



Bonaparte's Expedition to Palestine in 1799

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To cite this article: C. M. Watson (1917) Bonaparte's Expedition to Palestine in 1799, Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 49:1, 17-35, DOI: [10.1179/peq.1917.49.1.17](https://doi.org/10.1179/peq.1917.49.1.17)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/peq.1917.49.1.17>



Published online: 20 Nov 2013.



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pronounce it as though it were written *bhr*, and *mattarr* (مطر), "rain," as *mttr*.

The others have a firmer pronunciation than the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but they also ignore the *k* (ق), and pronounce *sh* as *s*.

(*To be continued.*)

BONAPARTE'S EXPEDITION TO PALESTINE IN 1799.¹

By the late Colonel Sir C. M. WATSON, K.C.M.G.,
C.B., M.A., R.E., etc.

AT the present time, when there is so much talk as to the prospects of a Turkish attack on Egypt from the east, and an attempt being made to interfere with the traffic in the Suez Canal, it is natural that we should turn to the history of the past, in order to see what lessons can be learnt from what actually happened in days gone by, which may be useful for guidance in existing circumstances. And one of the episodes of special interest from this point of view is the story of the invasion of Palestine by Napoleon Bonaparte, then a young general at the beginning of his remarkable career, as his action shows clearly what he considered was the most effective way of protecting Egypt against an attack directed against it from the east, and the manner in which he would probably have dealt with the protection of the Suez Canal if he had charge of the operations.

The facts connected with the French occupation of Egypt in 1798 are now almost forgotten except by some students of military history, although this occupation led to results of considerable importance in the conflict between England and the French Republic, and, in the following paragraphs, it is not proposed to deal with them except in a general way, and in so far as is necessary in connection with the expedition to Palestine.

There can be no doubt that the advantages to be gained by France, if she could obtain possession of Egypt, had been under the consideration of the French Government for a long period, and the

¹ [Although Sir Charles Watson did not live to read the proofs of this article, it is felt that it is too interesting not to be printed, consequently it is reproduced as it left his hands with only slight modifications.—E.D.]

councillors of Louis XIV had fully realized that the land of the Nile was the key to the commerce of the East, and that its occupation would be an effective means of checking the increase of English influence in India. But circumstances had not proved propitious, and nothing had come of the idea before the abolition of the French Monarchy and the establishment of the Republic in 1792, so that it was not until after the successful campaigns conducted by General Bonaparte in Italy during the years 1796-97, that the proposition took a definite form, and there appears little doubt that this was due to the initiation of Bonaparte himself, who was well acquainted with the history of the question, and who saw that the moment had arrived for taking action. His work in Italy was concluded by the Treaty of Campo Formio in October, 1797, and, when he returned to Paris in January, 1798, he was probably the most popular man in France, too popular indeed to suit the ideas of the Executive Directory, which had established itself as the Government of the Republic on a rather insecure basis on September 4th, 1797. Bonaparte had a magnificent reception on his arrival in Paris, and might possibly have seized the reins of power at that time, but he felt that it would be better to wait a little, both to strengthen his own position, and also, probably, because he foresaw that, if he gave them the opportunity, the Directors would make themselves more unpopular with the people. The Directors, on the other hand, were anxious to keep Bonaparte under control, as they recognized him as a dangerous opponent, and, with this object in view, appointed him to the command of an army which was being organized for the invasion of England.

Bonaparte accepted the position, and visited the north coast of France in order to study the question, when he came to the conclusion that the operation was not likely to be attended with success, as the English fleet was too strong in the Channel, and it seems to have been at this time that he made a definite proposal to the Executive Directory that he should command an expedition designed to occupy Egypt, a proposal that suited both parties, as Bonaparte gained an opportunity of earning further military distinction, while the Directors felt that the troublesome young man would be removed to a long distance from Paris, and that, possibly, he might never come back.

The expeditionary force was rapidly organized, and, early in May, 1798, five divisions of infantry, 1,000 cavalry without horses,

and 3,000 artillery, or about 32,000 men in all, were embarked at Toulon, and sailed for the East, escorted by a powerful squadron under Admiral Brueys. Malta was reached early in June, and occupied without difficulty, as von Hompisch, a German, the Grand Master of the Order of St. John, treacherously surrendered the fortifications in consideration of a large bribe promised to him by Bonaparte, who, after leaving a garrison in Malta, went on to Egypt and reached Alexandria on July 1st, 1798. That city was captured on the following day, and the French army marched on Cairo, and defeated the Memluks under Ibrahim Bey and Murad Bey at the Battle of the Pyramids on July 26th. Then Cairo surrendered: Murad retiring into Upper Egypt and Ibrahim to Belbeis on the road to Palestine, where they endeavoured to reorganize the Egyptian forces in order to make a fresh effort to drive out the French.

Shortly after Bonaparte had thus rapidly carried out the occupation of Egypt, the success was followed by a grave disaster, when the French fleet under Admiral Brueys was defeated and destroyed in Abukir Bay on August 1st by Nelson, who had followed the expedition and arrived on the coast of Egypt after the troops had been landed at Alexandria. Brueys had failed to carry out Bonaparte's instructions to remain at Alexandria, as he thought the anchorage at Abukir was better, and paid the penalty of this neglect by the loss of the fleet and of his own life, while the result was to place the French army in a dangerous position, as the communications with Europe were cut off, and the command of the sea passed definitely into the hands of the English. This was a great blow to Bonaparte, but he bore it with remarkable courage, and took vigorous steps for the complete subjugation of Egypt; Dessaix was sent with a strong force to pursue Murad and his Memluks up the Nile; Ibrahim was defeated at Salahieh and fled to Syria, while Alexandria, Rosetta, and Damietta, were fortified in order to protect the coast of Egypt from attack by sea.

While thus attending to military matters, Bonaparte also took measures for organizing the civil government, and, after an attempt at revolt in Cairo had been suppressed with great severity on October 21st, and the city made secure from attack both from within and without, he put the central administration on a satisfactory footing and arranged the taxation of the country. At the same time the party of savants, who had accompanied the expedition for archaeological and scientific exploration, commenced work with

great vigour, and collected a mass of useful and important information.

While thus engaged during the autumn and winter of 1798 in the settlement of affairs in Egypt, Bonaparte received news that Turkey had joined the alliance of England and Russia against France, and that two Turkish expeditions were in course of preparation for an attack upon Egypt, of which the one was being assembled in the Island of Rhodes for a descent on the coast, while the other had its headquarters at Damascus in Syria, and was intended to march through Palestine and across the desert separating the latter country from Egypt; the latter army was to have its base at Acre on the Palestine coast, the Governor of which, Ahmed Pasha, was a man of great strength of character, who was usually known by the soubriquet of El Jezzar, or the Butcher, on account of the cruelty with which he treated the people under his jurisdiction, and, in most accounts of the war, he is called Jezzar Pasha. He was joined at Acre by Ibrahim Bey, who, after his defeat at Salahieh, crossed the desert with 1,000 Memluks in order to assist the Turks in the invasion of Egypt.

As soon as he had heard of the Turkish plan of attack on Egypt Bonaparte at once decided that the best way to meet it was to take the initiative, and defeat the Turkish army coming from Syria in Palestine before it could cross the desert, then to return rapidly to Egypt, and be ready to oppose the landing of the second Turkish expedition which was in course of preparation at Rhodes. He also proposed to capture Acre, so that the Turks could not make use of it in their operations against Egypt, and also, because he wished to punish Ahmed Pasha, with whom he was angry for having assisted Ibrahim Bey when he was driven out of Egypt. In December, 1798, Bonaparte occupied Suez, and, while at that place, made the final arrangements for his campaign in Palestine, which I now propose to describe, basing the account principally on three sources of information which, although differing as regards certain details, give, when compared with one another, a clear view of the operations. These are: the despatches written by Bonaparte to the Executive Directory; the reports sent by General Berthier, who was Chief of Staff, to the Minister of War in Paris; and the letters from Captain Sir W. Sydney Smith, R.N., to the British Admiralty, which were published in the *London Gazette*. Of these, Bonaparte's despatches appear to contain what he wished to be believed rather

than what actually happened, while Berthier's reports give a much longer account of the facts, taken from the French point of view, and Smith's letters describe the same facts from the English standpoint. There is another source of information contained in the Memoirs of Bourrienne, who accompanied Bonaparte to Palestine in the capacity of secretary ; but, as these Memoirs were compiled many years later, and after Bourrienne had fallen out with his master, they are incorrect in many particulars and cannot be regarded as authentic history.

At the beginning of 1799 the total French force in Egypt appears to have been about 29,000 men, out of which there had to be provided the garrisons for Cairo, Alexandria, Rosetta, Damietta, Suez and some places in the interior of the country, while a strong column under Dessaix was pursuing the Memluks into Upper Egypt, and another field force was operating in the Delta, so that the number which could be spared for the expedition to Palestine did not exceed 13,000, a small army considering the work in view. The organization of the force was as follows :—

The infantry were in four divisions, of which the first, commanded by General Kléber, under whom were Brigadiers-General Verdier and Junot, was composed of the 2nd Demi-Brigades of light infantry, with two battalions of the 25th and two of the 75th of the line ; the second division under General Regnier, with whom was Brigadier Lagrange, consisted of the 9th and 85th Demi-Brigades of the line ; the third division under General Bon, with Brigadiers Rampon and Vial, had one battalion of the 4th light infantry, and two battalions each of the 18th and 32nd of the line ; the fourth division commanded by General Lannes, with Brigadiers Veaux and Robine, had one battalion of the 22nd light infantry, and two battalions each of the 13th and 69th of the line. The cavalry, 900 strong, under General Murat, was a mixed force, made up from a number of different regiments, while the artillery was commanded by General Dommartin, and the engineers by General Caffarelli. General Berthier was Chief of the Staff.

As regards the names of the generals there are two points worth notice ; first, the number of them that afterwards became famous during the great European campaigns of Bonaparte ; and, secondly, their youth as compared with the age of generals at the present day. Bonaparte and Lannes were thirty, while Murat and Junot were only twenty-eight ; Berthier and Kléber were forty-six, the

same age as Wellington and Bonaparte in the year of the Battle of Waterloo, at the end of their military careers. The fact that Bonaparte's generals were, for the most part, young, had probably a great influence in his success, as, although a great general is born and cannot be made, it is more probable that a man will be an efficient commander if he begins at thirty instead of fifty, as the qualities required in a subordinate officer differ considerably from those desirable for a general. It is a difficult problem, but one that was better solved at the end of the eighteenth than at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The strength of the French expeditionary force is thus given by Berthier :—

Infantry, Kléber's Division	...	2,349
„ Regnier's Division	...	2,160
„ Bon's Division	...	2,449
„ Lannes' Division	...	2,924
Cavalry	900
Artillery	1,385
Engineers	340
		<hr/>
	Total	... 12,507
		<hr/> <hr/>

He does not give the numbers of the staff and administrative services. The guns taken with the column, including the light pieces attached to the cavalry and infantry, were : four 12-pounders, fifteen 8-pounders, four 4-pounders, eight 3-pounders, fifteen 6-inch howitzers and three 5-inch mortars. As it was not possible to bring heavy guns across the desert, Bonaparte decided to send some 24-pounders, for use against Acre, by sea from Alexandria to Haifa, notwithstanding the fact that the English had the command of the sea, but the attempt was a failure, as the ship carrying the guns was captured by the English squadron off Haifa. Some more 24-pounders were despatched later but these did not arrive until the siege of Acre had been some time in progress.

The transport column had 2,000 camels and 3,000 mules and donkeys ; 2,000 camels to carry water for use of the troops when crossing the desert, 1,000 camels with fifteen days' provisions, and the mules and donkeys to carry the baggage.

As the primary objective of the expedition was Acre, Bonaparte decided to march by the northern road which passes near the coast

to El-Arish and Gaza, and thence by Jaffa to Haifa. The eastern frontier of Egypt was very different from what it is at the present time, since the Suez Canal has been cut across the Isthmus, and Lake Menzaleh extended considerably further to the coast, while, to the south, the desert reached to Salahiye, the last important station on the road from Cairo to Palestine. Fifty miles north-east of Salahiye, and thirty-five miles from the point on the coast where Port Said has been built, is the Oasis of Katieh, where there is a moderately good water supply from wells, and this was made the place of assembly. General Regnier, whose division was quartered at Belbeis and Salahiye, was ordered to advance to Katieh, which he occupied early in 1799, and built a fort to protect the walls. He was followed by Kléber, who brought his division in boats across Lake Menzaleh from Damietta, and by the rest of the force.

Sixty-five miles from Katieh, and on the road to Gaza, was the fort of El-Arish, occupied by 2,000 Turkish troops, and the first point where serious opposition was to be expected. The French advance commenced on February 7th, 1799, when General Lagrange, with three battalions and two light guns, started from Katieh and reached the vicinity of El-Arish on the following evening, driving back the Turkish outposts, who retreated to the fort. He was followed by Regnier with the rest of the division and the fort was invested, while a convoy, which was coming from Gaza with supplies for the garrison, was kept off and compelled to halt at some distance from the place. Nothing further could then be done until the main body of the French arrived.

Kléber, with his division, reinforced Regnier on February 13th, and, the next day, the camp of the Turkish convoy was attacked and captured, when a considerable quantity of provisions and other stores were taken, as well as many horses and camels. Lannes and Bon, with the artillery, came up on the 17th, and, on the same day, Bonaparte, who had started from Cairo on the 10th, joined the army, took personal command, and ordered an attack on the fort of El-Arish, the garrison of which surrendered on the 20th, when the Egyptians were sent as prisoners to Cairo, while some of the Arabs took service with the French. The following day the advance was continued, but, in different order, as Regnier, with his division, was left at El-Arish as rear guard, Kléber's division, with the cavalry under Murat, formed the advance guard, and was

ordered to occupy Khan Yunis, thirty-seven miles from El-Arish, by the evening of the 22nd. Here occurred one of those accidents which may happen in the best regulated operations, that might have had a serious result for the expedition.

The order for the occupation of Khan Yunis on the 22nd being quite clear, Bonaparte, with the headquarters staff and a small cavalry escort, left El-Arish on the 23rd, expecting to join Kléber in the evening. But when the staff approached the village, this was found to be still occupied by the Turks, and there was no sign of the French troops. Fortunately, the Turks, who thought that the French army had arrived, retired along the road towards Gaza, while Bonaparte and his escort withdrew rapidly in the opposite direction until he met the cavalry advance guard, which was behind him instead of in front of him. It then appeared that Kléber's Arab guide had misled him into the desert, where he wandered for two days, the troops suffering severely from want of water, while the divisions of Lannes and Bon were also led astray, though not for so long. It is interesting to think what would have happened if the Turks at Khan Yunis, instead of running away, had captured Bonaparte and the staff and conveyed them off as prisoners to the Pasha of Acre, who would probably have treated them with little consideration, and, at best, handed them over to the English.

On February 26th, the army assembled at Khan Yunis, and, after a short rest, marched to Gaza, which surrendered, the garrison retiring to Jaffa, and leaving great quantities of stores to the French, including 100,000 rations of biscuit and a large amount of powder and other ammunition. Bonaparte could then congratulate himself on having effected the crossing of the dreaded desert with little difficulty, and having secured a good base in Southern Palestine, while the provisions which had been captured relieved him of all anxiety as regards the feeding of the troops. The army was given two days' rest at Gaza, well earned after the march from Egypt, and, on February 28th, the advance was resumed, Kléber again commanding the vanguard. Esdud, the Ashdod of the Philistines, was reached on March 1st, and Ramleh on the following day, where more provisions were found, which had been abandoned by the enemy, who fell back upon the fortress of Jaffa, which prepared to make a serious resistance to the further progress of the French, as the fortifications were fairly strong, and there was a garrison of about 4,000 men, including Turks, Arabs, and Egyptians. Bonaparte on

the other hand was anxious to get possession of the place as soon as possible, as he hoped to be able to open communication by sea with Alexandria and Damietta, and gave orders for its investment, the divisions of Lannes and Bon being disposed round it on the east and south, while Kléber's division was camped on the Nahr el-Auja, five miles to the north, so as to cut off communication with Acre.

Trenches were opened on the night of March 5th, and four batteries were constructed to breach the fortifications, which opened fire on the following day and soon destroyed a sufficient length of the wall to justify an assault. This was made by the division of General Lannes, which fought its way into the town, and, after a severe struggle, overcame the garrison, the strength of which is given by Berthier as about 4,000 men. It is said that, after the capture of the place, a large number of prisoners were massacred by order of Bonaparte, but it is rather difficult to know what really happened. Berthier says that the greater part of the garrison were killed at the time of the assault, and that 300 Egyptians, who were taken prisoners, were sent back to their families in Egypt, while Bourrienne, on the other hand, says the 4,000 prisoners were shot in cold blood after the place was taken. Sir Sydney Smith speaks of the inhuman massacre at Jaffa, but gives no details, and, as there appears to be no reliable account of the transaction, it must be left an unsettled question.

After a week's halt at Jaffa, the army resumed its march on March 14th, and camped at Miskeh, on the road to Acre, and the following day at Zeita, thirty miles from Jaffa, where an attempt was made by Abdallah Pasha—who had retreated from Gaza when the French advanced—to obstruct progress. Abdallah, who had 1,000 cavalry, and was supported by a force of Syrians from Nablus in the hill country, attacked Lannes' division but, after some desultory fighting, the enemy was driven into the hills, and, on the 16th, Kléber advanced to Haifa and put a garrison in the fort, which had been abandoned by the Turks, who had removed the guns and ammunition, but left a good store of biscuits and other provisions, a useful addition to the French commissariat. Some ships of war were seen anchored off Haifa, and these proved to be the English squadron commanded by Captain Sir W. Sydney Smith, R.N., composed of H.M.S. "Tiger," "Theseus," and "Alliance," which had intercepted the French vessel bringing siege guns from Alexandria, as has already been mentioned, and was now waiting to take part in

the defence of Acre, a defence in which Smith and his gallant companions took a most important part.

The road from Haifa to Acre, a distance of twelve miles, passes over a marshy plain through which the Kishon flows, and it was necessary to construct field bridges for the passage of the French army across this river, and also across a smaller stream, the Nahr Namein, which enters the sea a mile south of Acre. The Turkish outposts were driven in, and, on March 18th, the army camped on the hills to the east, and the place was completely surrounded. After a reconnaissance made by the chiefs of artillery and engineers the salient to be attacked was selected, and, on March 20th, the trenches of approach were opened, and the sites of the breaching batteries selected. A sortie made by the garrison to stop the progress of the siege works was repulsed, and, by the 28th, the batteries were completed and armed with the field artillery guns with which fire was opened and a breach made in the north-eastern salient. An assault was then ordered as it was thought that Acre could be taken as easily as Jaffa; but here there was a different kind of commander to deal with, and, after a gallant attempt to scale the fortifications, the French were driven off with considerable loss, including three staff officers who were killed. This was a great encouragement to Ahmed Pasha who was ably assisted in the improvement of the defences by Colonel Phelippeaux, a French royalist officer of engineers, and by the English squadron under Sir Sydney Smith who arrived soon after the commencement of the siege, when the crews of the British ships worked hard at mounting guns to counteract the fire of the French batteries.

On April 7th another sortie was made in which the English took part as well as the troops of the garrison, but the latter unfortunately were so noisy that the French had good notice of their approach and opened so heavy a fire that it was impossible to take the trenches, and the attempt was a failure, while Major Oldfield of the Royal Marines was killed. Respecting this gallant officer Berthier wrote: "The body of Major Thomas Oldfield was carried off by our grenadiers; they brought him to our headquarters when he was at the point of death, and soon after his arrival he was no more; his sword, to which he had done so much honour, was also honoured after his death and it remains in the hands of one of our grenadiers; he was buried among us, and has carried with him the esteem of the French army."

While the siege operations at Acre were thus in progress, Bonaparte had not forgotten the main object of his expedition to Palestine, namely, to intercept and defeat the Turkish army which was being assembled in Syria for the invasion of Egypt, and, shortly after his arrival at Acre, he sent Murat with a small force to seize the fortress of Safed, situated eight miles north-west of the Sea of Galilee, and commanding the road from Damascus which crosses the Jordan a little to the south of Lake Huleh. Here a garrison was placed on March 31st, and, on the same day, Junot occupied Nazareth in order to watch the road over the Jordan, south of the Sea of Galilee, while, on April 4th, General Vial was sent to capture and put a garrison in Tyre, twenty-six miles north of Acre, and on the coast road leading from Beirut to Acre.

These preparations were not made too soon, as, on April 6th, information was received from the commandant of Safed that a large force of Turks had crossed the Jordan by the road leading from Damascus to Safed, and Junot reported that another large Turkish force, advancing by the southern road, had passed the Jordan and occupied Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, with an advanced guard at Lubieh on the road from Tiberias to Nazareth. Junot realized the importance of delaying the Turks, and, although he had only 300 infantry and 160 cavalry, moved out of the latter place and met a large body of Turks, reported to be 4,000 strong, near Lubieh. The French fought well but were outnumbered, and had to retreat to Kefr Kenna, four miles from Nazareth.

As soon as he heard of the advance of the Turks, Bonaparte decided to send the greater part of his army against them, leaving Regnier to watch Acre, and, on April 9th, Kléber started with his division and marched to the assistance of Junot, who had fallen back on Nazareth, where another attack was made on the Turks who retreated to Tiberias and Beisan. Meanwhile the northern Turkish army invested Safed, and Murat was sent to relieve that place, and then to join Kléber at Nazareth, then preparing to advance against the Turks who had taken up positions at Mount Tabor and at El-Fuleh on the Plain of Esdraclon, where there is now a station on the railway from Haifa to Damascus, while Bonaparte also started from Acre on the 15th, taking General Bon's division, all the cavalry and eight guns, marched to his assistance, and, on his arrival, found Kléber in action against a force of about 20,000 Turks, principally cavalry. Bonaparte formed his troops in

three squares about 4,000 yards apart, and advanced rapidly against the enemy, and the latter, after resisting for a time, gave way and fled to the Jordan pursued by the French cavalry who captured the Turkish camp. This action, known as the Battle of Mount Tabor, was admirably arranged and carried out, and it caused the complete defeat of the Turkish army of invasion. On the day after the battle Murat occupied Tiberias, where there was a quantity of provisions and other stores, and then Bonaparte returned to Acre with the greater part of the troops, while Kléber was left in charge of Galilee with his headquarters at Nazareth.

Shortly after his arrival at Acre Bonaparte received the satisfactory intelligence that three French frigates, having eluded the vigilance of the English cruisers, had arrived at Jaffa from Egypt, and had brought some siege guns, 24-pounders and 18-pounders, which had been sent to replace those captured by Sir Sydney Smith; orders were given for the guns to be sent to Tanturah, a small port on the coast fifteen miles south of Haifa, and thence they were forwarded by land to the camp at Acre, where they arrived on April 28th. Meanwhile, the siege works were vigorously pushed on, and a mine was driven under the wall, which was exploded on April 24th, when an attempt was made to scale the breach. But the garrison succeeded in driving the French back with considerable loss, when General Veaux of Lannes' division, and General Caffarelli, the Chief Engineer, were dangerously wounded, and the latter officer, who was a great loss, died of his wounds three days later. By a curious coincidence, Colonel Phelippeaux, the Chief Engineer of the garrison, died of fever on May 1st, to the great regret of Sir Sydney Smith, as he had conducted the works of defence with remarkable energy and skill, and his place was taken by Captain Douglas, who was given the local rank of colonel, so as to make him senior to the Turkish officers. He continued the work of improving the fortifications, and mounting guns landed from the ships, while other guns, such as the 68-pounder carronades from the "Tiger," were placed in light draft boats and moored in the harbour in suitable positions.

The French siege guns were mounted in the batteries by May 1st and, after a heavy bombardment, another assault was made, but again unsuccessfully, and a mine made by the French sappers was counter-mined and destroyed by the garrison before it could be exploded, when Bonaparte decided to wait a few days before

renewing the attack. During this delay, the hopes of the garrison were greatly raised by the arrival of a Turkish fleet, bringing the army that had been assembled at Rhodes for the invasion of Egypt, as Smith had sent peremptory orders to Hassan Bey, who commanded it, to come at once to Acre to assist in the defence. This was serious news for Bonaparte, who determined to take the place, if possible, before the Turkish reinforcements could land, and ordered an attack in force on the night of May 7th, when the divisions of Generals Lannes and Bon assaulted and succeeded in getting a footing in the north-east angle of the fortifications, and the struggle continued during the day of the 8th, when it required the most vigorous efforts on the part of the English and Turks to keep out the enemy, and it was only after a severe struggle that they were successful and compelled the French to retire from the breach with heavy loss. On this occasion General Rampon was killed, and General Lannes was severely wounded. Fortunately, Hassan Bey's troops had succeeded in landing and took a noble share in the fight, losing a great number of men, including 800 out of 1,000 Albanians. The following day little was done as both sides were exhausted.

This was the most serious attack that had been made, and Smith felt inclined to despair. In his despatch to the Admiralty, written on May 9th, he said: "Bonaparte will, no doubt, renew the attack, the breach being perfectly practicable for fifty men abreast. Indeed, the town is not, nor ever has been defensible according to the rules of art, but, according to every other rule, it must and shall be defended, not that it is in itself worth defending, but we feel that it is by this breach Bonaparte means to march to further conquests. It is on the issues of this conflict that depends the opinion of the multitude of spectators on the surrounding hills, who wait only to see how it ends to join the victor, and with such a reinforcement for the execution of his known projects, Constantinople and even Vienna must feel the shock. Be assured, my Lord, the magnitude of our obligations does but increase the energy of our efforts in the attempt to discharge our duty, and, though we may, and probably shall, be overpowered, I can venture to say that the French army will be so much further weakened before it prevails, as to be little able to profit by its dear bought victory."

It is interesting to note that, at the very time when Sydney Smith feared that Acre would fall, Bonaparte was coming to the

conclusion that it was impossible to take it, but he ordered one more assault to be made on the night of May 9th, and General Bon led a large force to the breaches, but without success, as the French columns were driven off with great loss, Bon himself being dangerously wounded. This last attempt having failed, Bonaparte wrote a despatch to the Directory on May 10th, stating that the capture of Acre was not worth the loss it would entail, and that he decided to withdraw the French army to Egypt, in order to be ready to meet the invasion of that country which he anticipated. In this despatch he gave the casualties of the French in the Palestine campaign as 500 killed and 1,000 wounded, but it is probable that the real number was considerably larger, as Berthier says that there were 500 killed and wounded in the last assaults only.

On May 11th, Bonaparte sent a flag of truce into Acre with a letter to the Governor asking for an armistice to bury the dead, and proposing an exchange of prisoners, and another flag of truce was sent on the 13th. Berthier complains in his report to the Minister of War that the messenger was fired at, and that a sortie was made by the garrison, while Sir Sydney Smith says that the French continued the bombardment after they had sent a flag of truce, which he considered a flagrant breach of the laws of war, and he sent the messenger back to Bonaparte "with a message which made the army ashamed of being exposed to such a merited reproof." Berthier also reports the return of the messenger, who, he says: "brought a supposititious proclamation of the Porte, certified by the signature 'Sydney Smith.' This proclamation was read by the whole army, who returned no other answer to it, but the contempt with which a dastardly action inspire true honour." On the whole the flag of truce does not appear to have led to any result.

As soon as Bonaparte had decided to return to Egypt, orders were sent to General Junot at Nazareth to withdraw the garrisons from Safed and Tiberias, and, after destroying all stores which he could not carry away, to fall back on the Acre-Jaffa road, so as to be ready to join in the retreat, which was commenced on May 18th by the removal of the sick and wounded; the heavy guns were also removed, their place in the batteries being taken by field guns which were left as long as possible. The camp at Acre was evacuated on the night of May 20th and the move was carried out as silently as possible so as not to attract the notice of the garrison. The division of Lannes formed the advanced guard, and he was followed by those

of Bon and Regnier, while Kléber held the trenches until the rest of the army had got a good start, when he followed with his division, and destroyed the field bridges when he had crossed the Kishon. The retreat was so well carried out that the garrison of Acre did not realize that the French army had gone until the following day, when they were already past Mount Carmel, and continued to fire on the trenches during the night. As he considered it unnecessary to carry off the siege guns, Bonaparte ordered that these should be buried or thrown into the sea, and the carriages burnt. Twenty-three of these guns were recovered by the Turks and taken to Acre.

On May 22nd, the French army was assembled at Tantureh, and, after the sick and wounded had been embarked to go to Jaffa by sea, marched to Cesarea, thirty-five miles from Acre, where they halted for the night, and, on May 24th, they reached Jaffa, when a halt of three days was made to rest the troops and to destroy the fortifications. The vessels containing the wounded were ordered to proceed to Egypt, and were captured by Sir Sidney Smith's squadron, which had sailed from Acre as soon as it was known that the French had retreated. Smith states that the French vessels steered straight for the English ships, "in full confidence of receiving the succours of humanity," and that the sick were very grateful for the kind manner in which they were treated. There is a story that Bonaparte ordered some of the French invalids to be poisoned at Jaffa, in order to prevent their falling into the hands of the Turks, but Smith, who arrived immediately after the departure of the French, does not allude to this, but says that, "seven poor wretches are left alive in the hospital, where they are protected and shall be taken care of." The march was resumed on May 28th, the divisions of Lannes and Bon taking the central road, while Regnier led a column on the left flank through Ramleh; the cavalry protected the right flank, while Kléber commanded the rear guard, which marched a day later from Jaffa. Every village near the road was burnt and the harvest destroyed, so that, as Berthier says: "the immense plain presented but one blaze of fire." Gaza was reached on the 30th and El-Arish on June 1st, where a garrison was left, and then the desert was crossed, but under worse conditions than during the advance, as the troops suffered greatly from want of water before they arrived at the Oasis of Katieh, when the Palestine expedition practically ended and the army was dispersed, Kléber's division returning to Damietta, while Bonaparte and the greater part of the

force proceeded to Cairo, where they arrived on June 23rd. This was not too soon, as, shortly afterwards, he received news that a Turkish fleet had been sighted off the coast of Egypt, apparently with the intention of attacking Alexandria, and orders were immediately despatched for the concentration of the French army at Rhamanieh in order to resist a landing. This is not the place to describe at length the events that followed, and it is sufficient to say that the Turkish expeditionary force landed at Abukir Bay on July 14th, and was completely defeated by Bonaparte on the 25th, many thousands of the Turks being killed or drowned, while the loss of the French was comparatively small. This victory put an end, for the time being, to any attempt to turn the French out of Egypt, and Bonaparte was able to consolidate his position in the country.

He realized, however, that, so far as he was personally concerned, there was nothing to be gained by remaining longer in Egypt, and, a month after the defeat of the Turks at Abukir Bay, he decided to return to France. He embarked at Alexandria on August 23rd, taking with him Berthier, Lannes, Murat, and some others of his best officers, and, after an exciting cruise, during which he was nearly captured by the English cruisers, landed in France on October 8th, and arrived a week later in Paris, when, shortly afterwards, he helped to overthrow the existing government, and was appointed First Consul. Before leaving Egypt, he appointed General Kléber to the command of the army in that country, who considered that he had been abandoned by his friend, who had owed so much to Kléber's assistance in the past, and now left him in a difficult position while returning to France to seek fresh honours for himself.

In dealing with Bonaparte's expedition to Palestine, the question naturally presents itself: Was it a failure or a success? and, as regards this, different writers have arrived at different conclusions, some thinking that he carried out the object of his campaign, while others lay stress on the fact that he was forced to retreat and suffered a loss of prestige. A careful consideration of the circumstances seems to show that there is something to be said for both points of view, and that, while Bonaparte certainly cannot be said to have failed, yet he did not accomplish all that he had hoped. The objects of the expedition have already been referred to, but it may be as well to repeat them as given in General Berthier's report

to the Minister of War, in which he wrote: "Bonaparte concluded that if the Porte declared for our enemies, a combined operation would take place against Egypt: an attack on the side of Syria, and an attack by sea. He accordingly resolved to march into Syria, chastize El-Jezzar, destroy the preparations made for an expedition against Egypt, in case the Porte should connect itself with our enemies; restore to it the nomination of a Pasha of Syria, if it remained our friend; return into Egypt, and be at the combined operations by sea, which, from the season, probably would not take place before the end of June."

It is clear, therefore, that the main object of the expedition was to defeat the Turkish army assembling in Syria before it started across the desert to invade Egypt, and then to turn back and crush the second Turkish force which was expected to land in the Delta, as, in this way, the enemy would be disposed of piecemeal. So far as this object was concerned Bonaparte was completely successful, as he defeated the Turkish army in Syria at the Battle of Mount Tabor, and returned to Egypt in time to fall with his whole force on the second Turkish army, coming by sea, at the Battle of Abukir.

Bonaparte's second object was to capture Acre, and to punish Ahmed Bey el-Jezzar for assisting the Turks and for having received Ibrahim Bey and his Memluks, who had been driven out of Egypt by the French. As he did not succeed in getting possession of Acre this part of the expedition may be regarded as a failure, but it was a failure of minor importance, as it is difficult to see what use he could have made of the place if he had captured it. Having lost the command of the sea, he would have found it a hard task to hold the fortress, and, as it was a long way from Cairo, it would have been of little use in the operations for the defence of Egypt. Indeed, just as Sydney Smith came to the conclusion that Acre was not worth defending except on sentimental grounds, so Bonaparte might well have considered that it was not worth attacking for the sake of any advantage that its possession would give him. Having, however, set his heart on taking it, he did not like to be thwarted, and did not relax his efforts until forced to realize that the game was not worth the candle; indeed it might fairly be argued that he waited too long, and that he would have been wiser to retire before the arrival of the Turkish fleet with reinforcements on May 7th, 1799, and before he had wasted the lives of a large number of officers and

men in the fruitless attacks made during the last three days of the siege.

It is not impossible, on the other hand, that Sydney Smith made a somewhat similar mistake in landing the expeditionary force at Acre to assist in the defence, as, if the Turkish army had been sent on to Jaffa and disembarked there, they could have cut the French lines of communication and marched north against Bonaparte, who, even if he succeeded in capturing Acre, would have been placed in a difficult position, and had to fight his way back to Egypt, instead of being practically unmolested on the retreat. It is, however, easy to be wise after the event, and all that can be said for certain is that Bonaparte succeeded in the main object of his expedition, the defeat of the Turkish army in Syria, and failed in the secondary one, the capture of Acre.

It is interesting to consider what lessons may be learnt from the French expedition to Palestine which would be useful as regards the conduct of the present war. In the first place we see that Bonaparte, who, whatever his faults may have been, was a great general, realized that the best way to defend Egypt against an attack coming from the East was, not to wait until the enemy had completed his arrangements for crossing the desert, but to meet him in Palestine and defeat his army there. This he succeeded in doing, although circumstances were not at all favourable for his operations as, France having lost the command of the sea when Nelson destroyed the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile, he had to depend for the most part on the land communications with Egypt, and the transport of supplies and munitions of war was difficult. Matters are now very different, as England, the country which is defending Egypt, has the complete command of the sea, and can send troops and supplies by water to any place on the coast of the Mediterranean, while, on the contrary, all supplies for a Turkish army assembling in Syria have to be brought by land over a long line of communications.

As this was well known when Turkey joined the Central Powers of Europe against the Allies in the autumn of 1914, it is difficult to understand why immediate steps were not taken to occupy the sea-ports on the coasts of Palestine and Syria, as these would have served as bases for such military operations as were desirable to stop the German-Turkish preparations for the advance across the desert against Egypt. Jaffa and Haifa, which were at that time

unfortified, should have been seized by the English, and placed in a state of defence, and Beirut, Tripoli, and Latakia should have been taken by the French, when the Allies would have got command of the railways from Jaffa to Jerusalem, from Haifa to Damascus, and from Beirut to Damascus, while the construction of the new line which it is supposed has been, or is being, made to continue the Haifa railway to Ramleh and Gaza, would have been stopped without difficulty.

There can be little doubt that such an occupation of the seaports by the Allies would have been hailed with pleasure by a majority of the inhabitants of the country, who fear, but hate, both Turks and Germans, and it would have been a far more effective way of stopping an invasion of Egypt from Palestine, than sitting down in front of the long line of the Suez Canal, and waiting until an attack upon it was developed. We may feel pretty sure that this would have been the course of action which Bonaparte would have adopted if he were now in charge of the defence of Egypt, as he was well aware that attack is often the best means of defence, and never, if he could help it, allowed his adversary to get the initiative.
