

332

Q That is followed by another telegram from India stating that the Turks now have several Divisions pages 19 and 20 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> March

A "We hear of at least three divisions which cannot be precisely located and are reported to be destined for Mesopotamia". The doubt at that time at the War Office and in India was as to where those divisions were going

333

Q The Viceroy appears to be under the impression does he not that Basra may be attacked by superior numbers besides the Arabs

A "We may be faced shortly with a serious attack on Basra"

334

Q During these repeated reports of Turkish reinforcements culminating so to speak in the expression of a belief by the Viceroy that our people might be attacked by a superior force besides the Arabs there was a deficiency of river transport which was very important

A There was no deficiency of river transport on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March for existing purposes because we were then not in advance of Basra and Kurna. When we went on to Nasiriyah and Amara there would be a deficiency

335

Q But we are told on the 28<sup>th</sup> February that the river transport is insufficient

A But not insufficient up to that date  
Sir Archibald Williamson It was <sup>insufficient</sup> in view of an advance?

A ~~General~~ General Barrett never contemplated going beyond the triangle - the Delta <sup>that is the point</sup>  
Sir Cyprian Bridge: any advance with the increased forces which we had got there

Chaplin 3 small

336

and which I presume we were compelled to provide in the belief that the enemy was reinforced was so to speak brought up against the insufficiency of river transport

24

337 Q Yes, if they had gone beyond  
 Were any immediate steps taken to make good the insufficiency of the river transport  
 A Immediate steps where?

338 Q In India

A That I cannot say

339 Q You would not know that - it is not within your province?

A No. We do not know exactly what they had at that time. Remembers the Government in this country at that time did not contemplate going beyond Kurra and Bastor

340 Q I presume that anything after the arrival of Sir John Nixon would come in to 9103

A Yes

341 Q Sir Archibald Williamson I see that the expedition up the other river the Karun, the one that goes to the right, seems to have taken place between the 17<sup>th</sup> February and the 1<sup>st</sup> March

A Yes

342 Q ~~But~~ The first reference to want of transport is on the 28<sup>th</sup> February

A So that in this paper?

343 Q It is in telegram No 97 which Admiral Bridge has already mentioned. How did they manage on the other river. I suppose that they required light draught boats  
 A Yes

- 344 Q Was there a sufficiently ~~fast~~ <sup>for that</sup> expedition  
 + Yes. It was not a very large force  
 At that time there was only one battalion  
 and that was supplemented a little later by  
 a second battalion. I think that they had  
 two guns and a squadron of Cavalry.  
 The Cavalry marched up
- 345 Q The Anglo-Persian Oil Company had its  
 river steamers as a matter of ordinary business  
 at Ahwaz?  
 + They had a certain number of river craft but  
 I do not know what they had as a matter  
 of ordinary business at Ahwaz. The oil  
 came down to Abadan at that time by a  
 pipe from the oil fields which are off  
 that map
- 346 Q All the drilling material the pipelining the  
 heavy timbers and so forth had to go  
 to the oil fields and they had to go by  
 river  
 + Yes
- 347 Q Therefore the Oil Company had a large fleet  
 had it not  
 + Not a large fleet
- 348 Q + Considerable fleet  
 A I do not think even a considerable fleet.  
 I do not know what they had
- 349 Q At any rate there was enough transport  
 for that expedition?  
 A There was enough for the small body of  
 troops sent and to keep them supplied I  
 suppose
- 350 Q You had had no requests during February  
 at all for further boats to be sent out

674

28  
 A No; I do not think we got a request till the middle of 1915

351 Q When did you get the first request for boats  
 A I must look it up. I think it was about July 1915

352 Q We are only reaching the Kurma stage and therefore perhaps we ought not to go too deeply into the question of transport but should the experience of the Karun have helped them to make a demand then for further river transport do you think

A No. It was not a very great distance and I should not think it would have necessitated by itself a demand. The steamers which they had would probably be quite sufficient for the purpose if we did not go beyond Kurma. The whole thing rested on that

353 Q Two of the Indian Marine boats were to go up to ~~there~~ Always

A Yes

354 Q The "Shusham"

A Yes; that is a river steamer; and the Comet

355 Q The Viceroy paid a visit to Kurma I see and he telegraphed on the 28th February that with the support of our ships on the "Tigris", the situation was practically impregnable

A Yes, was quite impregnable at Kurma

356 Q So that he looked on Kurma as a very strong position to hold

A Yes

357 Q There appears to have been nothing that



675

occurred at the time of his visit leading to the conclusion that an advance <sup>up</sup> the river was in contemplation

It depends on where you mean. It was certainly not in contemplation in England and I am not aware that it was in contemplation in India except from one or two ~~parts~~ <sup>hints</sup> we had had. He had never been told that they contemplated an advance beyond Kurma

358 Q There is nothing connecting the Vice Roy with any discussion <sup>on the spot</sup> of an advance ~~on the spot~~

A No

359 Q There are the general's communications and conversations with the political officers

A ~~See~~ Sir <sup>Percy</sup> Barton Cox?

360 Q Yes

A Yes

361 Commander Wedgwood With regard to your excellent Minute of the 27<sup>th</sup> November in the red précis on page 11, you will see that the Political Secretary, India office noted that "the eventual occupation of Bag<sup>h</sup>dad is so desirable as to be practically essential"

A Yes

362 Q That meant not necessarily military occupation during the war but occupation at some time or other

A Yes

363 Q It meant that Mesopotamia should be a British sphere of influence

A I think that the question was there being ventilated in many quarters in London as to what we were going to do in <sup>Mesopotamia</sup> ~~London~~ after the war - how far we should carry our sphere

- 29
- 364 Q sphere of influence  
 I What line should I mark?
- 365 Q Who is the political secretary  
 I Sir Arthur ~~Hertzog~~ Hertzog
- 366 Q Would he have any direct communication  
 with India  
 I No not on a matter of that kind. ~~For~~  
 Every official communication goes through the  
 Secretary of State to the Viceroy. The States  
 Department are authorised to telegraph very  
 largely about matters of detail
- 367 Q On page 13 of the précis at the top  
 there is a telegram from the Viceroy dated  
 the 25<sup>th</sup> of January in which he says "A  
~~flight~~ <sup>flight</sup> of aeroplanes from Egypt to Europe  
 would lessen the necessity for a cavalry  
 reinforcement. We are also sending him  
 two armoured motor cars and two light  
 lorries for desert work" Had they not any  
 aeroplanes in India before the war  
 I At that time no
- 368 Q Where had they gone to  
 a They had a few in India before the  
 war broke out and directly the war broke  
 out the War Office asked India to send  
 their aeroplanes to England for the use  
 of the army in France
- 369 Q Had everything was sent home  
 a Everything was sent home. The few  
 aeroplanes we had in India were also  
 sent home
- 370 Lord Hugh Cecil Only three  
 I I think three at that time

371 Commander Wedgwood Only three pilots in the whole of India?

A I will not say that but only three officers who had pilots' certificates

372 Q Are they not training pilots now in India?  
A No. They have no means of training them at all. All the aeromats that India gets get their certificates here

373 Q There is no school of training

A No. Just before the war broke out we were starting a school

374 Q That is closed down

A That is closed down and the aeromats were sent home and the aeroplanes

375 Q Down to the present they have taken no steps for reestablishing the school

A It is impossible

376 Q Have they not the money

A It is not a question of money at all; they have not the material and they have not the instructors. Every officer is utilised in one way or another so that there is nobody to send to India.

You must remember that the resources of India are not like those of this country

377 Q Australia has started a school

A But Australia has a large white population

378 Q On page 14 there is a telegram from the Viceroy which says "second line troops from home can hardly be regarded as suited to frontier defence". What do they mean by "second line troops" - territorials?

A I think that it means rather inferior territorial troops - those recently embodied. They were usually the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> battalions or something of that kind. ~~They~~ 2 the

- 379 Q. The ordinary Territorial troops?  
A. Not the troops that existed before the War, because they had all been used up.
- 380 Q. I think that they were being sent from England at the same time  
A. I think that the two Territorial Divisions that went out from England went out about October. These were some supplemental troops I think. I beg your pardon, he is speaking of troops which had already arrived in India - Territorial troops. He said that they could hardly be regarded as suited for frontier defence.
- 381 Q. But as they were suited for fighting Germans would not they be suited for fighting Pathans?  
A. No, the conditions are so different. In India on the frontier you require mobile troops trained to frontier fighting and officers who are trained to frontier fighting.
- 382 Q. Is not this an example of the exclusiveness of the Regulars?  
A. I think not.
- 383 Q. I do not mean your statement but this telegram  
A. No, I do not think so. I think that the telegram was reasonable at that date. The Territorial troops had only been in India for two or three months then.
- 384 Q. They have been there now for over a year  
A. Yes, but they had not at that date.
- 385 Q. Are they being used much?  
A. Yes, a number of them are in Mesopotamia.
- 386 Q. Are they being used on the frontier?  
A. Yes, some of them, but at that date they were not sufficiently trained. The Territorials up to the time that they left England were very

well trained for ceremonial purposes and fairly well trained, you might say, perhaps, for defence purposes in England but nothing more

387 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: At what date?

A When the war broke out they were not highly trained troops

388 Commander Wedgwood: They have done all right everywhere

A. But then they have had a lot of time. They did not go out of England until after March 1915

389 Sir Archibald Williamson: Some went in September 1914

A To France?

390 Q Yes. My son went to France on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1914 and he was in a Territorial Regiment

A Then I was not aware, but there were very few and they were rather picked regiments I fancy, like the London Scottish, the Westminsters, the Honourable Artillery Company and regiments of that kind

Sir Archibald Williamson: Yes, they were.

391 Commander Wedgwood: At page 17 of the Précis you say:

"It was evident that the Executive authorities, both in India and Mesopotamia were now alarmed, and might be expected to ~~so~~ take all necessary military action"

A Yes, that was the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1915

392 Q. That rather confirms the impression given in the rest of the Précis that the Indian Government took a good deal of stirring up from home: is that not so

A. They did about the Karen. I think they considered the Karen as quite an unimportant issue

393 Mr Hodge: A promenade

A No, not a promenade, but they looked on it as quite supplemental to the whole thing

394 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: A side show

31  
 A Yes. But that was not the view taken here, because the Admiralty, at all events, considered it about the most important part of the operations to defend the Oil Fields. They regarded the protection of the Oil Fields as most essential to their own operations.

395 Commander Wedgwood: They regarded their own operations and the British operations as in rather distinct compartments.

A Who did?

396 Q. The Indian Government

A Yes, I think they did.

397 Q. There is a telegram from the Viceroy of the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1915 at page 19 of the Precis saying that India has done her duty to the Empire and it is quite impossible to do more.

A. "India has therefore done her duty to the Empire and it is quite impossible in view of situation on the frontier and in interior to do more."

398 Q. "It is of no use to suggest to us that we should take further risks."

A "Further risks in India"

399 Q. Yes, "further risks in India". Does that not indicate rather a curious spirit in connection with this European war? Do they put India first and England second?

A. Yes, it really would read so, but is that not a point upon which Lord Hardinge could give you evidence?

400 Mr Hodge: Is it not rather because India had been denuded of troops

A. India had been denuded of troops

Chairman: We must remember that if the Indian Government do not protect India nobody else will. It is their duty.

Commander

that

401 Commander Wedgwood: On the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1915 there is a telegram from the Viceroy to say that the force will still be weak in Artillery, Pioneers and Sappers: "Can you complete some of these deficiencies? I have no desire to press <sup>you</sup> unduly" etc., etc. Were any steps taken at all

A. They sent a Cavalry regiment about that time

402 Q. That is not Artillery, Pioneers or Sappers.

A. At that period they certainly sent no Artillery and no Pioneers I think

403 Q. Did they take any steps to raise any fresh Artillery, Pioneers and Sappers

A. The Artillery being nearly all British Artillery, they could not therefore take steps to raise Artillery

404 Q. But the Pioneers and Sappers?

A. They were always recruiting for Pioneers and Sappers. By that date the establishment of both was very much higher than the normal establishment

405 Q. Who would prevent their raising new units of Pioneers and Sappers?

A. Nobody would

406 Q. Would the Finance Department

A. No. The Finance Department were not interested in stopping it. We in England pay for the war

407 Q. Are we paying for this?

A. Yes, you are paying for this

408 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: A Pioneer Corps of 3000 was raised

A. Yes, of labourers to work behind the lines

409 Q. Coolie labour?

A. The Pioneers are Regular battalions

410 <sup>The</sup> Chairman: Expenditure over and above the normal is met by us?

A. Yes, so that the Finance Department had no interest in economising. There is nothing to show that

that the Finance Department did economise. They probably never objected to anything.

321

411 Commander Wedgwood: No attempt was made to raise an additional company of Pioneers or Sappers for bridging or pontoon works or anything?

A. I suppose that no attempt was made because it was not practicable to do it. You cannot raise troops in India as you can in this country because you have not the officers and you have not the rifles.

412

Q. Officers and rifles can both be made

A. Officers for officering British troops can undoubtedly be made in a certain time, but officers for commanding Indian troops cannot be made as rapidly, because you must have men who know the language and who know the customs of the country; and another thing is that officers for sappers should have engineer training.

413

Q. The Inspector-General of Communications was Major-General Davison of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. He was the officer responsible for all the lines of communication I suppose up to the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1915. This is page 22 of the Yellow Book, Telegram No 108. Has he been responsible right up to the present time?

A. No.

414

Q. Who was Inspector-General in January, February and March of this year during the time that things were going badly?

A. Do you mean this year or last year?

415

Q. This year

A. I am not sure that he was not there in January.

416

Q. Is he at home

A. Yes. I think that he was out there in January.

417

Lord Hugh Cecil: You were asked just now about the Viceroy's telegram which appears on page 19 of the Red



Precis and, I think, in the Yellow document too

A Yes

418

Q. saying that further risks could not be taken in India. What were the risks in the Viceroy's mind? Can you describe them

A. The risks in the Viceroy's mind were undoubtedly, the risks of trouble on the frontier and also the risk of internal troubles. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1915 India had been largely denuded of troops and there must only have been about half the normal number of Indian troops in the country. Although the British troops were by the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March very nearly as many as in normal times, yet they were not the same class of troops at all. We had only at that date eight battalions of Regulars in the whole of India.

419

Q. Am I not right in saying that since the Mutiny we reckon the Indian troops as being a potential element of danger as well as a potential element of strength

A Yes, certainly since the Mutiny for many years that was distinctly considered

420

Q. Therefore in a sense India would be safer when the Indian troops were out of it than if they were in it

A Yes, if they are out in the proportion laid down <sup>if having</sup> ~~with~~ regard to British troops

421

Q. Is it not especially so at the present time, that the superiority of arms is so great that you need practically take no account of unarmed disturbances?

A That would apply to internal disturbances - well, I will not say that you need take no account of them, because, remember, our superiority

rests largely on communications in India, on railways and telegraphs, and they are almost entirely in the hands of natives. The supervising staff, the higher staff, is British but the actual Executive staff of the Telegraphs and the Railways is in the hands of natives. All the station masters except at the important stations are natives

33  
422 Q. In India itself apart from the frontier there is no danger of armed resistance except from a mutiny of our own troops, is there

A. You may say that broadly speaking. We do not know what arms are being imported into the country. We know that long before the war began the importation of arms was going on.

423 Q. By German agency?

A. Since the war certainly by German agency

424 Q. Were there up to this time of which we are speaking, any disturbances either in India or on the frontier

A. Up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> March?

425 Q. Yes

A. Yes, there had been internal disturbances

426 Q. Necessitating the interference of troops

A. No, never necessitating the interference of troops

427 Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge: Singapore

A. That is not in India. When you speak of trouble on the frontier you mean not only <sup>from one</sup> from the frontier tribes but inferentially from the Ameer of Afghanistan, I take it

Chairman

Folder from Mr Hill

428 <sup>is he</sup> Chairman. Were there indications of very serious disorder in the Punjab about this period. a yes, I think it was about this period.

429 Q Amongst a class of the population which had hitherto been loyal - the Sikhs a yes.

430 Mr Hodge: The Germans had been very busy with the Ameer.

a We are talking of March 1915. I do not think they had been very busy up to that date. I do not think they could have got at the Ameer previously to that date.

431 Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge: They had got at the Karun

a But that is not Afghanistan.

432 Q Word had been passed on.

a I do not think it had had much effect at this date. The main object of going to Mesopotamia at all to my mind was to keep the frontier of India safe, because as long as we kept the Turks employed there was no prospect of Afghanistan going against us, but if there had been no one to interfere with the Turks in those regions, Turkish intrigues would have spread very rapidly to Persia and through Persia to Afghanistan, and we should have been faced with trouble on the Afghanistan border long ago. That is proved by the fact that a few months later a German mission actually arrived at Corbu, and that mission would have had considerable influence if troops had

had followed it up, but because of our position in Mesopotamia no troops followed it up.

34

433

Lord Hugh Cecil: There is the advance to Amara.

A The advance to Amara was for the better protection of the oilfields.

434

Q There is mention also in one of the telegrams of the danger to Persia and Afghanistan.

A Yes, there is that danger, of course. There is danger of getting into Persia in that way.

435

Earl of Donoughmore: I do not know who ~~read~~<sup>wrote</sup> the précis, but at page 22 a phrase is used which is no doubt justified. "On the 1<sup>st</sup> April we were abruptly informed (Telegram H 3352 from Viceroy) that the Government of India had decided to reorganise Expeditionary Force 'D' as an Army Corps".

A This is meant for the Government as I said

436

Q The telegrams support the use of the word "abruptly". Telegram 108 in the Yellow Book came, so to speak, as a bolt from the blue.

A Yes.

437

Q That<sup>is</sup> is no doubt the telegram that is referred to. You were not consulted as to what appointments should be made and so on.

A No.

438

Q General Barrett was named to the Command

of the Poonah Division of which he was already in command.

A Yes.

439 Q Did the action result in his going home.  
A He was invalided home.

440 Q Rumours are going about, and as we are sitting with closed doors it is fair that we should put them to you. It has been boldly said that he was sent home because he regarded an advance to Bag<sup>h</sup>dad as impracticable. A I know him very intimately and I have seen a great deal of him since, and I should think that that was quite untrue.

441 Q I think it fair to put it to you. A He was no doubt very annoyed at his supersession and that no doubt had an effect on his health. His health was not good for some time before, but this was a bolt from the blue for him, and when it came he threw up the sponge, so to speak.

442 Q After all it is fair, is it not, <sup>to say</sup> that the proceedings which led to victory at Shaiba were organised by General Barrett.

A Yes.

443 Q General Nixon had not arrived. A Obviously. He only arrived on the first day of the battle and he was at Basra, not at Shaiba itself.

444 Q Who was in command. A General Mellis I think. On the first day General Barrett himself was there.

The

The third day's fight was the actual battle of Barasat, as apart from the two Shaiba actions. On that day General Mellis was commanding. His brigade had just arrived.

445 Q His brigade came in at the last minute as we have heard.

A Yes: he arrived before his brigade and took over the Command.

446 General Sir Neville Lytton: was not General Nixon there.

A No, he was ~~not~~ in Basra. It was no doubt in telegraphic <sup>telephonic</sup> communication or using whatever means of communication there were.

447 Q The battle was really won by General Mellis.

A I think that on the first day General Barrett was present. On the second day one of the Brigadiers was the senior officer on the spot, and General Delamain was commanding.

448 Earl of Donoughmore: This reorganisation of the command in the widest sense was India's action, and the Secretary of State accepted it.

A He accepted it at once.

449 Q Was there no discussion at all between India and home as to whether it was desirable to do what was done or not.

A There was a certain amount of discussion as to whether the Force should be reorganised on a corps basis, but no question of superseding General ~~Mellis~~ <sup>Barrett</sup> had arisen.

6/5

450

Q Technically he was not superseded.

A No.

451

Q He was in charge of the Poona Division and he remained in charge, but he ceased to be Commander-in-Chief.

A Pardon me, it is a little different from that. He was commanding the Poona Division only until the reinforcement arrived. One brigade arrived in February during the Karun operations and two arrived in April. So that General Barrett at the time that he gave over had actually five brigades of infantry and one of cavalry.

452

Q Therefore this appointment amounted to a supersession with regard to some of his powers.

A Yes.

453

Sir Archibald Williamson: Look at the telegram sent by the Secretary of State to the Viceroy of the 10<sup>th</sup> March on page 21 of the Red. précis. There was a suggestion to detail <sup>and</sup> ~~of~~ the <sup>a</sup> General Officer <sup>of</sup> Staff to assist General Barrett.

So that here there was no idea of his being superseded. That was sent on the very day that he seems to have sailed ~~for~~ from Basra.

A Yes. We were not aware of it.

454

Commander Wedgwood: Is it not April

~~it~~

455

Sir Archibald Williamson: I see that it was a month earlier. So that after this the Indian Government, about three weeks later

ap-

appointed all these new men.

May I explain about the Yellow Book?

Some of the telegrams are not in extenso in the Yellow Book. The Yellow Book is what was prepared for Parliament. You remember there was a demand for papers, and first of all we settled what telegrams might possibly be laid before Parliament, and those which we thought might be laid before Parliament are in the Yellow Book. We were going ~~to~~ to paraphrase them before they were laid before Parliament, most of the paraphrasing work having been done already, and then the presentation of papers to Parliament was stopped, and so we never continued the paraphrasing.

456 Q This answers some of Lord Donoughmore's questions. Apparently the British Government thought well of General Parrett and apparently desired to give him every assistance, and thought of him as the Commander of the whole campaign.

A Yes.

457 Q The Indian Government, three weeks later, superseded him, and appointed a whole lot of other officers some of whom were over his head.

A Yes.

458 Q He immediately resigned on the ground of ill-health and came away at 24 hours notice or very short notice.

A Yes.

459 Q Was General Nixon Senior?

A Yes.



460 Chairman: I suppose that this upset the whole of the Command.

A Yes.

461 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: At the beginning of the war, in England and in India there was Divisional organisation. There were the Northern Army and the Southern Army.

462 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: I am talking of the Field. There was Divisional organisation. We had too many Divisions.

463 Sir Archibald Williamson: Lord Crewe telegraphs that he thought it unnecessary to constitute an Army Corps of two Divisions. There is no answer as far as I know until the announcement, three weeks later, of what they have done.

464 Chairman: Is that <sup>not</sup> in accordance with the rule that India should manage the Campaign.

A India was responsible for the management of the Campaign. There were general instructions from the Secretary of State as to policy, but all the details were left to them.

465 I They were, therefore, perfectly within their right in making a change.

A I am not so sure of that, my Lord, but, technically, perhaps they were.

466 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: It was a strong order

A I must say that I think that they were the acting ultra vires

467 Chairman: They having received contrary instructions  
A Yes

468 Sir Archibald Williamson: There is a telegram of the 24<sup>th</sup> March to General Nixon in which he is asked to prepare a plan of an advance on Bagdad, and it is followed a week later by the announcement of all these new ~~Commanders~~<sup>men</sup>, and it seems that the two are connected.

A On the 24<sup>th</sup> March he was in Simla, I think, and had not left India. He arrived in Basra on the 9<sup>th</sup> April.

469 Q It was before his official appointment that he got these instructions.

A Yes, it was before.

470 Earl of Donoughmore: It looks as if India meant to make the appointment.

A Undoubtedly they meant to make it, but we were not informed.

471 Lord Hugh Cecil: Do you think it probable that the organisation of the Army Corps was connected with the design of ultimately advancing on Bagdad or not.

A I cannot answer with regard to what they thought in India, but I should hardly have thought that they could have expected that with that Army Corps they could have got to Bagdad.

472 Earl of Donoughmore: Would it be easily possible to let us have a statement showing what <sup>the</sup> strength was in Mesopotamia on certain dates. I leave the selection of the dates to you.

A Yes, we could give that.

473 Q I do not want to increase the clerical work. What is in my mind is the casualties.

37 A You want the strength: not the number, of units?

474 Q I want to know whether the units were up to strength ~~or~~ <sup>and</sup>, whether there was any arrangement made for drafts.

475 <sup>the</sup> A We have not that information, I am afraid. Chairman: Have you the total number of casualties up to date.

A Yes, I believe that we can give them up to almost any date.

476 Q We should like to have the number of effectives sent out and the number of casualties. Would it include sick.

A No. Those reported to us are killed, wounded, missing, and died of disease.

477 Q How could we get at the number of sick.

A That would have to be compiled in India, I think.

478 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: Could you show us the strength at various dates - the 1<sup>st</sup> April, for instance.

A We should have to telegraph to Mesopotamia for that. They would not know in India, I think, the strength on the 1<sup>st</sup> April or the 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1915, or the 1<sup>st</sup> September, <sup>the</sup> 1915

479 Chairman, Could we get the number of effectives and the number of casualties.

A We could get the number of casualties up to date. We could give the effective strength that sailed.

480 Q Could we see what the additions were and the shrinkage by casualties.

A I do not think we could give that.

480 Earl of Donoughmore: If you could let us have the strength in Mesopotamia at certain dates, which you would select, it would help us.

A I can tell you at once, my Lord, what the strength was at the end of April that we are talking of. It was two divisions and a cavalry brigade.

482 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: What number <sup>of men</sup> ~~of men~~ <sub>under</sub> ~~of men~~ would probably be 25,000.

483 Earl of Donoughmore: It would be convenient to the Commission all through, and not merely for the purpose of the examination this afternoon to have the information in tabular form.

A We will try to get it for you, my Lord.

484 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: Once a month, say.

485 Earl of Donoughmore: Or once a quarter, perhaps.

The Witness: We should have to telegraph out to the India for information.

486 Chairman: Now we come to the time when General Nixon was in command.

A Are you dealing with the Statement?

487 Q Yes. I now come to III. Your Statement tallies.

A It is under different heads: — Why we went to Mesopotamia; why we went to Kurma and the Karun Valley and so on.



Part 7

Chapter 3  
Swell

488 &

Almost the first thing that occurs after General Nixon assumes command is a Telegram from the admiralty I think calling attention to the great importance of protecting the pipe line as ~~toluene~~<sup>toluene</sup> is valuable. Do I understand that General Gortringe went up to Karun after that

+ No; General Gortringe went up to Karun at about May

489 &

So that no further steps were necessary there to protect the oil supply. General ~~Wheatstone~~<sup>Nixon</sup> telegraphs on the 19th of April on page 24 of the Red book: "The Cavalry Brigade now with this force cannot meet demands which will shortly be made on that arm. Dispatch of another Cavalry Brigade which should include a British Cavalry regiment is <sup>requested</sup> ~~requested~~".

+ Yes.

490 &

The hierarchy says that they cannot raise any more cavalry

+ Yes

491 &

Then Lord Crewe who was about to leave the India office sends a very important telegram. I presume that you were consulted about these telegrams

+ Yes about all these official telegrams

492 &

"Nixon's demand implies intention on his part of important offensive <sup>movement</sup> ~~movement~~". Then it goes on "if after smashing every in Karun direction it is possible to advance to Amara with view to establishing an out post which will control tribesmen between there and Karun and so contribute

to security of pipe line I should be prepared to accept such a proposal provided it is supported by you but I deprecate any plan involving undue extension and possible demands for reinforcements. Strategically our present position is a sound one and at present we cannot afford to take risks by unduly extending it. We must play a safe game in Mesopotamia. That was the deliberate and final opinion of Lord ~~Grey~~<sup>Crawe</sup> as Secretary of State

Yes it was

493 2 That is followed by a telegram on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May in the yellow book n<sup>o</sup> 130: "Nixon proposes to take offensive from Kurna ~~to~~ <sup>up the</sup> by a zigzag". In reply to that Mr Chamberlain as the new Secretary of State says "I sanction proposed movement on the clear understanding that General Nixon is satisfied that he can concentrate a sufficient garrison at Anwar to defy any attack from Bagdad during the summer when it may be difficult for him to reinforce so advanced a position. He must clearly understand his action must be guided by the fact that we can send him no further troops. As he must have made his arrangements for this move some days ago, I hold that he should have submitted his proposal before ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> last moment. Questions jointly involving civil and military policy should under present circumstances only be decided by the Cabinet". Then there is the reply on page 26 of reared

book from the Vicaroy stating "Nixon proposes to take offensive from Kurra up Digris on the 24<sup>th</sup> and does not consider any reinforcements will be required. We consider his move to be desirable in order to extend our control over Digris Valley thereby securing the pipe line and protecting the Basra Vilayet in accordance with his orders and do not propose to interfere with his intention. He will not of course proceed beyond Amara without your sanction". Then in reply to that there is a telegram from the Secretary of State. Then General Nixon I think for almost the first time on page 27 of the yellow book telegraphed direct to the Secretary of State. Why did he do that

Q I suppose because time was very pressing and he thought that he must get orders at once as he had made his arrangements to commence the advance

494 Q I do not think that General Nixon has telegraphed anything direct to the Secretary of State yet except for information purposes

A Once or twice the Secretary of State telegraphed to him when things were very pressing. You will find later on that during the Chesiphon period he sent one or two telegrams direct. They were repeated to India

495 Q The river transport being mobilized General Townsend moves up and he occupies Amara which is surrendered after a stiffish fight

- 39  
496 Q There was little or no fighting at Amara  
A and Was there not  
Q No. Amara and Kut el Amara are different places
- 497 Q I thought there was fighting at Amara  
A No there was little or no fighting at Amara
- 498 General Sir Neville Lytton there was capture of prisoners  
A The prisoners surrendered. General Townesend replied <sup>arrived</sup> with ~~an~~ <sup>midshipman</sup> ~~immediate~~ <sup>and</sup> shipment of 20 men of something of the kind, and they all ~~the~~ surrendered
- 499 Q Curious The Secretary of State sends his congratulations to General ~~Nasiriyah~~ <sup>miscon</sup> and the Naval and Military officers engaged in the operation. That is at page 29  
A Yes
- 500 Q The next move is to ~~set~~ Nasiriyah  
A Yes, on the Euphrates
- 501 Q It was supposed to be to prevent the Turks ~~doing~~ <sup>from repeating</sup> what they had done previously.  
A It was to prevent the Turks from repeating their shai'ba performance. If you hold Nasiriyah you cover Basra on that flank. At the India Office we rather held the view that it was a little dangerous to push forward to Nasiriyah
- 502 Q It was an isolated post  
A It was an isolated post which we could not reinforce because of the little water there was in the Euphrates
- 503 Q He occupied this place in very very hot weather



504 Q General Forriuge was in command  
 The Secretary of State telegraphs on the  
 12<sup>th</sup> July 1915 No 152, that he is informed  
 that the Admiralty attach very great importance  
 to the protection of the pipe and that  
 General Nixon must be warned not to rely  
 on tribal guarantees. Then it goes on to say  
 "I understand that as no further reinforcements  
 for Persian Gulf are possible you will not  
 sanction further advance but will be content  
 for the time to hold the Basra vilayet  
 and the pipe line"

A Yes

505 Q A Then there is the advance to Kut

A That is in the third section

506 Q The advance to Kut elamara was sanctioned  
 on the 20<sup>th</sup> August but previous to that the  
 Viceroy had communicated a very full statement  
 of General Nixon's views

A Yes

507 Q I think that I may say that those views  
 are views with which people acquainted with  
 proposals for military advances are familiar.  
 It was said that there would be a saving  
 of forces and there would be a better  
 concentration

A Yes

Chaplin

508 Q It is the general argument that is made  
 for an advance. The Secretary of State  
 assented

509 Q A Yes in his telegram of the 6<sup>th</sup> of August  
 there is an allusion here to a telegram of  
 Marking. Who was Marking

A Marking is the Minister at Teheran. Marking's  
 telegram of the 3<sup>rd</sup> August was a telegram  
 reporting reinforcements that he had heard of I think  
 2 There

Handwritten name: Gardner & Snel

510 Q. There was considerable fighting before we occupied Kut. General Townsend handled his troops with great success and we had a very considerable victory and Kut was occupied on the 29th August (September)

A. Yes

511 Q. What sort of climate is it at that time

A. Still ~~very~~ hot

512 Q. When does it get cool

A. I believe the nights were fairly cool about the 29th August but the days were very hot. It does not really get cool until October.

513 Q. Do you recollect whether there was any discussion when this was sanctioned about the river transport

A. You mean when the advance to Kut el Amara was sanctioned?

514 Q. Yes

A. There was no discussion. We had never been told that they were short of river transport

515 Q. It was very largely a matter of transport was it not, up to Kut el Amara

A. Yes from Amara I suppose it was, the ~~un~~mounted troops all marched and I ~~suppose~~ <sup>think</sup> a good many of the infantry marched most of the way.

516 General Sir Neville Lyttelton. The date is the 29th September not 29th August as put to you just now

A. The 29th September the days were still hot but the nights were cool

517 Chairman. Do not the Tigris a very difficult river on which to operate for military purposes because of the overflow

A. It was not at that date

518 Q. When does the inundation begin

A. The river began to rise after we had got back.

to Kut el Amara from Chesiphon at the end of October or the beginning of November. There was great difficulty because of the shallowness of the river and we lost several of our boats in consequence when we retired

- 519 Q. We got to Kut. el. Amara at a good climatic period  
 A. We left there at a good climatic period and in fact you may say that we got there at a good climatic period
- 520 Q. Towards the end of October the Tigris rises  
 A. In November it rises. The retirement from Chesiphon was at the end of November
- 521 Q. It got back in December  
 A. It got back in December. In that year the Tigris was rising early in December. During the retreat the river was very low and therefore in October and November they had river difficulties
- 522 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: And still more in December  
 A. In December the difficulties began to be the other way because there was too much water. Up to that date they had had trouble because of shortage of water - up to the 3rd December. When the relieving force was coming up they had difficulty owing to too much water. Even going up to Chesiphon they had great difficulty on account of the navigation. There was shortage of water when they left Kut. el. Amara. In that year at all events October and November were low river months
- 523 Q. General Nixon points out in 175. 1st October, that there were water difficulties
524. Lord Hugh Cecil: I gather that the India Office was very reluctantly assenting to the advance even as far as Amara

41

A: Yes

525

Q And similarly to the advance to Nasiriyeh

A: There <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>never</sup> ~~nothing~~ really <sup>very</sup> decided about Nasiriyeh at the India Office. We had not much information about Nasiriyeh and we felt that we must go by local opinion

526

Q If the advance with regard to both places had been postponed for six months or longer, do you think that any ill consequences would have come from it

A: No I do not; I think that we should have been all right. Amara covers the oil fields much better than Karun. There were good reasons for going to Amara. When we were at Karun it did not prevent the Turks coming down; they came down through the hills. The same thing might have happened again but I do not think it would have ~~been~~ done because they had a lesson that time - they were practically cut off. But still there was that to be said with regard to Amara - that you could prevent the Turks coming down not by the river but by the hills. They came down at the foot of the hills

527

Q: You are certainly of opinion that the advantages of waiting and organising the transport better would outweigh the disadvantages of delay

A: May I go to the map, my Lord?

528

Q: Certainly

A: Here is Amara. The reasons given by India for going to Amara were, I think, sound, because it prevented the <sup>from</sup> ~~the~~ Turks coming down this way. As long as we were at Amara they could not do that and therefore everything was safe and I think that it was well worth the risk of going up to Amara even if there was a shortage of river steamers

because the enemy were not at great strength at the time and we could hold our own very easily - in fact we were superior to the enemy up to that point and I am not at all prepared to say that Jordan were not right in going to Amara; in fact in the light of more recent events I think they were right.

529 Q. But beyond Amara you think it was an unnecessary risk

A. Yes; my own private opinion is that beyond Amara it was risky

530 Q. Apart from the question whether it was desirable to make these ~~advances~~ advances ultimately, you cannot call the attention of the Commission to any urgency or to any thing impending within a few months with regard to either advance

A. I think that the advance to Amara was fully justified

531 Q. But you cannot call the attention of the Commission to any specific element of urgency - to anything which was pressing in point of time

A. No. I think that probably things would not have been anything worse if postponed a little, but on the whole looking at it in the light of the knowledge of what did occur, I think that the Government of India was certainly right

532 Q. As for as Amara is concerned

A. Yes

533 Q. With regard to Nasiriyeh you think that there was nothing urgent

A. I think that there was nothing urgent

534 Commander Wedgwood: When you got beyond Amara the transport difficulty on the river came in

A. No; the transport difficulty never came in as far as we knew until after leaving Kut-el-Amara to go on to Chesiphon

42

535

Q: You must have known of the difficulty, that the only line of communication was a river

A: We knew that the only line was a river

536

Q: You never suggested to the Indian Government that they should look into that side of the question

A: No; we naturally supposed that they would

Q: It was part of the General's business to see that he had the means, and if he had not the means it was his business to report to the Government of India, and then it was for the Government of India to find him the means or to say "you must not do it."

537

Q: There is a telegram dated the 10th July 1915, Number 13 from the Admiralty to the India Office on page 11 of our book of correspondence: "I am to request that you will represent to the Secretary of State for India great apprehension on account of untrustworthiness of tribes." Would not that have been an opportunity for you to suggest to the Admiralty that they should help you with regard to water transport

A: On the 10th July we had no information that they were going on to Kut-el-Amara

538

Q: But with regard to going up to Amara, would it not have been an advantage on the Tigris and the Karun to have had assistance from the Admiralty in the shape of boats

A: It was not the business of the Admiralty to provide boats

539

Q: You did not know of any shortage at that time

A: We were not told of any shortage. There was nothing to indicate any shortage down to that time

540

Q: Now would you take the red précis. At page 29 there is a telegram from the Viceroy quoting General

Nixon's views. He says "The land communications of Nasiriyeh are bad but they could be improved by a railway. On this point I hope to address you very shortly the matter having been under investigation for many weeks." There is no trace in the papers of any representations in connection ~~to~~ with the railway ever having been addressed

A. There was no further communication on the subject until 1916

541 Q. There has been no request from the front for a railway right down to the present year

A. No

542 Q. There is only this hint that the problem might come up

A. Yes

543 Lord Hugh Cecil: This relates to the Euphrates, not to the Tigris

544 Commander Wedgwood: The Indian Government have taken no steps about railway <sup>communications</sup> at all

the Witness: They have now

545 Q. But not until recently - not until the War Office took over the administration of the campaign

A. No, I do not think so

546 Q. Would you turn to your Statement Number 5, and look at page 7, paragraph 16: "It was felt however by Mr Chamberlain that it was difficult to reject the considered opinion of those on the spot." I suppose that you must be guided by that and if the people on the spot are determined to go on and they have the Government of India behind them, what sort of power has the India Office here to stop them

A. Practically none, except the power of veto which it might be foolish to exercise under the circumstances

Presumably those on the spot have the best information and are aware of what their means are

43  
547 Q. You believe in trusting the man on the spot  
A. Yes, until he is found out

548 Lord Hugh Cecil: You can cross-examine him as to his reasons to some extent

A. <sup>Who</sup> ~~You~~ can?

549 Q. The Home Government. The India Office can cross-examine him

A. Yes, they might have done so

550 Q. Short of the veto, you can force him to give detailed reasons

A. Yes. The Secretary of State is all powerful

551 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: He can override altogether

A. Yes

552 Q. As to details he can override

A. Yes. I think I am right in saying that the Secretary of State is absolute

Chairman: The Secretary of State in Council is absolute

553 Commander Wedgwood: You say in paragraph 17 "General Mason with the support of the Government of India deemed it inexpedient to remain inactive whilst any Turks were within striking distance. He therefore next directed his activities towards the Euphrates side."

If similar circumstances arose again you would have to allow them to go forward to Kut-el-Amara

A. Yes

554 Q. If <sup>similar</sup> the circumstances arose to-morrow you would have to give way to the Government of India and the man on the spot in the same way - or I will not say that you would have to, but you would do so normally

A. Yes. It depends on your knowledge of the man on the spot

555 Q. And of the Government of India

A. Yes



Chairman: There is absolute power of veto

556 Sir Archibald Williamson: At page 22 of the red book the India Office state that their views are fully justified throughout by ~~events~~ <sup>events</sup>: "The ~~only~~ one small reverse at Adway would never have occurred nor our oil supply have been interrupted for several months had its views been accepted in time"

A. That is a statement that we were justified

557 Sir Archibald Williamson: The India Office and probably the Home Government took a certain view which turned out to be correct, but it was ignored by the Indian Government and they acted contrary to it

558 Chairman: That is not quite so. The Indian Government did not ~~even~~ send the reinforcements which the Home Government considered absolutely essential to safeguard the situation, but ultimately the Brigade arrived just in time

A. Yes

559 Sir Archibald Williamson: There had been divergencies of view between the Home Government and the Indian Government, and the Indian Government took their own way

A. Not necessarily. Lord Crewe overruled them in one case, and said "we will take the responsibility of your defending India. You must send such and such Brigades"

560 Commander Wedgwood: But that is the only occasion when you have overruled the Government of India

A. I think that that is the only occasion

561 Q. At page 8 of your statement of the 20th August 1915, the Secretary of State sanctioned the advance. Are we to take it that up to the 20th August no question had been raised about the transport difficulty with regard to Kut

444

A No; up to that date no question had been raised about shortage of transport

562 Q Neither the India Office here nor the Government of India had paid any special attention whatever to the transport question

A I cannot answer for the Government of India; we had not because we did not regard it as our business

563 Admiral

Sir Cyprian Bridge. The 29th September was just after the occupation of Kut

A The 29th September was the day on which our cavalry got into Kut

564 Q

On that date General Nison reported at page 36 of the Yellow Book telegram 173 - and this is one of the few statements <sup>on the subject</sup> I think that appeared from him - "The wounded are doing well and the health of the troops is good"

A There is an addendum to the Yellow Book, of telegrams that were omitted. You perhaps have that

565

Sir Archibald Williamson: There is number 144, the 5th June "troops in excellent health and spirits"

566 Admiral

Sir Cyprian Bridge. Yes I have that. This is one of the few references made in any of the telegrams from General Nison which we have before us as to the state of the wounded, and he says on the 29th September that the wounded are doing well

A: That was after the Kut. cl. Amara fight

567

Commander Wedgwood: What were our casualties.

A. About 1800, I think

568

Lord Hugh Cecil. Those were the first heavy casualties

A On

Chaplin 3 Suell

On the Hasiriyeh side they must have had 700 or 800

569 Commander Wedgwood There were none ~~under~~ over 1000 previously

Q This was the first over 1000 since the <sup>Straub</sup> ~~Shub~~ battles

570 Q Were they over 1000  
A Yes

571 General Sir Neville Lyttelton The casualties at Kut el Amara were believed to be under 500

I think that it panned out to 1300 or 1400 or something like that

572 Q It goes up to 1200

A It was more than that ultimately. You see there was no such thing as one connected battlefield. They were fighting in several columns at a distance

573 Admiral Sir Cypryan Bridge This refers to the wounded and I have taken it because it is in that section of your evidence. It seems to me important because it is one of the few occasions on which he alludes at all to the state of the wounded

He refers to the state of the wounded again after Otesiphon

574 Q 175 page 36, ~~at~~ October 1915 - in the course of a long telegram General Nixon says that in the view of the Navy the navigation above Kut is difficult  
A Yes it was beginning to get difficult then

575 Q That is followed up by No 177 on page 37 from him dated the 3<sup>rd</sup> October he says that he is strong enough to make his way to Bag<sup>hdad</sup>  
A Yes

L. Jg

45

710

576 I Ignoring the difficulties of the navigation  
+ apparently so

577 General Sir Neville Lytton He says that the con-  
centration must be partly by land. No 176  
shows the difficulties on the river -  
"Beset by navigation difficulties throughout  
the day"

578 Lord Hugh Cecil Could we ~~take~~ <sup>have</sup> a general survey  
+ yes, that could be given I think

579 <sup>the</sup> Chairman Immediately after Kut was taken,  
apparently General Derosend pushed his  
forces on  
+ yes

580 I And he was at ~~Asisia~~ <sup>Asisia</sup> three days  
afterwards

+ No not at ~~Asisia~~ <sup>Asisia</sup> I think <sup>three days afterwards</sup>

581 General Sir Neville Lytton On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October  
our Cavalry reached ~~Asisia~~ <sup>Asisia</sup>

<sup>the</sup> + yes but he was not there

582 <sup>the</sup> Chairman Where is that  
+ half way up to Ctesiphon I think  
The witness withdrew

Adjourned to tomorrow at 11-45 o'clock

Horace William Hill  
Shorthand Writer.