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[971]

The Official War Historian of the Commonwealth Government (Dr. C. E. W. Bean), after his study of the collection of private war records preserved in the Australian War Memorial Library, wrote:—

"The private diaries in this collection furnish some of its most valuable historical records, but, like all private memoirs which were not compiled with any historical purpose, they should not be regarded as first-hand evidence except where it is certain that they are so. The diarist is almost always sincere in his desire to record accurately, but he is subject to no obligation or inducement to indicate whether he is recording his own observations or incidents told him by friends or heard at third or fourth hand at the mess-table. Thus, in some of the diaries in this collection, scenes described with vivid detail, and without any warning that they are told at second or third hand, have been found to be completely inaccurate in important details. A certain number also have been written up or revised long after the events, though doubtless usually from notes made at the time. In most cases the student must rely on his experience and on internal evidence to guide him in judging what is and what is not likely to be historically accurate."

N.C. 1
France 5
67

On 6th Dec 1916. The Orsova left. Melli. bound for England
having on board about 750 Troops & 52 Sisters. The trip. was
good & uneventful & we were unmolested by any enemy
sub. marines etc. so the days passed pleasantly enough.
There not being ~~much~~ ^{very} much sickness in troops. Diseases
broke out. & we had in all about 12 or 13 cases. & only one
seriously ill man with typhentery. who picked up wonderfully
by the time we landed. A very pleasant 17 days or so was
spent at C. T. now the Sisters & Troops being entertained
night & morn by the Citizens. Motor trips etc. being the order
of the day. At last England was reached. shall we
ever forget it? In the middle of February at 3 a.m. 51
poor lone women sat on the Paddington Station till 7 a.m.
no one to meet them! No one knowing where to go. At
last we scattered - some at one Hotel some at another. and
all being collected in a couple of days. & lodged at the
Portland. There we waited 10 days. reporting back twice
daily. till one glad day we shipped to France. Six of
us went to join a British Hosp. No 24 at Etaples.
There the work was varied - the staff being very busy during
a push. & just comfortably so, afterwards. giving us good
opportunities of seeing all there was to be seen round
about Etaples & Paris-Beage. many an enjoyable afternoon
being spent in the beautiful woods there. Seven months
were ~~sp~~ put in there, when one day we were re-called
to No 1 C. S. H. Rouen. How glad we were to see our

own again. It was almost like getting home. A little
 disappointment was felt, in our not having our own boys
 to nurse - but when one would happen to get carried
 in, he ran great risks of being spoiled completely. Lately
 we considered ourselves more fortunate for towards the
 end of 1918. our ranks held many Australians & we
 met various friends & relatives. Here many happy, but
 more sad times were spent. How the Croves steamed in -
 how much there was needing to be done, how little we felt
 we could do - bare necessities being attended to first - & the
 finishing touches put in afterwards - sometimes not at all.

And all in an atmosphere of cheerfulness - brightness
 & hopefulness from the lads that were being nursed. &
 good comradeship & kindness from the staff & Nations
 Here the cold was the greatest hardship we had to put
 up with. but even then things were made as comfortable
 as possible & the meals always eaten with a relish
 that Land work gives - we always had our regular
 times off duty, whenever it was at all possible to get
 them. This I suppose accounting for the general good
 health throughout the staff as a rule. Off duty many
 places of interest & beauty were visited & in my case
 will always be looked back upon with pleasure.

At last a lull in the awful fighting! what a
 relief! How many had lost a dear one! & how most all
 of us dreaded to hear the word - & now it is past! &

although there is a sad re-union on the other side ^{for many of us} all
 are looking forward to Home - The last of the 1st A. S. H
 left Rouen - end of Dec. 1918. & now everyone seems
 to be enjoying all the beauties of an English Summer.
 Duties in the Hospital being not quite so strenuous &
 trying there are many opportunities of visiting all
 surrounding places of beautiful & historic interest -

U. Town



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