Nelson's History of the War

Volume VI

John Buchan
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NELSON'S
HISTORY OF THE WAR

VOLUME VI.

NELSON'S HISTORY OF THE WAR.

By John Buchan.

Volume VI. The Campaign on the Niemen and the Narev, the Struggle in the Carpathians, Neuve Chapelle, and Beginning of the Dardanelles Campaign.

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CONTENTS.

APPENDIX.

LIST OF MAPS.

Nelson's History of the War, Volume VI

CHAPTER XLII.

THE THIRD ATTACK UPON WARSAW.

Russian Front at Beginning of January—Russian Commands—German and Austrian Commands—Trench Warfare in Poland—Russian Advance into East Prussia—The Rawka Valley—Von Mackensen's Attack from Bolimov—Russians fall back—Russian Counter-attack—German Losses—Von Hindenburg's New Plan—The German Advance on Two Flanks—Parallel with Napoleon's Invasion in 1812.

At the beginning of January the Russian front had found a position in which it could abide. Beginning on the Lower Niemen it ran through the Masurian Lakes inside the East Prussian frontier, regained Russian territory north of the Narev, passed just south of Mlawa, bent in a salient towards Plock, and crossed the Vistula just west of the mouth of the Bzura. Then it returned to the east bank of the Bzura and followed it, and that of its tributary the Rawka, in a line making due south till it struck the Nida. It ran down the west bank of the Nida to the Upper Vistula, followed the Donajetz and the Biala to the Carpathian foothills, reached the watershed at the Dukla Pass, and then bent northwards, holding the Galician entrance to the Lupkow and the Uzsok. East from that it kept the northern side of the range, close up to the foothills, till it reached the Rumanian frontier. Its total length was just short of 900 miles, the longest battle-front in the history of the world.

The Russian command adopted, as did the Allies in the West, a system of army groups. These were two in number—a southern under Ivanov, and a

northern under Ruzsky. In Ivanov's command were the army of the Nida under Ewarts; the army of the Donajetz under Radko Dmitrieff; the force engaged in the investment of Przemysl under General Selivanov; Brussilov's army of the Carpathians; and the small 9th Army in the Bukovina under General Alexeiev, who had been Ivanov's Chief of Staff. Ruzsky's group embraced the army operating on the Pilitza; the forces defending Warsaw along the Rawka and the Bzura; the army of the Narev; and the army operating against Masurenland. Somewhere well in the rear, living in a railway carriage, was the Grand Duke Nicholas, with his two brilliant lieutenants—Yanuschkevitch, his Chief of Staff, and Danilov, his Quartermaster-General.[1]

The German forces in the beginning of the year were much the same as those engaged in the second attempt on Warsaw. On the left in East Prussia they were no more than four corps strung out along a wide frontier. The main force was with von Mackensen on the Bzura and the Rawka. Austria was now much weakened, for up to January she had lost over one and a quarter millions. At the moment she had still in the field five armies, which included among them some twenty army corps. On the Nida, where she took over the line from the Germans, General Dankl's army had been much reduced. It originally had five corps, but it had now only a corps and a half, the rest having been sent south of the Carpathians. Along the Donajetz lay General Woyrsch's army, tightly held by Dmitrieff. From the Hungarian plain there were operating against Brussilov the 3rd and 4th Armies, and what was left of the 5th—the force which the Serbians had handled so severely in December. The commander of the Carpathian group at this time was the Archduke Eugene. It is difficult to state with precision the German element now present in the Austrian armies, but it was generally estimated at four complete corps. We can identify the 3rd Bavarians in Woyrsch's army of the Donajetz, and we know that in January the 24th Corps, formed in October, was sent to join the advance from Hungary.

The first weeks of the new year saw little but the ordinary trench warfare which we had come to know in the Western theatre. There were a number of attacks and counter-attacks, but no action of any importance till the end of the month. Von Hindenburg and his staff exhausted their tactical ingenuity in this form of contest. Night attacks would be heralded by rockets and a blaze of searchlights turned on to dazzle the defenders. This would go on for a week, until the defenders became used to it. Then one night, after the usual preliminaries, no attack would follow on this section, but a few miles off there would be a violent assault on trenches which were not expecting it. On the Bzura the opposing trenches were only sixty yards apart. There the Germans employed an extraordinary invention against wire entanglements. They rolled

barrels of clay down the slopes, against which the Russians used their hand grenades, believing that German wire cutters were behind them. But the barrels were moving by their own weight, and if the defence exhausted its grenades it was in grave danger of being rushed. On the Donajetz front the bright sun of late January melted the Carpathian snows and the strength of the stream prevented surprise attacks. There the Austrian bombardment was specially marked—12, 10, and 6-inch howitzers, and one 42-cm. battery in the background. In Poland the Germans speedily constructed a most elaborate trench system, and in some parts, as on the Pilitza, had huge earthworks, with floored and ceilinged underground chambers. They resorted, too, to various devices not used in civilized war. The Austrians on the Donajetz fired from their machine guns an ingenious type of explosive bullet, made in the Buda-Pest small-arms factory, in which the impact of a man's body exploded a tiny melinite cartridge in the interior. It made a small hole entering the breast, but if the dead body were turned over half the back was lacking. On the Bzura shells and bombs were used which gave out mephitic gases, the general constituent being a preparation of ammoniac saltpetre.

Towards the end of the month a certain activity began on the Russian wings. In East Prussia Russian cavalry cut the railway to the north of Tilsit beyond the Niemen, and on a front of a hundred miles southward there began a general advance towards Pilkallen, Goldap, and Lyck. Along the north bank of the Vistula there was a movement in the direction of Thorn, and in the Bukovina the small 9th Army pressed towards the divide of the Carpathians, and took the pass of Kirlibaba. In the West we were at first in doubt as to the meaning of these movements, but we now know that they were undertaken at the request of the Western Allies to harass and distract von Hindenburg and prevent him releasing forces for the West at a time when the new resources of France and Britain were not yet available. That the Grand Duke Nicholas should have complied so readily with the request is a high proof of his generosity and courage, for Russia was still terribly weak in equipment. A movement on the wings meant that the central part of the front must be seriously weakened. The wings were chosen for the advance because it was towards East Prussia and Hungary that the Teutonic League was most vulnerable. To outrage the sacred East Prussian soil would bring von Hindenburg hot on the invaders' trail, and Hungary was Germany's chief remaining granary and the most sensitive part of the Dual Monarchy. The Grand Duke Nicholas did not contemplate any enveloping offensive; for that he had not the men or guns. All he sought was to annoy and distract his enemy.

Von Hindenburg, judging correctly that these adventures on the flanks must have depleted the centre, resolved to make one more effort for Warsaw

by a frontal attack. His reasons were obvious. He had good cause to believe that the effort on the wings meant that the defence of Warsaw had been weakened, for he knew the present limitations of the Russian equipment. The fifty-sixth birthday of his Imperial Master was approaching, and the Germans have a curious sentiment about commemorations. Warsaw had been the objective of his winter campaign—Warsaw by a frontal attack—and it was the merit, as it was the defect, of the veteran Field Marshal, that an idea once implanted in his stubborn mind was hard to uproot. There was some disposition in the West to regard the third assault on Warsaw as a feint to cloak the massing of men in East Prussia. But on the facts that view is unlikely. It is more probable that the attack was regarded by the German Staff as a major operation, and that only when it seemed certain to fail, and the Russian armies advanced dangerously over the East Prussian border, did von Hindenburg concentrate all his efforts on a flank movement, and attempt to get to Warsaw by a side road.

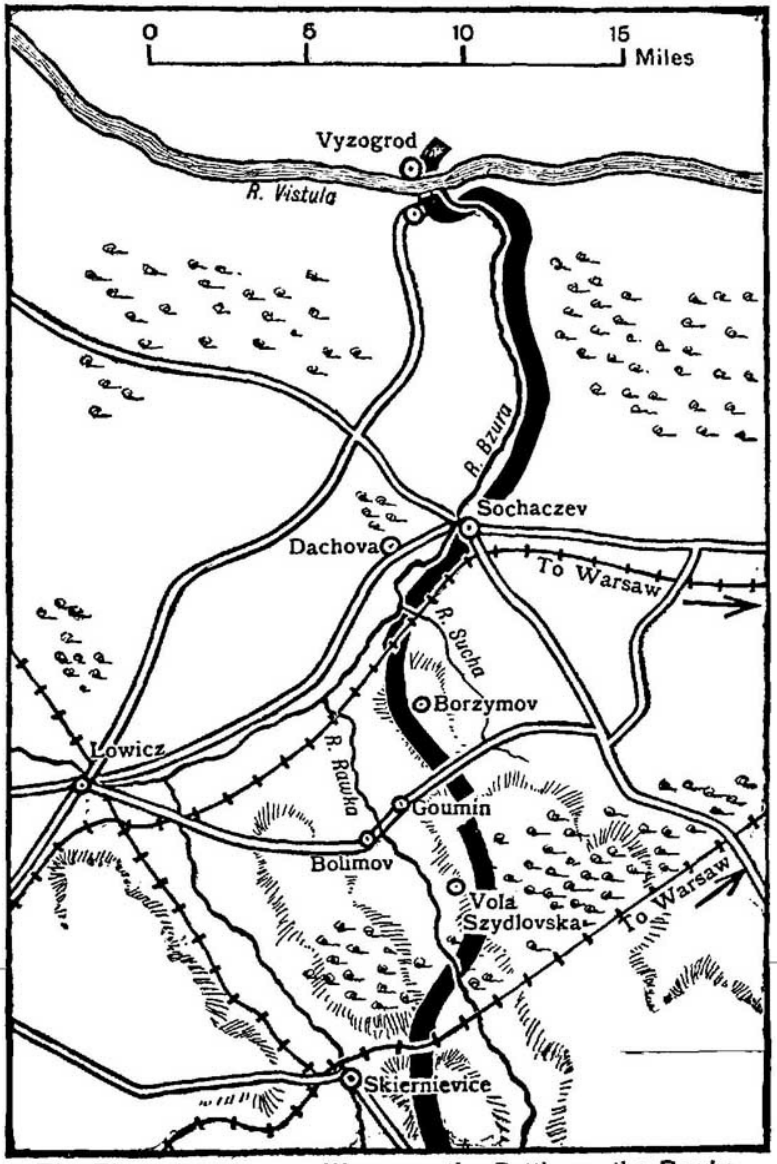
The details of the valley of the Rawka must be noted. From its confluence with the Bzura it runs mostly south till it is cut by the railway line between Skiernievice and Warsaw. On both sides the ground slopes gently down to the water's edge. The town of Bolimov lies on its eastern bank about midway between the railway and the Bzura. Opposite Bolimov, about two miles from the stream, there is a roll of downs, with the castle and distillery of Borzymov at the northern end. South of these downs on both sides of the Rawka are great belts of wood which extend for some dozen miles eastward towards Warsaw. Bolimov is about forty miles from the capital, and is connected with it by a fair road.

The Russian front was on the west bank of the Bzura for two miles above its meeting with the Vistula. Then it changed to the eastern bank, keeping pretty close to the water's edge, and passing through the town of Sochaczev, where it cut the Lowicz-Warsaw line. On the Rawka it was more retired from the stream, and held a line of trenches just in front of the crest of the downs opposite Bolimov, while the Germans had theirs close to the water, and on the east bank. Skiernievice was in German hands, and the Russians' front crossed the railway about two miles east of it in a clearing of the larch forests.

Jan. 31.

On Sunday, 31st January, von Mackensen had concentrated masses of artillery all along the front of the Rawka, and down the Bzura as far as Sochaczev. He made his great artillery bombardment on a wide front in order to puzzle the enemy as to the direction of the main attack. But in the meantime he was getting together his strength of men and guns on a line of seven miles in front of Bolimov. Here, on the

evening of Monday, 1st February, he had not less than seven divisions—140,000 men[2]—including various units of the Prussian Guard brought up from Lowicz. This gave him a strength of something like ten rifles per yard.



The Third Attack upon Warsaw: the Battle on the Rawka.
(The black line shows the Russian front.)

That night the artillery, working by the map, began a terrific "preparation"

from the slopes west of the Rawka against the Russian position on the Borzymov crest. It was snowing heavily, and under cover of the guns and the weather the infantry advanced up the slopes. Their formation was massed, sometimes ten and sometimes twenty-two men deep. They were mowed down by Russian shrapnel and machine-gun fire, but the impetus of numbers carried them into the first line of Russian trenches. All along the front, from the castle of Borzymov past Vola Szydlovska to Goumin among the woods and down to Semica on the Skiernievice-Warsaw railway, the Germans gained ground. A second and then a third line of trenches were captured on the Tuesday, and by that evening the Russians had been pushed back to the crest of the ridge, and in some places beyond it, where the ground began to slope down to the little river Sucha.

Feb. 3.

Von Mackensen had laid his plans well. He did not propose to repeat the mistakes he had made before Lodz, and drive into the enemy's front a wedge too narrow to be effective. He realized that a breach must be wide enough to move in and to operate against the broken flanks. All through Wednesday, 3rd February, he almost looked like succeeding. But the place he had chosen for his assault happened to be the place of all others which the Grand Duke Nicholas could most readily reinforce. There were two railways and two good roads, and troops were hurried along them from Warsaw, some divisions under orders for the north having been hastily recalled. Through the driving snow the supports came on, and on Thursday, 4th February, late in the afternoon, the German advance was checked. It had done wonders. It was over the crest of Borzymov, and it had advanced nearly five miles along the Warsaw railway. Another day and the Rawka front might have been fatally breached.

Feb. 4.

An attack pressed so hotly means heavy losses, and von Mackensen's seven divisions had paid a price for their success. Around Borzymov the slaughter was so great that the German dead formed the material for redoubts and embrasures. When the advance reached its furthest point it was growing very weak, and it yielded rapidly to the counter-attack. Not less were the losses in the woods of Mogely and Goumin. By the 8th the Germans were flung off the downs back on the Rawka flats, and the Russians crossed the Bzura at Dachova near the mouth of the Rawka. Von Mackensen cannot have lost much less than 20,000 men. The whole incident resembled the October attack of the four new formations against the British at Ypres. An advance was won which for a moment threatened the whole front, but the counter-attack shattered it.

The action of Bolimov was the last of the frontal attacks upon Warsaw.

The Bzura-Rawka lines were too strong to give those immediate results which von Hindenburg desired. He had prospected all the Polish front, and it did not tempt him. His next blow must be a surprise, delivered where the elements of surprise existed—that is, with the German system of railways behind it, and not the half-dozen botched and cobbled Polish lines. The new theatre must clearly be East Prussia, where the Russian movements were growing audacious and intolerable. The counter-attack at Bolimov had scarcely begun to succeed when von Hindenburg set in motion his alternative plans in the north and south. Austria was instructed to attack vigorously along the whole Carpathian front, and into East Prussia was poured the strongest single army which Germany had yet put in the Eastern field. It was von Hindenburg's culminating effort. If it succeeded, the communications between Warsaw and Petrograd would be cut, the line of the Niemen and Narev taken, and the Polish capital must fall. If Austria drove back Brussilov behind the Cracow-Lemberg railway, then Przemysl would be relieved, and if the movement in the Bukovina prospered Lemberg might be recaptured. If these things happened, or half of them, Russia would be forced back to the line of the Bug, and her coming new armies would profit her little. It would take her a year's campaigning to recover her lost ground. If, on the other hand, the great offensive failed, the position would be grave, for the new Russian armies would be launched against a weakened and wearied enemy.

It is important, if we would do justice to Russia's achievement, to realize the perils of the situation now developing, not for Russia only, but for the whole Allied cause. If von Hindenburg had achieved any great part of his desires, Russia would have been held in check for at least six months. During that time her offensive, whatever her resources, would have been terribly crippled, and she could have been held with limited forces. A great army would have gone westward, and any chance of reducing the disparity in France and Flanders would have been long deferred. Germany, in short, would have realized her initial plan so far as the Eastern theatre was concerned—an easy holding campaign against Russia fought far inside the Russian frontiers.

For those who love historical parallels the position in the East at the beginning of February is full of interest. It resembled, as a distinguished writer has pointed out,[3] the situation in June 1812, when Napoleon was mustering his forces for the invasion of Russia. "Then, as now, the front of the opposing armies was immense, and extended from Galicia to the Niemen. Schwarzenberg and his Austrians, issuing from Galicia, represent the armies under the Archduke Eugene; the King of Westphalia marching on Warsaw and Bialystok is paralleled by von Mackensen's command; the Viceroy of Italy, farther to the left, is reproduced by the German force on the right bank of the

Vistula; the Emperor Napoleon, Murat, and the dukes and princes who came from Thorn and Marienwerder into East Prussia, stand for the new German forces which von Hindenburg is crowding into Masurenland; while lastly, Macdonald, with the Prussians in front of Tilsit, has his counterpart in the German force which is already across the Memel, and will act, no doubt, as Macdonald acted before."

To understand the strenuous campaign which followed we must keep clear in our mind the nature of von Hindenburg's plan. It was no general advance, but a violent effort on the two flanks. During the East Prussian and Carpathian struggles the lines from the Lower Vistula to the Donajetz were almost idle. Much depleted on both sides, they waited on the issue of the battles in the marshes and the hills.

A word must be said on the condition to which seven months of war had reduced the unfortunate provinces which formed the battleground. Practically all Russian Poland west of the Vistula was in German hands. It had been the theatre of one German retreat and two German advances. Almost every square mile had been fought over, almost every town and village had been bombarded. Galicia had suffered the same fate, but at this time three-fourths of it were dominated by Russia, and behind the armies of Dmitrieff and Brussilov civil life went on very much as before. The city of Lemberg, for example, under the governorship of Count Bobrinski, had a winter of peace and moderate prosperity. Offences against civilian property were rigorously punished by the Russian commanders, and measures of relief were judiciously applied. The real sufferings of the Polish people were in the area west of the Vistula, and in the Galician segment between Cracow and the Donajetz.

The first German advance against Warsaw had not been attended by any special barbarities. But German policy demanded a wholesale destruction, and in November Poland was methodically laid waste. The wretched inhabitants, never too prosperous, were driven to live in cellars and dug-outs. Only blackened ruins marked the site of villages, and since the German army ate up all supplies, famine stalked through the land. One observer told how, in the abandoned trenches at Glovno, near Lodz, there was a colony dwelling in catacombs, which had a communal system and a judicial administration recognized by the German commandant. "Peasants and workmen refuse to return to their cottages, even when these are intact; the tide of war has flowed twice or thrice over their homes, and it may flow again. The sense of security, the desire for a settled life, has disappeared. I heard of families which, after wandering from trench to trench the whole way from Petrikov, reached the Vistula near Ivangorod, and took up residence in overturned German

pontoons."[4]

The sorrows of Poland are unfathomable. An empire which once stretched from the Elbe to the Bug and from the Baltic to the Carpathians has gone out of existence, partly from internal follies like an elective monarchy and the *Liberum Veto*, partly from sheer ill-fortune. The war found a people of twenty millions split up among the combatants. Four hundred thousand Poles were liable to serve under the Russian flag, 111,000 under the German, and 82,000 under the Austrian. Both sides angled for the support of these relics of a nationality, and both got it so far as concerned the Poles already under their sway. Russia, as the great Slav Power, had most of this allegiance, but there were Polish regiments that fought devotedly for Austria. For several generations Polish patriots had endeavoured to keep a sense of race alive among their countrymen under the different Empires, and especially to keep in being a common Polish culture. The war made their task impossible. The most that could be done was for the leaders of Polish thought to attempt to enlist the world's sympathy in measures of relief. The situation was complicated by the presence of the Polish Jews. These unfortunate beings, many of them too sunken to know the meaning of nationality, were exposed to the suspicion of both sides. Their homelessness made them useful as spies, and the Russian High Command was compelled in some cases to enforce rigorous decrees of expulsion. These measures have been represented as if they were inspired by Russian anti-Semitism, but it is certain that their only motive was military necessity.

The ruin of Poland was probably the most unrelieved of all the tragedies of the war. The material damage can scarcely be estimated, the human suffering can scarcely be imagined. An area seven times larger than Belgium was far more comprehensively ravaged. The situation is best described in the words of a Polish appeal to the civilized world:—

> "From the banks of the Niemen to the summits of the Carpathians fire has destroyed the towns and villages, and over the whole of this huge country the spectre of famine has spread out its wings. All labour and industry have been swept away. The ploughshare is rusted; the peasant has neither grain nor cattle. The artisan is idle; all works and factories have been destroyed. The tradesman cannot sell his wares; there is no one to buy. The hearth is extinguished, and disease and misery prevail. The aged and infirm have no shelter from the cold and hardships of the winter weather. Little children, stretching out their arms to their mothers for bread, receive in answer only tears."

[1] The Russian Quartermaster-General is something very different from the British officer of that name. He has to do with almost everything except supplies, and acts, among other things, as Adjutant-General and Director of Military Operations.

[2] The British at Ypres held a line of eight miles for two days with a single division.

[3] The *Times*, 17th February 1915.

[4] Mr. Robert Crozier Long in the *Fortnightly Review*.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BATTLES ON THE NORTHERN FLANKS.

The Russian 10th Army—The German Advance—Disaster to the Russian 20th Corps—The Russian Stand on the Niemen—The Danger to Warsaw—The Second Siege of Ossowietz—The Russian Counter-attack—The Situation on the Narev—German Strategical Plans—The Attack from Thorn—The Battle of Przasnysz—Defects in the German Plan of Campaign.

We return to the old battleground which lies between the Masurian Lakes and the Niemen, and which had already been the scene of two campaigns. Each war produces a special kind of action, determined by the nature of the *terrain*, and on the Eastern front we find a curious recurrence of one distinctive type. Germany, aided by her superior railway system, establishes a surprise concentration, and drives in the Russians. Owing to inferior means of transport, the latter suffer badly, but eventually reach a line where a stand is possible. Then comes the counter-attack, and the Germans fall back, and since they now have the benefit of the scanty Russian roads and railways, they too are heavily punished. If the word "stalemate" can be used anywhere, it is of the campaign on the East Prussian border. Tactically there were victories and defeats, but so far as grand strategy was concerned, nothing came of them. The Niemen was the *ne plus ultra* for Germany, the Masurian Lakes for Russia.

When, about the end of January, the Grand Duke Nicholas, in deference to the wishes of the Allies in the West, made a forward movement in East Prussia, the force used was the 10th Army of four corps, commanded by General Baron Sievers. The German army of East Prussia was small at the moment, probably not more than three corps strong. Most of it was Landwehr and Landsturm, and the first-line element seems to have been supplied by portions of the 1st and 20th Corps. A strong frost had set in with February, much snow had fallen, and icy winds from the north piled up drifts on every highway. But in spite of the weather, by the 6th of February the 10th Army had made astonishing progress. Its right was close upon Tilsit, and thence it ran just east of Insterburg along the Angerapp River, just east of Lötzen, which is the key of the main route through the Lakes, well to the west of Lyck, till its left rested on the town of Johannisburg. South of it, but separated by a big gap, lay the scattered forces

Feb. 6.

which constituted the Russian army of the Narev. It had two railways behind it, one from Insterburg to Kovno, and one from Lyck to Ossowietz; but two railways are scarcely sufficient for a front of a hundred miles.

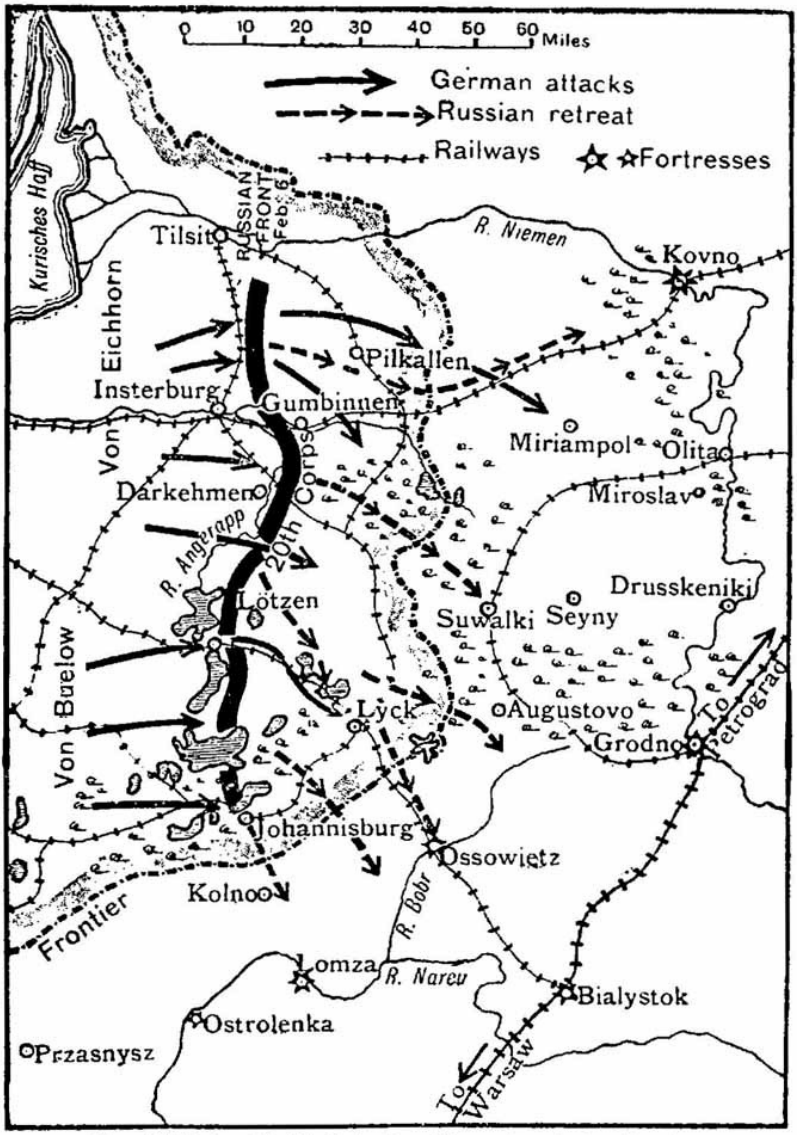
Feb. 7.

On 7th February the surprise which von Hindenburg had prepared was sprung upon the invaders. He had brought from the West the 21st Corps, which had been with the Bavarian Crown Prince, and three reserve corps; from Germany he had got the 38th and 40th Corps, which were new formations; he had borrowed the equivalent of three corps from other parts of the Eastern front, including the better part of a Silesian Landwehr corps, and a reserve corps of the Guard. He had thus accumulated a total force of nine corps—over 300,000 men—to hurl upon General Sievers's 120,000. The force was organized in two armies—the northern, commanded by General von Eichhorn, operating on the line Insterburg-Lötzen, and the southern, under General von Buelow, on the line Lötzen-Johannisburg. General von Eichhorn before the war had been "Inspector" of the Saarbruck group—the 16th, 18th, and 21st Corps. He bore a high military reputation; but a serious illness had so far prevented him from appearing in the campaign. This General von Buelow was not the army commander whom we have seen in the West, but the general who in peace had commanded the 21st Corps at Saarbruck.

The German advance was pressed along the whole line Tilsit-Johannisburg, and according to custom the left wing swept in an enflanking movement east of Tilsit in the curve formed by the Lower Niemen. The Russian right, in front of Pilkallen and Gumbinnen, was compelled to retire to avoid envelopment, and the natural line of its retreat was along the railway to Kovno. In so doing it turned a little to the north-east, and since the railway helped its speed of movement, the corps just to the south of it was left out of line. This corps was the 20th, commanded by General Bulgakov, and composed of one first-line division and three regiments of reservists—in all some 30,000 men. On the 7th it had been lying along the Angerapp River from Gumbinnen to south of Darkehmen. Von Eichhorn drove it back to the lateral frontier railway, after which there was no good way through the forests and marshes between the frontier and the Niemen. Its right wing was turned, and it was pressed down towards the south, with the enemy on three sides of it. In the wide forests north of Suwalki it speedily became a broken force, and companies and regiments were left to make the best of their way home. The two southern corps had to face the attack of von Buelow's four corps between Lotzen and Johannisburg. They held a strong position in the eastern narrows of the Lake region, and the passages were fiercely disputed. On the extreme German right one corps under General von Litzmann drove the Russian left

across the frontier to Kolno. North of him General von Falck occupied Johannisburg, while General von Butlar drove back the Russians from before Lötzen. The Kaiser was present at this section of the fight. The sternest struggle was for the narrows which cover the approach to Lyck from the west. These were held by the Russian rearguard, and not carried till the morning of the 15th. But by that time the two southern Russian corps were mostly over the border, retreating by the Suwalki-Seyny causeway and by the Ossowietz railway. In spite of this heavy rearguard fighting, these two corps got away without serious losses. By the 12th von Eichhorn's army was over the Russian frontier, and had occupied Mariampol. By the 15th von Buelow was also on Russian soil, moving towards Grodno and Ossowietz

Feb. 12-15.



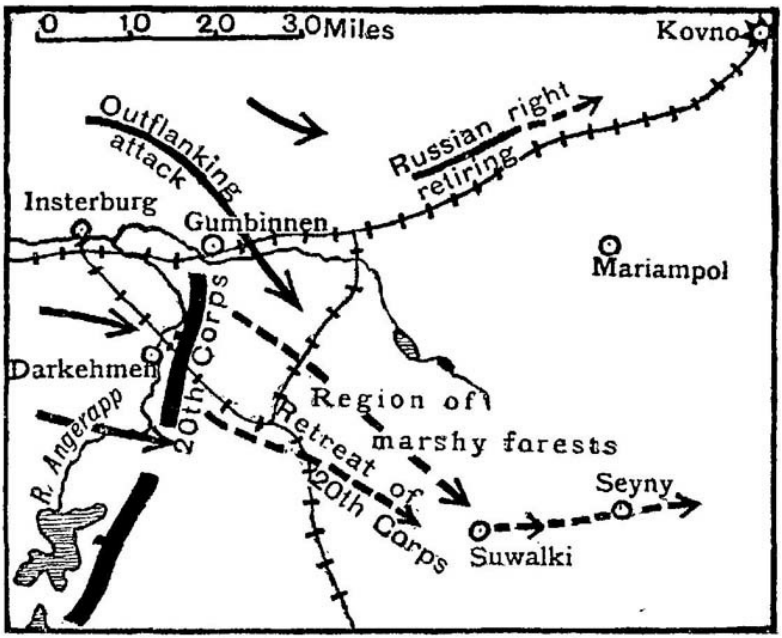
The "Winter Battle" in the Masurian Lake Region.

By that time most of General Sievers's army was on the Niemen and the Bobr.

Feb. 20.

Such are the bare outlines of one of the most desperate weeks in the whole campaign. But a bare outline gives little idea of the difficulties of the operations. For an army to fall back seventy miles under the pressure of a force three times its superior, based

on a good railway system, is at all times a difficult feat. When it is added that more than half of Sievers's army had no railways to assist them, but must struggle with their guns through blind forests choked with snowdrifts, the achievement becomes almost miraculous. The Russian losses were large, but in the circumstances must be regarded as moderate. The Germans claimed 75,000 prisoners and 300 guns, but these gains are demonstrably fictitious. The chief Russian loss was in General Bulgakov's 20th Corps, which the German Staff asserted that they had completely destroyed. But during the fortnight which ended on Saturday, the 20th, at least half of that corps and more than two-thirds of its guns safely made their way through the Augustovo and Suwalki woods to the position which had been prepared for the Russian defence. The total Russian losses may have been 80 guns and 30,000 men; they were no more. The two southern corps, in spite of their stubborn delaying action at Lyck, crossed the woods between Augustovo and Ossowietz without serious disaster. By the 20th the vigour of the German thrust had spent itself. The Russians were entrenched, and the inevitable counter-attack had begun. Once again the rival forces were on equal terms, for the zone of German railways had been left behind. Motor transport was impossible, and the big Pomeranian horses were for work in snow and slush far inferior to the little Russian ponies.



The Disaster of the 20th Russian Corps.

The Russian stand, which was virtually a counter-attack, began about the

19th. The line held was well to the west Niemen. It ran from Kovno, covering Olita, Miroslav, Drusskeniki, and Grodno; then in front of Ossowietz down the line of the Bobr, and then well north of the Narev. For the present we are dealing only with the thrust of von Eichhorn and von Buelow on the Niemen and the Bobr, and may neglect the operations developing along the Narev. The German aim was clear. The map will show that the main line from Warsaw to Petrograd crosses the Niemen at Grodno, running about thirty miles south of Ossowietz, and at an average distance of twenty miles from the Upper Narev. If this line could be cut, then one of Warsaw's chief communications would cease, and the road would be open for the capture of the city by an advance from the northern flank. Obviously, the most deadly movement against this line would be that made nearest Warsaw; but since the Germans had got so close to the Niemen it was justifiable to attempt to cut it there, far as it was from Warsaw, provided a great effort were also made against the Narev section. The fighting on the Niemen and the Bobr therefore developed into the operations of the left wing and left centre of the German armies, whose main effort was directed farther west.

Feb. 19.

The extreme left wing did little. Turoggen, on the right bank of the Niemen, was seized and held, but the numbers were small, and no serious effort was made to force the difficult line of the Niemen's tributaries, and take Kovno from the north. The chief attacks were two. Von Eichhorn about 20th February launched the veterans of the 21st Corps from Suwalki against the Niemen a little north of Grodno. Dense forests on both sides of the river made an effective screen, and the corps succeeded in making the passage, and for the better part of a week maintained themselves effectively on the eastern shore. They were unable to move against the Warsaw-Petrograd railway, which was less than ten miles off. The second attack was delivered against Ossowietz, the fortress which von Hindenburg had previously assaulted in September. Then, it will be remembered, the Germans failed to find emplacements for their heavy guns in the wide marshes, for Ossowietz stands on a strip of hard land, where run the railway and the highroad, and on all sides the swamps creep up to its skirts, while the only good gun positions for miles round are part of the defences of the fortress. This second siege of Ossowietz was conducted with great determination, and lasted for the better part of a fortnight. It made no impression, for in those flat, snow-clad wastes, where every knuckle of dry soil was known to the defence, there were no opportunities for screening the big howitzers, and the guns of the fort seem to have rapidly silenced them.

Feb. 20.

By the beginning of March the Russian counter-attack had developed, and everywhere, from Kovno to the Narev, the

Mar. 5.

invaders were being pushed back. The 21st Corps had to leave its perch across the Niemen. On 5th March the serious attack on Ossowietz ended, and the big howitzers were shipped on their railway carriages. Marshal von Hindenburg, after announcing that he had never meant to cross the Niemen, gave orders for a gradual retreat to the East Prussian frontier. On 8th March there was desperate fighting about Seyny and Augustovo, and the Russians made large captures of German supplies, as they had done in September. By the middle of March von Hindenburg had drawn back his left and left centre to a position some ten miles inside Russian territory, and covering his own frontiers. The offensive had failed, for not only had the Niemen line proved impracticable and Ossowietz impregnable, but farther south on the Narev a great battle had been fought and lost.

Mar. 8.

We turn to the struggle on the Narev, which was a typical instance of von Hindenburg's strategy. Simultaneously with his attack on the Niemen and the Bobr he launched a force against the line of the Narev. The initial composition of this force is still obscure; but we know that it brought the total of the German northern army up to fifteen corps, a total of more than half a million men. His intention was to clear the Russians out of East Prussia, drive them back to the Niemen, and leave a competent army to harass them there. At the same time Ossowietz would be besieged, and General von Buelow would press hard on the line of the Bobr. But, when the first Russian repulse had been achieved, the centre of gravity would shift farther west, and every man that could be spared would be brought back for the campaign on the Narev. This it was easy to do, for the lateral railways along the southern frontier of East Prussia provided excellent communications. If Warsaw were the main objective, then to force the Lower Narev and cut the two railways running east and north-east from the Polish capital must speedily lead to the fall of that fortress. It would be attacked simultaneously from the west, the east, and the north.

One is tempted at first sight to regard this whole strategical plan as a blunder, similar to that made in October in West Flanders, when the Yser, Ypres, La Bassée, and Arras were all attacked at one time, though a success at either of the last two places would have given all that could be desired. It looks like an unwise dispersion of force. But allowance must be made for the difficulties of the German problem. Unless an attack on the Narev were accompanied by an attack on the Bobr and the Niemen, there was some risk of the German left being turned by way of East Prussia. Further, unless the railways which fed Warsaw were cut or menaced at some point well to the east, Russia would be able to bring up reinforcements for the Narev front. Von

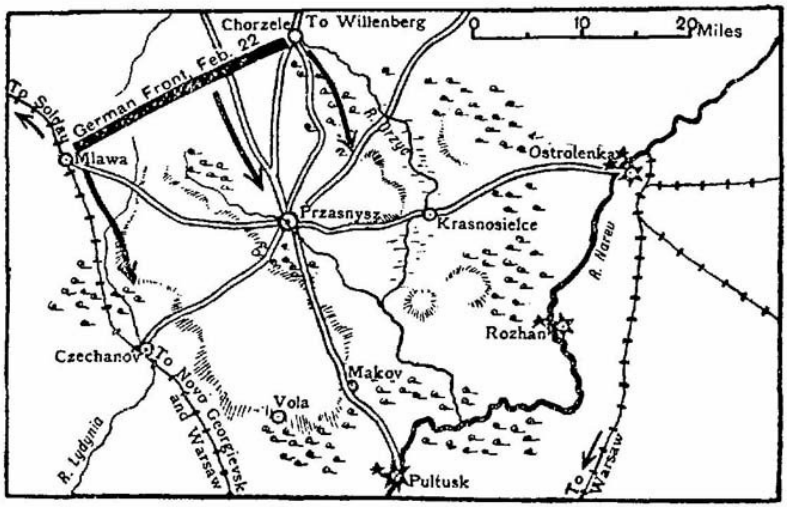
Hindenburg's problem was to feint heavily against the Russian right, and when he had driven it in to leave sufficient forces to occupy it, and swing the operative part of his force against the Russian left. In that way he hoped to find the Narev so ill guarded that he would be over it and in possession of the railways before Russia realized his aim. His winning card was the East Prussian lines, which would allow him to move men speedily and secretly, and far behind his front. This scheme, in which we may see the hand of von Ludendorff, his accomplished Chief of Staff, had on paper many merits. Its success depended on the weakness of Russia's hold on the Narev and the slowness of her communications. Like all German plans, time was of the essence of the business. If Russia could hold on for more than a day or two, the scheme must miscarry. Throughout the war German strategy tended to run in certain familiar grooves. The plan was the second invasion of Warsaw over again, when von Mackensen struck hard at the Bzura, hoping to win the capital before the army of South Poland could send help. It shipwrecked on the stubborn valour of the thin Russian lines on the Narev. Like Smith-Dorrien at Le Cateau, like Maud'huy at Arras, like Sir John French at Ypres, they broke the shock of the assault, and before it could be renewed the situation had changed.

It will be remembered that early in December there had been a German advance from East Prussia, when one corps, moving on a sixteen-mile front, had occupied the highroad which runs from the railway south of Mlawa east to the town of Przasnysz. A Russian counter-attack from Novo Georgievsk had driven it back, and had occupied the country up to Mlawa and beyond it. Thereafter there began, and continued throughout January, a Russian movement along the northern bank of the Lower Vistula in the direction of Thorn. Plock was in Russian hands, and on January 15th the Russian vanguard was only forty miles from Thorn. About the middle of February this movement was checked by a strong German advance, which forced the Russian left on this front back to the line Plock-Rachiaz. There the left stood firm, and the pressure ceased, for it had only been a preliminary to the more important operations developing farther east.

Jan. 15.

We must note the details of the Narev valley, from the point where it receives the stream of the Bobr. It flows in a tortuous course generally to the south-west in a marshy district, mostly heavily forested, and with a few ridges to break the monotony. North of it and east of Przasnysz there are some hills of considerable height, with forests patching their sandy slopes. It has a series of fortified towns commanding the chief crossings, which, beginning from the east, are Lomza, Ostrolenka, Rozhan, Pultusk, and Sierok, where it joins the

Bug about fifteen miles from Novo Georgievsk. The great Warsaw-Petrograd line runs for thirty to forty miles south of it, and sends off several branches, which meet at Ostrolenka. These branches are the only railway connections of the Narev valley. Just west of it runs the important line from Warsaw to East Prussia through Mlawa. The town of Przasnysz lies about half-way between the East Prussian frontier and Rozhan on the Narev. The details of the Przasnysz area are important. Eight roads converge upon it, and give it, therefore, some strategical value. To the east lies the low, boggy valley of the river Orzyc, at this time deep in snow. West lies a ridge about two hundred feet high, which separates the Orzyc system from the little valley of the river Lydynia, down which runs the Mlawa-Warsaw railway. About the middle of February the Russian army of the Narev—the 12th Army commanded by General Plehve—was very weak. The strongest part, its left, had been in action towards Plock. In front of Przasnysz there was an outpost of a single brigade, and between Przasnysz and the railway was another outpost, a division strong, holding the ridge between the two watersheds. The rest of Plehve's army seems to have been on the Narev itself, and was probably under orders to reinforce the front on the Bobr or the Niemen.



Scene of the Fighting round Przasnysz.

On Monday, the 18th, the Germans began to concentrate two corps on the line Mlawa-Chorzele, being well served by the lateral frontier railway from Soldau to Willenberg, and by the Mlawa-Warsaw line on their right. The advance on this front of twenty-five miles began on Monday, 22nd February. The right came down the Mlawa railway, the centre from Chorzele down the main

Feb. 18.

Feb. 22.

highroad to Przasnysz, and the left down the Orzyc valley in a flanking movement directed apparently against Ostrolenka and the Narev. The single Russian brigade in front of Przasnysz was driven back upon the town, and on the 24th the Germans captured Przasnysz, taking a number of guns and about half the isolated brigade. There remained only the division which had taken its stand on the ridge which lies between Przasnysz and Czechanov on the river Lydynia. On the 23rd this force was assaulted by the German right from the Mlawa railway, and by the centre from Przasnysz, which attacked by way of the village of Vola Vierzbowska, to the south-east of the ridge. Meantime the left wing was proceeding down the Orzyc, and had taken the town of Krasnosielce, and was threatening Ostrolenka and Rozhan.

Feb. 23-24.

This most critical situation was saved by the division on the ridge. Fighting a battle on two fronts, it held out for more than thirty-six hours—till the evening of Wednesday, the 24th, when Russian reinforcements had begun to come up. They came by Czechanov, where they strengthened the line of the heroic division, and from Pultusk, Rozhan, and Ostrolenka, against the German right and centre. The enclosers had now become too enclosed, for the German centre was hemmed in at Vola Vierzbowska between the Russians on the ridge and the corps coming from the valley of the Narev. The Russian right meanwhile had attacked Krasnosielce, and driven the German left off the Orzyc. The invaders were being pressed in on three sides, and driven northward through Przasnysz.

There is reason to believe that this battle was fought under conditions which are scarcely to be paralleled from the history of modern war. We know that Russia was hard put to it for munitions and arms. She was unable to equip masses of the trained men that she had ready, and it was the custom to have unarmed troops in the rear of any action, who could be used to fill gaps and take up the weapons of the dead. At Przasnysz men were flung into the firing line without rifles, armed only with a sword-bayonet in one hand and two bombs in the other. That meant fighting, desperate fighting, at the closest quarters. The Russians had to get at all costs within range to throw their bombs, and then they charged with cold steel. This was berserker warfare, a defiance of all modern rules, a return to the conditions of the primitive combat. But it succeeded. The Germans gave ground before numbers which were not their equal, and huddled into Przasnysz. On Friday, the 26th, the Russians entered that town, and all Saturday the battle raged among the snowy ridges towards Stegna. By Sunday morning the enemy's strength was broken, the retreat was ordered, and

Feb. 26.

"Back towards the northland and the night
The stricken eagles scattered from the field."

The battle of Przasnysz decided the fate of von Hindenburg's bid for Warsaw by a flank movement. Tactically it is exceedingly curious, for it bore more affinity with one of the struggles of old days than with modern engagements. The stand of the division on the ridge, with the enemy on both sides of it, should have been impossible, by all the textbooks. But with Russian armies impossibilities happen, and the fight deserves to rank in the history of the war with Foch's two-fronted battle at Sezanne and Smith-Dorrien's at Le Cateau. The Germans retreated in fair order, and established a front on prepared positions between Mlawa and Chorzele, but they left 10,000 prisoners in Russian hands. About the same time the siege of Ossowietz had failed, the 21st Corps had fallen back from the Niemen, and the whole movement languished. As a result of it von Hindenburg had now his northern front inside the Russian frontier. But this was, if anything, an advantage to an opponent so ill supplied with communications, and it had cost the Germans more than an army corps. It was another step in the war of attrition.

We have already noted the difficulties of the German position, and the odds against their strategy being successful. The most dangerous thrust was on the Narev, and that might have succeeded had the movement been co-ordinated with that of the armies to the east. As it was, there was a gap in the invasion north of Lomza and Ostrolenka, and this permitted Russian reinforcements to come up from the Narev valley, and allowed them to turn the German flank on the Orzyc. In the wide fronts of modern battles a gap cannot be filled up with an improvisation, such as Sénarmont's battery at Wagram or the cavalry divisions thrust between Niel and Canrobert at Solferino. Von Hindenburg, following Napoleon's footsteps in East Prussia, forgot one of the most pregnant sayings of that master of war. "In any advance to the conquest of a country it may happen that only one of its wings rests on a neutral frontier or on some great natural obstacle, or even that both the wings are uncovered. . . . In the latter case a commander-in-chief must keep his various corps in close touch with his centre, and never separate them. For, if success is difficult with two wings in the air, this inconvenience doubles itself if there are four wings in such a case, and trebles itself if there are six." Von Hindenburg at Przasnysz, as on the Pilitza in October, paid the penalty of his neglected flanks.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE BATTLES FOR THE PASSES.

The Military Value of a Pass—Russian Position in the Carpathians in January—Characteristics of the Range—Russian Movement in the Bukovina—Political Motives—Rumania—Baron Burian succeeds Count Berchtold—German-Austrian Aim in Carpathian Campaign—The Different Commands—The Attack on the Bukovina—The Koziowa Battles—-Russian Position on 21st March—Importance of Przemysl—Nature of Defence—Its Relief in October—Defective Austrian Preparation for the Siege—The Sortie in December—Famine among the Inhabitants—The Last Sortie—Surrender of Przemysl—Behaviour of Austrian Officers—Effects of the Surrender.

To capture a pass it is not sufficient to hold the crest at the watershed. The debouchment into the enemy's country must also be held, for it is precisely at the debouchment that the point of danger lies. The invader, shut up in a strait mountain valley, has no lateral communications ; but this is an advantage to him till he has descended the farther slope, for he is immune from flank attacks. But when he would issue from the pass into the enemy's lowlands, he is at once exposed to assault from many routes, and unless he can hold the foothills which will allow him to debouch and deploy, he can make little of his mountain vantage-points.

In examining the struggle for the Carpathians, which lasted through December and January, and started with new force at the close of the latter month, we must constantly remember what it means to hold the passes. Brussilov held all the main ones in October, because he commanded all their outlets to the Hungarian plains. Russia lost them all in December; lost in some cases her own Galician approaches. By Christmas she had regained all the Galician entrances, and was almost on the crest of the Dukla. On the first day of January she had, apparently, carried the watershed west of the Uzsok, and had begun to pour down the Hungarian glens towards Ungvar. Presently she was struggling for the Lupkow, and we hear of her cavalry at Mesö Laborcz on the southern side. In the mass of news of the operations in the hills it is hard to find exact truth, for the simple reason that no distinction is made in the *communiqués* between the main position of an army and the doings of a

cavalry patrol. For example, we heard a few weeks later of Russian successes at Munkacs, thirty miles south of the Carpathians, while on the same day a little farther east there was a vigorous Austrian attack on Russian positions fully twenty miles north of the range. This did not mean that the Russian line was indented like a nightmare saw, but only that a cavalry vanguard had shown exceptional boldness.

But during January and February Russia did not hold any of the passes in the true sense. She could not have debouched from any of them in safety. Her main position was still on the north side of the Carpathians. Brussilov in his mountain campaign was not inaugurating an offensive. He was endeavouring to clear his flanks, to win back the ground he had held in October. The passes must be held before an advance upon Cracow could prosper. The real offensive of these months was farther east, as we shall see, in the Bukovina. But Brussilov's advance was met by a vigorous Austrian offensive, which was directed to one single object—the relief of Przemysl. The Austrian right wing had been largely reinforced by German troops, and the Archduke Eugene, knowing well that the great fortress was *in extremis*, made one last effort to save it and drive Brussilov from the Galician foothills.

In an earlier chapter the nature of the Carpathian range has been indicated, but the time has come to look more closely at its character. It bends in a semicircle round the Hungarian plain, but it is not to be regarded as a single continuous ridge, like the Pyrenees. At the north-western end is the mountain country of North Hungary, a region more than a hundred miles wide from north to south, which includes the bare volcanic range of the High Tatra and the loftiest peaks of the system. At the south-eastern end is a still broader mass, formed by the hilly country of the Bukovina, which acts as a northern bastion, and, inside the loop of the chain, the great mountain district of Transylvania, bounded on the south by the Transylvanian Alps. The central part of the range, which was the theatre of the campaigns, forms a kind of curtain between the two flanking masses. Here lie the chief passes, and here is the main route from the north to the plain of Hungary, the road traversed centuries ago by Tartar and Magyar invaders. The map will show the difference between the valleys north and south of the watershed. In the north they are separated by long spurs of hill, and run roughly parallel and some distance apart; but in the south—owing to the semicircular nature of the chain—they converge rapidly on each other, and their streams unite to form the Theiss. In general the distance from plain to plain over the central range is not less than thirty miles. The rock is mainly sandstone, with some few volcanic outcrops on the south which form peaks and precipices. Sandstone means for the most part easy slopes, rounded tops, and wide valleys. Unlike the High Tatra, too, the section is heavily

wooded, and as we go east the woods increase till the range is one undulating forest. On the lower lands the trees are beech, and as the ground rises fir and pine clothe it till just short of the summits. The Bukovina means the country of beech woods.

The Central Carpathians, from the Dukla Pass to the Bukovina, are, therefore, the easiest avenue between Hungary and the north. There the summits are lowest and the range most narrow. There are also good lines of lateral communication on both sides, as well as five railways crossing the chain. On the Galician side a line follows the foothills, and links up the mouths of the glens from Sandek to Stryj. On the Hungarian side the branch lines running into the hills are connected by a good main line from Pressburg by Budapest and Miskolcz to Munkacs. So far as communications went, both the combatants were reasonably well served. But the danger was greater on one side than on the other. From the nature of the topography, to conquer Hungary from Galicia was easier than to conquer Galicia from Hungary. An enemy once south of the passes must advance along valleys which quickly converged, and whenever he approached the junction-point his advent would make the position of troops in the other converging valleys untenable. On the Galician side, on the contrary, the long parallel valleys, which often in their earlier courses run in the same direction as the range, gave the defence strong positions, and enabled one part of the front to keep its ground in one valley, though the invader had driven in the outposts in a neighbouring glen. It is fair to say that when Austria made her effort to save Przemysl there was a defensive as well as an offensive purpose in her movement. Unless Brussilov was driven right away from the passes, unless Austria held the Galician debouchments, there was no security for those rich Hungarian cornlands in which the sowers would soon be busy, and to which Germany looked to make good the deficiencies of her coming harvest.

Jan. 4.

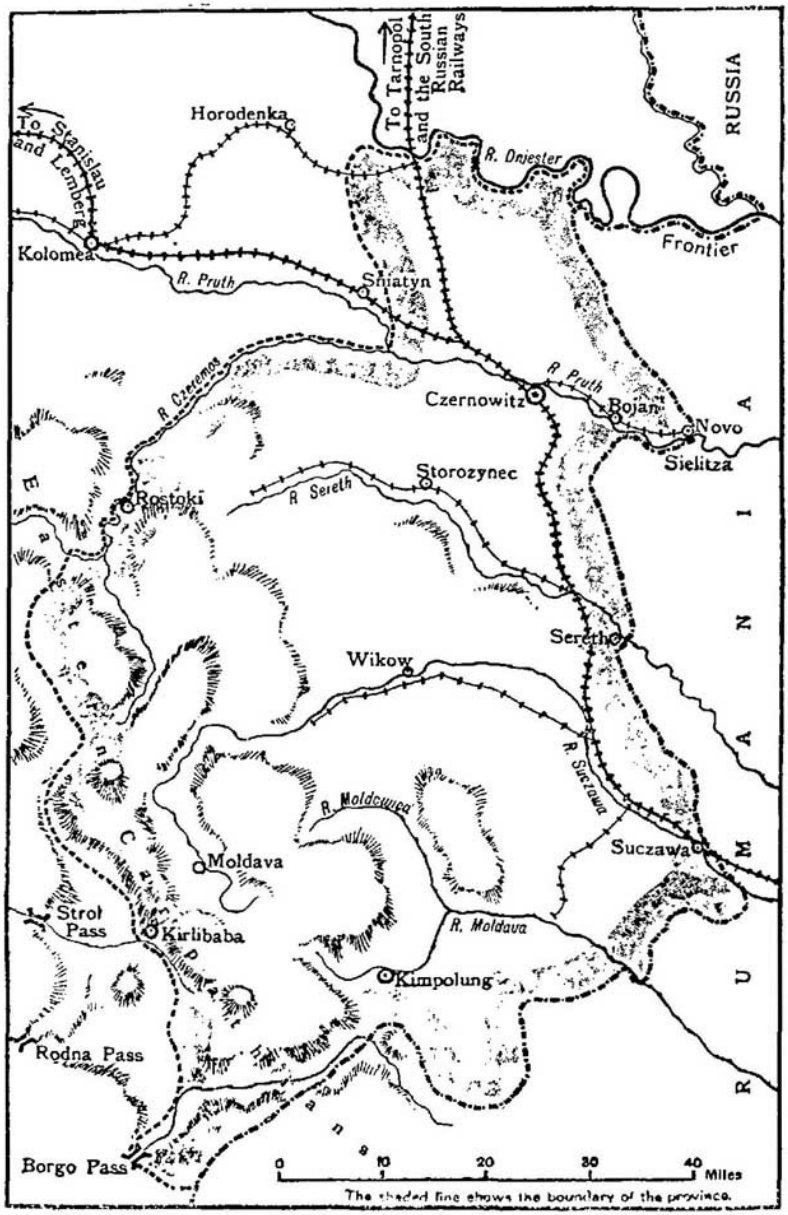
While Brussilov was endeavouring to push across the passes from the Dukla to the Uzsok, the extreme Russian left moved through the Bukovina towards the Carpathian watershed. Brussilov, it will be remembered, had seized Czernowitz, the capital, and Kolomea in the first half of September, after the victory of Lemberg, and ever since the northern Bukovina had been in Russian hands. Very early in the new year a forward movement began on the left by a small Russian force—not more than a division—which was opposed by an Austrian force but little stronger. By 4th January a panic was reported in the district, and over 30,000 refugees were said to have crossed the Rumanian border. That same day the Russians were in Goura Humora, a town on the Moldava, within twenty miles of the frontier. On 6th January the town of Kimpolung was

captured, and the Russians had fought their way for eighty miles to the mountain watershed. Almost the whole of the Bukovina was now in their hands. On 17th January they took the pass of Kirlibaba, a low saddle between wooded ranges, over which runs the road from Kimpolung to the Hungarian town of Maramaros Sziget. The main pass of those parts, the Borgo, which lies in the angle where Transylvania, the Bukovina, and Rumania meet, was not in their hands; and this was the most vital pass, for it gave access by the Szamos River to the lateral communications of the Austrian front, and by the Maros River to the heart of Transylvania.

Jan. 6.

Jan. 17.

A great army does not adopt a serious offensive with one division. The Russian movement in the Bukovina was not strategical but political in its import. Russia had not sufficient forces to turn the enemy's flank, but she had enough for a political diversion. The Bukovina advance was directed to the address of Rumania. That country, as we have seen, was in a position of some difficulty. Strategically, she commanded the Austrian right rear; commercially, she was one of Germany's main supply grounds for petrol and grain. She was intimately linked with Italy in her foreign policy, and it was generally believed that the entry of the one on the side of the Allies would soon involve the adhesion of the other. But, on the other hand, her situation was dangerous, for on her flanks she had a hostile Turkey and a dubious



The Bukovina.

Bulgaria. Moreover, while she had little love for the Teutonic League, she was still profoundly suspicious of Russia. The bulk of her people would have welcomed, it is probable, the taking the field against Austria, but the loss of Bessarabia still rankled scarcely less than the loss of Transylvania. During the

month of January arrangements were made for the advance by the Bank of England of £5,000,000 against Rumanian Treasury Bills—an arrangement which pointed to a considerable advance in her negotiations with the Allies. But to make her way clear, it was necessary to remove the menace of Turkey, and, as we shall see later, the Allies took steps to achieve this result by their Dardanelles operations. Further, some pressure must be brought to bear on popular opinion, and the presence of a Russian army on the threshold of Transylvania might prove a potent influence. The Bukovina and Transylvania contained a large population Rumanian in blood and language. If Rumania allowed these districts to be occupied by Russia and still remained neutral, she would have little prospect of making a successful claim to the annexation of any part of them at the close of the war. If she hoped for Transylvania, she must play her part in winning it.

But if the Russian advance aimed at putting pressure upon Rumania to join the Allies, it was also aimed at facilitating her co-operation if she took the plunge. A glance at the map will show how the Bukovina dominates the communications between Rumania and the Russian front in Galicia. The main Rumanian line runs north, and connects by Czernowitz and Kolomea with Lemberg and the Galician system. If the Bukovina were held by Austria, Rumania would be compelled, should she intervene, either to attack Hungary by the Transylvanian passes—a difficult course, which would turn her effort into an isolated campaign, cut off from all direct communication with the Russian front—or she would be forced to send her troops by a long circuit through Bessarabia and Podolia. The chance of *effective* co-operation was naturally a strong inducement, and Russia aimed at easing her neighbour's mind.

Jan. 13.

The position towards the end of the third week in January was, therefore, as follows: Brussilov held the crests of the Carpathians at the Dukla Pass, and practically at the Lupkow, and everywhere else the Russian line was close up to the northern foothills. If the advance here was pushed with vigour the upper valleys of the Theiss might be won, and converging columns would descend on the Hungarian plains. In the east of the chain the Russians had won the watershed at Kirlibaba, had occupied all the Bukovina except the small south-western corner around the Borgo Pass, and were threatening to bring about that political result—the entrance of Rumania into the struggle—which Austria especially dreaded. The situation called for a great effort, and, with Germany's aid, Austria was ready. On 13th January Count Berchtold, the Austrian minister of Foreign Affairs, resigned his portfolio. A great nobleman and landed proprietor, he had found politics an uncongenial task. His place was taken by Baron Stephen Burian, a

Hungarian diplomatist, who was of the party of the Hungarian Premier, Count Tisza. We may regard Count Tisza as now the one dominant influence in the policy of the Dual Monarchy. It was his own Hungary that was threatened, and he was resolved that no German preoccupation with East Prussia and Warsaw would prevent him from holding the enemy in the gates.

There was another reason which may have been at the back of the mind of the German Staff, and which grew in importance as the counter-attack prospered. In one district only was there a chance for the favourite German enveloping strategy, for a manœuvre battle on the flanks. In the West the opponents were held on lines of entrenchments from the Alps to the North Sea. On the East the flanks were still open, but the northern flank between Kovno and the Baltic was too difficult in that winter season, when the icy winds from the Pole and the proximity of the Russian depôts at Vilna gave small hope to the enflankers. But if Brussilov could be driven back from the passes; if Przemysl could be relieved and the communications of Dmitrieff on the Donajetz hampered; if, above all, the Bukovina could be occupied and the advance pushed past Czernowitz and Kolomea to Stanislau and the Dniester, there was a chance not only of hardening Rumania's heart against the Allies, but of retaking Lemberg, cutting communications with Kiev, and isolating the whole Russian army of Galicia. Such an achievement was by no means impossible. Von Hindenburg and the Archduke Frederick knew well how thin and how ill supplied were the Russian lines. They knew that there was but one Russian division in the Bukovina, and they did not believe that reinforcements could be ready before March.

The Carpathian campaign was fought in deep snow—three feet and more on the saddles, and far deeper in the glens. Eastward, among the beech woods, the weather improved, but for the most part the conditions were scarcely less rigorous than those which Enver some weeks before had faced in the Caucasus. The sufferings on both sides were terrible; but it was worse for the Austrians, who were of a less hardy breed than the Russian peasant soldiers, and were less accustomed to a bitter winter. In the last week of January the sun shone in the mountains, and observers have described how the virgin white of the slopes, as the battles progressed, became a vivid scarlet with the blood of the fallen. In February blizzards were the rule, and the fighting in the uplands slackened perforce, though the struggle in the foothills continued.

The Austrian forces were grouped in three separate armies, under the direction of the Archduke Eugene. In the section from the Dukla to the Uzsok was the army of General Boehm-Ermolli, charged with the relief of Przemysl. In the section from the Uzsok to the Wyzkow Pass, directed along the

Munkacs-Lemberg railway, was the army of the German General von Linsingen, which contained certain German formations which cannot yet be identified. Farther east was the army of General von Pflanzer, containing at least one German corps, and moving upon the Bukovina, mainly by the Delatyn or Jablonitza Pass. The whole offensive was skilfully stage-managed. Rumours were set about that Austria meditated a great attack upon Serbia, and that four German corps had been sent south for the purpose. A pretence was made of bombarding Belgrade and occupying islands in the Danube. But the troops never got farther south than the railway junction of Miskolcz, from whence they went eastward to the Maramaros valleys.

The Austrian left made little progress. It was held by Brussilov on the Dukla and Lupkow; but it crossed the Rostoki, the Uzsok, and forced the Russians back on the upper stream of the San about Baligrod. The resistance of the Russian right at this point was much assisted by the work of Dmitrieff and the army of the Donajetz, who, on a front from the Vistula to Zmigrod, checked the offensive of the Austrian 2nd Army, and inflicted on it severe losses. East of the Lupkow, however, the Austrians won all the passes, and poured their troops into Galicia. General von Linsingen, moving by the railway pass of the Beskid, and the two road passes Tucholka and Wyzkow, advanced in the direction of Stryj and Lemberg. Farther east, the army of the Bukovina crossed the range by the old Magyar and Tartar ways, and advanced upon Stanislau and Kolomea; while on 23rd January its right wing pushed the Russians off the Kirlibaba Pass, and, three days later, were close upon Kimpolung.

The two points of danger were the advance of the Austrian centre on Stryj and of the Austrian right upon Stanislau. A strategical blunder seems to have been committed in the first region. The capture of Stryj and the upper valley of the Dniester would be the first step to the relief of Przemysl, and the attack was pushed here with a force which could have been used to more purpose in the Bukovina. Przemysl showed once again the fatal magnetism which a fortress can exercise both on the attack and the defence. It is possible, of course, to see in von Linsingen's attack an effort to assist the army of the Bukovina by turning the right flank of the Russian defence on the Dniester. But there was scarcely need of such elaborate strategy against one division, and had the Bukovina army been strong enough to resist the very moderate Russian reinforcements which came up at the end of February, it would have seriously embarrassed the whole Russian command in Galicia.

Von Linsingen's effort shipwrecked upon the difficulties of the Galician foothills. The glens run long and straight towards the Dniester. The pass,

which is variously called the Vereczke and the Tucholka, carries a road which crosses a minor ridge, and descends by a tributary glen, the Arava, to the valley of the Opor. The pass, called the Beskid or the Volocz, carries a railway which continues down the Opor valley. Between the meeting-place of these two roads—that is, between the Opor and the Arava, which runs from the direction of the Vereczke Pass—is a ridge which takes its name from the village of Koziowa, and which is marked in the map as 992 metres. It rises steeply, is forested to its summit, and its roots are washed by foaming torrents. There, during February and the first days of March, Brussilov's centre withstood von Linsingen's assault. The battle of Koziowa deserves to rank with the major operations of the war, for it saved Stryj and Lemberg, prevented the relief of Przemysl, and gave time for reinforcements to reach the Bukovina. The Russians, so long as they held the heights, prevented the debouchment of the Austrian columns, and in spite of desperate bayonet attacks they could not be dislodged. The whole situation is an instructive commentary on the nature of mountain warfare. The two Austrian forces, moving by two different passes, could not co-operate because of the high land between them. If the forces on the left needed reinforcements from the right, they must be taken back over the range to the point north of Munkacs, where the two routes diverged. The Russians holding the valley mouth and all the places behind them, were in a far easier position. The selection of Koziowa for a stand showed good generalship, for it was the main strategic point of the whole central range. So long as the Lupkow and the Dukla were held, and so long as the openings of the Rostoki and the Uzsok were stoutly guarded, the defence of Koziowa meant the safety of Galicia.

Feb. 18.

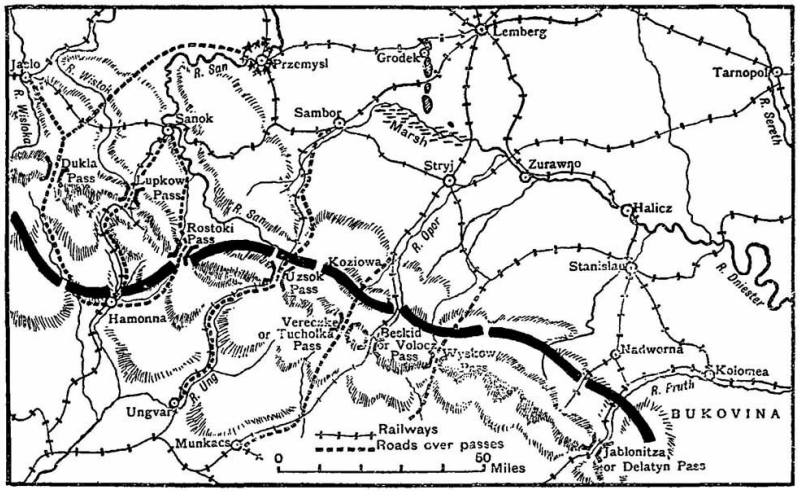
The Austrian right made better progress. About 18th February, moving from the southern corner of the Bukovina at Kimpolung, and also by way of the Jablonitza Pass down the valley of the Pruth, they took Czernowitz, on the railway from Rumania, and presently Kolomea, which is the junction between the Jablonitza line and the railway from Czernowitz to Lemberg. Between 27th February and 3rd March they advanced northward and took Stanislau, from which runs the line which follows the foothills to Stryj and Przemysl. It was a conspicuous success, for it threatened the Russian main communications. From Stanislau, as the crow flies, it is only some seventy miles to Lemberg and some fifty to Tarnopol, through which runs the line to Kiev and Odessa. They did not succeed, however, in forcing the Russians behind the Dniester. So far they had had it very much their own way, for a division cannot defend a province against four corps. Extravagant accounts of captures were published—over 12,000 in one week, which would have meant

Feb. 27-Mar. 3.

the complete obliteration of the Russians in the Bukovina. What happened was that the Russian left fell back rapidly, fighting small delaying actions, till it reached a position where reinforcements could join it. On the 3rd of March these reinforcements arrived, and the enemy was driven out of Stanislau, and the menace to the Stanislau-Stryj line removed. During the next fortnight the Austrian right was slowly pushed back almost to the Kolomea-Czernowitz line. By 21st March the position in the Carpathians was that the Russians held the Dukla, and were close on the crest of the Lupkow. They did not hold the Rostoki or the Uzsok, but held in strength the northern debouchments, so that they were of no use to the enemy. All the passes to the east of the Uzsok were in Austrian hands, but the true debouchments had not been won till the Jablonitza was reached, from which point to the Rumanian frontier the Austrian armies were from sixty to a hundred miles north of the watershed. The main strategical object of the offensive had failed, for Przemysl was no nearer to relief or Lemberg to recapture. But on Monday, 22nd March, an event happened which altered the nature of the campaign. After an investment of nearly seven months Przemysl fell.

Mar. 21.

Mar. 22.

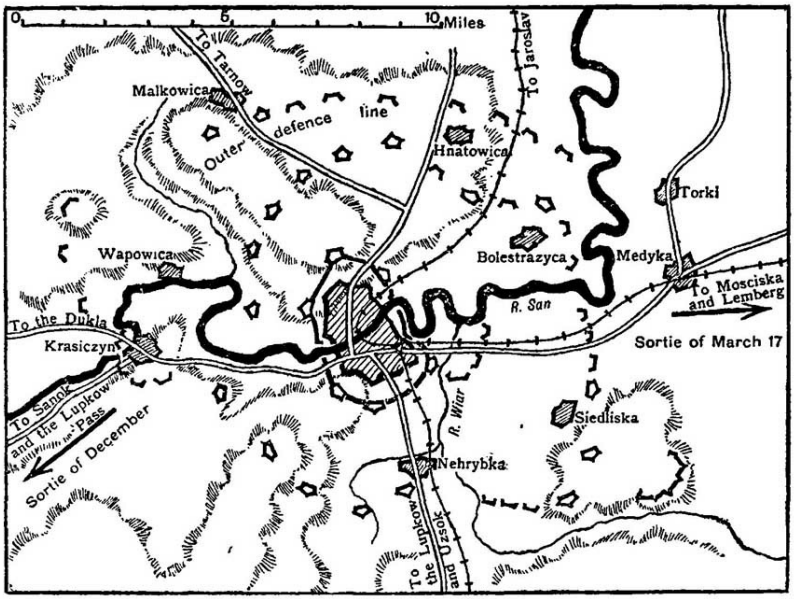


The Fight for the East Carpathian Passes.
(The dark line shows the approximate position of the Russian front in the middle of March.)

The city of Przemysl has been famous as a fortress for nearly a thousand years. In the early ages it held the outlets of the main passes between Hungary and the north—a Turin or a Verona of the East. Often these old mountain citadels have been hardly used by the modern world; railways have shunned them, the route which made their fame has been left to gypsies and foot travellers, and the once famous fort stands like an empty sentry-box at the gate

of a dismantled palace. But Przemysl has never lost its value. Its first modern forts were begun in 1871; it was enlarged in 1887, when there was a prospect of trouble with Russia; it was rebuilt in 1896; and was fully brought up to date in 1909. It was the first of Austria's defensive schemes against an eastern invader.

The San, descending from its source at the Uzsok in a wide circuit of mountain glens, washes its walls just before it leaves the foothills, and turns northwards into the Galician plains. The valleys around are broad and sheltered, the ridges rarely more than seven hundred feet above the streams. The higher slopes are muffled in fir and beech, and the lower are bright with groves of apricot, pear, and cherry; for it is the orchard land of Galicia. Rivulets, led from the higher glens, make a perpetual sound of running water, and the brightly painted wooden houses, embowered in the blossom of April, give the neighbourhood an air of cheerful well-being.



The Fortress of Przemysl.

The fortress owes its importance to-day to its situation astride the railways. The main trunk line between Cracow and Lemberg has been bent round so that it runs through the *enceinte*. It is true that there are other routes independent of Przemysl. The armies of the Donajetz could draw their supplies from Lemberg and Kiev either by way of Jaroslav and Rawa Russka on the north, or by the southern line which skirts the Carpathians *viâ* Jaslo, Sanok, and Stryj. But these were only makeshifts. The trunk line was by way of Tarnow, Jaroslav,

Przemysl, and Lemberg, and with Przemysl in the enemy's hands the trunk line was useless. Supplies had to make a laborious detour to north or south, and such an encumbrance meant much to Russia, when every hour and every man counted. Scarcely less important was the position of Przemysl in relation to the passes. South from the city ran a railway which split into two at the watershed between the San and the Dniester. The western branch ran by way of Sanok over the Lupkow Pass to Tokay and Miskolcz, the eastern by Sambor over the Uzsok. Now Przemysl did not block the Galician outlets of these passes—it was too far away; but it prevented any easy concentration for a Russian movement against them from the north, as it remained an ugly point of danger in the rear of any such advance. Conversely, again, it provided the Austrians, working over the passes from the south, with an objective which endangered the whole Russian frontier in the central foothills. Once the advance won to the centre point the Russian defence would be penned between it and the hostile Przemysl zone. This would mean the end of the investment, and the creation of a solid Austrian wedge in Western Galicia dominating all the eastern communications. Dmitrieff, on the Donajetz, could not maintain himself with safety for a day after Przemysl's relief.

The situation of Przemysl did not make it an ideal ring fortress. The heights were insufficiently isolated, and on the north-eastern side there was the widening plain of the San. The town lay on the right bank of that river, which was crossed by two road bridges and one railway bridge. A mile or two below it the little river Wiar entered the San from the south, and across it ran the main line from Lemberg. Round the city itself, at a distance of about a thousand yards, was a strong system of inner lines. Beyond this there was an intermediate circle of forts, mostly small, and beyond these again, at a distance of about six miles from the city, a circle of outer forts, consisting of nine main works, with numerous smaller connecting *fortins*. The distance between these forts was not regular, but depended upon the nature of the ground. Przemysl was defended, therefore, like Liège or Namur, its first line being the great forts themselves, and not, like Verdun, the far-flung trenches of a field army. Had Russia been well supplied with siege artillery its fall would have been assured in the first month.

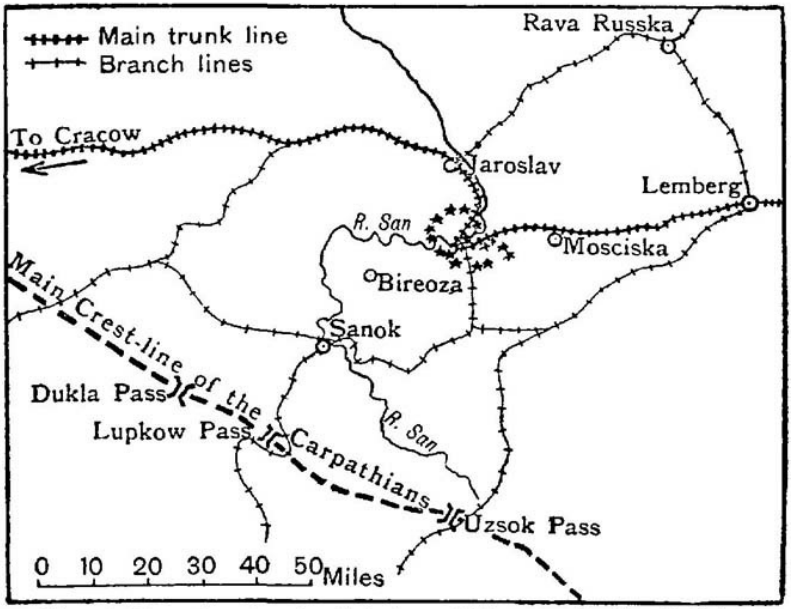
Sept. 27.

When Lemberg fell in the beginning of September part of von Auffenberg's army took refuge in Przemysl, and the numbers of the invested were increased by the *débâcle* of Rawa Russka a fortnight later. By 27th September we know from the Grand Duke Nicholas that all communications with the fortress had been cut off. The place in normal times had some 50,000 inhabitants, largely Jews, and this total must have been increased by refugees from the surrounding country.

Apparently four Austrian army corps were now inside, and the total must have been over 200,000 souls. Provisions had not been collected on any great scale, and by the middle of October starvation was within sight. Then came the first assault of von Hindenburg upon Warsaw, when Ivanov retired behind the San, and by 15th October the investment had been broken. All the west and north of the city was open, and remained so for three weeks, until, von Hindenburg being in full retreat, the Austrian left had to retire westward to conform. For three weeks, therefore, Przemysl had leisure to prepare for the second and grimmer blockade. It was known that large supplies of food and ammunition had been brought in; it was believed that most of the Austrian population had been sent out; and when the ring closed round it about 12th November, even the Russian General Staff assumed that whatever man could foresee in the way of defence had been prepared.

The astonishing thing is that nothing had been done—nothing that touched the heart of the question. Austrian strategy in all that concerned Przemysl was bewildering in its incompetence. Why, to begin with, was so great a point made of its defence? Its possession meant much to Russia, but more in the way of convenience than stark necessity. It did not block completely her communications or veto finally her movements against the passes. Nor did it give Austria any conspicuous advantage worth the seclusion of so large a force. Verdun was worth an army to France; Przemysl to Austria was not the equivalent of a corps. This was the view of the Russian Staff, and the event proved them right. But if Austria thought fit to hold it at all costs, why were not the means proportioned to the end? General von Kusmanek, the commandant of the fortress, was a man just over fifty, a commander, apparently, of fair ability, as the Austrian army went, but of a foresight even lower than the Austrian average. He did not propose to hold the place with a field army in outer entrenchments; he guessed, rightly, that Russia could not easily batter down the first line of works; and for the purpose which he set himself 50,000 men were ample. Instead of that, he crowded inside the twenty-five miles perimeter something like 150,000, and part of these were cavalry! In short, he kept the same garrison as had blown in by accident in September after von Auffenberg's misfortunes. Those who had sought Przemysl for sanctuary were retained for its defence, in spite of their unwieldy numbers and inferior quality. Moreover, he kept most of the civilian population. All that was done in those weeks' respite was to bring in food and shells—as if food or shells by themselves were a sufficient bulwark. General von Kusmanek, with a personal staff of seventy-five, seems to have regarded Przemysl as ideal winter quarters, and to have settled down to the siege under the impression that long before the ample commissariat was curtailed relief would have come. The chance given

him in late October was utterly neglected. The defence from the first was at the mercy of its own mismanagement, and passed from blunder to blunder. The Russian army of investment had nothing to do but to wait on the certain consequences of their opponents' folly.



Sketch Map showing the Relation of Przemysl to the Galician Railway System and the Central Carpathian Passes.

Yet there was a moment when relief came very near. General Selivanov had never more than 100,000 men; inadequate according to the textbooks if we regard the numbers of the defence, but adequate to the perimeter invested. He had little or no heavy artillery, so he resolved to adopt the method of gradual attack. Fortifying his position all around the outer lines, so that he might be able to resist any sortie, he instructed his men to sap up to within rifle shot of the forts. Within the *enceinte* there were over one thousand pieces mounted, including two batteries of the big Skoda howitzers. Most of the artillery strength, however, could not be used against a foe who had few siege guns, and who moved in close lines of entrenchments. By the middle of December, it will be remembered, Ivanov had to fall back from Cracow, as the Austrian attack across the passes uncovered his left flank.

Dec. 15.

On 15th December the Austrians held the Galician debouchments of the Dukla and Lupkow Passes, and were in Sanok itself, not thirty miles from Przemysl. Selivanov's position was full of peril. The Austrians coming through the passes were

conversing by means of searchlights with the Austrians in the fortress. The enemy's guns sounded on both sides of the Russian lines. It was the chance for a successful sortie, and on 15th December the sortie came.

Five Magyar infantry regiments under General Arpad von Tamassy broke through at the south-east angle, and pushed fifteen miles beyond the outer lines to Bireoza, on the Sanok road. For four days the issue hung in the balance. Selivanov brought reinforcements from another segment, and drove back the sortie with a loss of 3,000 killed, wounded, and prisoners. The more dangerous pressure from the south was presently relieved by Brussilov, who cleared the mouth of the passes, and by Christmas Day had restored the safety of the Russian flank. The one chance of raising the siege had gone.

Thereafter stagnation set in. The Russians perfected their position, and by means of light railways secured great mobility round the whole circumference. There were no more sorties by the garrison, but an enormous expenditure of ammunition, mainly fruitless. The town itself was never shelled, and its streets showed none of the ordinary siege casualties. But they showed something worse; for famine began to stalk through them, since the provisions laid in in October could not maintain the motley multitude in the *enceinte*. We possess the diary of a wounded Russian prisoner, from which we can follow the growth of privations. Till December there was plenty for every one. Then came shortage, first for the civilians, then for the soldiers, then for the hospitals, and last for the officers' messes. The weather grew cold, and there was no firewood. A fowl cost 24s., and bread was unprocurable at any price. Horses' flesh was eaten, and the cavalry mounts were slaughtered. By March a cow was selling for £140, and a dog for £2, 10s. There is, unfortunately, some reason to believe that these privations were not unavoidable, nor were they equally shared. The officers of the Przemysl defence treated the siege as a business in which at all costs their health and comfort must be protected, though it is hard to see what purpose this protection served, for they were singularly supine. They insisted on leading their ordinary life of cafés and heavy meals, while their men were fainting from starvation in the streets. There were exceptions, of course, especially among the Hungarian Honvéd regiments, who meant business ; but the conduct of General von Kusmanek and his staff remains one of the ugly episodes of the war.

Mar. 13.

On the night of 13th March the end began. The village of Malkovice, in the north-east segment, on the line to Jaroslav, was carried by a Russian assault. This meant that the outer line of the defence had been successfully breached. The Russians fortified the ground they had captured, and began a bombardment of a section of the inner

circle. Four days later the garrison attempted a last sortie. Thirty thousand men were employed, including the best troops available, the Hungarian 23rd Honvéd Division. They struck east across the plain of the San, in the direction of Lemberg, their aim being Mosciska, where they believed the provisions of the besiegers were stored; for it was imperative to obtain fresh supplies before an attempt could be made to move south and cut their way through to the Austrians in the Carpathians. The enterprise fared badly from the start. In the shallow cup through which the Lemberg railway runs the Russians had their strongest artillery position, and the Hungarians were mowed down in swathes. The sortie was driven back with a heavy toll of killed, and 4,000 prisoners were left in Russian hands.

Mar. 18.

That was on the night of Thursday, the 18th. Very early on the morning of Monday, the 22nd, the Russian lines heard the noise of innumerable explosions. The walls of the château, twelve miles away, where General Selivanov's staff were quartered, trembled as if made of cardboard. A Russian officer as soon as it was light climbed a small hill and looked towards Przemysl. "A wonderful picture was spread out before my eyes. The morning was calm, and a warm sun was rising in a clear sky. Above the fortress there hung a pall of smoke, and from it every now and then rose columns of black smoke, thin like poplars, but capped at the top like mushrooms. They looked wondrously beautiful in the sunlight." General von Kusmanek was busy at purposes of destruction, and this he performed with an assiduity unknown in his other methods of defence. Tons of explosives were sunk in the river, guns and even rifles were methodically destroyed, the horses which had not been slaughtered for food were shot, the three bridges over the San were blown up, and even the bridge over the Wiar was ruined. This last was a senseless piece of vandalism, for the bridge had no military value, and its destruction merely meant that the task of bringing food to the starving inhabitants would be seriously delayed.

Mar. 22.

About nine o'clock the Austrian Chief of Staff arrived at Russian headquarters. He brought a letter from General von Kusmanek, which ran: "In consequence of the exhaustion of the provisions and stores, and in compliance with instructions received from my supreme chief, I am compelled to surrender the Imperial and Royal Fortress of Przemysl to the Imperial Russian Army." A few Russian officers proceeded to the Austrian headquarters and received the surrender, but there was no formal and triumphal entry. The Russian military governor, General Artamonov, took charge of the evacuation, sending off prisoners at the rate of 10,000 a day, and making provision for the feeding of those who remained. The garrison showed no sense of shame at the fall of the city. The unfortunate Austrian and Hungarian soldiers would have welcomed

anything which brought them a meal, and the Russians, according to their custom, treated them with gentleness and courtesy. The officers, on whose reputation Przemysl will be a lasting blot, were not of the type that can feel shame, and the Russians were too busy with urgent tasks to enlighten them. But the contrast of the humane and capable victors, plainly dressed, and sharing the hardships of their men, with the elegant carpet knights who were callous to dishonour and indifferent to suffering if it were not their own, burned itself deep into the souls of the hollow-cheeked prisoners as they strung out on the Lemberg road.

The fall of Przemysl was not a Russian achievement so much as an Austrian disgrace. It fell by its own momentum like an overripe fruit. General Selivanov had only to bide his time for General von Kusmanek to do his work for him. We cannot, therefore, compare it with any of the great sieges of history—with Lille, or Paris, or Port Arthur; for it was no case of a strife of inflexible wills and an issue determined by overmastering skill or strength. Nor was its fall a matter of first-rate strategical importance. The place might have been relinquished at the start by Austria without serious loss, and its conquest did not transform Russia's position as, for example, Vicksburg transformed that of the American North. Russia made some 120,000 prisoners, of whom 2,600 were officers; but as these troops had been shut up for six months, their loss did not affect the strength of the Austrian field force. Over 1,000 guns were captured, mainly bronze, and of these 180 were fit for use. Considerable stocks of shells and small-arm ammunition were also taken, but the bulk had been destroyed. Her success freed Russia from a menace, vastly improved her railway communications, and gave her a good northern base against the Central Carpathian passes. But the real gain was the release for an active offensive of General Selivanov's army. Her main reserves were not yet ready, and the accession to her front of 100,000 armed men was a supreme advantage at a time when every man and rifle was still jealously counted.

CHAPTER XLV.

NEUVE CHAPELLE.

Position of Allied Front in March—British Dispositions—Meaning of an Artillery “Preparation”—The Surroundings of Neuve Chapelle—The Ridges to the South-east—Their Strategic Importance—Preparation for the Assault—Our Artillery Bombardment—Attack of the 8th and Meerut Divisions—Difficulties of the 23rd Brigade—Losses of Middlesex and Scottish Rifles—The Hitch in the Plan—Attack by 7th Division—Mist interferes with our Artillery—End of the Assault—The Fight at St. Eloi—Performance of Princess Patricia’s Regiment—Attack by First Corps from Givenchy—Attack by Second Corps—Capture of L’Epinette—Successes of British Airmen—The Gains of Neuve Chapelle—Elation of British Troops—Condition of German Trenches—Germany’s Indignation.

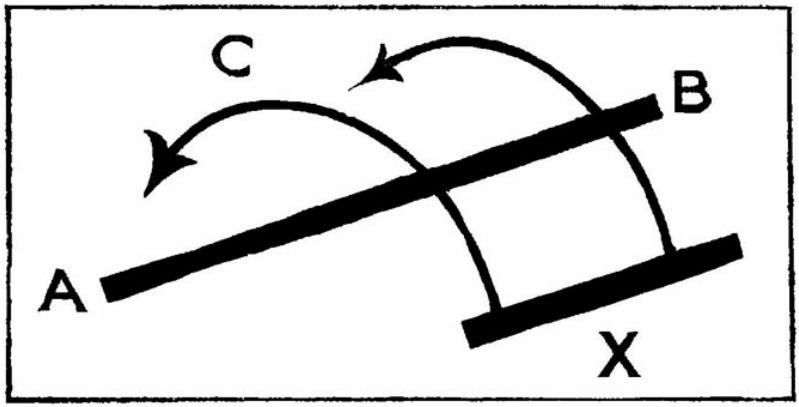
The Allied front in Flanders and Northern France was by the beginning of March little changed from its position in November. On the Yser the floods were ebbing, for the German howitzers had broken the dams near Nieuport which held them up, and by the middle of March troops could cross the meadows between the railway line and the canal. South from Dixmude to the point of the Ypres salient lay French troops, principally the 9th Corps, relieved at intervals by British cavalry. The southern re-entrant was held by the new British corps, the Fifth, under Major-General Sir Herbert Plumer, and south of them, behind Wytschaete and Messines, lay the Second Corps. Pulteney’s Third Corps lay in its old position astride the Lys, in front of Armentières, and south of it from Estaires to west of Neuve Chapelle was Sir Henry Rawlinson’s Fourth Corps. The Indian Corps continued the line towards Givenchy, where the First Corps carried it across the canal and linked up with Maud’huy’s 10th Army. Maud’huy had greatly improved his position by his successes on the ridge of Notre Dame de Lorette, west of Lens, but his line in its main features was that which he had so stubbornly held in late October.

But while the front remained the same the Allied forces had been largely augmented. In November Major-General Davies’ 8th Division[1] had arrived to complete the Fourth Corps. Early in January the Fifth Corps had been constituted under Sir Herbert Plumer, its two divisions being numbered the 27th and 28th, to allow of the new service divisions at home coming in

between. These divisions[2] were largely composed of men brought back from tropical stations, who were highly tried by the abrupt transition to a Flemish winter. In February the Canadian Division, under Major-General Alderson, arrived, and by the beginning of March there were as many Territorial divisions with Sir John French as there had been Territorial battalions in November. The British Force had been organized in two armies under the Commander-in-Chief; the First Army, commanded by Sir Douglas Haig, embracing the First, Fourth, and Indian Corps, and holding the line from La Bassée to Estaires; and the Second Army, commanded by General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, continuing the front to the Ypres salient, and including the Second, Third, and Fifth Corps. The total British troops on French and Flemish soil, including all arms, can have been little less than half a million in the first week of March. It is instructive to remember that the British under Marlborough were rarely more than a division strong; that at Waterloo we had a division and a half; that at our strongest in the Peninsula we had no more than one modern army corps; that in the Crimea we had under two divisions; and that at the full tide of the South African War we had less than a quarter of a million men. March saw a British army assembled on the Flemish borders twelve times as large as that which had triumphed under Wellington in the Peninsula, and fifty-five times greater than the force which charged with King Harry at Agincourt.

It had been decided as early as the middle of February that an offensive should be undertaken on the British front. The brilliant success of the French in Champagne had proved that under certain conditions an attack upon entrenchments must succeed. If a sufficiently powerful artillery fire were accumulated upon a section of the front, parapet and barbed wire entanglements would be blown to pieces, and if the artillery, lengthening its range, were able to put what the French call a *barrage* of fire between the enemy and his supports, the infantry could advance in comparative safety. The attached diagram will explain the general nature of such tactics. If the guns of one side, X, can destroy the trenches and defence of the enemy at AB, and immediately thereafter interpose a curtain of fire between AB and their supports at C, then the infantry of X must succeed in carrying the line AB and fortifying themselves against counter-attack. To ensure the success of such a plan complete secrecy is necessary. A huge artillery strength must be concentrated behind X unknown to the enemy; for if it were discovered it would at once become the target for the enemy’s fire, and AB would be the centre of a counter-massing of guns. For such a surprise the British were in an advantageous position. The ascendancy in air work which we had exhibited made it difficult for a German aeroplane to show its nose over our lines

without being promptly hunted back, while our own airmen were able to make reconnaissances over the German front, and determine where it was most weakly held.



The section chosen for the British attempt was the village of Neuve Chapelle. It will be remembered that on 16th October Smith-Dorrien's Second Corps took the village, and next day advanced as far as Auber and Herlies. On the 19th the Royal Irish took the hamlet of Le Pilly, three and a half miles east of Neuve Chapelle, a position which was the farthest we won in this neighbourhood. The German counter-attack pushed us back to just east of Neuve Chapelle, and on 27th October they recaptured the place. On the 28th a gallant assault by Indian troops regained it, but the attack was badly supported, and by the beginning of November we had fallen back to a line well to the west of the village. There we remained during the winter months. The German lines, held by the 7th (Westphalia) Corps, covered the village, and the British front ran from Givenchy by Festubert, just east of Richebourg, just west of Neuve Chapelle, and then north-east by Fauquissart and Bois Grenier to east of Armentières. It will be seen that our line between La Bassée and Neuve Chapelle represented a re-entrant which might profitably be straightened. It was not so dangerous an angle as that at St. Eloi, south of Ypres; but in the Neuve Chapelle section the war had long languished, and the enemy was less on his guard than in that old cockpit of the Ypres ridges.

Looking eastward from the British front, Neuve Chapelle showed a long, straggling line of houses among gardens, with a tall white church standing conspicuous over the flats. Let us see how the place looked in one of the wonderful photographs which our aeroplanes obtained from above. One main highroad runs north from La Bassée to Estaires. At Neuve Chapelle a second road leaves this, and goes by Fleurbaix to Armentières, and a connecting road

joins the two and forms a diamond-shaped figure, in the north angle of which the village lies. The houses straggle round the road junction, those on the east being small and crowded together, and those on the west larger and surrounded by gardens and orchards. At the northern apex of the diamond is a small triangle, bounded by roads and filled with plots and hedgerows. Between the houses and the La Bassée road on the west were meadows and ploughland, where lay the German trenches, our own being about a hundred yards westward, close along the highway.

To appreciate the strategic importance of Neuve Chapelle, we must continue our survey to the east. Two miles south-west of Lille a low but clearly-marked ridge begins, which runs to the village of Fournes, Smith-Dorrien's old October objective. At Fournes it splits into two, one following the main La Bassée road to lilies, the other running west to Haut Pommereau and then bending north-east to Aubers and Fromelles. The top of these ridges is a low plateau, which, once won, would command the approaches to Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, and the cities of the plain of the Scheldt. A small river, the Des Layes, flows between Neuve Chapelle and the ridges. This stream crosses the La Bassée highway south of Neuve Chapelle at a place which we called Port Arthur, and is crossed to the north-east by three roads, which run towards the ridges from the Neuve Chapelle-Armentières highway. Along the stream lay the German second line of defence, with strong positions at the bridgeheads, and a mile north-east of the village at the Pietre Mill, whose tall chimney is one of the landmarks of the place. A considerable wood, mainly of saplings, the Bois du Biez, lies south-east of Neuve Chapelle, on the left bank of the Des Layes, and another, the Bois de Pommereau, clothes the ridge south of Aubers. Obviously if the attack could be pushed so hard as to carry the second German position, the ridge would be won, the La Bassée-Lille line threatened, and, if fortune were kind, Lille itself rendered untenable.

Mar. 8.

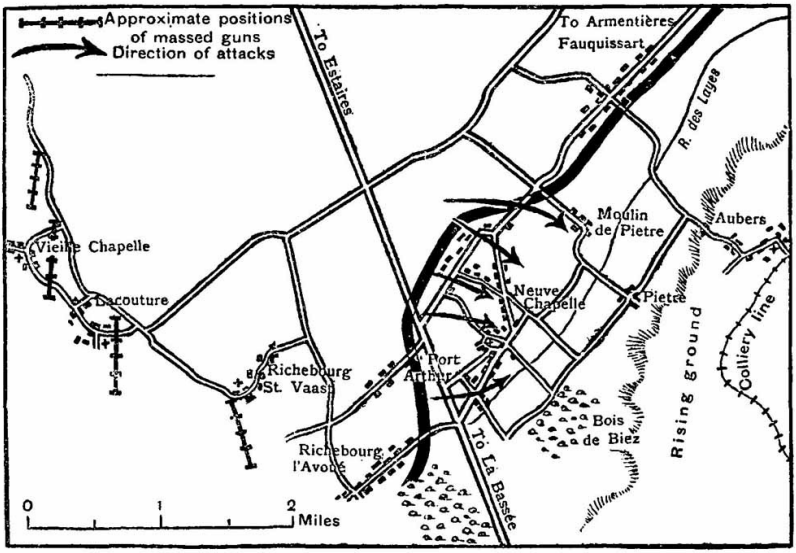
On 8th March Sir John French assembled his corps commanders and expounded to them the plan of attack. The assault of Neuve Chapelle was to be undertaken by the First Army, the Fourth Corps operating on the north and the Indian Corps on the south. In order to keep the enemy occupied, and prevent him from sending reinforcements, two supplementary attacks were arranged on the flanks of the main movement—the First Corps attacking from Givenchy, and the Third Corps from the Second Army attacking just south of Armentières. The scheme, which had been worked out by General John Gough before his untimely death, was as practicable as it was bold; but it made high demands on our artillery, and it was to some extent at the mercy of accident. It involved an artillery bombardment four times greater than anything we had yet undertaken. First,

the enemy's trenches and entanglements must be destroyed; then with a lengthened range a curtain of fire must be hung between him and his supports. To achieve this the Staff work must be precise and efficient. The infantry must advance at the right moment, neither sooner nor later; for if they were too soon they would run into our own fire, or would find the enemy's defences unbroken, and if they were too late the crushing effect of the bombardment would be lost. No plan ever works out quite as it is intended, and it might be necessary to modify some parts. The gun control communications must be kept up between the infantry and the gunners far behind them. Dispatch-bearers are too slow, and telephonic communication is apt to be destroyed in a bombardment, while if there should be fog the difficulty would be increased. Everything depended upon the artillery observers and upon the effective co-ordination of the different units by the divisional staffs. So far as the surprise went that could be made certain. We could catch the enemy unawares, thanks to the brilliance of our air work. But whether we would merely straighten our line, or drive a deep wedge into the German front which would give us Lille in a day or two, depended upon the thousand chances of battle which no human staff could completely foresee.

Very quietly during the 8th and 9th our artillery was brought together into a small area west of Neuve Chapelle. Every variety of gun was there—field gun, field howitzer, 60-pounder, coast defence gun, and the new 15-inch howitzer, which was our answer to Krupp and Skoda. The main field artillery positions were just west of Richebourg, while the heavy guns were around Lacouture and Vieille Chapelle.

Mar. 9.

From ten o'clock on the evening of the 9th the infantry assembled in the March night. Every trench and ditch was full of them, masses of expectant men burning for the order for the long-delayed advance. Hot meals were served out along the line, and, like the soldiers of the Revolution, they had hot coffee before sunrise. Then came a period of tense silence. Waiting under arms is a nervous business at the best, and doubly trying was such waiting as this, with the unconscious enemy a hundred yards away, and all hell leashed in the great guns behind. Down the line from Armentières to La Bassée there was the same eager anticipation. The men and the company officers did not know when the main attack was to be launched. All they knew was that they were on the eve of a great movement.



The Battle of Neuve Chapelle.
(The black line shows the general position of the British front before the battle.)

Mar. 10.

Dawn broke grey and sullen. The clouds hung low in the sky, and there was mist in the distance. The first light seems to have shown the Germans that something was astir in the British line. The trenches were full of men, so ran the reports of the outposts; but the corps commander took no steps. Then suddenly on the anxious ear of our troops fell the boom of great guns. It was our artillery firing "ranging" shots. Then all was silent again, and from Armentières to Givenchy battalion commanders looked at their watches.

7.30 a.m.

At 7.30, punctually to a second, the silence was torn by a pandemonium of sound. It split the ears and rent the heavens, so that our troops, crouching under cover, were dazed and maddened by the brain-racking concussions. Sometimes, when a gun trajectory was low, a shell passed close over their heads. Sometimes, when the great howitzers fired, the shells rose to the altitude of a huge mountain before descending on the doomed German trenches. The discharges were so rapid and incessant that they sounded as if they came from some supernatural machine gun. The earth vibrated as if struck by a great hammer. The first shells that hit the German position raised a mighty cloud of smoke and dust, and for the next thirty-five minutes we could see nothing but a pall of green lyddite fumes and great mushrooms of red earth. Barbed wire entanglements were sliced through, parapets—the work of months—were crumbled like sand castles, and horrible fragments of mortality blew back upon us with the lyddite wreaths. Four shells to the yard was our fire, and in this action there was more use of artillery than

in a year and a half of the South African War. The “preparation” lasted thirty-five minutes, and at the end of it there were no German trenches—only a welter of earth and dust and mangled bodies.

At five minutes past eight our gunners lengthened their range, and the houses of the village began to leap into the air. Great dust spouts went up to heaven; trees were razed like grass before a scythe; and the cloud grew denser with the debris of brick and mortar. Then the whistles blew along the line. The time had come for the infantry to advance.

8.05 a.m.

Due west of Neuve Chapelle lay two brigades of the 8th Division—the 23rd to the left and the 25th on the right. South of them, on a front a mile and a half long, was the Meerut Division, with the Lahore Division behind in close support. On the left was the Garhwal Brigade, with the Dehra Dun Brigade on its right. The first attack was carried out by the 23rd against the north-east corner of Neuve Chapelle, the 25th against the village, and the Garhwal Brigade against the south-west corner. The 25th had no difficulty with the trenches opposite them. Dazed and dying Germans were the only enemy left, though a machine gun or two still kept up fire from concealed positions, and there was much sniping. The 2nd Royal Berkshires and the 2nd Lincolns rushed the first line trenches, and then opened out for the 2nd Rifle Brigade and the 1st Irish Rifles to go through and take the village. Our artillery preparation still continued, and it was not till 8.35 that the range was again lengthened, in order to interpose a curtain of fire between the village and the German supports. Then the two battalions of the 25th Brigade swept into the battered streets, in which every German was soon dead or captured. What had once been a village was now only a rubbish heap. The church was a broken shard, and the churchyard, horribly ploughed up with our fire, showed the long dead in their graves. The ground was yellow with lyddite, the fruit trees and the oaks were torn up by the roots, and over the desolation in the churchyard and at the cross-roads loomed two gaunt crucifixes, which by some miracle had escaped destruction to point an ironic moral.

8.35 a.m.

The attack on the right by the Garhwal Brigade was at first no less successful. It easily carried the first trenches, and the 3rd Gurkhas met the Rifle Brigade in the southern outskirts of the village. Then it swept on to the Bois du Biez, past the heap of wayside ruins which was once the hamlet of Port Arthur. But on the left of the attack there was a different story. There the artillery preparation had been insufficient, and in the northern corner of Neuve Chapelle, where there is a slight hollow, the German trenches and barbed wire

entanglements were still intact. Here the 23rd Brigade advanced, the 2nd Devons, the 2nd West Yorks, the 2nd Scottish Rifles, and the 2nd Middlesex. The Scottish Rifles—the old Cameronians, who had on their regimental rolls Lord Hill, Lord Wolseley, and Sir Evelyn Wood—came up against unbroken wire and a storm of shot from rifles and machine guns. The splendid battalion never wavered. They tore at the wire with naked hands, but were compelled to fall back and lie in the fire-swept open till one company got through a gap and broke down the defence. They lost fifteen officers, including their gallant commander, Colonel Bliss, and few regiments have ever lived through a more dreadful hour. Scarcely less terrible was the ordeal of the Middlesex on their right. They, too, were mown down by machine guns in the open, and faced with wire. A message was sent back to the gunners, and the Middlesex waited in that zone of death till our shells had destroyed the entanglements. Meantime the success of the 25th Brigade to the south had turned the flank of the Germans north of the village, and presently the whole 23rd Brigade had struggled through to the orchard north-east of Neuve Chapelle, where they joined hands with the 24th Brigade—1st Worcesters, 2nd East Lancashires, 1st Sherwood Foresters, and 2nd Northamptons—which had attacked on their left from the Neuve Chapelle-Armentières highway. By midday our artillery isolated the village with a curtain of shrapnel fire. No German counter-attack was possible, for no reinforcements could pierce that screen, and our men had leisure to secure the ground they had won.

12 noon.

Now was the moment, while the enemy were still stupid with surprise, and demoralized by the awful bombardment of the morning, and while our own men were hot with victory, to push on and carry the ridge which dominated the road to Lille. But the great scheme had not gone as smoothly as was hoped. All telephonic communications had been cut by our own and the enemy's fire, and it was hard to get orders quickly to the first line. The check of the 23rd Brigade had put the whole movement out of gear, and our front needed serious adjustment. Mistakes had been made. "I am of opinion," Sir John French wrote in his dispatch, "that this delay would not have occurred had the clearly expressed orders of the general officer commanding the First Army been more carefully observed." There was also an unaccountable delay in bringing the reserve brigades of the Fourth Corps into action. It was not till 3.30 in the afternoon that on the left of the 24th Brigade there formed up the three brigades of the 7th Division—the 20th, 21st, and 22nd, who had won for themselves immortal glory in the October battle round Ypres.

3.30 p.m.

The left of the attack now swung south, moving towards Aubers by the

hamlet of Pietre. Simultaneously from the south the Indian Corps—the Garhwal and the Dehra Dun Brigades—pushed toward the ridge through the Bois du Biez. But everywhere they met with difficulties. The Garhwal Brigade, on the south, came upon a German position unbroken by artillery, and the 39th Garhwalis and the 2nd Leicesters carried it only with desperate losses. While it established itself on this new line, the Dehra Dun Brigade, supported by the Jullundur Brigade of the Lahore Division, attacked farther to the south, but were held up on the line of the river Des Layes by a German outpost at the bridge. Sir Douglas Haig brought up the 1st Brigade from the First Corps to support, but darkness fell before they arrived. Farther to the left on our front another fortified bridge over the stream held up the 25th Brigade, while the 24th was checked by machine-gun fire from the cross-roads north-west of Pietre village, and the 7th Division by the line of the Des Layes and the defence of the Pietre Mill. Everywhere in this neighbourhood were strong positions which our artillery had not yet touched, and to push an infantry attack was needless sacrifice. Accordingly, as the grey evening closed in, we devoted ourselves to strengthening our line on the ground we had won. Neuve Chapelle was ours; we had advanced a mile; and we had fully straightened our line. But the wedge had still to be driven into the enemy.

Mar. 11.

Nothing could be done without artillery, so early on the 11th our fire was directed towards the Bois du Biez and the positions around Pietre. Here and there the Germans rallied and counter-attacked, and here and there we won a few hundred yards. But the enemy had now pulled himself together, the asset of surprise had been lost, and our great artillery effort had exhausted itself. Such a “preparation” as was seen on the morning of the 10th cannot be repeated every day. During the night of the 11th Bavarian and Saxon reserves came up from Tourcoing, and early on the 12th the counter-attack developed in force all along our front. The mist continued, and our guns could do little, for in the absence of proper communications between observers and batteries they were just as likely as not to be shelling our own men. The stubborn bridgeheads of the Des Layes still prevented access through the Bois du Biez to the ridges, and the Germans held the fort around the Pietre Mill and the neighbouring cross-roads, and so covered the approach to Aubers. The German counter-attacks were badly co-ordinated and effected nothing, but our own thrust was now rapidly spending itself.

Mar. 12.

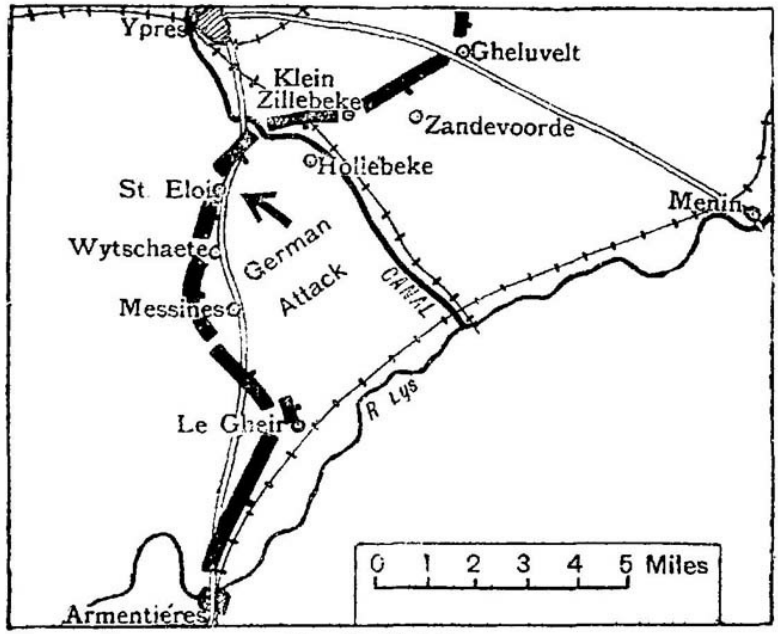
Much was hoped from the attack on the 12th, and the 2nd Cavalry Division under General Hubert Gough, and a brigade of the North Midland Division was ordered to support the infantry, in the hope that there might be a chance for the cavalry to get through. But when Sir Philip Chetwode with the 5th

Cavalry Brigade reached the Rue Bacquerot at four o'clock in the afternoon, he was informed by Sir Henry Rawlinson that the German positions were still unbroken, and he had regretfully to retire to Estaires.

All that day the 7th Division on our left struggled on against the Pietre fort, while the rest of the line attacked the Des Layes bridges and the Germans' second trenches in the Bois du Biez. The hardest task fell to the 20th Brigade around Pietre Mill—the 1st Grenadiers, the 2nd Scots Guards, the 2nd Border Regiment, and the 2nd Gordons, with the 6th Gordons, a Territorial battalion. Here the Victoria Cross was won by Private Edward Barber and Lance-Corporal Wilfred Fuller of the Grenadiers for brilliant work with bombs. They took position after position, but without the aid of artillery their task was hopeless. Here, too, fell Lieutenant-Colonel Maclean of the 6th Gordons. Farther south the 2nd Rifle Brigade from the 25th Brigade struggled forward in the afternoon, and managed to carry a section of the German second trenches, a feat in which Sergeant-Major Daniels and Corporal Noble won the Victoria Cross. But enfilading fire made their position untenable, and they were compelled to fall back on their old lines.

Mar. 13.

By the evening of the 12th it was clear that a stalemate had been reached. We could not win to the German position commanding the ridge, and they could not retake Neuve Chapelle. "As most of the objects for which the operation had been undertaken had been attained," Sir John French wrote, "and as there were reasons why I considered it inadvisable to continue the attack at that time, I directed Sir Douglas Haig on the night of the 12th to hold and consolidate the ground which had been gained by the Fourth and Indian Corps, and to suspend further offensive operations for the present." Many of the German trenches were destroyed by shell fire, many had been turned in to make graves—"We are standing on dead Germans here," a soldier told a correspondent—so all the 13th was spent by our weary troops in digging themselves into the wet meadows along the Des Layes. By the 14th the two corps which had fought the action had been withdrawn into reserve.



The St. Eloi Area.

The most severe counter-attack was not at Neuve Chapelle but fifteen miles north, where the village of St. Eloi stands on the southern ridge of Ypres. On the 14th of March, when the mists lay thick on the flats, the Germans concentrated a mass of artillery against the section held by the 27th Division. The village, which lies along the Ypres-Armentières road, is the point of that dangerous southern re-entrant to the Ypres salient which had been fought for so fiercely in the great October battle. At five in the afternoon a tremendous bombardment began, and at the same moment two mines were exploded beneath a mound which was part of our front, to the south-east of the village. A fierce infantry attack followed, with the result that our men were forced out of their trenches. This led to the enfilading of the troops to the right and left, and the whole section of the British front fell back. Then came darkness, and under its cover we prepared our counter-attack. It was delivered about 2 a.m. on the morning of the 15th by the 82nd Brigade, with the 80th Brigade in support. The former drove the enemy out of the village of St. Eloi, and retook part of the trenches to the east, while the latter completed the work, and by daybreak we had recovered all the lost ground which was of material importance. In this action Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, the 4th Rifle Brigade, the 1st Leinsters, the 2nd Cornwalls, and the 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers especially distinguished themselves. Princess Patricia's

Mar. 14.

Mar. 15.

Regiment was the first of the overseas troops to be engaged in an action of first-rate importance, and their deeds were a pride to the whole Empire—a pride to be infinitely heightened by the glorious record of the Canadian Division in the desperate battles of April. This regiment five days later suffered an irreparable loss in the death of its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Farquhar, kindest of friends, most whimsical and delightful of comrades, and bravest of men.

Mar. 10.

The attack on Neuve Chapelle was supported by a variety of movements along the British front to prevent any sudden massing of reinforcements. On the morning of the 10th the First Corps attacked from Givenchy; but there had been too little artillery preparation, the wire entanglements were largely uncut, and the most they could do was to hold the enemy to his position. On the 12th the Second Corps had arranged to advance south-west of Wytschaete against that troublesome German position on the ridge which we had assailed in December. It was timed for ten in the morning, but the mists hung so low that it was not till four in the afternoon that the 1st Wiltshires and the 3rd Worcesters from the 7th Brigade could move. The mist thickened, darkness drew near, and the attack had to be relinquished. More successful was the attack the same day on the hamlet of L'Epinette, south-east of Armentières. At noon the 17th Brigade of the 4th Division of the Third Corps, with the 18th Brigade in support, advanced 300 yards on a front of half a mile, carried the village, and held it against all counter-attacks. Our artillery also succeeded on the 10th in shelling the railway station of Quesnoy, east of Armentières, where some German reinforcements were entraining, and the fire of our great howitzers penetrated as far as Aubers on the ridge, where a tall church tower dissolved in a cloud of dust.

Mar. 12.

Mar. 10.

Mar. 10-12.

But the chief success in these subsidiary operations was won by our airmen. During the three days from the 10th to the 12th of March the weather was the worst conceivable for air work, and our aviators were compelled to fly at a height of no more than 100 or 150 feet to make sure of their aim. One dropped a bomb on the bridge at Menin which carries the railway over the Lys, and destroyed one of the piers; others wrecked the railway stations at Courtrai, Don, and Douai; and bombs were dropped on Lille, hitting one of the German headquarters. The whole air campaign was brilliantly conceived and executed. To destroy vital points in the enemy's communications was as effective as a shrapnel curtain to bar him from his reserves.

In casting up the accounts of Neuve Chapelle we may set down first the substantial gains. On a front of three miles we had advanced more than a mile, and the former sag in our line was now replaced by a pronounced sag in the enemy's. We had not won the ridges dominating Lille, but we had pushed our trenches close up to them, and we had given the enemy a bad fit of nerves as to his whole position in the plain of the Scheldt. During the three days' fighting at Neuve Chapelle, Lille suffered from something not unlike a panic. The large hospital was removed to Tournai, and many of the officers billeted in Lille went to Tournai to sleep. We made some 2,000 prisoners, several thousand dead were left on the battlefield, and the total German casualties were little less than 20,000. The vigour of our offensive put new heart into our men. The sense that at last they were going forward more than repaid them for their losses, and the wounded, even the desperately wounded, retired with jokes on their lips, recounting to each other the wild incidents of the day. When we won the German first-line trenches our men crowded into them, and there was not room on the firing positions for all who burned to take part in the action. One man would pull another down, crying that it was his turn for a shot. The elation was highest in the Indian troops, who had on the whole steered the straightest course. This was warfare after their own hearts. "One Gurkha," writes the official "Eye-witness," "made his way into a house, and single-handed captured five Germans, whom he marched off at the point of his kukri. It was curious to see them returning with articles of German equipment, which they designated by the French word *souvenir*." Our own casualties for the three days' fighting were just on 13,000, of whom 2,337 men and 190 officers were killed. The chief losses were in the Scottish Rifles, the Grenadiers, the Middlesex, the Northamptons, the Worcesters, the Sherwood Foresters, and the 39th Garhwalis.

Neuve Chapelle was a success, but the price was disproportionate. The results, in Cromwell's words, were not "answerable to the honesty and simplicity of the design." Our reach had exceeded our grasp, as so often happens in war. This was partly due to accident—the sudden clouding of the weather from 10th to 12th March. But there were also blunders, to which Sir John French has referred. The artillery preparation was not everywhere adequate, especially at the point where the 23rd Brigade attacked. The Staff work of the Fourth Corps was imperfect, and there was an unexplained delay in bringing up the brigades of the 7th Division after the advance of the 8th on the morning of 10th March. The observation work of the artillery was faulty—it is difficult to see how under the conditions it could have been otherwise—with the result that occasionally our own advancing troops were shelled, and more often the enemy's position was left unbroken. It was our first attempt at

the kind of tactics in which the French had shown us the way, and not unnaturally we fumbled a little. The best result was the increased ardour which the action inspired in our own ranks. But a plan which might have given us Lille only gave us Neuve Chapelle, and this at an expense of life which should have won the greater end.

Neuve Chapelle taught us much, too, of the conditions of the enemy. For the first time since the Marne the British troops had visited his home, and we found out something of the manner of his existence during the long winter. The trenches were not as good as ours, and there seemed a strange callousness as to the comfort of the men on the part of their officers. The officers' dug-outs were often luxurious, with furniture looted from neighbouring houses, and glazed and curtained windows. The men themselves were for the most part clean and well disciplined. On the whole their resistance was greatly to their credit. After the first terrific bombardment, when the whole trench lines dissolved, our advancing troops found poor dazed creatures on their knees, blindly holding out their hands, and the cellars of the village were full of men senseless with terror. But they rallied speedily, and the defence of their second line, aided by numerous machine guns—there were fifteen on one stretch of 250 yards—was a fine performance. They fought with desperate valour, the officers occasionally riding forward a few hundred yards from our line to direct the attack. "One Jaeger in charge of a machine gun kept his piece in action throughout our bombardment, and then, when our men charged down on him, awaited death, calmly standing upon the parapet of the trench and emptying his revolver at them." It was no demoralized or weakened enemy that we thrust back to the Aubers ridges.

One effect of our success was to produce an intense exasperation in the German mind. They are bad losers, and after exhausting their ingenuity in publishing tales of British treachery and unarmed German prisoners used as a screen for our advance, they fell back on bitter complaints of our artillery bombardment. "That is not war, it is murder," was the usual plea of our prisoners. It is another instance of that curious childishness at the back of the German nation, that the people who had accumulated gigantic artillery reserves, and had used heavy guns to prepare an action in a way unknown to history, should cry out when their own tactics were turned against themselves. We are a privileged nation, so ran their argument, to whom all things are permitted, but our enemies must abide by the old ways. For a little their spirits drooped, but presently revived as the rumour spread that von Hindenburg was coming to the West. That modern Thor would give the British a taste of the hammer which had dinted the Russian shield.

[1] It contained the 23rd Brigade—2nd Devons, 2nd West Yorks, 2nd Scottish Rifles, 2nd Middlesex; the 24th Brigade—1st Worcesters, 1st East Lancashires, 1st Notts and Derby, 2nd Northamptons; the 25th Brigade—2nd Lincolns, 2nd Royal Berkshires, 1st Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Rifle Brigade. The Northampton Yeomanry acted as divisional cavalry.

[2] The 27th Division included the 80th Brigade—2nd Shropshire Light Infantry, 3rd King's Royal Rifles, 4th King's Royal Rifles, 4th Rifle Brigade; the 81st Brigade—1st Royal Scots, 2nd Gloucesters, 2nd Cameron Highlanders, 1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; the 82nd Brigade—1st Royal Irish, 2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, 2nd Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 1st Leicesters. It included also the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and with the 28th Division, had the Surrey Yeomanry for divisional cavalry. The 28th Division included the 83rd Brigade—2nd King's Own Royal Lancasters, 2nd East Yorks, 1st Yorkshire Light Infantry, 1st York and Lancaster; the 84th Brigade—2nd Northumberland Fusiliers, 1st Suffolks, 2nd Cheshires, 1st Welsh; the 85th Brigade—2nd Buffs, 3rd Royal Fusiliers, 2nd East Surrey, 3rd Middlesex. The 27th Division had with it the following Territorial battalions—9th Royal Scots, 9th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the Cambridgeshires; the 28th Division had the 8th Middlesex, the 5th King's Own, and the Monmouths.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE WAR IN ASIA AND AFRICA.

A World-wide War—Transcaucasia—Mesopotamia—Fighting at Ahwaz—Turkish Attack on Shaiba—Turks defeated North of Kurna—Skirmishing on the Suez Canal—The War in the Cameroons—Occupation of Edea—Occupation of northern Railway—Frontier Fighting—The War in East Africa—Attack on Longido—British Defeat at Jassin—Fighting on the Uganda Border—Capture of Mafia—Blockade of German East Africa declared—The South African Campaign—Surrender of Kemp and Van Rensburg—Botha's Plan of Campaign—Movement of Northern Force from Swakopmund—Van der Venter advances from the Orange—Berrange crosses the Eastern Border—Mackenzie's Advance from Luderitz Bay—Capture of Keetmanshoop—Capture of Gibeon—Surrender of Windhoek—General Botha's Achievement—Difficulties of the Campaign.

In the war with Napoleon, while the main struggle raged across Europe, its effects were felt in the uttermost seas. British troops died in thousands of fever in West Indian islands, they landed in the surf of Table Bay, or fought in the flats of the River Plate, while the guns of the central conflict were roaring among Spanish hills or German uplands or Polish snows. Still more world-wide was the present campaign. The Asian and African wars were, it is true, mere side shows compared with the conflict in Europe. A failure or success in the Cameroons or Mesopotamia could have no real influence upon the ultimate result. But each area was vital in so far as it concerned our local and imperial prestige, and the Asian theatre especially had a direct bearing upon the future of India. These outland areas are worthy of consideration for another reason, since they enable us to realize how intimately the great war affected the destiny of the whole globe and of all that we interpret as European civilization. They show us how closely knit the modern world is, and how the greater political problems have annihilated space and surmounted those barriers which nature has set up to demarcate peoples. While some of the Allies fought in the frozen bogs of Masurenland or among the deep snows of the Caucasus, others were engaged in scorching deserts or fever-haunted swamps. Britons in the Flanders trenches found their chief enemy in rain and floods; Britons in South-West Africa valued water more highly than gold. There was no extreme of cold

and heat that on the same day was not endured by some part of the Allied forces. The campaign embraced all climates, landscapes, privations, pests, and terrors.

Let us look first at the Asian theatre. In Transcaucasia there is little to recount. The defeat at Sarikamish had broken utterly the cohesion of the Turkish army, and the Russian troops were engaged during the subsequent weeks in driving the remnants across the frontier. The chief sweeping movement was down the Choruk valley, whither, it will be remembered, the 1st Turkish Corps had retired after the disaster at Ardahan. One Russian column moved from Ardahan through the passes, while another, supported by vessels of the Black Sea Fleet, operated along the coast from Batum. By the end of March the whole frontier region was empty of the enemy. Farther south, from Sarikamish, there were a number of insignificant conflicts. Turkish stragglers united with the local professionals to form banditti, and this necessitated the kind of campaign to which our Indian frontier has accustomed us. Villages, the strongholds of the enemy, had to be cleared, and the brigands driven to the snowy hills. In all this there was no serious Turkish defensive, and presently the Turkish and Persian borders were as quiet as they are ever likely to be in a world-wide upheaval. The Russian commander made no attempt to advance to Erzerum, though from all accounts the defences of that fortress were strong only on paper. Russia's object was merely to hold the gate. The vital blow at Turkey must come from another quarter.

In the Persian Gulf area the British force was at the beginning of the year securely entrenched on both sides of the Tigris at Kurna and Mezera, a strong position commanding the highway to the sea. The situation, however, was not without its anxieties. In spite of Turkey's rebuffs in Transcaucasia and her diversions towards the Suez Canal, she had sufficient troops left in the Bagdad command to outnumber gravely the small British army on the Shatt-el-Arab. Further reinforcements were brought from India, under Lieutenant-General Sir John Nixon, who, on his arrival at Basra, took supreme command of the operations.

Early in January we discovered that the Turks were occupying a strong position on the banks of a canal some eight miles north of Mezera, and on 20th January we organized a reconnaissance to ascertain their strength and dispositions. Supported by our gunboats from the Tigris we shelled their camp, and drove them back with some fifty casualties to our own troops. The Turkish force was estimated at over 5,000 men, with six guns. The enemy next appeared near Ahwaz, on the Karun River, the scene of an engagement between Sir James Outram and the Persians during the short war of 1857.

There we had placed a small garrison to protect the pipe line of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. West of Ahwaz a Turkish force of three regiments and a number of Arab tribesmen were reported, and on 3rd March we made an attempt to reconnoitre this position. The enemy was discovered to be 12,000 strong, and our small expedition of 1,000 men were in imminent danger of being cut off. Our retirement was not effected without heavy fighting, in which we severely punished the enemy, but lost five officers and fifty-six rank and file killed, and about 130 wounded, mostly from the 4th and 7th Rajputs.

Mar. 3.

The sight of the red and white flags of the Arabs, whom we had hoped for as allies in breaking the Turkish rule, was disquieting, and it presently appeared that the enemy was clustering in strength round our whole area of occupation. On the day following the operations near Ahwaz, our cavalry, reconnoitring towards Nakaila, twenty-five miles north-west of Basra, had an encounter with 1,800 mounted Turks, and lost four of their officers. But the great attack did not mature till a month later. Three places, Kurna, Ahwaz, and Shaiba, a few miles west of Basra, were selected for the assault. On 11th and 12th April Kurna was bombarded at long range, but beyond the destruction by a floating mine of one of the Tigris bridges, no damage was done, and the attack was not pressed home. A number of Turks in boats suffered severely from the guns of H.M.S. *Odin*. The bombardment of Ahwaz was no more effective, and we saw nothing of the enemy but clouds of horsemen.

Mar. 11.

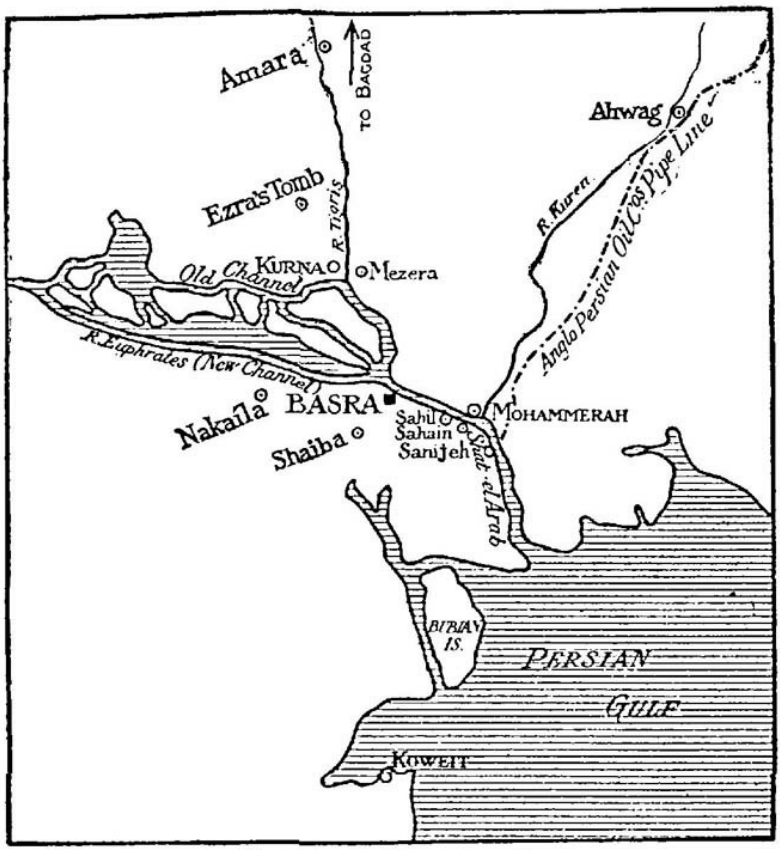
April 11-12.

Kurna and Ahwaz were only feints, and the real blow was directed against Shaiba and the possession of Basra. The action began on 12th April, and lasted for three days, and even in a war of this magnitude it deserves the name of a battle. The invading force was estimated at 18,000 men, of whom 11,000 were regulars of the Bagdad Corps, accompanied by at least twenty guns. The British position around Basra was protected on the east by the river, so the Turkish assault was directed from north, west, and south. Early in the morning, under cover of a heavy artillery preparation, the Turkish infantry advanced from three sides, and when their gun fire slackened, set to work to dig themselves in. The attack was resumed in the afternoon from the south, where we succeeded in beating it back. During the night there was a steady fire from rifles and machine guns, and in the morning we found the Turks in possession of some houses and rising ground to the north of us, from which it was imperative that we should oust them. Our advance was completely successful, and a simultaneous counter-attack by the Turks from the west was

April 12.

April 13.

easily repulsed, with the loss of several hundred prisoners.



The War in Mesopotamia.

That afternoon we observed a new concentration of over 5,000 Turkish troops to the south, where a strong position had been entrenched some four miles from the British lines. On the morning of 14th April we moved in force against these entrenchments, which contained the bulk of the enemy's army, at least 15,000 strong. We carried their advanced position, and in the afternoon swept them from their main trenches in spite of a heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. A final charge with the bayonet put the whole enemy force to flight. The British casualties amounted to about 700 officers and men, and the Turkish loss was not less than 6,000 killed, wounded, and prisoners. We captured several machine guns and large quantities of stores and equipment, including motor-cars and ammunition wagons. As usually happens, the routed Turks were set upon by their former Arab allies, who completed what the British had begun.

April 14.

The victory of Shaiba meant the end of a serious Turkish offensive for the present. Suliman Askeri, the Turkish general, fell back to Nakaila, but he could not stay there, and we occupied the place on the 17th. By the 20th the enemy was more than a hundred miles from Basra. On the river twelve of his boats were either captured or sunk. April is the season of floods in Mesopotamia, and our pursuit was much impeded by the swollen waters. The reconnoitring parties whom we dispatched found no sign of the enemy in all the countryside except abandoned positions and derelict stores. Sir John Nixon's brilliant action had cleared the delta of Turkish troops, rendered the pipe line secure, and, it was hoped, had convinced those shrewd trimmers, the Arab tribesmen, that for once they had erred in their forecast of the winning cause.

April 20.

During May there was a general cessation of hostilities, save that, about the middle of the month, we were compelled to give the Arabs a sharp lesson in the neighbourhood of Ahwaz. But on 31st May the enemy was threatening again north of Kurna, and it was resolved to disperse him. Starting at 1.30 in the morning, our troops, partly by boat and partly wading, surprised his position on the heights two miles from the town. Our artillery, especially our naval guns, silenced his batteries, and by midday we had cleared the heights, taking 250 prisoners and three field-pieces. Next day as we advanced we found him in full retreat. He stayed not upon his going, for he had left the tents standing in his camps at Barhan and Ratta. That evening we were north of Ezra's Tomb, thirty-three miles from Kurna, and our naval flotilla was in pursuit of the steamers and native boats by which the Turks had fled. One steamer, the *Bulbul*, was overtaken and sunk, and we captured two large lighters, carrying field guns, ammunition, and mines, and some 300 prisoners. The pursuit was continued by moonlight, and on 3rd June Amara, an important military station, seventy-five miles from Kurna, was captured, together with 30 officers and 700 men. The rest of the invading forces dispersed among the marshes of the Tigris.

May. 31.

June 1.

June 3.

The African theatre of war during the first four months of the new year had little of interest except in the extreme south-west, where General Botha was slowly and patiently forcing his way to the German capital. In Egypt, after the fiasco of the Canal attack in February, there were only affairs of outposts. On 22nd February the French cruiser *Desaix* landed marines at Akaba, and her guns cleared the Turkish troops from the town. On 31st March a British cruiser bombarded Mowilah, another place at the head of the Red Sea. Patrols and aircraft along the

Feb. 22.

Mar. 31.

Suez Canal reported that the nearest enemy posts were four days' march distant, and from other sources we learned that their main army was still quartered in Palestine. But on 22nd March there was another attempt to force the Canal. An enemy force, mainly infantry with guns, but including a few cavalry squadrons, was located near El Kubri, in the neighbourhood of Suez. Shots were exchanged, and the Turks retired to a point eight miles from the Canal. Next day the British, under Lieutenant-General Sir George Younghusband, fell upon their camp and drove them to Nakhl, seventy miles inside the desert. A few stray Turks still haunted the Canal banks, and on 8th April shots were exchanged between patrols close to El Kantara. A few days later the French warship *St. Louis*, assisted by several hydroplanes, bombarded a large Turkish camp near Gaza. Camps were bombarded during the month at El Arish and El Sirr, and the Bikanir Camel Corps on 28th April had a brisk skirmish with a detachment of the enemy. These, however, were minor incidents: it was clear that the Turkish army destined for the invasion of the Canal was thoroughly impotent and disheartened; and Egypt was used as a base for our Dardanelles operations without any anxiety as to its eastern frontiers.

Mar. 22.

April 8.

April 28.

In October we left the Germans in the Cameroons reduced to defensive warfare in a difficult hinterland. The Allies were not slow to push their advantage. Presently two columns of the Anglo-French force, under Brigadier-General Dobell, were moving along the two lines of railway which run from Duala to the interior. The bulk of the troops were French Colonial infantry, under Colonel Mayer. Edea, a point on the railway and the Sanaga River some fifty miles from Duala, was the first object of attack, and it was arranged that it should be assailed both by parties moving on the railway and by parties ascending the river in boats. The march was difficult, moving through dense forests and much harassed by snipers; but there was no resistance in the town itself, which was occupied on 26th October. The enemy retired to Yaunde, a station far up on the interior plateau.

Oct. 26.

Six weeks later the Germans made an effort to regain Edea, but were beaten back with a loss of twenty Europeans and fifty-four natives. There followed an Allied advance in three columns against Yaunde, in which we fought two little battles on 27th and 28th January, and seized the post of Bersona. Colonel Mayer crossed the river Kele, and a British column a little farther north took the bridge of Ngua. Meanwhile north of Duala, on the other railway line, good progress had been made. During December we seized Nkongsamba and Bare, the latter a station six miles north of the railhead. This gave us the whole of the northern line, and

Jan. 27-28.

at Baré we made prizes of two aeroplanes which had not yet been unpacked. Our casualties were trifling, and our strict blockade of the coast meant that no recruits or supplies were available for the enemy. It was a form of campaign in which time was wholly on our side.

On the frontiers of the Cameroons there was a continuous war of skirmishes. To avenge our defeats at Garua and Nsanakong, a British force from Nigeria sailed to Ikom on the Cross River, crossed the border, and marched on Ossidinge, which was surrendered after a few shots. The French on their part sent in columns from their Chad Territories in the north and from French Equatoria on the east and south, so that the luckless defenders were surrounded by a ring of foes. It was a slow campaign, in a country of swamps and forests and equatorial heat, and there was no need of hurry, for haste only spelled disaster. The Allies had reproduced in miniature the siege conditions which now prevailed in Europe.

In East Africa our campaign was less prosperous. We left off the narrative on 4th November, when Major-General Aitken's force suffered disaster at Tanga, and was compelled to re-embark. To coincide with that movement an attack on Longido had been arranged, the fort in British territory north of Kilimanjaro which had been occupied by the Germans. This, too, was unsuccessful. The East African Mounted Rifles and the Indian contingent detailed for the work were unable to capture a position held in superior strength and defended by many machine guns, and retired with considerable losses, including that gallant officer, Captain Sandbach of the 1st (Royal) Dragoons. Yet the attempt was not a total failure, for a few days later, on 17th November, the Germans quietly abandoned the place, and we promptly occupied it.

Nov. 17.

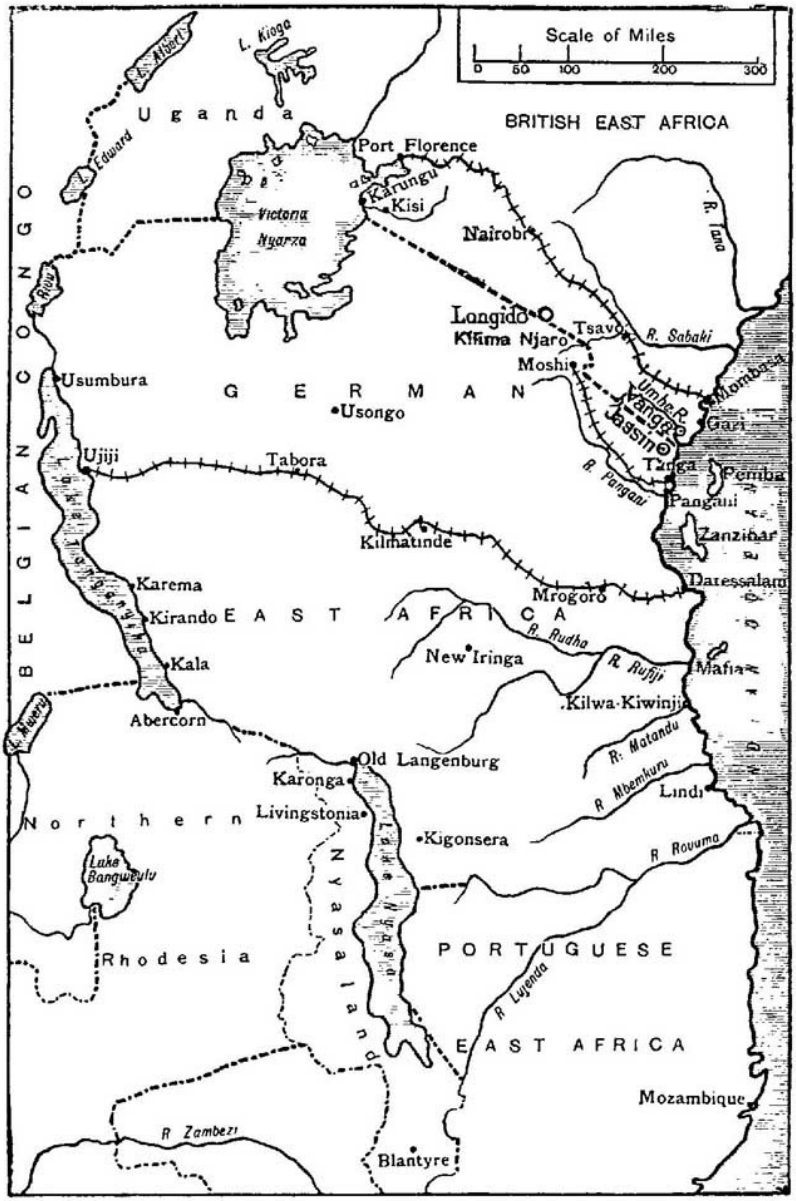
Then followed some isolated engagements. On 20th November a German force invaded Uganda, and, though repulsed at several points, forced the garrison to retire from Kyaka Fort, on the south bank of the river Kagera. Near Nguruman, there was an encounter between patrols, and all along the extended borders there were skirmishes of outposts. But it was not till the middle of January that we fought a battle and suffered our second serious disaster. After their victory at Tanga the Germans had invaded our territory by the coast route; but with the assistance of naval forces we drove them back, and by the end of December we had cleared our borders and occupied the post of Jassin, twenty miles inside German territory, where there was a small sisal factory. This was an advanced post, our real position being the valley of the Umba River to the north, and the town of Vanga at its mouth. Jassin was held by three companies of Indian

Nov. 20.

infantry, and these were able to beat off a sudden German attack delivered on 12th January. Six days later, however, on 18th January, a powerful German force, at least 2,000 strong, with artillery and machine guns, returned to the assault. Help was sent from the Umba valley, but it met with severe fighting on its way, and could not reach Jassin. On the morning of the 19th, the garrison, having expended all its ammunition, surrendered, and about 240 became prisoners of war. The two British officers in command were congratulated by the German general on their gallant defence, and had their swords returned to them. A party of forty men of the Kashmir Rifles managed to fight their way through the enemy, and reached the British lines with a loss of half their number. The German success seems to have been due to their numerous machine guns, and their skill in using them. One of our machine-gun men, a native soldier of the King's African Rifles, succeeded in bringing his gun away. When he arrived at the main camp he reported himself, and apologized humbly for having left the tripod behind him. The German loss in the action was severe, for they had fifty-seven whites killed and wounded, including seven officers killed, heavy casualties among their native troops, and three machine guns smashed by our mountain batteries.

Jan. 12.

Jan. 18.



The East African Theatre.

The disaster at Jassin compelled a withdrawal of our outlying posts in this region, and the Germans were justified in claiming that their East African territory was completely free from the enemy, while they held several posts inside the British borders. Our small successes were chiefly naval. Having taken the port of Shirati on the

Mar. 6.

Victoria Nyanza, we used it as a base for our armed steamers, and on 6th March the *Winifred* drove ashore and totally disabled the *Muanza*, the only German armed steamer on the lake. On 8th January an expedition from Mombasa occupied the island of Mafia, off the mouth of the river Rufiji. On 26th February we announced that from midnight on 28th February the coast of German East Africa would be blockaded, four days being allowed for the departure of neutral vessels. From that date the blockade of a coast line of over 300 miles was vigilantly kept up, and the German colony was placed in the same position as the Cameroons. Its armed forces might be strong, well equipped, and temporarily successful, but none the less they were the garrison of a beleaguered city.

Jan. 8.

Feb. 26.

When General Botha declared war against German South-West Africa it was generally believed that his campaign would not be concluded before the great struggle in Europe had come to a decision. The strength of the Germans, and their ample provision of artillery, the immense distances to be covered, and the difficulties of reaching a decisive result in a country so strongly fortified by nature, inclined most men to the belief that the war would soon resolve itself into a stalemate and a siege. Such a view underrated the energy and the skill of the South African generals. So soon as the rebellion within Union territories had been finally crushed, General Botha set himself to carry out an admirable strategical plan against the German defence.

But, first, the last embers of the rebellion had to be extinguished. Moving along the Orange River, a body under Maritz and Kemp gained two small successes, surprising two posts at Langklip and Onydas held by the 8th Mounted Rifles. The arrival of reinforcements obliged them to abandon their prisoners and hastily retire. On 12th January Raman's Drift was retaken by Colonel Bouwer, which gave the Union force the entire line of the Orange, and penned the hostile remnants into the angle formed by the river and the German frontier. On 24th January the rebels, dispirited and half starving, made their last sally. Led by Maritz and Kemp, and about I,200 strong, they attacked Colonel Van der Venter at Upington, but they were easily repulsed. Next day the end came. The leaders offered to surrender unconditionally. On 3rd February Kemp and his commando—43 officers and 486 men, including the prophet Van Rensburg—surrendered at Upington, and some of Maritz's band followed suit at Kakamas. Maritz himself was not among them. Knowing that for him there would be no mercy, he fled back to German territory.

Jan. 12.

Jan. 24.

Feb. 3.

The position in January, when the main campaign against South-West Africa began, was as follows: We held Walfisch Bay and its surroundings, and on 14th January we seized without trouble the adjoining German port of Swakopmund, the terminus of the line to Windhoek and of the line to Tsumab and Grootfontein, in the north of the colony. We had held since September Luderitz Bay (or Angra Pequeña)—the terminus of the southern line which ran to Windhoek by Keetmanshoop. Our capture of Schuit Drift and Raman's Drift gave us the fords of the Orange. We therefore held all the gates of the German colony, and our command of the sea made us free to use them. General Botha's plan of campaign was an enveloping movement against Windhoek, and the forces at his disposal were divided into two main armies. The Northern, under his own command, was to move from Swakopmund as a base along the railway to Windhoek. The Southern, under General Smuts, was divided into three separate columns. The first, under Sir Duncan Mackenzie, was directed to move east along the railway from Luderitz Bay. The second, under Colonel Van der Venter, was to move north along the line running from Warmbad to Keetmanshoop; while the third, under Colonel Berrange, was to start from Kimberley, and, crossing Bechuanaland, invade the colony from the east. All three columns were to concentrate at Keetmanshoop, whence, under Smuts, they would move northwards to join Botha. The plan was skilfully devised, for, if successful, it meant the shepherding of the German forces away from modern communications into the desert country of the eastern frontier, where the waterless sands of the Kalahari barred all escape.

Let us follow first the doings of the Northern army.[1] During January the various bases were well provisioned, and from Swakopmund a railway was laid along the coast to Walfisch Bay, and sea walls built to facilitate landing. On 8th February, on his way from Cape Town, General Botha called at Luderitz Bay and reviewed Sir Duncan Mackenzie's troops at their camp forty-five miles from the coast. He reached Swakopmund on the 9th, and on the 22nd his army began to move. At first its progress was slow. Two German posts were seized without loss, and then nearly a month was spent in reconnoitring the enemy's strength and preparing an advanced base. On 19th March the business of clearing the railway was taken in hand. That evening two mounted brigades left our post of Husab. The left column of the second brigade, under Colonel Celliers, had orders to cut the railway line between Jakalswater and Sphinx, and then, having hampered the movements of any reinforcements coming from Windhoek, to attack Jakalswater itself. The right column, under Colonel Alberts, was to seize Pforte, another station on the line. The first brigade, commanded by Colonel Brits, and accompanied by General

Feb. 22.

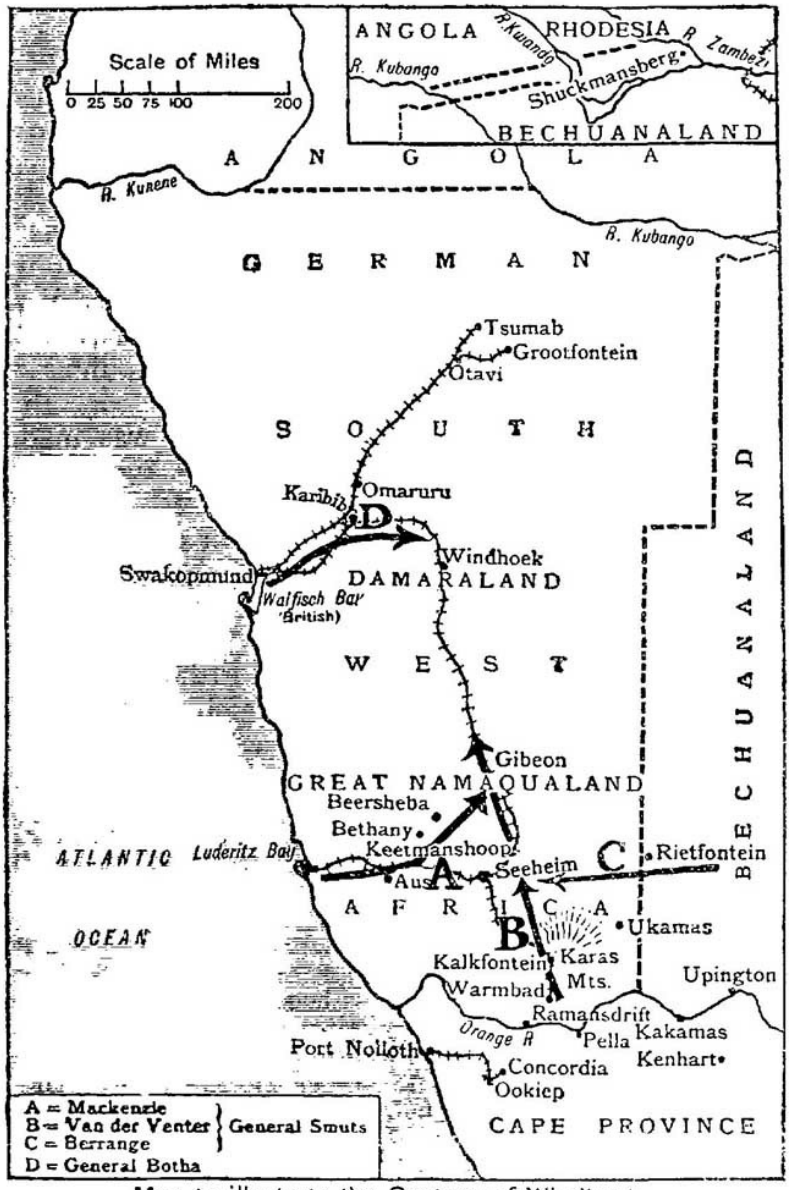
Mar. 19-20.

Botha himself, was to attack Riet, an important point south of the railway, while the Bloemhof commando, operating on its flank, was directed to seize the hill of Schwarze Kopje. The attack was timed for dawn on the 20th.

Celliers, having cut the line and captured a train laden with supplies, moved against the German position at Jakalswater. There, however, he found the enemy strongly entrenched, and his attack failed in its main object, though it prevented assistance being sent to Pforte. At the latter place Alberts was wholly successful, and that afternoon received the surrender of the garrison—210 men and four guns. The main objective of the movement, however, was Riet, where the German position was very strong. Its right rested on the Swakop stream, its left on the foothills of the Langer Heinrichberg, while its guns, skilfully placed, commanded the main road and the river. In our attack the gunners of the Transvaal Horse Artillery did admirable work, and so stoutly was it pressed that by the evening the enemy were driven out in disorder. A party of snipers, under Captain Lemmer, prevented the Germans from destroying the water-holes. The completeness of our success was marred only by the failure of the Bloemhof commando to reach its allotted place on the Schwarze Kopje, which would have enabled us to cut off the enemy's retreat.

May 5.

During April the advance proceeded steadily. Colonel Skinner with the Kimberley regiment protected the railway behind us, and our control of the Tsumab line as far as Trekkopje prevented any serious operations against our left flank and rear. In the first days of May Botha with the main army was at Kubas, and on the 5th, after a march of thirty-five miles, the junction of Karibib was reached and occupied. Another twenty miles took the army to Johann-Albrechtshöhe, and a further ten to Wilhelmstal. South of the railway runs the main road between Windhoek and the coast, and along this, too, our troops advanced. By this time all serious resistance was over for the Northern army. We must turn to the doings of General Smuts's army in the south.



Map to illustrate the Capture of Windhoek.

The heaviest task fell to Van der Venter,[2] moving north from the Orange. He came into touch with the enemy at Nakob, and early in March he occupied Ukamas and other posts in that region. Ten miles north of Ukamas he seized the German camp at Nabas, with large quantities of stores, and thirty miles on occupied Platbeen. On 3rd April his left wing occupied the railway terminus of Warmbad, and in the following week he

April 3.

penetrated nearly a hundred miles north of it. On 11th April General Smuts met Van der Venter at Kalkfontein, and arranged to drive the enemy out of the Karas Mountains, which gave them an awkward position on the flanks of our advance. The movement was made in three columns and was completely successful, the mountains were cleared, and on 17th April Van der Venter entered Seeheim, the junction of the lines from Warmbad and from Luderitz Bay. The Germans abandoned the place in such haste that they had no time to destroy the bridge across the Great Fish River.

April 11.

April 17.

Colonel Berrange's column, which entered the colony from the east, had by 19th March reached the borders, and was in the neighbourhood of Rietfontein.[3] On 1st April he captured an entrenched position at Hasuur, fifteen miles from the latter town. From there he fought his way westward, with constant skirmishes, to his appointed meeting-place with Van der Venter. The two forces met a little to the east of Keetmanshoop, in the third week of April.[4] The combined column then advanced on Keetmanshoop, which surrendered without fighting on 20th April. The place, which is 170 miles from Warmbad and 195 miles from Luderitz Bay, was the business capital of German Namaqualand, and its possession was highly advantageous. General Smuts made it his headquarters, and waited there for Mackenzie's force, which was moving inwards from Luderitz Bay.

Mar. 19.

April 1.

April 20.

Mackenzie had to begin by clearing the immediate neighbourhood of Luderitz Bay. Presently he seized Garub, seventy miles up the line, and advanced towards the hills which mark the end of the coastal desert. He occupied Aus, twenty miles farther on, where the Germans held a strongly fortified pass, from which they retired without a blow. There we had a hint of the new methods of warfare which about that time were coming into fashion in Flanders. Some of the wells were found to have been poisoned by arsenical sheep-dip, but happily the fact was discovered before our men could suffer by it. The thing had happened before in January near Swakopmund, and General Botha had sharply protested against this violation, not only of an article of the Hague Convention, to which Germany was a signatory, but of the fundamental decencies of war. The German commander replied that warning notices would be affixed to the poisoned wells, but this was clearly an evasion of the issue, and General Botha announced that he reserved the right to make reprisals for this barbarity.

At Aus Mackenzie's column[5] was clear of the worst desert

April 24.

region. He left the railway, took Bethany, and struck north-east in the direction of Gibeon, a station on the line between Keetmanshoop and Windhoek. Entering Beersheba without opposition, he reached the railway on 24th April at Aritetis, a small station seventy miles north of Keetmanshoop and forty south of Gibeon. Mackenzie was now co-operating directly with the main movement of General Smuts from Keetmanshoop, and the retreating Germans were between the two forces. Van der Venter, pushing from the south, came into touch with the enemy at Kabus, and after an indecisive engagement, in which both sides lost prisoners, the Germans succeeded in reaching Gibeon, whence, as Mackenzie learned, they proposed to reach Windhoek by train. He sent out a small party to cut the line north of Gibeon, while the 9th Mounted Brigade went forward to engage the enemy. At first the Germans were successful, but on 28th April our main force came up and inflicted on them a serious defeat. We took their two field guns, most of their transport, and some 200 prisoners, and released our own men who had fallen into their hands. We pursued them for twenty miles, and only the rocky and difficult country prevented their complete annihilation. We lost three officers and twenty men killed, among the former being Sir Thomas Watt's brother, Major J. H. Watt of the Natal Light Horse.

April 28.

The circle of steel was now closing in upon Windhoek. By the 1st of May all the German colony south of Gibeon was in British hands, and Botha was threatening the capital from the west. On 10th May he was informed that Windhoek was prepared to surrender. With a small escort he reached the place, where he was met by the burgomaster, and terms of capitulation were arranged, and on the 12th at noon his army entered the town. In it were 3,000 Europeans and 12,000 natives. The German troops had withdrawn to Grootfontein, in the north-east of the colony, which, it was declared, was now the capital. The wireless station was found intact, and with its capture Germany had lost all her stations outside Europe. After the entry of the troops under General Myburgh, a proclamation by General Botha was read in Dutch, English, and German, which placed the conquered territories under martial law, and drew attention to the futility of further resistance.

May 1.

May 12.

The capture of Windhoek meant virtually the possession of German South-West Africa, and the difficult operation had been carried through with the highest degree of skill and a minimum of loss. The enemy had been outnumbered, out-generalled, and, when necessary, out-fought, and by his leadership General Botha had performed a service, to use his former words, "of the utmost importance to the Empire and to South Africa." The British Prime

Minister, in his speech at the Guildhall on 19th May, well described the difficulties of the campaign:—

> "Their undertaking has been no slight one. A force of about 30,000 men, rather over half of whom are mounted men, with guns, horses, medical stores, mules, and transports, have been conveyed oversea 500 and 700 miles, in addition to the large land force which has been operating on the German-Union frontier. All supplies, every pound of provisions for the men, much of the water for their consumption, every ton of forage for horses and mules, have had to be brought from Cape Town. All the railway material for rapid construction has also had to be brought from Cape Town, and all these men, horses, guns, supplies, and materials had to be landed at two ports, Luderitz and Walfisch, at which appliances for disembarkation for such operations had not been constructed. Then there was the sandy desert veld, eighty to a hundred miles wide, which had to be covered."

The real foe had not been the Germans, but the climate and the desert. Not even the dank forests of the Cameroons made a more uncomfortable fighting ground than those scorching wastes of Namaqualand, which were assuredly made for chameleons and salamanders, and not for man. A letter from a volunteer in General Botha's army gives a vivid picture of the hardships:—

> "We have a far more difficult country to fight in, and a better equipped foe to fight against, than our soldiers had in the Boer War. Every day we have awful dust-storms lasting for hours and the shade temperature always over 100°. One day it was 113°. Still I'm ten times fitter than I ever was in my life, and have stuck all the marches in one heavy kit. Johannesburg has supplied 12,000 men for the front; that includes the Reef. Mounted men have a thin time. It is frightfully difficult getting enough water for ourselves—let alone for animals.
>
> "We've struck a place far worse than Luderitzbucht for sand and wind; it blows like the devil from midday to dark, and all the tents are going to ribbons. Ours, which had been holding together in a miraculous manner for some days, went with a bang yesterday afternoon. The sand blows along just like sleet, and the wind has not even the advantage of being cool. We clean our shirts by spreading them in the sun three or four days. We have to raise little cairns of stones to mark where the shirts are, because they can be completely

buried in a day. They have started dipping us just like sheep—but we don't need prodding under with forked sticks as we go through the tank! I'm beginning to long for a holiday to get to some place where there's vegetable life and water.

"A good many men have to be operated on to remove sand from their salivary glands, under their tongues. When they eat, the saliva, trying to force its way through, causes a good deal of pain and swelling. The sergeant of my section has just had three weeks in hospital from that cause. It's impossible even in a closed tent not to eat a good bit of sand when the wind is blowing. Two hundred Cape boys are employed day and night shovelling sand off 40 miles of railway. The train has a clear passage in the mornings, but returning in the evening finds as much as 4 feet of sand over the rails. Of course, we are allowed to wear goggles—one would not wear them going into action—but that is the only time that we should not. . . . I'm still keeping jolly fit, but I'll appreciate the Transvaal's vilest climate after this. Fighting men is a joke to fighting Nature."

One loss we have to record which cast a shadow over our success. Sir George Farrar, who had acted as Quartermaster-General to Sir Duncan Mackenzie's force, was killed in a railway accident near Gibeon on 18th May. He had played a great part in the modern history of South Africa. One of the old Uitlander chiefs, he had been condemned to death by President Kruger; he had fought gallantly in the South African War, and he had long been one of the leaders of the gold-mining industry. Toughly and compactly built, he was a born fighting man. In a world of smooth phrases he spoke his mind bluntly and summarily, and his honesty of purpose and sincere, if undemonstrative, public spirit, were as unquestioned as his courage. His clear head and powers of organization had been of inestimable use to General Botha in the campaign. The Empire was the poorer for the loss of a gallant and upstanding Englishman.

May 18.

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[1] Botha's force consisted of the various Burgher commandos and volunteers. It had also the following units: Transvaal Scottish, 1st Rhodesian Regiment, Cape Town Highlanders, Kimberley Regiment, Rand Regiment, Rand Light Infantry, South African Irish, Northern Mounted Rifles, together with part of the Transvaal Horse Artillery and the South African Railway Engineers, who were employed in construction

work.

[2] He had with him the 1st South African Mounted Rifles (the old Cape Mounted Rifles), the 2nd S.A.M.R. (the old Natal Police), the 3rd S.A.M.R. (partly Natal Police and partly South African Constabulary), the 5th S.A.M.R. (part), the Witwatersrand Rifles, and the Transvaal Horse Artillery (part). The S.A.M.R. form the standing army of the Union.

[3] His transport problem was the most difficult of all. From Kimberley to Kuruman (140 miles) the transport was by donkeys, and after that by oxen. The whole line of communication was about 600 miles, and we may guess at the difficulties of the 400 odd miles served by oxen only, including one stretch of 111 miles without a drop of water. Ox transport could not, of course, keep up with the columns, so the army was fed by a fleet of motor cars operating from the end of the line. At times the gap which the cars filled was over 40 miles. The whole affair was a very remarkable transport feat. After Berrange joined Van der Venter and Mackenzie, the eastern route was closed, and the whole Southern army was then supplied from Luderitz Bay.

[4] Berrange had with him the 4th S.A.M.R. (the old S.A.C.), 5th S.A.M.R. (part), 1st Durban Light Infantry, 2nd Durban Light Infantry, 1st Kaffrarian Rifles, 2nd Kaffrarian Rifles, Queenstown Rifles, 1st City Rifles (Grahams-town), Bechuanaland Rifles, Imperial Light Horse, Brand's Horse, Enslin's Horse, Hartigan's Horse, Diamond Field Horse, together with part of the S.A. Railway Engineers, and the S.A. Motor Corps.

[5] Mackenzie had the 1st Natal Carbineers, 2nd Natal Carbineers, the Natal Mounted Rifles Brigade (Natal Mounted Rifles, Border Mounted Rifles, Umvoti Mounted Rifles, Zululand Mounted Rifles, Northern Districts Mounted Rifles), Transvaal Scottish (part), Pretoria Regiment, Natal Light Horse.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE PROBLEM OF THE DARDANELLES.

The Meaning of "Subsidiary" and "Divergent" Operations—Examples from the Napoleonic Wars—Conditions of a Successful Subsidiary Operation—The Dardanelles—Legendary and Historical Associations—The Turkish Conquest of Constantinople—The Defence of the Dardanelles—Admiral Duckworth passes the Straits —-The Crimean War—Admiral Hornby passes the Straits—His Views on the Defences—Recent History of Dardanelles—Strategic Consequences of their Passage—Relief to Russia—-Effect on Hesitating Neutrals—Mr. Churchill's Speech—The Dardanelles Expedition justifiable Strategically.

Since August Britain had fought in several theatres of war, but all but one were of minor importance, and the operations were for the most part locally instituted and controlled. We come now to an offensive campaign of the first order, undertaken of our own initiative, and superficially unrelated to our main battles in Western Europe or to any of our African and Asian conflicts. We approach a subject which gave cause to violent controversy in military, naval, and political circles. It is not our business to criticise, still less to pronounce a verdict. Let us attempt to set out impartially the facts of the case, and provide the reader, if he so desires, with materials for an *interim* judgment.

It is necessary, in the first place, to get our minds clear on the meaning of the two terms "subsidiary operations" and "divergent operations." The first is properly a term of praise; the second of blame. Every great campaign must produce one or more subsidiary operations. A blow may be necessary at the enemy's line of supplies, or a halting neutral must have his mind made up for him, or some piece of enemy property, strategically valuable, deserves to be gathered in. Such operations are, strictly speaking, part of the main campaign, and success in them directly subserves the main objective of the war. A "divergent operation," on the contrary, has no relation to the main effort, except that it is directed against the same enemy. Success in it is quite consistent with utter failure in the chief campaign, and does not necessarily bring the issue one step nearer. It usually involves some wasting of the force available for the main theatre, and it means a certain dissipation of the energy and brain-power of the high commands.

The history of Britain is strewn with the wrecks of divergent operations, and a few instances may make their meaning clear. In the years 1793-4, when it was our business to scotch the Revolutionary Government of France by striking at its head, we set out on adventures in every other part of the globe. We took six West Indian islands —strategically as important as the North Pole; we landed in Haiti; we sent a force under the Duke of York to the Netherlands; we held Toulon as long as we could; we seized Corsica; we sent an expedition to La Vendée. The consequence was that we succeeded nowhere, and the Revolutionary Government at the end of that time was stronger than ever. Next year, 1795, while things were going badly for us in every quarter of the earth, we chose to send an expedition to Cape Town, to attack Demerara, and to make a disastrous landing on an island in Quiberon Bay. And so we went on indulging our passion for outlandish geography, while France grew in strength, and the star of Napoleon rose above the horizon. Take the year 1807. We sent a force under Sir Home Popham to the Cape, which proceeded to South America, took Buenos Aires, and presently lost it. We projected an expedition to Valparaiso and another against Mexico. These ventures, as a matter of fact, were utter failures; but had they been successful they would have in no way helped the main purpose of the war. For in Europe Napoleon was moving from strength to strength. Eighteen hundred and seven was the year of Jena, of Friedland, and of the Treaty of Tilsit.

1793-4.

1795.

1807.

Let us attempt to set down the principles which govern legitimate subsidiary operations, and separate them from the illegitimate divergent type. There is first the question of locality. Obviously it is not necessary that the minor campaign should be fought in the same area as the major. Wellington wore down the strength of the French in the Peninsula, though the main theatre of war, the place where the big stake lay, was Central Europe. In the American Civil War the eyes of the world were fixed on the lines of the Potomac, but the real centre of gravity was Vicksburg and the operations on the Mississippi. Nor, again, is it necessary that even the major campaign should be fought in or adjoining the enemy's home country. In the Seven Years' War France was conquered at Plassey and at Quebec, because it was for an overseas Empire, for the domination of India and America, that the combatants fought. The locality of a subsidiary operation matters nothing, provided—and this is the first principle—the operation directly subserves the main object of the war. In other words, the operation, if successful, must be profitable.

In the second place, there must be a reasonable chance of success. A subsidiary operation, thoroughly justified by general strategy, may be a

blunder if it is undertaken with forces too weak to surmount the difficulties. A case in point is the French incursion into Alsace on 7th August with a weak division. It is arguable that a strong movement at that time from Belfort might have had good results, but there was no justification for an ineffective raid. The same is true, of course, of the famous Walcheren expedition, and, to a certain extent, of the British expedition to Antwerp in October 1914.[1] If the force is not strong enough to effect the object, then, however desirable the object, the force would have been better left at home.

Thirdly, any force used for the subsidiary operation must not seriously weaken the operations in the main theatre, unless the former operation is so vital that in itself it becomes the centre of gravity of the campaign. Waterloo was a battle which is rightly regarded as one of the decisive fights of the world, but the Allies at Waterloo won by a very narrow margin. At the time, as is well known, Wellington's seasoned veterans of the Peninsula were for the most part involved in the woods and swamps of the Canadian frontier. That was inevitable; but had they been sent there as part of a strategic purpose with the European situation what it was on Napoleon's return from Elba, it would have exactly illustrated the danger we are speaking of. In the present war it was abundantly clear from the start that Germany must be conquered in Europe, and inside her own territories. The main campaign, therefore, must always be that on the lines from the North Sea to the Alps, and from the Baltic to the Bukovina. Any weakening of these lines so as to compromise their strength for the sake of a subsidiary operation was clearly inadvisable by all the principles of war.

Whether the Dardanelles Expedition violated the second and the third of these canons the reader can judge for himself from the subsequent chapters. But the application of the first—the value of the objective sought, and its relation to the central purpose of the Allies—can be made clear by a few general considerations. What were the ends to be attained by the forcing of the Dardanelles?

The Sea of Marmora and the winding straits that link it with the Ægean and the Euxine form a water frontier of some two hundred miles between Asia and Europe. This meeting-place of the East and the West has been the source of some of the most momentous events in human history. The story begins in the twilight of legend. As the traveller approaches the Dardanelles from the south he sees on his right, in front of the Bithynian

The Dardanelles Campaign—General sketch map of the scene of the operations.

Olympus, the hill called Kag Dagh, which is that Mount Ida whence the gods watched the siege of Troy. In the plain between it and the sea flow Simois and Scamander, once choked with famous dead. There by the hill of Hissarlik stood “windy Ilium.” The current of the Dardanelles made the Straits difficult for laden merchantmen, and it was the fashion to unload the ships at their mouth, tow them empty through the Straits, and carry the goods on pack horses across the plain of Troy. But Priam, King of Troy, exacted an unconscionable tribute from the harassed Greek traders, and the Trojan war was fought to abolish the impost. So, if we are to accept the speculations of modern scholars, it was not a woman’s face that launched the thousand ships, but an early craving for tariff reform.

Across the Dardanelles Leander swam to meet his mistress Hero, the priestess of Aphrodite. There, at the Narrows, Xerxes, seeking to conquer Europe, transported his armies by a bridge of boats on their way to Thermopylæ and Salamis; and a century and a half later Alexander the Great

led his troops by the same passage to the conquest of Asia. On its shores St. Paul heard the cry from Macedonia, “Come over and help us.” At first Constantine would have built his capital there, but he preferred the Bosphorus, where stood the old Greek colony of Byzantium, for centuries the emporium of the Euxine commerce. The new city which rose around the Golden Horn became the ruling centre of the Roman Empire. The transference of authority was a stroke of genius, for while the West went down in ruins before the incursions of the barbarian, Byzantium preserved for a thousand years the forms of Roman Imperialism and the culture of the ancient world.

We are concerned only with the Dardanelles, of which it may be permitted to quote Gibbon’s famous description:—[2]

> “The geographers who, with the most skilful accuracy, have surveyed the form and extent of the Hellespont, assign about 60 miles for the winding course, and about three miles for the ordinary breadth of these celebrated straits. But the narrowest part of the channel is found to the northward of the old Turkish castles between the cities of Sestus and Abydos. It was here that the adventurous Leander braved the passage of the flood for the possession of his mistress. It was here likewise, in a place where the distance between the opposite banks cannot exceed 500 paces, that Xerxes imposed a stupendous bridge of boats, for the purpose of transporting into Europe a hundred and seventy myriads of barbarians. A sea contracted within such narrow limits may seem but ill to deserve the epithet of *broad* which Homer, as well as Orpheus, has frequently bestowed on the Hellespont. But our ideas of greatness are of a relative nature; the traveller, and especially the poet, who sailed along the Hellespont, who pursued the windings of the stream, and contemplated the rural scenery, which appeared on every side to terminate the prospect, insensibly lost the remembrance of the sea; and his fancy painted those celebrated straits with all the attributes of a mighty river flowing with a swift current in the midst of a woody and inland country, and, at length, through a wide mouth, discharging itself into the Ægean or Archipelago. Ancient Troy, seated on an eminence at the foot of Mount Ida, overlooked the mouth of the Hellespont, which scarcely received an accession of waters from the tribute of those immortal rivulets Simois and Scamander. The Grecian Camp had stretched twelve miles along the shore from the Sigæan to the Rhœtian promontory; and the flanks of the army were guarded by the bravest chiefs who fought under the

banner of Agamemnon. The first of those promontories was occupied by Achilles with his invincible Myrmidons, and the dauntless Ajax pitched his tents on the other. After Ajax had fallen a sacrifice to his disappointed pride and to the ingratitude of the Greeks, his sepulchre was erected on the ground where he had defended the navy against the rage of Jove and of Hector; and the citizens of the rising town of Rhœteum celebrated his memory with divine honours. Before Constantine gave a just preference to the situation of Byzantium, he had conceived the design of erecting the seat of empire on this celebrated spot from whence the Romans derived their fabulous origin. The extensive plain which lies below ancient Troy, towards the Rhœtian promontory, and the tomb of Ajax, was first chosen for his new capital, and, though the undertaking was soon relinquished, the stately remains of unfinished walls and towers attracted the notice of all who sailed through the straits of the Hellespont."

The Dardanelles was designed by nature as a protection to the capital on the Bosphorus against any naval incursion from the south. The Greek emperors of Byzantium, though they maintained formidable armies, seem to have neglected all questions of naval defence. In particular they made no serious attempts to fortify the approach from the Ægean. In the thirteenth century the Crusaders, forgetting the object of their expedition, and lured by the plunder of a rich capital, found little difficulty in bringing the Venetian fleet to the Dardanelles, and placing a Flemish count on the throne of Byzantium. Had they cared to maintain their conquest, they might have erected a formidable barrier against the Turks. But this Latin Empire was short lived, and the Greek monarchs who followed the Counts of Flanders had neither the energy nor the means to meet the danger that soon threatened them from Asia.

In the space of a hundred years the Ottoman Turks, nomads from Central Asia, had made themselves masters of the Near East. They held the Asiatic shore of the Sea of Marmora, and Constantinople, weak and wealthy, was the inevitable object of their ambition. In 1358 they crossed the Narrows of the Dardanelles, occupied Gallipoli, and made the rocky peninsula a base for their career of European conquest. Presently they had overrun the Balkan lands, and their capital was Adrianople. The territory of the Eastern Empire was now confined to a few hundred square miles around the walls of the great city. The end came on May 29, 1453, when Mahommed II., the stern, black-bearded conqueror whose portrait hangs to-day in the Sultan's Treasure House, breached

1358.

1453.

the walls of Constantinople and ended the reign of the Palæologi.

The Turks were a martial people, with an eye for military needs. From the outset the Sultans of Constantinople realized that the defence of their capital and the existence of their empire depended upon their security against naval attack. Until the rise of the Russian power in comparatively modern times there was no danger from the Black Sea. But it was all important to bar the western entrance of the Sea of Marmora, and the Turks had no sooner occupied Gallipoli than they began to fortify the Dardanelles. The "Castles of Europe and Asia" were erected at the entrance, which to-day have been replaced by the forts of Sedd-el-Bahr and Kum Kale. Higher up at the Narrows Sestos and Abydos were fortified—the "inner castles" of old descriptions. Besides these shore defences a fleet of galleys and sailing craft was always kept at Gallipoli on a war footing.

In the year 400 the conspirator Gainas had led his Goths in rafts across the channel, and midway had been scattered by the Roman galleys. From that day till 1654 no attempt was made, save by the Turks, against the passage. In the latter year the Norwegian Adelen, acting as an Admiral of Venice, fought and defeated a Turkish fleet at the mouth of the Dardanelles, and seized Tenedos. But the shore forts barred all further progress. The Turks seemed to have found the expedient which would make their capital secure. Nevertheless in 1807 the straits were passed. A British admiral, Sir J. T. Duckworth, was sent by Collingwood from Cadiz with a powerful squadron to detach the Sultan from the French alliance. He had orders to demand the surrender of the Turkish fleet, and in case of refusal to bombard Constantinople.

400.

1654.

1807.

Duckworth's feat was remarkable, not because he encountered any effective resistance, but because of the risks he ran and the light which his experience casts upon all similar enterprises. It was no easy matter to convey a squadron of line-of-battle ships and frigates under sail through the narrow winding waters and against the heavy currents of the Dardanelles. The "castles" at the entrance opened fire, as did the Narrows forts, but with little effect. A show of resistance by a Turkish squadron at Gallipoli ended in its prompt destruction by a detachment under Sir Sidney Smith. Duckworth anchored before Constantinople, and it seemed as if his mission was successful.

But the French agent there, General Sebastiani, induced the Sultan to prolong negotiations till heavy batteries had been erected on the sea front. Duckworth might have silenced these, but by this time he had begun to see the

difficulties of his position. Warships that have run past the forts of the Dardanelles without subduing them and without leaving garrisons to secure the passage are in grave jeopardy. When their supplies of food, water, and armaments are exhausted they can receive no more except by the grace of their enemies. It was this consideration that compelled Duckworth to retire before his mission was accomplished. He ran through the Dardanelles into the Ægean with the tide and the wind in his favour. The Turkish batteries opened fire—chiefly clumsy mediæval cannon throwing stone balls, and mounted on slides formed of parallel balks of timber. They could not be trained to right or left, but could fire only when a ship came opposite their muzzles. Yet even this primitive artillery was formidable, several of our ships were hit and badly damaged, and there was some loss of life. Duckworth's experience was such as to increase the reputation of the Dardanelles defences.

For a decade after 1820 all Europe was arrayed against Turkey, and between her and Russia there was constant bickering. Presently the position changed, the Western Powers grew afraid of Russia's Mediterranean designs, and were more inclined to support Turkey against her. It is unnecessary to enter into the details of the troubled diplomacy of these years, but we may note that in 1841, by a treaty[3] signed by Russia, Britain, Prussia, Austria, and France, Turkey's right to keep the Dardanelles closed was made part of the public law of Europe. No ship of war could pass the straits without the express permission of the Sultan, and all merchantmen were to be examined at the entrance and show their papers. Each foreign embassy at Constantinople was allowed to keep at its disposal a small armed vessel.

1841.

When the Crimean War broke out the alliance of the Sultan was the necessary prelude to the passing of the Straits by the British and French fleets. The first step taken was the fortification of the Isthmus of Bulair, on the advice of Sir John Burgoyne, and its occupation by the Allied troops. The Isthmus, a neck of land less than three miles wide between the Gulf of Saros and the Sea of Marmora, connects the Gallipoli peninsula with the mainland of Thrace. French and English engineers surveyed the ground and constructed a line of entrenchments from sea to sea, with redoubts in the centre and at each end, known as Fort Victoria, Fort Sultan, and Fort Napoleon. At that time there was much ill-informed criticism of these steps, and some impatience that lines should be fortified so far from the theatre of war. But the policy was wholly right. All operations on the Black Sea shores or on the Danube must depend upon a secure line of communications through the Dardanelles, and the Dardanelles could not be secure unless the Gallipoli peninsula were held.

We have seen that it was a British squadron under Duckworth that first forced the Dardanelles after they had been closed for centuries to the fleets of Europe. Since then the exploit had been only once repeated, and again by a British admiral. When in 1877, during the Russo-Turkish War, the Russian advance from the Danube seemed to imperil Constantinople, our Mediterranean Fleet was sent to Besika Bay, and the Admiralty discussed with its commander, Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, how it should be used to prevent a hostile occupation of the Turkish capital. In those days it was a first principle of our foreign policy that Russia should not have Constantinople. The British Cabinet hesitated, at times inclining to a direct support of the Turks, at others contemplating the possibility of having to meet the united forces of a victorious Russia and a subservient Turkey. It was anticipated that if our fleet attempted the Dardanelles, Turkey might oppose it, or the Russians be in possession of the northern shore. Hornby reported that, although the defence of the Straits had been greatly improved, he did not think the batteries would prevent him reaching the Sea of Marmora. But in a dispatch dated 10th August 1877 he pointed out that even after the Dardanelles were passed the situation of our fleet would be critical.

1877-8.

> "If the northern shore of the Dardanelles were occupied by the enemy, I think it very doubtful if we could play any material part, and if the Bosphorus was also under their command, it would be almost impossible. In the latter case we could not get even the Heraclea coal. In the former, our English supply of coal, our ammunition, and perhaps our food would, in my opinion, be stopped. This opinion depends on the topography of the north shore. If you will send for the chart of the Dardanelles, you will see that from three and a half miles below Kilid Bahar to Ak Bashi Imian, six and a half miles above it, an almost continuous cliff overhangs the shore line, while the Straits close to half a mile in one part,[4] and are never more than two miles wide. An enemy in possession of the peninsula would be sure to put guns on commanding points of those cliffs, all the more if the present batteries, which are *à fleur d'eau*, were destroyed. Such guns could not fail to stop transports and colliers, and would be most difficult for men-of-war to silence. We should have to fire at them with considerable elevation. Shots which were a trifle low would lodge harmlessly in the sandstone cliffs; those a trifle high, would fly into the country without the slightest effect on the gunners, except amusement. It is for these reasons that the possession of the Bulair lines by a strong and friendly force seems to

everyone here to be imperative, if now or hereafter you should want to act at Constantinople."

Here we have the importance of the Gallipoli peninsula pointed out by a practical seaman. He felt so strongly on the subject that he urged the Government to send a British force to occupy the Bulair lines, which the Turks were then putting into a state of defence. This, however, would have committed the Government to a definite policy, and nothing was done. In January 1878, when the Russians arrived before Constantinople, Hornby was directed to enter the Straits, and had actually brought up his fleet to the entrance when he was stopped by a telegram from the Admiralty. On 12th February he was ordered to pass the Straits without waiting for the Sultan's permit, and "if fired upon and his ships struck, to return the fire, but not to wait to silence the forts." As it happened, he passed through without fighting,[5] and anchored in the Sea of Marmora. Here he spent some anxious days. He did not trust the Turkish commandant at Bulair, and expected at any moment to hear that the Russians had seized the lines there and cut off his squadron from supplies by getting command of the Dardanelles defences. A rupture with Russia, however, was avoided, and Hornby's naval demonstration undoubtedly strengthened the hands of the British Government in the negotiations which ended with the Treaty of Berlin.

During the Russian advance on Constantinople, Blum Pasha, a German officer in the Turkish service, had begun to strengthen the lines of Chatalja covering the land approach to the capital, but the works were not completed or armed when the Russians, having forced the passage of the Balkans, advanced by Adrianople to the shores of the Sea of Marmora. After the Peace of Berlin Blum completed the Chatalja defences, and planned new forts for the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. At a later date, when German influence was supreme in Turkey, a very large number of heavy Krupp guns were mounted at both straits, and the Chatalja and Bulair lines were comprehensively rearmed. In 1912 the victorious advance of the Bulgarian armies was checked at Chatalja. It was then arranged that, in order to enable the Greek fleet to pass the Dardanelles, Bulgaria should attack the Bulair lines, and so get possession of the Gallipoli peninsula. But the enterprise came to nought, for the defence of Bulair was as successful as that of Chatalja.

1912.

The history of the Dardanelles has been told thus fully because, without some knowledge of it, it is not easy to understand the importance of the Straits to Turkey. Against a naval Power like Britain or France they were the last

defence of the capital, and that capital, more than any other great city of the world, was the palladium of the Power which had its seat there. It was almost all that was left to the race of Osman of their once broad European possessions. It had been the base for those proud expeditions against Vienna and the Hungarian plains when Turkey was still a conquering Power. It had been the prize for which her neighbours had lusted, and which she had still retained against all rivals. It was, in a real sense, the sign visible of Turkey's existence as a sovereign. If Constantinople fell Turkey would fall, and the doom of the capital was sealed so soon as the Allied battleships entered the Sea of Marmora.

The strategic importance of the forcing of the Dardanelles in a war with Turkey was therefore clear beyond all doubt. But in how far would the fall of Constantinople influence the decision of the main European conflict? In the first place, it would to some extent simplify Russia's problem, and release troops for Poland and Galicia. To a limited extent only—for there was reason to believe that the loss of Constantinople might be followed by a continuance of the campaign in Transcaucasia. At the same time there was the possibility that a mere threat to the capital might lead to a revolution which would overthrow the shaky edifice of Enver's rule. The bulk of the Turkish people did not share the passion for Germany felt by the Committee of Union and Progress, and advices from Constantinople during these days seemed to point to the imminence of a rising which would make a clean sweep of the Young Turk party, and restore the Sultan to his old place at the side of France and Britain.

Again, the opening of the passage between the Black Sea and the Ægean would give Russia a channel for exporting her accumulated wheat supplies. The lack of these was increasing the cost of bread in Western Europe, and the restriction of Russian exports had made the rate of exchange set violently against her, so that she was paying in some cases thirty times the normal price for her foreign purchases. She also stood in sore need of a channel for the entrance of war munitions. Archangel had been closed since January, the trans-Siberian line was a costly and circuitous route for all but her imports from Japan, while entries by Norway and Sweden were at the best precarious. She needed especially rifles and ammunition, and though the Western Powers had little to spare in the way of the finished articles, they could send her the raw materials. Certain chemicals especially, which she badly wanted, could be imported in large quantities if the Straits were open.

But the main strategic value of the Dardanelles lay in its effect upon hesitating neutrals. Italy at the moment was still in the valley of decision, and

the downfall of Turkey and its influence upon the Balkan States would impel her to action. Turkey's defeat would have an effect upon the Balkan position like the addition of a new chemical to a compound—it would leave none of the constituents unaltered. A volume would be required to riddle out the intricacies of the situation in the Balkans. Suffice it to say that Greece, Rumania, and Bulgaria had national interests and purposes which compelled them to keep a watchful eye on each other, and which made it difficult for any one of them to move without its neighbour. Bulgaria, who had borne the heavy end of the Turkish campaign, had lost the prize of victory. Three compacts had been violated to her hurt, and she was deeply distrustful of all the great Powers, and especially of Russia. German financiers had befriended her in 1913, when France and Britain had stood aside, and her Stambolovists had always looked to Austria as their ally. With Greece and Serbia—especially with the latter—she had a bitter quarrel over the delimitation of territory after the Balkan wars, and she had little cause to forget Rumania's intervention. At the same time her geographical position made it highly perilous for her to join the Teutonic League. A victorious Turkey would be a bad neighbour for a state of her antecedents, and the fate of Belgium, and the grounds on which Germany had justified it, were not encouraging for a small nation. Her attitude was therefore a circumspect neutrality. But the first Allied guns that spoke in the Sea of Marmora would compel her to a decision, and there was little doubt what that decision would be.

With Bulgaria decided, Greece and Rumania would follow suit. We have already glanced at Rumania's position, a complicated one which was slowly disentangling itself under the pressure of events. If her southern frontiers were safe it seemed likely that she would make her choice, and her geographical situation and her well-equipped army of more than half a million would make her an invaluable ally. With Turkey out of action and the Balkans united on the Allies' side, the most critical part of the main campaign—the long front of Russia—would be greatly eased. When the Italian guns sounded on the Isonzo and the Rumanian force could take the Austrian right wing in flank, the balance against Russia's arms might be redressed.

In a speech made just after he relinquished the office of First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Churchill discussed the strategic purpose of the Dardanelles expedition:—

"You must not forget," he told his hearers, "the prize for which you are contending. The army of Sir Ian Hamilton, the fleet of Admiral de Robeck, are separated only by a few miles from a victory such as this war has not yet seen. When I speak of victory I am not referring to those victories which crowd the

daily placards of many newspapers. I am speaking of victory in the sense of a brilliant and formidable fact, shaping the destinies of nations, and shortening the duration of the war. Beyond those few miles of ridge and scrub on which our soldiers, our French comrades, our gallant Australian and New Zealand fellow-subjects are now battling, lie the downfall of a hostile Empire, the destruction of an enemy's fleet and army, the fall of a world-famous capital, and probably the accession of powerful allies. The struggle will be heavy, the risks numerous, the losses cruel; but victory, when it comes, will make amends for all. *There never was a great subsidiary operation of war in which a more complete harmony of strategic, political, and economic advantages has combined, or which stood in truer relation to the main decision which is in the central theatre.* Through the Narrows of the Dardanelles and across the ridges of the Gallipoli peninsula lie some of the shortest paths to a triumphant peace."

The contention in the words we have italicized seems to be in its strictest sense justified. The Dardanelles expedition directly subserved the main object of the war. There remain for the reader's consideration the questions whether the right way was taken to ensure success, and whether the forces employed in it weakened the efforts of the Allies in the main European theatre.

NOTE ON ADMIRAL HORNBY'S EXPEDITION, FEBRUARY 1878.

Admiral Hornby's correspondence, including his confidential communications with the Admiralty, has been published (*Life of Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, G.C.B.*, by his daughter; Blackwood, 1896), and it throws much light upon the whole problem of operations in the Dardanelles. The defences of the Straits at the time are described in a telegram from the British Ambassador at Constantinople, dated January 20th. "Torpedoes" was then used as a term to describe submarine mines. "Consul at Dardanelles reports that he thinks a further series of torpedoes have been laid at the entrance to the Straits between Castles Kum Kale and Seddul Bahr, and also at the northern extremity of the Narrows between Forts Nagara and Bokali. . . . Connecting wires to mines placed last summer on Asiatic shore have been led probably into old fortress, Sultanieh Kalessi (Chanak). About sixty heavy rifled guns are mounted now in the four principal forts in the Narrows. The 50-ton Krupp gun at Sultanieh Fort may be called ready for service."

Hornby's ships were the *Alexandra* (flagship), *Agincourt*, *Achilles*, *Swiftsure*, *Téméraire*, *Sultan*, and *Salamis*. They left Besika Bay on the morning of the 13th February in an easterly gale, with thick snow squalls, and at once cleared for action. It was known that the forts at the Narrows had been greatly improved under the supervision of the German engineer, Blum Pasha, and that a number of modern guns from Armstrong and Krupp had been

mounted, and submarine mines laid in the channel. The danger from these last was not considered serious, for the mines of 1878 were somewhat primitive affairs. The Turkish gunners and their officers were believed to be badly trained, and it was anticipated that the naval guns could silence the land batteries. Landing-parties were ready on board each vessel to be put ashore to attack the works in the rear.

There was no occasion to test these arrangements in actual conflict, for at the last moment the Turkish officer in command of the Narrows decided to let the fleet pass. This, however, was not known to the ships, and they steamed up the Narrows against a strong current and in the face of a blinding snowstorm, with the men at their guns watching for the flash from the forts which would be the signal for battle. There was an anxious moment when the *Alexandra*, leading the line, was closing in to Chanak at the narrowest part of the Straits. For some minutes the snow became so thick that all guiding marks were lost, and the flagship got aground on the Asiatic side within easy range of the big guns at Sultanieh Kalessi. She was hanging on the edge of a bank, with twenty fathoms of water only two ships' length away. The *Sultan* stood by her to help her off, a piece of work which took four hours, and meanwhile the other ships steamed on to Gallipoli. On being rejoined by the *Alexandra* and the *Sultan* the whole squadron entered the Sea of Marmora.

It is useless to speculate on what might have been in naval or military operations. The conditions of the Dardanelles in 1878 were very different from what they were in 1915. Though the armament of the forts had been improved, the number of guns mounted was comparatively small. There was no elaborate mine defence, and there were no drifting mines. Most important of all, the batteries were only those of the old forts on the low ground at the water's edge. There was not a single gun on the heights, which in many places overhang the Straits in lines of cliff. Had there been a fight, Hornby would not have been exposed to the fire of mobile guns and howitzers on the higher ground, hidden in positions where it would have been practically impossible to silence them. He had, in fact, a comparatively easy task against an incomplete scheme of defence directed by half-trained officers of the old Turkish army. But even so, if there had been any resistance, it seems certain that the Narrows would not have been passed without considerable loss. Had the Turks opened fire as the snow squall passed away and showed the *Alexandra* lying bow on under their guns in a position in which most of her armament was useless, the flagship might have been destroyed.

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[1] See Vol. III., pp. 195-7.

[2] *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xvii.

[3] In 1871, when Russia denounced the clauses of the Treaty of Paris which forbade her to maintain a fleet in the Black Sea, a further convention was signed in London, confirming the treaty of 1841 and extending its provisions to the Bosphorus.

[4] Here Hornby makes a slip—"three-quarters of a mile" would be more correct.

[5] See note at end of chapter.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE ATTACK ON THE DARDANELLES BY SEA.

The Beginning of the Naval War with Turkey—Bombardment of Dardanelles on November 3rd—Lieutenant Holbrook's Exploit—The Problem of Ships against Forts—Nelson's View—Sebastopol—Kinburn—The Lesson of the Alexandria Bombardment—Lord Sydenham's Views—The Spanish-American War—The Russo-Japanese War—Tsing-tau—Advantage of Forts over Ships—Moltke's Opinion—The View of the British Government—Its Defects—Topography of the Dardanelles—The Two Groups of Forts—Armament of Forts—Strength of Defenders—Political Motives for British Policy—The Attack on the Outer Forts—The Entrance cleared—Bombardment of Smyrna—Minor Operations—Attack on Asiatic Shore from Gulf of Saros—The *Amethyst's* Enterprise—The Great Attack upon the Narrows Forts—Its Failure—Loss of the *Bouvet*, *Irresistible*, and *Ocean*—The Destruction of E15—Preparation for a Land Attack.

The true beginning of Turkey's naval war was the arrival of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* at Constantinople in the second week of the campaign. They were speedily followed by a liner, once employed in the German East African trade, which slipped through the patrols of the Allies, and brought a large cargo of mines and explosives sufficient to improvise a naval base. To her we owe the construction of the first mine-field in the Dardanelles. Meanwhile quantities of war stores were reaching Constantinople overland through Rumania, and presently Admiral Limpus and his British Staff, who had been employed to reorganize the Turkish Navy, found the work passing into other hands. Early in September both the navy and the army of Turkey were under German control, and the sea-gates were being prepared for defence against that war with the West which daily became more certain.

Nov. 3.

Our warships had been watching the outlet of the Dardanelles since early August, and when war broke out with Turkey it was easy to establish an effective blockade. Hostilities began at daybreak on 3rd November, when the combined French and British squadrons bombarded the entrance forts at long range. Our ships suffered no injury, only one shell falling anywhere in their vicinity. The

operation appears to have been a mere reconnaissance, intended to draw the fire of the forts and ascertain if they possessed long-range guns. It was admitted in the Admiralty report that no safe estimate could be made of the damage we inflicted.

Thereafter for some weeks this section of the war languished. On 18th November there was a sea fight off the Anatolian coast of the Black Sea, in which the luckless *Goeben* was badly damaged. On 10th December the same ship attempted to bombard Batum, and was hunted back to the Bosphorus by the Russian fleet. The Allies maintained their Dardanelles blockade, and on 13th December Lieutenant Holbrook took a submarine into the Straits through five lines of mines, and torpedoed the old Turkish warship, the *Messoudieh*, which was guarding the mine-fields. For this gallant exploit, performed under difficulties which seem on paper insuperable, he received the Victoria Cross. But the incident had no sequel. The end of the year came, and still no attempt was made upon the Straits, where week by week the German and Turkish officers were elaborating their schemes of defence.

Nov. 18.

Dec. 10.

Dec. 13.

By this time, however, the Admiralty had decided that our ample margin of naval strength and our clear superiority in gunnery, of which proof had been given in several cruiser actions, made it safe to detach a number of our older ships for operations against the Dardanelles. It may be that the *Formidable*, which was sunk in the Channel by a submarine on New Year's morning, was one of a squadron destined for this purpose. By the end of January the blockading squadrons off the Straits had been reinforced by French and British vessels from various stations, and had grown into a powerful combined fleet. We had seized the island of Tenedos, which was still Ottoman territory, and Greece tolerated the use of Lemnos, which she only nominally held, and in which the bay of Mudros supplied a useful advanced base for naval operations.

These began in earnest with the attack on the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles on Friday, 19th February. A month later came the attack on the forts at the Narrows. All the operations from 19th February to 18th March were part of a general plan. They represented an attempt to destroy the defences of the Dardanelles, and force a passage into the Sea of Marmora, by naval power alone. Before describing these movements in detail, it will be well to examine with some closeness the strategical and tactical conditions of the problem, for on our view of them depends our judgment of the possibility of success, and, therefore, of the justification of this "subsidiary" operation.

Feb. 19, 1915.

A naval attack on the Dardanelles without the co-operation of a military force would be a battle of ships against forts, and it had long been widely held by experts that in such a contest the advantage would lie with the forts. What were the grounds and the historical warrant of this opinion?

There is an interesting letter of Nelson's, written on July 29, 1794, at the time when we were driving the French from Corsica and preparing to reduce the forts of Calvi. It had been suggested that the attack should be made from the sea, but Nelson demurred. He wrote to Lord Hood: "I took the liberty of observing that the business of laying wood before walls was much altered of late, and even if they had no hot shot, which I believed they had, that the quantity of powder and shot which would be fired away on such an attack could be much better directed from a battery on shore."

1794.

Armour-clads have replaced wooden walls, and high-explosive shells have superseded red-hot shot, but it still remains true that shore batteries are a more effective weapon of assault against fortifications than even the heaviest guns mounted in the most powerful ships. For a little there was some disposition to believe that improvements in naval artillery and the increase of armoured protection might turn the scale in favour of the ships. But modern progress in armaments is quite as advantageous to the fort as to the ship, and one of our highest living authorities[1] has argued that, if anything, the advantage of the fort has increased since Nelson's day. He has even suggested what at first seems a startling paradox, that the old wooden battleship, with its tiers of smooth-bore guns, could at close range pour into a land battery a more formidable fire, with a better chance of scoring effective hits, than the modern battleship with its few heavy guns at long range, even though these are weapons of the highest precision, fitted with telescopic sights, and directed with the aid of range-finders and observers.

In former times, though the shore battery generally beat the ship, there were exceptional cases where the victory lay with the latter. Such were Exmouth's destruction of Algiers in 1816, and Napier's exploit at Acre in 1840. But neither was a true test. The Algerian and Egyptian gunners not only shot badly, but allowed the hostile fleet to come up and anchor at close quarters without opening fire. It was the memory of these successes which led the Allied admirals in the Crimean War to believe that in the same way they could silence the forts on the sea front at Sebastopol. The attempt, made on October 17, 1854, ended disastrously, with six ships out of action and more than 500 men killed and wounded.

1816.

1840.

1854.

A year later, on the anniversary of the Sebastopol bombardment, the forts of Kinburn were silenced by a naval attack. Napoleon the Third's three floating batteries, the *Devastation*, *Lave*, and *Tonnant*, were engaged in the operations—the first of ironclads, and the pioneers of all modern armoured fleets. This event produced a new theory, and for some time it was supposed that the coming of the armoured ship had changed the conditions of the problem. But all subsequent experience has belied this view. In the American Civil War the repeated naval attacks on Charleston ended in failure. It is true that in the attack on New Orleans Admiral Farragut succeeded in passing the forts that defended the narrow waterway of the Mississippi, but he did not attempt to silence them. He steamed past them, and then had the city at his mercy on its unprotected flank. His feat—not an attack on forts, but an evasion of them—would have been impossible had the river channel been protected by a modern mine-field.

1855.

The most significant incident, perhaps, was our bombardment of Alexandria in 1882. At first sight it would seem to prove that a fleet could in a few hours and with trifling losses master forts on land. But a careful study of the bombardment, which was made by an American Commission with the assistance of our own naval officers, put the matter in a very different light. Our squadron was the most powerful which up to that date had ever operated against forts. One of the ships, the old *Inflexible*, was the Dreadnought of her day, mounting four 16-inch guns, which she brought into action at close range. We expended an enormous amount of ammunition—about 1,740 heavy projectiles, 7-inch and upwards, including 88 rounds from the guns of the *Inflexible*, together with 1,400 smaller shells, and about 33,500 bullets from machine guns and rifles. The conditions were perfect—close range, calm weather, no mines, and highly incompetent opponents. Yet it was proved that not more than three of the Egyptian guns were directly put out of action by our fire. It is true that many of them were dismounted or silenced in other ways. Several were disabled by their own recoil; they were so badly mounted that it flung them backwards with their muzzles in the air. Many others ceased firing merely because hits upon the parapet in front of them buried their mountings in earth and masonry; but in such cases an hour's work with pick and shovel would have cleared the guns. The whole defence system was bad. Most of the pieces were mounted *en barbette* over a low parapet that gave hardly any cover to the gunners. The guns at one fort were placed in front of a barrack wall, which stopped and exploded scores of shells that otherwise would have flown harmlessly overhead. What would have happened under better conditions was shown by the fact that a small battery of disappearing guns, constructed some years

1882.

before by an American officer, Colonel Chaillé-Long, was never silenced, and was firing the day after the bombardment. The shooting of the Egyptian gunners was bad with the rifled pieces, though they made a good many hits with the older smooth-bores. Lord Sydenham believes that if they had made as good shooting with the modern guns our fleet would have been driven off with heavy loss. As it was, had not the forts surrendered, twenty-eight guns could have opened fire next day, when our fleet was almost bankrupt of ammunition. The natural deduction from the Alexandria bombardment was that a naval attack on modern forts, well armed and adequately manned, would be a highly critical operation, would most probably end in failure, and could only succeed at the cost of serious loss.

This conclusion was so generally accepted that during the Spanish-American War the United States Navy Department repeatedly warned the admirals that battleships and heavy cruisers must not be risked in close-range action with forts. For example, when the War Secretary asked for the support of the navy in forcing the entrance of Santiago Harbour, the Secretary of the Navy passed on the request to Admiral Sampson, but ended his cable message with the words: “I leave the matter to your discretion, except that the United States armoured vessels must not be risked.” All that the navy ventured upon was a long-range bombardment of the Spanish coast fortifications, attacks that were little more than demonstrations, for no serious attempt was made to silence the land batteries. A few guns mounted on Socapa Point at Santiago, and very badly served, were sufficient to prevent Admiral Sampson from risking a close attack.

It was the same in the Russo-Japanese War. Admiral Togo never risked his battleships and cruisers in a close attack on the sea batteries of Port Arthur. There were occasional long-range bombardments with no result, and the reduction of the fortress was due to the attack by land. Similarly Tsing-tau in the present war fell not to Admiral Kato’s squadron, but to General Kamio’s army.

It may be said, however, that though ships are not likely to silence forts, forts cannot prevent ships running past them. The argument is not relevant to the case of the Dardanelles, where in the long run not only a passage, but the occupation of the passage, is necessary, as Hornby found in 1878. But in any case it is unsound, for the development of submarine mines and torpedo warfare has made it all but impossible to evade the fort. A mine-field in a channel, protected by a few well-mounted guns, with searchlights and quick-firers to prevent mine-sweeping by night, is for a fleet a practically impassable barrier. The mine-field cannot be disposed of until the fort has been destroyed.

We may thus sum up the advantages of the fort over the ships. The ship is liable to be sunk by gun-fire, submarine or drift mines, and torpedoes launched from tubes on shore. The fort can only be battered by gun-fire. The possible protection of a gun afloat is always limited, for to accumulate armour beyond a certain point is to sacrifice a corresponding amount of power, armament, or ammunition. On the other hand, there is practically no limit to the defences that can be accumulated around the gun on shore in the shape of earthworks, concrete, and armour. Again, the ship affords a much better target to hostile fire. To make effective hits on a shore battery is difficult, even with the help of aeroplane observation. Hits on the outer slope of the fort do little damage. Shrapnel fire can be met by head cover, for it is only a question of stopping a shower of bullets. The only serious harm can come from shells exploding on the crest of the parapet, or penetrating the embrasures and bursting beside a gun, or making direct hits on the gun or its mounting. Now hits of this kind are bull's-eyes. On the other hand, the vulnerable surface of the ship is large. Hits on the gun positions or the water-lines, or shell explosions starting fires on board, are all serious.

It must further be noted that, when the attack is made on coast batteries with high ground rising near the water's edge, the position of the ship is still more disadvantageous. Modern warships are armed with long, high-velocity guns, designed for direct hits at considerable range. It is not easy for them to bring effective fire to bear on a target at a high level above the sea. Batteries on rising ground are therefore difficult to reach, and this difficulty is enormously increased if they are made up of mobile guns which can change position when the ship gets the range. There are certain varieties of heavy howitzers which are comparatively easy to move about, and the plunging fire of howitzers, even if their calibre is moderate, is specially dangerous to ships, since it attacks with high-explosive shell some of their weakest points, such as decks, engine-room gratings, and tops of barbettes and turrets. Even field artillery can be used on high ground from concealed positions to drive off the sweepers from a mine-field. Finally, mistakes are readily made in "spotting" the fire position of a land battery; but the fountains of water caused by shells striking the sea are an invaluable aid to the gunners on land.[2]

Such being the accepted doctrine among naval and military students of the question, it may well be asked why the scheme of forcing the Dardanelles by a naval attack alone was ever accepted by the British Government. It is known that very high naval authority was opposed to it; it is equally true that certain naval authorities approved of it. On what grounds? Probably because there was an idea abroad that new conditions had been introduced into the problem. There is always a tendency to begin by exaggerating the effect of a new

weapon. The Dreadnought, the long-range gun, the submarine, have each been hailed as about to revolutionize warfare. It was presumed that the huge high-explosive shells of the modern warship would make land batteries untenable, not by silencing their guns one by one, but by acting like flying mines, the explosion of which would shatter the defences and produce a panic among the gunners.

Once the forts were thus temporarily overcome, landing-parties would complete the task, the mine-fields would be cleared, and the passage be won. It was also anticipated that with the long range of the newest naval guns the forts could be bombarded from a distance at which their own armament would be ineffective. The notion was that the outer forts at the entrance to the Straits could be silenced by the converging fire of a number of ships from the open sea, while the attack on the inner forts would be carried on by individual fire from ships in the Gulf of Saros, which, with aeroplanes to direct them, would send their shells over the hills of the Gallipoli peninsula. These two factors—aerial reconnaissance and the increased range of naval guns—were believed to have changed the whole conditions of the enterprise.

It would be unfair to say that there was no colour for this forecast. But it erred in strangely neglecting and underestimating other factors in the situation, and in unduly simplifying the problem. It was not a mere question of a duel between the guns of the fleet and those of the permanent fortifications. Had it been, there would have been much to be said for the optimistic view. But the defences of the Dardanelles had been organized on a system which took the fullest advantage of natural features, and was based on past experience and a scientific knowledge of modern warfare. It was no improvised Turkish expedient, but the work of the German General Staff. It contemplated an attack, not only by a fleet, but by a large military force acting in conjunction. When, therefore, the Allies, to the surprise of their enemies, decided upon a mere naval attack, the problem of defence was exceedingly simplified.

To appreciate the Allies' difficulties we must consider briefly the topography of the Straits. Their northern shore is formed by the peninsula of Gallipoli, a tongue of land some fifty miles long, which varies in width from twelve to two or three miles. The country is a mass of rocky ridges rising to a height of over 700 feet from the sea. The hills are so steep and sharply cut that to reach their tops in many places is a matter of sheer climbing. There is little cultivation, few villages, and no properly engineered roads. Most of the land is covered with a dense scrub from three to six feet high, with stunted forests in the hollows. Communications are so bad that the usual way from village to village is not by land, but by boat along the inner or outer coast. At the head of

the Dardanelles, on the European side, is the town and harbour of Gallipoli, the headquarters of the naval defence of the Straits.

The southern shore is also hilly. Near the entrance on the Asiatic side there is the flat and marshy plain of Troy, which is bounded on the east by hills running to 3,000 feet. On both sides the high ground overhangs the sea passage, and on the north side for about twelve miles the hills form a line of cliffs, with narrow half-moons of beach at the base, and here and there a stream making a gully in the rampart. As everywhere in the Mediterranean, there is practically no tide, but a strong current sets continuously down the Straits from the Sea of Marmora. Its speed varies, but it often rises to four knots an hour. North-easterly winds are prevalent, and before the days of steam these often closed the passage for weeks at a time to ingoing traffic. In the spring bad weather is not infrequent. Sudden gales with driving showers of rain, and long spells of mist in calmer weather, are a bar to naval operations.

There are two groups of forts. The first is at the entrance—on the north side, Cape Helles and Sedd-el-Bahr, with one or two adjacent batteries; on the opposite shore, Kum Kale and Orkanieh. None of these forts were heavily armed, for it was recognized that in any case they would be at a disadvantage against a long-range attack from a fleet in the open sea. The entrance forts were merely the outposts of the real defensive.

The second group is at the Narrows. Fourteen miles from the mouth the Straits close in to a width of about three-quarters of a mile. Up to this point their general course has been from south-west to north-east, but now the channel makes a short turn directly northward before resuming its original direction. There is thus within a distance of a few miles a sharp double bend, and guns placed in position at the water’s edge can cross their fire against ships ascending the Straits, which can also be brought under end-on fire from guns at the top of the Narrows.

At the entrance to the Narrows are the forts of Chanak, or Sultanieh Kalessi, on the Asiatic side, and Kilid Bahr, on the European. The slopes above the latter were studded with batteries, some commanding the approach to the Narrows, others commanding the seaway towards Gallipoli. Along both sides, but especially between Chanak and Nagara, the low ground was lined with batteries. It was possible to attack the forts at the entrance to the Narrows at fairly long range from the wider channel below the bend, but there was no room to bring any large number of ships into action at the same time. Once the entrance was passed all fighting must be at close range, but the strength of the defence did not depend only on the batteries. An attacking fleet had other weapons to face besides the guns.

There was first the obstruction of the channel by submarine mines. To get rid of these by sweeping was probably impossible, for the light vessels, which alone could be employed, had to face not only the fire of the forts but that of mobile guns on the higher ground. Further, at various parts in the Narrows, torpedo tubes were mounted in concealed positions, and the land torpedo tube is a formidable weapon. It can fire a more powerful missile than those discharged from ships, and since its station is fixed it can make good shooting. Again, the descending current could be used to send down drift mines upon the attacking ships. The artillery defence was further supplemented by howitzer batteries on the heights, difficult to locate, easy to move if located, and therefore almost impossible to silence.

It is clear that a fleet endeavouring to force a channel thus defended was at the gravest disadvantage. There was only one way to complete success—the co-operation of a land army, By that means there was a chance of gaining possession of the heights behind the forts, attacking them in reverse, assisting the fleet to silence them, and then destroying the mine-field. Only a landing force, too, could deal with the mobile batteries. Such an army would be met by many difficulties. The country, all ridges and pockets, was hard to operate in, and the Turks, who when acting on the defensive are among the best soldiers in the world, were certain under German leadership to take advantage of every natural feature. They had, in fact, converted the Gallipoli peninsula and the hill country on the Asiatic side into two vast fortresses manned by powerful armies. At the outbreak of war there were 200,000 Turkish soldiers in the Constantinople area, and this number, in spite of Caucasian and Egyptian adventures, was not allowed seriously to dwindle. The garrison of Constantinople alone was kept up to 180,000 men, and by February, when the Turkish offensive elsewhere had failed, there was probably well over half a million of men available for the Straits defence. They had no railway communication to speak of, both the Adrianople and the Anatolian lines being too distant, but they had an uninterrupted water route from Europe and Asia through the Sea of Marmora. We cannot tell the number of guns which they had mounted on the shores, but we know something of their calibre. At the Narrows forts there were 14-inch Krupp guns, which threw a shell of 1,366 pounds. They had a number of 11-inch guns, and at the outer forts some of 10.2-inch. Lighter guns of from 6 to 9-inch calibre were in all the forts. They had besides a number of field howitzers, which do not seem to have been higher than the 8-inch variety. The defect of Turkey in the past had been shortage of munitions, but in this case her German masters saw that she was well supplied. Large stores of Krupp shells had been accumulated in Constantinople during the winter, and when the struggle began there was no

slackening of the Turkish fire.

It is a simple matter to be wise after the event, and it is easy to judge a military problem pedantically, without allowing for the chances of war. Every operation is to some extent a gamble, even after all the unknown quantities seem to have been determined. History showed a clear verdict on the handicap of a contest between ships and forts, without the assistance of a land army. History, too, showed that to pass the Dardanelles was a perilous achievement, unless the invader held the Gallipoli peninsula, and so could secure his supplies and his retreat. But it is permissible sometimes to go in defiance of history and create new precedents—laudable if the attempt succeeds, excusable if it fails. We will therefore be prudent if we suspend judgment on the strategy which made a premature attempt on the Straits with a fleet alone, until we know more about the circumstances which gave it birth. The Government may well have argued that if by a bold dash the passage could be rushed there was a good chance that events might happen which would meet the historical objection to winning a route but not holding it. It was possible—nay, probable—that the appearance of the Allied squadron before Constantinople would be followed by the Turkish surrender, or, which was much the same thing, by a Turkish revolution. Or, if the Sultan abandoned the capital and retired to Asia Minor, it would be no very hard matter to open the way through the Bosphorus for the Russian fleet, and the defenders of Gallipoli would have to choose between a prompt surrender and a hopeless isolation. If the throw was daring, the stakes at any rate were high.

It is likely, too, that there was a direct political motive for making the attack at the date and in the manner it was made. In the beginning of the year, especially in the first weeks of February, things had reached a critical stage in south-eastern Europe. Marshal von der Goltz from his perch in Constantinople had been fluttering the dovecotes of the Balkans. His visits to Sofia were believed to have been highly fruitful, and there was a general impression that Bulgaria might be betrayed into a false step. On the action of Bulgaria, as we have seen, depended to a large extent the policy of the whole Balkan group, and the Allies, especially Russia, had cause for anxiety. There may have been a Russian request for a diversion which would at any rate confirm Bulgarian neutrality. Of this we cannot be certain until the secret political history of the war is published; but if such a request was made, there is evidence that it was not with the assent of the Russian High Command in the field. On this hypothesis it was not necessary to force the passage of the Straits; a vigorous thrust would be a partial success.

We have examined the Dardanelles question at some length, for it is likely

in after years to be by far the most debated portion of the campaign. Facile contemporary criticism is to be deplored; but it is well even now to understand the main lines of the problem. It is time to turn to the details of the first phase —the Attack by Sea.

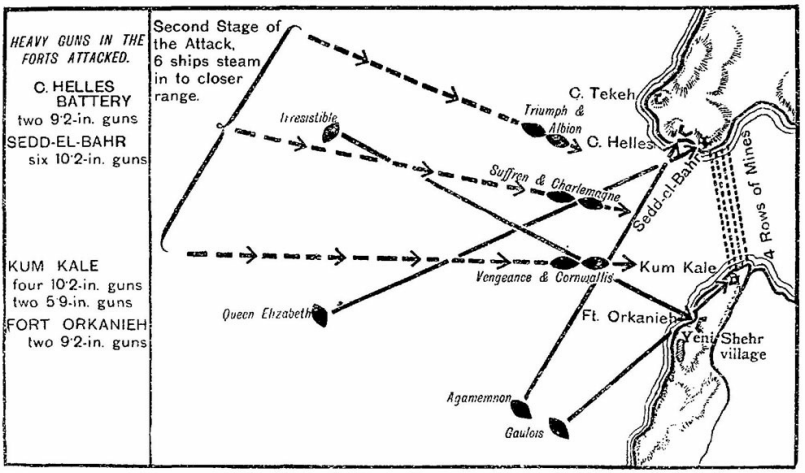
The first step was comparatively easy. By the middle of February a considerable naval force, French and British, had been concentrated at the entrance to the Dardanelles. With two exceptions, the larger British ships belonged to the pre-Dreadnought class; but there were also present the *Inflexible*, which had been in the Battle of the Falkland Islands, and the new super-Dreadnought, the *Queen Elizabeth*. The latter belonged to the most recent and most powerful class of battleship in the world. She was one of a group of five which, when war began, were still in the builders' hands, and in the ordinary course she would not have been commissioned till the late summer of 1915. Her main armament was made up of eight 15-inch guns, so mounted as to give a fire of four guns ahead or astern, and of the whole eight on either side.

Feb. 19.

The operations against the outer forts began on Friday, 19th February. The ships engaged were the *Inflexible*, *Agamemnon*, *Cornwallis*, *Vengeance*, and *Triumph*—British; and the *Bouvet*, *Suffren*, and *Gaulois*—French; covered by a flotilla of destroyers.[3] The naval force was under the command of Vice-Admiral Sackville Carden, and the French squadron was under Rear-Admiral Guépratte. Behind the battle-line lay the new mother-ship for seaplanes, the *Ark Royal*, named after Howard's flagship in the war with the Spanish Armada. From her aircraft were sent up to watch the fire of the battleships and signal the result.

The action began at 8 a.m. It was clear that the forts at Cape Helles, on the point of the peninsula, and at Kum Kale, on the opposite shore, were frequently hit, and at times seemed to be smothered in bursting shells. It was harder to make out what was happening to the low earthworks of the batteries about Sedd-el-Bahr. All morning the bombardment continued; it was like target practice, for not a single shot was fired in reply. Admiral Carden came to the conclusion that the forts had been seriously damaged, and at a quarter to three in the afternoon gave the order to close in. What followed shows that aerial observation of long-range fire is no easy matter. As the ships steamed nearer, the hitherto silent and apparently destroyed forts began to shoot. They made bad practice, for no one of the six ships that had shortened range was hit. By sundown the European batteries were quiet again, but Kum Kale was still firing, when, on account of the failing light, Admiral Carden withdrew the

fleet.



Attack on the Outer Forts (Dardanelles).

Feb. 25.

For some days there was bad weather, but by the morning of Thursday, 25th February, it had sufficiently improved for operations to be resumed. At 10 a.m. on that day the *Queen Elizabeth*, *Agamemnon*, and *Irresistible*,[4] and the French battleship *Gaulois*, renewed the long-range bombardment of the outer forts. It was clear that these had not been seriously damaged by the action of the 19th, and what injury had been done had been repaired in the interval. Once again the four forts, Sedd-el-Bahr, Cape Helles, Kum Kale, and Orkanieh, were attacked. We know from the Admiralty report that of these the first mounted six 10.2-inch guns, the second two 9.2-inch, the third four 10.2-inch and two 5.9-inch, and the fourth two 9.2-inch. Against the sixteen heavy guns of the forts the four ships brought into action twenty pieces heavier than anything mounted on the land, including the 15-inch guns of the *Queen Elizabeth*, the most powerful weapon ever used in naval war. The forts were thus greatly outmatched, and the long range of the *Queen Elizabeth's* guns enabled her to come into the fight at a distance where nothing from the land could possibly touch her.

In an hour and a half the *Queen Elizabeth* had silenced the Cape Helles guns, but not before they had hit the *Agamemnon*, a shell fired at a range of six miles bursting on board her, with a loss of three men killed and five wounded. This was the only casualty we suffered during the first stage of the bombardment. At 11.30 a.m. the *Vengeance* and *Cornwallis* came into action, and, running into close range, silenced the lighter armament of the Cape Helles battery. The attack on the Asiatic forts was at the same time reinforced by two of the French ships, the *Suffren* and the *Charlemagne*, which poured in a heavy

fire at a range of only 2,000 yards. Early in the afternoon the *Triumph* and the *Albion*[5] attacked Sedd-el-Bahr at close range. It says much for the courage and discipline of the Turkish artillerymen that, though they had to face overwhelming odds, their last gun was not silenced till after 5 p.m.

Feb. 26.

Little daylight remained, but, covered by the battleships and destroyers, a number of North Sea trawlers at once set to work to sweep for mines in the entrance. The work was resumed next morning at sunrise, and the mine-field was cleared for a distance of four miles up the Straits. Then the *Albion*, *Vengeance*, and *Majestic*[6] steamed in between the headlands, and opened a long-range fire on Fort Dardanos, a work on the Asiatic side some distance below the Narrows. It was not heavily armed, its best guns being four 5.9 Krupps. As the battleships opened fire, a reply came not only from Dardanos but from several unlocated batteries at various points along the shore. The Turkish fire, however, did little harm, and we were able to attack the rear of the entrance forts, and drive off several bodies of Turkish troops. One party near Kum Kale was driven across the bridge near the mouth of the river Mendere (the ancient Simois), and the bridge itself destroyed by shell fire.

We believed that by this time the Turks had everywhere been forced to abandon the defences at the entrance, and landing parties of Royal Marines were sent ashore with explosives to complete the destruction of the guns in the forts. This they successfully accomplished, but near Kum Kale they encountered a detachment of the enemy, and, after a hot skirmish, had to fall back to their boats with a few casualties. On this slender basis the Turkish bulletins built up a report of landing parties everywhere repulsed with heavy loss.

The result of the day's operations was that we had cleared the entrance to the Straits. This was the easiest part of the problem, and only the beginning of the formidable task assigned to the Allied fleets. The real defence of the Dardanelles—the forts at the Narrows—had not been touched. Nevertheless, with that misleading optimism which has done so much to paralyze national effort, the Press of France and Britain wrote as if the fall of the outer forts had decided the fate of Constantinople. In that city at the moment there was undoubtedly something of a panic among civilians, but the German and Turkish Staffs were in the best of spirits. They were greatly comforted by the time it had taken the powerful Allied fleet to destroy the outer forts, and they believed that the inner forts were impregnable. There long-range attacks would be impossible; no large number of ships could be brought simultaneously into action, and drifting mines and torpedoes could be used to supplement the

artillery defence. Enver, not usually partial to the truth, was for once in a way correct when he told a correspondent: “The real defence of the Straits is yet to come. That lies where the difficult waterway deprives ships of their power to manœuvre freely, and obliges them to move in a narrow defile commanded by artillery and mines.”

Mar. 4.

For a few days there were strong northerly winds, but in spite of the rough weather the mine-sweepers continued their work below the Narrows. On Thursday, 4th March, the battleships were again in action. Some attacked the forts inside the Straits, probably Dardanos and Soghandere, and a French cruiser in the Gulf of Saros demolished a lookout station at Cape Gaba Tepe. The published casualty lists show that among the ships engaged were the *Ocean* and the *Lord Nelson*.[7] A landing-party of Royal Marines near Kum Kale were driven back to their boats by a superior Turkish force with the relatively large loss of 22 killed, 22 wounded, and 3 missing. On 5th March there was a demonstration against Smyrna, a British and French detachment, under Vice-Admiral Peirse, bombarding the outer forts. As the attack was not pushed, it was probably only intended to induce Enver to keep a considerable force in that neighbourhood.

Mar. 5.

Mar. 6.

On 6th March the weather was again fine, with a smooth sea, and a preliminary attempt was made on the Narrows forts. On the preceding day some of the ships had entered the Straits and drawn the fire of the forts at Kilid Bahr. There was an explosion in one of them, and after that it ceased firing. On the morning of the 6th the *Vengeance*, *Albion*, *Majestic*, *Prince George*,[8] and *Suffren* steamed into the Straits and attacked the forts on both sides just below the Narrows. The fire was chiefly directed against Dardanos on the Asiatic, and Soghandere on the European shore—works which may be regarded as the outposts of the main Narrows defence. The attacking ships were struck repeatedly by shells, but no serious damage was done, and there was no loss of life.

This attack from inside the Straits was, however, a secondary operation. The main attack, from which great results were expected, was made by the *Queen Elizabeth*, *Agamemnon*, and *Ocean* from the Gulf of Saros, on the outer side of the Gallipoli peninsula. Lying off the point of Gaba Tepe, they sent their shells over the intervening hills, with aeroplanes directing their fire. Their target was two of the forts at Chanak, on the Asiatic side of the Narrows, about twelve miles off. These forts had a very heavy armament, including 14-inch guns, and it was hoped to destroy them by indirect fire, to which they had no means of replying. The Turks replied from various points on the heights of the

Peninsula with well-concealed howitzers and field guns, and three shells struck the *Queen Elizabeth*.

Next day, 7th March, the attack was renewed. Four French battleships, the *Bouvet*, *Charlemagne*, *Gaulois*, and *Suffren*, attacked the forts from inside the Straits and engaged Dardanos, which they succeeded in silencing. Behind them, farther out, lay the *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson*, firing at a range of from 12,000 to 14,000 yards at the forts at the Narrows entrance. Chanak, which the *Queen Elizabeth* had been trying to demolish the day before, brought its heavy guns into action. The *Gaulois*, *Agamemnon*, and *Lord Nelson* were hit several times, but we believed that we had put the Chanak forts, the strongest of the Narrows, out of action. Subsequent experience showed that it was a difficult matter permanently to silence the forts. Reports of German officers made it clear that under the heavy fire of the ships it was hard to keep the guns constantly in action, not so much on account of any serious damage, but because the batteries were flooded with stifling vapours from the shells, and it was necessary to withdraw the men until the air cleared. Further, the defenders had been ordered to economize ammunition, and to reserve their fire for the closer attack which they believed would follow. The fact, therefore, that a fort ceased firing was no proof that it had been really silenced. Again and again during these operations we heard of forts being silenced, which next day or a few days after could bring most of their guns into action.

Mar. 7.

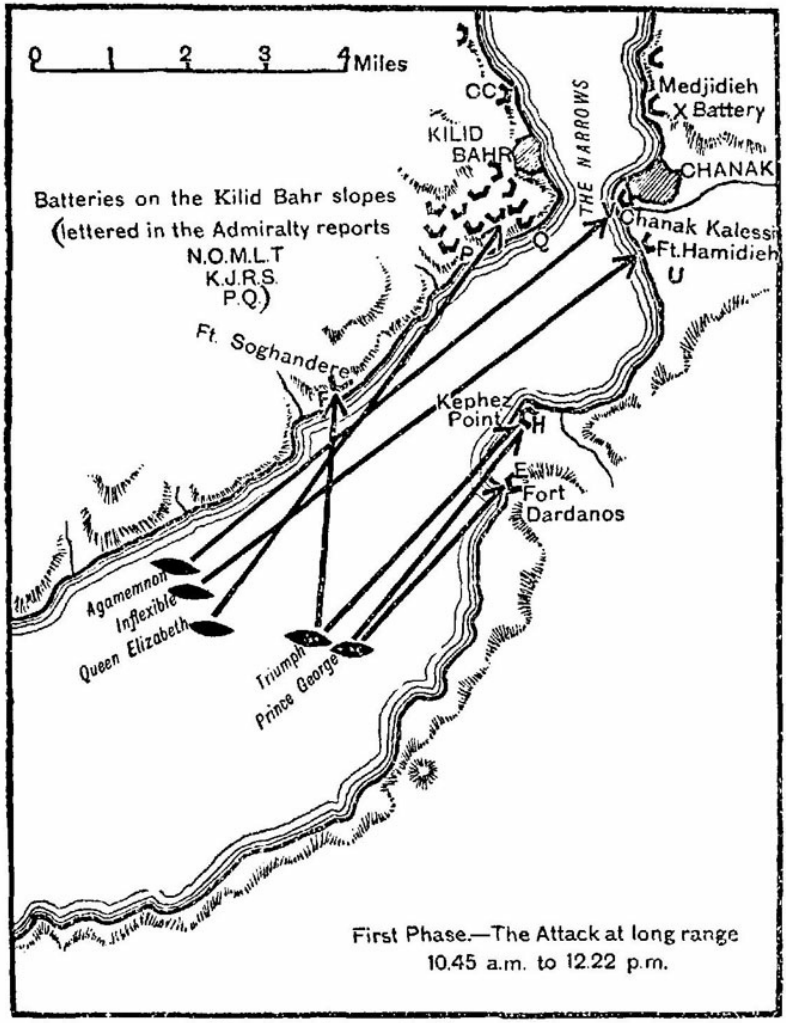
The following week saw nothing but minor operations. On the 10th an attempt was made to shell the Bulair defences at long range, and the British warships shelled some new batteries of light guns which the Turks had established near Morto Bay, on the European side of the entrance to the Straits. The Turkish Government sent out a report that the Allied fleets had been unsuccessfully bombarding the defences at Sedd-el-Bahr and Kum Kale. The British Press treated this as an impudent fiction, and pointed out that the forts there had been destroyed many days before. But the Turkish *communiqué* had a basis of fact. We had destroyed the forts, but we had not occupied the ground on both sides of the entrance. The Turks had accordingly entrenched themselves strongly near the ruins, and mounted guns, and these we attacked on 10th and 11th March.

Mar. 10.

At that time, misled by the optimism of the newspapers, the ordinary man in France and Britain counted with certainty on the speedy news that our fleet was steaming through the Sea of Marmora on the way to Constantinople. When tidings came that the light cruiser *Amethyst* had on 15th March actually made a dash into the Narrows, he

Mar. 15.

believed that the Turkish defence had collapsed. The *Amethyst's* enterprise was, apparently, part of a mine-sweeping expedition, and also, perhaps, a daring reconnaissance in which the little ship drew the fire of the upper forts. She seems to have got but a short way, and to have lost heavily in the attempt. But her exploit, magnified through Greek channels, made us believe that the Narrows defences had been seriously damaged, and that the time was ripe for a determined effort to force a passage. The combined fleet had now grown to a formidable strength, and included a Russian cruiser, the *Askold*,[9] which appeared from somewhere or other on 3rd March. Vice-Admiral Carden had been compelled by ill health to relinquish the command, and Vice-Admiral John Michael De Robeck succeeded him.

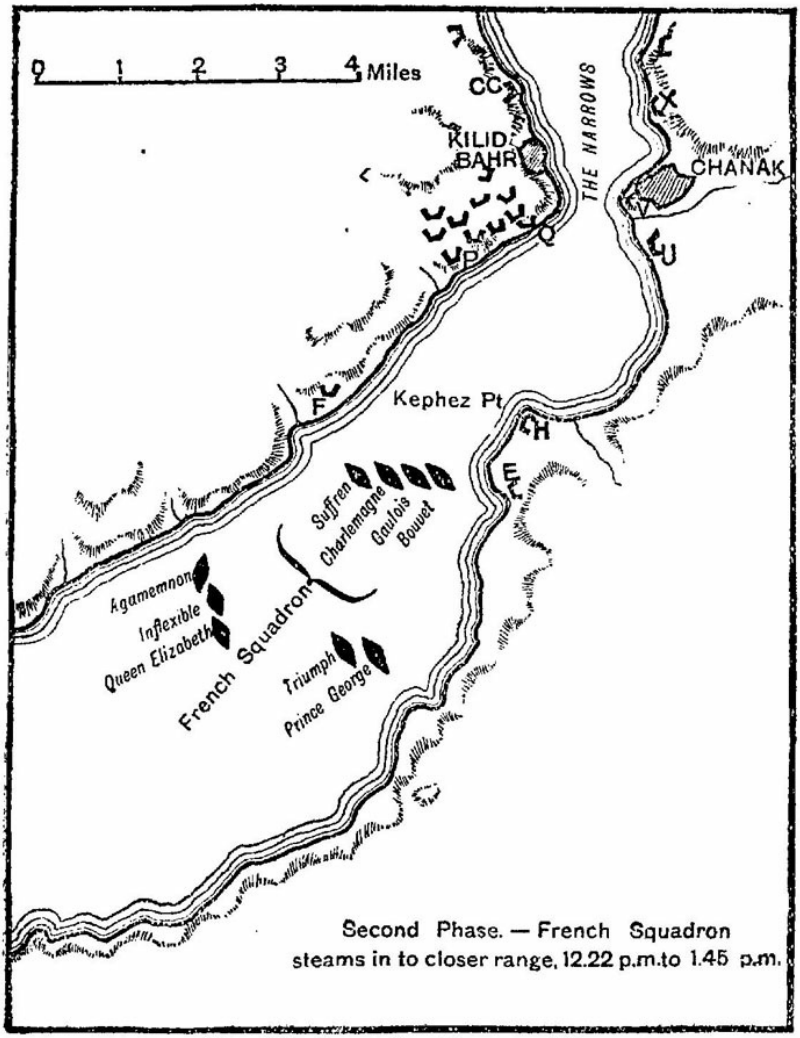


The Attack on the Narrows (!).

The great effort was made on Thursday, 18th March. It was a bright, clear day, with a light wind and a calm sea. At a quarter to eleven in the forenoon the *Queen Elizabeth*, *Inflexible*, *Agamemnon*, *Lord Nelson*, *Triumph*, and *Prince George* steamed up the Straits towards the Narrows. The first four ships engaged the forts of Chanak and the battery on the point opposite, while the *Triumph* and *Prince George* kept the batteries lower down occupied by firing at Soghandere, Dardanos, and Kephez Point. After the bombardment had lasted for an hour and a half, during which the ships were fired upon not only by the forts but by howitzers and field guns on the heights, the French squadron, *Bouvet*,

Mar. 18.

Charlemagne, *Gaulois*, and *Suffren*, came into action, steaming in to attack the forts at short range. Under the combined fire of the ten ships the forts once more ceased firing. A third squadron then entered the Straits to push the attack further. This was made up of six British battleships, the *Albion*, *Irresistible*, *Majestic*, *Ocean*, *Swiftsure*[10] and *Vengeance*. As they steered towards Chanak the four French ships were withdrawn in order to make room for them in the narrow waters. But in the process of this change all the forts suddenly began to fire again, which showed that none of them were seriously damaged. According to Turkish accounts, only one big gun had been dismounted.

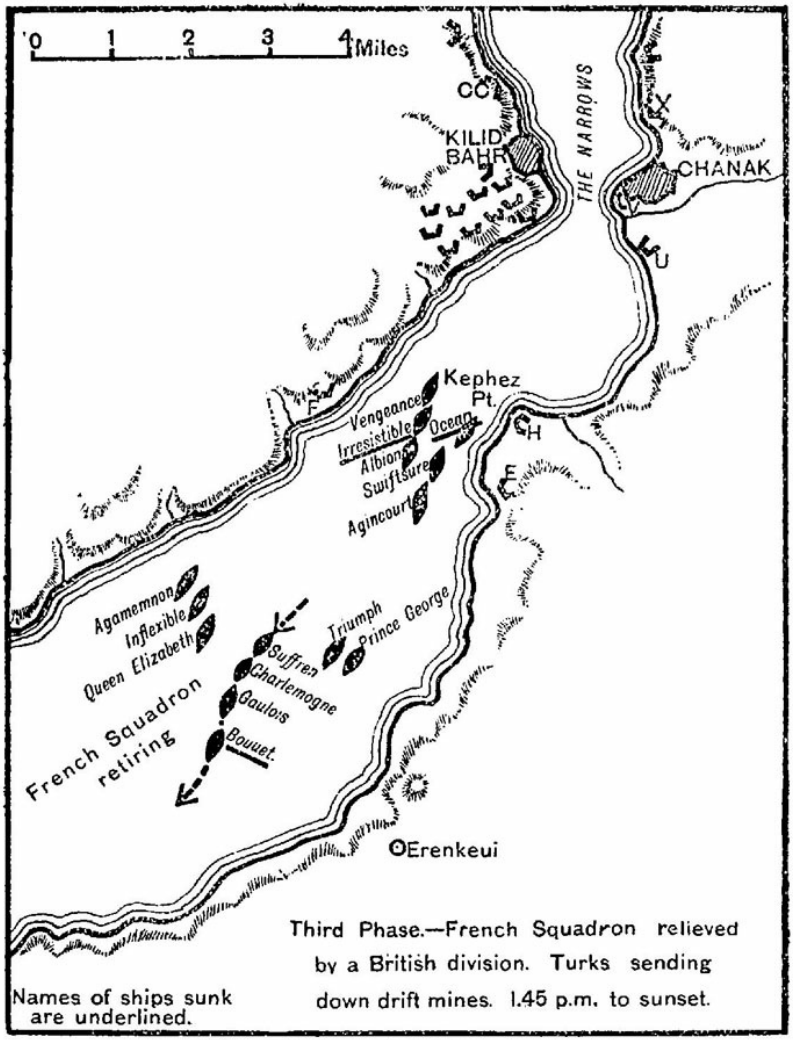


The Attack on the Narrows (2).

Then came the first disaster of the day. The French squadron was moving down to the open water inside the Straits, being still under fire from the inner forts. An officer on a British destroyer, who was watching its movements, reported that he saw three large shells strike the *Bouvet* almost simultaneously, and that immediately after there was a loud explosion, and she was hidden in a cloud of smoke. The first impression was that she had been seriously damaged by shell-fire, but her real wound was got from one of the mines which the Turks were now sending down with the current. They had waited to begin this new attack till the narrow waterway was full of ships. As the smoke cleared, the *Bouvet* was seen to be heeling over. She sank in three minutes, in thirty-six fathoms of water, carrying with her most of her crew.

The attack on the forts continued as long as the light lasted. The mine-sweepers had been brought up the Straits in order to clear the passage in front, and to look out for drift-mines. An hour and a half after the *Bouvet* sank, the *Irresistible* turned out of the fighting line with a heavy list. She also had been struck by a mine, but she floated for more than an hour, and the destroyers took off nearly all her crew—a dangerous task, for they were the target all the time for Turkish fire. She sank at ten minutes to six, and a quarter of an hour later another drift-mine struck the *Ocean*. The latter sank almost as quickly as the *Bouvet*, but the destroyers were on the alert, and saved most of her crew. Several of the other ships had suffered damage and loss of life from the Turkish guns. The *Gaulois* had been repeatedly hit, her upper works were seriously injured, and a huge rent had been torn in her bows. The *Inflexible* had been struck by a heavy shell, which killed and wounded the majority of the men and officers in her fire-control station, and set her on fire forward.

As the sun set most of the forts were still in action, and during the short twilight the Allied fleet slipped out of the Dardanelles. The great attack on the Narrows had failed—failed, with the loss of three battleships and more than 2,000 men.



The Attack on the Narrows (3).

For more than a month the sea attack languished. Almost every day one or more ships entered the Straits and opened fire to prevent the Turks repairing the entrance forts, or establishing themselves in new positions. Mine-sweepers were also constantly at work, and had to be protected. On 28th March there was some activity at the other end of the passage, the Russian Black Sea fleet having bombarded the outer forts of the Bosphorus. On 6th April we again bombarded the Smyrna forts. Meantime our submarines had been busy, and on Saturday, 17th April, E15 had the misfortune to ground in the Straits near Kephez Point. There was some danger of her

Mar. 28.

April 6.

falling into the enemy's hands in a serviceable condition, so on the Sunday night two picket-boats of the *Triumph* and the *Majestic*, under Lieutenant-Commander Eric Robinson, carried through a brilliant "cutting-out" expedition. The boats were under heavy fire from the forts 200 yards off, and from numerous small guns at close range. Notwithstanding this, the submarine was torpedoed and destroyed. The *Majestic* picket-boat was sunk, but the crew were saved by the other boat, and the only casualty was one man, who died of his wounds.

April 17.

During these weeks the naval attack was not pushed because the Allies had decided upon a different strategy. The events of 18th March had convinced the most optimistic that ships alone could never force the passage, and a combined movement by sea and land was now in train.

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[1] Lord Sydenham in his standard work on *Fortification*.

[2] Moltke, writing from Pera in 1836, discussed the forcing of the Dardanelles by a fleet, and well summarized the difficulties from the standpoint of that time:—

> "The ball fired from a ship against a land battery will, in the most favourable case, kill a few men and dismount a gun, while that fired by a land battery may quite well put a ship out of action. Men, guns, and ammunition are incomparably safer in the land battery than behind a ship's walls. Most important is the circumstance that the ship's rolling makes accurate aiming impossible. The land battery presents a target about four and a half feet high, and a slight little roll increases or diminishes the elevation of the guns to such an extent that a whole broadside strikes too high or too low. But the great gun of a land battery is still, the gunner takes an exact aim, and his target is a wall twenty or thirty feet high, a hundred feet long, and vulnerable all over. Balls that go too low may yet hit by ricochet; balls that go too high may destroy masts, spars, and sails. The larger number of guns is on the side of the fleet; the more favourable conditions on the side of the land

battery."—Mr. Spenser Wilkinson's translation.

[3] *Inflexible*—17,250 tons, eight 12-inch guns, sixteen 4-inch guns; *Agamemnon*—16,750 tons, four 12-inch guns, ten 9.2-inch guns; *Cornwallis*—14,000 tons, four 12-inch guns, twelve 6-inch guns; *Vengeance*—12,950 tons, four 12-inch guns, twelve 6-inch guns; *Triumph*—11,980 tons, four 10-inch guns, fourteen 7.5-inch guns; *Bouvet*—12,200 tons, two 12-inch guns, two 10.8-inch guns, eight 5.5-inch guns, eight 4-inch guns; *Suffren*—12,730 tons, four 12-inch guns, ten 6.4-inch guns; *Gaulois*—11,260 tons, four 12-inch guns, ten 5.5-inch guns.

[4] 15,000 tons, four 12-inch and twelve 6-inch guns.

[5] 12,950 tons, four 12-inch guns, twelve 6-inch.

[6] The oldest battleship type in the Navy; 14,900 tons, four 12-inch guns, twelve 6-inch.

[7] A sister ship of the *Agamemnon*—16,500 tons, four 12-inch guns, ten 9.2-inch.

[8] A sister ship of the *Majestic*.

[9] Our sailors called it "The Packet of Woodbines," from its five thin funnels.

[10] A sister ship of the *Triumph* 11,980 tons, four 10-inch, fourteen 7.5-inch guns.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE BATTLE OF THE LANDING.

The Muster of the Dardanelles Force—The French Contingent—The British Troops—The Australians and New Zealanders—The 29th Division—The Naval Division—The East Lancashire Territorials—Sir Ian Hamilton—The Crucial Question—Topography of the Gallipoli Peninsula—Gaba Tepe and the Cape Helles Beaches—The Expeditionary Force at Lemnos—The Landing on Sunday, 25th April—Australian Success at Gaba Tepe—Desperate Struggle at Beach V—The French Attack on Kum Kale—The Forcing of Beach V—Beach Y relinquished—Situation on 27th April—Work of *Queen Elizabeth*—Advance against Krithia—Nature of the Achievement.

The world first heard of the Dardanelles Expeditionary Force on 9th April, when the French Government, in an official note, announced that the French contingent had been ready since 16th March, and was then in Egypt waiting to be used. It may be assumed, that at first only a small expedition was contemplated, sufficient to secure the ground which the victory of the fleets would have made untenable by the enemy. But the failure of the great naval attack on 18th March had produced a wholly new situation. What we needed now was not a contingent to occupy but an army to conquer.

The French Staff rightly and properly declined to detach for a secondary field of operations even a single division of the armies organized for the main theatre of war. General Joffre had none too many men to hold the long front in the West, and he would not permit his carefully-prepared strategical plans to be dislocated by any side show. But France, as we have seen, was able to draw upon forces which did not belong to her regular army. The navy could furnish Fusiliers Marins. The Colonial Department had its Armée Coloniale, and there was the Foreign Legion, good fighting material, enlisted for service anywhere. From these various sources a detachment was got together, and put under the command of General d'Amade,[1] one of the soldiers who had most distinguished himself in the first months of war.

The bulk of the Expeditionary Force had to be provided by Britain. Originally there had been hopes of aid from Greece, but M. Venezelos failed for the moment to carry through his policy of intervention. It was our aim in

the business to avoid entrenching upon the new service armies which were destined for Sir John French's command. The nucleus of our contribution was the 29th Division, composed almost wholly of regulars, and under the command of Major-General Hunter-Weston, who had originally commanded the 11th Brigade of the Third Corps on the Western front. It embraced the 86th Brigade of infantry—2nd Royal Fusiliers, 1st Lancashire Fusiliers, 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers, and 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers; the 87th Brigade—2nd South Wales Borderers, 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers, 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and 1st Border Regiment; the 88th Brigade—2nd Hampshires, 4th Worcesters, 1st Essex, and a Territorial battalion, the 5th Royal Scots. For divisional cavalry it had a squadron of the Surrey Yeomanry, and in its artillery force were included two batteries of the 4th (Highland) Mountain Brigade.

The Naval Division was also available. It had been at Antwerp, and since then had had six months of training, while the gaps in its ranks had been filled. As before, it consisted of two Naval Brigades and a brigade of Royal Marines. There was, further, a considerable army already existing in Egypt. The Australian and New Zealand divisions, under Lieutenant-General Birdwood, between them made the strength of a corps; there was a large number of seasoned Indian troops; and a Territorial division, the East Lancashire,[2] under Major-General Douglas, had been in training there during the winter. Egypt was now reasonably safe, the more so as the Turkish army which had threatened it from Syria was being largely moved to the shores of the Sea of Marmora. Its defence was, therefore, left to part of the Indian troops, the native army, and some regiments of British yeomanry, and the Australasians, the Territorials, and some of the Indian troops were added to the Dardanelles force.

The total strength thus created was the equivalent of three corps. It was placed under the command of General Sir Ian Hamilton, who had previously been nominated to command the Fourth Army which was being formed at home. Sir Ian Hamilton had been Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean and Inspector-General of Oversea Forces since 1910. For nearly forty years he had served with distinction in every British war, and had been present with the Japanese forces in Manchuria. He was a soldier of a type rare in modern armies. A man of wide general culture, an accomplished writer, and something of a poet, he had proved himself one of the most gallant of regimental leaders, a brilliant Staff officer, and an efficient administrator. In a high command in the field his reputation was still to make. The Commander-in-Chief on the Turkish side was the German General Liman von Sanders, the former Chief of the Military Mission at Constantinople. On 29th March the Sultan issued a

decree appointing him to the post and constituting the Dardanelles forces the Fifth Army.

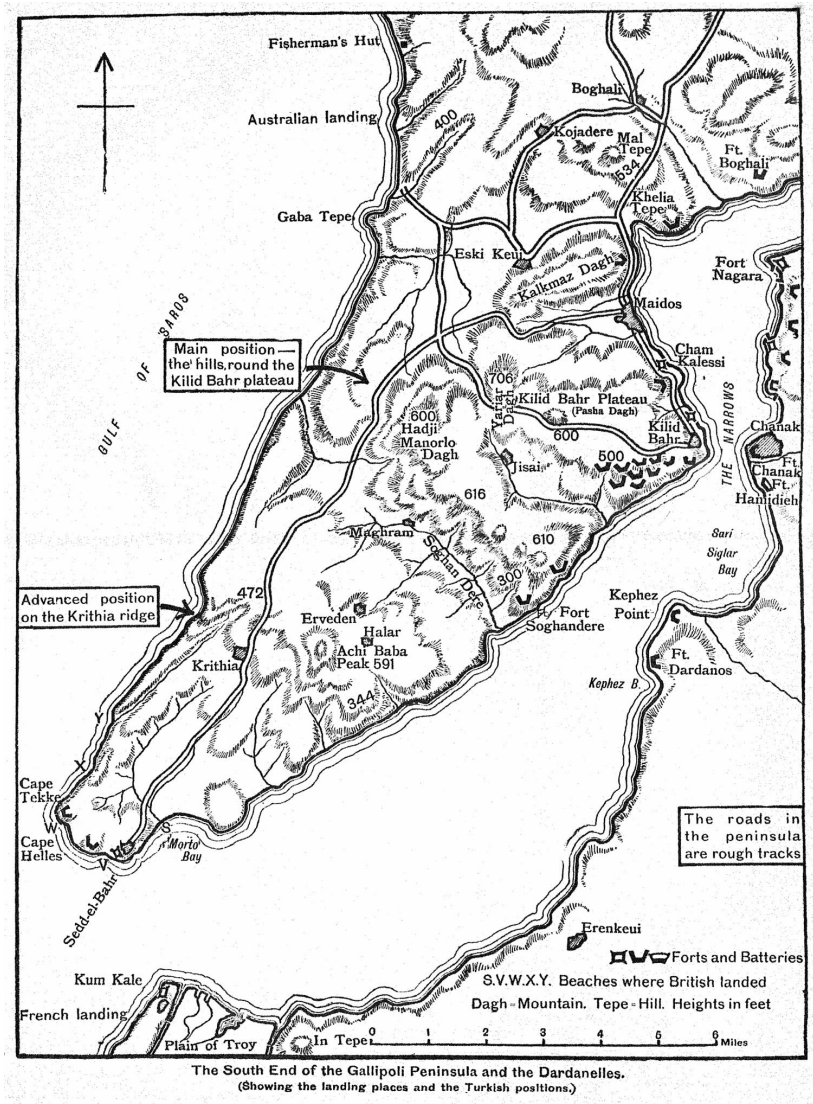
The inception of the Land Expedition raises the last of the questions by which we have tested the justification of a "subsidiary" operation. Did it weaken the Allied strength in the vital Western theatre? The 120,000 men who were assigned to it can scarcely—with the exception of the 29th Division—be said to have included any troops who had been definitely relied upon for France and Flanders. D'Amade's Colonials were a special effort of the North African depôts; our Naval Division was an Expeditionary Force for Admiralty purposes; our Australasian and Indian troops and the Lancashire Territorials had already been set apart for work in Egypt, and, but for the collapse of Djemal's invasion, might still have been engaged on the Canal. We may, therefore, regard at any rate the bulk of the Expeditionary Force as being composed of the loose fringes of our military strength, of troops not ear-marked for France and Flanders, but specially reserved for such expeditions as the Dardanelles. But were 120,000 men sufficient, and, if not, how could reinforcements be supplied except by drawing upon those new service armies, on which General Joffre and Sir John French were relying?

This question is in reality the crucial point in any criticism of the Dardanelles policy. It is difficult to see how any commander could hope to force a position of the utmost natural difficulty in the face of an enemy amply supplied with guns, with forces numerically inferior to that enemy's. Yet such was the situation to be faced. More men would be needed, and for such further troops our potential strength on the Western front must be weakened. It is possible to argue that at this point the Dardanelles Expedition ceased to be a legitimate subsidiary, and became an illegitimate divergent operation. As we have seen, its strategical purpose was vital to the main issue of the war. The attempt to force a passage by ships alone had at least a colour of reason—what is called a "sporting chance"; and if it failed did no irrevocable harm. But the land attempt was begun with forces which were patently insufficient, and adequate reinforcements would be apt to involve a weakening of the main efforts of the Allies in the West. The whole business might have been broken off with ease after the failure of 18th March. But so soon as the first landing was effected the die was cast. Thereafter there could be no looking back until, at whatever cost, our end was attained; and that, it may be argued by critics of the enterprise, is the very opposite of the true character of a subsidiary operation.

Let us examine briefly the military elements of the Gallipoli peninsula. One of the difficulties of the task before us was that it was impossible to

surprise the enemy. Surprise is the essence of most schemes of invasion. If Britain lost command of the sea and our coast lay open to attack, the enemy could count upon surprise as his chief asset. It is true that the attack would be expected, but there are so many possible landing-places on our coasts that no man could tell where the blow would fall. Our plan of defence would necessarily be a careful watch along our shores by a great chain of outposts, while our main forces were held in reserve at points inland where they could easily be moved to the zone of invasion. If, however, the attack were well directed, it might for long be doubtful where the chief effort was being made. There would be feints at several places, and troops landed only to be withdrawn, till the defence was in that condition of nervous confusion which gives the chance to the enemy with the bold initiative.

But in the Dardanelles expedition there was no room for such ingenuities. From the start the element of surprise was wholly eliminated. This was nobody's blame; it was due, not to the premature naval enterprise of February and March, but to the nature of the Gallipoli peninsula. The possession of that peninsula was essential to the control of the Straits, and this was clear to the Turco-German Staff before the first shot was fired on 3rd November. To master Gallipoli meant an assault from the Ægean, and the possible landing-places were few in number, small in extent, and clearly defined by the nature of the ground. Gaps must be found in the screen of yellow cliffs which fringe the sea. If we take the peninsula west of the line drawn north and south across the upper end of the Narrows, there were only two places where troops could be disembarked. One of these was the various beaches round about Sedd-el-Bahr and Cape Helles. The other was on the Gulf of Saros, near Gaba Tepe, where the sandstone hills leave a narrow space at the water's edge. Neither was good, and both were believed by the Turkish Staff to be wholly impracticable. Nevertheless they left no stone unturned in their defence.



The South End of the Gallipoli Peninsula and the Dardanelles.
(Showing the landing places and the Turkish positions.)

The mere landing of the Expeditionary Force would not effect much. The hills of the Gallipoli peninsula may be said to form a natural fortress defending the rear of the Narrows forts. It will be seen from the map that behind the point of Kilid Bahr a rocky plateau, which is more than 600 feet high, extends inland for some five miles. Its highest ridge runs up to the summits known to the Turks as Pasha Dagh. These hills are a salient with the point towards the Gulf of Saros, and the sides curving back to the Dardanelles above and below Kilid Bahr. North the high ground continues, and is pierced by a pass, through which a rough track runs from Krithia to the town of Maidos, on the channel opposite

Nagara.

But to an invader coming from the west and aiming at Maidos the Pasha Dagh is not the only obstacle. West of it and south of Krithia rises the bold peak of Achi Baba, nearly 600 feet high, which sends out rocky spurs on both sides to the Dardanelles and the Gulf of Saros, and forms a barrier from sea to sea across the narrow western point of the peninsula.

The problem before Sir Ian Hamilton was, therefore, simple enough in its general lines. He must effect a landing at the apex of the peninsula and at Gaba Tepe, in the Gulf of Saros. It would then be the business of the force landed at the first point to fight its way to Krithia, and carry the Achi Baba ridge, while the second force would advance from Gaba Tepe against the pass leading to Maidos. It might then be possible for the left wing of the first to come in touch with the right wing of the second, and together to force the Pasha Dagh plateau. If that movement succeeded the battle was won. We could bring up artillery to the plateau, which would make the European forts untenable. Moreover, we would dominate at short range the enemy's positions on the Asiatic side, and a combined attack by land and sea would give the Narrows to our hands.

The Expeditionary Force was assembled in Egypt during the first half of April. Sir Ian Hamilton had arrived at Tenedos on March 17th, but he found that the transports had been wrongly loaded, and had to send them back to Alexandria. Lemnos was chosen as the advanced base, and by the middle of the month the expedition began to arrive in the Bay of Mudros. Part of the force was landed on the island, and the rest remained on board the ships, where day and night, under the direction of naval officers, they practised the landing of men, horses, and guns. Germany was well aware of our intentions, and on 22nd April published an announcement that 20,000 British and French troops had landed at Enos at the mouth of the Maritza, a place some sixty-four miles from Bulair by a bad road. This was a legend, but we experimented during these days in small landings and bombardments in the Gulf of Saros as feints to distract the enemy. Meanwhile, by the 20th of April Sir Ian Hamilton had perfected his plans, and the first attack was fixed for Sunday, 25th April.

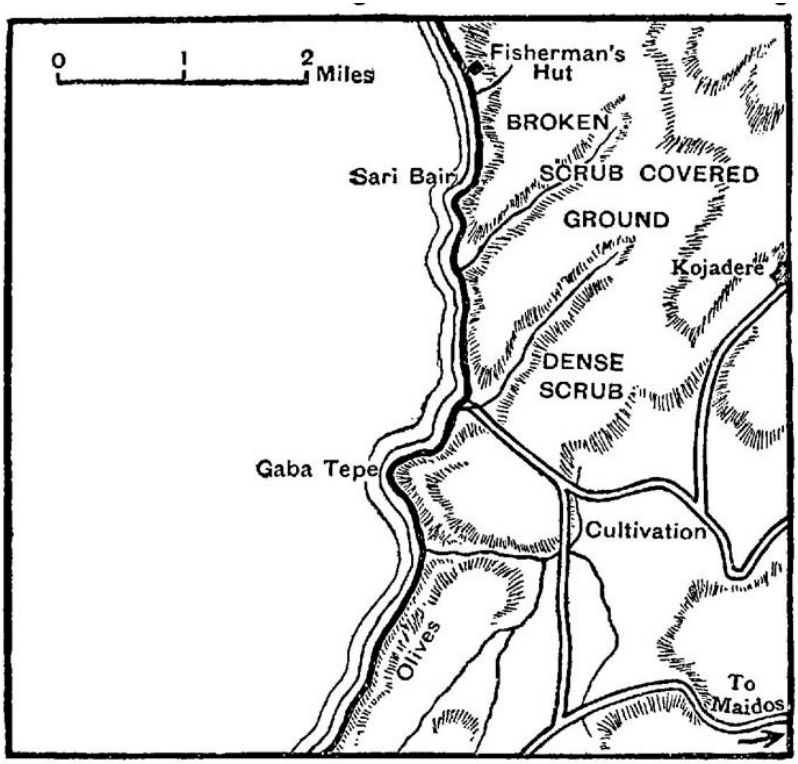
April 25.

That Sunday morning was one of those which delight the traveller in April in the Ægean. A light mist fills the air before dawn, but it disappears with the sun, and all day there are clear skies, still seas, and the fresh, invigorating warmth of spring. A glance at the map will show the nature of the place chosen for the attempt. Gaba Tepe, on the north side of the peninsula, we have already described. Round about Cape

Helles there are five little beaches. Beginning from the left, there is Beach Y, and, a little south of it, Beach X. Rounding Cape Tekke, we come to Beach W, where a narrow valley opens between the headlands of Tekeh and Helles. Here there is a broad, semicircular stretch of sand. South of Helles is Beach V, a place of the same configuration as Beach W, but unpleasantly commanded by the castle and village of Sedd-el-Bahr at its southern end. Lastly, inside the Straits, on the east side of Morto Bay, is Beach S, close to the point of Eski Hissar. The landing at Gaba Tepe was entrusted to the Australian and New Zealand troops; that at the Helles beaches to the 29th Division, with some units of the Naval Division. It was arranged that simultaneously the French should land on the Asiatic shore at Kum Kale, to prevent the Turkish batteries from being brought into action against our men at Beaches V and S. Part of the Naval Division was detached for a feint farther north in the Gulf of Saros.

Let us assume that an aeroplane, which miraculously escaped the enemy's fire, enabled us to move up and down the shores of the peninsula and observe the progress of the different landings. About one in the morning the ships arrive at a point five miles from the Gallipoli shores. At 1.20 the boats are lowered, and the troops line up on the decks. Then they embark in the flotillas, and the steam pinnaces begin to tow them shorewards in the hazy half-light before dawn. The Australians destined for Gaba Tepe are carried in destroyers which take them in close to the shore. The operations are timed to allow the troops to reach the beaches at daybreak.

1.20 a.m.



The Australian Landing near Gaba Tepe.

5 a.m.

Slowly and very quietly the boats and destroyers steal in towards the land. A little before five an enemy's searchlight flares out. The boats are now in shallow water under the Gaba Tepe cliffs, and the men are leaping ashore. Then comes a blaze of rifle fire from the Turkish trenches on the beach, and the first comers charge them with the bayonet. The whole cliff seems to leap into light, for everywhere trenches and caverns have been dug in the slopes. The fire falls most heavily on the men still in the boats, who have the difficult task of waiting as the slow minutes bring them shoreward. The first Australians—the 3rd Brigade, under Colonel Sinclair Maclagan—do not linger. They carry the lines on the beach with cold steel, and find themselves looking up at a steep cliff a hundred feet high. In open order they dive into the scrub, and scramble up the loose yellow rocks. By a fortunate accident the landing is farther north than we intended, just under the cliffs of Sari Bair. At Gaba Tepe the long slope would have given the enemy a great advantage in defence; but here there is only the forty-foot beach and then the cliffs.

He who knows the Ægean in April will remember the revelation of those

fringed sea walls and bare brown slopes. From a distance they look as arid as the Syrian desert, but when the traveller draws near he finds a paradise of curious and beautiful flowers—anemone, grape hyacinth, rock rose, asphodel, and amaryllis. Up this rock garden the Australians race, among the purple cistus and the matted creepers and the thickets of myrtle. They have left their packs at the foot, and scale the bluffs like chamois. It is an achievement to rank with Wolfe's escalade of the Heights of Abraham. Presently they are at the top, and come under the main Turkish fire. But the ground gives good cover, and they set about entrenching the crest of the cliffs to cover the boats' landing. This is the position at Gaba Tepe at 7 a.m.

7 a.m.

As we journey down the coast we come next to Beach Y. There at 7 a.m. all is going well. The three cruisers, *Dublin*, *Amethyst*, and *Sapphire*, have covered the landing of the King's Own Scottish Borderers and the Plymouth battalion of the Naval Division, who have without difficulty reached the top of the cliffs. At Beach X things are even better. The *Swiftsure* has plastered the high ground with shells, and the landing ship, the *Implacable*, has anchored close to the shore in six fathoms of water. Without a single casualty the Royal Fusiliers have gained the cliff line. There has been a harder fight at Beach W, between Tekke and Helles, where the sands are broader. The shore is trenched throughout, and wired and mined almost to the water's edge, and in the scrub of the hinterland the Turkish snipers are hidden. The result is that, though our ships have bombarded the shore for three-quarters of an hour, they cannot clear out the enemy, and do not seem to have made much impression on the wire entanglements. The first troops landed to the right under the cliffs of Cape Helles, and reached the top, while a party on the left scaled Cape Tekke. But the men of the Lancashire Fusiliers who landed on the shore itself had a fiery trial. They suffered heavily while still on the water, and on landing came up against unbroken lines of wire, while snipers in the valley in front and concealed machine guns and quick-firers rained death on them. Here we have had heavy losses, and at 7 a.m. the landing has not succeeded.

But the case is more desperate still at Beach V, under Sedd-el-Bahr. Here, as at Beach W, there are a stretch of sand, a scrubby valley, and flanking cliffs. It is the strongest of the Turkish positions, and troops landing in boats are exposed to every type of converging fire. A curious expedient has been tried. A collier, the *River Clyde*, with 2,000 men of the Hampshires and Munster Fusiliers on board, as well as eight boat-loads towed by steam pinnaces, approached close to the shore. The boat-loads—the Dublin Fusiliers—suffered horribly, for when they dashed through the shallows to the beach they were pinned to the ground by fire. Three lines of wire entanglements had to be

forced, and a network of trenches. A bank of sand, five or six feet high, runs at the back, and under its cover the survivors have taken shelter. In the steel side of the liner doors have been cut, which opened and disgorged men, like some new Horse of Troy. But a tornado of shot and shell rained on her, and few of the 200 gallant men, who leaped from the lighters to the reef and from the reef to the sea, reached the land. Those who did have joined their fellows lying flat under the sand bank on that beach of death.

At Beach S, in Morto Bay, all has gone well. Seven hundred men of the South Wales Borderers have been landed from trawlers, and have established themselves on the cliff tops at the place called De Totts Battery.

Noon.

Let us go back to Gaba Tepe and look at the position at noonday. We are prospering there, for more than 10,000 men are now ashore, and the work of disembarking guns and stores goes on steadily, though the fire from inland is still deadly. We see a proof of it in a boat full of dead men which rocks idly in the surf. The great warships from the sea send their heavy shells against the Turkish lines, seaplanes are "spotting" for them, and wireless stations are being erected on the beach. Firing from the ships is not easy, for the morning sun shines right in the eyes of the gunners. The Royal Engineers are making roads up the cliff, and supplies are climbing steadily to our firing line. On the turf on the cliff top our men are entrenched, and are working their way forward. Unfortunately the zeal of the Australians has outrun their discretion, and some of them have pushed too far on, looking for enemies to bayonet. They have crossed three ridges, and have got to a point above Eskikeni within sight of the Narrows. In that "pockety" country such an advance is certain death, and the rash attack has been pushed back with heavy losses. The wounded are being brought in, and it is no light task getting them down the cliffs on stretchers, and across the beach and the bullet-splashed sea to the warships. Remember that we are holding a position which is terribly conspicuous to the enemy, and all our ammunition and water and food have to be dragged up those breakneck cliffs. Still the first round has been won, Indian troops are being landed in support, and we are firmly placed at Gaba Tepe.

As we move down the coast we find that all goes well at Beaches Y and X, and that the troops there are working their way forward. The *Implacable* has knocked out of action a Turkish battery at Krithia which gave much annoyance to our men at Beach X. At Beach W we have improved our position. We have cleared the beach and driven the Turks out of the scrub at the valley foot, and the work of disembarking men and stores is proceeding. Our right wing—Worcesters and Lancashire Fusiliers—is working round by the cliffs above

Cape Helles to try and enfilade the enemy who are holding Beach V, where our men are still in deadly jeopardy.

The scene at Beach V is strange and terrible. From the deep water the *Cornwallis* and *Albion* are trying to bombard the enemy at Sedd-el-Bahr, and the 15-inch shells from the *Queen Elizabeth* are screaming overhead. The Trojan Horse is still lying bow on against the reefs, with her 2,000 men unable to move, and the Turkish howitzers playing on her. If a man shows his head he is picked off by sharpshooters. The troops we have landed lie flat on the beach under cover of the sand ridge, unable to advance or retreat, and under a steady tornado of fire. Brigadier-General Napier has fallen, and Lieutenant-Colonel Carrington Smith, commanding the Hampshires. At Beach S things are satisfactory. Meantime the French landing at Kum Kale has achieved its purpose. Originally timed for 6 a.m., it did not take place till 9.30. They had a skirmish with the Turks, partly on the height at Kum Kale, and partly on the Trojan plain. Then they advanced along the swell of ground near the coast as far as Yenai Sheri. Next evening they re-embarked, and joined our right wing at Beach S. They took 500 prisoners, and could have taken more had there been room for them in the boats. The Turk, who showed himself a dauntless fighter when fighting was the order of the day, surrendered with great complaisance and good humour when the game was up. He had no crusading zeal in the business.

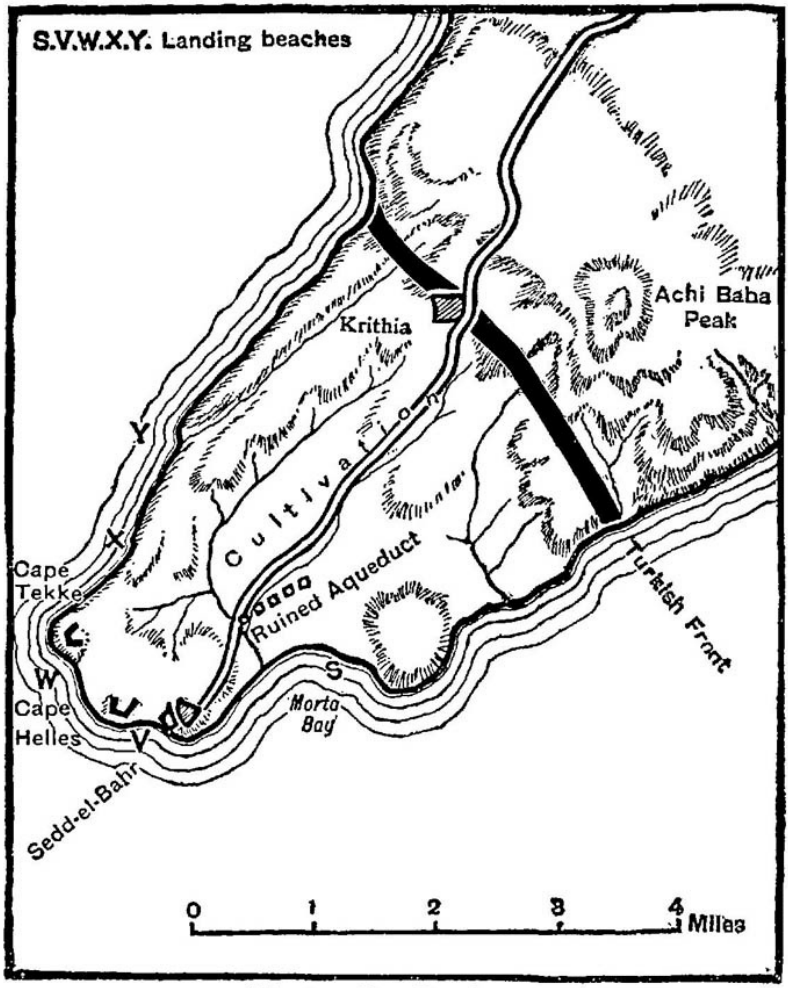
As darkness fell on that loud Sabbath, the minds of the Allied Staff may well have been anxious. We had gained a footing, but no more, and at the critical point it was but a precarious lodgment. The complexity and strength of the enemy's defence far surpassed our expectation. He had tunnelled the cliffs, and created a wonderful and intricate trench system, which took full advantage of the natural strength of the ground. The fire from our leviathans on the deep was no more effective against his entrenched positions than it had been against the forts of the Narrows.

April 26.

Let us resume our tour of the beaches about 10 a.m. on the morning of the 26th. At Gaba Tepe the Australians are facing a counter-attack. It lasts for two hours, and is met by a great bombardment from our ships. A correspondent on one of the battleships has described the scene:—[3]

> "The noise, smoke, and concussion produced was unlike anything you can even imagine until you have seen it. The hills in front looked as if they had suddenly been transformed into smoking volcanoes, the common shell throwing up great chunks of ground and masses of black smoke, whilst the shrapnel formed a white

canopy above. Sections of ground were covered by each ship all around our front trenches, and, the ranges being known, the shooting was excellent. Nevertheless, a great deal of the fire was, of necessity, indirect, and the ground affords such splendid cover that the Turks continued their advance in a most gallant manner, whilst their artillery not only plastered our positions on shore with shrapnel, but actually tried to drive the ships off the coast by firing at them, and their desperate snipers, in place of a better target, tried to pick off officers and men on the decks and bridges. We picked up many bullets on the decks afterwards. . . . On shore the rifle and machine-gun fire was incessant, and at times rose into a perfect storm as the Turks pressed forward their attack. The hills were ablaze with shells from the ships and the enemy's shrapnel, whilst on the beach masses of troops were waiting to take their places in the trenches, and the beach parties worked incessantly at landing stores, material, and ammunition."



The Landing Beaches.

The end comes when the Australians and New Zealanders counter-attack with the bayonet, and drive back the enemy. But all that day there is no rest for our troops, who are perfecting their trenches under a deluge of shrapnel.

At Beach Y things have gone badly. Our men there had advanced during the Sunday afternoon, and had been outflanked and driven back to the cliff edge. The Scottish Borderers lost their commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Koe, and more than half their men. It was decided to re-embark there, and as we pass the retreat is going on successfully under cover of the ships' fire. At Beach X there has been a hard struggle. Last night we were strongly attacked there, and driven to the very edge of the cliffs, where we hung on in rough shelter trenches. This morning we are advancing again, and making

some way. At Beach W, too, there has been a counter-attack. Yesterday afternoon our right wing there, which tried to relieve the position on Beach V by an enfilading attack on the enemy, got among wire, and were driven back. During the night the Turks came on in force, and we were compelled to fling our beach parties into the firing line, bluejackets and sappers armed with whatever weapons they could find. This morning the situation is easier, we have landed more troops, and are preparing to move forward.

At Beach V the landing is still in its first stage. Men are still sheltering on the deadly beach behind the sand bank. We have gained some positions among the ruins which were once Sedd-el-Bahr, but not enough to allow us to proceed. Even as we look a final effort is beginning, in which the Dublin Fusiliers and the Munster Fusiliers distinguish themselves, though it is hard to select for special praise among the splendid battalions of the 29th Division. It continues all morning, most gallantly directed by Lieutenant-Colonel Doughty Wylie of the Headquarters Staff, and Captain Welford of the Royal Artillery,[4] and about 2 p.m. it is successful. The main Turkish trenches are carried, the debris of the castle and village are cleared, and the enemy retreat. The landing can now go forward, and the men, who for thirty-two hours have been huddled behind the sand bank, enduring torments of thirst and a nerve-racking fire, can move their cramped limbs and join their comrades.

April 27.

By the morning of Tuesday, the 27th, all the beaches—except Beach Y, which had been relinquished—were in working order, and the advance could proceed. On that day the *Queen Elizabeth* was informed by a seaplane that a Turkish transport was coming down the Straits. She sank it in three shots, fired over a range of hills at a distance of nine miles. That day the Turkish gunners attempted to put a barrage of fire between the ships and the shore, but in spite of it the work of landing supplies went on swiftly. To quote the same correspondent:—

> "The whole scene on the beach irresistibly reminds you of a gigantic shipwreck. It looks as if the whole army with its stores had been washed ashore after a great gale or had saved themselves on rafts. All this work is carried on under an incessant shrapnel fire which sweeps the trenches and hills. The shells are frequently bursting ten or twelve at the same moment, making a deafening noise and plastering the foreshore with bullets. The only safe place is close under the cliff, but every one is rapidly becoming accustomed to the shriek of the shells and the splash of the bullets in the water, and the work goes on as if there was not a gun within miles."

That night our position on the peninsula ran from Eski Hissarlik on the Straits north-west to a point on the Gulf of Saros, 3,200 yards north-east of Cape Tekke. The dispositions from left to right were the 29th Division, four French battalions, and the South Wales Borderers. There was too little room for so large a force, and an advance was ordered for the 28th.

April 28.

Our main objective was Krithia village, and we found our road stoutly opposed. Our front was the 87th Brigade on the left, the 88th Brigade in the centre, and the French brigade on the right, with the 86th Brigade in reserve. In such a country a line has a tendency to "bunch" and become too thin in places. The result was that our progress was irregular, and under the strong Turkish counter-attacks we were too weak to hold all we won. The 87th Brigade advanced two miles, and this was the maximum we were able to make good, though parties of the 88th Brigade got within a few hundred yards of Krithia village, and the French to within a mile. Still, by that evening we had securely won the apex of the peninsula, and our front ran from three miles north-west of Cape Tekke to a mile north of Eski Hissarlik. An incident of that fight deserves to be recorded. A Turkish attack was made on our left, at a point which the nature of the ground hid from the threatened troops. It was observed by the *Queen Elizabeth* far out on the sea, and a 15-inch shell was dropped right in the midst of the attacking party. It was a shrapnel shell weighing 1,800 pounds and holding 13,000 bullets. The attack was literally blotted out, 250 Turks being killed.

So ended the first stage in the Gallipoli campaign—the Battle of the Landing. It is a fight without a precedent. There have been landings—such as Abercromby's at Aboukir—fiercely contested landings, in our history, but none on a scale like this. Sixty thousand men, backed by the most powerful Navy in the world, attacked a shore which nature seemed to have made impregnable, and which was held by at least twice that number of the enemy, in positions prepared for months, and supported by the latest modern artillery. The mere problem of transport was sufficient to deter the boldest. Every rule of war was set at nought. On paper the thing was impossible, as the Turkish Army Order announced. By the textbooks no man should have left the beaches alive. In Sir Ian Hamilton's words, it "involved difficulties for which no precedent was forthcoming in military history." Remember that we were fighting against a gallant enemy who was at his best in defence and in this unorthodox type of battle. All accounts prove that the Turks fought with superlative boldness and courage—with chivalry,[5] too, as their treatment of our wounded showed. That our audacity succeeded is a tribute to the unsurpassable fighting quality of our men—the Regulars of the 29th Division, the Naval Division, and not least to the dash and doggedness of the

Australasian corps. Whatever be the judgment of posterity on its policy or its consequences, the Battle of the Landing will be acclaimed as a mighty feat of arms.

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[1] His place was taken on May 10th by General Gouraud, a man of forty-seven, who had had a unique experience of French Colonial war. During the winter he had done brilliant work in the Argonne, and was the youngest *Général de Division* in the French Army.

[2] This division had volunteered as a unit for foreign service. Its infantry comprised the Lancashire Fusiliers Brigade—5th, 6th, 7th, 8th Lancashire Fusiliers; the East Lancashire Brigade—4th and 5th East Lancashires, 9th and 10th Manchesters; and the Manchester Brigade—5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Manchesters.

[3] *Times*, May 7th.

[4] Both officers received the Victoria Cross, and both fell in the moment of victory.

[5] Some atrocities were committed by an Arab battalion, but all the evidence shows that the Turks were punctilious in observing the etiquette of war towards the wounded.

APPENDIX.

THE BATTLE OF NEUVE CHAPELLE.

SIR JOHN FRENCH'S SIXTH DISPATCH.

The following Dispatch has been received by the Secretary of State for War from the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, the British Army in the Field:—

General Headquarters, 5th April 1915.

MY LORD,

I have the honour to report the operations of the Forces under my command since the date of my last dispatch, 2nd February 1915.

I. The event of chief interest and importance which has taken place is the victory achieved over the enemy at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, which was fought on the 10th, 11th, and 12th of March. The main attack was delivered by troops of the First Army under the command of General Sir Douglas Haig, supported by a large force of Heavy Artillery, a Division of Cavalry, and some Infantry of the general reserve.

Secondary and holding attacks and demonstrations were made along the front of the Second Army under the direction of its Commander, General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien.

Whilst the success attained was due to the magnificent bearing and indomitable courage displayed by the troops of the Fourth and Indian Corps, I consider that the able and skilful dispositions which were made by the General Officer Commanding First Army contributed largely to the defeat of the enemy and to the capture of his position. The energy and vigour with which General Sir Douglas Haig handled his command show him to be a leader of great ability and power.

Another action of considerable importance was brought about by a surprise attack of the Germans made on the 14th March against the 27th Division holding the trenches east of St. Eloi. A large force of artillery was concentrated in this area under cover of mist, and a heavy volume of fire was suddenly brought to bear on the trenches at 5 p.m. This artillery attack was accompanied by two mine explosions; and, in the confusion caused by these and the suddenness of the attack, the position of St. Eloi was captured and held for some hours by the enemy.

Well-directed and vigorous counter-attacks, in which the troops of the Fifth Army Corps showed great bravery and determination, restored the situation by the evening of the 15th.

A more detailed account of these operations will appear in subsequent pages of this dispatch.

THE FIGHT FOR THE BRICKFIELD.

II. On the 6th February a brilliant action by troops of the First Corps materially improved our position in the area south of the La Bassée Canal. During the previous night parties of Irish Guards and of the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards had succeeded in gaining ground whence converging fire could be directed on the flanks and rear of certain “brickstacks” occupied by the Germans, which had been for some time a source of considerable annoyance.

At 2 p.m. the affair commenced with a severe bombardment of the “brickstacks” and the enemy’s trenches. A brisk attack by the 3rd Coldstream Guards and Irish Guards from our trenches west of the “brickstacks” followed, and was supported by fire from the flanking positions which had been seized the previous night by the same regiments. The attack succeeded, the “brickstacks” were occupied without difficulty, and a line established north and south through a point about forty yards east of the “brickstacks.”

The casualties suffered by the Fifth Corps throughout the period under review, and particularly during the month of February, have been heavier than those in other parts of the line. I regret this; but I do not think, taking all the circumstances into consideration, that they were unduly numerous. The position then occupied by the Fifth Corps has always been a very vulnerable part of our line; the ground is marshy, and trenches are most difficult to construct and maintain. The 27th and 28th Divisions of the Fifth Corps have had no previous experience of European warfare, and a number of the units composing it had only recently returned from service in tropical climates. In consequence, the hardships of a rigorous winter campaign fell with greater weight upon these Divisions than upon any other in the command.

Chiefly owing to these causes, the Fifth Corps, up to the beginning of March, was constantly engaged in counter-attack to retake trenches and ground which had been lost.

In their difficult and arduous task, however, the troops displayed the utmost gallantry and devotion; and it is most creditable to the skill and energy of their leaders that I am able to report how well they have surmounted all their

difficulties, that the ground first taken over by them is still intact, and held with little greater loss than is incurred by troops in all other parts of the line.

On the 14th February the 82nd Brigade of the 27th Division was driven from its trenches east of St. Eloi; but by 7 a.m. on the 15th all these trenches had been recaptured, fifteen prisoners taken, and sixty German dead counted in front of the trenches. Similarly in the 28th Division trenches were lost by the 85th Brigade and retaken the following night.

During the month of February the enemy made several attempts to get through all along the line, but he was invariably repulsed with loss. A particularly vigorous attempt was made on the 17th February against the trenches held by the Indian Corps, but it was brilliantly repulsed.

PRINCESS PATRICIA'S REGIMENT.

On February 28th a successful minor attack was made on the enemy's trenches near St. Eloi by small parties of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The attack was divided into three small groups, the whole under the command of Lieutenant Crabbe: No. 1 Group under Lieutenant Papineau, No. 2 Group under Sergeant Patterson, and No. 3 Group under Company Sergeant-Major Lloyd.

The head of the party got within fifteen or twenty yards of the German trench and charged; it was dark at the time (about 5.15 a.m.).

Lieutenant Crabbe, who showed the greatest dash and *élan*, took his party over everything in the trench until they had gone down it about eighty yards, when they were stopped by a barricade of sand-bags and timber. This party, as well as the others, then pulled down the front face of the German parapet. A number of Germans were killed and wounded, and a few prisoners were taken.

The services performed by this distinguished corps have continued to be very valuable since I had occasion to refer to them in my last dispatch. They have been most ably organized, trained, and commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel F. D. Farquhar, D.S.O., who, I deeply regret to say, was killed while superintending some trench work on the 20th March. His loss will be deeply felt.

A very gallant attack was made by the 4th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps of the 80th Brigade on the enemy's trenches in the early hours of March 2nd. The Battalion was led by Major Widdrington, who launched it at 12.30 a.m. (he himself being wounded during its progress), covered by an extremely accurate and effective artillery fire. About sixty yards of the enemy's trench were cleared, but the attack was brought to a standstill by a

very strong barricade, in attempting to storm which several casualties were incurred.

WORK OF THE CAVALRY.

III. During the month of February I arranged with General Foch to render the 9th French Corps, holding the trenches on my left, some much-needed rest by sending the three Divisions of the British Cavalry Corps to hold a portion of the French trenches, each Division for a period of ten days alternately.

It was very gratifying to me to note once again in this campaign the eager readiness which the Cavalry displayed to undertake a *rôle* which does not properly belong to them in order to support and assist their French comrades.

In carrying out this work, leaders, officers, and men displayed the same skill and energy which I have had reason to comment upon in former dispatches.

The time passed by the Cavalry in the French trenches was, on the whole, quiet and uneventful, but there are one or two incidents calling for remark.

At about 1.45 a.m. on 16th February a half-hearted attack was made against the right of the line held by the 2nd Cavalry Division, but it was easily repulsed by rifle fire, and the enemy left several dead in front of the trenches. The attack was delivered against the second and third trenches from the right of the line of this Division.

At 6 a.m. on the 21st the enemy blew up one of the 2nd Cavalry Division trenches, held by the 16th Lancers, and some adjoining French trenches. The enemy occupied forty yards of our trench and tried to advance, but were stopped. An immediate counter-attack by the supporting squadron was stopped by machine-gun fire. The line was established opposite the gap, and a counter-attack by two squadrons and one company of French reserve was ordered. At 5.30 p.m. 2nd Cavalry Division reported that the counter-attack did not succeed in retaking the trench blown in, but that a new line had been established forty yards in rear of it, and that there was no further activity on the part of the enemy. At 10 p.m. the situation was unchanged.

The Commander of the Indian Cavalry Corps expressed a strong desire that the troops under his command should gain some experience in trench warfare. Arrangements were made, therefore, with the General Officer Commanding the Indian Corps, in pursuance of which the various units of the Indian Cavalry Corps have from time to time taken a turn in the trenches, and have thereby gained some valuable experience.

IV. About the end of February many vital considerations induced me to believe that a vigorous offensive movement by the Forces under my command should be planned and carried out at the earliest possible moment.

Amongst the more important reasons which convinced me of this necessity were:—The general aspect of the Allied situation throughout Europe, and particularly the marked success of the Russian Army in repelling the violent onslaughts of Marshal von Hindenburg; the apparent weakening of the enemy in my front, and the necessity for assisting our Russian Allies to the utmost by holding as many hostile troops as possible in the Western Theatre; the efforts to this end which were being made by the French Forces at Arras and Champagne; and, perhaps the most weighty consideration of all, the need of fostering the offensive spirit in the troops under my command after the trying and possibly enervating experiences which they had gone through of a severe winter in the trenches.

In a former dispatch I commented upon the difficulties and drawbacks which the winter weather in this climate imposes upon a vigorous offensive. Early in March these difficulties became greatly lessened by the drying up of the country and by spells of brighter weather.

I do not propose in this dispatch to enter at length into the considerations which actuated me in deciding upon the plan, time, and place of my attack, but Your Lordship is fully aware of these.

As mentioned above, the main attack was carried out by units of the First Army, supported by troops of the Second Army, and the general reserve.

The object of the main attack was to be the capture of the village of Neuve Chapelle and the enemy's position at that point, and the establishment of our line as far forward as possible to the east of that place.

The object, nature, and scope of the attack, and instructions for the conduct of the operation were communicated by me to Sir Douglas Haig in a secret memorandum dated 19th February.

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE VILLAGE.

The main topographical feature of this part of the theatre is a marked ridge which runs south-west from a point two miles south-west of Lille to the village of Fournes, whence two spurs run out, one due west to a height known as Haut Pommereau, the other following the line of the main road to Illies.

The buildings of the village of Neuve Chapelle run along the Rue du Bois-

Fauquissart Road. There is a triangle of roads just north of the village. This area consists of a few big houses, with walls, gardens, orchards, etc., and here, with the aid of numerous machine guns, the enemy had established a strong post which flanked the approaches to the village.

The Bois du Biez, which lies roughly south-east of the village of Neuve Chapelle, influenced the course of this operation.

Full instructions as to assisting and supporting the attack were issued to the Second Army.

BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE.

The battle opened at 7.30 a.m. on the 10th March by a powerful artillery bombardment of the enemy's position at Neuve Chapelle. The artillery bombardment had been well prepared and was most effective, except on the extreme northern portion of the front of attack.

At 8.5 a.m. the 23rd (left) and 25th (right) Brigades of the 8th Division assaulted the German trenches on the north-west of the village.

At the same hour the Garhwal Brigade of the Meerut Division, which occupied the position to the south of Neuve Chapelle, assaulted the German trenches in its front.

The Garhwal Brigade and the 25th Brigade carried the enemy's lines of entrenchments where the wire entanglements had been almost entirely swept away by our shrapnel fire. The 23rd Brigade, however, on the north-east, was held up by the wire entanglements, which were not sufficiently cut.

At 8.5 a.m. the artillery turned on to Neuve Chapelle, and at 8.35 a.m. the advance of the infantry was continued.

The 25th and Garhwal Brigades pushed on eastward and north-eastward respectively, and succeeded in getting a footing in the village. The 23rd Brigade was still held up in front of the enemy's wire entanglements, and could not progress. Heavy losses were suffered, especially in the Middlesex Regiment and the Scottish Rifles. The progress, however, of the 25th Brigade into Neuve Chapelle immediately to the south of the 23rd Brigade had the effect of turning the southern flank of the enemy's defences in front of the 23rd Brigade.

This fact, combined with powerful artillery support, enabled the 23rd Brigade to get forward between 10 and 11 a.m., and by 11 a.m. the whole of the village of Neuve Chapelle and the roads leading northward and south-westward from the eastern end of that village were in our hands.

During this time our artillery completely cut off the village and the surrounding country from any German reinforcements which could be thrown into the fight to restore the situation by means of a curtain of shrapnel fire. Prisoners subsequently reported that all attempts at reinforcing the front line were checked.

Steps were at once taken to consolidate the position won.

THE HITCH.

Considerable delay occurred after the capture of the Neuve Chapelle position. The infantry was greatly disorganized by the violent nature of the attack and by its passage through the enemy's trenches and the buildings of the village. It was necessary to get units to some extent together before pushing on. The telephonic communication being cut by the enemy's fire rendered communication between front and rear most difficult. The fact of the left of the 23rd Brigade having been held up and kept back the 8th Division, had involved a portion of the 25th Brigade in fighting to the north out of its proper direction of advance. All this required adjustment. An orchard held by the enemy north of Neuve Chapelle also threatened the flank of an advance towards the Aubers Ridge.

I am of opinion that this delay would not have occurred had the clearly expressed order of the General Officer Commanding First Army been more carefully observed.

The difficulties above enumerated might have been overcome at an earlier period of the day if the General Officer Commanding Fourth Corps had been able to bring his reserve brigades more speedily into action.

As it was, the further advance did not commence before 3.30 p.m.

The 21st Brigade was able to form up in the open on the left without a shot being fired at it, thus showing that at the time the enemy's resistance had been paralyzed. The Brigade pushed forward in the direction of Moulin de Pietre.

At first it made good progress, but was subsequently held up by the machine-gun fire from the houses and from a defended work in the line of the German entrenchments opposite the right of the 22nd Brigade.

Farther to the south the 24th Brigade, which had been directed on Pietre, was similarly held up by machine guns in the houses and trenches at the road junction six hundred yards north-west of Pietre.

The 25th Brigade, on the right of the 24th, was also held up by machine guns from a bridge held by the Germans, over the River des Layes, which is

situated to the north-west of the Bois du Biez.

Whilst two Brigades of the Meerut Division were establishing themselves on the new line, the Dehra Dun Brigade, supported by the Jullundur Brigade of the Lahore Division, moved to the attack of the Bois du Biez, but were held up on the line of the River des Layes by the German post at the bridge which enfiladed them and brought them to a standstill.

The defended bridge over the River des Layes and its neighbourhood immediately assumed considerable importance. Whilst artillery fire was brought to bear, as far as circumstances would permit, on this point, Sir Douglas Haig directed the First Corps to dispatch one or more battalions of the 1st Brigade in support of the troops attacking the bridge. Three battalions were thus sent to Richebourg St. Vaast. Darkness coming on, and the enemy having brought up reinforcements, no further progress could be made, and the Indian Corps and Fourth Corps proceeded to consolidate the position they had gained.

Whilst the operations which I have thus briefly recorded were going on, the First Corps, in accordance with orders, delivered an attack in the morning from Givenchy, simultaneously with that against Neuve Chapelle; but, as the enemy's wire was insufficiently cut, very little progress could be made, and the troops at this point did little more than hold fast the Germans in front of them.

THE SECOND DAY.

On the following day, March 11th, the attack was renewed by the Fourth and Indian Corps, but it was soon seen that a further advance would be impossible until the artillery had dealt effectively with the various houses and defended localities which held up the troops along the entire front. Efforts were made to direct the artillery fire accordingly; but owing to the weather conditions, which did not permit of aerial observation, and the fact that nearly all the telephonic communications between the artillery observers and their batteries had been cut, it was impossible to do so with sufficient accuracy. Even when our troops which were pressing forward occupied a house here and there, it was not possible to stop our artillery fire, and the infantry had to be withdrawn.

The two principal points which barred the advance were the same as on the preceding day—namely, the enemy's position about Moulin de Pietre and at the bridge over the River des Layes.

THE THIRD DAY.

On the 12th March the same unfavourable conditions as regards weather prevailed, and hampered artillery action.

Although the Fourth and Indian Corps most gallantly attempted to capture the strongly fortified positions in their front, they were unable to maintain themselves, although they succeeded in holding them for some hours.

Operations on this day were chiefly remarkable for the violent counter-attacks supported by artillery, which were delivered by the Germans, and the ease with which they were repulsed.

As most of the objects for which the operations had been undertaken had been attained, and as there were reasons why I considered it inadvisable to continue the attack at that time, I directed Sir Douglas Haig on the night of the 12th to hold and consolidate the ground which had been gained by the Fourth and Indian Corps, and to suspend further offensive operations for the present.

On the morning of the 12th I informed the General Officer Commanding First Army that he could call on the 2nd Cavalry Division, under General Gough, for immediate support in the event of the successes of the First Army opening up opportunities for its favourable employment. This Division and a Brigade of the North Midland Division, which was temporarily attached to it, was moved forward for this purpose.

The 5th Cavalry Brigade, under Sir Philip Chetwode, reached the Rue Bacquerot at 4 p.m. with a view to rendering immediate support; but he was informed by the General Officer Commanding Fourth Corps that the situation was not so favourable as he had hoped it would be, and that no further action by the cavalry was advisable.

General Gough's command, therefore, retired to Estaires.

The artillery of all kinds was handled with the utmost energy and skill, and rendered invaluable support in the prosecution of the attack.

THE CASUALTIES.

The losses during these three days' fighting were, I regret to say, very severe, numbering—

190 officers and 2,337 other ranks, killed.
359 officers and 8,174 other ranks, wounded.
23 officers and 1,728 other ranks, missing.

But the results attained were, in my opinion, wide and far-reaching.

The enemy left several thousand dead on the battlefield, which were seen and counted; and we have positive information that upwards of 12,000 wounded were removed to the north-east and east by train.

Thirty officers and 1,657 other ranks of the enemy were captured.

I can best express my estimate of this battle by quoting an extract from a Special Order of the Day which I addressed to Sir Douglas Haig and the First Army at its conclusion:—

> "I am anxious to express to you personally my warmest appreciation of the skilful manner in which you have carried out your orders, and my fervent and most heart-felt appreciation of the magnificent gallantry and devoted, tenacious courage displayed by all ranks whom you have ably led to success and victory."

SUPPLEMENTARY ATTACKS.

V. Some operations in the nature of holding attacks, carried out by troops of the Second Army, were instrumental in keeping the enemy in front of them occupied, and preventing reinforcements being sent from those portions of the front to the main point of attack.

At 12.30 a.m. on the 12th March the 17th Infantry Brigade of the 4th Division, Third Corps, engaged in an attack on the enemy which resulted in the capture of the village of L'Epinette and adjacent farms.

Supported by a brisk fire from the 18th Infantry Brigade, the 17th Infantry Brigade, detailed for the attack, assaulted in two columns converging, and obtained the first houses of the village without much loss. The remainder of the village was very heavily wired, and the enemy got away by means of communication trenches while our men were cutting through the wire.

The enemy suffered considerable loss; our casualties being five officers and 30 other ranks killed and wounded.

The result of this operation was that an advance of 300 yards was made on a front of half a mile.

All attempts to retake this position have been repulsed with heavy loss to the enemy.

The General Officer Commanding the Second Corps arranged for an attack on a part of the enemy's position to the south-west of the village of Wytschaete which he had timed to commence at 10 a.m. on the 12th March. Owing to dense fog, the assault could not be made until 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

It was then commenced by the Wiltshire and Worcestershire Regiments, but was so hampered by the mist and the approach of darkness that nothing

more was effected than holding the enemy to his ground.

ST. ELOI.

The action of St. Eloi referred to in the first paragraph of this dispatch commenced at 5 p.m. on the 14th March by a very heavy cannonade, which was directed against our trenches in front of St. Eloi, the village itself, and the approaches to it. There is a large mound lying to the south-east of the village. When the artillery attack was at its height a mine was exploded under this mound, and a strong hostile infantry attack was immediately launched against the trenches and the mound.

Our artillery opened fire at once, as well as our infantry, and inflicted considerable losses on the enemy during their advance; but, chiefly owing to the explosion of the mine and the surprise of the overwhelming artillery attack, the enemy's infantry had penetrated the first line of trenches at some points. As a consequence the garrisons of other works which had successfully resisted the assault were enfiladed and forced to retire just before it turned dark.

A counter-attack was at once organized by the General Officer Commanding 82nd Brigade, under the orders of the General Officer Commanding 27th Division, who brought up a reserve brigade to support it.

The attack was launched at 2 a.m., and the 82nd Brigade succeeded in recapturing the portion of the village of St. Eloi which was in the hands of the enemy and a portion of the trenches east of it. At 3 a.m. the 80th Brigade in support took more trenches to the east and west of the village.

The counter-attack, which was well carried out under difficult conditions, resulted in the recapture of all lost ground of material importance.

It is satisfactory to be able to record that, though the troops occupying the first line of trenches were at first overwhelmed, they afterwards behaved very gallantly in the counter-attack for the recovery of the lost ground; and the following units earned and received the special commendation of the Army Commander:—The 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers, the 2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, the 1st Leinster Regiment, the 4th Rifle Brigade, and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

A vigorous attack made by the enemy on the 17th to recapture these trenches was repulsed with great loss.

Throughout the period under review night enterprises by smaller or larger patrols, which were led with consummate skill and daring, have been very active along the whole line.

A moral superiority has thus been established, and valuable information has been collected.

I cannot speak too highly of the invincible courage and the remarkable resource displayed by these patrols.

The troops of the Third Corps have particularly impressed me by their conduct of these operations.

THE WORK OF THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS.

VI. The work of the Royal Flying Corps throughout this period, and especially during the operations of the 10th, 11th, and 12th March, was of the greatest value. Though the weather on March 10th and on the subsequent days was very unfavourable for aerial work, on account of low-lying clouds and mist, a remarkable number of hours flying of a most valuable character were effected, and continuous and close reconnaissance was maintained over the enemy's front.

In addition to the work of reconnaissance and observation of artillery fire, the Royal Flying Corps was charged with the special duty of hampering the enemy's movements by destroying various points on his communications. The railways at Menin, Courtrai, Don, and Douai were attacked, and it is known that very extensive damage was effected at certain of these places. Part of a troop train was hit by a bomb, a wireless installation near Lille is believed to have been effectively destroyed, and a house in which the enemy had installed one of his Headquarters was set on fire. These afford other instances of successful operations of this character. Most of the objectives mentioned were attacked at a height of only 100 to 150 feet. In one case the pilot descended to about 50 feet above the point he was attacking.

Certain new and important forms of activity, which it is undesirable to specify, have been initiated and pushed forward with much vigour and success.

There have been only eight days during the period under review on which reconnaissances have not been made. A total of approximately 130,000 miles have been flown—almost entirely over the enemy's lines.

No great activity has been shown over our troops on the part of the enemy's aircraft, but they have been attacked whenever and wherever met with, and usually forced down or made to seek refuge in their own lines.

REINFORCEMENTS.

VII. In my last dispatch I referred to the remarkable promptitude and rapidity with which reinforcements arrived in this country from England. In

connection with this it is of interest to call attention to the fact that, in spite of the heavy casualties incurred in the fighting between the 10th and 15th March, all deficiencies, both in officers and rank and file, were made good within a few days of the conclusion of the battle.

The drafts for the Indian Contingents have much improved of late, and are now quite satisfactory.

THE MEDICAL SERVICES.

Since the date of my last report the general health of the Army has been excellent; enteric has decreased, and there has been no recurrence on any appreciable scale of the "foot" trouble which appeared so threatening in December and January.

These results are due to the skill and energy which have characterized in a marked degree the work of the Royal Army Medical Corps throughout the campaign, under the able supervision of Surgeon-General T. J. O'Donnell, D.S.O., Deputy Director-General, Medical Services. But much credit is also due to Divisional, Brigade, Regimental, and Company Commanders for the close supervision which has been kept over the health of their men by seeing that the precautions laid down for the troops before entering and after leaving the trenches are duly observed, and by the establishment and efficient maintenance of bathing-places and wash-houses, and by the ingenious means universally employed throughout the Forces to maintain the cleanliness of the men, having regard both to their bodies and their clothing.

I have inspected most of these houses and establishments, and consider them models of careful organization and supervision.

I would particularly comment upon the energy displayed by the Royal Army Medical Corps in the scientific efforts they have made to discover and check disease in its earliest stages by a system of experimental research, which I think has never before been so fully developed in the field.

In this work they have been ably assisted by those distinguished members of the medical profession who are now employed as Military Medical Officers, and whose invaluable services I gratefully acknowledge.

The actual strength of the Force in the field has been increased and the health of the troops improved by a system of "convalescent" hospitals.

In these establishments slight wounds and minor ailments are treated, and men requiring attention and rest are received.

By these means efficient soldiers, whose services would otherwise be lost

for a long time, are kept in the country, whilst a large number of men are given immediate relief and rest when they require it without removing them from the area of operations.

This adds materially to the fighting efficiency of the Forces.

The principal convalescent hospital is at St. Omer. It was started and organized by Colonel A. F. L. Bate, Army Medical Service, whose zeal, energy, and organizing power have rendered it a model hospital of its kind, and this example has materially assisted in the efficient organization of similar smaller establishments at every Divisional Headquarters.

THE LATE GENERAL GOUGH.

VIII. I have already commented upon the number and severity of the casualties in action which have occurred in the period under report. Here once again I have to draw attention to the excellent work done by Surgeon-General O'Donnell and his officers. No organization could excel the efficiency of the arrangements—whether in regard to time, space, care and comfort, or transport—which are made for the speedy evacuation of the wounded.

I wish particularly to express my deep sense of the loss incurred by the Army in general and by the Forces in France in particular, in the death of Brigadier-General J. E. Gough, V.C., C.M.G., A.D.C., late Brigadier-General, General Staff, First Army, which occurred on 22nd February, as a result of a severe wound received on the 20th February when inspecting the trenches of the Fourth Corps.

I always regarded General Gough as one of our most promising military leaders of the future. His services as a Staff Officer throughout the campaign have been invaluable, and I had already brought his name before Your Lordship for immediate promotion.

NEED OF ARTILLERY.

I can well understand how deeply these casualties are felt by the nation at large, but each daily report shows clearly that they are being endured on at least an equal scale by all the combatants engaged throughout Europe, friends and foes alike.

In war as it is to-day between civilized nations, armed to the teeth with the present deadly rifle and machine gun, heavy casualties are absolutely unavoidable. For the slightest undue exposure the heaviest toll is exacted.

The power of defence conferred by modern weapons is the main cause of the long duration of the battles of the present day, and it is this fact which

mainly accounts for such loss and waste of life.

Both one and the other can, however, be shortened and lessened if attacks can be supported by the most efficient and powerful force of artillery available; but an almost unlimited supply of ammunition is necessary and a most liberal discretionary power as to its use must be given to the Artillery Commanders.

I am confident that this is the only means by which great results can be obtained with a minimum of loss.

THE CANADIAN DIVISION.

IX. On the 15th February the Canadian Division began to arrive in this country. I inspected the Division, which was under the command of Lieutenant-General E. A. H. Alderson, C.B., on 20th February.

They presented a splendid and most soldier-like appearance on parade. The men were of good physique, hard and fit. I judged by what I saw of them that they were well trained and quite able to take their places in the line of battle.

Since then the Division has thoroughly justified the good opinion I formed of it.

The troops of the Canadian Division were first attached for a few days by brigades for training in the Third Corps trenches under Lieutenant-General Sir William Pulteney, who gave me such an excellent report of their efficiency that I was able to employ them in the trenches early in March.

During the Battle of Neuve Chapelle they held a part of the line allotted to the First Army, and, although they were not actually engaged in the main attack, they rendered valuable help by keeping the enemy actively employed in front of their trenches.

All the soldiers of Canada serving in the Army under my command have so far splendidly upheld the traditions of the Empire, and will, I feel sure, prove to be a great source of additional strength to the forces in this country.

THE TERRITORIALS.

In former dispatches I have been able to comment very favourably upon the conduct and bearing of the Territorial Forces throughout the operations in which they have been engaged.

As time goes on, and I see more and more of their work, whether in the trenches or engaged in more active operations, I am still further impressed with their value.

Several battalions were engaged in the most critical moments of the heavy

fighting which occurred in the middle of March, and they acquitted themselves with the utmost credit.

Up till lately the troops of the Territorial Forces in this country were only employed by battalions, but for some weeks past I have seen formed divisions working together, and I have every hope that their employment in the larger units will prove as successful as in the smaller.

These opinions are fully borne out by the result of the close inspection which I have recently made of the North Midland Division, under Major-General Hon. E. J. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley, and the 2nd London Division, under Major-General Barter.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.

X. General Baron von Kaulbars, of the Russian General Staff, arrived at my Headquarters on the 18th March. He was anxious to study our aviation system, and I gave him every opportunity of doing so.

The Bishop of London arrived here with his Chaplain on Saturday, March 27th, and left on Monday, April 5th.

During the course of his visit to the Army His Lordship was at the front every day, and I think I am right in saying that there was scarcely a unit in the command which was not at one time or another present at his services or addresses.

Personal fatigue and even danger were completely ignored by His Lordship. The Bishop held several services virtually under shell fire, and it was with difficulty that he could be prevented from carrying on his ministrations under rifle fire in the trenches.

I am anxious to place on record my deep sense of the good effect produced throughout the Army by this self-sacrificing devotion on the part of the Bishop of London, to whom I feel personally very deeply indebted.

I have once more to remark upon the devotion to duty, courage, and contempt of danger which has characterized the work of the Chaplains of the Army throughout this campaign.

WORK OF SUBORDINATE SERVICES.

XI. The increased strength of the Force and the gradual exhaustion of the local resources have necessitated a corresponding increase in our demands on the Line of Communications, since we are now compelled to import many articles which in the early stages could be obtained by local purchase. The

Directorates concerned have, however, been carefully watching the situation, and all the Administrative Services on the Line of Communications have continued to work with smoothness and regularity, in spite of the increased pressure thrown upon them. In this connection I wish to bring to notice the good service which has been rendered by the Staff of the Base Ports.

The work of the Railway Transport Department has been excellently carried out, and I take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the valuable services rendered by the French railway authorities generally, and especially by Colonel Ragueneau, late Directeur des Chemins de Fer, Lieutenant-Colonel Le Hénaff, Directeur des Chemins de Fer, Lieutenant-Colonel Dumont, Commissaire Militaire, Chemin de Fer du Nord, and Lieutenant-Colonel Frid, Commissaire Regulateur, Armée Anglaise.

The Army Postal Service has continued to work well, and at the present time a letter posted in London is delivered at General Headquarters or at the Headquarters of the Armies and Army Corps on the following evening, and reaches an addressee in the trenches on the second day after posting. The delivery of parcels has also been accelerated, and is carried out with regularity and dispatch.

THE BELGIAN ARMY.

XII. His Majesty the King of the Belgians visited the British lines on February 8th and inspected some of the units in reserve behind the trenches.

During the last two months I have been much indebted to His Majesty and his gallant Army for valuable assistance and co-operation in various ways.

THE PRINCE OF WALES.

XIII. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is the bearer of this dispatch.

His Royal Highness continues to make most satisfactory progress. During the Battle of Neuve Chapelle he acted on my General Staff as a Liaison Officer. Reports from the General Officers Commanding Corps and Divisions to which he has been attached agree in commending the thoroughness in which he performs any work entrusted to him.

I have myself been very favourably impressed by the quickness with which His Royal Highness has acquired knowledge of the various branches of the service, and the deep interest he has always displayed in the comfort and welfare of the men.

His visits to the troops, both in the field and in hospitals, have been greatly appreciated by all ranks.

His Royal Highness did duty for a time in the trenches with the Battalion to which he belongs.

COMMENDATIONS.

XIV. In connection with the Battle of Neuve Chapelle I desire to bring to Your Lordship's special notice the valuable services of General Sir Douglas Haig, K.C.B., K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O., A.D.C., Commanding the First Army.

I am also much indebted to the able and devoted assistance I have received from Lieutenant-General Sir William Robertson, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the General Staff, in the direction of all the operations recorded in this dispatch.

I have many other names to bring to notice for valuable, gallant, and distinguished service during the period under review, and these will form the subject of a separate report at an early date.

I have the honour to be
Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,
J. D. P. FRENCH,
Field-Marshal,
Commanding-in-Chief,
The British Army in the Field.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected or standardised.

Inconsistency in accents has been corrected or standardised.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

[The end of *Nelson's History of the War Volume VI* by John Buchan]