CHAPTER XXII
THE OLD FORCE PASSES

After the First World War there was a natural tendency among impatient radicals to shirk the trouble of a very difficult judgment by a careless verdict of "both to blame." But it was no real help to the brave new world to lead its members to imagine that, if they had sat in conference with the Kaiser and his councillors, they would have found the atmosphere as favourable to the ideal of man's brotherhood as if they had sat with Asquith and Grey. It did not really favour progress in humane ideals to teach that a ruling class deliberately schooled in the principles of Clausewitz and Bernhardi would tend to mould human affairs as generously as one brought up in the creed of the English public schools.

Unfortunately, history supplied all too swiftly the corrective. Those who for ten years after 1919 painted the German war leaders as actuated by motives no less beneficent than those of their opponents were visibly chilled when confronted with a return to the old Prussian style in the new Nazi regime. It is true that Nazi-ism accentuates every anti-social evil of the old Prussian rule, and rests on the support of masses of young Germans deliberately warped by nus-education; that it aims at exterminating or enslaving "inferior" races, some of which the old régime would merely have tried to absorb. But the principle of international conduct that the leaders of Germany then upheld—that might is right—was the same, and involved the same revolt against the slowly developing system of law and order, the only medium in which humane civilisation can steadily grow. Nearly every symptom that marks the Nazi return towards international chaos and permanent war was observable in the methods of the German leaders in 1914-18: the march through Belgium which they were pledged to protect; the use of gas which they were pledged to avoid; the bombing of London and shelling of Paris with missiles that could only
be aimed at the population in general—all these were blows struck at the international order on which civilisation stands. The most cynical treacheries of Hitler's career have not surpassed the German orders either to release or *spurlos versenken*, "sink without trace," the small Argentine ship for whose people Germany was at the moment professing friendship.

There can be no question which side then, as to-day, offered more hope for humanity, or which the mass of humanity favoured. And the historian who misses this broad truth, which was patent at the time though obscured later in the maze of *post mortem* argument, ignores the essential source of the Allies' strength and German weakness. A historian of the Württemberg Army says that the Allies' propaganda was so good that even Germans most intelligently instructed in politics could not help asking themselves, "Isn't there something in it?" Actually the British propaganda directed at the German people and soldiers was powerful because of the truth in it. The support unintentionally given to it by Lichnowsky's memoir, exposing to Germans the fact that the blame for the outbreak of war lay with their own Government, materially affected the German will to continue the war. The converse was generally true of the Allies—among the motives that sustained the efforts of their soldiers and peoples, consciousness of the humanity of their cause was all-powerful.

In Australia 10,000 miles from any active theatre of war, the sense of extreme danger to the country's freedom was absent. Indeed if, as is often stated, during the submarine campaign of 1917 Great Britain came within measurable distance of starvation and possible surrender, the British people themselves were at the time unaware of their peril. Certainly this was the case in Australia; and the war effort there, much more largely than in Europe, was based on ideological grounds. Actually the danger to Australia through the submarine campaign of 1917 was deadlier than that to the Mother Country. Had Britain then been forced to surrender, the peace treaty would have abolished the British navy. The British

---

1 Both Ludendorff and Hindenburg in their memoirs complain that Germany could not attract support even from small nations that she had offered to "deliver."

2 See *Secrets of Crewe House* by Sir C. Stuart; also *The Commonsense of War and Peace* by H. G. Wells (Chapter 14). The propaganda by which the Allied press swayed its own peoples was by no means so truthful.
people would have remained, with the chance of some day regaining its freedom. But the Australian people might not have had that chance; without the British navy after the war Australia would have lain open to the Japanese. In 1938-41 a more ruthless aggressor by crushing nations one at a time proved that, for the security even of the greatest peoples, only one policy was trustworthy—to combine with other nations in fighting the aggressor at that time and place at which he could best be defeated. Those who waited for invasion waited beyond the time and place at which defence of their freedom was possible, and entered the fight only with the certainty of losing it. But the fact that nation after nation bordering the aggressor has failed to realise this many illuminate the difficulty of such realisation in the First World War by a people 12,000 miles away.

The Australian people did not make a total effort; they did not take every step that could have been taken had they felt themselves face to face with the threat of immediate extinction. Like so many other peoples since, a great part of them would recognise that threat only if it came in one form—invansion of their country. The strongest opponents of conscription were sincere when they said that, if Australia was invaded, they would be in the fighting without any conscription. In the political situation in which conscription was actually proposed it could only be introduced by the unprecedented method of popular vote; and the attempt to do so in a community which did not feel the imminence of personal danger raised a strife that has not healed in twenty-five years. The Australian attitude sprang from no desire to shirk but from experiences dating from the "convict" days which made each freeman intensely sensitive of injustice to the "under dog" and suspicious of authority. Many felt that the war was too remote for compulsion. Yet except for pacifists the issue was one of expediency and not of principle. The opposition came largely from parties of the left, with whom compulsion was a normal method and who in other lands had never hesitated to use it in a desperate war. As it was, the proposal almost secured the necessary majority.

But whether, with people so divided, the war effort would
have been aided by compulsion is more than doubtful. The campaign for it tragically hampered recruiting: with some leaders, opposition to this method quickly turned into opposition to the war effort—and this at a time when, unknown to his opponents, Ludendorff was seeking to weaken and strike down the Allies by encouraging precisely such divisions through hopes of negotiated peace. The student will probably agree with Andrew Fisher that the attempt to enforce a proposal carried against such feeling might have been disastrous. Compulsion could have been usefully introduced only if the mass of the people realised, through personal danger, the need.

Basically, Australians were not singular in their reaction. The war efforts of all sovereign states, as of individuals, were a measure not only of their virility, courage, loyalty—or other qualities that make up national morale—but also of their realisation of the direct threat to possessions which that morale would lead them to defend. It may be conceived that, drastic as were the drafts on British man-power, those on the French, whose country was invaded, were more searching, and possibly those on the German nation, whose leaders realised that they had pitted their people against the world, more drastic still. In proportion to population none of the British oversea dominions sent abroad an army as large as did the Mother Country. Australia's population equalled, roughly, one-tenth of the British, and, to be proportionate, her expeditionary formations on the Western Front would have had to rise, at maximum, to 175,000. Actually their maximum appears to have been slightly over 120,000. The ratio maintained by New Zealand would be definitely higher than Australia's; that for Canada, which was less seriously threatened, was lower. On the other hand the Australian and New Zealand forces were almost entirely front line troops. While the Mother Country maintained, at maximum, some 50 infantry divisions on the Western Front, Australia managed to keep in the line—though with great difficulty—five, which, though often weaker than

8 For Ludendorff's own words on this point, see pp. 459-60.
4 Vol. XI, p. 299
5 Their average strength there was, in 1916—86,163; 1917—118,454; 1918—110,031.
6 Canada maintained four, at fuller strength, and a very large force of railway and forestry troops of great value.
others, more than made up for it by their effectiveness. In all, Australia maintained oversea a naval force, five infantry and the greater part of two cavalry divisions, four combatant and four training air squadrons, and a number of smaller units. Such an effort by a daughter State, situated at the part of the world farthest from the actual fighting, constitutes an immense success in this experiment in co-operation between the forces of free colonies and their motherland, and is attributable entirely to the regime of freedom which the first chapter of this history described.

The qualities of the Australian forces, good and bad, these volumes have endeavoured truthfully to show, and there is neither need nor space to expound them here. From outside as well as from internal sources comes overwhelming evidence that the A.I.F., like all other armies from the British dominions, was found to be among the most effective military forces in the war—a judgment applicable to every Australian division, mounted and unmounted—and that the quality of the nation's seamen and airmen was as high. Australian nurses were noted for the same resourcefulness and determination as the men.

To what conditions did the British oversea troops—at any rate the Australians—owe their effectiveness? Hindenburg, who says that "the élite" of the British Army were "men from the colonies," attributes this "undoubtedly to the circumstance that the colonial population is mainly agrarian." Actually, however, it was not mainly agrarian except in the sense that agriculture occupied a much larger proportion of the overseas people than of the British, and, owing to the sparsity of the population, the city folk were in closer touch than most Europeans with country life. But in Australia this condition

---

7At maximum, a battle cruiser, six light cruisers, six destroyers, and a sloop. A submarine was lost off New Guinea and another in the Gallipoli Campaign.
8Including three tunnelling companies, six railway operating companies, a number of hospitals, an armoured car unit, and others.
9Lt.-Col. L. A. Strange, commander of the 80th Wing, R.A.F., in which served the two Australian fighter squadrons in France, wrote: "It became the practice for our Australian squadrons to lead the 80th Wing's bombing raids. When later in the year (1918) over a hundred machines set out on one of them, the spearpoint was always formed of Australian airmen led by an Australian" (Recollections of an Airman, p. 175.)
10Out of My Life, p. 330. The best French divisions were probably those of French colonials, and the Germans in East Africa seem to have had similar qualities.
had become much less marked in the last generation, and the percentage of Australian soldiers who had acquired their powers of determination, endurance, and improvisation from country occupations was probably not much more than a quarter.\textsuperscript{11}

It is true that the war furnished ample proof that, in general, country life produces a much better soldier than city life. In most European armies the troops from crowded industrial areas were visibly poorer in physique, mentally more helpless, and morally less virile and capable of endurance, than those from country parts.\textsuperscript{12} The ravages caused by industrialism on the physique of sections of the English people were horrifying to many Australian soldiers who had known England only from folk-lore, and similar effects were visible among the Germans. Differences between country and city soldiers were also definitely perceptible in the A.I.F., though to a very much less degree. For example, an outstanding feat by a platoon would be explained by such a comment as, “They were country boys from around Shepparton.” The artillery drivers and men of the regimental transport—mainly country men used to horses—were always regarded as particularly staunch. It was noticeable that in acts of heroic leadership, after clergymen or their sons who figure most noticeably in such records, farmers and other country men are outstanding.\textsuperscript{13}

The value placed by Australian generals on their various battalions could usually be judged from the order of priority in which they sent rested troops into attacks, and it was noticeable that brigades or battalions from the agricultural or pastoral States were, other things being equal, usually thrown in before those from the more industrial ones. But the fact that many city Australians spent holidays in the bush, and many also had been brought up there, undoubtedly modified whatever difference in quality would otherwise have existed.

Naturally very many other conditions affected the value of the troops—none more so than the leadership given to them; a change of commander more than once brought an Australian

\begin{footnotes}
\item[11] The number following “country occupations” is given as 57,000 out of 330,000, but a proportion of “labourers” (90,000) were probably also country men. See Vol. XI, p. 874.
\item[12] City troops were sometimes, though not always, quicker witted.
\item[13] Professional men were notable, also some of the “hard cases.”
\end{footnotes}
infantry battalion or brigade from near the bottom of the list in fighting value to near the top. Australian troops were far more level in value than most others, and under such leaders as Elliott, Gellibrand, Holmes and Neligan, units recruited chiefly from the great cities were, at one time or another, probably unequalled in the force. Nevertheless, taking the record over the whole war, Australian leaders would probably give first place to certain units from Western Australia and Queensland, States that were colonies of colonies, largely populated by energetic elements from the other States.

But the city element in the A.I.F. was so large, and the perceptible distinction between it and the country element so small, that it seems certain that, in the case of this force, country training was not the main reason for effectiveness. A more important one was that, compared with the Motherland, all the dominions may be said to have "picked" their troops, inasmuch as their forces were disproportionately small and dominion man-power was much less deeply drained. Yet this also does not account for the higher effectiveness of the oversea troops, for when they fought beside some of the first-raised troops of Kitchener's Army—undoubtedly men of wonderful spirit and pure devotion—the difference impressed itself deeply on even so keen a lover of the British Army as Brudenell White.

In 1917 British leaders in France and Belgium began to recognize a special effectiveness in dominion troops and attributed it to the fact that their divisions seldom left their Corps, and therefore operated constantly under leaders and staff who knew them. The blessed word "homogeneous"—applied to the Canadian and Australian Corps—was then assumed to explain everything; and it is true that, for many reasons—but chiefly for those referred to below—the oversea divisions were at their best under their own leaders and staffs. Yet the 1st Australian Division was indubitably outstanding at Hazebrouck, away from its Corps, and the New Zealand Division shone out wherever it went. Unquestionably the A.I.F. also owed its physique and morale partly to the will and ability of Surgeon-General Howse who, when recruiting fell low in Australia, successfully resisted very strong pressure from there to allow
unfit men to serve in the theatres of war. It may be contended that by this policy Howse threw an unfair burden on British units partly filled with less fit men. On the other hand Australian battalions with their reduced numbers were holding fronts and achieving successes greater than ever before, and both troops and leaders believed that dilution would have decreased their achievement.

But while all these causes undoubtedly influenced the effectiveness of the A.I.F., and most of them affected all dominion forces, any one who moved among these—including, perhaps, the reader, who has lived for a day among the Diggers at the Brewery farm, Querrieu—is aware of another difference between the life there and in the forces of the Motherland. In the dominion forces the atmosphere was that of democracy. In British military tradition—the example of Cromwell’s Roundheads notwithstanding—this has generally been looked on as a condition adverse to military effectiveness, and it has always furnished the main problem in the co-operation of British colonial forces and those of the Old Country. Speaking of officers of the American Provincial forces that served beside the British regulars in the Seven Years War, 1754 years ago, Sir Charles Lucas says that they were the democratic soldiers of democratic communities, and there was no social gulf between them and the rank and file. . . . It was a system . . . poles asunder from the rigid rule of the British Army, where the officers formed a caste, as compared with the men.

14 For discussion of this see Official Australian Medical History, Vol. II, pp. 845-55, 900-903. The youth of Australian leaders was, of course, partly a result of the rapid expansion of the force. Thus of those frequently mentioned in this history Maj.-Gen. Bridges was 53 at the outbreak of war, Howse 50, Monash, Chauvel and Hoobs 49, Birdwood and Griffiths 48, Gellibrand 41, Rosenthal 39, Glasgow 38, Brudenell White 37, Elliott and Leane 36, MacLaurin 35, and Blamey 30. Glasgow was major-general at 42 and Rosenthal at 43, and White temporary lieut.-general at 42. When given their battalions Lt.-Col. D. G. Marks was 22, W. J. R. Cheeseeman 23, A. H. Scott, D. T. Moore, A. S. Allen, R. M. Sadler, E. J. Farks and N. M. Loutit 24, O. G. Howell-Price 25, J. W. Mitchell and J. J. Corrigan (who had enlisted as a private) 26. R. J. Dyer was lieut.-colonel and C.R.E. 4th Div. at 24, and V. A. H. Sturdee, R.A.E., lieut.-colonel at 26. H. Gordon Bennett was brigadier-general at 29; the majority of battalion commanders were in the thirties—for example, Neligan 34, Whitham and C. H. Elliott 33, Salisbury and Marshall 31. Exceptions were Lt.-Cols. Price Weir, 48, and Burnage, 55, who were looked upon as old men, though fit. Br.-Gens. Burston and Spencer Browne, who were 58, though they pluckily reached Gallipoli, were quite evidently too old for the campaign. Norman Marshall, in 1914 a private, in 1917 commanded a battalion. Maj.-Genl. Gellibrand, a captain in 1914, commanded a division in 1918. Sir Charles Lucas, K.C.B., K.C.M.G. Head of Dominions Department, 1907-11; b 7 Aug. 1853. Died, 7 May 1931.

15 (From The Empire at War, Vol. I, p. 19.) Many other factors, such as clashing moral standards and disputes as to relative rank, also divided those forces.
In that and other wars, despite many instances of really keen mutual appreciation, the British officers as a whole disliked and despised the disorderliness and lack of smartness of the Provincials, while the Provincials, including Washington, felt bitterly that in some crises the British regulars did not measure up to colonial standards. The distinction, though much diminished, was still clearly noticeable in the Maori and South African wars; and, though in the Great War co-operation on both sides was most loyal and generous, and regularly cordial, the same causes, though greatly modified, did not fail to produce similar, if much less dangerous, effects.

To some extent the great and ancient traditions of the British Army operated against understanding. Reared in a community that was divided socially by sharp distinctions and in general accepted that condition, and from their childhood assuming it to be the basis for leadership and discipline of the fighting services, British leaders, high and low, had genuine difficulty in believing that any force observing opposite rules could be effective. A British staff officer of first rate intellect reported as an "insuperable" obstacle to the formation of new Australian divisions in Egypt in 1916 the fact that "the Australian Training Depot in Egypt has always found the greatest difficulty in producing officers of any value and non-commissioned officers of any sort at all." Yet the 4th and 5th Australian Divisions, which were forthwith formed there, were, at least by 1917, being used as picked, shock troops. Their whole artillery was raised from practically untrained men; one brigade of 850 members, for example, included only 5 former artillery officers and 18 trained artillerymen with, at first, only 5 guns instead of 16 for training them. Yet within three months it fired over Australian infantry at the battle of Fromelles—admittedly not without justifiable anxiety on the part of both.

By 1918 a slowly widening circle of "contacts" was recognising that the performance of oversea forces was partly due to marked capacity in their officers and N.C.O's and intelligent initiative in their men. Australian officers were realists and, provided their troops were clean and their guns and transport fit for any action, they did not usually insist that buttons must

---

shine, hubs and chains sparkle, and martingales be pipe-
clayed; but the report of the inspecting officer of Fourth
Army on their transport in the Somme winter was typical:

They were [necessarily] standing in a sea of mud, but nevertheless
the horses were in distinctly good condition. Waggons were filthy
and many tail-boards broken.

The old criticism—that these men might make fighters, perhaps,
but soldiers never!—was now succeeded by the assumption
that their effectiveness was due to their having acquired British
military discipline.

The Australian is a different individual now from when he came
(to France), both in discipline and smartness

said Haig in May 1918.

Yet in truth the A.I.F’s discipline was never better than
on Gallipoli. In the history of war there is no more signal
example of reckless obedience than that given by the dismounted
light horsemen at The Nek when, after having seen the whole
first attacking line mown down within a few yards by a whirl-
wind of rifle and machine-gun fire, the second, third and fourth
lines each charged after its interval of time, at the signal of
its leaders, to certain destruction. Much dispute as to disci-
pline is due simply to not defining that term—a useful definition
was, “Reliability at all times and under all conditions given
correct and appropriate leading.” But, given any reasonable
definition, the Diggers’ increased effectiveness in 1918 was due,
not to improved discipline, but to skill acquired through longer
experience and training. Indeed in 1918 such an incident as
the charge at The Nek could not have happened. Australian
leaders knew, and British commanders above them came to
know, that these troops had the habit of reasoning why and
not merely of doing and dying. Some leaders resented this
attitude, but it was one reason why overseas troops tended,
on the whole, to be more carefully handled. “I often wonder,”
said General Gellibrand, “which spur most induced towards

18 Admittedly Lt.-Col. H. W. Lloyd’s 12th (Army) Arty. Bde., which did
maintain this standard, was one of the best in the force.
20 This was the definition upheld by General Gellibrand
21 For example memories of the protests over the transport Drayton Grange were
the direct cause of the great care taken in properly fitting transports for the A.I.F.
the efficiency of an A.I.F. commander—the one from above or the one from below.’’

The Australian soldier did not want to die (says one who knew him). He wanted to do the job he had come for—to beat the enemy. To that end he was determined to take any amount of pains, understand his weapons and his tactics better than the enemy did, so that, when it came to killing, the odds would be against the enemy.

To paint the A.I.F. as a miniature of the British Army would be completely to miss whatever dearly bought lesson their co-operation in the First World War can give to either of their nations or to humanity. In some vital respects they represented opposing theories, the British Army inheriting an almost feudal tradition, the A.I.F. developing, though on British lines, a democratic one. What Haig and most other British leaders and writers on the war—with outstanding exceptions in C. E. Montague and John Masefield—never realised was that the efficacy of the A.I.F. was not in spite of the Australian Jack’s being as good as his master, but because of it—or, more accurately, because in the A.I.F. Jack and his master were the same. Social equality in civil life had produced men with the habit of thinking for themselves and acting on their decision. In the army they continued the habit, and were not backward in giving advice to their leaders if they thought it necessary. Yet their herd instinct was as strong and irrational as in any people. The Digger’s unspoken, unbreakable creed was the miner’s and bushman’s, “Stand by your mate.”

Whatever the merits or faults of democratic government in war, the freedom that it alone, apparently, ensures to its citizens seems to build the best soldier because it develops the whole man. The Australian soldier was in the main the British “worker” perhaps two generations removed, but developed (as John Galsworthy saw) to nearer the Briton’s natural stature. His mark was his freedom—he had been bred in it, and in the army he remained as free as a soldier can. This gave him resilience and a colourfulness certainly beyond that of any other

---

22 Col. A. G. Butler, official medical historian.
23 The son of Maj.-Gen. J. G. Legge, founder of the Australian military system, was killed fighting as a private in the division that his father had commanded.
24 Montague’s lesson for the British people is contained in his brilliant essay Disenchantment (Chap. XI, pp 158-160, 1924 Edn.) in which he says also some hard, and true, things of the Australians.
25 Among the Australian people equality was social and political, but not economic.
force as a whole; the Digger and his officers might be good or bad, but it would be idle to try to paint them as docile.\textsuperscript{26} The splendid elements in the force never built up a glowing reputation behind the lines but some reckless or criminal individual was sure to spoil it.

These qualities called for a method of discipline totally different from the old British Army system of suppression; this restless, inquisitive material required, from the day of its enlistment, active, positive leadership; and democratic principles, prudently applied, furnished excellent leaders. It was a great advantage to the A.I.F. that officers were chosen from the whole force instead of from certain cultural or social layers in it. The field of selection was thus vastly wider, and both juniors and seniors were chosen mainly for their known personality and capacity in leadership. Monash and White—two men who in their youth had to struggle for their education—rose to be among the ablest generals of the Empire: Monash, so Mr. Lloyd George implies, might have commanded the B.E.F. had his ability been known to the War Cabinet.\textsuperscript{27}

The problem of the discipline of the A.I.F. when out of the line appears to have been best solved by Monash in the 3rd Division: every step to provide humanising and civilising amenities in camp, and to render training useful and interesting, repaid tenfold the cost. All Australian officers were expected to care for their men before themselves, but lack of provision for mental recreation was of great detriment to most of the force.\textsuperscript{28}

The absence of any basic social barrier between officers and

\textsuperscript{26} For the character of the Australian see Vol. I, pp. 4-8; of the Australian soldier, pp. 46-8. These rich types, keen men under strong leaders, have been reduced by some Australian caricaturists to that of a slouching "dag", intent only on beer, thieving, "skirts" and scoring off nimcompoop officers. The false legend thus set up has travestied the First A.I.F. and damaged the Second.

\textsuperscript{27} See War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, Vol. VI, pp. 3,382 and 3,423-4.

\textsuperscript{28} Some commanders were not competent to assess its value, but it is notable that Monash and White were prominent in thinking out and providing such amenities (and also in enlivening training).

Perhaps the most striking object lesson of the value of this policy was given by the methods of Br-Gen. R. E. Williams (Ballarat) and Maj. W. T. Conder (Launceston, Tas.) at Langwarrin. This was a camp for the reception of men who contracted venereal disease, a disability from which the A.I.F.—partly because of its qualities but mainly through its wide separation from home—suffered (as the figures show) very severely, as did the forces of the other Dominions and the U.S.A. In two years, simply by increasing the decencies and humanities at this camp—largely by way of physical and mental recreation—these officers reduced the military offences to one fourteenth, the practice of leave-breaking to one twenty-eighth, and that of desertion from 88 to 69. The change of method also greatly improved the rate of cure; 6,000 men from here served in the A.I.F. overseas; 400 won decorations, one the Victoria Cross.
men carried the immense advantage that they served with a unity of spirit almost impossible under a more feudal tradition, strong and real though the comradeship in the British Army was. On the other hand a definite weakness in the A.I.F., though perhaps a minor one, was lack of education in precise and careful use of the English language. This was clearly due not merely, if at all, to default in individuals but to the Australian educational systems, for constant evidence of it is found not only in reports from patrols and outposts, but in staff memoranda and even papers written by medical officers containing the results of scientific observation. The consequent ambiguity sometimes robs the information of at least part of its value. By contrast, the reports of British officers, even in critical situations, are notably precise, and usually include the vital details of the date, hour, and place at which they were written. How dangerous the misuse of a word may be has been shown by the misunderstanding and delay that followed the wrong use of the term "repatriation" in Australia.

There is thus, apparently, strong ground for believing that the absence of social barriers and the comparative equality of opportunity under conditions of "colonial" freedom were among the prime causes of the effectiveness of the oversea forces. Those conditions were also, though far less than of old, one of the sources of what may be called the "family differences" which, in the First World War, as in the Second, German propaganda constantly tried to foment in the hope of splitting the Empire's unity and, incidentally, of destroying the men with whom it professed to sympathise.

Any degree of combination of armies—even those of most closely related peoples—is beset by difficulties; and, though co-operation probably was never happier than in the British Empire in the War of 1914-18, the historian has the responsibility of marking these pitfalls. Apart from the difference in social outlook already mentioned, the factor most disturbing to the all-important unity of the Empire's effort was probably, so far as the A.I.F. was concerned, the widespread belief of Australian soldiers in 1918 that they were given more than a proportionate share in the fighting, especially in attack or

[20] Gen. White, on the other hand, was almost fastidious in choice of word and phrase, and Monash, Gellibrand and others were carefully precise.
defence of crucial sectors, and less than their need of rest. That the strain put on them was partly due to Monash's deliberate policy, and not to Haig's, Monash himself states, and the Australians would probably have felt only flattered by their rôle had they, when possible in 1918, been given rest periods proportionate to their undoubtedly vigorous action, as were the Guards and the Canadians. Most troops, so long as they were well rested, preferred an offensive rôle to the wearing, endless hardship suffered, for example, by the German trench divisions.

G.H.Q. was undoubtedly faced by a difficult dilemma. Both British and German leaders had tried to prevent the special use of some divisions for assault and of others mainly for defence, since the effect on the defence divisions was depressing. And there are reasons for suspecting that the British command at first particularly tried to avoid using overseas divisions as shock troops because German propaganda seized eagerly any chance to proclaim that the British and French were making their colonials do the attacking. That no dominion division was included in Haig's original thrusts on the Somme in 1916 and at Ypres in 1917 may have been due to this policy. But as time went on certain divisions, by their proficiency or reliability, forced the Commander-in-Chief to use them if he was to be confident of results. Among these were the Guards and a number of other British divisions, probably including—through their independent, stalwart outlook—all the Scottish ones; and every overseas division.

The same circumstances gave rise to friction in regard to publicity. Oversea troops believed that they were given less credit than was due to their employment as shock troops, whereas the British soldier thought that they were given too much. But not till the present narrative appears will most British soldiers have had any opportunity of knowing many of the facts on which communiqués, which at the time seemed unduly to stress colonial actions, were founded. British troops regarded the oversea contingents as merely additional forma-

80 See pp 773, 875.
81 Their constant mention was naturally hurtful to pride. In July 1918 Gen. Plumer, after sending to his wife in three successive letters news of achievements of the 1st Aust Div., writes on the 14th of "a very good performance. I am very glad it was done by British troops" Plumer of Messines, p 178.
tions of the British Army—which they were not—and did not see why "Canadians" or "Australians" should be mentioned whereas their own divisions were screened in the general term "British." Among dominion troops also misunderstanding arose through the ambiguity of that term which, contrary to frequent usage, G.H.Q. regarded as including oversea units, but the oversea troops understood as excluding them.

Admittedly it was difficult to keep the different forces content, but to do so was as important as to counter German propaganda. The first reaction of Haig's staff to the Australian complaints was to deny, probably with sincerity, that any troops were used as assault divisions. It is certain, however, that they were—and this is probably to some degree reflected in the fact that, in proportion to the number of troops overseas, the Australian casualties were much the highest in the Empire. In the end the compensating rest was usually given, though not—at least in the case of the A.I.F.—without strong representations. General White held that, in future, a dominion force so co-operating should, as a condition precedent, have direct access to the Commander-in-Chief—at least in any matter of such urgency.

The best means of preventing inevitable jealousies from creating serious friction would have been deliberately to increase each partner's knowledge of the difficulties and achievements of the other. To acknowledge achievement has always been a necessity of military leadership. On the other hand, instead of flattering his men with newspaper reports Monash might well have impressed on them, when they were inclined to be critical of British conscripts, the simple truth that the British people, though lacking many privileges of comparative health, wealth, and freedom that have always made

---

32 See, e.g., its use by Gen. Plumer quoted in the previous footnote.
33 Possibly G.H.Q. was slow to realise what it was actually doing; but on 30 Mar. 1918, discussing the use of the Guards Division with the M.G.G.S. of Third Army, G.H.Q. directed: "This division should not be used to bedrock owing to its value as a counter-attacking division." The extent to which Australian and Canadian Corps were used for aggressive fighting in 1918 may be judged from a statement of Sir Hugh Elles (Army Quarterly, July 1921, p. 127) that experience of the later types of tanks was lost to the British Army because their operations "were mainly undertaken with the two Dominion Corps."
34 See figures in Vol. I, p. 548, and Vol. XI, p. 874; other figures are given in an Appendix to the present volume. The high proportion was also due to the Australians being mostly front line troops.
35 E.g. after Bullecourt, 1917 (Vol. IV, p. 684) and Bellicourt, 1918 (pp. 879, 1048-9 of the present volume).
British colonials into natural soldiers, were recruiting for their army nearly twice as thoroughly as Australians, and maintaining in addition the navy whose standards the Diggers well knew. The best way of promoting such mutual knowledge would have been by a liberal exchange of carefully selected officers. Furthermore several shocks to "oversea" opinion could easily have been avoided by ensuring, whenever possible, that the troops employed with or beside dominion forces were thoroughly reliable. Several episodes that were thus made possible were outstanding in promoting mutual appreciation, and any inconvenience involved in such a policy would have been well worth while.

Deep discontent occurred at one time in Palestine where, although Australian officers felt conscious that their realism rendered them fitter than the average of British officers for staff work, especially in an open campaign, British leaders, probably mistrusting the Australians' knowledge, tended to maintain a purely British staff. This grievance was only gradually removed. In Gallipoli and France such friction was largely avoided by Birdwood's wisdom in building up an Australian staff.

It was proved to the hilt that dominion troops were most contented and effective under their own leaders and staffs, and with their fellow countrymen beside them; and probably so were the Americans. Yet the advantage of a single authority, of whatever nation, at each level of command, was evident to every private, though not always to field-marshals. It is true that the British military tradition did not always facilitate a quick comprehension of what was involved in "dominion status"; but everywhere British leadership was marked by an upright fairness and loyalty to all who served under it.

It was also very efficient in the vital matter of supply. In operations in Gallipoli Sir Ian Hamilton was set by his Government a task which, as first attempted, was impossible, and, despite his courage and imagination, he probably lacked the great strength to force both the Government and his subordinates to overcome the initial disadvantages. In Egypt and Palestine the command was fatally lacking in realism.

36 For example when the 7th British Division was put in at Bullecourt.
37 For an account of this difficulty and the action taken see Vol. VII, pp 255-7.
and driving force until the arrival of Allenby, who possessed both and was also better supported by his Government. On the Western Front the A.I.F. came under Haig and his army commanders, who, for the last eight months, were under Foch. Haig was an optimist of immense resolution, devoid of brilliance, but with unshakeable nerve. He was big enough to ignore at crucial times all personal considerations, and he learnt steadily from experience. Though he never understood the Australians, he was entirely fair to them, and if they suffered unnecessarily in the bludgeoning towards victory, his own infantry suffered as much; and, at a cost, victory came. In 1916 when his attempts to “break through” were held up, they were repeated again and again with the alternative object of “wearing down the enemy”; but, as no thought was directed to inventing a special technique for wearing down, they reduced the numerical strength of the attacker more quickly than that of the attacked. By 1917 this costly experience had led to the evolution of the far more formidable technique of “step by step” battle by which, in favourable circumstances, a succession of really shattering blows was struck. But, again through lack of imagination, this technique continued to be applied when rain gave the advantage to the enemy and bogged the British Army in the morasses of Nonne Bosschen and Passchendaele.

At last in the tank battle at Cambrai Haig learnt the supreme value—and feasibility—of surprise, a lesson which the swift and extensive results of the German offensives in March and May 1918 also drove home. He never forgot this: his own stroke of August 8 was in some ways the most effective surprise on the Western Front; and, when its immediate consequences had ended, he rejected Foch’s order to renew the

---

88 The tragedy of Fromelles, in which a division of the A.I.F. lost 5,500 men, mostly in a single night, was due to muddled thinking by a highly trained staff. It was intended as a feint to keep German reserves away from the Somme battlefield. If the preparations for it, intentionally made obvious, had lasted longer they might have effected their object so long as the attack was not actually launched, but, from within a few hours of its launching, the fact that it was only a feint was necessarily known to the enemy. Most of the sorties at Anzac similarly made clear to the enemy within a few hours the very fact it was desired to conceal—that the real effort was elsewhere. The most effective feints of the A.I.F. were those which either did not go over the parapet, or else struck in real force at a valuable objective—Es Salt, Amman, Lone Pine. The capture of Lone Pine, a position of great value, was the most effective feint undertaken—in one respect too effective, since not only were all the local Turkish reserves drawn in, but the 6th Div. was rushed up from the Helles front, and happened to arrive just in time to stop the vital thrust at Chunuk Bair.
attack on the same front, and wisely secured the Generalissimo's consent to a surprise attack elsewhere.

After the holocausts of First Somme and Passchendaele it was constantly argued that the offensive had proved much more costly than defence. This was both true and untrue. The losses of troops attacking in a well planned surprise were usually slight, and the success very great—as long as the surprise lasted. But neither side possessed a “shock” arm strong or swift enough to keep the surprise and confusion in operation for more than a few hours. From then onwards it was the defending troops who knew where their enemy was, and where he would probably strike, and the attacker had to face a well prepared, and usually hidden defence. It was in the dull bludgeoning to break through this that the losses of the attacking side became much the greater.

Haig always hoped that the initial surprise and confusion might be prolonged by cavalry carrying out its traditional rôle, but telephone, automobile, and machine-gun had changed all that. Cavalry was now too slow and vulnerable to carry out the principles of “cavalry” tactics on the highly organised Western Front, though it succeeded against the weak Turkish armies in Palestine and Mesopotamia. On August 8th near Harbonnières a dozen armoured cars effected as much as a cavalry brigade. Except for a first-rate mind—which Haig’s was not—training in military history and tradition could actually confound judgment in such matters; it is conceivable that, had Haig grasped earlier the possibilities of the tank, he might have forestalled history by securing an effective “mounted arm” at half the trouble and cost with which the British cavalry was maintained, almost uselessly, on the Western Front.

Of Foch’s command the most important result directly experienced by the A.I.F., after the change of French policy on March 26th, was confidence instilled by the knowledge that a trusted leader was now watching the whole Western Front

---

39 The adoption of defensive strategy by the British and French Governments after the war was probably due in part to the overwhelming horror with which their peoples recalled the losses and sufferings in these battles. This would cause ministers to listen rather to advisers of the defensive school.

40 For British leadership, on the other hand, be it said that, although Ludendorff criticised it for being unable to make use of the considerable successes gained in the first stage of its big offensives, neither did the German command ever succeed in pressing similar successes to a decision. Ludendorff rejected the tank, and it was the British who introduced this and the second instrument of successful surprise—the unregistered barrage. Like Haig, the French maintained cavalry.
and carefully planning to seize opportunity. The events of 1917-18 show that even great and fair-minded leaders, if directly interested in one part of a combined struggle, could not be trusted to judge wisely as to the whole. Haig, Pétain, and Nivelle were each, at one time or another, perilously over-impressed by the dangers and opportunities of their own sections. Foch, becoming responsible for all sectors, exerted an admirably balanced judgment, almost certainly averted greater disasters than occurred, and seized the first real opportunity for counter-attack.

The Australian force produced the ablest commander under whom it came on the Western Front, Monash, and also Brudenell White, who, though his ability for staff work robbed him of the chance of command, constantly bore the responsibility for great decisions and, more than any other man, moulded the A.I.F. Both these were, by any fair criterion, great men; and great leaders were Bridges, Chauvel, Howse, Glasgow, Holmes, Gellibrand, Elliott, Leane, Rosenthal, Ryrie, Griffiths, Blamey, Hobbs and another score of outstanding personalities. Whether Monash possessed the ruthless will of the greatest fighting leaders may be strongly questioned, and he was fortunate in never having to carry unsupported the shock of a great reverse. But the range and tireless method of his mind were beyond any that came within the experience of the A.I.F. His men went into action feeling, usually with justification, that, whatever might lie ahead, at least everything was right behind them. A citizen soldier, going straight from the command of a division in May 1918 to what by August was practically that of an army, he had to learn much in a very short time, and in the three months in which he became famous he inevitably made mistakes by which doubtless he would have profited had the war continued.

But by the crude test of success few leaders in the British Empire could match his record. His administrative triumphs were as marked as his fighting ones. The problem of discipline behind the lines—in an Australian force—was completely solved, at least during his command of the 3rd Division, by his insistence that, "the staff is servant of the troops," and his infinite care in providing recreation, decencies and amenities.

---

41 Including actually, though not nominally, the Belgian.
Such were the military forces of what Professor J. B. S. Haldane has called "the world's most advanced democracy." Whatever moral their history contains for other nations the most urgent one is for Australians, inasmuch as not one of the causes that produced the effectiveness of the old A.I.F. is necessarily permanent. The Australia of to-day is different from that of 1914; the Australia of to-morrow, greatly industrialised, will be still more different. Some of the conditions that made the old A.I.F. were accidental, for others the nation itself was responsible. If there arise here the conditions that played such havoc when Europe turned to industry, nothing can avert similar wreckage here, and the loss of those qualities that the old A.I.F. drew from its contact with countryside. Or if social divisions increase with the artificiality of more highly organised society, the snobbery of fashion and publicity, or the servility that almost necessarily follows the co-existence of poverty and great wealth, then the qualities that the A.I.F. gained from its social equality will vanish with the causes that gave them birth. Indeed, failing basic measures, economic and cultural, the nation itself may be in danger of "racial" suicide. If what was admirable in its character is to be maintained in a changing world, this can be done only by special planning and vigorous determination to maintain those qualities.

The Old Force passed down the road to history. The dust of its march settled. The sound of its arms died. Upon a hundred battlefields the broken trees stretched their lean arms over sixty thousand of its graves. The time has arrived to sum its achievement.

The decisive victory in 1918 would have been impossible without the help of America, in reliance on which the whole campaign for 1918 was planned. It would also have been impossible without the British command of the seas, the endurance of the French, British and Russian armies for three years, and the British, French and American offensives in the final year. The A.I.F. was so comparatively small a force that it had to lose those three initials from its postal address

---

42 Callnumus, p. 25. The freedom of the British dominions is little understood abroad, even in America, despite the examples of Ireland and Canada. The reaction of Australians to it has been described in Vol. I, Chapter I.

43 To ask "Who won the war?" is like asking "On which leg does a table stand?"
when the A.E.F. poured into France. Yet those who were close enough to the events know that for France, Britain, and America, the course of the war in 1918 was made discernibly different by the spirit in these free men.

The first achievement of the A.I.F. was that at some stage, playing its full part with the Allies, it helped to save the world from a peace treaty dictated by Ludendorff. What such a treaty would have meant can only be conjectured; but the terms imposed on the Soviet leaders at Brest-Litovsk, compared with which those of the Versailles Treaty were a monument of equity, may be an indication. For the Australian people, as has already been said, such an ending meant almost certain elimination.

The second achievement was to furnish other nations with the measure of a then almost unknown democracy, or at least of a people reared in conditions closer to pure democracy than any nation, with the possible exception of the Swiss, had attained. That evidence gained Australia a hearing in the conference which closed the war and a place in the League of Nations.

The third, and perhaps a greater, achievement was to furnish that measure to itself and to its own nation. It is easy to forget the atmosphere of Australia in the days before the War of 1914-18. When the A.I.F. first sailed it left there a nation that did not yet know itself. Even the 1st Australian Division entered its first battle not knowing what manner of men Australians were. The people of the six States which formed the Commonwealth were much divided. Many an Australian had no confidence in the capacity of his people for any big enterprise. In numerous respects they were still six colonies rather than a single federated nation. Many Australians believed, and had said and written, that their people could support the discipline neither of an army and navy nor of successful industry. Critics both from within and from abroad had estimated that the Australian worker was less energetic than European and American workers. One well-known British journalist, Mr. Foster Fraser, had written that Australians were degenerating physically from the British stock, and it was on the writings of a Melbourne doctor that
he based his argument. Many of the older-fashioned Australians considered almost sacrilegious any pretence that goods of Australian make, or tradesmen and professional men of Australian training, from bootmakers to bishops, could be the equals of those from the older countries. If a capable leader was required, either for industry or for the army, he must be imported, they cried, from the old world. Many Australians would have trusted the capacity of an Australian office staff less than that of a staff of Americans or Englishmen. The section that did proclaim a belief in its native land often obtained that belief less from a knowledge of its own country than from an ignorance of others.

For the opportunity for Australians to know their own people had never arrived. It is in disaster that human character is most clearly exhibited, and though she had known fire, drought, and flood Australia had never seen the one trial that, despite civilised progress, all humanity still recognises—the test of a great war.

And then during four years in which nearly the whole world was so tested, the people in Australia looked on from afar at three hundred thousand of their own nation struggling amongst millions from the strongest and most progressive peoples of Europe and America. They saw their own men—those who had dwelt in the same street or been daily travellers in the same railway trains—flash across the world's consciousness like a shooting star. In the first straight rush up the Anzac hills in the dark, in the easy figures first seen on the ridges against the dawn sky, in the working parties stacking stores on the shelled beach without the turning of a head, in the stretcher-bearers walking, pipes in mouths, down a bullet-swept slope to a comrade's call, unconsciously setting a tradition that may work for centuries—in things seen daily from that first morning until the struggle ended, onlookers had recognised in these men qualities always vital to the human race. Australians watched the name of their country rise high in the esteem of the world's oldest and greatest nations. Every Australian bears that name proudly abroad to-day; and by the daily doings, great and small, which these pages have narrated, the Australian nation came to know itself.
Yet one aim that, more than any other, buoyed up the Australian soldier and his Allies in the later trials of those four years—to save their children from having to fight out the contest again—was not attained. The need for a post-war effort, as sustained and urgent as that of war itself, to make the settlement effective was then realised by few even of the world's brightest minds. The tired victors simply sank into peace and presented their former opponents with neither of the two conditions necessary to make it durable—first, inducement to live contentedly under the settlement or legally secured modifications of it, and, second, effective deterrent from the breach of it by force. A second A.I.F., in every sense the child of the first, is helping its British comrades and their Allies to fight out the same issues in even clearer form to-day. Humanity, whose fate again hangs on their success, prays that their deeds may be crowned with a settlement devised and maintained with the wisdom of experience which, alas, was not available to ensure full reward for the effort of which these pages tell.

But that effort stands. The meaner struggles of politics cannot erase one tittle from the story of that terrible but more generous struggle in the holly scrub of Gallipoli or under the rain-clouds of France or the glare of Sinai.

Twenty-three years ago the arms were handed in. The rifles were locked in the rack. The horses were sold. The guns were sheeted and parked in storage for other gunners. The familiar faded-green uniform disappeared from the streets.

But the Australian Imperial Force is not dead. That famous army of generous men marches still down the long lane of its country's history, with bands playing and rifles slung, with packs on shoulders, white dust on boots, and bayonet scabbards and entrenching tools flapping on countless thighs—as the French countryfolk and the fellaheen of Egypt knew it.

What these men did nothing can alter now. The good and the bad, the greatness and smallness of their story will stand. Whatever of glory it contains nothing now can lessen. It rises, as it will always rise, above the mists of ages, a monument to great-hearted men; and, for their nation, a possession for ever.