

66)
5476

Q Do you think that there was ~~economic~~ economic pressure

A Yes. I am sorry to say that the only way you have of getting the numerous things which the Government will not supply is out of the 'Garden Fund'. That is nothing more nor less than the British soldier paying for them himself. They are his profits in the canteen. It was allowed at the rate of 30 rupees a month from each regiment over what was nominally called the 'Garden Fund' in the military hospital. That 'Garden Fund' was even used for the purchase of instruments.

5477

5477 Lord Hugh Cecil: That was really the profits of the canteen

a Yes

5478 Chairman: Now you give here your experience of movement by rail and movement by sea

a Yes

5479

Q Your experience is that units were broken up, disorganised and disunited

a hot mine. I threatened to go to the General Officer Commanding at Bombay. I said I could not go off like that. I had been to three ships and eventually I said "I will get on to every ship in the Fleet but I must get what I want." The other units were as I have described

5480

Q It was embarked and disembarked upon at least three different ships

a. Do

A To the best of my belief, yes. I would swear to two, but I think it was three ships I was on and off myself.

5481 Q You say "No. 17 B.F.A. leaving at the same time was dispatched as follows: Officers on one ship, British personnel on another, Indian personnel on another, equipment on another, horses on another, tentage and stores on another. On arrival at Basra, to the best of my belief it took nearly three weeks

collect the unit together".

A Yes, that is quite true

5482 Q Was not there order and method in the embarkation at Bombay

A There was not much order and method as far as I could see. You had the embarkation staff who did not understand what these medical units were at all, and they had no idea of their strength. One officer wanted to tell me that a field ambulance consisted of 42 men. I said it was much nearer 300 than 42. He pulled out a book immediately and I said "That is a section and there are four of those sections". He said "I am sorry; I made a mistake".

5483 Q We have before us the statement which you furnished to the Vincent Bagley Commission

67
A Yes

Q You have given us your evidence as regards your experience in getting your ambulance together and your ambulance transport. Now I want to come to your practical experience as regards the treatment of the wounded. Speaking generally, would you say that the wounded from want of ~~attention~~ preparation suffered avoidable discomfort

A I am afraid they must. One cannot say anything else

5485 Q Which was ~~un~~avoidable? I am not talking of the officers who had to deal with them, but of the general system of organisation. Could foresight and better method have avoided a great deal of discomfort

A I am perfectly certain it could

5486 Q I suppose you discussed these matters a good deal with your brother officers

A Yes

5487 Q What was their opinion

A The outcome of it was that they came back to the question of a Government of India Order. They were blamed without ever being consulted. What was said to ^{you} was, "My dear fellow, there is the Government of India Order. This could not be done without a Government of India Order."

I used to say, "well then, ask for a Government of India Order". They said "Oh, you can't do that kind of thing". That was the ^{stock} answer which I got to everything

5288 Q

You kept a diary and furnished extracts from it to the Vincent Bingley Commission

A Yes

5289 Q

I suppose you have no objection to your statement before that Commission going upon our Notes and also, certainly not. I will swear to it

5290 Q

On the 27th January ¹⁹¹⁵ ~~1914~~ you make this record: "A. D. W. S. arrived from Basrah to inspect. He said G. O. C. was very pleased with the medical arrangements for operations on 20th". That was

A the reconnaissance in force from Kurma and Uaciriyah to the Bahrein position, where the Turks were

5291 Q

'No sanitary errors detected in camp. Spoke to him about the necessity for an ambulance mahaila and said clearing a foot of horse dung off a ship's deck and putting on wounded afterwards, was disgraceful. I also pointed out that ships were in a most septic condition and could not be cleaned. He refused

to sanction the hire of wahailas
 Do you still go on using these
 unclear wahailas

The wahailas were not unclear.
 You will see a previous entry on
 the 6th January. A wahaila
 was nothing more or less than
 a country boat, and I said I could
 fit it up as a means of carrying
 the wounded. He found fault
 with it on the question of expense.
 Afterwards I went to General
 Dobbie on this very matter, and
 General Dobbie went to Sir Arthur
 Barrett, and Sir Arthur Barrett
 said he would give us something
 to carry the wounded in. I then
 appealed again to the A. D. M. S.,
 Colonel Hare

5492

Sir Archibald Williamson: Have you
 a copy of your letter of the 6th
 January?

A Yes, but not with me

5493

Q Did you ask for hospital steamers
 or anything beyond wahailas

A No, I never had an idea of a
 steamer. I was quite contented
 to work with a thing that could
 be towed, because I thought it was
 of more practical use than a
 steamer

5494

Ste

Charrion, had you ever to use these
wahailas in a filthy condition

A We never had anything else until
 just

just before the first battle of Kut. It was ~~not~~ almost impossible to keep such a boat clean. It was used at one moment for the transport of animals, and there were no sanitary arrangements. It was almost impossible to keep them clean

Q Was there a sufficiency of them a ho; there was a scarcity of boats on the river, but barges could have been brought for this purpose.

With any real decent effort at organisation something could have been done. But it came back to continual letter-writing and doing the thing officially instead of by personal efforts. I do think at the very worst one could have done something and got hold of a boat of some kind if they had represented it strongly enough to the Army Commander

5496 Q On page 308, February 17th, you say the men were practically speaking sleeping in water, and you advocated prophylactic doses of quinine

Ans
5497 Lord Hugh Cecil: There is an earlier entry to the same effect

the chairman
5498 Q At the bottom of page 307 there is this: "15th February 1915. Field ambulance system altered: No. 10 British Field ambulance done away with, the unit

now No. 1 Field Ambulance consisting
 of two sections 16 British Field
 Ambulance and three sections
 No. 1 Field Ambulance from
 Kurnah. 17th February 1915. A.D.M.S.
 inspected camp. He admitted that
 my reports on the floods to him
 were not exaggerated. As men
 are, practically speaking, sleeping
 in water, I advocated prophylactic
 doses of quinine. He said quinine
 could not be administered prophylactically
 unless the admissions to hospital
 exceeded 3 per cent. He also spoke
 of the expense of my suggestion.
 A Yes that is it. Colonel Hare was
 an officer who wanted to have the thing
 purely according to regulations and
 book work. If you have, as we had
~~with~~ that case, a regimental
 medical officer with the battalion
 who was trying to keep his men
 out of hospital and keep them fit
 to fight, there is a regulation in
 some book or manual that
 prophylactic doses of quinine are
 not to be administered until the
 number of admissions to hospital
 reached ~~something~~ something like 3 per cent
 or 0.3 per cent. I could not tell
 you which; ^{because this} ~~this~~ officer was trying
 to keep the men out of hospital
 to do their work, and naturally they
 did not go to hospital, ~~so that~~ they
 were

were officially below the authorized strength for the issue of prophylactic doses of quinine according to the manual of Regulations

69
5499

Sir Archibald Williamson: Did that continue till the time you left
A I had no further reference to the matter because about that time I left. I do not think there was much ~~of~~ improvement. I got the prophylactic doses of quinine myself as soon as we were decimated with malaria, we had 180 cases per regiment per day. Then we got wild telegrams about prophylactic doses of quinine. But they would not give it to us while we had the men healthy
Commander Wedgwood: Who was the person who refused the quinine?

5500

A Colonel Hare

5501

Sir Archibald Williamson: Do you think the sickness would have been prevented if you had got the quinine in time?

A Yes, I think it would have gone a long way to prevent it

5502
The

Chaurian: At the bottom of page 308 I see: "Numerous cases of sun stroke as British troops were on iron decked barges without head cover." Was this general?

A They were not provided with head covers, because they were barges for carrying luggage or grain or fruit.

As a rule when men got on the barges they tried to rig up some kind of thing across, but in this advance they did not do that

5303

Q Is sun stroke in Mesopotamia very serious

A I am afraid so

5304

Q A man who gets sun stroke is not fit for duty for some time

A I was down with it myself, but I was never absolutely unconscious. I had three experiences of the effects of it

5305

Q Would a second attack be fatal

A You ~~could~~ never say. It depends upon how bad they were. If a man reached the stage of absolute total congestion of the brain, then probably the second attack would do for him. I stood three attacks myself before I left the country

5306

Q On the 13th June I see: "Received wire from sections in Kurna saying that there were 287 cases now under treatment and that in spite of urgent wires to Basra for ice none had been received and that cases of heat-stroke were dying in consequence."

A That was a wire sent on to me from one of my section commanders. I had left two sections behind at Kurna when I went on with the fighting force to act as a kind of general hospital because they had no other arrangements. He naturally wished to communicate with me about matters of this kind

5307

Q. Could you ever buy ice in Mesopotamia

A. Yes.

(70)

5508

Joseph McFarlane

folly Smith

2 There was ice there available

A Yes, there was ice before the night we advanced on this procession - the Kurna Regatta ^{we called it} - and off in rowing boats to ~~take possession~~ ^{attack the position}. The men were going down with sunstroke the whole day before we started. I went and I asked about ~~ice~~ ^{ice} and they said they were coming and all that kind of thing. I went to the supply people, and at last I was told it had arrived, but that it had ~~arrived~~ ^{arrived} on a boat, one ^{of the P} ~~of the P~~ boats, I think it was P IV ^{and which} did not come within 4 four miles of Kurna. She ~~came~~ ^{stopped} down the river, anchored in the river. With the assistance of the officer in the Indian Marine, ^{named Bottomley} Lieutenant Commander Bottomley, at ~~at~~ 12 o'clock at night I got hold of a tug and I sent down a ~~sergeant~~ ^{sergeant} of mine of the Norfolk Regiment, named Sergeant Danger who had made ~~the~~ ^{the} efforts ~~to~~ to get to this boat ~~to~~ to get the ice and had been fired on in consequence and had to retire. I got hold of this tug and sent him down and he brought us up ice, and that ice was used the next day in the engagement, because in all the boats I put a certain amount of ice ~~except~~ ^{expecting} of course, and enormous amount of heat apoplexy when working under those conditions. But as a matter of fact the heat apoplexy amongst the fighting forces, the 17th Brigade, was not as severe comparatively as it was amongst the reserves who were crowded on these barges going up the river attached to Steamboats

5509

2 Going a little further down, ~~page~~ page 309. "Saw Staff and Transport Corps with reference to a local supply of fresh milk, A.D.M.S. visited in the afternoon. I told him that the fresh milk supplied formed a clot in boiling, and that, as well as I could make out, it was adulterated with cows' urine (a custom amongst Arabs).

for medicines and ^{your demand} could not be complied with except in a few cases in small quantities. ~~Then you went up to Essington~~ ^{at Essington the first battle} you think the arrangements were better ~~than at Essington~~ ^{than at Es-sinn}



5517

A Yes, of course they suffered

Q Assuming it was of military importance to evacuate so many of the wounded, still many of them must have suffered very much from inadequate accommodation.

5518

A Yes, of course they suffered

Q Do you think the arrangements were worse before at Es-sinn.

A There was no arrangement at Essington at all. I myself was wounded at Essington and I went back to the battlefield; there were no hospitals there at all. We got into Kut from Essington. We left the wounded on the bank of the river and they were supposed to take them down the river to Amara and to Basra but they found ^{they had no} ~~much~~ accommodation, so they told us to take them back and treat them in the field regimentally and in the field ambulances

5519

Commander Wedgwood. Which do you mean by Es-sinn?

A The first battle of Kut. After the first battle of Kut a large proportion of wounded, between 500 and 600 were absolutely left to be treated regimentally in regiments, and I have seen men coming from regiments to have their fingers and toes cut off. They were all septic. They came to the field ambulances. I had to take all my field ambulances which I had taken all the wounded out of and take those cases and treat them in the field ambulances for over a month, and at the end of a month they had some accommodation for them down the river, and I sent them down the river; and at the end of the ^{same} ~~summer~~ month they sent up a section of Indian and half a section of British General hospital

72
 A No; I should like to

Q I should like to take you through the Schedules of the medical mobilisation, and I want to see whether ~~any~~ in any respects the arrangements made were up to standard. ~~But~~ You were short of hospital river steamers; in fact there were none

A That is so

5528 Q There was a great inadequacy of medical personnel

A Yes

5529 Q The river transport was very deficient

A Yes

5530 Q The only field ambulance was the Army transport cart

A That is the only thing we had in the way of a cart. There was one motor ambulance that I shovelled myself because it could not go through the mud. We shovelled it for about 5 miles through the mud. It was a 12 ~~horse~~ horse power car

5531 Q There was no proper field ambulance transport

A No, we put the men in the carts. ~~and~~ ^{we} put the dead men underneath to make a cushion and put the live men on top

5532 Q Did that actually happen

A Yes.

5533 Q As regards hospitals the buildings in certain cases were not appropriate

A No. There were plenty of places where they could have had hospitals, where they had them afterwards. ~~If they~~ ^{as} ~~were~~ ^{could} ~~get~~ accommodation for thousands of people afterwards when new troops arrived, it certainly could have been done in the previous instance

5534 Q Then there were no electric fans

A No

5535 Q You never saw one

A I saw one at Army ~~Head~~ quarters and one at the general hospital

5526

Q With regard to your medical stores you have given evidence

A Yes

5537

Q There was ^{no} medical embarkation officer at Basra

A There was no medical disembarkation ^{officer} on arrival, but afterward when European ~~some~~ troops came with the Relief Force they had a medical embarkation officer then but we did not have ~~one~~ when we came

5538

Q Until quite lately there were no hospital ships

A There was one hospital ship to start with, the "Madras", which Colonel Giffard commanded

5539

Q Yes, that was provided by voluntary help

A Yes

5540

Q Were the arrangements for water supply good

A No, they did nothing to the water. It was absolutely neglected. Major Winslow and I ~~saw a shaft and~~ tried to percolate it and to clear it, but they did not care about the water. They thought they could ~~get out of it~~ ^{get out of it} ~~clear~~ by putting ~~it~~ chlorine and permanganate of potash into it. All the thing was like to soup to start with, and then ~~we~~ put all the medicines in the pharmacop^{oea} in it. That was supposed to make it right, but it did not

5541

Q Then the staff for sanitation was small

A At one time there was ~~nothing~~ ^{none}. Then they got out people from France. There were sanitary officers going about but they had not a sufficient amount of menial staff to do the thing. They were wild on the question of incineration. I think it is a hardship on the British soldier. We tried to do this incinerating, which is a very important thing in a small area like that, which is nothing more nor less than the burning of night soil. They were prepared to pay an Arab ^{at month} 30 rupees as a sweeper.

Q It is a most unpleasant duty to have to get rid of

would not grant it did prevent people from asking
A I think so. Something must have prevented them from asking, otherwise why should they not ask?

5547

I Do you think that the superior medical officers in Mesopotamia fully realised their responsibility and that they made sufficient fuss.

A I am afraid they did not. That was the whole thing. I myself had to do with practically every General in the force and I never asked them to do anything which they did not do, ^{so} long as I had access to them. When there ~~was~~ ^{were stepping-stones} ~~to be done~~ ^{between} and I had to go ^{through my} departmental superiors things were not done, but I certainly saw no hesitation ^{on the part of} the Generals, ^{who} would do anything they could, ~~for~~ General Townshend, General Nixon and everybody else. I have asked for little things, which was all I could ask ^{for}, and I always got their assistance

1/2

5528

Lord Hugh Cecil: that was not the case about the malaria on the ~~25th~~ ^{27th} June. There you did have access to the G.O.C.

A I had ~~access to~~ ^{access to} General Dobbie and he saw Sir ~~Arthur~~ ^{Arthur Edmund} Barrett and General Dobbie came back to me and said "I have been to Sir ~~Arthur~~ ^{Arthur Edmund} Barrett and he says ^{that} if the A.D.M.S. ~~will approve~~ ^{will approve} you can get the malaria and rig up means to get the wounded away." At a subsequent ~~date~~ ^{date} I again spoke to me A.D.M.S. and he said that he did not approve of the suggestion. So therefore I had ^{have} ~~nothing~~ ^{to do} but to presume that Sir ~~Arthur~~ ^{Arthur} Barrett would have approved if the A.D.M.S. would have put it through, but the A.D.M.S. did not consider it necessary to do so

5549
 Lord Hugh Cecil: There is only ^{one} question about ice. I see on the 21st June you say "I saw" ice supplied for the use of the sick, for the first time."

A I think you will find that is an ^{extract} ~~explanation~~ from Major Wright's Diary

5550 Q. I am speaking of page 310

A: No, that would be my own. That was at Amara

5551 Q: On the 21st June

A. Yes

5552 Q. Do you know how that ice was made

A. Yes, there was an ice machine in Amara which the Turks had. ~~The~~ ^{the} Turks used to supply ice at so much per pound. He ~~was~~ started on or about that date to get the show running and started to supply us. Then our Supply Authorities took over the thing. Somebody went to work with it and burst something, and the ice stopped and there was no more ice

5553 Q. As far as you know there were no ice machines prior to that

A There was nothing brought along officially except the thing which the Turks had in the place

5554 Q It is true to say that the Expedition went up the Tigris without any ice machines

A Yes, to the best of my knowledge. I never saw any

5555 Q Your general criticism ^{as to} of the sick and wounded applies to the whole of your experience, not only to a part of it

A To the whole of my experience - to the end as well as to the beginning. The very last day I left it, as far as I could see things were getting a bit worse at the end

5556 Q We have seen the statement that up to May 1915 there was no serious difficulty because of the

Gardner & Helmer

small number of troops employed and because of the limited nature of the operations

A: Yes

5557 Q: As long as the Expedition did not go beyond Kerma

A: Yes, that is quite true; there was nothing ^{there were} very much happening then; there was no sickness and practically no casualties

5558 Q: Part of your evidence goes to show that, even at that early stage there were serious defects of equipment

A: Yes

5559 Commander Wedgwood: You were first of all under Colonel Hare

A: Yes

5560 Q: He was A. D. M. ^{S.} of the Sixth Division, and then ~~Surgeon General~~ Sir John Hathaway

A: Yes

5561 Q: As long as Colonel Hare was there, there was no break down, at any rate. He was superseded on April 1915

A: Yes, that is quite true

5562 Q: Up to this there had been no real break down

A: No, there had not

5563 Q: When did Surgeon General Hathaway leave

A: After me, a couple of days, I think

5564 Q: So that practically speaking you were working under Surgeon General Hathaway for the greater part of the time

A: I was still in the Sixth Division

5565 Q: He was not your immediate chief; you did not come in contact with him

A: At odd times I did, but Colonel Hare was the administrative officer of the Division

5566 Lord Hugh Cecil: Colonel Hare was under Surgeon General Hathaway

A: Yes

D. M. S.

70
 5367 Q Yes; he was the ~~D. M. S.~~ ~~of the Force~~ and Colonel Hare was the A. D. M. S. of the Division, and I was S. M. O. under Colonel Hare

Commander Wedgwood: Any shortage in your field ambulance you would have to report to Colonel Hare

A: Yes

5368 ~~Lord Hugh Cecil~~: And he would report it to Surgeon General Hathaway

A: Yes

5369 Commander Wedgwood: When you applied for these things did Colonel Hare stop them himself or pass them on to Surgeon General Hathaway

A: I could not tell you that. At the time, at Amara I said we had nothing: at the same time as that we got a Circular from Basra, and that Circular was sent out by Surgeon General Hathaway calling attention to the enormous consumption of drugs that were being used, and ^{calling on us} to effect more economy. That came from Basra itself

5570 Lieut Archibald Williamson: Did it originate at Basra

A: Yes. It came from Army Headquarters at Basra. I think I have the Circular

5571
with
Mr W

Q Can you put it in.

A I will try. I think I have it. But everybody knows; it would be in the records. It came out about the month of June. Everybody got it, because all the Ambulance Commanders discussed the thing. There were complaints about the amount of drugs, and calls for further economies, and we really had nothing at the time. That was ante-dated perhaps a fortnight or a week before that time, but we got it when we had nothing of any practical use.

5572 ADMIRAL SIR CYPRIAN BRIDGE Was that economy pecuniary economy?

A I think at the bottom it was a pecuniary economy.

5573 SIR ARCHIBALD WILLIAMSON: Colonel Hare seems to have been your superior officer during the whole period you were there?

A Not after the retreat from Ctesiphon. I gave very sketchy evidence about Ctesiphon, because everybody knows about it. But I stopped for six months longer in the country. I left on the 23rd of March of this year.

5574 Q Had the conditions materially improved.

A No, I am afraid they had not.

5575 Q Colonel Hare was the A.D.M.S. to whom you referred throughout your evidence.

A Yes.

5576 Q Is ~~not~~ that the gentleman who gave you four contradictory orders in five minutes.

A That is the very gentleman.

5577 Q And who appears to have no influence with any department.

A Yes, that is the very identical gentleman.

5578 Q The representations made by you seem to have been blocked when they got to the A.D.M.S.; they would seem to have got no further

A Some of them did. For instance, after ~~the first battle of Kut~~ ^{Es-sunn} I myself told Surgeon-General Hathaway of these voluminous orders and the condition of affairs, and pointed out the contradictory orders, and how impossible it was to do anything, and he asked me to send him a copy of all the orders, and he asked me to show him ^{on the map} the positions held by the Field Ambulances in

action, and I did so. After a few days I got that correspondence back, and a note from the D.A.D.M.S., Captain Hamilton, saying he did not care to interfere with the A.D.M.S. of the 6th Division.

5579

Q Am I right in understanding from your statement of what occurred on the 31st July, that when you could go direct to the General, as you could at one time, you got much more satisfaction.

A Yes. When I could go to General Delamain we got away from this system, and we were independent, and General Delamain did everything he possibly could to help matters.

5580

Q What was the reason that ^{when} you had to approach the A.D.M.S. instead of your General, you could not get the things required.

A Well, it is unexplainable. It is hard to say. I could not tell you why it was. But I am sure other officers will give you the same experience. He did not want to do anything that he was asked. Unless it emanated from his own brain, he thought nothing could be right.

5581

Q On the 12th September you had a heated discussion with the Marine Transport Officer about transport on the river.

A Yes.

5582

Q To what Service does the Marine Transport Officer belong.

A He is a Royal Indian Marine Officer.

5583

Q Had the Royal Indian Marine Officers charge of all transport matters up the river from Amara to Kut.

A Yes. The M.T.O's were on the beach, and were arranging the steamers.

5584

Q Would it be the Marine Transport Officers who would be responsible for sending less necessary things before medical stores.

A That is a very difficult question to answer. I think their duty is to provide the boats at a given time, and to get them away at a given time. I could not swear it was the duty of the Marine Transport Officer to say what was to go on the boat.

5585

Q Your discussion took place with the Royal Indian Marine Officer.

A Yes, because he was the only representative left. I wanted to get hold of a boat to get these medical units along, otherwise they would have been left behind. I eventually got a boat called the "Mosel".

5586

Q Did you take any part in agitating for hospital steamers or barges, except mahalias.

A I never did anything more. I made four efforts. I think I wrote about mahalias three or four times, and I was told they were not on the river. The "Mosel" went into action with 350 sick on her before there was a wounded man. After that it seemed only to cause discord and annoyance.

Q You were an important medical officer in this expedition: what dissuaded you from agitating for proper hospital accommodation on the river.

A I tried to get mahalias or barges. I could have done very well with them as we were situated. On the subsequent development, when the other troops came out, I had very little to do with the river. It is a very difficult thing to understand, but when suggestions are not taken well, and when you have made three or four efforts, it is rather hard to enter into an acrimonious discussion on a point where people take as a personal matter the mere fact of their being asked.

5588

Q Really it came to this, that you felt that representations would have been useless.

A Yes, and that the mere fact of asking would only have caused discord. Also I might ask a thousand times, and would not get what I wanted.

5589

Q Was it also thought by those in your position that it would interfere with their promotion.

A Well, I did not care very much for that, but there is always the personal element of dislike. One has to do one's best, but after all, one cannot go beyond a certain point, and when you have said it again and again, there is no good in going over the ground once more.

Hehn

Q Is Colonel Hehn still in Mesopotamia.

A I think he is in Turkey.

(The witness withdrew).

5590

77

Gardner & Fielder

mem to printer: insert statement herewith marked H1

5592
5393

5591 Gk

Major G. Hewett sworn and examined

Chairman: We have your statement here, which will be taken ~~as your evidence~~ as your evidence in chief

Q: What regiment do you belong to

A: The 48th Pioneers

Q: You say in your statement ~~that~~ is a valuable piece of evidence, and it is corroborated by a mass of similar evidence that I do not think we need examine you as regards the greater part of ~~your statement~~ ^{it}. ~~It will be printed and attached to the evidence, but I should like to ask you a few questions as to what happened before Chloiphon, because the evidence is unanimous as to what happened afterwards. You arrived in Mesopotamia on the 13th November 1914~~

A: Yes

5594 Q: At the very commencement of the fighting there was considerable difficulty in collecting and handling the wounded

A: Yes

5595 Q: There were no cars or ambulances, and there was no hospital ship with the force

A: No

5596 Q: Transport was hastily adapted for the accommodation of the wounded

A: Yes

5597 Q: In your opinion if a hospital ship had accompanied the force a great deal of suffering would have been avoided

A: Yes

5598 Q: During December the troops suffered very severely from impure water

A: Yes

5599 Q: The arrangements for purifying the water seem to have

152

(H1.)

390

h4
Jan 9-16

REPORT re MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN MESOPOTAMIA.

By Major G. Hewett.

Sahil or Zain, 17th November, 1914.

1. I arrived in Mesopotamia with my regiment on the 13th November, 1914. At the action at Sahil or Zain, 17th November, there was considerable difficulty in collecting the wounded and many were left out all night. The action was fought over a large area for the size of the force, and all casualties had to be carried in by hand. No carts had been landed, and, so far as I know, there were no ambulances. In this case, however, it is doubtful if wheeled vehicles could have performed much useful service owing to the very heavy nature of the ground after the rain which fell during the action.

There was no hospital ship with the force and many wounded lay in the open in the palm grove, while one of the transports was hastily adapted for their accommodation. On arrival at Basra some days later a large building was converted into a hospital and tents were pitched round it. At first patients had difficulty in obtaining food, and slightly wounded officers had to forage in the bazaar for themselves and friends.

Had a fully equipped hospital ship accompanied the force in the first place much suffering and discomfort could have been avoided.

Winter, 1914-15.

2. During December the troops in Basra suffered severely from dysentery due to the impure water. Arrangements were made later to supply tanks for storage of "chlorinated" (?) water, but apparently arrangements for water-supply had not been made in advance.

The establishment of native cooks for the hospital was quite inadequate, and fighting men had to be requisitioned from regiments to fulfil requirements. During the cold weather a properly fitted hospital boat to ply between Kurna and Basra would have been very useful. As it was, the sick were taken down the river on any steamer and generally had to just lie on deck.

Shaiba, April, 1915.

3. At the action near Shaiba on April 14th, 1915, there were only springless carts (ordinary transport vehicles) and artillery G.S. waggons for bringing in the wounded. The country was open and good going, and motor ambulances would have been invaluable.

This action was fought on a very hot day, and the troops, especially the casualties, suffered severely from thirst. There were no water carts with the force. During the whole time I was in Mesopotamia (November, 1914, to December, 1915) I never saw a water cart. Troops relied on mule pakhsals as used in Indian frontier warfare. These proved quite inadequate when the fighting took place away from a good source of supply, as on April 14th, 1915. On this day water was eventually taken out in ammunition boxes packed in A.T. carts.

The number of doctors in Shaiba was quite inadequate to do the work. It was only their extraordinary exertions which prevented a great deal more suffering. I believe one officer worked forty-eight hours at a stretch.

Operations near Ahwaz, May-June, 1915.

4. After the repulse of the Turkish offensive against Basra I was attached to General Gorrings's force operating in the direction of Ahwaz. Here there were few casualties, but a great deal of sickness, and the field hospitals were hopelessly overcrowded and overworked. At one time it was impossible to obtain castor-oil in the whole of the Illah Camp on the Kharke River. The heat was intense. Vegetables, even onions, were seldom obtainable, and it was only possible to get condensed milk in such limited quantities as to be of little value. This was in May-June, 1915. This was, I think, entirely due to lack of river transport. General Townshend was making his advance on Amara and required all the boats available, consequently the troops on the Karun River were, figuratively, starved.

During these operations the troops again suffered severely from lack of water carts when they moved away

from the river. Even when near it the British troops suffered owing to not having bhistsis with them. On one occasion I had to send the bhistsis belonging to my detachment to assist the R. West Kent Regiment, who were suffering severely from the heat. Throughout this time we had to drink water straight from the river, and practically everybody suffered from diarrhoea or dysentery.

In the middle of June my detachment returned to Basra and proceeded up the Euphrates River to take part in the advance on Nasariyeh.

Euphrates: Capture of Nasariyeh, July, 1915.

5. During these operations the strength of the detachment was increased to half a battalion, but in spite of urgent representations of the Commanding Officer, Major Riddell, since killed in action, no medical officer, or even subordinate, could be spared to look after the health of the men. During the attack on the enemy's main position, July 24th, 1915, no suitably fitted boat was available for the reception of casualties. When no longer required for moving troops, a steamer was handed over to the medical officers and the wounded were put on board. They lay on the deck, were very crowded, and could receive only the barest necessary attention.

Essin: Capture of Kut-el-Amara, September, 1915.

6. On completion of these operations our detachment rejoined the 6th Division and took part in the advance on Kut-el-Amara. In this instance a steamer was told off as hospital ship, but was only so in name and was very small. During the action my battalion was employed exclusively on technical duties, and suffered practically no casualties. It is, however, a matter of common knowledge that the troops employed in the turning movement under General Delamain suffered severely from thirst, and that such arrangements as the medical officers were able to improvise for the reception and accommodation of the wounded were hopelessly inadequate. I use the word "inadequate" literally.

Ctesiphon, November 22nd, 1915.

7. When the division attacked the Turkish position at Ctesiphon, November 22nd, 1915, my regiment was attached to General Houghton's brigade, and took part in the infantry attack. We suffered severely and the casualties were scattered over a considerable depth of ground. The regimental stretcher bearers did their utmost and gradually worked up close to the firing-line. Several were killed and wounded during the day. I was knocked over about 600 to 800 yards from the enemy's trenches—rifle bullet in the right thigh, groin. I also had a flesh wound in the left arm received previously, but of no consequence. I was hit at about 10 a.m., I think. I had my field dressing on me and my orderly was with me. The location of the wound made it difficult to bandage in the open under fire, so I let it alone, as the bleeding was not excessive. My orderly attended to the wounded near until himself wounded. When the fire slackened he assisted me into a small dry ditch. Here I was seen by the medical officer of the regiment, Captain Spackman, I.M.S., who had himself been wounded in the head, but was able to carry on. Hearing another officer was in *extremis* near by he left me, and my wound was eventually dressed by the sub-assistant surgeon, Wali Allah Khan. This would have been some three hours after being hit, but I did not make any note of the time. I was carried by the regimental stretcher bearers to an aid post established on the line of Turkish trenches by Captain Spackman. Under all the circumstances I consider this was good work. A water-supply was obtained from the Turkish trenches, where they had made an aqueduct from the river. During the afternoon a portion of a field ambulance came to the same place and was established there next day under Lieut.-Colonel Donegan. In the evening I obtained some soup from Captain Spackman, but do not know where it came from. I was also given a hospital blanket.

November 23rd, 1915.

During the next morning, 23rd inst., I was cleaned up and properly dressed by an officer belonging to the ambulance. So far as I know there were sufficient bandages, etc., but there were no comforts at all. Such food as I got was due to the kindness of the medical officers personally.

8. The position of the ambulance was clearly shown by the usual flags. The "accommodation," being the open ground, was ample, but cold at night. I only remember one tent—an 80-lb. G.S.—which was used for surgical purposes. When the action was renewed we had to crowd into the Turkish trenches for cover. There was no attempt to transfer wounded in the forenoon. Hot water, medical comforts and suitable food—nil.

9. Late in the afternoon we saw the Turkish counter-attack developing. At that time there were none of our troops directly between us and the enemy, and our guns were firing over our heads. The Turks, as far as possible, refrained from firing anywhere near us. The A.D.M.S. rode up and ordered Colonel Donegan to evacuate his wounded to the rear of the 18th Brigade. The latter pointed out that he was practically immobile. The order was then given, "All those who can walk, walk." A few got a lift in a cart or on one of the doctors' ponies. About 40 cases remained in the exposed position during the night. A doctor and the Rev. Mr. Spooner, Church of England Chaplain, remained with them. They were all brought in next day, I understand. I thought I could walk with help, so went off with my orderly and another sepoy of my regiment. My orderly was wounded in the right shoulder, but was able to help me considerably. The other man was more seriously hurt, and could only just get along himself. We did, perhaps, half a mile, and then could go no further. Two slightly wounded officers found us, and practically carried me some way to a big dry nullah which gave us protection from the bullets which were flying pretty freely. We decided to spend the night there. It was very cold, and we had no blankets.

In evacuating the ambulance the whole mob of wounded passed in rear of one of our field batteries in action, between it and their waggons. Though they presented a magnificent target for the hostile artillery they were unmolested; the Turks even appeared to cease firing at our battery for a while.

10. Soon after dark some ration carts came along (Oxford and Bucks L.I.). The Q.M. in charge gave us some food, of which we were badly in need, and putting me on one of the carts, sent one of his party to show us the way to the new ambulance station. The wounded sepoy got no food at all.

At the ambulance there was no real accommodation, and I spent a very cold night under a cart with only my overcoat for covering.

24th November, 1915.

11. Early in the morning I heard the wounded were to be evacuated to Lajj. The proceeding resembled a *sauve qui peut*. Again the order was given, "All those who can walk, walk." Lajj was about 5 miles away. I was unable to walk. I eventually was put on top of a half-loaded A.T. mule cart with an Indian officer who had a broken leg. I travelled fairly comfortably, but all the jolting and bumping made the Indian officer suffer terribly. The one or two motor ambulances available appeared to do valuable work, but were hopelessly inadequate. Many of the wounded travelled on limbers and the waggons of the ammunition column.

Embarkation at Lajj, 24th November, 1915.

12. At Lajj I picked up my servant, some kit, and was able to get a good meal from regimental sources. There appeared to be a good deal of confusion. An officer of my regiment found a place for me on one of the steamers which had been detailed for the accommodation of wounded and had me carried on board. I saw no one on the bank directing proceedings. All the medical officers had their hands full on board the different boats. I forget the name of the boat I embarked on. It was a small one, and

Major Bransby, D.S.O., R.A.M.C., was in medical charge. He did all he could to make us comfortable. There were, I think, six cabins, with two berths in each. The worse cases were put in these. The rest of us camped in the saloon and were pretty comfortable. There were divans and camp cots to sleep on, and I don't think any officers had to lie on the floor. The Indian officers, British soldiers and sepoy were on deck and on barges. I don't know the numbers. They had no comforts, but most of them had some bedding. Luckily, the weather was fine though cold. I can't say what the staff consisted of. Major Bransby looked after us, and there were a couple of British orderlies. We had our Indian servants with us too, so were well attended to.

13. We went as far as Kut-el-Amara on this boat, and were then transferred to P.IV. The journey to Kut took four to five days and was on the whole comfortable for a mild case like myself. The food was plain (bully stew chiefly) but sufficient. Perhaps not very suitable for serious cases. We provided our own crockery, &c.

None of the boats used as hospitals had any of their own. There was one latrine on the steamer and some rough ones on the barges. I don't know about the supply of bed-pans, &c. I did not require them. There was no bath, which we felt rather. We were very dirty when we came on board, and a bucket on deck was not satisfactory.

14. On P.IV. we were very much worse off. There was no cabin accommodation, and all the officers were crowded on to the upper deck. One or two of the worst cases had mattresses and there were a few sacks half filled with straw. I had none and lay on the boards. There were a few hospital blankets, but nothing like enough. I did not get one. The nights were cold, but the days were pleasant. There were the usual ship's awnings, but these would have been very inadequate protection in bad weather. The men on the barges would have been worse off, as they only had a roof of straw matting over them.

There was only one galley for cooking all the food, but the meals provided, while not being very attractive, were sufficient for people like myself, whose condition was generally healthy.

An officer of my regiment who was being sent down with jaundice, had considerable difficulty in obtaining suitable nourishment.

There were two doctors on board and some subordinates. They were very hard worked. We were on the P.IV. for nine days, and during that time my wound was dressed twice. I do not think this caused any trouble so far as I was concerned.

15. There was only one latrine and one bath for all the officers, patients and ship's officers, which caused considerable discomfort. On the journey down we were twice held up by hostile Arabs, and all our bedding, &c., was taken to form some protection from their fire.

Eventually we were herded into the holds of the barges, where we were at least safe. The barges, however, had been used for transporting mules, and were very evil-smelling. We lay on the steel floor, which was in direct contact with the water and consequently very cold.

We only stopped a few hours at Amara and went straight on to Basra. On arrival there we went into the hospital for one night, and next day were shipped for Bombay. Both in Basra and on the hospital ship we were extremely comfortable, and the doctors and nurses did everything in their power to help us.

16. The difficulty in dealing with casualties always seemed to be directly due to the lack of proper and sufficient river transport. There were supplies in Basra, but no means of conveying them up stream. The steamers with the force were always working hard moving troops and rations, and could not be handed over to the medical officers till the last moment. In fact, the latter received the ships and the patients simultaneously, so that confusion was bound to ensue. Again, lack of transport prevented hospital fittings being carried, so when the ships were handed over they were quite unsuited to the work. The doctors themselves made heroic efforts to cope with their work, but they were generally short-handed and hopelessly handicapped by lack of material.

have been a failure; is that so

A. They took a long time to come into force

5600 Q. When they came into force?

A. There may have been an improvement then

5601 Q. Then you were short of cooks for the hospital, and the fighting men had to be requisitioned

A. Yes

5602 Q. Was that on any considerable scale

A. I think we had to send about four or five men from my own regiment. Others probably sent the same

5603 Q. At Shaiba the conditions were much the same

A. Yes

5604 Q. And there were no water carts

A. That is so - there never were

5605 Q. I suppose it entailed a great deal of suffering

A. We very often kept close to the river, but whenever we got away from the river such as at Shaiba or in the march that some of the troops made from the Kharke River to Ahwaz, in both those places there was great scarcity of water

5606 Q. You have seen a good deal of service ^{before} ~~before~~ you

A. No, I have been once on the frontier

5607 Q. On the frontier ^{expeditions} you always have water carts

A. No, only mule ~~pack~~ pakhals. Of course we had those in Mesopotamia.

5608 Q. Even after the battle of Shaiba you say the ~~the~~ number of doctors was inadequate

A. Yes, the

~~the~~ the ones actually on the spot at Shaiba

5609 Q. Then you went up to Ahwaz

A. Yes

5610 Q. And the field hospitals there were filled with ~~sick~~ ^{sick}

A. Yes, they were practically all sick; there were very

few casualties

5611

Q Then there was a shortage of vegetables, and it was very difficult to get condensed milk

A Yes, practically impossible

5612

Q You attribute this lack of supply to the fact that General Townshend was making his advance on Amara, and he took away the boats that otherwise might have been available

A Yes, boats had to be taken

5613

Q In these operations at Ahway the troops suffered again severely from lack of water

A: Yes

5614

Q The water which you took from the river was bad and produced a good deal of diarrhoea and dysentery

A Yes

5615

Q Then you went to Nasriyeh

A Yes

5616

Q There was no suitably fitted boat there for ^{a hospital} ~~casualties~~

A. No

5617

Q And ~~the~~ steamer was requisitioned. Where did they come from to Nasriyeh

A They came down from Kurna

5618

Q Then you captured Kut-el-Amara - the same story again. The reception accommodation for the wounded was hopelessly inadequate

A Yes

5619

Q I have asked you these questions, because it has been asserted in certain quarters, that practically there was no breakdown at all ^{until} after the Battle of Chesiphon; but according to your evidence the arrangements were very unsatisfactory from the outset

A There were practically no arrangements really

- 5620 Q You mean to say that there were medical units, but they were quite inadequate
 A: They ~~got~~ ^{had} no means of evacuating the sick. They had no steamers handed over as hospital boats or even barges to put the sick into when they had collected them on the river bank
- 5621 Q I suppose the result was that the ambulances became a sort of ~~stationary~~ ^{stationary} hospitals
 A: Yes; we had the men dumped on the river bank and put on any old barge which happened to be empty, the mules taken out, ^{or something} ~~of the steamers~~ and the wounded put in, and sent down the river in it
- 5622 Q Was there a deficiency of medical supplies
 A Not at the beginning, I think. Of course I could not say from personal knowledge
- 5623 Q Were you wounded
 A: Yes, at Chesiphon
- 5624 Q The evacuation of the wounded was rather a remarkable performance, to get them down to Kutel Amara, but I fancy there was a great deal of discomfort and suffering.
 A Yes, there was
- 5625 Q But you all got down
 A. So far as I know, yes
- 5626 Q Practically there was no specially accommodation
 A Absolutely none
- 5627 Q Were you short of food
 A. Well, we got food of sorts. It was all right for people who were not so bad that they could not eat ordinary food
- 5628 Q When you got to Kut what happened to you? Did you go down to Amara
 A Yes; I stopped a few hours at Amara, and came down to Basra
- 5629 Q And when you got to Basra?

Q I got on the hospital ship and went back to India

Q Was that comfortable

A. Yes, very comfortable indeed

5631 Q: Properly fitted

A: Yes, perfectly

5632 Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge: Do I understand that in the early days of the expedition, apart from the shortness of medical personnel, there was no marked shortness of medical necessaries, but there was of organization

A: As far as I know there was no shortness of material then, as far as the actual bandages and things of that sort

go

5633 Q There was a want of organization

A: No, there was a lack of transport more, I think

5634 Lord Hugh Cecil: Before the expedition went beyond ^{Kurna} you say there was a lack of transport then

5635 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: It was a side show at Ahway, was it not

A: Yes

5636 Q The original force was quite small

A. Yes, one Division to start with. There was one Brigade, one in advance, ^{hanging} ~~sitting~~ about the Red Sea till war was actually declared. I thought you were talking about the original landing

5637 Q No, at Ahway. It ^{was} a very small thing indeed

A. I think so

5638 Q The ~~force~~ ^{force} grew

A The original force that went there was besieged

5639 Q: It assumed larger proportions than was at first anticipated

A. Oh yes, a great deal

5640 Sir Archibald Williamson. Were there nurses in the hospital at Basra when you were there

A. A few

5641 Q: That is the only place where there were nurses

A: Yes that was the only suitable place for them, I should think

5642 Q: You noted as early as December 1914 that there were no proper hospital boats

A: No, none at all. They wanted a steamer running down from Kurna to Basra

5643 Q: At that time the expedition had not gone farther than Kurna

A: No

5644 Q: But if the expedition went further up the river the need of hospital steamers would be increased

A: Yes

5645 Q: That was needed as early as December 1914

A: Easily, yes

5646 Q: But nothing had been provided of that sort by the time you left

A: No, not by the time I left

5647 Q: Not a special hospital steamer

A: No

5648 Q: In April 1915 you found that motor ambulances would have been of value

A: Yes. Since ~~left~~^{writing} I think they might have had difficulty in getting them ~~to get~~ to Shaiba from Basra. They had one or two in Basra, but the floods came up and I do not know if they could have made them up into light enough loads to take them to Shaiba

5649 Q: But motor ambulances would have been useful

A: Yes

5650 Q: And that impressed you as early as April 1915

A: Yes.

5651 Q: But following ~~up~~ in they were not in very large supply by the time you left

A: No

5652 Q: When did you leave

A. November 1915

5653 Q: That is 7 or 8 months afterwards

A. Yes

5654 Commander Wedgwood: Were you second in command

A. ~~No~~ No

5655 Q: Had you the whole battalion in Mesopotamia

A: No, I was ~~for the moment~~ commanding a detachment of one double company

5656 Q: Was the whole battalion there

A: Yes

5657 Q: Were they used for fighting and not for ordinary engineering work

A. We do ordinary infantry work in addition to the pioneer work

5658 Q: Did you do any pioneer work

A: Yes, a good deal

5659 Q: Did you make ~~permanent~~ bridges

A: Yes

5660 Q: Did you ^{do} anything at the port of Basra

A: Yes, we made wharves and roads all through Basra

5661 Q: The Pioneer Regiment we had in East Africa did nothing but engineering work. They made all the bridges

A: That is what the local General wants

5662 Q: You are all skilled engineers, are you not

A: No, we are rough

5663 Q: Can you do railway work

A. ~~Building~~ ^{not} plate laying, or anything like that

5664 Q: Is not that what the Pioneer Regiments are intended for

A. No, I think Pioneer Regiments are essentially infantry regiments of the line, and their Pioneer duties are over and above their infantry duties

5665 Q: Are you under ^{the} C. R. E.

A: For Pioneer work

5666 Q: Who was the C. R. E.

8.14
A: It would probably be submerged at this time

Q: Would it not be possible to lay a railway on the top of the road

A: I do not think it was. I do not think ~~they~~ ^{a railway} would be really of much use on the Tigris until you get close to Amara

5678 Q: You mean it could not be made

A: You would have to make a regular big thing of it, big embankments and things

5679 Lord Hugh Cecil: Because of the floods

A: Yes. Once you get past Amara then you get the high banks, and you ~~can~~ ^{can run} along fairly quickly, but the swamps below them were pretty bad. The Baghdad Railway does not go on the Tigris line at all

5680 Q: Is there anything about engineering out there that you would like to tell us

A: No, I do not think so

5681 Q: ~~Well~~ Speaking generally you agree ^{with everybody else} as to the deficiency of transport.

A: Yes

5682 Q: Is there any other defect of a general character which you would call attention to

A: No, I do not think so

5683 Q: You think, practically, the defects of the Expedition are summed up as defective transport

A: Yes

5684 Q: Did you, on your voyage back, or afterwards, when you were in India, hear cases of suffering caused by patients being moved out of hospital before they were fit to be moved and sent on the transports as convalescents when they were still sick

A: No; I heard of lots of cases of people suffering on account of not getting ^{speedy} sufficient attention and that sort of thing, but I could not give any first

hand

hand evidence on the subject

Q: Not on the way from Basra to Bombay

A: ~~It~~ People arrived in Bombay with gangrenous wounds

5686 Q: That was ^{on} the ~~war~~ hospital ships, was it not
A: I expect so

5687 The Chairman: Not on the transports

A: I could not say

5688 Lord Hugh Cecil: You happened to mention a Chaplain in the course of your evidence. Was the supply of Chaplains insufficient

A: At first it was, there was no Catholic Chaplain out there until just before Chesiphon - after we got to Kut

5689 Q: And other Chaplains

A: At first there was only one, Colonel ^{Mr} Kerwin. Later on three or four Church of England Chaplains came out

5690 The Earl of Donoughmore: You say you made some roads round Basra

A: Yes

5691 Q: I have seen somewhere that there is a great lack of stone in Mesopotamia. Does that extend to Basra? Could you get metal to make your roads

A: Old ~~the~~ bricks and things - there are practically no stones at all

5692 Q: You had to find old houses and pull them down

A: Yes, and very often we simply used reeds and stuff to bind the earth

5693 Lord Hugh Cecil: That holds all right in the dry weather, but not in the wet

A: In the wet the whole thing becomes like ice - slippery

5694 Q: It does not disintegrate the reeds

A: Yes, it does

5695 The Chairman: I suppose it dries pretty quickly

so, it is rather holding; it is a clayey soil. It is all this alluvial stuff that is brought down in the river

5696 Q It is very hard to walk over

A Yes

The witness withdrew

Adjourned to Tuesday next at 10.30 o'clock.

Ernest Augustus Wilson
Richard Wright