



**OVER THE TOP WITH
THE THIRD
AUSTRALIAN DIVISION**

G. P. CUTTRISS

Global Grey ebooks

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THIRD AUSTRALIAN
DIVISION**

**BY
G. P. CUTTRISS**

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
MAJOR-GENERAL SIR JOHN MONASH, K.C.B., V.D.

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CONTENTS

Preface

Introduction

'Over The Top' From 'There' To 'Here'

Australians—In Various Moods

Sunday, 'Somewhere In France'

Soldiers' Superstitions

On The Eve Of Battle: To The Widows Of France

'Over The Top.'

Shells: A Few Smiles And A Contrast

Messines: June 7, 1917

Bill The Bugler

A Tragedy Of The War

Recreation Behind The Lines

For The Cause Of The Empire

Our Heroic Dead

The Silver Lining

TO THE
FADELESS MEMORY OF OUR HEROIC DEAD
AND TO
THOSE WHO HAVE LOST
THIS BRIEF VOLUME OF SKETCH AND STORY
IS DEDICATED,
IN UNSTINTED ADMIRATION,
IN AFFECTIONATE SYMPATHY,
AND IN THE UNSHAKEABLE BELIEF THAT

'As sure as God's in heaven,
As sure as He stands for right,
As sure as the Hun this wrong hath done,
So surely we'll win this fight.'

MESSINES: JUNE 7, 1917

A shell-struck souvenir of hellish war,
A monument of man's stupendous hate!
Can this have been a Paradise before,
Now up-blown, blasted, drear and desolate?
Aye, once with smiling and contented face
She reigned a queen above a charming place.

But soon the sport of leaders and of kings
Transformed her to a resting-place for guns,
Rude scars across her breasts the worker flings,
To shelter countless hordes of hell-born Huns,
The while, upon the next opposing crest,
Our men died gamely as they did their best.

And thus for years, with cold, relentless zeal,
With fiendish science both sides fought and watched,
From loop-holes or from clouds which half conceal,
Or in deep tunnels all their skill was matched.
On sentry in the firebay, or the hov'ring 'plane,
Mining and countermining yet again.

And far behind such scenes, great engineers
Pondered o'er problems without parallel.
And planned with wisdom of a thousand years,
To blow the other to eternal Hell.
Their calculations left no callous scheme untried,
To slaughter hundreds of the other side.

But hush! the whole machinery's complete,
All plans are folded and the great work's done,
The work of building up to cause defeat—
The lever's pulled, and, lo! a new work has begun.
The task of falling on a shattered foe,
And doing things undreamed-of years ago.

Hush! hark! A mighty rumbling roar breaks thro',
And see! Her crest-line leaps into a flame,
The foul disease within her bowels she blew
High into the air to rid her of her shame;
In one huge vomit she now flings her filth,
Far o'er the country in a powdered 'tilth.'

And so the vassals of a fiendish foe
Are scattered far and wide into a dust.

Those who have revelled as they wreaked red woe,
A shattered sample of their own blood-lust.
Whilst from our hill-crest and its catacomb,
A new life comes a-pouring from the tomb.

Eager, and burning with the zeal of youth,
Our Second Anzacs sprang from out the ground,
Bound by their mateships and their love of truth,
The Third Division its new soul has found;
Straight o'er the top amidst a hail of shell
To their objective which they knew so well.

On, on, thro' poison gas and rattling roar,
Past ulc'rous craters, blackened foul and deep,
These comrades 'stuck' as ne'er they had before.
And kept together in their rushing sweep;
Deafened and rattled, hung up in the wire,
Helping each other thro' such fearful fire.

On still until they reached the furthest goal,
There to dig in and hold the new-won line.
By linking up each torn and shattered hole—
By no means easy, but their grit was fine—

They fought and worked like demons till the dawn,
Harried and pestered by the 'Kaiser's spawn.'

And, baffled from his gun-pits far away,
Low-down, well south, an angry foe doth roar,
He opens out again upon another day
And rakes the slope with shrapnel as before.
But only working parties on the top are found,
The rest, save A.M.C., are underground.

Strange sights are seen upon that battle-ground,
But stranger still are unearthed from below;
Here many supermen may now be found,
Just watch those stretcher-bearers where *they* go,
And see those parties bearing food and drink,
Past all those blizzard shells—then stand and think!
But one poor shell-crazed loon roamed far and wide;
Sweat-grimed, wild-eyed, and now bereft of all.'
Me mates? W'ere is my mates?' he plaintive cried,'
They's in that 'ole with me when it did fall.'
We took him to three huddled heaps near by,
But he roamed on as tho' he wished to die.

And as the sun's great light bursts o'er the scene,

La Petit Douve, one-time a sparkling stream,

Now sluggish slides, red-tinted, she has been

Past horrors thro' the night and *did not dream*.

For many days she'll, silent, strive to bear

Such human wreckage down a path once fair.

G.P. Cuttriss and J.W. Hood.

BILL THE BUGLER

I well remember when the subject of this sketch 'joined up.' He was small of stature, and his general appearance was by no means prepossessing. That he had seen a good deal of the world was very evident, even to the most superficial observer. His language was picturesque, though not profane. A few weeks sufficed to 'lick him into shape,' and he presented a fairly tolerable figure in uniform. At spinning yarns he was an adept, and at camp concerts could invariably be depended upon for an item or two, always of a humorous nature.

Bill quickly established himself amongst the 'boys' as a general favourite. This enviable position he still occupies. On account of his duties as bugler requiring him to be one of the first up in the morning, and one of the last to retire at night, he sought a change of duty. He became a bandsman, then a stretcher-bearer, and eventually was detailed to assist in a cook-house—in cook-house terminology an 'off-sider.'

Though Bill had as much military experience as most of us, we could not think of him as a soldier. That our opinion of him was justified the following incident will illustrate. A party of officers, including a staff-major, was inspecting cooking and billeting arrangements in our quarters. Bill, who happened to have a couple of hours off that day, was strolling towards the party. He was in cook-house attire—tunicless, his hat well back on his head, shirt-sleeves rolled to the elbow, hands deep in his breeches pockets, a cigarette between his lips. Regardless of the critical eyes which were focused upon him, he sauntered leisurely towards the officers, and when in line with them he nodded and said 'Good-day.' The officers stopped, and one of them peremptorily inquired, 'Aren't you a soldier?' 'Oh, no,' he replied; 'I'm D Company's cook!' His reply so amused the officers that he was allowed to continue on his way without being reminded that as a soldier he was required to salute all officers.

After spending a few weeks in the cook-house, he asked permission to go to the trenches when the battalion went into the line. The transfer was

effected, and he made a start with real soldiering. No amount of discipline could transform him from the free-from-care, do-as-you-please individual into the polished soldier. One evening he was posted over the gas-alert in the front line trenches, when a shell exploded a few yards in front of him. The explosion caused his hat to disappear and the concussion projected him into a dug-out.

Only the solidity of the wall prevented him from going further; as it was, the force with which he was hurled against the side of the dug-out made a deep impression on the damp wall. He lay in a motionless heap in the corner of the dug-out. A N.C.O. rushed along the duck-boards, thrust his head into the dug-out, and anxiously inquired of Bill as to whether he was hurt. Bill by this time had partially recovered from the shock. His small steel-grey eyes gradually opened. The N.C.O. again asked if he were hurt. Bill's eyes rolled, his lips moved, and then he blurted out, 'Oh, no, only my feelings!'

Bill is not a man to make a fuss about anything. He has no time for red-tape in any shape or form, it is true, but whatever work is assigned him is always done satisfactorily.

Whether he is any less a soldier or his efficiency as a fighting force impaired because of his failure to meet the rigid requirements of an exacting military regulation is a matter concerning which there might be a difference of opinion; but this at least stands to his credit: he knows no fear, is the life of the unit, and the battalion to which he belongs would sustain a distinct loss by the removal of Bugler Bill, &c.

A TRAGEDY OF THE WAR

From strife they now march back to smiling farms,
Recoiling from the crash and smoke and roar.

Meadows, all verdant, faerie fields, whose charms
Serve for a space to make them as before.

And peaceful pictures of the days of yore,
With thrilling thoughts of those they left behind
Flash thro' the mental vision, and a score
Of letters brightly occupy the mind
Without a care, or woe, or doubt of any kind.

Anon they journey from this place of rest
By night or early dawn back to the brink
Of that volcanic crater where the best
Sit tight, scarce caring if they swim or sink.
Silent they bear it, as they quietly think
The end approaching to their life at last,
And face each other, with a smile or wink
Outwardly stoic, tho' their hearts beat fast
As, thumping down, great shells come racing in and past.

Erase such thoughts from out the o'er-wrought brain,

Think rather of this freshness, and the sight
Of nature in her harvest dress, refrain
From plunging into the eternal night.
Such contrasts seem the only choice by right
Of those who battle for the joy of life.
Out on this troubled spot where Armies fight,
And peasants labour just behind such strife
Shorthandedly, unhelped, save by a child or wife.

So come with me down hedgerows, down the glades,
And thro' the cosy glens, till far away
We come unto a hill-crest—lights and shades,
Bright coloured landscapes far below us lay,
Blue mists and fields of yellow corn and hay,
In rows like soldiers, now the tired eyes see,
And poplars guard the distant dim roadway,
Whilst near the wind sighs thro' the acorn-tree,
Till one feels hushed, serene, contented, almost free.

And here, tucked back behind a leafy lane,
Low in a pocket of some sheltered ground,
An unpretentious farm, so snug and plain,
An invitation in itself; when found,

Only a whining howl like dingoes' sound,
Reminds one that there is a war near by.
The tools of peace see littered here around,
Weapons by which men learn to live, not die:
A plough, a drill, and there a binder standing nigh.

'*Bon jour, m'sieurs,*' a little hunchback cries;
A wizened, twisted human form divine;
She flashed a look of welcome from her eyes,
From which the soul of ages seem to shine.
'*Entrez,*' she welcomed, and her face looked fine,
As proudly bustling o'er her clean stone floor
She bade us linger, eat, and drink her wine.
Refreshed with food and drink, we loiter more
Within such cool retreat, delaying '*Au revoir.*'

And soon the human tragedy in course
Of progress thro' that little home becomes
Clear to the senses, and to us much worse
Compared with our Australia's peaceful homes.
For, oh, the pity, as one's vision roams
From there to here, and back on wings again;
A rush of feeling and emotion comes,

Whilst hearing this contorted piece of pain,
The stirring times of all their troubled lives explain.

For she to whom Fate seemed at first unkind,
Now lives an angel in a higher sphere.
This pained and twisted cripple seemed to find
Pleasure in living for her kinsfolk dear.
Hard work an honour, in her duty clear
To wives of brothers in the fighting line;
Women and children gather round her here;
For round their hearts her nature did entwine,
Her beaming face proclaimed 'See, Anglaise, they are mine.'

And all around these chubby children play,
Dirty, but happy, fed and cared for well,
With ne'er a troubled thought the live-long day,
For they know little of adjacent hell.
The hunchback warns us we are not to tell
About the 'Allemagne' whilst they are nigh,
Since all have known him in the past too well.'
Let them forget it as we often try.
C'est la guerre,' she said, and quickly brushed her eye.

And then she whispers, as we loiter near,
The story of their young lives years ago,
When, snatched from cradles, with a frenzied fear,
Their mothers hurried on before the foe;
Their men defend and screen them as they go,
And fight a rearguard action with the brute,
Who cares not for their agony or woe,
But only for the blood-streams and the loot.
And now she sees us watching one poor little mute:
'Ah! this one?' and she pointed to the dot
Who sat alone, and smiled to vacant space,
Waits for her mother; very hard her lot;
For years now has she waited in her place.
"Where is her mother?" I can never trace
Somewhere beyond across "the no man's way.
"Some day, perhaps,' she cried, with yearning face.
The tiny mite, tho' happy, could not play,
Except with little restless hands all day.

'Sometimes the shell come here right by,' she said.'
The other day, when I what you call wash,
A big boom quickly pass above my head,
And fall out in the field with a big crash.

But, oh, those children, they so very rash,
They know so little of the dreadful doom.
I come in time to save a fearful crash,
And catch them with the nose-cap in this room—
The nose-cap, unexhausted, from the boom.'

And then we start, inclined to say farewell.
We try to brighten up the little maid
Who sits alone, perhaps in faerie dell;
For she doth seem not in the least afraid.
She, smiling, takes the pennies which we lay
Within her hands, tho' distant is her smile;
And for a space she seemed with them to play,
But drops them ere we're scarcely gone, awhile
We wander back, half dumb, hard, thinking for a mile.

G.P. Cuttriss and J.W. Hood.

RECREATION BEHIND THE LINES

The military authorities have ever recognized the importance and value of recreation in connexion with the training of men. They realize that 'all work and no play makes Tommy a dull boy'; and the provision that has been made for recreation and amusement for the 'boys' commands the deepest appreciation of both rank and file. The Australian is unaccustomed to the rigid restrictions of an inflexible military régime, and a temporary relaxation contributes much towards eliminating that feeling of 'fed-upness' to which he is so susceptible under monotonous and trying conditions, and certainly assists in making him a less dissatisfied soldier.

The sporting instinct is so ingrained in the average Australian that amusement and athletics have become part and parcel of his life, and his efficiency as a fighting force has been increased in consequence. His well-knit, muscular frame, and cheerful, free-from-care disposition, and love for clean sport, have won for him a place in the estimation of those who know and understand him, which is the envy of many. Australia has given to the world champions in almost every branch of sport, and the traditions which have been established on the football and cricket fields and in athletic circles in years preceding the war are being upheld and added to by her sons 'somewhere in France.'

A General's task is by no means an easy one. He has to safeguard against dissatisfaction, which invariably is the primary cause of breaches of discipline. He requires to be tactful in the handling of his command, gain the confidence of the men, and enlist their undivided support; yet every consideration must be subordinate to the supreme task of winning the war. His methods must be such as will exact prompt obedience and beget respect, without imposing undue hardships and punishment.

The Third Division is exceedingly fortunate in having Major-General John Monash, C.B., V.D., in command. He is a popular and painstaking officer, a born leader, a strict disciplinarian, possessed of tireless energy. He has not spared himself in his efforts to establish and maintain a high standard of

efficiency amongst all ranks. The G.O.C. set himself to put his men right and succeeded. He has a wonderfully comprehensive grip over every branch of activity, and woe betide the officer or man who is indifferent to or negligent of the duties entrusted to him. Any proposition calculated to benefit the men has always been favourably considered, and he has frequently been an interested spectator of various games that have been played just behind the lines. As a result there is little if any disaffection among the men of the Division. Major-General Monash has encouraged by approval and assistance various forms of recreation and entertainment. The splendid fighting record of the Third speaks eloquently of his capable leadership and the rousing and prolonged cheering which greets him when presiding over or addressing an assembly of his men leaves no doubt in the mind as to his popularity.

For a few months after our arrival in France, a cinema afforded nightly entertainment. It was well patronized by the troops. The building used had seating accommodation for about seven hundred, and generally long before the hour of opening a queue of soldiers would assemble. There was no pushing or scrambling for tickets. The Australian good-humouredly submitted to the queue system, and patiently waited his turn. Mr. Frank Beaurepeare, of swimming fame, successfully managed the picture show, and eventually got together a few vocalists and comedians, who were organized into a pierrot group. These men were relieved from other duties during the comparatively quiet periods.

Eventually a couple of talented Tommies were added to the group, which came to be designated the Coo-ees, under the direction of Mr. Dixon, the capable and energetic successor to Mr. F.B. Beaurepeare. In addition to performing every evening, the Coo-ees frequently gave out-door concerts during the day or in the men's billets, after the evening entertainment. A nominal charge for admission was made, and the proceeds were used to augment the Divisional Funds, which are used for the benefit of the men. These entertainments were given within easy range of the enemy guns. On several occasions shells fell in the vicinity of the hall, but few casualties were reported.

Costumes were procured, and the programmes submitted were highly creditable and greatly appreciated. The quartette party was exceedingly popular, and never failed to please the 'boys.'

In addition to affording amusement, the Coo-ees did invaluable work during engagements. They either acted as stretcher-bearers or dispensed refreshments to the troops as they went forward to or returned from the trenches. They were located at dressing-stations or at R.A.P.'s. It is generally hoped that the party as at present constituted will be available after the war for the purpose of giving entertainments in Australia such as they gave to the tired war-hardened troops 'somewhere in France.'

Periodically horse shows and sports were arranged by D.H.Q. Substantial prizes and valuable trophies were awarded the successful competitors. The day's proceedings would be enlivened by band music. Impersonations of the world's mirth maker, Charlie Chaplin, and Australian 'sun-downers,' were decidedly clever and afforded much amusement. Horse shows always attract large attendances, and any vehicle going in the direction of the show grounds was practically commandeered by the tired but interested troops. They have a partiality, however, for 'M.T.' lorries. For weeks prior to the event, men would spend every available minute polishing chains, cleaning harness, painting vehicles, and grooming horses. Every unit has its admirers and supporters, and all events were keenly contested.

In addition to horse shows and sports organized by D.H.Q., the brigades and battalions within the Division arrange for fête days whenever opportunity offers. The manner in which these are carried out reflects the highest credit upon those responsible for their organization, and they have materially helped to bring about a better understanding between officers and men. Games appropriate to the season are played at the back of the lines. The ground selected for football or cricket may be shell-marked, and the materials used roughly made and incomplete. Football matches between different units have been as keenly contested on the muddy and broken fields of Belgium and France as those that have been played on the specially prepared grounds of the Homeland. The Australians have held their own against other units in both cricket and football.

For those who find such games too strenuous, indoor games are provided by the Australian Comforts Fund, the Y.M.C.A., or the League of Loyal Women of Australia. A circulating library is usually connected with the Y.M.C.A. or Church Army huts, so that practically every taste is catered for. An institution is justified in its existence by what it produces. Judged according to this canon, the various organizations which cater for the amusement and recreation of our fighting men have infallibly demonstrated their right to be, and should command the practical support of all who are interested in the well-being of our fighting men.

FOR THE CAUSE OF THE EMPIRE

Irrespective of the state which sent us forth, and despite our denominational and political differences, we are undivided in our admiration of those who, in the enthusiasm of deathless devotion, have made the supreme sacrifice for King and country. Words are inadequate to express the tribute which we would pay to the memory of our brave dead. We are beginning to value heroism more truly, and have not been blind to the valour of those who have fallen in the effort to uphold the honour and flag of the Empire. The story of their deeds makes the heart beat faster. Many have discovered that the most glorious use to which life could be put was to give it away. When the smoke has lifted and the noise died down, the confession made and the true history of this war written, then we shall see their heroism in the right light, and more fully appreciate their sacrifice in the interests of justice and honour. It matters not where they died—in hospital, on troopship, or on the battlefield; their presence in the Army was sufficient evidence of their willingness to bear their share of the cost in sacrifice that had to be made before the end could be achieved. They died as few men get the opportunity to die, fighting for all that is most worth while—for God, and right, and liberty—which is just another way of stating that they gave their lives for the glorious cause of the Empire.

The general impression is that the Empire consists of an aggregation of people, in possession of vast territories and enormous wealth: that it consists of Great Britain, Canada, India, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, &c. Many cannot think of the Empire but in terms of territory, money, and men. The British Empire, like the Kingdom of God, is invisible. These material things are but the practical expression of great forces and unalterable principles such as freedom, democracy, justice, and faith, which lie at the very base of our national life. It is for the retention and general enjoyment of these things that we are fighting. We are not fighting for France, Belgium, nor even for the Empire, as it is generally regarded, but for the enforcement of those standards of justice and honour which have made us the greatest

nation in the world. It is not a war of retaliation nor aggression, but a war to redress wrong, to succour the weak and down-trodden.

There is not lacking evidence that beneath the material aspects of this conflict there is a tremendous spiritual battle in progress, the issue of which will determine the value of these national assets. We cannot think that our comrades have given their lives merely to enlarge our borders or to increase our wealth. They have died for the cause of the Empire, and the cause of the Empire is synonymous with the cause of humanity, democracy, freedom, civilization—of Christianity.

The cause of the Empire is the cause of God. The highest standard of civilization finds expression in the readiness to make sacrifice that others might benefit. This standard has been splendidly exemplified by the 'boys' from Australia. This is the standard of the Empire as against that of Kultur, which is the suppression of the weak, the slaughter of the innocent, and the elimination of the small. The sacrifice has certainly been considerable, the price involved very great, but not too great. We are prepared to pay even a higher price rather than lose our heritage or forfeit our right to the enjoyment of the priceless privileges of freedom and justice. We cannot help the dead, but we can honour them, and we can best honour them by taking up the arms which they have laid down, filling the gaps which their death has made, and resting not until peace with honour shall have been established on firm and enduring foundations.

War is certainly an ugly business; it is hell; but better by far than the loss of liberty and civilization under the heel of Prussian militarism; and we would pay our humble tribute to the memory of our brave comrades who have freely given their lives for the cause of the Empire.

To those who have lost—the wives, mothers, and sweethearts—we extend our deepest sympathy, and trust that their deep sorrow will be tinged with pride in the knowledge that their dear ones died the noblest death that men may die.

OUR HEROIC DEAD

Our heroic dead, though war hath laid you low,
And cruelly robbed you of this earthly life,
You did your best against the fiendish foe,
And gave your all to put an end to strife.

Our comrades still, sleep on; your names will live
Long after this terrific war hath ceased.
No cannon's roar, no hurtling shell, no bomb
Can harm thee or disturb your long last sleep.

Down in your soldiers' graves you rest from toil,
Without the knowledge of the Hun's fierce hate.
The shell-struck, blood-stained clods of Belgian soil
Will open to your souls the Pearly Gate.

There is no place on this earth's troubled face
So sacred as the ground which shields your heads,
Fit resting-place for those so true and brave,
Who for the cause the fullest price have paid.

Australia's sons the sacrifice supreme

For honour, truth, and freedom gladly made;
And though the price as high again had been,
We'd have paid it, bravely, for the Nation's sake.

Comrades, sleep on, till God's great Spirit comes
To clothe you with the life which never ends;
And o'er this shell-swept, bruised, and bleeding land
Victorious and enduring peace descends.

'They also serve who only stand and wait.'

How true that is, and how we have realized it since we have been out here! We know that the wives, the mothers, the sweethearts, have had a harder time than any of us. We realize the long anxious time of waiting they have gone through, and know the magnificent part they have played in this world-wide war.

However dark things may appear now, the future is radiant with hope, and Australia's sons will return to their beloved land bigger and better men than when they left; and our country will be a nobler one because so many of her sons heard the call of the Motherland, and responded gloriously.
