

"1915"--TOLD BY WINSTON CHURCHILL

DARDANELLES BURDEN

Kitchener Finds His Hands Tied by Earlier Delays and Indecisions-Conference On Board Queen Elizabeth Changes Whole Plan-"No" Is Motto, Months of Inaction Follow.

BRITISH WARSHIPS LEFT STANDING IDLE

By RT. HON, WINSTON CHURCHILL, C.H., FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY, 1911-1915.

What had happened at the Dardanelles The army had arrived from the earliest moment permitted to them the admiralty had carried all the troops to the point of con-

centration with punctuality. Sir Ian Hamilton had reached the Dardaniles on the eve of the naval attack narrows, and had witnessed from the bridge of the Phaeton its closing scenes. The impression of the sinking of the battleships, the spectacle of the crippled Inflexible, listed and slowly steaming out of the straits, the destroyers crowded with rescued crews, was strong in his mind. These appearances aroused in a nature chivalrous to a fault, an inense desire to come to the gid and cue of the sister service. It was in this mood that he addressed himself to the problem with which he

was immediately confronted. That problem was indeed grave and perplexing in an extreme degree. If the navy asked for help, Sir Ian Hamilton was resolved to give it to the utmost of his power. But obviusly then there was not a moment to lose. Every day, every hour, the Turkish defences and preparations would improve and their forces accuulate. A fortnight before, the dis- any administrative staff. .

been watching events on the sno since the beginning of March, was eager to land then and there, and onfident that the opposition would e overcome by a prompt attack.

Moreover, although nearly 60,000 men were now available within striking distance of the Gallipoli penin-sula, the supplies were scattered throughout the Mediterranean, the hospitals were not prepared, staff had never come together.

A Choice of Evils. Sir Ian Hamilton has recorded plight in pungent sentences:

"Here I am still minus my adju tant-general, my quartermaster general and my medical chief, charged with settling the basic ques-tion of whether the army should push off from Lemnos or from Alexandria. Nothing in the world to guide me beyond my own experience and that of my chief of the general staff, whose sphere of work and experience lies quite outside these administration.

embarkation of 20,000 men on the peninsula might have been effected without great difficulty. But now sharp fighting must be expected. Still. General Birdwood, who had

"I had trouble with my kid-

here."

In the choice of evils which now alone was open to Sir Ian Hamilton, his staff pronounced that whatever were the risks & delay, they were less than those of a precipitate and unorganized assault. The general therefore determined to transfer his therefore determined to transfer his base and his army from Lemnos to hase and his army from Lemnos to Alexandria, leaving only sufficient troops at the Dardanelles for minor enterprises, and to organize from Egypt any large military operation which the navy might require. Sir Ian Hamilton's intimation that a change of base and consequent de-lay were inevitable did not affect the admiral's intention to renew the

cal result of withdrawal of troops artillery ammunition is fired to shelt the gravest consideration. If governing the gravest

the admiralty. On the 22nd of March a conference was held on board the Queen Elizabeth. There were present Admiral de Robeck, Admiral Wemyss, Sir Ian Hamilton, General Birdwood, General Braithwaite and Captain Pollen. Sir Ian Hamilton has recorded this conferen "The moment we sat down de Robeck told us he was now quite clear he could not get through without the help of all my troops.
"Before were through without the help of all my troops.

"Before ever we went aboard Braithwaite. Birdwood and I had agreed that, whatever we landsmen might think, we must leave the seamen to settle their away to be seamen to seame the seamen to seamen the seamen to seame the seamen the se

Far-Reaching Decisions. Far-Reaching Decisions.

It was a far-reaching decision. It put aside altogether the policy of the government and of the admiralty, with which, up to this, the admiral had declared himself in full accord. The plans which had emanated from the fleet, on which both admiral and admiralty had been agreed, were cast to the winds. It withdrew the fleet from the struggle, and laid the responsibilities of the navy upon the army. It committed the army in the

CHURCHILL

most unfavorable conditions to an enterprise of extreme, hazard and of first magnitude. It was a decision entirely contrary to the whole spirit, and indeed to the explicit terms, of the latest messages Admiral de Robert hings straight for a smashing, simultaneous blow, and I am resolved from the action of the straight for a smashing simultaneous blow, and I am resolved from the admiral had and preparations will then be so thoroughly worked out — so care-instructions of March 15 had said:

most unfavorable conditions to an enterprise of extreme, hazard and of first magnitude. It was a decision entirely contrary to the whole spirit, and indeed to the explicit terms, of the enemy's side an important step was taken. General Liman von Sanders had hitherto been the head of the German military mission to Turkey, but had not exercised any executive command. The distress and the apprehension of the Turks, and the apprehension of the orders with which, on accepting the command, the admiral had stated he was in full agreement. It is true that the admiralty telegram, number 109 of March 15 had said:

most unfavorable conditions to an enterprise of extreme hazard and of through the Mediterranean were directed. On this day also on the emmy's side an important step was taken. General Liman von Sanders had hitherto been the head of the German military mission to Turkey, but had not exercised any executive command. The distress and the apprehension of the Turks, and the apprehension of the Turks, and the apprehension of the orders with the problem.

"I must wait for the 29th division. (see paragraph 2 of your formal instructions to me.) The formal instructions to me.) The division (see paragraph 2 of your formal instructions to me.) The formal instructions to me.) The formal instructions to me.) The division of the problem of the cereived from the admiral had an at close quarters with the problem.

"I must wait fo that, so far as in me Hes, the orders and preparations will then be so thoroughly worked out — so carefully rehearsed — as to give every chance to my men.

"If the division were here . . had my staff and self been here ten days ago . . then, the moment the fleet cried off, we might have had a dash in, right away, with what we have here."

In the choice of evils which now alone was open to Sir Ian Hamilton,

Thus at this conference two grave

and the crisis of the operations, in duced Enver Pasha on March 24 to sulmon General Liman von Sanders to Constantinople and then to place in his hands the entire control of the Turkish forces available for the defence of the peninsula. General von Sanders assumed the combination, in the decision of February 16 to send the division of February 16 to send the substitution of a purely military effort.

Thus at this conference two grave 2 than in the condition was not intended to cover, nor did it from its context cover, the total abandonment of the naval attack and the substitution of a purely military effort.

Thus at this conference two grave 2 the content of the decision of February 16 to send the divisions for both sides of the Marmora which had obtained until the 26th of March had to be completely 2 the content of the decision of the decision and consequently dispersed its transports, when he had deliberately left the issue in suspense until March 10, when he had allowed the division 2 the content of the content

Thus at this conference two grave decisions became operative: First, that the naval attack should be abandoned in favor of a general assault by the army; and secondly, that the army should go back to Alexandria to organize and prepare for this attack, although this process would involve at least three weeks' delay. The army had in fact arrived too late and too ill-organized to deliver its own surprise attack. but in plenty of time by its very presence to tempt the navy to desist from theirs.

lay were inevitable did not affect the admiral'. intention to renew the naval attacks. On the contrary, by revealing how long an interval must intervene before a general military attack, it might well have been expected to strengthen his resolve. His answer to Sir Ian Hamilton on the evening of the 20th shows that this was apparently the case.

Vice-Admiral de Robeck to Sir Ian Hamilton.

"As a military measure I concur with your proposal to make Egypt the headquarters, but submit political result of withdrawal of troops from Mudros at the moment requires artillery ammunition is fired to shell-minimum to desist from theirs.

One must, however, make great allowances for the admiral and for the naval point of view which he represented. To statesmen or soldiers, ships in time of war possess mo sentimental value. They are engines of war, to be used, risked, and if necessary expended in the common cause and for the general policy of the state. To such minds the life of a soldier was every whit as precious as that of a sailor, and an old battleship marked for the scrapheap was an instrument of war to be expended in a good cause as readily as artillery ammunition is fired to shell-

action as that of March 18 could have been fought with a loss of only thirty or forty British lives and two or three worthless ships, and that so many valuable conclusions had been attained at such a siender cost, Admiral de Robeck was saddened and consternated to the foundations of his being. These emotions were also present around the admiralty table present around the admiralty table in Whitehall.

Liman von Sanders in Command. Sir Ian Hamilton and his staff sailed on March 24 for Alexandria,

DODD'S KIDNEY **PILLS**

the frontier guards of the good old times. The enemy on landing would have resistance everywhere, but no forces or reserves to make a strong and energetic counter attack." It was with grief that I announced

miral and the admiralty to continue the naval attack and that it must, at any rate for the time being, be August, 1914, many undertakings had been given on behalf of the royal navy, and hitherto all had been made good. It was now again open to the prime minister, to Lord Kitch-ener, to the cabinet, if they wished, to withdraw from the whole enter-prise and to cover the failure by the seizure of Alexandretta. We had vessel of the slightest value had been sunk. I could not have complained of such a decision, however strongly I might have argued against it. But there was no necessity to argue. Lord Kitchener was always splendid when things went wrong. Confident, commanding, magnanimous, he made no reproaches. In a few brief sentences he assumed the burden and declared he would carry the operations through by military force. So here again there was no discussion: the agreement of the admiral and the general on the spot, and the declaration of Lord Kitchener, carried all before them. No formal decision to make a land attack was even noted in the records of the cabinet or the war council. When we remember the prolonged discussions and study which had preceded the resolve to make the naval attack, with its limited risk and the sur had passed I could never the naval attack. His hour had passed I could never the naval attack. ceded the resolve to make the naval attack, with its limited risk and cost, the silent plunge into this vast military adventure must be regarded as an extraordinary episode. Three months before how safe, how sound, how sure would this decision have been. But now!

Kitchener Assumes Burden.

Ian Hamilton:

"March 23.

"I am informed you consider April 14 as about date for commencing military operations if fleet have not forced the Dardanelles by then. I think you had better know at once that I consider any such postponement as far too long, and should like to know how soon you will act on shore?"

The general's reply was unanswerable:

Sir lan Hamilton to Lord Kitchener.

"I have not yet named any date,"

"I have not date have not yet named any date,"

"I have not date have not yet named any date,"

to be embarked otherwise than in order for battle, he had tied his own hands inextricably. He had no hands inextricably. He had no choice now but to wait for weeks in the face of ever-accumulating dangers and difficulties, or to abandon the enterprise. This battle solution because he tion, however, he at no time entertained. On the contrary he braced himself resolutely for the effort, and It was with grief that I announced himself resolutely for the effort, and to the cabinet the refusal of the adforward.

Cessation of Naval Offensive. Admiral de Robeck did not in the event pursue even the limited operations of which he had spoken in his telegram of March 25. His energies and those of his staff soon became absorbed in the preparation of the

comprehensive and complicated plans necessary for the landing of the army. The Queen Elizabeth never lost fewer men killed and wounded than were often incurred in a trench raid on the western front, and no vessel of the slightest value had been sunk. I could not have complained of such a decision however.

> to offer to renew the naval attack His hour had passed. I could never lift that "No" that had descended, and soon I was myself to succumb. Still vainer was it for Admiral Wemyss, when he succeeded de Robeck, to submit the Keyes plans and his own resolute convictions to and his own resolute conviction

Kitchener Assumes Burden.

When Lord Kitchener undertook to storm the Gallipoli peninsula with the army he was under the impression that a week would suffice to prepare and begin the operation and that meanwhile Admiral de Robeck would continue a steady naval pressure upon the Turks which might reveal at any moment the weakness of their marine defences.

He was astonished at the date of the military attack having to be put off so late as April 14, and he sent there and then from the cabinet room the following telegram to Sir Ian Hamilton:

"March 23.

"I am informed you consider April 14 as about date for commencing" ing for their their terms to successor for permission to attack. "No" had won with general assent and measureless ruin. Never again did the British fleet renew the attack upon the narrows which in pursuance of their orders they had begun on March 18, and which they then confidently expected to continue after a brief interval. Instead, they waited for nine months, the spectators of the sufferings, the immense losses and imperishable glories of the army, always hoping that their hour of intervention would come, always hoping that their hour of intervention would come, always hop-

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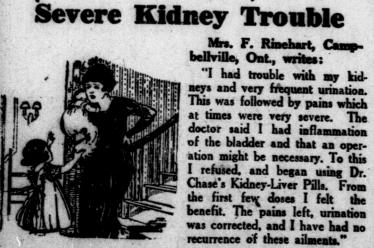


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