

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ANZAC LEGACY

ON 26th December 1919 General Monash, having almost completely repatriated the A.I.F., and so finished his last military task—in which the staff work was, he considered, “superior to anything with which we were connected during the war”—himself also returned home, and went quietly into civilian clothes to begin another outstanding service to his country as organiser of the great electricity undertaking of Victoria. Like him, the A.I.F. on its return merged quickly and quietly into the general population, an unworthy demonstration in Victoria by some of the inevitable riff-raff being quickly disclaimed by a huge meeting of ex-soldiers immediately called for that purpose and addressed by Elliott, Brand and other tried leaders on 23rd July 1919 in the Melbourne Domain.

The First A.I.F. officially ceased to exist on 1st April 1921. Its rehabilitation and pensioning—eventually administered mainly by the Department of “Repatriation”—were not finished when in 1939 the Second World War broke out. The number of pensions had reached its peak in 1931, when there were 283,322; but of these less than one-third were for servicemen and more than two-thirds for wives, widows or children of dead or (in some degree) disabled servicemen. The amount paid in that year was just under £8 million. The total number of pensions then began to fall until in 1942 it was 220,339,¹ when the amount paid was £7½ million. In rehabili-

¹ Pensions then, of course, began to increase owing to the Second World War. By 1945 there were again 283,000 pensioners to whom about £8 million was payable in respect of the First World War, and £3 million in respect of the Second.

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tation, under the system established by Senator Millen and Sir Nicholas Lockyer, with Mr J. Nangle as Director for Vocational Training, over 74,343 soldiers applied for this training and 27,696 completed their courses in occupations varying from show-card writing to boat building, great assistance being given by both employers and employees.

The children of those soldiers who had lost their lives or been wholly incapacitated were educated at public expense. War gratuities (at 1s. 6d. a day from embarkation) were voted in 1919 to all ex-servicemen who had enlisted for service oversea, with a lower rate for those kept in Australia; the total being £27½ million. Under the War Service Homes Act over 37,000 soldiers (or their widows) were enabled to build or buy homes by assistance to the amount of £800 to £950; and after twenty-two years less than 2½ per cent of the payments for these homes were in arrear. The settling of soldiers on the land was much less successful, partly because the land allotted was in many cases unsuitable or too highly assessed, partly through failure to insist on the competence of the applicants. The system was managed by the State governments, the Federal government helping by an advance of £625 for each settler. Many of the properties were in the irrigation areas, some of which are still largely peopled by ex-soldiers. But nearly one-third of the settlers failed, and in 1929, after inquiry by an authority in land valuation, Mr Justice Pike, the Federal and State governments wrote off £23½ million over and above considerable losses of interest.

Twenty-one years after the war, when the Second World War broke out, there were still 2000 servicemen of the First World War under treatment in Australian hospitals, and nearly 50,000 attended at some time during the year as outpatients. For serious cases the "Repatriation" Department itself maintained one hospital in

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each State. Many severely disabled men, however, were carrying on their normal civilian occupations, overcoming their handicaps with extraordinary courage and ingenuity; the loss of one or even two limbs made astonishingly little difference in the civil life of some of these determined men.² It was constantly demonstrated that, in treating disablement, by far the happiest results were those in which the State was able to help men to help themselves.

In addition to all this effort at public expense, the returned servicemen or their families were greatly helped by voluntary effort, in particular through a great bequest for their benefit by the leading pastoralist in New South Wales, Sir Samuel McCaughey, who died in 1919. Combined with the profits of the soldiers' canteens, this formed a fund of over £1,300,000 which, carefully and sympathetically administered by the trustees, was mainly devoted to the education of the children of dead or disabled soldiers in certain ways complementary to the government scheme. Help of another kind was given by the ex-soldiers' organisations, much the strongest of these being the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia, which secured some measure of preference in employment for ex-servicemen throughout Australia—varying in the different States; and by perhaps the finest movement that emerged from the war—the Legacy Clubs, originated by General Gellibrand and some of those whom he formerly led—whose members now undertake, in place of their dead or disabled comrades, to guide and help those comrades' children.

The First World War cost Australia 215,000 battle casualties; the comparative figures³ for the British Empire

² For typical cases see *Official Medical History*, Vol. III, pp. 840-3.

³ The Australian military and medical statistics of the First World War may be found in the *Australian Official Medical History*, Vol. III, pp. 856-980, (see also Vol. I of that history); and in the *Australian Official History*, Vol. VI, pp. 1088-9 and Vol. XI, pp. 871-6, and 882-8.

		Percentage									
	Population	Raised	Took the field	Killed and died of wounds	Wounded	Reported Prisoners	Total	Troops in field to population	Battle casualties to troops in field		
United Kingdom	48,089,249	5,704,416	5,399,563	702,410	1,662,625	170,889	2,535,424	11.2	47.1		
Canada	8,361,000	624,964	422,405	50,625	1,49,732	3,729	210,086	5.0	49.7		
Australia	4,875,325	416,809	331,781	59,342	152,171	4,084	215,045	6.8	64.8		
New Zealand	1,099,449	128,525	98,950	16,654	41,317	530	58,801	8.9	58.6		
South Africa	6,685,827	136,070	136,070	6,928	11,444	228	18,600	2.0	13.6		
India	315,200,000	1,440,437	1,388,620	53,486	64,350	3,762	121,598	0.4	9.1		

(mainly based on those of the British War Office, March 1922) are shown on the opposite page.

The military effort of the Dominions was not, as will be seen, proportionate to that of the Mother Country. In view of their distance from the main theatre, and their less advanced development, this was not expected of them. Nevertheless, if battle forces only are counted, Australians, with their five infantry divisions and the greater part of two cavalry ones, did not fall far short of the full proportionate contribution of their nation. Moreover, though Australia could not provide munitions, as did Canada, she was the only Dominion which furnished a considerable naval force. To the air force her contribution, like that of Canada and other British communities oversea, was outstanding, and she alone provided her own air force overseas as well as very many and notable entrants for the British one.⁴ In money the cost of the war to Australia during 1914-19 was, as already stated, assessed at £364 million, and the post-war cost, up to the beginning of the Second World War, was about another £270 million.

If the cause that led Australians to enlist can be reduced to a single principle, it is the principle of protecting their homes and their freedom by sustaining a system of law

⁴ For some of these, including Kingsford-Smith, Hinkler, Percival, Longmore, Taylor and Brearley, see *Vol. VIII*, pp. xxv-xxviii. Longmore and F. H. McNamara (who won the V.C. when flying in 1917 in Palestine) occupied high British commands in the Second World War.

Australians of both these forces competed for the prize offered in March 1919 by the Australian Government for their return home by air. The winners were Ross Smith with his brother Keith and Sergeants J. M. Bennett and W. H. Shiers, who in a Vickers-Vimy machine, reached Darwin on 10th December 1919 in just under twenty-eight days. Lieuts. R. J. P. Parer and J. C. McIntosh were forbidden to start, owing to the inadequacy of their D.H. 9, but disregarded this, and reached Darwin in seven months. Of other entrants, two were killed in England and two drowned near Corfu; others reached Crete and Java. For the full stories see *Vol. VIII*, pp. 386-96.

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and order between nations. And as only twenty-one years passed before they had again to fight almost the same enemy in the same cause, some have questioned—as did the Mayor of San Francisco at the opening of the U.N.O. Conference on Anzac Day 1945—whether the Allies in the First World War achieved anything of value by their victory.

So far as Australia is concerned, there can be no such question. It is true that the Allies failed in their purpose, conceived during the struggle itself, to make this “a war to end war”. Few, if any, even of their leaders had any conception that the maintenance of a free system in peace involves, on the part of those who believe in it, an effort almost as united—and at times, almost as vigorous—as that of war itself. The machinery set up in 1919 for peace—the League of Nations—failed perhaps partly because it did not offer the prospect of peaceful change when change by force had been ruled out; but mainly because the powers, great and small, were unwilling to face the risk of using the machine they had erected. The Allies failed to achieve a “permanent” or even a lasting peace.

But at least they avoided a German victory. If in the struggle, which—according to Lichnowsky—Great Britain did her best to avoid, the might amassed by the Germans (when they forced the armament race of 1909-14) had resulted in German victory, the first term in the peace treaty would have been the abolition of the British Navy; and for the Australian nation this meant either subservience to Germany or extinction at the hands of the Japanese. But the Second World War found us still able and ready to fight for freedom; and that free men and women should have to risk everything in fighting for their freedom within twenty-one years of having saved it in an earlier struggle, is nothing new in history; rather it accords with the normal process by which freedom has been won and maintained.

What was abnormal was that British command of the sea had given us in Australia 126 years of freedom without fighting for it; and what was admirable in our conditions was the factor (or combination of factors) that during those peaceful years kept alive, and indeed apparently increased, the will and capacity of Australians to preserve that freedom. It may be conjectured that, as so often in history, the nation's virility was largely due to the comparative sanity and simplicity of the country life from which even the inhabitants of our great cities were not yet widely separated.

The main achievement of the Australian forces in 1914-18 was to help materially in winning a prolongation of the security of the Victorian era for at least part of the free world, including their own. But for Australia in particular they achieved something more. First, they won her a recognised place among the nations; her seat on the League was given in direct acknowledgment of the part played by her forces. Second, though less commonly realised, was the bringing of a new confidence into Australian national undertakings. Early in the war not a few Australians had watched with diffidence the departure of their force as an improvised contribution to the great armies of the Allies. That diffidence was a natural survival from the "colonial" days. The return of the A.I.F., its leaders covered with distinction, its ranks acclaimed overseas as one of the notable fighting forces of history, deeply, if insensibly, affected that outlook. The old phrase about the "tinpot navy" had died once and for all when the *Sydney* fought the *Emden*, if not before; and gradually even the most conservative Australians began to realise that the success of the A.I.F.—like that of other Dominion forces—while owing much to British tradition, owed much, also, to attributes of the new nation. It is true that the integrity of their leadership—the more vital of the two vital elements, character and brains, on which the great success of their higher

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command was firmly based—accorded with the best British tradition, as not only Birdwood but Bridges, White, Chauvel and Monash would have maintained; but the development of the extraordinarily capable regimental officers, whom British observers noted as an outstanding mark of the A.I.F. in 1918, was peculiarly Australian.

Admittedly the A.I.F.'s achievement was recognised by some of the people at home less quickly than by the British and French, and even the Germans, nearer to the scene of war. The opinion of the Australian Cabinet, that it would be unreasonable for their nation to have, or even ask for, a seat at the peace conference, was symptomatic of an attitude which the returning troops not uncommonly found in Australia, especially among people of education: they constantly met the belief that reports from overseas had naturally, or politely, exaggerated the A.I.F.'s contribution to the final campaign. It was not until the publication of Sir John Monash's book, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*, that influential opinion in Australia recognised the performance of her troops for which leaders abroad, including Germans, were giving them credit.⁵

The crucial attribute of the A.I.F. was its discipline—or, perhaps, the compatibility of its discipline with the initiative and readiness to take risks that marked its men. As in every army, its discipline, to be effective; had to be based on the conditions and outlook of the nation. In their way, the critics from the colonial days were right: a people with Australian outlook and standards could not have produced an efficient army of the kind that those critics envisaged—that is, one imbued with the automatism of the old-time grenadier. But the Australian

⁵ Though Monash's book contains exaggerations and inaccuracies, it does not overstate the fighting value of the A.I.F., nor does it really rate the force higher than did many leaders and writers, British, Allied and enemy, whose estimates can be found in the War Memorial records at Canberra.

commanders and the troops themselves, from highest to lowest, as a result of their outlook and of the natural relations between them, developed a system of discipline which, though outwardly that of the British Army, was in spirit more akin to that of the French. It aimed at the best and most reasonable use of the national material for the purpose in view. It succeeded because the troops wanted the object, and understood the methods, almost as thoroughly as their leaders.

The main condition for the success of this form of discipline was the careful selection of officers, on whose suitability even more depended than in the British Army, in which the prestige of social position or education automatically helped to give control. In the A.I.F., unit commanders used to pick from among their men those whom they themselves would most desire to have under them in action; and, contrary to the old British rule, the general practice was for these, when promoted, to serve in their old battalions, commanding comrades whom they knew, and commanded by the seniors who knew them and had selected them.

Anyone watching an Australian battalion on parade felt that in this year's corporals he saw next year's sergeants and the following year's subalterns. The influence of A.I.F. officers was strengthened by Birdwood's insistence that they must always see to the interests of their men before their own, and Monash's principle that "the staff was the servant of the troops". It was a point of honour that, at any rate when in the line, officers should receive the same food as the troops, and the platoon commander should take his meal in the trenches, among his men. The absence of social distinction encouraged the initiative which was the outstanding quality of Australian troops. Even in this abbreviated narrative the reader will have noted several instances in which a suggestion volunteered by some soldier to his officer at a critical moment resulted in an important achievement.

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It is true that great damage was afterwards done to the Anzac tradition by caricatures, that became popular in Australia, of the indiscipline of her troops in the First World War, portraying the life of the "dinkum Aussie" as one of drunkenness, thieving and hooliganism—a caricature based on old soldiers' tales, which notoriously avoid the serious. Actually it was discipline—firmly based on the national habit of facing facts and going straight for the objective—that was responsible for the astonishing success which first gave to other nations confidence in Australia, and to the Australian nation confidence in itself.

Whether that confidence can be justified by achievement in peace as well as in war, only the future can show. The Second World War ended with the use by man of elemental forces of a kind that could dissolve him and, conceivably, all life on this planet, and even—as Shakespeare dreamed—"the great Globe itself". It may be hoped that human reason will bring these forces under unified control and overcome the monstrous danger of their use in war by surrendering those elements of national sovereignty on which war and its preparations are based. Such a consummation—which, in the not distant future, may be the only alternative to man's self-destruction—may be freely established by the nations; or it may be forced on the reluctant survivors by a victor after a third world war.

By what adjustments freedom, as known to the liberal world today, will be maintained under that new basis of human relationships, it is too early yet to foresee. But whatever the means still available to men for forcing their will upon others, these lessons of history will still be fundamental—that only in conditions ensuring freedom of thought and communication can mankind progress; and that such freedom can be maintained only by the qualities by which from Grecian times it has been won—by such qualities as our own people managed to preserve through the first 126 peaceful years of their

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existence—the readiness at any time to die for freedom, if necessary, and the virility to struggle for it.

In facing that necessity we now share with the New Zealanders one condition that was lacking to our young nations in 1915: we have passed through the test which until now, unfortunately, has necessarily been judged by mankind as the supreme one for men fit to be free; and we have emerged from that test with the Anzac tradition. In a Second World War that tradition has nobly served humanity.

May the day be near when it will be safely and gloriously fused in the tradition of a free mankind.

**TERRITORIAL RECRUITMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN
IMPERIAL FORCE IN WORLD WAR I**

INFANTRY		LIGHT HORSE
1st Divn	1st Bde (1st-4th Bns) N.S.W. 2nd Bde (5th-8th Bns) Vic. 3rd Bde 9th Bn Q'ld 10th Bn S. Aust. 11th Bn S. Aust. 12th Bn Tas (also W.A. and S.A.)	Divl and Corps Trps part 4th Regt Vic. 13th Regt Vic. 1st Bde 1st Regt N.S.W. 2nd Regt Q'ld 3rd Regt S.A., Tas.
4th Divn	4th Bde 13th Bn N.S.W. 14th Bn Vic. 15th Bn Q'ld, Tas. 16th Bn W.A. and S.A.	2nd Bde 5th Regt Q'ld 6th Regt N.S.W. 7th Regt N.S.W.
2nd Divn	5th Bde (17th-20th Bns) N.S.W. 6th Bde (21st-24th Bns) Vic 7th Bde 25th Bn Q'ld 26th Bn Q'ld 27th Bn S. Aust. 28th Bn W. Aust.	3rd Bde 8th Regt Vic. 9th Regt S.A., Vic. 10th Regt W. Aust.
5th Divn	8th Bde 29th Bn Vic. 30th Bn N.S.W. 31st Bn Q'ld and Vic. 32nd Bn S.A. and W.A.	4th Bde 4th Regt Vic. 11th Regt Q'ld, S.A. 12th Regt N.S.W.
3rd Divn	9th Bde (33rd-36th Bns) N.S.W. 10th Bde (37th-39th Bns) Vic. 40th Bn Tas. 11th Bde 41st Bn Q'ld 42nd Bn Q'ld 43rd Bn S. Aust. 44th Bn W. Aust.	5th Bde 14th Regt } former 15th Regt } Camel Cps A French regiment of Spahis and Chas- seurs d'Afrique
4th Divn	12th Bde 45th Bn N.S.W. 46th Bn Vic. 47th Bn Q'ld, Tas 48th Bn S.A. and W.A. 13th Bde 49th Bn Q'ld 50th Bn S. Aust. 51st Bn W. Aust. 52nd Bn S.A., W.A., and Tas.	
5th Divn	14th Bde (53rd-56th Bns) N.S.W. 15th Bde (57th-60th Bns) Vic.	

