

CHAPTER X

THE ARRIVAL OF II ANZAC

THEIR first test had come immediately after the divisions of the I Anzac Corps had left the Canal, in the defence of which they were to be replaced by those of the II Corps, still untried and very crude, the 4th going to Serapeum and the 5th to Ferry Post. As the rolling-stock of the Egyptian railways was fully employed in carrying the other divisions, G.H.Q. decided that these two should move from Tel el Kebir by march-route across the intervening desert. Both the railway and the Sweet-water Canal traversed this desert, and the available routes across the sand lay, in parts, beside them. These portions, however, were little—if at all—better than open desert, and it was left to brigade commanders to select whatever line of advance they preferred. In each division the "old" brigade¹ was to take over the line first, and, as time was pressing, the whole of the 8th Brigade and a battalion of the 4th² were sent ahead by train. The rest of the 4th and the new brigades were to follow on foot.

It was recognised that for new troops this would be a severe trial. M'Cay, who on March 22nd had arrived from Australia and taken over command of the 5th Division, had doubts as to its feasibility, and raised some objection, but was referred to G.H.Q., where he was informed that, trains not being available, the order must be carried out. Careful preparation was therefore obviously called for. Glasfurd in his order to the 12th Brigade, said:

The 12th Brigade within a month of its formation has been called upon to make a three-days march under service conditions. The first stage is 15 miles, the second also 15 miles, and the third 9 miles—over heavy sand; water and transport are limited. For young troops unaccustomed to marching this will be a severe test; the difficulties can, however, be foreseen; and they can be overcome by preparation and by strict attention to march discipline and to all orders issued.

¹ That is, the 4th and 8th Brigades respectively, which had existed before the re-organisation.

² The 16th Battalion.

Being a trained British officer, he naturally insisted upon much attention being paid, before starting, to the feet of the men; but neither Australian officers nor their men had at this time really learnt the necessity for such care, and there was in both a feeling strongly adverse to any "mothering." Cox, who with his (mainly British) staff had now assumed command of the 4th Division, was slightly more lenient in his march orders than M'Cay, whose staff (largely composed of Australians)³ had taken over the 5th. The test being under service conditions, the troops had to march with full packs and waterbottles, and (in the case of the infantry) with 120 rounds of ammunition, but, whereas Cox allowed his brigades to pack their rations for the day of march and their water-proof sheets upon the camels which accompanied them, according to M'Cay's orders both were to be carried by the men.

To face the approaching hot weather the troops had been provided with British sun-helmets and cotton uniforms; and, as it was already becoming warm, Monash, whose brigade was to lead, arranged to start at day-break. It was found,

³ The two senior officers of the general staff of the 5th Division were, however, British. The staffs of the 4th and 5th Divisions were:

4TH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION.

Major-General Sir H. V. Cox, commanding.

Lieutenant D. G. Reyburn, Indian Army, and Lieutenant C. H. V. Cox, Leicestershire Regiment (*Aides-de-Camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. Duncan, The Royal Scots Fusiliers, Major E. M. Williams, **A.I.F.**, Captain P. A. F. Spence, Royal Highlanders (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel E. Armstrong, Highland Light Infantry, Major J. G. Ramsay, Cameron Highlanders, Captain W. Fowler-Brownsworth, **A.I.F.** (*Administrative Staff*); Brigadier-General C. Rosenthal, **A.I.F.** (*Artillery*); Lieutenant-Colonel G. C. E. Elliott, R.E. (*Engineers*); Major J. E. Fraser, **A.I.F.** (*Signals*); Lieutenant-Colonel A. A. Holdsworth, **A.I.F.** (*Supply & Transport*); Lieutenant-Colonel G. W. Barber, **A.I.F.**, and Major A. H. Marks, **A.I.F.** (*Medical*); Major W. A. Kendall, **A.I.F.** (*Veterinary*); Lieutenant J. Tuckett, **A.I.F.** (*Ordnance*); Captain F. K. Prideaux-Brune, **A.I.F.** (*Police*).

5TH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION.

Major-General the Hon. J. W. M'Cay, commanding.

Lieutenant W. L. Hamilton, **A.I.F.**, and Lieutenant H. F. Moore, **A.I.F.** (*Aides-de-camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Wagstaff, R.E., Major D. M. King, Liverpool Regiment, Captain A. J. Boase, **A.I.F.** (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. P. McGlinn, **A.I.F.**, Captain R. P. Varwell, Royal Irish Rifles, Captain G. D. Smith, **A.I.F.** (*Administrative Staff*); Brigadier-General S. E. Christian, **A.I.F.** (*Artillery*); Lieutenant-Colonel A. B. Carey, R.E. (*Engineers*); Major R. A. Stanley, **A.I.F.** (*Signals*); Lieutenant-Colonel F. H. Francis, **A.I.F.** (*Supply & Transport*); Lieutenant-Colonel C. W. H. Hardy, **A.I.F.**, and Major H. H. B. Fcllitt, **A.I.F.** (*Medical*); Major M. Henry, **A.I.F.** (*Veterinary*); Captain J. M. Rodd, A.O.D. (*Ordnance*); Major E. J. F. Langley, **A.I.F.** (*Police*).

however, that the troops could not load the camels before daylight, and this circumstance henceforth governed the starting hour. The march as far as Moascar comprised two stages, the columns bivouacking for one night, generally at the oasis of Mahsama, where the staff had arranged for a dépôt of water and food. Beyond Moascar was the final stage, which, in the case of the 5th Division, lay along the made road to Ferry Post, but in that of the 4th across desert to Serapeum. The desert marches were found to be even more trying than had been anticipated. Few of the men could resist emptying their waterbottles early in the day. Their cotton trousers chafed, as did the new boots, especially when fine sand worked into them. The whole force was just recovering from the passing sickness caused by anti-typhoid inoculation a few days before. During the second stage of the 4th Brigade's progress, men, after toiling for a while through very heavy sand, began to "fall out" in alarming numbers. The New Zealanders from Moascar camp, however, went out to their assistance, and before dark, out of 132 who fell out, 118 had reached camp, a few others straggling in during the night.

The 4th Brigade was followed by the 14th (under General Irving), which left Tel el Kebir at 6 a.m. on March 27th; it was followed the same afternoon by the 12th (under Glasfurd), which marched half-a-day behind it. In the 14th, which advanced on a wide front in four successive lines—infantry in front, transport in rear—numbers of men fell out almost from the start, but both brigades reached their respective places of bivouac in good time. The next day was hotter, with no breeze. In the 4th Brigade, which was then making the final stage from Moascar to Serapeum through a cloud of dust and flies, all went fairly well until the column came within sight of the tents of Serapeum, when it dissolved into trailing groups and straggled into camp. It was revived by a bath in the Canal. In the 12th Brigade Glasfurd halted his men during all the hours of heat from 8.50 to 3.25; 165 men fell out, but the brigade reached bivouac in good formation. The 14th Brigade had to traverse the most difficult stretch between Mahsama and Moascar. About 11 a.m., when the midday halt was called, some of the men began to wander in

search of the undrinkable water which was all that lay within reach, and, possibly for this reason, General Irving shortly after midday recommenced the march. At this point there lay ahead some difficult sandhills, and, to avoid them, Irving made a détour towards a desert ridge which, as the divisional staff had informed him, would afford a firmer surface. After an hour's advance in the intense heat of midday the brigade began to reach this ridge in a state of utter exhaustion. According to Irving's report—

Scores, including Officers and N.C.O's, literally dropped down, the officers and N.C.O's from the extra fatigue they had experienced in looking after and exhorting their men.

A halt was called, and the medical officers advised that the men should be allowed "to go on at their own gait while they were able." Many collapsed in an agony of thirst and exhaustion, and the brigade, now practically out of hand and without any attempt at formation, like the remnant of a broken army, staggered into camp during the evening, the New Zealanders again going out to succour and bring in the most distressed. On the following day the Prince of Wales reviewed the brigade as it passed along the road to Ferry Post, when there occurred in some units a demonstration of feeling against their brigadier.

The later columns, making the same marches with special precautions and in less severe weather, came through with little trouble,⁴ and, if staff and troops had been more experienced, greater success might have been achieved even by leaders as careful as Monash and Glasfurd. Many of the men felt bitterly that they and their units had been unnecessarily humiliated by subjection to so severe a trial. Irving, whose arrangements for the march were in M'Cay's opinion very defective, was replaced in the command of the 14th Brigade by Colonel Pope of the 16th Battalion.

Upon the arrival of the new divisions at the Canal, an additional and most unpleasant surprise awaited them. At Serapeum and Moascar respectively there were found in camp the men whom the older divisions had ejected as unsuitable to accompany their units to France and who had been left

⁴ A rumour was afterwards current that, as a result of this march, several men had died. Though the available records contain no evidence to support this statement, it is not therefore necessarily incorrect.

behind "for further training"⁶—1,354 from the 1st Division, and 851 from the 2nd. Birdwood and White, who were then on the point of leaving Egypt, and who had not been informed of the "weeding out," assumed that these men were merely surplus reinforcements, and, to avoid unnecessary railway travelling, the new divisions (which, mainly through the loss of their artillery, were now 6,410 under strength) were ordered to absorb them.⁶ A day or two later, when the true nature of these quotas began to be apparent, Birdwood stood by his order, directing that their future must depend upon their conduct.

The new divisions thus absorbed the whole of the "rejects" of the older ones, the men being allotted according to their States. Of the New South Welshmen, no less than 200 were taken by one battalion—the 13th, which fortunately was an old Gallipoli unit. The rejects brought with them no "conduct sheets," and, in physique and training, were "far below the original 13th." The subsequent return of a number of the old 13th men from hospital gave an opportunity of getting rid of a proportion of the undesirables, some of whom are said to have been, during their stay in Egypt, allotted to, and rejected in turn by, no less than eight units.⁷ Of the rest, though much trouble was expected of them, the published history of the 13th states:⁸

Those we kept permanently—about 120—generally made good and, later on, on the bloody, muddy fields of France and Belgium, did work equal to that of any troops in the world, and died as gamely. Perhaps it was the fact that no conduct sheets arrived with them. . . . They perhaps troubled their officers, but they troubled the enemy more.

Such was the interesting result of Murray's exhortation to the Australian commanders concerning discipline, and of their efforts to improve it. Later, some of the commanders in the 4th Division, finding themselves hampered by an undue percentage of unintelligent or otherwise troublesome soldiers,

⁶ See pp. 57-8.

⁷ The main shortage was in the infantry battalions, which had had to furnish men to replace the withdrawn artillery.

⁸ According to the published history of the battalion (*The Thirteenth*, by Captain T. A. White, p. 61), four years after the war some of these men "were seen wearing the honourable badges of returned soldiers . . . and rattling collection boxes as suffering warriors."

⁹ *The Thirteenth*, p. 61.

endeavoured to obtain permission from Godley to send them back to the training battalions. Godley, however, held that this would merely relieve regimental officers of part of their duty—that of training unpromising material—and refused the request.

It was now approaching summer, and the training of the two divisions in the desert east of the Canal was greatly hampered by the heat. Cool mess-huts were, however, erected. Except for a short time before May 12th, when an enemy offensive was expected but did not eventuate,⁹ the forward line was no longer heavily garrisoned, as it had been by the old divisions, but was held only by sentries and machine-gunners; a single battalion¹⁰ from each division provided most of the actual garrison and of the immediate support,¹¹ the other battalions being free for training, which was carried out in the comparative cool of mornings and evenings.¹² To parts of the front the water had still to be transported by camels, and there had still to be carried out upon the desert trench-lines a certain amount of work, partly necessitated by the fact that some of the wire-entanglements, so laboriously constructed by the older divisions, had now turned into sand-hills, which completely blocked the view of the men in part of the firing line. To obviate this drawback, a number of new trenches of simple design were hurriedly dug. During these months, however, the active defence in all three sectors of the Canal fell mainly upon the mounted troops. Murray's plan for occupying the Katia district (on the northern route) was now nearing achievement, and he proposed to safeguard

⁹ This expectation of an offensive followed the Turkish raid upon the British at Katia in April (*see p. 294*).

¹⁰ Or two half-battalions.

¹¹ A light horse squadron (or two half-squadrons) was also stationed at the front line, with the remainder of its regiment in immediate reserve.

¹² The distributions made by the Australian Comforts Fund were of great value to the troops during this period. Health was good, although at the staging camps flies abounded. In the earlier months large dumps of animal manure had provided a breeding ground, but the fly menace was countered with far greater vigour than at Gallipoli. Steps were taken to destroy unnecessary manure-heaps, and to burn the manure, which was gathered into a few central dumps; what could not be burnt (owing to the admixture of sand) was spread out and raked over daily. In spite of all this, flies remained abundant. Only box-latrines were now used, and this possibly prevented the flies from being dangerously contaminated. At any rate the precautions seem to have had a valuable effect, since intestinal disease was not greatly prevalent and seems to have actually declined as the summer advanced. For example, in the 5th Division, during the six weeks after April 22, the percentage of troops suffering from diarrhoea fell gradually from 3 to 1.3.

the central and southern sectors in a somewhat similar fashion—by throwing out posts far up the desert valleys by which the enemy must approach. An entirely successful raid by the light horse, who killed or captured the garrison of the nearest enemy post, at Jifjafa, may have augured some success for this method. At the end of April, however, a sharp reverse inflicted by the enemy upon the advanced yeomanry at Katia caused the commander-in-chief to abandon this part of his plan; but he continued—with British infantry and troops of the Anzac Mounted Division—to push forward into the Katia district, at the same time carrying out to the letter the instructions originally given to him, by constantly raiding the enemy's advanced dépôts in Sinai, destroying his wells, and emptying his cisterns.¹³ It was the brilliant and continued success of the light horse and mounted rifles in carrying out one difficult task after another in exact accordance with his policy and orders, that occasioned a marked change in the nature of Murray's written references to his Australian troops. Telegraphing to Robertson on May 10th, he urged that the Anzac Mounted Division should be left with him as being "the only really reliable mounted troops I have." On May 16th (after their raid on Mageibra):

I feel sure that no troops but Australians and New Zealanders could have carried out this operation in the prevailing weather.

May 30 (writing to General Lawrence after the Bir Salmana raid): Any work entrusted to these excellent troops is invariably well executed.

June 16 (after the emptying of the Muksheib cisterns): This operation could not have been better carried out. . . . (The Commander-in-Chief) is particularly struck with the splendid way the men worked. Their discipline and endurance stood the test extremely well.

June 28 (after the salving of an aeroplane in the desert). Sir Archibald is anxious that these troops should know how great is his admiration for their continuous good service.

Of the new Australian infantry divisions, however, on May 7th he telegraphed to Robertson:

The artillery is not coming on as fast as General Godley had anticipated, and I do not think it will be ready for service in France until the end of June. . . .

¹³ At this stage the disaster of General Townshend's surrender in Mesopotamia was known to be impending, and Robertson at the War Office was urging that any success which could be achieved in the Egyptian theatre as an offset would be very valuable.

It appears as if scarcely any of the commanders in Egypt recognised the full meaning of the task imposed upon the staff and troops of the new divisions when their artillery was taken from them in order to hasten the departure of the 1st and 2nd. In the middle of March, when almost all the other units of the divisions had been formed, the artillery staffs had actually to recommence the task of raising anew for themselves practically the whole of their personnel. A scanty nucleus—about 150 officers and men from the artillery of the older divisions—had been allotted to each;¹⁴ but, except for these, the whole highly-specialised service had to be recruited forthwith from volunteers, chiefly from the infantry and light horse. As a start, about March 15th each infantry battalion in the two divisions was ordered to supply 100 men, and these were supplemented a fortnight later by, roughly speaking, an equal number from the light horse. The process of welding this raw material into trained artillery may be illustrated by the case of the 12th Field Artillery Brigade of the 4th Division.

As a trained nucleus for this brigade, its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Rabett (himself a young officer, formerly of the militia artillery in Australia), received, in all, five subalterns and about thirty artillerymen. Of the five officers, three had served at Anzac, and two were reinforcement officers who had originally been N.C.O's in the militia artillery in Australia. One of the officers (with Anzac experience) Rabett appointed as his brigade adjutant; the other four became his battery commanders. In order to select the seventeen additional officers required, Rabett visited Cairo and picked from the reserve camps of the light horse¹⁵ a

¹⁴ Others appear to have been attached later. On May 28th composition of the 5th Divisional Artillery was—

Artillery personnel	457
Light horse	1,198
Infantry	1,171
Other arms	151
Total	<u>2,977</u>

¹⁵ The infantry had already been thoroughly "combed" to supply officers for their own battalions. Consequently in the 4th Divisional Artillery, 33 out of 47 N.C.O's to whom commissions were given were light horsemen, and 12 artillerymen.

number of youngsters from the great Australian public schools. Having made his selection, he called them together, asked whether each was prepared to work himself to the bone in order to complete the task ahead, and then obtained their transfer to Tel el Kebir.

As it was not known how soon this artillery might be required to defend the Canal, no fixed period for training could be promised. Rabett assumed that they would have eight weeks, drew up a careful syllabus for each day and hour of training, and impressed on his four battery commanders that, whatever happened, this syllabus must be rigidly adhered to. Daily training then commenced, the men beginning under their battery commanders at 6.30 a.m. and working for ten hours (not counting intervals). In order to keep the new officers ahead of their men, Rabett took them as a class at 4.30 every morning, lecturing them for two hours before the troops came on parade, when they put in an hour's drill with their men. Fortunately certain parts of the instruction could be given by officers or N.C.O's without special knowledge of artillery work; but within a fortnight the new officers, putting in eight hours with the troops and four by themselves, were able to take their men in special subjects also.

It had been intended to use light horsemen as drivers and infantrymen as gunners, but as it was found that many of the light horse reinforcements could not ride, this distinction was not maintained. Although horses and guns were scarce, Tel el Kebir was an excellent manœuvre-area, and the artillery commanders were hoping that their brigades would be left there, but in the first fortnight in April they were sent to the Canal, where the heavy sand made manœuvre-drill impossible. In the 12th Brigade the men were given some practice by driving a watercart.

The artillery of both divisions were now given the elementary shooting-practice which was to end their training in Egypt. That of the 5th had had among its officers twelve regulars (of the Royal Australian Artillery, or from Duntroon); the brigades of the 4th Divisional Artillery had not one. It had fallen upon a handful of Australian militia

officers to create in two months this specialised force. It is unlikely that such a task was ever attempted among any other troops destined for the Western Front.

The War Office was naturally anxious to reinforce the army in France, and, loyal to his principles, Murray on May 3rd telegraphed:

Do not be afraid to take my 11th, 42nd, and two Australian divisions from me. I may not do wonders with the balance, but I shall not be inactive.

Birdwood's opinion had always been that the infantry of the 4th and 5th Divisions, containing, as it did, half the old Gallipoli men, was as fit to come to France as that of the 1st and 2nd. Accordingly Robertson now telegraphed to Murray asking whether this estimate was correct. The reply was:

It is hardly correct. . . . I know this is a theory of Birdwood's, but as a matter of fact I judged from personal inspection and observation that the infantry of the 4th and 5th Divisions is decidedly inferior, both as regards physique, training, and officers, to that of the first two divisions. . . .

He expressed a hope that it would be ready for France by the end of May; but the artillery could hardly be so for an additional month, unless it was to complete in France the groundwork of its training. Finally, at the end of May, the two divisions were ordered to the Western Front. Murray, who had frequently inspected them, and was undoubtedly pleased with their progress, then wrote to Robertson:

I think it is desirable to give you some idea of the degree of efficiency which these divisions will be found to have attained. . . . As regards the artillery, which is the most backward arm, further training is undoubtedly required to enable the batteries to take their place in the line with a reasonable standard of efficiency. . . . Nevertheless, taking into consideration that their artillery has been formed scarcely two months, and that only 7 per cent. of the personnel were originally artillerymen,¹⁸ with about 46 per cent. of infantry and 47 per cent. of light horsemen added, I consider that their general progress is up to my expectations. . . . All batteries have completed their gun practice (150 rounds per 18-pounder battery, and 120 rounds per howitzer battery) before they embark.

¹⁸ This figure is possibly too low. For the 4th Division the proportion of artillerymen was given by General Rosenthal as 15 per cent. Murray's letter states that in this new artillery "the infantry personnel had been found considerably more tractable and responsive to training than the light horsemen." Artillery officers in general, however, seem to have observed little difference in this respect between recruits from these two sources

Concerning the infantry, the material is unquestionably very good, in so far as concerns the rank and file. Officers are, however, on the whole, poor in military knowledge, and herein lies the chief trouble both as regards infantry and artillery. With good regular officers, who know how to train and command them, the infantry would be soon turned into a magnificent fighting force. The men are keen and energetic; they have completed their firing, and they are generally much better than I had expected in view of the amount of training they have received.

He added, however, that their training was still incomplete; and that their marching, march discipline, and the fit of their equipment "left much to be desired."

The opinion of the corps commander, Godley, on the other hand, was that the 4th and 5th were "just as good, if not better in physique than the 1st and 2nd, and unquestionably better trained."¹⁷

Of their commanders, Murray wrote:

I consider Major-General Sir H. V. Cox . . . and Major-General M'Cay quite suitable for the command of divisions in France. They are both men of character, determination, and hard fighters.

At this stage the light horse (with the exception of the 13th Regiment and part of the 4th, which accompanied the infantry to France as divisional cavalry) finally parted from their infantry. Although at first they possessed some hope of following the other divisions, and though Birdwood afterwards more than once asked to have a portion of them sent to him as infantry reinforcements, there was never any real chance of their being brought to France as mounted troops and they were better retained as the magnificent cavalry that they were. Distinguished as was the record of the Australian infantry in France, it never surpassed—if indeed it equalled—that of the mounted troops whom they were now leaving. The tall bronzed horsemen, who watched the tents of their fellow-countrymen on the Canal gradually disappear, had before them a very different campaign. Working, in the old Anzac undress, through the sand and torrid heat of Sinai and the dust and fever of Palestine, little heard of either by mates in France or by people at home, the Anzac Mounted

¹⁷ Godley considered that they had had more time for training, especially in such departments as bombing and bayonet fighting.

Division¹⁸ was nevertheless destined, as its historian has justly claimed,¹⁹ "to achieve results unequalled by any other division of horse, Allied or enemy, engaged on any front in the war."

The 4th Australian Infantry Division began to reach France early in June,²⁰ and, like its predecessors, came by rail (as one man said, "through 200 miles of garden" in the Rhone Valley) to the area about Merris. Birdwood suggested that it should be incorporated in his army corps, thus allowing the New Zealand Division to be transferred to II Anzac, whose commander, Godley, held the administrative command of the New Zealand force. The suggestion was shortly afterwards approved, but for the time being the New Zealanders remained in Birdwood's corps, and the 4th Division was merely attached to it. About the time when the 4th arrived, the I Anzac Corps was warned (as will presently be related) that it would be required to move to another part of the front. As the proportion of veterans in the infantry of the new divisions was the same as in the old, Birdwood decided to put the 4th immediately into the line, ostensibly for practice, but really in order to relieve troops who were required for the move. On June 15th he therefore ordered that the 4th Brigade should be given a tour of duty as soon as possible in place of a brigade of the 2nd Division: the remaining infantry of the 4th Division was also to enter the trenches as soon as that step could be arranged. The 4th Divisional Artillery was to be "practised" by being at first attached to that of the 2nd Division. As a first measure, on June 21st and 22nd each battery of the 4th was to send forward its commander with one of his officers and twenty-five others, to be attached to a battery of the 2nd Division in the line.

¹⁸ The original staff was:

Major-General H. G. Chauvel, commanding.

Lieutenants J. R. C. Davies, **A.I.F.**, and G. W. W. White, **A.I.F.** (*Aides-de-camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Browne, 14th Hussars, Major W. J. Foster, **A.I.F.**, and Captain W. J. Urquhart, **A.I.F.** (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel C. G. Powles, N.Z. Staff Corps, Major W. P. Farr, **A.I.F.**, and Captain N. B. Loveridge, **A.I.F.** (*Administrative Staff*); Captain J. H. Alexander, R.E. (*Engineers*); Major J. P. L. McCall, **A.I.F.** (*Signals*); Major W. Stansfield, **A.I.F.** (*Supply & Transport*); Lieutenant-Colonel R. M. Downes, **A.I.F.**, and Major C. E. Hercus, N.Z.E.F. (*Medical*); Major J. Kendall, **A.I.F.** (*Veterinary*); Captain V. T. Whelan, A.O.D. (*Ordnance*); Major J. H. Bisdee, V.C., **A.I.F.** (*Police*).

¹⁹ *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18, Volume VII (Sinai and Palestine)*, by H. S. Gullett, p. 58.

²⁰ On the Suez Canal the No. 2 Section, previously held by the Anzac Corps with two divisions, had been handed over to one division, the 53rd.

The rest of the 4th Divisional Artillery was to be similarly absorbed during the following days. That of the 2nd would then be withdrawn, so that by July 4th the artillery of the 4th would be holding the sector unaided. This plan was duly carried out; and thus guns' crews consisting almost entirely of men who on March 14th had been privates in the infantry and light horse—with section commanders of whom a large proportion had in March been infantry or light horse sergeants—became on July 4th responsible for the artillery defence of a sector of the Western Front.

The infantry both of the 4th and, subsequently, of the 5th Divisions were to experience active fighting almost from the moment of their entry into the line. That of the 4th had not yet reached the front area when General Cox learned that his troops would be expected to undertake one of the series of raids designed to engage the enemy's attention at the time of the Somme offensive. Upon receiving this intelligence Cox suggested that "for a first attempt the raid should *not* be on too ambitious a scale," that it should be undertaken on the latest practicable date, and that the team should be sent into the trenches in advance of its brigade. General Monash's "veteran" 4th Brigade was naturally selected for the operation, and was on June 18th temporarily transferred to the 2nd Division; and on June 22nd several platoons from the 13th and 14th Battalions were introduced into the line of the 5th Brigade, the number being gradually increased, although the formal relief by the 4th Brigade did not commence until June 27th. Monash ordered the 14th Battalion to furnish the raiding team, which forthwith began its training under the leadership of Lieutenant Harold Boyd Wanliss,²¹ a young officer of that battalion who, though never before in action, was recognised by all who knew him as likely to become, both by mental and moral qualities, one of the outstanding leaders in the brigade. As the enterprise was to occur on the night of July 2nd, when the 4th Brigade staff would have been only two days in control of the Bois Grenier sector, many of the preparations, which were necessarily in some respects hurried, were made by the staff of the 2nd Division. About

²¹ Capt. H. B. Wanliss, D.S.O.; 14th Bn. Orchardist and farmer; of Ballarat and Lorne, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 11 Dec., 1891. Killed in action, 26 Sept., 1917.

3,700 rounds were fired in the artillery preparation and subsequent bombardment. The point chosen was about 600 yards west of the scene of the first enterprise undertaken by the Australians under Foss.²² The raiders, 6 officers and 83 men, successfully crossed No-Man's Land, although their scouts had observed on their right front an enemy wiring party, which could be heard laughing and talking as the raiders first advanced. The first trench-mortar bombs fell directly among these Germans, and ten of their bodies were afterwards counted. When, however, the raiders reached the enemy wire they found it almost entirely uncut, the bombs having exploded mainly in an open space between two portions of the entanglement, of which there were four solid belts and some trip wire. The enemy appears to have expected the attack and to have directed not only his machine-guns, but also his shrapnel, upon the front of his own trenches. The men struggling in the wire began to fall, and others found themselves scrambling forward over the bodies of the wounded. Lieutenant Harvey,²³ in the lead, shouting "Come on, Australia!", was hit while hacking through the wire. Lieutenants Julian²⁴ and Roderick,²⁵ the leaders of the trench-parties, were both shot, the former mortally. Wanliss received a machine-gun bullet in the mouth, but held on and reached the enemy's parapet with some twenty-five men. Only nine minutes in the trench had been allowed for, and the artillery was then to shorten its range again on to the German parapet. There was therefore need for extreme haste. "We rushed in, 'uppercut' everyone about, and then came back," was Wanliss's subsequent description. Only their thorough training saved the raiders from complete disaster. From first to last some of the enemy, sheltered behind the parados, were throwing bombs. Nevertheless Sergeants Pearce²⁶ and Garcia²⁷ carried on in place of their leaders, duly searched part of the trenches,

²² See p. 244.

²³ Lieut. A. T. Harvey, 14th Bn. Clerk; of Bundaberg, Q'land, and Melbourne; b. Maryborough, Q'land, 20 March, 1888.

²⁴ Lieut. R. D. Julian, 14th Bn. Ironmonger; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Minyip, Vic., 7th Oct., 1894. Killed in action, 2 July, 1916.

²⁵ Lieut. J. B. Roderick, 14th Bn. Electrical engineering student; of Camberwell, Vic.; b. Albert Park, Vic., 11 Sept., 1896.

²⁶ Sgt. A. T. Pearce (served as No. 1441, John Pearce; 14th Bn.). Labourer; of Trawalla, Vic.; b. Burrumbeet, Vic., 1893. Killed in action, 11 Aug., 1916.

²⁷ Lieut. R. J. Garcia, D.C.M., M.M.; 14th Bn. Farrier; of Footscray, Vic.; b. Hobart, Tas., 12 July, 1880.

and bombed four dugouts containing Germans. Wanliss, who though badly wounded was on the parapet directing, then gave the signal to return. In recrossing the wire, on which the Germans were still firing with machine-guns from both flanks, many more of the party were hit; others struggled free with the greatest difficulty, partly, as before, over the bodies of their dead or wounded comrades. Wanliss himself found one of his sergeants, named Croft,²⁸ wounded in the wire and endeavoured to carry him back, but, being faint with his wound, could not extricate him. The enemy now saw the returning party and concentrated his fire upon it. Fortunately a small canalised stream, the Courau, ran through No-Man's Land, and although the Germans kept up their rifle- and shrapnel-fire for an hour, the raiders clung to this shelter, the survivors eventually reaching their lines through a ditch which approached the Australian parapet. Wanliss, who had been hit again by shrapnel, had fainted in the mud, but Sergeants Anderson,²⁹ Harris,³⁰ and De Arango³¹ carried him and fourteen others into safety. All the officers and nearly the whole of the actual assaulting party had been hit. Nine failed to return—all left dead or wounded in the enemy's trenches or in his wire.³² Although it was claimed, on slight evidence, that fifty Germans were killed during this raid, it is probable that the number was much exaggerated,³³ and that, like most other hurriedly organised attacks with inexperienced troops, this operation, in spite of much gallantry, did more harm to the raiders than to the enemy.

As has been already observed,³⁴ the enemy struck back on the following night, raiding the Anzac line in two places. One of these enterprises was launched against the very

²⁸ Sgt. H. Croft (No. 46; 14th Bn.). Shearer and sleeper-cutter; of Elmhurst, Vic.; b. Elmhurst, 1889. Died of wounds while prisoner of war, 8 July, 1916.

²⁹ Capt. F. Anderson, M.M.; 14th Bn. Foreman, Victorian Forests Department; of Ararat, Vic.; b. Buangor, Vic., 15 July, 1893.

³⁰ Capt. N. C. Harris; 14th Bn. Farmer; of Bannockburn, Vic.; b. Birkenhead, Cheshire, Eng., 27 Feb., 1895.

³¹ Sergeant De Arango (then a private) was one of the men who, on 19 May, 1915, assisted Private Jacka to clear the Turks from Courtney's Post in Gallipoli (see *Vol II*, pp. 149-50).

³² Men of the 14th, until ordered to desist, continued to go out from the trenches to rescue the wounded. It became known later that the Germans themselves went out and brought in Sergeant Croft, who was lying wounded in their entanglement.

³³ The enemy's version is given on p. 283. The 50th Reserve Division's report states that its total casualties for the night were 6 dead and 46 wounded.

³⁴ See p. 284.

battalion (the 14th) which had carried out the operation just described. At 10.23 the enemy's artillery crashed down upon the Australian trenches practically at the point from which the previous night's raid had issued, and also upon the right of the 6th Brigade farther north. The S.O.S. signal was fired, but the night was that on which the 4th Divisional Artillery was finally taking over from the 2nd, and the batteries appeared to be slow in answering. The enemy's preparatory bombardment, which continued for no less than an hour, blew in the breastwork and dugouts, wholly or partly burying a number of the garrison. Some of the sentries, however, kept throughout a constant observation on No-Man's Land, each man taking it by turns with the others in his bay to jump up and look over the parapet. About an hour after the beginning of the bombardment there came a lull, and in this interval a private, by name Wright,³⁵ who throughout the tornado had stood observing steadily over the breastwork, went running along the trench warning the garrison that the Germans were coming. With a comrade named Francis³⁶ and several others he began to pile across the tumbled trenches a hastily built barricade. The Lewis guns of the 19th Battalion were firing, but some of the enemy at this juncture reached the Australian line. A private named Boyes,³⁷ who had been half-buried in tumbled sandbags, managed to struggle free, and, seizing a rifle and scrambling on to the breastwork, found himself face to face with twenty Germans, one of whom was in the act of hitting an Australian on the head with a heavy pistol. Boyes lunged with his bayonet at a German near him, but, as often happened, missed. He himself, after being nearly bayoneted in turn by his opponent, escaped by shooting him and another, and then joined Wright and his fellows behind their barricade.

It was observed that the enemy were throwing bombs, but that these were not bursting. A few Germans scrambled into the shattered trench and came upon two officers of the 14th, almost buried, and a private, Stephens,³⁸ in the act of trying to

³⁵ Cpl. F. L. Wright (No. 512; 14th Bn.). Labourer; of Ascot Vale, Vic; b. Williamstown, Vic., 12 Oct., 1888.

³⁶ C.Q.M.S. A. C. Francis (No. 1739; 14th Bn.) Farmer; of Dookie, Vic.; b. Danehill, Uckfield, Sussex, Eng., 26 Feb., 1893. Died 28 Nov., 1937.

³⁷ Sgt. W. H. Boyes, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 1672; 14th Bn.). Farmer, of Lardner district, Vic.; b. Rushworth, Vic., 10 Sept., 1879. Died, 18 March, 1935.

³⁸ Sgt. A. A. Stephens (No. 4314; 14th Bn.). Labourer; of Nhill district, Vic.; b. Lorquon, Vic., 1895. (Stephens' left eye had afterwards to be removed in a German hospital.)

pull them out. The Germans, after throwing several bombs by which Stephens was wounded, seized him, and endeavoured to tug Lieutenant Mackay³⁹ and Corporal "Scottie" Urie⁴⁰ from the débris, but without success. Being themselves under fire of bombs, they almost immediately withdrew, taking Stephens and leaving the others still half-buried but alive.⁴¹ The bombardment lasted for nearly two hours, but the casualties of the 14th—about 40 killed, wounded, and missing—were much less severe than had been suffered in the early German raids on the Australians in France.

German records show that, although a man of the 4th Australian Division had thus actually been captured (in addition to at least one mortally wounded and several dead left in the German lines after Wanliss's raid), the German staff remained unaware of the presence of that division in France, and believed that both 4th and 5th were still in Egypt. This is the more surprising since German documents of May 7 record that a captured Australian officer had then mentioned that the 3rd (*sic*) and 4th Australian Divisions were to be transferred to France. On July 16, within less than three weeks after this raid, the Germans took prisoners of the 5th Division, which had then just relieved the 4th, and on July 19 they captured 300 more. They assumed that the 5th had relieved the 1st; and remained unaware of the presence in France of the 4th until they identified it on the Somme. Such mistakes, though they may have occurred on the British side also, certainly prove that the German intelligence system in Egypt, Marseilles, and at the front did not possess the supernatural accuracy with which it was commonly credited by Germany's opponents. In the report mentioned above, the 3rd Division was evidently confused with the 5th. It was later supposed to have been identified on 15 August, 1916, in reserve west of Armentières. This location was, of course, wrong; the true one, in England, is said by a British authority to have been discovered from an unguarded reference in a report of a football match published by an English newspaper.

The other raid carried out by the enemy that night was against the Epinette Salient in the New Zealand sector, where, after a bombardment which killed 20 New Zealanders and wounded 70, the enemy entered the New Zealand trenches, incidentally surrounding in No-Man's Land a listening-post held by five New Zealand privates. These men fought so long as they had bombs. One managed to escape, severely

³⁹ Capt. J. Mackay, 14th Bn. Student; of Elsternwick, Vic.; b. Glengower, Vic., 8 Aug., 1894.

⁴⁰ Sgt. A. Urie, D.C.M. (No. 2028; 14th Bn.). Seaman; of Melbourne and Glasgow; b. Kinning Park, Glasgow, Scotland, 8 Feb., 1884. Killed in action, 11 April, 1917.

⁴¹ This would, on the face of it, appear an act of humanity on the part of the enemy. According to one account the Germans, as they left, threw bombs at the buried men, but these failed to explode. On the other hand it is possible that the bombs (which certainly were found lying nearby) were merely left behind through the haste of the withdrawal. Bombs were found after almost every such raid.

wounded; one was killed; the remaining three were taken prisoner. The Germans had no success in the New Zealand trenches, and left one of their number wounded in the hands of the defenders.

Up to this point the series of minor raids and counter-raids on the Anzac front—undoubtedly the sharpest that was experienced by Australians on the Western Front⁴²—had obviously gone against the Germans. The enemy's raiding parties had unquestionably been the less successful. Whether the actual losses inflicted by the Anzac enterprises were on the average greater than those suffered during raids initiated by the enemy may be doubted, since the formidable bombardments employed by the Germans against the British defences, which even yet were hardly proof against the smallest shells, seldom failed to inflict heavy casualties. The Anzac troops, on the other hand, launched their raids after short, sharp bombardments, chiefly of field-artillery, against which the German dugouts afforded complete protection. The German troops therefore probably suffered few casualties in the preliminary bombardments, except from trench-mortar bombs, and unless the raiders caught a number in their dugouts they probably escaped lightly.

By July 5th the 12th and 13th Brigades (of the 4th Division) had relieved the 1st and 3rd respectively,⁴³ thus taking over the whole front of the 1st Division in the southern sector of the I Anzac Corps. To the north of the 4th now lay the New Zealand Division, these two formations, by putting all their brigades into the line, having relieved the 2nd, which, as has been previously stated, was required to move to another part of the front. The headquarters staff of II Anzac had arrived at Bailleul and had taken over the billets and offices of the II (British) Corps, which had been ordered to the Somme. Godley had been granted a short period of leave, and the II Anzac staff had not at first been

⁴² The fighting, however, did not approach in severity that which had been experienced at Quinn's Post in Gallipoli during May-June, 1915; and, from the point of view of the German command, the "private" raids of 1918 (those made by individual units, companies, or even by a few soldiers on their own initiative) probably had much more serious results.

⁴³ The 13th Brigade had been attached to the 1st Division since June 21, and had relieved the 3rd Brigade on the night of the 29th. It had been purposely arranged that the 13th should relieve its "parent" formation (the 3rd), and the meeting between the two was an incident long remembered by those who were present.

charged with responsibility for any part of the front. Although certain improvements had still to be carried out in the I Anzac sector, the new troops entered a trench-line very different from that which the older divisions had found there. The 12th Battalion, Rifle Brigade, which had held that front before, and which on July 15th was brought back to it for a few days, furnishes in its official diary a spontaneous and remarkable appreciation of the work of the Australian divisions in the trench-line in that sector:

The trenches were in a very fine state, and much the best the battalion has yet seen. They were mostly 10 feet deep, with parapets varying from 15 feet to 25 thick. There were any number of very good dugouts, and solid parados. The whole trenches were very well revetted and were very clean. The wire was good.⁴⁴

As early as the 25th of June the headquarters of the 5th Australian Division had arrived from Egypt and had been established at Blaringhem, and by the beginning of July the greater part of that division had concentrated in the surrounding area. On the 3rd, General Godley having returned some days previously, the staff of II Anzac moved to la-Motte-au-Bois and at midnight took over from I Anzac the command of the Armentières sector. Thus it came about that by July 8th, although the 5th had not yet completely arrived, of the 338,005 troops in the Second Army, 100,000 were Australians or New Zealanders.⁴⁵ At this juncture, indeed, the Anzac and Canadian forces provided eight of the Second Army's fourteen infantry divisions. There had already, however, begun a series of movements which was quickly to terminate in the withdrawal of the I Anzac Corps. These were occasioned by developments connected with the great Allied offensive, to which this narrative must now return.

⁴⁴ The historian of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R. (holding the trenches opposite the 1st Australian Division) notes this activity in April, 1916: "The enemy builds up his parapet very well, and by increasing the height of his breastwork gradually obtains even better observation over our position than heretofore."

⁴⁵ The actual figures were:

1st Australian Division	..	..	..	..	20,141
2nd Australian Division	..	..	..	..	21,650
4th Australian Division	..	..	..	..	21,222
5th Australian Division	..	..	..	..	17,843
New Zealand Division	..	..	..	..	19,512
I Anzac Corps Troops	..	..	..	..	4,579
II Anzac Corps Troops	..	..	..	..	762
Total	..	.	..	..	105,700

The majority of the "corps troops" were, however, British, leaving about 100,000 Australians and New Zealanders.