CHAPTER IV
THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN STAFF

The staff with which the 1st Australian Division sailed was the most brilliant that any Australian general had at his disposal during the war; indeed it may be doubted if any better existed among the regular divisions of the original British Expeditionary Force. Five of its officers had passed the staff college in Great Britain or India, and at least three or four of them had there made their mark by an exceptionally brilliant course. General Bridges picked the eyes of Australia ruthlessly. Without hesitation he took both the heads of departments and apparently indispensable juniors. His judgment was sometimes strangely at fault, but that in the main his choice was right was shown by the subsequent history of this small staff. Eleven of its members were generals before the end of the war. Incalculable results depended upon the quality of the original divisional staff and the standard which it set. Its members figure constantly in this history. Some at least of them may well be described at the outset.

The man who commanded the 1st Australian Division, William Throsby Bridges, was born on the 18th of February, 1861, at Greenock, in Scotland, where his father, a captain in the Royal Navy, happened to be stationed. He was thus 53 years of age when appointed to the 1st Division. Though the family came from Essex, Captain Bridges lived wherever his naval duties took him. He had married an Australian, the daughter of Mr. Charles Throsby of Moss Vale, New South Wales. The son was sent to school at Ryde, in the Isle of Wight, while his father was stationed there, and afterwards to the Royal Naval School at Greenwich, where the severity of the discipline left its impress upon him. During his son's schooldays Captain Bridges retired from the Navy and took his family to live in Canada. His own father, the Rev. George Bridges, had retired to some hermitage in the Canadian wilds many years before, after the shock of seeing his four daughters drowned in a sailing accident. Captain Bridges settled at Shanty Bay, and his son was sent to school at
Toronto, whence he entered the Canadian Military College at Kingston with a view to training for the British Army. His father, however, lost his private means in a bank failure, and brought his family to Australia. They settled in his wife's native town of Moss Vale, where Captain Bridges became Clerk of Petty Sessions.

William Bridges stayed at Kingston until he graduated, and then came to Australia to join his parents. The day after landing at Sydney he joined the Roads and Bridges Department of New South Wales, and was made Inspector at Murruundi and Narrabri. When New South Wales sent a contingent to the Soudan, he volunteered. He was too late. But soon afterwards, in 1885, when a vacancy occurred in the New South Wales Permanent Artillery, he was given the appointment over the heads of many others. After his marriage to an accomplished woman—Edith, daughter of Alfred Dawson Francis, of Moruya, N.S.W.—he was placed in charge of the Middle Head forts in Sydney. The place was completely cut off; it offered neither work nor prospects. Bridges read novels, and spent the rest of his time sailing with the officer commanding the South Head forts, often, to the terror of his wife, outside Sydney Heads. It was a purposeless life, and Bridges might never have been known to Australian history, had not the authorities decided to establish a School of Gunnery at Middle Head. Then he had something worth working for, and he worked for the rest of his life.

Bridges was a profound student, and his colleagues soon began to look upon him as a learned soldier. He was dour and brusque in his manner, picking his own way along the paths of his profession with a grim determination to "get on," but far too proud to steer for promotion by the way of servility either to superior officers or to Ministers of State; nor would he stoop to the intrigue which was at one period as common an instrument in the Australian military staff as it was in those of older armies. He served in the South African War as a major attached to the artillery of the Cavalry Division, and was present at the Relief of Kimberley, at Paardeberg, and in several other actions until invalided with typhoid. Shortly after his return from that war he joined the
Headquarters Staff, with which he continued from that time onwards to be connected. As Chief of Intelligence he set to work upon the problems of the Defence Scheme of Australia, and five years before the Great War visited London as the Commonwealth representative upon the Imperial General Staff.

This work upon problems connected with the theory of war supplied him with exactly that material for thought which most attracted him. He was a slow but a deep thinker, his chief interest being in questions of an academic nature. A clever philosophical definition invariably gave him pleasure. He read widely, and his friends put him down as a typical professor. He had a tall, bony, thin, loose-limbed frame and the bent shoulders of a student. His manner was gauche and on occasions rude. While he was Commandant at the Military College, one of his superior officers paid a visit to that place without previously letting him know. The visitor happened to arrive at the officers' mess during a meal. Bridges sat grimly in his place without rising or showing the senior visitor to a seat; the juniors of the mess had to perform the honours. His favourite form of answer was a grunt followed by a terse sentence. He was ruthless as to the feelings of others; he seemed to make no concessions to humanity; he expected none from it.

Officers and men were afraid of him, as schoolboys might be of a stern headmaster. They did not think of him as primarily a soldier, and in the opinion of those who knew him best he was likely to prove a purely academic commander. He had shown none of the qualities which commonly mark the leader. At the Military College he was barely known to the cadets and did not trouble to know them. But he knew his work. Before he started the college at Duntroon he visited the military schools of Britain, Canada, America, France, Belgium, and one in Germany. His driving-force amongst professors and instructors was the power that ran the college at high tension. He seemed to make few friends and to be graceless in his treatment of these. At Mena Camp in Egypt the staff was returning from a field day, cantering through the camp, the long-legged general riding at its head with the loose, awkward seat which was characteristic of him, when his horse caught its foot in a tram-rail and fell with him. The horse was
a big, spirited animal, full of breeding, presented to the force before it sailed by a well-known Australian horse-breeder. It scrambled to its feet with the general’s foot caught in the stirrup. Anything might have happened. But Captain W. J. Foster, General Bridges’ aide-de-camp, a young Australian officer bred to horses from his youth, was riding behind him. Foster literally leapt from his saddle, his horse still at the canter, and had the general’s reins in his hand before the big horse was yet on his feet. Everyone who saw this action recognised it as a feat of daring horsemanship which probably saved the general’s life. Yet Bridges never said “Thank you.” When his Chief of Staff remarked later: “Foster deserved a V.C. to-day,” the general gave his usual grunt. “I suppose anyone else would have done it,” he said.

Only those who watched him most closely knew that Bridges possessed one of those intensely shy natures which are sometimes combined with great strength. He had an abhorrence of the least show of sentiment, and would rather have gone to any extremity of rudeness than let a trace of it appear in his face, his voice, or his actions. He was genuinely attached to his aide-de-camp, and leaned upon his assistance, but he left such feelings to be discovered by other means or not discovered at all. He was fond of children, but he would not permit others to notice it. He made men afraid of him, but he disliked them to show their fear. Several members of his original staff were too nervous of him to make decisions of themselves or to advise him strongly and candidly. His grim attitude only made them more nervous; they lost confidence, and left more and more of the decision to him, with the result that they were piling upon him a heavier responsibility for solutions and details than any man in his position could bear. He could not, by a kindly word or a tactful hint, help another out of a difficulty; his self-consciousness prevented it. If a man affected his nerves, he dispensed with him. Nor could he brook direct opposition; he hated to face the personal awkwardness of continuing to deal daily with a subordinate with whom he was at variance. If he quarrelled with an officer, he got rid of him.

And yet to those who had that capacity which in horsemanship men call "hands"; to those who were sensitive to his moods and could handle him; to men of the world, such as Colonel Neville Howse, V.C., who became loosely attached to his staff as supernumerary medical officer; to men whose efficiency he trusted and admired, such as his Chief of Staff, or Colonel Sinclair-MacLagan of the 3rd Brigade, who had been Director of Drill under him at Duntroon—to such men he could be a delightful companion and a friend. He was a good host when shyness did not prevent it. Towards the end of the training in Egypt a French Mission visited Mena Camp in order to take stock of the Australians, and General Bridges had what to him was the painful duty of showing them his troops. He could read French well, but when the French officers arrived with General Birdwood outside the Mena mess, and it was explained to General Bridges that the visitors could not speak English and that he would have to talk to them in French, he blushed to the back of his neck. A few jerky replies were all that came from him as he rode glumly along beside the polite Frenchman who was head of the Mission. Yet when Sir George Reid, the High Commissioner for Australia in England, came to the mess, General Bridges was an easy and delightful host, recalling old days and laughing over old political jokes.

Though he never truckled to a minister, he never dreamed of ignoring politics as a factor to be considered in his direction of Australia's force. He had a wise far-reaching view of politics, based on deep experience, and his advice as to how any problem should be put before the Government, and what the probable view of that Government would be, was extraordinarily sound, and was relied upon implicitly by General Birdwood in his early dealings with Australia. He had a deep experience of the press, but, though ambitious, he was far too proud to seek publicity. Never once did he, by word, act, or implication, seek even the shadow of an advertisement. Though the Government had attached a War Correspondent to his headquarters for the benefit of the Australian people, and though, thanks to the general's fine national instinct and that of Colonel White, the correspondent was left free to see whatever he liked, good or ill, for the purpose of this present history of
MAJOR-GENERAL SIR WILLIAM THROSBY BRIDGES, COMMANDER OF THE AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE AND OF THE 1ST AUSTRALIAN DIVISION (MORTALLY WOUNDED AT ANZAC 18TH MAY, 1915)

Photo by Alice Mills
General Bridges and his staff, Mena Camp, December, 1914


their country's army, only on two occasions did General Bridges ever suggest to him what he should write. The first was when the general considered that it had become necessary to prepare the Australian people for certain disciplinary measures to be taken in Egypt; the second was on the eve of the landing, when he called the War Correspondent to him just before leaving the Minnewaska: “I don’t make a practice of asking favours of the press,” he said simply; “but I’m going to break the rule this time. I think it is worth mentioning, upon its own merits, that each of the three artillery officers who have been chosen to observe for the naval guns when we land is a Duntroon boy.”

General Bridges was not a popular leader. He was not an athlete. Few people guessed that he had any outdoor virtues. Yet of the feats of which he was proudest, one quite unknown among his colleagues was that of having built in Australia a bark canoe of the sort used by the Indians in Canada, and having attempted in it to shoot the rapids of the only considerable mountain river in Australia, the Snowy. He induced one companion to make the trip with him. The river was not to outward appearance very dangerous, but in one long reach the canoe was swamped. Both men were able to swim, but the short lumpy waves, striking Bridges’ companion on the back of the head as he swam, very nearly rendered him unconscious, and he was pulled ashore exhausted.

Such was the commander of the 1st Australian Division and of the Australian Imperial Force—a man little known to Australians except as a name occasionally seen in lists of military appointments. For his Chief of Staff he had an Australian of a personality as nearly the opposite of his own as it is possible for two natures to be. Cyril Brudenell Bingham White was the son of a North of Ireland man of good family, formerly an army officer. The father migrated to Australia, and eventually took up pastoral property in Queensland. Cyril White was born at St. Arnaud, in Victoria, but went with his people to Queensland at the age of five, and lived at various times at Charters Towers, Gympie, and Gladstone. The father was at one time a wealthy man, but drought and the adversity which sometimes comes upon the best of men in the Australian back country suddenly threw him back into
poverty. A magnificent man, 6 ft. 3 in. in his shoes, and with a heart as great as his body, he set his face again to the journey without a single complaint against his fate. Three times the conditions of the land broke him, and three times he picked himself up, without a grumbling word, to confront his fortunes. His wife—one of those Irish women whose gentle nature has made a tradition for their race—went with him. Delicate in health, she faced the hardships of a life in places where, when some of her children were born, there was no white woman except the wife of a shepherd to render help.

Cyril White, owing to the fall in his father's fortunes, went to a State school—a Normal school in Brisbane—which he left at the age of fifteen. An elder brother sacrificed himself to afford him a year's tuition at a private school in Brisbane—"Eton," kept by an old Eton master. Young White left with a prize for shorthand, entered a bank as a clerk, and never cost his father a penny from that moment. A boy of the keenest imagination and of restless intelligence, the drudgery of the bank clerk's work was bitter as gall to him; the monotony, and the absence of intellectual fodder or of any sort of promise of a life of interest, created an almost overwhelming oppression. There was little hope for a youngster from a salary of a pound a week. On being transferred up country, he received £120 a year. Nearly a third of his slender pay he sent to his mother; £1 each week he gave to a country schoolmaster to coach him nightly after the banking hours, so that he might complete his education. With the pittance which was left he clothed, lodged, and fed himself, and also put by the slender capital with which he was determined to make a start for himself when opportunity permitted. In those days his ambition—probably instilled by his father—was to become a barrister. During three years of drudgery in the bank the boy rose at six and worked upon his education until eight. After the day's work he sat down to his books at nine o'clock in the evening and worked until midnight. At the end of those three years an opportunity offered to cut loose from the life he hated. An examination was to be held for the permanent artillery of Queensland. Young White decided to sit for it. He had been for a short period
in the Wide Bay (Militia) Regiment. T. W. Glasgow, a bank clerk in the same town, Gympie, was a fellow militiaman. White passed, and on the Commonwealth of Australia being federated and taking over the separate forces of the States, he became an officer in the corps which was eventually known as the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery.

From the day when he entered the Australian military service White appeared to be destined for "staff" work. In the early days of the Australian Commonwealth its forces were temporarily under a Commander-in-Chief (afterwards replaced by a Military Board), and for the first holder of this position Australia obtained from England the loan of a very brilliant officer, Major-General Edward Hutton, who had previously commanded in New South Wales. Hutton, like many of the leaders of history, was of the character which finds it difficult to bend its judgment to that of any other man. Shortly after his return to England he was put on the retired list, and was thus little known to the British people. But he was a soldier of a brilliance only too rare. His mark remained deeply impressed both upon the Australian Army and upon his greatest pupil, White, who in 1904 became his aide-de-camp.

After the South African War, in which he served as a subaltern in the 1st Australian Commonwealth Horse, the War Office offered to receive a certain number of Australian officers into the British Staff College at Camberley, near London, and White was chosen, in 1906, as the first representative of his country. The primary object of the staff college is to train regimental officers in what might be called the "business" side of their profession. This "business" training is necessary in order that a man may fit intelligently into any place upon the organising staffs which control the various portions of an army, much as the central and local staffs control any great commercial house and its various branches. A term of two years at the staff college was held out as a prize for the officers of British regiments, and perhaps half-a-dozen in each infantry battalion had been allowed this opportunity before the war.

Those who graduated were marked "Passed Staff College" (usually "p.s.c."), and though perhaps only half of these were taken to serve in staff appointments, the advantage of having all staff officers and many regimental officers trained upon identical lines was very great.

White worked for two years at the staff college. During the time which he spent in England, Brigadier-General Henry Wilson and Major-General William Robertson, who were to become two of the most prominent British leaders in the Great War, were commandants of the college. Two of his fellow-students were a certain Captain John Gellibrand, a Tasmanian who had entered the British Army and served in the Manchester Regiment, and Captain Duncan Glasfurd, a young Scottish officer of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, of whom more will be told in these pages. White's career at the staff college drew upon him the attention of the British authorities; his grasp was so quick, his intelligence so keen, and his personality so attractive, that in the view of some of his British superiors, it was a pity for his career to be wasted in a comparatively small service such as that of Australia. At the end of his course, while he was on his way home, the War Office telegraphed a request that he should be lent to it for a further period. The conditions of the offer made it particularly attractive, and for three years White was employed in lecturing and training regular troops and officers in the various divisions of England and Ireland. Australia nearly lost him through a certain strange incident, now almost forgotten, when, by reason of an absent-minded order at a critical moment in certain cavalry manoeuvres, a body of light cavalry met the Horse Guards in a charge, both at full gallop. White, who was attendant upon a senior cavalry officer, was riding a light polo pony ten paces ahead of the lighter line. He saw that his one chance was to find a gap in the apparently

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solid ranks which were thundering down upon them. For a moment it seemed hopeless; then a gap opened, and he flashed through it: the field behind was a litter of men and horses, and two soldiers lost their lives.

On his return from England White became Director of Military Operations, and, as such, was acting-Chief of the General Staff at the outbreak of the war. Australia was fortunate in this chance, for nowhere else but in this young officer's head, and in the plans drawn by him for common action with New Zealand, existed the scheme according to which the Australian Imperial Force was mainly mobilised.

From the outset White depended entirely upon his personality for his success. His view of his duty to the army and to his country was an exalted one—to do the work which lay ahead without giving a thought to the reward. If the work were well done, those who were responsible for its recompense would see that it was paid. If they did not—still, it was well done; and that was the only reward which a man of any proper pride or patriotism would seek. Sooner than ask for promotion, he would go ragged. Never during the war would he so much as raise his little finger to solicit the distinctions which might have come his way. Where he was wanted, there he would be placed by other hands than his, and in that position he would serve his nation to the utmost of human power, with full service, pressed down and overflowing. Other methods were used, obviously and often successfully, during the life of the A.I.F. Their success no more affected White than the tide affects the rock round which it swirls. More than one among the leading Australians who served with him, feeling himself at some time overlooked or subordinated to the general interest, took heart from this example. "If it's good enough for White, it's good enough for me," was an argument heard more than once when self-interest prompted a different attitude.

An extraordinary personal charm served White in place of the thrust which brought many soldiers to the front. But behind it he possessed rare qualities both of brain and character, which combined to make his genius instantly recognisable. He took a lightning grasp of any problem, whether of organisation or tactics. He realised the question in one
illuminating flash, and his mind was at work upon the broad lines of the solution when most men would still be painfully accumulating the facts. His sense of proportion was absolutely sure. When once his intellect grasped the subject-matter, it discarded the unessential points and went directly along the broad highway of what was vitally important. The points which it held steadily in view were the essentials. When some unit commander was slow to see them, White would patiently hold him to them, explaining them again and again, but never allowing himself to be diverted from the main issue. His pleasant manner often hid his strength from the casual observer. In the position of Chief of Staff to his commanding officer, from which he was never released throughout the war, it was not his business to make the final decision. His duty was to present to his chief the alternatives, together with his own opinion upon them, in such a way that the general himself could readily decide. Yet the number of times during the war in which White acquiesced in a decision which he believed to be wrong was infinitesimal; he almost invariably swung his superiors to his view. With his inferiors, on a matter of principle, he was inflexible.

From the moment when he joined General Bridges, White's usefulness as a staff officer was so manifest, and the subordination of his own personal interests to the work of whatever general he was serving was so complete, that after the days of training he seldom came into touch with the men or even with the officers, except the seniors. During the training in Egypt he forced himself to make time for a certain amount of work among the troops exercising in the desert. The few simple lucid expositions which he gave to officers and men of various units with whom he met on these rides through the desert valleys were never forgotten by those who heard them. He had known how to deal with men. At the end of the South African War the troopship *Drayton Grange* sailed from Durban with insufficient preparation. Over a thousand time-expired Australians had been crowded between the decks by the authorities, who were afraid of them ashore. When mutiny broke out among these troops, it was young White, who, as ship's adjutant, was called upon to go down into the troop-decks among the men and face them. Every time
they had promised to toss him in a blanket when he came; and every time, when the young officer confronted them, they forbore.

Such was the man who, first as the right hand of General Bridges and afterwards as that of General Birdwood, was more than any other the moulder of the Australian Imperial Force. The men of the force knew little of him. When great folk came to Australian Headquarters, White was always in the background. His name was seldom heard. Yet in the height of his influence, during the dreadful winter of 1916 in France, there was not an activity in the Australian force which he did not control. During that time, when the difficulties of the A.I.F. were greatest and its sufferings most acute, every branch of the force—engineers, quartermaster-general, transport, supply—came to him for decisions, for the reason that his quick grasp and his sympathy in their enterprises ensured something being done. Not only the operations but the organisation of the force were inevitably referred to him. In the press of this work not a day passed but he found time in it to lend his help by some kindly action completely outside his special function—to smooth the way for a Comforts' officer organising coffee stalls in the mud area; to think out some problem of canteen transport; to help some overworked man or officer to his English leave; to support the Official Photographer in some difficulty with the British Intelligence Staff; to assist in getting Australian artists to the front for the sake of their country's record, or to promote some Christmas souvenir for the men to send to their people at home.

Of White's influence on the operations of the Australian Force in certain critical actions, and on the organisation and reorganisation of the A.I.F.—which was more his work than that of any other man—the tale will be told later. His ability raised him, against his will rather than by reason of it, to be the Chief of Staff of a British Army. Towards the end of the war his name was often mentioned as that of the next Chief of the General Staff in France, had any misadventure removed the distinguished officer then holding the position. He was ambitious, and an admirer of much in the British Army methods if properly carried out, but no inducement on earth would have tempted him to leave
his own country’s service. “I would rather remain a sergeant in the Australian Army,” he said, “than be a field-marshal in any other.”

For the second officer on the “operations” side of his staff General Bridges chose a major of the British Army who was in Australia on loan to the Commonwealth Forces as Director of Military Training. This was Major Duncan Glasfurd, of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, one of the two officers mentioned above as having been at the staff college at the same time as White. Glasfurd was an able officer with a profound knowledge of his profession, capable of brain, slow of thought but sound of judgment, and possessed of the hard pluck of most Scottish folk. He retained to a remarkable degree the freshness of a Scottish schoolboy, simple, enthusiastic, completely devoted to duty. He had been wounded in South Africa, and had served in every part of the world. In Australia his work had been largely the inspection of the cadet training. He was warmly enthusiastic concerning the Australian boy, and was much dissatisfied with the dull perfunctory training administered by many of the temporary area-officers, some of whom were entirely lacking in the necessary qualities of character, while all were overloaded with clerical work. The training of the 1st Australian Division at Mena Camp was largely supervised by Glasfurd.

For the third officer on the “fighting” side of his staff (known technically as the “general staff”) the General selected an Australian officer then in England—Major Thomas Albert Blarney. Blarney, like many other leading Australian officers, had begun his career as a schoolmaster. He was a man of very quick intelligence and exceedingly definite in his views. He had lately passed through the Staff College at Quetta, in India, where he completed a brilliant course; afterwards he had been attached to various regiments on the North-west Frontier. At the outbreak of war he was in England, attached to the Headquarters of the Wessex Territorial Division, for whose yearly training he was preparing the camps when he was summoned by telegraph to join General Bridges’ staff in Egypt.

For head of the Adjutant-General's side of his staff, which deals with the promotion, discipline, appointments, and status of the soldier generally, General Bridges took the then Adjutant-General of the Australian Forces, Colonel Victor Sellheim, who had a reputation for ability which had followed him since his days as a schoolboy at Brisbane Grammar School. Colonel Sellheim also controlled the Quartermaster-General's section of the staff, which was responsible for stores, ammunition, and transport. In this department his chief assistant was a senior officer of the Australian Forces, Lieutenant-Colonel W. G. Patterson. Patterson broke down under the trials and worries of the Landing, and the work fell upon the next officer in this branch, Major Cecil Henry Foott, an officer of great ability who was to become one of the notable figures in the Australian Imperial Force. Foott was a Queenslander who had received a classical education at Toowoomba and Brisbane Grammar Schools. He was a man of educated tastes and fine intellect, and cared like a father for whatever men came under his charge, determined that at all costs they should be properly supplied. Officers of the Lines of Communication, living palatially in the mail-steamer Aragon during the trials of the Gallipoli campaign, or in comfort at Alexandria, more than once learned in Foott's own language what was his opinion, when obstacles which he thought unnecessary were placed in the way of exhausted or wounded men from the Peninsula. When war broke out, he was in England, attached to the staff of the Southern Command, after having gone through a staff college course.

Captain W. J. Foster, also a Queenslander, an officer far too capable of handling men to be wasted on the work actually allotted to him, was Camp Commandant and principal A.D.C. For his Chief Accountant, Bridges asked for the appointment of a senior officer, late Paymaster in Victoria. The foundation of a vast system of pay and accounting, and also great financial decisions calling for an expert in high finance, really depended

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upon the officer chosen for this post. The official in question did not eventually sail with the force. Despite its devotion, the small staff which was taken was soon hopelessly overloaded with matters entirely outside the routine. This fact, together with the absence of special advice in complex matters of finance, was partly responsible for the confusion—of which the precise details were never publicly known—into which the financial system of the Australian Imperial Force subsequently fell. As ordnance officer in charge of supplies of arms, clothing, and equipment, Bridges appointed Major J. G. Austin,\(^\text{10}\) the British officer who had lately been lent by the War Office to inculcate a modern military system into the ordnance branch in Australia. In charge of the divisional train (the horse and waggon transport which accompanies a division and distributes supplies to the units, as distinguished from motor transport companies which bring the supplies to the division) he placed a British officer who had been lent to organise the Australian transport, Captain Jeremy-Taylor Marsh.\(^\text{11}\) A British officer similarly serving in Australia, Major G. C. E. Elliott, R.E.,\(^\text{12}\) was appointed as chief engineer on Bridges’ staff.

For the head of the medical staff of the 1st Australian Division\(^\text{13}\) there was chosen a well-known Melbourne surgeon, Colonel Charles Ryan,\(^\text{14}\) who had served at Plevna with the Turks. At the same time there accompanied the force in a vague position, as Director of Medical Services of the A.I.F., Surgeon-General W. D. C. Williams, an Australian who had made a reputation as an organiser in the South African War, and who had since built up the Army Medical Corps in Australia. In a "young man’s war" years were rather against both of these officers, and Ryan was far

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\(^\text{10}\) Brig-General J. G. Austin, C.B., C.M.G. A.D.O.S. 1st Anzac Corps, 1915/16; subsequently Chief Ordnance Officer, Havre, and afterwards I/c Royal Army Clothing Dept., London; b. Barbados, West Indies, 20 June, 1871.


\(^\text{13}\) The official title is "Assistant-Director of Medical Services."

more interested in the professional side of his work than in administration. The officer who before the end of four months was at the head of the medical services of the division, and within two years was in almost complete control of the Australian medical services outside the home country, was Lieutenant-Colonel Neville R. Howse, V.C., who returned from the New Guinea expedition only just in time to obtain leave to sail with the 1st Division as supernumerary medical officer. As the chief of his artillery Bridges selected an officer of the militia who had recently returned from England, where he had been pursuing an enthusiastic study of the science of modern field artillery. This was Colonel J. J. Talbot Hobbs, an architect of Perth (Western Australia).

Two other officers of the original 1st Divisional Staff must be mentioned for the sake of the part which they played later. At the outbreak of war the Secretary of the Military Board, which controlled the Australian Forces, was a civil servant who had entered the service of his country in 1886 as a gunner in the Victorian Permanent Artillery, Honorary Captain T. Griffiths. Born in Wales, he had come to Australia at a very early age, and was a man who knew military procedure, routine, and organisation as did few soldiers. General Bridges, determined to take him, first appointed him to his general staff and afterwards to the somewhat vague office of "military secretary." A distinction, not yet fully understood, existed, as was mentioned above, between the particular units of the "A.I.F." and the "A.I.F." itself. Griffiths quickly became identified with the staff of the "A.I.F." (the War Office, as it were, as distinct from the staffs of brigades, divisions, and so forth). Within three years he was one of the great figures in the Australian Army.

In Tasmania there was at this time an apple-grower who had been nursing a young orchard at Risdon. He was a Tasmanian by birth, of a pioneer family, and had served as an officer in the British Army, until his battalion—the 3rd of the Manchester Regiment—was disbanded under Lord

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Haldane's scheme. He refused to accept the loss of seniority which the authorities offered him as a condition of his continuing in the British service, and came out to his native island with a small pension to try his luck upon the land. This was Captain John Gellibrand, who, as has been already said, was with White and Glasfurd at the staff college in England. Gellibrand was a highly-educated man, with one of the brightest intellects—in the opinion of some who knew him the brightest—in the Australian Imperial Force. He had fought as a company officer at the Relief of Ladysmith in 1900, and in Gallipoli and France was one of those officers whose bravery was conspicuous even according to the standards by which gallantry was judged in the early days at Anzac. He was a tremendous worker, and was possessed of a humour, a quick understanding of men, and a standard of quixotic honour, which fascinated every Australian youngster who worked under him, and which made him the finest trainer of young officers that the Australian Force was to know.

Gellibrand was unconventional in the extreme, and even after he became a general he wore the same clothes as his men. His tastes were entirely healthy and entirely Bohemian. He was a direct speaker of the truth, never whittling down a fact or mitigating the sharp edge of a report to please a superior. "There comes a day in the life of all young officers," he used to say, "when a superior will ask them for their opinion. If the youngster gives an answer which he thinks will please, he is done; he is useless. If he says straightly what he thinks, he is the man to get on." It was a constant wonder, to those who knew in Gellibrand one of the best and ablest officers in any army within the experience of the Australians, how a man with these qualities and with staff college training could have been allowed—much less almost compelled—to slip out of the British Army. It was standing evidence of the hopeless defects in a system under which staffs were often appointed on the principles of a hunt-club. Gellibrand did not play polo; he was not a good rider; he had no skill at games; he kept largely to himself; he read voraciously. Men of this type found it no easy matter to achieve success in the old British Army.
Immediately on the outbreak of the war, this retired British army captain volunteered his services to the military authorities in Tasmania, but met with some difficulty in obtaining employment. His existence there, however, was known to his old fellow-student at the staff college, Colonel White. White obtained Bridges’ leave to send for him. A few days later there appeared at Headquarters in Melbourne a farmer, who apparently had come straight from his work in the paddocks. The crumpled soft collar showed evidence of heavy work. The clothes were such as a boundary rider might wear upon his daily round. General Bridges looked up, with obvious surprise, when the newcomer was brought into his room. After a few questions and answers the visitor was shown out. “Umph!” grunted the general to his Chief of Staff. “So that’s your friend!” With obvious doubts he took him. For some days the unkempt figure, going about its work in the barracks, caused a mild amusement to the clerks. Some officers, on finding him to possess fixed and very definite ideas as to the sea-carriage of troops and horses, were slightly contemptuous; some clerks, on being instructed to produce quick general estimates of figures in place of the details which they had been accustomed painfully to work out, regarded as an eccentric the officer who cut across all their notions of the right and proper. Yet there is at least one great battle now to the credit of the A.I.F. which, if ever a fight was won by a single brain and character, was won by John Gellibrand.