



ANZAC COVE.

Photo by Lieut.-Col. Millard.

DEDICATED TO

THE OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN
OF THE 4th FIELD AMBULANCE, A.I.F., OF WHOSE LOYALTY
AND DEVOTION TO DUTY THE WRITER HEREBY EXPRESSES
HIS DEEP APPRECIATION.

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FOURTH FIELD AMBULANCE

Shortly after the outbreak of War—after the first contingent had been mobilised, and while they were undergoing training—it became evident that it would be necessary to raise another force to proceed on the heels of the first. Three Infantry Brigades with their Ambulances had already been formed; orders for a fourth were now issued, and naturally the Ambulance would be designated Fourth Field Ambulance.

The Fourth Brigade was composed of the 13th Battalion (N.S.W.), 14th (Victoria), 15th (Queensland) and 16th (Western Australia)—commanded respectively by Lieutenant-Colonel Burnage, Lieutenant-Colonel Courtney, Lieutenant-Colonel Cannon and Lieutenant-Colonel Pope. The Brigade was in charge of Colonel Monash, V.D., with Lieutenant-Colonel McGlinn as his Brigade Major.

As it will be necessary from time to time to allude to the component parts of the Ambulance, it may be as well to describe how an ambulance is made up. It is composed of three sections, known as A, B, and C, the total of all ranks being 254 on a war strength. It is subdivided into Bearer, Tent and Transport Divisions. Each section has its own officers, and is capable of acting independently. Where there is an extended front, it is frequently desirable to detach sections and send them to positions where the work is heaviest.

As the name implies, the Bearers convey the wounded to the dressing station (or Field Hospital, as the case may be). Those in the Tent Division dress the cases and perform nursing duties, while the Transport Division undertakes their conveyance to Base Hospital.

It was decided to recruit the Fourth Field Ambulance from three States, A Section from Victoria, B from South Australia, C from Western Australia. Recruiting started in Broadmeadows, Victoria, on the 19th October, 1914, and thirty men enrolled from New South Wales were included in A Section. Towards the end of November B Section from South Australia joined us, and participated in the training. On the 22nd December we embarked on a transport forming one of a convoy of eighteen ships. The nineteenth ship — — joined after we left Albany.

Details from the Ambulance were supplied to different ships and the officers distributed among the fleet. Our last port in Australia was Albany, which was cleared on the last day of 1914—a beautiful night and clear day, with the sea as smooth as the proverbial glass.

THE VOYAGE

The convoy was under the command of Captain Brewis—a most capable and courteous officer, but a strict disciplinarian. To a landsman, his control of the various ships and his forethought in obtaining supplies seemed little short of marvellous. I had the good fortune to be associated with Captain Brewis on the passage from Colombo to Alexandria on board the — — and his friendship is a pleasant memory.

The fleet was arranged in three lines, each ship being about three lengths astern of the one ahead. The sight was most inspiring, and made one feel proud of the privilege of participation. The — — towed the submarine AE2, and kept clear of the convoy, sometimes ahead, then astern, so that we viewed the convoy from all points.

The day after leaving Albany a steamer, which proved to be the — —, joined us with C Section of our Ambulance. Signals were made for the — — — — to move ahead and the — — to drop astern, the — — moving into the vacant place. The manoeuvre was carried out in a most seamanlike manner, and Captain Young of the — — received many compliments on his performance.

Three days later a message was flagged from the — — that Major Stewart (who commanded the C Section of the Ambulance) was ill with enteric, and that his condition was serious. The flagship then sent orders (also by flag) "Colonel Beeston will proceed to — — and will remain there until next port. — — to provide transport." A boat was hoisted out, and Sergeant Draper as a nurse, Walkley my orderly, my little dog Paddy and I were lowered from the boat deck. What appeared smooth water proved to a long undulating swell; no water was shipped, but the fleet at times was not visible when the boat was in the trough of the sea.

However, the — — was manoeuvred so as to form a shelter, and we gained the deck by means of the companion ladder as comfortably as if we had been in harbour. Major Stewart's illness proved to be of such a nature that his disembarkation at Colombo was imperative, and on our arrival there he was left in the hospital.

The heat in the tropics was very oppressive, and the horses suffered considerably. One day all the ships carrying horses were

turned about and steamed for twenty minutes in the opposite direction in order to obtain a breath of air for the poor animals. In the holds the temperature was 90° and steamy at that. The sight of horses down a ship's hold is a novel one. Each is in a stall of such dimensions that the animal cannot be knocked about. All heads are inwards, and each horse has his own trough. At a certain time in the day lucerne hay is issued. This is the signal for a prodigious amount of stamping and noise on the part of the animals. They throw their heads about, snort and neigh, and seem as if they would jump over the barriers in their frantic effort to get a good feed. Horses on land are nice beasts, but on board ship they are a totally different proposition. One intelligent neddy stabled just outside my cabin spent the night in stamping on an adjacent steam pipe; consequently my sleep was of a disturbed nature, and not so restful as one might look for on a sea voyage. When he became tired, the brute on the opposite side took up the refrain, so that it seemed like Morse signalling on a large scale.

We reached Colombo on the 13th January, and found a number of ships of various nationalities in the harbour. Our convoy almost filled it. We were soon surrounded by boats offering for sale all sorts of things, mostly edibles. Of course no one was allowed on board.

After arranging for Major Stewart's accommodation at the hospital, we transferred from the — — to the — —. The voyage was resumed on the 15th. When a few days out, one of the ships flagged that there were two cases of appendicitis on board. The convoy was stopped; the ship drew near ours, and lowered a boat with the two cases, which was soon alongside. Meanwhile a large box which had been made by our carpenter was lowered over the side by a winch on the boat deck; the cases were placed in it and hoisted aboard, where the stretcher-bearers conveyed them to the hospital. Examination showed that operation was necessary in both cases, and the necessary preparations were made.

The day was a glorious one—not a cloud in the sky, and the sea almost oily in its smoothness. As the hospital was full of cases of measles, it was decided to operate on deck a little aft of the hospital. A guard was placed to keep inquisitive onlookers at a distance, and

the two operations were carried out successfully. It was a novel experience to operate under these conditions. When one looked up from the work, instead of the usual tiled walls of a hospital theatre, one saw nothing but the sea and the transports. After all, they were ideal conditions; for the air was absolutely pure and free from any kind of germ.

While the convoy was stopped, the opportunity was taken to transfer Lieutenant-Colonel Bean from the — — to the — —. There had been a number of fatal cases on board the latter vessel, and it was deemed advisable to place a senior officer on board.

On arrival at Aden I had personal experience of the worth of the Red Cross Society. A number of cases had died aboard one of the transports, and I had to go over to investigate. The sea was fairly rough, the boat rising and falling ten or twelve feet. For a landsman to gain a ladder on a ship's side under these conditions is not a thing of undiluted joy. Anyhow I missed the ladder and went into the water. The first fear one had was that the boat would drop on one's head; however, I was hauled on board by two hefty sailors. The inspection finished, we were rowed back to our own ship, wet and cold. By the time "home" was reached I felt pretty chilly; a hot bath soon put me right, and a dressing gown was dug out of the Red Cross goods supplied to the ship, in which I remained while my clothes were drying. Sewn inside was a card on which was printed: "Will the recipient kindly write his personal experiences to George W. Parker, Daylesford, Victoria, Australia." I wrote to Mr. Parker from Suez. I would recommend everyone sending articles of this kind to put a similar notice inside. To be able to acknowledge kindness is as gratifying to the recipient as the knowledge of its usefulness is to the giver.

The voyage to Suez (which was reached on the 28th January) was uneventful. We arrived there about 4 in the morning and found most of our convoy around us when we got on deck at daylight. Here we got news of the Turks' attack on the Canal. We heard that there had been a brush with the Turks, in which Australians had participated, and all the ships were to be sandbagged round the bridge. Bags of flour were used on the — —.

The submarine cast off from the — — outside and came alongside our ship. I was invited to go and inspect her, and Paddy accompanied me. On going below, however, I left him on the deck, and by some means he slipped overboard (this appears to run in the family on this trip); one of the crew fished him out, and he was sent up on to the — —. When I got back I found Colonel Monash, the Brigadier, running up and down the deck with the dog so that he would not catch cold! The Colonel was almost as fond of the dog as I was.

EGYPT

All along the canal we saw troops entrenched—chiefly Indians. This at the time was very novel—we little knew then how familiar trenches would become. At various points—about every four or five miles—a warship was passed. The troops on each ship stood to attention and the bugler blew the general salute. Port Said was reached in the afternoon, and here a great calamity overtook me. Paddy was lost! He was seen going ashore in the boat which took the mails. Though orders were out against any one's leaving the ship, Colonel Monash offered me permission to go and look for him. With Sergeant Nickson and Walkley I started off and tramped through all sorts of slums and places, without any success. Finally we returned to the water front, where one of the natives (a little more intelligent than the others) took me to the Custom House close by. One of the officials could speak a little English, and in response to my enquiry he turned up a large book. Then I saw, among a lot of Egyptian writing, PADDY 4 A.M.C. MORMON. This corresponded to his identity disc, which was round his neck. He was out at the abattoirs, where after a three-mile drive we obtained him. His return to the ship was hailed by the men with vociferous cheers.

On arrival at Alexandria we made arrangements for the disembarkation of all our sick, Lieutenant-Colonel Beach superintending their transport. We left soon after by rail for Heilwan, arriving after nightfall. A guide was detailed to conduct us to camp, and we set out to march a couple of miles across the desert. It was quite cold, so that the march was rather good; but, loaded as we were, in full marching order and soft after a long sea voyage, it was a stiff tramp. In the pitch dark, as silent as the grave, we stumbled along, and finally arrived at the camp outside Heliopolis, a place known as the Aerodrome.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sutherland and Major Helsham were camped with their Ambulance close by, and with most kindly forethought had pitched our tents for us. We just lay down in our greatcoats and slept until morning. Our Brigade was camped just across the road, and formed part of the New Zealand and Australian Division under General Sir Alexander Godley.

Training soon began, and everyone seemed full of the idea of making himself "fit." Our peace camps and continuous training at home look very puny and small in comparison with the work which now occupied our time. At manoeuvres the number of troops might be anything up to thirty thousand. To march in the rear of such a column meant that each of the Ambulances soon swallowed its peck of dirt. But with it all we were healthy and vigorous. As an Ambulance we practiced all sorts of movements. Under supposition that we might have to retreat suddenly, the whole camp would be struck, packed on the waggon and taken down the Suez road, where it was pitched again, ready to receive patients; then tents would be struck and a return made to camp. Or we would make a start after nightfall and practise the movements without lights; the transport handling the horses in the dark. Or the different sections would march out independently, and concentrate on a point agreed upon. It was great practice, but in the end not necessary; for we went, not to France, as we expected, but to Gallipoli, where we had no horses. However, it taught the men to believe in themselves. That period of training was great. Everyone benefited, and by the beginning of April we felt fit for anything.

We were exceedingly well looked after in the way of a standing camp. Sand of course was everywhere, but when watered it became quite hard, and the quadrangle made a fine drill ground. Each unit had a mess house in which the men had their meals; there was an abundant supply of water obtained from the Nile, so that shower baths were plentiful. Canteens were established, and the men were able to supplement their rations. The Y.M.C.A. erected buildings for the men's entertainment, which served an excellent purpose in keeping the troops in camp. Cinematographs showed pictures, and all round the camp dealers established shops, so that there was very little inducement for men to leave at night. A good deal of our time was occupied in weeding out undesirables from the Brigade. Thank goodness, I had not to send a man from the Ambulance back for this reason.

Apart from the instructive side of our stay in Egypt, the sojourn was most educational. We were camped just on the edge of the Land of Goshen; the place where Joseph obtained his wife was only about a mile away from my tent, and the well where the Virgin

Mother rested with our Saviour was in close proximity. The same water wheels are here as are mentioned in the Bible, and one can see the camels and asses brought to water, and the women going to and fro with pitchers on their heads. Then in the museum in Cairo one could see the mummy of the Pharaoh of Joseph's time. All this made the Bible quite the most interesting book to read.

The troops having undergone pretty strenuous training, we were inspected by Sir Ian Hamilton, who was to command us in the forthcoming campaign. Then, early in April, the commanding officers of units were assembled at Headquarters and the different ships allotted. Finally, on the evening of the 11th April, our camp was struck, and; we bade good-bye to Heliopolis. The waggons were packed and the Ambulance moved off, marching to the Railway Station in Cairo. Nine-thirty was the time fixed for our entraining, and we were there on the minute—and it was as well that such was the case, for General Williams stood at the gate to watch proceedings.

The waggons with four horses (drivers mounted, of course) were taken at a trot up an incline, through a narrow gateway on to the platform. The horses were then taken out and to the rear, and the waggons placed on the trucks by Egyptian porters.

We had 16 vehicles, 69 horses, 10 officers and 245 men. The whole were entrained in 35 minutes. The General was very pleased with the performance, and asked me to convey his approbation to the men. Certainly they did well.

TO GALLIPOLI

At midnight we left Cairo and arrived at daybreak at Alexandria, the train running right on to the wharf, alongside which was the transport to convey us to Gallipoli—the Dardanelles we called it then. Loading started almost immediately, and I found that I—who in ordinary life am a peaceful citizen and a surgeon by profession—had to direct operations by which our waggons were to be removed from the railway trucks on to the wharf and thence to the ship's hold. Men with some knowledge of the mysteries of steam winches had to be specially selected and instructed in these duties, and I—well, beyond at times watching a ship being loaded at Newcastle, I was as innocent of their details as the unborn babe. However, everyone went at it, and the transport was loaded soon after dinner. We had the New Zealand Battery of Artillery, Battery Ammunition Column, 14th Battalion Transport and Army Service Corps with us, the whole numbering 560 men and 480 horses. At 4 p.m. the ship cast off, and we went to the outer harbour and began to shake down. The same hour the next day saw us under weigh for the front. The voyage was quite uneventful, the sea beautifully calm, and the various islands in the Egean Sea most picturesque. Three days later we arrived at Lemnos, and found the harbour (which is of considerable size) packed with warships and transports. I counted 20 warships of various sizes and nationalities. The *Agamemnon* was just opposite us, showing signs of the damage she had received in the bombardment of the Turkish forts a couple of months before. We stayed here a week, and every day practised going ashore in boats, each man in full marching order leaving the ship by the pilot ladder.

It is extraordinary how one adapts oneself to circumstances. For years it has been almost painful to me to look down from a height; as for going down a ladder, in ordinary times I could not do it. However, here there was no help for it; a commanding officer cannot order his men to do what he will not do himself, so up and down we went in full marching order. Bearer work was carried out among the stony hills which surround the harbour.

Finally, on the 24th April, the whole armada got under weigh, headed by the *Queen Elizabeth*, or as the men affectionately termed