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The Dardanelles Expedition.

Chocolate Hill.

23.- 9.- 15.

This is about the 4th, time I have tried to write an account of what I've seen here. Its not easy to do somehow or other, and I'm sure its most unwise, for when I get back and start in to draw the "long Bow" and tell really spicy stories which I'll have time to invent on the voyage home, some horribly accurate and long - memoried person will certainly say:- "Oh Jim, I thought in the account you sent us you said so and so", and I will be covered with confusion.

I must therefore, request anyone who may venture to read this to kindly forget it all again, so that I do not forfeit the right of every returned soldier to stretch the bare truth when occasion may demand.

On the 6th, July I completed my warlike attire by buying a .45 Colt Automatic Pistol in London—a present from Cousin Bennie French. This has been a great success so far and if I have'nt used it every day on the enemy it is'nt because it was'nt in tune. As a matter fact an old soldier at Chatham told me, get a good revolver, you'll rarely want to use it, but when you do, you'll want it badly, and if its not a good one you may not want to use it again. As a matter of fact the one occasion I wanted it worse than I ever wanted anything was the one time I had'nt it with me; on that occasion I had to borrow a gun from another Officer, but that's going ahead too far.

Well, farewells were completed, and the train nearly missed and I returned to Basingstoke to pack up. All the Company except my section and Capt. S. had gone that morning via Devonport, and we were to go via Liverpool. I got packed up all right, leaving various packages in the hands of one of the Reserve Officers to be dispatched home.

Section marched off in great spirits at 2 a.m. and train left at 3.0. a.m. At the last moment 2 Officers of the 65th, Coy. jumped aboard the train minus their kits; they had turned in for

General came round, and we dismissed.

The ship had no guns except machine guns to defend herself with--most other transports we saw had a small gun on her poop.

Next day orders came out, that on the alarm being sounded every one was to stand still.

We had about 5,000 troops on board of whom 350 were Officers. We had a bunk each, and as far as the Officers were concerned, the only place over-crowded was the smoking room--smoking rooms are'nt proportioned on liners for a full passenger list of males.

We dined in the 2nd, saloon, and the first saloon was used for keeping the rifles in. The rifles were packed as tight as they could be, in stands, and even then the saloon could'nt hold them all.

The men were very crowded. Bunks were fitted in all over the place way down where cargo only lived in times of peace. They were blistering hot quarters, and the food was very pper--for the men--and it was amazing how cheerful they kept, and how little they groused.

Our food was quite good, even seemed so at the time, from present time it appears to have been marvellous - we had bread and we had butter. I am sure everyone will admit the excellence of these two products, but he wont feel it until he's lived with the Army Biscuit for some time--butterless.

On the 9th,-- 2 days out, the escort left us to our own devices and we did'nt think it at all nice of them.

The ship steered a zig-zag course by order of the Admiralty, changing every eight minutes. This took one knot off her speed.

On the 10th,-- 3 days out, we were detailed to certain boats in case of accident. That is, certain boats were to be manned by certain men, and everyone else was to stand still till he was told to move. This was a very good scheme, but somewhat late in being evolved as we were now past the worst place. I was given command of the Captain's motor boat, with orders to wait for that worthy, the General and Head Qrs. Staff. This motor boat contained a $1\frac{1}{2}$ H.P. motor which would not work.

The only duty I had to attend to on board was to look after the men's grub, and attend one parade daily.

There is really nothing to write further about the trip, the sea was like glass which was lucky for themen in their poor quatters, and we called at Gib., Malta, and Alexandria. It is unnecessary to describe such well known places even if I could remember much about them

After leaving Alexandria on 19th, July we came on for Lemnos. Grecian Archipelago was rather interesting. The Islands are all very mountainous and with very rugged shores. Passed fairly near Rhodes Island which I believe really belongs to Italy since the Tripoli war, but they've never worried much about it.

On June 21st, we got to Mudros Harbour on Lemnos Is. This is a fine harbour, as big as Hobart and check-full of ships. One of the first things one noticed was the "Packet of Woodbines"-- the Russian Cruiser with five funnels whos' picture was in the illustrated papers in connection with this Expedition.

There were dozens of warships, French and British and endless other ships here not to mention Hospital ships.

There is a French camp at Mudros itself and British camps were dotted round all over the place. The word "camps" should' nt imply tents- there were very few of these, the "camps" merely being areas where men dumped down their packs and lay down . The men carried a blanket each and some of them a waterproof sheet, and with these they did their best to keep off the sun and keep out the cold, as it was blistering hot in the day and fairly cold at night.

Next day we landed and after a good deal of hunting round we found that the rest of the Company had'nt turned up. Then we finally got allotted a spot where we were to bivouac. It was near some gunners one of whom was a son of the Dean of Kildare, and was called Waller. I immediately - on Waller's advice - tore off to the beach and managed to steal enough timber to enable us to stick up props on which to hang our blankets and sleep under. My little hatchet seemed to be the only cutting tool on the Island and came in very useful. Regret to say that when we came on here we came "light" and I

left it behind at Lemnos and have'nt seen it, or a good many of my things since.

After a few days, the rest of the Coy. turned up. They'd all travelled by a rotten old tub and were very sick of it. They were a week longer coming than we were - got bad food and had very little room.

All this time fresh battalions of the 10th, Division kept turning up and so there was no lack of company. The bathing was excellent and we partook pretty freely of it 2ce, daily.

We started off making roads and then went on to hospital building. One could judge pretty clearly that something was going to happen on a large scale pretty soon, owing to the anxiety they were in to run up hospitals. They wanted covered in accommodation for 10,000 patients to be ready in 14 days; I need'nt say they never got it. We built a few hospital huts, and some one else put up some tents and up to the day we left that was all that was done.

On August 5th, we got our first mails and great sport it was.

On August 6th, we suddenly got orders to "pack" all our carts and equipment, each man to carry his rifle and ammunition, 2 days iron rations and his haversack. That meant that all one was to keep was what could be put in the little bag that hangs at the side in the soldiers equipment - not the big "pack" which goes on his back. Everything else was put inside a barbed wire enclosure and to be left while we were to embark that afternoon for an unknown destination.

Well, after great rush and scurry we got ready. I carried in my hand a good sized billy can - which can was the main stay and support of the 66th, Company of the Royal Engineers from that day to this. Without it I do'nt know what we'd have done, as in it we have cooked all we've eaten ever since.

We came here on a boat ("The Partridge" *Belfast to Ardrossan*) that belongs to one of the Belfast to England ferries, and although the boat was covered with Staff Officers none of them knew where we were going - we only knew it must be for a new landing from the fact that we brought so little with us.

The food we had with us, or rather I had, was 2 days iron rations

aforesaid, 2 bits of cold fried bacon I'd saved from breakfast, and a quarter of a loaf of bread. The iron ration consists of a white cotton bag with about a hat-ful of small biscuits in it, the size of an overcoat button, and a small tin exactly like a 1 oz. tin of Smiths Glasgow mixture, and in that tin is a cube of Oxo, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz tea, and 1 oz. sugar.

These small biscuits are easilyly the best we ever get but, alas, we can't get them now.

We were able to get hot water on the boat for both Officers and men, and so we had tea to wash down the iron ration, I forget to say that the iron ration also contains a tin of corned beef - 12 oz.

I should also mention that we carried as many of the more necessary tools, on stretchers, as we were able to manage. We lay down on the deck when it got dark and tried to sleep, however we were all too cheery to do much of that.

Then just before dawn we began to hear heavy artillery firing and saw spurts of fire of shells bursting, and ships spitting flashes out of them. This seemed to be about a mile away at the nearest point and stretched up the shore for about five miles. The noise was tremendous and there looked to be a very big battle going on.

As a matter fact we were just opposite Anzac, where the Australians are, and our ships were bombarding there for all they were worth. Then the same thing suddenly spread up the coast ahead of us and we carried on straight for it. It gradually got light and we could see Sulva Bay right in front of us, there were lots of boats big and little, and as we came up our chaps started landing on a headland to the South of the Bay. These were the 31st Brigade (5th, and 6th, Baniskillings, 5th, and 6th, R. Irish Fusiliers) and some English battalions. We then saw the Field Guns land, and gallop into position with 10 horses each.

A little later the 30th, Brigade (6th, and 7th, Munsters, 6th, and 7th, Dublins) started landing on our left or on the North of the Bay. One shell hit the first lighter, and hurt some of those in it and just as they landed a land mine exploded and did some more damage. We were about a mile from the landing on the South, and half that

Well I think I've said all I can about the landing on Lala Baba - the men streamed over the narrow neck that I've marked "neck" on the map. There was a constant rattle of E rifle fire and they disappeared in the scrub - the rifle fire then increased rapidly which meant, I think, that our fellows opened fire. Of course I saw no more of this part of the battle, but on they went for Chocolate Hill scarcely opening serious fire on the E. at all but simply chasing him and bayoneting him when they got up. Chocolate Hill was taken, and taken by IRISHMEN, every bit of it, and I don't care who else claims the honour - it was taken by Irishmen alone (6th, and 7th, Dublin Fusiliers the 5th, and 6th, Enniskillens and the 5th, and 6th, Royal Irish Fusiliers).

The English Divisions or rather Brigades were to the left in the plain - they advanced well but stayed to return the E. fire too much hence they were a long time on the job, didn't go so far and lost quite as heavily as our boys who went at it full tear. There's no man to so much as approach Paddy in quick attack, he's even as good as the Australian. He fails and is beaten by the Australian because he doesn't understand the way to make his water bottle hold out.

I hear there are full accounts of all this in the papers that have just come in and I'm going to finish my account before I read them so as to try and tell only what I know is authentic.

So much for the left of the battle - the Enniskillens went on next day or the day afterwards and took some of the trenches on the hill I've marked W. no supports were forthcoming and they were called back. I think the R. I. F. were with them but can't say for sure, but they were probably in reserve.

The whole top of Chocolate Hill was a well prepared Turkish Fort. Our boys took the whole lot at the bayonet point.

Now for the North or left of the battle. The first to land were the Munsters (6th, and 7th,) and Dublins 6th, and 7th,) They landed a little later than those on the South. I have shown the points they landed as 1 - 2 - 3. As I said before one of the lighters was hit by a shell and some of the troops were blown up by a mine, but on the whole not many were knocked out. There was one trench only which

me to show the Major of the 68th, Coy. a site where we thought there might be water. I tramped off and in about 2 hours I got back and lay down again. I had'nt got to sleep however, when orders came that we were to peg off up the ridge again. I felt very injured but there's not much to be gained by feeling injured, so I put up my equipment again and tried to look gay.

Well, at 11. O. a. m. we started off to climb the ridge again and when we got up we were started digging at once. We were to improve the line along the top of the ridge. I can't say we did very much, it was too hot and the men too tired and thirsty.

I heard from an Baniskillen that there had been a well seen further back on the sea side of the ridge. I went and searched for this and found a nice little well able to give just enough water to fill up the water bottles of our Coy. This was a great help.

We worked two shifts that night, $\frac{1}{2}$ the Coy. on each and were still strengthening the top of the hill. We made very rough shelters for battalion Head Qrs. and rigged up cover from rifle fire along the ridge between points 4 and 5.

We got about three hours sleep this night, but it was too cold to do much good in this respect.

Next day there was a general advance and we went ahead to the position 6 - 7. This was not very severe fighting. The Turks retired quick enough and opened a very hot rifle fire at about 500 yds. We lost a good many but our particular people (R. E's.) were in reserve and we did'nt have much to do. That evening we went up to help dig the line in, and we worked all night at it. We had our first casualties this night losing one killed and three wounded. That was 10th, August.

On the 11th, I got orders that I was detailed by General Nicol (30th, Inf. Bge.) to lead a bombing party and take a trench held by Turks just in front of our most advanced Machine Gun.

I was to report at once to G. C. 6th, R. E. F. (Munsters) and act in conjunction with him. The orders were verbal and were simply to draw what men were necessary from the Munsters and take the trench. This latter was the only concise part of the whole thing. Oh yes,

one Turk fell.

I then ran on and searched everywhere for the gun which I knew was 'nt there, when suddenly 3 Turks got up not more than 10 feet away on the other side of the bush. They blazed off and missed me, I think I put them off with my yells and by pointing the revolver. Anyhow I then started pelting them with stones, they thought they were bombs I suppose, but they ran like hares. I was knocked down when these boys fired, I thought it was by a bomb but have since come to the conclusion it was their rifle fire that frightened me so that I fell.

All this time the men were falling very fast, and the groans of the dying and wounded were simply terrible. We worked along about 150 yards, and then I told Capt. Oldwall that there was no gun and we had finished. He then gave the command to his men to retire and bring in the wounded.

It was now broad daylight, and the E. was getting our chaps every shot. We got in the wounded somehow or other, and the whole show ended like a bad dream. We went out 160 strong and lost about 50%. It all lasted about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an hour and I never want to have another like it. On the way back we took the trench I'd been to the evening before and left a Sergt. and 10 men in it. After breakfast I got out to this trench, getting very nearly picked off in doing so, and got out sandbags and put it into a state of defence. We still hold that trench and its still the most advanced bit of the ridge we hold.

We went out four Officers. I was unscratched, two were killed one outright the other (Lt. Gafney) dying of a wound in the stomach, and the other Capt. Oldwall was shot through the wrist. I was fortunate in being able to help in some of the wounded. Poor Gafney was very brave, he was in terrible pain but I gave him morphia which quickly eased him. We got the wounded into a little advanced sangaar which I improved with sandbags and made safe. I sent for the Doctor of R. M. F. but he was so busy he never came. After holding poor Gafney's wound for about an hour, and fixing up about six others we had there, I slipped back to our lines and sent

of this battalion". He was then told that if he didn't get his men up to a safe position, and make them dig in, they'd all be sniped as they lay there when daylight came. This set him thinking and he became quite docile, and explained the situation thus: Well, look here old man, to tell you the truth I'm fed up - my colonel's killed, if I move about I loose my way and my knees get all prickled with these confounded prickles. That's absolutely true.

After a lot of trouble we got them into a safish position, but they utterly refused to do any work. We fixed up one little bit that seemed the most dangerous, and as daylight was coming on we went back to camp as best we could, but our men were very nearly done up.

These men we'd been with were Terriers, they called their Officers by their Christian names and seemed utterly devoid of discipline. One of these Divisions was "Stellenbashed", i.e. sent away as no good, and the other I hear has hardly distinguished itself.

Its all very well, men like this may do all right in trenches all ready made for them in France, but where open fighting is to be done they are not of the slightest use. A proper trench is like a street or pavement. You can't go wrong in direction very well and there are no prickles. Therefore these city men do very well, but turn them loose at Suvla Bay and they'r in a very different box.

I'm sorry to give such a poor account of the Terriers, but such is my experience of them (happily short) that I can't write otherwise and I'm afraid there's ample proof that I'm right when they were sent away from a place crying out for more men.

Next day 19th, we were relieved, and to our HUGE joy marched down to the base. We arrived there at 6.0. p.m. we all had fine beards, had practically not washed and had certainly never undressed for a fortnight, except twice when we got an hours swim - the only washing we'd done. I believed we looked a singularly wretched crew. I know my boots were completely worn through, my trousers were in that condition when one can't sit down on them, and my clothes back and front were covered with stains of all sorts and dust.

Next morning I strolled round and soon saw a 10th, Divn. A.S.C. officer. He at once ran and brought me a clean shirt of his own

and took us on to Kennedy the 5th, Eniskillings. He gave us new boots, new trousers, new tunic, new shirt, and new socks. I rolled them all up into a bundle and tore off to the sea, emptied my pockets and dived in. I scrubbed all my old clothes and got into the new ones and went back to where we were bivouacked and shaved. "Three days rest" was the great idea in everyone's head, three days doing nothing.

An hour later orders came that we were to march with 2nd, Mounted Division to Lala Baba that night and partake in an attack the next day.

I do'nt think I ever felt so angry with the fortunes of war as I did that day, but it was a great complaint to us as there must have been, and were, other Field Coys. available.

So of course we had lots to do all that day getting ready to move at night. At 6.0. p.m. we marched off. At 3.0. a.m. we had actually reached Lala Baba - 4 miles. I never had such a tiresome march at any time.

I'll now send off this such as the Chocolate Hill times are quite separate from those of Keretch Tepe.

Chocolate Hill was all trench warfare - a dull, laborious, miserable sort of game where everyone grumbles and gets on everyone else's nerves more each day.

I do'nt suppose anyone will want to publish any of this, but in case they do, I wish it to be distinctly understood that I write it only on the conditions that no one publishes one word of it.