

Bhramwasa Khan

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LECTURES

ON

Mesopotamia Campaign

BY

Lieutenant B. B. More,

B. A; LL. B.

TNSDA



02426



December]

BARODA.

[1928.

Price Rs. 2-8.

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Director of Archaeology
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FOREWORD.



His Highness the Maharaja Saheb had commanded that in order to create a taste of reading amongst young officers and thus improve their general knowledge, lectures on different subjects should be arranged by the Military Department.

Lieut. B. B. More (the writer of these notes) then Military Secretary to the General was selected to deliver lectures on Mesopotamia Campaign. In order to facilitate his lectures, he had prepared these notes.

I am writing these few lines in appreciation of the notes, which are being published now by Lt. More.

I have had occasions to preside over some of his lectures and I am glad to mention here that he described the Mesopotamia Campaign very graphically with the help of these notes and maps.

No doubt the principles of war have remained the same from the days of Epaminodas to those of Marshal Foch, but the difference arises in their application to the circumstances of each age and country.

General Baden Powell says "For though it may be said that success in war is the outcome of the three Cs courage, common sense, and cunning—yet study has also a great say in the matter."

I daresay, these notes will be useful and instructive to young officers, who wish to study the Mesopotamia Campaign from military point of view.

Senapati Office
Baroda 15th. October 1928.

} N. G. Shinde General
} Commanding Baroda Army.

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LECTURE I

Introductory.

1 " No kind of history so fascinates mankind as the history of wars ". It appeals to the deep sympathies of mankind. But it has different value from the viewpoint of a Military Student. He looks at it as a matter of movement, a matter of supply and a matter of destruction. To become a great Captain or a leader in a campaign, it is essential that we must have the knowledge of the great deeds of the great leaders of men of the past, the movements they carried out, the secrets of their achievements, and the principles of the art of war they have avoided to depart from. We must learn the conduct of war from the experience of others; our own experience is costly and is almost invariably gained too late. " No study is possible on the battle-field, one does there simply what one can in order to apply what one knows. Therefore, in order to do even a little, one has already to know a great deal and to know it well". Military History is the true means of learning war. Napoleon says, " Read and re-read the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavas Adalphus, Eugene and of Fredrick. Take these men for your models, this is the only way to become a great Captain". At another place he says, " Let my son often read and reflect on history. This is the only true philosophy. Let him read and meditate on the wars of the greatest captains. This is the only means of rightly learning the Science of War ".

2 Some say war can be taught by war only. To this

Can war be taught
by war only ?

Marshal Foch has given an elaborate reply in his book " The Principles of War. " He says, " For that school is not a continuous school at

all; it can neither be opened at will nor kept for the be-

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nefit of our learning. It is even insufficient; for it could not prepare us for the first actions of the next war. The campaign would be over when our instruction had only begun; and the price of results very likely unfortunate". He emphatically lays down that one must read and study war. He gives us a fine example in support of his principle explaining the weakness in 1866 of the Austrians, when the war of 1859 ought to have made them wiser, as against the Prussians who had not fought since 1815. Here first made war without understanding it: the second had understood war without making it, by means of careful study.

3 War is an art and not an exact science; and so it has its theories, its principles. We can master these things by study—I mean by studying the Military History. Military History is a careful teacher, who allows us to view and grasp matter. It offers us events and their outlines, conditions and phenomena, graphic illustration of the disturbing element in war, an illustration of influences, doubts, embarrassments, unforeseen accidents, surprises and delays. It describes the course prepared by commanders and by practical military common sense in surmounting these difficulties. It prepares the mental balance necessary at the moment of action. It affords a substitute for lack of military experience. Late Field Marshal Earl French says, "The life-long experience of military study and thought has taught me that the principles of the tactical employment of troops must be instinctive. In war there is little time to think and the right thing to do must come like a flash. And this habit is developed by a deep study of the campaigns of great men." Col. Henderson says, "It was not courage and experience only that made Hannibal, Alexander, Caesar the greatest names of antiquity; Napoleon, Wellington and the Arch Duke Charles were certainly the best educated soldiers of their times; while Lee, Jackson and Sherman probably knew more of war before they made it than any one else in the United States".

4 It is only by a deep study of military history, of the military arts and sciences that Moore and Wellington could face successfully the great Corsican. It is true that from books we cannot learn common sense, judgment, tact, etc., but in all these respects we can improve ourselves by practice, and by intercourse with our fellowmen. We have the example of Germany that a sound knowledge of war can be acquired under peace conditions; the mastering of text books and critical study of military history constitute the A. B. C. of the subject.

5 Each Nation has its schools where war is taught by great scholars in military science and art. We, as situated by circumstances, are placed in a quite different situation. Our resources are limited and so we are unable to conduct a military school on the modern lines. But it would not be advisable to sit with folded hands, and lament over our situation. We must find out a way out of it. And so His Highness the Maharaja Sahel has been pleased to order that lectures should be arranged on such subjects, as will increase the general and professional knowledge of the officers of our army, and I was ordered by G. O. C to deliver lectures on the Mesopotamia Campaign. I shall try my best to give you, though not a complete and methodical account of the Mesopotamia Campaign, (selected for these lectures), but rather a mere discussion of some important battles.

6 Before coming to our main subject, let me give you the causes of the war, and the general situation of the war when Turkey declared war on England. Before giving the immediate cause of the war, let us first examine the particular causes of the war. After the great victories of Prussia a generation ago, and the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, Europe gradually drifted into being an armed camp. The French were quite ardently desiring of recovering what they had lost. Germany from an agricultural state became a state

largely occupied in mining, smelting, spinning and shipbuilding; and there went with this revolution a large increase of population. They wanted some outlet—some colonies to inhabit. Germany tried to curb the National feelings of the Slavs by interfering in the Balken affairs; firstly by supporting Austria in declaring Bosnia and Harzegovina as her own; and secondly by intervening after the Balken war in 1913, ignoring and despising national feeling and national rights, creating artificial boundaries. It offended Russia to a great deal. Germany determined to have war at any cost in near future, so as to have her influence in the near East and to obtain new colonies to accommodate her increasing population. The murder of the Crown Prince of Austria gave Germany the best opportunity for carrying out the scheme which had been preached and taught in Germany for years together. Demands were made so as to lower Serbia as a Nation. It was expected that she would refuse, and she refused. Austria declared war on Serbia. Russia joined to save the Slav Nation from humiliation...Germany and France also joined in turn.

7 German strategy was to crush France by turning her flank, by advancing through Belgium by violating her neutrality if necessary. Then to turn towards Russia and crush her also in turn and the last attention should be paid to England to crush her completely and thus force a treaty by which nearly all her colonies could be taken over and the British Empire should remain only a name in history as that of the Roman Empire. "Might is right" was the German strategy.

8. Joffre brought his armies unbroken out of the clutches of the Germans. That was the first fine stroke among cleverest feats of the war. Then it was no mistake that made Von Kluck turn aside from Paris as he neared the Capital. Joffre forced him to do so, and had all along intended

that he should do so. The German General had to destroy the allied forces in front of him and turn the French line. Joffre fixed his own battle line, an historic and ideal battle area, between the two great fortresses of Paris and Verdun and drew the Germans down to that position. Then both their flanks and their lines of communications were threatened. It was really on the flanks that the battle was largely won. To quote Napoleon "the secret of war lies in the lines of communication". It was by Von Kluck's exposure of his insufficiently guarded communication to attack at the decisive moment that the Germans completed the set of circumstances for which Joffre had striven.

9. Joffre won the victory of the battle of the Marne, one of the decisive victories of the world. **Strategical blunder of the Germans.** in that a decisive victory strategically changes the history of the world for better or for worse. But he did not reap the full tactical benefits of his masterly strategy. If the material results of the battle were not quite so great as might have been expected, the moral result was tremendous. In their breakneck on-rush to ruin, the Germans left the seaports of Calais, Boulogne and Harve open. That was the greatest strategical blunder they committed. Then the race for the sea began. Many hard fights took place in Flanders to turn the sea flank of the allies, but it was of no avail.

10. Russian steam-roller was slowly progressing in East Prussia. Affairs were terribly black for Germany. Then the victory of **Affairs on the Russian front.** Tannenberg gave them some relief: but German hero Von Hindenburg was flung back while pushing into Russia and was badly defeated on the Vistula and was in full retreat. Austrians were crushed in the slaughter of Lemberg and General Brusiloff again smashed them at Raversuka.

11. The Serbians had smashed the Austrians at Shapatz and driven the Austrian out of Serbia. The smashing of the first two Austrian invasions was a fact to which little attention has been paid, for at the time tremendous events elsewhere in the far spread theatre of war overshadowed it.

12. Thus Germany and Austria were practically besieged from all sides. There was only one way and that through Bulgaria and Turkey. Again Russia was mainly dependent on her allies for ammunition and other war materials. Baltic is open for six months only, and it was not safe as the German Navy was lying nearby—Through Dardanelles Russia was supplied with her needs. If Turkey entered war this way would be blocked and Russia could be brought to her knees. Germany tried her best. For a long time German agents had been busy in the Capital and all over the country preparing the ground for action. Young Turks were for war and the others for neutrality. Arrival of two German warships—Goeben and Breslau—was the main factor in bringing matter to breaking point. Another event played into the hands of the war party. It was the taking over by England of the Ottoman warships, building in the English dockyards. That greatly enraged the young Turks and gave them the lever to stir up the feelings of the moderates against England and Entente. Enver closed the Dardanelles contrary to treaty engagements; troops were concentrated, German merchant ships were converted into armed ships and the Egyptian frontier was violated. England required from Turkey but the observance of elementary duties of neutrality. She overlooked positive acts of war. She offered her the fullest guarantees regarding her independence and territorial integrity. But driven by Enver and the Germans the Turkish Government showed in turn insolence, contemptuousness and defiance.

Nothing could hold her back. On October 29th 1914, the Turco-German bombardment of Russian Black sea ports took place and war was an accomplished fact. The reply of the Entente Powers was a demand that all German Naval and Military instructors in the Turkish service must leave Constantinople. After a prolonged and stormy meeting, the Turkish Council decided by a majority for refusal. The ambassadors of the Entente Powers applied for their passports and on November 1st they left Constantinople.

13. The question is always put as to why Turkey was not dragged into the conflict in the

Why Turkey did not join in the beginning of August 1914.

beginning of August. Had the campaign in the West gone as at the outset it was believed in Berlin it would go; had France been speedily crushed and Russia, held in the meanwhile by Austria, been speedily crushed in turn, there would have been no necessity for Turkish assistance. A presumably victorious Germany would have reaped all the greater advantages from a Turkish Empire unexhausted by war. The still untapped resources of Turkey would have been available for assault upon the British position in Egypt and India. In short all considerations were against involving Turkey prematurely and none in August 1914 in favour of that cause. By the end of October it had become urgent to divert as much as possible of the Russian strength from the main Eastern Front, to stir up trouble for the British in the East and not least to cut the connection between Great Britain and India through Egypt and prevent that country from being used as a base for the transport of troops or supplies from Australia. To involve Turkey in the war meant a menace at once to the Anglo-Persian oil fields at the head of the Persian Gulf, and to the oil fields of the Caucasus. It meant of course also the closing of the Dardanelles and the cutting off the short route to Russia to and from the west, seeing that the Baltic was now barred. As an inducement Germany could offer two apparently rich prizes-Egypt and the oil fields of the Caucasus.

14. Looking at these points the advantages immediately derived by Germany were, first the closing of the Black sea route; secondly the obligation thrown upon Russia of despatching a strong force into the Caucasus; thirdly the necessity imposed upon Great Britain of taking steps for the effectual defence of Egypt; fourthly Germany obtained the command of the force of strength of 8 lacs of soldiers and fifthly Germany got the unexhausted country for the supplies of materials for war.





Copied from the map prepared in the Historical section of the Committee of Imperial defence.

Lecture II

Some Important Features of Mesopotamia.

1 Mesopotamia consists of the lowland regions of the

Boundaries of Mesopotamia

the basin of the Euphrates and the Tigris. The term upper Mesopotamia is usually applied to the northern

portion reaching almost as far south as Bagdad, Lower Mesopotamia stretches thence roughly southwards to the sea. To the north of Mesopotamia is the Armenian Plateau, to the east Persia, to the west the Arabian table-land, to the south the Persian Gulf and the north eastern desert of Arabia.

2 From sea we have access through the Shatt-al-Arab-

Rivers and water courses of Mesopotamia.

the confluence of the Euphrates and the Tigris. It is nearly one and half miles wide at the mouth, gradually narrowing upwards to 600

yds. at Basra. The Karun enters it at about forty five miles upstream at Mohommerah. It is also navigable for small vessels. The Euphrates enters the Tigris from the west at Qurna. The course of this river is nowhere clearly defined in its lower reaches. It enters the Tigris by a new channel at Kunetali 5 or 6 miles north of Basra. In addition to these there are many subsidiary water courses and tracts of water. Tigris is the main line of communication between the sea and Bagdad. But navigation largely depends upon the melting of snows in Caucasus. From January to March the river is fairly full; in April and May it is at its highest owing to the melting of the snows; it falls in July and August and from thence to November the water is at its lowest. Floods caused by the sudden rise of the river level, rain or broken dam always affect military operations. Troops find it unable to stir from a camp. It becomes, therefore, an ordinary precaution to surround camps or trenches by protective dams or other earth works. When floods subside they generally recede wholesale leaving few if any pools behind them.

3 As a general rule rivers do not lend to passage of vessels of deep draught. The consequence is that in struggles to secure and retain command of such waterways against hostile military force on shore, a navy is restricted to the use of small ships and unless these are specially constructed for the purpose, they may not be well adapted to withstand bombardment from the land. And so special gun boats were made for the use on the Tigris by the British Force. These rivers can easily be blocked by sunken ships, by booms or by mining. Turks made use of these devices many a time, thus hampering the advance of the British Force, sometimes checking it for a considerable time. In operations on a river the current plays an important part, in that it increases or decreases the speed of vessels according as they are going up or down stream. In such operations when one side has gained the control of such waterway and has possessed the necessary transports of capable of navigating its channels, troops can very rapidly be moved, from point to point along its course. From the strategical point of view the command of a river like Tigris may confer on a military commander even greater liberty of action than the command of sea does, because difficulties as to landing generally disappear. The best illustration of this is afforded by Lord Wolseley's Campaign of 1882 in Egypt. By making use of the Suez canal and landing at Ismailia, the British expeditionary force acted against Arabi Pasha. The condition governing the command of a great river differ widely from those upon which the command of the sea depends. But once that command has been established, its strategical influence over land operations may be very similar to which so often follows upon maritime supremacy.

4 In Mesopotamia trees are scarce and all wood for building has to be imported.

5 There is also an almost total absence of stone; consequently the roads are unmetalled and without bridges. Tracks across deserts soon cut up and become heavy under artillery and transport traffic. It is therefore very difficult, almost impossible to supply a large army for a long campaign. We know how the roads are broken and wrought into hollows by the passage of heavy carts laden with loads. The trains that follow an army laden as they are with ammunition, pontoon, platforms for guns, siege artillery, and other ponderous materials soon destroy all but best roads. In order that the supply to an army may be uninterrupted, it is necessary that the roads should be of the best construction like the highways metalled ones. History tells us that in the Crimea even 7 miles of soft soil interposed in winter between an army and its depots may be almost a fatal obstacle. General Hamley says, "But it is not only on account of the supplies that great armies operate by great roads. It is also because the march of troops, and artillery becomes on bad roads so slow and uncertain that all the calculations on which a general bases a combined operation are liable to be falsified, and the rapidity necessary for a movement intended to surprise or foil an adversary is lost, so that the design is foreseen and frustrated by the enemy." An example of the different rate at which troops move over a good and a bad road is afforded by the campaign of Waterloo. Napoleon following Wellington and Grouchy following Blucher, both quitted the field of Ligny on the afternoon of 17th June. The Emperor marching by the great paved road of Namur and Brussels, assembled his army that night in the position of Waterloo, 17 miles from Ligny. Grouchy moving by country roads had great difficulty in bringing his 30,000 men to Grembloux, 5 miles from Ligny, by 10 O'clock the same night. Therefore, imagine the difficulties of the British and Turkish forces operating on the tracts in the sand. As long as these forces are near the river it is all

right. They can't move far away from the river and make any turning movement. We will see later on that the whole force moved along the river, scarcely going 6 or 7 miles away from the river. All the great battles have been fought alongside the river, always having one flank on the river bank.

6. There were no railways in Mesopotamia, The existence of railways has become one

Railways, one of the governing factors in Strategy.

of the governing factors in strategy. Napoleon had only to rely on rapid marching to gain strategical advantages at the outset of his campaigns.

To-day similar advantages are sought for in railways. So an army operating in Mesopotamia has to rely on the Tigris for all military purposes such as assembling and supplying the armies, carrying sick, wounded and prisoners and sending forward reinforcements. From Turkish point of view, it told terribly upon their movements of troops and sending reinforcements in time. There was railway from Aleppo to Ras-Al-Ain. From Ras-Al-Ain to Samara there was a gap of 327 miles to be completed. From Samara to Bagdad there was railway. From Bagdad downwards they had to rely on river transport. The bulk of the fighting forces of the Ottoman Empire were about the Dardanells, about Constantinople and in Antolia. To move a big force from these regions to Mesopotamia was a difficult job. At least 3 months would require for a regiment to come down to Basra from Antolia. Again there was question of supplying this force, with food, ammunition and war materials.

7. When armies have to undertake operations in regions like Mesopotamia, where few

Difficulties of transport and their effects.

supplies are procurable and transport is difficult, movement of armies is much hampered. Under such

circumstances long periods may have to be devoted to the formation of bases and special measures are necessary for

these things. These difficulties frequently account for a slowness of movement.

8. Supply and transport are intimately bound up in all military operations. Supplies have to be carried sufficient to subsist the force while it traverses the whole distance and the consequence of this is that the supply trains grow to an enormous size and became very trouble some to control and difficult to protect. Large part of an army becomes a mere escort. Henry IV of France remarked with regard to campaigns against Spain in his day, "Invade with a large army and you are destroyed by starvation; invade with a small one and you are overwhelmed by a hostile population". This is equally applicable to-day to regions where the roads, railways and other means of communication do not exist. In Mesopotamia we see that there was only one way of keeping communication and that was through the Tigris. But daily it began to increase in length. Communications always cramp the operations of the regular army; they act as a drag on its mobility and they tend to tie it down. As they increase in length, they are generally exposed to hostile enterprises. The consequence of this is their protection absorbs a large proportion of the forces in the theatre of war.

9 • In this campaign, as the operations progressed north of Basra, it led through districts where the temper of population was hostile, and so the posts and depots along the line were required to be posted.....Unless an adequate force is detailed to protect the line or lines of communications, there is always great risk of their being cut temporarily or permanently. General Townshead complains in his book "My Campaign in Mesopotamia", that at the time of the battle, of Ctesiphon when he was in want of troops for that battle, more than the fighting troops were employed in guarding the line of communication. He had 11,000 combatants in this battle while a full division of 15,000 was on duty of guarding the line of communication. History furnishes us with many examples of this

kind. In the Afghan campaign the number of troops employed on the Khaibar line between Kabul and Peshawar in March 1880, was more than 15,000 men; at the same time the Kabul field force consisted of only about 12,000 men.

10. It is evident that the line of operation and the line of communication must be the same in such regions. As in Nile expedition the Nile-road and river were the Britisher's one line of advance and supply, so in Mesopotamia the Tigris can be the only means of food supply and the line of operation.

11. When such campaigns are undertaken, the local tribes always play a prominent part in the operations. So, we must first of all try to get a grip of the condition of the local people. One must get a grip on the general and broad history

of the people, in so far as that history has developed its present condition. For, this not only gives the intentions of the people, it also gives their aims, ambitions and dreams. So one must have the thorough knowledge of foreign affairs of these people. Knowledge of foreign affairs is absolutely necessary to know the different moves made by these people. In order to understand different moves made by the local Arabs and the Shaikhs of Mohammerah and Kuwait, we must see what was the relation of these people with the Turkish and British Governments. Arabs had little love for the Turks owing to repressive policy of the Turkish Government. They were most untrustworthy people—always siding with the victorious party. We had many instances of these people harassing the Turks in their adversities and plundering their camps, and also the occasions of doing the same thing with the British in their difficulties. Many local Arab Chiefs were always at war with the Turkish Government. The Emirs of Nejd fought for their independence since 1818. At last in 1913, Ibn Saud declared his independence publicly and almost all the Arabs were in sympathy with him.

12 Kuwait is an Arab State south of Basra. Attempts were made to induce the Shaikh of Kuwait to accept the Turkish Nationality. But the Shaikh had independently contracted obligations from time to time with the British Government, and when the war broke out he was definitely under the British protection.

13 The Shaikh of Mohammerah was also anti-Turk. Through his territory the oil pipes are running. In 1910 the Turkish Government used force against him but it was tided over by the diplomatic pressure of the British Government.

14. Owing to good relations with these Shaikhs, the British were able to land forces at Fao with out any resistance from these Shaikhs; and there was no danger of their line of communication being cut off, when they proceeded further with all their forces, keeping only small, detachments to ward off the local Arabs. Had these Shaikhs been anti-British, British force could not have advanced further from the mouth of the Tigris without having subdued these Shaikhs. That would have taken time and the capture of Basra would have cost a heavy price.

15. Now, I will touch only one point, and that is mirage one of the physical disabilities of this country. It deceived the British force many a time, caused troops endless troubles, and misunderstandings. Mirage, distorting every object, was a daily phenomenon, and when this was accompanied by a dusty haze blown up by wind, all but comparatively near objects were blotted out. In reconaissance it deceived many a time the cavalry patrols, observation posts and even the air reconnoitres. They always mistook in the mirage and dust, Arabs for troops

or Sheep or Cattle for men. Many a time the troops were moved from the camp on such informations and the hours passed before the mistake was discovered. Edmund Candler gives a beautiful picture of mirage in his book "The Long Road to Bagapad." He says. "The atmosphere is most deceptive and in the haze or mirage it is difficult to tell if the enemy are horse or foot or to make any estimate of their numbers. Everything is magnified. A low lying mud village becomes a fort with walls twenty feet high, a group of donkeys, a palm grove. There is not a cavalry regiment with the force, which has not at some time or other mistaken ship for infantry. Often in reconnaissance the enemy are within 600 yards before the Squadron Commander can distinguish whether they are mounted or on foot. The dancing mirage plays one a hundred trick. Once an officer put up a direction post for prismatic compass survey, a little mound with a flag on it. When he started back to camp, he took down the flag. He had left the mound half a mile behind, when looking back he saw, what he thought was an Arab pursuing him. He lay down and covered the figure with his rifle and called to his orderly to do the same. They lay in wait while the Arab still came on, at the same rapid stride, his cloak flying in the wind. Whole minutes passed yet though he never ceased to move, he came no nearer. They approached and found it was the little mound a foot high."

16. I have given you as far as possible the general description of some features of the country necessary for our purpose. Now we begin with the main campaign in my next lecture.

Lecture III.

The Capture of Basra and the Battle of Shaiba.

1. In September 1914 Sir Barrow, Military Secretary at the India Office, had drawn up a memorandum urging the occupation of Basra on the three grounds, that it would safeguard Egypt, to impress the Arabs and to protect the Anglo-Persian Oil Installation. Upon that recommendation, the 6th division, out of the troops intended for service in Europe, was reserved for an expedition to the Persian Gulf. In view of the call for prompt action, the Poona Brigade, part of the 6th division, in middle of October embarked under the command of Brigadier General W. S. Dalamain as an advanced force. It was to occupy Abadan, the island in the Shatt-al-Arab on which were situated the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's refineries. On the declaration of war on Turkey, the remainder of the 6th division commanded by Lt. General Barrett sailed from Bombay and united with the Brigade under General Dalamain on Baharein island. This brought the strength of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force upto that of one division, roughly 15,000 combatants.

2. Shaikhs of Mahammarat and Kuwait were hostile to Turks. For many years the British authorities in India had political relations with these Arab Shaikhs, who ruled the territories at the head of Gulf. For the support of Mohammarat, it was considered prudent that the force sent from India would be directed to occupy Basra, thus securing the co-operation of both the Shaikhs. For the operation in Mesopotamia, the object laid down was the capture of Basra and of the Shatt-al-Arab upto that place.

3. On the 6th November landing took place at Fao. The fort was in ruins and it was lightly held. There were only 500 men and 4 Krupp field guns. They resisted for an hour or two and retreated towards Sanieyh. On the 7th having re-embarked the landing force and leaving a company to garrison the Fao telegraph station, the transport proceeded upstream anchoring about 16 miles above Fao, within sight of oil works at Abadan.

4. A strong force had been despatched from Bagdad at the end of September and it arrived at Basra by forced march on or about the same day, the British advanced force landed at Sanieyh, News of British landing must have reached the Turks at Basra, immediately on their arrival. No time was, therefore, lost in pushing down to Sanieyh a strong reconnoissance.

5. Decidedly the Turk's best opportunity was to attack the British camp forthwith with all the strength at their disposal. Unfortunately for them, their men were sent little fit for immediate campaigning. Reinforcements were sent from Basra and proceeded to entrench at Sahain four miles north of Sanieyh, thus cutting the route to Basra by land.

6. By this time General Barrett joined General Dalmain, and as soon as practicable the Turks were attacked at Sahain and were dislodged and the British were able to get their force ashore, in readiness to advance on Basra. Another force of the Turks had taken position at Sahil, nine miles northwards with their main force at Baljiniya. A general attack was decided upon and the whole force moved out. The Turks had taken a position with their left on the estuary and their right, where their artillery was chiefly in position covered by groves of date palm. In front was a bare and level

plain. General Barrett originally had decided to turn the right flank of the enemy, but after watching the course of engagement for sometime, he abandoned his intention and tried to turn the left flank of the enemy. General Fry engaged the enemy's right and centre by frontal attack, and General Dalamain turned the enemy's left flank. The manoeuvre was carried out with dash and coolness, breaking the Turkish defences.

7. By this victory, not only the road to Basra was cleared, but the Turks had been disorganised.

Capture of Basra. To follow up blow, part of British force was embarked on two river steamers and preceded by the gun boats made for Basra by water. The rest of the troops meanwhile pressed the retreating enemy by land. Basra was entered unopposed on 22nd November. Turks had evacuated Basra and retired on Amara. A part of the Turkish force had taken a strong position at Qurna. Lt. Col. Frazer was sent up to dislodge this force. On approaching Qurna, Lt. Col. Frazer soon learned that the place was held in a strength, quite beyond his battalion to confront. He was reinforced by two battalions. The British crossed the Tigris six miles above Qurna. In the meanwhile the Turks in Qurna had sat tight, evidently uncertain as to the direction of the main attack and probably thinking the crossing of the river higher up a ruse. Since the town is close to the point where the Tigris and Euphrates join, the appearance of the British force to the north and west apparently cut them off. Seeing this the whole force, 1500 men surrendered.

8. So far the British blows had passed to be swift

General situation after the fall of Basra. The hold on the estuary and the course of the Tigris as far as Qurna, 120 miles from sea was secure. Notwithstanding the loss of Qurna a Turkish force advanced to the Karun and occupied

Ahwas A big force was also at Nasariyah on the Euphrates.

68 miles west of Qurua. General Barrett found that to meet all demands upon his division forthwith would have involved its disposal on a wide extent of country. Already the force had been reduced by the placing of garrisons at Kuwait, Qurna and by the pipe line patrol along the Karun.

9. Still strategically the British were on the better position. There were three avenues of approach to Basra one from Nasariyah, 2nd from Amara and the third from Ahwaz. Basra was the central position having communication with the small detachments kept on both sides of danger. Basra was the center of operations. They were working on the interior lines while the Turks on the exterior lines, the detachments being independent of each other. British could keep their whole force concentrated at Basra with detachments at Qurna, Shaiba and Ahwaz. They could easily resist any attempt by the Turks in big force by any side, by concentrating their superior force. But Turks were not in a position to resist any attempt by their enemy in big force towards any of the sides mentioned above. British forces had the power of mutual reinforcements and support. The Turks were always kept ignorant as to the side on which the blow will fall. With the big half circle, the British General was free to move his troops as he wished. He could use his freedom to some purpose. The point most actively threatened was again and again reinforced from the central position at Basra, as in the cases of the battle of Shaiba and the attempt at Ahwaz by the Turks. One of Turkish General Staff, Bimbashi Muhammad Amin says, "The whole force was dispersed, one detachment on the Euphrates, one on the Tigris and one in Arabistan. The different commanders were incapable and there was no co-operation. Each fraction was left to itself and felt too weak to do its allotted task. Cut off from one another by great swamps, what could they do against the English who using the Euphrates, Tigris and the Karun rivers could bring a superior force to any one of the three sectors."

10 I wish to give in short the description of the battle of Shaiba—the first battle, in the real sense of the term was fought in Mesopotamia. The details of the dispositions of the British force on the

Dispositions of the British Force

11th April were as follows :—

At Qurna, under command of Brigadier General Dobbie, four Battalions and four heavy guns.

At Ahwaz, under command of Major General Davison, 4 battalions, one squadron of cavalry, one company of sappers.

At Shaiba under the command of Major General Fry 4 cavalry regiments, 7 battalions, 3 companies of sappers and miners and one battery.

At Basra, one heavy battery, 10 battalions, mountain battery, Howitzer battery and one cavalry regiment.

11 The state of country all round Basra, owing to the floods, rendered military operations difficult. The Tigris had overflowed and the country between Basra city and settlement along the banks of

State of Country round Basra-

the Tigris was practically under water. Beyond Basra, the Euphrates water extending to Zubair and Shaiba complicated the question of supplying the force at Shaiba. It was however a military necessity to hold a position at near Shaiba both to retain the initiative in operations, and to prevent the Turks spreading down the Shatt-al-Arab between Basra and the sea.

12 British extended camp at Shaiba—over three and half miles in circumference—was situated with its rear face on the edge of the flood area and its western face on a slight elevation on or about

Position of British Camp at Shaiba.

the centre of which was wallserai known as Shaiba Fort. The ground to the north west of the camp was slightly undulating, open and treeless while beyond these at about 900 yds. distance from the perimeter was a small hillock known as north mound. West-ward and south westward, the ground sloped very gently in undulating folds upwards for some two miles. There was a watch tower, a prominent land mark, some four miles distance from Shaiba Fort. The only other outstanding feature was a hillock, known as south mound, about halfway between Shaiba and the watch tower. The ruins of old Basra lay east of Lubair on the edge of the flood area. It was distant about 3 miles from the Shaiba Fort.

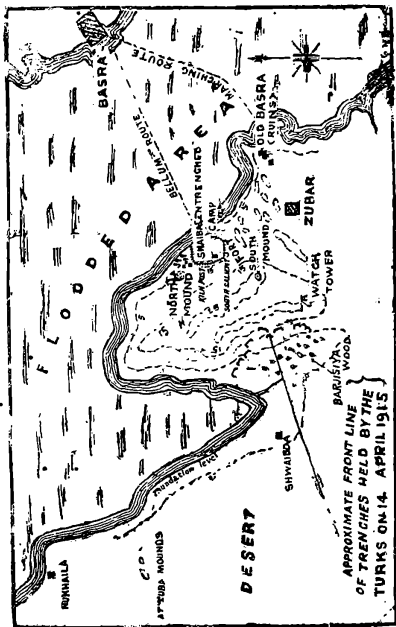
13 Turks in a great strength attacked this position at about 5 A. M. on the 12th. It was mainly directed against southern position. This attack was definitely repulsed without much difficulty by 8 A. M. when the Turks retired leaving small parties in observation. At dusk a vigorous attack was again delivered. But the attack failed and gradually died away to desultory firing.

Turkish attack on Shaiba

14 General Fry asked for help from Basra and General Melliss was sent with an Infantry Brigade and a mountain battery. With great difficulty in bellums they moved off. When General Melliss arrived at Shaiba at 8 P. M. of the 12th, fighting was still in progress. He decided to take up the offensive and drive the Turks away.

15 On the 13th, he ordered a cavalry regiment supported by an Infantry Brigade to clear the north mound occupied by the enemy. The cavalry advanced direct upon the north mound from their position. By 11 A. M. the north mound was cleared of the Turks and they were in full retreat towards west. Then this force turned to the west, and the clearing of the western vicinity of the Shaiba position was begun. By

- To illustrate the Battle of Shaiba.



Copied from the map prepared in the Historical section of the Committee of Imperial defence.

2.30 P. M. this was successfully carried out. At 3 P. M. he issued orders for the troops to withdraw to camp.

16. At dawn on the 14th April, personal observation disclosed to General Melliss that although the immediate vicinity of Shaiba was clear of the enemy, considerable hostile bodies remained in the neighbourhood of south mound. General Melliss decided to attack the enemy with all force, leaving only two battalions to hold the camp. First an advance was made on south mound, which was lightly held by the enemy, who had retired to the already prepared line of trenches to the west. It was near Barjisia wood. British plan was to engage the Turks' right and centre and to attack the left, thus hoping to strike at the enemy's line of retirement to Nukhaila. It was the most bloody battle fought. The left flank of the enemy could not be turned by the cavalry, as the Turks were holding positions right upto the mud on the edge of the flood area. From 10 A. M. to 4 P. M. vigorous efforts were made but they were of no avail and the British decided to retire to Shaiba before dusk and made all arrangements for it. In the meanwhile the right flank brigade, which was at a distance of 200 yds. from the Turkish trenches made the last effort and it proved successful. The whole line gave way and disorderly retreat began. Turkish losses were tremendous. General Melliss described it as a "Soldier's battle," we may interpret it by saying that superiority in manoeuvre had little to do in gaining the victory.

17. The battle of Shaiba had several decisive results. It cleared the western approaches to Basra of a dangerous menace; it restored the power of initiative to the British and it dissipated for the time being any chance of effective action by the Turks.

18 In this battle the Turks formed front to the flank.

Forming front to the flank.

When one of the two opposing armies is operating on a front parallel to the line of communicating with its base, the latter has acquired a great advantage over its adversary. It was a great mistake to place an army in such a position without reasonable prospect of counter-balancing advantage. In this position the defeat to the British army would have been a mere defeat—but to the Turkish army it was a ruin.

19. It must be said that the constant and effectual shifting of the British forces to any side made feasible by the error of the Turks. Turks worked on wholly independent lines. They never operated in combination. First an attempt at Ahwaz was made and then the battle of Shaiba was fought; and this disjointed state of things permitted British to reinforce the threatened point at their leisure. Had the Turks pressed their opponents at all the three points simultaneously they could have neutralised the advantages of the interior lines which the British had got.

20. According to Turkish official documents the Turkish forces amounted in round numbers to 17,000 rifles, 380 sabres, 44 field guns and 3 machine guns. The whole force was distributed in small detachments at several places. No concentrated effort was made by the Turks, from the landing of the British at Fao till the capture of Qurna. Of the total numbers given above the Turks concentrated in the vicinity of Basra, in November, only 4700 rifles, 18 guns and 3 machine guns. A great fault was made in not attributing sufficient importance to Fao, the gateway of Mesopotamia. They tried to resist the advance of the British by small forces, which the British could easily destroy in piecemeal. The same dispersion was made

again after the fall of Qurna. Suliman Akari—the Turkish Commander-in-chief violated one of the principles of war—the principle of economy of force. He tried to keep an eye on too many things, he tried to keep, to see, to defend everything. The result was dispersion, which prevented him from commanding, from combining one single affair, from striking hard. He ended in impotence. Clausewitz wrote of the principle of Economy of Force that "The first and the most important of the rules which impose themselves on the General-in-chief is to keep his forces united. He must only detach from the general mass of troops that, which is strictly indispensable for the satisfaction of an urgent necessity." Napoleon constantly refers to this principle throughout his military correspondence to his generals. At one place he writes "The Cordon system is good against smugglers and for postal arrangements, but it has never yet succeeded in war."

21 There is a proverb which says "You cannot hunt two hares at the same time. You would catch neither of them".

The Principle of big members beating small ones. Once Bonaparte wrote to Leoben the Austrian General "There are many fine generals in Europe, but they see too many things at the same time: I only see one, namely the masses. I try to destroy them feeling sure that the accessories will then tumble down of themselves." At another place he wrote "The same is true of war as of the storming of a fortified town, fire must be concentrated on one point. As soon as the breach is made the balance is upset; nothing else is of any avail; the town is taken.....Attacks must not be scattered but on the contrary combined." A conversation between Bonaparte and Moreau will illustrate the new conception of this principle. These two generals who had never yet seen each other, seemed equally pleased to meet. It was observed that during this interview, both for one moment looked at each other in silence. Bonaparte was the first to speak; he told Moreau

how anxious he had been to make his acquaintance. "You are just come from Egypt as a Conqueror" answered Moreau, "and I am just home from Italy after a great defeat."..... After giving some explanation of the causes of that defeat he concluded "It was impossible to prevent our gallant army from being overwhelmed by so many combined forces. Big numbers always beat small ones."

"You are right" said Bonaparte, "big numbers always beat small ones."

"Still, General," said Moreau to Bonaparte, "you have often beaten big armies with small ones."

"Even in that case" Napoleon said, "the small numbers were always beaten by the big ones."

This led to explain his tactics.

"When with inferior forces, I was met by a large army" he said, "having quickly grouped my own I fell like lightning on one of the wings which I routed. I then availed myself of the disorder of this manoeuvre never failed to produce within the enemy, so as to attack it in another part and again with all my forces. I thus beat the enemy piecemeal; and the ensuing victory was invariably as you see, the triumph of the larger number over the smaller."

22. From the very beginning the Turks were on the defensive. He who halts when the enemy is marching against him is lost. To take the lead, to act with a well formulated idea, and to compel adversary to conform, is very different to waiting and watching, and merely trying to ascertain and counteract the moves of an opponent who is skilfully endeavouring to mislead us at every step. "To make war is to attack." Sulaiman Askari thought that he could not advance and deliver battle

until he was accurately informed as to the enemy's strength and positions. He did not get it, he waited inactive and was beaten in consequence. His action at Shaiba was too late, that too disjointed one. The strategist should not wait for information and remain inactive; he should march straight on his objective the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field, with all his forces united. He should not move forward until he has concentrated all his forces or otherwise he will violate the principle of economy of force as is done in this campaign, by the Turkish commander. It does not matter if the enemy advances a hour or days before or some distance in land.

Lecture IV.

The Battle of Qurna.

1. A few days after the battle of Shaiba, General Townshead arrived at Basra as a commander of the 6th Division in place of General Barrett who sailed for India owing to ill health. General Nixon

Decision to advance on Amara.

was appointed as the Commander-in-Chief of the Mesopotamia forces. At this time the Turks were in position north of Qurna. They were carrying on raids on Ahwaz. It was thought advisable by the Government to push the advance to Amara, in order to stop these raids for good, because it was absolutely necessary to protect the pipe line throughout as the Admiralty attached great importance to the uninterrupted maintenance of oil supply at Abadan and regarded it as a matter of extreme urgency. In the beginning the Government had decided to play a safe game in Mesopotamia. But circumstances forced them to extend the operations in this region. Unless the British occupied Nasiriya and Amara, the attitude of the British at Basra could only be defensive. The safest policy was to take up a position at Nasiriya, so as to keep off the danger of allowing Turkish forces too near Basra - as in the instance in the battle of Shaiba. Turk's raids or advance in a big force on Ahwaz could only be prevented by the occupation of Amara; with Amara in British hands their troops could eventually be withdrawn from Ahwaz and be set free for work on either the Tigris or the Euphrates.

2. So General Nixon gave General Townshead the command of Qurna-Amara operations. He had to drive the Turks away from their position north of Qurna, to push 90 miles and to occupy Amara, a very important town, which was part of Basra province.

General Townshead was given the command of operation.

3. The flood season was on and for miles the river had overflowed its banks. Vast expanse of water westward and eastward. Only there were some sand hills held by the Turks. Between these islands and Qurna the depth of water averaged one to three feet. Advance by wading was out of question, while the shallowness of the greater part of area, the concealment of deeper channels and the presence of Turkish mines limited the extent to which the ordinary river craft could be utilised. This will give you an idea of the sort of battle Townshead had to fight at Qurna. It was plain that the only way one could advance was in boats, for during the flood season on the Tigris the banks of the river are invariably inundated which eventually prevents all marching or movement of wheeled traffic, over great part of the country.

4. The Turkish main position was astride the Tigris about Abu Aran, Muzabila and Ruta. In the foreground were the advanced position on the sandhills in front of Ruta, on one Tree hill, one Tower hill and the Two gun hill. Owing to flood it was a position of great strength. There were three alternative methods of attacking the Turkish position. The first involving a turning movement to the west of the Tigris but it was undesirable and almost impossible; owing to the flooded marshes with their high reeds, and the depth of creeks that would have to be crossed. The second involved the similar turning movement but to the east of the Tigris but it would mean the Ruta creek and it did not menace the Turkish line of retreat. The third was the frontal attack in strength assisted by an enveloping movement by a detachment along the eastern bank of the Tigris. General Townshead proposed the third method for the operation and suggested that the attack was to be taken methodically in successive phases, and would depend for its success on the intimate co-operation of the land force and the

ships and on the effect of the heavy gunfire. General Nixon gave his general approval to General Townshead's plan.

5. Then the preparations for attacks were carried out energetically. At Basra the

Preparations for attack.

sappers were kept very busy preparing water craft, shielded bellums, rafts for machine guns, barges for heavy guns, Mahailas for hospital purposes and for engineering and other stores. Every requirement of the attacking force had to be thought out and arranged for beforehand. Then the orders were passed to start training in the poling of these bellums. In this respect fair progress was made by the middle of April-32 men per battalion were trained. This being a new operation Townshead took a rehearsal of a whole brigade manoeuvring in boats.

6. General Townshead was given two brigades for this

Force given for the task.

operation and he was supposed to provide the troops for line of communication between Qurna and Basra. Regarding this he says, "It is instructive to see the way in which Government was starting an expedition to invade Mesopotamia: all the mistakes and errors of our maritime expeditions during the 18th and early part of 19th centuries are here repeated with interest. Even Bonapart could not have succeeded with methods like this; for my battle of Qurna, I was to have only two brigades out of my proper three, although I pointed out, on the Economy of Force principle, the third brigade might be given to me for my battle. Not only this but on the good old Indian plan, all the clerks in the office of the Head Quarter Staff in Basra were combatants taken from my Division, and to my horror I found in addition that all the military police in that place and batmen of the staff officers, were taken out of its fighting ranks."

7. The mission given to General Townshead was one of great difficulty and involved a hazardous battle, hazardous because the floods having rendered the whole country a great sea, compelled him to a frontal attack, which is the most costly and most to be avoided in war and least promising of success.

Frontal attack, a Necessity.

8. By the night of 29th-30th May, the whole of the force intended for the operation had been concentrated at Qurna, and on the 30th, General Nixon had also arrived there. Although he informed General Townshead that he had no intention of interfering with the conduct of the operations, he had announced his intention of being present while they were being carried out. General Townshead issued the following operation order for the attack:—

9. General Situation:—

Operation order. No pronounced change in the enemy's dispositions in his position astride the Tigris north of Qurna.

- (a) His main positions are chiefly the localities of Bahran, Rotah, Maziblah, Sackricha advanced posts to the Rotah position on the Sand hills and to the Bahran position at Norfolk hill, one Tree hill, one Tower hill, Gun hill.
- (b) The advance posts one Tower hill. Gun hill, one Tree hill are supported at under 5000 yards range from Bahran.
The Bahran position is supported by artillery fire from Rotah and Maziblah.
- (c) It is probable that the mines are placed in the Tigris channel.

- (d) According to our intelligence reports the Turkish force comprises of 5 battalions, 12 guns and about 600 Mujahidin and about 1200 Arab rifle men.

The positions of the guns are as follows :-

- 1 Gun at Rumla.
- 2 Guns at Gun Hill.
- 1 Gun on One Tower Hill.
- 4 Guns at Bahran.
- 2 Guns at Rotah.

- (e) The flooded state of the country renders the above a position of strength, and demands an operation methodically undertaken in successive phases as in seige warfare every effort being made to obtain concentric fire action by the forces on the west side of Tigris, the Naval Flotilla, and the force on the east side of the river.

2 General intention of the G. O. C.

The enemy will be attacked on May 31st by combined frontal and turning attacks.

- (a) Frontal Attack; A Frontal decisive attack supported by the artillery and the Naval Flotilla will move against the enemy's position on the west side of the Tigris, assisted by a turning attack on the east side of the Tigris.
- (b) Demonstration on the east & west; In order to engage the attention of the Arabs on both flanks of the Turkish positions, demonstration up the Suwaib and El Huir Creeks by friendly Arabs, supported by gun boats, are being arranged by Army Head Quarter.

3 Distribution of Troops for the 1st phase.

(a) Advance Guard Group.

Frontal attack } 17th Infantry Brigade (less 22nd
Lt. Col. Climmo } Punjabis).

$\frac{1}{2}$ Sirmur sappers & miners,
30th Mountain Battrey (less one
Section.

1 Sec. Bri Field Ambulance.

1 Sec. Indian Ambulance.

Turning Attack } $\frac{1}{2}$ Co. Sirmur Sappers & Miners.

Lt. Col. Blois } 1 Sec. Mountain Battery.

Johnson. } 22nd Punjabis.

$\frac{1}{2}$ Sec. Indian Field Ambulance.

No. 3 Group

C. R. A.

} No. 3 Group Artillery.

Land Section.

River Section.

Half 22nd Company Sappers and
Miners.

Bridging Train.

No. 1 Group } 16th Infantry Brigade (in ships)

G. O. C. 16th } Brigade-Signal Section.

Brigade. } 63rd Battery R. F. A.

Half 22nd Company Sappers and

Miners.

One Section British and two Sections Indian Field Ambulance.

General	}	No. 2. Group (in ships).
Reserve		22nd Norfolk.
Lt. Col. Peebles		

4 Orders for the Attack, First Phase.

Objective the line of Birbeek Creek.

- (a) At 5 A.M. on 31st May the Artillery Land Section will commence a bombardment of enemy's position their fire being distributed on :—

Norfolk Hill

One Tree Hill

One Tower Hill

Gun Hill

in accordance with the detailed instructions issued by the C. R. A. The Naval Flotilla will co-operate against Norfolk Hill and Gun Hill.

The River Section will be in readiness to move up when ordered from their rendezvous position at Qurna.

- (b) The frontal attack will advance from its position of assembly west of Fort Snipe at 6 A.M.

Objectives :—

Norfolk Hill

One Tower Hill

• Gun Hill

The O. C. will ensure the protection of his left flank during this advance.

- (c) the turning attack will start from its rendezvous at 1 A. M. objective one Tree Hill. The O. C. will time his movement so as to conform with the artillery bombardment.
- (d) Turning attack will detail a party to look for and explode by rifle fire all mines found along the river bank.
- (e) Mine sweeping operations by the Naval Flotilla will be conducted under orders of S. N. O. during the artillery bombardment.

The subsequent forward movement of the warships and River Section barges will be regulated by the progress of the mine sweepers.

- 5 No. 1 (16th Bridg.) Group and No. 2 (Reserve) Group in transports will be brought up the the Tigris when ordered as follows :—

• Mejidieh.

Blosse Lyneh.

P 1.

• P 3.

- 6 The Ordnance barge Hospital ship and R. E. Park (Group 4) and the Divisional supply column will remain at Qurna till ordered up.

The dressing station of the force will be on Norfolk Hill. This will be provided by the Field Ambulance attached to the General Reserve.

7 Reports: Reports to Divisional Head Quarters on **Beard H. M. S. Espiegle** from 6 P. M. on May 30th.

10. From the above it will be seen that attack on the Turkish advanced positions was to be made by the 17th Infantry Brigade, 30th Mountain Battery and Sirmur Sappers advancing in bellums, preceded and supported by a bombardment by the eight howitzers and heavy guns in position at and near Qurna; and further supported by the naval guns and the heavy and field guns in barges as soon as the mine sweeping operations allowed of their advance. The remainder of the force, organised in groups and consisting of a Field Battery, four infantry Battalions and a Company of Sappers and Miners with units of various auxiliary services were to follow in ships and to be used as circumstances dictated.

11. British attack has of necessity to be purely frontal one and so it was ripe for defeat. **Dangers of the frontal attack on the Qurna position.** General Townshead says, "Supposing the attack of the 17th Brigade was repulsed. It would be a veritable disaster, for it would be almost impossible for it to retreat. The labour of pulling and pushing and punting the bellums through the thick reeds was immense, and progress painfully slow. All the wounded would be drowned, practically all the boats armed would be lost, sunk, abandoned or taken. But on the otherhand even if I had 20,000 men, I could not take the Turkish positions without beleums, and they were only sufficient for one brigade. It was impossible for the Infantry to wade, for in many places the water was out of their depth and the different channels to cross were very deep. The warships could not defeat the Turks alone. The channel of the Tigris was mined and the redoubts with their guns though they were only field guns, should not find it difficult to sink the **Espiegle**."

Odin and Clio whose armour was practically useless. Fifty years old these sloops were used to stop the slave traffic on the west coast of Africa, or in the Persian Gulf; a single shell from a field gun below the water line would sink them. In fact the whole battle depended upon the successful advance of the 17th Brigade."

12. Before dawn on 31st May, the warships, the howitzers and heavy guns at Qurna

Attack on Qurna position. commenced their bombardment of Norfolk, Gun, One Tower and One Tree Hills. The 17th Brigade advanced

slowly through the reeds. But the resistance of the Turks was feeble. By 11-30 the first objective of the battle was in the British hands. The heat was extreme and the glare of the sun off the water very trying and so Townshead decided to cease operations for day and he issued operation orders to continue the attack at day break the next day on the main position at Bahren. The night passed quickly; the next morning the British guns opened fire but without drawing reply. The advance began, and still there was no opposition; Townshead describes in his book the astonished silence with which the British force continued to approach Abu Aran. This was only explained when one of the British aeroplanes dropped a message saying that Abu Aran, Ruta and Muzai-bila had all been evacuated by the enemy, who were fleeing northwards in every available craft.

13. General Townshead decided to pursue the enemy and if possible to enter Amara with the Turkish fugitives. He passed the necessary orders. 17th brigade was ordered to

Pursuit.

proceed upstream in ships together with 63rd Field Battery, the Norfolks, the 'river section' of the heavy artillery and the hospital steamer. But to embark the whole force would take time, and so General Townshead accompanied by S. N. O. followed by Clio and Odin and some twenty men, started

in pursuit up the river in the *Espiegle*. At Kila Shah a very small force was dispersed by shells from the ships. The Shaikh or the head man of the village went on board and Townshend ordered him to collect supplies for 15,000 men, as he said that they were on his heels and would arrive shortly. It was a bluff to deceive them and also hoping that he would send on the news to the Turks at Amara directly he had left. Then they pushed on, and reached Abu Sidrah 12 miles from Amara. He considered it advisable to await the arrival of his leading brigade, as he anticipated that Turks would defend Amara and he felt that it would be ridiculous to attempt to take the place with the few small vessels he had with him. Captain Nunn was anxious that they should go on, but General Townshend declined at first to do so. But an hour later, however, he told Captain Nunn that he would go and chance it.

14. Again the advance commenced and at 1-30 A. M. he

Capture of Amara. entered Amara where the Turkish commander Halim Bey, the governor of Amara Aziz Bey, three or four

colonels and some 30 or 40 officers came on board to surrender. Turkish troops were apparently quite demoralised by the unexpected rapidity of the British advance. Numbers kept coming and surrendering. But the British military and naval commanders and their tiny force had an anxious time, as it was evident that their weakness could not be concealed for a very long time. Early in the afternoon messages had been sent down the river for troops to come up as quickly as possible, and in the evening the ships carrying 17th brigade arrived.

15. "Nothing" says Lord Wolseley "will demoralize the enemy than the rapidity of movement and unhesitating display of

Effects of strenuous pursuit. energy and a constantly renewed and prolonged effort on your part."

In this battle general Townshend's vigorous pursuit with 3 ships demoralized the Turks so much that on seeing the ships they began to surrender. They realised that they were

dealing with a foe who means business. A strenuous pursuit has always a great effect.

16. A good instance of this energetic following up of the enemy is supplied by the sequel to

Sir Campbell's victory at Cawnpore. Sir C. Campbell's victory at Cawnpore. The cavalry and horse artillery had, before action, been sent to make

long detour so as to be ready to fall upon the hostile line of retreat, but owing to mistaking the route they were not at hand when the mutineers broke. The infantry could do nothing so, Sir Campbell took a field battery and with his own staff and escort dashed after the enemy. Several guns were captured and fortunately, just when the swarms of the fugitives were becoming too thick for this singular pursuing force to continue its intrepid career, the missing mounted troops turned up and completed what had been so well begun.

17. We have seen how General Townshead fooled the

How Townshead fooled the Turks. Turks by spreading reports that 15000 men were at his heels. Many examples might be cited from past campaigns to show that it is often practicable for a

commander to completely impose upon the enemy as to the strength of the force, and to impress the foe with the idea that a far larger body of soldiers is at hand than is actually the case. It is especially in attack that the circumstances led themselves to deceptions of this kind.

18. During the Tirah campaign, it happened that a

Captain Uniacke during the Tirah Campaign. small party of Gordon Highlanders was despatched to one flank covering the rearguard's retirement, and this party came suddenly under heavy

fire from some houses. With four of his men Captain Uniacke made a rush for the nearest, shouting words of command and

pretending that he had a large force at his back, captured it and as the Afridis bolted, he kept up the deception by shouting and using his whistle to attract the attention of the troops further in the rear.

19. Always victory is attained by vigour and dash. It

Victory is attained by vigour and dash. was the spirit of offensive animating the British leaders and their men which led to their victory in spite of adverse circumstances and a brilliant pursuit of 90 miles by 22 men. General Townshend made himself conspicuous for the unflinching courage and restless energy with which the operation was conducted. The Turks were given no rest and no breathing space. The success was instantly followed up. Energy and resolution were his watchword. The procedure was rather to overawe the enemy by a vigorous pursuit than to bring against him a big force. When after a desperate struggle the day is at last won every nerve should be strained to reap the fruits of victory by a close and effective pursuit, so as to turn the ordinary defeat into disastrous rout and irretrievable ruin. It is not often that a general gets such a chance, and yet many have failed to take it and by being unable, by neglecting or refusing to follow up their victory at once have lost the fruits of their own skill and of the valour of their troops. But it is going a little too far to say that there can be no excuse for neglecting to pursue. After the dearly bought victory of Wagram, the French were terribly exhausted and did not pursue but Napoleon was exceedingly angry and considered that at all events the cavalry General of the Guards were to blame. Wellington won many battles, but never delivered any very crushing blow to his opponents, because he failed to pursue. Waterloo is no exception, for the pursuit was effected by the Prussians.

20. The capture of Amara blocked the road to Ahwaz for the Turks, but the route to the

An expedition to Nasariyeh. town of Nasariyah on the Euphrates, by way of Kut-al-Amara and the Shatt-al-Hai channel remained open to them. By July 1915 a considerable Turkish force had colle-

cted at Nasariyeh. This force constituted a threat against Basra, and the British line of communication along the Tigris river. It was also the Head Quarter of the powerful Muntafik tribes. So it was decided to send an expedition to Nasariyeh so as to remove this menace for good. The expedition was under the command of Major General Goringe. After a stubborn fight Nasriyeh was occupied on 28th July. Thus the British line of communication was safe from both the sides—from the east through Ahwaz, and from the west through Nasriyeh.

21. But still the position of the British was not secure.

Position of the British and the Necessity of further advance on Kut.

With Kut in Turkish hands, they threatened both Amara and Nasriyeh and thus forced the British to divide their striking force, so as to garrison both places strongly and to hold a large reserve in a central position

such as Qurna. And so General Nixon considered the occupation of Kut would consolidate the military position and would have considerable advantages. If the British occupied Kut and concentrated their striking force there, they would cover Nasriyeh to a considerable extent and permit of its being held by a reduced garrison, sufficient to watch the local tribes and the Euphrates valley. A Turkish advance on Nasriyeh by this valley was unlikely owing to the physical difficulties and if made while the British were at Kut would expose Bagdad to a British counterstroke from there. In short General Nixon considered that the occupation of Kut by the British force, while depriving the enemy of two alternative lines of operation, would enable them to concentrate their main forces on a single line of advance. On the recommendation of the Government of India, the Government at Home agreed.

22. It was well known at this period that the Turks were busily preparing a strong defensive position on the Tigris below Kut. The decisive action below Kut at Es-Sin deserves a lecture to itself. The strategy of the British General in this battle was skilful and his tactics bold.



Lecture V.

The Battle of Kut-al-Amara.

1 The bulk of the Nasiriyeh army retreated north along the Hai, and were united with Nurudin at Essinn position. Nuruddin's force at Kut-al Amara. Nuruddin who had arrived at Bagdad from Constantinople with a good reputation as an up-to-date general, had entrenched himself in the position of Essin, astride the Tigris and some miles downstream of Kut, and in this position he was concentrating all the troops available. Nuruddin had three divisions with him. They were also busy in fortifying a position at Ctesiphon, which was to protect Bagdad if Nuruddin were defeated at Essinn and had to retreat.

2. On the 1st Sept. British moved forward by river for their forward concentration at Ali Gherbi. The Turks were at this period showing considerable activity by pushing detachments down to within a few miles of Ali Gherbi. By the 11th General Townshend had concentrated the whole of his force (one Division and $\frac{1}{2}$ the 30th Brigade) of 11,000 combatants.

3. By the 16th the British force reached Sannaiyat eight miles from Nuruddin's position. No fighting of any consequence, however occurred, as the Turkish advanced troops fell back without offering any real opposition. By aerial, naval and cavalry reconnaissance of the enemy's position, it was realised that the Turks were in strength and working hard at their entrenchment, and that ground some two miles wide between the Suwada and Suwaikiyat marshes was hard and good and that the route leading to this avenue from Nukhailat was equally good and was fit for three arms.

4. The Turkish position was astride the Tigris about seven miles north-east of Kut and after several months of preparation was a very formidable one. On the right or south bank the defences

Turkish Position at Essinn.

extended southwards for some five miles, lying along and in front of the remains of a former high level canal known as the Essinn banks, some twenty feet high. These provided an extensive view and field of fire and except for a few low mounds on the river's edge there were no other outstanding features in the flat and open plain. The Turkish extreme right flank rested on a large redoubt. The Tigris itself was blocked close to the Turkish trenches by a boom constructed of barges and wire cables, and commanded at close range from both banks of the river by gun and fire trenches. On the left bank the entrenchments extended for seven miles northwards, separated into three sections by the Horse Shoe and Suwada marshes. The defences on the extreme left consisted of a chain of redoubts connected by a maze of trenches, and reached to within two thousand yards of the Ataba Marsh.

5. The bridge of boats some five miles upstream formed the only lateral communication between the two portions of the Turkish force and its distance so far in rear constituted a grave defect in the Turkish position.

6. On the 26th Sept. General Townshead advanced from Sannaiyat to Nukhailat about four miles from the Turkish position. The advance was carried out in two columns known as "A" and "B"

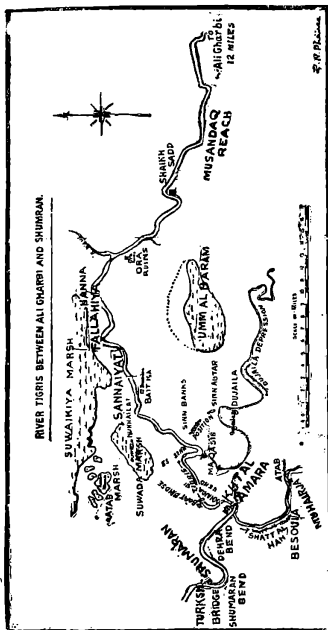
Advance to Nukhailat.

columns.

7. The scheme of attack decided on by General Townshead was to make a feint upon the right bank of the river, and then to transfer practically, the whole of his force to the left bank. A portion of it was then to hold the

Townshead's Scheme of attack.

To illustrate the Battle of Kut-al-Amara and the operations for the relief and the recapture of Kut.



Copied from the map prepared in the Historical section of the Committee of Imperial defence.

Turkish defence between the Suwada marsh and the Tigris, while the larger part of it to break through the Turkish line between the Suwada marsh and the Ataba Marsh and then to roll up the enemy's position and cut off his retreat while he was being attacked in front by the holding force between the Suwada Marsh and the river.

8. When the Infantry had broken through the Turkish line the cavalry were to push round the enemy's left flank towards Kut and the Bagdad road, to pursue the Turks and to capture as many of the enemy as possible. The feint on the right bank coupled with the large number of tents were all designed to deceive the foe into anticipating the main attack on that flank, and thus to induce them to transfer his reserves to his right flank, leaving his left flank thinly held. It has been said that this deceived Nuruddin and caused him to reinforce his right from his reserve and to keep his reserve on the right bank of the river.

9. On the morning of 27th Sept. General Delamain's force made a demonstration against the enemy's position on the right bank while the column "B" the minimum force was severely engaged. All the Turkish guns on the line Suwada Marsh Saddle Back Hill, the Tigris opened on column 'B' as it worked its way forward. In the evening Fry who carried out the instructions given to him, to the letter, had worked up his firing line to some 800 yards from the enemy's entrenchments.

10. At dusk on the 27th General Delamain's force crossed the boat bridge over the Tigris and by mid-night his whole force was concentrated at Clery's post with the exception of two battalions remaining on the right bank.

11. In accordance with the operation order for the battle, General Delamain's column was, on the 28 to execute a turning attack against the enemy's left flank and rear. He was in the first place to attack and envelop the enemy's entrenchments north of the Suwada Marsh; he was then to sweep down in a southeasterly direction leaving the Suwada Marsh on his left, and attack the flank of the enemy's second position between the Suwada Marsh and the Tigris.

12. At 2 A. M. the column marched off for the intended operation. The force was divided into two parts, one under the command of General Dalamain and the other commanded by General Hoghton.

The battle of Kut, Al Amara. General Hoghton had to pass through the gap between Suwai-kiya and Ataba Marshes. After hard fighting and several counterattacks the enemy's left was enveloped and by 2 A. M. the whole of the northern end of their position was in British possession. After a short rest to his troops General Hoghton again pressed on intending to sweep down the Turkish trenches from north to south, and to strike in the rear of the force opposed to General Fry. At this time 5,000 fresh Turkish troops joined the struggle. This force was recalled by Nuru-din from the right bank position to reinforce his left and they were proceeding to make a counter attack on column "A". But this counter attack was checked successfully. At this time the British force was too much exhausted. They were short of water. So parched with thirst were the men that few of them could speak intelligibly. The men were determined to drive the Turks away as they were barring their way to the river; again their flank and rear also was open to them but darkness saved them. During the night the Turks evacuated all their positions and were in full retreat up the Tigris towards Bagdad.

13. Here the pursuit was not vigorous as it ought to be.

Obstacles to vigorous pursuit. Steamers took some time to pass the obstructions and ramps had to be constructed on steep banks of the river to embark the artillery. Near Kut progress was much impeded by difficult navigation, and the steamers took 24 hours to traverse two miles of river. The cavalry who to some extent were tied to the steamers for lack of land transport, overtook the enemy on the 1st October forty miles above Kut; but finding that the Turkish force was making an orderly retreat, covered by a strong rearguard of all arms, they halted until the river column caught them up. This was not till the 3rd October. But on that day, aeroplanes informed General Townshead that the Turks were halted and were installed in the already entrenched position at Ctesiphone

14. You have seen that General Townshead's plan of battle was the application of the principle of the Mass against the enemy's weakest point. At the same time his minimum force was used to pin the adversary in front, whilst liberty of action and manoeuvre enabled his principal Mass to be moved on the enemy's left flank and rear, where it fell on the enemy and automatically rolled up the left wing of the enemy.

15. General Townshead was a great follower of Napoleon. He says, "If one studies the campaigns of Napoleon and Fredrick, their secret of war is at once apparent. On every occasion they throw their principal mass on the enemy's weak point, which in strategy is, generally speaking, his line of communication and in Higher Tactics is that flank which lies nearest his natural line of retreat, i. e. his line of communication."

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16. If we analyse Napoleon's military exploits we shall find that he always tried to strike at the enemy's communications. He did not move in one mass but in several masses, provided they were in touch and mutually supporting, thus confusing the enemy and keeping him in uncertainty. He placed the bulk of his masses on the enemy's strategic wing, holding him elsewhere.

Key to Napoleonic system.

17. The principle of the employment of masses on the weakest point of the enemy, gives us the key to the Napoleonic system. Napoleon gives us 27 examples of the flank being the weakest point as against two examples - Ratisbon and Austerlitz where the enemy's centre was the weakest point.

18. In these days the attack against the enemy's centre has little or no chance of success from a tactical point of view, unless you have enormous gun power.

Attack against the enemy's centre.

19. The power of striking like a bolt from the blue is of the very greatest value in war. The first thought and the last of the greatest general is to outwit his adversary, and to strike where he is least expected. General Townshend outwitted his adversary, in a masterly way. Nuruddin never expected that the blow will fall on his left flank. Townshend's clever demonstration on the both sides of Tigris forced Nuruddin to divide his force and then he with the mass of his forces fell upon their left flank.

Outwitting the adversary.

20. "How often", says Napier, "have we not heard the genius of Bonaparte slighted and his victories talked of as destitute of merit because at the point of attack he was superior in number to his enemies! This very fact which has so often been converted into a sort of reproach constitutes his greatest and truest

Superiority in Number at the decisive point.

praise. He so directed his attack as at once to divide his enemy and to fall with the mass of his own forces upon his at a point where their division or distribution of their troops left them unable to resist them. It is not in man to defeat armies by the breath of his mouth : nor is Bonaparte commissioned like Gideon, to confound and destroy a fort with 300 men. He knew everything depended ultimately upon physical superiority; his genius is shown in this that although outnumbered on the whole, he has always been superior to his enemies at the decisive point. "

21. When Nuruddin hurriedly transferred his troops to his left flank he played into the British hands. British force had taken the initiative and he passively conformed to their action. If he had counterattacked heavily down the right bank and thus met British offensive by a counter-offensive he might well have overwhelmed the small British force on that bank and have reached Nakhailat and British valuable shipping, with disastrous results to the British Army. His transfer of troops was too late to save his left flank and was only useful in that it enabled him by a counter attack to secure the retreat of his troops from the Essin position by delaying the advance of column " A "

22. In turning manoeuvres there are always great risks. If we want to deliver an effective blow against the enemy's flank a considerable interval must be left between troops charged with the holding attack and those detailed to make the flank attack. The width of this gap is increased to a seemingly dangerous degree by the range of modern weapons. The real danger is the annihilation of both the groups separately. As we continue to advance, the advance in itself will very soon set a limit to the enemy's counter attack. The dangerous gap in the

line at the commencement of the action is closed more and more as the enemy is approached. Sometimes it so happens that a cautious leader draws the turning group closer to the frontal one so as to reduce the gap but then this action impairs the effectiveness of the envelopment. To carry out such manoeuvres requires boldness, and determination. Townshead had prudence combined with daring. He displayed force of character in the execution of his plans and he convinced all that he had no distrust in his own powers. While, Nuruddin, of course, was a man of some ability but little determination or courage. He seemed to be capable of planning and occupying a very strong position and of putting up a strong defence in that position upto a certain point; but once matters became somewhat critical Nuruddin's nerve seemed to fail him and he was prone to order a retirement of his whole force.

23. There is a military maxim "Better is an army of deer commanded by a lion than an army of lions commanded by a deer." Before blaming the troops for a defeat, the conduct of the Generals should be carefully aimed.

24. "This battle of Kut-al-Amara can be said to have been one of the most important in the history of British Army in India. There had been nothing of its magnitude either in the Afghan war or the Indian Mutiny, for it was fought against troops equally well armed of more numbers to ourselves. In addition we ejected them from a very strong and upto date position, commanding ground as flat and as open as a billiard table with nothing to check their fire sweep," says Townshead.

25. To win victories troops must be able to manoeuvre

To win victory one must manoeuvre and to manoeuvre they must have good leaders. Townshend had leaders like General Delamain. Further against troops which manoeuvre earth-works are useless; and the defenders, to achieve any result at all, cannot rely on the purely passive defensive, but must be capable of counter manoeuvre. Here Nuruddin ought to have made the counter manoeuvre of advancing along the right bank and brought the British position in danger but he relied on the purely passive defensive and so he was beaten.

26. Turkish Cavalry raided one of the defensive Posts on the Tigris. By making this diversion Nuruddin lost 1500 horsemen for the battle. Such raids cannot do

Raids. anything but at the most put some inconvenience. If the mounted troops are employed in raids to the detriment of their proper work, then the raids are a grave strategical error. Again it must be remembered that such raids are side-issues and they are never decisive. For a result is not achieved by merely making dashes at an enemy's communications, but rather it is gained by mastering them, with one's whole force and then proceeding to give battle.

27. The importance of the security of an army's line of communication is an oft-told tale. The knowledge of this has however led to strategical errors, i. e. the detachments of troops from their proper duties for the purpose of raiding hostile communications. The advantages occurring from such raids are not usually commensurated with the disadvantages of removing troops, from their proper role and decreasing the strength at the decisive point.

28. From the battle of Kut-al-Amara we summarise the following deductions:—

Deductions from this battle.

- (1) It is the primary duty of the Cavalry to obtain reliable information at all hazards.
- (2) Offensive strategy is generally sound.
- (3) Before attempting to turn an enemy's flank, it is necessary to know with some degree of accuracy where the flank rests.
- (4) Combination of action and good communication between frontal and flank attacks are essential.
- (5) Success at decisive point brings success everywhere.
- (6) The hostile army is the first object of all strategy.
- (7) Strategic surprise is a powerful weapon. It confers the initiative on the surpriser and the surprised must conform to his enemy's movement.
- (8) A stroke aimed at an enemy's communications will always have a far-reaching effect.
- (9) No detachments of troops from their proper duties should be sent for the purpose of raiding hostile communications.



Lecture VI.

The Battle of Ctesiphone.

1. At this period the river craft in Mesopotamia were only just sufficient to keep two divisions in the country supplied with their ordinary requirements, and to provide for minor troop movements other than the ordinary one and any unforeseen contingencies at once put a strain on the river craft which they were unequal to. General Townshead urged most strongly that more river craft should be provided but it was of no avail.

2. To move any force beyond Kut with such deficient river craft was a folly. But Government insisted that General Townshead should advance and try to capture Bagdad. Regarding this proposal General Townshead says,

Townshead's opinion regarding advancing beyond Kut.

" You will see.....that there is no more chance of breaking up the retreating Turkish force, which by now is established in position at Ctesiphone. They have also probably been reinforced from Bagdad. If I may be allowed to express an opinion I should say that our object upto the battle of Kut has been the consolidation of the Basra Vilayat and the occupation of the strategic position at Kut. The plan of entering Bagdad on the heels of a retreating and disordered force was upset by the sudden fall of water rendering our progress in ships of great difficulty and extremely slow. On the other hand if the Government desire to occupy Bagdad then I am of opinion that methodical advance from Kut by road by two divisions or one army corps exclusive of line of communication troops is absolutely necessary unless great risk is to be incurred. It is absolutely impossible to send laden ships up river now. "

3. Thus Townshead brought to the notice of the Government the grave risk of advancing on Bagdad with one division. But Government was in need of some victory and being flushed by the rapid advance of the 6th Division, they wanted to take a chance. This consideration was rendered even more important by the imminent intervention of Bulgaria in the war, by the renewed attack on Servia by Austro-German forces and by the peril in which these developments would place the British force in Gallipoli. All this strengthened the case for taking advantage of Townshead's victorious advance. Townshead did his duty in bringing to the notice of General Nixon the danger. As a subordinate officer he could do no more. His conscience was clear and he was ready to undertake any order given to him. In his book General Townshead says that he thought further argument useless, as General Nixon evidently considered General Townshead's force sufficient and therefore, meant to disregard the warning.

4. Lot of exchange of telegrams between the Indian Government and the war office! It is stated in the report of the Mesopotamia Commission that "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 Bagdad than with the question whether it would be possible to hold after it had been taken. On the 6th October the General Staff, in a memorandum, stated that to hold Bagdad, except with forces larger than at present with 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 Bagdad and to withdraw from Bagdad after occupation would have a most unfortunate effect. On the 14th October another paper

was drawn up by the General Staff on the question of occupying Bagdad. They estimated that if Bagdad was to be taken and occupied, Nixon must have reinforcement of two Divisions."

5. On the 25th October, after the receipt of the British Cabinet's decision to advance on Bagdad, the Commander-in-Chief issued orders for the concentration of force for this operation.

6. At Lajj Townshead made all his preparations for the attack on the Turkish position at Concentration at Lajj Ctesiphone. Ctesiphone, not more than 16 miles from Bagdad, is not a town or a village, but the site of the ancient city marked by mounds covering its ruin. Nothing but the "Arch of Ctesiphone" remains to attest bygone importance. It is 95 feet in height.

7. The fortified positions prepared by the Turks consisted of three main lines. Of these Turkish* Position at Ctesiphone. the first the most southernly had been most carefully prepared and strengthened; the second lay to the north of the Arch of Ctesiphone and the third was the Diyala Line.

8. On the left bank the line extended for over six miles in a north-easterly direction following generally a line of a few low mounds. It consisted of a series of 15 closed redoubts at from 400 to 600 yards interval-connected by a continuous line of trenches. Two redoubts situated on low mounds at the extreme northern end of the line (termed V. P. by General Townshed) were considered by the Turks to be exceptionally strong.

9. At 1-30 P. M. on 21st November Townshead issued his operation orders for the next days battle. Turkish main army was on the left bank, only a small detachment was kept on the right.

In order to destroy the Turkish forces that were standing on the left bank of the Tigris, he intended to contain the troops, who were holding the front of the enemy's position, with a minimum force and with a maximum force to execute a turning movement against their left flank and rear. This turning movement was, however, to be preliminary to a decisive attack which was to be delivered by the Principal Mass against the flank that had been turned.

10 Here General Townshend divided his force into three portions—Preparatory Attack, the Turning Attack and the Decisive attack. The reason was that the Turks would expect him to repeat the distribution of troops as was made at Kut—two portions. He hoped that after the turning attack was hotly engaged by the Turkish reserve, he would surprise the enemy with the powerful blow of the Principal Mass delivered on the spot marked V. P. That was the vital point.

11. The three columns under General Houghton, Delamain and Hamilton moved off from Lajj during the night of 21st and 22nd, in one body. General Delamain's column was to take up its position of assembly at a point about 5,000 yards east of V. P., General Hamilton's column continuing to a position about three miles further on and General Mellis's column moving, still along the track to a position about two miles beyond that of General Hamilton.

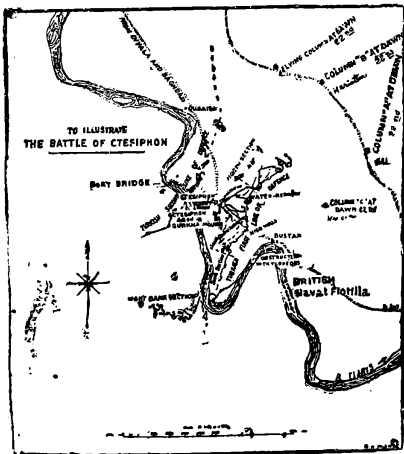
General plan of attack.

12. The General plan of attack of all columns was as follows:—

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

When these attacks had commenced column B, (Brig. General Hamilton) was to move north-westwards past V. P.

To illustrate the Battle of Ctesiphon



Copied from the map prepared in the Historical section of the Committee of Imperial defence.

and to attack the Turkish second line defences. The flying column by a wide detour was to operate on the left flank of the enemy's second line, endeavouring to turn the flank and to get behind the line; and later if all went well, it was to advance if possible and cross the Diyala river by a ford some miles up that stream and then to operate on the flank of the enemy.

13. At dawn on 22nd November all British troops were in their proper positions to commence the attack. At 7-30 A. M. advance began. By 11-30 V. P. and the first line was captured, but the column B could not make any head way as desired, and the Cavalry column under Melliss, who was to enfilade the whole of Turkish second position from its extreme left flank, had also met with serious difficulties. When the cavalry Brigade had begun to work round the extremity of the second line entrenchments, they were vigorously attacked by large bodies of Cavalry and Infantry. But the columns C and A were attacking the 2nd line and they were within 200 to 300 yards distance from it. Townshead had no reserve to support these gallant men. He had not kept a single man in reserve and he lamented for doing so.

14. By this time the Turks received reinforcements from Bagdad. Khalil Pasha came with a Division from the Caucasus and joined the battle at 8 P. M. The British could not advance, and so late in the afternoon Townshead issued orders that all columns were to concentrate on V. P. and at dusk this concentration commenced. The British bivouacked on the northern position of the Turkish first line, but sadly reduced in numbers.

15. The whole situation showed the hopelessness of any immediate resumption of the British offensive. The Turks heavily attacked the British position at midday on the 23rd. But they were repulsed with heavy losses.

16. On the 24 th General Townshead had been doubtful as to whether the British could maintain their positions but he did not propose to retire until it became necessary to do so. His losses amounted to 4593 of all ranks, of whom 682 were killed. He sent all his wounded to Lajj. On 25 th morning Turkish Cavalry were operating to the north east of the bivouac manoeuvring as if to menace Lajj. Meanwhile aerial reconnaissance disclosed that three columns of the Turks were moving from the direction of Kusaibah. Townshead grouped his army in two columns and the Cavalry Brigade was retained as a separate entity. Seeing the enemy in strength treble to his own, he decided to retreat and two communiquees were made to the men with the object of supporting their moral--in the first he thanked the troops for the valour and in the second he told that it was the supply of food that was necessitating the retirement. At night at 9 on 25th he evacuated the position and retired to Lajj, which he reached at 2-30 A. M, on 26 th November.

17. Thus ended the most remarkable and historic encounter claimed as a victory by both sides, The first day's fighting was clearly a victory for the British Troops though the result of succeeding day's contest was a retirement of British force to Lajj. The final advantage rested with the Turks.

18. " The question is always put as to why General Townshead did not endeavour to capture Bagdad by the apparently easy route up the right bank, The reasons against this course of action would appear to be as follows

Reasons for Townshead's plan of attack in this battle.

The primary objective of an army should be the field forces of the enemy and not the capture or occupation of a city however valuable, unless the forces of the enemy have first been defeated. " The first objective in war is always the destruction of the enemy's field force. In 1870 Paris was

the objective of the Germans, but to begin with it was necessary to defeat Bazaine and to blockade him in Metz. In 1914 also the objective was Paris, but von Kluck had to keep Paris aside in order to follow the French-British army which was retreating keeping Paris to one side. As a secondary consideration it must be remembered that the river Tigris being the sole source of water supply for the British Troops, they were naturally more or less tied down to it and prolonged detours into the desert were impossible. Thirdly, unless the Turks could be forced or manoeuvred out of their position at Ctesiphon on the left bank, it was impossible for the ships to carry all British supplies even to approach within gun range of that position and certainly not to pass it. Lastly an attack up the right bank would necessitate a division of force since a large army would have to remain on the left bank to hold the enemy in front. Such a dispersion of troops was out of question with a force hardly more than one division. It will, therefore, be clear that the only one way to attack the Ctesiphon position with a small force and at the same time to defeat the Turkish field army was the way selected by General Townshend viz. to attack up the left bank of the Tigris.

19. Nuruddin had learned a good lesson in the battle of Kut. And so he was careful not to deploy his whole force this time. He was holding half of his troops in reserve ready for despatch to any locality whether their presence was required or for delivering counter-attack. This he did when General Melliss tried to turn the left flank of the Turks, and in this he was successful. While General Townshend did not keep any reserve in his hands and he had to lament his action when they were urgently required to deliver a final stroke on the second line. Had he got at least two battalions he would have completely routed the Turks. A Commander must have reserve in his hands to meet unforeseen contingencies.

The reserve enables him to shift the centre of gravity of fight to the point desired by him, to reinforce his line where he considers proper, to equalize fluctuations of the combat and finally to bring about the decision.

20. Again General Townshead had confided the very important turning attack to two independent leaders. It is true that there was intimate co-operation and understanding and mutual support and unity of doctrine; but it would have been better if these groups have been put under one Commander. General Delamain's force launched its attack at 8-30 A. M. and then the attack of column "B" was delivered. By this the surprise which Townshead intended was lost. According to plan the column "B" ought to have attacked first and then the column "A".

21. General Townshead's orders for this battle were too long. They are full of details. He has given even instructions as to how the soldiers should fight in the streets of Bagdad, if Bagdad is captured. Prince Kraft considers it better to have no orders at all than to have them too long. He states that the orders for the Austro-Russian army were so long that before they could be copied the battle of Austerlitz had commenced. One of the most famous orders ever issued was the extremely brief one issued by Savaroff. It runs, "God wills, the Czar commands Savaroff orders that the enemy shall be defeated." The orders for battles must always be short, not to say abrupt and they should be exceedingly clear. There should be no doubt as to the intentions of the General-in-chief. If not, nothing could be achieved. The best example of such contradictory orders is the order given by Kuropatkin to General Stakelberg. It runs, "To you and your detachment is assigned the duty of moving towards Port Arthur and drawing on itself the greatest possible number of

the enemy thus weakening the attack on the Kwantung Peninsula. For this purpose your movement against the Japanese forces sent northwards must be swift and energetic, in order to keep in view the surprise of the advanced detachments. A battle is however not to be delivered against superior strength and the reserve is only to be used when the situation is entirely cleared up. Your final aim will be the capture of the Chinchon position and the relief of Port Arthur."

22. Superiority of numbers carried the day at Ctesiphone. The British Army fought valiantly. General Townshead says, **Townshead's estimate re: this battle.** "When I think of what the Sixth Division did at Ctesiphone.....

I am not surprised that the Press at home called them "Invincibles"; and I am perfectly convinced that no body of men ever had harder fighting, be it in the Penninsualr War, the Crimea or even in the Great War in France or Gallipoli. I am certain that no body of troops has had a harder task to carry out, nor has had to face such great odds."

23. **Battle was fought for political motives.** This battle was fought for political motives. History shows that many a time Government interferes in the military matters for political motives and thus they override strategical ones. The result when they are allowed to do so is almost always disaster. Napoleon allowed political motives to interfere with his strategy, and thus permitted 2,00,000 of his good troops to remain locked up in Northern Spain fighting Wellington while he was fighting for existence in Europe.

24. **Military operations should not be interfered by the Statesmen.** "It must be admitted that if the conduct of war depended solely on military considerations the task of directing it would be shorn of half its difficulty. History shows many occasions in which the ineptitude of statesmen, ignorant of things military but possessing the power to interfere, have done so and caused

defeat and ruin. In 1870 the French Government forced Mac Mohan to attempt the celebrated Flank march to relieve Bazaine when he had been shut up in Metz—a military manoeuvre foredoomed to failure and which terminated so disastrously at Sedan.”

25. We have seen that since the battle of Shaiba, the

**Turk's tendency
of being on the
defensive.**

Turkish Generals have been on the passive defensive throughout. Since the defence of Acre against Bonaparte the Turks have always been on the defensive. The defence of Plevna in

the Russ-Turkish war, that of the famous lines of Tchataldcha in the Balkan War, that of Gallipoli, all these show that the Turks fight well only when behind defences. They have retreated from one defensive position to another. Thus, slowly withdrawing they approached Bagdad, their source of supply. Spirit of fighting defensive battles was so much imbued in them that in spite of superiority of numbers to the British on the 2nd day of the battle of Ctesiphon, they did not take the offensive and destroyed the whole British force, which was not impossible for them. But they allowed Townshend to retreat to Lajj unmolested.



• Lecture VII.

Retreat to Kut.

1. General Townshead remained at Lajj on Nov. 26 th and the Turks did not attack him.
The British at Lajj From this fact may be gathered the state of demoralisation into which the Turks had been thrown. The British troops required rest prior to retirement to Kut nearly 100 miles. At 9-10 A. M. 27 th Nov. he telegraphed to General Nixon :—

2. " I have supplies here for ten days. Ample ammunition. I do not propose to get up any more supplies here. I propose to move to Aziziya or south when supplies here are eaten in order to concentrate the force for forward movement. Much too close to enemy here and in tactics one concentrates to the rear and not forward. He will never permit us to concentrate here unmolested. Can you give me any idea of how long it will take to concentrate one of the new Divisions with this one and equip it with transport required in this country. I imagine not under two and a half months. Lajj was under water last December from rains. Aziziya goes under also I believe. "

3. But shortly after General Townshead had sent the above telegram, the air reconnaissance indicated the approach of the Turks in strength from Ctesiphone, and so he decided to fall back the same after-noon, covering 22 miles to Aziziya in one march. As he says in his book :

4. " I began to see that there was no halting on the Bagdad side of Kut-al-Amara, if the enemy really intended an offensive with large forces. If he once hooked on to my little force I should be pinned down and surrounded. Basra was a long way from Lajj and I knew that no reinforcements could reach me before late in December. "

5. At once he passed the orders for retirement. "The Division will hold itself in instant readiness to march to Aziziya, preceded by the Divisional Train:—

Rear Guard	16th & 18th Brigades. Divisional Artillery. Cavalry Brigade.	} General Delamair.
Main Body	30th Brigade. 17th Brigade. Divisional Troops.	

Escort to Divisional Train — One Battalion — the Train to precede the Division by one mile distance.

Ship Convoy — under escort of Naval Flotilla — will move when ready to Azizieh."

6. Townshead moved off in the afternoon at 4 P. M. in two columns with the Turkish prisoners and the divisional transport leading. He reached Aziziyeh at 4 P. M. on 28th Nov. Turks followed the British but the Turkish cavalry made no impression on the British cavalry and the main Turkish force made no advance owing to lack of supplies.

7. On the 29th Nov. the Turkish main force advanced to the vicinity of Kutuniya. It is said that Nurrudin's decision not to advance further than that is attributed to the action of the British cavalry driving the Turkish attack on the Shaitan. On Nov. 30th at 8 A. M. 30th Brigade, 16th Cavalry and the Hants Howitzer Battery, under Major General Melliss marched out of Aziziya towards Kut. This Brigade was ordered to push on as fast as possible to deal with a hostile force operating down stream at Samariyat. The remainder of the force moved off at 9 A. M. to Umm-al-Tabul. The order was as follows:—

Retirement to
Umma-al-Tabul.

11. The Turks marched to Aziziya on the 30th and they remained there until the afternoon. The intelligence obtained by the Turks was far from being accurate. Nurrudin was informed that "the enemy's main body is being transported by steamers. The retreating portion is his rearguard." The 18th corps left Aziziya shortly before sunset with the 45th Division leading. At about 9 P. M. fires were seen in front, and it was concluded that this must be the bivouac of the Turkish Cavalry Brigade, which was believed to be, but was not, in close touch with the British. The British piquets fired on the advanced parties of the Turks, and then they realised their mistake. The Turkish force commander decided to bivouac and they bivouacked at a distance of one and half mile from the British camp.

12. Nurudin was still unaware that his cavalry Brigade was not in touch with the British. They had actually according to Turkish account moved from the north into Aziziya after their main force had left that place and there passed the night in drunkenness.

13. Seeing the movement of the enemy force General Townshead issued orders at 9-15 P. M. that if the enemy found to be close at hand at day-break, a combined frontal and enveloping attack would be made on them; and he also sent orders for the recall of detachment under Melliss and to the shipping to sail at day-break.

14. At day-break (1st December), the Turks launched their attack in great strength. They were executing a turning movement. Seeing this General Townshead at once ordered the artillery to open rapid fire, and asked cavalry to envelop that wing of the Turks which was closing in on him and to charge it. Meanwhile Delamain and Hamilton advanced with the Infantry.

15. The British cavalry moved rapidly and charged into the Turks encircling the column.

Orderly retirement to Kut. The whole column was thrown into disorder. Soon after this General Townshead, seeing signs of confusion and retirement among the Turks, seized the opportunity and broke off an action. He gave the Turks no chance to rally. The retirement upon Kut was at once renewed in echelons of brigades, a tactic which at once covered the land transport and foiled any attempt to out-flank him. Regarding this retirement General Townshead says, "I have never seen—even in peace manoeuvres—a retirement carried out better, both as regards steadiness and suppleness in manoeuvre than was executed by the 6th Division at this critical moment. The sight of the brigades falling back steadily in echelon with the precision of clockwork and the gradual development into one steady flow of retreat in perfect order—guns, everything in their proper places—filled me with pride. Shall I ever have such a command again, I thought?". The retirement continued all day till at 10 P. M. the British force arrived at Qaula Shadi (Monkey village) at a distance of 26 miles from Umm-at-Tabnl. This long march was carried out to shake off the enemy's pursuit.

16. Again the retirement was resumed at day-break on the 2nd. After a painful march of 18 miles the force bivouacked for the night three miles short of Kut. This 44 miles march coming under pressure from the enemy at the end of this period and carried out in 26 hours was, therefore, a severe test of their discipline.

17. The retreats are carried out owing to two causes, owing to strategical considerations

Causes of retreat. or owing to defeat in an encounter. General Townshead's retreat can be classed as one of those which is necessitated by strategical consideration, as was the British retreat at Coruna in 1809 and the retreat from Burgos or Madrid in 1812. It was not

the immediate consequence of a defeat as was the Prussian retreat after Ligny and the French retreat after Waterloo. But be the cause what it may it is certain that there is no operation of war more trying to the moral and discipline of troops than retreat before a pursuing force.

18. As a rule troops if badly beaten get out of hand and will seek safety in flight along the line by which they advance or by falling back on some place which they consider a safe place for retreat. Only when retirement begins before defeat has become acute can a well ordered rearward movement be carried out. General Townshead was not beaten and so he could carry out his retreat in good orderly manner.

19. At the same time we must blame the Turkish General for allowing General Townshead to escape without being molested. Nuruddin ought to have used his cavalry for this purpose. Partly by virtue of its mobility, partly because of its psychological effects, it is the cavalry which is the special weapon of pursuit. Nuruddin ought to have used his cavalry to the last ounce of strength of man and beast. Fatigue and horse wastage are minor considerations when the fruits of victory are to be garnered and when a vital avenue of escape is to be closed to a flying foe. Cromwell wrote that "a victory without an effective pursuit is a victory wasted"; while Napoleon stated after the indecisive battles of Lutzen and Baretzen (1813) that "for want of cavalry the battles are without any result."

20. Nuruddin ought to have sent his cavalry by great sweep and tried to cut off the retreat of Townshead to Kut. But he was too slow to follow Townshead. He wasted two most valuable days in remaining idle. General Allenby exemplified the principle on a grand scale when pressing his foes into the hills of Samaria, he sent his cavalry division by that

great sweep over the plains of Sharon to converge of the Turkish rear and stop every bolt hole of their doomed army.

21. Time is of vital importance and Nuruddin wasted it for nothing. He did not try to keep Townshead on the run. Pressure on Townshead was not vigorous, constant and relentless. Nuruddin was too cautious and did not like to take risks. But this was the time when he ought to have taken risks as it would have made tremendous influence on the operations. Nuruddin never tried to direct his cavalry or a pursuing column on the flank or on the line of communication.

22. The pursuit of Jena is such a classic of military history that it would be tedious to repeat the story in detail, but it is none the less profitable to examine the actions of Napoleon and his generals in the light of the principles accepted to-day. Early in the afternoon of 14th October 1806, the Prussian infantry had failed either to hold back the soldiers of the empire or to shake them by counter attack; Prussian centre and left were demoralised and upon them Napoleon loosed Murat, with a part of the cavalry reserve to drive them off the field. In the torrent of disaster which followed, both the Prussian reinforcements and Saxon Corps, which was just arriving on the field, were swept away and the whole mass was hurled in confusion partly towards Weimar, partly across the river Elb to the north of the town. Thus ended the tactical pursuit of the beaten troops. Then the strategical pursuit began.

23. The historic retreat of the 6th Indian Division from Ctesiphone to Kut was finished — a retreat carried out with skill and steadiness in hostile country after extremely hard fighting. The conduct of men in these trying circumstances was admirable; the moral of the force had not

suffered in the least in spite of a long retreat followed on a previously unbroken series of victories. Jomini has said, "Courage and firmness in adversity is more honourable than enthusiasm in success; for courage only is required to attack and carry a position, whereas heroism is necessary to carry out a difficult retreat before an enterprising and exultant enemy, and by opposing to him a front of bronze without letting oneself be discouraged." Napier says, "An honourable retreat is that one in which the retreating general loses no trophies in the fight, sustains every charge without being broken and finally after a severe action reembarks his army in the face of a superior enemy without being seriously molested."

24. Regarding this retreat General Townshead says, in his book 'My Campaign in Mesopotamia,' "To sum up the retreat from Ctesiphone to Kut : Mine was a retreat in the face of an overwhelming force of Turks, undertaken after a desperate battle of Ctesiphone, in which the losses had been 33 per cent of the total combatants engaged. The whole brunt of the loss was borne by the infantry. Therefore the casualties of 4500 meant over half my fighting force; yet in no way was the discipline, and good order of the 6th Division affected. It was a retreat of 90 miles with the advanced guard of the Turkish 6th army on my heels. • On 1st December I was forced to halt and fight against my will in order to save some ships and barges on the river. Yet not only was the attack repulsed but it was driven headlong back by means of an offensive counter-stroke on the enemy's flank, which all experienced soldiers will recognise as sufficient testimony to the discipline and manœuvring powers of the troops in retreat. After repulsing the enemy I broke off an action—the hardest test of all in rearguard fighting—and continued the retirement in echelons of brigades under as good conditions as in peace training. Not a single wounded man was left behind, though 500 were killed and wounded in

that action; not a single gun was lost and 1500 Turkish prisoners marched with my column throughout. Never I consider has a British force done longer or more exhausting marches than those of 1st and 2nd December. Never in any war in modern military history have British troops been more highly tried than in Ctesiphon operations. Yet never was there a murmur—never a slightest sign of demoralisation or insubordination. I hope history will call this also an honourable retreat."

25. Many have brought very strong arguments against the policy of occupying Kut, and

Criticisms made for occupying Kut and getting invested there.

getting himself besieged by General Townshead. They say that a field army may have retired for hundreds or even thousands of miles, but so long as it is intact and mobile the campaign will not have been lost for the balance may be changed completely by one successful action or manoeuvre. By occupying Kut, there involved division of force, and at that time such division means minimising the chance of success. At the same time "the fact that a part of the army is invested and immobilised cannot but cramp the freedom of action of the remainder who will feel that they must at all costs hurry to its assistance." The enemy get a chance to beat the two portions separately or to hold off the relieving force, until the garrison surrenders.

26. Again there was ample time for Townshead to make a safe and sure retreat to Ali Garbi or some other place down the river Tigris: Townshead entered Kut on the morning of 3rd while on the 7th the Turks closed in on Kut and the siege definitely began. There was gap of four days, and in these four days, he would have retreated to a safe place without being molested. He actually sent the cavalry brigade on the 6th and it joined the 7th Division at Ali Gharbi

so it is clear that he would have joined the 7th Division at Ali Garbi; and these two combined divisions would have made the situation quite different.

27. But strategically Townshead was right in occupying Kut. "Delay is generally to the advantage of the power that is on the defensive. It wears out the spirit of the attacker and in addition, the actions of doubtful friends and potential enemies are held in suspense, as they will be unable to make up their minds with whom to side".

Reasons for occupying Kut.

28 Kut was on the Tigris and the Turkish army had to pass by Kut. There were no railways, and the armies in Mesopotamia were obliged to move by the rivers. The Turkish army advancing had to march down the Tigris, and this means delay. The Shatt-al-Hai is navigable during flood only. But Kut was at the junction of Tigris and Shatt-al-Hai, and Townshead can stop the traffic on that river also.

29 Again the local Arabs, who inhabited the middle and lower courses of the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun, were wavering and by occupying Kut they were kept in check; otherwise there would have been general rising against the British and Persians might have definitely declared for the Turks.

30. There is yet another aspect of the manner "The tactical security of a body of troops is and must be the paramount consideration when in the field". In his telegram to General Nixon, General Townshead had pointed out that "the state of extreme exhaustion of the men demanded instant rest". So, we can see that fatigue of the troops was the decisive factor in deciding to halt and to stay at Kut.

31. Thus we see that how strategically and politically it was important to hold the Turks at Kut. A Turkish advance upon Amara would have threatened to undo the whole results so far of the Mesopotamia Expedition.

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

**Advantages gained
by the British by
halting at Kut.**

- (1) It held up the river transport of any large Turkish force advancing on Amara by the Tigris.
- (2) It gave time for British reinforcements to arrive from Basra and beyond, and to concentrate for action.
- (3) It assisted the Russian move on Bagdad from Persia by diverting many of the Turkish troops to Kut.
- (4) It enabled the British fatigued troops to rest and refit.
- (5) It closed the Shatt-al-Hai channel to the river transport of the Turks.
- (6) It obviated the necessity of destroying a great quantity of valuable stores.
- (7) It took advantage of the mass of provisions available in Kut which would otherwise have been lost.
- (8) It saved a further and more serious loss of prestige, such as would have been entailed by a continued retreat downstream.



Lecture VIII.

Fall of Kut.

1. " In military history, the history of entrenched camps is bound up with capitulations. Fates of entrenched camps. Bazaine's army, for instance the best in France committed suicide by shutting up itself in Metz. If the entrenched camp of Metz had not existed, France would not have suffered the great disaster she did. The failure of the Russian army to arrive in time caused Mack to surrender at Ulm, and the failure of the fleet to relieve Cornwallis at York Town caused the British' surrender at that place. Wellington maintained himself at Torres Vedras because of the presence of the British fleet ! "

2. If one is certain of early reinforcement then only one should retire into a fortress or an entrenched camp. We find rare examples of the army once invested to have broken through the enemy's investing armies. General Townshend gives us the chief disadvantages of an entrenched camp. He says, " The chief disadvantage of an entrenched camp like this, shaped like the great Indian peninsula, with water on all sides except the north, was that the fire of our guns went from the centre to the circumference and so was divergent and disseminated, whilst that of the enemy was directed from the circumference to the centre and thus had maximum effect. This is not the only disadvantage of the entrenched camps. They are merely figures, closed in all directions, composed of ordinary entrenchments, which give no such shelter from gun fire as a fortress does. Moreover an entrenched camp is unlike a fortress, in that you cannot, without running the gravest risk, divide a front in order to make a sortie in strength Thus they do not even assure real rest, and

repose to the troops, installed in their perimeter, while the operation of making a sortie is a most dangerous one "

3. Granted that it was necessary that Kut should be held by the force under General Townshead, there can be no doubt that the only possible defensive position for so small a force was that selected and occupied in the bend of the river in which Kut lies. But if the British force had been an army corps, instead of a weak division, it seems that a better position could have been occupied, upstream of the town, and chiefly on the right bank, where the force could have fortified and held up the loop of the river, placing the Tigris between it and the enemy as a natural obstacle to his advance.

4. For the purpose of defence General Townshead divided the whole area in three sectors:—
Three Sectors of defence.

- (a) North-east sector to be held by the 17 th Infantry Brigade.
- (b) The north-west sector to be held by the 16 th Infantry Brigade.
- (c) The southern sector to be held by the 18 th Infantry Brigade. The general reserve, consisting of 30 th Brigade was posted to the north of Kut Town by night while stationed in the town during the day.

5. On the 7th December the enemy summoned the garrison to surrender and on Townshead's refusal opened a heavy bombardment. The bombardment was heaviest on the 10 th and 11 th when the Turkish Infantry also attacked ; but no result was obtained. On 24 th December desperate attempt was made by the Turks, preceded by a heavy bombardment. British defence was magnificent and

it finally triumphed. So magnificent was it indeed, and so severe this time had been the lesson that this was the last endeavour to take Kut by assault. Then the Turks decided to blockade the place. On the 26th December therefore, certain movements were made by the Turks, which clearly indicated that it had been decided to convert the seige of Kut into a blockade, and at the same time to take immediate measures to hinder the attempts that would shortly be made by the British for its relief.

6. Meantime the relieving force far down the river was beginning to move. Its task was a complex one. **Difficulties of the Relieving force.** Tigris was a peculiar river. Interminable windings, endless shifting shoals and in normal times a depth too shallow for any but the lightest craft made the problem of water transport almost insoluble. In addition to this, the rains were erratic and when they came the river became a raging flood and the adjacent desert a lagoon. When the snow melted in the Armenian hills, the Tigris used to spread in lakes over great areas. "The only real solution was to follow Kitchner's example in the Sudan and build a railway at some distance from the flood region, since the river was wholly untrustworthy. Such course was not followed because the magnitude of the enterprise and the strength of the enemy were from the first gravely underrated. It was an instructive lesson in the folly of conducting a campaign with the left hand".

7. Having completely invested Kut, the Turkish Commander set himself to bar the road to any relief. His first line of defence was at Sbaikh Saad—25 miles due east of Kut. There he had a position on both sides of the stream. Five miles above Saad he had a line of defence along a water course called the Wadi. Above Wadi the great Suwaikha marsh flank the left bank of a river at a distance of a mile or two. Here there was a series of

immensely strong positions, all of the same general character astride the river and resting on the swamps. There were Hanna position, the very formidable position at Sannaiyat and last of all only seven miles from Kut, Essin position.

8. Relief force was concentrating at Ali Gharbi 40

miles from Kut. Unfortunately the preparations for the relief of Kut were marked by the same hustle and the same oversight of the essentials of the campaign as had pushed Townshead

Concentration of relieving force at Ali Gharbi.

into an enterprise which had not even a fair chance of success. The problem of transport was still unsolved. The troops from France had been sent off to Basra in hot haste, and orders were to push up to Kut without delay. How the troops were to be pushed up to Kut was left to the men on the spot. The result was that when the first attempt was made on Shaikh Saad, and finally it was checked at Hanna, 12,000 of the reinforcements which reached Basra never left the base.

9. General Aylmer was appointed as the G. O. C. of the relieving force. By the 3rd January

First attempt for the relief of Kut.

the force concentrated at Ali Gharbi amounted to 6th Cavalry Brigade and 7th Division. The Turk's strength below Kut was 15,000. General Younghusband was given the task of driving the Turks out of the Shaikh Saad position. The Turks had prolonged the flanks of their position by keeping a large force of Arabs; and so the frontal attack was delivered on the position. With great difficulty the British captured the position losing more than 4,000 men in the attack. The Turks retreated upon the Wadi. The British forced the passage of the Wadi on the 9th January. Thereupon the next Turkish retreat was to Hanna - 15 miles below Kut. Partly owing to wet ground, and partly to shortage of artillery equipment owing to limited transport, the losses of the relieving force had totalled nearly 6,000 men.

Had the 12,000 men, who were at Basra, been movable, they would have made all the difference. But they could not move. There was no transport. The position at Hanna was a very strong one, consisting of five lines of trenches. The attack failed. The British force was, by this time, crippled by its casualties.

10. The month of February was one of inaction for Aylmer's force. Reinforcement was sent up at Wadi. Preparations for renewing the offensive, reorganisation and training were continued. Frequent reconnaissance were made by land and air on both banks of the Tigris. The Suwaikiya marsh was reconnoitred in vain with the object of discovering a way across it. By this time General Nixon sailed for home owing to ill-health and his place was taken by General Percy Lake.

11. On the 6th March 1916 General Aylmer issued his

Plan of the second attempt.

operation order for the second attempt for the relief of Kut. His intention was to turn the right flank of the Essinn position by seizing the Dujaila redoubt. It was a perfectly sound strategical plan, but it has to face heavy odds. He had to move his force to 16 miles; another lay in the fact that there was no water except in the river, and unless the British routed the Turks speedily and completely the British should be hard put to it to support their advanced columns.

12. The striking force on the right bank consisted of 4 cavalry regiments, 28 infantry battalions and 68 guns. It was to concentrate for the night march at a rendezvous near the Pools of Silom at 8-30 p. m. on the 7th March. The force was to form up in three groups; column A [consisting of the 36th Infantry Brigade, half 34th Pioneers, 8th Battery, a section of sappers company under the command of General Christian] and column B (consisting of the 9th and 28th Brigades, a section 61st Howitzer Battery, 12th Sapper Company under General Kemball's own command)

constituted the 1st and leading group under the the command of General Kemball

13. The second group consisted of the Cavalry Brigade and a field ambulance under the command of General Stephen.

14. The third group, termed column C was under General Keary. It comprised the 7th and 8th Brigades, 37th Brigade, 4th Brigade, R. F. A. 13th Brigade R. F. A. 60th & 6 st Howitzer Battery, 23rd Mountain Battery and four field ambulances.

15. The force advanced in three columns. They reached a point of divergence at 5 a. m. It was a long march, the men were fatigued. At the halt they fell dead asleep, and were only aroused with difficulty. They were in no condition on arrival to fight a hard battle.

16. Having to make a long detour, General Kemball's force, with the cavalry brigade had of necessity to cover a greater distance. It proved unable to reach the point marked out for attack until after full day-light, being already two and a half hours behind time. This delay made it impossible to carry out the deployment of Kemball's force under cover of darkness, as had been arranged, and this proved to be most unfortunate

17. The Dujailah redoubt was found as anticipated to be held in no great strength. Time, however was taken up in deploying the attacking troops and waiting for the turning movement by General Kemball, who was already late by 2½ hours. This enabled the Turks to reinforce the menaced position. The turning movement too, had not as a surprise succeeded. The assault on the redoubt was launched and persisted in during the day. There was a moment towards the end of this bloody conflict

when the enemy showed signs of wavering. But there was no sign of hostile retirement and the risks of continuing the battle in the face of the weariness of the troops and their sufferings from thirst were undoubtedly grave. At nightfall, therefore, the attack was abandoned. It was a costly reverse. The second attempt of relief had broken down.

18. In the morning, finding the enemy's position was unchanged and that water supply was failing, General Aylmer decided to withdraw. By the night of the 9th march the whole force was back in its old position north of the river. General Aylmer could not have left his line of retreat open for long to an attack by the Turks. The flood season was expected in a few days and then by inundation the Turks could cut off his retreat altogether. Thus ended an operation which seemed to promise more chances of success than the previous attempt to relieve Kut.

19. After this failure it was decided to give another general a chance of showing whether he could obtain better results; and General Goringe was selected to take over the command of the Tigris Corps. His force was reinforced by the 13th Division. It was then decided to deliver a frontal attack on Hanna position. "There is here on the one side the Tigris and on the other the great Suwaikiya swamp with between them a neck of firm land some two miles in width." Hanna position was at the end of the neck farthest from Kut; the Sannaiyat position at the end of the neck nearest to Kut. The attack was delivered early on the morning of the 5th April. The Turks were turned out of the Hanna position. On 7th they were forced to retire from the Fala-hiyat position, upon the Sannaiyat Maze. For a moment there was hope of Townshead's relief. But once again Nature allied herself with the enemy. Tigris rose at a bound and spread itself over the landscape. On the 9th Goringe attacked the Sannaiyat position, and he failed to make progress.

20. General Townshead had already reduced the food ration and he had informed General Lake that he would not be able to resist after 15th April, as his soldiers were [mere skeletons. Thus the situation was grave. And now began belated attempts to reprovision Kut by means of aeroplanes dropping sacks of flour. On 17th April attempt was again made on both sides of the river, and on the right bank the enemy was pressed back four miles farther up, but in the position at Samaiyat the Turks held on. Thus the third attempt came to an end. The last effort of Gorringe was to try to break the blockade with a river steamer, the Julnar, on 24th April. It was a hopeless task.

21. On 29th April General Townshead surrendered. Before surrendering he blew up his guns, smashed up his rifles, destroyed harness, saddlery, all munitions and materials of war and at the last moment had the bolts of the rifles thrown into the river. In all, the garrison at the date of Kut's fall consisted of 2070 British troops of all ranks and some 6000 Indians.

22. Thus ended the historic siege of Kut—a siege of 147 days, a fine record when we consider the state of Townshead's troops and the supplies at his disposal, Lady Smith resisted for 120 days, but the end was good there. Kut fell to starvation, and not the prowess of the Turks "Its fall was misfortune but not a disaster." By its resistance, the Turks had to send large reinforcements to Mesopotamia, and thus the Russians in Caucasus were able to move swiftly and capture Erzerum and Tebrizond. It gave time to the British Government to concentrate a sufficient force in Mesopotamia to hold it against further attempts of the Turks.

23. Owing to hasty actions and being too eager to relieve

Violation of the Principal of Concentration.

Kut early, British Generals many a time violated some important principles of war. It is always a general rule and a safe one, that when we take up any operation, we concentrate all the forces available. In the first attempt, we have seen, that General Aylmer could not concentrate all his forces for the attack on Shaik Saad and Wadi positions. He left behind 10,000 men at Basra. The result was that the attempt terminated in being checked at Hanna. Had he waited few days for those 10,000 men, the result of the first attempt would have been different

24. The second attempt - attempt to turn right flank of the Turks by capturing Dujailat redoubt - was a brilliant one. It was a perfectly sound strategical plan; The strategy deserved to succeed but failed. There are many reasons for that. But main reason was the lengthy night march within a short time and then a hard fight. The column which was to turn the flank was 3 hours behind time and thus the surprise was lost. "Wolseley before Tel-el-Kabir had* to move only 13,000 men $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles across easy ground in $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Aylmer had to move 15,000 troops from 12 to 16 miles in less than 9 hours."

25. Best example to show how the troops coming behind time after a night march, spoiled the surprise intended by the commander, and thus the failure in attempt, was the attempt made by General Grant against General Lee's right in 1864. He moved nearly the whole of his army by a night march of several miles to a line opposite to and outflanking Lee's right. But he had the worst of the luck. During the night there was heavy rain. The roads were knee deep in mud. Troops could keep very slow pace, with many halts. Next day morning, troops were miles behind the appointed rendezvous. scattered and exhausted. The idea of attack had to be abandoned.

26. "It can hardly be denied that the orders which were issued by General Aylmer transgressed the principle that an operation order should tell the recipient nothing which he can or should arrange for himself. Generals Keary, Kemball and Fowler were fully capable of arranging the various details as to their operations which were nevertheless dictated to them. But in doing so General Aylmer was actually reducing instead of increasing the prospect of victory.....By this, delay and hesitation would probably result and in war these have dangerous ends."

27. Again the British force spent a lot of time in lengthy artillery preparation. The bombardment continued for 3 hours. This gave ample time for the Turks to bring the reinforcements and be ready for the British assault. Had they assaulted early without lengthy artillery preparation, they would have captured the position without much resistance, as it was weakly held.

28. Regarding the third attempt, Gorringe had violated the principle of economy of force. He ought to have tried with the bulk of his forces on right or the left bank of the Tigris instead of on both the banks by dividing his forces. By such method he was superior nowhere. General Townshead criticises it in the following words :—

29. "My opinion as set down in my diary was that if his principal objectives were the bulk of the hostile forces on the left bank, his principal Mass should have been on the left bank since the bulk of the enemy's forces was entrenched there. A bare minimum force should have been placed on the right bank just sufficient to contain the enemy's forces. In this way the principle of economy of force would have been observed and Gorringe would have had a large Principal Mass, the weight and depth of which should have carried it through."

30 The occupation of Kut by Townshead in the close proximity to the Turkish line of communication brought the Turkish advance further to standstill, as the occupation of Plevna in the close proximity to the Russian line of communication and to the single bridge across the Danube brought the Russian advance through Bulgaria to a sudden stop and relieved all pressure on Turkey proper.



. Lecture IX.

Recapture of Kut.

1. After the surrender of Kut the British and the Turkish forces on the Tigris settled into **Period of inactivity.** a state of comparative inactivity, which endured till near the end of 1916. General Lake decided to hold present line. The withdrawal down the Tigris would have led to risings of Arab Tribes, and would probably have reacted unfavourably on the situation in Persia and Afghanistan.

2. By this time Russian force under the command of **Russian activity in Persia.** General Baratoff was making a good progress in Persia. On 7th May General Baratoff's force occupied Qasr-i-Shirin on its advance to Khaniquin. On 16th Russians occupied Ruwandiz. But Khaniquin position was too strong for the Russian force. Again Turkish XIII corps was sent at once to the Persian frontier, to drive back Baratoff and to reoccupy Kermanshah as a means of continuing the Turko-German plans for operations in Persia and beyond.

3. General Lake, after the fall of Kut, devoted all his **Improvement of transport service.** time and energies to improve the transport question. The transport service from the first had been utterly inadequate. In the same way there was no proper transport from the field to the river. Badly wounded men had to endure agonies in springless carts. The story was the same in every detail of the Service. Everywhere there had been lack of foresight, and as a consequence unimaginable suffering for the men.

4. When the time came for military operations on the Tigris to be resumed the condition of the river transport has been completely transformed. By the end of 1916 there were constructed three lines of Railways.

5. One, from Basra to Nasariya on the Euphrates, another from Qurna to Amara and a third from Sbaik Saad to Essinn. This third one was extended to Imam-al-Mansur. All these lines were open for traffic in the month of December. Hospital arrangement had been perfected, and all the work behind the front, without which an advance of troops cannot be made, had reached a state of efficiency very different from the confusion of early days.

6. In August General Maude succeeded Sir Percy Lake in command of the Mesopotamia Force. When General Lake gave up the command, lot of difficulties had been overcome. There were many to be looked after. But he had laid the foundation of the organisation which finally brought the British success. After the fall of Kut all his efforts were devoted to the task of improving the position and condition of the troops at the front as much as possible. General Maude writes as follows in his April 1917 despatches;—

7. "Steady progress was made on the lines so carefully designed and developed by my predecessor., Lt. General Sir Percy Lake K. C. B., K. C. M. G., to whom my warm thanks are due for the firm foundations which had been laid for the ensuing winter campaign. The growth of Basra as a military port and base continued, and the laying of railways was completed. The subsidence of floods and the organisation of local and imported labour removed obstacles which had hitherto hindered development although conversely, the lack of water in the rivers and consequent groundings of river craft gave rise to anxiety from time to time. The Directorate of Inland Water Transport was created and accessions of men and material arrived from overseas as well as additional river craft; while the influence of adequate and experienced personnel for the Directorates of Port Administration and Conservancy Works, Railways, Supply and Transport, and Ordnance

enabled these services, to cope more adequately with their responsibilities in maintaining the field army. Hospital accommodation was reviewed and still further expanded, whilst Remount and Veterinary Services were overhauled and reconstituted. Changes were also made in the organisation of the army, the grouping of formations and units were readjusted, and alterations were made in the system of command. The line of communication defences was recast, and additional lines of communication units for administrative purposes were provided. Establishments for all units whether on the various fronts or on the lines of communication, were fixed, whilst the provision of mechanical transport and an increase in animals and vehicles enabled the land transport with the force to be reconstituted. By the end of November preliminary preparations were well advanced. A steady stream of reinforcements had been moving up the Tigris for some weeks and drafts were joining their units, making good the wastage of the summer. The troops had shaken off the ill effects of the hot weather and their war training had improved. Stores, ammunition and supplies were accumulating rapidly at the fronts, our communications were assured, and it seemed clear that it was only a matter of days before offensive operations could be justifiably undertaken. Training camps which had been formed at Amara were broken up and general concentration upstream of Shaik Saad was completed".

Turkish position in December 1916.

8. In the beging of December the Turkish front before Kut lay as follows :-

Turks still held the Snnaiyat position. It had been further elaborated. Not only were there six successive lines of entrenchments between the Tigris and the Suwaika Marsh, but other defences had been made extending back as far as Kut itself - a distance of 15 miles. On the right bank their front ran from a point on the Tigris three miles north east of

Kut, across the big loop which is called the Khadari bend to the Shatt-al-Hai two miles below, where it leaves the main river. There it crossed the Hai and ran north west to the Shumran Bend of the Tigris.

9. Strategically the situation was in favour of General

British position. Maude. Turk's lines on the right bank of the Tigris were a dozen miles upstream from those on the left bank. On both the banks the British flanks were secure by swamps from any attempt to work round them and strike in force at the British communications. Maude's plan was to get a firm footing on Hai, which might even result in cleaning the Turks from the right bank of the Tigris altogether; then he should be favourably situated to act against the Turkish communications and might compel the Turks to evacuate Sannaiyat. Again the long front gave the British many opportunities for feints to cover their real purpose.

10. Owing to concentration of British troops at Shaikh

Operations for the recapture of Kut began. Saad, Turks thought that the main effort would be made on the Sanniyat position, and so the main Turkish forces had been withdrawn to the Kut side of the river. Feint attacks

were made on the Sanniyat position. On 13th December Maude surprised the Turks and crossed the Hai at Attab, about eight miles from Kut. During the next two days the British steadily moved forward and by December 18 reached the Tigris between the Khadairi Bend and Kut. By this the Turkish force in the bend was cut off on left and right.

11. Heavy rains fell in the latter part of december 1916

Clearing of khadairi bend. and the first week of January 1917, Nevertheless the light railway was pushed forward as far as the Shatt-al-Hai; additional bridges were thrown over the water way and new roads made. An attempt by the British on 20th January to bridge the Tigris four miles

west of Shumran was anticipated by the Turks, and so it could not succeed. But the chief work during these days was the clearing of the Khaqairi Bend. The British had already reached the Tigris south east of Kut, but between that point and Megasis the Turks still held the right bank, and could swamp the British front by opening the bunds. So it was absolutely necessary to clear this bend which would give the British the mastery of the whole right bank from Kut downwards. This task was given to General Cobbe, who conducted the operation successfully and by the 19th January the bend was clear of the Turks.

12. The next step was to clear the Dabra Bend. On 10th February the attacks were delivered on this bend. By the 15th all the Turkish positions were carried and the right bank of the Tigris was made clear of the Turks. Describing the attack on the 15th February General Maude says, " a most creditable piece of work for it was a nasty place to go into, as the Turks had their artillery in a semicircle around the points we assaulted on the far bank of the river, "

13. " Maude had carried out the main preliminaries of his plan. He had won all the right bank of the Tigris in the vicinity of Kut. Khalil's line now ran east and west from Sannaiyst to Shumran, with his left wing bent at right angles between the Suwaikya Marsh and the river. It was geographically a strong defensive position, for it was protected throughout almost its whole length by the Tigris. But it had one weak point—at Shumran where the enemy's battle front and his line of communications met—and his fears for this point had compelled him to weaken other parts of his front. The moment had come for the British to cross the river and the proper crossing place must be as far as possible to the west. If the crossing was to succeed the forces at

Sannayat must be kept closely engaged, and activities maintained along the whole river line. We hoped to enter by the back door, but if that was to be forced open [it was necessary to knock violently at the front door to distract the occupants. "

14. Now General Maude's plan was to draw the Turks towards the Sannaiyat as much as possible and then to throw the 3rd corps across the river at Shumran. On 22nd February British forces attacked at Sannaiyat in a big force and after a day's hard fighting secured the first two enemy trench lines. That night a feint was made as if to cross at Kut and Magasis and during the day light the British had allowed their preparations to be furtively observed so that the Turks moved troops and guns near these points. Thus when Turk's eyes were fixed on Sannaiyat and Magasis on 23rd morning the British began to pass to the bank at Shumran, about 7 miles west of Kut, The small number of defenders could offer little resistance. The same day coincidentally, Cobbe broke through the trench lines at Sannaiyat and the British gunboats had reached Kut.

15. Thus the iron fortress, which had defied all the British efforts in the early months of 1916, had yielded to the resolute actions of General Maude. The main Turkish army was in rapid retreat, after being expelled with heavy loss from a strong position.

16. Muhammad Amin in "Bagdad and the Story of its Last Fall" says that on the 4th January the commander of the XVIII corps warned Khalil Pasha of the dangerous situation on the Tigris and recommended an evacuation of his positions on the right bank. Halil however, considering that an obstinate resistance on the right bank, would gain time and also break the enemy's offensive powers, refused to agree.

17. Muhammad Amin expresses the opinion that Sanjayat, Kut and Shumran should have been evacuated and several positions prepared in rear to cover the retreat or for further resistance as Nuruddin had done in 1915. Kalil, he says, refused to consider any suggestions to this effect, and it was not till the very day that General Maude crossed the Tigris at Shumran that he ordered a position to be prepared at Qala Shadi.

18. Muhammad Amin blames Kalil and his staff at this period for their lack of foresight. Marshal Von Hindenburg says in "Out of My Life" that "Although Enver Pasha took long views about war, generally speaking he had not

received a really thorough military training, or what I might call a general staff training. This was a drawback which applied to all the Turkish commanders and their staffs. The Turkish army appeared to possess only a few officers who were able to master the technical, inside problems of command, a knowledge of which was essential to the execution of well-conceived plans. They seemed not to realise that the General Staff must necessarily look after the details, even in the execution of great operations."

19. We have already seen how Kalil was forced to fight to flank that is his battle line was parallel to his line of communications, a position which in the event of

Forming front to a flank.

defeat would render retreat difficult and in any event disorderly. We have already discussed this point at the time when the battle of Shaiba was discussed. So we need not go deep into the matter. But the result of this position and the crossing of Tigris at Shumran Bend was that the Turk's retreat was so disorderly that they could not make a stand at the already entrenched positions at Ctesiphone.

20. A river is only formidable in defence when the front taken on it is limited, and the volume of its water considerable. If the river line be long, the enemy is given a great latitude in selecting his point of crossing. At the same time passive defence of a river line never prevails against an enterprising enemy. The enemy screens all his movements and preparations, and then by making feints, presents himself at some point weakly guarded and throws his force across the river. Kalil had taken a too long river line—nearly 22 miles, thus giving the British greater latitude in selecting their point of crossing. We have already seen how the intention to cross the Tigris at Shumran Bend was concealed to the last, and how the Turks were alarmed along the whole length of line, by feint at Magasis and attack on the Samaiyat position. General Maude selected his point of crossing very skilfully. Only a small force on the opposite bank at this point was quite sufficient to alarm the Turks as it would endanger their retreat.

21. Fights for the recapture of Kut-al-Amara were of the nature of trench warfare. Many a hand to hand fight took place. It was mainly the work of Infantry. British and Indian Infantries carried out these tasks successfully after nearly 2 year's mobile warfare. General Maude gives a great tribute to the courage and bravery of his infantries shown in these fights. General Ludendorff says, "In the end of ends, Infantry is the deciding factor in every battle and requires the greatest sacrifices; so also it promises the greatest renown. They have to endure the heaviest bombardments of the enemy, lying quietly in the dirt and mud, in damp and cold, hungry and thirsty; or huddled in dug-outs, holes and cellars, they must await the overpowering assault until leaving the safety of their shelters, face to face with death, they must rise to meet the destroying storm. Such is their life".

Lecture X.

Capture and Consolidation of Bagdad.

1. So rapid had been the Turk's flight that on 27th February Turks reached Aziziya, 50 miles from Kut. The British carried out the pursuit of the Turks in two columns one following the river, and the other striking across country in the hope of intercepting the Turk's rearguards. At Aziziya British halted to reorganise their communications. This place was to be the jumping-off place for the further advance. Since the crossing of the Tigris the British had taken 4,000 prisoners, 39 guns, 22 trench mortars, 11 machine guns, besides vast quantities of other material.

2. On 5th March General Marshall moved forward to Zeur, 18 miles from Aziziya, while his cavalry reached Lajj seven miles from Zeur. Next day the British Cavalry passed the Ctesiphone position, which was found to be strongly entrenched but empty. Not a Turk was anywhere met with.

3. On 7th March the British advanced guard reached the Diala, eight miles from Bagdad. The Turks were holding the line of the Diala river. Here followed some severe fighting. On 8th March four attempts were made to cross the Diala, of which one succeeded. Meantime a bridge had been thrown across the Tigris below the Diala mouth, and the cavalry and part of General Cobbe's forces had crossed, and advanced against the Turkish position at Shawa Khan, which covered Bagdad from the direction of the Euphrates valley. This position was strongly held by the Turks and stubbornly defended. This position was taken by the British on the 9th. During the same night the Turks fell

back and on 10th the British engaged them within three miles of Bagdad. But a stiff wind arose, accompanied by a dust storm of unusual density. On 11th March General Marshall and his troops entered Bagdad.

4. " The capture of Bagdad was an event of the first magnitude in the history of the war. **Importance of the fall of Bagdad.** It restored the British prestige in the East which Kut and Gallipoli had shaken. It deprived the Teutonic League of a territory which had always played a vital part in its policy. It hit Turkey hard in her pride, and not less in her military strength. It cheered and enheartened the Entente, for Bagdad was so far the only famous city won from the enemy." Marshal Von Hindenburge says in ' Out of my Life, " the loss of Bagdad killed many German dreams, besides being a sore point owing to the guarantee of territorial integrity which Germany had given Turkey. "

5. Upto this time the Mesopotamia campaign had followed the line of the Tigris. The **Problem beyond Bagdad.** river, apart from the railway built to serve the needs of the British, was the beginning and end of all traffic and movement from Bagdad to the Persian Gulf. It ran between wide stretches of swamp and desert; so that operations were confined to the neighbourhood of its banks. Beyond Bagdad, however the problem was different. The enemy retreated along divergent lines which tended to become ever more distant from one another yet for a considerable period the Turks were never so remote from Bagdad itself as to preclude the danger of a sudden descent on the city. The problem, in short, was that of making Bagdad secure and that could not be done save by offensive measures. Bagdad was not a fortress capable of defence nor would British prestige be served had the enemy been allowed to remain in the neighbourhood of the city.

6. The strategic results of the fall of Kut on February 24, 1917 had been immense and far reaching. It caused stir and movement in all the Turkish armies in Asia. Turkish army operating in Persia, at once, had begun to fall

back from near Hamadan. General Baratoff was following the Turkish XIII Corps. On March 11, the day on which Bagdad was captured, Turks had passed Kermanshah; about the 20 th they reached the formidable Fai Tak Pass, where a strong fortified position enabled the Turks to hold up General Baratoff.

7. Under these circumstances, if Maude pushing up the Diala could reach Khanaquin first, he would cut off the retreat of the 13 th Corps. It was a race between the two hostile armies.

8. After the capture of Bagdad, General Maude had to undertake military operations in several different directions. He had to go to Khanaquin before the Turks; he had to harass the retreating 18 th Corps in front of him to prevent it cutting certain important dams on the Tigris and the the Euphrates and to drive it north beyond the railhead at Sammara. He had also to make his left flank secure by seizing Feluja, nearest point on the Euphrates to Bagdad.

9. Of these, the second one, that is, to obtain control of the Tigris for a sufficient distance to the north was most important at the same time urgent. The season of the melting of the snows in the Caucasus was close at hand. Both the rivers—the Tigris and the Euphrates, then, would reach their highest level. So Maude had to establish himself

sufficiently towards north, so as to prevent Turks from cutting dams and flooding the area around Bagdad. And so Turks were given no time to rally and the British occupied Kasirin on March 14, three days after the entry into Bagdad. By the 16th the British captured Mushahida, some forty miles north of Bagdad.

10. The Tigris for a sufficient distance above Bagdad having been secured, the main interest lay in the race against time with Turkish XIII Corps in the mountains. Bakuba, 30 miles north-east of Bagdad, was still in the hands of the Turks. Through this town the roads to Samara, Bagdad and Khaniquin run. To seize such a place meant the severing of the Turk's chief communications with Persia. On the 15th March Maude's eastern column left Bagdad, and after a short encounter, it captured Bakuba on the 18th. At this date the Russians under the command of Baratoff, who had defeated the Turkish XIII army Corps, were pushing on towards Kasr-i-Shirin with the intention at Khaniquin of linking up with the British.

11. By this time another move upon Feluja on the Euphrates was taking place. If we look at the map we find that the two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates swerve together near to Bagdad and the distance here separating them is not more than twenty miles. The Euphrates column entered Feluja on 19th March without difficulty; the Turkish garrison retired twenty-five miles upstream to a prepared position at Ramadi.

12. All these three movements the occupation of Bakuba, the capture of Feluja and Mushahida on the Tigris were completed within a week of the capture of Bagdad. Results of these operations. "Not merely was this display of energy, rounding off the

occupation of Bagdad, noteworthy in itself, but it revealed the extent to which river transport had been improved, for though local supplies had been organised, the operations were still in the main dependent on Basra as the chief base and upon the traffic with that place. Any weakness at the base or on the line of supply must have led to delay and time was here the essence of success. "

13. Having made himself secure the Bagdad position, General Maude turned his attention towards the Turkish XIII Corps, which was retreating from Persia.

Operations on the Diala

If Maude cut off the Turkish retreat from Persia the whole Turkish XIII Corps would be extinguished. General Baratoff was at Kermanshah and the British were at Bakuba. The British column was ordered to advance forward along the Diala, and it occupied Shahraban on 23rd March. The situation seemed a desperate one, but the Turkish commander revealed surprising qualities of leadership and strategy.

14. On 25th March the British column reached the Jebel Hamrin range. Here the Turks were in an ideal position commanding the adjacent country and they were in too great force for the British, only two brigades strong, to dislodge them. The Turks left a strong rear guard against the Russians and against the British they took up a position on the Jebel Hamrin ridge. These two screens held up the Russians and the British until the XIII Corps reached Khaniquin, crossed the the Diala near the mouth of the Alwand and took the road which runs by Kera Tepe, Kifri and Kirkuk towards Mosul.

15. Viewing the Turkish operations as a whole it must

**Turkish XIII Corp
retreated in the Jebel
Marmin ranges.**

be admitted that the leadership showed a high degree of tactical and strategical skill. But though the British were unable to cut off the Turkish army retreating from Persia, they prevented it from effecting a direct junction with the 18th Corps in Mesopotamia and compelled it to retire from Kasr-i-Shirin by a more northerly route, so that its strength only became available for offensive purpose at a later date.

16. By the last days of March the Turkish XIII Corps had escaped from the trap. On the 31st the British captured the Deli Abbas position and on the same day the Russians were over the Paitak Pass—some ten miles to the west.

17. Now General Maude was anxious to reach Samara as early as possible for two reasons. Firstly, it would give him the control of the Railway with its northern terminus at Samara, secondly by its capture the danger of inundation from the Tigris and the Euphrates would be averted. At the same time the district about Samara is of peculiar strategic importance as the land there for the first time rises well above the river level: so that whoever controls the Samara district controls the waters of the Tigris below that point.

18. So the [British advance was resumed along the Tigris. To check the British advance, the XIII Corps instead of making for Kifri, swung south, held the left bank of the Shatt-al-Adhaim. Here a hard fight took place and by the 13th April the 13th Corps was forced back again on the Jebel Hermin range. The British were within 12

**Importance of
Samara.**

**Operations for
the Capture of Sa-
mara.**

miles of Samara when they found the Turks posted in a formidable position about the city of Istabulat. The position was on the right bank. General Cobbe was in command of the column facing the strong Turkish position.

19. The British were strong in cavalry and in all

Capture of Samara. these operations the cavalry played an important part. In the operation of Istabulat also the cavalry turned over the Turkish right, and thus forced the XVIII Corps to fall upon a second position, 6 miles from Samara. Another hotly contested battle and the Samara was in the British hands on the 24th April. "Samara is an ancient town, at one time the capital of the country and still of some local importance though much reduced in size. Surrounded by ancient ruins, it is celebrated as the place where the Roman Emperor Julian died of his wounds in A. D. 363 and where the disappearance of the twelfth Imam (Imam Mahdi) whose resurrection is looked for by many Mahomedans, is reputed to have occurred." •

20. Within a fortnight trains began to run between Samara and Bagdad. Thus the whole railway built by the Germans had fallen intact into General Maude's hands and the danger of inundations from the river past. The Turko-German power was broken up in Mesopotamia. It was a great military triumph for the British.

21. While the fate of Samara was being decided at

Activity of Turkish XIII Corps. Istabulat the XIII Turkish Corps attempted a fresh offensive in a last desperate hope of saving it. Issuing from the Jebel Hermin range after some extraordinary marching two groups of infantry has pushed swiftly down the Shatt-al-Adhaim towards the Tigris. In their haste the first group was sent forward 17 miles in advance of the second. The British got the chance of de-

feating the Turks in detail. The first group was engaged and heavily punished. It was pursued along the Adhaim. The second group also met the same fate. Thus both the groups were driven back into the Jebel Hamrin.

22. Thus Bagdad was secure by the end of April. The XIII Corps after its escape from Kermanshab, was thrice engaged and beaten, and finally was driven back into the Jebel Harmin ranges. The XVIII Corps was five times defeated, and was driven back on Tekrit. These two corps were driven back on divergent lines. The Turk's spirit had been broken. There was no enemy to be found within 40 or 50 miles from Bagdad and the position of the whole force in Mesopotamia was comparatively safe.

23. " In tactics, action is the governing rule of war." General Maude never remained inactive after his capture of Bagdad. He carried out his vigorous offensive against both the Turkish corps without giving them time to rally or to carry out a well-conceived plan. By this vigorous action he stopped the XIII corps from joining hands with the XVIII corps, and thus made them to work on divergent lines. If Maude had not taken these vigorous actions, XIII corps would have joined the XVIII corps and the task of keeping Bagdad secure and safe would have been very difficult, probably a disastrous one. But by his energetic, relentless and vigorous actions he drove both the Turkish corps to 40 or 50 miles distance from Bagdad.

24. By tactics and manoeuvre general Maude compelled the Turks to fight on exterior lines. The British were strategically in a very favourable position. They were on the interior lines. I have already fully discussed this point while discussing the position of the British at

**British position
by the end of April
1917.**

**" In tactics ac-
tion is the govern-
ing rule of War.**

**Interior and
exterior lines.**

Basra, in my 3rd lecture, and so I need not explain you the advantages and disadvantages of being on the interior lines or on the exterior lines. Being on the interior lines general Maude could easily send a strong column against any of the three Turkish columns, which were working separately and disjointly and inflict a severe defeat on it, as was done in the cases of Ramdie and Mehendi.

25. Von Caemmerer writes, " We must call Napoleon's exploit an almost unbroken chain of successes in the use of interior line. The need of covering one's own territory against hostile enterprise, which existed at all times and under all circumstances, had caused the military art of the old monarchies to adopt a very broad front as a rule, for strategic deployment, and the Napoleon's principle 'to advance in mass' as he himself called it, was generally best applied in selecting the centre of the hostile front as the objective. At the same time, when transmission of the intelligence during the operations was still exclusively dependent on the capacity of a horse, it was permissible to reckon with certainty upon the impossibility of really proper cooperation of widely separated army portions or corps. The news from one side to the other, the orders hither and thither, could in those days hardly ever arrive in time for acting in harmony with the constantly changing situations in war. "

26. Napoleon himself said at the end of his career as a general: " To operate from widely different directions without intercommunication is a mistake, which is usually the cause of another. The detached column has only orders for the first day; its operations for the next day depend on what has happened with the main column. It therefore, either loses time in waiting for orders or trusts to good luck. It is an axiom to keep the columns of an army always united in such a manner that the enemy cannot push between them. "

27. In these operations Maude had made the full use of the mobility of his cavalry. In the crossing of the river Adhaim, General Cassel's Brigade crossed the bridge over the river at its junction with the Nahrwan canal at 2 P. M. On the 18 th April 1917, advanced up this canal and cut the enemy off the river. On the previous day the cavalry, demonstrating on the northern flank, induced a belief in the minds of the Turks that their left flank was threatened. Thus the crossing was effected a mile below the point where it was expected.

28. While considering the work of cavalry in battles, we must remember one thing that the decisive and governing factor on which depends the result and value of that work is leadership. The leader must know as to how and when his cavalry should be used. He must be on the look out for opportunities where the cavalry would be useful. In war it is certain that mistakes may be committed; chances for surprises may occur; at such times, the leader must be capable of taking advantage of the enemy's mistakes, by making use of the mobility of his cavalry. "The cause of the indifferent performance of the cavalry lies not in the material, but in the leading, the formation and the distribution."



Lecture XI.

Battle of Ramadi and Death of General Maude.

1. At the close of April 1917, the Turkish armies had been driven back on divergent lines, and the British position at Bagdad was safe and secure. Owing to heats of summer, the campaigning was brought to an end for the time being. This time was used to bring the supplies and transport to a high pitch of perfection, and to give rest and reorganise the units who had fought the Bagdad campaign.

British position at the close of April 1917.

2. During this period there was inactivity on the part of the Russians. It was feared at the war office that a Russian Collapse would be felt most acutely in the East. Two months previously the hope of establishing the Russians at Mosul, thus securing the British hold on Mesopotamia and enabling the British to reduce their force there, had seemed to offer the British the opportunity of concentrating in Palestine to defeat the Turks. But now there was no such chance. Freed from danger from the Russians in Armenia and Kurdistan, the Turks could make a much more effective resistance. In Mosul the Turks could supply 2,00,000 men though it was doubtful if they could maintain that number south of Tikrit. Again Maude had to prevent the Turks from penetrating into Persia via. Kermanshah, as the Russians might withdraw.

3. Enver Pasha was very eager to recapture Bagdad, and the German Supreme Command yielded to Turkish pressure and agreed to accept the responsibility of operations to recapture Bagdad and to drive the British back to their base on the Persian Gulf. It was decided that the Supreme Command should be vested in General Von Falkenhayn, who should have under his

Von Falkenhayn detailed for the re-capture of Bagdad.

command a Turko-German force entitled "Yilderim" (i. e. thunderbolt).

4. Enver thought that the recovery of Bagdad would not only be a great personal triumph for him and productive of much effect upon the Turkish people; it would also mean recovery of the main route into Western Persia. As a result of Russian Revolution, Turks were secure from Russian attacks, and they could easily use all the forces in Mesopotamia. Enver decided the Palestine front as a purely defensive front.

5. The loss of Bagdad was a sore point for the German policy. Germans had their dreams and by its capture by the British; it seemed that those dreams would not be realised. Hindenburg says, "The loss of Bagdad was painful for us and as we well believed, still more painfully for all thinking Turkey. How often had the name of the old city of the Caliphs been mentioned in Germany in previous years? How many dreams had been associated with it, dreams which it would have been better to cherish in silence rather than shout all over the world in the impolitic German way?"

Hindenburg on the loss of Bagdad.

6. Great preparations were made at Aleppo for this coming offensive. Arrangements were made for hundreds of motor lorries, for the extension of Bagdad railway to Mosul, for the improvements of roads for leading to the front in this direction, for the construction of thousands of Sharkturs at Jerablus on the Euphrates, for the organisation of a good land line of communications down the Euphrates valley and for refitting and reorganising the Turkish Sixth Army.

7. The main idea of General Falkenhyn was to descent down the Euphrates and cut off the British forces north of Bagdad. A big force was concentrated at Aleppo.

Falkeuhyn's plan.

and strong detachments were sent to Ramadi and Hit on the Euphrates.

8. Djemal Pasha was against this plan of an offensive in Mesopotamia. According to his views Palestine front was of more importance. According to his opinion there was no chance of recovering and driving the English out of Mesopotamia; Palestine front was the most important point in the Ottoman Empire and so this front should be reinforced so heavily as to be impregnable.

9. Mustapha Kemal Pasha was also against this scheme. According to his opinion "In Mesopotamia the British having gained their objective had no political, economic or military reasons for a further advance; and even if they continue to advance successfully the loss of Mosul would not be very serious and would not affect the general situation. On the Hejaz and Senai fronts the enemy had not yet attained his political and military objectives and was known to be preparing to achieve his purpose, which was the subjection of Turkey, the formation of a Christian State in Palestine under British influence, the denuding of Turkey of her most prosperous of her provinces and the destruction of her last religious predominance. It was useless to ignore the danger to Syria or to think of recapturing Bagdad, a physically impossible project with Turkey's last reserves".

10. It was probable that in the cold weather a serious enemy offensive would take place. The whole Eastern front was affected by the demoralization of Russia. Owing to Russian weakness in the Caucasus, the gate into central Asia was opened for the Turks and the Germans. Moreover, it appeared that Germany was not minded to let Mesopotamia slip from the control of the Central Powers. General Falkenhyn was at Aleppo, and it was evident that his first objective was the recovery of Bagdad.

11. General Maude was knowing that his strategical position was not an easy one. He was nearly 700 miles up the Tigris from the sea. On his right, he had an uncertain factor of Persia. In his front, the enemy was entrenched in a good position and he was receiving reinforcements from Mosul. On his left he had the Euphrates valley, the area of surprise.

12. Ramadi was occupied in a good strength by a Turkish Commander, Ahmed Bey. By occupying Samara, British centre had been pushed forward far in advance of their flanks. First, the left flank was taken owing to increased activities of the Turks in that direction. So it was decided by General Maude to capture Ramadi, as it appeared to have an increased value, for its occupation would bar the best route described in the German report and would also threaten an alternative route to westward.

13. In September the operation was taken in hand and Major General Sir Brooking was in command of this operation. It was a strong position, for its right was protected by the Habbaniya Lake. Three miles behind the Mushaid heights lay the Turkish main position, running in a semi-circle around Ramadi, first along the eastern bank of the Canal between the Euphrates and the Habbaniya Lake, and then along some sandy downs to the Aziziyah Canal, which leaves the river a mile west of Ramadi.

14. The British starting point was Madhij some 8 miles from the Turkish outposts. British plan was to take such measures as to make the Turkish General believe that the chief attack was to take place from across the river. A road was laid down along the opposite bank and supplies were collected at the most convenient place of crossing. A bridge of boats was constructed downstream, and by this a part of

British column passed from the Ramadi side to the farther bank. This was the situation on the 27th September.

15. But during the night, these troops were withdrawn and recrossed the Euphrates. Two infantry columns and cavalry force moved out, the infantry columns outflanked the Mushaid Ridge, and the Turks were driven into their main position, a semi-circle line a mile from the town; the cavalry column by a wide sweeping movement reached the road running from Ramadi to Hit and Aleppo and cut the enemy's communications.

16. On September 28 th Turks were driven off the ridge.

Capture of Ramadi. The position at night fall was that the Turks were surrounded on all sides except on the north

where ran the Euphrates, but there was no bridge over the river, Ahmed Bey's only possible way out therefore, was through Ramadi along the Aleppo road ; but this road was obstructed by the British cavalry. This cavalry was furnished with machine guns, and when the Turks sought to break through, they were flung back into Ramadi. A general attack with all arms of the British force began, when suddenly the Turkish guns became silent and white flags went up all along the line.

17. It was a general surrender. No formal capitulation occurred. Ahmed Bey was captured at his headquarters, and when the full count of prisoners was made they amounted to 3500. Most important, however, than the prisoners were the captures of materials. These included 13 guns, 12 machine guns, 2 barges and large quantities of arms, ammunition, equipment, engineering stores, railway material and supplies.

18. Regarding the battle the Turkish account says

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Turkish account of this battle. "The disaster to the Euphrates Group had opened the river to the enemy. As the Group had been completely wiped out, he was free to make any move he wished on the other front. The Russians too were reappearing on the scene with fresh troops. The supplies difficulties in the zone of 13th Corps would soon necessitate the withdrawal of our left wing on the Diyala. To secure the Euphrates the 157th Regiment at Hit was insufficient protection. The 50th Division which was at Aleppo, therefore ordered the 169th Regiment and one battalion of artillery from its attached troops to march to Maskina on the Euphrates and from there to proceed to Hit by Shakturs. An infantry regiment, a battalion of artillery and various formations of the division remained at Aleppo".

19. "Ramadi was a perfect example of an encircling operation carried out with dash and precision. Its effect was decisive for the British locally". As Candler says "in the Bagdad vilayat Ramadi was recognised as the drop curtain for the Turks".

20. It was a finished piece of work and one of the completest victories won in Mesopotamia. No doubt the British outnumbered the Turks, but the Turks had been able to choose their own ground and were at liberty to fight or retreat. Ahmed Bey ought to have declined the battle, and retreated upwards by throwing a strong rearguard; by this he would have saved the bulk of his army. It is very rare in modern war for a whole force to be surrounded and compelled to surrender en masse and only great efficiency in the staff and intelligence work could have achieved such a surprise.

21. On the day on which Ramadi was fought, the right wing pushed out from Bele Ruz towards Mendali, on the Persian border. This small town had been

Capture of Mendali.

used as a minor base of supplies and had proved of value in organising raids on the Tigris line of communication. This place was surprised by cavalry dash, a ride of more than sixty miles, accomplished during the night of September 28-29. Owing to sudden attack Turks could not attempt any resistance and fled, at once into the hills. During October the British continued to improve this side of their position. Between 18th and 20th October, the British drove the Turks from the Diala into the Jebel Hermin and occupied the frontier town of Kizil Robot. The XIII corps was forced to retreat towards Kifri. This stroke disposed of the last vestige of the Turkish force in Mesopotamia between Ramadi on the one side and Kifri on the other.

22. Whilst these operations on the Diala front were in progress the XIII Turkish Corps undertook a counter demonstration towards Samara. After a short engagement the Turks fell back upon Tekrit, a town forty miles from Samara. Before the Turks could consolidate their position, the British attacked the Turkish position, and drove the Turks from it. On the 6th November the British occupied Tekrit.

23. These victories, on the Tigris, on the Enphrates and the Diala, had given General Maude a strong position from the point of view both of supplies and of strategy, for the Turks had no good advanced bases from which General Falkenhayn could launch his counterstroke. Now General Maude could oppose any move of the enemy with confidence and if nothing came, the British occupation of the enemy soil was growing stronger day by day.

24. But General Maude could not reap the fruits of his masterly strategy. On the 18 November General Maude died of cholera in Bagdad after two day's illness. It was an irreparable loss and a heavy blow to the Army of Mesopotamia and to the British cause.

25. "In little more than a year he had sprung into fame, and his reputation was the most valuable which a commander can acquire – that of one who did not blunder, whose heart never failed him, who was as patient and methodical in conceiving a plan as he was swift in executing it, who cared most zealously for the welfare of his men. Success followed his banner because he had taken pains to ensure it. His personal character was simple and kindly and he was both loved and trusted by all who worked with him. These have happily been the characteristics of many British Generals, and Maude was the type of soldier which it is the peculiar glory of his Nation to produce. He was so modest and unrhctorical that it was only the tragic shortness of his career that made the world realise its brilliance. He had taken over the army of Mesopotamia at a time when it was dispirited by failure and distraught by mismanagement. He had made it one of the best organised and most efficient of British forces, and in the face of immense difficulties he had led it continually to victory. Indeed the operations at Shumariyat and Shumran in February 1917 must rank with Allenby's turning movement on Eadraelon in the following year as the most perfect British achievements in manoeuvre battles during the campaign. If we could realise the magnitude of the war, let us compare the popular reputation which attends his success with that which he could have won had the campaign on the Tigris been the only military enterprise of Britain. He had done more than Wolseley had done in the course of a long life; and Kut and Bagdad were far greater achievements than Omdurman. Had he fought his battles twenty years earlier he would have had the prestige in the popular mind which fell to Roberts and Kitchner; but so vast was now the scale of British operations that he ranked with the British people as only one of many capable leaders".

26. In all operations after the capture of Bagdad cavalry

**Part played by cavalry
in these operations.**

played an important part. The chief burden of fighting and maintaining important positions fell upon the cavalry. It was cavalry which made

General Ahmed Bey to surrender at Ramadi, it was cavalry, which surprised the Turks at Mendali, and thus secured the most important and strategical point for the British. By making use of his cavalry General Maude always threatened the enemy's line of retreat and cut off his avenue of escape. The Turks were handicapped by the want of cavalry. Practically speaking they had no cavalry at this time. They could not carry out reconnaissance to a great distance and thus they were surprised many a time. Lack of cavalry told upon their movements and the moral of the troops also.


27 In estimating the work of cavalry in the field, we must always remember that the governing factor is Leadership. "In cavalry work individuals can make or mar to an extent almost, if not totally, impossible in the work of other arms".

28. General Moltke, says, "The strongest reason of all for the poor results obtained by cavalry on the battle-field lies in the characteristics of many leaders. An attacking cavalry is like a shot which has been fired, the effect of which cannot be foreseen, and which under certain circumstances might recoil on the firers. Many a cavalry officer, personally brave enough, has shrunk from making up his mind to a course of action the result of which cannot be determined in advance and which may demand great and perhaps fruitless sacrifice from his men. With the other arm it is possible to break off an action; not so with the cavalry charge - fate must run its course. With cavalry everything depends upon the initiative of the commander hence the immense importance of the personal element."

29. Count Von Wartenburg writes in his work on 'Napoleon as a General', "It is indeed a characteristic uniformly noticeable in the strategy of all the greatest generals that they know to

Von Wartenburg's views.

utilise their cavalry to the best advantage. For it is this arm designed for a wide field and rapidity of movement, which requires superior officers of exceptionally large grasp and quick resolution, who, keeping only the great aims of a war in view are able to set aside objects of secondary importance and to put up with heavy losses also, for cavalry employed over a large area must often get into situations from which it cannot withdraw without suffering them." Napoleon himself said, "The use of cavalry demands boldness and ability; above all it should not be handled with any miserly desire to keep it intact."



Lecture XII.

The End of Mesopotamia Campaign.

1. After the death of General Maude, Lieutenant General Sir W. R. Marshall was appointed as the Chief Commander in Mesopotamia. General Marshall describes in his despatch the situation in Mesopotamia at the time he took command thus

Situation in Mesopotamia when Marshall took command

“ The moral of the Army was magnificent, whilst organisation and training had reached a high level of efficiency. Turkish Army on the contrary was low in moral and desertions from it numerous and frequent ; on the Tigris and Euphrates they had retreated out of rapid striking distance and only on our right flank was there a good opportunity of hitting them. ”

2. By this time the danger of Turkish offensive down the Euphrates was over. British operations in Palestine, where General Allenby's force now had reached within a few miles of Jerusalem,

Effects of the British operations in Palestine.

forced the divisions concentrated at Aleppo to be sent to that front. On 22nd November the Chief of the Imperial General Staff sent a telegram recapitulating the instructions already given in which he says “ As far it is possible to judge the situation here, the destruction of the enemy's advanced bases at Ramadi and Tikrit, together with the successes gained in Palestine and consequent division of enemy's reserves to that theatre, make it impossible for the enemy to bring against you this year a force sufficient to threaten you seriously, and make it doubtful whether he can do so before the hot weather of 1918. Much depends on the extension of the enemy's railway to Mosul and it is important to obtain all possible information as to this, as well as to get timely notice of enemy's concentration either on the Euphrates or on the Tigris ”

3. General Marshall decided to hit the Turks on the the Jebel Harmin range. Here about 60 or 70 miles from Bagaded part of the XIII Turkish Corps held the passes over the range, guarding the north. General Egerton was given this task.

Decision to clear the Jebel Harmin range.

4. General Egerton had planned to carry out his attack in two phases. In the first phase the Turks would be engaged along the whole front Quizil Ribat-Suhaniya, which was taken up by the Turks and both their flanks would be turned, the left by forcing the passage of the Diala above Quizil Ribat and the right by the capture of Suhaniya and the Sakaltuan pass. The second phase would consist of an advance on Qura Tepe up both banks of the Narin river.

Egerton was given the operation.

5. After a night march converging columns surprised the Turks at dawn on December 3 and drove them far along the Mosul road through Kifri. Sakaltutan pass came into the British hands. This pass was of strategical importance to the British, as from which there was observation over a vast stretch of country to the north. This was the last operation of 1917.

6. The excessive caution of the Turks prevented any other important action for some time. During February 1918 beyond punitive measures against aggressive tribesmen and Air force activity there was no operation of importance except a short British advance in the direction of Hit on the Euphrates. For the previous two months the Turks had been reported to be reinforcing their troops in that neighbourhood and at the beginning of February it was estimated that the Turkish force about Hit and Sahiliya consisted of 50th Division.

Turkish activity on the Euphrates.

7. The Turkish force was much too near to be desirable and therefore a push in that direction was determined upon. General Sir Booking again was given the command on this front. But the Turks fell back before him and took up their stand at Khan Baghdadie, some twenty miles upstream.

8. The Turkish position about Khan Baghdadie consisted of an advanced entrenched line of an advanced entrenched line Turkish position at about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the south east of Khan Bagdadi. that place and of another entrenched area extending to a distance of over four miles to the westward of Khan Baghdadie.

9. The British plan of operation was to make an attack in strength on the Turk's left near the river, and to send a flying column over the desert to encircle the Turks on their right. It was almost an exact repetition of the tactics of Ramadi, and having regard to the Turk's experience on that occasion, it seemed in the highest degree improbable that the British would again be able to surround and capture the force. The only chance of success was swift and secret action. To this end the capacity of the force for rapid movement was increased and a Cavalry Brigade under Brigadier General Cassels and a number of armoured motors were sent forward, with instructions to move by night and conceal themselves by day. From what occurred afterwards it was evident that these measures were effectual in concealing the ambitious plan of operations, and that the Turks were in fact surprised.

10. On 26th March the attack was launched. At about 10 A. M. "P" trenches were captured practically without opposition. At this time the flying column was making a good progress. This column was engaging the Turkish rear and right flank from a point about $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles north west of Khan Bagdadi— on the Aleppo

road. The British Infantry were held up by machine gun fire on a general line 500 yds. east of the ravine dividing them from the Turk's " Q " and " R " trenches ; It was evidently the Turkish intention to hold this position so as to enable them to retire during night. About midnight the Turks tried to break through, but were completely beaten losing 1000 prisoners.

11. Next morning the Turkish guns gradually ceased firing, a white flag fluttered from the top of a ridge and the Turks came forward and surrendered. It was again a complete rout. The bulk of the Turkish force were either prisoners or out of action, but many small parties who had got through were flying along the Aleppo road.

Surrender of the Turks.

12. The moment for employing the full strength of the mobile column had now arrived, and the Cavalry, with other troops in motor cars, enjoyed the rare experience of the pursuit of a defeated enemy across the open field. There was no serious resistance. The guns had been captured in battle or left behind and the Turks' only thought was flight. Very few of the Turks escaped. The road clinging to the Euphrate's stretches for 400 miles to Aleppo and stragglers who sought refuge from the cavalry and armoured cars by leaving the highway were shot down by the machine guns of the airmen.

Pursuit:

13. On 28th the column reached Ana, where a great dump of ammunition was found so great that it was impossible to remove it, and it was blown up. The pursuit by motor was continued 73 miles further, and a few more prisoners worn out and demoralised by the rapidity of the pursuit, surrendered without opposition. Altogether motor force covered 140 miles in two days. The total number of prisoners taken was over 5200 including Nazim Bey, the Turkish Commander.

14. "The victory was, if possible, a more brilliant achievement than Ramadi; it was won against a much larger force, and it had the same effect of leaving the

Effects of this operation.

Turks for a considerable time completely powerless on the Euphrates. It was the first large operation undertaken by the new Commander-in-Chief. General Marshall attributed the completeness of this victory to the masterly way in which the force was handled by Sir Brooking, though the credit of such a considerable operation must largely belong to the Headquarters Staff which prepared the plan and facilitated its execution. The troops also showed extra-ordinary endurance and rapidity of movement: apart from the more spectacular performance of the flying column, the infantry had to march for two days and two nights with little or no sleep, and to fight the whole of one day and part of two nights. It only remains to be added that the ground won in this advance was not held. General Marshall's object was to [crush the Turks' fighting power, not to advance on Aleppo, and accordingly he withdrew his troops, leaving Khan Baghdadi to the enemy, who came on gingerly two months later".

15. The enemy dispositions in Mesopotamia during April appeared to be little changed. On the Euphrates where the British had

Turkish disposition during April 1918. effectually stopped for the time being, any idea of an enemy offensive by the destruction of his advanced depots of ammunition and stores, small Turkish detachments reoccupied Ana and Haditha towards the end of April, but there were no other signs of coming activity. The XVIII corps on the Tigris still held positions at and above Fatha; and the troops of the XIII corps whose headquarters were at Kirkuk were widely scattered to the east and south east of Mosul.

16. Now General Marshall decided to inflict a severe blow to the XIII corps, because

Fall of Kifri. that corps was a kind of danger to the British communication with

Persia. Russia was out of war and the whole burden of stopping the German-Turko intrigues in Persia fell upon the Mesopotamia force. General Egerton was given this task. Turkish advanced base was at Kifri, whence an easy road gave access to Kasri-Shirin, and thus to the great highway into Persia. In little over a fortnight the Turks were driven back for over 100 miles to the Lesser Zab. The British column was preponderously cavalry and moved swiftly. So rapidly did it march that the Turks at Kifri did not await its attack.

17. On May 7th the British entered Kirkuk, the headquarters of the Turkish forces on this front. For the best part of the month the British were engaged in removing the rich military booty at Kirkuk, after that they withdrew, but retained Kifri as a place controlling the route to Persia. In this operation the British took 7500 prisoners. It was the finish of the XIII corps.

18. The destruction of the Turkish power along Kifri-Kirkuk side was a measure taken in good time and formed the preliminary step in a wide development of military policy in the East.

Effect of this operation. Since the Russian's defection, the Turks had overrun Armenia, had advanced into Northern Persia and occupied Tabriz. The Turkish advance into Persia via Trans-Caucasia must in the end be a menace to the flank of the British in Mesopotamia. Most of the routes into Persia were beyond General Marshall's reach, but he could and did do much to reduce the Turks facing him to impotence, and thus in one quarter at least, to thwart the grandiose schemes planned in Berlin.

19. In October the British advance in Palestine began : and it was thought advisable to exploit at once the effect of General Allenby's success in Palestine, so as to eliminate all Turkish influence south of the Taurus mountains. The collapse of Bulgaria and

the Turkish position of extreme difficulty might end in the cessation of hostilities. In these circumstances it was advisable that the British should gain as much ground as possible up the Tigris. So General Marshall decided to devote all his resources to an advance towards Mosul from Tikrit.

20. The main Turkish army was holding a position of great natural strength, astride the Turkish position at the Fatha gorge, which they had been preparing for nearly 18 months, with a second strong position astride the Tigris at its confluence with the Little Zab. General Marshall would have preferred to make the Turks fight on ground of his own choosing by carrying out his main advance via Kirkuk. But the lack of available transport, owing to the requirements of Persia and of the collection of Mesopotamia harvest, prohibited such a course, so that the only alternative was a direct advance up the Tigris.

21. The plan was not a direct attack upon the Fatha defences. That would have been both doubtful and expensive. The plan was at one and the same time to turn the Fatha defences and the second fortified position by an attack in the first instance on the east side of the Tigris. In that part of the Jebel Hermin range of hills which lies between the Adhim Valley and the Tigris at Fatha, a distance of sixty miles, two openings had been found. They were very second rate, to put it mildly, and there was no water supply, and being remote from observation, they could be improved and wells dug. And that was done without giving the Turks the alarm. They had no troops nearer than Taxa Kumatli, forty miles distance.

22. Lewin was ordered to march to Taza Kermatli and Kirkuk, making the Turks believe that the British advance was to take place in that direction, thus preventing them from coming to the assist-

British turning attack

tance of the main body at Fatha. Cassels with 11th Cavalry Brigade was ordered to march by one of the defiles discovered in the Jebel Hermine and to ford the Lesser Zab, thus turning the Turkish second defensive position. Norton's cavalry were to move up into the hills by the more westerly of the two discovered defiles, cross the range, and then strike towards the northern outlet of the Fatha gorge.

23. A column under Brigadier-General Nightingale was to go by the route taken by Norton's cavalry, and to attack the Turkish army at Fatha in flank. The 18th Division was to demonstrate in front of the Fatha defences, and when the Turks evacuated, to follow him; 17th Division was to operate on the right bank of the Tigris thus maintaining pressure from west and preventing them from breaking out westward.

24. On the 23rd October, the different columns marched on their missions. On discovering these movements, the Turks stole out from their defences and began the retreat along the gorge during the night of October 23. This prompt action enabled the Turks to occupy their defences at the confluence of the Tigris and Lesser Zab.

25 General Marshall says " The operations started with an attack on the strong Turkish position

Marshall's account of this operation. at Fatah where the Tigris flows through the Jebel Hermin. This was carried out by the 17th and 18th Indian Divisions west and east of the Tigris respectively, assisted by the 7th Indian Cavalry Brigade on the east bank of the Tigris and the 11th Indian Cavalry Brigade on the west bank. The latter by a march of over 50 miles forced a crossing over the Lesser Zab in face of opposition, and by further march of about 50 miles got right round the Turks and astride their line of communication at Hurwah where they were joined by our armoured Car Brigade. The Turks fell back to their second line

at the confluence of the Lesser Zab. On 25 th October the 18 th Indian Division forced a crossing over the Lesser Zab and drove back to the west bank of the Tigris all Turks east of that river while the 17 th Indian Division closed up to the enemy who were now all on the west bank.

26. "The fighting which ensued was of a severe nature.

Action at Shergat Our difficulties were increased by the sandy nature of the soil which delayed transport. After continuous

fighting the 17 th Indian division forced the Turks to fall back on their third position on the hills covering Shergat on the morning of the 27th. All that day the Turkish reserves tried to break through the 11 th Indian Cavalry Brigade, but without success, though the arrival of the Turkish reinforcements from Mosul forced that Brigade to draw back its right. On the night of the 27 th, 28 th October the 7 th Indian Cavalry Brigade moving up the east bank, after a march of 33 miles, was able to support the cavalry in preventing any Turks breaking through northwards. On the mornig of 30 th the Turkish Commander (Ismail Hakki) surrendered his total force consisting of the whole of the 14 th Division, the bulk of the 2nd Division and portions of the two regiments of the 5th Division with all their artillery train and administrative services."

27. Meanwhile General Lewin had marched from

Kirkuk and the way to Mosul was open. He reached Hamman Ali, 12 miles from Mosul, when (Nov. 1)

End of the Campaign.

the information of the armistic was sent. As a precaution Mosul was occupied. On this day (Nov. 1) British were sixty miles above Ana on the Euphrates. The campaign in Mesopotamia was at an end; its purpose had been fully achieved.

Lecture XIII.

Conclusion.

1. You might have observed in the foregoing lectures that principal inferences that may be drawn, have been summarised at the end of each. If these summaries be compared, it will be found that the same principles of war and the penalties to be paid for their neglect, appear over and over again. It may perhaps be instructive to draw attention to some of the more important of these.

2. "The ultimate object of a commander must be to concentrate sufficient force for the delivery of a decisive blow."
Principle of Concentration. (Field Service Regulations)

In this campaign this principle of the concentration of every available man at the decisive point is very clearly brought out. The neglect of this principle is well illustrated by the disaster which occurred owing to faulty disposition of the Turkish Commander till the Battle of Shaiba. Before this battle was fought, three engagements took place between Basra and Fao; but no where Turks attempted to concentrate their whole force; and thus the British could defeat them in details, and could secure the most advantageous position of being on the interior lines.

3. It is always hazardous to attempt to check the advance of the enemy by small detachments. It is always immaterial if we lose a portion of land; but it is always suicidal to get our army defeated in order to save that piece of land. By such measures we do not check the advance of the enemy but give him best opportunity of defeating us in details and thus lowering our morals.

4. In the first attempt to relieve Kut, we have seen how General Aylmer violated this principle. Had he waited for few days, he would have got 10000 men more at his disposal, who were at Basra, and the result would have been otherwise. Whatever might be the causes that led Aylmer to violate this principle, but the result was a failure.

5. From this we can see that it is always advisable and safe to avoid battle if we can not concentrate our army. Retreat of few miles or a loss of a part of country is nothing compared to the security of the whole force. One successful engagement with our full concentrated force may give us back, what we are forced to give up owing to strategical considerations.

6. In tactics, action is the governing rule of war. Frederick says "To make war always means attacking". We must not give respite to the enemy until his strength is exhausted. We must pursue our aim, whatever it might be, with the greatest energy and with the whole force; we must exploit our success to the utmost, thus forcing the enemy to conform to our operations, abandoning his own plans the most disadvantageous to him. No half-hearted measures or hesitation would do any good; by such means ample opportunities will be given to the enemy who may take up the initiative and impose his will on us.

7. No better instance of the success which follows a well concerted, vigorous and sustained offensive can be given than the operations of General Maude's force in 1917 in Mesopotamia. On 13th December 1916, the attack against the Turkish position astride the Tigris was begun, and continued without a break, until the Turks were forced into

retreat on 25th February 1917. Maude followed the Turks and gave them no respite; he captured Bagdad on 11th March, Bakuba on the Diala was captured on the 17th March and Feluja on the Euphrates was occupied on the same day. At the end of March the British forces were 75 miles north of Bagdad and the Turkish forces were totally exhausted.

8. On the other hand we notice the half-hearted measu-

Half-hearted measures of the Turks while following Townshead.

res and the hesitation on the part of the Turks, when they followed General Townshead and invested him at Kut; had they taken vigorous action down the Tigris, by keeping a

detachment at Kut to watch Townshead, they would have captured Amara easily, and probably would have endangered Basra, the main base of the British forces in Mesopotamia. But instead of taking vigorous action or assuming offensive down the Tigris the Turks remained on the purely defensive astride the Tigris.

9. Marshal Foch says "Such a purely defensive battle,

Marshal Foch on defensive battle.

however well conducted, does not make a victor and vanquished. The game has to be begun all over again.

A purely defensive battle is a duel in which one of the fighters does nothing but parry. Nobody would admit that, by so doing, he could succeed in defeating his enemy. On the contrary, he would sooner or latter expose himself in spite of the greatest possible skill, to being touched, to being overcome, by one of his enemy's thrust even if that enemy were the weaker party".

10. So our aim must always be for creating events instead of submitting to them; and this we can achieve by taking vigorous offensive action.

11. Surprise is a most potent factor in war. We must always endeavour to mystify and mislead our enemy. When the enemy is surprised, he is confused and unbalanced and he is more than usually liable to error. **Surprise.** At the same time, without surprise we will not be able to attain the superiority of force at a decisive point, for the enemy will probably be prepared to meet us.

12. Surprise must be accompanied by "Mass" and "Speed". Mass, surprise and speed should be the Motto of a commander. If the surprise is not delivered with the bulk of your forces and with the greatest speed it will not be so effective, as it ought to be and sometimes it ends in failure. Failure of the second attempt of General Aylmer is the best illustration to show how the surprise delivered in Mass but not in speed ends, in failure. Had the speed been kept according to plan, the surprise would have been successful and General Townshead would have been relieved, but the left column which was to turn the Turkish right flank appeared three hours late and the effect of surprise was lost as the Turks could manage to reinforce that flank and thus check the British advance.

13. On the other hand, surprises carried out by the British forces at Ramadi and Khan Bagdadi are the perfect examples of well planned surprises. The moral effect of these surprises was great; **Surprises at Ramadi and Khan Bagdadi.** The Turkish flank, in preference to their front was struck, their line enveloped and their retreat threatened. These surprises were carried out in "Mass" and "Speed". No time was given to the Turkish commander at both these places, to meet the unexpected stroke, and thus he was mystified and misled; he lost his balance of mind and the result was the surrender of the whole force.

14. The second best illustration can be given of the crossing of the Tigris by General Maude in February in 1917. By the 15th. February, the Turks held a very strong position from Sannaiyat to Shumran Bend, on the left bank of the Tigris. To effect a crossing it was necessary to surprise the Turks. General Maude engaged the Turks at Sannaiyat, and along the river line between Sannaiyat and Kut ; he made all preparations for crossing at Magasis near Kut and made the Turks believe that the attempt would be made at that place. But he secretly prepared his main stroke, to be delivered at Shumran Bend. The Turks were taken by surprise and Maude crossed the Tigris without difficulty.

15. The possibility of effecting surprise is always largely a question of time, and Napoleon, the greatest exponent of strategic surprise, was remarkable for the mobility, the greatest exponent of strategic surprise, was remarkable for the swift-ness and rapidity of his moves. The power of rapid movement is essential for successful strategy. A mobile army can easily gain the initiative from the opponent, if they are less mobile, enemy's movements can be anticipated and he can be surprised and forced to give way or to fight at a disadvantage.

16. Field Service Regulations says " Mobility implies the power to manoeuvre and to act with rapidity and is the chief means of effecting surprise. " Movement is the law of strategy.

17. In the 18th, and 19th. centuries, the mobility used to depend largely on the marching power of the Army. After the Ulm campaign in 1805, the French soldiers used to say that " The little corporal has discovered a new method of carrying on war - he makes more use of our legs than our bayonets. " Influence

of marching power on success was great. In the retreat from Mons to Marne in 1914, the British army covered 200 miles in 13 days. "In regard to this march a German writer asserts that he is unable to decide which is most worthy of admiration, the strenuous endeavours of the German 1st. Army to bring the British to stanstill and force them to fight or the rapidity with which the British evaded the attempts of the enemy."

18. In this century, mobility depends on two elements - marching power of the army, (marching mobility) and the of transporting the army (mobility as regards the transportation,) Troops may be moved much more expeditiously from place to place by rail without their transport than with it.

19. In this campaign, the mobility of the British army was dependant on the river transport-which was not adequate in the beginning. The result was that as the operations were pushed up the Tigris, the river transport could not cope up with the situation. But in 1917 and 1918 the mobility of the British force was at its perfection and the result was the destruction of the Turkish force in Mesopotamia. General Maude could use the same division on three different fronts-on the Diala, on the Tigris and on the Euphrates, within a short period of 15 days; and thus he was always superior in numbers to his enemy and crush him in details. On the other hand, the immobility of the Turks, prevented them from profitting by the dispersion of the British force-on the North of Basra in 1917 and on the North of Bagdad in 1918.

20. In these days armies are very particular about their lines of communications. "When two armies are manoeuvring against each other's flanks or communications, that army whose flanks or communications are most immediately threatened will abandon the initiative and conform to the movements of its adversary".

Napoleon says "the secret of war lies in the communications". In all the important battles of this campaign, this principle of strategy was always kept in view by the British Generals. By their bold tactics and sound strategy, they were able to threaten the lines of communications of the Turks, and thus to force them either to make a hurried retreat or to capitulate themselves.

21. In the battle of Kut-Al-Amara General Townshead threatened the lines of communication of the Turkish force and thus forced them to retire towards Bagdad. General Maude by his sound strategy forced the Turks to form front to their flank and afterwards threatened their line of communications by crossing the Tigris at Shumran Bend. In all the engagements above Bagdad, British Generals tried to cut off the lines of communications of the Turks and thus forced them to evacuate their strong positions and to retire northwards or to get themselves surrounded. Ramadi, Khan Bagdadi and Fatha are the best illustrations of the attempts against the lines of communications of the Turks.

22. But care must always be taken that we should not be induced to send small detachments for such purposes; because such a small detachment may be too weak to carry out its object, and that it may be of no use to us at the time of the general battle. Such detachments are always injudicious and dangerous. Nurrudin had sent a detachment of 2000 cavalry to cut off the line of communication of General Townshead on the right bank of the Tigris at the battle of Kut-Al-Amara. This detachment could give some anxiety to Townshead, but a British battalion at the base could check it successfully. On the other hand Nurrudin lost this 2000 cavalry when the fate of the battle was being decided on the left bank of the Tigris. It is generally agreed that this

cavalry would have checked the advance of the turning attack of Townshead, had it been in the reserve.

23. By errors of the Turks the British twice enjoyed the advantages of being on the interior lines in this campaign, once on the North of Basra in 1914 and the second time on the North of Bagdad in 1917. Turkish armies at both these places worked wholly on independent lines; they never operated in combination; while the British pressed the Turks at every point simultaneously.

24. "The interior position may be said to be held by the army or group of armies which has its forces nearer to one another in point of time". North of Bagdad the British groups operating on the Diala, on the Tigris and Euphrates, were near to each other in point of time. Owing to construction of railways to Bakuba on the Diala, to Samara on the Tigris and to Feluja on the Euphrates from Bagdad, the British could either unite the whole more rapidly than the Turks were able to collect their forces or could concentrate against any portion of the Turkish front more quickly than forces can be assembled adequate to meet the blow or could promptly mass troops against an attack. Again another advantage of interior lines to the British was that they could use the same units in several localities, which was almost equivalent to an increase in the numerical aggregate of the force.

25. Politics should never interfere in the military operations. Whenever politics interferes in the military operations, they end in failures and disasters. By such interference there is always uncertainty of aim and dispersion; the commander is harassed and his attention distracted from his proper duties. "An army said Macaulay has often achieved success under a leader of moderate capacity but no army has ever prospered under a debating society. It may

be concluded, then, that it is wisest not to listed too much to people, and 'to make war on paper' and that in war, as in other affairs, the proverb holds good, ne sutor ultra crepidam".

26. General Townshead was forced to advance on

Advance on Ctesiphone. Caesiphone and to give a battle in adverse circumstances inspite of the protests from him and General Nixon. From military standpoint it was

unwise and hazardous to advance North of Kut, with in adequate transport and a weak force. But political reasons interfered and the result was the hazardous battle of Ctesiphone, a retreat of 90 miles, investment of the 6th. Division in Kut and the surrender of that Division, which had unbroken series of victories at their credit. Had General Townshead not stopped his retreat at Kut, the result of this interference of civil authorities in the military operations would have been the expulsion of the British out of Mesopotamia.

27. After the surrender of General Townshead at Kut,

Diversion of Turkish XIII corps to Persia. Turkish politics interfered in the Turkish military operations, and the XIII Turkish Corps, which was

operating on the Tigris, was diverted to Persia, to carry on operations there with the intention of creating troubles in Persia. Afghanistan and the North-western frontier of India. The result was that the XVIII corps could not check the advance of General Maude and the ruin of both the corps as they could not join hands and were forced to operate on divergent lines. Had the XIII corps been not diverted to Persia, the task of General Maude would have been more difficult and the Turkish armies would not have suffered the disaster they did in 1917.

Diary of Important Events

IN

Mesopotamia Campaign.

1914.

- 1st November Ambassadors of the Entente Powers left Constantinople.
- 5th November War was declared with Turkey.
- 6th November Landing of British forces took place at Fao.
- 22nd November Basra was occupied by the British.

1915

- 9th April General Nixon arrived in Mesopotamia as Commander-in-chief of the Mesopotamia forces.
- 31st & 1st June Battle of Qurna.
- 3rd June Amara was occupied by General Townshead.
- 26th to 28th } The battle of Ku-Al-Amara. The occupa-
September } tion of Kut by the British forces.
- 21st November Concentration of General Townshead's forces at Lajj, for the advance up the Tigris, towards Bagdad.
- 22nd to 25th Nov. The battle of Ctesiphone. The Turkish reinforcements arrived; and Townshead began his retreat.
- 1st December The action at Umm-el-Tabul.
- 3rd December Townshead entered Kut.
- 7th December Kut was invested by the Turks.

1916

- 3rd January Concentration of the relieving force at Ali-

- Gharbi under the command of General Aylmer.
- 9th January The British forced the passage of the Wadi and the Turks retreated to Hanna. The losses of the relieving force amounted to 6000 men.
- 8th March General Aylmer's second attempt to relieve Kut. Attack on Sinn position. The operation failed.
- 5th April The British occupied the Hanna position.
- 7th April The Turks were forced to retire from the Falahiyat position upon the Sannaiyat Maze.
- 9th April General Gorringe attacked the Sannaiyat position, but failed to make progress.
- 17th April Attempt to break through the Turkish trenches at Sannaiyat was again made on both sides of the river, but the attempt failed.
- 24th April Paddle steamer Juluar tried to run the blockade but without success.
- 29th April 2070 British, 6000 Indians surrendered at Kut, after a seige of 147 days.
- June & July The time was devoted by the British in improving their transport question by constructing roads and railways. Qurna and Amara were joined up by railway, Nasriya was linked up with Basra. The capacity of the river transport was increased.
- August General F. S. Maude was appointed as the Commander-in-chief of the Mesopotamia forces.
- 13th December British offensive opened with a surprise march on the Hai.

1917.

- January Khadairi Bend was in the British possession.
- 10th February British attacks were delivered on the Dehra Bend.
- 11th to 15th February Dehra Bend was occupied by the British, and the right bank of the Tigris was made clear of the Turks.
- 22nd February British attacked the Sannaiyat position in a big force, and a feint was made as if to cross at Kut and Magasis.
- 23rd February British crossed the Tigris at Shumran Bend.
- 1st March British forces occupied Aziziya.
- 5th March General Marshall occupied Zeur, and the British cavalry occupied Lajj.
- 7th March British reached the Diala.
- 11th March General Marshall and troops entered Bagdad.
- 16th March British occupied Mushahida, some 40 miles North of Bagdad.
- 18th March British occupied Bakuba on the Diala.
- 19th March Feluja on the Euphrates was captured by the British.
- 31st March British captured the Deli Abbas position.
- 24th April Samara, on the Tigris, was captured by the British.
- Close of April The Turkish armies had been driven back on divergent lines, and the British position at Bagdad was safe and secure. Owing to heat of summer, the campaigning was brought to an end for the time being. This time was used to bring the supplies and transport to a high pitch of perfection.

- 29th September Ramadi on the Euphrates was captured by the British with 3500 prisoners, and large amount of war materials.
- 6th November The British occupied Tekrit on the Tigris.
- 18th November General Maude died of cholera in Bagdad. It was an irreparable loss and a heavy blow to the army of Mesopotamia and to the British cause. General Marshall was appointed as the Chief Commander in Mesopotamia.

1918

- 27th March General Brookings captured Khan Bagdadi with 9200 prisoners including Nazim Bey, the Turkish Commander.
- 7 th May British entered Kirkuk.
- 23 rd. October Turkish position at Fatah was enfiladed, and so they were forced to retire at the confluence of the Tigris and Lesser Zab.
- 27th October Turks fell back on the prepared position at Shergat.
- 30th October Turkish Commander Ismail Hakki surrendered his total force with all their artillery train and administrative services.
- 1st. November Armistice was concluded. (As a precautionary measure the British occupied Mosul in November 1918)

BOOKS REFERRED.

- (1) Hamley's Operations of War.
- (2) Small Wars by Col. C. E. Callwell.
- 3) Cavalrry Studies by Field Marshal Haig.
- (4) Science of War by Col. G. F. R. Henderson.
- (5) Principles of War by Marshal Foch.
- (6) Reflections on the Art of War by Maj. General Reginald Hart.
- (7) Modern strategy by Lt. Col. W. H. James.
- (8) My Campaign in Mesopotamia by Maj. General Townshead.
- (9) The Campaign in Mesopotamia Vols. I, II, III, & IV by Maj. General F. J. Moberly.
- 、10) British Campaigns in the Near East Vols. I & II by Edmund Dane.
- (11) History of War by Buchan.
- (12) Time's History of War.
- (13) Direction of War by Maj. General Bird.
- (14) Long Road to Bagdad by Edmund Candler.
- (15) A chapter of misfortune by Maj. General W. D. Bird.
- (16) Out of My Life by Marshal Hindenburg.
- (17) My Memoirs by D'jemal Pasha.

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This list should not be treated as either complete or exhaustive.

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