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ROLL OF HONOUR  
 THE POST OFFICE OF INDIA  
 During the Great War 1914-18.

- |                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| CAPT W C DENNEY       | MAJOR M D BAGHAM           |
| R GREENE P E          | ASSTANT                    |
| LIEUT E C SULLARD     | JAN MAHOMED                |
| A D BINGHAM           | DASH RAM                   |
| 2ND LIEUT E M GRAHAM  | NABAYAN ANNAJI PARROT      |
| H B DWYER             | P SHRI RAPPY MICKLAP       |
| E S DORAN             | MAJOR AMCHA BHAI RAY       |
| ASST COMWR J S NADEER | KARAM CHAND                |
| B C GONCALVES         | SHAHN ABDULLA              |
| S C COLLETT           | GUR DUTT M L               |
| A M DESRAJ            | MACHINDRA VIKRAM LAL       |
| SUB-COMDR S GRITTON   | SATISH CHANDBA CHETTERJI   |
| B A RODGERS           | RAMSARUP SINGH             |
| R D SILVA             | M D SILVA                  |
| H W SUTHERLAND        | N M MAHARAJA               |
| C E MCLEAVEY          | ABDUL GUSMAN S             |
| CANASJI M SUPARWALA   | M S KARMADHAR              |
| SERGT T I THEOPHELUS  | W S NARSINRAO              |
| G M FANSHAW           | T SUBBA RAO                |
| J ROWLAND             | K PURUSHYAM MURALIDAR      |
| SILVER MENEZES        | SYED ZAHREDDIN             |
| A E WYSS              | X A GOYINDAM NAIR          |
| J ANCHAN              | M MAHOMED EGRAM            |
| ABIS PATTY            | KALI KANTA LAHRI           |
| M MICHAEL             | JITINDRA NATH MUKERJEE     |
| PTE H C HEBBERD       | PURSHOTAM DAS              |
| SUBDR NIMAL CHAND     | MORINDRA NATH PERAMANI     |
| BASUDEB GHOSH         | J N NANDI                  |
| JENDR SHAIKH AMIR     | RAM LAL                    |
| SIKANDAR KHAN         | HANS RAJ I                 |
| B MUNUSWAMY NAIDU     | FAZAL RAHMAN               |
| SASI MOHAN DAS        | RAM CHANDRA SARMA          |
| A K BASU              | GULAM DIN                  |
| L MADURANAYGAM        | MURGOVIND MAHISHANKER DOVE |
|                       | HAVDR ALIM KHAN            |

WAR MEMORIAL TABLET, GENERAL POST OFFICE, BOMBAY.

THE  
POST OFFICE OF INDIA  
IN THE  
GREAT WAR

EDITED BY

Lieut.-Col. H. A. SAMS, C.I.E., I.C.S.,

Late Director of Postal Services,  
Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force.

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**Price, Rs. 8.**

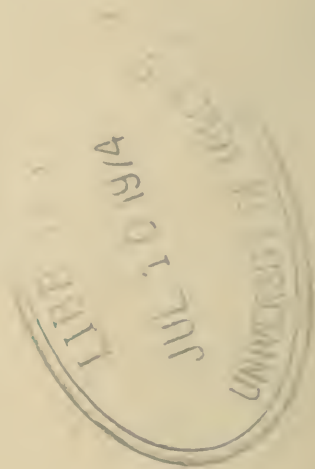
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BOMBAY :  
THE TIMES PRESS

1922

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## To The "Other Ranks."

### To You

Who in the frosts and mists of France,  
The blinding dust and heat, the dreaded rain  
Of Iraq, in the snows of North Iran,  
The swamps and forests of East Africa,  
Midst shot and shell, in sickness and disease,  
To bring sweet messages from Hindustan,  
Britain or Colony to those who fought,  
Worked doggedly,

I dedicate this book

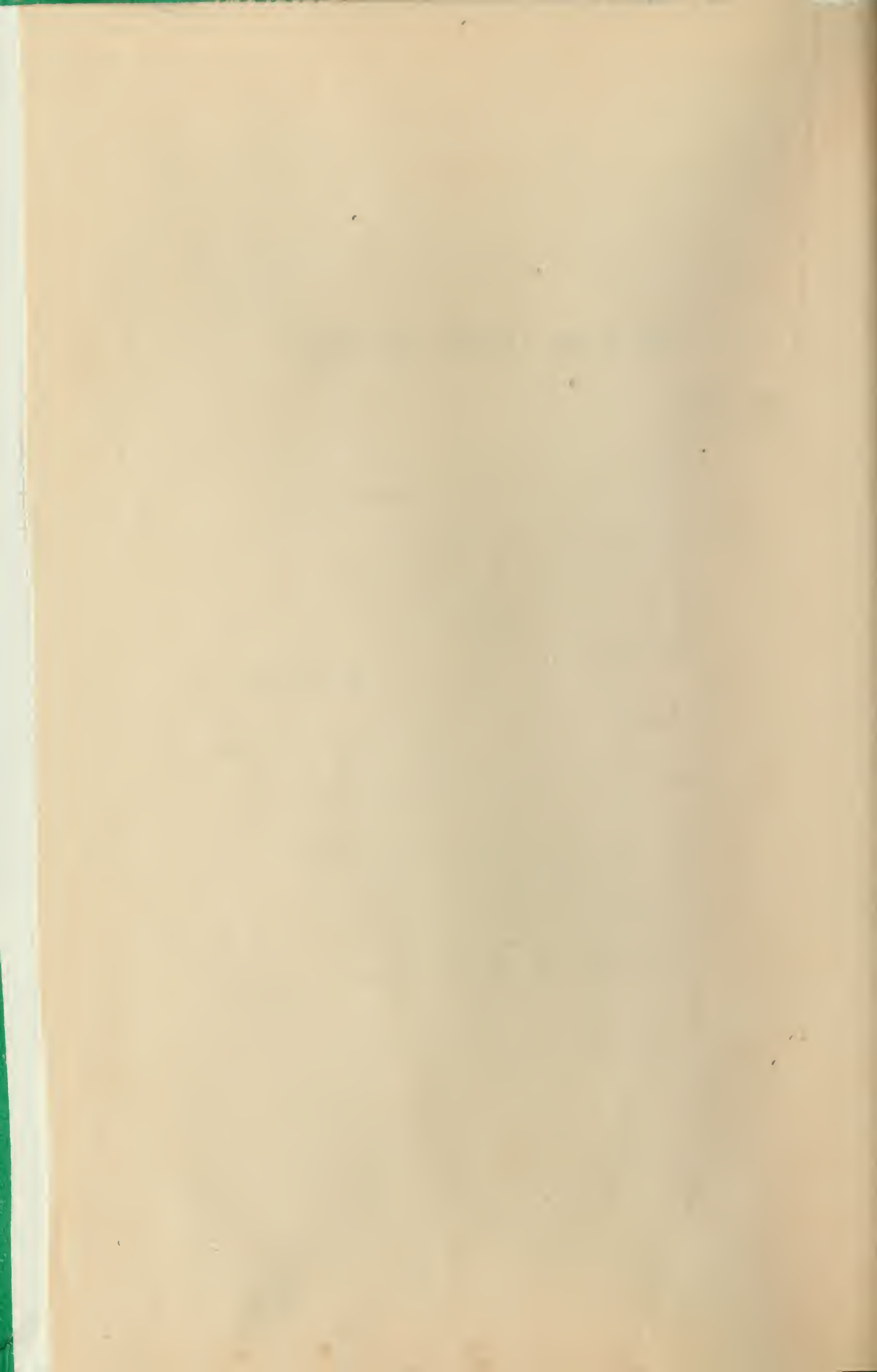
Admiring,

And above all To You

Who, honoured, died for Country and for King.

Yours was the toil and sweat. Not yours the joys.  
That e'en grim Mars does not deny the few,  
The cheery Mess, the picnic and the jaunt.  
Your work was strenuous, your leisure dull.  
And yet you grumbled not but carried on,  
Until that splendid day when Victory dawned.

D. A. S.



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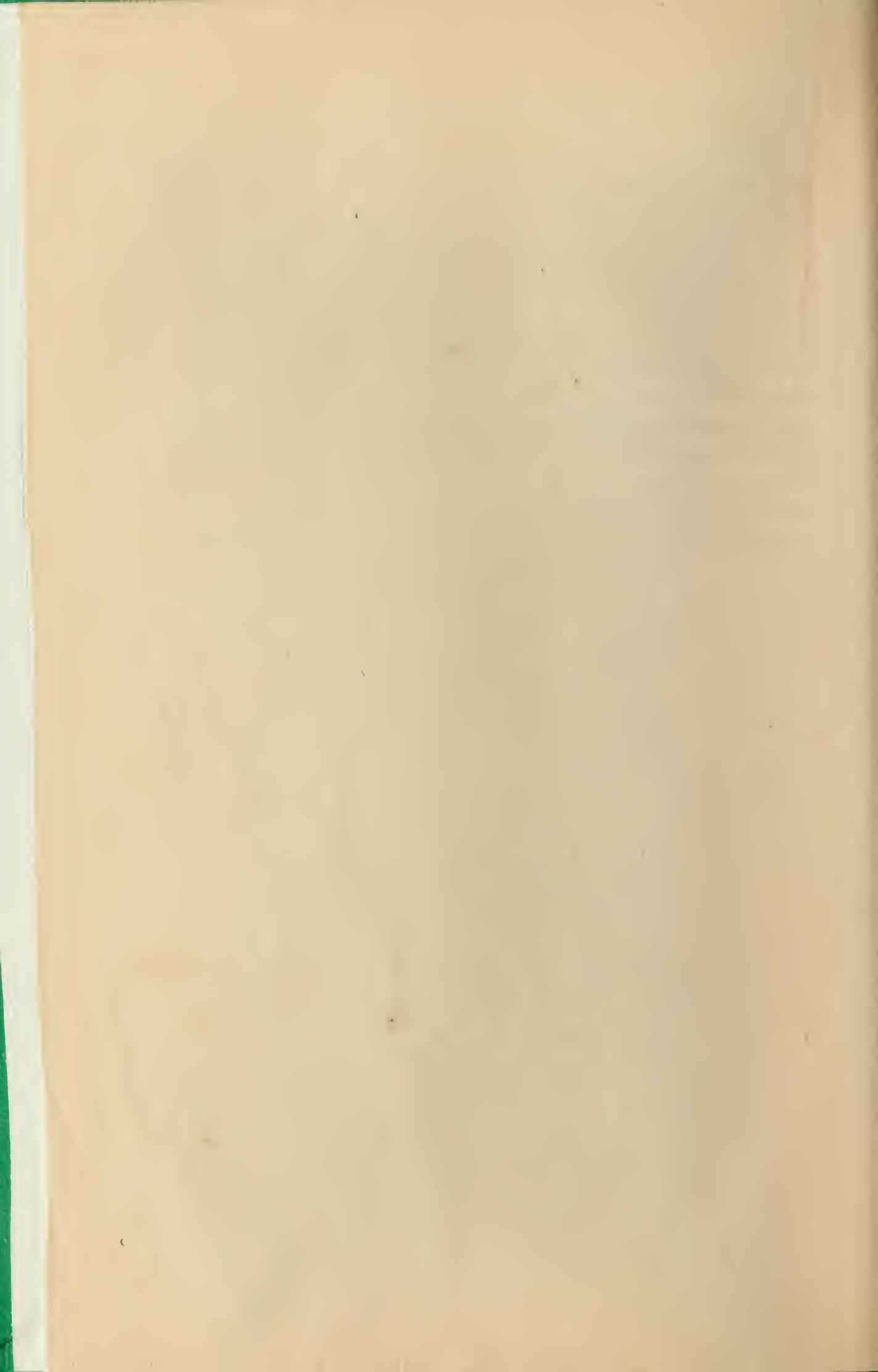
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## PREFACE

THE inception of this book is due to Major Vernieux, Assistant Director of Postal Services, Basrah, who served for a short time with the Postal Service, M. E. F. in March 1918; he wrote to me when I was Director of Postal Services, M. E. F., suggesting that an account of the activities of the Indian Post Office in the Great War should be compiled while records were available and memories fresh. I wrote to the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, India, handing on the suggestion and light-heartedly offered to edit such a book. The matter then appeared to have been dropped till after my return from leave in April 1920 when I renewed my offer.

There were two alternatives. One was to write the book entirely myself from materials supplied by myself and others. The other was to get each officer who was best acquainted with the facts to write his own account and to use existing official reports and narratives. For the former alternative I have neither the ability nor the time as Postmaster-General of a busy Circle, even though blessed with an excellent staff. I therefore chose the latter alternative which seemed to me to have many advantages. In the first place my self-imposed task would be considerably lightened and in the second place the book written by different pens would avoid monotony and be more vivid. I therefore suggested this course to the Director-General and asked him to approach the different officers and to put at my disposal his office files. He carried out my suggestion and at the same time I wrote to the Director, Posts and Telegraphs, Iraq, who very kindly sent me the old files of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force.

With the materials so collected I have compiled this book. Each one has told his own story, either by a narrative written specially for the book, or by using an official diary and report.

The task of Editor has been no light one in the midst of the trivial round, the common task of a Postmaster-General including a five months' strike. But the task has been considerably lessened both by the willingness with which officers have responded (though they too have obviously found it by no means easy to find time to write in the stress of their own official duties) and by the fact that my work has been an immense pleasure because of the absorbing interest and admiration which the reading of these narratives has roused in me, interest in the wonderful work which the Indian Post Office in the Field has accomplished in many lands, and under many varied conditions, admiration for the amazing competence of the officers—many of them very young and inexperienced before the War—and wonder at the splendid endurance, patience and loyalty of the lower ranks of all classes, often in most trying circumstances. As Director of Postal Services, M. E. F., I have had full experience of these fine qualities, but my admiration has been considerably heightened by reading the same happy experiences of others.

I cannot expect that this book will be read by the public generally. But even a reader unconnected with the Department will perhaps find in it some interest. It is primarily intended as a Departmental souvenir of the Great War, "a memorial more lasting," I hope, "than bronze," for those of the Department who served in it and for their friends and colleagues in India who are interested in their doings and on whom fell an increased burden of work in India. To carry out the souvenir idea, I have included a Roll of Honour—for alas! many brave fellows never returned to their dear home-land—a list of Honours and Rewards, a list which though large might easily have been larger and which will prove how much the services of the Postal Services were appreciated, and as complete a list as possible of all who served in the field. Many will find themselves specially mentioned in the different pages of the book, and all will, I hope, find their names in this list and will in the after-time be able to point out with pride to their children and children's children how they took part in the Great War.

It is also intended as a departmental record of the work and experiences of the Indian Post Office in the Field during the greatest War in history, a record which will perhaps serve as an inspiration to those who come after in the Post Office of India.

I would ask the readers of this book to be indulgent about inaccuracies especially regarding rank, and I should be grateful if they will bring mistakes to my notice so that, if a second edition is issued, they may be corrected.

The illustrations are, unfortunately, very unevenly distributed. Col. Sinclair illustrated his excellent Report profusely with photos, while I took several hundred snap-shots in Mesopotamia. Doubtless the different gifted authors of the various narratives would have been equally busy with Kodaks had they foreseen that this volume would have been compiled. But they had not foreseen it. The result is that the book is like a cake with all the plums in clusters.

In conclusion, I wish most sincerely to thank Mr. Geoffrey Clarke, the Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs, and Lt.-Col. de Smidt, Director of Posts and Telegraphs, Iraq, for letting me have the use of their office files.—the various contributors for their articles and photographs, Mr. S. R. Kothavala, the Personal Assistant of the Postmaster-General, Bombay, for his valuable assistance at Bombay, Mr. C. V. Bliss for helping me in the proof-reading, Miss E. De Monté for proof-reading the Appendices and for much other valuable help—and in fact all those who have in any way contributed to make this book the success in the Department which I hope it will be.

H. A. SAMS.

*Simla, May 1922.*



## CHAPTER I.

### GENERAL SURVEY.

(By the Editor.)

THE scheme adopted for this book, consisting of isolated accounts written either officially or specially, obviously needs some survey, however short, of the work as a whole of the Indian Post Office in the Great War. I propose therefore in the following pages to outline briefly the scope of our work and how it followed the military operations.

Up to the fateful 4th of August 1914 the Indian Field Post Office had taken part in many a stricken field from the Mutiny of 1857 to the Abor Expeditionary Force of 1911-12; and for the Indian Post Office to be on active service was no novelty. But the effort required of the Department in all campaigns prior to the Great War sinks, obviously, into insignificance compared with the huge task which confronted the Indian Post Office when the World War broke out in 1914. That mighty struggle strained to the utmost the resources of the Department and required all the skill and endurance of the Directorate in India, and of the officers and men in the field to bring the issue to what we can proudly regard as a triumphant conclusion. For with some defects and many handicaps the Department can justly claim that it fulfilled its task efficiently to the end.

1914.

The first to leave India was Force "A" bound for France. On August 21st, Lieut.-Col. Pilkington assumed charge at Bombay as Director, Postal Services of the Force, and arrived on the 26th September at Marseilles where a temporary Base Post Office was established. This in November was moved up to Rouen, the Headquarters of the British Army Post Office. But Col. Pilkington was not satisfied with Rouen as a Base and, greatly daring, he determined to transfer it to Boulogne. How he accomplished this really fine feat and the opposition which he encountered will be seen in his own account. The result was that the mails were delivered to the Indian Corps at the Front the day after the despatch from London, much to the delight of the Indian Corps and the envy of the rest of the Army. On the 15th December, Colonel Pilkington paid a flying visit to London and crammed into a few hours work which was pregnant of results for the Postal Service in France. By the end of the year and in a few short months of landing he had the satisfaction of seeing his Postal Service working like clock-work.

FRANCE, 1914.

The next Force to leave Bombay Harbour was the Indian Expeditionary Force "B" under General Atkins for East Africa and with it went the Postal Service under Lieutenant-Colonel Appleby. Not being able

EAST AFRICA

to land at Tanga, a Base Post Office was established at Kilindini on the 13th November. The Indian Postal Service not only served the Indian troops but the whole of the East African Force.

## MESOPOTAMIA.

After Indian Expeditionary Force "B" sailed Indian Expeditionary Force "D" on 14th October with a Postal contingent under Lieutenant J. H. Owens followed shortly after by Captain C. E. J. Clerici. Basrah fell on 22nd November, the Postal Service rapidly dug itself in and not only served the troops but also, greatly to its credit, the civilian population; for within a month of arrival in Basrah a Civil Post Office was opened on the Strand Road, Ashar, Basrah.

## EGYPT.

Hard on the sterns of the ships that carried Indian Expeditionary Force "D" sailed the ships conveying the 11th Division, Indian Expeditionary Force "E" early in November for Egypt with its Postal Service under Major A. J. Hughes. Soon after arriving on the Canal, Field Post Office 38 was opened at Ismalia. With Major Hughes was Captain McMinn in charge of the Post Offices of the 12th Division which comprised Force "F". These two Divisions were sent to hold the Canal against the Turks advancing over the Desert to attack and overrun the Eastern Defence of Egypt.

## ADEN.

Aden was also an objective of the Turks. Operations began on 3rd November by the capture of Shaikh Said by our troops, the Post Office at Aden serving the troops till regular Field Offices could arrive from India.

1915

## FRANCE. 1915.

In France Colonel Pilkington had been busy perfecting his system. Finding that the India Office was erring postally through apparent ignorance, he played another bold card and asked that an official of the India Office should come over and *see* what was wanted. Mr. Patrick came, saw and was conquered. Needless to say, Colonel Pilkington got all that he wanted. The Indian Post Office in France during 1915 suffered greatly and in the advance at Neuve Chapelle in March came under fire on many occasions, as will be seen from Lieutenant Bullard's vivid diaries. That gallant officer was killed on 1st August. Nothing was too much trouble for him to do cheerfully, whether it was carrying mails up to the Front line, acting as guide or interpreter, soothing the wounded or finding lost postal officials. His death was a heavy loss to the Postal Service in France and in India and to the Division which he served so well.

Lt.-Col. Merewether and the Rt. Hon. Sir F. E. Smith (now Lord Birkenhead) thus mention Lt. Bullard in their book "The Indian Corps in France"—

"Lieutenant E. G. Bullard, of the Indian Postal Service, was proceeding on duty in a car near Croix Barbée, when a German shell exploded practically in the motor, killing him and the chauffeur instantaneously.



This young officer had, by his kindly disposition and zeal in the performance of his important duties, endeared himself to his comrades in the Corps, and his loss was keenly felt.

The occurrence was particularly unfortunate, as he was to have proceeded on leave the next day, while the chauffeur was only taking the duty of another man."

By October the Indian Corps began to break up. One Division had already gone and another was under orders to go. Colonel Pilkington (the first postal officer in the Great War to be mentioned in Despatches) handed over the Postal Service to Captain Cook and left France in December.

To return to our Forces on the banks of the Canal. On February 2nd the Turkish Forces reached the Canal and on that day and the next a battle took place in which the Turks were defeated and driven back into the Desert of Sinai. Egypt was saved. In the meantime on April 25th the gallant landing at Gallipoli was made. Field Post Office 34 accompanied the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade and opened at Suvla Bay with Lieutenant A. G. Gillespie in charge. The Field Post Offices in Gallipoli were at first under Force "E," but it was considered expedient to have a separate organisation. Major McMinn was sent in charge of the postal arrangements of Force "G", as the Indian Mediterranean Expeditionary Force was originally called. Base "H" was opened in Alexandria on 28th June 1915 and Field Post Office 33\* was opened at Mudros. The Indian Post Office shared in all the danger and glory of Gallipoli and its Field Post Offices remained on the shell swept beach till the Peninsula was finally evacuated at the end of the year, when the curtain on this splendid failure was rung down.

EGYPT, 1915.

Later in the year on the Western borders of Egypt the Senussi gave trouble. A Force was despatched against them and with it went the Postal Service. On 1st December the most western Field Post Office in North Africa was opened at Mersa Matruh.

In Mesopotamia things were moving. In December 1914 Kurna (near the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris) was taken. In April 1915, Amara fell into our hands. An advance was then made on Kut 350 miles up the winding Tigris and on September 29th it was taken by General Townshend. A further advance was made on Baghdad and on November 22nd General Townshend attacked the Turks at Ctesiphon, a few miles South of Baghdad. After a victory which he could not consolidate he was forced to fall back on Kut which he reached on December 3rd. Then began the famous investment of Kut.

MESOPOTAMIA,  
1915.

These forward operations were accompanied by the Postal Service which served the Divisions and Brigades and the ever lengthening Lines

\* This Field Post Office had an adventurous career. From Mudros it went to Salonica. In 1918 it became a travelling post office in Thrace and in 1919 it was opened in Constantinople.

of Communication. Our Field Post Offices stretched from Fao at the mouth of the Shat-ul-Arab to a point South of Kut on the Tigris and to Nasariyah on the Euphrates. The Civil Post Office at Basrah became a Head Office. The number of Field Post Offices had increased from 9 to 23 and the number of Civil Post Offices from 5 to 10. Between Bombay and Basrah a Sea Post Office was also established which did most useful work till, crowded out by troops and stores, it was abolished.

In the meanwhile re-inforcements were arriving from France. Lieutenant E. B. Thompson came with Field Post Offices from Indian Expeditionary Force "A" and later on came troops and Post Offices from the disbanded Indian Expeditionary Force "G" from Gallipoli.

ADEN, 1915.

On 3rd July General Ali Syed Pasha, the Turkish General, moved from the Yemen border to Lahej only 17 miles from Aden and much liveliness ensued. Lieutenant Sinclair, Assistant Director, Postal Service, and Mr. M. E. Smith, Inspector, had been sent from Egypt to Aden to organise the Field Post Offices which were arriving from India. After carrying out this job Lieutenant Sinclair was recalled to Egypt at the end of August and the Postmaster at Aden became Assistant Director, Postal Service, in addition to his own duties.

SOUTH PERSIA,  
1916.

On the 16th of August Field Post Office 319 was opened at Bushire to serve the troops in South Persia.

1916.

EGYPT.

1916 was a year of disintegration for the Postal Service in Egypt and of increase of that Service in Mesopotamia.

After the evacuation of Gallipoli Lieutenant K. C. Sen was sent to Salonica with Field Post Office 66 which opened at Kalamania Road on 27th January. The rest of the Gallipoli Postal Service went to Mesopotamia under Major McMinn with the 13th Division. Indian Expeditionary Force "G" was disbanded and the Field Post Offices were again put under Indian Expeditionary Force "E" in Egypt. Colonel Warren, Director of Army Post Offices, was appointed Director of all the Post Offices in Egypt and the Indian Post Offices passed temporarily to his control. Major Hughes left for India leaving Captain Sinclair in charge of the depleted Indian Postal Service until it regained its old strength when, later in the year, the vigorous offensive began towards Palestine.

At the end of 1916 only one Field Post Office remained in Salonica.

MESOPOTAMIA,  
1916.

In Mesopotamia General Townshend and his Force of over 8,000 men were invested in Kut. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to relieve the town, the last of which was the battle of Saniyat on April 23rd when we again failed to break through. The surrender of Kut with 8,070 British and Indian troops followed after a gallant resistance of 143 days. After this grave disaster General Sir Stanley Maude was appoint-



ed Army Commander. The 7th Division from France and the 13th Division from Gallipoli arrived and in November 1916 a fresh advance up the Tigris began.

During these operations Field Post Offices were established on the Right and Left Banks of the Tigris with the advancing troops. The accumulation of 5,000 mail bags for the beleagured Force was a source of great anxiety to the Postal Officers. Captain Probyn Smith hit on the brilliant idea of dropping mails into Kut from aeroplanes. This was done with great success, but it obviously disposed of only a fraction of the accumulations and, when Kut fell, the position became still more embarrassing.

The work of the Postal Service was increasing greatly with the reinforcements which began to pour into the country. The Field Post Offices increased from 23 to 50, the number of bags from 1,500 to 2,000 weekly and the staff from 400 to 500 men and 10 officers. What the strain was on the over-worked staff is well described in Major Clerici's contribution.

In East Africa General Smuts took over the Command in February and rapidly cleared the Kilimanjaro region, driving the Germans back to the Usambara Railway in the centre of German East. Dar-es-Salaam was captured by the British on September 4th and the Germans were compelled to abandon the Usambara Railway and to retreat through dense country where it was difficult to follow.

EAST AFRICA,  
1916.

In January the Indian Postal Service received a draft of the Royal Engineer Postal Section and a detachment of the South African Postal Corps and got considerable help from Mr. J. Wilson, Postmaster-General, South Africa. The Postal Service in East Africa like all Postal Services in other Theatres of War suffered greatly from transport difficulties. The roads were so bad that motor transport could only crawl at 9 miles an hour!

In this year Field Post Offices were strewn broad-cast over British East, German East and Uganda. Not only did the Postal Service serve the troops, but it also did a large amount of civil work.

1917.

On 1st June the Base Post Office was established at Dar-es-Salaam and a line of Field Post Offices stretched from the coast to Lake Victoria Nyanza.

On November 24th the Germans crossed the Rovuma and entered Portuguese territory. Our Forces followed them and on 29th December a Base Post Office was opened at Port Amelia.

In Mesopotamia under the splendid leadership of Sir Stanley Maude success followed success. On 24th February the Saniyat position was brilliantly taken and Kut was recovered. Advancing swiftly the British

MESOPOTAMIA,  
1917.

entered Baghdad on March 11th, re-capturing all the guns lost by General Townshend and taking immense quantities of supplies and the valuable Arsenal. This was a deadly blow to the Turks. On April 18th their 18th Corps suffered a crushing defeat at Istabulat and on April 24th the British entered Samarra 65 miles north of Baghdad. On September 28th-29th the Turks were again defeated by General Brooking at Ramadie on the Euphrates. This battle secured the Hillah Area and the Euphrates generally. But amidst all these successes the Force suffered an irreparable loss in the death of General Maude who died of cholera at Baghdad in November. In him the Postal Service lost a warm friend. He was succeeded by General Sir William Marshall.

In March of this year Lieutenant-Colonel Hughes relieved Lieutenant-Colonel A. B. Thompson as Director, Postal Services. During the advance on Kut the Postal Service kept up with the troops and the Advance Base was established at Aziziyah. By now the Field Post Offices had increased from 50 to 60 and the number of bags dealt with in a week had risen from 2,000 to 3,000 and the staff from 500 to 600 men. The invaluable Returned Letter Office was opened in Basrah in March and on the capture of Baghdad a Civil Post Office was opened in the Turkish General Post Office.

Not only had we advanced beyond Baghdad on the Tigris and to Ramadie and Hit on the Euphrates, but the capture of Baghdad opened up to us the Diala which flows into the Tigris from the North-East. The 3rd Army Corps was established outside Baquba on the Diala. We quickly drove the Turks back across the Jebel Hamrin and freed the country of the enemy up to the Persian frontier. From now onwards we came increasingly into contact with Persia and Persian affairs. Our Lines of Communication were growing almost daily, necessitating Field Post Offices in most places *en route* and Civil Post Offices in many.

In the middle of September, I took charge from Colonel Hughes who returned to India in December.

SOUTH PERSIA,  
1917.

At the beginning of this year the Turkish and German agents had been active in South-West Persia in egging on the tribes to raid British territory. Two Forces operated in this part—one from Bandar Abbas, the other from Bushire.

On 3rd March a Base Post Office was opened at Bandar Abbas under Lieut. Elliot to serve the troops forming the Escort to the British Mission in Southern Persia under Sir Percy Sykes. Captain R. Greene took charge on 15th April. Before long there were Indian Field Post Offices stretching from Bandar Abbas to Shiraz. In May Bushire was made a separate Force.

EAST PERSIA,  
1917.

A force, the Seistan Field Force, had been despatched to East Persia with rail-head at Dalbandin with Lt. Kilman in charge of the Postal arrangements.



1918.

1918 marked the high water-mark of the activities of the Indian Post Office in the Field.

In Mesopotamia there was a lull in the fighting during the spring and summer. But in October when the British advanced in every field and when Allenby's victorious troops were astride the Syrian end of the Baghdad Railway, General Marshall gave the *coup de grace* to the Turkish forces in Mesopotamia. On October 25th Kirkuk was occupied and on October 30th the Turks sustained a crushing defeat between Baiji and Shergat. On the 3rd our victorious troops marched on to Mosul.

MESOPOTAMIA,  
1918.

Advantage was taken of the period of lull to consolidate the Postal Service, to improve its working and to extend its operations. In order to cope with the ever increasing needs of the Civil population a new appointment, Deputy Director of Postal Services, Civil, was sanctioned and Major Clerici, who took up the appointment in June, devoted himself to the task of building up a Civil Postal Administration on the already existing nucleus of Civil Posts. It was impossible and would have been uneconomical to separate the Civil from the Military Postal Service, but with their own special Deputy Director of Postal Services in charge, the Civil Posts made rapid strides forward.

The forward advance in the autumn of the year was followed by an advance of the Postal Service. Field Post Offices were opened at Shergat and Mosul and Civil Post Offices at Mosul and some of the outlying places in Kurdistan. An Assistant Director of Postal Services was appointed for the new area.

In November 1918 the Postal Service, M. E. F., consisted of—

24 Officers.

44 Inspectors of Post Offices and Deputy Postmasters.

104 Overseers.

826 Clerks and Field Postmasters.

876 Followers.

When Victory at last dawned on 11th November and after the wearing off of the novel sensation that we had *really* won the Great War and that the clouds had lifted, thoughts began to turn on Demobilisation. The thoughts became words and then General Routine Orders of considerable length and volume. Henceforth 'Demob' was on the lips and in the thoughts of all. The energies of all were henceforward devoted not to building up but to pulling down.

But though there was a lull in Mesopotamia there was considerable activity in Northern Persia. In March 1918 there were rumours of a "Hush Hush Brigade 'somewhere' in Persia." Only the 'I' Branch

NORTH PERSIA,  
1918.

of G. H. Q. knew what it was or where it was. The Postal Service was simply told to deliver all letters for certain officers and men to the 'I' Branch. The "Hush, Hush Brigade" was the famous and heroic Dunsterforce under the command of General Dunsterville, soldier, linguist and diplomat. The Germans and Turks had been stirring up trouble in Northern Persia whence the Russians, now Bolshevik and demoralised, were retiring. It was imperative to protect Mesopotamia's flank, and General Dunsterville was sent with a handful of officers and N. C. Os. to endeavour to put starch and discipline into the Armenians. It was a heroic enterprise. The nett result for the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force was a fresh and most difficult line of communications stretching 700 miles from Baghdad to Enzeli on the Caspian. Enzeli and Resht were occupied by the British in June. The Turks concentrated a force at Tabriz and attempted to break the line of communications. There was sporadic fighting on this front till the close of the war and after it Turkish guerilla forces remained in Azerbaijan in collusion with the Bolsheviks.

Meanwhile Dunsterforce had reached Baku where on July 26th the Bolsheviks were overthrown. In September the Turks attacked in force and Dunsterforce was compelled to evacuate Baku. After the Armistice the British Force again set out from Enzeli across the Western bay of the Caspian and once again occupied Baku. From the North-West British troops crossed the Black Sea and the two forces joined hands in the Caucasus.

These operations had considerable effect on the Postal Service. By the autumn of 1918 there was a line of Field Post Offices stretching from Baghdad to the Caspian, and after the Armistice, from Baku across the Caucasus. Lt. Spear was appointed Assistant Director of Postal Services, Persian Line of Communication, and later on Lt. Bickers was sent as Assistant Director of Postal Services to join the British Army Post Office of the Black Sea.

#### SOUTH PERSIA.

In the summer of 1918 the Military situation around Shiraz demanded a force to open up communications between Bushire and Shiraz. A force under General Douglas was sent with Captain R. Green as Assistant Director of Postal Services. On the latter's sad death while on leave at Poona on 21st September Captain Quilter took charge of the Postal Service.

#### EAST PERSIA.

Early in 1918 the Semorachia Cossacks turned traitor and the long mail line had still further to be extended. The Seistan Field Force became the Eastern Persian Cordon and our lines extended to Meshed. The postal work in this area was becoming too great a task for one officer. On June 15th therefore Lt. Kilman handed over to the Superintendent, Baluchistan Division, all Field Post Offices up to Dalbandin, and kept in his own charge the Field Post Offices to the north of that place. In



July a Military Mission under General Malleon was established. The Line of Communication now stretched 1,000 miles from Juzzak at Railhead to Askabad.

In the meantime great events were happening in the Near East. The onslaught of the Germans on the Western Front made it imperative that all available British troops should be sent to that theatre. The gaps were filled up from India and Mesopotamia and the personnel of the Egyptian Palestine force became essentially Indian. During September and October brilliant victories in this field followed each other with lightning rapidity. Three Turkish Army Corps were completely destroyed and on October 31st an Armistice with Turkey was signed.

In March the 7th Division was sent from Mesopotamia to Palestine and with it four Field Post Offices under Mr. White, the Inspector. The 4th & 5th Indian Cavalry Divisions, from France arrived in Palestine in April with Captain J. H. E. Cook, 4 Inspectors, 36 Postmasters, 31 followers and 14 Field Post Offices. Later on the 3rd Lahore Division went from Mesopotamia with Lt. C. W. Taylor and four Field Post Offices. There were in all 27 Field Post Offices in the front line and 18 on the Line of Communication and in Egypt. Col. Sinclair in his admirable report, which is one of the contributions to this book, tells us how splendid was the conduct of the postal staff during the rapid and arduous advance of September and October. At the time of the Armistice there was a line of Field Post Offices stretching from the Sahara to Bosanti on the further side of the Taurus Mountains, one of which Post Offices was placed by the famous ruins of Baalbeck in Syria.

PALESTINE,  
1918.

The Armistice, so far from lessening the work of the Indian Postal Service under Col. Sinclair increased it, for in addition it had to cater for the British troops who were being demobilised.

After the Armistice the Postal Service in Salonica was made a separate organisation under Lt. A. Gillespie, Assistant Director of Postal Services. Subsequently when the Salonica Force became the Army of the Black Sea the Salonica Base was transferred to Chanak and Field Post Offices extended along the Bosphorus and the Black Sea and eventually linked up with the Field Post Offices in Northern Persia under Lt. Bickers which, as has been mentioned above, had been detached from the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force Postal Service.

SALONICA,  
1918.

In East Africa the Germans were a beaten and fugitive force scattered through bush and jungle. Some crossed into Portuguese territory over the Rovuma and others into Rhodesia. At the beginning of the year there were in the Postal Service in East Africa 5 British officers, 5 Inspectors, 85 Postmasters and clerks, besides a contingent of the South African Postal Corps. In April a Base Post Office was opened at Durban to deal with mails from the United Kingdom. In June 6 Field Post Offices and 3 postal agencies were established in the Port Amelia Area in

EAST AFRICA.

Portuguese East. In that month the troops moved South into Mozambique where 6 Field Post Offices were opened. All through this year the Postal Service not only served the troops but also the civil population, earning the gratitude of the civilians and considerable revenue for the Service.

1919.

MESOPOTAMIA  
AND NORTH  
PERSIA, 1919.

1919 was a period of demobilization and disintegration. In the early part of the year some of the Field Post Offices in North Persia were transferred with the Assistant Director of Postal Services, Lt. Bickers, to the Army of the Black Sea under the Deputy Director, British Army Posts, at Constantinople. On May 1st the Postal Service, Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, ceased to exist and most of the personnel was transferred to the Civil Posts, Iraq, under Major Clerici. Our personnel in common with the whole of the force was affected by a spirit of nostalgia and restlessness and chafed at being retained for the Civil Posts. In December there was a general strike. Shortly after this Sir A. T. Wilson, the Civil Commissioner, decided to amalgamate the two Departments of Posts and Telegraphs and appointed Lt.-Col. G. E. O. De Smidt as Director of Posts and Telegraphs. Major Angelo returned to Mesopotamia on the 1st April 1920 as Deputy Director.

SOUTH PERSIA.

In South Persia General Elsmie moved up from Bushire to Shiraz leaving in his track Field Post Offices under Lt. P. Donovan. On 30th January his force reached Kazarun where it was joined by Col. Orton who moved out from Shiraz to meet General Elsmie.

EAST PERSIA.

In East Persia railhead reached Duzdab about February 15th. On 12th February a Field Post Office was opened at Askabad. The Postal Service now consisted of—

- 1 Base Post Office.
- 13 Field Post Offices.
- 14 Telegraph Offices.

NEAR EAST.

In the Near East the Indian Postal Service of the Black Sea on 8th October again came under the Director of Postal Services, Egypt, who undertook the control of the civil post offices at Amtal, Katum, Jerablus and Aleppo in Occupied Enemy Territory.

NORTH WEST  
FRONTIER.

Meanwhile in India another War had broken out. The new Amir of Afghanistan, apparently to cause a counter irritant to trouble in his capital, declared war on India on 25th April. The war was over in ten days when the Afghans were severely defeated and asked for an Armistice. But though the Afghans caved in, their more stubborn and war-like allies, the tribes of the Frontier, did not. The Mahsuds and Waziris with a force of 30,000 men gave the British forces considerable trouble all through 1919. Two forces operated—one the Baluchistan Force with its Postal Service under Lt.-Col. E. B. Thompson, the other, Wazir Force with Lt.-Col. W. A. Smith in charge of the Postal Service.



Lt.-Col. E. B. Thompson took up his duties as Assistant Director of Postal Service at Quetta on the 13th May. On the 17th May a Field Post Office was opened at Killa Abdulla and attached to the 57th Brigade. On the 20th May a Base Post Office was opened at Quetta. By the end of May all 47 civil post offices in Trans-Indus were converted into Field Post Offices and with the 7 Field Post Offices opened there were 54 Field Post Offices, 6 Officers, 183 Postmasters and clerks and 250 followers.

On 1st August 1919 the Postal Service Wazir Force, which was formerly under the Assistant Director of Postal Services, Peshawar, was made a separate charge, with a Base Post Office at Dera Ismail Khan and 31 Field Post Offices, a Base Post Office at Bannu with 18 Field Post Offices, an Advanced Base Post Office at Tank with 17 Field Post Offices in the Kohat area, and a Base Post Office at Dera Ghazi Khan with 10 Field Post Offices in the Dera Ghazi District. These two forces fought all through 1920.

#### 1920.

In Mesopotamia the Post Office of India still supplied officers and men to the Iraq Administration, *viz.*, 15 Officers, 25 Inspectors, 1 Postmaster, 11 Deputy and Assistant Postmasters, 545 clerks and 609 menials. During the early portion of the year there was considerable discontent but this eventually subsided. The Iraq Post Office was settling down to efficient work when the whole machinery of Government was upset by the Arab Rising. On 1st July large Arab forces, mostly armed with stolen Turkish and British rifles destroyed the railway bridge between Rumeitha and Diwanieh in the Hillah Area. Hillah was cut off. Many Post Offices were looted and the staff was taken prisoner. Once again field service conditions prevailed and the Post Office was called upon to serve troops amounting to over two Divisions. Towards the end of September the rising subsided.

Shortly after the declaration of War a fund was started to provide the Postal Staff with comforts, and Mrs. Harrison took up the duties of Honorary Secretary. In the following year the good work was extended to the Telegraph side. In April 1918 Mrs. Harrison left India and Mrs. Sharpe carried on the arduous duties of Honorary Secretary. The extent of the work will be seen in the chapter written by Mrs. Sharpe. Not only these two devoted ladies but also the many generous contributors in India, who made their work possible, deserved and won the heartfelt thanks of all ranks of the Posts and Telegraphs.

GIFTS AND  
COMFORTS.

## CHAPTER II.

### FRANCE—1914-1915.

From the Diaries of Lieut.-Col. H. H.  
Pilkington, C.I.E., M.V.O.

*From the Office file of the Director-General.*

1914.

AUGUST 21ST. Arrived Bombay and assumed charge of the Field Post Office.

\* \* \* \*

AUGUST 22ND TO 23RD. Spent in Bombay making preparations for our departure. Our difficulty was to find out when and where we were to embark. On the afternoon of the 22nd I received verbal orders from the Embarkation Officer to embark on the S. S. "Assaye" at noon on the 24th. A few hours later an urgent order was received saying that we should be on board at 12 noon on the 23rd, but on sending down on the morning of the 23rd to enquire when we might send down our heavy luggage I received a fresh order to embark at 6 a.m. on the following morning.

AUGUST 24TH. Up at 4 o'clock and accompanied the rest of the men to the Docks where we embarked on the P. & O. S.S. "Assaye" which sailed without our knowing where we were going to, soon after mid-day.

AUGUST 25TH TO SEPTEMBER 8TH. I do not propose to give a daily description of what occurred during the voyage. Our steamer sailed along in company with sixteen other transport ships, escorted by a couple of cruisers and the voyage was extremely slow and for the most part extremely dull. In the neighbourhood of the Kuria Muria Island we picked up the contingent from Karachi and our fleet was increased to 22 transport ships with two cruisers and some ships of the R. I. M. to see that we were not interfered with by enterprising German or Austrian battle-ships. At night we sailed almost in darkness and by day and night we were in constant danger of being bumped by the next nearest transports, as these boats did not understand how to sail in line and manœuvre in the way required of them by the Naval Officer in command of the Convoy. Nearing Aden I sent a message to the Admiral asking him to give us permission to land mails. I pointed out that he need only "Marconi" to the authorities at Aden or to the Postmaster asking for a launch to be sent out to us, instruct all the other transport boats to send their mails across to our ship and the Base post office would close the mails and make them over to the launch without delaying the Convoy for more than an hour; the delay would not have been of any consequence seeing that we constantly halted for longer periods in mid-ocean until



POSTAL OFFICERS, IN FRANCE, 1915.



Standing from left to right :—Lt. E. B. THOMPSON, Lt. E. G. BULLARD,  
Lt. J. H. E. COOK, Lt. J. H. KING.  
Sitting :—Lt. Col. H. S. H. PILKINGTON, C.I.E., M.V.O.  
Sir WILLIAM MAXWELL, K.C.I.E., M.V.O.

ships out of line had been put back into their proper place. The Admiral, however, refused to allow this concession. We were disappointed, as Lord Crewe and Lord Kitchener had already announced in the House of Lords that the Force had started and would proceed to Marseilles, so that there was no reason for maintaining any further secrecy in regard to our destination.

SEPTEMBER 9TH. Arrived Suez and as we entered the harbour about mid-day saw the Outward Bound Indian Mail Steamer sailing out. This means that no letters can go to India for another week. Paced up and down the deck for the rest of the day waiting for orders, which never came and watching German flags flying on a number of merchant vessels interned in the harbour.

SEPTEMBER 10TH. 11 a.m., a signal came to the ship to "up anchor" and proceed to Alexandria. We started at once. Arrived Alexandria on 11th and stayed till 19th without knowing whether we were to stay for any length of time in Egypt or not. Received no news or any information as to our movements until the 16th when we were ordered to embark by 4 p.m. On embarking we were told that the ship would not sail until the next day and our departure was postponed at regular intervals of six hours until our departure on the morning of the 19th.

\* \* \* \*

SEPTEMBER 19TH. Left Alexandria in the S.S. "Perugia" and had an uneventful journey to Marseilles except that on the 22nd we passed the Fleet conveying the Territorials to Egypt. The combined fleets numbered 39 ships in all and we waited some time whilst the Admirals in charge of the two Convoys exchanged calls. I was told that the sight of so many ships massed together in mid-ocean was imposing, but I am too sick of the sea to appreciate any sight of the kind.

SEPTEMBER 26TH. Arrived Marseilles in the early morning. Landed at 8-30 and proceeded in accordance with orders received on board to the office of the D.A.A.G. (Base) for instructions. Was directed to send the Post Office establishments with all their kit and tentage to Parc Borély, a place about 4 miles from the town of Marseilles, and at the same time was given a "billet de logement", billeting\* Bullard and myself on the Grand Hotel where the General Officer Commanding the Division (General Watkis) and his staff are staying.

Spent the whole morning on the jetty supervising the disembarkation of the men, the unloading of the kit, the landing of my horses, the drawing of rations for the men going in to camp and seeing after the supply of carts to carry the kit to the camp.

At the same time I took the opportunity of seeing the Divisional Censor Officer, who up to the present has been looking after the field

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\* Being billeted does not mean that we are to live free. The arrangement is that we shall each pay 10 francs a day plus 1 franc 50 cents for a bath!



postal arrangements. The British Field Post Office Department has opened a field post office here, but, as it is working solely for the Indian Forces, I have decided to take the work over, and to begin with, have attached two men (Smith and Murphy) to the office to watch the work that is being done with a view to doing it themselves. The Military authorities have expressed their approval of the arrangement and have provided free accommodation and living for the two men on board a steamer lying close at hand.

At 12-30 p.m., more or less foot weary after four hours continuous walking up and down the docks, went to the Transport Officer for the loan of one of the motor cars that have been engaged for the use of Commanding Officers attached to the Force and was told that no car could be spared, but that if I could hire a 'taxi' the cost would be paid by the Transport Department. No 'taxi' being available at the docks drove by cab (which cost 5 francs) to the Post Office where I had a long interview with the principal postal official—'Monsieur Le Receveur Principal des Bouches-du-Rhone.'

\* \* \* \*

The Director who is extremely obliging and anxious to do all that he can for the Indian Post Office has placed a room of his office building at my disposal in which I am arranging to open a small subsidiary Base Office with Newton in charge.

\* \* \* \*

In the afternoon took a taxi and first visited the Camp in Parc Borély where the post office establishment is staying. There I inspected the men, the tents and the kit—told off different men for various duties, saw the Provost Marshall and in accordance with his request issued orders about men leaving the camp. I then visited the other camps where the troops are located "La Barasse," "La Penne" and "Saint Marcel." Saw the officers commanding each and arranged with them for a plot of ground for a field post office in each place: and, so far as was possible, for the supply of rations to the men who will be attached to the offices. Was surprised to find how far apart the camps are situated. The distance that I travelled as recorded by the taxi-meter was 36 kilometres.

SEPTEMBER 21  
SUNDAY

\* \* \* \*

Sent Bullard off early to open field post offices in the camps whilst I looked after the opening of the post office in the Town General Post Office building. Saw Newton and his staff comfortably established there by 10 o'clock and then returned to the Hotel meaning to do a few hours office work of which there is much to be done.

SEPTEMBER 21

\* \* \* \*

In the afternoon put in a few hours quiet writing and towards evening received from the Base Commandant a copy of a telegram from Officer in charge of Communications at the British Advanced Base

asking him to send up at once a representative of the Indian Field Post Office to discuss postal arrangements with the Director of the British Field Post Office. I have no one I can depute, so must go myself although I can ill afford to go at the present time having still much to arrange and do here. In the evening asked for and obtained an interview with General Watkis. Told him about the telegram received and, as he thinks that I should comply with it at once and should go myself, I intend leaving to-morrow.

\* \* \* \*

EMBER 29TH.

Spent the best part of the morning packing. Heard that a batch of mails had arrived in our office in the General Post Office building. This is the first lot of mails that has reached us since we left Bombay. Went down to the office and, as might have been expected, found a seething mass of officers jostling for their letters. Most, I fear, were disappointed at not getting what they wanted most—*viz.*, news from India—as the despatch did not contain any Indian letters. In the early part of the afternoon did some office work and then proceeded to the station where I should probably be still, if it had not been for the able assistance given me by Bullard. With my luggage I was directed to a wrong part of the station, where my baggage was deposited and I could get no one either to lift my luggage or to tell me the right place to go to. The first French official I consulted referred to another and after a long palaver seemed to come to some decision; but before they could put it into execution, they were asked by a by-stander what the matter was and although he had nothing to do with the matter they went through the whole case with him. He apparently had different views of his own and so a fourth man had to be called in to give advice and eventually the whole crowd chipped into the discussion as to where I should go and what should be done with my baggage. In the meantime it got perilously near the time for the departure of the train and I must have missed it but for Bullard, who turned up at the right moment, got my luggage on to a cart and galloped to the right part of the station and then got the Station Master to detain the train for 10 minutes.

EMBER 30TH.

Had an interesting if uncomfortable journey into Paris which we reached at 2-30 p.m., after 22 hours travelling. Parisians, who evidently had fled from their homes when the Germans were near by, were returning in crowds and the carriages and corridor of the trains were so packed that it was impracticable to get to the lavatory for a wash or to a station buffet for anything to eat. On arrival at Paris changed into another train which was just about to start for my destination and at 3-30 arrived unshaved, unwashed, hungry and dirty. It was my intention to get a wash-down before seeing any one, but this was not feasible. No hotels are open, and I had to interview all kinds of British Officers, who in well cut English made serge clothing looked with a disdainful eye on the



dirty drill-clad person before them. Having finished these interviews, was taken by Col. Price, the Director of the British Field Post Office, to the House of the Mayor of the town where I received a billet which entitled me to reside in an empty house. Without any fire or kettle to boil water, was not much cleaner when I went at 6 p.m., to discuss postal affairs with Col. Price in his office. A basin of tea which, except for two pears, was the first thing I had tasted that day did me a lot of good and two hours later I thoroughly enjoyed my dinner (which with drinks cost only 2 francs) in a little fifth rate inn.

Directly after breakfast motored with Major Warren, the Deputy Director of the British Field Posts to see the transshipment of the British Army Mails at the Railway Station—was surprised to find them handling four full trucks of mails—in all 802 bags. I fancy there was an accumulation of arrears but the quantity of mail matter that is sent through the British Post Office is enormous. Having seen all there was to see at the station drove back to Col. Price's office and there had a long talk about the arrangements to be made. OCTOBER 1ST.

\* \* \* \*

Had a further talk with Price in the morning about the transmission of our English mails to our present Base and left for that Base—Orleans—at 3 p.m. in the afternoon—arrived 8 p.m. and found a comfortable hotel close to the Railway station into which I transferred myself. OCTOBER 2ND

Had a bath. This is not of any postal consequence, but to one who has not had a tub for several days it is a matter of some importance. Another important event was that I received a letter (from England) the first letter I have had since the 23rd August—six weeks. Wasted most of the morning in trying to get things out of people who in succession referred me to some one else, but did at least secure a nice set of rooms here for the use of the Base Post Office which I trust will be properly established within the next few days. Some of the Base Office staff arrived in the afternoon, but as the trucks containing their kit was cut off en route and they have no tents with them, it is no use sending them on to the camp and so I have ordered them to remain the night in the rooms taken for the Base Office. OCTOBER 3RD

Sent the clerks to the camp and with the help of Messrs. Graham and Newton sorted out a big despatch of mails received from England. In the afternoon drove out to the camp and spent some hours there. Returned to the office in town and sent telegraphic instruction to Bullard to come up here at once bringing the rest of the Base Office staff and his own Field Post Offices with him. OCTOBER 4TH

Visited the Base Office early in the morning and saw to the sorting for delivery of another consignment of mails received from England. Then went to the local Civil post office and ascertained from them the hour at which mails leave for England, Paris, Marseilles and India. OCTOBER 5TH

Arranged with the Postmaster about the despatch and delivery of our closed mails. Went to a furniture dealer and hired furniture for the Base Office and at the same time ordered some sorting cases to be made. Went to a printer to get some printing work done and spent the afternoon in my office and in the Base Office which are now located in the same building.

OCTOBER 6TH.

Spent the entire day endeavouring to get the Base Post Office into some kind of order which with only the few clerks who are here at present is a matter of much difficulty. Mails have now commenced to arrive daily from England and the quantity is such that it takes our present staff all its time to sort and get them delivered.

OCTOBER 7TH.

My morning was spent in helping on work in the Base. When the mails were sorted took them personally to the Camp where our one and only Field Post Office delivered them. During the course of the day Bullard and Roderick with nearly the rest of the Base Office staff arrived, but they were too tired after their journey to do any work and it took us all our time to get the men into tents before nightfall.

OCTOBER 8TH.

A large batch of mails arrived from India and another large consignment from England and it took the staff all day to dispose of them. We have at present no sorting case—no proper list of people attached to the force—little if any knowledge of the whereabouts of the different regiments and units, so that the work of distributing the mails is at present attended with considerable difficulty.

OCTOBER 9TH.

Made some little progress in the matter of getting the Base Office into order but it is clear that our present accommodation is insufficient and until we get more space Mr. Roderick will never be able to get things straight. Took the mails from the Base to the Camp in a motor car which after much difficulty I have had placed at my disposal and then set out in search of a house for the Base. Saw many houses before finally finding one that suited. We have now a Base Office and three field post offices working here and two field post offices in Marseilles. Gradually things are straightening out.

TO 18TH  
OCTOBER 1914.

I have a whole week's diary to write up. My days are so fully occupied that I find it hard to do much writing and consequently correspondence and diaries have to be written at odd intervals when time and opportunity permit. During the week I have motored from Orléans to Villeneuve Saint George and travelled by train from the last-named place to Marseilles. The latter journey occupied nearly 30 hours; in ordinary time it would not take half the period. The main portion of the week has been spent in a so far fruitless endeavour to obtain a small amount of assistance from the Military. Hitherto I have been working almost entirely on my own, and, to illustrate how much I am left to myself, I may mention that since I left India I have not received an official order of any kind. I have been given no advice as to what I should do,



where I should go, where I should post my officers. I mention this is no carping spirit. The difficulties that arise in making postal arrangements, without any help or assistance, for troops whose movements I am not allowed to know merely add to the interest of the work. To-day the 18th I learn incidentally that a large portion of the Force have moved from where I last left them. Where they have gone to, I do not know and the matter does not worry me. I have made my arrangements to serve that particular portion of the Force and up to a point they can move when and where they like. Until this point is reached my field post offices can and will stick to the Brigades and Commands to which they are attached, but beyond it I must depend on the Brigades and Commands to take their post offices with them. (I refer to the point at which the troops got beyond the reach of the railway).

To make the matter clear I will endeavour to describe the system and the means by which I propose to serve the troops in the Field. The Base Office will move from time to time as necessity arises to the junction at which I can most expeditiously get our English mails from the North, our Indian mails from the South, and keep in touch with the line of communication to the Front. The mails will be sorted at the Base Post Office and sent from there to the starting point of the Railway Supply Train on which will be a travelling field post office made up conjointly of British Field Post Office officials and our own men. It will be the duty of this travelling post office to make over the mails for the respective Brigades, etc., at the different railheads from which each Brigade obtains its daily supply of food, ammunition, etc. The railheads are liable to be changed from day to day and it will be the duty of the Assistant Director (who will, I hope, be supplied with a motor car) to come in every day or as often as is necessary to instruct the travelling post office where each day's mail is to be handed out and to see that the work is properly done. From the railheads the mails will travel with the mechanical transport column to the rendezvous where it meets the horse conveyances which come from the regiments and other units for their daily supplies. A clerk from each field post office will come every day to the rendezvous on one of the horse carts, with the mails posted in his office and will make them over to any Inspector or some other postal official to take back on the returning empty mechanical supply waggons to the railhead from which they will travel to the Base Office and then on to destination. At the same time the field post office clerks will take over at the rendezvous the mails for their own offices, open them and as far as possible deliver the letters and papers to the regimental orderlies travelling on the regimental horse carts so that the field post offices will only have to deliver the correspondence for the Brigade Head Quarters staff and the registered letters and parcels for which receipts have to be obtained.

To carry out this scheme it is essential that each Brigade and Command should take its own Field Post Office with it—moving

it along as they move. I have however up to the present been unable to obtain the small amount of assistance I required in regard to moving the field post offices with their Brigades. In Orleans the Generals Commanding the Brigades of the 3rd Lahore Division objected to the arrangement on the ground that they had no transport to spare for moving a field post office about and the matter was eventually put before the General Officer Commanding the Division, who sent for me, nominally to discuss the matter but actually I fear to tell me that what I wanted could not be done. I venture however to think that I was able at least to raise some doubt in his mind as to whether it could rightly be refused. I had a strong case. I pointed out that the arrangement was the only way of serving the troops, and to this he replied that some of the Generals present considered it quite unnecessary to have a daily service of mails in the Field. They considered that two services a week would be sufficient. I pointed out that even this would necessitate the Brigades taking their post offices with them, as otherwise we should lose touch with the troops altogether and I mentioned also that a good deal of significance is being paid to the way in which postal facilities are given to the troops on the Field.

\* \* \* \*

Thompson and Barton Wright arrived during the week and I have ordered the former to remain here for the present with three field post offices and sent the latter with the rest of the establishment he brought to where the Base is situated. To-day the 18th brings me news of our first casualty, Babu Gurbachan Singh of field post office No. 11 has been run over by a motor lorry and had his leg broken.

\* \* \* \*

OCTOBER 21ST.

Arrived at a station where I had to change trains at 4 a.m. and after waiting 6 hours proceeded to Orleans, arriving there at 1-30 p.m. Drove straight to the Head Quarter's office to settle about the transport for our post offices in the Field and on arrival was told by the Assistant Quartermaster-General that I was the very person he wanted to see, as General Hudson had consented to adopt the arrangement I proposed and the transport would be supplied. I was asked whether nine A. T. carts would meet my requirements. I replied 'Yes' and went away thinking that trouble in regard to the matter was at an end.\*

\* \* \* \*

To-day the 23rd I have had a long, useful day in office. I have arranged which post office should be attached to each different Brigade and Command and straightened things out, so that now any portion of the Force can move where and when it likes without upsetting our arrangements. All the field post offices sent out are now absorbed and

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\* The D. P. S. was however up against a tangle of red tape and over-worked staff Officers—Ed.



if it had not been for the accident that resulted in one Brigade being left behind in Egypt I should not have enough field post offices to go round. If or when that Brigade comes along, I shall be hard pressed to provide for it. I have already denuded the Base Office of five men, three to carry on work in Marseilles and two for duty on the Supply Train so that I cannot very well take more men away from the Base Office, but, even if I could, I have not the kit or equipment for another field post office. Anticipating that I would very likely have to provide extra field post offices I very carefully brought away with me the kit and equipment for two spare offices, but Mr. Appleby after I had left, most unfortunately sent off the establishment for two field post offices without any kit or equipment. I have telegraphed to-day for three more field post offices—complete—and ten more clerks for the Base Office. The British Base Post Office has about 200 men and the present staff of our Base is inadequate so that I have no one to take the place of men who fall sick or are injured. Considering the weather in front of us it must be expected that we shall soon have to face some amount of sickness amongst our men. In my telegram to India I mentioned the names of a few men who would be useful.

28th October—6 a.m. Left Orleans. 11-30 p.m Arrived Rouen.

The week has been a busy one. On the 24th I received for information the following copy of a communication issued from the Head Quarters of the Indian Army Corps:—

“No special transport is allotted to enable Field Post Offices to keep up with the Divisional and Brigade Head Quarters to which they are allotted. Arrangements should be made for their equipment to be carried with the Divisional and Brigade Head Quarters as is done in British Expeditionary Force.”

I also heard that the Brigades attached to the Meerut Division which are still at Orleans are providing transport for the Field Post Offices and are making our men load their equipment on to the Brigade transport carts and go out route marching everyday with the rest of the troops.

Congratulated myself that this troublesome matter about transport in the Field has at last been satisfactorily settled; but on the 30th October I received the following telegram from Bullard:—

“Have sent my two Brigade offices Nos. 10 & 11 to railhead, transport unavailable.”

The inevitable result of this will be that mails will be taken out of the hands of the Post Office. They will be left lying in some obscure place where they will be picked over by anyone who comes along and

eventually a whole heap of undelivered mails will be thrown back on us to deliver as best we can and addressees will wonder why the Post Office arrangements are so bad. I must now wait for complaints before I can move further in the matter. I have done what I can.

\* \* \* \*

On the 26th the whole of the Force moved out of Orleans leaving us without any orders as to where to take the Base, or any intimation as to where letters should be sent.

Let me recount a little incident that happened a few days ago.

I have mentioned in a previous diary that the whole of the 3rd Lahore Division went away from Orleans without letting me know anything about their movements. A few days later an officer, resplendent in red tabs and gold lace, came to the post office with the apparent intention of finding out whether the Post Office staff knew where the troops had gone. He questioned an Inspector very closely as to what we were doing with the mails and the Inspector told him that we were sending them on the supply trains to their destination. He then asked how we knew they would be delivered, and the Inspector, who began to think that the resources of the Field Post Office were being called into question, replied that they would be delivered all right; and, when it was put to him that we could not be sure that delivery would be effected if we did not know where the troops were, he answered that it was all right, "everyone knew where the troops were." By everyone he meant our staff that have gone ahead with the troops. Half an hour later I was summoned to Head Quarters where I was told that a Post Office subordinate had openly boasted that everyone knew where the troops had gone, and I was directed to find out how this officer came by the information, the name of the person who gave it to him, and the circumstances in which it was given. I was told that it was evident that people had been talking about the movements of the troops and it was intended to have some one punished in connection with the affair. As a matter of fact the Inspector had no knowledge whatever of the whereabouts of the Force so the matter was dropped. I mention the incident solely to explain that we in the Post Office now prefer not to know anything about the movements of the troops and that I do not consider that I am called upon to go out of my way to collect information as to where the troops are going in order to have arrangements made for them in advance.

Consequently when the Second Division (7th Meerut Division) moved away from Orleans I was left in the position of a shepherd who has lost his sheep. The Force might have gone north, south, east or west so far as I was in a position to know from any information given to me and on the 28th I left Orleans to make arrangements to move the Base without knowing where to take it. I gave myself one day to decide this point, to get accommodation at the place selected and to arrange



for the accommodation of an advance party which had orders to follow me from the existing Base two days later. I met the Director, British Post Offices, by appointment at Rouen and went into the whole question as to the location of our Base with him. He has always been keen on our going to Havre where his own Base is working and I was quite prepared to go there if he could show that Havre was really the best place for us, but after a long discussion he agreed that Rouen would be a better place. At Havre we should be completely cut away from the Indian troops: we should be the only Indian unit there, which would mean a lot of trouble in getting rations, etc., and at the same time there would be no advantage gained so far as our work is concerned. Having decided that our Base should be at Rouen wired to the Base Postmaster to send the advance party here and spent the afternoon in searching for a suitable house. Found one about 6 p.m., and spent the next day in making necessary arrangements preliminary to taking it over. On the following day the advance party arrived and went straight into the house.

\* \* \* \*

I still want a car for myself—badly—a car for Thompson, who will soon be at the Front with the cavalry, and a lorry for the Base Post Office.

Since I finished writing up my last diary I have been busy at the Base getting the office into working order. Furnishing and fitting up a house for the use of a large post office and the residence of some forty men takes time, but we are now getting into proper working order and I hope soon to be free to move about elsewhere.

12TH NOVEMBER  
1914.

I shall not attempt to describe each day's doings. Most of each day has been spent in walking round from place to place, making purchases for the office, calling on contractors to hurry them up with the work of putting lights into the office, making fire places, building cooking sheds, flooring and altering a shed for our parcel work, begging all round the place for transport to convey our mails to and from the Railway station, seeing Railway transport officers about the provision of trucks to convey our mails to and from the front and doing all kinds of jobs of a similar nature. I could have got through the work much quicker if I had had means of getting about from place to place, and I could have delegated a good deal of it to others, if the Army Department had attached even one interpreter to the Post Office, or if the Head Quarters Staff had suppressed the premature complaint which resulted in my having to send Barton Wright away to the front when I particularly wanted him to help me at the Base.

\* \* \* \*

Received a very kind letter from the Military Secretary, India Office, saying that the India Office would be glad to give me any assistance I wanted and so I have asked if he can arrange to send me four cars and



a lorry. A car for each of the Assistant Directors employed at the Front (Messrs. Cook, Bullard and Thompson) one for myself, and a lorry for the Base Post Office. Through the kind offices of an Army Service Corps Officer I have had the temporary loan of a motor lorry for the use of the Base Office during the past few days and I have found that it has enabled us to get through our work in half the time we take when working with horse carts. We are receiving so many mails and parcels that it takes all day to get the bags from the station by horse transport, and we have frequently found it difficult in consequence to get the mails despatched in time to catch the outgoing supply train. With a lorry we get the mails quickly and have no difficulty in catching the train. The following figures show the quantity of mail bags that we are receiving day by day from London alone:—

Date of despatch from London.	Letter bags.	Parcel bags.	Total.
2nd November .. .. .	11	45	56
3rd „ .. .. .	15	24	39
4th „ .. .. .	16	52	68
5th „ .. .. .	14	20	34
6th „ .. .. .	20	32	52
7th „ .. .. .	13	35	48
8th „ .. .. .		Sunday.	
9th „ .. .. .	18	42	60
10th „ .. .. .	15	50	65

These are all big bags packed full.

In addition we receive daily about 14 large bags from the field post offices full of articles posted, and undelivered letters and parcels addressed to soldiers who have been wounded and sent down from the Front, about four bags from the British Post Office and on Indian mail days an extra lot from India. There is therefore plenty of work for a motor lorry.

In fact we cannot work with any other kind of conveyance without running great risk of delaying the mails, as all articles that come into the Base Office have to be sorted and sent out again to destination the same day.

Since I wrote my last diary much has happened. Having got the Base Office at Rouen into proper working order with all arrangements made for the regular discharge of business and the comfort of the staff during the coming winter I felt that I might safely leave things there to the care of Barton Wright and the Postmaster. I accordingly left Rouen for the Front on the evening of the 27th November with the full intention of remaining until the heavy work to be expected at Christmas rendered my return necessary. Not having yet been supplied with a motor car I was compelled to travel to railhead on a supply train which crawled along for two nights and a day at the average speed of about five miles an hour and landed me at Choques at 7 o'clock on the morning of the 29th. I could have reached here in the course of a morning by motor car. My journey took me through Boulogne where, to my disgust, I found that London papers were sold on the date of their publication and that bundles of these papers were being put on to the supply train for delivery to troops at the Front on the following morning. Considering that the papers we were carrying in the post-bags on the same train were at least four days old I found plenty to think about during the remainder of my journey.

28TH NOVEMBER  
1914 TO 3RD  
DECEMBER 1914

At Choques I was met by Bullard who during the course of the day took me in his car, which he has recently been supplied with, to Dacon, Hinges and Bethune and in the course of my rounds I visited the Indian Army Head Quarters, saw Cook, Thompson and King and several field post offices. In the evening I returned to Choques where the whole of the next day and half the following were wasted, as I had no conveyance or any means of getting away from there and doing several important pieces of work that I wanted to do. Bullard had undertaken to fetch me in the middle of the first day, but a hitch in the arrangements for serving the Cavalry Division which had only just arrived kept him busy till late in the afternoon and it was then too late to go anywhere. The same thing occurred next day. Bullard was to have come or sent for me in the early morning, but the unexpected arrival of His Majesty the King at the Front upset his plans and it was nearly 2 p.m., before he was able to come to me.

By this time I had fully made up my mind to go and see the Quartermaster General of the British Force—General Sir William Robertson to obtain if possible his permission to work the Indian Post Office independent of the doings of the British Army Post Office. It has been drilled into me ever since I arrived that the Indian Post Office must conform to the doings of the British Post Office, and the Indian Army Corps (to their disadvantage as it now turns out) have lost no opportunity of



telling me to take my orders from the Director of that Service. I therefore made Bullard drive me straight away to the British Army Head Quarters—a distance of about thirty miles. On arrival there I found that the Quartermaster-General was out for the day so I sent Bullard back. On the following morning Wednesday the 2nd I saw General Robertson at about 8 o'clock and represented to him that the existing arrangements were altogether unsuited to the proper conduct of my work. I pointed out that the use of the Havre route, by which the mails from London are sent, involved much avoidable delay in the transit of mails, that it lengthened the line of communication to an unnecessary extent, which entailed difficulties in the matter of control, and enhanced the risk of accidents and mistakes, that the Base and advance field post offices were practically cut off from each other owing to the distance between them and the slow train service connecting them and that proper supervision under such conditions could not be maintained. I pointed out that I have much important work to do at both ends of the line and I had found that when I was at one end I was completely out of touch with what went on at the other.

General Robertson on the other hand pointed out what was to be said against my going—the following being the principal arguments:—

- (i) that the British Post Office, for good reasons explained by the Director which he had accepted, was not able to move its Base about and anyhow could not possibly do so by Christmas :
- (ii) that Boulogne might at any time be cut off the direct line of route between England and the front :
- (iii) that the train service between Boulogne and the Front might at any time be discontinued :
- (iv) that there would naturally be a great out-cry on the part of the British Force if the Indian Contingent was better served.

The latter argument was the only one I could not meet, but General Robertson himself was good enough to say that he would not let it stand in my way if I thought I could move my Base without disorganizing the heavy traffic that has to be dealt with at this time of the year, and if I was prepared to take all risk of finding myself isolated. I replied that if he gave me the opportunity I would move my Base within a week and that I was prepared to take the risks he referred to, (a) because I could move again if it becomes necessary and (b) because the reduction of three to four days in the time it was taking to get mails to the front gave me sufficient margin to work on in the event of the discontinuance of the train service to and from Boulogne. On this he told me that he agreed to my making the move if I could obtain the consent of the Inspector-General, Communications, and could get the Director, British Post Offices, to agree to the arrangement.



On the strength of this I wired at once to the Base office to start packing to be ready to move the following Monday and within half an hour was on my way to Abbeville in a comfortable Rolls Royce car kindly lent me by the Quartermaster-General to see the Inspector-General, Communications, and the Director, British Post Offices. At Abbeville luck was again against me—the Director, Post Offices, was away and I could not get the matter settled until the following day—Thursday the 3rd December. As might be expected the Director, Post Offices, strenuously opposed the arrangement, but my battle was won when I got the Quartermaster-General's consent. The Inspector-General, Communications, expressed the view that there was not sufficient reason to keep me from carrying out the improvements I desired to make, so gave me his consent. I at once wired to the Base Post Office that the move would be made on the following Monday and to the British Post Office to send out mails direct to Boulogne from that date. I then left in another borrowed car to get things ready at Boulogne. The position then was that Thursday after-noon we were committed to move to Boulogne on the following Monday and had no house or any accommodation to go to, no conveyance of any kind, and no arrangements whatever ready for dealing with the mails. I selected Monday for the move as we were about to reduce the period of transit by three days, and on any other day of the week would have to deal with three days mails on the date of arrival at Boulogne. By moving on Monday we should find only two days mails to deal with on the first day as no mails are despatched from London on Sundays. I was unable to delay the move till the following week as this would run us too near Christmas and moreover I was pledged to make it in a week.

On arrival at Boulogne drove direct to the Field Engineer's office and got him to come out in my (?) car to look for a house. By luck we found one in close proximity to the Docks and Railway Station—an old château that had not been occupied for years. The grass and weeds, even on the drive in front of the house were knee high and the dirt in the place was inches thick. There were no lights in the building except a few rusty gas lamps on the ground-floor—the water pipes were out of order and the drains were clogged. The house, however, had the merit of containing the space we required and was conveniently situated; so I elected to take it. The next morning I engaged twelve charwomen, and got the loan of a party of twelve soldiers to clean out the place, and for two and a half days these people were busy with spades, brushes, soap, water, etc. I also (with the Field Engineer) visited electricians, plumbers, glaziers, carpenters, gas men, road makers, locksmiths, and with the help of them was able to get the house partly fitted and ready to go into by the following Monday. At the same time I arranged for the supply of a motor lorry to carry the mails between the Post Offices the railway station, and the mail boat, for the supply of Indian ration

from one source, for British rations and fuel from other sources, and also for the transmission of our mails to the Front, as well as for the supply of railway trucks and a siding on which to load them.

King from railhead joined me on Friday and during the time he was with me gave me much useful assistance. At the other end Barton Wright made all arrangements for sending the Post Office off from Rouen and carried out this work in a very satisfactory manner. The Base Postmaster—Mr. Roderick—and his staff also carried out their work in a highly efficient and creditable way. On Monday they dealt at Rouen with the mail despatched from London on Saturday. This they loaded on to the supply train for transmission to the front, then got on to a passenger train which landed them at Boulogne early on Tuesday morning and there they disposed of the mails despatched from London on Monday and Tuesday in time for them to go on to the Front on the same supply train that they loaded at Rouen the previous evening. This left at 4 p.m., on the date of their arrival. The transfer could not have been carried out in a more efficient manner. To appreciate the performance fully it must be remembered that the Base Office establishment was fixed with regard to the conditions of field service beyond the Indian Frontier. Our weekly consignment of mails from India consists on an average of 28 bags and it may safely be said that on the Frontier the Base Office would never be called upon to deal with more than half that number of bags in one day—say 14 bags: Compare this with our daily receipts from London during the last week.

Date of despatch from London.	Letter bags.	Parcel bags.	Total.
6th December .. .. .	21	70	91
7th .. .. .	5	101	106
8th .. .. .	25	75	100
9th .. .. .	24	80	104
10th .. .. .	26	185	211
11th .. .. .	32	105	137
12th .. .. .	34	149	183
13th .. .. .	24	80	104
Total ..	191	845	1,036



The reliefs sent out from India have not yet arrived. They have unfortunately been detained in quarantine at Marseilles.

The effect of the change made is that we are *now delivering London mails at the front on the day after its despatch from London*. Mails for General Willcocks and his staff are delivered on the same day, as special arrangements have been made to convey his correspondence from Boulogne by motor. This is as good a service as it is possible to make. The Base Post Office has now shaken down into its new premises and work is carried out smoothly and efficiently. I have an excellent set of sorters, who under any conditions imposed upon them carry out their work willingly and with great ability.

On the 15th I went across to London and be it noted to my credit that I stayed there for only one whole day notwithstanding that I had not been in England for four years and great was the temptation to ask for a week's leave which is being freely granted to all officers with the force. The whole of that day was occupied with business at the India Office and the War Office.

14TH DECEMBER  
1914 TO 29TH  
DECEMBER 1914  
BOULOGNE.

\* \* \* \*

In the course of the day I saw Sir Thomas Holderness, General Sir Edmund Barrow, Mr. Lionel Abrahams, Mr. Stuart and Mr. Patrick of the India Office, General Long at the War Office and two officers of the British Post Office. It would take too long to relate what each one discussed and I will confine myself to saying that before leaving I got the Post Office branch at the India Office to start an entirely new system of sorting both parcels and letters which will facilitate work at the India Office as well as at the Base Post Office and thereby expedite the transit of mails. I got the office to introduce a special arrangement by means of which the publishers of newspapers can have the papers sent out to the Force on the morning of publication. I obtained and brought away a motor car for my own use and at the same time was given a promise that the War Office would see that my difficulties in regard to the supply of transport were removed, (this has since been done), and many other matters were placed on a proper footing. The visit was, to me, most satisfactory and I returned freed from a load of worries that has previously been troubling me, with the knowledge that I could carry out various schemes which will produce improvements in the service.

\* \* \* \*

We came out here mobilized for conditions that prevail on the Indian Frontier where twenty bags of mails a day would be regarded as heavy. With less than the ordinary staff provided to deal with the frontier mails we have been dealing with mails that have run up to 36<sup>2</sup> bags in one day and we have kept pace with the work. Without any provision for extra post office either in the shape of staff or equipment we have improvised arrangements and kept postal work going at



Marseilles, Orleans and Rouen where Indian Units have been located far away from the Army itself. We have contrived to make temporary arrangements to perform the necessary postal business at the different railheads and have carried on the work of the Post Office without being provided with proper transport facilities. Now we are running on an entirely different basis. The transport arrangements have been placed on a proper footing, reinforcements from India have arrived and we have sufficient establishment for the proper conduct of work at the Base. Properly equipped post offices have been established at the towns mentioned as well as at the railheads. Everything now is in good working order. Our Base has probably been moved for the last time, the work is running smoothly and well and the Force generally seem fully satisfied with the service. So that if we are left alone there remains little to be done but to keep things straight and to let them run on the present lines.

\* \* \* \*

Since my return from London I have paid two visits to the Front I have visited the Indian Hospitals and started arrangements for the delivery of mails to wounded British and Indian soldiers (officers and men). Up to the present the Hospitals have not been able to give us casualty lists, but I am in hope that this difficulty will soon be overcome and that before long we shall be in a position to deliver letters to the sick and wounded without any delay.

The Christmas mails were very heavy but were disposed of without a hitch and delivered to the troops at the Front as quickly as the mails ordinarily are.

1915.

BOULOGNE  
JANUARY 1915.

I have little to record. On the 2nd January I heard that the 2nd Cavalry Division was about to join the Indian Cavalry Corps at the Front and knowing that Thompson's car had not reached him I went up to the Front and stayed there till the 8th in order that he might have the use of mine. On one occasion we went round all the Cavalry Brigade post offices travelling from one to another by the shortest route. The distance we travelled in visiting these offices was 82 miles, which will show how necessary it is for the Assistant Directors to have cars. The new field post offices came up with their respective Brigades and fell into the work at once, clearing off in very short time the mails that had of necessity accumulated during the four days that the Division was moving from its previous station. Only one hitch occurred. Field Post Office No. 39 in charge of, Mr. Rulach got lost after arriving at railhead. Thompson and I made a long search for it. Then the Brigade Major sent out a number of despatch riders to search, but no trace of it was found until the following day when I received a telegram from the General Head Quarters of the British Army saying that a stray field

post office had turned up there—What was to be done with it? Rulach and his staff walked about 30 miles to get to General Head Quarters. Fortunately they travelled in the right direction and not towards the German trenches. On receiving the telegram I started with Thompson for General Head Quarters but met the post office on its way back. The men looked very tired, so I took Rulach in my motor, went to the nearest transport depôt, borrowed a motor lorry, went back, picked up the rest of the men and all the office kit and took them to their proper billet leaving the mule cart to follow on empty.

At another field post office which found its first billet within sound of the guns we were amused by a request of a field postmaster who asked for a clasp knife on the ground that having no revolver or sword, he had nothing to kill the Germans with in the event of their attacking his post office!

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During the interval since my last diary was submitted we have started registration work in all field post offices. I refrained from undertaking the work before because we had not sufficient staff at the Base and when reinforcements arrived it was so near Christmas that I thought it expedient not to introduce any new business until the Christmas rush of work was over.

Bullard and Cook have both had leave to England for seven days and at the time of writing King, Roderick and Smith are in England on short leave.

On the 14th January I motored to the Front and on the following day made a round of visits to the Field Post Offices attached to the Lahore Division, all of which were working very well. In the evening I returned to Boulogne to be in time to meet a representative from the India Office (Mr. Patrick) who, at my request, has been deputed to come and study our work in order that he may be in a better position to deal with postal questions that are constantly before the India Office. I omitted to mention in my last diary that General Barrow was over here for a few days and I took the opportunity of representing to him how much easier it would be for me to deal with the India Office if there was some one there who properly understood the postal situation out here. He agreed and at noon on the 16th Mr. Patrick arrived to study our system. I met him at the boat and kept him there until he saw the way in which our mails are sent out to us. Mails for the British Army Post Office arrive in the forehold of the ship and unloading commences directly the boat gets alongside the jetty. The Indian mails are sent out in the mainhold beneath—

14TH JANUARY  
1915 TO 26TH  
JANUARY 1915.

- (i) the French mails,
- (ii) passenger luggage,
- (iii) motor cars.



Having seen, he wrote down in his pocket book that some more suitable arrangement should be made. I took him to breakfast and then to the Base Office and kept him there till late at night and for the best part of the next day. On both dates I showed him that between the arrival of the mails from England at 1-30 p.m., and the departure of the supply train at 4-30 p.m., the Base Office sorts and disposes of the whole of the letter mail received and that no letters whatever are left over for disposal on the following day. My object was to prove to him that there was no delay in the transmission of mails through the Field Post Office and to contrast this with the delay that occurs in sending mails from Home. I showed him that it takes longer for a letter posted in London to leave London than it takes for the same letter to pass in transit from London into the hands of the addressee at the Front. The reason for this is that the working hours of the Post Office at the India Office has not been fixed with regard to the work that has to be done. The office works from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., instead of starting work at 5 p.m., so that practically no article posted on any given date is dealt with in time for despatch by the boat leaving Folkestone the following morning. When Mr. Patrick fully realised the position he not only made notes in his pocket book but sat down and wrote out instructions prescribing that the working hours of the letter sorters should be changed at once. Under the new arrangement I trust that we shall get the letters and effect their delivery twenty-four hours earlier than at present. On the following day I took him up to the Front and in the course of our journey we visited several Field Post Offices where I was able to show him how quickly the delivery work is effected in the field and how few letters are missent from the Base to these offices. We searched particularly for such articles and in all the offices we visited were unable to find any. In the afternoon I handed him over to Bullard who took him to see the Post Offices attached to Brigades that are actually in action and I paid a round of visits with Cook to the Field Post Offices attached to the Meerut Division. Here too I was unable to find any missent letters. Any outsider would have found it hard to realise that some of the offices were actually post offices as in one or two which I visited immediately after the despatch had been made there was not a single letter or parcel in the office. On the following day I took Patrick round to see how work is done at refilling points and then I drove him to Head Quarters of the Inspector-General of Communications where he wished to see some one on business not connected with the Post Office. I may mention that on the previous evening Mr. Patrick dined with General Willcocks who spoke in flattering terms of the work of the Field Post Offices. At the Head Quarters of the Inspector-General of Communications I took the opportunity of seeing Colonel Price, the Director of the British Army Post Office, who told me that the Indian Field Post Office will shortly have to move out of Boulogne and go back to Havre as there will be no room for us at the former place. If we do



our postal service will be absolutely ruined, but it will be time enough to worry about the matter if or when the change is made. On the 20th we motored back to Boulogne. Mr. Patrick left for London the same afternoon with an insight into our work which he could not have attained without coming over here, and I feel sure that his visit will be productive of good and useful results.

The last six days I have spent at the Base but, with the work running as it is now doing, I find very little to do and have more spare time on my hands than I altogether like. With effect from the 15th we started registration work in all Field Post Offices and from the 17th were able to introduce money order work with the United Kingdom. In the course of the next few days I hope to start British Postal Order business. I have asked the India Office to supply me with a stock of Orders and am awaiting their receipt.

Spent the 27th at the Base. On the 28th proceeded to the Front where, for the first time, I had the pleasure of meeting General Sir James Willcocks. The General was very nice and, after asking about the health of the Post Office men, complimented me on the work of the Department but rather marred the effect by saying that the Field Post Office was now delivering letters as quickly as the India Office.

27TH JANUARY  
TO 1ST FEBRU-  
ARY 1915.

\* \* \* \*

I have done no work this week. I have been on seven days leave to England. I was given permission to go by the Commander of the Indian Army Corps and I am now wondering how long it will be before I am shot under the orders of one or all of my many masters for having gone without their permission. For the purpose of discipline I am well looked after. I am under the Indian Army Corps Commander, the India Cavalry Corps Commander, the Inspector-General of Communications, the Base Commandant of Boulogne, and the Director of the British Army Post Office claims to have authority over me but he has not the power to shoot me. For all other purposes I am no man's child. My position is a peculiar one but it cannot be helped.

2ND TO 9TH  
FEBRUARY.

Since last writing I have spent a week at the front and a week at the Base. Work in both places is progressing smoothly. Our field post offices at the front have now been located in the same places for so long that the work has fallen into a groove and there is not enough to keep the men properly busy. This is not good for them and one or two have been getting into mischief, but this will stop when they have to march ten or twelve miles a day in addition to doing their ordinary work.

9TH MARCH 1915.

There has been, I am sorry to say, an unusual amount of sickness amongst the men. On the 28th February Babu Parshotam Ram, a clerk from the Punjab Circle, died of pneumonia. On the 1st March Mr. Roderick, the Base Postmaster, was invalided to England, suffering from water on the knee as a result of a fall, and to-day Mr. Barton Wright

has been invalided home in consequence of throat trouble. At the Base there has been an epidemic of influenza and six men have been admitted to hospital chiefly on this account. Now, however, the men are getting better and no new cases have occurred for some days past.

For a short time our mail arrangements were somewhat upset in consequence of the Blockade. The Channel steamers were allowed to run only at nights and this resulted in a delay of 24 hours to the mails. Now the steamers have resumed the normal timings and mails are delivered at the Front within 24 to 30 hours of leaving London.

9TH MARCH TO  
23RD MARCH 1915

I regret having to record another death—that of C. M. Supariwalla, a clerk from the Calcutta General Post Office, who died on the 18th March of Cerebo-Spinal fever. He was 21 years of age and arrived in France only two months ago, a bright, cheerful, healthy-looking boy. His sudden death has caused quite a shock, and the Field Post Office has lost one who gave great promise of turning into a very useful assistant.

I have also to record a casualty in the Infantry Railhead Post Office—Field Post Office No. 37 B. N. Karve, a clerk from the Bombay General Post Office, was injured by a bomb thrown from a "Taube" on the morning of the 21st March. I visited the place a few hours after the incident occurred. Karve was standing in the doorway of the post office when the bomb fell on the opposite side of the street some forty yards away. All the windows in the street including those in the post office were shattered, but beyond this very little harm was done to any of the buildings. Two women were killed and a few other persons injured. Some fragments of shell penetrated into the post office room but no one except Karve was hit, though Mr. Martin, the field postmaster, and his staff had an unpleasant experience. I saw the wounded clerk in hospital and gathered from the Medical Officer in charge that the wound was only slight and that the man would soon be better.

Wright and Roderick are still absent in England on the sick list. Two packers have also been sent to hospital in Brighton and two clerks and one packer are in hospital in France.

Some of our Field Post Offices are reported to have come under shell fire during the recent big fight at Neuve Chapelle. All I am glad to say behaved with great courage. I am told that one Field Post Office was ordered out of the village of Richebourg on account of the heavy bombardment that was taking place, but the postmaster and his two clerks (McLeavy, Heberd and Gordon) protested so vigorously against being moved that they were allowed to stay until next morning when they were made to go. I passed through the village a few days later on my way to see some of the Field Post Offices. There was not a house in the place that had not been badly damaged, and although at this time only an occasional shell came into the place I was extremely glad to get away from it. Bullard describes in his diary how another Field Post Office was working



in a building alongside of one of our big guns. I visited this office and found the men sorting letters on the ceiling of the room. This may sound incredible, but the explosion of the big gun had shaken the ceiling down on to the floor and the men were working in the midst of the litter. At another post office a shell burst in the verandah without hurting any of the post office staff.

I am reminded that it is time to submit another diary and I sit down to the task of writing it wondering what to say. We do a lot without doing much to talk about. The following table shows the amount of delivery work we are doing in the ordinary course of business :—

24TH MARCH TO  
5TH APRIL 1915.

### RECEIVED FOR DELIVERY.

Months.	Bags of Mails (letter and parcel).	Approximate number of letters.	Parcels (actual number).	Registered letters (actual number).
October .. .. .	666	106,650	3,423	1,875
November .. .. .	2,192	265,050	15,446	3,814
December .. .. .	5,134	382,500	47,771	5,366
January .. .. .	4,030	402,300	37,942	5,430
February .. .. .	4,267	468,900	38,376	4,712
March .. .. .	5,397	538,650	51,603	5,506

This means that we are now delivering on an average 17,376 letters and 1,664 parcels a day. I sometimes wonder how we shall get the mails along if our troops follow the enemy over a long line of country where all the railways have been destroyed.

We are working without any kind of restrictions as to what may be sent to the field and a visit to the parcel sorting room where one sees what is going through the post is a revelation. Here are parcels of every kind and description, from neat tin cases of stores packed by firms trading in the West End of London to bottles of 'Piccalilli' wrapped in brown paper by some fond mother who appears to think that the parcel she is sending to her son is the only parcel to be carried and that Post Office employees will carry it carefully by hand from the office of posting to the place where her boy happens to be. My last visit to the parcel room disclosed a small neat packet of chocolates and soap addressed to a gunner, alongside a large untidy bundle of chocolates and warm comforts addressed to a Chaplain. Apples bursting out of a broken wooden box—sweets dropping from a package and thereby giving the lie to the stated declaration



"Contents Stadenry" (sic), cakes from Buzzard—parcels marked "Exported from Bond" evidently containing cigars, cigarettes and tobacco. Others marked "Perishable" but these did not contain ladies' hats and other articles of female wearing apparel that give so much trouble in India. A large parcel of Easter Eggs was addressed to a Major and to another officer was a parcel containing "socks, syrup and towels." For a Captain there was a parcel containing "herrings, sugarcandy and ties," for a Lieutenant "13 Gents' watches (metal cases)." For a Private in an Infantry Regiment a set of boxing gloves and for a Cavalryman "a roll-up spoon and fork" (sic) with some clothes. For another officer a box of fresh eggs, which is rather like sending coals to Newcastle, as eggs are plentiful and cheap out here even at the Front where the troops are mostly lodged in or near farms where fowls still swarm.

Amongst the contents of other parcels I noticed such things as pineapples and lavender water but in the majority of cases the contents of the parcels were not mentioned. One sender simply affirmed that his parcel did not contain matches or explosives and another merely stated that his came "from address inside."

#### ' LONELY ' SOLDIER'S POST BAG.

"One lonely soldier in the trenches, said Mr. Hobhouse, Postmaster-General, speaking at Bristol last night, advertised for correspondents in a newspaper, and three days later 3,000 letters, 6 bags of small parcels, and 90 large parcels were delivered to him. If all soldiers did the same the postal system would break down."

As I write, a telegram comes to hand from the Director-General asking if the British Post Office have allowed free postage or postage at a lower rate than to the public on parcels sent by any Red Cross or other institution in United Kingdom for members of the British Expeditionary Force. I have never heard of any such concession and hope to find that the British Post Office has not done anything of the kind, as our parcel post service is already overtaxed and from the statistics given at the beginning of this diary it will be clear that there is no need to give the troops any further facilities for receiving parcels.

Mr. Roderick informs me that he has been given two months leave, and to his regret will not get back to work until the 5th of May. He has asked me to move the medical authorities to reconsider his case and let him back sooner, but I have replied that nothing I can say or do is likely to influence the decision of a medical board.

Barton Wright has been given one month's medical leave. He will return to India at the expiry of it.

B. N. Karve, who was wounded in the arm by a bomb thrown from an aeroplane is still in hospital in France, but continues to make good progress and should soon be well enough to return to duty.

Cook with the permission of his Brigade and King have both gone home again on 7 days' leave. They were both feeling a bit run down and it is hoped that the change of scenery and surroundings will do them good.

1915.

Since I last wrote our troops have been engaged in heavy fighting and for the last ten days I have made Aire my Head Quarters in order that I might be near by to go to the help of any Assistant Director who required assistance. Those officers have however put everything through very efficiently and required no help. Some of our field post offices have had a trying time. Two were located in Poperinghe and three on a side road leading out of Vlamertynghe (near Ypres) towards Bailleul. All were exposed to shell fire and the staff had frequently to leave their offices and go out into the fields where there was less risk of being hit. At Poperinghe the offices were exposed to the fire of big guns (believed to be 15 inch) and on one occasion a shell from one of these weapons fell in a garden not 40 yards away from the post office, making a hole so large that a stable and mule fell into it. The offices on the roadside were exposed to the fire of lighter guns and the men in these offices say that when the first shell fell in Poperinghe the Postmaster and his clerks bolted into their office room and locked the door. Having no doors of their own to lock they can afford to make such statements. One office had no shelter of any kind but the staff seemed quite happy and made no complaint about living and working in a field at the side of the road without as much as a tree to shelter them. During my visit to these offices I was most agreeably struck with the cheerful attitude of all our men who accepted the risks and discomforts to which they were being subjected as part of their day's work and complained of neither

23RD APRIL TO  
5TH MAY 1915.

Last week I was able to introduce a new motor mail service from Boulogne to the Head Quarters of the Indian Corps and the Indian Cavalry Corps. By means of this service we now deliver letters to the staffs of the Indian Corps, Commands and Brigades, within ten hours of the time they leave London and newspapers on the date of their publication. I hear that the King's messengers bring out London papers for General Sir John Willocks every day and since the introduction of the new service he has been able to show them that newspapers reach him more quickly by the post. From the beginning I have aimed at getting our mails along as quickly as the despatches carried by the King's messengers, but alas! I am not free to do all that I desire and it has not been easy to obtain the necessary transport (one small box car) to work a road service. The car is very small and will not take more than a very small portion of the letter mails to the Front. The rest go by what is known as an "Oddment train," i.e., a train that has no recognised time of departure or arrival and is made up of odd trucks that have to go in one particular direction. For Postal purposes such a train is most unsuitable. I should like to see the whole of our mail sent to the Front by road but I fear I shall never be given the transport necessary for this.



I met one A.D.P.S. recently making for a place where it was unsafe for him to go and I forbade his going there. A certain battery which is so keen on getting its mails that it makes special arrangements for sending for them was in action in such a warm corner that for several nights it could not get its mail cart through to the post office and this so upset the Assistant Director that he felt it was up to him to go and deliver the mails himself. He would probably have done so if I had not stopped him. To get to the place he would have had to pass through a veritable death trap. All the roads leading there converge into one and everybody going to the place must for a distance of about half a mile travel over the same piece of road. The enemy knowing this keep up a continuous and concentrated fire on that part of the road, and every one who has to pass along it does so at full gallop and is lucky if he gets through. One would like to have and could fully employ Assistant Directors of this kind with each Brigade.

7TH JULY 1915  
TO 31ST JULY  
1915.

The most important event I have to mention in this diary is the visit of the Director-General Sir William Maxwell to the Field; but, before referring to this interesting event I must give an account of a visit I made to Marseilles. We have kept a Post Office open there since our arrival in September 1914 but I have never found time to visit it since November last.

I left Boulogne by motor car on the morning of the 7th July, touched at Abbeville to discuss certain matters with the Director (British) Army Post Office and then proceeded to Paris where I arrived after 3 p.m. Paris in these days offers little attraction for sight-seers as all the public buildings are closed.

From Paris I travelled by train to Marseilles reaching there at 9 a.m. on the morning of the 8th. Unwashed and unshaved I had first of all to seek out an officer who could give me a "billet de logement", as hotels are not permitted to take in persons dressed in khaki without the permission of some one in authority. The billeting officer gave me the permit required and then passed me on to the Assistant Adjutant General and he in turn passed me on to the Base Commandant who had much to say about postal matters generally. Consequently it was late in the day before I got to my hotel for a wash and breakfast. It was pleasant to hear from the Base Commandant that he and others quartered at Marseilles were thoroughly pleased with the postal arrangements and the work of the field postmaster Mr. Williams. Perhaps on this account he told me that I might have a motor car from his garage when I wanted one. I was glad to take advantage of this concession.

\* \* \* \*

The Director-General (Sir William Maxwell) with his family reached Marseilles on the morning of the 11th and I was able to convey them to

their hotel in a Government motor, assist them in other little ways, and show them a restaurant where the French cooking is perfection.

Before his arrival I had obtained verbal permission to take him to the Front if he desired to see our field post offices, and when he heard of this he changed all his previous plans, cancelled the visit he was to have made to Aix les Bains and expressed the desire to be off to the Front at once. This, however, could not be managed as special written passes had to be obtained and other arrangements made which to his disappointment took time.

On the evening of the 20th he reached Boulogne and spent the best part of the next day in the Base Post Office. In the evening I motored him out to see a field post office which serves a hospital situated on the sea coast a few miles away from Boulogne. The next day we proceeded by motor car to the Front. Cook, Bullard and Thompson met us at the Indian Corps railhead and after spending some little time in the railhead post office Bullard took Sir William and myself in his motor car to see some of the post offices in the Field. We found one located in a cottage, another in a stable, another in a fowl house and after we had inspected some three or four of these offices, Bullard announced that there was a battery in position near by, which he had permission to take us to if the Director-General would like to see it. The Director-General said he would and we drove first of all to Artillery Brigade Headquarters where we found the Brigade Major who offered to accompany us. A short drive brought us to a point where it was not safe to take a motor and so we got down to do the rest of the journey on foot. I felt sorry for the driver of the motor car who was told to move his car fifty yards down the road and stop there behind a small cottage if by chance the Germans started shelling the road. I could not help thinking it must be very unpleasant to be left all alone waiting for other people on a road that was liable to be shelled at any moment. A walk of about a mile through standing corn brought us to the battery. Earlier in the morning the country all round where the battery lay had been heavily shelled but at the time of our visit all was quiet. We were shown how cleverly guns are hidden, saw how they are worked, inspected the shells, got into the funk pits where the gunners find safety in the midst of a heavy bombardment and did all that is sufficient to satisfy most men who are given the privilege of visiting such places; but it did not satisfy the Chief. Here were guns, here were shells and in front of the guns were the "Bosches." Why not kill some? At his request the battery opened fire, but we do not know what effect it had.

We then inspected an anti air-craft gun and afterwards went to Bullard's mess for lunch. On the way back the Director-General told us that he was just a bit disappointed that the Germans had not returned the fire as he would have liked to see a bursting shell. Some one told him that



we were not yet out of the wood but nothing happened during the course of our journey back to lunch. In the afternoon we had still one more office to inspect and on our way to it found that things were not so quiet as they had been in the morning. All along the road our own guns were busy, making a hideous noise and, as we turned into a road leading up to the point we were going to Bullard, pointed to a black column of smoke a little distance in front of us and said he thought it was a shell that had just exploded. Turning to the sentry on the road side he asked if it was a shell and the sentry replied that it was and that there were plenty more of them on the road. As he spoke four or five came hustling into the fields close by and one crashed into a building comparatively close to us blowing a great cloud of tiles and masonry into the air. We did not wait to see what actual damage was done, but made the best speed possible to get out of the neighbourhood. The speed did not amount to much as on that particular road all motor cars are made to slow down to five miles an hour in order not to raise the dust. It was a relief to find that all was quiet at the post office. The Director-General asked the staff whether they ever got any shells and was amused at the reply given, "Certainly—Sir every day we are getting shells." Finding that a safe road led away from the post office we took the Director-General, as we thought, out of danger but later in the afternoon fetched up at a comparatively large town for tea. But as we drove into the market square we noticed that the people seemed somewhat excited and saw that the place was littered with large stones, débris and broken glass, furthermore that a house in the square was badly damaged obviously from shell fire. A moment later stretcher bearers appeared carrying people and on making enquiries we found that the Germans had just been shelling the place. We had missed this bombardment by a few minutes. In the evening we took the Director-General out to see the fire shells that are kept going all night over the trenches. The next day I took him round the Cavalry field post offices where there was no excitement of the kind we had seen the previous day.

We lunched with the Cavalry Corps Commander (General Rimington) and in the evening motored back to Boulogne where the four Assistant Directors and myself had the pleasure of entertaining the Director-General and his family to dinner.



LT. COOK, A.D.P.S., CAV. CORPS.      LT. COL. PILKINGTON, D.P.S., I.F.F.A.      LT. KING, A.D.P.S., BASE  
 LT. BULLARD, A.D.P.S., ARMY HD. QRS. AND 3RD DIVN.      LT. THOMPSON, A.D.P.S., 7TH DIVN.



On Saturday morning we had Sir William photographed amongst us and then saw him off by the Folkestone boat.

I have every reason to think that the Director-General was pleased with his trip and enjoyed his baptism of shell fire. The following copy of a letter received from him shows that he was equally pleased with the work of the field post office :—

“ I must write a few lines to tell you how greatly I have enjoyed my visit to the offices under your control in France.”

“ It has been a real pleasure to me to see the conditions under which they work and nothing has gratified me more than the cheerfulness and devotion of the staff of all ranks.”

“ On all sides I heard nothing but praise of the Indian Post Office and I take this opportunity of thanking you and all the establishment working under you for all you have done here to uphold and enhance the good name of the Department.

“ Also I wish specially to mention that I am most grateful to you and Bullard for the excellent arrangements you made for my interesting tour.”

On the 1st August I received a telegram from the Indian Army Corps announcing the sad death of Bullard. He was killed whilst motor-ing between two field post offices. A shell hit his motor car blowing it to pieces and killing Bullard and the driver outright. On the morning of the 2nd I attended his funeral at Merville ; the burial service was conducted by the Bishop of Nagpur, the Right Reverend Eyre Chatterton, D.D. At his grave side were several Generals and many other officers of high rank, testifying to his universal popularity. He was liked by every one with whom he came into contact. By his death the Department has lost a most promising and capable officer. He was my right-hand man out here and I miss him greatly, both socially and officially.

1st AUGUST TO  
15th AUGUST  
1915.



Front row from left to right, sitting—

LT. W. B. RODERICK, BASE P. M., I. E. F. (A.); LT. E. B. THOMPSON, A. D. P. S., 7TH DIVN.; LT. E. C. BULLARD, A. D. P. S., IND. ARMY, H. QRS. AND 3RD DIVN.; LT.-COL. H. S. H. PIRKINGTON, M. V. O.; D. P. S., I. E. F. (A.); SIR WILLIAM MAXWELL, D. C. P. & T., INDIA; LT. J. H. E. COOK A. D. P. S., IND. CAVALRY CORPS; LT. H. KING, A. D. P. S., BASE



During the two days to which the preceding remarks relate, and for some days afterwards I was unusually busy on account of the movement of the whole of our Cavalry Force. The Cavalry first began to move on the 31st July and did not reach their destination until the 4th August. During this time they were making long daily marches. The food and rations supplied to them at various points of the route were conveyed from somewhere in the south and during the period of the move there was nothing in the way of supply or other trains to carry their post from where the Base Post Office is situated. The Director of Army Postal Services who takes a great interest in all we do came and told me beforehand that there would be no Railway service available for conveying the post of the troops and so suggested that we should hold it up at the Base until we had the means of delivering it at their final destination. This arrangement did not commend itself to me nor to the D. A. & Q. M. G. of the Cavalry Corps when I told him about it. That Officer was good enough to arrange to let me withdraw all the lorries that have been allotted to the Cavalry for postal purposes. These were sent down to our Base post office and by means of the lorries we were able to establish a regular daily service of mails to and from the places where the troops made their daily halts. Some of the runs were very long and both Cook and I were out all and every day from morning till night conveying mails in our own cars and seeing that all arrangements were properly carried out. So far as I am aware no hitch occurred anywhere during the movement and the troops got their letters and daily papers on the march with the same regularity as when they are stationed at one place.

The Indian Army and Indian Cavalry Corps are now far apart which makes things somewhat more complicated but the work is being carried out smoothly. Mr. Cook has brought to my notice that his two Inspectors (Messrs. Newton and Piggot) worked well and rendered very useful service whilst the troops were moving.

During the period under review I had the pleasure of seeing my name mentioned in Despatches.

\* \* \* \*

22ND SEPTEMBER  
TO 16TH OCTOBER  
1915.

Going from La Gorgue to Vieille Chappelle we passed the spot where poor Bullard was killed; the place is marked by an old twisted motor car wheel formerly belonging to his motor car which still lies in the ditch. A little further on we came to the place where we expected to find a post office but the buildings had been knocked to pieces and were empty. The Brigade Head Quarters and with them the field post office had been shelled out of the place the previous day and had gone to other quarters a little further back. We found the post office occupying what remained of a stable. The men were having the first cooked meal they had had for 3 days. They had spent the previous day underground to escape the shells and the day before they were on the march so had had no

opportunity of cooking anything for two days. None of them made any complaint but all expressed the hope that they would soon be allowed to return to India and that something would be done for them in the way of promotion or extra allowances. They had seen ten men killed or wounded close to the post office premises on the previous day and deserve some compensation for all that they have undergone. At the next post office I visited I found the postmaster engaged in digging for an unexploded shell that has just passed over the office building. Several had fallen close by but the nearest must just have topped the house judging by the direction of the furrow cut by the shell and its proximity to the building.

\* . \* \* \*

Major French, Accountant-General, Post and Telegraph, has been granted an extension of leave and will stay on with me for a further period of 6 months. He has given me a great deal of help and I am glad that I am not losing him.

I have not written for a long time as there was nothing of any importance to report. We are now breaking up. One Division has already left and another is under orders to move. I am sending Thompson with a full complement of field post offices to serve the Force and a number of spare men for work at the Base and on the Lines of Communication. When they have gone we shall be left with only 10 field post offices, the Base Post Office, and two offices on the Lines of Communication (at Rouen and Marseilles).

\* \* \* \*

I regret to say that two more deaths have occurred—

- i. Mr. C. S. McLeavy Field Postmaster, who died of Pulmonary Tuberculosis in King George Hospital, England, on the 17th November 1915. He was one of the best postmasters out here and by his death the Department has lost a promising and useful assistant.
- ii. Sarad Chand, packer, died of pneumonia in the Meerut Stationary Hospital on the 12th November 1915.

\* \* \* \*

A large portion of the Force has now left France and, after the Christmas postings have been delivered, there will be a material decrease in the work. The troops moved very quickly and we have never been told where they have gone so that it has not been practicable to make any cut and dry arrangement for the transmission of their mails.

\* \* \* \*

The following short extract from an article about the Army Post Office that appears in the "Morning Post" of the 28th December is I think of sufficient interest to quote:—

"One cannot conclude without a word of admiration for the fashion in which the Indian Postal Service fulfilled its duties. Its

17TH OCTOBER  
TO 4TH DECEMBER.

5TH DECEMBER  
TO 27TH DECEMBER  
1915.



“ task was, of course, on a far smaller and less complex scale, than  
 “ that of the British Army P. O., but its extraordinary punctuality  
 “ and freedom from mistakes won the most cordial appreciation from  
 “ everyone dependent on its good offices for those moments of  
 “ reunion with the things dearest to him, which mean so much to a  
 “ soldier in the field!”

\* \* \* \*

1916.

28TH DECEMBER  
 TO 30TH JANU-  
 ARY 1916.

This is my last diary and I have little to report. I am leaving here to-morrow and I think I may say that everything is in good working order. Cook will come and take my place at the Base and his place with the Indian Cavalry Corps will be taken by King. They will work in subordination to Col. Price, the Director of the (British) Army Post Office.

It is with great regret that I am leaving before the conclusion of the War and parting from men with whom I have worked for the last 18 months. They have all worked loyally and cheerfully and everyone has done his best to make our work out here successful. It is a consolation to feel that I am leaving the Unit in good hands and it may confidently be expected that under Mr. Cook the work will be carried out efficiently and to the general satisfaction of everyone concerned.



SEPOYS AT A FRENCH POST OFFICE RECEIVING PARCELS  
 FROM FAR OFF INDIA.

*CHAPTER III.*

FRANCE—1914-1916.

From the Diaries of

- (a) Late Lt. E. G. Bullard, Assistant Director of Postal Services.
- (b) Lt. E. B. Thompson, Assistant Director of Postal Services.
- (c) Lt. J. H. King, Assistant Director of Postal Services.
- (d) Letters of Lt. Barton Wright to Mr. Harrison, P.M.G., Punjab.

*From the Office files of the Director-General.*



DIARY OF LT. E. G. BULLARD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
OF POST OFFICES,

*For the 4th week of October 1914.*

October 24th. Shells were bursting in the vicinity throughout the early hours until dawn and we left at 10 a.m. *via* Lestrem, Vielle Chapelle Mesplaux to Lacon. On the way we saw several aeroplane attacks. At 8 p.m. I went to Railhead Lillers *via* Bethune and collected 5 bags of mails and returned at 11-15.

25th. Delivered all mails for Head Quarters myself at 7-30 a.m. as I had previously promised the General to do so. More arrived at 10 a.m. At 3 p.m. I went to try and find General Johnson and the Artillery and delivered his mails near the firing line at Levantier; he was jolly glad to get them. I was held up at Rouge Croix with shell fire. Black Marias and Jack Johnsons coming very close, the nearest being 60 yards off. I got back late at night.

26th. My 7th Brigade detached from Lahore Division and attached to the Cavalry Corps (General Allenby). Delivered their mails myself in Belgium (Kemmel). Visited Railhead Lillers and gave instructions. Visited St. Omer and met the A. D. Posts (British) to fix up regarding mails for the 7th Brigade to be included in the British F.P.O. which serves the Cavalry Corps. Delivered General Egerton's and 8th Brigade mails at Wytschete 2 kilos from the firing line. I was myself under fire for some time. I have now three different refilling points to attend to and only one cart, which makes matters difficult. I have also two different Railheads to visit. Returned to Lacon 7 p.m. having been out since 8-30 a.m.

27th. Lahore Division (what was left of it) retired from Lacon Estaires. Went to Levantier which is under shell fire and delivered mails to certain Batteries R.F.A., then went to Bailleul and Kemmel and delivered 7th Brigade Mails. Returned to Estaires. Delivered balance of mails to Batteries in the firing line as they were loosing off 4.7's. The C. O. and all were more than delighted at this novelty (as they called it) adding it was the first time they have ever heard of a delivery being made under such conditions. At 9 p.m. went out with Col. Hennesy and Major Sloane to act as Interpreter, so took the opportunity to try and deliver mails for the 9th Bhopal and 30th and 31st Sappers and Miners. Left Col. Hennesy at the 3rd Division (British) H.Q. then went to Rouge Croix, there was heavy fighting a mile off. Managed to deliver the 9th Bhopal mails and left the rest with a guard on the side of the road. We met some one who said assistance was urgently requested to wounded near-by, so left our car (which had to travel without lights) and walked right up to the trenches, a heavy rifle fire going on all the time.

Did all I could to assist many wounded. Also to the 2nd in Command 9th Bhopals (Col. Anderson who died next day of wounds). Came upon a German wounded and cross-questioned him. He had been there for many hours, shot through both legs and wanted food and water, but nobody could understand him, he said he had not had any food for two days (this was 11 p.m.) and that none of the Germans in the trenches opposite had had any for the same period. Returned to Rouge Roix to pick up the mails for Sappers and Miners and when I got back to where I left the car, I found that it had gone, I had to stay in the ditch all night (very cold and wet). I met a party of Sikhs who told me the Germans had broken through their lines and they were ordered to retire and that they had lost their Company. I put them on their road and stayed with the mails. Next morning I walked into Estaire in a round-about route and sent an orderly for the mails, and found out that the car that I had missed had been repeatedly fired on at point blank range from the ditch by the side of the road (without effect) and that they could not find me, so it was well I remained where I was, also that the Germans had been driven back (only a few getting through who were subsequently accounted for).

28th. Slept for 3 hours during the day and attended to current duties.

29th. Visited Railhead Chocques and brought in the evening's mails. Delivered mails at Kemmel.

30th. Visited Railhead and brought in letter mails for the General and Staff, also visited Lacon where I heard the Meerut Division had arrived and delivered missent mails to the General Staff Office. These were the first received since they left Orleans. Interviewed the General and then came up with Cook and informed him of what I had done. Arranged at Railhead for the Meerut Division mails to be sent up with my Inspector in the morning as no transport had been arranged for Cook.

31st. Delivered mails at Kemmel for the 129 Baluchi and 57 Rifles, the other regiments having rejoined the Lahore Division. Came under shell fire. Returned to Estaires. H. Qrs. then visited Railhead (Chocques), brought up H. Qrs. letter mails and delivered same 8 p.m. The General asked me to dinner. Took Cook down to Chocques to arrange for his mails and put King in the way of getting things done.

16th. Attack arranged for to-day as I visited some of the Batteries in action very early in the morning and took out their mails which were left over from the 15th. Visited Corps Head Quarters and Railhead. Got in touch with 15 parcels of gifts for my men.

17th. Arrived at Buones 10 a.m. to meet G.O.C.'s Secretary, Cavalry Brigade as per his wire of the 16th asking me if I could. Heard what he and his staff had to say about the Sub-Postmaster and had the latter up before him. The case is being reported separately. Went to Corps Head Quarters and brought back 4,500 cigarettes for Indian officers



of Lahore Division. Visited all Post Offices and distributed gifts, clothing, &c. At night I went round to the Field Ambulances returning 2 a.m.

18th. Visited Head Quarters Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade at Buones in connection with the Sub-Postmaster's case, then went to Hinges (Corps H. Q.) Sirhind Brigade Head Quarters C.R.A. Head Quarters at Gorre and Loisme. The Motor Bus service between Boulogne and Head Quarters ceased to-day so I wired the Base accordingly.

19th. (NOTE).—Work in all offices is increasing to a very great extent owing to fresh British regiments being attached to the Lahore Division. F. P. O. No. 9 has the most work, hence have arranged to have 1 N. C. O. and 6 men of the 4th Suffolks attached for Postal duty until the Xmas rush is over. Visited Corps Head Quarters, Sirhind Brigade and Railhead, also several Batteries.

20th. 1 N. C. O. and 6 men of the Suffolks reported to me at 10 a.m. Visited Railhead as I heard that the Director was coming in. He was not there. I then visited No. 19 F. P. O. at Buones, also the staff of the Secunderabad Cavalry and finally settled the Sub-Postmaster's case which I despatched to the Director to-day. Afterwards I visited Corps Head Quarters at Hinges and the Ferozepore and Sirhind Brigades. I arrived back at my Head Quarters at 2 p.m. and received a wire to go at once to Railhead (Chocques) to meet the Director, so I started at 2-10 and met him at 3 p.m. We then went together to Corps Head Quarters and Lahore Divisional Post Office at Hinges, Bethune, Le Quesnoy and Gorre. The latter Post Office was standing by ready to move at a moment's notice as a big attack was on in which we were not doing well, then we went back to Railhead and I returned to my Head Quarters at 8-30 p.m. Moved F. P. O. No. 10 to Bewry. After dinner I took up a convoy of ammunition to the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade 10 miles off as there was no one present who knew the way. There was a very big attack on and we were all warned to be prepared to move at any time. I had to travel with lights out and walked most of the way as the ammunition was conveyed in mule carts which are not very fast. We were held up 7 times en route to pass sentries. These people are most ferocious. They point their guns and bayonets at you until they are satisfied that you are really not what you ought not to be. The hospital at Chateau Gorre was shelled and had to clear out in a hurry. I got to bed at 2 a.m.

21st. Mails were late and very heavy; one of my lorries had to make two trips to Railhead to bring them up. The Director arrived at 11-30 and we went to Corps Head Quarters, had lunch and waited for the A. Q. M. G. I then visited the Divisional office and found mails for No. 10 had been left there in spite of my having given implicit instructions as to their disposal (*i.e.*, to be taken to La Quesnoy where the Brigade had gone). So I took them there myself. I then visited No. 36 at Gorre

and afterwards delivered mails for the 15th Sikhs who had not been able to send in for them (I promised I would do so). Heavy shelling was going on all round and it was with difficulty I could get there on account of the First Division being on the road waiting to go into the trenches to support. Our casualties to-day were over 500 not counting killed, but by evening we had taken the trenches we had lost.

22nd. Visited Sirhind Brigade Post Office at Gorre, also Railhead and Corps Head Quarters. Arranged for mails for the Secunderabad Cavalry who have this day severed connection with I. A. Head Quarters and been attached to the Cavalry Division. They were to have gone to Chateaux Bleaux  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of Molinghem, but on arrival there I found a note on the door saying they had left for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile east of Ishergnes where I went after dinner. At 10-30 I heard that the whole Division, also the I. A. Head Quarters were to move early next morning, so I wired those concerned. Corps Head Quarters were moving to Lillers, Lahore Head Quarters and Jullunder Brigade Post Offices to Lozingham, Ferozepore Brigade and Post Office to Lapugnoy and the Sirhind Brigade and Post Office to Anchel.

23rd. Arranged billets for three offices (the remaining offices were billeted by the Brigade billeting officers concerned). Saw personally that mails reached all the different offices in good time, I had extreme difficulty as my wire overnight to Railhead never reached, I had to send down a special messenger to bring up the lorries and it was only after dark that I learnt that the Sirhind Brigade were unable to reach their new Area, as the men's feet were too swollen and bad from standing in mud and water up to their knees in the trenches for many days and nights without rest. So I took their mails myself to Vendin, where they halted. Afterwards I picked up two sick men of the 4th Suffolks and took them with me. I then went to Corps Head Quarters, Lillers to draw Xmas cards for my Unit and had an accident with the car (fortunately without any one being hurt) which kept us for two hours in the road returning to Lozingham at 9-30 p.m.

*For the 3rd week of January 1915.*

16th. Lubbock arrived from leave. Visited Sirhind Brigade and Post Office at Richebourg St. Vast and arranged for Jullunder Brigade mails; latter Brigade moved to-day from Allnainin to La Conteur. As they could not get their mails from Lahore Division Head Quarters being too far off (18 miles) I got I. A. Corps Head Quarters to wire them to arrange for transport and keep their own post office with them as is done in other Brigades. My lorry bringing in despatches broke down at Bethune so I arranged for another to go out and hand it in to Lillers (Railhead). I got *khubber* of this too late to catch the supply tram.

17th. Superintended loading of mails and taking over of papers at Railhead. Visited Jullunder Brigade Head Quarters at La Conteur



regarding taking their own F. P. O. with them. They are now 20 miles away from it and say they cannot arrange transport.

Indian Corps Head Quarters have issued orders for them to fall into line with other Brigades and arrange for same. Visited Sirhind Brigade Head Quarters and P. O. at Richebourg St. Vast, then to Lahore Division Head Quarters (which is split up) and G. O. C. and 4 officers being at Les Lobes and remainder at Lozingham 20 miles off then from Lozingham to Lahore Division post office and visited rest of Head Quarters staff. Returned to Lillers (Corps Head Quarters) 8 p.m. to-day. I had no time for lunch or tea.

N.B.—The 125 Gurkhas (Sirhind Brigade) have been removed from the Brigade and 4th Seaforths have taken their place.

18th :—Went to Les Lobes *via* Lacon to arrange certain details with the G. O. C. Lahore as per wire received last night. Returned to Lillers in a snow storm. Beastly cold and got wet through. Met Director and Patrick (from India Office) at 1-45 took latter to Richebourg. Afterwards I showed him our F. P. O. No. 36 which at present has been under shell fire for two days. Then went to Levantier and passed within 300 yards German trenches. A fair amount of firing was going on. Returned to Lillers *via* Estaires, Lestren, Lacon, Bethune and Choques then visited, Corps Head Quarters and Phillomel where the G. O. C. Indian Corps lives.

19th. Sirhind and Jullunder Brigades moved from Richebourg and La Conteur. Visited both and arranged mails. Visited Lahore Head Quarters and Post Offices.

20th. My motor car came back from repairing dept. Visited Sirhind Brigade at La Conteur and Jullunder Brigade at Richebourg, came under shrapnel fire on the way to latter Brigade and had to stop and take cover. This was 400 yards behind the trenches. In evening visited the G. O. C. Lahore Division at Les Lobes and Field Ambulance at Les Lobes.

21st. Visited Richebourg St. Vast and Jullunder Brigade Head Quarters and took these mails (they have no P. O. with them). Things were pretty wet and the place was under shell fire. When I got there a gunner who was walking beside me had his hat blown off by a bit of shrapnel. Visited Sirhind Brigade at La Conteur, then G. O. C. Lahore at Les Lobes and returned Head Quarters Lillers. In evening visited 18th Brigade R. F. A. 59, 94 Batteries and 18th Brigade Amn. Column.

22nd. Attended at Railhead, then took up mails and papers for Jullunder Brigade at Richebourg (the sentry had his rifle blown to bits by shrapnel while I was there). Then went to see G. O. C. Lahore at Les Lobes and afterwards took mails and papers for Sirhind Brigade at Vendin (they left La Conteur at 12 noon) visited Railhead at Lillers and went to bed at 2 a.m.

23rd. Sirhind Brigade again moved and I took their mails to Anchel in the evening. I also visited Lahore Head Quarters at Les Lobes and Post Office at Lozinghem. Gave leave to three postal officials, also warrants for journeys. Returned to Railhead and Corps Head Quarters. Jullunder Brigade also moved their Head Quarters and came out of the trenches. I took their mails up.

*For the 2nd week of March 1915.*

Great moves are in the air. Hence I had to visit Railhead Lillers twice and instruct Spear, my Inspector, and also arrange for a second lorry. The Sirhind Brigade Units moved but not their Post Office or Brigade Staff. So I fixed their mails to go to Ferozepore Post Office which was nearer. In the evening I fixed up a special arrangement for the Corps Commdr.'s mails, as he moves to-morrow.

9th. Lahore Head Quarters General Staff moved to Lestrem leaving the Post Office and administrative staff at Callonne. I took the former's mail up. The Corps Commander (General Willcocks) and certain staff officers moved to Croix Mameuse. I took their mails up also, as their Post Office remained at St. Venant. Ferozepore Brigade moved from Ham to St. Floris and Callonne arranged for their mails. Jullunder Brigade moved in the night to La Conteur and left their Post Office at La Fosse, mails arrange accordingly. Corps Commander asked as a favour that I should arrange to send his mails up daily whilst he was away from Head Quarters. This means I have to take them. Fearfully busy all day.

10th. Took up mails for the Corps Commander and those who went to the Advance Report Centre 10 miles off. Then went to Jullunder Post Office at La Fosse escorting the mail lorry with me, the Post Office was not there and no one knew where it had gone to. In the night I went and saw the G. O. C. Lahore at Lestrem and he said that Jullunder Brigade was either in Vielle Chapelle or La Conteur. I went to each place and found the Brigade at the latter.

I took 18 bags of mails with me in my car, as no lorries were allowed east of the Main Road Lacon-Estaires and to my disgust when I got there I found the Brigade had sent its Post Office back to Quentin 8 miles off. I dished out letter mails and took the rest back to Quentin and also took the despatch. I then found my second lorry at Callonne with all the Sirhind Brigade mails (this was 2 p.m.): it could not find the Brigade as it left Rocheq in the night, so I took this mail myself and after much wandering round the country located it on the march. I picked up the packer and took him on to La Conteur and dumped him by the Church with his mails to await arrival of the Post Office. Lahore Head Quarters moved from Lestrem to La Conteur and Jullunder Brigade from latter place to Richebourg St. Vast. I had no time for lunch

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to-day and only got back to Corps main Head Quarters at 9 p.m. Road blocked on the way twice—once by German prisoners, once by wounded.

11th. Mails were again late so I went to Railhead to fetch them for Corps Head Quarters. Then sorted same and took the Corps Commdr.'s mails up to Croix Mameuse. Escorted one lorry to St. Floris and Callonne as it was not allowed to pass without. Then met my second lorry at Lacon as previously arranged and took up mails in my car for Sirhind Brigade at La Conteur (lorries not being allowed to go there at all). A shell dropped in the Post Office verandah 20 minutes before I got there, poor Fido and his clerks being greatly perturbed. Fortunately no casualties amongst the staff. Only the sentry was wounded who was just outside the office at the time. I broke a back spring and sent my car to Railhead for repairs, borrowing another from the G. O. C. Lahore who is billeted at La Conteur. I then went to Lestrem to meet one of my lorries to escort same to the Jullunder refilling point and returned to Railhead where I picked up my own car which had had a new spring fixed and got back to St. Venant 8 p.m. No lunch to-day.

12th. Mails were late so I went to Railhead and waited until 12 o'clock for them. Gave directions to Spear (all Post Offices moved in the night except two) and then took up Army Corps Head Quarters mails sorted it at Corps 2nd Echelon and took up those for 1st Echelon at Mameuse. I lost the Ferozepore Post Office and no one could tell me where it had gone. I wired to the Brigade about it but received no reply. They were too busy on account of the attack going on, so I had to return their mails to Railhead. Visited Sirhind Post Office, Jullunder and Lahore Head Quarters. The house opposite Sirhind Post Office was struck by a shell and collapsed in the morning and the Brigade had left for Neuve Chapelle leaving the Post Office high and dry to look after itself. The Sub-Postmaster wanted me to get a billet further away owing to continuous shell fire, but this was impossible as every available house was occupied. Returned to St. Venant.

13th. Sent car down to Railhead and brought up Head Quarters mails. Sorted same and took up 1st Echelon's to Mameuse. Then met Spear at Rendezvous and served out mails for Brigades at Refilling Points, the Ferozepore Post Office had not sent a clerk or cart for mails as per my wire. I sorted and delivered 25 bags (two days collection) myself and took the balance 7 bags in my car to their Post Office which I found on the roadside waiting for a billet in Vieille Chapelle.

*N.B.*—No lorries are allowed east of Lacon-Estaires Main Road. Returned to St. Venant and issued orders for to-morrow. This meant issuing 6 wires and I had to wait at Corps Office until 10-45 p.m. for information as to moves. Ferozepore Post Office moved again to Richebourg St. Vast.

14th. Took up Corps Commdr's mails, then went to Richebourg St. Vast. I had to leave my car at La Conteur and walk, as the place was being shelled. Met the Sirhind Post Office on my way. It was retiring from Richebourg St. Vast where they had been continually shelled all night. Two mules got blown to bits about 30 yards from me so I quickened my pace and reached Ferozepore Brigade Head Quarters and Post Office. The latter was ordered (much to McLeavy's and staff's annoyance) to retire as quick as possible to La Conteur area, which they did. The Brigade staff also had to clear out to a redoubt the other side of the town. The Church was hit several times while I was there and set on fire and scarcely a single house remains unhit. There were a good many casualties in the day and I was unable to get back on the road I came by, so had to make a detour to get my car. Later I visited Lahore Head Quarters. Their Post Office moved to Vieille Chapelle to-day and was stuck in a broken-down house beside a 6-inch gun which kept on loosing off and every time it did so, the whole place shook. Needless to say no windows near by remain intact.

15th. Visited all refilling points and took up the Corps Commander's mails to Mameuse. Took up mails for the whole of the 18th Brigade R. F. A. to Mameuse. Took up mails for the whole of the 18th Brigade R. F. A. who were in action and too far from their Post Office to get same (their carts missed Refilling Point). Visited G.H.Q.A.D. P. to try and trace a parcel for the G. O. C. Lahore. Found same, and delivered it next day. General Scott from Corps Head Quarters took over Command Lahore Division as General Keary has fallen sick. It's only likely to last a few days, so at the former's request I have arranged to send him mails by special cycle orderly.

*For the 4th week of April 1915.*

24th. Visited Lahore Head Quarters at Estaires. They are under orders to be prepared to move by train (destination unknown) in half an hour. I then saw that all Brigades got their mails at Colonne, Zelobes and Paradis and again went to Lahore Head Quarters. Orders came for the whole division to march at 1 o'clock to Belgium. In the afternoon at 5 o'clock I went up myself and located post offices and found out the best roads to take my lorries, all the roads were terribly congested and I only got back to Lestrem (Corps Head Quarters) at 1 a.m. when I had to issue instructions by wire to Spear at Railhead, also several wires had to be sent regarding alteration of Units and to Brigades regarding mail arrangements for the 25th. I got no dinner to-day and travelled over a hundred miles visiting Onderdon, Poperinghe, Vlamertinghe and numerous other towns in Belgium.

25th. I met my lorries at Gedewaerscelde as previously arranged at 11 o'clock and found Indian Corps Head Quarters mails were aboard contrary to instructions. So I sent them back to Lestrem (30 miles) in my car and went on one of the lorries to try and find the Divisional and



Brigade Post Offices which had moved in the night without my knowledge. After 5 hours wandering round Belgium I managed to find Lahore Head Quarters on the road halting at Onderdon and not knowing where they were going to. The staff were fearfully keen on getting their mails so I opened them out, distributed some and collected the despatch. I then found Brigades on the road between Onderdon and Vlamertinghe, but Jullunder post office had been left behind at Boeschepe with the baggage. Ferozepore Brigade post office was lost, no one knowing where it was, and I found the clerk of Sirhind post office wandering about by the side of a road asking every body where his Post Office was. He had been lost with all the rations for Brigade Head Quarters for 36 hours. I found his office and dumped him and the Sirhind Brigade mail down with the Sub-Postmaster and then at the G. O. C. Ferozepore's request served out 15 bags of mails for his Brigade myself on the side of the road, getting the Brigade Major to sign for parcels for Units which had not come up. I collected all their despatch and then went to find the Jullunder post office at Boeschepe. It was located in an open field under one of the waggons. I gave them their mails and returned to Lestrem Corps Head Quarters arriving at 11 p.m. having had no lunch, tea or dinner. As I was tired, I went to bed after refreshing with some ration bread and cheese and a bottle of stout.

26th. Left early in the morning for Belgium. Ferozepore post office found his way to the Brigade early this morning. Visited refilling points and saw to distribution of mails. All five post offices moved, No. 10 being the most unfortunate as it's located in an open field but fortunately it is fine weather and I was able to get accommodation in a hut for the staff. When I finished my work up here I left straight for Lillers about 35 miles off to meet the Director arriving there at 6-30. I left again for Lestrem with mails for Indian Corps, Lahore and Meerut Divisional Head Quarters, sending Cook back in my car. I had no lunch or tea to-day, but it was my own fault because I forgot to take my bully beef with me. For this special Motor Service from Boulogne to Railhead I have after much fighting arranged for a Corps Head Quarters lorry to go to Railhead daily for Head Quarters Lahore and Meerut mails.

27th. Took Cook upto Belgium to show him the ground in case his Division goes there. Visited all my Post Offices and refilling points at Onderdon, Vlamertinghe and Poperinghe. A house, 2 doors off Lahore Head Quarter's post office at Poperinghe, was hit by a big shell causing a certain amount of alarm and owing to the place having been shelled with 17-inch guns in the afternoon the place has practically been deserted. We had a conference regarding the Head Quarter's lorry going to Railhead daily for mails, the Camp Commandant and D. A. A. and Q. M. G. being dead against it and we argued the point for about half an hour, but I got what I wanted. Mails arrived at 8 p.m. and I sorted

them myself and delivered some with the help of my camp clerk and orderly as I did not want the Postmaster who is single handed to be kept on duty after 5 p.m.

28th. Went to Aire to see the Director, afterwards went to Meerut Division to see Cook and discuss certain mail arrangements. At 8-15 p.m. I saw to the delivery of Head Quarters mails, sorting some myself.

29th. Met the Director at Poperinghe in Belgium and took him round my Post Offices, Lahore Head Quarters and British Post Offices at Poperinghe and the Brigade offices on the road between Vlamertinghe and Onderdon. We afterwards went to Cassel and got lunch at 4 p.m. I returned to Indian Corps Head Quarter, Lestrem at 7 p.m. The last few days I have done over a hundred miles a day and am getting rather bored with motoring.

30th. Visited refilling points in Belgium. Ferozepore and Jullunder refilled early. They had all moved off by the time the mails got up and as usual made no arrangements to get them, so I made my lorry stand by and went off to Lahore Head Quarters at Poperinghe to find out where they had gone to. Lahore was under orders to move at 1 o'clock but this was subsequently cancelled while I was there. I was directed to G. 24-B for Jullunder and G. 29-C for Ferozepore. So I picked up my lorry and went there and got rid of the mails. (I had to be postmaster myself for the former, as the Post Office had gone to a different place). Both Brigades were in open fields where they had to stand by until 6 p.m. pending further orders. As every one was going to move in the night I ordered my Inspector to meet me at Flotre in the morning.

*For the 3rd week of May 1915.*

16th. Visited Canadian Divisional Head Quarters and met the A. D. P. S. as promised yesterday and gave him certain assistance. The whole Division is standing by ready to move at once. Their Railhead changed to-day with the result that they have received no mails up to 12-30 p.m. I wired about them to the R. T. O. concerned. Visited Railhead post office No. 37 at Lillers and gave certain instructions, then returned to Corps Head Quarters Lestrem. In the afternoon I visited Lahore Divisional Head Quarters 1st and 2nd Echelon (to find out where the Sirhind Brigade had gone) at Pont du Hem and Estaires and their post office at the latter place. At Pont du Hem we had about 11 shells over us but luckily they did no damage, falling in a field about 100 yards off. I found out that the Sirhind Brigade had been attached to the 2nd British Division and were in the neighbourhood of La Conteur, so I returned to Corps Head Quarters Lestrem and found one of the clerks of the Brigade Post Office looking for me; he said that the Postal Staff ran away because

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La Conteur was being heavily shelled and that they had left all the P. O. kit, etc., there. At No. 8 Post office I saw the other clerk of No. 36 (Sirhind Brigade). So I ordered them back to their post office at once and set off on horse-back to La Conteur to put things in order. I found the sub-postmaster and his packers; they had no billet but this was being arranged for by the billeting officer. It appears that the sub-postmaster went on with a Field Ambulance and left the Post Office kit and packer to look after themselves. It should be remembered that it was in this place some time ago that the same Post Office got a shell in the verandah.

17th. Visited Lahore Head Quarters and Post Offices, then went to Sirhind Head Quarters Post Office at La Conteur. I was fortunate to be able to return from the journey because a German heavy shell just missed my car by 15 yards, bits of shell went by in all directions but never touched us. In the afternoon I visited Jullunder Head Quarters and Ferozepore Post Office.

18th. Visited all refilling points and Lahore Head Quarters, purchased new flags for both Divisions and returned to Corps Head Quarters to await arrival of the Director. Discussed certain cases and took the Director to see No. 36 Field Post Office at La Conteur, then went to Aire and met Cook returned to Corps Head Quarters Lestrem in the evening.

19th. Visited refilling points and Sirhind Brigade Head Quarters and Post Office, they are still at La Conteur. Rode round later to see Thompson at La Fosse.

20th. Visited Lahore Divisional, Sirhind Brigade Head Quarters and Post Offices at Estaires, Pont de Hem and La Conteur—Took Thompson with me at 9-30 p.m. The special mail car had not arrived from Boulogne, so I started off to try and trace it. I got as far as Aire and saw 3 bags for A squad K.D.G's who are served through Corps Head Quarters lying outside the station Post Office. So I called one of the clerks up and asked him about the rest of the mails for Indian Corps. He knew nothing but said he had received his. I took the bags for the K.D. Gs. and went to look up Cook, but his place was all shut up, so I returned to Indian Corps Head Quarters Lestrem arriving there about midnight and found mails had been delivered at 11 p.m., Cook sending them in his car as the regular box car broke down again at Aire.

21st. Visited Lahore Division Jullunder and Sirhind Brigade Head Quarters and Post Offices at Estaires, Pont du Hem and La Conteur, also the 18th Brigade E. F. A. and certain Batteries in action west of Neuve Chapelle where I had a complaint of non-receipt of letters, etc. The

place was being shelled at regular intervals. Returned to Head Quarters Lestrem after being shown round one of our 15-inch guns.

22nd. Went to Boulogne to meet the Director as per instruction and discussed certain cases. On the way I met our mail van out of action about 15 miles this side of Boulogne, so I took as many mail bags as possible on in my car and reached there just in time to catch the boat. The Director and I went later on and towed the mail car back to the Base. Returned to Lestrem after purchasing fish and vegetables for the Corps Head Quarters messes.

23rd. Visited all refilling points and A. D. P. Meerut, also Lahore Division, Jullunder, Ferozepore and Sirhind Brigade Head Quarters and Post Offices at Fosse, Estaires, Pont du Hem and Epinette.

*For the 3rd week of July 1915.*

16th. A. D. Meerut returned from leave. Took him round his offices which had all moved during his absence and gave him revised sorting lists for his Division. Visited Lahore Division Head Quarters and Post Office at Lestrem.

17th. Visited the Base at Boulogne and discussed several cases with the Director. Returned to Corps Head Quarters in the evening. My car broke down and I had to walk back from Boulogne. I was fortunate in getting another from a friend in the motor Ambulance line and eventually rolled up at Lestrem at 3-30 a.m.

18th. Arrived at Corps Head Quarters Lestrem 3-30 a.m. cleared off office work most of the morning and fixed up passes for the Director-General Sir William Maxwell who is expected on 22nd. The Director arrived about 12-40 for a couple of hours. I then went to Railhead office Merville to meet A. D. Meerut. We gave the staff a good telling off for careless working. I also gave them a separate sorting list for the Inter Corps service, showing Divisions and Corps in 1st Army. Returned to Corps Head Quarters not over fit.

19th. Arranged for a pass for the Director-General to visit the front. The Corps Commander telephoned to G. H. Q. for permission; visited Jullunder and Sirhind Brigade Head Quarters and Post Offices at Pont du Hem and La Corgue (they both moved to-day).

20th. Visited Railhead Merville and fixed up billets for offices, &c., as we move there on 23rd.

Visited Lahore Division Head Quarters and Post Office at Estaires also 15th Sikhs and 1st Manchesters.

21st. Arrange for mails for the Corps Commander to go to Marseilles for two days. Visited A. D. Meerut and cavalry at Barnes and Aire, also Lahore Division Head Quarters, Sirhind, Jullunder



Brigades, Head Quarters and post offices. Fixed up a billet for the Director-General in the Château for to-morrow and for the Director close by.

22nd. Met the Director-General and Director at Railhead Merville and took them to Lahore Head Quarters and post office at Estaires, then to Jullunder post office at Pont du Hem. I arranged with the G. O. C. Lahore for permission to take the Director-General to a Battery in action and we picked up the Brigade Major R. A. at Riez Bailleul who had been telephoned to accompany us and proceeded to the 84th Battery: afterwards we returned to our mess for lunch at Corps Head Quarters. In the afternoon we visited Ferozepore Brigade. Post Office near Levantier and got shelled on the way. Then to Sirhind Brigade Head Quarters where we had tea with the G. O. C., visited the Post Office and left for Head Quarters 1st Corps at Choques to see General Cobb, our late D. A. & Q. M. G. Returned *via* Bethune and just missed being shelled again there.

In the evening visited Corps Head Quarters Post Office at Lestrem.

23rd. Indian Corps moved to Merville, made arrangements for the Post Office to open out before arrival of the Head Quarters Staff. Railhead F. P. O. had to be moved to another part of the town as Meerut Division comes into Merville shortly, their present billet being in their billeting area. The Director-General and Director left at 10 o'clock for Aire. I followed later and went with them to Boulogne; A. D.'s Cavalry and Meerut also came along.

Wrote out a diary for the Director-General giving an account of yesterday's trip and traced out same on a map.

NOTE.—After writing this diary Lt. Bullard was killed by a shell.—ED.

## DIARY OF LT. E. B. THOMPSON, ASSTT. DIRECTOR OF POST OFFICE, I. E. F. A.

*For the 1st Week of August 1915.*

1st. Visited Field Post Offices 13 and 12, 14, 37, T. I. 2. In the afternoon went to Indian Corps Head Quarters where I heard of the sad death of Lt. Bullard who was killed by a shell. Lt. Bullard's body was brought into Indian Corps Head Quarters. Sent a wire to the Director informing him of the hour of the funeral.

2nd. Attended the funeral of Lt. Bullard at 10 a.m.; met the Director, Postal Services, who directed me to take charge of all the F. P. Os. in the Indian Corps; visited Field post offices T. I. 1, T. I. 2, 9, 8, and 13.

EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY OF LT. J. H. KING, ASSISTANT  
DIRECTOR OF POST OFFICES, INDIAN CAVALRY DIVISION.

*For the Month of June 1916.*

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NOTES.—(1) Lala Jainti Parshad, Field Postmaster, F. P. O. No. 42, has been mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig's recent Despatch. It is a source of great pleasure and satisfaction that my recommendation of this competent official to General Rimington, late Cavalry Corps Commander, has been accepted (see my note in my diary for the 3rd week of March 1916). The distinction awarded to Lala Jainti Parshad is well merited and in view of the honour conferred on him I propose to recommend in a separate communication that he should be awarded immediate special promotion in recognition of this honour, as distinct from any likely promotion granted to Post Office officials who have rendered good service in the Field.

2. I have pleasure also to report a visit made by the Postmaster-General of the United Kingdom with Col. Price, the Director, Army Postal Services, to two of my Field Post Offices. The Postmaster-General was very favourably impressed with the two Field Post Offices he visited. He specially visited Lala Jainti Parshad's office for the express purpose of congratulating him on being mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch.

EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY OF LT. J. H. KING, ASSISTANT  
DIRECTOR OF POST OFFICES, INDIAN CAVALRY DIVISION.

*For the Month of September 1916.*

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14th September 1916. Arranged to move my office and personal to the Front by Motor Lorry. Railhead of the 1st and 2nd Indian Cavalry Divisions changed to-day. The Railhead of the 2nd Indian Cavalry Division moved to Albert. The town was being subjected to a heavy bombardment at the time by the Boches. Entire Railhead post office staff (Field Post Office No. 3) were under continuous shell fire for more than 8 hours, but nevertheless they exhibited very rare courage and were in excellent spirits in spite of the dangers they were exposed to. I must give credit to the Postmaster, Mr. Naidu, for displaying great tact in rallying his staff in this difficult situation, or the entire Post Office work would have collapsed. It was the staff's first experience of being under direct shell fire. This was in consequence disconcerting. Some



casualties were sustained by other ranks, but I am glad to say that none of the Post Office staff were injured. They were, however, obliged to sleep at night underground in cellars, as the shelling continued all through the night.

15th September 1916. Moved my office and Head Quarters to Albert. The Railhead of the 1st Indian Cavalry Division (Field Post Office No. 42) also moved to Albert. Arranged billets for them in the ruins of the town and also a billet for myself and my office. The town is still being heavily shelled. The staffs of the two Railhead offices are conducting themselves splendidly. I mention this incident in my Diary merely to convey some small idea of conditions and dangers under which the Field Post Offices in France have to perform their daily duties. These conditions, I am confident, do not exist in any other sphere of operations where there are Field Post Offices.

LETTER FROM LT. R. BARTON WRIGHT TO  
C. M. HARRISON, ESQ., I.C.S., P.M.G., PUNJAB.

*France, 25th February 1915.*

DEAR MR. HARRISON.

I was not able to write last week as I was travelling again. I went as far as Rouen and stayed a week there fitting in some furniture for the Post Office. It now looks anything but a Field Post Office as it has a nice counter, a parcel case and an English sorting case. Everyone who called wanted to know if we served drinks as well. Just after all this was finished, the mail suddenly stopped. This was disastrous, and we were most fearfully ragged. I tore round and found that it was all due to an intelligent D. A. D. R. T. who had mixed up the trains a bit. Coming back I travelled with a R. A. M. C. Captain and a Canadian padre. The doctor had been right through the war from the beginning and gave us some very interesting accounts of the battle of the Aisne where he saw quite a lot of the fighting. His dressing station was at the junction of four roads and the Germans shelled this point to try and make it impassable. It got so fierce that the wounded who had come to be dressed said they would rather be back in the trenches. How he managed to escape he does not know as the shells were falling all round and several took corners off the roof of the barn in which he was working. In another place a shell burst in a room where he had been living not ten minutes after he had left and made a tangle of twisted iron of his bed and as for his kit which had not been moved there was nothing left.

The padre was very quaint. "I guess I will be glad to get back to Toronto, when all this fuss is over" he told me and I thought what a splendid word it was for this show. It is nothing but that and what we are all fighting about nobody seems able to say.

The Russians have been having a bad time lately and we are watching the East very anxiously, as it will prolong things indefinitely if they get badly beaten. I do not know when we expect to advance but it cannot be far off now as weather is improving every day and I think we are very well prepared now. There is a Zeppelin scare on here after the Calais visit and searchlights play all over the sky at night. It is very pretty to watch especially on isolated patches of cloud. I do not think that they are likely to visit us as there is nothing of great importance to them. We had very cherry news yesterday to say that one of the German submarines had been sunk and that two were reported as long overdue at Cuxhaven. I hope we get a few more of the brutes. Our mail boat was nearly torpedoed day before yesterday not seven miles from here. It was the same boat that Rodricks, our Base Postmaster, had crossed on in January when he went on leave. This was therefore a shock to him but nothing to what the captain got when he saw the torpedo flash by, not twenty-five yards ahead, I believe it upset him for the rest of the day.

I do not know when I am going to have my leave. Everyone has been and I am the last. I have put in for it and hope to go definitely this week. The weather promises to be good although it was snowing yesterday after which we got a heavy shower of rain which made the streets perfectly filthy, but to-day it is just perfect.

With kind regards.

(Sd.) R. B. WRIGHT.

FRANCE, 13th January 1915.

MY DEAR MR. HARRISON,

I have to apologise for not having kept up my diary for several mails but I have been travelling all over France making postal arrangements for many people and in the stress of receiving and despatching bags I have had no time for correspondence. Since leaving the base I have had a very interesting time, I met the Second Cavalry Division on their way up and stayed with them for nearly a fortnight, although it was not a large town we managed to amuse ourselves quite well and on Christmas day we had a very jolly dinner sitting down forty-three to table.



After they left I visited an office at a depôt, passing through Paris on my way. I managed to get in a few hours there and had a delightful time. Among other things I got a topping Turkish bath which was very welcome—not to say needed. I visited the Eiffel Tower and did a cinema so I did not altogether lose time. On my back from the office to the town where I am now, I again passed through Paris arriving there at night and I had the whole of the next day as my train did not go till the evening. I stayed at the Ritz. This may appear to be extravagance, but the truth is, they gave you a room free for three days and only charged half price for the food. At this even the prices were high enough but it was good value and one felt better for a stay there. My room was glorious one and the furnishing and fittings were perfect. The food was a dream and the whole place a marvel of modern comfort. With the Second Division I had one bit of excitement, when one day we went out to draw warm clothing and we lost our way, our driver tried to turn on a narrow country road and before we could stop him backed into the field where the car immediately sank nearly up to its axles in the soft earth. It was a very lonely spot and we thought we should be stuck for the night and have to walk home, when an old lady came along in a high cart with a great, fat horse and hauled us out in great style. She smiled very amiably as she drove off, but I do not think she had a very high opinion of us as useful people. We got home very late in the evening but we managed to visit the ordnance depôt first, although we had to pick up a particularly evil smelling peasant as guide. He sat down in the car between us and it was all I could do to keep from producing a handkerchief. The other man in the car was a very haughty and polished A. D. C. and his expression, when the peasant calmly got into the car when we had suggested his standing on the footboard, was very funny. He had to stick it out as there was nothing else to do.

\* In Paris I managed to lose my servant. This was an awful catastrophe and cost me numerous francs in taxis before I found him. I had left him at the Baths, as the crowds on the road were becoming a nuisance, the way they crowded round every time I stopped as they had never seen any of the Indians before. I took the name of the places very carefully but unfortunately I lost it and having changed taxis, I was done, however, I had a good idea of the direction and after a few false casts I hit off the line, as Tallyho describes it, and ran the youth to earth. This gave me very little time for my train and it was a scramble, as it happened to be the only express for the place I was going to and was crowded out. I managed to get standing room in the corridor but we were packed like sardines. The French seem rather to like the carriage being as full as possible and they then shut all the windows and any nook by which air might get in and sit back smothered in rugs and appear to have realised the height of comfort. If you dare to so much as to lower the window by an inch, they all wake up and glare at you

and one old wretch once called the guard. To judge by his expression I had done something quite as bad as trying to cut their throats. On the whole I get on very well and, as I can talk fairly fluently now, I have long talks with the different people I meet travelling. The Frenchman is always ready to talk and at a rate that is astonishing. They have some peculiar habits, but as a people I think they are very jolly and the families I have lived with have always been more than kind and would do anything they possibly could to help.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) R. B. WRIGHT.



## CHAPTER IV.

FRANCE, 1914—1915.

Lt.-Col. E. B. Thompson, M.B.E., formerly A. D. P. S.,  
Cavalry Division.

*Unofficial.*

IN India the first week of August 1914 was full of vague and alarming rumours and it was not until the 8th day of the month that any definite military orders arrived with regard to the mobilization of Indian troops. I was in Ajmere at the time as Superintendent, Post Offices, Lower Rajputana Division, and I remember the vague and wonderful rumours which floated round in the Club. Everyone wanted to know what troops had been mobilised and when and where their ultimate destination was to be. Everything was said in whispers and the greatest secrecy prevailed. No one at this time, I think, really realised that "Der Tag" had at last arrived, and it was not till about the middle of the month that it became really clear to everyone that desperate fighting was going on in France and that matters were serious. Then the greatest excitement and enthusiasm arose everywhere and everyone wished that he could do something. By degrees familiar faces, quietly disappeared from our midst and no one seemed to know when and where they had gone, and I remember wishing that my career in life had been that of a soldier instead of a miserable Superintendent, Post Office, so that I could be among the chosen to be quietly called away. At this time the idea of going on service with the Field Post Offices never once entered my head. Why, I really do not know, as, although I was not a Volunteer for Field Service, I knew of the existence of this branch of the Indian Post Office. Great then was my surprise when on the 15th August I got an urgent confidential wire from the Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs, Simla, asking me whether I would volunteer for Field Service and if so to proceed at once to Bombay and report to the Postmaster-General there. This wire was received late at night and needless to say I did not take long to make up my mind. The next day I spent in handing over charge and packing up my belongings and on the morning of the 17th I quietly and unostentatiously slipped away from Ajmere for Bombay. Little did I think there that it would be more than 5 years before I would return to my duties as Superintendent, Post Offices.

On arrival in Bombay I found the greatest excitement everywhere. The hotels and streets were full of khaki clad figures and one saw camps on the maidan and in all sorts of unexpected places. On my reporting

myself to the Postmaster-General, Bombay, I found that Messrs. J. E. Cook from the Nerbudda Division, E. G. Bullard from the Upper Rajputana Division and C. Probyn Smith, P. A. to the Postmaster-General, Bombay, had also received their orders and had quietly and unknown to everyone joined in Bombay. Lts. Bullard and Cook were I believe the first to join in Bombay and on my arrival there Lt. Bullard had already left for Karachi in order to join the Lahore Division Field Post Offices which were embarking from that Port. He was the first Assistant Director, Postal Services, to sail from India, as the Lahore Division embarked at Karachi on the 24th August and Lt. Bullard accompanied them. My own orders were that I was to proceed with Expeditionary Force "C" to Africa and that I was to be ready to proceed at a moment's notice. I besieged the embarkation office daily but could get no definite orders regarding when I was to sail and so I had to drag on from day to day in Bombay never knowing when I would have to leave. In many ways it was fortunate that my orders for sailing were delayed as I was by no means ready, I had no uniform or equipment and the shops in Bombay were all overworked with orders. Also the staff which was to accompany me to man the Field Post Offices were not ready. The men were arriving in twos and threes from various parts of India many of them without full equipment. In addition to this there were many other details to be seen to all of which took an extraordinary amount of time to settle. It was difficult to get anything through quickly as everyone appeared to be working more or less in the dark. However by degrees men and materials were got together and I and Lts. Probyn Smith and Cook were all ready to start. But still we could get no definite sailing orders. Whenever we attended the Embarkation we always heard a fresh date for sailing and after a while we began to think that we would never sail. Sometime during the last week of August or first week of September, Lt.-Col. H. S. H. Pilkington arrived in Bombay and after seeing what arrangements we had made and giving us certain orders he sailed for an unknown destination taking with him staff and equipment for a Base Post Office for "A" Force. As already mentioned I was detailed for "C" Force, but these orders were subsequently cancelled and I was told I was to accompany "A" Force and Lt. Probyn Smith who was also under orders to accompany "A" Force was at the last minute ordered to go with the "C" Force, and Lt. Barton Wright, a Madras Superintendent of Post Offices, was ordered to accompany "A" Force in his place. Shortly after these revised orders were received, we got our sailing orders from the Embarkation Office and there was naturally a great deal of bustling about getting our men and equipment ready. At last the day of embarkation arrived and I with Lt. Barton Wright found ourselves on board the "City of Exeter" with about 30 men and equipment for six Field Post Offices. We embarked in pouring rain and we and our kit got soaking wet while waiting on the quay. However we were glad to be on board at last, but much to our disappointment



we found when the boat left the quay that it was not leaving Bombay but only going to take up its place in the convoy waiting in the harbour. Lt. Probyn Smith also embarked the same day on another boat. Lt. Cook had already embarked a few days previously with Lt. H. King who was going as an Inspector, Field Post Offices, and they had already left for Karachi.

After three days' wait in the harbour we all moved off. I cannot now remember how many boats there were in the convoy but there must have been close on 30. It was a most impressive scene seeing all the boats falling into line one after the other and filing out of Bombay. The smaller and slower boats went first so that they would not be left behind, and the big boats brought up the rear with gun boats fore and aft to guard the whole convoy. When we were about half way across the Bay the transports of the "C" Force detached themselves from the convoy and sailed South. About the same time another convoy hove in sight from the North and attached themselves to us. These were transports from Karachi which were carrying troops of the Meerut Division and incidentally Lts. Cook and King and the Field Post Offices attached to the Meerut Division. Even at this stage of the journey we knew nothing about our destination and it was not till we reached Port Said and had left that place that we at last realised that we were destined for France. At Port Said we took on board a large number of bags of mails, and as we were held up in Port Said (or rather just outside Port Said) for 3 days, we utilised the time in delivering the mails to the units on the various boats of the convoy. We were lent a pinnace for this purpose and this pinnace went from boat to boat and, after ascertaining who were on board, delivered the bags. The troops naturally were delighted to get their mails, as they never expected to get any mails en route to their destination. After leaving Port Said the transports did not keep in such close formation as there was no danger in the Mediterranean from enemy ships, and by degrees the faster boats outstripped the slower boats the result being that the transports arrived in Marseilles one after the other instead of in a large convoy. The "City of Exeter" arrived in Marseilles on the 9th October and on the same day the boat conveying Lts. Cook and King also arrived in port.

On the whole the voyage was uneventful and I am sure everyone was glad to get on to "terra firma" again, particularly the Indian elements on board, as boardship life was a new experience to all of these and the majority of them suffered from "mal de mer." Most of them I am sure had never heard of sea-sickness before and could not understand what had come over them when they first felt the qualms of sickness creeping on them. I am not a good sailor myself and so could feel for them and they certainly looked very miserable huddled up in their hold whenever the weather was rough. However, they all behaved splendidly and with the exception of only one or two all struggled up to the main deck for the daily round of inspection.

It was a very wet day the day we arrived and great difficulty was experienced in obtaining definite orders as to where I and my little band of postal officials had to go. First I received orders, to go to a camp just outside Marseilles but these orders were subsequently cancelled and I was ordered to take my men to a camp about seven miles outside Marseilles. I myself went on ahead to make arrangements and left the men to come on with an Inspector and a French guide. It was pretty late when they started but it was nearly midnight when they arrived at their destination. The delay was chiefly due to the fact that progress along the roads was very slow. Everywhere our warm hearted Allies men, women and children vied with each other in showing honour and kindness to the men who had traversed so many weary miles by land and sea to play their part in the World War.

On arrival at the camp ground the men were so dead tired after their march which was very trying to men who had been cooped on boardship for nearly three weeks, that all they wanted to do was to lie down anywhere. This, however, I would not allow and insisted on tents being pitched, which was fortunate, as during the night it poured rain in torrents and in the morning the camping ground was a quagmire. Next morning we all got to work and opened a Field Post Office to serve the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade which was encamped in the same camping ground. Not much postal work was done during the next few days as I am afraid no one had much time to write letters and moreover everyone was fully occupied with other more weighty matters. The mails were despatched to and received from Marseilles by trams, as no other means of transport was available. One clerk and one or more packers used to accompany the mails daily and the men chosen for this work thoroughly enjoyed the day's outing as life in camp was very slow and dull and of course everyone wanted to see something of the great port of Marseilles.

A few days after our arrival in Marseilles Lt.-Col. Pilkington came down from the north and the day following Lt. Barton Wright with some of the staff brought out by us departed for Rouen. Troops were now arriving in Marseilles daily, mostly units of the 1st Cavalry Division and I had to open Field Post Offices in three or more camps in and around Marseilles. The greatest difficulty was experienced in serving these Post Offices as they were very scattered and transport was very scarce. Trams, Motor-cars, G. S. wagons and A. T. carts were all utilised, in fact any kind of conveyance available to and from Marseilles and the camps was used. It was almost impossible to make any permanent arrangement for conveyance of mails as conditions were changing from day to day. However, everything worked more or less smoothly and the greatest credit is due to the Inspector and Field Postmaster and their staff all of whom were new to their surroundings and, although most of them had been on Field Service before, the conditions that prevailed were entirely



different to any that they had experienced before. Considering the fact that not one of the Post Office staff knew a word of French it was wonderful the way in which the clerks and even packers found their way to and from Marseilles and the various camps. There was at Marseilles at this time a small Base Post Office and all mails were collected and despatched from this office. It was also a Returned Letter Office and one of its chief duties was to try and deliver mails to units and officers whose whereabouts were not known. When I first arrived in Marseilles this office was in its infancy but after a very short while it grew to be quite a large and important office.

About the 10th of November the whole of the first Cavalry Division having arrived in Marseilles orders were received that the Division was to move to Orleans and I was ordered by Lt.-Col. Pilkington to accompany them with as many Field & Post Offices as I could take away without denuding Marseilles entirely of Postal staff. On arrival at Orleans I found Lt. E. Graham, Inspector, Field Post Offices, in charge of the Post Office arrangements. The conditions here were very much the same as in Marseilles.

The troops were encamped outside Orleans in camps and each camp had one or more Field Post Offices. The mails were received by the Base Post Office in Orleans and were sent out to and received from the various Field Post Offices by any conveyance available. We stopped in Orleans for one week. The cold was intense and very trying to those living in tents but I was glad to say everyone bore it manfully and there were no cases of sickness. During this week all those who had not received warm clothing in Marseilles were supplied with warm clothing and all unnecessary articles of clothing and equipment were left behind at the Base Post Office, as this was our last stage before proceeding into the War area. The majority of the men had brought umbrellas with them from India and I had the greatest difficulty in getting them to leave these articles at the Base. I explained to them that umbrellas were not considered a part of one's uniform and that it was not considered correct to carry or use a umbrella when on service. I am sure they considered that I was very hard hearted and unreasonable and in spite of all my arguments, orders and kit inspections I found subsequently that more than one umbrella was secretly stowed among the kit and accompanied the men to the Front. What happened to these umbrellas subsequently I cannot say. Possibly some of them have returned to India with their owners and are prized as War relics.

Orleans was a dull place and as I have already mentioned the weather was bitterly cold and we all were delighted to leave, especially as we knew that the next stop would be somewhere in the War Zone. We left Orleans late one night by a troop train and after two nights and a day in the train we arrived at our destination Lillers, a small French country town. At last we were in the War Zone but every one was very hazy as

to our exact position as compared to the trenches. A general excitement prevailed and everyone wondered what was going to happen next. However before nightfall we all found ourselves more or less comfortably billeted in the small villages in the vicinity of Lillers which was our railhead. Field Post Offices work now commenced in earnest. Division Head-quarters and each Brigade had its Post Office. At first a certain amount of confusion existed; mails came badly sorted and it was with great difficulty at times that the Field Post Offices were able to dispose of their mails. The greatest difficulty however was in getting mails from the railhead to the various Field Post Offices. We had very little transport at our disposal and had to beg, borrow or steal lorries to convey mails from the railhead to the various Field Post Offices. This state of affairs continued until the beginning of the new year (1915) when we were given our own transport, after which matters went more smoothly.

We stopped in Lillers for about three weeks and on Christmas Day, 1914, the Cavalry Division moved and settled down in villages about 12 miles from Lillers. About this time another Cavalry Division arrived from India and a Cavalry Corps was formed and I was appointed Assistant Director, Postal Services, Cavalry Corps, and moved my headquarters to Corps headquarters in Aire, a small country town. Here I remained for three months and lived in more or less luxury. I had a very good billet, a good motor-car for my official work and nine motor lorries for my mails. With all this transport at my disposal my work was greatly simplified. Mails used to arrive daily at Aire railway station (railhead) by the supply train. From railhead they would be conveyed by two sets of lorries each set in charge of an Inspector to the various Field Post Offices where they would be dropped and postings collected and the lorries would return to railhead in the evening. This was the daily routine with slight variations. On the whole things worked very smoothly, the only hitch arising when a Brigade would suddenly and without warning move to some fresh billets.

I should here like to mention the name of Lt. Graham, one of the Inspectors with the Cavalry Corps. A better Inspector I have not come across in all my five years' Field Service. He was always ready and willing to take up any additional work given to him, and met all his difficulties in a cheery manner. Unfortunately for the Indian Post Office he applied for a commission in the regular forces and after doing his training in England came out to France again a full blown officer, but was killed in action not long after.

In May, 1915, I left the Indian Cavalry Corps handing over charge as Assistant Director, Postal Services, to Lt. Cook whose place I took as Assistant Director, Postal Services, of the 7th Meerut Division. In many ways I was delighted to get away from the Cavalry Corps, as I had got very tired of the monotonous routine work I had had for the last four months. My first head-quarters with the 7th Division was at a



place called Fosse, a tiny little village some four or five miles behind the trenches. From now onwards my work was much more interesting as there was plenty of life and movement going on. Some of the Post Offices were within a mile of the trenches and it was always a dangerous business visiting these post offices, as they were often under shell fire. I also had Lt. Bullard who was in charge of the Indian Corps Head Quarters and 3rd Lahore Division close to me and we often met and visited field post offices together and I always found him to be of the greatest help and assistance to me.

In addition to going round daily visiting my field post offices I used to try and make a point of paying a visit at least once a month to the Base at Boulogne. I was never more than sixty miles from Boulogne and with a good car and good roads I used to do the journey in less than 2 hours. These little trips to Boulogne were always very pleasant. At Boulogne I was always the guest of Col. Pilkington, our Director, Postal Services, who was always exceedingly kind to me and after a day by the sea I used to return to my duties much invigorated. It was very interesting visiting the Base Post Office which I think I am right in saying was a model Base Post Office. Lt. Roderick was Base Postmaster and I used to get through quite a lot of useful work during my short trips to Boulogne. In July we were honoured by a visit from Sir William Maxwell, Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs, who was on his way to England on leave. He visited the Base Post Office at Boulogne and also spent a few days in the War area going round and visiting various Field Post Offices.

I spent practically the whole of the summer of 1915 in Fosse, and it was a very happy summer in many ways. I was billeted in the attic of a farm. It was a miserable room but the owners of the farm were very kind and did their best to make me comfortable. I should here like to mention that during the whole of my fourteen months in France although I and my post offices were billeted in numerous different villages and towns in the north of France I hadn't a single case of unkindness or incivility from the owners of the billet. On the contrary I always found the French people in these small villages most obliging and ready to help and make one as comfortable as possible. The Indian Postmasters and clerks got on particularly well with the people they were billeted with, which was surprising when one considers that they could not speak each others languages. I shall never forget a little scene I once saw. I had been hunting all one afternoon for a certain Field Post Office of mine and after great difficulty found the village in which it was located and after making enquiries was pointed out a tiny cottage back from the road in which I was informed that the Field Post Office was located. By this time it was late and dark and as I walked up to the cottage I saw into the cottage through the open door. No one heard me coming and so I stopped and looked in and there I saw the Field Postmaster sitting in

front of the fire with a very old wizened French country woman on one side and a young child on the other. It was a very happy little family party and I was really almost loath to disturb them. I can't now remember the name of the Field Postmaster, but I remember that he was a Sikh and a very fine type of man with three or more ribbons on his chest. He was an old man in those days and had seen much Field Service, but he often told me that this was the last Field Service he would go on. Although he stood it out bravely I could see that the cold and the general discomfort of life in France thousands of miles away from his home was telling on him.

Nearly all the Field Postmasters of the 3rd and 7th Divisions were men who had grown grey in the Department and had been on service in more than one Field before and a finer class of men I don't want to meet. They were the pick of the Indian Post Office and it is a great credit to them the way they stuck to their work without a murmur.

There was one other Field Postmaster whom I would particularly like to mention and he is Subedar Asaha Beg who at this time was Field Postmaster, Field Post Office No. 16 attached to the Bareilly Brigade. This Field Postmaster went out to France with the first batch of volunteers and as far as I recollect was attached to the Bareilly Brigade during the whole of the 15 months he was in France. Some of the Field Post Offices attached to the Brigades did not move with the Brigade when it went into the trenches but remained behind at some suitable place generally "refilling point" where the Brigade used to draw its ration and at the same time would draw their mails. The Bareilly Brigade, however, always made their Field Post Office accompany the Brigade Head Quarters wherever it moved. As Brigade Head Quarter was usually not far from the trenches and consequently under shell fire, the Field Post Office had always a rather risky time of it when the Brigade was in the trenches. Subedar Asaha Beg was however an old veteran and although he must at times have felt very nery he went through it all with a brave front and whenever I visited his office he always met me with a cheery smile and regaled me with the horrors of some recent bombardment. This Field Postmaster left France with me when the 7th Division went to Mesopotamia and was with me during the whole of the Kut relief operations, after which he returned to India, but he again rejoined me when I went to Baluchistan as Assistant Director, Postal Services, in the year 1919. He was a fine type of man, hard working and always very popular with the officers and men of the formation to which he was attached.

There were others of a similar stamp whom I would like to particularly mention but it would take too much space.

In July I went on a week's leave to England. This was the second dose of leave I had had since coming to France. These short leaves were one of the brightest spots of the campaign in France. They were short



but very sweet and were always something to look forward to and on return something to look back on. My leave was always spent in London and it was surprising how much one could cram into one short week.

On my return from leave in July Lt. Bullard who did my work during my absence was granted short leave. Unhappily, however, he was never destined to go on leave as on the 1st August the day before his departure he was killed by a shell. I was to look after his post offices during his absence and on the 1st August we agreed to go together to one of his Field Post Offices at a place called Croix Barbée. We both started for this point but by different routes. On my way, however, I saw that they were shelling Croix Barbée very heavily and so I turned back without seeing Lt. Bullard who apparently must have arrived shortly afterwards and, instead of turning back, he stopped in his car a few hundred yards short of Croix Barbée and, while waiting there, a shell got a direct hit on the car killing both Lt. Bullard and the driver of the car. This happened in the morning and in the afternoon his body was brought into Merville (Indian Corps Head Quarters) and I made all arrangements for his funeral. His funeral took place early next morning, Col. Pilkington came down from Boulogne and as many of the Field Post Office staff as could leave their duties attended. Lt. Bullard had by his kindly disposition and zeal in the performance of his duties endeared himself to his comrades in the Indian Corps and his popularity was testified to by the fact that officers from all over the Corps attended his funeral. No one in the Corps, I feel sure, felt Lt. Bullard's loss more keenly than myself. Although we were attached to different formations we made a point of meeting each other practically every day and his sudden and tragic death caused a great blank in my life. As no other Assistant Director, Postal Services, was spare at the time, Col. Pilkington asked me whether I would be able to take up Lt. Bullard's duties in addition to my own. Of course I agreed to do my best and consequently transferred my head quarters from the 7th Division to Corps Head Quarters from where I controlled the Field Post Office work of both the 3rd and 7th Divisions. Shortly after this a British Division (the 19th) was attached to the Indian Corps and at the request of the Director, Postal Services, British Post Offices, the post offices attached to this Division were also thrust on me. This made in all three Divisions to look after which was rather a stiff job. I had no Assistant Director, Postal Services, to assist me and the Field Post Offices (particularly those of the 19th British Division which had only just landed in France) required a great deal of supervision, as heavy fighting was going on and troops were constantly on the move from one place to another and it was at times very difficult to keep in touch with all the Field Post Offices. However, I had good staff in all my Field Post Offices and, although at times everything seemed to go wrong, matters progressed very smoothly. I was very fortunate in having a sterling good officer as Inspector of Field Post Offices in the 3rd Division by name Lt. R. W. Spear. He came out

with Lt. Bullard at the very beginning of the campaign and had been with the 3rd Division ever since landing in France. A brighter, cheerier youth I never want to meet. When things seemed at their blackest Lt. Spear was at his best. I would often meet him in the evening after a hard day's work going around with mails to the various Field Post Offices, covered in mud or dust and more often than not frozen through with the cold, but he was never worried or perturbed and always met me with a merry smile. This officer continued his good work in Mesopotamia and I am glad to say was promoted to the rank of Assistant Director of Postal Services. Subsequently he was promoted to a Superintendency.

In November, 1915, I again went on short leave to England and on my return to France was surprised to hear that the Indian Corps (Infantry) was leaving France. Although our destination was not definitely known, it was surmised that we were due for Mesopotamia. I personally was very sad at the idea of leaving France as I felt that all the other campaigns were only side-shows as compared to the campaign in France. My Field Post Office staff were however delighted at the idea of getting out of France. Many, I know, thought and hoped that they were going back to India, but in any case they knew it was to a warmer climate and that they would not have to spend another winter in France.

I returned from leave in the middle of November and from then until November 27th I was very busy as units were leaving daily for the south and their mails had to be disposed of which naturally caused some confusion. On November 27th, I left the Indian Corps Head Quarters after handing over charge to Lt. King who had arrived from the Base. On arrival at Boulogne late in the evening of the 27th, I was informed by Col. Pilkington, Director of Postal Services, that I was to leave early next morning for Marseilles with a draft of 22 men (Base Post Office men) who were to go with me to the unknown destination and join the Base there. We arrived in Marseilles with a draft of 22 men (Base Post Office men) who were to go with me to the unknown destination and join the Base there. We arrived in Marseilles on the 30th November and were met there by Lt. Williams, Field Postmaster, Field Post Office No. 20, who had very kindly made arrangements for all my men. The men went into camp some miles out of Marseilles and I remained in Marseilles itself with the 7th Division Head Quarters. We remained in Marseilles for a week and during this time practically the whole of the 7th Division with their Field Post Offices arrived. On the 6th December, we all embarked on the S.S. "Ivernia"; when I say "we" I mean the men from the Base Post Office and the Field Post Offices attached to the 7th Division with the Inspectors. The Field Post Offices of the 3rd Division remained behind with Lt. Taylor to come on with the 3rd Division.



The "Ivernia" was a very fine vessel with plenty of accommodation but still we were very crowded and it took some time to settle down. However in a short time we all got more or less settled down in various parts of the ship and the good vessel steamed out of Marseilles harbour on the 7th December.

On the voyage to Port Said we heard that we were not going to Mesopotamia direct but would stop somewhere on the Suez Canal and refit. However on arrival at Alexandria the Officer Commanding Troops got an order that the boat was to proceed direct and at once to Basra. It was a great disappointment to many, as every one had had hard work for the last 15 months and the troops in particular had been fighting almost continuously during this period and everyone felt they wanted a rest which from all accounts was a thing they would not get in Mesopotamia. We only stopped in Alexandria for a few hours and then steamed for Port Said and it was a great relief to every one, particularly the Captain of the boat, when we were safely at anchor in Port Said harbour. The Mediterranean at this time was infested with submarines and we had to travel with the greatest caution all the way from Marseilles. I might here add that the S.S. "Ivernia" was submarined on the returned journey to France after dropping us at Koweit. We stopped in Port Said for 3 days and we all went ashore and stretched our legs. In Port Said I met Lt.-Col. Hughes, Director, Postal Services, of the Egyptian Force. We left Port Said on the 15th December, and at Suez took on board some fresh troops (2nd Rajputs), and also exchanged mails. We left Suez on the 17th and from that date till the 29th, the day we arrived at Koweit, we stopped nowhere. Christmas 1915 was spent on board and a most enjoyable day it was. At Koweit we transferred to the S.S. "Thongwa" which came along. The "Thongwa" was a tiny boat as compared to the "Ivernia" but somehow or other we all managed to squash on board. We left Koweit at daybreak on the 31st December and arrived in Basra daybreak of the 1st January, 1916. At Basra we disembarked and I with the Post Office staff with me reported my arrival to Captain C. J. E. Clerici, Director, Postal Services, Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force.

E. B. THOMPSON.

26th April 1921.

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## CHAPTER V.

### EGYPT.

The Official Report of Lt.-Col. S. C.  
Sinclair, M.B.E., Director of Postal Services  
Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

*I. Historical Sketch of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force,  
1914—1919.*

SAILING from Bombay in the early days of November, 1914, Forces E and F met at Suez, where both disembarked about a fortnight later much to the surprise of the latter—originally intended as reinforcements for France.

DEPARTURE OF  
FORCES " E " AND " F "

Major A. J. Hughes, who was in charge of Force E, had sailed a month earlier with Indian Field Post Office 28, which he eventually opened at Ismailia in November, 1914, to serve some Indian Units camped out on the border of Lake Timsah. He then left for Suez and awaited the arrival of the rest of Force E, which comprised one Assistant Director, Lieut. S. C. Sinclair; three Inspectors, Messrs. P. R. Lalkaka, A. Gillespie and N. Smith, a Base Postmaster, Sirdar Jawahir Singh and three Indian Field Post Offices.

Force F was under the command of Captain C. H. McMinn and consisted of two Assistant Directors, Lieuts. R. W. N. Scroggie and E. Doran; four Inspectors, Messrs. K. C. Sen, E. Smith, J. A. Byrne and Zakar Ali; a Base Postmaster, Mr. J. Ferguson and eight Field Post Offices.

The sudden declaration of War by Turkey against the Allies left Egypt at the mercy of the Turks, who were rapidly advancing across the Sinai Desert for an attack against the Suez Canal. The timely arrival of Forces E and F (11th and 10th Divisions) considerably upset their plans, as the defence of the Canal was rapidly taken in hand and Indian troops located along its banks and throughout Egypt.

SITUATION IN  
EGYPT.

The Field Post Offices attached to Forces E and F consequently opened out at all the principal points along the Suez Canal from Suez to Port Said, viz., at Port Tewfik, Suez, Moascar, Serapium, Toussoum, Ismailia, El Ferdan, Kantara and Port Said and also in the principal towns of Egypt.





INDIAN FIELD POST OFFICE AT KANTARA.

The two Bases worked separately under instructions from India, until they were finally amalgamated on 17th April, 1915, when it was decided that Force E would take over the Canal Defences.

In addition to Indian, large bodies of British and Australian troops had been concentrated along the banks of the Suez Canal. As the latter had no Field Post Office to serve them, the Indian Field Post Office undertook this task. "At one time", as recorded by Major Hughes in his Annual Report for 1915-16, "we were serving twice as many British and Australian units as we were our own."

The great Turkish attack on the Canal took place on 3rd February, 1915, in full view of most of the Indian Field Post Offices along its banks; but in spite of the dangers of bursting shells and stray bullets, the staff enjoyed the novelty of the experience and never flinched in their duties. An uninterrupted mail service by rail and launch was maintained throughout operations.

The Turks having completely failed to cross the Suez Canal at any point, rapidly retreated across the Sinai Desert to their own lines where they dug themselves in. Egypt thus became fairly secure from the Eastern side. On the other hand, matters were not bright in Mesopotamia where help was required. On the 21st March, 1915, the 30th Indian Brigade sailed from Suez to join Force D with the necessary postal complement under M. Zakar Ali, Inspector, Field Post Offices.

It had been decided early in 1915 to force the Dardanelles and capture Constantinople owing to the dissipation of the Turkish Forces in far distant portions of their Empire. Large contingents of British and

Australian troops had already departed for the scene of operations, but it was not till 21st April 1915 that the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade under Brigade-General Cox sailed from Port Said and Alexandria for Gallipoli. Indian Field Post Office 34 accompanied the Brigade and after several thrilling and exciting experiences safely landed and opened at Suvla Bay with Lieut. A. G. Gillespie, Inspector, Field Post Offices in charge. This office was at first heavily bombarded by German and Turkish artillery, which mistook the post office flag for that of the Divisional General!

In order to provide for the probable expansion of the Indian Contingent with the Gallipoli Army, it appeared necessary to institute a separate postal organisation for it. A scheme was, accordingly, prepared by Major Hughes under orders from General Headquarters, Canal Defence, and approved by the Director-General, Posts, India. Major C. H. McMinn was placed in charge of the new Force, which had its Base Post Office at Alexandria. Indian Field Post Offices were opened at W. Beach, Anzac and Cape Helles, and a Sorting Office on the Island of Mudros.

Transports conveyed mails from Alexandria to Mudros, whence, after being sorted out, the bags were transmitted on trawlers chiefly under cover of darkness to the various Field Post Offices on the Peninsula. The job was a most dangerous one as, apart from floating mines, the German gunners kept the points of landing under intense artillery fire by day and night. The terrible dangers and difficulties encountered and cheerfully endured by the gallant little postal band on Gallipoli cannot be exaggerated, one relaxation being to test the efficacy of the fire of the Turkish snipers by holding an envelope on a stick over a trench and having it (the envelope) shot away. This usually caused much amusement and gave rise to a few side-bets. The staff, nevertheless, gladly welcomed the news of the decision to abandon the Peninsula in the Spring of 1916.

After the evacuation three Indian Field Post Offices were opened in Salonika and its vicinity; but the remainder of the establishment under Major C. H. McMinn sailed *en masse* for Mesopotamia to form the postal organisation required by the 13th British Division, which had just left Egypt for that theatre of War. Messrs. Sen, Byrne, Ferguson and Dall accompanied Major McMinn as Inspectors.

About the middle of 1915, the Turks made a desperate effort to capture Aden where a weak mixed garrison had been left. Reinforcements were urgently called for from Egypt and the 28th Indian Infantry Brigade under Brigade-General Sir George Younghusband left hurriedly on 27th July 1915 for the scene of operations.

Owing to the recent reductions of postal staff, it became impossible to send a Field Post Office with the Brigade. Two supervising officers, Lieut. S. C. Sinclair, Assistant Director, and Mr. E. Smith, Inspector, were ordered to proceed at once to Aden as an advance party to look

OPERATIONS IN  
ADEN.



after the military mails until such time as the two Field Post Offices wired for from India arrived. A Field Postal Service had to be organised as soon as possible. A Base Post Office was opened in the Aden Civil Post Office and not long after Indian Field Post Offices were established at Aden Steamer Point, Sheikh Othman and Aden Camp. Mails were conveyed between outlying Field Post Offices and the Base by motor car and lorry provided by the Army.

The G. O. C. expressed satisfaction with the postal arrangements in a letter of approbation to the Assistant Director, who was recalled to Egypt at the end of August, 1915, on the control of this Force passing to the Postmaster-General, Bombay.

RISE OF THE  
SENUSSI.

Stirred up by German and Turkish agents, these nomad tribes suddenly revolted and attacked the British outposts on the Western Frontier of Egypt. A mixed expedition composed of British, Australian and Indian troops was immediately despatched to rout them. An Indian Field Post Office accompanied the Indian Units to Mersa Matruh on the coast of Tripoli where it opened on 1st December 1915. The Senussi chased by armoured cars took to flight and surrendered early in 1916 when the main body of the operating Force was withdrawn. The patrol of the Western Desert tracks, however, continued throughout the period of War, and Indian Field Post Offices had to be stationed on the sands of the Sahara with Indian Units for a long time.



MAILS BEING CONVEYED ON CAMEL ACROSS THE SAHARA DESERT.

THE P. M. G.'s  
VISIT.

In December, 1915, the Hon'ble Mr. G. R. Clarke, Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs (then Postmaster-General, Punjab) to whom Forces

E and F were subordinate, paid a short visit to Egypt and investigated the postal organisation of the two Forces which were found satisfactory.

1916—1917.

In February, 1916, British Army Postal Offices and establishment arrived on the scene of operations along the Canal. Colonel P. Warren, C.M.G., C.B.E., R.E., was thereupon appointed Director of all the Army Postal Services attached to Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Prior to this, Australian and New Zealand Postal Units had relieved the Indian Field Postal Service of the extra work voluntarily performed in serving Australian and New Zealand troops postally. From now onwards the Indian Field Postal Service became subordinated to the British Army Post Office for administrative purposes and matters of policy.

POSTAL CHANGES

The Army Post Office immediately took over the service of British units from Indian Field Post Offices, which gradually moved down from the Northern to the Southern or Suez Sector with Indian troops, who were sent across the Canal and along the shores of the Red Sea up to Tor and Abu Zemina to guard against a Turkish attack from the borders of Arabia. At this period the strength of the Indian troops gradually became reduced as every available unit was despatched to Mesopotamia to help in the recapture of Kut, the threatened danger from Arabia having been greatly minimised owing to the withdrawal of Turkish forces to the Sinai Desert, where the fierce onslaughts of Australian and British troops had driven them out of their prepared positions at Romani and El Arish.

The number of Indian Field Post Offices consequently sank very low by October, 1917. Out of a total of 16 offices (including the Base Post Office and three Field Post Offices at Salonica), only 9 remained at the beginning of November, when Major A. J. Hughes, Deputy Director, departed for India. From 7th November, 1916, charge of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force devolved on Captain S. C. Sinclair.

Before the end of the year the former scheme of simply defending the Canal against the Turks was abandoned and a vigorous and energetic offensive campaign had been planned. Indian troops quickly advanced up to the front line. An Indian Railhead Office opened out at El Arish and later pushed on to Dier-el-Belah, while other Indian Field Post Offices were established at Romani and Bir-el-Abd Rafa. Gaza and Beersheba fell not long after and Indian postal facilities were extended to the troops occupying these areas.

The number of Field Post Offices soon rose from 9 to 15. Meanwhile steps had been taken to obtain from India additional Field Post Offices and staff in view of the military situation, which was assuming the nature of a big advance through the Sinai Peninsula into Palestine.



## SALONICA.

Three Indian Field Post Offices formerly attached to Force "G" operating in the Dardanelles were transferred to Salonica and placed under Force "E" when Major McMinn's Force left for Mesopotamia. In October, 1916, two of these offices closed down and only one (Indian Field Post Office 33) remained to serve the Indian Units on this Front.

Mails were forwarded from Egypt about twice a week and sorted out at the Indian Field Post Office, Salonica, which then transferred them in labelled bundles to the British Army Post Office for onward transmission to units in the field. Mails from Salonica were despatched on every available transport to the Indian Base Post Office and Indian Field Post Office 16, Alexandria, thence to the field, India and the East. Mails for Europe were disposed of direct from Salonica.



INDIAN FIELD POST OFFICE 16, ALEXANDRIA.

Officers Commanding units at the Front applied to the Inspector in charge (Lieut. A. Gillespie) whenever they desired Money Order work to be performed, and an official from the Indian Field Post Office visited the various camps for the purpose.

Salonica rendered its accounts in English currency, (after conversion from the Greek), to the Indian Base Post Office, Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The latter then converted them into Egyptian and Indian currency before incorporation in its own accounts.

The Postal arrangements at Salonica remained under the control of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force up to 11th November, 1918, when the increasing flow of fresh Indian units necessitated a more direct administration. The Force was therefore made a separate organisation and placed under the control of an Assistant Director, Lieut. A. Gillespie.

The Salonica Base Post Office was subsequently transferred to Chanak and the Force became known as the Army of the Black Sea. Field Post Offices extended along the Bosphorus and Black Sea at Chanak, Kilo 28, Oakmidan, Batoum, Askishchr, Boyuka Dere and the Headquarters of the Assistant Director were at Constantinople. Owing to the departure of Indian units and for the sake of economy, the Black Sea Force again came under the control of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force on 8th October 1919 and ceased to exist as a separate organisation. The same arrangements, which existed at Salonica in respect of mails and accounts, were re-introduced, and Lieut. Gillespie remained Assistant Director.

1917—1918.

Army Post Offices deserted the Southern Canal Sector when British troops left for Palestine. Indian Field Post Offices now served postally the various small detachments of British, Australian, Indian and Egyptian units left behind in this Sector. By the middle of the year all these remaining troops were practically withdrawn from the Suez Canal and concentrated on the borders of Palestine. This move also necessitated the transfer of Indian Field Post Offices from the Canal to the Front line in Palestine. The Railhead Office shifted from Dier-el-Belah to Dier Sneid and thence onwards to Ludd as soon as Jerusalem, Jaffa and Jericho fell into our hands. At these cities Indian Field Post Offices were immediately opened.

POSTAL PREPARATIONS IN PALESTINE.



THE INDIAN FIELD POST OFFICE AT JERUSALEM.  
MAILS BEING DESPATCHED BY LORRY TO JERICHO.



The Great German Offensive on the Somme in April, 1918, cast its shadow on the military situation in Palestine, all available British formations being sent over at once to France and a plan developed to replace them by Indian troops from France, Mesopotamia and India.

The 7th (Meerut) Division arrived from Mesopotamia before the end of the official year with its complement of four Indian Field Post Offices and one Inspector (Mr. White), and steps had been taken to obtain postal reinforcements from India to meet the increasing influx of Indian troops from all directions.

Postal matters were now being organised for a long and arduous campaign in the Judean Hills, where the enemy was firmly entrenched.

Life in the hot, unhealthy and dusty plains of Palestine was most monotonous. Out-door sports, especially football and cricket, in which everyone, British and Indian, joined enthusiastically formed the only recreation and relief from the lethargic conditions. Thanks to the Postal Comforts Fund for supplying the necessary sporting implements must here be recorded. Few, however, escaped a "Palestine head" (or loss of memory): one Inspector, for instance, nearly caused a military telephone operator to have a fainting fit by booking a call on Jubbulpore instead of Jerusalem!

1918—1919.

POSTAL  
DEVELOPMENTS.

Early in April the 4th and 5th Indian Cavalry Divisions arrived from France with Captain J. H. E. Cook in charge of the postal staff which accompanied it. The staff was composed of four Inspectors, Messrs. H. R. H. Bull, K. B. Murphy, L. G. Piggott and H. M. Newton; 36 Field Postmasters and clerks; 31 packers and 14 Field Post Offices.

Not long after the 3rd (Lahore) Division reached this country and brought with it from Mesopotamia one Assistant Director, Lieut. C. W. Taylor, one Inspector, Mr. O. Willie, and four Field Post Offices with necessary staff and equipment.

The number of newly raised battalions, which came from India and Mesopotamia to Egypt also grew, so that the essential character of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force gradually changed from British to Indian. Former British Brigades were reformed on a basis of three Indian regiments to one British.

Under arrangements with Colonel Warren, Director, Army Postal Services, a combined Field Post Office system had been agreed upon. Under it two Field Post Offices, a British and an Indian consisting of two men each, were attached to each Brigade and worked side by side, the British serving British units and the latter Indian. Divisional Headquarters were provided with British or Indian Divisional Field Post Offices according to the Staff being on the British or Indian Establishment. The scheme presented many advantages; but the chief

consideration was economy in staff, which at the time from the Indian point of view was a pressing problem owing to heavy strain on the resources of India on account of urgent demands for men from other Fields of War.



A BRIGADE FIELD POST OFFICE.



A DIVISIONAL FIELD POST OFFICE.



The Indian Field Post Offices had now been reorganised and distributed as follows:—

*Jerusalem Area.*

20th Corps	{	10th (Irish) Dvn.	with 3 Indian F. P. Os.
		53rd (Welsh) Dvn.	with 3 Indian F. P. Os.
		60th (London) Dvn.	with 3 Indian F. P. Os.
Desert Mounted Corps.	{	4th Cavalry Dvn.	with 3 Indian F. P. Os.
		5th Cavalry Dvn.	with 3 Indian F. P. Os.
		20th Ind. Inf. Bde.	with 1 Indian F. P. O.

*Jaffa Area.*

21st Corps.	{	3rd (Indian) Dvn.	with 4 Indian F.P. Os.
		7th (Indian) Dvn.	with 4 Indian F.P. Os.
		75th (British) Dvn.	with 3 Indian F.P. Os.

All these 27 Indian Field Post Offices were situated in the Front line.

During the operations of September-October, 1918, which culminated in the entire annihilation of the Turkish Forces on this Front, almost all these Indian Field Post Offices marched long distances with their respective formations, discarding their tents and living on emergency rations only.



FRONT LINE FIELD POST OFFICE ABOUT TO MOVE OFF WITH BRIGADE.

Great praise and credit is due to the whole of the Indian personnel attached to these offices for their untiring zeal and unflinching endurance of hardships. Special mention must be made of the Staff attached to the 7th Indian Division and 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions, which pushed on as far as Aleppo and Alexandretta covering about 500 miles between September 19th—October 26th.

The Railhead Office at Ludd, which was the point of incidence of all incoming and outgoing mails at the Front, had been strengthened and enlarged. This office, being the key of the whole postal situation, always remained under the personal control and supervision of the Deputy Director. Throughout operations a regular and daily postal service was maintained between Railhead and Field Post Offices on the march in spite of the difficulty of conveying mails by motor cars and lorries to rapidly advancing troops.



VIEW OF THE RAILHEAD OFFICE AT LUDD.

In addition to the two Bases at Port Tewfik and Port Said which dealt with mails from and for India, 18 Indian Field Post Offices existed as stationary offices on the Lines of Communication and in Egypt.

The Postal administration of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force had devolved on a single officer (Capt. S. C. Sinclair) on the departure of Major A. J. Hughes for India in November 1916. The huge augmentation of this force in 1918, owing to arrivals from France, Mesopotamia and India, made it incumbent to organise the administration of the service on a sound and practicable basis. Captain J. H. E. Cook was, therefore, placed in charge of the Indian postal arrangements of the 20th Corps, Lieut. F. P. Williams, of the 21st Corps, and Lieut. C. W. Taylor of those in Egypt and on the Lines of Communication.

ADMINISTRATIVE  
REORGANISATION.

An Inspector was posted to the Headquarters of each Division and made responsible for the mail and other postal arrangements within the Division. He was under the control of the Assistant Director of the relative Corps. The Inspectors in Egypt and on the Lines of Communication were given fixed areas and placed under the control of the Assistant Director concerned.



Consequent on the revised administrative situation and the anticipated advance into Northern Palestine and Syria, the Deputy Director, Major S. C. Sinclair, opened advance Headquarters at Ludd and put himself in close contact with Colonel P. Warren, Director, Army Postal Services, who communicated from General Headquarters at Bir Salem all important troop movements, and action was then taken to make necessary postal provision for Indian troops. This central location also enabled the Deputy Director frequently to visit Indian Field Post Offices at the Front; consult and instruct Assistant Directors and to supervise and control Inspectors and Indian Field Post Offices during the critical period of operations when the Assistant Directors were unable to visit Divisions from their Corps Headquarters owing to the rapid advance.

The administrative machine worked smoothly and efficiently from start to finish.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS OF THE E. E. F., 1918.



LT. C. W. TAYLOR, CAPT. J. H. E. COOK, LT. F. P. WILLIAMS (SEATED),  
LT.-COL. S. C. SINCLAIR.

#### POSTAL SITUATION AFTER THE ARMISTICE.

The Armistice opened up new conditions, as a number of troops were withdrawn from enemy country and transferred to Egypt for demobilisation and garrison duty. The Force changed from a mobile to a stationary one; but although transportation of mails became easier as railways were developed, the work of the Indian Field Post Office, on the contrary, increased in volume owing to British units on Indiaa

formations, hitherto served by the Army Post Office being located on Indian Field Post Offices under orders from General Headquarters. This allowed British postal personnel to be demobilised as Indian Field Post Office now functioned normally as they should have in ordinary circumstances.

For garrison and administrative purposes the 19th Indian Brigade became an independent force and was located in Cilicia with Indian Field Post Offices at Mersina, Adana and Bosanti (on the further side of the Taurus Tunnel). A Travelling Post Office was instituted between Adana—Aleppo to serve the various small detachments guarding the railway line in this sector.



NORTHERN END OF TAURUS TUNNEL ; WHERE AN INDIAN FIELD POST OFFICE EXISTED.

The 7th Indian Division (less 19th Brigade) and 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions were left in Syria ; the 3rd Indian Division scattered itself in Palestine ; the 75th Division guarded the Suez Canal ; while the 10th Division, recently reformed with Indian troops, was detailed to look after Upper Egypt, where there had been serious rioting and general unrest. 4 Indian Field Post Offices were now attached to each of these Divisions instead of 3 as formerly, besides those stationed on the Lines of Communication. Indian Field Post Offices had been established during the progress of the War over a 1000 mile area extending from the Sahara Desert up to Asia Minor.





RUINS OF THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER, BAALBECK, (SYRIA) BELOW WHICH AN INDIAN FIELD POST OFFICE WAS OPENED.

RESULTS OF THE  
PEACE CON-  
FERENCE.

The solution of the Syrian Question, whereby Syria West and Cilicia has been handed over to France and Syria East to the Hedjaz Government, resulted in the withdrawal of all British troops occupying these areas. Indian Field Post Offices attached to these formations are now concentrated in Egypt and Palestine preparatory to their return to India, which of course will depend on the development of the international situation in Syria and the political one in Egypt and Palestine. There is no doubt that as soon as Peace with Turkey has been signed, which it is hoped will be before the end of the year, the present political tension will cease. Indian Field Post Offices will then be free to return home along with their respective formations, except those required to cater for the small garrisons which will remain in Egypt and Palestine only. Thus after a hard and glorious campaign throughout the middle East for over 5 years, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force will close a remarkable and unique career.

CIVIL WORK IN  
OCCUPIED ENE-  
MY TERRITORY.

The administration of Civil Post Offices in O.E.T.A. was placed under the control of the Director, Army Postal Services. On the withdrawal of the Army Post Offices from Syria, the Indian Field Post Offices in Syria East, under orders from General Headquarters, undertook this work as a temporary measure at Aintab, Katma, Jerablus and Aleppo, while the French Army provided Civil postal facilities in Syria West and Cilicia. In Palestine the Civil Postal Administration remained entirely

in the hands of the Director, Army Postal Services. No new Indian Field Post Offices were opened for purely civil work, but existing offices performed civil postal business along with military, because the local Administrator was the senior military officer in command of that area.

The Assistant Director, Indian Posts, at Aleppo advanced an imprest of Egyptian Expeditionary Force Stamps for supply to the Administrative Commandants of various areas for sale to civilians, who affixed them on ordinary and registered letters and parcels, which were then handed over by the senders to Indian Field Post Office concerned for disposal. The Indian Field Post Offices also sold and paid British Postal Orders to civilians and handed over mails received for them to Administrative Commandants for delivery. The revenue derived from the sale of stamps was credited to the account of the G.O.C., 5th Cavalry Division, who had been appointed Chief Administrator of the O.E.T. \* North. The poundage realised from the sale of British Postal Orders was credited in the accounts of the Indian Field Post Offices. Owing to the withdrawal of Indian Field Post Offices from Syria East, the civil population now rely on the Hedjaz Government for a postal service, which ought to have been instituted, as pointed out more than once, before the evacuation



THE ANCIENT RUINS AT JERABLUS ON THE BANKS OF THE EUPHRATES  
WHERE AN INDIAN FIELD POST OFFICE SERVED THE CIVIL  
POPULATION.

\* Occupied enemy territory.



## II. Mail Arrangements.

OVERSEAS

Egypt being the half-way house between East and West, Overseas mails from both directions arrived and were despatched by the same mail boats weekly during the first two years of the War. The enemy then began his unrestricted submarine warfare and the mail service became irregular and more belated as the submarine danger grew in intensity. The number of Home mails lost through enemy action fluctuated; but with the institution of transport service for the conveyance of mails no great hardship was experienced by the troops, who could receive and despatch mails about 3 times a week on the average. Only one mail from the Egyptian Expeditionary Force to India was lost when the S. S. Mongolia struck a mine and sank outside Bombay.

INLAND.

So long as operations were confined to Egypt, the transportation of mails was a simple matter. The daily despatches of mails were carried to all parts of Egypt in the vans of the Egyptian Postal Administration, whose Postmaster-General, H. E. Borton Pasha, C.M.G., rendered every help at all times. Heavy mails were conveyed in trucks hired from the Egyptian State Railways.

The arrival of large reinforcements of British troops in the country after the evacuation of the Dardanelles in 1916 rendered impracticable the conveyance of Army mails in the limited accommodation provided in the Egyptian Travelling Post Office vans. Colonel P. Warren, C.M.G., C.B.E., R.E., Director of the Army Postal Services, thereupon established Travelling Army Post Offices throughout Egypt and the British Postal Service then undertook the carriage of all Indian mail bags.

Difficulties, however, began to spring up when the advance took place across the Sinai Desert, where no railways previously existed and new lines had to be laid. The railway progressed rapidly: consequently the railhead kept continually shifting to a higher point. This necessitated the removal of the Railhead Office, which being the distributing centre of all mails for troops further afield, assumed great importance in the field postal organisation. Its value varied in proportion to its distance from Indian Field Post Offices with formations further ahead, the shorter the distance, the easier and quicker was the transit; but when troops and Field Post Offices pushed forward and transport resources became strained, special precautions and measures had to be adopted to maintain postal contact.

Hitherto Indian Field Post Offices had been attached to Divisional and Brigade Headquarters. It was obvious, however, that when a rapid and long advance took place as was anticipated, Field Post Offices could not accompany headquarters, which would doubtless leave all such

offices behind as encumbrances, but yet demand a regular mail service. The military authorities had fully recognised the dictum about an Army marching on its stomach : on the other hand, the Great War has shown that the Army cannot stand at ease unless it holds a love-letter in its hand. Supplies and mails are inseparable : both must move together.

At a Postal Conference held at General Headquarters under the Presidency of Colonel Warren, Director, Army Postal Services, just prior to the advance into Northern Palestine and Syria, it had been decided to adopt the above principle, *viz.*, that as troops must be fed bodily and mentally, Supplies and Field Post Offices should work side by side and travel together. All Indian Field Post Offices were, accordingly, removed from Divisional and Brigade Headquarters and located at Divisional and Brigade Refilling Points. General Headquarters issued instructions to Supply Officers to move Field Post Offices in supply transports when Refilling Points shifted.

In addition to this advantage of mobility, all sudden changes in the distribution of units could easily be obtained from Supply Officers by Field Postmasters and communicated to the Railhead Office, which then circulated mails correctly in spite of constant and kaleidoscopic changes.

The *modus operandi* proceeded as follows :—

Mechanical transport supplied by General Headquarters carried mails from the Railhead Office to the Divisional Sorting Office situated at the Divisional Supply Dump. Thence Divisional and Brigade Supply Columns conveyed their respective mails in their transports to the relative Field Post Office at Refilling Point. Units at the front despatched a Post Orderly daily with the Regimental ration cart to draw mails from and to transact postal business with the Field Post Office at Refilling Point. In this way no matter how far units at the front had gone into the blue, they had to arrange to draw supplies from the Refilling Point and under this scheme obtained their mails at the same time.

With the seizure of railway lines in enemy territory and the cessation of the advance after the Armistice, the transport of mails between the Bases in Egypt and the troops in Northern Palestine, Syria and Cilicia again became normal. The Railhead pushed on from Ludd to Haifa and enemy lines began to operate under control of the Army. These were the Turkish railways between Haifa and Damascus, Rayak and Aleppo, and the Baghdad line through the Taurus Tunnel up to Jerablus on the bank of the Euphrates. The French Railway between Beyrut and Damascus was also put into working order. Mails in consequence circulated all over the conquered territory by rail. An additional sea service by steamer and trawler was established between Port Said and the Levantine Ports Haifa, Beyrut, Tripoli, Alexandretta and Mersina. The steamer and trawler service was discontinued on the evacuation of British troops in this area.



In passing over the history of Railway Mail lines, it may be pointed out that as soon as the breach on the line between Jerablus and Baghdad is completed, it will be possible to exchange mails between Baghdad and Constantinople by a direct railway route *via* Aleppo. The port of Mersina in Cilicia (Asia Minor) can also be developed as the point of incidence, where mails between Europe and Mesopotamia should be exchanged, the railway line running directly between Mersina and Baghdad. This route will be less expensive and certainly more expeditious than the long and tortuous sea transport through the Suez Canal.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF ALEPPO.

### *III. Sorting and Delivery Developments.*

#### BASES.

The sortation of Overseas mails has uniformly been carried on a Port Said and Port Tewfick. The importance of Bases at ports, where mails are debarked, has been insisted on throughout and been thoroughly justified during the campaign. Experiments were made in the early days of the War to deal with Indian mails at an inland town, *viz.*, Ismailia, but they proved a failure in as much as inevitable delay arose on account of no consideration being paid to the importance of time, which was wasted by dumping mails at Port Tewfick and then railing them to Ismailia according to available train services, the interval being sufficient for a well-staffed sorting office at Tewfick to dispose of all these mails to destination. Again, Base Post

Office "H" was originally opened at Ismailia, where it naturally had no direct outlet to connect with the mail boat for India which left from Port Said. This base was consequently transferred after a short time to Port Said, where Base "G" had been established since the inception of Force E.

Mails from India are debarked at Port Tewfick (as all P. & O. mail boats and transports stop here) on the launches and lighters kindly supplied by the Egyptian Postal Administration. On landing at the quay, they are immediately taken possession of and dealt with by the Indian Sorting Office on the spot, mail matter being despatched to destination within a few hours to the furthest units, whether located on the borders of the sandy Sahara or the slopes of Asiatic Turkey.



INDIAN MAILS BEING LOADED FROM LORRY TO RAILWAY VAN FOR ONWARD TRANSMISSION TO INDIAN FIELD POST OFFICES

Mails for India are concentrated on the Base Post Office, Port Said, this being the only port in Egypt where P. & O. and other mail steamers drop anchor on their voyage to the East. This office also dealt with Parcel mails for the United Kingdom, and at the commencement of the War disposed of mails from the United Kingdom. The latter work was subsequently undertaken by the Army Postal Service at their own suggestion. The Base Post Office formerly handled the mail matter to and from the late Salonica Force and also those of the Black Sea Force. The centre of radiation of all overseas mails from the West is Port Said and the establishment of the Base at this port has been justified on the grounds of practicability and efficiency.

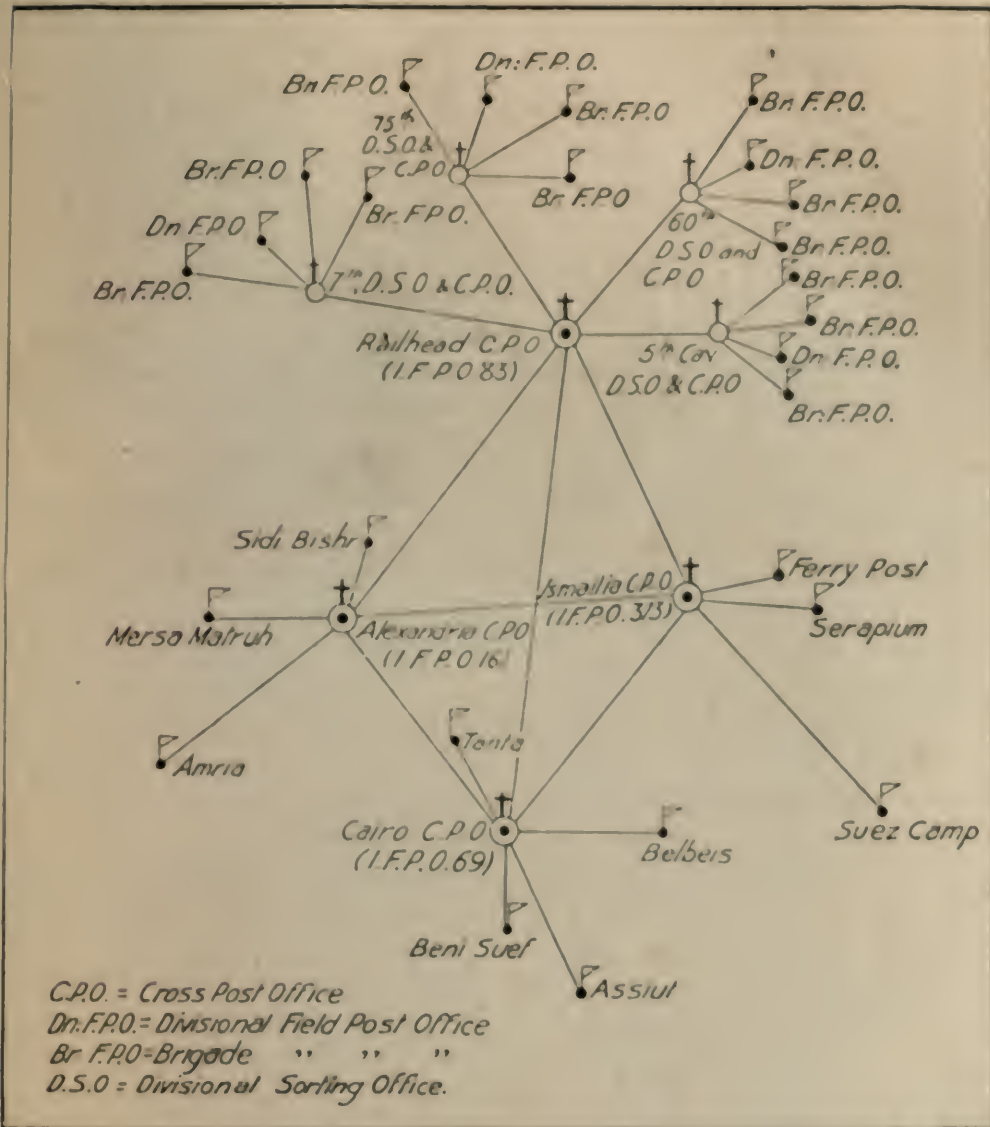




THE BASE POST OFFICE "E. E. F." PORT SAID.

CROSS POST  
OFFICES.

A Divisional Sorting Office is a Cross Post Office for the Divisional and Brigade Field Post Offices of a Division, *i.e.*, the inter-change of Divisional and Brigade mails ordinarily passes through the Divisional Sorting Office. Lower down the Railhead Office acted as a Cross Post Office between Divisional Sorting Office for Divisional mails, *i.e.*, the exchange of mails between Divisions had to be effected as a rule at this point. Finally, the Bases and certain selected Stationary Offices in the back areas worked as Cross Post Offices for mails posted in any Field Post Office in their sector. In other words, Cross Post Offices alone made up bags on each other in which were consigned for final disposal mails for units located on all Field Post Offices within the jurisdiction served by the particular Cross Post Office, as illustrated below :—



To ensure correct and prompt disposal of mails for units, a Location Book was introduced and supplied by the Directorate to each Field Post Office. The Book is arranged according to the various branches of the Army and included every unit in the field. Against each unit was noted the Field Post Office which served it. A Location List is issued daily by the Deputy Director to every Field Postmaster showing revised locations of units and changes in the labelling of bags. Each Field Postmaster noted these revisions in pencil in the Location Book as shown below and then destroyed the Daily Location List by fire.

LOCATION BOOK.

<i>Cavalry.</i>	Index 2.
2nd Lancers .. ..	362
9th Hodson's Horse .. ..	99



<i>Infantry.</i>		Index 4.
1st Guides	.. ..	97
27th Punjabis	.. ..	40
<i>Labelling of Bags.</i>		Appendix I.
Ind. F. P. O. 19	.. ..	Via Ind. 310, Adana.
Ind. F. P. O. 97	.. ..	Closed 25-6-19.
Ind. F. P. O. 99	.. ..	Tanta, <i>via</i> Ind. 69.

A perpetual Sorting List was thus maintained throughout the Force.

The Daily Location List is prepared from information supplied by General Headquarters and telegraphic instructions received from Inspectors and Field Postmasters, to be confirmed later by Field Reports sent to the Director instead of to the Base Postmaster.

It seems essential that "Locations" should always be a branch of the Directorate.

#### NOMINAL ROLLS.

Each Field Postmaster maintained a complete Nominal Roll of Officers of every unit served by him and forwarded a copy to the Deputy Director, for embodiment in a General Nominal Roll prepared from this information and supplied to the Bases, Cross Post Offices and the R.L.O. Revised addresses were communicated by Field Postmasters in Field Reports, this information being circulated by the Deputy Director to the offices concerned for inclusion in the General Nominal Roll.

#### REDIRECTION.

Without prejudice to the bulk of mails, items for British and Indian Officers were "run" as far as possible at the Bases. That is, during the sortation of mails articles requiring redirection were diverted according to the latest instructions on record. Failing this, mails were despatched to the addressees' unit, which then redirected the correspondence. If the unit was unable to do this, the Field Post Office undertook the work, and in the last resort undelivered articles had to be forwarded to the R. L. O. for disposal.

#### RETURNED LETTER OFFICE.

The R. L. O. gradually developed when it was found that the Base Post Office could not dispose of undeliverable articles from the records at its disposal, *viz.*, addressees' instructions and field reports. As soon as fighting or an advance took place, hundreds of casualty cases occurred, and hospital returns poured in daily, with lists of admissions, evacuations and discharges. To sort out these heterogeneous lists where names repeated themselves until a patient left a hospital, and also to collect information regarding new arrivals in and departures from the country required a special organisation with a trained staff.

The R. L. O. was, therefore, instituted at Alexandria on novel lines, as distinct from that in vogue at the Army Post Office. Experience proved that so far as British and Indian Officers were concerned, the Index Card system could be safely introduced and kept up to date. But it was impossible to maintain this as regards the lower ranks whose

whereabouts could only be traced with definite certainty from the records maintained by the D. A. A. G. 3rd Echelon. The R. L. O., depending as it did on the supply of accurate information, was ordered to work in close connection with the 3rd Echelon. A certain number of clerks from the R. L. O. attended that office daily with bundles of untraceable correspondence for men, which was disposed of in consultation with the various records sections. In very special cases when no trace of an officer was obtainable from the records of the R. L. O., a reference had to be made to the 3rd Echelon to locate him. In this way not only did the service economise staff, gain efficiency and a good reputation, but the result justified the means. Out of over 200,000 undeliverable letters, which passed through the R. L. O. less than 1000 were treated as "untraceable" and forwarded to the D. L. O. or Army Post Office for disposal.

Delivery continued to be made through accredited Post Orderlies of units. However, in order to fix responsibility for the loss or misdelivery of articles by Post Orderlies, a receipt book for registered and parcel items handed over to them was introduced. In the respective Post Orderly's receipt book (Registered or Parcel) was noted by the orderly himself from the copy of the unit parcel or registered list, handed him by the Field Post Office for record, full particulars of each registered and parcel article for which he had given a signature to the Field Post Office on the original unit registered or parcel lists. On making delivery the Post Orderly obtained the addressees' signature against the relative entry, while an acknowledgment in the book was granted by the Field Post Office official if an article was handed back to the Field Post Office for redirection. An immediate and very appreciable reduction in complaints took place after this, as Post Orderlies now realised their responsibilities, especially if Officers Commanding units scrutinised these receipt books carefully with the Post Orderly's registered and parcel lists and signatures against each entry. The receipt books were kept on record for a year by the unit for future reference. Claims for compensation seldom arose, and in the few isolated cases that did, it was definitely proved that the Post Orderly of the unit was to blame.

Officers of the Indian Field Post Office censored letters posted in the field during 1914-15. Owing to the gradual increase in bulk of such correspondence, the Indian Field Post Office could not undertake this work any longer. It was arranged that a Censor's stamp should be issued to the Officer Commanding each unit, who was then responsible for the censorship of the mails of his men. Printed Field Service Post Cards did not, of course, fall within the scope of censorship, and these were supplemented later on by the issue of green field service envelopes, contents of which though ordinarily immune from scrutiny were liable to be examined at any time. Frequently, a certain percentage of all censored correspondence was withheld and passed to specially appointed Censors for re-examination. On two or three occasions General Headquarters



ordered all mails posted in the field to be detained so that no information could filter through to the outside world until the critical period had passed. On the whole, censorship in the field was expeditious and no great delay to correspondence ever occurred.

#### IV.—MONETARY TRANSACTIONS.

##### ISSUE OF MONEY ORDERS.

**F**AMILY Remittance Money Orders, always popular with the troops, became more so on receipt of the decision of the Government of India in 1917 to remove the restrictions under which the amount of the Money Order was limited only for the month of remittance. The troops could now accumulate their balances and remit them in a lump sum to their families.

British troops occasionally came to the Indian Field Post Office, when one was handy, to remit their money to the United Kingdom by means of ordinary Money Orders instead of by British Postal Orders because they found that the money was paid quicker to their families in the event of loss of mails at sea through enemy action. A duplicate copy of the Money Order list detailing particulars of the orders was posted by the Base Post Office to London on the boat following that on which the original list had been sent. The London Office issued Money Orders immediately on receipt of the duplicate list if circumstances demanded this. On the other hand, if a British Postal Order was lost at sea a delay of at least 3 months occurred before the claim could be established and payment effected.

Ordinary Money Orders to India were also utilised largely by the troops and the commission realised on them was not inconsiderable.

##### PAYMENT OF MONEY ORDERS.

Apart from the refund of Money Orders for various reasons to remitters in the field, a scheme was introduced under which Money Orders received by the Egyptian Postal Administration from the United Kingdom or from any British possession for payment to troops could be disbursed by Indian Field Post Offices without interfering with the regular system of accounts.

The Indian Field Postal Service acted as an intermediary between the Egyptian and Army Postal Service as follows:—

- (a) The Director, Army Postal Services, received Money Order advices from the Egyptian Post Office and he then posted direct to military payees an authority whereby they could draw the relative amount at any British or Indian Field Post Office.

- (b) If presented at an Indian Field Post Office, the amount was paid and shown as a remittance to the Base Post Office, the authority of the Director, Army Postal Services, duly receipted by the payee, accompanying the Daily Account in support of the charge.
- (c) The Indian Base Post Office recouped the amount on presentation of the authority at the Base Army Post Office, Port Said.

SALE AND PAYMENT OF BRITISH POSTAL ORDERS.

The Indian Field Post Offices undertook the duty of selling and paying British Postal Orders to small British and Australian detachments when the bulk of the British troops in the Southern Canal were withdrawn in May 1917. The placing on sale of British Postal Orders is now adopted at all Indian Field Post Offices throughout the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The original stock of British Postal Orders was obtained from the Director, Army Postal Service, but this advance was withdrawn at the beginning of March 1918. The stock is now supplied direct from the London General Post Office.

LIFE INSURANCE

Life Insurance policies became available from 1916 to any member of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, whose appointment fell within the scope of the Civil Service Regulations. Eight postal officials and six employees of the Military Accounts Department insured their lives in the field. Several applications from other branches of the Army had to be rejected on the ground of ineligibility.

SAVINGS BANK DEPOSITS.

Deposits varied annually according to the strength of the Force, and, generally, rose before an attack when the troops were glad to be provided with the means of banking their savings. The prohibition against withdrawals in the field prevented more frequent deposits, as the troops preferred placing their credits with the Field Controller from whom they were able to withdraw money whenever required.

WAR INVESTMENTS.

Few Indian War Loan Bonds were purchased through the agency of the Indian Field Postal Service owing to lack of advertisement and limited facilities.

When Indian Field Post Offices during 1919 began to function for British units on Indian formations, a demand arose for the sale of British War Savings Certificates. This work was, therefore, undertaken at the suggestion of General Headquarters. The Director, Army Postal Services, advanced to the Indian Base Post Office a stock of War Savings Certificates, which the latter then supplied to Indian Field Post Offices. The cash realised from the sale of these certificates was remitted to the Army Post Office with a special weekly account by the Base Postmaster. These transactions did not in any way affect the accounts as the Indian Field Post Office simply acted as an agent on behalf of the Army Post Office. The sale of these Certificates at Indian Field Post Offices became very heavy immediately after their introduction.



## V.—A CRITICISM OF COMPLAINTS.

THE varying number of complaints may be considered as a postal barometer from which the public temperature can be gauged, and, incidentally, the efficiency of the postal arrangements and supervision. Since 1914 up to March 1919, 2,321 complaints only had been received in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Of these only 109 or less than 5 per cent. were well founded. Most of the complaints related to non-payment of Money Orders in India owing to loss of the original Money Order or death of the payee, circumstances over which this Force had no control. No serious and substantiated complaint had ever been brought forward. It is therefore no idle boast to record that, judged on these bases, the reputation of the Service has been worthily upheld by all postal ranks in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE DARDANELLES, SALONICA AND CONSTANTINOPLE, 1915—1919.

By Captain A. C. Gillespie, A. D. P. S.,  
Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

#### DARDANELLES CAMPAIGN.

THE defeat of the Turkish Forces along the Suez Canal in the early part of 1915 secured the peace of Egypt. Large contingents of British and Australian troops were accordingly detached from the Force in Egypt and despatched to the Gallipoli Peninsula. This Force which acted independently of the one operating in the Egyptian theatre was named the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. It was, however, anticipated that the rugged nature of the country in which a gigantic struggle was already taking place was altogether unsuited for the rapid transport of the heavy guns which formed the backbone of the Force, and that the infantry would find itself left entirely to its resources once it advanced and got away from the beach and the range of naval guns. It was therefore thought desirable to employ only such batteries as could with ease and celerity be moved even as the infantry advanced to the first line trenches.

The 7th Indian Mountain Artillery Brigade which was located on the Suez Canal was selected to accompany the corps from Egypt. This unit, with its complement of light guns and its men specially trained in mountain warfare, was a great asset to the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force as after events showed. The Indian personnel attached to this Brigade did not however justify the despatch of an Indian Field Post Office with it, and it had therefore to depend on the British and Australian Army Post Offices for its mails.

As operations on the Peninsula developed, the 29th Indian Brigade under Brigadier-General H. V. Cox, which had so ably distinguished itself against the Turks at Kantara, was likewise detached from the Canal Defences and despatched to the Dardanelles, Indian Field Post Office 34, comprising an Assistant Director, an Inspector, and staff accompanied the Brigade, which sailed from Port Said on 28th April 1915 arriving at Cape Helles two days later. It was found extremely difficult to land the Field Post Office, as a big attack in the direction of Krithia was in progress and enemy guns from the European and Asiatic sides kept the whole beach under fire. Moreover transport was also not available for the



conveying of kit and personnel from the ship to the beach. The few trawlers and boats that were already at Cape Helles were busily engaged in disembarking troops from the different transports and conveying wounded to hospital-ships. It was not till the 6th of May that the office could be shipped across and Field Post Office 34 was immediately opened at W Beach. Lieut. Scroggie, the Assistant Director, who had orders to return to Egypt as soon as the office was established, left the Peninsula on 11th May 1915.

On the attacking force moving inland great difficulty was experienced in sending up rations from the Base. The British Army Service Corps with its complement of heavy vehicles, while sufficiently adequate in a flat country, could not conveniently negotiate the hills and uplands with which the country abounded. It was therefore decided to utilise the service of the various Imperial Service Corps that were in France and also reinforce them by a sufficient number of mule corps from Egypt and India. The strength of the Indian Force operating in this Theatre of War had thus been considerably increased.

It was now decided to form a separate Postal Force to cater for the Indian troops on the Peninsula. Up to the latter part of June 1915, Field Post Office 34, the only office in the Dardanelles, was under the jurisdiction of Indian Expeditionary Force 'E', but on the formation of Indian Expeditionary Force 'G', also called the Indian Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, this office came under the jurisdiction of Major McMinn, Deputy Director, Indian Expeditionary Force, 'G.' Base 'H' of the new formation was opened at Alexandria on 28th June 1915, and Field Post Offices, 65, 66 and 325 established at different points on the Peninsula. Field Post Office 33 was opened on 13th July 1915 on Mudros Island and served as a sorting and advanced base office for the four field post offices in the Dardanelles. For purpose of a more direct control and to deal with the numerous important questions likely to arise it was considered necessary to make these offices immediately subordinate to an Assistant Director who would be on the spot. Lieut. K. C. Sen was accordingly selected for this post and despatched from Alexandria to the Dardanelles. This officer had his Headquarters on the H.T. "Arragon" at Mudros. The "Arragon" served the purpose of a huge secretariat wherein were established the different administrative offices attached to General Headquarters.

The Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, as a force, was but short lived. In December 1915 preparations were already taking place for the evacuation of the Peninsula. About the middle of this month the Indian Mule Corps located at Anzac and Suvla Bay was gradually withdrawn and split up into detachments, one on the neighbouring island of Imbros and the other at Mudros. Field Post Office 65 was moved from Suvla to Mudros, while Field Post Office 34 which was now located at Anzac was closed down and returned to Egypt with the 29th Indian

Infantry Brigade Headquarters. Owing to the suddenness of orders received regarding the closure of this office, and haste in which the personnel had been withdrawn, the equipment of this office had to be left behind. This sector and Suvla had been evacuated and abandoned to the enemy, and it was impossible to regain the equipment, but the unit commander to whom reference regarding the kit was made was very optimistic about its "turning up one day." Events moved rapidly and soon the whole of the Peninsula was evacuated by our troops. Field Post Offices 66 and 325 were closed down, the former being re-opened at Imbros to serve the mule corps stationed there, while the staff of the latter was returned to Egypt.

Life on the Peninsula especially in the initial stages can better be imagined than described. The "contemptible little postal army" which functioned in the Dardanelles "stuck to its guns" in spite of shrapnel, shell and storm. All had received their "baptism of fire" on the Canal, but compared to the stupendous struggle here, the feeble and abortive attack on the Canal was but mimic warfare. From his elevated position the enemy hurled his messengers of death with disconcerting wildness and during the day these burst dangerously near. It is fortunate that, throughout the terrible ordeal of shell fire and abnormally cruel weather these obscure heroes were left unimpaired in mind or body.

Prior to the opening of Field Post Office 33 at Mudros, mails for the Indian units operating on the Peninsula were forwarded from Alexandria in transports along with those of the British and Australian Army Post Offices to Indian F. P. O. 34 from where they were collected by unit post orderlies. It often happened that on account of more pressing needs it was not possible to detail a post orderly for mails and on such occasions the Inspector would, at considerable risk to himself, personally deliver them to the units in the first line of trenches.

When Field Post Office 33 was established, all mails for the Dardanelles were in the first instance forwarded to that office from where they were sorted out for the different offices and despatched under cover of darkness to the Peninsula. English mails were received direct at Mudros and not *via* Alexandria but mails from India were first consigned to Base 'H' and thence transmitted to the Sorting Office at Mudros. Postings were forwarded by the offices in the Dardanelles to Field Post Office 33 for detailed sorting. The latter office consigned to Base 'H' all articles for India and Egypt while correspondence for the United Kingdom and France was made over to the local British Base Army Post Office for inclusion in its direct despatches to London. The system worked very satisfactorily, but such delays as were incidental on account of the scarcity of transport and losses from enemy action were unavoidable and the troops accepted the conditions very sportingly.

In a campaign such as that undertaken in the Dardanelles casualties must necessarily be very high. A further commitment was accepted



by the Assistant Director, Postal Services, in dealing with "unknown" correspondence. Each office maintained in addition to the prescribed nominal rolls of British and Indian officers, a casualty list showing number, rank and name of all ranks who had become ineffective in a particular unit. Mails received for delivery were accordingly scrutinised and those for "ineffectives" returned at once to the Base Post Office with a suitable endorsement. Thus each Field Post Office worked also as a Returned Letter Office for the units attached to it.

In the initial stages it was not feasible to perform money order work as no facilities existed for the disposal of surplus cash. Later on, when field cashiers functioned, this class of work was promptly undertaken. It is needless to say that a great boon was thus conferred on the Indian soldier who found a safe outlet for his petty savings.

#### *British Salonica Force.*

After a very short rest at Mudros and Imbros the Bharatpur and Indore Imperial Service Transport Corps, the 31st Mule Corps and the 3rd Mule Cart Train suddenly broke camp and proceeded to an "unknown" destination. The threat on the Narrows having been minimised, it was possible for the Turkish forces engaged in their defence to be concentrated on the Greek borders. In Macedonia things had taken a serious turn; Bulgaria had advanced to within 60 miles of Salonica, the attitude of Greece was vacillating; Turkey had ruffled his feathers and was ready in men and guns to render every possible assistance to his allies on this Front.

The position was keenly felt by the Allies and every effort was made to check the enemy advance and at the same time maintain a garrison at Salonica to overawe and if necessary to coerce the Greeks. Troops were rushed up and everything was got ready for a vigorous offensive. As in Gallipoli, so also here the nature of the country made it extremely difficult for the transport of heavy guns and supplies. The Indian Transport Corps and Mule Train, released from the Dardanelles, were therefore advantageously employed on this Front. But it was not till a telegraphic communication was received from the War Office regarding their mails, that Indian Expeditionary Force 'G' came to learn of the location of the units who had so mysteriously left Mudros.

British Field Post Offices were already functioning in the Balkans and it took considerable persuasion to obtain the sanction of General Headquarters to the establishment of an Indian postal organisation in this theatre. Although the Indian units were not many, technically Indian Field Post Office work differs from British. The actual delivery of letter and parcel mail, so far as bulk and sorting go, is of no very great importance and needs but a small staff. Indeed there would have been no necessity for a separate institution, were it not for the fact that the

majority of letters from and for the troops is written in different vernaculars which would obviously be as interesting and confusing to the British sorter as a Chinese puzzle. It is true that Indian troops are being taught the English alphabet and attempts are made by them to address their letters in English, but the result of the effort is such as to tax the cunning of an Intelligence Officer. Considering the nature of the Indian troops employed, they were attached to different batteries and were spread over a large area and at considerable distance from one another. It was practically impossible to select a place for an office which could be central and convenient to all units. It was also not possible to allocate an office to each unit as the volume of work would not justify any such arrangement.

Indian Field Post Office 66 was opened at Kalamaria Road, Salonica on 27th January 1916 and early in February the sorting office from Mudros was brought to Salonica. Very shortly afterwards Field Post Office 325 was opened at Dudular. These three offices were supervised by Lieut. Sen, Assistant Director, Postal Services, assisted by an Inspector.

The Headquarters of Indian Expeditionary Force 'G' still remained at Alexandria, but, if Salonica could be administrated from Alexandria, it could as well be placed under the jurisdiction of the Deputy Director, Indian Field Posts, Egyptian Expeditionary Force. This view was held by the Directorate in India and Indian Expeditionary Force 'G' was accordingly disbanded, the personnel remaining at Alexandria being sent to Mesopotamia to reinforce Indian Expeditionary Force 'D'\* which by the influx of the 13th Division and an expansion of operations found itself severely handicapped in the matter of personnel.

The Indian Post Office at Salonica was but an arm of the British Army Post Office and was therefore subordinate to the head of that service in matters of policy and general control. The whole thing worked in a sort of feudal system. Field Postmasters were responsible for the correct working of their office to the Inspector, the Inspector to the Assistant Director and the latter to the Deputy Director, Postal Services, who represented General Headquarters. Mail arrangements were solely in the hands of the Deputy Director, Postal Services, British Army Post Office and with the deletion of this important branch from the administrative office it did not appear necessary to retain the Assistant Director. The small number of Indian troops on this Front together with the lightness of work performed could with ease and efficiency be supervised by the Inspector, Lieut. Gillespie who was well up in local knowledge and knew personally the majority of officers attached to the Indian troops. Lieut. Sen was therefore recalled to Egypt and on arrival there he was despatched to Mesopotamia.

\* Later the M. E. F.



By October of the same year Field Post Offices 65 and 325 were closed down and Field Post Office 33 took over all the units at Salonica.

Nothing of postal importance occurred up to September 1918 and postal arrangements were smoothly and efficiently carried out.

Two events outside the postal sphere occurred at Salonica in the early stages of the campaign. In April 1916 a Zeppelin crossed over and dropped bombs. One exploded about 20 yards from Field Post Office 33 setting a supply dump on fire. It was about 2 a.m. and the shock of the explosion was such that the staff was literally thrown out of bed. The scare that it gave was not forgotten till the August of the same year when the same airship paid another visit but this time to be brought down in flames.

A fire of gigantic proportions broke out in the town of Salonica in September 1917 destroying three-fourths of the town. Thousands of families were rendered destitute and homeless but the spontaneous generosity of the Allies provided shelter and food to the wretched population.

It has been explained above that the Indian units on this Front were not located in a limited area and in proximity to one another. The Field Post Offices which served them were in reality Field Post Offices 65 and 325, while Field Post Office 33 served as a sorting and advanced Base Post Office for these two Field Post Offices. Mails from Egypt and India were forwarded from Port Said or Alexandria to Field Post Office 33 by transports whenever there was an outlet, that is on an average of three times a month. The sorting office divided the correspondence for the units at the front into two lots—for Field Post Offices 65 and 325. These latter offices in their turn made up sorted bundles for the different units and transferred them to the relative British Field Post Office serving the Formation to which they were attached. With the closure of Field Post Offices 65 and 325 unit bundles were made up by Field Post Office 33 and transferred to the local British Army Post Offices for disposal. Postings were handed in at British Field Post Office which dealt with all legible correspondence and transferred to Field Post Office 33 vernacular letters and those for India. Considering the circumstances in which the Field Post Offices and troops worked this arrangement seemed to be the only possible one and it is pleasing to note that no aspersions were cast on the postal arrangements prevailing on the Salonica Front at this time.

The money order question was solved by periodically deputing a clerk with necessary stamps and documents to the units at the Front. This clerk was quartered with the unit at the time of his visit and would accept money orders from the men. The cash realised was deposited with the Field Cashier if there happened to be one, or if not, brought to

Salonica for disposal. This solution of a knotty problem was much appreciated by all ranks.

*Army of the Black Sea.*

The great German offensive on the Western Front made it extremely necessary to concentrate all available British troops on that Front. In October 1918, 12 British units were accordingly released from the Balkan Front for service in France and were replaced by an equal number of Indian battalions from Mesopotamia. The strength of the Indian contingent had now reached approximately 19,000 combatants and followers. On the signing of the Armistice with Turkey, the force on the Balkan Front was reduced and units transferred to Turkey where they assumed the rôle of an Army of Occupation. Up to this period the Field Post Offices in this theatre were under the Deputy Director, Indian Field Posts, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, for matters of inner control but it was now necessary to organise a separate service to function here. Lieut. Gillespie was placed in independent charge of this unit. A Base Post Office and several Field Post Offices were despatched from India and arrived at Salonica in October 1918.

Base 'H' was opened at Lembet (Salonica) in November 1918 in place of Field Post Office 33 which office was converted into a travelling post office. The following Field Post Offices were also established :—

Field Post Office, 400 at Chanak.

Field Post Office, 407 at Buyuk Dere.

Field Post Office, 409 at Krasnovodsk on the Caspian Sea.

Field Post Office, 410 at Petrovsk in South Russia.

Field Post Office, 406 at Batoum and 408 at Tiflis.

In consideration of the garrisoning of the Black Sea Litteral the name of the Force was changed to the Army of the Black Sea and the Headquarters itself moved from Salonica to Constantinople. Field Post Office 33 ceased to function as a travelling post office and opened as a Field Post Office at Bostandjik on 15th April 1919. Base 'H' moved from Lembet to Chanak (Dardanelles at the Narrows) on 26th May 1919. About the same time the Assistant Director, Postal Services, transferred his office from Salonica to Haider Pasha, General Headquarters being already too full up to accommodate the office. As a regular ferry service existed between the two banks of the Bosphorus, no inconvenience whatever was experienced by the Assistant Director, Postal Service, in attending General Headquarters.

The Baku area was primarily under the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force but, when Batoum was occupied by troops from Salonica, it was passed to the control of the Salonica Force. With effect from 1st March 1919, Field Post Offices, 76, 81, 88, 120 and 122 with Lieut.-



Bickers, the Assistant Director, Postal Service, were transferred to the jurisdiction of this Force but, when the Baku area was completely evacuated in August 1919, this officer and his staff were returned to India. The Tiflis area was evacuated at about the same time and Field Post Office 408 closed down.

The mail arrangements for the Army of the Black Sea were normally run on the same lines as for the British Salonica Force but with this exception, that direct mails were exchanged with Bombay. English mails continued to be dealt with exclusively by the British Army Post Office. The service between Constantinople and Egypt which was dependent entirely on army transport was very unsatisfactory and mails from India and Egypt would often be held up at Port Said or Alexandria for several weeks awaiting an outlet. Troops grew discontented and to relieve the tension it was arranged to forward mails for the Army of the Black Sea by every available steamer, private or military.

As the units, once they pushed to Constantinople, became stationary no difficulty was experienced in providing them with every postal facility. Money order work was performed daily except Sundays and such units as were encamped outside the jurisdiction of an Indian Field Post Office a clerk was deputed for the purpose.

Owing to the concentration of the Indian units round Constantinople it was possible to effect a large reduction in the postal establishment of this Force. Several offices including the Base Post Office were closed down and the personnel was repatriated. The destinies of the offices on this front seemed to be linked with those of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and thus after a year's separation they were again placed under the control of the Deputy Director, Indian Field Posts, Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

## CHAPTER VII.

MESOPOTAMIA, Oct. 1914—May 1916.

Bombay to Basrah.

By Captain Owens, C.I.E., M.B.E., R.E.

Official Report.

THE POST OFFICE OF INDIA WITH FORCE "D."

IT was during the second week of October that a small batch of Postal Officials were mobilised at Bombay to proceed with Force "D."

The mobilisation was carried out rapidly and the few days I spent in Bombay were very full, and crowded, there being much to be done and very little time to do it in. The first official to arrive, reached Bombay on the 7th October and by the 12th the unit had embarked on the "Vare'a," which then lay at anchor in the harbour until the 14th October. Some of the difficulties experienced in mobilising will be more readily understood, when it is explained that the majority of the officials who had volunteered and been selected, had to perform long journeys to reach Bombay, some even arriving on the date of embarkation. All these had to be supplied with uniforms and kit. The Post Office equipment had to come all the way from Lahore.

The establishment consisted of three supervising officers, and three ESTABLISHMENT. first, and two second class Field Post Offices in addition to a small Base Post Office, the details of the staff being one Superintendent, two Inspectors, five postmasters, eleven clerks and twenty-nine menials.

Towards evening on the 14th October, the signal for moving was DEPARTURE given and the "Varela" in company with a large number of other vessels steamed out of Bombay harbour to form the convoy which was to be escorted by two cruisers. At the commencement of the voyage, the transports for Indian Expeditionary Forces "B" and "D" proceeded together, the forming up of the convoy and the start being an impressive sight. On the third day, after leaving Bombay, our convoy parted company with I. E. F. "B" and proceeded alone, escorted by one cruiser. Later we were joined by a transport from Karachi.

Our destination was unknown at the times we started from Bombay, DESTINATION. and it was owing to the necessity for the movements of the Force being kept secret, that no mails were received for some weeks. It was only after the voyage had commenced, that we learnt, that the Force was bound for the Persian Gulf, and was Force "D."





The first place the convoy called at was Bahrein in the Persian Gulf. BAHREIN.  
 How long the Force was likely to remain at Bahrein was not known and at one time arrangements were being made to land the Force on the island and form a camp. About ten days after our arrival, however, the Turks declared war and the Force much to everybody's relief left for Bushire. During the stay at Bahrein postal work was carried on under difficulties, the chief of which was the lack of boats for visiting the other transports lying about half a mile apart from each other, to deliver and collect letters, as also to place mails on board the mail steamers which called at Bahrein to take our mails. The "Varela" was very crowded, and there was little available space to open up an office for the stamping and sorting of mails. As at that time no orders had been received regarding free postage to India and the United Kingdom, stamps had to be sold on board, and supplied to the troops on the other transports. To obtain access to the Post Office equipment was also a difficult matter, as it was buried under the equipment of other units. When leaving Bombay, we were under the impression, that the voyage would only last for a few days, and in consequence were not prepared for a voyage of over a month and for performing post office work on a congested steamer with hardly a square inch of space in which to work. The staff rose to the occasion and to the best of their abilities carried on the work.

On leaving Bahrein the convoy proceeded to Bushire from where. BUSHIRE.  
 After a short halt, it left for the mouth of the Shatt-al-Arab. Then followed the taking of Fao, without a shot being fired by our troops, the "Varela" being the second vessel to enter the river with landing parties, after the Turkish batteries at the mouth of the river had been silenced by the gun boats. It was necessary at Fao, to reconstruct the British Telegraph Office which was destroyed by the Turks, the Indo-European Telegraph Company's operators being taken prisoners to Baghdad. The majority of clerks in the Post Office of India are also signallers, and this being known, the department was called upon to provide operators, Field Post Office No. 308 being left at Fao to perform both post office and telegraph work. The staff of this office, which was originally one postmaster D. H. Jogina, two clerks, and three menials, was later reduced to a postmaster and a menial, when operators from the Indo-European Company took charge of the Telegraph Office, and was finally closed when the small detachment which was left there was withdrawn, the telegraph operator in charge performing, for a small remuneration from the Post Office the little work which had to be done, in addition to his telegraph duties.

Little time was lost at Fao. As soon as the landing parties had ABADAN  
 returned and everything had been settled on land the transports continued up the river to Abadan and from there to Suniyeh, a few miles



further up, where the troops were landed and a camp formed. No postal officials or post offices were permitted to disembark at this camp, and from the vessel, we witnessed a dawn attack made by the Turks on the camp on the third day of the landing. A paucity of boats and launches again gave rise to difficulties. An arrangement had to be made for the clerks to proceed in land in the morning and perform Post Office work, viz., selling stamps, issuing money orders, collecting letters, stamping and sorting letters posted for despatch by the Persian Gulf Mail steamers, which connected with the Force every week. Very frequently, the clerks had to spend the whole day on land with very little in the way of food owing to the difficulty experienced in getting on board again, once they had been landed, every available boat or launch being employed in the landing of troops, transport, ammunition, and supplies and none being allotted to the Post Office. Beside the arrangements to be made for the transaction of postal business on land, the transports had also to be served. These were at first few in number but soon reinforcements began to arrive and the number grew, making it all the more difficult for them to be served. The "Varela," was at this time converted into a hospital-ship, and the post office officials obtained their first impressions of the "horrors of war," when the wounded were being taken on board.

## SAHILL.

After a stay of about ten days at the camp, the troops advanced along the river bank, the transports following up a few miles behind. The Turks were entrenched at Sahill, some miles above the camp, and after a sharp engagement were driven from their position and retreated, pursued in the direction of Basrah. A short halt was made at Sahill, where news was received that the Turks had evacuated Basrah and that the Arabs had looted the town. On the arrival of our gunboats, however, the disturbances had ceased. Further reinforcements had in the meantime arrived and the next few days were spent in pushing forward the troops to Basrah on river steamers. As the number of river steamers were insufficient for the transporting of troops, the Post Office staff could not be sent up in a body. Small batches with their kit and equipment were, when opportunity offered, put on any boat going to Basrah. The first batch to arrive opened up an office, No. 26 under Mr. Faithfull, at Ashar, near the Turkish Barracks. Eventually by the end of November the full staff and equipment reached Basrah.

## BASRAH.

If the work prior to embarking at Bombay was heavy it was easily surpassed by what had to be done at Basrah. Our work was considerably increased by having to deal with the accumulated mails for the civil population undisposed of by the terrified Turkish officials. A Base Post Office and Field Post Offices had to be opened and set going, a site had to be procured and a camp pitched for the staff.

All the duties cannot be fully described on paper, but the Post Office

officials learnt during this time what it meant to feel dog-tired and to do with scrappy meals. We had hardly been in Basrah two days when a telegram was received, stating that reinforcements for the Post Office had arrived in the river with mails for the Force. This lengthened the strain for some time longer, but by degrees, things settled down and the next two or three months were spent in improving the postal arrangements.

The establishment which came out as reinforcements consisted of two Superintendents, two Inspectors, four postmasters, ten clerks, and fifteen menials. These brought our staff up to a fairly large number. Our encampment was in a date garden, intersected, as all date gardens are, by numerous canals with strips of land about ten feet wide between them. These canals were filled in with mud and our tents were pitched over this ground. The site was not healthy, as the ground was, naturally, very damp, and the decomposing vegetation in the canals around gave out the usual unhealthy smells. Besides this our camp was outside the perimeter, and as at the time the Arabs were unruly, an attempt to rush the camps was not beyond the bounds of possibility, and as a matter of fact was feared. The ground which we occupied was flooded a month or so later, and on this account and because living in tents would have been impossible during the Hot Weather, which was approaching, another cleaner and healthier site was procured near Messrs. Gray Mackenzie's building. Mat huts were later built by the Works Company, for the Hot Weather and this place has been our camp up to the present time, May 1916. From a few huts, the camp has gradually grown until at the present time quite a large number of huts have been erected and the area is becoming crowded.

ESTABLISH-  
MENT.

The Base Post Office was established in one room, in the British Consulate building, which was occupied by Sir Arthur Barrett, and the Headquarters Staff of the Sixth Division. As there was need for expansion and no more room was available, the Base Post Office was put into a large E. P. tent, but this proving very unsatisfactory a small proportion of one of Messrs. Gray Mackenzie's sheds was obtained and enclosed with mat walls. As the force grew bigger the original office kept expanding, and at the present time, the whole of the shed (a very large one) is occupied by the Post Office and a room 82 x 43 has had to be added for the storage of mails. Mat walls have given place to brick ones, and the whole office is lighted by electricity. Letters are sorted in a room 100 x 61 and the parcels in one 100 x 30. These rooms are full of sorting cases for parcels and letters. The bags when landed are placed in the mail room from where they are taken to the sorting room in batches, as required, and their contents to the men who deal with articles for the various Divisions. These men prepared bags for each unit of the Division. As the mails for up river are closed the bags are taken off to the mail room and there kept till transport is available for their

THE BASE POST  
OFFICE.



despatch. The office has now an imposing appearance as could be expected of an office in the field and no one would recognise the old godowns from which it originated.

POST OFFICE  
TRANSACTIONS.

Although strictly according to the Manual rules the work in a field post office is restricted to issuing money orders, accepting Savings Bank deposits, collecting and delivering letters and delivering parcels, yet by degrees the force at Basrah was given many extra facilities. The Base Post Office was authorised to register letters and parcels, including the delivery of value-payable parcels, and the payment of money orders. Postmen were employed to deliver letters, although on Field Service all units should send orderlies to the Post Office for their mails. In fact the members of the Force at Basrah have practically the same postal facilities as they had in India. The civil population, moreover, was not neglected, civil post offices being opened up near Ashar and in the heart of Basrah City. These offices are invaluable, as owing to the shortage of freight and the opening of a number of business firms thousands of parcels arrive every week. These civil offices as well as civil offices at Abul Khasib, Mohammerah, Fao, Bushire, Zobeir, Suk-esh-Sheyukh, Nasiriyah, Qalat Saleh, Amara, Ahwaz are all under the control of the Director, Postal Services.

FIELD POST  
OFFICE

As Basrah is a fairly large town and units and departments were scattered it was found necessary to open up small field post offices in various localities to do away with the necessity for members of the Force to walk any great distance to transact their postal business. One after another field post offices were opened up until at one time there were seven or eight such offices scattered about Basrah alone. Mail line communications were introduced between these offices and the Base Post Office.

QURNAH.

To go back once again to the time when Basrah was occupied. A few days after the occupation, Qurnah was taken after a sharp struggle, and later a force was sent to Ahwaz and later still to Shaiba some miles from Basrah. Field Post Offices were sent out with these columns, and a Civil Post Office was opened at Ahwaz. No further movements were made for about three months, when further activities were commenced. The enemy had gathered in force and were threatening Shaiba and Qurnah. Then followed the battle of Shaiba, in which the enemy was defeated and retreated precipitately in the direction of Nasiriyah. The battle of Shaiba was watched with the great interest from the Zobeir gate on the outskirts of Basrah by all those left in that city. The bursting of shells was plainly visible and through glasses one caught glimpses of movements of bodies of cavalry and scattered lines of infantry. Not long after the victory at Shaiba, an offensive was made against the Turks around Qurnah and here again the Turks were defeated and retired upriver, hotly pursued by the gunboats and troops. Amara was occupied by our troops,

some 700 Turks being taken prisoners by Major-General Townshend with a mere handful of tommies. When Qurnah was occupied, a Field Post Office for the Force there had been opened; and in the advance to Amara the post offices accompanied the troops, performing the journey in the river steamers. Amara once occupied there was a further lull in the fighting for a couple of months. During the lull the post office work was carried on smoothly, post offices being opened on both banks placed in communication with each other, while the civil population benefited by the opening of a Civil Post Office. One of the most important duties at stations upriver was the arrangement for the despatch of the outward English Mail, in time to connect at Basrah with the outgoing Persian Gulf steamer. Thursday was the latest day on which mails could be despatched from Amara in order that they could reach Basrah and be censored in time to be included in the mail despatched on Saturday or Sunday. All censoring was carried out at the Base. The outward mails was usually despatched by river steamer but, frequently there were no steamers available, and on these occasions, country boats had to be hired and despatched to Basrah with a guard. These boats, provided a favourable wind was blowing, performed the journey almost as fast as a steamer. The advance to Amara was made just as the Hot Weather had set in and during the months spent at Amara we were frequently hard put to it to carry on the work. With over fifty per cent. of the staff ill at the Base and at the Front, it was necessary for the remaining men to work very strenuously indeed. Working for long hours in the terrible heat was a great strain on the men and reinforcements from Bombay could not arrive fast enough to replace those who had fallen sick.

The worst days of August 1915 having passed, arrangements were made for a further advance up the Tigris and in the month of September 1915 a forward move was made to Sannayat Camp about sixteen miles below the Turkish position. Field Post Offices again accompanied the troops in this advance and started work on steamers. A halt of about ten days was made at Sannayat and during the time the different Brigade Post Offices were opened. The chief difficulty here was the procuring of transport or fatigue parties for the mails when received, and often mails, especially parcel mails, would not be taken delivery of by the units as they had no wish to burden themselves with heavy mail bags when on the move, which was to follow shortly. Towards the end of September the camp was struck and the post offices once more placed on board to accompany the advance. From a position five miles further up the river, where all the steamers halted the battle of Kut-al-Amara which resulted in the defeat of the Turks and the evacuation of Kut was watched. The postal arrangements at Kut were a repetition of what was done at Amara.

As soon as sufficient supplies could be collected, a further advance was

KUT-AL-AMARA.

28TH AUGUST.

CTESIPHON.



22ND OCTOBER  
1915.

made towards Baghdad and postal officials with the Field Post Offices were again in the advance being located on the steamers. The battle of Ctesiphon, as all know, resulted in a victory for the British, but owing to a number of causes the position could not be held and the troops had to retire on Kut-al-Amara. During the retreat all the Field Post Offices and a large number of mail bags for delivery which were in the possession of the postal officials were safely withdrawn to Amara. Under the orders of the military authorities, one small post office was left at Kut-al-Amara. Eight postal officials, consisting of one Superintendent, Mr. Appleby, two Inspectors, one field postmaster and four menials remained in Kut when it was invested. The field post offices that were put in the boats remained at Amara until the fall of Kut, dealing with the mails for the beleaguered garrison, about six thousand sacks of letter and parcel mails having accumulated up to the time that Kut fell.

REINFORCEMENTS  
FROM FRANCE.

Kut was besieged during the first week of December 1915, and during the succeeding month large reinforcements were received from I.E.F. "A" which had returned from France. Transports carrying these troops arrived in quick succession, the Force bringing their own postal staff which was amalgamated with that of Force "D." Seven or eight field post offices arrived, with a number of spare clerks and menials for the Base. Some of the field post offices were rushed to the Front with the troops to form the relief force for Kut but most of the postal staff had to be detained at the Base to strengthen the Base Post Office, where the sudden advent of such large reinforcements caused a great increase of work. The system of sorting the mails had to be reorganised to cope with the abnormal increase which followed the arrival of these reinforcements. Numerous huts had also to be erected in the camp to accommodate the new-comers and a large extension of the Base Post Office had to be designed and carried out. Hardly had this time of stress passed when Force "G" amalgamated with this Force and reinforcements of about six supervising officers, three or four field post offices and a few spare clerks and menials for the Base joined us. I. E. F. "D" at this time far surpassed in size and importance any Expeditionary Force that had left India. The several large reinforcements sent up the work to be dealt with by the field post offices by leaps and bounds. About a million articles per week are being dealt with. It is not necessary therefore to dilate on the amount of mail matter now being handled, but a few remarks in general on the mail arrangements and other important points upon which complaints against the Postal arrangements in Mesopotamia were chiefly based would not perhaps be out of place.

MAIL ARRANGEMENTS.

As regards the inward mails Force "D" except for a short period, when there was a regular bi-weekly mail, received mails regularly once a week by the Persian Gulf mail steamers which

brought both the English and Indian Mails from Bombay and Karachi. On occasions when the P. and O. mail steamer carrying the English mails arrived at Bombay too late to connect with the Persian Gulf Mail steamers, the English mails was sent on by any available transport. These mails were sorted in the Base Post Office at Basrah and despatched by river steamers. In the early days, although there was a shortage of steamers, the volume of mail matter being small, space could be found fairly regularly to convey all the mails to the Front. As however the number of mail bags increased, transport became more and more difficult until the climax was reached when I. E. F. "A" joined this Force.

Coming from France where accelerated communications and all modern conveniences enabled the Indian Post Office to give the troops a service second to none, the Indian Divisions could not at first understand that in a primitive country like Mesopotamia the want of transport considerably stultified the efforts of the Post Office. As troops as they arrived were pushed up the Tigris to Ali-al-Gharbi and owing to the paucity of steamers their field post offices could not accompany them. With the staff of the Field Post Offices of the 6th Division which were brought out of Kut before that town was invested, field post offices were opened to serve these troops. When leaving France, most of the troops were not aware of their destination and consequently could not give their correspondents their correct address and were doubtful of receiving mails for some considerable time. They were therefore exceedingly surprised when mails rolled up in December 1915 and, except for the erratic running of the steamer service between Marseilles and Bombay, mails arrived on an average of once a week. The joy of receiving a mail was apparent. Notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather and the glutinous nature of the soil, men of the regiments, although tired and wretched with the wet and cold, gladly volunteered to work on fatigues to get their mails and cheerfully trudged through almost knee-deep mud to get the letters to the units in the trenches. Tommy Atkins loves letter-writing but above all he loves to receive letters and illustrated papers. Mail days were red letter days in the Advance. For their part the Indian postmasters cheerfully gave of their best to cope with rapidly increasing mails and to deliver the mails expeditiously.

During the Advance to Wadi post offices were on steamers. These boats were crowded to overflowing and practically every square inch of deck on board was staked out. Each post office was given just enough room for the postmaster to lay his bedding and kit down on and here he had to perform his postal business. Consequently when mails arrived they were opened on the river bank in the pouring rain and oceans of mud. The Kut mails added to the difficulties of the staff, as they were rapidly increasing and accommodation could not be found for them at



the Front. The 'Mejediah' with Corps Headquarters had her holds full of mails for the garrison in Kut. Difficulties and hardships were indescribable till the Force took the Wadi position and advanced to Hanna. Here it was decided after some time to pitch standing camps in the right and left banks of the Tigris and central post offices were opened on each bank. Nothing was decided about the disposal of mails for Kut till the 'Mejediah' was required for transport work; and then suddenly 2,000 bags of mails were dumped on the right bank without any previous preparation for their storage.

WADI, 1915.

The greater part of the camp at Wadi was under water when it rained, as the ground was low, but the post office was fortunate enough to secure a piece of high ground just sufficient to hold the camp. The ground was bounded on the North and West by a mullah and on the East by swampy ground; the only approach was from the West. The unfortunate clerks of the post office seemed to have offended Jupiter Pluvius, for on Mail days he caused the rain to fall in torrents just to watch the unfortunate postal officials getting bogged and to laugh at the antics cut by the pack mules and mule carts when conveying mails to the post office. It was a noteworthy fact throughout February and March 1916 that on mail days it rained incessantly from early dawn till sloppy eve and then the rain ceased abruptly. The next day would be bright and clear. Notwithstanding the efforts of Jupiter Pluvius, the Indian postal officials braved the cruel elements and with great good humour and with a keen sense of the ridiculous, cheerfully worked at and invariably delivered the mails by evening. To counteract the antagonism of the weather, owing to the great demand for transport and the necessity to rush military supplies to the Front, mails could not be sent up regularly and came up in large consignments of two or three thousand bags. This threw a tremendous strain on the Post Office; transport carts had to be procured and fatigues obtained to unload the mails. Thanks to the assistance of the Labour Corps, fatigues were generally obtainable.

1916.

In the middle of February the Staff allowed the Assistant Director to get up the proper personnel and post offices were given to each Headquarters (Corps, Division and Brigade) and a proper service was introduced.

The mails for Kut were a nightmare to the officers of the Post Office, as they were getting too large to be looked after properly. In the middle of February 1916, the A. D. P. S. Corps, Captain Probyn Smith, suggested dropping mails into Kut by aeroplanes. The Corps ascertained General Townshend's wishes and first letters and a few papers for General Townshend and his Brigadiers were successfully dropped by an aeroplane and then at intervals the mails for all the Generals, undelivered from the beginning of the siege were safely delivered by aeroplane. The mails

for the staffs and senior officers were next dropped and finally, before the final advance through Hannah, a certain amount of letter mails for miscellaneous officers were safely sent through. General Townshend sent a message through at the end of March saying that there was great joy in Kut when mails were received. This delivery of mails could only be made when aeroplanes were not utilised on other work.

To show the keenness of the garrison to get their mails, on one occasion a bag was dropped on the river bank and at night a little action was fought to get it in, fortunately no casualties were sustained by the brave 6th Division.

The outward English and Indian mails from the Front were despatched once a week and, as boats were available, later despatches were made to catch the outward steamer. Owing to the strict censorship it was necessary to get the mails into Basrah by Thursdays; so Fridays and later Sundays were fixed as the last safe day of posting at the Front. Much dissatisfaction was expressed by officers and men at the Front at the erratic receipt of mails. This, as has been already said, was and is due to the requirements of the Force being great and the transport being insufficient. For a short time two boats S-1 and the 'Sabeh' were lent to the Post Office as mail boats, but after one trip in the case of the former and three trips in the case of the latter they were withdrawn for military purposes. Mesopotamia, as the cradle of Creation and the first naval dockyard for a passenger ship, to wit the good ship "Noah's Ark," has seen naval construction in its primitive stages and is accustomed to unsightly craft; but even "Mesopotamia" gasped with jealousy when it saw the S.-3 and S.-4. Why did not Noah and his nautical descendants think of this plan of construction? S.-3 with her miniature twin stern wheels and her thin smoke stack first staggered up the river. In this age of records she rightly eschewed the claim to speed and graspingly laid her claim to being the slowest steam craft on the river. She wheezed up to the Front in eight days taking pieces out of the banks and mud flats. But her joy was short-lived:—she staggered down again and met *en route* near the garden of Eden, a fearsome looking craft, all deck with boilers resembling the figure of Pickwick's fat boy and a short thin funnel just peeping over the edge of the awning? This was S-4. A tiny stern wheel propped the ship. If S-3 was wheezy, S-4 was in the last stages of asthma: the wheel revolved for two miles and then stopped the engines gasped for breath of steam and the current took her back again. Nobly she too stepped in front of her rival S-3 and the latter was so taken aback that she rested on a mud bank and allowed the strange creature to proceed on her giddy way. Never again did S-3 show her paces on the Tigris. But what of S-4? With 3,000 bags of mails on her she plodded on her way and, long after her number was up at Lloyds, she suddenly crept into Filailiyah having run about 256 miles in 12 days.



Back she went the same afternoon the proud possessor of the record of doing the journey in the longest time. During the absence of these weird craft, mails were allowed to be sent up in consignments of twelve sacks by each boat. The Base Post Office put as many small bags into the largest sacks to try and get as much mail up as possible. This only irritated people up at the Front and some people received letters and others did not. When General MacMunn took over the L. of C. he allowed the Post Office to send 30 sacks by each boat, later raised the number to 50 and now to 100 bags per steamer, so that most of the letter mail can be sent up in two or three days and before the end of the week all the mail is cleared from the Base.

APRIL 1916

During the advance to Filailiyah some of the mails for General Townshend and his officers were brought up ready to be sent in and, when Kut capitulated, these bags were sent through. The rest of the mail was then brought up in the hopes of the Turks allowing the letter mail through, but Khalil Bey, the Turkish Commander, eventually refused to allow them to be taken up, and they were forwarded to Basrah where they are being dealt with by a special set of men. The Kut mails, both letters and parcels, during their several trips up to the Front and eventually back to Basrah, suffered considerably through the rough handling they received, large numbers of the parcels being smashed to pulp or matchwood. Exposure to rain and damp were responsible also for the destruction of the covers or wrappers of letters and parcels, rendering the addresses illegible. No great difficulty was felt in disposing of the letters for the prisoners of war, as these after being censored are forwarded in the case of British prisoners to the India Office (Postal Section), London, and in the case of Indian prisoners to the Postal Censor, Bombay, for onward transmission. The parcels, however, were more troublesome, as a considerable number were damaged and were without addresses, or contained perishable articles. All parcels in good condition were dealt with in the same manner as the letters, but as regards the others, a Committee of three officers was asked for and appointed by the Army Commander to decide the manner in which they should be disposed of. The contents of broken parcels without any trace of addressee or sender, if in good condition, were made over to the Officer Commanding, War Gifts, but if damaged were destroyed as also were parcels the contents of which had perished, such as cakes, plum puddings, etc. Parcels containing War Gifts were made over to the O. C. War Gifts, and those with addresses such as "Mess President" or "Officer Commanding" were sent to the O. C.s of the Depôts of the various regiments. Six thousand sacks of mail matter take some time to dispose of, but the work is now nearing completion.

The few steamers plying then could hardly cope with the work thrown upon them and, as it was more important for ammunition and

supplies to reach the Front early, the mails suffered great but unavoidable detention. Frequent requests were made for special boats to be allotted to the Post Office, to enable the department to organise a regular weekly service, but the same obvious reply was received on each occasion, that since there were not sufficient steamers for even military requirements, certainly no help in this line could be given to the Post Office. It is not possible under such circumstances to deliver mails rapidly in Mesopotamia, and, although the Post Office takes full advantage of the concession of 100 bags for each steamer by making sure that 100 *very full* bags are despatched yet at that rate it is difficult to clear 1,800 to 2,000 bags in the week, so as to be ready for the same number of bags arriving by the next week's steamers. A regular weekly mail steamer service from Basrah to the Front is a necessity, and had this been possible from the beginning, the complaints received by the Post Office would have been negligible. Not only complaints of delay in delivery, but complaints of loss of parcels in the post, have invariably been accounted for by the fact that in reality they were lying in mail bags accumulated at the Base. Letter mails are always sent up before the parcel mails and it is not surprising that addressees having received an intimation by letter of the despatch of a parcel and not having received it even two or three weeks after the receipt of the letter, complain bitterly of the delay or fear that their parcels have been lost or even stolen whilst in transit through the Post.

The Inward letter mail has reached abnormal proportions, and the work of dealing correctly with the letters received presents many difficulties.

It is surprising how the public in spite of notifications and advertisements still persist in addressing letters incompletely. Each mail brings numbers of letters simply addressed to I. E. F. "D" without any mention of the unit to which the addressee belongs. This entails much extra work in consulting alphabetical lists and nominal rolls. Letters in every kind of vernacular are received for this Force, and, what is still more difficult, numbers of letters addressed in English by illiterate Indians. An example which needs no comment will give an idea of the kind of article one has to deal with—

• "In Basrah City in Basrah, Sahib Office must receive to Affizullah."

Again, officers and men of certain regiments are attached to other units while their own regiments are with the Force, and frequently drafts are attached to different regiments at different times. All these changes increase the difficulty of sorting correctly. So long as an officer or man is with his own unit, mails can never be delayed, but when they are detached the trouble begins. Instructions are telegraphed to the Base that



certain officers are wounded and have gone down to the Hospital at Amara. A mail has just arrived and is being dealt with at the Base Office. The letters for such officers are picked out and enclosed in a bag for Amara. They have hardly left the Base when a wire is received that the officers have been sent to the Base Hospital. By the time the letters are recalled the officers have gone to India without leaving any instructions. It is worse in the case of men's letters. They are returned to the field post office serving the unit with the intimation that the addressees are 'not with the unit' and the Post Office has then to do what it can to trace the addressees. Considering that the average time taken by a boat to do the round trip to the front and back is 14 days, the difficulty in dealing with correspondence for men who are detached from their units may be better imagined than described. To cope with these difficulties a special Enquiry Office (Forerunner of the R.L.O.) is attached to the Base Office, which has to trace out the addressees of letters returned by the various units to the Post Office and of those which are insufficiently addressed. These men have to be specially trained for this work and cannot be readily replaced. All of them may occupy one hut in the camp and occasionally a case of sickness occurs which necessitates most of them being quarantined for a fortnight and a new set of men have to be trained to do the work. The same is the case with the sorters. Three or four sorters are specially trained to sort letters for each Division and are provided with a list of the Officers (Exception List) who have been detached from the units of that Division. This list is a very lengthy one and is generally committed to memory by the sorters. It takes time to make these men expert at this work. A case of suspected cholera occurs in the camp and eight, ten or fourteen of these sorters are marched off by the Medical Officer, and work, which could have been done by trained men in a couple of hours, is accomplished with difficulty in six or seven. The climate of Mesopotamia is not the healthiest in the world and the conditions under which the work has to be done are not ideal. Mail steamers generally come in the evening and after a day of hard work the staff has to begin afresh, to sort inward mails, at which they are busy throughout the night, so as to effect a delivery in Basrah the first thing in the morning and to have the mails ready for despatch up river by the first boat that may be leaving the next day. The men are tired out and working sometimes 50 per cent. below normal strength on account of sickness, but the following day's work must be attended to at all costs. Officers and men are worked at very high pressure on such occasions. Hundreds of thousands of letters are dealt with under the most trying circumstances and very often by new drafts from India. Is it surprising that occasionally a letter for an officer who is detached from his unit slips through in the unit bag? In France such a mistake would scarcely be noticed, as the letters would get back to the Base in a day or two; but out here it means a delay of perhaps

15 to 18 days and, very naturally, the addressee complains of the "disgraceful arrangements at the Base." Again owing to the Post Office being limited to a despatch of only 100 bags per ordinary steamer, whole Formations cannot be served at the same time. "A" gets his English Mail and "B", very naturally, wants to know why he has not received his and promptly strafes the Base Post Office. Parcel mails are subjected to greater detention, and because "B" has not received his parcel of cigarettes punctually to time he jumps to the conclusion that it has been lost or stolen in the Post and a long complaint is sent in, which after a very lengthy correspondence, is admitted to have been received a few days later. The inward parcel mail causes a great deal of trouble and anxiety to postal officials owing to the large number of parcels which are received damaged or broken to pieces, especially those despatched from the United Kingdom. The long journey which parcel bags have to perform and the rough handling they receive during the numerous transshipments from one boat to another are the causes which are responsible for parcels being received broken. Parcels which are several times crushed in slings when being loaded and unloaded from ships, and have to bear the weight of hundreds of heavy parcel bags piled on them, cannot be expected to arrive whole unless they are very strongly packed. Imagine the condition of a plum pudding wrapped in a piece of brown paper when it arrives in Basrah, after having been lying at the bottom of a pile of bags weighing fifty or sixty tons! Again, tins of tobacco, cakes, &c., are tied up in brown paper with a bit of twine around it and addressees cannot understand why the contents are damaged! In many cases they cannot even be delivered, as nothing remains of the address on the brown paper, all of which has been torn to shreds. All parcels which do not contain clothing, &c., should invariably be packed in strong wooden boxes with thick sides and enclosed in gunny. Card-board boxes are of no use. Boxes of thin wood are even worse, and parcels so packed must invariably be smashed in transit, the contents falling out and mixing with the contents of other parcels packed in the same manner, with the result that it is impossible to find out what each parcel contained.

The outward mails are much simpler to deal with although there is a lot to be done in disposing of them. The destinations of all articles addressed in vernacular have to be transcribed in English, *i.e.*, the *post town* of destination of each article has to be recorded on it in red ink. With numerous Indian regiments here from all parts of India this is no light task, especially as the work has to be carried out expeditiously in order that all letters posted during the week in the various post offices as well as at the Base, may be sorted and censored in time to be despatched by the outgoing mail steamer. The office of the Chief Censor is in the same building as the Post Office. The sorting staff of the Base



Office separates the letters, postcards and packets received from upriver stations, as well as those posted in Basrah into three divisions, viz., (1) articles for the United Kingdom and foreign countries, and India addressed in English, (2) articles for India addressed in vernacular and (3) articles 'O. H. M. S.,' postcard and letters being 'faced' and tied up separately in bundles of a convenient size. These bundles are transferred through separate shoots into the Chief Censor's Office, where they are dealt with by a staff of officers and Indian soldiers controlled by Major Branson, the Chief Censor. As each bundle of letters and postcards is censored, it is retied and transferred to the sorters who deal only with the outward mails. These men work in a portion of the room occupied by the Censor. They sort the contents of the bundles into direct bags for London, Bombay, Karachi and the Karachi-Bombay Sea Post Office and for various important centres in India. As soon as a bag is ready it is sealed, its label stamped by the Censor and then it is transferred to the mail department. Articles of the parcel and registered mails have to bear an impression of the Censor's stamp before they can be booked by the Post Office and the registered and parcel bags have to be closed in the Censor's presence. Nominally only those articles which are in the Base Office by Thursday night are supposed to be dealt with by the Censor, but as a matter of fact, thanks to the efficient arrangements made by Major Branson, all articles received in the Base Office up to within a few hours of the time fixed for the closing of the outward mails are censored and included in the weekly despatch. Considering the mass of mail matter that has to be dealt with each week and censored most carefully, the results are more than satisfactory and reflect creditably on the co-operation between the two departments.

To complete this article, mention must be made of the Sea Post Office which was organised to serve the Force by sorting the mails between Bushire in the Persian Gulf and Basrah, a voyage of about 18 hours. Sorters from Force "D" proceeded weekly to Bushire by the outward mail boat, disembarked there and returned on the inward mail boat, sorting the mail during the voyage. The scheme proved very successful until the mails became too heavy to sort in the time at our disposal. The space on the mail boats was also limited and could not be extended owing to the large amount of Government stores which these mail boats had to convey. The Sea Post Office had therefore be abolished and the sorting work performed in the Base Post Office. The chief advantage of the scheme was that mails for members of the Force in Basrah were received sorted and could be delivered very shortly after the arrival of the mail.

All that is now required to give the force in Mesopotamia an ideal postal service is the provision of suitable river steamers placed *entirely* at the disposal of the Post Office for the conveyance of mails between

Basrah and the Front.\* Arrangements are being made for such a service and when they are completed and the River Mail Service established, complaints will be conspicuous by their absence.

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\* This proposal, though repeatedly made, did not actually materialise till after the Armistice in 1918.—EDITOR.



## CHAPTER VIII.

Up to Nov. 1917.

### THE FIRST SIX PHASES.

By

Major C. J. E. Clerici, C.I.E., O.B.E., R.E., D.D.P.S., M.E.F.

Official Report.

*Brief Account of the Gradual Evolution and Expansion of Postal Operations in Mesopotamia. November 1914—November 1917.*

INTRODUCTORY:  
RESERVATIONS.

**T**HIS Note\* is written at very short notice and is based, as far as the first two of the three years embraced are concerned, on memory merely and as regards the third year on direct knowledge of only the Tigris Front and Lines of Communications.

2. The period is divisible into six distinct phases, namely :

PHASE I : Up to April 1915—the assumption of command by General Sir John Nixon as Army Commander and the increase of the Force from one to two Divisions with a Cavalry Brigade ;

PHASE II : Up to Dec. 1915—the investment of Kut by the Turks

PHASE III : Up to the end of April 1916—the relief operation and the capitulation of Kut to the Turks ;

PHASE IV : Up to Dec. 1916—the inception of operations leading to the capture of Baghdad ;

PHASE V : Up to March 1917—the occupation of Baghdad by the British ;

PHASE VI : Up to November 1917.

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GENERAL OR-  
GANISATION OF  
FIELD POSTS.

3. It seems necessary at the outset to describe the general organisation of Indian Field Posts.

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\* Major Clerici wrote the Note for Sir William Maxwell, Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs, when he visited Mesopotamia in November 1917.



Seated:—MAJOR ASHES, LT.-COL. H. A. SAMS, MR. G. R. CLARKE, MAJOR CHURCH, CAPT. BROWN.



The Postal Manual (War) India lays down "the normal scale of field post offices" is as follows:—

For the Headquarters of each Army in the field .. .. .	1
For each Divisional Headquarters (including the Divisional troops) .. .. .	1
For each Cavalry Brigade .. .. .	1
For each Infantry Brigade .. .. .	1
For Lines of Communications .. .. .	As required.

The same publication states that the field units formed by the Post Office are termed base post offices and 1st and 2nd class field post offices. Ordinarily a base post office will be established at each military base of operations. The normal scales of establishments of base and field post offices and supervising staff are given in the "Field Service Manual Postal," which fixes the strength of post offices as follows:—

—	Post-master & Dy. Post-masters.	Clerks.	Menials.	Total.
<i>For a base post office, presumably to serve the strength of a Division.</i>	3	15	9	27
For a 1st class post office.	1	2	4	7
For a 2nd class post office	1	..	2	3

It has been recognised that the field post office of a Brigade or of a Divisional Headquarters should be of the 1st class. In other cases the strength of the staff is determined by actual requirements from time to time and may exceed the first class scale especially in field post offices at large and important stations on the Lines of Communications.

PHASE I:—November 1914—April 1915.

PHASE I.—INCEPTION OF POSTAL OPERATIONS (OCTOBER 1914).

4. November 1914 has been adopted as the opening date of this narrative, because it was not until then that Indian Expeditionary Force, "D", as the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force was at that time known, landed in Mesopotamia. A complement of field post offices, however, accompanied the original Brigade which, under General Delamain,

set out from India in October 1914, waited at Bahrein for the turn of events and finally took Fao at the beginning of November 1914. No mails, under the orders of the Military authorities in India, had yet been sent out to the Expedition, but this initial draft of postal officials performed invaluable service in collecting and despatching to India letters written by members of the Force, and more especially in working, by means of the signallers included in its number, the telegraph office left standing by the Turks at Fao, thus opening telegraphic communication with India and later, linking up Basrah, when it fell into our hands, on the 22nd November 1914.

5. In the meantime the rest of the 6th (Poona) Division, to which General Delamain's brigade belonged, arrived in the Shatt-el-Arab as the united streams of the Tigris and the Euphrates from Qurnah and of the Karun from Mohammerah are known in their passage to the sea). With it came the first set of mails for the Expeditionary Force and the remainder of the postal staff necessary to serve the complete Force which consisted of the 6th (Poona) Division under Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Barrett. A base post office had been established at Basrah— in a small room on the ground floor of the Residency building, a few days after the British occupation of that city, and was ready to receive, sort and deliver the mails that had arrived. These comprised accumulated mails of four or five weeks, amounting to about fifty bags of letters and parcels; and nothing could have exceeded the joy which their advent occasioned among all ranks.

ESTABLISHMENT  
OF BASE POST  
OFFICE AT BAS-  
RAH AND  
DELIVERY OF  
FIRST MAILS,  
(NOVEMBER  
1914)

6. Real business then began briskly, in an expedition, which so far at any rate as the Postal Service was concerned, was from day to day to present fresh problems of peculiar difficulty and has perhaps been the busiest and most harassing of all postal undertakings in the War. Field Post Offices were promptly allotted to Brigades and henceforth as a rule followed their Formations from place to place. Basrah itself called for much attention, as numerous headquarters units, offices and camps were scattered in and around the city. One of the first steps taken was to attach a field post office to the General Hospital which was established at Beit Namah, the Sheikh of Mohammerah's palace on the right bank about two miles above Basrah. Other local field post offices were opened respectively at what was then known as the Governor's house (now the office of the Inspector-General of Communications) in the late German Consulate; at the Serai and at Ashar Barracks. By the end of March 1915 postal operations had extended towards Ahwaz on the Karun; to Qurnah at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates; and to Shaiba, an outpost some miles west of Basrah.

OPENING OF  
FIELD POST  
OFFICES AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
OF OPERATIONS.

7. The task of organising civil posts had meanwhile been taken up with alacrity. Previous to the War, British consular post offices, manned

CIVIL POST  
OFFICES.



and controlled by the Indian Postal administration, had existed at Basrah and Mohammerah. These offices only served the consular staffs and agents and the British colonies at those places. The Mohammerah post office, being on Persian soil, alone survived the outbreak of hostilities, although so far as mail communication was concerned it was little better off than Basrah itself until the arrival of British troops re-opened the Persian Gulf route for both. Large collections of mails for civilians, received from India and found at Basrah, were dealt with at once and delivered at an improvised office in a tent; a regular post office for the general use of the civilian population was established at a central site on the Ashar Strand at Basrah in December 1914, within a month of the entry of the British; a house-to-house system of delivery by local postmen was inaugurated; a daily mail service with Mohammerah was started; and a second civil post office was opened in Basrah city in March 1915, near the late Turkish post office, to meet the growing requirements of the place. In the same period civil post offices were also established at Fao and at Koweit.

#### POSTAGE.

8. Free postage on correspondence from troops in the field to India and the United Kingdom was sanctioned in November 1914. In the case of Civil Posts in the occupied territory, as well, as for example at Koweit, Indian postage rates and conditions were introduced from the start. Mohammerah, although only twenty miles distant from Basrah and on the same high road to the outer world, continued and continues under the much higher Union scale of postage by virtue of its situation within the political frontiers of a foreign Union country. The anomaly of maintaining the Union tariff in local correspondence exchanged between the Mohammerah and the Basrah post offices was removed in April 1915 temporarily when Indian rates were made applicable to such mails.

#### MAIL SERVICES: (a) WITH THE OUTER WORLD.

9. Mail communication between Mesopotamia and the outer world has always been *via* India, that is to say, Karachi and Bombay through which its English Mails come and go. It is dependent therefore as much on the nature of the service between Bombay and London as on that between Bombay and Basrah. Shortly, a third main link in the chain was to be added, namely, the long, lengthening and difficult line between Basrah and the Tigris Front; but in the period of the first Phase, only the Bombay-Basrah connection claimed notice. Before the War there were two mail services to the Persian Gulf:

- (1) A fast service, touching only at the principal ports and doing the journey between Bombay and Basrah in about 5 or 6 days in each direction, and
- (2) A slow or subsidiary service, embracing all ports and taking about 10 or 12 days each way.

On the declaration of War, a single, combined service was introduced and was continued for some time after the capture of Basrah by the British. The steamers frequently took 10 to 14 days in their journeys from Bombay to Basrah, or almost as much as the mail transit time from London to Bombay; and these delays, often increased by the difficulty of negotiating the bar at Fao and the obstruction in the shape of a steamer sunk by the Turks at Mohammerah, gave rise to some impatience among members of the Force. The mails had frequently to be brought up from Mohammerah in launches specially provided for the purpose by the Military authorities, and similar arrangements, with a view to expediting the receipt of the mails, were resorted to when necessary even after the resumption of the fast mail Service. Both from the earliest days and subsequently, transports or troopships to and from India have been utilised for mails whenever advantageous.

10. In most directions the quickest and in some the only way of distributing and collecting mails was by water, and accordingly a series of services by *bellam*, the local gondola, was started to Ashar and to the Serai and the city *via* the Ashar Creek; to Magil, for some time the site of a Brigade, and later as far as Gurmat Ali six or seven miles above Basrah. To Qurnah which was the most distant point to be served, mails were sent by Military steamers, which constituted the only available means of transport to that place. For some time a bi-weekly ferry service between Basrah and Qurnah was maintained by the Military authorities; but even when it did not exist no pronounced difficulties in the transmission of mails arose, as long as Qurnah remained the terminus upriver. Shaiba was the only place served by road, but mails to and from that outpost had soon to be exchanged by *bellam* convoys which were established by the Military authorities on the occurrence of the abnormal floods of that year. The loading, unloading and safeguarding of mails conveyed by these convoys called for special arrangements which were satisfactorily carried out, no mails being lost or damaged. By the courtesy of Mr. Aga Jaffer and Messrs. Lynch Bros. who successively ran ferries to Mohammerah, mails were carried free between that place and Basrah.

MAIL SERVICES:  
(b) LOCAL.

11. His Excellency the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst visited Mesopotamia in January—February 1915. Special services were organised whereby mails for and from His Excellency or the Viceregal party were delivered at once. This visit is specially noteworthy for the grateful terms in which reference was made, in the public address presented to him by the citizens of Basrah, to the grant to them of the benefit of the stimulating Indian rates of postage.

NOTEWORTHY  
EVENTS.  
VISITS BY THE  
VICEROY AND  
THE POSTMAS-  
TER-GENERAL,  
BOMBAY.

Mr. E. A. Doran, C.I.E., J.P., Postmaster-General of Bombay, came to Basrah in March 1915 on a tour of inspection and was well pleased



with the postal arrangements. After discussion with him and under his orders, registration and parcel business was started in the Base Post Office; and with his approval also, delivery of mails by postmen was instituted in the Headquarters area of Basrah. Mr. Doran further took note of the necessity for launches for the postal service.

MISCELLANEOUS  
MATTERS :

(a) MOVES OF  
POST OFFICE  
CAMP AND BASE  
POST OFFICE.

12. There was a considerable amount of settling down and therefore a corresponding amount of unsettlement—a feature which has specially characterised conditions in this country, owing to peculiar local circumstances and frequent accessions to the strength of the Force, as well as the march to further improvements. The entire Postal Camp had to be moved to drier ground, while the Base Post Office had to be transferred from the Residency first to an E. P. tent and later to Messrs. Gray, Mackenzie's main shed a portion of which had to be matted in and fitted for the purpose.

MISCELLANEOUS  
MATTERS : (b)  
INSTITUTION OF  
" EXCEPTION  
LISTS."

13. A system of "Exception Lists" issued weekly, showing unit by unit the names of detached and invalided officers, was instituted at an early stage of the proceedings for the purpose of enabling their mails to be readily intercepted and redirected at Basrah. This measure proved of incalculable use and benefit subsequently, when, owing to the increase in the area of operations and in the number of casualties and to transport difficulties, failure to intercept mails at the Base would have resulted in serious delay in their receipt by the addressees.

GENERAL  
SITUATION AT  
CLOSE OF PHASE  
I.

14. Nine field post offices and five civil post offices existed at the end of Phase I in a sphere comprised within the limits of Ahwaz, Qurnah, Shaiba and Koweit; the postal staff numbered about 80, including 3 officers; and the average number of letter and parcel bags received weekly was about 80.

COMMENDATION  
BY G. O. C.

15. Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Barrett in his despatch on relinquishing command of the Force commended the Postal Service on its arrangements.

PHASE II :—*April 1915 to December 1915.*

BRIEF SURVEY  
OF EVENTS,  
PHASE II : (a)  
INCREASE OF  
FORCE.

16. In April 1915 General Sir John Nixon assumed command of the Force, which was then increased from one to two Divisions with a Cavalry Brigade.

(b) OPERATIONS  
AND EXTENSION  
OF LINES.

17. Operations took place successively at Shaiba (April 1915); in Arabistan (April-May 1915); on the Tigris near Qurnah (May-June 1915); on the Euphrates and at Nasiriyah (July 1915); at Kut-el-Amarah (September 1915); and at Ctesiphon (October 1915). In all these instances post offices accompanied or followed close behind the troops. At the same time, as the main columns moved on, Lines of Communications or local field post offices were opened at all important posts that were established in the rear; thus, such post offices were provided in turn at

Qurnah, Amarah and Kut-el-Amarah. All the field post offices belonging to General Townshend's (the 6th) Division, General Melliss's Brigade and the Cavalry Brigade were at Lajj when the final advance to Ctesiphon began. In the hurried retirement which ensued, the postal staff successfully extricated all Government property and mails, which were sent direct to Amarah. The Line of Communications field post office at Kut was left there, at the request of the Military authorities and was shut in with the invested garrison; and one British Officer and two Inspectors of the post office who remained at Kut to attend to certain duties had also no further opportunity to come away.

The main net results of the above operations from the postal point of view were the permanent extension of the line up the Tigris to a point below Kut, about 250 miles from Basrah, and the creation of a new line on the Euphrates up to Nasirayah where field post offices were established after the capture of that town.

18. A field post office had also to be provided for Bushire where troops were stationed to keep the local tribesmen in check. (c) ADDITION OF BUSHIRE.

19. Civil post offices followed in the wake of our advancing forces everywhere and were established at Amarah and Qalat Saleh on the Tigris; at Nasiriyah and Suk-es-Sheyukh on the Euphrates; and at Ahwaz on the Karun. A house had actually been taken for the civil post office at Kut, while the staff and equipment for the post offices required for Baghdad had already arrived at Basrah. (d) CIVIL POST OFFICES.

The main post office at Basrah was raised to the status of a Head Post office in respect of all civil post offices from Koweit upward which had hitherto been subordinate to Bushire.

Persian postage stamps surcharged "Bushire under British Occupation" were issued at Bushire when that town was taken temporarily under our control in August 1915.

20. To turn to good account the period of transit from India to Basrah, a Sea Post Office was instituted in May 1915, to sort the mails between Bushire and Basrah. By this organisation—perhaps the happiest inspiration of the Post Office in the whole history of the Expedition—the mails were ready for delivery or transmission upriver immediately on arrival at Basrah, and the Base Post Office was relieved of the necessity for sorting the mails against time. MAIL SERVICES : (a) EXTERNAL BUSHIRE-BASRAH SEA POST OFFICE.

21. The moment the troops moved up beyond Qurnah the difficulty of obtaining adequate and proper transport for the mails began to be felt, and it became more acute with each advance. Immediately after the action near Qurnah, when no craft for mails was available in the course of the operations, urgent application was made to India for a large MAIL SERVICES : (b) INTERNAL TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES.



motor launch without which, at least, it was feared that the Postal Service would be reduced to a position of impotency. The reply received was that under the terms of the Note to rule 11 of the *Postal Manual (War) India*, it was "incumbent on the Military authorities to provide the Post Office with the requisite transport" when it was impracticable for the Department, as in this case, to make its own arrangements in the field for the conveyance of mails. Responsibility for the provision of transport has never been repudiated by the Military authorities and the Post Office has merely had to share the effects of the general shortage and to take its turn after more urgent requirements. Efforts were made without success to obtain by independent purchase and through the Military authorities Evinrude motor boats for local services. About the time of the Kut-el-Amarah operations the real necessity which existed for the provision of special postal steamers for the conveyance of mails between Basrah and the Front was pointed out to the Military authorities; and it may properly be mentioned here, although the proceedings occurred at the beginning of the next Phase, that eventually application was made for 4 "L" class steamers for the upcountry service. These were sanctioned but the steamers were never received!

The actual arrangements which existed for the conveyance of mails were as follows:—

**TIGRIS LINE**:—By Military steamers when available. During operations they were generally *not* available for mails. On several occasions outward mails had to be sent down to Basrah by country boat in the absence of steamers.

**EUPHRATES LINE**:—By country boat between Qurnah and Nasiriyah.

**KARUN LINE**:—By supply steamers which ran very irregularly at intervals of 8, 10, or 14 days. It was possible, however in due course, to arrange with Messrs. Strick, Scott and Co., agents of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, for a regular weekly service between Mohammerah and Ahwaz by motor launch, under contract.

**STAFF SITUATION.**

22. During the phase (April 1915—December 1915), the situation in the matter of staff assumed a serious aspect owing not only to an initial shortage but also to wholesale casualties which could not be replaced quickly enough. These occurred during the hot season which was unusually severe and protracted even for Mesopotamia. As a precautionary measure, mat huts had been erected by the Military authorities for the accommodation of officers and men in standing camps. These huts were no doubt better than tents, but apparently failed to afford sufficient protection against the heat, which was most trying. The available personnel of the Base Post Office to deal with mails often dwindled down to

2 or 3 men, while at the Front, where the staff had to live in tents, whole offices at the time were wiped out. Nevertheless owing to the magnificent exertions of the men who were not stricken and of the officers, who did clerks' and packers' duties, no hitch occurred when there might easily have been a breakdown. The strain, however, told on the staff.

23. The Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, India, the Hon'ble Mr. C. H. Harrison, I.C.S., visited Basrah in November 1915 and was apparently satisfied with the state of the Postal Service.

24. The region of the postal responsibilities of the Force was now embraced by Koweit and Bushire on the Persian Gulf; Ahwaz on the Karun; Kut on the Tigris and Nasiriyah on the Euphrates. The number of field post offices had increased from 9 to 23 and of civil post offices from 5 to 10. The postal staff consisted of about 120 men and 5 officers. The mails received averaged about 200 to 300 bags weekly.

GENERAL SITUATION AT CLOSE OF PHASE II.

PHASE III :—*December 1915 to April 1916.*

25. Kut was invested by the Turks early in December 1915. Soon after that event occurred, information was received from the Military authorities that two additional Divisions were coming shortly from France and that the number would possibly be still further increased. That notice was scarcely given before the troops and mails for them began to arrive. The mails which had never exceeded 500 bags on any occasion were now all at once received in quantities of 1,000 or 1,500 bags. Those for the newly arrived Formations were accumulated mails, and the volume generally grew with the approach of Christmas and the New Year. The Postal Service suddenly found itself faced with a situation of extreme gravity in respect of accommodation, staff, organisation and transport.

SUDDEN DOUBLING OF FORCE TO BE SERVED.

26. The accommodation in the Base Post Office which was calculated to meet the requirements of a little more than two Divisions was entirely insufficient for the mails of four Divisions and the greatest difficulty was experienced on this account. Almost the whole of Messrs. Gray, Mackenzie's large shed had to be taken up; but this had to be walled in and fitted, and labour as well as material was scarce at the time. The building work, which included the construction of an annexe for use as a separate mail room, was not completed until March or April 1916, and for some time in the interval the mails had to be dealt with under most disadvantageous circumstances. Extraordinarily bad weather with constant gales and torrential downpours greatly aggravated the conditions.

DIFFICULTIES OF ACCOMMODATION AT BASE.

27. The staff available was even more inadequate than the accommodation owing to the depletions of the preceding hot season, and the

SHORTAGE OF STAFF.



shortages that existed were serious both at the Base and at the Front. The reinforcements generally arrived in instalments some time after the troops were in the country and their mails began to be received. No reserves came and the initial shortages were not made up, while casualties on a considerable scale, caused by the inclement winter, both among the new arrivals and the original staff further depleted the ranks. So far as the Front was concerned, the reinforcements were delayed at the Base for want of transport and also, in the first instance, only a few of the men were allowed to proceed beyond Amara. Additional hutting accommodation was obtained for the increased staff at the Base, while extended and comfortable latrines and cooking-ranges were erected as soon as practicable for their use.

ORGANISATION  
FOR DISPOSAL OF  
MAILS.

28. The arrangements for the disposal of mails had to be taken in hand and completely reorganised and an officer was at once placed on special duty for the purpose. An Inspector was further detailed to board all transports, collect nominal rolls and make enquiries as to the immediate movements of units or detached officers. All this information was carefully registered and circulated under the orders of the officer in charge of sorting arrangements, who moreover controlled and supervised the working of the sorting department. The Bushire-Basrah Sea Post Office was abolished under orders from India, owing to the increase in the volume of the mails and the inability of the British India Steam Navigation Company to provide sufficient accommodation for sorting purposes on the mail steamers. The sorting work had, therefore, again to be undertaken by the Base Post Office. The whole scheme of sorting had been most carefully thought out down to the smallest detail, and the fact that in spite of exceptional drawbacks of every description the mails were disposed of correctly and expeditiously shows that the plans had been well conceived and carried into effect. At a time of overwhelming pressure and considerable confusion, the Post Office had up to date knowledge of the whereabouts of every officer in the country and was frequently referred to for information. The necessity for a Returned Letter Office was also at once recognised and such an office was actually organised, but for want of staff could not be properly worked.

TRANSPORT  
DIFFICULTIES.

29. Transport was evidently totally inadequate even for military requirements and the question of forwarding mails to the Front, especially in the greatly increased quantities in which they now arrived, became a most anxious problem. To lose no opportunity, an Inspector was detailed to call on the Embarkation Commandant daily to inform him of the number of bags in hand and to enquire whether transport was available. That officer was in addition given written notice ahead of English Mails expected and of the transport probably required for them. In this way it was generally possible to send up letter mails soon after arrival, but parcel mails suffered delays of about a week and sometimes more.

30. At the Front the greatest difficulty was experienced in dealing with and distributing the mails received. As already stated, only a limited number of postal officials was at first allowed to go beyond Amarah. The staff consequently was extremely short. Such post offices as were actually at the Front were for a considerable period accommodated in crowded barges; units were scattered and were constantly on the move; fatigue parties were not easily obtainable; and the weather was execrable. As soon as possible a central post office was opened at Orah; field post offices were sent to their Formations and an efficient service was organised.

CONDITIONS  
AT THE FRONT.

31. Meanwhile the Force had been further increased by a British Division (the 13th) the mails for which amount to about double of those of an Indian Division. Soon after, an Indian Division also arrived. The reinforcements for these Divisions did not come until considerably later and, as field post offices had to be provided at once, the only resource was to draw upon the staff of the Base Post Office where the arrangements were greatly disorganised in consequence.

FURTHER IN-  
CREASE OF FORCE.

32. The mails for the beleaguered garrison at Kut had been collecting steadily, and special arrangements had to be made for their storage at Amarah. Three times they were sent up under orders, only to be returned. When the capitulation of Kut had been decided upon, it was hoped to arrange for the delivery of the mails, and for this purpose they were specially sorted and censored; but the negotiations failed. The mails of General Townshend and his staff and the staffs of the Brigades at Kut were, however, dropped by aeroplane during the siege, and all landed safely except one bag which fell into the Tigris.

KUT MAILS

33. In January 1916 a large and fast motor launch which happened to be on sale at Basrah was purchased for the Post Office with the sanction of the Army Commander and the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs. This launch was a veritable godsend. Mails had to be unloaded from and loaded on steamers anywhere between Serajee 4 miles below and Magil 4 miles above Basrah; all transports had to be boarded for the collection of nominal rolls and numerous services in consequence of increased activities had to be performed by river. In these circumstances it is difficult to conceive how the Post Office could have managed without the launch; and with the scarcity of transport which existed it would have been hopeless to expect help from the Military authorities.

PURCHASE OF  
MOTOR LAUNCH.

34. A combined civil post and telegraph office was opened at Zobeir, a market town about 8 or 9 miles southwest of Basrah.

CIVIL POST  
OFFICES.

A camel service was started between Basrah and Koweit *via* Zobeir with a view to giving Koweit a quicker and more regular means of communication than by sea. The arrangement did not, however, prove satisfactory and was abolished.



SITUATION AT  
CLOSE OF PHASE  
III. GENERAL  
CHARACTER OF  
PHASE.

35. The Force consisted of about 6 Divisions and was thus three times its previous size, the Divisions of the Tigris Front being constituted a Formation designated the Tigris Corps. Field post offices rose in number from 23 to over 40 and civil post offices from 10 to 11. The average weekly number of letter and parcel bags received was 1,500 to 1,800 against 200 to 300 in the preceding Phase. The Postal personnel numbered 250 to 300 and 8 officers. The reinforcements had included trained men from France and Egypt, who were of the greatest use on account of their experience.

30TH APRIL  
1916.

With the fall of Kut, one British Officer and two Inspectors of the Post Office and the staff of a 1st class field post office became prisoner of war, with the exception of a clerk who was sick and whose exchange was accordingly effected. Nothing has since been heard of the others.

This was undoubtedly the darkest period for the Post Office in this Expedition; but, with courage and determination, with refusal to be beaten, with calm, careful and resolute consideration of each difficulty however great and with unsparing efforts on the part of all, the service emerged triumphantly from the ordeal, and the names of those who bore the burden deserve to be recorded in imperishable letters of gold in the chronicles of their Department.

ENCOMIUM BY  
SIR JOHN  
NIXON.

36. General Sir John Nixon relinquished command of the Force in January 1916 and in his final despatch complimented the Post Office on its well organised service.

*Extract from despatch of General Sir John Nixon, K.C.B., A.D.C., on the operation of Indian Expeditionary Force, "D" in Mesopotamia, for the period from the beginning of October 1915 to the date he relinquished command, dated the 17th January 1916.*

I cannot praise too highly the work done by the Telegraph and Postal Departments, the state of completeness of which has done much to promote the general efficiency of the force.

\* \* \* \* \*  
The exigencies of field service have thrown a great strain on the Postal Department, but owing to the hard work done and the excellent organisation build up by Mr. E. Clerici and his staff the results have been most satisfactory.

PHASE IV :—April 1916—December 1916.

GENERAL  
CHARACTER  
OF PHASE AND  
STAFF AND TRAN-  
SPORT SITUATION.

37. This was a period of consolidation and preparation. Matters began to settle down, but the Postal Service was still faced with the constant difficulty of getting up mails quickly and with shortage of staff which, to start with, was very pronounced. Towards the end, when more river steamers were available, the general situation as regards transport eased off considerably and it was actually found possible to arrange for a daily despatch of mails between Basrah and Sheikh Saad which was the Advanced Base and Riverhead. From Sheikh Saad a light railway was opened to Es Simm, then the extreme point of the British lines.

Similar railways from Qurnah to Amarah and from Basrah(Magil) to Nasiriyah were also practically completed.

38. The process of general re-organisation involved large accessions to the strength of the Force in such new miscellaneous units as Labour and Porter Corps, Railways, Inland Water Transport (which absorbed and replaced the Royal Indian Marine Department in this country), Army Service Corps and Motor Transport. A second Cavalry Brigade was also added.

ACCESSIONS TO  
FORCE.

39. General Headquarters moved from Basrah to the Front in October 1916 to remain permanently there. In November 1916 the Tigris Corps was replaced by two Army Corps, designated the 1st and the 3rd Corps, respectively.

MILITARY  
CHANGES.

40. The appointment of Deputy Director, Postal Services, was created on the 6th December 1916 and the officer was attached to General Headquarters to represent the Director in the latter's absence and to control postal arrangements at the Front. At the same time an Assistant Director of Postal Services was stationed at Sheikh Saad which was the receiving and distributing centre for the Front and where the central sorting office was situated. From Sheikh Saad there were two main lines of communication—one by river to Filayah opposite Sanayat and the other by rail to Es Sinn.

DEPARTMENTAL  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
CHANGES.

41. There was no extension of the area of operations, but owing to the development of the Lines of Communications and the formation of new posts a considerable number of miscellaneous field post offices had to be opened, notably, at Beit Nama (Officers' Hospital) and at Tanooma (Hospital and Workshops) near Basrah; along the Euphrates Line to Nasiriyah; and at Mudelil, Ali Gharbi and Arab Village on the Tigris.

FIELD POST  
OFFICES.

42. Combined post and telegraph offices were also established at Abul Khasib about 8 or 10 miles below Basrah on the same side of the river and on the island of Abadan (Anglo-Persian Oil Company's Refinery Works) about 10 miles below Mohammerah. The former place is served by the Basrah-Mohammerah ferry worked by Messrs. Lynch Bros. with whom a contract was entered into for the conveyance of mails on that section. Abadan is served through Mohammerah, to and from which Messrs. Strick Scott and Co., agents of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, carry the Abadan mails free. Abul Khasib being in occupied territory enjoys Indian rates of postage. On the other hand Abadan is subject to the Union tariff, as it is on the Persian side of the river. Efforts were made, with the support of the Chief Political Officer, to have it treated as a British concession (which it virtually is) for the purpose of postage rates, but without success.

CIVIL POST  
OFFICES.

43. The Kut mails which aggregated 5,000 bags of letters and parcels fell to be disposed of during this period. The Army Commander appointed a Committee including two Postal Officers to undertake the task which was successfully accomplished.

KUT MAILS.



VISIT OF  
DIRECTOR-  
GENERAL AND  
POSTMASTER-  
GENERAL,  
BOMBAY.

44. The Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, India, the Hon'ble Sir William Maxwell, K.C.I.E., M.V.O., I.C.S., and Mr. H. H. Pilkington, C.I.E., M.V.O., Postmaster-General of Bombay, visited Basrah in October 1916. The latter officer had been Director of Postal Services with the Indian troops in France and was specially deputed to advise on postal administration in Mesopotamia.

SITUATION AT  
CLOSE OF OPE-  
RATIONS.

45. The number of field post offices increased from 40 to 50 serving five Infantry Divisions, two Cavalry Brigades and highly developed Lines of Communications. The average number of mail bags received rose from 1,500 or 1,800 to over 2,000 weekly. The staff totalled 400 or 500 men, and 10 officers. A higher paid Postmaster, lately in charge of the Delhi Post Office in India, was appointed Base Postmaster.

MENTION OF  
POSTAL SERVICE  
IN SIR PERCY  
LAKE'S DESPAT-  
CH.

46. Lieut.-General Sir Percy Lake, who had succeeded General Sir John Nixon as Army Commander, described the Postal Service as satisfactory in his Despatch written on relinquishing the command of the Force in August 1916.

PHASE V :—*December 1916 to March 1917.*

GENERAL  
SURVEY.

(a) DECEM-  
BER 1916—FEB-  
RUARY 1917.

47. Operations were carried on below Kut from December 1916 to February 1917. Mails came up with tolerable regularity, while special arrangements were made to forward English Mails from Basrah in through fast steamers calculated to do the journey to Sheikh Saad in 60 hours. At Sheikh Saad also the distribution was effected without undue delay except in two or three instances when, owing to the volume of the mails received and to accommodation on the Es Sinn Railway being required for more urgent purposes, parcel mails could not be cleared at once. On such occasions the Military authorities invariably allotted a special train or a fleet of Ford vans for the mails as soon as possible and the detention was never of more than two or three days' duration. In no case were letter mails detained. At Railhead again, prompt arrangements were always made to get the mails off to units in mule carts or motor vans immediately after arrival. The Christmas Mail of 1916 for Mesopotamia was a record one of about 3,500 bags. It was disposed of and sent up by the Base Post Office with the utmost speed and was distributed at the Front without delay. The arrangements for the distribution of these mails were commended by the Army Commander.

GENERAL SUR-  
VEY: (b) FEB-  
RUARY-MARCH  
1917.

48. As soon as the British troops had established themselves on the Hai river facing Kut, the Es Sinn Railway was pushed forward first to Imam and soon after to Atab, which became railhead. Lines of Communications post offices had to be opened at Twin Canals, Es Sinn and Imam on the railway and another had now to be placed also at Atab. By the end of February 1917 the rout of the Turks began, and then an immediate complete change in arrangements supervened even before Baghdad was reached. The Advanced Base moved at once to Aziziyah and with it the A.D.P.S. and the main distributing office from Sheikh Saad; the Es-Sinn railway now served no units except the dumps that had to be left behind in the general advance; and everything was

going through by river. The advance was so rapid and the demands for transport for supplies, stores and troops required to maintain the pursuit of the Turks were so great that only a few of the field post offices accompanied by the supervising staff could go up at once. These took charge of an English Mail that had just arrived at Aziziyah from the Base and delivered it at Baghdad on the day following the British occupation of that city on the 11th March 1917. The Advanced Base with the A.D.P.S. Advanced Base and the Advanced Base Post Office (as the main distributing and sorting Office at the Front was now designated) moved up from Aziziyah to Baghdad; the Tigris Line of Communications was extended, practically at one stroke, from 250 to 500 miles and a new chapter opened.

49. The Cavalry Division was formed about the middle of December 1916 and included the 2 Cavalry Brigades that already belonged to the Force.

NEW FORMATION.

50. An Advance Stock Depot was instituted at the Advanced Base to supply field post offices at the Tigris Front. The question was also raised of vesting the Advanced Base Post office with the functions of a head post office to deal with the accounts of all field post offices at the Front.

MISCELLANEOUS ARRANGEMENTS.

51. The number of field post offices rose from 50 to 60 and the weekly mails from 2,000 to 2,500 bags. The staff amounted to about 500 to 600 men and 10 officers. The clerical and menial staff continued to be below strength.

SITUATION AT CLOSE OF PHASE V.

52. The late Sir Stanley Maude who commanded the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force complimented the Postal Service in his Despatch.

PRaise OF THE POSTAL SERVICE BY THE LATE SIR F. S. MAUDE.

PHASE VI :—*March 1917 to November 1917.*

53. The Phase up to August 1917 has been dealt with in detail in the Administration Reports for that period submitted by the D.P.S. and by the D.D.P.S., G.H.Q., and it will be sufficient merely to mention briefly the principal events :

BRIEF RECITAL OF EVENTS.

*Mail Service between India and England* :—Fortnightly, instead of weekly, mail introduced, July 1917.

*Mail Service between Basrah and India* :—All mails in both directions to be sent exclusively by transports; B.I.S.N. Coy.'s mail steamers relegated to service of Gulf ports, August 1917.

*Bushire* :—Removed from sphere of this Force—May 1917.

*Base Basrah* :—(1) Returned Letter Office established—April 1917.

(2) Base Post Office extended.

(3) Civil Post Office moved higher up the Strand, Ashar Creek—November 1917.



*Civil Parcel Post to and from Mesopotamia*—Suspended July 1917.  
*Tigris Line of Communications* :—(1) Kut-Baghdad (Hinaidi) Railway opened—July 1917.

(2) Basrah (Nahr Umar)—Amarah Railway opened—November 1917.

*Kut Civil Post Office* :—Opened—November 1917.

*Hinaidi* :—(1) Receiving and distributing office established on opening of Kut Railway—July 1917.

(2) Railway to Baqubah opened—July 1917.

(3) Railway to Shiftat and Shahraban opened—October 1917.

(4) Motor service to Baghdad and Baghdad railway station started—November 1917.

*Baghdad Civil Posts* :—(1) Baghdad Civil Post Office opened—March 1917.

(2) Delivery of civilians' letters by local postmen inaugurated—April 1917.

(3) Collection and distributing of civilians' letters at outlying places through the offices of Assistant Political Officers and the Chief Political Officer started—May 1917.

(4) Postage stamps introduced—September 1917.

(5) Registration stamps introduced—September 1917.

*Baghdad Field Posts* :—(1) Local Field Post Offices in Lower and Upper Baghdad Left Bank opened—April 1917.

(2) Local Field Post Right Bank opened—May 1917.

(3) Advanced Base Post Office Accounts Branch (performing functions of head post office) established—October 1917.

(4) Local motor mail service started—October 1917.

(5) Advanced Returned Letter Office established—November 1917.

(6) Advanced Base Sorting Branch transferred to new Advanced Base Post Office at Baghdad from Advanced Base Right Bank—November 1917.

*Baghdad Railway Station (Right Bank)* :—(1) Line to Samarrah opened to traffic—May 1917.

(2) Line to Sadiya (serving left Bank) opened—August 1917.

*Advanced Base Right Bank* :—(1) Feluja Railway opened up to Nuqta—November 1917.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,  
 MESOPOTAMIAN EXPEDITIONARY  
 FORCE,  
 The 22nd November 1917.

(Sd.) E. CLERICI,  
 Deputy Director,  
 Postal Services,  
 General Headquarters.

## CHAPTER IX.

September 1917 to April 1918

by

The Editor



A TYPICAL FIELD POST OFFICE.

**I**N August 1917 when I was at Calcutta on a Conference about Cash Certificates I got a 'salaam' from Sir William Maxwell, the Director-General. "Would I like to go as Director, Postal Services in Mesopotamia?" "Would I not jump at it and have a chance of taking any kind of a hand in the Great War? By the 8th of September I was on the H. T. "Edavana" en route to Basrah, all my civilian kit left behind in Bombay and with nothing but khaki on me and about me. The voyage was hot and sticky, especially the last night before we arrived, when we were all gasping for breath. As soon, however, as we got over the Bar into the Shatt-ul-Arab, the climate underwent a magic change and became cool, dry and bracing.

I had been to Basrah before, during Christmas of 1913. The picturesque trip up the Shatt-ul-Arab was therefore not novel; but what of



course was novel was the general air of activity and bustle, the number of steamers passing up and down, the two sunk steamers just above Mohammerah by which the Turks tried, unsuccessfully, to block the channel, and above all the hum and energy of Ashar which I remembered as rather a sleepy little port, now teeming with life.

At Basrah I found Lt.-Col. Hughes, whom I was to succeed, Major Angelo, Captain Buckner, Officer Commanding Base Post Office, and Captain Probyn Smith among other officers of the Postal Service. In spite of the short time during which he had been in Mesopotamia Col. Hughes had effected a marked improvement in the Service and, notably, had opened the Returned Letter Office to deal with returned letters. His work during the most trying months of the year made my task comparatively simple, though there was still plenty to be done.



MAJOR A. ANGELO, O.B.E.

There was little if any room in the Postal Camp for a new-comer. But luckily for me and very kindly on his part, Mr. Wills, Agent of Messrs. Gray, Mackenzie's, my host of 1913 had arranged quarters for me in a Government billet located in an extension of their building. He and his partners very hospitably asked me to chum with them. The Beit Vakil was conveniently situated next door to the Base Post Office and to my own office and it was certainly one of the most comfortable and cheery messes on the River Front. I was therefore very much in luck's way; and I shall always look back with great pleasure and gratitude to the happy days I spent with Mr. Wills, Mr. Milborrow (who to the great sorrow of us all died in September 1918) and Mr. Spence, the three partners of the firm. From the very first they made me feel at home and indeed I looked on the Beit Vakil as my home whenever I was at Basrah.



BEIT VAKIL BASRAH.

To plunge straight from civil life into Active Service without the period of training that an officer usually receives is a veritable experience. No fish ever felt more out of water than I did during my first week or so at Basrah. The number of sins of commission and omission committed and omitted by me must have been appalling and they would have been infinitely more, but for the many most carefully and tactfully conveyed hints from Col. Hughes and the others. However, I rushed in where perhaps a properly trained angel would have feared to tread.

One of my first visits was to Major-General Sir George MacMunn, the Inspector-General, Line of Communication, whom I found then and



always ever ready to listen and to help whenever he could, or to restrain with tactful words of wisdom any scheme of which he did not approve. Then came a visit to General Brownlow, the Base Commandant, an exceedingly important person in Basrah, on whom we depended for our buildings and most of our arrangements.

Next there were calls on General Campbell of the 3rd Echelon with whom the Post Office had a great deal to do, on Captain A. T. Wilson (now Lt.-Col. Sir A. T. Wilson, K.C.I.E., C.M.G., D.S.O.) then Deputy Civil Commissioner at Basrah with whom we had much work in connection with the Civil Posts which the Director, Postal Services, was required to direct and organise, and on General Hughes, General Officer Commanding I.W.T. from whom we got launches and maheilas, the Arab equivalent of a lighter.

But Basrah was only so to speak one-third of the Postal Service. Another and most important third was at G. H. Q. Baghdad under Major Clerici; and the remaining third were all the offices scattered about the two Army Corps and the ever lengthening L. of C.



LT.-COL. A. E. HUGHES. LT.-COL. H. A. SAMS. MAJOR A. N. OTHER.  
CAPT. J. S. BUCKNER.

It was necessary to see the G. H. Q. portion as early as possible. Towards the end of September 1917 leaving Major Angelo to begin to put my office on an efficient footing Col. Hughes, Captain Buckner, his brother Lt. N. M. Buckner and I boarded the 'P. 60' at Magil for the voyage—my first—up the Tigris to Baghdad. I shall never forget that

trip. In spite of the extreme monotony of the landscape—that of a huge nude billiard table, there was ever something novel to see, a town or a village, a tomb, a group of Arabs regarding us apathetically from the bank or running along with the boat selling in their stride, eggs and squawking fowls, a convoy of Ford vans wending their way dustily along the bank, an occasional block house, the Narrows, the Desert, the blue haze of the Pusht-i-Kut, the scene of a victory or of a defeat. And on P. 60 there was the endless novelty of life on a boat full of officers, soldiers and horses, with a welcome sprinkling of *kisters*. The days were decidedly hot, but the early mornings were deliciously cold for an hour or two. The usually tedious journey up to Kut therefore passed almost quickly. From there we went by train on the recently constructed line, Kut to Hinaidi, in a covered-in truck. It sounds much worse than it is, but once you are on your camp cot asleep it makes little difference whether you are in a truck or a Pullman.

At Hinaidi we found Major Clerici and Captain Owens, both old friends of mine and men for whom my twenty-one months in Mesopotamia increased my affection and admiration.





CAPTAIN J. H. OWENS, C.I.E. M.B.E.



CAPTAIN BUCKNER, LT.-COL. HUGHES, LT.-COL. SAMS, LT. BUCKNER.

There was no railway then from Hinaidi to Baghdad East and we drove the short distance in a car. I stayed with Major Clerici at No. 11 Mess which was afterwards my home in Baghdad.

Under Major Clerici's wing I visited with some trepidation that bee-hive of brains called G.H.Q. and called on Major-General Stuart Wortley, Deputy Q.M.G., our own particular General, for we were attached to the Q. Branch. This was the first of very many interviews in the sardab\* under G. H. Q. with General Stuart Wortley who remained Dy. Q. M. G. till after the Armistice. He was an excellent friend to the Postal Service. Judging by the number of visitors whom I always met there and who often kept me waiting an exasperatingly long time, the Q. Branch seemed to be one of the busiest in G. H. Q. As we all passed the time of day with the staff officers working in the ante-room, it was always a puzzle to me how they ever got any work done at all. The secret apparently lay in their after-dinner efforts, an appalling but necessary custom.

\* A coal basement room.





GRAVE OF GENERAL MAUDE, BAGHDAD. DEC. 1917.

It was then that I saw General Maude for the first time. I shall not soon forget that visit to the Hero of Mesopotamia, a tall, splendid looking soldier with a gentle manner rather reminiscent of a College don, concealing a method which was the admiration and fear of the whole Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force. A few days later I had the honour of dining with him and met him again for the second and last time for to everyone's great sorrow he died two months later.

It was during that visit that I first met Sir Percy Cox, the Civil Commissioner. Quiet, efficient, scholarly, he too, like General Maude, is a striking personality. I have met him many times since then and each meeting increases my admiration.

I had to hurry back to Basrah, for there was much to do there and we were expecting a visit from Sir William Maxwell towards the middle of October. However, he postponed his visit till the middle of November and I used the interval to run up the Karun River to Ahwaz with Lt. N. M. Buckner in our Post Office launch L. 9, that invaluable craft round which a considerable file grew. It was a delightful trip, with cold mornings and evenings and cool days. At Ahwaz I became acquainted with that thorny problem, the kran exchange, and heard a good deal about the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, one of the main causes of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force.





LT. N. BUCKNER.

The next episode was the visit of Sir William Maxwell, the D. G., as cheery as ever, with Mr. Purssell, his Personal Assistant. There were strenuous days and nights. Besides a mass of work to be done and all sorts of questions to be settled, there were a great many matters to talk over with him, things to show him and people to take him to see. After three nights of work up to 3 a.m. I was so tired that when he and I dined together at the I. G. Cs., (General Sullivan, who was acting for General MacMunn) I mistook a plate of silver covered chocolates for an antique pepper pot and solemnly peppered my chicken and beans with chocolates. Of course the worst construction was laughingly put on it and it took a good deal to live down that unfortunate mistake and also my error in failing to take my partner out of three clubs into two no-trumps and messing up hopelessly what would have been a very pretty hand.



SIR WILLIAM MAXWELL AT EZRA'S TOMB, DEC. 1917.

We took Sir William down to the Anglo-Persian Co.'s Refinery at Abadan and came back very late indeed for a dinner which the staff at the Base gave him under the ever able direction of Captain Buckner.





MAJOR HEDGES, LT. K. C. SEN, SIR WILLIAM MAXWELL,  
LT.-COL. L. BAGSHAWE.

AS PASSENGERS OF T. 7.

Then Lt.-Col. Bagshawe, Director of Telegraphs, joined us and we all went up to Baghdad in the Telegraph launch T. 7 and made a very amusing and cheery voyage up the Tigris to Kut where we took the train for Hinaidi and Baghdad.

The Director-General stayed with Sir William Marshall who had succeeded Sir Stanley Maude as Commander-in-Chief. A very busy time in Baghdad followed and once again we descended the Tigris to Amara where we took train for Nahr Umr, which was by now as far as the Amara-Makina line had gone. I shall remember that journey, for Major Clerici and I lost fourteen consecutive rubbers against Sir William Maxwell and Lt.-Col. Bliss of the Railways.

We had left a great deal of important work to be finally settled up at Basrah and were in the thick of it, when most inconveniently and unpatriotically I went down with German measles and was spirited away to the Isolation Camp at Tanooma. It was a fearful nuisance. We could have settled up many things which long remained unsettled, for shortly afterwards Sir William Maxwell got ill, went on leave and retired.

With this perhaps too personal introduction to the period 1917-1919 we will return again to Basrah and to the Postal Service generally.

The Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force or, as it was originally called, Indian Expeditionary Force 'D,' beginning with a Brigade, had increased by the end of 1917 to two Army Corps, an Independent Division

(the 15th) an Independent Cavalry Division, an immense Line of Communication, a huge I.W.T., an ever growing Civil organisation under the Civil Commissioner and his Politicals, a large organisation called Local Resources—a gigantic Base at Basrah, an Advanced Base at Karadah and all the numerous odds and ends of a large Army in the Field. The Postal Service was waxing bigger and bigger and it was decided by the Director-General and the Government of India to send a Postmaster-General out as Director of Postal Services.

By the end of September, 1917, much of the initial rough and tumble and inconvenience had disappeared or was quickly disappearing. Lines of rail were being pushed forward in many directions. The I.W.T. was splendidly organised for the River traffic. Huge Labour Corps made it possible to erect very greatly needed buildings. In the postal camp at Basrah well constructed mud and lath lines were under construction on Pioneer Road and would soon replace the squalid hovels that abutted on to the Base Post Office. That office originally inhabiting a corner of Messrs. Gray, Mackenzie's godowns gradually usurped the whole. It was dusty and noisy, but very conveniently situated for the receipt of mails on the River Front. The Office of the Director of Postal Services was held in part of this building and there was literally no room for the clerks to move. My own office was in a small dark room which was always in a cloud of dust kicked up by the Kurd coolies passing up and down the passage outside. The officers' quarters were hot and small. There was no proper Mess. Some messed in their rooms; others in one tent, others in another. The first thing to do was to clear out the D. of P. S.'s office to another building where there was more elbow room: this gave much needed space to the Base Post Office. The office was removed on the 6th February 1918 to a more spacious building in the Old Naval Dockyard. Steps were also taken to push on with a Mess but this was not really ready till late in 1918.

The general organisation of the Postal Service between October 1917 and February 1918 was as follows:—

**DIRECTOR OF POSTAL SERVICES.**—Usually residing at G.H.Q. where he had a Personal Assistant and a small office. Main office and another Personal Assistant at Basrah.

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF POSTAL SERVICES G. H. Q.**—Assisted by a Personal Assistant with Head Quarters at Baghdad. The Deputy Director of Postal Services, G.H.Q., was in charge of all arrangements in the area north of and including Kut.

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF POSTAL SERVICES, BASE,** assisted by a Personal Assistant, with Head Quarters at Basrah, was in charge of all arrangements in the area South of Kut and at the Base.

**AN OFFICER COMMANDING BASE POST OFFICE, BASRAH**—assisted by an attached officer, in charge of the local arrangements in Basrah, Captain Buckner was Officer Commanding during this period.



AN OFFICER COMMANDING, BASE POST OFFICE, BAGHDAD.—Captain A. I. P. Browne held this appointment.

RETURNED LETTER OFFICE (R.L.O.) at the Base in charge of a Manager, Sergt. Major Richman.



CAPTAIN J. S. BUCKNER OUTSIDE THE OFFICERS' MESS, BASRAH.

A staff of ASSISTANT DIRECTORS OF POSTAL SERVICES working under the direct orders of each Deputy Director of Postal Services.

A staff of INSPECTORS working under the orders of their Assistant Directors of Postal Services.

The whole of the Lines of Communications were formerly in charge of a single A. D. P. S. working under the orders of the D. D. P. S., G. H. Q. The charge was clearly too great for a single officer and it was decided to divide the Lines of Communication for Postal purposes into Upper and Lower Lines of Communication each under an A. D. P. S. The Head Quarters of the former remained at Baghdad, and the Head Quarters of the latter was fixed at Amara, an important postal centre.

An A.D.P.S. was also appointed for Kut where the transshipment of mails for Baghdad and beyond took place. This officer was also placed in charge of the Kut-Hinai River Section which was then served by a Travelling Field Post Office on board a launch. Lt. Shujat Ali was given the appointment.



LT. SHUJAT ALI.

In February or March 1918 an A.D.P.S. Lt. K. C. Sen was transferred to the D. D. P. S. G. H. Q., as an extra Personal Assistant to work the rather intricate mail arrangements at the G. H. Q. Forward Area.



ADVANCED BASE POST OFFICE, BAGHDAD.  
(FORMERLY THE TURKISH G.P.O.)



Formerly the work of the Advanced Base was done at the Field Post Office at the Advanced Base Right Bank. After my visit to Baghdad in September 1917 it was decided in consultation with Major Clerici to open a new Advanced Base Post Office in Baghdad itself for the more convenient handling of mails and disposal of accounts. This step was effected in November; the office was located in half of the excellent G.P.O. of the Turks near the Citadel. The other half was occupied by the Civil Post Office which did a considerable amount of work for the Civil population of Baghdad. In January 1918 Captain A. I. P. Browne came out as Officer commanding this new office. The arrangement quickly justified itself and effected a marked improvement in the postal work in Baghdad and the Forward Area, though there was still considerable room for improvement, especially in the delivery work.

In December 1917 a travelling field post office was established between Kut and Hinaidi—a few miles south of Baghdad and Rail-head to work the important posts on that line. A. Ds., P. S. were appointed as Personal Assistants to the D. D. P. S. G. H. Q. and D. D. P. S. Base, a step which relieved these overworked officers of a large amount of petty details and enabled them to move about more freely.

The development of the Postal Service from October 1917 to March 1918 will be seen from the following figures:—

	<i>October 1917. March 1918.</i>	
Officers .. .. .	14	24
Deputy Postmasters .. .. .	6	7
Inspectors of P. Os. .. .. .	32	46
Overseers .. .. .	43	86
Field Postmasters and clerks .. .. .	437	616
Menials .. .. .	336	665
Field Post Offices .. .. .	61	74

Among the new field post offices were those at Ramadi, Khaniqin (on the Persian border) and Ruz.

There was a shortage of—

8 Inspectors.

14 Overseers.

169 Clerks.

212 Menials.



TYPES OF POSTAL OFFICIALS IN THEIR NATIONAL DRESS.

This shortage was one of the most pressing of the problems to be tackled. The Postal Service had no margin whatever for sickness which in the Cold Weather is fairly prevalent and in the Hot Weather rampant. Sir William Maxwell fully appreciated the situation and got the Government of India to increase the minimum pay of the clerical ranks to Rs. 100 a month, with the result that by February 1918 our shortage was only 81 clerical and 109 menial staff.

The volume of work done between October 1917 and February 1918 will be realised from the following figures showing the *monthly* average:—

Bags of letters received from Overseas	..	9,301
Bags of parcels received from Overseas	..	10,479
Registered letters received	.. .. .	34,809
Registered letters posted	.. .. .	7,331
Parcels received	.. .. .	138,850
Parcels posted	.. .. .	1,231
Money Orders issued	.. .. .	3,334
.. value of	.. .. .	Rs. 3,46,746
Unregistered letters received	.. .. .	7,681,823
Unregistered letters posted	.. .. .	3,806,074

These figures represent only the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force work and do not include a considerable volume of work done by the Civil Post Office which was in part manned and entirely supervised by the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force Postal Service.



Owing to the impossibility of getting freight the parcel post and V. P. P. system were used to such an extent as to paralyse the Civil Posts. The parcel post and V.P.P. were therefore stopped. But traders in India soon discovered that they could send articles of unlimited weight by the registered letter post. Towards the beginning of December 1917 they began to take advantage of this discovery and by the middle of February 1918 the number of registered letters weighing anything between 10 and 600 tolas, mostly piece goods, was enormous. This avenue of sending goods was getting decidedly embarrassing and was subsequently closed.

The postal camp at Basrah between October 1916 and February 1918 consisted of over 360 men. This number required a considerable amount of management if they were to live in comparative comfort and well-being. Hitherto an A. D. P. S. had attended to the Camp as he found time, which was not often. An appointment of a Camp Superintendent was therefore asked for and sanctioned and Assistant Commissary Homer was appointed, while the Officer Commanding Base Post Office was also made Officer Commanding Postal Camp. This effected an immediate improvement and the Postal Camp in time became one of the best run camps at the Base. Mr. Homer did excellent work and was afterwards promoted to be an Assistant Director of Postal Services. A Recreation Hut was started and thanks to Mrs. Harrison (wife of Mr. C. H. Harrison, I.C.S., Officiating Director-General) and, later, Mrs. Sharpe (wife of Mr. W. S. Sharpe, Director of Telegraphs) it was provided with Indian musical instruments. This resulted in concerts, the practising for which helped greatly to keep up the health and spirits of the men. A most successful concert was given in Christmas Week 1917 by the Postal Staff in the Parcel Sorting room. It was the first of many other good shows organised by the leading spirits of the Postal Camp, chief among whom was Ghulam Nabbi, the 'Lucknow Poet.'



GHULAM NABBI, "THE LUCKNOW POET."

I quote from my Report to G. H. Q., dated the 29th March 1918.

"POSTAL CAMP BASE"—On my return to the Base on the 26th, I found a great improvement in the Postal Camp. There is a general air of orderliness and cleanliness. The Ration Hut which was formerly very defective is now well fitted up and meets, I understand, all the requirements of the Sanitary authorities. The floor of the Ration Room has now been covered with concrete. Rations are brought by the new Light Railway which runs into the Postal Camp.

A new road and a motor garage has been made for the Camp.

"RECREATION"—The Postal Hockey team has entered for the Base Hockey League and out of 12 games has so far won 4, drawn 3—lots 5. This is most creditable considering that the team has no ground of its own on which to practice.



' Badminton has also been started and is well patronised, and any evening the Burmans can be seen playing their national game of "chun-lon" with the basket balls which I asked the Postmaster-General Burma to send.

' The recreation hut has a library of 300 books and is well stocked with papers and games.

' The Camp is well off for Musical instruments—thanks to Mrs. Harrison. The Y.M.C.A. has given us a Harmonium while the War Gifts has given us two gramophones with English and Vernacular records. My thanks are due to Mrs. Harrison, Col. Moens and the Secretary, Y. M. C. A., for all the help which they have given to us.



BURMESE ORCHESTRA, BASE POSTAL CAMP, BASRAH.

' The whole spirit of the Camp is different. Cheerfulness now reigns in the place of depression. The greatest credit is due to Captain Probyn Smith who has devoted all of his scanty leisure to organising this important side of our Camp, and my thanks are due to Major Angelo, Captain Buckner and the other officers at the Base for their interest in the Camp's welfare and their contributions of money and gifts.'



OUTSIDE THE BASE POST OFFICE, BASRAH.

The pivot of the Postal Service was the Base Post Office, Basrah. It was here that all mails for the Force from India and Europe were received and dealt with. The work was colossal and required very great care. Mail bags arrived in their hundreds and thousands by every Hired Transport from Karachi and Bombay. Each bag had to be opened and articles had to be taken out for officers and sisters who were not with their units. The number of such was legion and necessitated a very voluminous 'Exception List' compiled from the latest returns received from the Hospitals and Third Echelon. This Exception work was supervised by Mr. (now Khan Sahib) Surti who knew the list by heart. Then the bags with their local postings in Basrah had to be re-tied and forwarded. All the outward mails passed through the Base Post Office and many of them had to be arranged for censorship by the Censor, whose office was in the Base Office. Added to the work of the Inward and Outward Overseas Mail was the very voluminous work of the Inland Mails and mails for Mohammerah and Koweit. The work was heavy and difficult, but in Captain Buckner I had an officer whose splendid organising ability was one of the principal causes of the successful working of the Postal Service all up the line.

An outstanding problem on my arrival was the R.L.O. (Returned Letter Office). This had been opened by Lt.-Col. Hughes in March 1917 soon after his arrival from Egypt, but it was undermanned and overworked. In consultation with General Campbell the D.A.G. Third Echelon the R.L.O. was made into an Army Unit and was manned entirely almost by P.B. (Permanent Base) men with a total strength of 167 N. C. Os. and B.O. Rs. and 12 Postal ranks. It was also decided that



the R.L.O. should undertake *all* the redirecting work. In October 1917 173,803 articles had been sent to the Third Echelon for redirection, but the reorganised R.L.O. quickly reduced this to 23,907 for March 1918 and was soon redirecting 98 to 100 per cent. of the letters.

In order to improve the redirection of articles by the Units themselves a proposal was submitted in November that all detached men and convalescents on being paid should be obliged to send a post-card giving their address to the Officer Commanding their late Units. This proposal was accepted and was embodied in a G.R.O. It had the desired effect and considerably reduced the number of articles returned to the R.L.O.

An amusing incident occurred in connection with a letter addressed to "Sir William Marshall, O.C. Anglo Indian Corps, M.E.F." The letter went to the Anglo Indian Regt. whose post orderly marked it as 'unknown'! It went to the R.L.O. which sent it up to G.H.Q. and delivered to the C.-in-C., I was asked to explain the delay in delivery and did so, much to the amusement of the C.-in-C.

The question of transport for the mails was from the outset of the campaign, one of great difficulty. According to rule the Army is required to supply all transport required. Actually and naturally it could only supply whatever transport could be spared and during operations this was often very little. But the Postal Service always received very sympathetic treatment when transport was asked for and in course of time a good deal was done. The extension of the railways solved many of our difficulties. For example in November 1917 the mails went by train from Nahr-Umar (some 80 miles north of Basrah) to Amara. From 23rd February they were sent all the way from Makina\* just outside Basrah and at the same time a Light Railway was constructed from the back door of the Base Post Office to the railway station at Makina. It was thus possible to send mails by rail all the way from the G.P.O. to Amara. At Amara they were shipped on to up-going boats and went by river to Kut where they were again entrained to Hinaidi and later to Baghdad East. There was also a very efficient Ford Van Service between Hinaidi and Baghdad—(until the Hinaidi—East Baghdad Section was opened) and another between Baghdad, Museyeb, Hillah and Kufa. In March the Deputy Director of Postal Services G. H. Q. arranged for a daily service to and from Hillah.

In November 1917 the personal comfort and mobility of Postal Officers at Basrah were greatly enhanced by being provided with a Ford car and a Dodge car exclusively for our use. This was a very great con-

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\* Named after the Makina Mal Sus or—Liquorice Machine, a curious instance of a Greek word being adapted by the Arabs and eventually becoming the familiar name of a British Camp.

venience. At the Base it was practically impossible to get a car from the Pool under 24 hours. The two cars of our own changed all that and made an enormous difference. At G. H. Q. on the other hand it was very easy to get a car from the Pool.



CORPORAL PEARSON AND OUR DODGE CAR.

On the 9th of January 1918 I went up to G. H. Q. and joined Major Clerici in No. 11 Mess, then in New Street opposite the S. and T. Depot. There I spent some very happy months. On the 4th of February Major Clerici and I went off on tour to see the Hillah Area which was then rapidly opening up. We spent a miserable night in the open on the outskirts of Hillah where we got stuck and another uncomfortable night and day in the Turkish Barracks at Hillah. Then Major Macpherson,\* the Political Officer, Hillah, very kindly took us in, in spite of already having a house full of officers. While at Hillah we paid, of course, a visit (my first) to Babylon which is only a few miles distance. From there we went on to Kufa and Nejef where we stayed with poor Captain Marshall, the Political Officer, about a month before he was treacherously murdered. Thence we went on to Museyeb and Kerbela and the Hindiyah Barrage. It was a most enjoyable and interesting tour. Major Clerici was an ideal travelling companion, our drivers were excellent fellows and the more difficult things got, the more cheery and resourceful they became. The desert air was exhilarating and, except for rain on the first day, the sky

\* In civil life a partner of Messrs. Grey, Mackenzie.





OFFICE OF THE D.P.S. AT BAGHDAD.

was ever a cloudless blue. It was on this trip that I first got to know and appreciate Major Clerici's 'boy' Gabriel. Nearly everyone in the M. E. F. seemed to know Gabriel. Once he prepared a dinner for us at Baghdad West. The menu which he had drawn up began with 'Supe' went on with "Fish Frid" and one of the items was 'Tomato Sauce.' "Where" we asked "is the Joint, Gabriel?" "The joint" he replied "is included in the tomato sauce."



GABRIEL AND YASIN.

QASAR-I-SHIRIN, FEBRUARY 1918.



CAPT. J. FERGUSON, M.B.E.

Later in the month Major Clerici and I again went on tour, this time to the East and visited the Third Corps at Baquba, Capt. Ferguson was A. D. P. S. We spent a cheery day and night at Corps H.Q. and the next day set out for a long run to Khamiqin past Sharaban and Ruz over the Jebel Hamrin and the Kadarrah River to Khamiqin where we arrived very late and very weary and stayed with a cheery M.T. Mess in a disused bakery. This was certainly the quaintest place for a



Mess I had yet seen, but our hosts said it was good and cool in the hot months. In February it would have been decidedly 'cool' but for the oil stoves. Khaniqin was just recovering from a famine. The hungry people, nourished by our rations, were beginning to revive and the squalid bazaar had almost an animated appearance.

The next day we went on to the foot of the Pai Tak Pass through picturesque hilly country marred by the deserted and ruined villages and the famine stricken villagers. At Sir-i-Pul we came across the rear guard of the Russians marching back through Persia to enjoy the 'liberties' of Soviet Russia. We saw them again the next morning at the foot of the Pai Tak struggling up the hill side without any attempt at a formation, looking cold and miserable in the driving rain. Colonel Leslie, their commander, turned aside at the invitation of the hospitable detachment of Hampshires and drank the health of "Les Alliés et les Anglais." It was many generations since his family had seen Scotland and the only Scotch he understood was potable.



OUTSIDE G. H. Q., F. P. O. MAJOR CLERICI IN THE CAR.

On our way back it began to rain, and then every dip in the undulating road meant a probable delay. Sometimes the car got through the mud, sometimes and more often it did not. Then it meant pushing and pulling. Sometimes a wheel would get free and smother us with a shower bath of mud. Motoring along the Persian road was exciting but not always amusing.

Soon after our return, General Altham, the Quarter Master General in India, visited my office and asked many questions. Two days later

Colonel V. C. French, Accountant-General, Posts and Telegraphs, arrived to look into our accounts which, I am glad to say, he found in good order.

On the 16th of March Col. French, Major Clerici and I visited the 1st Corps (A. D. P. S. Lt. Taylor) at Samarra where we stayed with the Corps Commander, General Cobbe. We discussed many postal matters with him and with General Rattray, the D.A. and Q.M.G. My chief impression of our visit to the 1st Corps was the incessant rain and the fathomless mud. But neither rain nor mud damped the spirits of the troops. Everywhere you would hear a laugh, a whistling, the catch of a song.

On the 21st of March Col. French and I returned to Basrah stopping for a night at Kut and for another at Amara with General Austen, the G.O.C., Tigris Front, whose hospitable Mess was always open to the passing officer.



RECREATION TENT, BAGHDAD.

We arrived at Basrah on the 26th of March and shortly afterwards Col. French left for India.



## CHAPTER X.

1st April 1918—1st May 1919.

By The Editor

1st April 1918—1st May 1919.

**T**HESE thirteen months—1st of April 1918 to 1st of May 1919, were full of interest, incident and hard work for all of us. In the back-ground was the ever darkening shadow of the German onslaught in the West. We looked anxiously at the wires but did not talk much about them. What was there to say? The only anodyne to our feelings was work, and we all, I think, felt that by improving our particular "shows" in Mesopotamia we were helping to stave off the evil day of defeat or hasten the joyous one of victory which actually dawned on 11th November 1918.

The period was one of considerable activity and progress in the Postal Service M. E. F. The steady growth of the Civil Posts made it clear that the time must soon come when it must have an Officer of its own. Sir Percy Cox had discussed this with Sir William Maxwell during his visit to Baghdad in November 1917 and had specially asked for Major Clerici for the appointment. On the 1st of June 1918 the appointment of Deputy Director of Postal Services, Civil Posts, Iraq, was created and Major Clerici, who had so long and so successfully worked as Deputy Director of Postal Services G. H. Q. and the Forward Area, now left my office for one of his own, and thenceforth his work was more with the Civil Commissioner than with the Director of Postal Services. But our relations were still very close and by cordial co-operation between him and me and his officers and mine we were of great mutual help to each other. The result was that the gradual absorption of the Field Post Offices by the Civil Post Offices during the process of demobilization in the early part of 1919 was comparatively easy and the final absorption of the former by the latter in May 1919 should have been easily accomplished but for the unreasonable attitude by the men.

On the appointment of Major Clerici as D.D.P.S. Civil, Major Angelo came up as D.D.P.S. G.H.Q. and Major Probyn Smith became D.D.P.S. Base.

The areas and work of the two—now three—Deputy Directors, Postal Services, were well defined and there was no overlapping. During this period the Base Post Office was made an independent unit, and the O. C.



Seated, left to right:—Mr. GURDAS SINGH, LT. A. E. AZEVEDO, M. B. E., CAPT. A. R. AUGIER, MAJOR A. ANGLIS, O. B. E.,  
LT. COL. H. A. SAMS, C. I. E., CAPT. J. H. OWENS, C. I. E., M. B. E., MR. C. SMITH, MR. NIKRANTAM, MR. ANTHONY.



DIRECTOR OF POSTAL SERVICES, PERSONAL ASSISTANTS AND  
ORDERLIES, BAGHDAD, 1918.



CAPT. AUGIER, LT.-COL. SAMS, LT. AZEVEDO.

had control over all field post offices in the Base area, a much needed and very useful step. Each D.D.P.S. and the O.C. Base Post Office had almost complete control over his own area and settled all details. The D.P.S. reserved to himself the general control only and thus had time to devote himself to matters of general administration of which there were many.

Several much needed improvements were introduced into the service. In April 1918 a postmen's delivery was introduced at Basrah on the initiative of Captain Buckner, O. C. Base P. O. Hitherto a postmen's delivery on Field Service had, as far as I am aware, never been considered on a large scale. It was certainly not contemplated in the Postal Manual. But the vagaries of the Post Orderlies and the stationary conditions approaching conditions of civil life made the step very desirable. At Basrah it was soon in working order and from the Base Post Office a daily average of 2,411 were delivered by postmen and from field post offices at Basrah a daily average of 3,277. A similar postmen's delivery was introduced at Baghdad, with the result that in February 1919 the Despatch Rider Letter Service—better known as the D.R.L.S. was abolished. It could have been abolished sooner had the Postal Service sooner had the men for the postmen's delivery. At Amara also the postmen's delivery was introduced on the 8th October 1918.

An Express Letter Service was introduced between Baghdad and Basrah on the 9th November 1918 in order to avoid some of the delays which took place by the ordinary mail route. The usual transit time of mails between Baghdad and Basrah was 110 hours Up and 84 hours Down, a very long time for some 500 miles. But the transit involved two transshipments of mails from train to steamer, two separate railway journeys and on the Up journey no certainty whatever of getting a steamer connecting with the Makina-Amara train. It was only after the Armistice that the I. G. L. of C. was able to let me have a Ferry Boat Service of T. boats plying between Kut and Amara. And by getting the Director of Railways to give me a special train from Amara to Makina, the transit time was greatly reduced.

Undoubtedly the ideal way of dealing with the problem of rapid transit between the Base and G.H.Q. was by *air*. But all the aeroplanes were required for military purposes and none could be spared for postal work. As a matter of fact we did on three occasions make use of the air. The first occasion was on the 11th of January 1919 when General Mac-Ewan visited Baghdad in his Handley Page bus *en route* to Delhi. A strictly limited mail was sent impressed with a special rubber stamp. There was considerable competition to send letters by this mail which after some mishaps duly arrived in Delhi on the 20th of January. The



second occasion was on the 25th February 1919 when the R.A.F. informed me that a machine was flying to Cairo and could take a small mail. 500 letters impressed with another special stamp were despatched by it and were delivered at Cairo on 1st of March. On the 14th of March 1919 Lt.-Col. A. T. Wilson flew to Cairo *en route* to the Peace Conference at Paris. A small mail was sent which arrived on the 16th—a good performance—and was disposed of by the Army Post Office. But it took our mail more seriously than was intended, regarded as 'mis-sorts' the "Souvenir" letters addressed by senders to themselves at Baghdad and was, very properly scandalised at the inclusion—probably by Col. Wilson or his office—of a registered letter addressed to Miss Gertrude Bell without a registered list!

On the 1st of January 1919 a sorting service called the Tigris R.M.S. was opened between Basrah and Amara. It did excellent work while it lasted but it was closed on 23rd of March when the rapid demobilization of troops rendered it unnecessary. From the beginning of March 1919 a weekly steamer service was opened between Magil (Basrah) and Ahwaz on the Karun, giving Ahwaz with the existing service two mails a week.

The tampering of mails between India and Basrah gave a great deal of trouble and resulted in a large number of complaints. I appealed to General St. John, the Embarkation Commandant at Bombay for help and with his co-operation the tampering entirely ceased.



SERG-T-MAJOR RICHMAN OF THE R.L.O.

In June 1918 Major Probyn Smith, Deputy Director of Postal Service, Base, devoted himself to the overhauling and re-organisation of the Stock Depot at Basrah. This was no light task even in the Cold Weather, but in June it was heroic and both he and the Manager, Mr. Rebello, earned the thanks of the Director of Postal Services and the



gratitude of the service for the very efficient way in which the re-organisation was accomplished. The efficiency of the Service and the comfort of the men depended largely on the good working of the Stock Depot which henceforth ran like clock-work.

The R. L. O. under Sergt.-Major Richman had made very rapid strides since April 1918. By October 1918, it was redirecting over 99 per cent. and from December 1918, 99.9 per cent. of its receipts which amounted to anything between 100,000 and 200,000 letters a month. In January 1918 it sent 36,896 letters to the Third Echelon for disposal, in December 1918—111, in March 1919—only 9! What more eloquent tribute to the efficiency of the R.L.O. is required? At the suggestion of Captain Buckner—a stroke of genius—the R.L.O. dealt with the whole of the English Mail on arrival at Basrah and were able to intercept thousands of letters and save them an unnecessary journey to the Units which the addressees had left.

The 3rd Echelon was duly grateful for the relief. But once (in December 1918, I believe) there was a hitch. I had just come down from Baghdad and found on my table a draft for General Campbell, the D.A.G. 3rd Echelon, regretting that the R.L.O. had sent *sixteen* bags of mails on a recent date and promising that the heinous offence would not be repeated. I turned over the pages of the file and found an indignant letter from the General complaining of breach of faith on the part of the Post Office. I could not make it out and called for Sergt.-Major Richman.

“What is all this about?” I asked reproachfully.

A smile flickered across his face as he replied “We send eight bags every day for the eight sections of the office of the 3rd Echelon. On one day their office was closed, so we sent sixteen bags the next day.”

“And how many letters are there in these sixteen bags?” I asked.

“About 80, Sir, all told.”

“Where are they?”

“Here, Sir. The Head Clerk of the 3rd Echelon threw them back at us.”

I called for the car and the Sergt.-Major and I sped to the 3rd Echelon at Makena. I entered the General's office.

“I have come Sir, about these sixteen bags of mails,” I said.

“Yes?” he said frostily.

“Have you seen them?”

“No, I have not.”

“Well, Sir, I shall be glad if you will. They are outside. A baby could lift the whole sixteen.”

The General jumped up and came with me on to the verandah where the sixteen erring bags lay. Then he sent for his Head Clerk and spoke wingéd words. The Head Clerk retired very crest-fallen, the General apologised most handsomely and we had no more trouble after that with the Head Clerk of the 3rd Echelon.

In September 1918 at the request of the Director of Telegraphs arrangements were made to instruct Field Post Offices in the art of booking messages and a start was made with 19 offices. By February 1919, 31 offices were booking messages and between 1st September 1918 and 10th of February 1919, 3,442 messages were so booked and Rs. 29,506 were collected from the Civil population.



VIEW OF POSTAL OFFICERS' MESS, BASRAH.

As I have said in the former chapter the Postal Officers at Basra suffered a great deal of inconvenience for want of a Mess. The hut for the Officers' Mess was completed in February 1918 but was not provided with lights and fans till June 1918. Owing however to one cause and another it was not in full use till September 1918 when Captain Buckner returned from leave and taking the Mess in hand ran it on sound economical lines. Not only did he beautify the interior so that it was the admiration and despair of other less pleasing Messes, but he laid out grass lawns and flower beds. By November 1918 the Postal Officers' Mess both inside and out was second to none for appearance and comfort. The tennis court was finished on December 1918 and soon became one of the best at the Base.



The greatest event of the year was of course the Armistice. After years of anxiety and after the dreadful months of the Spring of the year the end seemed to come with a rush, and, when it did come, the prevailing feeling was one of relief, rather than of exaltation. It seemed too good to be true that the War was really over and that before long most of us would be home again. I got the news at Kut in bed with a good 'flu' and under the devoted care of Lt. Shujat Ali, the A. D. P. S. A parade had been ordered for the 12th for all troops, when three cheers were to be given for the King. I did not intend to miss that and tumbled out of bed in a dressing gown and joined our men who were paraded in the F.P.O. compound.



POSTAL OFFICERS' MESS, BASRAH.

MAJOR PROBYN SMYTH, MAJOR ANGELO, CAPTAIN BUCKNER,  
CAPTAIN THOMPSON, LT. LITTLE, LT. CREAGAN, LT. BELL.

In December 1918 we were visited by the Hon'ble Mr. Geoffrey Clarke, Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, together with Mr. Meredith, Director of Traffic, Mr. Pursell, and Mr. Burlingham. After a short stay at Basrah we (including Col. Bagshawe) all went up to G.H.Q. on S. 14 a spacious and comfortable launch which Sir George MacMunn very kindly put at our disposal. A trip on the Tigris in the Cold Weather—in a comfortable boat—is a very pleasurable experience, especially when there is a sense of victory in the air.

At G.H.Q. Mr. Clarke and the others of his party, except Mr. Purcell, who unfortunately had sprained his ankle badly during a shoot on the way up, dined with the officers of the Postal Service at the Officers' Club. It was a cheery gathering and one which we shall all remember.

After visiting Northern Persia in August 1918 and after seeing the whole line from Ruz to Enzeli, it appeared to me clearly necessary to have an Assistant Director of Postal Services, Persia, in order to look after the 500 miles of Lines of Communication and the new Field Post Offices which had been opened at Kermanshah, Hamadan, Kazvin, Enzeli and the Travelling Field Post Office between Ruz and Hamadan. G.H.Q. sanctioned the proposal and Lt. Spear was appointed A.D.P.S. on the 27th September 1918. A sorting office under Lt. Shalom was opened at Ruz on 1st December 1918 to deal with the correspondence for the Persian Line of Communication and the personnel of Norperforce. The opening of the sorting office immediately effected a great improvement in the disposal of correspondence for this long and difficult line and I regret that I did not open it in September or even earlier. Transport on this line had always been a matter of great difficulty. Until long after the Armistice there was never enough and the mails suffered in consequence. There were



'S' 14 MR. G. R. CLARKE, LT.-COL. SAMS, MR. R. MEREDITH,  
MR. BURLINGHAM, MAJ. CLERICI, LT. JAMES.

always a large number of bags at the different stages waiting for transport. At times it was impossible to get Motor Transport and it was necessary to resort to animals—usually camels. This was wholly unsatisfactory. It was of course painfully slow. The contents of the bags often arrived smashed to atoms. There was a large amount of pilfering and robbery. The huge accumulations caused a great deal of dislocation and were for the most part responsible for the partial failure of the



Postal Service on this line. It was purely a matter of transport and, if from the outset this had been adequate, the troops would have had, what they greatly desired and deserved, a satisfactory mail service. G.H.Q. and the H. Q. Persian L. of C. gave me all the help they could. But there was not enough mechanical transport for all that it was required to do. There was often not enough petrol for purely military purposes. The mails had perforce to suffer.



BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON. MR. GEOFFREY CLARKE, LT. COL. SAMS, MAJOR ANGELO, MR. R. MEREDITH, LT. JAMES. DEC. 1918.

When after the Armistice the British troops from the Middle East joined hands in the Caucasus with Norperforce, the latter was transferred to the British Force, Constantinople. This entailed the transfer on the 1st March 1919 of the Field Post Offices at Hamadan and at Enzeli, of the 36th and 39th Brigades to the Deputy Director of Postal Services, Constantinople and Lt. Bickers was sent to Baku as Assistant Director of Postal Services, Baku. The appointment of A.D.P.S. of Railroad (Qizil Robot) was abolished and Lt. Shalom was sent as A.D.P.S. Persian Line of Communication with Headquarters at Kermanshah.

In February 1918 the Persian Government through the British Minister at Teheran had asked the G.H.Q. to arrange for the carriage of the Persian letter mail *via* Baghdad, as Soviet Russia was closed to mails and the road from Bushire and Teheran was unsafe. We were asked originally to transit only five bags a week, but the number was actually on an average 80 a week. This imposed a further strain on our already overstrained resources on the Persian Line of Communication and the Persian mails suffered from the same accumulations as the E.F. mails. While I was at Teheran in August 1918 I discussed the matter with M. Molitor the Director-General of Persian Posts and the Persian Minister, with the result that by the 3rd of February 1919 the Persian Postal Service was re-opened between Teheran and Khanuqin where the Persian Posts re-opened their Office of Exchange.

Another problem for the Postal Service in Persia was the fact that the rupee was not current in Persia beyond Kermanshah, in the Persian Lines of Communication; the Field Treasure Chest Officers kept their accounts in sterling. No money order business could be done and the postal staff could not get their pay without great delay. The market value of the kran varied daily and it was obviously impossible to expect postmasters to work out daily a conversion table duty. The problem seemed insoluble when Mr. Hart, the Manager at Kazvin of the Imperial Bank of Persia came to the rescue. He suggested that the Field Post Offices should periodically take an advance at the market rate of the day. This advance was to be wired to Baghdad to the credit of the Advanced Base Post Office and to be repaid daily by the Field Post Offices in Persia from their cash collections. The postmasters had to make out a conversion table, checked by the Field Treasure Chest Officer for the period only at the rate at which the advance was made. As soon as the advance was paid up, a new one was taken at the new market rate. I welcomed his suggestion and it was also beneficial to the Bank, as Mr. Hart pointed out, which found the issue of small drafts to British troops a very troublesome business but one which they did not like to refuse. This advance system was introduced at Enzeli (through Resht) and Hamadan and worked very satisfactorily until the Field Treasure Chest Officers were able to accept the cash collections of the Field Post Offices



as they did subsequently. From the time the advance system was introduced a brisk money order business was done and the personnel of the Field Post Offices were able to get their salaries without delay.

On the Persian Line of Communication we had Field Post Offices at Ruz, Khaniqin, Pai Tak, Kermanshah, Hamadan, Kasvin, Enzeli and later on at Baku. Up and down the line were scattered isolated posts which found considerable difficulty in transacting postal business. Two travelling Field Post Offices Nos. 64 and 75 were therefore opened between Ruz and Hamadan, one starting from either end. Subsequently it was found more convenient to amalgamate them into one. This T. F. P. O. was of great utility and did a considerable amount of money order and registration work.

At the date of the Armistice our Field Post Offices extended from Baku on the Caspian to Hit on the Euphrates, a distance of 900 miles, and from Mosul in the North to Koweit on the Persian Gulf, a length of nearly 800 miles. This constitutes a record of Field Postal Services in one Area and is a one of which the Post Office of India may well feel proud.

On the 1st of April 1918 we had—

	Head.	Sub.
Field Post Offices .. .. .	2	73
Civil .. .. .	1	13

Subsequently 18 more Field Post Offices were added, and at the Armistice we had 91 Field Post Offices.

During the process of demobilization the Civil posts had been taking over the Field Post Offices as the troops withdrew and by the 15th of April 1919 there were—

	Head.	Sub.	Branch Offices.
Field Post Offices .. .. .	2	47	..
Civil .. .. .	2	41	21

The strength of the Postal Service on the first April 1918 and at the time of the Armistice was respectively

	1st April 1918.	Nov. 1918.
Officers including officers transferred to Civil .. .. .	23	24
Inspectors and Dy. Postmasters ..	49	44
Overseers .. .. .	89	104
Clerks .. .. .	594	826
Followers .. .. .	633	876

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1,850

On the 1st of May 1919 the Postal Service M.E.F. had dwindled to 3 officers, 2 Inspectors, 70 clerks and 19 menials. The rest had been demobilised or had been transferred to the Civil Posts.

The health of the Postal Service was very fair on the whole and HEALTH certainly got better as the conditions of life especially on the Postal Camp improved. In April 1918 the percentage of admittance into hospital was 3·19 increasing in July 1918 to 11·89. In September it was 5·45 and from then onwards there was a steady fall to 1·01. The low average as casualties in the winter of 1918-19 is I think greatly due to the 576 warm, sleeping bags which Mrs. Sharpe very kindly sent us for the menials.



#### B.G.H. 33 MAKINA.

In order to ascertain the work of the postal service two enumerations of a month each were taken, one in October 1917 the other in August 1918.

The following are the figures:—

	October 1917.	August 1918.
Letters received .. .. .	.....	3,052,948
Do. posted .. .. .	3,330,873	3,556,002
Reg. letters received .. .. .	45,010	44,074
Do. posted .. .. .	21,236	19,902



			October 1917.	August 1918.
Money Orders-Issued	..	..	65,312	54,682
Do. Value	..	..	Rs. 28,63,872	28,38,974
Do. Paid	..	..	1,428	528
Do. Value	..	..	Rs. 39,550	18,016
Parcels Received	..	..	39,518	52,504
Do. posted	..	..	3,210	3,290
B.P.Os. sold	..	..	440	1,384
Value	..	..	Rs. 3,431	4,244
S.B. Deposits	..	..	1,110	1,124
Amount	..	..	Rs. 81,708	63,268

The issue of money orders was very heavy. In the Base Post Office, Basrah alone, the monthly average was over 4,500 and on 3rd February 1919 a record was reached when 655 money orders to the value of Rs. 35,000 were booked at the Base Post Office between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. by a *single clerk* Mr. K. D. Chetty.

As soon as the method of demobilization had been finally decided it went very rapidly. The Postal Service had of course to follow and nothing could be closed until the troops had moved on. As the shrinkage proceeded a large number of our men were sent to India for demobilization and some were transferred to the Civil Post. By the 15th of April 1919 we had 12 officers, 38 Inspectors of Post Offices, 509 clerks, 91 overseers and 662 menials. Of these 11 Officers, 29 Inspectors of Post Offices, 475 clerks, 80 overseers, and 611 menials were required for the Civil Posts and the Army of Occupation and the rest were sent to India for demobilization. In order to clear up the pending and future references a M.E.F. Record office was opened at Basrah on 1st of May 1919 with a small staff of 68 clerks under Captain Owens as D.D.P.S. and two Personal Assistants.

After Mrs. Harrison left for Home, Mrs. Sharpe succeeded to the arduous duty of guardian angel of the Postal and Telegraph men on Field Service. Among her greatest achievements was the supply of the afore-mentioned 576 sleeping bag razais for the menials. Having experienced the cold of Mesopotamia in the winter of 1917-18, I asked Mrs. Sharpe in June 1918 to send, if possible, 576 sleeping bag razais for the packers. Mrs. Sharpe appealed for funds to the personnel in India and met with a most generous response. By the 19th of October 1918, Mrs. Sharpe had sent all the razais asked for. These were immediately distributed first to the packers on the Persian Line of Communication, where the nights were getting chill, and then to the others from North to South. As a mark of appreciation of the work done by Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Sharpe, our officers and men contributed and sent them each a Persian rug.

Lady Willingdon during her visit to Mesopotamia in April 1918, had asked me to let her know if there was anything she could do for us. There was nothing at the time, but later on I described the bareness of the quarters of the A. D. P. S. on the L. of C. and suggested certain things which would be greatly appreciated, e.g., finger bowls, prints, etc. Lady Willingdon sent them almost by return of post and earned the gratitude of several young officers.

Soon after my return to Baghdad in June 1918 I went on tour—and a very hot one too—by car from Baghdad to Ramadi where Lt. Spear was A.D.P. S. with the 15th Division. General Brooking very kindly put me up and I thus had the privilege of getting to know one of the M. E. F.'s most successful commanders. I took Lt. Spear on with me to Hit, one of quaintest towns I have ever seen. The burning heat and the smell of bitumen from the furnaces reminded us vividly of the place that the 'padré mentioned in his last sermon.'

Towards the end of June Major Angelo and I took train to Ruz where Lt. O'Callaghan was A.D.P.S. The heat in his tent was terrific and throughout the day we could do little else but sleep, drink and gasp. The next morning we drove over the Diala River to the Head Quarters of the 13th Division then in charge of General O'Dowda with whom and with his staff officers we discussed postal matters. Their one request was the return of Nabbi Bakhsh, their late Inspector. This was a great feather in Nabbi Bakhsh's cap, for the 13th Division was all British and had more correspondence and therefore gave more trouble than all the other Divisions put together. It spoke volumes for his energy, industry and good humour that they all wanted him back, and it was due as much to the recommendation of the General Officer Commanding the 13th Division as to mine that he was recommended for and was awarded the title of Khan Sahib.

At the beginning of August 1918 I toured for nearly six weeks in Persia, travelling to Teheran where I spent eight delightfully cool days with Major Sir Walter Bartelot at the British Legation at Gul Haq. The shade of the magnificent trees and the plash of the rivulets intersecting the grounds were in most refreshing contrast to the glare of Mesopotamia in August. At Gul Haq I met M. Molitor, the Director-General of Persian Posts and the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs; and after a good deal of persuasion I got them to agree to re-opening the mail line to Khaniqin. On my way back I met General Stuart Wortley at Kasvin and suggested that I should visit Enzeli on the Caspian. He agreed. And so I saw the very picturesque and interesting bit of Gilan from Menzil (where I came across Mr. Davis, Postmaster of the 37th Brigade F.P.O., who has contributed a subsequent chapter) to the Caspian. At Enzeli I met General Dunsterforce on the "Paul Kruger" (his Headquarters) just before he sailed for Baku. He was at tea and was busy seeing



representatives of the Bolshies' and being interviewed by British Officers some on the way to Baku, others en route to Krasnovodsk on the further shore of the Caspian. On the way back from Hamadan I passed thousands of 'Jhelu' refugees from Lake Urmiyah trekking to Baquba where the British Government gave them asylum and hospitality. It was a pathetic sight, a nation in flight. Many did not get to Baquba but died by the way, their corpses punctuating their line of march.



Field Postmaster of F. P. O. 16—Arab Village 1917.

Soon after leaving Khaniqin I met Sir Percy and Lady Cox going up to Teheran where Sir Percy had been appointed Minister in succession to Sir Charles Marling. We stopped and exchanged greetings, and then pursued our journeys, they for the cool delights of the Persian Hills, I for the still reeking plains of Mesopotamia.

I got back to Baghdad about the middle of September after one of the most interesting tours I am ever likely to make.

My last tour before leaving Mesopotamia was in February 1919 when I went to Mosul. Railhead was then at Baiji and from there we went to Shergat where I picked up a cuniform brick from the ruins of Ashur. On the way from Shergat to Mosul over grass and flower-strewn undulations we got stuck in the mud and for the second time I had to spend the night in the Blue. Sir John Hewett and the officer travelling with him on their way up a week previously had also stuck in the mud on the same journey and wired thus to G.H.Q. for help.

"3 I.O.Rs., 2 B.O.Rs., 2 B.Fs. stuck in mud aaa please send help."

We got to Mosul after a day's delay. Mosul had recently fallen into our hands, but it seemed as if our occupation had been for months, so clean, well kept and orderly was the place. Thomas Atkins settles down as quickly in Mosul as he would in Margate. On the way back we had better luck than on our way there and within forty-eight hours of leaving Mosul, we arrived back in Baghdad.

By the end of April 1919 my job as D.P.S., M. E. Force, was finished and I handed on the postal torch to Major Clerici who became Director of Postal Services, Iraq and Persian Line of Communication.

So ended my intensely interesting experience as a temporary officer in the Great War. As we steamed down the Shatt-ul-Arab bound for India and Home, I thought with a pang of regret of the cheery life on Active Service, of the never failing help and courtesy of the officers with whom I had worked, of the dogged grit and determination of the personnel of the Postal Service working cheerfully and devotedly in the most adverse circumstances and of my brother officers in that service.





LT. SHUJAT ALI, LT.-COL. SAMS, MAJOR CLERICI  
Nov. 1918.



LT. CREAGAN, A.D.P.S.

I cannot conclude this narrative better than by quoting from my Report to the Director-General.

NOTICE OF OFFICERS.—“I find it very difficult to single out any particular officer without doing injustice to others. The work of some has come more under my notice than that of others, but I know that the work of all has been whole-hearted and good. The Postal Service has been officered by very junior men, many of whom are not even Superin-



tendents in India. I have been greatly struck by the way in which they have handled often most difficult situations and how they have all cheerfully shouldered responsibility. This campaign has given them their chance and they have taken it fully.

“ I acknowledge herewith gratitude that all these young officers have done, and with even greater gratitude the devotion and loyalty which I have always had from the senior officers, especially by those who have worked with me as D.Ds. P.S. or in the Base Post Offices. Without their willing co-operations, success would have been impossible.

“ We have all been a very happy family together and there has been among us a real *esprit de corps*.

“ It is with genuine regret that I leave my brother officers and the Postal Service, M. E. F.”

## CHAPTER XI.

### MESOPOTAMIA.

Discomforts and Difficulties on the Tigris. August 1916.

By

Major McMinn, A.D.P.S., Corps.

In giving a narrative account of the work of the Field Postal Service for the 3rd Indian Army Corps a commencement must be made by a description of the Central Post Office and of its multifarious duties. When the Corps was at Orah, a Central Post Office was established there but after the advance to Filayah for some reason the Central Post Office still remained at Orah. As the latter place had ceased to be the Rivice Head it is obvious that the Central Post Office could no longer exercise the functions of a Central Office and it degenerated into an ordinary Field Post Office serving the units of Orah and Wadi. This office was afterwards closed and a new Central Post Office was opened at Filayah but later the River Head was moved down to Sheikh Saad and accordingly the Central Post Office was transferred to that place.

The duties of the Central Post Office at that period were :—

- (1) To act as a funnel for all the mails of the Corps, *i.e.*, (a) to arrange for the disembarkation and embarkation of all mails; (b) to sort the bags for F.P.Os. according to the latest news about distribution of troops; (c) to despatch upward mails by river boat or by convoy as the case might be.
- (2) To act as a Central Sorting Office for local mails. For this purpose the Central Post Office exchanged 21 bags daily with F.P.Os.
- (3) To act as an Enquiry Bureau. In this connection all doubtful and non-deliverable articles were returned to the Central Post Office by the Field Post Offices. Here all possible enquiries were made to try and effect delivery, to despatch all mails down river.

The methods of despatch of up mails were at that time two in number. One by ferry service to Arab Village, two by cart convoy to Twin Canals and Es Sinn.



## POSTAL OFFICERS, BAGHDAD, 1918.



Standing left to right:—Lt. A. E. AZEVEDO, Lt. H. C. ECCLESTON,  
Lt. K. C. SEN.  
Seated left to right:—Capt. J. H. OWENS, Capt. A. R. AUGIER.

It was not long before the railway opened with a daily service to Twin Canals. By this service mails are sent to the 7th, 8th and 9th Brigades but the mails for the 14th Division still go by mule cart convoy which leaves Sheikh Saad every third day.

The system of despatch by convoy is now as follows:—

In a morning of the day previous to the departure of the convoy we are supposed to submit an estimate of the carts required. This estimate is based on the number of bags awaiting despatch and on our expectations of a mail boat arriving during the day. This latter factor has always been an uncertain one and now that the river is low has become an absolute gamble. In the evening the carts arrive and are loaded up; an escort under an N.C.O. and one man for each cart is provided and after being packed the carts move off with the escort to the Advance Transport Depôt where the whole convoy amounting sometimes to 600 carts is parked for the night. At dawn the next morning the convoy starts arriving at Twin Canals about 9 or 10 A.M. Here the mules are changed and the convoy halts for the day. Our mails are unloaded and carefully checked bag by bag by the Inspector stationed there and loaded again in the evening and made over under receipt to a fresh escort. The next morning the convoy starts for Es Sinn where it arrives about four hours later. The mails are unloaded and checked by the Inspector, 14th Division, who arranges for the distribution to the F.P.Os. concerned. There have always been difficulties in safeguarding the mails on the convoy. After the bags are loaded, a tarpaulin is spread over them and the whole load is then secured by ropes. Each driver receives a chit on which the number of bags in his particular cart is noted. The total number of bags is carefully checked by the N.C.O. in charge of the escort with the postmaster of the Central Post Office and a way bill is handed over to him. All these precautions should apparently ensure the safety of the mails, but unfortunately this is not always the case. The road is very rough and the carts move in an impenetrable cloud of dust. This cloud is so thick that the escort, more especially if it is a British one, cannot march alongside the carts and have to move parallel to them at some distance on the windward side. Through the jolting of the carts ropes get loosened and sometimes a bag drops off. On account of the dust haze and the number of carts the loss is unnoticed and the bag being of much the same colour as the dusty road even the rear-guard pass it by. Such losses, though guarded against as much as possible, are inevitable under the existing conditions. When the railway runs to Es Sinn (which it is hoped will be soon) then it is trusted that all bags will arrive safely at their destination.

A description of what we call a convoy day at Sheik Saad might be interesting as well as amusing. In the morning the A.D.P.S. looks at



the dump of mails and tries to make a rapid calculation as to the number of carts required. An estimate of 15 is arrived at. He then proceeds to the M.T.O. and asks anxiously for news of, say the "Blosse Lynch" which is on its way upstream with a nice little load of 1,500 bags. The M.T.O. assures him that to the best of his belief the "Blosse Lynch" cannot arrive till the next day. The A.D.P.S. with a lightened heart proceeds to the Advance Base Commandant's office and submits an indent for 15 carts and a fatigue party of 20 men. After some discussion, the Staff Officer is at last induced to admit that he has 15 carts and 20 men hidden away, where he can get at them, and the A.D.P.S. returns to his tent to attend to office work. By the time he has finished this his temper has become somewhat soured owing to the difficulties of attending to papers in a temperature of 115 degra. ; and with a howling wind blowing which is called the "Shumal." After breakfast, the sound of a steamer is heard and a casual glance down the river shows the horrible spectacle of the "Blosse Lynch" steaming proudly up the river. The wretched A.D.P.S. then puts on his helmet and as soon as the boat is wharfed dashes off to board her. He hopes against hope that there is some mistake in the wire but on meeting the postal official on board, he is informed that the news of 1,500 bags is all too true. The Captain of the boat meets him and babbles with pride about having made a record trip. A.D.P.S. looks upon him with a jaundiced eye and demands moodily why he could not have adhered to his scheduled time instead of making foolish attempts at breaking records. The skipper wanders off brooding over the ingratitude of man, more especially of postal officials. The A.D.P.S. by that time, looking haggard and worn, betakes himself again to the office of the Advance Base Commandant and demands 20 more carts and a further fatigue of 60 men. The Staff Officer sarcastically asks if he is supposed to be a conjurer able to produce carts and men from up his sleeve. After a spirited and acrimonious argument 10 more carts and a further fatigue of 30 men are promised and the A.D.P.S. returns to his tent pleased with the inward knowledge that he has obtained more than he expected. On arrival there, he finds an agitated officer waiting him with a piteous tale that he has not received any letters from his wife by the last mail. With difficulty refraining from making a cynical suggestion that the said wife has found a better means of spending her time than in writing letters, the A.D.P.S. listens to the tale of woe and promises to wire to the Base. The complainant departs with a greater belief in the efficacy of such a telegram than has the disillusioned postal officer. The A.D.P.S. by that time in a half-crazed condition of mind, indites a wire to the Base Postmaster which is calculated to curl the hair, if any, of that harassed official. He sardonically chuckles as he imagines the remarks about ingratitude which will be made in the Base Post Office on arrival of the wire. The A.D.P.S. then seeks his couch to try and rest till 4-30 P.M. the time of arrival of the carts and fatigues. If lucky,

he may, in spite of heat and flies, doze off and dream of myriads of mail bags. At 4-30 P.M. he looks out and sees the arrival of carts and the men of the Madras Porter Corps who form the fatigue and who are usually known as the Madras Tigers. Soon a steady stream of bags is seen to arrive and the A.D.P.S. after a hurried tea, proceeds to join in the struggle which is imminent. Soon huge dumps of mails begin to appear on the plain apposite the C.P.O. The very attenuated postal staff can be seen here and there with their head-gear still visible above the hills of bags. Order is gradually evolved out of what appears to be chaos and in time the convoy carts are loaded. At the same time other carts are making frequent journeys to the evening ferry-boat with mails for Filayah. Other carts too are being loaded up with mails for brigades of the 13th Division and local units. Just at this time the M.L.O. arrives with the news that the P.5 is proceeding to Basrah at dawn next day and mails must be loaded on her at once. The A.D.P.S., with difficulty refraining from bursting with emotion, gets hold of the Inspector and instructs him to take one cart and 12 men to the down river dumps and load up the P.5. Just then a Staff Officer from some head-quarters gallops up and demands his particular mail bag. The A.D.P.S. points out the vast heap of still unsorted bags and suggests that his bag is the one at the bottom, whereupon the Staff Officer humbly accepts the advice that he should send over the next morning and returns to his camp in a chastened mood.

Just as darkness has fallen the convoy carts have all been loaded and the way-bills are made out, a copy of which the A.D.P.S. takes over to the Advance Base Commandant's Office. By the time he returns, the carts have moved off, the ferry boat has weighed anchor and peace has settled over the land. He wanders to his table, pours out a little whisky diluted with Tigris and gives thanks that another convoy day is over. He knows that he is sure to receive a batch of wires from Filayah the next day complaining of non-receipt of mails which owing to the limited room on the ferry boat could not be forwarded by that trip. Enough for the day is the evil thereof, he thinks, and he shouts for dinner.

The above brief description will give some idea of postal work at Sheikh Saad. From Twin Canals, there is direct communication between that place and Corps. Next to Corps Head-Quarters Camp is the 3rd Division Head-Quarters' Camp. The means of communication is by motor lorry. A motor lorry convoy leaves Corps every morning loaded up with water "pachals" for Twin Canals. They pour the water into the tanks at that place and then return to Corps. This trip is repeated in the evening. It has now been arranged to send local mails by these lorries and Field Post Office 68 at Twin Canals has been made into a sorting office and office of exchange. It will easily be seen that there is a large amount of work for three offices, *viz.* the Central Post Office



Field Post Office 68 at Twin Canals and Field Post Office 36 which is the landing and despatching office at Arab village. These offices cannot be treated as ordinary Field Post Offices and they require a large staff. The dearth of men due to sickness and lack of proper staff in the first place need not be dwelt upon in this report.

The Field Post Offices with the 14th Division at Es Sinn deserve a special word of mention. They are with their brigades which are holding the most advanced of our positions. The offices themselves have come under shell fire and have also been bombed from aeroplanes. Field post Office 53 had its tent and some Government and private property irreparably damaged by shell fire.

On the whole the service has been satisfactory and reasonable, complaints have been few and I will close this report with a word of thanks to all those of my staff who have borne the burden and heat of the past few months without complaining and without dropping out from the ranks of the workers.

Statistics shewing the number of bags dealt with by the Central Post Office during the month of August 1916.

Sent by convoy.	Sent by rail.	Sent by T boat up.	Sent down stream.	Bags received from down stream.
1,639	459	3,574	2,327	6,758

## CHAPTER XII.

## MESOPOTAMIA.

More Worries on the Tigris. January 1916 to August 1916.

By

Lt.-Col. E. B. Thompson, M. B. E., late A. D. P. S.,

7th Division.

I ARRIVED here at Camp Wadi on the 16th January 1916 by T. boat with a couple of mahelas full of mails. We had had a very bad voyage up-stream, having run aground about half a dozen times. The day of my arrival was a perfectly wretched day, very cold and very wet. On this day I had my first experience of real mud. Bray met me and no sooner had we tied up, than hordes of officers, orderlies, etc., rushed on board and clamoured for their mails. Some bags were on the boat itself (on both the decks) and the remainder were on the two mahelas. Bray, Spear (Inspector), my camp clerk Mahamad Abdulla and myself with the help of some other Post Office Officials who rolled up tackled these mails and by night time we had managed to deliver the greater portion of them. There was no taking receipts or counting bags. We simply handed over the bags. The whole camp was in a state of chaos. Nobody knew where any one else was. Post Offices were scattered about on all the boats and the only thing to be done in the circumstances was to get rid of the mails in the best way possible. It poured with rain the whole time. On the following day the remainder of the mails were delivered from the boat and the boat went off.

After this I reported myself at the 7th Division Head Quarters which was on the S.S. "Blosse Lynch". I was ordered to embark on the boat and was given a place on deck. I discovered that on this boat there were 3 Field Post Offices. Only one of them belonged to the 7th Division Head-Quarters. What the other two Field Post Offices were doing I never quite made out. How any of these offices ever did any work I don't know. They were put away in any little corner where they got all the wind and rain. I tried to get a better place for the 7th Division Head Quarters Field Post Office, but found that every available square inch was occupied. I myself had to sleep out in the open and got more or less



wet every night I visited the Field Post Offices and found them all on boats and all stowed in odd corners. I never saw such general



CAPT. J. H. OWENS, CAPT. E. B. THOMPSON.

discomfort or chaos, when all the boats went down stream at the end of January. All the Field Post Offices were gathered together and placed in

one camp and a General Post Office to serve the whole camp was opened. This was the only possible working scheme as we had not sufficient staff to give the Divisions and Brigades separate post offices. Also if the post offices had been split up and given to different formations it would have been almost impossible to control them until things had settled down a little. After the General Post Office had been opened a few days and we had gathered together all the undelivered mails, things began to look up little. The chief drawback was the weather. The rain and mud made work particularly difficult, as it was at times almost impossible to unload steamers and always impossible to keep mails dry.

In the middle of February Bray went down stream to the Base and Probyn Smith came up and took over charge of that Tigris Corps. Shortly after his arrival more staff came up and we gave each Division and Brigade Head Quarters a Post Office. The Post Office only consisted of one postmaster and one packer and the greatest difficulty was experienced in delivering mails on mail days and preparing and despatching postings. Mails were received very irregularly, sometimes after 10 days, sometimes after 3 or 4 days. Despatches were made 4 or 5 times every week (whenever a boat was going to Basrah). The day fixed for the English Mail was Friday at 2 P. M. but extra despatches were made nearly every week on Saturday and Sunday. A central post office was opened which did practically the same work as a railhead post office in France (Force "A"). The Force at this time was split up. The majority of the Force remained on the Right Bank. The two Forces were connected by a pontoon bridge. Mails were nearly always unloaded on the Left Bank which meant that transport had to cross and back which was not always an easy job. Messrs. Spear and Davison were at different times in charge of the Right Bank and I fancy they had anything but a comfortable time. This state of affairs went on practically till April when a general advance was made and we all came up to Falayah. The winter was over, which was a blessing in many ways. With the united effort of every one, led very ably by Probyn Smith, some sort of a postal system had now been formed. It had been a very bad time for all and especially for the Post Office staff. They had little or no comforts, suffered terribly from the weather and had to work like Trojans all day.

Shortly after our arrival at Falayah, Probyn Smith and Bray both went over to the Right Bank and I was left with Davison on the Left Bank. Steamers unloaded invariably on the Left Bank and generally about 2 miles down river from Bridge Head. This caused a great deal of trouble and waste of time as transport was often delayed going and coming across the bridge. On the 24th April McMinn arrived and took over from Probyn Smith. At the same time Bray left and went down stream. On the 19th May, I moved over to the Right Bank



with the 7th Division. On the 20th I got a touch of sun with very high fever and was ordered into the 20th B.F.A. On 23rd I came out of hospital. From the 24th May to 14th June I was in a camp near the Bridge Head. It was a very bad camp as the road to the bridge passed within a few feet of my tent and all the dust raised by the constant traffic was blown direct into my tent. This combined with the heat and flies nearly drove me mad. During the time I was in this Camp the boats carrying mails unloaded nearly two miles further down the river and some difficulty was experienced in arranging transport to take away the mails. This especially was the case when the mails were big, as the necessary number of carts could never be obtained at one time and it either meant that mails had to lie over or else I had to go elsewhere for my transport. McMinn and Sen more than once came to the fore and helped me by giving me transport.

On the 6th June McMinn left for Sheik Saad and took the Central Post Office with him and left Sen and me up at Falayah. Sen fortunately had a spare post office which we turned into a Central Post Office for the offices at the Front. On the 10th the Turks started shelling some ammunition barges which were tied up just in front of the Civil Post Office and where the mails were unloaded. The Turks managed to hit the barges which blew up. Fortunately none of the mail bags which had just been unloaded were destroyed nor were any of the Post Office staff hurt. The Post Office staff wisely took to their heels when the shelling commenced. I was in my camp at the time and heard the shells passing over and after the barges blew up I went down to the Central Post Office and found every body had disappeared. Tents were burning and unexploded shells were going off like crackers. My mails were still lying on the beach and I had then removed to a place of safety and with the help of some Arabs I managed to get off some mahelas. I wandered down to Sen's camp which was about half a mile lower down but found him away. On my way back I met Sen at the Central Post Office. He was rummaging about apparently looking for missing postmasters and clerks. I suggested that the best place to look for them would be in a truck about three miles off. I left him a solitary figure still poking about looking for postmasters, clerks and packers.

On the 12th the Head Quarters 7th Division moved back but not the Brigade Dépôts and Post Offices. I myself shifted my camp on the 14th to a place near the Supply Dépôt two miles down stream. I chose this place in consultation with the D.A.A. and Q.M.G. of the 7th Division, as the boats bringing mails would unload at this place and it was more convenient for me to remain there than with the 7th Division Head Quarters which was on the opposite bank about a mile up stream.

From the 15th June to date of writing I remained at Arab Village

in the Supply Col. Area. I had to move my camp four times during this period.

Two T. boats ran daily between Sheik Saad and Arab Village. Mails were carried sometimes by only one boat and sometimes by both. On arrival of mails at Arab Village a fatigue party was obtained from the Supply Col. or the M. L. O. and all mails were unloaded and sorted at a Central Depôt, after which demands for transport were made and mails were despatched to their respective offices. A packer from each office attended at the depôt morning and evening and accompanied the mails (if any) to his Post Office. All the 7th Division Post Offices were on the other bank. Owing to the bridge being cut at regular intervals (and sometimes irregular intervals) some trouble was experienced in getting the mails over to the other bank. Mails were closed daily by all Field Post Offices at 3 P.M. and a daily despatch was made down stream. On 4th July, Sen also left for Shaik Saad which left me the only A.D.P.S. up here. In addition to mails for the 7th Division mails for Corps Head Quarters 6th Cavalry Brigade, 3rd Division Head Quarters and 8th Brigade were sent by T. Boat and had to be unloaded and despatched from Arab Village. Alani Khan Inspector supervised the sorting and despatch of mails for the 3rd Division Head Quarters and 8th Brigade and Corps Head Quarters; for the rest I was ably assisted by my Inspector, Davison. On the 20th July the Army Commander came up. I went on board his boat and saw one of his staff and made arrangements for a post office to work on board during the A.C.'s stay up here. The A.C. left here on the 24th July.

On the 27th July I took over F.P.O. 43 (6th Cavalry Brigade).

During the whole time I have been up here I have remained attached to the 7th (Meerut) Division. Right through the Division has taken an interest in its post offices and has given me a deal of assistance. At first as already stated the postal arrangements were disgraceful and I was worried all day with complaints and suggestions (very often very poor ones) for improvements. By degrees however matters began to improve. As soon as ever I was given a Divisional Post Office and a Post Office for each Brigade (in February) I arranged with the Division that the Division Head Quarters and Brigade Head Quarters were to be held responsible for the retaining of their Post Offices and in the event of a move taking place they were to supply transport and move their post office as though it were part and parcel of the Division or the Brigade Head Quarters and from that day to this I have never had any trouble as regards the post offices when a move took place.

The two great drawbacks to any good postal system have been the weather and lack of sufficient staff. In the winter the weather was very wet and cold, and in the summer the flies, heat and dust have been terrible. Until a very short time ago the post offices were all single-



handed which meant that the Postmaster could never leave his office. Even now two of my Offices are still single handed. In spite of all these discomforts and difficulties the P.O. staff of the 7th Division have stuck to their job most nobly and without their co-operation the great improvement in the Postal arrangements here could never have been made. Mr. Davison who joined me as Inspector in February and my camp clerk Mohamad Abdulla have been my right hand men right through.



LT. E. B. THOMPSON WALKING ACROSS MESOPOTAMIA.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## MESOPOTAMIA.

## Voyage of H. M. L. "Chin" 1916.

ON the morning of the 1st April 1916 at 3 A.M. the launch "Chin" left Basrah with His Majesty's mails for Nasiriyah. To the side of the launch and twice its size was tied a mahela containing over 250 bags of mails which had been brought in by the steamer from Bombay the previous evening.

Progress against the tide and the current was not as rapid as one could have wished and it took 13 long hours to cover the 45 miles which separate Qurnah from Basrah. The country all along was inundated by the floods which were now at their highest and but for the date palms on the river banks, it would have been well-nigh impossible to follow the channel of the river.

At Qurnah mails for the garrison were given out and it was while engaged in this work that the "Chin" nearly came to an untimely end. A paddle steamer, towing two enormous barges, and turning round to take up a berth, was carried away by the current and came crashing down on the "Chin". Fortunately the skipper of the paddler saw what was happening just in time and by skilful steermanship sheered off but not before one of the barges collided so violently with the "Chin" that an indefinite postponement of her journey seemed at first the only possible consequence. However the "Chin" survived and at 6 P.M., after coaling, taking on some more mails and a guard, she finally passed through the bridge of boats which spans the Euphrates.

Travelling by night along an unknown river with a crew doing the trip for the first time is a risky undertaking, and so it was decided to proceed as far as possible while there was light and then tie up, but about 7 P.M. all further progress was abruptly terminated by some submerged obstruction which the ship had apparently fouled. All efforts to get free ended in failure and, as it was too dark to see, there was nothing for it but to wait until morning. Sentries were posted, but the night's rest was continually disturbed by their challenges. It was evident that there was something in the wind. Every now and then the dark form of a "mashoof" would glide swiftly across ahead or astern and disappear again into the night. But there was no attack and with the dawn the reason was soon made apparent. Five hundred yards upstream was anchored a grim looking monitor with its 4.7 trained on to the neighbouring Arab village. It subsequently transpired that the



inhabitants of that particular village had not been behaving themselves as they should and that their conduct had received summary punishment.

The obstruction of the previous evening had melted away with the night, and the next halt was at the telegraph station of Chabaish which was reached at 9 A.M. Here the mail bag was dropped and also some rations, badly needed by the small garrison which had been forced to take to living in boats owing to the floods. At Chabaish a convoy was overtaken which had left Qurnah four days previously and as there were some mails with it they were transferred to the "Chin" so that they might reach their destination more quickly.

An hour after passing Chabaish the Hamar Lake was entered and it soon became evident that the pilot knew very little about the waters of the lake, and indeed, if it had not been for the good offices of one of the monitors guarding the lake it is doubtful whether the "Chin" would ever have struck the "Hakeika Channel" which is very difficult to find, being effectually screened by the tall reeds for which the lake is noted.

At about 4 P.M. the same evening Hakeika was reached and mails for the troops were given out to the S. S. O. who in addition to his many other duties also does the work of postmaster. This is perhaps not as it should be, but no other scheme is practicable. Sickness makes all services shorthanded and the postal service is no exception to the general rule; so willing helpers are collected where they can be found and the work is got through by hook or crook.

The next halt (at 4 P.M.) was at Junction Camp. The Euphrates here is working out for itself a new channel which passes by the towns of Suk-es-Sheyukh and Khamsiyah and finally flows into the Shatt-el-Arab a few miles above Basrah. Over a hundred bags of mails were handed over to the Postal Inspector who controls the mail line between Khamsiyah and Junction Camp. Mails for Suk and Khamsiyah are forwarded by country boats in charge of Arab policemen. The journey to Khamsiyah takes from seven to eight hours.

As several hours of daylight still remained, it was decided to push on to Nasiriyah the same evening. But this decision was arrived at without reckoning with the current which above Junction Camp is very swift. Pedestrians on the river banks were easily outstripping the "Chin" which laboured on, till night and a "Shamal" put a stop to all further progress.

As daybreak on the third day the last part of the journey was begun. The final ten miles to Nasiriyah were completed without incident except

on one occasion when the current all but carried the "Chin" into a pile of wreckage with which the Turks had ineffectively tried to block the river last year.

At 10 A.M. the mud walls of Nasiriyah hove in sight, and that the arrival of the mails was not unexpected was proved by the fact that a cheerful party of Territorials was abroad in a moment and busy disembarking the bags in record time. After being sorted into four groups representing the different post offices in Nasiriyah they were hurried away for final delivery and by noon everyone was reading his mail which taken altogether in point of numbers and quickness of transit constituted a record for Nasiriyah.

In addition to the weekly mail steamer advantage is taken of every possible boat which plies between Qurnah and Nasiriyah. But the subsiding of the floods has now resulted in a corresponding decrease of water in the lake so that at the present moment only country boats can cross the lake. The mails are therefore towed up in a mahela by the "Chin" as far as "Lakehead" from where the mahela proceeds under her own sail to Hakeika. Here the mail is picked up by a launch and brought up to Nasiriyah.

The journey across the lake is a tedious one and sometimes takes the best part of four days if the winds are adverse, which they are for the best part of the year for river craft proceeding upstream. It thus happens that a mail now takes a week to reach Nasiriyah.

The difficulties occasioned by the absence of steamers are not so seriously felt in the case of outward mails. Country craft do the journey to Qurnah in 30 hours by making use of their sails all the way. Mails are despatched therefore whenever a convoy leaves Nasiriyah and this is as often as four times a week. As it is useless to ask a Briton to write as the spirit moves him and as he must have his "mail" day, Monday 9 P.M. has been officially declared as "mail day" for the garrison at Nasiriyah.

At Nasiriyah itself there are three Field Post Offices and there is also a Civil Post Office situated in the town. The duties of the Field Offices are mainly to receive and deliver mails to the troops. A considerable amount of money order work is also done with the Indian troops while the British troops prefer to send their savings home by British Postal Order, since they buy these Orders free of poundage.

The Civil Post Office in the town is always a source of interest. The postmaster is a Goanese and a Portuguese subject and the postmen are Arabs. Through the medium of this office, the "Basrah Times" sends broadcast to Arab Sheikhs its weekly Arabic edition of Reuter's telegrams.



The local merchants who were at first suspicious of the benefits to be derived from the use of our newly opened Postal Service now correspond extensively through its medium and have recently taken to remitting large sums of money by money order.

In conclusion, reference must be made to the possibilities (from a postal point of view) which the opening of the Basrah-Nasiriyah Railway will bring in its train. Nasiriyah will then no longer have to depend on an over-varying waterway with attendant delays, but will receive a quick and regular service of mails by railway.

Doubtless in the near future the world will be informed of the running of the first Mesopotamia Postal Express which it is to be hoped will not be a mere local service to Nasiriyah, but will, with the extension of the railway, seek a terminus in some port on the Mediterranean and carry with it the foreign mails.