

Confidential

Mesopotamia Commission

Tuesday 3rd October 1916

Seventh Day

Members Present

The Right Hon. Lord George Francis Hamilton G.C.S.I.
in the Chair

The Right Hon. the Earl of Donoughmore K.P.

General the Right Hon. Sir Neville Gerald Lytton G.C.B., G.C.V.O.

Admiral Sir Apprian Arthur George Bridge G.C.B.

Lord Hugh Cecil M.P.

Sir Archibald Williamson Bart M.P.

Mr John Hodge M.P.

Commander Josiah C. Wedgwood M.P.

Mr R.G. Duff, Secretary

C.S.I., I.M.S.

India

① Lt. Colonel Giffard ~~MAF~~ Sworn and Examined
4892 Chairman we have got your statement which we
will take as your evidence in chief and we
will put some questions to you upon it.
a certainly (Insert Paper marked A)

4893 2. During the year 1915 you are of opinion that
48-62 although there was a good deal of discomfort
suffered by the sick and wounded there was a
breakdown, either at Basra or at Bombay

a Yes
4894 Lord Hugh Cecil: Do you say that there was no
breakdown

and

48

A

74
27.9.16.

B

MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION.

B8

STATEMENT BY LIEUT.-COLONEL G. G. GIFFARD, C.S.I., I.M.S.

24th September, 1916.

1. The following notes are the result of your request made to me last Friday, that I should write down some outline of my experiences with Force D, and my ideas as to the reasons for the alleged inefficiency of the treatment and transport of the sick and wounded in Mesopotamia.

My experience covers the period from December, 1914, to December, 1915.

2. I was employed in command of the hospital ship S.S. "Madras" from November, 1914, to July, 1915, during which time I travelled in her nine times to Basra and back to Bombay. I was A.D.M.S. (i.e., Administration Medical Officer) of the Poona divisional area—which includes the Bombay brigade—from the end of July to 17th December, 1915. I was therefore in a position to see and know what was going on at the Base in Mesopotamia and in India during the whole of 1915.

3. During that year there was nothing either at Basra or at Bombay that could be considered to be a breakdown, although the difficulty of dealing with the large numbers of sick and wounded was very great, and many patients suffered considerable discomforts, especially the sepoys.

4. When Force D sailed it took the amount of personnel and equipment which is laid down in the Regulations for a land expedition of similar size on the Indian Frontier, but the Indian Frontier expeditions have good roads and railways behind them and the fighting line is seldom far away from the base. This personnel and equipment very soon proved to be inadequate for a force operating far from India, in a very unhealthy country without roads and without railways and provided with no special river medical transport.

5. The expedition was not supplied with a single hospital ship, nor with a single river hospital boat, barge, ambulance or floating hospital.

6. After the capture of Basra the British soldiers' hospital and the Indian soldiers' hospital were established in two large houses on the right bank of the river. Tents were pitched in the gardens around, but these soon became uninhabitable as the river rose and flooded the gardens. At the time that the twin-expeditions to East Africa and to Mesopotamia sailed from Bombay there were no hospital ships in Indian waters, and up to Christmas, 1914, there were only two afloat, i.e., the H.S. "Loyalty," supplied by the Indian Princes, and the H.S. "Madras," supplied by the people of the Madras Presidency.* The H.S. "Loyalty" was unable to go to Basra, as she drew too much water to be able to cross the "bar" at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, so the H.S. "Madras" (my ship) was the only hospital ship serving the Mesopotamian expedition until the H.S. "Takadu," in July, and the H.S. "Marallo," in August, 1915, were got ready by the Indian Government and were equipped at Bombay.

7. As stated above, the sick and wounded suffered some considerable hardships in their transit to Bombay on ordinary (returning) transports, but the H.S. "Madras," running up the Gulf once in every three weeks, brought

* H.S. "Madras" fitted to carry 300 in cots and 200 walking cases; 20 officers. Maximum load carried whilst I was in command, 580 (overcrowded), but as there were about 7,000 sick in Basra and no other hospital ship and the weather was fine we deliberately overcrowded the ship and no harm came of it.

(C 48-43)

48-62

down the badly-wounded and seriously-ill cases (both European and Indian) and all the sick and wounded British officers. After August, 1915, up till the time of the advance to Kut, I know from personal knowledge that as far as sick transport *by sea* was concerned officers and men had little to complain of (with the exception of the transport loads), but it was very obvious to me that Basra hospital accommodation was becoming quite insufficient by May, 1915, and that the standard of treatment and of comfort was very low, and that most hospital ships were already required.

8. I heard at Basra from officers who had come down from Kurna and Amara, and who had served at Awaz and the attacks on Nazareah, that the field ambulances were totally inadequate to deal with the sick, but as I did not myself go up the river above Basra I am only able to testify that even at that time, May-July, 1915, the Medical Department had no river hospital ships or river ambulances and none had been ordered nor were they expected. I gathered from conversations with the G.O.C. and the D.I.S. that the expense of procuring them was considered by "Simla" to be prohibitive.

9. The sick and wounded, up till my last visit to Basra were brought down the river in any sort of boat or barge or flat that was coming down empty, and they were similarly brought off from the hospitals on the river bank to my ship in any sort of boat or native (Arab) barge that S. and T. could supply. At my last visit a fairly comfortable river steamer was used. At this time (July, 1915) the medical officers who came down the river with the sick were loud in their complaints of the conditions up country. One senior colonel, R.A.M.C., told me that he was keeping careful notes "for when the Inquiry begins."

The surgeon-general must at that date have been perfectly well aware of the gross overcrowding of patients and the serious deficiency of medicines and comforts at Kurna and in the field ambulances further up the river at Awaz.

10. In May, 1915, and during the later months the patients in the base hospitals at Basra were not comfortable. The heat was almost unbearable and they were largely housed in thatched sheds. I saw these sheds badly overcrowded, the attendants were too few, there were hardly any ice, electric fans (although offered by the Madras Fund in December, 1914*) had not been installed and in every way it was a poor performance.

It was at that date (May, 1915) obvious to most of the medical officers that even at Basra the "breaking strain" was nearly reached. When in Poona I heard that had been decided to advance still further up the river I knew that "breakdown" was inevitable. I have doubt that the Surgeon-General knew it too.

11. The attitude of the high officials at Basra with which I discussed the situation in the hot weather of 1915 was "It is no good asking India for better things."
"The money is not forthcoming."
"India cannot do anything better."
"The resources of Bombay are already exhausted."
"England in Europe is too busy to think of us."

12. One incident, however, has remained to me unexplained. I told Surgeon-General Hathaway that I thought the Madras Fund could afford to give two motor boats to the hospitals. He jumped at the

* Secretary of State was most improperly misinformed

On my return to Bombay, H.E. the Governor of Madras at my suggestion wired G.O.C. Basra making the offer on behalf of the Fund. The answer from the G.O.C. was to thank H.E. for the offer, to decline it, as motor boats are not necessary. How any G.O.C. or his staff could make this statement when more hospital ships were required, to say nothing of the need for any and every form of floating ambulance transport, I cannot understand.

13. About this time (hot weather, 1915) the Bengal Presidency fitted out in Calcutta the river hospital ship "Bengal," but she was unfortunately lost at sea and never reached Basra. Government apparently at that time had made no attempt to get any river ambulances ready, and as the monsoon blew a gale of wind between Bombay and the Gulf from June 5th to the end of September, during which time no river steamer can put to sea, if any had been ready, they could not have reached Basra.

14. From everyone, whether Generals, Surgeon-Generals, or S. and T. officers, I heard the same story: "Simla will not pay." "Simla will not admit that there is a war on." These examples will suffice to exemplify this idea taken from my own experience.

15. In January, 1915, Colonel Hehir was D.M.S. at Basra, and the patients were already too many for the hospital accommodation, so that some of them were being treated on a hired transport which was lying anchored in the river opposite the hospitals. Colonel Hehir told me that he was very puzzled to know what to do about hospital accommodation, as the G.O.C. had told him that he must take the patients off the ship as the expense of keeping the ship was too great, and that Simla was already complaining of the expense of the expedition. They were taken off.

16. When I was appointed A.D.M.S.; Poona, I found it impossible to make adequate arrangements for the train loads of sick and wounded coming to Poona from Bombay, as neither the hospitals of Poona nor my office were supplied with telephones. I asked the G.O.C. to sanction three telephones. He told me that he had no power to do so, but that it required the sanction of the Government of India. He eventually allowed them to be installed, but told me that it would take six months to obtain sanction, and that I might have them installed provided that I understood that I might have to pay for them. It was impossible for me to do my work efficiently, so I took the risk, and hope that I shall not be called upon to pay.

17. Whilst A.D.M.S. at Poona I was very dissatisfied with the hospital accommodation provided in Bombay: the large number of sick and unfit men who were ginning in August, 1915, to arrive from Egypt and France (sepoys). I persuaded the G.O.C., 6th Division, to come to Bombay with me and to interview the G.O.C., Bombay Brigade, on the subject. General Knight, the D.C., Bombay, told me that he knew quite well that the men on the Maidan in the rains were not sufficient for the work, but that he was unable to get sanction for anything from Simla because of the expense. The urgency was

so great that he had actually built one hospital pavilion without sanction.

II.

18. I am not quite clear as to whether my *opinion* as to the cause or causes of the medical breakdown is or is not invited. If it is acceptable to the Commission I herewith give in outline my views.

19. Causes:—

- (1) The chief cause was the decision to advance beyond Kurna.
 - (2) The splitting up of the expedition in three and later into five smaller armies, each operating far away from the Basra base in a roadless and railroadless desert country without increasing the Medical Department.
 - (3) The fear of spending money.
 - (4) The despatch of Force D with insufficient supplies and with entirely insufficient transport.
 - (5) The absence of hospital ships.
 - (6) The great difficulty of establishing comfortable base hospitals at Basra, which was a filthy overcrowded Arab town two miles from the river and surrounded by desert.
 - (7) The fact that everything had to be brought by sea from Bombay and that the resources of India (medical and surgical) are very small; so that most things required for hospitals must be brought from England.
 - (8) The standard of comfort in Indian hospitals for *Europeans* is lower even in peace than it is in England (less expensive), and for sepoys so low that the hospitals for Indian soldiers are hardly to be classed as hospitals at all. The R.A.M. Corps N.C.Os. and men do not come to India.
 - (9) A very large proportion of the personnel of Indian field-ambulance and base hospitals is made up, on mobilization, of temporarily employed untrained and very inefficient natives, so that comfortable hospitals with such a scratch medical corps are almost impossible of realisation; and such conditions always throw an extra strain on the medical officers.
 - (10) The standard of comfort expected by soldiers, and especially by the British officer, has very greatly risen during the last 20 years; but "comfort" spells "money," which has never yet been available for Indian military medical efficiency.
20. When I left India (December, 1915) I heard from many officers (but I had no official knowledge) that it was very difficult, if not impossible, to get medical supplies from England or more medical men from India.
- I also heard that the reinforcements coming from Egypt and England had not taken with them the correct proportion of medical staff and equipment and had not taken any river transport with them. I have no means of verifying these reports, but, if true, these facts must be of importance in arriving at the cause of the trouble.

Q When I say ^{no} breakdown I mean that there was nothing bad

~~Q~~ ^{Madras} We have had evidence to show that there was a general shortage of supplies. It is a little difficult is it not when there is a general shortage of supplies to exactly indicate where the shortage ends and where ~~the~~ breakdown begins

4896 2 a Yes ^{although} ~~if there was~~ ^{were} a shortage ^{and} inconvenience you think there was evidence to justify the use of the word breakdown

a As regards Bombay and Basra, yes

4897 2 During that year

a Yes

4898 2 ~~The great~~ In your judgment the great defect was the matter of special river medical transport

a Yes

4899 2 The only hospital ships afloat were the "Loyalty" and the "Madras"

a Yes

4900 2 And those were both supplied by voluntary effort

a Yes, both

4901 2 ~~and~~ The sick and wounded in their transit ^{to} ~~from~~ Bombay ^{and} Madras had to be conveyed in ordinary transports

a Those that we did not take, but at the beginning there were not very many over. We cleared the base pretty well each fortnight, but as time went on it became too much for us. There were one or two troopships that went down crowded with sick and wounded who in my opinion would have been far better in a hospital ship

4902 2 Then at the beginning of May 1915 it was clear to you that the Basra hospital accommodation was becoming insufficient and that ~~the~~ ^{the} standard

treatment and of
of comfort was very low and therefore more hospital
ships were required

Q Yes

4903

2 For ~~therefore~~ and further you consider ^{that} the officers who came down from Kurma and Amara with the field ambulances were quite inadequate to deal with the sick

Q ^{yes they told me} It might be so

4904

2 As the field ambulances were really doing the work of ~~the~~ clearing hospitals and of a base hospital
Q Some of them were really used as advance base hospitals I believe.

4905

2 You came in contact with many medical officers who came down the river with the sick
Q We were up there every three weeks, and men were always coming down. The ship was very well found
They made ~~them~~ ^{it} a sort of club, whenever we were there. They came in and I saw dozens of them

4906

2 The general opinion was that the conditions of the ^{the} country were very bad
Q Well they were pretty bad

4907

2 ~~Then generally~~ You say that you ^{gathered} ~~inferred~~ from conversations with the General Officer Commanding ^{medical} and the Director of ~~Military~~ ^{Medical} Services that the ~~cause~~ ^{cost} of ~~overcrowding~~ ^{procuring} the hospital ships and river ambulances was considered by "Simla" — ~~simply~~ ^{simply} to be prohibitive
Q That was what was being said. ~~That is hardly~~ ^{That is hardly} evidence — ^{it was} only in conversation. It was the ordinary opinion ^{that} and that was supposed to account for the trouble.

3 4908

2 You ^{gathered} ~~inferred~~ that from conversation with the General Officer Commanding and not from hearsay evidence

Q Well, ~~~~~ I had a good long

int

interview with Sir Arthur Barratt and I understood him to say that

4999 2 You found ^{that there was} the same idea in the minds of the Director of Medical Services

a Yes, I understood so

4910 2 Then going down a little further and taking paragraph 11 which refers to the same subject you found that that was the general impression amongst the officials at Basra

a Yes I think I may say so

4911 2 The specific statements you make are that the opinion was that it was no use asking India for better things

a This is what went on in ordinary conversation amongst ~~the~~ officers up there. I was not in a position to check the accuracy of it, but that is what everybody was saying

4912 2 Now what should you say, Colonel Siffard, was the ^{effect} ~~mark~~ of these ideas and this impression upon the officers who held them. Did it deter them, do you think from asking for things which otherwise they would have ^{asked for} ~~done~~ or from pressing those demands

a Yes I think so

4913 2 Would you say that it was an exaggeration to assert that the general belief amongst officers engaged in this class of work was that the Expedition was being run on the cheap

a ^{most certainly} ~~most certainly~~ That was the distinct opinion amongst all of us as far as I could gather from ordinary conversation

4914 Lord Hugh Cecil: Was it generally known that the additional expense of the Expedition fell upon the British Exchequer and not on the Indian Exchequer

a I do not think that we knew anything about

3

that at all. As a matter of fact I think it was not so when we were up there was it?

Q Yes, it was so from the beginning of the war as I was in East Africa just before. They told me that the British Government had taken over the Expedition but nothing was said at the time that the British Government had taken over the Mesopotamia Expedition

4916

Q The ^{arrangement was that the} military expenditure ^{by India} was to remain the same in time of war as in time of peace

A That was in the papers ~~that said the pay of the troops to be borne by~~
Q ~~What is this~~ about the ~~ordinary~~ expenditure

A ~~The ordinary expenditure~~

4917

Q The pay of the troops ^{to be} ~~was~~ borne by India and all ~~the~~ additional expenses by the Imperial Exchequer

A I do not think that ~~they~~ ^{it} made much difference

4918

Q I am not suggesting that ~~they~~ ^{it} did but was that in the minds of those who made these criticisms

A I do not know; I could not tell you at all

4919

^{Chairman} Q I assume that this idea got its origin from the difficulty there was in getting things which were asked for from India

A I suppose so, but I do not know, so I could not answer the question

4920

Q You suggested to Surgeon General Hathaway that the Madras funds should give two large motor boats

A Yes

4921

Q That offer was refused by the General Officer Commanding

A Yes, I saw the telegram refusing

4922

Q Who was the General Officer Commanding

A General Nixon

4923

Q Now in your judgment as an experienced medical officer and Surgeon, you think that the Surgeon General must have been aware that the hospitals and

and ambulances were grossly overcrowded and there was a serious deficiency of medicines and comforts up the river

Q I did not see how he could avoid ^{knowing it;} sending them; ^{that} why it existed

4924 Commander Wedgwood Do you mean by that Surgeon General Hathaway

a Yes

4925 Lord Hugh Cecil: The serious deficiency you say in your ^{written} evidence was at Kurna

a The really ^{serious} cause of the deficiency is only hearsay on my part. I never went to Kurna

4926 Chaurman: The serious deficiencies were above Basra

a Yes, above

4927 2 Then you go on to say that from everybody you heard the same story: "Simla will not admit that there is a war."

a Yes, that is what ^{ordinarily} originally was said

4928 2 Now, have you ever been in a frontier campaign

a Yes

4929 2 Was the equipment and the medical establishment of this Mesopotamian Expedition in its early stages

much on the same scale as those ^{for a} on the frontier campaign. ^{more than 20}

a Well it is ~~19~~ years ago since I was ⁱⁿ ~~with~~ one that

~~20 years ago~~ it was ~~then~~ in Upper Burma and things were pretty bad then because the country was ^{frantically} ~~awfully~~ difficult. So that in my experience things had not improved very much

4930 2 Colonel Hether What was the position of ^{Colonel} ~~General~~ Hether

a He started with being the principal Medical Officer of the whole Expedition but he was superseded afterwards - at least when the Expedition got larger Surgeon General Hathaway came up.

4931 2 He informed you that Simla was already complaining ^{of the} expense

of the Expedition

- Q That is what he told me in Basra
- 4932 Q That is in January 1915
- a Yes
- 4933 Q Then you wished to have some telephones
- a I simply gave ^{gave} ~~those~~ examples of ~~those~~ that came ^{personal} to my knowledge ~~and~~ the difficulty of getting things
- 4934 Q And those telephones were to be put up in India in order to enable you to make adequate arrangements for the arrival of the sick and wounded and you were told that it would take six months to obtain sanction
- a Yes. General Cowper told me so
- 4935 Q He ^{was} the General Commanding where
- a He was the General Commanding in Poona
- 4936 Q You put those up yourself, running the risk
- a He eventually sanctioned them but the understanding was that probably I should have to pay for them
- 4937 Q But could he sanction them
- a No he could not.
- 4938 Q While you were in an official position at Poona, you were very dissatisfied with the hospital accommodation provided in Bombay for the sick and wounded who were coming from Egypt and from France
- a Yes
- 4939 Q And those I suppose were in addition to the men coming from Mesopotamia
- a Oh yes, of course. They poured in before we were ready for them. That is what it came to
- 4940 Q General Knight Commanding Officer in Bombay told you just the same thing that although ~~the~~ ~~tents~~ he knew quite well that tents on the Maidan in the rains were

not

not sufficient for ^{sick} the men but that he was unable to get sanction ^{for} ~~for~~ anything ^{better from Simla because of the expense} ~~for an improvement.~~

Q He said "go on", told me that most certainly ~~a most certainly~~

4941 Q And then in consequence he built ^a the hospital pavilion without sanction

A Yes

4942 Q You belong to the Indian Medical Service

A Yes

4943 Q I see ^{from} your concluding evidence that you are of opinion that the standard of comfort ~~to~~ of treatment in the hospitals provided for the Indian Army is very ^{inferior} ~~inefficient~~ compared ^{to} ~~with~~ that which is provided in England for the British Army

A ^{Here} Well, I happen to know what I am talking about, because I have just been with the First Army in France for a fortnight and there is no comparison between the two

4944 Lord Hugh Cecil: That is apart from deficiencies in the Indian ~~Government~~ accommodation you are of opinion that the standard was inferior.

~~A I doubt whether they come up to the~~

A ~~Standard,~~ but I doubt whether your gentlemen would consider that the Sepoys' Hospitals in peace time in India are hospitals at all. They are little ordinary houses

4945 Earl of Donoughmore: Regimental in their organization

A Yes. We have been trying to get them put under the Department for the last 15 years but it is a question ^{again} of expense, I am afraid

4946 Chairman Not only is the treatment and accommodation in peace time in Indian Hospitals very inferior

A You say Indian Hospitals

4947 Q Native

A That is different. The hospitals for the British soldiers
 and

and the hospitals for the Indian soldiers

5
 were ~~were~~ quite different

4948 2 Now, as regards the personnel ^{for} ~~have~~ the

hospitals in India there have been complaints

made by previous witnesses that there is

no reserve of menials or orderlies organized

in peacetime which can be drawn upon in

war time

a Yes; as far as I know there is not any reserve.

I have never ~~them~~ seen it

9
 Whelan

2 The

- 62492 The Complaint is that you consequently in time of emergency have to go into the Bazaar.
- 1 When you mobilise you go into the Bazaar. He always
 4950 2 do that ^{obviously} inferior.
 You get in consequence a very ~~inefficient~~ class of man
 A Well of course you do
- 4951 Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge ~~not~~ quite untrained
 A Yes
- 4952 Chairman So that the result of the system ^{is} that low on the standard of hospital comfort for Native ~~troops~~ ^{troops} in times of peace, in times of war it gets worse
 A I would not say that because in times of war you have an organised hospital for Native troops. Although the subordinates are poor stuff yet ~~though there~~ there is an organised hospital for a brigade ~~at a time~~, but in peace time each regiment makes its own local arrangements and they are very poor. I do not mean to imply that the war conditions of the Sepoy are worse than in peace time, because I think ^{that} in some ways they are better
- 4953 Mr Hodge But there is a ~~deficiency~~ ^{de} deficiency of accommodation
 A & in war?
- 4954 2 Yes
 A It depends entirely on the conditions of the war. If you are in a healthy country and there is not much fighting going on it is all right.
- 4955 2 Yes but we are referring to Mesopotamia
 A Well things got along all right until they went up the river
- 4956 2 Their defects began to show themselves
 A Certainly
- 4957 Chairman ~~then~~ You think that the splitting up

up of the expedition into separate smaller portions, each operating away from the Basra base put an extra strain upon the medical department & yes it always does. If you break ^{up} a force it always makes it more difficult to manage

4958 2 And three various expeditions put a still further strain (at the battle of Shaiba in April ^{yes for instance} ~~there~~ there was a column operating with at Ahwas a column up the river, another one at Nasiriyah one at Shaiba and there there was the base. The expedition had gone on like that. There are no roads and no railways

4959 Lord Hugh Cecil First was after the advance to Amara ~~at~~ began & I think Amara was a little after that

4960 Quarran Now you say that you were told by various officers but it ~~was~~ ^{not} official that it was very difficult if not impossible to get medical supplies from England

& I was told that by storekeeper at Bombay. The medical storekeeper in Bombay is one of our officers. He is a colonel

4961 General Sir Neville Lytton Do you mean to say ^{through} the Store Department of the India Office here when ^{you say} ~~do you mean~~ from England

a That is the only way that the stores in Bombay can get anything

4962 2 You ~~were~~ ^{were} not aware that Sir Alfred Keogh made every demand that was made on him for supplies - for medical ~~in that country~~ stores and everything

a I do not know that any were ever asked for out of the ordinary routine ^{way} ~~to~~ at the time I am speaking of

Clear

4963

Chairman your hospital ship I suppose periodically
I went to ~~Basra~~ ^{Basra} and remained there for some time.

We generally stayed about four days or five
days. On one occasion we turned around and
came back on the second day in a hurry

4964 Q You ~~saw~~ ^{saw} that a good deal of what is called
the fort of Basra

A Yes a great deal

4965 Q And you saw I suppose a good deal of disem-
barkation of stores and of troops from Bombay
for the expedition

A Yes the whole time we were there

4966 Q Did there a decent system of organization
at Basra

A It was very difficult, there were no piers;
there were simply the river banks. The big
ships ^{lay} at anchor in the middle of the river
and you had to put everything on shore
as best you could. The R E were making ^{some}
^{little} wooden jetties as fast as they could go but
it was a very slow process

4967 Q How did ~~they~~ your wounded get on board
the hospital ship

A Any way they could in native boats and ships
boats and these little things they call wallahs?

4968 Q You had no motor launches

A I had a couple but they were not big
enough to take wounded. I could ^{only} ~~take~~ ^{take} the
boats. I was asked by Lord ^{Pentland} ~~(?)~~ to state

1? said anything that was wanted and I tried to
^{buy} ~~provide~~ motor boats in Bombay or anywhere
I ⁱⁿ ~~wanted~~ ^{indeed} that I could
but it was impossible as they did
not exist

4969 Q When did you leave Bombay a on

On the 17th December 1915

4970 Q Did you see much of the disembarkation of troops for France at Bombay ~~from France from Bombay from France~~

A Yes I was in there every three weeks

4971 Q Was there ^{any} ~~any~~ one high officer in charge of the work

A Of which work?

4972 Q The disembarkation work

A Yes; there was no high military officer. The General Officer Commanding in Bombay and his staff looked after it all. He had at ~~that~~ some time a Colonel and then a Captain and then some officers who lived in the docks under him and the shipping part of it was done by the Royal Indian Marine

4973 Q There was no special staff of disembarkation officers

A Yes there was there was an disembarkation Commandant who was a General himself. He had control of the ~~thing~~ and there was a staff Colonel for disembarkation, two staff Captains, or three and a staff Medical officer, a Captain I do not know what the Indian Marine had. There were a lot of them about. I believe that Captain Lumsden the head of the Marine was in much the same position as the General; that is to say he controlled the whole thing with special officers

4974 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: A very much larger staff than in peace time

A Yes much larger

4975 ^{chairman} Q Did you hear any complaints from Medical officers that their medical units were broken up in the disembarkation

Do you mean when the expedition started?

4996

2 Yes
I was not there then. I heard a great deal about ~~them~~^{it} of course

4977

2 You heard that the units were broken up.
Well for instance ~~this~~ I heard from Colonel Johnson who was a great personal friend of mine - D.M.S. in East Africa - that ~~when their~~^{another} expedition started they put the medical things in I think he said 15 different ships

4978

2 That was East Africa
Bombay was having an awful time of it mind you. ~~force~~ It was the last expedition to go they had to collect ships from everywhere and it was a very difficult thing. The Alexandria docks were not properly finished and they did their best; but I admit that it was a poor ~~one~~^{best} ~~to~~^{to} France Earl of Devonshire. There were expeditions ^{to} East Africa ~~at~~^{and} Mesopotamia

4979

2 And Egypt
^{Chairman?} I gathered that the embarkation of ~~you~~^{the} wounded on to the hospital ship at Bastia had to be done in any boat that was available

Yes, it had to be done so

4980

2 Stretcher cases
Stretcher cases came up on stretchers

4981

2 But were ^{they} put into any boat available, brought alongside and hoisted up

49

2 Well it was not so bad. They were carefully put down on the stretchers. The ship had a derrick fitted with special tackle

and a large sort of box. The stretcher was put in the ~~deck~~^{box} and they came up on deck quite comfortably; they did not suffer much

4982 2 It was not too bad

A No

4983 2 That was not as convenient as piers and going alongside

A No. It took longer

4984 2 At Bombay you got alongside the pier & we came alongside the wharf inside the Alexandra dock. That was ~~so~~ splendid; ~~they~~^{we} had motor ambulances and everything there

4985 2 You had much the same provision as in France in fact

A Not as good as at ~~Paris~~ Boulogne

4986 2 From Bombay onwards you had ambulance trains.

A Yes

4987 2 Satisfactory arrangements Properly fitted up carriage trains

4988 A Yes ^{there was} ~~there were~~ nothing wrong with these arrangements ~~were satisfactory~~

4989 A Lord Hugh Cecil though you say there was no break down, you also say that the base hospitals at Basra were not comfortable and that there was a deficiency of much needed ^{comforts} ~~things~~ like ice ~~machines~~ and electric fittings fans

A Quite so but may I just remind you that Basra is not a town like London or Liverpool. It is simply a Turkish town two miles from the river. When we got there we ~~with~~ simply had the banks of the river with palm trees and ~~rice~~ ^{rice} on four houses and that is all

4990 2 And that ^{was} perfectly well known to the Indian Government. The B. I. have been leading

A Yes

trading there for more than 40 years
2 No adequate provision was made in point of
fact for ice and electric fans.

As you cannot get ice machinery and things like
that in India in a hurry. It is all very
well ^{but} India has not the capacity for ^{suddenly} getting
hurry out things like Europe has.

4992. I This was May 1915 and the expedition
started in November 1914, so that there
would have been plenty of time to get them
As they there would have been.

It may suggest that when the expedition started,
and for some time afterwards, there was a
general feeling that the war would be over
in six months before the hot weather

4993 Chairman the ^{Mesonot Bagdad} ~~Bassor~~ expedition

As the whole war. I think that very few
people thought it was going to go on for
years

4994 Lord ^{Hugh} Cecil. These deficiencies in hospital comforts
at Basra and the deficiencies of which you
have heard in medicines and comforts at
Kurna must have been perfectly well known
to the authorities in India

As they ought to have been

4995 2 They were known at any rate to the
Surgeon General necessarily

As well they must have been, I suppose

4996 2 Therefore when the advance to Amara was
under consideration, they must have been in
the minds of those concerned

As I hope they were

4997 2 Surgeon General Hathaway was principal medical
officer there; he was Director of Medical
Services

5004 2 Certainly, but supposing you had been directing the medical services you would have ^{had} more hospital ships if you could have got them

A Most certainly, if I could have got them.

5005 2 Now was it the case so far as you could judge that a certain number of the sick were classed as convalescents when they really were sick

A Convalescents are sick

5006 2 But ~~they~~ ^{they} were classed as convalescents ^{when} they were not convalescent, but ^{were} still acutely sick

A No

5007 2 You did not see that

A No that was not done

5008 2 Were there persons classed as convalescents who ought to have been classed as hospital cases on the transports

A Yes on two voyages.

5009 2 There were

A Yes in many cases my opinion was

5010 2 Quite so ^{for that} ~~only~~ ^{was responsible} ~~and~~ ^{improper} classification —

A When you say "classification" I do not ^{mean} ^{classified} in the books of the expedition as such; they came down on transports but if hospital ships had been available they would certainly have come in those. That is what I mean

5011 2 Were the transports improvised hospital ships or were they treated merely as transports

A Two I know were improvised hospital ships

5012 2 It is ^{alleged} ~~stated~~ that at one period of the expedition ^{sick} ~~sick~~ persons were ^{who} really required the comforts and care of a hospital were classed as convalescents and sent without any of the accommodation of

a hospital on an ordinary transport

I I did not see them

5013

Q You did not see anything of the kind
a I saw two transports ^{in the gulf} ~~two transports~~ one of I saw one of them

start and both of them arrive; ~~because~~ we passed them
in the ^{gulf} They had only one doctor or perhaps
two. ~~He~~ ^{One} had only one doctor, that I know

Q They had on board a large number of men,
cot cases who should have been in hospital
ships

5014

Q ~~But~~ The transport ~~was~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~a~~
hospital ship ^{which} ~~it~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~treated~~ ~~as~~ ~~a~~
convalescent ship

I I do not quite know what you mean by
^{treated as a} convalescent ship

5015

Q I mean, did they put on the ship the
necessary such comforts or the necessary personnel
for a hospital apart from ^{the question} whether it was
fitted up as a hospital

I No. They had ^{not} got it. As the result of
that the "Takadu" was ordered to equipped
~~arrived~~ in Bombay

5016

Q With regard to the slowness with which
applications were ^{got through} brought to the Indian Government
~~you~~ could ^{you} give evidence as to the ~~structure~~
for making an application

a Do you mean in the field?

5017

Q Take the case of the telephones

a It was the peace time ~~organ~~ routine

5018

Q Was it very slow

a The point was that no change was made
on account of the war. ^{where} ~~until~~ I left India
practically no change was made except that
you were allowed to use the telegraph
Gath or

- 5019 2 ^{rather more freely} The routine of peace time was maintained in war
 & you practically as far as getting things done
 concerned
- 5020 2 Given in respect of Europeans, you say the
 standard of comfort in ~~the~~ Indian hospitals
 is lower than what prevails now in France
- Q Yes
- 5021 2 Decidedly lower
- A Yes, I think so
- 5022 2 Do you attribute that to the desire for economy?
 & Well we have been brought up to believe
 that.
- 5023 Mr Stodge had the Red Cross & any motor ambulance
 at Basra
- A Not in my time
- 5024 Commander Wedgwood. You said in answer to Mr
Stodge Colonel Gifford that "things went on all
 right until we got up the river". I think
 you may like to modify that somewhat.
- A I mean to say beyond Basra or beyond
 Karm Kurma I had better ^{say} ~~say~~ perhaps
- 5025 2 Until the advance on Amara was made
- Q Yes "all right"
- 5026 2 You did not mean by ~~steady~~ that the
 hospitals were properly equipped
- A I do not mean perfectly all right
- 5027 2 There were no ice machines or only a few
- A ~~They were few there were few~~
~~& few electric fittings fans,~~
 a There were a few soda water making machines
- 5028 2 Were there ^{hospitals or even} huts
- A With regard to huts, things were going on
- 5029 2 You say they ^{had} were ^{huts} thatched roofed houses
- A When

11

When I saw them ^{last there} ~~only~~ they were rows and rows of large thatched houses

5030

Q You would hardly call that all right for a hospital

A It was all right in a sense. It is a question of standard

50312

~~Commander Westwood~~ Throughout your evidence, and throughout a good deal of ^{the} evidence we have heard, ~~already here, there~~ the stereotyped statement that "Simla is to blame" "Simla will not pay"; "Simla will not admit that there is a war on"

A That is conversation again

5032

Q Yes, but what I want to put to you is this: Did not high medical officials use the Simla excuse as an excuse for doing nothing themselves

A How can I answer that? If war not only used by the medical ^{staff service,} ~~but~~ it was used by everybody

5033

Q Simla will bring forward in reply that they were not asked for things and that everything they were asked for was sent

A If that is the case, I have no doubt that you will be able to settle it by asking if they ^{were} asked.

5034

Q We have not many cases of things that have been refused

A But Sir, if you know that you are not going to get a thing you do not ask for it

5035

Chairman May I put ^{the} question in this way, and I think it will express your views: Is there an impression among the Indian Med

Medical service that those officers who were persistent in pushing demands for improved treatment and improved accommodations, not popular with the authorities

Q No I do not think I would say that
Do you mean ~~to say~~ in peace time or in war time?

5036 I In peace time or in wartime - both

Q Well as far as that is concerned, I am able to say ~~was~~ just the opposite because I have pushed for everything like anything, and I have been very successful

5037 I Then there is no idea of a black mark being put against a man for asking for ^{things}

5038 ^{Can no} Commander Wedgwood. It did not become common form to say "We cannot get anything from Simla in respect to requisitions for genuine mosquito nets or ice making machines". It ^{is} ~~was~~ not a sort of common form reply ^{to} ~~but~~ everybody ^{there} ~~who~~ made complaint

Q How Simla?

5039 I To ^{any} ~~the~~ ^{junior} ~~senior~~ officers ^{for instance} who complained that he could not get genuine ^{for his} equipment

I It was said pretty often

5040 I It became rather a useful statement

Q It may have been. I did not use it because I never was personally in the position to have to ask for things from Simla

5041 I They ^{it} ~~did~~ not ^{strike you} argue at all that it might be used as an excuse for not having the necessary equipment

Q No, the difficulty is that if you I am still ⁱⁿ the service and ^{have} to stay in the service so ^{that} I can hardly give you ^{my} opinion about ^{senior} men ^{See} Arch

Crashin

Wheeler from Snee

5742

Sir Archibald Williamson: I want to call your attention to paragraph 3 of your evidence in chief. Of course you are aware that ~~more~~^{great} importance will be attached to the first two lines which are in italics, and I therefore want to ask you whether it is quite correct and what you really mean when you say ~~that~~^{that} during that year Do you that means the whole of 1915 - there was nothing that could be considered a breakdown at Basra. Before you answer I will call your attention to your words in paragraph 7 which say that in May 1915 the hospital accommodation in Basra was becoming quite insufficient and furthermore, in paragraph 10 you state that when you heard ^{that} it was decided still further to advance up the river you knew that a breakdown was inevitable. Is it still correct ^{to say} that during the whole of 1915 there was no breakdown

5043 a No it is not correct; that is a slip
 2 What ~~do~~ you mean ~~to say~~ ^{is} ~~that~~ during the period of 1915 when you were at Basra

a Yes, that is exactly what I meant

5044 2 That is up to May

a Up to June

5045 2 You will recognise that that entirely alters the meaning of the words ~~since~~ and the sense.

a Yes; I quite agree; it is a mistake of mine

5046 Chairman I ought to be corrected to "up to May 1915"

a During my experience

5047 Sir Archibald Williamson: you mean during the period ^{that} you were in Basra in 1915 there was no absolute breakdown

a Quite so

5048 2 It is perhaps difficult for you to answer this but

but may I ask what you really meant by the word
 breakdown and before you answer that I will ^{call} you
 of you think attention to the fact that you have told us that
 there were no river hospital ships ^{for nor} river ambulances, that you had no
 proper boats to take them wounded and ill on board
 ship that you had to use any sort of boat and furthermore
 that the ~~sheds~~ ^{patients} in the ^{base} hospital at Basra were
 not comfortable, that the sheds were badly overcrowded
 that attendants were too few, that there was hardly
 any oil or electric ^{fans} ~~lighting~~; that Colonel Stehr in
 January 1915 found that the patients were already
 too many for the hospital accommodation. In view of
 all those things ^{at} what point does a breakdown
 begin

Well it is a matter of the meaning you wish to
 put on the word "breakdown". You ^{may} use it about
 machinery, ^{when} ~~but~~ the machinery ^{is} still going.
 It ^{may be} ~~was~~ making a noise and smoking and doing all
 sorts of things, but still going

5049 2 ^{It was} Far from satisfactory, although not an absolute
 breakdown. I did not think it satisfactory at all

5050 -2 ^{Sir Archibald Williamson} You will excuse my putting that to you because
 the importance of it is obvious when people are
 on their defence
 a certainly

5051 Lord Hugh Cecil: You mean by breakdown, the sick not
 being treated at all

5052 Sir Archibald Williamson: When patients are too many for
 hospital accommodation I take it that that is a
 breakdown ~~is not~~

4 a that would not do ^{clearing} for instance in our
~~Booth~~ hospital in France the other day I saw
~~them~~ ^{men} lying on the floor and soon, ~~being~~ that may
 occur for ^{one or two days and it} ~~is~~ bound to happen in any war but I
 would

It.

would not call that a breakdown

2 Those words are also applicable to the conditions during the second half of the year at Bombay. Directing your attention to that I would call your attention to paragraph 17 in which you state that during that period you were very dissatisfied with the hospital accommodation provided in Bombay for the large number of sick and ~~unfit~~ unfit men who were beginning in August, 1915, to arrive. ^{and} furthermore that General Knight told you that he was unable to get sanction for anything better than tents on the Maidan in the rains for some of the patients. In view of those two facts is it still correct to say that the arrangements at Bombay had not reached the point of a breakdown

a Well, we are up the same street again are we not? It depends entirely on what your idea of a breakdown and mine are. They were treated; they were got through; there was no scandal. Things were done all right - well I will not say all right because ^{the} question comes up again there. I mean by breakdown when you cannot treat your sick, for instance ~~it~~ ^{it} did occur undoubtedly if I am to believe what ^{one of the} medical officers ^{have} told me ^{that} before that ^{they were sent} that we went down the river absolutely unattended to.

5354

Chairman. After Chesiphon
a year after Chesiphon. I call that a breakdown

12
Wheeler

5055

Sir Archibald Williamson: From your own words you were evidently very dissatisfied with some of the conditions
I came down with the General commanding the Division to see what the ~~Large~~ Brigade was doing and I was not satisfied personally

General

5756

General Sir Verill Lyttelton: What position ^{was} in Surgeon General Hathaway in ~~the~~ When you told him about the two motors from Madras? Was he P.M.O. in Mesopotamia then

1/3
Bell

a Yes

5054

Q Where did you see him to tell him that
a On the banks of the river at Basra

5058

Q Still at Basra I see

a Yes

5059

Q ^{Take} All these quotations from Simla - "It is no good asking India for better things." "The money is not forthcoming" ~~The resources~~ "Judicial cannot do anything better." "The resources of Bombay ~~already~~ are already exhausted." "England ~~and~~ ⁱⁿ Europe, too busy to think of us". Those ^{are} ~~is~~ in inverted commas. ~~and~~ Did you hear those expressions used by responsible people

a Yes, by many people

5060

Q Then General Knight told me he was unable to get sanction for anything better from Simla because of the expense. That is ^{gather} talking about the tents. Did you ~~gather~~ ^{gather} that he had applied for permission to build ~~things~~ and had been refused

a Yes I understood him so

5061

Q That he had applied and had been refused

a ~~well~~ ^{well} He did not say that he had been refused

13

5062

Q You say that he was unable to get sanction for anything better from Simla because of the expense ^{of the expense} ~~of the expense~~ ^{thought} ~~thought~~ it was no use asking ~~so~~ or was he ~~thought~~ ^{thought} positively refused

3

14
 a I think he had asked but it took time. I understood from him when he was standing there with General Cowper, the Divisional General, and myself and the A. D. W. S. Bombay and we discussed the question, that the difficulty was that they could not get sanction ^{and} that there were long delays rather than refusals. In the meantime the hospital ships were coming in and the sick were piling up in Bombay

5065 Q Do you consider that the hospital accommodation in India during peace time for British troops ^{is} inadequate and unsatisfactory

a Here again it is a matter of standards. It is not as good as it is in Europe

5064 Q It is not as good as it ought to be, you think
 a I do not think it is. Take one example of a station I was myself in, in Poona. The station hospital there, the building, was condemned ten years ago but it is still being used

5065 Q That is what I wanted to get at
 a Exactly

5066 Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge. I think you said just now that the storekeeper at Bombay pointed out to you the difficulty of getting stores from England

a At that time you see I think there was difficulty in getting anything from England

5067 Q I was just going to ask — when he said ^{that}
~~it~~ ^{did} he mean the impracticability of ^{the} get

getting them at all or simply delay

A Delay

5068 Lord Hugh Cecil: There is one question I would like to ask you which possibly you can answer: when you were at Basra was there a proper staff of Chaplains for the Expedition at the base for looking after the sick or not

A I only met one.

5069 Q You only saw one chaplain in Basra

A Yes

5070 Chairman: There is one question which ~~was~~ ^{escaped} ~~troubled~~ me. You mentioned the boat "Baralla" as one of the vessels got ready by the Indian Government and equipped as a hospital ship

A I think her name was ^{the} "Baralla"

5071 Q Perhaps you are not aware that the Vincent Brigley Report condemned this ship as a hospital ship

A She was chosen because she was one of the few that could go over the bar in the monsoon.

5072 Q This is ^{the} comment they make: "we have evidence that the 'Baralla' was in no sense suitable for the accommodation of sick and wounded, ^{she had animals} ~~at that time~~ on board and she was also loaded with ammunition which she was discharging from time to time, whilst she was being used as a hospital ship" You were not aware of that

A That is a long ^{before} ~~time~~. She was turned into a hospital ship

5073 Q No apparently not

A. S. J

Q I think so. She is a transport that came down previously before she was a hospital ship. She brought a lot of ~~feet~~ ^{sick} down then. ~~She~~ ^{Since} ^{once} she was turned into a hospital ship and did nothing else, I think she was very suitable

5074

Carl ~~of~~ Doughmore: Properly fitted up ^{with an} ~~for~~ operating theatre and that sort of thing

5075

A Yes I think so
Lord Hugh Cecil: You do not know of her being used for both purposes at once
A Before she was turned into a hospital ship?

Witness from Snell

5076

Q Not simultaneously
A She was a transport then

5077

Q I understand that she was first used as a transport and then as a hospital ship, but there was ^{no} ~~one~~ period ^{in which} ~~when~~ she was used as a hospital ship and also used to transport ammunition and the like

A No; I should say that that is impossible
Chairman: Thank you, Colonel
The witness withdrew



7

General

SECRET.

261 72
25.9.16.
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*Insert in evidence
only documents
read of page 5*

MESOPOTAMIA.

**STATEMENT BY MAJOR-GENERAL F. B. MAURICE, C.B., DIRECTOR OF
MILITARY OPERATIONS, WAR OFFICE.**

1. I am the Director of Military Operations at the War Office. I was appointed to that post on 23rd December, 1915; previously I was for ten months Brigadier-General, General Staff, in charge of the Operation Sections of General Headquarters, France. For the first seven months of the war I was on the Staff of the IIIrd Division, which I joined on mobilization as General Staff Officer, 2nd Grade, becoming Senior Staff Officer of the Division after the battle of Le Cateau.

Before the war I was on the Staff of the Staff College, and I held appointments on the General Staff of the War Office and as Brigade-Major of an infantry brigade. My previous war service has been in South Africa, where I served as Special Service Officer and on the Staff of an infantry division, and in the Tirah Campaign, 1897-1898, in which I served in the 2nd battalion of my regiment, the Sherwood Foresters.

2. As the Director of Military Operations at the War Office my chief duties are to advise the Chief of the Imperial General Staff as to plans of operations and as to the distribution of the military resources of the Empire between the various theatres of war. All correspondence regarding operations in Mesopotamia and all orders and instructions which have been issued in regard to these operations, during the period in which they have been under War Office control, have passed through my hands. I understand that the Commission has already received copies of all telegrams and despatches which have passed between the War Office and Mesopotamia, but I have, for the convenience of the Commission, arranged all such telegrams as are of any importance in narrative form, and these I now submit to the Commission.*

The operations in Mesopotamia, during the period of War Office control, fall naturally into two parts; the attempt to relieve Kut-el-Amara and the subsequent operations. I have arranged the narrative accordingly.

3. One of the principal functions of the General Staff of the War Office is to advise the War Committee as to the conduct of operations, to take the instructions of the Committee and to supervise their execution. It is therefore important that the Commission should have before it such decisions of the War Committee as concern operations in Mesopotamia, and I have been authorized by the Prime Minister to produce these. I am also authorized to produce the various papers concerning the operations in Mesopotamia prepared by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and presented to the War Committee. (Appendix IV.)

4. In order to make clear to the Commission the reasons which induced the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to advise the War Committee that the control of operations in Mesopotamia should be vested in the War Office, it is advisable that I should begin my story somewhat before the change of control took place.

As early as the end of December, 1915, it had become clear to the General Staff that the situation in Mesopotamia might call for further reinforcements, and that these could not be provided by India without assistance. Accordingly, after consultation with the India Office, it was arranged that the War Office should despatch 12 garrison battalions to India for the purpose of relieving sufficient troops, to enable India to complete and maintain a fifth Division for Force "D." This arrangement was approved by the War Committee at a meeting held on the 28th December, 1915. No further steps of this nature were at the time possible, and it was therefore clear that any further reinforcements required in Mesopotamia must be found by the War Office. In considering this question of reinforcements, the General Staff was guided mainly by an important decision of the War Committee, which was reached at the meeting of 28th December. This was as follows:—

- (i.) From the point of view of the British Empire, France and Flanders are the main theatre of operations.
- (ii.) Every effort is to be made to prepare for carrying out offensive operations next spring in the main theatre of war in close co-operation with the Allies and in the greatest possible strength.

* *Vide* Précis of Operations, page 6 *et seq.*

- (iii.) An adequate force is to be maintained in Egypt for its defence, that force being at present estimated at approximately eight divisions with some garrison troops.
- (iv.) The operations in East Africa are to be carried out on the general lines approved by the War Committee and with the force already determined on by it.
- (v.) The mission of the force now employed in Mesopotamia is to be of a defensive nature, and it is intended, for the present, to rely on the existing garrison of India for the defence of that country subject to conclusion 2.

5. By the beginning of January the evacuation of Suvla had been completed, the troops were in process of transfer to Egypt, and the evacuation of Helles had been ordered.* When Helles was successfully evacuated and all the troops which had been employed in Gallipoli had reached Egypt, which was in the latter part of January, it was seen that it might be possible to find an adequate garrison for Egypt and still have some troops to spare for Mesopotamia, should it become necessary. Accordingly, on the advice of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the War Committee decided, on 26th January, 1916, that the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief in Egypt should be ordered to prepare a division for despatch to Mesopotamia. By this time it had become more and more evident that it was desirable that the authority which had control of the only available reserves should also control the conduct of operations, and should be in a position to adjust the respective requirements of the campaign in Mesopotamia and of the campaigns in other theatres. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff accordingly, on 31st January, 1916, presented two papers to the War Committee, one (G. 51) † being a general review of the situation and the other (G. 52) ‡ a statement of the reasons why the control of operations in Mesopotamia should be vested in the War Office. On 3rd February, 1916, the War Committee approved of the transfer of control on terms which, I understand, have already been submitted to the Commission.

6. There are two points in the paper No. G. 51, the review of the situation to which I desire to draw the attention of the Commission; one is the statement in paragraph 2 that "it is not possible in the time available to do more than has already been done to strengthen the relieving force," the second is the statement in paragraph 6 "no time will be lost, therefore, by deferring the decision as to the departure of this division for about 10 days, and by that time it is possible we may have some more definite information of the enemy's movements and intentions."

The General Staff had been informed on 22nd January, 1916, that supplies in Kut would last until the 17th February, 1916, and on the 27th January that Townshend could make his food supplies last for some time after that date. It was not until 7th February, 1916, that we learnt that the supplies could be made to last until 17th April, 1916.

I give this information to the Commission so that they may know why no special efforts were made by the War Office to expedite the despatch of the XIIIth Division. Appendix I. gives all the information received as to the supplies in Kut, and from this it will be seen that no fewer than seven different dates were given.

It is not possible to say now whether, if the War Office had known in January that there were sufficient supplies in Kut to last them until the middle of April, the division could have been despatched sooner, as it had to be reorganized and to a great extent re-equipped after its withdrawal from Suvla, and there was the further important question as to whether the river transport available in Mesopotamia would have allowed it to have been transported to the front at an earlier date than was actually the case. The point is that, as it appeared quite impossible to get more troops up in time to effect the relief of Kut, no special efforts were made to overcome such difficulties as there might have been.

7. On receipt of the telegram of the 7th February, 1916, announcing that the supplies in Kut would last until the middle of April, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, having received an assurance from the Commander-in-Chief, India, that the XIIIth Division could be received and maintained on its arrival in Mesopotamia, ordered it to proceed there as soon as possible. The XIIIth Division left Egypt between 15th and 25th February, 1916, and arrived at Basra between 24th February and 13th March, 1916.

8. The story of the operations for the relief of Kut from the point of view of the War Office is, I think sufficiently detailed in Part I. of the précis of operations, but there

* Suvla was evacuated on 30th December, Helles on 9th January.

† See Appendix, page 72.

‡ See Appendix, page 76.

are certain other matters which directly affected the operations during this period, which will be of interest to the Commission. Although the Administrative Control, as the Commission is aware, remained at this time in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief in India and of the India Office, the General Staff recognised that the condition of the communications in Mesopotamia was the key to the problem. The question of river transport was at once investigated with the assistance of the Admiralty and of the India Office. It was found that all available resources for the construction of river craft were being utilised, but, owing to the difficulties of providing the right type of vessel and of that of navigation on the Tigris, improvement in this direction was likely to be very slow. A senior staff officer, Brigadier-General W. Gillman, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.A., was sent out to investigate and report on this and other matters, and investigations were made as to the possibility of improving communications by the construction of railways. On 14th April, 1916, some suggestions for the construction of railways were made to General Lake, who replied on 16th April, welcoming the idea, and stating at the same time that General Nixon had applied in August, 1915, for permission to construct a line to Nasiriyah, but that "the Indian Government refused to sanction on the score of expense." On receipt of this the question of railway construction was at once taken up with India, and railways are now under construction from Basra to Nasiriyah, and from Kurna to Amara, while a light line from Sheikh Saad to Es Sinn has been completed. A complete statement on the question of railway construction will be found in Appendix IV, in the form of a paper dated 15th July, 1916, prepared by the General Staff for submission to the War Committee. Various telegrams which have passed on this question will also be found in Appendix II.

9. I now come to the operations after the fall of Kut, described in Part 2 of the précis. On the 25th April, the Prime Minister, on the advice of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, approved of the despatch of the telegram of the Secretary of State for War to the General Officer Commanding, Force "D," given on page 34 of the précis. This telegram authorized the opening of negotiations for the surrender of Kut and, at the same time, outlined the general policy to be followed after Kut had been surrendered. On 28th April the War Committee as a whole ratified this policy, which was amplified in a further telegram despatched by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on 30th April. This latter telegram will be found on page 41 of the précis, but, as it contains the instructions to Force "D" which still hold good, I repeat it here for convenience of reference :—

"From Chief of the Imperial General Staff to Commander-in-Chief, India.

"(No. 15955, cipher.)

30th April, 1916, 2.10 p.m.

"My No. 15736 of 25th April. I am not sure from Lake's No. 1008/696/O. of 28th that he understands the policy of His Majesty's Government in Mesopotamia after the fall of Kut. I will now explain the policy fully to you and leave you to instruct Lake accordingly. At present our policy in Mesopotamia is defensive and we do not attach any importance to the possession of Kut or to the occupation of Baghdad. It is, of course, impracticable to prescribe policy for a long time ahead. Lake would probably be directed to fall back to Amara or even to Kurna if no other considerations were involved, but it is important to minimize and counteract the effect of the fall of Kut, and in order to assist the Russians to keep occupied the Turks now opposed to the Tigris Corps. For these reasons Lake should for the present maintain as forward a position as can be made secure tactically and be ready to take advantage of any weakening of the Turks on his front so long as this can be effected without incurring heavy loss whether caused by the enemy or by unhealthy conditions.

"It is undesirable and impossible to reinforce Lake owing to the conditions in other theatres of war, but he will be kept adequately supplied with drafts and munitions. His forces are superior to those of the enemy, according to our information, and he should therefore have no difficulty in carrying out the above policy until the Turks are strongly reinforced. In that event he should be given full discretion to fall back; at any rate he must be clearly shown that the security of his force is of primary importance and that neither now nor at any time is he required to maintain a more forward position than he thinks he can hold with reasonable safety. Lake should inform you if he considers he cannot carry out his assigned rôle with the forces at his disposal. Please inform me before you instruct Lake if you see any reason to differ from the above instructions."

10. It will be seen that these instructions embody the policy recommended by the General Staff to be followed in the event of the fall of Kut, in Paper G 51, of 31st January (Appendix IV.). The alternative was to fall back to Amara, which would undoubtedly have relieved the strain on the communications and made it easier to maintain the troops in a healthy condition during the hot weather. The military arguments against this withdrawal appeared, however, both to the War Committee and to the General Staff, and to the Commander-in-Chief in India, to be conclusive. As will be seen, the instructions did not preclude a withdrawal if Sir Percy Lake thought this advisable in order to avoid heavy loss, whether caused by the enemy or by unhealthy conditions. Otherwise, he was to maintain as forward a position as could be made secure.

11. From the fall of Kut up to the present time, the only military incident of importance has been the withdrawal of the Turks from their positions on the right bank of the Tigris which enabled General Gorringe to push forward and occupy the Es Sinn position on the 21st May. With the exception of occasional skirmishes with raiding parties of hostile Arabs both on the Tigris and on the Euphrates, there has up to the present time been no material change in the military situation. The summer months have been devoted almost entirely to endeavours to improve the communications and mitigate the hardships of the hot weather.

12. It was clear to the General Staff that the difficulties of supplying the force on the Tigris front would be much relieved if the number of troops there could be reduced and a portion held in reserve at Amara or some other point lower down the Tigris. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff felt, however, that this was a matter which could only be decided by the Commander on the spot who alone was sufficiently acquainted with the local conditions. He made a suggestion for such withdrawal on the 30th June to Sir Percy Lake, who expressed himself against the reduction of Gorringe's force because of the possibility of the Turks being reinforced after they had driven back the Russian troops in Persia and because the conditions were more healthy about Sheikh Saad than at Amara.* Conditions in these respects have recently changed. The Turks have shown no immediate intention of transferring troops to Mesopotamia, and the climatic conditions at Amara have improved. Accordingly, General Maude, on succeeding Sir Percy Lake, at once suggested the withdrawal of the XIIIth Division and certain other troops to Amara, and this is now being carried out with considerable relief to the supply situation at the front.

13. With regard to the undertaking given in the instructions of 30th April that Force "D" would be kept adequately supplied with drafts and munitions, it would be of interest to the Commission to have the various demands which have been made by the Force and the extent to which they have been made. As to this the General Staff had to be guided by the decision of the War Committee of 28th December that France and Flanders was, from the point of view of the British Empire, the main theatre of operations, and therefore all demands from Mesopotamia had to be carefully considered in the light of the requirements from France. Force "D" has at various times demanded:—

- (i.) Two British cavalry regiments (on 28th February).
- (ii.) A battery of 8-inch howitzers.
- (iii.) A siege brigade of 6-inch howitzers.
- (iv.) An increase in the percentage of high explosives for 18-prs. and howitzers.
- (v.) 36—4-inch trench mortars.
- (vi.) A battery of latest pattern anti-aircraft guns.

14. As regards the cavalry regiments, the demand was made in the spring, and at that time none could well be spared from other theatres, while it appeared a matter of doubtful expediency to despatch more cavalry during the flood season. In June it seemed possible to spare an Indian cavalry brigade from France, and with the flood season drawing to an end it appeared very desirable to increase the mounted troops in Mesopotamia. Accordingly, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff offered an Indian cavalry brigade to India provided it could be maintained at the front. The Commander-in-Chief in India and Sir Percy Lake welcomed the idea, and the Meerut Cavalry Brigade accordingly embarked from Marseilles between 22nd June and 8th July.

15. As regards the other demands, the Commission will remember that in accordance with the decision of the War Committee of 3rd February India remained the main base of the Force in Mesopotamia, the War Office supplying such requirements

* See précis, page 56.

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t/o

Spica

Major-General F.B. MAURICE, C.B. sworn

5078

CHAIRMAN: Before we deal with the paper which you have put in there is certain information which we should like to have from the War Office and which I have no doubt you can supply. General Barrow gave us certain portions of the deliberations of the General Staff of the War Office and of one or two subsequent meetings which were held before the advance to Bagdad was made. The documents which we want are a memorandum of the 6th October prepared by the General Staff of the War Office, and of the 14th October a War Office paper drawn up by the General Staff on the question of occupying Bagdad; and we also want any papers relating to an Inter-Departmental Committee which met subsequently with Sir Thomas Holderness in the Chair. It was on these Reports that the advance was made. We could send you a list of the papers.

A ^{Thank you} I think I know the papers. I was not at the War Office at the time but I think that I have them actually in my own charge.

5079 Q We have had extracts from them and we should like to have the whole of the papers.

A Certainly.

5080 Q Now your narrative is very full and I propose to put a few questions to you upon it. We will take your own statement as your evidence in chief.

A Certainly. * * *

5081 Q You have been Director of military operations since the 23rd December 1915.

A Yes.

5082 Q Towards the close of 1915 it was clear to the General Staffing that Mesopotamia would require further reinforcements, and way to enable India to send those it was arranged that you

* To Printer: Insert paper marked B down to the end of page 5.

were to send 12 garrison battalions to India.

A Yes.

Q What are garrison battalions.

A Garrison battalions are raised from what we call B 1, that is men fit for garrison duty but not physically fit for active service in the trenches. They are given certain classifications by the medical authorities on enlistment. It means men fit for ordinary work either at home or abroad in garrisons but not fit for actual fighting in the trenches. Those troops are intended to relieve what we call obligatory garrisons in India and enable the troops to go forward to the frontier.

5084 Q They would hardly be fit for a frontier expedition.

A No. A considerable number of men improve physically during training and pass from one category to another, but as battalions they would not be fit.

5085 Q In deciding about reinforcements the General Staff was guided by general considerations which are stated in the paper, the last of which concerns this Commission. No. 5 on page 2 is, "The mission of the force now employed in Mesopotamia is to be of a defensive nature".

A Yes.

5086 Q We understand that it was not until the 7th February 1916 that you learnt from General Townshend that he had supplies which could be made to last until the 17th April

A Yes that is so.

5087 Q I think I am not using too big a word in saying that the delay of this information was almost disastrous.

A I think that perhaps that is a little strong, having regard to the information in our hands ~~at the present moment~~. We are actually conducting war and therefore we have not time to go into past history, and so I cannot say definitely whether if we had known, say at the end of December, that Kut could have held out until

the 17th April, we might not have been able to get the whole of the 13th Division up earlier than was the case. My impression is very strongly that we could have done it, but there were a number of factors to go into which we did not go into. For instance, we should have had to go into the exact state of the Division when it was withdrawn from Suvla and the equipment which it required to make it efficient to go to Mesopotamia and the time that it would require to get equipment. Such questions which might have been gone into were not gone into and I do not doubt that if they had been gone into we could have got the Division off much earlier than was the case as a matter of fact.

16

5088 Q Do I understand that they were not gone into because of the urgent need of the expedition to Mesopotamia.

A They were not gone into because there appeared to be no urgency. Until the 7th February it was quite hopeless, as far as we knew, to send troops to Mesopotamia because ~~we could not have provided~~ in time to effect the relief of Kut.

5089 Q You mean that you could not relieve Kut by the 7th February and therefore you did not hurry.

A We did not make an effort to hurry because we thought that it was quite hopeless, but when we got the news on the 7th we expedited the dispatch of the 13th Division and the Division was got away in a ~~very~~ short time or a comparatively short time.

5090 ^{The} EARL OF DONOUGHMORE: Is another name for the 13th Division the ~~13th~~ Meerut Division?

A No. The Meerut and Lahore Divisions went to Mesopotamia some time before.

5091 Q From France.

A From France. The 13th Division was in the Dardanelles. It was withdrawn from Suvla Bay in December, and the fact

of the withdrawal having been carried out successfully gave us certain troops at our disposal and we selected the 13th Division from those troops to go to Mesopotamia.

5092 LORD HUGH CECIL: It was then in Egypt, was it not?

A It was then in Egypt.

5093 CHAIRMAN: I suppose that if from the first you had known the date to which General Townshend could hold out you would have had more time to properly organise the Relief Expedition, and I assume that the Generals would not have been under the obligation to attack, as they did at times, in very awkward climatic conditions?

A Quite so. My own view is that it would have entirely altered the whole conduct of the operations.

5094 Q I suppose that you will admit that under the conditions which prevailed a good many arrangements had to be improvised and supplies were scattered, and that when combatants had to be moved up to the front they were in certain cases ^{denuded} ~~devoid~~ of their non-combatant units.

A Yes.

5095 Q And the force was not as effective as it would have been if you had had time to properly organise it.

A That is so.

5096 Q May I ask the difference between the conduct of the war and the administration of the war? There was a division between the War Office and the India Office. They did the administrative work which now has been taken from them. What is the distinction?

A The distinction is that the conduct of operations deals with the dispatch of orders to Generals as to what is to be their objective - in fact how they are to carry out the policy which is settled from time to time by the War Committee. That deals only with fighting, marching and other operations of the war and it is not in any way

concerned with supplies of the material that they require ^{except} naturally in so far as it is necessary for those controlling operations to know what the state of supplies is - for instance, the amount of ammunition that can be made available in order that they may issue their orders accordingly and may not issue orders which it is not possible to carry out because the material is not available.

(17)

5097

Q The Division was really a makeshift - it was rather an awkward Division, was it not.

A Yes, in my own opinion certainly it was.

5098

Q Administration rather implies making good supplies, and that the Indian Government as far as regards ^{either} men or stores could not do.

A They were able to do it to a great extent but they were not able to do it altogether. The arrangement was that India was to be what we call the main base of the Expedition in Mesopotamia, that is to say the great majority of the material required in Mesopotamia came from India and India indented on the War Office for anything that they could not supply themselves, but I agree that it was not an ideal arrangement.

5099

Q Now the War Office are entirely responsible.

A Now the War Office are entirely responsible.

5100

Q Do they indent on India for things that they think India can supply.

A No, the position remains much the same, that is to say that India still supplies what it can and lets the War Office know what most is wanted; but the difference is that now the War Office, having an authoritative position in the matter, has its own officers out there who are making definite inquiries into what India can supply and warning the War Office in time.

5102

Q What is the position of the Indian Government when they

are indented upon? Are they obliged to comply with the indent.

A I am afraid that that is a little out of my beat.

5703

Q It comes under supplies. The policy of a defensive attitude was communicated to the Indian Government and, as I understand it, General Lake acquiesced in it.

A Yes.

5704

Q So you state. After full consideration the War Office decided that it was advisable that the Mesopotamia Force should occupy a position somewhat nearer to Kut.

A Yes.

5705

Q For defensive purposes. General Maude has been placed in command of the whole Mesopotamia Expedition.

A Yes.

5706

Q Who is commanding the Tigris Army Corps.

A The Tigris Army Corps is now being divided into two. General Cobb (?) is commanding one Corps and General Marshall is to command the other. I do not know whether he has arrived.

This is a recommendation of General Maude which has recently been made. The Tigris Corps got distinctly unwieldy; its staff was very large and there were a great number of administrative difficulties in getting things through, and we quite agreed that a smaller organisation was desirable in every way. The change is not yet completed but it is in process at the present time.

5707

Q Just following up the policy pursued with regard to the force in Mesopotamia, I find that on page 61 of your statement there is a communication from the Commander-in-Chief in India to the Chief of the Imperial Staff and in that communication he points out that there are two courses open and he apparently is in favour of the second course, the advance to Bagdad "thus helping the Russians and possibly destroying a portion of the force against us".

A Yes.