

(COPY OF LETTER)
from
CORPORAL C. G. CRANE

2nd Lt Sigbee PE
Gallipoli B. 4
France,
8th July, 1916.

To his Mother

I have just received some letters dated May 13th, the fastest time of any letter I have received since we arrived in France. I am glad to know that the family are all well. I got some photos also of the family at "Felsgarth".

I am quite well and in good order.

We have just moved from somewhere to somewhere else, which probably wont interest you very much, though it bored us exceedingly as we had a delightful home in our last place. Six of us lived in the house of a French Dame with two daughters. The daughters were quite nice looking, but mostly in the afternoon on account of curling pins or whatever you call them. However they looked after us very well, so we can't complain.

At present we are staying at a farm. Have you seen a most delightful publication called "Fragments from France". The farm is illustrated therein, fortunately our farm is not quite so bad. We expect to move again soon, for which I am glad, although we get a view from here of the German lines. Incidentally,--the Germans get a good view of us. There is much "strafe" going on further down the line, it looks fine at night.

The longlooked for offensive has now begun, at least the papers say so, and they seem to know. If it is true, I suppose we shall soon hop into it.

I was interested to know that the Rawson fraternity had left Australia. I suppose they will be in the 3rd division. The 3rd is known among the people here as the "War Babies Division", the explanation is obvious.

I was sorry to hear about Mrs. Gillespie, convey my regrets to Helen, if that is the right thing to do.

Olive will perhaps be interested to know that I see a good deal of Geoff Walker, as he is attached to the Sanitary Section at present.

Our farm is on the border between France and Belgium, so that it is possible by walking about 300 yards to be exactly on the frontier. Belgium can be distinguished from France by the number of civilians and the roads, which are, if possible, worse than the French ones.

I shall enclose some photos of Gallipoli, which I have had for a long time and also an account of the evacuation which I wrote at Lemnos, and shoved into my pocket and forgot.

Dont worry if you dont get any letters for awhile, because all mail will have to stop if we really have a business like cut at the Boshes.

Goodbye for the present, with love to yourself, Father, and the attached families.

From

CORPORAL C. G. CRANE,

2nd SIGNAL COMPANY, HEAD QUARTERS SECTION.

THE EVACUATION OF THE ANZAC-SUVLA POSITION,

ON GALLIPOLI PENINSULA, on 19-20 DECEMBER, 1915.

The first indication of any approaching movement occurred on the night of December 10.

Clifton and I had been up to the 5th Brigade to play Bridge with Arn. On our return to H. Q. O./ 2nd Division, we heard that the 6th and 7th Field Ambulances had received orders to pack up and be ready to move out in 6 hours time, leaving their tents and all medical equipment. This left only the 5th Field Ambulance to do the work of the whole 2nd Australian Division.

Next day, the 7th Brigade with the exception of the 25th Battalion had orders to move out the following night. The text of the message read:-

" In order to reduce the consumption of stores during the
" winter months, the 7th Brigade, with the exception of the
" 25th Battalion, will prepare to move out tonight."

The 20th Battalion took the place of the 7th Brigade at Russells Top. The 25th Battalion moved to Reserve Gully for beach fatigues.

Most people thought at this time that all this was the beginning of a big advance somewhere on the line. There was no further change for the next two days. Construction of new roads and other work went on as usual, although no new stores were being landed at this time. This was not unusual, however, as there had been large quantities landed just previous to this.

The second day following the evacuation of the 7th Brigade, every unit received orders to reduce its strength to just enough men to carry on its work. All the patients in the hospitals were sent away, and any man who became sick was evacuated straight away, even though one day in hospital would put him right.

From this on it became increasingly evident that an evacuation was intended. Every effort was made after this to prevent the Turks detecting anything unusual. Every one spent as much time as he could out in the open, so that the roads would not look unusually empty. Every effort was made to prevent any Stores falling into the hands of the Turks. Any one could get whatever they wanted from Ordnance. It was nothing unusual to see one man coming from Ordnance with about a dozen pairs of leggings, quantities of caps, overcoats and gum boots. Everything that could not be taken away, was destroyed. In our Company alone, there were 100 new pairs of boots destroyed, not to mention blankets, signal stores, and countless tins of bully. Army Service Corps were issuing more than double rations, milk was so plentiful that one would hardly bother to pick a tin up. Many people got cases of butter, by merely applying to the divisional train.

On the night of the 17th, troops began to leave the firing line, which was greatly thinned out on that night, and still

more so on the 18th.

The final retreat was timed to begin on the night of the nineteenth when parties from each Company left the trenches and marched down to the beach, where everything was ready for them to embark.

All men leaving the trenches muffled their feet in blankets and bags, which they discarded when away from the trenches, so that all the saps leading to the beach were carpeted with old blankets etc. The H. Q. of the 2nd Division remained in Rest Gully until 2 a.m. on Sunday, when they transferred to the old A.C. Sig. office near Watson's Pier. The 5th Brigade held their headquarters until Sunday night, when they transferred to their last post behind Plugge's Plateau. The 6th Brigade H.Qs retired to Bridges Road on the site of the 6th Field Ambulance.

The outlying posts, Quinns, Courtneys, Walkers, & Russells Top, were connected by specially constructed lines with the 5th Brigade post at Plugges, and kept up communications until the last of the rearguard, consisting mostly of machine gunners, left the trenches. As the men came in, they pulled the wire entanglements across all the saps, and a few Field Engineers with them made the final connections for blowing up the mines under the chess board, Russells Top and the Turkish lines. As soon as word was received from the beach that these people had arrived safely, the covering party on Plugges fell back, picking up the 5th Brig. Sig. office as they came. This party, consisting of the Commander of the rearguard, the machine gunners, the last of the 2nd Division H.Q. Sig. Coy., the 5th Brigade Signal Section (Arnolds) and the last of the 1st. division, then embarked on the last boat to leave Anzac position, just as the first mine at Russells Top exploded.

The whole movement was carried out in almost perfect silence, without confusion or loss of time of any kind. Troops were under cover the whole time except when moving over ground where cover was impossible. The last boat left about 4 o'clock on Monday morning.

On the Sunday night and Monday morning there were no casualties, a most unusual thing, on a normally quiet night.

-----00000-----

I was in the party, which under Captain Fraser, carried on the Signal Station in Rest Gully, until the 2nd division H.Qs retired to Anzac. We remained at Rest Gully until about 11 o'clock on Sunday night, and then as our position was rather isolated and would be liable to get cut off should the final retreat come earlier, we withdrew to the head of the Anzac Gully, and embarked at Watson's pier at about 2 o'clock on Monday morning, so that we were well out on the water when the last boat left.

The Turks were completely misled, even Beach Bill, a battery which the least thing unusual excited to activity, was quiet, firing only about one shot every quarter of an hour.

Later, a naval report stated that 26 hours after the evacuation, the Turks charged at Courtneys and Russells Top, after a two hours bombardment of our trenches. They suffered a good deal from shrapnel fire from the warships, and a few days later foraging parties on the beach were also seen.

-----00000000-----