

# **Temporary Crusaders**

Cecil Sommers



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## TO MY DAUGHTER

BY the time you begin, to sit up and take notice, little Margaret, people will be referring to the time when "the war was on." You will not be old enough to remember how the men in khaki came back, and how in a few weeks they disappeared, and other men, strangely like them, but clothed in dull civvies and talking of shop office, took their place.

As you grow up you will find that the world in which you live is full of very ordinary people—the butcher, the baker, the man who comes to see about the drains, the gardener, and your father. It will be hard for you to realize that these men and the soldiers who fought in the war are the same. They are so very ordinary, aren't they? Everybody will be leagued against you to deceive you. Your grandmother, who is apt to sentimentalize, will tell you that Daddy was a Crusader. Fresh from reading the exploits of Richard Coeur de Lion, you will try to picture him in shining armour with a large red cross somewhere about him. And you will fail. Try to picture him bathing at Alexandria while the guns roar and thunder two hundred and fifty miles away.— Ah, I thought that would be easier. Books, too, will mislead you. The atmosphere in which heroes move is so much more enthralling—and profitable than the, stale tobacco of the ordinary man. Nor are you likely to get the whole truth by questioning the butcher or any of the other men of whom I have spoken. Distance lends enchantment to the view, and I am afraid that in ten years' time they, like the soldiers of Henry Vth, will "remember with advantages, the deeds they did that day."

This is a diary, written from day to day, in many queer places, at many peculiar times, of actual happenings. For this reason I have made no attempt to rewrite a portion that fell in with a German submarine off the North coast of Africa. Each of Napoleon's soldiers carried a Field-Marshal's baton in his knapsack, though few found any use for it. We do not carry this article nowadays, nor is any provision made for a copy of Baedeker. Therefore if on any question of higher strategy or of antiquity I differ from your schoolmistress, please put your trust in her and not in me. Thackeray is said to have been satisfied if he could complete a page of *Vanity Fair* in a day. This book has been begun and ended in the brief confines of a short leave from France, and the Hindenburg line is no place for correcting proofs, so that if the literary merits of the one are in excess of the other, you will quite understand why this should be.

The butcher, the baker, the man who comes about the drains, and the rest of them, are all Temporary Crusaders now, whether they are in Palestine or France. But they are in every way the

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same men that you will know later on, and very ordinary men at that. Remember this, and when in days to come Daddy strafes Mummy because the porridge is burnt you won't be tempted to think to yourself, "How poor Father must have deteriorated since he was a Crusader."

## CHAPTER I

*November 24th, 1917.*  
FRANCE.

If the war has no other result, it will at least explode the myth that it is always fine in France. "'Struth, 'oo said sunny France? " came from behind me as we marched off the quay to-day. The same quay, the same mud, the same blasé sentry, as on that day almost three years ago when we first came to the wars. Slithering on the greasy pavé on the way up to the rest camp, I congratulated myself for the hundredth time on the good fortune which has decreed for me the land of milk and honey instead of the land of mud and shells.

The men are in fine spirits and determined to look on the bright side. "Dear Mother," wrote one lad in a letter proudly headed " Somewhere in France ... .. We had a pleasant voyage, and I was sick the whole way." Against such persistent optimism what can prevail? At the same time my draft of nineteen-year-olds really are enjoying themselves. To them the journey has that novelty which it no longer has, alas, for me, and they are positively looking forward to the seven days' journey in cattle-trucks.

A man in the mess told me this tale to-day. It is too good to forget. Such a thing could not have happened in our army. The censor would never permit it.

A German sentry had imbibed somewhat freely of the Hunnish equivalent for rum. To the dismay of his N.C.O. word was passed down the trench that the general was on his way round the line. What could be done to the bibulous Boche? Quick as thought that efficient N.C.O. produced a stretcher and laid the recumbent figure on it. The whole he covered with a waterproof sheet, just as the clicking of heels in the next fire-bay heralded the arrival of the Arch Hun. Round the traverse he came, strafing hard. His eyes lit on the silent figure under the waterproof sheet. Springing to attention, and puffing out his chest until the Iron Crosses upon it began to tinkle, he saluted, intoning in a gottlike voice, "I the noble dead, for their country sacrificed, do salute." From the improvised bier came an unmistakable hiccup. There were two courts martial in that regiment next day.

Half of this camp is occupied by Americans. They are the first that we have seen, and they look a good lot and very keen. Their officers are bent on picking up all the information that they can. One of them told me that what struck him most about the British troops in France was their lack of interest in the war. On the whole, it was a just criticism. A Yankee will walk a mile to read the war news. I am afraid that we hardly cross the street, for the same purpose. The first question an American officer will ask you will probably be, "What is the correct position for the second-in-command of a company in the attack?" whereas, " What hope of leave?" is the most ordinary opening of a conversation between two of us. It's a case of familiarity breeding contempt, I suppose.

I came to a bridge over the canal. Its approaches were governed by four men. On my right flank an American presented arms in the rather slipshod way they have. To the right front one of our "Red Hats" saluted smartly. Half-left an Australian Military Policeman—rara avis—sprang to attention. Close to him a French sentry slapped his rifle. Which was I to salute? I compromised by looking straight ahead. A Chinese Labour Company was repairing the road, along which came a string of waggons driven by negroes with gleaming white teeth. Down below, in the docks, German prisoners were busy unloading coils of barbed wire. I shouldn't wonder if they are beginning to realize that it's a world war.

One of the men, whose bump of locality is somewhat out of the ordinary, writes: "Dear Liz, We are thousands of miles from home, but don't you worry, I'm not having any truck with the black girls."

*2nd December.*

Much has been written about the habits of the troop train, but no words could begin to do justice to the numerous playful little mannerisms of ours. We have been travelling since dawn on Friday. It is now Sunday afternoon, and we are due in at midnight, but are seven or eight hours late. On the whole, we are having quite an amusing time, though sleeping six in a second-class carriage begins to pall after a time.

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The march over cobble-stones and a dead dog or two brought us to the entraining point just as the first rays of Friday's sun shone down upon the unloveliness of our train, a few dingy second-class carriages and the usual string of cattletrucks. We entrained without incident, and then as we weren't due to start for some time there was a rush for the coffee-stall. Imagine fifteen hundred men all trying to get coffee at the same time from one fair English maiden with one pair of hands. At first there is a great scramble of the new soldiers, determined to get a hot drink before they start. The veterans seize the best corners of their trucks, settle themselves down comfortably, and wait an hour or so. When they go for their coffee, standing in a queue is no longer necessary. By the time the train starts the stall is deserted, save for the damsel knitting behind the counter. As we pass to take our places in the train, we look at her rather wistfully. When shall we see an English girl again? A frantic tooting of tin trumpets arouses us from our reverie. The train is in motion.

We were due in at —, our first stop—the first recognized stop—at one o'clock. Two minutes before time we arrived. Our consternation was great. The next stop, just outside — should have been at 6.50. We reached it five minutes ahead of time. To be up to time in an eight-hour journey is unique. To our relief, however, the engine-driver played no more tricks, and when we arrived at 2 a.m.—five hours late—at —, we felt our confidence in him return. Since then we have been steadily increasing our lateness.

Saturday was not an exciting day. We stopped once in the morning for tea, and once again in the evening. We halted from time to time, sometimes to let a passenger train pass, sometimes to change engines, and often for no reason at all. The country through which we passed was fertile, without being in any way unusual. The inhabitants are much more stolid than the people in the north.

To-day, however, a great change is noticeable. Since we reached — we have passed through a fertile plain with high hills in the distance on either side. Vineyards stretch away to the foot of the hills, and every now and then a little grey stone village breaks the monotony. All the houses of any size are of white plaster with low red-tiled roofs. The olive-skinned peasants wave to us as we pass. British troops are not an everyday occurrence to them, and nowhere in France have our men been more cordially welcomed. At —, to our surprise, we were given footwarmers. and as we moved out of the station a cheer ran down the whole length of the train. Tommy can appreciate a kindness of that sort.

At another station there were scenes of enthusiasm when our train ran into the station simultaneously with a French leave train. The platform was crowded with civilians in their Sunday best. Our men offered the French soldiers bully and biscuits, and were in their turn given coffee and cognac. Irishmen talked B.E.F. French to dear little things in furs and tall Paris hats. Both of them seemed to like it. Men from Glasgow explained to staid matrons of Tarascon the superiority of the Scotch over all other races, the French presumably included. The English, less quick at making friends than their Irish and Scottish brethren, smiled approval and ventured an occasional "Bong jour." Into the midst of this scene of fraternization steamed a long troop train bound for Italy. The mud of Paschendale was hardly dry on the wheels of the limbers. From the hell of Ypres to the doubtful joys of a winter campaign in Italy is a far cry. The best of luck to them.

The chief amusement on the train is cooking on my primus. Up to date it has proved invaluable, and we have cooked on it coffee, tea, mushroom soup, chocolate, and ration biscuit pudding, besides grilled sardines and fried sausages and bacon. All these have been done in the same tin, which is beginning to take on a peculiar taste of its own, as there is not sufficient water to wash it.

The sun is sinking behind the dark blue of the hills. The sky is pale mauve, and in the foreground is the brown expanse of the bare vineyards. A castellated château shines white through the deep green velvet of the pine forest. The peasants are plodding homewards along the grey roads, and at home—but what's the use of talking of home.

*Monday night.*

This needs some believing. For several miles our course lay along the banks of a river. As we tore along we could watch pieces of driftwood catch us up and flow past to the sea. A man, wishing to stretch his limbs, broke all regulations and hopped out of his truck. It was very misty, and after a time he lost sight of his train. Nothing daunted, he hurried along the line, and at last spied a van disappearing into the fog. He gave a sprint and caught it up. When he had settled down again he noticed that the men in his truck were not the same as before. He had



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overtaken the train that left twenty-four hours in advance of his! Or so they say!

During the last lap of our journey no train could have been too slow, for the scenery through which we passed was very grand. The railway runs along the sea coast, at a height of perhaps three hundred feet from the level of the sea below, now along a wonderful terrace cut out of the sandstone cliffs, and now over immense bridges from which you look down on little inlets or ravines covered with spruce. The Mediterranean lies at your feet, blue as the Southern Seas of fiction, and away in front you can just make out the bay with its great port.

Yesterday one might have been in Spain, to-day Italy. We came to an unofficial halt at a low white-walled house this morning. In the garden grew palms, and for the first time we saw cactus growing on the bank. Leaning against the wall, their figures silhouetted against the blue of the sea, were three girls, dark skinned, black haired, Latins of the Latins. It seemed hardly believable that they were of the same nation as the ungainly farmers of the Pas de Calais. One of them "clicked" with a gunner, and after five minutes they had arranged to be married in Upper Tooting "après la guerre!" Can there ever be an "après la guerre"? Was there ever a time before the war?

The train ran us right into the docks, and rumour had it that we were to embark right away. But rumour is a lying jade, and we are sampling the delights of still another rest camp. We arrived just as the sun was setting, blood red, over the purple cliffs, To-morrow we sail.

*December 9th.*

### THE MEDITERRANEAN.

Anything more peaceful than our journey up to date cannot be imagined. Not a single periscope has so far disturbed the almost glassy stillness of the sea. Would it were ever thus.

It is surprising how commonplace the Great Adventure becomes after three years. Lunch, a short march, a gangway, and you are playing bridge in the saloon of your transport. Indian waiters in long stiff white coats and blue cummerbunds, and the most absurd little white hats—the sort you would give to a child of three—perched rakishly on their heads, serve you with drinks. Lascars run about the deck with bare feet and curious clothes, chanting monotonously as they heave at a rope. It is all very novel, but somehow one does not feel very excited.

At the rest camp at Havre I was the object of more salutes from the Americans than many a major-general, and I should have suffered from swollen head had I not found out in time that it was my tartan trews and not myself about which they were so intrigued. One morning down at Havre I was a bit doubtful which tram to return by to the camp, so I asked an American Military Policeman if he could tell me.

"Which tram for the camp?"

"Which what?"

"Which tram?"

"What?"

"Tram?"

"Say, do you mean street car, sonny? Well, I guess the next will take you right there."

Up at the camp I had been sitting in the mess—a large hut—for some time, when the extraordinary diligence of the three men who were painting the ceiling struck me. The British soldier is not celebrated for his ardour in such jobs. On closer inspection they proved to be German prisoners. On their heads they wore the usual little pill-box. They were clothed in rough cloth of good quality with a blue circle let into the trousers, and a P.G. sewn on the back of the coat. This worried us at first. We could not make out the significance of P.G. One suggested "Prussian Guard," and another flippant soul declared for "Paying Guest." The sentry put an end to the argument by telling us, with that contempt which the learned sometimes have for their weaker brethren, that P.G. stood for "Prisoniere dee Gaire."

We are very fortunate in our boat, a fine fast passenger ship of fair size, and only a few years old. To officers, with a proper bunk to fly to whenever the weather is rough, the boat doesn't matter so much, but as far as the

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men—packed like sardines all over the ship—are concerned, a good sea—worthy boat and a fine crossing are of the greatest importance. So far we have been fortunate on both counts.

As we were having lunch on Wednesday some one noticed that the shed opposite our berth was moving. A glance through one of the port—holes showed us the Assistant Military Landing Officer strolling home to his billet, and two negroes, laughing over their dinner, perched on the gangway which they had just removed from our boat. That was the way of our going—three men on the quay, not one of whom was the least interested in our departure. We no longer rush to the deck to watch the receding land, but just sit down again and make a choice between roast goose and Bengal curry.

It's hardly the sort of send—off one would expect for Crusaders. Would Richard Coeur de Lion have been satisfied with it, for instance? I wonder if he had to wear a life—belt. If so I should have liked to see him in one of the aesthetic monstrosities in which we now live. Behind us a lump of cork which catches you in the nape of the neck. In front there is a great chest protector of cork, and just where the whole show ought to end there is an outcrop in the form of another slab of cork, giving you all the appearance of a flag—seller with a collecting—box, or a hawker complete with tray. We look very silly in them, but if we were done in by Fritz I suppose we should feel more stupid without them.

From my porthole, when I shave in the morning, I can see a thin grey streak. At lunch—time it is still there, and when the stars shine at night they shine on the same grey streak in the same place—just opposite my cabin. It is not until you take up a glass and have a good look that you notice the men standing at the guns. At the mast flies the Rising Sun.

We have on board a detachment of the Egyptian Labour Corps, going home after the completion of their engagement in France; a bunch of chattering children in tattered khaki. This morning at boat stations, looking down at them, as they stood tightly packed together, while the O.C. ship made his tour, I would have given a lot to drop a penny down and see the result on their discipline. Off parade they are kept in order by a Military Policeman of wonderful appearance. A fez sits on his woolly hair. His face is coffee coloured and smiling. In his hand a large stick, which he uses unsparingly. His tunic started life as an ordinary drill one. It is anything but ordinary now. His legs are encased in a very old—though at one time ultra nuttish—pair of officer's breeches, much too small for him. On his bare feet are a pair of enormous boots without laces. When he wishes to chase anybody he steps out of his boots. They are simply there for effect.

Land is in sight ahead, and I have hopes of getting ashore.

*December 10th.*

No luck. We have not entered the harbour, but have anchored in a bay close to the island. Over the crest of the island we can see the domes of mosques, and slender white towers. In our own bay we have a small village of flat white houses, straight out of Chu Chin Chow.

Last night as we leaned over the side of the boat we could hear the fish rise below us, so calm was it, and could see them moving about in the deep blue water. The stars were very bright, and we talked of home.

*December 11th.*

IN MY BUNK.

And we thought that the Mediterranean was a well—behaved sea. Oh!

If there is one type of man I hate, it is the aggressively cheerful blighter who comes along and slaps you on the back and tells you, rubbing his hands together, that this is the sort of weather for him. It gives him such an appetite. Oh!

We resumed our journey under unfavourable circumstances yesterday afternoon. There were many absent faces at dinner—time. At least, so I am told. I only know of one for certain. Oh!

The worst of lying here is that you begin to imagine things. To the *mal de mer* tainted mind each door that bangs is a potential torpedo, each raucous shout of merriment from on deck a cry to stand to the boats, each bell

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rung for the waiter, or more probably the steward, the alarm signal. One comfort we have. It does not matter much if we do die. Oh!

*December 13th.*

To-day we can laugh at our infirmities of the last thirty-six hours, for there is hardly a ripple on the sea, and the sky is blue once more. Ahead of us a long line of buildings can be seen, though we are still a long way from shore. A motor launch has just rushed up to tell us that all is clear, so we have cast aside our life-belts with a sigh of relief. Down below the Gyppos are "making fantasie," a sort of can-can performed by two of them while the rest crowd round and clap in time with the very tuneless song that they sing. They are in the last stage of excitement at the idea of setting foot once more upon their native land. For them the war is over.

The news that Jerusalem has fallen reached us at breakfast to-day. I think most of us felt a little disappointed, as we had all hoped to take part in its capture. To be able to say "I was first into Jerusalem" would be a proud boast. I wonder if there will be as many claimants to "First into Jerusalem" as there were to "Last off Gallipoli"?

I must get up on deck now and see the sights. The pilot and his boat are being tugged out, and we shall soon be entering the harbour.

*December 16th.*

YEOMANRY BASE DEPOT.

It is Sunday afternoon, and I can imagine the people at home sitting by the fire with a book and trying to keep warm. Here am I, in the shade of a tent, my coat off and my face bright red, as the result of two days in the sun. The glare from the sand and from the endless succession of white tents is so great that I have to screw up my eyes to see properly all that is happening. Along the stretch of sand between the tents and the dusty metalled road a procession of camels is passing, their long, graceful necks swaying from side to side. The blue-robed escort lend a touch of colour to the scene. Lorries rattle past, some of them fitted with iron tanks and used as water-carts. A rotund Egyptian, a caterer or contractor of some kind, urges a donkey of no great stature into a trot. A squad of the Egyptian Labour Corps march along, singing as they go, and from the direction of the canal comes a batch of blue uniformed Turkish prisoners, their day's work done. Soldiers by ones and twos, or in formed bodies, pass and repass, those newly out from England noticeably pink and white compared with the bronzed veterans. A carrion crow flies lazily overhead, and wagtails hop about in the sand at my feet quite without fear of the British soldier. From a Y.M.C.A. close by come the strains of "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Away in the distance a line of palm-trees stand out clear against the blue sky, and the black funnel of a boat passing along the canal.

We landed on Thursday afternoon. From the deck we watched the Egyptian dock hands getting up our gangway; there must have been at least a hundred and fifty of them to do the job of a dozen. By the time we were ready to march off it was almost dark. Our way lay through the docks and whole streets of cotton warehouses until we came out into the native part of the town. It was just like I stepping into Chu Chin Chow with the lights turned off. Gyppos squatted on door-steps smoking and talking, veiled women went by carrying bundles on their heads, erect and stately with silver anklets jangling as they walked. Here and there an Arab stalked along, head erect and arms crossed on breast; street sellers shouted their wares in musical tones, and barefooted, curly-haired little boys darted about everywhere. Gradually we reached a richer quarter with brilliantly lighted shops. Every one seemed to be talking at once. From the confused babel one sentence rose clear, "Thooms oop, I says to him, thooms oop, lad." The pavements were crowded with all sorts of people, and there was quite a fair smattering of soldiers on pass. The buildings become more and more pretentious. Through the square we went, and then along the sea front until we reached the trams which were to take us several miles out to our camp.

On Friday we were ordered up the line to our disappointment, for we had hoped for a few days to see the town. However, two or three of us just managed to get in for an hour or so, and went to the Army Post Office for letters; but there were none. We had tea at the window of an hotel looking on to a square, the best tea I have had for a long while. I have fallen very badly in love with Alexandria, and could have stayed at that window for hours

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gazing at the new scenes. You feel that you are in quite another world, a world of veiled women—some of them, alas, wearing coloured silk stockings and high-heeled patent leather shoes—of incredibly small donkeys pulling very large loads, of the sherbet vendor with his gaily bedecked brass urn, of grinning urchins trying to sell you the *Egyptian Mail* for thrice its proper price, of pompous red-fezzed merchants and of picturesque beggars, a world of new sounds, new colours, new customs, and new smells. And before we had time to take in a hundredth part of it a troop train whisked us away and landed us on the banks of the canal at five in the morning, a very cold and cheerless hour. As the bridge was "broken," we had to wait for some time; and, shivering, we watched the sun rise red gold behind the palms. Silhouetted against the fiery glow a ship floated past, a bright white light at her bows. A string of camels slouched along the embankment, as silent as the dawn itself. They were followed by a platoon of Egyptian soldiers, straight off the lid of an Abdulla cigarette box, accompanied by two donkeys carrying most of their kit. A dhow drew near, gliding along with its graceful tapering sail pink tinted by the dawn. From the bank an early fisherman cast his circular net. A bugle in the distance blew the *réveillé*, and the first lorry of the day crossed the bridge. We followed its example.

To my surprise I was ordered to report to the — Base Depot, where I learnt that I am now attached to a dismounted yeomanry unit turned into a de-kilted Highland battalion. A bit of a mixture.

This camp is a very large one, and quite devoid of any attractions save those afforded by the Y.M.C.A. and other kindred huts. What the men would do without them it is hard to say, and the officers' club—opened a day or two ago by Lady Allenby—is a great refuge against boredom. In it you can read or write, or just talk, sitting in comfortable arm-chairs, or you can have a large and "bon" tea for three piastres. The waiters are Gyppos in long white robes with red sashes. I don't know what the proper word is for the Egyptian costume, but it much resembles a long night-shirt with a tendency to a bell tent near the bottom. Sometimes it is closed at the neck, at others it is left open to display a sort of embroidered waistcoat beneath.

There is a good deal of difference in the food out here. Butter, milk and vegetables all seem very scarce; but, on the other hand, eggs and fruit, especially luscious oranges, are plentiful, and jam made of figs or dates has novelty at least to recommend it. Rations are much the same as in France, except for the large number of Australian rabbits—I have had rabbit for three meals in the last two days.

On Tuesday I expect to go up the line, and by Christmas Day I shall probably be "keeping watch by night" like the shepherds of old.

## CHAPTER II

December 19th.  
THE PROMISED LAND.

The road to Hell was paved with good intentions. The road to the Promised Land is paved with bully beef. tins—bully beef tins, orange peel, and here and there a nibbled biscuit. For mile upon mile our victorious army can be traced by the litter of tins. The beef corners of Chicago have written their names across the desert of Sinai.

Very wonderful were the trucks in which we did the journey, large and without sides. Overhead a flimsy wooden roof had been roughly constructed to keep the sun off. "Lucky it seldom rains here," remarked one of our number, looking at the sky through the cracks in the roof. Five minutes later the first drops pattered down upon it, found the cracks and came through. Soon it was pouring, and we were attacked from every side as well as from the faulty roof.

Unfortunately, the only part of the truck that could be called waterproof was the floor, and soon twenty-two officers and twenty-two valises, not to mention twenty-two "marching orders," were floating about. The whole size of the floor was twenty-one by eight feet, so you can work out how much room we each had. The men were thirty in a truck, but, of course, with no valises; and soon they disappeared altogether under their shining waterproof sheets. I managed to build myself a little shelter in one corner with the aid of two bootlaces, but the drips off it ran down off to my legs. Luckily the rain cleared after an hour or so, and left us to contemplate the desert. Anything less inspiring I can hardly imagine, a succession of undulating sandhills and greyish gorse-like scrub. The only really interesting objects were a few deserted gun-pits, relics of the time when the Turk was going to turn us out of Egypt. Since then he seems to have adopted most thoroughly the *reculer pour mieux sauter* strategy.

Darkness came on, and at nine o'clock we reached a station on the coast. The men had tea at a canteen, and we put away omelets at the rest camp, where one of the waiters brought back memories of home—his belt had started life as the braid round the bottom of the seat of a L.N.W.R. carriage. Much fortified, we settled down to spend a very cold night in the train; nor were we disappointed.

Just after dawn we ran into Gaza, the scene of the battles; and from there onwards we passed through fairly fertile, though still sandy country. On every side there is evidence of the Turkish retreat, particularly in the form of ammunition dumps. Parties of refugees met us, their hastily gathered household goods loaded on uncomplaining little donkeys. The women no longer wore veils or were clothed in black. In appearance and dress they might have come straight from the pages of the Old Testament. Ploughing was being carried on in the flat sandy plains, the plough, a wretchedly primitive wooden implement, the team in most cases a couple of oxen preceded by a blasé camel, who walked along ahead oblivious of the lowly use to which he was being put. The result of the ploughing is a miserable little scratch.

Mud villages and orchards were left behind on either side, the latter protected by thick hedges of green-grey prickly pear. Endless camel convoys swung along in the same direction as ourselves, side by side with motor-lorries and little Ford cars.

We have reached railhead and have to march for three days. Even then we shall not be there. Railhead is a collection of tents that moves forward every day. When you start for it no one knows where it is. You just go on till you come to the end of the rails. By to-morrow afternoon trains will go on a mile or so further.

December 23rd.  
JUDAEA.

It's a "hell of a war"! During the last four days I've marched many weary miles through the mud, a dishonest native has stolen my pack, containing everything I need, the bread issue has been sat upon by the camel which brought it along, it's raining hard, and the rain—well, I'm glad I was told I was coming to a dry climate.

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Nevertheless, I've seldom felt more contented than I do at the present moment. The cause of my content is a mess tin full of the most abominable tea, two packets of biscuits—the solitary stock of the farthest-up Y.M.C.A.—and a tin of ration jam. They say that war deadens the senses, at any rate it enables one to appreciate little things like food and sleep, which at other times are taken for granted.

The stubble fields through which we have been marching were not improved by the rain, and it has been a very wearying trek. However, you feel that at last you are taking part in a war, as opposed to the mutual slaughter competition in France. Here, at any rate, there is the war of movement so long hoped for.

We have been passing through flat country, great stretches of cultivable land, and every three or four miles a mud village with its cactus-fenced orchards. We have only come across one road so far and we were glad to be off it, it was so rough. Away on our left stretch sand-dunes, and on our right the Judaeian hills grow closer every day. Up there we hear of winter conditions, and stone houses, rocky goat tracks, and nunneries. Down in the plain we are marching through the pages of the Bible. Every evening we have bivouacked outside one of the villages, and though the villages themselves are out of bounds, a walk round it generally provides one with a good idea of the inside; distance, I think, lends enchantment to the view. From the outskirts everything seems delightful. At close quarters it probably would smell a good bit. Up and down the narrow streets go the figures of two thousand years ago: old men in flowing robes, and bright headdresses, white bearded and patriarchal. In five minutes you can pick out Isaac, Abraham and Jacob. Little children make mud-pies round the prehistoric waterwheel, or gaze from behind the folds of their mother's dress at their strange new khaki-clad friends. Women in brightly-coloured rags come down to the well quite unhindered in their pace by the pitchers which they carry on their heads, pitchers of true Biblical shape. One woman in her long loose dress of blue, with broad red stripes running down the length of it, wore round her head a yellow scarf, but in place of a pitcher she carried a shining ration biscuit tin full of water. This tin and the battered shrapnel helmet with which one kiddie was making a castle of mud, were the only two signs of the civilization of this twentieth century. Outside the village walls in a shady corner was the market-place. Here all sorts of uninviting food were being sold: beans, lentils and flour of more than one kind. The vendors sat on the ground, their goods displayed before them on flat round trays. A yoke of diminutive oxen plodded patiently through the throng, followed by a little boy carrying the wooden plough. Round another corner of the wall we came to the rubbish heap. It also dates from the time of the Old Testament.

Whenever we approach a village on the line of march hosts of boys and old women run out with oranges. You can buy a dozen Jaffa oranges for less than sixpence. "Orinjis," they cry, "quais orinj is. Bigwong."—"Oranges, very good oranges. Big ones." They have begun to learn English already.

One day I had a long talk with an A.S.C. officer who was following us with a convoy. He was able to tell me much about the place where we are bound, and according to him I ought to spend Christmas in Kirjath Jairim! He was taking up Christmas comforts to a division—chiefly cigarettes. Of all war's changes can anything be more revolutionary than that which transforms Father Christmas with his fur coat, sleigh and reindeer, into a benevolent old temporary 2nd Loot in the A.S.C. riding on a mud-stained hairy at the head of a column of G.S. waggons, with Gyppo drivers in sun hats with pink scarves, through the plains of Philistia?

Yesterday we met a batch of several hundred Turkish prisoners who were being escorted down the line by Indian lancers. The Indians seemed to like the job better than the Turks. About the same time there caught us up a squadron of French African Cavalry, fine looking men on splendid white Arab chargers. They looked very picturesque beside our drab infantry. Bersaglieri waved to us. from their encampment under a couple of cypress-trees, and dusky West Indians were busy sinking a well. All along the way the Egyptian Labour Corps were at work. "Baksheesh Johnny," they shout. As they straggle back to camp from their work on the roads, these happy-go-lucky fringes of the British Army clap their hands in time with the high-pitched monotonous chant of their foreman, and join in the inevitable chorus Kam lealo, kam yaum." —"How many days, how many nights," till the end of their engagement. Another of their songs, in Arabic of course, begins, soloist, "Here comes the British master." Chorus, "Bring whisky, bring soda."

I'm getting quite a vocabulary now. "Buckshee" has for so long been in the army vocabulary that its parent "baksheesh" needs no learning. "Mungaree" means food, and "Mafish" corresponds to "Nah Poo." "Imshi Yalah" means that you no longer require the presence of an importunate orange seller, and "Stana" will cause a picturesque old man on a donkey to stand still long enough to have his photo taken. "Isma" means "Come here," and if repeated often enough generally has some effect. That seems to be quite enough to get on with.

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We are resting to-day preparatory to another two or three days of marching. There is a light railway—left behind by the Turk in his haste—but that is not for the likes of us poor infantry, and anyhow it gets washed away every time it rains.

What a war. I had pictured myself either in Cairo or Alex. spending Christmas convivially and becoming acclimatized. Up in the mountains where we are going they seem to have snow and rain on alternate days. It will be quite like home again.

*December 27th.*

We've been marching about all over the place trying to find our brigade, which is doing a show somewhere.

We reached this place on Christmas Eve and bivouacked on a ploughed field. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were the most ghastly days I have ever spent. It started to rain in the evening, and went on for twenty-four hours. The only change was when it poured. Two of us made a bivvy of stones and our solitary waterproof sheet, in which we were moderately wet, and then some one walked right into it and doused us with much water from the sheet above. As I stood in the mud at 4 a.m. with no one to love me, I thought out these very morbid lines

Roar out, roar out, proud guns,  
Screech over plain and hill,  
Glad tidings to mankind  
"Peace and on earth goodwill."  
Howl out your joyful news.  
No mourning requiem.  
"The Saviour of the world  
Is born in Bethlehem."

My valise had disappeared entirely under water when the morning came, and we had to march, after a long wait for the wretched slithering camels, about ten miles over a sharp metalled road—through grand scenery, by the way—all uphill. The road was very uneven and inches deep in water at places. Sometimes the road crossed a wadi, and then we waded through up to our knees. At other times the stream ran down the centre of the road. We halted every quarter of an hour until the water in our boots became so cold that we had to go on. The camels were falling out all along the roadside, some of them dying of exhaustion, some of exposure, and others slipping in the mud and tearing apart in between the forelegs where they are very weak. We were too miserable to care much. We reached our destination only to find that the brigade had moved. However, we got a billet for the night; for the men a large building—quite dry—and for ourselves a tent, with its floor under water, but we managed to get stretchers to lie on, and that was all we wanted. Next day we returned, but this time in empty lorries from the supply dump, and the view was wonderful; right across the mountains you could see away as far as the sea coast. Our journey of the day before was a mistake, as our brigade had moved to another part of the line.

We are waiting at the place where we got our soaking; but tents have come up now, so we are all right, and it is fine and our things are dry again. I could hardly lift my valise on Christmas Day, it weighed so much! Everything here just at present is very primitive except for an old Roman Monastery. The hills are forbidding, rugged and barren except for olives and a sort of prickly heather. Huge grey boulders cover the higher peaks, and every now and again a roughly hewn cave in the sheer mountain side. Down here there are ploughed fields, some vines, figs and orchards, but no prickly pear. I have not seen an orange growing yet, though they only cost a piastre for six.

We go on again to-morrow, but do not know when we shall reach the battalion.

Our Christmas dinner consisted of half ordinary rations and an issue of about an ounce of Australian butter—all the jams and that sort of thing come from Australia, and are very good, generally either peach, quince, or melon and ginger.

The different means of transport here are extraordinary. Train, light railway, lorry, caterpillar, Ford—the new

## Temporary Crusaders

"ship of the desert"—horse, mule, camel, and the wonderful little Eastern donkey, about eighteen inches high. The Fords are simply marvellous.

*December 29th.*

I am with the battalion at last, or, to be more accurate, with the few details left behind during the show which they are doing. We go up to join them almost immediately.

The conditions here are very different from what they are in France. You cannot even begin to compare the two. Here up in the mountains you send a company to take a ridge, where in France several divisions, and no end of artillery, would be needed. It is quite wonderful how we have advanced through such country at all.

Roads, even the new ones being made, are four or five miles away, and everything comes up on camels, mules or donkeys. It is just one hill after another, very steep and with great gullies in between, all right during fine weather, but running streams in wet. There are no billets at all, but every man carries a bivvy sheet. Two of these put together make fair cover for two men. All the hills are covered with great boulders out of which sangars are made for defence, and they are also used, I believe, for rolling downhill at the oncoming enemy. It is all very primitive.

Last night I slept in a cave on the hillside capable of holding about 500 men, but so frowzy that except in very bad weather people only use just round the entrance. You climb almost straight up to it from the wadi at the bottom, where most of the men have their bivvies. Among the rocks grow pretty magenta orchids. In the mouth of the cave there was a fire with men cooking round it, their figures silhouetted against the moonlit, though cloudy, sky, and you could see the next ridge, where there has been much fighting, half a mile or so across the gully. On the side of it were the sparkling camp fires. It was most picturesque.

We had a march of seven or eight miles up here yesterday, first of all through a village and past a fine-looking monastery. Then the road fizzled out, and we trekked over cultivated land and by olive trees until we reached this wadi.

I am afraid we are getting beyond the orange sellers, who are a very present help in time of trouble. However, it is extraordinary the way they appear and produce oranges from nowhere. Yesterday I got five huge ones for a piastre, they were each the size of a small melon. So far my impression of Palestine centres round a Tommy resting on his pack by the roadside eating oranges, while a string of camels passes behind him. No blue sky in the picture though.

Since Christmas Day the weather has been fine but, by Jove, no one who was out here on Christmas Day will ever forget it. Rumour has it that you are not allowed to swear in the Holy Land. I am afraid that order if it was ever made was not kept on Christmas Day. The Turk is very much worse off, I believe, both as to food and clothing. Our men, though they do not look smart, have plenty of clothes and enough food. The Turk is in rags. No one out here now despises army rations. Bully and biscuits are the staff of life, and you can generally get tea and sometimes sugar, Ideal milk and dried dates. On the whole it is a very pleasant life.

If you are near Jerusalem you can sometimes get leave to go in and see it. They say that there are hotels open there, but they are forbidden to sell you bread, and so you have to take your own ration biscuits with you in your pocket!

I am writing this in the mess, a bit of open ground walled round about three feet high with stones. Outside the camels are grunting hard, as they always do when they are being loaded. And the wee donkeys! I believe they are the only form of transport that can get up far along the mountain tracks. You can imagine the shepherds living here in Bible times with the rocky caves as their homes.



## CHAPTER III

*December 30th.*

I am sitting here on the top of one of the highest hills in Palestine. It, and the village, which bares, thinly disguised, a very well known New Testament name, were taken about twenty-four hours ago by—so I heard one of them say—five men! John Turk has "imshied" again all right, and the line is well on ahead of this.

We came up yesterday. It was a most extraordinary march—men, camels, mules, horses and donkeys in single file going along goat tracks up and over precipitous hills, down wadis luckily dry, through olive groves and clumps of fig-trees, and occasionally an orchard or small vineyard. There are a few stone huts and every now and then a well. Sometimes we passed signs of the morning's fight, shell-holes or a dead Turk, shrapnel balls lying among the fig-trees, or a little pile of spent cartridges. At times we were in sight of the Turk, or rather we could see our own shrapnel bursting over the hill-tops on which they were making a stand. On the rocks grow narcissus, and white clematis, orchids and humble daisies.

We reached the battalion about midnight, and found it in extended order, waiting to carry on with the advance. There was a good deal of rifle and machine-gun fire going on, and it was very difficult to get one's bearings. The line was stretched across the middle of a great saddle of rock, covered with scrub and huge boulders, and bounded on both sides by a deep ravine, falling away almost perpendicularly for fifteen hundred feet. This, of course, I did not know at the time, but found it out on our way back later. There was a quarter-master-sergeant going up and down the line, giving out boots to some of the men of his company, and as far as that goes all the men seemed to be in need of new ones. The weather and the country through which they have been advancing has absolutely destroyed the soles, and of course no supplies are yet up as far as this.

The enemy had to be driven off the whole of the ridge across which we were now straddled so that we could obtain a jumping-off place for another advance; and after a time the order was given to push forward. By dawn there was no sign of Johnny on the ridge, though he took a good deal of persuasion. The fighting was of a very confused nature, as is natural on a dark night over such ground. If you don't look out after you've climbed several stone walls and forced your way through a cactus hedge or two, you will find yourself advancing in any but the right direction. The rattle of machine-guns, the surprised shriek of a ricochet, sudden cries in many tongues, the crash of bursting bombs, staggering figures of men coming past with dripping half-seen bandages, and in the morning our scouts were looking across at the village of B——.

Machine-guns were brought up and trained on the mud and stone huts of the village, in which from time to time a Turk would show himself for a moment. Between us and the enemy the ground fell away abruptly, for a thousand feet or so, almost a sheer drop, into a dried-up wadi bed. The village which we were to take stood on top of a hill higher even than that on which we lay, and the ascent was very steep, and made more difficult by crumbling stone terraces and small cliffs. But nothing could stop the men. From the word "Go" they were up and away downhill, jumping, scrambling, rolling even, and before the enemy had time to open out properly with his machine-guns the attackers were down in the dead ground below, tattered, bruised, and panting, and reorganizing for the final assault. One sergeant-major, not wishing his company to lose their rum issue, carried the jar over the top with him, and is said to have tripped about a hundred yards from the bottom, but rather than drop the precious vessel, he used his body to shield it in a long swift roll over stones and brambles. He certainly looked battered after the show.

Our machine-guns, from the pushing-off point, directed a hail of fire on the village, covering the advance, and making the enemy keep his head down. Our men began to climb the height, still in dead ground, and when at last they came in sight of the stone walls they went in with the bayonet with such dash that few of the Turks thought it worth while to wait. There was a certain amount of hand to hand fighting though, in which our men, panting and sweating after their extraordinary climb, managed to get the best of it, and in a short time it was all over, except the rather risky house-to-house search. An hour later eighty prisoners, including two German colonels, were on their way to the canal, and there was a steadily increasing heap of captured material, including seven brand new German machine-guns, and a beer bottle—empty—with a Constantinople label.

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Other divisions have closed in on either side of us, and are carrying on the pursuit. Our part of the job is finished, and we shall probably be going down into the loot-hills for a rest. As I have not yet been posted to a company, I took no active part in these operations, which was just as well as the fighting is of such a different nature here that one needs to look on at first.

*January 5th.*

There has been no chance for me to do any writing lately. We stayed on the hill for several days, days which were chiefly remarkable for the sunsets. We were about 3000 feet up, and could see practically the whole of Palestine; behind us Jerusalem and the Tomb of Samuel, and away below to the west the shining sands and white Jaffa. With a little imagination you could see Gaza. It is fine to look out above clouds at the sun setting over the sea which does not seem to be more than a few miles away, though really it must be well over thirty miles. Clouds below, purple hills gradually dwindling in size, the vivid sand and occasional patches of green in the plains.

On the 1st of January we marched out as straight as possible. At first we went along a passable sort of track obligingly built by the Romans 2000 years ago—I wonder if the Censor will pass that; perhaps the enemy has not heard about the Romans being here—and then up and down precipitous hills. Each hill is in terraces so that you have a drop of three or four feet, and then a ledge the same breadth covered with scrub and loose stones—oh, Lord, those loose stones. The rocks are slippery at most times, but when it starts to pour, and there is a thin slime of mud over everything, they are horrible.

And New Year's Day was almost as bad as Christmas Day for rain. How we got down a single one of the hills I don't know. It all has to be done in single file, and if you are in the rear you seem to be on the run the whole time. I was at the rear. The company pack—mules were behind me, and I was certain that sooner or later one of them would slip and fall on me. We went about eight miles as the crow is reputed to fly, equivalent to twenty as the P.B.I. climb and stumble, and reached an olive grove where we bivouacked for the night. It was pouring hard, but three of us managed to find a half-hidden and almost dry cave, and by sleeping in our wet things we were dry again when we started to march the next morning. That march brought us to a pleasant enough hill sheltered from the rainy side—the west—and here we are installed among the rocks for a rest. As long as the weather remains good we are happy enough, and will be able to get on all right even if it does rain. From my bivvy I look over a broad plain, with an occasional olive grove and village, to the hills a few miles away, and in the morning watch the sun rise from the warm vantage ground of my flea bag. When the wind is in the right quarter the gentle breezes waft to us the far from pleasant atmosphere of the Old Testament Ajalon. It is a very ordinary, squalid, dirty village now.

I am the proud possessor of a Tommy's tunic and great coat, so no Turk can snipe me. The men are getting fitted out again after their three months of fighting. During the fighting they had to put up with what they could get, and when anything wore out it was just a case of doing without. The only sort of equipment which is found round here is fig leaves, and that is considered inadequate nowadays in the army.

I want to get at the people who told me I was coming out at just the right time of year. The other day, when we were in bivvies and the rain was pouring down on them and through them, the sergeant-major brought round an urgent message: "Officers visiting hotels in captured territory are not to register their names or units."

On the third I was sent with fifty men to report to the A. P. M. of a place near here, and when I got there was sent on to some villages where there had been trouble. A lot of spies had been captured in some caves armed with modern German rifles, dynamite, etc. They had also collected a quantity of Government property. For two days we stayed with the H.Q. of a camel transport company in an orange grove, living in the lap of luxury for these hard times I actually had some cake and chocolate—and searching the caves and villages round about. All the bedouins had cleared out, but we took a good deal of stolen stuff from the villages, camel fodder, and sacks, blankets, coats, equipment, etc., a lot of Turkish arms and ammunition, and the inhabitants' fire-arms—a weird collection of old blunderbusses, flintlocks, and cast-iron pistols.

It was very interesting going through the houses, though the stench and filth were horrible. In each house or hut live a family and a mixed collection of cattle, donkeys, dogs, sheep, and occasionally a camel. The houses are made of mud and straw and are never repaired. It is quicker to build a new house. Up in the hills the places are

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built of good stone held together by a plaster of straw and mud, with a brushwood and plaster roof. The women are tattooed with dirty blue spots which give them a diseased look. Some are nearly white, some, descendants of slaves, are pitch black. The atmosphere is one of flying chaff and fleas. They knead the most filthy-looking bread, on the floor, with their hands or feet, and cook a sort of spinach in earthenware pots. Most houses have a store of olives, kept very often in English tobacco tins. We came across a bundle of Turkish notes exchangeable, I believe, at about thirteen per cent. of their face value. One house was evidently the draper's, as there was a quantity of the canvaslike embroidered cloth the women wear. At a distance you can always tell a man from a woman by the load which the latter is sure to be carrying. In one house there was a swarm of bees. At night no one will leave the villages on account of the jackals, which make no end of a row.

*January 8th.*

All goes on much the same as usual, heaps of rain and a little sun; but, thank heaven, our bivvies have proved absolutely watertight, so we have just lain in them and listened to it coming down. On the whole I think we are very lucky to be out resting, as there is no doubt that this is the worst month of the year, and when we get back to the line it should be comparatively all right again. On three days this week there has been more than an inch of rain.

There was a thanksgiving service in Jerusalem on Sunday, and I tried hard to get to it, but only one officer was wanted, so I did not get the chance, for which I afterwards offered up thanks in my bivvy. It was a simply brutal day. They had to start at 3 a.m., and returned about 9 p.m., or twenty-one hundred as it is called out here, quite soaked and with a conspicuous lack of the thanksgiving spirit. Anything less devout than their opinion of the day can hardly be imagined. They could not get a meal of any sort in any of the hotels, except for one egg! While S—— was eating his egg a soaking and irate brigadier entered. On being told there was nothing to eat he paced up and down, shouting "Damn! damn! damn! damn! damn! damn!" and then rushed out of the room, to return a quarter of an hour later with a five-pound cheese. He set it down before him and pulled out from his haversack a very minute quantity of bread, "the unexpended portion of the day's ration." Soon every one, at his invitation, had dug out their little bit of bread or biscuit, and was tucking into the cheese!

I have been working for the last day or so at a cookhouse for the company. We have shelved out a large soft rock on the hill until it is quite a cave, and have dug right down under the lee of it, so that the cooks can get along in the wet without actually being in the driving rain, which puts out their fires and makes them just about as miserable and wet as they can be. It is wonderful how they do manage to get something done, and as for the officers' mess cook he is quite a marvel, and seems to be able to make a fire out of water and mud. We have a company mess, and our food consists of rations, a few eggs and oranges purchased locally, and occasionally a parcel up from Cairo, but these are very irregular, and arrive at most unexpected times. We have got some potatoes for lunch, and cook promises us potato cakes. One of my jobs is O.C. Mess, so I've got to do the best that can be done with our frail resources.

*January 9th.*

I was told this story to-day. It may be true. A very smart signalling sergeant in charge of an instructional class had the brilliant idea of arranging at the start of every lesson some long word like "hypotenuse." When any officer came round he would signal this word at great speed and on being asked what the word was, "hypotenuse" would shout the class in unison, though probably not one of them had read it. All went well until "influenza day". Along came the general. "Influenza" signalled the sergeant frantically.

"What was that word, sergeant?"

"Influenza, sir."

"Come here, lad"—to one of the class—"What was that word? "

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"Er—er—tonsillitis, sir."

Many of the streams here are infected with a deadly germ which bears the name of its discoverer, Dr. Bilhartz. He must be sick now to think that his researches have been most beneficial to the British Army out here. This bug kills one within seven years, and all water has to be tested before it is used, but it is very difficult to get Tommy to take any precautions. The seven years during which the germ is eating one away seem too indefinite for the poor infantryman. He is becoming accustomed to reckon life in terms of stunts, rather than years.

They say that some time ago the Ordnance opened an officers' repayment issue store well up the line. These stores theoretically provide officers with anything, from a bootlace to a mess—tent. Ragged and tattered officers from all parts of the line managed to get down to it with many commissions to execute for themselves and their pals. After an advance like that on Jerusalem most of your clothes are left hanging in shreds on the rocks. When they reached the store it was only to find that owing to transport difficulties it contained nothing except silk scarves.

Palestine air seems to be driving me to poetry. I sat down with a view to writing something for the middle page of the Times, but on consideration I have decided to write it down in this diary instead.

There was an old man of Jerusalem,  
Who habitually used to bamboozl 'em  
By selling our men  
the fruit of the hen,  
At three times the price that he should sell 'em.

The more one sees of the inhabitants of Palestine, the less one loves them. Mark Twain says somewhere that he could never understand till he came here why, in the East, men kissed each other. He realized later that it was because no one would ever want to kiss the women. The inhabitants are commonly reported to be starving, and a healthy fund has been raised at home for the famished population. One rather doubts the need of it, except perhaps in Jerusalem, and there one hears that no sooner is the flour doled out to the poor than they sell it back to the local food profiteers. In the country the people make a precarious living by scratching the ground with a prehistoric plough, made of a sharpened tree trunk. At least they did before unlimited possibilities of acquiring wealth became theirs with the advent of the brave new Crusaders. Now they sit on the ground with an oily smile, and dish out oranges, figs, almonds, and eggs, at about nine times their value. The family generally consists of one father complete with donkey, slightly larger than a fox terrier, to ride, six or seven wives—unless he can acquire a camel, which is both cleaner and more pleasant to look upon, and does more work than half a dozen wives—and a large collection of offspring, which go by the name of "bints" and "waleds."

The children are cleaner than their parents, but that is because washing is with them the same as vaccination with us, an ordeal to be borne once in seven years. The women wear dirty blue overalls patched with any sort of rag. From their ample bosoms they produce oranges, onions, or dud change with complete lack of shame. The men are clothed chiefly in fodder sacks bearing the tell—tale inscription "A.S.C. Supplies," but some of them still wear the national costume, a dirty night—shirt covered by a still dirtier blanket, with a skull—cap on their head wound round with a coloured sash. They look very dirty editions of the race which inhabits the illustrations of old Bibles. The habitations of these unfortunate beings are made of stone and mud, and are infested by camels, oxen—small size, horrible hags, and myriad insects, large and small—chiefly small. Those who are not blind are mostly deaf, dotty, or dead. With a cold you can smell a native down wind at fifty yards. A village can be located by the same method at any distance up to three miles. For the rest the customs of the people do not seem to have changed much since Old Testament days.

*January 27th.*

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I am sitting writing this to the familiar splash of the rain, but really the weather has been simply topping—for a whole fortnight the sun has been shining steadily. However, yesterday, clouds. beautiful flaky white ones, kept coming over against the wind, and to-day the sun is gone and the preliminary showers of the next wet spell are beginning to fall.

There is a great shortage of matches. No parcels have come up yet, and the ration issue recently was one box of matches per brigade per three days. In the early morning one company's cookhouse would light a fire with their match, and from all parts of the brigade area men would run with dry sticks to get a light for their own fire. Candles are unknown, and we have to turn in directly daylight goes—about 5.30. There is nothing else to do.

### THE CAMEL TRAIN.

A convoy of camels brings up the rations to the outpost line in the Judaeaan hills.

Gurgling, grunting, gliding, swaying,  
Careful pick your way,  
Up the steep and stony wadi.  
What's come up to-day?

Is there any tea or sugar,  
Dog biscuit or bread,  
Bully from the Argentine or  
Cow but lately dead?

Have you brought us plum and apple,  
Apricot, or honey,  
Succulent Maconochie or  
Australasian bunny?

Are those swaying wooden cases  
Perched up on your hump  
Cheddar cheeses fit for H.Q.,  
Or a suction pump?

Have you any sides of bacon?  
Have the candles come?  
What about the baccy issue.?  
Have you got the rum?

What about some ration Woodbines?  
What about some grease?  
Puddings, Xmas, plum," or sago,  
Beans or dried green peas?

But no matter what you've brought us  
What we all need most  
'Tisn't grub and 'tisn't water.  
Have you brought the post?

We possess a mess—tent now, an ordinary belltent, which we have made very comfortable. Inside there is a semicircular trench making a rounded table in the centre, and on the pole is a fine wire candlestick and an oatcake tin, fashioned into an ash-tray and orange—peel holder. Just outside the door is a flower—bed made by myself and my batman, with "C Company Mess " in white stones and many beautiful orchids. Unfortunately the mess cook

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will insist on making additions to the flower-bed, and he never manages to get hold of the whole root. We cannot remove his dead plants for fear of offending him.

C—— and I spent three whole days in making ourselves a house, two-feet six high, and about seven by twelve, of stones, and when the bivvy sheets are up we can all but stand erect in the middle. The building was no end of a job, as the walls had to be two foot thick or so before they would stand up. First of all, we outlined the inner sides with big stones, and then filled in between with little ones, and the same with the next layer, and so on until we were high enough. Our corner stones we rolled down from some distance, and they must each weigh between one hundred and fifty and two hundred pounds. When the whole thing was done we covered the outside and the top with a gorgeous slimy plaster, made out of a sort of chalky lime and water. That was a messy job, as we put it all on with our hands, having no trowel or anything like one. We got quite professional at chucking it on in true masonic style, but we were queer sights when it was done—hands all covered with white slime, face, hair and clothes speckled all over with it, and boots the colour of tennis shoes. The sun is supposed to bake it hard, but I don't know whether it has had time to do so, and so we are sitting and waiting for the first sound of falling stones. If the worst comes to the worst we have the mess tent to fly to. In front of the sleeping apartment we have another flower-bed, with the regimental crest in white, surrounded by topping red anemones, which we persuaded to leave the wadi one moonlight night with the aid of an entrenching tool. Some of them have not recovered, but the majority are fine.

During the building of the house we unearthed all sorts of queer animals under the large stones. You have to turn the stone over and have a good look at it before you lift. There may be a scorpion sticking to it, brutes of things, but easily killed. And the spiders! On hot days the lizards come out of the clefts in the rocks and bask in the sun, but if you come too near them they are down into their holes like lightning. They vary in size from a tadpole to a small crocodile. Some of them were blown up when we were blasting rocks for the company cookhouse, huge great chaps, great-grandfathers no doubt.

Shorts are no longer, on account of mosquitoes. It is a bit of a nuisance, as they are far more comfortable than anything else. The men all wear Salonica shorts, which are practically slacks slit up both sides to the knee, buttoned up by day, and allowed to fall by night. They don't look bad turned up, and are very useful, but now they have to be worn down they look dreadfully sloppy.

*February 3rd.*

We own a tame chameleon, picked up by D—— when he was out road-making, or stone-picking as it is more commonly called. He is just waking up from his winter sleep, and at present is not keen on eating, which is just as well, as there are no flies to be had. He changes colour most obligingly, and becomes greyish, greenish, khaki, brownish, or yellowish, according to his surroundings. So far we have not tried him with the tartan test, to see if he will bust. The only man here with tartan trews won't lend them for the purpose. He can grip with his tail or any of his feet, which look just like spanners. He makes no end of a fuss if any one interferes with him, hissing just like the cistern of a bath, and rolling his eyes. His eyes are covered with a film of skin, and there is just a wee pin-prick through which he looks at you. They can turn right round so that he can see his spine or mouth at will, and as the two eyes don't work together the effect is weird. He may be looking at you with one eye, and at something else in an opposite direction with the other! In the desert the men used to wear a live chameleon on their helmets, almost as part of their equipment. They kept the flies away so well.

The Devons had their sports yesterday, just outside the camp. There was one or two novel items, including blindfold platoon drill and a Lewis gun competition, but the huge event of the day was the series of races for the villagers. All the inhabitants of the village, from the Sheik down to the youngest kiddie able to toddle, came to watch the sports in their best clothes, and each event was explained to them by the interpreter. In the middle of the performance came a sprint for baby "bints"—girls—and then a race for "waleds"—boys under 14. Finally, there was the "old waleds'," or veterans', race. I shall never forget patriarchs sprinting along, in all their flowing robes, through two lines of cheering Tommies. Greybeards all of them, and so pleased with themselves. The leader fell over his robes about five yards from the winning-post, and came down an awful smack. The boys got awfully excited and chattered like a lot of monkeys while they were running, but the baby bints were the quaintest. The

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oldest of them—who was scratch—directly the starter had left her to place the wee ones farther along, began to cheat by moving forward inches at a time until caught at it by the Sheik, who smacked her. Whereupon many tears. The wee—est bints in the very front all decided to hold hands, which spoiled the race from an athletic point of view.

*February 10th.*

We have had five days of pretty steady rain, and last night beat all records. I am sure there was an inch of water covering the whole hillside as I came home from dining with B Company. Luckily my drainage system worked so well that all the water from the rocks above was collected in a roaring stream, which rushed past the entrance of home, but did not leave a drop behind. Though it does rain so fast here, there is one thing about the weather, it isn't vindictive, and there is never any sulking. Either it rains—sometimes you can see clouds coming at you from three different directions—or the sun shines.

Directly the tap is turned off out comes the drying apparatus, and everything becomes normal again except for the roads frequented by traffic. They say the rain either goes on for four days or for fourteen or twenty-four, and the 4th, 14th and 24th are the worst. It's like the old joke about the first seven years of the war being the worst and after that every third year.

We have been down to Junction Station to be cleansed. All our blankets and clothes have disappeared into the capacious maw of the "delousifier," an old Turkish disinfecting machine discovered there when we captured the place. It came as a bit of a shock to find the Turk possessed such a thing, but the man who works it told me it was inches thick in rust. At this spot Samson made love to Delilah.

A story too good to be true is the following. At a musketry class the instructor asks, "Any one know what's meant by the Triangle of Error?" "Yes, sergeant, it's the three-cornered red flag carried behind the brigadier."

Stone picking is becoming a very strenuous job these days, and has to be carried on in wet weather, as Allenby's coming along soon, and I suppose, if the road is nice and broad and smooth, somebody expects to get a D.S.O. as, the fruit of our labours. Anyhow our tasks have been doubled, and as all the stones near to the road have long since been used, it means a long trek for each basketful. It's not a bad way of spending the day, either. There are two sorts of roads here. Stone roads, and stoneless ones—both are made by the infantry. If you are sent to a stoneless locality you can bet your life on having to make a metalled road, and vice versa.

## CHAPTER IV

*February 20th.*

This is the first entry for ten days, but I have been waiting until I had seen Jerusalem, and the visit was postponed more than once, owing to the camp there being flooded out.

However, I started off at last on the afternoon of the 14th in charge of a party of fifty men and half a dozen officers. We marched along to a rest camp on the main road, and next morning very early boarded lorries taking supplies through Jerusalem. The first part of the journey I had walked under very miserable circumstances on Christmas Day, so it was not new to me, but one can appreciate things a bit more riding on a lorry in beautiful sunshine.

Just outside the camp we passed an important bunch of wells, round which poplar and cedar-trees grow. Indian cavalry were watering their horses here. There was a vineyard close by in which an occasional almond-tree had just come out into blossom. The road winds along beside a wadi, through undulating country of no great interest. A well at the side of the road is said to be Job's well, but there are three of them that I know of within a radius of five miles, so you never can tell. First comes a picturesque khan at the side of the road, and directly after that the hills close in on both sides, but I have described that part of the journey once before. The only difference is that now the red and mauve and white of the rock flowers and the green of the foliage cheers up the prospect considerably. We climbed up to the place where I stayed on Christmas Day the resting-place of the Ark of the Covenant—and, from this point on, the journey is a series of almost precipitous descents and steep ascents. At one point there is an extraordinary stretch of road with six hairpin bends, starting at the top of a hill and ending only about a hundred feet lower. All along the road the population is engaged in carting stones under the supervision of Egyptian soldiers. The women carry baskets of stones on their heads to the road, the boys break them up, and the men for the most part look on and talk.

Down in the valley on our left we saw a line of trenches taken by the West Somersets, and up above a hill system taken by the Londoners.

Then round a bend and down into the village where John the Baptist is said to have lived. Two or three miles farther on we came to the camp, just on the outskirts of the town, a few tents in a little walled-in orchard. We had some lunch and started off.

Coming in from the west there is no "first view of Jerusalem" at all, as the road is pretty flat, and you arrive without noticing that you are arriving. White modern buildings, mostly schools, hospices, and the like, become frequent, and it is not until you get well into the suburbs that you first see the Holy City—that part of the city which lies within the walls. Everything outside the walls is modern. No map of modern Jerusalem will give any idea of how far the suburbs stretch; on the west for two miles, and on the north for about a mile. We managed to get a pass for the walled part, and went inside just to have a look round. It was most interesting to me, as it is really the first Eastern City I have been in. The main streets are partially covered in, and on either side are the shops, holes in the wall, with a booth in front of them. There is a separate neighbourhood for each sort of shop: at one place butchers' shops, with all sorts of cooked and uncooked meats; next door the vegetable market, full of beautiful cauliflowers, oranges, lemons, huge radishes—eaten about the same size as a beetroot—pumpkins, turnips and all that sort of stuff. Others are full of dried figs, dates, the pulp from the wine presses—used as jam—grain, almonds, raisins and round leatherlike sheets made of dried Damascus apricots. Others go in for eggs, goats' butter, and a curious sort of liquid cheese made of goats' milk, yeast and mint. The sweet shops display huge trays of sticky cakes all baked in one and cut off by weight, toffee made chiefly of almonds and seeds, and all sorts of queer messes. Bread shops, shoemakers, odd shops, and all sorts of rubbish shops.

All along the streets pass Arabs, bedouins and Sudanese, Syrians, Jews and dagoes of all sorts, an occasional British, Indian, Italian, French, Egyptian or Australian party of khaki or blue-clad sightseers. The Jews are the queerest to look at—the really select ones. The rabbis wear long blue or black or purple velvet robes, and a sort of fur-trimmed toque. Others wear black and a very broad-brimmed black felt hat with a long curl of hair falling down in front of each ear. There are priests of all sorts and sizes in all sorts and kinds of get up and an occasional



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green turbaned holy man. The Mohammedan women walk about in their long clothes of black, brown or purple, with a black or flowered veil right over their faces. I wish the others would follow their example. We turned aside to the Jews' Wailing Place and were lucky enough to catch them in the act, as it was a Friday. I am not going to describe why they wail, or in fact any of these things that can be read much better in a guide book.

We sampled most of the queer messes in the bazaar, generally giving the man a piastre or two baksheesh for what we took. About 4.30 everything seemed to be closing up, so we came out at the Damascus Gate and went to the Hotel Fast—appropriately so named these days—for tea. Tea in Jerusalem these days means just what it says—tea, unless you bring your own eatables with you. We are forbidden to eat native bread, as the local food profiteers were starving the population and selling bread to the troops at about 500 per cent. profit. The red and white wine of the country is good and cheap and, comparatively speaking, everything you get is quite reasonable, souvenirs particularly so.

After tea we went to quite a good concert party with a band, performing in a soldiers' theatre left behind by the kind Turk near the Jaffa Gate. I have never seen anything more interesting than the traffic that passes the Jaffa Gate nowadays, soldiers and war material of every sort mingling with the very mixed native crowd. After the concert party we went back to the camp, a good supper, and a first-rate sleep, unbroken even by the howling of the dogs.

Next day we went to the Garden of Gethsemane and up to the Mount of Olives—for description, etc., see guide books. Throughout we had a unique chance of seeing things, as there are no tourists and all these places are practically deserted except for the priests and caretakers. From the tower of the Russian Church there is a magnificent view—the Dead Sea, Jordan, Bethany, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Siloam, The Hill of Evil Council, Aceldama, The Valley of the Kidron, and away north-east Samuel's Tomb to Bethel, Gideon, and Beth Horon.

We came back to lunch at the Hotel Fast, and then a Y.M.C.A. guide took us the tour of the Holy City. It was very interesting, but I would not swear to the genuineness of many of the places. I think we saw everything that is to be found in the guide book, but all I would be prepared to swear to is the value of owning one of them as a means of income. It is one thing to say "This is Jerusalem where everything happened," but it is quite another to show you the footprints of the cock that crowed thrice, or the piece of earth from which Adam was formed, or a hundred and one other places. The Dung Gate was, I should think, pretty genuine. Our guide was an American who had been compelled to leave Beirut, his home, by Johnny. He was most interesting, and could tell me all about the customs of the different races and point them out and explain everything in the shops, how it was made, etc.

In the evening we went to the Barnstormers, a simply topping concert party, the best I have ever seen, with six changes of costume and scenery and two quite perfect "girls."

On Sunday morning we went into the town again and had a look round. We came home in lorries, stopping on the way to pluck some olive branches as souvenirs.

We are still at work road-making, and are now rewarded by the sight of convoys of motorlorries passing over last month's ploughed fields. The whole battalion is on the job every day, men, mules, limbers, and even the mess donkeys.

I had a successful gamble to-day, backing a man in my company for a hundred piastres in a mile race. He won easily, with the result that the company is feeding on stewed figs to-night. I went up into the village with my batman, who can speak Arabic almost fluently, and after much haggling came to terms with a very old man, in very old clothes, in a very old mud house. He produced a primitive pair of scales, made out of a piece of olive wood, some old string, and two earthenware dishes. In one he placed a large stone, and filled the other up with dried figs for six piastre. It was a long job, for as usual the figs were scattered all over the house in little holes in the walls and dirty plaster ovens with a hole in the top barely big enough to put your hand through. When the transaction was complete, which was not until we had pointed out on three separate occasions that a finger should not be weighed in with the figs, we presented a small waled with half a piastre as baksheesh, but as soon as our backs were turned there was an awful row, and we found the old man hanging on to his son by the ear and forcing the coin out of his unwashed palm. We ticked him off severely, but I doubt if it did much good.

*February 23rd.*

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I have just finished reading Mark Twain's *New Pilgrim's Progress*, an account of his journey through the Holy Land. It is without doubt, the most entertaining book on the country, and at the same time, though the author does not always stick too close to facts, the atmosphere is quite wonderful. People at home would gain a far greater knowledge of what Palestine is really like by reading this book than can be picked up by perusal of guide books, or books of travel on the Holy Land. Mark Twain describes what he sees. The writers of guide books naturally write of things as their readers, tourists generally, would like to imagine them. Travellers in the Holy Land who have committed themselves to print are for the most part deeply religious men, who either see things which are not there or feel it irreverent to mention that the most remarkable feature of such and such a place is the large variety of fleas to be found in the local guest-house, a perfectly true, and, for the tourist, valuable fact.

The British soldier is not, as a rule, a good sightseer. He is incredulous, and not always very interested. He has been brought up with an abomination of idolatry in any form, and to him the "clap-trap side-shows," the words are Mark Twain's, come very close to idolatry, and spoil the splendour of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Jews' Wailing Place seems to appeal to them, probably on account of the personal interest provided by the wailers. Perhaps, too, the soldier has come to the conclusion that the interests of the past are dwarfed by the astonishing present. The inhabitants and their customs are more entertaining than old stones. The proper study of mankind is man, meaning in a great many cases woman.

Oh, these, roads! We are still at it, and they say that even the men in the outpost line have to turn out of the sangars by day and do their bit. Palestine seems to consist entirely of stones and mud. Our job is to carry the stones over the mud. The road within two miles each way of this camp is so good now that we are probably shifting our quarters, made comfy by much hard work, to another field of muddy proclivities.

We are living in the height of luxury just now, as parcels are arriving in shoals, and eggs are becoming cheaper. Christmas parcels are beginning to arrive. We had rather a swell dinner last night, and I ate it all without feeling ill. Mutton broth to start with, and then fish cakes made of tinned salmon. Then bully with mashed potatoes and Heinz' Baked Beans. All these courses on the same plate, and another one for the rest of the dinner. A raspberry blanc-mange, Welsh Rarebit, and a large orange, the whole finished off with a lump of excellent Turkish delight. Two months ago we were living on half iron rations. One becomes accustomed to eating large quantities of oranges out here. D——, for instance, always has seven in bed before he feels strong enough to rise in the morning.

The table is adorned with a Gold Flake tin filled with flowers of every sort and shape, anemones, lilies, candytuft and orchids. New kinds arrive every day, but mostly they are very fragile and fade away quickly once they are picked. I do not like the idea of leaving our beautiful bed of anemones or our fine stone cookhouse. Still, I suppose we must get on with the war out here just as much as anywhere else.

February 28th.

### A BIVOUAC AMONG OLIVE-TREES.

Another month gone and we do not seem to be much nearer the end of the war. Nor do we here seem to be any nearer to the end of this eternal road-making. We are heartily sick of it and want to be on the move again. We shifted our camp on Sunday and came up here, a pleasant enough little hillside, nowhere in particular. We are joining up two main roads by converting a little goat track into a good metalled road. The track leads through olive groves, which slope down on either side to a stony wadi bed. The hills are terraced, to permit of cultivation, and luckily for us there are heaps of stones everywhere. In among the rocks and on the terraces grow bright-hued flowers, every day brings a new one into bloom—red and blue, yellow and white, mauve and heliotrope, and a carpet of brightest green. As there seems to be a great hurry over the road, we have had to put our backs into it, and we have actually been doing the stupendous task of one yard of road per man per day. That means that each man has to complete one yard of an eighteen feet wide road, consisting of three layers, very large stones, fair sized stones, and small stones, with a coating of gravel on top. The gravel is very difficult to obtain, and there are frequent arguments with the superintending sappers as to the precise dividing mark between gravel and earth. of

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which there is a whole countryside full. Yesterday the rain came down in sheets, with the result that at about midday the wadi descended in one huge wave on a half-completed section of road, and washed it away.

Two days ago I went with the C.O. and several other officers to visit the scene of the last show, and go over it. It was a most interesting day's ride, and some of the ravines up and down which we dragged the horses were the limit. I had not ridden for two years, and by the end of the day I was very sore and stiff.

There is something very sad about the scene of a battle such as this was. The countryside deserted save for a flock of goats or long-eared sheep, precipitous rock-studded hills changing their shape entirely from each point of view, terraced either naturally or with banks of stone, an occasional mosque or sheik's tomb and straggling groves of stunted olive-trees. Everywhere a prickly green bush, very like heather at a distance, and sparkling up through the green every conceivable bright colour, red anemones, pale mauve candytuft, little terra-cotta peas, white daisies and jonquils, long stalked uninteresting lilies, baby iris, and a hundred and one dainty flowers, nameless to me. Down in the stone-bottomed wadi a deserted Mills Grenade box, a little farther on some bully beef tins—"Here we had breakfast before we started"—a heap of empty cartridge cases—"We nabbed a Turkish sniper here"—and so on up to the top of the first hill. Hastily erected stone walls built up against a bank, and abandoned before they were finished, the high-water mark on the first day of the attack, a page of *John Bull*, all there is to show that we were ever there. At one point we crossed an old Roman road. You could still see the places where they had hewn away solid rock to give them a straight passage. I wonder if two thousand years hence some other soldiers—What will soldiers be like in two thousand years?—will discover the remains of our labours, and think of the Last Crusaders.

It has been raining off and on for the last eight or nine days, but the only really bad day was yesterday, when we had solid water coming down on us one minute, and were cursing the heat the next. The clouds came over like express trains, almost close enough to touch. Our new bivvy leaked "some" too, but luckily I had collected a great load of brushwood, and on it I lay comfortably enough with the water flowing through below.

At the road junction here—it is called Tattenham

Corner, much to the delight of one of our men who is a tick-tack by trade—a market has been established, and here come every morning native men, women and children with donkey-loads of eggs, nuts, oranges, figs and olives. They try to sell native cakes, a mixture of earth, maize and raisins. Nobody buys them twice.

*March 3rd.*

Last night I went out to have a look round the camp before turning in for the night. It was nearly twelve. In fact the clocks were probably chiming the ghostly hour of twenty-four hundred, new style, in Jerusalem. In the bright moonlight our road, begun and ended within a week, shone white down below the bivvies. Above, on the slopes of the hill, the diamond shapes of the bivouacs showed clearly through the undergrowth. The stars glistened, silver and emerald, far brighter than they seem to shine over old England, and if you were so inclined their reflection could be caught in the shimmering silver olive-trees. The silence was emphasized by the snoring of a man, and the distant howl of a jackal among the rocks. I turned in and slept soundly. This morning I woke to the old familiar sound of the guns. So far I have been on a Cook's tour. Now, I suppose, I become a Crusader. It is high time. For all I know though, there may not be any idea of an advance.

## CHAPTER V

*March 7th.*

### A LAKE SIDE.

We have moved again, and are now well up in the hills on the banks of a small and very uninviting lake, the only one of its kind, I think, in Palestine. It is bright brown in colour.

They seem to think that we need a change from road-making by day, so now we are making roads by night, and helping to pull guns up into perfectly absurd positions on mountain crags.

*March 13th.*

### IN THE LINE AT LAST.

When I made the last entry we were waiting for the latest shove to commence. We were in support, and on the first day we moved right up behind the attacking troops, and carried on with our old pastime—road-making. To be more correct we were filling up the mine craters and breaches in the Nablus Road to let the armoured cars and artillery get along. Roads are of paramount importance in country like this.

From our camp we could see the show start, and it reminded me very much of the pictures of battles one sees in old copies of papers like the *Illustrated London News*. Distant hills on which shells are bursting, shells from guns which you could actually see in action. The faint rattle of the "emina gees" and the screech of the departing shells mingled with the hum of aeroplanes overhead and ambulances below. At one point infantry, the immediate supports, were advancing in artillery formation, but the attacking line was too far away to be seen with the naked eye. Long streams of camels and donkeys followed, at a none too safe distance, bearing water and other necessities. A messenger galloped up to the battery just in front. They ceased firing, and every one seemed to be running about in ordered confusion. A few minutes and they were off up the road, a long column of spirited teams and paint-bedaubed, limbers. To our right a small village. The indefatigable Baedeker reader informs us that it is Bethel. What a war! Coming up a shell or two fell near us, but they were small and did no damage. Johnny seems to be hard up for guns in the hills. He may not have many left, but more probably he is frightened of our capturing them as we push on, as it is almost impossible to move artillery with any speed in this country, nor are guns of very great use.

The show seems to have been a successful one, but it is hard for us to say, as we were suddenly switched off to the right to establish an outpost line in the newly-gained ground there. The Turk in these shows is very often not so formidable an enemy as Nature. During an advance you are liable to come up against sheer cliffs fifteen or twenty feet high, which, combined with the ordinary hill slope of about 3 in 5, makes it almost impossible to get along. I had a look at some of the trenches from which Johnny had "imshied," and looking down from them on the road, fifteen hundred feet below, it seems incredible that we have advanced at all.

Up here in the line the flowers are more beautiful than any I have seen out here. Purple iris and white and mauve anemones carpet the ground, and down in the valley grows the humble celandine. We are, unfortunately, advancing out of the orange district, and can only get two small ones now for a piastre. I should have liked a journey to Jaffa during the orange season, now closing, as from all accounts it is a pleasant town, and a better one to live in than Jerusalem. There oranges are sold to the soldiers at twenty-four for the piastre! And many of them the size of a small melon.

NOTE.—The section of the diary dealing with the events of the second half of March was torpedoed off the North coast of Africa, and, although it was subsequently salvaged, portions of it only are legible.

... have been a week in the line without a single casualty, barring one of the mess donkeys. The weather is fine, though chilly, and we are having a quiet time on the whole, as so far Johnny has been concentrating his

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artillery upon a deserted olive grove. Our position is on top of a long, saddle-backed hill, vivid with scarlet tulips and a hundred and one other blossoms. By day we leave a few men in the front line of sangars and go to sleep on the reverse slope of the hill, and by night we stand to on the forward slope, and send out parties of half a dozen men to rope in any stray snipers and to annoy the enemy in various ways.

From Brigade H.Q. down to Battalion H.Q. is one long slide, not to be accomplished with dignity by man or beast. The men who bring down the rations have to hold on to the donkeys by the tail and pull to keep them from slipping, and doing the last half mile at record pace. This in full view of the Turkish guns way down below. It . . .

... on our left raided the hill that we have been sniping, and took over forty prisoners. At dawn the Turks recaptured the hill—on which there was nobody—by means of a gallant counterattack, which we watched with amusement. They should. . . .

. . . we don't see many of them The jackals are pretty daring sometimes, and last night one walked through the bivvy and over my body. I did not manage to get a shot at him in time. Jackal cries, too, are a source of trouble to us, as it is very easy to imitate them and very frequently the Turk uses the weird howl as a means of communication between scouts and patrols. Owls, too, are not always what they sound.

*April 1st.*

The brigade has taken over fifty prisoners and about twenty deserters since we came in, and so far we have not begun to fight. The deserters are very amusing. They always come in at the same place, and it has become so usual to get a few men every morning at dawn that a guide now goes forward a hundred yards or so to guide them to company headquarters. The sort of job for an ex-shopwalker! A few days ago D— was stretching himself just outside his bivvy. It was a misty morning. Suddenly out of the mist came "Good morning," and looking round he saw a Turkish officer and his orderly, armed to the teeth. His reply was quite characteristic. "What the hell are you doing here?" Luckily he had only come to give himself up. He was a poor specimen and very anxious to please by giving any information which he thought we would like. Thus, when asked how the Turks were doing in the way of food, he replied that they were starving not because they were starving, but because he thought we should like to be told that they were.

The contrasts in this war are very weird. From one of our outpost positions you look down into the Jordan valley, four thousand five hundred feet below, and see the white puffs of bursting shrapnel where John the Baptist did his work. It is the same everywhere. True that we, like Jacob, have slept, with a stone for pillow, on the rugged heights of Bethel, but there the likeness ends. Where Samson wooed Delilah we have stood with a blanket round us, while the disinfectant has attended to our clothing. The white-winged dove above us has exchanged the olive branch for the Lewis gun. In Jerusalem we have listened to "Where did that one go to, 'Erbert?" and where Joshua commanded the sun to stand still we have taught his descendants the three-legged race.

The Australian cavalry, who have been operating in the Jordan valley, say that now they understand the full force of the old expression, "Go to Jericho."

I went out on a patrol last night with a sergeant and one man, and crept about among wadis at the bottom of very high hills, miles from anybody except Johnny, with a heart thumping hard in my boots. Every bush or boulder took on the appearance of a waiting man. However, we found out what we wanted, and steered clear of all trouble. The patrol was a reconnoitring one entirely, and so we were supposed to avoid any enemy, but frequently we send out fighting patrols, of a dozen or more men, and they tackle any enemy they run across up to twice their number.

The weather is abominably cold, rainy, and windy. About a week ago there was ice, but it will probably change for the better very rapidly now. As a matter of fact, we have managed to keep comparatively dry, and remarkably fit. In one of the dry spells D— and I went down into the wadi below and washed our clothes, and had a cold bath in a puddle. We were able to stay in for a quarter of an hour without feeling cold. Early the same morning there had been ice on the little pools in the rocks on the top of the hill.

Last night the sergeant-major had a knotty problem set him for immediate solution. He was carrying round two jars of rum, both without corks, taking them round the outpost line of sangars and giving the men a tot each.

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By some mistake he found himself outside the line, and when trying to return was challenged by a sentry, "Halt! hands up." What was he to do, drop the rum or take his chance of being shot?

One of the men was heard to remark as a shell burst on the ground close to him, "his Holy Land they talk such a lot about is getting holier every day."

*April 6th.*

I spent the night advancing the line without opposition, a not particularly arduous job, consisting of building a line of sangars three hundred yards in front of our old line. The Turk turned his wheezy machine-gun on to us, but without effect. Otherwise the night passed uneventfully.

This morning S—— and I climbed up the steep cliff face behind us, and watched the dawn break over the mountains of Moab. We are far too prosaic to get up at that hour of the day for such a purpose, but it is decreed that all good soldiers in the line should be on the alert at that time, and so we went on a voyage of discovery. The cave was disappointing, only about the size of an ordinary room, and quite empty, but the sunrise was quite worth the climb.

Before us stretched the whole position from the Nablus Road on our left to the Jordan valley, four thousand feet below, on our right. Here was the line we had been holding at first, there, a bare stony knoll crowned with a row of Turkish sangars, from which a few black specks could just be made out withdrawing to their day positions. Here a solitary fig-tree marked the spot where we discovered an empty cave-like cistern, round the circular mouth of which clung masses of slender maidenhair fern; there the village in which we tried to obtain figs from the few remaining inhabitants, and only succeeded in getting fleas. A dark, low ridge on the horizon brought back thoughts of the raid that never came off, and then with almost a sheer drop the hills parted and Jordan glistened in the sun, which had not yet breasted our own particular hills. Pale green and yellow, blue and grey, a wonderfully peaceful sight. Our own hills were still little but silhouettes, dark, uninviting lumps of rock. Inhospitable and barren, exposed to every hurricane and downpour, how can we look forward to leaving them with any feeling but pleasure. Generally one does not regret the departure from a place till one has left it, and all its disadvantages fade away through the rose-coloured spectacles of memory. But already I feel sad at the thought of going. To me the hills ring with the laughter of the "licentious soldiery," the cry of the donkey

Some of them arrived within five hundred yards of the position, but then they turned and fled. Shortly after this Johnny began to shell our bivvies, probably out of spite, so N—— and I decided to move fifty paces to the right and watch our worldly goods being blown to bits. We heard another shell coming, and, just as a matter of form, I ducked behind an olive-tree. Lucky for me, too, because the brute burst within a few yards. I made tracks away from that spot, and was just congratulating myself on a lucky escape, when I saw blood trickling down my tunic, and found that they had got me in the cheek and below the ear. As for the wound itself, I am now waiting to get down to a hospital to have it X-rayed. My face is swollen as if I had an enormous black eye. However, the swelling is improving now, and all day I have been able to look out of both eyes, though in slightly different directions. My great trouble is that I cannot laugh without pain, and the fellows with whom I am travelling down the line are a very humorous lot.

Directly I was hit one of the company stretcherbearers dressed me, and from there I went to the regimental aid-post, where the M.O. had an ineffectual probe or two. I walked up an awful wadi for about two miles to the advanced aid-post which was full. They gave me a mule and an orderly, and sent me on to the Field Ambulance, which was at Bethel, a horrible journey in the dark over slithery hills. Eight miles of them. A large tot of brandy settled me off, and I slept until they were ready to send me on to Jerusalem, which I reached after various adventures. One night in the Italian Hospital there, and now I am at railhead waiting to go down the line to-morrow.

It was good to hear the voices of the sisters again at Jerusalem. They came as a pleasant relief to the cackling complaining, wail of the native women.

Many of the people in the hospital had taken part in the daring raid on the railway at Amman. When the inhabitants of Es Salt saw them arriving they turned round on the Turks and massacred all that they could find. We never meant to stay there, and when the inhabitants found this out they started to trek for Jerusalem rather

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than be left to account for the way in which they had sped the parting guest. When our troops entered Es Salt they were met by a volley fired from the house-tops. It was only by good luck that our men did not extend and attack the place, thinking it was defended. When a pukka bedouin greets you he shoots off his rifle and shouts "Saieda." When he does not feel well disposed towards you he omits the word of greeting and shoots at you. It is sometimes difficult to say which he is doing.

*April 10th.*

### EL ARISH.

A stage farther down the line, and a topping place. El Arish is sand and sea and tents and date palms with a ceiling of blue sky. The hospital is pitched within a stone's throw of the sea, and it is a sight for Palestine-surfeited eyes. Rows of marquees on the golden sand with white-clad nurses passing in and out, their caps waving in the breeze.

I have just been X-rayed. It is a very uninteresting performance. One lies on a bed while the doctor presses a slate over the part affected. All the lights are turned down and nothing seems to happen.

I saw myself yesterday in a looking-glass, and nearly died of the painful process of laughing. The whole of the right side of my face is enormous, like a gumboil, a thick ear, and a fat eye combined. Round the eye is all black and purple, and the white of the eye is red. I look on one side like the fat boy of Peckham—eleven years old, twenty-two stone, and not bust yet. I haven't shaved for a week on that side of the face, either.

## CHAPTER VI

14th April.

### NASRIEH HOSPITAL, CAIRO.

To my delight I have not been kept at Kantara, but after a single day there the order came to move down here—which we all did with the utmost willingness. The first part of the journey down to Cairo is much more like my idea of what a desert should be than the Sinai desert itself. There is nothing but sand, not even scrub. Ismailia is the first break, a pleasant little town hidden in trees of all kinds. There we halted for the inevitable hospital train meal of tinned chicken and bread. Gradually the country began to change, palm-trees became frequent, and soon we were passing through fertile irrigated country with every here and there a village of grey mud, much on the Palestine plan, but slightly less ramshackle. Everywhere the cattle, no longer the poor stunted little oxen of the Holy Land, but great stupid water buffaloes, performed their endless water-raising task, and grinning boys paddled in the ditches. We stopped for a few minutes at Zagazig, a flimsy-looking town which could surely be destroyed by a man and a boy in a day—as the arithmetic books used to have it—working uniformly for eight hours with a spade and a pick. On through more of the same sort of country, through Benha, and into Cairo.

My first impression of Cairo was that I was in a French town. The houses are pleasant enough from the outside, white or yellow, flat roofed, and generally covered with flowering creeper, mauve, red, or purple. The very trees in the streets are in blossom.

This hospital used to be a school, and it is very comfortable in every way. The wards open out on to a broad veranda, and there is plenty of ventilation. By night the mosquitoes are a perfect pest, and seem to get through the mosquito nets with little difficulty. We are allowed out after lunch until dinner-time, but the rest of the day, as in most hospitals, is a series of intervals between meals.

This afternoon I went down with another man who says he knows Cairo well to see all the sights.

First of all we visited Shepherd's and had a drink there. Then we went to the Continental and repeated the performance. We finished up with a pre-war tea of meringues and an ice or two at Groppi's. That, apparently, is all that there is worth doing down here, though I had always understood it was an interesting place. However, it's all very novel, the Gyppos and Arabs and many queer people with a background of lovely spring colouring. It is quite a change, too, to see decently-dressed women—the sisters in their white uniforms look especially nice—and the staff officers in gabardine and shining buttons are a pleasant sight after the ragged occupants of the hospital train.

As the hospital is some way from the centre of the town, we took a gharry, a small and decayed type of victoria, manned by a greasy Gyppo and two small and starving horses. The driver sits on top of a great heap of green fodder called *berseem*, and urges on his steeds with whip and tongue. They pay not the least attention to either, but proceed at their own pace.

General Smuts has been out here. News of this reached a pushing young officer, who happened to be in the vicinity of a reinforcement camp when a figure approached on horseback, in uniform, but wearing a waterproof with no badge of rank upon it. Recognizing the famous pointed beard the young officer stepped forward.

"May I hold your horse, sir?"

"Certainly."

Pause of half an hour, during which the rain stopped, and at the end of this time the owner of the beard came out again, with his waterproof over his arm, and unmistakable two stars on either shoulder. It was one of the official War Office artists.



I am convinced that from time immemorial novelists and touring agencies have been in a conspiracy of exaggeration. I suppose it pays the novelist to be able to describe the conflicting emotions with which the hero is seized when he comes face to face with, say, the Pyramids, or any of the other so-called wonders of the world. And as far as the tourist agencies are concerned, of course it pays them to persuade you to travel several thousand miles to see the beauties of the Himalayas, when the more modest attractions of the lake district would meet the case just as well. All of which is leading up to the disappointment which I felt on seeing the Sphinx, or for that matter the Pyramids, for the first time. From the time that I used to plod laboriously through single syllable Readers," the immensity of the Pyramids has been impressed upon my brain until I suppose that nothing would satisfy me short of their being snow-capped. We were going along the road in a gharry when I was told to look round and get my first view of them. I turned round and looked straight in front of me and slightly up into the air. There was nothing doing up in the air. I looked lower and lower until in a gap between I saw what looked like a distant ration dump. We were still several miles away, but nevertheless it was a great disappointment.

Eventually we arrived at the Mena House Hotel, dropped our gharry and started to walk to the Pyramids. This was the signal for a swarm of donkey boys, camel men, guides, curio vendors, and photographers to swoop down on us. They all admitted quite candidly that they were the best donkey boys, guides, etc., in Cairo. "Me the limit," stated one, and I for one am not disposed to argue with him. We shook off the main body and proceeded in a south-easterly direction, annoyed only by a few skirmishers. One wished to climb the Great Pyramid and return within five minutes, but his desire was not shared by us. To take our photos sitting in front of the Sphinx on a camel was the aim of another. Another, still, had a valuable scarab which he was willing to sell us dirt cheap for one hundred and fifty piastres. These ornaments seem to deteriorate very rapidly, as the same man later on was willing to part with his treasure for tenpence. And so, repulsing the hordes of robbers on all sides, we came to the wonderful, inscrutable, worth-millions-of-pounds-to-authors Sphinx. The great riddle of the mysterious East. How many reams of rubbish have been written about this misshapen block of stone. Napoleon, a practical man, fired a few cannon balls at its face. High explosive shells were not invented in those days.

The Pyramids improve on close acquaintance, though I am sure I have seen something almost as big in the Supply Depot at Le Havre. The builder must at least have the satisfaction of knowing that his work is the greatest example in the world of wasted energy—at any rate until the advent of civilized warfare. But there's nothing very wonderful in the Great Pyramid compared with the flimsy erection with which it was crowned by a couple of sappers a year or two ago. At last the great tomb is being put to some use. Marconi has superseded Pharaoh.

After these great thoughts tea at the hotel was welcome, and soon we were bowling home again in the gharry, passing over the Island of Gezira on our way. This island is said, probably by some one with a financial interest in it, to be the most beautiful island in the world. Certainly it is very picturesque.

A day or two ago we went to the bazaar, and it, too, suffered from the preliminary puffs which so many people have given it. As a riot of colour it hardly comes up to expectations, but I hope to spend several afternoons pottering round the more dingy parts of it, where the scent and the shoes, the ornaments and the silks, are prepared. Here again the honest guides are a pest. All of them know of a tradesman—as honest as themselves—who has just what we want—before we know what that is ourselves—and they are harder to shake off than the donkey boys even. The brass workers are as interesting to watch as anybody, old men, young men, and baby boys chiselling out the intricate patterns with wonderful speed and no instruments of precision, such as rulers or compasses, to assist them.

On Thursday we paid the Cairo Zoo a visit, driving there through a particularly sultry Khamsin. We seemed to be moving through a bath of sand and dust, hot and dry as the wind itself which brings no relief. The Zoo is well worth seeing, a blaze of colour at this time of year. Everywhere great masses of purple orange and scarlet Creepers hang down from the bright green trees, and the flower beds are a riot of tropical blooms. The animals are all natives of Africa, and are rather more smelly than in most zoos. The hippo is accustomed to be photographed all day long and is willing, almost eager, to pose. The most distinguished of the beasts is the camel which takes the Holy Carpet to Mecca. During the rest of the year it does nothing. The Holy Carpet, as is only fitting in this land of paradox, is not a carpet at all, but a wall covering. When we had seen everything we sat down in a

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tea-garden and drank iced beer. Suddenly a pipe band struck up "Hielan' Laddie." Shades of the good old 51st Division. We hurried to the spot from which the familiar sound came, and discovered a blue and red uniformed, red fezged troop of Gyppo boys, led by an enormous Gyppo pipe major. The march came to an end and after a moment's rest they stepped off at the slow march, feet well up in front, chests thrown out, to the haunting lament of "The Flowers of the Forest." At the end of their beat the pipers turned inwards in true regimental style and passed through the ranks of the drummers. I approached and took out my camera. At once the pipe major halted the band, placing himself very much in front, so that his very large form hid the majority of the very small performers. As we were leaving the grounds we noticed two of the keepers approaching a cage with stealth and armed with knives and revolvers. Scenting adventure, we drew near, but discovered that they were only on their way to clean out the habitation of the Common Rock Lizard.

On Friday we went for a long drive all through the town. Out through the Mouski to Old Cairo, a city of the dead, and out to the tomb of some khedive or another, whose tomb we inspected with sandalled feet, retiring less a few piastres and plus many benedictions and a blown pink rose. We also were shown round a harem, unfortunately empty, where a small boy tried to show us the contents of a Koran. whether in an effort of proselytism or in the hopes of immediate monetary gain I don't know.

On past the citadel to the Sultan Hussnei Mosque, in both of which places Napoleon left a few cannon balls. We were shown round the mosque by a gentleman with a long striped *galabeah* and a large stomach. His English was delightful to listen to as long as you did not want to understand what he was talking about. He shouted "Allah!" in a long drawn-out cry, and held up his hand for us to listen to the echo. Unfortunately, a passing lorry tooted its horn rather loudly and spoiled the whole effect.

April 26th.

Yesterday they operated on me again and removed a large piece of shell out of my face and a fragment of the Holy Land from under my ear. Unfortunately they have lost both pieces. As far as I can remember, this is the fourth time since 1914, and chloroform becomes more revolting on each successive occasion. They insist on washing off the marks of the adhesive plaster with it, too, and I notice that I am not the only one to screw up his face and stop breathing directly the blue bottle which contains it is opened.

Every morning early we have visitors. First comes the boot-boy, a dirty little rascal of uncertain age. If you don't look out he will take your boots and belt to his lair and bring them back to you untouched. A little later comes the washerman, clad in a striped night-shirt, pink silk socks, and light brown boots. He is followed by the barber, who carries round with him an antiquated tin coffee-pot and a little lamp, from which combination he produces hot water in sufficient quantities.

The afternoons pass by more or less uneventfully. Tea at Shepherd's Hotel after a game of billiards is about as much as I can comfortably do. All the world comes there about five o'clock to listen to the band and swap the latest gossip. Sitting close to the street and looking down on the ever-changing throng below you are pestered by guides and sellers of fly-whisks, stamps, or matches. "You want Moses, him very good guide," or "Very good fly-whisk. Very na-ice. Very cheap," cannot be escaped. A constant stream of tea seekers pours up and down the steps, civilians in smart dog-carts, generals in cars, the less favoured infantryman on leave in gharries or taxis, a French colonel in blue, with white gloves, a wife, several daughters, and a gorgeously appressed Moroccan servant, a couple of naval officers off a torpedo boat at Alex., a green uniformed Italian, members of the public services with their wives, blue-banded officers from the hospitals, Indian princelings in their smart cavalry tunics, a sprinkling of nurses in white, and the gilded staff. An orchestra of Greeks and nondescripts plays selections from Gilbert and Sullivan, and red-sashed turmagis move leisurely to and fro with cakes and ices. It is all very pleasant.

May 7th.

Yesterday was Shem-el-Nessim, the holiday to welcome spring, and I spent most of the morning watching a

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native Punch and Judy show from the hospital window. It was a picturesque scene, a white wall overhung with purple creeper as a background, and the bright blue sky overhead. The characters were just the same as in the English version and the Gyppo *deus ex machina* make just the same squeaking noises as can be heard on Brighton beach. I believe that we borrowed the show from the Egyptians, or rather the Persians. On his haunches, beneath the stage, squatted a grinning native in a far from clean blue *galabeah*, hitting a kettle-drum and calling on all who passed to stop and witness the performance. All around clustered little bints and waleds with one or two grown-ups trying to appear unconcerned, and looking round furtively for fear of being discovered by friends. In the afternoon we went again to the Zoo in the hope of finding the holiday crowds there. It was simply crowded with family parties, pompous fat Egyptians out with their wives and families *en bloc*. The veiled ladies, their wives, seem to take more interest in a kilt than even in the monkeys. All the native women are dressed in the *habbera* of black stuff and the *yashmak*, which certainly has the effect of hiding deficiencies in looks and figure. There were any number of Greeks and dagos there too, their women-kind grossly overdressed.

The poorer classes take a flat native cart for the day, and sit on it in a solid block of twenty to twenty-five at a time. I don't know how they manage it. The wretched mule gives a faint sigh and carries on. His is not to reason why. As they make their way through the crowded streets they shout and sing, clap their hands and wave their arms. The very best people hire a band to precede them. A really select band will consist of a big drum, a bagpipe, and a cornet. Even the tram-drivers caught the infectious spirit of rejoicing, and I noticed one careering over the Kasr el Nil bridge, clapping his hands and singing loudly. The car was making the best of the opportunity to run down a stray dog.

The day before yesterday D—— and I went out on the Nile in a felucca with two Australian sisters, friends of his. We took care to lay in an ample stock of cakes and strawberries and cream before starting. When we reached the Semiramis Hotel and looked over the side of the embankment we were met by a storm of greeting as the fifty odd ship owners clamoured for our patronage. Finally we chose the good ship Cairo No. 1 and set sail. The captain had apparently lost most of his nose shortly before and was wearing a pair of glassless spectacles to hold the bandages on. The crew had a taking grin, but was not ornamental. We sailed along happily, tacking from side to side of the river, until we reached the spot at which Moses was discovered in the bulrushes. Here the boatmen left us, and we partook of strawberries and cream and iced coffee from our picnic basket. When the time for our return drew near there was no sign of our crew, nor did they turn up until all hope of our getting back to hospital in time had vanished. To punish them we poled the boat well out into the stream, and made them come after it for some way. However, that did not upset them, and when last seen from the embankment they were squabbling over the contents of the tin into which we had thrown the debris of our meal.

Once or twice a week life is rendered hideous for us by the arrival of the Bing Boys, two knock-about comedians of the lowest and most reprehensible type, who are there ostensibly to clean the floors, but really for their own fiendish satisfaction. They enter the room without warning, each bearing two full buckets of soapy water, a broom, and a wet blanket. The buckets are dropped on the floor, sometimes right ways up, and beds, patients, tables, flowers, all the usual properties of a hospital ward are thrown pell-mell into a corner, and with a slosh-slosh bucket after bucket goes whizzing across the floor. Some of the water penetrates your boots, lying underneath the bed, the overhanging end of a counterpane gets its share, the *Egyptian Gazette* floats forlornly on the crest of the wave. Maleesh. Nothing matters. The Bing Boys are here. Once everything is soaking the boss scrapes a formidable broom against the wall with a noise like a dentist in action, while his understudy careers on all fours round the room, backwards, dragging after him a wet blanket. Chairs and flowers fall. Patients curse. Sisters shriek. The Bing Boys are here. Even the C.O. of the place gives them a wide berth. Yet we recover somehow.

Another of life's little trials is our V.A.D. She has conceived the absurd idea of making us take turns in helping her with the beds. Strrrrip and turrn is the order of the day. Every cloud has a silver lining, and the staff colonel in bed No. 5 is not exempt. He made my bed to-day.

On Saturday I answered duty's call and went to the Museum to visit the Pharaohs and their numerous relations. They are not looking quite so young as they used to be. What a degrading end for an Eastern potentate to be gazed at by the inquisitive barbarian from the West.

The General was round the wards to-day, and shook hands with each of us. It must be a boring business and difficult to find anything to say. After watching great personages being polite in this fashion for the last four

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years, I have come to the conclusion that the majority of them adopt this plan of campaign. Before starting out commit half a dozen sentences to memory, and dish them out in turn as you go round. Thus at a hospital:

1. How are you getting on?
2. Where were you hit?
3. I hope you will be all right again soon.
4. How long have you been here?
5. Is everything being done for you?
6. I'm glad to see you looking so well.

Start on the first and by the time you get to the sixth you are out of ear-shot of the man that No. 1 was addressed to, and can start all over again.

M——, who has just arrived in the next bed to mine, spent the first two years of the war as a Territorial defender of India. At the tender age of nineteen he found himself, by virtue of his job of O.C. Detachment, the most important man in a large Indian station, both from a military and a social point of view. As the society of the place included many highly-placed civil servants, and several senior officers on special duty, his position might well have been an invidious one, but, apparently, what most galled him was having to take the judge's wife into dinner on every occasion instead of one of the more attractive though less important members of the community more of an age with himself. He gave the sister a shock to-day by presenting her with his right leg bandaged up for dressing, and it was not until she had searched through the bed for his other leg, the damaged one, that she could be convinced that he had not made a miraculous recovery.

## CHAPTER VII

May 12th.

No. — GENERAL HOSPITAL, ALEX.

This is a perfect barrack of a place, completely surrounded by rules. Whichever way you turn a notice greets you, "Officers may not —," whatever it is. Before the war it was a German hospital, and so, perhaps, the germs of Prussianism still lurk in the cheerless corridors. I only expect to be here for a few days, until they transfer me to the Command Depot.

Alexandria has one advantage over Cairo. At Cairo there is so much to be seen in the way of pyramids, museums, etc., etc., that it takes one quite a fortnight getting them "done," and till then one can begin to enjoy the ordinary pleasures of life. Alexandria is totally different. Barring the so-called Pompey's Pillar, there is not a single thing which has to be seen, and simple pleasures can begin at once, tennis, golf, and bathing, a game of billiards at the Union Club, or tea with a ministering angel at the Milanese.

The Egyptian is a subtle man. A short time ago a father sued a robber for kidnapping his son and keeping him for a fortnight. The defendant seeing that the case was not going any too well for him, counter-attacked with a summons for the cost of the food supplied to the boy during his "visit."

May 15th.

COMMAND DEPOT, MUSTAPHA.

I am now in the convalescent stage, and share a tent with another officer, who was wounded in the romantic Amman stunt, about which there has been only too little in the papers. It was, in its way, one of the most daring exploits of the war. A weak division, aided by Australian mounted troops, crossed the Jordan and, cut off from the rest of our army, went clean through the Turks for a distance of forty miles, cut the railway and returned with all their wounded and hundreds of prisoners. Their jumping-off point was a thousand feet below sea level, the railway was four thousand feet above them. There were no roads through the mountains and it rained almost the whole time. They got there in forty-eight hours. When they reached Es Salt the inhabitants turned out *en bloc* to greet them, standing on the roofs of their houses and loosing off rifles into the air.

On Saturday I went to the races, a weekly event at the Sporting Club, much patronized by the khaki element. There is a lot of money to be made out of the racing here, and just as much to be lost. I confined my efforts to one horse, which I was told to watch very carefully. I watched it the whole way round, and thereby lost not only my money, but a good view of an exciting finish between the first and second, some hundreds of yards in front of my choice. So much for dead certs. The races are worth going to for the colour and movement alone. Khaki everywhere, in the enclosure and the paddock, the stands and even the judge's box. Tommies who can afford to do so are allowed into the enclosure, where they stand the same chance of seeing the finish as their more fortunate brethren in Sam Brownes. This is a pleasant change to the usual way in which the wretched Tommy has to take a back seat wherever entertainments are concerned. A white-uniformed band plays over by the tea-tables and the lucky ones watch from cars close by. All the nations of the world seem to crowd round the totalisator in an effort to enrich themselves at the expense of that callous machine. French, Greeks, English, Italians, Egyptians, dagos, and bedouins in flowing robes jostle one another in the stands and the paddock, and crane their necks to catch the first sight of the gay colours of the little bunch of jockeys as they come tearing round the corner. The course is an oval one, with bamboo canes hiding a great part of it, and just as the course is not straight neither are some of the jockeys. The knowing ones say that the bamboos are there for the special purpose of allowing the horses to be sorted out into the order of finishing, but no doubt they exaggerate somewhat!

For a whole day before the races nothing is talked of in the mess but the chances of different horses on the

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following day, and when the races are over one has to listen to a hundred and one tales of misfortune, of how one man meant to back Ghazi, but didn't at the last moment, and how another was sure that it was about time that Bellhouse won again but forgot to back him, and so on ad infinitum.

There has been a native wedding at one of the houses close by, and day and night alike have been rendered hideous by the triumphal music of the Gyppo band. The elements of Eastern melody are very easy to master. Each instrument plays in a different key, and in different time. It's very simple.

May 20th.

Sunday morning is the select time to bathe here, and so, in order to be in the swim, P—— and I went down to Stanley Bay this morning and joined the crowd in the Brilliantine Pond. There is quite a good bathing beach, but, unfortunately, whenever there is any sea at all the Black flag goes up and one has to be contented with the shallow puddle at the side of it. This goes by the name of the Brilliantine Pond on account of the film of hair grease that forms on top of it about midday, after all the dagos have been in. It varies from three foot to six inches, and no great skill in swimming is necessary; in fact, a chic bathing costume is much more to the point. There is a double row of bathing huts banked round the beach and from these issue mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, husbands and wives, soldiers and nurses by the thousand. The bathers are of all shapes and sizes, and there is considerable variety on the bathing costumes, which date from early Victorian to very advanced twentieth century. It is rumoured that when one rather ponderous old dear goes in the level of the pond rises by half an inch, but I think that this must be an over-estimate. Every one is equal in the water, brigadier and one pipper, G.S.O. 1 and supply officer. I seldom miss a day in the water, and am becoming quite fish-like in my movements. Perhaps it is just as well, as I shall probably be crossing over again when I leave here, and I notice a lot of people walking about the town to-day in the somewhat sketchy costume of the shipwrecked. Stanley Bay is *par excellence* the haunt of the English population, and if one prefers more mixed society it can always be obtained on Glyminopoulo beach. A certain lady of uncertain age can be seen bathing there every day and doing her best to pick up stray officers. She is commonly known as the Seaweed Queen. One day she swam out to the rocky reef, and when diving off to return to the beach her cap fell off. Though it was not generally known at the time, her hair was attached to the bathing cap and not to her head. Cap and hair sank to the bottom and were lost. To hide her confusion, and incidentally to earn for herself a nickname more clinging than her hair, the Seaweed Queen plucked a large handful of slimy green from the rocks and swam ashore and ran to her hut with her head draped in it. Hence name.

The journey into Alex. on the tram is an unfailing source of amusement. The occupants are always such a very mixed lot, and always seem hostile to each other. The other day an obnoxious child fell off the step while the car was in motion and started to howl as only a baby dago can. To his aid came a frenzied mother. The car stopped, and the conductor jumped out and ran towards the pair. The mother turned and fell upon the conductor—it was entirely the son's fault by the way—who would have fared badly had not reinforcements arrived in the shape of the driver. The majority of the passengers left the car and formed a group round the squabbling trio. They all took sides and pandemonium started. Meanwhile, the cause of all the trouble strolled away unconcernedly to a fig-tree by the side of the, rails and started to steal unripe green figs. Little things like this are of everyday occurrence, and at the Ramleh terminus there is generally a free fight over boarding each of the trams as they come up.

The Anglo-Egyptian women have been having a field day in the papers, boasting their patriotism in giving dances to lonely officers. I went to have a look at one of these dances the other day, and the lonely officers all seemed to have tabs of some colour or another on them. Perhaps that is how one recognizes a lonely officer.

May 27th.

This afternoon I played golf for the first time for many years. The course is an artificial one with a good many awkward irrigation dikes crossing over it. My play was erratic, and the first shot off the tee sailed into a tennis court half left. As that was out of bounds I had another shot and this time rectified the direction of flight by twenty

## Temporary Crusaders

degrees or so, the ball breaking through a foursome of two brigadiers and a couple of V.A.D.s with tanklike rapidity. I enjoyed the game. The caddies are small boys in baggy white trousers and blue jerseys. They have no hesitation in telling you how each stroke should be played, and like the ball boys on the tennis courts can all play pretty well themselves. Unfortunately, honesty is not one of their strong suits. Whenever your ball falls into a ditch with water in, they rush forward as if eager to rescue the ball before it becomes too wet. In reality their object is to get into the water themselves and stir up the mud so that finding the ball is an impossibility.

W—— and I went bathing again to-day, and managed to secure a surf boat. The sea was fairly rough and neither of us could stay on board for long. While we were sitting on the beach there was a sudden commotion. A man was seen to be splashing far out as if he was in difficulties. All eyes were turned on the lifesaving bloke, an expert swimmer in the employ of the Alexandria Municipality. Calmly he rose to his feet, and with great dignity proceeded to remove his tight blue jersey. He folded it up neatly and laid a white sun hat on top of it. He stripped to his waist, and folded the shirt up. He removed a pair of large boots. He walked over to the post on which hangs a life-buoy. He turned up his trousers carefully, and stepped into a boat. Meanwhile the swimmer had stopped splashing and was floating in with the waves.

The proprietor of the officers' bathing box met his Waterloo, or perhaps it would be better to say his Aboukir Bay, to-day. He is a blood relation of the bathing-machine men of the south coast of England, but a lifetime spent in the East has given him more cunning than they can ever hope for. An Australian became more than a little annoyed with him and threatened to slay him. This was enough for George, who fled incontinently seawards, followed by the Anzac, who seemed by now to be more amused than anything else. Without looking behind him George dashed to the water's edge and lumped into the sea, bearing with him all our watches and pocket cases, which he is in the custom of carrying in a haversack at his side. He came out almost at once, smiling, and has since looked upon himself rather in the light of a celebrity. The girls who bathe can be divided for all useful purposes into two classes. The first class with one leg on the ground, the second with one eye on the men.

Yesterday was Saturday, with its usual race meeting. I went, and had a successful day. A successful day is one on which you don't have to borrow the return tram fare.

The curse of Egypt is the caterer. For some quite unfathomable reason most of the messes here deliver themselves into the hands of a rascally dago, who robs them in a way that would bring a blush to the cheek of the worst food profiteer at home. The caterer has no nationality. I imagine that for generations a race of them has been rising, each generation more loathsome than the last. They seem to gather to themselves all the bad qualities of all the hundred and one races that inhabit the shores of the Mediterranean. They are dishonest, dirty, untruthful, everything beastly. The food they provide is nasty in the extreme, and is not improved by cooking in cotton seed oil or cocoanut oil. At breakfast the eggs are stone cold, however early you turn up. Presumably they cook them over-night. Our own particular darling, when cornered the other day over some peculiarly flagrant breach of his contract, waved his hands in the air, and tore his oily hair, exclaiming that he was a British subject trying to do his bit. They seem to encourage the waiters to cheat, at any rate one never gets the proper change for drinks without much strafing.

Compared to the caterer the newsvendor is a perfect gentleman.. He is invariably an Egyptian, and he strolls along in his flowing *galabeah* with a handkerchief sticking out all round the bottom of his tarboosh. Nothing ever hurries him. Smilingly he saunters through the camp, crooning his song. "Sageroboarse. Rayfawmgazetmel. Piywerjonbolricecard." Which, being interpreted, means "Messagero, Bourse, La Réforme, Gazette, Mail, Paper, *John Bull*, Race Card."

There is a shortage of stripes up in the line, or at any rate there was some time ago when a certain private was promoted temporarily to the rank of lance-corporal. He did his best to get some sort of badge of rank, but without result, and finally added one stripe to his tunic with indelible pencil. Shortly afterwards some misdemeanour lost for him his promotion, but it is one thing to publish in orders that Lance-corporal so and so reverts to the ranks, but it is quite another for the ex-lance-corporal to remove the indelible stripe. When last seen the hero of this story was going about with the purple stripe still up, but with a large "cancelled" written across it.

June 2nd.

SIDI BISHR.

## Temporary Crusaders

We have moved from the comparative comforts of Mustapha to the sandy wastes of Sidi Bishr, where we live in a rush-matting hut with half an hour's dreary trudge between us and the trams.

From time to time one hears of spies being discovered and shot, but there is one, a German, whose adventures are becoming almost legendary. He goes by the name of F—F— and is commonly said to spend his short leave, from the Turkish front, in Alex., bathing and playing tennis with the best. It is told of him that he once approached a sentry at a railway station dressed as a staff officer, and that after having obtained much useful information from him he had him arrested by the military police on a charge of divulging official secrets to strangers. He seems to be a cool customer, and is said to be a deadly shot with a revolver, even when at the gallop, so that there should be a sporting chance of earning a week's leave open to some daring spirit. Of our spies one hears nothing, though on one occasion a filthy Arab who gave himself up to our outposts was heard asking for a drop of Scotch in anything but a Syrian accent.

This morning I spent at the dentist's. For several days I have been skirmishing on paper with the medical authorities, and at last I received orders to report to the dental annexe at ten. I suppose that everybody feels the same as they ascend the steps to the torture chamber—the pain disappears, and all desire to proceed further with the business too. Here, to encourage one, the first thing the eye meets is a large notice, "Do not spit blood on the stairs, use the bucket provided." Up three flights of stairs, through lines of timid looking Tommies, and into the waiting-room, a parody on the peace-time waiting-room, complete down to the four-month-old papers. You seek to concentrate on the *Sydney Bulletin*, but your mind wanders, and your eyes rise to the faces of those who come in from the business end of the room. "Next, please," half a dozen times, and then comes your turn. You are in a large room with four dentists and three assistants, all hard at work. Groans in different keys arise on all sides. There is no "What pleasant weather we are having," about it, but a brusque "Sit down. What's wrong?" "This is going to hurt you." "Thank you; next, please," and you are back again in the waiting-room, and a moment later adding your quota to the bucket on the stairs. Doctors and dentists will have a lot to relearn in the way of manners after the war.

The street sellers of antiques have not been doing very well just lately, so they have thought out a new plan, a good one no doubt, but one which throws a glaring light on their commercial honesty. I heard one shouting in the street the other day:

"Scarabs, coins, very good, very old, very rare, very nice. Necklaces, very antique, very clean, two thousand year old, made by Turkish prisoners of war."

It is a great game going to and from the tram station on the donkeys. What a noise. As you leave the tram a horde of donkeys and boys precipitate themselves upon you from the donkey compound. "Oh—ah, OH—AH! You want me, sir. No, me, sir. You remember me, sir. Good donkey, sir, gallop all way, him very quais. Oh—ah, OH—AH!" By this time you are in the midst of them, and you pick out what you think to be a good one, though a good donkey across the sand may look like nothing on earth, and it is always a toss up whether he will arrive first or not at all. You make your choice and mount the once velvet seat of the high pommelled saddle. While you do this the boy—generally a man—hangs on to the off-stirrup to prevent the whole saddle from swivelling round. It is a curious fact that no donkey's saddle is ever put on properly. As you ride along it inclines first to the right and then to the left at increasingly alarming angles. Meanwhile the boy starts to belabour the poor animal with a stick. I think he must do this to keep warm, as the donkey does not seem to mind in the least. Off you go at a canter or fast trot, sometimes falling to a walk, sometimes quickening to a gallop in accordance with the capability of the boy to keep up. Oh—ah, Oh—ah, OH—AH! the pattering of little hoofs, and the thud—thud of semi-suspended officer meeting rapidly rising saddle.

The donks take on the names of familiar racehorses towards the end of the ride, and Hafez on, Anwar manages to obstruct Ali Selim on Abu Kheysha in true twisters style. I won magnificently as Bellhouse on Obeyan, hanging well back till the straight was reached, and then shooting past the field and winning by a short head. The donkey bolted with me, but we don't talk about that. It was a fine animal, a true thoroughbred. I could tell this because it trotted with its starboard legs while it was cantering on its port side. It requires an unusual animal to do this. The boot-cleaning boys are even more amusing than the donkey boys. Often they are so small that they can hardly carry their box. The little devils always show you with pride a Cherry Blossom or Kiwi tin, but experience teaches that the contents are some local mess of little value.



## Temporary Crusaders

Some of the rich Greeks and Italians here go in for the manly sport of pigeon shooting. Out of curiosity I went to watch them the other day, and was much struck by their courage. The brave competitors stand alone in the ring and wait quite unprotected for the onslaught of the wild bird. They do not even wear steel helmets. There is a totalisator, and betting is carried on just as at the races. However, there is no parade of the competitors in the paddock before the events.

## CHAPTER VIII

*June 10th.*

### KANTARA.

After a brief interview with a doctor I have been sent up here again and expect to go up the line any day. Kantara is a place to be avoided; "the grave of disappointed hopes," some one called it the other day in an article I happened to read. The only advantage it has for me is the return to a soldier batman. For the past month or two I have been in the clutches of a native substitute whose only human instinct was a desire to avoid work, and to gain his living by selling his officer's kit. The man I share now is of the "strong, silent," batman type, and knows far better than you do what clothes you want to wear, and when you should change your vest. He is always cleaning my Sam Browne belt when I have to go on parade.

To-day I took part in a court martial which would have given points to any farce yet staged.

A wretched member of the Egyptian Labour Corps was charged with having in his possession several ounces of hashish, a deadly crime, and in addition a few little knick-knacks in the shape of Government spirit-levels and planes. Amongst the exhibits were a lady's reticule, seven packs of playing cards, twelve tins of tobacco, a dozen lead pencils, one embroidered waistcoat, and sixty-five packets of Epsom salts. Quite a connoisseur. We were only trying him in connection with the first-mentioned articles, as there was no proof of the rest being Government property. The prisoner was a shifty-eyed inhabitant of Benha, who refused to answer yes or no to any question. Every time he was asked any question he would burst forth into the true and graphic account of what really did happen, and not what the cruel accusers were inventing, and so on. It became rather tedious.

The first witness was a genial old fellow of some sixty summers, an officer in the company to which the man belonged. He was chiefly concerned in explaining to us at some length that the Egyptian was not invariably honest. We made a note of this, and carried on. The escort was a very old corporal of the R.E., with long-drooping moustache, hollow cheeks, a loosely flapping uniform, and legs so formed that it was impossible to say whether he was standing at attention or at ease. There were two comrades of the accused called in to give evidence for the defence, but they, wishing to be obliging, perjured most charmingly, and stated that their friend had done much of which he was not even accused. There was an interpreter, a man of no recognizable race, and unable to speak any language—e.g., "He hit him on the engine-room," for "I hit him in the vicinity of the workshop." There was a native foreman who insisted on delivering a great number of lies at a wonderful speed in a language which he said was English, saluting at the end of each sentence. There was a red-faced police-sergeant, with the regular London Bobby manner. There was an apathetic prosecutor and an able prisoner's friend, but the case was too strong a one for him to have any chance.

*June 6th.*

### OVERSEAS TRANSPORT CAMP.

When I was undressing in my tent last night an orderly brought me instructions for my early removal to France. They were unexpected and anything but welcome, for there is no doubt as to which is the "better war."

The national sport of Australia must surely be lamp-post leaning. Wherever a lamp-post or pillar can be found in this country an Australian can be found attached, legs crossed, smoking, gazing amusedly at the world from beneath his broad-brimmed hat. They say that an Anzac got leave from the Jordan Valley after eleven months, and that he never passed Kantara Station on his journey down to Cairo. He found the station lamp-post, and was still there when the train left for up the line next week.

*June 8th.*

## Temporary Crusaders

H.M.T.

We embarked yesterday and are now in the outer harbour, waiting to start. H—— and I and about two hundred details form the ship's guard, and do all the duties. The rest of the troops are Indians, drivers and Syce Corps. The whole of the first-class is full of officers, chiefly of senior rank, going home on leave or on various duties. When we had shepherded our men on board and seen them safely into their quarters, we went to the ship's orderly-room and played the good old Army game of "Sign it" for half an hour, at the end of which time the Embarkation Staff Officer must have been in possession of anything from a hundred to two hundred assorted signatures of mine and H——'s. We suggested to him that as we were to do all the work during the voyage we should be given good berths, and he replied by allotting us a most luxurious cabin in the midst of all the brigadiers and colonels. We afterwards found out that the C.O. of the ship and the ship's adjutant themselves were not so well billeted as we. About ten a stream of cars, lorries, and gharries began to arrive bearing the officers and their baggage—some of them with a great deal of baggage. One padre rolled up with a complete gharry full of trunks and boxes and valises, and he himself followed in a second gharry with his more personal luggage, a couple of suit-cases, several brown paper parcels, and a wicker crate. I had a guard on the gangway with strict orders not to let any one on to the boat without a warrant. He was a red-haired London Scot and a man who knew how to obey an order. No one did get on to the boat without showing his warrant, though many tried. This is the sort of thing that happened. Colonel, all red and gold, bustled, out of his car. Stick and cap in one hand, *La Vie Parisienne* and a book or two in the other. He approached the gangway and was about to ascend when the Scot said:

"Can I see your warrant, sir?"

"That's all right, corporal."

"My orders are——"

"Of course I've got a—— orders, sir."

"Very well."

Down went the contents of one hand. One hand not sufficient. Tried with two. Couldn't be found. Of course! It was in one of the suit-cases; but which of the six which were gradually beginning to form a small pyramid on the quay.

"It's in one of these suit-cases, corporal."

"Sorry, sir, but my orders are——"

It ends by the colonel, surrounded by a collection of open suit-cases, Jodphur breeches and silk *lingerie*——for the Mrs. Colonel it is to be hoped——remembering that he placed the warrant in the lining of his topee. For quickness. A hundred laughing eyes look down on him, eyes too well disciplined to do more than twinkle.

A convoy nowadays is quite a thrilling sight. The transports themselves in their weird futurist coats, the Jap destroyers, the motor-boats, the sea-planes and the captive balloons, the minesweepers and the monitors, lend to the whole scene a sense of unreality.

*June 9th.*

We are well out now and going strong through a calm sea. When the list of boat stations was posted up in the saloon I noticed that my name was absent. At first I thought that in my capacity of O.C. Ship's Guard it might be

## Temporary Crusaders

my rôle to die on the bridge with the captain and the C.O. of the boat. On application at the orderlyroom, however, it turned out to be a clerical error.

*June 10th.*

To-day we had a first-rate alarm. In the middle of lunch boat stations went, and we all dashed to our positions, wondering what was up. The ship seemed to be going faster than usual, and the destroyers had disappeared, otherwise everything seemed normal. One of the ship's officers said that a submarine had been spotted, and to give support to his statement at that moment the destroyers came in sight, well astern and going hell for leather. There was some firing and an explosion or two, and after a time the word came to stand down. We have not learnt the result of the chase, but anyhow Fritz must have been given a fright.

*June 11th.*

Still another country and another language. We are at present in a beautiful land-locked harbour, waiting to disembark; but we are not likely to go ashore till to-morrow morning.

At dinner to-day C—— gave us the following tale, about the comparatively early days of the war out East. An officer of the Royal Engineers was sent to a certain treacherous coast line to report on the best means of conveying stores from shipboard. He replied in favour of "flying foxes." By return he was asked to state where these animals could be caught, what training would be necessary, and what they should be fed upon. It appears that a "flying fox " is a sort of aerial railway.

The harbour here is most interesting, and contains amongst other things a collection of the oldest ships I have ever seen. They are all warships, and used. I suppose, as depots, but they must hail from the early seventies. G—— suggests that they belong to the Seventh Dynasty, but then he is an Egyptologist. Some of the camouflaged ships are simply great. They say they fill the painters up with neat whisky before they start. There must be a run on the job.

*June 13th*

The train is advancing by alternate rushes, and I am only able to write when it stops for the driver to have a chat with some fair Italian working in a vineyard.

Yesterday H—— and I went down from the rest camp to the town of T—— in the most wonderful of buggies. The driver, too, was inspired with a desire to get there far greater than that of his horse, a gallant, though misshapen, steed of great antiquity. He stood up in his seat and performed a balancing feat over the hindquarters of the poor beast, and whacked at it with little success. The horse turned round frequently to have a good look at the strange Inglesi; but, generally speaking, we made fair progress in the right direction. As we were galloping along we passed a well, from which the driver desired a drink. He flung himself off the driving-seat, had a drink, caught us up, and jumped on. Meanwhile the horse continued to gallop to the best of its ability. Eventually the whip caught in the front wheel and broke off short.

The town is a most uninteresting place, but we were able to get quite good food in the hotel, where we were the sole representatives of the British Army among many Italians. Neither of us knows a word of Italian, but luckily one of the small boys who waited on us had a smattering of English.

At night there was an open air cinema performance on the hill sloping down from the camp to the harbour. The effect of the flickering green light on the screen, the enormous semicircle of glowing cigarette ends, and the white light streaming from the ships in the harbour, was most picturesque.

The country through which we are passing at present is reminiscent of Palestine—a succession, of rather bleak olive groves and stone-covered hills. At every halt little boys and girls congregate and try to sell unripe fruit at exorbitant prices. "One beef" is asked for a peach, and several cigarettes for a tomato.

*Later.*

## Temporary Crusaders

We have been steaming along the coast of the Adriatic all day, passing village after village, snuggling down into their orchards and vineyards. Near each village there is a curious Heath Robinsonian jetty made of long thin poles. From these the inhabitants fish all day. This evening we have put into a siding where tea is being brewed for the men, and I have just returned from a scratch dinner in the station buffet presided over by a ferocious-looking villain in a dingy frock-coat. His moustache must have been eighteen inches from tip to tip.

*June 15th*

F——

We are here for a twelve hours' halt, in a most delightful little rest camp in a most delightful little Italian town. It is situated among tall trees below the ramparts of the town, grass lawns and flower beds bright with many colours surround the huts, and from the dining-room come the strains of an orchestra. In the ante-room there are all the latest papers—it is curious to see papers less than a fortnight old in these days—and the walls are covered with Muirhead Bone and Kirchner, Barribal and Handley Read. Union jacks and the Italian tricolour float side by side over the orderly room.

The orchestra turned up first at lunch, about seven men and a large woman, all most artistic in costume. They settled down comfortably in their chairs and after the usual turning up expressed their readiness to begin. All the waiters stopped waiting and gave a warning "S-s-s-h" We stopped talking, and even eating, to hear the opening bars of the masterpiece which they were evidently going to give us. After a few seconds it dawned upon us that the item was not as classical a one as we had expected. Another few bars and even the doubters were forced to admit that it was nothing more elevated than Harry Tate's "Good-bye." They played very well, alternating "Il Travatore" with "Black-eyed Susan," and "Rigoletto" with "Beware of Chu Chin Chow." At the end of each number a frenzied discussion broke out among the orchestra, and in this the waiters took a hand.

The town is famed for its pottery, so after lunch H—— and I walked over to the factory and saw all the processes, from the mixing of the clay to the final baking of the finished vessel. It was most interesting and we came away with several rather bulky pieces which we did not really want, and which will doubtless be a source of great inconvenience for the rest of the journey.

The Italians, as seen from the train, are a pleasant ever-smiling race, not nearly so dark as I had imagined, and after Egypt and Palestine one is so struck with the intelligence of their faces and their cleanliness. The little kiddies who clamour for "chigarette" are adorable, and the girls all seem to be pretty.

Extract from the conversation of a small and weedy-looking lowland Scot in the next carriage, or rather cattle-truck, to mine:

"Nae lang sine I wis at Kantara, where I had occeesion tae speak a wee tae General Allenby. Twa Dinkums wis passing and the yin says tae the ither, 'D'ye see General Allenby? Much is he?' says the ither."

*June 16th.*

To-day has been one long wave. Early in the morning we ran, through fine scenery, into the base of the I.E.F., where we stopped for a short half-hour, and swapped lies about the war on the different fronts. There was a large draft on its way to join the second battalion up in the Montello, and I recognized and had a chat with several of the men. They say that it is a good war in Italy.

Through the passes, and from the numerous villages everybody stopped for a moment whatever they happened to be doing and waved to us. The train, seen from one end of it, took on all the appearance of a forest of waving arms, and many of the men have small Italian flags or long bamboo canes. Our reception as we crawled slowly through the large town of G—— was magnificent, and we got so worked up that we even cheered another of our own troop trains, a disgraceful breach of our insular reticence. Nailed to the walls of one great munition works were three huge screens:

## Temporary Crusaders

Hurrah for our British friends.  
Welcome to our American Allies.  
Vivent les Français.

The latter part of the day was slightly marred by one of those little accidents which will happen in war-time. We left our carriage for a moment at one of the unofficial stops, and crossed over a line to get a paper. A goods train came along the line which we had just crossed, and before the road was clear again our own train started off, with us in pursuit. When we reached the carriage we found to our amazement that the door had gone, and on looking back there it was lying on the ground in between the two tracks. We must have left it open and it had caught in something sticking out from the goods train. Our night promises to be a cold one.

*June 17th.*

We are passing through the Riviera. The sentries at the bridges and tunnels are French. Good-bye, Egypt. Good-bye, Palestine. Goodbye, blue skies and summer seas. We are in the B.E.F. again, and the B.E.F. cares for none of these things.

Maleesh!

THE END