

The first book has been completed and is ready for home, still I have not the faintest idea how it is going to get there.

About the 26th May we moved from Ferry Post Rail Head to the trenches. B Squadron was to be relieved by us (C Squadron). A & B Troops went out to the right flank, C & D company to the left. The day before we moved I caused a bit of excitement, I had been out on night Patrol and came into camp about 9.30a.m., having been on the move since four o'clock. Had soon had breakfast and after cleaning my horse I lay down in the tent and was soon asleep, (I had been on the move since 4a.m. and we get very little sleep whilst on a Patrol. At 11.30 the whistle blew for stables and as I walked to the Parade Ground I felt very green, it was a blazing hot sun, one of our worst, and as I stood in the ranks I had made up my mind to step back two paces and sit on some sand bags, that was the last I remember as I fell right back in a dead faint. Next thing I remember was coming to in one of the tents and Lieut. McGrath bending over me.

I did not want to report to the doctor as the Squadron would move out and I might have to stay back, so I lay in my tent stewing in the extreme heat and by evening felt much better. I think the cause must have been a rush of blood to the head brought on by coming into the direct sun from my sleep and standing in so hot a sun. I have been careful since not to rush out so suddenly, nothing has happened since, for a while I worried about it, but some queer things happen in this country until we get used to the climate and one soon gets hardened to them.

On Monday morning we got an early start to escape the sun and there was no rush and confusion, in all previous camps so much had to be left till the last moment such as pulling up horse lines, striking tents and packing them on the camels etc. None of that this time as we left everything standing for B Squadron to occupy and they did the same for us out at the trenches. They had the best end of the stick for our men had just the week previous completed fine stables and out here the work was in its infancy. It seemed awful to see our horses tethered out in such a blazing sun as we were now getting every day but the carpenters in C & D Troop soon got to work and within a week much to their credit had a cover on the stables and the horses seemed almost human the way they appreciated it.

And now we had to settle down to the new camp, every move so far seemed to take us further out of the world. Our camp is situated half a mile behind the trenches which are manned by the Royal Suffolks, a Tommy Regiment that has seen survival both in France and Gallipoli. We have nothing to do with the trench work, our duty is to Patrol out on the desert in front of the trenches for a distance of about eight miles night and day. The name of this camp is Duntroon Plateau Camp.

Four Patrols leave every evening at 5.30p.m., each consisting of three men in charge of a Corporal and the whole under a Sergt. We camped at our separate posts about three miles out for the night and at day-break (4a.m.) move out towards the east, every man is about half a mile from his right and left flank and within sight so that our camp provides about a mile line of patrolled country.

Camps on our right and left do the same and thus the whole of the Canal front is guarded, but I am only dealing with our section of the country here. We advance about six miles, searching every hole and gully and gradually close in at a point known as Mt. Bole where we turn for home once more having completed our night's duty, arriving in camp at 7a.m.

We have thus examined thoroughly the whole of the country that the day party have to pass over. They leave camp at 7.30a.m., made up of 1 Corporal, 5 Troopers and two Helio Signallers. It is unnecessary for them to advance in extended order, so go direct to Mt. Bole where one man at a time keeps watch over a stretch of country in front of our twelve miles with a powerful telescope. Thus a Helio message can be flashed the full length of the Canal from station to station in a few minutes if necessary or back to any camp if the enemy is seen at any given point. They leave Mt. Bole at 4.15p.m. and meet the night watch on its way out and report any strange incident that has been noticed during the day. I have had all night work until last Saturday, June 10th I think, when I had to take out the day men, it was the worst day's work I have had at this camp, at the foot of Mt. Bole is a very temporary shelter erected for the horses but nothing for the men to get out of the blazing sun. We had to lay in against the horses' feet, but a sand storm was raging and

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the day's work was far from pleasant. Only one man need be on duty at once, the rest are at the foot of the hill with the horses.

Although the night Patrol is the most sought after, it is also the most dangerous, our men are all agreed that if Mr. Turk did come and we were lucky enough to be warned in time it would be odds on as to whether we could get into the trenches without the Tommies shooting us. Our instructions are to go back to the camp and give the signal on approaching the trenches, only we would probably have bullets buzzing around our heads long before the signal could be heard.

I cannot understand these English soldiers, they seem to be a bundle of nerves even with their French and Gallipoli experience, only last week one of their own Officers was going the rounds and not hearing the challenge, was shot. The poor man lingered for two days and died. It seems strange that a mob of them as there are in the trench should give a single man so poor a chance as they know we are out in front and the enemy must alarm us first if they come. It's a good thing for a party of them that we are on the outposts instead of their own men. A party of them were out one day and had been delayed, unknown to our Patrol. Just at dusk the Australians saw a party of about six advancing in extended order away out on the desert, just the way an advance party of the enemy would come. One of our men wanted badly to shoot, but as we were there and behind the rise, we reckoned we were good enough to let them come closer, imagine our disgust to recognise Tommies not Turks, had it been the other way about the English would have fired first and done the recognising part after. In broad daylight the other day they fired on one of our Officers in the distance.

The Australian seems to be a different nature all together. We had received information that an attack was to be made on June 6th. I was on night Patrol on the 5th., nothing happened. On the evening of the 6th a Tommy came galloping over the hill to our camp in a great state of excitement with the news that a party was advancing on the Howitzer, our Officers issued no orders and knowing our rifles and ammunition were ready, we simply continued with what we were doing, mainly lying on the sand smoking.

There was a lot of rushing around in the other camp for an hour when our excitable friend once more galloped over to say it was a false alarm, he seemed quite surprised to find us still at our smoking. I think he expected to find us half way into the Canal.

That reminds me of something that occurred about 40 miles further along the Canal last week, an enemy aeroplane flew over the New Zealand camp dropping bombs but missed them, he next came to the Light Horse camp, the first shot destroyed the wireless station, the next bomb got a number of men and horses, killing some and wounding others. On the next day the enemy attacked the English camp and the New Zealanders (Light Horse) were sent out to help them, they met the Tommies rushing back to meet them. Our men went forward and with very little trouble drove them (the enemy) back and brought in the Tommies' gear. This did not happen in our part of the country, but an eye witness in the shape of a N.Z. man told me of the incident himself and I believe it to be perfectly true.

So far we have not had any of that excitement, but although a great number of us have so far never been under fire, I have perfect confidence in the way they will conduct themselves when their time comes. Our Patrol now and again come across signs of the enemy and our aeroplanes tell us there is a camp of them behind some hills about 15 miles out from the Day Patrol Hill via Mt. Bole. A few days ago we recognised a column of smoke rise from just about where they are supposed to be camped, as it is, waiting is killing work.

June 19th. Three weeks since we came out to this camp. Nothing is ever doing in the shape of a fight and yet everyone must always be keyed up to convert pitch as our friends are not so very far away, they now and again have a bit of a scrap at someone of the numerous camps situated along the Canal, but so far we have not been molested in any way. The one great worry of our lives now is what is eventually going to become of us. The Light Horse (3rd Brigade) are now as far as I can tell the only Australians now in this beastly country of Egypt. The two hundred thousand of our brothers in the infantry are either over in France or England. Our men are continually talking of when their turn comes to move on, it is the one subject that never gets worked out. Immediately a visitor from the Rail Head turns up the first question is "What Furphy (rumor) have you brought with you?" Some wild ones seem to get invented,

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they are always "the dinkum oil" till some fresh one comes along. We are so fed up with the desert that a move of any sort would be hailed with cheers, at one time we were to be sent to Ireland as Mounted Police. Now if there is one branch of our Army hated by its own men the M.P.'s are the ones, for one of our men just to joke about joining that Unit is to bring sarcasm on his head and be called vile names. One of our men joined at Heliopolis six months ago, the boys have not forgotten it yet. With all this feeling I believe we would have gone willingly to Ireland, but as usual it was only a "furphy!"

Another one was that we were to go up to Alexandria for a spell and then move on to fresh scenes, once more our hopes went up but that report is now over a month old, a dozen more have come to light since. One which was really a genuine one at last, soon got nipped in the bud. Some mounted men were required to go down south to German, East Africa, our Brigadier General "The Old Bull" as we call him, jumped in at once with an offer for the 3rd Brigade to go down. In all the fighting of this great war none would have suited us better, not only are we trained for the style but our Australians proved in the Boer War that they were especially adapted for that class of country and mode of warfare, but no it was no good, our C.O. was told we had to stay and guard the Canal.

English, yes, many were sent to East Africa, men who in many cases I am told had lived their lives in London to go and do mounted work in a wild tropical country. In any case had he lived in the country all his life the Tommies acknowledge that we are more suited for the work. Undoubtedly General Godly must know what he is doing but it seems a strange move from our point of view.

That "furphy" was the most welcome of any so far had it only come true. But today a fresh one is in circulation, brought direct from Zealun a suburb of Cairo where our Military Schools are situated, this one is absolutely too good to be true and yet some of us are fools enough to let our minds dwell on it and hope something is going to come of it. We are supposed to go from here to Weymouth in the south of England for a short spell and then go on to France dismounted. None of us wish to give up our horses as we see what the poor Infantry have had to go through in this country and yet to get to France every man in the Regiment is willing to shoulder the pack. But it is no use, nothing will come of the report and something fresh will come along next week. This war will come to an end and our fellow Australians will return home from their hard fought battles in France and some day at Broadmeadows or some other Parade grounds a huge Muster Parade will be held when the space that should be occupied by the 8th Light Horse will be vacant. Then the G.O.C. will ask who should be filling it, and the Authorities will suddenly remember that our Regiment should be there, the records will be turned up and it will be published in our "Argus" and "Age" - "Missing, 8th Light Horse, last heard of in the Arabian Desert about the year 1916."

I have always been optimistic and said to my mates to just wait as our turn will come in time, but even I am losing my faith in such hopes as so far we have clung to. As far as fitness is concerned we are not equal to the raw recruit away in the camps of Australia. Our work is tedious and tiresome but not hard, there is no comparison in my own case now as three weeks after I entered camp in Seymour.

Out in this desert for four months, food none too good and there is no denying we have to face our share of hardships, in our camp at present a man cannot even get a dose of salts, every man in camp is asking for them, the natural consequences is that with the slightest scratch on the arm turns to septic poisoning usually, every second man has a hand or arm or leg with a bandage. And yet all that we want is a change for a week or so to some camp near civilization and our men would once more be fit for any fighting the war could offer. Many of us want to face it without the rest. Would welcome anything to move out of here.

I have mentioned different English Regiments whilst writing this account. Perhaps a few words here would prove of interest. In saying we are the only Australians in Egypt now, I cannot be far wrong. Six weeks or two months ago we had about one hundred and seventy thousand of our men here but as far as I can gather unofficially they are all in France and England, at Tebel Kebir where our Details are quartered there were thirty thousand, today only the Details are quartered there. Ferry Post a few miles from here we had a large camp of Colonials, today they are all English troops. Our last camp viz. Ferry Post Rail Head in our time was made up of our own Regiment and a few Engineers. Now it is four

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or five times as large and with the exception of A and B Squadron of the 8th, the camp comprises of Tommies. The first English I came in close contact with was at Serapium (OR SERAPEUM) Rail Head. The Ayrshire Royal Horse Artillery comprised of men from Scotland who had gone through an eighteen months Course of solid training at home and came direct to our camp from there.

I made a few good friends amongst this Battery and they were what the Australian termed hard cases. For a long time I could not follow their conversation as it was very broad Scottish and often used to think how certain friends in Melbourne would have loved to hear them talk. A party of four or five of them would come to our tent every night and would stay till about 11p.m. One man by the name of Mollie McPherson would have us in roars of laughter all night and we gave them such a good time during our stay there that if Mollie ever heard one of his countrymen speak slightly of us he would at once want to fight him. Many funny things happened in connection with our friends there and the morning we came away they all came over to say good-bye and take a group photograph which I now have in my collection. I have spoken already of the men we have had in the trenches here, and am afraid none of us were sorry to hear that they had orders to move to another camp. Then there are the Royal Sussex, the King's own Rifles (Welsh) and numerous other Units, one cannot remember all who are in at the Rail Head.

But there is a Regiment, or portion of one out here in our trenches now, came from the Rail Head and since their Arrival at that camp have interested me very much. They are a mixture of Negroes, Creoles and white men, in appearance only, I suppose they all have black blood in their veins, they are known as the W.I.'s as they came from the West Indies, hailing from Mexico and the numerous small states of Central America such as Hondorous, Guatamala, British Guiana and other places. Some are the purest of negroes and yet one cannot associate with him the name of nigger as there is such a vast difference between them and the local make of blacks. Gypo nigger is a miserable, crawling, disease stricken individual, to your face a cringing being with his whining "Saieda" and steal your socks behind your back, always got the cry of "Give Mungaree" on his lips and ready to accept the rottenest of food as a gift.

Put him up beside these West Indians and one soon sees the difference. The latter are the well built race, some giants, very neat in their uniforms and seem to carry themselves with a dignity all their own, superior in many cases to the white man and yet they do not push themselves into our company, probably because they have received many a snub from the cads and ignorant ones of our race.

They talk no language but English, write home in English and seem to be Englishmen as much as we are, only black. They never speak first but once you break through their reserve, you find yourself talking to an intelligent thoughtful man who knows as much if not more than yourself. I watched them at the Church Service last Sunday night in the Y.M.C.A. and they sang as lustily our hymns as anyone could sing. Although the nigger here seems to think colour means relationship he soon wakes up to his error, one of the Gypos would never dream of striking a soldier although I am sorry to say many times they have cause to, one day last week a dispute arose between two of the blacks and the Gypo struck the West Indian with a stick. If he has any brains he will not attempt it again, for I don't doubt but what he thought the butt end of a rifle was an earthquake which had struck him when the Indian had finished with him. Now that we have these men out near our camp I expect to see more of them and probably will have more to write about them later on.

Then I have mentioned the Bickerneal Camel Corp and also sent home photos of them. They are a fine race of men, not so large in build, if tall they are thin, but usually short and wirey, no matter what condition you find him under, he has the same happy smile and a greeting of "Salaam Johnny", and they think a lot of us Australians but usually have no time for the Englishmen. They are passionately fond of knives or wristlet watches, in fact they would almost sell their souls for either but they are as honest as the day. On one occasion I wanted one to give me a badge from off his uniform, they said they had none to spare, a few minutes after one was admiring my wristlet watch so I took it off and handed it to him for a closer inspection, he calmly pulled out a badge and handed it to me and pocketed my watch. Of course I got

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excited and though mounted on a swift camel he did not try to get away but gave me back my watch for his badge, he thought it a fair exchange, needless to say I was of a different opinion. These men do day Patrol on camels out in parts where we cannot go on horse back. We often come in contact with them and if they speak English the conversation is very interesting.

We seem to be in a very strange country as regards to climate. The present month is real summer, of a day time it must register quite hot at about 115 or 120 degrees in the shade, our hot winds must run it up 50 degrees higher for they do scorch at times, and yet last Saturday some of us went through a peculiar experience whilst on night patrol. I have already told you how we go out in groups of threes and camp for the night some miles in front of the trenches, then in the morning advance in extended order to Mt. Bole six miles further on. The morning in question we started to advance at 4.30a.m. through a dense fog, impossible to see fifty yards ahead and the fog was that bad that our clothes were soon wet and drops of water hanging on our eyebrows and moustache. I pushed slowly forward in a South eastern direction and though I crossed many tracks they were old ones. At about 6a.m. I came across what I was looking for namely the track of our day Patrol about a mile from Mt. Bole and soon picked up my mates. We are all supposed to return to camp together but on a morning of this sort they usually straggle into camp in twos and threes but this time we came in together as every man was able to meet. We soon learnt to trust our horse more than our own knowledge and it never fails. Once during the morning my horse whinnied and a reply came back not a quarter of a mile away on my left. I tried to find the man and found out after that he tried to find me and yet we did not meet for over an hour and that was miles away from the spot, if we had left it to the horses they would have done it in a few minutes. If a man gets lost he lets his horse go as it pleases and always he lands at the entrance of our barbwire Entanglements. On more than one trip a horse has come galloping into camp during the night leaving his rider stranded out on the desert. One morning my mare was loose and just made a start for home but at a call from me she waited and I was saved an unpleasant experience.

July 1st 1916 - Sunday: Our stay in this camp has come to an end at last, we are to move into the Rail Head early to-morrow morning. "A" Squadron is to come out to relieve us. Although none of us were anxious to come out here in the first case nearly every one is sorry to be leaving, we are just as far from the civilized world at one camp as the other, out here a man knows what he has to do, gets his regular duties and after that can rest satisfied that he won't be interfered with again until it comes his turn for duty. The case is altogether different at the Rail Head, the Squadrons will be joined up and thus numerous fatigue duties must be done every day, we have more work to do, and more bosses, still one cannot choose his camp, so to-morrow morning our troubles once more begin as our Officer very aptly put it this morning.

I have not had any cause to complain during my stay here, had two visits to Ismailia and could have had more for the asking, but anyone knowing that town will quite understand that two was enough, during my last visit I saved some seeds of a tree very common over here and which I have long been trying to rescue, they are on their way home now and have sent full instructions for cultivation as they would be a novelty in Edgar Street. I have never seen the flower in Victoria.

The principal reason that took me to Ismailia for my second visit was to get some films I had forwarded to Cairo to be developed. I was disgusted to find my long dirty trip was in vain as the Military Censor at Cairo had taken possession of them. I have written to him giving details of every picture taken by me in the hope that they will be returned only my own opinion is that it's a case of "Mafish Photos". It makes a big break in the collection in Australia as some of the pictures I cannot get repeated. Crossing the Canal on my way back I got a splendid view of a War Boat coming up stream which had provisions on board for aircraft, and with anti-aircraft guns mounted on her. I took two pictures, one in front and one behind and developed them. In future my films must not be sent to Cairo or they all will go the way of their late brothers.

Well as I have already said after to-day we are finished with patrols for a while, I suppose they consider we are needed here and yet it seems

an awful farce, when we first came out there was supposed to be a hope that the enemy would attack and our night patrols seemed necessary but nothing has ever come of it and we go out night after night, do our ride in the morning and come home again, same report every morning "Nothing doing". One man has written home to say he is boundary riding but we have our joke, that the duty of the night Patrol is to keep big black beetles that are very plentiful here from invading our camp.

One hard case came in the other morning with the report that during the night three of them advanced on him, he fixed his bayonet and after a hard fight accounted for two of them, but the third was able to dodge him and got through to our camp.

The first really severe month is over, the next two I believe are the worst but we have had some very trying weather lately. Generally speaking the cold nights are gone, our extra pair of blankets have been called in, we are only now supposed to have one per man and no-one ever dreams of sleeping in our tent, I am afraid there will be a lot of rheumatism in Australia in years to come as usually by morning our blanket is pretty wet with dew, the fogs are very severe and prove a source of annoyance to the Patrols in the early morning.

As soon as the sun comes up it begins to burn and by 8a.m. the heat of the day has commenced. I suppose the temperature must go up to 110 or 115 degrees and it's the same thing day after day, never any cool change. The only change we have is perhaps for a week sand storms will rage continually and then we have only the heat without the sand, and it is a solid heat without any shade.

Until a fortnight ago we had only the single tents but now those are recalled and all tents are double. It is a decided improvement for they are very fine tents. The camp routine has not been severe, our two Officers can be and are severe when necessary but a certain amount of slackness can be indulged in here and they allow it to be so.

We turn out at 5.30a.m. for stables, exercising horses, grooming and feeding, and breakfast at 6.30 and rifle inspection at 8.30. At 9a.m. we water the horses, 11.30 feed and 12 noon lunch. 4p.m. is to water, groom and feed horses once more with our own tea at 5p.m., when all men not on duty are free for the night, some enjoy the cool, smoking and yarnning, watching the rest kicking the football.

July 5th 1916: We came in from Duntroon Plateau camp (the trenches) on Monday July 3rd., back to the old camp at Ferry Post Rail Head, great changes have happened here since we left about six weeks ago, at that time our 8th Light Horse was practically the whole of the camp and with the Engineers we had a few Australians and a small Company of Infantry doing fatigue work. To-day we have a camp four times as large wholly made up of Tommies and one Company of British West Indians. We would willingly have stayed at our last camp as this is 'out of the frying pan into the fire' and the men are worked much more, then again there are Officers every where and a man cannot call his soul his own most of the time.

But that is not our complaint, we are having considerable trouble over the food, there is no denying that the men are only half fed and if it was not for the food bought with our own money at the canteens, many a man would go hungry. Even as it is we will only get up from one meal in six feeling at all satisfied. Over in Australia a doctor once said that a man should always get up from the table feeling he could eat a little more, it sounds bad enough but when put into paradise it feels a jolly side worse, even if a man does have a feed of their issued food, an hour afterwards he is as hungry as ever, it may be filling but far from satisfying.

For breakfast, (the one meal a man really feels fit for, since he turns out at 4.30a.m. and exercises horses for an hour) there is meat served out usually a piece of mutton or beef about half the size of this page (i.e. HALF THE SIZE OF A SMALL NOTE BOOK * NOT THIS TYPED SHEET) together with a piece of bacon fat (very rarely any meat on it), natural consequence is that we must dig into our jam and as one pound tin has to do four men for a day, we must inevitably run short later on. The midday meal is made up wholly of bread and marmalade, each man gets half a loaf of bread per day very often less, it usually is some time before we get it but that is not bad enough to prevent us from eating it, one loaf in four will have black mould running through it, then even a soldier cannot face the music and our mates cut themselves short by sharing theirs with the

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unlucky two who got the crook loaf. In the evening we got our hot meal, for seven months I have faced stew practically every day until a week or so ago there was an uproar from the men so stew was abolished and then the meat was roasted, it was worse than ever, the small piece of meat per man was of no value and the vegetables comprising of carrots, potatoes, marrow, onions and beetroot were tossed into one dish and mixed up like pigs food by the Mess Orderlies. They have no other alternative as only one dish is allowed and every man wants one of each vegetable, there is no denying that he gets a little of each but the mixture is such that one must be very hungry to face it.

I cannot see any excuse for all this mix up, a stranger visiting our lines would see two steam cookers and in many cases cooks who have been to a cooking school at Alexandria, it is easily understood that this sort of food is not dished up to the Officers and Sergts. Mess, in the former case of course they are allowed so much to buy extra food and Sergts. are always allowed to pay money out of their own pockets to form a Mess, with the Officers no complaint can be made as they have their own cooks but from what I can see of it (though I never join in the complaints made by the men amongst themselves), there is too much time spent by the cooks preparing special dished for certain small Messes, whilst the food for the men is tossed in and allowed to cook itself.

There are numerous articles which according to regulations should be issued regularly, we see them once in a blue moon, one cannot say where it goes to but a lot of us have a very good idea.

To emphasize what I said here is a case worth quoting. A man in our troop was caught asleep on stable picquet, he was sentenced to 28 days, number two field punishment and left for Ferry Post to carry out his sentence. He returned to-day and informs us that the food here was absolutely not to be compared with what he had been getting, men have been known to commit a crime and be sent away so as to get a chance of decent food. Every time a man goes on leave, their one thought is that he will soon be able to get a square meal in the city. The three times I have visited Ismailia my first and (SOMETIMES SPELT 'ISMALIA'. B.K.) perhaps only thought was to find a good hotel or restaurant and tuck in.

Judging by this week's experience the jam question could be easily remedied, three solid months of marmalade seems to have been the last straw and one day we protested to the Orderly Officer, the following day black currant was issued. For such a number of men it would take more than twenty four hours to alter the make of the jam and yet this came to light, marmalade has again come on the boards, one cannot help asking who would have got that jam had the row not been made and since it was so easily obtained on such short notice who is getting it now. Now and again a tin of plum jam comes to light, everyone knows that all the food is contracted for, where is the rest of the plum jam contract. Something seems to be very wrong, as I said before I never have anything to say, but like the Sailor's Parrot, I think a lot. Up to now I have written a fair amount, this being the second book and I have tried to keep all complaints out of my work. Now I am on the subject I may as well do it properly. Our friends in Australia are working day and night to provide comforts for we soldiers, but usually it is so poor and tin pot that one wonders who could be so foolish to send it over, there are rare occasions when it is good and to prove that a screw must be loose somewhere, use for example our last issue received about a fortnight ago.

That was undoubtedly our best issue and there is no doubt it was satisfactory. I can hardly enumerate now what we got, but every man got a nice enamel plate, one big handkerchief, two small tins of milk, two packets of Peter Pan cigarettes, then the sections got issued to them to divide up between the men, tinned fruit, powdered milk, milk food, tins of lollies, sauce, pickles and other small luxuries. The reason for such a good issue as far as I can see is explained in the fact that a man was sent from Australia expressly to see that the food reached the quarters it was meant to reach, the natural consequences was that we got the proceeds of the money earned by our loyal women folk, who are doing their share in this war.

One more complaint and then perhaps I will be finished. We are told by some that our members of Parliament have taken this up, at anyrate they sent us here and it's nearly time they did something for us over here for it is not a bed of roses out here in the desert. Many of them are neither use nor ornament over there, perhaps if they were forced to come here it would do some good, as a day's work might be got out of them

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(if they have it in them), a great number of them are within the age limit and when they say they are of more use at home than over here, they must value their services as soldiers on a very poor basis since their work in Australia is very little indeed. But to this complaint and then "Mafish".

The tobacco issued to us is absolutely rotten, one man is supposed to be keeping a sample of each brand to take home, he will have a load I'm afraid. From the time we came out on the desert till a week or so ago we got a fresh brand almost every issue, two or three were rather good, but they must have been trying to find the worst as it worked down to that, until we got down to the lowest grade of "Black Cat", at last they had reached their limit, nothing could be worse than that and so they issue that every week now, the man cannot smoke it or if he tries it ruins his pipe, the stuff is vile and nine out of ten throw it away, tobacco speaks for itself when a smoker away from civilization with hours on his hands throws away the only tobacco he can obtain and gives up smoking.

I wanted to send a tin of this particular brand home, needless to say the censor tabooed such a thing. At the Rail Head we have canteens and buy our own, surely our members can remedy such a simple thing as the men's issue of tobacco and cigarettes for many a man will put up with bad, or a scarcity of food if he can get a good smoke two or three times a day. And now I have had my say on this question let us close it down for a while, and will try and not harp on an old subject.

July 12th: It seems strange that I should write down all our grievances on the 8th, since then they have improved 100% and no man can find fault with the present condition of things in our Mess shed. I believe some of our men took it upon themselves to draw the attention of the head of our camp to the state of affairs, we very often get two hot meals a day and the stew dished up is of the best. Our cook seems to fry the onions and then put them in the stew which gives it a very good flavor. The joints are good and at present we are getting a bit of a variety, porridge one day, boiled rice the next, if things continue as at present there will be more satisfaction.

As we came from tea to-night a great treat was in store for us, a Brass Band belonging to the Royal Field Artillery (an English Regiment) had come to pay our lines a visit, they planted their music Stands on our football grounds and played for over an hour. I suppose in reading this you simply think for a band to play it only means as much as if one took a walk to some park on a Sunday afternoon and heard a band.

It meant a thousand times more to us than that, since we left Heliopolis nearly six months ago, the only approach to brass music for us had been the sharp shrill notes of a bugle giving some unwelcome call and soon after we arrived at the Canal even that was put an end to and a whistle used. To-night one had just to close his eyes and dream, though it was an English band, most of the music was familiar, one piece played often by the Warrnambool Band years ago, another would send our minds back to the Theatres at home, a third piece was one I had often heard in the Melbourne Botanical Gardens and the whole performance took us back once more to civilization. I never used to take much notice of music whilst at home, but after six months silence I lay on the sand and enjoyed myself. My camera was useful, I took a photo of them.

There is not much love lost between the English and our boys I'm afraid. It seems a great pity for I find some of them are fine fellows but others are not much chock, still the same things apply to our own boys also. A couple of weeks ago they almost came to blows, some argument cropped up in front of the canteen (I suppose the beer was talking) there were about four of our boys and a mob of Tommies, things looked bad for Australia, but it only took a minute or two to get word to the Y.M.C.A. tent when the 'Kangaroo feathers' soon received reinforcements and the Tommies started running around saying they had come to fight the enemy not their brother soldiers. There is a sentence there you will not understand, I spoke of Kangaroo feathers. The third Light Horse Brigade have been issued with Emu plumes, it is a crime to even go on stable duty without the plumes in your helmet. I saw our Major refuse one man Alexandria leave simply because he came out to stables one morning without them. The plumes look well and of course the Tommies want to know what bird they belong to, we tell them they are Kangaroo

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feathers and some of them swallowed the joke. It is remarkable ~~the~~ how the British West Indians and the Australians pull together, the English are hated in many cases, but in their opinion the sun shines on our boys. We treat them as equals, the Tommies look down on them. They are a splendid class of men, and almost all have had some college education, an Englishman called one a vile name the other night. The West Indian knocked him down and then gave him a piece of his mind, and the air was sulphurous (if I can use the expression) but the Indian drove some solid truths into the Tommy's thick head. The Australians cheered and the English were silent. Still you must not think we are enemies, we are all one big family and should Mr. Turk come he will find we quarrel but can fight together when necessary.

July 20th - Wednesday: As can be seen by the entries which are few and far between the life in camp must be very monotonous, nothing ever happens worth recording. Last Monday our Regimental Brass Band (which is stationed at our Bridge Head Quarters at Serapium Rail Head) paid us a visit for two days, we had lots of good music, they would play in one of our Mess sheds for a couple of hours in the afternoon and then again out in front of our tents in the evening.

It could easily be seen that the men appreciated the treat, they all lay out in the sand smoking and listening to the music. On Tuesday evening after playing in the lines till dark, they retired to the Y.M.C.A. tent, cleared a place for the Band and gave us a concert that would cost money to hear in Australia. The Band left us early Wednesday morning.

I believe the "Bulletin" has taken up our case by asking the question, "Where is the cold-footed 3rd Brigade?" and then their answer was "Only a little ant and the enemy know". (Our Brigadier General's name is Anthill.) It is hard to be branded cold-footed for being compelled to stay here, we are thoroughly disheartened at not getting away to France and that sick of the whole thing that the least said soonest mended.

I came over last November feeling keen and anxious to do something, to-day I absolutely don't care what happens, my case is the same as every other man with me here, we are simply living here against our will and waiting for the war to end so as to allow us to go home.

July 29th - Thursday. At last some excitement has come our way, we can only depend on rumor, our Officers tell us nothing, but news leaks out all the same, the enemy have bombed Suez thirty miles south of us, and we hear there is heavy fighting at Kantana About thirty miles north, the enemy are also supposed to be advancing down towards our locality of the Canal zone. At present it is believed that our 3rd Brigade is to move out on Tuesday, some say to go up to Kantana and others think it is to go out and meet the advancing forces. I prefer the former as there is always the chance of something doing up there and it would probably mean a permanent move from this camp. The sooner we say "Mafish" to here the better pleased all of us will be. Anyhow there must be something doing this time, our rest camp has been closed up, the men that arrived there on Tuesday for their eight days were recalled hurriedly on Thursday and ever since there has been a feeling of excitement through the camp. Last night the boys went to bed singing and feeling happier than they have felt for many weeks. And our only hope is that this time it won't turn out a false alarm.

November 1st. Over three months since I made an entry here, it seems much longer as in that three months such a lot has been crammed in and we have had our share of hardships and also hard work, now that it is finished for a week or so and we are supposed to be here at Romani resting I must see what I can make of the few notes I was able to keep whilst out on the front line, they are short and in many cases hard for even me to understand myself only one good thing the dates are correct and my memory must supply all the details of our three months out on the firing line. With reference to the fighting. I will only put down incidents and things that happened just in my particular spot, one could fill books of the yarns he hears after the fight is over, but after twelve months experience in the Army a man finds that he can only believe half of what he sees and nothing he hears.

On July 27th the Regiment left Ferry (SOMETIMES WRITTEN IN DIARY AS 'FAIRY') Post Rail Head for Ballah Bunyah, our long looked for move

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had come at last, rumors were constantly coming in of fighting around Romani and this move was taking us directly towards that part of the country. I will always remember that day, we started early to clear up everything, the night before I had said good-bye to my friend Arthur Bliss at the Y.M.C.A., we were both sorry to part, though a Queensland boy, we had spent many an hour talking of home and home folk, what we wanted to do on our return, and also had many a little picnic in his tent when parcels came by the home mail.

The London Yeomanry arrived at about 10a.m. to relieve us and we looked rather a rag time mob, our horses were loaded from head to tail with blankets, bags, pannicans, plates and numerous other things hanging from every available place on the saddle, as we formed up and marched out of camp after an early dinner. As one looks back on that move he cannot help but smile for we soon learnt to do without all these things and travel about with only bare necessities on board.

Just as we got clear of the camp an order was given which necessitated the 8th doing some galloping to get into position, the fun started then, some of these articles were not tied on securely and of course had to go, all along the track for a couple of miles were water buckets full of articles of clothing, feed bags, plates, mugs, caps, undoubtedly our tracks could be followed by what we left behind, everyone was happy and each time a man made an attempt to save some loose article he would be greeted with "Let her go, the Turks are sure to have plenty more".

I might say that months after this move the N.C.O.'s were attending a lecture given by our Brigadier Major McLaren and he spoke of this particular march, and whilst condemning it, he compared it to a march made by us later under different circumstances, where every man was almost dead from exhaustion, had been in the saddle for about 36 hours (almost without a spell) and after riding all night attacking a place at day break and marching back again, arriving at camp at 8p.m. and all without confusion, so different to our exit from Ferry Post Camp.

About 6p.m. we arrived at Ballah Bunyah camp, so different to our previous camps, here were trenches and wire entanglements, and fortifications of all sorts, it was a huge camp but very compact. That night and the next day we had to camp outside the redoubt waiting for stables to become vacant, it was a very hot day and the little shade we got from our blankets stuck up on the rifles was very meagre still we soon learnt to put up with those discomforts later on. A few of our horses died after that trip and one chap who had always caused great fun on account of his silly talk seemed to go right off his head, some said he was working to get sent home to Australia, if so he proved a good actor as three months after his name was read out in orders for going home. Personally I think he went mad in real earnest, no shamming was needed.

On Sunday 31st July we once more packed up and moved into our proper position, inside the redoubt and for a change fine stables were already built and waiting for us, we soon had our horses comfortable and our gear in our tents, the rest of the day and Monday was spent getting things squared up and having a look at our new home. The impression created was on the whole a good one, it appeared to be a comfortable camp and we soon had everything ship shape little dreaming that all our work was for such a short stay as from now on our life was to be one mad and yet orderly rush for months to come.

On Wednesday evening I went on in charge of the Guard and on Thursday August 3rd. C Squadron were ordered out to an Oasis some 15 miles out in front to dig wells, as my duty was not up till 6p.m. that night I paraded early that morning to ask to be relieved of my duty to enable me to march out with my troop, the relief was promised, only did not come till 1.20p.m. and they were to go at 2p.m., when my Squadron Sergt. Major saw the position I was in, he told me I could please myself about coming. Then I started some of the smartest work I ever did, threw my things on the horse, flew up to the Q.M. for rations and watered my horse in time to move with the rest, a few miles out the S. Major rode past and his surprise was amazing to see me in my place; forty eight hours after I regretted with all my heart that I had been fool enough to come but now it is all over I am glad for it was all experience and I secured some fine photos for my trouble.

We marched for about four hours when I got my first view of an Oasis in the desert. I cannot explain my feelings, coming over miles of

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desolate sand, ridge after ridge of it and then as we marched through a narrow defile of sand hills a beautiful mass of green palms burst into view within a few yards of us, palms in such luxuriant perfection that can never be seen in our gardens at home. As we suddenly came on them, there was one loud "oh!" from everyone for it was something we had never seen before and certainly never expected to see out here. I soon learnt that this desert life was going to prove one continual chapter of surprises and experiences that would live in our memory as long as we live.

We left two troops of our Squadron at this place to dig whilst the other two (including the one I am in) went about four miles further on, we arrived at about dark and only had time to fix camp and have tea before some of us had to go on outpost duty for the night.

I remember now we made rather a smart move, after dark we saddled up and moved out into the desert to camp and came in again at day-break. The men were soon at work digging and now came another surprise for though the sand on top was dry we only dug a foot or eighteen inches and water would ooze up, when you get three feet down the pump has to be kept continually going to enable the digger to go the required depth, viz. from eight or ten feet, sides boarded and there you have a well that will usually supply water at the rate of about 200 gallons per hour, we dug about four that day and the next, the whole trip so far had proved a picnic, the crook part was to come. I got a number of fine photos but so far have not seen them developed, that has to come. The palms were loaded with dates, all red but none ripe and they made a view many a wealthy man back in Australia would have given a large sum of money to have round his suburban home.

We were relieved about 7p.m. Friday 4th August, joined up with the other two troops at 8p.m. and started for Ballah Bunyah camp, expecting to be in bed by midnight. We soon proved the words of Burns' poem about 'the plans of men', at 1a.m. we were still riding and no prospects of home, our Leader had missed his way and landed us down almost on the Canal, for most of the way some of the boys sang to pass the time away, as the night wore on they became silent, everyone was stiff and tired and when we eventually arrived in camp at 3a.m. I for one could not dismount, simply had to fall off, it was absolutely the most exhausting ride many of us had ever done and as far as I am concerned only one ride which you will read about later on has ever come up to it.

The next morning we turned out at 6.30a.m. for the stables thinking that after the ride we would be able to rest all day after our horses were attended to. At 7a.m. orders came out that the whole Brigade had to be on the move at 7.30, during my stay at the wells, a thorn had pierced one of the fingers of the right hand and it had swollen an enormous size. I was only waiting to get to camp to let the Doctor attend to it so when this order came out I explained to my Officer that I would stay in camp for the day and come on with the camels tomorrow. He said that is meant fighting this time, there would be no tomorrow as probably some of us would be in Heaven by then and if I was not coming to hand my horse over to some other man who had none. That was enough for me, on my saddle I went and I moved out with the others, for days I suffered great pain with the hand only I would never have forgiven myself had I stayed behind this time, and yet it is well we cannot see ahead.

Saturday 5th August - Some time after we left our camp the big guns began their work away in front of us somewhere, we marched under a boiling sun all the morning, had been ordered to leave everything behind us, carried our one blanket and were not allowed even to bring our tunics on the saddle, everyone was in his short sleeves, most of us with only a tussore, a silk one and yet we found the extreme heat trying, most of our Brigade of course were fresh but after the trying ride for C Squadron the night before we could hardly sit on our saddles. There were no songs this time, just plug along the best way we could. At 2p.m. the Brigade arrived at a big camp called Hill 70, watered and fed the horses and then rumaged around for our own tucker for canteens soon run out of food and so we had to turn to Bully Beef for our Midday meal. No orders had been issued of the next move, we simply lay down behind the horses and got an hour's rest.

At 4p.m. everyone was on the move once more, doing what we could for our horses as from now on they had to be first consideration, it

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might turn out hard work for us, but it was certainly going to be much worse for them.

The fighting was some miles out in front, wounded men were coming in and as we marched forward that afternoon it would have made a fine photograph, regiment after regiment of our Light Horse, Signallers, Field Ambulances, sledges, camels, and any other possible means to enable them to get the wounded back for proper attention.

We advanced till 11p.m. when the camp was once more formed up, our night's rest was a very poor one since it fell to C Squadron to form the out-posts, everyone had to lay down fully prepared to move at a moment's notice, horses kept saddled and men fully dressed, however the night passed quietly and we all got a few hour's rest. Everyone was on the move again before dawn, the out-posts called in and a hasty meal snatched on hard biscuits and Bully. Great numbers of us had nothing so had to be satisfied with a smoke.

It was Sunday and again a move forward was made in full marching orders, it was fine to see the Batteries of Artillery going past and then came our men and at last the long line of Red Cross conveyances. The procession must have been miles long.

On ahead was to be heard the loud boom of our big guns sounding very plain and I suppose it must have been about 11a.m. when a halt was made, food was issued to the men and after an hour's wait, we were able to water our horses, we made a kind of a meal and snatched a few minutes sleep lying at our horse's feet, each man holding the brute's rein, the burning sun was no inconvenience now as man and horse both would have rested under any disadvantage.

The 8th now was moved on by themselves, at the time of course, none of us knew the plans of the Officers, but since then I have heard different men talking and can only surmise what was supposed to happen. The Turks were very strong just outside a certain Oasis (will give them the local name of Hods from now on) and I believe the 9th and 10th went forward to the attack whilst we were to get behind and cut the enemy off. We moved away to the right and tried time and again to go forward but evidently our leaders considered they were blocked as at 3p.m. we joined Head Quarters again and from a bit of high ground were able to watch the 9th and 10th fighting, after a while we mounted and rode back a mile nearer to a Hod and formed camp.

Late that evening the other two Regiments came in. I cannot say exactly what men they lost, but the number was small, on the enemies' side it was heavy, as we found out the next day. The 9th and 10th captured that day about 600 prisoners, amongst them were some Austrian and German Officers and N.C.O.'s, we had them all to guard that night and needless to say proved of great interest to our men. The troops were poorly dressed but on the whole looked a determined lot of men and took things very calmly, were thankful for any considerations shown them, all of our men went on half rations to provide an evening meal for them, but the German Officers were very surly and took their capture with a bad grace, one of them I believe whilst being questioned by our Leaders informed them he was a prisoner and not there to answer questions.

This was my first close acquaintanceship with Jacko, as I said before we thought them poorly dressed but no doubt they thought the same of us, since none had on a coat, shirts in many cases torn, some in riding pants whilst others had only short pants like a small school boy wears, out in the firing line clothes are at a scarcity, a man wears what he can get hold of and what he cannot get he does without, before many days some of us cut a sorry figure. Not a man in the Regiment could produce a razor, we would go for days at a time without water to wash. I have gone three weeks without soap and for three weeks without any towel, I would use the calico that would come wrapped around the parcels from home which I brought with me. It's the man who can last out the longest and be ready when he is wanted, not how we were dressed.

And as Sunday the 6th August came to an end whilst our folk are at home preparing to go to Church we were foraging round for food for horse and man, cleaning our rifles for the next day's work and as it got dark, spreading out our blanket just a yard or so behind the horse line to get as much rest as possible, we were on the game at last after our months of waiting and watching.

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Sunday 7th August - An early start was made probably about 3a.m. The 8th were to attack and take at all costs the Hod about two miles away where the enemy had their camp, as I said before the previous day's fighting had taken place outside the Hod, we were soon marching over the battle field, dead Turks were everywhere and in all sorts of positions, hundreds of rifles, belts and enormous quantities of ammunition lay all around, I might say that during the whole of the next week's fighting this was the only time I witnessed such a wholesale retreat on the part of Jacko. Always after that it was an orderly retreat but will write more about that later on. If I live to be an old man I can never forget my first view of the battle field, later on I saw our own men dead and wounded, in some cases chaps that had been with me in the good old Seymour days, but the impression was not so marked as this particular morning. One case in particular of two Turks, they had evidently been wounded and managed to drag themselves to the same bush, and my mind could picture a scene, what must have been acted there. One had died and his mate had pulled his water-proof sheet over the body. When we came along he too was also dead, he was resting on his left elbow and with the right hand stretched out probably to pull the sheet further over the mate and had died during the act. The man seemed simply to be resting there, his face was calm and to make sure everything was right one of our chaps got off to see that he was really dead.

I never thought a dead man could look so natural, going over this ground it was a splendid opportunity to secure some curios but very few of our men did, as we thought soon we could get plenty more. Unfortunately for most of us no such chance came our way again. Some days afterwards I believe our men came along this way and buried these bodies. Our own men were always buried and when possible the Turk also but in some cases we were not able to, had we the time, to give the enemy proper burial.

After crossing the fighting ground an advance was made on the Hod but it was soon discovered that Jacko had gone during the night, we rode in and camped in their old camp. They had not left much behind them besides large quantities of ammunition and rifles, we pitched camp about 10a.m. and poked around till 3p.m. when the Brigade joined us up and the order was to move on along the track the retreating enemy had taken, there was no missing it as thousands of foot tracks in the soft sand together with the camel and goat tracks, showed plainly, the direction taken. The Inverness Battery was attached to us and of course moved everywhere with the Brigade. About four o'clock a halt was called for ten minutes rest, during the ten minutes an aeroplane came up over the horizon, for a minute or so, until we could recognise that he belonged to us, everyone was on the alert, the plane came straight for us flying very low and when passing over the head of the column dropped a small dart which had a message attached to it.

We travelled about four miles further on before camp was formed for the night. The wells at this particular Hod proved fairly good, consequently the horses only took about an hour to water, after tea those who were not told off for night duty were soon sound asleep. It seems wonderful what a man gets used to, a chap had simply to lay down and in less than five minutes would be sound asleep, of course no one was ever allowed to take off any clothing, our rifles would be under the blanket and beside us and our saddle at our head. Within 10 minutes of an alarm every man could easily be sitting on his horse all ready to move off. Up till now our Squadron had not been under fire but our turn was not far away and everyone was happy.

Tuesday August 8th. The camp was astir soon after 2a.m., the usual routine now was to immediately pack your saddle and draw the day's rations for yourself and horse. It consisted for the latter ten or eleven double hand-fulls of barley that was to do the horse for twenty four hours and for a fortnight they never had a mouthful more, each man drew about six biscuits one tin of Bully Beef and to every four men, one tin of Marmalade, a small quantity of sugar and tea, occasionally every eight men got a tin of Ideal Milk, the latter was a luxury. Many times when the transport could not come up to us we would run very short, on one journey I have had one tin of Beef to four men for a day's rations, we were only allowed one bottle of fresh water per man. I forgot to mention that the water out of these wells was very brackish and not nice to drink, but the men soon took to it when water was not to be had. Watering the horses was a slow game, one man would stay at the well

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drawing water whilst the other man carried it to where the horses were, we made no bones about drinking with the horses, a man carrying it would perhaps get some muddy stuff and then secure a little clear water, he would take a long pull and give the rest of it to his horse, perhaps the animal had been drinking out of the same bucket for half an hour before him. When we get back to civilization it will make our stomachs turn when our minds think back over memories of what we have eaten and drunk. The man who has taken care of himself in the past is the one who will come out on top now, we lived on this water for a fortnight and on the whole it did not seem to effect us but after the fighting when the Brigade settled down at a ~~Hod~~ the water seemed to be crook, there was a Cholera scare and orders issued that no man was to drink well water, being camped at the same Hod for perhaps a week or ten days, the transports would come regularly and fresh water in limited supplies could be had but only for drinking purposes. I remember at one camp I met some old friends from the Inverness Battery and they showed me a small tablet that was issued to them which was supposed to purify the water, he gave me a demonstration and they certainly seemed to make the water more palatable so I got a few of them from him for future use. He warned me not to let cloth get in contact with them or they would quickly eat through it but the tablet was supposed not to have any effect on paper. I very carefully wrapped some paper round them and placed the packet in my tunic pocket where there were some letters, a fine photo post card of my brother in uniform and a bonzer Testament Mum gave me. For a fortnight they remained there forgotten by me until one day I turned out my pocket, the Testament was ruined, only half the card was there and the letters were almost gone. My opinion of their tablets is best left unsaid.

I commenced to write about the doings of August 8th but the book is finished so will start on that day in the next book when I can receive one.

END OF BOOK 2.
