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A GERMAN STAFF OFFICER ON THE DARDANELLES EXPEDITION.

Translated by THOMAS F. A. SMITH.

(Author of "*The Soul of Germany*" and "*What Germany Thinks.*")

A MEMBER of the staff of Field-Marshal Liman von Sanders has published his experiences in the Gallipoli campaign. On March 25th, 1915, the chief command of the Turkish armies for the defence of the Dardanelles was offered to, and accepted by, the German Field-Marshal. He left Constantinople the same evening on the yacht "*Plevna*," arriving at the town of Gallipoli next morning.

The author of the book, "*Gallipoli, the Fight for the Orient*,"¹ gives a sketch of the work of organisation to receive the expected attack.

"The coast," he writes, "is rugged and indented. There is nothing to indicate where the enemy will land. One thing, however, is quite certain: the English and French are concentrating huge forces on the islands of Lemnos, Tenedos, and Imbros, and reinforcements are arriving daily.

"The naval attack of March 18th, which took such a tragic course, in spite of enormous sacrifices, has probably convinced the enemy that it is absolutely impossible to force the Dardanelles by naval power alone. Now, landing attempts on a large scale may be expected. At present the Turkish troops are scattered along the coast, so that wherever the enemy lands he will meet with resistance. But whether these scattered forces will be able to stop the enemy is another question. First of all, the new Commander-in-Chief, accompanied by Essad Pasha, inspected the whole of the peninsula. A few days sufficed for the completion of this task. Above all, the formation of a network of roads occupied his attention. Battalions of workmen (Armenian and Greek Christians) were brought up for the task. The position of the troops was entirely changed, only a thin line of guards being left along the coast. Where landings seemed possible, companies and battalions were placed, the Field-Marshal's fundamental idea being to have all the troops of his army so placed that heavy blows could be dealt at any point.

"Weeks passed, filled with hard work, without any notable incident. Agents brought news that the Anglo-French Armies on the islands of Imbros, Lemnos, and Tenedos were being transported to Egypt. Another announcement was that the attack on the empire of the Caliph would not be made at Gallipoli, but either on the coast of Syria or at Smyrna. Liman von Sanders took no notice of these and similar

¹ "*Gallipoli, der Kampf um den Orient*," von einem Stabsoffizier. Verlag August Scherl, Berlin, 1916.

rumours, but continued his work, ably supported by his German and Turkish officers.

"Sir Ian Hamilton gave his enemy exactly one month to prepare for the coming attack. This time was just sufficient to enable the Field-Marshal's uncanny energies sufficient time to get everything in order. If the enemy had only decided to attack a little earlier, Heaven knows how the matter would have ended. But by this time all the companies were in well-entrenched positions at the various important military points along the coast. Behind them were supporting battalions, and behind them the reserves, who were to hold the opponent till the big divisions could come up.

"The main forces were so placed that they could be thrown against the enemy wherever he chose to land. The Commander-in-Chief had found time to inspect all the probable landing points in person, and had changed everything which he thought necessary.

"On March 18th, the exterior forts, Kum Kali and Sed-ul-Bahr, had been laid in ruins. Since then plenty of ammunition had been expended on the Dardanelles, but the bombardment which commenced at dawn on April 25th surpassed everything which had preceded it. At daybreak the southern point of the peninsula and the country round Kum Kali was hidden under a veritable hail of steel and iron, sand-clouds, and powder smoke.

"At 6.30 a.m., General Weber, commanding the troops on the Asiatic side, received news at his headquarters in Calvert Tschiftlik, that the enemy was landing at Kum Kali. A few minutes later a small fleet of transports and torpedo-boats appeared in Besika Bay. The divisions at that point were warned, and the first, under Colonel Nefid Bey, immediately advanced. Only a few days before, manœuvres had been held there, and every N.C.O. and every individual soldier knew exactly what he had to do. It appears, however, that this was only a feint on the part of the enemy in order to divide the Turkish forces. There was no landing in Besika Bay. So it fell to the lot of the Saxon officer, Colonel Nicolai, to oppose the enemies' forces at Kum Kali.

"In Kum Kali itself there was a company of Turkish infantry, who had dug themselves in, and refused to withdraw when the cannonade began. The first heavy shells penetrated into their position, killing Lieutenant Ali-Effendi, the commander of the company and the N.C.O.'s. The remainder were captured by the enemy.

"Meanwhile, the 6th Company of the x Regiment held the Messarlik (cemetery) to the north of Kum Kali, till the columns marching *via* Kalafatli arrived to their support. Up till now the French had not dared to advance beyond the protecting zone of their ships' fire. On the other hand, it would have been a serious mistake for the Turks to have made a daylight attack. They would certainly have been annihilated by the enemy fleet, which lay in a crescent round Kum Kali. Hence a night attack was decided upon, when Colonel Wehrle would be able to support the attack with his heavy artillery, which, during the day, was devoting its attention to the fleet.

"The darkness had scarcely fallen when the heavy howitzer batteries began to direct their fire from Intepe on to the town and fort of

Kum Kali, where the French and Senegalese had obtained a footing. The battalions of the division which had been placed in readiness deployed in thin firing lines, taking advantage of every bit of cover. The machine-guns were in the very front line.

"As the front troops advanced, the reserves and supports came up behind them. Company after company glided forward, now creeping on all fours, now trotting through a valley. When the searchlights from the fleet caught them everybody remained still. The moss-coloured Turkish uniforms adapt themselves excellently to their surroundings. Shots flash from the enemy outposts, but that merely betrays where they are, and a concentrated fire is directed on them.

"The fight is soon in full swing. Flashes are seen on all sides, and the machine-guns begin to hammer on both sides. The whizz-bang of the shells, the screeching of shell splinters, the crack of rifles, and the tack-tack of the machine-guns, all help to make a veritable hell-concert. But it was merely the overture to what was to follow. The heavy naval guns began to search the whole of the Menderes Plain. With fixed bayonets, to shouts of 'Allah! Allah!' the infantry rush into the village. The hand-to-hand fighting puts a stop to the artillery fire. A bloody struggle, man to man, takes place for the ruins of every single hut. When the first beams of morning came from behind the Trojan hill, Kum Kali was again in the hands of the Turks.

"Still it was too early to rejoice on that account. Colonel Nicolai ordered the évacuation of the village, and withdrew his troops to the south, where the country offered protection against the naval bombardment, which began again at daybreak. But the Turks were not inactive. Again and again they repelled the attacks of the enemy. Lieutenant-Colonel Bienhold, in command of the field artillery, did excellent work. When evening came again—the Turks had been fighting without a pause for 36 hours—the enemy fled from the village.

"Four machine-guns, a large number of rifles, together with quantities of every kind of war material, fell into the hands of the pursuing Turks. The battlefield in and around Kum Kali presented an awful spectacle. The deep craters which the huge shells had torn in the soft soil, were filled with the dead and dying, while the streets of the village were covered with dead from the 175th French Infantry Regiment and the 6th Senegalese Regiment.

"Yet, if the enemy had suffered appalling losses, the Turks, too, had paid a heavy price for their victory. The French continued their efforts to obtain a footing on the Asiatic side till April 29th. After the day-and-a-half's fighting, however, Colonel Nicolai had withdrawn his main forces, leaving detachments in Kum Kali and Jenischehir under Major Schierholz. Thanks to their stubborn resistance against superior numbers, all hostile attempts were foiled, and no further landing was made on the Asiatic side.

"On April 25th, as Lieutenant-Colonel Mustafa Kemal Bey was making a round of inspection in the early hours of the morning, he witnessed the first fights between the weak coast defences and the English, Australians, and New Zealanders, at Kaba Tepi and Ari Burun. At the former place the x Division had a very severe task. But Mustafa

Kemal sent another infantry regiment to their help, and a complete victory was won. In order to keep back the landing parties at Ari Burun, he ordered another infantry regiment to occupy the commanding height, Kodja Djemendajh. From this point they were able to drive back the attackers to the heights immediately adjacent to the beach.

"Meanwhile, at headquarters, from 4 a.m., there had been uninterrupted telegraphic and telephonic activity. The first announcement said that seven enemy transports were in the northern part of the Gulf of Saros, surrounded and protected by warships. Our Commander-in-Chief, who at the time was in Gallipoli, caused the division for the defence of that part to be warned. Then he himself went on to a mountain not far from the Bulair lines, and thick and fast the following messages came pouring in:—

- " 'Enemy landing at Kum Kali;'
- " 'Hostile transports with torpedo-boats in Besika Bay;'
- " 'The company at Sed-ul-Bahr is wiped out;'
- " 'Enemy landing at Eski Hissarlik;'
- " 'Also at Cape Helles;'
- " 'Enemy thrown back at Kaba Tepe;'
- " 'At Sigindere, troops landing uninterruptedly;'
- " 'Battle at Ari Burun at a standstill.'

"Late in the afternoon, as the enemy had made no endeavour to disembark troops in the Gulf of Saros, the Commander-in-Chief concluded that it was merely a feint. Without another moment's hesitation, and taking on his shoulders a grave responsibility, he gave orders for the divisions stationed at Gallipoli, as well as the division on the north-east shore of the Gulf of Saros, to be immediately withdrawn, in order to support his heavily-pressed defenders at the southern point of the peninsula. The movement of troops had to be effected in the night. Everything was at stake, for if the enemy had discovered that the upper Gulf of Saros was denuded of its defenders, a catastrophe might have ensued. But, then, 'fortune favours the brave'—by dawn of the 26th, the advance troops of the two divisions arrived at Sed-ul-Bahr and Ari Burun.

"At 5 a.m. another enemy bombardment commenced. The defending troops opposite Cape Hellas were withdrawn just in time to the dug-outs which had been prepared everywhere at regular intervals between the trenches. It was impossible to see the beach for smoke, dust, and the yellow clouds from the lyddite shells. After twenty minutes, which had seemed an eternity, the battleship which was hammering this point turned to another objective. The men left their dug-outs immediately, and although the enemy had fired more than 100 shells of the heaviest calibre against this short line, our losses had been comparatively small.

"An amazing panorama presented itself to the men in the trenches. Hundreds of vessels, large and small, were lying in the Ægean Sea. In the far distance, almost invisible to the naked eye, were the big ships of the line, whose guns reach nearly 20 miles. The purpose of the floating batteries was no doubt to quell the Turkish artillery fire, and then to pour such a torrent of shell on to the landing places, that no further resistance could be expected.

"The transports came nearer, surrounded by small boats and rafts. English soldiers began to fill the lighters and make for the coast. The command rang out: 'Distance 800 yards!' and the Turkish fire tore gap after gap in the crowds of enemy soldiers. Only a few men from each boat—the most of them were capsized—succeeded in reaching the shore and finding shelter under the cliffs. Wires stretched beneath the water proved a most effective hindrance to the landing parties, and those places were flanked by machine-guns.

"At points where larger numbers had collected, especially at favourable landing places, torpedo-heads, which had been improvised as mines, were exploded with appalling results. However great the Turkish losses may have been from the drum-fire of the naval guns, the casualties of the attackers were terrific.

"The battle raged at four different points: at Eski Hissarlik, whose heights had been stormed from Morto Bay; at Sed-ul-Bahr; Teke Burun; and at the mouth of the Sigindere the Turkish regiment (x Regiment) which had set out at daybreak, had a terrible time while on the march, for the enemy was able to observe their movements from his kite-balloons. The regiment arrived at the Sigindere about mid-day, but in the meantime the enemy had entrenched himself at the mouth of the river and brought numerous machine-guns into position. He had succeeded, too, in making a landing at Kum Tepe under the covering fire of a cruiser.

"The Turkish regiment, supported by the artillery, was hurled against this position, and the enemy was driven back to his ships in wild flight. The enemy troops, however, which were entrenched round the mouth of the Sigindere were most effectively supported by the fleet, and, although the Turks could not drive them out, they prevented them from gaining more ground.

"The third regiment of the x Division attacked at Ari Burun, while the second was sent against the enemy at Sed-ul-Bahr. The troops defending this latter place had had a very warm time. A devastating fire from the fleet had inflicted terrible losses on them. The new regiment plunged into the fight, and both sides fought with the courage of lions. The Turks lost nearly all their officers, and at this critical moment the Hodjas (Mohammedan army chaplains) intervened and led the Turks forward again amid cries of 'Allah! Allah!'

"The final result of this first day's fighting, which probably decided the question of 'to be or not to be' for the Caliph's Empire, was summarized in the report which reached headquarters the same evening:—

"'The enemy is everywhere in retreat to the shelter of the cliffs. One enemy detachment which climbed the heights of Eski Hissarlik from Morto Bay is entrenching there.'

"The Commander-in-Chief ordered a night attack along the whole front. Although the attack did not succeed in breaking the morale of the invaders, still the troops which arrived from Gulf Saros on the morning of the 26th were able to take the Eski Hissarlik heights by storm and to drive the enemy down to the bay. At the same time the enemy received a severe check at Cape Hellas.

"Another night attack was ordered for the night of the 26th to the 27th. An attack is the best means of parrying, and at all costs the enemy had to be prevented from getting possession of any commanding height. He had fixed his eyes, above all, on the Eltschitepe. The huge advantage which the possession of this mountain would give him is obvious. From it he would be able to silence the heavy guns in the Dardanelles forts, thereby opening the Narrows—the way to Constantinople would be free.

"Hence the Turkish patrol was sent forward as soon as the sun had set. They had soon learned to throw themselves down and remain motionless while the searchlights swept the Kirte plateau. Then another advance in complete silence till the enemy's positions were reached. But it helped little that some of the most daring penetrated by Cape Hellas to the shore. Towards morning they had to be withdrawn to their positions south of Kirte in order to get some kind of cover from the fearful fire of the naval guns, whose activities recommenced at daybreak.

"During the first days of the attack the situation of the defenders, in face of the superior artillery of the Entente and their huge masses of troops, was exceedingly critical. The strain on the Turkish soldiers was enormous, as the network of roads was not complete. On the 29th, the attackers believed themselves sufficiently strong to overrun the Turks on the southern front. The attack began with the customary bombardment. Almost every square foot of ground was ploughed up by shells of every calibre, and when it appeared that no living being could remain in this part, three English brigades advanced on the left and two French on the right wing. The counter-attack of the Turks followed without an instant's pause, and before their bayonets the French withdrew in wild flight under the covering fire of the naval artillery. After this it was impossible for the English wing to maintain its ground, and they went back too. Unfortunately, in the first days of these terrible battles the Turks had only field artillery at their disposal. The whole of the heavy artillery was already distributed for the defence of the Narrows.

"Finally, heavy artillery was brought up. These colossal guns were only brought into position by tremendous efforts. When the strength of the oxen failed, then strong Anatolian hands grasped the spokes of the wheels. Mortars, howitzers, and heavy cannon were hauled up the steep heights. No doubt this was observed by the enemy airmen, but probably the English commander believed there was no ammunition for them. Every English child knows that there are very few munition works in Turkey, but the enemy did not know that the German naval captain, Herr Pieper, had already organized munition works not only in Constantinople but everywhere throughout the country.

"Hardly a day passed but that the enemy suffered severe losses through the Turkish artillery; transports were sunk, landing piers destroyed, and munition stores set on fire. A heavily laden Red Cross wagon, drawn by four horses, was accidentally hit by a shell. It turned out to be a munition transport, however, which exploded with

a tremendous noise. Perhaps the English had loaded up gun-cotton in mistake for cotton wool! It is said that such trivial mistakes often occur!

"On May 3rd a small landing party with eight machine-guns was despatched from a Turkish ship to assist the southern army. As darkness set in the latter, having been reinforced with fresh troops, advanced to the attack along the whole line. This time they were successful in forcing the enemy still further back on to the strip of coast land. But yet again with the dawn of a new day the superiority of the enemy's naval guns held the Turks up. His infantry, however, was so shaken that they did not follow the Turks beyond the protecting range of their own guns.

"On May 5th, General Weber Pasha, who up till then had commanded the troops on the Asiatic side, took over the command of the southern army in place of Colonel von Sodenstern, whose knee had been severely injured. The attackers, both English and French, dug themselves in at Sed-ul-Bahr and Ari Burun and began to fit up their positions with all the devices of modern trench warfare. Their lines of communication with the Motherland were open, but the Turks, on the other hand, had to surmount the greatest difficulties in bringing up war material and troops. The roads were not yet finished and English submarines penetrated the mine-fields into the Sea of Marmora with a gallantry deserving of the greatest admiration. There Turkish transports were in constant danger. Enemy airmen soon discovered the places where Turkish troops could be landed, and directed on them the indirect fire of the heavy naval guns. But the inexhaustible energy and never-resting activity of the Commander-in-Chief overcame all difficulties.

"The Turks entrenched themselves, too. With an impenetrable ring of iron they prevented the enemy from gaining even another foot of land. Again and again, with ever new reinforcements, the enemy tried with terrific attacks, now against the southern group, now at Ari Burun, to reach his goal—the commanding heights of Eltschitepe, but always with the same result—his troops driven back with bloody heads to their trenches.

"The first act in the great drama of the struggle of the greatest fleet in the world and a brave landing corps was ended. And in all truth the enemy had proved himself brave. The English, as well as Albion's adopted sons, the New Zealanders and the Australians, the Ghurkas and the Sikhs, the French, too, with their black colonial troops—they all fought like lions."