

Gift
February 1915

Dear Edie

It is ten weeks now since we left Australia & during all that time I have only received one letter & that one was from you which I received at Colombo containing a Kmas card. Our regiment has received seven mails during that time & I cannot understand how none have come my way considering that the last mails to arrive were dated Sydney January 16th. Probably my letters went astray or might have been destroyed by the censor. Neither Will or myself have received word from home & we are both anxiously awaiting news from there. Of course it is nothing to worry over & if the letters are on their way they are bound to arrive someday.

Our Battalion is still camped in the same place & we are just about used to this funny country not to say full up of it. At least some of the chaps are but I would just as well be training here.

as in England where the weather would be
bitterly cold at present & besides that this is an
interesting country & I have a lot to see in it yet.
Last Sunday week three mates & myself went
out to have a look at the pyramids which are
situated about nineteen miles from here on
the other side of Cairo. We went into Cairo
by electric tram & from there to the pyramids
we travelled by carriage & pair which cost us 4/-
each for a 10 mile drive. It is a lovely drive from
Cairo to the pyramids & we laid back in the
cushions & enjoyed it. I can tell you that the
Australian soldiers do things in style here.
We arrived early in the afternoon & therefore
had plenty of time to look around. We went to
the biggest pyramid which is 450 ft high &
climbed to the top of it. There are steps all the
way up but some of them are five feet high
& we found it jolly hard work. When we arrived
at the top we found it square about 30 ft each
way & on top of this great tomb we found a soft
drink stall specially erected for the soldiers
who are a thirsty lot. There is a magnificent
view from the top & well worth seeing.

Afterwards we descended & went inside. It costs nothing for that only it is necessary to have a guide who demanded 3^{fr} per man which was not extortionate. After removing our boots & coat we commenced our tour through & we found it harder work than climbing the great building. We first crawled along a passage about one hundred yards long & about 3 ft high. It was pitch dark & the small candle the nigger guide carried did not give much light. After going through the passage we could stand up & see better. The guide led us through long high passages with marble floors as smooth as glass & with boots on we would never have been able to keep our feet. The pyramids are very ancient buildings & the one we were in was built 5,000 years ago by an Egyptian ruler of that period named Cheops who was interred in it after his death. The guide showed us his chamber where the coffin stand still is but the coffin & body were stolen years ago by thieves. It was all very interesting & worth seeing. After walking through about 4 mile of passages as I thought we came out again the trip having lasted one hour.

I left my mates then & went down to the Mena
 Camp which is only half a mile from the pyramids
 to see Will. I found him a bright & greeted
 him like a long lost brother, he is looking
 real well & the army has done him no harm
 as far as health is concerned. He has only
 received one letter since landing in Egypt
 & wanted to know how they were all getting
 on at home. I asked him why he did not call
 in to see you & he told me that he intended
 to do so but like all good intentions it fell through.
 He said that he was sorry that he did not call
 in & see you. We paid a visit to Ruby's cousin
 who is in the first battalion & the three
 of us went to a picture show to spend the evening.
 There are two picture shows in the Monacaoh
 but the pictures come on in French which
 makes them hard to understand.
 After the pictures I returned home.
 I go into Cairo once a week & I find the
 city amusing if nothing else. There are soldiers
 everywhere & it is marvellous how the city
 & the niggers are getting Australianised.

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All the cafes & beer shops have Australian names such as the "Pitt St Cook Shop" the "Kangaroo Dining rooms" the "Woolloomooloo Bar" & I saw another nigger putting up over his shop "The Little Bourke Street High Class Cafe & Restaurant". These names of course have been derived from the advice of some of our soldiers. The majority of these nigger places are dirty foul smelling dens & the food is cooked & prepared in a not too clean manner. I would not eat a meal in any of them if I was paid to. When I do want a meal I go to a European Cafe where I can rely on everything being clean & good & there are some good cafes in Cairo & cheap too. The language of the niggers is undergoing change too since the Australians came here & our slang is catching on well, the other evening I passed a nigger who was selling "fair dinkum" peanuts direct from Sydney & I have often heard a nigger call another nigger a "wowsers". Such language has never been heard in Cairo before.

I might have told you in my last letter that our battalion has been put in General Sir Arthur Godley's army division called the Australian & New Zealand Division. We are still undergoing

a hard course of training & I think that in a few weeks time we will be fit for the front. My mate & myself met an Egyptian student last Sunday & after spending the afternoon with him he asked us to go to his home one evening. We are going to see him on Wednesday. It will be a strange experience for us going to an Egyptian home. The student can speak English & so can his father who is an accountant in the Public Service. The ladies here wear veils & nobody can tell whether they are good or bad looking.

Well Edie I must conclude. Remember me to George & give him my best regards & best wishes & accept my kind regards & best love
As I Remain

XXXXXXX

Your loving S. brother

Private R. Longstaff

C. Coy Bth Battalion

4th Infantry Brigade

A.I.F.

Pick

P.S. Send letters with old address F. Company 13th Battalion
to Victoria Barracks Melbourne