

5708

2

Chaplin 3 Fred

Now I want to put this question to you: Are you not ^{rather} ~~at all~~ surprised that such a suggestion should be made after our experience. I take it that ^{the} ~~a~~ commander-in-chief in India ~~can~~ send ^{that} ~~of~~ telegrams ^{ahead and}

a

He is looking a good deal ahead. He is probably looking to the time when the railways will be completed and when the lines transport will be in a satisfactory condition.

He was probably also in view the fact that we had a considerable force in Mesopotamia, some 120 000 men and that a dually opposite to us at Kut there were not more than 20 000 Turks ~~and not the~~ which from a military point of view ^{can} hardly be described as a satisfactory situation.

I have no doubt the Commander-in-chief in India wished to have the state of ^{affairs fully} ~~considered~~ but I take it that he did not ^{recommend} ~~recognize~~ in fact I am certain he did not, in the telegrams of the 2nd & 3rd August anything like an ^{immediate} ~~front~~ advance

5709

General Sir Neville Lytton: ^{it begins} ~~that depends~~ "The continued withdrawal of ^{Baratoff widens} ~~the gap~~ ^{between our forces and his} ~~and so on.~~ It looks as if he wanted something done very soon

in order to relieve the pressure on the Russians. Look at the first paragraph. Yes. What he means about that I think is that the fact that the Turks have driven back Baratoff gives them as he says elbow room. They are no longer in fear for their communications between Kut and Baghdad from the Russians. They have ^{been} driven back ^{by} the Turks ~~and~~ therefore they can possibly ^{during} ~~through~~ the colder weather

weather ^{collect} ~~at~~ _____ Forces
 against us and he is contemplating the possibility
 of a Turkish offensive in strength on the Tigris
 I think and is considering the best way of
 dealing with that situation. I read the whole telegram
 as I was looking — a long way ahead ~~at~~

5710 Chairman ~~I say~~ If you notice, in the second sentence
 he says "The risks are very heavy but if
 the Russians are likely to be immobilized by the
 snows, and we do not forestall a Turkish ^{concentration}
 by an advance, it merely means the unopposed
 advance of superior strength against our forces
 on the Tigris". Therefore, I do not think it
 was very remote. It looks as if it was
 an action which he thought must occur before

5711 ^{a. the snows} ^{see} Lord Hugh Cecil. When would the Russians be immobilized
 by the snows

Q From October onwards they are beginning to
 get into difficulty but they are ^{never} immobilized by the
^{by the snow.} ~~snow~~. They took the Erzeroum ⁱⁿ the middle
 of the winter ~~and~~ the worst of the snow
 period last year in February, so it is not possible
 to say that they are ever immobilized by the
 snow, but certainly from October onwards the
 difficulties of the operations in Northern Armenia
 began to begin.

5712 Chairman: What impresses me is that you have
 this suggestion made from India, and then on
 that there is on page 79 at the bottom
 of paragraph 4 the deliberate opinion of Sir
 William Robertson which is expressed within a
 short time: "at the same time I
 desire

to make ^{quite} it clear that owing to the effect of the climate on the health of the troops, to very defective communications, and to ^{various} other causes, the force is not at present in a good condition, and could not undertake offensive operations except to a very limited extent".

19

Quite so. That is the view we have always had on the general staff as regards the force and that is what makes me think that the Commander in Chief in India was referring to a winter campaign possibly

5713

2nd Now, taking this statement of the Commander in Chief in India in connection with previous suggestions that he has made do you not think that the outbreaks at Suva under-estimated the difficulties of the advance on Baghdad?

a I am afraid that I have very little basis on which to express an opinion on that question. The only communications I see from the Commander in Chief are practically these telegrams. I think you have them all here. We get them from time to time from the Commander in Chief in India. As a matter of fact the ultimate decision in a matter of this kind is made not by the Commander in Chief in India but by the War Committee on the advice of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

5714

2 But this is I understand from the Commander in Chief
Yes quite so but when the actual action is taken on that would be ^{this} if the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was convinced by
He

The Commander-in-Chief in India that ~~he~~ ~~agrees~~ the course was right, he would advise the War Committee and take their decision on the matter. ~~But~~ the Commander-in-Chief in India has no authority to ^{order an} advance to Baghdad or to make any other change in the policy as laid down by the War Committee General Sir Neville Lytton. This is an appreciation of the Commander in Chief in India.

5115

a It is an appreciation of the Commander in Chief in India. It is merely sent for our information. We regarded it wholly as that, and not as a proposal for action at all.

5116

Commander Although you were not in ^{office} ~~action~~ at the time of the advance to on Baghdad, ~~it is~~ it is perfectly clear it is not that real expedition ~~for which~~ failed for two reasons - ~~so~~ first on account of defective transport and secondly on account of the increased numbers and superior fighting power of the Turks who were brought up to oppose it.

5117 2

a Yes. ~~Lord High Seal~~ It looks to me and ~~to me~~ to me that all I think that in India they did not fully ^{appreciate} ~~understand~~ ^{appreciated} ~~the~~ and have not even now got ~~the~~ ^{appreciated} the nature of the difficulties that had to be overcome in an advance on Baghdad. How do you differ from that?

a I certainly agree that both the fighting power of the enemy, his numbers, and the difficulties of communications were not fully ^{considered} ~~thoroughly~~ before the advance to Baghdad was ordered and they were not fully understood in

in India; I think there is no question about that. I have looked back at the reports that came in from time to time ^{before the advance began} they were ^{before the advance} unduly optimistic I think ~~before the advance~~

20

5118

2 And I think they did not make allowance for the superior modern equipment of the troops that were moved up

A I think that is so and in the first case they met ill armed Turks who were practically little more than local levies of men and they gained easy successes over them ^{but} ~~and~~ when they began to meet good Turkish Divisions ^{whose} the difference in ^{their} fighting power was of course very striking

5119

2 One more general question: ~~How~~ Surveying the operations which took place previously to the advance on Baghdad and the attempt to relieve Kut, the courage and behaviour of our troops seems on the whole to have been ^{very} good

A During the whole of the operations up to Kut?

5120

2 Yes
A Most certainly, & admirable in every way

5121

2 And under most trying conditions.
A Under the worst possible conditions conceivable there was every form of discomfort you can think of. Practically a great part of the time under General Sarrail's ^{fighting} they had not a dry patch of ground to lie down on

5122

2 ~~It is~~ ^{So that whatever} ~~the~~ ^{there was} ~~the~~ ^{of your} failure there was ^{practically} no failure on the part of the ^{mass of the} ~~lowest~~ rank and file apart from officers

5123

2 Are you pretty well satisfied as to the

was mooted Sir William Robertson wished to be sure that the Division could be ^{used} ~~required~~ if it was sent - The time for the relief of Kut was getting short and we sent a telegram with the idea of getting definite information to know whether that Division could be used and we took this to mean if it could be used. As a matter of fact Sir Percy Lake did not mean that. He meant that you could ^{land} ~~put~~ it in the country and could feed it.

21

5130

Q It is the wording of your telegram then that is ambiguous

A Yes: "Receive and maintain this force on arrival"

5131

Chairman And consequently the 13th Division were not sent up at the scene of action in time

5132

Q It says on page 13 that the War Committee are dissatisfied with General Aylmer's conduct and they suggested that he should be replaced either by General Maude or Gornidge. ^{and he was} ~~what do you say~~ on that suggestion he recalled and General Gornidge took his place. Did the War Committee know that General Gornidge was General Aylmer's chief of staff

5133

A That I am afraid I cannot say
Q Because it was recalling the general on the ^{ground} ~~account~~ that his tactics were not right I think and placing a man next ^{to} him in responsibility for those tactics. ~~is not that it is~~

A My recollection of the matter is that General Gornidge was at that time commanding a Division under General Aylmer. ^{I do not think} ~~of~~

By he was his chief of staff

5134 Chairman He told us so

5135 Lord Hugh Cecil At one point he was chief of staff. Can you tell me at what point I brought into that matter and find out but I do not know

5136 Chairman: I assume that there was some doubt as to whether General Aylmer had been persevering enough and it was therefore more or less ^{tactical} on political grounds perhaps that he was removed

5137 Lord Hugh Cecil: What were the grounds of General Aylmer's recall?

A The grounds of his recall to the best of my recollection were that he was a man of a certain age and the War Committee considered that the operations required a young and energetic Commander, ~~and~~ ^{that} the conduct of ~~the~~ ^{the} operations as this telegram shows had not been fortunate ~~and that the~~ ^{the} fact that a commander had failed would probably have a depressing effect on his troops and as the time for retraining was short it was advisable to remove any effect of that kind as quickly as possible and to put someone else in. There was no time to investigate the details of General Aylmer's action at all

5138 Lord Hugh Cecil It was not on the ground of any specific strategical or tactical blunder or ^{blunders}

A No certainly not ^{a statement}

5139 Chairman We have had ~~it~~ in evidence or a paper has been put in to the effect that there was a serious tactical blunder. Have you looked into ^{the} that point at all as to

Greening from Bell 5145

A Yes, we were aware of that certainly
Q You have not ~~ever heard that you can get it~~ ^{had time to go into it}

A I have not ~~heard that we can get it~~ ^{had time to go into it}; we have made no investigations into the matter

5146

Lord Hugh Cecil In short, you could not give evidence as to the responsibility of any particular General or commander

A No

5147

Chairman The statement made to us was that the second line, I think it was, ^{which} was composed of new troops ~~who~~ got scared by the tremendous use of flares, which lit up the whole place. The flares seem to have startled them, and there was ~~very~~ ^{artillery} fire, and they fell back and threw ~~us~~ into disorder the third line that was coming on

A I have heard of that incident

5148

General Sir Neville Lyttelton Have you seen General Maude's letter describing it

A Yes

5149

2 ~~Commanders Wedgwood~~: we have of course only heard one side; we have not heard General Kimball's justification

A All right so

5150

Chairman Both he and General Aylmer are coming ~~home~~ to give evidence. Now on page 21 at the bottom of the page there is in small type a statement from General Lake which resulted in General Davison being superseded. Have you heard any complaints of General Davison's work as Inspector General of Communications

A ~~Yes~~ I ~~had~~ ^{we} had ~~no~~ ^{the general control of the communications} reason to believe that the work ~~on the communications~~ was not as satisfactory as it should have been

5151

Q Is General Davison an oldish man

A Yes; he is a man of a certain age, certainly

Q ~~He is~~ ^{supposed}

23
~~Q Certain~~

Q I suppose that this "D" Expedition being the best, the younger and more active men had already been appropriated to the other Expeditions

A Yes, I should say that to a certain extent that is so — to a considerable extent that is so, in fact

5753

Q In page 46 you see there is a telegram sent by a member of Parliament who was serving. ^{to a Cabinet Minister} He was allowed to do this though perhaps it was rather a dereliction of duty or discipline, under the exceptional circumstances and the Indian Government repudiate the allegations made ~~and at the time~~ ^{and} at the bottom of paragraph ⁷ they say "throughout the war our difficulties with regard to Mesopotamia have never been financial, and have been solely due to the fact that owing to the demands on the resources of the Empire our wants could not be met at all, or at the best, after long delay". This is a general question: do you think that the Indian Government have made full use of the resources of ^{India} ~~the country~~ by mobilizing them as has been done in this country.

Rice from Snell

A My impression is certainly not. The particular matter that has been brought most to my notice ~~in the main~~ has been the railways. I think that the general tendency of India has been a little ^{but perhaps} to look after Indian interests — I will not say ~~perhaps~~ first, and those of the Empire second, but at any rate to place the interests of India very high

5754

Q ^{tendency} It seems to have been ^{to attempt} to carry on the war ~~most~~ with as little damage as possible to India

A That is my impression
Q We might now perhaps take the question of railways which is dealt with on page 74,
~~the~~ ^{is it} General Stuart-Wortley under whom the construction of railways chiefly is?

A Since the War Office took over ~~the~~ administrative ~~and~~ control, General Stuart-Wortley has been responsible. ~~I think~~ He could give you better evidence than I am able to give ~~and~~ ^{as to the} ~~would~~ present the ~~present~~ situation and what is being done. I can only say that ~~the~~ efficiency of the communications ^{vitaly affects operations,} and ~~the~~ moment the War Office took over ^{control} ~~we had~~ ^{at once} set ^{to} work to see how the communications could be improved and we ^{lighted on this} ~~abundantly~~ that question of ~~with~~ railways

5156 Q The Indian Government as you know, have the advantage of a singularly efficient Public Works Department, ^{with} and a great railway specially ^{maint} established, under their control

A ^{up}
5157 Q Can you see any indications that they ^{utilise} ~~utilise~~ that ^{at all} ~~at all~~ before the War Office took over

A None as far as I am aware. In fact we have the definite statement from Sir Percy Lake that the Indian Government had ^{refused} ~~refused~~ to consider the question of the ^{construction} ~~construction~~ of a railway

5158 Q Has it been called to your attention that owing to some bridging taking place in Eastern Bengal a large railway metre system will disappear and be replaced by broad gauge

24

5159

A Yes. I have heard of that

Q Consequently there is ready ^{to hand} almost at once ~~to hand~~ an immense supply of metre gauge equipment

A Yes; it was that information that caused us to send our original telegram of enquiry. We heard that there was a large quantity of ^{wanted to know whether} material available and we ~~sent an order that~~ use ~~could not~~ be made of it.

5160

Archibald Williamson

The first telegram is the ^{14th} April and that is about German rails. That is at page 74

A You will find the actual telegram given in the Appendix ^{on the 14th April to Sir Percy Lake asking whether} A telegram ^{was sent} ~~material from India for~~ light rails

A That is the point - material from India for light rails. We had the two things in our minds and we ^{received the information} ~~had the statement~~ to which the Chairman referred and that made us pick up our ears and send that telegram.

5162

Chairman - Would you be disposed to make the same general observation about non-utilization of resources as regards the river transport and the improvement of the harbour ~~at~~ Basra.

A Not during the period with which I have been directly concerned, I have reason to believe, ~~that~~ You can obtain much better evidence than mine; ~~that~~ it was perhaps the case in the earlier days but as for as anything I have been able to find out

48

during

the German rails which were believed to be at Basra for the Railway or material from India be used for improvement of the Baghadad construction of the Baghadad for light lines could not communications

76
C
Pitt

during the period with which the War Office have been concerned ~~that~~ ^{with} the operations I think India has made every possible effort as regards river transport and that every possible source has been tapped.

162

Q Since the beginning of the year

A Since the beginning of February. ~~Commander~~

163

Commander Wedgwood The works have not been commandeered or put under any sort of control

A works in India?

164

Q Yes

A No

165

Lord Hugh Cecil. Does the observation extend to ^{the} some of the improvement of the ~~works~~ ^{port} at Bessa and the improvement of the Channel up the river

A I am trying to think of the date when Sir George Buchanan went out. It must have been I think fairly early in the ^{year} ~~year~~

2 Sir George Buchanan's paper begins with some rather angry observations which seem to suggest that he was not satisfied

a. Certainly, he was not, but my recollection is that he was then referring to what I may call the 1915 period.

A Egerton

2. No; I think that it is the early spring of 1916

Q I thought it was 1915

167

2 ~~It is~~ In a report dated 17 April he says quite "I left Bombay on the 27th April. ^{at Bombay} He arrived on the 22nd of January (Chamman) It was ^{coincident} ~~coincident~~?"

169

a ^{yes} with the end of the year

A It was ^{coincident} ~~coincident~~ with the end of the year. From that

Time onwards as far as I know India did everything they could

25
5770

(Lord Hugh Cecil) he says somewhere that he was a mere cypher and so on & so on and that he would not stay longer because he was of no use

Q How does he?

5771

A Chairman & In the arrangement you are making I suppose you are utilizing Civilian experts as far as you can of the standing of Sir George Buchanan

Q Yes, I know it is the case but that, General Stuart Wortley will speak about much better than I can (Lord Hugh Cecil)

5772

Lord Hugh Cecil: A page 6 of Sir George Buchanan's memorandum, 17 April 1916 he says: "writing ~~him~~ personally, I have formed the opinion that my services have not been utilized to nearly the extent contemplated by the Government of India and sufficient importance has not been attached to the specific work I was called upon to perform. Moreover, I have been obstructed, and I know that to be the opinion of Sir Percy Lake who said so in the course of an interview I had with him shortly before I left Barrack"

Q I understood the question, ^{that I was asked} was whether the Government of India had been doing everything they could ~~and~~ My impression is ^{that at any rate} from the beginning of this year they have been doing everything that is possible

5773

Q It was local obstruction

a. Yes local obstruction

Chairman General Gormage was superseded

Do you know anything about the ^{reason} ~~superseding~~

a. Yes I know the reason of it. He was subordinate

~~Q~~ ~~the~~ Yes ~~was~~

Q. Was ^{his} conduct of affairs supposed to be satisfactory

a. For the relief of Kent?

Q. Yes

I think he made the very best of an almost impossible task

Q. Do you think that he was to blame in the disputes that he had with Sir Percy Lake?

a. Yes. I mean that no subordinate ought to have addressed his superior in the way ⁱⁿ which he addressed Sir Percy Lake and I think ^{that} Sir Percy Lake had no other course than ^{that} which he adopted when he received the particular communication now referred to

Q. Did the matter on which they differed relate to supplies or was it a question of disciplinary arrangements?

a. I think that ^{the} point, as far as my recollection goes, was that General Gormage resented certain criticisms of Sir Percy Lake which as ^{the} Commander of the spot ^{or} Lake was perfectly justified in making, and General Gormage did not resent them in a military manner.

I will put it in that way in your recollection

5780 Lord High Cecil might I ask whether ^{apart}

from the manner which may have been
blameworthy, there was anything in the
- substance
circumstances with regard to ~~the substance~~
of which General Goring was to blame

a I should say, no

5181 & Chairman It was what was called
incompatibility of temperament
a That is so

Regina

26

5182

Chapter 3 Snell

2 Then, General ~~Max~~ Maurice, I think I ^{may} will
 sum up ~~and~~ ^{the policy} ~~well say~~ as regards the
~~affairs~~ ^{affairs} in Mesopotamia as contained in the ^{words}
 on page 62 about six lines down ^{in the}
 telegram you see. At present there can
 be no question of an advance to Baghdad
 however desirable this might be for the reasons
 you give. All efforts should be concentrated
 on completing the force as regards drafts,
 equipment and communications as soon as the
 cessation of the monsoon admits, and as the
 weather gets cooler special attention should be
 paid to giving the troops ample training.
 That seems to be the policy which you are
 pursuing now

5183

a That is the policy which we are pursuing now
 Admiral Sir Cyfruan Bridge In the final Memorandum attached
 to ~~that~~ ^{your} statement it is said ^{that in} general the
 operations were allowed to develop without proper
 regard to ~~the~~ vital questions of supply and
 maintenance. In the conditions existing in
 Mesopotamia ~~where~~ ^{Supply and} maintenance ~~depend~~
 on sufficient and proper organization of river
 transport

It is certainly I am quite certain that Sir
 William Robertson in writing that had almost
 entirely in view the deficiency of river
 transport

5184

Drawman I will put it in this way that
 maintenance as land transport at times was
 almost impossible, this force was periodically
 absolutely dependent on river transport

It is entirely

5185

Admiral Sir Cyfruan Bridge I suppose we may
 take

take it that ^{the} insufficiency of river transport was ~~approved~~ by the frequency with which the officer in command in Mesopotamia applied for its increase

And also there were many other ~~considerations~~ ^{proofs} We were unable to get up all the supplies required by the force ^{and} all the ammunition that was required, and ^{then there is the question of the} the arrangements for the evacuation of the sick and wounded. In fact I may say that we were constantly in receipt of the clearest evidence that river transport was deficient

5786

I Now ~~was~~ ^{although} the control of ~~the~~ operations in Mesopotamia ~~at any rate~~ ^{was not} vested in the War office. Until February 1916, ~~to had~~ would it not be right to assume that the Imperial General Staff watched the proceedings in that theatre of war

I I was not in the War office at that time. I ~~should not~~ ^{am} giving rather hearsay evidence but I should say it was undoubtedly the case that they did

5187

Chairman If a Commanding Officer was ~~asked~~ ^{directed} to submit a plan for an advance on Baghdad ~~that~~ ^{the} plan ~~that~~ should include the transport necessary for the operations

I Yes certainly but I think perhaps it ~~was not~~ ^{would be} a little unfair to throw the whole onus on the Commander on the spot. The business of a general staff is to prepare plans of operations and to consider all these questions beforehand

5188

admiral Sir Cyprian Budge Then if there was want of foresight, whoever was responsible for it

in not demanding ~~the~~ additional river transport
 until at the earliest the 20th June, if not
 the 7th July, would that lack of foresight
 have been made up by frequent repetitions
 of the demand after it had been sent in
 I am afraid that in military operations
 you can never quite make up for lack of
 foresight, because if you make a mistake the
 enemy takes advantage of your mistakes
 and if there is lack of foresight, you
 are always made to pay for it in war
 General Sir Neville Lytton You used the
 expression ^{just now} that General Goring had an almost
 impossible task set him, and ^{that applies} ~~to~~ also
 almost to the same ^{degree} ~~task~~ as General Aylmer's
 task does it not.

27

5189

Not to the same degree because it was a
 question then of raising ramp with the
~~messy~~ floods. My own personal
 opinion of the matter I am not speaking
 as ~~of the~~ ^{of the} general staff opinion at all in that
 the operations of March the 8th decided
 the fate of Kut and afterwards the floods
 made the relief almost an impossibility.
 It was a question of advancing ~~through~~
 through a series of ^{defiles} ~~obstacles~~ caused by the water
 and the very moderate part of the troops
 would have been able to stop ^{an} ~~the~~ advance
 in such circumstances

5190

General Aylmer's was a very difficult task too
 certainly; I think the whole operations
 were of great difficulty, but I think that
 of the two, General Goring's was distinctly
 the more difficult

5191

I General Aylmer really pushed forward because he thought, and everybody thought there, that Kut could not hold out beyond the middle of January

5192

+ Yes ^{although}
I That he was not really in a fit state to advance

+ Yes ^{I adhere to} in the opinion I gave before ~~was~~ that if we had all been in full possession of the state to which Kut could have held out, the plans for the relief would have been entirely different from what they were. I adhere to that ~~opinion~~

5193

I General Suvorov's opinion to state accurately what his supply position was was very ^{inaccurate}

a That is my opinion certainly

5194

I I may take it that the ~~statement~~ ^{of} General staff were fully aware ~~that~~ ^{of} the very great difficulties that awaited ~~both~~ these forces, but they ^{in view of} ~~decided~~ ^{realized} the very great importance of relieving Kut and in the ^{belief} ~~faith~~ that there was a fair chance of carrying out the relief to ~~lead~~

~~you~~ ^{you allowed} ~~to~~ ^{the} expedition to go forward

+ That is so. In the paper ~~you~~ ^{you} prepared ~~the~~ ^{that the General Staff} ~~the~~ ^{the} General staff you will see, certainly ^{on January 31st} considered that the chances were not brilliant at ~~that~~ ^{that} date, but as ^{long} as there was any hope there was no question that something had to be done

5195

I You knew that ~~the~~ ^{weather} difficulties of transport and ~~the~~ ^{other} difficulties were in the way

+ Yes

5196

I With ~~our~~ regard to our present position you told the ~~Chairman~~ ^{Chairman} just now that

that you were satisfied that it was reasonably safe

Q Yes militarily

5197

A Yes. It was put to General Goring, or he put it to us, that the Turks might ~~maintain~~ encounter the force now near Kut with a superior force and turn his flanks

Q I think that is a possibility, certainly, which has to be provided for, but I think it has ^{been} provided for

5198

A It is not lost sight of

5199

Q You have no special tactical commands ^{make with regard to tactics} comments to pass on the conduct of the operations of General Aylmer or General Goring

A No, I do not think so

5200

Q You have not had time to go into it
A No, I could not be expected to express a ^{reasoned} ~~recept~~ opinion on it at all. One has one's own impressions of course but they would not be the result of careful investigation

5201

Q What is the nominal force in Mesopotamia now?
A The nominal strength?

5202

Q Yes; ^{how many} two divisions

5203

Q ~~only 5?~~ ⁷⁵ If they were full up that would be a total of how many

A We calculate that about the middle of this month when all the ^{drafts} ~~participations~~ are got in, we shall have over 120,000 men in Mesopotamia

5204

Q Five divisions only?

A Besides that there is a considerable force

of cavalry; there are detached brigades and
headquarters the Tigris Corps as shown on page
80 we have 9000 infantry, 200 ^{sabres} ~~sabres~~
on the Euphrates line and 6000 infantry
and 900 sabres on lines of communication.
There is practically a cavalry Division as
well now

5205

2 Fine Infantry Division
A Yes, and two detached brigades and a
Cavalry Division and the lines of communication
~~but~~ when they are up to strength the whole
force will be about 120 000 men roughly

5206

2 ~~up by the~~ the middle or end of October that
is hoped for.

A Yes

5207

For Archibald Williamson: How does that reconcile
with the statement ~~that~~ "by the middle or end
of October we hope to have about 56 800"
A You mean the statement on page 80?

5208

2 Yes
A Well that means this - that you have to
turn the ~~guns~~ ^{men} into ~~equipment~~ ^{the} ~~staff~~ ^{men}
and then ^{are all} the administrative staff.
I include in the 120 000 the personnel
in the country ^{56 800} there are the fighting
troops

5209

2 There are ^{the} people on the steamers
A Yes, and ^{doctors} ~~doctors~~, and the administrative
staff not included ~~in these figures~~

5210

Commander Wedgwood that does not include
labour does it

5211

⊙ No it does not include labour
General Sir Neville Lytton India was very seriously
depleted indeed by the previous demands
on

29

on her ~~own~~ resources ^{for} forces A, B, and C

5212

A Yes

2 And therefore there is some excuse for ~~saying you~~ ^{shortcomings when} they were called upon to find D

A A very ~~good~~ ^{great} excuse indeed. India suffered very very great disadvantages in that way & ^{she} was drained of officers and a great deal of material

5213

2 The supposition is that the best men had already been withdrawn for service with the previous forces

A I think that is so

5214

2 India previously protested very strongly at ~~at one time~~ ^{at one time}

A Was it the view that of the general staff ^{of that} the East African Expedition was of equal value with the Mesopotamia Expedition

5215

A At what period, because that ~~truly~~ ^{truly} affects it

2 At an early stage - in Lord Crewe's time

A I cannot answer that question without going into it. It was not in my own time and I should have to look up the question

5216

2 On the face of it ^{the Mesopotamia Expedition} ~~seemed~~ ^{seemed} ~~entirely~~ ^{to be a good deal more important than the operations in} East Africa?

A I agree that before I came into the War Office that is before the inception of General Smuts' present campaign - the policy in East Africa was purely defensive

Chapter

5217

Lord Hugh Cecil When did you first come into the War Office

5218

A In December 1915

2 You then first came into your present position

5219

A Yes
Sir Archibald Wilson We have had complaints from generals directly and indirectly that their ^{orders} ~~orders~~ were influenced by want of knowledge of the Government's intentions. Is it the usual custom for the staff to inform generals of what the limits of the expedition are and what the aims are

(30)

5221?

A I want your opinion
 My own opinion is ^{certainly} ~~definitely~~ that there was a distinct lack of clear policy throughout the ^{whole of} earlier stages of the operations

5222

Chairman I should be right in saying that the two horses were pulling different ways

and that the Indian Government were very reluctant to supply the forces which the Imperial Government thought necessary for ~~such~~ advances.

A — There again I am only speaking ^{purely} ~~partly~~ from memory but my recollection agrees ~~with you~~ certainly

5223

Sir Archibald Williamson with regard to the financial policy of the Indian Government, have you come across any indications that the tradition in India ~~has~~ to how far expenditure is looked upon has hampered ~~the~~ ^{engaged in} their operations in their demands for necessary things. Perhaps I am putting it so that you do not ⁱⁿ understand me

A — I think ^{that} I follow you

5224

Q — On page 29 of your Statement there is evidence that the supply of shells was very small. General Gortuge reported that he was compelled to curtail expenditure on 60 pounder gun

ammunition, and supplies were running low. * "at this juncture this is particularly undesirable. In my No. 17/1509 of 17th March

Jack

I asked India for 4000 rounds in addition to the emporment of the same number referred to ~~my~~ ^{on} and so ~~and so~~. The Chief of the General Staff, India replied ~~that~~ ~~in his No 4482 of 22 March~~, that as the equipment has not yet been in action the immediate supply of 4000 rounds was

unnecessary and so forth

5225

Ans. Yes

Q Did that indicate to you that at any rate in the minds of the Generals on the spot there was an idea that India was reluctant to give all that was wanted

a — I think that as regards this particular question here, that would be hardly a fair criticism. I think that it was due to a misunderstanding in India as to what we ~~ones~~ do at home in the way of supplying ammunition. The whole story of these 60 pounders was that General Townshend was equipped with ~~something~~ ^{certain} very antiquated guns heavy guns from India and when he was falling back from Mesiphon, certain telegrams came to our ^{office} in the war, although at that time we were

not responsible for the operations, in which he pointed out how ineffective these particular guns were, and asking ^{ed} whether he could not get some new ones and we volunteered to supply modern 60 pounders to replace these old guns. At a matter of fact they were never used for the purpose because General Townshend was besieged. Then when ~~we~~ ^{we} offered the guns, India asked us for a certain number of rounds of ammunition - 6000 rounds - to go out with the guns. That is at the bottom of page 29 - "The Secretary of State for India ~~recently~~ ^{originally} asked the War Office to arrange for 6000 rounds to accompany the batteries" (At that particular time early in February there was a shortage of 60 pounder ammunition for every theatre of war and we could not afford to send off 6000 ^{rounds} guns ^{in one} ~~shipment~~ ^{with} to Mesopotamia. ^{as it} would mean keeping France too low so we said we would send 4000. ^{Apparently} at the ~~same time~~ India understood that to mean that we considered that 4000 ^{rounds} ~~guns~~ ^{was} enough for the number of guns in Mesopotamia but we meant nothing of the kind. What we meant was that it was all we could afford at that date - the 3rd February. ^{When} ~~one~~ ^{one} ~~statement~~ ^{a demand} was sent in from General Goring to India they appear to have ^{considered} ~~lacked~~ ^{lacked} ~~upon~~ that they ought not to divert ammunition from the principal theatre of war

31 /
5226
for war - France - and without referring
to us again they ~~refuse~~ refused the
demand for ammunition. It is a
thorough misunderstanding due to
there being too many people concerned.

Q. There was ~~no~~ administrative control
of the General Staff India, should have sent
a telegram to say that as the ~~equipment~~
had not yet been in action it was
unnecessary.

Q. Yes. He ~~was~~ ought as the agent
he had not the ^{ammunition} ~~ammunition~~ ~~to~~ ~~give~~ to
have asked us to ^{himself} have given him more

5227
Q. That was not a good reason

Q. It was not a good reason

5228
Q. And not the real reason.

Q. And not the real reason.

5229
Q. Still on the point of whether the idea
that expense is a very important
matter in the mind of the Government of
India ~~as to whether~~ ^{and} that affected the
operations, Again on page 68 we find
that General Lake telegraphing to the
Chief of the Imperial General Staff
speaks in the last paragraph on the page
^{about} the question of a line from Kurnool
to Anara as being a much ~~larger~~
and more expensive proposition and
then lower down he says "Railway
communication along this route by metre
gauge, while more important from a
military point of view than the Nasiriyeh
line, would take a long time to construct
(65) and

and would be expensive". The word 'expense' seems to run throughout the story as one of the factors ^{of} that influenced those in the field and they ^{were} ~~don't~~ not ^{as} ~~instant~~ as they should have ^{been} ~~done~~ in demanding what was necessary. So you gather that that is so ?

A - yes, I think that that is a fair criticism from what I know

5230

Q - Then we are told in your paper that the river transport available would carry 330 tons a day - that is for delivery at the front. Now can you give us any idea of what transport will be required ~~to~~ per day for ^{the} much larger force which will shortly be there which I think you estimate at 120000.

A - I think you would get much better information on this question from General Stuart Wortley who I understand is to give evidence. He has the whole thing under his hands and I ^{can} ~~am~~ only speaking from memory

5231

Q - ^{We should} ~~would~~ you not like to have an estimate when the time comes

A - I will ~~now~~ mention that to him

5232

Q - Then at page 80 you refer in a paper written by Sir ^{William} Henry Robertson in which the statement referred to by Sir Cyprian Bridge is made that the operations were allowed to develop without proper regard to ~~the~~ vital questions of supply and maintenance. Now I do

not want to ask you as to the fact which I suppose we may accept & but I want to know also responsible for allowing a thing to develop without proper regard to vital questions

A ^{Primarily} the War Management Government - The War Committee is the Supreme authority for the conduct of the war

32

5233

Q - The statement is made in 1915

A I am afraid that I do not know exactly what form the Cabinet Committee took in those days. It has went through many changes but I think there was always a Cabinet Committee

5234

Sir Archibald Williamson - Is it not the case that during the whole of 1915, these operations were under the Government of India

A - Yes, they would be under the Government of India but to a very limited extent. I think that the supreme authority ^{regards} as for the war is as far as I know throughout the war has been the Government at home

5235

Lord Hugh Cecil. But would it not be the case that it would ~~not~~ be the duty of ^{the} General ~~of the~~ Staff either in India or in London to advise the Cabinet or Committee or the Cabinet as a whole on all such questions as transport and supply

5236

A Perfectly Sir Archibald Williamson. The ^{sentence begins} answer depends upon "As regards the question of communications." It is not therefore

a
question of the policy of having a war at all; it is confined to communications and this is in reference to ^{communications} ~~communications~~ that the words are used - "In ^{general} the operations were allowed to develop without proper regard to ^{vital} the whole questions of supply and maintenance"

a Yes
5237 q-

Quite so
I ~~don't~~ ^{want to} know whether in such circumstances it would be the Commander in Chief in India or the Commander in the field who would be responsible

a — well as far as I understand ~~the operations~~ up to the time the war office took over, they ^{operations} were conducted more or less in this way: The general officer commanding force D received his orders from the Commander in Chief in India; he in turn received his instructions from the Viceroy in Council who was instructed by the Secretary of State for India who was the responsible ^{Admiral} either of the Cabinet or whatever Committee of the Cabinet was

dealing with the operations. ^{That is how I} ~~as I~~ understand them ^{it} and I think that

5238 - General Sir Neville Lyttelton that accounts for it
The witness ~~that~~ I think that that as ~~General~~ Sir Neville Lyttelton says, is

is sufficient to account for how the operations were allowed to drift

5239 Sir ~~Francis~~ ^{Willy} ~~Willy~~ ^{Willy} But does there not come a point at which ~~where~~ the Commander in Chief in India or the General Commanding in the field ^{ought} to put down his foot and say

say " I will do what I am told but I will not be responsible for attempting to make ~~my~~ bricks without straws and sacrificing my troops " Does not

that point come out in certain circumstances
A ^{in certain circumstances} Yes, but I certainly think that the prime responsibility must be put with those who start an expedition without fully investigating the ways ⁱⁿ which they ^{it} may develop. The object of having a general staff is that all these things may be dealt with

5240
Admiral
h

Mr. Cyprian Bridge. Would not they have to get a good deal of information from the ~~the~~ Officer in Command on the spot who knows the conditions of the country in which the campaign is ^{you are being} conducted ~~is~~ which the Campaign is normally all that a you see normally all ^{that} information would be collected before an expedition started for

R. E. Stone

50

33

Chapter 3 Small

5241

Mr Archibald Williamson The general staff in India are supposed to have certain information ^{Persean} with regard to the conditions in the factories ^{and} of ~~the~~ ^{the} relief ~~at~~ ^{up} the river

5242

2 And it would be their duty ~~then~~ ^{then} to bring to the notice of the Indian Government the conditions ~~that were~~ to be expected there

5243

2 And it would be their duty to estimate the quantity of Manpower and medical supplies in view not only of casualties but of the climate

5244

2 If ~~the~~ ^{requirements and conditions} ~~things~~ were not brought properly to the notice, ~~of~~ and emphatically to the notice of the Indian Government, it would be a failure of duty on the part of the military and medical men ~~under~~ the existing system. I think myself that it is much more a failure due to the very difficult system of waging war which existed, but undoubtedly the head quarters staff in India would be responsible for ~~incumbency~~ ^{incumbency} collecting ~~that~~ ^{all} information as regards possible theatres of war in which these troops might be employed. As to whether the ~~Head Quarters Staff~~ ^{Head Quarters Staff} in India ever ~~received~~ ^{had} any inkling that they would be likely to be engaged in Persia, I am afraid I do not know. They may even have received definite instructions that they were to prepare for ~~nothing~~ ^{nothing} of the kind

5245

2 You are speaking of peace time

5246

2 I am speaking of ~~these~~ ^{peace time} preparations for war

Lord Hugh Cecil The secretary has drawn my attention

to the fact that in
 attention to this. In Sir Beauchamp Duff's
 memorandum which you have probably seen
 relating to the Vincent Dingley report, he says
 this, which relates to what Sir Archibald
 is asking you about: "It should be noted that
 so far as pre war considerations of what might
 be necessary in any theatre of operations
 north of Burma was concerned this area
 was reserved for the general staff at the
 War office and India was not allowed to
 collect intelligence or formulate plans thereon
 I received no plans of ~~operations~~ ^{operations} from the
 General Staff War office". The suggestion
 is that so far as north of Burma goes it
 was an Imperial matter and not an India
 matter. Is that news to you

Yes that is news to me

5247 Sir Archibald Williamson If that minute is correct
 it would be the case would it not, that
 we went into this expedition with no
 information on the part of the general staff
 here and having none in India

That would be the natural deduction

5248 Commander Wedgwood Needs it not have been
 the duty of the general staff ⁱⁿ India to ^{of Reg} find
 had not the information there to find out ^{of that}
 out from the general staff at home, ^{of that}
 had not got the information ~~there~~ there

Yes

5249 Sir ~~Gen~~ Archibald Williamson: It follows from that that
 the advice that should have been ^{tendered by} given ^{by}
 and should have been ~~tendered~~ ^{tendered} by the Military
 authorities to the Viceroy could not be given
 because the military authorities had not ^{the} given
 the information.

There is no question about it that it is
 the

74

the duty of the general staff to investigate every possible theatre of war and to have plans prepared for operations in those theatres of war and if that is not done there is neglect of duty on someone's part

5250

Q If Sir Beauchamp Duff had not the information as he says then he could not have rendered it

5251

Q ^{a no.} ~~The~~ Chairman assuming that a Commander in Chief had not the information would he be justified in requiring a continuous advance without the information

A No

5252

Q That is the point

A It is the first business of a Commander in Chief to see that he is provided with adequate information

5253

Q Did the Home Government send any information ~~at that time~~ ^{or plans to} India.

A I was out in France at the time, ~~at~~ all these questions are ^{directed} ~~related~~ to a period with which I have very little connection I could investigate the matter if you wish, but I would rather not answer the question from memory

5254

Q Yes if you will, because I think it is rather important that you should investigate that in view of the statement that has been made

A Very well

5255

Q Sir Archibald Wilhamson who is responsible for the failure ~~it~~ to give the proper regard referred to by Sir William Robertson

A Well I will answer that by an analogy

55

does it not on the success or failure of the initial operation
Yes

5259

Q And therefore if you ~~met~~ ^{meet} with a disaster or if you ~~should have~~ ^{meet with} an unexpected success the original plan of campaign is either extended or contracted compulsorily

5260

Yes
Q It is not ^{merely} a question of who gives advice, but ~~the~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~circumstances~~ may come into operation which have to guide your future proceedings

Not entirely. If you ~~was~~ ^{gained} a very early success ~~say~~ at Basra for example, it would not necessarily follow that the man on the spot had ^{at once} ~~the~~ ~~power~~ to follow up that success and proceed to Baghdad, if he had not the means of maintaining himself in Baghdad when he got there

5261

Q But assuming that he ^{gains} a success and that success expands and opens out ~~your~~ ^{the} original plan of operation, those operations ought not to be ~~extended~~ ^{extended} until some competent authority has gone into it and seen what are the probabilities.

Yes

5262

Q There was a great and continuous success on the Tigris and then the campaign became like ^{a telescope} ~~the~~ ~~projected~~ opening out and there does not seem to ~~be~~ ~~any~~ ~~investigation~~ ~~as~~ ~~to~~ ~~it~~ ~~being~~ ~~have~~ ~~been~~ ~~sufficient~~ ~~investigation~~ ~~as~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~necessary~~ ~~transport~~

A I make so. I put it in this way - that the machinery for advising the highest ultimate authority was at this period

- 5263 period - inadequate
- 2 Talking the circumstances which are very peculiar and complicated which connect the British and Indian Governments together, for proposals for our advance coming from a General in command ~~in the~~ ~~command~~ ought to have been investigated by the Indian general staff
- 5264 a yes 2 They would be primarily responsible.
- 5265 a yes 2 And if the Commander in Chief forwarded those proposals to the ~~war~~ ^{Home} government with his approval, although the staff here might have to supervise, ~~the~~ ^{there} the primary responsibility from a military point of view would be on the Commander in Chief in India
- 5266 a yes 2 He Archibald Wetherburn That is what I want to bring out - ~~that~~ ^{whether} it is the Commander - in chief in India who is responsible for the want of proper military advice. He has a general staff
- 1 He has a general staff. I still maintain my point and that is that the defect is ~~that the defect is~~ in not having the adequate machinery to advise the actual authority which decides ~~whether~~ ^{namely} in the Cabinet or some Committee of the Cabinet
- 5267 2 Are we not dealing with two different things there is the question of deciding on ~~the~~ advances and on the policy of going to war at all, but this is a question of operations which developed. It is not a question of

policy
 of failure to be decided by the politicians
 yes, but ~~with regard to whether~~ ^{with regard to whether} I consider
 that the Commander in Chief in India was entirely
 responsible, I am not at all sure how
 far it would get ~~to~~ he was in the
 confidence of the Majesty's Government as to
 what they intended - what their policy was

59

5268

The Commander may I ~~complete~~ ^{put} it in this way:
 Do you think there was any evidence ~~in~~ ^{when} the
 Government ~~before~~ ^{ordered} this expedition to Burma
 that they foresaw the dimensions to which it
 would almost necessarily attain ~~from~~ ^{or} the
 opposition that it would encounter ^{and} necessarily
~~in the country~~ ^{encounter} from Turkish forces

56

5269

a No I think that that was not foreseen
 Sir Archibald Williamson I shall confine myself to
 the statement of Sir William Robertson which is
 that the operations were allowed in 1915
 to develop without proper regard to vital questions
 of supply and maintenance and I still ~~ask~~ ^{ask}
 who is responsible? You ~~told~~ ^{tell} us that you
 think that it is the politicians ~~they~~ ^{for} deciding
 on a certain policy

5270

No pardon me
 I gather that it was ~~the~~ ^{the} October date did the Cabinet
~~was to~~ ^{whom} ~~come~~ ^{came} to certain decisions
 a The Cabinet ~~was~~ ^{received} certain military ~~advice~~ ^{advice}
 There is some ~~responsible~~ ^{responsible} authority who is
 authorized to advise the Cabinet as to
 military operations. At the present time
 that is the Chief of the Imperial General
 Staff. If there was a failure in
 1916 the responsibility would be his and
 nobody else's. Therefore it seems to
 me

me that in 1915 the responsibility rests on the man in a corresponding position in India as regards the operations in Mesopotamia to Sir William Robertson.

5271 Q Would that be in India or in London
 A That is not for me ^{on this question} I am speaking of a matter of which I do not know ~~or~~
~~have~~ ~~any~~ ~~question~~

5272 Lord Hugh Cecil You have not seen all the telegrams
 A No

5273 Sir Archibald Williamson With regard to the question of railway construction, your statement tells us on page 77 that on the 16th February the War Office took over control of the military operations
 A Yes

5274 Q And furthermore that they ~~had not~~ ^{at once} recognized that the conduct of the campaign and other things depended on the power to improve the communications
 A Yes

5275 Q And then on the 21st April after some stirring up from ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~and~~ ^{and} the Indian Government agreed to the Mesopotamian line
 A Yes

37
5276

R. E. Gordon

Q But at that date they ^{still} did not appreciate the need of the Kurna Amara line

A We had certain difficulty in getting ^{them} to agree to the Kurna Amara line

Q About that date they still talked of deepening the channel

A Yes. ~~in the 19th May~~

Q On the 19th May India at last agreed to the Kurna Amara line and on page 66 of your statement there is a despatch from the Commander in Chief in which he tells us that he has 45 miles of light railway of 2 feet 6 inch gauge of which he is making use. Now if that 45 miles of light railway had been lying there since the beginning of the campaign in August 1914, were not the Generals neglecting their duty in not making proper use of it? Was it in other words essential to ~~make necessary~~ ^{obtain} authority from India to use these light railways

A Without knowing the exact instructions which were sent to the ~~General~~ ^{Commander} of forces ⁱⁿ by the ~~Commander~~ ^{Commander} in Chief in India, I could not express an opinion, I am afraid, but my own view that certainly would be that if the Commander on the spot saw the necessity for a Railway and there was material there, he would start constructing it and get authority afterwards

5277

5278

afterwards

Q - It was within his power to make use of those rails

A - Yes

5280

Q - I gather that the German rails were not there in very great quantity -

A - They seem to have been entirely used for bridging and other ^{purposes} of that sort

A We found on investigation that there were not many - We had an idea that there were more German rails than there were

5281

Q Is it not rather serious to find now that there were 45 miles of light railway lying ~~unused~~ ^{unused} until the date in 1916. Does it not surprise

A You not certainly it does but I believe there are very considerable difficulties in construction on the Kurna Amara line, owing to floods but it is quite possible that prior to the 16th April construction was not possible. The flood season is beginning to be over in April

5282

Q - The application ^{for permission} to construct a railway to Hasiriyah applied to a ^{broad} particular gauge ~~to~~ a permanent line and it was refused on the ground of expense. There again you will get set

A Better information from General Sir Stuart Wortley probably. on this question than from me

Q. I will defer that. At page 66 General Lake gives us his view about one railway - ^{along} ~~where~~ this road route by metre gauge while more important from a military point of view than the Nasiriyah line, would take a long time to construct and would be expensive. As regards carrying capacity on this route any lighter railway would compare unfavorably with river transport but would be worth making in view of the possibility of traffic ^{being} ~~being~~ ^{and so on} ~~being~~ ^{interrupted} ~~interrupted~~ in this narrow and difficult section. Do you not think that with regard to this mode of transport ^{of both} rail ^{and} water the authorities should have called in some civilian experts to help them

A Yes I think that that is certainly so as regards the river transport. It is a very technical matter and there are a very limited number of people who have experience with regard to it and ^{I think that} ~~who~~ ^{whose} ~~advice~~ ^{advice} ought to have been called in from one of the big businesses which was accustomed to deal with river ^{transport} ~~traffic~~

Q. And also ^{on} ~~on~~ the subject of ^{is} ~~is~~ a comparison between railway and river transport which it requires an expert to judge which is capable of doing most work in certain circumstances ^{road} ~~road~~ if not

A Yes
Q Do you know anything of the reasons

reasons

"Why the war office refused to allow the
erection of a ~~road~~^{red} ~~the~~ 1000 hospital
steamer at Abadan

A. No. That again I fancy you
will get from General Stuart
Wortley

adjourned for a short time.

- Adjourned for a short time -

Horace William Hill
Shorthand Writer

Editor
Wh whom follows.