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TROOPS SUFFER AT GALLIPOLI

(Continued from Page 2)

zeles had not at that time reached his zenith and the country was in a rebellious state, disintegrated by factions and sedition.

The Russian Armies were not armed or munitioned and were fighting with picks, shovels, clubs etc., in an unexampled, brave manner against the hordes of Austrians and Germans on the borders.

Egypt was in the state of unrest, India filled with seditionists, and France and England had their hands fully occupied on the Western Front.

The army of occupation on the Peninsula kept Bulgaria out of the war until 1916, acted as a deterrent on the spread of German propaganda in Greece and kept a huge army of trained Turkish soldiers from descending on Egypt and Russia, and thereby freeing Austrians and Germans for the Western Front.

So much for the writer's opinion of the efficiency of the attack; now for a slight resume of the Campaign.

Early in the War it was realized that the Egyptian Frontier, would be one of the "points d'Appui" and that an attack on the Dardanelles was the only way to ensure the safety of the Mediterranean traffic and divert the Turkish Army from her attack on Russia. Much discussion was aroused as to how this affair should be carried out and in the first months of 1915, it was decided that a naval force should attempt to force the Dardanelles passage, release the wheat supplies of Southern Russia and effect the above mentioned deeds.

In the third week of February 1915, the Allied fleets attacked the forts on the Southern end of the Peninsula and had no difficulty in dealing with the old stone forts of the locality. Shortly afterwards the mine fields were encountered and aided by the strong currents, these floating weapons of destruction made the work anything but a holiday making for the mine sweepers.

In March several ships were sunk by floating mines and it was then decided that an army should be landed to assist the naval forces to effect their objectives by seizing the high ground on the shores of the Dardanelles which had been so troublesome to the navy. As Masfield has so aptly pointed out, no idea of investing Constantinople ever entered into the heads of the Staff originating this idea.

After much deliberation during which the Turks had ample time to prepare for the attack, it was definitely decided that the landings should be made on the beaches at Cape Helles and at Gaba Tepe some twelve miles up the coast where a narrow beach 200 yards across offered a chance of success.

The army chosen for this attack was composed of a French Division, the Royal Naval Division, the 29th Division of British Regulars and the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.

The island of Lemnos some fifty miles from the Peninsula had been chosen as the tactical base from which munitions, reinforcements, etc., should be forwarded, and it was there that the transports awaited until the weather should settle and render a landing possible.

At dawn on the morning of the 26th of April, 1915, the landings were commenced with a preliminary bombardment of the Turkish positions by the fleet.

Of all the landings none was more heroic, more difficult, and more bloody than that of Sedd-el-Bahir. These troops landed from lighters and the tramp steamer River Clyde, which had been previously prepared by having gangways cut in her sides, and platforms built out to enable men to get ashore quickly. The plan was to run the ship as near the beach as possible, and fill in the intervening space with the lighters, which were towed into position by naval launches.

Immediately the "River Clyde" grounded she and the lighters were greeted by a hail of machine gun bullets. Men dead, dying and wounded fell into the water, were carried away by the strong currents and drowned. Others tried to build up the lighters to form the bridge and were killed as they worked. The lighters broke apart, were made, and remade, under a shrapnel fire of unparalleled ferocity from the Asiatic guns. All day long the rushes of men continued, and all day long they were killed with the exception of a few who reached cover of the beach.

Just on night fall the Turkish fire slackened for some inconceivable reason, and the survivors came ashore, joined the men on the beach, and attacked the old fort which contained thousands of Turkish snipers. The fighting was intense and it was not until a charge made in the early morning that the ruins fell into our hands and the landing parties were definitely established.

The men comprising this force were from the peerless 29th Division, veterans of the Indian Frontier, Matabeleland, and South African wars.

Much credit has been attached to the Australian Force for its work on the Peninsula, but no troops in the world have ever done better, and few have equalled the magnificent and indomitable qualities of the men of this 29th Division, the flower of the English Regular Army. Their behavior during the many trying months of the campaign was that of demi-gods.

Of the other landings on the Southern edge of the Peninsula, one was completely successful and after fighting a series of desperate battles the troops pushed on and established themselves well forward.

While these operations were progressing the Australians and French fought their way ashore, at Gaba Tepe, and on the Asiatic side, respectively.

The landing parties which had been planned for Gaba Tepe were luckily diverted by the tide to a little beach to the Northward. Once more the Turks opened on the boats and the same state of affairs was reenacted as in the case of the River Clyde landing. Barb-wire had been placed under the water and as many of the men jumped ashore from their boats they were caught and drowned. This time, however, the casualties were not so great and our forces got ashore and rushed the Turks. One sailor who noticed a machine gun close to the water edge seized a rifle and bayonet from a dead man nearby, charged the gun and fell across its muzzle putting it out of action. He fell ridled with bullets. The crew were instantly killed.

Then began the bush fighting against the Turkish snipers who were camouflaged and fought like fanatics. In

the meantime, the artillery in Asia, on Gaba Tepe, and Achi Baba, had found the range, and shrapnel and heavy iron filled the air. Turkish reinforcements arrived and every man seemed a direct target for the enemy.

The beach had become an absolute inferno, shells burst among ammunition and blew the already wounded men to fragments; but all the time, the men fought onwards and on the eve of the fourth day the A. N. Z. A. C.'s had made good and occupied a country in which they were destined to remain until those sad days of December, 1915, when they were forced to leave their hardly-won territory.

The landings had, in every case, been gained at a frightful cost of men, but in the case of the Australians at least, it had meant the birth of a new nation, and traditions that will endure until eternity.

As more than one man had pointed out, we have been condemned for not pushing on. German emissaries have spread reports about the Turks being short of food and ammunition. Perhaps they were, but the procurement of those munitions and reinforcements, for them, was possible,—with us we had but to do without and realize that nothing could reach us for some considerable time.

Time and again the Turks rushed our men now entrenched on the hillside, all day long they pounded us with their artillery, morning, night and noon they sniped us, but while this was going on time was found to strengthen our positions, and by means of pacifist raids, biting off little pieces of the Turkish line and outposts, our men gradually advanced until the supports were, to a slight extent, saved from absolute vulnerability. These isolated actions of attacking parties continued until the last days of December.

If there were such a thing in the world as inaction, the Peninsula Forces did not know of its existence, and that very activity was the main factor in keeping up the splendid e'lan and virility of the men engaged.

On the 19th of May the Turks made a massed attack on our positions and were repulsed with bloody losses. So great was the excitement in the trenches that men fought for places at the machine gun to get a chance at the splendid targets offered.

During these weeks the 29th Division, French and Royal Naval Division had improved their positions at Cape Helles and after thirteen days of constant battle succeeded in capturing the village of Krithia on the way to Achi Baba.

Then summer came, and with it, blinding heat, millions of flies, and all the crawling insects in the encyclopaedia.

At Auzae, we had practically no water and were dependent upon the supplies brought by lighters for our existence.

A Naval Officer on the Beach stated that this water which was brought 500 miles cost 44c a gallon, and on the way to the trenches in petrol cans about one third of each gallon was lost. The issued ration was one pint per diem for eating, drinking and washing. Reinforcements arrived steadily all through May, June and July. In the first days of August it was decided that a big attack should be made at a place called Sula Bay, a locality filled with mountains intersected by every kind of tortuous ravine. To divert the attention of the Turks from this landing it was decided that two minor operations should take place at Cape Helles and Auzae respectively. The affair at Auzae was intended to capture the main water supply on Lonesome Pine Plateau the value of which the Turks had amply demonstrated by their magnificent defense on every occasion of attack.

On the afternoon of the 6th, the attack opened with concentrated shelling by the warships, and just on sundown the men attacked.

All hell became loose in an instant, but the Turkish trenches were reached and found to be covered with railroad sleepers and irons which had to be forced apart and entries made through the gaps.

For five days and nights the fighting continued on that Plateau amongst corpses and filth, with bayonets, bombs, knives, boots and even teeth, but at the end of that time the Anzaes held the Plateau. Official figures gave 7000 dead on an area 500 yards square.

Simultaneously with this affair the English, New Zealanders, Indians and Australians attacked the hills in front of Sula bay. They encountered innumerable forces of Turks ahead of them. Some troops obtained their objectives, and found themselves isolated, the flanks being unable to come up.

Turkish reinforcements arrived, counter-attacked innumerable times, and were driven back as often as they attacked, but in the end the crest of the hill remained in their (the Turks) hands and on the 11th of August the battle ended with us in possession of the rear line of hills, but our chance of cutting through the Peninsula zone.

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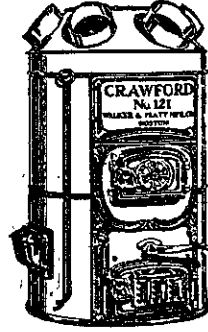
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From that time onwards there was a constant repetition of pacifist warfare punctuated by no tremendous attacks from either side.

On the 29th of November as if to make up for the summer heat, a blizzard descended on us in its full force. In twenty-four hours ten thousand casualties occurred from frost bite, pneumonia, etc., Then the rain came down in solid sheets inundating our trenches wetting our only possessions trenches, wetting our only possessions and fall in.

This blizzard aptly illustrated the difficulties awaiting our coming months of winter if we remained on Gallipoli.

(At this time our batteries were restricted to 2 shells per gun per day, all shells being saved for emergencies.)

Early in December certain amongst us were told that the evacuation was definitely planned to take place in the near future and preparations were carefully made to allay any general suspicions that may have been aroused.

All available transport room was utilized for the emigration of the sick and wounded. Only the hardest remained and every moment was occupied in strengthening the rear lines of defense in case a rear guard action should be fought on the last night.

On the night of the 19th of December a very small force remained on the Peninsula, every step had been taken to impress the Turks with our intention to attack, and the enemy could be seen placing out new barbed wire entanglements and generally improving his position.

On that night of the 19th we left in small parties for the lighters, awaiting us at the beach, and embarked on transports ready for us well out in the Aegean Sea.

At one time the Turkish army had some twenty machine gunners facing them along our entire front. Many of the troops broke down and wept like children at leaving the spot where so many of their comrades had given their lives, and where our national traditions had been born; but a soldier must have no feelings, so we metaphorically girded up our loins and made ready for the next piece of work that was allotted us.

Thus ended the operations at Auzae, a tactical mistake perhaps, a failure of attainment of objectives possibly, but in our minds an opportunity of doing in our small way, a little bit toward Humanity's cause and the Establishment of Right.



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