



FIFTH SUPPLEMENT

TO

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THURSDAY, 20 FEBRUARY, 1919

War Office,

20th February, 1919.

The Secretary of State for War has received the following Despatch, addressed to the Chief of the General Staff, India, by Lieutenant-General W. R. Marshall, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., Commanding-in-Chief, Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force.

General Headquarters,

Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force,

1st October, 1918.

SIR,—

1. I have the honour to submit herewith a report of the operations carried out by the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force during the period extending from April 1st to September 30th, 1918.

My previous despatch ended with the narrative of the operations which culminated in the capture of the Turkish forces opposed to me on the Euphrates about Khan Baghdadi, and the subsequent pursuit to Haditha, Ana, and beyond.

2. In my previous despatch I alluded briefly to the murder of the political officer at Nedjef, but not to the motives which had prompted

such an unprovoked crime. The reasons for it have been traced to enemy agency, and amongst the evilly disposed inhabitants of Nedjef a conspiracy, fostered by German gold, had been organised, the heads of it calling themselves "The Committee of Rebellion." The roots of this conspiracy were in Nedjef and its branches extended both up and down the Euphrates Valley. To put down this conspiracy, therefore, and to mete out stern justice to those actually concerned in the murder was from every point of view an urgent necessity. It was not desired to treat the city, which contains one of the most holy shrines of the Shiachs, and is surrounded by a very high wall, in an ordinary way, *i.e.*, by shelling or by direct assault.

A strict blockade was therefore ordered and the outside water supply cut off. Picquets were established round the town with barbed wire connecting them and these effectually stopped ingress or egress. There were two attempts of the insurgents to break out through the blockade line, but these were effectually stopped; dominating mounds were assaulted and held by our troops and gradually the blockade line closed in and occupied the bastions of the walls as well as holding the en-