

CHAPTER VIII

"ANZAC" AND HELLES

MUCH else that had happened on the Turkish side was learnt four years later by the Australian Historical Mission. As mentioned above, the coastline of the southern half of the Peninsula had been held by the 9th Turkish Division, which placed four battalions around the seaboard and held the other five in reserve. The actual landing places had been garrisoned on the Australian front by one company, and on the 29th Division's front by two, in each case assisted by machine-gunners and some artillery. The main local reserve, the 19th Turkish Division, was camped two miles from the Narrows and three or four miles from the Australian landing place.

News of the Australian landing reached headquarters of the 9th Turkish Division, at Maidos on the Narrows, probably about daybreak. Its commander, Khalil Sami, at once sent off the two reserve battalions of the regiment (27th) whose other battalion was holding that part of the coast. They were to attack from Kojadere, a village just behind what may be called the Fourth Ridge. They started at 7.30 and were the troops who drove back the advanced parties near Scrubby Knoll and some also were later seen marching up the Third Ridge. For further reinforcement Khalil appealed to the 19th Division—apparently keeping the rest of his own reserve, three battalions, in case of need for the southern end of the Peninsula, whither they were eventually sent.

The 19th Division to which he appealed consisted of one Turkish regiment (57th), and two Arab ones (72nd and 77th) which the Turks regarded as of less value. It

happened that the divisional commander, Major Mustafa Kemal, had arranged to exercise the 57th Regiment that morning over precisely the ground that the Australians were to seize. The regiment assembled at 5.30 and was on parade when Khalil's message reached Mustafa Kemal. It said that a force of "about one battalion" had landed at Ari Burnu and gone towards Hill 971; and Khalil asked Kemal to send a battalion from his camp to Ari Burnu to meet this thrust.

Kemal instantly conjectured that, if his opponents were making for Hill 971, the attack was no mere feint by a single battalion, but a major offensive. He therefore decided to throw in not one battalion but the whole of the 57th Regiment, and himself started off at once across country, map in hand, striding out with the leading company of the regiment, and with its leading battalion commander, Zeki Bey, beside him.¹ As he reached the eastern slope of Scrubby Knoll on the Third Ridge, a number of Turks scattered by the Australian advance came tumbling down the slope. Mustafa Kemal climbed this ridge immediately north of the knoll and sent two battalions of the 57th straight against the Australians. Captain Tulloch's men, several ridges away, by Battleship Hill could then be seen by the Turks, and the tough fight began. The Australian fire, said Zeki Bey afterwards, was heavy and accurate. Zeki Bey's battalion advanced on the inland side of the main range and the sister battalion down the seaward side—it was the latter attack that eventually drove the Australians from Baby 700.

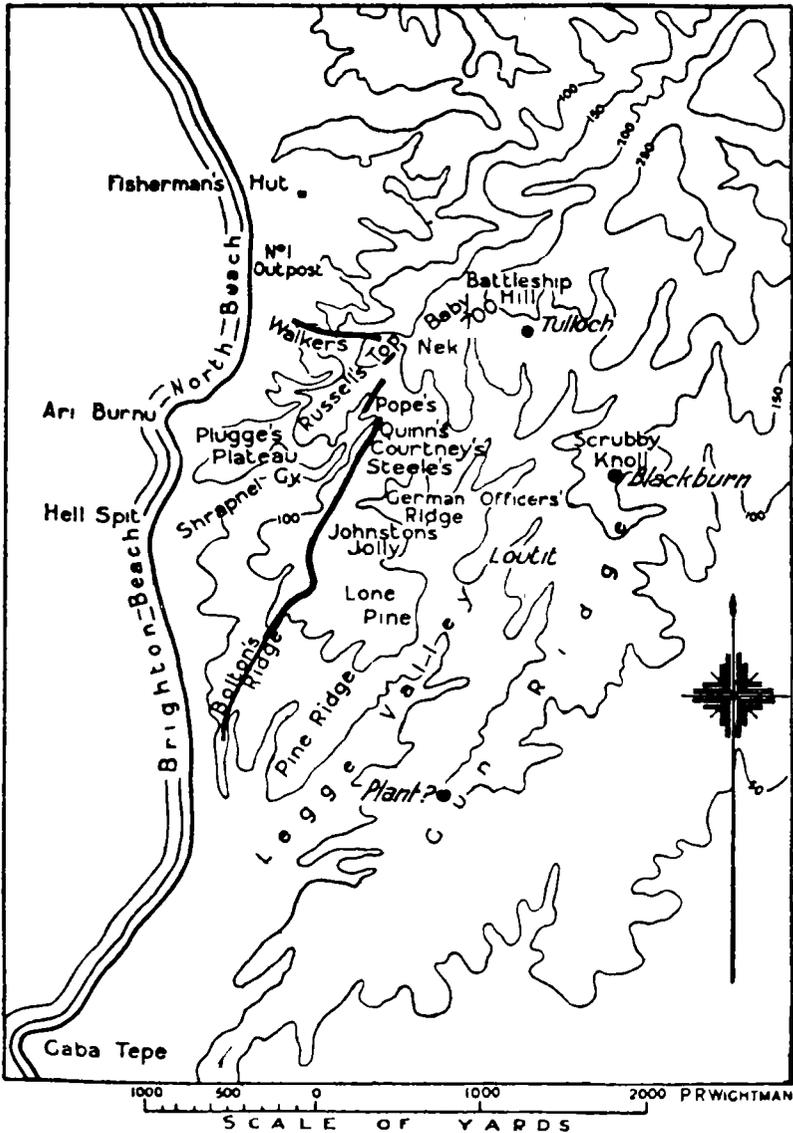
A little farther south the advance against the 400 Plateau and the spurs south of it had been made by Khalil's 27th Regiment. The 27th barely reached the Plateau and in the southern spurs it fought all day against advanced parties of M'Cay's 2nd Brigade holding the

¹ For the Turkish side of the story, as told to the Australian Historical Mission which went over the ground carefully with Zeki Bey in 1919, see *Vol. I. pp. 447-52, and 476-9* and Gallipoli Mission by the present author

farthest spur (Pine Ridge). By dusk it had overrun the last of them. To fill a gap between the 57th and 27th Regiments Mustafa Kemal had by then brought up his second regiment, the 77th (Arab); but its troops, attacking at nightfall or after, became hopelessly scattered, many of them firing from Third Ridge upon the other Turkish regiments in front. Part of Kemal's third regiment, the 72nd (Arab) he brought round during the night to the main range to support the 57th, whose last battalion had been put in on Baby 700 and had driven the last Australians there across The Nek. Here the Turks were unknowingly helped by the erroneous belief of some of the Australians that Indian infantry was fighting beside them, which caused them at certain critical moments to cease fire on the Turks whom they mistook for Indians.

After nightfall the Turks, using a third battalion of the 57th, had outflanked and captured The Nek. The reports from some Turkish commanders on this front to Mustafa Kemal had been as alarming as those from the brigadiers MacLagan and M'Cay to Bridges; but the commander of this battalion, who was up with his troops at the Nek, reported that, though he was in touch with only eighty or ninety of them, and feared that, if attacked, they might not be able to hold their own, he believed their opponents also were too exhausted to attack.

During this night at both ends of the Second Ridge the Turks assaulted in the dark, but their rushes were always preceded by a sudden wild chorus of "Allah! Allah!" which gave warning of each attempt, and they were easily mown down by rifles and machine-guns. All night parties crept up and sniped or tried to assemble for closer rushes, but were constantly scared back by short charges of Australians and New Zealanders with their bayonets. From dark to dawn both sides maintained a terrific and perhaps largely useless rifle fire. Alternately firing and digging, the Australians and New Zealanders had barely time to notice the drizzling rain. The crucial



THE BATTLE OF THE LANDING, 25th APRIL 1915

(Though two of the northern outposts are here marked, the effort to establish them was not made till a later stage. Loutit's name marks his party's position—he himself reached Scrubby Knoll.)

Map from "The Empire at War" (50 metre contours)

sector was the left, where—though this was barely realised for several days—the Turks now held the crests of the main range continuing across The Nek to the northern edge of Russell's Top, in the heart of the Australian position. Here the Australians and New Zealanders clung, on the left, to Walker's Ridge, running steeply and ruggedly down from Russell's Top to North Beach. On the right they held on to the heads of the indentations in the Second Ridge to which MacLagan had directed them in the morning, and which became ultimately Steele's, Courtney's, and Quinn's Posts. Here the Turks were actually behind them, as well as lining the other edge of the Second Ridge, a biscuit throw in front; at Quinn's, near the extreme left of the Second Ridge, which there rose gradually to the neighbouring Baby 700, they were only thirty or forty yards from the bayonets of the Australians and New Zealanders. On two occasions, apparently, that post was held only by the stubborn will of subordinates who overrode their hesitating superiors. Fortunately the left shoulders of each of these indentations protected the defenders against fire from the rear, and by volleys and occasional rushes they kept back the enemy in front.

The gap in this vital part of the line, where the Turks on Baby 700 looked straight down Monash Valley, behind the Second Ridge, was partly filled during the night by the first troops of Monash's 4th Brigade, whose 16th Battalion was led up by its commander, Colonel Pope, to the hill (afterwards known as Pope's) which served the purpose of a cork in the hole.

At dawn on Monday, April 26th, the great Turkish counter-attack, for which Birdwood and the Dominion leaders—and indeed all their troops—were waiting, did not come. What the Dominion leaders did not realise was that the Turks were as tired as their opponents, and had lost very heavily; in the 27th and 57th Regiments alone there had been 2000 casualties—an astonishing proof of

the accurate fire of the Dominion troops. Later on the 26th a body of Turks attempting to move down the wide summit of Baby 700 towards Pope's Hill was caught and shattered by shells from the *Queen Elizabeth* and other battleships; their fire had been mostly ineffective hitherto, but they pounded the Turkish positions that morning, largely in order to cheer the troops. The twelve Indian mountain guns and a few of the Anzac field artillery were by then in position. The only other visible movement that day was made from near the southern end of the front by the 4th Australian Battalion which, on receiving a verbal order to straighten a section of its line, mistook this for the order for a general advance which many troops were expecting. The 4th swept over the 400 Plateau, recapturing most of the southern lobe (Lone Pine), from which Australians had been withdrawn during the previous night. The rest of the force did not even know till afterwards that this second advance had occurred. Few Turks were there, but the plateau was swept by an intense fire of shrapnel and small arms, and after heavy loss the remnants were that night again brought back into the old line.

On the third day, April 27th, Mustafa Kemal, having been reinforced by two regiments, attempted a general counter-attack. But the warships' guns caught the main attack as it tried to move down Baby 700 and scattered the Turks like ants on a disturbed anthill—after this experience never again until August did the Turks at Anzac attempt to move down slopes exposed to the warships' guns. At Quinn's and the posts south of it they were mown down by rifle fire; and on the right, where they again attacked by night, an Australian battery, which by then Lieut.-Colonel C. Rosenthal had managed to have dragged to the firing line, helped to sweep other assaulting lines away.

Along much of the front the garrison was not even aware it had been attacked. The one sector in which real

danger existed was at The Nek—now in possession of the Turks—where the main range ran in. But here three days' constant fighting, under Brig.-General H. B. Walker (chief of Birdwood's staff who temporarily commanded the New Zealand infantry) and Lieut.-Colonel G. F. Braund of the 2nd Australian Battalion, established a line facing the Turks at The Nek. The gap at this apex of the position was not quite closed—the Turks still held Baby 700, the key of the Anzac position, but they could not get further past or round the posts, though they could still fire into the back of Quinn's, Courtney's and Steele's. This day Colonel H. N. MacLaurin, the young Australian brigadier who relieved MacLagan with a view to the remustering of the 3rd Brigade, was killed—as was his brigade major—by a Turkish sniper from the left rear.

In all this time the Australians and New Zealanders had hardly seen an aircraft. The balloon ship *Manica* had done most of the observing from the air. On the evening of the 28th, when Turks were seen on Nibrunesi Point, which jutted out four miles to the north, a seaplane from the *Ark Royal* flew low along the Beach and reported that men were at work on that point. It was feared that they were emplacing a howitzer to shell the Beach. The warships battered the point with their shells. No gun was ever emplaced there, but raiding parties (on April 30th and May 2nd) destroyed the post, the New Zealanders capturing fifteen prisoners there.

Birdwood's Corps had thus established a foothold—it would now be called a bridgehead—on the Peninsula, and by May 1st forty-four of his sixty-four guns had been hauled into position, mainly on the hilltops close behind the front line. The New Zealand and Australian Division under General Godley was allotted the left third of the front, and the 1st Australian Division under General Bridges the remaining two-thirds. Birdwood obtained leave to call the place by the code-name of his corps, ANZAC—Australian and New Zealand Army Corps—and

that famous name, though originally devised by one of Birdwood's English clerks, Lieutenant A. T. White, while the Corps was at Cairo, now first came into general use. The bay and the half-mile of beach between the two sheltering knolls, already crammed like a busy port with the food, fodder, ammunition, engineers' stores, dressing stations, pack mules and offices of the Corps, were named Anzac Cove. The warships, the hospital ships and a crowd of transports (still having aboard much of the artillery and nearly all the transport and their horses), as well as trawlers and small craft still lay a few miles off it and a similar collection off Cape Helles, with battleships, cruisers and destroyers guarding them.

At Cape Helles the 29th Division had landed in face of greater difficulties than the "Anzacs"; the heavy naval bombardment there had not suppressed the Turks,² but had warned them that the infantry would land. The attempt to disembark at Seddel Bahr from the beached transport, *River Clyde*, miscarried with great loss, and those who here reached shore were pinned all day to the beach or near it, as were those at the next beach to the north, Lancashire Landing. Fortunately on other beaches opposition was much less and the southern effort was helped by the fact that the northern landing, at Anzac, drew to itself for two days nearly all the Turkish reserves; but even on the third day, the first objective for the 29th Division, Achi Baba peak, was still farther off than was the objective, Mal Tepe, at Anzac, and the troops at Helles were as exhausted as the Anzacs.

Sir Ian Hamilton had neither artillery nor infantry enough to push on at both Anzac and Helles. But at Helles the fleet could better support him on both flanks and his land artillery had room for its positions. Chiefly for these reasons he decided to concentrate upon his effort there. On April 27th the French division which had made

² Throughout the campaign the flat trajectory of most naval guns rendered them largely ineffective against troops in trenches.

the feint south of the straits, and had now been withdrawn, took over the right of the front, at Seddel Bahr, and next day the 29th Division advanced. But, though it greatly improved the foothold by carrying the front to nearly 3 miles from the Cape, it was still $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles short of Achi Baba and over 2 from Krithia village at the foot of that height.

Hamilton now decided to use all available forces—including whatever could be spared from Anzac—in trying to reach Achi Baba peak before the Turkish force ahead of him was too strong and too well dug in. He himself wished to approach the enemy here at night and attack at dawn, but the Commander of the 29th Division, General Hunter-Weston, dreaded the confusion of operations in the dark now that his infantry had lost many good officers.

On May 3rd Hamilton summoned Birdwood and asked him to send to Helles as much of his force as he could spare. Birdwood sent at once the two infantry brigades that had been least heavily tried—the New Zealand and the 2nd Australian—and Hamilton also brought down twenty Anzac field-guns which were still in their ships. The two brigades were transported in fleet-sweepers on the night of the 5th, and landed at dawn next day beside the stranded *River Clyde*, now serving as part of the breakwater and pier at Seddel Bahr. There on May 6th, in a countryside wholly different from the rugged Anzac, they presently watched from amid olive groves and flowery meadows in brilliant sunlight a formal attack, beginning at 10.30 a.m. with a bombardment, the distant infantry, French and 29th Division, advancing on either flank at 11 o'clock. Between the two a "composite" brigade of 29th Division and Royal Naval Division troops was to keep touch. From a quarter to half a mile was gained that day, but two similar attacks next day added very little to this. On the third morning the New Zealand Brigade, lent to the 29th Division, renewed the attack on

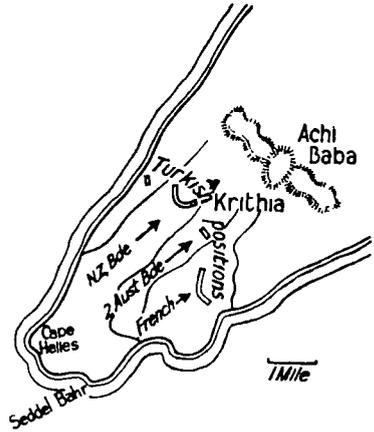
the left; its orders arrived late and again little ground was gained. General Hunter-Weston of the 29th Division had no better plan than to order it to attack again in the afternoon.

But here Sir Ian Hamilton stepped in. In nearly three days the army in its costly advance had not yet reached or, for the most part, even seen the Turkish positions. His reserves were almost expended. But it was still believed that, if once reached and pierced, the whole Turkish line would collapse. Accordingly Hamilton resolved to put in the 2nd Australian Brigade where the composite brigade had been; at 5.30 p.m., after fifteen minutes' bombardment by the ships and land artillery, the whole Allied line was to fix bayonets and advance.

The 2nd Australian Brigade had just been brought round over a streamlet and through flowery meadows to bivouac, so it thought, for the night 600 to 900 yards behind the British centre. Its men were digging themselves shelter and cooking their evening meal when at 4.55, without warning, the order arrived. Colonel M'Cay was away, visiting the New Zealand brigadier, and it was doubtful whether it was physically possible for the brigade to be in attack formation crossing the front line within thirty-five minutes. Messengers were sent to the four battalions and to M'Cay and at 5.5 M'Cay issued his order—the 7th and 6th Battalions to advance side by side over the level country ahead of them, with their flanks on two streams and with the 5th and 8th Battalions similarly following in support.

The men, then settling to their tea, were hurried away, with packs on, the battalions making across country from their bivouacs to pick up position, Major Gordon Bennett and Lieut.-Colonel McNicoll directing the left (with which went M'Cay) and the brigade major, W. E. H. Cass, leading the right. With the Allied guns thundering, the hurrying companies crossed a slight dip and a trench full of Indians and then emerged through the

scattered olive trees on to a wide, dry, level grassland that reached ahead to the distant Achi Baba peak. The moment they appeared, bullets fired at long range fell among them. Presently Turkish shrapnel began to burst over the right, raising tawny clouds as the pellets whipped up the dust. But each time, when it cleared, the platoons were seen marching as before. The fire of small arms increased but the heavily loaded brigade hurried straight on, heads down, as if into fierce rain, some men holding their shovels before their faces like umbrellas in a thunderstorm. The left battalion, 6th, had already extended into successive lines, as it moved, and the right, 7th, now did the same.



Five hundred yards after passing over the Indian trench the troops reached, suddenly and quite unexpectedly, another trench, filled with British soldiers. In the A.I.F. it was ever afterwards known as "The Tommies' Trench". The leading lines jumped into it or lay down behind it, panting from the speed of the advance and wondering if they were to go farther. After about three minutes, as later lines came up, M'Cay jumped out on the parapet and called, "Now then, Australians! On, Australians!"

The fire was by then intense, spurts of dust rising from the plain like drops splashing in a thunder-shower. But line after line of the 2nd Brigade clambered out and hurried forward. Their swift advance was the spectacle of the battlefield. For another 500 yards they hastened on, men falling constantly, until the lines were so thin

that it was clear that the front was too weak to push farther. The stone houses of Krithia were still 2000 yards away, but in advancing 1000 yards the brigade, already reduced at Anzac to 2900 men, lost in one short hour another 1000. On higher ground on the far right of the Allied line the Turkish trenches were reached—the French were seen leaping into them. Some Australians at the end of the advance could make out Turkish earthworks 400 yards ahead. On the left the New Zealanders had gained but little ground at heavy cost. After dark touch was found with them. Three weeks later the inexperienced 42nd Division, advancing by night as Hamilton had wished, approached another 200 yards nearer to the Turkish position almost without casualties.

The two Anzac brigades were sent back to their own force. The time when the Turkish line across the south of the Peninsula was still largely unentrenched had passed; and, with the Turks digging in solidly and reinforcements reaching them, there vanished the hope that their defence could be penetrated, and the objectives dominating the straits gained, by Hamilton's present force and method. So far the military attempt as well as the naval had failed.