

In the Thick of It

Australian Soldiers Describe Their Experiences

Pte B. W. Newton compares the game of war to the game of "footer." This is how he puts it:—"Herewith are some particulars of our remarkable 'football team' over here. I am going to start with 'Tommy Hillside,' a good back, while with 'Jack Sandbag' and 'Harry Dugout' in their respective places we have a good combination. In the ruck comes 'Wally Bayonet,' who can't be touched at close quarters or a scrum-up. On the wing is 'Jack Aeroplane,' a master there's no doubt, and he is backed up well by 'Joe Vareylight,' a most illuminating player. On the forward lines 'George Grenade' plays a prominent part, ably assisted by 'Bill Sniper,' whom we can always rely on to raise the flags. 'Bill Howitzer' causes some excitement with his place kicks, and can always be relied on to add a few points. In 'Jack Shrapnel' we've always had a good follower. Last of all but not least comes our rover 'Phil Tank,' fast and furious, and always to be depended on in the throw-in. Well, now, that's the story of our football team. If there are any admirers and followers of the game who care to come and have a look at us they can do so by calling in at the nearest recruiting office."

Mr. A. T. Saunders, of Adelaide (and well known in the West) has received the following interesting letter from his son, Graham, who was at one time reported missing, but has since returned to duty:—

"We have been in a big stunt, and we now are in a peaceful spot away from all the noise and dust, with a view to straighten things out and get ready for other events. Just at present I am sitting against a tent pole with the writing-paper on my knee.

Following is a letter in true poetic strain from Lamotte A. Sage, a son of La Belle France, now with the A.I.F.:—

"Dear, dear old Perth, I greet you from beyond the seas! I envy them all who are now treading thy beloved pavements; oft I wonder what changes these three long years have brought to thee. I wonder if the German pest is allowed to pollute still thy fair name, or art thou free? If not, have no fear, for thy warrior sons will one day come back to thee, and it would be a bold man who should dare to govern thy destiny and at the same time offer any quarter to thy enemy. Thy warriors will deliver thee from the masters of kultur, for I know their temper, I know their steel, and if I do not then who should, for have I not followed their fortunes in Gallipoli, on the Somme, at Bullecourt, Messines and Ypres? Their temper is soon told. They will have nothing to do with Germans nor anything made by them, nor will their cultured presence ever be tolerated. A wise Government will purge thee, O fair land, of all things that have the least suggestion of a disgraced kultur before thy sunlit shores are gladdening our eyes.

"And thy sons' steel! Ah, that is difficult to tell of, or of their dauntless courage, their deathless bravery. I must pass it in silence, for I am a soldier, and as such we dislike to speak even unto thee of our deeds. It is a peculiarity of your fighting soldiers to draw a veil over their strength, although they are not so secretive about their weakness. Generally that is not believed of the veterans of many battlefields, who have challenged Death to combat desperate and grim, and smiled farewell to the dying comrade. No, it is not believed that these old veterans are still retaining a human heart capable of the most ardent love and keenest emotions.

"I, myself, am fortunate, for I am at present on leave at my temporary home at East Llis, Hants, England, and as I lift my eyes from this paper I behold a little woman of surpassing beauty—my wife. On her lap sits a little child nearly twelve months old—our war baby, born while I was on the battlefield of France, and whom I, her father, saw but for the first time on Wednesday last!

"Let us deliver our last blow with decision, and without mercy. Let Australia remember that the soil of France is even at this hour crimson with the blood of those who loved her. Yours in faith."