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NAVAL STAFF MONOGRAPHS
(HISTORICAL).

FLEET ISSUE.

VOLUME IV.

Monograph 15.—Naval Operations
in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf.

JULY 1921.

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**Monograph 15.—Naval Operations
in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf.**

NAVAL STAFF,
TRAINING AND STAFF DUTIES DIVISION,
July, 1921.

THE CAMPAIGN IN MESOPOTAMIA.

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THE CAMPAIGN IN MESOPOTAMIA.

INTRODUCTION AND NOTE ON SOURCES.

(i) This Monograph deals with the operations in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf from the outbreak of war with Germany to the fall of Kut on 29th April 1916. The naval side of the operations is that dealt with; policy, strategy, and the military side of the operations being noticed only in sufficient detail to render the description complete and the operations themselves comprehensible.

(ii) The sources from which this Monograph have been compiled fall into three categories, namely, policy (including strategy), naval, and military.

(a) Policy.

1. Précis of correspondence regarding the Mesopotamia Expedition—Its Genesis and Development. (Prepared in the Military Department of the India Office.) (Secret.) (H.S. 126/29/7.) (Referred to in this monograph as "Mesopotamia Expedition.")

2. Collection of private telegrams between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy prior to the outbreak of war with Turkey. (H.S. 126/29 (12).)

This is a small collection of telegrams, which passed during August and September 1914, chiefly referring to the British Government's applications for more troops from India, and the Viceroy's replies. The last telegram is dated 20th September 1914.

3. Secret memorandum by Sir E. G. Barrow, G.C.B., Military Secretary, India Office, 20th September 1914—"The Rôle of India in a Turkish War."

4. Summary of papers dealing with military policy in Mesopotamia from the commencement of operations to the capture of Kut-al-'Amarah, 29th September 1915. (General Staff, India, M.O.I., 132/2.11.16.) (H.S. 126/44.)

Contains the official, and some of the private, telegrams bearing on the subject. Referred to in this monograph as "Military Policy in Mesopotamia, I."

5. A summary of papers connected with the advance from Kut-el-'Amarah on Baghdad, 1919. (General Staff, India. D. 133/2.11.16.) M.O.I., Simla, 1916.

See Note to 4 above. Referred to in this monograph as "Advance to Baghdad."

6. (C.I.D.) Minute by Secretary, Military Department, India Office, on the question of an advance to Baghdad. 9.31. Secret. 16th October 1915.

7. (C.I.D.) Report of an Inter-Departmental Committee on the Strategical Situation in Mesopotamia. (Secret.) 9.28, 16th October 1915 (*re* proposed advance to Baghdad).

8. Summary of papers dealing with military policy in Mesopotamia during the period between the Battle of Ctesiphon (22nd November 1915) and the end of July 1916.

Referred to in this monograph as "Military Policy in Mesopotamia, II."

9. Orders received by the Government of India with special reference to preparations keeping pace with policy. (D. 139/14.11.1916.)

10. Statement prepared by Secretary of State for India for presentation to the Mesopotamia Commission. 14th December 1916.

11. *Secret.* Brief for the Defence of the Mesopotamian Campaign by Sir Edmund Barrow. 30th June 1916

12. *Secret.* Short Memorandum on the Inception, Difficulties, and Results of the Mesopotamian Campaign. (Printed at Simla, 9th September 1916.) D. 138/13.11.16.

Appears to have been prepared by the Army Department, Simla.

13. Précis of correspondence connected with the advance to Baghdad, prepared in the Military Department of the India Office. *Secret.* H.S. 126/29.

14. *Secret.* Telegrams relating to General Sir John Nixon's advance in Mesopotamia. A number of telegrams, both official and private, dealing with the advance to Baghdad. India Office. (A copy of this is in a box (unnumbered) in the H.S., C.I.D.)

15. Mesopotamia Commission. Report of the Commission appointed by Act of Parliament to inquire into the Operations of War in Mesopotamia. (H.M. Stationery Office, 1917.)

In addition to the above, a number of private communications passed between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy. It has always been the authorised practice of these officials to communicate privately with one another, such communications being supplementary to, and explanatory of, the official communications. But such telegrams and letters are the property of the senders and recipients, and they have not been consulted, with the exception of such as are printed in 2 and 14 above and those quoted in the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission.

(b) Naval Sources.

1. H.S., Vols. 6 and 46. These volumes contain papers relating to Mesopotamia up to the 13th December 1914, viz. :—

(a) Collection of documents relating to Persian Gulf. (Letters and telegrams, including such India Office telegrams as were forwarded to the Admiralty for information.)

(b) Despatches of Ambassador, Constantinople.

(c) Telegraphic Correspondence of Viceroy.

(d) Letters of Proceedings of S.N.O., Persian Gulf.

(e) Certain military despatches.

2. Other miscellaneous papers, telegrams, military despatches, river craft papers, &c., relating to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf from 13th December 1914, onwards.

3. "Mesopotamia River Operations, 1914-1917." Report compiled in 1919 by Capt. W. Nunn, C.B., C.S.I., C.M.G., D.S.O., R.N.

This Report, which comprises H.S., Vols. 204 (Text), 205 (Appendices), and a Volume of Maps (not numbered), contains a record of the operations from the date of despatch of sloops to Mesopotamia to the cessation of operations at the beginning of the hot weather in 1917, after the capture of Baghdad.

The report appears mainly to be based upon Captain Nunn's (who was S.N.O. during the greater part of the time) reports of proceedings and the military despatches; though it is not always in agreement with them, it is of great value as a supplement to the Reports of Proceedings.

4. The Naval Review, Vol. III., No. 3, and Vol. IV., No. 15, has an account of the operations up to the battle of Ctesiphon, which brings out a few points of interest.

5. The descriptive, &c., geography of Mesopotamia is dealt with in the following Admiralty publications :—

"Handbook of Mesopotamia," (Vol. I., November 1918, I.D. 1118 A.; Vol. II., 1917, C.B. 294; Vol. III., Supplement, June 1918, C.B. 295 A.)

"Geology of Mesopotamia and its Borderlands," May 1918, I.D. 1177, Cap. VIII., Part II., dealing with the Persian-Mesopotamian oil-field.

"Monthly Intelligence Report," July 1919. Article, "The Anglo-Persian Oil Supply."

"Persian Gulf Pilot," which gives an account of the rivers and their navigation.

"Turanianism and Pan-Turanianism," I.D. 1199, explains the "Jehad."

(c) Military Sources.

1. The despatches of the General Officer Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force "D," with reports from officers in charge of individual operations, and copies of Operation Orders, Sketch Maps, and Plans, from October 1914 to August 1916, are in H.S.C. 2. The earlier despatches are in H.S. 6 and 46, copies of them being in H.S. 205. A complete (?) collection of the despatches of the G.O.C. is also to be found in the H.S., C.I.D. "Persian Gulf" boxes, (unnumbered).

2. The "War Diary," Army Headquarters, India, Indian Expeditionary Force "D," contains some telegrams which are useful to supplement those contained in H.S. 6 and 46 and elsewhere.

(iii) In the narrative of the operations in this Monograph the Reports of Proceedings of the S.N.O. and the despatches of the G.O.C. have been considered the best evidence. They are supplemented by Captain Nunn's Report which is frequently at variance with them on points of detail.

(iv) Captain Wake's Report on the operations at Dilwar is in H.S. C. 2. It forms Appendix 2 to Major Wintle's Report forwarded by General Nixon, 3rd September 1915. The papers dealing with the action required in the Persian Gulf in the event of war with Persia are numbered M. 04505/15.

(v) The spelling of place names is in accordance with the rulings of the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

(vi) Chart No. 2837b, Persian Gulf—Western sheet, in Officers' Chart Atlas Folio (General Folio) will be found useful for the description of the operations at Dilwar.

THE CAMPAIGN IN MESOPOTAMIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS.

1. **Geographical Position.**—Mesopotamia is a geographical expression employed to denote the great depression enclosed between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and the country surrounding those rivers, and extending south-south-east from the northern corner of Syria and the high plateau of Anatolia and Armenia to the head of the Persian Gulf. The buttresses of the Persian Plateau form its eastern boundary, but on the western and south-western sides the deserts slope gradually up to the highlands of Syria and the plateau of Arabia.

Under the high mountains of the north is a belt of lower hill country extending to within 60 miles of Baghdad; but that portion of the country in which the British Naval and Military forces were operating during 1914–16 is known as Lower Mesopotamia, and comprises the great alluvial plains of Iraq which form the floor of the depression.

Access to the Mediterranean is gained at the Gulf of Alexandretta across the passes of the Kurd Dagh. Mesopotamia is thus a stage on the direct line of communication between Southern Europe and India. Moreover, the direct line of approach from the Eastern Mediterranean to Northern Persia lies across Mesopotamia to the passes in the mountain ranges near Gasr-i-Shirin, 100 miles north-east of Baghdad. From Diabekr just across the northern border of Mesopotamia, communication is obtained *via* Sivas with the Black Sea at Samsun.

2. **Physical Features.**—The greater part of Mesopotamia is a waste of swamp or desert. The rainfall is scanty, and irrigation, since the great systems of canals of ancient times were allowed to silt up and the dykes to fall into disrepair, is practically non-existent. The country suffers both from an excess and from a scarcity of water; in flood-time too much, in summer and autumn too little. For the most part the soil is of exceeding fertility, and though at present bearing little but grass or camel-thorn, it could, as in the days when it was the granary of the world, be made by irrigation to yield heavy crops. To-day, however, cultivation is almost entirely confined to the neighbourhood of the rivers and canals.¹ The almost complete lack of timber added to the burden of transport during the Mesopotamia operations, necessitating the conveyance of all firewood needed by the troops for cooking, &c.

¹ This description of the country applies to the years 1914–16.

In the flood months of March to May, the rivers rise above the general level of the country, and since for the most part they are neither relieved by escape works, nor confined by adequate dyking, great areas of land become flooded. The area involved by these floods may be roughly divided into three districts; from Museyib, 40 miles south of Baghdad, to the southern end of the Bahr Shinafiya, an area some 90 miles from north to south and 50 miles from east to west; from Suk as Shayuk north-east to Gurmat Ali and east of Qurna, 100 miles by 40, and the Suwaib (Shaib) River marshes which stretch from Qurna north-east to the Persian border, 50 miles distant, and are of varying breadth; the third district is that north and north-west of Kut-al-'Amara, 40 by 50 miles. Extensive permanent swamps also exist,¹ which rise and fall with the season.

3. **Waterways.**—The nature of the country of Lower Mesopotamia is such as to lend great importance to the rivers. Of these, the two principal, the Tigris and Euphrates, unite at Qurna, 100 miles above the Persian Gulf, and form the Shatt-al-'Arab. This is the largest of the rivers which empty themselves into the Persian Gulf, at the head of which they form a considerable delta; its mean breadth increases from 600 yards above the junction with the Karun to a mile and a half at Fao. The Shatt-al-'Arab, which provides the sole direct access from the sea to the country, is navigable for ocean-going vessels as far up as Basra, though a bar at its mouth impedes navigation. Vessels of more than 11 feet draught have to wait for flood tides; there is some 20 feet of water on the bar at high water springs and 17 feet at neaps, but it is reported that the bar could be dredged to permit the passage of vessels drawing 25 to 26 feet. Once over the bar, ships can go up to Basra with depths of about 24 feet.

In Basra Reach there is deep water anchorage. Above Basra the river changes its character and resembles the Tigris (*q.v.*). Above the so-called New Channel of the Euphrates, which enters the Shatt-al-'Arab at Gurmat Ali, it has only two considerable tributaries, the Suwaib or Shaib, which enters on the left bank 3 miles below Qurna, and the Karun, the only navigable river in Persia, which joins it at Muhammara, 22 miles below Basra.

During Turkish times, there were neither store-houses nor wharves at that port, and vessels were unloaded in mid-stream into native sailing craft; but since the British occupation, a considerable amount of wharfage has been constructed both at Basra and at Macgill (Margil) 5 miles up river, also repair workshops and slipways, and a dock and other improvements at Muhammara.

¹ See Plan 1.

Navigation of the Shatt-al-'Arab and Tigris between Basra and Baghdad is practicable throughout the year for suitable steamers drawing about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet, though at the worst places and in a bad year such vessels would ground frequently and have to be lightened and hauled through the shallows. It is the custom for steamers to tow a barge or lighter of shallow draught on each side of them to prevent their paddle boxes and paddles hitting the bank. The width of the Tigris is about 200 to 500 yards, except in the narrows between Ezra's Tomb and Qualat Saleh, where, in places, it is only 65 to 75 yards with many sharp bends, and the current flows from about two knots in the low to six knots in the flood river.

In this stretch between Ezra's Tomb and Qualat Saleh it is difficult for steamers without independent paddles to avoid striking the banks when going round the corners down stream.

"Vessels under such conditions occasionally turn completely round, and it is a common experience to see lighters breaking adrift under the strain."¹

The constantly shifting sand banks which are formed by the floods, and the loose nature of the soil of the district, render regular surveys or reliable navigation almost impracticable, but local knowledge was possessed by several British pilots whose services were at the disposal of our forces during the operations. The river beds are without exception composed of soft mud or sand, so that to run aground is not usually a very serious matter.

The Lower Euphrates is much more difficult of navigation than the Tigris owing to the shallow Hamar Lake in the great swamps (little more than 18 inches deep in parts in the low season) through which the "New Channel" passes, and the Chabaish and Haqiqa bars on the Old Channel which have to be passed between Qurna and Nasiriya. The great dispersion of its waters renders it far shallower than the Tigris, and steamers drawing more than 5 feet could not, in 1914, pass beyond Nasiriya, even at high water. From Nasiriya to Samawa navigation is easier, and a steamer drawing 3 feet 2 inches could run on this stretch in the month of February. Above Samawa there is considerable difficulty in navigation.

In January in Lower Mesopotamia the regular rise of the Tigris begins, and the spring floods—"snow rises"—occur in March or at the beginning of April. Throughout May and June the river falls gradually, and in July the low-water season may be said to begin, the river continuing to fall until it is at its lowest in October and most of November.

The rise and fall of the Euphrates takes a similar general course, and both rivers are liable to sudden and violent rises.

¹ Mesopotamia Commission Report, p. 9. With the exception of a trial screw ship and two sternwheelers all the river craft were paddle steamers with independent paddles. (N.I.D. note.)

The floods of the rivers spread out in great inundations, as the ground levels are often below their high flood levels, and in the destruction and decay of the former vast systems of irrigation there is no longer any way by which the floods may be controlled.

The three conditions affecting navigation on the Tigris are the swiftness of the current, the frequent shallows, and the numerous curves, particularly in the narrow winding stretch between Qualat Saleh and Amara. The Euphrates, though shallow, has little if any current. Bridges where they exist are made of boats, a section of which can be swung open to permit the passage of vessels.

Other rivers which must be noticed are the Shatt-al-'Hai between Kut-al-'Amara on the Tigris and Nasiriya on the Euphrates, navigable at flood tide for river steamers drawing $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet for a few miles down from Kut-al-'Amara, but in a normal year affording insufficient water even for small native boats throughout its entire length, and the Karun, in Arabistan, navigable generally up to the Ahwaz-Naziri Rapids for vessels of 5-6 feet draught, though in low water vessels drawing only $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet may have difficulty at points within 20 miles of Naziri. The rapids are passable by towing, the best time being in a moderately high river. Cargoes for Ahwaz are usually landed at Naziri and transported overland. Above Ahwaz shallow draught steamers can run to Shaleili on the Ab-i-Gargar branch of the river, about $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles below Shushtar. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company's sheds are situated at Dar-i-Khazineh, 4 to 5 miles below Shaleili.

4. Railways and Roads.—The Baghdad railway was projected by the Germans to run from Constantinople along the coast of Asia Minor *via* Smyrna and Alexandretta to Aleppo, 300 miles north of Jerusalem, where it branched into two main lines, one turning south into Palestine, and the other towards Mesopotamia. The latter branch was to cross the Euphrates at Jerablus, 60 miles north-east of Aleppo, and run over the Upper Jezireh, *via* Harran, Ras-al-'Ain, and Nisibin to Mosul; down the right bank of the river (in order to avoid the large and numerous affluents on the left bank), *via* Tikrit and Samarra to Baghdad. From Baghdad it was to traverse the narrow neck of land to the Euphrates at Museyib, when it would cross the river to Kerbela, Nejef, and down the right bank along the edge of the desert to Zobeir and Basra. Eventually, it was to extend to Kuwait on the Persian Gulf. The short stretch from Samarra to Baghdad, was completed and open for traffic in November 1914, and it was used for the transport of troops. It was a single line, gauge, 4 feet $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches. There was a break from Samarra to Jerablus. At the end of 1915 the rail had been carried as far as Ras-al-'Ain, 100 miles east of Jerablus, with the exception of tunnels through the Taurus and Amanus;

but up to October 1918, no train had run right through to Aleppo.¹ The earthworks were finished as far as Nisibin, through Ras-al-'Ain was still the railhead.

In Mesopotamia, the roads have never attained to the importance of the waterways as a means of communication.

"In general it may be said there is either too much or too little water for movement by land, which is restricted by great areas of swamp, temporary or permanent, or may be stopped after rain by morasses of mud, or is impeded by frequent canals intersecting the country near the river; or, on the other hand, is hampered by lack of drinking water in the dry Steppes."¹

Before the war, a caravan road ran from Baghdad to Basra via Kut-al-'Amara and Qurna, following the course of the Tigris. From Basra a road led by the edge of the desert to Nasiriya on the Euphrates, and the latter place was connected with Kut-al-'Amara by a track running some distance inland from the right bank of the Shatt-al-'Hai. None of these roads were metalled, nor were they much used, where the rivers provided a far easier means of communication and transport than a track which the first fall of rain converted into slippery mud.

In the Mesopotamia operations the movement of troops was almost entirely, and heavy transport entirely confined to the rivers. Taken in conjunction with the serious shortage of transport which existed from the time the expedition moved above Qurna, this seriously hampered the operations.

5. Climate : Its Effect on the Operations.—The climate of the northern portion of Mesopotamia is very dry and very hot in summer, with a cold winter; while to the south of Qurna the climate becomes very damp as well as hot, the conditions approximating to those of the Persian Gulf, the mean temperature ranging from 47° F. in January to 95° F. in July. December, January, and February, are the coldest months, when frost is occasionally experienced. The hot season extends from June to August, the maximum usually falling in July or August, when temperatures of 121° F. and 114°·4 F. have been registered at Baghdad and Basra respectively. On about 20 to 30 days during this period the great heat is mitigated by the *Shamal* or fresh northerly wind. During the early part of the Kut expedition, as late in the year as September (1915), temperatures of 110°–115° F. were experienced.

The climate exerted considerable influence in the campaign. Many operations were carried out during the hot weather which caused great lassitude and many cases of heat stroke among the troops. During the Amara operations, early in June 1915, the temperature, as recorded by the *Espiègle's* log, never fell below 83° F., even at night, while by day 95°–100° F. was almost

¹ Liman von Sanders, "Fünf Jahre Türkei," pp. 40–41.

² Handbook of Mesopotamia, I., p. 268.

invariable, and this was only the beginning of the hot weather.

The Indian troops, in particular, suffered much from the cold. The suffering of the sick and wounded during the Utesiphon operations in November 1915 are historic. "They lay on the bare deck of boats and barges for 13 days, amid septic discharges, diarrhoea, and dysentery, swept at night by a wind that dropped nearly to zero, without any protection against the cold, save their clothes and country blankets, which, in the cases of total cripples, were sodden with their own discharges and dejecta."¹

The plague of flies and mosquitoes and the serious deficiencies in the diet supplies to the troops combined to affect the general health of the men, and produced much dysentery and other sickness. "The whole system of supply was on too low a standard, and was badly organised. . . . The rations issued to the Indian troops was deficient in nutritive qualities, and a serious outbreak of scurvy ensued."²

Gunnery difficulties were much accentuated by the mirage in the desert, which ^{often} rendered it difficult to fire ^{even at short} ~~at long~~ ranges without forward observers.

6. Administration.—For administrative purposes the Turkish Empire was divided into divisions called vilayets, governed by a vali, with a staff and council. Each vilayet was divided into two or three sanjaqs, administered by a lieutenant-governor, or mutessarif, and each of these was again sub-divided into from three to six kazas, each administered by a sub-governor, called kaimmakam. The kaza was further sub-divided into three or four nahiyes, presided over by a mudir, and in every village there is a mukhtar or headman.

The vilayets of Basra and Baghdad were the theatres of the operations in 1914–16, the vilayet of Basra being divided into the sanjaqs of Amara, Basra, and Muntefiq, and the vilayet of Baghdad into Baghdad, Diwaniya, and Kerbela.

The administration was only more or less effective, as not only were a number of important departments directed from Constantinople over the vali's head, but also the local shaikhs and personalities were often more influential than the Turkish officials on the spot, and frequently it was tribal or local custom rather than the Ottoman jurisdiction which kept society together.

Southern Arabistan, in which operations on the Karun were carried out, was ruled by the Shaikh of Muhammara, His Excellency Khazal Khan, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E. He was nominally subject to the Persian Government, but was practically independent, had deputy-governors at Ahwaz and other places, and held large tracts of land in the province as private property.

¹ Mesopotamia Commission Report, p. 85.

² *Ibid.*, p. 112.

He had always shown himself friendly to the British Government, from whom he received support and distinction, and during the war he remained our firm ally, in spite of Turkish threats.¹

At Kuwait was another very powerful shaikh friendly to Great Britain. Kuwait is the large Arab town on the north-west shore of the Persian Gulf near the mouth of the Shatt-al-'Arab, and had been a source of dispute with the Turks, who claimed sovereignty over it; but the shaikh's independence was guaranteed by Great Britain, and the Turks were never able to detach him from the British connection.

The operations in Mesopotamia were marked by the almost invariable hostility of the Arab population along the rivers and lines of communication, who sniped our troops and cut off stragglers whenever opportunity offered.

CHAPTER II.

THE ATTITUDE OF TURKEY.

7. Possibility of a Jihad.—Within a few days of the declaration of war with Germany the Baghdad army began to be mobilised,² martial law was proclaimed, and property belonging to British subjects in Mesopotamia was seized.³ The situation which was created caused grave anxiety both to the Admiralty and to the India Office.⁴ The Turks and, in fact, all Moslems at Basra were evidencing an attitude hostile to the British, and there were first rumours of a Jihad.⁵ Our interests in the Persian Gulf, consolidated in the past with so much care and effort, were menaced; and not these only, for hostilities with Turkey involved a threat to the security of the North-West frontier and our tranquillity and prestige in India itself.⁶

The religion of the majority of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Arabistan, and the neighbouring Persian Highlands is the Moslem, a predominance largely due to the historic part played by these countries in the early development of the Moslem power and faith. Christian communities exist in the towns, where there are also considerable numbers of Jews, Sabians, and members of more obscure religions; but these are greatly outnumbered by the Moslems. The Sultan of Turkey,

¹ Political Resident, Persian Gulf to India Office, 16th November 1914, M. 03720/14.

² Mesopotamia Expedition, p. 1.

³ A. 2.

⁴ Brief for the Defence of the Mesopotamian Campaign.

⁵ Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 18th August 1914.

⁶ Sir E. Barrow: "The Rôle of India in a Turkish War."

being also caliph or head of the Mohammedan Church, was in a position to declare a Jihad, or Holy War, if the faith was, or was considered to be, in danger, and to denounce Moslems friendly to us as traitors to their faith, a prospect which would have considerable influence in deciding the Moslem Arabs to join a Jihad which might soon spread throughout Persia, and thence to Afghanistan and the unruly tribes of the North-West frontier of India.

Arabs form the greater part of the population of Lower Mesopotamia;¹ in the north they are in contact with the Kurds, and further south the boundary between Arabs and Lurs runs along the foot of the Pusht-i-Kuh hills to the western borders of Afghanistan. On the northern edge of the plains of Arabistan the Arabs are in contact with Sagwand, Bakhtiyari, and Kuhgalu Lurs. The Arabs are divided into a large number of tribal groups; many of them are provided with rifles, and most of them are untrustworthy. In Mesopotamia robbery with murder is a gentlemanly pastime. It was difficult to gauge their attitude in the event of war with Turkey. It was considered in some quarters² that the support and organisation of an Arab movement in co-operation with the friendly Shaikhs would be an effective feature of a campaign, for, although nominally Turkish, the Arabs were more closely allied with the subjects of the Shaikh of Mahammara than with any other people; and in any case they were complete opportunists and likely to adhere to the side which appeared at the moment to have the upper hand.

Under these circumstances, the attitude of Turkey was a matter of considerable importance; and it was not long before evidences were seen that Turkey, incited by Germany, was likely soon to become a hostile belligerent.

8. German Intrigue.—The existence of German intrigue against Great Britain in Mesopotamia was a matter of common knowledge before the war. British prestige in that part of the world was still a factor, and our interests in the oil fields at the head of the Persian Gulf had greatly added to our commitments in these parts, the more so in view of the increasing use of oil fuel. The Royal Navy had policed the Gulf for years.

For a long time the only ^{foreign} steamers on the Tigris were those of a British Company; British commercial interests were important and of long standing; and our protection was afforded to the practically independent Shaikhs of Kuwait and Muhammara. The British Consul-General at Baghdad enjoyed unusual privileges which the representatives of the other European nations did not share; he had an armed shallow-draught yacht for cruising in the rivers, and an armed

¹ See Handbook of Mesopotamia, Vol. I., N.I.D., 1784.

² Telegram 692 from Ambassador, Constantinople to Foreign Office, and Admiralty Minute.

guard of Indian soldiers always was stationed at the British Residency at Baghdad.

The interests of Great Britain had grown up before the revival of the authority of the Central Turkish Government. There was, however, much latent jealousy on the Turkish side, and signs had not been wanting of late years that Turkish control of affairs was being tightened, particularly since the coming of the Young Turk Party whom the Germans in the background used as tools in their plan to exploit Turkey. As part of the scheme to establish German, and undermine British, commercial supremacy in these parts, the Baghdad Railway and the Hamburg-Amerika Line of steamers to the Persian Gulf were also important factors.

That German influence would be at work in Mesopotamia on the outbreak of the war was only to be expected,¹ and was confirmed on August 21, when a report² was received that, aided by the Germans, the Turks were preparing to block the Shatt-Al-'Arab.

For some years past British sloops had navigated the Shatt-al-'Arab at will, in the protection of the Indian Dhows in the date trade. At this moment the *Odin*³ and *Lawrence*⁴ were the only two British warships in the Persian Gulf.

The *Odin* was already on her way to Reshire (near Bushire) as the result of the following telegram despatched⁵ from the Admiralty to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies:—

“135. *Marmaris* reported⁶ at Basra, coaled and with steam up. Order *Odin* to watch her closely, and to be prepared to engage her on receipt of orders.”

On receipt of the intelligence that the Turks were preparing to block the river warning was sent to the *Odin* (who was on passage to Reshire), and the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, was ordered⁷ to be prepared to send the *Odin* and *Lawrence* at short notice to the Shatt-al-'Arab to prevent any such attempt, and, if necessary, to stop the transport of Turkish troops and stores by water.

The R.I.M.S. *Lawrence* was a wooden paddle steamer of little fighting value; but the *Odin* was considered by the Admiralty to be capable both of preventing any attempt to

¹ “Wönkhaus” (German Agent for the Hamburg-Amerika Line) we know now was a clearing-house for “information.” Birch-Reynardson, p. 34. See also I.O. Telegram P. 77B, 1st December 1914, Diary No. 8674.

² A. 4, 5.

³ *Odin*, sloop, 1,070 tons, 4—4-inch, 4—3-pr., Commander-in-Command, Cathcart R. Wason.

⁴ R.I.M.S. *Lawrence*, 4—6-pr., Nordenfeldt, 4—4-inch, B.L., 4—45-inch 5-barrel Nordenfeldt. Her 4-inch and 45-inch guns had been landed at Bombay.

⁵ 18th August 1914, 5.15 p.m.

⁶ *Marmariss*, Turkish gunboat, 420 tons, speed 14.8 knots, 4—9-pr., 2—1-pr., 1—18-inch torpedo tube.

⁷ A. 7.

block the river and of stopping the passage of any large Turkish force into Persian territory should the Turks mobilise.¹ The presence of the *Odin*, moreover, would suffice to deter any Turkish gunboat in the river from shelling the oil refinery at Abadan. It would be more difficult, however, to prevent the shelling of the oil refinery by field guns, and if this should be threatened it would entail a military force being used to prevent it.

9. British Oil Interests.—The oil wealth of Mesopotamia was an important factor, embodying considerable commercial and war-time interests of the Allied Powers. There are in the country three principal localities which yield oil—the area round the head of the Persian Gulf and in the neighbourhood of the Shatt-al-'Arab; the Ahwaz area in Northern Arabistan, which joins on to the Shushtar oil fields in Persia; and an area north-east of Baghdad, running from the Persian hills north-west to Mosul. The latter is probably the richest oil field, but it was the least important on account of its position in the heart of Mesopotamia introducing obstacles into its commercial development. The fields around the head of the Persian Gulf were poor, but commercially well placed. Some of the wells of the Ahwaz area were very rich and have been a known source of oil for more than 20 centuries, and they comprised, with the Persian oil fields, the principal British interest. The Persian installation was owned by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, in which the British Government had recently become large shareholders on account of the importance attached by the Admiralty to the oil supply from the Company's wells.² The Company's pipe-line was laid from Dizful in Persia by Shushtar along the Karun River through Arabistan down to the Shatt-al-'Arab, a distance of about 140 miles. In August 1914 we were taking 16,000 tons of oil a month from the refinery at Abadan.

10. Situation—End of August.—The total Turkish forces in Basra at this date numbered not more than 1,000 men with a battery of field guns. Reinforcements at Baghdad, in the event of declaration of war, would bring the force up to 5,000 men with four batteries of field guns.³ Local officers in Mesopotamia were of opinion that, having regard to the acute anti-British attitude of the Turks in the Shatt-al-'Arab, the despatch of a gunboat, and still more of a small force of troops to protect the oil settlement, would involve risk of precipitating a collision with the Turks.⁴ In the view of the Viceroy, decision had to be made between the comparative importance of possible

¹ Sir Edmund Slade's Minute, M. 01496, 23.8.1914, and Admiral Sturdee's remarks thereon.

² Mesopotamia Commission: Report, p. 12.

³ M. 01496.

⁴ M. 01496. Telegram: Viceroy to I.O., 21st August 1914.

destruction of numerous oil reservoirs and the alternative risk of precipitating a collision with the Turks. It was of the highest importance that hostile action should, in the event of war, be first taken by Turkey.

The India Office considered it was highly necessary that the British Navy should be adequately represented in the Persian Gulf,¹ owing to the moral effect on the inhabitants, as this would be a very important factor in case of Turkish hostilities;² and in this view Sir Edward Grey concurred, and urged that the naval forces in the Persian Gulf should be augmented.³

In reply, the Admiralty put forward the following proposals for the protection of the Anglo-Persian oil refineries at Abadan in case of emergency⁴ :—

- (1) To prepare an expeditionary force at Karachi to move up the Gulf at the shortest notice.
- (2) To send a portion of this force, say, two battalions of infantry and a mountain battery, to Basidu, whence they can be moved into the Shatt-al-'Arab in 48 hours. This will provide ample force for safeguarding the refinery in case of any attempt being made to interfere with it.
- (3) *Odin* and *Lawrence* to be sent to the river to prevent any attempt at blocking it, and, if necessary, to stop the Turks from using the water for transport purposes. They would have to deal with the Turkish ships first, but that should not be a difficult matter.

Beyond the field battery at Basra there is nothing to trouble them. *Odin* and *Lawrence* (if she can mount her 4-inch guns) to be kept supplied with shrapnel.

- (4) *Lawrence* to get her 4-inch guns if she has not drawn them already, and if she can mount them with her own resources, assisted by *Odin*, but she should not be withdrawn for that purpose.

Under the arrangements in force Mesopotamia was divided between the Imperial and Indian War Intelligence Departments, the delimitation line running approximately from Akaba in Arabia to Basra. All north of that line was in the sphere of Whitehall; all south belonged to Simla for intelligence purposes.⁵ The whole of Mesopotamia was within the radius of action of India.

¹ M. 01496. Under Secretary of State for India to Admiralty, P. 3305, 22nd August 1914.

² For composition of East Indies Squadron and distribution of ships, see Naval Staff Monograph, No. 17, "East Indies," and H.S. 6, "Naval Operations in the Persian Gulf."

³ M. 01578/14. F.O. to Admiralty, No. 42068, 25th August 1914.

⁴ These proposals are included in M. 01496, and are dated August 1914. They were despatched on 23rd August, and crossed Sir Edward Grey's letter.

The conduct of the general military policy of India was under the Military Department of the India Office.

At this date considerable demands had already been made upon the Indian Army.¹ India was supplying three overseas expeditionary forces, known as "A," "B," and "C" respectively. The increasingly hostile attitude of Turkey since the arrival at Constantinople of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* had convinced the home authorities of the necessity of giving evidence of the loyalty of the Indian Army by sending Indian troops to replace and set free for other work the British garrison in Egypt; this force was known as Expedition "A." "B" was a defensive expedition to Dar-es-Salaam, and "C" an offensive expedition to East Africa. Without orders from the Cabinet the India Office was unprepared to assume further liabilities of this description,² and it was decided, "on account of the political situation with Turkey," that no troops would be sent to Mesopotamia for the present.

CHAPTER III.

THE INCEPTION OF THE EXPEDITION.

The situation in Lower Mesopotamia at the beginning of September was not satisfactory. The Turks were showing considerable activity; they had commandeered all the stocks of coal and oil belonging to British firms in Basra and Baghdad,³ and had forbidden navigation past Muhammara at night, posting guns to enforce it.⁴ The Turkish Government was reported to have placed an embargo on the export of dates and grain from Basra.⁵

11. British Shipping and Trading Interests in Mesopotamia.

—The export of dates amounted to some 50,000 tons annually, and the grain harvest also was far beyond the needs of Mesopotamia. Since the vast proportion of the exports was carried in British ships, the above measures were bound to have disastrous effect on our trade in those parts.

¹ Collection of private telegrams between Secretary of State for India and Viceroy.

² M. 01496. I.O. to Admiralty and Military Secretary's note thereon, dated 3rd September 1914. See also First Lord's Minute on Sir E. Slade's Memo. of 30th August 1914, and the last telegram in Collection of Private Telegrams between Secretary of State for India and Viceroy.

³ A. 2.

⁴ Tel. 721 from Ambassador, Constantinople to F.O.

⁵ C. 7589 in M. 01780.

Two lines of river steamer plied between Basra and Baghdad before the war:—

- (1) The Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company owned by Messrs. Lynch: steamers—*Medjedieh*, *Blosse Lynch*, *Julnar*, and *Khalifa*.
- (2) The Ottoman Nahrieh Company with five steamers.

The Shatt-al-'Arab above Basra was closed to foreign shipping with the exception of the limited number of steamers allowed to the E.T.S.N. Company.

The Ocean Steamer Service to and from Basra was carried on by ten companies, seven of them British, which also served the port of Muhammara; and there was communication by small river steamers on the Karun from Muhammara to Ahwaz and above, by means of which the foreign trade of Arabistan was carried on. Baghdad was the principal market of Mesopotamia for foreign trade, and also supplied the Persian market by the Kermanshah route.

12. **Warships Despatched to the Shatt-al-'Arab.**—The action of the Turkish authorities in placing restrictions on navigation in the river was a violation of our long established right to pass freely up and down the Shatt-al-'Arab at all times;¹ and on the 10th September the following telegram was despatched by the Admiralty to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, the India Office being informed of the proposed action:—

"160. *Espiègle*,² *Odin* and *Lawrence* are to proceed to the Shatt-al-'Arab to patrol from Muhammara to the sea to prevent any interference with the navigation by the Turks.

"In the event of war being declared with Turkey, they are to stop Turks from attacking the refinery at Abadan in Persian territory.

"If forced to abandon the place, British and Indian population should be removed if possible.

"The telegraph station at Fao to be held as long as possible.

"If abandoned, the instruments to be removed.

"The steamers coming in for dates to be protected as much as possible, and the Shaikh of Muhammara to be encouraged to assist.

"It is reported 2,000 soldiers have assembled at Basra, and reinforcements are being sent from Baghdad."

The *Odin* left Bushire at 8.15 p.m. on 13th September in pursuance of these orders, and arrived at Muhammara on 15th, passing the *Lawrence* which was anchored at Abadan.³

There were now some 8,000 troops at Basra⁴—eight times the normal number; there was some movement up and down the river, and the Turks were apparently throwing up earthworks at Kiln on the right bank of the Shatt-al-'Arab, 10 miles

¹ Tel. from Sir Edward Grey to Sir L. Mallet, 644—7th October 1914.

² *Espiègle*, Sloop, 1,070 tons, 6—4-inch, 4—3-pr. Commander-in-Command—Wilfred Nunn.

³ *Espiègle's* log.

⁴ A. 13.

distant from Fao, and commanding a long stretch of river both ways.

A lighter had been sunk to block the channel 4 miles above Muhammara. The Valis of Basra and Baghdad had protested against the violation of neutrality caused by the presence of the *Odin* in the Shatt-al-'Arab, the whole of which they claimed as Turkish waters.¹ In this connection the following telegram was despatched to Sir Louis Mallet, our Ambassador at Constantinople, who communicated in this sense to the Grand Vizier²:—

"In view of equivocal conduct of Turks in case of *Goeben* and other matters, His Majesty's Government are justified in ignoring present complaints of Turkish local officials. I leave it to your Excellency's discretion whether to inform Porte that so long as Turkish Government maintain an attitude inconsistent with their avowed position as a neutral State, they cannot expect that His Majesty's Government will receive sympathetically their objections to precautionary movements of British ships."³

The *Espiègle*, which had left Colombo for the Persian Gulf on 13th September, in consequence of the Admiralty telegram of 10th, arrived at the outer bar of the Shatt-al-'Arab on the morning of the 29th, took over the duties of Senior Naval Officer, and proceeded up the river to Muhammara, where Commander Nunn anchored at 6.5 p.m. in the Hafar Channel of the Karun river, a short distance inside the Persian boundary, in order to obviate the neutrality question. The *Odin* was sent to Bushire to coal, and left at 8 a.m. on 29th; on her return she was ordered to anchor outside the outer lightship of the Shatt-al-'Arab so as to be out of Turkish territorial waters. The *Dalhousie*⁴ had been despatched from Bombay on 13th September to relieve the *Lawrence* at Abadan, while the latter drew her 4-inch guns, and was anchored in the Shatt-al-'Arab when the *Espiègle* passed up to Muhammara.

13. **Decision to despatch an Expedition.**—Already on 24th August Sir Edmund Barrow, the Military Secretary of the India Office, had drawn the attention of the Secretary of State for India to the dangers involved in the attitude of Turkey;⁵ and, now, on 26th September, he wrote a further minute⁶:—

"All the omens point to war with Turkey within a few weeks, or even days. Such a contingency need not alarm us unless the Turks succeed in drawing the Arabs to their aid. In that case they will probably proclaim a Jihad, and endeavour to raise Afghanistan and

¹ The Shatt-al-'Arab was a Turkish waterway with a treaty giving to Persian and British subjects the rights of navigation.

² Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, No. 900, R., 30th September 1914.

³ F.O., 25th September 1914, No. 587, Military.

⁴ *Dalhousie*, armed screw steamer employed as a small troopship by the R.I.M.

⁵ This minute has not been seen.

⁶ Secret memorandum by Sir E. J. Barrow, 26th September 1914. "The Rôle of India in a Turkish War."

the Frontier tribes against us, which might be a serious danger to India, and would most certainly add enormously to our difficulties and responsibilities. This shows how important it is for us to avert Turko-Arab coalition."

It was known that Turkey had been intriguing right and left to win over the Arabs; to get them on our side we must give evidence that we intended to support them against the Turks. General Barrow, therefore, advocated the despatch of an expedition to occupy Basra:—

- (1) It would checkmate Turkish intrigues and demonstrate our ability to strike,
- (2) It would encourage the Arabs to rally to us, and confirm the Shaikhs of Muhammara and Kuwait in their allegiance.
- (3) It would safeguard Egypt, and without Arab support a Turkish invasion is impossible.
- (4) It would effectually protect the oil installation at Abadan.

Such results seemed to General Barrow a full justification for the proposed action.

In 1913-14, on the acquisition by Great Britain of interests in the Anglo-Persian oilfields, the provision of a force of the strength of two brigades to a division in the event of local disturbances had been foreseen by Simla in plans of operations for securing British interests in Persia and the Gulf. The method of coping with major complications depended upon questions of Imperial strategy.¹

At this time Enver Pasha and a number of German confederates were intriguing against the British Government,² warlike preparations were being made by Turkey, and an attempted Jihad was imminent in the countries lying between Mesopotamia and India. On 2nd October the British Government decided to take the precautionary measure of despatching a force to the Shatt-al-'Arab to protect our interests.³

The exact scope of the expedition at this period before Turkey became a belligerent was defined by the following telegram from the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy⁴:—

"The force under orders is only intended to occupy Abadan, protect oil tanks and pipe-line, cover landing of reinforcements, if these should be necessary, and show Arabs that we intend to support them against the Turks. . . ."

After consultation with India, it was decided that a part of Expedition "A" should be secretly diverted to the Persian

¹ Short memorandum on the inception, &c., of the Mesopotamian Campaign, Simla, 9th September 1916.

² Mesopotamia Expedition, p. 1.

⁴ No. 1158 of 5th October 1914.

³ A. 22.

Gulf,¹ and the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, was acquainted with a view to naval co-operation.²

It was originally intended that the expedition should land at Abadan or Muhammara;³ but this was afterwards altered to Bahrain⁴ in order to avoid violating Persian neutrality.

The initial force demanded by the India Office was a brigade of the 6th Division and two mountain batteries, to be followed by the remainder of the division at a later date. In the event of Turkey becoming a belligerent the management of the expedition (which was to be called "Indian Expeditionary Force 'D'") would devolve on the Government of India. The brigade chosen was the 16th, commanded by Brigadier-General W. S. Delamain, D.S.O.

14. **Force "D" sails from India.**—Despite the protests of the Turkish authorities the *Espiègle* and *Odin* maintained their positions throughout October, viz., *Espiègle* in Persian territorial waters at Muhammara, and *Odin* at the entrance to the Shatt-al-'Arab, outside the 3-mile limit, where she had anchored on 5th October on her return from coaling at Bushire. The *Dalhousie* left Abadan on 11th October⁵ to obtain convoy orders for Expeditionary Force "D," which left Bombay and Karachi on 16th and 17th October respectively for Bahrain, the jumping-off place of the expedition.

At this time the *Emden* was raiding commerce west of Colombo, and the *Königsberg* was also at large. There was a possibility that the former might enter the Persian Gulf,⁶ either to attack Force "D" or to deliver herself over to the Turks as the *Goeben* and *Breslau* had done. Indeed, it was reported that German and Turkish naval officers and men were on their way to Basra to take over the *Emden*.⁷ The *Duke of Edinburgh* was accordingly despatched to the entrance to the gulf to cover the passage of the force, and the *Swiftsure* to search and protect the trade routes. The *Dalhousie* was stationed to watch the entrance to the Persian Gulf, and a system of intelligence was established which included look-out posts at the principal places in the gulf, and special communication was arranged thence to the telegraph systems.

In case the *Emden* should arrive, a line of extempore mines was prepared by the *Espiègle* to stop her from coming up the Shatt-al-'Arab; the *Espiègle* was to join the *Odin* in the Shatt-al-'Arab, and the two ships were to wait for the *Emden* in such a position as to neutralise the extra range of the German cruiser's guns and force her to engage at close range.⁸

¹ A. 16.

² A. 22.

³ A. 20.

⁴ Over which we had a protectorate.

⁵ A. 29.

⁶ M. 02499.

⁷ A. 34.

⁸ A. 27, 37. The *Emden's* 4·1-inch guns far outranged the sloops' old 4-inch.

The Turks continued to show considerable activity in the river. It was reported that troops and guns had been placed at numerous points, including guns at Fao, which might be used for the purpose of preventing the egress of our ships.

The *Espiègle* had been ordered by the Turkish authorities to leave the Shatt-al-'Arab within eight days from 11th October, after the expiration of which period she would be prevented from leaving by force of arms.¹ It was apparently the intention of the Turks to mine the river, and a strong protest was addressed to the Turkish Government against the violation of an international highway, which would be considered an act of open hostility to great Britain.²

15. Force "D" arrives at Bahrain.—On 23rd October Force "D" arrived at Bahrain (over which we had a protectorate) convoyed by the *Ocean*, *Dalhousie*, and the armed launch *Mashona*.³ The British Government, while prepared to defend their rights, desired to refrain from any action which might be interpreted as aggression; in the event of war the first shot should be fired by Turkey. Disembarkation of the troops was ordered not to take place until further orders,⁴ and the *Ocean* was ordered to be retained at Bahrain while the troops were on board the transports.⁵

The despatch of Force "D" had been kept strictly secret; it was prepared as part of Force "A." The sealed orders specifying its destination were not to be opened until it was at sea, but its presence at Bahrain was known to the Turks at Basra and Muhammara within 48 hours. In order that its intentions should not be misunderstood by the Arab population of Mesopotamia and the surrounding districts the utmost publicity was now given to its presence, and the Arabs were successfully assured that no aggressive action was contemplated by Great Britain.⁶ The activity of the Turks became more pronounced; their armed Thornycroft patrol launches frequently passed up and down the river filled with officers and men, and there were reports of large reinforcements arriving at Basra from up river, and of guns being mounted at various points.⁷ They continued their attempts to block the channel of the Shatt-al-'Arab, a little above the Turkish border at the Narrows, which are about a mile above the Shaikh of Muhammara's palace between Dabba and Shamshamiya Islands, sinking there the

¹ A. 30.

² F.O. to Sir L. Mallet, Constantinople, No. 968, Military, 23rd October 1914.

³ *Mashona*, tug, 1—3-pr. Hotchkiss.

⁴ Telegram 1275 from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 22nd October 1914.

⁵ A. 37, 38.

⁶ Tel. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 26th October 1914, Diary No. 6283.

⁷ A. 42 and I.O. tel. 19th October 1914, Diary No. 5828.

Ekbatana,¹ also an old light vessel, and two smaller steamers. These preparations could only be directed against Great Britain.

By the end of October telegraphic communication to the *Espiègle* was completely cut off² owing to the failure of the Persian telegraphic line through Ahwaz and Ram Hormuz to Bushire, and the difficulty of boat communication with the Indo-European telegraph station at Fao; and she was forced to depend upon occasional night communication by W/T with the *Ocean* at Bahrain, nearly 300 miles off, and near the limit of the *Espiègle's* W/T and with the *Dalhousie* at Bushire.

16. Great Britain declares War on Turkey.—On 30th October, the line of policy having been approved by the Government, the Admiralty sent instructions³ to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, and the S.N.O., Persian Gulf, to resist any attempt on the part of the Turks to block or lay mines in the river, even to the point of precipitating hostilities. In that case the *Odin*, which was lying at Fao outside the 3-mile limit, was to reinforce the *Espiègle* in the river, and the expedition would be brought from Bahrain and landed. All British shipping was now sent out of the river.⁴ Later in the same day the intelligence was received⁵ that Turkey had attacked Russia in the Black Sea. War was now imminent, and the S.N.O. was told to prepare for all contingencies, and to take the necessary steps for the defence of British interests.

At 12.35 a.m. on 31st October the following telegram was despatched from the Admiralty:—

"To C.-in-C., East Indies, 255, S.N.O., Persian Gulf, *via* Fao:—

"Orders sent Ambassador, Constantinople, 8.15 p.m., 30th October, to present ultimatum to Turkey, expiring at end of 12 hours. Do not yourself commence hostilities without further orders."

And later on the same day, the ultimatum having expired, the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, and S.N.O., Persian Gulf, were ordered to "Commence hostilities at once against Turkey."⁶

¹ Hamburg-Amerika liner.

² A. 40, 48.

³ A. 46.

⁴ Except the s.s. *Silver Cedar*, which was at Abadan unloading pipes for the oil pipe line; she came to no harm.

⁵ A. 47.

⁶ A. 51. Received by *Espiègle* at 1.45 a.m. on 1st November. Great Britain formally declared war on Turkey 5th November 1914.

CHAPTER IV.

LANDING OF THE EXPEDITION. OCCUPATION
OF BASRA

17. **Naval Forces in Mesopotamia.**—The available naval forces in Mesopotamia at the commencement of hostilities with Turkey comprised the sloops *Espiègle* and *Odin* and the *Dalhousie*. The *Lawrence* was at Bombay drawing her 4-inch guns. The *Ocean* was at Bahrain; but she could not cross the bar of the Shatt-al-'Arab, and the extent of her co-operation was limited to assisting in landing the expedition and supplying guns to the tugs,¹ while her picket and other boats were employed in the river during the period that she lay off the bar of the Shatt-al-'Arab.²

The following small local craft were armed for service about this time:—

Tugs.—*Mashona*, *Sirdar-i-Naphte*.
River steamers.—*Miner*, *Carmsir*.
Yachts.—*Lewis Pelly*, *Comet*.

¹ The following vessels were armed and manned by H.M.S. *Ocean*, Captain Arthur Hayes-Sadler, S.N.O., Persian Gulf:—

Carmsir (1—3-pr. Hotchkiss).—Lieut.-Commander F. G. S. Elkes, R.N.R. Commissioned, 5th November 1914. Paid off, 12th November 1914.

Sirdar-i-Naphte (1—12-pr. 8 cwt., 1 Maxim).—Lieut.-Commander C. L. Thomas, R.N. (retired). 11 ratings. Commissioned, 7th November 1914. Paid off, 13th December 1914.

Shaitan.—Lieut.-Commander F. G. S. Elkes, R.N.R. Commissioned, 1st December 1914. Gun and ship's company turned over from *Sirdar*.
Lewis Pelly (2—3-pr. Hotchkiss, 1 Maxim).—Lieut.-Commander J. F. Carslake, R.N. 13 ratings. Commissioned, 7th November 1914. Paid off, 13th December 1914.

Miner (1—12-pr. 8 cwt., 1—3-pr. Hotchkiss, 1 Maxim). Lieut. C. H. Heath-Caldwell. 17 ratings. Commissioned, November 1914. (Mr. H. E. Coleman, gunner, left in command when *Ocean* quitted the Persian Gulf).

Mashona (1—3-pr. Hotchkiss). Lieut. Irving M. Palmer, R.N. Commissioned, November 1914. Paid off, 1st January 1915.

Total supplied by *Ocean*:—

2—12-pr. 8 cwt.
5—3-pr. Hotchkiss.
3 Maxims.
4 officers.
41 ratings.

For detailed list of ratings, see letter of proceedings of Captain Hayes-Sadler, 18th December 1914.

² The R.I.M. *Dalhousie* was formally transferred to the Royal Navy by an Order in Council dated 20th August 1914, *Lawrence* on 29th October 1914, and *Comet* on 5th November 1914, though they came under the orders of the C.-in-C., E. Indies (or S.N.O., Persian Gulf), before these dates.

The *Carmsir* had been brought from Bushire, and the *Lewis Pelly* was a small yacht formerly employed on political service in the Persian Gulf.

The *Comet*¹ was the official yacht of the British resident at Baghdad, and mounted two old Nordenfeldts, to which a 3-pr. supplied by the *Espiègle* had been added. Her bridge was already armoured in peace time by light hardened steel plates, against the Arabs sniping in the river. After being taken over by the Royal Navy she was armed with one 6-pr., three 3-prs., and two Maxims. The remainder of the local craft taken up belonged to commercial firms, chiefly Messrs. Lynch.

The enemy naval forces consisted of the gunboat *Marmariss*, armed with four 9-pr. Q.F., two 1-pr. guns, and one 18-inch torpedo tube, and a number of Thornycroft motor patrol boats 60 to 70 feet long, draught 2½ feet, 10 to 11 knots speed, each carrying two 1-pr. Vickers-Maxim pom-poms—one forward and one aft. Four of them had been shipped to Basra in March 1914.² The Turks also armed and placed guns on board river steamers at different times.

18. **Disposition at the Commencement of Hostilities.**—The telegram to commence hostilities with Turkey contained the following instructions for the ships:—

Admiralty to C.-in-C., East Indies, and S.N.O., Persian Gulf³:—

256. "Commence hostilities against Turkey. *Espiègle* to deal with the guns posted opposite the oil works, and to prevent any attempt to damage them, and generally to protect British interests in the river.

"The expedition has been ordered to proceed from Bahrain to the Bar.

"*Odin* to await the arrival of the expedition at the Bar, and to accompany it into the river, first dealing with the guns at Fao.

"*Dalhousie* should remain at Bushire to maintain communications by wireless until Fao is captured and the telegraph cable is working again.

"Steps should be taken to obtain all the steam tugs in the river and mount small guns so as to assist the troops.

"The armed launches should be concentrated in the river as soon as possible.

"*Ocean* to assist in landing the expedition and to supply small guns for the tugs.

"Although it is not probable that mines have been laid, every precaution should be taken to guard against them.

"The Shaikh of Muhammara must be reassured as to our proceedings, and informed that the main object is to keep the river open and trade free to his towns and territories. That his position will be amply secured, as we have no quarrel either with him or with any of the Arabs."

19. **Opening of Hostilities.**—Within a few hours of the receipt of the telegram ordering the commencement of hostilities,

¹ Lieut.-Commander C. A. Scott, R.I.M.

² Admiralty to S.N.O., Persian Gulf, 12.9.14. M. (no number).

³ Sent 31st October 1914, 2.30 p.m.

the first shots of the campaign were fired. On the 1st November the *Sumana*¹ and *Sirdar-i-Naphte* were ordered by the *Espiègle* to proceed down the river from Muhammara to join the *Odin* at the Bar and assist in the sweeping operations. Both were fired on at Fao; the *Sirdar-i-Naphte* got through, but the *Sumana* narrowly escaped capture, and was compelled to return to Muhammara.² The *Miner* was also sent by Captain Hayes-Sadler to the Shatt-al-'Arab to protect the buoys in the river; and the *Comet* was at Muhammara.

The *Espiègle* had been ordered to remain in the vicinity of Muhammara and Abadan, and having been apprised of the approach of the Expeditionary Force, at 3.30 a.m. on 3rd November, she left her anchorage in the Hafar Channel of the Karun River and dropped down the Shatt-al-'Arab with all lights out, without being fired on, and took up a central position 2 miles south of Muhammara, where she could watch the main river and both channels for the enemy's patrol boats. A party was landed, and cut the Fao-Basra telegraph line.

20. Force "D" sails for the Shatt-al-'Arab.—On the outbreak of hostilities with Turkey orders had been sent to General Delamain to proceed at once with his force to the Shatt-al-'Arab and to concert measures with the naval authorities for an immediate attack on Fao.³ The river was to be cleared of the enemy as far as Shamshamiya if possible, but the force was not to proceed further without reinforcements, and it was not to go to Muhammara,⁴ in order to avoid violating Persian neutrality.⁵

The policy of the Government contemplated an advance to the vicinity of Basra, but General Delamain's force was not strong enough to take Basra,⁶ and another brigade of the VI.th Division had been ordered on 30th October to get ready for immediate despatch to reinforce him.⁷

The 16th Brigade under General Delamain left Bahrain at 8 a.m. on 2nd November in the transports *Varela*, *Umaria*, *Umta*, *Berbera*, and *Masunda*, convoyed by the *Ocean*, and arrived at the Bar at 6 p.m. on the following day. The next two days were occupied in arming the various tugs which had been taken up for service, and fitting the sweeps; the work was carried on under difficulties as a strong southerly wind caused a heavy swell. At 10 a.m. on the 5th November the *Mashona* returned from Kuwait where she had been despatched to obtain from the Intelligence Officer, information as to landing places,

¹ Tug.

² Captain Nunn's narrative.

³ A. 52. For Orders of Officer Commanding Force "D," see B. 1-3.

⁴ Viceroy to Secretary of State, H. 1882, 7th November 1914.

⁵ Chief of General Staff to Generals Delamain and Barrett. 1906 W., 6th November 1914.

⁶ Viceroy to Secretary of State, P. H. 1777, 30th October 1914.

⁷ Military Policy in Mesopotamia, I.

and at a conference between General Delamain and the S.N.O., it was decided that the landing should be made at Fao itself.¹ A landing party of 100 marines with two maxims manned by seamen, under Major Temple, R.M.A., was told off, together with a beach party and 24 men to act as coxswains for the transports' boats, the Lascars not being trustworthy under fire; and the S.N.O. proceeded on board the *Odin* to take charge of the Naval operations.

On this day (5th November 1914) Great Britain declared war on Turkey.

21. The Expedition Lands.—At daylight on 6th November the *Odin* proceeded up the river with the *Sirdar-i-Naphte*, the *Ocean's* picket boat sweeping ahead.² The enemy opened fire at 10.7 a.m. from the neighbourhood of the fort at Fao at a range of about 5,500 yards, and as the ships approached, heavy rifle fire was opened upon them from trenches on the right bank to the southward of the fort. A few rounds of shrapnel sufficed to silence the fire from the trenches, and by 10.45 a.m. the enemy's guns were silenced; the transports at the Bar weighed, and the *Odin* shortly afterwards proceeded up to Fao Telegraph Station, 3 miles above the fort. At 2.0 p.m. the transports arrived at the Telegraph Station and a landing of 600 men was effected from boats without opposition. The troops occupied the fort in the evening, unopposed, and rendered the guns (apparently 15-pr. or 25-pr. Krupp) unfit for service as it was found impracticable to remove them.³ The fort appeared to have been hastily evacuated by the enemy, who had, however, removed their dead and wounded, of which latter there were plenty of evidences.

The landing party re-embarked on the 7th November, and on the following day the force began to disembark at Saniya,⁴ 2½ miles above Abadan, a proceeding which occupied the next 48 hours. No enemy were encountered, though on 6th November the *Espiègle* had been heavily fired on with rifles from trenches and mud walls on the bank opposite Abadan, but had driven the enemy away after an hour with shell and rifle fire, with a loss reported to be 46 killed.

22. Turkish Patrol Boat Sunk.⁵—The Consul at Muhammara reported that two of the Turkish Thornycroft armed launches had been seen in Abadan boat channel on the evening of

¹ G.O.C. Force "D" to Chief of General Staff, P.B.M. 38, 6th November 1914.

² No mines were found.

³ M. 04988/14, letter of proceedings of S.N.O. But General Delamain's Despatch as printed in the "Gazette of India," 26th February 1915, states that the guns were dismantled and thrown into the river.

⁴ See Chart F. 020. Saniya (not marked on chart) is about a mile below Saihan.

⁵ From *Espiègle's* Report of Proceedings.

8th November. Accordingly, early on the following morning the *Sirdar-i-Naphte* and the *Ocean's* picket boat were sent to draw the channel up-stream, while the *Espiègle* proceeded under cover of darkness and took up a position close in to the Persian shore near Harta. The channel was drawn blank, but on working up to Dabba Island at 6.25 a.m. the *Espiègle* sighted one of the Turkish launches in the boat channel south of the island, opened fire on her, which was returned by pom-pom, and it was believed eventually sank her. During this engagement the *Espiègle* was under heavy rifle fire from the banks.

On 12th November Captain Hayes-Sadler was able to report to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, that Abadan Oil Works were safe, and that trade had been resumed. Considerable enemy forces from Basra were in the vicinity, and at daylight on 11th November the enemy made a determined attack on the camp, advancing to within 50 yards of the outpost line. They were repulsed with a dashing counter-attack,¹ and the *Espiègle*² and *Odin* shelled the enemy as they retreated across the desert.

The forces were ready for an early advance on Shamshamiya, but the strength of the enemy and the necessity of safeguarding the oil works at Abadan decided General Delamain to await reinforcements before moving.

Our armed launches³ were patrolling the river between Abadan and Fao, at which latter place we had a garrison of 300 men.

Considerable difficulties of communication in the Persian Gulf were experienced by the forces;⁴ constant thunderstorms interrupted the wireless system, and the installation of the *Dalhousie* was of poor quality and the operators insufficiently experienced. This ship was stationed at Bushire to connect with the cable. The wireless station at Jask answered the calls of the *Ocean* by day, but would not take in any message for transmission.

23. The Capture of Basra.—On 14th November a second Brigade (18th) of the VIth Division arrived from India, and Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., took over the command of Force "D."⁵ Disembarkation of the troops was completed by the 16th, but the landing of the guns and horses was attended by circumstances of some difficulty

¹ General Delamain's despatch.

² The S.N.O. had removed from *Odin* to *Espiègle* on 9th November.

³ The armed launches in the river comprised *Sirdar-i-Naphte*, *Mashona*, *Miner*, *Lewis Pelly*, and *Carmsir* (about to be paid off as useless).

⁴ General Delamain's despatch. For steps taken to remedy this see telegram from General Barrett to Chief of General Staff, 3rd December 1914, Diary No. 8663.

⁵ The 17th Infantry Brigade sailed from India on 20th Nov., and completed its disembarkation at Basra on 9th Dec, to complete the VIth Division.

owing to the muddy nature of the river banks—stretches of mud lying uncovered save for a short time on each side of high water—the absence of suitable landing places, the strong tides, and insufficiency of steamboats or tugs.

General Barrett's orders named Basra as his objective¹; if, after discussion with General Delamain, he considered his present force strong enough, he was to move on Basra. The town, which, with its suburbs, had a population estimated at about 80,000 in 1914, is on the right bank of the Shatt-al-'Arab and 69 miles by river from the Persian Gulf. It is of importance as being the highest point on the river to which large steamers are accustomed to go, and it is the port of all this country and of Baghdad, and through Baghdad, of Western Persia and part of the Mosul region. It is the centre of trade of its district, especially of the date trade of the Shatt-al-'Arab.

As a preliminary to the advance, on the 15th an enemy position near Saihan, 4 miles up the river, on the right flank of an advance by land, was captured by the troops with slight losses, the *Odin* supporting by gunfire. *See notes on next page, however,*

The advance of the force commenced on the morning of the 17th November. The enemy was reported at Sahil and Zain, with his main body in position at Balzaniya. The disembarkation of the artillery was still incomplete, but General Barrett determined to advance at once for the sake of the moral effect upon the Arabs. It was his intention to turn the enemy's right flank and drive him towards the river and the warships' guns.²

The *Espiègle*, *Odin*, *Sirdar-i-Naphte*, and *Lewis Pelly* moved up the river, level with the skirmishing line, and at 9.45 a.m., when off the north-west corner of Muhalla Island, the sloops opened fire on the enemy's trenches. As the advance continued the extent of their co-operation was limited by the belt of palm trees which obstructed their view, and by the fact that General Barrett had been obliged to alter his original plan of turning the enemy's right flank and driving him on to the ships' guns. At 1.15 p.m. the enemy, estimated at 4,000 Turkish troops and some Arabs, abandoned his position and fled. After an hour and a half the pursuit was stopped; the troops entrenched for the night at Sahil,³ and the transports were brought up with the rations and stores. The next three days (18th to 20th November) were occupied by the troops in landing stores and reconnoitring the enemy's position at Balzaniya prior to a further advance. The ships had anchored on the night of the 17th near the Turkish Police Station, 3 miles above the camp. The Turks suffered the loss of a second motor patrol launch on the 19th, caught by the *Espiègle* hovering around the north-west end of Dabba Island, where the river was reported

¹ See Appendix B. 5.

² General Barrett's Despatch.

³ This engagement is known as the Battle of Sahil.

to be blocked by sunken ships, and on the same day the *Espiègle* also exchanged a few rounds at long range with the *Marmariss* and with the battery at Balzaniya. Examination of the obstruction established that there was a passage between the sunken craft and Dabba Island, practicable at slack water for the warships and smaller transports. A lighter was found to be sunk in the passage north of Shamshamiya Island.

The entrance to the Karun river was now open to us, and several shallow-draught river steamers, belonging to Messrs. Lynch, consequently became available. They were brought down and placed under orders of the transport officer,¹ and were employed in working between the heavy-draught transports and the shore.

The *Comet* had already left the Karun, where it was feared that her presence might give the Turks a pretext for attacking Muhammara. She was ordered to try to reach the Persian Gulf by the Bahmishir Channel,² which she successfully negotiated, and joined the flotilla in the Shatt-al-'Arab.

The combined naval and military attack on the Turkish position at Balzaniya was arranged to take place on 22nd November, but on the evening of the 20th the S.N.O. received information that the Balzaniya position was abandoned, and that the Turkish forces and officials were evacuating Basra; and he proceeded up the river next morning with the *Espiègle*, *Odin*, and *Lawrence*³ and confirmed for himself the news of the evacuation of the Balzaniya position.

A report that the Arabs from the surrounding country were taking advantage of the evacuation of Basra by the Turkish troops, to loot the town, decided the S.N.O. to push on to Basra without delay. The passage of the obstruction in the river which was rendered very difficult owing to the strong tide and swirling current was successfully negotiated at slack water and a landing party was sent ashore to dismantle the four guns in the evacuated battery at Balzaniya; and the *Espiègle* and *Odin* proceeded up the river, leaving the *Lawrence* to bring on two battalions of troops, which were being sent up by river steamers; the remainder of the Division was to march.

The ships arrived off Basra at 5.30 p.m. that day (21st November) and anchored off the Custom House which was burning and full of Arabs looting. These were dispersed by the firing of a blank charge, and a party was landed to clear the Custom House. The town was taken possession of next day, the German Consul and his staff being made prisoners for their share in the attempt to block the river.⁴ At 9.30 a.m. on

¹ Commander A. Hamilton, R.I.M.

² See Plan II.

³ The *Lawrence*, Acting Commander R.N. Suter, joined on 16th November from drawing her 4-inch guns at Bombay.

⁴ Captain Nunn's Narrative, p. 57.

the 22nd November the river steamers with two battalions under Major General Fry arrived, and the town was handed over to him. The main body of the troops arrived at noon, after a trying march delayed by the frequent irrigation channels, and next day General Barrett made his ceremonial entry at the head of his troops.¹

The secrecy which had been observed with regard to the Expedition and the suddenness of its movements were attended with complete success. On 5th November Great Britain declared war on Turkey, and on the 6th the Expedition landed at Fao, and in less than three weeks, at the cost of a few casualties, the key to Mesopotamia was taken and occupied.

24. Effect of the Capture of Basra.—In the *Brief for the Defence of the Mesopotamian Campaign*² the Military Secretary of the India Office describes the probable trend of events if no such enterprise had been undertaken:—

“In that case, it is certain that Arabia would have abandoned all hope of liberation from Turkish rule, and perforce have joined the Turks. The proclamation of a Jihad would have been endorsed by the Sheriff of Mecca, and the Standard of Islam would have been raised against us throughout the East. Persia would have followed suit, and Turko-German intrigues in that country would have met with immediate and popular response. A wave of fanaticism would have quickly engulfed Afghanistan, and on the Indian frontier the movement would have been hailed with all the eager enthusiasm that prospects of easy loot inspire in barbaric races.

“Such a development would have meant war on a prodigious scale all along the Indian frontier as well as a dangerous internal situation in India.”

The capture of Basra completed the first phase in the Mesopotamian campaign. Our prestige was restored. A position of great strategical importance had been secured with little loss. The friendly Arabs were confirmed, for the time being, in their loyal attitude, and the oil works at Abadan were safeguarded,³ but not the long stretch of pipe-line running North into Persia.

¹ General Barrett to Chief of General Staff, 57 P.-G., 23rd November 1914. The telegram states: “A proclamation announcing annexation was read in Arabic,” but this statement was corrected in a later telegram. It was not the policy of H.M. Government to declare the annexation of any territory in this region.

² Page 3. It should be noted that this is only Sir E. Barrow's personal opinion.

³ Mesopotamia Expedition, p. 8.

CHAPTER V.

THE OPERATIONS AGAINST QURNA.

The remaining troops¹ and guns were brought up, and the occupation of Basra was established without opposition on the part of the inhabitants who appeared well disposed towards us,² though there was occasional sniping at night in the outskirts of the town.

Beyond the damage to the Custom House, little apparent damage had been done by the looters. The enemy had abandoned four guns on the river bank, and four more were found in the Arsenal.³ Many enemy wounded were left in the town, and it appeared that the actions of the 15th and 17th November had more important results than was at first believed.⁴

The question of the permanence of the British occupation of Basra was postponed until the final settlement at the close of the war.⁵

25. **Decision to Advance on Qurna.**—The original policy of the Government did not contemplate an advance into Mesopotamia beyond the vicinity of Basra.⁶ Our position in the country had, however, to be consolidated;⁷ and the first phase successfully concluded, it was advisable to decide on the next step. In a Minute ~~submitted by the Military Secretary of the India Office,~~⁸ General Barrow pointed out that a policy of passive inactivity was to be deprecated on account of its effect on the Arab and Indian world, and he suggested that an advance should be made on Qurna.⁹

Qurna, one of the traditional sites of the Garden of Eden, is a town of about 2,000 inhabitants, standing at the angle of the Euphrates and Tigris, its main front being on the latter river, and from it the suburb of Nuheirat stretches along the right bank of the Tigris for about a mile and a half. Under the Turkish régime it was the capital of Kaza in the Basra Vilayet, and had a small Turkish garrison and a Custom House. The position had been one of military importance since the end of

¹ A battalion had been left at Sahil.

² G.O.C. Force "D" to I.O., No. 54 G., 22nd November 1914, and General Barrett to Chief of General Staff, P. 1-G., 28th November 1914.

³ Telegram: General Barrett to I.O., No. 54 G., 23rd November 1914.

⁴ Telegram from Political Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary to Government of India (Foreign and Political Department), Diary No. 8134, 25th November 1914, and telegram from General Barrett to Chief of General Staff, Diary No. 8331 of 28th November 1914.

⁵ Telegram: Secretary of State to Viceroy, 16th December 1914.

⁶ Military Policy in Mesopotamia, I.

⁷ Chief of General Staff to G.O.C. Force "D.," 8089 W., 25th November 1914.

⁸ 27th November 1914. *Private telegram Viceroy to G.O. 25th Nov. 1914.*

9 27 Nov. 1914.

the Middle Ages, and its advantages General Barrow summarised as follows:—

- (1) Its commanding military value.
- (2) The control it would give us of the entire navigable waterway to the Gulf.
- (3) The possession of the whole of the rich cultivated area from Qurna to the sea.
- (4) It completely covered Persian Arabistan, and would safeguard it from Turkish intrigues or incursions.
- (5) The moral effect on the Arabs.
- (6) The control of the telegraph up to this point, and also the passage of the Euphrates.

"Whatever we do, let us not stand still," wrote the General.

~~The Viceroy, meanwhile, was urging that an advance should be made on Baghdad,¹ but~~ After consideration of his Military Secretary's Minute, Lord Crewe delivered his decision as follows in a telegram²:—

To the Viceroy:—

"We are not disposed to authorise an advance to Baghdad at present as there are grave international considerations involved, but as soon as General Barrett is ready to do so, we sanction an advance to Qurna with a brigade, or such portion of his force as may be necessary for the operation. . . . Basra . . . should be regarded as the Headquarters for the present."

In connection with the words "grave international considerations," Lord Crewe explained³ that it would have an unfortunate effect in the Moslem world if we should be compelled to retire from Baghdad under the menace of superior force. The main considerations which governed his decision were that our available military forces in Mesopotamia at this time were only one division, our resources in river shipping were limited, and there were at this season difficulties of navigation to contend with,⁴ for it was only a month past the usual time of year of lowest river.

26. **Naval Reconnaissance of Qurna.**—Since the occupation of Basra the ships had been engaged in sounding and buoying the passage past the sunken *Ekbatana*, and in examining the boat channels near Dabba Island. The *Ekbatana* appeared on examination to be capable of salving⁵ had appliances been available,⁶ but the smaller transports were now able to proceed to Basra.⁷ It was found that two lighters had been sunk in the

¹ Private telegram of 25th November 1914 to I.O.

² 1418 of 27th November 1914.

³ Telegram: 30th November 1914.

⁴ Brief for the Defence of the Mesopotamian Campaign, pp. 3-4.

⁵ S.N.O., Persian Gulf, to Admiralty, 121, 22nd November 1914.

⁶ D.R.I.M. to Admiralty, 5, 25th November 1914. It was eventually found to be impossible to salve her, and she was left to sink into the mud, the scour of the current soon formed a channel round her so that it was possible for steamers to pass at all states of the tide.

⁷ S.N.O., Persian Gulf, to Admiralty, 127, 28th November 1914.

passage north of Shamshamiya Island, and in view of the dependence of the Expedition upon river transport for supplies, it was important that the channel should be kept clear.

On 25th November the *Espiègle*, *Odin*, *Miner*, and *Mashona* proceeded to reconnoitre the river as far as Qurna, to get in touch with the enemy and ascertain that Qurna was still in their occupation. The river was found clear of the enemy until within 6 miles of Qurna, when the *Marmariss* was sighted retiring up the Tigris. At 10.40 a.m., coming round a bend in sight of Qurna, in shoal water, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the town, fire was opened on the ships by two or three guns posted near that place, and with rifles from the river bank. The ships replied at once to the enemy's fire, and backed into $2\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms, the *Miner* and *Mashona* being sent on ahead to engage the enemy. The rifle fire of the latter was silenced, and after an hour their guns were only replying spasmodically.¹ The *Odin* struck something in the river during the engagement, damaging her rudder badly, and the *Mashona* had damaged a plate, and both ships were sent back to Basra.

There were no naval casualties during this action, and the object of the reconnaissance having been attained, the *Espiègle* and *Miner* left for Basra at 4.30 p.m.

As it was found to be impossible to repair the *Odin* with the appliances available in Mesopotamia, the S.N.O. proposed² to send her to Bombay. This was emphatically negatived by the Admiralty³ on the grounds that the co-operation of her gunfire would be invaluable in the operations against Qurna; a tug must be used to steer her if necessary.

A subsequent survey made after the occupation of Qurna showed that in the wide part of the Tigris, from about 7 to 15 cables to the south-eastward of Qurna, there was a shallow bar which in the present low river season had only some 8 or 9 feet of water over it, and only 6 feet in some places.⁴ At this time, however, the ships had only an old rough sketch map of the river, giving few soundings and very little information.

It was discovered that a lighter had been sunk close to the left bank as an obstruction to our advance, and it was this that the *Odin* had struck at 11.20 a.m.⁵

27. Naval Preparations for the Advance on Qurna.—On 6th November the Admiralty had informed the C.-in-C., East

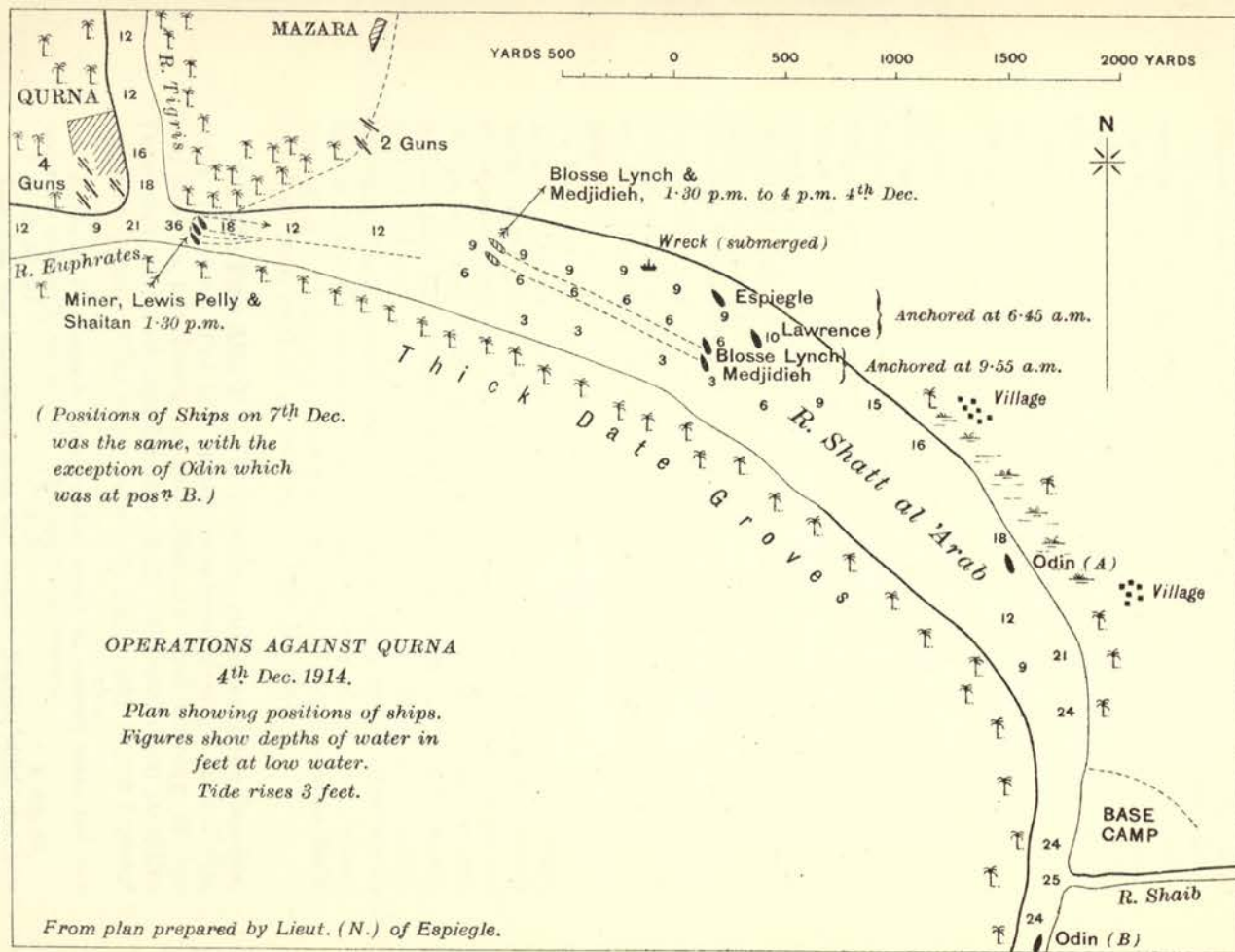
¹ Captain Nunn's narrative, pp. 59, 60.

² S.N.O., Persian Gulf to Admiralty, 129 of 29th November 1914, and First Lord's note thereon.

³ A. 63.

⁴ See Plan 3. It was discovered later during the Qurna operations that there was a small rise and fall of tide during this season, of which the ships took advantage. In the high river season the river rose 6 to 8 feet above the depths given. The sloops drew about 12 feet.

⁵ Captain Nunn's narrative, p. 60.



(Positions of Ships on 7th Dec. was the same, with the exception of Odin which was at posⁿ B.)

OPERATIONS AGAINST QURNA
4th Dec. 1914.

Plan showing positions of ships.
Figures show depths of water in feet at low water.
Tide rises 3 feet.

Ordnance Survey, 1921.

From plan prepared by Lieut. (N.) of Espiegle.

PLAN 3

To face page

Indies, that the *Ocean* was required to escort a convoy leaving Karachi in about 10 days' time, but the ship had been allowed to remain in the Persian Gulf on the representations of Admiral Peirse that her presence was necessary as her Captain was conducting combined operations with the G.O.C.¹ Moreover, several of her officers and men were up the Shatt-al-'Arab with the Naval Flotilla. On 16th November, Admiral Peirse was ordered to take charge of the naval operations in Egypt, where an attack on the Suez Canal was anticipated; he retained command of the East Indies Station, but Captain Hayes-Sadler as S.N.O., Persian Gulf, was given authority to communicate direct with the Admiralty.²

The *Ocean* remained lying at the bar of the Shatt-al-'Arab except for a visit to Kuwait and Bushire at the request of the Political Resident. Her heavy guns would, however, be of great assistance in the defence of Egypt, and on 28th November the Admiralty inquired the earliest date she could conveniently leave the Persian Gulf without detriment to the military operations in the Shatt-al-'Arab; a limited number of ratings might be left behind to man the local craft which had been taken up for service.³ The operations against Qurna were then imminent, but General Barrett was willing that the *Ocean* should leave after their completion, provided he received no orders to advance on Baghdad; and it was arranged that she should leave on 9th December, leaving behind two 12-pr. guns and a few men.⁴

General Barrett had now decided to commence operations against Qurna on 3rd December, and preparations were accordingly hurried on. On 1st December the *Shaitan*, a small shallow-draught tug which had been employed in conveying troops up and down the river, was commissioned for service under Lieut.-Commander F. G. S. Elkes, R.N.R., of H.M.S. *Ocean*, and armed with a 12-pr. gun.⁵ On account of the shallow water the only other armed craft which were able to get close up to Qurna were the launches *Miner* and *Lewis Pelly*, the former mounting a 12-pr. gun; the *Carmsir*, whose engines were worn out, had been paid off as useless on 12th November.

28. **The First Attack.**—The Flotilla, consisting of the *Espiègle*, *Odin*, *Lawrence* and the armed launches *Miner*, *Lewis Pelly*, and *Shaitan*, left Basra on the afternoon and evening of 3rd December, and anchored for the night off Dair, about 10 miles south of Qurna. The river steamers *Medjidieh*, *Blosse Lynch*,⁶

¹ A. 55, 56, 57, Captain Hayes-Sadler acted in concert with, but not under the orders of, the G.O.C. (See operation orders.)

² A. 58, 59, 60.

³ A. 61.

⁴ A. 62, 65.

⁵ This gun was transferred from the *Sirdar-i-Naphte*, which was now paid off and returned to her local owners.

⁶ The *Medjidieh* and *Blosse Lynch* each mounted 2—18-pr. field guns, which were to be placed at the disposal of the S.N.O. after the troops were landed.

Malamir and *Salimi*, carrying the troops,¹ arrived at 5.0 a.m. on 4th December, and the force proceeded up the river to Shaib, 3 miles below Qurna in the bend of the river, and out of sight of the town. Here the *Odin* (manœuvring with difficulty on account of her damaged rudder) and the armed launches anchored, the *Espiègle* and *Lawrence* anchoring about daylight higher up the river in sight of the spit of Qurna, to cover the landing of the troops, which was to be effected at Shaib on the right bank of the river of that name,² which here joins the Tigris. It is a river of considerable volume and depth, and would have been difficult to bridge or transport the troops across.

Fire was opened on the ships at about 6.45 a.m. from the guns on the left bank of the river and from Qurna; and the *Espiègle*, *Odin* and *Lawrence* replied. The enemy soon ceased fire, and the landing of the troops was effected by 9 a.m.³

At 9.40 a.m., however, the enemy guns at Mazara and Qurna opened fire again on the *Espiègle* and *Lawrence*, hitting them several times though without doing serious damage; but by now the *Medjidieh* and *Blosse Lynch* had landed their troops, and they came up on the port quarter of the *Espiègle*, and joined in shelling the enemy's guns and trenches, covering the advance of our troops, which by now was in train.

The enemy were entrenched along the edge of the date palms,⁴ and also in Mazara Village, and some difficulty was experienced by the ships in spotting their fall of shot, and determining the location of our troops as they advanced, signal communication with the troops while in movement being difficult to establish.

By 1 p.m. the enemy had been driven out of their position and retired across the Tigris to Qurna, abandoning their guns, whence they engaged our troops who were entangled in the thick groves of date trees, unable to cross the river in face of the enemy, or to use their field guns. The enemy's position was out of sight of the ships, and the sloops were unable to move in the shallow river. The armed launches *Miner*, *Shaitan* and *Lewis Pelly* were, therefore, sent forward, and they penetrated to within 800 yards of Qurna under heavy gun and rifle fire from the enemy upon whom they themselves could bring no effective fire to bear. The *Miner* was holed in the engine room at the water line,⁵ and was saved from sinking only by the efforts of the Stoker Petty Officer and Stoker, both of whom were wounded and remained at their posts,⁶ and at 3.0 p.m. a

¹ Two field guns, 1/2 Company Sappers and Miners, 1 Company Norfolk Regiment, 2 Indian Battalions under Colonel G. S. Fraser.

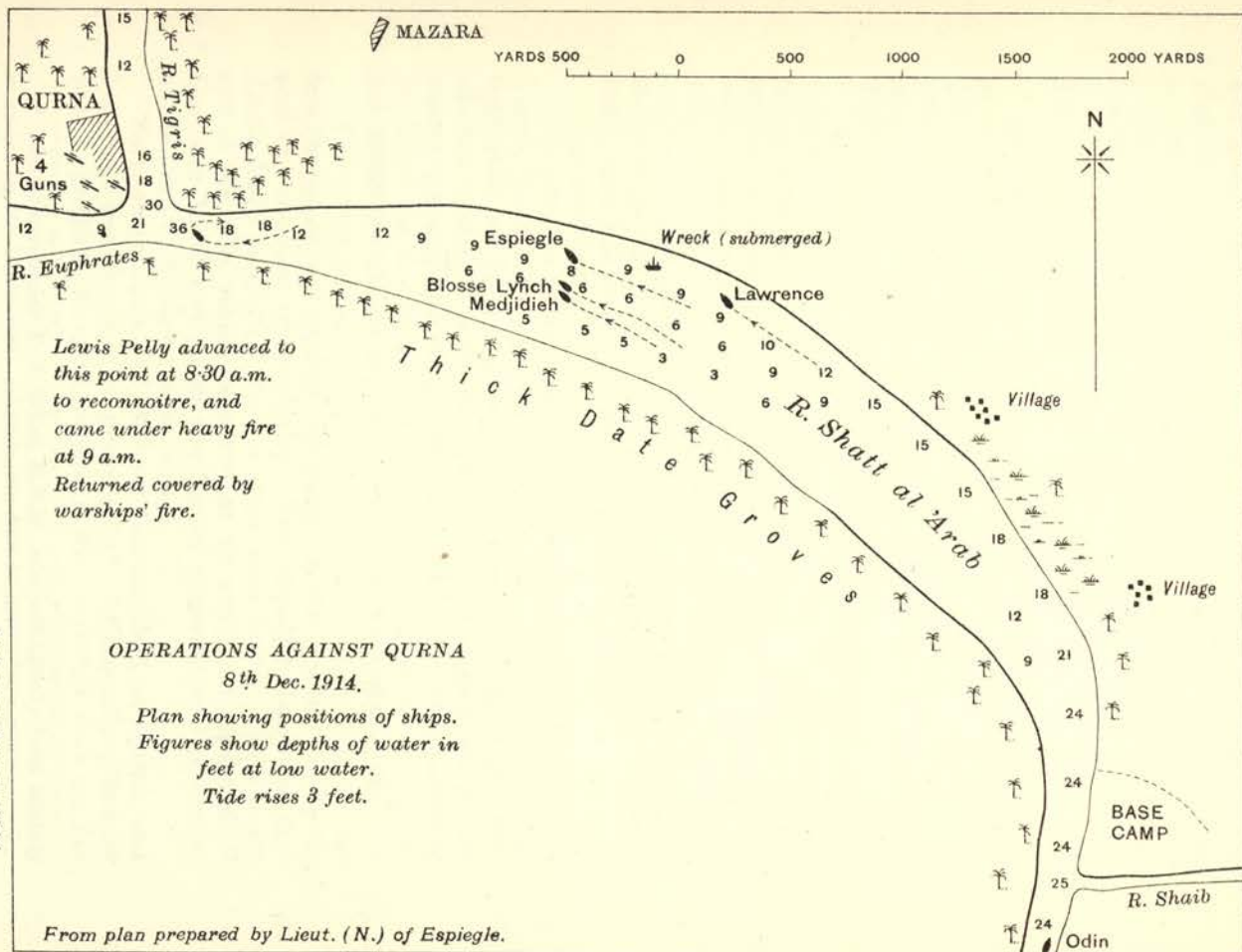
² See Plan 3.

³ Captain Hayes-Sadler's Report. Captain Nunn's Report says 0920.

⁴ See Plan 3.

⁵ She was patched up during the night by *Odin's* staff.

⁶ Stoker P.O. A. Jones, R.N. (awarded C.G.M.), and Stoker D. Lacey, R.N.R. (awarded D.S.M.).



PLAN 4

To face page

general retirement of the troops having been ordered, the *Shaitan* and *Lewis Pelly* were recalled.

At 6.15 p.m. the enemy opened fire once more on the *Espiègle* and *Miner*, the remaining ships having dropped back. The *Espiègle* was aground, superintending the *Miner's* temporary repairs; but at 6.30 p.m. the tide had risen sufficiently to render her manageable, and the *Miner's* repairs being completed the two ships retired undamaged.

The troops encamped at Shaib to await the arrival of reinforcements from Basra.

29. The Attack Renewed: Capture of Qurna.—Reinforcements under General Fry arrived at 5 a.m. on 6th December. The enemy also had been considerably reinforced and were in position at Mazara and Qurna. General Fry decided that an early attack on Mazara, with the clearing of the left bank of the Tigris, was essential to further operations.

At 9.30 a.m. on 7th December the ships and armed steamers moved up the river about a mile and covered the advance of the troops with their fire. Mazara was stormed at the point of the bayonet at 12.50 p.m., and the *Miner*, *Lewis Pelly* and *Shaitan* were ordered up to assist the left of the troops, the *Espiègle*, which had been struggling through the mud all day, being unable to move further. The launches were heavily fired on; the *Shaitan* had her steering gear damaged and her Captain¹ killed, and was, with difficulty, brought out of action.

The launches were shortly recalled.

By now, the troops were in possession of the left bank of the Tigris, where they camped for the night. Three more enemy field guns had been captured. The crossing of the Tigris was effected on the following day without serious opposition by the enemy, the ships assisting with their shell fire.² It appeared to be due to the diversion created by the latter that the enemy did not discover until too late that the river was being crossed.³

The attack on Qurna was timed to take place at 6 a.m. on 9th December, but during the night of the 8th-9th the Turks sent in a message of surrender. The *Espiègle*, *Lawrence* and *Lewis Pelly* proceeded up the river next morning on a slight rise of the tide, which occurred at 10 a.m., and anchored off Qurna at 10.50 a.m.; and the formal unconditional surrender of the town took place the same day.

Forty-two officers and 969 men surrendered at Qurna, and four guns were found in emplacements.⁴ Amongst the prisoners was a Turkish Naval Lieutenant who reported that on 7th

¹ Lieut.-Commander F. J. Elkes, R.N.R., who had already been slightly wounded on 4th December. *Shaitan* was sent to Basra for repairs.

² See plan 4.

³ G.O.C.'s Report.

⁴ General Barrett to C.G.S., 107 G., 9.12.14 Captain Nunn (Report) says the total captures were the Turkish Commander (Subhi Bey) and 44 officers, 989 men, and 8 guns.

December a chance shot sank his armed motor launch off Qurna. The *Marmariss* was not seen by the ships, though, on 7th December, she was reported to have been driven up the Tigris by our field artillery.

The naval casualties during the five days' operations comprised Lieutenant-Commander Elkes, killed, one seaman, died of wounds, and one officer,¹ one C.P.O. and nine petty officers and men wounded.

CHAPTER VI.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE BASRA POSITION.

30. Minor Operations for consolidating our Position at Qurna.

—The capture of Qurna established our authority over the entire Shatt-al-'Arab valley, and over the whole waterway navigable for sea-going steamers, Qurna being the limit of such navigation.

The Naval forces in this country at this time comprised the *Espiègle*, Captain Wilfred Nunn,² (S.N.O.), *Laurence*, *Shaitan*,³ and *Lewis Pelly*. The *Comet* was commissioned on 1st January, 1915, by Lieutenant Irving H. Palmer and the crew of the *Mashona*, which then reverted to her duties as a tug. The *Miner*⁴ was refitting at Abadan, and the *Odin* was at Bombay, having her damaged rudder repaired.⁵ The *Dalhousie* was in the Persian Gulf, and the *Ocean* had left for Aden.⁶

Since the capture of Qurna it had become evident that there were considerable bodies of hostile Arabs round the place, and there was a great deal of sniping into the camps at night. Spies reported that a body of Turks was near Mazeebala, north of Rota Creek,⁷ just south of which, and about 7 miles north of Qurna, the Turks had sunk four large lighters in the river, and thus blocked the passage for the sloops. On the 1st January, 1915, a reconnaissance was carried out up the right bank of the Tigris by a small military force supported by the *Espiègle*, *Shaitan* and the *Blosse Lynch* which had retained her armament of two 18-pr. field guns. The ships did not get within range of the

¹ Mr. Richard Gain, gunner, R.I.M. (*Miner*). This list is as given by Captain Nunn. The S.N.O.'s telegraphic report to the Admiralty evidently does not include casualties among the R.I.M.

² Commander Nunn was promoted Captain on 31st December 1914.

³ Lieutenant Mark Singleton.

⁴ Lieutenant Carslake had returned to the *Ocean* 11th December on her leaving Qurna, and the *Miner* was now commanded by Lieutenant C. H. Heath-Caldwell.

⁵ She left Qurna on the 11th December 1914, and returned to Basra from Bombay, 16th February 1915.

⁶ Captain Hayes-Sadler and the Officers and men of the *Ocean*, except those left for duty in Mesopotamia, left Qurna on 11th December 1914.

⁷ See Plan 5.

enemy. It was found very difficult to navigate the *Espiègle*, in the river which narrows very much above Qurna, and has many sharp turns; and although the ships got nearly up to the obstruction,¹ the actual state of affairs could not be ascertained without carrying out diving operations. Until that was done it was impossible to say how much the lighters were damaged and what steps were necessary for raising them. Diving operations would necessitate a force being stationed in the neighbourhood for protection. The river was now rising, and every day rendered salvage operations more difficult.² No decision on the subject was made at the time as it was not known whether the expedition would go higher up the river than Qurna.

On 6th January the *Espiègle*, *Shaitan*, *Comet* and *Lewis Pelly* convoyed the river steamers *Medjidieh* and *Malamir* carrying a small force of troops up the Euphrates to make a reconnaissance of the river and the Hamar Lake, and to deport the pro-Turkish Shaikh of Chabaish, a large Arab village among the swamps.³ The *Espiègle* had to anchor two and a half miles east of Chabaish on account of the shallow water, but the shallow draught craft proceeded to the village. The inhabitants displayed white flags, and the Shaikh was removed without opposition. The Hamar Lake was found to be too shallow for navigation even by the armed launches.

On the 12th January, while supporting the daily cavalry patrol on the Tigris, which had been instituted to the northward, the *Miner* sighted an enemy launch in Peardrop Bend. The *Espiègle* came up and sank this at 5,000 yards range, and exchanged some rounds with a force of Turkish troops.

At this time there were signs of Turkish activity, and reports of large reinforcements⁴ arriving at their camps at Sachricha⁵ and Rota. Finally, the Turks occupied the sandhills 6 miles north of Mazara, and General Barrett decided to drive them back in order to impress upon our troops as well as upon the enemy that it was not our intention merely to maintain a passive defence of our position at Qurna-Mazara.⁶ The Navy was to co-operate from the Tigris and was also to guard the mouth of the Shaib and Euphrates, the *Medjidieh*, with two 18-pr. field guns and some troops, being placed under the orders of the S.N.O.

The troops moved off at dawn on 20th January, and at 6.50 a.m. the *Espiègle* (with some Army signal personnel on board), *Miner*, and *Medjidieh* proceeded up the Tigris from their anchorage off Tigris Camp. At 7.50 a.m.⁷ the ships came into action with the enemy's guns posted on the south side of Rota

¹ See Plan 5.

² Telegram from S.N.O. to G.O.C., 1st January 1915.

³ See Plan 7.

⁴ Intelligence Reports.

⁵ See Plan 5.

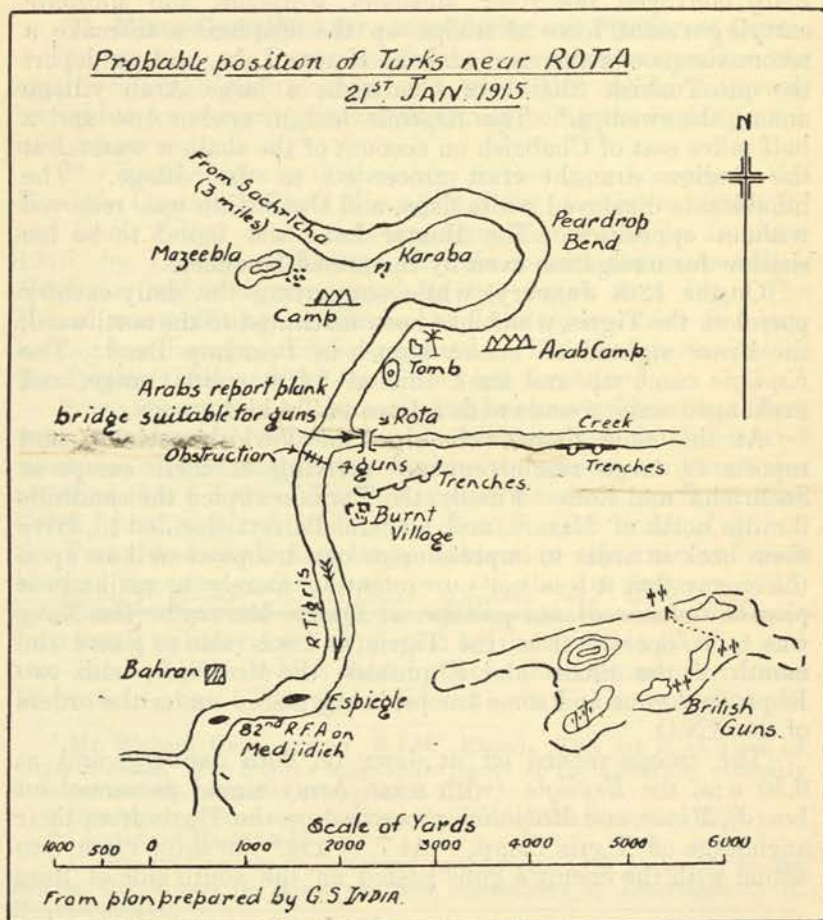
⁶ General Barrett's Report.

⁷ S.N.O.'s Report. Captain Nunn's narrative gives 7.30 a.m.

village, and they anchored in position to bring as many guns as possible to bear on the enemy, with whom they became hotly engaged. The enemy's fire was good for direction, but badly laid for elevation, and no damage was done to the ships. By 10.45 a.m. the enemy's guns were almost silenced.

The Oxfordshire Light Infantry had cleared the enemy off the sandhills, but the troops were now entangled in the marshy ground in front of the enemy's main position, part of which seems to have been on the south side of Rota Creek. A large body of infantry, estimated at between one and two thousand men, coming from Sachricha to reinforce this position, was dispersed by the *Espiegle's* fire.

PLAN 5.



The G.O.C. had not intended to cross Rota Creek, as his force was insufficient to maintain its position if the enemy were reinforced from Baghdad; and as further advance across the marshy ground would probably have entailed considerable casualties,

at 10.35 a.m. a retirement was ordered and was carried out under cover of the fire of the ships and the field batteries.

About 1 a.m. on the 30th January some 300 Turks attacked Mazara from the north-east in a quarter where the ships' guns could not co-operate in the defence. The Qurna garrison moved out to the northward on the morning of that day, in pursuance of a pre-arranged plan, supported by the *Miner* and *Lewis Pelly*, and carried out a small punitive movement.

31. The Oil Pipe Line Cut : Operations up the Karun.—The presence of British forces in Mesopotamia had not sufficed entirely to stop the spread of the Jihad movement, which showed itself in Southern Arabistan. At length the situation at Ahwaz became so critical that on 29th January the Secretary of State for India urged the despatch of troops up the Karun to protect the oilfields.¹ India pointed out in reply² that the oilfields were only a secondary objective. The situation was so threatening that all Europeans were evacuated on 31st January and sent to Muhammara.

Meanwhile, General Barrett had already despatched a small force of infantry, and the *Shaitan* and *Comet* were sent to Nasiri, the port of Ahwaz in Persian territory, and the highest point to which the ships could proceed, to support the force.³ Co-operation was also afforded by the Shaikh of Muhammara with 1,000 armed Arabs. No protest against the presence of our ships was raised by Persia.⁴ On the 5th February the pipe-line was cut above Ahwaz by tribesmen, and reinforcements under General Robinson were despatched from Basra. On 21st February the Shaikh's troops inflicted a defeat on the rebel Arab forces and occupied Wais,⁵ and the Karun was ~~been~~ cleared of the enemy as far as Bund-i-Kir, ~~it~~ it was possible to ~~send out~~ ^{send out} parties ~~under escort to mend~~ the pipe-line.

Trouble had also developed farther down the river, and the *Espiegle* and *Lawrence* had to be sent to Marid, 10 miles from Muhammara, to support the Shaikh's force.

32. The Reverse at Ahwaz.—Towards the end of February, from information brought in by spies and reconnaissances, a Turkish force under Khalil Bey, with Arabs under Shaikh Saiyid Namieh, numbering from 5,000 to 6,000, was located about 10 miles to the north-westward of Ahwaz. It was reported that they intended to attack when the Arab Shaikh Ghazban joined them with his Beni Lam tribesmen. Brigadier-General Robinson, commanding at Ahwaz, decided to attack them before the junction was effected. Unknown to us, however, it was

¹ Secretary of State to Viceroy, P. 1607.

² Viceroy to Secretary of State, P.H. 3101, 30th January 1915.

³ S.N.O., Persian Gulf, to Admiralty, 14 of 28th January 1915, and F.O. to Minister at Teheran, No. 30 of 3rd February 1915.

⁴ Minister at Teheran to F.O., No. 47, 3rd February 1915.

⁵ See Plan 1.

effected on the evening of the 2nd March. Our troops¹ moved out of camp on the morning of 3rd March and quickly came in contact with the enemy. Large bodies of irregular Arab cavalry endeavoured to outflank and threatened to surround our force. A retirement was ordered; one of the Indian battalions² proved unsteady, and a severe rear guard action had to be fought at short range by the handful of Dorsets and the cavalry, which enabled our troops to extricate themselves with the loss of one field gun and nearly 200 casualties, including six British officers killed.

The enemy's guns came into action at the end of the retirement and were apparently directed by trained gunners. The retirement was supported by the fire of the *Shaitan* and *Comet*. The enemy, however, lost some 500 to 700 men killed,³ and the action had great effect in breaking the confidence of the Arab tribes and checking the spread of fanaticism throughout the district.⁴ Steps were immediately taken by General Barrett to concentrate a brigade at Ahwaz. On the day previous to this action the Viceroy telegraphed that, owing to the reported massing of the Turks for an attack on Basra, grave anxiety was felt for the position of Force "D,"⁵ though India could spare no further reinforcements. But on the 5th March, on the news of the reverse, the Cabinet ordered the Government of India to despatch reinforcements, at the same time relieving the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief from any responsibility as to what subsequently might occur in India from this depletion of their military reserves.⁶

33. Turkish Concentration at Nasiriya.—As early as the end of December 1914, information began to be received of the despatch of Turkish reinforcements to Baghdad and Mosul.⁷ It gradually became evident that the Turks intended to make an offensive against Basra,⁸ and the sufficiency of General

¹ Two Troops, 33rd Cavalry, two Sections R.F.A., one Section Ind. M. Artillery, one Officer, 20 men Dorsets, three D. Company's 4th Rajputs, three D. Company's 7th Rajputs.

² 4th Rajputs.

³ G.O.C., I.E.F., "D." to C.G.S., India, 7th March 1915.

⁴ General Barrett's Report, 9th March 1915.

⁵ Telegram: Viceroy to Secretary of State—P.H. 3517, 2nd March 1915. Earl Kitchener to General Sir B. Duff, 16th January 1915. "Turkish army in Mesopotamia apparently being increased to two and possibly three divisions. These numbers may make situation on the river less secure than is desirable. Presume your troops are well entrenched and you can reinforce them."

⁶ Telegrams: Secretary of State to Viceroy, P. 1683, 4th March 1915, and P. 1689, 5th March 1915.—Two Infantry Brigades, one Battery R.F.A., and one Company Sappers and Miners were sent, and reached Basra 25th March—10th April 1915.

⁷ Telegram: Viceroy to Secretary of State, H. 2705, 2nd January 1915, and Sir J. Buchanan to Sir E. Grey, 854.

⁸ Telegram: S.N.O., Persian Gulf, to Admiralty, 22nd January 1915, and Viceroy to Secretary of State, 26th January 1915.

Barrett's force to hold the position came into question.¹ The Jihad movement had made some ground amongst the Arabs,² and to meet the pressure which was foreshadowed, General Barrett's force was reinforced by another brigade (12th) from India. The reinforcements ordered to be despatched to him on 5th March by the Home Government brought his forces up to the strength of two divisions.

On the Tigris line the Arabs were making overtures to us,³ and although the Turks were in considerable force, an attack on the strong Qurna position was considered unlikely.⁴ The Turks were withdrawing some of their troops from this line, partly on account of the exceptionally high floods, and also for operations against Basra and Ahwaz.⁵

The main concentration of the enemy on the Euphrates line was at Nasiriya,⁶ and it was from this point that the attempt to turn us out of Basra was expected. On 25th February our cavalry were in contact with hostile cavalry beyond Shaiba.

34. The Euphrates Blockade.—The *Miner* and *Lewis Pelly* had frequently to patrol the Euphrates to Chabaish owing to the presence of two Turkish patrol boats based on Nasiriya. With a view to harassing the enemy's communications from the westward a small flotilla was employed from 3rd March onwards in the arm of the Euphrates near Gurmat Ali, and operated near Nakhaila. Two military 4-inch guns were mounted on a barge, which was convoyed by two sternwheel shallow-draught steamers, the *Shushan* and *Muzaffri*. The *Shushan*⁷ was armed with two 3-pr. guns and crew from the *Espiègle*. The ships were accompanied by a tug, a motor boat, and detachment of troops. This flotilla met with considerable success, sinking, shelling, and setting fire to some of the enemy's dhows and mahelas⁸ conveying their stores, and in spite of the shallow water, getting near enough to shell the enemy's camp on several occasions. On 22nd and 23rd March the fort at Ghubashiya was bombarded and destroyed; and on one occasion there was an engagement with the two Turkish motor patrol boats which tried to approach the *Shushan*, disguised with branches of trees.⁹

The blockade by the gunboats on the Euphrates had a considerable effect on the enemy, as it compelled them to change their line of supply from the easy method of carriage by native craft to land transit across the desert.¹⁰

¹ Viceroy to Secretary of State, P.H. 3517, 2nd March 1915.

² Viceroy to Secretary of State, H. 3053, 27th January 1915.

³ Sir P. Cox to Secretary of State for India, No. 382 B., 4th March 1915.

⁴ Mesopotamia Expedition, p. 15.

⁵ Captain Nunn's Report, pp. 102-3.

⁶ C.G.S., India, to C.G.S., No. S. 4729, 1.42, 6th March 1915.

⁷ Lieut.-Commander Arthur G. Seymour (*Espiègle*).

⁸ Open native boats.

⁹ "Summary of Operations by Euphrates Expedition," 11th March 1915.

¹⁰ Captain Nunn's Report, p. 106.

35. **The Enemy's Mining Activity on the Tigris.**—The Turks made attempts to blow up our ships at Qurna by floating mines down the river, one exploding on the night of 10th March near the *Odin*, which had rejoined from Bombay on 17th February. On the morning of the 19th March the *Marmariss* was observed to be under weigh in the vicinity of the Peardrop Bend. The *Odin* proceeded up the river and engaged her, but the *Marmariss* did not come down past the obstruction at Rota. The Turkish guns at Rota also joined in the engagement. As the *Odin* advanced an observation mine was exploded in the river ahead of her, and it was afterwards established by the capture of the *Marmariss*' log that her activity was a ruse to draw the *Odin* over the minefield.

The *Espiègle* proceeded to Qurna on 2nd April to relieve the *Odin* and permit the latter to return to Basra to complete with coal, ammunition, and stores. But reports coming in of enemy activity near Birbeck Creek to the northward of Qurna, the *Espiègle* proceeded up the Tigris on 3rd April to reconnoitre and ascertain whether they were mounting any guns. Fire was opened on her from three 15-pr. guns on the sandhills just north of Birkbeck Creek. She was hit twice and sustained casualties. The *Espiègle* replied vigorously and silenced one of the guns, and shelled the enemy's trenches, whence rifle fire was being directed at her, our military 4-inch guns endeavouring to assist at long range. Two 5-inch guns were sent up from Basra and arrived on 5th April, and the enemy's positions were bombarded by them.

The enemy had not abandoned his attempt to sink our ships by mines, for on the nights of the 10th and 14th April mines exploded near the *Odin*, which had relieved the *Espiègle* on 7th April. In consequence of this the *Odin* in future lay below the bridge of boats which crossed the Tigris just above Qurna. This was mined on the morning of 12th April and seriously damaged.

36. **General Nixon takes over Command; Battle of Shaiba.**—On 9th April General Sir John Nixon arrived at Basra and assumed command of Indian Expeditionary Force "D."

Our forces at this time were threatened from three sides, viz., on the Tigris north of Qurna, on the Karun near Ahwaz, and by the strong enemy forces concentrating to the westward of Basra, whose base was Nasiriya. This was the most important concentration, and where the enemy decided to make his principal effort. To meet it, General Nixon had in this, the Shaiba Sector, on a front of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, two infantry brigades, one of R.F.A. and a mountain battery. Communication was rendered difficult by the floods from 1 to 4 feet deep which covered the desert between Basra and Shaiba, and reinforcements, ammunition and supplies had to be sent up by bellums—native craft which could carry 8–10 men or their equivalent in ammunition and stores. The Navy were unable

to approach Shaiba or support the troops with their gunfire owing to the shallowness of the water, and the troops were unable to move on foot owing to the creeks hidden by the floods.

Our outposts had already (March 16th) been in touch with the enemy. Contact was made with the advance guard of the enemy on 10th April near Shaiba.

On 12th and 13th April there was fighting round Shaiba. On 14th a decisive victory was gained at Barjisiya, and the enemy fled across the desert in confusion, their retreat being harassed by their former allies, the Arabs, and by our ships on the Euphrates. But shortage of transport precluded pursuit by our troops, who could otherwise have entered Nasiriya on the heels of the flying enemy,¹ thereby obviating an arduous campaign later in the year.

This brilliant engagement resulted in clearing the Shat-al-Arab delta of all Turkish or Arab enemies. Basra was now secure. The plan of the British Government in despatching an expedition to Mesopotamia has been realised in all respects, save that the protection of the oil supply was not yet complete.²

CHAPTER VII.

THE OCCUPATION OF AMARA.

37. **Expedition up the Karun.**—With Sir John Nixon's arrival in Mesopotamia Indian Expeditionary Force "D" was organised as an Army Corps. Sir John's orders³ were to retain complete control of the Basra Vilayet, which includes Nasiriya and Amara, and extends to within 4 miles of Kut. A secondary objective, which was not to prejudice his main operations, was to secure the safety of the oil-fields, pipe-line and refineries of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. These instructions are dated 24th March 1915, but the Home Authorities had no knowledge of them until they were received by mail at the India Office on 2nd May.⁴

The question of the oil-field and pipe-line had again become acute, and on 20th April the Admiralty brought to the notice of the India Office the serious consequences of a shortage of oil.⁵ In consequence of this the XIIIth Division under General

¹ Memorandum by General Kemball, 8th July 1915 (M 07175/15).

² Mesopotamia Commission: Report, p. 16.

³ B. 6.

⁴ Mesopotamia Commission: Report, p. 6.

⁵ Secretary of Admiralty to Under Secretary of State, I.O., M/N. S 2818-15, 20th April 1915 and letter of 23rd May 1915. It had recently been established that toluene could be extracted from Persian oil, and there was a considerable demand for it for the manufacture of important explosives.

Gorringe was despatched up the Karun. The operations of the expedition were entirely military, and took place outside the limits of naval co-operation. They extended over a period of seven weeks, and as a result of them and of a victory over rebellious tribesmen by our ally, the Shaikh of Muhammara, Persian Arabistan was cleared of the enemy, and the Arab tribes were forced to submit, thus enabling the pipe-line to be repaired and normal conditions to be resumed at the oil-fields. On 15th June General Nixon was able to telegraph to Simla¹ that the situation in Arabistan had about returned to the normal. The flow of oil was restored, and oil reached Abadan once more on 13th June.²

38. The Decision to Advance on Amara.—As long ago as 20th December 1914, Sir Percy Cox, the Chief Political Officer in Mesopotamia, had urged the occupation of Amara.³

This town stands on the left bank of the Tigris, amid canals and marshes, 92 miles above Qurna. It had a mixed population, estimated at about 20,000, and was a centre of trade. Under the Turks it was the headquarters of a sanjaq in the Basra Vilayet, and had a garrison, harbour-master, customs, telegraph, &c. The town is fairly well built, and has a fine new frontage and bazaar.

Sir Percy Cox urged its occupation in the following telegram:—

“Amara Town possesses considerable importance, and from an administrative point of view, it would be convenient if the district came under our control as it is within the Basra Vilayet. The country beyond Amara district comes under the administration of Baghdad and different sets of tribes; so that its possession by us need not, politically speaking, necessarily entail any further advance, and question admits of being considered on its independent merits.”

In a telegram of 3rd January 1915,⁴ he supplemented this as follows:—

“Amara is the point on the Tigris where Turko-Persian frontier approaches nearest, it being only 30 miles distant.

“Possession of Amara will enable us effectively to safeguard Arabistan frontier against Turkish aggression when necessary, and at the same time to manage and influence Beni Lam who are dependent on Amara and are at present a chronic thorn in the side of Shaikh of Muhammara, who has strong views on this aspect of question”

There were also advantages concerned with trade to be obtained from the occupation of Amara.

Sir John Nixon himself, though he did not specifically mention that he contemplated its occupation, telegraphed to Simla on 19th April 1915, for another cavalry brigade,⁵ which request was interpreted by the Secretary of State for India as

¹ G.O.C. I.E.F. “D” to C.G.S., India, No. 84.

² G.O.C. I.E.F. “D” to C.G.S., India, No. 83, 14th June 1915.

³ See Plan I. ⁴ No. 12 B.

⁵ It was not supplied. (Telegram, 23rd April 1915.)

indicating an intention to carry out an important offensive movement.¹ Accordingly on the 24th April Lord Crewe telegraphed to the Viceroy as follows²:—

“With reference to Nixon’s request for a cavalry brigade I concur in your decision,³ as, apart from the impossibility of complying,⁴ the approach of the hot season renders despatch of more troops, especially British, inadvisable.

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

Meanwhile, General Nixon proceeded with his preparations. On the same day (24th April 1915) that Lord Crewe telegraphed to the Viceroy urging caution, Major-General Townshend, who had arrived from India two days previously, and had taken over the command of the VIth Division, was directed by Sir John Nixon to proceed at once to Qurna to reconnoitre the Turkish position north of that place and to form a plan of attack.⁵ Sir John considered that he was strong enough to undertake the operations against Amara without reinforcements.⁶

The Admiralty at this time were anxious that the supply of oil should not be interrupted again in the future.

“My Lords desire to urge the great importance of keeping the line safeguarded in the future. The interruption (viz., during the early part of the year) has already cost the State a very considerable sum, and Admiralty contracts with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company cover a large amount of Admiralty requirements, besides the quantity which is being redistilled for toluene. It is, therefore, considered of extreme urgency that no other breakdown should be experienced.”⁷

Strategically, Amara was precisely the point, possession of which would enable us to protect the pipe line. The Viceroy,

¹ Sir John Nixon gave evidence before the Mesopotamia Commission that he understood he had been sent to Mesopotamia to pursue a more vigorous policy than his predecessor. (Mesopotamia Commission: Report.)

² No. 1812. The text of this telegram is as given in “Mesopotamia Expedition,” p. 24, but the Mesopotamia Commission: Report, p. 17, gives a slightly different version.

³ Viz., not to despatch one.

⁴ Owing to shortage of cavalry in India.

⁵ Despatch No. 168, dated 26th June.

⁶ Viceroy to Secretary of State, 23rd May 1915.

⁷ Admiralty Letter, 23rd May 1915.

therefore, supported Sir John Nixon's plans,¹ and on 23rd May Lord Crewe gave his permission for the advance to be made, in a telegram which clearly reveals his dislike of the project²:—

"I sanction proposed move on the clear understanding that General Nixon is satisfied that he can concentrate a sufficient garrison at Amara to defy any attack from Baghdad during the summer when it may be difficult for him to reinforce so advanced a position. He must clearly understand his action, must be guided by the fact that we can send him no further troops. As he must have made his arrangements for this move some days ago, I hold that he should have submitted his proposal before the last moment. Questions jointly involving civil and military policy should, under present circumstances, only be decided by the Cabinet."

39. Naval Forces, May 1915.—The available naval forces in Mesopotamia at this time comprised the sloops *Espiègle*, *Odin*, and *Clio*,³ the *Lawrence*, and the armed launches *Miner*, *Shaitan*, and *Comet*. The paddle steamer *Shushan* had been armed with two 3-prs. for convoying the two military 4-inch guns mounted in barges during the operations connected with the Euphrates blockade.⁴ The *Dalhousie* had gone to Jask from Muscat with reinforcements on account of an expected attack by Afghans at Jask.

Two of the four naval 4·7-inch guns mounted in horseboats, with crews from the *Espiègle* and *Odin*, had been operating in the New Channel of the Euphrates⁵ on the flank of the enemy retreating after the Battle of Shaiba. On 22nd May the officers and men of the *Lewis Pelly* were transferred to the small shallow-draught tug *Sumana*, which was taken up from Messrs. Lynch and armed with a 12-pr. 8 cwt., 2—3-prs., and Maxims, the *Lewis Pelly* being afterwards employed as a minesweeper.

For the operations against Amara the naval forces selected comprised the sloops *Espiègle*, *Odin*, and *Clio*, the *Lawrence*, *Shaitan*, *Sumana*, and *Miner*, the *Bahreïn* and *Lewis Pelly* as minesweepers, and all four of the 4·7-inch naval guns mounted in horseboats. The troops detailed were the VIth Division.

39A. Shortage of River Transport.—Owing to the shortage of river transport no advance from Qurna could take place before the return of the steamers taken by General Gorrings up the Karun. We had sufficient troops but not sufficient steamers to undertake simultaneous operations.⁶

¹ Viceroy to Secretary of State, 23rd May 1915.

² Secretary of State to Viceroy, 23rd May 1915.

³ Commander Colin Mackenzie, D.S.O. On 18th February 1915 the Admiralty had inquired of the C.-in-C., East Indies, whether the *Clio* could be spared for the Persian Gulf, and on receiving his reply in the affirmative they ordered her to be despatched. On account of the situation in Persia, she had been despatched by Captain Nunn to Bushire (arrived 12th March), whence she had now returned.

⁴ See paragraph 34.

⁵ See plan 7.

⁶ General Kembell's Memorandum, 8th July 1915.

At the time of the Qurna operations the Director of the Royal Indian Marine had asked the Government of India for information as to operations projected in Mesopotamia, in order that he might arrange to supplement the Marine staff, stores, and material as necessary.¹ At this time, however, the policy of the Government did not contemplate an advance up the Tigris.

The need for more river transport had been made known in November 1914 and again in January, before Sir John Nixon's arrival in the country, and on the 25th of that month the Viceroy telegraphed to the War Office that General Barrett required seven shallow-draught steamers and two lighters, in addition to vessels locally available, for an advance above Qurna.² These vessels were purchased in India, and they arrived at Basra in May 1915. On 28th April he telegraphed again that General Barrett required a further four large steam cutters or launches, and four river tugs,³ and the latter were taken up in India, armed, and towed out, arriving at Basra shortly after the seven river steamers.

Up to date, with the exception of the expedition up the Karun, operations had been practically confined to the banks of the Shatt-al-'Arab, from which the Turks had been pressed back, though they remained in considerable numbers within striking distance. During these operations it had been possible to supply the troops by ocean steamers. Above Qurna, however, the character of the Tigris altered; deep-draught steamers could no longer be used, and the supply and transport of the troops was dependent upon river steamers of a special type suitable for use in the rivers of Mesopotamia. Several such vessels had been taken up locally,⁴ but the number available was insufficient.

40. Operations up the Tigris: "Townshend's Regatta."—The naval forces and the VIth Division were concentrated near Qurna by 30th May 1915, with the river transport which had been in use on the Karun for General Gorrings's force, and which now became available. Qurna was at this time practically an invested town, and the troops were suffering much discomfort from the floods in their cramped quarters, where they were subjected to continual sniping and artillery fire. From 18th to 29th May General Gorrings had been ordered to demonstrate from Bisaitin so as to co-operate with the impending

¹ From D.R.I.M. to Secretary to Government of India, Marine Department, 8th December 1914 (Diary No. 8,976). "I have received letters and wires from Basra river indicating that a number of small craft are to be used and an advance made up the river. Can I be given any information on this head so that Marine staff, stores, and material may be supplemented as necessary."

² H. 3,467.

³ H. 4,507.

⁴ See table, p. 74.

advance up the Tigris, and these demonstrations were of material assistance to General Townsend in his operations.¹

General Townshend's orders were to drive the enemy from his positions between the Peardrop Bend and Qurna and to capture his guns, and to push him up-river and occupy Amara, the operation to be continuous.² The strength of the enemy was reported to be five battalions with 10 guns,³ and his main positions were at Bahran, Rota, Mazeebla, and Sachricha.⁴ He had occupied his position since January, and greatly strengthened it with entrenchments and gun emplacements.

The operations took place at the height of an abnormal flood season, and the whole country surrounding Qurna was a great sheet of water, with marshes and high reeds on each side of the river, stretching in places for miles.⁵ Rising from the water were the sandhills and higher pieces of land on which the enemy had made his gun positions. The flood water in many places was very shallow, but the bottom was intersected with deep-water cuts, ditches, and canals, which usually made wading impossible; in fact, there was too much water for the Army, but generally too little for the Navy. The flooded state of the country demanded a combination of naval and military operations methodically undertaken in successive phases, as in siege warfare.⁶ The infantry was carried in armoured bellums,⁷ which were prepared beforehand. A number of the infantry had been taught to propel these craft by paddling in the deep water and punting or dragging through the shallows. Second line bellums followed with ammunition and supplies which they obtained from their supply mahela or dhow. Heavy, field, and mountain guns were mounted in barges, rafts, tugs, and paddlers. Field ambulances and machine guns were carried on rafts; and mahelas, roofed like Noah's Ark, were used as field hospitals. General Townshend himself was on board the *Espiègle*, his staff being divided between the sloops. Amongst the British soldiers, irrepensible in spite of the sweltering heat,⁸ flies and mosquitoes, and general discomforts, these novel conditions were regarded as a huge joke, and much rivalry ensued between the various bellums' crews, and the operation was christened locally "Townshend's Regatta."

¹ General Nixon's Despatch, No. 168-6-0, dated 26th June 1915. The force under Mahmud Daghistani Pasha, which had retired across the Karkeh River before General Gorringe, was surprised by us when we entered Amara, where part of its advanced guard was captured and the remainder was dispersed by *Shaitan* with loss of two guns. (Captain Nunn's Report, pp. 133-4.)

² Report by Major-General Townshend, No. 25-30 G.S., dated 11th June 1915.

³ The actual strength was afterwards found to be six battalions with 1,800 Arabs.

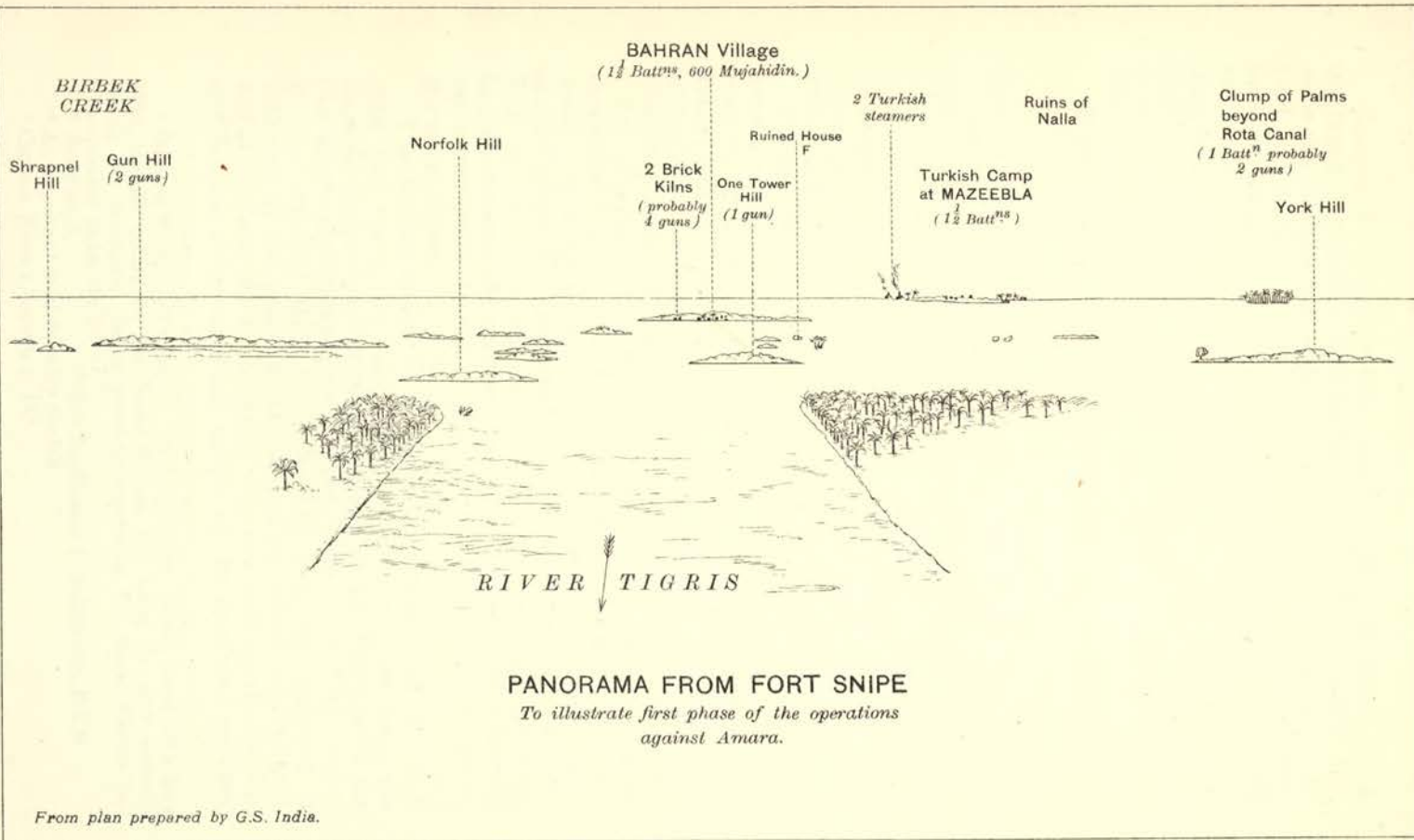
⁴ See Plan 5.

⁵ See Plan 6.

⁶ General Townshend's Report.

⁷ Native boats.

⁸ Average daily temperature, May 1915, 4 a.m., 78° F.; 4 p.m., 87.4° F. (From *Espiègle's* log.)



Ordnance Survey, 1921.

PLAN 6

To face page

General Townshend's plan was to attack the enemy by a combined frontal and turning attack. The frontal attack was to be the decisive one, supported by the bulk of the guns on land and afloat.¹ At 5 a.m. on 31st May the heavy bombardment of the enemy's position commenced and lasted for about two hours. Two aeroplanes had arrived at Basra on 14th May. They had been unpacked and put together, and made their first flight on 27th May. Both machines were flying over the enemy's position when the bombardment commenced. The ships co-operated from the following positions:—

Espiègle and *Clio* in Tigris off Qurna for advance up the Tigris.

Odin in the Shatt-al-'Arab, about a mile below Qurna, in a position to enfilade the enemy's gun positions on Tower Hill.

Lawrence and *Miner*, with three of the 4.7-inch guns in houseboats in the Euphrates, firing up Norfolk Creek.

On the right flank the *Comet*, with a 4.7-inch gun in a houseboat, a launch, and a force of infantry in a paddle steamer in support, proceeded at daylight on 31st May up the Shaib Creek,² and bombarded the enemy's position on the sandhills and at Rota to divert attention from the main attack.

On the left flank the *Shushan*, mounting two 3-pdrs., with guns' crews from the *Espiègle*, and a detachment of troops with machine guns under the command of Sub-Lieutenant R. H. Lilley, R.N., of the *Odin*, and the stern-wheeler *Muzaffri*,³ with troops and machine guns on board, proceeded up the Al Huir Creek at daylight on 31st May, acting in co-operation with some 2,000 friendly Arabs under the Shaikh of Medina.⁴ They encountered great difficulty in navigating the shallow creek, could only make little progress, and came under the fire of a small Turkish gun in position near the Arab village of Rumla. They had no casualties, however, and rejoined the main body in the afternoon, their action having had the effect of diverting the marsh Arabs from attacking the left flank of our troops in the main advance.⁵

The bombardment by the *Odin*, *Lawrence*, and 4.7-inch guns had commenced at 5.10 a.m. Five minutes later the *Espiègle* weighed and proceeded slowly up the Tigris with the *Clio* astern, and engaged the Turkish guns on Gun Hill, which at once returned their fire. Norfolk Hill was captured at 7.25 a.m. at the point of the bayonet by infantry in bellums, and at 8.15 a.m. the *Espiègle* and *Clio* preceded by the *Shaitan* and *Sumana* sweeping ahead, moved up the river and anchored

¹ General Townshend's Report. His Operation Orders, dated 28th May 1915, include orders for the Naval Forces, this being the first instance during the campaign. In all previous operations the Naval Flotilla had "co-operated under the S.N.O."

² See Plan 5.

³ Sub-Lieutenant L. Sanderson, R.I.M.

⁴ An important local friendly Shaikh.

⁵ Captain Nunn's Report, p. 125.

off Norfolk Hill to engage at close range the Turkish guns and trenches near Tower Hill, and to assist the infantry attack on Tower Hill and Gun Hill. The *Odin*, *Lawrence*, and *Miner* also moved up in support, the *Bahrein*¹ and *Lewis Pelly*² being kept in reserve as spare minesweepers. The *Espiègle* received some slight damage from an enemy shell and sustained three casualties.

Tower Hill was captured at 9.30 a.m. by infantry advancing in boats and wading, and by 11.40 a.m. the Turkish guns had been gradually silenced and Gun Hill was taken.

The heat was intense,³ and the flies and mosquitoes intolerable. The remainder of the day was spent in consolidating the position with a view to a further advance next day. The 4.7-inch naval guns⁴ and the military heavy and field guns in their lighters, were now brought up. A boom was placed across the river ahead of the ships as a protection against mines floating down during the night, several having exploded on the bank. The danger of encountering mines during the next day's advance was dealt with by the discovery of the minefield switchboard and observation post on Tower Hill and the fortunate capture of the Turkish mining engineer officer⁵ responsible for the mines in the locality. Placed on board the *Sumana* he readily assisted in pointing out the positions of the leads of a minefield situated just below the obstruction at Rota, which was then destroyed. Captain Khalil stated that his mining company had arrived at Rota four months previously from Baghdad and that observation mines had been laid in the following positions:—

- 4 opposite mouth of Birbek Creek.
- 4 opposite Bahran.
- 3 about 1,500 metres up-stream from Bahran.
- 3 " " " below Rota obstruction.
- 3 at Rota.

Captain Khalil had been assisted by a German Major who, he believed, was formerly employed in the railway workshops at Baghdad. He stated that there were 150 floating mines in charge of German officers at Mazeebala. The moored mines were all afterwards raised by our forces, and some of them were emptied and used later on as buoys in the river.

The bombardment of the Turkish position at Bahran commenced at 5.30 a.m. next day (1st June) by both naval and military guns. There was no reply from the Turkish positions, and on advancing up the river with minesweepers ahead it soon became apparent that the enemy had retreated. This was

¹ Lieut.-Commander C. R. Campbell, R.I.M.

² Lieutenant Duncan R.I.M.

³ Temperature, 4 p.m. 97° F. (*Espiègle's* log).

⁴ Under Sub-Lieutenant R. H. Lilley (*Odin*).

⁵ Captain Khalil.

confirmed by the aircraft, and the flotilla of ships and river craft carrying troops anchored off Bahran at 10.40 a.m.

Examination of the obstruction, which consisted of four sunken lighters nearly covered by the high water in the river at this time of year, established that there was a practicable passage for the sloops near the western bank. The *Shaitan* and *Sumana* were at once sent through to chase the enemy's shipping, whose smoke could be seen in the distance. The passage was buoyed, and shortly after 3 p.m. the *Espiègle*, followed by the *Odin* and *Clio*, succeeded in negotiating it. Navigation was rendered extremely difficult by the bends and twists in the river, of which the ships had only a rough map; and owing to the extensive floods on each side it was very difficult in places to make out the river channel.

The *Marmariss* and river craft towing mahelas were soon made out ahead in flight up the river, and at about 5.50 p.m. the *Shaitan*, who was leading, commenced firing at long range with her 12-pr. gun, and did considerable damage to the enemy ships. The *Espiègle* opened fire with her 4-inch guns at 6.43 p.m. at the Turkish river steamer *Mosul*, shifting target at 7 p.m. to the *Marmariss* which had come within range. The *Clio* and *Odin* shortly joined in the action, which continued until it became too dark for firing or navigation. The heat was intense, the thermometer registering 100° F. at 4 p.m., and dropping only very little with the falling of twilight; and the men suffered much from the flies and mosquitoes in these marshes. A number of lighters and mahelas full of troops, guns, mines, stores, and ammunition, in tow of the *Marmariss*, were abandoned by her in order to facilitate her escape, and they fell into our hands,¹ the *Odin* being detailed to seize them.

The ships anchored at 8.5 p.m. to await the rising of the moon. The searchlight disclosed another Turkish steamer, the *Bulbul*, half submerged in the shallow river, sunk by the *Shaitan's* 12-pounder, with a lighter full of troops and stores which fell into our hands.

At 2 a.m. on 2nd June, the moon having risen, the *Espiègle* and *Clio* weighed and proceeded in company with the *Miner*, *Shaitan*, *Sumana* and the *Comet* (which had been recalled from Shaib Creek). The river was getting more and more shallow, and the ships had great difficulty in proceeding. As day broke the *Marmariss* was discerned, apparently ashore, near Garbi,² about 6 miles above Ezra's Tomb.³ Rapid fire was opened on her, but receiving no reply the ships ceased, and the S.N.O. proceeded with an armed party to take possession of her. She was found to be aground and on fire, showing signs of many hits by 4-inch shells. Her officers and most of her

¹ For detailed list of captures, see S.N.O.'s Report, dated 10th June 1915.

² 31° 23' 5" N.; 47° 27' E.

³ See Plan 1.

crew had escaped during the night. The river steamer *Mosul* was discovered to be aground in the next reach. She was full of troops and stores, and surrendered to the *Shaitan*.¹

41. **The Capture of Amara.**—There appeared to be no doubt that the enemy was thoroughly demoralised. General Townshend decided, therefore, to push on at once with the lighter draught vessels.

As the river was falling, the *Espiègle* and *Clio*, which were practically aground near Garbi, were moved a mile down-stream into deeper water, stern first, as there was no room to turn. General Townshend, transhipped to the *Comet*, and, with the S.N.O., proceeded up the river in pursuit of the Turks at 11 a.m.,² accompanied by the *Shaitan*, *Sumana*, and *Lewis Pelly*, three horseboats, each with a 4·7-inch gun, and Sir Percy Cox, Principal Political Officer, in his steam launch "L. 2." The flotilla anchored for the night above Qualat Sale,³ whose principal Arab citizens came on board to tender their submission, and it proceeded at 5 a.m.⁴ next day (3rd June). No opposition was encountered, and white flags were flying everywhere.

The *Shaitan* was now sent on 3 miles ahead as an advanced guard, and soon after 2 p.m. she steamed into Amara. The town was full of enemy troops, and the little armed tug was surrounded at point-blank range, but so complete was the demoralisation of the Turks that not a shot was fired at her. Two hundred and fifty of the enemy surrendered to her and delivered up their rifles on board.⁵ The remainder of our forces, consisting of a total of 22 British soldiers and sailors, shortly came up, and we received the surrender of Amara from the Governor and Commandant.

Some 30 to 40 officers and 700 regular troops surrendered to General Townshend and his 22 men. An entire battalion of the crack Fire Brigade Regiment from Constantinople (about 500 men) surrendered in barracks to Lieutenant Palmer, R.N., and two men.

Messages were sent down river for our troops to be sent on as fast as possible, and at 6.30 a.m. on 4th June the Norfolks arrived. They were not a moment too soon, as the Arabs had discovered the true state of affairs, and a fusilade had begun in the houses. The arrival of the Norfolks enabled order to be restored.

The prisoners taken during the operations of 31st May to 4th June 1915 comprised 139 officers and 1,634 men. The

¹ Lieutenant Mark Singleton.

² General Townshend's Report, p. 5; but Captain Nunn's Report, p. 131, says noon. *Espiègle's* log says *Shaitan* proceeded at 11.10 a.m.

³ Spelt Kale Sale on Plan 1.

⁴ General Townshend's Report, p. 5; but Captain Nunn's Report, p. 131, says 6 a.m.

⁵ For this exploit Lieutenant Singleton was awarded the D.S.O., and Chief Petty Officer A. J. Roberts, R.N.R. (Coxswain), and Leading Seaman Rowe (G.L.), were awarded the D.S.M.

captures included 12 field guns and five naval guns. The *Marmariss*, five steamers, and a number of barges and small craft were taken or sunk.¹

The total casualties of the British forces during these operations comprised four officers (one killed) and 21 men (three killed).

"I should be wanting in gratitude to the Royal Navy," wrote General Townshend,² "if I did not mentioned the services of the sister Service first of all, for I owe the whole of the success firstly to the Royal Navy. . . ."

CHAPTER VIII.

OPERATIONS ON THE EUPHRATES. CAPTURE OF NASIRIYA.

42. **Naval Dispositions after the Capture of Amara.**—Early in June 1915 the Naval Officers and men from the sloops, who had taken part in the operations against Amara, returned to their ships near Ezra's Tomb, and the sloops left for Basra on 8th June. Great difficulty was experienced in navigating the shallow river, as the water was falling. It was so narrow that the *Espiègle* and *Clio* had to back down stern first for some distance before it was broad enough for them to swing round. After arrival at Basra the *Clio* was sent to Bombay for repairs to her port propeller which had been injured in the late operations. The *Lawrence* had already been sent to Bushire,³ as German agents were known to be stirring up the Persians to attack the place.⁴

At this time—June 1915—excessively high temperatures were being experienced in Mesopotamia. There was a great deal of sickness and many deaths among the troops and although the Navy, on the river, were living under slightly better conditions than the troops, they too had losses from heatstroke. The Admiralty, therefore, ordered that during the hot weather the sloops were to take advantage of any lull in the operations to proceed in turn to Ceylon, where the ships would be refitted and the crews would be sent to the Royal Naval Camps in the

¹ For complete list, see General Townshend's Report, Appendices 18 and 19.

² Report, No. 25-30 G.S., 11th June 1915.

³ Admiralty to S.N.O., Persian Gulf, 16 of 8th June 1915. "India Office want one sloop at Bushire in view of Persian situation." The *Lawrence* had already been despatched.

⁴ The British Residency at Bushire was attacked by Tangistani tribesmen on 12th July 1915. Bushire was occupied by British troops on 8th August. The *Lawrence* took part in the operations at Dilwar, 10th to 16th August 1915, under Captain D. St. A. Wake, H.M.S. *Juno*.

hills at Diyatalawa.¹ But before this routine could be initiated certain operations on the Euphrates had to be carried out.

43. **The Decision to Advance on Nasiriya.**—The question of the practicability of sending a force to occupy the Nasiriya district had already been raised in December 1914 by the India Office.² There was at that time, however, insufficient information to justify a final decision on the question,³ and it was subsequently deferred until the situation was clearer.⁴

Nasiriya, the most important town in the Basra vilayet on the Euphrates, is situated some 9 miles up the river from Qurna. It was the headquarters of the Turkish Sanjaq of Muntifiq, and the Officer Commanding the garrison discharged also the duties of Civil Governor of the Sanjaq, the place being an outpost of Turkish authority in the unsettled country in which the powerful Muntefiq tribe of Arabs especially gave trouble. The town had a mixed population of about 10,000, and was the centre of a considerable trade. It contained some good masonry houses, broad streets and blocks of Turkish Government buildings. Sir John Nixon had been of opinion after the victory at Shaiba that an eventual advance to Nasiriya was essential to the effective occupation of the Basra vilayet, and that if the advance was too long delayed the enemy's forces on the Euphrates line might again become formidable.⁵ But he was prevented at that time from taking advantage of the disorganisation of the enemy's forces to pass on to Nasiriya, as he had not yet found a practicable waterway which would enable him to avoid the difficulties of transport and supply by the desert route.⁶

The construction of a light railway had been advocated on 25th February 1915 by General Barrett, at that time G.O.C. in Mesopotamia, as the best solution for an advance to Nasiriya, and General Nixon had been instructed to report on the possibility of the employment of such a railway. But owing mainly to the flooded state of the country, it was not constructed.⁷

After the battle of Shaiba, therefore, the Euphrates flotilla⁸ was employed in exploring the waterways from the Hamar Lake towards Chabaish,⁹ with a view to the eventual advance

¹ Admiralty to S.N.O., Persian Gulf, 19th May, 1915.

² Secretary of State to Viceroy, P., 14th December, 1914. (Diary No. 9415.)

³ Viceroy to Secretary of State, P. No. H. 2705, 2nd June 1915.

⁴ Secretary of State to Viceroy, P. 1507, 5th January 1915.

⁵ General Nixon to Chief of General Staff, India, No. 129/30-1, of 27th April 1915.

⁶ *Ibid.* But General Kemball's Memo., 8.7.15, states that shortage of river transport prevented our troops from pursuing the disorganised enemy forces to Nasiriya.

⁷ Mesopotamia Commission; Report, p. 58.

⁸ See paragraph 30.

⁹ See Plan 7.

to Nasiriya.¹ These reconnaissances established the fact that the enemy was keeping a good look out on the approach by water to Nasiriya; and it was reported that the mines had been placed in the Gurnal Safha or Haqiqa Channel,² and that steamers had been sunk between Nasiriya and Suk-as-Shayuk, to block the fairway of the Euphrates.

Suk-as-Shayuk—"Market of the Shaikhs"—was a centre of trade, small manufactures, and boat-building of the Arabs, situated on the Lower Euphrates, at the Western end of the marsh and lake country, some 63 miles from Qurna. It had a floating population of about 12,000, and though there was no Turkish garrison, detachments were quartered at various points in the neighbourhood.

The work of reconnaissance was interrupted by the operations against Amara, after the successful conclusion of which Sir John Nixon raised the question of an advance to Nasiriya,³ which had been mooted six months previously. The move was supported by Simla, who considered General Nixon's force to be "quite sufficient for the success of the operation and the maintenance of the new position."⁴

In the view of the India Office the broken Turkish force at Nasiriya was scarcely to be regarded as a menace to us, though it might offer a rallying point to Turkish reinforcements from Baghdad, in which case, Basra might possibly be again threatened from the West. Moreover, we could not expect the Arabs in the Euphrates to side with us so long as they had a Turkish garrison in their midst.⁵ On 22nd June General Nixon was, therefore, informed that he had full liberty to advance on Nasiriya.⁶

44. **Forces for the Euphrates Operations.**—Before the advance up the Euphrates could begin the vessels which transported the troops to Amara had to be brought back down the Tigris, no other river steamers being available. The preparations were not completed until towards the end of June, and by the evening of the 26th the force detailed for the operations was concentrated on the Euphrates, about two miles to the Eastward of Chabaish, the furthest point which the sloops and the *Miner* could reach on account of the shallow water.

The Naval forces consisted of the *Espiègle*, *Odin*, *Miner*, *Sumana*, the stern-wheelers *Shushan*, *Massoudieh*, and *Muzaffri* and two 4·7-inch guns mounted in houseboats with Naval crews,

¹ For details of these reconnaissances, see Capt. Nunn's Report, pp. 116 *et seq.*, and Letters of Proceedings of S.N.O.

² See Plan 7.

³ G.O.C., I.E.F. "D," to Chief of Gen. Staff, P. No. 303-3-0, 11th June 1915.

⁴ Viceroy to Secretary of State, P. (P.S.V.'s No. 643), 13th June 1915.

⁵ Mesopotamia Expedition, pp. 27-28.

⁶ Chief of General Staff to G.O.C., I.E.F. "D," P.S-12941, 22nd June 1915.

The *Shushan*¹ was to fly the pendant of the S.N.O., and was armed with a 12-pr. 8 cwt., a 3-pr. gun, and a maxim from the *Espiègle*. Lieut. Comdr. A. G. Seymour was placed in command, and her native crew was supplemented by a party of seamen and a Marine from the *Espiègle*. The *Muzaffri* was placed under the command of Lieut. H. F. Curry of the *Odin*, with a crew and a maxim from that ship. The *Massoudieh* was given a 3-pr. and a maxim, and was commanded by Lieut. C. H. Heath-Caldwell, and manned by a crew from the *Miner*. The stern-wheelers were curious craft, but owing to their very light draught were the only vessels available suitable for use in those shallow waters. They were given some protective plating, but it was necessary to be sparing with it in order not to increase their draught materially.

The troops,² under the command of Major-General C. F. Gorringe, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., were accommodated in the river steamers *Blosse Lynch*, *Medjidieh* and *Malamir*, each of which had two 18-p. R.F.A. guns mounted on her fore-deck. They were accompanied by the tugs *Shuhrur* and *Shirin* and two transport tugs, all of them towing mahelas or lighters full of stores, ammunition, &c. The mountain guns were mounted on bellums for use of the troops in the flooded parts of the desert.

45. **General Gorringe's Instructions.**³—The instructions given to General Gorringe were to open the waterway from the Hamar Lake to the Euphrates, and to secure effective occupation of Nasiriya and Suk-as-Shayuk. The object of the operations was to obtain effective control of the western portion of the Basra vilayet and the powerful Arab tribes in the neighbourhood. General Nixon considered that the water route *via* Qurna and the Hamar Lake was preferable to the land route, which involved an arduous march across 110 miles of desert in the hottest season of the year.

The Hamar Lake⁴ is very shallow, and this was the season of falling waters, so that while ships drawing four feet could negotiate the passage at the end of June, a maximum draught of only three feet could pass in July, and in the lowest water season the lake was only some 18 inches deep. From the western end of Hamar Lake the Gurma-Safha, or Haqiqa, and other channels led into the Euphrates; and it was known, from reports and previous air and naval reconnaissances, that the Gurma-Safha was blocked by a solidly constructed dam, about half a mile from its entrance to the lake.

The information available was to the effect that the dam itself was not strongly guarded. It was reported that the bulk of the enemy's troops which had been concentrated at Nasiriya

¹ Lieut. F. W. Lyte, D.S.C., R.N.R.

² 30th Infantry Brigade, 63rd Battery R.F.A., 30th Mountain Battery Sappers, Pioneers, Signalmen, &c.

³ G.O.C.'s Despatch, 20th August 1915.

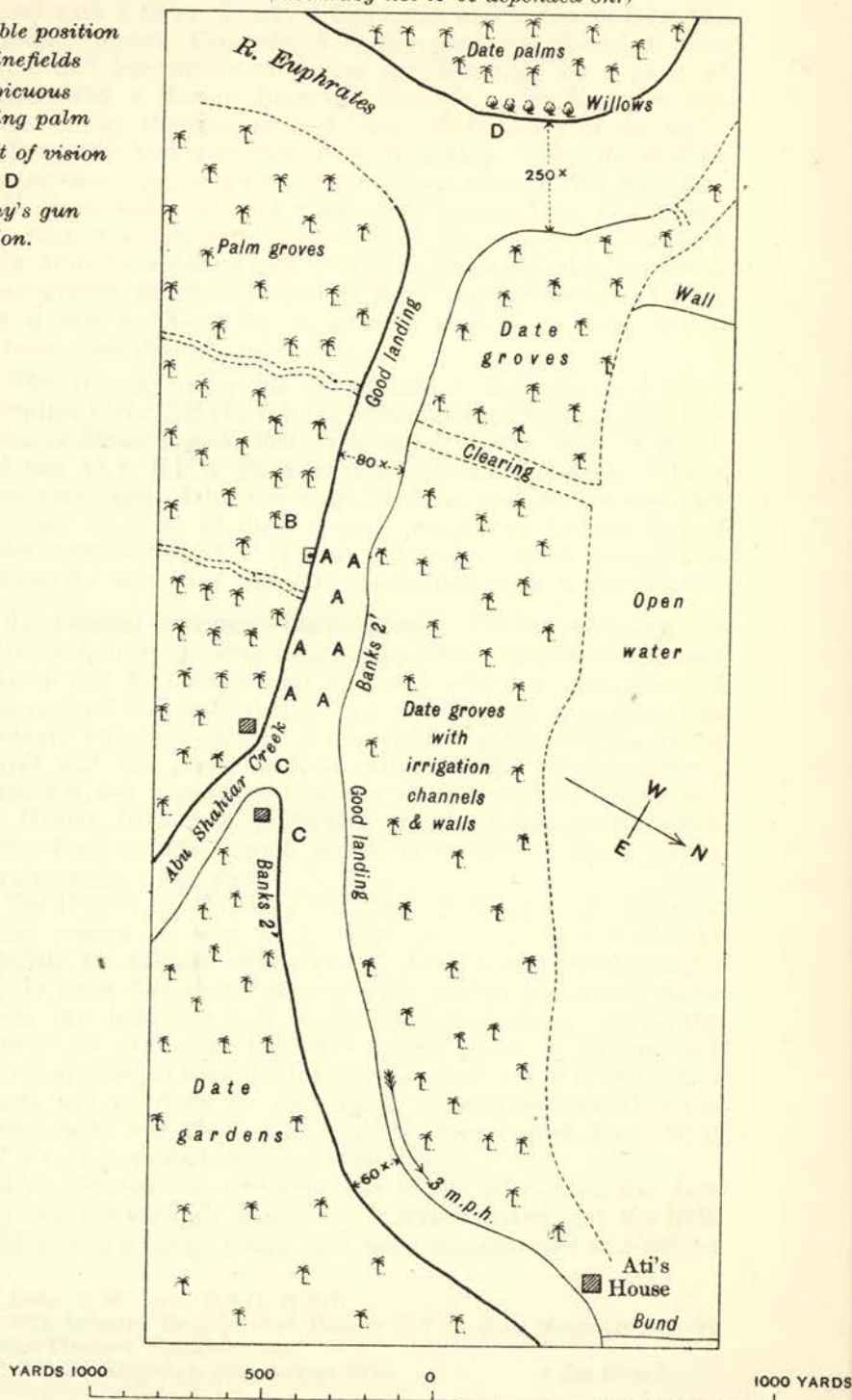
⁴ See Plan 7.



PLAN 8

Sketch of W. end of GURMA SAFHA
(accuracy not to be depended on.)

- A - Possible position of minefields
B - Conspicuous slanting palm
C - Limit of vision from D
D - Enemy's gun position.



From plan prepared by G.S. India.

Ordnance Survey, 1921.

and Kamsiya, had been withdrawn up the Shatt-al-'Hai to join the Turkish forces on the Tigris.

46. **The Operations : Capture of Gurma-Safha Position.**—At 4 p.m. on 27th June the *Shushan* and *Massoudieh* left their anchorage and proceeded to the westward across the Hamar Lake, followed by the remainder of the flotilla and the steamers and barges carrying the troops. The ships experienced considerable difficulty in keeping to the tortuous and almost unmarked channel through the muddy waters of the lake, and they frequently grounded. At 1.30 p.m., as they approached the Haqiqa Channel, two Turkish patrol boats further up the river above the dam opened fire on them with pom-poms, and the gunboats returned the fire. Steamboats swept ahead of the flotilla, but no mines were found, and, entering the Haqiqa Channel at 4 p.m., the gunboats anchored just below the dam.

It was decided to blast a passage through the obstruction with explosives, and the work was at once commenced. On the following morning, 28th June, the northern end of the dam was blown away, when four mahelas were discovered which had been sunk in the fairway underneath the dam, when it was constructed some two years ago. The enemy patrol boats fired a few rounds now and then at the working parties, but were easily driven away by the gunboats, and at 5 p.m. on 29th June a small channel having been made through the dam, the *Shushan* and *Massoudieh* were hauled through into the Euphrates against the rush of water. The two horseboats with 4.7-inch guns were got through on the morning of 30th June, and at 11.45 a.m. these craft proceeded up-river on a reconnaissance. The enemy's position was located at the junction of the Gurma-Safha and Euphrates, where he was entrenched and had placed two guns to command the line of our advance up the channel. These two guns also defended a minefield¹ which spies reported to have been placed in the river. Hostile Arabs prevented this reconnaissance from making detailed observations. Accordingly on 2nd July another reconnaissance was made, supported by two double companies of infantry. Below the point marked on the plan as Ati's House the country on both banks was chiefly marsh; but above it both banks were dry and covered with very thick date gardens, much intersected by irrigation channels and mud walls. The channel itself was tortuous, and consequently the view was very much restricted by date palms, jungle, and willow trees on the water's edge.²

At 4 a.m. on 4th July, all craft having been successfully hauled through the obstruction, the gunboats escorted an advanced party of infantry, pioneers, and mountain guns to secure Ati's House, and to make a passage, giving access by water for bellums from the river to the open water on the west of Ati's House. A reconnaissance established the fact that

¹ See plan 8.

² General Gorrings's Report.

the enemy's position could be turned by a route along the bund (bank) north of Ati's House, though the operation would require two battalions in order to overcome the opposition of the local Arabs. During the afternoon the remainder of the force moved forward and anchored about a mile down-stream from Ati's House.

At 4.45 a.m. on 5th July the advance commenced. On the right bank our troops were held up at the Shahtar Creek by the enemy's fire, and the *Sumana* and *Shushan* moved up in support. They came under heavy gun and rifle fire and the *Sumana* was disabled by a shell which hit her main steam-pipe, and wounded her captain¹ and two men.

Meanwhile, troops were pushed forward wide on the left bank to the Euphrates, and a heavy fire from guns and rifles was opened on the enemy's gun position, and at 1.20 p.m. the enemy surrendered. Our troops crossed the Euphrates in bellums and took possession of the battery. On the right bank our troops, assisted by the *Shushan*, managed to cross the Shatar Creek at 2 p.m.; the enemy fell back, found their gun positions in our hands, and surrendered.

At 4 p.m. the *Shushan* and *Massoudieh* moved up on the channel, sweeping for mines, the position of which was indicated by a Turkish officer who had been captured in the battery. By 9 p.m. the channel of the Euphrates was swept clear, one mine having been found, and all ships moved up and anchored in the Euphrates and entrance of the Gurma-Safha.

The strength of the enemy during the operations was estimated at 300 Turks, 2,000 Arabs, two guns and two launches with pom-poms. They were re-inforced during the action by two guns and 700 regulars from Nasiriya. Their losses must have been considerable²; and 132 prisoners, two Krupp guns and large quantities of ammunition and equipment were captured. Our naval casualties were one officer and two men wounded. The military casualties were 111 killed and wounded, this low figure being due to the effective co-operation of the ships' guns.³

47. Preparations for a further Advance.—Suk-as-Shayuk surrendered next day (6th July) to the *Shushan* and *Massoudieh* towing the 4.7-inch guns.

The S.N.O. then proceeded up the Euphrates in the *Shushan* to reconnoitre, and located the enemy's position near Majinina, about 4 miles below Nasiriya. They had sunk the steamers *Frat*, *Risafa*, and a Thornycroft launch about 3,000 yards downstream of their position,⁴ but in their haste they had done it so ineffectually that it was afterwards found that the flotilla could get past. The flotilla was now brought up and arrived off Asani at 4 p.m. The enemy were seen working, entrenching

¹ Lieutenant W. V. H. Harris.

³ Captain Nunn's Report.

² General Goringe's Report.

⁴ Marked "Obstruction" on Plan 7.

and improving existing trenches. The *Shushan* and *Massoudieh* opened fire on a Thornycroft launch in the bend of the river, to which she replied with her pom-pom while she retired. The enemy also disclosed a field gun, and the flotilla withdrew out of range and anchored for the night.

Further reconnaissance next day (7th July) discovered that the enemy position consisted of strong earthworks on both banks of the river, with the flanks resting on marshes, having in front of it on the right bank the broad Majinina Creek, the approach to which was absolutely devoid of cover. On the left bank the position could be approached under cover through a narrow belt of date gardens. The enemy's strength was reported as 2,000 Turks, four field guns and two mountain guns. Two Thornycroft launches were in the neighbourhood, and large numbers of hostile Arabs were in position near Majinina. Reconnaissances were also carried out up the Sultan Creek to ascertain whether the enemy's left flank could be turned, and similar reconnaissances were made through the marshes on the right bank.

As a result of these reconnaissances General Goringe decided to seize and occupy an advanced position on the right bank within about 2,000 yards of the enemy's position, in order to put a stop to the attempts the latter was making to improve the obstruction in the river, and to cover the artillery positions which had been selected. This was successfully accomplished on the night of the 7th-8th July with little opposition from the enemy. On the 8th July and succeeding days bombardment of the enemy's position was carried out by the naval and army guns. The position had been found so strong that reinforcements were necessary before the attack could be made. The enemy's guns, of which on 11th July they disclosed six, were frequently active, and our 4.7's carried out indirect firing over the date palms, controlled by Lieut.-Commander A. G. Seymour, the necessary telephonic communication being furnished by the artillery. At 8 p.m. on that day (11th July) the enemy attacked our position on the left bank, getting to within 15 yards of our advanced trenches; but they were easily repulsed.

Reinforcements of two Indian battalions, half a battalion of the Royal West Kents, and a howitzer section began to arrive on 11th July. Supplies, &c., were towed up to near our forward positions by night by the *Shirin*,¹ and were subjected to a heavy fire until they learnt to move silently. Frequent gun-boat patrols down to Suk-as-Shayuk were carried out, as concentrations of hostile Arabs were reported.

The enemy was continually receiving reinforcements of men and guns,² while, in addition to our casualties, we had, owing

¹ Lieutenant Hugh Curry, R.N.

² From Intelligence Reports it is believed that the enemy's force opposing us at Nasiriya comprised seven battalions, two companies of cavalry, and 13 guns. They were commanded by Ahmed Bey, who was wounded during the operations, and was succeeded by Nejm Pasha.

to the extreme heat,¹ a great deal of sickness and fever, and the regiments were far below strength. Further reinforcements were, therefore, asked for, and arrived on the 19th and 20th July. They included an infantry brigade and some heavy guns and howitzers. Two aeroplanes were sent, but one only arrived, the other making a forced landing near Suk-as-Shayuk.²

48. Battle of Majinina³ and Capture of Nasiriya.—By the evening of the 23rd July the heavy guns and howitzers had been landed and registered on their targets. The *Sumana* had rejoined after expeditious repairs to her main steampipe at Basra, and everything was in readiness for the advance.

At 5 a.m.⁴ on 24th July bombardment was commenced of the enemy's positions on both banks, naval guns co-operating with the military. Half an hour later the infantry went forward on the left bank, and as soon as this attack was seen to be developing favourably the attack was developed on the right bank. Under a heavy fire the *Sumana*⁵ towed up a barge, and amid a hail of rifle bullets⁶ she placed it successfully across the mouth of the Majinina Creek. The *Sumana's* steampipe was again fractured, and the barge was holed by a shell, the troops in her suffering heavily.⁷ But the successful placing of the barge had the effect of lowering the water in the creek so that it could be forded by the troops, which were now advancing. Supported on their right by the *Shushan* and *Massoudieh*, and the *Muzaffri* with a Maxim battery aboard, the troops carried the trenches, and by 10 a.m. the whole of the Majinina position and five guns had fallen into our hands.

The *Shushan* and *Muzaffri* at once went forward and the *Musaffri* landed the Maxim gun battery at the captured enemy position on the right bank, north of the Majinina creek. This piece of work was carried out by Lieutenant Curry under rifle and artillery fire, the *Muzaffri* being holed by a shell, the *Shushan* also being hotly engaged.

The advance continued slowly; the enemy, though retreating, offered considerable opposition, and the ships and 4·7-inch guns were heavily engaged throughout the forenoon. Two R.F.A. guns were mounted and some troops were now embarked in the *Medjidieh* in order to have the means available for rapid

¹ Average temperatures, month of July 1915; noon, 94·9° F., midnight, 88·5° F. (from *Espiègle's* log).

² It was repaired and flew to Asani on 22nd July.

³ Also called the Battle of Nasiriya.

⁴ Captain Nunn's Report, p. 161, says 4.30 a.m. and that the infantry attack began at 5 a.m.

⁵ Lieutenant W. V. H. Harris.

⁶ Eighty-seven bullet marks were afterwards counted between *Sumana's* bows and funnel.

⁷ Out of 90 men on board there were 40 casualties.

pursuit. The gunboats pushed forward at 3 p.m. and aided the troops by engaging the enemy's final position at close range. The Turks shortly evacuated the position and retired in disorder across the marshes, and our troops, exhausted by fighting in the intense heat, halted for the night.

At 6 p.m. the S.N.O. moved on in the *Shushan* to reconnoitre towards Nasiriya. Rapid fire was opened on her from pom-pom and Maxim by a Thornycroft boat retiring at full speed up-stream. The recoil of the *Shushan's* 12-pr. had seriously strained her ancient timbers, who had originally been built for the relief of General Gordon at Khartoum; but Lieut. Commander Seymour, handling and aiming the gun himself, hit the patrol boat with his third round, and she ran ashore and was soon in flames. The *Shushan* then pushed on to Nasiriya, where white flags were flying. Heavy fire at short range was, however, opened on her¹ and she dropped back, replying with a few shells, and anchored below the town in the failing light. The Turks evacuated Nasiriya during the night (24th-25th July), and on the following morning the leading Arab citizens invited us to occupy the town. They reported that they had done their best to dissuade the Turks from firing on the *Shushan* on the previous evening. The troops arrived during the day (25th July) and the town was fully taken possession of, the enemy being in disorderly flight to the Northward in the direction of Shattra on the Shatt-al-'Hai.

The Naval casualties during the operations on the Euphrates were two officers and three men wounded. The troops had over 500 casualties. Fifteen enemy guns and much ammunition was captured by our forces as a result of the action of 24th July.

On 27th July Captain Nunn in the *Shushan*, which had proceeded up the Euphrates, reached Samawa, 71 miles by river above Nasiriya. This town which had a population of about 10,000, was a centre of trade on the Euphrates. It was on the Turkish telegraph line, and a small garrison and police force were maintained there. These had, however, fled on hearing the news of the Turkish defeat at Nasiriya, and the Shaikh asked that the British should occupy the place.

¹ Lieut. Commander Seymour was wounded here.

CHAPTER IX.

NAVAL FORCES AND GENERAL SITUATION IN
THE PERSIAN GULF IN THE SUMMER OF 1915.

OPERATIONS AT BUSHIRE AND DILWAR.

DECISION TO ADVANCE TO KUT.

49. Measures to increase the Provision of River Gunboats.—

Early in 1915 the S.N.O. had asked the Admiralty that more shallow-draught gunboats might be provided for the operations in Mesopotamia.¹ It was not possible, said Capt. Nunn, to take up and arm for naval purposes any more of the river craft belonging to local firms, as they were fully occupied in the transport of troops between Basra and Qurna, and already the Transport Department was badly in need of more. To have taken any of them they would have seriously hampered the operations.² The question was examined fully by the Admiralty, and 12 gunboats were ordered to be built.³ Labour troubles delayed their construction,⁴ but it was expected that four would be shipped on 1st June⁵ to Basra. These gunboats were of the "small China" type: they were constructed in England in sections for erection at Abadan at the Anglo-Persian Oil Works, and Messrs. Yarrow, who were building the boats, sent out an experienced overseer⁶ to put them together. The first four were expected to be ready for service in October,⁷ and the remaining eight before the end of the year.⁸

It was also arranged to have some vessels of the "large China gunboat" type strengthened and towed out from England.⁹ Another contemplated addition to the flotilla consisted in one of the Turkish motor patrol boats which had been sunk by the *Espiègle* in November 1914. She was found to be lying in a position where she could be salvaged, and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's representatives offered to attempt to do so, and to refit her for service. This was approved by the Admiralty.¹⁰

In the meantime, two sternwheel gunboats were offered by the Egyptian Government.¹¹ The Admiralty accepted them,

¹ M. 01379/15. From Admiralty Telegram, 353, to C.-in-C., E. Indies, for S.N.O., Persian Gulf, 19th December 1914, it would appear as if this request already had been made in December 1914. On 9th January 1915, the Viceroy wired to the India Office that the G.O.C. recommended the Admiralty be asked to provide four gunboats for river work above Qurna.

² S.N.O., Persian Gulf, to Admiralty, 148, 22 December 1914.

³ Four more were ordered later (23rd December 1915).

⁴ M. 01379/15. ⁵ M. 03386/15. ⁶ Mr. William Grant.

⁷ The first one (*Firefly*) was launched on 23rd October 1915.

⁸ Admiralty to S.N.O., Mesopotamia, 33, 18th August 1915.

⁹ The first one, *Mantis*, left in November 1915, and was followed later by the *Gnat*, *Moth*, and *Tarantula*.

¹⁰ She was successfully salvaged, renamed the *Flycatcher*, and commissioned with a naval crew for service in Mesopotamia towards the end of 1915.

¹¹ M. 01411/15.

and they were despatched; but they sank in bad weather in the Red Sea, and it was decided to send no more of them.¹

In view of the contemplated increase in numbers of small river craft, the *Espiègle* had neither the accommodation nor the staff to cope with the accounts, stores, medical superintendence, &c., and it was found necessary to establish a naval dépôt for accommodation, administration, and refit. The *Alert*² was, therefore, fitted at Bombay for this purpose, provided with a nucleus crew of officers and men, and commissioned by Commander A. T. Steward, R.N. (retired).³

50. Change in title of S.N.O.—The departure of Captain Hayes-Sadler in the *Ocean*, after the conclusion of the operations against Qurna in December 1914, had left Captain Nunn as Senior Naval Officer. In July 1915, however, owing to the despatch of a combined naval and military force to Bushire for operations against the tribesmen, Captain Drury St. A. Wake, of the *Juno*, was appointed Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf, and Captain Nunn became Senior Naval Officer, Mesopotamia, with southern limit at Fao.⁴

51. Unrest in Persia.—From January 1915 onwards, the effect of German intrigues in Persia had been to cause unrest among the tribesmen.⁵ There were attacks by tribesmen on our garrisons at some of the coast ports, and sloops had been despatched at different times. By the early summer the situation had become somewhat critical. In the event of war with Persia we could not afford to embark upon extensive undertakings in the country requiring a large force of troops, and it was considered that our best policy would be to leave the interior alone and endeavour to safeguard Muhammara and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's pipe-line and property.⁶ Provided we had not to reckon with effective German hostility, it should not be a difficult matter to seize and hold the coast ports, at some of which we already had small garrisons, though support of the troops by warships would be essential.

On the 20th June the Admiralty telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, as follows:—

"316. Consideration is being given to the steps which would be necessary if war broke out with Persia. All occupations of Persian

¹ Admiralty to S.N.O., Persian Gulf, 8, 5th May 1915.

² *Alert*, sloop, 4—4-inch, 4—3-pr. She arrived and was berthed at Abadan on 4th October 1915.

³ Admiralty to C.-in-C., East Indies, 498, 25th August 1915.

⁴ C.-in-C., East Indies, to Admiralty, 747, 21st July, and Admiralty reply 417 of same date.

⁵ Einstein states ("Inside Constantinople," p. 65) that Raouf Bey, a Turkish naval officer of prominence, suspected by the Germans of not being under their control, was given the mission of raising the tribes in Southern Persia against the British, in order to remove him from the capital.

⁶ Letter from India Office to Admiralty, P. 1981-2, 10th June 1915.

territory would be a military responsibility, but Navy might have to assist and cover landing of troops, patrol Gulf, and blockade ports You should consult G.O.C., Egypt, S.N.O., Persian Gulf, and Government of India, and report what ships you could make available for the Persian Gulf.”

At this date the *Lawrence* was at Bushire and the *Dalhousie* in the southern part of the Persian Gulf. The S.N.O., Mesopotamia could not spare either the *Espiègle*, *Odin*, or *Clio*—the only three of his vessels which were suitable for work in the Gulf. The Federal Authorities were asked to commission the *Psyche* and *Fantome*¹ and at once agreed to do so; the former could be made ready about the middle of July, but the shortage of trained ratings in the Australian Service would delay the *Fantome*.

52. Bushire Attacked: Punitive Expedition decided upon.—

On the 12th July the British Residency at Bushire was attacked by a force of Tangistani tribesmen. The *Dalhousie* was despatched, and arrived three days later; and on 16th July the Admiralty despatched the following telegram to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies:—

“401. Armed intervention against Persia will shortly be commenced and it is under consideration to raise the Russian Force at Kasvin and Resht to 5,000 with cavalry and guns. British action proposed is to seize Bushire, Bunder Abbas, Lingah and Muhammara and occupy Hormuz, and then to inform Persia that we shall retain possession until reparation is made for attack at Bushire and until German intrigues are put a stop to by arrest of German agents in Persia. C.-in-C., Cape, has been ordered to send either *Pioneer* or *Pyramus* to Aden to follow your orders.² *Fantome* commissions at Sydney on 27th inst. for Persian Gulf. *Juno* left Gibraltar 11th to join you and *Diana* has been ordered from Gibraltar to join you. *Juno* should be sent on to Aden as a preparatory measure. You should resume control of Persian Gulf, leaving operations up Shattal-Arab to present S.N.O.”

At the same time they ordered the Commander-in-Chief, China, to put in repair the gunboats, *Bramble*, *Britomart* and *Thistle* at once, as it might be necessary to commission them for service in the Persian Gulf.³

It was decided as a punitive measure to occupy Bushire and bombard and attack Dilwar, a fort and village 20 miles down the coast from Bushire, and the headquarters of the rebellious tribesmen.⁴ Four Companies of Indian native infantry under Major C. E. H. Wintle were detailed by General Nixon, and were despatched to Bushire, which was occupied on 8th August without opposition. The Naval forces for the punitive expedi-

¹ No. 285 to Navy Office, Melbourne, 20th June 1915, and reply No. 185

² *Pyramus* was sent.

³ 92 to C.-in-C., China, 16.7.15.

⁴ Tel. from Viceroy, 17.7.15, and reply, P 2665, from Sec. of State to Viceroy, 21.7.15.

tion consisted of the *Juno*,¹ *Pyramus*,² *Dalhousie*, and *Lawrence*, and a landing party of 100 men; and the landing operations were in charge of Captain D. St. A. Wake, Royal Navy.

53. **The Operations at Dilwar.**—On the evening of the 9th August the troops were embarked on board the *Lawrence* and *Dalhousie* at Bushire. The Squadron sailed at 4 a.m. on 10th and anchored off Dilwar the same morning. The weather interfered with the immediate prosecution of operations, and it was not until 13th August that the landing was possible.

The Land Force consisted of 170 rifles, 96th Infantry, with Signallers, Medical personnel, and entrenching tools, and a covering party of 50 Royal Marine Light Infantry under Captain G. Carpenter, R.M.L.I. A base party of 20 men under Commander Viscount Kelburn was detailed to take charge of embarking and disembarking operations; and for demolition of the enemy's fort a strong party of native infantry with Maxims was told off, and was commanded by Commander Bloomfield. The landing was to take place on an open beach commanded by sand dunes on which the enemy had constructed sangars. Dilwar Fort was some 2,000 yards from the shore.

The landing commenced at 11 a.m., covered by the fire of the *Juno*, *Pyramus* and *Lawrence*. The boats left in three lines towed by steamboats, under the general command of the Captain of the *Pyramus*. For a short time they were under a very heavy fire from the shore, which was replied to by four of the boats, in which maxims had been mounted. The deciding factor, however, in keeping down the enemy's fire was the manner in which the *Juno's* salvos were worked along the beach in a systematic manner with a lateral spread for the 6-inch guns of about 400 yards.³ Owing to her draught, the *Juno* had been forced to anchor 9,000 yards off, and her fire was directed from the *Lawrence* (3,500 yards from shore). The enemy could be seen leaving their hangars as the salvos approached.

The boats grounded 100 yards from the shore; as the covering party landed the enemy finally evacuated his sangars; the landing was effected without further opposition, and the position chosen for the base was consolidated. At 3.30 a.m. next day (14th August) the troops advanced to Dilwar village, captured the palm groves, and commenced to destroy them.⁴ The enemy shortly afterwards attacked in force, and our troops had to withdraw to camp with some casualties, including Commander Bloomfield, who had been shot through the body and died shortly after.

¹ Capt. D. St. A. Wake, S.N.O.

² Commdr. Viscount Kelburn.

³ Report of S.N.O., 16.8.15.

⁴ 300 axes had been taken for the purpose.

The attack was renewed early on 15th August; Dilwar village was captured and burnt and the fort blown up; after which the the troops withdrew under cover of the *Juno's* guns.

The Chief of Dilwar had now been sufficiently impressed. It was estimated that to complete the destruction of the palm groves would take a week; much of the available ammunition had been expended; and in view of the situation at Bushire it was desirable to get the troops back. Accordingly on the on the night of the 15th-16th August the Punitive Force was withdrawn under cover of darkness, without any casualties. Our total casualties during the operations were 15 killed and 40 wounded, including 32 Naval casualties.

54. Action at Bushire: 9th September.—The situation at Bushire continued to give rise to anxiety, and accordingly on 20th August Sir John Nixon despatched thither a force under Brigadier-General Brooking. This force with a Naval landing party attached, under Captain G. Carpenter, R.M.L.I.,¹ attacked the enemy near Bushire on 9th September before the latter had time to deliver a serious attack, completely routed them, and successfully relieved the situation for the time being.

55. Decision to advance on Kut-al-'Amara.—A succession of victories had now attended our arms at the head of the Persian Gulf. In Mesopotamia the successful conclusion of the Euphrates operations had established our control of the western side of the Basra Vilayet; though the districts lying north and west of the line of Amara-Nasiriya still remained outside our control. In Southern Arabistan, as we have shown², conditions had practically returned to the normal. But Sir John Nixon was not yet content to rest on his laurels through the blazing Mesopotamian summer; it was in his mind to advance still further up country.

The enemy, in their flight up the Tigris past Amara after their defeat on 31st May, had been an absolute rabble, and they did not stop until they reached Kut, where they were joined by Muhamad Pasha Daghistani's force, which had fallen back from the Karun front before General Gorringe. Aeroplane reconnaissance from Amara on the 14th June observed camps and trenches on both banks of the Tigris at Daqq-al-Hajjaj, eight miles downstream from Kut, and another camp about six miles up-stream, which was bombed. By 23rd June it was estimated that the Turks might concentrate at Kut under Nur-ed-Din Bey 8,500 regular infantry with 23 guns. A regiment was reported in an advanced position at Skaikh Saad, and reports indicated that the Turks were placing an obstruction of barges, &c., in the Tigris near Kut, and that they were patrolling down-stream. On 30th June, therefore, General Townshend ~~sent~~ *was sent* a small force

¹ Gen. Brooking's Report says Capt. Carpenter, R.N., H.M.S. *Juno*, but this is evidently an error.

² Paragraph: 37.

to occupy an advanced post at Kumait, about 29 miles up the Tigris. The *Shaitan* and *Comet* accompanied it, and patrolled up-stream from the post. Owing, however, to the enemy pushing down the Tigris the force at Kumait was shortly afterwards withdrawn.

Kut-al-'Amara, usually known to the British as Kut, was a town of some 5,000 or 6,000 inhabitants on the left bank of the Tigris, about 204 miles below Baghdad by river, and nearly 300 miles by river from Basra. It possessed a few fairly well built houses and a quay. In Turkish times it was the Headquarters of a Kaza in the Baghdad Sanjaq, and had a small garrison, police, harbour-master and Custom house, and it was the centre of a considerable grain traffic. Its strategic importance lay in its command of the lower reaches of the Tigris, and also of the Euphrates by way of the Shatt-al-'Hai; and its occupation, it was considered, would facilitate the reinforcement of our position on either river, and also enable us to control the powerful Beni Lam tribe, and effectively safeguard the oilfields against aggression from the Tigris¹. General Nixon considered that its occupation was essential to secure British supremacy throughout the Basra Vilayet.²

The idea of advancing on Kut had been mooted by Sir John Nixon on 11th June,³ and he had been informed by India that there were no reinforcements available to send him. Sir John continued, however, to advise the move, and India finally asked him for an appreciation of the situation and whether, with his present forces, he could hold Kut. This, he was confident he could do.⁴

The gradual extension of the sphere of our military operations up to date, with its resultant attenuation of strength was regarded with apprehension by Mr. Chamberlain⁵, who had succeeded Lord Crewe at the India Office on 27th May, and who thoroughly endorsed his predecessor's policy of caution.⁶ Our extension had involved the withdrawal of troops from Basra and from Ahwaz, at the time when the political situation in Persia was very critical.

Moreover, the Admiralty oil interests now bulked in a degree very different from that in which they had been regarded by India in the early spring, when Sir John Nixon was ordered *as far as he might find feasible without prejudicing his main operations*⁷ "to endeavour to secure the safety of the oil fields, pipe-line and refineries of the Anglo-Persian oil fields."⁸

¹ Viceroy to the Sec. of State for India, No. H. 6582, 27th July 1915.

² Sir John Nixon's Report, No. 1012-1-0, 29th October 1915.

³ C.G.S., India, to G.O.C., I.E.F., "D," P. No. S.

⁴ No. 303-5-0. Memo. on "Occupation of Kut-al-'Amara," 24th June 1915.

⁵ Mesopotamia Expedition, p. 28.

⁶ Sec. of State for India to Viceroy, No. 1867, 28th May 1915.

⁷ The italics are ours.

⁸ B. 6.

In view of all the circumstances, Mr. Chamberlain considered that caution must be impressed on the G.O.C. Force "D," and he telegraphed to the Viceroy¹ :—

"Reference protection of Anglo-Persian Oil interests, the Admiralty are most anxious that there should be no further interruption of supply, and urge effective military protection irrespective of tribal guarantees². They were informed that military are preparing to withdraw troops from Ahwaz and pressing oil company to subsidise the Bawi tribe. Probably 2,000 cavalry, infantry and guns will suffice for this duty, but you, in communication with General Nixon, can advise on this point.

"Nixon must be warned that the present situation in Persia and Aden renders it more than ever advisable not to rely entirely on Arab and Bakhtiari guarantees. I understand that as no reinforcements for Persian Gulf are possible, you will not sanction further advance, but will be content for the time to hold the Basra Vilayet and the pipe-line."

On 27th July, however, General Nixon followed up his appreciation of the situation³ by a further telegram⁴ to the Chief of the General Staff in India urging the desirability of seizing the river junction at Kut; and Simla was so impressed that the Viceroy immediately telegraphed to Mr. Chamberlain⁵ : "The occupation of Kut-al-'Amara is considered by us to be a strategic necessity."

This telegram contributed nothing towards allaying Mr. Chamberlain's apprehensions that we were extending our operations dangerously. The Viceroy had taken it for granted that the 28th Brigade could be spared for Mesopotamia from Aden, where the situation was now easier; but the 28th Brigade was urgently required back in Egypt by the Secretary of State for War, and if reinforcements were necessary for operations against Kut they would have to be drawn from Nasiriya, Basra, or Ahwaz; and Mr. Chamberlain suggested that the garrison should be withdrawn from Nasiriya.

This, however, was considered by the political officers in Mesopotamia to be out of the question on account of the loss of prestige and the moral effect on the Arabs which would be entailed. But Sir John was prepared to reduce the garrison, as also those at Amara and Ahwaz, provided he was allowed to concentrate strongly at Kut. The Viceroy not only urged the advance to Kut in a long telegram⁶ forwarding Sir John Nixon's views, but he stated that he proposed to authorise General Nixon to make the advance.

Thereupon, Mr. Chamberlain gave way and telegraphed his permission,⁷ but he added to his telegram :—"What is strength and distribution of troops on Karun line? I presume that they are sufficient with local arrangements at oil fields for defence against raiders." In reply, Sir John Nixon stated

¹ No. 1950, 12th July 1915.

² We had an agreement with the Bakhtiaris to protect the pipe-line.

³ See page 71.

⁴ 132 of 27th July 1915.

⁵ No. H. 6582, 27th July 1915.

⁶ No. H. 6793, 5th August 1915.

⁷ No. 3002, 6th August 1915.

frankly that in the event of war with Persia he could not render himself responsible for active operations in Persia so far inland as the oil fields. The Viceroy, however, did not anticipate any trouble at present.¹ But Mr. Chamberlain's telegram had reference to local disorders only, and on the assurance that General Nixon's military arrangements were adequate to deal with these he gave his final permission for the advance to take place.²

The Mesopotamian summer was now at its height. The troops were suffering severe discomfort in the stagnant swamps, and sickness had reduced the strength of units. But the complete success which had attended their operations in the campaign had preserved their morale unimpaired.

CHAPTER X.

CAPTURE OF KUT AND DECISION TO ADVANCE TO BAGHDAD.

56. Concentration for the advance on Kut: Shortage of River Transport becomes acute.—On hearing the news of our victory of the 24th July the enemy forces which had pushed down the Tigris to Shaikh Saad and Ess Sinn fell back, and by 28th July they were retiring towards Kut. On 1st August, Ali al Gharbi, 78 miles above Amara, was occupied without opposition by a detachment of troops from Amara, accompanied by a naval flotilla; and under cover of this detachment ~~General Townshend~~ began the concentration of the 6th Indian Division for the advance on Kut.

After June the Shatt-al-'Hai had ceased to be navigable for five or six months, and the only line of advance by water on Kut was by the River Tigris. The transference of the troops from the Euphrates to the Tigris line was a slow progress, owing to the difficulties encountered by shipping in crossing the Hamar Lake and navigating the rivers in this low-water season.

River transport was now more than ever the governing factor in operations, but a deficiency had existed ever since the expedition moved above Qurna and quitted tidal waters in which supply and transport could be carried out by ocean steamers.³ We have seen how, before an advance could be made on Amara, the force had to await the return of the steamers taken by General Gorrington up the Karun, and how, before a force could be despatched against Nasiriya the vessels which transported

¹ H. 7094, 18th August 1915.

² Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 3020, 20th August 1915.

³ Mesopotamia Commission: Report, p. 61.

the troops to Amara had to be brought back down the river, and, further, how the arduous expedition to Nasiriya during the hottest season of the year, which cost over 500 casualties, had been necessitated because the Force had not sufficient transport to follow up the flying enemy after the decisive battle of Shaiba. Now, before the 6th Division could be fully concentrated at Amara for the advance to Kut, it had to await the arrival of the river steamers with the Nasiriya expedition.

Craft available for Work in Low River.¹
(10.7.15.)

Vessel.	Loaded Draft.	Troops. (If not required to sleep on Board.)	Cargo (Tons).	Animals, and Remarks.
	Ft. Ins.			
Blosse Lynch	4 7	1 battalion	100	Regimental only, in addition to troops.
Medjidieh	4 6	"	100	Regimental only, in addition to troops. (When carrying troops, no cargo, and vice versa.)
Malamir	3 9	5 companies	80	Regimental only, in addition to troops.
Julnar	3 6	1 battalion	150	"
Mosul	4 6	As Malamir	—	Captured from Turks. Old boat.
Sumana	3 6	Nil	Nil	Nil. Taken for Navy.
Shurur	3 6	"	"	Nil.
Shihab	3 6	"	"	"
Shaitan	3 6	"	"	" Taken for Navy.
Shirin	3 3	"	"	"
Shushan	2 6	"	"	"
Salimi	3 6	1 company	10	"
Muzaffri	2 6	4 companies	40	"
Mahsoudi	2 6	1 company	20	"
Kazimi	4 9	"	10	"
		--	90	Can tow 100 or 150-ton-barge. Taken at Amara.
Shatt-al-'Arab	3 0	—	—	Launch at disposal A.D. Telegraphs.
L. 1, 2, 3, 4	3 0	—	—	Single crew steam launches.
Samara	5 0	—	—	German, taken at Amara. Can tow two mahelas or 1 small barge.
T. 1, 2, 3, 4	4 4 (without troops).	3½ companies	Nil	Nil. Tugs, too weak to tow barges.

¹ (M. 07175/15.)

Vessel.	Loaded Draft.	Troops. (If not required to sleep on Board.)	Cargo (Tons).	Animals, and Remarks.
P. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	Ft. Ins. 4 4 to 5 0 (without troops).	1 battalion (P. 5, ½ battalion)	—	R.I.M. launches. P. 1, 2, 3, 4 can take about 70 animals without troops.
Safeh	Deep	—	—	Taken at Amara.
Bahmanshir	—	2 companies	—	
Karun	Too deep	"	—	Single screw launch.
Bahrein	for	"	—	" "
Lewis Pelly	low	"	—	" "
Edward Ross	river.	"	—	" "
Arab	5 0	—	—	Single screw launch. Very old.
Anna	5 0	—	—	Single screw launch.
Delawar	3 6	—	—	" "

Thirty-six barges 300-600 tons capacity. Some captured German or Turkish, remainder property of private firms in Basra.

On 8th July General Kemball¹ wrote a memorandum² in which he emphasised the necessity of taking immediate steps to procure river steamers of a suitable type. River transport would no doubt continue to be the governing factor in future operations. "A properly-equipped river fleet would double and treble the effective value of the Army in Mesopotamia at the present moment," he wrote. Up to the present we had never managed to transport at any one time more than five battalions with field and heavy guns (but without animals). Our communications naturally increased as we assumed control of the Basra Vilayet, but the river steamers taken up locally were commercial vessels and must sooner or later be returned to their owners if trade up river was not to come to a standstill in spite of our successful military operations. The 12 gunboats which the Admiralty was sending out³ would not be available for general transport purposes. What we required were river steamers which could tow a barge on each side; and General Nixon put forward a demand to India for six paddle steamers, three stern-wheelers, eight tugs and 43 barges.⁴ "If steps are not taken in good time to meet these requirements," wrote General Kemball, "we are running grave risks of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment."

Both the Admiralty and the War Office advised the India Office that General Nixon's demands should be met in full,

¹ Quartermaster-General.

² M. 07167/15.

³ See para. 49.

⁴ H. 6772, from Viceroy, 4-8-15.

without reduction.¹ But for various reasons, "up to the end of 1915 the efforts made to rectify the deficiency of river transport were wholly inadequate."²

The Naval forces consisted of the *Comet*³, *Shaitan*⁴, *Sumana*⁵, and four 4·7-inch guns in horseboats⁶ towed by the steam launches *R.N. 1* and *R.N. 2*. The flotilla was under the command of Lieut.-Commdr. Cookson, Senior Naval Officer.⁷

57. The Advance begins.—The VI. Division was concentrated by 12th September and moved forward to Ali-al-Gharbi in ships. From this point the advance was continued principally by route march along the river bank, with the naval flotilla and shipping near them, dragging through the shallow water, until Sannaiyat was reached on 15th September. Intense heat prevailed during this period, with temperatures varying from 110° to 116° in the shade—when any could be found. The enemy's advanced troops fell back before us without offering any resistance, and the column remained halted at Sannaiyat until the 25th September, during which time it was joined by further reinforcements, and by four seaplanes⁸ under Squadron-Commander Gordon, R.M.L.I., who had been employed in the operations against the *Königsberg*.

58. Position and Forces of the Enemy.—Constant naval and air reconnaissances were now carried out. Nur-ed-Din Bey's position⁹ was found to be astride the river some 7 miles North-east of Kut, and 8 miles from General Townshend's force at Sannaiyat. It occupied a line naturally favourable for defence, which, during three or four months of preparation, had been converted into a most formidable position. The ground was devoid of cover. The river was blocked by a boom composed of barges and wire cables, commanded at close range from both banks by guns and fire trenches. The position was held by two Divisions with 38 guns; the 35th Division was in the right bank and the 38th in the left bank defences. Four battalions of Army troops were in reserve on the left bank near a bridge of boats some 5 miles above the main position. The enemy's mounted troops, under Subri Bey, consisted of two regiments of cavalry and 400 camelry, most of whom were absent during the battle on a raid against our communications near Shaikh Saad. In addition there were a number of Arab horsemen operating on the Turkish left flank.

¹ M. 07262/15 and M. 07366/15.

² Mesopotamia Commission: Report, p. 61.

³ Lieutenant in command, W. V. H. Harris, D.S.C.

⁴ Lieutenant in command, Mark Singleton, D.S.O.

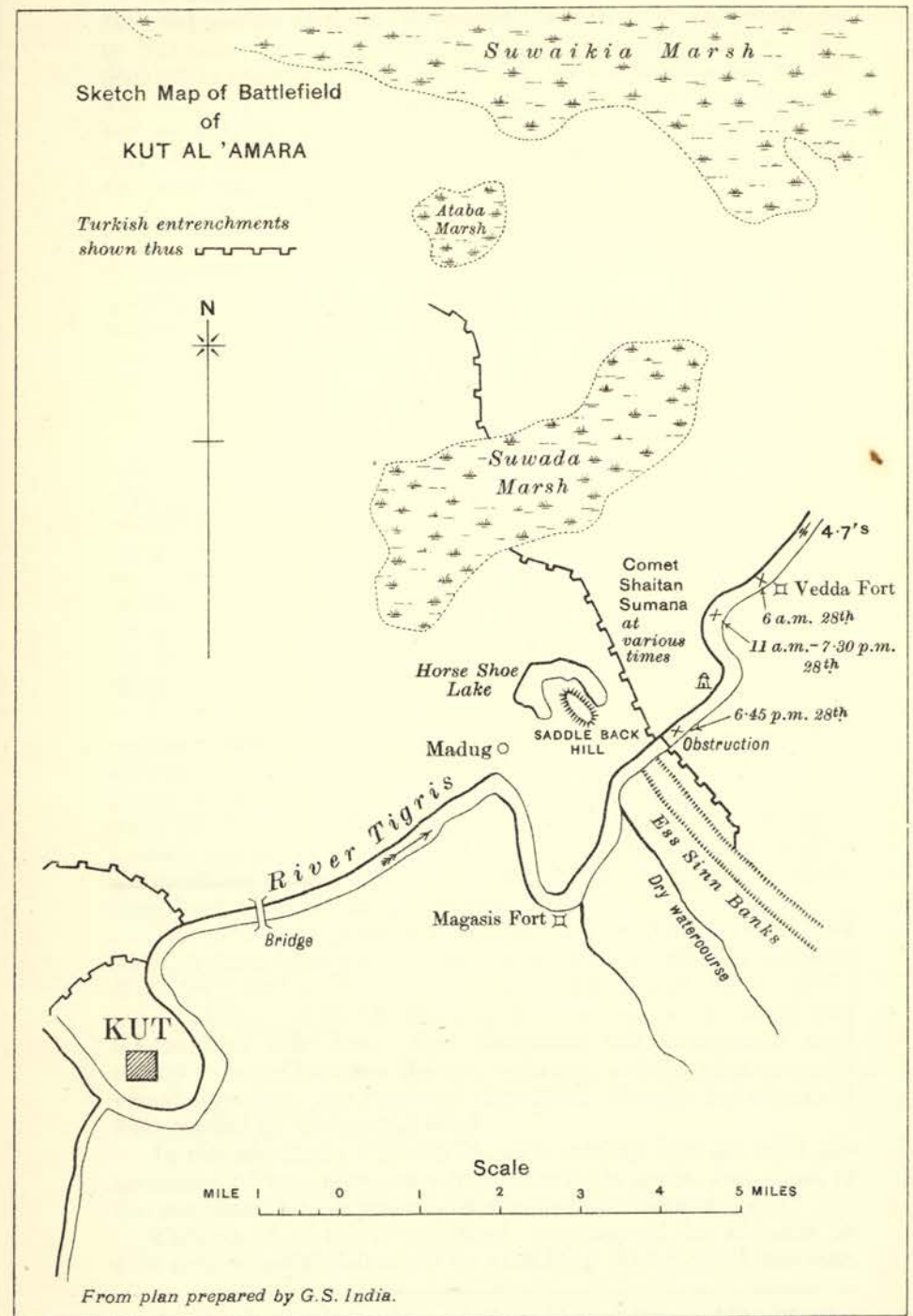
⁵ Sub-Lieutenant in command L. C. P. Tudway.

⁶ Under Lieutenant M. A. B. Johnston, R.A., and Mr. J. Mackay, Gunner, R.N.

⁷ Capt. Nunn was absent in Ceylon, and the next Sen. Officer, Capt. Colin Mackenzie, had been invalided to hospital with malaria.

⁸ They arrived at Basra on 5th September 1915. ⁹ See Plan 9.

PLAN 9



59. **Battle of Kut-al-'Amara, 28th September 1915.**—On 26th September General Townshend advanced from Sannaiyat to Nakhaila, some $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Turkish position. He decided to make his main attack on the northern bank, which was believed to be the weakest part of the Turkish position; but as a feint, all preliminary dispositions were arranged to make the enemy believe that the principal attack would be on the south bank.

In pursuance of this plan General Townshend divided his force into two columns. Column A¹, the principal force, was to demonstrate against the enemy's southern defences, and subsequently to move across the river and make a decisive attack against the enemy's left. While this was going on Column B² was to attack the left bank against the enemy's centre, and pin him to his trenches. The naval flotilla was to co-operate by moving up the river and protecting the flank of Column B.

On arrival at Nakhaila a boat-bridge was thrown across the river, and on the morning of the 27th September, Column B advanced, covered by the Artillery and Naval guns, and established themselves some 2,000 yards from the enemy's centre or horseshoe position.³ Meanwhile, Column A, after demonstrating on the right bank on September 27, withdrew under cover of night, in accordance with plan, and crossed to the left bank. They were deployed for the attack by 5 a.m. on the 28th, and by 2 p.m. the whole position north of the Suwada Marsh was in their hands.

In the centre, Column B had closed the enemy at 5 a.m., but received orders not to make a decisive attack until the turning movement by Column A had developed further. At 11 a.m. the enemy South of the river pushed forward a column to enfilade them, and the naval flotilla, which had during the night brought forward the naval 4·7-inch and military 4-inch and 5-inch guns mounted in barges, advanced, shelled the enemy, and drove them back to their entrenchments.

The 4·7-inch guns had opened fire at 5.45 a.m. on the enemy's right bank position, and were received with an accurate shell fire; and at 11 a.m. the gunboats moved up to closer range abreast of Suffra Mound, also coming under shell and intermittent rifle fire. The seaplanes and aeroplanes kept communication between the two columns, as from noon onwards visual signalling was rendered impossible through the clouds of dust carried by the strong wind.

In the afternoon Column B again worked forward with the assistance of very effective support from its guns and those of the gunboats, which practically silenced the Turkish guns.⁴

Column A, having reformed, commenced to advance at 4.50 p.m. to assist column B by attacking the enemy in the rear.

¹ Brig.-General Delamain. ² Major-General Fry. ³ See Plan 9

⁴ General Nixon's Report.

But at 5.30 p.m., when some 3,000 yards west of his objective and about to attack Eastwards, General Delamain found that strong hostile reinforcements were advancing from the south. He immediately changed his objective, formed front to the south, and his weary troops, infused with fresh life, delivered a dashing bayonet attack, routing the enemy in one magnificent rush, inflicting heavy loss on them and capturing four guns. The enemy, after a stubborn fight, were saved by the darkness, and the exhausted and thirsty troops bivouacked for the night. The marsh water was brackish and undrinkable, and it was not until next morning that the column moved to the river, and the horses got their first water for forty hours.

The naval flotilla was acquainted of General Delamain's success by seaplane at 6 p.m., and the G.O.C. requested the S.N.O. to proceed up to the obstruction to examine, and, if possible, destroy it in order to enable the pursuit to be pressed home by water as well as land. After dark, therefore, at 6.30 p.m. the three gunboats, followed by launch *R.N. I*, moved up, showing no lights. When near the obstruction a very heavy rifle and machine gun fire was opened on them from trenches on both banks of the river. An attempt to sink the centre mahela by ramming was unsuccessful; accordingly, the *Comet* was placed alongside it and Lieut.-Commdr. Cookson jumped into it and attempted with an axe to cut the wire hawsers connecting it with the other two craft (iron lighters) which formed the obstruction. He was immediately hit by bullets in several places, and died within ten minutes on board the *Comet*. The ships were being swept by a terrific fire¹ at ranges from 75 to 100 yards; and to avoid loosing them Lieutenant Harris of the *Comet* signalled to them to withdraw; and they anchored in Nakhaila Reach for the night.

On the following morning (29th September) the gunboats again proceeded up the river. The *Shaitan*,² which was leading, was fired on once ineffectually by an old muzzle loader dug into the bank abreast of the obstruction and manned by two Turks.³ But the defences were silent: the enemy had fled during the night; and aeroplane reconnaissance established that they were in full retreat towards Baghdad.

60. The Pursuit.—The gunboats got through the obstruction, arrived off Kut about 10 a.m., and went on in chase of the enemy's steamers, which were fleeing up the river. But navigation was most difficult in the low river, and it was not until the morning of the 30th September that two enemy craft, the

¹ General Nixon's Report. 12 men on board *Comet*, including 4 of the Royal West Kent Regiment who were serving on board, were wounded at this time. (S.N.O.'s Report.)

² Lieut. Mark Singleton, *Shaitan*, now became S.N.O.

³ They were subsequently wounded and captured.

*Pioneer*¹ and the *Basra*², were sighted. By the time the *Sumana* had broken both rudders by grounding, and the *Shaitan* was aground near Kut, so the *Comet* passed on alone and engaged the steamers, being joined later by the *Shaitan* when she managed to get afloat again.

The *Basra* replied to the gunboats' fire with four guns.³ She was apparently hit; she dropped two mahelas full of ammunition which she was towing, and made off out of range with the two gunboats in pursuit. About noon fire was opened on our ships by two enemy mountain guns from astern. The *Shaitan* again grounded, and for a while our gunboats were in a very dangerous position, with the possibility of being cut off from our forces which were far behind. Luckily, the *Shaitan* got afloat once more, and the gunboats returned safely to Kut.

The *Sumana* was despatched to Basra for repairs on 1st October, and the *Shaitan* and *Comet* went on up the river in convoy of four river steamers carrying General Townshend and a Brigade. After four days' steaming and grounding they reached Aziziya, about 90 miles above Kut.

The pursuit was greatly hampered by the conditions. Practically the only form of heavy transport was by river, and the amount required was out of all proportion to the usual requirements of a river expedition on account of the absence of fodder for the military transport animals and the lack of resources of any sort above the base—even firewood had to be carried by the transport. The difficulties were so great that there was no possibility now of catching the enemy⁴ who had already reached his previously prepared position at Ctesiphon, covering the road to Baghdad, where reinforcements joined him. Accordingly, General Townshend was ordered to stop his pursuit,⁵ and an advanced post was founded at Aziziya.

61. General Nixon's Plans for a further Advance.—General Nixon now considered that he was strong enough to advance to Baghdad, and with this intention he proposed to concentrate at Aziziya.⁶

“With reference to my suggestion to open by another general action road to Baghdad” he wired to Simla,⁷ “Will you kindly let me know whether my force is to be reinforced to the extent of another Division from France in order that my position there may be maintained. Effect of my occupying Baghdad would be more than nullified if subsequent events should compel me in course of time, to retreat down the river in consequence of reinforcements not being forthcoming.”

¹ A German tug armed by the Turks.

² River steamer mounting (?) one 3-pr. (Intelligence Report.)

³ Captain Nunn's Report. But cf. note ².

⁴ G.O.C. “D” to C.G.S., India, No. 129/200/1, 3rd October 1915.

⁵ C.G.S. India to G.O.C. “D”. P.S. -23401. 5th October 1915.

⁶ G.O.C. “D” to C.G.S., India, No. 129/200/1, 3rd October 1915.

⁷ 4th October 1915.

But the suggestion of an extension of our line to Baghdad, with all it involved, was contemplated with the greatest disquietude at the India Office. "If we do not stop him," wrote General Barrow, "Nixon will soon be in Baghdad regardless of orders, and we shall then be faced with the grave alternative of either having to withdraw again or of making our occupation effective. Either course involves serious considerations, more especially in view of the gloomy situation in the near East."¹ Russia had been driven out of Poland, Courland, and most of Galicia; Servia was about to be invaded once more by the Austro-German armies; and on the very day when General Barrow wrote his memorandum the Allies' ultimatum was despatched to Bulgaria. In Gallipoli our bolt was shot; the Salonica adventure was as yet too young for its ultimate effect to be gauged, and Roumania, though friendly, could not aid us without the help which we could not give.

Assuredly we could not afford to take risks in Mesopotamia. It seemed "imperative to stop Nixon's further advance," as Mr. Chamberlain wired privately to the Viceroy on the 4th October. He reiterated in an official telegram² his predecessor's orders, which still held good, that operations were to be confined to the Basra Vilayet, and accordingly next day a telegram³ was despatched from Simla warning General Nixon that no advance in strength should be carried out beyond Kut until it was certain that reinforcements from France might be expected, which was very doubtful, and deprecating his forward concentration at Aziziya.

Baghdad was a difficult position to defend. Its possession by us would, however, deprive the Turks of an important trade centre, a valuable depôt, base and railhead. Our forces would be astride the main route from Europe through Kermanshah to the interior of Persia, and would deprive the Germans of a base for their intrigues in the Middle East. Sir John Nixon had advocated its occupation⁴ nearly two months previously as the best means of counteracting the unrest in Persia.

62. A Committee appointed to consider an Advance to Baghdad.—Meanwhile, General Nixon had telegraphed to Mr. Chamberlain⁵ :—

"Navigation difficulties have been overcome . . .⁶ Enemy . . . much demoralized by defeat at Kut-al-'Amara, a

¹ Memorandum by Military Secretary, I.O., 4th October 1915.

² 3071 of 4th October 1915.

³ See paragraph 60.

⁴ Memorandum, dated 13th August 1915. Cf. General Nixon's Orders.

B. 6 Operations, 3 II.

⁵ No. 308/203/0, 5th October 1915. Addressed to C.G.S. (India), repeated to Secretary of State for India.

⁶ This sentence is important. It referred merely to an earlier telegram from General Nixon to C.G.S., India, in which he reported *navigational* difficulties above Kut. But it was taken by the Committee to mean that General Nixon had overcome the *transport* difficulties which had existed from the time of the occupation of Qurna and became serious from and after May 1915.

position which they considered impregnable. They are now so near Baghdad that Nur-ed-Din will have difficulty in making a determined stand with men who are close to their homes and wish to desert We have in front of us a shaken enemy who has lost 13 guns and is deficient of ammunition He has taken refuge in a position where we can manoeuvre, and I hope destroy him. I see nothing which would justify letting slip such an opportunity."

On 4th October the Cabinet met and Mr. Chamberlain reported the position to them, and as a result a special Inter-Departmental Committee was appointed of representatives of the Foreign Office, General Staff, Admiralty, and India Office "to consider in all its possibilities and policy an advance on Baghdad."¹

The War Office appreciation² coincided with General Nixon's own view that his force could seize Baghdad; but the question was whether he would be able to remain there. At this time we were withdrawing troops from Gallipoli for Salonika; knowing that our hands were full, the Turks could reduce their forces in Syria and Gallipoli. In the Caucasus the Russians had been inactive since the battle of Olty,³ and winter was approaching, which would immobilize them; it was quite possible for the Turks to withdraw troops from that front. Altogether the War Office considered that in the course of a few weeks the Turks might move 60,000 reinforcements to Baghdad.

It was the universal opinion that withdrawal from Baghdad once we had occupied it would have a most unfortunate effect on the Moslem world.⁴

The Foreign Office considered that the effect of our occupation of Baghdad would weaken the power and prestige of the

¹ The composition of the Committee was as follows :—

Sir Thomas Holderness, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., India Office, Chairman.

Sir Edmund Barrow, G.C.B., Military Secretary, India Office.

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

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

Mr. Launcelot Oliphant, Foreign Office.

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

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

The following were the terms of reference :—

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

² Memorandum by G.S., War Office, 6th October 1915.

³ 7th September 1915.

⁴ The evacuation of Gallipoli may be considered a parallel case. It is possible that our forebodings on that score were exaggerated.

Turkish Government throughout the whole of Arabia.¹ It would have a wholesome effect on the critical situation in Persia at that time, where the position of the Germans who were intriguing against us was entirely dependent on their being able to keep open the road to Baghdad. It would even re-echo in Afghanistan.

"If no such effective action be taken, the danger to British interests in Persia and Afghanistan may be a matter of the most serious consequence. If we stop short of Baghdad the political effect of our victorious advance into Mesopotamia will be largely discounted. The effect of our halting will undoubtedly be ascribed to weakness."¹

The political officers in Mesopotamia always held the occupation of Baghdad in view as the desirable ultimate goal of the expedition. It might, thought Sir Percy Cox, deter Persia from declaring war, if carried out in time.²

¹ F.O. Memorandum, 7th October 1915.

² R. 252 from Sir P. Cox, 29.10.15. Sir P. Cox's views, however, were not transmitted until six days after the advance to Baghdad had been authorised.

On 29th October the Admiralty telegraphed to Commodore Wake, S.N.O., Persian Gulf (as result of his urgent telegram, No. 40, on the situation):—

"15. All preparations should be made for war with Persia. Admiralty are informed that additional troops will not be forthcoming for operations in Persia or for appreciably reinforcing garrisons of posts, and reliance will consequently be placed on H.M. ships taking as effective steps as possible for protection of British interests . . . Consult with military and political authorities and report. . . ."

Commodore Wake's proposed dispositions are given in the following telegram, 41, from Commodore, P.G., to Admiralty, 31.10.15:—

"After consultation with military and political authorities, I have arranged that ships will take up the following stations as soon as possible: *Juno*, Bushire; *Pyramus*, Jask; *Bramble*, Chahbar; *Britomart*, Lingeh; *Dalhousie*, Bander Abbas; *Lawrence*, Henjam, if required. As there are not sufficient troops for the occupation of Lingeh and Bander Abbas, British representatives and subjects will be removed, if necessary, by H.M. ships at the port to Karachi. Cable would be disconnected and steamers would cease to call. Community will remain as long as possible at Chahbar on account of telegraph line. After evacuating Lingeh and Bander Abbas *Dalhousie* will go to Bombay for refit as previously arranged, *Britomart* will go to Henjam, from which place a system of relief ships requiring coal will be arranged. *Lawrence* will then return to Bushire for disposal. Defence of Bushire will be undertaken by *Juno* and troops, following lines that have been recently in force at that place. C.O. of troops is asking for 400 additional troops to be sent. This reinforcement is considered very necessary owing to length of perimeter to defend, 6 miles in length. If it is desired to sieze Persian seaborne trade propose to form depôt for captured dhows at (?)rag Island, with a second depôt, Henjam. It is considered ports on the Arabian coast need not be considered."

63. Report of the Committee: Decision to make the Advance.—On the 8th October the Secretary of State for India had telegraphed to General Nixon:—¹

"Very urgent. With what addition to your present force are you confident that you can both occupy and hold Baghdad?"

and at the same time he assured the Viceroy privately that he would make every effort to supply the necessary force.² General Nixon replied that he was confident he could occupy Baghdad without any addition to his present force, but if the Turks made a serious effort to retake it he would require reinforcements of one Division and one white Cavalry Regiment.

On 16th October the Committee reported on their terms of reference. They considered an early advance on, and occupation of, Baghdad most desirable; but unless reinforcements could be sent, sufficient to enable Force "D" to maintain its position there, the attempt should not be made. Their estimate of the reinforcements necessary coincided with Sir John's own view.

At this time we were badly in need of a striking success in the East. The turning movement at Suvla had failed, and our prospects in Gallipoli were most uncertain. Bulgaria had followed up her mobilization by a rapid advance in Serbia, and it seemed that the German attempt to break through to Constantinople would succeed.

On 23rd October the Viceroy was informed that General Nixon might march on Baghdad if he was satisfied that his available forces were sufficient for the operation; and that reinforcements would be sent him as soon as possible.³

The enterprise was authorised, and General Townshend was ordered to begin his advance without delay.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE OF CTESIPHON AND RETREAT TO KUT.

64. Concentration at Aziziya: Shortage of River Transport.—During the six weeks after the arrival of our advanced troops at Aziziya on 5th October reinforcements, supplies, and transport animals were brought up preparatory to the advance.⁴ The

¹ No. 3077. Repeated to India.

² 8th October 1915. "Private and Very Urgent."

³ Secretary to State for India to Viceroy, No. 3099.

⁴ General Nixon's report No. 168-11-0, 17th January, 1916, para. 3. But cf. C.G.S., India, to G.O.C. "D," P.S.-23401, 5th October 1915. ". . . There seems to be no advantage in concentrating at present so far forward as Aziziya as the only gain in this is if a move towards Baghdad takes place. C.-in-C. considers that no advance in strength should be carried out beyond Kut-al-'Amara until it is certain (and this appears to us very doubtful), that reinforcements from France may be expected.

concentration was a slow process on account of the difficulties of navigation during the low water season, which much delayed the passage of shipping.¹ Another factor bearing adversely on the case was the shortage of river transport. At this date no railways had been built by us in the country, and we were completely dependent upon river shipping for the transport of reinforcements, ammunition, and supplies of all sorts, even down to such things as firewood, from the base, to our forces up the Tigris and Euphrates. The question of transport became more and more serious as the lines of communication lengthened, and the quantity available for the advance to Baghdad was quite insufficient for such an undertaking.²

65. **Naval Forces.**—The *Comet*,³ whose improvised gun mountings had broken away from the decks, had now returned from repair at Basra. With the *Shaitan*⁴ and *Sumana*⁵ she was detailed for the advance to Baghdad. The *Firefly*⁶, first of the new "small China gunboats," which were being put together at Abadan, was now available. There were present also the four Naval 4·7-inch guns in their horseboats, with the *Shushan*⁷ and *Massoudieh*,⁸ each armed with a pom-pom and a Maxim, to tow them. Captain Nunn arrived at the front on 22nd November and directed the Naval operations from the *Comet* or *Firefly* as occasion required.

66. **The Advance begins: Battle of Ctesiphon.**—General Townshend had given it as his opinion that, unless great risk was to be run, the advance to Baghdad ought to be carried out by two Divisions, or by one Division supported closely by another complete Division, exclusive of the garrisons of the important places Nasiriya, Ahwaz, and Amara.⁹ The available troops under his command comprised his own VI. Division, and he was reinforced by five squadrons of cavalry, three infantry battalions, and a R.H.A. battery: he had thus some 14,000 men. Two Divisions were promised from France, but the leading troops were not expected to arrive at Basra until the end of November, and some further time must elapse before they could be transported to the front and made available for the advance.

¹ It took about nine days for a steamer towing a barge each side of her (the usual method) to reach Aziziya from Basra.

² For an extensive discussion of the question of river transport and railways see Mesopotamia Commission: Report. It is outside the scope of this Monograph.

³ Lieut. G. E. Harden.

⁴ Lieut. Aubrey C. Thursfield.

⁵ Sub-Lieut. Lionel C. P. Tudway.

⁶ Lieut. Christopher J. F. Eddis. She was launched 23rd October 1915, and left Basra for Aziziya on 3rd November 1915. Armament, 1—4-inch, 1—6-pr., and Maxims. She was equipped with W/T.

⁷ Lieut. F. W. Lyte, D.S.C., R.N.R.

⁸ Lieut. F. C. Hendry, Indian Army.

⁹ Tel. to General Kemball, 3rd October 1915.

Misgivings were clearly in General Townshend's mind. On 2nd November—nine days before he advanced—he wrote to the Viceroy:—

"These troops of mine are tired, and their tails are not up, but slightly down; the Mahomedans are not pleased at approaching the sacred precincts of Suliman Pak at Ctesiphon—the troops are not confident and have had enough; as it is now, the British soldier and the Sepoy, as the Roman soldier did under Belisarius, look over their shoulders and are fearful of the distance from the sea, and go down in consequence with every imaginable disease. . . ."

General Townshend occupied Kutunie² on 11th November without opposition, and on the 18th his whole force and shipping³ were brought up, and the advance continued to Zair against slight opposition, the troops moving along both banks of the river. On the 20th and 21st the force concentrated on the left bank at Lajj, nine miles from Ctesiphon.

The Turkish position at Ctesiphon lay astride the Tigris, covering the approach to Baghdad. The defences, which formed two main positions, had been under construction for months, and the intrepid efforts of the airmen had enabled our forces to gain a fairly accurate knowledge of the position. There were a first and second line of entrenchments on each bank, and in rear of the second line on the left bank, a bridge of boats. Further in rear, again, the Diala River, near its junction with the Tigris, was bridged at two points, and entrenchments commanded the crossings.

Information as to the enemy's strength was not very definite. It was reported that he had over 13,000 regular troops and 38 guns in the Ctesiphon position,⁴ and as reinforcements were near, it was considered advisable that there should be no delay in attacking and defeating Nur-ed-Din before their arrival. But as a matter of fact large reinforcements joined Nur-ed-Din's army at Ctesiphon shortly before the battle.⁵

General Townshend, after a night march from Lajj on the 21st–22nd November, attacked in three columns⁶ the hostile position on the left bank at the centre, and on the north-east flank, about 8 a.m., and a severe fight lasted throughout the day, resulting in the capture of the enemy's front position, and

¹ Mesopotamia Commission: Report, p. 27.

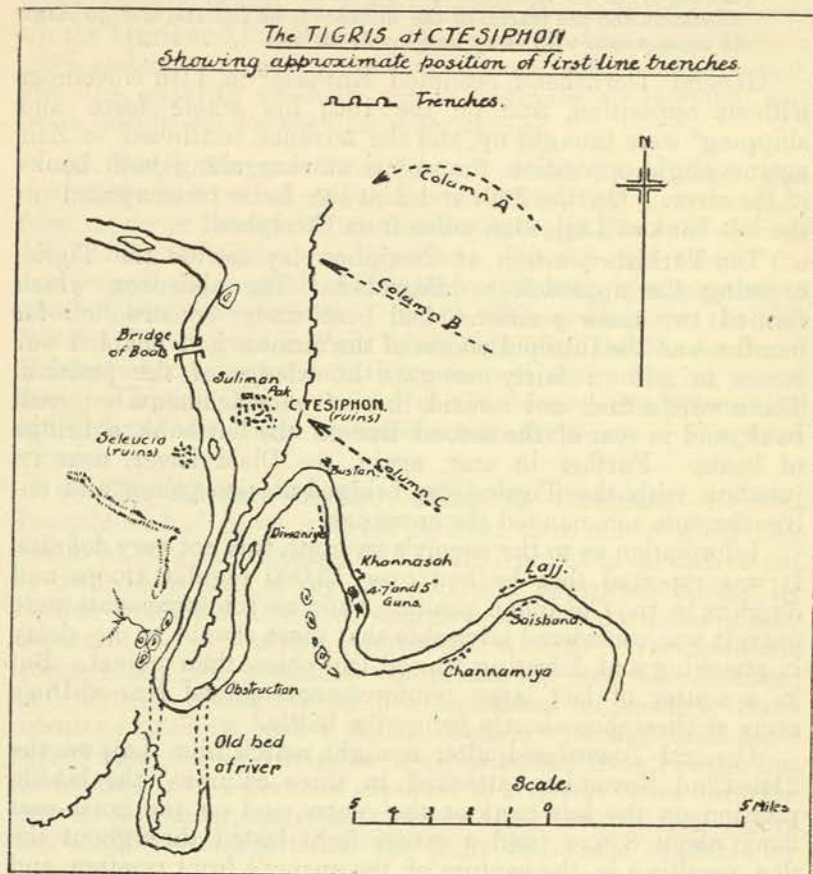
² See plan 1.

³ Five river steamers, barges, lighters, &c.

⁴ General Nixon's Report, No. 168–11–0, 17th January 1916. But General Townshend's Report, No. 158–1–A, 20th December 1915, para. 5, says:—"The Turkish Force . . . was estimated by our Intelligence Department . . . at roughly 10,900 combatants and some 36 guns, but it will be seen this was not half of the enemy's real strength, which undoubtedly amounted to well over 20,000 men and anything between 40 and 50 guns." In forwarding the report, however, the G.O.C. (Gen. Lake) states (No. 168–21–0, 9th March 1916, para. 2) that the accuracy of this statement is seriously challenged by the G.S.O. i/c Intelligence Section. Our own forces amounted to 14,000 combatants and 40 guns.

⁵ General Townshend's Report. ⁶ Termed A, B, and C respectively.

more than 1,300 prisoners. All the British forces remained on the left bank throughout. It was hoped to be able to roll up the left flank of the enemy, and our cavalry (column A) were then to cut off their retreat up river, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Diala River. This would have left the enemy only one bridge of boats by which to escape, and this might have been destroyed later by artillery fire or aircraft bombs.



The gunboats moved from Lajj on the evening of 21st November, followed by the naval 4.7's and two military 5-inch guns mounted in barges, and took up a position overnight for bombarding at daylight an enemy redoubt reported near Bustan. On the way the *Firefly* and *Shaitan*, who were leading, ran into an ambush of sniping, the *Firefly* having one casualty before the enemy were cleared out. The reported position of the redoubt near Bustan was bombarded next morning for an hour, but no sign of it was seen either then or later, when the ships moved up. Throughout the three days' battle which followed the naval 4.7's and the two army 5-inch guns remained approximately in the same position, and bombarded various points in

the enemy's lines as circumstances required. As the river banks here were about 15 feet high, these guns were invisible to the enemy, the country being dead flat, and they had, of course, to use indirect fire. The four gunboats meanwhile cruised in the north and south reach between these guns and Bustan, and on the 23rd and 24th they sometimes went round the corner into the next reach. But this corner was an unhealthy place, the Turks had evidently got all the ranges marked off and forward observers out, and they made very good shooting; and as General Townshend's plan was to attack on the left bank only, these enemy guns¹ on the right bank, which were well dug in and difficult to locate, were unmolested and were able to hold up the advance of the flotilla during the entire period.

During the forenoon of 22nd November the Turkish river craft came down and embarked their infantry from the right bank to reinforce the flank which was being attacked. Our gunboats, which had great difficulty in making satisfactory shooting over the high river banks, engaged the enemy's ships, which retreated up river. The operations continued during the 23rd, 24th, and 25th November, during most of which time the flotilla engaged and was under a heavy fire from the Turkish guns on the right bank, the masts and funnels of the gunboats providing a good mark for the enemy. The *Comet* was hit on the waterline on 22nd November, but did not withdraw from the action.

Meanwhile, on 22nd, our troops pressed on and penetrated the enemy's second line, capturing eight guns, and established themselves in the Turkish trenches. As their reinforcements arrived the enemy made fresh counter-attacks. The captured guns changed hands several times amid fierce fighting, but had finally to be abandoned, and before nightfall our force had to be withdrawn to the enemy's first-line positions. Our casualties were very heavy: we had lost some 4,500 out of 14,000 combatants, while the Turkish losses were enormous.²

The 23rd November was spent under heavy shell fire in reorganising our troops in the captured positions and collecting the wounded. Our losses had been so heavy that it was considered inadvisable to renew the offensive. Neither horses nor men had watered since leaving Lajj on the evening of 21st. ~~The Turks who had fought on the previous day were also in no state to resume the fight; but reinforcements came up and~~ Heavy attacks were made against General Townshend's line throughout the night of 23rd-24th November. The 24th passed

¹ 4.8-inch and field guns.

² The 17th Brigade could only muster some 700 men; and General Delamain's and General Hamilton's Brigades were under 1,000 men each.—(General Townshend's Report).

quietly, and the morning was spent in evacuating the wounded to the transports lying near Lajj.¹

67. **Decision to retire.**—From aircraft reports it was now clear to General Townshend that he would shortly be attacked by superior numbers, for large reinforcements were coming up from the north, who had been engaged with the Russians. His division had driven four Turkish divisions out of a very strong defensive position, but it was too weak to face these odds. Accordingly, the General decided to fall back on his ships at Lajj under cover of dark. "My duty," he writes, "seemed clear to extricate and preserve my division by a steady retirement until near enough to our own reinforcements to be able to make a stand."²

The retirement began at 8.30 p.m. on 25th, preceded by the transport, and Lajj was reached during the night. Captain Nunn sent the 4.7's and 5-inch guns on, and himself followed with the *Comet* and *Firefly* as rearguard, reaching Lajj on the forenoon of 26th November. The rapid advance of the enemy necessitated the retirement being continued ~~on that afternoon~~, and the Turkish force was actually only some 6,000 yards distant when our columns moved off. Our troops marched through the night *via* Zair and El Kutunie to Aziziya, where a halt was made on the 28th and 29th November, in order to evacuate the wounded and stores, which left on 29th November for Kut in the river steamer *Medjidieh* and barges. Very slow progress was made, and the barges were continually grounding. The gunboats remained behind to set fire to such stores as had to be abandoned, and then acted as rearguard, and rendered assistance to the miscellaneous collection of barges, lighters, and other river craft which necessarily accompanied the army, and which were stranding everywhere.

68. **Loss of the Shaitan.**—On the evening of the 28th November both the *Comet* and *Shaitan* went aground about eight miles above Aziziya, and remained fast all night, being sniped from both banks. The *Comet* got off at 7.30 next morning and was none the worse. But the *Shaitan*, overstrained by heavy towing work and frequent grounding, had sprung a leak, and before it could be stopped her low gunwhales were under water, and she rested on the bottom. Under the fire of Arab snipers at close range, which the *Comet*, *Firefly* and *Shushan* endeavoured to drive away, she was lightened of guns, ammunition, &c., which were placed in a barge. In response to a wireless request the Cavalry Brigade was sent up and got well into the Arabs, dispersing them and accounting for about 140. But the

¹ Any account of the awful sufferings of the wounded owing to the lack of hospital river steamers, &c., is beyond the scope of this monograph. The subject has been exhaustively dealt with in the Mesopotamia Commission Report.

² General Townshend's Report.

Turkish advanced guard came up, and their guns opened fire on the ships, and the *Shaitan's* hull had to be abandoned.

The retreat was continued at 11 a.m. on 30th November, with the gunboats last, and at Captain Nunn's suggestion the Naval 4.7's and the two 5-in. guns, with the *Shushan* and *Massoudieh* were sent right through to Kut, instead of halting each night with the force. The troops were marching on the fairly straight Baghdad to Kut road; but the ships and transport had just double the distance to traverse by water, owing to the bends in the river. The 30th Brigade¹ had been sent on ahead to Kut, in order to re-open the line of communications near Shaikh Saad, which had been interrupted by the Arabs. Sir John Nixon's steamer² had been attacked near this place while being convoyed down the river by the *Butterfly*,³ the second of the new small China type gunboats. The day's march was only about eight miles, and the troops camped at Umm-at-Tubul,⁴ but on Captain Nunn's representations General Townshend caused the next day's march to be arranged in concert with the Senior Naval Officer, who possessed the necessary knowledge of the difficult places in the river and the time required for the transport to pass them. At this period the gunboats were acting as rearguard to the force, and owing to the turns and twists of the river were frequently many miles behind. If a gunboat then stuck on a mudbank it had to work out its own salvation in a hostile country, as the Arabs always turned on the retreating force, and the Turkish Cavalry and advanced guard followed close on their heels.

69. Action at Umm-at-Tubul : Loss of the Comet and Firefly.

—The camp at Umm-at-Tubul was attacked that night. The enemy were beaten off, but they brought up guns and burst shrapnel well over the camp and ships, the *Firefly* being hit twice. At about 3 a.m.⁵ on 1st December, as the enemy appeared from their camp fires to be in force, orders were sent

¹ General Melliss.

² G.H.Q. were moved to Aziziya on 13th November 1915.

³ Launched 21st November, left Basra 24th November 1915.

⁴ General Townshend's Report, paragraph 54, states that the shortness of the march (and consequent surrounding of the force by the enemy on the following day) was due to the troops being delayed by the ships. General Nixon in his Report, paragraph 18, made a similar statement, but on the facts being brought to his notice by Captain Nunn, Sir John Nixon wrote to the C.G.S., Simla, on the matter, and the mistake was subsequently amended by Gazette.

The facts were that Captain Nunn, when conferring with General Townshend on the afternoon of 30th November, pointed out that the ships had been forced to waste several hours of daylight by anchoring so early, and he was given to understand that the short march was due to the exhaustion of the troops. (Captain Nunn's Report, p. 183.)

Umm-at-Tubul is just above Hamadiya (*see* plan 1).

⁵ General Townshend's Report, p. 13. Captain Nunn's Report, p. 185, says 2 a.m.

both by military officers on horseback and by a naval officer¹ in a motor boat, for General Melliss to bring up his brigade.² The former got through, but the latter was unable in the dark to find General Melliss's column, which was possibly some miles from the river. The motor boat was heavily fired on from the river banks, both going and returning, one man in the boat being killed, and both the sub-lieutenant and the other man wounded.

At daylight (6.45 a.m., 1st December) just as the transport began to move off, about 12,000 Turkish troops were seen advancing on the camp, about 2,500 yards distant, in an enveloping attack. It is likely that the rapid retirement of General Melliss's column had been reported by Arab spies, and the Turks, imagining this to be the whole force, had followed in pursuit, and came up to the outposts of our camp after dark on the previous night. Their advanced guard then received a check, and they camped until daylight.

Both sides at once opened fire, and the Turks delivered an attack in great force upon the camp, and concentrated a heavy artillery fire on the *Firefly* and *Comet*. The *Sumana* was at this time further down stream, struggling with two large lighters, endeavouring to save as much of the river transport as possible. The Turks were in mass formation, into which the gunboats poured lyddite as fast as the guns could be loaded; and at the range of 3,000 yards great execution was done. The steadiness of our troops was magnificent, and the retirement was conducted with clockwork precision.³

The troops and the river transport were soon clear away, but shells were falling all around the gunboats. At about 7 a.m., just as Captain Nunn, on board the *Comet*, had ordered the signal to be made to drop down the river, the *Firefly* was crippled by a direct hit on the steam drum of her boiler, which killed a stoker and severely wounded her Captain.⁴ The *Comet* got her in tow at once, but being an old boat without independent paddles she was unmanageable in the current with the *Firefly* in tow; she went aground, and the *Firefly* drifted down the river. A signal was made to the *Sumana* to drop the barges she was towing and come to the assistance of the two ships; but all her attempt to get the *Comet* off were fruitless.

All this time the enemy's fire was growing hotter; they were in our camp now, firing with field guns accurately and with great rapidity at short range at the gunboats, which were completely surrounded by the enemy. The *Comet* was being

¹ Sub-Lieutenant Wood, R.N.R.

² It arrived, well out on the northern flank, about 9 a.m.

³ General Townshend's Report, paragraph 59. "The common shell was exploding all over the place amongst us and several shaves I and my staff had . . . but nothing disturbed our steady retirement" (paragraph 60).

⁴ Lieut. Christopher J. F. Eddis.

repeatedly hit, and it could only be a matter of minutes before a lucky shot should disable the *Sumana* also; and Captain Nunn accordingly decided that the *Comet* and *Firefly* must be abandoned. The *Sumana* was ordered to come alongside the *Comet*, whose Officers and men were transferred to her after the breech blocks of the guns had been thrown overboard and the engines disabled. Under a heavy fire an Officer¹ and a seaman² gallantly pulled over in a small boat to the *Firefly*, which was aground near by, and brought off her officers and men. The *Comet* and *Firefly* were now badly damaged and on fire, and as the heavily laden *Sumana* backed off astern down the river the enemy were only 50 yards away, and the hail of bullets was penetrating her protective plating.

Near Shidaif, a difficult crossing a few miles further down the river, the tug *Shuhrur* was found to be aground with two large lighters, one of which contained the whole of the divisional ammunition for the heavy and quick-firing guns and small arms, on which the retreat to and holding of Kut depended.³ Time was short, and the *Sumana* was dangerously overloaded, her draught was materially increased, and the slightest list brought water over the gunwale, but she managed to extricate the *Shuhrur* and the ammunition lighter. The other lighter was full of sick and wounded ratings, and some of them had to be left to their fate,⁴ as the enemy had now come up and opened fire.

70. **Kut reached.**—The *Sumana* was now several miles behind our retreating army, which was marching steadily on Kut. She passed the river steamer *Salimi* during the evening, and transferred the wounded and surplus ratings; and at 10.30 p.m. she anchored to the eastward of Baghela.⁵ She proceeded next day (2nd December) at daylight, and reached Kut at 1 p.m. without experiencing any further difficulties. The troops arrived late that evening and marched in next morning. They had marched 43 miles in 34 hours, including six hours of rearguard fighting, and their casualties were a little more than 500. The total length of the retreat from Ctesiphon was between 80 and 90 miles. In spite of greatly superior forces on his heels the whole way General Townshend had not lost a gun or a single prisoner, but he had brought all his sick and wounded through,⁶ though at the cost to these of the most dreadful suffering; and he had brought through also some 1,200 Turkish prisoners which were captured at Ctesiphon. The casualties of the Division during that battle and the retreat

¹ Lieut. G. E. Harden.

² Seaman Ernest Guy, R.N.R.

³ Capt. Nunn's Report, p. 188.

⁴ The Turks sent them in to us under flag of truce a few days later, saying they had so many wounded of their own that they could not attend to them.

⁵ See Plan I.

⁶ See Note 4, ante.

to Kut amounted to nearly a third of its total strength.¹ During the whole retreat the gunboats had shepherded the steamers and barges of the river transport, working at night as well as by day, frequently under fire from snipers on both banks; and it was largely due to their efforts that the river transport was brought safely through to Kut,² at the sacrifice of three out of four ships.

CHAPTER XII.

OPERATIONS FOR THE RELIEF OF KUT: TOWNSHEND SURRENDERS—29TH APRIL 1916.

71. **Townshend stands at Kut.**—General Townshend's decision to stand at Kut was influenced by the necessity of resting his men, while strategical reasons demanded that the advance of large Turkish forces should be checked firmly to prevent the Tigris Valley from being overrun as far as Amara, and to give time for the reinforcements now arriving at Basra from Egypt and France to ascend the river and concentrate at Amara to stop the Turkish advance.³ By holding Kut the Shatt-al-'Hai would be denied to the enemy.⁴

Preparation were at once commenced for the defence of the town. The aircraft, cavalry and all shipping that could be spared were sent down river, as they would be of the greatest use to the relief force, whereas the cavalry would not be needed when the place was invested, and the ships could have been destroyed by shell fire. For there was no part of the town which the Turks could not command by gun-fire. The only Naval forces left in Kut were the little *Sumana* and the 4·7inch guns in their horseboats, as these could find a little shelter under the river banks.⁵ The shipping left Kut on 4th December and the cavalry two days later, the latter only just in time, for by 7th December the investment was complete.

At Ali Gharbi, 75 miles lower down the Tigris, our cavalry were reinforced with infantry and guns from Basra, and also the newly completed small China type gunboats, *Butterfly* and *Crane-fly*; and behind this advanced detachment a force, under the command of Major-General A. J. Aylmer, V.C., was collected on the line Amara-Ali Gharbi for the relief of Kut.

72. **Increase in Naval Forces.**—The new small China type gunboats were now rapidly becoming available. The *Butterfly*,⁶

¹ Actual numbers: 692 killed, 3,852 wounded.

² This is not specifically stated in General Townshend's Report.

³ General Townshend's Report, No. 15-O.-A., 10 March 1916.

⁴ G.O.C. "D." to General Townsend, No. 1008-117-0, 6th March 1915.

⁵ Lieut. Tudway's Report on the siege of Kut and proceedings of *Sumana* is given in Captain Nunn's Report, Vol. IV., Appendix VI.

⁶ Lieut. Gerald A. Wilson.

Crane-fly,¹ and *Dragon-fly*² were at the front³ at the end of the year 1915; the *Gad-fly*⁴ arrived on 2nd January 1916 and the remainder followed soon after.⁵

They were useful little craft, though their engines, which developed a h.p. of 175, only gave them three to four knots speed against the current in the flood river, and were scarcely powerful enough⁶; and they had a single screw and one boiler only, which latter was a drawback in case the boiler should be put out of action by a shell. They were armed with one 4-inch, one 12 pr., one 6-pr.,⁷ a 2-pr. A. A. pom-pom, and four Maxims. Their complement was two officers and about 20 men; and they had the luxury—in Mesopotamia—of a good wireless installation.

In addition to these, the *Mantis*, the first of four gunboats of the large China class,⁸ had left England in November 1915.

The Turkish Thornycroft motor patrol boat sunk by the *Espiègle* in November 1914, had now been salvaged and refitted by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company,⁹ and was taken into the naval service under the name of *Flycatcher*. For Minesweeping duties two steam launches were provided.¹⁰ Steps were being taken, with the approval of the Admiralty, to establish a naval repairing base at Basra for the repair and docking of the river gunboats and seaplanes. The *Espiègle*,¹¹ *Odin* and *Miner* were employed at the base in connection with manning, storing and fitting out the new craft; and the Depôt ship *Alert* was at the Abadan building yard. Arrangements were also being made for a Naval Depôt on shore, the site chosen being at Tanooma,¹² where there was an old Turkish Hospital. A floating repair depôt on the left bank of the river, opposite Basra, was required, and the Admiralty asked Messrs. Yarrow to design and build a stern wheel repair steamer for this purpose.¹³ Five seaplanes and two aeroplanes under Flight Commdr. Frederick W. Bowhill, R.N., left England for Basra on 9th January 1916;¹⁴ but at the end of the month, in order to relieve the S.N.O. of the duties of administration, the Naval Air Squadron ceased to be under Captain Nunn, and was placed under the orders of the

¹ Lieut. Alexander R. Chalmer.

² Lieut. Aubrey C. Thursfield.

³ Ali Gharbi.

⁴ Lieut. Irving M. Palmer.

⁵ Four more were ordered on 23rd December 1915. M. 09914/15.

⁶ Captain Nunn's Report, pp. 203-4. See also Vol. IV., Appendix I., Report No. 984/111, dated 26.6.1916.

⁷ Changed eventually for a 12-pr. 12-cwt.

⁸ Length 230 ft., beam 36 ft., draught 4 ft. 6 ins., speed 14 knots. Main armament 2—6-inch Q.F. guns. They were towed out from England.

⁹ See paragraph 49.

¹⁰ Under Lieut. (Temp.) William A. Milne, R.I.M.

¹¹ She was relieved by *Proserpine* on 22nd March 1916, as she was found too small for the rapidly growing administrative work, offices, &c.

¹² The southern corner of Ashar Creek (see plan 7) had first been proposed for this purpose, and work was commenced there, when the more favourable site at Tanooma was offered to the Navy.

¹³ She was eventually commissioned as *H.M.S. Scotstoun*.

¹⁴ Admiralty to S.N.O., 117, 12th January 1916.

G.O.C. in Mesopotamia, who assumed the responsibility for the transport of the squadron's stores and equipment, and for the arrangement for repairs.¹

73. Concentration at Ali Gharbi.—General Townshend stated he had supplies at Kut for some two months; but he telegraphed on 6th December that he hoped it would be possible to relieve him in a month,² for if relief was delayed two months Marshal Von der Goltz, who had taken command of the Turkish Army in Mesopotamia after the Battle of Ctesiphon, and was reported at Baghdad with six Turkish Divisions, would have time to annihilate him.³ Events proved him to be wrong; but his daily list of casualties in the shell-swept town was very long,⁴ though he hit back with such effect that within a few days the enemy abandoned their costly efforts to take the place by direct attack, and had recourse to regular siege operations.

On 28th October the nucleus of a Russian Expeditionary Force⁵ to Northern Persia under General Baratoff had disembarked at Enzeli on the Caspian, and it was hoped that this Expedition would draw off some of the Turkish forces in Mesopotamia. General Baratoff moved on Hamadan, which he occupied on 19th December, with the intention of advancing on Kermanshah, and threatening Baghdad from the North-eastward. But he had not yet made his influence felt to Mesopotamia.

The British relieving force, known as the Tigris Army Corps, was being concentrated at Ali Gharbi, and reinforcements from Great Britain and India were being poured into the country, and sent to the front as fast as the inadequate river transport would allow, for no steps had yet been taken to construct a light railway up the Tigris. But the month mentioned by General Townshend ran out before the Tigris column was ready to advance.

74. Operations for the Relief of Kut commence 4th January 1916.—Soon after the investment of Kut the Turks had pushed mounted troops down to Shaikh Saad, some 30 miles by river from Ali Gharbi, and they followed this up on 28th December and subsequent days by moving down troops to occupy the place and oppose the advance of the relieving force. On 21st December the *Butterfly* and *Dragonfly* had bombarded and destroyed some enemy trenches near Shaikh Saad, the ships coming under fire, but sustaining no casualties.

On 4th January 1916 General Aylmer's leading troops, under Major-General Younghusband advanced from Ali Gharbi

¹ Admiralty to C.-in-C., E. Indies, 45, 30th January 1916.

² No. 160-G., 6th December 1915.

³ Marshal Von der Goltz visited Kut at the end of 1915.

⁴ His casualties between 4th December and Christmas Day, 1915, were 1,625 out of a force of under 9,000. (General Townshend's Report, p. 11.)

⁵ 10,000 rifles and 30 guns.

towards Shaikh Saad, moving by both banks, the gunboats¹ keeping touch with the advance and rearguards. General Younghusband was on board the *Gadfly* with Captain Nunn on the 6th and 7th January.

The column got in touch with the enemy on each bank on the morning of 6th January. The Turks were entrenched astride the Tigris, three and a half miles East of Shaikh Saad. Heavy firing immediately developed and our Force made an attempt to turn the Turkish right flank, the gunboats supporting with their 4-inch guns; but owing to the pressure of hostile cavalry and Arabs in superior force the movement did not succeed. General Aylmer came up on the morning of 7th January, and by the evening, after very heavy fighting, the enemy's trenches on the right bank had been captured and some 600 prisoners and two guns taken. On the left bank our troops were held up, and attempts to turn this flank were checked by the enemy.

Little progress was made by the tired troops next day, (8th January). During the afternoon, by using some of the *Espiègle's* 25-lb. 4-inch shell, which weighed 9-lbs. less than her own, the *Gadfly* was able to put some shells into Shaikh Saad, which greatly demoralised the Turks. It was found early on 9th January that they had retreated up-river during the night,² and our force advanced and occupied Shaikh Saad. The gunboats at once moved on, and discovered a line of mines moored across the river between the enemy trenches. Two mines had already broken loose and came down on 6th January and the remainder were now weighed and removed.

The enemy had fallen back about 10 miles and taken up a position near Ora ruins, with a deep Wadi (canal) in front of them. General Alymer concentrated his whole force on the left bank and attacked on 13th January. After hard fighting the Turks abandoned the position during the night, 13th-14th January,³ and retired five miles to the westward and entrenched in a strong position at Hanna. The ships moved up on the morning of 14th to harass their retreat, and at 12.55 p.m. the *Gadfly* was hit by a 4.8-inch shell, which penetrated the upper deck, magazine bulkhead, and ship's side without bursting. She made a good deal of water before the hole was stopped. The S.N.O. transferred to the *Crane-fly* next day (15th January), and sent the *Gadfly* down to Abadan for repairs.

75. The First Attempt to relieve Kut fails.—Throughout these operations the weather was very bad. On the evening of

¹ *Butterfly*, *Crane-fly*, *Dragonfly*, *Gadfly*. The *Flycatcher* arrived at the front on 10th January.

² Report of S.N.O. (No number) 27th January 1916. But General Nixon's Report, No. 168-11-0. 17th January 1916, para. 42, says: "On January 9th the Turks were forced to abandon their remaining positions."

³ Report of S.N.O. But General Nixon's Report says: "The Turks were driven out on the 14th."

8th it began to rain, and this with the high cold wind caused great discomfort to the troops, and made movement by land and by river most difficult, converting the ground into a bog, and bringing active operations to a standstill for a time.

On 19th, 20th and 21st January the gunboats bombarded the Hanna position, and on the 21st the troops attacked unsuccessfully. The Artillery gave the utmost help to the Navy with advice and material. The gunboats had come out equipped only with Dumaresq instruments, range clocks, &c., and pending the arrival from England of dial sights, clinometers, telephone wire, &c., the Artillery and Ordnance lent everything possible. To renew the attack on the 22nd January was not practicable; the losses on the 21st had been heavy, the ground was still a quagmire, and the troops were exhausted. The sufferings of the sick and wounded in the rain and bitter cold were shocking. Many failed to reach camp after the battle on 21st and died from exposure. Even for those who succeeded in getting on board the ships used for evacuating casualties the conditions were terrible, even worse, in many ways than those prevailing after the battle of Ctesiphon, which are historic.¹

76. Preparations for a Second Attempt.—Owing to misapprehension as to the state of the supplies in Kut, General Aylmer had been obliged to begin his advance without waiting to complete the organisation and equipment of his force.² Divisions and Brigades had perforce been broken up to meet the difficulties of transport from England. There had been no time to await the arrival of belated units, and formations had been made up with such units as were available. This constituted a severe handicap to the troops.³ On 25th January, however, General Townshend reported that he could hold out for 84 days longer as regards food supplies,⁴ and time was thus available to reconstitute formations as far as possible in their original condition.

77. Change in Army Command: War Office takes over Control.—On 19th January 1916 Sir John Nixon relinquished the command of the Indian Expeditionary Force "D" on account of ill-health, and Lieut.-General Sir P. H. N. Lake, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., assumed command. Control of the operations was shortly taken over by the War Office, and it was then suggested by them that the Admiralty should take over control of the river transport.⁵

¹ Mesopotamia Commission: Report, p. 156.

² General Sir P. Lake's Report, No. 168-15-0, July 1916, paragraph 5, forwarding General Townshend's Despatches.

³ General Lake's Report, No. 168-31-0, 12th August 1916, paragraph 16.

⁴ Tel. to G.H.Q. No. 69-120-G.

⁵ Admiralty to S.N.O., Mesopotamia, 159, 15th February 1916.

78. Shortage of River Transport.—Difficulty was experienced in pushing reinforcements, supplies and munitions from the base up to the front for the forthcoming offensive. The provision of additional river steamers had not been sufficient to cope with the increased strength of the force, nor had railways been constructed concurrently with the advance to relieve some of the traffic on the river. The shortage of transport seriously affected the operations.¹

The transport at this time was worked by Royal Indian Marine Officers under control of the Army Commander, by whom arrangements were made for coal and oil for all vessels.² The river transport consisted, first, of locally (British) owned river steamers commanded by civilian captains to whom the Admiralty had recently given temporary rank in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, and, secondly, of such small craft as had been sent from England and India,³ commanded by temporary Royal Indian Marine Officers. The Senior Military Transport Officer was under the control of the Director of the Royal Indian Marine and the Army Commander. The work of controlling and managing a miscellaneous fleet of river steamers, tugs and barges, with their crews, their upkeep, and their traffic was not in the usual line of Army or Royal Indian Marine experience. Eventually,⁴ it was taken over by the Inland Water Transport Department.

79. Demonstration on the Euphrates: Situation on the Tigris.—On the 7th January a mixed force under General Gorringe moved from Nasiriya to Butaniya,⁵ 12 miles north of Nasiriya, for the purpose of demonstrating towards Shattrah, in the hope that the Turks might be induced to weaken their forces opposite General Aylmer on the Tigris, by detaching troops to guard the lines of approach along the Shatt-al-Hai. Although the demonstration failed to accomplish this, it succeeded in attracting large numbers of hostile Arabs who might otherwise have joined the Turkish forces around Kut.⁶

At the end of February 1916 the situation on the Tigris front was as follows: On the left bank the enemy had been reinforced, and held the Hanna position⁷ strongly. Further in rear were their defensive lines, at Falahiya, Sannaiyat, Nakhaila,

¹ General Lake's Report, paragraph 5. Mesopotamia Commission, p. 45, says, "The evidence shows conclusively that shortage of river transport was the chief cause of the failure to relieve Kut."

River tonnage available for transport from Basra up-river, and the requirements at different periods were as follows:—

November 1915.—Available daily—	150 tons,	requirements,	208 tons.
April 1916. " " " "	250-300 " "	" "	598 tons.

² S.N.O., Mesopotamia, to Admiralty, 90, 20th February 1916.

³ Numbers of barges, motor lighters, &c., had also been sent.

⁴ September 1916. ⁵ Butniya on Plan 1.

⁶ General Lake's Report, No. 268-18-0, 4th March 1916.

⁷ See Plan 10.

and along the northern part of the Es Sinn position. They were all protected on both flanks by the Tigris and the Suwaiqiya respectively. On the right bank, the Es Sinn position constituted the Turkish main line of defence, with an advanced position near Beit Aiessa. The right flank of the Es Sinn position rested on the Dujaila Redoubt, which lay some 5 miles south of the river, and 14 miles south-west of the British lines on the right bank.¹ Bombardments of the enemy's position continued, in which the gunboats joined, gaining experience in indirect firing using field telephones to forward observer.

It was decided to attack the Turkish right flank and Dujaila Redoubt, as the first step towards the relief of Kut, before the arrival of the flood season, expected about the middle of March when it was feared that the Turks would cut the bunds (banks) and so flood the country as to render further offensive operations impracticable. The whole area was so flat that there was scarcely any portion of it which could safely be pronounced to be above flood level. But adverse weather at the beginning of March again interrupted operations, and gave the enemy time to construct trenches to close the gap between Dujaila Redoubt and the Shatt-al-Hai.

80. **Second Attempt to relieve Kut.**—On 7th March weather conditions at length rendered it possible for operations to be commenced.

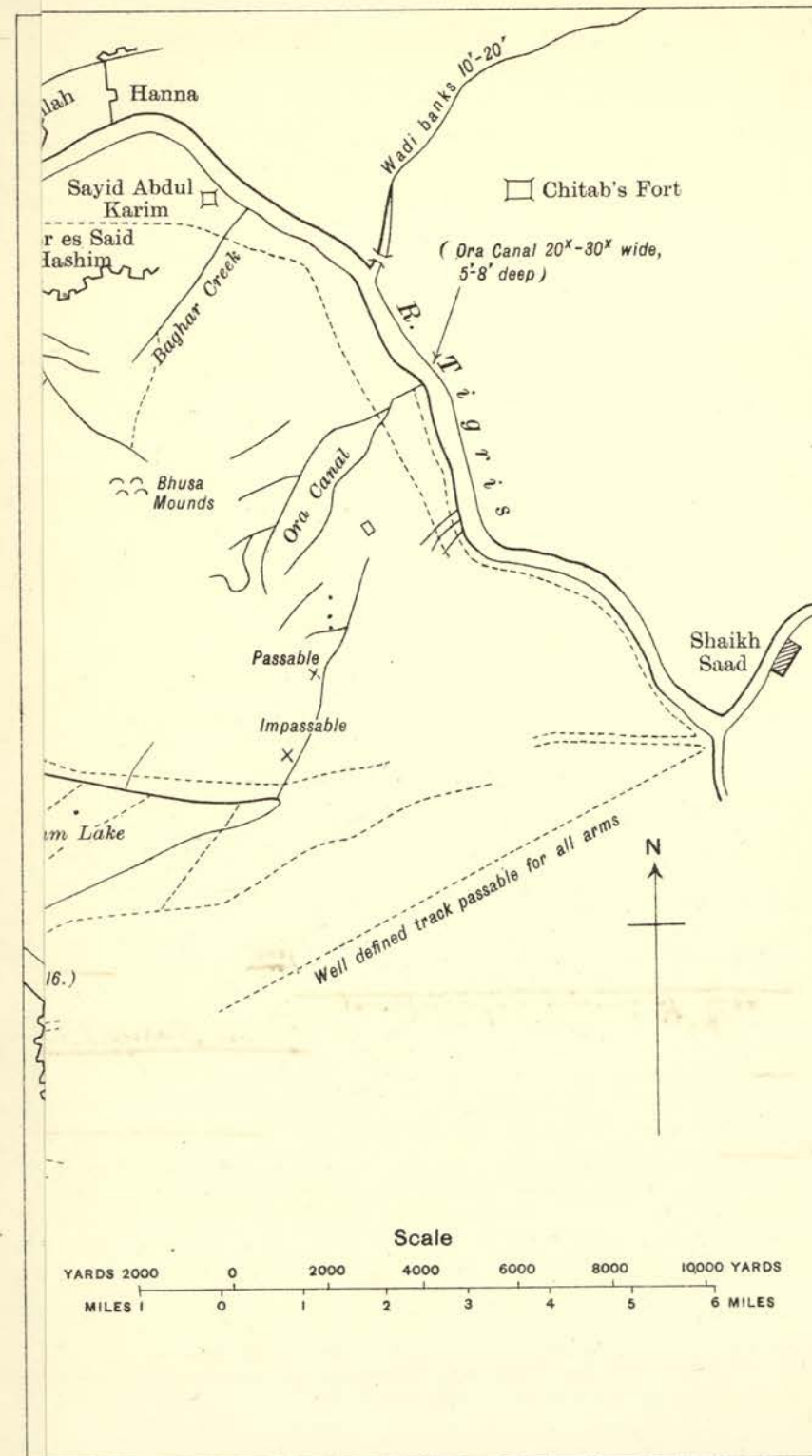
The dispositions of our forces were as follows:—

The greater part of a Division under General Younghusband, assisted by gunboats, contained the enemy on the left bank. The *Mayfly*, *Sawfly* and *Mantis*² were anchored above the bridge of boats in position to assist in the bombardment of the Hanna position, while the *Gadfly* and *Dragonfly* were below the bridge in a position to command with their gunfire the North-eastern flank and approaches to the camp. The remaining troops (less the reserve) were formed into ~~two~~ columns under ~~Generals~~ ~~Kemball~~ and ~~Kearny~~ respectively. General Kemball's column ~~was~~ to make a turning movement to attack the Dujaila Redoubt from the South, supported by the remainder of the ~~force~~ operating from a position to the East of the Redoubt.

The operation was designed to effect a surprise and entailed a night march across the enemy's front. ~~General Kemball's~~ *force* column was late, and time was lost in registering the guns and carrying out reconnaissances; and when, three hours later, General Kemball's troops attacked they were met with strong opposition. Fighting continued all day. At 5.15 p.m. heavy and costly assaults were launched against the enemy's position, and the Manchesters and 59th Rifles, and some of the 37th


¹ General Lake's Report, No. 168-31-0, 12th August 1916.

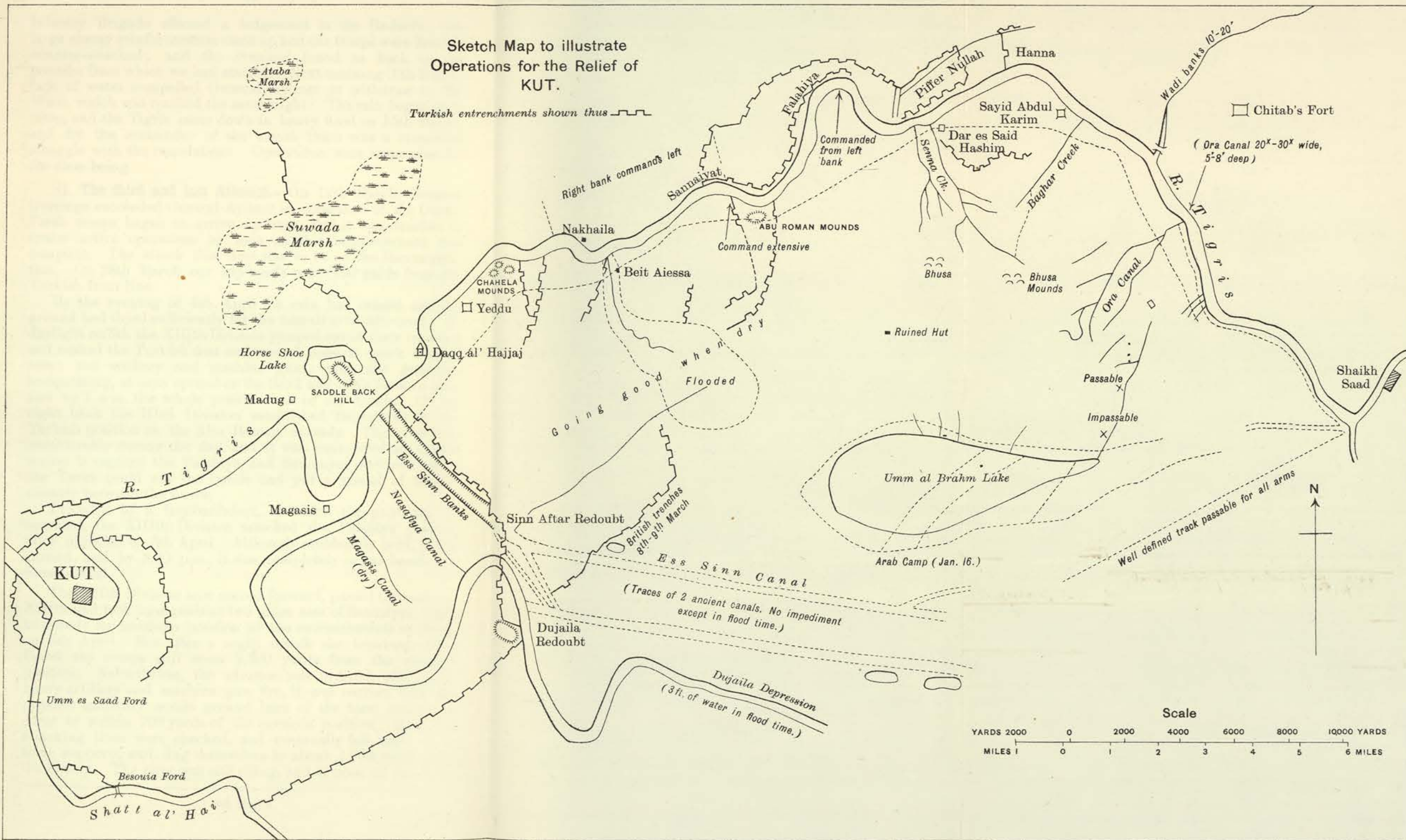
² The first of the new large China class gunboats, Commander Bernard Buxton. She arrived at the front on 5th March 1916.



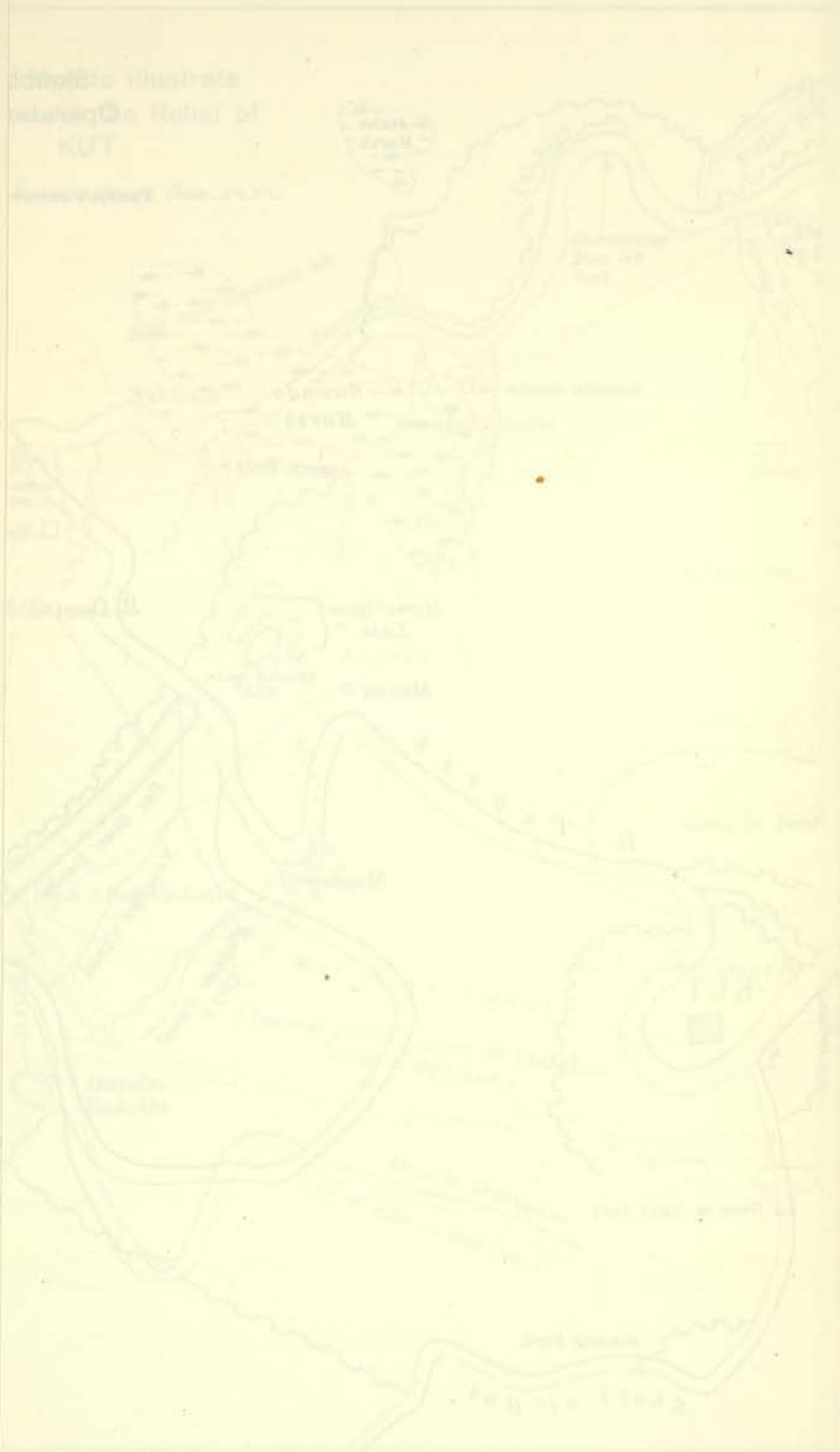
PLAN IO

Sketch Map to illustrate Operations for the Relief of KUT.

Turkish entrenchments shown thus 



From plans prepared by G.S. India.



Infantry Brigade effected a lodgement in the Redoubt; but large enemy reinforcements came up and our troops were heavily counter-attacked; and the evening¹ found us back in the position from which we had started. Next morning (9th March) lack of water compelled General Aylmer to withdraw to the Wadi, which was reached the same night. The rain began once more, and the Tigris came down in heavy flood on 15th March, and for the remainder of the month there was a strenuous struggle with the inundations. Operations were suspended for the time being.

81. **The third and last Attempt.**—On 12th March, General Goringe succeeded General Aylmer in command of the Corps. Fresh troops began to arrive up-river, and it was decided to renew active operations as soon as this reinforcement was complete. The attack this time was to be on the Hanna position. On 28th March our sap-heads were 150 yards from the Turkish front line.

By the evening of 4th April the rain had ceased, and the ground had dried sufficiently for the assault to be delivered. At daylight on 5th the XIIIth Division jumped out of their trenches and rushed the Turkish first and second lines in quick succession; our artillery and machine guns, with the gunboats co-operating, at once opened on the third and other lines in rear, and by 7 a.m. the whole position was in our hands. On the right bank the IIIrd Division established themselves in the Turkish position on the Abu Roman mounds. The river rose considerably during the day, and it was considered an urgent matter to capture the Falahiya and Sannaiyat positions before the Turks could cut the bunds and put a stretch of flooded country between the forces.

Preceded by a bombardment, in which the gunboats co-operated, the XIIIth Division attacked the Falahiya position after nightfall on 5th April. Although stubbornly held, it was carried, and by 9.30 p.m. it was completely in our hands and consolidated.

The VIIth Division now moved forward, passed through the XIIIth and took up a position two miles east of Sannaiyat, ready to assault the northern position of the entrenchments at dawn on 6th April. But after a night march the breaking dawn found the troops still some 2,300 yards from the enemy's position. Nevertheless, the advance was ordered, and under heavy artillery and machine gun fire, it was carried with the greatest gallantry across ground bare of the least vestige of cover to within 700 yards of the enemy's position. Here the attacking lines were checked, and eventually fell back on to their supports, and dug themselves in about 1,000 yards from the enemy. The river was still rising, and at noon on 6th April

¹ 8th March.

it reached the highest level of the year, and floods rendered the position of our forces for a time critical.

Not until the 8th April was a renewal of the attack possible. That night an assault was once more delivered on Sannaiyat. The enemy's front line trench was penetrated, but support failed to arrive at the critical moment, and the Brigades dug themselves in some 300 to 500 yards from the enemy's position. The gunboats assisted in the bombardment, and on hearing of the initial success Captain Nunn moved up in the *Mantis* with the others following to harass any retirement; but they had to drop back again when the true state of affairs was known.

In Kut the sands were now running out. General Townshend's narrative of events, sent by wireless, had ceased on 9th March; but imagination could picture a town held by living skeletons for whom there was no respite, night or day, from the enemy's bombardments. On 1st March he had reported his casualties since the beginning of the siege as 2,929—a third of his total force—including 1,289 dead. How few yet remained, nobody dared to conjecture. There was no time to sap up to the Sannaiyat position; and it was decided that another attempt to force the enemy's right about the Sinn Afar Redoubt offered prospects of a speedier success.

On 12th April the enemy's outpost line east of Beit Aiessa was captured by the IIIrd Division advancing across the inundations and on 17th the Beit Aiessa position was seized. Heavy counter-attacks ~~failed to shake our line~~ ^{were temporarily repulsed}, and at dawn on 18th the Turks retreated, having lost some 4,000 to 5,000 men. But our advance was checked, and on the left bank, just as the XVIIth Division was preparing for an assault on Sannaiyat on 20th April, the wind veered to the North, the trenches and ground in front of them were flooded, and the attack had to be postponed.

Throughout the 20th and 21st April the Sannaiyat position was bombarded. The Flotilla had now been augmented by the arrival of the *Waterfly*¹ and *Greenfly*² and after a preliminary bombardment on 22nd, in which the gunboats joined, the VIIth Division delivered their assault, on a front which the floods restricted to 300 yards. The old, heart-breaking story was repeated. The troops carried the first two lines of trenches, but were forced to retire again, with the loss of 1,300 men. The fact had to be faced, that they could do no more.

82. The last Act: The Julnar's Venture.—All attempts to relieve Kut had failed, and it was known that at the outside not more than six days' supplies remained to the garrison.

¹ Lieut. W. V. H. Harris, D.S.C.

² Lieut. H. O. B. Firman.

General Gorrings's men were worn out. The same troops had flung themselves time and again against positions strong by art and held by a determined enemy, and this on a scale of rations far from sufficient, but which the shortage of river transport had made it impossible to augment.¹ Their losses exceeded a third of the force.²

Attempts had been made for some time to drop provisions into Kut from aeroplane, but not enough to be of material use could be conveyed thus. There remained but one chance if the relief of Kut was to be accomplished—to throw into the town supplies enough to enable General Townshend to hold out still longer.

While the late operations were in progress, the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies,³ had come up to the front on a visit of inspection in the *Snakefly*,⁴ and ~~after consultation with him~~ ^{on the subject of the attempt, as a forlorn hope} the *Julnar*, one of the least slow of the steamers on the river,⁵ was prepared by the Navy with protective plating, &c., to run the blockade into Kut with supplies. She was commissioned by Lieut. Humphrey Firman of the *Greenfly*, with Lieut.-Commr. W. C. Cowley,⁶ R.N.V.R., as second in command.⁷

At 8 p.m.⁸ on 24th April, carrying 270 tons of supplies, the *Julnar* proceeded up the river from Falahiya, her departure being covered by all artillery and machine-gun fire which could be brought to bear, in the hope of distracting the enemy's attention. At 1 a.m. on 25th General Townshend reported that she had not arrived, and at midnight a burst of heavy firing had been heard at Magasis,⁹ some eight and a half miles from Kut by river, and then, suddenly—silence. During the day aeroplane reconnaissance reported that the *Julnar* was in the hands of the enemy at Magasis. It was discovered later that she was stopped by a cable which was stretched across the river and fouled her propeller. The last hope was gone.

83. The Surrender of Kut.—With the failure of the *Julnar* vanished the last hope of extending the food limit of the garrison at Kut. Everything that was possible with the means to hand had been attempted. The troops only desisted from their efforts when through battle losses, sickness, and exhaustion, the limit of human endurance had been reached.¹⁰ On 29th April

¹ General Lake's Report.

² General Gorrings's Report.

³ Vice-Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss.

⁴ Lieut.-Commr. R. P. D. Webster.

⁵ She was only able to make 3 or 4 knots against the current.—(N.I.D. note.)

⁶ Of Messrs. Lynch, Captain of the *Medjidieh*.

⁷ Both of these officers were awarded the V.C. (posthumous), and decorations were awarded to the crew.

⁸ Gen. Gorrings's Report; but Capt. Nunn's Report, p. 222, says 7 p.m.

⁹ See plan 1.

¹⁰ Gen. Lake's Report, para. 57.

1916 General Townshend was compelled through starvation to surrender at Kut to the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, Major-General Khalil Pasha, the last day's reduced ration being issued that day.

Four months of strenuous fighting had ended in bitter disappointment. Our military casualties between ~~23rd~~ ^{5th} January and 30th April 1916 numbered over ~~15,000~~ ^{38,000}; the effective strength of the relief force on 15th April 1916 was rather double ~~this figure~~ ^{than}; and the Turkish force which opposed it comprised a similar number. Until the hot weather was over and the inadequate river and railway communications and supply organisations were improved, there was nothing to be done save to remain on the defensive and maintain the security of our force.

APPENDIX A.

TELEGRAMS, 1914.

AUGUST.

1. *From* Viceroy. 14th August.
To India Office.
Political Resident, Persian Gulf, reports 13th August. "Gray Mackenzie¹ report from Basra, dated 10th August, that the Turkish gunboat *Marmariss* is deep down in water, steam up, and ready for long voyage. Vali has warned Gray Mackenzie that he may commandeer all supplies of coal and oil. Strong anti-British and anti-Russian feeling. Gray Mackenzie expect to be made to leave before long."
2. *From* Foreign Office. 17th August.
To Sir L. Mallet, Constantinople.
No. 386. Euphrates and Tigris Navigation Company report that Turkish Government have requisitioned Company's coal at Basra, whereby mail steamers are prevented from running.
You should urge Porte to send instructions to local authorities to withdraw requisition or give to Company suitable supply of fuel.
3. *From* Jask Radio. 20th August.
To Admiralty.
Odin sailed for Bushire about midnight, 19th August.
4. *From* Viceroy. 21st August.
To India Office.
Following telegram received from Resident, Bushire, No. 997—
"Captain S.S. *Anatoba* left Basra 19th, reports that Germans of Hamburg-Amerika liner *Ekbatana* were busy filling old Turkish light ship with sand preparatory to taking her down river and sinking her in fairway."
5. *From* Admiralty. 21st August.
To *Odin* (Wireless, Jask and Basra).
German steamer *Ekbatana* at Basra. Reported to be making preparations to block channel by sinking lightship.
6. *From* Bushire. 22nd August.
To Admiralty.
Odin arrived Bushire.
7. *From* Admiralty. 25th August.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.
142. Referring to Viceroy's telegram, 21st August, be prepared to send *Odin* and *Lawrence* at short notice to Shatt-al-'Arab in order to prevent any attempt at blocking and if necessary stop transport of Turkish troops and stores by water. *Odin* should be kept supplied

¹ Gray Mackenzie & Co., General and Shipping Agents, Merchants and Importers.

with shrapnel. India Office have been recommended to order *Lawrence* to draw her 4-inch guns¹ provided she and *Odin* can mount them, but not to withdraw her for that purpose.

SEPTEMBER.

8. From C.-in-C., East Indies, Bombay. 12th September.
To Admiralty.
155. *Dalhousie* proceeding to Shatt-al-'Arab 13th September to relieve *Lawrence* whilst latter returns to Bombay to have guns, B.L., 4-inch, fitted.
9. From Bombay. 13th September.
To Admiralty.
Dalhousie sailed for Persian Gulf.
10. From I.O., Colombo. 13th September.
To Admiralty.
15. *Espiègle* sailed for Persian Gulf.
11. From Bushire. 13th September.
To Admiralty.
Odin sailed for Shatt-al-'Arab, arriving at Muhammara 15th September.
12. From Muhammara. 16th September.
To Admiralty.
Odin arrived at Muhammara. *Lawrence* arrived Abadan.
13. From C.-in-C., East Indies. 18th September.
To Admiralty.
166. From S.N.O., Persian Gulf, begins:—
As a result of recent Reuter telegrams behaviour of populace of Basra shows signs of improvement
There are 8,000 troops at Basra, normal number should be approximately 1,000.
A certain amount of movement of troops up and down river noticeable.
Apparently throwing up earthworks at Kiln on right bank, 10 miles distant from Fao, commanding long stretch of river both ways.
Vali of Basra has protested against violation of neutrality caused by *Odin* remaining in Shatt-al-'Arab. Matter has been reported to Constantinople.
Am not patrolling owing to difficult communication, blocked lighter is in position sunk 4 miles above this, it would not appear to be intention to attempt to block channel below Muhammara at present. (Ends.)
14. From C.-in-C., East Indies. 21st September.
To Admiralty.
175. Following telegram received from S.N.O., Persian Gulf, begins:—
Vali of Basra has sent Turkish Naval Officer commanding to request *Odin* to leave Shatt-al-'Arab and not use wireless until 17 miles from river, contending that presence ship of war Turkish waters is a violation of international law.

¹ The Army Department, India, was asked to act on this. (Tel. 652 from Secretary of State to Viceroy, 25th August 1914.)

Following message by signal:—

I am here under orders and cannot comply with request, but I will telegraph to my C.-in-C. informing him of these two requests and that answer will be sent through Consul when received. (Ends.)

Request instructions by wire with reference to my telegram 166, 18th September.

15. From Admiralty. 25th September.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.
186. Your telegrams 166 and 175. The complaints of the Turkish authorities as regards the presence of British men-of-war in the Shatt-al-'Arab are to be ignored. Ambassador, Constantinople, has been instructed that this attitude will be maintained so long as Turkey ignores her obligations of neutrality in Europe.
16. From Secretary of State for India. 26th September.
To Viceroy (Army Dept.). Diary No. 4,526.
P. 1062. Owing to the threatening situation regarding Turkey, the necessity may arise of making a demonstration at the head of the Persian Gulf. The 6th Division would suit very well for this object, but nothing should leak out regarding this change of direction and great secrecy should be maintained on the subject.
If it is decided by the Government to adopt this course, you should immediately embark the following force, as if it were needed in Egypt very urgently, but at the same time give them sealed orders to go to the Shatt-al-'Arab:—
1 Brigade, 6th Division.
2 Mountain batteries.
Sappers.
Take no action until I send further instructions, which I will do to-morrow.¹
17. From Bushire. 30th September.
To Admiralty.
Odin arrived at Bushire.
18. From S.N.O., H.M.S. *Espiègle*, Muhammara. 30th September.
To Admiralty.
Espiègle arrived.
- OCTOBER.
19. From Sir L. Mallet (Constantinople). 1st October.
To Foreign Office.
No. 910 Military. H.M. Consul at Basra having telegraphed that he had been informed confidentially that there was intention to block Shatt-al-'Arab in order to prevent British man-of-war from leaving, I made a representation to the Grand Vizier.
Consul reports to say that British man-of-war has left Turkish waters.
20. From Secretary of State for India. 3rd October.
To Viceroy (Army Dept.).
P. 1144. With reference to Expedition "D," instructions should be issued to the O.C. that we are at peace with Turkey, and he is on no account to land troops on Turkish territory.

¹ On account of the improved situation, action was postponed until 2nd October.

Neither is he to take any other hostile action against Turkey, without orders from you, except in the case of absolute military necessity. If convenient to do so he may disembark at either Abadan Island or at Muhammara, but preferably at Abadan.¹

21. From Bushire. 4th October.
To Admiralty.
Odin sailed for Shatt-al-'Arab lightship.

22. From Admiralty. 6th October.
To C.-in-C., East Indies, Bombay.
209. Very Secret. Indian Government are sending small force to Abadan, leaving India with main convoy about 13th inst. and to be called Expedition "D."

Direct S.N.O., Persian Gulf, to co-operate with G.O.C., and give naval assistance in disembarkation and as necessary to forward the operations.

After you have consulted with Military Authorities report arrangements you have made.

23. From S.N.O., Persian Gulf. 7th October.
To Admiralty.

Urgent. Consul informs me local Turkish Government will demand *Espiègle* and *Dalhousie* be interned if in river after 7th October. Request instructions as to action to be taken in event of Turkish endeavouring to enforce internment.

24. From C.-in-C., East Indies. 7th October.
To Admiralty.

206. Following telegram has been received from Consul at Muhammara, October 6th, begins:—Yesterday Vali handed Consul, Basra, letter setting forth new regulations telegraphed from Constantinople.

The clauses of regulations are as follows:—

(1) Ottoman territorial waters are reckoned as extending 6 miles from shore, prohibition area is the Basra Gulf (whatever that may be), the Shatt-al-'Arab between Bubian Island and the shore and Khor Abdullah.

(2) The coast is considered to be a curve touching furthest projecting point of shore. Ships of any kind going out in territorial water without regulation lights will be fired upon.

(3) Entry of warship in general into prohibited area whether by day or night is forbidden. Ships disregarding this provision will be fired upon.

(4) Merchant ships may not enter prohibited zone between sunset and sunrise; they may enter and go out only by day.

Entry of warships into Shatt-al-'Arab being henceforth forbidden orders have been issued to Artillery, Fao, to prevent by firing the passage of any ships of war that enter in spite of prohibition. These regulations will come into force from evening, October 7th. Ends.

I have ordered *Dalhousie* to remain off Abadan for the present as the *Espiègle* and *Odin* will be leaving river to escort expedition "B" from Bushire. S.N.O., Persian Gulf, reports that guns have been recently mounted at Fao, and it is presumed passage of Fao is to be forced if necessary and fire returned.

¹ This was afterwards altered to Bahrain in order to avoid violating Persian neutrality.

25. From C.-in-C., East Indies, Bombay. 7th October.
To Admiralty.

209. With reference to S.N.O., Persian Gulf telegram addressed to Admiralty I have telegraphed to S.N.O., Persian Gulf, that internment must be resisted pending Admiralty instructions.

26. From Admiralty. 7th October.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.

215. As the *Emden* is at large on the western side of India and the large expedition will not be ready to sail till 14th or 15th cannot *Swiftsure* search and protect trade, and *Duke of Edinburgh* search to the entrance of the Persian Gulf for *Emden* or *Königsberg*. You might remain behind to complete escort arrangements.

27. From Admiralty. 8th October.
To C.-in-C., East Indies, Bombay.

216. Vali, Basra, has warned H.M. Ships in the river to leave before 7 p.m. on Wednesday, October 7th, and that any vessel disregarding this prohibition will be liable to be interned.

One ship is to remain in the Persian anchorage at Muhammara and the others are to remain outside Turkish territorial waters which are only to be recognised as extending for a distance of 3 miles from the coast.

Every endeavour is to be made to prevent an attempt at blocking the Channel either by sinking dhows or by sinking a steamer on the Bar.

Information has been received that it is intended to use *Ekbatana* for transport of troops.

She may also be used in order to block the river by being sunk on the Bar.

It is said she may sail under the Turkish flag, but this transfer of flags is not to be respected.

It is possible that the *Emden* may attempt to come up the Persian Gulf to co-operate with any movement of the Turks in that region.

You should therefore endeavour to arrange for a watch to be maintained at the entrance to the Gulf, using the *Mashona* for that purpose and arrange with the Government of India for all possible assistance for that purpose.

The *Odin* and *Espiègle* are to retire into the river in the event of the *Emden* appearing at the head of the gulf and attacking them and to select such a position that they may fight the *Emden* if she appears in the river.

It is possible by the selection of a suitable ground to neutralize the longer range of the *Emden's* guns.

If you consider that the force you have at the head of the Gulf is sufficient without the *Dalhousie*, she may be used to watch the Straits.

Repeat to the Government of India.

Report measures adopted.

Acknowledge.

(Amended orders as approved by Sir E. Grey and Lord Crewe.)

28. From C.-in-C., East Indies. 8th October.
To The Admiralty.

212. Your telegram 215. *Swiftsure*, *Duke of Edinburgh* are being sent to sea for purpose indicated. C.-in-C., East Indies, remains at Bombay.

29. From Bushire. 14th October.
To Admiralty.

Dalhousie left for Henjam.

30. From S.N.O., Persian Gulf. 14th October.
To Admiralty.
- Vali, Basra, has informed Consul at Basra that the Porte informs the Embassy at Constantinople on the 11th instant that the British gunboat which has entered the port of Muhammara must leave that port passing through the Shatt-al-'Arab and reaching the open sea within eight days or be interned until the end of the war. Vali has consequently notified Consul that the *Espiègle* may leave the Shatt-al-'Arab within eight days counting from 11th October, but that if she does not do so, any attempt to pass through the Shatt-al-'Arab after the expiration of that period will be prevented by force of arms. Repeated to C.-in-C., East Indies.
- Note on original.—The F.O. have telegraphed to Constantinople to say that she is not to leave.
31. From S.N.O., Persian Gulf. 20th October.
To Admiralty.
224. Consul, Basra, reports he has reliable information that mines are being sent to Basra and will reach Baghdad in a day or two. C.-in-C., East Indies, informed.
32. From S.N.O., Persian Gulf, Muhammara. 21st October.
To Admiralty.
- With reference to previous telegram of October 20th, information now received that mines have reached Baghdad and will probably be sent to Basra 20th or 21st October and that Turks intend laying mines at Turkish border above Muhammara and then at Muhammara bar and Fao.
- It is said that mines will be laid with secrecy probably at night which will render detection or prevention very improbable.
- Reports indicate that Turkish troops and guns are being placed on island opposite Karun, where *Espiègle* is anchored. C.-in-C., East Indies, informed.
33. From Admiralty. 22nd October.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.
234. In consequence of repeated reports from Constantinople that the *Emden* is intended to go to Basra, it is thought advisable to cover the military expedition going up the Gulf, in case this turns out to be true.
- It is estimated that she might reach Musandam about the 27th October.
- You should therefore detach the *Duke of Edinburgh* for this service before reaching Aden if she has enough coal.
- Further supplies should be arranged as convenient either by collier from Bombay or Karachi, or from the Depôts at Muscat or Bushire.
34. From S.N.O., Persian Gulf. 22nd October.
To Admiralty.
- Urgent. Foreign (?subject) has informed Political Resident, Persian Gulf (Bushire), that H.M. Ambassador at Constantinople reports new Governor General of Basra, with Turkish and German Naval and Military Officers and troops, have arrived at Alexandretta from Constantinople, their destination being Basra, where they will take delivery of German cruiser *Emden* (ends).
- I submit that it will be advisable, in view of foregoing, that any ships available should be sent to mouth of Shatt-al-'Arab as soon as possible to intercept *Emden* should she attempt to pass, as *Odin* is inadequate for the purpose.

35. From C.-in-C., East Indies. 22nd October.
To Admiralty.
233. Your 234 *Ocean* is with Force 1 (? "D"), due at Bahrain 23rd October *Duke of Edinburgh* arrives at Aden on 23rd October in advance of convoy to complete with coal. Suggest to retain *Ocean* off Bahrain until arrival of *Duke of Edinburgh* about 28th October, leaving after receipt of English Mail, (or) large convoy to proceed from Aden to Suez with *Minerva* and *Northbrook* only.
- This will be necessarily delayed until departure of next convoy from India, which was to have left 1st November, escorted by *Swiftsure*, *Ocean*, and *Dufferin*.
36. From Admiralty. 22nd October.
To Dalhousie (Jask Radio), S.N.O., Persian Gulf, and C.-in-C., East Indies (235).
- Directions have been given that disembarkation of troops at Bahrain is not to be commenced pending further orders.
37. From Admiralty. 22nd October.
To S.N.O., Persian Gulf.
- As soon as *Emden* is known to be coming up the Gulf, *Odin* should go into the river and keep out of range of the *Emden* until joined by *Espiègle*, as directed in Admiralty telegram of 8th October.
- The two ships should wait for *Emden* in such a position as to neutralise the extra range of her guns and to force her to engage at close range.
- In the event of the Turkish troops at Fao opening fire, *Odin* should push past so as to join *Espiègle*.
- Report what guns are in position at Fao and keep a good watch for mines being laid.
- An efficient escort service should be organised with the assistance of the Shaikh of Muhammara.
- You should inform Shaikh that we do not intend that the access to his port should be blocked.
- Duke of Edinburgh* has been ordered to Persian Gulf and should arrive before the *Emden*. Acknowledge.
38. From Admiralty. 22nd October.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.
236. Your 233. As *Ocean* is with the force at Bahrain she should remain.
- Duke of Edinburgh* remain with convoy.
39. From C.-in-C., East Indies. 23rd October.
To Admiralty.
235. Your 236. As *Ocean* must remain off Bahrain Island to safeguard transports which could be landing men, until further orders should not *Duke of Edinburgh* proceed to Shatt-al-'Arab to intercept *Emden*?
- Reply 238. Your 235. No; one armoured ship will suffice.
40. From S.N.O., Persian Gulf. 25th October.
To Admiralty.
- Persian telegraph line to Muhammara is broken down. Please repeat all telegrams to Fao and endeavours will be made to get them sent up by steamer on every possible opportunity.
- C.-in-C., East Indies, informed.

41. *From Admiralty.* 26th October.
To C.-in-C., East Indies (242) and S.N.O., Persian Gulf.
 H.M. Government have informed Turkish Government that they will regard attempt to lay mines in Shatt-al-'Arab as an act of open hostility.
 H.M. Ships are to watch for any signs of minelaying and be prepared for orders to prevent it by force. Acknowledge.
42. *From S.N.O., Persian Gulf.* 26th October.
To Admiralty.
 Report leaves no doubt that four field guns 3-inch calibre have recently been sent to Turkish fort Fao, *vide* chart 1235, and it is possible some older guns also mounting there.
 Two field guns have been recently placed on Dabba Island opposite Karun entrance; fairly reliable report indicates two or more field guns, probably 3-inch, nearly opposite Abadan and four field guns in Turkish territory two each side of the river four miles above Muhammara.
 Less reliable report states two guns two miles above Fao and same near Dawasin Island.
43. *From International Cable Office, Bemi.* 27th October.
Translation No. 262. Line broken above Basra.
44. *From Admiralty.* 27th October.
To S.N.O., Persian Gulf.
 Re your wire of 25th. Report position of ships and convoy in gulf.
45. *From Bushire.* 28th October.
To Admiralty.
Espiègle at Muhammara,
Odin at outer Bar, Shatt-al-'Arab,
Ocean off Bahrain,
Dalhousie at Bahrain,
Convoy at Bahrain.
46. *From Admiralty.* 30th October.
To C.-in-C., East Indies, and S.N.O., Persian Gulf.
 249. My telegram of 26th October. If the Turks send a vessel down the river with the object of blocking the river below Muhammara, *Espiègle* is to follow her and try and remove her out of the fairway before she sinks.
 When the Turkish mines arrive at Basra Admiralty is to be informed at once. *Espiègle* is to be instructed to fit sweep for removing mines as soon as they are laid. Towing launches to be obtained from oil company and local British firms. If the Turks persist in attempting to lay mines *Espiègle* and sweeping boats are to follow mining vessel down the river and as soon as minelaying commences sweeping boats are to proceed to remove them. Should the Turks open fire in either of these contingencies the mining vessel if present is to be destroyed and further operations taken as you may deem necessary. If hostilities commence *Odin* need not remain at the Bar but should join *Espiègle* in the river. The expedition will thereupon be brought from Bahrain and landed. You should arrange with the G.O.C. as to the details of the operation, bearing in mind that the principal object until reinforcements arrive is to secure telegraph station at Fao and to protect the town of Muhammara and the oil works at Abadan from molestation

- by the Turks. Should the Turks not open fire the mines if laid are to be removed and *Espiègle* to return to her anchorage at Muhammara.
 Repeated (No. 832) Military by F.O. to Ambassador, Constantinople.
47. *From Admiralty.* 30th October.¹
To C.-in-C., East Indies, and
S.N.O., Persian Gulf.¹
 Turkey has attacked Russia in the Black Sea. Be prepared for all contingencies and if they attack take all necessary steps for the defence of British interests.
48. *From Espiègle.* Sent 31st October.
To Admiralty.
 105. Persian telegraph line is still broken down and owing to attitude of Turks no launches are going down to Fao, so only means of communication to and from *Espiègle* now is through Bushire and by wireless through *Dalhousie*.
49. *From Espiègle.* 31st October.
To Admiralty.
 107. The Turks have sunk two ships in river in same position a little above Turkish border to the west of Shaikh of Muhammara's palace.
50. *From Admiralty.* 31st October.
To C.-in-C., East Indies (255),
S.N.O., Persian Gulf.
 Orders sent Ambassador, Constantinople, 8.15 p.m., 30th October, to present ultimatum to Turkey expiring at end of 12 hours.
 Do not yourself commence hostilities without further orders.
51. *From Admiralty.* 31st October.
To C.-in-C., East Indies, and
S.N.O., Persian Gulf.
 Commence hostilities at once against Turkey. Acknowledge.
52. *From Secretary of State.* 31st October.
To Viceroy, Army Dept.
 1306. Expedition "D." Please instruct Brigade at Bahrain to proceed at once to Shatt-al-'Arab and to concert measures with Naval authorities for immediate attack on Fao.
 Force will then clear Turks out of the Shatt and its vicinity as far as Shamshamiya if possible. After which it will await arrival of reinforcements from India.
 Admiralty advise that reinforcements may be sent without escort from Bombay unless Naval Commander-in-Chief has any reason to contrary. *Königsberg* located on African coast, south of equator. Take steps to inform Arab chiefs in Gulf and on Aden side. Please telegraph date of despatch of reinforcements and composition.
- NOVEMBER.
53. *From Ocean.* 2nd November.
To Admiralty. Sent 1.25 p.m.
Ocean and convoy proceeding to Shatt-al-'Arab.

¹ This telegram is undated in the original.

54. *From Ocean.* 4th November.
To Admiralty.
Ocean and convoy arrived at Bar. *Ocean*, 3rd November. (2210.)
55. *From Admiralty.* 6th November.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.
266. . . . *Ocean* to return to Karachi for convoy leaving middle of November.
56. *From C.-in-C., East Indies.* 7th November.
To Admiralty. Received 9.30 p.m.
263. Your telegram 266. Consider it undesirable that *Ocean* should leave Persian Gulf at present as Captain is conducting combined operations with G.O.C., Shatt-al'-Arab . . .
57. *From Admiralty.* 12th November.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.
282. *Ocean* is to remain on station and hoist your flag when no longer required in Persian Gulf . . .
58. *From Admiralty.* 16th November.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.
292. It is necessary that you take charge of Naval operations in Egypt as soon as possible. . . . You will retain command of East Indies Station while employed in Egypt.
59. *From Admiralty.* 17th November.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.
293. . . . Telegraph whether you feel able to discharge other duties of your command, namely, convoy and Persian Gulf operations at the same time.
60. *From C.-in-C., East Indies.* 18th November.
To Admiralty.
293. Anticipate no difficulty with regard to other duties. Have directed Captain of *Ocean* as S.N.O., Persian Gulf, to correspond direct with Admiralty, Government of India, and Director of R.I.M. during my temporary absence from Indian waters, continuing myself in general control, but as operations on Persian Gulf are chiefly military consider that details may safely be left to Senior Officer on the spot.
61. *From Admiralty.* 28th November.
To S.N.O., Persian Gulf.
Report earliest date *Ocean* can conveniently leave Persian Gulf with detriment to military operations in Shatt-al'-Arab. Consult G.O.C. *Ocean* is required for operations in Egypt. A limited number of ratings may remain for working small local vessels.
62. *From S.N.O., Persian Gulf.* 29th November.
To Admiralty.
130. *Ocean* could leave 9th December without detriment, 2—12-pr. 8-cwt. being left in armed launch¹ up river; also guncotton. G.O.C. requests *Ocean's* assistance if he received orders to advance. He has no orders.

¹ These guns were mounted in the *Miner* and *Shaitan* respectively.

63. *From S.N.O., Persian Gulf.* 29th November.
To Admiralty.
129. Unable to repair *Odin's* damaged rudder; I am sending her to Bombay as soon as practicable
Reply. Your 129. Proposals approved.
Further reply. Urgent. Your 129. If *Odin* can reach Bombay she should be able to take part in Qurna Expedition and proceed to Bombay later. Her gunfire will be of use and if necessary a tug can be used to steer her. Defer sending her to Bombay until later. (Sent 12.30 a.m., 30th November.)
64. *From S.N.O., Persian Gulf.* 30th November.
To Admiralty.
Odin not leaving for Bombay until after operations at Qurna.
65. *From Admiralty.* 30th November.
To S.N.O., Persian Gulf.
Ocean should proceed to Suez, leaving Persian Gulf on 9th December, the 2—12-pr. guns and the guncotton being left behind with a few men.
- DECEMBER.
66. *From S.N.O., Persian Gulf.* 6th December.
To C.-in-C., East Indies.
Owing to present inconclusive date of "Qurna" submit proposal to remain to conduct Naval part of operations till decision arrived at. This will delay departure of *Ocean* a few days.
(Repeated (139) to Admiralty.)
67. *From C.-in-C., East Indies.* 7th December.
To Admiralty.
339. No objection to *Ocean* putting off departure for a few more days.
68. *From Admiralty.* 8th December.
To S.N.O., Persian Gulf.
Your 139. Approved.
Note.—Further telegrams dealing with policy and the conduct of the operations are reproduced where necessary in the text. The telegrams concerning supply are not, as a rule, of sufficient importance to be reproduced in full.

APPENDIX B.

1. ORDERS AND INSTRUCTIONS, I.E.F. "D."

INSTRUCTIONS.¹

For the Officer Commanding, I.E.F. "D." :—

- (1) The rôle assigned to your force is that of demonstrating at the head of the Persian Gulf. You will bear in mind that Great Britain is at peace with Turkey, and that you are, therefore, on no account to land troops in Turkish territory or to take any

¹ Issued on 2nd November. Only essential portions are quoted, which accounts for the omission of certain numbered paragraphs.

hostile action against the Turks without orders from the Government of India, except in case of absolute military necessity.

- (2) You will occupy Abadan Island with the object of:—
- Protecting the oil refineries, tanks and pipe line.
 - Covering the landing of reinforcements, should these be required.
 - Assuring the local Arabs of our support against Turkey.
- (3) With these objects you may disembark the whole or such part of your force as you consider necessary at Abadan Island, Muhammara, preferably at Abadan. In deciding on the point of disembarkation, however, you will work in concert with the Naval and political Authorities.
- (4) In your dealings with the Arabs in Persian or Turkish territory you should be careful to avoid any action which is likely to cause friction with them, as their co-operation may be required in the event of a rupture with Turkey.

Communication will be opened with:—

Bin Saud, Shaikh (Amir) of Najd,
The Shaikh of Muhammara, and
The Shaikh of Kuwait,

with the object of informing them of the despatch of your force.

- (7) In the event of hostilities with Turkey, the remainder of the 6th (Poona) Division is being held in readiness to support your force, and will follow as quickly as possible.
- In the meantime, you will take such military and political action as you think feasible to strengthen your position, and, if possible, occupy Basra.

2. TELEGRAM.

From Secretary of State.
To Viceroy.

30th October 1915.

Expedition "D." Please instruct Brigade at Bahrein to proceed to Shatt-al-'Arab, and to concert measures with Naval Authorities for immediate attack on Fao.

Force will then clear Turks out of the Shatt and its vicinity as far as Shamshamiya if possible. After which it will await arrival of reinforcements from India.

3.—TELEGRAM.

From Chief of the General Staff.
To General Delamain.

2nd November.

P. No. W-6626 The force under your command must not proceed beyond Shamshamiya or go to Muhammara. Detachments may be left at such places as are necessary, particularly at Abadan and Fao; but the detachment at Abadan is not to be larger than 200 men.

4.—ORDERS ISSUED TO LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR A. A. BARRETT.¹

(1) The 16th Brigade under General Delamain is now on board its transports off Bahrein, Persian Gulf; and has been directed to hold itself in readiness for immediate action as required.

¹ Essential portions only are reproduced.

(2) The troops in the margin¹ will embark as soon as possible to reinforce General Delamain. You, with your Divisional Headquarters, will accompany this reinforcement and on arrival assume command of the whole force detailed for operations at the head of the Persian Gulf. This force is designated Indian Expeditionary Force "D."

(3) Your objective will be telegraphed to you

(4) Your disembarkation will be concerted in closest touch with the Senior Naval Officer, on whose ship you should travel if possible.

6. Enclosed for your information and guidance are:—

- Copies of orders given to General Delamain.
- Copies of all subsequent correspondence with him and the Secretary of State.
- Plans of operations prepared by the General Staff, Simla, in the hope that they may be of assistance to you.

5.—TELEGRAM.

From Chief of the General Staff, India.
To General Barrett.

13th November 1914.

Please see the third paragraph of your orders. Your objective is Basra. If, after discussion with and taking over from Delamain, you consider your present force strong enough, you will move on Basra.

6.—INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED TO GENERAL NIXON BEFORE LEAVING INDIA ON 24TH MARCH 1915.

(1) Indian Expeditionary Force "D," now operating in Mesopotamia under the Command of Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., has been reinforced and raised to an Army Corps Command, the details and organisation of which are shown in a proof copy of Organisation Orders, Force "D," attached.

(2) You will proceed to Basra, and take over command of Indian Expeditionary Force "D" from Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett, who will retain command of the 6th Division.²

(6) Instructions as to the operations of your force are in a separate document.

OPERATIONS.

(1) Your force is intended to retain complete control of the lower portion of Mesopotamia, comprising the Basra Vilayet, and including all outlets to the sea, and such portions of the neighbouring territories as may affect your operations.

(2) So far as you may find feasible, without prejudicing your main operations, you should endeavour to secure the safety of the oilfields, pipeline, and refineries of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

(3) After acquainting yourself on the spot with the present situation you will submit:—

- A plan for the effective occupation of Basra Vilayet;
- A plan for a subsequent advance on Baghdad.

(4) In all operations you will respect the neutrality of Persia so far as military and political exigencies permit.

¹ Viz., the remainder of 6th Division.

² General Barrett was invalided to India on 10th April, the day following Sir J. Nixon's arrival at Basra.

APPENDIX C.

BRITISH NAVAL FORCES IN MESOPOTAMIA.

WARSHIPS.

<i>Ocean</i>	-	-	Battleship. Captain Arthur Hayes-Sadler, S.N.O., Persian Gulf. Armament: 4—12-inch, 12—6-inch, 10—12-pr., 6—3-pr. Left the Gulf, 13th December 1914.
<i>Proserpine</i>	-	-	Light Cruiser. Captain Wilfred Nunn. Armament: 8—4-inch, 8—3-pr. Arrived at Basra, 22nd March 1916.
<i>Espiegle</i>	-	-	Sloop. Captain Wilfred Nunn, S.N.O., Mesopotamia. Armament: 6—4-inch, 4—3-pr. Left Mesopotamia, 23rd March 1916.
<i>Odin</i>	-	-	Sloop. Commdr. Cathcart R. Wason. Armament: 4—4-inch, 4—3-pr.
<i>Clio</i>	-	-	Sloop. Commdr. Colin Mackenzie, D.S.O. Armament: 6—4-inch, 4—3-pr. Ordered by Admiralty to be despatched to the Gulf, 19th February 1915.
<i>Mantis</i>	-	-	Gunboat. Commdr. Bernard Buxton. Armament: 2—6-inch, 2—12-pr. Arrived at the front, 5th March 1916.
<i>Alert</i>	-	-	Sloop. Commdr. (Retired) A. T. Steward. Armament: 4—4-inch, 4—3-pr. Berthed at Abadan, 4.10.15. Employed as depôt ship.

SMALL CHINA TYPE GUNBOATS.

Armament: 1—4-inch, 1—12-pr., 1—6-pr., ¹ 1—2-pr. A.A. pom-pom, 4 Maxims, except <i>Firefly</i> , 1—4-inch, 1—6-pr.			
<i>Firefly</i>	-	-	Lieut. Christopher J. F. Eddis. Completed, 3.11.15. Captured by Turks, 1.12.15. Recaptured by British, February 1917.
<i>Butterfly</i>	-	-	Lieut. Gerald A. Wilson. Commissioned, 24.11.15.
<i>Cranefly</i>	-	-	Lieut. Alexander R. Chalmer. Commissioned, December 1915.
<i>Dragonfly</i>	-	-	Lieut. Aubrey C. Thursfield. Commissioned, December 1915.
<i>Gadfly</i>	-	-	Lieut. Irving M. Palmer, D.S.C. Completed, 29.12.15.
<i>Grayfly</i>	-	-	Lieut. C. H. Heath-Caldwell, D.S.C. Completed, 23.1.16.
<i>Greenfly</i>	-	-	Lieut. Humphrey O. B. Firman. Completed, January 1916.
<i>Mayfly</i>	-	-	Lieut.-Commdr. Evelyn H. B. L. Scrivener. Arrived at the front, 14.2.16.

¹ Afterwards changed to 1—12-pr. 12-cwt.

<i>Sawfly</i>	-	-	Lieut.-Commdr. Christopher J. F. Eddis. Completed, February 1916.
<i>Snakefly</i>	-	-	Lieut. Robert P. D. Webster. Completed, March (?) 1916.
<i>Stonefly</i>	-	-	Lieut. Mark Singleton, D.S.C. Arrived at the front early in March 1916
<i>Waterfly</i>	-	-	Lieut. William V. H. Harris, D.S.C. Arrived at the front, April 1916.

ROYAL INDIAN MARINE VESSELS.

<i>Lawrence</i>	-	-	Paddle Steamer. Commdr. (Act.) R. N. Suter. Armament: 4—4-inch, 4—6-pr. Transferred to the Royal Navy, 29.10.14. Left Mesopotamia for the Persian Gulf, June 1915.
<i>Dalhousie</i>	-	-	Commdr. (Act.) Edwin M. Palmer. Armament: 6—6-pr. Q.F. Nordenfelt. Transferred to the Royal Navy, 20.8.14. Left Mesopotamia for the Persian Gulf after landing of Force "D" November 1914.
<i>Comet</i>	-	-	Paddle Yacht. Lieut. Irving M. Palmer. Armament: 1—6-pr., 3—3-pr., 2 maxims. Transferred to the Royal Navy, 5.11.14. Commissioned, 1.1.15.

LOCAL STEAMERS (ARMED).¹

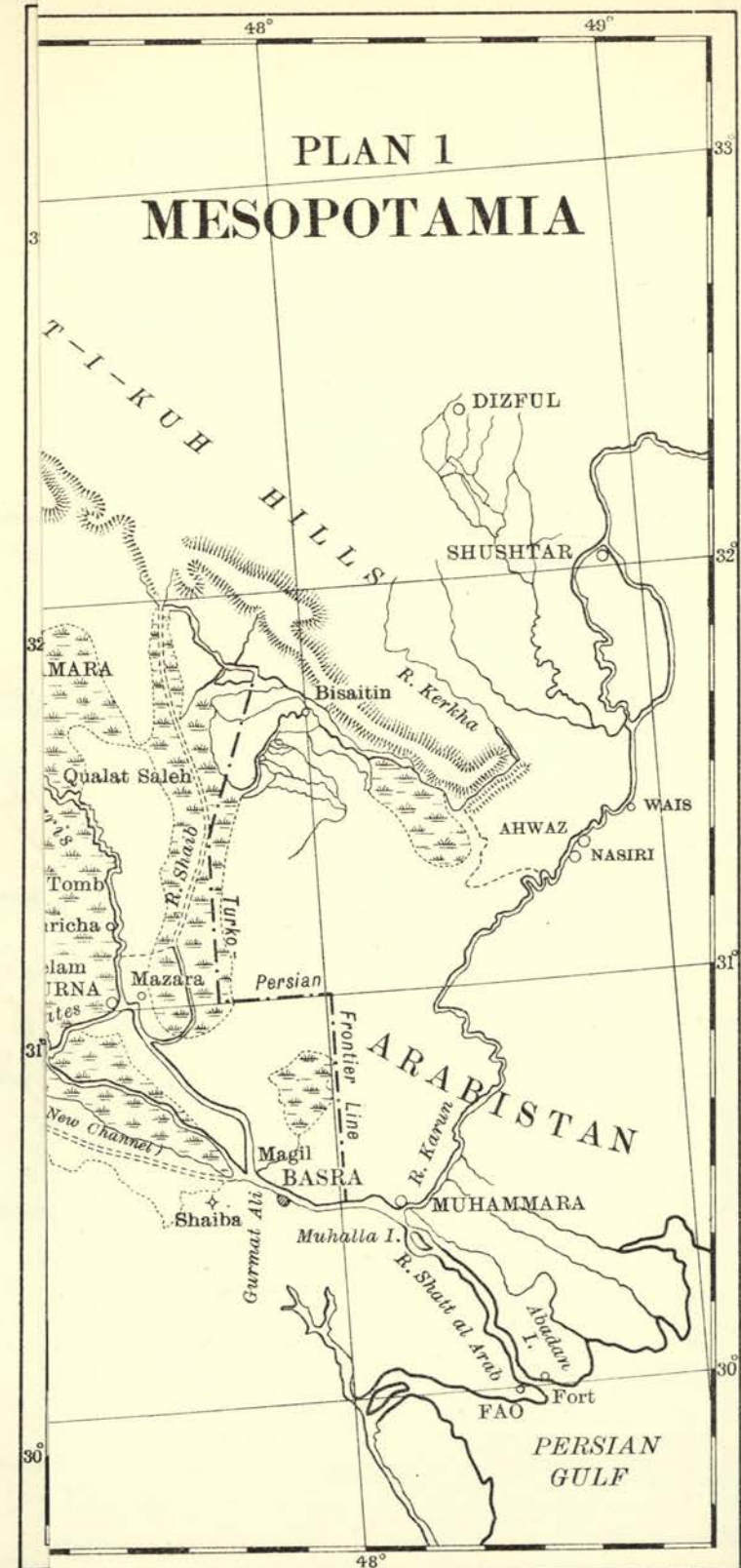
<i>Sirdar-i-Naphte</i>	-	-	Tug. Armament: 1—12-pr., 8 cwt., 1 maxim. Commissioned, 7.11.14. Paid off, 13.12.14.
<i>Miner</i>	-	-	River Steamer. Armament: 1—12-pr., 8-cwt., 1—3-pr. Hotchkiss, 1 maxim. Commissioned, November 1914.
<i>Lewis Pelly</i>	-	-	Yacht. Armament: 2—3-pr. Hotchkiss, 1 maxim. Commissioned, 7.11.14. Disarmed, 22.5.15., being afterwards employed as a minesweeper, &c.
<i>Mashona</i>	-	-	Tug. Armament: 1—3-pr. Hotchkiss. Commissioned, November 1914. Paid off, 1.1.15.
<i>Shaitan</i>	-	-	Tug. Armament: 1—12-pr., 8cwt., 1 Maxim. Commissioned, 1.12.14. Lost in action, 29.11.15.
<i>Carmsir</i>	-	-	River steamer. Armament: 1—3-pr. Hotchkiss. Commissioned, 5.11.14. Paid off, 12.11.14.
<i>Sumana</i>	-	-	River steamer. Armament: 1—12-pr., 2 (?)—3-pr. Commissioned, November (? December) 1914. Captured by the enemy at fall of Kut.

¹ These vessels had different Captains at various times.

- Shushan* - - - Sternwheel river steamer.
Armament varied at different dates.
Armed, March 1915.
- Massoudieh* - - - Sternwheel river steamer.
Armament varied at different dates.
Armed, June 1915.
- Flycatcher* - - - (Turkish) Thornycroft launch. Lieut. (Tempy.)
Hugh Lincoln, R.N.R.
Salved and taken into Naval Service in 1916.
- Bahreïn* - - - Minesweeper.
- Muzaffri* - - - Tug (for 4·7-inch guns in horseboats).

FORCES UNDER S.N.O., PERSIAN GULF.

- Juno* - - - Light Cruiser. Capt. Drury St. A. Wake, S.N.O.,
Persian Gulf.
Armament: 11—6-inch, 8—12-pr., 1—3-pr.
- Pyramus* - - - Light Cruiser. Commdr. Viscount Kelburn.
Armament: 8—4-inch, 8—3-pr.
- Dalhousie* - - - q.v.
- Lawrence* - - - q.v.

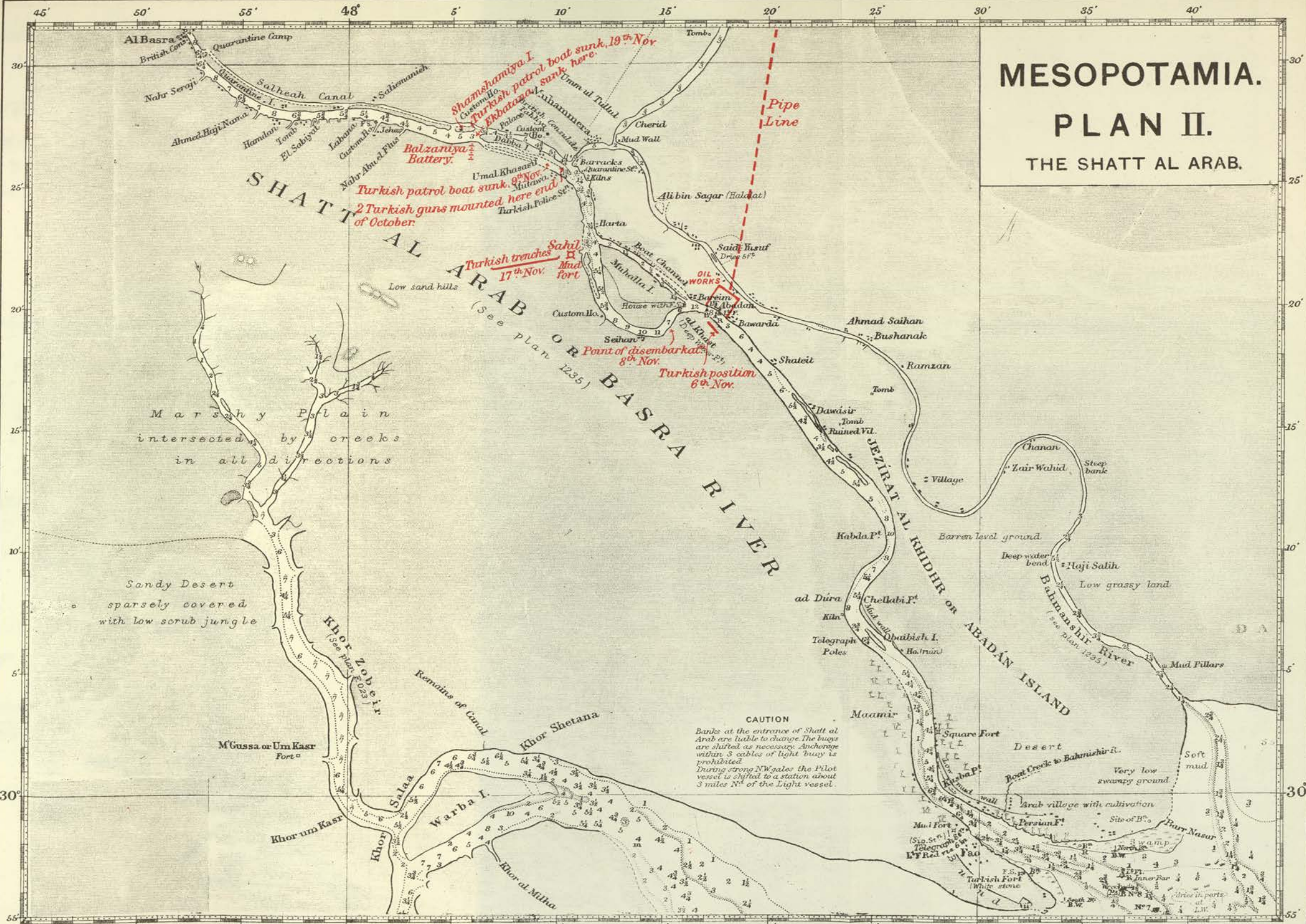




MESOPOTAMIA.

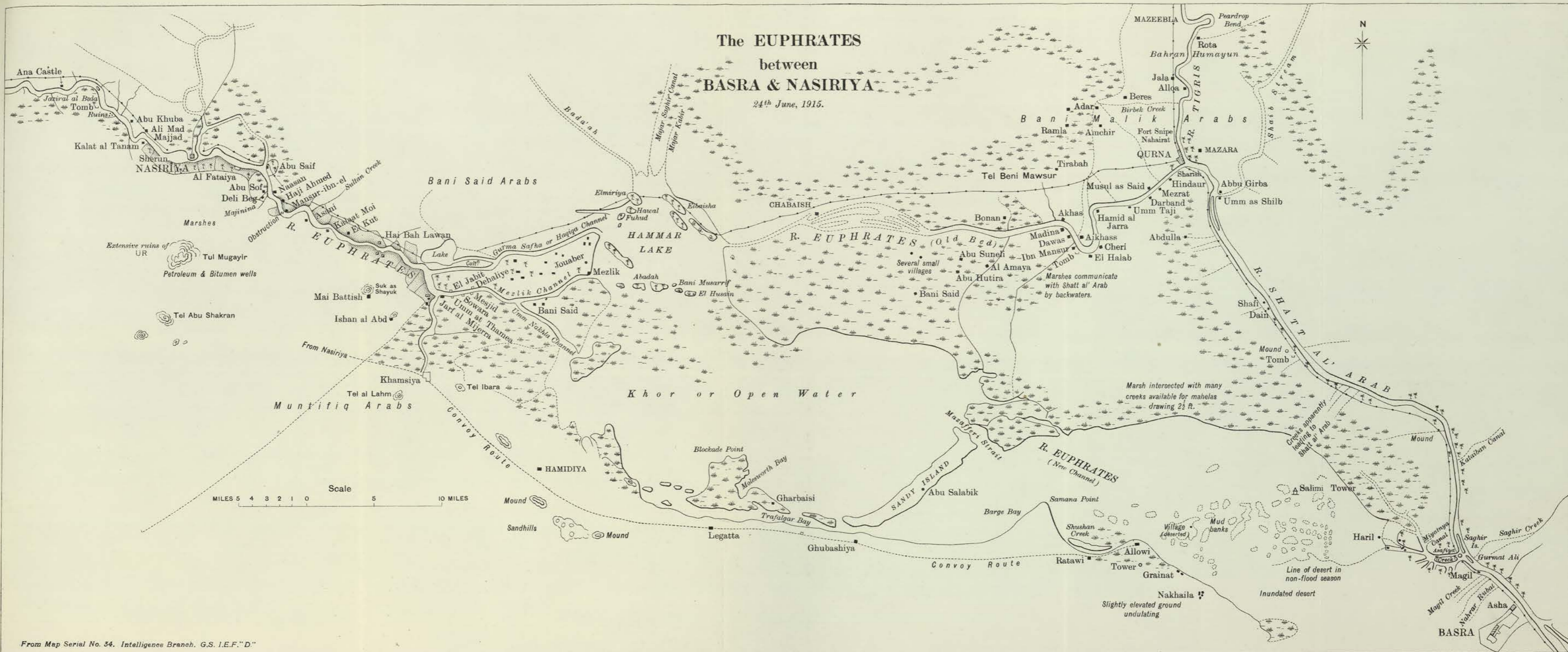
PLAN II.

THE SHATT AL ARAB.



The EUPHRATES between BASRA & NASIRIYA

24th June, 1915.



From Map Serial No. 34. Intelligence Branch. G.S. I.E.F. "D"

UNCLASSIFIED

No. 216

(To be pasted inside the back cover of C.B. 917 (B).)

~~CONFIDENTIAL.~~

*Attention is called to the penalties attaching to any infraction
of the Official Secrets Act.*

QV. 5413 B (1)

ADDENDUM No. 1

TO

NAVAL STAFF MONOGRAPHS
(HISTORICAL).

VOL. IV.

*A note, "See Addendum No. 1," should be inserted in the margin of
C.B. 917 (B), against the paragraphs affected by this Addendum.*

ADMIRALTY,
NAVAL STAFF,
TRAINING AND STAFF DUTIES DIVISION,
January, 1924.

ADDENDUM No. 1

TO

C.B. 917 (B). NAVAL STAFF MONOGRAPHS (HISTORICAL).
VOL. IV.

The following amendments are to be made to C.B. 917 (B)—
Naval Staff Monographs (Historical), Volume IV.

Page 13, line 20.

Delete "which . . . observers" and substitute "which
often rendered it difficult to fire even at short ranges."

Page 15, line 8 from bottom.

For "only steamers" read "only foreign steamers."

Page 18, line 2 from bottom.

Delete full-stop after word "purposes." Delete "The
whole of Mesopotamia" and substitute "and."

Page 31, line 19.

Add "Our troops did not, however, occupy the position."

Page 34, lines 20, 21.

For "Submitted by the Military Secretary of the India
Office" read "on a proposal by Sir Percy Cox that the
advance should be continued to Baghdad."

Page 34, line 24.

Add new footnote 9, "27th November, 1914."

Page 34, footnote 8.

Alter to read "Private Telegram Viceroy to I.O., 25th
November, 1914."

Page 35, lines 15, 16.

Delete "The Viceroy, meanwhile, was urging that an
advance should be made on Baghdad, but . . ." Delete
footnote 1.

Page 40, line 4 from bottom.

For "a reconnaissance was carried out up the right bank
of the Tigris" read "an operation against the Turks at
Mazeebla was carried out."

Page 43, line 29.

For "soon" read "temporarily."

Page 43, line 30.

Delete from "and it" to end of sentence and substitute
"though it was not yet possible to re-establish the pipe-
line."

Page 69, line 9 from bottom.

For "hangars" read "sangars."

Page 70, last line.

For "General Townshend sent a small force" read "a
small force was sent."

Page 73, lines 17 and 18 from bottom.

Delete "General Townshend."

Page 77, line 15 from bottom.

Delete "mounted in barges."

Page 83, after line 17 add new paragraph.

"The question had also been referred to the consideration
of a joint Conference between the General Staff and Admiralty
War Staff, which issued its report on 19th October. The
Combined General Staff considered it unwise to occupy
Baghdad with the intention of remaining there until the
end of the war, unless the enemy could be prevented from
sending reinforcements to Mesopotamia, by cutting his
communications, as for example, by a landing in the Gulf of
Iskanderun. They regarded it as imperative that no troops,
which might otherwise be employed in Europe, should be
diverted from the primary theatre of war for the purpose of
conducting a campaign which cannot appreciably influence
the decision as between the armies of the Allies and those of
the Central Powers."

2 C.B.9

4 C.B.917(B). ADDENDUM No. 1 to NAVAL STAFF MONOGRAPHS
(HISTORICAL). VOL. IV.

Page 87, line 4 from bottom.

Delete from "The Turks" to the end of line 3 from bottom.

Page 88, line 19.

For "on that afternoon" read "next day."

Page 98, lines 34, 35.

*For "two columns" read "four columns." Delete
'under Generals Kemball and Keary respectively.'*

Page 98, line 36.

*Alter to read "columns (A and B), accompanied by the
fourth (cavalry) column, were to make," etc.*

Page 98, lines 37, 38.

*For "supported by the remainder of the force" read
"supported by General Keary's column (C)."*

Page 98, lines 40, 41.

For "General Kemball's column" read "The force."

Page 100, line 26.

*For "failed to shake our line" read "were eventually
repulsed."*

Page 101, line 15.

*For "after consultation with him" read "on the appeal
of the army, as a forlorn hope."*

Page 102, line 6.

For "23rd Jany." read "5th Jany."

Page 102, line 7.

For "over 15,000" read "23,000."

Page 102, lines 8, 9.

*For "rather double this figure" read "little more than
30,000."*

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 (HISTORICAL)
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