

# WELCOME HOME.

## PASSCHENDAELE HEROES.

### WAR INCIDENTS.

Nearly all wounded or suffering from illnesses, but every one of them exceedingly cheerful, another contingent of soldiers from the Western front arrived in Sydney yesterday.

There were 112 New South Welshmen and 80 Queenslanders.

Men who have been on almost every point on the far-flung line were in this contingent, comparatively small though it was. But the point most represented was Passchendaele.

In the early days of October last Australia was thrilled by the reports of the achievement of the Australians and New Zealanders in the second great Ypres push. They shared with brilliant regiments of the United Kingdom and France in the overpowering rush across territory over which Sir John French had been forced to retire earlier in the war. The Australasian achievements were universally acclaimed equal to those of their English comrades. They captured Abraham Heights and 2000 prisoners; they shared in the victory of Broodseinde; they took possession of Celtic Wood, and planted themselves on Passchendaele Ridge, which was the keystone of the German position. The weather was atrocious; heavy rain fell, the plains, even the ridges, were churned in quagmires, at best they were bogs; a fierce storm raged, the wind grew into a tempest, the intense cold was like a drop into midwinter. But on the British and French went, the Australians in the van at their particular point, and by "hurricane fighting"

particular point, and by "hurricane fighting" achieved what was at the time described as the greatest victory in history.

A great many of those who reached Sydney yesterday took part in the great events of those few memorable days. "How men could live through it was marvellous," said an invalid who was sent home because of an attack of fever. "It just shows," he continued, "what endurance and determination can do." The published reports set out that the German casualties were fully 75 per cent. greater than the British losses. To the soldiers who took part in the offensive the 75 per cent. meant, they said, on the basis of British losses, a terrific "chopping-up." The group that thus discussed the offensive remarked upon the German "pill-boxes." The general opinion was that these devices had not proved as successful as the Germans expected, though their usefulness could not be denied.

The returning soldiers were met at the Woolloomooloo Wharf by the State Commandant, Brigadier-General Lee, Captain Bell, Staff officer for invalid and wounded soldiers, and their staffs, and representatives of the executive of the Red Cross Society, North Sydney A.V.A.D., was in attendance, and distributed flowers and gifts. The New South Wales men were driven to the Anzac Buffet in the Domain, where they met their friends and were served with refreshments by Mosman V.A.D., assisted by Burwood V.A.D. The Queenslanders were taken to Rose Hall, where they had dinner, at which Eastwood and Bondi-Waverley V.A.Ds. assisted the house detachment, and in the afternoon were despatched by train for Brisbane. They were accompanied on the train journey by Glebe Men's V.A.D.

Deeds during the Ypres battle secured many rewards for Australians. Amongst the distinguished ones was Pte. L. Montgomery, of Rockhampton, who has been recommended for the Victoria Cross, and who was amongst yesterday's home-comers. In the height of a fight he carried in his colonel and captain.

yesterday's home-comers. In the height of a fight he carried in his colonel and captain, both of whom were badly wounded, from No Man's Land.

Pte. C. J. McCoy, of Rosebank-street, Darlinghurst, was awarded the Military Medal for services at Passchendaele. He, on October 4, took part in the first Australian participation in the Ypres battle, and passed through it without injury. But eight days later a sniper's bullet got him whilst he was scouting.

Captain Calderwood, who was formerly a surveyor in the Tamworth district, won the *Military Cross for exceptional bravery* during the German retreat in 1917. He had been on active service for over two years.

A Frenchman by birth, Private Bortzell answered the call in May, 1915, and fought alongside his Australian companions-in-arms for nearly two years. Yesterday he wore the colours denoting the owner's possession of the Military Medal, and talked generally on every subject excepting the war and the exploit which won for him the honorable recognition of his commanding officer. "He was always first when there was anything to be done," remarked a returned man who was in the same company as Private Bortzell. "He has been wounded three or four times, but he will never tell anyone." Private Bortzell was last wounded at Passchendaele Wood in October, when he lost his right leg. He gained the Military Medal for carrying wounded at Ypres under heavy shell fire.

Private Turnbull, from Newcastle, has come back without a scratch, but nevertheless incapacitated. He was for 15 months in and about the fighting line, saw his share of trouble, participated in many operations, came through them all without receiving physical hurt, and wound up at Passchendaele, in Belgium. One of his chief recollections of Passchendaele is the mud with which he and his fellows had to contend, but there was glory in it as well. On September 20 last his battalion was at work with others, they went over the top, and at the end of the day there

over the top, and at the end of the day there was to the credit of British arms a total of 8000 prisoners. On October 4 another fight took place—day's result, 5000 Germans laid by the heels and sent to the rear. On the 12th of the same month the result was 8000 prisoners. But on this day a shell burst near him and Turnbull was physically incapacitated. "Mind you," he said, "we left more dead on the field than we brought away prisoners. Fritz had a bad time. Most of our prisoners simply surrendered, they had had enough of fighting.

Private Higgins, whose home is at Lismore, enlisted with the Queenslanders, as Lismore is in the Queensland military district. He arrived home with this contingent, after two years of service. One side of his face is discoloured by powder, in his pocket he carries souvenirs of his last action, and one knee is stiffened from the effects of wounds received on the same occasion. On June 6 of last year his battalion was one of many before Messines. They waited for the grand explosion of Messines Ridge, and in the subsequent operations the men composing it went over the top. In October he was at Passchendaele, and on the 12th of that month was in the support line. The Germans shelled the line very severely, and whilst Higgins was in a somewhat exposed position a shell burst in front of him. It was so close that the one side of his face was blackened.

#### COT CASES.

The following cot cases were sent to Randwick Military Hospital:—

Lieut. L. W. C. Gibson, Pte. J. H. O'Donoghue, Gunner R. L. Rowe, Pte. Wm. Lee, L.-cpl. G. E. Reynolds, Pte. E. Doyle, Cpl. A. D. Bown, Pte. H. V. Hall, Pte. A. W. Gimbert, Pte. J. W. Heywood, Pte. R. Woodward, Pte. J. J. Yabsley, Pte. T. J. Kirk, Pte. W. A. Readford, Bmbr. E. Solomon, Pte. C. A. Pugh, Pte. J. R. Rusk, Bmbr. C. M. Lane, Dvr. L. Williams, Pte. R. A. Shiel, L.-cpl. C. H. Gross, Pte. J. Sepack, Pte. Goods, Pte. Higgins.

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