

ANZAC
to
AMIENS

C.E.W. BEAN

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL
CANBERRA

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PREFACE

THIS volume tells in short the story of the Australian fighting services in the First World War. The political, social and industrial history of the nation in those years is merely sketched to provide the necessary background.

The narrative is based almost wholly on the twelve volumes of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, of which the present writer was the editor. For the necessary research the present work is therefore almost entirely dependent on the studies undertaken for that history by himself and his former colleagues—Sir Henry Gullett (Sinai and Palestine), Mr F. M. Cutlack (Australian Flying Corps), Mr Arthur W. Jose (Royal Australian Navy), Lieut.-Colonel S. S. Mackenzie (New Guinea), and Sir Ernest Scott (Australia during the War), by the medical historian (Colonel A. Graham Butler); and by Captain J. Balfour and Mr A. W. Bazley of the former historical staff. The *Official Medical History* of the Australian services (by Colonel A. Graham Butler), the *British Official History*, and the *New Zealand Official History* have been of great assistance; and among other sources consulted have been Sir Charles Lucas's notable contributions to the history edited by him, *The Empire at War*, a work less widely known than it deserves to be.

It is now (on the advice of the writer and his successor) recognised by the Australian authorities that, in the production of the history of a great war, an early task should be the publication of a short general narrative; and it is believed that the same view is held in Great Britain. For many years the present writer and others—with the signal exception of the Legacy Clubs—failed to realise that, until the history of the Australian forces in 1914-18 was compressed into a single volume, many of our people would soon be almost entirely unaware of the experience of their fellow-countrymen in that transcendent test. Yet that is the position; to take a simple example, today very many Australian children, and teachers, for whom the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava is a household word, have

never heard of the heroic charge of the Light Horse in a desperate effort to help their comrades at the climax of the Gallipoli campaign. And the reason is not merely that Balaclava is celebrated in Tennyson's magnificent verse.

There is little fear that a short history, written largely for teachers and school libraries, will meet today among teachers the disapproval which it would have met for many years after the First World War. Not that the detestation of war was then greater than now; but there was a widespread feeling, not merely that military operations bulked too largely in history—which is true, despite the immense influence of wars on almost every phase of human development—but that, by sustaining a pride in the military efforts of our countrymen, the history of war encouraged war. Probably for that reason one 330-page history of Australia published during that time not merely gave no account of the part played by Australians during the Sudan and South African wars, but, in its text, did not even mention those wars. Yet, if only as incidents fundamental to the growth of the collective defence system of the British Commonwealth of Nations, Australia's actions in both of these were of obvious importance.

After the victory in 1918 and the establishment of the League of Nations our defence system was even for many of our finest citizens a matter of small concern; and the mere existence of bayonets and bayonet training in a world at peace is at all times a horrible reminder of the gulf that still separates mankind from its reasonable ideals. It required something yet more horrible to bring home again to many of us the truth that those who value liberty must always be prepared to die for it. But that reminder was quickly supplied by the appearance of another in the long list of the world's tyrannies, with its foul train of attempts to crush freedom, even of thought, by wholesale murder, torture and blackmail. Many of us who in peace-time had justifiably objected to some implications of our national anthems—"confound their knavish tricks", "the nations not so blessed

as thee shall in their turn to tyrants fall’—have since known years in which the realities behind those words have been too evident for any free man and woman to disregard, and when the happiness of mankind obviously hung upon our recognition of this. The writer’s plea is, not for preserving such lines, but for understanding that there are still unfortunately, realities behind them—and for the recognition and recording of the worthy, and successful, reaction of the freer peoples to those realities. At least they saved the opportunity for freedom, long and painfully built up. The pride of the British nations, the Russians, the Americans and the Chinese, in their traditions—old or new—of fighting for their various conceptions of freedom, was a mighty factor, without which that opportunity might well have been destroyed at least for our lifetimes, perhaps for many lifetimes. Knowledge of a struggle in which the same result was—even if only temporarily—achieved, must surely help the judgement and the spirit of readers, young and old, provided that it is true knowledge.

A condensed war history, occupying perhaps a twentieth of the space of the original, cannot (as was attempted in that work) exhibit its vast subject in terms of the hopes, fears, ambitions, resolutions, enthusiasms and sufferings of ordinary men—whether in the conference room or in the scrub on a Turkish hilltop. For the intimate experience and trials of Australian clerks or stockmen fighting amid the Roman ruins of Amman or the fields and woodlands of France, or in their out-of-date aeroplanes over Sinai or in their ships patrolling through the steaming waters of Sandakan or the sleet of the North Sea, the reader must be referred (as is here constantly done by footnotes) to the volumes of the official history. Except when otherwise stated the references are to that work.

The official history had many objects outside the scope of the present volume. First, that history was largely a memorial, and the historian had the duty of preserving everything, within a reasonable limit, that would throw

light on the subject. Second, it was mainly pioneer work; the historian had to ascertain and establish the facts, which till then were largely unknown, and which, unless they were ascertained by him, would not be ascertained at all, since certainly no other nation would establish them from Australia. Third—as these had to be established not only for Australian readers but for those in other countries—he obviously had to do this in a narrative which carried its own proofs. Fourth, as war—even more than other disasters—still affords a plain trial of national character, it was necessary to show how the Australian citizen reacted to it. This could be done only by recording not merely the decisions of generals and governments, but also the manner in which those decisions worked out through the ultimate machinery of men's nerves and muscles at the fighting edge, where nation grated against nation. That record had also to furnish a fund of information from which military and other students, if they desired, could draw; finally, if possible—which fortunately to a large extent it was—the story had to be told from the Turkish and German side as well as ours.

What is here attempted is to enable the reader to see as a whole the Australian effort in that war, to follow the general reasons for most of the operations described—military and otherwise—and to understand at least some of their results. The writer hopes that the most important omissions may be made good later in two small volumes of “incidents” and “biographies”.

By the courtesy of the Australian War Memorial Board nearly all the maps, sketches and illustrations in this volume have been selected from those used in the official history, but the maps include also several originally supplied for *The Empire at War* (for which acknowledgements are due to the Oxford University Press). The maps and sketches have been adapted for their present use by Mr W. H. G. Guard, to whom, as to the Acting Director (Mr A. W. Bazley) and other members of the War Memorial Staff, the writer is deeply indebted. The official photographs are mostly by

Captains Frank Hurley and Sir Hubert Wilkins, M.C., and Lieutenant H. F. Baldwin; for others, thanks are due to the lenders mentioned beneath the prints, and, for her part in indexing, to Miss Mary Ordish.

It remains to mention two items in the story of Anzac ascertained or confirmed since these chapters were written: the two subordinates by whose stoutness Quinn's Post was held when superiors would have abandoned it were, first, Regimental-Sergeant-Major H. E. Pugsley, a former British soldier, and, later, Lieutenant H. Jacobs, 1st Battalion; and, in the attack launched by Colonel Clarke at the Landing against the machine-gun at Fisherman's Hut a leading part was played by Captain John Northcott, who, eventually rising from the scrub 150 yards from the gun, at once received four bullets, which put him out of that war. He survived to become a Chief of the General Staff in World War II, and, later, Governor of New South Wales.

Finally, this is not an official history, though entirely based on one; for the views expressed the author alone is responsible.

C. E. W. B.
1946

FOREWORD

In his preface to the original edition of this book C. E. W. Bean wrote "The narrative is based almost wholly on the twelve volumes of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, of which the present writer was the editor". Diffident and modest as he was throughout the whole of his life, Bean did not explain that he personally wrote six of those volumes, which contain over two million words, and took some twenty-three years of unremitting work to complete.

Nor did he explain that most of the material in the volumes was gathered at first hand. Bean observed closely many battles in which the Australian Imperial Force was engaged as he sought to discover for himself and record "what actually happened at the cutting edge of the military machine, where the intention and effort of one side grated on that of its opponents".

In the words of General Sir Brudenell White, Bean "faced death more times than any other man in the A.I.F., and had no glory to look for either". To his fellow war correspondent, Keith Murdoch (later Sir Keith), he was "that zealous and pure spirit who, wherever the A.I.F. went into battle, went with it; wherever the A.I.F. interest could be served, under enemy guns or in the camps of friends, went there to serve it".

Bean's capacity to convey the feelings and qualities of thousands of ordinary soldiers made the official histories unique among national war histories. He feared that a condensed war history would be too limited in scope to "exhibit its vast subject in terms of hopes, fears, ambitions, resolutions, enthusiasms and sufferings of ordinary men". But *Anzac to Amiens* does indeed contain a perceptible touch of this quality and constitutes part of the legacy which C. E. W. Bean left to his country and people.

Dudley McCarthy
1983

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