

BOOK 1.

Joined up 28-7-1915.
Commenced Diaries 10-5-16

In commencing this account now, most of the dates must necessarily be left out for the first ten months of my life as a soldier. I can only touch on the principal facts of the recruit stages. Never had any intention of keeping a Diary but I find many things of interest happen which can not be put in a letter and as time goes on and fresh incidents occur the others fade out of my mind and thus if ever we are lucky enough to reach home again there is much which would prove interesting to our folk that has gone for ever from my memory. This will in a sense be a Diary but I don't doubt but that at times weeks will elapse between entries for our life here in the camp is very often most monotonous and my idea is only to put down interesting items for future reference.

I handed in my name the first week that Australia called for recruits but eventually did not go on with it as after a lot of consideration I came to the decision that if men were wanted my time would come and that by waiting a certain time I would be able to put my private affairs in such a condition as would enable me to go away without the worry of thinking everything was at sixes and sevens at home. I waited in Australia twelve months longer, it seems a long time to wait but who thought this war would last so long as it has and it took that twelve months to get the population to realise such a deadly struggle was being carried on by our nation and her allies.

In July 1915 the first Great Recruiting week was held, though nearly a year ago and so much has happened in that year I still remember that wonderful week when our men came forward in their thousands, twenty thousand in one week I think it was. I went about my Office work as usual but I knew my time had come and on the Friday evening after Office hours I enlisted at the Melbourne Town Hall, passed the Medical Test and took the Oath for Active Service abroad. The news was taken quietly at home, not that my Mother wanted to see me go but that she realised that the time had come when all able bodied Australians would need to come forward and do their share in the great struggle taking place for freedom and honour. I arranged to enter camp on the 28th July, 1915 and that gave me about ten days to square my affairs. Bessie came to Melbourne a few days before that date with the intention of staying in town until my departure for the front. I finished up at the Treasury about the 26th and had two days to myself.

At last the 28th came, a bright sunny morning (Wednesday.) Ivo and Miss Morrison, a visitor at home, came into town with me, we met all our friends on Princes Bridge and made our way down to the Stuart Street Orderly room. There were a party of 10 of us entering together. I wonder can I name them all, for we did not stay together long, and though I met most of them in Cairo later on we were hopelessly separated. Bob Andrews, Bob Rankin, Les. Cathie, Rupert Hawthorn, Jack Harris, Jack Carruthers, Bassell, Wheeler, Kenny and myself, some of them I would have liked to have kept in touch with but a soldier never can tell where his duty is going to take him so must just go forward. At last the final good-byes were said and we marched to Flinders Street en route for the Seymour camp.

When I look back on the first three weeks in camp I realise that we met with some pretty severe hardships, at the time we were keen and enthusiastic and made light of all troubles but perhaps until we arrived in a part of the desert of Egypt where water was scarce and the sun hot, no time has been more trying than that August, 1915. Coming straight from our comfortable homes in the middle of winter to a camp of 22,000, a camp perhaps not too well managed where it rained almost constantly for three weeks until meningitis broke out and so many deaths happened. It all appears to be a nightmare now, often in one night walking from the main part of the camp to our portion known as 'Pneumonia Gully', one would meet two, three or four stretchers on their way to the Field Hospital, many of them to die the next day for the disease was most deadly and twenty four hours usually told the tale.

But I must hurry over this portion of camp life, after three weeks an examination was held to choose men to enter a preparatory school for N.C.O.'s and then go on to Broadmeadows to the Officer's School to compete for Commissions. I had no difficulty in passing the tests, for six months previous I had been doing one and sometimes two nights a week at drill with the Malvern Rifle Club under Major Nixon, just before entering camp I passed with 76 out of 100 marks for a Commission in the Citizen's Forces but entered camp without waiting for my appointment. The clerical portion of this camp exam was of no consequence and so I entered our Seymour School

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of Instruction. The three weeks we spent there was the hardest three weeks of all my camp training, over 300 of us worked like slaves and when the sorting out came I was lucky enough to be placed in the first fifty. At last the great day came, the day of disappointment for we had been sorely misled, the examining committee came from town and instead of wanting 150 as we were led to believe they required only 50. Seventy were chosen and I with many others who were considered the most efficient were passed over and others chosen. I could write pages on this day's doings but the facts are printed too plainly on my mind, and there is no need to put them on paper. For weeks we hung on in what was known as Q Company in the hopes that something would turn up but on account of petty spite the 'powers that be' refused to recognise us and we eventually drifted into reinforcements.

This was not what I wanted so after a lot of trouble I transferred into the Light Horse, here again I was at home as I had spent two years in the old Victorian Mounted Rifles, afterwards called the Light Horse and I entered this Unit as a paid Corporal. We stayed at Seymour another fortnight when it came our turn to go down to Williamstown to go through a course of musketry, this was early in November and everyone thought they would be leaving Australia about 23rd November. It was a Wednesday when we moved out of Seymour and on the Friday afternoon two Officers came from Broadmeadows wanting 104 men to make up 150 reinforcements for the 8th Light Horse. There was no difficulty in getting them, some hung back but 104 was soon made up and then the rush began. I had not been on final leave and we had to sail in five days time. Saturday had to be put in on the Rifle Range and I left Williamstown Saturday evening with orders to join the unit by midnight on Monday. Sunday was spent saying good-bye to relatives and Monday was the final rush round the city doing the 101 things that had to be done at the last moment, arriving in camp at an unearthly hour Monday night. Tuesday was a very busy day in camp and late that night I spent a couple of hours in town. We got on the move at 4a.m. Wednesday morning. entrained at Broadmeadows for Port Melbourne. The boys made things merry, they were happy for their aim was in view and a few hours would see them on the water to join the grand 8th Light Horse who had gone through so much over on Gallipoli and at such a cost.

Of the many thousands of our men who have gone from Australia every single man will remember his day of embarkation. Personally from the day of sailing till our arrival here in the desert I perhaps saw many new scenes and yet if I am lucky enough to return to Australia one scene will always be very plain in my mind. Our train ran into Flinders Street Station and after a few minutes wait ran on to the Port Melbourne line and went straight through onto the railway pier, our boat was on the town pier so we marched from the one to the other. Just as we stepped off the former I saw Enid taking a photo of the soldiers, next came Mervyn and Ivo and then they all came, Viva, Mother, Bessie, Arthur Vale, Dad, Jess and Mrs. Snedden. We only had time for a word or two and then they were shut off by the barriers on the second pier. We were kept waiting for a couple of hours before it came our turn to board, then every man had to march on and going down to the deck portioned off for his Unit, take his seat at the table, our deck was H and Table 17 holding about 20 men, which table I had charge of. At 11.30 we were allowed on deck to wave good-bye to our friends as they were now allowed on the pier, I searched the sea of faces but without success only have found out since that Dad was there. Exactly at noon our boat "A 11 Ascamas" moved from the pier and our trip was started, numbers of motor boats kept beside us till we got well away from Port Melbourne but as our pace increased only one was left. Eventually this one had to drop back too and all we had to do was gaze at Williamstown, Port Melbourne and St. Kilda gradually fading from our sight. For the next two hours I was busy down below assisting to pay the men and arrived on deck once more just as the boat was passing through the heads. Went to bed that night feeling splendid only about 4a.m. next morning I woke and only had time to rush on deck when everything came up. I never moved from that spot for four hours and all I can remember of the next two days was lying on deck with hundreds of others that had no desire to move. People travelling under the best of advantages feel crook when sea sickness comes on but they have their bunks to lay in, imagine what it must be in an over-crowded troopship. H Deck was our home, in the day time we had our meals there, at night we hung our hammocks over the tables. I could never stand the hammocks though, they made me feel crook as they swung back and forward with the motion of the boat. I found a little corner right out of everyone's way and used to crawl in there every night and spread my bed. As I said

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before my first two days and nights were put in on deck but about Saturday I began to take an interest in life and thought perhaps there were meals on board. I went steadily for the first meal and from then on I picked up.

The trip over was uneventful, was agreeably surprised to find amongst the Infantry on board were many of my Tallangatta and Corriong friends. As the boat travelled up the Indian Ocean the days got hotter, but the day was worth living through to get the evening, immediately after tea we would gather on deck near the Officer's Mess and the Band would play for an hour, after that a mob of us would gather at the fore part of the boat and talk of home and Australia and of what was on ahead of us. After we had been out about a fortnight one poor chap from Tasmania died in hospital, the boat was stopped and he was buried at sea, such a burial seemed so much more impressive than on land. As for amusement on the ship, our Officers did as much as they could to carry on a series of sports to cover the whole trip. In the evening as well as the band there were to be found groups with boxing gloves, in other parts of the boat were Church Services. Things might become monotonous during the day but of an evening there was plenty to do. As we crossed the Equator they held the usual sports when different ones from Captains down to Privates were tried by Neptune and ducked in a huge Vat of water. First a prisoner would be charged with some ridiculous crime and the usual sentence would be swallow a pill (usually salt and sugar.) If a man objected he would only be handled rougher. After the pill came a lather of dirty paste and then be ducked two or three times in this Vat of salt water.

We sailed on the 10 November, 1915 and arrived at Port Suez at about the 6th December without calling in at a single port. In fact from the time we left the Heads of Port Phillip until the morning we sighted Aden, not a view of land or other ships came our way. From Aden to Suez up the Red Sea of course we saw plenty of shipping and one Monday morning saw us at the wharf of Suez. For two days the troops and their gear was being unloaded. We left for Cairo per train on Tuesday afternoon and arrived at our Light Horse Camp at Heliopolis about 10p.m., very tired and thirsty. We had a cup of tea and as soon as our blankets were handed out we made for our tents without any delay and were soon dead to the world.

And now our camp life starts in Egypt, the men were granted a full Day's leave for the first day. I was not able to avail myself of the privilege as I was wanted in at the Base Office to hand over some papers in connection with the voyage over, whilst I was in at that Office I paid a visit to many of my room mates from the Treasury in Melbourne. They were surprised to see me over here and we had a good old yarn of the times in Melbourne. In camp that night many strange experiences were related by our boys, they poked about everywhere and saw sights not to be seen in our Australian cities. I had my day off later on. For the first few weeks we had no horses to attend to, used to go out of a morning on foot until the boys were heartily sick and tired of "sections right" and "sections left". Later on we had some horses handed over to us but no man could claim any particular horse as it was a case of first come first served. Christmas soon came round and on that morning we turned out for an early Church Parade and after Church every man marched past Major McLaurin and some ladies who presented each man with a Christmas Billy. Things must have got a bit mixed up as we Victorians got Queensland billies and Queensland got Victorians. Mine came from a lady in Clifton, I still have her address. There were many things very useful in the billies and each man also got a box of comforts from the Australian Soldiers' Comfort Committee. A holiday was granted to 50% of the men, the others to go off on New Year's Day.

Early in the year the 8th Light Horse was reorganised, men had come back from the Peninsula and there had to be a sorting out. Up to this time I had been getting my 10/- (ten shillings) per day as Corporal but now good men were coming back from the front with experience and many of us (in fact all of us) had to stand down. I was one chosen for the new regiment and was lucky enough to be given one stripe. They gave me the choice of going into the Details on my 10/- or coming into the Regiment as Lance Corporal, I did not hesitate as the fate of the Details was very vague. We soon got to work on mounted drill after this. The whole Brigade would march out on to the desert for Brigade drill. The procession used to be a long one, with our Field Ambulance, Signallers, three Squadrons per regiment and all the other Units attached to us. Many a gallop we had storming imaginary positions and retiring, the whole work was most interesting, at 12 noon we would off saddle for an hour, feed our horses and a meal for ourselves, then once more drill till about 3.30p.m. and then make for home, arriving about 4.30.

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The Heliopolis camp was what many of us called a home, the camp was one of the finest I have been in since I joined the forces, close to the city and with very little trouble leave could be obtained for the evening in Cairo. Most of our men were quite satisfied just to take a walk up into Heliopolis and back to camp again. We had the shower baths in the grounds, of a Saturday there would be sports and the camp was very comfortable. Perhaps a word about Heliopolis would not be out of place here. The suburb comprises all beautiful homes, streets all planted with trees, wide and clean, very nice gardens and nowhere is to be found the poverty of the natives that is seen everywhere else. This portion of Cairo is altogether modern, was built only a few years ago by a Belgium and English syndicate. What is known as the Palace Hospital was originally meant for a huge casino, to give an idea of the size I am told it takes £500 per night to properly light it up, the grounds around it are beautiful, the whole building took my eye, I photographed it from four different positions which gives a very good idea of the largest hospital in the world.

Amongst the principal buildings in this suburb, were to be found the Palace of the Sultan's Mother, the home of the Belgium Consul, Roman Catholic Church and the business Street was wholly made up of fine buildings all of which I have sent photos home. In connection with the first named I got a great surprise. One Sunday some of us were passing when the guard told us if we waited a few minutes the Sultan would come along. He travelled per motor car, the advance guard comprised six Sergt. Majors of the Egyptian Army on Douglas Motor Bikes, the latter dismounted just near us and I turned to my companion to remark that one of them looked like an Englishman. Imagine my surprise to hear a voice behind me say, "By jove Bill I nearly ran into that gee-gee." I shot round and asked him if he was an Englishman and he said yes they were all English in the pay of the Sultan's Army. We had a long talk to them and they were well pleased with their positions, good pay, a good job and master and short hours, their whole duty was to accompany the Sultan on their bikes. I soon got arguing the point as to the merits of Douglas bikes compared with others.

And now a word about Cairo, the modern city is perhaps the same as any other ordinary city but the population was the attraction for me. I could spend a very pleasant hour in any of the main cafes with a lemon squash in front of me and watching the people coming and going. Perhaps Cairo is as much cosmopolitan as any city in the world. Whilst I was there the city was always crowded with thousands of our troops, Australians, New Zealanders, Indians, Canadians, Tommies and Scottish troops. To see the native population one had to go through the bazaars of which I will have more to say later on. A visitor to the city would see all these sights but our duty carried us further. Every night a Mounted Patrol would leave our camp and patrol the poorer portions from 6p.m. to about 10p.m. We saw sights then that we never want to see again, some of the streets too narrow to admit daylight, in some places we would have to dismount and lead our horses single file, not a night passed but some horses would slip on the greasy, filthy street and fall, rider and all. I had one fall, my tunic smelt for a week after. Then would come the ride home, our horses very flash for want of work, weather very cold and sixty of us eager for camp, our Officers as anxious as us and we would be a wild mass of plunging horse but our men were at home on horseback and no serious accidents ever happened.

During my visits to the city I tried many places for meals and eventually settled on one place which in my opinion could not be beaten for the money. viz. the Y.M.C.A. in the Gardens, that Institution is also something I will deal on more plainly later on. At the moment I would like to note they had a four course dinner, tables placed in a huge greenhouse situated in a very pretty garden in the heart of the city. They had the best of French cooks and one of my pet courses was one of their French omelettes. There was also a counter for lunch attended by English ladies who gave their services free. A skating rink, tables for letter writing and a large room full of papers and books. I spent many an hour in a comfortable chair and a paper. Other attractions were there and everything was done for the comfort of the soldier.

If you are going to trust yourself to a guide you will find he wants to take you to the mosques. During my stay in Cairo I visited most of them. The first one I saw was the Mehemet Ali Mosque, another name is Alabaster Mosque built inside the Citadel, the decorations, architecture and grandeur took my breath away, we find no buildings in our own country to come up to these Oriental cities. This building is only alight seven times a year and judging from the coloured glass decorations to be seen during the

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day it seems impossible to imagine the picture of a night alight with Electric Light with its thousands of coloured bulbs. The Sultan Hassan Mosque is considered the great show Mosque of Cairo, said to have cost \$600,000(pounds). El Hassanen Mosque, built for and is the last resting place of Hassan and Hasein two grandsons of the Prophet, this holds a peculiar sanctity by Moslems. There are many, for each one seems to have some fresh marvel to wonder at, one of them has a wonderful partition made of a kind of fret work. Everyone entering these buildings must remove their boots and put on old slippers, no sober minded man can enter one without it having a sobering effect on him, the immensity and vast grandeur of the whole thing and of course each one really represents a tomb of some great ruler. Outside one mosque I had a very interesting conversation with a caretaker "Jack", he spoke fine English and I learnt more of the customs of the people from him than anywhere else.

The Citadel cannot be passed over, it can be seen from any part of Cairo, it is really an ancient fortress, a town within a town, contains several mosques, hospital, prison, barracks, prison and arsenal, shops etc. within a wall. The main entrance is Bab-el-Azab which is a fine specimen of Architecture, this entrance contains a gruesome history. The Sultan of Egypt in 1811 was afraid of losing his throne, he invited all his Beys or Governors to a feast, the historian deals with the show these men made, mounted on their finest horses, magnificent uniforms, forming the most superb cavalry in the world. They entered the Citadel by this entrance, then for perhaps half a mile you go up a steep incline with many turns and blank stone walls on each side, from small windows in these walls the Beys were fired on, every man was slaughtered. A wild story is told of the escape of one man who made a wonderful jump on his horse, but it is not true. The particular man was warned at the last moment and failed to attend the feast. Mehemet Ali built the great Alabaster Mosque on the site of the massacre in memory of his vile deed.

The Pyramids of course must be mentioned but there is no need to dwell on them as we have read so much of them. I entered the big Pyramid with a party and a guide, was very glad I did so but would not do so again, the marble steps are fine but the heat is awful and a main objection is the narrow, low passage, boots have to be removed as it is impossible to crawl along the marble steps with boots on. The other Pyramids have their attractions, also the Sphinx. Dimensions of the great Pyramid are:- Height 451 feet, each side 755 feet at the base and the area it occupies 535.824 square feet.

Another site passed over by many and which should always be visited is the Barrage. It is about 20 miles from the city and constitutes a huge dam or weir built across the Nile at the junction of the Rosetta and Damietta, the wall or bridge is consequently a double one, one 600 the other 500 yards across making a huge bridge nearly two miles long. The day we visited it we arrived at about 2p.m. and after going to the small museum which contains models of all the irrigation schemes of the Nile, we passed on to the Gardens. This is a beautiful spot and is spoken of as the only real Gardens anywhere near Cairo. From there we walked along a shady drive going down the river to a second bridge, crossed over and amused ourselves taking photos of some Gypo soldiers doing physical drill. A strange incident happened here, a nurse took a snap of our chaps mixed up with the Gypos. She then wanted to be taken with us too and a ragged Arab said he would work the machine, he was dirty, hungry looking and in rags. She handed him the camera in surprise and without any bother he took the snap. I intended getting a copy and the nurse gave me her address, just over the road from our camp but I never called so lost my photo. During my visit to the Barrage I made another acquaintance in the shape of a Greek, well educated and very interesting, we had a long conversation whilst he provided me with tea. Whilst on this subject I might say that a few weeks later our 8th Light Horse had a route march out to this spot, went out one day and home the next, but having been there once took most of the interest out of it for me.

Many other places were visited by me but it comes hard to remember them now as months have elapsed. The Zoological Gardens are beautifully laid out, visited twice by me, there is a fine collection of African animals but other countries are not so represented. Theatres are scarce, of course lots of picture shows and perhaps a few music halls interesting to see, the only one of note is known as the Kursall and here I saw some wonderful acting of acrobats, performing animals and other interesting items. Some fine singers came on but always they sang in French. It is

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a surprise to me to find so many of the business men unable to talk English. I have seen cases of natives who can talk three languages, Arabic, Italian and French and yet cannot understand English. All the street boys have learnt to swear and use slang from our soldiers but when it comes to decent talking it's a case of 'Finish English'.

Well our three months stay in the Heliopolis slipped away, we had not too much work and everything went smoothly. An interesting sight was our Sunday morning Church Parade and after Church the "March Past". One day we went through the performance of making bogus trenches for the benefit of the "Picture People", perhaps later on I will see it on show in Australia, and although there are lots of things of interest I have omitted I must come to the time of our departure from this home of a camp. It was about 26th February, for a week before we had been getting equipped and on the Sunday night we were to entrain for the Canal. I remember that day well, we had our last Church Parade and immediately after the tents were struck and all gear and baggage packed on the wagons. After dinner we simply lay round reading or sleeping as we were to travel all night. I was in the Mess Shed feeling a bit home sick through thinking of them all over there when who should come along but Harry Ivory an old friend. He got my address from the Base Office and came to see me little thinking it was my last day in Cairo, he stayed for tea and well on in the evening before leaving for the city. At 10p.m. we saddled up and exactly at 11 o'clock we moved out. One thing I was sorry for we left our troop leader behind i.e. Lieut. Lammas, he came over with our lot and I had stuck to him right through but a day or so before we left he was struck off our strength. We trucked our horses at a station near the camp and took our own seats to find it was a case of wait. At about 1a.m. the train moved off and our fellows spread themselves out to sleep the best way they could. Troops travelling per train don't usually mind where or how they sleep so long as sleep can be got, and so the floor or seats or luggage racks are all one to them. The journey to the Canal was uninteresting as most of us had been over it all before. Camps soon came into view after day-break and our trip came to an end about 9a.m. Did not take long to get our horses off and as soon as horse lines were erected the men had a meal and were allowed to lay on the sand in the warm sun for two or three hours when work started in earnest.

And so here we are in our new camp Serapeum on the Canal, just between the Great Bitter Lake and Ishmalia. Our first job was to fix up horse lines and then erect our own tents, the first night we only had small Bell tents but the next day our own E.P Tents turned up and we erected those ourselves. They hold about 13 to 20 comfortably and give us more room to move about. It did not take us long to settle down in our new home. The first week is always the worst in a new camp and as this goes on you will notice that we always seemed to arrived at a new camp to strike sand storms for the first few days. This was the case at Serapeum and after about a week of it the weather cleared up and we had a good time for our month there. Another thing about a new camp is that for the first few days it is a wild scramble for our rations until the cooks got under way. A rather amusing incident connected with this could be quoted here. In Heliopolis we used to have big 7 pound tins of jam served out to us, when we came away five of these tins were un-opened. Farrier Wise of our troop managed to stow these away with his tools and on arrival in the new camp, not having a tent to put them in, dug a hole beside his saddle and just at the rear of his horse to bury his jam which of course all of our tent were very much interested in. During the afternoon his horse was moved further along the line together with his saddle. Next day we wanted jam so Wise thinking to surprise us went digging but where he dug was no jam. For three days he and his cousin Cpl. Chambers dug up the desert but it was a case of Finish jam. It was the joke of the camp and no explanation ever came to light, only none of those 7lb. tins were issued at this camp and yet a certain tent had some of the tins in their tent. They must have seen Wise bury the jam and when his back was turned helped themselves.

For a time fresh water was very scarce in this camp. The horses were led about a mile over to some lagoons and watered twice a day, for ourselves we had to be content with a bottle per day. It was here that I learnt what a lot could be done with a small quantity of water, for weeks I have done the following myself and counted V.G.K. lucky to be able to do it. Pour out less than two cups of water in my dixie, wash my teeth, next face and hands, then have a shave and last wash all my dinner utensils. Our days in this camp were not too strenuous, we would exercise the horses all the morning and improve our camp in the afternoon till we had everything fixed

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up then the afternoon would be occupied with a swimming parade for horses or men. I witnessed only one accident, a man dived from a boat into very shallow water, he was brought out but though conscious he seemed to be paralysed. Two days later he died in hospital. He was not one of the 8th men but belonged to some other unit. Of an evening the Canal would be one mass of men swimming.

The evenings were the best time of the day. I used to take my pipe and lay on the Canal bank, smoking and almost every evening see some huge boat go up or down the Canal, some going home to Australia and a chap would feel like swimming out to board her. On one of these occasions a batch of Australian girls were on board and we carried on a conversation as they were passing. We were not allowed to say what we belonged to or give any information. In this camp I met Alf Osborne a very old friend who was in our Field Ambulance, we had many a long talk on the Canal bank. One evening when taken up with my usual occupation a young man came and sat beside me, and soon got into conversation and as he came from Mildura asked him if he knew Ivo my brother, it turned out they lived in the same house and were great friends, Robbins was his name. We only stayed in this camp for a month, on the 9th I think it was, we moved over the Canal and formed a camp at the Rail Head out five or six miles in the desert. The water was being laid on from the Canal end but was not complete, and the horses had to be brought in every day for water. When they arrived at the troughs the riders could not manage them as they rushed it, it was only to be expected since they would have a drink at midday, go six miles home on a dusty road, and then come the same distance next day for their next drink. Our regiment was all ready to go out when orders came not to move, another plan was tried which proved almost as bad. I was one chosen to do the 30 hours patrol from Serapeum. We left camp at 2p.m. on a Tuesday, watered our horses on the east side of the Canal and made a move, we passed through Rail Head and followed the water pipes to the Headquarters of the 10th who were out at the trenches, our horses were allowed one small canvas bucket of water. We camped there for the night and moved out on the patrol at 5a.m. For the first six miles we went due west and at a certain point one party under Cpl. Chambers went south whilst the other one under myself went north, we arranged to meet three hours later at the foot of a certain sand hill in the east. After going as far as we thought necessary we then turned south-east but found our meeting place was further than we at first thought so pulled up for dinner. The other party were of the same opinion but at 12 noon once more came into sight and joined us. The horses were feeling the heat and want of water so had to spell them till 3p.m. when we struck back for the 10th camp. At times we were anxious as to whether we were going right as we only had the sun to go by so you can imagine our surprise at finding ourselves at 4.30p.m. exactly where we had separated eight hours before. We only had to follow our own tracks and soon got in touch with the outposts and then the camp. No water there for either horse or man and we made a start for Serapeum camp getting there at about 10.30p.m. thoroughly done up and very dirty and hungry. But our fatigue did not last long on arrival in camp our first Australian mail was waiting for us, five months since we left home and now to hear from them. I think I got seven letters but as it was night time had no way of reading them till morning. Still I was to a certain extent very satisfied, they were in my pocket and the morning would tell me all about the home folk. After feeding our horses and getting some tea ourselves I lay down in the open and slept the sleep of the just. All was confusion in the camp for new orders had been issued whilst we were on patrol, our tents were down and kit bag and gear scattered ~~xx~~ everywhere and had to be found, as we had to move out at 8a.m. next day.

As was proved by that trip patrolling from Serapeum was a failure, our horses would never stand it so the 8th Light Horse had to move to the Rail Head and my Squadron (C) were to go out to the trenches, it was a mad rush next morning gathering my things as one must be ready at the stated time, no staying behind and coming later. I was ready and the Squadron moved over the Pontoon Bridge at the stated time. This was the time for me to read my letters for we did not arrive at our destination till 1p.m. After my two hard days before I was feeling done up and was disgusted to find I was not finished yet, only a certain number of horses were kept at the trenches, the rest had to fall back to the Rail Head. I was sent in charge of D Troop, one man leading three horses and riding one. The four Troops in charge of Sergt. Fuzzard. Rail Head was another eight miles and by the time we got there my horse had covered over eighty miles with very little rest for rider or horse, as soon as the horses were fixed up I lay down behind them with

clothes on and slept soundly all night.

Again I entered a new camp with dust storms. The first night we had no tents, the second and third we had a big E.P. tent and no sides. The sand blew for three solid days, they were the worst three days I had ever spent in any camp. It got in our food, eyes, ears and nose, sand everywhere but eventually our tent sides arrived and the storm blew itself out. Our entrance to the camp was not a good criterion of what this camp was going to be. I spent a very happy month here, was very comfortable, had very little work to do and Sergt. Fuzzard proved a very fine chap. When the time came I was very sorry to leave the camp. Water here was more plentiful so long as the pumping plant at Serapeum did not break down then we used to have trouble till it was fixed up again. In the afternoon we used to take the horses in to the Great Bitter Lake and swim them. It was here that I was struck with the pretty shells on the beach, Cpl. Griggs and myself rode in one day on our own and gathered a lot of the best to send home to Australia, much to the amusement of our mates.

It was whilst we were at this camp that an amusing incident happened. A large number of Infantry was camped a few miles from us who were being visited by the Prince of Wales, it was purely an unofficial visit and no notice was to be taken of the Royal visitor, he simply was on the Staff of our Commander-in-Chief. While passing some trenches one N.C.O. called his men to attention and then called for three cheers, the Prince moved on without the slightest recognition of the honor and our men not to be out done counted him out in the good old Australian way. This evidently caused the future King to ask what that meant and probably they told him it was our way of showing dis-approval. Of course the story passed from trench to trench and on to other camps. A few days later he was again greeted with three cheers, by this time he had learnt to understand our boys ways and he stopped and said a few words, the soldiers then counted him in, 9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1, "In" rang all along the trench. No doubt he will carry the story home to England with him and cause many a laugh.

He visited one camp and it was so unofficial that many never knew that we were so honored. I had a good view of him, a very slight unassuming man of perhaps 24, dressed as a Lieutenant of our Forces and he appeared to be always trying to keep in the back-ground as much as possible.

One evening two Officers were sitting just inside their tent and paying great attention to some object in a bucket of cool water outside the door, it had been a very warm day and some of our boys thought something was doing. As soon as it got dark they set to work, one daring spirit spent over an hour crawling along on his stomach until he circled the big E.P. Tent and at last reached the spot desired, he then had to wait his opportunity, dived his hand in the bucket and found a bottle, he returned the way he came, joined his mates and then opened the prize only to find it was empty so the Joker had the joke against him. Water at times was very scarce so it can easily be guessed other drinks were more so.

Whilst telling of jokes played on others I may as well tell of one where I was a party to suffer, whilst we were in this camp we four Corporals and two Sergts. made a private arrangement with the cooks and thus formed a small Mess of our own, it cost us a weekly donation but for the benefit obtained was well worth the money. Every time an N.C.O. from our Squadron came in from the trenches he was made very welcome to share our food. Not a day passed but there was at least one, sometimes four or five who dined at our expense. When we were to move from this camp the whole Squadron came in the night before and we gave a good meal to as many of the Sergts. as our food would allow. Next morning was a mad rush to get away and when we called over to the cook house for our breakfast found the other crowd had got in and eaten it, we were absolutely without any food and had to ride out on empty stomachs. This action caused a lot of ill feeling and, with the exception of one or two rotters, the perpetrators of the so called joke were heartily ashamed of themselves.

Very early in April we came over to the Ferry Post Rail Head where I am writing this from now. From the first day I developed a great dislike to the camp, so far the camps had been good, to all appearances this was the same as the others and yet I could not content myself. We were only allowed Bell tents, had no Mess sheds and by eating in these small tents millions of flies came home to roost, for nearly a month this went on until I lost my appetite and for four days I hardly ate a mouth-full, natural consequences I found myself in hospital for a week, in fact entered on Good Friday, and so spent the quietest Easter ever spent in my life. At the end of the week I was anxious to get back to my camp as there was every prospect of a fight,

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but I find I must date back a week or so to tell of an incident of interest. I have the date in another pocket book but cannot refer to it at present.

On a Tuesday morning a party of Light Horse chosen from the whole Regiment moved out of camp and travelled due east for two days. On the Thursday morning they arrived and surrounded a small camp of Turks, in those two days they covered 90 miles of barren desert without a drop of water on the road, everything had to be carried per camels. About 10.30a.m. the camp was attacked and after a fight of about an hour and a half every Turk was either killed, wounded or captured, including one Austrian Officer captured. There was not a moment to waste, a camp of some thousands of the enemy was ten miles further on and our men had to come home as fast as horseflesh could carry them, arriving about Saturday. The men were all loud in their praises of Captain Wearne, he galloped right through the camp emptied his revolver and came out the other side. We were fortunate in losing only one man, a Corporal from B Squadron of our Regiment who was buried on the spot but no time could be spared to bury the enemy numbering about 30. One Sergt. of B Squadron has been recommended for the D.S.O Medal. ~~Sergt.~~ McGuinness, cousin to some old friends of mine from Warrnambool district but there seems to be a diversity of opinion amongst the men as to his earning it so the least said soonest mended. One Austrian-Sergt. eventually wounded fought bravely. I believe he was not seriously wounded.

From now on the Turks began to advance, great preparations were made for their reception, troops rushed out from Ferry Post together with great supplies of stores, several of our patrols were supposed to have brushes with them and we were daily expecting orders to go forward to meet them when the flying machines reported that they had once more retired, leaving only a few patrols. I think all our men were very disappointed. Thousands of our Infantry had gone to France whilst we were left behind to guard the Canal and just when we hoped to get a crack it was taken from us. Many ~~then~~ thought very seriously of transferring to the Infantry so as to get over to France but when it came to doing the deed found they would not let us go. There was work of a kind to do here of which I will explain later and it was work that only mounted men could do so our luck was out and had to content ourselves best way we could out here in the desert.

In the meantime the conditions of this camp had improved considerably, whilst I was away in hospital. Mess sheds had been built. Not only did it give us more comfort to eat our meals but it removed all food from our tents and to a certain extent did away with the hoards of flies. Then came the Y.M.C.A. with their big tent with its canteen of Soft Drinks, tinned fruit, fish, tobacco, lollies and other things so much appreciated by the men. A library was opened with a fine collection of books, papers, games, gramophone, a small organ, paper and envelopes for writing, all free, and what was much appreciated by a great number of men, Church services of a Sunday evening. The Secretary was a Mr. Greenberg of Sydney. I soon became acquainted with him and also with his private tent where there was a very comfortable deck chair at my disposal. You folk at home don't realise what that last item means, but think for a moment, month after month and nowhere to sit but on the ground or on a hard form in the Mess shed. I have spent many a comfortable hour and hope to spend many more in that same chair.

The Y.M.C.A. is a wonderful Association and one the soldiers will never forget. The Churches in the camps at home do great work but they cannot follow us out here in the desert. The Y.M.C.A. comes as soon as a settled camp is formed. Personally they will always be able to claim a substantial Annual Donation from me in the years to come if I am spared to go home. Mr. Greenberg and I have become very friendly, I believe he was a Minister at home. We have many a long chat of home and friends in his tent. A few days ago I got two horses and we went for a ride, I gave him mine but he did not have too happy a time, it was the first time he had been on a horse and my mare was not long in finding the fact out. We arrived home without any accidents for which I was very thankful. I try to do my little bit in recompense for the many benefits received, the papers sent to me from home when read I always bring up to this tent, "Punch" coming every week to me is particularly looked for and for Victorians the "Weekly Times" is much sort after, so it proves they are welcome additions.

Inoculation seems to be the curse of the soldier, many of them do not believe in it but it is always compulsory, of course it means in most cases a very painful arm for a day or so, in some instances it upsets the man bodily for days. We have had it done twice lately as a precaution against typhoid. In both cases it took no effect on me. An amusing story can be quoted here though I won't vouch for the truth. A man's arm was pricked and the injection made but he said there was no pain, the second time they

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washed his arm thoroughly to find a shirt under the dirt, good reason why no pain was felt. There is no excuse for dirtiness in this camp, we have to carry our own water about a quarter of a mile but there is as much as you want for the carrying. Of an evening the troughs present an amusing picture, groups of men everywhere washing clothes from small canvas water buckets, a little further away is to be seen men stripped naked and sponging their bodies. We are quite safe as no female is ever seen here, black or white. It is a world of men. And that makes me think of what has just happened. At the present moment a gramophone is going sixty to the dozen in the tent here and they just had the cheek to put on the song entitled "There are nice girls everywhere." Surely the composer never dreamt that his song would be sung out here. As the song was going on one burly chap yelled out "Liar." It certainly seemed to be the essence of sarcasm.

There used to be a very pussy gramophone here but I notice to-day that they have a fine one now, one with circular discs and what is more welcome a fresh supply of songs and band pieces, absolutely everything is done for the amusement of the men. The Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. tells me that many times his balance is on the wrong side and yet the Association is always perfectly satisfied if he can say the wants of the men are supplied and they are contented, with it all there are times when some hoodlums take advantage of them and go away complaining, the great majority think the work done is wonderful.

On the 13th May being a Saturday I got a day's leave from camp and paid a visit to Ishmalia on the other side of the Canal. I got a train somewhere about 11a.m. We have no set time for trains to arrive or depart, they simply go out or come in when they think it is time for a run. I cannot explain the style of engine but must say the most ancient of the Australians appears to be up to date compared with these. The best and only way to convey to your mind an idea of railway travelling in this part of the country is for me to photograph the whole concern. We arrived at Ferry Post (the end of the line) soon after midday, at this point the Canal has to be crossed per pontoon bridge and then comes a two mile walk into Ishmalia. But such a walk, for the last 2½ months I had been on the desert, not a sign of a bush or tree, in some places is to be found tufts of dried up grass about twenty yards apart. At Serapeum we saw a few scrags of trees on the African side used as a protection from the wind and sand storms. Apart from this our views had been sand and sand as the boys say. This drive or Avenue from Ferry Post to Ishmalia was bordered on both sides with green trees and huge palms, the walk was one of the best I have seen in Egypt. One side is a fresh water Canal full of some small kind of fish as going along one can see them jumping out of the water, I believe they are very sweet to eat.

My first worry on arrival at the town was a good dinner and I was going to feast on the best for once. The French portion I passed over as nothing there seemed good enough for my present mood. At last I arrived in a more promising part and entered one hotel. In Egypt a man soon learns not to judge by outward appearances so I asked a chap who had completed a meal if it was good, his report was not satisfactory so Knuckey soon found himself outside. But I had been walking for nearly an hour and the inner man was making himself felt, so I followed three Officers knowing their ability to smell out a good feed. They soon anchored at the Belgian Cafe and I followed them upstairs. They went into one small room so I took the next one, being a very warm day I spread myself out for a comfortable feed. The first order was an iced lemon squash which was brought to me. But my joy was short lived the manager came to me and asked if I was with the Officers. Why was I taught to speak the truth I wonder for it robbed me of a good dinner, when I told him no he politely said he could not serve me as the place was only for Officers, once more Knuckey had to move on. By this time I was desperate so made straight for the French portion and pulled up at the New Zealand Cafe. My troubles ended here I had fried eggs and bacon till I was tired and topped off with a French omelette washed down with numerous iced lemon drinks. I may state that was the only food they could supply me with. I can safely say I accounted for six or eight eggs.

Dinner finished I started on a tour of inspection for the purpose of photographing any nice sights. The town itself is a failure, hardly a decent shop in the place and rather dirty, narrow streets, but what the business portion lacks the residential part makes up. The population of white folk is principally made up of Government and military people. They seem to have overcome the hot tropical climate by building nice cool homes and each house is surrounded by a lovely garden. I soon got to work with my camera and what with the homes and Public Gardens the spool was full before I knew where I

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was. Every street was planted on both sides with trees, the gardens full of Bouganvillia and other bright flowers. The fresh water Canal running right through the town is taken up on one side with gardens, on the other side with lovely homes. At the entrance to the town are the main Public Gardens, full of bright red geraniums and other flowers. In the Gardens I photographed some ancient carvings on stone similar to pictures one sees in illustrated Bibles. By 3.30p.m. I was full of Ishmalia and made my way back to Ferry Post to visit some friends in Tivey's Brigade. Late in the afternoon I met an old Warrnambool friend and we had a glorious swim in the Canal, brought some tinned fruit and biscuits for tea and ate them on the train perched up on top of an open truck loaded with goods. It's a funny little train and Officers and men climb for seats on top of the loaded trucks. Ishmalia on the whole impressed me favourably and is worthy of another visit if I can get away.

I must try now and give an idea of the class of work we are called upon to do here. Of course when not out of camp on duty we have the usual camp fatigue duties. I think I average one day in charge of some party out of camp and the next two days in camp in charge of some fatigue party. There is a long trough of water about 3 miles out of camp on the road to Ferry Post, we send a patrol out to it every twenty four hours in charge of a Corporal, take rations for men and horses to do the whole trip. I had a good deal of this duty when we first came to this camp. It is a very handy job, all that has to be done is watch and see that horses drank in their right trough and camels drink in theirs, prevent natives from using the water for their donkeys. The men on this job usually take all their washing with them and do it during the day, then in the evening they can switch the pipe off the trough, turn on the water and have that unknown luxury a cool shower.

The last time I was on this duty we had an awful time, it had proved a very hot day and we only had a little shed affair without any roof for protection. About eight at night we began to prepare for bed when a dust or sand storm came up. I had been in a few good ones up to now but this one was the daddy of them all, of course our shed went first pop, one man was covered with it but he stayed there hoping to escape some of the sand. I ran twenty yards to get a box to sleep with my head in it, came back to find my blankets gone, search as I would we could not find them. The horse picquet said they had not blown past him so I went back to where I had left them to find that they were completely buried in the sand. Well this kept up for two hours, absolutely impossible to sleep. At the end of two hours to make matters worse the wind ceased and it came on to rain, naturally our blankets now got wet. There was very little rain but still quite enough to do us out there on the open desert, after the rain it was all right till about midnight when the sand storm once more came on and we had a very miserable time till morning when our relief came out to take up duty. I might state that the condition of things was not much better in camp, certainly they had their tents but when a dust storm comes on they have not much protection. This storm lasted for two days and then blew itself out. Dust storms in Australia are bad but over here the fine sand strikes the face and hands and it feels like red hot needles. At Tel-el-Kebir where our reserves are camped a storm was raging when it came time to water the horses, we had about half a mile to go for water, just as we arrived home two stray horses galloped into the lines without their man, we waited for the chap who went out with them but as he did not turn up the Officers got anxious and sent a party out to search for him, eventually over a hundred men were out searching the desert and cooee-ing for two hours without any success. Nothing for it but return to camp, imagine our disgust to find him home having tea, we must have passed him with only a few yards to spare as we went out and yet no one saw him. The horse he was riding had thrown him and he found his way in on his own.

The above happened when I was at Tel-el-Kebir and is to give you an idea of sand storms out here.

Speaking of bucking horses brings to mind an incident that happened in our camp here a few weeks ago. A horse was causing trouble one morning so one of our chaps got on his back and we had a splendid exhibition of buck-jumping. At the same time Tivey's Brigade which had been out in the trenches was marching past our camp in all its glory with the band in front hard at it giving us some music. Our friend and his horse was very near the road and they bucked themselves right through the band, musicians went all ways and it was a case of "Finish music." I don't know what Colonel Tivey thought but the men all enjoyed a good old laugh before forming up again.

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But that is getting away from the subject I was on. Another duty we are all fond of is called The Railway Patrol. Four men and an N.C.O. leave our camp at 6a.m. and ride into Ferry Post along the railway line, a trip of about an hour and a half. On arrival we report to the driver of the train who then runs his old train out. We are not expected to hurry back as we carry a feed for our horses, so go down on to the Canal, feed the horses and have a lovely morning dip in the briny. I suppose by going through this you notice how our men take every opportunity offered to go into the water. When camped at Serapeum on the Canal it was no unusual thing to see five or six hundred men in the water and as the Canal was only about 120 yards wide the black dots in the water were pretty thick.

All stores that are carried out to the trenches on the camels must be escorted by one or two of our men but as this is not an N.C.O.'s job I have never been on it. Sometimes the men have considerable trouble with the nigger drivers, as they go through different infantry camps they hang back to beg "mungaree," and if the camel train comprises forty or fifty animals this causes great confusion. I have always been against knocking niggers about and at times they get very impudent knowing a man on horseback cannot approach near enough to strike, the horses go mad if anywhere close to a camel. One nigger had caused considerable trouble one day and ended up by calling the escort a vile name in English. The chap jumped off his horse, picked up a piece of wood and threw it at "Sambo". Mr. Darkie got hit but got a worse fright as he rolled off his camel. For the rest of the journey he was the best man in the mob and did a lot towards keeping order amongst his black brothers. The best plan for the men and one they soon found out is to take off one of the reins of their bridle and after a cut or two there is very seldom any more bother on that trip. A great trick is to make the camel lay down (on a hot day) when you remonstrate with your strap all you can get out of him is "Finish camel," meaning that the camel is knocked up, the nigger thinks then you will leave him and he can steal the water or goods on his camel. On these occasions the double rein comes in very handy.

I have given you some of our good duties, going by the rule of good things first let the bad ones come later. Night patrols are not sought after much, the only redeeming point being that there is a slight hope of having a brush with our friends the Turks. A few weeks ago there was every possibility of this but now there is not much chance. Three patrols leave every afternoon, each party being five men and a Corporal. One goes to the left flank whilst two go to the right. We report to the Officer in Charge of the trenches and he comes out with us to post the patrol and then leaves us for the night. We camp for the night at some suitable spot about 8 miles in front of our furthest trenches, our instructions are that during the night we are not to challenge but shoot anything that comes in front of us. If an enemy does appear one man must gallop back to report whilst the others retire slowly fighting, of course a man runs a risk of missing the camp, in all cases our camps can easily be missed even in day time. To miss the opening in the entanglements means we would be between the devil and the deep sea. We are not allowed unsaddle the horses all night nor even take off any of our equipment so it is not the sweetest job in the world. At 4a.m. we move out and link up with the other patrols, each man about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile apart and in view of his right and left flank. In this way we cover about five miles and then advance four or five miles forward. We then work our way back to the trenches, report and come back to our camp. You may be sure we sleep well the next night as no sleep can be obtained during the day. I have been getting a lot of this work lately but it has to be done so there is no good in finding fault.

If a man is that way inclined he can find many interesting features in this weary lonely desert of ours, our work requires us to make good use of our eyes and every little thing out of the ordinary needs careful investigation. Some of the formations of the sand-hills are wonderful. My idea of a desert used to be a great stretch of level sandy country, this is the case in some places but in others it is one continual run of ridges. Out on one of our patrols there is a marvellous view in the shape of three immense holes each one could accommodate a Regiment of Light Horse. To approach them from the south a man would go right up to the bank and then there was a sheer precipice of about two or three hundred feet. To view it from the south west about a mile away you can see the three holes, from this side you are on a level with the bottom of the hole as the bank forms a circle or horse shoe of three sides. It would be a fine hiding place even from our aeroplanes as they would more than likely fly over and not notice anything. The desert is full of these holes and gullies and it comes hard on the horses as they sink

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very deep in the sand. I saw a peculiar hill the other day whilst out on our left flank. It was about two hundred feet high and a plain land mark. The wind from the east and west seems to have blown on this hill until it was twisted into a huge S, the sides were as smooth as if they had been rolled and the wind had worked it up to such a state of perfection that from the distance the edge seemed to look like a knife. I felt at once for my camera only to find that it was full so had to pass on without a photo. We may travel over this hilly country for hours and then suddenly come on to a great stretch of level where a patrol can see an enormous distance ahead. No one can realise unless by actual experience how heartily sick and tired a man gets of this sand, sand and sand again. We are just situated where the Children of Isreal wandered around for forty years, poor old chaps, since coming over here I can sympathise heartily with them.

On Monday 22nd May we had a sham fight. The 8th Light Horse were supposed to be guarding certain ridges whilst Infantry were attacking. We were out of bed at 3a.m. and after an early breakfast moved out to our positions on horseback. At day break we soon picked out the advance guard of the 'enemy' in the shape of their cycle corp coming along the made road. Then the main body came on and high up as we were we could watch every movement and it made a grand site. From my point of view it was a silly position to attack; they made numerous attempts from both flanks but it was no use the last two miles between both sides was fairly level and we could have picked them off by the hundreds. Their only hope would have been to blow us to pieces with Artillery first and then advance. I believe the fight was voted in favour of us. On arrival back in camp again we were lucky enough to get a cup of tea so we were alright even with our early breakfast. Our men rather enjoyed the fun.

The Y.M.C.A. are ever anxious to provide amusement for us. If ever an opportunity comes along for a lecture on some interesting subject from a visitor Mr. Greenberg does his utmost to have it delivered of an evening in his tent. Last week we had one on a visit through the Holy Land. The tent was crowded. But last night we had a fine one (25th May) delivered by some Colonel, a Military Chaplain. The subject was the South African war. The defence of Elaan's River Camp by 500 Australians against 5,000 Boers under Des. Wett. He was a fine lecturer, and at times made the men roar laughing with his funny sayings. There was not standing room in the tent and it was one of the most interesting lectures I have ever heard on that war. Of a Sunday evening there is always a Church Service, if the services of a Chaplain cannot be obtained Mr. Greenberg himself will preach, and he is very plain spoken at times. The men like him very much as for myself I have a lot of little things to thank him for which makes life bearable here.

Before we start on the happenings of our next camp there is a little to say of the general impression of Egypt and the surrounding country made on me. I have had to rush this book from beginning to end for fear we were moved from the Ferry Post Rail Head before I had written up this account. But now I am up to date and can add to it as I like.

As I said before our first camp was at Heliopolis Racecourse, a suburb like Caulfield just a mile run from the city. It is really a residential suburb but since soldiers have come shops have sprung up. There are about two or three business streets and whilst our camp was there with all the Infantry at the Aerodrome, these streets presented a lively scene. Thou-~~and~~ sands of soldiers walking up and down with many small tables on the sides of the streets where one could enjoy the cool of the evening whilst having refreshments. No sooner would you sit at a table before a dozen little youngsters would fight to get to your boots to clean them. Every man would go through this performance, when we first arrived money was plentiful and clean boots the night before meant only a brush up in the morning for parade. But the attraction about this suburb was in the private homes and pensions. Not a poor house anywhere, lovely three or five story terraces and beautiful homes with their gardens. None of the black population or poorer classes lived here. But though the homes were fine looking I found by enquiring that they are run up in a very slipshod manner built of a kind of soft sandstone which could not stand a winter in our own country. They last for years here as practically speaking no rain falls but it would be a different case with most of them if they had to stand one or two of our ordinary Australian storms. Everything here is built to suit the climate and country. When we first arrived and before horses were issued we had to go for an hour's march every morning and all of us were struck with the beauty of the place. No matter where we go in the future or what countries we visit my thoughts of our three months at this camp can never be anything but happy ones.

My first introduction to the native villages was one Saturday afternoon

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when a party of us went for a ride. These places are a great contrast to what has just been said of Heliopolis. The slums of Melbourne are palaces compared with most of them, in most cases there is no pretence of streets, just mud humpies dumped down anywhere and though there is acres of room they cluster together as thick as flies in one little plot of ground. Usually there is two stories, the bottom one is occupied by the fowls, goats and donkeys whilst the top story is the home of the natives. I would not like to say how many families are in the one small hut, but two stories would not be as high as a single story cottage at home. There must be some awful outbreaks of disease in these places of a summer as there never seems to be any attempt at cleanliness in these native quarters, perhaps the out-door life they lead counter-acts it to a certain degree. The niggers themselves are a miserable looking lot, every second one stamped with some past disease and the men have a hang-dog look about them and yet when together they are a happy, childish lot, as simple as children in their amusements. I have seen camel drivers out here in the desert grown men walking along behind their camels with arms around each others necks and waists singing in a peculiar kind of sing song way just the same as one is used to seeing little girls four or five years old in Australia. These men will steal anything they can lay hands on, none are ever allowed approach near our tents and if an article is put down for a moment with a native near it will disappear. They are mad on "Mungaree" or bread and that is ever their cry if passing through one of our camps. The hardest piece of crust is most acceptable. At our Race-course Camp one old chap that I christened 'Dad' tacked himself onto me, used to bring water to me to wash in, polish my spurs etc. and other things, when not employed at his work in the stables, after each meal I would find some bread and take to him and judging by his behaviour he was well paid. His clothes were rather noticeable by their absence so I gave him my dungarees issued to me at Seymour many months before and he was like a peacock strutting around in them. I photographed this antiquity of humanity and he told his son who also worked at the camp. The son rushed up to me in a very excited manner and for a long time I thought I had done something awful until he led me to understand he wanted to be taken with the old man. I went through the performance without taking the photo and he was at once calm and happy. Speaking of photos I may say that the males are a great nuisance, immediately they see you taking one they work all sorts of schemes to be in front of the camera and a black man invariably takes a good picture but it is the hardest job in the world to get a photo of the women folk, they always cover up what little you can see of their faces. Only in one instance was I successful and in this case it was with the wealthier class, unknown to them. I got a beautiful picture of which I was very proud.

The higher class of Gypo is altogether a different race and then there are the mixture of different races and in many cases very hard to tell which are Egyptians and which are not. As I said before, I often sat in some busy Cafe with my ice cream or lemon drink in front of me watching the crowds going and coming, it was always an interesting sight for me. The men with their little skull caps and dressed as neatly as any city man at home and the women with their eyes and forehead only visible and dressed very nicely indeed.

As regards the cultivation of the country there is not much to be said. One quickly realises that without the Nile Egypt would be uninhabitable for all, black or white. This great river is the back-bone of the whole country, if the traveller sticks to the Valley of the Nile his journey will be one long trip through a land of plenty. No vacant ground and all the time I was there always green. It makes one think of our huge Chinese gardens. During one of our marches we went twenty miles along this river and for the whole trip it was under cultivation, not a fence to be seen anywhere but all marked off by small ridges a few inches high or perhaps a narrow stream of water into small plots about a quarter of an acre in size. This is all irrigated from the river and everywhere one sees them ploughing with an old wooden plough pulled by a couple of oxen or kind of buffalo. The plough consists of a single piece of wood digging into the ground and turning over the black rich soil which has been washed down by the river whilst in flood. At intervals one comes across a water wheel of the most ancient type with a bullock harnessed to it going round and round pumping water out of the main channels into the smaller ones and thus it is passed on to the farmer if one may be allowed to call him such. I must get a photo of one of these water wheels before we leave this country. The whole place makes one think of the Bible and the way they worked in those days. The natives seem to refuse to do work in a modern style. I saw a big drain being dug, it was from 20 to 30 feet deep and perhaps 40 feet wide. Just where they were

BOOK 1.

working was a chain of men from the bottom to the top and they got the mud up by hand-fulls, passing it on to each man above until the handfull reached the top man who threw it up on the bank. In some cases I believe baskets are used but in this instance they were not so up to date, all the time the workman carried on a sing song sort of noise.

Our first move from Heliopolis gave us an opportunity to see that wonderful work the Suez Canal, our camp was situated between The Great Bitter Lake and Ishmalia. It was not what I expected to see as I thought it would be much wider. All shipping has to move very slowly through the Canal. I think the speed limit is 8 miles per hour. Most of the huge Liners seem to pass through of a night time and two boats cannot pass each other, they must do all that out in (along) the Lakes. It was very interesting to see a big boat come along well lit up and crowded with well dressed passengers. You must remember that now we were out of the world in a sense as we never saw even a black let alone white woman and we found that such an incident as calling out and being answered by perhaps an Australian girl or at any rate a white girl was spoken of by the boys for days, such was the monotony of our lives and yet a time was soon to come when we reckoned that by returning to our camp at the Canal we would once more be well in touch with the outer world, for out here in this dreary desert a man realises that the smallest town in Victoria no matter how far back is acceptable. At present I am in a camp called Duntroon Plateau out at the trenches, not more than eighty in the camp and we get sick and tired of seeing the same few faces day after day. I don't know what I would do only for my horse, if a man likes horses he can put in a lot of time attending to that friend.

Whilst on this subject just a word or two about our best friend the horse. We have had them away from Heliopolis now for nearly four months and at times both food and water is scarce and yet if you search any stables in Victoria you could not find 60 or 70 horses looking better or perhaps as well, until this week they have had to stand in the sun all day and since it is quite 120 degrees in our tents you can form an opinion of what it must be in the sun. Of course it is one man one horse and their coats testify to the fact that they are well groomed. When they come in after a day's work with sweat running off them the average man is not satisfied just to groom his horse when it is dry but gets a bucket of water and a cloth and washes every inch of the animal's body and legs, then when she dries a good hard grooming produces a shine that will almost enable you to see your face as in a mirror, my own horse has a beautiful coat and gets plenty of attention.

And now to close the book just a few words about the desert we are in, on the Asian side of the Canal. Of a day time a man hates the very sight of it, sand hill after sand hill or perhaps as far as the eye can see one long stretch of sandy country but just where we are it is mostly hills. We have plenty of opportunities of studying it as for instance before 7a.m. to-day I had ridden over fifteen miles on a Patrol starting at 4a.m. But the whole thing has a different effect on me of a night. My only duty in this camp so far has been to go out in charge of a station on the night Patrol. We leave our camp about 5.30p.m. and ride out to wherever our particular station is, three at each post, usually about four miles in front of our trenches, camp there for the night with one man always on the watch, and at daybreak we link up with the stations on our right and left and patrol for about 8 miles out to Mt. Bole, each man about half a mile from his mate and at Mt. Bole we all join up and come back to our main camp together, arriving in, as I said before, at 7a.m. in time for breakfast. The day Patrol goes out at that hour and watches from Mt. Bole till 5p.m. Last night was rather jumpy work as we are expecting an attack to come to-night. It is wonderful what one's imagination will do, whilst I was on duty last night I could swear a man was creeping up the hill I was on, I knew it was only a scrubby bush and yet it seemed to come nearer, several times my finger was on the trigger and at last I held my rifle ready for instant use and walked up to the bush to find nothing there. Our duty is to fire five or six shots at any enemy in front and then retire back to the trenches but we are more afraid of the Tommies in the trenches than any Turks in front for we seem to have a very nervy lot here now. Three nights ago they shot one of their own Officers whilst he was on a tour of inspection, he was challenged and not hearing it did not reply. The poor fellow is expected to die any moment as he was shot in the head. Anyhow nothing happened last night and I don't go out to-night.

Camping out on the desert has its attractions, we never unsaddle nor take off our own equipment, simply lay down with a blanket around us when not on watch. The desert has a wonderful fascination of a moonlight night and I love to lay there with my pipe and dream of home and wonder what every-

one is doing as you are about eight hours ahead of us in time. Away miles behind, you can see the reflection of searchlights continually working on the Canal and it seems like company to see them, in front is a huge valley with sandhills on both sides and that is what we have to watch all night. Dreary and all as the desert is if one likes to keep his eyes open he finds many interesting sights. I have taken several photos at present undeveloped but am afraid they won't be a success as it is too vast a subject for so small a camera. Everywhere you will find huge holes made by the wind, one side level with where you stand and the other three sides formed into a circle with banks straight up in the air two and three hundred feet high, so large that a couple of thousand men and horses could hide from a Patrol. One hill is a good land mark, we call it Snake Hill and the wind seems to have blown from the east and west at once, it is hundreds of feet high and is twisted like an S but has more curves in it than the letter and it rises to a ridge like a knife. The day I was near it I didn't have my camera since then I have not been able to get near enough to snap it. But the greatest surprise I ever got was to be riding along one day and I came across a strange sight. Standing out in the open absolutely by themselves were two stalks without any leaves growing like a Bella Donna Lily grows, all along this stalk was one massive cluster of bright yellow flowers something after the style of a hyacinth but much more flower, the stalk of blooms tapered off to a cone and it looked remarkable out there in the sand, the photo I took was a failure for which I have great regrets since I have never been able to find any more search as I will. During a certain part of the year there are some very pretty flowering shrubs in parts of the desert but they are all burnt up now with the heat. One plant very common I am sure I have seen in the hot houses down at Brunnings Nurseries on Brighton Road.

I could go on writing of things of interest seen but harping on the one subject would make this very dry, it will be bad enough as it is I'm afraid so as I go on with the next book I must try and run little bits in as I come across them. I have tried to remember as much as possible and put it on paper as well as I could but ten months happenings was rather a tax to the memory. From now on I must try and keep this more up to date if possible. To read this account one would find it more interesting to have the collection of photos ~~xxx~~ beside them but we can do that later on. My next worry is how I am going to get this home, perhaps an opportunity will offer later on, at present there are no prospects of it, so my kit bag must carry it and there is always the chance of that getting lost as we move from camp to camp, my days of writing will then be wasted as it would not prove of much interest to any others than my own people. This certainly is the longest letter ever written by me.

Dear Everyone at Home,

Do not knock the book about any more than possible. It saw some rough handling before it came to me and I want it on my return home. Excuse all mistakes. I haven't got the patience to read it over.

END OF BOOK 1.
