CHAPTER X

THE CORPS LEAVE EGYPT

GALLIPOLI was to be invaded in order to help the Navy to force the straits. The first plans were conceived at the conference of March 22nd in the Queen Elizabeth, when de Robeck and Hamilton decided to suggest the abandonment of a purely naval attack, and the employment of the army, originally intended for use at Constantinople, in securing with the Navy the passage of the Dardanelles.

How could the Army best help the Navy to pass the Narrows? It was, of course, the duty of the General Staff at the War Office in peace time to study such questions, and this very problem had been examined in 1906. But Sir Ian Hamilton had not been supplied with the papers which resulted. He and his staff must hurriedly study the problem as if it had never been considered before. A vain effort was made to obtain an existing plan, drawn up by the staff of the Greek Army for an attack upon the Dardanelles.

Normally the General Staff at the War Office should have seen that every available item of information was supplied. But under Lord Kitchener the General Staff had practically ceased to exist. The British Army had an organisation intended to secure efficiency in war. It was supposed to be administered by an "Army Council," composed of the heads of its great departments, chief among which was the General Staff. Previous Secretaries of State had, as a matter of course, asked the advice of the Chief of the General Staff when making decisions concerning military operations. Whether they acted on his advice or not, they gave their decisions to him, and he issued the instructions to commanders in the field. When a commander abroad had a report to send in, or a request to make, he addressed it to the Chief of the General Staff. That officer either dealt with it himself or took it, with his recommendation, to the Minister for decision. This recognised method of good administration, whether in government or
ONE OF THE GAPS IN THE EASTERN BANK OF THE SUEZ CANAL (NEAR TUSSUM POST) DOWN WHICH THE TURKS DRAGGED THEIR PONTOONS FROM THE DESERT, 3RD FEBRUARY, 1915

Aust War Museum Official Photo No G1481 Taken in February, 1910

Western bank (Indians, N.Z., with Lancs Artillery)

SUEZ CANAL SOUTH OF TUSSUM, FROM THE SHIFE ACROSS WHICH THE TURKS DRAGGED THEIR BOATS ON 3RD FEBRUARY 1915, SHOWING THE WESTERN BANK WHICH WAS DEFENDED BY INDIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS

Aust War Museum Official Photo No G1481 Taken in February, 1910

To face p 202
Narrows behind here

 Kilid  Bahr  Plateau  Achi Baba

Turkish Gun pit  Turkish Gun pit  The "Olive" Grove  Turkish Gun pit

The Kilid Bahr Plateau from near Gaba Tepe. This was the direction from which the Anzac troops looked at it. Achi Baba (the British objective) is on the horizon and the Turkish "Olive" Grove gun-pits in the foreground.
industry, was the only possible one, if the General Staff was to grasp the problems which it had been specially established to solve.

But Lord Kitchener was a soldier-statesman, and, when he became the Minister responsible for the administration and conduct of the Army, he attempted to do that work himself. He almost completely ignored the General Staff. He did not ask its advice, but himself sent instructions direct to leaders in the field. Sometimes the General Staff was not even informed what those instructions were. He encouraged commanders whom he knew and trusted, such as Maxwell and Birdwood, to write directly to him. This was sometimes a great advantage to the troops, who had their wants brought immediately to the notice of the Minister, but it was an impossible system for the conduct of a great war.

But there is this to be said for Lord Kitchener's attitude. The British General Staff did not possess either his confidence or the nation's. It was suspected of moving still in the atmosphere of the hunt-club. In the years before the war its members had little belief in Kitchener, and he had small sympathy for them. He was a man of great simplicity, quite without subtlety, but one who could see large ends and pursue them by a straight path with a mighty will, careless of what people thought or felt. His experience in the East had made him an autocrat. He mistrusted the Ministers with whom he sat. He suspected that, if he informed them of his news or of his projects, some of these cherished secrets might reach other ears, and he therefore told them as little as possible. From the Prime Minister downwards they constantly sought information from such war correspondents or others from the front as they chanced to meet. Lord Kitchener's small personal staff could not give Sir Ian Hamilton the assistance which the General Staff would have supplied. Sir Ian, as has been said, had to face the problem as if it were entirely novel.

When Hamilton left the Dardanelles after the conference on March 22nd and sailed for Alexandria, all that had been decided was that the Army must help the Navy, and that the Army would wait until the 29th Division arrived. Hamilton had also indicated that he would probably choose to land at the toe of the Peninsula. But the final decision in this and
every other part of the plan had still to be made. Hamilton's "administrative" staff had not yet arrived from England, and his attention during twelve crowded days in Egypt was largely taken up with matters of supply and transport. It was therefore not until he finally sailed from Egypt that his main plans were completed.

The most important question for decision was—Where should the army be thrown ashore? If a landing was to be made on the Gallipoli Peninsula, it was obvious that it must be attempted from the open sea, and not from inside the straits, where all the Turkish defences would bear directly upon it. On the other hand, the outer coast was so fringed with rough hills in the north and cliffs in the south that there were only a few possible points of landing. The most obvious of these was at Bulair, at the northern end of the Peninsula, near its junction with the mainland. Here the land falls low, and the Peninsula is only three miles in width from sea to sea. Any force which landed and threw itself across this neck would cut the land communication between Turkey and the Peninsula. Admiral Carden and Birdwood's own staff, almost to a man, had urged Birdwood to adopt this plan, and it was constantly cited afterwards as the obvious method of attack.

Birdwood had rejected Bulair for four reasons: first, it would in no way enable him to carry out his rôle of assisting the Navy; second, the only feasible landing-place at Bulair was on the northern side of the Bulair Lines, which must therefore be assaulted from the direction of the mainland—the precise contingency which these very strong entrenchments were expressly constructed to meet; third, troops landing at Bulair would be working from north to south, while the Navy would be attacking the Peninsula from south to north, and no co-operation would be possible as they advanced; fourth, the rear of the army would always be open to attack by Turkish forces advancing from the mainland.

The same reasons caused Sir Ian Hamilton to reject all thought of Bulair. He had reconnoitred the coast of the Gulf of Saros in a warship on March 18th, and had there seen for himself the white lines of new trenches, and wire entanglements on the beach at the possible landing-places. "With the exception of Cape Helles," he telegraphed to Lord
Kitchener, "they (the landing-places he had noticed on the coast) were all commanded by elaborate networks of trenches." The lesson of the war in France was this—Do not waste troops against ready-made entrenchments. Wherever you throw in your new forces, let it be at some place where there is not a continuous trench line already in front of you; let it be where the enemy will still have, for some days at least, an open flank.

A landing at Enos, on the northern side of the Gulf of Saros, was also suggested. This was favoured by Birdwood's staff. The country there was level. But it was nearly fifty miles by land from the Peninsula. Hamilton lacked the wagons and other transport for such a march. Moreover to have the Army fighting a desperate battle at one point, and the Navy at another, neither able to help the other, and both within sight of large forces of Turks, seemed an absurdity. Much more feasible was the plan now urged by Birdwood himself—that of landing on the Asiatic coast, south of the straits, where Besika Bay would, under most conditions of weather, have given a fair protection to the shipping.

But the object of the whole campaign was to get the fleet to Constantinople. What barred its way was the Narrows. Strategy cannot be far wrong if it throws an army against the essential point; it may be disastrous if it squanders it elsewhere. Hamilton therefore decided to fling his army straight at the Narrows.

Whereas Besika Bay was twenty-five miles from the Narrows, there were two areas on the coast of the Peninsula where troops could be landed in force much nearer to the vital point. One of these began where the crumpled hills and valleys of the upper Peninsula stooped down to the green alluvial flats and long beaches round Suvla Bay. These low lands did not reach across the Peninsula; they ended about four miles inland, where the two villages of Kuchuk Anafarta (Little Anafarta) and Biyuk Anafarta (Great Anafarta) nestled into the lofty hills behind them. One or two gaps in the hills led the country roads to valleys on the Dardanelles side near the upper end of the Narrows.

The appearance on the Asiatic shore of heavy guns which could reach the toe of the Peninsula had caused General Birdwood to alter his previous opinion. He afterwards, however, showed his approval of Hamilton's plans.
Suvla Bay lay opposite the northern end of the Narrows. Immediately south of Suvla was the loftiest and wildest mass of hill country at this end of the Peninsula. Its name was Koja Chemen Tepe (Hill of the Great Pasture), but it was known to the army by its height in feet as marked on the map—971. Its summit was in reality only the northern end of its main ridge, which gradually sank as it ran southwards, converging towards the coast until it ended in the low but steep promontory of Gaba Tepe (Rough Hill).

A good beach extended the whole way from Suvla to Gaba Tepe. At the latter a saddle of level country reached across the Peninsula to the Narrows, which were here less than four and a half miles distant from the outer coast. The small bay of Kilia Liman (Kilia Harbour) and the village of Maidos on the inner shore, were only five miles from Gaba Tepe on the outer. Not all the seven-mile stretch of beach from Suvla to Gaba Tepe, however, was suitable for landing, inasmuch as along half of it the wild spurs of Hill 971 rose almost from the water’s edge. But near Suvla, at the northern end, and near Gaba Tepe in the south, the country was gentler and landings were possible. Gaba Tepe promontory itself had been occupied in peace time as a police post.

From Suvla Bay to Gaba Tepe was one possible area for a landing. South of Gaba Tepe, near Kum Tepe (Sand Hill), was another beach, about which the Turks had some fears. But thence almost to the foot of the Peninsula, although the coast was not so high as in the north, there was scarcely a break in the barrier of cliffs. Immediately south of the Gaba Tepe lowlands there rose abruptly the frowning sides of the Kilid Bahr Plateau. This mass was not so lofty as Koja Chemen Tepe, its highest point being marked 706 feet, but its slopes were almost as steep as the sides of a box. Its
shape was roughly square. Its flat summit was completely hidden from the plains below. Behind it, out of view, and entirely protected, were the forts guarding the Narrows at Kilid Bahr.

South of the Kilid Bahr Plateau was further rough country surrounding the Soghun Dere (the deep valley which ran out into the Dardanelles opposite Kephez Point). This rough terrain suddenly ended in the peaked hill of Achi Baba or Alchi Tepe (Plaster Hill). Achi Baba was a long, bald summit, raised like a head upon the square shoulders of the surrounding high land. It was 718 feet in height. It afforded no view over the rough country to the north of it, the Narrows, Kilid, Bahr, and Chanak being completely shut out by the heights of the Kilid Bahr Plateau. But looking southward, the whole foot of the Peninsula to Cape Helles, five miles away, was spread out as if on a map. The land fell gently, although its gentleness concealed one or two gullies surprisingly rugged. On the slope, a mile below the peak, lay the Greek village of Krithia. The Peninsula ended in white or sand-coloured cliffs like those of the south of England. In these, round the toe of the Peninsula, were a few narrow beaches, generally corresponding to a break in the rocks behind them. Such beaches afforded the second possible landing-place for an army striking a blow at the Narrows. This was the point of attack favoured by Major-General A. Hunter-Weston, commanding the 29th Division, and Major-General Paris, commanding the Royal Naval Division, both of whom, like Birdwood, were called upon to summarise their opinions for Sir Ian Hamilton.

But the beaches at the foot of the Peninsula were not large enough for the landing of an army. Moreover, they were thirteen miles from the Narrows. On the seven-mile beach between Suvla and Gaba Tepe there was room and to spare

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3 See plate at p 203

2 The Turkish measurement. British maps show 700 feet and 218 metres (715 feet).
for the whole army, and the Narrows were only four and a half miles from the southern end of that beach; but the wild ridges and gullies, covered with scrub and scored with sandy cliffs, which pressed down to the shore half-way between Gaba Tepe and Suvla, seem to have daunted all who reconnoitred the coast. Again, to land at Gaba Tepe or Suvla Bay seemed to be a waste of the tremendous assistance which could be expected from the Navy. At best the ships could only fire from behind the troops, who, after advancing a few miles, would be out of their sight and reach. On the other hand at Cape Helles the battleships could keep pace with both flanks as they progressed—a consideration which at that time seemed of overwhelming importance. Birdwood and Hunter-Weston had been as much impressed by it as was Hamilton.

Hamilton therefore decided to make his main attack from Cape Helles, with a view to thence capturing the all-important plateau of Kilid Bahr, taking Achi Baba in the first advance as a preliminary step. At the same time he could not disembark his whole force there at once, even by using all the five beaches available. He therefore decided to launch a second heavy attack from the beach immediately north of Gaba Tepe. This northern attack would, if unsuccessful, be a powerful feint, and the troops could be re-embarked. If it succeeded, the northern force would seize the hill mass of Koja Chemen Tepe, which Hamilton held to be almost as important as the Kilid Bahr Plateau itself. Its possession would prevent reinforcements from moving south while the southern force was attacking the Kilid Bahr Plateau. When that was captured, the Narrows would lie at the feet of the Allied army. To assist these two main attacks it was decided to make two false landings, one to the north at Bulair, and one to the south at Kum Kale.

Such was the outline of the great plan. Birdwood had originally been in favour of landing at once with whatever troops were at hand. But Hamilton decided to await the arrival of all the troops, such being Lord Kitchener's instruction. He informed the Admiral that the Army could not be ready until April 14th. Kitchener at once telegraphed that he
thought this delay far too long. But owing to the lack of a previously-considered plan, difficulties were arising which made delay inevitable.

Lemnos had been chosen as the base of operations for the army. On March 8th, when the 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade had already been there four days and the French Division and Royal Naval Division were about to arrive, the Australian Engineers discovered that in the neighbourhood of Mudros, where the troops were to be camped, there was water only for a few thousand men. It would therefore be necessary to keep nearly the whole force in the transports until it actually sailed to Gallipoli. Moreover it had been discovered in England, at the moment when the 29th Division was starting, that some of its transports had been already fully loaded with fodder. Consequently the troops in those ships were compelled to leave their waggons to follow. In the case of the Royal Naval Division, certain troops were in one vessel, their vehicles in another, and the horses in a third. It is obvious that, if troops are to be hurriedly disembarked to fight on an unknown coast, each party must have its animals, vehicles, and gear in its own ship. If a landing is to be well-organised, the officers loading the ships ought to know beforehand which troops will land, at which place, and in what order.

But in the case of the transports for this expedition no special instructions were given or could have been given, since the plans had not yet been made. When the ships left England, material which should have been on top of the holds was at the bottom; the gear belonging to troops who would land on one beach was in a ship carrying troops to another beach. Exactly the same was the case with the ships of the 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade which were loaded in Alexandria. The ships would have to be re-stowed. In Lemnos there were no wharves or appliances for transhipping. The recommendations of General Birdwood's chief engineer, Colonel Joly de Lotbinière, were sent by Admiral Wemyss to the Admiralty, and Hamilton, immediately on his arrival, decided upon

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the transfer of the main base of the expedition to the great Egyptian port of Alexandria, 650 miles from the Dardanelles.

Hamilton allowed the 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade to stay at Mudros. General Birdwood had received orders from Lord Kitchener that one of his brigades, when at Lemnos, should be especially trained in landing and re-embarking; Birdwood had already instructed Colonel MacLagan to administer this training to the 3rd Brigade; a secret hint was added that the landing-places chosen should resemble those at the toe of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men were to be practised at communicating information in battle, and at carrying a very full load. Accordingly the Brigade passed its spare time in the ships’ boats on Mudros Harbour, with constant landings and rushes up the foothills. The exercise was heavy, but the bald hills and scanty grass of Lemnos were a paradise after the Egyptian desert and the obvious feelings of the men influenced Hamilton’s decision. The 9th Battalion (Q’land), which had been crowded with the 10th (S. Aust.) into the Ionian, was sent into camp ashore. The rest slept in their transports Part of the time the troops worked in the holds, unearthing landing-stages and water appliances from beneath hundreds of tons of other baggage.

On the other hand the French transports, which had begun to reach Lemnos about March 9th, and those of the Royal Naval Division, whose main body arrived about March 12th, were, with few exceptions, ordered to Egypt to disembark their troops and re-stow their cargoes. The 29th Division had been headed thither direct. For a few weeks Alexandria became a great military camp. At Ramleh, on the white sandhills, were thousands of fair-haired Frenchmen: men of the 175th Regiment from La Rochelle, in the new blue-grey uniform of the French Army; men of the 226th Regiment in dark blue; huge Senegalese blacks with dark blue fezzes and tunics and light blue greatcoats; gallant French cavalry, Chasseurs d’Afrique, in their dashing blue jackets, red trousers, and brick-red cummerbunds; French Zouaves in huge red pantaloons and jackets of blue embroidered with yellow; adventurers of the Foreign Legion; quick-witted French officers with peaked caps and pince-nez. Many of these Frenchmen had spent several days at Bizerta and nearly
a fortnight at Lemnos before their transports were sent to Alexandria. Presently men of the 29th Division began to appear in Alexandria, sturdy fellows of middle height, every man the replica of the next, in big khaki sun-helmets and light khaki uniform; so also, in a darker khaki, did men of the Naval Division, who whose officers wore a khaki cap of the naval shape and carried the naval curl upon their sleeves instead of the stars or crown which showed the rank of a military officer. Throughout the city large houses and hotels, with their spacious bare rooms and empty corridors, were taken over for offices, and the various staffs of the new "Mediterranean Expeditionary Force" began to settle down.

To the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, still training at Cairo, there had come but vague rumours of all these proceedings. Sir Ian Hamilton had reviewed each of the divisions, and the work in the desert continued. On Thursday, April 1st, the 1st Australian Division was engaged in a divisional field-day. The troops had shown at their best in attacking one of the high desert ridges which they knew so well. The 4th Light Horse Regiment, which Bridges had sent on to seize it, reached it before the enemy. The 1st Infantry Brigade, advancing against the other half of the ridge, was held up. But the 2nd Infantry Brigade, which was behind the Light Horse, managed to get on top of the hill, and then swept along it, advancing beautifully. The long line of each company—figures showing dark against the glaring sand—suddenly springing into existence where only a bunch of men had been crouching before, and sweeping, one line after another, across the hillside, drew from a British officer the comment: "Could not have been better." The fight was over early. The two brigadiers, M'Cay and MacLaurin, came to tea at Divisional Headquarters in a state of great satisfaction. They asked for leave till Sunday. Many officers and others were given permission to visit Luxor during the week-end. In one battalion the officers were giving an evening picnic on a Nile boat fifteen miles up the river. All this was taken as a sign that nothing was imminent.

True, the 3rd Brigade had disappeared a month since, and there was a general notion that it was at Lemnos Island. It

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6 Most of the Royal Naval Division, however, were sent to Port Said.
THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN TRAVERSED BY THE EXPEDITION, SHOWING ALEXANDRETTA AND GALLIPOLI
was rumoured that the nurses at some of the hospitals had been ordered to get sunhats. Most of the troops thought that they were destined presently for the Dardanelles, but some guessed Alexandretta. As a matter of fact, early in the year, at the time of the Turkish expedition against the Canal, a landing at Alexandretta and the seizure of the Bailan Pass had been suggested by Lord Kitchener to General Birdwood. Plans were drawn in Egypt, and Birdwood had chosen the 1st Australian Division for the attack. At first it was proposed to land only one brigade under General Bridges. When this had seized Alexandretta, Bridges was to be made Governor of the town. Afterwards it was proposed to push inland and even to capture Aleppo, the whole of the 1st Australian Division being destined for this colossal task. These plans were known to very few, and the turn of events at the Dardanelles caused them to be abandoned. The secret of the Alexandretta scheme had been perfectly kept, and those who, on April 1st, guessed that this port was the ultimate destination of the force, were judging only by probabilities.

That evening Major Wagstaff, of the Army Corps staff, came from Cairo to Bridges' headquarters at Mena and was closeted in the General's room. As he left, Bridges' voice was heard saying: "Well, thanks for bringing us good news. That's the most cheerful thing we've had happen to us for a long time."

The word spread like wild-fire—"All leave stopped." Colonel MacLaurin, one of the brigadiers who had obtained leave, came smiling up the stairs to the General's room. His holiday was gone. Officers and men starting to Luxor were stopped at the train. The picnickers on the Nile, returning, found their colonel waiting for them on the wharf. The "Australian Division" was ordered to the front. Next day the "N.Z. and A. Division" received orders to follow it.

Far into the night of April 1st the staff of the 1st Division worked at tables of entrainment and orders of embarkation. The commander of the Army Corps had received instructions that none of the light horse or mounted rifles would be included in his army corps in the forthcoming operations. If required, they would be sent for at a later date. The divisional ammunition column also was to be left behind. But in case
the latter should be needed early in the advance into Turkey. It was to be moved down to Alexandria, and transports were earmarked for it and for a squadron or two of light horse. The Australian Field Bakery and part of the Field Butchery were despatched to Lemnos, and afterwards to Imbros. The great Australian hospitals were to be left in Egypt. The 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Station and the 1st Australian Stationary Hospital had been sent on to Lemnos. The Clearing Station afterwards moved with the Corps.

Every force that goes to war requires constant supplies of new troops to take the place of casualties. In the British Army a force takes with it its first reinforcement—equal, in the case of infantry, to one-tenth of the whole number—in order to make its units up to strength after their first fight. Every month there should arrive a further supplement about half as strong as the first. The first Australian contingent had brought its first reinforcement with it from Australia; a second and a third had arrived since.

It was decided that the force should take its first two reinforcements with it to the front. Each battalion was notified that it must set apart from its numbers two special parties, to be known as the “beach party” and the “hold party” respectively. Battalion commanders naturally guessed that one of these would be hoisting stores out of the ships' holds, and the other receiving them on the beach; these parties they made up mainly from the reinforcing drafts. About 400 men from the same source were formed by orders of the Army Corps into two large fatigue parties for making roads or for carrying stores wherever required from the landing-place. The reinforcements which had been longest in training had already been absorbed into the battalions, so as to bring the units to full strength; those which had last arrived were left in Egypt, carrying on a more or less desultory training under such officers as General Bridges detailed to the Base. Major Macnaghten—the same whose strenuous methods had moulded the cadets of Woolloomooloo—had been detached to train the reinforcements of the 3rd Brigade in Egypt. But he now moved with his own battalion.

There was further allotted to General Birdwood's force the 7th Brigade of Indian Mountain Artillery, then on the Suez
Canal. This consisted of the 21st and 26th Mounted Batteries, each possessed of six small guns—10-pdr. They had 13 British officers, 820 Indian rank and file, and over 500 mules. The Ceylon Planters' Rifle Corps, composed of 150 fine young Englishmen who had left Colombo about the time when the 1st Division called at that port, was also attached to the "A. and N.Z." Army Corps as "corps troops."

In the whirl of preparation the riot⁶ which occurred in Cairo on Good Friday, the day after the order for the move—a disturbance of which the tradition still clings in Egypt—passed almost unnoticed by the staffs of the two divisions. In every battalion the men were medically examined to ensure that they were fit for active service. Their spare kits were being left behind; the men stuffed them into their black kit-bags; and on April 3rd these bags began to be piled in huge stacks beside the tram terminus in Mena Camp. It was necessary that the camp site should be left clean, a point of military etiquette as to which Australian regiments were said to have been careless in the South African War. The incinerators—round mud-walled enclosures of about the size of a well-head—in which the rubbish of the camp was burnt, were smoking heavily all this day behind the lines of each battalion.

That night anyone looking down on Mena Camp from the sand-ridge behind it would have imagined it to be a manufacturing city. All over the valley bonfires and incinerators blazed like the furnaces of Wolverhampton. Between them there glowed at intervals the windows of the long mess-huts and the many lights of the camp. Every now and then from some part of the lines a field company or ambulance or half of a battalion, as its time was reached on the entrainment tables, would be marching off to Cairo, without any demonstration whatever, exactly as if this were part of the work of the last seven months. In the camp, one battalion, waiting for its turn to march, was gathered in a huge circle round the bonfires on its old parade-ground, holding an improvised concert. The strong faces of the men showed up red in the glow of the fire. In the chair was their old colonel, whom they wellnigh worshipped, and by his side the smallest and most popular man

⁶ See footnote 13, Chap. VII, p. 130
in the battalion, acting as master of ceremonies. Men had been throwing odd blank cartridges into the incinerators, and the desultory popping of these in the fires came from all over the camp. Lined in front of the doctor’s tent was the last awkward squad of suspects, who had been “dodging” medical inspection all day in the dread that some of them would be rejected. They were ready to take any desperate measure to go with their battalion. A hundred men had got out of hospital that day, and a hundred more had made the attempt.

By the morning the greater part of the 1st Infantry Brigade had left Cairo, departing quietly throughout the night and entraining without fuss in “standard” trains, each of which carried half a battalion or a similar unit, with its vehicles packed on to open trucks and its horses in horse-trucks. “The railway authorities seem to be of the opinion that the troops of the Army Corps are extraordinarily good at entraining,” wrote one British officer of the Corps Staff. Within four days the old camp at Mena had gone for ever. Beside the empty roads the tents of the newly-arrived 3rd Light Horse Brigade, the 4th Light Horse Regiment, and a few other units stood forlornly on the desert.

As soon as each transport completed its loading at Alexandria, it sailed, without escort. The captains had sealed orders, but without opening them they knew where they were going. The captain of the Minnewaska bethought him of these orders three hours after leaving port. “I thought—why, bless me, I’d better open ’em and see what they say,” he said later, “and I found we were going to the right place.” The route lay not far from the coast of Asia Minor. But the Navy so watched all enemy ports that British ships sailed the sea almost as in peace time. With only one transport, the Manitou, bringing artillery of the 29th Division, was there any interference. On the morning of April 17th a torpedo-boat overhauled her a day out of Lemnos. The Manitou took the boat to be British. It came close beside her, and then a voice shouted: “I give you ten minutes to leave the ship, and then I shall sink you.” It was the Turkish torpedo-boat Timur Hissar. Part of the Manitou’s troops were on deck; the rest came up quickly. Boats were swung out and filled, and one began to be lowered
with sixty men in it. The rope jerked, and one of the davits broke and fell into the boat, which crashed into the side and overturned. Wooden deck-gear, to which the men might cling, was hurriedly thrown into the sea. In the meantime the enemy fired a torpedo at fifty yards range, but it passed beneath the ship. Hauling off, he fired two more, which passed harmlessly astern. The torpedo-boat then left to chase another vessel, but three British destroyers hove up, and the Turkish captain ran his boat ashore on the island of Chios. Though the Manitou had escaped, many of her men were in the sea, and fifty-three were drowned. Some weeks before this, an aeroplane ship, the Anna Rickmers, had been torpedoed near Smyrna. Her Levantine crew vanished in the ship's boats; but two British officers, with British and French air mechanics, managed to work her, sinking, to Lemnos. Until far on in the Peninsula campaign no other British transport received serious harm from the enemy in these seas.

Thus the "Australian Division" went to its first campaign. It knew it had everything to learn and little experience to guide it. Officers had told their men plainly the heavy chances of death in the fighting ahead of them. In the last day or two before leaving Mena it was rumoured that thirty per cent. of casualties were expected in whatever landing operations were impending.7

The standard of performance which officers had kept before their men was that of the British regular army. Few Australians had ever seen British regular troops, but the standard of the old army was something to which they had been taught to look up, and they accepted it simply and with something akin to the awe with which the novice reveres the master craftsman. In this connection it may be mentioned that at this date Australian hats were difficult to procure, and men were therefore allowed, if they desired, to buy pith helmets similar to those worn by the British. A considerable proportion, especially in the artillery and the light horse, availed themselves of the permission, and wore the helmet not without a certain pride in their resemblance to the men of the British Army.

7 The official estimate both of General Birdwood's staff and of G H Q. was very much less.
Australians and New Zealanders carried with them for years strange tags of "Arabic" and broken English, such as "Imshi Yalla" (Go away); "Igri" (Hurry up); "Saida" (Good-day); or "Eggs-a-cook," "Oringhes," "Boots-i-clean" —calls of the Cairo urchins who sold eggs or oranges, or who blacked boots. The troops were weary to sickness, both of Cairo and of the desert. Years later they looked back on them as on a paradise such as the contingencies of war were likely never to place in their way again.
Transports in Mudros Harbour, Lemnos, 13th April, 1915, with the 2nd and 3rd Australian Infantry Battalions practising landing from the Derfflinger

Aust War Museum Official Photo No G883

To face p. 218
Colonel E. G. Sinclair-MacLagan, Commander of the Covering Force
(3rd Australian Infantry Brigade)

Photo by Swaine, London

To face p. 219.