

## A D I A R Y

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### On the Siege of Kut-Al-Amara.

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147 Days or 21 Weeks.

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5.12.15 to 29.4.16

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- Dec. 5th. Official date of commencement of Siege. Cavalry left this morning, crossing river by boat-bridge and going down the right bank, making for AMARA. Enemy fired their first shells into Kut at 10.20 this morning.
- Dec. 6th. Regt. digging trenches - Remaining with H.Q. for the present as liaison officer to the 30th Bgde.
- Dec. 7th. Enemy commenced shelling us in earnest but not much damage done.
- Dec. 8th. Last night the 24th P. with 22nd. went out to attack a Mullah outside the fort but found the enemy had cleared out.
- Dec. 9th. Regt. digging trenches all day. Enemy did a little shelling, the Regt. has been put into billets in the corner of the Town nearest the 63rd Battery.
- Dec. 10th. This morning the enemy attacked the bridge and drove in the bridge head guard, capturing one B.C. (wounded) and several men. Our guns got into them and they seemed to have a good number of casualties. H.Q. was very anxious until the Bridge was blown up about 8.30 this evening.
- Dec. 11th. Sniping very heavy and most of the trench digging had to be done at night.
- Dec. 12th. Relief is promised for about 25th, but some of the staff say that we are in for a two months' siege at least.
- Dec. 13th. Rejoined the 24th P. Every night we go out and sleep in the Reserve Trenches and return to our billets as soon as it is daylight.
- Dec. 14th. There is nothing to do during the day except play cards and read. We play Patience in the morning and Bridge all afternoon.
- Dec. 15th. The communication trenches are not yet finished so we have to march across the open to reach the Reserve Trenches we seem to get one or two casualties every evening.

- Dec. 16th. Sniping is very heavy and it is impossible to go outside the town during the day.
- Dec. 17th. Sniping continues. There is one continuous noise day and night. The Midan near the town is strewn with bullets and shells.
- Dec. 18th. It is estimated that over bullets per minute are falling into Kut but the casualties are not excessive.
- Dec. 19th. SIGNAL - 4th Ratputs attached 24th P. has sprained his ankle, jumping into a trench and gone sick. I am now commanding No. II D. C. and No. I D. C.
- Dec. 20th. Now the trenches are a little deeper we can work in them by day again. There were a good number of casualties up in our Front Line to begin with owing to the shallow trenches.
- Dec. 21st. Everyone has now settled down to the siege and nothing much happens from day to day.
- Dec. 24th. Xmas Eve. The enemy shelled the town and Fort heavily from early dawn until about eleven o'clock and then launched a determined attack against the Fort. This was repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy. Their Front Lines fell so rapidly that their other lines lost heart and melted away. In the evening the enemy attacked again and gained a foothold in a corner of the Fort from where they were eventual ejected with heavy losses. Things looked very serious at one time and there was talk of giving up the Fort. We had a rotten day in the reserve trenches.
- Dec.. 25th. Xmas Day. The G. O. C. thought the enemy might renew their attack on the Fort so we were kept out in the trenches all the day. We tried to eat our Xmas lunch, consisting of a goose, which we had most carefully cherished and gloated over since the beginning of the siege, and plum pudding, sitting in an open dugout with the wind blowing a sandstorm. But it wasn't a success - The goose had been burnt and spoiled and the plum pudding was chiefly sand and we couldn't smoke our carefully saved cigars as our eyes, mouths, noses, ears etc. were full of sand.
- Dec. 26th Trench digging continued - it is getting fairly cold.
- Dec. 28th. It is estimated that the Turkish casualties in their attack on the Fort on Xmas Eve were 2,000.
- Jan. 1st. News of 40 transports with reinforcements at the SHATT-AL-ARAB BAR.
- Jan. 2nd. Heavy shelling for several hours this evening - damage slight.

- Jan. 3rd. Sharp night attack by enemy - no result - rumour says two fresh Turkish Divisions are arriving from Baghdad. We fear the relief force is held up by 15,000 enemy at Sheiksa'ad. Rations are beginning to get low and the river is rising owing to the bad weather.
- Jan. 4th. We think there has been a battle at Sheik Sa'ad as the heavy guns could just be heard. The weather is awful and the relieving force will not be able to move until things dry up as it is impossible to march in Mesopotamia when the ground is wet, owing to the mud.
- Jan. 5th A fairly quiet day. Heavy rifle fire from 10.30 - 11.15 p.m.
- Jan. 6th Second part of relieving force should leave Ali-Al-Gharbi to-day. Very heavy firing all day. Rain and thunder at night. S. & T. are running short of oil.
- Jan. 7th Fairly quiet day. A little shelling at dusk and night firing as usual.
- Jan. 8th. Guns of relieving force were heard distinctly to-day.
- Jan. 9th Official announcement:- Enemy 15,000 strong attacked AYLMERS force and then retired. We captured 2 guns. Progress slow on account of rain.
- Jan. 10th. Rumours of heavy casualties in recent fighting at SHEIK SA'AD. Turks claim the victory and have decorated camp and ships.
- Jan. 12th. Official news this evening says, At battle near SHEIK SA'AD. Turkish casualties 4,500. Many prisoners and 2 guns captured, enemy now entirely under command of German Officers. Shelling heavier than usual this evening and maxim firing across river during night.
- Jan. 14th. Things quieter than usual.
- Jan. 15th. There has been more fighting down river and we do not seem to be getting on as well as we should. Rumour that relieving force has lost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a division already. Much heavy rain. Our rations have been reduced and several cases of scurvy have been reported.
- Jan. 16th. Wet day. Trenches are getting bad. with mud and water.

- Jan. 17th. General Townshend today issued a communiqué to the troops explaining that the Relieving force was held up by bad weather and asking everyone to exercise patience. It rained all day.
- Jan. 19th. Trenches in a terrible condition owing to the recent rain. Some nearly full of water. Guns heard down stream.
- Jan. 20th. The river rose 8 ft. and flooded the Wool Press village trenches.
- Jan. 21st. Trenches awful. Roads almost impossible. Shelling afternoon and evening. Rumour that relieving force is fighting a battle at SUNNYIAT. Weather conditions couldn't be worse.
- Jan. 21st. The river flooded the Turks front line trenches this morning and they had to retire about 100 yards. We waited for them with machine guns etc. and they suffered many casualties. Our front line was also flooded out for the time being.
- Jan. 22nd. WOOL PRESS VILLAGE also flooded and their front line abandoned. There was a sharp attack on the village two or three days ago. The enemy attacked about 4.30 a.m. but were driven off with bombs and rifle and machine gun fire. In morning there were dead all over the place - and 43 were counted just in front of their wire.
- Jan. 23rd. Weather improving but roads and trenches still under water. There have been several deaths from exposure. The river is very high and causing much trouble through breaking into trenches.
- Jan. 24th. S. & T say we can hold out for another month if we eat horse flesh. More rain to-day.
- Jan. 25th. Still wet and cold, scale of rations cut down again. No chance of AYLMER doing anything until the weather improves. Bad luck seems to have followed us since Nov. 22nd though perhaps we have asked for it, through leaving 500 miles of communications unguarded. General NIXON has been recalled. This makes 15th General returned from the Messpot.
- Jan. 26th. Communiqué to troops - Relieving force expected to arrive first half of February. Ample food for another 84 days.
- Jan. 28th. More shelling again this morning. Battery bullocks are all finished and this morning we had horse-flesh. It is not so bad as one might expect though a bit tough.
- Jan. 29th. Weather much improved and ground drying rapidly.

- Jan. 31st. Temperature down to 25.5 this morning and plenty of ice about. Pretty cold. in the trenches. Rumour that AYLMER expects 10,000 reinforcements February 7th.
- Feb. 1st. Pretty cold, weather good.
- Feb. 2nd. Temperature 24.8. Cold pretty bad at night - still doing night digging every night.
- Feb. 3rd. We all prefer Mule to horse flesh - it is more tender though mule soup is pretty strong, - mule heart is a delicacy.
- Feb. 4th. Little shelling. Doctor of 2/7th GURKHA'S shot through the head while walking outside a trench.
- Feb. 5th. More shelling this evening - Rumour that AYLMER attacks again to-morrow.
- Feb. 6th. Cold and cloudy. Apparently nothing doing.
- Feb. 9th. Heavy rain during the evening.
- Feb. 10th. Rain most of the day. Trenches half full of water again and roads thick with mud. It is not much fun wading up the trenches and sleeping in wet boots and puttees.
- Feb. 11th. Weather much better but trenches still awful. Guns of relieving force heard all day. Unusually heavy shelling late at night.
- Feb. 12th. Rumour that AYLMER will attack on 17th or 18th.
- Feb. 13th. Enemy aeroplane turned up and bombed us to-day. Not at all a nice experience. One feels so helpless with the machine overhead and waiting - waiting for the bomb to drop. The aeroplane put in its first appearance at 9.30 a.m. and turned up again in the evening. Altogether about a dozen bombs were dropped. No damage was done except to nerves. Max. Temp. 64.8.
- Feb. 14th. Enemy aeroplane appeared again this evening at about 5.30 p.m. and dropped more bombs. Our Anti-aircraft guns opened but without effect. Heavy shelling late in evening.
- Feb. 15th. Heavy shelling between 5 and 6 p.m. Aeroplane did not appear. Much warmer to-day.

- Feb. 16th        Raining again this evening.
- Feb. 17th.        Shelling and heavy rifle fire about 9 p.m. and shelling again at 1 a.m. A shell landed in G.H.Q. but did not do much damage. Rumour that enemy's aeroplane is seriously damaged. We hope it's true.
- Feb. 19th.        Enemy's aeroplane paid two visits and dropped six large bombs (about 100 lbs). It was flying much higher than before. Many rumours re date of relief.
- Feb. 20th.        Two enemy aeroplanes turned up this evening. They came late, just when we thought we were safe for the night and dropped ten bombs. One dropped near the bakery but failed to burst.
- Feb. 21st.        Three aeroplanes attempted to rise in the enemy camp this evening but flew no distance.
- Feb. 22nd.        Everyone astir early. All garrison prepared for momentous events. Heavy bombardment down stream heard to commence before dawn and swell until it was terrific. Stood to arms expecting orders to go out in front of our lines to attack the enemy but nothing happened. About 11 a.m. one of our aeroplanes flew over going in direction of Turkish camp. Later, orders received for units to remain in semi-readiness and things settled down again to usual routine. There is much conjecture as to what really happened, we know we have been held up somewhere. Communiqué been issued to the MOHEMMADAN troops re eating horse flesh. Sharp attack on WOOL PRESS VILLAGE between 8 and 9 p.m. Our river front guns fired a number of rounds and the enemy retired.
- Feb. 25th.        Alarm gongs sounded but the enemy aeroplanes failed to appear. A little mutual shelling about 6 o'clock in the evening.
- Feb. 26th.        Gongs again sounded without the aeroplanes appearing - its too bad to keep 'pulling our legs' like this.
- Feb. 28th.        Big sweepstake on date of relief opened.
- Feb. 29th.        Good news of Russians who are advancing on BHAGDAD through PERSIA. Rations again reduced.
- March 1st.        About 4 o'clock this afternoon the enemy's guns opened fire and soon their aeroplanes were circling over head dropping bombs. This was kept up until dusk. It is by far the hottest 'Straf' we have had since the beginning of the siege. We are wondering what it all means - perhaps they have just got in a new supply of ammunition from Germany. A number of

Arabs were wounded and dressed in the ambulances. Amazement is expressed on all sides that our aeroplanes with AYLMER'S FORCE did not come to our assistance.

- March 2nd. Good news of the fall of EZEROM! One of our armed aeroplanes dropped Rs 1000/- in cash into the town this morning. This is for paying for Arab labour.
- March 3rd. Heavy bombardment down stream heard all day - at times heard very distinctly - weather much warmer, some rain.
- March 7th. Something interesting is expected to happen tomorrow and special orders are out.
- March 8th. Early this morning we all stood to arms and I was sent off with half No. II D.C. to the Serai. The whole time a terrific bombardment was going on down below stream and shells could be seen bursting over the enemy's positions. The rest of the 24th P. with the remainder of the 30th Brigade were held in readiness to cross the river should the attack be successful. Guns continued to be heard most of the day and bursting lydite could be seen from the roof. The Troops at the Fort were increased and the front line abandoned for the time being. The convalescents from the hospitals were put on special police duty and every available man turned out. But all to no purpose. In the evening a Communiqué was circulated saying "Our troops advanced five miles and took a redoubt." In other words the advance had been held up again. The enemy shelled up about six in the evening without doing much damage. An enemy's aeroplane is said to have fallen and smashed itself.
- March 9th. Guns booming much more clearly than yesterday but nothing to be seen except an occasional lydite or shrapnel burst. Later in the day troops received orders to return to their former quarters as other operations had been abandoned. This caused great depression as one can only conclude that AYLMER has again failed to break through. This evening the enemy sent in a White Flag saying that Honour was now satisfied and demanding our surrender.
- March 10th. Communiqué issued saying AYLMER has failed to relieve us owing to shortage of water and that he has been compelled to retire to his former position. This is his 4th failure and now we hear that he has been recalled and that GORRINGE his Chief of Staff reigns in his stead.
- March 11th. Guns heard in the distance again. Heavy rain this afternoon.
- March 12th. Rain all day and severe thunderstorm in the morning. Another case of suicide reported.

March 13th. More rain and thunderstorms.

March 15th. Trenches very bad after recent rains - flooded in many places and full of mud.

March 16th. The Band to protect the town from floods which we have been working on for same time is now nearly finished and we hope to have less night work in future.

March 17th. General TOWNSHEND met all the INDIAN OFFICERS this morning and talked to them and explained the delay in the relief. Rations have been reduced to 8 oz. bread and 1¼ lbs horse flesh per day and nothing else. The Turks have produced a new battery of two 8 inch guns said to be from one of their dismantled warships. These fire high explosive and we are expecting a bad time.

March 18th. This evening occurred the greatest disaster of the siege. About 5 p.m. while I was shooting Starlings in the South Palm Grove, one of our guns on the river face opened fire and for an hour there was a sharp artillery duel, one of the enemy's shells, striking the SUMARAH and killing a sailor. At dusk Fritz' the enemy's aeroplane made its appearance and commenced bombing dropping four bombs of 100 lbs each. The first bomb either by accident or design fell slap into the BRITISH GENERAL HOSPITAL killing five men on the spot, 4 more have since died and another 30 are lying more or less badly knocked about. The whole place was in fearful confusion. General TOWNSHEND has sent a letter to the Turkish Head Quarters protesting against such an outrage, but he is not likely to get much satisfaction. A second bomb landed in the roof next door to the hospital but luckily failed to explode and was gently removed and dumped into the river by the sappers.

March 19th. Again heavy shelling during the night. This is their latest form of amusement - firing off a few shells at odd times all through the night. It doesn't do much damage, but disturbs one's rest if the shells land anywhere near.

March 20th. Shelling between 2.30 and 3 o'clock this afternoon. SUMARAH was again hit but not much damage. These shells came from a new battery on the right bank of the River. Fritz has started a new game - bombing us by moonlight - It is full moon at present and last night he turned up at midnight and dropped several bombs aiming for the 4.7 gun barges. He made good shooting, one bomb just grazing the side and exploded in the water the shock dismounting one of the guns but not damaging it.



March 21st. A good deal of shelling both this morning and evening but casualties were few. The enemy seem to have got a new supply of ammunition.

March 22nd. Directly it was light a terrific bombardment began, lasting 3½ hours during which time they put in over 1,500 shell, registering a direct hit on the other 4.7 barge, sinking it gun and all. The crew of the gun were splendid and did their utmost to get the barge ashore before it sank, but the water was too deep and she sank as they pulled her alongside the bank. They were being sniped merrily the whole time. One of the crew was drowned. During the whole bombardment Fritz and another enemy aeroplane made at least a dozen trips, throwing high explosive bombs. We expected an attack but nothing came of it - it was just a 'straf'. The total casualties during the bombardment were killed 2 wounded 13 - not much return for 1,500 shell. Their gunnery is not good. In the evening they shelled us again for about an hour. The night before their aeroplanes again bombed us - dropping a couple of incendiary bombs which destroyed some Arab huts near Headquarters.

March 23rd. We were shelled again during the night, on and off, from 10 p.m. to dawn, but no damage done. They seem to have a good lot of shell waste. Their snipers were busy most of the day but their guns quiet. WOOL PRESS VILLAGE is now entirely isolated from the Turks by water about 5ft. deep, the river having risen and flooded all the low lying land.

March 24th. Shelled again from midnight to dawn. We are getting so used to it now that we sleep through it. The floods are pretty high to-day.

March 25th. Our guns have been trying to break down the enemy's bands and let the floods in on them. Guns down stream very plain. GORRINGE rumoured to have an overwhelming force and 108 guns. Relief in a week's time!

March 28th. GORRINGE is reported to have taken FALLAHIYEH with few casualties. Bread ration reduced to 8 oz.

March 30th. Several lucky people received letters dropped by aeroplane this morning. Enemy did a little shelling and managed to land one shell in the boiler of the SUMARAH. There was a fearful rush of escaping steam. WOOL PRESS VILLAGE is isolated until she is repaired,

March 31st. A little rain. One of our aeroplanes, very cleverly dropped a bag of letters and money into the river. KUT is too small a mark for them it seems.

April 1st. Heavy rain and severe thunderstorm - rained for many hours on end - trenches all flooded. At an auction to-day 100 cigarets fetched Rs 100/- and 10 Three Castle 4/8. The whole of the surrounding country is flooded.

April 2nd 120th day of the Siege - cold and wet - many of the men are dying from want and pneumonia. The fleas are getting awful though the lice are dying off. Heavy gunning down stream.

April 3rd. Another disappointing and depressing day. Heavy storm with tremendous hailstones in the afternoon. The siege has now lasted longer than LADYSMITH.

April 4th. Much gunning down stream all day and shells seen exploding to left of ESS SINN RIDGE - GORRINGE expected to attack tomorrow. Our remaining mules are being fed on Horse Soup and meat chopped up with barley. Shelled for about an hour.

April 5th. Intense bombardment heard in early morning. Continuing for 2½ hour. Later, message from GORRINGE states he has taken first 5 lines of turks HANNAH position. More firing in the evening.

April 6th. River rose terribly fast last night and exceeded last flood by 6 inches. Guns firing all day down stream. Communiqué says GORRINGE continues to advance and has captured more trenches.

April 7th. Heavy firing down stream again this morning. GORRINGE seems to be doing well and has captured more trenches. Our hopes are rising and the rain is falling.

April 8th. No news until evening when GORRINGE wires "All well advance continues", enemy fired a few rounds from their 16 inch mortar but did no damage.

April 9th. Communiqué from TOWNSHEND saying that in view of the slow progress of the relieving force he has decided to still further reduce ration to 7 oz. from the 10th. A bad sign. We can now hold out until the 19th if necessary.

April 10th. Another Communiqué from TOWNSHEND saying that GORRINGE has been held up for the present and that he is compelled to reduce rations to 5 ozs. of bread for everyone, which will enable us to hold out until the 21st. Spasmodic firing by the Turks. Our guns replied more than usual.

- April 11th. General SIR PERCY LAKE wires "GORRINGE can push through to Kut. Reinforcements arriving daily and will be through by 15th" I wonder? Thunderstorm and heavy rain during night.
- April 12th. General HOUGHTON died last night and was buried at 3.30 p.m. Bugles sounded Last Post. He died of Enteritis which is. very prevalent. All MOHAMMEDANS are now eating horse flesh.
- April 13th. TOWNSHEND issued last appeal to non-meat eating troops, at the same time threatening to make an example of I.O's and N.C.O's who did not set a good example. Talk of rationing the garrison by aeroplane so that it can hold out until the end of the month. 5000 lbs per diem required. All very hungry.
- April 14th. Silence from down stream.
- April 15th. Another thunderstorm about 4 p.m. Praying for fine weather at all services. In the evening after tea three aeroplane flew up from GORRINGE and dropped 6 bags of provisions. A novel sight! Message from GORRINGE says he is still advancing. But will he be in time?
- April 16th. Aeroplanes arriving all the time with more food. Fired at by Turks but without effect. Arabs starving - many tried to leave Kut but were fired on by Turks.
- April 17th. Terrific gun fire down steam. All GORRINGE'S guns going full split from dawn to mid -day. Later message says GORRRINGE has taken the BEIT AYESEA position with small losses to ourselves and capturing 2 Field Guns, 5 machine guns and 180 prisoners of whom 8 are officers - 200 - 300 Turkish dead were found in the trenches. Turks are counter-attacking.
- April 18th. Heavy gun fire down stream all night. Late the following Communiqué was issued. "Yesterday the enemy began at 7 p.m. a series of continuous and heavy counter-attacks which lasted all night." In some places they attacked 12 times and got within 20 yard's of our lines. Their attacks were repulsed, the Turks attacking over the open suffered very heavy losses. In one part of our line we lost some ground but we retained the trenches captured yesterday, and also keep control of the water near BEIT AYESEA. The 13th Division is now pushing forward with the object of attacking the left of the enemy's trenches at CHAHELA. Shelled a little during the night. Bread ration reduced to 4 oz!!
- April 19th. Message from GORRINGE saying "Enemy made out 20 counter-attacks night 17th - 18th and suffered appalling losses. Two of our Brigades

suffered heavily. Enemy reported to have lost about 10,000. A little shelling in the evening.

April 20th. Communiqué says GORRINGE is held up by flood rather than by bar the enemy. He has to build causeways to let his guns and supplies up. Our trenches are flooded. Aeroplanes are busy dropping food and are occasionally chased by the enemy's aeroplanes. A little shelling and sniping in the evening. A Communiqué has been received from SIR PERCY LAKE saying that the relief will take place shortly.

April 21st. Our last day of regular rations, emergency rations start tomorrow. There is still plenty of mule and horse flesh but not much else. Doubts arise as to our ability to hold out. GORRINGE is still delayed by bad weather.

April 22nd. Guns down stream commenced at dawn. The attack on SUNNAT and CHUALA Mounds expected .

April 23rd. GORRINGE reports some progress but failure of second attempt to capture SUNNIYAT owing to mud. For some time our tobacco has consisted of a mixture of dried tea and lemon or orange leaves with a little old cheroot thrown in. Not awfully nice but something to fill our pipes.

April 24th. Aeroplanes dropping food all day. We are now living on what they drop - 4 oz. bread, 10 oz. sugar, ½ oz. chocolate 1/8th oz. salt and 1½ lbs meat ration as usual. The 24th is under orders for special and secret duty after dark to-night. Am not very fit these days, a touch of enteritis.

April 25th. Spent all last night on the river banks not far from the Fort, waiting to unload the 'JULNA' if she got through with supplies. Soon after midnight heard and saw guns and rifle fire approaching from down stream and then after about an hour - silence! - Returned to billets just before dawn and as soon as it was light enough saw the poor old 'JULNA' stuck at MEGASSUS VILLAGE only about 11,000 yds. away. She had run the gauntlet through the Turkish lines only to get held up on one of the cables of their flying bridge. Both her pilots were killed. Our heavy guns tried to destroy her as soon as they saw she had fallen into Turkish hands but she was just too far. She had on board 250 tons of provisions or rations for the whole garrison for a month. Have been in bed all day feeling rather bad.

April 26th. Wires from C.-in-C. in INDIA congratulating VI Division on stand made at Kut. Arsenal burning stores. Artillery men throwing gun ammunition into river all night. Our last hope is gone.

April 27th. Sudden cessation of hostilities. Not a rifle shot to be heard - a fearful relief after 5 months of it solid - General TOWNSHEND has gone up to see the Turkish Commandant to arrange terms of surrender.

April 28th. Awaiting the terms of surrender, and destroying as much Kit as possible.

April 29th. At 7 a.m. orders received to destroy all guns, ammunition, saddlery, equipment etc. and 50% of our rifles. Soon after, pieces of guns hurtling in all directions - equipment, stores, aeroplanes, motors etc. all going up in smoke. Thousands of pounds worth of stuff being destroyed - What a sight! Piles of rifles - tents, equipment all blazing away and ammunition popping as if a picked battle was in progress. My field glasses - revolver etc. all thrown into the flames. Later, the rest of the rifles and remaining ammunition was destroyed and two Battalions of Turks marched in and took over the Town. In the afternoon the 30th Brigade embarked on the Turkish river steamer CALIPER and left for SHAMRAN CAMP a place about seven miles up stream where the whole garrison was being collected. On arrival we expected to receive decent food etc. but not a bit of it - There was absolutely nothing whatever given to us to eat that night and next day all we had was a few Turkish rations, Biscuits which to some of the sick, were uneatable - the consequence was that many men died. Before we left for SHAMRAN the general opinion was that Indian troops and sick will at any rate be allowed to go back to GORRINGE and very likely regimental officers also, under parol.

### RESUME of the SIEGE.

The period .of the siege was a terrible one for all, at the same time it was not half so bad for the British officers as for the sepoy. The former had a good many Mess stores during all the siege and could get tinned things from the S & T., whereas the sepoy had to subsist largely on "sag" or green grass and other leaves gathered from the ground. When sniping was heavy this could be done in very early morning and at dusk, and even then time was short, so that the sepoys being unable to see what they were picking, had to bring everything into billets and divide it up afterwards by daylight. Thus greatly diminishing the quantity of edible grass. Many grasses also, were poisonous and several deaths occurred, through eating them.

There is no doubt that all casts were very greatly prejudiced against eating horse flesh and that, not so much from religious motives as from the reason that it had never been done before. The religious a motive was however the one put forward until it was proved false and even then it was only in face of actual. death by starvation that they finally agreed to do so, but even then each regiment feared to be the one to set the example.

The British officers of the 24th were very lucky, as on arrival in Kut about 25 cases of liquor were found addressed to the Mess. These consisted of beer, whiskey, port, gin and vermouth. The quantity was, of course greatly in excess of what the regimental officers could drink, but as there was extreme scarcity of liquor in the town, the surplus was exchanged for food and stores.

The 24th were quartered in billets at the N.E. corner of the town just south of the BRICK KILNS, the rest of the 30th Brigade (who were in reserve) were in Bivouacs. When the strain of the siege began to be excessive, the units of the 16th Brigade applied to be relieved in the first line and this was carried out by the GURKAS and 76th PUNJABIS. I am sorry to say the 24th PUNJABIS were not allowed into the Firing Line on account of the two AFRIDI Companys whose loyalty was suspected by the authorities on account of what had happened in other regiments, at the same time I think an effort might have been made for the remainder of the regiment to go up; as it was a valuable experience lost. The MOHAMMEDANS have proved most unsatisfactory, there have been a large number of desertions, though only two from us - NAIK OSMAXHAN and YAR AKHMAD WHO FLOATED DOWN THE RIVER ON TWO Pakhals, two AFRIDI recruits were strongly suspected of trying to desert in the same way but were acquitted by Court Martial. Another AFRIDI, NAZIRBAZ was caught, convicted and shot.

The enemy's artillery fire though destructive was nothing to what it might have been, had they had high explosives. The 24th billets were out of sight and what shelling we did get was mostly over from shells intended for the artillery in the Brick Kilns. One shell came into a room and laid out 7 men. One shrapnel hit the house next the Mess; one just missing the mess went through the room behind and landed in a group of Indian officers, failing to explode and injuring no one, another shell from 'WHIZZ BANG' hit the compound wall. I was in the middle of the pattern of one shrapnel which burst over the compound and HAIO and STAPLETON had a narrow shave from another on the roof. Many of the 4.8 shells failed to explode.

The aeroplane was more terrible, while the supply of bombs, captured from us after CTESIPBON, held out. These were 10.30 and 100 lb bombs. Afterwards when they began making their own, they were quite harmless as they scarcely ever went off. The hospital and D road were in the direct danger zone and those in the hospital had a very terrifying time especially when the aeroplane came at night. One bomb (30 lb) only fell on our billets, striking the wall of the room next the Mess, and exploding and falling inside JEM BHOLA SINGH.

One of the most trying jobs the men had were the night digging fatigues. For the first part of the siege these were in 4 hour reliefs. These were very bad also for the British Officers who had to be continually going up and down driving on the men, thus being very exposed. The last two hours dragged terribly, the men being half

asleep and often numbed with cold. Afterwards these fatigues were reduced to 2 hours. During the first half of the siege up to the time the Turkish trenches were flooded out there was continual sniping 40 to 60 shots a minute being fired into the place day and night, so that all work by day or on moonlight nights except in deep trenches was impossible.

Two or three times we had most unpleasant jobs, once in digging the trenches between the sandhills and redoubts. A. under a heavy fire from 1 - 3 a.m., after the men were dog tired and had been asleep for two hours. Again breaking ground for the NEW ENTRENCHMENT under heavy rifle fire.

The regiment was very often in the new retrenchment in Close Reserve to N.E. section. In fact for the first few weeks after it was dug we were out nearly every night. Several nights we spent in heavy rain, after which the trenches became almost impossible to walk in.

At the end of the Siege we were in close Reserve and close support to the picquets 4 - 9 alternately when we had to sleep in our clothes, but did not leave billets. The mens hospital was a disgrace and it was a terrible experience visiting it, though it was not the doctors fault as they had. simply nothing to give the sick. The scarcity of supplies is shown very strongly by the Auctions held of the effects of deceased officers - at a half-pound tin of A & N tobacco fetched 49/- - old coats and jackets more than double their price when new whilst if a bottle of whiskey had been put up for auction it would have gone for nearer 100/- to 10/-.

### NOTES ON THE SIEGE.

The shelling of the town by the enemy, though pretty continuos, had not the bad effect one would expect. This was chiefly owing to the bad ammunition they used - A great deal of which was old Cannon shell which failed to explode. They probably had a good deal more artillery than we had but a lot of it was out of date. During most of the siege their heaviest guns were some 4.8 in. firing a heavy lead covered shell. Towards the latter part, they brought down and mounted on wooden baulks, two 6 in. Naval guns, said to be from off one of their gunboats - these however only lasted two days as, with the help of an aeroplane, observing our 5 in. guns knocked them both out during one morning.

Their night shelling was rather more fearsome than that by day, as at night the bursts of the shells sounded much closer than they really were and far louder. One or two of their shells did damage - one falling into an S & T dugout killing and wounding three or four sergeants, but for the most part they were very harmless and their shooting was very wild. We had one shell into the mess and several into the compound but, though several of us had narrow escapes, no one was touched. The dropping of bombs by their aeroplane was far more terrifying as one could never tell

where the bombs were likely to drop. The Aeroplane always appeared to be straight overhead even though it might really be several hundreds yards to left or right. At first all the bombs used were our own! captured from us on the retirement from AZIZIAH, and very effective they were too. Besides the one which did the fearful damage in the hospital, one dropped in on ARAB house near the Officers hospital. The house collapsed, killing about 10 ARABS, and burying them at the same time. One small one fell on the roof of the Mess, exploding and falling into the room next door, amongst some Indian Officers, but without injuring anyone. We witnessed one or two fights between our aeroplanes and the enemy's but never saw one brought down though we saw ours chase the enemy's home once or twice.

During most of the siege the Regiment was out in the reserve trenches at night and-in billets during the day but occasionally we got a night off in billets, for which we were truly thankful.

Before lying down at night, we had to do 2 or 3 hours work, digging trenches, building bunds etc. This night-work was, to me, the worst part of the whole siege. The enemy's fire was nearly continuous and hardly a night passed without one man being killed or wounded. It was often cold and wet and one was always sleepy. After an hour or twos work the men would tire and the officers had to spend the whole time walking up and down seeing that they worked.

When it rained, the trenches were awful. In the evening we had to wade up through them, through mud and water and then try and sleep in soaking boots and puttees. At times, too, the cold was pretty bad and one or two Indians died of exposure.

During the latter part of the siege, when the enemy's sniping was not quite so bad, we used to go out in the evenings and shoot the starlings and sparrows as they came to roost in the palm trees. These were a welcome addition to our meagre rations. Starling pie was great (I heard later that these same starlings used to spend the day feeding on dead Turks lying outside the Wire round WOOL PRESS VILLAGE and no wonder they were so fat!!) Later on the starlings migrated and the doves took their place. We would shoot half a dozen or so of these, in an evening and have them for breakfast next morning.

As all cows and buffalo's milk was supposed to go to the Hospitals, we drank ass's milk for breakfast and tea and found it quite good. We spent most of our time when we were in billets, in playing Bridge and Patience and reading, though good books were hard to come by. Horse and mule were not bad eating but not. very filling with only a 4 oz. loaf to help, and towards the end we were always more or less hungry, even just after a meal. We all lost weight and most of us about a stone.

While it was cold the lice were a fearful pest but these died off as the weather got warmer and their place was taken by fleas - giant fleas.



There was a certain amount of sickness - chiefly pneumonia and scurvy and towards the end an epidemic of enteritis which did in many men even after the siege was over and we had gone in camp or SHAMRAN. I had a slight attack of enteritis just at the end and was in bed for the last two days or so.

After the siege was over a certain number of men were sent home sick but not half the number that should have gone and the mortality on the March to BHAGDAD, MOSUL & RAIS-AL-AIN was frightful.

