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Mesopotamia.

Will Anyone Be Punished?

By LOVAT FRASER.

The truth about the Mesopotamia Expedition is out at last, and it will make the country flame with indignation. No more deplorable story of mismanagement and of errors of high policy can be found in our history, with the solitary exception of the Dardanelles failure.

The public have long wanted to know who was responsible for the miserable blunders in Mesopotamia. The report of the Commission shows clearly that the ultimate responsibility is dual. It rests on the one hand upon Mr. Asquith and the First Coalition Cabinet, and on the other hand upon the heads of the Indian Administration. Probably attempts will be made by party hacks to save the reputations of home politicians by thrusting the blame exclusively upon the Indian authorities. As I said long ago in *The Daily Mail*, that cock will not fight.

The tragedies of Kut and of the costly and unsuccessful attempts to relieve the beleaguered garrison were the direct consequence of the Dardanelles fiasco. Consider the facts. In the summer of 1915 General Townshend had advanced far up the Tigris and gained a victory at Kut, afterwards occupying the town. On October 3 Sir John Nixon, who was in chief command in Mesopotamia, took the extraordinary course of telegraphing direct to Mr. Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, thus: "I consider I am strong enough to open road to Baghdad, and with this intention I propose to concentrate at Azizieh." Mr. Chamberlain, with admirable judgment, telegraphed on October 4 forbidding Sir John Nixon to advance any farther; but afterwards on that day the War Committee of the Cabinet met, and saw Sir John Nixon's foolish boast.

The Cabinet knew that ruin had overtaken them at the Dardanelles, and that withdrawal was inevitable. They feared the wrath which would arise when the nation discovered the truth. Sir John Nixon's message tempted them, and at that fateful meeting they tentatively decided to

run the grave risk of pushing on to Baghdad in the hope of gaining a victory which would obscure the defeat of Gallipoli. Mr. Asquith was audacious enough to say in the House of Commons on July 18, 1916, that in Mesopotamia "from first to last political have never been allowed to override military considerations." The Commission flatly and categorically contradicted him, but even without their verdict the published documents are sufficient proof. The official telegram to India said: "We are therefore in great need of striking success in the East." For what reason? Not to save Gallipoli, the abandonment of which was then certain, but to save the Government.

We all know what Mr. Asquith did subsequently. He went down to the House of Commons on November 2, and skated over the Dardanelles business, for which, he admitted, "nobody is more responsible than I." Then he turned joyously to Mesopotamia, announced that Sir John Nixon's force was "within measurable distance of Baghdad," and added, "I do not think that in the whole course of the war there has been a series of operations more carefully contrived, more brilliantly conducted, and with a better prospect of final success. Retribution swiftly followed this mad attempt to take Baghdad and defeat a Turkish army over 500 miles from the sea with a force of only 11,000 weary soldiers backed by 18 field guns and a horse battery. The Commission point out that it resulted in the ultimate surrender of more than a division of our finest fighting troops, while the ineffective attempts to relieve Kut cost 21,000 casualties.

All our troubles and misfortunes in Mesopotamia flowed from the unwarrantable decision of the Cabinet to attempt for political reasons the capture of Baghdad by a rash, with a weak and unsupported force, the only thing which can be said in excuse of Mr. Asquith and his colleagues is that they were very badly advised by their

military experts.

The responsibility of the Indian authorities is of another kind, but it is equally blame-worthy. Collectively, the Government of India tacitly abdicated their functions, and the real control was vested in the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge) and the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Beauchamp Duff). Their fundamental error was that, after telegraphing home objections which were not strenuous enough, they assented to the advance to Baghdad when they knew the dangers. Though they were not responsible for policy, they were directly responsible for most of the shocking mismanagement and neglect which the report reveals. Lord Hardinge seems to have reposed blind faith in General Duff until the cumulative reports of the sufferings of the wounded carried conviction to his mind and impelled him to take a strong line with the Commander-in-Chief. For General Duff there appears to be no excuse whatever.

General Duff shared with Lord Kitchener the authorship of the cumbersome and over-centralized scheme of military control in India, which grabbed all power for the Commander-in-Chief and under the first test of war wrecked the Indian military machine. It was in protest against this scheme that Lord Curzon resigned the Viceroyalty twelve years ago. I heard Lord Curzon's words the night before he quitted India for ever. He said that the principles for which he had fought had not vanished, though they had momentarily disappeared. "They will reappear," he declared, "and that before very long." They have indeed. Rarely has a statesman been so overwhelmingly vindicated in his own lifetime. The Commission damns the Kitchener scheme of control root and branch, and General Munro is already in India with a free hand to build a new structure out of the ruins.

Although General Duff was the slave of the system he had helped to create, his faults of omission were still extraordinary. He tried to run the war in Mesopotamia from a Himalayan hill-top, remained a recluse in his office, and never once visited the base at Bombay or the front on the Tigris. He kept everything in his own hands, and the consequent delays were innumerable. He never grasped the grave dangers of river transport, and made no effective attempt to remedy them. He turned a deaf ear to the cloud of reports of the sufferings of the wounded after Ctesiphon, and never investigated until it was too late the gross inefficiency of the Indian medical arrangements.

The public in Great Britain and India will assuredly expect the Home Government to take disciplinary measures against the various prominent officers who are so comprehensively condemned in this astonishing report. Sir John Nixon's conduct in disregarding the numerous warnings respectfully addressed to him by General Townshend and others was grievous. Sir William Bebie, who is most severely criticised for starving the medical equipment of the expedition, occupies to-day one of the highest military medical posts in this country. Sir Edmund Barrow, who is singled out by the Commission as the originator of the expedition and as the officer in this country chiefly responsible for advising the advance to Baghdad, has actually been rewarded with the post of military member of the Secretary of State's Council. Others in the wrong have been decorated or promoted.

A word of warning must be added in conclusion. In spite of General Maude's successful advances this year, we are not yet out of the wood in Mesopotamia. The paralysis on the Russian front in Armenia is ominous, and we shall be fortunate indeed if the Turks do not come down, horse, foot, and artillery, upon Baghdad in the autumn.

Fishery News.

From F. Curlew, (Belleoram to Rencontre).—The catch is 15,510 qtls. with 2,200 for last week. Prospects are good for codnets but poor for hook and liners. Work is hampered by foggy weather. The lobster fishery is fairly good.

From A. Ingraham, (Ramea).—Thirteen dories and skiffs and 28 boats are fishing. The catch is 4,200 qtls. and for last week 200. There has been so much fog lately it has been impossible for the boats to find the proper fishing grounds. Prospects are fairly good but a good many dogfish are getting about. Bait is plentiful.

From J. Cunningham, (Conmore Bay to Red Island).—The trap fishing is about over but there is a fine sign of fish on the outside grounds and prospects are good. Squid bait is plentiful. Ten traps set 60 dories, skiffs and boats are fishing. The catch is 9,369 qtls. and for last week 450.

From R. Furneaux, (Rose, Blanche to H. LeCou).—Prospects are fairly good and squid bait is abundant, but foggy weather all the week delayed operations. The lobster catch is much better than last year's. Twenty-six gories and skiffs are fishing. The

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catch is 14,240 qtls. and for last week 380.

From P. J. Wade, (Salmon Cove Pt. to Brigue S. Pt.).—The fishery during the week has practically been a failure only some of the traps getting a few fish, while the hook and liners did almost nothing. Prospects are not good just now but there is a sufficient supply of caplin and squid. The catch is 290 qtls. with 50 for last week. Fifteen traps and 12 dories and skiffs are fishing. The lobster catch is poor.

From J. Gosse, (Spaniard's Bay to Upper Island Cove).—Trapping for the season appears to be about over and the outlook for a fair voyage is not good, though there is still plenty caplin and squid. The hook and liners have done nothing to date. Nineteen traps and 34 dories and skiffs are fishing. The catch is 446 qtls. and for last week 40.

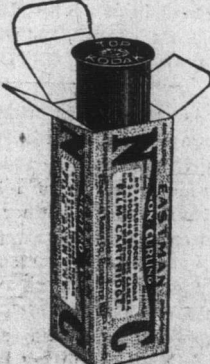
From C. Renout, (Bank Head to Highlands).—The traps have all been taken up but trawls and hook and liners are still doing a little. Squid is plentiful but prospects for a further catch of cod are very poor. Lobsters are very scarce. The total catch is 4,814 qtls. with 300 for last week.

Body of Another Victim Recovered.

The Premier received a message yesterday afternoon from General Manager McDougall, of the Dominion Coal Co. at Sydney, stating the body of Richard Butt, of Western Bay, B.D.V., had been recovered from the New Waterford Mine, the scene of the recent mining horror. The remains are being forwarded to Port aux Basques and will arrive on Monday afternoon.

The Wreck.

The work of pumping out, preparatory to refloating the wrecked Scandinavian liner *Kristianafjord*, is practically completed by the divers and powerful wrecking tugs. In the event of the ship being refloated, in all probability she will come here for permanent repairs, which would be guaranteed to be done more promptly than anywhere else. The *Kristianafjord* would be the largest ship to be ever taken on the Reid Co's Dry Dock, though there would be ample room for her as the dock is 610 feet long. In connection with the stranded liner a fortunate circumstance is that the condition of the sea remains moderate.



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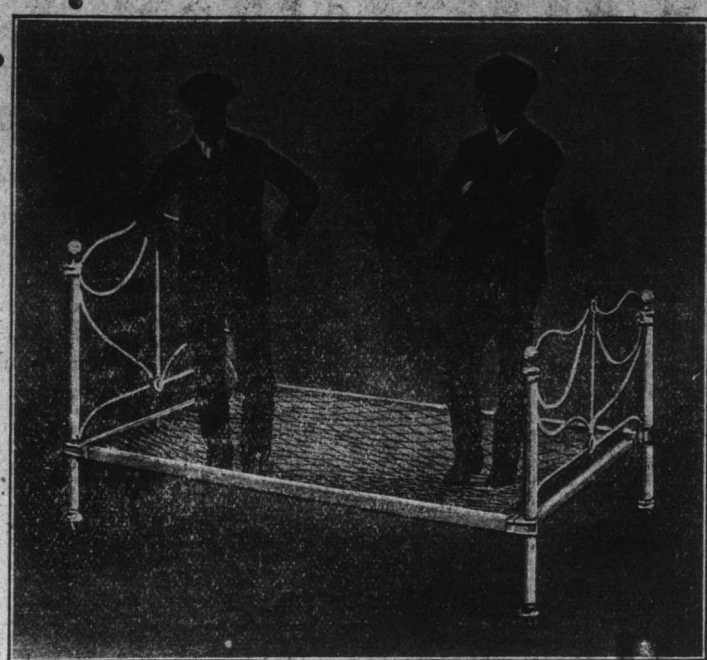
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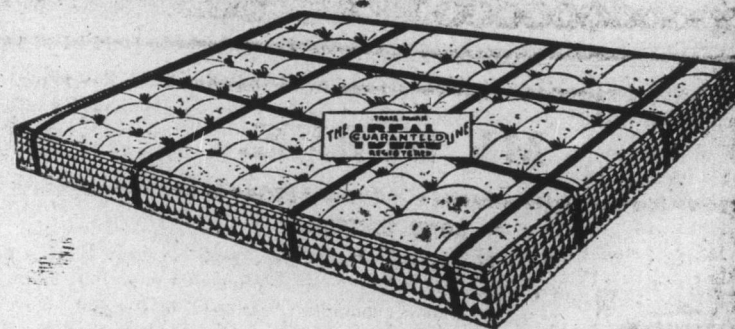
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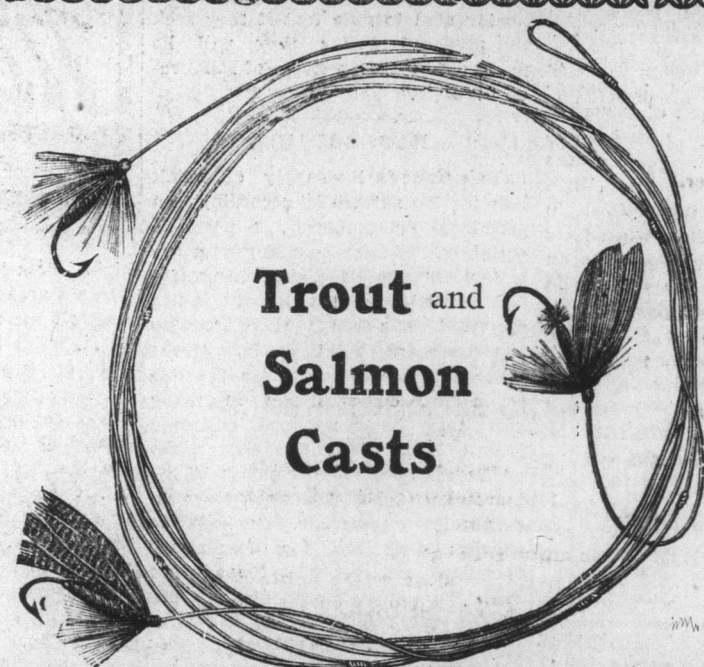


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Highlanders' Concert

AT MOUNT PEARL.

Last night the Highlanders in camp at Glendinning's Farm, Mount Pearl, held a most successful concert. The programme, which was run off without a hitch, was arranged by Mr. Carl Trappnell and was greatly enjoyed by the large number of visitors. Included in those present were a number of officers and soldiers who have returned from active service.

Those who assisted at the concert were:—Misses Glendinning, Messrs. Stansfield and Boutlier, Miss Strang, Mr. Devereaux, Miss Trappnell, Mr.

Hamlin, Miss Taylor, Mr. Somerville and Mr. Carl Trappnell. Mr. Gordon Christian was the accompanist.

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September 12