

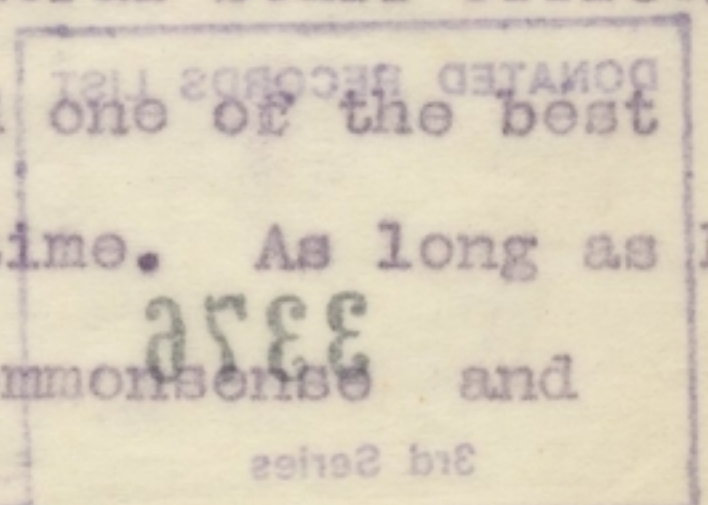
Army Corps Headquarters,

Anzac Cove, 17th May, 1915.

My dear Sir Ronald,

I have just sent you a telegram telling you that I fear there is little hope of Bridges pulling through, and asking you to try to prepare his wife for the news. I cannot tell you how greatly grieved I am about this and how really deeply I feel on the subject. In a previous letter I think I mentioned how fond I was of him and how much I liked working with him. My feelings in this respect have altogether increased with further knowledge, and I cannot help feeling that Australia in general, and the Expeditionary Force in particular, owe him a very deep debt of gratitude for all he has done for them. He had I think no other thoughts beyond those of making the Australian Force efficient. All day and I think all night too he was thinking out plans and working out the various subjects to make sure that no detail was omitted. He was such an uncommonly able and fearless soldier as he so fully proved himself to be during this last few weeks. He had, as you probably know, read military history deeply, and was always able to apply his knowledge when faced by any practical problem in the field.

In administration he was always just, while his wonderful knowledge of all details connected with the Australian Force was probably unique, and it has certainly been of the most valuable assistance to me since I took sole command of this Army Corps. No Commander could have wished for a more loyal and whole-hearted superior than I have had in Bridges, and I shall never be able to express the gratitude I feel to him for the way in which he has commanded his division and given me such willing help whenever called on. His loss here really is irreparable, and I feel most sad at the idea of having to carry on in future without him. I am only thankful that I have in Colonel White, Senior General Staff Officer of the Division, a man who is worth anything, and one of the best and most capable soldiers I have met for a long time. As long as he is there I feel quite content, as he is full of commonsense and has much detailed knowledge and sound judgement.



I have asked that Kirkpatrick may come out to take over command of the Division. In doing this I mentioned to Sir Ian Hamilton that I thought White was quite fit to command a brigade, and indeed even to take over the Division. For the former I cannot spare him from his present post, while for the latter I fear he is too junior to be considered at all events for the present.

Bridges' wound was most unfortunate. The perimeter of my line of trenches is divided into two sections, one under Bridges and the other under Godley. Bridges was going across to see Godley's trenches where they join up with his, so as to be ready for co-operation when we next make an advance. On his way he was hit either by a stray bullet or by a wretched sniper with a very long distance shot through the thigh, the bullet severing both the femoral vein and artery. Fortunately, there happened to be a doctor and a dressing station absolutely on the spot or he would have died immediately. The bleeding however was stopped, and we got him on board the hospital ship "Gascon," where I have just seen him before she sails for Alexandria. The doctors, however, tell me that mortification has set in in the limb which makes amputation essential, and they fear there is practically no chance of his being able to stand this. He was himself as cheery as could be expected, and said he hoped I would only put in a temporary command in his place as he quite meant to come back shortly. I told him I would rather have lost a whole brigade than him, and we certainly wanted him back to take over the Division. I cannot express at all how much I feel this, though in the circumstances in which we are placed with fighting daily, one cannot afford to have any such feelings. I have been very highly tried also today by the loss of one of my best and most devoted staff officers who has been with me for the last six years - Major Villiers Stewart, who was hit through the heart this morning with a piece of shrapnel.

I was most unlucky enough to get a bullet along the top of my head when in one of my trenches three days ago. Fortunately, it just escaped fracturing the skull so I am quite ~~all right~~.

In case you care to see it, I enclose a copy of the report I sent in to Sir Ian Hamilton on our landing. I ~~fear~~ that this or anything I can write is incapable of doing full justice to the achievement of the Australian soldiers, for the more I see every day

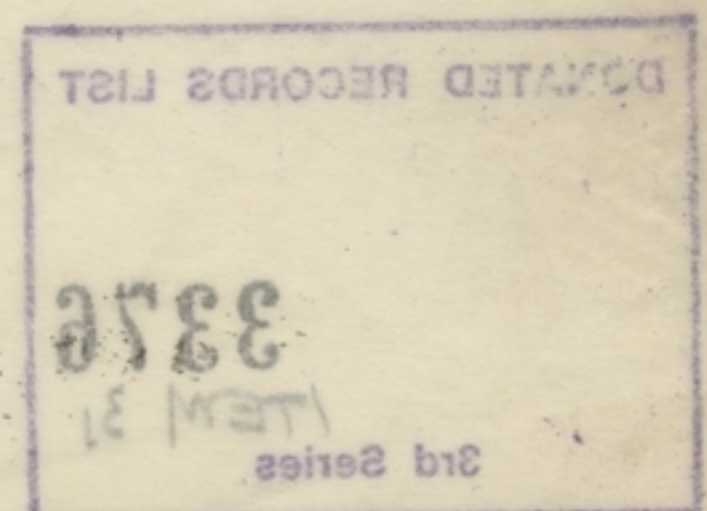
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of this difficult country we are in, the more do I admire their gallantry and dash in taking it. The Turks have been hard at it ever since in trying to turn us out, and at the present moment there are some 20,000 of them around us (my force consists at present of about 10,000 rifles). I do not think we have had a single half hour during the last three weeks without either rifle or shell fire, and at times, especially at night, the rifle fire becomes a continuous roar for a considerable time. We have, however, I fancy inflicted very heavy losses on them, reports from Constantinople admitting them as high as 60%, so I hope they have more respect for us.

My report to Sir Ian is to be followed by another one containing recommendations for awards for officers and men for gallantry, etc. The most prominent among these I had intended to put forward the name of Bridges, and I have just written to Sir Ian suggesting that he should, as a special case, recommend him for a "K.C.M.G." at once, to be given if necessary as a posthumous honour if he does not survive the next day or so. In case of his death at sea, I have arranged that the body shall be taken on and be buried at Alexandria, which I think would probably be in accordance with his wife's wishes. Mrs Bridges I do not know, but I will write to her as soon as I hear anything definite on arrival of the "Gascon" in Egypt. I am sorry that this should be a lugubrious letter, but one must have such feelings here occasionally when one sees good friends going, but it would never do to show them.

The men I am glad to say are all cheery and fit, and getting the most excellent rations which always counts for much.

Yours sincerely,



AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ARMY CORPS.

V
COPY.

Army Corps Headquarters

Anzac Cove, 20th May, 1915.

CABLEGRAM.

From:- Lieut-General Sir W. R. Birdwood,
K.C.S.I., C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O.,
General Officer Commanding,
Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.

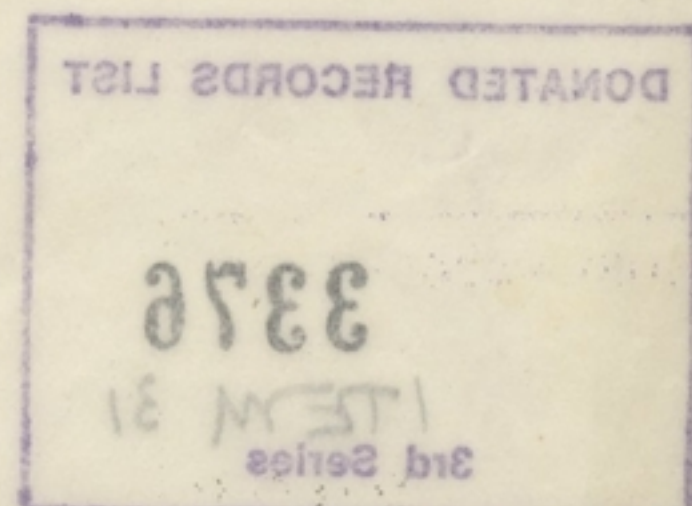
To :-His Excellency, the Governor-General
of AUSTRALIA.

It is with the deepest regret I have to announce the death on 19th instant of General Bridges who has proved himself the most gallant of soldiers and best of commanders. I am quite unable to express what his loss means to the Australian Division, which can never repay the debt it owes him for his untiring and unselfish labours which are responsible for the high state of organisation to which the Division had been brought in every detail.

The high ideals he placed before the boys trained at Duntroon and which he succeeded in attaining as far as my knowledge of those now serving with the Australian forces in the field is concerned, will I hope go down to the honor of his name as long as the Military history of Australia lasts.

Forwarded to :-

Australian Division,
New Zealand and Australian Division.



AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ARMY CORPS.

W

Copy.

Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

21st June, 1915.

My dear Sir Ronald,

I was on the point of posting my letter to you, when yours of the 12th of May has just come in, for which many thanks, and one or two points of which I may as well reply to.

I think I have already told you that the Infantry Brigadiers (McLaurin, McCay, MacLagan, and Monash) have fully justified their selections. I also told you how extremely sorry I was to have lost poor McLaurin. McCay was wounded when his Brigade was operating apart from my force, but I am glad to say he is now back again though still going rather lame. He is one of those who are so upset at Legge's appointment.

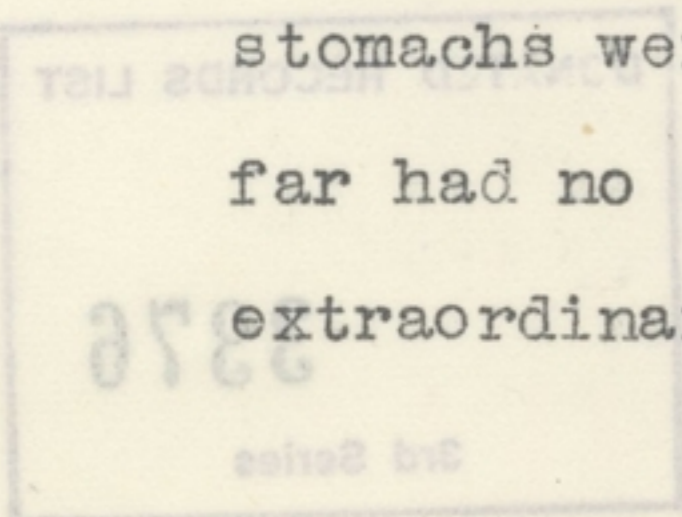
My mounted brigades (without their horses) have now all joined me. I asked that they might be sent from Egypt either by regiments or squadrons to be used as reinforcements to infantry brigades. I had two reasons in doing this; one, that I had no great confidence in the Brigadiers, and two, the fact that a number of small organizations does not tend to efficiency. The ordinary infantry brigade may roughly be taken to be 4,000 men, while a dismounted light horse brigade is only 1,500. To have four (including the one from New Zealand) such units to deal with separately is, as you can imagine, a great drawback. However, it was decided otherwise, and all brigades have joined me intact, so I am naturally making the best of them that I can, and so far I have had no trouble, for I must say all three Brigadiers have played up and are working most willingly. I have not so far called upon them to exercise any initiative, as I have absorbed their Brigades in sections of my line of trenches, which is the state we have been in since they arrived.

In the trenches the brigades have done excellently, and I find all regimental officers of the mounted brigades most keen in undertaking hazardous adventures, and shewing initiative generally. The promotions made from the ranks here will I trust be good ones, as Commanding Officers must now be in the position

to judge a man's qualifications while actual fighting is going on. If any of the senior or older officers have to go, I trust that it may be possible to invalid them without any unnecessary trouble.

You need of course have no anxiety about Australian officers being overlooked as far as honors in the field go, for in this they will be on precisely the same footing as all Imperial officers. Indeed, you will see that we have already been able to give some half dozen D.S.O's, Military Crosses, and a larger number of Distinguished Conduct Medals to our troops here, while I trust you may shortly see Howse given a "C.B." Others, too, will of course get that, and I hope higher decorations in due course, but up to date only very few of the higher rewards are being given. I think I told you I had asked that Bridges might be given a posthumous "K.C.M.G." and I am only delighted that this should have led to his receiving a "K.C.B" which is perhaps even better.

I have heard no complaints whatever about kit or clothing, and all articles worn out here are being replaced at once; in fact, the clothing we are receiving - I understand that it is, as a matter of fact, comes from England - is quite excellent. The breeches, etc., are all quite good enough for any officer to wear, and the men assure me they have never been better done in this respect, and perhaps especially in the boots. The same applies to the feeding - in fact, if one can say anything about it, it is that we get too much! Bacon, Ham, cheese, biscuits, beef, and jam, while here lately we have been getting fresh beef two and three times a week, and occasionally bread, the latter being baked on the Island of Imbros and sent across to us. I even hear on some sides that we get too much in the way of rations. Howse was telling me one day that he thought abdominal wounds did not do so well here as in South Africa, and when I asked him the reason, he said he thought it was possibly from the fact that the men's stomachs were practically always full! About rifles we have so far had no anxiety, though you will know as well as I do how extraordinarily improvident these men are. I am always at them



about it, for I find they are ready to throw away food, clothing, equipment, ammunition, and even rifles, which they may not want at the time, and leave lying about anywhere. By constant worrying they have improved a good deal in this respect, though it sometimes goes to my heart to see unnecessary waste. Having lost so heavily as we did at first start, it was necessary to get reinforcements over from Egypt earlier than we intended, and I am sorry to say I have heard many complaints about the great lack of training among the men of the 4th and 5th reinforcements.

I have been told that more stress was laid upon the training of the 5th and 6th Brigades as units than on that of the reinforcements. Whether this is the case or not I do not know, but so many of the Brigadiers and Commanding Officers have told me that they are in despair about the men they have received, that I feel I may as well mention it to you. They tell me they know nothing of the elements of musketry or of drill. I must say that this does not seem to be entirely carried out by my own experiences when talking to lately arrived men, as I have seldom come across one, who has not said he has not been through his full musketry course with the exception of the field practices. When I quote this to Brigadiers, I am told that they must have been put through their course very badly! However, it only remains for us to do our best to give them such training as we can while in a place like this, though it is very difficult, as you can hardly form up men anywhere without shrapnel firing being started on them. I have told them to train them in actual musketry by firing from our own trenches at the enemy's loopholes and sandbags, than which you can want nothing more practical.

I am glad to say that I hope I have made our whole surroundings here much safer by the erection of really big traverses across every path, and the cutting of deep covered ways through all spurs of the hills. Even then it is impossible to prevent casualties, though these have now been reduced from about 60 or 70 per day to a little over half a dozen. The men say they all feel far safer in the fire trenches than elsewhere, and this is quite the case, for during my daily visits to the

trenches, I find I am under shrapnel and bullet fire constantly, while once in the trench you only hear the bullets striking the parapet outside, quite harmlessly. It was while moving in rear of our line of trenches like this that poor Bridges was killed.

I find Sir Ian Hamilton a most charming Chief, though so far I have seen little or nothing of him, for I am here alone with this Army Corps, and he has only had time to come and see us once or twice for a few minutes each time. I hope, however, that he will come over for a day shortly, as I am most anxious to take him round a section of the trenches and show him the really wonderful work our men have done in this way. I will naturally not take him to bits which I consider dangerous, as I do not think that would be fair to him, though he would be the first person to want to go there if I would let him! We are most fortunate in having so many excellent miners, who have been working like tigers both at tunnelling and trenching. In one section we completed a whole length of trenches, complete with traverses, fire platforms, etc., all unground. You were able to walk along six feet high passages with about a foot of earth left on top. At the last moment, and during the night, the "lid" was taken off this, and the enemy were faced with a second row of entrenchments complete in every respect, and a good deal nearer to them than they had ever anticipated.

I understand that the main force operating down near Cape Helles have nothing like this, and that their trenches cannot in any way compare with ours. This possibly accounts for the fact that the Turks have now entirely given up attacking my two Divisions, and prefer instead to attack the other six at Cape Helles. Also, though, I think we really have established a complete moral superiority over them, which is partly due to a very clever invention of a man called Beach, who produced a periscopic rifle.

When we got here, we denuded the whole of our transports of their looking-glasses, and made up some 2,000 periscopes on our little beach. This man then made a very simple device of fastening one of these periscopes on to the butt of a rifle by

which the sites of the rifle are kept on the level of the upper mirror, while the firer sits comfortably down below the parapet looking through the lower mirror, and pulling the trigger by a wire. The result is the Turk only sees the muzzle of the rifle coming over the parapet without anything behind it to shoot at, and we understand from prisoners that he dislikes this intensely. The rifle is perfectly accurate, and as a result, the enemy's snipers have been completely dominated, and dare not show up anywhere. I was really very amused the other day when going round the trenches to see a man have three or four shots at a Turk who was digging. Each time he missed, the Turk deliberately signalled a "wash-out" over his parapet, but unfortunately for himself he showed his head shortly afterwards, and got a bullet through it. Almost in the same place, another Turk proceeded to signal a "wash-out" with a small flag, but putting his hand above the parapet to wave it, he got a bullet through it, and dropped his flag like a hot potato. I may explain that our trenches are as close in places as fifteen yards from the Turks' (it was in this near spot where I got a bullet through my head some time ago) but the place where these two shots were made on the trench mentioned, the two trenches are about 200 yards apart.

I am afraid I cannot see any near end to our undertakings here at present, for we are really only at the beginning of things, and if the political situation in the Balkan States remains unchanged, I think we shall have to get still further heavy reinforcements before we can hope to win through.

I cannot help holding Winston Churchill personally responsible (though I may be absolutely wrong in doing so) for what has happened, for I feel that he tried to rush the Navy through entirely off his own bat, and against all professional advice. Of course it does not do to say this here, but when I was first sent up here to reconnoitre in February, I at once wired Home most definitely, saying I felt sure the Navy could not do what had been asked of them, and the military operations to be undertaken would and must be of a serious nature. To justify what I say about the disastrous effects of the premature Naval action, I need only mention that at the end of February we were able to

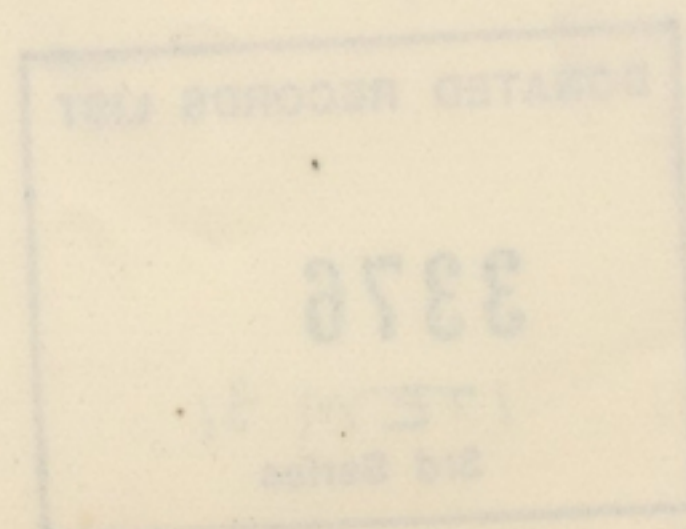
land 200 Marines at Cape Helles, and blow up 39 Turkish guns. It has now taken a whole Army Corps to effect a landing there with enormous losses, while a very large force is finding it extraordinarily difficult to make any headway.

Such points, however, are not for discussion here, where we all, as you so rightly say, work on the idea that it is all part of our scheme for defeating the Germans, and, as I have told my men, we are here making a big move to turn Germany's flank, while she is held in front by the British and French Armies. I believe there are some people who advocate the withdrawal of this whole force, so as to increase our strength in France. To my mind this would be absolutely disastrous, as it would completely discredit us throughout the whole Mohammedan world. It would probably bring Afghanistan and Persia into the field against us. The troops on the Indian Frontier would at once be up, while disaffections and risings would probably occur in India and Egypt. When saying goodbye to the Sultan before I left Cairo, I remember he was most effusive and almost affectionate in his farewell, and among other things said-"Though we could probably afford to lose anywhere else, yet before Constantinople it was an impossibility," and this is doubtless the case. We must therefore see this through absolutely to a finish until the Turks are beaten, and then I hope we shall be able to transfer our activities directly against the Germans, though exactly where that will even be it is hard to say at present.

Should Bulgaria or Roumania now join the Allies, things would at once be altered. An army of 50,000 Bulgars on the Bulair Lines would probably mean our completing operations in this peninsula in ten days time, as now that we have submarines operating in the Sea of Marmora (which entirely alters the whole situation) all Turkish supplies would be cut off, and they would have to fight to a finish or capitulate. I am urging Sir Ian to send strong reinforcements to where I am, rather than to the South, as from here with stronger forces I can hope to stretch across the peninsula, and get astride of Liman von Sanders' lines of communication. I fear this is a terribly long yarn I

have spun you, but I dare say you will not be sorry to get our news.

Yours very sincerely,



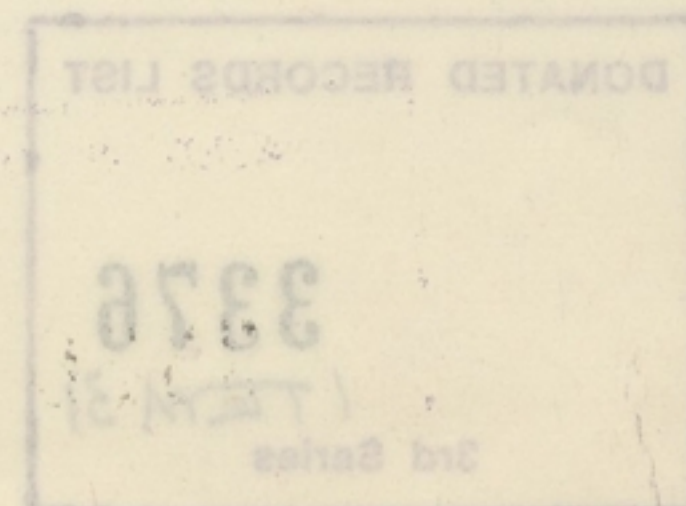
Cablegram.

Governor-General,
MELBOURNE.

15th August

Australian troops have again done splendidly in recent prolonged very heavy fighting. Charge of 1st Infantry Brigade and capture by them of enemy's strongly protected labyrinth of trenches was magnificent. The other infantry and Light Horse Brigades shewed most conspicuous bravery while work of Artillery throughout has been beyond praise AAA Among our fallen comrades all here deeply regret loss of Colonels Scobie 1st Battalion, E.S. Brown, 3rd Battalion, Miell, 9th ~~Regiment~~ and White 8th Light Horse, all of whom had proved themselves excellent commanding officers and can so ill be spared.

General Birdwood.



AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ARMY CORPS.

W

Mediterranean Expeditionary Force,

16th September, 1915.

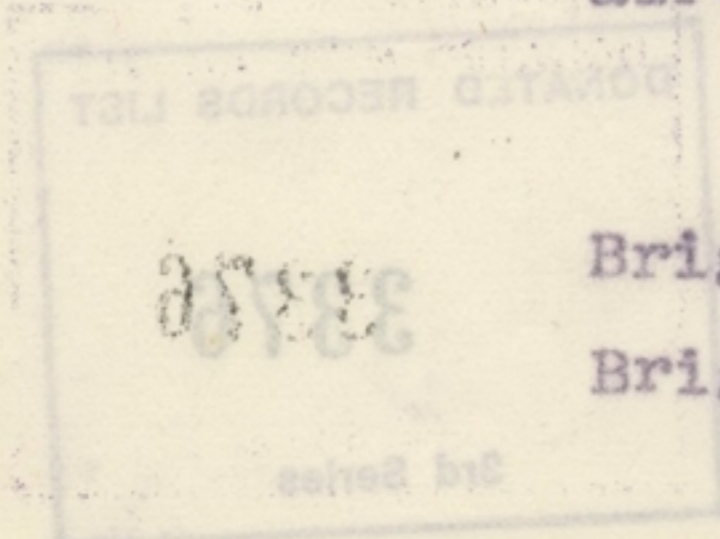
My dear Sir Ronald,

Many thanks for your long and interesting letter of the 4th August which I have just received.

We have had nothing beyond the ordinary daily scrapping, which takes place between our own and the enemy's positions, since I last wrote, and my energies have been rather concentrated on getting away the old hands, who so thoroughly deserve a rest, and replacing them by Legge's new Division which has just arrived.

When I last wrote, the 5th Brigade had arrived, and now the remainder of the Division has done so. You will probably have heard of the very uncomfortable experience which part of this force had when the "Southland" was torpedoed not very far from Lemnos. It is most fortunate that the casualties were as small as they were, though the death of Colonel Linton is much to be regretted. The troops on board all behaved in a most excellent and exemplary fashion, and I enclose a ^X copy of the special Army Corps Order which I published welcoming them to their old comrades here. I am indeed tremendously struck by them, and think it would be impossible to come across a more magnificent body of men throughout the world, and I feel sure that they will insist on living up to the high traditions, which have already been formed by the first Division.

Colonel Spencer Brown as you know lost his Brigade Command on the breaking up of the 4th Light Horse Brigade, and as Legge told me he thought very well of him,
even/



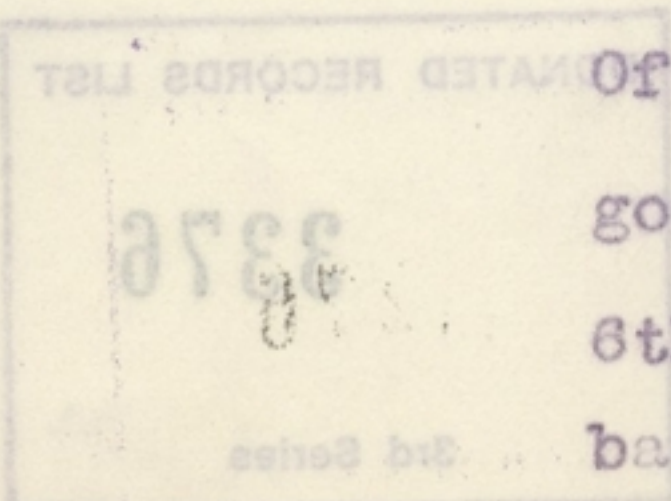
even though he is an oldish man, I have sent for him from Egypt to take Linton's place in the 6th Infantry Brigade, and expect him shortly.

I forget if I told you how I dealt with the 11th and 12th Light Horse regiments. These consisted of three New South Wales and three Queensland squadrons. It so happens that we have here three New South Wales and three Queensland regiments, so I have attached one squadron to each, (i.e. making a four squadron ^{or} of each) of these six regiments, viz- 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 9th regiments, while the 13th regiment has remained intact as a Divisional regiment to the 2nd Division. Colonels Grant and Abbott have been utilised to replace Colonels White and Miell in the 8th and 9th regiments.

I understand that this has given as much satisfaction as was possible, but of course noone likes to have his regiment broken up, and on going round all the trenches manned by these new squadrons two days ago, both officers and men assured me that they had settled down quite comfortably with their new corps, and were perfectly happy, as I felt sure would be the case.

The 5th Brigade having been here some little time under Holmes have I think now settled down comfortably, but I am sorry to say that the 18th battalion is already weak in numbers owing to the casualties they suffered soon after arrival - a matter which I mentioned to you in my last letter in connection with Colonel Chapman, whose resignation of the command has been accepted, and he will now proceed to Egypt en route to return to Australia.

I have not seen enough of the other Commanding Officers to form much of an opinion regarding them. On going through the trenches, however, the other day of the 6th Brigade I thought that Knox struck me favourably. His battalion is now holding the position known as "Lone Pine,"



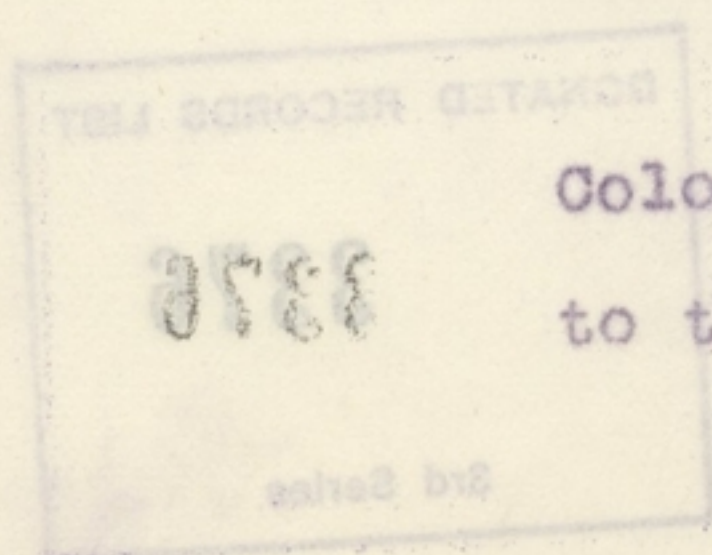
which we captured from the enemy, and which they still regard with jealous eyes and constantly attack. On going through the trenches soon after the new troops had taken them over, I was very pleased with the whole attitude of the men, who were desperately keen to shew their worth, and ready to take on any number of Turks - also quite agreeing that the original lot had thoroughly deserved the rest, and saying how glad they were to come along to ensure them getting this.

I found that Legge took exception to one of the Commanding Officers of this Brigade, and was anxious to get rid of him and send him to Egypt. After seeing him, however, I told him I could not feel that from what I saw of the officer concerned he would be justified in doing this, as, as far as I could see at present, he did not appear to be inferior to other Commanding Officers we have had, and was doing his work keenly and I thought well, considering how new he was to it. Legge agreed that this was the case, but told me that owing to rather a curious kink in character and lawyer-like disposition, he was not likely to make a good Commanding Officer. I said that this perhaps might prove to be the case, but as long as the man was working energetically and doing his best, it was only right he should be given a full chance, as long as he did not seem to endanger the safety of his men or regiment, and on this Legge at once decided to drop his proposal.

If I may say so, I think he is glad to have me to lean on in such matters, and if for this reason only welcomes my being ^{the} central authority of the different Australian units regarding such matters of promotions, supersession, etc.

Yesterday I went round the new 7th Brigade under Colonel Burston. This quite temporarily I have had to attach to the New Zealand Division in place of Monash's 4th Brigade, ^{Some New Zealanders}

which/

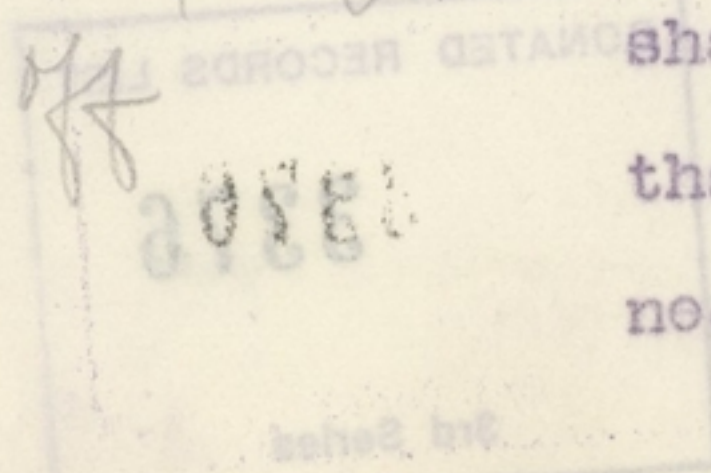


which has been sent off to rest - a rest which is most thoroughly deserved. I found Colonel Burston evidently most anxious to do his best, but I am afraid that I rather came to the conclusion that he was on the old side to be of full use as a Brigadier, and it seems hardly possible that he can possess the receptive qualities so necessary in the, what must be to him, new class of fighting with which he is now faced. I have nothing to say against his activity, and he came along climbing the steep hill like a young man.

We went round Collett's 28th battalion of West Australians, who are holding a very difficult and most important position high up on the spurs under Chumuk Bair. I am afraid I was a little disheartened at what I saw there - but I should not have been, as I know how extraordinarily difficult it is for new troops to get into the swing at all of this work. The lack however of experienced officers and N.C.O's was very visible, and I realised how necessary it was to begin again almost at the beginning to try and do what we could to teach and bring the new lot up to the standard of the old. I of course have not put the new soldiers in entirely by themselves, for some three hundred of the old Brigade ^{& New Zealanders} have been left to look after them and shew them the way round, and these will get their rest later on.

However, even then I had to spend some six hours in the trenches myself trying to explain to the Brigadier, Commanding Officers and others, of the hundred and one important things that have to be looked for at every corner, e.g. the necessity of officers constantly being in the trenches - men having their bayonets fixed ready for any sudden attack - methods of getting supports up quickly in case of such an attack - the way to deal with enemy's sharpshooters - the necessity of keeping trenches clear so that men can pass through them quickly - the very essential necessity of looking after all sanitary arrangements very thoroughly/

The Turkish
trenches are
only 50 yds



thoroughly, etc., etc. I found that none of them knew about such things, though they had been shewn them by the outgoing troops. With, however, so many details to be mastered, it is quite natural that the fact of being told about details does not mean that they are taken in and acted on, and experience alone will get them right. I am thankful, however, that for their first few days and nights here the Turks left them alone, as I should have been very apprehensive had they been attacked suddenly in anything like large numbers, for they were obviously unprepared even to reinforce their fighting line with anything like rapidity. However, this will all shake down, and as I say I am full of admiration for the wonderfully fine men you have sent, and almost every man I have met and stopped to speak to is full of good cheer and confidence and happy to be here, which is as it should be.

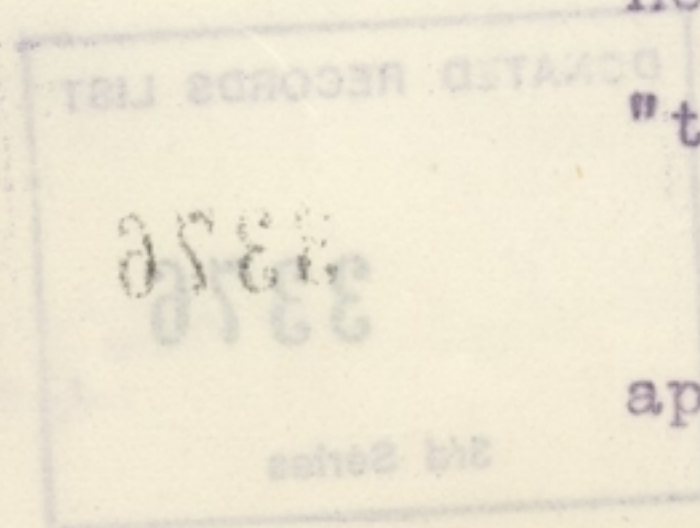
Legge is doing all right, and I have hopes that he will continue to do so, especially as he is kind enough to come down and consult me before he takes action in matters which require consideration.

It is a great pity he does not attempt to make himself more acceptable to all with whom he comes in touch, for though, as I told you, Sir John Maxwell had written from Egypt saying he had found him tremendously improved for his first stay here, yet later on he told me he found him rather difficult, which I think was partly due to his "cocksure" manner, which rather gives the idea that he is come to put everything right.

You may be sure I will do my best to see him through if difficulties arise, but I have every hope that he will not want any "seeing through," but will prove himself "the right man in the right place."

As regards the possibility of Chauvel's appointment to the 1st Division, I enclose for your

information/



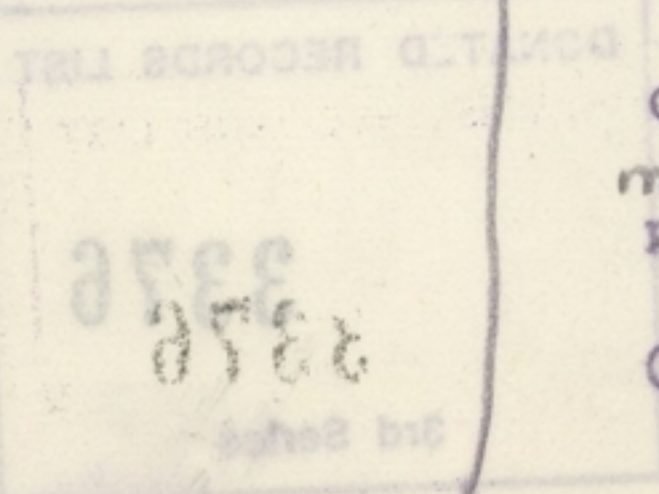
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information a copy of the telegram I sent on the subject when asked for my opinion, and I hope that you may perhaps agree with this. I may say that I like Chauvel very much indeed, for he is a most charming and courteous gentleman, who is always anxious to do his best. I am sorry to say, however, that he often seems to take an unnecessary pessimistic view of things, and more than once has rather annoyed me at telling me that all was not right in his particular section of the defences, when I naturally told him that if it was not so, it was up to him to immediately take steps to see that things were right instead of sitting still and doing nothing. Also, he has not really sufficient decision of character to carry confidence, though it is possible he might rise to the occasion if holding an independent command like a Division. General Walker, who is now commanding the 1st Division, is I think generally regarded with much confidence by the officers here, and I certainly feel far happier knowing that he commands that Division, than I should be if Chauvel were doing so.

From a letter I have just received from Sir Ian Hamilton, I gather that a precis of my telegram as well as one of his on the same subject was sent to the Colonial Office for transmission to you, and your reply has been forwarded on to us here. This begins with the words "Hamilton's dispatch re Australian Divisional appointments", and ends with the sentence "If the General Officer Commanding were to cable here promptly selections for superior commands including colonelcies, it would tend to smooth relations."

The War Office has taken it that you mean that Hamilton should act as suggested in your reply, and he ~~has~~ consequently asked me to give him the information so that he ~~may~~ ^{might} do so. Now I rather gather that by "General Officer Commanding" you mean me, and that what you would like me to

do/



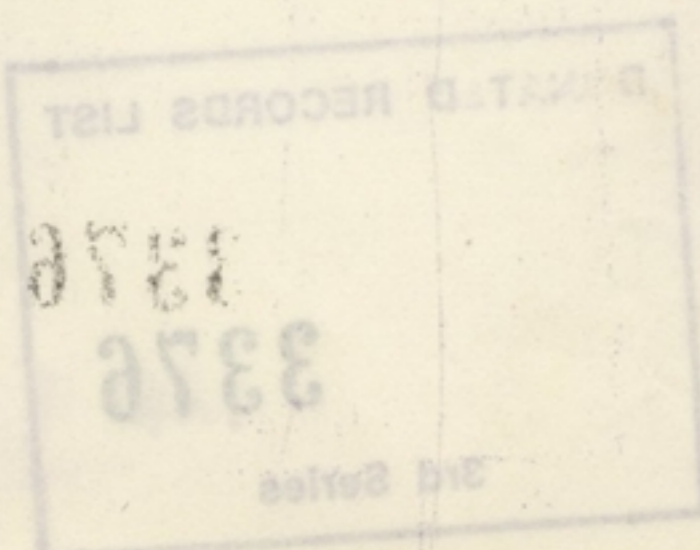
do is to telegraph to you the names of officers, who may be selected by Divisional Generals, and approved of by me, for the commands of regiments and brigades, for confirmation in the ordinary course as laid down in Order in Council. Any appointment to a Divisional Command would of course naturally be submitted to you for approval.

Sir Ian agrees with me that this is really what you wish, and I will therefore of course see that this information is given to you from time to time. Your Defence Minister sent me a telegram some time ago asking for this information, and I am sorry to say it has taken a terribly long time to send him a reply (indeed, this has not yet been done) owing to the fact of my having had to send to Egypt for particulars, and though you will hardly believe it, it has sometimes recently actually taken two months for letters to pass between here and there.

While talking on the subject of promotions in the Australian Imperial Force, I think your Defence Minister will certainly like to see a copy of the correspondence (marked "C") which I enclose, giving Legge's proposals for publishing Orders shewing all concerned how the question of promotions in the Australian Imperial Force is dealt with. This will I think shew you what stress he lays on my looking after such matters.

I am so glad to hear your view about reinforcements, with which as you know I so thoroughly agree. The proposal that fresh units should come out with temporary officers and non-commissioned officers is very attractive in ways, and might

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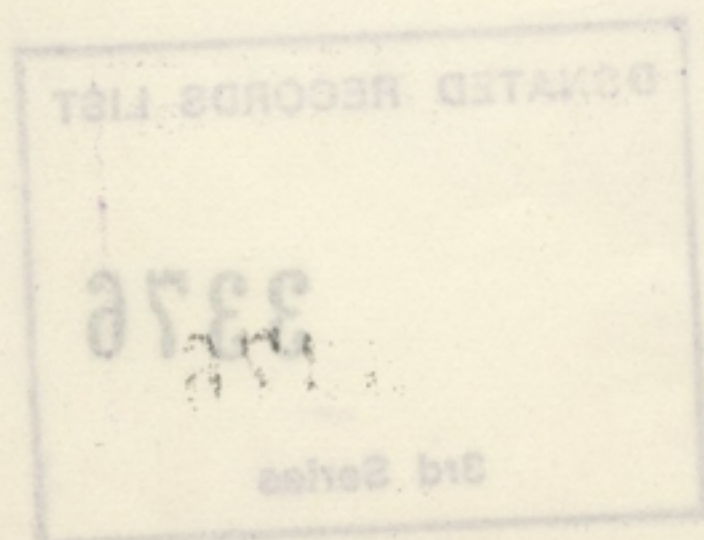


I think well be dealt with to some extent, as undoubtedly many can well be selected among the men we have had out here all these months, as company leaders, serjeants, etc., and I am always so glad when those who have done well are given such opportunities not only of being rewarded but of shewing what they can make of higher positions, knowing as I do that a good deal of grumbling has often been caused by the old hands finding that among the new-comers are some, who were rejected when the former were originally taken, and who have now come out in superior positions. - but as you say I would give much to be able to talk to you about all these matters instead of having to write.

I really do think our boys are getting less careless now in the care of things, and I find that regular sweeps up are made of all discarded ammunition, equipment, etc., and everything is brought in religiously to the various stores for redistribution, while the cleanliness of our trenches is remarked on by everyone.

The following is an extract from a letter I have just received from an officer in a very responsible position, who was recently sent out here by the War Office. He says - "I have seen English, French, Belgian and German "trenches in France, as well as those at Helles, but I "have never seen anything to approach those at 'Anzac.'" A high compliment to the Australians that, and entirely due to themselves, and the magnificent lot of men, who have so determinedly worked with head and hands to make their trenches as perfect as possible.

We are evidently destined to go down to posterity both geographically as well as in history, for I am sure that "Anzac" will have to appear on future maps! The origin of the word is that, when I was asked to select a code word as our telegraphic address in Egypt, I hit upon/



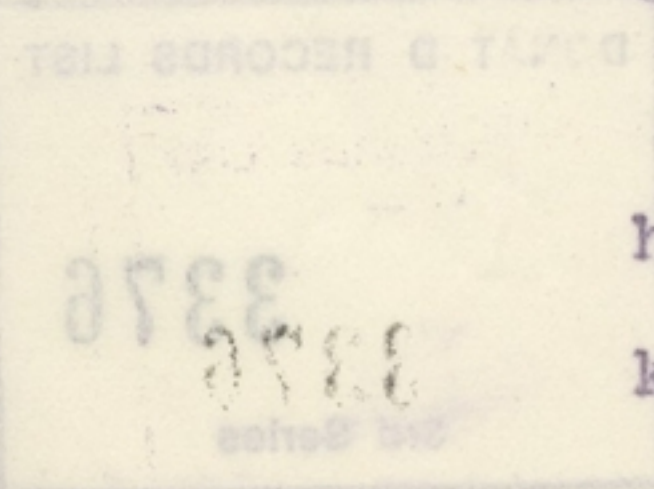
upon "Anzac", and when we landed here, and I was asked to give a name to the little bay in which we first set foot, I called it "Anzac Cove," and as such I hope it may remain.

I quite agree that something substantial should be done for Beach as the inventor of our periscopic rifle, for we still do much good work with it.

Without the periscope though, it is wonderful the good work some of the boys have done, and I have one man in the 2nd Light Horse Brigade whose performance I am always rather ashamed to quote, as I feel no one will believe it. He is I understand a half-breed (Chinese) called Sing, who has taken up a sniper's post for himself which he absolutely refuses to leave. Men sit beside him with a telescope taking it in turns, and with this they keep watching the enemy's loopholes (which are about 150 yards off) and all possible corners. As soon as a Turk is sighted anywhere, Sing is warned and gets his rifle ready and apparently never misses, for I am assured he has now got a total of 121, and that he is now beginning to claim that the Turks are a bit fighting shy of that corner! As I go round the trenches I tell all the other boys about this, and say if only they will each of them account for one half of Sing's score, we shall be in Constantinople in another week!

We are all here looking forward most anxiously to news from the West, where we understand a big movement is likely to be made almost immediately by ourselves and the French. So far we have only heard of an intense bombardment extending over many days, and we are hoping for good news ere long.

I hear that Winston Churchill told a friend of his that Lord K. had been one of the few people who had been kind to him after his fall. He is one of those men, who
comes/



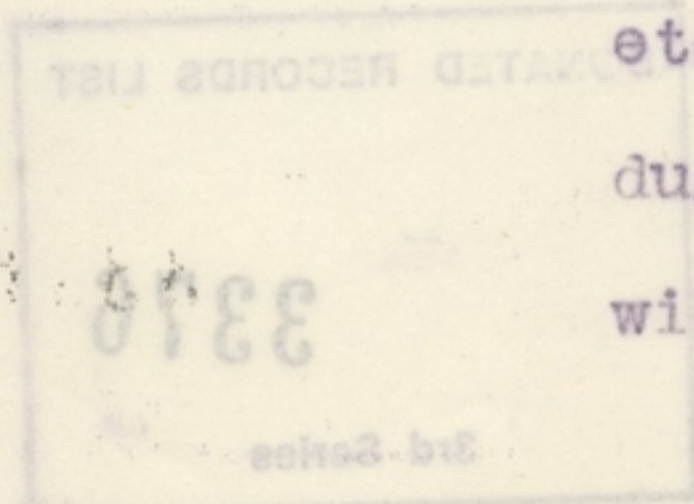
comes bobbing up however far he may have fallen, but it must take a man a long time to live down his premature attack on the Dardanelles - Antwerp - Ulster, and I might add the raising of the Naval Division, which I cannot help regarding as a most scandalous waste of life and money. The officers and men composing it should have gone to the Navy as sailors, and the Army as soldiers, instead of being mixed up in a hybrid force as they are.

I forget if I told you that I had lost my A.D.C., such a nice young boy called Onslow, who was killed by a shell here one night when sleeping within a yard or two of me. Since then I have had my table broken by another shell, but I am glad to say a minute or two after I had left it, so you see we still have lots of excitement, though now that we have spread out over a very much bigger area than before, life is more bearable, as bullets and shells do not concentrate into such a small piece, as *formerly* when behind ~~the~~ ^{the} trenches, which one had to traverse daily to get into them. *trenches*

I am at present working hard to see what best arrangements we can make for the comfort of the troops, hospitals, etc., in the ^{possibly} face of our having to spend a winter here. This is ^a rather horrible thing to have to contemplate, but still we may have to do it, and with very few local resources, I am afraid one cannot hope to be too comfortable, especially as we must of necessity be cut off for many days at a time from the outside world owing to the severe weather we are sure to have, and the want of of anything like a harbour.

I am getting in as much corrugated iron, wood etc., as can be sent us, and will try to fix up glorified dugouts as huts for the men up every ravine, where they will be as safe as possible from shell fire. I am trying

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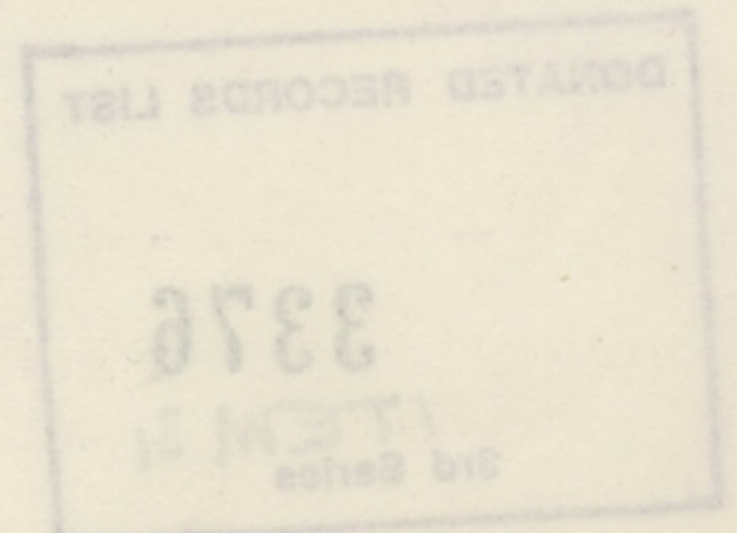


to get brasiers and stoves out also, as I am rather afraid of what effect all the combined damp and cold will have on the men, who come from the drier parts of Australia.

Water too will be a difficulty. I am getting every tank I can lay hands on ashore so as to build up a reserve, but I can hardly hope to get any more than say a week's supply for the whole force, though I am reducing animals to an absolute minimum, and will practically only have such mules as are necessary for transport purposes left. There will of course be lots of rain which will fill up our wells, but as practically every valley in the place has had so many dead buried in it, the doctors tell us we shall be unable to use any local water - I have, however, so often in India had to get on on water that is said to be hopeless and have survived, that I have no doubt we shall be able to do the same thing here if necessity drives.

With my kindest regards.

Yours very sincerely,



AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ARMY CORPS.

W

Mediterranean Expeditionary Force,

3rd October, 1915.

My dear Sir Ronald,

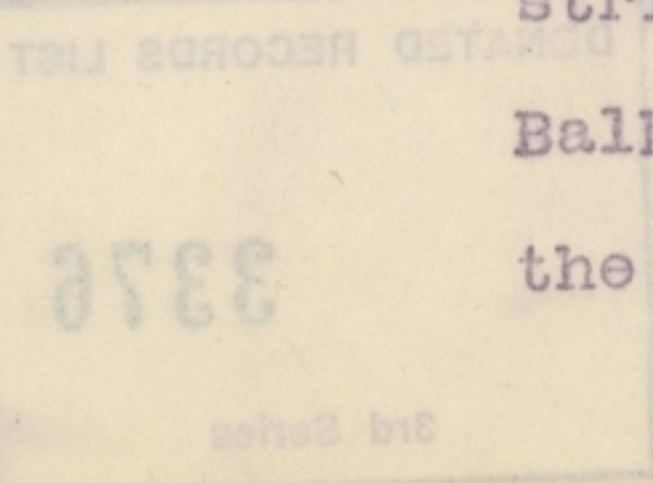
Many thanks for yours of the 23rd August - received yesterday.

Things here are very quiet at present, and we are rather primarily engaged in watching the Balkan situation. I much fear that German blandishments have succeeded in capturing Bulgaria, and it looks as if it might only be a matter of days for the Bulgarian Army to take Serbia in rear. When ordering mobilisation Bulgaria curiously enough seemed to think that neither Greece nor Roumania would follow suit. Greece, however, I imagine is bound by all sacred ties to support Serbia if attacked by Bulgaria, but even though Greece has responded by mobilising, I am afraid that Bulgaria will still decide to come in on what we consider to be the wrong side. What Roumania will do still remains to be seen, but I imagine she will continue to sit successfully upon her fence for some little time yet.

With this prospect of finding Bulgaria against us in the near future, it behoves us to be rather cautious in our movements, as it is always possible we may have to send men from here, while at the same time we may expect to be heavily attacked ourselves if Turkey has any alliance with Bulgaria.

From such papers as I have seen, it certainly strikes one as if things had been bungled most terribly in the Balkan States. More than once we seemed almost to have had the ball at our feet, which only wanted a small kick to bring

Roumania/



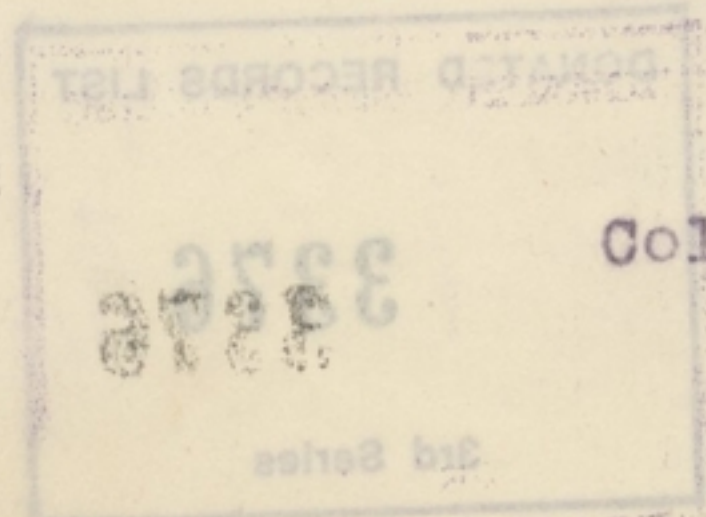
Roumania, Bulgaria and Greece all rolling along on to our side. The opportunity however seems to have been lost more than once, and I fear it may not come again - however, I am drifting into politics which is a terribly dangerous maelstrom.

Legge has now settled down here with his 2nd Division, and so far is doing quite all right, and I trust will continue to do so. He is full of energy and ideas, which I am always so glad to see, as I find so many men are content to sit down and be quite happy doing nothing.

Major Griffiths has taken over as Military Secretary to me, and will I trust be helpful in all correspondence connected with Australian appointments and promotions. Chauvel I am glad to say is keeping very fit and doing well in command of his Light Horse Brigade. Rylie of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade I am sorry to say got a shrapnel bullet in the neck a few days ago, but fortunately it missed doing much harm, though I understand it went very near the main vein. I saw him board the hospital ship quite cheery and hoping to be back very soon when the bullet has been extracted.

Hughes of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade has been invalided, and I very much doubt if he will be able to return. I did not see him before he left, as he was evacuated before I had heard of his illness, but I am told he looked very run down and weak, so I doubt if at his age he will be able to return. Antill is officiating in command of that Brigade, while Cox, of the 6th Light Horse, is officiating for Rylie.

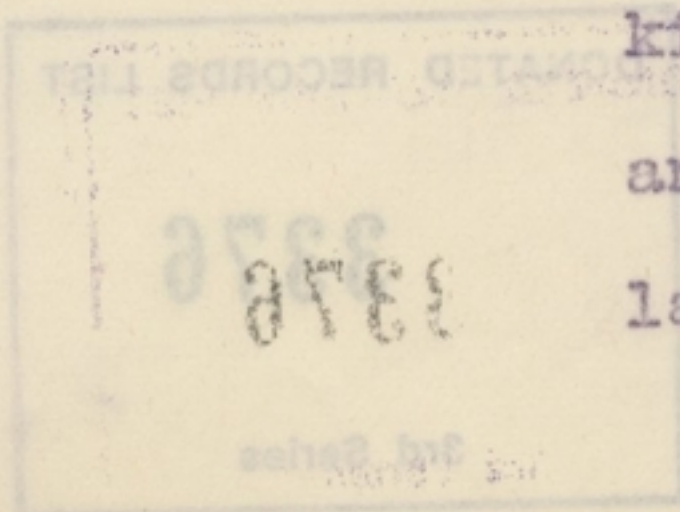
I am sorry to say I am much doubting if either Colonels Burston or Spencer Brown will be up to carrying
on/



on Brigade commands long, as the life is almost too strenuous for men at their age.

With the arrival of Legge's Division I am glad to say I found it possible to give a really good and so thoroughly well deserved rest to the troops who originally landed with us, and at present I have the 1st and 2nd ^{24th} Infantry Brigades resting at Mudros. I hope it will be possible to give them each about six weeks' complete rest, and with I sincerely trust access to canteen stores and malt liquors - the latter under strict regimental supervision. When these return, the 3rd Brigade will take their place, and I am hoping that we are going to be given permanent accommodation for about 3,000 men at Mudros, so that all troops in turn will be able to get their rest. A large camp of this sort wants a permanent Brigadier to look after it, and I am rather coming to the conclusion that Burston would be employed to the greatest advantage in charge there and his place taken in command of the Brigade by a younger man. I have not spoken to him about this myself yet, but I much hope he may see it in the same light.

Unfortunately, we have had such extraordinarily bad luck with our senior officers that the difficulty of fixing up these higher commands is great. Those who arrived with the 2nd Division have not been long enough in the field to be tested in any way, but I had much hoped we should have been able to find Brigadiers from among the commanding officers of the first four Brigades - and so we should have been able to do but for the heavy casualties. Braund, Scobie, ^{and} Brown, Onslow Thompson would all have done but have been killed, while Owen, McNaughton, Wanliss, McNicoll, Bolton and Smith have been invalided. This still left Bennett, late 3rd and now commanding 1st Battalion, and Elliott, of the/



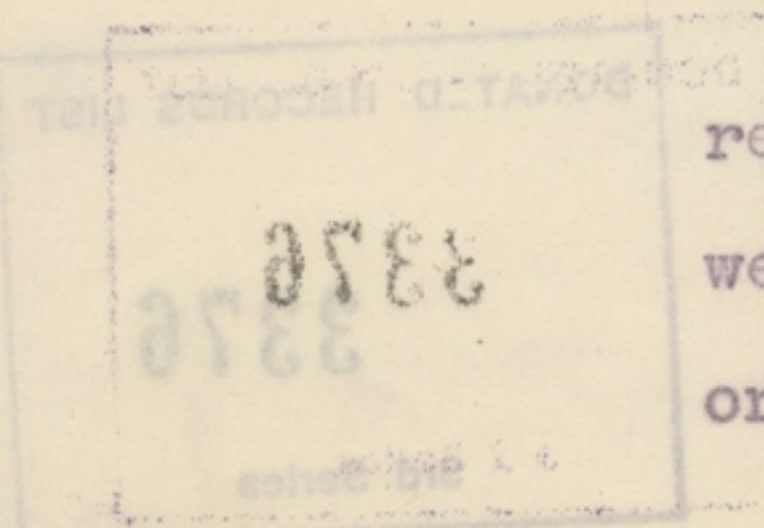
the 7th Battalion, available, and I had hoped that they would have come forward for the first two vacant Brigades. Now, however, they in turn have been invalided, and I am left with practically none for the time being, though I am rather hoping that possible Colonel Brand, who now commands the 8th vice Bolton, may do.

Among artillery officers Colonels G. J. Johnston and Rosenthal have done very well, as indeed has Hobbs, who is always most painstaking and full of work. Johnston I think is a man who might well be considered to command an Infantry Brigade, which would give him far more scope than he has in command of his three batteries. A few years ago such a thing might have been looked upon askance, but now-a-days cavalry and artillery officers are being given infantry commands freely, for more especially once we get down to this trench warfare a real live man full of commonsense and go is what is wanted, and Johnston I think has these attributes.

As I think I told you before I would far rather see an Australian officer put in to command a Brigade if one is available and really suitable, but when this is not the case we must go outside.

I have just had a letter from Hamilton asking me to let him know about Legge and about senior officers generally, and I presume he will pass this on to you, as he is probably replying to the letter which you told me you wrote him about our keeping you informed promptly as to selections for superior commands etc., and about the command of the Australian Divisions.

You are indeed doing wonders in the way of recruiting, which reflects not only so extraordinarily well on the keenness of the men to serve, but on the organization required for training and despatching them here.



New Zealand I fear is in the same difficulty as you are regarding rifles, but I much hope that the War Office may be able to help in the course of the next month or so, as I imagine the munitions and arms factories will soon be working to their full extent.

I am afraid you are right in mentioning the difficulties in transport service for wounded men to Egypt. The rush at first was of course perfectly appalling, and so far exceeded anything anticipated that I fear complete arrangements had not been made, though personally I know little about this, as once I evacuate a man from the shore here to the hospital ship I lose I am sorry to say all sight of him, and have the greatest difficulty in ascertaining whether he has gone to Egypt, Malta, England, or Australia.

I am afraid I am not altogether personally satisfied with our medical arrangements, and I have just sent Howse to see Surgeon-General Babbie to discuss the matter. I gather that some of our young Australian medical officers are very inexperienced and hardly know how to deal with men as they should. I wanted to send Howse down to Egypt to look into this, but you will know as well as I do what extraordinarily sensitive people doctors always are, and I am afraid they may have thought I wanted to interfere with their doings there, so my proposal has not been welcomed, but this is quite between ourselves, and I hope that things are now right.

Cyprus was I believe at one time thought of as a possible place for the wounded, but I understand that the whole of the belt close to the shore is terribly mosquito infected, while there were little or no facilities for the very difficult hill transportation, which would have been
necessary/

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necessary to get the men up to a decent climate and free of the mosquito zone - however, with you I have often thought it would have been a good place for base hospitals.

I so much wish those 500 regular artillery men had been able to come here, as they would have been most welcome. Without them the Australian artillery have done magnificently, but what with sickness and casualties we have often been very hard put for men, while we have had from time to time to man additional guns such as two 6" howitzers and a 4.7" naval gun etc. which I still have here manned by Australians.

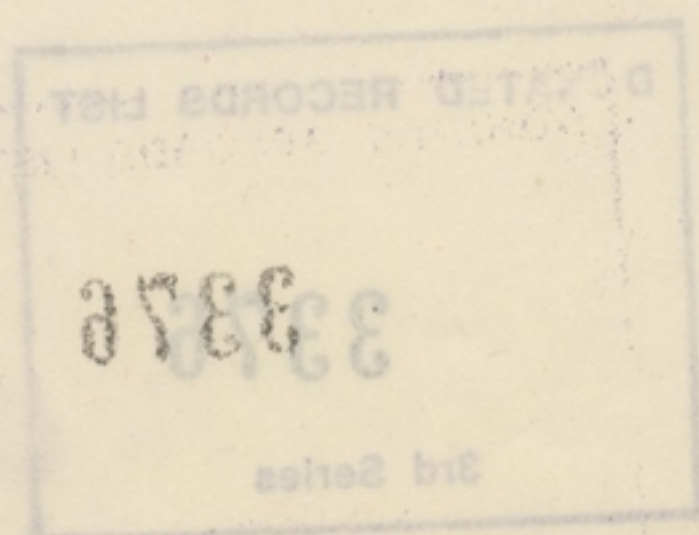
I am afraid this is a stupid letter, but I have no news.

With kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,

(S'gd) W. R. Birdwood.

I have been seeing a bit more of the new 2nd Division the last few days. Holmes, Paton of 25th Battalion and Watson of 24th Battalion, all impress me favourably. The former should I hope prove himself suitable for a Divisional Command should another vacancy occur, while if Burston should not be able to remain on in command of his Brigade, I hope that Paton may perhaps prove a suitable successor to him, while if Watson comes on well, he also might I hope develop into a Brigade Commander in due course.



AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ARMY CORPS.

W

Mediterranean Expeditionary Force,
12th October, 1915.

My dear Sir Ronald,

Many thanks for yours of the 31st August - just received in what I am glad to say was a very large Australian mail for the men.

The mails here are certainly most enormously appreciated, and I always see the cheeriest of faces when I am going round the trenches on a mail day. I always chaff the boys about their own letter writing, telling them if they do not write their mothers and best girls write to me for information about them, and as I have no wish to be overwhelmed with complete mail bags from Australia, I always insist it is one of their duties to write weekly, while at the same time I point out that they are very much luckier in this respect than our troops in France, where I understand soldiers are restricted to the sending of about one postcard only either every week or every fortnight. It often happens, as a matter of fact, that want of paper and envelopes makes writing difficult, but this generally rights itself rapidly by supplies sent from Egypt, either by the Y.M.C.A. or perhaps some of our chaplains who are there.

The men occasionally complain to me they have not had letters for a long time, but I really feel one can never blame the Postal Department very much, who must be tremendously hard-worked, and who do their best. In spite of this I must say the mails to say the least of it

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John S. B. are/

are erratic, for I think, as I told you before, it has more than once taken me two months to get letters from Egypt, while I frequently receive letters from Home which have taken four to five weeks, and in the meantime others have been received which have come across in a fortnight.

Sir Ian Hamilton has been over here today and seen some of Legge's troops for the first time. He could not help being pleased with them, as their work (such as they are called on to do in the trench line) has been excellent.

Major Fitzgerald, who is officiating in command of the battalion he saw (20th) strikes me as an excellent officer, who will I am sure turn out well.

I had a letter from McCay the other day from England telling me he hoped the operation on his leg had been quite successful, and that after a visit to Australia he felt confident of being able to return to us. I hope he will be able to do this, as he undoubtedly proved himself a good Brigadier in the field. I know that he is unpopular and, as a matter of fact, during the early days of our training in Egypt, Bridges once or twice came and spoke to me about the advisability of relieving him of his Brigade command, chiefly owing to the fact that he apparently wished to regard all orders from the point of view of the lawyer and to argue about them. This I am glad to say he quite got over, and I know that Bridges was thoroughly satisfied with him before his death. He certainly writes to me in the most loyal spirit now with every determination (and he is a man of determination) to do his best when he can come back. I have told him it is of course too far ahead to see exactly what position to which he will be able to return, but he may be quite sure his interests will not be overlooked.

Further/

Further vacancies will one cannot help regretting have certainly occurred by then, and he may drop in for a Brigade or Divisional command, as possibly a 3rd Australian Division may be in the field by then.

MacLagan I am sorry to say has had to be invalided to England, and his nerves seem to be a good deal shaken. I trust however that he will be able to return here and take over his Brigade again in due course. In the meantime I have put Colonel G. J. Johnston in command of his Brigade. I understand you are sending out a certain number of Artillery Brigades for Legge's Division, and when these come Johnston might be transferred to the Divisional Artillery command, by which time MacLagan may be back again. I have just wired asking for details about this artillery, as it will be a convenience to know what to expect. Pending its arrival I am giving Legge the 1st Artillery Brigade and the new 5" howitzer battery, which should be over here from Egypt very soon.

I am glad to hear you have some promising new Brigadiers, and I have heard here that Colonel Tivey is quite good.

I so thoroughly agree with all you say about the Australian character, and have a real affection for all the men with me here now. Our standard of discipline is I fancy different from that of any other Army Corps in the service, but I do not think it is any the worse for that. In Egypt, when we were doing much more regular soldiering the men had got into the custom of almost invariably saluting. Here, where we are on very much more irregular lines - where clothing is to say the least of it irregular - where trenches are very narrow and, moreover, when one meets the men at all sorts of odd turns at work of all kinds, the saluting/

saluting of officers has become the exception and not the rule. This I suppose is regarded by some as a great want of discipline, but in our men here I can never for a moment regard it as such, and I judge of their discipline by their general demeanour and spirit, both of which are all one can wish for. I never find the men anything but entirely respectful when I go round the trenches - always glad to see one and pass the time of day in a respectful, friendly and intelligent manner. I was quite pleased when going round and stopping to talk to a man, who is evidently a recent arrival with the last reinforcements, and who consequently did not know me by sight. After talking to him for a few moments it evidently dawned upon him who I was, when he jumped up and said, "Are you General Birdwood?" When I acknowledged that I was, he at once stepped up and shook hands saying he was very glad to meet me, as I was him, and it is in that spirit which our discipline here is a good deal run.

I am rather amused at your referring to the amount of "inquiries" made by politicians, for the Base Depot in Alexandria has just informed us that the number of inquiries they receive by telegram about the men is about ten times as much as that of the whole of the rest of the force put together, and this I can quite believe, as people in England do not seem to think it necessary to go to the length in this respect that the Australians do.

The labor situation in England is indeed absolutely deplorable, and strikes me as undoubtedly the weakest point in the Empire at present. I imagine it must be on account of this that the Ministers hesitate about adopting universal service, and it makes one mad with rage to think that we

should/

should have large bodies of men, who are not prepared to do everything in their power for the sake of the Country at the present juncture. Much as one cannot help admiring Lloyd George's energy and courage at the present moment, one cannot help feeling that he is responsible by his speeches in past years for a good deal of the "class" bitterness in England at present, though I do fully believe that when he spoke in the way he did, he was probably at the time drunk with his own eloquence.

The Balkan situation still seems entirely in the melting pot, and I fancy that the Government at Home must be in a terrible state of anxiety. However, Greece has now apparently definitely asked us and the French to land troops at Salonika, which looks as if she at all events must have definitely made up her mind to fight on our side if she comes in at all, while the knowledge of this may prevent Bulgaria coming in against us. One of the most hopeful signs that I have seen so far is the desertion of 4,000 Bulgarians rather than fight against Russia. This is exactly what I have always hoped might happen, as I know the nation and army are entirely pro-Russian and anti-German, and if such action should spread throughout the army, it might well be beyond the powers of the King and General Staff to get them to fight for Germany, in which case I shall not be at all surprised to see a collapse take place in Turkey, as I know how entirely the Turks are now relying on German and Bulgarian aid if only in the matter of ammunition and rifles. They are certainly getting short of the latter, while the Bulgarians have a large stock of Mausers, which they took from the Turks in the last war, and which they have held up ever since.

We/

We have a fair amount of aircraft, as have the Germans, and it is always a state of wondering what it is hovering above us, for as often as not the buzz of the propellers is followed by the dropping of bombs among us, and more recently by the playing of a maxim from up above. However, it is extraordinary what very little harm they have done in this manner, while I hope that our aeroplanes have done them a considerable amount of damage.

I am sorry to say that our sickness still continues considerable, and the actual evacuations from my Army Corps (which now includes a Territorial Division) are between three and four hundred daily, while I still have the 1st, 2nd and 4th Brigades/and the New Zealand Brigade resting at Mudros. The climate is absolutely perfect, and every day I hope that the sickness will cease and that we shall begin to get back those who were invalided some time ago, but neither hope seems to be near accomplishment. Instead, therefore, of having a really strong force with me, I have still a comparatively speaking weak one, with which it is hardly possible to contemplate doing anything very heroic even if that was our present role. Personally I cannot help thinking that the doctors send men unnecessarily to England and possibly to Australia when they might well be returning to us here, but that is a matter in which we are never allowed a say of any sort, though I have done my best to bring it to notice by frequent representations on the subject.

Your story about Roseberry at Windsor is certainly most amusing, and had made me laugh a good deal. I remember hearing much the same about the Prime Minister from someone who happened to travel back to town with him after/

after his first teetotal dinner at Windsor, when I understand his language was very forcible. Here, I am thankful to say we have practically no option but to follow suit, and I fancy I made myself quite unpopular by refusing to allow inordinate rations of rum to the troops. I found this was being allowed by Divisional Generals frequently, so I took the issue of it into my own hands, and now only allow it when I think it is really wanted, viz- after some extraordinarily heavy work, or when the men have got very damp and chilled. Even then I think coffee or cocoa is very much preferable, and I have just been able to arrange that men will always be able to get the latter as an alternative during the winter, and I much hope they will take advantage of this, as though rum temporarily raises the temperature, yet this undoubtedly falls lower again after the effects have worn off. I may say I am not by any means a rabid teetotaller, but I so fully realise the disastrous effects which drink can have on the men, though I also realise that drink in moderation can do no harm, and I have made every effort to try and get good beer and especially stout issued to our men who are now resting at Mudros, for I feel sure it would do much to pick them up. I was very amused on asking a man who has just come back from there yesterday if he got his beer, for I had had a very large consignment brought up from Egypt, which I hoped would have gone round. His answer was - "Yes! They gave me a glass one day and a "bottle of sodawater the next day to square it up;" so he evidently felt he might have had more with advantage!

You may have seen a letter I wrote to the Defence Minister last week about a wounded boy -Moorehead - I saw on board the hospital ship "Maheno." I do not know when I have been so struck with a man as I was with him.

He/

He was so naturally and unaffectedly cheerful, and had no idea I was writing to anyone but his father about him.

I see that you are apparently going to send out still more Brigades beyond the 8th, and if an 8th, 9th and 10th come, I presume we shall have a 3rd Australian Division. I wonder if when this comes - but not until then - would you think it advisable to wire Home suggesting that you would like all the Australian troops to be kept together in the same Army Corps? I suggest this, as I think it really is a thing well worth consideration. At present I have four Divisions in my Corps - the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions, the composite New Zealand and Australian Division, and a Division of Territorials. I should be very glad to have with me the 3rd Australian Division when it takes the field in preference to the Territorials, and from the Australian point of view I think it would be a great convenience for all the troops to be together, and certainly as regards promotions, orders etc., I could keep them all co-ordinated. An expression of such a wish from you would I fancy mean a quiescence, but as I say there is no hurry whatever about this until the three Brigades are, we will say, about to arrive in Egypt.

I am doing all I possibly can to safe-guard the financial interests of the Commonwealth Government, as in my present position I feel it is entirely incumbent on me to do. Several matters have cropped up in this connection recently as regards the seconding of men and consequent increased establishments - the formation of increased base depot establishments, etc., etc., and your Government may rest assured that in every such case I will always do my best to watch Australian interests to the best of my powers, and in this I feel I always have the most capable and loyal assistance in White and Griffiths.

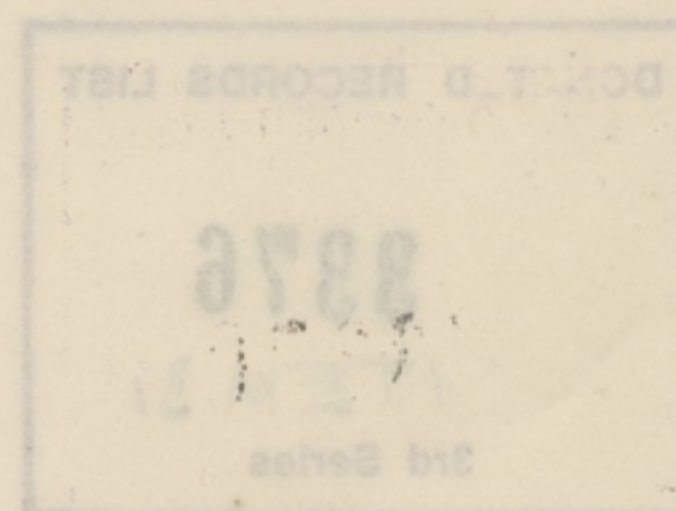
Will/

- 9 -

Will you please give my kind regards to Her
Excellency, and with all good wishes.

Yours very sincerely,

(S'gd) W. R. Birdwood.



MEDITERRANEAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

W

General Headquarters,

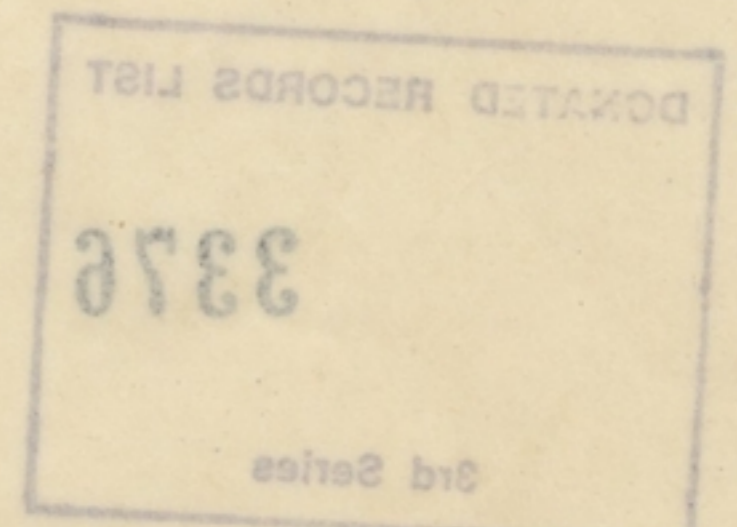
8th November, 1915.

My dear Sir Ronald,

Many thanks for yours of 24th September -
just received.

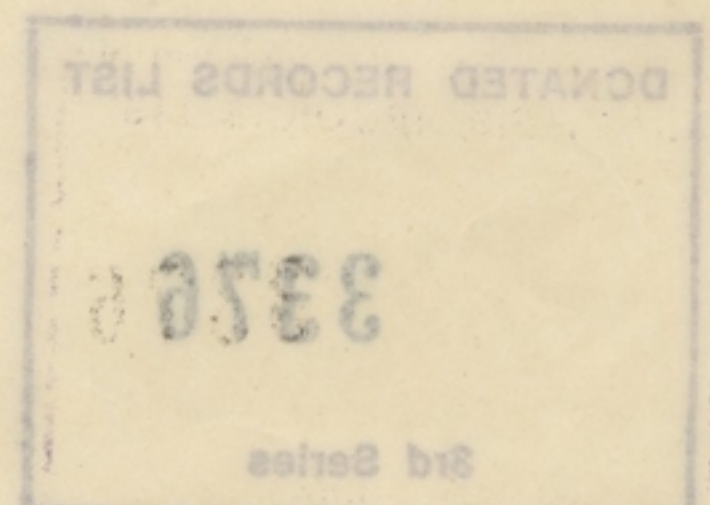
Since I last wrote you will have heard of the changes that have taken place here, in that Sir Ian has now left us. I had to take over temporary command of the Force during his absence and pending Sir Charles Monro's arrival. I am personally so sorry that Sir Ian has left us, for I always found him a most courteous and considerate Chief; and I immensely admired the spirit in which he left. General Monro arrived in due course, but has since left again, and it is doubtful if he will return. If he does not do so, I am to take over the permanent command of the troops here - at present, a far from enviable position to be in, as I personally do not see light in the way I originally did.

That/



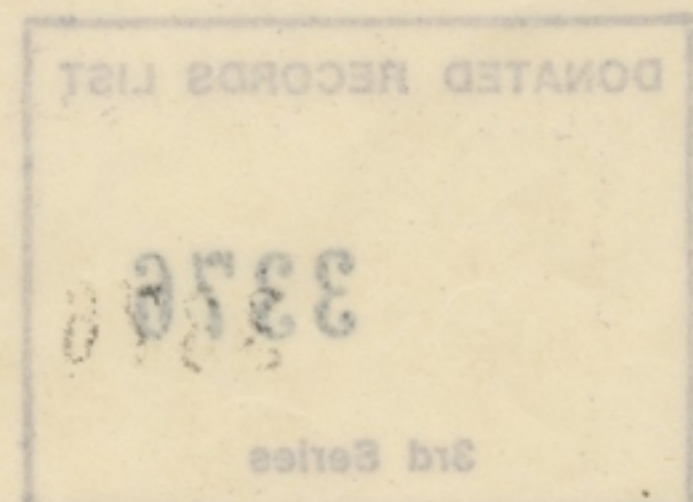
That, however, is neither here nor there, and if I am to command, I will do my best to carry through whatever orders I may receive from Government. What these will be, it is impossible to say, for I have had many absolutely contradictory communications of the future policy within the last week or so.

The question is indeed a most extraordinarily difficult and complex one, and made all the more so by the entry of Bulgaria into the war against us, and the absolute uncertainty as to the action of Roumania and Greece. Bulgaria's advent alone is extraordinarily serious for us, as I gather that this has already resulted in the opening of a road for guns and ammunition from Germany to Turkey. If Germany can send down really big guns with unlimited ammunition against us, our position will be, to say the least of it, uncomfortable - especially with the winter coming on, and the troubles with which we may be faced on being cut off by bad weather for considerable periods from Naval assistance. Personally, I have expressed my opinion that I feel confident that my own Army Corps at any rate is prepared to see anything through, and that I would far rather leave my bones on the Peninsula than evacuate it for fear of being driven off.



But, of course, political reasons - especially if the Government at Home be of the opinion that we are not pulling our whole weight by sitting immobile here, and could be better employed strategically elsewhere, are very different, and it may be possible that Government will decide that we should withdraw. On the other hand, they may equally decide that, by retaining here as we are the whole flower of the Turkish Army, and so preventing them going up into Bulgaria, opposing the Russians in the Caucasus and all our own troops in Mesopotamia, we are doing more good than we can elsewhere. This question will doubtless be decided before this can reach you. Any withdrawal will be, as you know, a most ticklish and difficult operation to carry out, and if it has to be done, I am particularly anxious that I should be actually in command of my Army Corps to see them off the Peninsula in the same way as I landed with them. This very much emphasises my reasons for wishing to remain there, and not to have to conduct the operations from a distance.

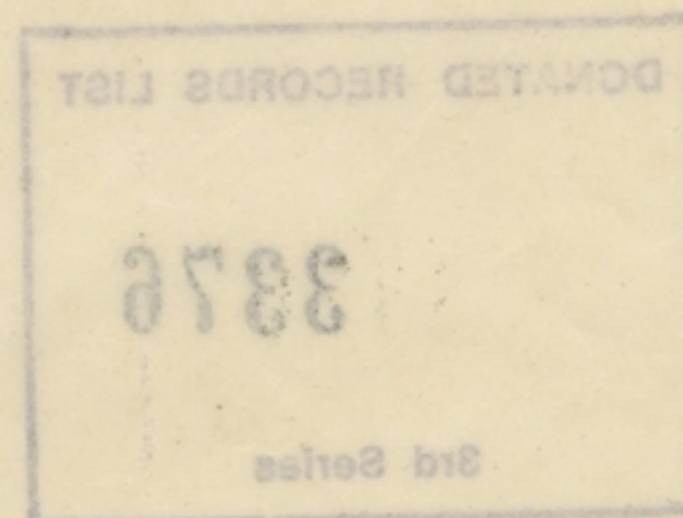
I enclose you copy of a letter which I have just written to Senator Pearce, in which I mention the possibility of my leaving my immediate command of the Australian troops, and I really am quite unable to express how/



how very much I should feel it, if I am compelled to do so, for I so much feel that they are my own particular lot at present.

Your Defence Minister must indeed be a great acquisition at the present moment, and I am so glad you have with you a man in whom you have such confidence. As I have so fully mentioned to him all questions of command, I will not go into them at all with you now.

I have been very sorry to hear about the trouble there has been in Egypt regarding the Red Cross organization and Australian Medical Service. Whether Fetherstone's visit will result in putting all this right, I do not know, and I am sorry to say I did not see him when he was here, as we crossed each other when I was officiating as Chief and he was at "Anzac." He has recommended that a senior Australian medical officer shall be on the staff in Egypt to help in looking after our medical interests there. This is a proposal I, myself, made some time ago, which was not then accepted. As officiating Chief, I have forwarded his recommendation to the War Office for consideration, as the matter is really one to be dealt with by them in consultation with Egypt. While I was in Egypt, I knew there was very much ill-feeling generally against Ramsay Smith and his methods/



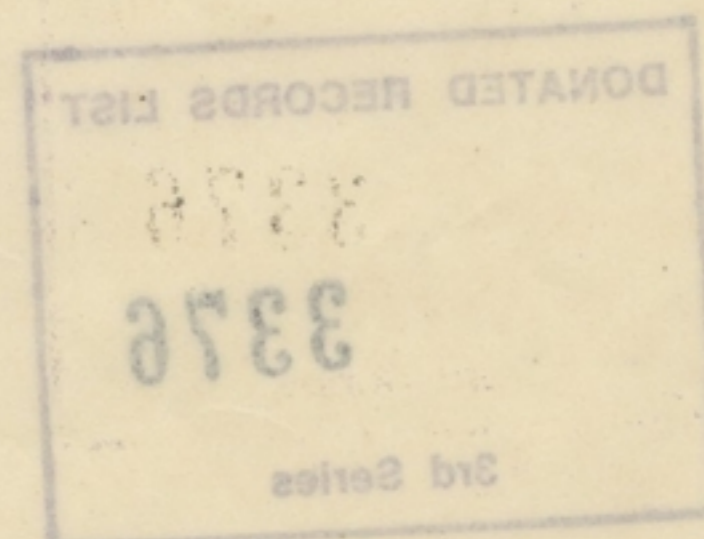
methods. Before leaving there, I tried to put this right, and though I had succeeded, but instead of that matters seemed later to get worse, and I trust that his return to Australia will help.

If Howse, whom I look upon as quite excellent and whole-hearted in his desire to see these medical troubles put right, can be deputed as our representative in Egypt, I have great hopes that things will be settled satisfactorily, as he is quite fearless in giving an opinion, which is generally a sound one.

Transport arrangements between here and Egypt have I am afraid often left something to be desired, but you will of course know how astoundingly difficult they have been, owing partly to the shortage of shipping available in the Empire - casualties astoundingly in excess of anything we had anticipated, and the submarine menace.

I have been passing a very anxious ten days lately acting as Chief in Monro's absence in Egypt, when I have been faced with some most exceedingly difficult telegrams from the Government contemplating actions of different sorts, which I will only describe as "varied."

However/



However, I shall be seeing Lord Kitchener tomorrow, and hope I may hear something fairly definite, though I imagine nothing can be decided until he gets Home again, and the Cabinet is able to decide on future action.

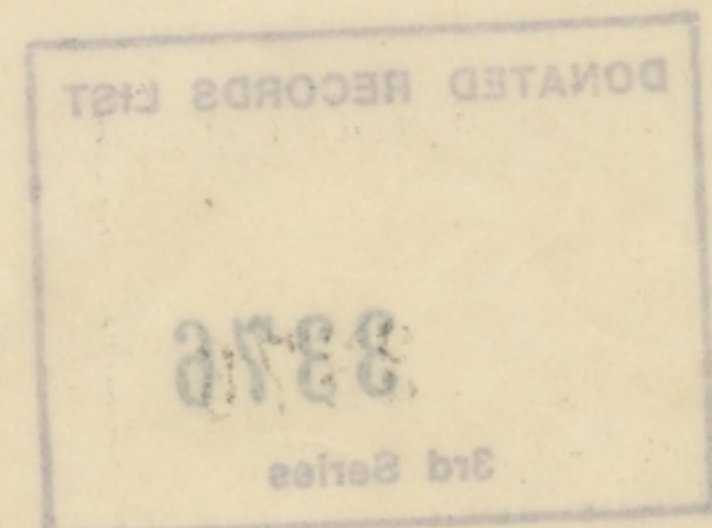
With kindest regards,

Yours very sincerely,

P.S. Since writing this letter I have seen Lord Kitchener, and though nothing has yet been definitely settled as to the future of this force, for so much still depends upon political events, yet I think I can tell you regarding my own immediate future, which he has decided.

I very earnestly appealed to him to leave me with my Army Corps, Sir Charles Monro stepping into Sir Ian Hamilton's shoes. I was able to place facts before him which I think decided him to favor this course. After further consideration, however, he came to the conclusion that he must have some co-ordinating authority between the force on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and the troops serving at and beyond Salonika, and for this purpose decided that

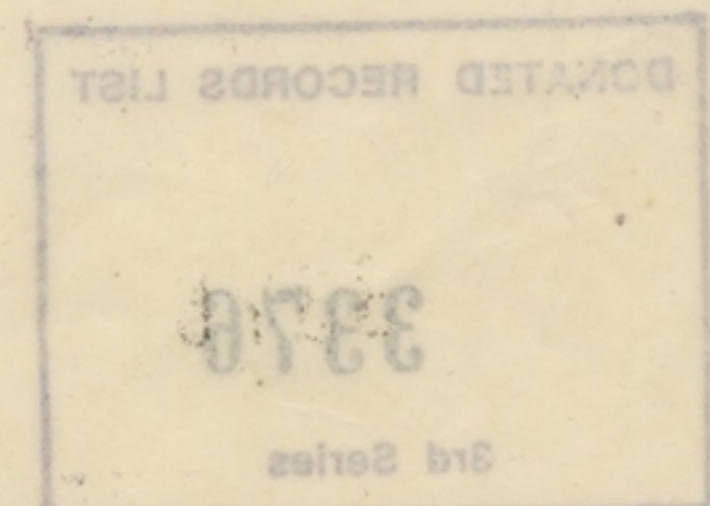
Sir/



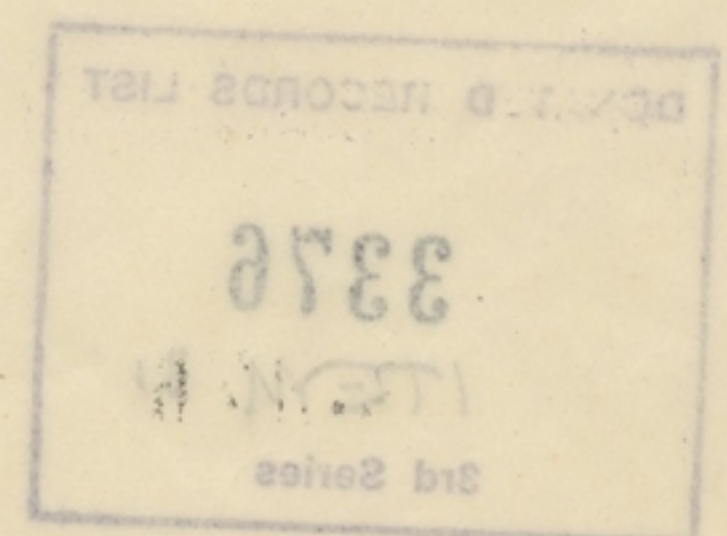
Sir Charles Monro should hold this position, when he considered I must take over the command of all troops in the peninsula. I should of course be naturally very proud indeed to be selected for such a position - and so I am; but I do most sincerely regret that it will cut me off to some extent from my immediate close connection with our troops, of whom I have become so fond. They, however, of course still remain part of my force, and I have had it laid down that I am not removed from the command of the Army Corps, on which I am to retain a lien, in the event of the big force being for any possible reason broken up, when I shall at once return to my "Anzac" troops.

In the meantime, Godley will take over the command from me, and you may rest assured that he will look after their interests very fully and completely. He has, as you know, already had two Australian Brigades in his Division for a considerable time, so he knows a good many of our troops well, which is a great thing to start with. I much wish I could see the future more clearly open before us, but it is impossible to foresee at present on what lines General Monro will have to act.

I am sorry to say we have just heard of the
sinking/

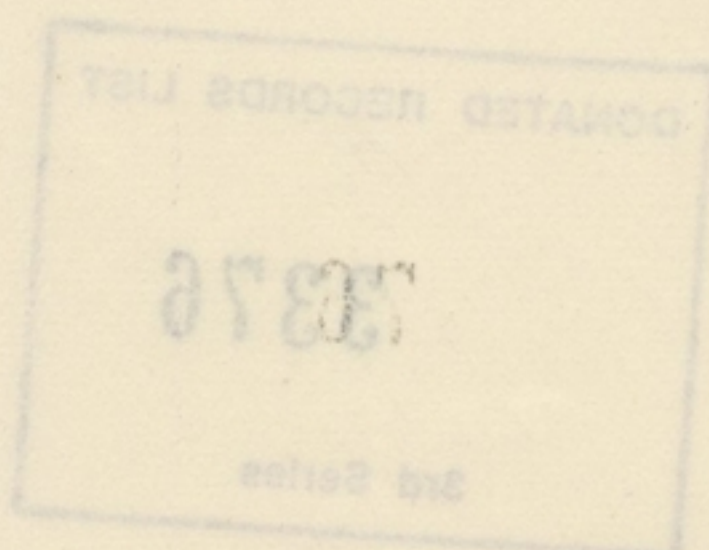


sinking of a storeship between Egypt and here, with a loss of some 2,000 bags of mail, about 600 of which were Australian, so I fear it is quite possible that I may have lost something from you.



Copy of letter, dated 8th November, 1915, to Senator, Hon'ble
G. F. Pearce, Defence Minister, Melbourne, forwarded to
Governor-General.

(Copy on Defence Minister's file)



Headquarters,

Dardanelles Army,

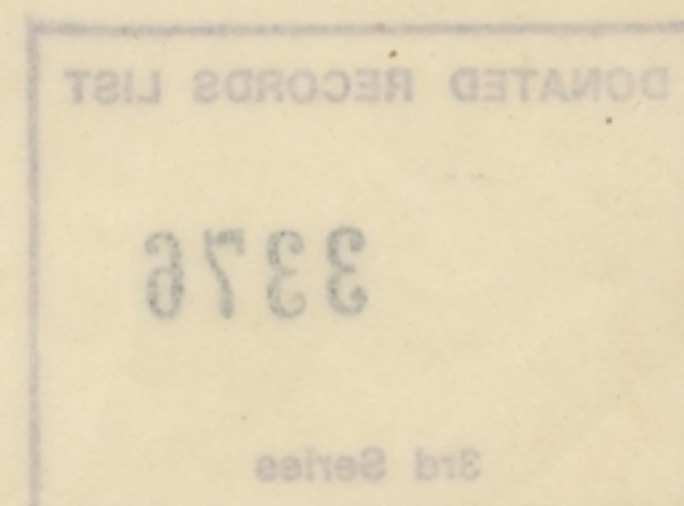
26th November, 1915.

My dear Sir Ronald,

I am writing to tell you that what I fore-saw might happen when I last wrote has now come about, and I have now definitely had to take over the command of the Dardanelles Army, and consequently to give up the immediate command of my beloved Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. My new command of course includes my late Corps, but as I also have two other Army Corps and French troops spread about different areas, it will be impossible for me in future to remain in the very close touch I have been in for nearly the last year with the men, and I am indeed sorry that this should be the case.

I think I told you that I tried hard to avoid this, as I was so anxious to remain with my own troops, but Lord Kitchener eventually decided that I must take over the higher command. My new Army forms

one/

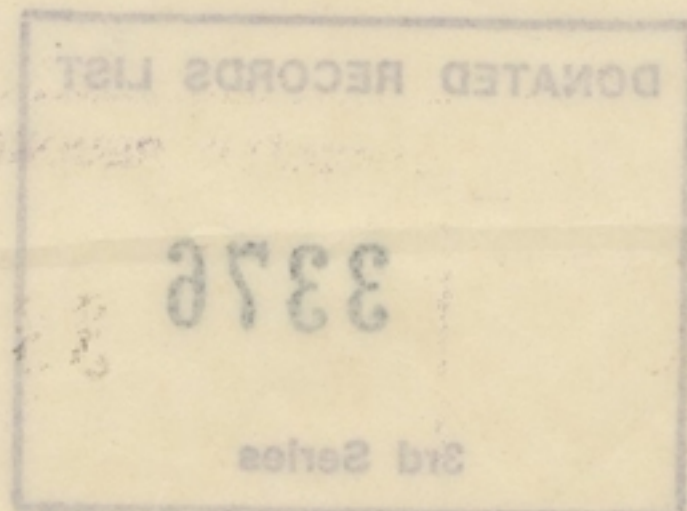


one of two under Sir Charles Monro, so I shall not be carrying out any independent operations on my own. I should be happier if I could get over every day and be with the troops, but unfortunately my Headquarters are on Imbros - just off the coast, and now-a-days we have such continually bad weather, that it is often quite impossible for me to get over and see them, though I make a point of spending every fine day going round them as heretofore.

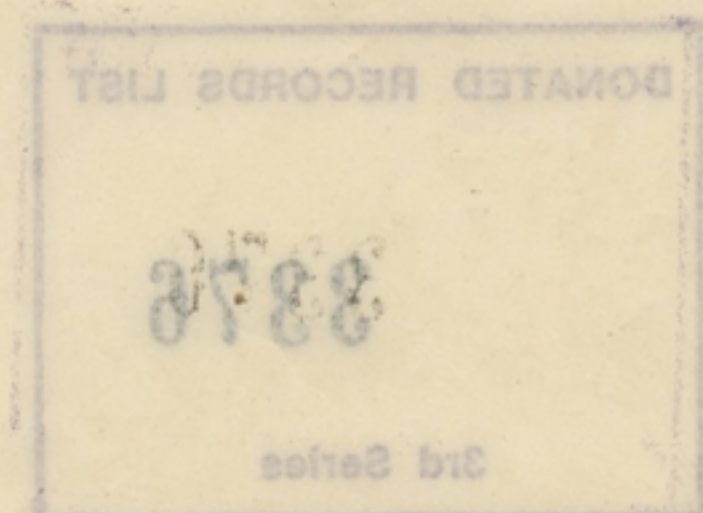
There have been some changes which I may perhaps mention in the personnel, and I dare say that your Defence Minister may care to hear about these, though I have ordered telegrams to be sent to him regarding them.

Legge, I am sorry to say, went sick very suddenly at a time when I was away from "Anzac," so I did not see him. Only a day or two before, I took Lord Kitchener over there, when Legge seemed perfectly well, and I was very sorry to hear that he had gone off ill.

I may mention that Lord Kitchener was very much struck indeed with "Anzac" - at all that he was able to see there during what we felt to be an all



too short a visit, but it was of course impossible for him to stay there long, or to see half of all our work. I, however, took him up to one of our trenches, now held by the 2nd Division, and where he was within some 25 yards of the front Turkish trenches, which I think made him very happy. He said he had never been able to realise until he saw them the difficulties with which we had been confronted, and which we had successfully overcome; and he told me to give a message to the Army Corps from him, which I did - a copy of which I enclose for your information. From a soldier's point of view he could not help noticing the want of depth in the position, which does not enable us to have any strong supporting lines, or positions for reserves and reinforcements, if attacked by overwhelming numbers, and from this point of view the position must be considered unsatisfactory, though we have had no difficulty in holding it against all the Turkish attacks, and we feel perfectly confident that we can continue to do so against the Turkish Army, whose attacks we should welcome, as we did that of General Liman von Sanders, when with 30,000 men he attacked 10,000 of us, and got
such/

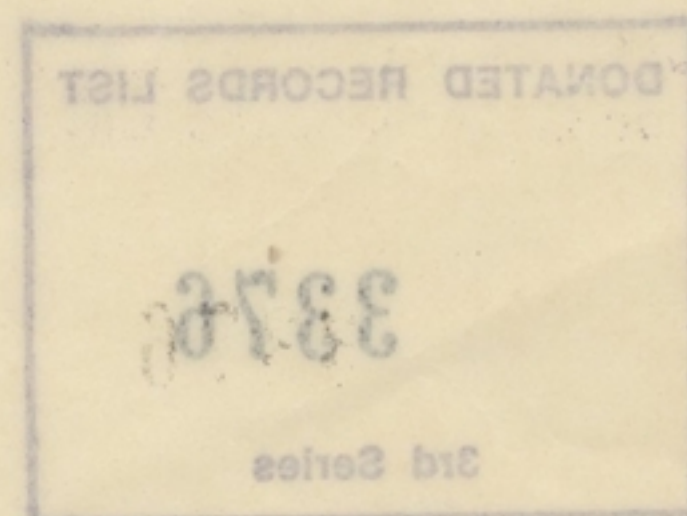


such a lesson, that the Turks never attempted anything of the sort in force again. A heavy German attack with many big guns and unlimited ammunition might, however, of course be a different matter.

To replace Legge in the 2nd Division I have put in Holmes, who I hope may do well. I think I have already told you that Chauvel is now commanding the 1st Division vice Walker.

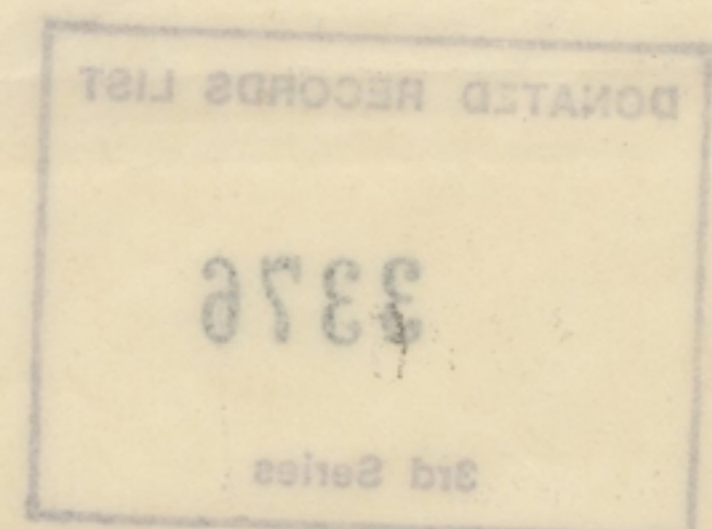
I may mention that on these appointments, Monash made a representation claiming that he should have received a Divisional command before either of them, basing his claim on the fact that the date of his appointment as a Brigadier-General is prior to that of others.

Monash has, I think, certainly done well. He looks after his Brigade thoroughly well - knows all details concerning it, and is an excellent organizer. At the same time, I cannot look upon him as a leader in war, and I consider both the others more suitable than he. That, however, is in any case beside the question, for I do not consider that any man has a claim to a high command merely because he thinks his seniority should give it to him. It must in my opinion be a case
entirely/



entirely of selection, and in this I know well you and the Defence Minister will agree. Curiously enough too, Monash's contention does not really carry weight. By the King's Regulations, all Brigadier-Generals rank among themselves, not according to the dates on which they became Brigadier-Generals, but from their date of Colonel, and as such Monash is the junior of the three. He, however, further contends that the Australian Gazette appointed him as a Brigadier-General without any allusion to the rank being temporary as is usually done. This of course is a nicety, about which I am not prepared to argue with him, and I am sending a wire to the Defence Minister suggesting that the matter should be put right when such appointments are gazetted.

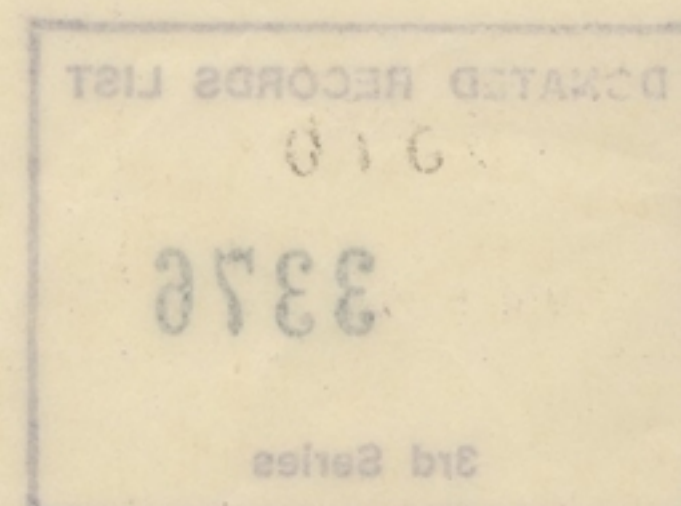
I have put Colonel Cox, of the 6th Light Horse Regiment in the acting command of the 1st Light Horse Brigade, vice Chauvel. He was not a man who impressed me at all in Egypt, for he did not train his regiment at all well, while he was inclined to be very full of his own perfections, and to be cocksure and
merely/



merely superficial. However, on arrival here he improved a good deal, and when lately officiating in command of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade, when Ryrie was wounded, he carried on quite satisfactorily, and Ryrie himself had no hesitation in recommending him for this appointment.

Spencer-Brown I am arranging shall be sent to Egypt to look after the large amount of mounted details we have there in the way of light horse and transport. I have felt he really is not up to commanding a brigade in the trenches, though he is most gallant and anxious to do his best. I understand that his meteor is in the light horse line, and as General Legge found him useful as such during the time he was in Egypt, I hope that he may again be of greater advantage to us there than here. I have put officiating in command of the 6th Infantry Brigade Colonel Brand, who I think will do well, but I do not propose to confirm him in any way until we can see how he turns out, while I also think that men like Elliott and Bennett, who have been invalided Home, should be given chances of Brigade commands if and when they are able to return.

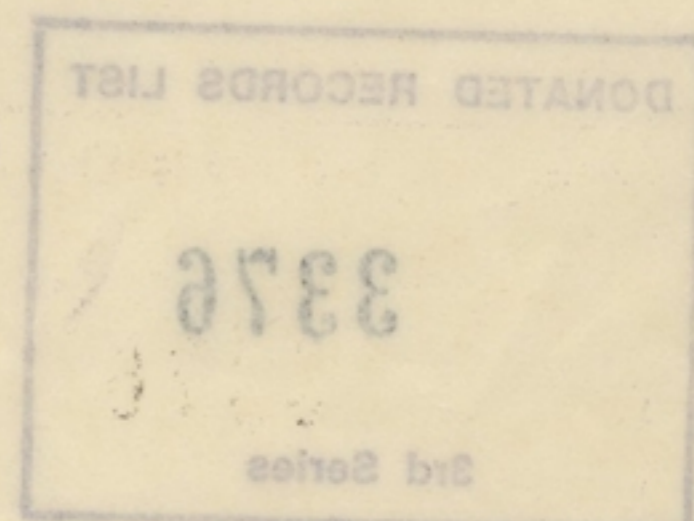
I am sorry to say I have had to agree to
the/



the removal of Colonel Crouch from the command of the 22nd Battalion. Legge wished to carry this out soon after the battalion arrived, but I told him I was not then prepared to acquiesce until he had had further trial. Legge and Spencer-Brown (who is his Brigade-Commander) both now report that it is quite impossible to retain him in command of his battalion with any confidence whatever, so I have had no alternative but to remove him to another appointment. Though I have only seen Crouch commanding his battalion in the trenches, I feel sure that Legge and Spencer-Brown are right in their opinions of him. He is no doubt most keen, and perhaps over-anxious to do right, with the result that he strikes me as quite "jumpy" and unsuited to meet any difficult or critical situation, and I rather gather that his officers have no confidence in him, which of course is fatal.

In my last letter I enclosed a copy of a short circular, which I issued to the men, as regards keeping themselves fit, and which you may care to see.

If there is anything in this letter you would wish your Defence Minister to see, you will of course/



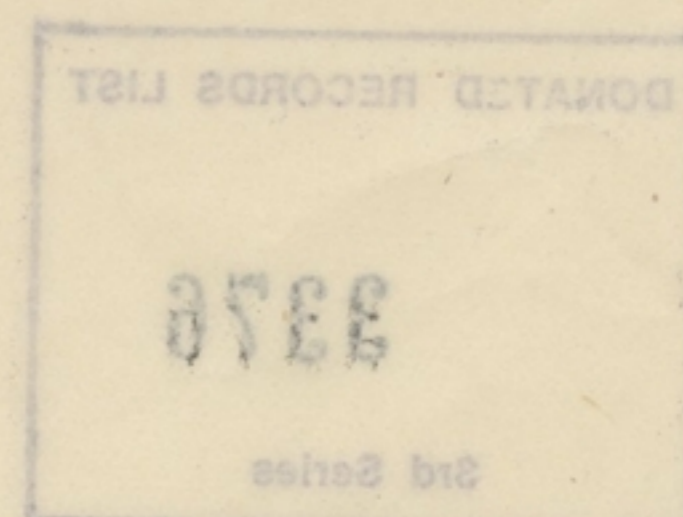
* course let him see it.

In conclusion, I can only repeat how extremely sorry I am that I no longer command the Army Corps, of which I am so fond, but I am glad to say that it has been arranged by Lord Kitchener that, should future developments result in any alterations in the present commands, and a consequent breaking up of portions of the Dardanelles Army, I am to retain my lien on the Army Corps, to which I shall so gladly revert at any time. In the meantime, I am so glad to think that General Godley will be in command, for he will I know look after their interests, and those of the Commonwealth, to the very best of his power, and I am sure better than I have been able to do.

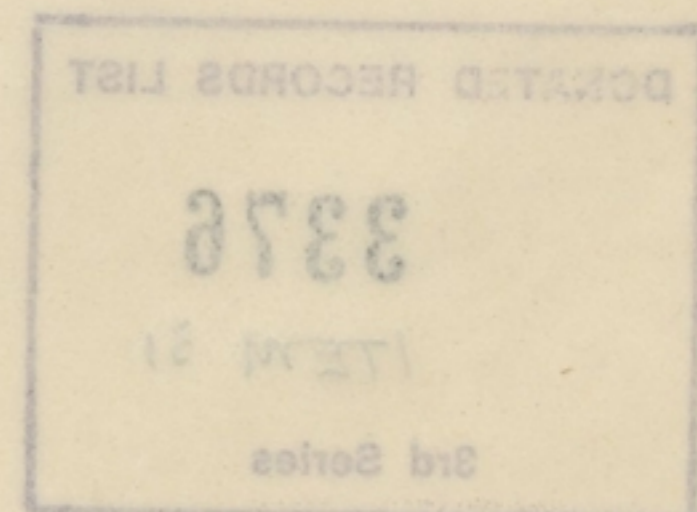
With kind regards and good wishes for the coming year, which let us hope may possibly bring peace before it ends.

Yours very sincerely,

P.S. Since writing this, I have just been reading the debate in the House of Commons - November 3rd, and am
rather/



rather horrified at the publication of all details of the Prime Minister and Carson's speeches. I cannot help thinking that the great emphasis which the former laid upon the whole of the operations in these parts, and the latter's equally emphatic remarks about the indecision of Government as to whether to continue the operations or at once withdraw, are all likely to draw a very undesirable attention of Germany to our doings, and probably to induce them to send large reinforcements with heavy guns against us, while we are in rather a critical position owing to some extent to the indecision referred to by Carson, which naturally has far-reaching results, and owing to bad weather having set in, which makes movement of any sort most difficult.



Copy.

Headquarters,

H.E. Rt Hon. Sir R.C. Munro-Ferguson.
G.C.M.G.,
and

Dardanelles Army, M.E.F.
22nd December, 1915.

Col. Hon. J. Allen, J.P., M.P.,

My dear Sir Ronald,

Dear Colonel Allen,

I think that you will probably share my regrets to some extent at our Australian and New Zealand Army Corps having had to leave "Anzac," where the men had made such names for themselves.

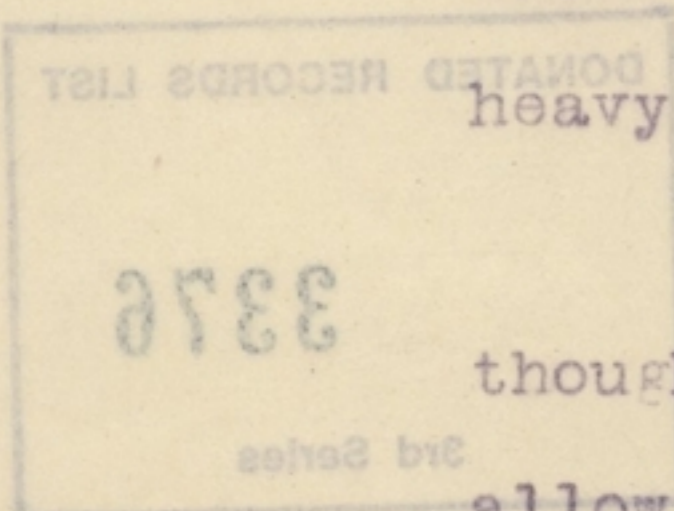
I will not in any way discuss the question, but if we were not pulling our whole weight in the boat by practically marking time there and containing Turks, and if it was considered that we could be of much greater value by being used elsewhere - then there is nothing more to be said about it, and when we got our orders to go, everyone of us naturally did our best to carry them out.

As I think you may care to see it, I enclose for your private information copy of a letter I have just written to Lord Kitchener on the subject, giving him some details of the retirement.

I shall always feel that Providence was directly watching over us to see us safely through this. I had felt quite confident of being able to withdraw with very little loss, provided always that the weather was kind to us, but having to do it when we did - in December, we had to reckon on possibilities not of fair, but really bad weather with violent storms, so one's anxiety in this respect was justifiable.

However, as Providence willed it, we had the most perfect weather possible to carry out our operations, while this broke up the following night in a way which might have entailed heavy losses to us, had it done so twentyfour hours earlier.

I still cannot help chuckling with delight at the thoughts of the German officers, who are with the Turks, in allowing themselves to be hoodwinked, as they must have been, to permit/



permit of our withdrawing some 80,000 troops and 200 guns from literally right under their eyes - for their trenches look right down on us over nearly the whole of our position, for long stretches together the "Anzac" front being 25 to 50 yards distant - we calculate they had something over 80,000 men facing us, so should have been able to give us a bad time, had not all my boys played the game so wonderfully well as they did.

You can imagine what a satisfaction it is to me to feel that we have been able to pull every single one of the boys out safely, and I am glad to say in excellent spirits, and ready to take on whatever may be before us. I have so far got no definite orders on the subject, but quite anticipate we may all have to go down to Egypt to defend that country from what looks like a really determined and big German-Turkish advance very shortly. The Germans are equipping a special force of selected men in Germany, and fitting them out with tropical uniforms, special water-carrying arrangements, etc., etc. We may be quite sure that they will not undertake any expedition of this sort without doing it very thoroughly indeed, so we shall have to look out for, and be prepared to meet a very different attack from that which took place last year. I have every confidence we shall be able to do this, and if we can succeed in bleeding Germany at the end of a long artery, and give her a real bad knock whenever she comes along, it might have very far-reaching results.

I have sent the whole of our mounted men to Egypt at once, as I want them to get to their horses as soon as possible, and the knowledge that they are in sight of these has done much to cheer them up for any regrets they may have had in leaving the trenches at Gallipoli, at which they had worked so hard.

With kind regards.

Yours very sincerely,

(S'gd) W. R. Birdwood.

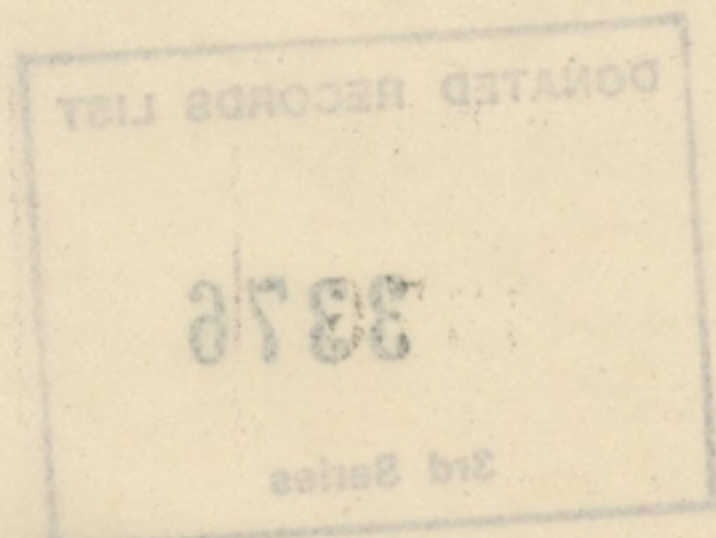


(letter to Sir R. C. Munro-Ferguson, continued)

- 3 -

P.S. We had a terrible experience here last month in the shape of a blizzard, which struck us very suddenly and severely. Coming, too, as it did, a whole month before bad weather was expected, it did all the more damage, and I am sorry to say that in one of my Corps alone I lost 204 men dead from exposure and frost in two nights, while I had to evacuate well over 6,000 - worse almost than a big engagement. A regular waterspout seemed to fall with great violence on the Corps on my left, and was immediately followed by a hurricane of wind and intense cold, which simply froze up the men where they stood, while some were actually drowned by the torrents rushing through their trenches.

I forward a copy of a "Special Order" which I think you may care to see.



(letter to Col. Hon. J. Allen, continued)

- 3 -

P.S. We had a terrible experience here last month in the shape of a blizzard, which struck us very suddenly and severely. Coming, too, as it did, a whole month before bad weather was expected, it did all the more damage, and I am sorry to say that in one of my Corps alone I lost 204 men dead from exposure and frost in two nights, while I had to evacuate well over 6,000 - worse almost than a big engagement. A regular waterspout seemed to fall with great violence on the Corps on my left, and was immediately followed by a hurricane of wind and intense cold, which simply froze up the men where they stood, while some were actually drowned by the torrents rushing through their trenches.

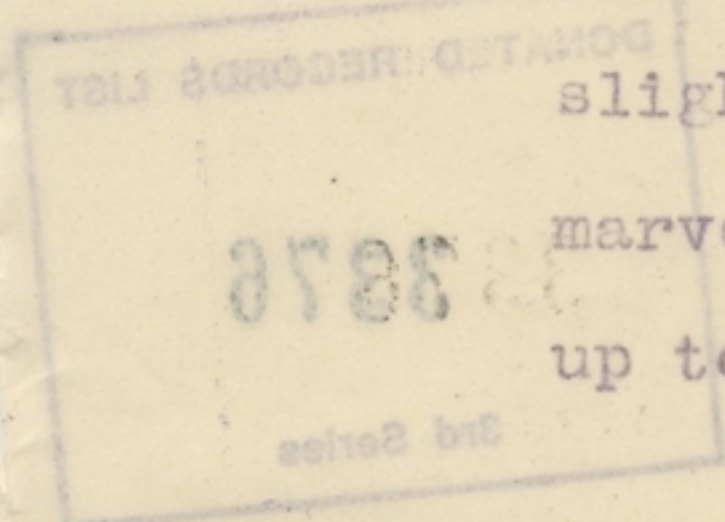
I enclose a copy of a "Special Order" which I think you may care to see.

(Later)

Since writing this letter, I have just received yours of the 26th October, for which many thanks. I am so glad to know that anything I was able to write to you about the "Maheno" was of use, and I recently got a very nice letter from the Governor, telling me you had kindly let him see my letter, and thanking me for it. I shall hope to see the "Marama" in due course, but, as you will know, it will not now be in these waters.

It is possible that the Governor may have shewn you a letter I wrote him on the 13th, giving him information about the New Zealand troops. I can only again tell you what a really high opinion I and everyone else here have formed of them. They have always risen to the occasion, and have done magnificently. That they will continue to do this to the end, I have not the slightest doubt, and I do think you have done and are doing marvels in the way of sending troops forward, and keeping them up to strength with drafts.

While in Gallipoli we certainly badly wanted the
full/



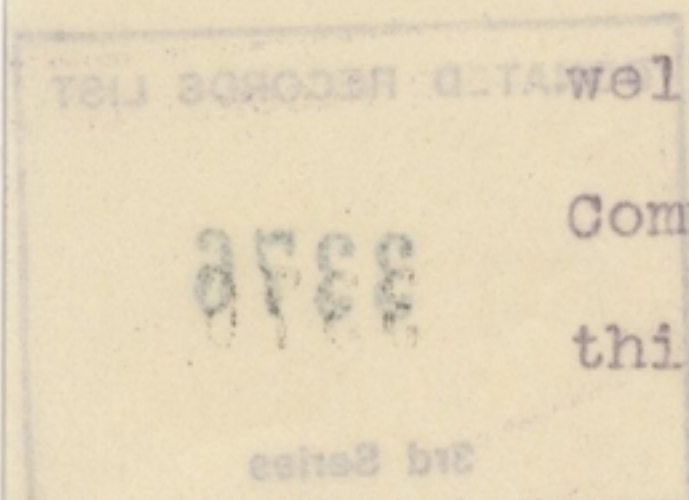
full 20%, which we asked for, and you will probably have heard how lamentably weak our battalions and brigades often became - indeed, it seemed quite impossible to keep them even up to half their normal strength. Now, however, that they have left here, I anticipate that the difficulty of keeping them up in numbers will for the present at all events not be great, and for the next few months I rather think that battalions will be considerably over strength with the enhanced reinforcements you are sending. However, there is no knowing what may not yet be before us, and personally I cannot help thinking that by the spring we shall all be fighting in France, when it is to^{be} feared our casualties must again be exceedingly heavy.

Practically all the New Zealanders are now in Egypt. The time there will I think be of the greatest value in enabling them to refit, pull themselves together, and get at some regular training again, which we were unable to do in the Gallipoli trenches. The mounted men, too, will be delighted at getting to their horses, and let us hope they may get a chance of putting in some good work on them in due course.

As I think you know, Godley has succeeded me in command of the Army Corps, and I was exceedingly glad to have been able to recommend that Russell should take his place in command of the New Zealand and Australian Division, for he has proved himself a first rate soldier, and always ready to take anything on.

Chaytor will I am sure do well in his place, for he is a real soldier at heart, and always anxious to be doing something.

I am much looking forward to seeing your Rifle Brigade when I go to Egypt, and I hope that you have been satisfied with the appointment of Braithwaite to command it. He has done very well indeed when officiating on two or three occasions as a Brigade Commander, and I thought it was only fair that he should be given this command now, after having borne the heat and burden of the day/



day, as he has done during this last year. I know Fulton to be an excellent officer, but I think he can well afford to wait for a little, and vacancies alas occur so quickly - perhaps one may occur before we wish, and in the meantime his experience as a Battalion Commander on service will be all to the good, and help him commanding a Brigade later on.

I will not fail to convey to General Godley and your officers and men your high and generous appreciation of all their splendid work, and you have indeed every reason to be extremely proud of all that they have done for the Empire. That the people of the Old Country are entirely of the same way of thinking, and fully appreciate all that your men have done out here is I think very evident from the wonderful reception they get on every possible occasion in England, and I am glad to say I hear good accounts of their behaviour there.

With all good wishes to you for the coming Year, which let us hope may bring with it victory and peace before it is ended.

Yours very sincerely,

