not organized for the purpose of directly managing a campaign. It was, however, through the instrumentality of this Department that the Mesopotamia campaign was started.*" Para. 4, page 96.

I may point out that, with the exception of two military officers, the Department was entirely manned by a Civilian staff. It never attempted "to manage the campaign" as it had no machinery for so doing, but it initiated the campaign and endeavoured to direct its policy. Had the expedition not been undertaken, it is more than probable that India would have been confronted with a far more serious campaign on its Afghan frontier at a moment when assistance from England was impossible. It was the prompt offensive at the head of the Gulf which brought to nought all the Turko-German schemes for carrying the war across Persia and Afghanistan to the Indian frontier.

The orders issued by Simla on the 24th March 1915 were not received in London till the 2nd May and consequently the criticism contained in our telegram 1812 of the 24th April was justified, and it might fairly have been quoted by the Commission. Our view of the military situation and policy on the date in question was shown by the concluding words of our telegram :— Para. 8, page 97.

"*I deprecate any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements. Strategically our present position is a sound one and at present we cannot afford to take risks by unduly extending it. We must play a safe game in Mesopotamia.*"

The Commission dwell at great length on the faulty organisation of Indian military administration. I need hardly point out that that organisation was not only approved by the Government of the day but is precisely the one which when introduced in 1905–06 was belauded in extravagant terms by the British public and Press, and that I, as a firm opponent of the administrative system then adopted, suffered in my professional career for my opinions.

It is scarcely fair to blame the India Office for not realising the difference made in the military conditions of the problem "if the offensive was pushed beyond a certain point," considering that at each stage beyond Kurna the Military Department of the India Office represented the objections to further advance. Para. 45, page 108.

The division of responsibility between the India Office and the Indian Government—the one directing policy, the other management—is represented as "unworkable." My only comment on this is that no other course is practicable. His Majesty's Government must be responsible for policy in the case of a world-wide war, while naturally the management of this or any other campaign must devolve on its agents, the Generals in the field and the Government of India, or the War Office, as the case may be. It is for them to give effect to the policy on which the Supreme Government decide. Para. 2, page 111.

"*The scope of the objective of the expedition was never sufficiently defined in advance so as to make each successive move part of a well-thought-out and matured plan.*" Para. 3, page 111.

Up to Kurna nothing could be more specific than the definition of our aims. It was only when, owing chiefly to a too indulgent reliance on "the men (or Government) on the spot," we relaxed our grip on the operations, that the objective was perhaps not sufficiently defined.

In conclusion, I would like to say how grateful I am to Commander Wedgwood for the generous terms in which he has recorded his views on myself in paragraph 4 of the Minority Report, and his handsome tribute in paragraph 9 to the magnificent conduct of the Indian Army. Moreover, with reference to paragraph 10, as the senior General of the Indian Army, I feel it my duty to represent that, till the War Office took over control in February 1916, we were stinted or thwarted at every turn, whether our

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000c2

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

MEMORANDUM OF 4TH OCTOBER 1915 BY GENERAL SIR E. BARROW, MILITARY SECRETARY, INDIA OFFICE.

The Mesopotamia Question in its Military Aspect.

The victory at Kut-el-Amara is of so complete a nature that the idea of pushing on to Bagdad will certainly be revived. Pressure will be brought on us, either directly by Sir John Nixon and Sir Percy Cox, who *primâ facie* are in the best position to judge of its feasibility, or indirectly by an agitation in the press or in commercial circles. It may even be urged, and there is much force in the argument, that it is advisable on political grounds on account of the world-wide prestige which the occupation of Bagdad would confer. Certainly strong arguments can be advanced for its occupation, and the ease with which the operation can be carried out will be impressed on us with such cogency and insistence that the proposal will be difficult to resist. The very glamour attaching to so historic a city is in itself a temptation, and it is with extreme reluctance that I advocate a policy of caution, which will certainly be unpopular, and perhaps difficult to justify in the minds of those who are not intimate with the intricacies of the problem.

The force under General Nixon comprises two divisions of infantry and a brigade of cavalry. This force occupies a considerable area in the midst of a doubtful and possibly hostile population. It also has to protect important British interests in the Anglo-Persian oilfields as well as at Bushire and Basra. The consequence is it cannot be concentrated.

The following may be regarded as a reasonable, if not almost an obligatory minimum distribution of the troops :—

At Bushire, Ahwaz, Basra—1 brigade, 1 regiment of cavalry.
At Nasiriyah and Kurna—1 brigade.
At Amara and Kut-el-Amara— 1 brigade, 1 cavalry regiment.

This leaves available for further operations towards Bagdad only one infantry division and two cavalry regiments.

Such a force may be sufficient to expel the Turks from Bagdad. That is a question which can only be answered by General Nixon on local information, but the problem does not end at the capture of Bagdad. The city will absorb a garrison of at least a brigade. This leaves us only two weak brigades to cope with any eventuality that may arise. I put the strength of the force that might possibly be available for operations outside Bagdad at :—

5,000 infantry, *i.e.*, 2 brigades,
800 cavalry, *i.e.*, 8 squadrons,
22 guns,
1 company sappers and miners,

which is probably sufficient to deal with any local disturbances that may arise in the Bagdad Vilayet, though even from this force we may have to make obligatory detachments. For instance, we may be compelled to find a garrison for the railhead at Samarra on the Tigris, 70 miles from Bagdad, and perhaps another on the high road to Persia *viâ* Khanikin; consequently I do not think we can count on having a mobile force of more than 4,000 or at the most 5,000 men all told for employment in advance of Bagdad.

This to my mind is insufficient.

The *débris* of the Mesopotamian Army Corps will probably retire towards Mosul, and if they were hereafter—say, three months hence—reinforced by a Turkish Division either from the Caucasus or Syria, our reduced division of 5,000 men would have a formidable task to resist the enemy's advance. If it were supported by disaffected Arabs or a religious rising we might have to evacuate Bagdad and retire to our present strong strategical position at the junction of the Tigris and Shatt-el-Hai. Such

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00005d

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

APPENDIX II.

MINUTE, DATED 15TH OCTOBER 1915, BY THE SECRETARY, MILITARY DEPARTMENT, INDIA OFFICE, ON THE QUESTION OF AN ADVANCE TO BAGHDAD.

NOW that it has been decided to send two divisions to Mesopotamia, the condition postulated in my note of the 4th October is fully met. I said therein :—

> "In my judgment it will not be wise to go to Baghdad *unless we can increase the force by a whole division of infantry* and one or two cavalry regiments, and this we know is impracticable unless the Indian troops are withdrawn from France."

The view I then held was that if we got an extra division it would be safe to go to Baghdad. *A fortiori*, if we get two divisions, it will be more than safe. We shall then have three divisions and four cavalry regiments in the Baghdad area, and one division and two cavalry regiments from Kut-el-Amara to the sea. This means a force of about 30,000 men within the Baghdad area, of which probably 25,000 could on emergency be concentrated for battle at Samarra or other suitable position between Samarra and Baghdad.

I understand that the General Staff hold the view that 60,000 Turks or more might be utilised to attack us, but though that number might be available, I doubt if they can be concentrated for battle in the face of an active commander with 25,000 men holding the interior lines in a selected and prepared position.

If the enemy operates by both the Euphrates and the Tigris lines he should be beaten in detail; if he operates only by the Tigris he will have great difficulty in concentrating within striking distance. I therefore hold that with this force at our disposal it will be worth our while to go to Baghdad, as, anyhow, the Turks would not be in a position to attack it under three months, and for three months we should have all the moral advantage of holding a great political centre and strategical position.

Further, if the Turks have not in the meanwhile gained a great success at the Dardanelles, that period of three months might well be prolonged to next April, when the hot season will be beginning and the Turks will not be tempted to embark on so serious an operation. In that case the moral and political advantage of holding Baghdad will be indefinitely prolonged.

If, on the other hand, I am wrong, and the Turks can concentrate 50,000 or 60,000 men against us, at the worst we should have to retire to Kut-el-Amara, having first deprived the enemy of many of the advantages Baghdad would ordinarily confer. We should have removed all shipping, destroyed the railway and rolling stock, and taken possession of all munitions of war and transport.

Further, having for all those months interrupted the communications between Baghdad and Persia, we should have emasculated the German movement in Persia and postponed trouble on the Indian frontier.

If, therefore, we have a firm promise of two divisions, I am entirely in favour of going to Baghdad, while, if we get only one division added to Force "D," we might still consider the advisability of a raid and retirement. That is to say, General Nixon, with two divisions and three cavalry regiments in the Baghdad area, will be able, whatever the Turks may do :—

1. To spoil their advanced base by removing or destroying all stores and transport now available in the area.
2. To cut them off from all communication with Persia for at least two or three months.
3. To postpone trouble from Afghanistan for that period.
4. To keep the Basra vilayet and the oilfields quiet for a like period.

Before the three months have elapsed, the position may have entirely changed in our favour elsewhere, but whatever we decide we must decide quickly or the moral effect of Kut-el-Amara will have worn off.

I have described the advantages of offensive action, but I am not oblivious to its dangers. The political effect of eventual retirement will be bad, but

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000014

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

I am not in the military secrets of the Government regarding the strategical situation in the Middle East, and therefore I cannot judge of the relative importance of the order in which troops should be despatched to Salonica, or the Dardanelles, or Mesopotamia, or elsewhere, and the delay, for all I know, may be a military necessity, but I am in a position to state positively that, if we postpone unduly the despatch of troops to Mesopotamia we shall be running grave risks there, risks which will be increased enormously if we abandon the Dardanelles, or if we meet with a reverse in the Balkans. In my judgment the only justification for delay is, or can be, the intention to force an issue at Gallipoli by pouring in troops there and taking the place at all costs before the Germans can establish themselves at Constantinople. That seems to me a justifiable reason, because success at Gallipoli will solve all other problems, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Indian, and Balkan. All through this unhappy war we have just failed to win great successes, because we have not exerted sufficient force at the critical moment. The whole essence of war consists in concentrating all effort at the right time and place. If Gallipoli is still recognised as our first objective, I admit that any consequent delay in moving the Indian Army Corps must be accepted as the lesser of two evils, but, failing some such supreme reason, the India Office ought to press on the Government the urgency of the Mesoptamian situation.

It will be seen that I sounded a note of warning a week before the battle of Ctesiphon.—E. G. B.

If we can concentrate three Divisions, or say 30,000 bayonets and sabres in the Baghdad area by the early part of January, I believe we can hold our own against any force the Turks are likely to bring this winter. General Nixon will probably have 12,000 men of his own there; 4,000 men or so are now *en route*, the rest have yet to come from France.

* * * *

APPENDIX IV.

Extract from Sir E. Barrow's opening Statement before the Mesopotamia Commission.

* * * * *

20. On the 22nd November was fought the battle of Ctesiphon, which, though a tactical victory, unhappily proved a strategical retreat, and on the 25th, after the wounded had all been removed, the retreat to Kut-el-Amara commenced.

The *précis* shows how, step by step, the policy of the advance on Baghdad adopted eventually by the Government, was in reality inexorably shaped by the force of circumstances and though nothing can justify failure, it may at least be urged in favour of General Nixon's idea of advancing to Baghdad, that a Turkish offensive in or through Persia would be rendered impossible if we could take and hold that position. At the time anarchy prevailed throughout Persia, and German intrigues were rampant, so that had the Turks not been threatened north of Kut-el-Amara, it is quite conceivable that, while containing us there, they would have pushed into Persia through Khanikin last autumn, and thereby have forestalled the Russians at Karmanshah and got into easy touch with Persian centres of disturbance. Such a result might have been even more disastrous than the surrender of Kut, as all Persia would have gone against us; Afghanistan would have followed suit, and then the whole Indian frontier would have been in a blaze. This, indeed, was the consideration which most influenced the India Office. We assumed from General Nixon's reports—

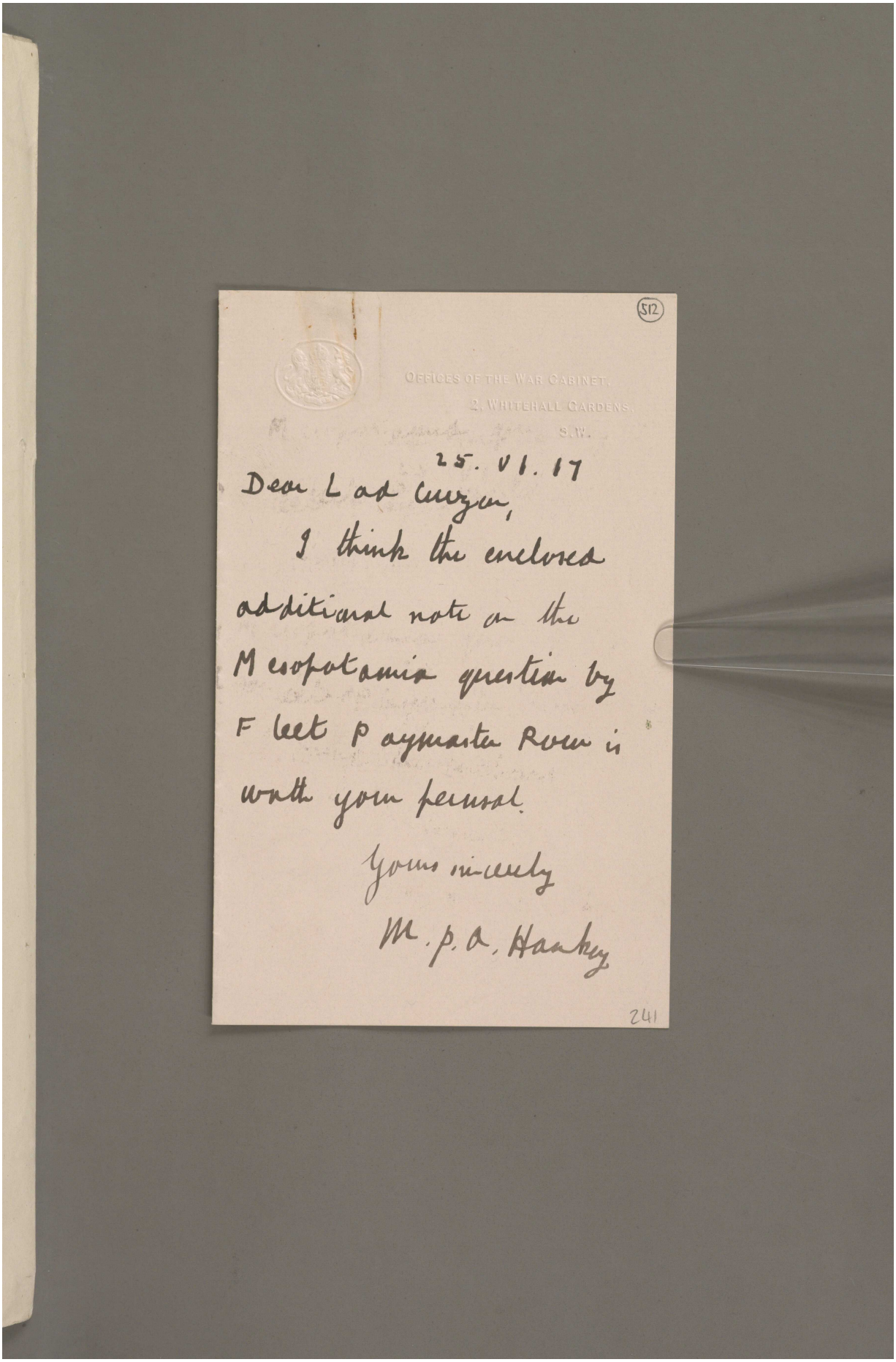
i.e., Autumn 1915.—E.G.B.

(i) That he had in front of him a beaten and demoralized enemy inferior to his own force of 14,000 seasoned troops who for a whole year had been marching from victory to victory.

(ii) That another Turkish defeat, followed by an occupation of Baghdad, offered great strategical and political advantages, viz.:—

(*a*) Interior lines as regards Turkish columns dribbling towards Baghdad by two widely-separated lines of approach—the Tigris line from Mosul and the Euphrates line from Aleppo.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000067



(512)

OFFICES OF THE WAR CABINET,
2, WHITEHALL GARDENS,
S.W.

25. VI. 17

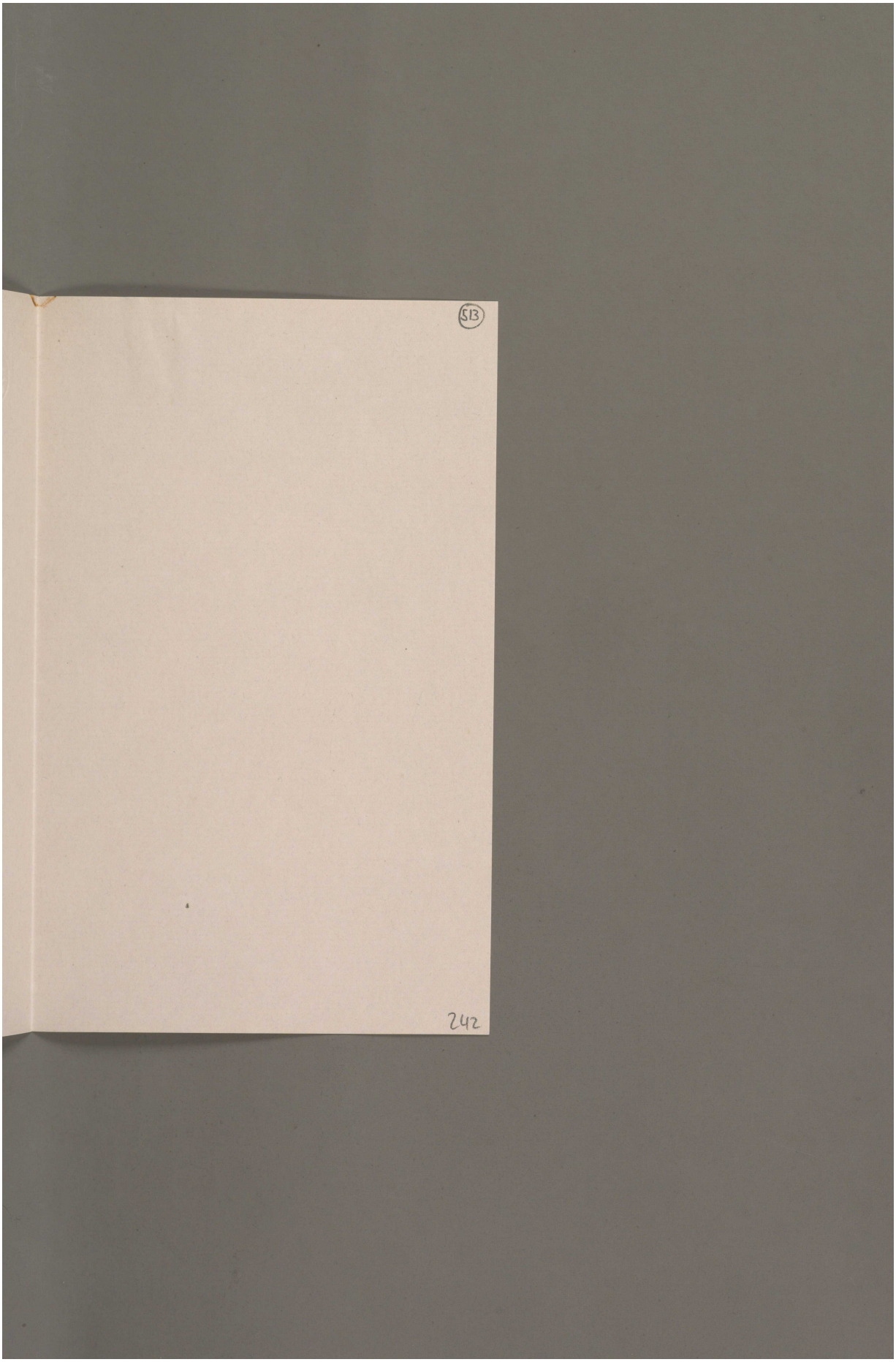
Dear Lord Curzon,

I think the enclosed additional note on the Mesopotamia question by Fleet Paymaster Rowe is worth your perusal.

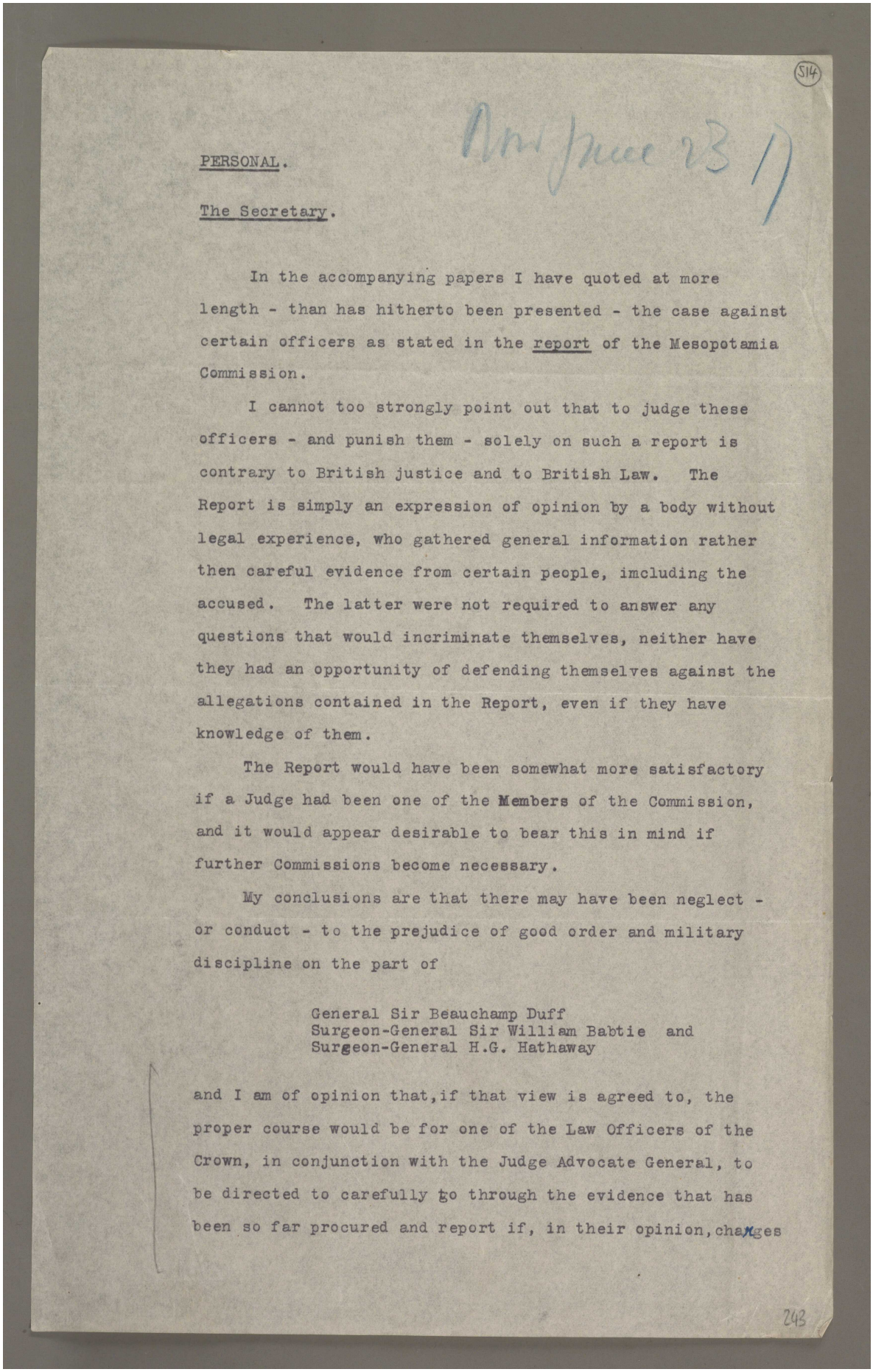
Yours sincerely
M. P. A. Hankey

241

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000007



Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000a4



(514)

PERSONAL.

The Secretary.

In the accompanying papers I have quoted at more length - than has hitherto been presented - the case against certain officers as stated in the report of the Mesopotamia Commission.

I cannot too strongly point out that to judge these officers - and punish them - solely on such a report is contrary to British justice and to British Law. The Report is simply an expression of opinion by a body without legal experience, who gathered general information rather then careful evidence from certain people, imcluding the accused. The latter were not required to answer any questions that would incriminate themselves, neither have they had an opportunity of defending themselves against the allegations contained in the Report, even if they have knowledge of them.

The Report would have been somewhat more satisfactory if a Judge had been one of the Members of the Commission, and it would appear desirable to bear this in mind if further Commissions become necessary.

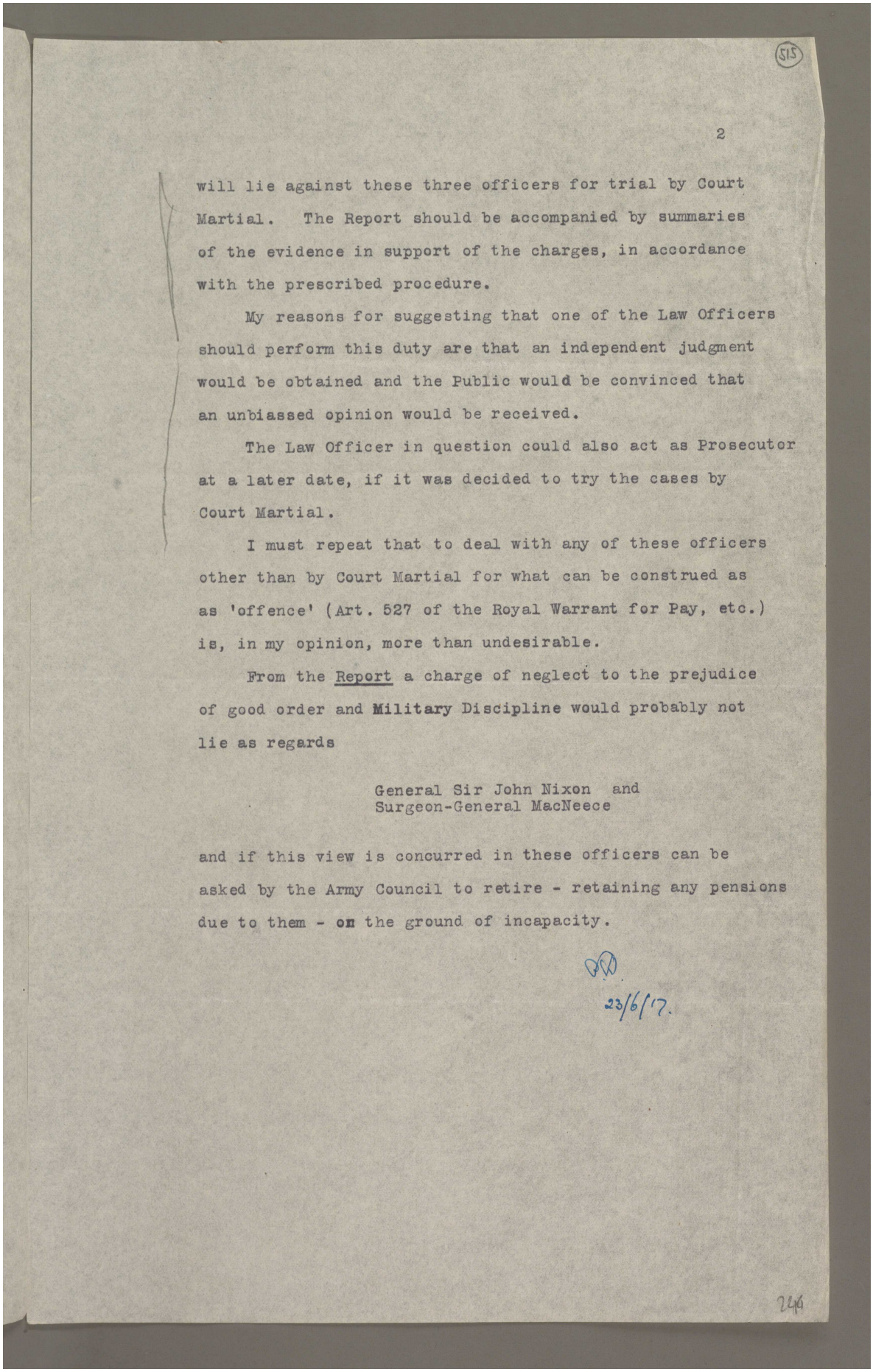
My conclusions are that there may have been neglect - or conduct - to the prejudice of good order and military discipline on the part of

General Sir Beauchamp Duff
Surgeon-General Sir William Babtie and
Surgeon-General H.G. Hathaway

and I am of opinion that, if that view is agreed to, the proper course would be for one of the Law Officers of the Crown, in conjunction with the Judge Advocate General, to be directed to carefully go through the evidence that has been so far procured and report if, in their opinion, charges

243

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00008e



(515)

2

will lie against these three officers for trial by Court Martial. The Report should be accompanied by summaries of the evidence in support of the charges, in accordance with the prescribed procedure.

My reasons for suggesting that one of the Law Officers should perform this duty are that an independent judgment would be obtained and the Public would be convinced that an unbiassed opinion would be received.

The Law Officer in question could also act as Prosecutor at a later date, if it was decided to try the cases by Court Martial.

I must repeat that to deal with any of these officers other than by Court Martial for what can be construed as as 'offence' (Art. 527 of the Royal Warrant for Pay, etc.) is, in my opinion, more than undesirable.

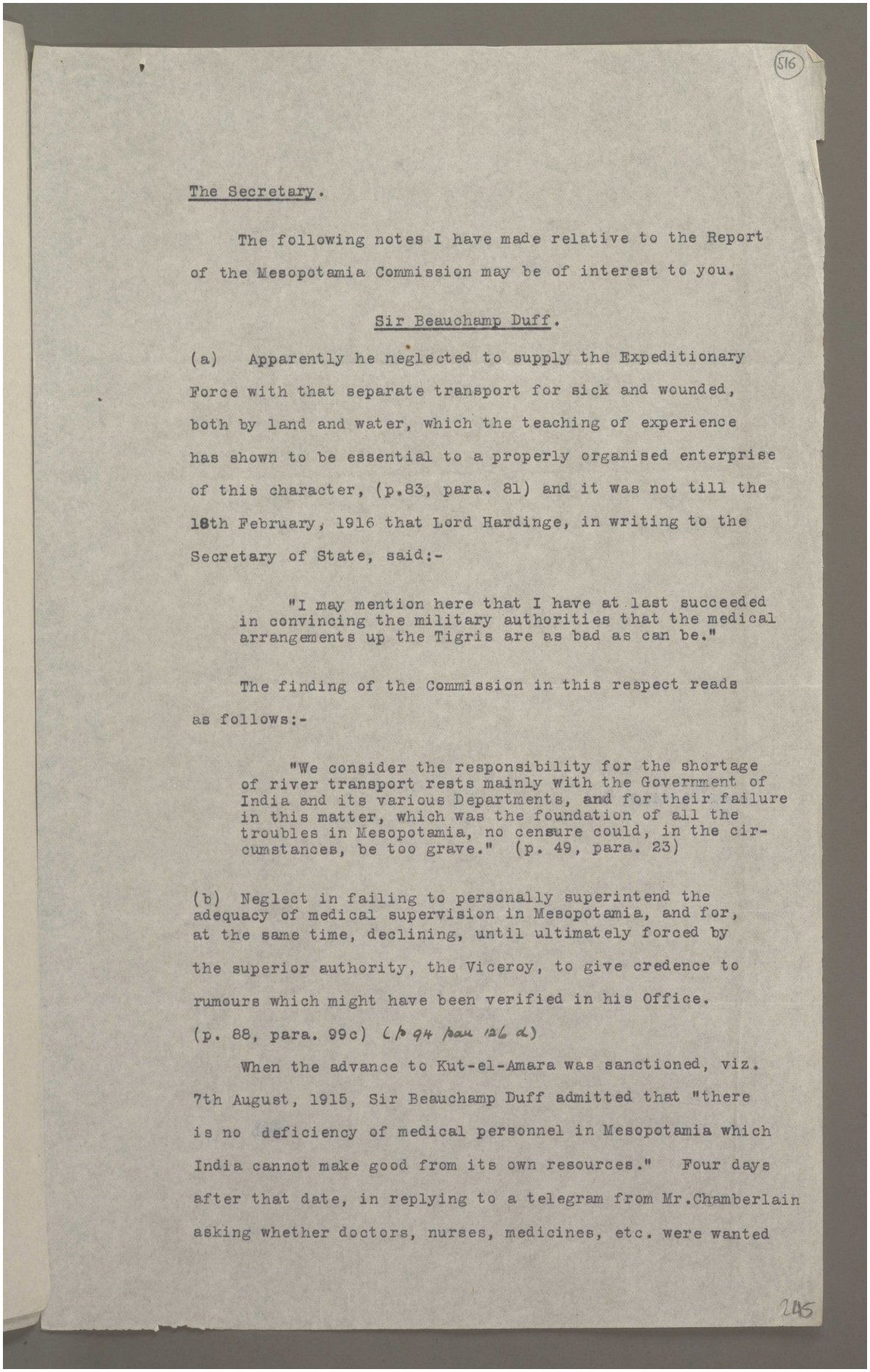
From the Report a charge of neglect to the prejudice of good order and Military Discipline would probably not lie as regards

General Sir John Nixon and
Surgeon-General MacNeece

and if this view is concurred in these officers can be asked by the Army Council to retire - retaining any pensions due to them - on the ground of incapacity.

DH
23/6/17.

246



516

The Secretary.

The following notes I have made relative to the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission may be of interest to you.

Sir Beauchamp Duff.

(a) Apparently he neglected to supply the Expeditionary Force with that separate transport for sick and wounded, both by land and water, which the teaching of experience has shown to be essential to a properly organised enterprise of this character, (p.83, para. 81) and it was not till the 18th February, 1916 that Lord Hardinge, in writing to the Secretary of State, said:-

> "I may mention here that I have at last succeeded in convincing the military authorities that the medical arrangements up the Tigris are as bad as can be."

The finding of the Commission in this respect reads as follows:-

> "We consider the responsibility for the shortage of river transport rests mainly with the Government of India and its various Departments, and for their failure in this matter, which was the foundation of all the troubles in Mesopotamia, no censure could, in the circumstances, be too grave." (p. 49, para. 23)

(b) Neglect in failing to personally superintend the adequacy of medical supervision in Mesopotamia, and for, at the same time, declining, until ultimately forced by the superior authority, the Viceroy, to give credence to rumours which might have been verified in his Office. (p. 88, para. 99c) (p 94 para 126 d)

When the advance to Kut-el-Amara was sanctioned, viz. 7th August, 1915, Sir Beauchamp Duff admitted that "there is no deficiency of medical personnel in Mesopotamia which India cannot make good from its own resources." Four days after that date, in replying to a telegram from Mr.Chamberlain asking whether doctors, nurses, medicines, etc. were wanted

245

in Mesopotamia, the Viceroy replied deprecating the need for assistance in supplying any of these necessaries, adding, "the Government arrange for doctors and medicines."

(c) Delay of three months before reaching a decision as to the building of a railway, which was then refused on the ground of expense. (p. 58, para. 54)

The tendency of the Indian Government to avoid any expenditure from Indian funds was the cause of lack of provision for the wants of the Mesopotamia Expedition during the first sixteen months of its operations. (p. 106, para.41)

(d) Neglect to visit Bombay or Mesopotamia, or to detail some of his Staff to those places, to act as liaison officers and keep him fully informed as to the requirements of the Expeditionary Force, etc. (p. 88, para. 99; p. 101, para.17; p. 111, para. 5)

Sir William Babtie.

(a) Neglect, in incorrectly reporting on the condition and adequacy of Colaba Hospital. (pp. 74 & 75, paras. 53, 54 and 55.)

(b) Neglect to impress on the Departments concerned the necessity of providing in advance medical appliances, etc. (p. 71, para. 40)

(c) Neglect to take the necessary steps to render the food ration suitable for the Expeditionary Force. (p. 72, para. 43)

(d) Knowing the Army Medical Service in India to be organised only for frontier warfare, and, knowing the provision of field ambulances and hospitals to be deficient, and, knowing the medical personnel to be insufficient, negelcting to make adequate efforts to improve these defects so as to efficiently equip the Expedition. (p. 72, para. 44; p. 83, para. 81; p. 100, para. 17)

246

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(It may be thought that, as Sir William Babtie is reported upon as being such a highly capable officer, the measure of any neglect on his part is far greater than in the case of an officer of only ordinary ability.)

Sir John Nixon.

(a) The principal, almost the only real, charge that can be brought against Sir John Nixon is that he recommended the advances in 1915 with insufficient transport and equipment, and, when he had asked for such transport and equipment, he did not appreciate the time which it would take to provide the same; neither did he refer to his own difficulties in this matter (p. 20, para. 4), nor the inevitable augmentation of these difficulties, which would result in prolonging his line of communications by over 200 miles (see also p. 48, para. 18), and that he did not pass on to either India or London the requests he received for further water transport. He points out, however, (see p. 48, para. 21) that he was relieved of direct responsibility for the conduct of the business of providing the requirements of the Forces in the field, and that, when the Government approved the plan of campaign, they at once assumed the responsibilty in principle for the provision of the needs of the requisite Forces. (p. 49, para. 21)

Surgeon-General MacNeece.

Surgeon-General MacNeece was warned in July 1915 by Sir Beauchamp Duff that he should go thoroughly into the question of the adequacy of the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia, and the Commander-in-Chief states that he should have brought to his notice the demands that had been received and the impossibility of meeting them. (p. 83, par 81)

The Commission add that it was the duty of the Commander-

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000001

in-Chief, in dealing with a matter of such great and continuing importance, to satisfy himself by an active supervision that his subordinates were not neglecting their instructions. There is no evidence in the Report to say what Surgeon-General MacNeece did do, or failed to do, in this matter.

Apart from this, Suregon-General MacNeece was directed to proceed to Basra "to confer" with the authorities there (p. 85, para. 90), and reported to Sir Percy Lake that "the whole business is bad". It is stated, however, that his official report on his return on the 27th January, 1916, was colourless. In spite of that, however, it seems to have convinced the Commander-in-Chief that further inquiry was called for. (p. 87, para. 97)

The Commission sum up, as regards Surgeon-General MacNeece, that he was "in our opinion, an officer thoroughly desirous of fulfilling the duties consigned to him. He was a man of passing years, diminishing strength, and unequal to the position he was called upon to fill, and his administration appears to us to show no signs of the vigour and efficiency that were required".

From this one might assume that he came under the heading of 'incapable', not guilty of culpable neglect.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000068

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

CHARGES THAT MAY BE POSSIBLE AGAINST SURGEON GENERAL HATHAWAY.

(Based only on the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission.)

Culpable neglect in omitting to make a report about the end of October 1915 pointing out the deficiencies in the medical arrangements that prevailed (and ? still prevailed) after the first battle of Kut.
(page 76,par 56)

Culpable neglect in not reporting the breakdown in the medical arrangements after the battle of Ctesiphon (p. 76,par.59) in November 1915.

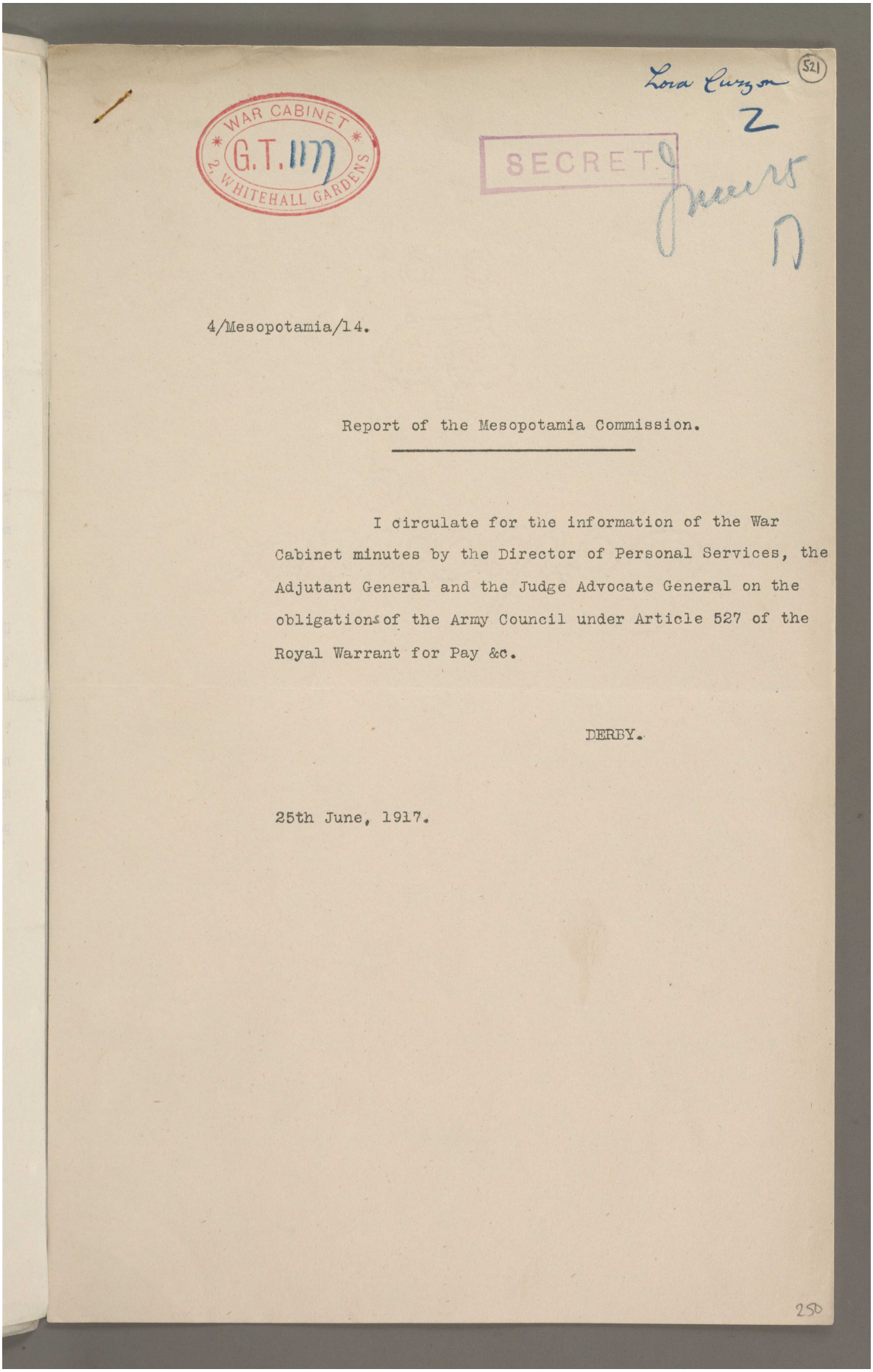
Neglect to the prejudice of good order and Military Discipline in not reporting fully to the Director of Medical Services in India on the medical situation in Mesopotamia,and proposing action with a view to remedy being made at the earliest date. (p.80,par.74)

Neglect to the prejudice of good order and Military discipline in not taking steps to ~~pleae~~ purify the drinking water used by the troops
(p. 81.par 74)

? Neglect to the prejudice of good order and Military Discipline in not urging the necessity for adequate and suitable transport for the sick and wounded with that insistency which the situation demanded.(p.114, par 17)

23/6/17.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x0000a0



4/Mesopotamia/14.

Report of the Mesopotamia Commission.

I circulate for the information of the War Cabinet minutes by the Director of Personal Services, the Adjutant General and the Judge Advocate General on the obligations of the Army Council under Article 527 of the Royal Warrant for Pay &c.

DERBY.

25th June, 1917.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00002b

(522)

The question has arisen as to the circumstances under which an officer can be removed from the Army, called upon to retire or to resign his commission, and by and under what authority such disciplinary action can be taken.

The recent Inquiry set up by the House of Commons into the case of Second Lieutenant Barrett might have produced a situation much as follows and I will suppose for the sake of argument that the recommendations of the Commission were to the effect that certain officers should be called upon to retire. I will suppose that the Commission made recommendations to this effect to the Cabinet and the Cabinet directed the Army Council to give effect to them. I will suppose that the Army Council did not agree with the views and finding of the Commission and that an impasse was reached wherein the Army Council disagreed with the Cabinet. The question arises could the Cabinet enforce upon the Army Council their views and require them to give effect to their decision. In my opinion they could not for the following reasons :-

An officer serves under a particular Act of Parliament, namely, the Army Act. He has certain remedies under that Act contained in Section 42 and I will allude to this again at a later date. The liabilities under which an officer suffers in regard to his removal, retirement, or resignation, are contained in Articles 525 and 527 of the Royal Warrant.

I will leave Article 525 out of the question for a moment as the removal of an officer from the Army can be effected summarily by the Sovereign without any question of opinion arising but under Article 527 it is laid down that an officer may at any time be called upon to retire or resign his commission should the circumstances of the case in the opinion of Our Army Council require it. I should argue that under these circumstances the opinion of Our Army Council, that is to say, a quorum of three members, must be formed upon the facts laid before them having regard to all the evidence which may be available. I hold that it is incumbent upon the Army Council to enquire into all the evidence before coming to that opinion and that they could not in law or in equity accept the opinion or the directions of the Cabinet if in fact their opinion did not coincide with that of the Cabinet.

I wish to further strengthen my argument by emphasizing the fact that every officer has under Section 42 of the Army Act a statutory right of complaint. Section 42 of the Army Act lays down that if an officer thinks himself wronged..... he may complain to the Army Council in order to obtain justice, the Army Council are required to examine into such complaint and through a Secretary of State to make their report to His Majesty in order to receive the directions of His Majesty thereon.

It is here convenient to refer to Note 2 to that Section wherein it is expressed inter alia that the Army Council are required to examine into the complaint and report to His Majesty and that they are not debarred from expressing their own view of the case.

Supposing for the moment that the Army Council dealt with an officer under Article 527 of the Royal Warrant

without

251

without forming an opinion but merely accepting the directions of the Cabinet it is obvious I submit that if an Appeal were addressed to the Army Council under Section 42 of the Army Act they would in law be required to examine into such complaint. Such examination would, of course, require the scrutiny of all the evidence bearing upon the case and it is conceivable that on the examination required under Section 42 they might come to the conclusion that the Appeal should be so upheld and so recommend through a Secretary of State to His Majesty.

A recent case in the High Courts of Justice has but confirmed the opinion which has been held by lawyers in regard to the rights of an officer. The Lord Chief Justice (I am merely quoting his words from memory) laid down in his judgment that where an officer is serving under a military code he cannot seek redress for supposed wrongs by any other channels than those laid down in the Army Act. Under those circumstances I suggest that his disposal cannot be effected by any other means except under the provisions of the Army Act and the Royal Warrant.

My memorandum may, of course, appear ridiculous and suggest that the Army Council are superior to the Cabinet - that is not my intention. I maintain that the Army Council are by law required under Section 42 to examine and under Article 527 of the Royal Warrant to form an opinion; that opinion I submit must be their own, unfettered and duly formed upon the facts and the evidence which must of necessity be submitted to them. They cannot divest themselves of their statutory obligations which devolve upon them under the Letters Patent which created them. The solution of the problem, of course, is that if the Army Council cannot agree with the Cabinet then the Cabinet would have to find an Army Council that would. They would in fact have to go on until they created an Army Council who in a quorum of three would form the opinion which the Cabinet desired.

In conclusion I would suggest that by law the Army Council in such cases could not accept the ipse dixit of the Cabinet but are required "to examine" and "form an opinion". If the Army Council took action under Article 527 and called upon an officer to retire under the directions of the Cabinet without enquiring into the facts of the case and forming an opinion I would suggest that their action would be ultra vires and that in the event of an appeal against that decision being received from the officer concerned under Section 42 of the Army Act they would be required to "examine into such complaint". Such examination, of course, of necessity would take the form of an examination of all the evidence brought against the officer which led to his being called upon to retire. If it were admitted for the sake of argument that the Army Council could blindly call upon an officer to retire without making any enquiry into the evidence against him how could such action be maintained if in the event of an Appeal they would subsequently be required by law to enquire into it.

(Sgd.) B.E.W. Childs.

25/6/17. D.P.S.

252

(524)

2.

I entirely agree with the above minute.

(Intld.) C.F.N.M.,
A.G.

3.

J.A.G.

May I have your remarks please.

(Signed) B.E.W. Childs,
D.P.S.

23/6/17.

4.

D.P.S.

1. I concur in the views expressed in the above minute as to the legal position of the Army Council under Article 527 of the Royal Warrant for Pay and Section 42 of the Army Act.

2. If in the circumstances stated the Army Council were called upon to require a particular Officer to retire or resign his Commission under Article 527 of the Royal Warrant, it would in my opinion be the duty of the Army Council to form and express their own opinion according to the merits and justice of the case, and they would not in my opinion be bound or entitled to act merely upon instructions received from the Cabinet. The duty of forming an opinion is cast upon the Army Council itself by the words of Article 527.

3. If an Officer who had been called upon to retire or resign his commission under Article 527 were to complain to the Army Council under section 42 of the Army Act it would be the duty of the Army Council themselves to examine into such complaint and through a Secretary of State to make their Report to His Majesty in order to receive the directions of His Majesty thereon. This is a statutory duty of a quasi-judicial nation imposed on the Army Council by the Army Act and if it could be proved that they had failed to discharge it I think that they could be compelled to do so.

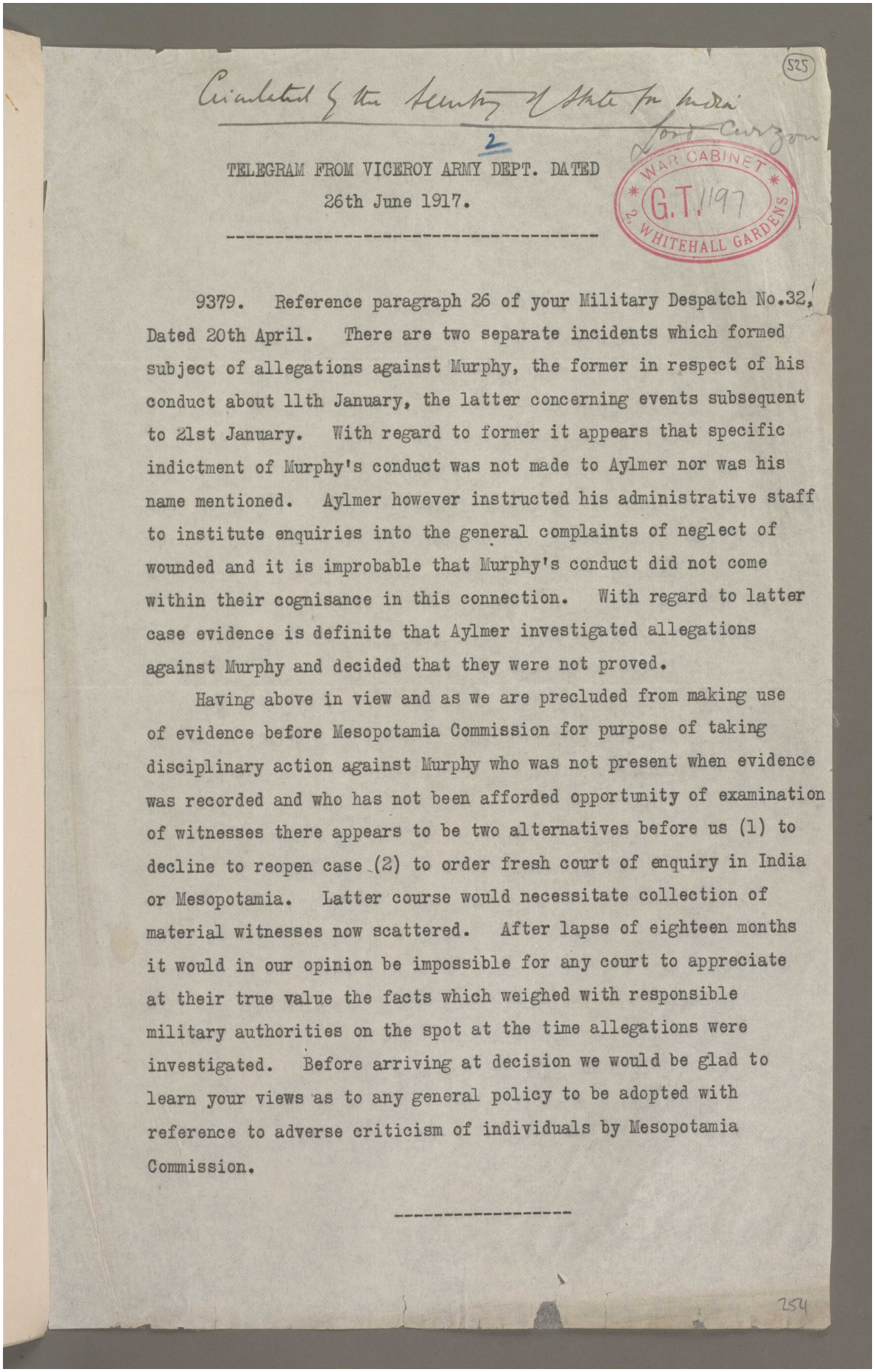
4. It would, I think, be unreasonable to hold that there was an obligation on the Army Council on the instructions of the Cabinet to express an opinion under Article 527 of the Royal Warrant, which they could not support or endorse in a Report which it might subsequently become their duty to make under section 42 of the Army Act.

5. I have dealt only with the position of the Army Council under Article 527 of the Royal Warrant. The Prerogation of His Majesty to dispense with the services of an Officer at any time is undoubted, and if His Majesty did so on the advice of the Cabinet, the Officer would have no legal remedy.

25/6/17

(Sd.) F. Cassel,
J.A.G.

253



525

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India

Lord Curzon

2

TELEGRAM FROM VICEROY ARMY DEPT. DATED
26th June 1917.

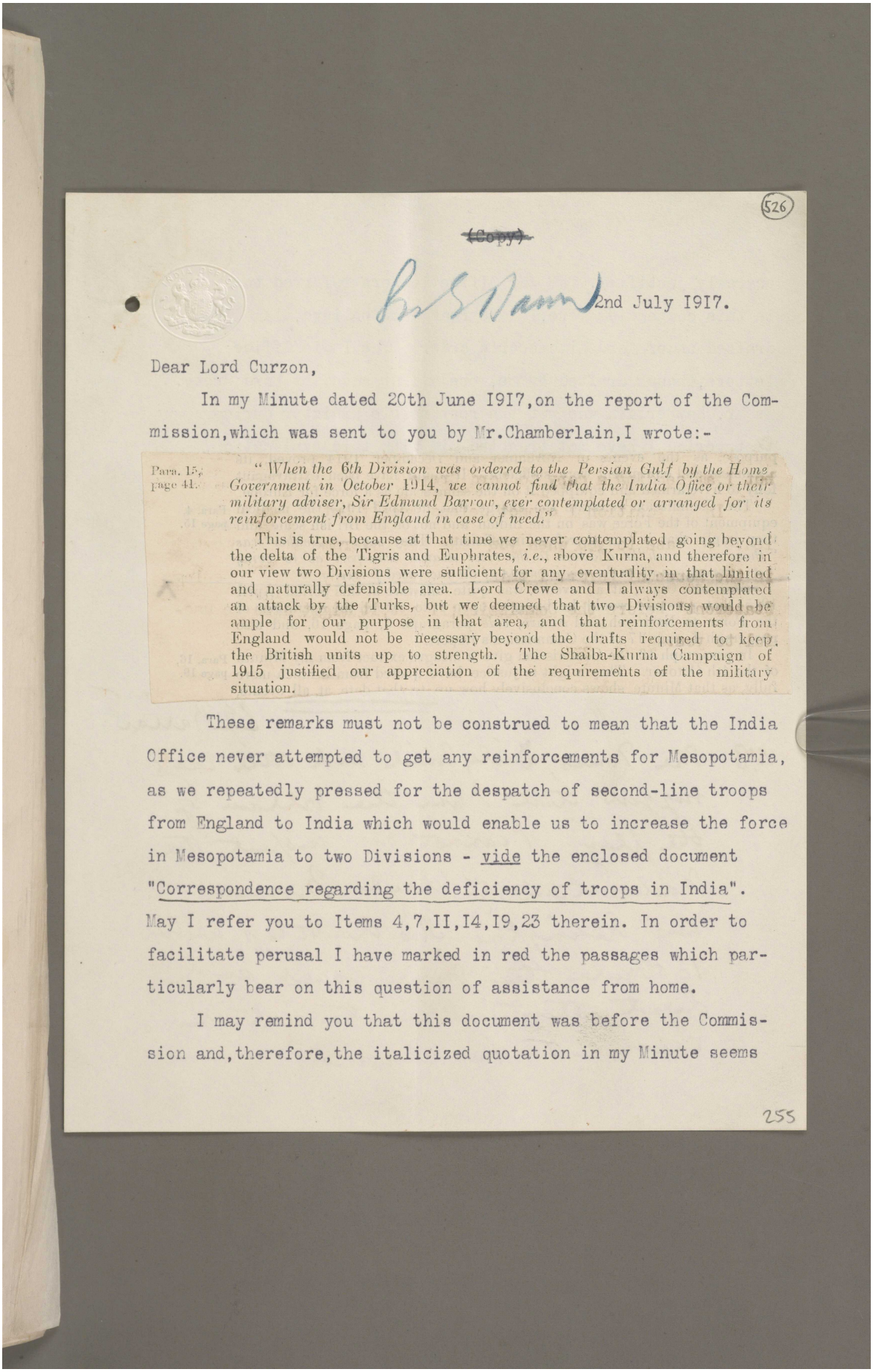
WAR CABINET G.T.1197 2, WHITEHALL GARDENS

9379. Reference paragraph 26 of your Military Despatch No.32, Dated 20th April. There are two separate incidents which formed subject of allegations against Murphy, the former in respect of his conduct about 11th January, the latter concerning events subsequent to 21st January. With regard to former it appears that specific indictment of Murphy's conduct was not made to Aylmer nor was his name mentioned. Aylmer however instructed his administrative staff to institute enquiries into the general complaints of neglect of wounded and it is improbable that Murphy's conduct did not come within their cognisance in this connection. With regard to latter case evidence is definite that Aylmer investigated allegations against Murphy and decided that they were not proved.

Having above in view and as we are precluded from making use of evidence before Mesopotamia Commission for purpose of taking disciplinary action against Murphy who was not present when evidence was recorded and who has not been afforded opportunity of examination of witnesses there appears to be two alternatives before us (1) to decline to reopen case (2) to order fresh court of enquiry in India or Mesopotamia. Latter course would necessitate collection of material witnesses now scattered. After lapse of eighteen months it would in our opinion be impossible for any court to appreciate at their true value the facts which weighed with responsible military authorities on the spot at the time allegations were investigated. Before arriving at decision we would be glad to learn your views as to any general policy to be adopted with reference to adverse criticism of individuals by Mesopotamia Commission.

254

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000039



526

~~(Copy)~~

2nd July 1917.

Dear Lord Curzon,

In my Minute dated 20th June 1917, on the report of the Commission, which was sent to you by Mr. Chamberlain, I wrote:-

Para. 15, page 44. "*When the 6th Division was ordered to the Persian Gulf by the Home Government in October 1914, we cannot find that the India Office or their military adviser, Sir Edmund Barrow, ever contemplated or arranged for its reinforcement from England in case of need.*"

This is true, because at that time we never contemplated going beyond the delta of the Tigris and Euphrates, *i.e.*, above Kurna, and therefore in our view two Divisions were sufficient for any eventuality in that limited and naturally defensible area. Lord Crewe and I always contemplated an attack by the Turks, but we deemed that two Divisions would be ample for our purpose in that area, and that reinforcements from England would not be necessary beyond the drafts required to keep the British units up to strength. The Shaiba-Kurna Campaign of 1915 justified our appreciation of the requirements of the military situation.

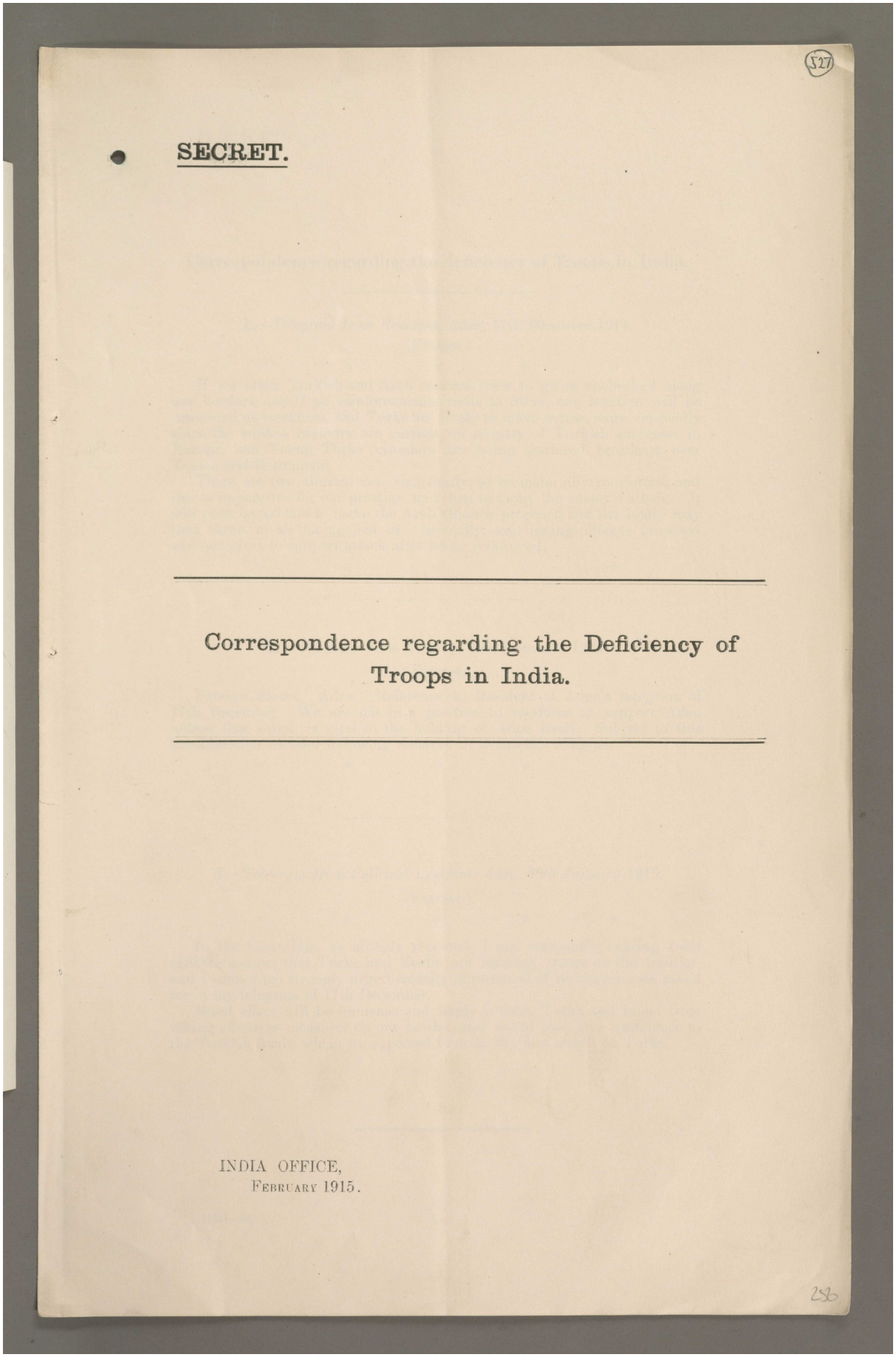
These remarks must not be construed to mean that the India Office never attempted to get any reinforcements for Mesopotamia, as we repeatedly pressed for the despatch of second-line troops from England to India which would enable us to increase the force in Mesopotamia to two Divisions - vide the enclosed document "Correspondence regarding the deficiency of troops in India". May I refer you to Items 4,7,11,14,19,23 therein. In order to facilitate perusal I have marked in red the passages which particularly bear on this question of assistance from home.

I may remind you that this document was before the Commission and, therefore, the italicized quotation in my Minute seems

255

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



(527)

SECRET.

Correspondence regarding the Deficiency of Troops in India.

INDIA OFFICE,
FEBRUARY 1915.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00001b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

528

Correspondence regarding the deficiency of Troops in India.

1.—*Telegram from Resident, Aden*, 17th *December* 1914.

(Extract.)

* * * * *

If we allow Turkish and Arab concentration to go on unchecked along our borders, and if no reinforcements come to Aden, our inaction will be construed as weakness, and Turks are likely to move across, more especially since the wildest rumours are current up country of Turkish successes in Europe, and Young Turks' circulars are being scattered broadcast over Yemen and Hadramaut.

There are two alternatives, viz., firstly, to be materially reinforced, and this is imperative for our prestige, and then to await the enemy's attack. It will then be too late to make the Arab alliance proposed and the Imam may then throw in his lot against us. Secondly, sanctioning alliance proposed and ourselves to support attack after being reinforced.

* * * * *

2.—*Telegram from Viceroy*, 20*th December* 1914.

(Extract.)

Foreign Secret. Aden. Reference to Resident at Aden's telegram of 17th December. We are not in a position to reinforce or support Aden unless that action is vital to the holding of Aden itself. Subject to this consideration we offer following remarks on Resident's telegram.

* * * * *

3.—*Telegram from Political Resident, Aden*, 20*th January* 1915.

(Extract.)

* * * * *

In the meantime, as already reported, I am constantly hearing from reliable sources that Turks and Zeidis are massing troops on the frontier, and I cannot too strongly urge necessity of presence of reinforcements asked for in my telegram of 17th December.

Moral effect will be immense and likely to deter Turks and Imam from taking offensive measures on our border, and would also give confidence to the Turkish Arabs whom we expected to make the first attack on Turks.

257

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000070

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

The general conclusion at which I arrive is that we require for the control of South-West Persia and for the reinforcement of General Barrett's Expeditionary Force at least another Division.

Muscat.—Our Ally, the Sultan of Muscat, has lately been in a precarious position, and but for the recent opportune repulse of the Imam's forces by about 900 Indian infantry sent to support his authority he might have been driven into the sea. So untoward an event would have greatly inflamed the Arab mind and increased the number of our enemies.

Aden.—This fortress, considering its unique position, is absolutely safe from a land attack. It has a garrison of—

3 Companies Royal Artillery.
1 Battalion Territorials.
2 Battalions Indian Infantry.
1 Squadron Camelry.

This garrison with naval support is doubtless sufficient to hold its own against any Turko-Arab attack, but it is quite inadequate to protect the outlying settlement of Shaikh Othman, our feudatory the Sultan of Lahej and the Abdali tribe generally. If we cannot protect these people we expose them to the ravages of their enemies, and consequent on such a misfortune will be the certainty that the whole of the powerful political influence which we have laboriously built up in half a century will crumble to pieces.

In my judgment we ought to reinforce Aden with at least a Mountain Battery and two battalions of good Indian infantry, so as to be able to give support to our allies in the Hinterland.

East Africa.—The situation in East Africa is to say the least of it disappointing. Instead of over-running German East Africa all we can do is to protect our own territories. Although no immediate action may be necessary, it cannot be disputed that we cannot assume the offensive without another Brigade, and when one can be spared for the purpose it should be sent, as unquestionably it is desirable to retrieve our military prestige in East Africa as soon as possible.

This brief summary of our position shows that for the successful accomplishment of the military obligations we have incurred we require some 19 battalions of Infantry with a due proportion of other arms, viz. :—

	Batteries R.F.A.	Batteries Mountain Artillery.	Regiment Cavalry.	Battalions British Infantry.	Battalions Indian Infantry.
For South-West Persia and Mesopotamia - -	3	2	1	3	10
For Aden - -	—	1	—	—	2
For East Africa - -	—	—	—	—	4
Total - -	3	3	1	3	16

We shall at once be told that neither India nor Egypt can spare this force. Nor can they at present from existing resources, but I venture to submit that the problem is not insoluble if we apply to it a just and reasoned assessment of our various military obligations and their comparative importance.

The suggestion I would now make with a view to solving the problem is that we should at once despatch to India a Division of the 3rd or 4th New Armies and a Brigade of Artillery. These, while good enough even now for garrison purposes in India, could complete their training and be got ready for the field later on. With this reinforcement on its way India would be able to provide at once the forces noted in the above table for service out of India. The British Infantry and Artillery could be detailed from the regular units in the 2nd (Rawal Pindi) Division or the 4th Division (Quetta),

258

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00007f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Lynch's steamers and other available transport can probably convey a few mountain guns and a couple of battalions which should suffice to hearten Sheikh and his adherents as the Turkish raid is probably more formidable as regards potential numbers than as regards its military value while Ahwaz affords a good defensible *point d'appui*. I am asking Admiralty to send "Odin" back to Shatt without delay and am also pressing War Office for further reinforcements of second line troops from this side, which would replace 12th Brigade in India and enable you to bring Barrett's force up to equivalent of two Divisions. It may be advisable to secure Bakhtiaris' loyalty by the promise of next half year's oil dividend in advance.

Please acquaint me fully with your views on above suggestions and of action you propose to take therein. I assume that Barrett now has five battalions and two batteries at Basra besides cavalry and sappers; so if Barrett sends force at once to Ahwaz as proposed above he may think it necessary to strengthen Basra garrison by troops from Kurna pending the arrival of 12th Brigade. I understand that without reinforcements from here you can send no more troops from India except cavalry as already suggested and possibly some sappers.

7.—India Office to War Office.

No. 1610. (Secret.) India Office,
Sir, 30th January 1915.

I am directed by the Secretary of State to call attention to the serious military situation in India involved by the urgent necessity of sending reinforcements to the Persian Gulf. As you are aware, a threatened attack on the Karun oil fields and pipe line, together with the increasing menace to our position on the Shatt-el-Arab owing to the co-operation of the Arabs with the Turkish troops, has compelled the Government of India to despatch a Brigade from Karachi to meet the emergency.

The Secretary of State is convinced that this reinforcement should be speedily followed by others if we are to maintain our position, and that General Barrett's force in the Persian Gulf should be raised without delay to the strength of two Divisions. He is further of opinion that we ought to have a Brigade in readiness in India to reinforce Aden at short notice, but I am to point out that India is totally unable to provide these reinforcements unless British troops can be despatched to India forthwith, to ensure her internal security and adequate forces for the defence of her frontier. I am, therefore, to ask whether the Secretary of State for War can arrange for the very early despatch of at least eight battalions to India. Highly trained troops are not necessary for this purpose, and Lord Crewe will be well satisfied if battalions of the New Armies or Territorials can be detailed for this duty. These troops will be able to complete their training in India and will then eventually be fitted to release other fully trained units.

* *Vide* page 8.

The attached table* will show the inadequacy of the present garrison of India.

I have, &c.,
E. G. Barrow, General,
Military Secretary.

The Secretary, War Office.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000008

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

8.—*Telegram from Viceroy, 30th January* 1915.

H. 3501. Your No. 1607. 12th Brigade should arrive at Mohammerah about 7th February. It is possible that they may be too late to protect pipe-line and oil-fields, but, in our opinion, their protection should not be regarded as our principal object which is to crush any attacks on Kurna or Basra. Defeat at either of these places necessarily involves subsequent destruction of oil-fields and pipe-line. In our view Barrett should not detach troops to Ahwaz unless he feels confident that he can safely spare them and we doubt whether this is his opinion. In any case the whole decision must be left to him as he alone is in a position to judge. We shall be glad to receive any reinforcements that can be sent us but would prefer that this should, if possible, take form of a return of a division of our own troops from Egypt. Second line troops from Home can hardly be regarded as suited to frontier defence. Without reinforcements we can send no more troops to Mesopotamia except three squadrons of 16th Cavalry now under orders and, perhaps, a Territorial battery.

We are repeating your telegram and this reply to Barrett and are asking for his views. Question of securing Bakhtiari loyalty by promise of next half-year's dividends in advance will be replied to separately.

9.—*Telegram from Viceroy, 1st February* 1915.

(Extract.)

* * * * *

Private. I entirely agree with the view that Force D should be increased to two divisions. In that case we could advance to Nasiriyeh and Amara, should the military authorities consider this desirable. Cox maintains that Basrah will not settle down until this advance is made. When I have seen Barrett I will telegraph further on this point.

As regards nature of reinforcements I am very strongly of opinion that India should now receive back from Egypt one of our two divisions that are there, and which would not have been allowed to go, had we known the demands which would be made of us in the Gulf. We can spare no more Regular troops from India, and it would be madness to send Territorial troops to the north-west frontier. I may mention that the last lot of Territorials sent to India, the Wessex Reserve Division, have in my and the Commander-in-Chief's opinion, very small military value.

10.—*Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, 1st February* 1915.

1615. Your 3501. I quite agree that Basra and Kurna are more important factors in military situations than Karun, and must be the first consideration, but if situation in Shatt region is, in Barrett's opinion, such that troops can be temporarily spared for defence of latter it may be prudent to support the Sheikh as Turkish success of that side might have a very far-reaching political effect and directly endanger our military position at Basra and Kurna. It is to enable Barrett to act if necessary in Karun direction that I have obtained concurrence of Foreign Office who have informed Teheran. The question simply resolves itself into whether Barrett is confident whether he can or not safely detach troops during this week pending arrival of 12th Brigade. Prompt support now may obviate larger military efforts later.

As regards reinforcements from Egypt or England I will reply later.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000082

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

reinforcements from home or Egypt are furnished. Please cable if this correctly represents case. It will make position perfectly clear if you express urgent need of reinforcements as well as inability to give it from existing Indian resources. I am quite convinced of necessity of reinforcing Barrett up to two Divisions as apart from menace on Karun side it is obvious that Turks are concentrating troops in Mesopotamia. In my view the need of reinforcing India by a proportion of British units is a more important consideration than the risk run by you parting with the Indian complement of two more brigades, although the latter should not be ignored.

14.—India Office to War Office.

No. 1623. Secret.

India Office,
4th February 1915.

Sir,

In reply to your letter No. 0161/3146 (M.O. 1), of the 2nd February 1915, I am directed by the Secretary of State for India to make the following remarks thereon.

Lord Crewe fully endorses the view of the Army Council as to the primary demands on His Majesty's Forces, he also accepts their view that the battalions of the 1st Wessex Division ought now to be fit to take up duties "near the Frontier," by which he understands that they might be employed on garrison duty at places like Quetta and Rawal Pindi, but this qualified description of their military value does not admit of the relief of all the nine British regular battalions allotted to the defence of the frontier, as such battalions should be fully trained and capable of working independently or in Brigade in frontier warfare.

2. Lord Crewe is, however, prepared under the exceptional circumstances of the time to allow three of the nine battalions* in question to be sent on service to the Persian Gulf, *provided* that three more battalions of second line troops are sent from England to take the places of Territorial battalions sent up to the Frontier Divisions. As regards the seven Indian battalions still required to complete the Persian Gulf Force to two Divisions, these might be speedily furnished from the Indian troops in Egypt, if a proportion of the latter can now be spared, as seems possible, from recent rumours. Otherwise they would have to be found from the troops now allotted to internal defence, in which case Lord Crewe would reluctantly have to press for more infantry from England to replace them.

* One of the nine has just been so sent.

3. The Secretary of State is responsible that all due and reasonable provision is made for the peace and security of the Indian Empire, and he therefore feels it his duty to place on record what is the exact position in India.

There are at the present moment 112 British and Indian battalions in that country. Deducting the battalions composing the three Frontier Field Divisions and those required to complete a second Division for the Persian Gulf, there is a balance of 64 battalions only available for the internal defence of all India, from Aden to Bhamo and from Chitral to Cape Comorin, whereas according to the Nicholson Commission of 1912 there should be 89 battalions. There would thus be a shortage of 25 battalions which cannot be regarded as a satisfactory condition of affairs. The details are more fully shown in the accompanying tabular statement.†

† See page 8.

4. It will be observed that the extra troops that might be required for Aden and East Africa are not included in this estimate, and therefore as regards the concluding remark of your letter under reply I am to point out that it was never suggested by this Office that a Brigade would be required to reinforce the Aden garrison, but that a couple of battalions and a mountain battery might be necessary to support the Abdali Sultan and our other friends in south-west Arabia, a contingency which has been frequently dwelt on recently in the telegrams from the Resident at Aden.

5. Apart from all arithmetical calculations the real measure of our safety in India is the relative value of the British troops now composing the

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000b4

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

recommend as a better alternative to paying the money to Mavia that a British force of one brigade of infantry and one mountain battery should be sent to Dala. I have no doubt such an advance on our part will call in all our tribes as well as Mavia who would fight with us in defence of their interests. Situation is entirely changed since the Turks crossed the frontier, and it is now imperative for British prestige among our protected tribes that the British should take action and lead them against Turks and not leave it to Mavia, a Turkish Arab, to do."

17.—*Telegram from Viceroy, 10th February* 1915.

(Extract.)

* * * * *

Private. The serious side of the situation, as far as India is concerned, is that if Persia joins Turkey it will be very difficult for the Amir to resist any longer influences in Afghanistan which are already preaching a Jihad amongst some of the tribes. This would create a critical situation on the frontier and amongst our frontier tribes, and it might so far affect our position as to necessitate recall of some of our troops from overseas. It is therefore very desirable in every way that Persia should maintain her neutrality.

18.—War Office to India Office.

No. 121/2760. (M.O. 1.) War Office, London, S.W.,
Sir, 11th February 1915.

I am commanded by the Army Council to acknowledge your letter, M. 2461, of the 3rd February, on the subject of reinforcements lately received from India for the Indian Contingent.

As indicated in the enclosures to my letter of 28th January 1915, the reports on the subject received from General Headquarters in France are to the effect that the later drafts which have arrived from India to replace casualties at the front are satisfactory. The Army Council fully appreciate the efforts which have been made, and they realize the strain which these demands must throw upon the military organisation in India: they trust, however, that this organisation will prove itself capable of dealing with the difficulties of the situation.

As regards the position for internal security in India, to which a reference is made in your communication under reply, I am to ask you to invite the attention of Lord Crewe to War Office letter No. 0164/3146 of the 11th instant, which sets forth the views of the Council on that subject.

I am, &c.,
R. H. Brade.

The Under Secretary of State
for India.

19.—War Office to India Office.

No. 0164/3146. (M.O. 1.) War Office, London, S.W.,
Sir, 11th February 1915.

In reply to your letter of the 4th instant, No. 1623, I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you that they must still adhere to the views expressed in their letter of 2nd February that the prosecution of the war on the Continent is of primary importance; and the necessity for making adequate provision for its strenuous prosecution, as well as for the maintenance of the efficient defence of this country, does not allow of further troops being taken from home for despatch to India, as suggested in your letter under reply. Neither are they in a position, in view of the facts reported from Egypt in the most recent telegrams (copies of which are attached), showing that our forces there are now seriously engaged with the enemy, to detach any Indian troops from Egypt to the Persian Gulf.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x00004a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

22.—*Telegram from Viceroy, 15th February 1915.*

Foreign Secret. Basra. Cox reports position at Ahwaz unchanged. Turco-Arab force crossed Karka 20 miles west of Ahwaz. All still well at oil-fields but Arab tribesmen on both sides of Karun river gradually seceding from Sheikh of Mohammerah. Holy War is professed but discontent with Sheikh's rule and his association with us is important factor. Shiekh says that (?) Muhaisin Sheikhs are getting restless and fear that their tribesmen at Ahwaz will be carried with tide unless British promptly occupy Ahwaz in sufficient force. General Officer Commanding has sent up two Native Infantry regiments, two field guns, two mountain (?) guns, 30 Cavalry and 25 British Infantry, which is all he can spare.

23.—India Office to War Office.

M. 5400. India Office,
Sir, 16th February 1915.

With reference to your letter No. 121/2760 of the 11th February the Secretary of State for India deems it desirable to point out that the improvement in the quality of the recent drafts despatched from India to France must not be accepted as a proof that the military organization in India is capable of indefinitely coping with the difficulties of the situation. These recent reinforcements are largely composed, not as hitherto of reservists and fully trained recruits from regimental depôts and linked battalions, but of detachments and even companies of soldiers from other regiments in India. For example, as the resources of the 39th Garhwalis had been wholly exhausted, the 38th Dogras at the Malakand has been drawn upon to complete the deficiencies in the 39th, and similarly, a double company from the Guides has been sent to the 57th Wilde's Rifles. This process obviously cannot be often repeated, as in that case the regiments in India on whom we now rely for the defence of the Indian Frontier and for the maintenance of internal order would be so depleted as to be incapable of performing those duties. The superiority therefore of these recent drafts, so far from proving the elasticity of our military organization, clearly indicates the probability that India will soon cease to send drafts of a satisfactory standard, while at the same time certain units in India will suffer in efficiency through having furnished these detachments.

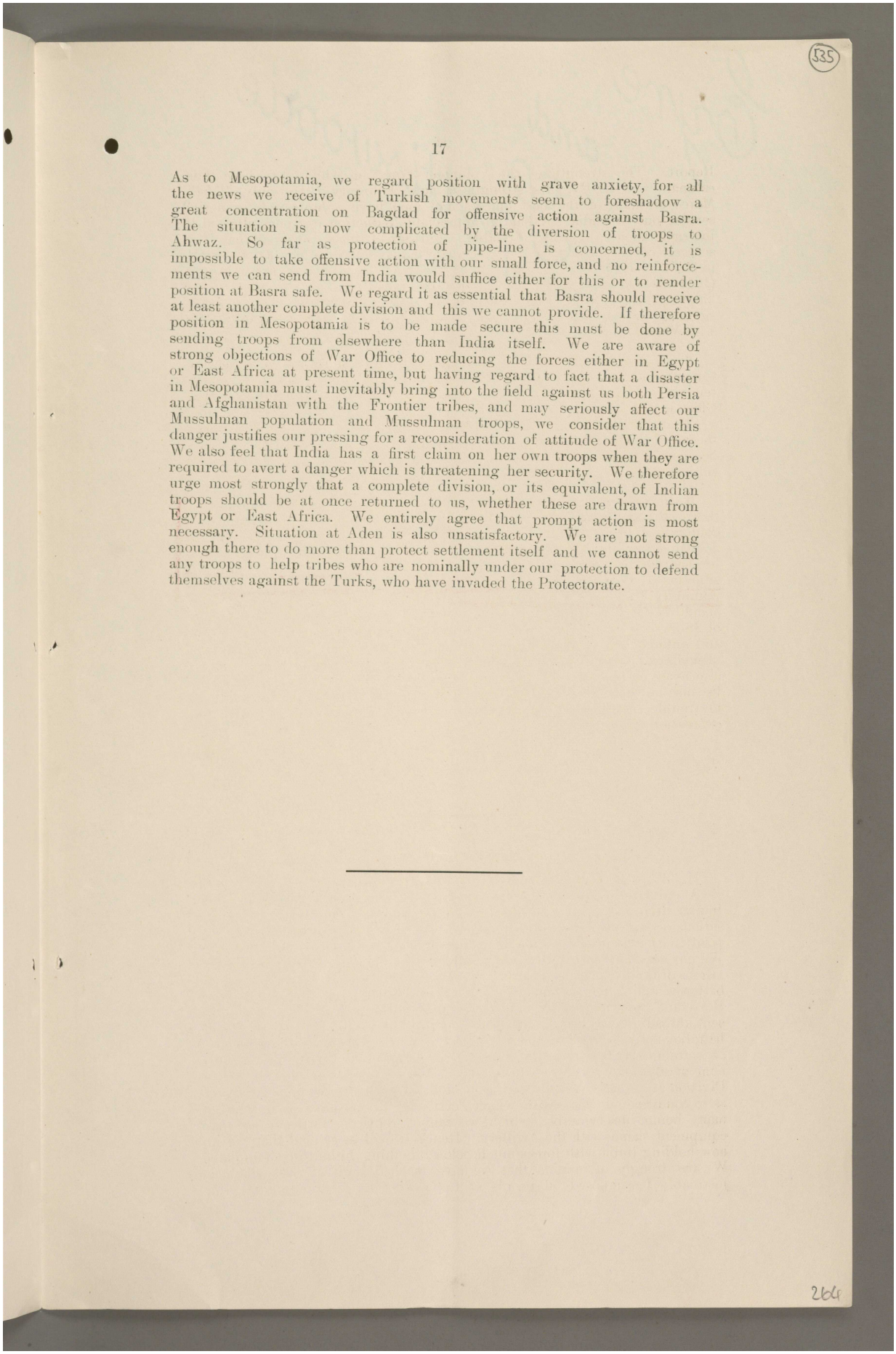
2. In the concluding paragraph of your letter under reply you draw attention to War Office letter No. 0164/3146 of the 11th instant with special reference to the question of internal security, and you suggest in paragraph 3 that the three Frontier Field Divisions should be included in estimates of the forces available for internal defence on the ground that the railway system connects them closely with the rest of India. To preclude any misconception on this point Lord Crewe wishes to impress on the Army Council the view of the India Office that serious internal troubles can hardly arise without external pressure or assistance, and that it is precisely when we have to resist aggression from without that we may also have to take strong military measures to repress or prevent disturbances within. In other words the need for internal defence will synchronize with the necessity for military operations on the Frontier, in which case it is futile to rely on the Frontier Divisions as being available for internal defence. The danger of denuding the Frontier for this purpose is all the greater at times like the present when the preaching of "Jehad" may inflame the dormant fanaticism of the tribes, and possibly of the Afghans. Furthermore, at such a crisis it is by no means sure that the control of the railways and telegraphs can be altogether depended on, for it must be borne in mind that the bulk of the personnel of those services is almost entirely native and some of them perhaps not of the most loyal classes.

3. As regards the Volunteer forces, I am to state that for these due allowance was made when the Nicholson Commission considered their

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x0000a5

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



535

As to Mesopotamia, we regard position with grave anxiety, for all the news we receive of Turkish movements seem to foreshadow a great concentration on Bagdad for offensive action against Basra. The situation is now complicated by the diversion of troops to Ahwaz. So far as protection of pipe-line is concerned, it is impossible to take offensive action with our small force, and no reinforcements we can send from India would suffice either for this or to render position at Basra safe. We regard it as essential that Basra should receive at least another complete division and this we cannot provide. If therefore position in Mesopotamia is to be made secure this must be done by sending troops from elsewhere than India itself. We are aware of strong objections of War Office to reducing the forces either in Egypt or East Africa at present time, but having regard to fact that a disaster in Mesopotamia must inevitably bring into the field against us both Persia and Afghanistan with the Frontier tribes, and may seriously affect our Mussulman population and Mussulman troops, we consider that this danger justifies our pressing for a reconsideration of attitude of War Office. We also feel that India has a first claim on her own troops when they are required to avert a danger which is threatening her security. We therefore urge most strongly that a complete division, or its equivalent, of Indian troops should be at once returned to us, whether these are drawn from Egypt or East Africa. We entirely agree that prompt action is most necessary. Situation at Aden is also unsatisfactory. We are not strong enough there to do more than protect settlement itself and we cannot send any troops to help tribes who are nominally under our protection to defend themselves against the Turks, who have invaded the Protectorate.

264

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x0000a7

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

536

Statement by the Military Secretary, India Office.

I am the Senior General in the Indian Army, and I have nearly 45 years' service, of which over 15 years as a General Officer. I have raised and commanded a regiment, and have at different times, either in peace or war, held the several staff appointments of Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General; Assistant Quartermaster-General; Assistant Adjutant-General; Deputy Adjutant-General; Assistant Secretary, Military Department, Government of India; Deputy Secretary, Military Department, Government of India; Chief of the Staff, China Expedition; Secretary, Military Department, Government of India. I have also commanded:—

The Kohat Kurram Force -	- 4 months.
The 1st Peshawar Division - -	- 4 years.
The Southern Army, India -	- 4 years.

My last appointment in India was that of General Officer Commanding the Southern Army, which appointment I vacated on the 10th October 1912. Since the 7th February 1914 I have been Military Secretary at the India Office and have been in entire charge of the secretarial business in the India Office connected with the Mesopotamian campaign, with the exception of such matters as are dealt with by the Political Department or the Director of Stores.

It has been my duty quite lately to prepare a précis of correspondence regarding this campaign for the use of the Secretary of State and the members of the Cabinet. I am therefore, I believe, fairly conversant with all matters in this connection up to the 16th February, when the War Office took over charge of the operations.

2. I am authorised to submit copies of the above-mentioned précis to the Commission, who may, if they so desire, treat it as my evidence to be supplemented by any questions which they may wish to ask me, or by any further papers for which they may call. The collection of papers dealing with the operations, originally intended for presentation to Parliament as a Blue Book, but withheld on the advice of the Army Council, will also be laid before the Commission, and contains the full series of documents referred to in the précis. The documents themselves can be produced at any time to the Commission if so desired. I produce the letter from the Army Council above referred to.[1]

---

[1] 121/3/107 (C. 1). Confidential. War Office,
29th June 1916.

Sir,

I am commanded by the Army Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter enclosing a proof of the Papers relating to the Operations in Mesopotamia which it is proposed to lay before Parliament, and to state for the information of Mr. Secretary Chamberlain that, after careful consideration, the Council find themselves strongly opposed to their publication. The papers contain many indications as to the military problems which have still to be faced, notably the difficulties of navigation on the Tigris, and of maintaining a force far up that river, the protection of the oilfields and pipe line, and the question of the isolated garrison at Nasiriyeh.

I am to return the proof of the papers with those portions marked in blue which, on purely military grounds, it will be most objectionable to publish at the present time; but even from the remainder the Council are of opinion that an astute enemy, reading between the lines, could obtain much information which would be of value to him. They therefore desire to urge that the publication of the papers would involve serious military disadvantage, and that their publication should, therefore, be withheld; it being stated if thought desirable that, in the opinion of the Imperial General Staff, publication would prejudice the success of operations in Mesopotamia.

I am, &c.,
R. H. Brade.

The Under Secretary of State
for India.
(Military Department).

265

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x000016

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

(a)—*Why we went to Mesopotamia.*

Although no actual rupture with Turkey took place until the 5th November, the Porte had shown signs of great hostility to England from the very outbreak of the war with Germany. As early as the 11th August the Baghdad Army had begun to mobilise, martial law had been proclaimed, and the property of British subjects had been seized.

The situation thus created caused grave anxiety both to the Admiralty and to Lord Crewe, then Secretary of State for India. Under his orders the subject was closely watched in the Military and Political Departments of the India Office.

In a Minute dated the 26th September 1914 I reviewed the position as it then presented itself, laying stress on the danger to our interests in the Persian Gulf, and on the menace, not only to the security of the Indian frontier, but to our tranquillity and prestige in India itself, which hostilities with Turkey would involve.

The Minute then went on to deal with the military arrangements that would be necessary to meet the case of war.

The primary and immediate objects in view were held to be:—

(1) To safeguard the Indian Frontier from the immediate effects of *Jehad*.

(2) To demonstrate our power to strike, and thus check Turkish intrigues amongst the Arabs.

(3) To confirm the Arab Chiefs of Muscat, Bahrein, Koweit and Mohammerah in their allegiance to us, and incidentally to encourage the Arabs generally.

(4) To protect the valuable oil installations at Abadan in which the Admiralty were so largely interested.

6. These objects had from an early date commended themselves to Lord Crewe and on that same evening he telegraphed warning instructions to the Viceroy on the subject.

On the 2nd October the Viceroy was informed that the Government had decided to take the action already indicated to him, and that he was to prepare a force accordingly. On the 3rd October further instructions were given defining the scope of the action to be taken. "Except under "absolute military necessity or orders from you no troops must be landed "on Turkish territory or other hostile action taken against Turkey," and on the 5th October the Viceroy was told specifically, in answer to a question, that the object of the Expedition was "to protect the pipe line and "oil tanks by the occupation of Abadan, to give support to Arabs against "Turks, and to cover landing of any necessary reinforcements."

Orders were also given for the despatch of the entire 6th Division should war with Turkey ensue. Meanwhile the Political Department gave instructions for Major Shakespear to visit Bin Saood and also laid down the policy to be followed with the Persian Gulf Arabs generally.

7. On the 16th October the advanced Force under Brigadier-General Delamain left India with the convoy for Egypt under sealed orders and as previously arranged was diverted to Bahrein, when three days out from Bombay.

During the last half of October many indications of activity on the part of the Turks and of co-operation with Germany were reported. On the other hand Bin Saood and the Arab Sheikhs of the Gulf declared themselves on our side. Meanwhile General Delamain arrived at Bahrein on the 23rd October and anchored off that island awaiting orders. On the 30th October, in consequence of the hostile action taken by the Turks against the Russians in the Black Sea, the flotilla at Bahrein was ordered to sail at once to the Shatt-el-Arab, but did not get away till the 2nd November. On the 5th November war with Turkey was declared, and on

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00009b

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

The advantages of this position are:—

"(1) Its commanding military value.
"(2) The control it gives us of the whole navigable waterway to the Gulf.
"(3) The possession of the whole of the rich cultivated area from Kurna to the sea.
"(4) The fact that it completely covers Persian Arabistan and safeguards it from Turkish intrigues or incursions.
"(5) The moral effect on the Arabs.
"(6) The control of the telegraph up to this point and also of the passage of the Euphrates.

"When we have reached Kurna and fully established ourselves there it will be time enough to consider whether we should go further."

Lord Crewe, in telegraphing[1] his sanction for this move, expressly stated *that he was not disposed to authorise an advance to Baghdad* as had been suggested in certain quarters, and limited our operations to Kurna. The main considerations which governed his decision were the fact that our available military forces at that period were only one Division, and that our limited resources in river shipping and the difficulties of navigation at that season, practically precluded any further advance for the time being.

[1] Telegram No. 57, dated 27th November 1914.

10. The operations against Kurna were begun on the 3rd December and culminated on the 9th December in the surrender of that town, together with the late Vali of Basrah, 1,200 prisoners and nine guns. Our authority was thus established over the whole of the rich riverain tract between Kurna and the sea, and also over the whole waterway navigable by Gulf steamers, Kurna being the limit of such navigation.

By Christmas 1914 events had taken a somewhat disquieting turn. From information received it became obvious that the Turks intended if possible to retrieve the situation in Mesopotamia, and by the end of January it was evident that they were collecting forces, not only to attack us at Kurna and Basra, but also to threaten the oil fields in the Bakhtiari Hills, a movement which involved a Turkish invasion of Persian territory. Consequently, on the 27th January Lord Crewe despatched a telegram to the Viceroy authorising the immediate despatch of the 12th Brigade.

"As there are indications of increasing Turko-Arab menace both on Tigris and on Euphrates, also of a possible early attack on the pipe line near Ahwaz, whilst Turkish reinforcements we know are being sent to Baghdad."

At the same time Lord Crewe approached the Foreign Office on the subject of sending a force to the Karun Valley to protect the pipe line and thus indirectly safeguard the oil fields. The Foreign Office communicated with Teheran and explained that "His Majesty's Government were compelled to "take measures for the defence of their interests and property in default of "any effective Persian force sufficient to guarantee those regions against "Turkish invasion." The Persian Government tacitly acquiesced in the proposed action.

11. At the end of January 1915 the general position was somewhat as follows:—AtNasariyeh Turks and Arabs were collecting for an attack on Basra by the desert route to Zobeir. In the Kurna direction the Turks were in considerable force, but unlikely to attack owing to the strength of the Kurna position. On the Karun side the menace was becoming formidable, the Turks were approaching, *Jehad* was being widely preached and the Arab tribesmen were ripe for an armed rising against the Sheikh of Muhammerah and ourselves. At the time we had approximately a Brigade in a strong defensive position at Kurna, and two Brigades at and around Basra, while a fourth Brigade was being got ready for embarkation in India. British subjects had been withdrawn from Ahwaz and the *Comet* and *Shushan* had been sent up the Karun to give moral support to the Vice-Consul and our adherents at Ahwaz. This, however, did not satisfy the Secretary of State as sufficient considering the importance of the pipe line, the vital necessity of preventing the spread of *Jehad* into Persian Arabistan and the urgency of asserting our military superiority at the head of the Gulf. Accordingly on the 1st February he despatched a telegram to the Viceroy emphasizing the dangers of the situation.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00005f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

remained with the Secretary of State. The consequence of this diminished control over events is that the India Office is not in possession of all the facts and has to rely on such telegraphic evidence as is before it.

15. Major-General Townshend arrived from India on the 22nd April and took over command of the 6th Division. On the 24th Sir John Nixon directed him to proceed at once to Kurna to reconnoitre the Turkish position north of that place and to form a plan of attack. The contemplated operations took time to materialize, and, in fact, the advance up the Tigris did not commence till the 31st May. Meanwhile the situation had developed on the Karun side, and it will be convenient to turn thereto before continuing the narrative of the advance to Amara.

Immediately after the conclusion of the Shaiba operations Sir J. Nixon, in accordance with Lord Crewe's instructions, took steps to deal with the situation on the Karun. Major-General Gorringe was directed to reopen communications with Ahwaz and disperse the enemy, who were estimated to consist of about eight battalions of Turkish regulars and some 7,000 Arab tribesmen. On General Gorringe's advance the Turks retreated north of the Karkheh river, which was crossed by us early in May, but too late to intercept them in their retirement towards Amara. As a result of General Gorringe's operations Persian Arabistan was cleared of the enemy and the Arab tribes forced to submit, thus enabling the pipe line to be repaired and normal conditions to be resumed at the oil fields.

16. On the 26th May General Nixon telegraphed direct to the Secretary of State asking for definite orders as to his proposed advance to Amara. In the meantime Mr. Chamberlain had taken over the India Office. Lord Crewe had given his consent to the advance to Amara with some reluctance. His view was that we were chiefly concerned with the maintenance of a secure base at Basra and the safety of our important interests in the oilfields. The India Office had been constantly reminded of those interests by the Admiralty while it was not without its own anxieties. It knew that in the circumstances of the moment in Europe no military assistance could reasonably be expected from the War Office. It recognised that India could send no further reinforcements, and though it was fully aware of the strategic and other advantages of holding the Tigris Valley up to Amara, it was doubtful of our capacity to do so if the Turks mustered in force to attack us there. It was felt, however, by Mr. Chamberlain that it was difficult to reject the considered opinion of those on the spot who were obviously in a better position to judge than we were of the local conditions and the relative strength and value of the opposing forces.

The operations that ensued were carried out by General Townshend with two Brigades. On the 3rd June Amara was reached and the garrison capitulated.

17. With the occupation of Amara and the submission of all the tribes in the Karun valley, the gallant Mesopotamian Field Force might, without reproach, have rested on its laurels during the blazing and enervating summer, but General Nixon, with the support of the Government of India, deemed it inexpedient to remain inactive whilst any Turks were within striking distance, he therefore next directed his activities towards the Euphrates side. There had been naval reconnaissances up the Euphrates channels both from Basra and Kurna, which indicated an eventual offensive movement in that direction, but the first positive intimation on the subject received at the India Office was the telegram from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, dated 13th June 1915.

The view of the situation set forth therein was accepted by Mr. Chamberlain, as though the broken Turkish force at Nasiriyeh could scarcely be regarded as a menace to us, it was thought that it might offer a rallying point to Turkish reinforcements from Baghdad, in which case Basra might possibly be again threatened from the west, while unquestionably we could not expect the Arabs on the Euphrates to side with us so long as they had a Turkish garrison in their midst.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000066

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

540

These considerations taken separately would appear to have fully justified at the time the course recommended by the Government of India and accepted by the Secretary of State.

(d)—*Why we went to Ctesiphon.*

18. The phase of the Mesopotamian campaign which ended at Ctesiphon is naturally the one which has excited the most interest and the most criticism. As already shown, when we advanced from Kurna the initiative passed from the Secretary of State to the Government of India; similarly, after the battle of Kut-el-Amara the initiative passed from the Government of India to the General in Command.

19. Kut-el-Amara was captured on the 29th September. Four days later the head of the pursuit had reached half way to Aziziyah. On the same day (3rd October) General Nixon telegraphed, reporting various movements and details. His telegram also specifically added:—

"*I consider I am strong enough to open road to Baghdad,** and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Aziziyah (*vide* page 31 of précis).

* * * * *

On the 4th October I submitted a Minute to the Secretary of State, which is quoted at pages 31–32 of the précis, and to which I would draw the attention of the Committee, as it states, I believe correctly, not only my own views, but those of the Secretary of State on the date mentioned. On that same evening the Secretary of State telegraphed as follows to the Viceroy:—

"P.—As it appears that owing to difficulties of navigation, there is now little chance of overtaking and breaking up the retreating Turks, there is no object in pursuing them any further, and so under these circumstances I shall be glad to learn what Nixon's present intentions are. Subject to what may occur in Baghdad and elsewhere and to any proposal you may now recommend, the orders which my telegrams of 24th April and 6th August conveyed to you are still in force. Kindly send me by telegram an estimate of what you consider to be the present strength in Mesopotamia of the enemy."

The orders above referred to limited the operations to the Basra Vilayat.

The history of what followed between the 5th October and the 21st October is given as far as possible in narrative form at pages 33–38 of the précis. I would particularly call attention to the proceedings of the Inter-departmental Committee (pages 35–56 of précis). The final decision was taken at a war committee of the Cabinet held on the 23rd October, and on that date the Secretary of State telegraphed the decision to the Viceroy. In that fateful telegram it was expressly stated that "*Nixon may march on Baghdad if he is satisfied that the troops he has are enough for the purpose.*"

This telegram was advisedly framed in a permissive form in case General Nixon should have received information in the interval, so altering the military situation, that he might wish to modify his plans.

20. On the 22nd November was fought the battle of Ctesiphon, which, though a tactical victory, unhappily proved a strategical defeat, and on the 25th, after the wounded had all been removed, the retreat to Kut-el-Amara commenced.

The précis shows how step by step, the policy of the advance on Baghdad adopted eventually by the Government, was in reality inexorably shaped by the force of circumstances and though nothing can justify failure, it may at least be urged in favour of General Nixon's idea of advancing to Baghdad, that a Turkish offensive in or through Persia would be rendered impossible if we could take and hold that position. At the time anarchy prevailed throughout Persia, and German intrigues were rampant, so that had

* The *italics* were not in the original telegram, but as this is the first definite suggestion from General Nixon of going on to Baghdad, attention is called to it.

269

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000069

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

position was a strong and important one to hold. Strategically it arrested the Turkish advance towards both Amara and Nasiriyeh, while tactically it was almost unassailable, as indeed was proved by the seige.

Moreover, had General Townshend continued his retirement there can be little doubt that the Arabs, both along the Tigris and the Euphrates, would have risen against us. Our communications would have been everywhere threatened and a situation would have arisen in December which might well have been even more disastrous than that produced by the surrender in April. With the more complete knowledge that we now have of the conditions in December the more positively can we assert that the decision to hold out at Kut was the right one at the moment. It gave us time to breathe, and but for the floods and atrocious weather conditions, combined with certain grievous tactical errors, Kut should have been relieved in due course, and at latest by the 8th March, when we appear to have lost a grand opportunity of penetrating the Turkish lines on the right bank of the Tigris.

(f)—*The Collapse of the Administrative Arrangements.*

22. The brilliant and unqualified successes of the Mesopotamian Force up to the autumn of 1915 had greatly relieved the situation, both on the Middle East and on the Indian Frontier, so that the Government of India had for the time been enabled to drain India of its military resources, both in men and material, to meet the demands of the Imperial Government in Europe, in Egypt, in East Africa, and elsewhere. The ultimate result was that India was left with practically no margin to meet unforeseen contingencies, and when the unforeseen did occur, India found herself without doctors, without medical equipment, without needful supplies and land transport. I have had prepared statements showing :—

(i) The contributions made by India in personnel and war material.
(ii) The demands made on England by the Government of India in connection with Mesopotamia and the action taken thereon.

The Director-General of Stores is also preparing a statement showing the steps taken by his department.

Our shortcomings are now painfully obvious, but they did not become so till the necessity for reinforcing General Nixon arose. Whatever shortcomings there may have been, real failure only occurred after the battle of Ctesiphon.

It must be borne in mind that there was no intention on the part of the Government to advance beyond the Basra Vilayat till October 1915, and, indeed, definite sanction for that operation was only given on the 23rd of that month. Till we left Kurna at the very end of May 1915 the need for river shipping on a *large* scale had not arisen. So long as our operations were confined to the Shatt-el-Arab and the Karun, our resources in this respect, as well as our medical requirements, appear to have been adequate. General Barrett had been generally satisfied, as an advance was not contemplated beyond Kurna, to which point light draught Gulf steamers could ascend. His evidence on this point has been communicated to the Vincent-Bingley Commission. The insufficiency of the medical arrangements began to present itself after the battles round Shaiba (11th to 14th April 1915), but it will be well to await the Report of the above Commission on this point as well as the evidence of witnesses who are acquainted with the subject.

Till the summer of 1915 no adverse reports regarding either medical arrangements or river transport had been communicated to the Secretary of State. On the 9th October Mr. Chamberlain made special enquiries regarding the health of the troops. The reply was satisfactory. Again after Ctesiphon there was some anxiety, but General Nixon's telegram of the 7th December (page 41 of precis) allayed all fears at the time. A little later, owing to private reports the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy for information. He replied on the 24th December by telegraph, but still there was no sign of the impending collapse. The first warning note was a telegram from General Nixon, dated 10th January 1916 :—

"The deficiency of river-craft, to which I have so often referred, renders the task of evacuating the wounded intensely difficult. These amount to about 3,000."

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x00008f

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

15

4/Mesopotamia/14.

SECRET.

(542)

War Cabinet.

Mesopotamia Commission Report.

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War.

WAR CABINET
G.T.1327
2, WHITEHALL GARDENS

The Army Council considered the extract from the decisions of the War Cabinet 175(2), the Judge Advocate General being present throughout the proceedings.

They were of opinion that all the officers in question should be given an opportunity of giving evidence on oath and calling witnesses in their defence in answer to those parts of the Report by which their conduct is impugned, and having been advised by the Judge Advocate-General that no charge should be preferred against any of them until a Court of Inquiry has been held, the Council decided to give orders forthwith for steps to be taken to hold such inquiry in public. A civil legal assessor who should, if possible, be a Judge of the High Court, should be appointed to assist the Court, and the Law Officers of the Crown should present the case to the Court.

As a preliminary to a Court Martial a "summary of evidence" must by law be taken, which would entail the presence of all witnesses, both for the prosecution and the defence. By means of a Court of Inquiry the cases can be more expeditiously dealt with, and those which cannot be brought before a Court Martial disposed of, and it will give the officers concerned the opportunity of defending themselves against charges of incompetence.

In any case in which the evidence would justify charges, the officer will be tried by Court Martial, provided legislative action is taken to extend the provision of Section 161 of the Army Act, under which trial must be commenced within three years from the date of the offence.

In any case in which it may be found that the evidence taken at the Court of Inquiry will not legally support any charge, the Council will consider whether any other action is required.

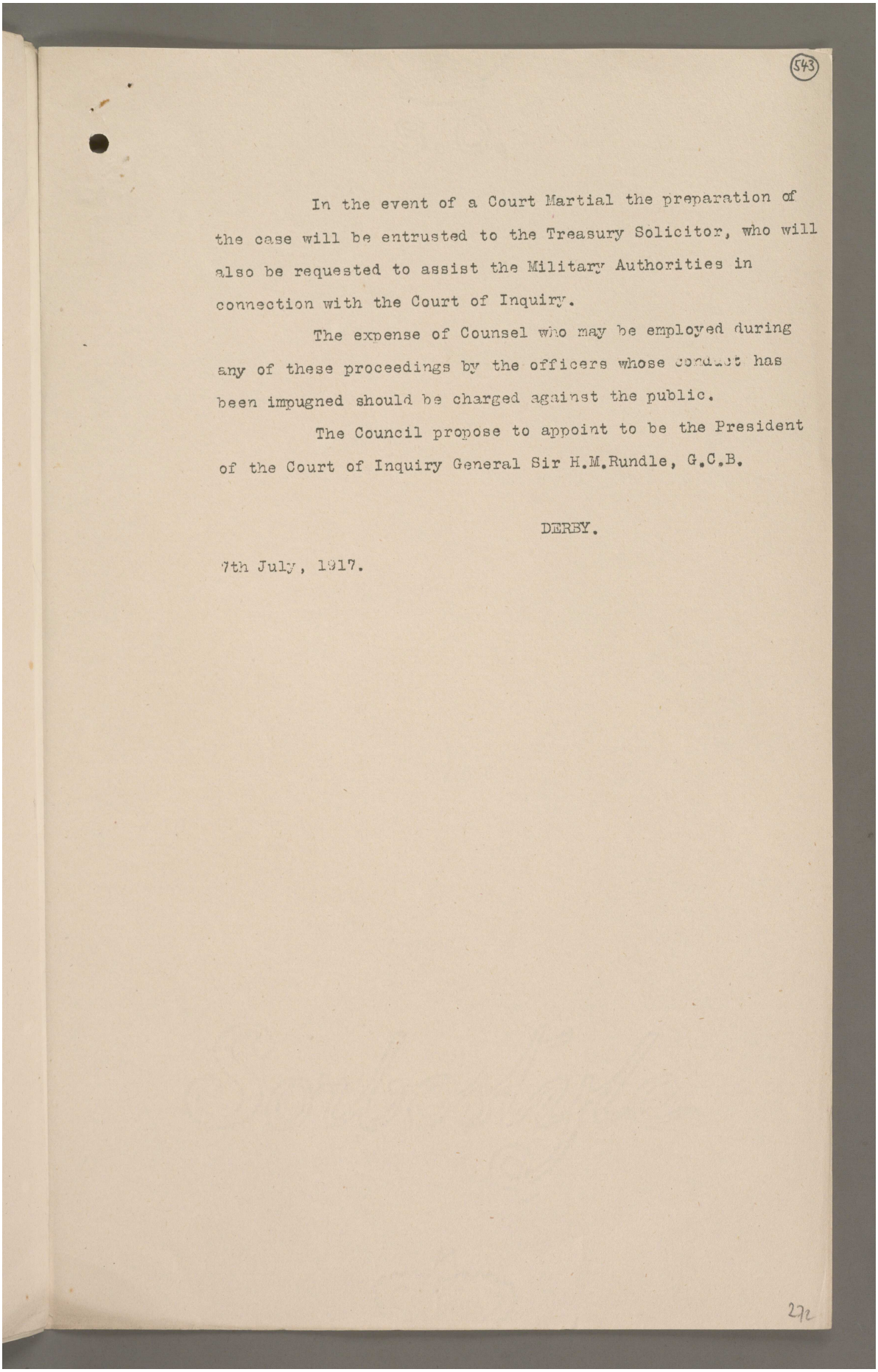
In

271

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774577.0x0000b1

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



(543)

In the event of a Court Martial the preparation of the case will be entrusted to the Treasury Solicitor, who will also be requested to assist the Military Authorities in connection with the Court of Inquiry.

The expense of Counsel who may be employed during any of these proceedings by the officers whose conduct has been impugned should be charged against the public.

The Council propose to appoint to be the President of the Court of Inquiry General Sir H.M.Rundle, G.C.B.

DERBY.

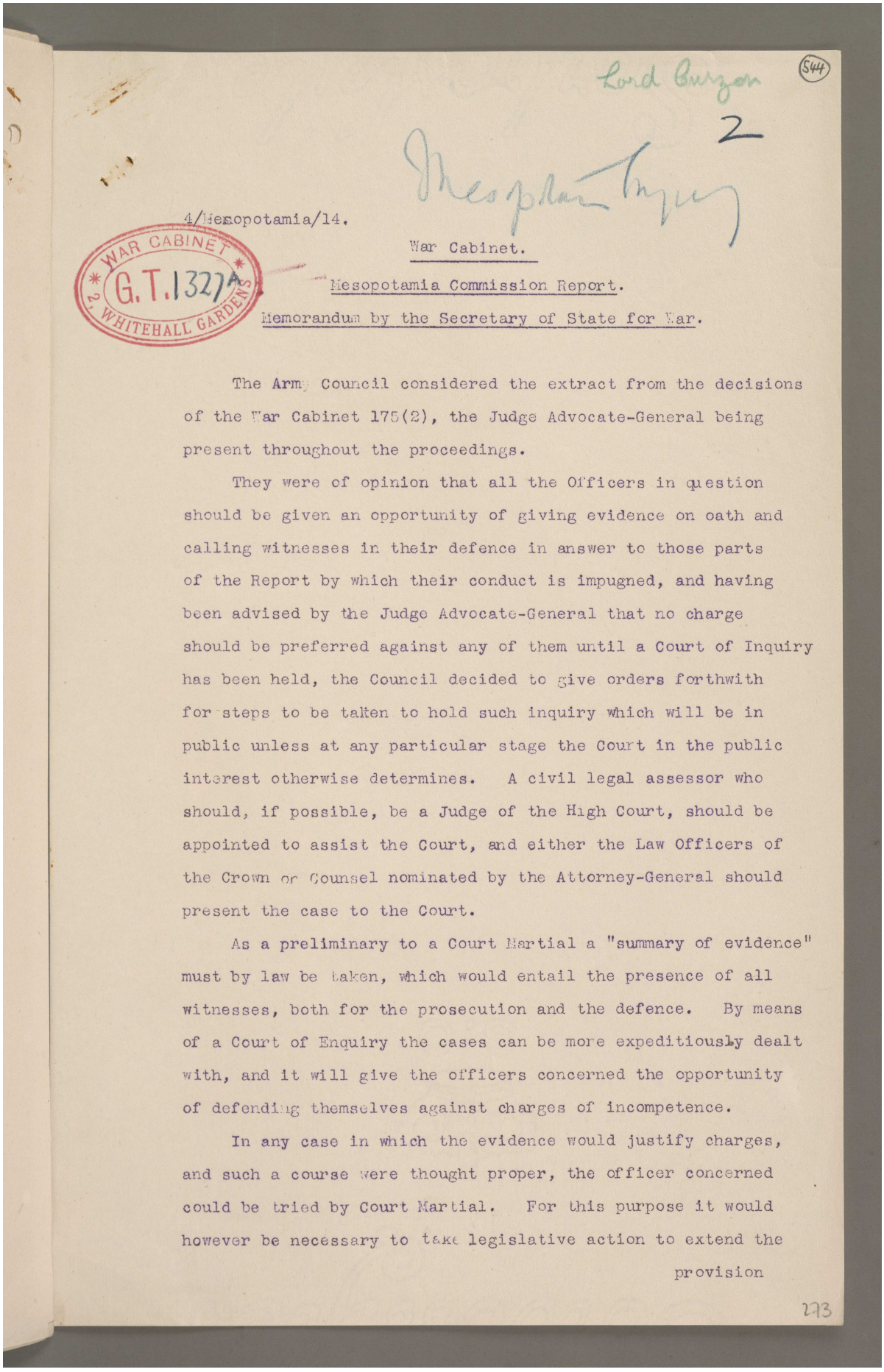
7th July, 1917.

272

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000064

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



Lord Curzon (544)

2

Mesopotamia Inquiry

4/Mesopotamia/14.

WAR CABINET
G.T.1327A
2, WHITEHALL GARDENS

War Cabinet.

Mesopotamia Commission Report.

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War.

The Army Council considered the extract from the decisions of the War Cabinet 175(2), the Judge Advocate-General being present throughout the proceedings.

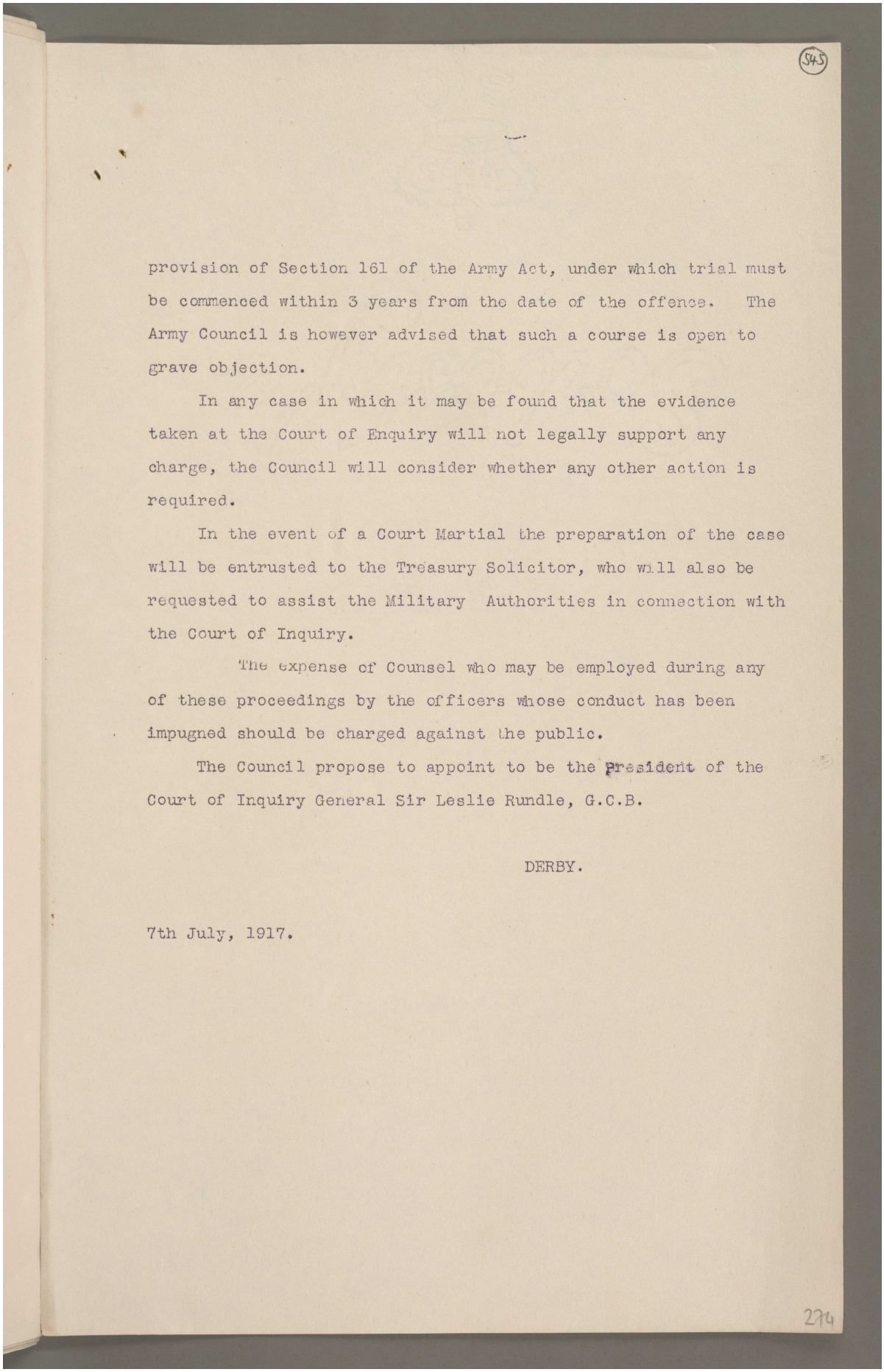
They were of opinion that all the Officers in question should be given an opportunity of giving evidence on oath and calling witnesses in their defence in answer to those parts of the Report by which their conduct is impugned, and having been advised by the Judge Advocate-General that no charge should be preferred against any of them until a Court of Inquiry has been held, the Council decided to give orders forthwith for steps to be taken to hold such inquiry which will be in public unless at any particular stage the Court in the public interest otherwise determines. A civil legal assessor who should, if possible, be a Judge of the High Court, should be appointed to assist the Court, and either the Law Officers of the Crown or Counsel nominated by the Attorney-General should present the case to the Court.

As a preliminary to a Court Martial a "summary of evidence" must by law be taken, which would entail the presence of all witnesses, both for the prosecution and the defence. By means of a Court of Enquiry the cases can be more expeditiously dealt with, and it will give the officers concerned the opportunity of defending themselves against charges of incompetence.

In any case in which the evidence would justify charges, and such a course were thought proper, the officer concerned could be tried by Court Martial. For this purpose it would however be necessary to take legislative action to extend the provision

273

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x00009c



(545)

provision of Section 161 of the Army Act, under which trial must be commenced within 3 years from the date of the offence. The Army Council is however advised that such a course is open to grave objection.

In any case in which it may be found that the evidence taken at the Court of Enquiry will not legally support any charge, the Council will consider whether any other action is required.

In the event of a Court Martial the preparation of the case will be entrusted to the Treasury Solicitor, who will also be requested to assist the Military Authorities in connection with the Court of Inquiry.

The expense of Counsel who may be employed during any of these proceedings by the officers whose conduct has been impugned should be charged against the public.

The Council propose to appoint to be the President of the Court of Inquiry General Sir Leslie Rundle, G.C.B.

DERBY.

7th July, 1917.

274

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

Lord Curzon (546)

SECRET
G.T.-1337

July 9.17 2

WAR CABINET

MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION - DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Memorandum by the Judge Advocate General

S. of S.

I am of opinion that a Court of Inquiry is preferable to a Court-Martial for the following reasons :-

1. It would be practically impossible to commence trial by Court-Martial in November, 1917, the latest date by which this can be done under the Army Act.

2. In the event of trial by Court-Martial it would be necessary first to take a summary of evidence and afterwards to call all the witnesses at the trial. This would necessitate taking away a large number of military witnesses from their duties in various theatres of war twice instead of once.

3. In the case of a Court of Inquiry a Judge of the High Court could be made legal assessor or under the Army (Courts of Inquiry Act) 1916 a member of the Court of Inquiry.

4. The Army Council on the recommendation of the Court of Inquiry could recommend His Majesty to remove or dismiss an Officer from the Service, while the maximum punishment which a Court-Martial could inflict for any offences which could possibly be charged is cashiering or dismissal.

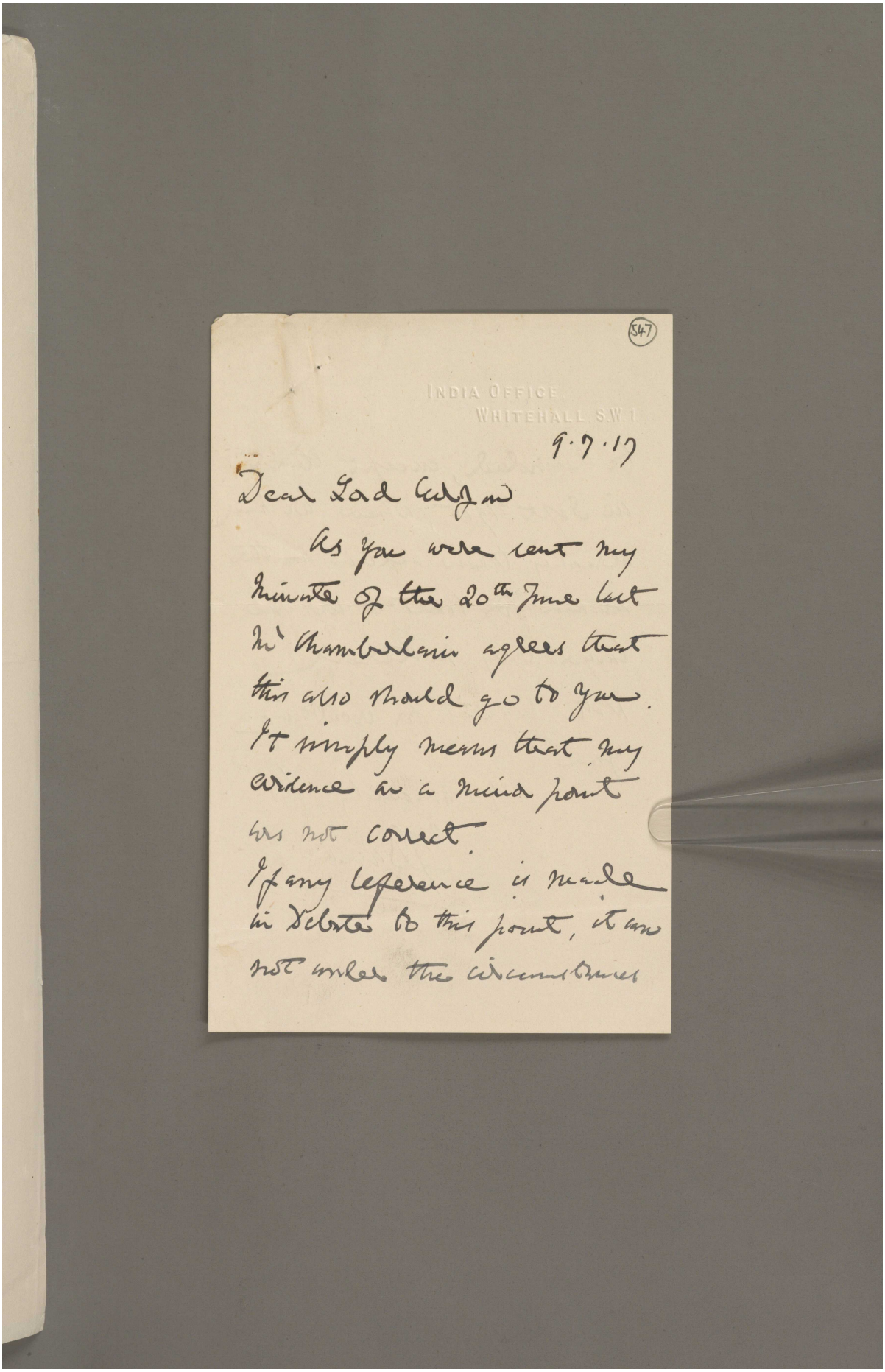
5. A Court of Inquiry could deal with matters affecting the Military reputation of the Officers in question as well as offences. It is only fair to these Officers that this should be conceded in view of Rule 124 (F) of the Rules of Procedure under the Army Act which provides :-

(F) "Whenever any inquiry affects the character or military reputation of an officer or soldier, full opportunity must be afforded to the officer or soldier of being present throughout the inquiry, and of making any statement and of giving any evidence he may wish to make or give, and of cross-examining any witness whose evidence, in his opinion, affects his character or military reputation, and producing any witnesses in defence of his character or military reputation."

The Officers concerned did not before the Mesopotamia Commission have the right of being present throughout the inquiry, of cross-examining witnesses, or making a statement in their defence.

(Sgd.) F.CASSEL
Judge Advocate General

9th July, 1917



(547)

INDIA OFFICE
WHITEHALL S.W.1

9.7.17

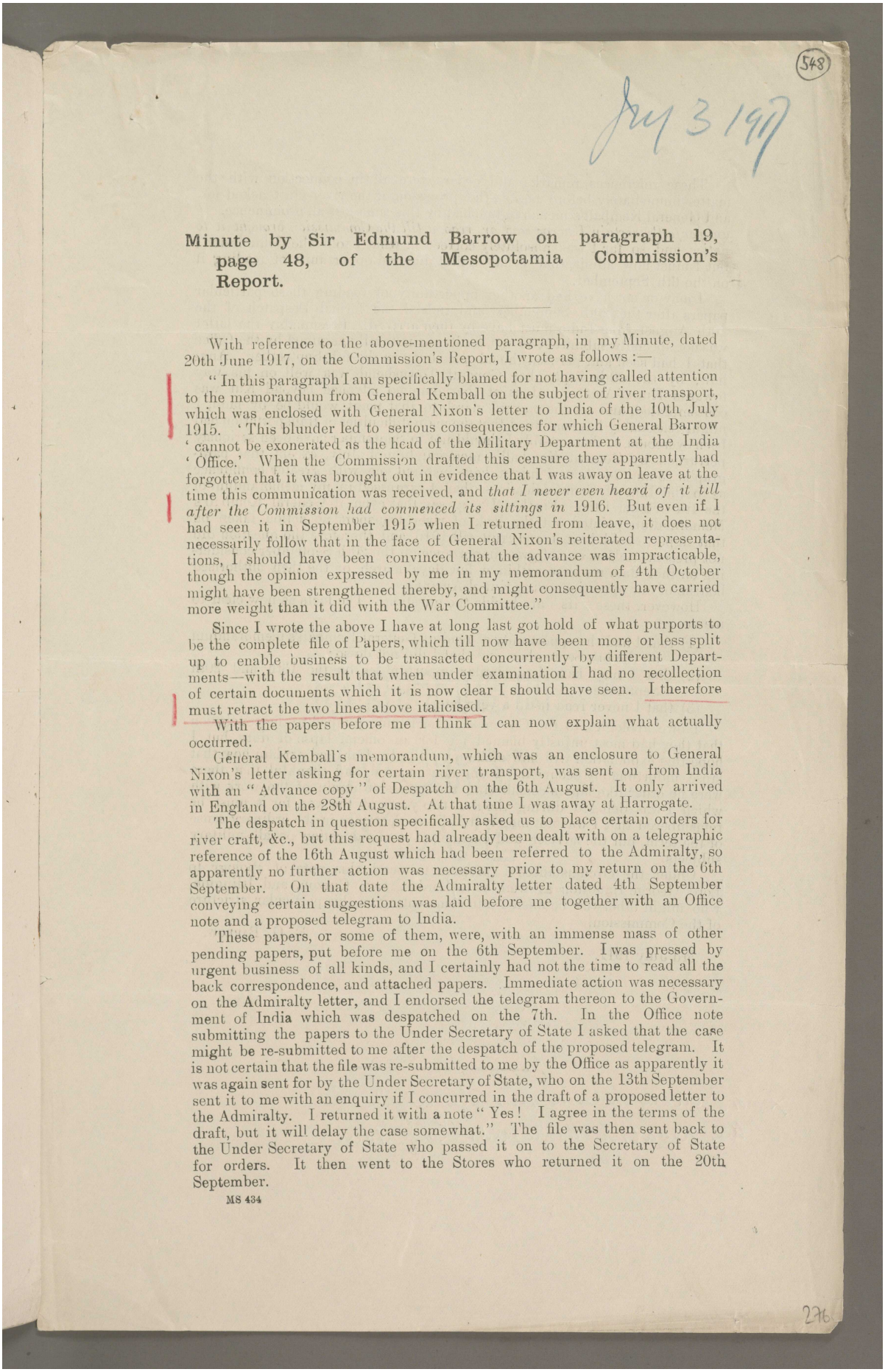
Dear Lord Curzon

As you were sent my minute of the 20th June last Mr Chamberlain agrees that this also should go to you. It simply means that my evidence on a point was not correct.

If any reference is made in debate to this point, it was not under the circumstances

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



548

July 3 1917

Minute by Sir Edmund Barrow on paragraph 19, page 48, of the Mesopotamia Commission's Report.

With reference to the above-mentioned paragraph, in my Minute, dated 20th June 1917, on the Commission's Report, I wrote as follows :—

"In this paragraph I am specifically blamed for not having called attention to the memorandum from General Kemball on the subject of river transport, which was enclosed with General Nixon's letter to India of the 10th July 1915. 'This blunder led to serious consequences for which General Barrow 'cannot be exonerated as the head of the Military Department at the India 'Office.' When the Commission drafted this censure they apparently had forgotten that it was brought out in evidence that I was away on leave at the time this communication was received, and *that I never even heard of it till after the Commission had commenced its sittings in* 1916. But even if I had seen it in September 1915 when I returned from leave, it does not necessarily follow that in the face of General Nixon's reiterated representations, I should have been convinced that the advance was impracticable, though the opinion expressed by me in my memorandum of 4th October might have been strengthened thereby, and might consequently have carried more weight than it did with the War Committee."

Since I wrote the above I have at long last got hold of what purports to be the complete file of Papers, which till now have been more or less split up to enable business to be transacted concurrently by different Departments—with the result that when under examination I had no recollection of certain documents which it is now clear I should have seen. I therefore must retract the two lines above italicised.

With the papers before me I think I can now explain what actually occurred.

General Kemball's memorandum, which was an enclosure to General Nixon's letter asking for certain river transport, was sent on from India with an "Advance copy" of Despatch on the 6th August. It only arrived in England on the 28th August. At that time I was away at Harrogate.

The despatch in question specifically asked us to place certain orders for river craft, &c., but this request had already been dealt with on a telegraphic reference of the 16th August which had been referred to the Admiralty, so apparently no further action was necessary prior to my return on the 6th September. On that date the Admiralty letter dated 4th September conveying certain suggestions was laid before me together with an Office note and a proposed telegram to India.

These papers, or some of them, were, with an immense mass of other pending papers, put before me on the 6th September. I was pressed by urgent business of all kinds, and I certainly had not the time to read all the back correspondence, and attached papers. Immediate action was necessary on the Admiralty letter, and I endorsed the telegram thereon to the Government of India which was despatched on the 7th. In the Office note submitting the papers to the Under Secretary of State I asked that the case might be re-submitted to me after the despatch of the proposed telegram. It is not certain that the file was re-submitted to me by the Office as apparently it was again sent for by the Under Secretary of State, who on the 13th September sent it to me with an enquiry if I concurred in the draft of a proposed letter to the Admiralty. I returned it with a note "Yes! I agree in the terms of the draft, but it will delay the case somewhat." The file was then sent back to the Under Secretary of State who passed it on to the Secretary of State for orders. It then went to the Stores who returned it on the 20th September.

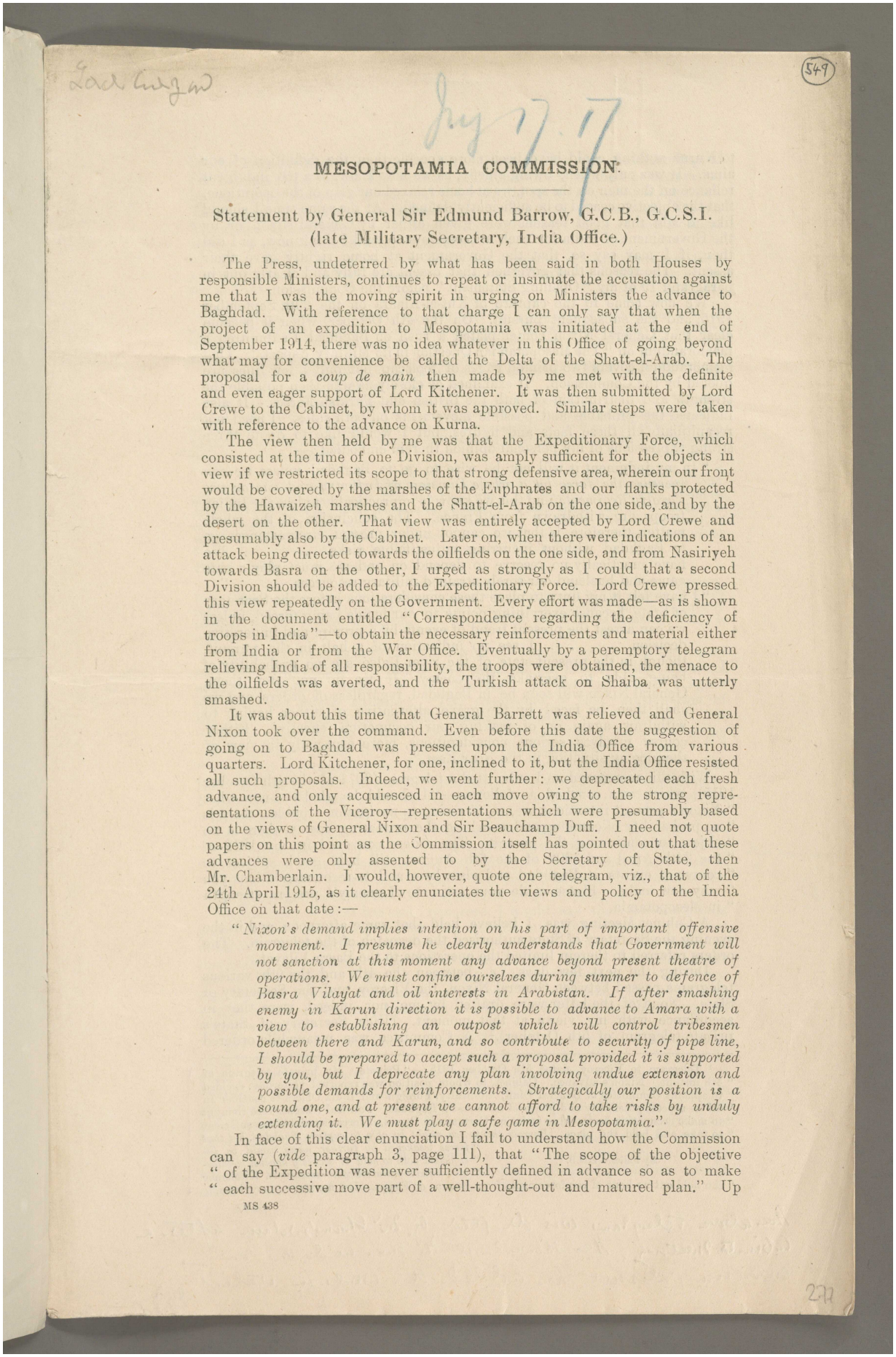
MS 434

276

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x00000a

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY



549

MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

Statement by General Sir Edmund Barrow, G.C.B., G.C.S.I. (late Military Secretary, India Office.)

The Press, undeterred by what has been said in both Houses by responsible Ministers, continues to repeat or insinuate the accusation against me that I was the moving spirit in urging on Ministers the advance to Baghdad. With reference to that charge I can only say that when the project of an expedition to Mesopotamia was initiated at the end of September 1914, there was no idea whatever in this Office of going beyond what may for convenience be called the Delta of the Shatt-el-Arab. The proposal for a *coup de main* then made by me met with the definite and even eager support of Lord Kitchener. It was then submitted by Lord Crewe to the Cabinet, by whom it was approved. Similar steps were taken with reference to the advance on Kurna.

The view then held by me was that the Expeditionary Force, which consisted at the time of one Division, was amply sufficient for the objects in view if we restricted its scope to that strong defensive area, wherein our front would be covered by the marshes of the Euphrates and our flanks protected by the Hawaizeh marshes and the Shatt-el-Arab on the one side, and by the desert on the other. That view was entirely accepted by Lord Crewe and presumably also by the Cabinet. Later on, when there were indications of an attack being directed towards the oilfields on the one side, and from Nasiriyeh towards Basra on the other, I urged as strongly as I could that a second Division should be added to the Expeditionary Force. Lord Crewe pressed this view repeatedly on the Government. Every effort was made—as is shown in the document entitled "Correspondence regarding the deficiency of troops in India"—to obtain the necessary reinforcements and material either from India or from the War Office. Eventually by a peremptory telegram relieving India of all responsibility, the troops were obtained, the menace to the oilfields was averted, and the Turkish attack on Shaiba was utterly smashed.

It was about this time that General Barrett was relieved and General Nixon took over the command. Even before this date the suggestion of going on to Baghdad was pressed upon the India Office from various quarters. Lord Kitchener, for one, inclined to it, but the India Office resisted all such proposals. Indeed, we went further: we deprecated each fresh advance, and only acquiesced in each move owing to the strong representations of the Viceroy—representations which were presumably based on the views of General Nixon and Sir Beauchamp Duff. I need not quote papers on this point as the Commission itself has pointed out that these advances were only assented to by the Secretary of State, then Mr. Chamberlain. I would, however, quote one telegram, viz., that of the 24th April 1915, as it clearly enunciates the views and policy of the India Office on that date:—

> "*Nixon's demand implies intention on his part of important offensive movement. I presume he clearly understands that Government will not sanction at this moment any advance beyond present theatre of operations. We must confine ourselves during summer to defence of Basra Vilayat and oil interests in Arabistan. If after smashing enemy in Karun direction it is possible to advance to Amara with a view to establishing an outpost which will control tribesmen between there and Karun, and so contribute to security of pipe line, I should be prepared to accept such a proposal provided it is supported by you, but I deprecate any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements. Strategically our position is a sound one, and at present we cannot afford to take risks by unduly extending it. We must play a safe game in Mesopotamia.*".

In face of this clear enunciation I fail to understand how the Commission can say (*vide* paragraph 3, page 111), that "The scope of the objective "of the Expedition was never sufficiently defined in advance so as to make "each successive move part of a well-thought-out and matured plan." Up

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774579.0x000019

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

by the Prime Minister to consider the subject, under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Holderness. The primary point laid down for their consideration by the Prime Minister was whether there should be an advance on Baghdad. That point is dealt with in paragraphs 3 and 5 of the Committee's Report. The views therein stated, in paragraph 3, were chiefly those of the Foreign Office. I quote the following extracts :—

"3. On political grounds the early capture and occupation of Baghdad are considered most desirable. This will relieve directly the existing situation in Asiatic Turkey, in Persia, and in Afghanistan.

* * * *

"An advance to Baghdad may be regarded from the political or Foreign Office point of view as of the very greatest importance, not only on account of the situation in Asiatic Turkey, ... but more especially with regard to the present critical situation in Persia and even in Afghanistan."

"'The position of the Germans in Persia is entirely dependent on their being able to keep open the road to Baghdad *viâ* Kermanshah.'"

"In view of these reports, the material benefit to be obtained by an advance on Baghdad —if, thereby, as appears probable, the German ascendancy and the Allies' precarious position in Persia can be checked—seems to render this step essential, while if no such effective action be taken, the danger to British interests in Persia and in Afghanistan may be a matter of the most serious consequence."

* * * *

5. On military grounds the capture and occupation of Baghdad offer distinct and solid advantages. The enemy, apart from the blow which his prestige would sustain, would be deprived of an important trade centre, a valuable depôt, a base, and a railhead (of the section of the Baghdad railway now working from Samarra to Baghdad). Our forces would be astride the main route from Europe through Kermanshah to the interior of Persia, and would deprive the Germans of a base for their intrigues in the Middle East.

The Practicability of an Advance.

6. The General Staff, War Office, the Commander-in-Chief in India, the Military Secretary, India Office, and the local military authorities are all in agreement in the opinion, in which the Committee concur, that the British forces at present in Mesopotamia, though apparently adequate for the capture of Baghdad, are not sufficient to ensure its retention, which is regarded as essential.

The above views exactly coincided with my opinion on the date the report was originally drafted. A day or two later, on the 15th or 16th October, I submitted another minute to the Secretary of State in which I again discussed the whole situation. The conclusion of that presentation of the case was contained in the following words :—"*If, therefore, we "have a firm promise of two Divisions, I am entirely in favour of going "to Baghdad*; while if we get only one Division added to Force "D," "we might still consider the advisability of a raid and retirement." The latter alternative, I think, was the one at the time preferred by Lord Kitchener. I concluded the minute in the following words :—"I have described the "advantages of offensive action, but I am not oblivious to its dangers. "The political effect of eventual retirement will be bad, but there will have "been compensatory advantages, and, moreover, we should have been given "time to prepare a formidable Torres Vedras at Kut-el-Amara and some of "our gun-boats will be ready to guard the river; in fact, I may summarise "the policy herein advocated as *frappez fort mais frappez vite*."

In the light of what has since occurred, I would say that the conditions postulated by me in the Minutes of the 4th and 15th October, were not observed. The reinforcements promised were delayed, not by the action of the Indian Government or the India Office, but by that of Lord Kitchener and the War Office. I do not suggest any blame to them, as that delay was doubtless necessary in connection with events in the Levant. The position at Kut-el-Amara was never prepared in the manner I had naturally anticipated that it would be.

About the same date the General Staff submitted a paper on the question of occupying Baghdad. In this it was estimated that Sir J. Nixon could start three weeks after the order was given for the Division to leave France, and that a total period of seven weeks might be required before the reinforcements could reach Basra, *i.e.*, the middle of December. But for the delay which took place, the relief of Kut, at all events, might have been assured, more especially if General Aylmer had not been deluded by General Townshend's lamentable error in understating the amount of his supplies, an error which doubtless led to the haphazard premature attacks made by the Relief Force during January 1915.

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774576.0x000025

مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

551

I should like to add that throughout I was influenced by the famous example of Sir John Moore's stroke at Napoleon's communications in Spain prior to the retreat on Corunna. At the time Sir John Moore was bitterly reproached by both the politicians and the Press in England, but the verdict of history has been that that stroke probably saved the British Army and Portugal from the great disaster which a triumphant march by Napoleon's army on Lisbon at that moment would have meant to the cause of the Allies in Europe. From that moment the British Government and Public saw the importance of supporting the operations in the Spanish Peninsula. Similarly, but for Sir John Nixon's failure, we should not now have in Mesopotamia the great army which has so successfully reversed the whole situation, which has averted, or at least postponed, the menace to Persia, Afghanistan, and India, and through which we shall hold a strong trump card at the Peace Conference.

Finally let me say this. Throughout I acted not as an officer responsible for the action taken by my superiors, but as a military adviser and secretary. I was not the only "expert" consulted. The Secretary of State for War—Lord Kitchener—the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Director of Military Operations, the experts of the Foreign Office and the Political Secretary of the India Office were all "experts" from one point of view or another, yet I, who up to the middle of October favoured and urged a policy of caution and strongly deprecated any advance, am singled out by the Commission, the Press and the Public as the one "expert" at home who should be pilloried by name for censure or punishment, because at the last stage of the discussion on the evidence before me I yielded my previous convictions to what then seemed to me sound policy and a justifiable military operation. In that error of judgment I was in good company, as three Prime Ministers, past and present, shared therein.

I would add that whether my advice was good or bad, it was my duty to offer it, as hardly any important question is ever decided by a Secretary of State or other Departmental Chief without hearing the opinion of his responsible subordinates.

The injustice of the attack upon me fills me with indignation, assuaged only by the generous tributes in recent Debates of the four prominent Ministers most conversant with the case. It is an immense satisfaction to me that both the Secretaries of State under whom I had served during the war should have publicly testified to the soundness of my advice and of my judgment; had it been otherwise I might have felt it my duty to tender my resignation and to demand an inquiry on the charge against me.

E. G. Barrow.

17th July 1917.

× Not a single newspaper has done me the justice to notice these tributes so that I am still in the eyes of the Public one of the principal 'criminals'

EGB

end
279

Reference: Mss Eur F112/163-164. Copyright for this page: Open Government Licence
View on the Qatar Digital Library: http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100179774578.0x000031