

# THE LIVING AGE

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## THE PUBLICATION OF THE DARDANELLES REPORT

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THE Dardanelles Commission has at last issued its second and final report. The first report was issued in February, 1917, and the examination of witnesses for this second report continued till September of that year. The pages have been long in type, and their substance has been freely made known, so that I cannot say why the publication has been so long delayed, unless there was difficulty about the maps. For I can hardly suppose that political or personal considerations were taken into account so long after the event. Since the commission was appointed, Lord Cromer (chairman) and Lord Nicholson have died, and two members have resigned. But all the members were men of distinction, and under the chairmanship of Lord Pickford they have carried out a very difficult and complicated task with a fine sense of evidence and entire impartiality.

The report, which is admirably written and arranged, forms in fact a summary history of the whole Dardanelles campaign from the first landing to the evacuation. The observations upon the many controversial points in the conduct of the campaign naturally interest me most, because I was present

on many of the occasions myself, and have since spent many toilsome days in trying to discover the truth about them. Such controversial points, I mean, as the cause of the delay at starting, the frontal attacks at Helles, the capacity of certain generals at Suvla, the disastrous withdrawal from Scimitar Hill on the night of August 8, the water supply on the previous day, the identity of the guns which drove Major Allanson's gallant party from the summit of Sari Bair just when the Narrows were in sight and victory seemed assured, the question of the hospital ships, the responsibility of the contractors who sent out salt and stringy meat, the delay of the canteen ships in spite of frequent petitions for them, and the consequent plague of dysentery and enfeebling diarrhœa.

But the commission's wider conclusions are of more general interest. The value of the campaign as a strategic conception was presumably estimated in the first report, on the 'Origin and Inception,' but the conclusion is there only represented by a row of dots. In my opinion, the conception was the finest strategic idea of the war. If it had been pushed with con-

centrated energy and not played with as a dubious side show it must have ended the war at least two years sooner, for it would by that time have surrounded the Central Powers with an iron wall out of which no issue was left. But the present report deals only with the failure in execution. The commissioners justly concluded that from the outset sufficient consideration was not given to the measures necessary for success. The Turks had been underestimated. The Turks had been amply warned by the naval bombardments of the previous November and the February and March of 1915. The reports of the Admiral and of Sir Ian Hamilton showed that the Turkish resistance was likely to be stubborn. Owing to our obligations in other theatres of war, the necessary drafts, ammunition, high explosives, etc., could not be supplied:

We are of opinion that, with the resources then available, success in the Dardanelles, if possible, was only possible upon condition that the government concentrated their efforts upon the enterprise and limited their expenditure of men and material in the western theatre of war. This condition was never fulfilled.

After the first landing, Sir Ian, on May 17, reviewed the position for the government and asked for one army corps if Bulgaria or Greece joined us; otherwise for two. The government was so occupied with its own crisis and disputes that the dispatch was never considered till June 7, and the sending of reinforcements was postponed for six weeks, during which the men on the peninsula were obliged to make repeated frontal attacks to save themselves from being driven into the sea. Yet, in Mr. Churchill's words — and to him was due the honor of the whole strategic conception — 'if there were any operations in the history of the world which, having been begun, it

was worth while to carry through with the utmost vigor and fury, they were these.'

It is true that Mr. Churchill was responsible for the naval attempts to force the straits, and so for the warning that induced the Turks, under German officers, to prepare the elaborate land defenses which made rapid advance impossible even when the army had effected a landing. Whether the naval attacks would have succeeded if they had been pressed, in spite of considerable losses, we cannot know. But we know that our success was fully expected in Constantinople at the time, and we know that up to the very end, when evacuation was in sight, some of the best of our naval officers on the spot strongly advocated a renewal of the attempt. Though Admiral de Robeck was opposed to the scheme, he allowed a plan of operations to be drawn up. Admiral Wemyss supported it, and Commodore Roger Keyes (now Vice Admiral) came home to press the proposal vigorously, and, as he believed, with success. Ultimately the government rejected the idea and resolved on evacuation, although Lord Kitchener was resolutely opposed to that course until he visited the scene of action and was won over by Sir Charles Monro and certain staff officers there. If the ships could have fought their way through, or even if the army had clung on to the peninsula, deepening their trenches against the worst that German or Bulgarian shells could do, our country would at least have been spared the disaster of Kut. But such speculations are futile now. The main conclusion of the commissioners is:

Viewed as a military enterprise which was undertaken not as a surprise, but after ample warning had been given to the enemy of the probability of a land attack, we are of opinion that from the outset the

risks of failure attending the expedition outweighed its chances of success. The conditions of the problem, so far as we can judge, were not fully investigated in the first instance by competent critics, and no correct appreciation of the nature and difficulties of the task involved was arrived at.

After summarily discussing the main points of the campaign, they come to the evacuation, which they say the General Staff at the War Office favored:

To Sir Ian Hamilton such a step as evacuation was unthinkable, and he informed Lord Kitchener accordingly. On October 11, Lord Kitchener also told the Dardanelles Committee that in his opinion the abandonment of the Gallipoli Peninsula would be disastrous. On the other hand, Sir Charles Monro strongly urged its expediency and feasibility, and this view, though at first distasteful to Lord Kitchener, was afterwards accepted by him. At last the government resolved to withdraw from the peninsula. We think that this was a wise and courageous decision.

The commissioners find very little fault with Sir Ian himself for his conduct of the campaign upon the scamped resources allowed him. To me, the worst that can be said lies in the brief sentence, 'On the evening of August 8 we think that Sir Frederick Stopford's difficulties were increased by the intervention of Sir Ian Hamilton.' It was that Sunday evening of fatal calm, the day after the Suvla landing. Coming to Suvla from Imbros, Sir Ian had found, as he said, 'inertia prevailing.' The Turks now admit that they had not a man along the line of heights on our front. We had but to walk forward and occupy what we liked. But hardly a soul moved. Hoping to save the situation even then, Sir Ian gave a direct order to a divisional general (Hammersley, of the 11th Division). The order was to occupy the dominating height of Tekke Tepe with any battalion avail-

able. No order could have been better; but owing to the confusion of brigades, the ignorance of positions, the gathering darkness, and the exhaustion of some battalions, the 6th East Yorks, in compliance with Hammersley's order, were withdrawn from the vital point of Scimitar Hill, but they never reached the height of Tekke Tepe. Nor was any battalion sent to replace them. In the night large Turkish reinforcements came up by forced marches. Stopford's plan for an advance upon the heights at dawn was utterly upset. Scimitar Hill was soon crowded with Turks, and, in spite of deadly efforts, we never took it again.

The unhappy result was due to a series of accidents. In their more general view, the commissioners express a just estimate of Sir Ian himself:

We recognize Sir Ian Hamilton's personal gallantry and energy, his sanguine disposition, and his determination to win at all costs. We recognize also that the task entrusted to him was one of extreme difficulty, the more so as the authorities at home at first misconceived the nature and duration of the operations, and afterwards were slow to realize that to drive the Turks out of their entrenchments and occupy the heights commanding the straits was a formidable and hazardous enterprise which demanded a concentration of force and effort. It must be further borne in mind that Lord Kitchener, whom Sir Ian Hamilton appears to have regarded as a Commander-in-Chief rather than as a Secretary of State, pressed upon him the paramount importance, if it were by any means possible, of carrying out the task assigned to him.

I should like to know what officer in the army, including himself, ever regarded Lord Kitchener as anything but Commander-in-Chief, or ever thought of him as a Secretary of State! And when the commissioners go on to say that, in their opinion, it would have been well if Sir Ian had examined the situation as disclosed by the first landings in a more critical spirit, impar-

tially weighed the probabilities of success and failure, and submitted to Lord Kitchener a comprehensive statement of the arguments for and against a continuance of the operation, one can only say that within three weeks Sir Ian did present such a comprehensive statement of the situation, and that the government was too much occu-

pied with its own squabbles to pay the least attention to it. As to recommending the abandonment of an enterprise with which he had been entrusted, Sir Ian was not the man to do that. If abandonment was what it wanted, the government ought to have appointed a different kind of man to command.

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## JAPAN AND AMERICA IN THE PACIFIC: AN AUSTRALIAN VIEW

THE present state of tension between the people of Nippon and the people of the United States affords us grave cause for concern. There are, of course, those — and their number is astonishingly large — who frankly rejoice over the possibility of a clash between the great Republic and the great Asiatic Empire. They fondly imagine that if these two countries fall out they will necessarily lose the immense advantages they have won in trade and commerce during the war, and Great Britain would thus come into her own again. Could any reasoning be more futile and absurd? If a break should come between these two Powers who now dominate the Northern Pacific, it would prove impossible for Australia to stand long neutrally aloof. The contest would not be between two rival commercial states. It would be between White and Yellow. Between the East and the West. Between the European and the Asiatic.

Although one may consider strife between the two peoples to be very improbable, may earnestly hope that such a catastrophe will not occur, it is yet profitable to reflect for a moment

over what would probably happen if the Stars and Stripes and the banner of the Rising Sun were shaken out in anger, and battle were joined. While we may feel sure that Japan would not press her claims too far, that the United States would rely solely upon diplomacy to protect China and the Dutch East Indies, it is, nevertheless, arguable that a nation whose military ideas are modeled on those of Prussia might consider it proper to seize a favorable opportunity of securing aggrandizement by means of the sword rather than by means of commerce and diplomacy.

We have seen what happened in Europe when a great and prolific race was hemmed in and blocked whenever it strove to find an outlet for its people in some fertile place in the sun. What is likely to occur if, in the Far East, another virile and prolific people is debarred from expansion in those fields it regards as rightfully belonging to it? The Morocco understanding between France and Great Britain prevented German expansion in Northern Africa. The British annexation of Koweit and the Anglo-Russian partition of Persia