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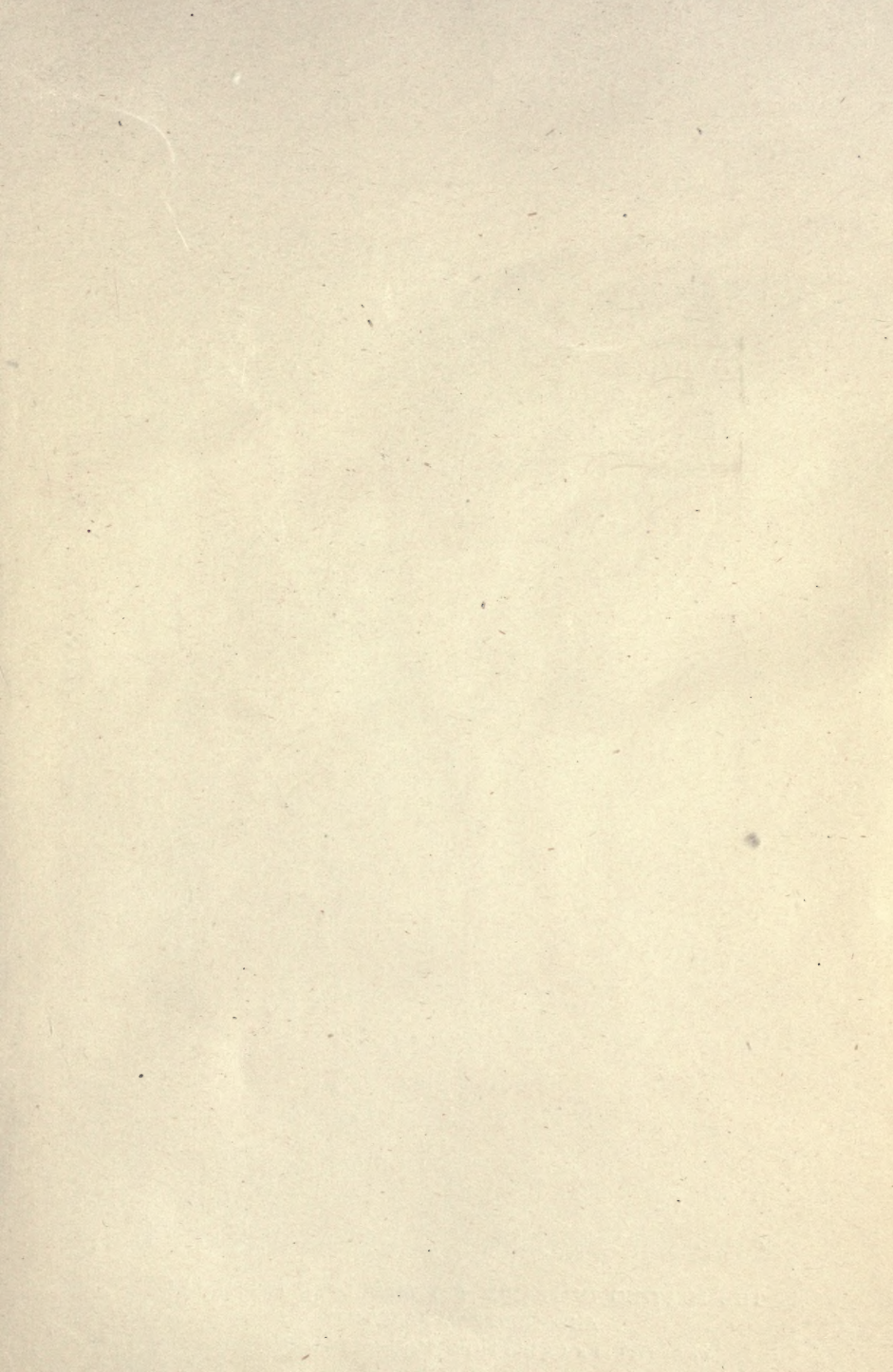




FIELD-MARSHAL  
LORD KITCHENER









THE MEETING IN FRANCE BETWEEN LORD KITCHENER  
AND GENERAL BARATIER

who served as a Captain in the Marchand Fashoda mission

*From a drawing by Wal. Paget*



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# FIELD-MARSHAL LORD KITCHENER

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*His Life and Work for  
the Empire*

BY

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AND OTHERS

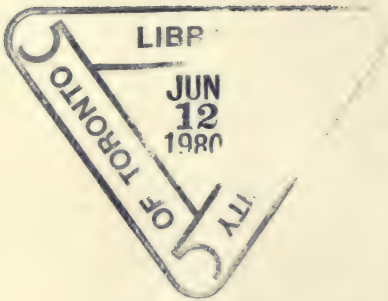
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(Vol. III)



# FIELD-MARSHAL LORD KITCHENER

## VOLUME III

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### CHAPTER I

#### Lord Kitchener in India

Lord Rosebery and Lord Kitchener's Appointment to the Indian Command—The Importance of the Indian Army to the Empire—Lord Kitchener's Aims with regard to the Army—The Indian Army as he found it—The Indian "Military Department"—The Visit to the Gordon College at Khartoum—Arrival in India—Lord Kitchener's Reorganization of the Chief Units of the Indian Army—The Army Memorandum of 1904—Lord Kitchener's Ideas of the Structure and Training of a Modern Army—The Education of the Officer—The General Staff and the Staff College—The "Military Member of Council" in India—Lord Kitchener and the "Dual Advisership"—The Commander-in-Chief's Case—Attitude of Lord Curzon and the Indian Council—Mr. Brodrick's Examination of the Case—The Home Government's Decision—The Select Committee's Findings—Lord Curzon's Resignation—Lord Morley and the Department of Supply—Expert Criticisms on Overcentralization—The Defects of the Working Policy—A Summary of Lord Kitchener's Work in India.

**I**N the Lords' debate on the findings of the South African War Commission Lord Rosebery spoke strongly on the value which Lord Kitchener would be to Great Britain as the reformer of the War Office. "The time has come", he said, "for a new departure. We are so fortunate as to possess a great soldier in the prime and vigour of life who unites high capacity for business, finance, and administration with ripe and recent military experience. We should entrust,

or ask the King to entrust, the War Office to Lord Kitchener with the fullest authority to reorganize our present system, with a view probably to its being administered by a Board, as in the case of the Admiralty. His relations to the Cabinet would easily be settled by more methods than one. . . . Of this I am sure, that by singular fortune we possess the man for the crisis, and that none of the flimsy formulas that have been urged should be allowed to prevail against his appointment." Some months later Lord Rosebery went out of his way to condemn the appointment of Lord Kitchener to the command of the army in India—to do work which any one of a score of less distinguished generals could perfectly well perform, at a time when there was such urgent need of the best available military talent at home. Lord Rosebery was right in his insistence on the need of reform both in the War Office and in the administration of the home army, but neither of the political parties saw its way to give effect to any scheme of army reform which would have satisfied the highest military opinion. Lord Roberts, who had come back from South Africa with all the prestige of the march to Pretoria to back him, could not force on reluctant administrations the plan of making the Commander-in-Chief the real head of a great Head-quarters Staff, and of enduing him with the opportunity of training his generals of division. Nor could he induce either party to attempt to put the recruiting for the army on a basis which would give it sufficient men for providing it with a proper organization with army corps and a compact expeditionary force. In brief, Lord Roberts as Commander-in-Chief in Great Britain was faced with all the difficulties which arose then, and afterwards, from the fact that ministers could not be persuaded that an army would ever be needed by Great Britain except for small expeditions. The modest preliminary reform of making the Commander-in-Chief the real head of the army, with power to appoint generals, was wrecked on



the rock of patronage; the formation of a Great General Staff was watered down into the formation of an army council; the only enlargement of the army was by a process of patch-work and insignificant additions; and when finally Lord Roberts resigned his office the army he had commanded was still deficient in artillery, in equipment, in men, and in organization. Lord Kitchener had far greater scope in the Indian command.

Moreover, Lord Rosebery under-estimated the importance of the Indian command and the immense field which that command offered for all the organizing and administrative powers of Lord Kitchener. This importance was due not only to the numbers of men included in the command, but to the great position and responsibilities of the commander. At home the Commander-in-Chief was, and remained, an official the main outlines of whose policy were laid down by the Cabinet and the Secretary of State. In India the Commander-in-Chief is a member of the Council of India, which corresponds to the Cabinet at home, and he is, in practice, second in importance to the Viceroy. He has a very large voice in settling the lines of military policy of India, and the military policy of India was one of the corner-stones of the military policy of the Empire. The British Empire rests on the possession of the sea, and while this condition lasts the Empire cannot be irreparably harmed. An invasion of any part of it can only take place through the vulnerability of the navy, because an invasion of it is possible only by sea—with two exceptions, of which India is one. India can be invaded by land, and it becomes necessary, therefore, to form in this vast country an army adequate for its defence. Moreover, from the very condition of our rule in India it is apparent that our task in defending it demands a strong and efficient army, because British policy in India must avoid the appearance of weakness. It must not shift or change,

it must not promise and fail to perform, it must not trim to circumstances, but it must control circumstances in an aim never lost sight of. The aim is peace in India and unbroken confidence in Britain's mission and power. These considerations were bound to influence Lord Kitchener, who saw in the Indian army a great instrument which, if rightly handled and tempered, might become a unit in Imperial policy of greater importance than ever before. But it is undeniable that he had other ambitions and views with regard to it. He perceived in India and in the Indian army the opportunity of carrying out military reform and military reorganization on a scale and in a way that could not be attempted in Great Britain.

In the Soudan campaign Lord Kitchener had worked with his own Staff, with men who had grown up with him, who had worked with him and been trained by him. In a letter written a generation ago by Moltke<sup>1</sup> that great strategist defined what the relations of a Commander-in-Chief should be to his General Staff. "A General Staff cannot be improvised on the outbreak of war. It must have been prepared long before, during peace, and must be in practical working and in constant touch with the troops. But that is not enough. The general staff must know its commander, must be in close touch with him, and acquire his confidence, without which its position is untenable." That defines precisely what the relations had been between the Sirdar and his subordinate commanders in the Soudan. The result was a triumph of smooth working and co-ordinated effort. But in South Africa Lord Kitchener had an experience of a different kind. He had seen the failures of commanders who had improvised Staffs, or who had to depend on subordinates whom they did not know and whom they had not trained. He had experienced at Paardeberg the damaging consequences of having to work without a Staff, and to give

<sup>1</sup> *Imperial Defence.* By Sir Charles Dilke and Professor Spenser Wilkinson.



orders to generals who had been trained in a school very different from his own; and throughout the whole of the war he was, from first to last, confronted with the wastefulness and the futilities of campaigning under conditions in which cohesion and co-ordination and a comprehensive organization were lacking. Towards the end of the South African campaign he was beginning to fashion the incongruous elements of his army into an ordered structure; but it was an unthankful task, and one which he foresaw would be undone again as soon as operations ceased. Before the war was finished he was eager to complete his task so that he could begin on one which offered a more promising opportunity of building up a real army, complete in structure as in details.

The German official historian of the South African War wrote that Lord Kitchener had admitted to him the lack of staff organization in the British army and deplored its absence, expressing at the same time a wish that he could remodel an army on the Continental plan. The recorded admission is no doubt true, and when Lord Kitchener was appointed to the command of the Indian army in the autumn of 1902 he rejoiced in the opportunity of being able to give effect to his wishes and to his plans for the construction of an army in circumstances and under conditions where he hoped to have a free hand. It was in this hope and expectation that he sailed for India, and there is little doubt that in converse with his old friend and chief, Lord Cromer, at Cairo, he spoke of them. Lord Cromer was a little dubious of them, because he thought that, in his own words, it was always undesirable to form plans before a thorough investigation of the conditions on the spot. He believed that Lord Kitchener would have done better to go to India with an entirely open mind, and without a plan of campaign, and that he should have formed one only after a long and patient examination of the situation and of the obstacles in the path of reform. In this apprehension Lord

Cromer was justified; for, though Lord Kitchener's reforms were in many details welcomed and approved by all Indian authorities, there were principles, and important principles, in them which were fiercely combated by men of great experience and authority in India. The opposition thus aroused was in itself a factor in preventing the smooth and satisfactory working of the system as Lord Kitchener devised it.

The Indian army, as Lord Kitchener thought it should be, must be capable of something more than the suppression of internal tumult or of providing for a frontier expedition against well-armed tribesmen. It ought to be efficient both in numbers and in equipment, if called upon, to meet the army of a Great Power. It would be fruitless to attempt to conceal to-day that the inimical Great Power which had been contemplated by a generation of soldiers before Lord Kitchener went to India was Russia, whose slow march towards the North-West Frontier had been a continual and not altogether a fanciful menace. That Lord Kitchener was impressed by this menace is certain; and it was perhaps owing to German intrigues that during one period of his command in India the threat was made to appear more substantial than for many years before. It is now certain that the real threat to India was and is Germanic; but the identity of the assailant does not affect the necessity for Indian military preparedness. The army which Lord Kitchener found in India was very far from being prepared either in numbers, equipment, or organization. The Indian army numbered, approximately, 203,000 Indian troops, 74,000 British regulars, and a small force of 30,000 Imperial Service troops and volunteers, the principle of the army's formation being that both in peace and war the British soldier should be close to the Indian sepoy, and that the sepoys should not outnumber the soldiers by more than two to one. The British formations were provided by the system of linked battalions with the home army—the home army



contributing annually a proportion of its regiments for service in India. Theoretically the British contingent of the Indian army, when Lord Kitchener's predecessor (Sir Power Palmer) retired from the command, was a magnificently trained body of men. But it was passing its meridian. During the three years of war in South Africa the passage of soldiers from the ranks to the reserve wholly ceased, and few weedy recruits went out to India. The various corps thus consisted largely of veterans thoroughly acclimatized. But when the new Commander-in-Chief took over the army the situation was reversing itself. The veterans were every day passing to the reserve, their places taken by the very recruits, immature and unacclimatized, whose absence had been such a source of congratulation. It was one of the inevitable results of the British system of recruiting. The artillery equipment of the army was not in much better case. There was a better provision of artillery horses for the field-batteries than in the home army, but the artillery needed re-equipment, and there was a marked deficiency not only of heavy guns but also of modern observation apparatus.

The organization of the Indian army into four large but unequal armies was cumbrous and unwieldy, and presented several glaring anomalies. The Punjab commander had 80,000 men under his orders, and his responsibility was heightened by the several hundred miles of more or less turbulent frontier for which he was answerable. The Bombay commander, on the other hand, had fewer than 40,000 in his district. Moreover, in the attempt to parcel out the whole of the Indian Empire into four military commands, geography and expediency alike had been sacrificed. Burma, separated from Madras by 500 miles of sea, was under the Madras commander. Baluchistan, which had nothing in common, either geographically, ethnologically, or administratively, with Bombay, was placed under the Bombay commander, whose head-quarters were 1000 miles away, half of

this distance being covered by sea. Apart from these anomalies, a large proportion of the armies was grouped in a most unscientific manner in cantonments, which were doubtless of considerable strategic importance in the days of the old East India Company, but which, in relation to the railways, had altogether lost their importance. There were far too many small and isolated stations and far too many detachments. The splitting-up process was fatal to good training; and the new Commander-in-Chief saw that it was essential to efficiency to redistribute and group the forces in larger bodies.

The deficiencies of transport and of communications were of a kind which would immediately catch the eye of Lord Kitchener—whose wars had been won by superiority of transport, and whose campaigns had been, in his own words, “fought with the aid of the locomotive”. Railways needed extension, enlargement, strengthening, and guarding. The transport system of the Indian army was in good condition, but that, too, was susceptible of enlargement and improvement. There were other questions of supplies and reserves which needed the attention and supervision of the highest kind of organizer. India is not a manufacturing country with Great Britain’s output or power of expansion. In the case of warlike stores she was entirely dependent on the limited output of the Government factories. It was, and is, desirable that she should become as independent as possible of the United Kingdom in the matter of military supplies. The reserve of horses was quite inadequate for military operations on a large scale. There was no indigenous horse supply in India suitable for artillery or artillery-transport purposes. India is dependent on Australia for her remounts, which have thus to be brought thousands of miles by sea, and then require months of acclimatization before they are fit for work.

Lastly, there was the administrative aspect of supply. In India, before Lord Kitchener went there, a “Military Depart-



Bourne and Shepherd

LORD KITCHENER IN INDIA  
on his favourite charger—"Democrat"





ment" existed side by side with the Head-quarters Staff and theoretically designed to exercise some sort of supervision over the Commander-in-Chief. This was a provision with regard to which Lord Kitchener was to be expected to entertain strong views. But, apart from the principle of dual control which was involved, there was one aspect of army administration by the Military Department which the Commander-in-Chief was extremely unlikely to favour. The great departments of supply were directly under the Military Department and not under the Commander-in-Chief. Under supply are grouped the food and ammunition and transport which an army needs for its sustenance and for its movements. Lord Kitchener's armies had moved securely and swiftly in the past because it had been his constant care that the departments which fed them, supplied them, and carried them should be of the highest degree of competence. It was not likely that he would view their divorce from his control in India as in any way expedient.

Such were some of the aspects of the Indian army concerning which Lord Kitchener had probably formed opinions before he set out to take up the command. He left London for India on the morning of 17th October, 1902. So unostentatious was his departure that the railway company received only twenty minutes' warning that he would travel by the eleven o'clock train from Victoria. He stopped in Paris at the Embassy, and did not escape the friendly notice of the Parisians or the Press, the *Temps* remarking: "Since yesterday there has been in France one ex-French soldier the more; his name is Kitchener, and he resides at the British Embassy". In Rome he was the guest of Sir Rennell Rodd, and on 27th October he landed in Egypt, had an audience of the Khedive, and went on to Cairo as the guest of Lord Cromer. It was during his stay with Lord Cromer that he spoke freely of some of his views and intentions with regard to India.

While in Egypt he visited the Nile Barrage, and afterwards went to Khartoum to see his realized project, the Gordon College. At the opening ceremony he spoke with unwonted enthusiasm of the future which he foresaw for the Soudan, and of the importance which education was to assume in it. In the Soudan he thought that the people of all classes anxiously desired the education of their children, and that the steps that had been taken to give it met with their approval. The material, he believed, was good; the Soudan primary schools, he had been told, were equal in efficiency to those of Egypt; the boys were eager to learn and capable of learning. They were an excellent type, and clearly showed the fruitful field for work which, if developed, would surely result in making the country a prosperous centre of civilization. But, he went on to say, the memorial to General Gordon had not been called a college without due consideration. It was hoped, and had been fully foreseen, that it would in the future become the head and centre of secondary and more advanced scientific training and technical education of the youths of the Soudan. Here they would be brought up and taught so as to be able to get out into the world equipped to fill many posts for which their country already required them. "I for one", said Lord Kitchener, "am quite willing and happy to wait patiently for that result which is the purpose and future of the institution."

Lord Kitchener arrived in India in November, 1902, and at once set to work to work out the details of the reforms which he had in his mind. The principle underlying his aims was, in his own words: "That the army in peace should be organized and trained in units of command similar to those in which it will take the field".<sup>1</sup> The alterations which he proposed were submitted to the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, through the channel of the Military Member of the Council of India, and were supported by the Council

<sup>1</sup> Army Order, 28th of October, 1904.



with certain important reservations. In the correspondence which arose out of these reservations, and of which it will be necessary to speak, Lord Curzon mentions that Lord Kitchener's plans were first formulated on the 6th November, 1903, a year after his arrival in India, but were deferred at the Viceroy's suggestion.

The reorganization of the chief units of the army was not, however, in any way controversial, and was as follows:—

Under the new organization India was divided into three commands instead of four. Each command comprised three divisions, and each division consisted of one cavalry and three infantry brigades, with divisional troops of cavalry, artillery, sappers, and pioneers, &c. Each division had its own additional troops to maintain order in its divisional area in the event that the division was withdrawn for war. The Madras command disappeared. The other three commands remained as they were, except that their boundaries were altered according to a plan that was not inelastic, and they became known as the Northern, Western, and Eastern Command. The Secunderabad Division, which had been part of the Madras army, was constituted as a separate unit, with its own lieutenant-general communicating with and taking orders directly from the Commander-in-Chief, and the Burma Command was similarly made a complete and distinct unit. Ultimately Lord Kitchener, who consulted with his generals of division through their lieutenant-generals commanding the three main "army corps", mapped out the whole of British India into divisional areas, each under its own general. There were nine such divisions and eight cavalry brigades, with certain other units known as army troops which could be put into the field. The advantages of the arrangement were, and are, evident, since they enable the units which are associated on active service to be trained together in peace time, while the system ensures that brigades will take the field under generals whom they know

and who have taught them, and with Staff and departmental officers with whom they are acquainted.

Ultimately, in order to ensure uniformity of training and discipline, Lord Kitchener formed (1907) the forces in India into two armies, the Northern and the Southern, each commanded by a lieutenant-general with his own Staff. The Northern Army consisted of the 1st (Peshawur), 2nd (Rawalpindi), 3rd (Lahore), 7th (Meerut), 8th (Lucknow) divisions, and three frontier brigades, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan; and the Southern Army of the 4th (Quetta), 5th (Mhow), 6th (Poona), 9th (Secunderabad), and Burma divisions, and the Aden brigade.

Lord Kitchener's plans, which were ripe for the consideration of the Governor-General in Council in November, 1903, were considered and dealt with in Council during the next year. They involved a large increase in equipment and supplies. There were many additional requirements consequent on the creation of new army departments and on the extension of factories for making munitions in India. An idea of the new demands on Indian resources may be gleaned from the following passages in the memorandum which Lord Kitchener addressed to the army in India in April, 1904, regarding the higher military training and military education of officers; the distribution of Staff duties; the responsibility of general and Staff officers, and the training of troops for war.<sup>1</sup> It is a document of the highest interest, because it reflects Lord Kitchener's idea as to the structure of a modern army in the light of his knowledge and experience.

"Our army", he says of the Indian army, but his words applied with equal force to the British army, "is admittedly a small one for the purposes for which it is maintained. There is consequently all the more need for a higher standard of excellence with us than obtains elsewhere. It must be the constant endeavour of every one in the army in India so

<sup>1</sup> Indian Army Order, 11th April, 1904.

to train themselves and those under them in time of peace that when the strain of war comes all ranks may know what to do and how to do it."

Lord Kitchener went on to observe that though since the South African War there had been improvement in the military training both of troops and of Staff officers, yet the progress was slow and hampered by difficulties and defects which ought to be and could be removed. One of the defects was our traditional over-confidence in the capabilities of our troops. In South Africa there were several instances of how such complacent beliefs, and the consequent neglect of ordinary precautions, had led commanders to disaster. Against such erroneous ideas—which arose from a false estimate of the army's preparedness for war, or from the feeling that if it was not really perfectly trained, it was at least good enough to cope with any enemy likely to be encountered—it was most necessary to guard. From such soothing beliefs there was often a rude awakening. In the day of battle a commander might find that the troops were not as well trained as he had imagined, that his Staff left something to be desired, that the whole military machine was inefficient and not working smoothly. But it was then too late to remedy shortcomings. "It is during peace", said Lord Kitchener, "that we must prepare for war by making every component part of the machine—however apparently small and insignificant—thoroughly sound and serviceable."

It was because he had supervised the insignificant details of the machine in the Soudan that it had worked without a flaw; it was because of improper training and inefficient Staff work that the South African campaign had been so costly and tedious. None knew better than he that it was the army's defects rather than the novelty of the warfare it was called upon to wage that had prolonged and magnified its task.



He went on to insist on the paramount need of unremitting teaching, constant practice. "The whole secret of preparing for war is a matter of training and instruction." Crammed knowledge was useless; officers' education must be imparted within their regiments, beginning when they joined, never ending till they left the service; it must be from his regiment that the subaltern should go up for examinations on the foundation of knowledge and instruction given to him by his commanding officer. It might be that some commanding officers might fail, through ignorance, indolence, or incapacity, to instruct those under them. Lord Kitchener proposed a scheme by which this might be tested. It was a single "garrison class" which the failures might attend. If this got them through, then evidently their first failure was due to their commanding officer. A second failure would make it clear that the fault was with themselves, and that the Service had no further use for them.

It was not commanding officers of regiments alone on whom the responsibility for teaching the army lay. Great as was their responsibility, that of the general officers commanding was still greater.

"Many generals", observed Lord Kitchener, "appear to imagine that they have fulfilled all their duty when they have reported badly on a unit and have officially recorded a long list of its shortcomings. This is a view from which I most emphatically dissent. A general must indeed be able to detect and point out faults, but such criticism is useless unless he himself is able and ready to apply the remedy that is needed. Troops must be accustomed to regard their generals, not as necessarily hostile critics, but as their trusted leaders in war, their instructors in peace, and at all times their ready helpers, able and willing to promote their welfare, and to spare no effort to increase their preparedness for the stress of active service."

Consequently Lord Kitchener, by direct implication, laid on his generals the same necessity for unceasing study and of constant practical application. "In this way alone can they

properly prepare their troops for war, and at the same time so train themselves as to be able adequately to discharge the great responsibilities which will devolve on them when called upon to command in the field." But such duties and such tasks could not be performed adequately without the assistance of a Staff. "Nothing is more essential for complete preparation in peace and for successful operation in war than that an army should have a thoroughly trained and highly educated General Staff. If such a Staff is provided, and generals know how to use their Staffs, we shall have gone a long way towards attaining true efficiency."

Lord Kitchener did not think that this provision of Staff education and training had been sufficiently realized in India. He therefore took steps for the foundation of a Staff College for India, nominations to which of the best and most promising young officers were made by general officers commanding districts. The nominations were further confirmed by examination. The training given to these selected candidates at the Staff College would, he hoped, provide the army with a thoroughly practical General Staff, competent to afford the maximum of assistance not only to the generals whom it served, but also to the troops for whose benefit it existed. He was careful to guard against the absorption of Staff officers thus trained in mere routine work. It was essential, he pointed out, that a certain amount of routine should be learnt and administered, so as to ensure the well-being of the troops in peace, but routine must not be allowed to obscure the need of learning, above all and before all, what was to be done in war. The work of a Staff, he pointed out, fell into two great divisions:—

1. The art of war.
2. Routine business in peace and war.

The first was concerned mainly with all the higher problems

of war: the strategy of ourselves and of possible enemies; tactics and military problems. It was further divisible into (i) training and preparation for war; and into (ii) maintenance and movement. The Staff officer in charge of each of these subdivisions was completely responsible for it and for all its details, under the direction of his general; but he must also know what was going on in the other division.

“The two branches of this great division must in fact work with that combination of purpose and perfect smoothness of execution which is possessed by the twin screws of a ship. Though the channels in which they work are divided by the keel-line between them they will always in reality be working in perfect harmony and on parallel lines under the direction of the general to drive the vessel of the army towards perfect efficiency.”

The Commander-in-Chief did not permit himself many metaphorical passages of that kind in his Army Order, which went on in a very business-like way to distribute and define the work of Staff officers over districts, and which ended with the characteristic reminder that there would be hard work for all.

“I wish carefully to impress on all generals and Staff officers the fact that it is far from my intention to diminish the work at present done by any individual officer, but on the contrary to ensure that work which is now neglected or left wholly undone is adequately performed in the future. Thus all Staff officers will have more work to do than they have at present, though in many cases it will be work of a different kind.”

The rest of Lord Kitchener's Army Order is devoted to the subject of the training of the troops; the necessity for combining discipline and individuality in the men; the overwhelming importance of making officers and non-commissioned officers capable from the very first of exercising independent command: “The exercise of independent command having thus been inculcated in the juniors, the system must be carried up through all ranks, and be continually developed at each



stage of the training". All arms—cavalry, artillery, infantry—should be worked together. The newer knowledge should be applied to the use of cavalry and artillery.

"Last but not least comes the preservation and maintenance of discipline which distinguishes an army from an armed mob, and without which all other training is of small value. The true combination of discipline with a proper exercise of individual intelligence and initiative cannot fail to give the army in which these qualities have been inculcated a superiority over one in which they have been neglected."

In these formal sentences Lord Kitchener concluded his precepts. He proceeded to put them energetically and unremittingly into practice, so that by the end of two years he was able to say that he had prepared, or had done much to prepare, the Indian army in respect of its internal training to assume the aspect and qualities of a modern army. But there was an extraneous cause which was a continual drag on its progress and a hindrance to its expansion; and this cause arose from the system of administration of the army in India. In Great Britain the Secretary of State for War, before August, 1914, was always a civilian, though the army was administered by the War Office. The system has admittedly not worked well, but it was more simple than that of India, where the Commander-in-Chief, though nominally master in his own house, was continually confronted by the activities of a Military Department which was independent of him. In former days, when each of the three Indian Presidencies Bengal, Bombay, and Madras possessed its own army, a connecting-link between their armies and the Viceroy of India was provided by an official designated the Military Member of Council. The duties of his office related to the civil side of army administration. The office was usually filled by a military man; not because a soldier was a necessity, but because it was easier to find a soldier who was a good business man than a civilian who thoroughly understood the army.

Thus it came about that when the forces in India were made into one army, the Military Member, being generally a soldier, and being always at the Viceroy's right hand as counsellor and adviser, and being also as much a member of the Government Council as the Commander-in-Chief, came by degrees to be looked on as a kind of military equipoise to the Chief—to whom he was in no sense responsible or subordinate. Such an arrangement, which had reached its worst point when Lord Kitchener took over the command, was, in his view, intolerable. Under Sir Edmond Elles, a man of great ability, the Military Department of India had grown to be a very powerful department. Its influence had been felt and disapproved while Lord Roberts and Sir George White had commanded in India; in the period of office of Sir William Lockhart and Sir Power Palmer, who preceded Lord Kitchener, the exercise of its powers by the Department had grown more frequent and imperative. Constitutionally the Military Member was only an adviser to the Viceroy, who was free to take his advice or to choose between it and that of the Commander-in-Chief. But Lord Kitchener held that the "dual advisership" was no less undesirable than dual control, and that, whatever might be the constitutional theory, the system was damaging to all efficiency and to his own authority. In practice the Military Member deemed it his right not merely to interfere in purely military questions, but on his own initiative to interpose a veto on the Commander-in-Chief's requirements, and thus even to prevent them from coming before the Viceroy in Council for discussion. Nor was this all. Until Lord Kitchener put his foot down, junior officers in the Military Department were in the habit of offering criticisms on the Commander-in-Chief's plans.<sup>1</sup> The Commander-in-Chief's requirements were debated by the Military Department with

<sup>1</sup> See an article by Sir George Arthur, "Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener", *Fortnightly Review*, August, 1905.

an aggravation of the system of red tape such as would have seemed incredible had not Lord Kitchener himself furnished the instance. On 17th February, 1904, Lord Kitchener sent in a request relating to small-arms ammunition. The request was not officially commented on by the Department till 19th May, a period of three months. Discussion in the Department proceeded in leisurely fashion for a couple of months longer, when (21st July) a dispatch was sent home. The Secretary of State for War in England (Mr. Brodrick) thought the matter urgent, and, though on holiday, returned to town to telegraph a reply. Yet, notwithstanding the urgency of the Commander-in-Chief and of the Secretary of State for War, the Indian Military Department coolly decided to await details by post. There was then a half surrender and further delays, and it was not till ten months after Lord Kitchener had sent in his requisition that he got his ammunition.

This was not the kind of thing which Lord Kitchener could or would tolerate. He had gone to India for a given purpose, and he was determined to allow nothing to stand in the way of its accomplishment. If a department stood in the way, then he would break the department. He therefore did not complain of Sir Edmond Elles; he raised the whole question of the Military Department, which he declared to be a hindrance to all Indian army reform. He made his protest before the Government in Council, and the question as between himself on the one hand and the Council on the other was referred to the authorities at home for decision. The controversy is set out at length in a Blue Book<sup>1</sup> published in January, 1905, and the Commander-in-Chief's case is epitomized as follows:—

If, observed Lord Kitchener, the military problem in India were only to safeguard the country against the border States, such as Persia or Afghanistan or China, he should not have

<sup>1</sup> "Papers relating to the Administration of the Indian Army", 1st January, 1905.

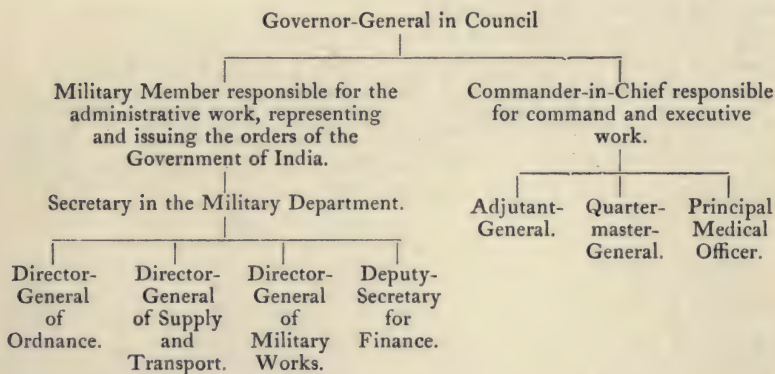


raised this very thorny question. But the question was an Imperial one, not merely an Indian one; and it was on that account that he felt it his duty to state his conviction "that the present system is faulty, inefficient, and incapable of the expansion necessary for a great war in which the armed might of the Empire would be engaged in a life-and-death struggle". Lord Kitchener went on to say that the existing system of army administration in India had not been adopted as the one which was best designed to produce an efficient modern army, but had grown up as the consequence of irrelevant causes and changes. Its leading feature was that although its Commander-in-Chief had always been a member of the Government of India, yet a second and independent authority had been introduced, in the form of the Military Department, to deal with all military matters. The Government of India transmitted through this department its orders to the Commander-in-Chief. The department was responsible for the regulations and orders issued to the army, and the head of the department had a position in the Council co-equal with that of the Commander-in-Chief. "The Military Member of the Council wielding this power, and being responsible for the 'administration' of the army, is therefore really omnipotent in military matters."

"On the other hand, the Commander-in-Chief, as the 'executive' head of the army, commands the troops, and is nominally responsible to the Government for their training, distribution, discipline, and efficiency—subject always to the limitation that he cannot issue orders for the movement of the troops or introduce any but trifling improvements in any of these matters without the previous sanction of the Military Member, which sanction is communicated in the name of the Governor-General in Council. The Military Member, as representing the Government of India, has power to interfere with the decisions of the Commander-in-Chief or prevent his wishes being carried out even in questions of discipline and training. In every branch of army administration, policy, or preparation for war the approval of the Military Member has to be

obtained before any action can be taken. Thus we have a system of dual control in the army, in which, although the Commander-in-Chief is responsible to Government for the initiation of measures for improvement and reform, all such have to be referred to the Military Department to be sanctioned or rejected as may seem best to them."

It was true, that if the Commander-in-Chief and the Military Member disagreed, the point at issue could then be submitted to the Council for decision, but this entailed a great deal of waste of time and work, and was only a resort in matters of great importance. A diagram which Lord Kitchener drew to represent the system in India illustrates his objection to it:—



It will be seen that the entourage of the Military Member is rather more important than that of the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Kitchener observed of it that the system had been framed to meet peace requirements, and he added, pointedly, that in India, as in Great Britain, it was owing to defects in the higher administration of the army that essentials had been disregarded and military progress and efficiency had not kept pace with the times. He had in mind the neglect of the War Office at home to provide proper artillery or artillery horses; or to educate general officers in the handling

of large units; or to organize transport; or to prepare reserves of supplies.

The Commander-in-Chief remarked that one of the chief faults of the Indian system was the enormous delay and endless discussion which it involved.

“No needed reform can be initiated, no useful measure can be adopted, without being subjected to vexatious and for the most part unnecessary criticism. . . . The fault lies simply in the system which has created two offices which have been trained to unfortunate jealousy and antagonism, and which therefore duplicate work, and in the duplication destroy progress and defeat the true ends of military efficiency. The system is one of dual control and divided responsibility. . . . Every scheme and proposal for reform leads to endless references and cross references between the two offices. . . . Moreover, owing to the separation of the offices, it is impossible for the Commander-in-Chief to know how his schemes are progressing or whether a hitch has occurred, much less its cause, unless he makes special enquiries. Thus the offices become paper-logged with more or less unnecessary verbiage, and I am not surprised that mistakes occasionally do occur: indeed, I am only astonished that they do not occur more often than is the case.”

Some of these “mistakes” were instanced; the most serious of them was in regard to supplies. Lord Kitchener had asked for certain quantities. In the result “my demand for the amount of ammunition which I considered necessary for safety met with so much opposition that I found myself obliged, in order to save further discussion and delay, to consent to the amount being fixed at about three-quarters what I considered necessary, while placing on record my adherence to my former opinion as to what was the lowest safe minimum. . . . Thus while the Commander-in-Chief cannot get the ammunition he considers necessary, he is presented instead with a quantity of ordnance stores which he has not asked for.” That was merely an instance; the principle involved was more weighty:—

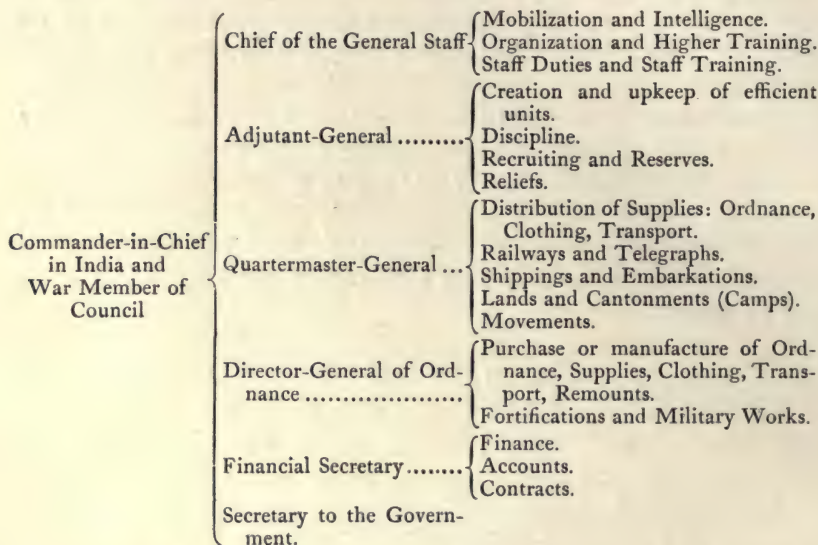


“Although the Commander-in-Chief is supposed to be the executive head of the army, the services on which the army depends for its subsistence, equipment, armament, and movement are not under his control, but are separately administered by the Military Member of Council. It cannot be maintained for a moment that an army divorced from these services can be regarded as an efficient fighting-machine: and in my opinion this removal from the military head of the army of the responsibility for the supply to the troops of transport, remounts, food, clothing, armaments, ammunition, and other munitions of war constitutes a standing menace to efficiency and a consequent danger to the army and the country. No commander in the field can be expected to obtain decisive results unless he is perfectly sure he can rely on these services: and it is impossible for a commander to administer them with efficiency and economy in war unless they have been trained and administered under him in peace.”

It is apparent that in the last statement Lord Kitchener expressed the main canon of his military doctrine: that peace and war “states” must coalesce, or, at any rate, touch one another at all points, in supply as in training, in transport as in tactics. This was the strongest point in his plea, and if there had been no other consideration the case for reform would have been demonstrated. It had, he thought, been demonstrated, and the time for action had arrived, unless India was to be satisfied with the fatalist formula, “whatever is, is best”. “No one”, said Lord Kitchener, “dislikes change more than I do, but if necessary I do not fear it. I would certainly not continue a rotten system because I was afraid to stretch out my hand and take a sound one.” He meant what he said, and in presenting his own constructive proposals for the organization of the higher command and administration of the Indian army he added, with almost passionate sincerity, that he would prefer to see the Commander-in-Chief disappear rather than maintain the old system of dual control. Who should be the head of army administration of India was of less importance than that there should

be a head. He recommended that the full title of the future head of the War Department in India should be "Commander-in-Chief and War Member of Council".

His substituted tree of relationship he drew up as follows:—



It will be seen that in Lord Kitchener's military hierarchy are the factors of a General Staff, consisting in his own definition "of a department directing its attention to military problems in the widest sense, and of a body of officers occupied in peace in the higher training of the army, and prepared to direct operations in the field". In addition, an Adjutant-General's Department was required to be responsible for the production and upkeep of efficient units, and for all that relates to the discipline, care, and well-being of the soldier in peace and war, and a Quartermaster-General's Department for the custody and distribution of everything that an army requires, and responsible for its means of distribution and transport. The other sections explain themselves, and, taken together, would complete the military organization, to



Bourne & Shepherd

LORD KITCHENER AND HIS PERSONAL STAFF IN INDIA

Names from left to right : Lieut. G. G. E. Wylly, V.C. (A.D.C.); Capt. N. J. C. Livingstone-Learmonth (A.D.C.); Capt. O. A. G. FitzGerald (Asst. Milly. Sec.); Col. W. R. Birdwood, C.I.E. (Mily. Sec.); Capt. W. F. Basset (A.D.C.); Lord Kitchener





be known collectively as the War Department of the Government of India.

Lord Kitchener said in his minute that he regarded this scheme as the top of the ladder in the system of military administration which he recommended. He had, indeed, on his arrival in India, begun at the bottom by endeavouring to deal with the defects in his own Army Staff; so that, if the higher organization which he now recommended were adopted, the grooves of the Army Head-quarters machine would fit into it. His own Army Advisory Council began work in 1903, and consisted of the following officers, with himself as president:—

The Adjutant-General.

The Quartermaster-General.

The Military Secretary.

The Deputy Adjutant-General.

The Deputy Quartermaster-General.

The Head of the Intelligence Branch.

The Head of the Mobilization Section.

The Assistant Adjutant-General for Musketry.

The Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General for questions concerning native army recruiting.

Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General for Mobilization.

Other officers attended the Council when such matters as concerned their departments (Army Medical or Army Education, for example) were under discussion, and the Council met once a week during the Simla season for two years. It co-ordinated the work of the departments, and it threshed out projects of reform and improvement. It was incomplete as a Council, because it wanted a financial secretary to appraise the cost of reforms which it discussed. This was the arrangement in peace.

In a great war the Commander-in-Chief, if he took the field

in person, would be accompanied by the Chief of General Staff and the major portion of that department. Their duty in the field would be the collection of intelligence, the framing of plans of strategy and tactics, and the carrying out of plans so formed. A section of the General Staff would remain behind in India.

The Adjutant-General would remain behind. His duty would be to keep the army in the field up to full strength. A portion of his department would go to the front to deal with everything connected with the health, comfort, discipline, and well-being of the troops in the field.

The Quartermaster-General would go with the army in the field because there the duties connected with its maintenance and movement would be most important.

The Director-General of Ordnance and the Financial Secretary would remain behind. Thus at the front would be:—

The Commander-in-Chief.  
 The Chief of the General Staff.  
 The Quartermaster-General.  
 A Financial Adviser.

And at head-quarters behind:—

A representative of the General Staff.  
 The Adjutant-General.  
 A representative of the Quartermaster-General.  
 The Financial Secretary.  
 The Secretary to the Government.

Finally:—

“A War Department thus formed, with the work of its various sections properly co-ordinated on the one hand and differentiated on the other, and able to pass without dislocation or even friction from a state of peace to one of war, will be capable of any necessary expansion, and will be prepared to meet without loss of efficiency the strain of adminis-



tering the large bodies of troops which would arrive in case of necessity to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Indian army in the defence of the Empire."

It was not to be supposed that this trenchant indictment, or the drastic reorganization with which it was supplemented, would be left without rejoinder by Sir Edmond Elles, of the Military Department, or by the Council of India. Sir Edmond Elles, in his reply, protested against the assertion that his department was either dilatory or obstructive, and produced a list of the reforms which had been initiated by it or carried through with its supervision and approval. The Council, headed by the Governor-General,<sup>1</sup> Lord Curzon, stood on higher constitutional ground. They desired the retention of a system and of a department which, as they contended, had worked well on the whole, and which they preferred to the alternative and novel project of leaving the administration of the army solely in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief, without adequate safeguards against a military autocracy. There was not, suggested Lord Curzon in the memorandum addressed to the Home Government, any "dual control" under the present system, because both the Commander-in-Chief and the Military Member of Council were subordinate to the Governor-General, who was in supreme control. The Military Member had no independent control.

Secondly, the defects which were discoverable in the Indian army were not due to the system, but to specific or accidental causes. The inability of the Indian army to mobilize itself on a large scale was, for example, due to lack of money. Again, it was not the system which was answerable for wasteful expenditure in time of peace, or for complications when mobilization was necessary. On the contrary, it answered very well in respect of military efficiency, and was on the whole better in

<sup>1</sup> Lord Curzon is more commonly referred to in Britain as the Viceroy. The older official title is Governor-General.

respect of economy. All that was necessary for smooth working was that proper relations should be in existence between army head-quarters and the Military Department. There should be mutual co-operation between these departments. It was not correct to say that they had been trained to jealousy and antagonism; on the contrary, their relations had been marked by the utmost tranquillity and good temper.

In respect of the questions of delay, obstruction, and indifference which had been raised, it was pointed out by Lord Curzon that Lord Kitchener's scheme of army reform, which had been formulated by him on the 6th of November, 1903, and involved a consequential increase of equipment and supplies, as well as money for new departments and for new factories, had been considered and dealt with in Council between February and September, 1904, and expenditure equivalent to £3,600,000 sanctioned.

But the main objections of the Council and of Lord Curzon to Lord Kitchener's scheme were that it was less likely to improve the efficiency of the army than to revolutionize the governmental system, and to substitute for control of the army by the Governor-General in Council control by one individual—the Commander-in-Chief. The objection was not urged against Lord Kitchener, with whom the Council felt it an honour to be associated in the framing of his reforms, but against the principle. The question at issue was whether the Governor-General should have a single and supreme adviser—the Commander-in-Chief—or whether he should be able to rely on a second expert opinion. Lord Curzon and the Council thought the second opinion and the Military Member essential.

Moreover, the Council pointed out that the Military Member relieved the strain of the Commander-in-Chief's heavy duties by managing the great spending departments; that he acted as a kind of intermediary between the Commander-in-

Chief and the Finance Department; and that in his absence the Commander-in-Chief would not be able to cope with his double duties. Finally, if a scheme were prepared by the Commander-in-Chief the Governor-General was not faced with the need of accepting it or rejecting it on his own responsibility, or of having certain advice alone to assist him, but had the knowledge and judgment of the Military Member of Council and his department to help him in coming to a right judgment.

This memorandum was signed by all the Council—including Lord Curzon and Sir Edmond Elles—Lord Kitchener dissenting. It was submitted, together with Lord Kitchener's memorandum, to Mr. Brodrick (now Lord Midleton), Secretary for War, and to the home Government for consideration. From the beginning the sympathies of the home Government were with Lord Kitchener. In a dispatch dated 31st May, 1905, Mr. Brodrick examined the memorandum of Lord Kitchener and the rejoinders to it, and announced that in effect the Military Department and the Military Member of Council would disappear. The decision was not reached till after serious consideration and reference to military authorities and officials of Indian experience in Great Britain. Though army reform marched with leaden foot in Whitehall and Pall Mall, the home authorities were eager to apply some of the lessons of the South African War, and India was a suitable theatre for experiment. In a dispatch, dated 31st May, 1905, Mr. Brodrick conveyed their decision in terms of which the following are the relevant passages:—

“His Majesty's Government propose to draw a clear distinction between the purely military services which should be controlled by the Commander-in-Chief and the Services of Supply and Manufacture which will be under the control of a separate officer, whose relations with the Commander-in-Chief will differ from those of the Military Department as at present organized.



“The Commander-in-Chief will be directly responsible for command, staff, regulations, regimental appointments, promotion, discipline, training, intelligence, mobilizations. . . .

“As regards the Supply and Transport Department, this will be entrusted to a person directly responsible to the Commander-in-Chief.

“The functions of the Military Department in charge of another member of your Council will be limited to responsibility to Government for the control of army contracts, purchase of stores, the management of military works, and the manufacturing departments<sup>1</sup>.”

The questions at issue had been referred to the consideration of a committee consisting of Mr. St. John Brodrick, Lord Roberts, Sir George White, General J. H. Gordon, Mr. James L. Mackay, Mr. E. F. Law, and Lord Salisbury. This committee confirmed the belief that the Military Department had “formed the habit of giving authoritatively an independent opinion on purely military questions”, that “discussions had been protracted unjustifiably”, and “that the opposition between the two departments was not conducive to the effective discharge of duty”. They supported the decision communicated by Mr. Brodrick to Lord Curzon to give the Commander-in-Chief the authority over the army which he demanded, and to put Supply, Transport, Military Works, and Remounts under a (new) Member of Council, “who would, however, stand in a distinctly different relationship to the Commander-in-Chief from the present Military Member”.

It would have been fortunate, indeed, if this decision had ended the matter, and if India and the Council could have settled to the testing of the new arrangement without further friction. By this arrangement the Commander-in-Chief was made entirely responsible to the Viceroy in Council for everything necessary for the personnel and training of the army, for strategical plans, for military intelligence, for schemes of mobilization. All measures he might propose would be sub-

<sup>1</sup> Employing 20,000 skilled artisans.

jected financially to the expert criticism of a financial department represented in Council. Politically the measures would run the gauntlet, first of half a dozen trained heads of departments, also sitting in Council, and next, of the Viceroy himself. They were further liable to be referred home to the Secretary of State for India, who commands the most experienced Indian military opinion. Finally, there was the home Cabinet to be reckoned with. Unhappily Lord Curzon was not to be reconciled to the arrangement. In place of the Military Department a new Department of Military Supply had been instituted, which was to have as a chief a member in Council. For the chief of this department Lord Curzon suggested the appointment of General Barrow (Sir Edmond Elles was in any case about to retire at the close of his period of office), and General Barrow was held to be a representative of the old and condemned order of things. It was suggested that another appointment should be made, and that a civilian would be better suited to the post than a soldier. Lord Curzon declined to accept the suggestion, and resigned the Governor-Generalship.<sup>1</sup> It was a severe loss to India, and, we think, a severe loss to the cause and aims which Lord Kitchener had at heart, and which, had they been forwarded with Lord Curzon's cooperation and constructive genius, would have been established on a stronger basis.

A Liberal Government succeeded Mr. A. J. Balfour's Unionist Administration, and Lord Morley became Secretary of State for India. Lord Morley was of opinion that the Member in charge of Supply should have been a civilian rather than a soldier. He finally resolved, however, to amalgamate the Department of Supply with the army. The new arrangement distributed the functions of the Military Depart-

<sup>1</sup> Lord Curzon tendered his resignation on the 5th of August, 1905. It was accepted by the Prime Minister, Mr. A. J. Balfour, on the 16th August. He was succeeded by Lord Minto.



ment between the Army Department and the Department of Military Supply. It further amalgamated the new Army Department with the Army Head-quarters under the control of the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Morley's new arrangement strengthened Lord Kitchener's position. It was very strongly criticized in India and in Britain. Lord Curzon, in the House of Lords' debate (1909), maintained that the system was one of dangerous centralization; that it gave too much power to, and laid too great a burden on the shoulders of, one man. Lord Roberts expressed a general agreement with this view, and Lord Cromer believed that for financial reasons it would prove unsatisfactory. Lord Minto, who was Lord Curzon's successor, did not agree with these criticisms, but believed that the heavier responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief would lessen rather than increase his independence of action. Lord Morley remarked, as his own opinion, that the "talk about military autocracy was wide of the mark", and added that Lord Kitchener's shoulders were quite broad enough to bear the burdens imposed on them.

In the foregoing sentences may be summed up the many criticisms and rejoinders to criticism on Lord Kitchener's work and position in India. He made the Indian army efficient, but he was the man who kept the forge alight. He inspired his subordinates to work; he exacted and obtained from them more than any other could. When his influence and driving power were withdrawn the flame of energy sank lower. When his tenure of office closed there was no successor of equal influence who could obtain from Governments the sinews of war as he had been able to do. In short, for those financial reasons, at which Lord Cromer had hinted, though in another connection, the equipment, transport, and training of the Indian army could not be kept up to the standard of a modern army on Lord Kitchener's model. Moreover, it was quite true that his method of centralizing rather than of delegating power was



too much for most men. During his last two years of work in India it kept him tied to his office in Simla, and it seems to have demanded a similar concentration and energy from some of his subordinates. Had he been in India long enough, had he been able to inspire his countrymen with his own ideas on the need for efficient armies and the desirability of paying for them, the Indian army might have remained what, in his ideal, he intended to make it. But no army recruited and maintained as the Indian army was, or as the British army was, could be both cheap and efficient.

Yet, as Lord Kitchener left it, the Indian army was a modern and powerful instrument needing chiefly leaders able to wield it. Its creator had trained it highly; he had gone to new sources of recruiting; he had improved the conditions of its enlistment. The pay and the pensions of native soldiers had been increased, and the standard of the army raised through all ranks. Military manœuvres on a large scale, and divisional training, had been put into practice; and Lord Kitchener watched them sedulously. On his tours of inspection in India he travelled no fewer than 65,000 miles. A tribute to the efficiency and appearance of the army he commanded was paid by King George after his visit to India when Prince of Wales with the Princess of Wales.

“At Rawul Pindi”, he said in his Guildhall speech<sup>1</sup>, “I had the pleasure of staying with Lord Kitchener in his camp of manœuvres, and witnessed operations on an extended scale between two armies, numbering 55,000 men, terminating in a review of the largest force ever brought together in India in time of peace. . . . Throughout the army I found an earnest desire for increased efficiency and readiness to take the field. I was especially glad to be associated with our magnificent army in India under such practical conditions. I am proud to say that during my tour I was able to inspect 143,000 troops.”

Lord Kitchener's life in India was his military life. As he

<sup>1</sup> The famous speech, “England must wake up”.

once said, he always "did the job nearest him", and his job in India was not politics or social expansion, but the creation of a modern army. Yet for the first time in his life he had some leisure and ceremonial obligations, and he was able to indulge a taste, new found and perhaps a surprise even to himself, for social amenities. "India", wrote one of his friends,<sup>1</sup> "humanized him. He said when he arrived there that he had never really known since boyhood what it was to possess a home." In India he had two official residences—Snowdon at Simla and the Commander-in-Chief's house within the walls of Fort William at Calcutta. He greatly enlarged the house at Simla, decorating it and beautifying its garden till he had altered the place beyond recognition. His official receptions and parties reflected the importance of his office, and were by implication a testimony to his appreciation of the need for magnificence in governing the East. He was popular though he had never sought popularity, and the sympathy which was expressed on all sides at an accident with which he met at Simla, and which fractured his leg, was universal and widely expressed.

He had his own views of the governance of India, though they were expressed only in private, and he never had any doubt as to the ability of Great Britain to maintain her rule there. From the soldier's point of view he staked his opinions on the strategic value of the Indian railways, both for maintaining internal order and for keeping her borders intact. While he was Commander-in-Chief there were only three small military expeditions—against the Zakka Khels and the Mohmands, and the entry into Tibet, of which the last-named was the most important. Major-General Sir J. Willcocks's punitive expedition against the Zakka Khels lasted only a fortnight in February, 1908, and against the Mohmands from the 15th to the 30th of May, 1908. The Tibet mission, under the command of Brigadier-General J. R. L. Macdonald,

<sup>1</sup> "Asiaticus", in the *National Review*, July, 1916.

was accompanied by three battalions of native infantry and guns, in all 3000 men. Active hostilities were begun on 31st May, 1904, when the British force was attacked on the way to Gyantse by the Tibetans, who were completely defeated. Gyantse was reached on the 11th of April, but then and thereafter the Tibetans resisted the advance, and a march on Lhasa became necessary. General Macdonald was reinforced, and a column 2000 strong reached Lhasa on the 3rd of August. There were small encounters but no serious fighting.<sup>1</sup> On 7th September a treaty was signed, and by November most of the troops had returned to India.

In August, 1909, Lord Kitchener's tenure of office as Commander-in-Chief in India came to an end; and for his services he was promoted to the rank of Field-Marshal. It cannot be said that his task was finished, for it would have been better for India had he remained there to perfect it, or, in another capacity, to supervise its progress. In the farewell dinner given to him at Simla, Lord Minto said that India was losing an illustrious Commander-in-Chief and a far-seeing, sagacious statesman. He said no more than the truth. Lord Kitchener spoke only of the army. "I am", he said, "deeply sorry to leave it. It is second to none in loyalty to its Sovereign, in discipline, in efficiency and devotion to its profession."

E. S. G.

<sup>1</sup> There were sixteen small skirmishes in all, and the British losses were 37 killed and 165 wounded.



## CHAPTER II

### Reorganizing the Dominion Armies

Lord Kitchener's Visit to Australia and New Zealand—His Reports on their Military Organizations—The Essential Needs of our Naval Supremacy—Kitchener's Ideals of a Citizen Army—Effects of Kitchener's Visits—Achievements of the Anzacs—Kitchener and Canada.

**W**HEN Lord Kitchener relinquished the command in India, in September, 1909, he did not return home by the direct route, but practically made a voyage round the world. At the request of the British Government he visited Australia and New Zealand, with a view to examining their defences and making reports to their respective Governments on the measures which were, in his opinion, necessary to ensure their safety. Lord Kitchener travelled by way of China and Japan, and in the latter country especially he was received with much deference. He reached Port Darwin on 21st December, and then began a tour through every State of the Commonwealth, including Tasmania. Training-camps were visited and a close examination of military organizations was made throughout the country. The result of the tour was a report, characteristic in its comprehensiveness, and at the same time its comparative brevity. Opinions are stated and recommendations made without any waste of words. Lord Kitchener found that a new Defence Act for the Commonwealth had recently been passed, and his recommendations mainly consisted in pointing to the best way to put in force the enactments or in recommending amendments.

He found the existing forces in Australia inadequate—in

numbers, training, organization, and munitions of war—for the defence of the country from the dangers that were due to the conditions prevailing in the country as well as to its isolated position. The danger of want of population and consequent ineffective occupation in many parts of the country was, in his opinion, a most serious condition, as it might greatly imperil the stability of the present state of affairs in the Commonwealth. The building of railways in the country had been carried out in such a way as to result in lines more favourable to an enemy invader than to defence. Also, the fault that the gauges of the railways differed in the various States was another point which he emphasized.

Having had considerable experience of Australians working in the field in the South African War, Lord Kitchener stated, in his report, that he was not surprised to find that excellent material existed among the young manhood of the Commonwealth, from whom the defenders of their country must come. He noticed in the camps (where troops were assembled especially that he might inspect them) the great keenness displayed by all ranks in rendering themselves proficient, and in applying the military knowledge they had acquired to the practical conditions of work on the manœuvre ground. "In these days, however," continued Lord Kitchener, "excellent fighting material and the greatest zeal, though indispensable adjuncts, are not themselves sufficient to enable a force to take the field against thoroughly trained regular troops with any chance of success." When we come to the recommendations made in the report we find, to begin with, a passage which has now become almost proverbial:—

"It is", wrote Lord Kitchener, "an axiom held by the British Government that the Empire's existence depends primarily upon the maintenance of adequate and efficient naval forces. As long as this condition is fulfilled, and as long as British superiority at sea is assured, then it is an accepted principle that no British Dominion can be suc-

cessfully and permanently conquered by an organized invasion from oversea. But in applying this principle to Australasia, considerations of time and space cannot be disregarded. The conduct of a great war depends upon the calculated and proper combination of naval, military, and diplomatic forces; and it is quite conceivable that, in the future as in the past, national considerations may require the concentration of British naval forces in one or other theatre of operations. It follows that in seas remote from such a concentration the British naval forces may find themselves for the moment inferior in force to an actual or potential enemy. In such a situation, although our ultimate superiority at sea might not be a matter of doubt, some time might elapse before our command of the sea was definitely assured in all waters. It therefore becomes the duty of all self-governing Dominions to provide a military force adequate not only to deal promptly with any attempt at invasion, but also to ensure local safety and public confidence until our superiority at sea has been decisively and comprehensively asserted. For this reason it has recently been agreed that the home forces of the United Kingdom should be so organized as to compel an enemy contemplating an invasion to make the attempt on such a scale as to be unable to evade our naval forces. The same arguments apply to Australasia, and its land forces should be organized on this basis."

Having thus set forth the requirements of the country, Lord Kitchener turned to the question of the strength of the land forces necessary to fulfil these requirements. Three factors had to be considered. First, there was the great ocean distance between Australia and any possible enemies. Secondly, the armed strength and power of transportation oversea of any conceivably hostile nation. And, thirdly, the vast extent and railway communication of the Australian continent—which covers an area of 2,948,366 square miles, and possesses a coast-line of 12,210 miles—as contrasted with the smallness of its population—4,275,000 souls, of whom 1,295,000 were males of fighting age. Having taken into account all these factors, Lord Kitchener estimated the land forces required at 80,000 men—half required to secure the larger cities and defended ports from attack, and so to maintain the public



confidence and national credit, while the other half would be free to operate as a mobile striking force anywhere in Australia.

The Defence Bill of 1909 had already given effect to the principle that every citizen should be trained to defend his country. Lord Kitchener's advice was therefore devoted to the manner in which the force of 80,000 men should be enrolled, organized, and trained on the principles laid down in the Act, which was designed to call into existence a national citizen force. While taking the Defence Acts, 1903-9, as the basis of his proposals, Lord Kitchener departed from the training periods therein prescribed, because he was of opinion that, while cadet training was valuable as a preparation, it could not replace recruit training, which was a necessary preliminary to the production of an efficient and trained citizen soldier. For that reason he classed the 18-19-year men as recruits, over and above the peace establishment of 80,000, but liable to be put in the ranks in war time. Lord Kitchener recommended the time spent in camp to be extended, and his amendment to the Defence Act made the training required by law over and above home training as follows:—

Junior Cadets, 12 to 14 years—120 hours.

Senior Cadets, 14 to 18 years—16 days.

Recruits, 18 to 19 years—16 days, of which 8 to be in camp.

Trained Soldiers, 19 to 20 years—16 days, of which 8 to be in camp.

Trained Soldiers, 20 to 25 years—6 days in camp.

Trained Soldiers, 25 to 26 years—Muster parade only.

On the proposed basis the yearly quotas enrolled would amount to:—

	Infantry.	Light Horse.	Artillery.	Engineers.
Recruits ... ..	12,500	1,950	1,450	1,175
Trained Soldiers, 19-25, ...	63,000	9,800	7,300	6,000
"    "    25-26, ...	9,200	1,400	1,000	850

Thus it will be seen that, apart from recruits, and without including Engineers, a total of 80,100 is reached, besides

11,600 men of the 25-26-year class. These men would provide for 21 brigades of four battalions each—84 battalions of infantry: 28 regiments of light horse: 49 four-gun field batteries and 7 four-gun heavy and howitzer batteries: 7 communication companies and 14 field companies of engineers.

Coming to the question of the principles regarding enrolment, Lord Kitchener said that the first and imperative principle for the enrolment and maintenance of these 80,000 men as an efficient citizen force was that the nation as a whole should take a pride in its defenders, insist upon the organization being real and designed for war purposes only, and provide the means for properly educating, training, and equipping their officers and men. The second principle for a successful citizen force was a complement of the first. The force must be an integral portion of national life. "The citizen should be brought up from boyhood to look forward to the day when he will be enrolled as fit to defend his country; and he should be accustomed to practise those habits of self-denial, of devotion to and emulation in the execution of his duty, of reticence, and of prompt obedience to lawful authority which are essential to the formation of patriotic and efficient citizen soldiers."

Passages like this give an insight into the character of the man who wrote it, and of his high ideal of what a soldier should be. Moreover, in studying the principles laid down by Lord Kitchener to govern the organization of defence in Australia, it is almost impossible not to reflect that had such principles been in force in Britain at the outbreak of war the country would have been in a better condition to go to war than it was. Another point that Lord Kitchener insisted upon was that the force must be kept free from politics. "Political feeling in an army", he wrote, "is always a serious drawback to efficiency, and may become a danger to the State." He added that, in dealing with the question of exemptions, there

were two broad guiding factors: (1) That the welfare of the family should not be prejudiced; (2) that the State should get the best men available.

Lord Kitchener went on to say that the only way satisfactorily to organize and train a citizen force of the nature about to be raised in Australia was to divide the country into areas from which the national force would be drawn. Each area would have to provide a definite proportion of men and would have to be in charge of a permanent officer. Ten areas should form one group under a superior officer, who would become brigade major in time of war. In cities every two areas would supply a battalion and certain details, while in the country every three areas would supply the same number of men. To the officer in charge of an area would be entrusted the duties of inspecting junior cadets, organizing and training senior cadets, the enrolment, equipment, and training of recruits, and the equipment, organization, and training of the trained soldiers within his area. He would also have to supervise the registration of all male inhabitants in his area. As for the efficient training of permanent officers, Lord Kitchener said:—

“In the United States of America the military college of West Point sets an example of a severe and thoroughly military training imposed by a Democratic Government, and I should advise that Australia can only expect to produce officers of the type required by the establishment of a military college similar in ideals, if not altogether in practice—for that will vary with national characteristics—to West Point. From such a college should be drawn all officers of the Staff corps. These officers should be sent abroad in turn to study military matters in various parts of the Empire. The citizen officers—that is to say the officers who were not professional soldiers—should be appointed young (between 18 and 20 years of age), and be liable to serve for 12 years.”

Discussing the training and pay of citizen soldiers, Lord Kitchener went on:—



“The Australian citizen soldier experiences much of military value in the everyday conditions of his civil life. He is generally a good rider, active, lithe, and intelligent. As a cadet he is taught to shoot, and learns the rudiments of drill, and, passing through his recruit adult training, he joins the force as an efficient soldier. Much will undoubtedly depend on the amount of training that, through self-denial and devotion to duty, the citizen soldier performs at or near his home, and if this is done, in my opinion he will be able subsequently to maintain his efficiency as a soldier in the manner that has been proposed. . . . Throughout the period of service the citizen soldier must remember that he is discharging a duty to his country, and that the pay he receives is not a wage, but an allowance to assist him in the discharge of his duty. . . . I consider that the pay of a soldier in all subsequent years should be at the rate laid down for the 19–20 years, namely 4s. per diem.”

When Lord Kitchener was entertained in Melbourne on 11th January, 1910, he made a speech in which he deprecated all shams, extravagances, fads, and uselessness in a military force, and urged a high ideal, discipline, and obedience to law authority without servility to any individual, and expressed his opinion that the Australian popular demand was for the realization of the principles of the recently passed Defence Bill—that “it is the duty of every able-bodied man to be trained to defend his country”.

The report from which these brief extracts are given above was adopted by the Australian Government later.

From Australia Lord Kitchener proceeded to New Zealand. There the Defence Act of 1909 had effected many improvements in the system of defence which previously obtained in the Dominion. It made provision for the general military training of all young men up to the age of twenty-one, and for the maintenance of a territorial force of 20,000 of all ranks. The Act was not put into operation at once, as Lord Kitchener was due to arrive in February, for the purpose of inspecting and giving his advice on all matters pertaining to the defence of the Dominion. In his report



Spurling, Launceston

LORD KITCHENER IN TASMANIA

during his tour through Australia and New Zealand as Military Adviser to the Commonwealth Government





on New Zealand defences, which was dated 2nd March, Lord Kitchener stated that, from what he had seen during his tour of inspection, the necessity for improved training was not as marked in New Zealand as it was in Australia.

“It appears to me”, he wrote, “that for your land forces New Zealand and Australia should adopt homogeneous military systems in order to be able efficiently to support one another in the event of national danger. The desirability of such co-operation is evident by reason of the geographical position of the two countries. Moreover, the young men of New Zealand and Australia, though showing some markedly different characteristics are, in both countries, splendid material for creating a first-rate fighting-machine, for the conditions of their country life are very similar, producing successful pioneers, accustomed to make the land supply the wants of man. I think, therefore, that uniformity in training and establishments of units, as well as the closest ties of comradeship in the armed land forces of New Zealand and Australia, should be fostered in every way.

“These considerations point to New Zealand sending those cadets destined to be instructors of her citizens to the Australian West Point College, which I have recommended that the Commonwealth should institute, and which, I believe, they are about to establish. It is quite evident that the wants of New Zealand in this respect are not sufficient to create a college where training of the nature required can be properly imparted. This will be seen from the fact that, working on the lines suggested for Australia, a suitable number of areas for New Zealand will be about 55—i.e. approximately 30 in the north and 25 in the south of the island. Areas should, of course, provide the same quotas as are recommended for Australia, and it follows that the permanent instructional officers required for area work alone would be 50 for sub-alterns and captains and 6 majors. The 30 permanent officers now employed with the Permanent Forces and District and Head-quarters Staff will also be wanted.”

Lord Kitchener went on to recommend an eventual establishment for the New Zealand Staff Corps of 100 officers, being 91 accounted for above, plus 10 per cent to allow for the deputation of officers to train with units in India and

the United Kingdom, for sickness, &c. To keep up this supply he recommended that 10 cadets should be sent annually to the Australian college, from whom 5 should be chosen for commissions in the Staff Corps.

The new territorial force of New Zealand consists of 4 brigades mounted rifles, 3 regiments each; 4 brigades infantry, 4 battalions each; 4 brigades field-artillery and ammunition columns of two 4-gun batteries each; 4 field-engineer companies; 4 mounted signalling companies and 4 infantry; 4 mounted field-ambulances and 4 infantry; 4 companies supply column mounted, and 4 infantry. Provision was also made for the Royal New Zealand Artillery (Permanent Force) and Garrison Artillery in establishments to suit the scheme of fixed defence at each defended port.

No time was lost in giving effect to Lord Kitchener's recommendations. Colonel W. T. Bridges,<sup>1</sup> Australian representative on the Imperial General Staff, was asked to visit the various training institutions at Woolwich, Sandhurst, and West Point, and on his return was appointed Commandant of the Military College of Australia. A site for the college was found at Duntroon, on that tract of land where some day the Federal capital city of Australia, Canberra, will be. The first entrance examination was held in February, 1911, and the college is now doing excellent work. The establishment is fixed at 150 cadets—42 being admitted every year, and room being thus given for the elimination of cadets who turn out to be unsuitable for their future duties. The college is a lasting memorial of Lord Kitchener's visit to Australia and New Zealand.

But the effect of that visit may surely also be seen in the reputation won by the Anzac<sup>2</sup> troops in the great war.

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Brigadier-General Bridges, C.M.G., mortally wounded while commanding the Australians in Gallipoli, May, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> The word Anzac is arrived at from the initial letters of the term Australian and New Zealand Army Corps—A.N.Z.A.C.

No one would wish to take any of the credit won by these troops away from the men themselves. Nevertheless, training plays an all-important part in the making of soldiers, and the finest material in the world is of little good in active service if untrained or ill-trained.

To attempt to dilate upon the achievements of the Anzacs here would be out of place, but the following passage from a dispatch by an official Australian correspondent at British Head-quarters in France may be quoted, because it seems to show the general feeling of the British people on the subject. The dispatch was dated 12th September, 1916. It ran as follows:—

“When the Australians made good on the beaches of Gallipoli and the story reached London, it was said that whether or not the Turk and German were defeated, the men of the Commonwealth could never be said to have fought and died in vain. Their sacrifice and achievement upon that April morning would be forever the inspiration of the Australian people at home and their glory abroad. The British people were profoundly moved; they shared in our pride and our grief. Australia had within a few terrible but splendid hours gained a new place in the mind of Britain and the whole outside world. Our little force of native-born, schooled only in peace, and strangers to soldiering, had joined the rare company of their race who followed Drake and Wolfe and Nelson; old fighting Britain welcomed them as of the Balaclava breed. After the landing at Gallipoli the Australian abroad was vividly conscious of a great citizenship.

“You felt those things in England, but not until you come here amidst Britain’s fighting manhood at the front do you appreciate fully what Australia and every Australian have gained. In France and Flanders the traditional practice has been followed of making new troops accustomed to the sight and sound of war before putting them into the front line. The introduction to the trenches has been gradual; the eager novice has been as far as possible fathered and supported by the trusty old regular before taking the extreme responsibility. In the whole war there has been nothing so magnificently audacious as was done with the Australians and New Zealanders at Gallipoli. Men tell me here that in the long story of war there is no parallel for entrusting voluntarily a



great, decisive, clean-cut job to a new raw force as was done with the Australians. 'Hamilton must have liked the look of them, and been greatly impressed with their officers', a general said the other day. 'He had the advantage of having seen the Australians at home, and he evidently took the view that, fighting alone, they would be on their mettle.' His faith was brilliantly justified."

At the conclusion of his visit to Australia and New Zealand it was expected that Lord Kitchener would visit Canada. It was stated that he would return home via the Dominion, and would visit his brother, who was Governor of Bermuda. Then came sensational reports about a tour of inspection in Canada being prevented by the hostility in high Canadian circles to any such proposed visit. When Lord Kitchener reached San Francisco on 8th April he merely said: "I intended to visit Canada until important business in England made it necessary for me to shorten my homeward trip. For that reason I go direct to New York and Liverpool. I will leave New York not later than 16th April." At Chicago Lord Kitchener was reported as saying: "As to Canada's military future, I have not visited Canada. I see no aggressiveness in the future so far as Canada is concerned. The little navy they are building up here is only that they may sleep a little easier o' nights. One rests better with a 'bobby' walking round the square. I suppose they will some day begin to increase the army there just for the same reason."

Sir Frederick Borden, then Minister of Militia, in reply to an enquiry on 15th April as to why Lord Kitchener had not been invited to visit Canada, said: "There is really nothing to say except that General Sir John French has been invited to visit Canada, and I understand that Lord Kitchener was invited to visit Australia, with the approval, in both cases, of the War Department."

At three great centres in the United States Lord Kitchener was given a splendid reception, and on 18th April the *Toronto*

*News* expressed much of what Canadians were feeling on the subject when it said of Lord Kitchener's journey home across the States:—

“As he traverses America from east to west he gets tantalizingly near the Canadian border, but he never crosses it. This is the occasion of keen regret on the part of thousands of Canadians. Had the hero of Omdurman, the man who was the chief driving force in the last phase of the Boer War, visited the Dominion, he would have been accorded a triumphal procession from coast to coast. For to Canadians he represents one important aspect of the large Imperial legend of our race.”

In the Canadian House of Commons, on 20th April, in reply to questions by Major J. A. Currie, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Prime Minister, said: “There is no official reason why Lord Kitchener did not visit Canada; the Government of Canada did not advise Lord Kitchener to visit Canada. It did not occur to the Government that it was opportune to do so. There is no correspondence on the subject.” So it came about that Lord Kitchener never visited Canada, and the general feeling was that it was politics that had got in the way. Interviewed on his return, Lord Kitchener said that he did not have time even to visit Washington, and that a hurried visit would have been a poor compliment to Canada.

Much regret on the subject was expressed in military circles in Canada. At a meeting of the Canadian Military Institute at Toronto Colonel W. Hamilton Merritt, during a discussion on the new militia laws of Australia and New Zealand, said: “If Lord Kitchener's suggestions were applied to Canada we would have here 322 areas, 525 staff corps, and 600 warrant and non-commissioned officers, a total of 1125 in place of the 4954 permanent force, which we have here. There would be a peace establishment of some 120,000 fighting-men, with war strength double that number, with 336 guns, and the cost in the seventh year, including the Royal Military College, not more than \$14,000,000.”

A. B. T.

## CHAPTER III

### British Agent in Egypt

Liberal Ideas in Egypt—Sir Eldon Gorst's Administration—The Young Egyptian Party—Lord Kitchener's Hopes—The Mediterranean Command—Lord Kitchener's Appointment to Egypt—The Old Egypt and the New—Kitchener's Patriarchal Rule—The Soudan—The Agricultural Labourer and his Debts—The Five Feddan Law—Wave of Disturbance in the Orient—Lord Kitchener's Hopes for Egypt—Nationalist Plots and their Propagators—Kitchener's Care of Egypt.

**A**T the time when Lord Kitchener's term of office in India came to an end a new shade of political feeling was beginning to colour the Empire's dealing with its possessions and dependencies. South Africa, where Lord Kitchener at the Vereeniging Peace Negotiations had hinted at a future in which the Boer people might find recompense for the loss of their independence, had already realized a form of self-government, the gift of the Liberal Government which had swept into office under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. The same Liberal expansiveness was being extended to Egypt and to India. When the Unionist party went out of office it left as a confidential injunction to its successors the need of appointing a strong man to the India Office. The need was recognized, and Lord Morley, as Secretary of State for India, unflinchingly supported Lord Kitchener's measures of military organization and reform. But even while Lord Kitchener was in India the uneasiness concerning a Russian advance towards India—an uneasiness which Lord Kitchener inherited as a tradition, and on account of which he strengthened the communications and mobilizable defences of the North-West frontier



—was subsiding. The danger to be apprehended of Indian unrest he never shared; he believed that while the army held control of the railways no rising had any chance of success, and he believed also that the control of the railways was secure. Consequently, when Lord Kitchener left India the time seemed ripe to Liberal statesmen to extend to it some larger share of that self-government which a section of the Indian population never ceased to demand.

The principle had been applied to Egypt also. Lord Cromer had been willing to extend to Egyptians a larger share in the government of their own country; but his concessions were cautious and watchful. Sir Eldon Gorst, who succeeded him, had carried on the policy of concessions too rapidly and too far; and the formation and progress of the Young Egyptian party, which held a congress in Geneva, and organized an Egyptian national congress in Brussels after it had been prohibited in Paris, were signs of an expansion which was quickly growing beyond control. There were more dangerous signs. Boutros Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister—who was described by Lord Cromer as “certainly the most capable of living Egyptian ministers; an Egyptian patriot in the fullest sense of the term, and one who worked honestly and devotedly for the service of his country”—was assassinated by a student named Wardani, a member of the Nationalist party. The murder followed on a Press campaign against Boutros Pasha, and one Arabic journal went so far as to eulogize the murder. This was the condition of affairs in Egypt in 1909; and the dangers were pointed out to Great Britain by one of her most faithful and candid friends, Col. Theodore Roosevelt.

Col. Roosevelt was in Khartoum in the March of 1909, and in an address to the native officers delivered an impressive warning against mixing politics with soldiering. On a later occasion, at Cairo University, he declared that Egypt was not

ready for self-government. These utterances of a friendly neutral, which included also a denunciation of those who had condoned or apologized for the murder of Boutros Pasha, were a good deal criticized in Great Britain though they were welcomed by the Europeans in Egypt. They had their effect in impelling the British Government to the conclusion that a strong man, rather than indulgent patronage, was needed on the banks of the Nile.

There is no reason for thinking that Lord Kitchener wished for the post. He had hoped to succeed Lord Minto as Governor-General of India, and he had some grounds for expecting that he would do so. But various new considerations had arisen at this time. One of them, which may be regarded as academic, was the inconsistency of making a soldier Viceroy at a time when Indian domestic reforms were under discussion. A more relevant consideration was that there was another candidate for the post, Sir Charles Hardinge, who had been ambassador to the Court of St. Petersburg from 1904 to 1906, and permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 1906 onwards. In him King Edward VII had reposed the fullest confidence at a time when his counsel had been of authority in approaching a cordial understanding with France and Russia. In the altered conditions of the attitude between Great Britain and Russia the selection of Sir Charles Hardinge for Viceroy of India (11th June, 1909) was appropriate and valuable, and as Lord Hardinge of Penshurst he sailed to India as Lord Minto's successor.

Lord Kitchener was disappointed, but it was a disappointment without bitterness or very much surprise. His chief dissatisfaction, shared by many of his countrymen, was that he was left with nothing to do. The post of Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean was vacant. It had been occupied by the Duke of Connaught, who had resigned it and expressed his opinion of its usefulness by recommending its abolition. It



was suggested that Lord Kitchener should succeed him, but on 30th June the *Times* announced that he would not proceed to take up the appointment, and the statement was quickly confirmed in the House of Commons. On the same day, in the House of Lords, Lord Cromer condemned the whole policy of the office, maintaining that the duties of its holder were incompatible with one another, and that the powers conferred on him might clash with those of other authorities. Lord Lucas of Crudwell, replying on behalf of the Government, said that the duties of the post comprised the inspection of overseas forces outside India, and that possibly after the next Imperial Conference they might embrace periodical visits of advice to the Dominions overseas. This was plausible enough, but when other peers wanted to know why the Duke of Connaught had resigned the post, and why Lord Kitchener had refused it, no information was forthcoming, and a week later Lord Crewe confessed that the Mediterranean Commander-in-Chief would visit the Dominions only if asked by them to do so. The post was clearly insufficient for Lord Kitchener's abilities, though at a later date Lord Haldane (then Mr. Haldane) said that the holder of the office would think out strategical questions connected with the Suez Canal and the route to India. General Sir Ian Hamilton was appointed on 21st June, and still Lord Kitchener was unoccupied. The fact was the subject of a great deal of adverse comment, and Lord Charles Beresford voiced a general sentiment when he declared (21st July) that Lord Kitchener ought to be on the Imperial Defence Committee. He was made a member of it in October, but his duties were not sufficiently onerous to prevent him from leaving England before the year was out. He went to Egypt, visiting Khartoum and Omdurman, and going on to British East Africa and Uganda. At Nairobi he visited the Government agricultural farms, where in the experimental station he was shown a Mendelian variety of rust-



resisting wheat. This had been arrived at by blending South African wheat with samples of Tibetan wheat, which, as stated in an earlier chapter, he had sent to some Boer friends from India. The blend is very appropriately known as "Kitchener's wheat". It was during this visit that Lord Kitchener purchased the estate of some 5000 acres of agricultural and grazing land on the Uganda line, about forty miles on the eastern side of the Victoria Nyanza, described in the same chapter.<sup>1</sup>

To this period of semi-repose also belonged Lord Kitchener's acquisition of Broome Hall, in Kent, where his collections of swords and of china were housed, and which he was never tired of beautifying. But he had hardly entered into complete possession of it when an opportunity arrived by which his country could make some use of his unfading energies. In April, 1911, Sir Eldon Gorst died, and the post of British Agent and Consul-General became vacant. While Lord Kitchener was there to fill it, there could be no other man for the post. That was what his friends thought, and what the country thought, and if the public had been better informed about the inner policies which had kept Lord Kitchener unoccupied so long their opinion on the point would have been more loudly expressed. As it was, Viscount (then Sir Edward) Grey, in the face of some super-critics in the House of Commons, found himself in the position of one who has to defend an unexceptionable appointment. He did it, however, with unanswerable firmness. Lord Kitchener's great capacity, he observed, was not only that of a soldier. The Egyptian appointment was an extremely difficult one to fill, requiring special knowledge, special experience, special qualities. "I do not know anyone", concluded the Foreign Secretary, "who possesses that special knowledge and experience and these qualities in so high a degree as Lord Kitchener."

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pp. 45-8.

The new Agent-General arrived in Egypt in September, just before war broke out between Italy and Turkey on 1st October, 1911. Egypt had changed a great deal in the eleven years in which Lord Kitchener had been absent from it. When he had been Sirdar the rule of Egypt was still patriarchal, though the Occidental mind of Lord Cromer so largely influenced it, and though a greater security and liberty had replaced the tyranny and corruption of Egypt's old masters. But with liberty had come licence and the growth of "political" parties, and an Oriental community was becoming infected with sedition masquerading as reform. Lord Kitchener has left on record his first impression of the altered state of things. "I have been forcibly struck", he wrote in his first Consul-General's report,<sup>1</sup> "by the fact that the formerly homogeneous body of intelligent Mohammedan inhabitants who constituted a collective community based on fixed social laws is now split up and divided into parties and factions of a political character." He added some reflections in the patriarchal manner which were not only excellent in themselves, but which he took care to enforce on the minds of those to whom they were addressed by bringing to bear all the powers of his own influence, prestige, and determination. Whatever might be the advantages of party politics to Western peoples, he told the Egyptians, they would not help Egypt. Calm and well-considered interest in political affairs was good for both the governed and those who rule; but fictitious interest, generally based on misrepresentation and maintained by party funds and party tactics, would do nothing to elevate or develop the intelligent character of an Oriental race.

These precepts and Lord Kitchener's determination that they should be respected needed emphasis at a moment when the Italian war with Turkey and the consequent invasion by Italian forces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica had awakened the

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Finance, Administration, and Condition of the Soudan in 1911.* (Cd. 6149.)

belligerency which is never far from the surface in Mohammedan communities. There was, as Lord Kitchener observed, an extremely warm feeling of sympathy in Egypt for the Mohammedan combatants; the excitement caused by the war was widespread and deep; and the more irresponsible of the native newspapers did all they could to stir up mischief. But Egypt was declared neutral, and the neutrality was strictly maintained by the Egyptians. The British Agent pays a handsome tribute to their restraint. "They have shown", he wrote, "an admirable devotion to duty, law, and order, in spite of the intensely sympathetic feelings raised by the long struggle which has been going on so close to their frontier." Lord Kitchener's share in prompting this devotion need not be insisted on. The composure which he enjoined then was to withstand a greater strain four years later, at a crisis more momentous to his own country.

His influence was not less efficacious, though equally unobtrusive, in the religious differences which threatened to provoke a struggle between the Copts and the Mohammedans. The Coptic Christians, a sect rather indefinitely allied to the Christians of other countries, had arrived at a common understanding of tolerance with the Egyptian Mohammedans, who vastly outnumber them, but have not oppressed them. But the Copts had perceived the altered state of liberties in Egypt, and a feud between them and the Mohammedans was ripe for further development when Lord Kitchener arrived. The feud died down under what may be described as the mollifying influence which he exercised on strife. The two parties to it gave up the idea of holding "Congresses"—those fruitful occasions of dangerous self-expression—and Lord Kitchener notes in his report that "an era of peace and concord has been established which must be beneficial to all, and which I hope will prove lasting".

For his own part he sheathed the sword and bade the





Lord Kitchener

LORD KITCHENER AT THE OPENING OF THE HEIGHTENED ASSOUAN DAM, DECEMBER 23, 1912



Egyptians turn theirs into ploughshares. His reports teem with measures taken for the improvement of agriculture, the development of drainage in the over-watered delta, the possibilities of cotton, the improvement of the condition of the fellah—all of which, with educational progress, were, he roundly declared, more essential steps towards the material and moral advance of the people than political adventures. Together with his old friend Sir William Garstin, he considered anew the problem of the irrigation of Egypt. Egypt, as so often has been repeated, is the Nile, which feeds it and waters it, and the control of which is essential to its welfare and even to its sustenance. A new Egypt came into existence with the building of the great Assuan Dam at the First Cataract, by which a great reservoir of Nile water was stored behind a granite wall ninety feet high, to be doled out to Lower Egypt in the dry season. When Lord Kitchener returned to Egypt the work of raising the level of the dam so as to impound a still greater quantity of water was nearly finished.

In the spring of the year following his arrival the work was completed, and Egypt, fed by a Nile lake stretching more than 180 miles upstream from the First Cataract, had all the water it needed. This water-supply was further regulated by another dam or barrage lower down the Nile at Assiout; and the chief problems which occupied the administration of Lord Kitchener were how to raise the water to the level of the land of Upper Egypt, and how to prevent it from being wasted in Middle Egypt. The small cultivator was imbued merely with the notion of turning the water into his land in the fullest quantities he could obtain, and of accepting the resultant crop, when the earth fructified in the sun, without thought of the subsequent condition of the land. But over-watered lands cease presently to yield good crops; they induce disease in some of them, and they waste the water. Lord Kitchener threw himself with energy into the projects for the



removal of this form of wastefulness, a vice which in any form was abhorrent to him. The problem had reached an acute stage in that part of Egypt known as the Delta, where the agricultural land suffered not from any lack of water, but from a plethora of it, and where its redemption could only be effected by the institution of an elaborate and costly system of drainage. The new Deltaic project of drainage was estimated to cost a million and a third sterling; it was not completed when the Great War broke out and Lord Kitchener left Egypt to dam a far more dangerous flood.

The condition of the Soudan in the year when he saw it again, almost for the first time since he had left it as its conqueror, gave him unmeasured satisfaction, and there is an almost affectionate note in the way in which the first report notes its progress. Before it had been ravaged by the rule of the Mahdi and the Khalifa its population had been nearly nine millions. The wars, disease, and starvation which came in the train of Dervish rule reduced the number of its inhabitants to well below two millions. In the decade since the battle on the plain of Omdurman the population had shot up to over three millions.

“The children born under our rule”, wrote Lord Kitchener, “will themselves shortly become parents. Moreover, from all the surrounding parts of Africa a constant stream of immigrants, attracted by the prosperous and peaceful condition of the Soudan, is entering the country. It appears to me justifiable therefore to expect that in the next five years the population will have attained some 6,000,000 and have thus doubled the present total. It will be the duty of the Government to look after the welfare of all who live under their rule, so that they may live in peace and prosperity.”

That was an aspiration for the fulfilment of which he defined one very practical measure. The curse of the Egyptian agricultural labourer and small owner is the load of debt under which he staggers, a load which heavy taxation has shut off

opportunities of lightening, while the presence of usurers and speculators has supplied the temptation of increase. Kitchener perceived that by putting into operation the ancient Mohammedan law, whereby the land of the country was "Kharaji" land<sup>1</sup>, the Government could prevent it, in some measure, from being sold. The Government was, in short, a kind of Oriental lord of the manor, and could thus, by keeping off the European speculator, safeguard the birthright of future generations of native cultivators.

"When we conquered the Soudan", writes Lord Kitchener, "there was hardly a single inhabitant who possessed any money, and, with the exception of the fighting-men, the whole population was practically starving. Nothing, I think, strikes one more in revisiting the Soudan to-day (1910) than the great increase which has taken place in the individual prosperity of its inhabitants. It is not too much to say that there is now hardly a poor man in the Soudan. . . . It is therefore not surprising that the people are happy, contented, and loyal. When expressions of this happiness and contentment are heard it is satisfactory to feel that they are not merely word-painting for the benefit of the rulers of the country, but are based, as the people themselves maintain, on solid facts."

During the remaining years of Lord Kitchener's administration, the Soudan, his favourite child, gave him hardly an hour's anxiety. "Peaceful development, undisturbed by political feeling, continues in the Soudan", he wrote in 1913,<sup>2</sup> "and has enabled the country to take another stride in its advance towards prosperity"—and it exemplified the truth of the maxim that the prosperous country is that whose history is uneventful. Its prosperity was the more gratifying because in 1913 it passed through a period of excessive drought. The Nile Flood was the lowest for a century. The recurrence of drought in the

<sup>1</sup> This term applies to land of which the owners, after the country became Mohammedan, were allowed to remain in peaceful possession: whereas when the land was wrested from the original possessors and divided among its Mohammedan conquerors, it comes under the term "Ouchori" land.

<sup>2</sup> *Annual Report for 1912.* (Cd. 6682.)

Upper Nile valley enabled Lord Kitchener to press on a project which had commanded the attention of British engineers for some time. This was a scheme for irrigating the dry lands in the Upper Nile region of the Gezira; and it comprised the building of a dam across the Blue Nile above Khartoum at Makwar and the construction of a forty-mile canal. He favoured an even more ambitious project, which was designed, not to water the land, but to hold up the superfluous water which flooded Lower Egypt during periods of excessive Nile Flood. This plan involved the construction of a dam on the White Nile forty miles above Khartoum, in the neighbourhood of Gebel Auli, so that the flood-water coming from the Abyssinian highlands might be held up and regulated.<sup>1</sup> The lake thus formed behind the dam might furthermore be used to supplement the reservoir behind the Assuan Dam some hundreds of miles farther down stream. The estimated cost was a million sterling.

These ideas were impressive enough; and there were many in Egypt who criticized the magnitude of Lord Kitchener's commitments. Even such schemes were not the limit of his plans. When all the areas of Egypt were fully developed he believed, and said, that the regulation of the Nile would have to be undertaken as far south as the Great Lakes. He had a profound belief in the future of Egypt and its provinces, and thought that under prudent management and a benevolently despotic Government the country could pay for its improvements. So, though by nature an economist, he planned the improvements on a magnificent scale, and where irrigation and drainage were concerned he thought the dam was always worth the expense.

Nevertheless, throughout his administration his paternal interest in the poverty-stricken native cultivator was continually shown. In Egypt, as in India, he had been made con-

<sup>1</sup> Begun in 1916 after Lord Kitchener's death.



tinually aware of the way in which the native agriculturist, poor but improvident, inordinately fond of spending money on ceremonial feasts at weddings and the like, and bitten with a mania for going to law, becomes the prey of the usurer. It is this which keeps the Indian ryot, the Javanese labourer, and the Egyptian fellah poor in the midst of plenty. In India Lord Kitchener had seen a law passed which was intended to help the ryot, and, as he declared, had done so in spite of its critics; and he co-operated in the enactment of a similar measure in Egypt known as the Five Feddan Law. Five feddans is a little more than five acres, and is about the amount of land on which an Egyptian native can support himself by cultivation. The Five Feddan Law passed under Lord Kitchener's administration gave protection to the small cultivator by enacting that this five feddans should not be sold under his feet for debt. Until such a law was passed the fellah was induced by small foreign usurers, the eighth plague of Egypt, to mortgage his land at interest amounting to as much as thirty or forty per cent, and the process went on till the land fell into the moneylender's clutches. The new law put a stop to this by making the last five feddans inalienable; and though, of course, it reduced the fellah's opportunities to run up debts, it proved popular, and succeeding generations will have cause to bless the name of Kitchener. How greatly the law was needed was demonstrated by an enquiry which revealed that the average debt on every feddan of cultivable land in Egypt was £25, a state of things under which the most highly favoured agriculture could not continue to pay its way.

A more modest reform, which nevertheless reveals the paternal sense of government which Kitchener had imbibed with his long Oriental training, was the institution in small rural areas of what we should call unpaid magistrates here. The "notables" of the district were thus empowered to administer justice in petty cases, such as disputes about small

sums of money, or about field boundaries. "One of their principal duties will be to reconcile adversaries and to make up local quarrels", observes Lord Kitchener, who had himself considerable experience in this kind of duty, and throughout his stay in Egypt was always accessible to notable or sheikh or Oruda.<sup>1</sup> These new magistrates, whose exercise of their powers proved very successful, did a great deal to make the poorer people contented, and while preventing the exacerbation of local quarrels pending the appeal to distant tribunals, gratified the native propensity for appealing to law on very small provocation.

Was there, many will ask, any indication during Lord Kitchener's administration that his governance was influential in bringing quiescence to a land which had never known tranquillity since the days of Mehemet Ali, and which entered on a new career of disorder under Ismail? We think that there was. Lord Kitchener entered on his virtual governorship at a time when the rhythmic movement towards disturbance, which is always apparent in the Near East, was approaching the crest of the wave. The movement was accelerated by the Turco-Italian disturbances, and later by the conflict of Turkey with the Balkan Powers and with Greece, who sought a convenient moment for attack. Lord Kitchener bore reiterated witness to the excitement which these conflicts bred in Egypt, all of whose sympathies were with the Crescent. Egypt, conscious that by some means, not of her own providing, she was possessed of a compact and efficient army, chafed and strained at the bonds which kept her neutral. Yet neutral Egypt remained, and the most conspicuous thing about the Egyptian army at this period is its absence from mention in Lord Kitchener's reports. He speaks of its efficiency, of its improvement in its musketry, of slight alterations in its cadres, and of some minor enterprises in preventing the import of

<sup>1</sup> The Oruda in each village is the agent of executive administration.

arms to the tribes in the neighbourhood of the Abyssinian frontier—there is also a mention of the Senussi—and that is all. There is no hint of trouble with the Senussi, though among most of the border tribes of the Soudan there was always a little local blood-letting in progress: the Senussi rising during the Great War was engineered by German agents. The army was loyal to the man who had made it. So also was the mass of the people loyal. "I notice indications", remarked Lord Kitchener, "of a greater confidence in the Government, particularly among the silent mass of the people."

He believed that in spite of all surface indications of unrest in Egypt the time was coming when the population would be again closely united, when they would put aside the perilous game of intrigue and party politics and work loyally for the common good of their country. With his shrewd, practical mind he saw that such a time could be brought nearer only by making the poorer people contented and prosperous. For the politicians and the wire-pullers he had only contempt. He had arrived in Egypt just after one assassination; he had been there little more than a year when (in the summer of 1912) a plot was brought to light to assassinate him as well as the Premier, Said Pasha. The plotters, one of whom was a journalist on the staff of a Nationalist newspaper, and the other a subordinate, who was recognized by Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzgerald, Lord Kitchener's Military Secretary, were arrested as soon as they had sufficiently incriminated themselves. Lord Kitchener's reference to the affair is very characteristic.

"I think it is necessary", he writes<sup>1</sup>, "to refer very briefly to the misguided action of a few fanatical persons, who, influenced by the example of Wardani and imitating his methods, joined in a conspiracy to assassinate prominent officials in this country. The plot, which, if successful, could only have done great harm and thrown back the pro-

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Report for 1912.* (Cd. 6682.)



gress of Egypt for many years, was discovered in time, and those engaged in it were tried and punished."

From Lord Kitchener's point of view the more important thing was the discovery of the attempt to introduce seditious propaganda into Egypt. The ostensible culprit, Sheikh Shawish, a Nationalist agitator, was arrested and acquitted: Lord Kitchener probably had a shrewd idea of who it was that was furnishing the propagandist fuel for the Nationalists, but he did not allow the knowledge to escape him in his reports. He was quite capable of dealing with his own hands with the Nationalist party or the Young Egyptian party, which languished during his administration and did not give him much anxiety. His preoccupation was to keep his weapon bright in Egypt, and meanwhile to increase the prosperity of the "great silent mass of the people". That he did, persistently, boldly, and with no regard whatever for the criticisms or the slanders of those who failed to catch Kitchener's eye, or, catching it, quailed under it. His display of magnificence, which impressed the Oriental, provoked the criticism of the Europeans; he had no friends at the Khedival Court, and the Khedive saw in him only a bar to his own cupidity. So in Egypt he stood alone, as he had done elsewhere, doing "the job that was nearest". He was extremely accessible, and from this time the foolish legend of his austerity began to decay. A letter of this period, written by an Australian statesman, speaks of his courtesy, his willingness to listen to suggestions and to new ideas—in a word, his approachableness. "He was not austere, not haughty", writes the Hon. Dugald Thomson, a member of the first Commonwealth Administration, "but quite human, with a pleasant humour in social intercourse. At work he was intensely active during long hours: had a ready 'uptak', as the Scots say, and a quick grasp of what was necessary to meet novel conditions. The man he drove

hardest was himself. With regard to his merits I have noticed that of the men who were best able to judge by close association with him, the able and assiduous were those who spoke highly of him: the slackers were the bitterest of critics."

Egypt found these qualities in him. It found that the man who had made her riflemen out of mud could take the keenest interest in the country's education, in the state of its roads, in obtaining a good price for its cotton, and in conserving its agriculture. It found in him a soldier who was also a statesman, an administrator who had sunk the conqueror in the friend.

E. S. G.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Coming of the Great War

A Fortunate Chance—Lord Kitchener's Summons—Origins of the Great War—Germany's Lust for World Power—Her Contempt for Britain and her Empire—The Teaching of her Professors—The Kaiser and the Sovereignty of the Seas—Building the German Navy—Germany's Colonies—Her Road to the East—The Kaiser as the Protector of Islam—The Serajevo Assassinations—"First-class Lies"—Britain's Share in the Diplomatic Crisis—The Bursting of the Storm—Lord Kitchener's Far-sighted Views—His Knowledge of Germany and her Army—Plan for punishing her after the War—His Love for France—Views on British War Office and Plans for European Campaign—How he accepted Office as War Minister—Strength of the British Army before the War—Lord Kitchener's Sure Instinct—German Disillusionments—Historical Precedent for the "New" Army.

**I**T was a fortunate chance for Britain and the Empire that Lord Kitchener happened to be home on leave in June, 1914, at the time of the Serajevo assassinations, the ostensible origin of the Great War. He remained through the critical weeks that followed, taking no part in the complicated moves on the diplomatic chess-board of Europe. The fact that he was allowed to start on his return to Egypt, reaching as far as Dover, on the morning of 3rd August, twenty-four hours before the British ultimatum to Germany, is proof clear enough that the British Government still believed it impossible that the whole of Europe could be plunged into war through a local squabble in the Balkans. But while the greatest events, as Sophocles pointed out many centuries ago, may seem to spring from trivialities, the causes are always profound. The truth of this was never clearer than in the origins of the Great World War. They can be traced in a hundred deep and different ways, and as far back as in the primitive days when



the Teutonic warriors sallied forth for the place in the sun which even then they regarded as theirs by right of conquest. The *Weltpolitik* of modern Germany, with its aggressive gospel of Might and Right, is merely a case of history striving to repeat itself, with the difference that other nations are now prepared to defend the liberties of the world.

It was not surprising that Germany, with a population-problem growing every year more serious, and a commercial genius which gave her a leading place in all the markets of the globe, should cast longing eyes on the fair colonies acquired by Britain long before the Kaiser's people dreamt of a colonial dominion. The Germans, as Prince von Bülow has admitted, are by nature prone to envy, and we need not quarrel with their ambitions for colonial power when we remember that their natural overflow of population was for the most part forced to settle under any national flag but their own. Such colonies as they possessed held out little attraction for emigrants beside the boundless possibilities of America, or any of Britain's great dominions oversea. Their only hope was that these emigrants would preserve their Prussian sympathies and ambitions, so that in due course they could play their part when the time came to realize the ideal of Treitschke, who taught them that since the greatness and glory of Germany had been attained by the governance of Germany by Prussia, so the greatness and glory of the world were to be attained only by the universal supremacy of German *Kultur*. That their hope in this respect was not entirely groundless was seen in the vast network of intrigue all over the world gradually revealed in the course of the Great War. Even the United States received its warning, both in plot and outrage, that the "hyphenated" American, still clinging to his Prussian ideals, was a grave menace to the republic. For years this subtle scheme of "peaceful penetration" had been pursued, not only in the United States but also in such South American settlements as those founded by the

Germans in Brazil and Argentina, as well as over most of Europe. Not until the Great War revealed much that was hitherto unsuspected did we realize how far and how tenaciously the tentacles of this Teutonic octopus had spread over its neighbouring countries through the Balkans to Turkey and the East, and even as far as our own dominions. "Peaceful penetration", however, was of too slow a growth for a nation taught to regard itself, in the Kaiser's own words, as "the very salt of the earth", as the nation destined to become the dominating power in the world. Modern Germany had attained its proud position by the sword; by the sword, therefore, should its crowning glory be achieved. Bismarck with his "blood and iron"; Heine with his hero-worship; Nietzsche with his Superman; Treitschke with his glorification of the Prussian ideal and his hatred of Britain; Bernhardt with his faith in war as the father of all things, and Germany's historical mission in the world; and all the other professors and publicists following in their wake, had so dinned their beliefs into the susceptible German mind that the whole Fatherland, filled with the overweening pride of a people grown in a single generation amazingly rich and strong, became hypnotized with the intoxicating ideal of Pan-Germanism, fervently expressed in their favourite national song:

Deutschland, Deutschland, über Alles,  
über alles in der Welt.

We did not quarrel with Germany's pride in her past achievements, or with her eager strivings after greatness. Where we joined issue was in this arrogant belief in the superiority of the Germans over all other races, with its accompanying swagger, and sword-rattling, and loud insistence on Germany's right to make aggressive war, especially at Britain's expense. Britain, so the Germans were taught, was merely a robber State which had built up her empire, not by



valour and true greatness, but by centuries of hypocrisy, assisted by supineness on the part of worthier nations. This monstrous Empire, it was declared, was nothing but a colossus with feet of clay. At the first crucial test it would come toppling to the ground, with all its loosely-compacted members broken asunder, never to be joined together again. To say that Britain was decadent was to admit that she was ever strong; and that, according to these truculent professors, was a gross error. Hence the hoped-for day of reckoning for Britain—"The Day" to which it became a custom in the German navy to drink a solemn toast. "A thing that is wholly a sham", said Treitschke, in speaking of the Empire for which he always reserved his uttermost scorn and wrath, "cannot endure for ever. It may endure for a while, but its doom is sure. There is no room for it in a world governed by valour, by the Will to Power."

Treitschke's principles—the doing of great things greatly, heroic action, the glory of war, and the day of reckoning with Britain—were, as Professor Cramb pointed out in his prophetic little book, published just before the Great War,<sup>1</sup> the very essence of his influence throughout Germany. National vanity, like all other vices, grows by what it feeds on, and there was no lack of intellectual food of this character in the two decades which elapsed between his death and the coming of the war which he regarded as inevitable. The faith which he had inspired, and the dreams of world-wide dominion which gradually took possession of the Fatherland, were confessed frankly enough by General von Bernhardt, who, like Treitschke, honestly believed that war was a biological necessity of the first importance, and that it was Germany's historical mission to pursue the struggle for the harmonious development of the whole human race. Having, he argued, taken the lead in the intellectual progress of mankind, they had incurred an obliga-

<sup>1</sup> *Germany and England.* June, 1914. (Murray.)



tion for the future, and failure to act accordingly would make them "untrue to their supreme duty towards the human race".

It is curious to read these exalted sentiments in the light of Germany's attitude during the Great War towards the rest of the human race, neutrals and belligerents alike. The invasion of Belgium in defiance of Germany's own pledged word to the contrary; the sinking of the *Lusitania*; the violation of all the laws of civilized warfare, and the like, were strange proofs of their divine solicitude for the rest of mankind. But it flattered German pride—always peculiarly susceptible to flattery—to believe that in preserving and extending the German spirit they were working for the good of civilization as a whole, and for the establishment of universal culture. It was astute teaching for a nation which, in Bernhardi's view, had but two alternatives—world-dominion or ruin. This was but the echo of Treitschke's dictum that "a country which owns no colonies will no longer count among the European Great Powers, however powerful it might otherwise be". And since Germany had entered the field too late to found a colonial empire worthy of her destiny, she must of necessity win her share by force of arms.

"All that other nations attained in centuries of natural development—political union, colonial possessions, naval power, international trade", wrote Bernhardi, "was denied to our nation until quite recently. What we now wish to attain must be *fought for*, and won, against a superior force of hostile interests and powers. . . . We must rouse in our people", he added, in another chapter, "the unanimous wish for power in this sense, together with the determination to sacrifice on the altar of patriotism, not only life and property, but also private views and preferences in the interests of the common welfare. Then alone shall we discharge our great duties of the future, grow into a World Power, and stamp a great part of humanity with the impress of the German spirit."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Germany and the Next War*. Friedrich von Bernhardi (Arnold), 1912.

In spite of its Chauvinism, we cannot but admire the grandeur of conception in this aspect of Pan-Germanism, or the unflinching courage of those unnumbered thousands who, brought up in the faith, so unhesitatingly made the supreme sacrifice in the life-and-death struggle which followed. In judging them we must never forget that not only are almost all their newspapers wholly controlled by their Government, but also their schools and universities. Nothing may be taught that has not the highest official sanction, and since all professors and teachers are salaried agents of the State, and know only too well that their whole future depends on their loyal obedience, it follows that the entire nation long before the war had been educated up to the aims and ideals so frankly disclosed by such writers as Treitschke and Bernhardi.

It was left to the Emperor William II to support this world-policy with a proportionate display of sea power. To what extent the Kaiser was personally responsible for the Great War cannot yet be told, but that he was as conscious of Germany's so-called historical mission as any of his professors was obvious from the very beginning of his reign, when, in his first proclamation to his army, he solemnly vowed always to remember that the eyes of his ancestors were upon him, and that one day he would have to render to them an account both of the glory and honour of German arms. Before long he openly vowed never to rest until he had created a navy worthy of the army. "Our future lies upon the water" is one of his historic utterances; while on another occasion he went the length of declaring that "our colonial aims can only be gained when Germany has become master on the ocean". This direct challenge to Britain's sovereignty of the seas—a sovereignty as essential to Britain's safety as an island power as was Germany's mighty army to guard her wide-flung frontiers on land—is obvious enough to-day. Slowly but surely the trident was to be wrested from what the high-priests



of Pan-Germanism regarded as the unworthy and bullying clasp of Britain. Did not the Kaiser himself declare that "the trident must pass into our hands"? The challenge was as unmistakable in the preamble to the German Naval Bill of 1900:—

"Germany must possess so strong a battle-fleet that a war with her involves, even for the most powerful naval adversary, the danger of risking his own position as a Power. For this object it is absolutely necessary for the German battle-fleet to be as strong as the greatest naval power, for a great naval power would not, as a rule, be in a position to concentrate all its fighting forces against us. Even if it did succeed in meeting us with a much superior force, the defeat of a strong German fleet would nevertheless weaken our adversary so materially that in spite of any hard-won victory his own position as a Power would thereafter cease to be secured by an adequate fleet."

Thus Germany became the second strongest naval power in the world, and steadily sought to decrease the margin which separated her from Great Britain's proud supremacy. These and other warnings did not pass entirely unheeded, though at the time we were too readily persuaded by politicians and suave diplomatists that the crime of a great European war was unthinkable, if not impossible, rejecting the fact that in the existing state of the world the surest hope of peace lay in being fully prepared for war, by land as well as by sea. The pacifism of Britain, relying too much on the forces supposed to be working in the Fatherland itself against the ambitious doctrine of *Realpolitik*, was so much fuel on the fire of militarism in Germany, and worked together with the unpreparedness of Russia and France in encouraging the appalling conflagration which followed.

Had the time been ripe it would have broken out ten years before. The Naval Bill of 1900, authorizing great additions to the German forces raised under the Navy Laws of 1898, was passed during the Boer War, and the Pan-Germans fondly



hoped to have their new navy ready before that unhappy conflict could cease. But the new navy could not be ready before 1904, and, strive as they might, with intrigues and empty promises, to induce the Boers to continue the struggle, they failed through the organizing genius and conciliatory policy of Lord Kitchener, which, combined with the good sense of the Boers, restored peace to South Africa two years before the fire-eaters of Germany had hoped. It was probably only because their navy was too small that they did not seriously interfere at the time of the Jameson Raid, when the Kaiser sent his notorious telegram of congratulation to Kruger, and again after the outbreak of the Boer War, when the anti-British feeling in Germany was roused to fever-pitch. Their sense of helplessness at sea at this period against the might of Britain's fleet, and their intoxicating dreams of conquest, henceforth removed all obstacles in the path of the Kaiser's naval policy and the propaganda of the German Navy League. It was part of Britain's indebtedness to Lord Kitchener that he restored peace to South Africa two years before Germany was ready to take Britain at a disadvantage and strike the blow which it was hoped would in course of time add the tempting Dutch republics in South Africa to the German colony in the south-west, where Nachtigal, in 1884, had hoisted his country's flag on colonial soil for the first time since the Great Elector's premature beginnings towards the close of the seventeenth century. The sudden awakening to their urgent needs in the matter of oversea dominions came to the generation of Germans whose childhood, in the words of Treitschke, "was illuminated by the sun of Sedan".

"The object of their ambition", added this learned firebrand, "is that the young giant who has just shaken the sleep from his eyelids should now use his strong arms to advance the civilization of mankind, and to make the German name both formidable and precious to the world. Therefore our German youth were thrilled as by an electric

shock when, in August, 1884, the news came that our flag waved upon the coast of Angra Pequena (South-West Africa) and the Cameroons, and that Germany had taken the first modest but decided step in the path of independent colonization."

The Cameroons—and Togoland as well—had followed South-West Africa within a few months of the hoisting of the flag on the coast of Angra Pequena, the beginnings of German East Africa on the other side of the continent being added in the following year (1885), Bismarck, now fully though reluctantly committed to a colonial policy, meantime securing a foothold in the Pacific by annexing a part of New Guinea. These were intended merely as the nucleus of the Greater Germany which in due course would reach the four corners of the earth. The acquisition of Kiao-Chau in 1898, on the flimsiest of pretexts, was only dictated by Germany's need for a naval base in the Far East. This last was the historic occasion of the "mailed fist", followed in 1900 by the Kaiser's characteristic speech in addressing his troops embarking for China, from which arose the nickname of "Huns" for the Germans:

"When you meet the enemy you will defeat him. Give no quarter; take no prisoners. Like as the Huns under Attila a thousand years ago won their reputation, which still survives in historical tradition, so may the name of Germany be made known in China, that no Chinaman in future will ever again dare even to look askance at a German."

No ruler ever knew better than William II how to kindle the enthusiasm of his subjects. His fatal gift of eloquence often overstepped the bounds of prudence, sometimes causing internal trouble as well as disquietude abroad, but in their heart of hearts the Germans idolized him as the living embodiment of the Fatherland. His passionate regard for Germany's rich historical associations, his strong vein of romanticism, and his impressive personality combined with his ambitious plans for the future of his race to inflame a personal devotion and a



fervent patriotism which burnt themselves into the very heart of his people. Having followed his guidance in regard to the navy, and grown in confidence and truculence with the increasing strength of their fleet, they were carried away with his visions of conquest, not only in Africa and the Pacific, but also in the East, which had exercised a growing attraction for Germans for generations past, and especially for the romanticist William II. Whether, as Dr. Prothero and others would have us believe,<sup>1</sup> the *Drang nach Osten*, or pressure to the East, supplies the master-key to German foreign policy is an arguable point. Personally we regard it as but one of a number of equally important keys which the Pan-Germans were ready to turn at the first favourable opportunity; but there is no doubt that it played a vital part in the crisis which led to the world-catastrophe of 1914. One of the Kaiser's golden dreams was the construction of a great confederation of States, including Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Balkans, and Turkey, controlling the vast area extending from the North Sea to Bagdad and the Persian Gulf. Hence the "Berlin to Bagdad" line, which was to establish an overland route to the East shorter than that by way of Suez. Hence also the systematic efforts of Germany to undermine British prestige throughout the East, and the readiness of William II to flatter Abdul Hamid with his friendship when every other ruler in Christendom shunned that sultan on account of the appalling massacres in Armenia. Nothing was allowed to interfere with the prospects of this dazzling scheme, which in due course was to bring within the Germanic sphere not only Egypt, Syria, Arabia, and Persia, but the mother of nations herself—India.

First, however, it was essential to support Austria-Hungary in the Balkans at all costs. Every increase of Russian influence there threatened the whole fabric of this Oriental empire. The

<sup>1</sup> *German Opinion and German Policy before the War*, by G. W. Prothero, Ph.D. (Royal Historical Society). 1915.



*Drang nach Osten*, like the naval development, was directly opposed to the policy expounded by the more level-headed Bismarck in 1888, when he declared that German interests in the Balkans were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier. But it made a tremendous appeal to the impulsive young emperor, who, ten years later, after a second visit to his friend the Red Sultan, at Constantinople, paid a pious pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and, dressed in Oriental costume, proclaimed himself at Damascus as the protector of Turkey and the friend of Mohammedanism throughout the world. When the Great War broke out he did not hesitate to write a letter to the Senussi—intercepted by the French—proclaiming himself “the Envoy of Allah and protector of Islam”, and praying that the Mohammedans would “expel all infidels from the lands which belonged to true believers”; and there were no lengths to which his emissaries were not prepared to go in the colossal campaign of lies, by means of which they hoped to spread what they were pleased to call the Holy War against the British. It needed a monarch with the Kaiser’s imaginative gifts to square his allegiance to the Prophet with his fondness for posing at home as the true champion of Christianity. As firmly as his great-uncle, Frederick William IV, whom he resembled in some of his most marked characteristics, he held that he derived his kingly authority from God alone, that he was indeed the right hand of God Almighty, and that his subjects were the chosen people whose destiny it was, under his guidance, to dominate the world. Thus by degrees the bulk of the nation, taught from childhood to regard the State as something beyond and above them, to be revered and implicitly obeyed—not, as in this country, the creation of the people themselves, with a constitutional king, and a government holding office by virtue of the people’s mandate—came to regard themselves, in the Kaiser’s own words, as “the very salt of the earth”, and honestly to believe that Germany was

the Super-State. The moral effect of all this self-glorification was not surprising, since nothing clouds the judgment so much as vanity. "A false appraisalment of oneself is certain to lead to a false opinion of one's neighbours", as Dr. Prothero pointed out in one of his illuminating lectures before the Royal Historical Society in 1916 on "German Opinion and German Policy before the War":

"Always somewhat unsympathetic and therefore unintelligent of others, the Germans have been led by their pride on the one hand, by their desires on the other, into the grossest miscalculations as to the mind of foreign nations, and even as to the political conditions of other countries. Never has it proved more true that the wish is father to the thought. The Germans have been led to believe that France was utterly decadent; that Russia would collapse at a blow; that Britain would never fight, and that, if she did, her colonies would desert her, India would revolt, and the British Empire would crumble to pieces. There is no end, in fact, to the delusions and false hopes which have been nourished in the minds of Germans, as a result of this habitual glorification of themselves and depreciation of their neighbours. Their vanity has destroyed their judgment."

Their judgment, like their diplomacy, was never so much at fault as in the summer of 1914, when the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife at Serajevo, the capital of the Balkan province of Bosnia—once part of the ancient kingdom of Serbia—was seized upon by the war lords as Germany's golden opportunity to hack out her destiny by force of arms. At any rate she would be sure of Austria-Hungary on her side, whatever Italy, the third partner of the Triple Alliance, might decide to do in view of the fact that this compact was solely of a defensive nature, and dissolved if war resulted from their own aggressive action. Every effort, therefore, was made by Germany both then and afterwards to prove that the sole responsibility for the war rested with the Allies in general and Great Britain in particular; that



Germany, in short, had unsheathed her sword solely in self-defence. It was not difficult to convince the German people that they were fighting for their lives against a ring of jealous and unscrupulous enemies, determined to crush the Super-State before it was too late. They knew that France had never ceased to nurse her hopes of revenge for Alsace-Lorraine; that Russia had set her hand to the freeing of the Slavs, and would block the path of Germany to Constantinople and the East; and that Britain had causes of friction on account of naval supremacy and commercial rivalry. Hence it was not difficult for the Berlin authorities to persuade all Germany that Britain had deliberately egged on France and Russia to goad the Germanic Powers to a conflict, while she lured Germany to her doom under the cloak of peace, meaning all the time to deal the treacherous blow which she struck on 4th August, 1914.

Only the war lords of Germany knew how far from the truth were these "first-class lies". The German people were not allowed to know the truth when war broke out; but the record of diplomacy lay open to the rest of the world, and Britain was content to be judged by its verdict. That record proves, if it proves anything, that from first to last Viscount (then Sir Edward) Grey left no stone unturned in his earnest desire to avoid anything approaching provocation, and that, but for Germany, at the last critical moment, his ceaseless efforts for peace would have been crowned with success. The truth was that the war lords, knowing that they alone were fully prepared for "the Day" for which they had been arming for forty years, and convinced that a better opportunity might never occur to gain elbow-room for their world-policy, were now determined to strike at all costs, and settle accounts at least with France and Russia.

"Germany knew very well what she was about", said her ambassador in Vienna to the British representative, Sir Maurice





LORD KITCHENER AND THE WOUNDED  
Chatting at Brighton with an Indian V.C., Jemadar Mir Dast



de Bunsen, in the course of the negotiations following upon the ultimatum to Serbia, "in backing up Austria-Hungary in this matter." And anyone who has read with an unprejudiced mind all the diplomatic documents published relating to the crisis will endorse both this opinion and the eulogium passed upon Britain's share in the negotiations by Professor Stowell, of Columbia University, New York, as "one of Britain's glories, and a pattern for generations to come".

This is not the place to trace all the tortuous paths of politicians and statesmen during the memorable weeks which hurried the old order of things to its doom. One passage in Sir Maurice de Bunsen's dispatches suffices to show how, after Serbia had accepted practically all the demands of Austria-Hungary's ultimatum—"the greatest humiliation", said Sir Edward Grey, "that he had ever seen a country undergo"—leaving only a few outstanding points to be settled by the Hague Tribunal, Germany took the whole matter into her hand and plunged into war.

"Austria, in fact," wrote Sir Maurice, "had finally yielded, and that she herself had at this point good hopes of a peaceful issue is shown by the communication made to you on August 1 by Count Mensdorff, to the effect that Austria had neither 'banged the door' on compromise nor cut off the conversations. . . . Unfortunately these conversations at St. Petersburg [afterwards Petrograd] and Vienna were cut short by the transfer of the dispute to the more dangerous ground of a direct conflict between Germany and Russia. Germany intervened on the 31st July by means of her double ultimatums to St. Petersburg and Paris. The ultimatums were of a kind to which only one answer is possible. . . . A few days' delay might in all probability have saved Europe from one of the greatest calamities in history."

The German Chancellor's excuse that "war became unavoidable solely by a Russian mobilization" is not sufficient. The Tsar himself, in his telegram to the Kaiser on 30th July, pointed out that the military measures then being taken had



been decided upon five days before for defensive purposes against Austria's preparations. "I hope with all my heart", he added, "that these measures will not influence in any way your position as mediator, which I highly esteem. We need your strong pressure on Austria in order that an understanding may be brought about with us." Nor must it be forgotten, as Sir Edward Grey afterwards pointed out, that the Tsar of Russia had proposed to the German Emperor that the Austro-Serb dispute should be settled by the Hague Tribunal. "The refusal of a Conference by Germany", declared our Foreign Minister, "though it did not decide British participation, did in fact decide the question of peace or war for Europe, and sign the death warrant of the many hundreds of thousands who have been killed in this war."

The opportunity, in German eyes, had been too good to miss. The great strike in Russia would so tie the hands of the Russian colossus that the Germanic hosts could easily hold the Eastern front while they settled accounts with France once and for all—a war in the West which, short and sharp, would crush France so completely that she could never cross Germany's path again. Then, in due course, having also beaten Russia to her knees, she would be free to deal with the most hated enemy of all—Great Britain—who meantime, it was confidently hoped, would be too occupied with the forthcoming rebellion in Ireland and her own internal troubles to join in a war which was no immediate concern of hers. Even if eventually drawn in it could only be with an insignificant British army and the certain loss of all her great Dominions. The first item in the programme of the German Staff was to smash France in three weeks, seizing the French naval ports before Britain had time to realize that the destruction of our neighbour was merely a stepping-stone to the conquest of ourselves.

To remove any suspicions we might have on the subject, the

German Chancellor made his infamous proposal on 29th July, 1914, to our Ambassador, Sir Edward Goschen, to the effect that if Britain would promise to stand aside while Germany went to war, Germany on her part would give every assurance that the Imperial Government aimed at no territorial acquisitions at the expense of France. The French colonies, however, were another matter, and as for Belgium, Germany was not prepared to give any guarantee save that she would only respect her integrity after the war if she had not sided against the Fatherland. We know now what these promises were worth from a Power even at that very moment planning to violate its own treaty obligations. They were rightly scorned at the time by Sir Edward Grey.

“His Majesty’s Government”, he replied on 30th July, “cannot for a moment entertain the Chancellor’s proposal that they should bind themselves to neutrality on such terms. What he asks us in effect is to engage to stand by while French colonies are taken and France is beaten, so long as Germany does not take French territory as distinct from the colonies. From the material point of view such a proposal is unacceptable, for France, without further territory in Europe being taken from her, could be so crushed as to lose her position as a Great Power, and become subordinate to German policy. Altogether apart from that, it would be a disgrace for us to make this bargain with Germany at the expense of France, a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover. The Chancellor also in effect asks us to bargain away whatever obligation or interest we have as regards the neutrality of Belgium. We could not entertain that bargain either.”

This was but one of many warnings, both to Germany and Austria, that though our hands were still free they must not count on our neutrality in all circumstances, and sufficiently disproves the charge that we left Germany completely in the dark as to our intentions. Up to the very last Sir Edward Grey gave so little encouragement to France and Russia to defy Germany, as the Imperial Chancellor would have the world



believe, that on the very next day (31st July) he promised the German Ambassador in London that if Germany would only put forward some reasonable proposal for settling the existing differences he would not only support it, both in Petrograd and Paris, but go the length of telling Russia and France that if they declined to accept it Great Britain would have nothing more to do with the consequences. Instead of falling in with this proposal, Germany sent her double ultimatums to Russia and France, which destroyed the last hope of a peaceful settlement. Even then Sir Edward Grey moved heaven and earth to localize the conflict; and only when Germany again declined to give any assurance that she would respect the treaty rights of Belgium—though France at once agreed—did Britain take the first precautionary step in the active support of France. She had already, on 27th July, issued the historic order countermanding the instructions for the dispersal of the Grand Fleet assembled at Portland after the manœuvres. She now, on 3rd August, gave the French Ambassador an assurance that if the German fleet came into the Channel, or through the North Sea, in order to undertake hostile operations against the French coast or shipping, the British fleet would give all the protection in its power. This, Sir Edward Grey was careful to explain, was not a declaration of war, but as binding to take action should that particular contingency arise. It was the German invasion of Belgium on the following day that decided Britain to range herself wholly on the Franco-Russian side, though Sir Edward Grey had already, on 31st July, warned the German Ambassador that if France and Germany became involved in war we should be drawn into it. Whether or not Germany regarded this as mere bluff; whether, indeed, the German Ambassador correctly informed his Government on the subject, cannot at present be told; but in any case there were plenty of other portents to warn the Kaiser and his Imperial Chancellor that they would have to reckon with



Britain after all in spite of the confident prophecies of their military professors.

Britain's non-committal policy up to the last was the only wise course for a constitutional minister to adopt in the perilous circumstances then prevailing. Sir Edward Grey's pacifism had helped to solve what had seemed an equally grave crisis in the Balkans in 1913, and there is little doubt that it would have prevailed in 1914 but for the war lords of Germany. Britain's foreign policy in those fateful hours before the German declaration of war was put in a nutshell two years later by Mr. Winston Churchill in one of his "Four Great Chapters of the World War."<sup>1</sup> It was simply this:—

"Not to encourage France and Russia into ambitious courses by any assurance that we should take their side: not to let Germany suppose we were afraid or unable to fight her: to try somewhere, somehow, to get both sides to parley round a table. To this must be added the Admiralty policy—'Ready'. And had there not been a deliberate overriding intention to make war on the part of Germany, to which intention the Emperor William had consciously and resolutely given his support, Sir Edward Grey would unquestionably have succeeded. But against the ram of a stubborn purpose nothing could avail."

In spite of all the German accusations to the contrary, we were free from all legal or formal engagements. From the first our naval and military discussions with the French Staffs had taken place on the clear understanding that in the last resource the British nation must be free to decide if and when the moment came. "Still they counted on us," again to quote from Mr. Churchill's article. "They believed that, not for a war of *revanche*, but in resistance to naked aggression, they could count on us, and they had made their military, and, even more, their naval dispositions in that hope—not, thank God, unfounded."

Belgium, too, had counted on us when Germany, in defiance

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday Pictorial*, 16th July, 1916.

of her pledged word—with that of Great Britain, France, Russia, and Austria—to guarantee her neutrality and independence, demanded a safe passage for her troops through Belgian territory on 4th August, threatening to treat Belgium as an enemy in the event of her refusal. To this threat King Albert and his Government, to their eternal honour, returned a categorical refusal on the grounds that such an act would be a flagrant violation of the law of nations. King Albert at the same time made an urgent appeal to Britain for diplomatic intervention to safeguard the integrity of his country. To that appeal there could be but one response. An ultimatum was sent to Germany demanding that she would proceed no farther with her violation of the Belgian border, and stop her advance; and that, failing the receipt of an assurance to that effect by twelve o'clock that night, "His Majesty's Government would have to take all steps in their power to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which Germany was as much a party as themselves".

When this ultimatum was delivered by the British ambassador, the only reply of the German Secretary of State, Herr von Jagow, was "that the safety of the Empire rendered it absolutely necessary that the Imperial troops should advance through Belgium", which was in accordance with the doctrine laid down that very afternoon by the Chancellor, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, in the Reichstag, when he declared: "We are now in a state of necessity, and necessity knows no law". This was in the course of the speech in which the Chancellor frankly admitted that the invasion of Belgian soil was contrary to the dictates of international law. "The wrong that we are committing"—these are his own words—"we will endeavour to make good as soon as our military goal has been reached." It was after this speech that the British ambassador had his farewell interview with the Chancellor, having been given

clearly to understand that Germany had no intention of acceding to Great Britain's demands. Sir Edward Goschen found the Chancellor very agitated.

"His Excellency", wrote the British ambassador in his account of the interview, "at once began a harangue, which lasted for about twenty minutes. He said that the step taken by His Majesty's Government was terrible to a degree; just for a word—'neutrality', a word which in war time had so often been disregarded—just for a scrap of paper Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her. All his efforts in that direction had been rendered useless by this last terrible step, and the policy to which, as I knew, he had devoted himself since his accession to office had tumbled down like a house of cards. What we had done was unthinkable; it was like striking a man from behind while he was fighting for his life against two assailants. He held Great Britain responsible for all the terrible events that might happen.

"I protested strongly against that statement, and said that in the same way as he and Herr von Jagow wished me to understand that for strategical reasons it was a matter of life and death to Germany to advance through Belgium and violate the latter's neutrality, so I would wish him to understand that it was, so to speak, a matter of 'life and death' for the honour of Great Britain that she should keep her solemn engagement to do her utmost to defend Belgium's neutrality if attacked. That solemn compact simply had to be kept, or what confidence could anyone have in engagements given by Great Britain in the future?

"The Chancellor said, 'But at what price will that compact have been kept? Has the British Government thought of that?'

"I hinted to His Excellency as plainly as I could that fear of consequences could hardly be regarded as an excuse for breaking solemn engagements, but His Excellency was so excited, so evidently overcome by the news of our action, and so little disposed to hear reason that I refrained from adding fuel to the flame by further argument."

The die was cast. Midnight came, and with it no sign that Germany was prepared to respect either her own international obligations or Britain's protest. The violation of Belgian territory which had placed Germany so palpably in the



wrong had stunned the British Cabinet into agreement. Our matchless navy was ready, not only to defend our shores, but also to transport our dauntless little army across the Channel; and Britain, true to her obligations of honour both to France and Belgium, as well as, be it added, to her own national interests, declared for war.

Lord Kitchener realized at once, not only that everything was at stake, but that the war would be long and arduous. He was under no illusions as to the strength and efficiency of the German war machine. Had he not fought against it for France in his youth, and seen it in peace manœuvres in his manhood? He knew something of German intrigues, too, in his work for Britain along the outposts of Empire, and was not one of those who believed that the Great War could be traced primarily to the psychology either of the Kaiser or the Emperor Franz Josef. He held the view that whatever share might have been taken by the Allied Emperors, the origins of the conflict were not individual but national. Nevertheless, though he knew enough of Germany and her army to anticipate a merciless war on their part, he was frankly staggered by the countless acts of inhumanity which sullied and stained for ever the Fatherland's formidable reputation in arms. In a leading article published on 28th July, 1916, the *Morning Post* revealed the fact that shortly before his death Lord Kitchener informed it that he regarded the conduct of Germany as something outside the range of human experience. The Germans, he declared, had deliberately prepared over a long period of years for nothing less than the domination of the world. In this design they had used their subjects as spies and corrupting agents, and taken advantage of the hospitality of their neighbours to prepare their destruction.

“It was the crime of a whole nation, and it was specially directed against the British Empire, which had given the Germans every privilege that British subjects enjoyed. His opinion was that we should do some-

thing to punish Germany for this organized treachery, and so to mark our detestation of the system as to prevent it ever happening again."

What Lord Kitchener proposed was that a law should be passed whereby for twenty-one years no German should be allowed to naturalize himself, or take up his domicile in the United Kingdom and the British Empire as far as the authority of the Imperial Parliament extended, or to enter into partnership in any British business, or become a shareholder in any British Company. Nothing more clearly than this showed the measure of Lord Kitchener's abhorrence of the nation which by its abominable deeds had placed itself beyond the pale of common humanity.

The Germans on their side had little reason to love the man whose work as the organizer of Britain's armies not only achieved what they had regarded as impossible, but also shattered their sanguine hopes of world-power. "The most important thing for us to remember", they declared in the pages of the *Lokalanzeiger* at the time of his death, "is that in Lord Kitchener died one of the bitterest enemies of Germany that modern Britain has produced." Kitchener was the last man to be swayed by passion. His mind was essentially practical; and just as he treated the Emir Mahmud after the battle of the Atbara, and the Mahdi's tomb at Omdurman—not from any lust for vengeance, but solely because he knew the Arab and the fatal mistake of any misplaced leniency in the hour of victory—so he would have used the most effective means within his power to deal German militarism its death-blow after the war. He probably regarded the war lords as he regarded raiding Mahsuds, the Ishmaelites of the Indian frontier. "These Mahsuds", he said to an intimate friend during his Indian period, "are the curse of our borderland. I do not wish to attack them or anybody, but if they give us much more provocation I fear we shall have to. I want you



to remember that I am not seeking any sort of frontier war, but if I go for these people *I shall not spare them.*"<sup>1</sup> Kitchener knew enough of war to be something of a pacifist at heart, but when war was thrust upon him he never sheathed his sword until it had done its work thoroughly.

There was never any doubt of his sympathies towards France. His love for that country was shown clearly enough in the war of 1870, and helped to smooth matters in the critical days of Fashoda. It is not generally known that after his experience as a volunteer in 1870 he was tempted to remain in the French army and to continue his career in France. Lord Kitchener appears to have confided this fact at the Mansion House banquet, a few months before his death, to Senator Jenouvrier, who subsequently recalled in the *Petit Journal* his conversation with the War Minister.

"After the war", said Lord Kitchener, "General Chanzy offered me a post as captain in an engineer corps. But, having paid my debt of gratitude to France, I realized that I owed myself to my own country, and could only promise to return if I found that I was not wanted there." Fortunately for the Empire, the British army did want him; but his early experiences in France were never forgotten, and Britain's alliance with her in the Great War was, as he added to Senator Jenouvrier, a great joy to him. He found in it, he said, something like the consecration of his life.

In 1911, when Germany played her game of bluff at Agadir—and lost, thanks to Britain's unmistakable hint that she would regard her occupation of Agadir and its coast as an unfriendly act—Lord Kitchener was home, and, as a member of the Committee of Imperial Defence, kept in close touch with the plans then made for the war which Germany discreetly decided to postpone for what she hoped would prove a more favourable opportunity. He left to take up his post

<sup>1</sup>"Lord Kitchener and India", *National Review*, July, 1916.



as British Agent and Consul-General in Egypt, in succession to Sir Eldon Gorst, before that crisis had finally passed away, and shortly after the Kaiser's speech at Hamburg, in which he referred to the future strengthening of the German fleet until "no one can dispute with us the place in the sun that is our due"; but Kitchener was still kept informed of the plans for Imperial defence. Many secret documents were composed at that time, "and military publicists took pains to prove, beyond all reasonable doubt", wrote his close friend and fellow-member of that Committee, Lord Esher,<sup>1</sup> "that in a war between France and Germany the decisive battles would be fought within the first fortnight of the outbreak of hostilities, and that the presence of our six divisions in the field at the crucial point, and at the earliest possible moment, was the essential element of success. In the autumn of that year [he left for Egypt in September] Lord K. scouted this notion as puerile, and wrote to me, what he repeated with emphasis in 1914, that the war would be ended and victory achieved by the 'last million' of men that Great Britain could throw into the scale."

The tragedy of it was that the one man who foresaw the nature of the impending conflict, and might have equipped the nation in time with an army worthy of its destiny, was never placed at the head of the War Office until the hour of Armageddon had struck, and he was left to save the Empire with a military system which, though it had the consent of all parties in the State, only provided for the dispatch abroad of 150,000 to 160,000 men. He knew only too well the magnitude of the task awaiting him at Whitehall. The War Office was a subject on which he could at times be eloquent.

"During many an evening in camp or bivouac", wrote "A Staff Officer" in *Blackwood's Magazine* not two years before the outbreak of the war, "Kitchener often talked long, openly, and convincingly upon

<sup>1</sup> "Lord K.", *National Review*, July, 1916.

army reforms needed in the War Office and the army. Of his opinions on this point it is too soon to speak, for he may yet have occasion to put them into practice. So I will only say that they are calculated to produce a very considerable fluttering in Pall Mall dovecots and among the old women of both sexes when Big Ben chimes out K.'s hour of office and responsibility."

Small wonder, when the hour struck, and the whole nation turned to Kitchener in its desperate need, that he hesitated, knowing, as none other knew, how hopelessly inadequate were all our military plans and preparations. It was a saving mercy that he should be home at the time on leave, but he was due back in Egypt, and had, indeed, already started on the return journey on that memorable Bank Holiday of 3rd August, 1914—the day before Britain sent her ultimatum to Germany—when Mr. Asquith dispatched his telegram at the last moment asking him to postpone his departure and to see him in London. The telegram only reached Kitchener as he was stepping on the Channel boat at Dover. He returned. "He told me," afterwards related Mr. Asquith, who, at the outbreak of war, was temporarily holding the position of Secretary of State for War as well as that of Prime Minister, "in the frankest possible terms, of his indisposition, except at the call of duty, to undertake the task which I proposed, with the consent of the Sovereign, to lay upon him. Like every good soldier, duty came first with him. He subordinated everything to that. From that moment to this there has not been one single day in which Lord Kitchener has not laboured with an assiduity, a zeal, and a patriotic self-devotion—as I can say from the personal observation of daily contact with him—which are beyond all praise." This tribute was part of the Prime Minister's defence of Lord Kitchener during the debate on his administration inspired by his parliamentary critics at the close of May, 1916. It does not explain why Mr. Asquith continued nominally to hold the office of Secretary of State for

War until 6th August, 1914, while certain organs of the Press were loudly calling for Kitchener's appointment to the post. One explanation is that the delay was due to the arrangements necessary for the conduct of Egyptian affairs in Kitchener's absence. It must have been before the British declaration of war that the incident occurred which Lord French related in his panegyric on his old chief in the House of Lords after his death, as "the great and glorious soldier which I knew him to be". Lord French reminded the House how for nearly three years during the South African War he was closely associated with Kitchener, enjoying his intimate confidence and friendship, and how, at that time, as well as later, he became so impressed by his great qualities that his first thought when the Great War became inevitable was to serve under his old chief in the field.

"When, at the outbreak of war," he said, "I had reason to believe that I had been selected for the Chief Command in the field, I went to Lord Kitchener very early one morning and urged him to see the Prime Minister and endeavour to arrange that he himself should take the place, and that I should accompany him as Chief of Staff. Although at that moment he had no idea of taking over the position of Secretary of State for War I could not prevail on him to do this."

Providence, it seemed, had destined him for the more complex task of converting our modest Expeditionary Force into an army of Continental dimensions, numbered not by tens or hundreds of thousands but by millions. The story of that mighty achievement is reserved for the following chapter. The measure of Kitchener's success, and the true greatness of the man, can only be appreciated when we realize how inadequate were the resources at his disposal when he accepted the post of Minister of War and how complete were the enemy's preparations for the conflict. The strength of Germany's fighting-machine, as we have observed, was never underestimated by



Lord Kitchener. In his speech at the Guildhall, delivered some ten or eleven months later, he said:—

“The thorough preparedness of Germany, due to her strenuous efforts, sustained at high pressure for some forty years, has issued in a military organization as complex in character as it is perfect in machinery. Never before has any nation been so elaborately organized for imposing her will upon the other nations of the world; and her vast resources of military strength are wielded by an autocracy which is peculiarly adapted for the conduct of war. It is true that Germany’s long preparation has enabled her to utilize her whole resources from the very commencement of the war, while our policy is one of gradually increasing our effective forces. It might be said with truth that she *must* decrease, while we *must* increase.”

But at the beginning, compared with the millions of armed and fully-trained men who were already marching to battle both on the Eastern and the Western fronts, the little army—varying in fighting strength from 80,000 to 130,000 men—which formed the original British Expeditionary Force seemed no more than a mere drop in the ocean. Had their strength been in proportion to their valour the war might have been over as soon as the sanguine experts had imagined, but though they arrived at their destination “well within the scheduled time”, to quote from Lord French’s first dispatch, and were among the deciding factors in the stemming of the German tide in the first critical months of the war, they were for the most part doomed men. The old “regular army”, which they so nobly represented, saved the national honour, but sacrificed itself in doing so.

No one had realized the gravity of the situation so clearly as did the new War Minister. It was true that on paper Great Britain’s military strength exceeded 800,000 on a war footing, but these included the Indian and Colonial establishments, and all the reserves, as well as the Territorial Force, which, numbering 251,706 at the beginning of 1914, was then

30,000 short of its peace establishment. At the beginning of the war there were fewer than 140,000 regulars in the British Isles; and it was from these and the reserves that the first Expeditionary Force was formed.

One of the first things that Lord Kitchener did was to ask for another half-million men to go on with, and the nation, which had learned of his appointment with a sense of profound relief, responded with enthusiasm. The appointment had been announced in the morning papers of 6th August in the following terms:—

“In consequence of the pressure of other duties the Prime Minister has been compelled to give up the office of Secretary of State for War.

“The King has approved the appointment of Lord Kitchener as his successor. Lord Kitchener undertakes the duties of the office for the time being, in view of the emergency created by the war, and his post in Egypt will be kept open.”

In the House of Commons that evening Mr. Asquith confirmed the announcement in one of his great speeches on the war.

“I am very glad to say”, he concluded, in observing that it would not be right that he should continue as Secretary of State for War, “that a very distinguished soldier and administrator in the person of Lord Kitchener, with that great public spirit and patriotism that everyone would expect from him, at my request stepped into the breach. Lord Kitchener, as everyone knows, is not a politician. His association with the Government as a member of the Cabinet for this purpose must not be taken as in any way identifying him with any set of political opinions. He has at a great public emergency responded to a great public call, and I am certain he will have with him in the discharge of one of the most arduous tasks that has ever fallen upon a Minister the complete confidence of all parties and all opinions. I am asking on his behalf for the Army power to increase the number of men of all ranks, in addition to the men already voted, by no less than half a million.”

The quiet, confident way in which he set about building

up the vast new armies confirmed the nation in its faith in Kitchener as the unfailing organizer of victory. That faith was as unquestionable as Kitchener's strength, which, like that of most men of action, lay not so much in any logical reasoning as in that sure instinct which is often deeper and truer than our thoughts. It was that instinct, according to Mr. Bonar Law, which, at the beginning of the war, warned him of the nature of the terrible struggle in which Britain was to be involved, and induced him, concurrently with the dispatch of the first Expeditionary Force, "to set about the formation of armies on a scale such as we have never dreamt of, and at a time, as I believe, when no statesman of any party would have formed a conception so gigantic, and yet, as events have shown, so necessary".

It was a conception, however, as Lord Esher afterwards pointed out, which Kitchener had formed years before, and the same authority has reiterated that "K." was the only man in the British Government who foresaw from the very beginning how long and arduous the struggle would be.

"I remember the first day I saw him immediately after our declaration of war," said Lord Esher. "He then said he was about to prepare for a three years' war. 'The Germans may get to Paris,' he added, 'but this is not the war of 1870. It must be fought to a finish. If the Germans get to Paris the French armies will retreat beyond the Loire, and we shall retreat with them, and two years hence we, Great Britain, shall throw the last million men into the scale and win the war.'"

With his quick perception of the urgent needs of the situation in France he advised his colleagues in the Cabinet that all their available troops must be brought from India and Egypt to tide over the crisis until his new armies were ready to fill the breach. It was argued that we might thereby lose both Egypt and India. "No matter," he replied. "Win the war in Europe and you will get them back. Lose the war in Europe and you lose everything." Thus it was that India was denuded of British troops at the beginning of the war;





IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE GREAT WAR

Lord Kitchener, with Lord Haldane, arriving at the War Office to take over his new duties



and Britain is never likely to forget that India, instead of rising in revolt, according to Germany's confident prediction, proved her loyalty up to the hilt. "Britain had no need to keep troops to hold her," as Sir Francis Younghusband wrote; "she held to the Empire", and with her own armies proved a tower of strength in half a dozen theatres of war. The Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, has related how, at the outset of the war, he consulted with the leaders throughout India, frankly exposing the situation and the needs of the Empire, and how everyone assured him of India's unswerving loyalty. Not only were the British troops removed—save for a mere handful of men—and an Indian contingent sent to the Western front in those critical autumn months of 1914, but the whole of India's artillery, of the most modern and up-to-date pattern, was supplied to our troops at a time when our resources in guns were disastrously inadequate. During that anxious period scarcely any artillery was left throughout the length and breadth of the Dependency, apart from a few batteries retained on the north-west frontier in case of raids from across the border. The shortage both in men and guns was afterwards made good; but India, with her contingents in France, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Egypt, East Africa, and elsewhere, continued to prove her unfailing allegiance.

The risks were greater in Egypt, but here the Turco-German intrigues merely led to the deposition of the intolerable Khedive Abbas II and the formal constitution of the country as a British Protectorate, with Abbas's uncle as Sultan Hussein I. With his intimate knowledge of Egypt and India Kitchener probably knew that both countries were safe. He once said, in discussing the Anarchist movement in India, that he never had the slightest doubt about the ability of Great Britain to maintain British rule, insisting that the bulk of the Indian peoples were either ardently or tacitly loyal; but he overlooked no possibility in concentrating on the vital battle-



front in those crucial months of 1914. "Knowing far less about the fighting potentialities of the belligerent hosts than many officers in the War Office and in the Expeditionary Force," as "One who knew him well" wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* two days after his death, "he nevertheless gauged the situation more correctly than any one of them. Far less well acquainted with the economic position of the Powers engaged in the struggle than many of his colleagues in the Cabinet, he nevertheless by some mysterious intuition grasped from the outset how far the economic problem was likely to influence the fortunes of the well-balanced contending sides." Whatever mistakes Lord Kitchener made in the conduct of the war itself—and mistakes were inevitable in one of the most arduous undertakings ever entrusted to a human being—the services which he rendered in leading the nation and the Empire at the critical moment along the only path that led to safety, and in creating an army of some 5,000,000 men out of so little trained material, were above and beyond all praise.

"Kitchener's Army" was Cromwell's New Model repeated in the twentieth century on a stupendous scale, with splendid Territorial and Indian and Imperial armies to equip and coordinate at the same time, and such diabolical accessories of war to counteract as Cromwell's Ironsides—sturdy fighters though they were—never had to face. The real precedent for the Great War and "Kitchener's Army", however, is to be found, not in the civil wars at home in the seventeenth century, but in the Revolutionary era of France, when the Republican forces, founded on a small regular army and raised to unprecedented proportions by volunteers, recovered Belgium and the Rhine frontier in 1793-5. There is a striking parallelism also on the strategical side between this earlier campaign in Flanders and that of the Western front in the Great World War, the opposing forces in each case facing one another roughly on

the same battle-front, extending right from the North Sea to Switzerland. On the one side were the professional troops of the Allies who had joined forces against the Revolutionists of France, led by German and Austrian princes and generals who then, as in 1914, claimed to be the supreme war lords of the world; and on the other a national fighting force, based on a small army of well-trained professionals, but largely composed of volunteers, and fired by the ideals of liberty and fraternity for which they were ready to lay down their lives. The voluntary system ultimately failed, owing partly, as in the case of the Great World War, to the length and severity of the campaign, but it enabled the French to keep their line intact through the trying winter of 1793-4 and paved the way to victory in the following months.

“The first three months of 1794”, to quote from Mr. Elliott’s Oxford Pamphlet on the subject, “were marked mainly by the intense suffering of the French troops holding their line in winter without supplies and equipment. Then began the dual offensive, its dualism at first accidental, but gradually developing into two main lines of attack. On each wing was obstinate and indecisive fighting: it seemed impossible for the French to maintain themselves either on the Scheldt or on the Sambre. Near Maubeuge four times in succession they crossed the Sambre and retreated before counter-attacks; in the fateful ground between Ypres, Courtrai, and Lille the advance was so slow as hardly to be perceptible. But Pichegru, though not a genius, was a very obstinate commander, and Jourdan was fighting for his life: their lieutenants, Souham, Moreau, Kléber, Marceau, Championnet, were able men who had survived the purging of war and of the Terror, that awful concentration of the country upon victory. Their men had still, in spite of their privations, the enthusiasm of the Revolution. So suddenly, at last, almost without a recognizable defeat—there was in this campaign none of the formal spectacular battle of the Napoleonic era—the Austrians admitted the pressure of numbers, the pressure of enthusiastic determination, the pressure of events in Poland. They evacuated Belgium, and were driven to the Rhine.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Historical Precedent for the New Army.* Ivo d’O. Elliott.

Strategically, therefore, as Mr. Elliott points out, the campaign of 1794 furnished a comforting precedent, as well as an inspiring example of a New Army, largely created by an immense voluntary effort, waging a victorious war in the cause of freedom, and adhering even in the hour of conquest to the principles which had given it strength.

F. A. M.



## CHAPTER V

### The Making of New Armies

Building up the Framework—Kitchener's Prescience—The Burden and the Sacrifice—The Improvisation of Armies—Territorial Organization—Officers—First Hundred Thousand—Kitchener's Message to the Expeditionary Force—Reserves of Man-Power—India's Contribution—Speeding up Recruiting—Raw Material—The Four New Armies—"More Men and still More till the Enemy is Crushed"—Decisions which had to be made—The Need for a General Head-quarters Staff—Shortage of Supplies—Shells—Training the Armies—An Inspection—A Frenchman's Observations—The Decentralization of Control—Lord Kitchener and War Material—The Ministry of Munitions—Lord Kitchener's Letter calling for more Recruits—Men and Munitions—Falling off in Recruiting—The National Register—The Trade Union Congress and Conscription—Lord Derby's Scheme—"Single Men First"—The Last Lap in Voluntary Recruiting—The Figures of the Unenlisted—Labour—The Tribunals—General and Immediate Compulsion—Message from the King.

**I**N the day of crisis Lord Kitchener was called to the War Office by the voice of the people, and no minister of the King could have ignored that peremptory demand. People spoke of him freely as a dictator, though there was nothing in the character of his appointment which warranted the term, and still less in the spirit with which he entered on his task. The right estimate of his acceptance of the appointment and the task is to be found in the sentence in which the Prime Minister announced it: "He has, at a great public emergency, responded to a great public call, and I am certain he will have with him in the discharge of one of the most arduous tasks that has ever fallen to a minister the complete confidence of all parties and all opinions". None knew better than Lord Kitchener the nature of the task which had immediately to be performed, and the overwhelming additions which



the future would make to it. None ever took a less theatrical view of war, or more clearly recognized that successful campaigns are waged, not by filling up the muster-rolls of armies, but by perfecting the organization behind them. Not for Kitchener cheap phrases about the "strong man". He knew quite well that no strength of will could call rifles and guns and shells to the instant service of the country, and that the will to answer the country's call, great asset though it might be, was an asset which could not be liquidated till the means of training and equipping men had been built up. Lord Kitchener's chief difficulty may be illustrated by an anecdote. In the United States Senate a senator once remarked that America had no need of a standing army, for if her rights were in peril ten millions of her citizens would instantly spring to arms, to which Colonel Theodore Roosevelt rejoined that there would be only 400,000 rifles for the ten millions to "spring to".

Great Britain had an Expeditionary Force, the finest in the world for its size, and completely equipped, except for those engines and implements of warfare which the subsequent experience of the campaign proved necessary; but when the Expeditionary Force had been accounted for, there was no means of quickly equipping other commensurate units to follow it. The Territorial system existed as a means of expansion, but Great Britain had otherwise no framework of military cadres, such as Continental armies had, on which new units could be fitted and expanded into divisions or army corps.

The twin tasks of building up frameworks before the attempt could be made to build armies, and of finding and fitting the equipment for the armies as they grew on the stocks, were sufficient to appal any soldier who knew his business. The better he knew his business, as Lord Kitchener knew his—having built up an army in Egypt, trained one in South Africa, and re-organized a third in India—the more back-breaking would the task appear. There were two other reasons why it

might have daunted him. From the beginning, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, he renounced all idea of a short war. He had a strange prescience, more than once exhibited, as to the kind of war that was to be fought, and as to the nature of its greater movements. Everyone has said that the German Higher Command, which, whatever its miscalculations, was constituted of scientific soldiers, expected a short war. Kitchener from the first said it would be a long one, and prepared accordingly. He may have divined, with his faculty of swift, true, and penetrating insight undistracted by the outward semblance of things, that the great German military machine was not great enough to do the work it had undertaken, but that it was strong enough to sustain years of hammering before its weakness became manifest. On a later occasion in the war, during the German campaign against Russia in 1915, his utterance that the "Germans had shot their bolt" revealed the same kind of insight at a specific stage of the hostilities. But while recognizing the protraction of the war he was fully aware of what demands on the manhood and resources of Great Britain were implied in it. The Prime Minister had announced in the War Minister's name the need for half a million recruits. Kitchener could see vistas of men who would be needed far beyond the first half-million. He could see the ever-growing tasks of equipping them; he could realize the greater and greater sacrifices which the nation would be called on to make. He did not know Great Britain well; most of his life had been spent out of it, and he was never fully conscious of his own place in the minds and hearts of his countrymen—no, not even to the last. But here again his insight helped him, for he knew that even as he himself would shrink from no sacrifice for his country, so his countrymen were of like mind, and that when the pinch came they could be depended on.

Yet he also knew how heavy was the burden laid on him in converting a nation unmilitary by habit, profession, and



intention into a military one. He knew that the British people could not be rushed, and in the early stages of the war he had no intention of, and no incentive for, rushing them. It is often asked whether Kitchener favoured compulsory military service from the first. The answer is that he was at once too cautious and too deliberate to ask for it. In the absence of cadres for training men, in the absence of the means for equipping them and of any possibility of quickly converting the recruits into armies, he did not want more than could be conveniently and efficiently dealt with. In the second place, he held the view, derived from his own experience, that the quickly-made soldier is not the man for the high trials of a campaign against modern weapons. He had seen too much of the raw levies of South Africa to have illusions on that point, and he preferred few but fit soldiers to masses which, however valiant their spirit, were deficient in the training and initiative and sense of military necessities which long association with armies in being can alone impart. He knew quite well that numbers would have to come, that great and greater armies would have to be formed, but he did not believe they could be thrown together and knocked into shape in a hurry. The soldier of the Kitchener type, by which is meant the soldier whose life has been spent in fighting, or training men for fighting, has an ingrained belief in the veteran soldier, and a distrust, often founded on experience, of short training. But even if he realized, as he may have done, that the material of his new armies would be of a quicker intelligence and greater mental capacity than that which he had hitherto handled, he was too well aware of the difficulties of finding generals, staff, officers, guns, transport, ammunition, and supplies for the complex units into which it was to be moulded, to ask for millions when hundreds of thousands might prove more encumbrance than use. He probably knew that in trying to fashion his hundred thousands into armies he was attempting a task which was ever

near the edge of failure. When the Germans said that a nation could not improvise armies they were speaking no more than what appeared indisputable to every student of military history. No nation except a nation like the British, who were profoundly ignorant of militarism, and prided themselves on it, would ever have expected Kitchener to succeed.

The machinery to his hand for converting recruits into armies was that furnished by the skeleton Territorial organization and the County Associations which had been created in the hope of clothing the skeleton with a reserve of men. In the years of peace immediately preceding the war the Territorial body had grown thinner and thinner; it now began to put on flesh. The immediate plan which Lord Kitchener put into execution was to separate the regular army, with its Expeditionary Force and its special reserve, from the armies which he projected, and for which he intended to use the Territorial organization. The Territorials were divided into two classes, those willing to serve abroad and those who were unable to do so. The Territorial force would thus consist of (1) coast-defence troops, the divisions, brigades, units, local-defence forces and central force, as provided in the home-defence scheme; and (2) those willing to serve abroad who would be formed into complete reserve divisions which could be used to supplement the oversea force. But it was understood that no attempt would be made to induce the Territorial forces to volunteer as a whole for foreign service. Lord Kitchener, proceeding slowly in educating the public, was aware that he would need Territorial cadres at home on which to frame new divisions in increasing numbers. Thanks to the wise military advice which he had given to Australia and New Zealand, he could depend on the Dominions to send their contingents in divisional form.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>That is, in form to take the field as divisions. In the urgent necessity which arose during the war for new units the divisions had sometimes to be broken up.



There was an enthusiastic response in the country to the call for men, and Mr. Asquith's proposal to increase the army by half a million (5th August, 1914) was passed with acclamation in the House of Commons. It was not possible, however, either for the country or the Commons at this stage to realize what would be the ultimate, or even the proximate, need for men. Lord Kitchener's circular to the Lord-Lieutenants of Counties (9th August) and to the Chairmen of County Territorial Associations, gave no clue except to military authorities. At that time recruits were coming in at the rate of some 3000 a day, and the most urgent necessity was that of officering them. The Universities Officers Training Corps volunteered almost to a man. They were offered commissions in the Territorials or in the Special Reserve which Kitchener was forming—his New Army. If the second of these commissions were accepted the officer went to an Officers' Training Corps, and thence was drafted to a unit as he became wanted. Retired officers, familiarly called "dug-outs", and old non-commissioned officers were invited to rejoin, and these were attached for instructional purposes to new units with the object of forming additional "service battalions" of existing battalions. By these means Lord Kitchener hoped to form and train six divisions, each of three brigades, which would make his First Army—the First Hundred Thousand. These would be followed in 1915 by the Second and Third Armies.

Meanwhile the preparations for the transport to France of the Expeditionary Force, which Sir John French commanded, were going on swiftly and with a secrecy to which the whole nation was a party. Its arrival in France was chronicled by the French newspapers a week before the fact was officially admitted, on 18th August, 1914, and its concentration there was complete three days later. The instructions which Lord Kitchener issued to the soldiers of that historic force, so few of whom long survived him, are memorable. Every soldier



carried with him the following message from the Commander-in-Chief:—

“You are ordered abroad as a soldier of the King to help our French comrades against the invasion of a common enemy. You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience. Remember that the honour of the British army depends on your individual conduct.

“It will be your duty not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness under fire, but also to maintain the most friendly relations with those whom you are helping in the struggle. The operations in which you are engaged will for the most part take place in a friendly country, and you can do your own country no better service than in showing yourself in France and in Belgium in the true character of a British soldier.

“Be invariably courteous, considerate, and kind. Never do anything likely to injure or destroy property, and always look upon looting as a disgraceful act. You are sure to meet with a welcome and to be trusted: your conduct must justify that welcome and that trust.

“Your duty cannot be done unless your health is sound. So keep constantly on your guard against any excesses. In this new experience you may find temptations both in wine and women. You must entirely resist both temptations, and while treating all women with perfect courtesy you should avoid any intimacy.

“Do your duty bravely.

“Fear God.

“Honour the King.

“KITCHENER, Field-Marshal.”

These instructions contrast significantly with the sinister teaching of the German War Book; and they were honoured as their author knew they would be. But their greatest interest is that in them speaks the authentic Kitchener, who practised the abstinence he preached.

The force was fighting when Lord Kitchener arose for the first time to address the House of Lords. In this speech he made no bid for anything but voluntary service, and indeed contrasted the compulsory service of the other countries concerned in the war with our own system. But a close examina-

tion of his words reveals that his preference at that time for voluntary service resided in the fact that it left a large reserve of untapped man-power for future needs. "I cannot", he said, "at this stage say what will be the limits of the forces required, or what measures may eventually become necessary to supply and maintain them. . . . If the war should be protracted, and if its fortunes should be varied or adverse, exertions and sacrifices beyond any which have been demanded will be required from the whole nation and Empire."

He added the simple expression of his belief that whatever the needs might be they would be met. His words made a deep impression in France, where they were sufficient to counteract the doubts which arose from the doctrines busily spread by those of our countrymen who had not awakened to the realities of the situation, and who believed that Great Britain could make war on a system of limited liability. Already their voices were making themselves heard, and on the day following Lord Kitchener's speech the Prime Minister had to reply to a question which arose out of it, and to declare that "compulsory service was unnecessary". The momentum of enthusiasm had not expired; but, even at the moment when the Prime Minister spoke, Lord Kitchener was aware that recruitment must be speeded up, and a joint Parliamentary Committee to aid recruiting had his approval. By the beginning of September, 1914, the recruits numbered more than a quarter of a million men, and were coming in steadily.

In India the rulers of the native States, Jodhpur, Bikanir, Mysore, Gwalior, Nepaul, and many others, had rallied to the Empire's side with offers of men and money. To all outward appearance things were going well, and the bitter fighting in France kept recruitment at a high level, though even in the second week of September, 1914, a great demonstration, at which Mr. Winston Churchill spoke, was held at the London Opera House to stimulate the stream of men. On

18th September Lord Kitchener made his second statement on the military situation, and in this he spoke of four New Armies, in addition to the force which was to be maintained in the field at its full strength of six divisions and two cavalry divisions. The greatest difficulty experienced hitherto had been in dealing with recruits as they came in, and not the least part of it was that of finding officers of the right kind. An example of the difficulties which is within the writer's own experience relates to a battalion which two years afterwards did magnificently in the Great Push on the Somme. When the battalion was constituted it consisted of 1100 Northern miners, and it was commanded by one Anglo-Indian major and two non-commissioned officers. Its men had no rifles; a large number of them had no boots; a percentage of them very quickly ran through their trousers. It was weeks and months before they were equipped, and as material the men were of the roughest. The colonel who led them, and whose experience might be duplicated in other battalions over and over again, expressed the view which the old army took of Kitchener and of his influence by saying: "Nobody but Kitchener would ever have had the audacity to ask us to undertake such a job, and for nobody else would it have been done."

That was the fact, and the mesmeric influence of the War Secretary extended beyond the army to the nation. To what other man would they have listened had he told them that he must have an army of a million men? Yet when Lord Kitchener, on 18th September, 1914, said that his plans comprised the formation of four New Armies—two at the training centres, one at the new camps, and one to be formed from the reserve battalions—no one dreamt of questioning the necessity for them or of doubting that they would come into being. Only foreign military critics may have asked incredulously whence the magician was going



to produce them, and how maintain them. For Great Britain it was enough that Kitchener promised that in the spring of 1915 the New Armies would be there.

If the country had been better informed in military matters it might have felt less optimistic, and it could not have overlooked the significance of the recruiting speeches made by Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. Redmond, and—three times in as many weeks—by the Prime Minister. The fall of Antwerp at the beginning of the second week in October, 1914, did more than anything else to awaken the country from its dreams, but owing to the resolutely jubilant note which was maintained in the newspapers the belief that armies were being quickly created, and that they would be ready in plenty of time to complete the work which the Russian steam roller had begun, was unshaken during the autumn of 1914. On 30th October Turkey entered the war, but the majority of the people in Great Britain did not realize how serious the consequent closing of the Dardanelles would be. In the first week of November Admiral R. A. Cradock's ships, the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth*, were sunk by Admiral von Spee's squadron, a serious reverse had been experienced in German East Africa, a rebellion under De Wet and Beyers was brewing in South Africa—and yet the optimism of the nation was unquenched.

The spirit of a nation is an incomprehensible thing, its depression or exaltation seems often independent of material circumstances; and, certainly, when Lord Kitchener again addressed his countrymen, as he did at the Guildhall Banquet (10th November, 1914), he spoke to people who had no qualms about the seriousness of the situation. That was the spirit which he wished to preserve, but his speech, read by the light of later events, seems to contain a deeper solemnity of warning than was apprehended at the time. The Empire, he said, was fighting for its existence, and it was only from a

realization of that truth that a great moral and national impulse could be born: without that impulse "governments and armies can do little". Perhaps that warning passed little noticed in the eagerness which his audience felt to obtain from his lips some estimate of the progress of the war, some authoritative lifting of the curtain behind which the greatest struggle of history was at that moment being waged less than a hundred miles distant from the lighted security of the Guildhall Banquet. Lord Kitchener had none to vouchsafe. He passed on to business. He had no complaint to make, he added, of the response to his appeal, and the progress in military training of the enlisted was remarkable. But—"I shall want more men and still more till the enemy is crushed".

It was in many ways a memorable banquet. It heard the Prime Minister's declaration that we should not sheathe the sword till the military domination of Prussia was fully and finally destroyed; and it heard Mr. Winston Churchill's unfulfilled prediction about the effects of our blockade. But it heard nothing more to the point than Lord Kitchener's words, and it listened to none with so great attention. Those who heard the cheer, vehement almost to truculence, which greeted him when, a little late, and the only soldier in the assembly in plain khaki, he crossed the threshold of the library will never forget it. It was almost the last occasion on which the writer of these lines saw him, but the most vivid recollection he retains is not that of Lord Kitchener standing up, grave and very deliberate, in movement as in speech, but of the quick smile and jovial word that he interchanged with his aide-de-camp in the vestibule before he entered the Guildhall to be greeted by the City. He spoke in public only twice again in that year: once to pay a tribute to his old chief, Lord Roberts—one of the pall-bearers to whose coffin he was at the service in St. Paul's—and once, a week later (26th November), when he told the House of Lords that the difficulties of providing



and equipping the new armies were being successfully met, and that he felt confident that future calls on the manhood of Britain would be responded to in a manner and spirit which would ensure the prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion. That was after the First Battle of Ypres had ended in the repulse of the Prussian Guard, and recruits were coming in at the rate of 30,000 a week. Kitchener knew quite well, nevertheless, that this was no occasion for premature rejoicing. He was being pressed at the time to suppress football matches, but he preferred still to keep voluntary effort running and not to force the pace too soon.

The country looked to Lord Kitchener for many decisions; but though it pictured him bearing the weight of the war on his shoulders, it little realized the character of the burden, which was not that of one responsibility but many. He was the military adviser of the Cabinet, and on him rested the responsibility of decision with regard to Great Britain's share in the fighting in France and on other fronts which continually multiplied during the war. He had decided to bring over part of the Indian army—a decision in itself before which any man with less than Kitchener's conviction of the soundness of the military situation in India might have hesitated. He had to face subsidiary campaigns in West Africa, in East Africa, and to make his decisions about the course of affairs in South and South-West Africa—where he trusted General Louis Botha, and where he was right. He quickly found a campaign in Mesopotamia on his hands, as well as the adventure of the Dardanelles. In all these things he was the ultimate referee; and no Great General Staff was employed to aid him in forming strategic plans or decisions. Once again Kitchener found himself in the conduct of the most important function of a Commander-in-Chief without the Staff to do it. A Head-quarters Staff had been formed at the War Office, but it was not of a character suited to deal with the problems which the war evoked.



Then, again, in the correlated tasks of a Head-quarters Staff, the officers and machinery for finding transport, supplies, and munitions were neither numerous enough nor experienced enough to deal with the requirements of a war and of an army expanded immeasurably beyond the War Office's dreams. Particularly in respect of the supply of arms—rifles, guns, cartridges, shells, especially shells—was the machinery insufficient, for here the very factories in which these requisites were to be made were wanting. There were not rifles enough in Great Britain for the recruits; there were not even boots enough. And if anyone should imagine that Great Britain was alone in the imperfection of her supply organization, he would find his speculations corrected by an enquiry into this humble but necessary equipment of the soldier. A battalion of soldiers recruited from among boot operatives had to be brought back from the fighting-line to make boots for the French army. Shells were a far more serious question; but the shortage of shells arose in the first place, not from any miscalculation on the part of Lord Kitchener or of the generals commanding in the field, but the inability of the shell manufacturers to cope with the unprecedented orders and fulfil them in time. They were months behind with their contracts. The supply of shells to the army was the weightiest of the responsibilities laid on Lord Kitchener. He felt it keenly; but the shortage was an outcome of British unpreparedness that no energy could repair at once. Even more keenly he felt the imputation that he was in some way to blame for the shortage. Lord Desborough has recalled his anxious observation: "I hope the army does not think I have let them down". The army never thought so. The army was painfully aware, during long months when it was being "strafed" by German shell-fire without being able to reply in kind, that the shell supply was inadequate, but it may have had enough military perspicacity to reflect that matters would not have been improved had Lord

Kitchener and Mr. Asquith proclaimed the shortage to the Germans from the housetops. It may have been because the German Higher Command was never positive about the extent of the reserves of ammunition in the West that their 1915 campaign was transferred to the East.

Besides these tasks of organization the War Secretary had the paramount duty of inspecting the training of his armies. Anybody who knew anything of Kitchener knew that his inspection would be thorough. If he went to inspect a soldiers' club he looked at the mattresses, he looked at the crockery, he examined the kitchens, and enquired about the ventilation and the baths; and he was not the commander to permit his armies to be trained without his supervision. He had always practised as well as preached a different canon. He went everywhere and saw everything. A French observer, M. Henry Davray, who was allowed to attach himself for a period of observation to the staff of one of Kitchener's armies, has described a characteristic visit of the War Secretary.<sup>1</sup> There was first a brief telegram that the S. of S. (Secretary of State for War) would come next day to inspect all the troops. "K." would be at such and such a place between 10.45 and 11.10, and at another place between 11.25 and 12.45, and so on. M. Davray remarked to a Staff Officer that the notice was rather short. To which the officer replied: "That's *he*: he is always like that, and a very good thing too". The Staff set to work. One of them said to Davray: "'K.' sets us an example; he works without respite and without leisure, and he knows that we do as he does".

The French observer goes on to describe the arrival of Lord Kitchener's car (without speed limit). From the step of the car Lord Kitchener transfers himself to the saddle without a moment's interval. . . . "On horseback he has a firm and easy carriage: his left hand holds the reins, and his right hand,

<sup>1</sup> *Britain's Effort: A Frenchman's Observations*, By Henry Davray. (Constable.)



LORD KITCHENER INSPECTING PART OF "KITCHENER'S ARMY"

*From a drawing by Cyrus Cuneo*





when the horse is walking, is laid on the haunch. As a horseman Lord Kitchener has a very fine presence." But what is most interesting in this young Frenchman's observations is the impression Lord Kitchener made on him on this field day. On ordinary occasions, or when making a speech, M. Davray found the Field-Marshal a fine figure of a man, perhaps a little stern and unbending.

"But it was in his khaki costume that Lord Kitchener really gave me the impression of a leader; a soldier from head to foot in his field uniform, with his spurs, his leather gaiters, his ample riding-breeches, his loosely-fitting tunic held in at the waist by a belt of brown leather supported by a shoulder-piece. The red and gold decoration on the collar, the red band on the cap, and on the peak the double garland of gold leaves are the distinctive signs of his rank."

On ordinary occasions in London, or in public, the French observer found Lord Kitchener's face immobile. A closed face, he calls it. The wide-opened eyes he thought usually expressed a desire to be somewhere else. But when inspecting troops the eyelids contracted over the eyes, which became keen and penetrating.

"With untiring persistence he surveyed and inspected the soldiers, rank after rank, and the material drawn by the artillery teams. From the moment that the first platoons opened the procession he began to smile, and his expression was one which none of his portraits has ever revealed. The darting glance from under his eyebrows, the motion of the jaw for the utterance of cordial words, the movement of the moustache above the smiling lips: sometimes a genuine sprightliness animated his features: the satisfaction of the Chief radiated good humour."

It was because his officers knew that he did not spare himself that they laboured for him; but work as he might he could not compass the task which his industry had raised. Had it been possible to recall the Head-quarters Staff which had gone to France, a first step to a productive centralization at the War Office might have been taken, but in its absence Lord Kitchener had to improvise his own Staff. The difficulties in point of

time were insuperable, and the centralization of control appeared to be proceeding to a figurative Paardeberg when the decision to establish a Ministry of Munitions distinct from the War Office was taken. Before that decision was carried into effect less fundamental reconstruction had been tried. Efforts had been made to expand the existing munition factories and to supply them with the necessary labour. The widening of the powers under the Defence of the Realm Act had been undertaken with this object in view. But all these measures had been insufficient, and the reason was that, in the spring of 1915, neither the people as a whole nor the majority of their representatives in Parliament, nor yet the newspapers which mould or are moulded by public opinion, had yet realized to the full the character of the war. They heard a phrase, such as that which Lord Kitchener had employed at the Guildhall, "that the Empire was fighting for its existence", but they did not inwardly digest it. The British people, fed on speeches, awoken only now and then to a realization that a speech may be the last note of warning; more often its meaning passes them by. So that in the early part of 1915, though the battle of Neuve Chapelle was a grim and costly failure owing to the want of that overwhelming supply of shells which alone can reduce the cost of frontal assaults on fortified positions, the question of finding enough shells was complicated by considerations of payment of labour and regulation of work, even as the question of finding enough men was to be complicated by considerations of the Briton's birthright and the calls of "business as usual". The complications in each crisis arose solely from the country's ignorance of the gravity of the struggle. The ignorance was partly due to the optimism of those who believed what they wished to believe; and it was partly due to a military censorship of the Press, prescribed no doubt with the best of intentions, but mischievous in its effects. Lord Kitchener distrusted the Press, and he had some good reasons for the



distrust. So far from making use of it, he allowed it, or his policy allowed it, to inculcate only a spirit of optimism which no amount of warnings in speeches by public men could counteract. Even Lord Kitchener's stern warning in the House of Lords on 15th March, 1915, that the work of the new armies as well as of the forces in the field had been hampered by the failure to obtain sufficient labour, was evanescent.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it was that both in the field of labour and in the field of recruiting supplies fell short. On 18th May, 1915, just before the Liberal Government coalesced with the Opposition into a Coalition Government, Lord Kitchener said with regard to ammunition that there had been a considerable delay in producing the quantity required, but that he was confident that in the very near future we should be in a satisfactory position with regard to these shells. Nevertheless, when the Coalition Government met Parliament on 3rd June, a Ministry of Munitions had been added to its functions, and the Department was in the charge of Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Lloyd George knew nothing of shells before his appointment as minister, but his fiery energy was trusted to bring together a Staff which did and would. The new departure was of value, not because it implied the establishment of a new method, for before the Munitions Department was constituted the expansion of the factories had begun under Lord Kitchener, but because it signified to the country, and especially to the workmen, that more shells, and still more shells, were needed. The Department creaked a great deal in its working long after it was started, but it relieved Lord Kitchener of part of his responsibilities, and it was also a step to the complete rousing of the country to a need even more vital, the need that every man in it should take his share in the war.

Quite early in the struggle opinion had divided itself into

<sup>1</sup> He added: "I can only say that the supply of war material at the present moment, and for the next two or three months, is causing me serious anxiety".

two camps on the desirability of national service, and militarists and anti-conscriptionists disputed with a fierceness that was in part a legacy of the cherished party system. Continually one party asserted that the war could be won only by putting the whole manhood of the country into the scale, while representatives of the other party endeavoured to wring from the Government the assurance that there was "no ground for the belief that the war would be more successfully prosecuted by means of conscription"—an assurance which more than one member of the Cabinet gave. For Lord Kitchener the question was one of expediency. He knew the army wanted men, but he knew also that it wanted shells. He was told by those who understood labour and the conditions of working-class opinion in Britain that conscription would never do. Very well then, said he in effect, the army must have the munitions, and that need must be complied with. So long as the armies can be kept up to their complement of men, it seems to me best to get them by some way which will not denude the factories, or put me on bad terms with the working class, from which I derive supplies as well as soldiers. Let us go on while we can with the voluntary principle. So he lent his sanction to all the paraphernalia of the recruiting campaign—public meetings, posters, processions; and he penned that great and simple letter which the nation has learnt to prize as a legacy:—

"WAR OFFICE, Whitehall, S.W.

"I have said that I would let the country know when more men were wanted for the war. The time has come, and I now call for 300,000 recruits to form new armies.

"Those who are engaged on the production of war material of any kind should not leave their work. It is to men who are not performing this duty that I appeal.

"KITCHENER.

"16th May, 1915."

The appeal came at a moment when the nation should have been peculiarly susceptible to it. It followed close on the sinking of the *Lusitania* (7th May, 1915) and the revelation by the Bryce Committee's Report of the accumulated infamy of German atrocities in Belgium. If those to whom it was addressed had comprehended the gravity of the military situation at this time—when the great drive prospected by von Falkenhayn was crashing its way through the Russian lines on the Dunajec towards Przemysl; and in the West, in the words of Lord Stanhope,<sup>1</sup> "the French were holding their trenches with rifles and their wonderful 75's, while we were holding our trenches, broadly, by rifle-fire"—it might have been more successful. But the issue was confused by two considerations. In the first place, the fact that munitions were urgently necessary, as Kitchener had himself admitted, and as the new Minister of Munitions gravely and even vehemently asserted, gave an opportunity to those who contended that it was more urgent to get the shells than to get the men, and who ignored the fact that the urgency of the situation called for both. In the second place, the question whether there should or should not be national service to obtain the men had by this time divided the Press into two camps, which unfortunately were more or less identical with the old party divisions. During this wordy struggle recruiting fell off. At this time the comprehension by Labour of the country's need and the country's danger stood at its lowest. The large number of new hands needed in munition factories, and the need for new rules and new methods, had awakened suspicion in the Trade Unions, and even Mr. Lloyd George was unable to convince the men or their leaders that "needs must" when a nation is at war for its existence. Murmurs arose about "industrial conscription"; the old cry was raised about the national birthright; and those who

<sup>1</sup> Speech in the House of Lords, 10th June.



asserted that compulsion would break up the national unity had more justification than usual, for the working classes were bewildered and disturbed to the point of resisting the demands made on them. The rights of labour, if so they can be called, were being assailed on two sides, on the side of compulsory industrialism and on the side of compulsory military service, and the working classes were of a mind to resist both. All the eloquence and force of Mr. Lloyd George could not prevent friction in the factories and mines; the ubiquitous war posters drew in a lessening roll of recruits. It was quite freely said among the working classes that voluntary recruiting was being discouraged in order to force conscription in the country.

The first practical step to end the fruitless controversy as to whether the country could spare more men for military service was that of compiling a National Register of the population, to be used either for organizing the people for voluntary service or as the essential basis for conscription. (A household canvass had already been conducted by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, and of the eight million forms sent out less than half were returned.) The measure was denounced by the objectors as "an unwarrantable interference with the personal liberty of the people",<sup>1</sup> but it was passed. Lord Lansdowne remarked of it that Lord Kitchener had now a measure which he required in order to prosecute the voluntary recruitment of the army, and which might remain in his hands as a weapon in order that the war should not be brought to an inglorious conclusion.

Lord Kitchener himself asserted the need and value of the Registration Bill in the speech which he delivered at the Guildhall on 9th July, 1915. "When this registration is completed", he said, "we shall anyhow be able to note the men between the ages of nineteen and forty not required for

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Philip Snowden in the House of Commons, 5th July, 1915.

munition or other necessary work, and therefore available, if physically fit, for the fighting-line. Steps will be taken to approach with a view to enlistment all possible candidates for the army—unmarried men to be preferred before married men as far as may be.” The last phrase was one destined to be many times repeated before Lord Kitchener got the men he wanted. But it is very noticeable that, though in this speech his warnings were no less grave than they had hitherto been, and though he said in the plainest possible words that the time had come when something more was required than had already been done to ensure that the demands of our forces overseas be fully met, yet the country went jogging on in the same way as before. The reserved occupation of munition-making needed all the men it could detain. Mr. Lloyd George, before Parliament adjourned on 28th July, gave an account of the way in which the whole country had been divided into great co-operative areas, with management boards to organize the whole available machinery for increasing the output of munitions of war. In addition to this, sixteen national factories, supplied with the necessary machinery, had been set up.

The effect on the mind of the workers, of the campaign for and against national service, was made apparent at the annual meeting of the Trade Union Congress, when a resolution was passed condemning the agitation in the “reactionary Press” to “foist conscription” on the workers. One speaker after another rose to express the general dislike of conscription which was entertained among the working classes. It did not require the stock phrases and the stock arguments—that the function of Great Britain was not to provide a large army but to hold the seas, finance the Allies, and make munitions—in order to show that the wind was blowing strongly against the success either of voluntary effort or of conscription. Mr. Lloyd George was invited to come to the Congress and address



the delegates. His speech made a great impression; but it was directed rather to the diminution of trade union restrictions on the output of munitions than to an augmentation of the supply of men. When Lord Kitchener addressed the House of Lords a week later he told the House that provision for the forces in the field during the next year (1916) had caused him anxious thought, owing to the recent falling off in the numbers coming forward to enlist. A large addition to the number of recruits would be needed, and he hoped for an early solution of the problem as to how an adequate supply might be secured.

The Prime Minister on the same day said that though recruiting had been steady during the war, it had fallen off during the last few weeks. A debate on compulsory service arose, but it led to nothing more decisive than the assurance from the railwaymen's member, Mr. J. H. Thomas, that the workmen would not have conscription, and that industrial disquiet was threatened in the forthcoming winter. As the year went on it became more and more clear that more men would be wanted, that our commitments, to which the Salonika expedition had been added, were increasing, and that the number of recruits was not increasing in commensurate proportions. The trade union leaders had agreed to do what they could to bring eligible men to the colours, and to their efforts were added those of Lord Derby, who, having for long upheld the desirability of conscription, had consented to make a concerted effort with the leaders of labour to organize a special recruiting campaign throughout the country.

Lord Derby's scheme was announced by him on 21st October, 1915, when he described it as the last effort on behalf of voluntary service. A canvass was to be conducted, with the assistance of the National Register, of all men between eighteen and forty who had not been starred as munition or indispensable workers, who were divided into forty-six groups,



the unmarried men in the first twenty-three groups according to their ages, and the married men in twenty-three more groups on the same plan. Men who "attested" their willingness to enlist would not necessarily be called upon for service at once: the intention was to call up the groups in their turn as they were required. Lord Derby sent a personal letter to each eligible man. The campaign was inaugurated by a message from the King to his people, bidding men of all classes to come forward and take their share in the fight. The campaign began well. But by November, 1915, difficulties began to arise. Many married men had enlisted in the belief or the expectation that their enlistment would compel a prior call to be made on single men. "Single men first" became a watchword. On 2nd November Mr. Asquith had stated in the House of Commons that, in his opinion, the obligation of the married men to enlist ought not to be enforced, or held to be binding on them, unless and until the unmarried men had been dealt with. This was immediately construed as a pledge that married men would not be called up for a long time to come. About the middle of November some words used by Mr. Asquith raised a doubt as to the meaning of his pledge—the rate of recruiting dropped with a thud. Lord Derby set the pledge up again in a formula of his own—it was "understood" that the married men should not be called out until the great majority of the unmarried men had enlisted, and if a great majority did not enlist, compulsory methods would be used. A lawyer once said that the greater part of his income was made out of people who had "understood" things instead of having them in black and white. The inference was applicable to the history of the single-men-first pledge. Mr. Bonar Law explained (in the Prime Minister's absence) that the Government would not adopt compulsion on the ground merely that all the single men who might have attested had not done so: but if there were a "general shirking" of single

men, then the unmarried would be compelled to go before the married were called upon. Evidently much depended on what was understood by a "general shirking". Lord Derby found that at any rate recruiting was not proceeding with sufficient rapidity.

In the first half of December, 1915, enlisting became brisker. In the last few days before the Group System closed the stream of young men was more intense than ever before in the history of the war. Long queues waited outside the recruiting offices: and this eagerness was due to the belief that compulsory service was coming. There was also an intention on the part of the married to force the pace for the unmarried. So great was the rush it was at first believed that compulsion would be unnecessary. Lord Derby, in the House of Lords (15th December), did not give the figures, but asked for support in maintaining that it would be absolutely impossible to call up the married men till the country was convinced that the single men had come forward in such numbers as to leave only a negligible quantity behind. The Prime Minister (21st December) was equally non-committal with respect to figures, but he renewed his pledge to the married men. More significant of the future was his motion for a supplementary Estimate which provided for forces of 4,000,000 men instead of the 3,000,000 of the current year. The session and the year 1915 closed with the great question undecided, but a speech by Mr. Lloyd George on the work of munition-making contained a phrase which was applicable to both problems. We must throw aside, he said, the delusion that we could win victory by an elaborate pretence that we were doing it. Too often the footsteps of the Allies had been dogged by the mocking spectre of "too late".

It soon became known that the proportion of single men attested under the Derby Scheme was not sufficient to cover the Prime Minister's pledge. The Cabinet came to a decision



LORD KITCHENER AT AN INSPECTION OF IRISH SOLDIERS BY THE KING

The photograph shows the King, accompanied by Lord Kitchener and his staff, arriving at the parade-ground near Aldershot. The troops reviewed comprised the Royal Ulster Volunteers and other Irish regiments





before the end of 1915 that some form of compulsion would have to be introduced, though opposition was offered by Mr. M'Kenna and Mr. Runciman on the ground that it would prejudice the finance and trade of the country, and by Sir John Simon on grounds which he never succeeded in justifying to the bulk of his colleagues or his countrymen. By his efforts, and the persistence of those who thought with him, other efforts were made to save the voluntary system. The unreasonableness of doing so was apparent from the figures which were published in the Derby Report. Out of a total of 2,179,231 single men of military age, 1,150,000 had been accounted for, and there remained 651,160 unstarred men who had not answered the call. This was far from being a negligible quantity, and Lord Derby observed that in order to redeem the pledge to married men it would not be possible to hold them to their attestation till the services of single men had been obtained "by other means". The Government could not, and did not, resist the conclusion. They did not propose a National Service Bill, though one had been drafted, but on 5th January, 1916, introduced the Military Service Bill which proposed compulsory service for all male British subjects who were between the ages of eighteen and forty-one on the date of the National Register (15th August, 1915), and who were unmarried, or widowers without children. The Bill came into operation on 10th February, 1916; and its operation was hampered by a considerable number of exemptions and exceptions, which Local Tribunals and a Central Tribunal were set up to consider. At the same time the Derby group system was re-opened.

Opposition was expected, and soon showed itself. The most important opposition was that of Labour. While the Bill was still before the Commons a London Congress of the Labour Party carried a resolution against it, and recommended the Labour representatives in Parliament to oppose it; but having

thus vindicated their principles they decided against an agitation for the repeal of the Bill should it become law. After that its confirmation by Parliament was certain, and Lord Kitchener was satisfied with having got so much. He authorized Mr. Walter Long to declare that "he (Lord Kitchener) hoped the Bill would be passed practically as the Government had introduced it: and that the measure, by bringing in the unmarried men and enabling the others to be called up, would provide the troops that the nation required, and would enable him to do all that was necessary to do."

The country now entered into the tribunals stage of enlistment, with its accompaniment of excuses which were good reasons, and of excuses which gave rise to a new sense of injustice. The phrase "single men first" had been taken by the married to mean that no married men should be called up while single men remained available and unattested. When many of the single men were found escaping into the harbour of reserved occupations a new outcry arose from the married. An agitation, neither reasonable nor scrupulous, arose against Lord Derby, and the Government found themselves bound to consider anew the applicability of the reserved-occupation badges. It soon became clear that the new scheme was inflicting no less injustice than the old, and the army and Lord Kitchener could not wait. The seventy divisions which were the minimum of the field formation of Lord Kitchener's armies required 1,400,000 recruits for their maintenance and completion during the year 1916. Men must be found, and quickly. Compulsion was again casting its shadow before it. Sir Edward Carson in the Commons, and Lord Milner in the Lords, announced resolutions in favour of passing an Act rendering all men of military age liable for military service during the war. The Army Council, of which Lord Kitchener was chief adviser, furnished the Cabinet with a very plain statement of their immediate requirements in men. Last of all, the



attested married men, by deputation, contended that equality of sacrifice had not been attained, and asserted that the Military Service Bill ought to be made to apply to all.

The Prime Minister had a difficult task to perform. He had to convince his colleagues that what to his own perception was inevitable was also necessary; he had to prevent a reaction in the ranks of labour; and he had to compromise with some of his own previous utterances about the desirability of compulsion. No Prime Minister ever had a harder task; but no Prime Minister of our time was better able to cope with his own Cabinet. Among the expedients to secure unity was a secret session lasting two days (25th–26th April, 1916), in which the House considered the situation; and immediately afterwards a Bill was introduced by Mr. Long which advocated various expedients instead of National Service. Mr. Long had little to say for the Bill, which proposed to enlist time-expired men and boys of eighteen. No one else had a good word for it. Its prospects were hopeless. Mr. Asquith was sent for in haste, and in almost as great haste the Bill was abandoned. Mr. Walsh, on behalf of Labour, in demanding that the Bill should be withdrawn, had urged the Government to insist on the straight thing—to say the necessity has now arisen and must be met. They need not fear the response of the country.

The Government took that sage advice. On 2nd May, 1916, the Prime Minister announced that a new Bill would propose general and immediate compulsion, and the next day this Bill “with respect to military service during the present war” was introduced. It passed rapidly through Parliament, receiving the royal assent on 25th May, and it included within its scope all the unattested married men. It made provision, furthermore, for the transference of Territorials to regular battalions, and it made more stringent provisions with respect to the renewal of exemption certificates. On the day on

which the royal assent was given to the new Military Service Act the King addressed the following message to his people:—

“BUCKINGHAM PALACE,

“May 25th, 1916.

“To enable our country to organize more effectively its military resources in the present great struggle for the cause of civilization, I have, acting on the advice of my Ministers, deemed it necessary to enrol every able-bodied man between the ages of 18 and 41.

“I desire to take this opportunity of expressing to my people my recognition and appreciation of the splendid patriotism and self-sacrifice which they have displayed in raising by voluntary enlistment, since the commencement of the war, no fewer than 5,041,000 men, an effort far surpassing that of any other nation in similar circumstances recorded in history, and one which will be a lasting source of pride to future generations.

“I am confident that the magnificent spirit which has hitherto sustained my people through the trials of this terrible war will inspire them to endure the additional sacrifice now imposed upon them, and that it will, with God’s help, lead us and our Allies to a victory which shall achieve the liberation of Europe.

“GEORGE R.I.”

Thus at last, and not long before he died, Lord Kitchener saw the fruition of his work in massing his armies and in passing the manhood of the nation through their training and discipline. In the early summer of 1916 he had at his command eighty-three divisions, with the prospect of being able to maintain and add to them.

E. S. G.

## CHAPTER VI

### Progress of the Great War

Lord Kitchener's Large View of the War—The Responsibility of Decisions—Second-best Courses—Ancillary Operations—The First Three Months of the Campaign—Lord Kitchener's Speech at the Guildhall, 1914—Neuve Chapelle—Russia's Campaign in the Carpathians—Ypres—Canadians and the Asphyxiating Gas Attack—Germany's Great Blow against Russia on the Dunajec—Munitions—The Long-continued Russian Retreat—Kitchener's "Shot-their-Bolt" Speech—The Gallipoli Expedition—Its Brilliant Beginning and the Subsequent Disappointments—The Decision to evacuate Gallipoli—British and French attack at Loos and in Champagne—The Plight of Serbia and the Salonika Expedition—Mesopotamia and Lord Kitchener's Responsibility—A Clean Balance-sheet in January, 1916—Reorganization of the Head-quarters Staff.

FROM the first, as shown in the previous chapter, Lord Kitchener took a larger view of the war than any of his colleagues. In a letter written by Lord Esher on 8th August, 1915,<sup>1</sup> it was mentioned that every other member of the Ministry thought the war would be over in from three to nine months. He took over a War Office whose officials had studied the defence of the country and the problems arising from it, but who had hardly considered the possibility of sending out of it anything more than a small expeditionary force. It was to the conflict between Lord Kitchener's wider view and the machinery which he found for giving effect to it that the early mistakes of the war arose. But he was not deceived. At the beginning he saw how great the war would be: at the first he was determined that the country should have the armies it got; and he adhered to his plans through all vicissitudes and

<sup>1</sup> The letter was quoted by Commander Carlyon Bellairs in the House of Commons on 31st May, 1916.



through all the accidents of war. Wide as was his outlook, it had continually to embrace fresh occurrences, fresh needs, unforeseen turns of fortune. He was like the watcher of a fire that has taken hold of a heath, and who, having bent his energies to subduing and beating it down in this place or that, sees it break out continually in some new quarter.

There were many who thought that Great Britain's duty was done when the Expeditionary Force had been dispatched. In the tide of war which flowed over Belgium and northern France these ideas were swept away. The fall of Namur, the retreat from Mons, were the guillotine of other hopes. When at length the battle of the Marne, following the struggle of the Grand Couronné, altered the whole character of the war, expectation and hope again revived. In spite of all that had happened by land and sea, optimism was higher in Great Britain in November, 1914, than it had been since the war began, and higher than it was destined to be for many months to come. It was no part of Lord Kitchener's plan to disturb the imperturbability of the public, the advantages of which he recognized, and in the speech which he made at the Guildhall that month he said little of his hopes or apprehension, contenting himself with a eulogy of General Joffre—"not only a great soldier but a great man"—and a warm tribute to the British army, whose reputation had never stood higher. But it is not to be doubted that the ever-growing magnitude, complexity, and implication of our commitments were open to him, and that they confirmed the estimate which, with a flash of genius, he had at once formed.

Genius was his, although it became the fashion of some to deny it to him and to assume that he was nothing but an organizing machine. It has been said of him that his experience of war had been gained only on limited fields; but that is an absurd idea, for the necessities of campaigns are everywhere the same, and success is won, not by sudden de-

cisions on the field of battle, but by having so brought armies on to the field, and so supplied them there, that victory is assured beforehand and is independent of accidents in detail. That had been the character of Lord Kitchener's successes, as it is the key to success in all military history. He had, as the Duke of Wellington said of another great soldier (Marlborough), the gift of strong, cool common sense; and that is the first attribute of military genius.

"The faculty of seeing things as they are," says Mr. St. John Fortescue in a passage that might have been written to describe Lord Kitchener, "swift, true, penetrating insight into the heart of things, undistracted by their outward semblance—this, whether it be the attribute of statesman or general, is genius. And to frame your actions, as a man of action, upon real insight, what does that mean? It means transcendent moral courage, the courage of faith in one's own judgment, the courage to depart from beaten tracks, the courage to brave the disapprobation of those who cannot do without such tracks, the courage to take liberties."

It was Lord Kitchener's responsibility to make decisions, many of them momentous, some of the second-best course—because the best course could not possibly be taken. That selection of courses was forced on all the Allies during the first two years of war, and especially during the first eight or ten months of it, because they were unprepared and the enemy was prepared, and had struck with all the advantage of his organized and correlated preparations behind him. Of the nature of such second-best decisions was the advance through Belgium, or even the ill-fated dispatch of the Naval Brigade to Antwerp. At their best they might have disorganized the German as a piece of grit in the wheels of a ponderous machine may upset its working: at their worst they would delay the German operations, and the gain of time was at this stage of enormous importance to the Allies. It was Kitchener's opinion, as witnessed by Lord Esher, that the French would have to fall back



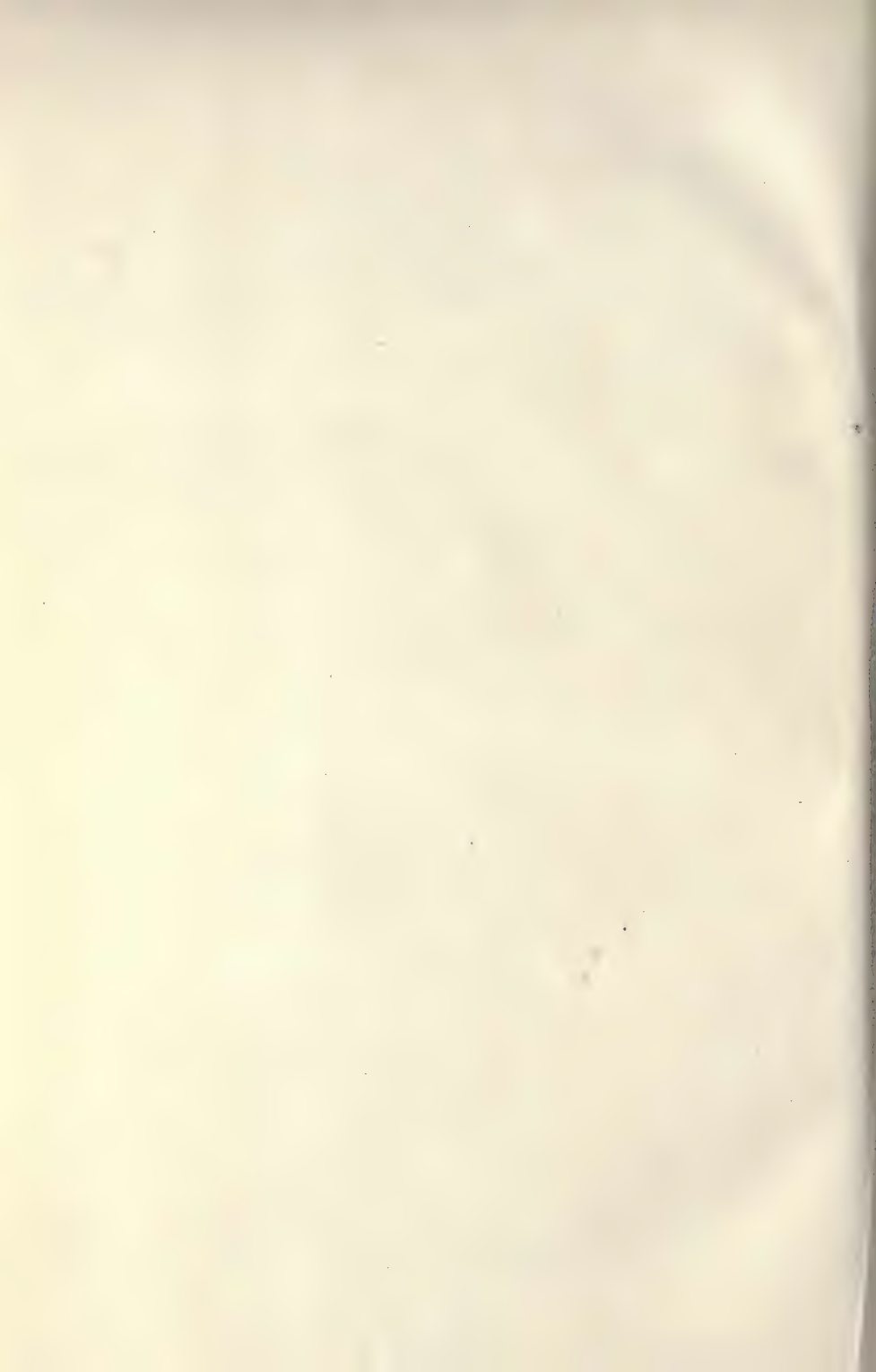
to the line of the Loire, and how real the menace appeared to the French Government may be judged from the removal of the seat of government from Paris to Bordeaux. That catastrophe was averted by the genius of General Joffre, in spite of the "premature deployments" and the too hasty withdrawals of which his famous Army Order afterwards spoke; but no small part of the arrest of the German advance was due to the great delaying actions which were fought by General Foch on the French right at the struggle of the Grand Couronné, and by General Smith-Dorrien with the British divisions on the left.

There were other second-best decisions in which Lord Kitchener was a more responsible adviser than in the course of events in France, where, when once the Expeditionary Force was sent, direct or immediate control passed out of his hands, and events were directed by the men on the spot. No one knew better than Kitchener, who had had long experience of the undesirability of control from a distance—and had once, on the eve of military operations in the Soudan, taken steps to isolate himself from telegraphic interference—that the General commanding must be unhampered by instructions from home; and from the moment when he put aside the generous offer of Sir John French to go to France as Chief of Staff with Lord Kitchener in command, he refrained from anything approaching dictation to the Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Force. When things were going ill with our armies in Flanders, and when, in fact, they were being sacrificed to the mistaken confidence of the politicians—of both parties—who had never believed that they would have to be sent there, it was not Kitchener who raised his voice to blame. His part was not to find fault, but to find remedies. Though during the trial of that battering of British divisions by German armies and Germany's incomparably preponderant machinery, of which Lord Kitchener's successor at the War Office spoke two years





LORD KITCHENER AND LORD ROBERTS



later,<sup>1</sup> there was recrimination, Lord Kitchener took no part in it. In an army there are army politics no less bitter than those in civil life, but history will show that in this period of the British army's history no soldier was ever more completely loyal to his colleagues and subordinates. This loyalty extended to less authoritative commanders than Sir John French, and was applied to those who were responsible for more distant operations.

During the earlier stages of the struggle Great Britain was committed to what were often described as ancillary operations—in Kiao-Chau, in Togoland, in the Cameroons, in East Africa, in Mesopotamia, and finally in the Dardanelles and in Egypt. It was often said that we should abandon these projects and concentrate all our forces and all our powers on the Western front, where alone a decision of the war as a whole could be reached by us. But even before Lord Kitchener's death it was seen that, even if their abandonment had been desirable, it did not lie with us to decide to abandon them. The Cameroons and Togoland lay athwart our trade route to the Cape, a convenient base from which the enemy could have raided our shipping and have linked himself up with German South-West Africa. Kiao-Chau was an equally dangerous naval base. German East Africa—where, even when Lord Kitchener was speaking at the Guildhall in November, 1914, he had learnt of a bad reverse to our local forces and the force sent from India—threatened the traffic on the east side of Africa, as the incident of the *Königsberg* (and the subsequent removal and distribution of her guns among the German troops in East Africa) served to show; and the establishment of a strong German garrison in this part of Africa would ultimately have been a dangerous threat to the Lakes and to the approaches to the Soudan. It might have raised Abyssinia and fanned the ever-smouldering fanaticism of the Arabs into a flame. The

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lloyd George in interview with an American correspondent, 28th September, 1916.



evidences of the widespread ramifications of German intrigue in Africa were made evident afterwards in the revolt of the Senussi, whose activities, when Lord Kitchener wrote his last report on the state of affairs in the Soudan,<sup>1</sup> had been negligible.

The expedition to Mesopotamia, the defence of Egypt, and the heroic attempt of the Dardanelles campaign were all necessitated by the entry of Turkey into the war as an ally of Germany. It may have been that our diplomacy was at fault with regard to Turkey, and that, knowing, as afterwards it was asserted that we did, of Turkey's secret treaty with Germany, we assumed or hoped that Turkey could be induced to refrain from active participation in hostilities against us. The revelations of diplomatic truths are not to be expected in this generation. But Lord Kitchener, as Minister of War, had to deal with facts as he found them, and, with Turkey active and threatening, he had to choose between striking quickly with ineffective forces, and waiting till Turkey was drilled and munitioned by Germany into a yet more dangerous antagonist. The history of the first eighteen months of the war is the history of Great Britain's efforts to do ten men's work with less than one man's powers, and to do it without proper tools. In other words, Lord Kitchener was compelled to make decisions with regard to ancillary expeditions which could only have been profitably undertaken by a military nation with a long history of military training and a plethora of military equipment.

Some months after Lord Kitchener had died, and when some of his labours were coming to fruition on the battle-fields of the Somme, the French premier, M. Briand, said that whatever had been asked of Britain, Britain had never said "No". He may have had in his mind the recollection that from Antwerp to Salonika Lord Kitchener had continually consented to the dispatch of British forces to stop the gaps

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Report on Affairs of Egypt and the Soudan, 1913.*

where the enemy might break through. The decisions to send the men had been powerless often enough to guarantee the success of the enterprise; but in every case it is arguable that had Lord Kitchener refused to run the risk, that refusal might have been more disastrous to the Allied campaign as a whole than his decision to make the sacrifice.

Before the end of 1914 some decisions had been reached that were indeed independent of Lord Kitchener. Antwerp had fallen, the German tide had rolled from Namur past Amiens, and then at Joffre's bidding had rolled back again. The fall of Namur, the retreat from Mons, the battle of the Aisne, the tide-marking battle of the Marne, had become events in history. The long siege on the Western front had begun. The German line on the west extended from the sea north of Nieuport, past Dixmude, east of Ypres and Arras, to a point north of Compiègne. Here it turned at an angle and ran north of the Aisne, and for some distance parallel to it, till it crossed the river and passed Reims on its way to Verdun. Thence it swung south to enclose the great salient of which the apex was St. Mihiel. On the eastern side of the salient the French held Nancy and Lunéville, and the line turned south again from the border of Alsace to the Swiss frontier. The Germans thus held the whole of Belgium except a few square miles of solid ground and the area which the Belgians had devotedly flooded to check the German advance, as well as a considerable area of the richest industrial provinces of northern France. The Allied line consisted of the whole of the French army, the British and Indian expeditionary forces—the decision to use the Indian Expeditionary Force in the face of any possibility of an Indian rising was Lord Kitchener's—and the Belgian army.

On the Eastern front the Russian advance into West Poland had been premature, and had been paid for by the disaster of Tannenberg, which set the bells ringing in Berlin and laid the



foundation of the Hindenburg superstition. As a set-off against this, the Austrians had been severely defeated between Halicz and Lemberg in Galicia, and the Russians had flowed over Galicia past Lemberg and Przemysl, though Przemysl, a besieged town, stood like an island in the flood. The line along which the Russians and the Austro-Germans faced one another ran just inside East Prussia, and thence through Mława to Lipno. Thence diverging slightly to the south-east it went through Plock and along the north bank of the Vistula towards Warsaw, which it approached within thirty miles. Southwards it went to Skierniewice, across the Pilica east of Piskrow and west of Kielce, crossing the upper Vistula about thirty-five miles from Cracow, and so on to the Carpathians. The Germans thus held the greater part of western Poland, whereas the Russians occupied the greater part of the Austrian province of Galicia. In the lesser theatres of war the attempted advance of the Turks, under German leadership and according to German plans, into the region of the Caucasus had been arrested by the indomitable infantry and superior marching of the Russians; and the Austrian incursion into Serbia, temporarily successful, had been violently counter-attacked, the Austrians routed, and Belgrade reoccupied by the Serbians.

The foregoing conditions of the theatre of war, though not treated in such summary fashion, formed the substance of Lord Kitchener's statement on the war to the House of Lords on 6th January, 1915. He had, however, little to add in the statement which was not already known, and his comments were more noticeable for what they left unsaid than for what they said. He pointed out that the operations on the Western front had for some time past resolved themselves into a form of siege warfare, and he announced that the army of Sir John French had been reinforced by a number of Territorial units and by another division which included a Canadian regiment. In the Eastern theatre of war, Lord Kitchener declared that



the German objective in Poland had suffered a severe check—by which he referred to the failure of the frontal plunges at Warsaw, along the line of the lower Vistula and below it. He observed that the great natural difficulties of winter operations in Russia were increased by a faulty line of communications. The Serbian victory over Austria he regarded as one of the most satisfactory military occurrences of December, 1914, putting it, by inference, by the side of the Russian triumph in the Caucasus. He believed that the blow to the Turkish offensive movement in that neighbourhood would have a far-reaching effect on Turkish operations in the Near East.

Lord Kitchener had solid grounds for his prediction. At Sarykamysch the Turkish 9th Army Corps had been annihilated, losing all its guns and 300 officers, and the 10th Corps severely handled. But his forecast was quickly followed by other events which proved how prescient had been his estimate, for in the five days following his speech the Russians smote the 11th Turkish Army Corps as well, capturing 5000 prisoners and most of its supplies. The battered remnants of the Turkish army fell back on Erzeroum. Lord Kitchener was reticent about East Africa. There was little to say of it that was good. Our intelligence service had served us ill, and the Indian army organization had not been happy in the equipment of the expedition. But the Indian army's former chief naturally did not make public these deficiencies, and remarked merely that we were occupying certain strategic points in the region. These were to serve more than a year later as jumping-off places for the campaign which Kitchener's old opponent in northern Cape Colony, General J. C. Smuts, was to conduct to such profit for our arms.

The first six weeks of the year 1915 on the Western front presented the swaying, indeterminate struggle over the line of the trenches, which was for so long to remain the feature of the military situation in the West, and which for nearly two

years neither opponent was able to replace by any more open form of warfare. The French, surprised by the sudden rising of the Aisne in flood at Soissons, suffered an irritating reverse there; they recovered some of the ground by a succession of what were called General Joffre's "nibblings". On the British front the deadlock was interrupted by the glorious but ineffectual dash at Neuve Chapelle, west of Lille, and the counter-attack of the Germans at St. Eloi. Neuve Chapelle was the first lesson in the desperate science of "breaking through". It proved that, though by great bravery and greater sacrifices it was possible to break the enemy's lines, yet that after reaching a certain point the attack lost its momentum, and that the loss of communication by the breakage of telephone wire, and the consequent difficulties of either maintaining cohesion in the attackers or of directing reinforcements to their aid, made such enterprises more costly than any resultant gain from them could justify. Moreover, it showed that even what was then thought an overwhelming artillery preparation did not overwhelm the enemy. Neuve Chapelle was a dear victory. It cost us 15,000 men—wounded, prisoners, or killed. We lost as many men in prisoners as we took.

In the East the Russians continued to prosecute their successes with a vigour unattainable in the West, and during the first three months of 1915 there was a period when they touched their high-water mark, and when the belief in the efficacy of the "steam roller" seemed to be warranted by the events of each succeeding day. At the southern end of their long line they had invaded the Bukovina, and on the 16th of January their advance-guards had seized the Kirlibaba Pass leading into Hungary on the borders of Transylvania. They had to fall back a week later before a concentration of Austrian troops staffed by some German officers, and not until October, 1916, were they in sight of Kirlibaba Pass again. They kept, however, a firm hold on what they had won in the foot-hills of



the Galician Carpathians, and maintained a hold on the northern entries to the passes from the Dukla to the Uszok. The first attempts to make them relinquish their grip on the southern end of their lines took the form of a fierce assault on the northern portion of them. Von Hindenburg, heavily reinforced, advanced from East Prussia through the Masurian Lakes, driving the Russians before him. The Russians were beaten by von Hindenburg's superior knowledge of the district, added to his superior railway communications, which enabled him to concentrate with far greater rapidity than the Russians. The Russians were hampered by inferior artillery and the absence of sufficient transport and supplies. In the Masurian Lakes they were hit almost as hard as at Tannenberg, but the Germans were unable to push home their advantage to a similar completeness. The snow and mud hampered the Russian retreat, but it also hampered the German advance, and by the time the Russian troops had succeeded in taking up their new positions on the Niemen-Bohr line, under the shelter of their own fortresses, the German offensive was spent. More than that, the Russians were able to counter-attack, and a complicated action, which was fought near Przasnysz, resulted in a Russian victory and the definite stoppage of the Germans.

The advance, damaging as it had been to the Russians, had been almost as costly in men to the Germans. What, however, it had cost the Russians was ammunition as well as a large proportion of their diminishing stock of rifles and guns. The same influences were at work in the south. To all appearance the Russians were conducting a hard-fought but progressive campaign in the Carpathians, and its successes were crowned by the fall of Przemysl, the fortress which the Austrian garrison had held for four months. Przemysl fell on 22nd March, 1915, and besides contributing guns, prisoners, and stores to the Russian account, and consolidating the Russian position in Galicia, it released a number of men for further operations in



the Carpathians and elsewhere. A good many of them were employed in the continued attempt to force the passes, and before the eyes of the uninformed visions began to appear of a Russian advance over the Carpathians into Hungary as soon as the winter snows melted. The alternative vision was that of a Russian advance towards Cracow and Silesia. The visions were illusory. The Russian munitionment had been reckoned on the prospect of a short campaign, and Russia had no industrial resources equal to the task of remunitioning her great armies, such as Germany possessed. All this time Russia was expending irreplaceable ammunition, guns, and rifles, while Germany was adding to and expanding hers.

Elsewhere the operations against the Turk had also come to an end, for reasons which were not then perceptible but were in truth associated with ammunition; but the Turks themselves were not in much better case, and their threat to assault the Suez Canal had not powder behind it. In Mesopotamia the first clash of the contending divisions of the Turks and the British force at Basra took place in March.

The summer of 1915 brought a complete alteration in the aspects and prospects of the war. The Germans elected to hold fast their line in the West while striking with all their reserve weight at the Russians in the East. They were well informed about the state of the Russian munitionment, and reckoned on being able to beat the Russians to their knees. Their intentions were concealed by the distribution through their agencies in neutral countries of reports of the massing of troops in Belgium, and by the more effectual mask of vigorous counter-attacks to the tentative offensive of the Allies in the West. The French kept up a continual and rather costly attack on the German positions in Champagne and on the Hartmannsweilerkopf in Alsace during March, and the British were engaged in continued attacks in the region of the Ypres salient during the same period.

It was during the fighting about Ypres that the Germans first made use of asphyxiating gas—at this time a mixture of chlorine and sulphur—and by its use gained a tactical advantage by the temporary collapse of the Allied line where French troops and the Canadians joined. In spite of the gap made in the line the Germans were unable to push their advantage. The Canadians, left “in the air”, swung back in the first rush but did not break, and saved the situation until gradually equilibrium was restored. This attack on the Ypres salient was a deadly thrust, and Great Britain and France owed a great deal to the gallantry of Canada. The occasion marked the beginning of the newer methods of warfare—asphyxiating gas, flammenwerfer, and poison shells—initiated by the Germans. Lord Kitchener’s private comment on it was that the Germans were “dirty fighters”. His subsequent public condemnation of methods which had brought an “indelible stain” on German arms was no less severe. Throughout the rest of the summer of 1915 there was much fierce and inconclusive fighting from the north of Arras, especially about Souchez, to Alsace. Some of the fiercest was in the Argonne, where the Crown Prince made a determined but ineffectual assault on the French positions.

Meantime the summit of the Russian offensive on the South-eastern front had been reached about the middle of April, 1915. They had taken 70,000 Austrian prisoners in the Carpathians, and by the beginning of the last week in April the Lupkow and Uszok passes seemed to be in their grasp. Then at the beginning of May the storm burst. The Russians had known that a great German concentration was taking place at that southern portion of their lines where they curved to the Upper Vistula and the Carpathians. The place where the blow was expected was that denoted by the line of the Dunajec, or Dunajetz, River, held by the forces under General Radko Dimitrieff, or perhaps a little farther north;



and they believed that by their ability to concentrate men behind the triple line of entrenched positions they could hold them. But the Germans had solved the problem of breaking through entrenchments. It was by weight of heavy gun-fire and by high-explosive shells. They had also learnt from the failures on both sides on the Western front that it was fruitless to pierce a line on a small front. So von Falkenhayn had massed 2000 guns, and had entrusted General Mackensen with the task of using these as the hammer-head of a battering-ram while breaking through on a forty-mile front. This battering-ram burst through the Russian lines where there were men who were magnificent fighters when fighting on equal terms, but who now, in a phrase used by Lord Kitchener to one of his civilian colleagues at the War Office, were "fighting the Germans with their fists". The Germans had the heavy guns; the Russians were short even of rifles.

At the same time that Mackensen was bursting his way through to the San, an attack was made by von Hindenburg in the north on the Baltic provinces of Russia. In Great Britain the gravity of the situation was not understood by the public—whom the Press Bureau had decided must not be "unduly depressed"—for it seemed impossible that the Russians, whose annals for weeks past had been marked by successful advances, should now be involved in a disastrous retirement. Lord Kitchener guessed the truth, but even he at that moment, while aware that the Russians had received a "severe set-back"—the phrase is his own—could not determine the extent of it. His summary in the House of Lords on 18th May was extremely reserved. After desperate resistance to the Austro-German advance, he said, the Russians were now holding a strong line from the Eastern Carpathians to the Vistula, with Przemyśl as the pivot.

His comments on the situation on the Western front were almost equally non-committal. He anticipated important results



from the British advance along the Aubers ridge and the French offensive south of La Bassée. He had few observations to offer either about the Gallipoli campaign, which was now in slow and uncertain progress after its vigorous beginning, or about Mesopotamia, but he spoke warmly of General Louis Botha's steady progress in German South-West Africa. What was most marked in his periodical summary was his statement about the production of high-explosive shells. He imputed no blame to anybody, though others laid the fault at the doors of the manufacturers who had accepted contracts without fulfilling them. Lord Kitchener's only comment was that the demands on the manufacturers had been unprecedented and unlimited. "I am confident", he added, "that in the very near future we shall be in a satisfactory position with regard to these shells." And it was the truth that the orders were placed and the production advanced by the abused War Office Ordnance Department before the Munitions Ministry was created to keep up the supply. Lord Kitchener added some expressions about the use of poisonous gases by the enemy. It was, he said, a diabolical practice, but unless our men met the enemy "on his own ground" they would be under an enormous and unjustifiable disadvantage. The British and French Governments felt, therefore, that the Allied troops "must be adequately protected by the employment of similar methods". In the course of his survey Lord Kitchener paid a high tribute to the Canadians for their stand at Ypres against the enemy's poisonous fumes, "an ordeal to try the qualities of the finest army in the world". Their losses and those of the whole army had been heavy, "but the spirit and *moral* of our troops have never been higher than at the present moment".

With regard to shells and guns Lord Kitchener was not slow to read the lesson of the Russian retirement. Eyes far less keen than his must have noted it. However brave the

Russians might be, however heroically they might prolong their resistance, the German armament slowly but surely blasted them out of their positions. They could not long hold the line on the San, and Przemysl, the capture of which had been gratefully hailed as a presage of their success so short a time before, fell into the hands of the Germans on 3rd June, 1915. While Mackensen with his phalanx drove directly at the Russian centre in Galicia, and von Buelow, under von Hindenburg's direction, was advancing far to the north on Russia's Baltic provinces, von Linsingen was undermining the Russian positions in the plain of the Dniester between the river and the Carpathians. For some time the struggle between the opponents swayed in Galicia: von Mackensen making his way slowly against the Russians because of the difficulties of bringing up his heavy guns and the shells for them, and the Russians counter-attacking von Linsingen with success. But the Germans were not to be stalled off from Lemberg, which Boehm-Ermolli, the Austrian general, entered on the 22nd of June.

From this point the German strategy developed in a new phase. Instead of pushing back the Russian armies still farther east, Mackensen diverted his course to the north, supported by an Austrian army under the Archduke Ferdinand. The intention soon became clear. The Russian armies of the south, whose touch with those of the north was maintained by the Lublin-Cholm railway, were to be isolated by cutting the railway in front of the Pinsk marshes. The second part of a plan, even more far-reaching, was that in the north von Hindenburg should push forward to cut the line between Petrograd and Warsaw, and thus make of Warsaw and the armies defending it a vast salient which the Hindenburg group of armies would enclose on the northern arc, while those of the Mackensen group would encircle it on the south. The salients created about Przemysl and Lemberg were in



short to be repeated on a grandiose scale. The story of the extent to which this strategy was profitably prosecuted, and of the reasons why it stopped short of complete success, belong to the history of the war. Their relation to the biography of Lord Kitchener is derived from the extent to which perforce they influenced his decisions. The decisive incidents in the German advance on Warsaw were the capture of the Lublin-Cholm Railway in the south, and the difficult storming of the line of the River Narew in the north. Fortresses like Kovno, and in a lesser sense Grodno and Novo Georgievsk, delayed the German advance, but the Grand-Duke Nicholas, then commanding the Russian forces, cherished no illusions, and before the fortresses had fallen had determined to sacrifice Warsaw to save his armies. It was a great decision, and the steady retreat of the Russians throughout these weeks and months of the long summer of 1915 will rank as one of the great achievements of military history. The crowning point of it was the withdrawal from the precarious positions about Vilna, on the main line to Petrograd. Here the Germans had striven to create a situation in which the Russian retreating forces would be enclosed in a salient, and a "hammer-blow" attempt was made by the great hammer-head General von Hindenburg to cut the Russian line of retreat east of Vilna with a force of 50,000 cavalry. It failed, and by 18th September, 1915, the last serious risk of encirclement which the Russians had run was over.

The true estimate of the position of our Allies had been made in a review of the military situation which Lord Kitchener had addressed to the House of Lords three days earlier (15th September). He had paid a warm tribute to the fighting qualities of the Russian soldiers, and added that the Russian army still remained intact as a fighting force. The Germans, he added, appeared to have "shot their bolt" on the Eastern front. While they had prevailed by sheer weight of guns,



and at an immense cost to themselves, they had gained nothing but barren territory and empty fortresses; their strategy had clearly failed, and the victories they claimed might only prove to be defeats in disguise.

Even in Great Britain Lord Kitchener's opinion that the Germans "had shot their bolt" was received with some surprise, and one of the friendliest of military critics observed only that it was to be hoped that Lord Kitchener was right. But in Berlin the utterance was received with a scorn that amounted to fury. Major Moraht, the temperate expert of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, acidly observed that Lord Kitchener was sometimes rashly moved to make pronouncements of this nature, and these showed of what little value were his military knowledge and judgment. But events proved Lord Kitchener right. The Germans went no farther then; except in local operations they never did go any farther; and they found themselves condemned to hold a preposterously long line against an enemy who were able ultimately to show that it was the Russians, and not the Germans or Austrians, who alone could change it.

Of less moment to the greater issues of the war, but of closer interest to the nation, were the operations in the Gallipoli Peninsula. The advantages and the gains to be derived from forcing the Dardanelles were so evident that no one could help seeing them—certainly not the astute German enemy. It seemed in the early months of 1915 that a bold attempt to seize this passage might succeed, and at one blow open the way to transporting wheat and grain from the Russian Black Sea ports, and of furnishing Russia more speedily with the guns and shells of which she stood so greatly in need. In the Cabinet one minister, Mr. Winston Churchill, never ceased to urge the project; and it had the enthusiastic support of the Grand Duke Nicholas.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Churchill at first inclined

<sup>1</sup> Speech by Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons, 2nd November, 1915.

to believe that the Narrows of the Dardanelles could be rushed by a naval attack. Naval authorities were by no means convinced that it was possible; and Lord Fisher was also doubtful—Mr. Asquith said that “some doubt and hesitation had existed in the mind of Lord Fisher”; and since Lord Fisher did not veto the adventure, which had also the approval of the admiral on the spot and the French Admiralty, it may be assumed that this characterization of Lord Fisher’s attitude was adequate. It took some time to show that naval guns could not reduce the forts of the Narrows. The first long-range attack (in which the latest type of super-Dreadnought, the *Queen Elizabeth*, assisted) was made on 19th February, 1915; the last was made on 18th March of the same year by the ships of the combined French and British fleets. In the intervening four weeks the British public had hopefully believed that success could be attained, and had read with pride of the work of the mine-sweepers preparing for the grand attack. But in the meantime the Turks, with the assistance of German engineers, had been steadily fortifying their works, and had accumulated mines and coast-defence torpedoes. The result of the attack of 18th March was a repulse which was mitigated only by the gallantry of those who suffered most by it. The *Irresistible* and *Orion*, struck by mines, were lost, though most of the crews were saved; the French battleship *Bouvet* was sunk with nearly all her crew in three minutes. The Narrows were, for all practical purposes, unscathed.

It was an unhappy omen for the campaign which was to follow; but the campaign had a basis of logic, for it was now clear that, if the Dardanelles forts were to be reduced, a combined operation by land and sea must be undertaken to reduce them. This was the operation which Lord Kitchener was called upon to sanction. He did sanction it—on the principle asserted by Clausewitz that positive success can only be gained by positive measures planned with a view to a decision, and that there



is no great gain to be won in war except by risking a great stake and imperturbably abiding by the result. Gallipoli was a great stake, but we could not take it because we had not enough to lay on the table. We had men and heroism, but we had not cohesion—and we had not the metal. Neither in guns nor in shells was the expedition sufficiently equipped.

Lord Kitchener selected his old Chief of Staff in South Africa, Sir Ian Hamilton, for the command, and he arrived with his Staff at the Island of Tenedos on 17th March, 1915, in time to witness the amphibious battle between warships and fortresses, which took place the following day. He was at once convinced that a large force would be required to furnish efficient co-operation with the fleet, and he sent all his transports to Egypt, in order that the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force might be reconstituted for its task. General D'Amade, of the French Expeditionary Force, did likewise. The rearrangements were not completed till the third week in April, and the landing was begun on the morning of 25th April. It was an event which will perhaps always be known as the "landing of the five beaches", and it was effected with a gallantry which was proof against the hurricane fire poured on the Expeditionary Force by the securely-entrenched Turks. The landing on that day of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was an event which added a new record to our military history and a new name to our tongue: "Anzac".

The general advance was begun on the morning of the 28th, but it was soon discovered that the peninsula was a network of barbed-wire entanglements and entrenchments which presented insuperable obstacles to sustained progress by forces of the numbers and armament which Sir Ian Hamilton had at his disposal. In short, all advantage of surprise had long since vanished; the Turks and Germans had fortified the peninsula with every device that engineering ingenuity could recommend, and it is probable that had the expedition been accelerated the



same state of things would have been found. The Greeks, it is true, suggested that the strategic plan of the attack on Gallipoli had been wrongly conceived, and that they had a better one. But not much confidence is to be placed in any assertion of the Greek Head-quarters Staff, and there is little to show that if we had followed any plan of theirs our fortunes would have been improved thereby.

A story is told of Sir Ian Hamilton which is true, and correctly sums up the situation. He had sent a dispatch to Whitehall in which he asked for reinforcements and for more munitions. An unofficial reply which accompanied the official response from Head-quarters told him that he would probably get the reinforcements in men, "but", continued his friendly correspondent, "don't ask for more munitions; you might as well ask for the moon". To which Sir Ian Hamilton responded in the same vein: "If you don't send me the moon, you can't expect me to give you the Crescent!"

Properly regarded, the story of the Dardanelles Expedition is one which revealed from first to last that want of equipment which the enemy had—fortunately for Britain—never fully exploited on the Western front. In the searching glare of the Gallipoli terrain the lack stood exposed. We had men; we had in the Anzacs, the Lowlanders of Scotland, the stout East Lancashires, and the Naval Division, some of the bravest troops in the world; and we can ever recall with pride the deeds of the famous Twenty-ninth Division, as well as of the gallant Indian contingents. But we had not then the guns, we had not the shells, we had not the experience and co-ordination, and when the pinch came in the attempted surprise at Suvla Bay and its failure, we had not the General Staff for such work as we were attempting.

The expedition cannot be written down an unmitigated failure; it beat back every Turkish attempt to drive it into the sea; it could always advance—and did—at a price; and it

pinned to the Peninsula the best fighting material of Turkey, to the great advantage, both then and thereafter, of the Russian Caucasus army, which was aiming at Erzeroum. According to Mr. Asquith, we continually detained a force of 200,000 Turks in front of our positions. During the summer of 1915 the nation waited patiently for good news from the Dardanelles, hoping against hope even after the Suvla Bay failure on 6th August. By the end of September the fighting had resumed the form of trench-work, tedious, dangerous, and wearing to the spirit of any troops in the trying conditions of the peninsula, where heat and flies and vermin were more unbearable than the accurate shrapnel thrown by some of the Turco-German batteries. An epidemic of dysentery broke out—it was imported from Egypt—and the measures to cope with it were taken only after it had got a good start. In short, the expedition had been undertaken in a hurry, and if it could have succeeded at the first rush all would have been well. But the longer it stayed the greater the obstacles became which it had to surmount, and the higher the price for delay. When the autumn approached, bringing with it the presage of storms that would make landing impossible for days together at the beaches in the winter, a new decision had to be taken. Was it worth our while to go on losing our men by dribblets for the sake of holding the Turks in Gallipoli? If we did hold on, was there any prospect that we could at last pluck success out of failure? Or could we make better use of the men elsewhere?

These questions were anxiously debated by the inner war council of the Cabinet. Sir Ian Hamilton, who, in the opinion even of those who criticized him, had had an impossible task from the beginning, wished to make another attempt, and believed that he could succeed with an additional army corps. But the plain truth is that there was no army corps to spare; and Lord Kitchener had no illusions left about the probable



fate of drafts sent out as reinforcements. A new method, a new point of attack, a compact and complete army with which to undertake the enterprise were all necessary; and it was clear that if we had these to send there were other places besides the Gallipoli Peninsula where they might be imperatively called for. The Russian retreat in Galicia and Poland had completely altered the strategic situation, and had left more than one Allied flank in the air. In April, 1915, when the Russian enterprise was prospering, it might have been proper to take risks to win the prize of Gallipoli; in the following autumn the risks were too great. The men and munitions expended on another effort were needed for the Allied offensive on the Western front and elsewhere. There was yet another consideration. Sir Ian Hamilton was gravely apprehensive about the cost in life of removing the expedition from the peninsula under the Turkish guns. He thought that under a determined Turkish attack we might lose 30,000 men. Sir Charles Monro, who succeeded to the command on Sir Ian Hamilton's return to England in the middle of October, believed that we might get out with a loss of 5000. The lesser estimate was serious enough, and the question had to be answered whether it was better to incur these losses and withdraw from Gallipoli in the shadow of misfortune, unredeemed except by the memories of ineffectual heroism and resource, or whether it would be possible to hang on in the hope of better fortune. The difficulty of defining better fortune—how it could befall, or what shape it could take, perhaps clarified Lord Kitchener's resolution. At any rate, after consultation with Mr. Asquith, Lord Kitchener (as described in the preceding chapter) went to Gallipoli to survey the situation for himself and to confer with the men on the spot.

A recollection of his journey has been contributed by Lord Esher.<sup>1</sup> The suggestion that Lord Kitchener should go to

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Post*, 25th September, 1916.



Gallipoli was made at the War Council on a Thursday morning, and the same evening he left for France. While in Paris he discussed his projects, hopes, and fears with a friend. The suggestion was made that he should be accompanied by a French officer, Colonel Girodon, who had returned to France from Gallipoli a few days earlier, and whose talents and sobriety of judgment qualified him for a high place in Lord Kitchener's confidence. On this Friday afternoon he was hard to find, for he was glad to be back in Paris, and was spending his holiday gaily with some of his young family. But Lord Kitchener and his friend found him about five o'clock, and for an hour Colonel Girodon and Lord Kitchener talked together in a small sitting-room on the top floor of the British Embassy. When Girodon left him Lord Kitchener said: "You will meet me at the station at eight". "But, M. le Maréchal, I must get permission from my chiefs." "You will not be late: eight o'clock," was all that Lord Kitchener said.

Characteristic of the man was it not? It was characteristic of Girodon too. There are only two left of the Staff which Lord Kitchener took with him to Gallipoli, for Colonel Girodon, while commanding a French division, was killed at the Somme during September, 1916; but "those two", wrote Lord Esher, "will remember how faithfully he served and how devotedly his full knowledge of the situation at Gallipoli and his trained military judgment were placed at the service of his chief".

Lord Kitchener went to Gallipoli, stayed there a few days, and, as we have seen, decided that the expedition was to be wound up. The withdrawal from Suvla Bay and Anzac took place on the night of 18th-19th December, 1915. The Turks were aware that the withdrawal was contemplated, but the measures taken to deceive them as to the exact day and hour were successful. They made no attack; the troops were

Lord Kitchener



Official photograph

**LORD KITCHENER'S PERSONAL VISIT TO GALLIPOLI**

Examining the position from the "Anzac" trenches, close to the Turkish lines





gone and the abandoned stores were flaming to the sky in a funeral pyre before they recognized that the moment was past. Not a life was lost in executing what had been regarded as an operation of the utmost danger; only three men were wounded, and six guns left behind. Other troops remained in occupation of the Sedd-el-Bahr point of the peninsula till 7th January, 1916, and an impression was circulated that the Allies would, at any rate, hold on here. Lord Kitchener's decision had been otherwise, and the withdrawal was delayed only till transports were available. Again the Turks were misled. They attacked on 7th January, 1916, prematurely, and found the Allied trenches ready to give them still a warm reception. Puzzled, they drew off, and the same night the embarkation of the troops began. It was continued without opposition on the 8th, and by four o'clock in the morning of the 9th of January not a British or French soldier remained. The only losses the Allies sustained were in repelling the attack on the 7th.

"This operation," said Mr. Asquith, in alluding to it in the House of Commons, "taken in conjunction with the earlier retirement from Suvla and Anzac, is, I believe, without a parallel in military or naval history. That it should have been carried through with no appreciable loss, in view of the vast amount of material and the personnel involved, is an achievement of which all concerned, commanding officers, officers, and men in both services, may well be proud. It deserves, and I am sure will receive, the profound gratitude of the King and the country, and will take an imperishable place in our national history."

It may be so; and that is perhaps the right way in which to regard an enterprise the failure of which it was useless to lament. As an expedition it cost us 115,000 casualties, with little that was obvious on the asset side except the immortal memory of the many deeds of valour done in the attempt to accomplish an impossible task. But the expedition had its value, and its place in the evolution of the struggle; and some

of those who had the greatest reason to deplore its losses—the Australians and the New Zealanders—taught a splendid lesson to those who would criticize it by saying that Australia desired no enquiry into its conduct, but preferred that the examination should be deferred till the end of the war.

While the Russians were enduring the blows of the hammer in the East, the Allies in the West had been accumulating munitions in preparation for a counter-stroke in the West. It was impossible for them to launch it during the summer, and the month of September, which was chosen for it, was probably premature. Not then had the British army attained its full strength; it had not then enough munitions; it had not yet purchased the necessary experience of handling large forces in the novel conditions of siege warfare. On 25th September, 1915, a great battle began which temporarily broke the German line in two places. The British attack took place south of the La Bassée Canal to the east of Grenay and Vermelles, in conjunction with a French attack on their right on the Vimy ridge. The enemy trenches were captured on a five-mile front, and the lines penetrated in some places to a depth of two and a half miles; the captures included the village of Loos and part of Hulluch, and the Hohenzollern and Kaiser Wilhelm redoubts were stormed.

Simultaneously a greater and an independent attack was launched by the French in Champagne on a front of fifteen miles. On the evening of the 27th the German first line had gone and the French stood on a wide front before the second line of German defences, having repulsed counter-attacks with heavy loss. The British assault had taken 3000 prisoners: the French captured 23,000 Germans and 121 guns. But, striking as was the French triumph, both absolutely and in comparison with that won by the British, it was almost equally unproductive in the larger sense. Both attacks came to an end by loss of momentum by the beginning of October, and



though by virtue of their preliminary success the attackers continued to make prisoners until the second week of October, it had become clear that this great autumn offence had not succeeded in arresting or altering the plans of the German Higher Command, and had certainly failed to break through the German fortress lines in the West in any effective-fashion. The Germans were able to stop the gaps by bringing up reinforcements before the attackers could make any use of the gaps to discomfit the enemy further. Both attacks had been very costly, that of the British at Hulluch and Loos relatively much more so than the French assault in Champagne, and both Allies, though they held the greater part of their gains successfully, received proof in October that the German ability to counter-attack remained. The Germans continued to attack the French violently during November in pursuit of the strategy by which then and in the following year they hoped to drain the French resources.

At the end of October, 1915, General Joffre came over to England and attended a War Council, at which Lord Kitchener, together with Mr. Asquith, the Minister of Munitions, Mr. Balfour, and various British and French Staff officers were present. The purport of his visit was fairly evident. It was to arrive at an understanding as to what share Great Britain and France were to take in the Serbian campaign. Russia, as already has been said, had by her involuntary retirement left more than one flank of the Allies in the air. At the end of September it was not clear whether the Central Powers would begin an attack on the grand scale on the Allies in the West; whether they would turn their attention to Italy, who, since her entry into the war, 23rd May, had captured a number of Austrian prisoners and had immobilized a great number of Austrian troops, but had otherwise been able to do little more than consolidate her hard-won positions; or whether, finally, they would turn their attention to devastating Serbia. It soon



became clear that, with the treacherous aid of Bulgaria, and with what appeared strangely like the acquiescence of Greece, Germany and Austria were bent on the destruction of Serbia. By this means the Central Empires would join up through Bulgaria with Greece, thus achieving results of great political as well as strategical advantage.

The decision before the Allies was whether and how they could help Serbia. Through France and through Great Britain there was a great amount of sympathy with this brave and suffering people, but many soldiers and some statesmen of both countries believed that it was impossible to render them effective aid. Lord Kitchener's Head-quarters Staff—taught by the drain of our other subsidiary campaigns, and especially by the moral to which the Dardanelles pointed, of sending insufficient forces—were opposed to the dispatch of a new expedition. In France, M. Delcassé, the Foreign Minister, resigned rather than be a party to denuding the French line in the west. But in both countries there were soldiers, and General Joffre was among them, who thought that for honour's sake we ought to strike a blow for Serbia. Joffre convinced Lord Kitchener, and a joint expedition was sent to Salonika, and from Salonika up the Vardar valley, in an effort to join hands with the Serbian army falling back towards Macedonia under the direct pressure of Mackensen with Austro-German forces, and of two Bulgarian armies on the eastern flank. The junction was never effected, and the Serbians were driven to make their escape from Serbia through the rugged and devious mountain paths of Albania and Montenegro. They struggled to the coast and were assembled subsequently in Corfu. Meanwhile General Sarrail's force had to conduct their fighting retreat, aided by the British as an eastern flank rear-guard at Lake Doiran. But the Franco-British forces reached Salonika in safety, and securely entrenched themselves there. In Salonika they possessed an invaluable base for future operations, and

were subsequently joined there by the reconstituted remnants of the Serbian army.

The evacuation of Gallipoli reacted on other campaigns in the East. It set free Turkish troops for an attack, or for the threat of it, on the Suez Canal; and it put a different complexion on the operations which, early in the war, had been undertaken by us at the head of the Persian Gulf and in Mesopotamia. While the siege of the Dardanelles was in progress the British operations in the Persian Gulf went well. They had been undertaken as a necessary part of our Farther East strategy. The Persian Gulf is continuously patrolled by British naval units, and it was necessary to seize the chief ports to protect our interests; to assure the safety of the oil-wells; and in general to assert our position there. Concerning these necessities there is no dispute; the question which arose was whether, having asserted our position, we should endeavour to better it by an advance from Basra up the Tigris and Euphrates into Mesopotamia. It is easy to believe that Lord Kitchener did not favour any considerable operations here. He had examined the conditions and the military needs of protecting or occupying the Persian Gulf hinterland while he had been Commander-in-Chief in India. When the question of the partition of spheres of influence in Persia, between Russia and Great Britain, had arisen some nine or ten years before, the sphere of influence allotted to Great Britain was, by his advice, a small one. His decision was hotly assailed at the time by Lord Curzon, who maintained that Great Britain had only the husk, while Russia had the kernel. But Lord Kitchener's opinion had been based on military considerations. He could not undertake to hold or defend larger areas than Seistan and Persian Mekran with the expeditionary forces at the disposal of the Indian army. If the Indian army was also to be responsible for the defence of the lands at the head of the Persian Gulf, then he held that the army must be increased.



By his advice, as already mentioned, a large component of the Indian army had been brought to the Western front, and though, with no North-Western Frontier to hold in strength, India had forces at its disposal, he was still unwilling to commit himself to a large Mesopotamian expedition. But the deceptive unpreparedness of the Turks in Mesopotamia during the greater part of 1915 involved the leaders of the expedition in tasks which their forces were not strong enough to prosecute. During the spring of 1915 the Turks were invariably defeated; and after the heat of summer was over, and supplies and transport had been accumulated, the expedition, which was under the general command of Sir John Nixon, proceeded with the utmost confidence up the Tigris. At this time the enthusiasm of the officers of the Expeditionary Force had communicated itself to Downing Street, if it had not altogether convinced Whitehall, and in a period when there were few military successes to cheer civilians, those which were reported from the Persian Gulf were warmly welcomed.

On 27th September, 1915, General Townshend, who was in command of the advanced division of the force, reached a point about seven miles below Kut-el-Amara, where he found the Turks strongly entrenched on both banks of the Tigris. He attacked next day, driving out the Turkish forces, which numbered between 7000 and 8000 regular troops, under the command of Nasr-el-Din Pasha, and capturing some 1700 prisoners. The defences from which the Turks had been driven were very strong. After the occupation of Kut-el-Amara little was heard of the expedition till 24th November, when it was announced that two days before General Townshend had reached Ctesiphon, eighteen miles from Bagdad, and three or four miles from the Tigris. A severe action was fought, which went first in Townshend's favour and resulted in a Turkish retreat and the capture of Turkish prisoners. But Townshend was quickly made aware that the Turks were being strongly



reinforced, and had no option but to retreat southwards, taking his wounded and prisoners with him, and fighting rear-guard actions as he went. (His casualties were 4567 out of his small army, and he had captured 1350 prisoners.) On 3rd December, 1915, he reached Kut-el-Amara again, and entrenched himself, while the Turks sat down with the clear intention of besieging him. What had happened was the expected, though we had hoped for the unexpected—the Turks, knowing as well as we did the prestige associated with the retention or capture of Bagdad, had determined to strain every nerve to keep it. In this effort they could count on every co-operation which it was possible for their German allies to render; and they had the advantage of better communications than ours. The railway was completed nearly to Bagdad, and Meissner Pasha was being supplied as quickly as possible with the materials to complete it. The slackening of the British efforts in Gallipoli had released Turkish troops; the opening up of the through route by Belgrade and Sofia to Constantinople had given opportunity for abundant remunitioning.

The effects were quickly seen. We sent up reinforcements to relieve Townshend, but the Turks could reinforce themselves faster, and established themselves strongly on the Es-Sin and other positions down river from the loop in which Kut stands. General Aylmer fought two successful actions in January, 1916, and had one failure. In describing the situation in the House of Lords on 15th February, Lord Kitchener said that General Aylmer had found the Turkish position too strong to be forced with the troops under his command, and was awaiting reinforcements before making a further advance to join General Townshend. It was officially said, though not by Lord Kitchener, that the object of General Aylmer was not to bring Townshend's force away from Kut, but to help it to retain hold of the position. General Nixon, retiring on account of ill-health, had been succeeded by Sir Percy Lake. It

was at this point that General Aylmer made a renewed attempt to "join" the beleaguered force; but the night march which inaugurated the attempt was a melancholy failure, and the *communiqués* now dropped the pretence of holding the mastery of the situation, and began frankly to speak of the difficulties, not of joining, but of relieving General Townshend. By the middle of April the besieged force was in a precarious condition, and though General Gorringe, who had succeeded General Aylmer, had driven the Turks out of part of their entrenchments, he could not get past the Sanna-I-Yat defences (south of Es-Sin), and an outflanking manœuvre by General Keary, though pressed with the greatest resolution, failed to stem a heavy counter-attack, directed from Es-Sin, by the Turks. The end came when the last attempt, on 24th April, to succour General Townshend by sending him provisions by barge had failed. On Saturday, 29th April, 1916, the following announcement was made by the War Office:—

"After a resistance protracted for 143 days and conducted with a gallantry and fortitude that will be for ever memorable, General Townshend has been compelled by the final exhaustion of his supplies to surrender".

Lord Kitchener can never have issued a report which gave him so much regret: and though the country received the news of the disaster with grim composure, the blow was a hard one to bear. The disappointment found expression in many attempts to find a scapegoat. General Nixon was blamed for the misplaced confidence with which he had sent General Townshend with 15,000 men to attack the Turks entrenched at Ctesiphon; Lord Kitchener was blamed for having been misled by the confidence of his subordinates; the Indian Government was blamed for its failure to furnish proper transport; the Cabinet was blamed for allowing the Indian Government to conduct as a subsidiary campaign an operation



which was of capital importance. More recondite critics endeavoured to show that the failure of the Indian Government arose from the breakdown of the Indian army system, which was not fitted to enable the responsible military administrators to maintain, equip, and transport an expeditionary force in addition to their other responsibilities.

These accusations and inferences it is impossible to examine, because there is no sufficient information at present on which to base an enquiry, nor will any information of value be available till the war is ended. This much alone it is necessary to say: that in war it is not always possible to take the best course, and the course that is known to be dangerous and full of risk has sometimes to be adopted. If it were possible never to make mistakes there would be no wars, because the results of them would always be mathematically certain. In the Great World War, in which Lord Kitchener ensured for Great Britain by his commanding judgment and preliminary action the forces which alone could win her the victory, the mistakes were certain to be made, because continually the generals and the soldiers they commanded had to attempt the impossible. It was one of the penalties of our position at the beginning of the war. But the most heroic attempt to perform the impossible was that made by Lord Kitchener himself when he set out to improvise armies out of a nation not schooled to arms; and, as he made the impossible possible, it is unnecessary, and at the moment foolish, to question whether his achievement was or was not free from errors and mistakes in detail.

With the exception of the Mesopotamia commitment, the year 1916, so far as Great Britain was concerned, began with something approaching a clean sheet. In the Cameroons the forces of Brigadier-General Cunliffe and Major-General Dobell had swept the colony clear of Germans; in Uganda Major-General Tighe held back the Germans in East Africa while



the South African troops, with whom General J. C. Smuts was to win his first campaign, were beginning to arrive at Mombasa; German South-West Africa had been made British by General Louis Botha. The outlook was improving. We had two and a half million men in the field, most of them called there by Lord Kitchener, and it could be foreseen that soon our belligerent power would make itself felt by land and by sea. But the time of preparation was not yet at an end; we had learnt by bitter losses the cost of offensive actions undertaken prematurely—the armies had to be trained, recuperation and refitment were essential. The army and the nation were learning patience in a hard school, but in the early months of 1916, when it seemed that the period of waiting would never be broken, ceaseless work was in progress. Towards the close of 1915 a conference was held at Calais between Mr. Asquith, Lord Kitchener, and Mr. Balfour, with their naval and military advisers on the one hand, and M. Briand, General Gallieni (the French War Minister), and Admiral Lacazo on the other. The day before this conference a change was announced in the position of General Joffre. It had been generally perceived that the Germans derived a great advantage over the Allies by reason of the undivided control of the German Great General Staff. Accordingly it was announced (3rd December) that a new post had been created in France entitled "Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies". To this post General Joffre was appointed, thereby assuming command not only of the French armies in France but of the Salonika expedition. The change in the French Higher Command was followed by a change in the British Command. Sir John French<sup>1</sup> relinquished, at his own request, the command of the British Expeditionary Force, and was succeeded by Sir Douglas Haig. Lieutenant-General

<sup>1</sup> Sir John French was created Viscount French of Ypres, and assumed command of the troops stationed in the United Kingdom.

Sir William Robertson, hitherto Chief of the General Staff to the Expeditionary Force, came to Whitehall as Chief of the Imperial General Staff. There were other changes in the commands, but the last-named was the most important, because it gave to Lord Kitchener a Chief of Staff, and afforded him more time for the performance of the arduous work proper to his own office. When Lord Kitchener accepted the office of Secretary of State for War in August, 1914, the Department of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was without executive responsibility, the head of the department and his subordinates being thinkers, planners, and organizers, but in no sense directors. The Adjutant-General issued his orders in the name of the Army Council, and so did the Quartermaster-General, while the Chief of Staff, though nominally First Military Member of the War Council, had neither authority nor responsibility. It thus happened that Lord Kitchener became his own Chief of Staff, and during the first eighteen months of the war tacked on to his duties as such those of a Cabinet minister responsible to Parliament. Under the new arrangement Lord Kitchener conveyed the decisions of the Government, of which he was the chief military adviser, to the Chief of Staff, and then left him a free hand to carry out those orders in conformity with his own military judgment. Under this procedure the post of Chief of the Imperial General Staff became similar to that in the German Great General Staff, except that Sir William Robertson was responsible to Lord Kitchener, and through him to the Cabinet, instead of being responsible, as von Falkenhayn and his successor, von Hindenburg, were, to the Sovereign.

With this alteration and devolution of duties the process of co-ordinating the forces and efforts of the Allies were steadily pushed forward. They could only go as fast or as well as circumstances would allow, especially as the circumstances were in part dictated by the movements of the enemy.



The German Higher Command were naturally aware of the hope and intention of the Allies to secure unity of command and direction; they attempted to frustrate it by striking hammer-blows at the Allies in turn. The first of these blows was the great attack on Verdun, which in striking power and in weight of artillery surpassed the great effort which had wrecked the Russian lines in the preceding year, and had put the Russian armies out of action for an indefinite period—indefinite in a sense which subsequently proved disastrous to the German hopes of 1916.

The great blow at Verdun was a failure. It failed through the heroic resistance of France, but to Great Britain France accorded her thanks for the assistance which Kitchener's armies gave to her in taking over part of the long, hardly-pressed line in France during the months of March and April, in 1916. Next in importance to this was the great effort which Austria made to strike at Italy's flank by way of the great salient of the Trentino. That blow failed too, and the effects of its reaction were far more obvious than the impasse at Verdun. Italy struck back on the Isonzo front, and Russia, deemed by the Germans so inert and incapable of offensive action, suddenly burst through the too thinly held lines of the Austrians south of the Pripet, and changed the whole face of the campaign in the East. The corresponding reaction in the West, when at last the British and French forces joined in assault on the Somme, Lord Kitchener did not live to see. It was the consummation which he had worked to effect, and could he but have been a witness of it, those days of triumph would in their turn have been a witness to his greatness.

E. S. G.



## CHAPTER VII

### The Old Army and the New

The Expeditionary Force—Soldiers of the Old Army—The First Seven Divisions—Mons and the Retreat—The Stand of the Gordon Highlanders—The Aisne and Ypres—Territorial Organization—London Scottish in France—Lord Kitchener's Tribute to the Territorials—The First Hundred Thousand—Flame Attack at Hooge—New Army's Baptism of Fire—Losses of the Divisions—Gallipoli—Anzac and Suvla—Gloucesters, Lancshires, and Wiltshires—Salonika—The Western Front—Merging of the Old Army and the New—The Armies of 1916.

**I**N a speech which General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, made in October, 1916, there were two passages which compared the Old Army and the New. "When we went to war", said General Robertson, "we had just six divisions. Fortunately they were very good indeed. No better divisions ever left the shore of any country. The way in which they kept up their end at Mons, Le Cateau, and in the wonderful retreat to the Marne, and then turned and thrust back the enemy to the Aisne, is a story which will go down through history for all time. I shall never forget what I witnessed and what I heard during the first few weeks of the war as to the doings of those wonderful divisions. The endurance, unselfishness, gallantry, and dogged determination displayed were simply marvellous. By all the ordinary rules of war they were thoroughly beaten divisions within a few days after they came in contact with the enemy. But they were not beaten; they never have been beaten. On the contrary, they are winning, slowly if you like, but none the less surely, by the side of those numerous other divisions which have been sent out and are now fighting so splendidly."

Of this New Army he said: "The Mother Country has not done badly. Think of the number of divisions we have put into the field. Officers who before the war were training and drilling four or five hundred men now command twenty thousand; those who commanded ten thousand now command hundreds of thousands. These divisions were brought into being solely and entirely through the energy and foresight of that great soldier, Lord Kitchener, who did as much as many men to win this war for the Empire." Lord Kitchener would ask no higher encomium than these words from his old Chief of Staff, a man who spoke seldom, and who never had words to waste on flattery. The Chief of Staff knew what his leader had done, and knew in what circumstances of difficulty, criticism, and discouragement he had done it. Both of these soldiers were reared on the traditions of the Old Army, though one of them had grown up with its regiments, while the other had handled its regiments only as a commander. But in Lord Kitchener, as in Sir William Robertson, the tradition of the army was strong; he knew by virtue of long and intimate experience the derivation of its fighting qualities, its habits of discipline, the paths by which it had acquired its power of initiative and its instinctive knowledge of the right thing to do in any military situation in which it found itself.

The British soldier of the Old Army was not made in a day, or in a year. He was the product of what has always been, in effect, a long-service system, and that system, though hard on the man as a citizen, converted him into the ablest fighting-man in the world. A Canadian officer who, before he obtained permission to take a commission in the Second Canadian Division, had enlisted in the French Foreign Legion, heard from a French sergeant-major the following story of the Old Army. During the retreat from Mons the French sergeant, cut off from his unit, fell in with two British stragglers who, like himself, had lost their way. They came to a French village, and had hardly



LORD KITCHENER AND SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON, CHIEF OF  
THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF

("Anzac" Day, 25th April, 1916)





had time to get some bread and ham and some cider when one of the villagers hastily came running with the alarm that the Uhlans were approaching. It was true; their lances were already in sight: they were the advance scouts of a German brigade or division. "And then", said the French sergeant, "it seemed to me time to go; but not so to the British Tommies. One of them turned to his friend, whom he called Bill, and said he: 'Bill, I think now is the occasion to organize a counter-resistance!'" Doubtless the phrase was one he had heard from one of his officers. And so these two set up to offer counter-resistance to a German division. "The one who had called the other Bill rolled a barrel to the middle of the village street, to take cover behind it, and placed his companion and me in flanking positions. As the Uhlans made their appearance at the end of the village street the Tommies opened fire. . . ." That is nearly all the story that concerns us. The French sergeant was wounded, rolled into a ditch, and was afterwards picked up by the returning tide of the French advance. The two British soldiers who set out to hold up a division were killed. But the story illustrates something more than the temper and spirit in which the Old Army fought; it discloses the knowledge of military necessities and deportment and phrases which permeated the army. It was in the best sense a professional army, in which the officers knew their men, and the men were the shrewdest and most appreciative critics of their officers, from subalterns to divisional generals.

This army belonged not to Aldershot alone, but to India, where the linked battalions served, and to every garrison overseas, and was trained on the one hand to the company standard of the Grenadiers, who are the drill-sergeants of the British army, and on the other hand to the tactical and fighting efficiency which is inculcated in India. They were, to use an Anglo-Indian expression, *pukka* soldiers; and let it not

be forgotten that one of their makers was Lord Kitchener, who in Egypt and South Africa and in India had handled and used British infantry for warlike operations, and had ever set the highest standard of efficiency before them. The men who fought at Mons were not individually the same as those who had fought at Paardeberg and Diamond Hill, or who had learnt their marksmanship on the veldt, but they were men imbued with the traditions of the regiments which had been hardened there. They were all of the school:

Which had heard the *réveillé*  
 From Birr to Bareilly  
 From Leeds to Lahore  
 And half a score more. . . .

They were to show their mettle on the fields of France and Flanders and elsewhere, but they were to fulfil a more fundamental duty than that. These men, in whom lived the traditions of the fighting in two continents, and on whom Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener and Sir John French had imposed a higher and higher standard of efficiency for more than a decade, were to be the nucleus and the exemplars for the new armies which were to gather about them. How they fulfilled that obligation is told by numberless witnesses from the battle-field, the trenches, and the training-camps; it is told not in English alone, but in French; it is spoken by Canadian and Australian and New Zealander, who have never found words high enough to praise the pluck, the tenacity, the skill, and the capacity of the men of that army which proved its greatness not only by fighting but by dying for Britain.

“When war broke out on August 3rd, 1914, the British Army”, wrote Lord Ernest Hamilton,<sup>1</sup> “was so small as to be a mere drop in the ocean of armed men who were hurrying to confront one another on the plains of Belgium. It was derisively described as ‘contemptible’;

<sup>1</sup> *The First Seven Divisions*, by Ernest W. Hamilton, late Captain 11th Hussars (Hurst & Blackett).



and yet in the first three months of the war this little army, varying in numbers from 80,000 to 130,000, may justly claim to have in some part moulded the history of Europe."

The regular army, small as it was, did not become at once available. Much of it was away in India, or in garrisons overseas. But a proportion was at hand, and with a smoothness and swiftness only less remarkable than the silence in which the operation took place, 50,000 infantry, with its artillery and five brigades of cavalry, were shipped off to France. From Havre and Boulogne the troops marched or were carried northwards, shook themselves into shape, gradually assumed the form of two army corps of two divisions each, and in this formation faced the Belgian frontier to meet and check the invaders. The first Expeditionary Force to leave England consisted of the 1st Army Corps (First and Second Divisions) and the 2nd Army Corps (Third and Fifth Divisions). The Fourth Division arrived in time to prolong the battle front after the first shock at Mons, but did not incur the earliest stress of the German onset; and the Sixth Division, which, with the Fourth Division, formed the 3rd Army Corps, did not join till the battle of the Aisne. The Seventh Division was with the 1st Army Corps in the battle of Ypres at Klein Zillebeke, which witnessed the first great attempt of the Germans to break through the Ypres salient on the way to Calais.

The operations of the "Old Contemptibles" (the undying nickname which they won) do not come within the scope of Lord Kitchener's biography except in so far as their glory is reflected in him, but no account of his life would be complete unless the scenes of their great deeds found mention in it. When the First Expeditionary Force reached Mons on 22nd August, 1914, its primary object was to prolong the French line to the north-west. The position it took up was

that of a broad arrow, with the two army corps at an obtuse angle to one another,  $\wedge$ . The brunt of the attack fell on the 2nd Army Corps (Third and Fifth Divisions), which had taken up a line in advance of the true line of defence, on which it was prepared to fall back. But Sir H. Smith-Dorrien, while preparing to hold the second line, received orders to fall back in conformity with the French retirement, and a difficult and desperate series of rear-guard actions was entailed. For two days, forty-eight hours, the British held up the German forces north of the Maubeuge-Valenciennes lines, protecting effectively the left of the French army, and retiring in perfect order and intact, except for the ordinary wear and tear of battle. It held up the German right wing and so defeated von Kluck's outflanking movement, while the French dispositions farther south and west were shaping for success.

The retreat of the British army was resumed on the early morning of the 25th. Three German army corps, with superior transport and fresher men, were on its heels. In this retreat were fought the affair at Landrecies, and the desperate stand at Le Cateau, when it seemed that nothing could extricate General Smith-Dorrien's three divisions from the onslaught of seven German divisions supported by an overwhelming preponderance of artillery. Yet they were extricated. It was at a great cost. The Gordon Highlanders, to whom the order to retire never penetrated, or who were too proud to retreat, were all but annihilated. This historic battalion lost eighty per cent in killed, wounded, and missing. But the left wing of the army was saved by acts of heroism of which theirs was typical, and by the coolness, intrepidity, and determination of General Smith-Dorrien himself.

From Le Cateau the retreat continued, marked by fierce rear-guard actions at Villers Cotteret and Néry, till on 2nd September, 1914, the army found itself at the Marne, and the long trial ended. In twelve days it had covered a distance of



140 miles, fighting two pitched battles and constant rear-guard actions and skirmishes. The bulk of the fighting had fallen on the 2nd Army Corps, whose casualties amounted to 350 officers and 9200 men. But the turning-point had come. The Sixth Division joined up, and between 5th and 14th September the army that had been retreating turned to follow von Kluck's retirement. The advance was slow at first; soldiers who have been retreating for nearly a fortnight are not smitten with rashness when they advance. But after two days the Old Contemptibles began to push, till, on 12th September, the battle of the Aisne was joined. In this great war names and places are quickly submerged in newer events, but Troyon, Verneuil, and Soupir are all sacred to the memory of the Old Army's valour.

There followed the manœuvres to the west, when each army sought to outflank the other, every manœuvre priced in blood, till manœuvring came to a deadlock in lines of entrenchments. The Ypres salient was born, and with it a new type of fighting, a new form of resistance—the old heroism and competence remaining. The struggle at Ypres: the stonewall resistance put up there by the three war-worn army corps who held back the formidable masses of the German attack at Givenchy, Ploegstraet, and Klein Zillebeke in October, 1914; the desperate resistance at Neuve Chapelle in the same month; the "little battles" of Pilkem and Kruiseik, Gheluvelt, Messines, and Wytschaete—these are names which, though they fade in public recollection, are written in hearts and homes in Britain never to be effaced; and they add their recollections to what Viscount French called "one of the most glorious chapters in the annals of the British army". On 17th November the Germans made their last serious attempt to reach Calais by way of Ypres. They reached the Old Army's trenches, but those who got there never returned. With this failure the first chapter of the Great War was closed; and great as has



been the valour and the glory since, nothing can ever surpass, as a story of sublime, simple pluck, the history of the first three months' work which the Old Army did for its country.

The Territorial organization belonged not to Lord Kitchener, but was the outcome of Lord Haldane's attempts at army reform; and to him belongs the credit of the elasticity with which the system responded to the call on it. It would, however, be impossible to presume that the enthusiasm with which the Territorial units responded to Lord Kitchener's appeal to the country can be dissociated from the influence of his name and genius. On 7th August, 1914, Lord Kitchener sent a circular letter to the Lord-Lieutenants of Counties and Chairmen of the Territorial Force Associations, in which he invited their co-operation in the work of raising the additional number of regular troops required for the army. Members of the Territorial forces might be enlisted, and Territorial units which were at full strength would not recruit additional men until the 100,000 were provided. But should any of their members desire to join the regular forces thus raised, their places might be filled at once by men who wished to join the Territorials and not the regular army.<sup>1</sup> "It is not", concluded Lord Kitchener, "an ordinary appeal from the army for recruits, but the formation of a second army." Kitchener's "First Hundred Thousand" was filled up almost before the paste was dry on the posters: the Territorials rose at once to the level of their opportunity. The mobilization of the force went like clock-work, and within twelve hours after the "Call" went round it was complete. The artillery had the hardest task to perform, for they had not only to get their men together but they were set the task of collecting nearly 5000 horses and assembling vehicles before they were ready for service. Lord Esher, the President of the County of London Territorial

<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, under the Army Act of 1915, the Territorials became practically merged in the army.

Force Association, issued an appeal for 30,000 recruits, and got them at once. By the beginning of September, 1914, the force was beyond its 300,000, and of these four-fifths, or about 240,000, had volunteered for foreign service. In many cases whole brigades, and even divisions, had volunteered for service abroad; and almost every unit had its list of men waiting enrolment.

They quickly justified their impatience to be gone. The London Scottish were the first to go, and in November, 1914, first faced the German fire. They met it at Ypres, when they threw back a much larger body of Germans, and the Commander-in-Chief's message to their colonel bespeaks better than anything else their value:—

“I wish you and your splendid regiment to accept my warmest congratulations for the fine work you did on Saturday. You have given a glorious lead and example to all Territorial Corps fighting in France.”

The Honourable Artillery Company were the next to receive mention, but the front had by this time been strengthened by a number of other Territorial units. By the New Year the Territorials were thronging to France. In the third year of war the indication of names of units was forbidden, but in January, 1915, the authorities were less cautious, and the organ of the force, the *Territorial Service Gazette*, spoke of twenty-three battalions who were out. The list lengthened week by week, till by midsummer it filled a column of the *Gazette*, and comprised ninety battalions, from nearly every corps in England, Scotland, and Wales. Every month, and almost every week, added to the list, which would have continued growing had General Head-quarters allowed it to be published. With it grew the graver lists of wounded officers and men, filling far more columns than the lists of battalions, or even the light-hearted “letters from the front”. These Territorial letters give an idea of the work which the battalions were doing, such



as was afterwards impracticable to gather and forbidden to publish; for they came not from France alone, but from India, from Gibraltar, from Egypt, and from other places where, until they were wanted at the front, the battalions were serving in the garrisons and in the lines of communication of the Empire. Their work first received "war recognition" from Lord Kitchener in his speech in the House of Lords on 15th March, 1915:—

"Since I last spoke in this House substantial reinforcements have been sent to France. They include the Canadian Division, the North Midland Division, and the 2nd London Division, besides other units. These are the first complete divisions of the Territorial Force to go to France, where I am sure they will do credit to themselves and sustain the high reputation which the Territorials have already won for themselves there."

In the long progress of the war the actions of the Territorials became merged in those of the New Armies, even as the New Armies coalesced with the Old to form a newer and greater British army such as its history had never before known. Yet even as regiments keep their own traditions through the centuries, so the New Armies, which at the beginning were called Kitchener's Armies, will have their own histories and records, and in years to come will assert their own individualities and distinguish their own units, from divisions to battalions. With the formation of Kitchener's Armies is wedded the phrase, "The First Hundred Thousand", coined by a subaltern who was better known as a writer before the identity of "Ian Hay" was disclosed. The First Hundred Thousand were recruited by six divisions—the Scottish, Irish, Northern, Western, Eastern, and Light Infantry, and "Ian Hay" was with the Scottish. His account of their training and their trial has become a classic because of a literary talent which was never turned to better account, but the story of the Scots battalion might be repeated in the



epic of many another were there but the right men to tell it. As things are, we hear the tale only in fragments, things we heard and things we saw, and the whole of it will never be told. The inspections by Lord Kitchener during the training, the heavy trials and stresses in the first days and months at the front, the stubborn weeks of sticking to it, the hardships, the hunger, the glorious infrequency of mention in dispatches—all these were part of the story, but only the minutest fraction of it has been set down. After the war men will tell it by their own firesides; the regiments will faithfully compile their own records, and, as we know, the King will keep them; but otherwise, the British temperament and habit being what they are, men will go back to their ploughing and their reaping, to their mines and workshops, their factories and desks, their studies and their games, and will speak little and write less about it all. Much that has happened will be forgotten. But Kitchener's Armies left a seed which will remain an inheritance to the nation. Some of those who died in them have no memorial, and, in the words of *Ecclesiasticus*, are perished as though they had not been, but the name of the great impulse of which they were a part will not be blotted out.

Even now the memories are slipping into the past: the memories of the northern miners drilling and marching and grumbling and learning their business through the wettest winter in the memory of these islands; the recruits learning to shoulder arms in the squares of a London Inn of Court, at first a mob of weedy youths, then bracing themselves into soldiers, and next heard of on the bloody fields of Flanders with one of their company captains cheering them on with his dying breath; or the Public Schools Battalions, slogging through the mud on Epsom Downs, eternally route-marching, and ever bemoaning their weary lot because Lord Kitchener had forgotten them. He did not forget them, nor they him;

and many who wrote jesting complaints in the corps magazine have now become no more than a memory to their comrades. They were all in haste to be off: the war caught them all up in time.

The present writer has a vivid memory of the recruiting stations in Australia when war broke out and the news reached Melbourne. On all sides were complaints that the authorities would not take men fast enough, that it was so hard to get recruited, that the war would be over before Australia could get to the front. It was only the magic name of Kitchener that soothed complaints. Young Australia was confident that with Lord Kitchener "bossing the show" it would have its chance. It had its chance on the sanguinary ridges of Gallipoli, where it added a new name, the name of "Anzac" to British history; it took its chances in the Sinai Peninsula and on the slopes between the Ancre and the Somme. Everywhere all that was best in young British manhood sprang swiftly to its opportunity. The English and Scottish Universities volunteered almost as one man. Before Lord Kitchener died every college had its roll of honour of men who had preceded the great chief, giving their lives to the cause they had in common.

In the common cause the deeds of units of Kitchener's Armies emerged only occasionally from obscurity. Letters home lifted the curtain to disclose the continual pressure to which those were subjected of whom the daily *communiqués* said only that "there was nothing of importance to report"; and from time to time a belated dispatch threw light on murderous warfare and unimagined valour. But in the earlier days of the war there were weeks when there was hardly any official news of the British Expeditionary Force or of its contemporary Mediterranean Expeditionary Force; and later, when the perfection of the German spy system and intelligence work were realized, all mention in publications, other than official, of



units was forbidden. So that for long periods the men of Kitchener's Armies, sharing a common glory, shared also in a common obscurity. If we are able to reveal here and there what they did, it is only because the records of official dispatches permit it. At the forefront of their achievements, before any of them reached the fighting-line, may be put the fact that Liverpool had the honour of forming the first complete battalion of Kitchener's Army, and Lord Kitchener was its Honorary Colonel.

Of the divisions of the First Hundred Thousand the Scottish (Ninth Division) went to France; the Irish (Tenth Division) to the Dardanelles, where it was accompanied by the Northern (Eleventh Division) and by the Western (Thirteenth Division). The Light Division (Fourteenth Division) appears to have been first in action. They formed a reinforcement of the Second Army, and were occupying a section of trenches near Hooge. The German attack began before dawn of Friday, 30th July, with a concentrated bombardment.

"It fell to part of the New Army to bear the brunt in this its first serious engagement", writes Mr. F. A. Mumby,<sup>1</sup> "and the casualty lists subsequently told how heavy was the toll then taken of the flower of the young English manhood—University men of promise and distinction, old public-school boys from all parts of the kingdom who had flocked to the colours at the outbreak of war. The men stood the first ordeal of the bombardment magnificently, though the position, practically flattened out, was desperately difficult to hold. Then, however, came the added and wholly unexpected horror of the blinding, burning sheets of flame—the German *Flammwerfer* which threw 100-foot jets of flame."

"The flames blinded the men," wrote one who took part in the fight, "and while they were still blind the Germans charged and took the trench." The British artillery saved the situation by some extraordinarily accurate shelling, interposing a barrage of fire between the British and German

<sup>1</sup> *The Great World War*, Vol. IV, p. 81.



trenches which here were only fifty yards apart. The Germans were able only to take a section of trench, and the sections on the right and left were able to hold up the rest of the German attack. The severity of their ordeal may be gauged from the casualties. One of the Rifle Brigade battalions of the New Army lost altogether 19 officers and between 500 and 600 men. Another Rifle Brigade battalion, as well as three battalions of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, lost only less severely. The Victoria Cross was conferred on Second Lieutenant Sidney C. Woodroffe, of the Rifle Brigade, who died in winning it. "This very gallant officer", said the *Gazette*, "was killed while in the act of cutting the wire obstacles in the open" after he had resisted the enemy's assault to his last bomb, and was leading a counter-attack. Almost by his side was Lieutenant Gilbert Talbot, also of the Rifle Brigade, the youngest son of the Bishop of Winchester. Hooge was in the literal sense the baptism of fire of the New Army.

The rejoinder of the Light Division came with the first phase of the autumn offensive of 1915, when the Allied troops first feinted at half a dozen points, and then assaulted the German lines in force at Loos and in Champagne. One of these feint attacks was at Hooge, south of the Menin road (Third Division), while the Light Division stormed the Bellewarde Farm and ridge to the north.<sup>1</sup> The fighting in each case served its purpose of holding the enemy to this part of the front, and of attracting his reserves. But it was costly, for the Germans were not to be taken by surprise. At daybreak on 25th September a mine explosion was the signal for the Fourteenth Division to advance, and almost before the smoke had cleared away from the crater they were in possession of the greater part of the enemy's first line, the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry in the centre, with the Rifle Brigade on their

<sup>1</sup> *The Great World War*, Vol. IV, p. 193.

left, and the Shropshire Light Infantry on their right. The men of the Oxford and Bucks, advancing in two columns, lost heavily; the right column carried the German positions at a rush. The Rifle Brigade took four lines of trenches in succession, thanks in no small measure to the splendid courage of one of their company leaders, Captain Douglas Carmichael, who was only twenty-one, and had taken his degree at Cambridge (Jesus College) in the June before the war. Shropshires, King's Royal Rifles, and Oxford and Bucks all fought as veterans fight, storming their way to Bellewarde Farm, and holding their positions under concentrated German fire for four hours till withdrawn. Withdrawn they had to be, for this was one of the desperate sacrifices that the war exacted.

There were many other sacrifices which the New Army made in that year, none greater or sadder than in Gallipoli. Their record is one of the redeeming features in that campaign of faithful failures. In the main Anzac advance of 6th-7th August, 1915, the New Army provided the left covering column<sup>1</sup>—landed secretly during the previous nights—under the command of Brigadier-General Travers. This force, preceding the left assaulting column, had diverged diagonally to the north to the capture of Damajelih Bair, a height from which it could both assist the landing at Suvla Bay and guard the left flank of the Anzacs' main assault from any forces of the enemy which might be assembled in the Anafarta valley. It was a critical test for men who had had no previous taste of fighting, this long night march exposed to flanking fire and ending in a bayonet charge against an unknown height, "formless and still in the starlight, and garrisoned by those spectres of the imagination, worst enemies of the soldier". But Travers's column marched on, heedless of an enfilade fire, with none of the hesitation which was to prove so disastrous to the synchronized advance from Suvla Bay. The rapidity of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Great World War*, Vol. IV, p. 135.



northern advance was largely due to Lieutenant-Colonel Gillespie, who commanded the South Wales Borderers, and who led them victoriously to the final assault on Damajelih Bair, only to fall afterwards in the fighting of the following days.

For the rest of the New Army those days were filled with the hardest trials to which new formations could be put, and their experiences were part of the price which had to be paid for an undertaking which appears to have been imperfectly carried out by the Divisional Staffs. Enough has been said of blame with regard to those disastrous days in the second week of August, 1915, and the apportionment of responsibility for failure is in itself a responsibility which no one is justified in attempting until the report is published of the Commission appointed to inquire into the whole affair. It is the more praiseworthy and grateful task to narrate the deeds of endurance and courage with which the men of the New Army redeemed the hours of misfortune.

The Anzac troops were reorganized for a new attack on Sunday morning, 8th August, and with them they had two battalions of the Thirteenth Division (New Army) in their right column, and an infantry brigade of the New Army in the left column. The right column had an instant success. It was headed by one of the New Zealand battalions and supported by the Gloucesters (New Army), the Maori contingent, the Welsh Pioneers, and some of the Auckland Mounted Rifles. The troops raced one another to the summit. Here the Gloucesters suffered devastating losses, but they fought on even when every officer had been killed or wounded and every company sergeant had suffered the same fate. From midday to nightfall, beating off counter-attacks, the Gloucesters held on, though reduced to groups of men under junior non-coms. or privates. "Here is an instance", wrote Sir Ian Hamilton in his dispatch, "where a battalion of





Official photograph

LORD KITCHENER'S VISIT TO GALLIPOLI: AMONG THE AUSTRALIAN TROOPS AT "ANZAC"

(See pages 195-6)



the New Army fought right on from midday to sunset without *any* officers."

The left column (with which was the Infantry Brigade of the New Army) was held up by a murderous fire in front of the Sari Bair ridge, but here they stood at bay, "and though the men were by now half-dead with thirst and fatigue they repulsed attack after attack delivered by heavy columns of Turks".<sup>1</sup> In spite of the set-back, another combined assault was planned for next morning, and was organized in three columns, of which two battalions, each from the First New Army, formed the third column under Brigadier-General A. H. Baldwin. The story of that final attempt is one of disappointment, of a victory nearly won, and of positions perforce relinquished after they had been purchased with toil and blood. But among its stories of disaster the attempt of Baldwin's men to hold a hopeless position, and the sacrifice of the Loyal North Lancashires and the Wiltshires are great if grievous memories. "The North Lancashire men were simply overwhelmed in their shallow trenches by sheer weight of numbers, while the Wilts, caught in the open, were almost annihilated"—the scanty battalions of the New Army had to meet the shock of a Turkish division flushed with victory. To the left the Turks had swept with equal fury on the farm held by General Baldwin. Round this farm and the spurs to the north-east ensued a confused, deadly, hand-to-hand struggle in which generals fought in the ranks and men caught their enemies by the throat. "There was no flinching. They died in the ranks as they stood. Here Generals Cayley, Cooper, and Baldwin and all their gallant men achieved great glory. On this bloody field fell Brigadier-General Baldwin, who earned his first laurels on Cæsar's Camp at Ladysmith."<sup>2</sup> Out of the 10,000 men of the Thirteenth Division of the New Army 6000 men had been killed or

<sup>1</sup> Sir Ian Hamilton's dispatch.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Ian Hamilton's report.



wounded—sixty per cent. One brigade of the Tenth (Irish) Division of the New Army had lost more than fifty per cent of its strength. In his summing up Sir Ian Hamilton, after paying just due to the Anzacs, adds that “though the troops of the New Armies had only just landed from a sea voyage, and many of them had not previously been under fire, I do not believe that any troops in the world could have accomplished more”.

The landing at Suvla Bay, even more tragic in its failure because it spelt the ruin of the plan, and was the last nail in the coffin of the Dardanelles campaign, had yet some great incidents to add to the records of the New Armies. The Tenth (Irish) Division (Sir Bryan Mahon) and the Eleventh, including the Lancashires (General Hammersley), at first advanced to what seemed like success, and the Fifty-third Territorial Division also won high commendation; but from the tangle of details which makes up the record of Sir Ian Hamilton of the operations one thing emerges, which is that the troops were ill directed by the Higher Command, and were beaten by the conditions—of thirst and fatigue—before they could close with the desired enemy. The unlucky divisions of the New Army attacked hopeless positions, they endured severe losses; one battalion of Territorials plunged forward in desperate effort to come to grips, and part of it was lost, never to return; but all that was done was to little purpose. Suvla Bay was a muddle—and a terrible one.

The Irish Division had the opportunity to retrieve its fortunes at Lake Doiran; the opportunities of the others came in other fields, and they were ready to take advantage of them. There is only one other division of the First Hundred Thousand which has not been comprised in this brief survey—the Twelfth, or Eastern, Division, men of the Home Counties, Middlesex and Surrey, Kent and Essex, as well as of Sussex, Wessex, and East Anglia and the shires, Bedford, Gloucester, Somerset.

They first proved their mettle at Ploegstraet before being thrust into the furnace of the Big Push at Loos in September, 1915. Their losses and the battle honours of their officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, among whom was Corporal Cotter, V.C., whose superhuman endurance and valour cost him his life—these are the testimony to the spirit and the soul of that New Army of which they were a part. Others have followed them—other men, other deeds, other divisions; the heroism, courage, and devotion of the men of Kitchener's Army were immortal. They survived the army's founder and the men who first heard his call.

In the development of the long war the time at last arrived when it became appropriate to speak of the Old Army and the New, not as distinct and separable, but as merged in one. The Old Army could never disappear; its traditions, its methods, its discipline and its ideals inspired the New, of which it was not only the framework but the personality. Like the unforgotten John Brown, whose exploits were sung in pious doggerel by the fighters of another people and another century, though its body lay mouldering in the grave its soul went marching along. Perhaps the New Army will always be known by that name, even as one of the oldest foundations of Oxford is known as New College; and in 1915, when it was reconsecrated on the Somme, it still kept its designation. The Prime Minister, in one of the sincere tributes which he paid to the memory of Lord Kitchener, used the expression. Lord Kitchener would always be associated, he said, with the creation and organization of the "New Armies which have transformed Great Britain for the first time in its history into a military power of the first order". Mr. Asquith spoke (June, 1916) before the great events took place which demonstrated that the New Army was, indeed, a military force of the first order, a Continental army which was able to meet the most completely organized army in the world on equal terms.



When Lord Kitchener died this army had not undergone the supreme test. It had proved at Hulluch and Loos its valour and devotion; it had shown that it could resist to the end; but as a machine for offence it had not yet displayed the powers without which final victory can never be won. It had held trenches, no army ever held them better or under more trying and dispiriting conditions; and it had never for a moment faltered in its belief that its defensive lines could not be broken by any German attack. Deep behind its lines were reserves, and yet more reserves, training for some supreme effort; but the moment for action was long delayed. Men who had long been out there doubted whether the "deadlock" would ever be broken; at home many wondered whether the Great Push would ever take place.

Spring in 1916 broadened into summer, and the Germans, who had launched their first assault on the heights of the Meuse at Verdun on the snowy mornings of February, were still trying to drive wedges through the French defences at midsummer. Months afterwards the Germans disavowed their intention of having ever intended to reduce Verdun, and substituted the hypothetical design of wearing down the French army by killing or wounding its finest infantry. Certainly some of the finest infantry in the world gave their lives to the defence of the French lines at Verdun, though they exacted a heavier toll from their assailants. But even at this stage Britain's New Army was not called upon by the French Commander-in-Chief to come to the aid of its ally by making a counter-attack. All General Joffre asked or permitted was that the British should take over a part of the French line; and this they did, extending their holding to a point nearing the River Somme. To have launched the British forces in a premature counter-attack would have been to play the enemy's game, the strategy of which was to hammer the French at Verdun but to hold sufficient reserves opposite the British



lines to smash any probable offensive. The Germans knew, probably as well as we ourselves knew, the depth and strength of men behind Sir Douglas Haig. What they did not know was the offensive capability of this mass of men. It is justifiable to say that they underrated it.

June was ripening, and still the hour of the New Army had not struck. July 1st dawned. General Joffre gave the signal. The New Army went forward, side by side with the French, as comrades-in-arms and coequals. Rightly considered it was one of the great moments of crisis of the war. Would the New Army show that it had learned the long and bitter lessons of two years of war. It had been hammered. Had it been hammered into a formidable weapon, not of defence, but of offence? It had. It responded to the test—to every test. The courage of its men was unchanged, but it had learned skill; its staff work was sound; its artillery, in scale and in accuracy, was perfectly co-ordinated; the great machine, all its parts in unison, could do the work required of it. The advance of the New Army along a fifteen-mile front was held up on the north of the Ancre; south of the Ancre, to where the British lines joined the French, it trampled out two years of German trenchwork in a day. It captured 5000 prisoners; it resisted and beat back the German counter-attack, and consolidated its own gains. On 1st July and 2nd July, 1916, the New Army answered the question put to it. It was no longer an Expeditionary Force. It was the British Continental army.

There was no question of surprise. The Germans anticipated the attack. They were aware of its advent, probably of the length of line to be attacked, and of the constitution of the forces to make the assault. They had massed reinforcements to meet and counter it—and they failed. So confident were they that the chief attack would come from the British, and that the French, exhausted by Verdun, had not another assault left in them, that they left part of their line south of the

Somme incompletely reinforced. So that the French in a very short time, and with relatively little difficulty, carried forward their lines some five miles to Biaches opposite Peronne. But the stern work was north of the river, and the British had the hardest part of it to begin with. Their progress was all uphill towards the crests which in a semicircle curve between the Ancre and the Somme and look down the lateral valleys. But the salient feature of the advance, distinguishing it from all others which had previously been attempted, was that it was continuous. It did not exhaust its momentum in one effort; but, having attained its immediate objective, settled itself there, and in the act of doing so prepared for a new step forward. Its action may be compared to that of athletes who run a relay race. Each runner as he reaches a certain point hands on his task to another, who continues it till the goal is reached. The simile has a peculiar applicability to the progress made on the Somme, because, although the authorities allowed no unofficial reference to troops engaged, and the Commander-in-Chief mentioned them but seldom, it was clear from the length of the operations and the magnitude of the forces engaged that very great numbers of the New Army, as well as of the Territorial and Dominion troops, took part in them.

One of the most interesting aspects of the battle was the extraordinarily ingenious dovetailing of the British and French efforts, who supported one another in assailing the Germans, like partners at a whist table who are executing the manœuvre known as a double ruff. On 24th August, for example, after the lull which followed a successful advance, the French stormed the German positions between Maurepas and Cléry. Next day, the 25th, it was the turn of the British, who made an advance which threatened Guillemont and Thiepval. Apprehensive for the safety of Thiepval, on the evening of that day the German commander sent forward the Prussian Guard to oust the New Army. The attack failed, owing, in the words



of Sir Douglas Haig, to "the steadiness and determined gallantry of the Wiltshire and Worcestershire battalions". In that unadorned phrase is noted an attack and its repulse which was of the greatest consequence to German feeling. The Prussian Guard was always the German trump card. Its failure before the unpretentious "Wiltshires and Worcesters" was a symptom which Berlin could not ignore, and on the testimony of Mr. Thomas Curtin,<sup>1</sup> an American who was in Berlin at the time, it made a deep impression in Prussian army circles.

"It seems as if the British had begun to learn the business at last", a Prussian officer told Mr. Curtin. They had, and the New Army furnished many proofs of it in succeeding days. On 3rd September Guillemont was taken and on 10th September Ginchy, Combles and the intricate fortresslike-work of Thiepval. Courcellette and Le Sars fell in their turn; and still the New Army went on with unhesitating, unflinching step. They never lost ground: the fiercest German attacks broke in vain against their front, and they were ever ready to begin again. In November they burst through the obstinate lines on both sides of the Ancre, winning fresh victories, which won the warm congratulations of the King. "The spirit and dash of our troops during this severe fighting, in face of frequent determined counter-attacks and constant intense artillery-fire, have been magnificent", wrote Sir Douglas Haig in one of his daily *communiqués*; and no army ever won a higher tribute. It was more than a tribute to the New Army, it was a tribute some share of which belongs to the great man who presided at its birth. Nearly a generation before, he had made a new army in a country of his adoption. But this was the New Army of his own people; and it is no mere fancy to believe that in its victories, as in its hours of trial, the spirit of Kitchener was with it.

E. S. G.

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 11th October, 1916.



## CHAPTER VIII

### Visits to the Front

Lord Kitchener's First Visit to the Western Battle-fields—With Mr. Asquith at Ypres—Meeting with King of the Belgians—With the French Army in the Field—Second Visit to the Western Front—Receives Ribbon for War of 1870—Memories of Fashoda—Marchand's Tribute—M. Millerand's Speech in Kitchener's Honour—Visit with French War Minister to British Front—Another Visit to the French Army—Discussing the September Offensive of 1915—Departure for the Eastern Theatre of War—Fate of the Gallipoli Campaign—Mystery of Kitchener's Departure—Meeting with Lord Esher in Paris—War Minister's Arrival in Gallipoli—The Anzacs' Reception—Meeting with King of Greece—A Critical Interview—Visit to Rome—Arrival on the Italian Front—Conferences with King of Italy and General Cadorna—Italy's Increasing Share in the War—Some Italian Tributes—Kitchener's Return to Paris—Home again—The Allied Council of War.

**N**OT until the Western front had received its first divisions of "The First Hundred Thousand"—other divisions meantime sailing for the more distant fields of Anzac and Suvla Bay—did Lord Kitchener allow himself time to visit any of the battle-fields. He had seen the New Army, the flower of young British manhood, in training at home, and Sir John French had already reported on their advance-guards in France and Flanders as likely to prove "a valuable addition to any fighting force", but they had still to win their spurs when Lord Kitchener himself spent his first two crowded days on the western battle-fields in the summer of 1915. Arriving at General Head-quarters on Tuesday, 6th July, accompanied by the Prime Minister, with whom he had just attended a conference of Allied Ministers at Calais, he remained until the Thursday evening, spending the greater

part of his time in seeing as much as possible of the troops in the field, the well-trying Old Army and Territorials, as well as some of the Indians and the first units of the New Army. Wednesday was devoted to an informal tour of the northern half of the British front and area, the War Minister and the Prime Minister leaving head-quarters early for a long and eventful day. A high wind was blowing, and clouds of dust not only hid the roads but rose from every patch of bare ground; yet, as "Eye-Witness" pointed out, these drawbacks were counterbalanced by the unlikelihood of spying aeroplanes venturing out in such squally weather. After inspections of various defences in the supporting lines, and such units as an ammunition-park, a travelling workshop, and an aerodrome, all performing their ordinary duties, the visitors reached the stricken town of Ypres. As Lord Kitchener and Mr. Asquith, with a small staff of officers, picked their way along its ruined streets, the sound of distant, intermittent shelling told that the tide of battle had swept for the time being to the north of the town. The sun had now come out, lighting up the scene of desolation in Ypres in all its horror.

"Luckily", continues "Eye-Witness", in his account of this memorable visit, "the wind was strong, for though it rendered the exploration of buildings dangerous, owing to the bricks which were continually dropping from the walls, and the tiles which fell from the shaking roofs and filled the air with dust from the debris, it purged the streets of the sickening smell which still hangs about them on a calm day. It also drove away the swarms of flies. Leaving Ypres and its Cloth Hall, still grand in its desolation and a monument of German *Kultur*, the party were able to watch some of our guns which were actually engaged in repelling a German counter-attack being made that afternoon to the north of the town."

Continuing their journey past the scene of this unsuccessful assault, and on behind the Belgian lines, which carried "Joffre's Wall" to the North Sea, Lord Kitchener and Mr. Asquith

were met by King Albert, who personally conducted them round some of the Belgian defences. Here they saw how His Majesty's gallant army, now stronger in every way than before the war, was tightening its hold on the far corner still left to it of its native land, and how confidently it awaited the hour of retribution. Various halts for inspection were made on the journey back, and short addresses delivered by both ministers. Their arrival was everywhere received with unaffected delight by the men, though, as there was nothing professional about the tour, the roads were not lined with troops. On the following day Lord Kitchener visited the southern half of the British army, this time alone, Mr. Asquith being occupied at General Headquarters and elsewhere.

The War Minister's itinerary on this occasion was too long to allow of much time for inspections, and was summed up by "Eye-Witness" as follows:—

"His first visit was to the Indian cavalry, which was formed up in mass to receive him. This large body of mounted troops formed a very fine picture with the curved sabres and lances of the *sowars* flashing in the sun. Then followed a long run through miles of roads lined on each side with infantry, who presented arms and cheered lustily as he passed slowly between their ranks in an open car. In this way, with occasional halts to meet Corps, Divisional, and Brigade Commanders, the whole morning was passed. The troops all looked very cheerful and well, and evidently pleased."

Having passed beyond the southern extremity of the British line Lord Kitchener found himself, for the first time since he served as a volunteer under Chanzy in the Franco-Prussian campaign of 1870, in the midst of a French army fighting to repel a ruthless invader from its native soil. The foe was the same, but the young British volunteer had become the head of the mightiest army that Britain had ever possessed, and Chanzy's ill-organized army had given place to an efficient host of heroes who, like Kitchener himself, had taken to heart



the lessons of that luckless war. Small wonder if the British Field-Marshal's thoughts flashed back across the forty odd years, when the general commanding the French army on the British right advanced to welcome him as he passed into the French sphere of operations. As "Eye-Witness" records, "he was most cordially received"; and he was given every opportunity of studying our Allies' system of defences and military organization. After this strenuous tour Lord Kitchener crossed the Channel with Mr. Asquith the same evening, and twenty-four hours later—before the majority of the British public knew that he had been abroad at all—was addressing the citizens of London at the Guildhall on the urgent and increasing need for more men. His words rang like a message which he had brought home from the trenches. "One feels", he declared, "that our gallant soldiers in the fighting-line are beckoning, with an urgency at once imperious and pathetic, to those who remain at home to come out and play their part too."

In the following months, before the Allied Offensive which, on the British side, culminated in the battle of Loos, Lord Kitchener paid another visit to the Western front. This time it was on the invitation of the French Government. Accompanied by M. Millerand, then French Minister of War, he spent two days in the midst of our Allies' army in the field, passing down its entire front, and holding long conferences both with M. Millerand and General Joffre, discussing the most pressing matters to be settled in view of the coming joint offensive. It was during a review held on this occasion within the French lines that General Joffre presented the British Field-Marshal—one time private in the Sixth Battalion of the Mobile Guard of the Département of the Côtes-du-Nord—with the black and green ribbon for his share as a volunteer in the Franco-Prussian War. This, the senior among all his many decorations, he wore on his breast above his British Orders,

and throughout the day did not conceal his joy at finding himself again in the midst of an army in the ranks of which he had fought so many years ago. Memories of 1870 were also linked that day with those of 1898 and Fashoda—a word to which a new meaning had now been given by the alliance which had been cemented with the best blood of France and Britain—for among the general officers present to salute him was Baratier, who had been Marchand's chief staff officer at Fashoda. Baratier was a plain captain in those critical days, and when subsequently dispatched by Marchand to France to arrange for the evacuation of the disputed post, he had travelled to Marseilles in the very steamer which carried Lord Kitchener back on his return from the Khartoum campaign. They now met again as allies against a common foe, and greeted each other warmly. During this visit, according to a *Times* correspondent, Lord Kitchener also met General Marchand himself, and revived old memories in the new spirit of the Great War. This was not long before the Champagne battle, in which General Marchand covered himself with glory while leading his dashing Colonials to victory. Some of these very Colonials had been reviewed by Lord Kitchener, who astonished the natives by addressing in Arabic one of their own officers of the Algerian Spahis, assuring him that the African contingents could be wholly confident of the ultimate success of the Allies' cause. The native officer responded that they all had absolute faith in a final victory. Marchand fell wounded in the gallant charge of his troops in the Champagne assault of the ensuing month, but lived to take his place again at the head of his men, and to join in the world's tributes to Lord Kitchener's memory when, but a few months later, the news was received of his cruel death. "I personally", Marchand telegraphed at the close of his message to Sir Douglas Haig on that occasion, "feel deeply the bitterness of the loss which is sustained by Great Britain and France in alliance."





Official photograph

LORD KITCHENER'S VISIT TO THE WESTERN FRONT, AUGUST, 1915

Lord Kitchener is seen in a trench near the German lines, watching through his field-glasses the effect of French shell-fire





At the close of the second day of Lord Kitchener's visit to the French army—to return to those momentous events of August, 1915—a dinner was given, at which M. Millerand, addressing the guest of the evening, assured him that the repeated testimony of admiration and confidence which he had expressed in the course of his visit would be a recompense and an encouragement for them all.

“Monsieur le Maréchal,” he concluded, “though the time at your disposal only allows you to see the France of the armies in the field, permit me to give you the assurance that the whole of France is of the same confident spirit. People, Parliament, and Government, in strict agreement with you and with our faithful and heroic Allies, are more determined than ever to lay down their arms only on the day on which we reach the goal that we have set ourselves. Though the way may be as long as the road to Tipperary the prize awaiting us there will repay us for all the delays, the hardships, and the sorrows of the journey, for the prize is nothing less than the freedom of the world.”

Lord Kitchener, replying in French, paid an enthusiastic tribute to the strength and valour of General Joffre's magnificent army. The words of M. Millerand, he added, had gone straight to his heart, and he concluded by reiterating Britain's firm resolve to make every effort, even to the uttermost, to help her loyal Allies in order, as the French Minister of War had said, to reach the goal. On the following morning (18th August) the two ministers were joined by Sir John French, and vital points were settled in discussion concerning the approaching operations. A visit was then paid by M. Millerand, accompanied by Field-Marshal Kitchener and French, to the British front, where every aspect of the life and organization of our armies in the field was exhibited to him as fully as those of our Allies had been to Lord Kitchener. The climax to this tour, in the course of which M. Millerand expressed unbounded admiration for the superb spirit and general efficiency of our troops, was a review of a brigade of

Guards in the clear twilight of the late afternoon. This took place some miles behind the firing-line, on high ground surrounded with cornfields, with the Guards massed for the occasion close to an old Flemish mill, over which were flying both the French and British colours. The Guards' bands struck up the "Marseillaise" as M. Millerand passed down the front of the troops, afterwards to take his stand between Lord Kitchener and Sir John French for the march past. Overhead circled the aeroplanes to keep watch against the prying eyes of enemy aircraft. In his account of the review in the *Daily Telegraph*, Mr. Philip Gibbs, who was present, described how the Guards marched past in half-companies with the perfect line and rhythm of the old days of peace at the trooping of the colours:—

"All these men had taken part in many actions, they had faced the daily ordeal of shell-fire, they had but just come out of the trenches, and the names of their battalions will be written for ever in history with those of Ypres and Neuve Chapelle. But as they came at a swinging pace through the long grass, every hand swinging in unison, moving with machine-like accuracy of pace, they bore but few traces of war except in their bronze burnt faces and the hard look of their physique. One officer had lost his right arm, but brought his left smartly to the salute. None of the officers carried swords, and this perhaps, curiously enough, was the one outward sign that this was a review in war, and not in peace. A Scottish battalion also marched round to the music of their pipes playing "Highland Laddie", and it was perhaps the first time that the French Minister of War heard the skirl of that music which brought back the memory of days when here on this soil the Kings of France had Scottish gentlemen for their body-guard. I noticed that when the last of the troops had filed by, M. Millerand turned to Sir John French and shook him warmly by the hand to express his admiration of those splendid men."

The French Minister of War returned that night to Paris, but Lord Kitchener remained with the British troops over the next day, when he visited the First Army, the previous day



having been spent with the Second Army. Another full programme closed with his departure for home on the night of 19th August, after four days of supreme interest and importance. He had studied the Allied armies side by side, and all that now remained before the "Great Push" of the following months was to complete the final plans. The course of that costly victory has already been traced in an earlier chapter.

At the beginning of November, 1915, when it was realized that the exaggerated hopes raised by the first news of the Great Push were doomed to disappointment, heavy though the blow had been to the Kaiser's army, Lord Kitchener again left for the front—this time in the Eastern theatre of war. His departure coincided with a flood of rumours of strained relations at the War Office, one evening newspaper, more positive than the others, insisting, in spite of official denial, that Kitchener had resigned. The newspaper was suspended, the Press Bureau reaffirming emphatically that the War Minister's absence was only temporary, and that Mr. Asquith was filling the gap until his return. The Prime Minister himself afterwards repeated the denial in the most emphatic terms:—

"Lord Kitchener never tendered his resignation to the King or to myself.

"Lord Kitchener never breathed one word about resignation."

The truth was that the situation in the Balkans had rapidly been rushing to a grave crisis. The plight of Serbia's heroic army was daily becoming more desperate, and fears were expressed of an act of treachery on the part of Greece which might wreck the whole of our Eastern campaign. It is fair to assume that the important news which decided the Cabinet to send Lord Kitchener to the Near East—news subsequently described by Sir John Simon as "very grave, sudden, and unexpected"—was not unconnected with this anxiety concerning

the policy and intentions of the Greek Government towards the Entente Powers. France had already entrusted one of her State Ministers, M. Denys Cochin—foremost of French Philhellenes—with a special mission to King Constantine. M. Denys Cochin represented the polite diplomacy of the Allies. Lord Kitchener now followed him as the soldier of the Allies, polite also, but with power to speak decisive words from the military point of view. His departure followed a war conference in London attended by General Joffre, who, keenly alive to the supreme importance of the Balkans in the whole plan of campaign, and the increasing danger of the existing situation there, was eager for Britain's whole-hearted support in that direction.

These developments had naturally to be considered in relation to the luckless Gallipoli campaign, the fate of which still seemed to be hanging in the balance. Lord Kitchener had long been anxious to examine for himself the whole situation on the peninsula, and he made this his first duty on arriving in the Near East. Sir Charles Monro, who had preceded him to Gallipoli in succession to Sir Ian Hamilton, had already telegraphed to the War Minister that he saw no military advantage whatever in remaining there, and that, in his opinion, evacuation was the only course to pursue. These facts were unknown to the general public at the time of Lord Kitchener's departure, the mystery surrounding which was not wholly dispelled by the Prime Minister in his speech at the Guildhall banquet on 9th November.

“Lord Kitchener”, he declared, “went in the first instance to Paris, where he engaged in friendly and, I believe, fruitful consultation with the Prime Minister and the War Minister of France in the new Government which has recently been formed in that Allied country. From Paris Lord Kitchener proceeded to—what shall I say? I know that I shall be told that, after the fashion of this perverse and misguided Government, I am concealing the truth and hoodwinking the nation—

Lord Kitchener proceeded on his mission. He has gone—only, as we all hope and trust, for a very short time—but he has gone to survey at close quarters and in intimate confidence with our representatives and those of our Allies the whole situation in the Eastern theatre of war. He takes with him the complete confidence of his colleagues, and, I believe, of his countrymen. He takes with him the authority of a great soldier and a great administrator, and added to this the special faculties of insight and judgment which he derives from an unrivalled knowledge and experience of the Near East.”

It is impossible to reconcile all this with Lord Esher's moving account of his interview with Lord Kitchener during that memorable visit to Paris on the way to the Eastern theatre. “I see him standing with bowed head, with his back to the fire, in his bedroom at the British Embassy in Paris. In three hours he was to leave for Egypt and Gallipoli. His return to England, he had said a few moments before, was very problematic.”<sup>1</sup> He bore no resentment against those who had attacked him. He was too big, both of body and soul, to retaliate against critics whose pin-pricks would have exasperated a smaller man. “But he felt deeply”, said his friend, Lord Esher, “the want of loyalty, and above all the lack of friendly regard on the part of those with whom he laboured and associated.” He had, we are assured, a warm personal regard for Mr. Asquith, but the tortuous paths of politicians were beyond him, and he confessed to M. Briand, the French Prime Minister, his inability to walk in their ways. M. Briand rightly attributed this to his upbringing and the whole environment of his life. “You have lived in lands where you could order a village to be pulled down here, or built up there, and where your word was law. But these methods are unadaptable to the Boulevard des Italiens.” They were also unadaptable to Downing Street. Nor were they calculated, with his dominating personality and indisposition to delegate sufficient

<sup>1</sup> “Lord K.”, by Viscount Esher. *National Review*, July, 1916.



powers to his staff, to make any easier his colossal task at the War Office.

The full story has yet to be told of the circumstances under which he left London, "at the request of his colleagues", on that historic mission to Paris and the Eastern theatre. Subsequently Lord Lansdowne, challenged in the Lords to deny that "Sir Charles Monro had reported in favour of withdrawal from the Dardanelles, and adversely to the continuance of winter operations there", did not refute the suggestion. What he said was that, in the Government's opinion, Sir Charles Monro's report, and the evidence accompanying it, "did not seem sufficient to enable us to come to a conclusion on the great questions of policy involved"; and he summarized the object of the War Minister's mission by adding that he had "gone to the Eastern Mediterranean in order to report to, and advise, His Majesty's Government". Lord Esher tells us that he dreaded the task of having to evacuate Gallipoli with all the intensity of a nature accustomed to vanquish obstacles and to achieve success.

"He could", he said, in the course of the interview in Paris already referred to, "perceive no ray of light. He spoke of those who had seen him leave England without regret, and very solemnly he added words that if quoted could only give rise to feelings of remorse in those of whom he spoke gently and regretfully. When he raised his head his eyes were full of tears. Fitz<sup>1</sup> and I, who were present, were struck speechless."

What a flood of light this throws on the character of the man who was supposed to be hard, taciturn, as unemotional as the Sphinx! "I never knew a worse estimate of a man's character than that", said Lord Derby, another of his intimate friends. Whatever regrets and misgivings were felt in Paris,

<sup>1</sup> "Fitz" was Lieutenant-Colonel O. A. FitzGerald, C.M.G., Kitchener's personal military secretary and devoted friend, who was drowned with his chief in the *Hampshire*.

"K." was himself again once he landed among his soldiers in Gallipoli. He was at home in the firing-line, and even though he had come prepared to confirm an avowal of failure, he was at least free for a time from baffling politicians and military critics. He visited Mudros, Helles, and Anzac, held conferences with the new Commander-in-Chief, and in the photographs taken during his inspections on the Peninsula wears the look of a man happy in feeling in his element again. He met all the leading officers, British and French, both in the southern zone and the northern battle-fields. The Anzacs gave him a rousing reception. His landing among them was unannounced, and only known in advance to very few of the senior officers; but the news of his arrival spread like wildfire among the troops, so that by the time he had reached the end of the landing-stage the men were out of every dug-out on the hillside and tumbling over one another in their eagerness to reach the beach in time.

"Australians", wrote Captain C. E. W. Bean, their official Press representative, in his account of this remarkable scene, "do not cheer readily, but as Lord Kitchener, accompanied by Generals Birdwood and Maxwell and others, passed the crowd along the beach the men spontaneously called for cheers and gave them again and again. It was purely a soldiers' welcome. Lord Kitchener many times turned to the men. 'His Majesty the King has asked me to tell you how splendidly he thinks you have done', he said; 'you have done excellently well. Better', he added, 'even than I thought you would.'"

Yet he always had the firmest belief in their fighting qualities. He had seen with his own eyes their dare-devil courage in the South African campaign, and had followed their military development with the closest interest since his visit to the Southern Cross after relinquishing the command in India. Now, six years later, he saw the finished product of the military systems which he had himself recommended both to Australia and New Zealand, and knew that his faith in their



manhood, and in his own ideals of citizenship as then expounded, had been abundantly justified.

“Without a pause”, to pick up the thread of Captain Bean’s narrative, “Lord Kitchener went straight up the steepest road in the Anzac area direct from the beach to the highest point in the old Anzac area, and in less than ten minutes one could see the tall figure stalking by the side of the little figure that all Anzac knows so well [General Birdwood] right at the top of the steep ascent. Most persons arrive at that summit breathless, but Lord Kitchener went straight up without a halt. He went through the front-line trench on the neck where the Light Horse had charged. The troops could scarcely be restrained from cheering him, although the Turks in places were within twenty yards, and the Anzac Staff had some moments of considerable anxiety at certain awkward corners all too visible to the Turkish snipers.”

He seemed to scorn danger. Another correspondent described him as in splendid form, “and very cheery, frequently speaking to men in the trenches”. Whatever doubts may have lingered in his mind before his arrival regarding the proposed evacuation of the peninsula they were all removed as a result of his investigations. The only question now remaining was the probable cost of the closing act of this ill-starred drama. “Remember,” he had told Sir Ian Hamilton, when his old and tried Chief of Staff in the South African campaign left to take command of the Gallipoli expedition some eight months before, “once you set foot in Gallipoli you must fight it through to a finish.” The finish was in sight, but it was not the finish for which Kitchener had hoped and planned. Heavily handicapped from the very first by Russia’s inability to co-operate with her promised invasion of the western shore of the Black Sea, and by the fall of M. Venizelos, which had countered all the plans for the active support of Greece, it had been doomed to failure chiefly by the dogged defence of an enemy fighting with every natural advantage in his favour, and the pressure of events on other fronts which prevented the



dispatch of adequate reinforcements when they were most urgently needed. There were other reasons, but these alone sufficed to account for the failure of a campaign which had inspired the highest hopes, as well as imperishable deeds of heroism.

It must have been in the midst of such mingled reflections that Lord Kitchener said good-bye to Anzac and its gallant warriors, after the two crowded hours in which he had contrived to take a thorough look at the position and to see almost every officer of note.

At Mudros, on Lemnos Island, in the Ægean Sea, he discussed the situation with Sir Charles Monro and other commanders, including Sir Henry MacMahon, High Commissioner for Egypt, and General Sir John Maxwell, then commanding the military forces in Egypt, who were consulted with reference to the possible effect of the evacuation of Gallipoli in Egypt and among the Arabs. To Mudros, also, went the British Minister at Athens, Sir Francis Elliot, as a preliminary to the meeting between Lord Kitchener and the King of Greece. It was reported at the time that King Constantine himself expressed a desire to meet the British Minister of War. "I am not much of a diplomatist," he said, according to the account afterwards given by the Greek Consul-General in London, "but I am a soldier, and to talk matters over with another soldier like Lord Kitchener will help matters."

Unfortunately the interview, which took place on 20th November, synchronized with the overwhelming triumph of the arms of Germany and her Allies in Serbia, and the obvious failure of the Franco-British campaign in Gallipoli. It was all too clear, too, not only that the Entente Powers were unable to save the Serbian army, whose only roads to safety now lay through Albania, but that their own forces in the Balkans might soon be in an equally precarious position. The Tenth British Division—Ireland's contribution to Kitchener's "First

Hundred Thousand"—had arrived in the previous month from Suvla Bay under Lieutenant-General Sir Bryan Mahon. The Irishmen, who were holding the lines in Serbia which they were to defend so heroically in the following month, had been preceded by two French Divisions under General Sarrail, presently appointed to the supreme command of all the Allied forces based on Salonika.

At this critical juncture, as already mentioned, the attitude of Greece was none too clear. The Germanic Powers had threatened, that since the Entente armies had taken Salonika as their base, and were sending their armies through Greek territory to Serbia, they would dispatch their own victorious armies across the Serbian frontier in order to hurl the invaders into the sea. It was rightly argued on the Allies' side that the ordinary rules of neutrality could not apply in the case of Greece, since the troops landed had been sent at her own invitation in order that the duties of Greece as the ally of Serbia might be fulfilled—duties which she herself was now unable or unwilling to fulfil. The influence of the Central Powers in Greece, however, was strong enough to warrant the suspicion that she might be persuaded to throw in her lot with them, now that they were at the zenith of their power in the Balkans, notwithstanding her hatred of their other confederates, the Bulgarians. In that eventuality the fate of the Franco-British force in its inevitable withdrawal from Serbia would have been sealed.

Lord Kitchener, to come to his delicate meeting with King Constantine, was accompanied to Athens by his Military Secretary, Lieutenant-Colonel FitzGerald, as well as by Sir Henry MacMahon and General Sir John Maxwell. Arriving in the Piræus in one British warship, and escorted by another, he was received on board by the British Minister, Sir F. Elliot, Colonel Metaxes, of the Greek General Staff, and Captain Staikos, representing the Greek Minister of War. Landing



Official photograph

LORD KITCHENER EMBARKING FOR ATHENS IN A BRITISH DESTROYER—H.M.S. L'AFREY

During his tour in the Eastern Mediterranean, November, 1915





at 11 a.m. from one of the warship's launches the visitors, all dressed in service uniform, proceeded by motor-cars to the British Legation at Athens, where crowds of curious sightseers gathered to discuss the great soldier whose coming had given rise to the usual crop of extravagant rumours and suppositions. Lord Kitchener's handsome, dominating personality did not fail to impress the crowd, which, rapidly increasing in numbers, was kept in order by gendarmes outside the Legation, while the military guarded the neighbouring streets and squares. At 11.30 the British War Minister left by motor-car for the Royal Palace, where his audience with the king lasted an hour.

What took place at the interview we have no means of knowing, but to a *Times* correspondent His Majesty afterwards expressed his gratitude for Lord Kitchener's mission, as well as for that of the French representative, M. Denys Cochin. "With these two gentlemen", it was officially announced, "the King has fully discussed the situation, and he trusts that many clouds may be dispersed by their visit." Lord Kitchener also had a long interview with M. Skouloudis, then Prime Minister, after which the well-informed correspondent already referred to learnt that "these conversations have had the good result of warranting more favourable views with regard to the prospect of a settlement of the question of the treatment of Allied troops who may cross over from Serbian into Greek territory". Whatever the character of the conversations this particular crisis was tided over. When, after the visits of Lord Kitchener and M. Denys Cochin, the heroic remnants of the Serbian army succeeded in making good their retreat through Albania, and the Bulgarians, foiled of their prey, strove to drive a wedge between the French and British armies on the Serbian front, there was no longer any immediate fear of treachery on the part of Greece.

That the Bulgarians failed in their desperate efforts to

isolate the Allied armies was chiefly due to the fine fighting qualities of Sir Bryan Mahon's seasoned troops. The Franco-British forces were withdrawn without further opposition from the Bulgarians after the severe grueling which these received from the British Tenth Division on the 6th, 7th, and 8th of December; and the intimation that the Allies intended to proceed to the defensive line selected was received in good part by the Greek generals. "They commenced", afterwards wrote Sir Charles Monro, "to withdraw their troops further to the east, where they did not hamper our plans, and they showed a disposition to meet our demands in a reasonable and friendly spirit." It was not long before General Sarrail was able to convert Salonika into a position which offered the Bulgarians few inducements to attack, even with the help of such men as the Austrians, Turks, and Germans could spare to assist them; and the pleasant project of flinging the Franco-British armies into the sea had perforce to be abandoned.

The British War Minister's visit to Athens was vividly recalled in that city when news of his dramatic death was received just seven months later. One of the first messages of sympathy was received from the President of the Greek Chamber of Deputies. It was to the following effect:—

"On behalf of the Greek Chamber of Deputies I have the honour to request your Lordship to express to the House of Lords their deep sympathy and regret at the grievous loss of one of their most eminent members, and to assure their Lordships of the very real share which they take in the sorrow of the British nation at losing in the person of Lord Kitchener not only one of the most glorious of her sons, but also one of the greatest figures of our time, whose name will remain enshrined in the memory of the Greek people as that of a true friend of Greece."

When Lord Kitchener had completed his mission to Athens on 20th November he returned to the British warship, and left, to quote from the meagre accounts allowed to be published at the time, "for an unknown destination". It was



not without significance that among those who had attended the lunch and reception in his honour at the British Legation was the Italian Minister, Count Bosdari. The next news of the British War Minister was that he had arrived in Rome on the 26th, and was engaged in fruitful discussions regarding Italy's share in the war in general and in the Balkans in particular. For the time at least Italy had far too much indispensable strategical work on her own frontier to engage in any side-shows abroad, even on behalf of the threatened State of Montenegro, of which Queen Elena of Italy was a princess, and which was shortly to share the unhappy fate of Serbia. But Italy was at one in her approval of the plans, which Lord Kitchener doubtless discussed, for the closer co-ordination of effort among all the Allies. It was only a week or so after his visit that she signed the Compact of London, to which France, Russia, and Japan, together with Great Britain, were already parties, agreeing not only that none of the signatory Powers would conclude peace separately during the war, but also that none of them would demand conditions of peace without the previous agreement of each of the Allies, thus proving the complete solidarity and interdependence of the five Powers. Italy also, not long afterwards, as a preliminary to sending her own expeditionary force to Salonika in the following summer, definitely joined in the Balkan campaign by holding open, with naval and other forces, the way of escape from Albania of the retreating Serbian and Montenegrin armies, thus preserving some of the finest fighting-men in Europe for the future struggle for the recovery of their native lands.

To what extent these welcome developments of Italy's share in the war in the closing months of 1915 were discussed during the visit of Lord Kitchener we cannot say, but his arrival in Rome was universally taken as a sign of Italy's closer co-operation with the other Entente Powers. By all classes of the community and every section of the Press he was welcomed

as an organizer of victory and great leader of men; and was received with enthusiasm wherever he went. On his arrival on Friday morning, 26th November, he proceeded with the British Ambassador, Sir Rennell Rodd, to the Ministry of the Interior, the Prime Minister's Department, where he conferred with Signor Salandra. Then followed a visit to the Consulta, where the Field-Marshal and the Ambassador had a similar conference with Baron Sonnino, Minister of Foreign Affairs. This was followed by a lunch in Lord Kitchener's honour at the British Embassy, the guests including Signor Zupelli, Minister of War, Signor Martini, Colonial Minister, and Signor Elia, Under-Secretary of War. Afterwards General Porro, Deputy Chief of the Italian General Staff, had a somewhat lengthy interview with Lord Kitchener at the British Embassy, and at half-past three the illustrious visitor, accompanied by Sir Rennell and Lady Rodd, proceeded to the French Embassy.

Early the same evening Lord Kitchener concluded his flying visit to Rome by departing for the Italian Army Headquarters at the front, to confer with King Victor Emmanuel and General Cadorna, the Italian Commander-in-Chief. The importance of all these events was summed up in an inspired note published at the time by the *Giornale d'Italia*:—

“This is the time for action rather than for pleasant and often inconclusive visits. We may therefore conclude that in these conferences to-day between Lord Kitchener and the Italian Ministers the methods of common action by the Allies in the Balkan Orient were decided upon.”

A full programme was also arranged for the following day, spent with the Italian army in the field. Here Lord Kitchener saw at first hand the formidable nature of Italy's stupendous task, and was deeply impressed with the brilliant qualities displayed by her army in steadily accomplishing it. All through the summer and autumn of 1915 the Italians had been consolidating their 500 miles of mountainous frontier preparatory



to a great offensive in the following year, meanwhile seizing every possible point of vantage, and holding some 800,000 picked Austrian troops much after the fashion of the Allies in the winter campaign on the Western front. It was not spectacular warfare so far as territorial gains were concerned, but only by such preliminary spade-work could the Italians hope eventually to dislodge the Austrians from all their threatening positions along the mountainous frontier. Their advance had been slow, but it had been methodical and scientific, and far from barren of material results, some 30,000 prisoners and a number of guns, as well as about fifty machine-guns and great quantities of ammunition, having been placed to their credit before the arrival of Lord Kitchener. During his brief visit the British War Minister, who travelled over part of the front on the lower and middle Isonzo, and was particularly struck with the daring and almost incredible ingenuity of the Italian troops in this amazing campaign among the mountains with modern weapons, conferred the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath upon General Cadorna, and the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George upon General Porro, King Victor Emmanuel at the same time personally decorating the British Field-Marshal with the Grand Cross of the Military Order of Savoy.

On the following (Sunday) morning Lord Kitchener, with his suite of five officers in uniform, arrived at Milan from the Italian front, travelling by special train from Udine to Maestre, where a special carriage was linked to the express from Venice to Milan. Here he had two hours to wait before continuing his journey to Turin and Paris, and spent the time in making a round of the city. Escorted by Lieutenant Pirelli, the party first visited the Archæological Museum and Art Gallery in the historic Sforzesco Castle, travelling in two motor-cars, and afterwards drove to the Restaurant Cova for lunch. Lord Kitchener's arrival in Milan had not been announced, but his



distinguished presence was soon recognized, and he was everywhere greeted with fervent enthusiasm. A crowd had collected at the station to await his return, and gave him a hearty send-off as the express left Milan at 12.50 a.m. When Lord Kitchener reached London at the end of this eventful tour he sent the following message to General Cadorna, afterwards, with General Cadorna's reply, telegraphed from Rome by Reuter's correspondent:—

“On my return from my visit to Italy I desire again to thank your Excellency for the courteous and cordial reception accorded me at the Head-quarters Staff of the Italian army during my necessarily brief visit.

“I hope that your Excellency will at the same time allow me to send the cordial greetings of a soldier to the General Staff, to your Excellency, and to the whole Italian army. I have carefully followed its operations, and can only express my admiration for the skill of its leaders, its general efficiency, and the tenacious bravery with which the whole army is fulfilling the task confided to it. I have been able to see with my own eyes the nature of this task and the splendid manner in which the Italian army is accomplishing it.

“I am full of confidence that the spirit shown by the Italian soldier will lead to victory.

(Signed) KITCHENER.”

General Cadorna replied:—

“The expert criticism which you have been good enough to express in your message, which recognizes the completeness and efficiency of the military action which Italy is proceeding to develop, will be learnt with great satisfaction by the Italian army, because it comes from the highest military person in Great Britain.

“I thank you for the soldier's greeting which you sent to the Italian army, to the officers of my General Staff, and to myself, and cordially reciprocate them. I am happy to have had the opportunity of personally knowing the illustrious general who has known how to create formidable English armies which with the Allies are fighting in the firm confidence of final victory for the triumph of civilization against the common enemy.”

A touching sequel to these telegrams was the sympathy expressed by King Victor Emmanuel and the whole Italian nation when Britain had so soon to mourn the loss of her greatest soldier—"a loss", telegraphed the Italian Commander-in-Chief, "which is a grief to all the Allied nations". In his reply General Robertson told General Cadorna that Lord Kitchener had "often recalled with pleasure the visit which he had the privilege of paying to the Italian front, and of the meeting which he had with your Excellency in London. His serene confidence in the ultimate success of the cause in which the Allies are engaged was and will continue to be a source of inspiration to us all." The tidings of Lord Kitchener's fate was received throughout Italy, writes one correspondent, "as the blow of a family bereavement". He was always immensely popular there, and had made himself doubly so by the following happy phrase during his last brief visit, which had been proudly published by the national Press: "Every Englishman has two Fatherlands—Old England and Young Italy". It was during Lord Kitchener's visit to Italy that he also met General Sarrail, commanding the Allied forces at Salonika. Their two interviews on Italian soil were the only occasions on which they met, though, as General Sarrail afterwards remarked to a special correspondent of the *Morning Post*, he knew that his name was a household word with every soldier on the French front.

"What", he added, "we all especially admired was his extraordinary genius for organization, and the firmness, tenacity, and thoroughness with which he carried out all the military as well as the polemical work he undertook. I well remember our two meetings. What struck me first was the fine, tall figure and its soldierly bearing. We discussed at length many important and delicate questions, and I was charmed not only with the manner and extent of Lord Kitchener's knowledge of the minutest details of the subjects discussed, but his wonderfully complete knowledge of the French language, and more especially of the technical terms and



phrases relating to all such topics, whereby the deliberations were immensely facilitated and an interpreter was wholly unnecessary."

It is time, however, to return to the last stage of Lord Kitchener's Eastern tour, which brought him back to France in time for important conferences in Paris on Monday, 29th November, 1915, conferences doubtless summoned to discuss at once the complete results of his mission. The hour of his arrival at the Gare de Lyon in the morning had been kept secret, but he was met by officers representing General Gallieni, Minister for War, and was warmly received on being recognized, leaving by motor-car amid the cheers of a number of French soldiers on leave, who had congregated at the station. He lunched with the President, M. Poincaré, and afterwards attended a conference at which, besides M. Poincaré and General Gallieni, M. Briand, General Joffre, and General Jilinsky, Aide-de-Camp to the Tsar, and former Chief of the Russian General Staff, were present. Leaving Paris shortly afterwards he was back at his Kentish home, Broome Park, the same night. He had been away rather more than three weeks, in the course of which he had visited the battle fronts on different theatres of war, had audience of two reigning sovereigns, and conferred with the leaders of three Governments. Next morning, 30th November, saw him again in London, where, two days later, he attended the meeting of the Cabinet Council in his capacity as Secretary of State for War, thus giving the *coup de grâce* to the rumours still lingering about town regarding his official position. On the following Saturday, 4th December, 1915, he made one of his last voyages abroad, when, with the Prime Minister and Mr. Balfour, accompanied by their naval and military advisers, he took part in a conference at Calais with M. Briand, President of the Council of Ministers, General Gallieni, Minister for War, and Admiral Lacaze, Minister of Marine. The Council lasted from



2.30 until 6 in the evening, when the Ministers left again for London and Paris respectively.

Lord Kitchener's visit to Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean, as will already have been seen, was not unconnected with the development of the Allied Council of War, which, for the first time, co-ordinated the efforts of all the Allies, so that when the day came for the next great offensive the full strength of their whole force might be exercised at the psychological moment. Hitherto far too much of the Allies' strength had been dissipated in isolated action, while the Central Powers, on the other hand, had been fighting from the first under absolute unity of direction, and with the further advantage of operating on interior lines. The need for closer and constant co-operation among the Allies had long been recognized, and steps had been made to meet it by the interchange of distinguished Staff officers and military attachés, but it was not until the first meeting of the Allied War Council in Paris towards the end of November, 1915, while Lord Kitchener was on his way home, that complete co-ordination was possible. The British representatives were Mr. Asquith, Viscount (then Sir Edward) Grey, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Balfour, accompanied, among others, by the First Sea Lord, by Sir William Robertson, then Chief of Sir John French's General Staff, and by Colonel Hankey, of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

The formation of the Allied War Council may be said to mark the turning point in the war. The Germanic Powers, having, as Lord Kitchener prophesied, "shot their bolt" in Russia before the end of October, and subsequently crushed Serbia without annihilating the Serbian army, had at length passed the zenith of their strength, though they were to make one supreme effort on the Western front, as well as on the Italian frontier, in the following year. The lull in the fighting which succeeded the autumn campaigns of 1915 on all fronts was bound to tell in favour of the side possessing the greatest

resources in men and munitions, and with practically all the rest of the world to draw on for its supplies. It was during this lull that Sir John French, after sixteen months of severe and incessant strain, relinquished the command of the British armies in France and Flanders—to be rewarded with the viscounty he had so richly deserved, and to be succeeded by his right-hand man, General Sir Douglas Haig.

F. A. M.

## CHAPTER IX

### Kitchener as a Parliamentarian

His Distaste for the House—Personal Sketch of Lord Kitchener in the Lords—As Cabinet Minister—Critics in the Commons—His Conference with them shortly before his Death.

**L**ORD KITCHENER was no parliamentarian. He frankly disliked that part of his duties as Secretary of State for War which took him into the parliamentary arena. Completely unfitted for it by gifts and training, he made little or no real attempt to enter into the spirit of the House of Lords, or to meet politicians in open debate. Only on one occasion, indeed, during the whole period did he come down to the House other than for the special and particular purpose of using it as the necessary platform from which to make public statements on the progress of the war. He was ever a being different and apart from his fellow-peers, including the ministerial colleagues among whom he sat on the Government bench. How Lord Kitchener would have succeeded had he taken a different view of his parliamentary duties is a matter for speculation. By common consent he was an extremely busy man; and we know, at least, that he succeeded magnificently in his main great achievement in spite of the fact that he regarded his visits to Parliament as in the nature of a bore.

Before there was any thought of his becoming War Minister, before even the idea of Great Britain being engaged in a great war had crossed the public mind, Earl Kitchener appeared in the House of Lords. The date was 29th July,



1914. He came, on the eve of his anticipated return to Egypt, to take his seat and subscribe the roll on his elevation in the peerage from the rank of Viscount to that of Earl, and he was supported by Earl Roberts and the Earl of Powis. This appearance attracted no special notice. But a few days later Lord Kitchener's name was on everyone's lips. On the morning of 6th August he formally became the war-time Secretary of State. An interval of nearly three weeks passed before he addressed the House of Lords.

It is a difficult place in which to make oneself heard, and Kitchener had none of the arts of oratory. His voice was always strong, but at times rather thick. In our time the two greatest masters of voice in the House of Lords have been the late Marquess of Salisbury and the Earl of Rosebery. The speeches of Lord Kitchener did not ring through the Gilded Chamber in the least degree as great orations. They were businesslike statements, and a speech which is read never can have the same effect as an extempore deliverance. Kitchener read all his speeches from typewritten manuscript. They were not of his own composing. All he did was to supply an outline of what he wished to say, and the finished speech in due course appeared on his table. If he had time he would revise it. As a rule such revisions as he made were towards rendering his sentences more euphonious. He possessed a sense of the harmonious arrangement of sounds in composition, and this was the principal quality he would look out for when he scanned the manuscript of a speech before leaving the War Office for the House. As soon as his speech was delivered it was put into circulation for the Press from Whitehall—a wise and convenient arrangement, since Lord Kitchener read his speeches so rapidly that a strictly accurate report in the first person from a position acoustically so imperfect as the Press Gallery of the House of Lords could hardly have been guaranteed.

Every eye was upon him as he spoke—the tall, spectacled soldier in mufti, perfectly groomed, who stood at the table, hardly ever raising his eyes from the long typewritten page, and in a level voice, without gesture or dramatic embroidery of any sort, uttered straightforward words that went round the world. The importance which attached to Lord Kitchener's speeches was due not only to the interest felt in his remarkable personality. Another factor exercised equal influence. In the early days of the war complaints were rife against the secrecy which veiled the operations of the British army. People spoke of "this anonymous war". The grievance necessarily assumed larger proportions by reason of the fact that the press was not taken into the confidence of the Government at that time, as it was subsequently. Since full authoritative news was lacking, imaginative persons found free scope to indulge in rumours, many of which were totally without foundation, and some of which were malicious. In such an atmosphere the speeches of Lord Kitchener were as a great steady light to the nation. The people trusted him. They took his word. They knew he would neither hide the truth nor colour it. If Kitchener said that things were going well, or refrained from saying that things were going badly, the attempts of anyone else to disturb the confidence of the British public became so much wasted effort.

He made altogether thirteen appearances in the House of Lords. His first speech as Secretary of State for War was also his maiden speech in Parliament, though he had been sixteen years a peer. It was delivered on 25th August, 1914, when the Expeditionary Force had been in France eight days. A large number of peers came down to hear him, and cheered repeatedly in the restrained fashion which characterizes their lordships. To an assembly which instinctively distrusts emotion and ostentation, Lord Kitchener's manner naturally commended itself. He was calm, serious, determined; and if he did not



give much information, at least his style was as free from innuendo as it was and continued to be from personalities. Only his opening words struck a personal note about himself, to which none of his subsequent speeches reverted.

“As this is the first time that I have had the honour of addressing your lordships”, he said, “I must ask for the indulgence of the House. In the first place I desire to make a personal statement. Noble lords on both sides of the House doubtless know that while associating myself in the fullest degree for the prosecution of the war with my colleagues in His Majesty’s Government, my position on this bench does not in any way imply that I belong to any political party, for as a soldier I have no politics. Another point is that my occupation of the post of Secretary of State for War is a temporary one. The terms of my service are the same as those under which some of the finest portions of our manhood, now so willingly stepping forward to join the colours, are engaging—that is to say, for the war, or if it lasts longer than three years, then for three years. It has been asked why the latter limit has been fixed. It is because, should this disastrous war be prolonged—and no one can foretell with any certainty its duration—then after three years’ war there will be others fresh and fully prepared to take our places and see this matter through.”

As a general rule nothing happened after Lord Kitchener’s statements on the progress of the war—never a debate based upon his speech, and rarely even a commentary. But his second speech (17th September) announced the grant of increased separation allowances for the wives of Regulars and Territorials, and was welcomed by the Marquess of Lansdowne. Lord Harris put a question, on the subject of allowances to widows of those who fell in the war, and received an assurance from Lord Kitchener that the matter was under consideration. His third speech, which he followed with two brief supplementary statements, was commented upon by Earl Curzon (26th November). His fourth was on 6th January, 1915. In his fifth speech (15th March, 1915) Lord Kitchener dwelt impressively on the effect of labour troubles upon the conduct of the



war; while in the next (18th May) he announced the British intention to meet the use of poisonous gas by the enemy. His tenth speech (17th February, 1916) was on the subject of German air raids, of which the country now had had over a year's experience, and on which the debate was initiated by Lord Oranmore and Browne. Four weeks later (15th March) he spoke on the Military Service Act and exemptions under it, following the Earl of Derby, who six months previously had been installed at the War Office as Director-General of Recruiting. The twelfth speech, on 4th May, was a brief tribute (for which a question on the notice paper by Lord Beresford afforded the peg<sup>1</sup>) to General Townshend and his troops, who had been obliged to surrender at Kut. Four days later Earl Kitchener made his last appearance at the House and answered questions by Viscount Midleton with regard to army casualties incurred in quelling the Irish rebellion.

In the Upper House Lord Midleton was the chief potential critic of Kitchener's administration—the formation of the Coalition in May, 1915, took others into the Ministry themselves. But on no occasion did anyone succeed in putting Lord Kitchener on the defensive in regard to his department. He rendered quite exceptional the position which he held by sheer force of character. He came down to the House—and came with soldierly punctuality—when and because he had business there, and once the business was over, returned as quickly as possible to the War Office. Lord Midleton once asked when another statement on the history of the war was to be forthcoming from the Secretary of State. It sounded like a hint that Lord Kitchener spoke too seldom. "I have tried", was his reply, "to choose those periods on which the statements could be of most interest and could give some final point of the war." If there were any peers who thought Lord Kitchener was going to let himself be drawn into general

<sup>1</sup> Lord Charles Beresford was created a peer in January, 1916.

debate, they gradually learnt that they had misunderstood the rôle which he had assigned to himself. The most notable discovery of this sort was made by Lord Midleton in the days of the Liberal Government, when, early in 1915, the House of Lords stole a march upon the Commons by assembling on three days and debating various aspects of the war several weeks before the House of Commons was due to meet. A statement by Lord Kitchener on the progress of the war was a feature of one of those sittings (6th January), and Lord Curzon expressed the wish that the statement had been double as long and double as full. This occasion was marked by no fewer than four interjections by Lord Kitchener during Lord Curzon's speech, which dealt mainly with the Indian forces. Perhaps Lord Kitchener felt he must never allow himself to be drawn out of his habitual reserve again even to that extent. At any rate there was soon to be a test. Two days later a subject of which Lord Midleton had given notice came up for discussion—"to call attention to the future part to be taken by the British forces in the military operations in Europe, and to ask what steps His Majesty's Government intend to take to ensure the constant supply of reinforcements and drafts from Great Britain and Ireland". The House met in a state of mild curiosity as to how Lord Kitchener would treat this challenge. And Lord Kitchener's absence supplied the answer.

Lord Midleton did not hide his disappointment. "I regret to say", he began, "that I have received a letter from the noble and gallant Earl, the Secretary of State for War, saying that he is afraid he will be unable to be in his place in your lordships' House this afternoon owing to the very urgent pressure of business in his office. I am sure we all sympathize with the preoccupations of the War Minister, and would wish to make them as light as possible, but it is a matter of regret to us that in circumstances closely and almost exclusively affecting his office we have not the



advantage of his presence." The debate proceeded, though someone referred to "the play without Hamlet". It appeared that Lord Midleton wanted to know the monthly intake of recruits upon which Lord Kitchener counted. Lord Lucas, on behalf of the Government, refused the information.

One impromptu reply by Lord Kitchener stands on record, and no one who is versed in the proceedings and personages of Parliament will read it without a smile. Being asked whether he could not tell the House in general terms what share of the war expenditure of £5,000,000 a day was due to the subsidiary expeditions as compared with the cost of the main force in France and Flanders, he answered: "As regards the financial position of the various expeditions in which we are engaged, it would be difficult without notice to give any definite figures. But I may say that the principal army of this country is in France and Flanders, that the expenditure is in France and Flanders, and that the subsidiary expeditions are small from the financial aspect in comparison with the expenditure which is taking place in the main theatres of the war." Need it be said that no one pursued the point? The House then rose, and the subject was never reopened.

One theory of Lord Kitchener's parliamentary manner—and it does not deserve to be lightly dismissed as the wrong one—is that it was due to certain limitations of intellectual resource. It cannot be said that he was a ready man in argument. Nor was he, apparently, as rapid of decision later as he had been in his middle career. As a young man his mind worked steadily rather than swiftly. Lieutenant-General Sir W. T. Shone,<sup>1</sup> who was a contemporary of Lord Kitchener at the Royal Military Academy, retains the impression that in his cadet days at Woolwich "he was slow and took longer than most fellows to assimilate knowledge". Both were young

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Terence Shone, K.C.B., D.S.O., was Director-General of Military Works in India 1901-3.



officers of the Royal Engineers at Chatham, and then their careers diverged.

“I only remember seeing him once after we left Chatham”, says General Shone in the course of a letter to the writer, “till he came to India as Commander-in-Chief. We then met at the Delhi Durbar in January, 1903, and I was greatly struck at the rapidity with which he grasped the important points in a question and at once gave a decision. This was very different from the cadet days, and was no doubt due to the fact that he often found himself in positions in his early days in Egypt where he was obliged to come to decisions on his own responsibility. Though not clever, he had plenty of common sense, and so, finding his decisions turned out well, he presumably acquired that confidence in himself which was not marked when he was a cadet.”

General Shone left India shortly after the Delhi Durbar, and he never met Lord Kitchener again. But there are those in a position to take up the history of Lord Kitchener's mental growth, and continue it into the period of his membership of the War Cabinets of 1914-16, who hold—paradoxical as it sounds—that at the climax of his career he was in certain respects past his best. It may have been that the mental agility of Lord Kitchener bore a peculiar affinity to the atmosphere of the East, and that on returning to this country after his long divorce from British life he found himself rather at a disadvantage in the position of a Cabinet Minister, having as colleagues party politicians whose normal business he probably regarded as that of contradicting one another. His intimate friend, Lord Esher, admitted that “Lord K.”, as he called him, was at his worst in council.

“The aloofness of the desert places in which his youth had been spent was round about him in the council chamber. He refused to lay bare his inmost thoughts; and he sought to command, when he was expected to discuss. In argument he was a child before the thrusts of the keenly fashioned weapons wielded by his colleagues. He would return from a long Cabinet, drop into a chair at York House, so weary and undone that further labour seemed impossible. Yet he would be

found at the War Office after a short interval, grappling with the work he did so well, which a convention had interrupted. . . . Lord K.'s towering personality and forceful character were apt to sweep men off their feet, but in later years, when age began to tell, his impressiveness varied according to his bodily vigour. When rested and unharassed, he seemed to the casual stranger to have in him the spirit of the holy gods. Often it was otherwise. Recently I had occasion, in the early morning, to hear him unfold his views on the political strategy of the war, as its prospects appeared to him. He was unwearied and fresh, and his mind played over the vast area of the war with a clearness of vision and a logical sequence that would have astonished those who had seen him in less incisive moods. I saw him again that same day, after a prolonged Cabinet sitting, and the virtue had gone out of him."<sup>1</sup>

In the House of Commons Lord Kitchener's critics were a small but growing body. The War Office was ably represented by the Under-Secretary, Mr. H. J. Tennant, who had held the position a considerable time, and knew the work thoroughly. Upon Mr. Tennant fell the brunt of criticism which to a large extent would have been borne by the Secretary of State himself had the latter been a parliamentary gladiator anxious only to confront and confound his critics. Most of the mistakes and mysteries in the conduct of the war led to a stream of criticism being directed against the War Office. For a long time, however, only nice things were said about Lord Kitchener. Members endeavoured to criticize the War Office without criticizing him, or to attack the Liberal Government during the first ten months of the war without attacking him. "If I venture to say anything about the War Office", observed Major Baird in that period, "it would be to remind everybody of the fact that this wonderful organizer, who in the time of our greatest stress fortunately was available to save the country, served his apprenticeship in the land where we first heard of making bricks without straw, learning the job so well that he has turned out an amazing quantity of bricks of

<sup>1</sup> "Lord K.," by Lord Esher. *National Review*, July, 1916.



an extraordinarily fine quality." "I do not believe", was Mr. Walter Long's tribute about the same time, "the nation can ever repay the debt we owe to those who at the War Office have done such wonderful things." Such was the temper in April, 1915.

But by November, though the coming of the Coalition in the meantime had made the majority of members refrain from speaking to a greater extent than before, a new note crept in. Lord Charles Beresford made a speech in which he held that it was absolutely wrong that Lord Kitchener, "the Minister of War, or rather the Commander-in-Chief in the War", should be in the Cabinet.

"He would be much stronger outside," said the admiral M.P. "What does he do? Suppose he argues that he wants men. But the question of getting men if the present scheme fails is a most abstruse, difficult, political question about which there may be all sorts of different opinions. There is the question of the trade unions, of the miners, of my own country Ireland. What does the Commander-in-Chief know about these things? Nothing whatever. Yet he has, I suppose, to argue about these things. His business is to run the war. He has nothing whatever to do with the political features. His business is to take a sheet of paper and say to the Cabinet: 'I want so many men and such munitions on every Monday fortnight'. He has no business with how these are to be got. He is wasting his time considering that. He ought to be in his office. Supposing it was said by those concerned that we can, or we cannot, get the men. Suppose he is told, when he says 'I want so many men', that they cannot be got. He will probably say, 'I must re-form my front, my reserves, my supports, and I think the war will last three or four years'. That is his business. There should not be the least bit of friction with his own colleagues. He ought, I believe, to let his own colleagues know what he is going to say in the House of Lords. The country has great confidence in him and he has great power, but I maintain that as long as he has a seat in the Cabinet he stultifies himself."

A stern and unbending Radical member, Sir Thomas



Whittaker, though frowning upon any suggestion that a change should be made now, owned to a very strong conviction that a mistake was committed at the outset in appointing a soldier to be Secretary of State for War. Another Radical baronet of a more censorious habit of mind was Sir Arthur Markham. He blamed Lord Kitchener for allowing retired officers to return to the War Office, alleging that those "dug-outs" were incapable of building up a great business organization such as was essentially necessary. Lord Kitchener, he added, among other prejudiced charges, had never had any experience of administration on a sufficiently large scale, and the Government which gave him powers to centralize the administration of the War Office must now bear the responsibility.

Advocates of compulsory service in both Houses were intensely displeased with Lord Kitchener on account of his acquiescence in the voluntary system up to the very last moment. In determining his attitude to this question Lord Kitchener founded himself very largely upon the course pursued by Mr. Asquith. A section of the people considered the Prime Minister's policy the highest wisdom, inasmuch as his gradual approach to compulsion corresponded with the rate of movement of public opinion in that direction, and that thereby he kept the nation united. Others saw in Mr. Asquith only the skilled practitioner of a lazy opportunism—certainly he followed the line of least resistance. Untutored in the political mind of the country, Lord Kitchener may well have been content to take his cue from the Prime Minister—to deliver no ultimatum to the Cabinet on the subject of men, but rather to wait and see. He must have known fully the opinions and leanings of all his colleagues, because he was most regular and punctual in attendance at Cabinet meetings, and he admired the skill with which Mr. Asquith kept his Government united on the question.

Criticism in the Commons came to a head on 31st May,

when Major-General Sir Ivor Herbert, who had repeatedly shown his lack of confidence in Lord Kitchener's administration, took the formal course which is ordinarily taken in the case of a political Minister whose administration is about to be reviewed, and moved to reduce the "token" Vote for the War Office by £100, in respect of the salary of the Secretary of State. The Prime Minister's defence of Lord Kitchener was notable for the statement—which Colonel Churchill corroborated in the same debate—that Lord Kitchener had not sought the office, that he had indeed been reluctant to accept it. "I say with the utmost sincerity and earnestness", Mr. Asquith declared amid cheers, "that I think the Army, the country, and the Empire are under a debt which cannot be measured in words for the services Lord Kitchener has rendered since the beginning of the war." And a rebuke was administered to the critics by Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, who said he had been reminded of the words of the boatswain in the opening of *The Tempest*. When the passengers came up on deck during the storm and gave trouble, the boatswain said: "You mar our labour . . . you do assist the storm."

Sir Ivor Herbert's motion was of course negatived, but before this stage of the debate Mr. Tennant made an announcement which took the House by surprise. It was that Lord Kitchener felt that considerable advantage would be gained if he had an opportunity of conferring with any honourable members who might wish to see him, and personally to give information on points of difficulty or doubt. He would be glad to see members at the War Office on the following Friday at 11.30. Later, the Foreign Office was suggested as the meeting-place, as there might not be sufficient accommodation at the War Office. But in the end the historic meeting on 2nd June, 1916, between Lord Kitchener and his critics took place in Committee Room No. 14 at the House of Commons. Lord Kitchener on this occasion came down in uniform. The meet-



LORD KITCHENER LEAVING THE WAR OFFICE  
TO FACE HIS CRITICS

Lord Kitchener's last public appearance was at the meeting with the House of Commons critics of his administration, which took place on 2nd June, 1916, two days before his departure for Russia





ing, which was private, resulted in a complete triumph for the War Minister. His speech was not published, and all that the public were permitted to know of what passed is contained in this brief official statement:—

“A considerable number of the members of the House of Commons met Lord Kitchener and members of the staff of the War Office in conference this morning. Mr. Whitley, the Chairman of Committees, presided. Lord Kitchener made a statement reviewing certain aspects of the war, and replying to recent criticisms of army administration. Subsequently he answered a number of questions put to him, of which some had been previously handed in. The answers to a few questions were postponed in order that the necessary information might be collected. They are being sent by letter to the members concerned. The proceedings closed with a vote of thanks proposed by the Right Hon. W. Crooks, and seconded by Major-General Sir Ivor Herbert.”

One of his principal critics, it will be observed, seconded the vote of thanks. Members after the meeting summed up their verdict in the words: “Lord Kitchener is firmer in the saddle than ever”.

Thus happily was Lord Kitchener's career as a parliamentarian fated to end. A clever young lady, who enjoyed exceptional opportunity of hearing various first-hand impressions of him at this period of his life, sums up her study of him in a phrase: “Lord Kitchener was not a man, but a poster”. Justice to the memory of the late Sir Arthur Markham requires the admission that he had said that too, adding: “he was a very good poster”. We may indeed say that there were no bounds to the people's trust in him. During those uphill days of the war, when the greatest British army had to be raised and trained and equipped, the name of Kitchener was the unfailing stimulus. If he was “a poster”, never in our history was poster so effective or indispensable.

G. T.

## CHAPTER X

### The Closing Act

The Battle of Jutland—Sir David Beatty's Action—Sir John Jellicoe's Appearance—Fog cuts off the Action—The Dispatches—A Review of the General Situation—Russia's Summer Campaign—Lord Kitchener's Mission to Russia—His Staff—Embarkation on the *Hampshire*—The Gale—Mine or Explosion?—The *Hampshire* founders—Reception of the News in London—The King's Army Order—National Grief—Fragments of the Story—Tributes to Lord Kitchener—The Dominions and the Allies—The Funeral Service—The Last Post.

ON the afternoon of Wednesday, 31st May, 1916, the British Grand Fleet met the German High Seas Fleet, and after an engagement, which is known to us as the Battle of Jutland and to the Germans as the Skager Rack Battle, drove it back to its harbours. The point where Sir John Jellicoe deployed his main fleet to fight what he hoped would be a decisive action is a little over 200 miles from Heligoland, the German advanced base, and a little under 400 from the chief British bases on the North Sea coast.

The action began at twenty minutes past two, when Sir David Beatty, with the First and Second Battle-cruiser Squadrons and a screen of light cruisers and destroyers, was steaming northwards in the direction of the advance of Sir John Jellicoe and the main fleet. Moving on a wide front, with his scouts spread fanwise in front of him, he was looking for the enemy. On the right wing of the fan the German fleet was first sighted towards the north-east. At once two squadrons of Beatty's light cruisers pressed rapidly forward to get in touch with



them, while the Battle-cruiser Squadron was swung round so as to cut off the German ships from Heligoland. A sea-plane sent up from one of his scouts, the *Engadine*, told him the strength of the enemy's forces—five battle-cruisers—and he at once formed his ships into line.

Behind the First and Second Battle-cruiser Squadrons the Fifth Battle Squadron, of four ships, followed some five miles distant. The battle-cruisers were strung out in echelon. Beatty increased his speed to twenty-five knots to close with the enemy battle-cruisers (under von Hipper), which now turned back to join the German Main Fleet, which was coming up from the south at full speed. The first shots were fired at a little before four o'clock, when the German ships were still hull down and their distance about eleven miles. The distance decreased to eight, and the firing was taken up also by the Fifth Battle Squadron behind Beatty and his Battle-cruiser Squadrons, but the distance was probably too great. At this time (about four o'clock) the anticipated German submarines made their appearance, but were driven off by the British destroyers, which in their turn made a dash for the big German ships. The German torpedo-boats came out to meet them, and in the mêlée two German boats were sunk, but the encounter had prevented the British destroyers from pressing home their attack.

Between four and half-past four the intensity of the action increased. Von Hipper, of the German Battle-cruiser Squadron, was in effect reinforced by Admiral Scheer's battleships, and Admiral Sir David Beatty found himself engaging the whole German fleet. The *Queen Mary* and the *Indefatigable* were sunk, the first of them by a chance shell, and the Battle-cruiser Squadrons were thus reduced to four ships. In support of them were the four battleships of the Fifth Battle Squadron—*Barham*, *Valiant*, *Malaya*, and *Warspite*, which carried 15-inch guns—under Admiral Evan Thomas, but even with these pressing forward to join action it was not possible to fight and

defeat the superior German forces. Sir David Beatty could, however, hope to draw the German fleet on to attack and follow him till they came into the range of the guns of Sir John Jellicoe with the main fleet. So he turned about and headed for the point towards which the British Grand Fleet was advancing. Admiral Evan Thomas followed conformably, forming up behind the four battle-cruisers, and the eight ships carried on a running fight with the whole German fleet for more than an hour.

The ordeal was a heavy one. When von Hipper was falling back before Beatty his fire had slackened under the growing severity of the British cruisers' fire, but now new German ships were coming into action and taking up the attack, so that the British squadron again had to sustain an accurate and damaging fire. Nevertheless the British gunnery was equal to the strain. It never lost length or direction. In this unequal fight one of von Hipper's battle-cruisers was driven out of line and another hit under water. Before he had joined forces with Admiral Scheer one of his ships had been set on fire and another torpedoed, so that the loss which we had sustained of *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable* was now becoming equalized.

Sir David had the legs of his pursuers and kept ahead of them, cruising away north-eastwards till Sir John Jellicoe's battleships came in sight about six o'clock. When the Commander-in-Chief was five miles away, Beatty, leading his squadron with the flagship *Lion*, turned abruptly to the east at top speed. By this manœuvre he would cut across the line of the German advance, making a figure like a T. By so doing he hoped to make the Germans conform to his direction thus  $\perp$ . While they were so doing he would be able to concentrate his fire on the leading ship of their line, and he hoped to be able to get away to the east and leave Sir John Jellicoe to cut in with his battleships. The Germans divined



his plan and sent a swift light cruiser to delay it by means of a torpedo attack. But now Beatty received a welcome reinforcement from the Third Battle-cruiser Squadron, which was steaming in advance of Sir John Jellicoe. It was led by Rear-Admiral Hood, a sailor whose first distinctions were won when captaining a gunboat on the Nile during Kitchener's Soudan campaigns. Hood, bringing the *Invincible*, his flagship, "into action ahead in the most inspiring manner", showered salvo after salvo on to the leading German ship, crumpling up the head of the German line. Unhappily the *Invincible* was struck by a chance shell, blew up, and sank. But she had done her work before her brave admiral and his officers and men sank with her. Admiral Evan Thomas's four battleships had also put in good work: they brought their 15-inch guns to bear on the German Battle-cruiser Squadron as it turned to the east to follow Beatty. One of Evan Thomas's battleships had an almost incredible experience. Her steering-gear was hit, and she uncontrollably steered in a great circle within close range of the Germans. It says a good deal for the demoralization of the German gunners at this stage that she escaped from her predicament and emerged firing all her guns at the enemy.

The position at a little after six o'clock was as follows: The enemy had turned east, following after Beatty, who was well ahead, and to the north of them Evan Thomas was steaming in Beatty's wake some three or four miles behind. Sir John Jellicoe, having deployed the Grand Fleet, was following also the line taken by Beatty, and was just coming into action. Then came the North Sea fog, which on that dull hazy day had threatened once or twice. It blotted out the sight of the German fleet from the eager eyes of Jellicoe's squadrons, and under its cover von Scheer doubled in his tracks and stole back to cover. The first shots were fired by the British Grand Fleet at 6.17. Fire continued whenever a break in the fog



permitted enemy ships to sight one another, but all hope of that great decisive action, which must have seemed so desirably imminent to Sir John Jellicoe at six o'clock, had vanished before darkness fell. But the enemy did not get away scathless. Our gunnery increased in effectiveness as that of the enemy decreased under the difficult conditions. By half-past eight the British fleet had got between the German fleet and Heligoland, and had it been morning instead of night the German fleet would never have got back there. But it would have been madness to rush big ships on a game of blind-man's-buff, which would grow even more perilous to the pursuers as Heligoland was neared. So the British Grand Fleet was called off, and the destroyers were sent in to wreak as much damage as they could on the fugitives. The damage done was great. The losses suffered by the Germans before they reached Cuxhaven, Wilhelmshaven, and Heligoland far outweighed those which the British fleet had suffered in the *Queen Mary*, the *Indefatigable*, and the *Invincible*. Sir John Jellicoe's cautious dispatch puts the German losses at three battleships (seen to sink), one battle-cruiser sunk, and a battleship and a battle-cruiser so severely damaged as to make it doubtful if they could reach port, besides losses in light cruisers and destroyers very much more severe than ours.

The Germans hastened to claim the battle as a victory, though, as Mr. Asquith caustically remarked, a couple more such victories and the German Fleet would cease to exist. But it is not to be denied that the tone of the earlier reports warranted the impression that the British Grand Fleet had fought an action which had cost it heavy losses without exacting a greater toll from the Germans. The false impression was rectified when the dispatches of Sir John Jellicoe and Sir David Beatty were published, but the first days of June were clouded by an uneasy feeling among the public that at sea, where we were supreme, the Germans had caught us napping.

The situation did not at that time lend itself to optimism. The long pause on the British front was yet unbroken; the attack of the Germans on the French lines at Verdun, though to military understanding a failure, was still proceeding, and here again that vague uneasiness which in war time ebbs and flows was asserting itself, taking the form of the doubt whether even the incomparable French army could continue to sustain its losses without bleeding to death. On the Italian front the Austrian thrust at the Trentino had awakened doubts as to the Italian capacity for resistance. On the Russian front alone the progress of General Brussilov's forces and the disintegration of the Austrian lines and armies held an augury of success for the Allies, an augury which seemed almost too good to be true. The Russian renaissance had never been expected by popular opinion to occur so soon, and except to the Higher Commands it was a surprise. The military opinion which finds its way into the better-instructed journals was unprepared for it; and since it evidently took the German Head-quarter Staff by surprise, one may reasonably suppose that General Joffre and Lord Kitchener found it better than their hopes. For long periods in the war the military capability of the Russian forces and the strategic hopes of the Russian command were known only to themselves; and the opinion may be hazarded that they were not completely known in Russia. But in June, 1916, it was in the highest degree necessary, in view of the coming combined offensive of the Franco-British forces on the Somme, that the military situation and prospects on the Russian front should be clearly estimated. Lord Kitchener was charged with an "important mission" to the Tsar. There could be no more important mission than that of an exchange of views at first hand with the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies, and the acquisition of the point of view of the Russian army commanders and General Staff with regard to the military situation.



Lord Kitchener at the historic committee meeting in the House of Commons had imparted to members a very frank estimate of the military situation and the military needs as he knew them. It is pleasant to know that this encounter with some of his persistent and formidable critics in the House of Commons had obliterated the feelings with which he had regarded some examples of their criticism, and that, in Mr. Asquith's phrase, he spoke of it on the eve of his departure to Russia "almost with the gaiety of a schoolboy". His last dinner in London before he went to Scotland to take ship for Russia was shared with his old friend Sir William Garstin, but one of his last interviews before he left was with the Prime Minister. "As he rose to take his leave," said Mr. Asquith, in a speech delivered afterwards at Ladybank, "and we shook hands and wished him luck upon his voyage, it was impossible to connect that imposing figure, a magnificent embodiment of virile force, with any thought of mortality. Yet in the plenitude of his powers he was going forward straight to his doom—a fine, and in many ways an enviable, end."

In the official announcement Lord Kitchener was charged with a special mission to the Emperor of Russia. He was accompanied by Mr. O'Beirne, Sir Frederick Donaldson, and Brigadier-General Ellershaw, and at the request of His Majesty's Government was to have taken the opportunity of discussing important military and financial questions. Sir Frederick Donaldson was Chief Technical Adviser to the Ministry of Munitions. Brigadier-General Wilfred Ellershaw was on the Staff of the War Office, where he was employed on special service. Mr. O'Beirne was in the Diplomatic Service, and under Sir Arthur Nicholson and Sir George Buchanan had spent nine years in the Embassy at Petrograd. With Lord Kitchener went also his personal military secretary and devoted friend, Lieutenant-Colonel FitzGerald.





Lt.-Col. FitzGerald Mr. O'Beirne

Lord Kitchener

### ADMIRAL JELlicoe's FAREWELL TO LORD KITCHENER

The photograph here reproduced shows Admiral Jellicoe, the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, bidding farewell to Lord Kitchener and his party prior to their embarkation on H.M.S. *Hampshire*. Lord Kitchener, in a military overcoat, is facing Admiral Jellicoe, who is shaking hands with Mr. H. J. O'Beirne, of the Foreign Office. Lt.-Col. FitzGerald (on the gangway) was Lord Kitchener's personal military secretary



Lieutenant-Colonel FitzGerald was seldom parted from Lord Kitchener, and it was emblematic of the relation between them that he should have been with him on this, the last journey. Other official members of Lord Kitchener's party were Second-Lieutenant R. D. Macpherson, 8th Cameron Highlanders, Mr. L. S. Robertson (Ministry of Munitions), and Detective M'Laughlin, of Scotland Yard.

Lord Kitchener and his party travelled by the night express from London on 4th June, passing through Edinburgh on the way through Perth to the north. On arrival at his destination at the north of Scotland Lord Kitchener paid a visit to Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, and, having bidden good-bye to him, embarked with his staff on board H.M.S. *Hampshire*. The *Hampshire*, which had taken part in the Battle of Jutland,<sup>1</sup> was commanded by Captain Herbert J. Savill. The cruiser steamed away about five o'clock on Monday night, taking a westerly course round the northern island of the Orkneys. She was accompanied on her voyage by two destroyers; but the wind was rising, a very heavy sea was running, and about seven o'clock the captain of the *Hampshire* was compelled to order them to detach themselves. The *Hampshire* went on her way alone into the north-north-west gale past the desolate and formidable coast. A little before eight o'clock, according to the rather confused reports, the men on a patrol boat saw an explosion on the passing cruiser. No one seems to have heard the sound of it in the gale that was blowing, and the Admiralty, without disclosing its reasons for the belief, says that the *Hampshire* struck a mine. It happened between Marwich Head and Brough of Birsay, north of the Bay of Skail, on the western coast of the mainland of the Orkney Islands, on the opposite side to them from Kirkwall. The *Hampshire* sank in

<sup>1</sup> In a letter published after the loss of the *Hampshire*, and written by Engineer Commander Arthur E. Cossey, who lost his life in her, the writer says: "The good old *Hampshire* did all that was required of her, and had the satisfaction of loosing off her guns at the Huns".



ten minutes. People ashore say that they saw four boats launched and battered to pieces on the rocks and cliffs. The news was flashed to the fleet, and immediately destroyers and patrol vessels were sent to the scene, and search-parties worked their way along the coast. An empty boat was found. Then a raft came ashore with twelve men clinging to it. The waves had battered and exhausted them. One of them murmured to the rescuers "Kitchener was on board"—and then fell asleep.

That was the story in all its bareness which reached Sir John Jellicoe on Monday night. It was made public in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and in London about midday on Tuesday, and was received with stupefaction, almost with disbelief. Sir John Jellicoe's message said that "as the whole coast has been searched from the seaward, I greatly fear that there is little hope of further survivors"; but people believed against hope. With an emotion akin to that expressed later by the Prime Minister, they could not think that that great and strong man had gone thus tragically from the world wherein he played so splendid a part. The incredulity was reflected in a sheaf of rumours, some of them quite circumstantial, to the effect that a message had been received by the War Office (or by the Lord Mayor) saying "Kitchener safe", and the legend survived long after. But it was no more than a legend. The tragic, the unforeseen had happened, and Lord Kitchener was drowned in the northern sea. The King's Army Order next day removed any shadow of hope or doubt.

"The King has learnt with profound regret of the disaster by which the Secretary of State for War has lost his life while proceeding on a special mission to the Emperor of Russia.

"Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener gave forty-five years of distinguished service to the State, and it is largely due to his administrative genius and unwearying energy that the country has been able to create and place in the field the armies which are to-day upholding the traditional glories of our Empire.

“Lord Kitchener will be mourned by the Army as a great soldier who, under conditions of unexampled difficulty, rendered supreme and devoted service both to the Army and the State.”

The effect on the minds of the British people may be recorded for future generations, but it will never be realized save by those who in this island kingdom heard the first sudden whisper of the incredible news. In towns the contents bills of the evening papers, “Lord Kitchener Drowned”, arrested traffic. In London almost a hush fell on the coming and going of London’s myriad feet. The blinds were drawn at the War Office and the Admiralty and at the clubs, and the principal places of business were closed for the rest of the day. These were outward signs of mourning, but in the hearts of Lord Kitchener’s countrymen dismay conflicted with pity. The dismay did not arise from the blow sustained by Britain in his loss, for all knew that the war would go on inexorably, and that he had built foundations so sure that the structure on which victory was to be raised would survive the architect. But it was dismay that he who was the symbol of Britain’s effort could never now see the realization of her hopes; it was pity that he could never now claim his just reward. Never has sorrow for the loss of a great man been more personal. Yet as days wore on this sorrow gave place to another feeling. Sir John Jellicoe’s first message had given no hope of any survivors, but from the twelve seamen who were rescued from the raft a story, meagre indeed in its details, could be pieced together of the last moments of disaster; and from this story, slight as it was, some picture of that last scene on the *Hampshire* could be framed, and from it some consolation drawn. The story as pieced together at the naval enquiry is as follows.

In the heavy gale seas were breaking over the *Hampshire*, and some of the hatches had to be battened down. Some time before eight, while the watch below were waiting to turn

in, an explosion occurred, which is attributed by the Admiralty to the striking of a mine by the *Hampshire*. All lights immediately went out, and a great draught roared along the mess-deck, blowing all the men's caps off. Orders were at once given by Captain Savill for all hands to go to their established stations for abandoning ship. As the men were moving to their stations, one of them, First-class Petty-officer Wilfred Wesson,<sup>1</sup> saw Lord Kitchener come with a naval officer from the captain's cabin. The officer called out: "Make room for Lord Kitchener", and the men opened out to let Lord Kitchener pass.

Captain Savill gave orders to lower some of the boats; but the sea was too high. One of the boats was broken in half while being lowered, and the men in her thrown into the water. Lord Kitchener had now reached the quarter-deck, and was pacing it up and down, talking quite collectedly with two of his officers, probably Colonel FitzGerald and Second-Lieutenant R. D. Macpherson, since all three were wearing khaki just as when they had come on board. Captain Savill at this time had got the captain's gig hoisted near the fire-bridge, and called to Lord Kitchener to come and get into the boat. But owing to the noise of the wind and sea Lord Kitchener apparently did not hear him, and it is not believed that he made any attempt to get into a boat at all. No survivor saw him in one. The only survivor (Rogerson) who saw him on deck is positive that he did not, but went down with the ship. Lord Kitchener, says this witness, did not seem in the least perturbed, but calmly waited the preparations for abandoning ship, which were going on in a quiet, steady, and orderly way. It was of no use to lower boats, for they were at once smashed. All that could be done was to get into them when they were hoisted and hope that when

<sup>1</sup> Wesson was one of the survivors from the raft. His account of what happened appeared, with that of Leading Seaman C. W. Rogerson, in the *Times*, 16th June, 1916.



the ship went down they would float; but this hope proved illusory, for the *Hampshire* went down by the head, turning a somersault, and carrying her boats and all in them down with her. Those who escaped from the sinking ship were men who jumped into the rafts.

Lord Kitchener was not among them. The last that was seen of him was as he still stood on the starboard side of the quarter-deck talking to his officers.

“I won’t say”, says Rogerson, “he did not feel the strain of the perilous situation like the rest of us, but he gave no outward sign of nervousness, and from the little time that elapsed between my leaving the ship and her sinking I feel certain that Lord Kitchener went down with her, standing on deck at the time.”

It is impossible to elaborate that simple description. Lord Kitchener went down with the ship. His body was never found, though that of his friend and secretary, Colonel Fitzgerald, was washed up on the coast of Orkney and was buried at Eastbourne. Lord Kitchener died as he had lived, not indeed alone nor yet quite solitary, but in circumstances which set him aloof from other men. He shared the common fate of men, but it was destined that he should share it in no common way. Be sure that he met death as he had met life.

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,  
 The mist in my face,  
 When the snows begin and the blasts denote  
 I am nearing the place,  
 The power of the night, the press of the storm,  
 The post of the foe.  
 . . . . .  
 Yet the strong man must go:  
 For the journey is done and the summit attained  
 And the barriers fall  
 Though a battle’s to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
 The reward of it all.

I was ever a fighter, so one fight more,  
 The best and the last.  
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forbore  
 And bade me creep past.  
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,  
 The heroes of old,  
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
 Of pain, darkness, and cold.  
 . . . . .  
 And with God be the rest.

Many of the words that were spoken of Lord Kitchener after his death by his countrymen have already found a place in this record of his life. There are others which must be added. There is no simpler or more worthy tribute than that which was paid him by the Prime Minister:—

“No one knows—no one can know—as well as I do, with what ceaseless and boundless self-devotion Lord Kitchener served his country from the first day of the war to the day of his death. He was not by nature and temperament an optimist, but in the darkest moments of anxiety and of discouragement I have never known his courage quail or his nerve give way. . . . Even now I find it difficult to realize that he has gone, leaving a place in our national life that no one else can fill, and a memory that will last as long as the British Empire.”

General Joffre sent the following message to the War Office:—

“In the name of the French Army, which has been profoundly touched by the tragic end of him who fought in its ranks in 1870, I send you the expression of the grief we have felt on learning the death of Lord Kitchener. We will never forget the man who with patriotic ardour created and organized the noble and valiant British Army now fighting by our side.”

Lord Rosebery, speaking on the day when the news of Lord Kitchener's death was made public, said:—

“It is no victory for the enemy, but it is a deep sorrow for ourselves. We will not lament Lord Kitchener to-day. He had lived full life. He had gained the confidence not merely of his own nation and of all the Dominions, but of the Allied nations as well.”

How true that was became evident in the messages from the Dominions and from our allies which poured in. Mr. Hughes, the Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth, said:—

“Australia owed him much. He laid down the foundations of the Australian defence scheme. He gave us the benefit of his great experience and set our feet upon the road we should travel to ensure national safety. The Australian soldiers regarded him as a great soldier, and felt that in him they had a man who would enable the manhood of the Empire to cleave its way to victory.”

In Canada Sir Robert Borden said that Lord Kitchener's presence at the War Office inspired confidence not only in the British Isles but throughout the Empire. In New Zealand Mr. Massey, the Prime Minister, in moving the resolution in the Houses of Parliament recording their appreciation of Lord Kitchener's services to the Empire, deplored that death should have overtaken him before his great efforts had been crowned with complete success. In South Africa General Botha, in announcing the death of the great man whom so wholeheartedly he had respected and admired, broke down. He was the master of the war, said Botha, and his work in changing the army from hundreds into thousands and from thousands into millions was done for the liberty and freedom of his people and his country.

In France, in Russia, in Italy, in Japan, Serbia, and Portugal the expressions of sympathy, of admiration, of profound respect and regret for the man who, in General Cadorna's words, was “an intrepid and unconquerable soldier who died in the battle front for the victory of his great country and for



the success of the noble cause of the Allies", were universal and sincere.

The armies of our allies were at one in their eulogy of the great soldier.

"Most glorious general and prop of your army", cabled General Oshima, the War Minister of Japan.

"The Egyptian army unites with me", ran the message of Sirri Pasha, the War Minister of Egypt, "in deeply mourning its former Sirdar, who led it to victory on more than one occasion. As an Egyptian I profoundly regret the loss of our great friend, Lord Kitchener."

There were messages from the Tsar and from the Grand-Duke Nicholas; and the French Senate and the Chamber of Deputies adopted unanimously the following motion:—

"The Senate, profoundly moved by the immense loss suffered by Great Britain in the person of Lord Kitchener, saluting the organizer of the armies which, with those of the Allies, will assure the early victory of the right, and remembering that in 1870 he placed the gallantry of his youthful years at the service of France in peril, addresses to the Government of the United Kingdom the homage of its sorrowful sympathy."

Had Lord Kitchener died in the fulness of his years his last resting-place would have been with those other great soldiers in St. Paul's Cathedral, within sound of the unceasing stir of life in the capital of the empire for which he and they had wrought. The ceremonial of such a funeral could not be his. In its place were the observances of a memorial service, which was at once a public and a personal act of mourning for the loss of the soldier whose work was done ere we could thank him. The service was attended by the King and Queen, by Queen Alexandra, by the Princess Royal and Princess Maud, Princess Victoria, Princess Arthur of Connaught, Princess Louise (Duchess of Argyll), the Duchess of Albany, Princess Christian and Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein,

and Princess Henry of Battenberg. The Grand-Duke Michael was present, and the Prince of Wales, the Queen of Norway, and the Duke of Connaught were represented.

The French, Russian, Japanese, Italian, American, and Spanish Ambassadors, the Belgian, Serbian, Swiss, Norwegian, Portuguese, and Rumanian Ministers were present, as well as the Ministers and Chargés d'Affaires of many neutral States, and the representatives of the Dominions. The Prime Minister and all the members of the Cabinet; representatives of the Fleet; Lord French, Sir William Robertson, Sir Evelyn Wood, Lord Grenfell, General Sir Charles Tucker, General Broadwood, General Sir Bruce Hamilton, General Steele (of the Canadian forces)—all soldiers who had fought side by side with Lord Kitchener—these and many others who were part of the life of Great Britain found places in the Cathedral. India sent chieftains, some of them serving at the front; the regiments of which Lord Kitchener was Honorary Colonel sent units to pay him honour, and there was no side of the manifold social and political and civic life of Great Britain which was not represented.

When the King and Queen had taken their places the service began with the hymn "Abide with Me"; and after the Lord's Prayer and the responses, and Psalm cxxx, "Out of the Deep", there followed the funeral lesson from the *Corinthians*. On the silence broke the deep roll of the drums ushering in the "Dead March"—a sound that thrilled through the uttermost spaces of the Cathedral.

The prayers and responses and the last hymn, "For all the saints", were said or sung; and, last of all, the Archbishop of Canterbury pronounced the Benediction. No, not last of all. From somewhere high in the Cathedral nave pealed the notes of the "Last Post", that deeply-moving requiem which the bugles sound over the grave of the soldier. There are few who once having heard it can hear it again unmoved, and

in St. Paul's that day there were many who could not keep back their tears at that sound. Yet it had hardly ceased before a new music filled the Cathedral. It was the music which had accompanied the dead soldier's life, the anthem of duty and devotion—the National Anthem of the British race.

It was not only in St. Paul's that Lord Kitchener was mourned on that day. Memorial services were held in Russia by the Russian Church, and in many parts of the United Kingdom. A service at St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, was attended by Admiral Beatty, Admiral Lowry (commanding at Rosyth), the Judges, the Corporation, and representatives of the University and the Bar. Soldiers filled the nave, and in the transept was a body of bluejackets. Addresses were given by Dr. Kelman, of the United Free Church, and Dr. Wallace Williamson, minister of St. Giles. Dr. Brown, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, pronounced the Benediction.

Services were also held in St. Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow, in the Episcopalian Cathedral, Edinburgh, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, in Canterbury Cathedral, and in many other cathedrals and parish churches.

It was not with Lord Kitchener as with other men whose memories are lost in the great tide of passing events. The days and years will add lustre to his name as they will bring completion to his task. His fame will never die. His name will never be forgotten or become less glorious.

E. S. G.



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