

BOOK 3.

August 1916. There are long spells between my writing fits, not my own fault as when the last book was completed I was camped at Ft. Malgar near Romani and though I tried every canteen within miles of that camp was not able to secure another book. Am writing at present in the Anzac Hostel at Cairo, and when the time comes to write on this visit of mine to the city will have more to say about this soldiers' home.

Tuesday - August 8th. We were on the move soon after 2a.m. getting ready to move forward at daybreak, it was not safe to move during the dark now as "Jacko" was only a mile or so ahead. A and B Squadron of the 8th were on ahead whilst C Squadron was coming up as a reserve. My duty this morning was to make one of four men to form connecting files between B and C, the former soon got in touch with the enemy and the firing was pretty brisk, C Squadron halted behind a ridge awaiting the signal from us to push on. This was my first experience of being under fire, but being down behind a sand hill the bullets were only going over my head. Leaving my horse in charge of a man I carefully crawled up to the top of the ridge and made myself fairly comfortable and, as I thought, safe behind a scrubby bush. I certainly was safe from everything in front but soon discovered danger on the right flank, it must have been a sniper posted away out on the enemies' flank and he soon got my position, my first knowledge of anything wrong was a vicious "Zip" and sand rose about two feet to my right, thinking it was only a stray bullet I stayed there, when "Zip" came No. 2 just on the left and about as far away, knowing that no enemy should be away out on that flank I was still doubtful, since it was necessary for me to keep the front Squadron in sight, I left my hat on the bush and moved round on the other side of my protection, No. 3 bullet settled all arguments for it landed just where I had been lying. I began to think of home sweet home so secured my hat with the end of the rifle and retired down the ridge crawfish fashion whilst my friend peppered the bush for a couple of minutes. Just about that time one of the four files came up and being curious to know what was doing on the other side, wanted to take up my old position, since he was of the opinion as I was that no enemy should be out on that flank, we waited a few minutes and then he started forward, only to find the bush was too hot for him and so came down faster than he went up.

For half an hour now all that could be done was to wait for some move to be made from the men in front, the horse holders made a move round a sand hill to the left so one of our files also went forward, then things got lively, he went too far and I lost him on account of the sand hills, every time I got on high ground it was a case of gallop till I got over the ridge, during one of these little gallops I saw a bag of something on the ground and a Turkish rifle bolt on the sand about twenty yards further on, I wanted that bolt badly as a curio, but the bag was probably horse feed and therefore of more value, so waiting till the shooting eased off a bit I galloped up and dismounting tried to fix the bag on the saddle, "Jacko" soon found me and started his little game again. However nothing happened so I also ran over and secured the bolt, then wasted no time in getting down the gully again. My mare had a better feed that night than any other horse in the Regiment. Soon after this there were signs of B Squadron retiring so C had to come forward to cover them, my duty as connecting was finished, so I fell back and sending the horse to the rear joined my troop on a ridge. We very quickly dug ourselves into the soft sand and waited for the enemy to come over the next ridge, he evidently was satisfied at beating the others back for waiting half an hour our orders came to fall back to our horses and await developments. By this time the sun was out at its strongest and we suffered terribly from the heat, the only shade was what the horse threw as he stood up and many a man swore hard when the poor brute would move thus leaving him in the sun, as the sun got overhead we would get right in under our horses and the exhaustion of the men was so great that as soon as he sat down under his horse he would doze off to sleep. for the next few weeks our horses got so used to this that they would never move an inch. I have never known a man to get kicked or even stood on, many a time there would be a roar of laughter as a chap woke up in a great fright to find himself between his horse's legs. Tired and all as the men were they always enjoyed a joke. Sleep was the one escape we had from the terrible thirst that was always on us. Things had quietened down considerably by now so we took the opportunity of putting the nose bags on the horses and having some Bully Beef and Biscuits ourselves, occasionally a stray bullet would hiss in amongst

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us but no notice was ever taken of them. Les Jackson of my troop had one of three narrow squeaks at this point of time, the other two came later on. A bullet entered his haversack, went through a tin of marmalade and settled down in the bottom of the haversack, he took great care of that bullet and intends taking it home as a keep-sake. A few evenings later we were relieving some outposts when a bullet entered his horse's neck, the poor brute gave a shiver and took no more notice of it. The bullet stayed there for weeks until we went out on the Marza Strip, when the same horse got shot in the fetlock and had to be destroyed. He really deserved a better fate but at this game we don't always get our desserts.

In the afternoon our Squadron moved over to a Hod on our left, watered and unsaddled for an hour or so and then retired back to a better camping ground for the night. During our stay in the first Hod several men got caught by stray bullets and also one horse. Our share of this day's work was not very much but even though we took a secondary place we lost one Officer and several men together with a few wounded, the Officer was Lieut. Urguhart of Warrnambool District, a man I used to know down there. One of the wounded, Tom Holloway by name, was the first man of the ones that came over with me to get hit. Weeks afterwards I found out that poor Jack Shaw (of whom I spoke in a previous book and of the strange way we both came to meet at Ferry Post Rail Head after my unconsciously doing him a bad turn at Terang in Victoria) was killed. I was very sorry to hear of his death, he and his brother were originals, which means they came over with the Regiment, went through Gallipoli where the brother was killed, and now his turn had come out on Sinai Desert.

By the time we arrived at our camp, watered and fed the horses, had a snack ourselves, it was 10p.m. and those who were not on duty dropped down behind the horses and slept, too tired even to take their only blanket off the saddle, in fact it was not worth while as reveille would be at 2a.m. in the morning and no time to dress or roll blankets, everything had to be ready to move on a moment's notice.

And now came Wednesday the 9th August, a day to be remembered by all men of the 8th for two reasons, it was the Anniversary of their great charge on Gallipoli when the old Regiment was practically wiped out, and to-day they were going to keep up the old name, though many predicted that it was going to be a repetition of last year and it nearly was the case, or perhaps would have been the case only for our friends the Inverness Battery of Artillery. We got off the mark before day-break, there was some hitch regarding our fresh water transport and as the 8th were to do the attacking we had to move out to schedule time, many of our men could not fill their bottles even with well water, luckily I came out with a full bottle, even so later on in the day I suffered terribly from thirst so you can imagine how those other poor beggars fared that had none.

I said we retired after the previous day's fighting, Jacko did at the same time, so it fell to our lot to attack their Headquarters, backed up by the 9th and 10th Regiments. We moved slowly forward and soon after daybreak got in touch with the Turk again, I again was told off for other duty. This time I had to carry messages backwards and forwards from our Squadron Leader (Major Crawford) to the C.O. of the Regiment (Lieut. Col. Meagher). It gave me a good opportunity to study our Colonel, rather an elderly man of perhaps 50 years. He was always warning those around him to be careful but often he would stand out in the open in the way of bullets himself, since Jacko knew that was where our Leader was situated he did not spare the powder. At about 9.30a.m. the enemy had been driven back on our right, and I was sent to rejoin C Squadron carrying a final message to Major Crawford giving him details of the whole situation, and also what the Colonel intended to attempt later on. For half an hour our men rested behind a sand hill with the horses, and it was here I got my first taste of shrapnell at close quarters. C and D troops were in one spot but the enemy's guns found us and began to drop shells just behind, they would burst right above our heads, which of course was alright as the contents would go past, but it soon got too warm so we led our horses round to A and B troops. When going over the ground a few days later it seemed wonderful to think they did not get us. The nearest shave for me was when a spent shrapnell pellet struck my horse's neck and fell onto my leg as I was lying on the sand in our favourite spot under the horse. Then came the order to move towards a ridge on our left. Major Crawford led D Troop and off we went at a gallop, the feeling was glorious, bullets hissing round and us in open formation galloping forward.

We were pretty cool but the horses recognized the danger more than

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the riders and no spurs were required, we reached the bottom of the ridge that was to be occupied, with the loss of one horse, the poor brute was shot in the front leg, and yet on its three legs the animal kept up with the mob, screaming like a human being. Its rider (the Major's groom) was away in the rear coming on foot the best way he could, one of the men led the horse away and shot him as its leg was smashed. We dashed up on to the ridge and took cover anywhere we could. The Turk was on in front but the position was not a good one for us so after waiting a while the order came to retire again, our horses were brought up and the troop was divided into two lots. One was to go over the open ground and wait on the other side for the second lot. It was going to be warm work as the Turk had seen us come up and had that ground well covered.

I was in the first lot, at the word we went off at a gallop, spurs were used freely this time, we had about 30 yards of danger to cover, it seemed to me to be a mile and yet the Melbourne Cup winner could not have gone any faster, and our party got over safely. How we managed I cannot tell, but it was a day of miracles to-day. The second party was led by Sergt. Bloomfield, and he made one small mistake, poor man paid for it with his life. The enemy had seen a full troop come forward and only half of it go back. The Sergt. did not wait back long enough. Immediately he saw us disappear over the ridge he gave the word to follow. By the time we got to the bottom his party was coming over the top and of course they were ready for him. He dropped off his horse shot through the neck and never moved again. Bert Davison fell a few yards further on but the rest of the party got down safely. We did not see our Major again for the rest of the day. His groom, whose horse had been downed in the charge forward, had an exciting time. Having no horse he was experiencing great difficulty in getting up to us, unknown to the rest of the mob when we retired he was left behind. The Turks soon spotted him and every few yards he would have to take cover then dash on to the next bit of shelter. The man was not able to join us again but picked up another horse that had lost its rider and was having a game of its own galloping round the desert, the groom eventually joined another troop of our Squadron.

When the two portions of our troop once more were joined up we found we had no Sergeant or Lieutenant, one Sergt. was dead and at the time the other one was thought to be dead also, Corporal Slade took charge and a few minutes after another Corporal arrived on the scene with news that a portion of our Squadron was very hard pressed over to the right of where we were and we were to go and reinforce them, he guided us round and most of the way it was quite safe with the exception of a short distance where the other horses were being held, a bit of a gallop got us to the point where we had to dismount, it was in a hollow and we had to cross a piece of high ground on foot to reach our mates in distress. The men holding horses warned us that the Turks' machine guns were trained on that ground and we would have to beat all records to get across alive, but no one hesitated, our Sergt. Major who had joined us led the way and we made off in one long string. That run will never be out of my mind if I live to be 100 years old, loaded up as we were with our haversack, water bottle, belt, rifle and 140 rounds of ammunition, the pace had to be very slow, my legs seemed to refuse to work and there was such a hail of lead that one could almost feel them going past, as I was crossing one way a machine gun Officer and two of his men were coming from the opposite direction, the three fell at my feet, both men killed instantly and the Officer tried to rise but fell back again, he was shot through the breast and screaming with pain, he died. Yet not one of our mob got hit, I will never cease to wonder at the mystery, we rushed down the other side and fell on the sand gasping for breath but there was no time to waste, everyone began to crawl to the other side and take up a position.

And now the business of the day started for us, we found Mr. McGrath, our own Troop Leader, was in command and just before we arrived our mates had almost run out of ammunition so had to use fixed bayonets for a charge as the Turk was almost on them, the charge did not come off as upon our arrival Jacko retired about 200 yards back, we dug ourselves in but a perfect hail of bullets was whistling just over the ridge so a man was not able to expose himself, it was the same on our side, we peppered every bush or shelter of any sort and Jacko got as good as he gave.

I cautiously looked round to see what sort of a hole we had run into and made up my mind not many of us would come out alive, it was a saucer shaped hollow and at the bottom the stretcher bearers were hard at work. Turks were in front and working round to our left, most of our own forces

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were on our right whilst one troop was on the left and then further on were the New Zealanders but some distance away. As the Turk gradually worked to the left we could see what great danger we were in but could do nothing to remedy it, to go back across the ridge meant certain death and also would be deserting the other troop. I watched Mr. McGrath and imagined the worst but he simply lay behind a bush and kept his glasses glued to his eyes, never giving a hint that he thought our position hopeless, many times that day I was thankful to be under him, he proved himself cool and calm and this saved our lives. It ~~was~~ must have been about midday when we arrived at this point and if ever the sun burnt it did that day. The hot sand scorched our skin, those who had water found it hot as could be, and those who had none could hardly speak, hour after hour we lay there, getting a shot in now and again and every few minutes would be a cry of "stretcher bearers" and some poor chap would either crawl down or if unable would be dragged down by his mates, if a wounded man was able to crawl at all he would not allow anyone to come for him but would "get down the best way he could and wait his turn for dressing, in several cases I saw them crawling on one hand and the other arm practically blown off, blood was everywhere and at last we knew what war meant.

About 3pm. the machine guns formed up about thirty yards behind us and opened fire over our heads at Jacko, many of us felt our salvation had come but soon changed our tune for the enemy turned their shrapnell guns on us in order to shut up our machine guns, the next hour was agony for us, the shells burst in front, on both sides and behind, it was hell let loose, the rifle shooting had slackened so a party of our men left the ridge and gathered in a group down on the low ground for a smoke and a yarn, a shell came over and burst over them, we looked back not expecting to see a live man, the saucer was full of smoke and as it cleared up here were the men still smoking and not hurt, they wasted no time before getting into their position on the ridge once more, five of those men came from Echuca district and lay side by side on the ground, they no sooner got settled once more before another shell came over us, it caught the whole five and made a terrible mess, one seemed to have his arm almost torn off, another one had his side torn open, two others were wounded in different places and poor old Dick Chambers got the full benefit in his head, he was an awful sight, as he lay on his back, the red cross men left him till last as one look was enough to prove that he was past human aid. I cannot forget the man as he lay there, perfectly unconscious and yet he seemed to be conscious of pain for he kept rubbing his hand over his head and blood was pouring out. I think four bullets entered his head. He died that night without gaining consciousness. Two others died later on and the other two went home to Australia.

Chambers was in Seymour camp with me and that day at Williamstown when I was undecided whether to come away with the 12th or the 8th Light Horse it was he that decided the matter by suggesting I toss a coin. He came over as a Sergt., lost one stripe when the Regiment formed up, lost another at Ferry Post Rail Head and handed in the other a few days after, ever since our arrival in Egypt we had always been in the same tent and now he was gone. I got a fine photo of his grave later on.

That was about the last shell that did any damage to our little party, the ranks had been thinned considerably and the shrapnell was so true that the machine guns had to move over to our right. You can always tell if a shell is coming your way, you hear the boom of the gun and a second or so after can hear the scream of the shell coming forward. It is so plain that long before it reaches you a man can tell if it is coming to your side or over your head, if over your head you simply lay and wait developments, to get you it must burst about 20 yards in front, and there are no half-measures about shrapnell pellets, they tear your limbs away. I saw a case of where one shell got 12 horses, all killed, poor brutes.

It was now about 4p.m., our men were nearly mad for water, had eaten nothing since the previous day but a couple of hard biscuits. The thirst was so great that one could not eat the biscuits, and the sun had done his best to burn up up. The Turks had just about given our little party up, or at least we thought so, at the foot of the ridge on our left was a Hod and some old native huts with thorn fences around them, and Mr. McGrath wanted to see if there was any water in this Hod, we concentrated our forces just along the top on the left flank, were divided into three parties of eight (24 and 1 Officer whereas at least 40 had entered that saucer earlier in the day.) The first party peered cautiously over and picked out a certain point to rush to, then at the word, "Are you ready?" and a final "Go" from

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from Mr. McGrath over they went and made a mad rush for cover, it was down hill and every stride was a jump of twelve or sixteen feet so it took less than a minute to get to the bottom. All got down safely, a few seconds after the second party went over led by Mr. McGrath and last my crowd came. The Turks turned a few rifles on us but no-one got caught and by short rushed we all reached the native huts. The machine guns opened on us but the bullets flew high. One of our party crawled into the Hod but no water was to be found.

After a decent rest Mr. McGrath very cool and collected remarked, "Oh well lads it's getting dark we had better get out of this" and everyone crawled along to a gully and then calmly strolled along to a certain point where our horses were expected to be, and now happened the last act of the day and perhaps the most remarkable, if we had stayed at those huts five minutes longer I would now be writing this in Constantinople or else be no more, we would have been completely cut off. It seems that as soon as dark came on Jacko came from cover and must have come forward at a run, something had roused Mr. McGrath's suspicions and thanks to his coolness he got us away. Some more of our Squadron now joined our small party and the Serg. Major with a couple of men went off to find our horses, the enemy was within 50 yards of us and once more we had to set on to them, the horses arrived but not enough so men scoured the desert behind us till they found enough strays (for there were lots of them) to supply our mob, I got my own horse luckily, the troop then mounted and thanks to the dark were able to ride quietly away unknown to Jacko. About a mile back we joined up with the Brigade and then commenced a long, weary march back to find water for man and horse. It was after midnight before we were settled in camp for the night, our horses had gone for over 30 hours without food or water and most of the men twenty four hours. I am only speaking of my own Regiment, I believe some of the troops were even worse off than us but as I said in my last book I only want to put down on paper whatever part I was mixed up in myself. I have heard men of other Regiments talk of that day and many true accounts of doings but my mind cannot carry them all. I am lucky to be able to give a clear account of my own part of the line for this all happened nearly six months ago, and all the notes I kept of this day were four short lines in a small pocket book.

The Inverness Battery were the only big guns we had that day, and every man realised that without them there would have been no 3rd Brigade to-day, it was their first day in action of any sort and their shooting was wonderful, they silenced the enemies' guns time and again and we told them after that we owed our lives to them. They responded by saying that the 8th Light Horse would always be good enough for them to fight with, they were never tired of talking about the way our chaps would gallop right up to the firing line before dismounting to fight.

That night is one that will last for many a year in my memory. By midnight our horses were attended to and there was time to think of a meal, our breakfast had been a wild scramble at about 3a.m. and since then it had been a case of munch hard dry biscuits. When our water bottles were empty the biscuits would not go down, another young chap and myself shared a tin of Bully Beef, made water do for a drink as no one was inclined to make tea. There was some talk of having a rest the next day, personally I did not care if I was left behind. I purposely got separated from my own troop moving further up the Hod and tying the horse to a palm, saw that she was comfortable, and then spread out my blanket just behind her. I could not deny the fact that my limit was reached, I was completely done, and must have been asleep in less than a minute. At two in the morning I wakened up to find horses all round me and the usual confusion of a troop coming into camp at midnight. At first I thought the camp was attacked, but soon discovered that another Squadron was fixing up its horse lines just where my bed had been laid. Nothing for it but to move my things, left the horse there with the strangers and once more got down for my sleep. My next recollections were to waken up with the sun shing in my face and burning pretty hot. It seemed very strange to still be sleeping, we were so used to being on the move long before day-light.

All that day was our own to do as we liked, we had breakfast, fed and watered the horses, then chose a shady spot under some palm trees and once more went off to sleep. The afternoon was spent differently, we stripped off for a wash of a kind, the well water of course was hard and impossible to raise a lather, but after days and days of heat and sand, a wash of any sort was like heaven, to feel the cool water running over one's body. The next move was to wash our shirt and sox, for if you remember that was practically all we wore, shirt, pants, sox and leggings.

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It was a case of sit and wait for the clothes to dry, but that did not take long as the sun soon did that part of the business for us. Late in the afternoon Lieut. McGrath, the C.O. of my troop paraded his own men and we wondered what was in the air, the first order was, "Step out all men that were with me on the ridge yesterday," about 15 of us stepped out and though we had gone through an awful day I don't think any action of mine ever gave me more satisfaction than to be able to respond to that command. Lieut. McGrath took all our names, he then ordered all men to step forward who had been horse-holders the previous day, about 5 came out of the ranks and then every man left (1Sergt., 1Corporal and about 10 men) had to give him an exact account of how he had spent the day. It was an awkward position for some of them and for others I felt sorry, our Senior Sergt. was one, the second Sergt. was killed, the Senior Corporal was another, thus leaving only Corporal Slade and myself as N.C.O.'s who had stuck to our Officer. Lieut. McGrath is a thorough gentleman and one of the best of Officers, but he did not mince matters when listening to the explanations. Some of the chaps felt very small but nothing more came of it and later events proved that they had learnt their lesson.

After this parade our whole Regiment was paraded and our Brigadier General made a speech, he could not find words to show his approval of the actions of the 8th, of course he did some leg pulling by telling us we were the apple of his eye, we had been under shrapnel fire for about 7 hours and whilst it lasted was hotter than anything ever seen on Gallipoli, over there they had their trenches, dug-outs and other means of protection, but yesterday's fight was absolutely in the open, not a vestige of covering and the great hardships of no water or food, the men from the Peninsular said it beat Gallipoli. We were told that although the bulk of us were reinforcements we had easily maintained the great name the Regiment had won previously. Our casualties so far as he could tell us were about 900 as against the Turks 9,000. After a lot more flash talk we were dismissed for the day.

And now this is a good chance to tell you about the enemy. As you can judge by this account we were following the Turk as he would retire, the work done by us may have been wonderful and yet the work of "Jacko" was ten times more so, we would go forward and catch him, he would be perhaps waiting for us and the consequence would be fight all day until dusk then we would have to fall back miles to water our horses and camp. We would show that, although we would get perhaps three or four hours sleep a night, and Jacko had fought all day he had retired during the night taking everything with him.

If a history of their retirement is ever printed truthfully it will show a wonderful record of endurance. When they got any sleep I cannot tell, the way they would clear their trenches in readiness for the next stand, proved that no time could have been wasted in sleep. They usually took their wounded but rarely waited to bury the dead.

Speaking on the whole my experience was that they fought and acted fairly. I did hear of cases of our men being robbed of boots etc. but cannot vouch for the truth. I do know from what I witnessed later on that they were in an awful state for want of leather, will speak of that later on.

One incident that came under my notice was of one of our men, cannot think of his name at present but we found him 3 days after this big fight, had been shot in both legs and lay out for three days and nights (it may have been two but am almost sure it was three), when our men found him he was almost gone but upon being brought into the Field Ambulance he came to enough and told his experience. It was an awful one and he said that after the fight and we had retired the Turks over-ran the battlefield, they came across him, made him as comfortable as possible, and left a bottle of water beside him, that water saved his life until our men found him but I think he eventually died. Any dirty actions done I think can be traced to the German and Austrian Officers in charge of these Turks. One case which miscarried, happened a night or so before, there had been a fight and we had fallen back leaving our outposts well forward. During the night the sentry on duty distinctly heard an English voice out in front calling in English for water. It must have been hard to decide what to do, anyhow no action was taken and the man in distress was left out there. Next morning the front was searched but no man dead or alive could be found. My opinion is that Jacko wanted either to capture our outpost or anyhow see where it had been placed. I guess Turks were closer to those men that night than what they realised.

During the fight on the 9th a machine gun of the enemies' was doing

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terrible mischief to us, though we had a good idea where it was, we could not shift him by our rifle fire. He showed himself by one of the most dastardly actions ever witnessed in warfare. A band of Turks evidently considered it was getting too hot for them or perhaps they had had enough. Anyhow they wanted to surrender, and commenced to come over to us in a body. We ceased fire of course, and this German Machine Gun Officer, seeing the Turks coming over to us turned his gun on them, and shot his own troop down, he kept the gun playing on them until they ran back to their own trenches. We always could get conversation going with Turkish prisoners. It was amusing to see the scowls and awful looks any German gave us. The Austrians were no better. I think I said some time ago that in the case of one Officer when our leaders were questioning him, he sourly informed them, he was there as a prisoner of war not to answer questions. The Turks fought well. I thought after hearing these things they must have fought desperately in fear of their Leaders, but when we did capture them they were as happy as could be to feel that they were finished with the game. There were cases where they would run up and kiss the boots of our men on horseback. One amusing story I heard months afterwards which was given to me as true.

A truce had been called and Jacko came in under the white flag with a message, he was given a reply to take back but flatly refused to leave our lines. It was impossible for us to keep him under the conditions that had brought him there, so there was nothing for it but carry him out of our camp, escorted by one of our Officers.

Most of the prisoners looked well fed but like us were desperately hungry during the week of fighting. Only the Officers must have lived like fighting cocks, for when we came to some of the deserted fighting camps they would be strewn with empty wine bottles and signs of good food. On several occasions our men dug up cases of wine that they could not carry away so had buried. This attack had taken 12 months preparation, and all their stores and ammunition were buried months ago in anticipation of a retreat. As far back as March our patrols had caught the Bedouins burying food and cartridges, and the ground we were passing over now had been in the hands of the enemy for months. No doubt there is still a huge quantity of provisions under ground. In one Hod we dug up thousands of rounds of ammunition and a quantity of rifles, they were all destroyed by our men.

I cannot say how long our front line of defence was. Some say the distance was about five miles. My opinion is that it was much more, anyhow our whole strength was about 3,000 mounted men, whilst against us were as near as could be estimated 18,000 of the enemy. It seems ridiculous to think that so small an army as ours should be able to drive back such a large force.

Our 3,000 was made up of the 1st., 2nd., and 3rd. Brigade Light Horse, a Brigade of New Zealand Mounted Rifles and a few English Yeomanry. Had the Turks only known our weakness they could have wiped us off the face of the earth. As I said before they fought bravely only our boys had waited month after month for this. They had seen all their Infantry friends go on to France had attempted first to transfer to the Infantry, then to the Artillery for the purpose of seeing some fighting. Each attempt at a transfer was hit back and all we had to do was to roast out in the desert, and read in the Australian papers such questions as "What are the cold footed Light Horse doing?"

I can tell you though it was not our fault, all this hurt most of us that up till this month had not seen any fighting, so now when the time came they went into it heart and soul. I have seen men lying on the sand in the boiling sun with shrapnel bursting all round to say nothing of the "Ping" of bullets as soon as a head was raised, no food for 7 to 8 hours and empty water bottles, and you would hear a call "Hey Jacko do you think she is dinkum," the chaps were glad to be at it for once. No wonder Jacko was hit back day after day.

But that is only one reason, the other perhaps was more likely to be the real explanation. In conversation with a prisoner afterwards he told me his side of the question. The Turk was on foot and knew exactly how fast he could travel back also what the country was like he had to cover. It seemed to get on their nerves the fact that we were mounted, because they knew what we did not know, viz. How easy it would be for us to out-flank them or even get through their line.

We were afraid to do either for fear no water would be procurable. As it turned out after, water could have been obtained. As mounted men we would appear and disappear so suddenly and turn up again just where

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most needed, that the enemy had a holy dread of our getting behind them, or surrounding some of them, they had nothing else to do but fight hard all day and move back at night. Their hardships must have been awful and if ever I hear anyone speaking disparagingly of Jacko I picture to myself my idea of what their retreat must have been, and a few days later I was able to witness how cunningly they used to fight, but everything in good time. That part of my little story will fit in later on.

You will think I am never going to get on with the advance of the troops, which I suppose is of more interest to you than this, just one more small item and then you can have your wish.

I want to speak of a few acts of bravery on the 9th. Every troop of men had some acts to record of individual bravery but I only want to speak of what I witnessed. We had a Sergt. Hockhart in our little hollow (Army Medical Sergt.). I gave you an account of how they got right on to us with their shrapnel, and through it all he worked as cool and calm as if he were back in camp, not only that but time and again he helped wounded men back (back) over the terrible ridge out of danger, and returned to us again. Everyone was loud in their praise of Hock's actions. In camp he was far from being a favourite, was very deaf and this seemed to make him short tempered and sharp to any sick man who came to him for treatment, out in action he was as different as black is to white. They say it was just the same on the Peninsula. After that day I thought differently of him, he was recommended for a V.C. for his work on the 9th. I fancy he got either the V.C. or a Military Medal. Soon after that he had come into Cairo for treatment of his ears. They wanted to board him for Australia but he requested to be left, his argument was that going home would not give him back his hearing, so he might as well stay on and do his work here. You folk cannot realise what 'going home' means to a man after spending twelve months in these deserts to say nothing of his Gallipoli experience. So much for Hockhart, we had a Cpl. Miles (Jacky he's better known as) in C Troop of my Squadron, he earned his medal a dozen times that day and never got recognition of any sort. Four or five times he crossed the ridge for more ammunition as we were getting very short in our quarter, as I said before Jacko had this ridge covered by his machine guns but Miles always seemed to bear a charmed life, he would get across every time. Another man was Arthur Lyle, a stretcher bearer who they tell me put in wonderful work. Rather a strange thing that in camp we never had any time for either of these men. Their actions were not after my taste, shows I am a bad judge of a good soldier.

But one case that was acted under my eyes is worth recording here. A man of our Squadron had wormed his way up to the top of our ridge, on the left and some little distance from any of us. Some hours after we arrived at this spot someone asked who was the man away up on the left. Poor old Fred Cox, there he was to all appearances dead as a door nail. For a while we left him there and then a mate started to crawl up to bring him down, to see if he was really gone. Scotty Duguid crawled on his stomach inch by inch and every moment expecting a bullet, for they were buzzing round thicker than flies. He took over half an hour to go about 20 yards and all of us watching anxiously, at last Scotty reached out and grabbed Fred's foot to draw him down. Like a flash of lightning the 'dead man' sprang to his feet and rushed down the slope into safety, leaving poor old Scotty up there unable to move for amazement. Dangerous and all as it was we roared with laughter. It seems Fred had got so near the top that the moment he moved to dig himself in the bullets would spit all round him, he could neither go forward or back, so he did the next best thing, lay his rifle down beside him and went off to sleep. Shows how exhausted the men were when he could sleep in such an awful noise. When he felt someone at his foot he woke and did not wait for an explanation but went for his life. Scotty Duguid should have got a medal for his part in the game. Many other's acts were done but that is enough to show you that our boys did not know what fear was - or perhaps they did.

Friday 11th saw us on the move once more at 2a.m. after our previous day's rest, we marched out of camp at 4a.m. The 10th were to do the attacking to-day whilst the 8th had to act as supports. We did not get any fighting that day, our advance had to be made very cautiously for fear of an ambush, but the enemy had got back further than usual this time. About 10a.m. as our column was moving forward an aeroplane came up over our horizon and we were not left long in suspense as to his intentions. It was a German Taube and he came direct for us. The order was given to scatter and though he dropped a few bombs no damage

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was done, just as he passed over us an English plane came to our rescue, the taube opened her machine gun on her and immediately our plane began to dive straight for the ground at a terrific pace. Our C.O. sent a section of men in charge of an H.C.O. to see if they could be of any assistance. It seems our machine could not see the enemy, he very cunningly got between the plane and the sun, then opened fire. The Observer was shot through the back and the Pilot had his jaw shot away, even so the Pilot was able to stick to his work until he brought the machine safely to earth. He died a few minutes afterwards. I am not sure but I believe the Observer also died. I might say that right through the piece the enemies' Taubes were much superior to our machines but the German prisoners say our men made up for the deficiency by being much more daring than their airmen. As soon as the German saw our Machine begin to come down he turned and cleared for his life. Nothing of any consequence happened for the rest of the day we simply moved from place to place trying to locate Jacko but wherever he had his guns placed he kept very quiet. As evening came on instead of re-turning to camp C Squadron went forward as it was their night for outpost duty. I forget now who it was we relieved but anyhow whilst we were lying on the sand waiting to take over Les. Jackson had his second narrow escape as his horse got a bullet in his neck (I spoke of this earlier in this book) the bullet entered the animal's neck and travelled along some inches towards the head, he simply gave a shiver and stood still. They worked the horse for weeks after without extracting the neck bullet.

After dark we were posted in position and I think it was the most anxious night I have ever put in. Just before dark we saw the Turks quite plainly on the next ridge digging for all they were worth, not more than a quarter of a mile from us. We thought they were digging themselves in, but found out the next day they were burying their dead. It was the nearest our outposts had ever camped to the enemy and as I was in charge of one post there was very little sleep for me, usually one man watches whilst 2 slept. To-night two had to watch together whilst the other four slept. However the night passed peacefully and next morning preparations were made for another big fight as the Turk was very strong there the previous evening. Once more the enemy proved his wonderful enjuring powers, for when our men moved forward he was gone once more. No sleep for him poor beggar but go for his life.

Saturday 12th - Our duty was to find where Jacko had got to. He beat us the day before as you saw by my account, and to-day we learnt a lot of the Turk's tactics. For some hours our Squadron wandered over the Turkish trenches and dugouts. Some of them were the essence of cunning but what we took my fancy most was the sniper's positions. All over this part of the desert is to be found mounds of sand, covering perhaps two or three square yards and covered with a short scrub called camel bush. When fighting we always got behind these mounds and peeped round the sides to shoot. The natural consequence was the enemy would fire from the sides and we would do the same, when shooting them. To-day we discovered our mistake. The Turk would have a trench right in front and shoot from there, or perhaps he would lay right on top amongst the bushes. He was usually as safe as a house, since we would be watching for some movement at the sides. Many a time I have been under cover and could swear a Turk was behind a certain hill, would watch my chance to put a bullet first one side then the other side, back would come the reply immediately, and it does make a chap mad to feel he is beaten, only once did I really feel safe and so pumped lead into the bush in front until my rifle was too hot to hold. This time I either got my man or he thought the pace was too warm for after a while he stopped. I visited that spot next day and though there was nobody there I don't wonder if he moved to a more healthy spot, as the bush was cut to pieces and there must have been a young lead mine buried in that spot.

But I always seem to wander from my subject, am afraid this must be a rambling sort of account. We wandered over these defences and found nothing of any consequence, only graves galore, one could always tell where a German was buried, it would have a rough cross or a few bushes round it. In one particular place I reckon had we opened up some of the graves we would have found more than dead bodies, but as far as I know this was never done, we were satisfied to leave them rest in peace. And now something happened that has been criticized by our chaps many times since and the remarks were not favourable to the Officer leading us, unluckily our own Lieutenant that I think so much of was not in charge or things probably would have been different, it was simply luck and not leadership that got us out alive. We moved forward in extended order knowing the enemy must be

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somewhere handy. We were not there to fight but only to find where he was. They must have thought what fools we were for we got right under their guns and then they opened on us. The first warning we got was "boom" and then high explosives came hissing straight for us. The sandy country saved us, the shells burst right amongst us (of course we were in extended formation), the shells blow huge holes in the sand and covered us with a shower, three horses were knocked clean over by the concussion but no one was injured. It did not take C Squadron long to get out of range of those guns, we had done our work and made tracks back for the Hod where our artillery was camped waiting for our report.

We had a few hours spell here and then a movement was made that puzzled all who did not know the reason. I can write the explanation with the account, but it was many days before we ourselves knew the "ins and outs" of the game. Our Artillery, the Inverness Battery, (our old Scottish friends) moved forward soon after dinner, escorted by our Regiment. They took up a position and we were dismounted all around the guns, the whole Regiment within an area of half or even a quarter of a mile. This was the most dangerous position it was possible to find in the whole desert for as soon as our guns would open fire the enemy would naturally try to silence them. We could do absolutely no good in our present position.. The Turks were too far away to try and capture the Battery, any attempt of the sort could have been blocked by us and yet we could be a mile or so on their right or left, and now the Scotties showed us what they could do with their eighteen pounders, for that was all they had. Their first shell they dropped just in front of the enemy, the second and third must have been very near home. Jacko must have been having a midday rest for they took some minutes to answer, and then followed the hottest Artillery duel I ever want to witness at such close quarters. High explosives started to burst all around us and some of us were so near our own gunners that we were able to cheer them on. I may not be a coward but again I know better than anyone else that I am not a hero, and like a good many more that day I lay down, but took fine care to be well mixed up amongst our poor horses, we preferred the risk of being kicked to death rather than catch a piece of flying shell. This lasted for 2½ solid hours and remarkable as it seems now, I am glad to say the Turkish guns never once found us. They cut up the desert on each side, in front and behind, sometimes getting very close until at last they must have decided we were in a hollow on the right and they put shell after shell there much to our satisfaction. At the end of the 2½ hours the guns limbered up and we all made back for camp feeling very pleased that what we expected had not come to pass.

We found out afterwards the marksmanship of the Inverness had been remarkable, they fairly blew the enemy out of their Hod, by name Sal Marna of which you will hear more later. After the Turks had endured about 2 hours of this they began to get back for all they were worth and one of our shells even caught a mob of them, that settled all arguments. And the reason of it all was only an Artillery Demonstration, our "Heads" thought they would send up the aeroplanes to locate us and would go back and report that a huge mob of horsemen were around the guns waiting to charge, it was never intended that we should charge, but such a report would be quite enough for Jacko, as by now he believed the Australian Horse Soldiers (as they called us) were mad enough to attempt anything. The aeroplanes were not sent up.

Sunday 13th. There was no early move this morning, we watered and fed our horses, then about 8a.m. made a move over to our left to join the Brigade at a Hod called (A SPACE WAS LEFT HERE). When we got within about a mile of our destination the enemy aircraft came buzzing round, they dropped a few bombs on the main camp but evidently missed our Regiment as we moved forward amongst the sandhills. Anyhow no damage was done as the bombs fell wide.

We stayed in this camp as far as I can remember about a fortnight and personally I must say it was absolutely the worst fortnight of my Army life, we had very little work to do, in fact very little could be done on account of our horses. They were absolutely done, for days previously everytime we moved out of camp, anything up to a dozen would founder. Never a day went past but what a number of men would have to be sent back to the base as there were not any horses for them. It seems wonderful that there were any to ride at all, for over a fortnight the horse rations had been twelve double handfulls of barley to last twenty four hours. It seems impossible for a horse to live let alone work on it and yet they never got a mouth full more. There was nothing to pick

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up on the desert, everything was burnt up by the hot sun, and our horses were falling away to shadows. My little mare had come from Ferry Post rolling fat but every day I could see the ribs showing more and more. Not only was the food scarce but hardly a horse could show a good back. Our saddle had been on for 20 hours out of the 24 and very often for the whole 24 hours, some of their backs were in an awful state but a horse was never sent back for a bad back, they simply had to be ridden. Some of our troops were only half strength, and though the hard fighting was over, almost every day some expedition or other would go out for the day. It used to be a hard job to get horses enough to make up the number but the work was irregular and the food for the poor brutes improved in quantity and quality, their well earned rest was commencing, but it took months of feeding to get them back into condition, in my opinion their hearts were broken. There was only one more hard trip to come and that proved the last straw as you will read later on. So much for our horses, but the men were not any better off. Some of us were in rags. As you will remember we came from Ballah Bunyah in our shirt sleeves and practically had not had them off our backs for over a fortnight, not a razor was to be found in the camp. I went for about 12 weeks about this time without a shave, and often for over a week one would not see soap; now that we were camped for a few days we were able to undress of a night, every evening great crowds would gather round the wells with their horse buckets, strip off everything and pour water over their bodies. It made one feel fresh even if it did not clean us.

But at this period we entered into a new era of Army life. Back in our different camps we always had our cooks and steam-cookers, then whilst on the march we had to live on Bully Beef and Biscuits, but now our transports were able to reach us we were allowed to cook our own food, potatoes, onions, rice, tea coffee, bacon etc. All these were not issued at once, some days one thing sometimes another. Although later on we appreciated this system of rations, in this camp it was awful. We were not camped in a Hod but out in the open desert as it was safer on account of the aeroplanes visiting us every morning. We had no wood or sticks for our fires and about this time there was always a strong wind blowing causing great discomfort. Our horses were out in the open and the men also. Of a day we would put the bayonets on our rifles and drove them into the sand, using them as corner posts and fix our blankets as sides and a roof. A dozen times a day the wind would blow down our 'mansion' but a man soon develops a wonderful amount of patience when the sun is about 130 degrees and only a blanket to keep it off. To keep the horses backs from blistering we would strap our saddle blankets of them. They would stand there on the lines with sweat streaming off them but it was better than letting the sun blister them.

To make things worse Cholera broke out down where the wells were. Fresh water was brought up by the camels, and orders issued that no man was to drink well water, the slightest scratch would turn to septic poisoning. I had 3 on my left hand and all the doctor had to put on them was Iodine and he even ran out of cloth to bandage. About this time I began to sicken, so reported one morning to the Doctor. He sent me to the Red Cross Sergt. for some pills. The Sergt. could not give them to me as he had sent them down to another camp, and they had not been returned. For four days I lay on the sand with only a blanket over me and just life enough to drag about the camp, the Sergt. Major saw how matters stood and took care that I was not put on any duty, those four days of diarrhoea were worse than any sickness I ever experienced at home. At the end of that time I once more reported to the Doctor. He immediately ordered me to the Field Ambulance about two miles away at another Hod. Then comes the funny part of it, I was too weak almost to stand and just to get to this Field Ambulance I had to walk two miles over very heavy sand carrying my blankets. I got there but can hardly remember the trip, it is a dim nightmare. Those two miles saw me taking a rest every few yards, but I did not mind as every step took me nearer to proper attention and food. Once I think I must have fainted as I woke up and only a few hundred yards further on I could see the Palm Trees which put new life into me. The Doctor examined me and ordered the hospital at Romani at once, but I asked him to let me stay at the Field Ambulance for one day and see how I got on. I was not anxious to get away from the Regiment for one reason. During the time we had been wandering round the desert no mails could follow us. It was difficult enough to get food to us. I think the day I entered the Field Ambulance was Friday 18th August and a report was going round the camp that a huge mail was coming out to us.

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I had not had any word from Australia for about 7 weeks and to go back to hospital at Romani meant probably a lot of my letters and parcels going astray. I felt I would be right where I was, had a tent to be in and the food was exceptionally good, the Doctor was a fine man and a thorough gentleman (more than we could say for some) so he cancelled his order for the hospital and let me stay with him.

I think here I might apologise for so much complaining of the life we were living, I don't mean it in that way but want to give as true an account as possible, in fact some of the worst I have glossed over or not mentioned at all, as it would do no good. I was no worse off than the others, we were all in the same boat but I can never forget the misery of the last few days that are in this part of the book, but every cloud has a silver lining they say and from the day I entered the Field Ambulance things began to improve in every way. First of all I managed to secure some paper to write letters, had not written any since we left Ferry Post Rail Head eight or ten weeks before. I spent my first day writing letters or short notes, there was no hope of getting them away at present, but it was satisfactory to have them ready when that time did come. Absolutely no fault could be found with the food and treatment. It was here that one of the Red Cross men made himself known to me, a Rutherglen boy Neil Davies. We had some good old yarns of the old town and its people, he introduced me to another young chap who was well acquainted with my Wahgunyah friends (cannot remember his name), and altogether after the past few week's experience I was very comfortable and again beginning to feel that there was something to live for.

The evening of Saturday 19th August was a red letter day for us. I can well remember the scene. During the day it had been very hot and I was thinking how lucky I was to have a tent for a covering, but as evening came on it got much cooler and I carried my blanket out on the sand under a huge palm, a lovely cool breeze was blowing and I lay there gazing out on to the desert and dreaming of Australia. I could see a horseman coming to our camp and as he got nearer I recognised my own mare, the rider was a Dick Watson, and he had my mail for me (7 letters.) I was surprised at him bringing them, we had never been very good friends and coming out on the boat we started in to settle an argument down on our deck, but some chaps separated us before much damage was done, and now just as I am writing this account here in Gehezerih (Jan. 4th 1917) word has come through that this same man was killed a day or so ago during the attack on El Arish, but that is months ahead of this account.

I did not do much dreaming now, the letters had arrived at last after so many weeks of silence, the rest of that evening was well spent. Only letters came on this particular transport, the mails had gathered up to such an extent back at the Base that camels could not be found to bring papers and parcels, they were to come on later.

Sunday August 20th was indeed a day of rest for me, we had not had many Sundays lately, they had to be the same as every other day. We could not have a Service to-day as the Chaplain or Padre as everyone called him, wanted to visit the Regiments and have services. I have had such long breaks whilst on this writing that I really forget if I mentioned the good old chap, everyone had a wonderful opinion of him, no matter what religion you were or if of no religion at all. Padre Collock was his friend. To write his history one would have to write a book, he was a West Australian Archdeacon, had been a Military Chaplain in the Boer War, and so at this time was getting fairly old. When we were on the march he would move amongst us, with always a happy word, nothing ever seemed to put him out and in his company, the roughest and hardest living men amongst us seemed to turn into gentlemen. He was not a brilliant preacher, but was a good one all the same. He was camped at this time in the same Hod as the Field Ambulance, and every morning would run in to our tent to give us any news the Officers had received of France or anywhere else where fighting was.

The 10th Light Horse (W. Aust.) can tell numerous stories of our old Padre and all of them true. His one fault was that no matter who asked him for the loan of 5/- they would get it (in Aust.), in fact he never had a penny to his name. On the gold fields a common sight was our Padre walking down the streets followed by dozens of blacks, they idolised him and he always gave them a great treat at Christmas. One time in W.A. his Parishoners thought he wanted a holiday, so gathered up enough money to send him to Victoria for 3 months. A week after his send off he was back on the goldfields with the yarn that in Perth he felt so well that it was not worth while going on to Melbourne. Upon making enquiries it was discovered

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that he had given all his money away and had none for his fare. A second concert was held and more money raised but this time they bought his train ticket to Perth, paid his boat fare and cabled the remainder of the cash to a Bank in Melbourne. One day whilst we were fighting he was standing behind a sandhill with our Colonel when he saw a man fall up on the hill. The bullets were so thick that to go up was almost certain death, but the Padre started off up the hill after him and the Colonel had to roar at him before he would come back, and then it was like a whipped dog with his tail between his legs. The poor old chap was so disappointed that they would not let him try to rescue the man. A few weeks after this date that I am writing about when our Squadron was camped at Agivra Tina the Padre called in on his way to Cairo to tell us he was being sent to France. You could see he would much rather have stayed with the 3rd Brigade Light Horse.

It was just about this time that we lost our Brigade Leader, Brigadier General Amphill. I have not said much in writing about him. I was not an admirer of his, the opinions of the men were very much divided. Some who had been on the Peninsula with him had not a good word in his favour, others spoke well of him, personally I prefer to hold my peace. No-one seemed to know what became of him, one report was that he received promotion and went to France, another report was that he had been recalled and was to go back to Australia. I heard of his being in Cairo some weeks after he left us. After that he seemed to disappear and I cannot say for sure where he went to.

Brigadier General Royston took command of our Brigade. He is altogether a different stamp of man and brought with him a great name, he is a South African and has a Military Record of over 40 years standing. I like the man very much and from my point of view the change has been for the better, all the men speak well of him and we have found out since that when going into action he is always to be found in front, which was not what we had been used to in the past.

Monday 21st August found me much improved. The Doctor had placed me on No. 3 diet, which is really hard food and a sign that he thinks we are nearly well enough to go back to the lines. Fresh meat was the one thing we could not get. I remember a huge flock of large birds flew over the Hod, and our machine guns opened out on them, evidently the shooting was bad or the birds knew how to take care of themselves for our cooks did not benefit by the incident. It was on the next day that the Doctor promised us a great treat, there were six of us in the tent and at tea time the orderlies came in with tinned rabbit for the meal. It was beautiful and enjoyed by all of us, only soon after the meal three of us were out of the tent busy getting rid of our meal. We could not keep it down. That upset things a bit as next day found us back on No. 2 Diet and delayed our leaving for the Regiment until the following Friday. On Thursday a crowd of our chaps came into the Field Ambulance with different complaints, amongst them was my Sergt. Major, he said the Regiment was going to attack a position in a day or so. I asked the Doctor to let me go back on the Friday, he did not want to do so only there was such a rush of sickness he eventually said I could go. I forgot to add that on the Tuesday evening a mate rode over from our camp with the remainder of my mail, he had to bring a pack horse, there were seven parcels and sixteen papers. It was one of these that came from Mervyn's Church made up of a lot of very useful things. Up to this time I only had one shirt and one pair of socks with me, though my kit bag at the rear was crammed full of clothes, a shirt came in Viva's parcel and Miss Morrison sent me a pair of socks, so I was set up, no need now to stand out in the sun naked waiting for my clothes to dry.

The anticipated attack never came off. I returned to camp on Friday but was far from well, only getting on that way and with care would be all right. My left hand and arm was one mass of septic sores and it was no joke riding one horse and leading three to water. Still I could feel myself improving and so felt well satisfied. I had not the heart to cook food for myself before, but now I got to work. Four of us rode over to an adjoining Hod and cut some long Palm branches which we built a house with and things in general were much more comfortable. Of course every morning the Taubés would fly over our camp and drop bombs on us but we would rush the horses off the lines, and scatter all over the desert till the danger was over. They always came early in the morning and as it is the hardest thing in the world to drop a bomb on a given spot from a great height, there was really very small danger, one morning he dropped over 20 bombs

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and only caught some niggers with camels. Rarely did he catch any of our chaps at this camp.

Wednesday 30th August: I see my next entry in my note book is this date. Although I was feeling in much better shape after my week under the Doctor I was still in a fairly bad way. The entry says my left hand was covered with septic sores, my right arm and side was jumping with rheumatic pains and my right foot had a septic sore just below the ankle. We said good-bye to this camp on this date and moved on to Aghra Tina (only C Squadron.)

There was nothing of much consequence happened in this camp as far as our life was concerned, but some months before our arrival it was the scene of a terrible catastrophe to some of our forces. If you date back to one of my previous books you will find I think that just about Easter time I spoke of some fighting whilst we were camped at Ferry (THIS IS SPELT 'FAIRY' IN SOME PLACES.) Post Rail Head, we were in hopes that our Brigade would be sent north to take part in it, only no such luck happened. It was here that the Turk had a most pronounced victory over some English Yeomanry. Our system as I have explained before, when we camp for the night is to send forward outposts two or three miles ahead of the main body, and they keep watch all night. In the morning these patrols advance three or four miles and examine all the country round, before returning to camp. If it is a foggy morning we wait for the fog to lift and when it does not lift until 8 or 9 a.m., as soon as one can see everything clear ahead simply come into camp. When this goes on month after month without any sign of Jacko, one is very apt to get careless, the poor Tommies paid dearly for their bit of slackness. On one particular morning their Patrols did not wait for the fog to lift but came straight into camp at 6 a.m. During the night the enemy had come right up close to their Posts and under cover of the fog followed the Patrols right into the camp, which was situated not in the Hod but just on the other side, he fixed his machine guns on a hill overlooking the camp and at about 9 a.m. when the fog lifted opened on the Yeomanry who were absolutely ignorant of any Turks being within miles of them. Not a man of the Squadron escaped, practically all were slaughtered and a few prisoners taken. When we arrived at this Hod about quarter a mile from our camp, Tommies were lying everywhere, most of them had just been covered with sand but it had blown away and in some cases the niggers had dug up some of the bodies to get the dead men's clothes. Our Squadron spent three days burying the dead deep enough to ensure no further disturbance. We took all letters, photos etc. from the men for our Officers to forward to their relatives at home. During the time we were fighting a few weeks back some of our Light Horse had very severe fighting around this Hod, graves of our own men and Turks were to be found everywhere and dead horses made the atmosphere very thick.

We had a very happy time at this camp stayed about fourteen days and I think I enjoyed it more than most of our future camps. The work was easy, it was not actually the front line. The New Zealanders were on ahead of us, and we only had two outposts to supply of a night and two or three during the day, so our horses were our main work, trying to make them look fit once more. That in itself was a fair job as our troop was only half strength and where a week or so ago there were more men than horses, now every man had two horses, one good and the other sick or lame. It was here we got a bit of decent medical attention. Our Doctor had stayed back at the other camp with the Regiment and there was a Scottish Red Cross Staff and an English Doctor stationed at this Hod to attend us. My word he was disgusted at the awful condition some of our poor chaps were in, we were less than one hundred strong and in the first seven days he sent 27 to the Romani Hospital, everyone of these 27 men had previously reported to our own Doctor who had returned them to their lines as fit for duty. All the time I was at Aghri Tina I reported every morning to the Doctor to have my foot and arm treated. It was remarkable the care and attention paid as compared with our own men. I became very friendly with some of the N.C.O's and every evening would walk over to their camp and lay on the sand yarning till bed time. I have their home addresses and we hope to meet again some day in Scotland.

On Saturday night at Aghri Tina our Squadron decided to hold a concert and as this Red Cross Corp had a lovely choir, which we had heard in the still evenings practising, they were invited down to our concert. Some of our men were fair singers and some recited, but the Scotties were the boys to sing. Several of them gave items and one chap sang "Annie Laurie" beautifully. It brought back to my mind an incident which must

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have happened 20 years back. A Band of Hope Meeting in the old Church at Eldorado and Mum singing "Annie Laurie". Perhaps when Mum reads this she will not remember the night but I do and George Carnsow read a portion of "Handy Andy", and Mervyn gave the recitation called "The Midnight Cry". It all came back to me out on the sand with huge Palm trees all round and a beautiful full moon shining, a nice cool breeze had sprung up after an extremely hot day, and all were stretched out enjoying their ease.

But there was not time to think of Eldorado all night. Something happened that made me take a jump of years and think how much Jessie Sneddon would have enjoyed being where I was at that particular moment. Our Major (who was acting as Chairman) called on the Scottish Choir to give an item, but they were bashful and would not come to the front but just sang where they were sprawled out on the sand. They sang Loch Lomond and no sooner finished one than one of them would start up another song and away they all would go, song after song, sometimes a comic, then a serious one, they knew by the absolute silence that we were appreciating the treat and I think without the word of a lie they sang for twenty minutes without drawing breath. Jess. would have been in her glory, all of them were Scottish songs and mostly songs we all knew. Our concert ended about 11p.m.

It was in this camp we first came in contact with water melons. A few miles from camp we found thousands of acres of ripe water melon growing out on the open desert. It was only another of the surprises that the desert supplies, every second day we would send out about four camels and an escort of our men to bring melons in for the camp. It used to run out at about 8 to 10 per man and I witnessed some of the greatest water melon eating competitions I ever expect to see. At first I was afraid of them and went very sparingly, but stuff as many as we liked they never seemed to take any effect on us, in fact I am sure they did us a lot of good. ^{were} Dates were beginning to ripen now too and enormous quantities of them ~~were~~

consumed, so what with dates and water melons we were getting a bit of a change from our camp fare. We always did our own cooking now and for some months to come. The wonderful part of this Army business is that it shows how a man brought up and pampered by civilization can adapt himself to the roughest of living. Take my case, and I am only one the same as thousands of others, who ever would have suggested over in Australia that I should cook the dinner, even with all your conveniences of good wood, frying pans, pots and a decent fire place in the kitchen. Our fires were out in the open, with very often a high wind blowing, our wood was dead palm branches which would not burn unless one constantly kept blowing. We made hobs and fireplaces of empty Bully tins, and our dishes for cooking with were ^{prepared} ~~prepared~~ fruit tins, and a frying pan made of the side of a biscuit tin. I know you women folk will be sceptical of our cooking abilities but the rissoles we made were as good as any Melbourne shop and probably a lot cleaner. I used to boil rice then when condensed milk was issued I would mix my share of milk and heat it up again, no insult to Mum's cooking but I am sure she could not have done it better at home. I became a dabster at making cocoa. About this time I received a lot from home. I also had a huge tin (5/- worth) sent out from Romani and I had two cups of cocoa three times every day, I began to put on some much needed condition.

As I said before I enjoyed this camp more than any, we all had a cover for our head, each section of 4 would club together and build a shanty of old bags or Palm branches. Some of them were marvellous contrivances but after being camped on the open desert with absolutely no covering, these indeed were homes of refuge. Up till now and often afterwards we had nothing to build with and I envied the old swaggy over in Victoria. I used to think of when I was in the country in Victoria and out for a walk would sometimes come across a family or perhaps a couple of men travelling along the road with stock and only a wagon to sleep under, I would in those days compare his life with my own comfortable bedroom and meals provided without any messing about on my part, and would feel very sorry for the poor chaps on the roads. Yet now I realised that very often their lives were quite as happy and perhaps in some cases more so than my own with all the comforts. I have learnt a few lessons since we came out here and can imagine no more glorious holiday for a city man than a horse, wagon, some tinned food, a gun and a camera, and three weeks up in the mountains away from everybody. I intend to try it instead of rushing through the country at 50 miles an hour in a train. If Bessie ever reads this I guess she will think of the Harvey family on the Mitta River near Tallangatta, compared with my present life their home was a palace, a roof over their head, a river at their door and hundreds of rabbits to trap, beds to sleep in, none of these things

were out here.

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On Sunday September 9th we had to move away from this camp, the Railway that was being built behind us was well on its way to where we were camped so our orders were to go forward to El Marno and relieve the New Zealanders, all the morning we were busy cleaning up our camp and burning all the rubbish. I was very sorry to leave our Scottish friends up on the hill. I had spent many a pleasant evening on the sand talking of home, they of England whilst I was all for Australia. I took their addresses in case I ever go to the Home Country. Soon after lunch we made a move and the way was very hot and dusty. Our road ran along what is known as the Northern Caravan Track. To speak of it as a track would lead you to imagine a kind of road, in a sense it was but not in the way you think. It twisted and turned and all the way there was sand hills on each side, simply caused by the constant use of caravans of camels for centuries past. Some months after a Military Chaplain gave us a series of lectures on the Biblical History of the country we were now crossing. He told us of men as far back as the Bible days who had used this way to travel from Jerusalem to Egypt, huge cities and rivers existed where now there was barren desert. Some of the Hods still retain a semblance of the ancient names, and as I rode on under a burning sun on my way to El Marno my mind was busy imaging those wonderful old men plodding along beside the camels to and from Egypt. Ships of the desert in every sense of the word. But the most wonderful thing of it all was that though we ourselves were on horses, those camels were still indispensable since it was going to depend on them whether we lived or died for months to come. Every day our provisions would come along there the same way as thousands of years ago per camel. Napoleon in his endeavours to reach India over-land came along this track, but was beaten by the desert and turned back to Egypt where he was defeated in the great battle with Nelson. That wonderful old track had defied all the ages until after we passed over it and then a Railway came after us and to-day trains by the dozens every day cross the desert along the Northern Camel Route. Had I been able to write this when those lectures were given, the account would have been much more interesting but at the present moment I am writing this in England quite nine months after, so many things have happened in between, that all recollection of what was told us has gone from my memory.

We arrived in camp somewhere about 4p.m. and by the time our horses were fed and watered, our own tea over, darkness had come down and we simply lay down under the Palms to sleep. One thing a soldier soon learns is that wherever he lays his head at the end of his day's journey that is Home. Early next morning as soon as the horses were attended to, each section of 4 set about building a Palm Leaf Home. Up till now they were always small ones and one could hardly move about, but this time my section improved matters by making one much larger than usual, we expected to stay there for a good while and then start our journey back to the Canal for our long looked for rest. I think many of us would have given up there and then had we known just when we would see the Canal again, for the time was a great way off. It was only the anticipation of relief that kept the boys on their feet. This camp was much after the same style as our last, the Palm trees were a wonderful size and as we were going to find for weeks to come everywhere dates were absolutely a nuisance. Fatigue parties had to gather up all that fell to the ground as it made the camp look dirty. Thousands of water melons were within three or four miles of the Hod and every second day parties were formed to go out and get some. Our only work as usual was night listening posts and day look-outs, but there were still troops on ahead so there was not any great danger of a surprise. Still our men kept slowly dropping out with one complaint or another, only now they were not so much missed as before as a day or so before we left Aghri Tina some reinforcements came up from Romani, about half a dozen joined my troop and each man had only his one horse to attend to once more.

My next entry in my note book is Saturday 15th September. This trip proved the last straw for a great number of our horses and settled the men for many weeks after. The whole thing happened such a long time ago and yet sitting here in Harlaxton Camp, England, it still remains a painful nightmare of a memory. The Turks had a very strong position at Birel-Mazar, I cannot tell the distance but say 40 miles as the crow flies, needless to say we did not go in so straight a line. A forced march was to be made under cover of night with only one watering spot, nine miles from our present camp, our General told us that when the attack was made everything would depend on the first two or three hours of fighting, if in that time we were not in Mazar it meant an awful march back home once more.

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All day on Saturday 15th we prepared for what was on ahead, got all our saddlery in good working order, and at dark we lay down on the sand behind our horses, saddles all packed and camp dismantled for there was no telling that if we returned that way it would be with Jacko hot on our tracks. All food we could not carry was buried, and so a couple of hours rest was taken. Silently we moved out at midnight, hardly a word spoken, every man knew what was expected of him and did it. C Squadron of the 8th was detailed as right and left flank to the main body. The main body was going forward and our duty was to travel on the outskirts in twos, keep in view the couple in front and be in touch with the main body, they travelled all the way in a hollow, we could not see them but could hear the continual swish of the gun carriage wheels through the sand. I forgot to mention that one Battery of Artillery who joined us for this trip was the old Ayrshires whom we had made friends with six months before at Serapium (SOMETIMES SPELT 'SERAPEUM' IN DIARY) Rail Head. I was down at the wells the afternoon they came into camp and had a yarn to the boys we had entertained at the other camp. Sergt. Cowen, Stewart Caddis and others but poor old "Molly" had been wounded in August and was back in Romani Hospital, we had a great laugh over Molly and the wonderful tea we took to him in the guard tent when he was unable to attend our banquet. This Battery came along with us on this trip as well as our old friends the "Inverness" boys. All night we marched on, it was pitch dark, but nice and cool, just before day-light we arrived at Sal Marna and being the flanking party our lot were last to settle down, the rest of our Regiment camped in the Hod but C Squadron had to be satisfied with camping outside amongst some low bushes about three feet high, there was no hope of sleep for hours. Our horses had to be watered, groomed and fed, our own rations attended to and other duties. Soon things began to get lively, the enemy Taubés began to appear in the air to see what was doing, everytime they showed up our own flying machines would come from the opposite direction, at one time we had three Taubés trying to bomb our camp and four English machines chasing them away. It was all very interesting until a Taubé got overhead and got her machine guns to work on our camp. It was disastrous to us, killed some horses and a couple of men whom we buried about an hour after. By this time the sun was very hot and tuned us up somewhat. I spread my blanket over two low bushes and crawled in for an hour's sleep, the chance of a bullet finding me was of no consequence since I could not keep my eyes open any longer. I think I slept for about two hours when it was time to water horses and be already for a move on. This job of watering horses was always a long one as usually there was only two or three wells and if the Regiment was only there it meant from five to six hundred horses whereas the Brigade was three times that number. In this case the Brigade was here, the Artillery was at another Hod a couple of miles away. We had to be very careful of our own and our horses rations, for in front of us was a thirty mile ride of barren waste without any water, if the expedition was a failure we would need to come back over the same ground before food or water could be obtained. Our prospects were anything but bright.

Punctuality was a great point in our Regiment, we were timed to move away at 6p.m. Five minutes after the hour not a soldier was in the Hod who should have been with the column, no one was feeling fresh, the day had been very hot and practically no sleep could be got, but everyone was cheered up with the prospect of a pretty sharp engagement at dawn next morning. This evening our Squadron was marching with the column, it was a slight improvement on last night as there was the company of your mates which one has not got when acting as a flanking party. Not a word was to be spoken and not a match struck all night. We would move forward a few miles and then a halt called, dismount and lay at your horse's feet for a few minutes until reports came in from the scouts, then up and go forward a few more miles when the same performance would be gone through, every man was ordered to keep awake but the moment a man sat down on the sand, down would go his head, never any trouble with our horses now, they were feeling it worse than we were for this part of the desert was heavy going and they had not yet recovered from the previous month's hardships. All night long we pushed on along the old Caravan Route, between the high sand banks worn through the continual traffic of countless camels since the days when Joseph and his brethren travelled along it, and Moses with the Children of Israel wandered round. Just to keep awake I tried to think of these things and pictured the many millions of camels that had passed along exactly the same track as we

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were on since those early days, and then in later years when Napoleon tried to get to India and failed, having to turn back to Egypt, this was the track he took being the main Caravan track between Jerusalem and Alexandria and on to Cairo. At last I could not keep awake any longer. I must have dozed off in the saddle for I woke with a start and found myself amongst strangers, asked of one man what Squadron and he said A Squadron, my horse was a fast walker and had carried me through B on to A so I had to pull out and wait till C came up to me. At 1a.m. half an hour's halt was called for breakfast of McConnachie's Rations and hard biscuits, we had to be most careful, for no one could see how this stunt we were on was going to end. At 1.30 the order was once more given to mount and move on. Just before mounting I was sent along our D Troop line to give each man the pass-word. I have often wondered since who chose it, the word made me think of home and olden times, "Murray". For the next hour I kept myself awake thinking of Rutherglen, Corowa and my fishing trips down to the Murray from Tallangatta, and here we were now using the name of the old river out in Sinai Desert as a Pass-word during an attack on Marza.

Away in the east dawn began to make the first faint signs of breaking, our poor weary horses began to liven up and a thrill of anticipation ran along the lines of silent sand-covered men. The attack was to be made at dawn but none of us men knew if we were close to Marza or were we lost. About half an hour after dawn first appeared some rifle shooting broke out on our left and on ahead, we broke into a trot and moved round to the right and very soon we saw the object of our weary march away in front and slightly to the left. The Turks were taken by surprise, we could see their out-posts rushing back to the main redoubt and hard pushed by some of our men. My Squadron galloped up to the foot of a sand hill and took up a position on top whilst our horses were led away at a gallop, bullets began to buzz round and every man soon forgot that he had been in the saddle for practically two nights and no sleep during the day. Jacko was soon beaten back and we were able to have our horses brought round and we galloped forward to the next ridge of sand-hills. We soon came to a dead stop, a storm of bullets met us and we dropped down out of the saddles and took up fresh positions. We lost a few men and horses in that gallop and where we now were the Turk had our range and he warned us up. For three hours our Squadron lay on top of that sand-hill and for most of the time had very little to do. Jacko was being beaten back to the main redoubt but our boys could not advance any further on account of open country, so had to leave the advancing to others more to our left.

As the sun came up in the sky that awful feeling of weariness and want of sleep returned. I was lying behind a bush and once more dozed off, must only have been sleeping a few minutes when I woke up feeling as if I had been buried alive, nose, ears, mouth full of sand. In fact I was almost buried, a shell had landed about ten or twelve yards from me and though I was so near nothing happened as the soft sand had killed the force of the bursting shell. My second attempt to sleep had come to a disastrous end, so I once more began to get an interest in things around me. I thought it a good chance to do some practice shooting so picked out a bush about 700 yards on ahead as my target, for the first five or six my range was bad but after that I used to see little clouds of dust rising very close to it, I got a couple of bull's eyes and imagine my surprise when I saw four or five men suddenly rush from behind my target and seek shelter elsewhere, this bush had been protecting them all the time.

Just after this our aircraft began to come buzzing round which showed that our Artillery were coming up, those wonderful Scotties that had done such grand work for us only a month previously. We had begun to think they had got lost in the night but soon their Battery opened out on the redoubt and the planes flew over to "observe". Now the dust and smoke began to fly where Jacko was, he evidently had no big guns in the redoubt so he replied with "Archies" (anti aircraft guns). Our work was done now, some of the other boys had pushed further in, but as I said before where we were it was impossible. At about 10a.m. our horses were once more brought up and we fell back out of range of the enemy's fire, we did not have many casualties, more losses of horses than men.

From 10a.m. to 11a.m. we stood at our horse's heads and ate a hurried meal and drained the last drops out of our water bottles. The poor horses were suffering awfully and there was nothing for it but to face last night's march on a return back to Sal Marno. It was now 11a.m., our horses had had their last drink 19 hours before and had travelled over 30 miles, now had to start on the 30 miles home again. We were past thinking, it was a case of sit in your saddle in a kind of stupor. The hours dragged on,

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twelve, one, two, three until there was some message passed along the lines, of water on ahead, no one knew where it was coming from for we all knew we could not reach Sal Marno till 10 or 11 at night, but for the next hour the rumor grew, "water on ahead", and not hard well water that we had been using but fresh pure water.

About 5p.m. we were passing through some low sand-hills and found a block in the column on ahead, we soon discovered the cause. On our march back to-day the Officer-in-Charge realized that our horses could not stand the journey, so had sent a message in by wireless to meet the column with fresh water. I will never forget the scene now in front of us. There were miles of canvas water troughs full of beautiful clear water and hundreds of horses drinking or waiting to drink. The poor brutes were almost mad at being held back to allow those in front to drink. Everywhere on ahead was a mass of camels loaded with fantastic water, slowly coming up and kneeling down whilst niggers, Indian soldiers, Royal Engineers and others were unloading them, emptying the water into the troughs and then putting the empty cans back on the camel's back once more, and each nigger would make his camel rise and lead him away. No one seems to know how many camels were used that day and I would not try to guess. On the whole everything passed off in an orderly manner. We had not long to wait for our turn and it was just as well or our horses would have become unmanageable. When we lead them up to the water both men and horses drank together, we were all in the same boat, the whole thing was a great piece of work and saved hundreds of horse's and probably men's lives as well for many were on their last legs.

We rested for an hour, making a meal on the remains of our food and at about 7p.m. we started once more on the final stages of our journey. But our horses seemed to be too far gone to continue, every few minutes a horse would stagger out of the ranks and by the time the rider was off his back he would be down on the sand. There was only one way out of the trouble, leave your horse to die and find your own way back to camp, usually they would wander round until they found an unloaded camel returning and ride home on it. We none of us knew that night how many horses were lost, some time later a lot of us realised it, but you will hear of it later on. Many of our boys stayed out on the desert all night trying to save their horses, we had grown very fond of our mounts and after what they had done for us these last few days and it was the least a man could do was stay behind with the poor brute. Fortunately my little mare hung out splendidly, she carried me all the way in fine style and at eleven that night we arrived at the spot where the wells were and from where we started on Sunday evening. Our horses were again watered and fed and the men simply lay down behind them without undoing the blanket from the saddle. They were strewn everywhere, no fear of horses breaking away in the night, the poor beasts were done like the men. Officers and men were all mixed up together, this trip was one of the occasions when our Officers fared exactly the same as the men and I guess some of them felt the hardships.

END OF BOOK 3 * BOOK 4 COMMENCES WITH PAGE 24 OF DIARY NO. 4.
