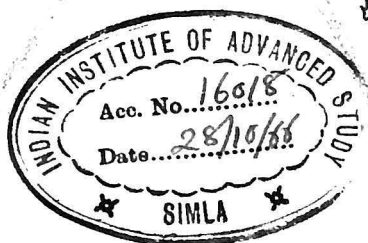


the enemy do? Will he await the attack, or, seeing the¹ that gathering against him, will he venture all on a desperate thro¹. The German navy is in Hindenburg's hands, as well as the army. He will use it like a landsman, no doubt; but he may well use it resolutely. Lacking, like Napoleon, *le sentiment exact des difficultés de la marine*, he may send von Scheer out as Napoleon sent Villeneuve. But that will hardly happen so long as the submarine campaign continues to give a promise of success in German eyes. Meanwhile, it is not likely that the campaign of piracy and murder is raising the *moral* of the German navy, and it is certainly thinning out the ranks of the Kaiser's most experienced officers and men. However the event may be brought about, we can look forward with confidence to a day when the navies will meet, and to the result of that meeting.

GERARD FIENNES.



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MESOPOTAMIA

(I)

THE RECENT MILITARY POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA

THE Report of the Mesopotamia Commission is a terrible indictment against all those who are held to be responsible for failures in the conduct and maintenance of the operations during the period considered by the Commission.

The one bright feature in the story given us of those dark days is the bearing of all ranks of the troops both British and Indian. Despite hardships—some at least of which foresight and adequate preparation would have mitigated—the trying climate, indifferent and often scanty rations, inadequate medical personnel, equipment and supplies, the lack of a sufficiently numerous and powerful artillery and aircraft and of all those essential accessories of present-day warfare with which our armies in other theatres have been liberally supplied, both the Majority Report and that of Commander Wedgwood speak in the warmest terms of their courage, stoutheartedness, discipline, and fighting qualities. That they 'maintained the best traditions of the Service' is the only comforting thing in the Reports. We all know what they have done since.

The Commission has formulated its findings and conclusions and assigned responsibility for failures to individuals. It is the purpose of this article to comment on two only of the conclusions arrived at, namely :

A. The disastrous effect on the Army in India and on this Expedition of 'the era of economy before the War when the military estimates were ruthlessly cut down, often, it is to be feared, without due consideration,' with the result that 'the Army was inadequately equipped, not only for an overseas expedition, but even for frontier requirements.'

B. That, owing to the abolition of the late Military Department of the Government of India and the assumption by the Commander-in-Chief in India of the duties of the Army Member of Council, 'it is clear that the combination of the duties of Commander-in-Chief in India and Military Member of Council cannot

adequately be performed by any one man in time of war, and that the existing organisation is at once over-centralised at its head and cumbrous in its duality below.²

To grasp thoroughly all that is included in 'the era of economy before the War' referred to by the Commission it is necessary to touch as briefly as possible on the reorganisation of the Army in India by Lord Kitchener, not one of the least works of that great soldier-administrator, so as to see how far his plans and projects have been completed, changed, or allowed to lapse since his departure from India in September 1909. The writer will endeavour to do this from such published official information as is available to all.

As Lord Kitchener himself said, his sole aim during the tenure of his command was 'to place the administration of the Army in India on a sound business footing.' The first condition of this he held to be that the Army must be maintained in a thoroughly efficient state, able at all times to carry out whatever may be expected from its numerical strength. This condition requires not only that its established strength is maintained, that its arms and equipment are up to date and in perfect order, that officers and men are kept in a high state of discipline and their training uniform and progressive, but also that all the subsidiary services of the Army, whether in being or in cadre, are highly organised, and that reserves of men, animals, arms, ammunition and stores are maintained, so that the Army may pass from a peace to a war footing with the highest possible speed and the least possible friction and be maintained on that footing. Moreover, as we all know so well to-day, there can be no such thing as a permanent standard of military efficiency, for science aided by technical skill brings forth many surprises both in peace and war. Therefore, every Government maintaining an army must look around and ahead and be prepared to provide it with every improvement both in organisation and in material which its professional advisers consider necessary. To neglect to do this, especially in India, where our rule, an alien one, cannot do its duty to the country unless it is strong, is not only a breach of trust, but is just as foolish as is the individual who throws away his money by paying premia to an insolvent insurance company.

The reorganisation of the Army in India, initiated by Lord Kitchener, involved no appreciable increase in its numerical strength. What he aimed at was the creation out of the existing forces of a fighting army, organised in divisions complete in all their details, led in war by the Generals and Staff responsible in peace for their training, discipline, and upkeep, and with sufficient reserves of all sorts behind them to maintain them in the field for a certain time. To each division a definite territorial area

² *Report*, Part xii. para. 29, page 116.

was allotted ; when it mobilised there would remain in the area, or be brought into it from outside, sufficient troops suitably staffed and organised for the maintenance of internal security. The formation of these divisions necessarily entailed redistribution in the quartering of the troops, and therefore a considerable building programme. An expansion of the munition and armament factories was also a feature of the scheme, so that in this respect India might be as self-dependent as possible.

As regards the higher command and control of the Army and its administration under the Viceroy, it was finally decided by the Cabinet of the day that, instead of the dual control and responsibility of the Military Member of Council and the Commander-in-Chief, it should be exercised by the latter alone as Army Member with a sufficiently increased staff, military and secretarial.

Though considerable progress had been made, the scheme for reorganisation and all it involved was not complete when Lord Kitchener left India in September 1909, for neither time nor money had sufficed. Several important measures were still in the progress stage. But in its completed state it represented what that acknowledged expert considered should be the standard for 'the compact, highly equipped and disciplined Army' which nearly half a century before a great pro-consul, John, first Lord Lawrence, on the eve of his final departure from India, officially recorded as essential for the external and internal security of that country.

Unfortunately it never has been completed, for with Lord Kitchener's departure, and despite his appeal for continuity in military policy, there commenced a period of retrenchment in military expenditure which continued up to the outbreak of the present War and held the field till quite recently.

This fact is considered by the Commission to be one of the causes of what has happened in Mesopotamia, and it is, the writer believes, a primary cause.

In support of this assertion it will be necessary to examine somewhat minutely the military expenditure of the last few years. For its right understanding, however, a word or two on the system of military finance in India seem necessary.

The yearly military budget is fixed by the Governor General in Council. The two members of that Council most directly interested in it are the Finance and Army Members. Expenditure is classed as *ordinary* and *special*, though these are not shown separately in the general published accounts. *Ordinary* hardly needs explanation, for it comprises the expenditure connected with the upkeep of the Army at its fixed strength, its establishments, equipment, ammunition, stores, and barracks, and also the upkeep expenditure of the Royal Indian Marine. *Special* comprises all

other expenditure whether of an *extraordinary* nature, such as the cost of actual military operations, or connected with measures designed to increase the efficiency of the Army. This latter is termed *schedule* expenditure, for, after its amount has been fixed by the budget, it is divided amongst the various heads of departments by the Army Member and his advisory Council, according to what they consider is the relative importance of the various proposals each has submitted on a schedule of his requirements. When allotted to departments the head of each is responsible for watching and regulating the expenditure on each item on his list. *Schedule* expenditure was thus defined by the late Finance Member, Sir G. Fleetwood Wilson :

By this expression I mean the provision for new schemes costing more than 3300*l.*, a limit which brings within the *Schedule* all outlays of a special nature such as the introduction of new armament and other major improvements in the direction of efficiency.

The *schedule* grant has also to bear the recurring cost of all such measures until their completion when they pass to *ordinary*.

The above quotation has been given because it shows so plainly how closely maintenance of a high standard of efficiency and of preparedness for war depends on an adequate provision for *schedule* expenditure. Cut it off altogether and there would still be an army, but if persisted in for long it would be one hopelessly out of date. It shows, moreover, that in the *schedule* grant the financier intent on reduction of expenditure or on finding funds for other objects has an easy and unadvertised way towards part at any rate of his object.

To effect economies in *ordinary* expenditure is neither so easy, especially in an army commanded by Lord Kitchener for nearly seven years, nor so safe. The easiest way of course is to reduce establishments, for such reacts on almost every item which goes to make up the total cost. But this, especially if it involved the most costly item, the British portion of the Army, would entail reference to the Secretary of State and the Cabinet, and would inevitably come under discussion in Parliament and in the Press. As long as the strength is maintained, all within it must be paid, clothed, armed, housed and fed, and pensions must be paid. There are of course other means whereby savings on ordinary expenditure can be made; but to allow arms and equipment to become unserviceable without replacement, to cut down repairs to barracks and buildings, to use up stores and munitions kept as reserves, and suchlike, is not only 'a penny wise and pound foolish' policy, but such are very dangerous expedients for any Government to adopt.

For the financing of his scheme Lord Kitchener insisted on having a fixed yearly special grant for a term of years, as on such a system only could methodical and economical progress be made.

Though originally fixed at a considerably higher figure, the average amount spent during the five years ending on the 31st of March 1909 was 1,643,000*l.* per annum. From this date the Government reverted to the former system of a yearly *schedule* grant, fluctuating according to the general state of the revenue, the urgency of the need and the claims of other branches of the administration.

Before going to the details of expenditure, we would ask our readers to bear in mind one fact as regards India. It is that a good monsoon almost invariably means financial prosperity for the Government, and a bad one the reverse. An Indian budget has been termed 'a gamble in rain.'

The following tables show the net annual *total*, *ordinary*, and *schedule* military expenditure for the financial years 1908-09 to 1914-15.

TABLE I.
Net Annual Total Expenditure. £ sterling.

Year	Budget	Actual expenditure	Plus or minus Budget
	£	£	£
1908-09	19,787,700	19,603,000	-184,700
1909-10	19,653,000	19,112,300	-540,700
1910-11	19,706,500	19,265,000	-441,500
1911-12	19,575,200	19,558,600	-16,600
1912-13	19,094,500	19,565,500	+471,000
1913-14	19,646,800	19,896,100	+249,300
1914-15	20,500,000	20,435,000	-65,000

TABLE II.
Net Ordinary Expenditure. £ sterling.

Year	Budget	Actuals	Plus or minus Budget
	£	£	£
1908-09	18,121,000	18,213,000	+92,000
1909-10	19,178,300	18,691,700	-486,600
1910-11	19,050,800	18,623,800	-427,000
1911-12	18,513,700	18,494,200	-19,500
1912-13	18,387,700	18,686,000	+298,300
1913-14	18,709,500	19,185,400	+475,900
1914-15	19,429,000	19,641,800	+212,800

TABLE III.
Schedule Expenditure. £ sterling.

Year	Budget	Actuals	Plus or minus Budget
	£	£	£
1908-09	1,666,700	1,263,300	-403,400
1909-10	474,700	420,600	-54,100
1910-11	482,700	468,200	-14,500
1911-12	595,200	448,400	-146,800
1912-13	526,900	631,500	+104,600
1913-14	737,700	710,700	-27,000
1914-15	1,071,000	793,200	-277,800

Taking the five years 1909-10 to 1913-14, inclusive, the tables show that the total net military expenditure during these years was 278,500*l.* less than the budget estimate. Also that the total *schedule* allotment was 2,817,000*l.*; of this 1,512,000*l.* was for the Army proper, the balance was for military works and the Marine. Of the Army share 1,426,000*l.* was spent, a yearly average of 285,200*l.*, a meagre sum to meet the incomplete requirements of the Kitchener programme as well as those new ones which in any modern army are constantly arising.

We have included 1908-09 in the tables because its budget was the last one to carry any portion of Lord Kitchener's special grant. Moreover, whilst the preceding ten years had been years of remarkable prosperity, 1908-09 was a year of exceptional financial stringency, owing to the failure of the monsoon of 1907 and the spring rains of 1908. Notwithstanding the closest economy in all spending departments—and the Army took its full share in this—the year closed with the large deficit of nearly four millions sterling.

Naturally in such circumstances the estimates for 1909-10 had to be framed on the most economical scale possible. That for *ordinary* expenditure had, however, to be largely increased, for to this head had now to be added an additional contribution of 300,000*l.* per annum to the War Office towards the cost of depots and recruits for the British Army in India, as well as the cost, 427,000*l.* per annum, of the increase of pay granted to the Indian Army on the 1st of January 1909.

In September 1909 Lord Kitchener left India and was succeeded by General Sir O'Moore Creagh. Trade continued dull throughout the year, and in November the Government issued a call for further economies in all departments. When the year closed the net military expenditure showed a reduction of 540,000*l.* on the budget estimate. The bulk of this saving was in the *ordinary* expenditure, the largest items being 98,000*l.* due to a substantial fall in food prices, and 328,000*l.* on account of reduction of payments in England, 219,000*l.* of this being due to short purchase of ordnance and other stores.

The general accounts of the country for the year closed with a surplus of 607,000*l.* only. There was, therefore, reasonable justification for the economies imposed on the Army, provided always that these economies were remembered when finances were more prosperous and funds provided to make up the leeway in postponed measures and fill up depleted stocks of stores. Our remarks on the succeeding years will, we believe, show that nothing was done till the state of the arms and equipment of the troops rendered a more liberal expenditure imperative.

During 1910-11 weather conditions were favourable and trade

was active. At its close the revenue was over six million pounds better than that of the previous year. After local Governments had had their share the central Government was left with the handsome surplus of 3,936,000*l.*

In November 1910 the late Earl of Minto was succeeded as Viceroy by Lord Hardinge, and an era of yet more drastic economy in military expenditure commenced.

The actual military expenditure for the year showed a reduction of 442,000*l.* on the budget estimate. Practically the whole of the *schedule* allotment was spent as well as an *extraordinary* grant of 173,000*l.* for operations in connection with the suppression of arms traffic in the Persian Gulf. The saving, therefore, was in the *ordinary* expenditure, and the chief causes were savings on food charges, 158,000*l.*, reduction of two transport cadres, of ordnance charges, smaller purchases of stores in England (63,000*l.*), and reduced Marine expenses.

Thus we see that although the Government of India was at the end of the year in possession of the surplus mentioned, the accruing of which must have been manifest to the Finance Department long before the year closed, Army expenditure was reduced by nearly half a million, no effort being made to compensate for the savings effected during the two preceding lean years.

Though failure of the monsoon in July and August 1911 caused considerable anxiety, the situation was saved by bountiful rain later, and by the end of September conditions had steadily improved. Trade was brisk, both exports and imports were on scales never before obtained, and at the close of 1911-12 the Government of India had a surplus of 2½ millions sterling.

During the year their Majesties the King and Queen visited India. In December 1911 the great Durbar was held at Delhi, which henceforth was to be the capital of the Indian Empire.

In the military budget for the year, 1,061,000*l.* was allotted for *special* expenditure. Of this, 466,000*l.* was *extraordinary*, to be incurred in connexion with the military arrangements for the Royal visit and Durbar, for extended manœuvres, and for the continuation of measures for the suppression of arms traffic in the Persian Gulf, the balance, 595,000*l.*, being the *schedule* allotment, of which 321,000*l.* was for the Army proper. The more important measures for which funds were provided were continued improvement in the armament of the artillery, the formation of signal companies, and the purchase of a considerable number of the latest pattern rifles.

At the close of 1911-12 the total military expenditure was 16,600*l.* less than the estimate. But the actual expenditure included the sum of 307,000*l.* on items such as the Abor expedition

charges falling to be paid in 1911-12 and the Durbar bonus of half a month's pay given to the rank and file of the Army, not foreseen when the budget was framed, and therefore unprovided for. Practically the whole amount came out of the special expenditure—143,000*l.* from the *extraordinary*, owing to the abandonment of the manœuvres, together with savings on the Persian Gulf operations; and 146,000*l.* from the *schedule* grant, owing to reduction or postponement of several proposed measures. For instance, out of 100,000*l.* allotted for artillery re-armament, only 38,000*l.* was spent. But for these unforeseen charges the net expenditure would have been 324,000*l.* less than the estimate.

The year 1912-13 opened with excellent financial prospects which were maintained, the revenue of India reaching the record total of 87 million pounds.

When introducing the budget for the year, the Finance Member remarked as follows regarding the military services :

The budget has been mainly influenced by the inquiry into the possibilities of retrenchment, promised a year ago. . . . In pursuance of the same policy expenditure has been temporarily curtailed in various directions and a number of permanent economies effected, whilst other important suggestions are under consideration.

As the result of this policy the net military expenditure was placed at 19,094,000*l.*, a sum lower, as the Finance Member stated, than that of any year since 1903-04. When making this statement he did not however remind the Council that since that year the permanent charges connected with *ordinary* military expenditure had been increased by not less than 1½ millions sterling on account of higher pay to the Indian Army, increased contribution to the War Office, and the permanent charges created by the measures introduced for the improvement of the Army since 1904-05.

Special expenditure was placed at 706,800*l.*; of this 179,900*l.* was *extraordinary* on account of winding-up charges of the Abor expedition, suppression of arms traffic and charges connected with troops in Persia; and the balance, 526,900*l.*, was the *schedule* allotment, which was to be devoted to 'the provision of primary requirements of the Army, guns, rifles, bayonets, and swords, and to the prosecution of the scheme for providing Indian troops with sound, well-constructed lines and the continuation of other military works now in progress.' The appointment of the Nicholson Committee to inquire into military expenditure was also announced.

As has been stated, the year was an exceedingly prosperous one. The bountiful revenue gave a surplus over expenditure of nearly eight millions sterling, and, after sharing this with provincial Governments, the Government of India was left with

3½ millions, the greater portion of which was devoted to grants in aid of education and urban sanitation.

The net military expenditure exceeded the estimate by 471,000*l.* Of this about 174,000*l.* was on *special* expenditure, mainly owing to a considerable increase in the number of rifles purchased and to expenses connected with military parties required with survey operations on the N.E. frontier. The balance was in the ordinary expenditure, the largest items being 174,000*l.* on account of a rise in food prices and 54,000*l.* increased purchase of ordinary stores.

For 1913-14 the net military budget was fixed at 19,646,800*l.* The allotment for *special* expenditure was 937,000*l.*, of which 200,000*l.* was for *extraordinary* and 737,700*l.* *schedule* expenditure. The share of the Army in the latter was 427,700*l.*, the principal items being re-armament of artillery 145,000*l.*, purchase of rifles 119,000*l.*, acquisition of land for a new cantonment at Delhi in consequence of the change of capital 73,000*l.*, and the formation of a school of military aviation. The balance of the schedule went to military works, 286,500*l.* for continuation of building in progress and to special coast and land defences.

The total net expenditure was 19,896,100*l.*, an increase over the estimate of 249,300*l.*, which was entirely due to a sudden rise in food prices following a failure of the rains in September 1913.

In July of that year Sir G. Fleetwood Wilson was succeeded as Finance Member by Sir William Meyer, who had been Secretary of the Finance Branch of the Army Department on its formation under Lord Kitchener and also a member of the Nicholson Committee.

For 1914-15 the net military budget estimate, framed of course before the outbreak of the War, proposed an expenditure of 20,500,000*l.*, an increase over the actuals of the previous year of 604,000*l.* The allotment for *special* expenditure was 1,071,000*l.*, all of it *schedule*, the share of the Army being 635,000*l.*

The expected rise in expenditure was due, the Finance Member stated, to two main reasons: first, the probability of yet higher food prices; and, secondly, the necessity of increasing the *schedule* grant in order to provide for further large purchases of guns, rifles, and munitions in England. For the new cantonment at Delhi a further sum of 133,000*l.* was also provided.

The net expenditure for the year was 20,435,000*l.*, or 65,000*l.* less than the estimate. On the *schedule* there was a saving of 277,800*l.*, mainly because the orders for arms and stores placed in England could not be fully complied with on account of the War. The greater part of this saving was swallowed up in unforeseen *ordinary* expenditure due to the War.

The general accounts of India closed with a deficit of 2½ millions sterling, owing to the effect of the War on revenue.

For 1915-16 the estimate for military expenditure was 20,169,000*l.* The Finance Member made what at first sight appears a somewhat remarkable statement: 'Owing to the War [military] expenditure is being restricted to what is considered essential for the maintenance of efficiency and the protection of the country.' The military budget was, therefore, practically on a peace basis, and the explanation is that, in accordance with the agreement made at the beginning of the War, India bears no part of the War cost of Indian troops on service overseas; all she pays is the amount of what their ordinary upkeep charges would have been had they remained in India under peace conditions.

Taking the years from 1908-09 to 1913-14 inclusive, the general result is that the actual military expenditure during this period was 465,000*l.* less than the budget estimate, notwithstanding that the cost of foodstuffs during several of these years largely exceeded the estimate, 300,000*l.* being a moderate estimate of the total excess. When we look at the figures of the *schedule* expenditure, that pertaining to the Army proper being a direct measure of its progressive efficiency and readiness for war, a yet more striking result is seen. Out of a total of 4,483,000*l.* allotted 541,000*l.* was not spent. When it is remembered that this head has to carry the recurring cost of every measure however costly from the date of its initiation to that of its completion, which may be several years, it will be recognised why the completion of the Kitchener programme, even in a modified form, has been so long delayed and what little scope there was for the initiation of other measures, important if progress relative to other armies was to be ensured. Take for instance the flying service. Started in India in 1913-14 with the small grant of 20,000*l.* for the establishment of a school of military aviation, it received in 1914-15 the further sum of 32,000*l.*, whereas in the Home Army estimates for that year one million was provided. Is it to be wondered at that India could not provide an efficient air service for Mesopotamia? And again, considering the scanty sums made available, that the heavy artillery sent there was neither sufficient nor up to date and the medical arrangements and equipment far below the generous scale of the Western front?

The outbreak of the present War made heavy demands on India's military resources, which were readily and promptly met. Large, well-organised and well-equipped forces were sent to different theatres, whilst in India itself certain formations have to be held in full strength and complete readiness for any emergency which may arise on the frontier or elsewhere. Moreover, the Indian Army has been deprived of many hundreds of its

British officers taken for service elsewhere with the new armies of the Empire. What India has done could not have been done so completely and so promptly had it not been for Lord Kitchener's reorganisation of the Army.

The force originally sent to Mesopotamia admirably fulfilled its mission. The difficulties there began when a more ambitious programme was decided on without adequate means.

The fact is that, the time of stress having come, the inevitable results of the military hand-to-mouth policy of the Government of India during the years we have considered now show themselves. It was a policy adopted, not owing to financial exigencies, but for a settled purpose. The late Viceroy had been but a few months in the country when in the budget debate in the Legislative Council he said he 'cordially endorsed the undertaking to examine expenditure, both civil and military, with a view to restricting its growth and making actual reductions wherever practicable.' In the following year he went further, stating that, in consequence of the Anglo-Russian Agreement, 'the rapid growth in Army expenditure has been checked and controlled,' that the sky was clear, 'we have secured the defence of the country.' It is now our duty to turn all our energies to the uplifting of the people.' The means to this end were to be education and sanitation, both in themselves, and especially the latter, truly laudable objects for any Government's activities, but, not in India especially, to be purchased at the expense of the safety of the country, which must come first. As said *The Times* in 1913, 'Indian defence does not merely connote the safety of British rule in India. It means far more, the security and happiness and prosperity of a very large proportion of the world's population.' For these toiling millions the British Government and the British people have made themselves responsible.

For those on the spot to see, it did not however require war conditions to show what the results of the Government's policy were going to be. It was evident that the arms and equipment of the Army were seriously deteriorating and reserves becoming depleted. The state of the rifles of not a few units of the Indian Army was an open secret. In March 1912 *The Pioneer*, a leading Anglo-Indian newspaper, when commenting on the budget for that year, said 'we should have liked larger sums given for the purchase of rifles, as many of the rifles now in use are barely serviceable.' In another newspaper it was said 'we fear there can be little doubt that, in India, military equipment has been allowed to sink into a condition which, if not actually as deplorable as many maintain, is at least very far from being satisfactory.'

To anxiety about a state of affairs like this, must be attributed the increased military expenditure in 1913 and 1914, which was

no doubt designed to remedy some of the results of the ill-advised economies during the fat years from 1910 to 1912 when surpluses were so lavishly distributed to other objects that, as the present Finance Member himself said, the donations were so great as 'to be far beyond the spending powers of local Governments.'

Little mention has been made of the Nicholson Committee, for its report has not been published. Lord Hardinge, however, has stated in the House of Lords that the majority of that Committee recommended the maintenance in readiness to act of a fighting army of $7\frac{1}{2}$ divisions, which is considerably less than the strength considered necessary by Lord Kitchener, and that the Government of India accepted the recommendation. He also stated that the despatch of these divisions overseas was not even contemplated by the Committee. Were they told not to do so? For it is not possible to imagine that the members of the Committee could have forgotten either the numerous instances in Indian military history of expeditions being despatched overseas from that country both eastwards and westwards, or the possibilities of war between Germany and the British Empire. But we will not pursue this portion of our subject further, for the writer hopes that sufficient facts and figures have been given to show what the era of economy meant and how absolutely warranted is the conclusion of the Commission regarding it.

For the initiation of the policy, whether prompted from India or not, stand directly responsible the Government in office during the period and especially the Secretaries of State for India, Lord Morley up to 1910 and the Marquess of Crewe. The Government of India appear to have accepted it readily, and the Finance Member of Council during the greater part of the period, Sir J. Fleetwood Wilson, was that Government's chief instrument in carrying it out. In 1913 he was succeeded by Sir William Meyer, who, even if he had wished to do so, had not the time before the War came in which to find the funds necessary to repair the damage done.

There have always been some who have regarded the abolition of the Military Member of Council and the Military Department of the Government of India as a weakening of its military system. Shortly after rumours of failures in Mesopotamia became current in England, the question began to be raised in the Press. Now the Commission has declared that the existing system is faulty, being over-centralised and throwing on the Commander-in-Chief duties and responsibilities beyond the power of any one man.

Nevertheless the writer ventures to hold that the conclusion is an erroneous one and that the existing system, if properly worked, is sound; for he believes that the best military opinion with recent experience of India would regard with dismay a

return to the system of dual control which the former administration involved.

Breakdowns in military administration, as in any other business affair, may be due either to faults in the system or to failures on the part of those entrusted with the working of it.

First, let us see what the present system is. At the head of it is the Viceroy and his Council in which the Commander-in-Chief has a seat as an extraordinary member in charge of the Army Department. So far it corresponds to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, the Army Member to the Secretary of State for War. The Viceroy is the head of the Army in India in the same sense as His Majesty the King is of all his Forces. The dignity is not a purely titular one, for the Viceroy has well-defined powers and responsibilities with regard to the Army and exercises them.

The Commander-in-Chief as such has a Military Staff corresponding to the Army Council and the War Office Staff—that is, Chief of the General Staff, Adjutant-General, Quartermaster-General, Director of Medical Services, Directors General of Ordnance and Military Works. There is this difference as compared with the War Office, that the Director of Medical Services is independent of the Adjutant-General, and the dual responsibility for ordnance and works carried by the Master-General of the Ordnance is shared by two officers. The number of high officers is increased, but so is personal responsibility.

As Army Member the Commander-in-Chief has a secretariat staff, composed of a Secretary to the Government of India in the Army Department with a small staff of officers and a considerable subordinate establishment.* Attached to this staff is the Financial Adviser and his subordinates; though attached, this latter officer and his staff really form part of the Financial Department of the Government.

The chief officers already named as the heads of the Military Staff, together with the Secretary of the Army Department and the Financial Adviser, form the Army Member's Advisory Council. The position of the Secretary, who is a military officer of high rank, does not correspond to that of the Secretary of the War Office. He has, like other secretaries to Government, the right of direct access to the Viceroy, and can bring to the latter's notice any point of military administration he considers necessary. Nor does his branch correspond with that in the War Office, except in minor details, inasmuch as its higher ranks are manned by military officers. Indeed the Army Department Secretariat is in degree a miniature of the old Military Department. There would be smoother and quicker working if its military functions were more restricted.

Now, what were the reasons which led Lord Kitchener to

recommend the abolition of the Military Department? 'Unity of Control' and 'The Single Front' are watchwords of to-day. The reasons are obvious; without unity of control in war—and in peace too—there is waste of power, time, and energy. As the Commission remark regarding the dual system under which London and Simla tried to conduct the operations, 'the chain of responsibility is greatly lengthened by the number of authorities who had necessarily to be consulted, and who had a voice in the direction of affairs.' To which may be added delay in coming to decisions. It was precisely this sort of dual control which Lord Kitchener found hampered the progress in the reorganisation of the Army in India he went there to carry out.

To accuse him, as has been done, of the desire to centralise all power in himself and Army Headquarters is a mistake. That he desired the power to carry out his proposals cannot of course be denied, but these proposals had been approved in principle by superior authority. Decentralisation of power, military and financial, was a cardinal feature of his policy. The three commands, into which India was divided when he went there, were abolished. The division was made the unit of higher command, and divisional commanders were given largely increased powers so as to enable them to deal with both military and financial matters which previously would have required to be referred to Simla. And the same was carried down into the subordinate commands. The frontier brigades were made independent commands.

The disadvantages of the former dual system as they appeared to Lord Kitchener are best given in his own words spoken at the last meeting of the Viceroy's Legislative Council he attended before he left India :

A glance at the history of the Army in India shows that though, in the long run, good results have been attained in the past, they were only obtained by following very devious roads, and therefore took much time to accomplish, whilst the methods employed were far from economical, and the policy was lacking in continuity. The system of dual advice to the Viceroy on all Army matters by two separate members of His Excellency's Council was the main cause of this. . . . If you duplicate your advisers you will reel through the mazes of military technicalities, leaning first on the shoulder of one and then on that of the other, and continuity will and must be lost.

All expert opinion seems to be agreed that from its very beginning the campaign in Mesopotamia should have been controlled by the War Office. It was not so carried out, as we know. Is there, however, any reason inherent in the system of military administration in India why the military authorities there should not have been able to work on the same lines as the War Office would have done? Seeing that, as has been mentioned, the two

systems have in all essentials the same general organisation and personnel, there seems to be no such reason. In the Press have appeared statements that the late Commander-in-Chief was 'chained to his desk, buried beneath mountains of paper and overwhelmed with detail.' A witness before the Commission stated he was trying to perform the work of six men. The picture is pathetic, but, if true, one may well ask was it necessary? As has been shown, the Commander-in-Chief and Army Member has a staff to plan, supervise and carry out operations, to supervise training, administration and supply. If this staff proved inadequate for war purposes he was responsible for increasing it; if individuals on it were shown to be incompetent, for replacing them. If, however, the Commander-in-Chief fails to make full use of his staff, then indeed he is attempting to do the work of six men and the result is not the fault of the system. It is understood that the distinguished soldier now Commander-in-Chief in India does not find it necessary to be always at his headquarters but is able to visit his troops. It is to be hoped no radical changes in the system will be made till he is able to give a considered opinion on it. Sir Charles Munro has also the assistance for inspection purposes of the Generals Commanding the Northern and Southern Armies, which appointments appear to have been allowed to remain unfilled, perhaps for reasons of economy, during the earlier period of the War.

The Commission caustically remarks on the office procedure of the Army Department. Minute writing appears to flourish in all Government offices, and especially so in India, where the *babu*, both black and white, must justify his existence. It is perhaps presumption on the writer's part to criticise the undoubted authority of Mr. Brunyate and his example of procedure as given in the Commission's Report; nevertheless this latter invites a question. Why is it necessary for office clerks and subordinate officers in the Army Department Secretariat to vote on the Quartermaster-General's proposal when it is the rule in the Army Head-quarter side of the office that clerks are not to write minutes, or junior officers either, on subjects noted on by the heads of other branches? There may be wisdom in a multitude of counsellors, but military experience is against it. The remedy seems simple. Revise the Rules of Business in force in the Army Department. Stop all minute writing by clerks and junior officers except on such minor matters as the latter are themselves empowered to settle. Let the Financial Adviser's Office confine itself to checking estimates, to saying whether the necessary funds can be found or not, and to its other legitimate financial functions, and refrain from giving an opinion as to the military necessity or otherwise of the matter under consideration.

It has been said that the Army in India has lost influence owing to its being represented in Council by one member only. Two votes are no doubt better than one, and if any but first-rate men are appointed to an office as high as any distinguished soldier can aspire to in peace, loss of influence is sure to follow. But a first-rate soldier of reputation in the field and administrative ability, who in his Advisory Council has expert advice on all military subjects, will, it is thought, carry such weight on those subjects in Council as to render unnecessary the support of another soldier.

It may, however, be said that the brilliant success of the Ministry of Munitions shows how much better off the Army in India would have been had the Military Supply Department continued to exist. The comparison is fallacious. Here, in the United Kingdom, an Army beyond the imagination of all but one man has been raised, equipped, trained, and supplied with munitions of war. To do it has involved the establishment of munition and controlled factories over the entire Kingdom, with its consequent alterations in the whole of our industrial system—a task far beyond the powers of a military department formed to supply an army almost microscopic compared with the numbers now under arms. In India there has been no such increase, though of course large recruitments have been necessary to maintain the strength of the Army. The troops sent to Europe and elsewhere are being maintained by the Imperial Government, and there seems to be no reason why the existing army factory and marine dockyard organisation in India, assisted by such civil resources as might have been utilised, should not have been able to supply the force in Mesopotamia with nearly all it required, heavy guns excepted, provided money was made available and push put into the matter. But these factories, like the Army, had been through the starvation period I have tried to describe, and the Government of India, when war came, do not seem to have recognised that it was one on the issue of which the Empire would stand or fall, went on with 'business as usual,' and thought, as has been said, in pence and not in lakhs of rupees.

I have spoken here and throughout of the Government of India, because it is the Executive Government. But it must be repeated that it is not supreme; it has to take its policy from its masters, the Cabinet and Parliament of the United Kingdom.

MESOPOTAMIA

(II)

THE TRAGEDY OF AN IMPOSSIBLE SYSTEM

IN the outburst of national shame and anger at the disclosures of the Mesopotamia Commission, there is danger lest the cry for punishment of those responsible should obscure the essential point, which is how to prevent recurrence of such evils.

The first thing to be done to this end is to understand the organisation that has failed. This takes us at once to the headquarters of the Army of India, which is admittedly the principal machine that has broken down. This Army was set a hazardous task in the Bagdad advance, but no shouting against the politicians who ordered the enterprise will disclose to us that which has to be found.

The army of India machine broke down because it was too weak to bear the strain that was put upon it. It was too weak because it was badly organised and was run on too cheap a scale. It was in the same case as the army of Great Britain, in being defectively financed, up to the time of the outbreak of war. It differed from the army of Great Britain in continuing to be defectively financed long after an end had been put to the same mistake in England. Throughout the critical seasons of 1914 and 1915 the army of India continued to lack things that were procurable; things which, if they had been provided, as they might have been by the prompt and copious pouring out of money, would undoubtedly have produced, in 1916 and 1917, results, if not as splendid, at least to some extent comparable to those achieved in the same period in the army at home.

Everybody agrees that the Indian troops themselves did wonders. That they were badly found has also been established beyond dispute. Transport in particular was deficient. A railway from the sea to supply the Bagdad advance would have made all the difference in the world. Had this railway been sanctioned even as late as August 1915, when the responsible general at the front asked for it, the Bagdad advance might have succeeded.

At worst, the retreat would have lost its terrors. That the railway could have been built in time to have been of the greatest use is clearly apparent. India, at the moment, had an undepleted railway department with strong staff of engineers. Abundant labour was available. Vast supplies of rolling stock and permanent way were at hand. Everything down to the last coupling pin could have been furnished without a single indent upon Europe. Some of the less important of the thirty thousand miles of existing railways in India might have had to be torn up, but, had sanction only been given promptly, there is no doubt whatever that the work could have been put through. It becomes then essential to examine why no railway was built.

General Sir John Nixon asked for the railway on the 11th of August 1915—i.e. more than eight months before the disaster at Kut. He telegraphed to India thereafter to expedite a reply. He was informed on the 30th of October that the matter was still 'under the consideration of the Government' (i.e. the Government of India). A further reminder from General Nixon was followed on the 14th of November by a reply to the effect that 'for the present the Government have decided not to proceed with the construction of the railway, on the ground of expense.' Thus, after the loss of three months in the midst of war, the means of transport so sorely needed was definitely refused, and a British army was left face to face with what proved an impossible situation.

In these three months the scheme trickled slowly through the involutions of the labyrinth-like system in which the Government of India and Indian Army Headquarters are involved. Sir William Meyer did not note on the scheme until the 5th of October. Even then his minute was only to say he must have further assurances before anything could be done.

We cannot [he wrote] embark on large expenditure on such a project for other than the most urgent military reasons. . . . If, however, His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and Army Member can definitely assure me that this project is absolutely necessary for the safeguarding of our military position, having regard, *inter alia*, to the time which the line must take to construct, I cannot, of course, resist a reference home on this basis.

Indian Army Headquarters then abandoned the scheme. It would no doubt have been better to have pursued it further as the Chief of the Staff advised, but Indian Army Headquarters were immersed in the thousand urgencies of a campaign. The point that stands out is the undue delay which occurred, delay which can only be explained by the complication of the system. Sir John Nixon, who had asked for the railway, was no less a person than the general commanding in Mesopotamia. He occupied a

position analogous to that held by Sir Douglas Haig in France. His proposal was approved by the Indian Chief of the Staff (Sir Percy Lake) and by the Commander-in-Chief-cum-Indian-Secretary-of-State-for-War (Sir Beauchamp Duff). There can be no doubt whatever that the scheme ought to have gone through—indeed, it appears to have been one of the first to be put in hand as soon as the War Office relieved the Government of India of control of the Mesopotamia campaign. It was killed not suddenly, nor by the action of any one official, but by the impossible system in force at Simla.

It is this system that requires to be reformed. I say the system deliberately, rather than the men administering it. The men have made mistakes, but they were doing their best, and, whereas men come and go, a bad system remains to be a permanent source of evil. Of the three men directing the organisations which had to decide the fate of the railway—viz. Lord Hardinge, Sir Beauchamp Duff, and Sir William Meyer—the first two have already left India, and the demand which has arisen for the punishment of the third will not bear investigation. Sir William Meyer is a capable public servant, and his course of action was in consonance with the habitual view definitely imposed upon him by a system for which he was neither immediately nor exclusively responsible. On the other hand, a bad system can and ought to be remedied at once.

I have described at some length what happened in connexion with the railway, because the failure of this scheme played so essential a part in preparing the way for disaster. No one can read the evidence given before the Commission by Mr. J. B. Brunyate, Secretary to the Government of India in the Finance Department, where he describes the complicated references that would have to be made before Indian Army Headquarters would be allowed to add to the supply of mules or strengthen the equipment of machine guns, without recognising that the system is one under which proposals for a railway were only too likely to receive endless postponement.

In order to arrive at that which has to be changed, it is necessary to dissect the practice in force. Let us examine the procedure of the particular scheme relating to the purchase of mules explained by Mr. Brunyate. In order to simplify the details, we will make the suppositions in advance (1) that this scheme was an important one, in which the full procedure had therefore to be followed, also (2) that it was a scheme on which the financial authorities all took one view and the military authorities all took another—a state of things by no means unusual. We then have the financial authorities, consisting of the Finance Member, who is the

Indian Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his representative at Indian Army Headquarters, who is known as the Military Financial Adviser, arrayed against the military authorities, which, in the case we are considering, would consist of (1) the Indian Army Member (known also as the Indian Commander-in-Chief), who is the Indian Secretary of State for War and presides over the Indian Army Council, and (2) the Quartermaster-General, who is the head of the branch concerned with the purchase of mules. The proceedings would commence by the Indian Quartermaster-General informally consulting the Indian Secretary of State for War, and thereafter drawing up a definite scheme for obtaining the mules. This scheme would be referred to the Indian Military Financial Adviser, who, belonging as he does to another department, would have to be approached through the secretariat, which is the office of the Indian Secretary of State for War. This secretariat would note on the scheme before sending it on. The Financial Adviser and his deputies would note on the scheme and send it back through the Army secretariat, the latter again noting upon it and sending it on to the Quartermaster-General to note on what the Financial Adviser had said. The scheme might continue to be remitted backwards and forwards between the Financial Adviser on the one side and the Quartermaster-General on the other, on the secretariat's inviting each to reply in turn to criticisms or rejoinders. Eventually the secretariat would say the scheme had been sufficiently discussed, and it would be sent back under the orders of the Secretary of State for War to the Financial Adviser, who would, this time, submit it to the Finance Member—i.e. to the Indian Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Indian Chancellor of the Exchequer would then note on it and send it back to the Financial Adviser, who would send it back to the secretariat, who would eventually, under the orders of the Indian Secretary of State for War, lay it before the Viceroy, who might order it to be discussed in the Viceroy's Council, a body in which the Indian Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Indian Secretary of State for War are both members.

It has been necessary to give these complicated particulars, to enable ordinary people to realise what a preposterous system we are up against. The Mesopotamia Commission very properly describe it as 'astounding.' They asked the witness 'if this elaborate process of check and counter-check was not really carried on to keep up the fiction that there are two people as there used to be—the Military Member of Council and the Commander-in-Chief—whereas, at present there is only one person in these capacities,' and the answer was in the affirmative. The point we are directly concerned with, however, is somewhat different. It is that, whatever the history of the matter, the thing that is

now wrong is the position occupied by the Financial Adviser. Put him into his proper place as a colleague of the Quartermaster-General, under the orders of the Indian Secretary of State for War, and the whole of the outrageous complications, dependent on the Indian Secretary of State for War having to be dragged in every time the Quartermaster-General requires advice on a financial point, drop out of the arrangement. What remains of the procedure would be reasonable enough, and would work well from the army point of view, provided only that the Indian Secretary of State for War did what is already within his power, namely to give prominence to his Army Council, a body which comprises the heads of all the branches the Indian Secretary of State for War controls. Indeed the system, in this case, would become exceedingly like that already obtaining in the British War Office. The Quartermaster-General's scheme for buying mules, referred to above, would then go direct to the Army Council, who would settle any difference of opinion on it that might have arisen between the Quartermaster-General and the Financial Adviser, both of whom would be present and in positions of equality. The Army Council would either reject the scheme finally or else sanction it finally, without more ado, provided the mules could be bought out of the funds supplied in the army budget. Supposing the army budget not to be sufficient for the purpose, the Indian Secretary of State for War, in his capacity as president of the Army Council, would have only to carry the scheme to the Council of the Viceroy. In this Council the Viceroy would be advised by the Finance Member as to whether the additional money required could be found, and a decision would be arrived at as to whether or no the scheme should go through. All serious complications would have disappeared. At the same time the Viceroy in Council and the Finance Member would have lost not one iota of real control. The legitimate function of the Finance Department begins and ends with the raising, conservation and apportionment of the revenues of the country, and is in no way impaired by the removal of machinery not concerned with these duties. The Finance Department is entitled to be consulted in the fullest possible manner as to the total amount that the Army Department may spend, but it has nothing whatever to do with such questions as that of the proportion of this total to be used for the purchase of mules, or anything else which belongs to the sphere of the Army Council.

It is not surprising, in the circumstances, that the Mesopotamia Commission have found 'general dissatisfaction at the system of microscopic financial control exercised over details of military expenditure.' Sir Herbert Mansfield, lately Director of Transport in India, in a letter to *The Times* of the 17th of July, goes

further in stating that the Finance Member and the Finance Secretary have been 'practically running the Army.'

The principle concerned in the whole matter is one of very wide application. It is that, in Government business, just as much as in commercial business, every department should be given absolute freedom in matters of finance—subject only to the limitations of the budget and the audit—the one to lay down the total up to which outlay may be incurred, and the other to ascertain periodically that the total is not exceeded. Finance should be the servant and not the master of the administrator, for the fewer the restrictions the more complete the measure of economy, as well as of efficiency, that becomes attainable. Nothing is so costly in the end as the replacing of good personal management by arrangements controlled from outside.

We have seen that this principle, which lies at the root of successful business organisation, has been violated in the system in force in the army organisation of the Government of India. Vital responsibility has been taken away from authorities occupying the best position for dealing with it successfully, and has been put upon those more remote and thus less able to handle it properly. The Indian Secretary of State for War and the Indian Army Council have been prevented, at a time of war, from being masters in their own house.

The verdict of the Mesopotamia Commission, that the Indian Government failed 'adequately to minister to the wants of the forces employed in Mesopotamia,' is a true one, but in the eager task of apportioning blame it must be remembered that the Indian war machine was starved because the financial talent of the Government of India has been organised to check rather than to serve the war administration. The Indian Finance Department includes some of the ablest of the officials in India. The fault lies in the fact that they have been isolated from the executive department of which they ought to have been an integral part. They have thus occupied a position of antagonism when they ought to have been the most helpful of colleagues.

To recognise a wrong principle is a long step in the direction of reforming it. The shaping of the precise measures necessary need present no insuperable difficulty, if they be but approached with sympathy and good will. The helpful relations that existed between the old Indian Military Accounts Department and the Ordnance Branch of the Old Indian Military Department should be consulted as an example that has worked well under Indian conditions. The changes to be made should include the transfer of the existing Military Financial Adviser, with all his deputies and all his powers, also the whole of the existing Indian Military Accounts

Department, to the control of the Indian Army Council? The financial officials transferred would then become integral parts of the department to which they are now only attached. Their duties would be to help to prepare schemes, instead of criticising them after they have been completed. The Indian Finance Department would remain as strong as ever in the matter of settling the competing claims of the various departments to shares of the Government funds, also in that of limiting the total amounts of the grants. Its authority would stop, however, outside the doors of the other departments. It would have nothing to do with individual schemes. The duties of the Finance Member would be confined to those of a Chancellor of the Exchequer—a field quite wide enough. There should cease to be any room whatever for Sir Herbert Mansfield's complaint that financial officials are running a department other than their own. There is no good reason why the relations between the Indian Army Council and the Financial Adviser should be different, as they now are, from those between the Viceroy's Council and the Finance Member.

In these remarks no reference has been made to past controversies in connexion with Indian army reform. This is because the more completely these are kept out of the matter the more likely is friction to be avoided now. As to mistakes made in the field, those who are risking their lives for their country deserve that their countrymen should support them, even when they make mistakes. The one thing that should be done is to render mistakes easier to avoid, for, unless the organisation is on sound business lines, the tragedy of Mesopotamia will remain liable to recur.

EVERARD COTES.

