

On the 17th December I ordered the 6th Division to recall all troops from Rumaitlah and from all places upstream of Nasiriyah except Samawah after the fines had been paid by the tribes. The retention of Samawah was only to be a temporary measure, as I had informed the High Commissioner that in the future I had no intention of maintaining troops in the Euphrates valley between Hillah and Nasiriyah. The occurrences in that area during July and August showed only too obviously the folly of retaining regular troops where their communications were unsafe, and I suggested that the Arab Levies were the proper force to guard the railway, which was of no value from a military point of view, the Tigris being my main and safer line of communication.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MARCH ACROSS THE SHATT-AL-HAI.

For some time prior to the relief of Samawah the desirability of moving troops into the area between Kut and Nasiriyah, known as the Shatt-al-Hai, or Shatt-al-Gharraf, had become evident. The tribes there, whose inclinations for a time were distinctly bellicose, had been kept in check, and only in the vicinity of Nasiriyah incidents such as firing on blockhouses had taken place. Those among the tribesmen whose ill-feeling had been translated into hostile action could, through the medium of their Political Officers, be made to pay later for their temerity, but the mass of the inhabitants who lived at a distance had not laid themselves open to punishment. Yet, if in the future satisfactory relations were to be preserved between ourselves and the tribes of the well-armed Muntafiq confederation, it was essential that they should be made to see with their own eyes our military strength.

This I felt to be all the more important as the confederation in question held the position of a boggy, and the appearance of our troops within their borders at an earlier date had not enhanced our military reputation. What had then occurred I did not know fully until later, but it appears that towards the end of December 1915, when General Townshend's reports as to the urgency of relieving Kut became grave, the army commander decided that, although unready and deficient in many particulars, an advance must be made up the Tigris from Ali Gharbi at the earliest possible date. The Turks shortly after pushed their advanced troops down-stream to Shaikh Saad, and so increased

the distance that lay between them and those engaged in the investment of Kut.

Prior to this movement the idea of initiating operations on the Shatt-al-Gharraf from Nasiriyah had been conceived, and with that object Major-General Goringe left Qurnah for that place on Christmas Day.

On the 5th January, the date on which our troops suffered heavily at Shaikh Saad, he was ordered to advance at once in the hope of leading the Turks to believe that a strong attack was intended from the Euphrates valley, and so inducing them to weaken their main force by throwing out a detachment in his direction. Rain now fell, causing a delay in the collection of the necessary local transport, and not until the 14th January could a reconnoitring column leave Butaniyah, where the rest of the force had in the meantime been concentrated. The column in question consisted of some cavalry, a section of pack artillery, and a battalion, and marched towards Shattrah. On reaching Suwaj reports that had already been received of a considerable concentration were confirmed. Numbers of men mounted and on foot were seen in the distance advancing rapidly. The column soon became engaged, and fell back on Butaniyah, being helped in its retreat by two battalions from that place. Its casualties amounted to forty, and those of the Arabs were estimated at one hundred and eighty. On this date our troops were engaged with some three thousand men, among whom was a contingent of the Abudah section under their present redoubtable chief Khayun al Obaid, and that they intended to show fight if we entered their territory was clear. They had displayed their skill in manoeuvring in their difficult country, which is so intersected by canals and small water-channels as to make it resemble a gridiron.

The strength of the Muntafiq confederation and the natural difficulties of the advance by a regular force were such that it was decided not to attempt a further enterprise in their country. Orders were therefore given for the troops to remain at Butaniyah, between which place

and Nasiriyah the tribes had shown no hostility, so that the fact of their presence might, through the medium of the Arabs, come to the knowledge of the Turks.

On the 7th February, it having been decided to withdraw the force at Butaniyah, which was then commanded by Major-General Brooking, all available troops at Nasiriyah were sent there to assist in the operation. The force consisted of one regiment and one squadron of cavalry, one field and one mountain battery, two British battalions (both much under strength), and two and a half Indian battalions.

No sooner had the baggage got clear of the camp and the rearward begun to move than the Arabs appeared in force, and put into practice their customary tactics of working round the flanks. The numbers of the enemy kept on increasing, and the situation became grave, owing to the unsteadiness of the Indian troops. Hand-to-hand fighting ensued, and the force was only extricated with difficulty.

Subsequent reports, giving in detail the tribes who took part in the action, showed that before it terminated the numbers had increased from two thousand to about twelve thousand armed men. Our casualties numbered one hundred and forty-eight killed and thirty-five missing; those of the tribesmen were estimated to be one thousand.

In September 1916 the same tribes stubbornly resisted a force of two brigades, which was engaged in punitive operations in the neighbourhood of Nasiriyah.

The experiences of the Turks in this quarter were, however, even less encouraging than our own, for prior to the war they had sent several expeditions to subdue the tribes around Shattrah, and on each occasion had met with failure. In one expedition the force sent comprised seventeen battalions, each approximately three hundred rifles strong, but it had met with defeat, and was forced to make its way out of the area as best it could.

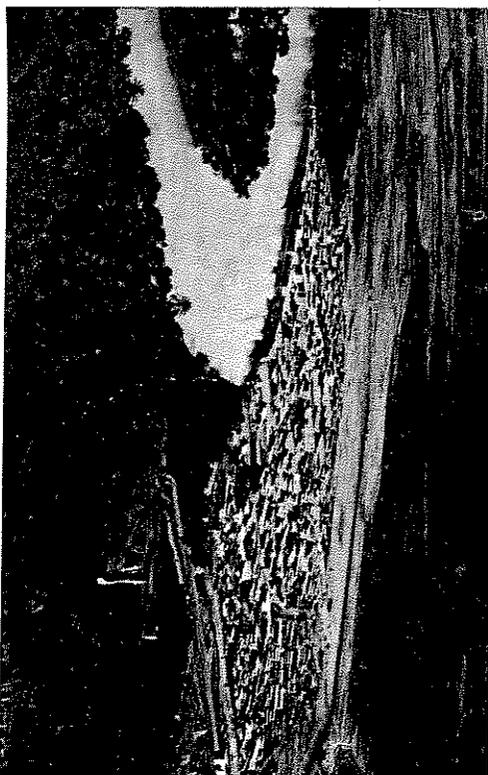
A peculiar feature of the fighting which had taken place in this portion of the country is said to have been the endeavour of the Arabs on all occasions to obtain possession

of the invaders' guns. This object having been effected, the Turks would at once stop fighting, and a settlement be arrived at by the local leaders on both sides. Thereafter the artillery which had changed hands would be restored to its owners.

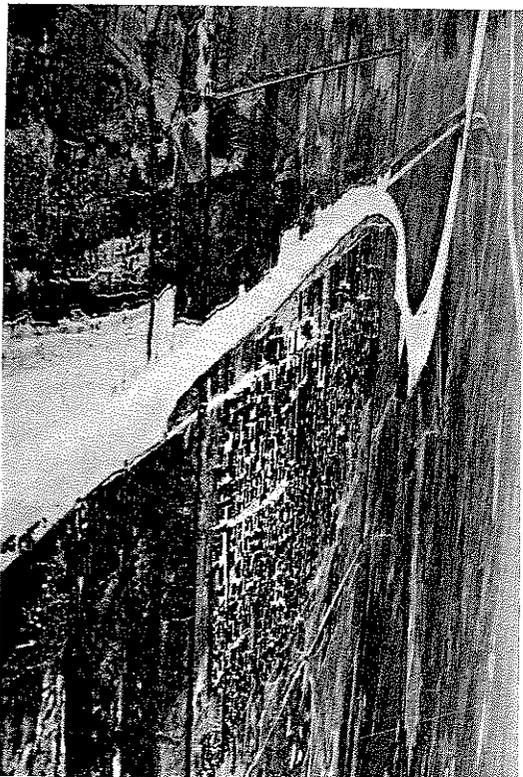
Such then was the country, whose tribesmen were now far better supplied with arms and ammunition than four years earlier, through which I was resolved to move. That there was little enthusiasm in my force to walk into such a possible wasps' nest is not surprising, for there still remained in it several officers who had been present at the engagement above described, and others who had served throughout the earlier campaigns in Mesopotamia.

Any operations in the Hai triangle must, however, necessarily be postponed until the flood season, as before that time neither craft for navigating the stream and carrying supplies nor water sufficient for the requirements of the troops and animals could be found. The difficulties of the operation were stated by those on the spot to be very great, and as time went on the obstacles to the scheme increased rather than diminished. But on Marshal Ney's dictum that "Some things are more difficult than others, but nothing is impossible"—an elaboration probably of Napoleon's more terse saying that "Can't is only to be found in the fool's dictionary"—I persisted in my determination to send troops through from Kut to Nasiriyah. I felt certain that, did I fail to carry out my plan, either I or others after me might have cause to regret the lost opportunity.

On the 24th November, after consulting the High Commissioner and obtaining his approval, I telegraphed my intentions to the War Office. I stated that the operation would probably not be concluded until the end of January, by which time all the arms that were likely to be collected throughout the areas in which the insurrection had taken place would have been handed in. The difficulties of the operation were expected to be such as are common to warfare in Mesopotamia, but in the Muntalifq area, apart from



Qalat Sikar.



Shatrah.

the question of the tribes themselves, who might or might not fight, the controlling influence, perhaps even in a more marked degree than in other parts of the country, was water. The river is prone to rise suddenly, and as suddenly subside, and troops dependent on water-borne supplies might find themselves forced to remain halted owing to the difficulty of movement of themselves and the animals and vehicles accompanying them. It was undesirable to move a small force through the area, as the inhabitants might not prove to be pacific, yet a large column might find itself immobilised and short of food. The country, too, being watered from the river along which the line of march must run, was intersected with innumerable canals of varying size, and the necessary bridging material, as well as the means of transporting it to the places where it would be required, could not be provided. In fact, so impracticable did the country seem likely to be at one point, that I was forced to give up the idea of marching a column through from Kut to Nasiriyah, and decided to content myself with arranging for the junction of a portion of the two columns which were to advance to meet each other from both those places.

The plan therefore resolved itself into the advance of a column under Brigadier-General Coningham from Nasiriyah to Shattrah (thirty miles by road), and another under Brigadier-General Dent from Kut-al-Amarah to Qalat Sikar (fifty-four miles by road). On reaching their respective destinations, which are twenty-nine miles apart, both columns would send a force to Karradi, which was to be the point of junction, and the column from Kut would transfer to that from Nasiriyah certain units. These units, which were due for return to India, would be sent from Nasiriyah to Basrah, which would be quicker than to march them back to Kut and thence convey them by river to the base. This proposed transfer of units was later cancelled, as it was found that it would give rise to administrative difficulties which were undesirable.

By the 14th January 1921 the following troops under

the command of Brigadier-General F. E. Cunningham were concentrated in a camp just north of Nasiriyah :—

37th Lancers (less two squadrons),
Composite Battery (two sections 18-pdrs., one section how-),
2nd Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry,
3/8th Gurkha Rifles,
3/124th Baluchis,
2/125th and 3/153rd Rifles,
Half a machine-gun company,

while one company of sappers and miners as an advanced party, escorted by half a squadron and two companies of infantry from the column, moved to Lake Butanayah. The water of the lake is brackish, and the supply there had to be improved before the main body arrived. Next day the column joined the advanced party, which was pushed on to Suwaij, nine miles further north, where the question of water again presented difficulties, the wells being thirty to forty feet deep and the amount obtainable small. In consequence the column was forced to halt at Lake Butanayah on the 16th and 17th, while work on the wells proceeded. During this unavoidable delay all available waggons, carts, and cars in Nasiriyah were sent as a water-convooy to Suwaij to fill up the tanks there in anticipation of the arrival of the column.

On the 18th January the column, which had been joined by Shaikh Khayun al Obaid, the most influential man in the Shattrah district, whose good services in preventing the spread of the insurrection in the Hai have been referred to, and who brought with him some followers, marched to Suwaij, leaving a small post at Butanayah. The preliminary arrangements at Suwaij proved so satisfactory that an ample supply of water was found there, but as a precautionary measure three more deep wells were dug next day, which proved to be greatly superior to the existing Arab wells.

On the 19th, leaving a small post at Suwaij, the troops followed the dry bed of the Shatt-al-Shattrah through

Shattrah town to a camp about two miles further north. During this march, as also that of the column from Kut-al-Amarah, aeroplanes made demonstration flights at certain times, the inhabitants of the towns and villages leaving their dwellings in large numbers to observe them and watch the troops as they passed. Supplies of certain natures had been arranged for in advance by the Political Officer, who accompanied the column, and these were satisfactorily delivered by the tribesmen, whose reception of the troops was generally of a friendly character.

Difficulties, which Brigadier-General Dent's column was meanwhile experiencing, necessitated a halt on the 20th and 21st of the column from Nasiriyah, during which the troops visited Shattrah, where their presence had a good effect.

On the 22nd Brigadier-General Coningham, leaving a small post at his camp, marched for Karradi, which was reached on the 23rd. Here the north and south columns joined hands, the large space covered by the camps of the united forces, and their combined strength, as also the aeroplanes which flew overhead, having a marked effect on the tribesmen. On the 24th Brigadier-General Coningham marched for Nasiriyah, which was reached without incident on the 30th January. The movement of his column had been carried out more easily than that from the north, which had to cover a greater distance, although, at first sight, the water-borne supplies on which the latter depended seemed to give it the advantage.

While preparations for the march to Shattrah by the column of the 6th Division were being made, those for the advance of the force from Kut-al-Amarah to meet it were in progress.

On the 24th December a preliminary reconnaissance was made by Brigadier-General Dent, who was to command the latter force. Accompanied by a staff officer and Major J. F. D. Jeffreys, the Political Officer at Kut, who possesses great influence with the tribesmen of Iraq, and who, like other officers on the Tigris, had done admirable work in keeping order during the insurrection, he reconnoitred the

road to be followed as far as a point three miles south of Hai town, which is twenty-five miles south-east of Kut-al-Amarah. The road, or rather track, was found to be passable by all arms in fine weather, provided certain bridges were constructed.

On receipt of his report the constitution of the force, which was called the 77th Brigade column, was settled as follows:—

5th Cavalry (one squadron),
 131st Battery R.F.A. (less one section),
 50th Paek Battery,
 61st Company 2nd (Q.V.O.) Sappers and Miners,
 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers,
 45th (Rattray's) Sikhs,
 1/94th (Russell's) Infantry,
 108th Infantry,
 1/10th Gurkha Rifles,
 and certain details.

These troops were moved by rail from Baghdad between the 6th and 12th January, and by the afternoon of the 13th were concentrated on the right bank of the Tigris opposite Kut.

By the same date two defence vessels and other craft, which included a hospital ship, were ready at Kut, and by next evening all native boats that were required for the carriage of supplies had arrived.

On the 15th fourteen days' rations, that were necessary for the column, which, less local produce, was to be self-supporting, and seven days' reserve rations, were loaded, the former on mahelas, the latter in iron barges.

On the 16th the column left its place of concentration, and on the 18th reached Hai town, the capital of the Bani Bihab; and as the troops entered it aeroplanes which had arrived from Baghdad with commendable punctuality circled overhead, and added to the great impression presented by the spectacle of so many troops.

Not far from Hai river are some of the oldest mounds or remains of ancient cities in Mesopotamia, which were

the abode of Sumerians or Southern Babylonians; and as one of my staff, Lieut.-Colonel K. L. Stevenson, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, who is an amateur archaeologist and can read the cuneiform writing, was about to proceed to Samawah for inspection duty, I arranged that he should travel to Karradi with Brigadier-General Dent's column, and then transfer himself to that of Brigadier-General Coningham. In company with the Political Officer, Captain Thomas, who earlier had done much good work in keeping the Muntafiq in check, he returned later from Nasiriyah and made some excavations at Umma, the constant rival and eventual destroyer of another ancient city, Lagash (about B.C. 4000), a report on which he sent to the British Museum.

Two days before Brigadier-General Dent's column left its place of concentration near Kut the river had begun to fall, with the result that at the end of the first day's march only one defence vessel had been able to proceed as far as the camp, and when Hai was reached all barges, as well as mahelas, were aground, and supplies had to be transferred to bellums.

To provide the smaller form of boat and to bring forward the reserve rations a halt of two days was necessary. To add to the difficulties of advance, a bar had now formed both at the mouth of the Hai and at a point four miles north of the town of that name, and an attempt to clear a passage through the latter obstacle by blasting proved unavailing. To this point the defence vessels, the hospital ship, and two other steamers had made their way, and Brigadier-General Dent arranged to form here an advanced base, guarded by a company of the 1/94th Infantry, where the rations from the two stranded barges would be collected.

On the 21st the column marched some fourteen miles further south, when another bar was encountered on which twenty-five boats became stranded. By the help of the Political Officer and a local shaiikh, Arab coolies were procured and several of the boats refloated or lightened, hauled across the bar, and then reloaded. That night the force found itself with the minimum quantity of rations

necessary to carry it to the point of junction with Brigadier-General Coningham's column and back again to Hai.

The march next day brought the force close to Qalat Sikar, where aeroplanes demonstrated over the town and then proceeded to meet the column coming from that direction. On the 23rd Karradi was reached, where one day's rations carried on bellums arrived, and on the following day the return journey began. The river, owing partly to a strong north wind, had by this time fallen 6½ feet, and on the 27th, when the point where the advanced base had been prepared was reached, all native craft had to be abandoned. As animal transport for the whole force was not available it was divided into two groups. The first group, under Lieut.-Colonel McVean, 45th Sikhs, taking with it the transport of the other, made a march of twenty-four miles on the 28th, and reached the Tigris opposite Kut-al-Amarah on the afternoon of that date.

Rain, which had begun to fall at Baghdad and to the north on the 23rd, affected the Hai river on the 29th. By the following day it had risen two feet, and by 2.30 p.m. all vessels were afloat. The river continued to rise, and by the 1st February the second group of Brigadier-General Dent's column reached its concentration camp opposite Kut, all the river craft being assembled on the Tigris during the afternoon.

The combined operation carried out by the columns of Brigadier-Generals Dent and Coningham created a profound impression. Not only did it prove to the tribes distant from our main line of communication that we possessed troops, which by hostile propaganda they had been led to doubt, but that those troops were in considerable numbers; and the effect of seeing so many bodies of cavalry, infantry, and artillery, the long spaces which they covered on the march, and the size of the camps which they occupied, was much enhanced by the frequent coming and going of numerous aeroplanes.

As was to be expected, the arrival of our troops caused the prestige of those tribes of the confederation who had remained loyal throughout the insurrection to rise, and

strengthened their faith in the wisdom and foresight of their leaders who had restrained them from following the evil example set by their neighbours. Several shaikhs of other tribes who before that time had excused themselves from accepting an invitation of the Political Officer to report themselves at Nasiriyah, alleging that they could not do so owing to the disturbed state of the country, now found no difficulty in complying.

As some twenty-five minor leaders in the area Butaniyah-Suwaij-Shatrah had earlier committed definitely hostile acts, and had for varying periods formed part of hostile concentrations during the insurrection, they were ordered to pay a fine of rifles, which they accordingly did. Several months later the Political Officer of the Division stated in a report that the Muntafiq fully expected to be disarmed at the time our troops visited their country, and regarded it as a sign of weakness that this course was not taken. My instructions from the High Commissioner in any case debarred me from taking such action, and it is open to question whether, had disarmament been ordered, it would have been possible, owing to the natural diffidentities of the country and the warlike nature of the inhabitants, to have effected it before it became necessary to send back to India the reinforcements which had arrived to help in quelling the insurrection. The process would in any case have been a lengthy one, as the tribesmen are given to burying their weapons when the loss of them is threatened.

Immediately following the march through the Hai country, my attention was directed to Sug-ash-Suyukh (or Shaikhs' Market), a town of some twelve thousand inhabitants, which stands mainly on the right bank of the Euphrates, about twenty-seven miles downstream in a south-easterly direction from Nasiriyah, and between that place and the Hammar Lake.

On the 1st July the Assistant Political Officer, Captain A. Platts, had held a race-meeting for the tribesmen of the district, which was largely attended. The sport was good and the diversion an entire success, yet within one hundred miles the tribes were gathering to destroy the railway

and murder its officials. This fact must have been known to the Arab spectators, but was certainly not within the knowledge of Captain Platts nor of that of the several Europeans who were present.

Gradually the situation at Suq grew worse. The Jihad movement spread to that place, and the tribes began to think that the hand of Allah was against the British. The police took to deserting, and on the 1st September only one man who was guarding the prisoners remained. To attempt to control the situation now became impossible, and at midday on that date, the hour of the Arab meal, the Assistant Political Officer and some other Europeans embarked on a defence vessel, which had been stationed there for a few days when the unrest was approaching a head, and made their way in safety to Nasiriyah.

At that time river operations on the Euphrates had temporarily ceased, but as there was room for naval activity on the Tigris the two defence vessels at Nasiriyah were ordered on the 4th to run the ganuntlet. This they successfully did, though fired on below Suq for one and a half hours. Being, however, well protected, the personnel escaped unscathed, while the insurgents were severely handled by the guns and machine-guns of the vessels. The Arabs had sunk a forage barge across the river, hoping thereby to block the passage, but the attempt proved to be abortive. The two vessels arrived in time to assist in covering the withdrawal of the dredger *Mudarik* from the Hammar Lake, where she was in danger of falling into the hands of the insurgents, as well as some other vessels which had been sent there to assist her in keeping open a passage through that shallow stretch of water when there seemed to be a prospect that the railway from Basrah to Nasiriyah might be severed. By the efforts of the *Mudarik*, manned by a scratch crew—for she was one of the vessels which, when the insurrection broke out, it was proposed to sell—a three-foot channel was kept open through the lake, which had allowed of the despatch for service on the Euphrates of four extra stern-wheelers with barges, besides permitting the defence vessels to pass freely be-

tween that river and Basrah for repairs. Indeed it may be said that the presence of the extra vessels which we had been able to place on the Euphrates helped to retard the spread of the insurrection round Nasiriyah, and also to assist Samawah.

During several months the attitude of the inhabitants of Suq and its vicinity had been such that it was highly desirable to make a show of force among them. Moreover, it was known that they were still incredulous regarding the relief of Samawah. When the news of our success there reached them it was thought that it might cool their hostile ardour, but, Arab-like, they declined to believe what they themselves had not seen, and sent a messenger to bear witness to the truth or otherwise of the report. When he returned and had been closely questioned, his account of what he had seen must have been but little to their liking, for it is said that with one accord they fell upon him and severely beat him.

On the 3rd February, therefore, a column, under the ubiquitous Brigadier-General Comingham, was sent to Suq; but the inhabitants had by this time come to their senses, and the visit, which had threatened to be stormy, passed off without incident.

Thus ended the operations which had been in constant progress for seven months, the seal on which may be said to have been set when a little later I received the following telegram from the Army Council:—

“The report that the operations in connection with the recent insurrection have been brought to a close has been received by the Army Council with much satisfaction, and they desire to offer their congratulations on the successful issue of a difficult task to you, to your staff, and to the troops under your command.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

THE visit of the troops to Saq-ash-Sayukh brought to a conclusion all operations of a hostile nature, for after that, to the best of my belief, no shot was fired in anger on either side. But, as I have shown earlier, stationary and movable columns continued to collect fines in many areas, and teach the insurgents the price they had to pay for throwing down the gauntlet to the British Empire. The punishment had of necessity to be exemplary; and besides the frequent visitations by the troops, which proved our power of moving where we pleased, and the casualties inflicted, which were considerable (see Appendix VIII.), the following fines were collected or extracted:—

Rifles, 63,435—all serviceable—of which 21,154 were modern weapons.

Small-arm ammunition, 3,185,000 rounds.

Cash, Rs. 817,650—equivalent to about £34,112.

Prior to the insurrection, according to a carefully prepared but necessarily rough estimate, those tribes who took part in the rising were credited with possessing 59,805 rifles—figures which were regarded by the Political Officers in some areas, when the time came for levying fines, as excessive. That these figures should have been surpassed by several thousands, and in addition a sum of money equivalent to from five to ten thousand rifles should have been secured, are proofs of the thoroughness of the work of the several commanders, more especially those of the

17th Division, and of the assistance given them by their political advisers.

Earlier in my career I had taken part in three campaigns on the North-West Frontier of India, and I had not forgotten the weary months of waiting for the scanty quota of firearms—a few hundreds only—to be handed in, and these in most cases did not deserve the name of rifle. But here in Mesopotamia we had actually extracted from the tribesmen serviceable weapons, which exceeded in number those with which they had been credited. I confess to feelings of considerable satisfaction, to me more moving than those created by the rising figures of a political election, as the tale of arms, ammunition, and rupees reached me daily in a continually ascending scale.

The operations which had led to these results, and which were only undertaken with reluctance, involved a stern and protracted struggle. Indeed, from the beginning of July till well into October, as will have been apparent from the narrative, we lived on the edge of a precipice where the least slip might have led to a catastrophe. The vast area to be guarded by our limited numbers afforded many opportunities for such mishaps as those which made memorable the first half of August, all of which added fuel to the fire of insurrection, and any one of which might have had most serious results. But fortunately tribal combination, though in certain areas it existed and was encouraged by the incidents in question, was less widespread than might have been the case. Thus by the resolution, valour, and endurance of the troops, British and Indian, and those who led them in the field, it was possible to temporise and keep the situation to some extent in control until the reinforcements came from India.

In addition to the troops who operated in the open, those who were invested in blockhouses or elsewhere, the staff and the various ancillary services which helped to win success, I was much indebted to three other sources to which reference must be made. The first of these, the Royal Air Force, was directly under my command, and the other two were controlled by the civil administration.

As regards the Royal Air Force, I have stated earlier the number of squadrons available, and only during September did the first flight of a reinforcing squadron—the 84th—from Constantinople come into action.

Besides the limited number of machines that were available in July and for some time after, when the outbreak occurred the Royal Air Force in Mesopotamia was in process of being re-equipped with new aeroplanes and engines of which the personnel had little or no experience. Moreover, such is the summer heat of Mesopotamia that the question of the reliability of the engines was a cause of additional anxiety. This difficulty was overcome by designing and fitting extra water-cooling arrangements, so that some machines could be flown during the heat of the day until such time as tropical radiators, which are necessary in torrid climates, had arrived from home.

The work of the pilots and observers has been described at various places in the narrative, and as much of it was performed during the hottest hours of daylight with a limited number of machines, which were constantly being called upon to act at short notice, the strain on them was excessive.

But the less showy work of the air mechanics and others at the Aircraft Park which alone made flying possible was carried out, as I know from periodical visits, in corrugated iron sheds where the temperature was calculated to call up thoughts of Christian martyrs or the burning fiery furnace.

The man who above all others inspired what I may call the indoor and outdoor branches of the Royal Air Force in Mesopotamia, and kept his officers and men in trying conditions cheerful and unflagging in their work, was Wing Commander (now Group Commander) C. S. Burnett. I had learned his value in France in 1917, when for a time he commanded the 12th Squadron, which was attached to my corps, and helped materially during the stormy days which ushered in the battle of Arras and at other times. In 1920 I often undertook that what was called an "aerial holiday" should be granted, if only for twenty-

four hours, to those whose work was of so strenuous a nature. During that period it was agreed that I should ask for no machine to leave the aerodrome, so that gradually a reserve might be built up. But for the first three months of the insurrection and until the arrival of the additional squadron that holiday remained a myth. Yet, with material which was constantly being damaged and sometimes lost—for eight machines fell into hostile hands and forty-one were injured by rifle fire—the Royal Air Force steadily pursued its daily risky task of co-operation with columns, reconnaissance, and dropping bombs; and at Ramathah, and to some extent at other places, helped to prolong the existence of the garrison till rescue came.

I have touched upon the work of the Levies here and there in the narrative—a force which, like the Railway Service, was controlled by the civil administration, but acted from time to time with regular columns, besides carrying out their ordinary duties, which resemble those of an armed police.

In January 1920 and the months following the Levies were divided into what were called Police and Striking Force, their numbers amounting on the 1st April to 3687. With the Levies were a limited number of British officers and non-commissioned officers. The standard of training which the force had reached by June 1920 was not high, and until that month no unit had received instruction in mounted duties. The material was good, but, in order to raise it to a much higher state of efficiency, some additional officers, specially chosen for their military qualifications and possessing a knowledge of Arabic, were required.

No sooner had the insurrection broken out than the rank and file, especially those in the Middle Euphrates area, were assailed by blatant propaganda of every kind. In the bazars and streets they were openly hailed as infidels and traitors; refreshments were denied them at the coffee-shops, and in several cases vessels from which they had drunk were ostentatiously flung to the ground and broken. Their female relatives were in the forefront of this campaign of abuse, and exerted all the pressure

they could bring to bear to induce the men to desert assembling in clamorous crowds round the barracks and calling upon them to come to their protection. Those of the Levies who had been recruited from the countryside began to realise that to continue serving with the force meant the end of all relations with their tribe. But what perhaps strained their allegiance more than all else were the reports of assaults on their women-folk, who in some cases were stated to have been carried off or killed.

As time went on rumours were rife that a large Sharifian army was in the field and on its way to drive the British from Iraq. Then came the news of the disaster to the Manchester column, which had occurred in the very centre of the area where the 2nd Euphrates Levy performed its normal duties. The force, which had been trained substantially for mobile action, soon found itself sharing in a series of sieges or operations of a sedentary nature, and, as has been described in the case of Hillah, the men were greeted by cries from the insurgents to come and guard their homes and families.

At this period the British cause, so far as outward appearances showed, seemed to the men to be almost hopeless; and should that prove to be the case, the end of those who had stood firm beside the "infidels" in their need was one not pleasant to reflect upon.

I think in all fairness it may be said that in the annals of the British Empire no young force, a force in this case of only a few months' standing, has ever before passed through so high a trial. Deserters there were a few, for everywhere men of mean spirit will be found; but when the temptations to which the Levies were daily subjected, and which almost passed endurance, are weighed against those of them who proved faithless, the number is insignificant. Great credit is due to Major C. A. Boyle, the then Inspector-General of Levies, a gallant leader and a master of many Eastern languages, as well as to the officers and non-commissioned officers serving under him, that the force kept its allegiance and served with credit in many places during the insurrection. Like the regular troops,

they had their share of losses, which amounted to one hundred and seven killed and wounded; while five Arab and Kurdish officers, besides ten other ranks, received rewards for gallantry and devotion to duty in the field.

Of the last of the three services whence assistance came I may seem to have written earlier in a captious and ungrateful strain; but perhaps I failed to appreciate fully the great and increasing difficulties with which it had to labour.

So much depends in war on assured and rapid movement that, when delays unforeseen and possibly avoidable occur which upset plans and cause the troops discomfort, it is no easy matter to maintain a strictly impartial attitude.

Throughout the whole of the disturbances, in areas in which the railway continued to function, the first warning of attacks or anticipation thereof generally emanated from the railway staff. It is true that reports were often exaggerated, but it must be remembered that the station staff of outlying places were isolated and their lives frequently in imminent danger. Normally their only source of protection lay in the presence of local Shabana; and the devotion to duty shown by the railway employees in the face of repeated attempts at looting and destruction of property was as remarkable as it was praiseworthy. Not only railway staff but permanent-way gangmen and others similarly isolated on the several lines were exposed to treatment of that nature, and many suffered considerable hardships. Engine-drivers also and train staff ran grave risks throughout the operations in the execution of their duties in extremely difficult circumstances both from actual attack and from damage to the road, and several among them lost their lives.

It is interesting to note that on the 30th June the total route-mileage under full traffic was 867 miles, and on the 2nd July 286 miles of the through route were closed to all but urgent military traffic. About two months later 636 miles were closed to all ordinary traffic, and some 324 miles of railway line were in the hands of the insurgents; while by the beginning of October, when the tide was turning

in our favour, 184 miles of railway, with all the plant involved, were still in hostile possession; and on all lines, except that from Kut to Baghdad, which was never cut, nothing more than a precarious service could be maintained.

The casualties among the railway personnel of this civilian service up to the 30th September speak for themselves. They amounted approximately to twenty-three killed, fifty wounded, and forty-one missing; and on that date eight locomotives and about one hundred and fifty vehicles of our limited rolling-stock were in areas in which the insurgents still predominated.

The punishment which had been inflicted on the insurgent tribes had consisted mainly of fines in rifles and ammunition, for except sheep and cattle they possessed little else of value. But even the imposition of such fines was unsatisfactory—a fact which had begun to show itself at the time that the troops marched through the Shatt-al-Hai area. Reports of the difficulties which column commanders, who were operating in other parts of the country, were experiencing in extracting rifles were frequent, and it was becoming apparent that the day of disarmament by force in Mesopotamia had departed when the mass of troops left after the Armistice. As I write these words nearly a year after the insurrection was at its height, and am aware that those whom we deprived last year of their most valued possession have already not only rearmmed themselves but acquired weapons of more modern type than those they handed in, I perceive the vanity of what we undertook, necessary and unavoidable as it was. Though the lesson given was salutary and will be effective for a time, it is clear that in a country such as Mesopotamia, with its borders open practically on all sides, it is folly to think, not in one year but even in many years, to draw the teeth of its inhabitants.

While dealing with the subject of disarmament I may refer to certain factors which seem to me to occupy an important position with relation to it. I allude to a system which, as already mentioned, I instituted in certain districts during the insurrection, and which, I have since learned,

prevailed in Egypt with somewhat similar objects under the Pharaohs thousands of years ago. The system in question is based on the supply of water, which is essential for the operations of the cultivator, and was applied in the Diyala area and at the Hindiyah Barrage, where small garrisons were so placed as to maintain complete control of the regulators on the canals.

Since that time I have urged the extension of the system, and several large effluents and canals are now being protected by blockhouses at those points near the main stream of the Tigris where the regulators have for some time been in course of construction or are completed. The proximity of the blockhouses to the river, whence the canals draw their water supply, make it possible for defence vessels to reach them at all times, so that the garrisons cannot be cut off or besieged. Some of these canals carry vast quantities of water—one of them, it is estimated, swallowing up half the volume of the Tigris—and irrigate areas which maintain populations amounting to hundreds of thousands. Consequently by the mere control of a brick dam with regulators, half a dozen men can be placed in a position to deny a recalcitrant tribe what is essential for its daily bread. But this is not all, for through the presence of the small garrison the payment of revenue could be enforced, and even the peaceful surrender of arms might be effected. Than this it would be hard to find a more striking exemplification of the great principle of economy of force.

Unfortunately the system is not applicable to the Euphrates, as that river in its middle and lower reaches has been practically reduced to the condition of an irrigation canal with numerous subsidiary branches. Indeed, its further degradation is inevitable, unless its future as a trade route can be assured by some grand and costly scheme, such as that propounded by Sir William Willcocks, which, amongst other works, includes the construction of a barrage whereby the excess water of both the Tigris and the Euphrates could be stored in certain natural depressions of the land which are to be found somewhere north-west

of Baghdad. During the insurrection gun-vessels and other steamers were able to proceed as far north as Samawah, but this is no longer possible. The Arabs near Suqash-Suyukh have complained that the Mezlaq channel, which was opened for navigation early in 1917 and which carries the Euphrates into the Hammar Lake, robs them of water to the detriment of cultivation. In consequence the dredging of the channel, whereby defence vessels could enter the river and proceed, even at low water, for over one hundred and twenty miles northward, has been stopped, and the time is at hand when only Arab vessels of shallow draught will be able to ply on its waters.

Another feature of this subject is that many of the irrigating pumps in Iraq—and their numbers are increasing—are driven by means of oil-engines, the supply of the fuel for which can readily be controlled. It will be obvious that these pumps afford a means, beyond that provided by regulators, of maintaining pressure where circumstances may render it advisable.

Regulators, however desirable from a military point of view, cannot be constructed where fancy alone dictates, or a serious situation may easily be created. The question concerning them is a complicated one, which has puzzled experts and given rise to differences of opinion. In fact, in dealing with the matter of irrigation in a country like Iraq, it would be unwise to begin with a purely local project based on the requirements of a particular district and planned without reference to a general scheme for the whole country. Still, something can be done in the required direction without harmfully affecting the problem as a whole, for irrigation is the crying need which surpasses all the other requirements of Iraq.

Another factor which, if the experience of other countries is to be relied on, should have a civilising effect on the tribes, and not only benefit them but the Arab nation, is the provision of medical assistance in an easily accessible form. Before I left England in 1920 Sir John Hewett made a strong point, when talking to me on the subject, of the necessity for peripatetic ambulances together with the

requisite personnel. Statistics of any value are not available, but I have been assured that some seventy-five per cent of the children born annually in Iraq do not arrive at maturity—an appalling loss of life, which is due to climate, absence of sanitation, and other causes. In the towns the loss is less, but the rate of infant mortality is a very high one. The following figures, which cover a period of three years, show the mortality per thousand births at Baghdad as compared with that of England and Wales:—

Baghdad.	England and Wales.
1918—353	1918—96
1919—408	1919—89
1920—293	1920—80

In the towns there are civil medical establishments, which would no doubt be extended were money forthcoming; but unless the tribesmen bring their sick to such places, they are dependent on their own antediluvian curative measures, which resolve themselves into the survival of the fittest. Were help such as suggested forthcoming, the rivers provide a ready means of transporting the necessary personnel and material for combating the last enemy of mankind; and as the tribesmen, whether shepherds or cultivators, dwell for the most part in the vicinity of the waterways, they could easily be reached and receive such treatment from physicians of either sex as their several maladies might require.

Unfortunately, like many more civilised beings, they look upon doctors with suspicion, and have an innate horror of amputation. I remember seeing at Rumaiṭhah an Arab lad who had lost the sight of one eye from trachoma, and was threatened with total blindness within a year. He had been treated for a time by a British civil surgeon, but the process of cauterisation was necessarily prolonged and somewhat painful, and rather than continue it he ceased to visit the hospital, and wasted his money on nostrums prepared by the local quack in the bazaar. Another case at the same place was that of a boy with a tubercular knee whose parents refused to consent to an amputation, whereby his life might have been saved.

The treatment of Arab women presents great difficulties, as no male physician is allowed to approach them; and there are some who will not even tolerate examination by a foreign female doctor. Time, however, will no doubt break down the barriers of century-old convention, and induce the ignorant to take advantage of Western knowledge.

Two marked instances of how medical science can exert a pacificatory influence came under my notice some time after the insurrection was suppressed, and of such importance do I regard this subject that at the risk of being accused of prolixity I will mention them here.

In July 1921 an incident took place in the desert midway between the Euphrates and Syria such as is of common occurrence in these regions. A shaikh of the Amarat section of the Anizah tribe, who was encamped with his followers near some wells, was attacked by a certain doughty raider, who had come across from the Syrian side on one of his customary summer expeditions. The Amarat succeeded in driving off their opponents with the loss of a goodly number of camels, but in the fight their shaikh received a severe wound. It chanced that a few hours later a reconnoitring party of British officers, which included a Political Officer from Ramadi, arrived on the scene of the fight. The officers were returning to Amman by car after having completed the pioneer journey from that place to Baghdad. The shaikh's wound was dressed and further aid promised; and at the end of the next stage the party of British met the aeroplanes which had left Cairo for Baghdad that same morning. To make a long story short, under the guidance of Air Commander (now Air Commodore) R. Brooke-Popham, R.A.F., the wounded shaikh was transported on a Vickers-Vimy machine to Baghdad, where he was soon restored to health and rejoined his tribe.

The sequel to this incident occurred about a week later, when owing to an accident to an aeroplane in the desert several other machines had to be sent from Baghdad to assist. Towards sunset, as the air party were settling down to spend the night in the desert, five Arabs mounted on camels rode up, and after some futile attempts to explain

their intentions, took up an outpost line round the aeroplanes, where they remained till dawn, when they rode silently away. It was subsequently ascertained that this party belonged to the wounded shaikh's tribe, and that they had come to show their gratitude for what had been done for their leader by ensuring that no attempts were made during the night to molest the airmen.

But the good effect of the action taken by the Royal Air Force was not confined solely to the pleasing gratitude shown by this small party of tribesmen, for I have been assured by several officers of that force that whenever it has happened that an aeroplane flying between Baghdad and Cairo has been obliged to land in the desert, the Arabs everywhere have displayed marked friendliness to the occupants. And what is still more satisfactory, the land route between those two places, which at one time was far from safe, can now be traversed with little fear of molestation.

The second instance only came to my notice as I was about to leave Mesopotamia on the termination of my appointment there. Having a few spare days at my disposal while waiting for my successor to arrive, I visited the oil-fields of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at Maidan-i-Naftun, where, and at other places in the company's hands, I received the utmost kindness and attention from my hosts. One of the points which interested me particularly were the admirable arrangements for dealing with sick employees, over which Dr M. Y. Young, the chief medical officer, presides. During the past year some 20,000 cases were treated either in the hospitals, in quarters, or in field dispensaries. But the work did not end here, for I was informed to my astonishment that besides sick employees, over 60,000 cases had passed through the hands of the medical officers, making in all a grand total of 80,382. The result of the far-sighted and generous action of the company in providing free medical assistance to all and sundry—and many cases, both men and women, travelled hundreds of miles over difficult country to the hospitals—is that the Bakhtiari area, which was at one time notoriously unruly, has now

subsidied into quiescence, a condition which must be highly satisfactory to the shareholders in the admirably administered and ever-growing oil-fields of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

Before leaving the subject of the benefits that accrue to a community through medical science, and perhaps more noticeably if it be still in the semi-civilised stage, I must refer to yet another case which has come under my observation.

When attached to the Japanese Army in Manchuria in 1904-5 during the war with Russia, I could not help noting how markedly friendly the Chinese peasant was to the British military attachés, and on making inquiries was informed by Dr Christie, the head of the Scottish Medical Mission at Mukden, that the attitude in question was mainly due to the appreciation which the Chinese felt for the labours of the Mission on their behalf. The fact, too, that unlike similar eleemosynary enterprises from other nations, those from the United Kingdom were known and recognised to be devoid of political significance, tended not a little to foster the confidence of the Chinese.

What is done in Manchuria, a country in the increase of whose population, I imagine, we have no overpowering interest, could be repeated on a larger scale in Mesopotamia; but the missionary element, if there were any idea of proselytising the inhabitants, would have to be eliminated. Perhaps some day those at home who take a keen interest in child welfare may turn their attention and devote their money to that problem in Iraq. The tribesmen see but little return for the large sums which they contribute annually to the revenue; and if medical facilities and increased irrigation could be provided—the two great factors which together would solve the problem of restoring the pristine agricultural greatness of Iraq—there would inevitably follow an era of prosperity and in its train civilisation, and possibly a reign of peace.

I have talked to King Faisal and others on these subjects; and on the question of disarmament it seems as reasonable to hope to dam Niagara—an operation doubt-

less more possible than when that well-worn synonym first was used—as to attempt wholly to disarm the tribes. This can only be effected by measures such as I have suggested, which would divert the mind of the Arab into unwelcome channels. His mental outlook must submit to change, gradual no doubt at first, a matter which is feasible through his fondness for money and all it brings, so that he may in course of time learn to acquire by legitimate methods and not by loot and murder, those things which at the present time he covets. In other words, he must be taught to forget

“... the simple plan,

That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.”

There are those alive who knew Japan when the swabbing Samurai terrorised the towns and villages; and how different is that country now! She does not, of course, offer a true parallel to Mesopotamia, where amongst other difficulties the problem, owing to nomad tribes, is greatly complicated, but serves as an example of how a change in thought may, in a few decades, effect what force without annihilation could never do. All countries in their evolution have gone through the stage at which the brand-new kingdom of King Faisal finds itself, a kingdom which has often in the past been the scene of bitter strife; and it seems plain that if that evolution is to be hastened, all measures which may tend to kill the idea of the armed retainer, and may lead to his early disappearance in favour of a regularly constituted force for the maintenance of law and order and the safety of the borders, must be introduced. The Arabs may aspire some day, as others have before them, to become a nation in arms, but an armed horde of tribesmen is another matter, and such must disappear.

Whether that consummation will be attained, or whether forces from beyond the borders may renew the strife of old, I cannot pretend to prophesy. It must, however, be remembered that we are now garrisoning Mesopotamia, which

M. W. J.
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has certain local forces little past the state of embryo, with about one-fourth of those that held the country eighteen months ago, but which have been replaced by the Royal Air Force, and that, as I have stated, the inhabitants are better armed than ever.

Those inhabitants, though they are not formidable except in overwhelming superiority, are distinguished by their treachery; and "that which is crooked cannot be made straight." Their cruel methods of dealing with their prisoners are notorious, and recall the most horrible of those described in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs.' Yet so little are these facts known or recognised by some at home, that I recently read a statement by a distinguished officer, who was referring to the Arab of Mesopotamia, that "Arabs are very highly civilised and fight as gentlemen always." The Arabs of Iraq respect nothing but force, and to force only will they bend; and little as I know of them, I am certain of that characteristic. It is strange, however, among such a people, who seem to follow the Old Testament precept of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," and more if possible, that their power of feeling, or it may be showing, resentment is small or wears off quickly. Although in the summer of 1920 no European could travel in most areas without taking his life in his hands, some months later the inhabitants of those same areas, which meantime had been repeatedly visited by troops and swept from end to end, would receive the British soldier with outward tokens of respect and manifestations of goodwill. Since then, when moving about the country, I have met no trace of such ill-feeling as one might expect to find as the result of the damage, material and other, which was inflicted on them. They seem indeed to accept the situation, admit that they were beaten, bow to superior force, and bury the hatchet till a good chance comes of paying off the score.

In my numerous journeys—and I have visited nearly every corner of Iraq—I have met and harangued hundreds of shaikhs, including those who stood by us during the insurrection, and others, a far greater number, who took

up arms against us at that time. I can count among those with whom I have conversed, through the medium of my excellent intelligence officer and interpreter, Major Bovill, every shaiikh whose name appears in this narrative of the disturbances. I have enjoyed their princely hospitality, and on one occasion spent an afternoon snipe-shooting with Shaiikh Shalan Abu, whose arrest on the 30th June 1920 was the ostensible beginning of the insurrection. Amongst others I have met Yusuf al Suwaidi, a handsome courtly old gentleman, and rallied him on his modesty in repelling my advances to make his acquaintance (*i.e.*, arrest him) in August 1920, and his passion for foreign travel! With all his faults, I confess to a strong liking for the Arab, and I regret that on my arrival in Mesopotamia I was too much occupied with military matters, and too ill-informed regarding the political problem to go among the people with advantage. Whether I might have been able to effect anything towards staving off the trouble which soon followed I hesitate to say; but the Arab, with all his innate respect for force, seems to me to be highly susceptible to tactful and sympathetic handling. A Middle Eastern shaiikh, when speaking to me of his fellow-countrymen, said with conviction, "The Arab is a slave, and requires a hard master; give him the stick first, then the sugar." The method he advocated is probably correct, and the employment of any other would be accepted as weakness.

But to pass on to a characteristic which has particularly struck me, one which is not attributable to self-interest but comes under the head of magnanimity. It is noteworthy how on some occasions certain Arab shaiikhs at risk to themselves would intervene to save the lives of British officers, while in other cases the quality of mercy was not strained on their behalf. I have given examples of this in an appendix; and I may mention, principally for the information of those who benefited by their captors' magnanimity or whatever it may be called, that every one who during the insurrection did us a service or showed concern for the welfare of prisoners or intervened to save