

watered his mules, and then blissfully bathed his wounded head and thigh in the river.

The cursed country continued to receive, constantly invalidate and reject draft after draft of our best blood. It had become a mouth which we fed reluctantly, lavishly, with the manhood which was essential elsewhere. No effort was spared by Government to keep the front up to strength or to improve the health of our men. The charge of niggardliness, in 1916 at any rate, was false. Economy was not considered, whether in money or in men. But it was too late. In May it was realised that it would be humanly impossible to secure sufficient transport before the next cold weather. Yet for political reasons we had to hold the barren ground we had gained and to keep up a line of communications over 300 miles from our base. One could fill chapters with statistics showing the wastage this entailed. Everyone who has first-hand evidence can multiply instances. There is no regiment or a unit which cannot add its melancholy item to the bill. New drafts coming up the river lost more than half their effectives before they reached the gap they had to fill. Other drafts succeeded and succumbed in their turn. *Item*: A draft of 139 men of Highland Light Infantry arrived at Basra and reached the front 28 strong. Few of them had ever been south of Cromartie before they enlisted, and some had never seen a train. *Item*: The three Indian battalions of the 1st Brigade went into the trenches in July with only a few British officers. *Item*: A howitzer battery with 100 men to man the six guns. Sixty is the normal strength, leaving a hundred for the wagon lines. *Item*: A motor car at Amara put out of action by the sun. All the engine room crew were down with heat-stroke. *Item*: A commanding officer and a temporary lieutenant to run a hospital with a thousand patients. I heard of dozens of cases which I cannot verify, but which are probably little