

~~SECRET~~

THE MESOPOTAMIA CAMPAIGN IN THE WORLD WAR.

By

Lt.Col. George B. Hunter, Cav.,
Instructor, G-4 Division.

Lecture delivered at
The Army War College,
Washington, D. C.,
April 1, 1930.

REVISED

- CONDUCT OF WAR COURSE NO. 22,
1929-1930.

Number of Copies 175.

Copy No. 26

THE MESOPOTAMIA CAMPAIGN IN THE WORLD WAR.

By

Lt. Col. George B. Hunter, Cav.,
Instructor, G-4 Division.

SLIDES - "See next page."

12555-59

12560-67

12575

12614-15

Lecture delivered at
The Army War College,
Washington, D.C.,
April 1, 1930.

CONDUCT OF WAR COURSE NO. 23.
1929-1930.

SLIDES.

No.	War College File No.	Subject: Map of:
1.	6515	Asia Minor.
2.	12567 ✓	Mesopotamia.
3.	12566 ✓	Lower Mesopotamia.
4.	12563 ✓	Mohammerah.
5.	12560 ✓	Qurna.
6.	12565 ✓	Shaiba.
7.	12564 ✓	Nasiriya.
8.	12562 ✓	Battle of Kut, 1915.
9.	12559 ✓	Kut to Baghdad.
10.	12561 ✓	Ctesiphon battle.
11.	12557 ✓	Operations near Kut to April, 1916.
12.	12556 ✓	Operations near Kut to Feb., 1917.
13.	12558 ✓	Capture of Baghdad.
14.	12555 ✓	Area north of Baghdad.
15.	12575 ✓	(Chart) Maude's Organization.
16.	12614 ✓	Kifri - Kirkuk Area.
17.	12615 ✓	Operations on the Tigris, Oct., 1918.

Note:-

Slide No. 2 is reproduced and attached hereto. It will assist in locating most of the places mentioned in the lecture.

THE MESOPOTAMIA CAMPAIGN IN THE WORLD WAR.

I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY.

1. Extent and Geographic Location. (Slide No. 1).

Mesopotamia in 1914, was that part of the Turkish Empire which lay between the Armenian plateau and Kurdistan on the north and the Persian Gulf on the south.

2. Climate.

The climate is one of extremes and very unhealthful. The temperature varies from 120° (Fahr.) to well below freezing.

The rain on the Mesopotamia plain nearly all falls between October and April and has little to do with the high floods in April and May which are caused by the melting snows in the mountains.

The very frequent occurrence of mirage had an important effect on military operations, interfering with reconnaissance, observation of fire, and visual signalling.

3. Topography. (Slide No. 2).

The one outstanding topographical feature is the Euphrates and Tigris River system. In Lower Mesopotamia this basin is a flat featureless plain, generally below the high flood level of the rivers. In Upper Mesopotamia the basin is a more or less undulating, treeless plain with here and there low ranges of hills.

4. Communications. (Slide No. 3).

a. Railroads.

In 1914 the only railroads within Mesopotamia were 74 miles of the Baghdad Railroad which had been completed between Baghdad and Samarra and a 60 cm. line connecting Baghdad with the Euphrates near Falluja.

b. Roads.

Such roads as existed before 1914 were unmetalled and for the greater part without bridges.

c. Rivers.

The rivers were universally regarded as the best means of travel, but they were subjected to violent floods, and stages of low water, which without a modern system of improvement and maintenance made their navigation very difficult and required special types of river craft.

d. Ports.

Basra, 62 miles from the sea, was in 1914 the best port in Mesopotamia for accommodating ocean-going ships; however, it lacked most of the essentials for a military base. The ground was water-logged and flooded during high water. Ocean-going ships were unloaded in mid-stream into native boats which then drifted with the current until they could be poled ashore.

5. Products.

While in Upper Mesopotamia the rainfall is sufficient for agriculture, in Lower Mesopotamia irrigation must be depended upon, but until Baghdad fell into their hands in March, 1917, the British were unable to exploit the local resources.

About 26 miles southeast of Shuster are the oil fields owned by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The oil is piped southwest, 140 miles, to the refinery on the Abadan Island in the Shatt al Arab.

II. THE FIRST PHASE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS.

1. General Statement.

The discussion of this campaign will be divided into two phases. In the first phase, extending to the surrender of General Townshend's force at Kut in April, 1916, you will see the result of attempting extensive military operations without adequate provision to insure the necessary supplies, replacements, and evacuations.

While in the second phase you will see what can be accomplished in an undeveloped country by a modern military force provided money, time and men are utilized in building up and maintaining the means and facilities required.

2. The Initial Force and the Occupation of Basra. (Slides Nos. 3 and 4)

Two days before Great Britain declared war on Turkey, November 5, 1914, five transports, with a small naval escort, were off the bar of the Shatt al Arab. This force, a reinforced brigade, was under General Delamain, whose instructions from the Indian Government were, in part, as follows:

"(1) The role assigned to your force is that of demonstrating at the head of the Persian Gulf. x x x x

(2) You will occupy Abadan Island with the object of:-

(a) Protecting the oil refineries, tanks, and pipe line.

(b) Covering the landing of reinforcements, should they be required.

(c) Assuring the local Arabs of our support against Turkey.

x x x x x x.

(7) In the event of hostilities with Turkey, the remainder of the 6th Roona Division is being held in readiness to support your force and will follow as quickly as possible.

In the meantime you will take such military and political action as you think feasible to strengthen your position, and, if possible occupy Basra."

The Turkish forces in Mesopotamia, at this time, were thought to be about 10,000 regular troops, which the inclusion of reservists might increase to 15,000 men, over a half of whom it was estimated could be concentrated in Basra.

There was a small Turkish force, in and around the village Fao, which withdrew upon being shelled by the Navy. The brigade established a camp at Sanniya, repulsed an attack on the outpost and was joined by the remainder of the 6th Division, under General Barrett, who received definite instructions that his objective was Basra. The Turks, driven from their positions at Saihan and Sehil, abandoned Basra, which the British at once occupied.

Notwithstanding that the ships had been loaded in India without much reference to the order in which the supplies would be required in Mesopotamia, or to the difficulties of unloading with improvised facilities, General Barrett, by the end of November had established in camps, with tents, baggage and supply services beginning to function, a force which consisted of 1 regiment of cavalry, 5 batteries of artillery, 13 battalions of infantry and some sapper and medical units.

3. The Baghdad Question. (Slide No. 3).

The objective had now been attained. The British prestige in the delta of Shatt al Arab was high and her local political predominance seemed sufficient to assure the immediate security of the oil industry. However, Sir Percy Cox, political advisor to General Barrett and with his consent, in a "private" message to the Viceroy, at once brought up the question of an advance on Baghdad. A question which was to be passed back and forth for many months, not only between Mesopotamia, India, and London, but also between the numerous political and military officials in those places. An amazing amount of correspondence results, but for the purposes of this paper it will be sufficient to note that the complicated governmental organization controlling the Mesopotamia campaign, at this time, affords an excellent illustration of how political and military advice and responsibility must be simplified and properly balanced in governmental organization if sound national policies are to result.

4. The Occupation of Qurna.

In order to provide proper security for his force, General Barrett held Shaiba, about 10 miles southwest of Basra, with a small detachment, and captured Qurna, about 46 miles above Basra, placing there a fortified post.

Considering the size of General Barrett's force, Qurna was rather distant from Basra for a detached post. However, its location at the junction of the Tigris with the old channel of the Euphrates and being near the head of deep water navigation, made it of some strategical importance.

5. The Turkish Counter Offensive.

Within the four months following the capture of Qurna, the desire to fully protect the oil interest (the oil pipe line having been cut in February), the increasing indications of an early Turkish counter offensive, and the desire to hold Persia and the Arab tribes amenable to British influence reluctantly compelled the sending of some 14,000 reinforcements, which with the arrival at Basra, on April 9, of General Sir John Nixon, were to be organized into the II Indian Army Corps of two divisions, the 6th and 12th. This force, 25 Infantry Battalions, was dispersed at this time between Ahwaz, Qurna, Shaiba and Basra.

Two days after General Nixon's arrival the Turks attacked at Shaiba. (Slide No. 6). The attack was definitely repulsed. A British counterattack drove the Turks from the immediate vicinity of Shaiba and finally from their position in Bajisiya woods, in a disorderly retreat to become a rout when harassed by their late Arab allies, while the exhausted British were unable to pursue.

6. General Nixon assumes the offensive.

a. His Instructions.

Briefly, General Nixon's instructions were to:

Control the Basra District and such portions of adjacent territories as might affect his operations; secure the safety of the oil industry; and submit plans for the effective occupation of the Basra District and for a subsequent advance on Baghdad.

General Nixon reading into the instructions a change in the Mesopotamian policy, assumed the offensive.

b. Operations in Arabistan. (Slide No. 3)

First he decided to expel the Turks from Persian Arabistan and placed General Gorringe in command of contemplated operations. These were successful and by June 13, oil was again flowing in the pipe line.

c. The Capture of Amara. (Slide No. 5)

Operations progressing satisfactorily in Arabistan, General Nixon turned his attention to his center and directed General Townshend, commanding the 6th Division, to occupy Amara.

The territory north of Qurna, was in flood. The enemy, 5 battalions, 10 guns and about 1,800 Arab irregulars, were occupying a number of intrenched positions astride the Tigris, and rising as islands in the flooded area. The Tigris was obstructed and mined. A Turkish gunboat was in support. General Townshend advanced his light guns on rafts and his infantry in "bellums", a native river boat similar to a gondola. Supported by heavy guns in place near Qurna and by the Naval Flotilla, the amphibious attack was a complete success. The Turks abandoned their positions. Pursued by the Naval Flotilla the retreat became a rout and on the fourth day (June 3), General Townshend, with some 41 men, landed and received the surrender of Amara.

d. The Capture of Nasiriya. (Slide No. 7).

Another amphibious expedition was organized at once, this time under General Gorringe. He was directed to occupy Nasiriya on the Euphrates. Little difficulty was experienced until the Turks were located in a strong position astride the Euphrates about 7 miles below Nasiriya.

The Turks put up a stubborn resistance for over two weeks but were finally overcome, the positions carried, and Nasiriya occupied July 25.

e. Battle of Kut and the Occupation of Aziziya. (Slide No. 3)

General Nixon now held points on the Euphrates and Tigris 200 miles from the sea and with forces half that distance up the Karun, certainly enclosed an area to hold which might well tax the ability of two divisions, especially when the supply and evacuation facilities were but little more than sufficient for one division actively employed. The oil pipe line and refinery were reasonably secure. With the Shatt al Arab in British possession there was no threat, from this vicinity, to British sea communications. To have any effect on German influence in Persia the British advance must be carried beyond Baghdad. To advance that far, even General Nixon at this time thought would require reinforcements which he had been repeatedly told would not be sent.

Some consideration might well have been given to the advantages of a strategical defensive in this area, but General Nixon does not appear to have given much thought to such a line of action. Strong hostile forces were reported to be at Kut al Amara, so General Townshend was instructed to destroy them and occupy it. He had a total combatant strength of 11,000 men, 28 guns and 40 machine guns, with the Naval Flotilla in support.

Reconnaissance disclosed a Turkish force of 6,000 Infantry, with Cavalry and Arab horsemen, in a very formidable position astride the Tigris about 6 miles east of Kut. (Slide No. 8) The position was prepared in great detail, with wire entanglements, miles of communication trenches and many brick and mortar gun emplacements. The Tigris was blocked near the front line and bridged some 5 miles to the rear.

Some 8 miles from the hostile position General Townshend organized his force into two main columns. These columns advanced on opposite sides of the river and demonstrated against the position. The column on the south bank then crossed the river, moved in rear of the other columns and enveloped the hostile left flank.

Notwithstanding that coordination of the two attacks proved difficult of accomplishment and the breakdown of the signal communications, the Turkish left was turned and captured and all remaining positions north of the river threatened, when airplane reconnaissance revealed that the Turks had skillfully extricated their forces and were in retreat. An attempt was made to pursue, but nothing was accomplished.

The Turks lost about 4,000 men and the British casualties totalled 1,233, just about twice the number for whom evacuation arrangements had been made.

f. The Battle of Ctesiphon.

With the capture of Kut the discussion of the "Baghdad Question" was intensified and finally on October 23, the Cabinet authorized Mr. Chamberlain to send the Viceroy the following telegram:-

"Nixon may march on Baghdad if he is satisfied that force he has available is sufficient for the operation. Reinforcements will take time owing to relief and transport arrangements, but two divisions will be sent as soon as possible. I will telegraph probable date later."

In arriving at this decision the desire for conquest was allowed to override sound strategy and the logistical limitations of General Nixon's force were entirely ignored.

A month later found General Townshend prepared and in position to attack the Turks in their position at Ctesiphon with a force of 13,756 officers and men, and 30 guns supported by the Naval Flotilla.

The British estimate placed the Turks immediately confronting General Townshend at 13,000 regular infantry and 38 guns, but they actually had 18,000, exclusive of irregular Arabs and cavalry.

Under Nur-ud-Din, the Turks had fortified three main lines. (Slide No. 10). The first line astride the Tigris had been very carefully and completely prepared, especially the six miles on the left bank. While its left flank did not rest on any natural obstacle, two redoubts on low mounds at this point, termed "V.P." (Vital Point) were exceptionally strong. Behind the second line, also astride the Tigris, was a boat bridge, the only means of lateral movement across the Tigris.

General Townshend elected to attack only on the left (north and west) bank, and divided his force into four columns, namely: "A", "B", "C" and Flying Column. There was no reserve under divisional control. This was especially unfortunate as the plan called for a wide dispersion of force and was dependent for success upon the proper timing and coordination of the several attacks.

The attack did not progress entirely as planned. Column "C" advancing very slowly and methodically, failed to draw toward it any hostile reserves, these moving instead against the turning attack (Column "B" and Flying Column) which was launched somewhat earlier than contemplated in the plan. Likewise the main blow (Column "A") was prematurely launched and while it succeeded in capturing "V.P." it received no assistance from the turning movement and had to weaken itself to assist the holding attack of Column "C" with the result that it spent itself while still some 800 yards from the hostile second line. Nur-ud-Din still had 2 battalions and 4 guns in reserve, General Townshend had none. The Turks counterattacked, drove the main blow back to "V.P.", which it was just able to hold. By dark, while the British held the first line, the Turks were secure in the second.

Late in the next afternoon the Turks attacked but without success, and withdrew into the second line.

The British system of evacuation of the wounded failed absolutely. They estimated they would have 2,400 wounded, prepared to take care of 1,500, intending to evacuate the remainder forward to Baghdad on ration vessels, and actually had about 4,000 to care for. The resulting suffering among the wounded will be left to your imagination.

7. Townshend Retreats. (Slide No. 9)

General Townshend, believing that the Turks were receiving reinforcements, began a hurried withdrawal down the Tigris, followed by the Turks. The Turks stumbled on his camp at Umm at Tubul but were held off by Cavalry and gun fire and General Townshend by long marches reached Kut, December 3.

8. The Siege of Kut al Amara. (Slide No. 11)

While the question of continuing the retreat below Kut was being discussed by the numerous echelons of the British political and military organization, the Turks took the initiative and completely invested the town by December 7.

The river in its bend around Kut was a formidable obstacle on three sides, and with a line of field work prepared across the neck the location had very considerable defensive possibilities, especially with no commanding ground in the vicinity.

The Turks made two determined attempts to capture the location, then abandoned an active siege and trusted to its reduction by blockade alone, moving troops downstream to block any attempts at relief.

9. Operations for the relief of Kut (Slide No. 11)

a. Organization of the Tigris Corps.

The promised reinforcements began to arrive at Basra as General Townshend's retreat was reaching Kut. They were pushed upstream as rapidly as the limited transportation facilities permitted and organized by General Aylmer into the Tigris Corps for the relief of Kut.

Troops were constantly arriving during the operations of this Corps and were fed to it piecemeal so that it always lacked many essentials for a well balanced force.

b. The action at Shaikh Saad and at the Wadi River.

A month following the investment of Kut, General Aylmer's advance began. The Turks resisted British attacks at Shaikh Saad and at the Wadi River and each time withdrew unmolested.

The medical arrangements again proved entirely inadequate, which with the wet, cold weather, caused very great suffering among the wounded for some days before evacuations could be completed.

c. The First Attack on Hanna.

The Hanna position, on the left (north) bank of the Tigris, was at the eastern entrance of a 7 mile defile formed by the Tigris on the south and the extensive Suwaikiya march on the north. With a frontage of 1,350 yards and a depth of 2,600 yards, the position had been made exceptionally strong with a complete trench system and wire entanglements. The Turks held the position with some 9,000 Infantry and 26 guns.

General Aylmer attacked this position. The 7th Division (21 battalions and 30 guns) made the frontal attack, while 4 battalions, 2 squadrons and 14 guns enfiladed the position from the right bank. The British succeeded in capturing about 150 yards of front line trenches from which they were soon driven by a counterattack.

d. On January 19, 1916, Lt. General Sir Percy Lake, took over command from General Nixon whose health had completely broken down.

e. The Attack on the Dujaila Redoubt.

Besides the strongly fortified defile, the Turks held the Es Sinn position astride the Tigris, extending south thereof to the Dujaila Redoubt; then southwest toward the Hai.

General Aylmer's next attempt was against Dujaila Redoubt. Leaving the 7th Division to contain the Turks in the Hanna position, the remainder of the Corps, nearly 19,000 rifles and 68 guns, by a night march gained a point about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of the Dujaila Redoubt. Here the column dispersed in three groups to rather widely separated deployment positions.

The night march was a complete surprise to the Turks, but this important advantage was lost by attempting a dispersed and complicated attack, coordinated by prearranged detailed orders, when, such an attack at best requires accurate knowledge of the hostile positions, good maps, an excellent system of signal communications, experienced staffs and good team work, all of which were lacking at this command.

It would seem, that had the night march ended in a concentrated effort based on a simple, direct plan, none of the effects of the strategical surprise would have been lost, and there would have been splendid opportunities for a decisive British victory. As it was, the attack failed.

f. The Last Attempts to Relieve Kut.

General Corringe now succeeded General Aylmer in the command of the Tigris Corps, which was being reinforced by the 13th Division, an all-British division under General Maude, but recently withdrawn from Gallipoli.

A period of trench warfare began, extending up to the surrender of Kut, which will be but briefly summarized.

The 13th Division, supported by the 3d Division and Corps Artillery south of the river, assaulted and captured the entire Hanna position and the Fallahiya position some 4 miles further west. The 7th Division now took over but were stopped at the Sannaiyat position. The 13th then tried and failed. Operations were now shifted to the right (south) bank and the 3d Division captured and held the Bait Isa position, and on April 22, the 7th Division made a final attempt at the Sannaiyat position without success.

8. The Surrender of Kut.

On April 29, after holding out for nearly five months, Kut surrendered. About 1,500 wounded and sick were exchanged and close to 12,000 went into captivity. The last three days of the siege the only food obtainable was that dropped by airplanes amounting to about 4 ounces per man per day.

9. Conclusion of the First Phase.

In the operations for the relief of Kut the total casualties of the Tigris Corps amounted to over 23,000 officers and men. If we add to this the casualties Townshend's force sustained after his victory near Kut, in August, 1915, we cannot escape the conclusion that the British paid very dearly to gain, considering the situation confronting them during the World War, an objective defined by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, about the time the advance began, as being "To secure the neutrality of the Arabs" and "generally to maintain the authority of our Flag in the East."

III THE SECOND PHASE OF OPERATIONS.

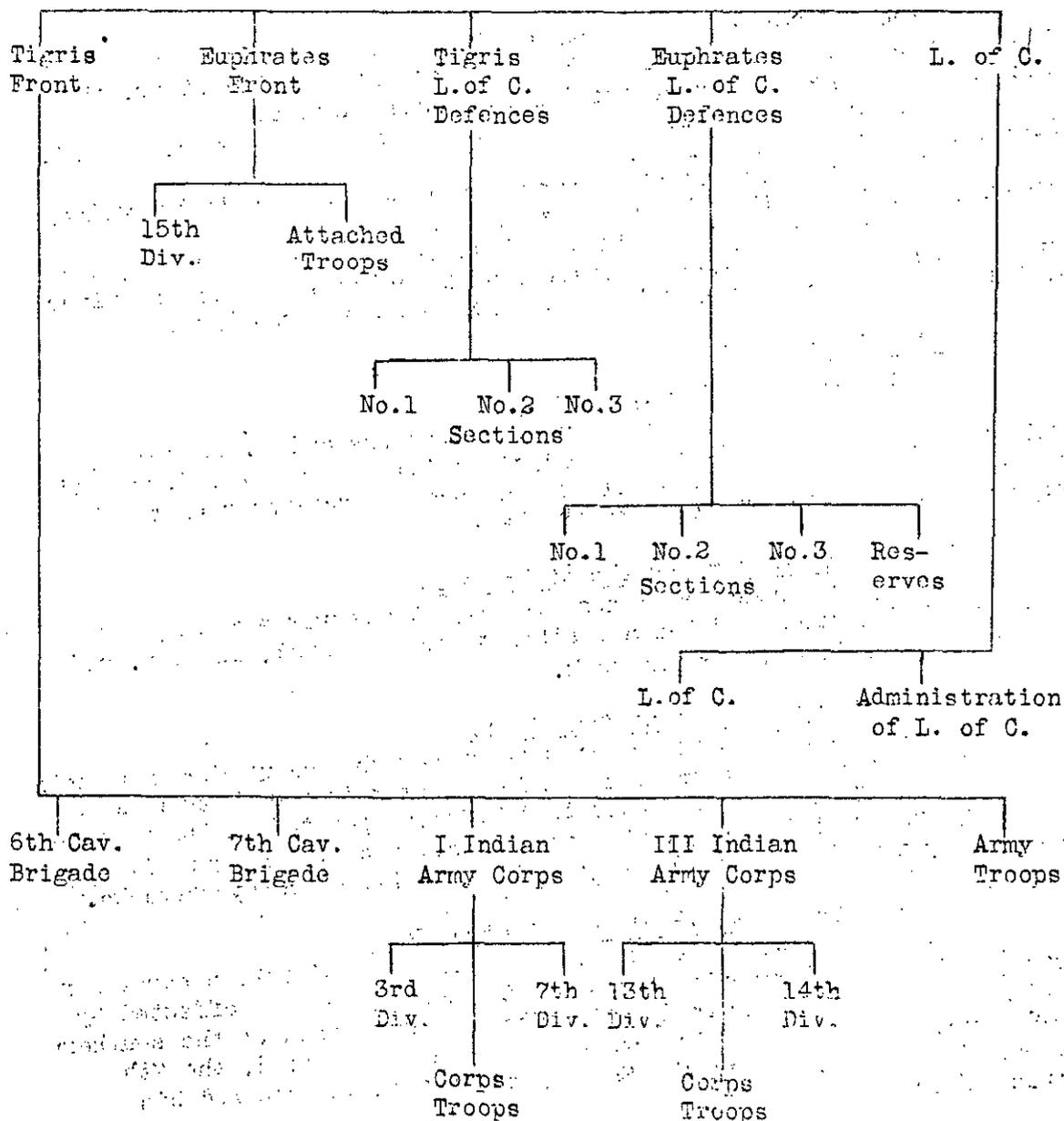
1. The Situation after the Fall of Kut. (Slide No. 3)

After the fall of Kut, the Turks, realizing the exhausted condition of the British, left their XVIII Corps to contain the Tigris Corps and moved the other corps, the XIII, to the northeast of Baghdad where, in June 1916, it assisted in defeating a Russian attack at Khaniqin, about 100 miles from Baghdad.

With the appointment of General Lake to command in Mesopotamia, an extensive enlargement and reorganization of the line of communication and all that pertains thereto had been initiated. However, his reforms had not begun to be felt before the surrender of Kut and were far from completed when he was succeeded by General Sir Stanley Maude, who, first being promoted to command the Tigris Corps, was selected, in August 1916, for command in Mesopotamia.

It was not until the end of October, 1916, that General Maude felt that he had his administrative arrangements sufficiently well organized to permit of moving his headquarters from Basra. He then moved them to Arab Village and reorganized the forces in Mesopotamia as indicated below. (Slide No. 15)

G.H.Q.



Slide No. 12575.

General Maude now had in Mesopotamia a combat strength of 221, 150 and by the middle of December was ready to renew active operations with a force on the Tigris front of 3,500 sabers, 45,000 rifles and 174 guns, and estimated the Turkish strength opposed to him at 30,000 rifles and 70 guns. However, the Turkish authorities place their strength at only 20,500 rifles and 50 guns.

The I Corps, General Cochrane, was holding trenches on the left bank of the Tigris opposite the Turkish Sannalvat position and for a short distance on the opposite bank. (Slide No. 12576)

The III Corps, General Marshall, continued the line of the I Corps along the river bank to Maqasis, then leaving the river, their line followed the Dajaila depression to Dajaila Redoubt.

The two cavalry brigades, organized into a provisional cavalry division, were near Sinn Abtan.

The troops on the right bank were supplied by a light railway pushed forward from the advance base, Shaikh Saad.

On the left bank, besides the strong Sannaiyat position, the Turks had prepared a series of positions extending as far up the river as Kut, near which they also held positions on the right bank.

2. Battles around Kut.

a. Active Operations Resumed.

General Maude began active operations and in two weeks, while holding the enemy in his Sannaiyat position with the I Corps and part of the III Corps, he was able to advance the remainder of the III Corps and the Cavalry Division to the Hai.

b. Trench Fighting on the Right Bank.

After intensive trench fighting for nearly a month, the Khudhaira, Hai Salient and Dahra positions were captured, in turn, and the Turks driven from the right bank.

c. The First Assault at Sannaiyat.

General Maude now desired to attack the enemy simultaneously on the flanks at Sannaiyat and Shumran Bend, but rain and flood made a crossing of the Tigris so difficult that he only operated on the hostile left by the 7th Division assaulting the Sannaiyat position where it succeeded in gaining a foothold only to be expelled by counterattacks.

d. Maude Forces a Crossing at Shumran Bend.

As soon as the flood showed signs of subsiding, a carefully prepared and executed surprise crossing at Shumran Bend was effected by the 14th Division, which gained a line about 1 mile north of the southern end of Shumran Bend. While the crossing was being effected, the 7th Division pinned the Turks to the Sannaiyat position and secured his third and fourth lines.

3. The Turkish Withdrawal from Kut. (Slides Nos. 12 and 9)

Notwithstanding that the Turks began to withdraw next morning from the Sannaiyat position and the British airplanes, early that morning, reported the enemy in full retreat toward Baghdad, the British failed to take full advantage of the situation, since the I Corps only advanced 4 or 5 miles against positions, in which it met practically no resistance, and which, moreover, were outflanked by the Naval Flotilla during the day when it steamed upstream and anchored off Kut.

The III Corps gaining by nightfall the Dahra Ridge, permitted the Cavalry Division to get around the Turkish line but that Division allowed itself to become involved in the local fighting and accomplished nothing.

The result was that the Turks made good their withdrawal from a very difficult situation and were next morning some 20 miles west of the British forces.

4. The Pursuit.

Neither the Cavalry nor Infantry accomplished any decisive results in pursuit, but the Naval Flotilla pressing forward, disregarding the rearguard, shelled and completely demoralized the main body of the Turkish force.

5. The Capture of Baghdad. (Slide No. 13)

With his advanced troops at Aziziya, General Maude halted for a week, to readjust his line of communications to the new situation. In the meantime the War Cabinet changed his mission as follows:

"Subject to the security of your force and to the capacity of your communications, it is the policy of H.M. Government to establish British influence in the Baghdad Vilayet."

The advance was resumed along the left bank of the Tigris. The III Corps was delayed by the Turks at the Diyala and the 1st Corps and the Cavalry Division, crossing the Tigris 10 miles below the mouth of the Diyala, met resistance at Tel Aswad and Umm at Tubul sand hills, but the Turks soon withdrew and General Maude entered Baghdad March 11, 1917.

6. The Consolidation of the Position at Baghdad. (Slide No. 14)

In order to secure the converging routes of approach toward Baghdad, General Maude at once advanced columns up the Diyala, Tigris and to the Euphrates.

Overcoming such resistance as the Turks were able to make, the British, before the end of March, occupied Falluja on the Euphrates, Mushahida Station and Dugma on the Tigris.

But on the Diyala they were not quite so fortunate. Shahraban and Deli Abbas were occupied but the Turks at the Jabal Hamrin delayed both the British and Russians sufficiently long to withdraw their XIII Corps toward Kifri.

7. Assistance Expected from the Russians.

With the meeting of the British and Russians near Qizil Ribat on April 2d, General Maude expected to be able to confine his operations to the Tigris against the XVIII Corps, while the Russians pushing back the XIII Corps on Mosul would eventually establish themselves on the Tigris. But it soon became evident that the unsatisfactory condition of the Russian Revolution rendered any offensive operations by them out of the question.

8. Operations on the Adhaim and Occupation of Samarra.

About April 1, the Turkish XIII Corps, 1,350 sabers, 11,000 rifles, and 60 guns, was falling back toward Kifri and their XVIII Corps 500 sabers, 5,600 rifles, and 50 guns was holding the Adhaim and had some troops on the right bank of the Tigris.

General Maude advanced, on each bank of the Tigris, a column consisting of a division reinforced with Cavalry, airplanes and additional artillery.

The column on the right bank, pushing the Turks before it, advanced to Harba. The other column, under General Marshall, advanced to the Adhaim, but the Turkish XIII Corps, threatening his right flank, by moving down the Khalis Canal toward Diltawa, caused him to halt and move against that corps. This threat driven back to the Jabal Hamrin,

General Marshall retraced his steps and forced a crossing of the Adhaim. General Cobbe, with the column on the right bank then advanced, overcoming stubborn Turkish resistance at Istabulat, occupied Samarra while General Marshall advanced up the Adhaim and defeated the XIII Corps, which, by moving down the Adhaim, was again threatening the British right, but now withdrew to the Jabal Hamrin.

9. Situation during the summer of 1917.

The troops then went into summer quarters and except for an attempt in July, to take Ramadi, on the Euphrates, which failed, no important operations took place until fall.

All during the summer General Maude was informed, from various sources, of the organization of a Turkish offensive under German leadership ("Yilderim") for the capture of Baghdad, but by the latter half of October his information pointed to Palestine as the objective toward which this effort was to be directed.

10. Action at Ramadi.

Late in September a second attack was made at Ramadi on the Euphrates. General Brooking attacked with his infantry, while placing his cavalry squarely across the hostile line of retreat, and captured the entire force of 3,456 men, 13 guns and considerable stores.

11. Action at Daur and Tikrit. (Slide No. 16)

The I Corps, reinforced by the cavalry division and armored cars, advanced up the right bank of the Tigris and drove the Turks from their position near Daur and from a strongly entrenched position at their advance base at Tikrit. The entire XVIII Corps now retired to or north of Fat-ha, while the British withdrew to the railhead at Samarra.

12. Death of General Maude.

On November 18, 1917, General Maude died of cholera; Lieutenant General Sir W. R. Marshall being appointed to the Chief Command, his mission was defined as an active defense, striking at the enemy wherever an opportunity of doing so presented itself.

13. The Third Action in the Jabal Hamrin.

Just previous to General Maude's death the British occupied the Jabal Hamrin, near the Diyala Gorge, so as to control the water in various canals leading off from the Diyala near that point. General Marshall attacked the Turks in that locality hoping to hold them to a decisive action but only succeeded in gaining a more extensive hold on the Jabal Hamrin.

14. Changes in Organization.

In view of the situation in Mesopotamia, the 7th Division and the 3rd Division were withdrawn and sent to Egypt. Their places in the 1st Corps were taken by the newly formed 17th and 18th Divisions.

15. The Capture of the 50th Turkish Division. (Slide No. 16).

In March, General Brooking advanced up the Euphrates and occupied Hit, with its valuable bitumen fields.

The Turkish 50th Division, 4,500 rifles and 17 to 21 guns, was on the Euphrates between Ana and Khan Baghdad, the latter place being held with a strongly entrenched position.

General Brooking, aiming at the destruction of all the hostile forces below Ana, gained the hostile rear with a cavalry brigade and 13 armored cars while his infantry attacked. The Turks surrendered in large numbers. The pursuit continuing to beyond Ana, the British practically destroyed the 50th Division.

16. Operations East of the Jabal Hamrin.

In April, a force, consisting mostly of cavalry but reinforced with about 2 brigades of infantry, artillery, and armored cars under General Egerton, operated against the Turkish 2d Division, which was then scattered in various localities in the triangular area north of the Jabal Hamrin and the Kiyala River. The Turks withdrew toward Kirkuk, but were overtaken near Kulawand and again a few miles further north, with a loss of 1,300 in prisoners alone. The Turks, withdrawing behind the Little Zab, Kirkuk was occupied without any fighting.

17. The Final British Offensive. (Slides Nos. 16 and 17)

Operations were again suspended during the summer of 1918, but on October 24, while General Allenby's troops were approaching Aleppo, General Marshall resumed operations.

East of the Jabal Hamrin the III Corps advanced along the Kifri - Kirkuk - Mosul road while the I Corps moved up the Tigris.

The III Corps met with very little opposition, but the I Corps had some severe fighting, when it attacked the Turkish position astride the Tigris at Fat-ha with the 18th Division and 11th Cavalry Brigade east and the 17th Division and 7th Cavalry Brigade west of the Tigris.

The 11th Cavalry Brigade crossed the Jabal Hamrin to the east of the Turkish position, gained the hostile rear near Huwaish, where it was joined by the Armored Car Brigade, which had moved around the other flank.

Pressed by the infantry, the Turks fell back to their second position near the mouth of the Little Zab. The 18th Division, forcing a crossing of the Little Zab, drove all the Turks to the west bank of the Tigris. The 17th Division forced the Turks to their third position covering Sharqet. The 11th Cavalry Brigade, resisting attacks by Turkish reserves and holding off reinforcements advancing from the north, was joined by the 7th Cavalry Brigade and by an infantry brigade.

For two days the Turks held on. Part of the force trying to escape, by night, through the cavalry, was cut off and captured. Seeing his hopeless situation, the Turkish commander, on the morning of October 30, surrendered his total force.

General Cobbe's force, in these operations, captured 11,322 prisoners, 51 guns, 130 machine guns, 3 river steamers and much other material with but 1,886 casualties.

At noon October 31, an armistice between Great Britain and Turkey went into effect under the terms of which the British occupied Mosul, thus ending the campaign.

18. Total British casualties.

Killed or died of wounds.....	14,614
Died of disease.....	12,807
Wounded.....	51,386
Taken prisoner or missing.....	13,494
	92,501

IV. ADMINISTRATION.

1. The Situation.

With the appointment of General Lake to command in January, 1916, for the first time in the history of the expedition, administration, (and that term is used to include all those organizational, supply, transportation, evacuation, sanitation, and personnel matters which must be satisfactorily arranged in any successful campaign), began to assume a prominent evaluation in plans and projects and to receive proper attention during military operations.

However, General Lake's reforms had not begun to be felt before the surrender of Kut and it is for this reason, as we have stated, that that event is chosen to separate the two periods into which we have divided the discussion of this campaign.

Administrative deficiencies in the first phase were a very decisive factor in causing that British disaster and it was administrative prevision and provision that made the final outcome possible.

The Tigris Corps furnishes a good illustration of the administrative situations during the first period. During some or all of the time of its active employment it lacked many essentials to make it a well balanced organization. We will mention but a few of its deficiencies:- It did not have a proper Corps Staff; the supply and transportation personnel was less than one-fourth of the prescribed number; land transportation, except first line columns, was almost entirely lacking; medical personnel and equipment were inadequate; airplanes were too few; and its bridging equipment was very poor.

How extensive were the administrative deficiencies during the first period can be, perhaps, best realized by appreciating that for the seven or eight months, following the surrender of Kut the principal activities of the British force were confined to placing the administrative arrangements and facilities on a basis sufficient to sustain the military effort.

2. The Control of the Expedition.

The Mesopotamia expedition when first conceived was placed under the Indian Government. It will only be necessary to enumerate the authorities who had to be consulted in Mesopotamia affairs to indicate the organizational handicaps under which this expedition labored during the first phase. These were:- The Commanding General in Mesopotamia; the Commander-in-Chief in India with his Department and his Army G.H.Q.; the Viceroy with his council; the Secretary of State for India with his military Secretary; the War Council with the Imperial General Staff; and finally, the Cabinet.

In February, 1916, while India remained the base and the C.-in-C. in India retained control of the expedition, the general direction of the expedition was placed in the War Office in London, but it was not

until July of the same year that the direct responsibility of the C.-in-C. in India to the War Council was completely established.

3. Organization of the Line of Communications.

In May, 1915, a separate organization of the Line of Communications was started with the appointment of an Inspector General of Communications and in September of the same year, following the provisions of the British Field Service Regulations separating administration and defense in the organization of a long line of communications, an officer was placed in command of Line of Communications Defense Troops.

During the second phase, the Line of Communications was reorganized and greatly expanded. Many experienced officers were obtained from England. It remained organized, in general, with defense and administration kept separate and distinct from each other.

The line of communications administration was organized on the principle of a fixed base section and a moving advance base with other sections placed between the two as the line extended. During General Maude's operations around Kut, Shaikh Saad was the Advance Base. When Baghdad was captured it became the Advance Base with the Qurna, Amara, and Kut sections between it and the Base Section, which remained at Basra throughout the campaign.

The line along the Tigris was also divided into one or more administrative sections.

When the forces fanned out after the capture of Baghdad the Advance Section handled the administrative situation with a railhead post organized at each railhead.

Headquarters Line of Communications remained at Basra where were located the Headquarters of the Base and of the Inland Water Transport, Sea Transport, Railway, and Port Directorates as well as the 3rd Echelon, G.H.Q.

With the capture of Baghdad, a Local Produce Directorate was organized which obtained large quantities of food, fuel, road and other building material, thus lessening to a considerable extent the strain on shipping.

Replacement depots, hospitals, remount and the various supply depots, ship, motor and railway repair shops and other facilities were placed at convenient points from Basra to Baghdad.

The list of the administrative units is a long one. The following summary of the strength of the force at the armistice gives an idea of the administrative needs of a force with an extended Line of Communications.

Fighting troops	112,000
Administrative troops	105,000
Followers	<u>197,000</u>
Total	414,000

Of the "fighting troops" were a little over 1/4 of the total ration strength.

4. The Base Port.

The British line of communications to Mesopotamia was the sea. A port was necessary. While Basra was the only locality for such a purpose its many advantages as a port have already been referred to.

However, General Nixon apparently considered that its crude disembarkation facilities would be sufficient for his force, for it was not until December, 1915, with the two new divisions arriving, that an effort was made to improve the congested situation by the rapid construction of some wharves along deep water.

By indicating briefly some of the things done by Generals Lake or Maude during the year 1916 to make it a suitable base port will also demonstrate what it lacked in that respect during the first phase of the campaign.

To protect it from flood, 24 miles of embankment were built enclosing an area of about 48 square miles, providing accommodations for 15,000 troops and 7,000 sick, large numbers of animals, and great quantities of stores. Wharves, with modern equipment, were constructed to accommodate ocean-going vessels. A shipbuilding yard, repair shops, slips and basins for steamers were completed or begun. The wharves, camps, hospitals, and warehouses were all connected by good roads with bridges over the many tidal creeks. An electric power plant, ice factory, and water system were installed.

By the end of the campaign the port was supplied with a complete railway system of some 50 miles of track connecting the wharves, and the various depots and had a railroad yard designed on an up-to-date plan affording suitable facilities for rapid working.

In the six months ending June, 1918, the port discharged 814,447 tons of cargo. In July, 1916, the average detention of freight vessels at Basra was 46 days, while in 1918 this average was reduced to 6.2 days.

5. Inland Water Transport.

General Nixon, realizing that the rivers were the natural arteries of communication, made repeated efforts to obtain suitable steam vessels and barges, but with indifferent success.

Throughout the entire first phase of the campaign the shortage of river transport had a very unfavorable effect on operations.

Shortage of ammunition and other supplies at the front was quite a normal situation. Often there was a shortage of rations. Troops were without proper animal transportation since it could not be transported to them or maintained with forage if it could have been. Replacements often could not be sent forward even when they were available at Basra. Troops could not be rapidly transferred from one bank to the other to take full advantage of tactical opportunities. Evacuations of the wounded was slow and attended by great suffering.

In September, 1916, Brigadier General Grey, with a considerable staff, took over the whole river transport service in Mesopotamia as Director of Inland Water Transport under the Inspector General of Communications.

From about this time river vessels either complete or for erection at Basra, arrived in considerable numbers.

A comparison of the total number of river craft in commission for various months and of the total tonnage carried during these months gives an idea of the rapid growth of this organization.

MONTH	NO. OF CRAFT	TONS CARRIED
Sept. 1916	367	9,168
March 1917	744	92,269
Dec. 1917	1,299	145,013
March 1918	---	199,350
Nov. 1918	1,634	133,949

In addition, large numbers of native craft were employed. In January, 1917, all native craft of over 12 tons capacity were requisitioned and placed under the Director of Inland Water Transport. At the time of the Armistices, 2,439 of such craft were under his control.

The personnel engaged in this service increased from 7,000 in September, 1916, to nearly 16,500 by December of the same year, while in 1918 it amounted to 42,968.

The organization of a river pilot service, a dredge service, the constant work on the river banks and flood embankments, and the installation of lights at difficult bends, all improved navigation, while the erection of piers and wharves at Basra and important stations upstream, facilitated loading and unloading and the construction of railroads supplemented the river service at difficult stretches of the river.

6. Railroads. (Slide No. 2)

When the campaign opened in 1914, the only railroads in Mesopotamia were two short stretches in the vicinity of Baghdad.

The only railroad material supplied the expedition, until it came directly under the control of the Imperial General Staff, was 45 miles of 2 ft. 6 in. gauge material mostly for the Port of Basra. But with the change in control of the Expedition, the policy was completely reversed and railroad construction began.

Reference has already been made to the 2 ft. 6 in. gauge railroad from Shaikh Saad. This was finally pushed forward to the Hal and it was due to it that General Maude was able to eventually turn the Turkish positions north of the river, after which it was dismantled and used in the Baghdad area.

The difficulties of navigating the Euphrates, suggested a railroad from Basra to Nasiriya.

Likewise, the "Narrows" in the Tigris, were by-passed by a rail line to supplement the inland water transport from Qurna to Amara, and later extended to Basra.

Baghdad was about the head of navigation on the Tigris. So, after its capture, the distance to which troops were advanced therefrom demanded railroads for their maintenance.

The exploitation of local resources was facilitated by a rail line from Baghdad to the middle Euphrates valley.

Accordingly, besides extending the existing standard gauge line north from Samarra, other lines were built until at the close of the campaign, 250 miles of standard, 478 miles of meter gauge, and 21 miles of 2 ft. 6 in. gauge were in operation.

7. Motor Transport.

When General Townshend fought the battle of Kut, in September, 1915, the only motor vehicles with the British were two armored cars, two trucks, and one motor ambulance.

In February, 1916, General Lake offered the Tigris Corps one hundred trucks, but General Aylmer did not think he could use them.

The growth in the employment of motor transportation following the capture of Baghdad was rapid, due to the favorable terrain in Upper Mesopotamia and to the construction and maintenance, by the expedition, of many roads and bridges. At the close of the campaign about 30 truck companies were being operated, nearly all being Fords.

The use of trucks and armored cars accounts, in a large measure, for the Cavalry being more successfully employed, after the capture of Baghdad, than it had been previous to that event.

8. Unit Transportation.

During the first phase of the operations, units had their first-line Transport, corresponding to our Combat Trains, but were frequently without their Second-Line Transport, the equivalent of our Field Trains, and it was never possible to supply more than a fraction of the command with Divisional Trains.

General Maude gave the subject of transportation with troops very careful consideration. To reduce the transportation of forage by the shipping, as much as possible, it was very desirable that the transportation with troops be kept at a minimum consistent with their possible employment at reasonable distances from the river.

Steps were taken to equip the force with first and second line transport and with supply columns sufficient to carry one day's supply for two cavalry brigades and five infantry divisions, and in addition to have available sufficient transportation to permit of two infantry brigades and a brigade of artillery operating three days from the Tigris.

9. System of Supply.

The impossibility of maintaining definite schedules for the operation of river craft and in the second period, the distances at which operations frequently were conducted in advance of rail lines made it impracticable to employ a system of supply predicated on a regulating station and the daily automatic arrival of the day's ration at a given point.

In addition to the Advance Base already referred to, generally field depots or dumps were built up near the troops. In some instances, the shortage of land transport necessitated the sending forward of a detachment to secure a site for a field depot, which when stocked would become the base of operations for a larger force.

River steamers, with barges, were assigned, in a number of the operations along the Tigris, to units as second line transport and were kept filled by native craft plying back and forth from the nearest base.

In Townshend's advance to Ctesiphon, 14 days' supplies were carried in river craft for the entire force, 7 days' accumulated at Aziziya and from 10 to 12 weeks' at Kut.

In Maude's advance, after his battles around Kut, the Inland Water Transport organized what were termed "formation" units, "that is, ships and barges specially loaded with complete rations for men and animals for one division or brigade for so many days", and these units were assigned to each division.

In the operations after the capture of Baghdad, the various columns employed, at different times, were frequently assigned land transport sufficient to carry the supplies required for the expected period of the operations, the column returning to within reach of its railroad before these supplies were exhausted.

V. CONCLUSION.

1. While much can be said on the political and strategical unimportance, in the World War, of the Mesopotamia Campaign and most military authorities characterize it as an uneconomical employment of forces in a theater of very minor importance, it nevertheless affords many interesting and instructive lessons in the conduct of operations and the execution of assigned tasks. Therefore, in the time allowed for this lecture, no attempt has been made to treat the campaign from a viewpoint other than that of its commander in the field.

2. Comparing General Maude's organization with that of General Nixon affords an excellent illustration of the advantages accruing to a commander of a relatively small expedition who so organizes his forces that, while commanding the expedition, he is also the logical immediate commander of the main fighting front.

3. The campaign is rich in tactical lessons in offense and defense both with and without Naval gun boats cooperating, and with rivers, deserts, swamps, and defiles as obstacles.

4. The organization and means for controlling civil and political affairs during the campaign would make a subject for an instructive G-1 study.

5. The employment of radio and the airplane during the siege of Kut introduced new forces to be reckoned with in such operations. Their value as aides in maintaining morale, by keeping the besieged in touch with the outside world, should not be overlooked.

6. There is no evidence of utilizing, in this campaign, any new or untried means of obtaining military information. While the same officer remained in charge of military intelligence throughout the campaign, it is interesting to note the different results attained in its two phases. During the first phase there was a very decided tendency to discount information received from higher authority when it was at variance with that obtained under the immediate supervision of the expedition, often with disastrous results. On the other hand, during the second phase all information received, regardless of its source, was carefully weighed, balanced, and finally evaluated with surprisingly accurate results.

7. It is particularly valuable in the lessons it has to offer in the military operation of inland waterways.

8. A study of this campaign brings out in an unusually forcible way the absolute necessity of correctly estimating the logistical requirements for a campaign and by proper and timely planning, assuring their fulfillment if success is to be assured.

9. And in conclusion, we wish to recommend the study of this campaign, especially to those planning for expeditions requiring a long line of communications through an undeveloped country or the establishment of a base in such a country, in the belief that such a study will generally lead to a revision upward of the estimated time, money, and total number of men required to maintain a given number on the fighting front.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

1. History of the Great War, The Campaign in Mesopotamia. Vols. I, II, III and IV, Brig. Gen. F. J. Moberly.
2. A Brief Outline of the Campaign in Mesopotamia, Major R. Evans.
3. Notes and Lectures on the Campaign in Mesopotamia, A Kearsay.
4. Life of Sir Stanley Maude, Maj. Gen. Sir C.E. Callwell.
5. Report of the Mesopotamia Commission.
6. My Campaign, Charles Vere Ferrers Townshend.
7. The Inland Water Transport in Mesopotamia, Lieut. Col. L. J. Hall.
8. In the Clouds above Baghdad, Lt. Col. Tennant.
9. The Railway Gazette. London, Sept. 21, 1920.
10. The Long Road to Baghdad. Two volumes, Edmond Chaudier.
11. History of the Great War, Veterinary Services, Maj. Gen. Sir L. J. Blenkinsop and Lt. Col. J. W. Rainey.
12. War in the Garden of Eden, Kermit Roosevelt.
13. On the Road to Kut, Black Tab.
14. A Chapter of Misfortunes, Maj. Gen. W. D. Bird.

CONDUCT OF WAR COURSE NO. 22.
1929-1930.

acm

MESOPOTAMIA.



Reference.
Principal routes shown thus
Railways as existing on 1st November, 1918 shown thus

