

Garden & King

Confidential

Mesopotamia Commission

Tuesday, 12th September 1916
Fifth Day

Members Present

- The Rt Hon Lord George Francis Hamilton G.C.S.I. (in the Chair)
- The Rt Hon the Earl of Donoughmore K.P.
- General the Rt Hon Sir Neville Gerald Lyttelton G.C.B., G.C.V.O.,
- Admiral Sir Cyprian Arthur George Bridge G.C.B.
- Lord Hugh Cecil M.P.
- Sir Archibald Williamson Bart. M.P.
- ~~Mr John Hodge, M.P.~~
- Commander Josiah G. Wedgwood, M.P.
- Mr R. G. Duff, Secretary

The Reverend Ronald John Percusford Iroin, M.C., M.A., sworn
and examined

2404 Chairman: Will you state your position

A. In Mesopotamia, Chaplain to the Seventh Meerut Division, and I am Chaplain on the Bengal Ecclesiastical Establishment.

2405 Q. You hold that post now

A. Yes

2406 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: That comes first; Chaplain on the Bengal Ecclesiastical Establishment and in Mesopotamia Chaplain to the Seventh Meerut Division

A. Yes

2407 Chairman: You have put in a printed Statement with annexes which we will accept as your evidence in chief

A. If you please

Insert here
printed statement
sent herewith.

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MESOPOTAMIAN COMMISSION.

STATEMENT BY REV. R. J. IRWIN.

PART I.—Treatment of wounded.

PART II.—Organisation and conduct of campaign.

PART III.—Statements of wounded officers.

MESOPOTAMIAN COMMISSION.

PART I.

1. My name is Ronald John Beresford Irwin, and I am a Chaplain on the Bengal Ecclesiastical Establishment. I have been Chaplain to the 7th (Meerut) Division since August 14th, 1914. After having been on service in France for over a year, I travelled with the Divisional Headquarters Staff from Marseilles to Basra, leaving the former place on December 7th, 1915, and arriving at Basra on January 1st, 1916. In addition to the Divisional Headquarters Staff there were on board H.M.T. "Ivernia" the Secunderabad General Hospital, at least 200 Kohars of one of the Divisional Field Ambulances, with a medical officer of R.A.M.C. and one of I.M.S.

2. At Suez the 2nd Rajput Regiment embarked. There were other details on board. On arrival at Basra it was very evident that the organisation was not what we had been accustomed to in France. There was not sufficient transport for all to go up the river at once, though the authorities must have known when we were going to arrive, as we transhipped at Koweit on December 29th.

On afternoon of January 1st I left Basra on a small river steamer, with only part of Divisional Headquarters Staff (the A.D.M.S. and D.A.D.M.S. of the division were left behind), the 19th and 21st Brigade Staffs.

We reached Amara on January 3rd. I visited a hospital in which were British soldiers, and saw a medical officer, who complained of shortage of doctors at Amara. I told him that we had brought a fully equipped general hospital, and at least 12 doctors. He replied, "I hope some will be sent here, as if there are heavy casualties in the coming fighting it will be impossible to deal with them adequately, and we do not want the wounded to suffer again as they did after Ctesiphon."

I was told there was no Chaplain of any denomination here, and know for certain there was no Church of England Chaplain.

3. From Amara to Ali-Gharbi we had in tow two luggers with stores, which considerably decreased our speed, though Brigadier-General Norie, who was in temporary command of the division from the time we left France, had received orders at Basra to get to Corps Headquarters as quickly as possible.

We arrived at Ali-Gharbi on January 5th. The Corps Headquarters were here. One Brigade (28) had already left, also the 1st Seaforth Highlanders, which regiment belonged to 19th Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General Harvey. Brigadier-General Norie was ordered to take command of a force on the left bank, and Brigadier-General Harvey commanded a force consisting of 1st/5th Hampshire Regiment, 107th Pioneers, and a Composite Regiment, on right bank. He had met none of these regiments before.

This was the beginning of the confusion, which was caused by regiments on reaching the front not being allowed to join their own brigades, and fighting alongside those whom they knew. On January 7th I arrived at Mandaliyeh Reach.

TREATMENT OF THE WOUNDED.

4. In trying to give some idea of what the wounded suffered in Mesopotamia from January 7th to April 17th, I only wish to relate what I actually saw, and I propose to deal with the subject under the following heads:—

- (1) Treatment of wounded at Mandaliyeh Reach (left bank).
- (2) Treatment of wounded at Hibsh (right bank).
- (3) Treatment of wounded after the Wadi and Hannah battles.
- (4) Treatment of wounded on and from s.s. "Julnar" (January 7th to 27th).
- (5) Treatment of wounded from February to April 17th.
- (6) Treatment of wounded at Bombay.
- (7) General notes concerning medical arrangements.

5. (1) *Treatment of wounded at Mandaliyeh Reach.*—The wounded on the left bank during battle of January 6th to 8th were brought to this place. When I arrived at what was supposed to be a hospital on the 7th everything was in great confusion, and the wounded were coming in great numbers. At 2.30 p.m. I saw Lieut.-Colonel McWhiney, Acting A.D.M.S. He stated that he had only been asked to provide for about 450 casualties, and there were now over 2,000. The wounded (British and Indian) in many cases were arriving without any field dressings, and there were, as far as I know, not more than six medical officers (exclusive of two Colonel doctors, who were not actually dressing any wounded, and Regimental Medical Officers, who were with their regiments in the firing line for the most part) attending to the wounded here up till the 9th.

Those who were lucky enough to have had their wounds dressed could not have their first field dressings changed as there was a great insufficiency of medical dressings.

There were only very few tents.

The "hospital" seemed to have little or no comforts, and there were no arrangements for feeding the wounded.

All through the afternoon and night wounded were coming in, and British and Indian troops lay huddled together in the open.

No separate place was marked off for officers, e.g., two officers of 2nd Black Watch, both badly hit, and lying out in the open, were taken by me after 11 p.m. to sleep on s.s. "Malamir," as they had no blankets, and could receive no medical attention, nor get any food.

Men died and remained lying amongst the living until removed by anyone the chaplains could get to help them.

The cries of the wounded were at times heartrending, and I heard one medical officer apologising to the wounded that he was unable to attend to their wounds, as he had no more dressings. He attributed the shortage to the niggardliness of the Government of India.

It was a very cold night, and the men, being able to get no hot drinks, felt it very much. Every man could have done with at least two blankets, but in most cases the wounded were lying on the bare ground, and sharing one blanket, and many had not even got that.

6. There seemed to be a shortage of stretchers, and as the badly wounded came in on A.T. carts they complained much of the pain which they had suffered through the carts having no springs, or palliasses for them to lie on. On more than one cart a dead man was found when they were unloaded.

This primitive form of medical transport was looked upon with disgust by the British and Indian troops who had just arrived from France.

At an early hour on the morning of January 8th, I found that the wounded, who had been lying out all night without any protection from the cold, were suffering intense pain. I realised that if anything was to be done to alleviate the suffering it was necessary to resort to private enterprise, as the totally inadequate medical staff could not deal with it.

After a consultation with the C.O. 1st Seaforth Highlanders, who was slightly wounded, we decided it would be best to pitch a camp for officers and men of the 2nd Black Watch and 1st Seaforth Highlanders about 40 yards from where a few tents had been pitched by the medical authorities, and where the few medical officers were working.

7. After getting permission to form this camp from the A.D.M.S., I went with Captain Anderson, 1st Seaforth Highlanders (also wounded), and we commandeered tents off a boat lying close by. The Assistant Provost-Marshal gave us Turkish prisoners, and we managed to get a number of tents erected, palliasses filled and placed on the ground, and the officers and men of the above-mentioned regiments were moved there.

8. As the medical authorities could supply no food the Quartermasters of the regiments provided what they could. I know, in the case of one officer who afterwards died, all he got was tea brought by an Orderly of his own regimental mess, from the 2nd Line Transport some distance away.

The British officers of Indian regiments complained that they could get no food, and Orderlies were sent to their own regimental transport to get them what they could.

9. Close to the camp for the British wounded a mortuary tent was pitched, as up to then no provision for removing the dead or burial of the same had been made. The medical officers said they had no personnel for attending to same.

I feel I ought to put on record that at about 12 noon two officers of 2nd Black Watch were bleeding a great deal from their wounds, and had up to then received no medical attention since they had been dressed by their own regimental medical officer on the previous day. I saw a major of the I.M.S., beautifully dressed, walking about. I fetched him in to see them in their tent, and he looked at them and said he would come back to dress them. He never did. I eventually got another medical officer to come.

A medical officer of R.A.M.C. came round British camp for Highland Regiments with me, and I pointed out to him what I considered the more serious cases, and he marked them down for removal down stream.

10. All that afternoon work was being carried on amongst the wounded, and a good many British and Indian troops were got away to the so-called hospital ship. After 11 p.m. I saw over fifty sitting cases placed on the P.I., which was very crowded. It was late at night that I found still more dead lying amongst the living. What actual treatment they had received before their deaths I cannot tell.

On Sunday, January 9th, the congestion in the camp was not so bad, but the wounded were still receiving little medical attention owing to shortage of all necessaries. On this morning rain came down, and the ground was soon very muddy. I received orders to join s.s. "Julnar" at 2 p.m., so I cannot say from personal observation how the wounded fared after that.

Orders were issued before I left for part of the medical staff and equipment to advance, so I fear the remaining wounded, of whom there were at least 1,000 Native cases and 500 British, suffered still more. The latrine arrangements were nil, and I saw only one sweeper.

In statement E. 6 will be found an account by an eyewitness of the filth of the camp, and the extreme measures which men wanting to relieve nature had to resort to.

12. (2) *Treatment of wounded at Hibsh (right bank).*—I went from the left bank to the right on January 7th about 6 p.m., in order to bury British officers and men of General Kemball's Column who

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had fallen. I saw Lieut.-Colonel Wood, A.D.M.S., right bank, who was very tired with all the work he had done during the day. He told me that he had been ordered to prepare for 100 sick, and he had now over 500 wounded.

I visited the wounded. There were a fair number of tents, and most of the British wounded were under cover. There was a great shortage of blankets, and as the hospital was very near to the river, the men naturally felt the cold. Dressings, iodine, &c., were very short, and Colonel Wood asked me, as soon as I returned to the left bank, to report to Lieut.-Colonel Irvine, D.M.S., Tigris Corps, that he must have more, as he had not sufficient to dress the wounded who were already there.

13. The medical officers here were working very hard, and were doing all they could with the few supplies which they had to make the men more comfortable. I left the hospital on this bank shortly after 8 p.m.

On the evening of the 8th I visited this hospital again, as there was no chaplain in this bank. Many of the wounded had been moved on to boats, and those who were left were much more satisfied. Of course, those wounded on the 6th had, for the most part, been unable to get their first field dressings changed owing to the shortage of dressings, &c. Thanks to the prompt and effective work of Regimental Sergeant-Major Cox, 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, the arrangements for the burial of the British dead on this bank were good.

Statement C. deals more fully with the sufferings of the wounded on this bank, and what they endured after they were placed on a P. boat until they reached Amarah.

14. (3) *Treatment of wounded at Wadi and Hannah Battles.*—On or about January 12th, Colonel Westropp White, the A.D.M.S. of 7th Meerut Division, arrived at the front and relieved Lieut.-Colonel McWhiney.

At the battle of the Wadi the wounded had to be brought a considerable distance on A.T. carts, and at first there were no tents on the river bank, and the intense cold, rain, and a biting wind made their lot desperate, as they had practically nothing except what they stood up in to cover them.

Boats had been delayed getting from Sheikh Saad to the Wadi owing to gale during night of 14th-15th. As they came up with Administrative Staff—officers, clerks, &c.—stores, including palliasses and eiderdowns, some of them were cleared, and the wounded put on them. There never seemed to be any reliability of a certain boat being used only for the evacuation of wounded, and so it was impossible for the men to be made very comfortable.

15. On one boat, where I was assisting to place the wounded on 15th, there were practically no stretchers for the bad cases to lie on, and the men had to lie on the decks, which were far from clean. There were no Orderlies on board, and the sitting cases had to attend to the lying.

It was noticeable how, until the time when the boat was due to start down stream, the regimental medical officers attended to their serious cases—simply because they knew they would otherwise get no attention. Many of the more serious cases required very careful attention, and yet there were no trained Orderlies, no proper cooking arrangements, and the slightly wounded were doing their utmost to boil water, &c., so that those suffering from the cold could get a hot drink.

16. After the battle of the Wadi, a large camp was formed, but owing, I suppose, to the shortage of medical personnel there were no proper sanitary arrangements, and any piece of ground was used for latrines, irrespective of whether it was close to a hospital unit or not.

While the 9th Brigade was moving up to the Wadi, I noticed there was no field ambulance with it.

Between the 15th and 21st more medical officers, personnel, and equipment arrived, and separate hospitals for British and Indian troops were marked out.

Heavy rain on the 16th made the camp very bad, and many sick cases had only the ground to lie on.

17. As collecting stations were established only about one mile from the front from which the attack against Hannah position on 21st was launched, it was hoped that the sufferings of the wounded would be considerably less. Unfortunately the casualties were large and rain began to fall at 11.30 a.m., the result being the Nullahs overflowed, the tents for dressing the wounded in fell down, the country became a quagmire, and the sufferings were worse than in the two previous battles.

The more slightly wounded struggled to the collecting stations, and if they were lucky, after standing for some time in the open, with rain coming down in torrents, they got their wounds dressed, and then they were told to walk back to Orah Camp, 2½ miles away from where the casualty clearing (if it could so be termed) was.

Many, of course, never reached their destination and were found after dark lying in mud and water. An able-bodied man had the greatest difficulty in walking through this quagmire.

18. In the evening a P. boat was brought up to a point on the river bank near to collecting station and the stretcher cases were carried to it.

This work was going on till the early hours of the morning of the 22nd. Many on the previous afternoon and evening were placed on A.T. carts, and in several cases mules, owing to their being used for transport and carrying wounded, were so dead beat that they refused to pull. The dravies took them out and the cart was left with its load of suffering humanity, waterlogged. I myself at 2 a.m. on the morning of the 22nd found a wounded officer with a broken leg lying on an A.T. cart which was up to its axles in mud, and he had been deserted by the dravi several hours before.

Rain had been falling for over 12 hours and the officer was suffering intensely from the cold, apart from his wounds. I found several wounded men who had fallen down from fatigue groaning on the bank.

Much of this suffering might have been avoided if the medical authorities had seen that the A.T. carts conveying the wounded had gone back as a convoy and not indiscriminately.

The wounded men who tried to walk the distance should have been sent in parties, as when darkness came on and no lights to guide them it was hard to follow the track. In all I have said I have only referred to what befell the wounded after they reached the collecting stations.

As was the case on former occasions, there were no hot drinks, shortage of food, medical stores, &c.

It is impossible to say how many of the wounded died from the effects of exposure and lack of prompt medical attention.

Statement D(2) deals with what the wounded had to suffer on one of the boats which went down stream.

19. (4) *Treatment of Wounded on Steamship "Julnar" from January 6th to 27th.*—Throughout this period it will be well to remember that the steamship "Julnar" was called a hospital ship. There was attached to her on port side when I first saw her an ammunition barge and on starboard side a supply one, over which the wounded had to be taken.

On the afternoon of January 7th I went on board and was horrified to find the congestion on the deck. There was a chaplain on board, so I did not stay very long, but as most of the officers and men belonged to the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, who were well known to me, I heard many complaints of their lack of treatment. Suffice it to say—

(a) That in a very congested part of the ship I found two wounded officers in a Sikh regiment trying to lay out Captain Proudfoot, 53rd Sikhs, F.F., who had passed away. There was no orderly to help.

(b) Further on I found the body of Private Chambers, 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, and had him removed for burial.

On the 9th I received orders to embark on steamship "Julnar" and replace Rev. Tibbs, who was to return to Amara.

At 4 p.m. the steamship "Julnar," which since the 7th had been moored alongside the left bank at Mandaliyeh Reach, was ordered up the river to Sheikh Saad. I presume that when the wounded were placed on this boat it was intended that they should go down stream to have their wounds dressed and have proper attention, but, as events turned out, three days after they were, after receiving no medical treatment and no food (certainly none suitable for wounded men), actually being taken up stream.

20. There had been heavy rain which poured through canvas awning overhead, and the decks were flooded. Bales of hay which had been placed on the upper deck to try and keep the rain off the stretcher cases proved of little use. Officers, British and Indian troops were all suffering alike, and they could get little sleep, as most of those on board were lying on the decks with nothing but very wet palliasses beneath them.

21. On the 10th it was fine, and the sun helped to dry the blankets, &c. The Medical Staff consisted of a major I.M.S. and an Indian of same service, assistant surgeons; two British orderlies, so I gathered from them, had been wounded at Ctesiphon and were on their way to rejoin their regiments, so had attached themselves to the ship in the meantime; two British cooks, who certainly knew little about cooking, and did little for the wounded except boil the water for tea: one sweeper.

On this morning the cabins and decks were overcrowded. With my two orderlies I managed to get the less serious cases to sit up and to clean where they had been lying, and the captain of the ship gave the services of a man to do sweeper work. As they themselves said, no one had done anything for them since the 7th, and it is impossible to describe the filth where they had been eating and sleeping for the past three days. The British and Indian troops had been lying close together. The sitting cases had done their best about bringing a bed-bottle and bed-pan to the very seriously wounded, but in many cases men had been forced to relieve themselves where they lay.

22. My attention was specially called to two cases of intense suffering:—

(1) A private of 2nd Leicestershire Regiment said he was suffering great pain from his right arm, in which he was wounded on the 6th. Nothing had been done to it since he had had the first field dressing put on. When the dressing was undone the wound was found to be very gangrenous.

(2) A quartermaster-sergeant of same regiment, who is by no means inclined to complain, and was badly wounded, told me that he had received no attention since the 6th.

As far as I could see, even if there were a shortage of dressings, &c., more might have been done by the medical personnel on the boat for the wounded. On this morning orders were received that the wounded would be disembarked in the afternoon. As we moored alongside the right bank a little above Sheikh Saad village about 2 p.m., it was expected that we should find a hospital camp ready pitched.

The following are the facts:—

The fatigue party for pitching camp arrived after we had moored. The wounded were ordered to be taken off as quickly as possible as the boat was required to take an Indian regiment to the other bank. The wounded were put on the river bank and remained lying and sitting there for over two hours. When the camp was ready those who could hobbled across there: others were carried by volunteers from the regiments on this bank.

23. At the camp there were no sanitary arrangements and practically no food. No medical officer remained for the night in the camp.

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As the wounded were receiving so little attention I spoke to the Commanding Officer 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, who came himself and ordered the regimental medical officer and stretcher bearers to do what they could. Dressings were changed. They were assisted by medical officers of two Indian regiments and assistant surgeons attached to batteries of Royal Field Artillery. The Quartermaster of the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment provided hot drinks and some food for the British troops. There was a great shortage of blankets and the night was cold.

One private of 2nd Black Watch, who in the morning on the steamship "Julnar" had spoken to me of his lack of treatment, was in great pain. I fetched a medical officer, who attended to him. After he left the soldier asked me to pray with him again, adding, "There is no hope of my living after the way I have been neglected." He died in the night.

24. The sufferings of the officers and men were by no means at an end. On the 11th orders were received that this hospital camp was to be moved behind the village of Shaikh Saad. I was not actually there when this move was carried out, but the wounded had to walk the distance carrying whatever kit they had, and the stretcher cases were put to much suffering, and several complaints were made to me by British officers who were close by at the way the wounded were moved. I visited this newly formed camp on night of 11th and found that—

- (1) The British officers were in tents by themselves. ?
- (2) The British and Indian troops were separated.
- (3) There was a shortage of blankets.
- (4) The men had no palliasses to lie on and the officers had in most cases only their valises. One officer wounded on 7th and hit in the back was suffering greatly from having nothing soft to lie on.
- (5) The sanitary arrangements were nil. I handed in to the Vincent Commission a statement made Lieutenant Swindells, 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, on this matter.
- (6) I saw the medical officer who had just arrived and had been put in charge. He was naturally quite unable to deal with the great number of sick and wounded, as more than came off "Julnar" had arrived from the hospital camp further down stream.
- (7) The medical officer in referring to the wounded from the steamship "Julnar," said that the medical officer had not handed them over, and had gone off. Many cases required very careful attention and seemed to have received none. He wished he could tell him all he thought of him, as his conduct was scandalous.
- (8) There were very few orderlies.
- (9) There was very little food and no comforts.

On 12th I was at this hospital again. The medical officer was doing all he could to improve matters. Slightly wounded soldiers of 2nd Black Watch returned to their regiment, as they could get no food, and no treatment since receiving their wounds on 7th. I did not see this camp again.

On the steamship "Julnar" from this date until 27th the sick and wounded officers who were on board could get little medical treatment, and none could get any food except what was got from their own regimental messes, and for cooking had to rely entirely on their own orderlies. There was no system of drawing and issuing of rations. The men fared worse.

25. On morning of 22nd, about 2.30, I went on board the steamship "Julnar" and found things in a worse state than usual. The decks were streaming with water, and even the saloon was in a flooded state. Officers, including one Brigadier-General, were lying on the floor, but some were on stretchers.

There was no medical officer on duty. One officer suffering from pneumonia was calling for an orderly, and had been doing so for some time, but could receive no attention. I woke up an Indian medical officer, who came and attended to him. This was not the only case. In the cabins officers were lying on the floors as well as in the berths, and in one two-berth cabin five officers were sleeping. On the decks there was no comfort of any sort for the troops. ?

26. More wounded came on during the early hours of the morning. Their clothes were all saturated as they had been lying out for some time, and there were no dry clothes to give them after the wet ones had been removed. Their teeth were chattering from the cold, and for some time it was impossible to get hot drinks or dry blankets. I attended to three wounded officers, all of whom were very wet, and suffered greatly through being unable to have any medical attention, procure dry clothes, or get a hot drink. There were a few rations of hard biscuit and bully beef issued for breakfast. There was little condensed milk for the tea when the latter was forthcoming. No attempt was made to try and clean the decks of the ship, and the latrines were in an awful state.

27. The officials of a post-office section were mixed with the wounded; and the guards of regimental baggage slept close to where the food was cooked.

After the wounded were removed from this ship, sick officers and men were sent by the regimental medical officers to it for treatment. Some had to hobble in three miles from the front line.

On 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th of January I saw the sick who had been sent to this ship, and on every day the complaints were numerous. I know the sick who were turned off the ship without receiving any medical attention or food.

I found men suffering from dysentery sitting in the mud on the river bank. The nights were very cold, and we had much rain at this time.

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On January 25th my attention was specially called to the bad state of affairs. N.C.O.'s and men who could hardly crawl along had been ordered by the medical officer to return to their regiments as he would not attend to them. It must be remembered that nearly all these men had been sent for medical treatment by their regimental medical officers as they were unfit for duty, and I am not speaking of any who might be called shirkers. To give one instance:—

A private of 2nd Leicestershire Regiment who was suffering much pain as his ankle was greatly swollen, told me he had been ordered to rejoin his regiment three miles off. I said that if he was ordered to do so again he was to send for me. About an hour after, a Staff-sergeant on the supply barge attached to the ship came to tell me that the soldier had been ordered off the ship and was lying on his barge suffering great pain and unable to move. I fetched the medical officer in charge of the ship. He said to the private, "Why have you not gone back? What is the matter? Take off your boot and sock." With much difficulty the private did so. The doctor felt it, in what I should call a very callous way, and said, "Get up; there is nothing the matter." On my remonstrating, as it was clear to anyone with a pair of eyes that something was wrong with it, as it was so swollen, the doctor again felt it (this time with more care) and said, "Yes; he must be kept here and is to go on deck."

28. Over 40 men of 2nd Leicestershire Regiment alone were returned to duty. Some never reached the regiment, as they fell down from exhaustion, as the going was very heavy. On morning of 26th January, Major-General Kemball and I were present at the Sick Parade held by the Regimental M.O. and saw some of the sick who had been ordered off the s.s. "Julnar" on previous day. One was doubled up and could not stand up straight, another could not get his heels together, another could only stand on one leg, and all were suffering from either rheumatism, dysentery or very severe cold. The Regimental M.O. reported that they were all quite unfit for duty and were ordered to go to hospital. A report was sent in by the C.O. of the regiment, together with statements from the Regimental M.O., 2nd Lieut. Brakes, Regimental Sergeant-Major Cox and a sergeant, all testifying to the fact that the sick of the regiment had received no attention on the s.s. "Julnar." The C.O., 53rd Sikhs, F.F., also sent in a report as his British officers and men had likewise suffered. These reports were forwarded *in toto* by Major-General Kemball to the Divisional General, who afterwards sent them to the Corps Commander. A copy of these reports was handed in by me to the Vincent Commission.

29. On 27th I found amongst combatant troops who had embarked on the s.s. "Julnar," in order to cross to the other bank, the dead body of a private of the 1st Manchester Regiment lying on the upper deck with a blanket over him. It took me less than five minutes to get a stretcher and have him carried off the ship, yet, when I told the medical officer what I had done he said, "Oh yes, he died last night about 6 p.m." It was then 9 a.m. next day. At the funeral a sergeant of the same regiment expressed great surprise at his death as he was only slightly wounded. Major Crossley, 20th B.F.A., did duty on this ship shortly after and it was noticeable how much cleaner it soon became.

The evidence of 2nd Lieut. Hadden, I.A.R., attached 53rd Sikhs, F.F., would have been invaluable as he was on the ship for some time and told the M.O. to his face what he thought of the way in which the wounded were being neglected. Any sick officers on board-up to this date had to provide their own beds.

30. (5) *Treatment of Wounded from February to April 17th.*—As trench warfare commenced, the casualties were not so heavy, and with the arrival of Major-General at Orah Camp, the camp was laid out in better order and each field ambulance had its allotted space.

As the field ambulances of the 7th (Meerut) Division arrived at the Front so did the medical arrangements on the left bank begin to improve.

Collecting stations were formed behind each brigade holding the front line; and to this point the wounded were brought after receiving attention from their Regt. M.O.

The troops on left bank were engaged in no big battle until April 15th.

31. On March 6th I accompanied Column B, under command of Major-General Kemball, to right bank. On March 7th we marched to the Dijailah Depressio; arriving there on 8th at an early hour. The troops of the column were engaged with the enemy all day and the casualties were heavy.

The medical authorities, under difficult circumstances, did all that was possible for the wounded, and it was noticeable how well doctors who had had the experience of work in France made their arrangements. There was a shortage of stretcher bearers, as the casualties were heavier than expected and the wounded had to be carried a considerable distance from the battlefield to the medical headquarters.

From this point it was 15 miles back to Orah Camp, to which place the wounded were conveyed on the 9th March.

There were no motor ambulances and very few horse ambulances.

Long lines of A.T. carts conveyed the wounded, and only those who have been carried in them when they were wounded can fully realise how great is the discomfort. Very serious cases were carried the whole way on stretchers. As no one could be left behind it was only to be expected that there was little hope of anyone hit in the abdomen recovering after such a long journey.

32. The arrangements at the field ambulances on left bank on return of the wounded were very good, and everyone got a hot drink and food to drink. Many of the wounded were sent away in steamers on the 10th.

On April 5th there was another battle. The 13th Division made an attack on Hannah position, and their casualties on that morning were not very heavy. I saw Sir William Vincent and Major-

General Bingley on the battlefield and the former asked me "whether I did not think the hospital arrangements for that day satisfactory." I replied, "Yes, but the casualties have been few and motor ambulances are in use for the first time."

It was unfortunate that the aforementioned Commissioners did not see the arrangements next morning.

33. As I was wounded the second time about 5.50 a.m. I cannot say very much from observation, so shall only relate what actually happened to me. I received what would in Mesopotamia be considered very good treatment.

I was hit in the pelvis and temporarily lost the use of my left leg during the attack on Sannaiyat. As I fell among the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment I was picked up about half an hour after by two regimental stretcher bearers and carried to the regimental dressing station. Here my wounds were dressed. The M.O. ordered the stretcher bearers to carry me back to the advanced dressing station, which, no doubt, he thought had been established about 2 miles behind.

No dressing station was found until we had gone $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and there the M.O. said he could do nothing for me as he had orders to move. There was a number of wounded lying at the same place. I was placed on an A.T. cart and was feeling very faint from loss of blood. My orderly, whom I picked up, saw a crowd on the river bank and a ship, so directed the drabi to take me there. I now personally experienced the discomfort of an A.T. cart, and nothing could be worse, as over every rough piece of ground the cart jolts one, and wounds probably get hit either against the iron girders of the side or bottom of it. On arrival at the ship, Colonel Tate, A.D.M.S., 12th Division, saw me and in the kindest way told a M.O. I was to be sent down on the ship which was moored there, adding "It will be at Orah Camp in about half an hour." It was then about 9.30 a.m. and we actually were disembarked at 5.45 p.m. after lying all the time within a foot of a sheep and lamb, and the sun beating down on one's head, and flies, &c., innumerable.

34. After we started to go down stream the only doctor on board told the wounded that he had nothing to drink and no food. Every wounded person had been on the move since 4.30 a.m. on the 5th, after getting little sleep in the trenches, with a night march throughout the 5th and 6th, followed by an attack. On arrival at Orah Camp the officers got a cup of cocoa and thick bread and butter. Our wounds were dressed and we were placed in a large tent on stretchers. Next morning for breakfast there was little food, but I was fortunate, as an orderly of a brother officer brought a cake from his regimental mess.

As I was very exhausted I managed to get some brandy, and the M.O. was very attentive.

At 12 midnight I was awakened and carried on to S.I.

There was a camp bed on board, and the medical officer, the late Captain Seabrook, worked indefatigably until we reached Basra on the 10th.

There was not a great deal of food on board, but on arrival at Amarah the M.O. had dinner brought from the Rawal Pindi General Hospital for the officers, and took more provisions aboard.

There were orderlies, bed pans, water bottles, &c.

When it was raining one had to keep on changing the position of bed to try and keep dry. The corrugated iron sheeting, recently placed overhead to keep the sun and rain off, was pierced with holes, so did not serve its purpose well. It must have been scrapped material when placed there.

On arrival at Basra, I was taken to the Officers' hospital where one was well looked after. I left Basra on the 17th as a cot case on s.s. "Sicilia," and was in a nice officers' ward, where I received every attention. The food was entirely to my satisfaction, and we reached Bombay on April 24th.

35. (6) *Treatment of Wounded at Bombay.*—On arrival at Bombay I was sent to the officers' hospital at, Byculla Club, but as I could not receive the necessary treatment for my wound, was transferred to St. George's, where I was under the care of Lieut.-Colonel Jackson, I.M.S., who throughout the time that I was there was most kind, and did everything he could for me. At this hospital I was in a small ward by myself and had my own servant, so was much better off than most officers.

To summarise complaints made by officers :—

- (1) There was no variety about the food, e.g., poached or buttered eggs for every meal, and the cooking was very inferior; on one occasion an Indian servant refused to take the food given him by the nurse for his officer.
- (2) The food was served up badly and the plates were dirty very often.
- (3) In the ward with wounded officers there was a civilian gentleman suffering from cancer, and he died there. In the other ward there was an enteric case.
- (4) The ward boys were very loth to obey the requests of officers, and the nurses had little control over them. Those officers who were not convalescent and had not got their own servants were not very well attended to. The nurses did not bring the meals to the patients.
- (5) Officers were put to a great deal of trouble, if they were being invalided home, by having to apply for leave, &c.

36. (7) *General Notes concerning Medical Arrangements.*—(i) On January 28th, when the Force Commander came to Orah Camp, I was sent for by him and was requested to tell him and the Corps Commander what I had seen as regards the medical arrangements and lack of treatment of the wounded up to date. This I did.

(ii) I gave evidence before the Vincent Commission at Orak Camp on April 4th. As the 7th Division was moving on that evening up to the trenches preparatory to the attack on the Hannah position, it was impossible for the Commission to hear the evidence of officers and men whom I wished to bring before them. Sir William Vincent and Major General Bingley agreed to receive written statements. Many who could have given valuable evidence have now been killed. I know seven statements were sent in by Captain Anderson, 1st Seaforth Highlanders, including one from Captain M. E. Park, D.S.O., 2nd Black Watch.

(iii) *X-ray Apparatus at Bombay.* It seemed strange that 18 months after the commencement of operations in Mesopotamia there was no X-ray apparatus at the hospital for Indians on the Marine Parade. I think Sir Victor Horsley made a recommendation that this should be rectified. My own experience as regards X-ray may be of interest.

On April 27th I was sent to the Jamssetjee Jedabhoy Hospital to be X-rayed. Two plates were taken. On April 28th I was X-rayed again. Two plates were taken. On May 3rd and 4th I was X-rayed at St. George's Hospital: two plates were taken on each occasion, and again on the 5th.

The operation for extraction of bullet on 7th was unsuccessful.

On May 16th I was X-rayed at St. George's, but as it was unsuccessful I was sent to Colaba Hospital where I was X-rayed on 19th. Two plates were taken and process for localising bullet gone through. This again took place on the 20th and the X-ray specialist, who was present on each occasion, said he was working under great difficulties and a new place was being built for him, and he hoped to have an up-to-date X-ray appliance going shortly.

A second operation for extraction of bullet on 23rd was again unsuccessful. On arrival at Harold Fink Private Hospital, 17, Park Lane, on June 29th, I was X-rayed within 18 hours of arrival. The bullet in pelvis bone was localised and it was extracted on July 4th.

(iv) *Motor Ambulances.* Four of these arrived at the Front in March. They were very useful on April 4th-6th. When in France the Indian Corps were presented with motor ambulances, but were not permitted to bring them away from that country.

(v) *Horse Ambulances.* We had none of these at the Front until the middle of February. I only once saw a bullock tonga, such as is used for conveying the sick in Indian cantonments.

(vi) No river hospital ships arrived at Orak until March. In my opinion if there had only been either hospital barges or river hospital ships, with an operating theatre (where the more serious cases could have been promptly attended to) and cots for the wounded to lie in, much suffering would have been saved, and probably the lives of some prolonged.

It is needless to say how much additional suffering was the lot of those wounded, who were placed on boats, which were detained for ferrying trips across the river, and as this often went on day and night very little sleep was possible.

(vii) It is much to be regretted that there were no sisters at an earlier date working at the hospitals.

(viii) I have it on the written word of a lieutenant-colonel who died at Amarah, that in May of this year (a full year after the occupation of the place), there were no electric fans, or ice plant in the hospital. The heat was intense.

(ix) On s.s. "Assaye," on which I travelled from Bombay to Suez in June, the electric fans were very inferior, and no wonder, as they were *German-made* ones, so the C.O. of the ship told me, and had recently been put in by the Indian Marine.

The engineers were constantly trying to keep them in working order.

A specialist on bacteriology told me he had been sent out with two assistants and sufficient equipment to fill two general service wagons, to do special sanitation work. On arrival at Basra he was ordered to leave his assistants and equipment there, and to proceed to Amarah, where he was placed in charge of a medical ward. The bacteriologist working at Amarah suggested to the A.D.M.S., Amarah, that the assistants and equipment should be sent for so that they could work on each bank of river. No action was taken. The specialist was returning home after having told the late Sir Victor Horsley about the matter. In this kind of way full use was not made of the material and experience at hand.

(x) *Armistice on January 22nd.* On this day an armistice was asked for.

It was of no use as regards bringing in the wounded, as they were in before the A.Q.M.G. Corps left our lines under the white flag.

On previous night our front line was brought back 80 yards behind where most of our dead were; and ammunition, rifles, equipment, &c., were left behind. As soon as the white flag was taken out the Turks allowed uniformed Arabs to go over the ground and take what they could, also strip our dead, though the actual armistice did not commence until 4 p.m., when General Hudson returned. I was told by him to bury the dead and was free to do so until 6 p.m.

I had already buried officers and men who had fallen close to our own front line.

No Staff officer of the corps was there to make any arrangements, and no party was told off to dig the graves.

In French I talked to a Turkish officer who was very amiable. He said he could, according to his orders, bring our dead to a place only 150 yards in front of the line to which we had withdrawn. A party of volunteers dug the graves. All of the dead had been stripped naked, and identity discs removed. I only recognised the C.O. of 62nd Punjabis.

One Indian, stripped naked and brought for burial, was still breathing, and I pointed this out to the Turkish officer. He was taken to one of our field ambulances but shortly afterwards died.

In my opinion if I, as a chaplain, had been told earlier of the proposed armistice, I should have been allowed to go to the Turkish lines and seen our wounded who had been taken prisoners, also got the identity discs of the dead who had fallen on their trenches. As it was owing to bad Staff work and

withdrawal of our line behind where most of our dead had fallen, little good came out of the armistice. It was only as we worked our way by trench warfare in February and March up to the Hannah position that we found some of our dead, and then they were unrecognisable. I reported the matter officially to the corps on the 23rd.

(xi) I bring before the Commission Statements A-F made by wounded officers.

PART II.

(1) *Lack of Organization.*—As soon as we arrived at Basra on January 1st it was clear that the organization in nearly every department was very different to what the division had been accustomed to in France. It seemed surprising that, as there was such a shortage of river transport, nothing had been done about constructing a light railway at Basra. Troops as they arrived were pushed up to the front without transport horses, or any administrative unity, and naturally there was chaos—*e.g.*, 7th Division: Headquarters were sent up river and had to take part in severe fighting immediately on reaching the front, yet no effort was made for getting any horses up. My own horses never arrived at Orah until a fortnight after I was wounded. Telegrams were repeatedly sent to the base for them, with no result. In this case river transport was not required for sending them up—only a little organization. They could have been sent up with any of the many echelons which marched up.

When regiments belonging to the division arrived they were not sent to their own brigades—*e.g.*, 2nd Rajputs, belonging to the 21st Brigade, had not joined the brigade up to the time when I left, nor had the 1st-9th Gurkhas, who had fought alongside the 1st Seaforth Highlanders in France, joined the 9th Brigade.

Much confusion was caused in January by regiments being taken from their own brigades and brigades not even knowing in what division they really were—*e.g.*, the 28th Brigade did not come permanently under orders of 7th Divisional Commander for some weeks. When Major-General Gorrington arrived as Chief of the Staff there was less of this changing and more organization.

It is impossible to say who was responsible, but there is little doubt that it did not improve the efficiency of a battalion to have representatives of 23 different units in it—*e.g.*, composite territorial battalions. At one time there were over 40 officers drawn from various regiments in this battalion.

I think the organization might have been improved sooner than it was had the opinion of officers from France been more readily accepted and acted upon.

(2) *Shortage of Rations.*—I cannot remember the exact difference between the rations in France and Mesopotamia, but they were considerably less in every way, and the troops used to complain of shortage of food. The Indian troops at one time had no meat ration and there was a great dearth of fresh vegetables and potatoes. Mesopotamia is a fertile country and it is thought gardens could have been started at the base.

The wood ration was always short, and this affected both British and Indian troops greatly, especially the latter, as they did not like a cooked ration. Owing to the shortage of rations a good deal of pilfering went on in January, and private and other stores coming up river were broken into and taken. I remember seeing British troops buying dates from Arabs on a boat, and they told me that they could get no rations, and I found their statement was quite correct. Owing to the amount of pilfering that went on guards were placed over the ships. In January it was impossible to buy tobacco, cigarettes, &c. I never saw any cases of bribery as regards getting rations, only heard of them. It is to be regretted that large quantities of comforts sent by ladies from India never reached the troops at the front.

(3) *Morale of Troops.*—The morale of the troops was affected, especially in January, by—

- (a) Lack of organization.
- (b) Treatment of wounded.
- (c) Shortage of rations.
- (d) Strict censorship.

In January the N.C.O.'s and men were only allowed to write post-cards, and it was almost impossible to get them at the front. I represented that there were married men who wished to write privately to their wives and in France had been allowed to use the "green envelope"; but from the answer I received it appeared that the Staff had never heard of this envelope. It seems as if the censorship was so strict

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in order that the public at home might not hear the true state of affairs at the time, and that by the end of the war they may have been forgotten, and those responsible be beyond danger of punishment.

(e) There is little need to refer to the inadequacy of the postal arrangements, as they were notoriously bad, and officers and men complained bitterly at getting no letters for weeks, and everyone knows what a good tonic it is for men when facing danger to hear satisfactory news from home. When Major-General Gorringe arrived as Chief of the General Staff to the Corps an effort was made to improve things. A bazaar was started, rest for the men on Sundays, &c., and under him the *morale* of the troops considerably improved.

It is to be regretted that an effort was not made earlier to start a field force canteen where the men could purchase notepaper, tobacco, cigarettes, &c. The 7th (Merent) Division had a library in France for the use of the troops, and this we brought with us.

In February, through the help of Major-General Gorringe and Major-General Younghusband, both of whom were always ready to do anything they could for the welfare of the men, I secured an E.P. tent and some tables and forms from the Divisional Engineers and started a reading-room tent, where the men could read the papers, borrow books from the lending library, listen to the gramophone, &c. This was greatly appreciated. I only state this in order to point out how the comfort of the men might have been greatly improved if the authorities had only considered their welfare a little more.

(4) *Tentage*.—On arrival at Orleans when we went to France our tents were bought from us by either the Imperial or Indian Governments. On arrival at Basra we were without tents. The Government of India ordered we should be equipped with tents by Ordnance Department on payment. The tents provided by the Government for us were 40-lb. ones; so the Government enunciated the principle that for the British officers in Mesopotamia in the hot weather a 40-lb. tent is sufficient. It seemed extraordinary that the E.P. tent should have been so little in evidence. At a Durbar in India these tents figure everywhere in their thousands, but in Mesopotamia only a very few at the front. Even the patients in hospital had to put up for the most part with 160-lb. tents.

Chaplains for Church services were granted one 160-lb. tent.

(5) *Chaplains*.—In January, after Rev. Tibbs returned to Amarah where there was no chaplain, I was the only Church of England chaplain with the Tigris corps for 10 days, and was responsible for holding services for, in addition to the officers and men of my own division, the corps troops, cavalry brigade, and other British regiments and British officers of Indian regiments on left bank.

I was wounded on April 6th, and up to July 7th no one had been appointed to take my place. The shortage of chaplains on this latter date was very bad. When I went from Basra to Bombay on board the S.S. "Sicilia" during Holy Week and Easter Sunday the ship was only carrying British troops, and there was no chaplain to minister to the wounded.

1. *Battle of March 8th*.—As so much criticism has been made about the failure to relieve Kut-el-Amarah on March 8th, I have been asked to state what I actually saw.

In no way do I presume to criticise the actions of the Generals in Command, nor do I profess to know what were the actual orders given to the Commander of Column B. by the Corps Commander.

2. I was attached to Column B. under Major-General Kembell, C.B., D.S.O., for the operations from the 6th to the 9th, and was present throughout the night march of 7th-8th. When we started for the night march our objective was the depression south of the Dujailah Redoubt. I understood from General Kembell that he thought if we could get to the appointed place at the appointed time we could carry out our task, and defeat the enemy. The Corps Commander seems to have laid down what every brigade was to do, and this was of course all right, provided nothing unexpected happened, and the enemy did exactly what we wanted them to do. General Kembell told me that he tried to get certain changes made in the arrangements for the night march, as they seemed to imperil the march coming off as planned; but his suggestions were not approved of, and consequently we were over one hour late in leaving the rendezvous, and we had halts of an hour instead of 10 minutes owing to mistakes in rear.

3. We finally arrived in broad daylight short of our destination, and in plain view of the enemy, within effective shell range. Deployment for attack was consequently delayed, as the Column Commander was determined not to advance in a mass of troops and transport in broad daylight into gun and machine gun range of the enemy, and thus court a disaster. He was anxious not to make a disconnected attack, so that everyone should clearly be shown on the ground their several points of attack. In spite of this, numerous mistakes were made owing, no doubt, to the extreme flatness of the ground. The advance was opposed at once when we got out of the Nullah.

The enemy had trenches in places awkward for the column, and certainly more strongly held than was anticipated. Throughout the day the troops of this column fought with the utmost gallantry, and suffered heavily; but owing to the very heavy machine gun fire to which they were subjected they could not break through. I do not think anyone at Corps Headquarters could have realised how severe was the rifle and machine gun fire. I know that on the afternoon, as I was returning from where the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment was held up, I met the Brigade Major of the 28th Brigade, who asked me what I had seen. I told him that, from what I could see, there was little hope of our advancing any further until we had knocked out a machine gun on our left front.

He went out himself to see, and shortly afterwards he was brought in wounded, and told me to tell General Kembell that the artillery must knock out the machine guns before the infantry could advance any further.

Captain Chapman, the Brigade Major referred to above, said to me as he was going forward to investigate the situation: "You may be surprised to hear that the corps do not understand why we do

not walk into the Redoubt." Comment is needless for anyone who was anywhere south of the Redoubt.

The attack earlier in the day having failed, another effort was made at 5.15 p.m.

4. About 7 p.m. I went round the British regiments of the column in the positions which they were then holding, and they were digging themselves in for the night. They did not complain of any shortage of water. I arranged that the dead should be collected to different centres, and should be buried very early next morning.

At about 9.30 p.m. I was very surprised to hear from General Kemball that orders had come from the corps that we were to retire during the night. I told him that it would take some considerable time before all the wounded could be got back to Column B. Headquarters, close to which were the casualty clearing station, and that if the retirement took place as intended it would be impossible to bury the dead. I believe that General Kemball represented this to the corps. I left the Column Headquarters about 11 p.m., and returned to 28th Brigade Headquarters. At 12 p.m. I went out with stretchers and a party to bring in the wounded.

5. When I was in the trenches of the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment the order to retire came, and was received with feelings of sorrow, as the men realised that the relief of Kut would not be carried out.

While placing 25 of the 6th Devon Regiment on to stretchers at 1.30 a.m. on 9th, for a quarter of an hour there was heavy firing from both sides. By 3.30 a.m. all the combatant troops of the column had left the front line, and there was no one between those collecting the wounded and the enemy.

Arabs had set up lights which misled many of the men who had got separated from their units. Throughout the night we found a number of wounded and unwounded men who had gone to sleep in the reserve trenches, not knowing that the retirement was taking place.

From the time that the combatant troops retired until the morning not a shot was fired from the Turkish trenches in front of us.

All through the time that we were engaged getting in the wounded we could hear the Turkish transport moving away on our left flank, and some thought that they were moving their artillery. Anyhow, the creaking of wheels was very considerable.

6. When daylight came we found that all the combatant troops had withdrawn to close to Column B. Headquarters, but no further, as the Commander had only disengaged from the enemy, and was covering the collection and despatch of the wounded.

Before the party that was with me could go back there, we were put to some inconvenience by Arabs, who had come on to the battlefield to strip the dead, and finding some of our men asleep were stripping them of their clothes. We had picked up a half company of an Indian Regiment which had got separated from the battalion, and as they were armed we were able to save a number of British and Indian soldiers from being stripped, and to rescue some of those who had been already stripped of all their clothes and equipment.

I state this to show that the order for retirement took everyone in this column by surprise.

7. I reached Column B. Headquarters at 7 a.m., and saw General Kemball. I told him of the movement on the part of the Turkish troops.

It was shortly after this that the Column Commander wired to the Corps Commander that he was willing to hold on at the position to which he had been ordered to retire without any support.

It was no use, though the retirement order was suspended for a time, as at 11 a.m. we heard the main body was retiring, and at 11.45 Column B. had to conform. The Column was unmolested till after 1 p.m., when the enemy pushed out cavalry and guns from the direction of the Shatt-el Hai, but the rearguard of the column easily checked them, and they came no further.

We were within sight of Kut-el-Amarah, and the enemy had broken into two portions, and had fallen back on their bridgeheads.

I do not yet know why we retired, nor do I think that the Column B. Commander has ever been given any reason.

At the time it was naturally thought that something serious had happened necessitating retirement, and we could get no news from the corps as to what was happening on that flank, although the Column Commander asked for it. The want of water was never mentioned at the time as the cause of retirement, and when it was seen that this was given as the cause in the papers after, caused much surprise and amusement amongst the troops.

As has transpired since, and from what the Turks themselves said during the armistice, after the fall of Kut-al-Amarah, if we had only consolidated our position on night of 8th-9th, and turned the battle into a two-day one instead of only one, we should have had them "cold."

I know that General Kemball was horrified at the order to retire.

At Sheikh Saad in January, the column on right bank was in a far tighter place and was fighting all night with the enemy working round their flank, but held on and when allowed to advance did so and won the day.

It was a very sad march back to Orah Camp, from which we had set out on the 6th, as we all felt the operations might have been such a great success.

8. In reference to the action on April 6th, much feeling was roused amongst those who had gone through the attack to see it was officially stated in English papers that "No attack was made on the Sannaiyat position on April 6th, as reported in the Turkish communique of April 10th."

Whether it was a reconnaissance in force or a close reconnaissance our casualties were very heavy. The Turks in their report said that our casualties were 1,500 yet this was denied, and the communique of the 11th, which so truly described the operations of the 5th-7th, was referred to "Turks' distorted account of the British success."

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It caused much annoyance to those who had done their best and suffered heavily to know that the public in England were being misled.

The truth was bound to come out as the wounded reached England, and it is the British public and not the enemy who are deceived by such statements.

I have prepared the foregoing statement in order that the Commission may, if they wish, be able to read it before I appear before them, and I shall be pleased to answer any questions, so far as I am able, which the Commission may wish to put to me.

PART III.

STATEMENT BY R.A. OFFICER.

Hit 4.30 p.m., 7.1.16; wounds roughly tied up; carried 4 miles to field hospital; was very lucky to be taken away as a great number of officers and men were not taken in till the following morning. Night very wet and cold, a large number must have suffered severely from exposure. This could be remedied by a number of two-wheel stretchers or more stretcher bearers.

Arrived at field hospital, which was in awful confusion. About 2,000 or 3,000 wounded were lying about without blankets, tents or any attention. Several doctors were working continuously dressing the undressed wounded that were continually arriving. No dressings could be changed as no more dressings could be obtained. The hospital had little or no comforts and absolutely no arrangement had been made for feeding or pitching tents for the wounded. I, with heaps of others, had to stay out all night with no covering, not even a blanket.

I was afterwards told that the medical arrangements were made for only 400 wounded, so you can imagine the state of affairs there.

Absolutely no arrangements appear to have been made for taking wounded down stream—officers and men hit on the 7th left Sheikh Saad on the 14th (dressings had been changed once during this period).

I left on a "P" boat, which had discharged a cargo of mules, &c., on the 12th. We had no covering on the barges and very little on the boat, and as it rained practically the whole of the five days to Amarah the condition of all was appalling. Mere words cannot sufficiently describe the scenes on the boat, so I will not attempt it, but must say that we had only one doctor on board to Amarah and he had absolutely no medical stores, not even a bandage. No arrangements were made for cooking, and the diet for all consisted of biscuits, bully and tea. These boats have no sanitary arrangements on board. The greater part of the journey we were lying in about 4 inches of water.

After Amarah the conditions were much better. A representative of the Y.M.C.A. came on board, also a doctor. All wounds were dressed there and much better feeding arrangements were made.

FIRST STATEMENT BY LIEUT. WOOLEIDGE.

Wounded 7.1.16. No first field dressings to majority of wounded. In places dressings had to be cut in halves. One doctor to attend to about 500 wounded, with hardly any dressings of any sort to do it with. Many of the wounded died of loss of blood through want of attendance. Lay the whole night in the open with no cover and only one blanket; could have done with four. Very damp. Told the next morning to embark on one of the "P" boats. On the boats officers, soldiers and sepoy's thrown down in any position together on the bare boards. Some were put on the horse barges on the sides of the boat. Came down to rain and no awning on barges to keep off wet.

Stretcher cases being in about 3 inches of water. A good many wounded died of nothing else but exposure on the way down. There was only bully beef and biscuits to give to the wounded. When we arrived at Amarah a man of the Y.M.C.A. came on board and gave us something to eat and drink and a few other comforts, of which we were very thankful. We left Amarah on the 9th and spent another two days on the boat, and arrived in Basra on the night of the 11th and were treated very well in the hospital there.

SECOND STATEMENT BY LIEUT. WOOLEGGE.

Wounded, Shiekh Saad, 7.1.16, at 5 p.m. and had to wait till close on 6 p.m. for somebody to bandage up my wound, which was then done by one of my Sepoys. No doctor within miles to offer any assistance. Was picked up and placed in a Jaipur cart with iron grid bottom and sides at about 7 p.m. and taken about 2 miles to a place on the river bank. The road was very rough and I was badly knocked about by the time I arrived at my destination. When I arrived hundreds of wounded were lying out on the bare ground with no cover at all. Was given one blanket and told to make myself comfortable. It was jolly cold, almost freezing, and four blankets would not have been too many.

We then lay all night in the open, and being close to the river it was very damp. Many of the others with me lay the whole night without a dressing at all and consequently a great number died from loss of blood and exposure. There was only one doctor to attend to about 500 of us. Many had no first field dressings and in places one dressing had to be cut in halves. The doctor here had nothing in the way of dressings of any description. At noon on the 8th we were told to embark on one of the "P" boats. The men who could walk went on and made themselves fairly comfortable, but the stretcher cases were brought on any way and anyhow. There were only about two stretchers for the whole lot. The stretcher cases were thrown on to the bare boards, which were in a very dirty state owing to the fact that horses and mules had been disembarked and the place had not been cleaned after. At about 2 p.m. we started for Amara; and on the way it came down to rain and fairly swamped the whole boat out. Some were lying in 2 and 3 inches of water, which was mixed up with horse dung. On the boat there was only one doctor, and he worked the whole day and night, with a very small quantity of fressing to do it with.

There were no sanitary arrangements except for one bed-pan, which had to do for about 200 stretcher cases. This was bad enough, but on the barges at the sides of the boat in which were Sepoys it was disgraceful the way they were treated. It seemed as if they were just placed on the barges to die, they got no attendance at all. I myself saved one man who was trying to work his way to the side of the barge to commit *suicide* by dropping in the river. He told me that he had been wounded on the 6th and had had no dressing at all put on him, and on looking at the wound, which was a very large one in the side, it had turned septic. This was not the only case. They died like flies. When we arrived at Basra on the 11th we were placed in hospital there and treated very well. We left hundreds behind, and I was told the next lot that came down a few days later that they had been treated exactly the same.

STATEMENT BY LIEUT. E. A. BURREL, 1/4 HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT.

The following account of the treatment of men wounded on January 21st, 1916, near Orah Creek, Mesopotamia, to the time they reached Basra will seem to those who have not been with I.E.F. "D" in Mesopotamia and especially to those who have seen the up-to-date methods of evacuating wounded from the fighting line in France, almost incredible, but it is a perfectly true account of things in which I was personally engaged.

The attack was launched against the Turkish position about half an hour before sunrise, the ground over which our troops had to advance was flat desert, and the Turks could not be turned out of their position, and in consequence our casualties were very heavy.

About 9 a.m. it began to pour with rain and an icy wind sprang up; the wind and rain lasted continuously until the following morning.

The wounded began to walk or crawl back to the field dressing station, which by mid-day was surrounded by a crowd of wounded, drenched and shivering, waiting to get their wounds dressed before setting out for the river steamers $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles down the Tigris; then towards evening the crowd increased, there were very few doctors and they complained that they were very short of medical stores and were not able to get nearly enough Jaipur carts to send those unable to walk back to the boats.

The worst scene of all was the river steamer, the decks of which were like muddy country roads. There was a canvas awning above the top deck, but the rain poured through in a continual stream; on the lower deck, near the boilers, there were two small stoves on which orderlies were trying to boil kerosene tins of water to make tea.

The wounded had to be packed as closely as possible, absolutely touching one another like sardines in a tin, those who could stand huddled round the boilers, and those few who could, congregated in the stokehole. All through the night wounded were being brought in on stretchers, literally crying with cold and stiffness, and at last every inch of space on the boat was taken up.

A few blankets, also soaking wet, were issued; there were not nearly enough to go round, so that many were without a blanket at all, lying on the bare deck, and no more blankets could be obtained; there was no dry clothing at all, so that men had to remain in their wet and bloody clothes with no chance of drying until the rain stopped. There were a few rations of hard biscuit and bully beef issued, but not sufficient to go round, tea was brewed in kerosene tins, but the water took so long to boil that it was many hours before everybody had had some.

There was only one bed-bottle on the ship, so that many of those who could not walk were using boots, and those who could not procure boots were compelled to do their business where they lay.

There were only two doctors on board and they worked like horses all that night, but early in the morning medical stores ran out and they could do little.

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All through the night men were crying out and complaining not of their wounds, but of the cold. On the morning of January 22nd the rain stopped.

When the boat reached Amara three days later the men on the top deck were still wet, but at last got relief; here several were taken off to hospital and the congestion was relieved. Surgeons and orderlies came on board with medical stores, food, and blankets, and every man's wounds were dressed, and the journey was completed in comparative comfort, except that the wounded still had to lie with only one blanket between them and the deck.

At Basra their sufferings came to an end, the hospital seemed to be well fitted up.

STATEMENT BY LIEUT. D. S. WILKINSON, 5/1 BUFFS, CONCERNING MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THE MESOPOTAMIAN EXPEDITION AFTER THE BATTLE OF SHEIKH SAAD, JANUARY 6TH TO 8TH.

1. On the morning of Saturday, January 8th, there was not sufficient fuel at the temporary dressing station on the river for purposes of boiling water or milk.
2. Neither were there sufficient blankets or even dressings.
3. At the same semi-permanent hospital (field), further down the river and quite close to the boats, dressings were extremely short, so short in fact that the medical authorities were asking wounded to give up their field dressings.
4. The only commodity of which there seemed to be an abundance was tents, though since there were so few orderlies, these were so badly pitched as to be almost useless, as water ran under the flaps and soaked the floors of the tents.
5. The cooking arrangements were also a failure, the number of dummies and orderlies being far too few.
6. After all the "walking" cases had been moved up to Sheikh Saad, I was given to understand by one of the remaining doctors that there were left behind 1,500 (fifteen hundred) native cases and 500 (five hundred) British cases, of which a very large percentage were stretcher cases. For this number there were precisely four doctors, a few orderlies, say 10, and *one* sweeper. The sweeper was, of course, worked off his legs, but still there were wounded men unable to move, crying for the bottle or bed pan. The result is obvious. Men who could crawl a little just crawled outside the tents and relieved nature there, others to my knowledge used their boots and handkerchiefs and spare articles of clothing, until the whole camp was turned into a human pigsty! All this on top of the fact that men's wounds were not being dressed, apart from the first field dressings they had put on when first hit.
7. When on board the river tugs, bound for Basra, the cooking arrangements were a trifle better, but for protection against the elements there were no arrangements at first. The rain water streamed about the deck, and there was not sufficient orderlies to move the men to dry places, nor sufficient dry places available. To my knowledge a man wounded in the legs and head, stripped himself naked, remarking he "could keep himself drier naked!"
8. The medical staff worked heroically and no blame can be placed upon them.
9. I was four days at the semi-permanent hospital, and as far as I know, the cases at Sheikh Saad village itself were left even longer before they could go down stream and have proper attention.
10. Once arrived at Basra, however, we were all right, being placed on board a hospital ship, whose medical staff were horrified at the condition that we were in and in which we had travelled.

STATEMENT BY CAPTAIN PAGE ROBERTS, 1/4 HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT.

Want of hospital boats on the river.

On the boat on which I was sent down to Basra, there were not sufficient orderlies or sweepers, and the men were constantly calling for them without any attention being paid to their calls. There were no proper latrines for the men, and one Indian soldier fell overboard and was drowned in consequence. For two days before we were sent down to Basra, the boat was detained for ferrying troops across the river with sick and wounded on board; this went on both day and by night, consequently very little sleep was possible.

Biscuit ration was issued, although bread was obtainable. On several of the boats wounded and dysentery cases were lying side by side.

For a considerable time the 9th Brigade had no field ambulance.

The ambulances were so under-staffed that they were not even able to keep a list of wounded who passed through their hands. This I was told by an R.A.M.C. officer, and also the regiment was unable to trace the wounded for this reason.

After Ctesiphon the supply of anaesthetics at the hospital in Amara was insufficient, and operations for extracting bullets were performed in some cases without it.

The wounded were sent often off without rations. One case where this occurred, a major in an Indian regiment who was wounded in the hand, asked one of the S. and T. conductors to supply rations for some wounded and dying officers, tea and tinned rations, &c., but the conductor pretended he had not got any; as soon as a Rs.10 note was produced, however, he gave this officer as much as he wanted.

I think you will see in my Statement ~~that~~ I ~~was~~ put down later that the 28th never really came under orders, permanently, of the 7th Divisional Commander until the end of January or the beginning of February

2415 Q: Then you arrived at Basra at the end of the year

A: Yes, on the 1st January, to be exact

2416 Q: Had you seen service before

A: Not before this war

2417 Q: Then what are the decorations you are wearing

A: One is the Military Cross and the other the Durbar Medal

2418 Lord Hugh Cecil: What did you receive the Military Cross for; for these proceedings in the East, in Mesopotamia

A: I have been rather fortunate. I received the Military Cross in France, and again in Mesopotamia I was given it on February 8th before I knew I had got it for France

2419
4th

Chairman: A: You came from France where, of course, the organization had by the time you left attained a pretty high standard of efficiency

A: Yes, especially as regards medical arrangements.

2420 Q: Your evidence here is very strong on the lack of foresight, and, if I may say so, on the general sort of muddle that existed in Mesopotamia. Do you think that you judged harshly of the condition of things in Mesopotamia from your previous experience in France where conditions were, of course, much easier for good administration and co-ordination

A: My opinion is that if we had had more transport and if there had been hospital barges and, at any rate, hospital ships, to get the wounded down the river, much of the difficulties might have been overcome

2421 Q. Transport and hospital ships ^{yes} and, of course at first
 A. there was not sufficient tentage for the wounded; there was nowhere for them to go to at all and you could never rely on any particular ship being utilised for hospital work

2422 Q. I suppose you arrived at a moment when troops were being pushed up with the utmost haste to the front
 A. Yes, I arrived with our own 7th Divisional Head-quarters at the front

2423 Q. And your experience of the ambulances was during a period of exceptionally hard fighting
 A. It was

2424 Q. What were the particular battles
 A. ~~Shaikh~~ ^{Shaikh} ~~Saad~~ ^{Saad} from the 6th to the 8th of January, Wadi the 13th and 14th, the Hannah position, the 21st January and I was through the ^{Redoubt} Dijailah Battle of March 8th, and then I only just saw the beginning of the April battles; I was wounded on the 6th April

2425 Q. The Official Record given us here of the casualties is exceptionally heavy - 4,262 Shaikh ^{of} Saad; 1601, Wadi; 2,741, at Urun-al-Hannah; and 470 killed and 2877 wounded at Es-Sinn

Yes.

Commander

A. Yes

#

3 A Yes

2426 Q You were through all those.

A I was through all those battles.

2427 Q Then I suppose not only was the hospital and military provisioning insufficient for the force, assuming that they had only ^{had} normal casualties, but it became absolutely inadequate under the abnormal casualties that ~~had~~ occurred.

A Yes.

2428 Q I assume that the authorities, both medical and otherwise, never anticipated such heavy losses?

2429 A I gathered that they did not from what I was told Lord Hugh Cecil; the losses would not have been abnormal in France; they were only abnormal according to the Indian standard - is that so

A The losses were heavier in France

2430 Q Heavier than in France

A I can remember in France being at ^{the} advanced dressing station where we had 2,400 through in less than 24 hours and we ~~at~~ had absolutely no difficulty in getting them away, they were all dressed there and ^{away} ~~the way~~ ^{away} in ambulances and back at the advanced position. ~~but~~ ^{But} we could never do anything like that in Mesopotamia

2431 Commander Wedgwood. But the losses per division were heavier in Mesopotamia

A Yes

2432 the Chairman The losses taken to the total number of people engaged were very heavy in Mesopotamia

A Yes.

2433 Q In France the losses would be very heavy at one part of the line I suppose ^{and} unless heavy at others

A Yes. ^{that} would be so; it would all depend upon whether you were in an actual engagement or not in

France

France. I gather that the casualties of our 7th Division from the time we first engaged in January to the fall ~~at~~ of Kut-el-Amara were 12,375

2434 Commander Wedgwood: Out of a bayonet strength of how many to begin with

A We had reinforcements up at that time. I would not like to say exactly out of how many

2435 General Sir Neville Lytton: More than three parts?

A Yes, certainly; that figure was given to me by Sir George Younghusband when he ~~of~~ came back ~~from~~ ^{to} Bombay and showed me the casualties.

2436 Lord Hugh Cecil: What I wanted to bring out was whether in your opinion the medical arrangements were more highly strained in Mesopotamia than they ~~se~~ were in France ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ respect to the number of casualties

A No, I do not think so. I think if we had had our own ambulances up there at the front, our own Divisional doctors would have dealt with the casualties very much better. It seemed to me that they had not the experience in Mesopotamia to deal with heavy casualties

2437 The Chairman: As regards the conduct and behaviour of the medical staff, with one or two exceptions that you mention they seem ~~to~~ to have done all that was practically possible under very difficult circumstances

A They did splendidly, the actual medical officers at the front

2438 General Sir Neville Lytton ~~Nicholson~~: With these exceptions

A With one or two exceptions

2439 The Chairman: In the ~~Lyttelton~~ ^{Vincent-Bingley} Report there is a word used ~~that~~ ^{which} I think very largely governs their inquiries and their Report. It is the word "avoidable". I assume that you ~~contend~~ contend that if proper foresight had

had been used and proper arrangements made, a very large proportion of the terrible suffering and distress to which the wounded were subjected could have been avoided.

4

A Yes

2440

Q Affairs were further complicated by very bad weather

A Yes, most certainly in January.

2441

Commander Wedgwood: In January only

A Yes, we had heavy rain in February but for the March battle we had very good going indeed, and for the April battle the going was extraordinarily good, the ground was quite good. dry

2442

Chairman: I assume that the whole standard of comfort, of rationing, and ~~the~~ medical equipment was on a lower standard in Mesopotamia than in France.

A Yes, certainly

2443

Q I will just take them through. Rations

A Yes, judging by the complaints that I received and the food that one got ^{ones self} ~~ones self~~

2444

Q Was it supposed to be the same ration?

A We understood ~~to be~~

2445

Q And in quantity was it the same

A No, certainly not

2446

Q Less

A Less

2447

Q And in quality

A In quality too

2448

Q Then the standard of comfort, under normal conditions were ~~the~~ ^{the} arrangements made for ambulances as well as in the stationary ~~but~~ hospitals on a level with those in France

A J

Garden of Bingham

A. I cannot speak about ~~the~~ stationary hospitals; I was not at the base until I went down wounded. I can only speak about the field ambulances at the front. Of course you have to remember that they only had tents there and they were single-fly tents; there were not billets or schools to which the wounded were taken in France and of course ~~everything~~ ^{here} was ~~quite~~ ^{an immense} different; but I must say that when our own Divisional Ambulances got up to the front it was marvellous to see the change which they did make in our encampments

2449 Q. And had the ambulances ~~all~~ ^{large} tents

A. Not for the most part, there ^{large} were very few large tents certainly with regard to the 19th and 20th British Field Ambulances; - the ones I saw myself there were very few large tents.

2450 Commander Wedgwood. Do you mean to say that they had not E. P. tents at all

A. Some, but few

2451 Q. They ~~are~~ ^{are} double-fly

A Yes

2452 Chairman. You say on page 12nd "when we went to France our tents were bought from us by either the Imperial or Indian Governments". What does that mean

A. That when we got to Orleans we were told we had to hand over our tents, they were valued by the Board and paid for

2453 Commander Wedgwood. Do you mean when leaving France

A. No when we arrived in France, in October 1914. We were ^{all} told to take tents with us when we left India

2454 Chairman. Then when you arrived at Basra you were without tents

A. Yes

Q. The

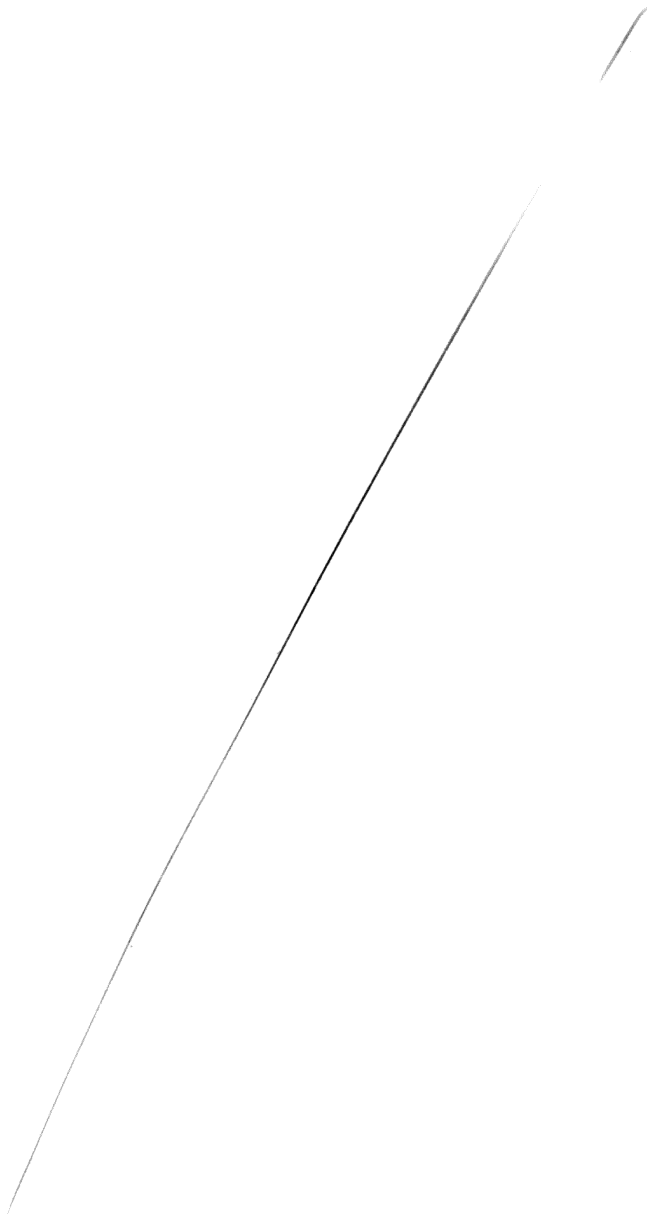
2455 Q The tents provided by the Government for you
you say were 40-lb tents

A. Yes

2456 Q What size does that mean

A. Very small

Mr Hill follows



Walter Hodgson
Penmanship Writer

Q What

Wheeler Smell

Tell Mr Hodgson

2457 Q Was this the tent in universal use for officers
 A Yes, except for those officers who were lucky enough to have managed to send to India again and get better ones

2458 Q And the men's tents were larger
 A Yes; they had the 80 lbs tent taken but at first they only had the bivouacs ~~of course~~

2459 Q The result of the hardships, through which the wounded went in your judgment affected the morale of the troops
 A Certainly

2460 Q I suppose that discipline the Chaplain gets rather on the morale, the inner exceptional opportunity of the seeing what a spirit of the troops, is } One hears their views very
 A Fully at any rate

2461 Q Previous to the outbreak of this War had you any experience of soldiers
 A ^{I was for} Five years in India ^{my Lord} actually with troops

2462 Q Do you feel that you are fairly competent to judge what the morale of troops is after you have been some little time with them, talking with them and moving amongst them
 A I think so my Lord

2463 Q And in your opinion there was a deterioration in consequence of the shortage of rations and the treatment of the wounded and the lack of organization
 A Well I think I may say that I do not think their spirits were as good, but I should not like it to be surmised in any way that their fighting qualities deteriorated because I think the way that the British troops have fought in Mesopotamia is worthy of the utmost credit. It has been absolutely magnificent throughout, my Lord

2464 General Sir Neville Litchelton } The men you saw most

the sick and wounded, the men who
of ~~all~~ ^{of} suffered most from the breakdown?

Q I would not like to say that, I was always round
with the men in the trenches as well
2465 Q I ^{others} talked to you more freely than men in rude
health did they not

A I would not like to say that. When they got away
I did not see them again. The men in rude health
I saw most of except just after a big battle.

4466
The

Chairman: Speaking, not as an expert but with some
little experience, you would ^{you} say that the conditions
under which they had to attack were extremely
difficult and extremely dangerous

A Yes certainly

2467 Q You were pretty close up to the fighting line were
you not

A Yes, my Lord

2468 Q They had to make frontal attacks on very broken
ground

A It was very open ground too

The opinion of officer's and others was that it was
far more dangerous fighting in Mesopotamia than
in France

2469 Q I do not propose to ~~examine~~ examine you as
regards the Battle of March 8th as we shall
have some of the military authorities before
us as witnesses, but your impression is that the
order to retire was a surprise to those to whom
it was given and to those with whom you were
A Yes my Lord

2470 Q And as far as you can judge, was that surprise
shown general.

A Certainly

2471 General Sir Neville Lister: ^{In} of the whole division
that was withdrawn

A Yes

2472
 Q Yes and more especially ⁱⁿ ^{case of the} ~~of~~ the 28th Brigade
 Chairman You have put in some statements as
 regards officers, were those exceptionally bad cases,
 or were they just cases that you selected as rather
 typical

A No. These statements were made in January
 and handed in to a Colonel's wife and then they
 were sent up to me. I know the officers.

2473 Lord Hugh Cecil Are the officers' statements trustworthy
 testimony

2474
 A Yes

Chairman Sir William Vincent and Major General
 Bingley were on the battle field ^{on the} 5th April
 A They were actually on the battle field on the morning
 of the 5th April

2475 Q And the conditions under which the wounded
 were treated were then more satisfactory than
 those in the preceding battles.

A Yes

2476 Q On account of the casualties being so much fewer
 A On that particular morning

2477 Q ^{or} ~~where~~ were the arrangements better
 A There is no doubt about it ^{part} more foresight had been
 shown in getting things ready. Our own A.D.M.S.,
 Colonel ^{Weston} White, had gone to a great deal of trouble
 in getting things and they had got the
 advanced dressing station with a road made
 to Oak Camp for the
 motor ambulances which we had never seen before
 while out there in working order

2478 Q Motor ambulances

A Yes

2479 Q Not ruin ~~ambulances~~ carriage.

A No; they used the ~~a~~ ——— small steamers for
 take

taking wounded down. That was the only mode of conveyance they had at first. They could not take up a big gish ——— ship near to the trenches

2480 Lord Hugh Cecil: ^{There were} ~~Except~~ the ammunition carts of which you speak

a Yes, ~~except the~~ A.T. Carts

2481 Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge: Was that the first time on which you said that foresight exercised a On March 8th the medical arrangements for Column B were as good as ^{they} possibly could be under the very difficult circumstances

2482 Sir Archibald Williamson: The left bank of the river or the right
a The right

2483 Commander Wedgwood: You mean by the right the western side of the river

a The southern side

2484 Lord Hugh Cecil: The right bank as the stream goes

2485 Sir Archibald Williamson: Were these arrangements that were made made on the Dujalah Redoubt Side
a Yes. For those particular operations troops ^{from} ~~for~~ the left bank crossed to the right with our own ambulances and they were under Major D [?] one of our divisional doctors and he acted as A.D.M.S. for the operations of Column B. We took over the 19th British field ambulance and the 128th or 129th or 130th ~~ambulances~~. I could not say for certain which it was. We took ^{it} them to the right bank.

2486 Q Is Orak on the right bank

a No, Orak is on the left bank

2487 Q There were actions on both banks on that day
a Yes. The 28th Brigade was withdrawn from the 7th Division and went to the other bank where ~~they~~ joined with the 9th and 36th Brigades of Column B.

and so forth under General Campbell and the 19th and 24th Brigades remained on the left bank and made a feint there

2488

Q You do not mean motor ambulances; you mean field ambulances

A Field ambulances

2489 The

Chavmani: was the country practicable for motor ambulances
A Personally, I should ^{certainly} say so. They could have got along all right I think

2490

Sir Archibald Williamson: was it the case that the action at the Dujailah Redoubt was 17 miles from the place where the camp was where you started from. Seventeen miles I will say from the hospital

A I have put it down at 15, but I believe that that is an under estimate

2491

Q The wounded had to travel 15 to 17 miles distance from the field of battle to where they could receive proper attention

A Yes

2492

Lord Hugh Cecil: was that done in motor ambulances on this occasion

A No. I think I might say that there were no motor ambulances; there were practically none at any rate

2493

Q How was it done ~~at~~

A A.T. Carts and stretcher bearers.

2494

Chavman What was the country like on each side of the Tigris

A Very flat. After ~~the~~ rain it became very muddy and very heavy going but when it was dry it was very good to march on

2495

Q Would you say that the description of each side of the Tigris after heavy rain really resembled rather a paddy field

A Yes; it was terrible

2496

Q Was there a high bank which would be

avael

available in rain for motors

a From Orak camp up to our ~~front~~ ^{front} line trenches

we made a ~~bank~~ ^{bund} in March to keep the Zigais

out and after that a road was made between the

~~bank~~ ^{bund} and the camp so that motor ambulances could

go along it in April

2497 Lord Hugh Cecil: But that would hardly have been possible

in January when the mud was deep

a I do not think that motor ambulances could be moved

in January back from the collecting station to Orak

2498 Chairman Did you see any serious effort made to

supplement the River Transport

a I could not deal with that my Lord. ~~Yes~~ I

saw new boats arrive. There was always great

excitement when one did arrive.

2 That

Wheeler

8

Chapter 3

2499 2 That was river transport

1 Yes

2500 2 The river transport as I understand, was quite insufficient

~~1 Quite insufficient~~

2 Did you see any indications of an attempt made to vigorously supplement the River transport by improving the land facilities

1 No I did not see any but I could not see it.

2501 Lord Hugh Cecil There was no land transport as a matter of fact?

1 We were very short of ^{mule} ~~actual~~ transport. When ^{we} were landed at Ali Gharbari there were a certain number of cauls but there was no ~~transport~~ transport issued

so that they ^{keep it} ~~could get~~ out to the different brigades. It was always a matter of swopping over the whole time

Before the March the 8th operations ^{for instance} ~~then~~ ^{practically} ~~of~~ the transport of the 7th Division was ^{all} ~~begun~~ taken away ~~from them~~ and they were left with none while we took it on to the right bank for the operations

2502 the Chivanan Here your deliberate opinion I gather is after having had ^{some} time to think over the whole matter, that although the local conditions were very difficult, a very large proportion of the suffering which you describe was due to inadequate preparation and inadequate anticipation of ^{what} ~~all~~ the weats would be.

1 Yes I should certainly say so, my Lord.

2503 Earl of Droughmore You gave evidence before the Murcut Commission

1 Yes I did.

2504 2 Oral evidence or written evidence or both. The

The Vincent Commission proceeded rather by correspondence?
 A Sir William Vincent took down the whole of my evidence but I should like to state that I only had a few hours notice when I was very busy that I had to go before the Commission and we were moving up that night. We knew ^{that} we were in for a big show and I had services ^{to conduct} and I had very little time to think about what I should say ^{in evidence}. I had not ~~the time~~ to work out my evidence ~~at the time~~ then.

2505

Q You were examined on the spot

A I was examined on the spot

Meeurt
2506

Q You went with ^{the Meeurt} Division from France

A Yes

2507

Q You have described to us how as far as arriving in Mesopotamia went, the brigades arrived at different times

A Yes

2508

Q The 28th ~~arrived at~~ started at the beginning of November and you left on the 7th December from Marseilles

A Yes

2509

Q Did your hospitals go with you

A No; they followed the Divisional headquarters and they followed the combatant troops for the most part

2510

Q They arrived in Mesopotamia after you

A Certainly

2511

Q Did they leave Marseilles with you

A They were all at Marseilles when we were there well I would not like to say ^{all the ambulances were} at Marseilles but certainly I can remember visiting two of our ambulances in Marseilles

2512

Q You ~~stopped~~ ^{stopped} a little in Egypt. Were they with

with you then
All we did on the "Ivernia" was to ^{pick} ~~put~~ up
two Indian regiments at Port Said the 58th
Rifles and the 69th Punjabis and pick up
the 2nd Rajputs at Suez and then we went
straight on.

2573

Q You were not delayed in Egypt considerably
A No

2574

Q Was your proper medical equipment, that is to say,
the ambulances with you in Egypt when you
arrived

A No, ~~we~~ never saw anything of our ambulances
until certainly three weeks after I had been
up at the front and I am underestimating at best.

2575

Q Therefore they were three weeks ^{late} ~~that~~. I gather
from your answer that you do not know
whether they were not with you ^{when you arrived at Mesopotamia} because they
were delayed at Marseilles or because they were
delayed in Egypt

2576

A I cannot express an opinion on that - I cannot say
Q They were three weeks late ~~certainly~~ in arriving
in Mesopotamia

A Most certainly - ~~three weeks~~ ~~arriving to the front~~
^{most of the ambulances} they [^] marched up from Basra ~~most of the~~
~~ambulances did~~

2577

Q Your Division was at the front

A Yes

2578

Q Therefore ^{that was} the proper place ^{after all} for them to be

2579

A Yes they ought to have been up there before us
the Clearman before you

A Well the hospitals ought to be there so as to
be ready for any action but we had none
of our ambulances

2580

Lord Hugh Cecil As a general question, it would be
true to say that a large part of what you
found

first fault with was due to the delay in the medical units

to you most certainly

2521

I I want to ask you one question about short chaplains. You speak of a shortage of Chaplains on page 12 of your evidence. Can you give any figures at all as to the shortage. How many Chaplains ought there to have been and how many were there

to May I go back to when we started for France!

2522

I Certainly

to When we started for France there was only one Chaplain with the 7th Division and one Chaplain with the 3rd Lahore Division

2523

I How many ought there to have been

A The Indian ~~troops~~ would be ^{Establishment} ~~providing~~ ^{Chaplain} for one Church of England and one Church of Scotland ^{Chaplain} if necessary if there are ^{of} ~~English~~ ^{Scottish} regiments in the Division. There was no Roman Catholic Chaplain. After I had been in France about a month, I represented ~~to~~ ^{to} the Divisional Commander Sir Charles Anderson, and to Sir ~~James~~ ^{James} Wilcox and they sent me home. I came and saw Sir Arthur ~~Switzel~~ ^{Switzel} at the India office and I saw the ^{Chaplain} ~~Chaplain~~ General, and after a lot of trouble eventually they granted a Roman Catholic Chaplain for the Division because the Roman Catholics felt ~~it~~ very much having no one ~~at~~ ^{and} ~~there~~ ^{there} we got two more Church of England Chaplains but the moment orders came that we were to return to India the extra Church of England Chaplains were cut out, and I was told to go back alone so when we arrived in

Me

Mesopotamia there was only myself with the Division
 When we got up to the front I found ^{that} the
 Reverend Tibbs who had been at Amara
 for some considerable time had left there and
 had gone forward with General Aylmer two days
 before leaving no one at Amara to which place
 all the wounded were going. There was no
 chaplain of any denomination whatsoever at
 Amara at that time, and eventually Mr Tibbs
 returned there. ^{He} ^a ^{Scottish} ^{chaplain}
 and Mr Mc ^{Nelly} ^{Cornwall} also went there. He was
 with ^{the} 1st Seaforth's, and was ^{chaplain} ^{of} the two
^{officers} Scottish regiments in the Division and
 there was no Roman Catholic Chaplain for some
 time

10

2524

2 Then at that point even the low standard of
 the Indian establishment was not ^{kept up} ^{available}

1 No

2525

2 And the standard of the Indian establishment
~~was~~ ^{is} very much lower than what now prevails
 in ^{France}

1 Very much

2526
mosquito

Commander Wedgwood Captain ^{Aubrey Herbert} ~~Arthur~~ ^{in his}
^{mosquito nets} evidence says "I had some cases mainly in
 the front trenches but very few. There were
 no ~~hardly~~ anti fly chemicals up the Tigris"
 Can you confirm that at all

1 I never saw any mosquito net cases in the front
 trenches

2527

2 Neither for British nor Indian troops

1 No

2528

2 Don't not the Indian troops use mosquito nets
 in India at all

1 Yes ^{Raydo.} I remember coming to India for mosquito
 nets

nets for troops but they ^{had} did not arrive by the time I left

2 He speaks further about cigarettes and says that they would have made intolerable conditions more tolerable. "The ^{men} ~~man~~ ^{paid} ~~buy~~ ^{bought} fags from the Arabs at six times their price. It is ~~only~~ worth noting that these fags ought to have arrived free of charge but they were sold to Arabs on the way". Have you heard anything of the sort. Can ~~it~~ you confirm that

1 I know that the British soldiers complained bitterly of having to pay such an exorbitant price to Arabs for cigarettes

2 You never heard that they were looted and sold to Arabs on the way

1 Only hearsay evidence

2 "The officers had a very limited amount of condensed milk, and the ~~was~~ ^{men} a totally inadequate quantity. I ^{was} ~~am~~ told that ^{by a} ~~the~~ responsible and Senior officer ^{of} ~~of~~ India that at the first demand refused to supply condensed milk on the ground that ~~thought~~ it was unnecessary and expensive". Have you ever heard that particular story.

1 There was a great shortage of condensed milk

2 But you never heard that particular story.

1 No

2 ^{again he} says "I ^{The higher} ~~was~~ ^{was} medical authorities were savagely hated. I heard the remark more than once when Kut fell that our men would be better treated by the Turks than they had been by the Government of India."

DW

"Government of India". Did you ever hear anything as bad as that
 + No ~~the~~ I repeatedly heard the Government of India blamed

11
 2534

Q But you ~~had~~ never heard that the troops ^{would have} preferred to ^{have been} under the Turks

A No. ~~I stated that~~ they always said ^{that} they received very good treatment from the Turks at the fall of Kut. "The general ~~resentment~~

2535

Q resentment of those who thought they were in a position to know was directed against the alleged inaction on the part of the

senior doctors". You said that the doctors out there had all done very well you thought
 A I said that the ~~doctors~~ doctors working in ambulances did splendidly

2536

Q The senior ~~doctors~~ ^{medical officers} would be at the front. You speak of two Colonels who could not tackle cases because they were Colonels

A Yes; they considered themselves administrative

2537

Q Colonels and therefore they would do nothing

A They cannot do operations after an action. They are not capable I suppose of doing operations. Was there any sort of feeling against the senior medical officers, the Colonels not those who do the operations and who actually help the wounded, but the people who are supposed to make the arrangements

A I think the feeling was rather strong

2 You

2538
 2 You mean against the Senior Medical officers
 out in Mesopotamia and not against the
 officers in India

1 Against those at the base more especially

2 Not against the A.D.M.S.'s

11
 1 Certainly not against our own A.D.M.S.
 when he arrived - Colonel Westrop White, he
 could not have done better than he did
 He was indefatigable in his work

2540
 Sir Archibald Williamson You were present at the
 battles from the 7th to the 9th March

1 Yes

2541
 2 1 statement appeared in the " Scotsman " on the
 15th March which read as follows: - " The
 following official statement was last night issued
^{that is on the 14th March}
 on behalf of the India Office and the Red
 Cross Society - " The Joint Committee are officially
 informed that as regards the recent operations
 the G.O.C. has reported that he was extremely
 satisfied with the arrangements made for the
 wounded on the field and after removal from
 the scene of action". It goes on but the
 rest is unimportant. Now do you enquire in that

1 In Mesopotamia I think that the wounded
 were removed extraordinarily well but not as
 compared with France

2542
 2 Their removal you mean from the field of
 action presumably ~~would~~ to the base, that 15 or 17
 miles

1 My view ~~is~~ upon that is that owing to their
 being put into ~~that~~ these A.T. carts there
 was a tremendous amount of suffering. I can
 only corroborate what I have already said
 that certain officers who were badly hit
 in

2550 I would not say so then. I have only been in a ~~long~~ ^{tonga} ~~on~~ ^a ~~road~~ ^{road}

Mr Archibald Williamson were there as a matter of fact sufficient a J Carter to carry the wounded

I would not like to say. We got all our wounded away from Column B headquarters; that in all I know, I have only got to amplify my evidence as regards that on the point. For such a long journey the ~~number~~ ^{dooly} ~~beavers~~ got very tired indeed and were only kept going by the officers' orders. They were absolutely dead beat. I was talking to an officer ^{during} the last three days who ~~had~~ got back from there and he said that if it had not been for his own orderly ^{keeping the dooly beavers going} he would never have got back

2551 2 There were deplorable scenes on the movement of wounded from that battlefield back to Orak were there not in fact

I remained with the main forces. I saw the wounded ~~at~~ ^{off from} ~~the~~ ^{column B headquarters} ~~only~~, and I did not leave there till they had all gone

2552 2 Was that at the depression of the Dujalah Redoubt

I saw some way from the Redoubt in the depression. After that I did not see the wounded until very late that night when I got back to Orak Camp

2553 2 That depression itself was some distance from the firing line

Yes

2554 2 At the clearing station on the midnight of the 8th and 9th March was there absolutely no preparation for the reception of any one. Is that the fact

A A1

13
2535
A At column B headquarters?

Q I do not know about column B headquarters. This is the force ^{at} the Dujailah redoubt. ^{What I am putting to you} This ^{is} from one of the officers of the Highland regiments

A I do not agree with him

Q Was there preparation

A Yes

Q You saw preparation

A I certainly did. I was there at different periods

Q He states that it ^{was} simply a square of desert and the ^{tents} ~~tents~~ accommodated a very small percentage of the wounded

A That is true

Q The remainder had to sleep in the open without blankets

A They slept in the open; I would not like to say without blankets. I was only there you see till 11.30. and I then went up to bring in more wounded from the front, and I did not get back till ^{the} next morning

Q Is it true that the night was exceedingly cold

A I expect it was for a wounded man lying up ^{out} but for those ^{the whole time} working it was rather warm

Q The statement is made that there was no food the following morning for anyone. Is that true

A There was a shortage of food, and an officer who was ^{carried} ~~brought~~ back told me there was no food for the whole journey on the way home. They did not stop for food anywhere

Q Is it true that there was no water? I suppose that that means drinking water

A You mean at that particular place?

Q Yes

2563

2 Yes

A I would not like to say whether there was at that particular place

2564

2 The officer states that a great deal of agony and suffering might have been spared if more suitable conveyances had been provided. You agree

to yes

shelter

2565

2 Also if more adequate shelter had been provided in the way of tents against cold at night and heat in the day

I Certainly I think that when you start on what you hope will be a very successful march for the relief of Kut you ~~cannot~~ ^{may} take with you everything that ~~was~~ you would otherwise take.

2566

2 Was it not the case that the arrangements contemplated the taking of the redoubt and ^{that} no proper arrangements for bringing ~~the~~ ^{men} back had ever been thought of

I Well there was certainly a shortage of carts when the men were falling out on the march back in the afternoon there were carts

2567

2 ^{if it is true} ~~Can it be said~~ that there was not adequate food and not adequate shelter and water? ~~was~~ was not obtainable, ~~Can it~~ ^{is it} be properly reported in the papers that ~~that~~ ^{he} ~~is~~ ^{is} extremely satisfied with the arrangements made for the wounded on the field and ~~out~~ ^{for their removal from} the scene of action. ~~Is that correct~~

2568

I ^{Who is he? whose} ~~whose~~ description is that?

I The general officer Commanding

A I consider that under difficult circumstances they did their best - I adhere to what I have said with regard to that - but I do not think the medical arrangements were perfect

Con

2569

Commander Wedgwood It was ^{a better best} ~~on a better basis~~ than at any of the previous battles

2570

Q That is right
A In Archibald Williamson Less bad

2571

Q Yes. Major D [?] worked in a most extraordinary way
A Commander Wedgwood And ^{at} the April battle ^{it} was better again

2572

Q Yes ~~in~~ Archibald Williamson
A There is no reflection in those statements on the officers working there

2573

Q No
A But ^{there} is on the want of foresight ⁱⁿ the arrangements

2574

Q Yes
A You refer a good deal to the conditions on the ship you were appointed to

2575

Q Yes
A Have you read the Vincent Baingley report

2576

Q No I have not seen it; I should like to
A The statement is made that the officer in charge ~~that~~ ~~stated~~ ~~was~~ ~~negligent~~ ~~in~~ ~~his~~ ~~duty~~ medical charge of the "Julnar" was negligent in his duty, that the patients who were sent to him received insufficient food and no proper medical treatment and that they were discharged from hospital with orders to return to their regiments when they were fit to do so. These facts ~~were~~ reported at the time by General Kendal to Sir Fenton Aylmer who found, after enquiring, that the charges were not proved - the evidence that we have recorded, and the written statements that we have received, do not in our opinion support this finding, but in view of the fact that the decision was arrived at after an enquiry made at the time by an officer with first hand knowledge of the facts, we do not think we ought to differ ^{expressly} from it. We may say, however, that this ^{officer} was in our opinion ^{very} ^{fortunate} ⁱⁿ ^{being} ^{exonerated} ^{from} ^{any} ^{blame}.

Were you examined on this point by the Commission
+ I was

Commander Wedgwood ^{and at} the court martial

A There was no court martial

2577
2578 Sir Archibald Williamson It says "after inquiry"

+ I can tell you the whole history if you
wish to hear it

2579 Q It depends on how far it might be valuable
Sir Archibald Williamson Your evidence in fact is
entirely at variance with the finding of Sir Fenton Aylmer

* Your evidence is very strongly against the Medical
officer in charge of this boat

+ Most certainly

2580 Q Therefore you disagree entirely with the statement
that the charges were not proved

+ Yes

2581 Commander Wedgwood ~~and yet~~ you were not examined

+ I was never examined by General Aylmer

2582 General Sir Neville Lyttelton The general held ^{the} inquiry
himself did he not

+ No I know nothing about that

~~Sir Chairman Archibald Williamson we ought to~~

~~Chairman I~~ ~~adequate inquiry~~

~~Chairman I think we ought to see what the nature~~
~~of the inquiry was~~ 28th

28th
29th
Waters On January 28th I was sent for by Sir
Percy Lake when he came up to Crathie

the first time and I saw him and Sir Fenton
and Aylmer alone and Sir Percy Lake asked me
to tell him absolutely frankly what I had

seen ~~and~~ I told ~~them~~ ^{that} on that occasion and
it was after that ^{that} I heard that an inquiry
into the conduct of the medical officer on the
"Julnaff" was made but I ~~did~~ ^{do} not even

Know to this day until you read it out what the finding was. I had never heard it by Archibald Williamson: You say there was not a Court martial

Q I was never called

2 You were before Sir Fenton Aylmer

Q That was only a private talk.

I think I am correct in saying that ~~General Campbell~~ ^{General Kemball} in giving evidence before the Vincent Commission refers to that in his evidence. Perhaps you will look at that evidence. He told me to touch on this particular point

2 It was General Lake you spoke to not General Aylmer was it not

Q Both of them

Commander Wedgwood Your remarks to Generals Aylmer and Lake got them to start an inquiry into this Officer's conduct

Q After this statement was forwarded from General ^{Kemball} Campbell ~~embroidery~~ the statement of certain officers at to Sir George Young was sent and it was sent on for further inquiry. If you look at what General ^{Kemball} Campbell actually said when he sent that evidence forward you will see what he ^{was} asked for

Captain

Sir