

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DARKENING SCENE

SIR IAN HAMILTON'S telegram of the 17th August,¹ which Aug. announced the failure of his offensive and asked for a reinforcement of 95,000 men, arrived in England at a moment of tense anxiety. On every side the horizon of the Entente was black with lowering clouds.

On the Eastern front the Russian Armies were reeling under Austro-German attacks. In recent battles they had lost nearly half a million men and more than 3,000 guns. The morale of their troops was sinking. From the Grand Duke Nicholas down to the regimental officers the belief was gaining ground that Britain and France were thinking only of themselves, and in London and Paris there were grave fears of a separate Russian peace. On the Italian front Italy's second effort to break the Austrian line on the left bank of the Isonzo had ended in failure. In the Balkans Bulgaria had concluded arrangements for a German loan, and was presumably on the verge of joining the Central Powers. Such a step would open the way for streams of German munitions to reach the Turks.

Before the extent of the latest failure in Gallipoli was fully realized in England, the threatening news from other corners of Europe had increased the determination of British ministers to secure at all costs the opening of the Dardanelles. This, it was held, was the quickest means of carrying hope to Russia, of forcing Turkey out of the war before help could reach her, and of restraining the Bulgarian Tzar from placing his army of 300,000 first-class troops at the disposal of the Central Powers.

But Sir Ian Hamilton's cable of the 17th August added weight to the arguments of those opposed to the Government's Eastern policy. The tenor of his report was far less confident than usual, and in view of the fact that he had lost 25,000 men

¹ See page 336.

Aug. without securing his first objective it could certainly be argued that a new attack in the same area, without the advantage of surprise, was unlikely to fare better. Disappointment at home was leading to recriminations. Already it was darkly hinted that Ian Hamilton was a general who always "nearly succeeded"; and even those in favour of meeting all his demands found it hard to say what should be done if his next attack were to fail with another loss of 25,000 men.

Nevertheless the general situation demanded an early success so urgently, and the prospects of gaining ground on the Western front were thought to be so remote, that many ministers were still in favour of reinforcing Sir Ian Hamilton with all the troops he wanted when, on the 20th August, a contrary decision was imposed upon Whitehall by the latest news from France. There, in defiance of the general weight of French military and political opinion, General Joffre had finally had his way, and the French were to launch a great attack on the Western front in September. At an interview in Paris on the 16th August Lord Kitchener, despite his dislike for the project, had succumbed to Joffre's arguments and definitely agreed that the British Army should co-operate in this attack to the utmost limits of its power.

At a meeting of the Dardanelles Committee on the 20th August Lord Kitchener explained that though he and Sir John French had been anxious to postpone operations in France till the spring of 1916, General Joffre had convinced him that for political reasons an autumn offensive was essential. The French commander, he explained, was not expecting to gain an overwhelming success, but had urged that an offensive was necessary for the maintenance of French morale.

In these circumstances it was now agreed by the Committee that one course alone was open to the British Government. In spite of the fact that enough men and munitions were probably available to satisfy the most exacting demands of the Gallipoli theatre, but not nearly enough to ensure a success in France, it was decided that every effort must be centred in an attack on the Western front.

It will be seen on a later page that the tragedy of this decision lies in the fact that the arguments which had converted Lord Kitchener did not reflect the view of the French Government. Although they, too, had succumbed to General Joffre's persuasion, responsible statesmen in France were strongly averse to an autumn offensive on the Western front, and were beginning to believe that the wisest course for their country, as for England, was to remain on the defensive in

France and strain every nerve to open the Dardanelles before Aug. the arrival of winter.' These facts, however, were not known to Lord Kitchener at the time.

The decision to fight in France made it quite impossible to satisfy Sir Ian Hamilton's demands. But it left unsolved the urgent and vital problem of the Gallipoli theatre. Lord Kitchener, unaware of this nascent French support for an Eastern as opposed to a Western policy, admitted on the 20th August that he would be thankful if Britain could cut her losses and abandon the Dardanelles enterprise. But he added that this was impossible. He had discussed the matter with Sir John French in France and had come to the conclusion that the thing could not be done. If a withdrawal were ordered, it seemed too much to hope that all the troops could be embarked. Large numbers would almost certainly be forced to surrender, and a disaster of this magnitude would have so bad an effect in Egypt and India that the idea could not be thought of. On the other hand, if a withdrawal were not ordered and Sir Ian Hamilton was told to fight it out, it would be equally unthinkable to desert the hard-pressed troops already on the peninsula and leave them unsupported by drafts and ammunition.

In these circumstances the Dardanelles Committee sought refuge in another half-measure. It was decided to reinforce the Gallipoli army with every available soldier that was not needed for the main theatre in France, the defence of England, or the adequate protection of Egypt. Sir Ian Hamilton had asked for 35,000 men. It was resolved to send him one-quarter of that number,¹ and the desperate hope was entertained that with this meagre support, which would still leave the existing formations more than 30,000 below their war establishment, the tired and dispirited army would be able to reach the Narrows.

In a telegram to Ian Hamilton that night Lord Kitchener explained the general situation. Owing to an early offensive in France it was impossible to send any new divisions to Gallipoli. But a success at the Dardanelles was "very desirable", and it was hoped that the operations might still be finished successfully. "We feel confident", the message ran, "that you will do your utmost, as we are doing ours to support you."

On this day, too, a new attempt was made by the Admiralty to come to the army's aid. Realizing the importance of a success at the Dardanelles, and holding that, in the existing crisis, naval

¹About 13,000 reinforcing drafts and 12,000 2nd-Line Territorials and dismounted Yeomanry.

Aug. risks would be justified which had hitherto been counted inadvisable, they telegraphed to Admiral de Robeck:

If you still think your old battleships could make any really decisive or important contribution to success of land operations you will be supported in any use to which you may think it desirable to put them.

Three days earlier Commodore Keyes had again proposed an attempt to force the Straits,¹ and though the proposal had not seemed feasible to the admiral, he had ordered Keyes to submit a detailed plan. But to the Admiralty he replied on the 21st August:

I have consulted General.² I consider support as at present given to Army by ships best means using squadron. To attack Narrows now with battleships would be a grave error, as chance of getting even a small efficient squadron past Cnanak very remote. . . . This also the opinion of other admirals.

To this message the Admiralty replied the same evening:

We were not contemplating attack by warship on Narrows. If this comes at all it will come later. We only had in mind the possibility that intervention of battleships might give important perhaps decisive aid to land operations . . . and we intended to convey that any decision you might come to on this point would receive full support from here. We have fullest confidence in your judgment.

On the 23rd August the Government's hope of a success in Gallipoli without large reinforcements was dashed to the ground by the news of Scimitar Hill. Sir Ian Hamilton's report was definite and precise. His troops had failed to make any headway; and this new failure, combined with his heavy losses since the 6th August, had profoundly modified his position. As no further divisions could be sent him, he could only remain on the defensive, and might shortly be obliged to abandon Suvla and retire into the original Anzac position. His wastage from sickness was becoming abnormal, and his total losses, including sick, since the opening of the offensive amounted to over 40,000 men.

The Government's anxieties were increased at this juncture by further rumours of Bulgaria's imminent entry into the war.

¹ See page 337.

² Describing this interview in his diary Ian Hamilton wrote at the time that he considered it outside his province to advise the admiral as to the specific use to be made of his ships.

The arrival of German munitions in Gallipoli would enable the Aug. Turks to attack, and British ministers feared that in the face of a heavy bombardment Sir Ian Hamilton's exposed positions would soon become untenable. They argued that there was no room to fall back to alternative positions in rear, and that a successful attack by the Turks might lead to a disaster almost without a parallel in English history.

Amidst these gloomy forebodings the only ray of light was a British intelligence report—repeated to England for what it was worth—that the Turkish troops in Gallipoli were as tired as the British,¹ and could not hold out much longer. Little trust could be placed in this report; but it now seemed possible to scrape together a few thousand more men for Gallipoli. With these extra numbers the invading army might be able to hold its positions; and there seemed to be no alternative to ordering it to try to do so. After the conclusion of the offensive on the Western front it might perhaps be possible to send out more reinforcements; and Sir Ian Hamilton was now instructed to report whether, in the light of his past experience, he still saw a chance of ending his campaign successfully, and how many men he would need to make success a certainty. As yet, however, the British Government were unaware of the date proposed for the opening of Joffre's offensive. All that was known in England was that the Mayor of St. Omer had stated in a public speech that the attack was going to be launched on the 15th September.

In Gallipoli, meanwhile, General Byng had arrived from France on the 23rd August to command the IX Corps. With him came Major-Generals F. S. Maude and E. A. Fanshawe, who had also served in France, to command two of his divisions.²

¹ That the report was to some extent justified is shown by the following extract from a new German official study of the strategy of the campaign which the compiler of this volume was privileged to see while these pages were in the press:

"Notwithstanding the satisfactory results achieved in August, General Liman von Sanders still regards the future with anxiety. . . . The wastage amongst the Turkish troops was alarmingly high, and the danger was that they would gradually bleed to death. . . . Further formations were hardly likely to become available for Gallipoli. Drafts were coming in more slowly and their standard was growing worse. The increased size of the Army enhanced the difficulties of supply. Not only were the lines of communication barely able to meet the existing demands, but the resources of the capital appeared to be running short."

² Major-General Maude was appointed to the 13th Division, *vice* Shaw invalided. Major-General Fanshawe replaced Hammersley in the 11th Division. General de Lisle returned to the 29th Division, and Major-General W. R. Marshall assumed command of the 53rd. The 13th Division was brought to Suvla and the 54th took its place at Anzac.

Aug. General Byng, it will be remembered, had been specially asked for at the middle of June, when the August operations were first projected, but the request was then refused. Now, ten weeks later, it had been granted. The experienced pilot had arrived. But the ship to be steered into port was already hard on the rocks.

Sir Ian Hamilton, though still acutely conscious of the difficulties of his problem, had already begun to persuade himself that his telegram of the 23rd August had painted too gloomy a picture. The new corps and divisional commanders were proving a tower of strength. He now felt convinced that with the help of the drafts promised he would be able to retain Suvla, and that with adequate reinforcements he could fight his way to victory.

It was manifestly impossible, however, to name the precise number of divisions required—at some uncertain future date—to strike the winning blow. The bulk of the existing force was thoroughly worn out, and, though still capable of fighting a defensive action, could not be expected for some time to come to stand the strain of offensive operations. Furthermore, the number of fresh troops already ordered to the peninsula was still an uncertain factor.

As for the troops already on the peninsula, the spirit of the Expeditionary Force at this period was at a lower ebb than the Commander-in-Chief realized, despite his frequent visits to the front line. Officers and men alike were doing their best to make light of their troubles and carry on with a smile. But there were few officers in the force who were not fully persuaded—however bravely they kept their opinions to themselves—that the chance of reaching the Narrows had disappeared. Constantinople, in their minds at least, was a dream of vain imaginings, and the utmost limit of ambition had narrowed down to the possible gain of some scrap of ground that was not overlooked by the enemy. The minor comforts of life, such as food and its preparation, or the arrival of the mail, had become the chief preoccupation, coupled perhaps with a vague hope that no further costly attacks would be ordered by G.H.Q.

The principal scourge from which the troops were suffering was a peculiarly violent form of diarrhoea. Broadly speaking, the whole force, from the Commander-in-Chief downward, was affected by this complaint, and the men were so weak from it that few could walk at a quicker pace than a crawl. The intense heat and the protracted strain of the fighting, the dust, the flies, and the utter discomfort of the surroundings, had all played a part in sapping the men's vitality. The continued lack

of success had damped their spirits; and the lack of any variation Aug. of diet was ruining their constitutions.¹

Even for the troops in reserve there was little or no cover from the enemy's shelling, and the one saving grace was that the stock of Turkish shells was very low. Every corner of the Suvla area which offered any cover from view and fire was already overcrowded, and the limited space on the western slopes of Lala Baba was now occupied by three divisional headquarters, three artillery brigade headquarters and a number of reserve battalions. At the foot of the slope, close to the men's bivouacs, were the wretched horses and mules, suffering all day long from lack of water,² and tormented by millions of flies. Some portions of the horse-lines could be reached by the enemy's guns, and it was not long before the nerves of the luckless animals were so shaken that many would squeal at the sound of a distant shell. On the 29th August one round from a 5.9-inch howitzer accounted for 113 mules.

It was at this juncture—when the British Government were at their wits' end for a possible means of extricating themselves from the Dardanelles entanglement, when Sir Ian Hamilton could promise no solution of his difficulties without many more troops than could be sent him, and when the army on the peninsula was quietly dwindling away—that hope was revived by astonishing news from France. On the 30th August Lord Kitchener was informed that the French were contemplating a landing by six French divisions on the Asiatic side of the Straits in close co-operation with the British troops on the peninsula. Four of these divisions would be sent from France, and the others would be the two serving at Helles.

At G.H.Q. at Imbros the enthusiasm evoked by this surprising news was increased by a message from Lord Kitchener that the two French divisions at Helles would probably be replaced by the British 27th and 28th Divisions, composed of Regular units, from the Western front. The Turkish strength on the Asiatic shore at this time was believed to amount to not more

¹ All through the summer the need of a canteen, where minor luxuries could be purchased, had been felt very acutely. An Expeditionary Force canteen was opened at Helles on 19th August and at Suvla a month later; but supplies were very inadequate. Anzac had received a small quantity of stores as early as June; but it was not until late autumn that stores were available in any quantity at the beaches. Canteens were established by local contractors at Mudros, and there were Y.M.C.A. depots at Mudros and Imbros.

² As the only water-holes available were on the southern edge of the lake and under direct fire, animals could only be watered before dawn or after dark.

Aug. than 12,000 men.¹ If only the preparations for this new landing could be kept secret, and if the troops could arrive quickly, a successful end to the campaign seemed almost certain. Sir Ian Hamilton voiced the general feeling of relief when he wrote in his diary that night: "From bankrupt to millionaire in 24 hours. . . . *Deo volente* we are saved; Constantinople is "doomed."² These newborn hopes, however, were doomed to disappointment. After three weeks' suspense, the reinforcing divisions were to prove as unsubstantial as a mirage.

July. The sequence of events which induced the French Government to make this last-minute offer to assist the Dardanelles enterprise, and then compelled them to withdraw it, forms an interesting though mournful study. French attention had first been directed to the Asiatic shore by General Bailloud's report of the danger to which his corps was exposed by the Turkish batteries on that side of the Straits.³ But the main cause for the new plan was the fact that a strong section of French opinion had been turning in favour of an autumn offensive in the Eastern Mediterranean. With the powerful exception of General Joffre, military and political opinion had become almost unanimous by the middle of July that no further attacks should be made on the Western front till the spring of 1916. The succession of costly failures in Champagne, Woevre and Artois had led to discontent, the Government had been freely blamed and criticized, and it was reported to M. Poincaré on the 21st July that "no single general, not excepting Foch, has any more "faith in an offensive proving successful." On the following day M. Poincaré records: "Our meeting today was largely "concerned with the Dardanelles, and it was unanimously "agreed that any success there would be of first-rate importance "—far more so than any of the little offensives on our own "ground—and that our diplomatic as well as our military "interests largely depend on it"⁴

¹ Actually it consisted of only one regiment (less than 2,000 men) scattered between Chanak and Yukyeri Bay.

² To Lord Kitchener Hamilton telegraphed more soberly: "The most important thing is that the expedition should come out as soon as possible. . . . A landing on the Asiatic shore will create an awkward situation for the Turk, but I do not believe he will withdraw troops from my front to meet it, as it will not at first offer as serious threat to his vitals as I do. I think it more likely that the 12,000 troops on the Asiatic side at present will, in the first instance be reinforced from Uzun Kupru, Constantinople, or Smyrna. It will therefore be unsafe to expect that such a landing will at once reduce opposition on the peninsula, or that I could do with a smaller number of troops than new formations up to 50,000 men and drafts to bring my existing divisions up to establishment. In this former total, however, the 27th and 28th Divisions could be counted." ³ See page 146.

⁴ "Memoirs of Raymond Poincaré" (Eng. ed.), iv. pp. 167-8.

After this meeting, as the French Government were all July. agreed, it was left for M. Millerand and the Prime Minister (M. Viviani) to arrange with Joffre the number of divisions to be sent to the Mediterranean.

Even Joffre at this time (the end of July) did not appear to be unsympathetic to the idea of sending French reinforcements to ensure the capture of Constantinople if this object should not be achieved by the approaching British offensive. In an appreciation dated the 29th July he agreed that it was as much out of the question for France as for England to abandon the Dardanelles enterprise; the fall of Constantinople, he admitted, though it would not end the war, would be an important step towards final victory. He urged, however, that an operation against Constantinople could only be justified by its complete success. Half-measures would merely result in locking up more troops, and not another man should be sent out by France till a sufficient force could be spared to make success a certainty. This could probably be done by the end of September, and the intervening weeks would allow a plan of operations to be worked out in detail.

Side by side with these military reasons for despatching French troops to the Dardanelles, a motive of a different nature arose at the beginning of August. During June a political movement had been on foot for the supersession of Joffre by General Sarrail; and on the 22nd July Joffre removed Sarrail from the command of the Third Army. Sarrail was Aug. offered the French corps already at the Dardanelles, in succession to General Gouraud,¹ but his supporters urged so strongly that an army commander should not be publicly humiliated by being sent to a corps, that the Government agreed to the formation of a new army for service out of France. General Sarrail was promised the command of it, and as the country in which it was to operate had not yet been decided upon, the commander designate was asked to express his views.

A week later, on the 11th August, General Sarrail suggested, in a memorandum to the War Ministry, that the new army might usefully be landed in the neighbourhood of Smyrna, at Alexandretta, or perhaps at Salonika. Neither the War Minister nor General Joffre was impressed by this memorandum. "The War Minister", General Sarrail has admitted, "was probably right. But the duty of deciding, where an army should be sent and what it should do is the task not of a soldier but of the Government."²

¹ General Bailoud was only in temporary command of this corps.

² "Mon Commandement en Orient", p. x.

Aug. General Joffre, meanwhile, was completing his plans for an autumn offensive in France. The French Government were still averse to the proposal, but Joffre's determination, and the Government's fear of the effect his resignation might have on public opinion, enabled him to have his way. This was one of Joffre's most unaccountable triumphs. For more than two months evidence had been accumulating in Paris that the failure of the Arras offensive was mainly responsible for French discontent. "Parliament is becoming very restless," wrote M. Poincaré on the 29th May: "Charles Humbert has 'apparently said in the Senate that two battalions have gone 'over to the enemy singing the 'International' . . . must one admit that here there are symptoms of fatigue and exhaustion?" "The war-weariness which permeates many 'quarters", he wrote on the 5th July, "has produced a fresh 'crop of insulting and threatening letters" asking for peace. At St. Pol on the 7th a French corps commander addressed him with: "Pray, M. le Président, do what you can to put an 'end to these local offensives; the instrument of victory is 'being broken in our hands". Yet on the 14th August General Joffre had only to say that "from purely military considerations it was necessary to keep his troops employed, as 'otherwise they would deteriorate physically and morally", to silence opposition.¹

This was the situation when Joffre persuaded Kitchener with similar arguments to co-operate in the French attack. Whether Lord Kitchener would have agreed so readily had he known the views of the French Government is a matter of conjecture. But his concurrence was undoubtedly of great assistance to Joffre. It was well known in Paris that the British War Minister had hitherto been in favour of defensive action till the spring of 1916, and his change of attitude was all the more significant.

On the 26th August General Bailloud telegraphed to Paris from Gallipoli that the Suvla—Anzac offensive had definitely failed. Two days later the French Government unanimously agreed that the early despatch of reinforcements to the Dardanelles was now absolutely essential, and that a French army should be landed on the Asiatic side of the Straits. The same afternoon the French Foreign Minister was told to obtain British approval for an operation by a French force under a French commander "in a new theatre, but in close liaison with 'the British troops fighting on the peninsula". The British were to be asked for ships to carry the new divisions, for naval

¹ "Memoirs of Raymond Poincaré" (Eng. ed.), iv. pp. 120, 155, 158, 191.

support to cover their disembarkation, and for an exclusively Aug. French base at Mitylene or Mudros.

Meanwhile General Joffre had fixed his attack in France for the middle of September,¹ and though he had promised to break it off in the event of non-success, the despatch of troops to the Dardanelles was complicated by his definite refusal to part with a single man till the 22nd September. The President urged that the opening of the Dardanelles was of far more importance than the gain of a few kilometres of ground on the Western front, but his arguments were unavailing.

At the moment, therefore, when the French Government informed London that they were contemplating the despatch of four divisions to the Dardanelles there was no hope of these troops starting till the end of September, and no definite plan had been adopted for their employment. At the instance of General Joffre, however, a committee of staff officers, under the presidency of his Chief of the General Staff, had examined the question at the Ministry of War in Paris, and had submitted on the 21st August an exhaustive study of the situation.

Arguing that the Turks could oppose a French attack on the Asiatic side of the Straits with 165,000 men² on the tenth day after the landing, this report suggested that the new landing ought not to be made by a smaller force than thirteen divisions; and that as France could not spare that number, Italy should be asked to supply whatever balance was required. The whole force at the Dardanelles—French, British and Italian—should be placed under a French commander-in-chief; and the British and French squadrons at the Dardanelles should also be under the supreme military commander. Finally the committee recommended that the new landing should not be allowed to begin until it was certain that equally important results could not be obtained by an offensive on the Western front. It can be said of this report that General Joffre's committee had been most complaisant to their Chief.

¹ Originally fixed for the 8th September the attack was postponed first to the 15th, then to the 25th.

² The basis of this greatly exaggerated calculation was:

Troops already on the Asiatic side of the Straits	20,000
Four divisions brought over from the peninsula, each division calculated at 15,000 strong, and ferried across at the rate of 25,000 a night. (<i>N.B.</i> —This figure was approximately double the strength of Turkish divisions on the peninsula.)	60,000
Troops from Adramyti area	5,000
Troops from Thrace, marching to Kilia and crossing the Straits at the rate of 25,000 a night	80,000
Total	165,000

Aug. General Joffre forwarded the report to the Minister of War with a covering minute urging that even with the help of thirteen divisions success would not be certain, and that it would be "profoundly regrettable" if the attempt were allowed to be made. "It was the English", he naïvely added, "who took us to the Dardanelles. To-day the abandonment of the attack would be an English defeat. To-morrow, if we were to send reinforcements, and to claim the chief command, we should be faced, in case of failure, by a French disaster."

Close upon the heels of this minute came a note from the French Naval Chief of Staff, urging that the new landing-place ought to be occupied strongly, piers constructed, and an adequate reserve of supplies put ashore, before the army was allowed to land!

Sept. The French Government, however, had now made up their mind, and for the moment at least were not to be turned aside by these tendentious warnings. On the 7th September Joffre was definitely ordered to earmark four divisions¹ and six "groupes" of heavy artillery to be ready to embark at Marseilles in the first week of October.

On or about the 10th September² a second appreciation, drawn up by General Joffre's committee, urged that in view of the extreme importance of the approaching offensive in France, the Commander-in-Chief should be allowed the use of every available man till the end of the operations. The committee admitted, however, that their original estimate of thirteen divisions being required for the Dardanelles was probably excessive, and that a force of six divisions might suffice, though the enterprise was full of danger.

This was the situation when on the 11th September at a conference held at Calais between Lord Kitchener, Sir John French, the French Minister of War, and Generals Joffre and Sarrail, it was decided that two British divisions (the 27th and 28th) and four French divisions should begin to embark at Marseilles on the 10th October, and that the new operations should start in the middle of November.

After the meeting, however, Joffre told Lord Kitchener that an Asiatic landing would certainly require more than six divisions; that he was not very confident about Sarrail's leadership; and that the French plans did not look very promising.

From Lord Kitchener's telegram to Ian Hamilton describing this conference, it now seemed very doubtful if the new French

¹ The Italians had by this time refused to send any troops to Gallipoli.

² In the French official account the date is given as the 20th, but this is an obvious misprint.

landing would ever materialize. In any case, the troops were Sept. not to leave France till the conclusion of Joffre's offensive on the Western front; and in view of Ian Hamilton's rapidly mounting sick-rate, and the approach of winter storms, the chance of success at such a late season of the year seemed utterly remote. A plan which promised victory if launched without delay had apparently been overlaid in the hour of its birth.

Throughout these anxious weeks, while the councils of the Entente were perplexed by conflicting theories, Germany had no doubts as to which of the courses open to France and Britain held most peril for herself. "Heavy fighting", wrote Admiral Tirpitz on the morning after the landing at Suvla, "has been going on since yesterday at the Dardanelles. . . . The situation is obviously very critical. Should the Dardanelles fall, the world-war has been decided against us."¹ More German submarines were hurried to the Mediterranean, and redoubled efforts were made to interrupt the British traffic to the peninsula. General Falkenhayn, Chief of the German General Staff, was similarly convinced of the urgency of preventing the opening of the Straits. Fully persuaded that the German line in the west was strong enough to withstand any attack that France and England could make on it, he turned his attention, as soon as Brest-Litovsk had fallen, to overrunning Serbia and opening the road to Constantinople.²

Bulgaria was inclined to believe that the Russian defeats and Sir Ian Hamilton's failure at Suvla betokened the ultimate triumph of the Central Powers, and on the 6th September a convention was signed by German, Austrian and Bulgarian representatives, outlining the part which each should play in the coming attack on Serbia. Austria, it is true, was anxious to continue to attack the Russians. But Falkenhayn disagreed. "It is incomparably more important", he wrote to Austrian G.H.Q., "that the Dardanelles should be secured, and in addition the iron in Bulgaria struck while it is hot."³

In France, meanwhile, the project of a landing on the Asiatic side of the Straits had not been finally relinquished; but in the last week of September the whole plan collapsed under the pressure of events in the Balkans. Bulgaria issued

¹ "Erinnerungen", p. 491.

² This was not the first time that Britain's attempt to force the Straits had affected German strategy. The German official account, vol. vii., shows that the opening of the naval bombardment in February had much to do with Falkenhayn's cancellation of his plan for an offensive on the Western front in the spring of 1915.

³ "General Headquarters 1914-16 and its Critical Decisions" (English ed.), p. 133. Falkenhayn feared that if the Dardanelles were forced Bulgaria might yet join the Entente.

Sept. orders for mobilization; Greece and Serbia promptly asked France and England for 150,000 men to enable Greece to fulfil her treaty obligations;¹ France at once agreed; and England followed suit. On the 25th September Lord Kitchener telegraphed to Sir Ian Hamilton that two British divisions and probably one French division must be withdrawn from the Dardanelles for service at Salonika. The Yeomanry promised to Gallipoli and already on passage would also have to go to the new front. He suggested that Ian Hamilton should abandon Suvla Bay.²

This telegram marked the beginning of the end of the Dardanelles campaign. Lord Kitchener had pointed out in it that there was no intention of withdrawing from the peninsula, or of giving up the Dardanelles operations till the Turks were defeated. But these words seemed little more than a pious aspiration. The Allies had been unable to support two theatres of operations; they certainly could not support three; and it was only too plain to Sir Ian Hamilton that the chance of success in Gallipoli had disappeared.

Meanwhile on that very day in France, through the determination of Joffre and the pressure which he had exerted on Lord Kitchener, Sir John French was "compelled to undertake" operations before he was ready, over ground that was most "unfavourable, against the better judgment of himself and General Haig, and . . . with no more than a quarter of the troops . . . that he considered necessary for a successful attack".³ In the course of these operations 250,000 French and British troops were vainly sacrificed on the Western front. The supporters of the Gallipoli campaign had claimed that half that number might secure the opening of the Straits.

¹ According to her agreement with Greece, Serbia had to provide 150,000 troops for the protection of her eastern border. She could not do this owing to the threat on her own northern borders.

² Sir Ian Hamilton in reply strongly deprecated a withdrawal from Suvla Bay, the effect of which, in addition to prejudicing his defence of Anzac and Helles, might more than discount in Bulgarian eyes the landing at Salonika. He promised that if he need send only one British and one French division to Salonika, he would still be able to hold all his existing positions. This proposal was agreed to; only the 10th Division and one French division were withdrawn from the peninsula, and by the end of September these troops were concentrating at Mudros for conveyance to the new front.

³ "Military Operations, France and Belgium 1915". Vol. II. p. 129.