

SECOND FOURTH CASUALTY CLEARING STATION A.I.F.

Unofficial History.

-by Lieut. Col. T. Hamilton

Although December 30th, the day on which the Head Quarters of the Unit moved into Brighton Camp, Hobart, and issued its first Routine Order, is the official birthday of 2/4 C.G.S., the actual planning of the Unit took place long before that date.

I was seated in my Surgery at Newcastle, N.S.W. on November 15th 1940, talking quietly to a patient, when the trunk line call which I had been awaiting from the outbreak of War came through on the phone.

I recognized the even tones of the D.D.M.S., Eastern Command.

"Will you accept an appointment to Command the Second Fourth C.G.S. and take it abroad?"

My pulse rate leapt ten beats with sudden excitement but I managed to say.

"Yes Sir."

"Good, then you may have to proceed to Tasmania to form the Unit there."

"I'll go to Timbaktu if necessary, Sir."

The D.D.M.S. must have sensed the excitement because he laughed and said.

"All right, take ten days to get ready and we will give you further orders in writing. Army Head Quarters will ring you on Sunday night and give you particulars of your team of Officers; come and see me when you are ready and I'll give you all the help I can. Good-bye."

The crackle of the far-away voice ceased and I tried to concentrate on my patient again. Her ailment seemed to be forgotten; she had evidently got the drift of the conversation, for she smiled nervously and said.

"So you will be leaving us too, Doctor."

I nodded, and she continued-

"War is a cruel business; my husband sailed three weeks ago."

Instantly I felt sorry. Here was a new aspect which I had not considered. She had just recovered from a serious operation and, with her husband away, was faced with the task of living in loneliness and rearing two young children on a meagre income. I wonder how often

we fellows on Service realise that the real brunt of the war is being borne by our women-folk on the Home Front.

We shook hands solemnly and she departed, wishing me "Good Luck" as she went.

My Secretary entered with a letter. She seemed to know also.

The letter was dated 13th November, by Air Mail from Tasmania and was from Captain E. H. Lee asking for the post of Quartermaster. I laughed; "Funny how Quartermasters know everything before anyone else."

Need I describe the ensuing days? The rush to dispose of practice and car; the farewells with the family; the examinations at the Recruiting "bull-ring" in Sydney; with the help of Eastern command and a friendly Warrant Officer I got through the ordeal in forty minutes, which must be close to a record.

Captain G. R. Furner came down with me to interview the D.D.M.S. He wanted him in my unit and he wanted to come. We were colleagues and good friends in the 1st Field Ambulance (Militia).

Headquarters were adamant. There was no place for Captain Furner, until later, perhaps! We returned to Newcastle feeling sulky, but I bet him going up in the train that I would have him with me by hook or by crook.

Heavily prevailed as the best policy and Captain Furner joined me later in Tasmania and has been a tower of strength to the Unit ever since.

On the 9th December I paraded at Army Medical H.Q. in Melbourne and was given the opportunity of meeting Major H. A. Phillips and Captain R. Wall.

In between conferences I was whisked out to Royal Park Depot where I saw Major J. S. Chalmers and W. O. Max Bosward in action at Training School. I was impressed by their evident efficiency and promptly requested that they be included in my Unit.

The accompanying officer, Colonel (now Brigadier) R. W. Walsh, smiled and shook his head.

"You can't have all the good men in the Army, Chalmers and Bosward are already allotted."

How Major Chalmers and W. O. Bosward subsequently joined us is a long and unofficial story which will be told after the War.

101.
Hotel Windsor,
MELBOURNE.

8th December, 1940.

Left Newcastle on Sunday afternoon train, feeling miserable. Felt better when I met Capt. Gen. Barlow on the train and found he was going right through to Melbourne to a Staff and Command School.

Raining and very humid in Sydney and Central Station just as depressing as usual.

Managed to get berthed in with Capt. Barlow on the Limited and had a good trip to Albury.

Col. Monty Brown and one or two officers of I Division also called in and chatted till bed time.

Albury sold and fresh - had breakfast on the "Spirit of Progress" and found a seat next to Capt. Max Brown of Tasmania - fine train.

Cpts. Webber and Newman of Newcastle Hospital were also on the train proceeding to Laverton to join the R.A.A.F.

Victoria Barracks at Melbourne seem to have doubled in size. Commonwealth Police and Officials everywhere.

D.O.M.S. quartered in block "J" and it is an interesting revelation of how the Army Med. side of H.Q. is run.

Lunch at the Imperial Service Club and met old General Hardy, late Base Commandant of R.O.S., who has just been "retired". The poor old chap sneezed a bit and about it.

With Col. Colvin I went over the team for the O.C.O. Should I say yes to Captains I had never seen? I managed first to get Carl Furner fixed and then I decided to interview two others. One (whom the General specially nominated) I asked to be rechecked

ho. 2.
T. S. S. KARDOONA.

11th December, 1943.

Sad Spots

What a rush round Melbourne in the last two days - visiting the Barracks, getting tickets, interviewing officers and surgeons. The Movement Officer said he had booked me a good cabin for Tasmania but, being wise in the ways of the Army I found it was a dark dungeon of a four berth bibby cabin. When I rang him up and complained he said it was because the boat was probably crowded. Being down town before sailing time I looked in at the Tasmanian Tourist Bureau and asked if they could do anything better. They said "Certainly sir, we'll give you one all to yourself, and it won't cost anything extra", so here I am with a decent cabin all to myself.

Sir Robert and Lady Knox took me to lunch at Manzius to-day. I hope I don't lose it all by being sea sick. Sir Robert is going to telephone Hobart and get me put up at the Tasmania Club in case I have to stay there for a few days and he is also going to get some of his business friends to look me up at the Club.

We have just cleared the heads and seen the poor old "Orungal" on the beach. She can be seen quite clearly from Point Lonsdale.

Last night I had to see Mr. Malcoms Quick, but he got toothache and I was left at a loose end, so I went to the Princess Theatre next door and bought a seat. I was surprised when I was only charged 3/6 for a booked stall, but saw a ballet pirouetting on the stage, so sat down, and it was about ten minutes before it dawned on me that I had blundered into a school performance by the pupils of Miss Hopman's Clifton College of Calisthenics. I wasn't quite sure what calisthenics were before, but I know now all right - so fed, very fed up.

I got a pleasant surprise this morning when the Windsor knocked 20% off my bill, seeing that I was in the A.I.F. I hope all the pubs do it.

Hope in the next spasm from Tasmania. I must arrange for my wife to come over.

HOBERT,

15th December, 1940.

A clean town of 60,000 inhabitants, dominated by Mount Wellington and Mount Wilson. Douglas Parker, Superintendent of the General, spent yesterday afternoon trying to take me up to the pinnacle of Mount Wellington in his car - of ancient vintage.

About a mile past the Springs Hotel and in sight of the summit, the car coughed, faltered and stopped. Doug coaxed it, his wife encouraged it, but the car was adamant, so we let it trickle down backwards to the Springs, had afternoon tea and came home.

In the evening I had tea with Dr. Hamish Reid and his family - three nice youngsters - just like mine. Seeing them come in and exhibit their milk worms, listen to the local "Dad and Dave" and then kiss me good-night with the rest of the family, made me a bit hungry for my own home and youngsters and all the peaceful joys of one's own house.

To-day Dr. Frank Day and his family are going to call for me.

Nobody works in Hobart on Saturday mornings - a very pleasant custom. I went up to the Barracks to do some work, was presented with a cup of morning tea and assured that there was no hope of seeing anybody that mattered, as they had all gone fishing or calling for the week-end.

Major Turnbull, of Launceston, will be unable to join the Unit as his wife is expecting her fourth baby and has begged him not to go till it arrived. I had no hesitation in letting him off as I had been given a tip that he might be a hard officer to manage, although he seemed a very decent chap.

To-morrow I go to Launceston to see some potential officers and men there. A very fine type of N.C.O. is available, fortunately, and most of them have previous A.A.K.C. or hospital experience. In order to stiffen the technical side of the work I have sent to Newcastle Hospital for a young Radiographer who can turn out beautiful X-ray work, and the head Theatre Attendant, who is thoroughly skilled with sterilisers and operating theatre gear generally.

I have been assured in Hobart that I was very lucky to get a C.C.S. as there was keen competition for the post, not only from Tasmania but from every Capital City in Australia. It is astonishing the number of medics here - all with three or four children - who are leaving in practices and enlisting. The Tasmanians are taking the War very seriously.

On Friday night I had dinner with Dr. Bruce Hamilton and his mother, who is over seventy. Bruce has a lavish home, including a marvellous radio-gramophone cabinet which plays series of records at a time and does everything except mix drinks. His bedroom has four wardrobes, he has about forty suits - everything in the grand manner - and although it adjoins the palatial bathroom, he has had hot and cold water brought in to a marble basin at his bedside so that he can practically shave without getting out of bed.

He is going off as eye specialist with the 2/4 Hospital - a Victorian Shoe - and I believe his kit has to be seen to be believed. As Bruce says - "I shall positively loathe every minute in camp. I've never been in camps, I like comfort, and I hate B.O. In fact I got quite fatigued watching the gardiner dig an air-raid shelter for mother. I simply had to dig her one, you know, as it's too big a job for the dear lady herself." Considering the dear old lady is over seventy I should say it was.

15th December, 1940.

These notes are a bit rambling but, reading them in years to come, we may be able to piece together the background and story of what promises to be a most interesting unit. Later on I will be able to introduce the personnel.

Tom.

No. 17.
22nd December, 1940.

"For trouble-free motoring, join the Army". This was the remark passed by an Officer on Friday when he was taking me down to Fort Direction at the entrance to the port of Hobart. It was indeed a lovely drive, mainly along the northern shores of Hobart's lovely harbour and then across a narrow sandspit which led up to the rather lonely Fort.

We met Major Perkins (in charge) and his N.O. - Dr. Bean - an old Anzac and now in the vicinity of seventy. He is a brother of Major G. E. E. Bean who wrote the War history.

Captain Cornay walked me all round and the view from the top observation post was wonderful - the whole panorama of Tasmania's eastern coastline being visible.

I have covered nearly a thousand miles by car this last ten days, including over to Launceston and back, and one or two shorter drives round Hobart with the various doctors. To-day I went down to Marion Bay with Dr. Haulish Reid and his family and saw more of the coastline towards historic Port Arthur, notorious for its bad treatment of convicts in the olden days.

To-night I returned home to a comfortable bath and a dinner of braised pigeon, which was excellent. This really is a wonderful war so far, but I have a feeling that it is too good to last although the Army seem quite satisfied to have me await the passing of the holiday period before proceeding to Brighton.

Major "Bou" Rogers and Captain Chalmers - both Tasmanians and good fellows - have now been appointed to complete our team. "Bou" lives in the Club and, I am told, he has been like a dog without a tail since he lost his wife last year. Evidently he was greatly devoted to her and lost heart greatly when she died. Now he is as happy as a schoolboy because he feels the new activities with the C.G.S. will help him forget his troubles. He seems a cheery soul otherwise and I think he will make an excellent Mess President. He is said to be rather weak on the surgical side but is very energetic, and I can balance things there myself by taking a hand with his surgical team.

I met Col. Wilfred Giblin the other night. He is most interested in my unit as he led the first Tasmanian C.G.S. in the last war and did great work on the beach at Anzac Cove in 1915.

I mentioned this in my broadcast appeal for recruits on Friday over the Tasmanian National Stations and feel that it will give the unit a definite Tasmanian tradition. In fact, it wouldn't be hard to become a pro-Tasmanian. Hobart offers the stranger an excellent welcome and the strawberries, raspberries, loganberries - and cream - have to be seen to be believed.

Everyone in Australia has heard of the famous Tattersalls Sweep which is run from Hobart. As a (more or less) distinguished visitor I have been invited to draw the first prize of £12,000 in the Xmas Sweep. It will be drawn at 7 a.m. tomorrow, so some early bird is going to catch a lovely worm - in short, a fortune will depend for some lucky one on my particular whim tomorrow morning in selecting a small marble from a large barrel.

Captain Simpson, our new and very young Dental Officer, reported in this morning. He is a clean-cut boy, doesn't smoke or drink, and is very keen to learn all the military routine. I like his looks and, as I find he is good at his clinical work, I shall probably be lucky to have another good officer. The three chaplains are still an unknown quantity, but we have initiated some string-pulling through the D.A.A.G.'s Department so that we will get good ones.

My first few days travelling allowance has just come through and it will cover my extra expenditures over Christmas very nicely.

Signing off till next issue.

26th December, 1940.

no 5

Holiday time in Hobart. How I wish Edna were here to share it with me. Still, only fourteen more days and she is flying over to join me. Meanwhile lots of my new friends are interested in her arrival and are going to call on her and show her round. I have shown them her photo and Marjorie's snapshots from home and I feel sure she will have a very enjoyable time.

No one seems to want to work here at present. The Barracks and Brighton Camp are reduced to skeleton staffs and pianos at the holiday beaches down the Bay are the order of the day. I visited Kingston with Major Rogers yesterday and saw the golf links.

There is a pretty river hole about 180 yards over which I'd love to try a niblick shot. I must try and get my sticks over here.

Bruce Hamilton asked me to Christmas Dinner at Great Point Hotel. His mother was sick, so we dined quietly together and cracked a bottle of Tasmanian Cider in honour of the day. I'm glad he took me out, otherwise I should have been homesick for my home and youngsters. They had filled my thoughts all morning and I could picture them racing down the stairs at the first peep of daylight to inspect their stockings - or was it pillow slips?

After dinner I went home with Bruce and helped him to sort and pack his military kit. What a lovely kit! Everything a military tailor could push over on him plus endless gifts in leather from friends - writing cases, money belts, sheath knives. His uniforms were the last word in finely woven gaberdine - God help them when his batman gets to work on them or when he sits down on a grassy bench.

He was very grateful for my help and I have arranged to take him to dinner next Xmas if we happen to be near one another.

Boxing Day. Had a swim down at Kingston Beach.

ho-6

2nd January, 1940.

New Year's Eve in Hobart and a town addicted to mild womanism became a good deal brighter. It is apparently an old Tasmanian custom for the police to go temporarily off duty and for the local inhabitants to mount ancient horsed vehicles and parade the town towards midnight. The best effort appeared to be two brewery horses (magnificent Clydesdales) harnessed to a landau carrying about a dozen revellers.

Major Rogers invited me to a dinner party at Hadley's (the Australia of Hobart) which he gave in honour of Captain and Mrs. John Cottier and their guest from N.S.W. (Mrs. S. Frell). Hamish Reid's wife was also there and after dinner we went round to the Hospital to see Ham, who is having a hernia done in preparation for joining the A.I.F. Ham didn't look so good (enema).

The evening finished at the Superintendent's quarters at the Hospital, where Dr. and Mrs. Parker were saying good-bye to Miss Jill Secretan, who has been appointed masseuse (military).

The bit cut from the bottom of the last page was where I mentioned her unit and it just occurred to me (especially as we are under strict orders not to chatter about unit movements) that it mightn't get by the Genecr.

On New Year's Eve at Hadley's, every table was photographed and out of all the odd fifty tables they had to pick on that of Major Rogers to publish in the local "Mercury". The result is enclosed and will serve as a souvenir for the file. It left me open to quite a lot of "rassing" in the Brigade Mess yesterday morning. We have not established our own unit mess yet (lack of good cooks) and are feeding at Camp Headquarters, which accommodates about forty officers under the command of Lt. Col. Payne.

To-night I was invited to a farewell by the infantry mess who will be leaving shortly - home to bed by 10.15 - a very cheery evening, with everyone in good spirits.

The publicity department at Head Quarters are still advertising for our recruits. The attached ad. will be useful for the file, as it indicates how Tasmanians are being asked to join up. We have a corporal who graduated through Sandhurst and was an officer with the Cameronians for 16 years. A most useful man and looks like making a good sergeant.

To-day I held my first C.O.'s parade and our tiny unit looked quite well.

More in the next instalment.

No. 7.

26th January, 1941.

Officers' Mess, No. 2 R.E.D. Royal Park - What a Group!

Arriving to-day three hours late after a stormy crossing in the "Taroon" (Capt. R. Bentley) we marched to Spencer Street, waited half-an-hour for a train to Flemington and marched in to Royal Park R.E.D. - a wind-swept group of huts on the only hill in North Melbourne. The strong south-westerly made greetings imperative. No Camp Commandant received us, although the guard turned out (without the Orderly Officer).

I sent for him afterwards and pointed out that a little personal attention wouldn't do my unit any harm. He then dug out the second-in-command who was apparently doing his duty from an arm-chair in the mess and looked as hospitable as a cold fish. We bought a drink for ourselves.

After Brighton the men were disappointed to find a cold welcome but we soon hustled round and shook the camp staff into some sort of activity. They had a poor midday meal, but this one will be better or I'll know the reason why.

The Head Quarters staff at Brighton (Col. Lee Payne) were wonderful to us and we enjoyed our stay there. Although we left at six fifteen a.m. the whole staff, including the padre, came down to see us off - even in the pouring rain. We left Brighton in funny little box carriages with no mod. cons., and, as it was a long journey, we pulled up twice in the bush ("P" Stops). Everyone alighted on the blast of a whistle and did their duty at the side of the line - except the two nursing sisters who kept discreetly to their carriage when some of the troops called out facetiously "Any ladies aboard." They then sang "My eyes are dim I cannot see, I did not bring my specks with me."

In the "Taroon" I was O.C. troopship. We had a mixed bunch of troops including draft dodgers, three prisoners and escorts and reinforcements for infantry.

Only four or five of the first group gave any trouble until I closed the "bars" and then they got sea-sick and that took the shine out of them.

Carl Turner was embarkation officer and evidently decided that my cabin wasn't good enough, because he beckoned me downstairs after we cleared the Tamar and said he had secured quarters "worthy of the O.C. Troops." The quarters were a suite-de-luxe such as one dreams of - a big wide double cabin panelled in silky oak with two beds, a lovely bathroom (a shame I didn't have my wife travelling also). There were eighteen switches and bell pushes fitted, with dinky lights over all the mirrors and the seat in the lav. was marbled in a delicate shade of onyx - a pleasure to sit on.

A south-wester hit us about midnight and from then on my room looked as though there had been a free fight in it.

The ship rolled to a thirty-degree angle, paused, and then did the same on the other side. I got fed up with being rolled out of bed and having to climb back up the sloping floor against a cascade of suitcases and chairs, so I wedged myself in on the settee but cricked my neck there, put the bed clothes in the marble bath and thought that would trick the rolling, but the bath was too darned cold, so I then tried the next bed and was so tired by then I slept till dawn - what a night.

Major Rogers was bathed with the R.C. Padre Quirk and apparently he used some very forcible language and appeals to the Almighty when being seasick, and we all reminded him this morning that extra masses were being said for the good of his soul.

26th January, 1941. hoy

On reaching Melbourne I turned the troublesome part of the draft over to the Southern Command Officer as soon as possible. To my amazement he told them to report at Royal Park by midnight and then turned them loose in Melbourne.

There was apparently method in his madness because he only said "The Military Police will pick them up later and they can't get into much trouble in Melbourne on a Sunday."

No. 8.

2nd February, 1941.

A thrilling 24 hours. The train column marching out of Royal Park yesterday was in my care. We went out with the band playing and some of the lads (Victorians) with lumps in their throats at the thought of leaving their home city. Lt. Col. Rawson and his staff took a farewell salute as we left.

Rushing through the long night in a silent troop train, with rain pattering down, made me reflect on the tremendous changes caused in a country at War - or perhaps I was sad myself. At any rate something impelled me to seize time at Moss Vale as the troops were breakfasting and get my beloved wife and youngsters on the long distance 'phone. It was cheering to hear their voices, even little Anne's timid "Hello Daddy", and I felt much better afterwards.

Then came Darling Harbour with the Navy in charge and a ferry trip to N.S.W. S.S.L. What a ship! Or rather, a floating city. Here I am with a cabin right up on the top deck and about eight thousand men underneath, berthed on ten great decks. The main rooms are untouched, but we use the tourist dining saloon as the first is so big it has been fitted with more tables for the men - all fed in three sittings.

The men are in great spirits - beer is only five pence a pint and cigarettes five pence a packet - so they are making the most of it.

The ship's size leaves one gazing with wonder, and the yachts which have been circling us all day long, look very tiny from the height of the tall decks.

Bill Jeater and many other old friends are on board and we met in the lounge - a magnificent room with lamps in gilt as big as baby bathtubs, and almost knee deep in rich carpets. As one officer remarked - "Fancy me travelling like this and getting paid for it." Troops are still pouring aboard. The Embarkation Officer called out "Here is your berthing ticket and your mess ticket" and one of the troops repeated with "and where is our return ticket?" They have a joke for everything. Coming along in the train we crawled past an isolated cocky farmhouse with an untidy looking girl in the back-yard. As it was near Sandbagai one of the troops yelled out "Ullo Mabel, where's Dave?"

I was very unpopular because I confiscated all the beer they brought aboard the train at Senalla. However, I changed it into cigarettes at the bar at Wangaratta and gave the beer-drinkers the bags instead.

And so to bed. I had little sleep last night and this in the most luxurious mattress I have slept on for a long time. I share a private bathroom with Major Fisher.

4th February, 1941.

One of the greatest days in our lives! A convoy of three huge ships leaving Sydney, loaded with troops.

Firstly the preliminaries. A morning parade in preparation for the arrival of the Governor General, Lord Gowrie's slow walk down the long length of the masted decks - a snappy salute and a handshake. "Good luck, Hamilton, both to you and your unit. Good luck lads." He looked tired, but not too tired to later accompany us to the Heads in a smart cream pinnace and stand at the salute as the troops gave him cheer after cheer.

We sensed we were leaving then, as the tide was full and the ship tried out her steam whistle. At one o'clock the officers went to stations and the troops started lining the decks.

I was lucky to secure a position on the front of the lower bridge, right under the Commandore. What a sight it was. First the stately "Acquitanie", with her four black funnels bailing smoke, led the way; then we followed in the famous "Queen Mary" leading the "New Amsterdam" - a huge K. P. M. Atlantic ship, said to be full of New Zealanders.

As we gained the Heads every launch in Sydney Harbour seemed to be around us. The regimental bands were playing fore and aft, and everyone seemed to be yelling at once with excitement.

Then the "Queen Mary's" huge whistle nearly broke our ear drums. In the rush that followed one of the troops on the forward deck yelled up to the bridge - "Hey, cut it out skipper, we can't hear the bloody band."

Then the ship's sailors started to lower the pinnaces over the bows, aided by all sorts of wrong advice from the soldiers, until the chief officer was red in the face with embarrassment.

After clearing the Heads a trim cruiser - the "Hubert" - raced up and passed us. Then a dive bomber swooped down and missed our fore-stay by a yard. Little mine sweepers had already swept the channel and the "Acquitanie" hung back while the "Queen" assumed her rightful place at the head of the convoy. Sydney slipped astern and we had the wonderful sight of three huge liners following a cruiser - all within half a mile of one another.

To-night we are blacked out but the "Queen Mary's" huge lounge is crowded with officers in khaki and nurses in their scarlet cloaks. Someone is tinkling the marvellous grand piano and the stewards - all in white - are going round with loaded trays. Beer at five pence a pint is the favourite drink, much to the pain of the more distinguished and very English stewards, but everyone is happy and the huge vaulted room, with its lovely marble and glass, setting off the beautiful panelling, is a very colourful scene.

Several Newcastle men came up and shook me by the hand to-day, including Lieut. Fred Lusk and Richardson, and also W. G. Hutchinson - an old tiger from the 2nd Battalion.

We are now ploughing along at a steady twenty-one knots and the huge bulk of the "Acquitanie", just half a mile to starboard, can be clearly seen in the moonlight. She seems to be rolling a bit but C. I. T. is as steady as a rock and no one seems to have even thought of sea sickness.

Some of the officers were quite visibly affected at leaving Sydney and I'll confess to getting a lump in my throat when I looked north along the coastline with my binoculars and reflected that, just two or three headlands further on, my boys and all that I hold dear were still standing looking out to sea. God guard them while I'm away; and that's an honest prayer if ever there was one.

And so for a turn on deck and then bed.

The Commodore has expressed the wish to meet
the following Officers at lunch at his table at 1315 Hours
today:-

Lt. Col. Hamilton
Lt. Col. Conroy
Lt. Col. Gumsone

Lt. Col. Kirwood
O.C. Troops.

Received 6/2/41.
T. Hamilton
Lt. Col.
2/4 S.C.S.

2th February, 1941.

20.4
Sunday at sea in a troopship. Lots of happenings since my first entry. The new "Sauratensis" came up eastern four days ago and joined us towards evening. A stately ship all in grey.

We figure now that we are due to turn round Cape Levin this evening and hit Fremantle tomorrow morning. Orders say "No shore leave".

The Saturday night dance in the main lounge last night was a wonderful sight. The beautiful furnishings, the lofty room with its soft lighting and exquisite panelling, the dash of colour from the red capes of the Army Sisters, all made an unforgettable scene.

My inoculation kept me quiet but we discovered that Champagne (the genuine Veuve Cliquot and Gordon Rouge of 1928) could be purchased at 13/10 a magnum as against 23/9/- on shore. We had some.

18th February, 1941.

40-9

One day out of Fremantle - heading North.

We left Fremantle last night after being anchored for three days in the blazing sun. The "Mary" is not built for the tropics and below decks was hot and stuffy. The hammock areas down in "X" deck were almost unbearable, but most of the troops slept on the promenade deck at night. There was no shore leave and I was lucky to get a telegram ashore to my wife.

All the letters were censored by the Unit Officers and it was sometimes heartening, and at other times not so good, to hear the men's opinion of their officers. I was lucky and had a good run.

We left in the quiet of the evening with bands playing and the "Aquitania" pulling out and taking the lead. Then came the "Mauretania" the "Queen Mary" and the "New Amsterdam" with her New Zealand contingent. The New Zealanders were wearing their heavy cloth dress and must have been hot. Our chaps are dressed in shirts and shorts with golf stockings and light shoes. On the decks most of them strip to the waist and are acquiring a fine sun tan.

My typical day is to wake at 6 to the sound of the deck buglers and open the blacked-out port-hole. Although the air conditioning makes life comfortable, the morning sea breeze is generally refreshing. Then the orderly Officer reports, fully dressed, confers with me on the day's orders as I drink my morning tea, and then departs down to the lower decks to bring the men up for the early parade.

I join them on parade and then they go to breakfast and I go back to my cabin, don bathing trunks, descend five decks in the elevator, and step into the first class pool. With the hot weather this is becoming very popular, and even the nursing sisters are getting up early and using it too.

Then comes a smoke and breakfast. Then drill and lectures follow until lunch at one, although I break off at 10.30 and accompany the Staff Captain of the ship in one of the ship's inspection groups, which all assemble, complete with buglers (cones and caps and salutes) in the main hall off the promenade deck. For one group to inspect the ship alone would take a week, and even yet, many of us get "bushed" when we go away down into the miles and miles of corridors below decks.

Our destination, Malaya, was to-day given to the troops, and they are all excitedly pouring over little booklets which the Army issued telling them about the language and customs of the natives. Some of them are already trying out the strange new words and one of them addressed me as "Tuan" (Big white chief). "K'root" means "bolly", but so far I haven't learnt much myself.

We have concerts every night, and, before dinner, on the games deck, a big Scotch engineer inflates his bagpipes and we dance Scotch rightous reels for exercise under the tuition of two officers from the Sydney Scottish Regiment (Capts. Hexton and Snelling). At the end of the reel, everyone, including the piper, is in a bath of perspiration. Then follows another bath or a swim, fresh clothes, a dry Martini in the forward cocktail bar, and then dinner.

Verily a full day.

16th February, 1941.

Indian Ocean

A Rendezvous with the Navy - Convoy Farewell.

We were told to-day that, at 1315, the "GX" would detach from the convoy and proceed independently with another cruiser.

Promptly at 1300 the Navy appeared on the horizon and came up with the convoy dead on time.

The troops manned the decks, with massed bands amidships on the sundeck. Then the "GX" slipped on full speed, swung out from the lead of the convoy to port, went down the line of ships and came up behind them on their starboard side. The two cruisers exchanged greetings while our ship, travelling twice the speed of the others, passed them slowly, and all flags dipped in farewell.

It was an amazing sight to see four huge trans-Atlantic liners maneuvering in mid-ocean, everyone listing to the side with the weight of thousands of troops, all hoarse with excitement and giving cheer after cheer for their departing comrades-in-arms. When we had passed them all we fell in behind our new cruiser and headed for Singapore, while the "Canberra" led off the other three to port, bound for Colombo.

17th February, 1941.

Today we are getting gear packed, ready for disembarkation. The sea is an oily calm and the only breeze is the 20-knot one made by the ship. Volcanic ash from the Sunda Islands covers the water surface here and there and sharks (ray variety) and large sea snakes are very numerous, swimming on the surface. We are in the Malacca Straits and one can almost sense the Far East. It promises to be interesting country.

25.11
27th February, 1941.

The native life here is still of unending interest to us. On Saturday, R. O. M. Brett, O.C. Selanger Police, entertained Carl Purser and I at a "curry tiffin".

We arrived about one and sipped "stingahs", smoked and yarned until two under his punkah fans and then set down to the meal. They tell us that at more formal "curry tiffins" the pre-eating session may extend another hour or two and the actual lunch may not finish until five. After a good Indian soup, "avan", the Malay servant brought round a plate of finely flaked and beautifully cooked rice. This is laid in a wide circle round the plate and into the central hollow one drops two or three pieces of curried meat and gravy.

Here in Australia one would stop and be satisfied. Not so the Malayan. Round come ten more circular dishes from which one takes a small helping of shrimps, banana, prawns, Malay nuts, chili and so on. These are also dropped into the hollow and the whole lot mixed together.

The result is magnificent - something like a wild torchlight procession down one's gullet, without any unpleasant after effects. Carl and I came home and slept soundly until tea time.

We have another one to face with the local Native Chief or "Dato", who also acts as District Officer, on Saturday, although the fact that he is a strict Musselman and therefore a teetotaler will probably help a lot.

The boys are getting used to bargaining in the shops, and my batman - Private McDonald - comes home and boasts how he got pockets put in my pants and the length altered for one dollar (2/11).

"Peter Jackson" Craven's and the best English cigarettes sell at 56 cents for "50" tins, i.e. just about one-third of the price they are in Australia. Good cigars are also very cheap, although I hadn't tried them out yet. We find it hard to get good tea - largely the fault of the chlorinated water - and coffee is not available.

More next time.

Tom.

28th February, 1941.

We have now adopted the daily time-table of troops in the Far East. Woke up at 6 and then the usual Australian Camp time-table until 1, when the troops have a warm meal. They then have a rest period until 3.30, followed by a lecture until 4.30, and then high tea. From 5 until 7 they play organized games, generally football or soccer, against local teams. Cricket and rugby are also being organized. Tennis is available for the officers and as 5 until 7 are the social hours we have visitors dropping in. They watch the football and then we adjourn to the mess and give them a cup of tea or a drink until it is time to bath and dress for dinner, which is at 8. The local hour is 9.30, but we found this was a bit too late.

Dinner and a yarn afterwards generally finds us near bed time. All day we are in a lather of sweat with the humid heat, but are standing up to it surprisingly well, and the nights are not unpleasant for sleeping. The insects at night are much the same as at home but more playful. Flies are non-existent and mosquitoes are much fewer than in Newcastle, although we sleep under nets always, as a precaution. A small green and red snake was killed yesterday outside our quarters and we always examine our slippers before putting them on, in case of centipedes.

Small lizards come out at night and race merrily over the walls of our sleeping huts. Some of them are quite friendly. The huts are thatched with "attab", thick layers of palm leaf, and when we want a coconut we get a native to climb up a nearby tree and pull one down.

Two nights ago we went to a Chinese performance at the local picture show. The performers were most amusing and went on for hours in the high sing-song music so well known to radio-listeners. The local Chinese band accompanied them with a weird cacophony of jingling bells, crashing cymbals and squeaky string music. About two hours was as much as we could stand.

More next week.

Tom Hamilton.

4th March, 1941.

Join the Army for care-free motoring!

Patrol restrictions have now been brought in in Malaya and also "black-out" practices. All the motorists are growling, just as they did in Australia when it first came in there. The natives are so good at forgery that they estimate that a lot of "phony" petrol coupons will soon be in circulation. The Army is exempt. Yesterday I motored 100 miles on a fascinating trip through the western part of Malaya, on a visit to the outlying parts of our unit. I saw lots of old military friends, also Sergeant Major Pat Levy (Sydney's old time play-boy) and called in at the Mess at Seremban in the evening for a bath and a feed. The roads are all bitumen and it was a joy to go over mountain ranges and through cool jungle glades. On the way home the driver and the orderly in front swore they saw a tiger cross the road in the glare of the headlights, but as Capt. Chalmers and I were half asleep in the back seat we missed it. Capt. Chalmers asked them what they had to drink at Seremban!

Seremban is the capital of the State of Negri Sembilan, and while we were trying to find the Camp Hospital we pulled up at the Sultan's palace by mistake. The Sultan is an Oxford graduate and did not seem to be at home. There were two big bearded Sikh policemen on guard at the gate.

The main street of the town is like a "set-up" from Hollywood, say in a picture such as "Shanghai Lil" - gaudy, fringed, two-storey shops painted green blue and white - half naked Malays lounging in doorways, venerable Indians squatting on kerb-stones, Chinese women all in black, their thin hair pulled tightly back from a yellow wrinkled forehead, laughing Chinese school children in blue suits, almost like pyjamas, and big conical hats, and Malay school kids in brightly coloured sarongs, brown velvet caps and neat white shirts. The women seem to do most of the work in this country. All along the road we passed them, swinging picks in road-side quarries, carrying big logs of wood balanced on one shoulder or carrying a big basket or load of green stuff on their heads. Here and there we passed gaudy Chinese temples and little wayside shrines, although the Malays don't take religion very seriously.

Writing under a big fan is a curse. If I slow it down it stops and the room becomes insufferably hot. If I set it going full speed the papers all blow off the table.

Yesterday we had a Tamil climb up our cocoa-nut trees and throw down the nuts to us. Some of the natives have trained monkeys who do it for them. Some of these notes should be useful for Marjorie and Jean for school suggestions.

On Saturday I had a ceremonial "tiffin" with the Dato, or native district officer. I didn't feel so comfortable when the C.O. Police - also a guest - gravely picked up one of the dishes, smelt it and said "I can recommend this Colonel! - decayed prawns in a high state of fermentation." He also added - "The Dato has a choice taste in eggs - these egg slices are at least two years old." They looked it too. The curry was extra hot and I hesitated to enquire what was in some of the stuff I ate. Although I had a mouth like a bird-cage all evening, I woke up next morning feeling very fit, so the stuff must have been harmless. The Dato - who prides himself on being very English - produced his wife - a shy, slender Malayan with almost a Tokinese cast of features. She was evidently not brought out often because she was like a frightened gazelle and glided round the walls of the room as though seeking protection. She could not speak English and seemed scared stiff. I passed her all the doubtful dishes before tackling them myself. Her features were something like my drawing, and she was dressed in a pyjama-like outfit of rich heavy silk. I tried to make conversation through the native magistrate but she just nodded in reply, so the going was rather heavy.

More next time.

7th March, 1941.

Black-out in Malaya.

8 a.m. and a still, humid dark night, just before dawn. The whole of Malaya is on a war practice and the civil population is "blacked out". The civil population is all darkened down and, in this area, has done it very well. I'm a bit fed up with my guards and picquets. It's their first war practice and posts and orderly rooms are supposed to be manned. I decided to take the first all-night duty myself and waited till the moon disappeared before doing a round.

Orderly Room - orderly snoring peacefully under a mosquito net; inlying picquet fooling about in the guard room and looking suspiciously like a sleeper just awakened; main sentry - no challenge, rifle still at the "slope" - I could have stolen his rifle or stabbed him easily; outpost on vehicles also casual. "Why didn't you challenge me?" "Oh - I thought it must be you, sir". I shall have to teach them that similar carelessness may some day cost them their lives.

What a grouch! Probably I shall laugh over it when I've had bath and breakfast.

Really things are so placid round this part of the world that no one would think there was a war on. British and British-Indian Officers still look the last word in nattiness with brass badges and buttons. They are all very decent chaps and most obliging. We like to hear them talk in their precise, clipped accents. They are invariably efficient and have done a great job in smoothing down the "looming troubles" of the Australian Units.

I was to have led a cricket team yesterday on the padang in an inter-unit match but our usual five o'clock tropical shower (about an inch in half-an-hour) wiped it out. One can almost time the daily rain here, it is so regular. I'm told this is the secret of the country's success with its rubber plantations. The planters are nice people and we see quite a lot of them. There is a big proportion of Scotsmen and Yorkshiremen among them. They and their wives entertained the men at the Club the other night with a sing-song. The men sang the "Road to Gundagai" and made us all homesick.

19th March, 1941.

Kuala Lumpur or "K.L." as it is familiarly known, is the "leave" town of all troops in this area. It is a straggling city of 111,000 inhabitants (about as big as Newcastle, only more densely crowded) and is approached by good bitumen roads. The best is Circular Road, which winds round the town through pleasant gardens and fine houses belonging to wealthy Europeans and Chinese. The Sungai Beal Road takes one in direct from the south and is a medley of tumble-down native buildings, native smells and the native shopping centre. Passing the fish markets (with old-time fish) one almost has to wear a military gas-mask. The streets are crowded with motley nationalities at all hours - Europeans driving in cars manned by turbaned Indian eyes, Malays in old "Pods", Chinsmen in jinrickshaws pulled by frail but wiry coolies in big conical, straw-plaited hats. The shops, with their faded whites, greens and reds have overhanging bedroom balconies, where crowds of native children peer through shutters on to the street below. Each shop has a gay sign outside, generally covered with large Chinese signs, and, in smaller letters, translations in Malay and English. Some of them are amusing - "Long Fook, Files Specialist"; or "Aread Ali, DESTROY, Welcome!" All of them seem to be specialists in something or other. Short, stocky Malay police, in pill-box caps and kakis shorts adorn each traffic intersection, bicycles are legion, and venerable sikh and Muselman watchmen lounge on fibre bed-frames in the shop entrances. Then Captain Lee and I, garbed in shorts, tin helmets and large revolvers poking out of hip holsters, stood in the streets yesterday awaiting our car, I'm sure most of the crowd thought we were military policemen. In fact, several rickshaw drivers held out an indicating hand as they passed round us.

K. L. is the capital of the M. N. S. and has many fine examples of Indian Architecture.

13th March, 1941.

"Toto" has been added to the Unit strength. As it is a little Malayan monkey of undetermined sex we have to refer to it as "it". Its sleeping quarters are a tree outside my hut door and it sables about on a long wire, which gives it plenty of freedom, and eats an enormous quantity of banana and pineapple daily. The N. C. padre is its official keeper and we accuse him of taking it to early morning mass.

Last night we had our first official "guest" night in the mess and it went off quite well. As a special compliment to our guests, The Dato Royali, Capt. O. G. Williams, Capt. R. G. Brett (Malayan Police) and Mr. Frank Norman, the District Engineer, we opened the case of Cascade Blue Label which we carried carefully all the way from Hobart labelled "Medical Comforts."

We growled about having to wear collars and ties and tunics in the humid heat, but after dinner slipped the tunics off and had quite a pleasant evening. The padre and the Dato played "chinese checkers" and Brett, Fisher, Rogers, Simpson, Lee and myself played poker for 10 cent. pieces. The poker was causing. I startled them with a Royal Routine flush deficient in one pip only, but strong enough to beat Brett's "flush" to a big Ace-pot.

I'm off to Singapore by car in the morning with Capt. Lee - officially to gather in the rest of our store convoy but unofficially to have a look at the place.

We haven't had leave for a while and two days oceanic touring will be a nice break. I am anxious to see the famous Mohammedan mosque and Chinese temple. If the prices at the "jabs" are too high we shall stay at the famous naval barracks which have very luxurious quarters for touring officers and which cost us nothing. "Join the Army and see the World."

Our X-Ray gear is now set up and is a fine job. Young Ron Cunn (of Newcastle Hospital) is very enthusiastic about it and he has turned out a great asset to the Unit. Sergeant Sykes (also of Newcastle Hospital) is teaching the orderlies to set up the operating theatre and it looks quite well. We may not have to use it, but its good practice in setting up the gear.

Next week I'll be able to give a commentary on Singapore.

17th March, 1941.

Week-end in Singapore.

The R.A.M.S.'s voice came over the 'phone - "Colonel, I think your Q.M. should take the car to Singapore on Friday and check the remainder of your Unit stores. We need them badly; will you let him go? Better take Lieut. Robertson also." "Good idea. I'll do more than that. I'll go with him myself. It's time I had a day off. Will H.C. approve?" "Rather, have a good time and give my love to the Brigadier."

Nothing is better than an unexpected holiday. Could I do it on 50 dollars. I'd try. Singapore or bust.

And so down the main road in the half light of early morning, no patrol worries and the car purring sweetly over a fine bitumen road. The roadside scenes are full of interest. Little Tamil and Malay children on their way to school, rubber tappers cycling to early morning muster, villages with lazy shop keepers squatting in the windows, patient Gujarati oxen pulling the yoked native carts, Chinese women with heavy loads on a shoulder stick, all combined in a medley of colour against the green jungle coolness. Then came the belts of rubber plantations, then Johore with its kula palms and pineapple plantations. Could we pinch a couple of pineapples and slake a growing thirst. We did, to the delight of a passing Chinese coolie.

Johore Bahru arrived with lunch time. Capital of an unfederated State, its Sultan keeps a private army and is busy building a new palace for his latest Soudanian wife. He must have one of the wealthiest States in the world and his rake-off from his customs barriers (one on every main road boundary, manned by raggedy little, smiling brown-faced police) must be enormous.

Over the causeway lay Singapore Island, about as big as the Isle of Wight and bristling with fortifications hidden away in its tree covered depths. A fine highway leads into the City proper and we deviated only to report in at Fort Canning.

Could we see Major Maisey? Not only did we see him but found the R.A.M.S. the soul of hospitality. - "You must meet the Brigadier". I did and he promptly asked me to dine with him the following evening. "Would Major Maisey dine with us?" He would not, but we should be his guests at Raffles that very evening. Raffles!! (Hold us back, boys!)

Raffles, a base to conjure with - white on the fringe of a glorious dance floor at 8.30 - the fine orchestra playing our signature tune as we entered ("Waltzing Matilda", if you please) - a cheery wave from the band-leader as we acknowledge his effort - Major and Mrs. Maisey leading the way through the lofty terraces to a secluded lawn lined with stately palms (no kidding) - dinner on the lawn served by noiseless Malay "boys", every table cabled up, with the soft glow of a central table lamp. The too-tee English voices sound as ("Hair of the dog that bit you, my dear!") - the champagne, the liquors and cigars afterwards - Made us wonder how our host could do it on a Major's pay. Later on, when we said "good-night", as he beamed over the wheel of a spanking big Daimler Sports Model, we decided that the tenner the dinner cost him was probably only a flea-bite. Mrs. Maisey was the only lady we had to dance with - wish my wife had been there.

On the way home a yellow-turbaned Hindu bear peered into my face and said - "Sahib, I can see you are lonely; you love deeply someone who is far away. She is not with you, but some day you will return to her. I will tell you more if you pay me TWO DOLLARS! Hell! I could have told him that myself, so I didn't waste the two dollars.

19th March, 1941.

Dining with the "Tuan Besar" of the Medical Service.

During dinner at Raffles I said to Mrs. Healey - "That's the formula for dinner with the D.D.M.S." "Oh," she said, "don't be alarmed, his wife will boss him all evening, they will quarrel mildly, and then you will be rushed off to a cinema." And that is exactly what happened.

Being brought up on strategy I took no risks and sent my driver out beforehand to York House, Alexandra, to reconnoitre the route and be able to find it in the dark. While he was doing this I visited the Chinese temple (photo coming later) and had a comfortable bath at the Adelphi (8 dollars, bed and breakfast, and not bad either).

On the way to dinner I managed to arrive within three minutes of eight and was met by the Chinese "boy" who escorted me into a very fine military bungalow. The Brigadier (who is a most kindly and distinguished man) gave me a warm welcome, a cigarette and a "stongah". He then introduced me to Major Chopta of the Indian Medical Service, a fine looking Indian, and then to his wife, who smiled pleasantly, talked a lot, called her husband "Charlie" and advised me to hurry up and down my drink as she wanted to rush dinner and be in time for the "Gazette" at the cine-mah.

We had a lovely dinner, over which I could easily have spent about two hours, all in thirty minutes, and served by soft-footed Chinese. Then Charlie was told to go up and change his trousers, as the kabki drill did not quite match his tunic (I couldn't see any difference and felt horribly conscious of my somewhat grubby tunic - thank heaven the lights were well shaded). We then piled into Major Chopta's car, although Charlie wanted badly to take his own, saw the movies - at which all the dress circle audience were in full evening dress - and was dropped back at my hotel with a bright smile and no surper. Charlie had to go back to the office.

28th March, 1941.

"Toots" our little monkey mascot, has been joined by a boy friend, a big agile cheeky monk (Joe) who sits cross and sits on anti-heaps eating ants-eggs until the ants rally round and bite his backside. He is very tame and comes down and watches the cricket in the afternoon. The other day he jumped on to the knees of a private who was stretched out on the grass. The private growled out - "Now Joe, don't be cheeky", upon which "Joe", the monk, promptly ran a long hairy forearm up the wide leg of the private's shorts, much to everyone's mirth.

Last evening, I paid my official call to the Residency, which is the equivalent of Government House, for the State of Selangor. The Resident was kind enough to call informally at the Camp beforehand and told me to bring some of my officers as well - habits (pronounced "poits") from 8 till 8 p.m. Issued a great scrubbing and cleaning of smart drill uniforms and finally four of us looked so smart that, as I remarked, we "out-footed Poonah!" to which some wag drawled out - "Play the game, Cads."

Then into the staff car, with the driver shined up and trained to get out first and open the door for us - much cursing when he did this and we found out that it was the Sultan's house and not the Residency - fortunately the Sultan was not at home - arrived half-an-hour late and slightly flustered in the huge porch of the Residency - was so startled by the sight of a huge, bearded Rajput guard slapping his rifle into a snappy "Present Arms" that I got out of the off-side of the car while the driver did his stuff on the other side. We calmed down under the influence of a very friendly welcome - murmured "Stengah" automatically and were parked among guests in various parts of the rooms. Then ensued a sort of game of general post, the technique being as follows:- The Resident stands usually in the middle of the room - grey-haired, Irish and smiling. He watches how one gets on with Mrs. Wallflower or General Buzz-wax and if he sees that one is not at ease he walks up, takes an arm and says - "Colonel, I want you to change places with Major So.& So. - you really must meet everybody". Major So.& So. then takes on the wall-flower and so one moves round until you find a group registering the same wave-length in light conversation. "Stengah" came automatically (as soon as one's glass emptied it was refilled by noise-less Malays in the full Selangor State livery - velvet cap, white shirt and the red and yellow sarong in Selangor colours). A Malay in deep purple shirt and mauve sarong, whom John Chalmers mistook for the head butler, was subsequently introduced as H.H. Al'aidin Sultan Shah, a prince and son of the Sultan. He seemed a quiet, shy chap under his brown skin and spectacles.

Note from my day book - "Private J.P. (MX--6) Infantry - blow in the main gate of the Camp this morning and said he was trying to get back to Malacca. He was dressed in whites with a blue shirt, said he had been A.V.C. in Louis Luanae and had his uniform and pay-book pinched at a fancy-dressed ball." Some ball; I should say, judging by his appearance. I put him, nominally under arrest and gave him a feed before phoning his G.O. to send up a truck and escort for him.

Speaking of deceiver, Brett, of the Malayan Police, told me that he hasn't a chance of hiding himself in this country, nor had a white man a chance of committing a misdemeanour and getting away with it. Native eyes are everywhere and gossip is the chief stock in trade around the kampongs. Sooner or later this is picked up by native police and relayed to M.C.

28th March, 1941.

The Orderly Officer is very bad tempered this morning. He was going over at Reveille to rease out the Sergeants and "Joe" the monk, jumped on to his shoulder from a beam and emptied his bladder over his nice clean shirt.

March 27th, 1941.

40-20

Sunday Night at the Solangor Club

"I'm fed up with this quiet camp; who wants to come into K.L.?"
"We all do. Who gives us leave and what do we use for money?"
"I'll give you leave - at least, those with the most money - and we'll tick up the balance at the Club till next pay-day." Everyone is short this pay."

The idea catches on and in no time the physician, the Kousabout (Surgeon) and I, are en route to Kuala Lumpur in a hired and very rough baby taxi - four dollars for the night - as we didn't have a reasonable excuse for leaving the staff car about the streets on a Sunday. We left the Quartermaster lamenting behind, as the dhoby hadn't brought his one and only drill tunic back from the wash - a frequent happening; still, its nice to see a Q.M. get caught occasionally. Tunics are "de rigueur" in K.L. after sundown and the Q.M. got picked on by a Staff Major last time he was in without one. He's still vowing vengeance.

On the way in we argue ways and means of dining fashionably, either on credit or with the least possible expenditure. My suggestion that we might meet someone who would "shout" us is viewed with favour but without much hope. It comes off:-

Enter the Club (commonly known as the "Spotted Dog" from its early and hybrid origin). I point out that our honorary membership expired seven days ago and has not been renewed. The Surgeon says he must have a "P"; Ted says he must pay the Secretary the 75 cents we owe him. To have one with the Surgeon, but can't find the Sec. Very well, we will go to the Anson Club and get a cheap feed. Ted says - "No, we will go through the main lounge and see if we can find someone we know." We do. I find myself in the huge lounge, orchestra playing, Malsy "boye" flitting about, all K.L. Society in evening dress sitting round little tables sipping "Pahito". I see a familiar face. "Dear me, isn't it Major and Mrs. East when we met at the Bostoney?"

"Colonel, how nice of you to come over; you have a remarkable memory for names. Do sit down."

"Well, really, we were just on our way to dinner. Won't you and the Major join us?" (That a risk)

"Not a bit of it, we just ador'ne meeting Australians and you must dine with us."

"Oh no, Mrs. East, we couldn't dream of it, especially in a Club where we are not members." (Hold us back)

"Then that's settled - you will, and Reggie will take care of everything."

We forgot about the Anson Club (Reggie did too) - and a lovely time was had by all. We did try to reciprocate by taking them on to the Bukit Binton; afterwards (This is the famous W.B. Amusement Park and admission is free. It will possibly form the subject of a further note as it deserves a column all to itself.)

So Mrs. East was elected hostess for the evening and the Major paid out nobly and seemed to like it. These Dublin Irish Majors certainly are charming folk.

Mrs. East has four sons and liked the photos of my wife and four daughters. I get homesick when I see a bloke enjoying himself in his wife's company.

A Club dinner is a leisurely affair. We went easy on the Stangah ("Stangah Juki" is always safe; its small and watery) from 8 till 9.30 and listened to the Club Orchestra, composed of Jewish refugees from Hong Kong, give a wonderful programme.

March 27th, 1941.

Then we adjourned across to the Chambers, a huge vaulted dining hall manned by Chinese waiters in immaculate whites and black felt slippers. Selecting the menu took another half hour and was done round another "Stengah" in the annex. Good meals remain a pleasant memory. Why waste them by describing the details.

Going home in the taxi the Surgeon snored gently. Ted suddenly burst out laughing and said "The old man's (that's me) lucky bunch came off again. Seeing we got a free dinner we'll reward the driver with an extra dollar." The Malay eyes grinned.

P.S. I did not clean my teeth with shaving soap and woke fresh as a daisy on Monday morning.

10.21
31st March, 1941.

H. B. Tallala, a wealthy Indian in K.L., threw the A.I.F. a party - what a party! An Indian festival.

Our crowd arrived about 11.30 in a convey of ten ambulance wagons and a staff car. The grounds were laid out with marquees, and there were two Indian Orchestras, a troupe of dancers and jugglers and the Malay Police Band - very smart in white uniforms with blue facings, pill-box caps, silver stars and blue sarongs.

All the troops got a bottle of beer each and a curry tiffin. They ate to the point of exhaustion and even then only made a slight impression on the catables available. About seventy cameras were in action snapping the novel scenes, and the Tallala family, plus numerous cousins, made a picturesque group, the ladies being garbed in lovely silk saris and the little Singhalese girls in all the finery of tiny Indian dancers. They had as much fun as we did, photographing the troops.

I had to do the heavy and represent the General as the senior officer present. It involved a reply to Mr. T's speech of welcome, but, with extracts from the Padre's sermon of that morning and a profound bit about the Brotherhood of Australia and our great Indian Empire - plus the troops ready to cheer anything and everything - it went off quite well. At tiffin, which the officers had in the main lounge, Capt. Chalmers and Simpson had a contest to see who could eat the most curry. I backed Simpson, who is a hearty eater, but he let me down cold, fading away in the middle of the second plateful. Chalmers, whose second was Major Rogers, cleaned up two plate loads easily and then tackled the "Gale Malacca" - no mean feat.

I returned home ready for a siesta in the boiling afternoon heat, but, being my birthday, had to go and eat afternoon tea with the dancers, then go to the pictures in R.O. - thence to the Solange Club - listen to the orchestra and have a Malay dinner about 10 p.m. in the Chubbere. To bed at 11.45 p.m. after an international birthday - Australian breakfast, Indian lunch, Danish afternoon tea (Gung) and Malayan dinner. I'm happy to say that my stomach is standing it well.

Next week and I shall have a quiet game of golf - I hope.

None attached.

April 5th, 1941.

A Village Tragedy

Yesterday a long Indian Army Convoy was passing the camp gate, vehicle after vehicle, camouflaged in the drab green and khaki. The drivers were Sepoys fresh from India. They are poor drivers mentally, slow to act and think in the head. In addition they do not seem to have had much mechanical training and are newly arrived in Malaya.

Suddenly a "Don" (motor cyclist) dashed into the Camp and I saw the Orderly Officer send down a stretcher squad and a driver for our "dirty" ambulance wagon. He then came and told me that a native had been knocked down by one of the Indian cars.

I jumped into a staff car and went about a mile south to a little kampong at the side of the main road - a quiet clearing in the roadside jungle. Tall trees met overhead and, lining the road, there were one or two cars of the convoy plus a group of Malay and Chinese coolies. Standing by their vehicles and looking impassive but restless and ill at ease were three Indian Sepoy drivers, their dark features and mustaches belying their youth.

Behind them and deadly still was the body of a poor coolie woman, quite dead and cold from shock. A nasty gash above the left knee seemed to be the only injury. She seemed to be near childbirth also.

The district police officer arrived then and the usual long enquiry started. My men did what they could to help and took the dead woman to the native hospital near the Camp. These coolies seem just like animals at times - no intelligence, very little speech, impassive faces and patient toiling like oxen from daylight till dusk. Death and the Chinese Nirvana would seem a happy release from such an existence. I was relieved, later in the evening, when the D.O. Police told me that the driver was not to blame. Malaya is hard on dangerous drivers and the penalty of negligence involving injury is three months imprisonment without the option. Our drivers have all been warned to exercise care.

10th April, 1941.

A MALAY "BERSTANDING" (WEDDING RECEPTION).

Dato Uneda Mohamed Razali (Malayan Civil Service), District Officer of the Ulu Langat and a relative of the Sultan of Selangor, entered my office and beamed pleasantly.

I knew what the bespectacled, oily gentleman - a graduate of Oxford - had come about; but with true Oriental cunning knew that it wouldn't be brought up until well through the interview. Briefly, he had been "ticked off" by Mr. Weyman, the British Engineer, on a complaint by Major Fisher, our hygiene officer, that a night-soil tub had been left for the third time by his sanitary staff just opposite the camp gate until it became covered in maggots and nearly stank the guard out of house and home.

We talked about the weather and the crops and then he tentatively mentioned his Health Inspector, a lazy Tamil. I therefore took the initiative and suggested that a man in the Dato's position was too high an official to be bothered by such trifling matters as night-soil tubs and that possibly we could deal direct with his Health Inspector. However, if he could spare the time from his high position to occasionally interest himself in the collection of garbage from the camp, then we would be only too happy to co-operate by 'phoning him direct. This seemed to please him mightily, so I then shifted the conversation to praise of the Malays and their national customs. In fact, before the Dato left my office I had talked myself into an invitation to a Malay Wedding and a Kronchong - the latter being a Malay Historical Play.

He was as good as his word and sent the Royali eyes with the car for us on Sunday afternoon.

We were driven to a Malay bungalow at the outskirts of the village and welcomed into the midst of a colorful wedding reception. Atop shelters set with tables had been laid out for the guests and there seemed to be over a hundred Malay guests, all in their finest sarongs and song-koks (hats) and hordes of young children who looked delightful in their silk sarongs or pyjamas. I beckoned one smiling little boy - "Mari sini" (come here) "Apanama?" (what is your name)

10th April, 1941

He understood my very poor Malay and said "Latif". Latif and I became quite friendly and he was the proudest kid in the village when we got him to pose for his photograph with us.

After shaking hands with the host and the Kathi (Muslim priest) and settling down to sweet tea and cakes, we heard the sound of Malay music (the orchestra seemed to be "swinging" it a bit) and the bridal procession arrived. The religious ceremony had taken place the night before and now the bride and bridegroom were on view. They became "royal" for the occasion and were dressed in Royal robes - the bridegroom in a bowl-like gilt turban and long yellow and gold robe and the bride, with downcast eyes and wax-like features, in a robe of mauve with gold stars and three capes of red, yellow and blue - all richly embroidered. Her head-dress was magnificent and seemed to consist of flowers built up on top of a high coiffure. There was no bridesmaid but two wizened old amahs escorted her and seemed to be instructing her in the etiquette of the occasion.

The best Man's job seemed to be to fan the bridegroom all the time with a palm leaf fan and to mop his forehead at intervals with a yellow silk kerchief.

They were received by the mother-in-law and placed under a floral canopy inscribed in Arabic "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

After a reasonable interval we were all invited to discard our shoes and enter on carpets to view the couple. They sat absolutely immobile, hands on knees and eyes on the ground. We conveyed our good wishes through an interpreter and were then presented with a pot of artificial flowers, a hard boiled egg and some rice - emblems of happiness and plenty.

I'm told that sometimes the bride and bridegroom are on view for as long as three days, if the family finances can stand the entertainment of the numerous guests. Occasionally, the ceremony takes so much out of the family funds that the unlucky bridegroom spends the next fifteen years paying it off.

The Dato and the Kathi seemed very pleased at our attendance. We should have liked to see the next part of the ceremony which

10th April, 1941.

is the ceremonial bath, but it is taboo to all non-Mohammedans.

I got a belly-ache from the strange cakes and couldn't go to the Kramchong. Captain Lee said afterwards (apropos of the Kris fighting) "If ever a wild Malay comes at you with a kris kick him quickly wherever you can and then turn round and run for your life."

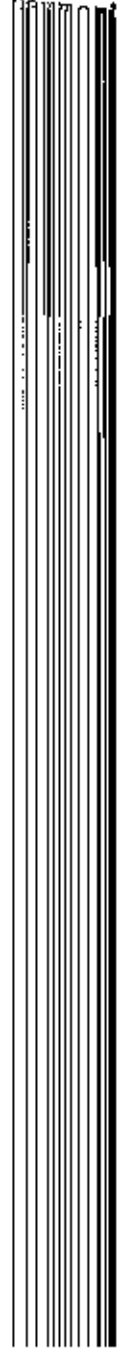
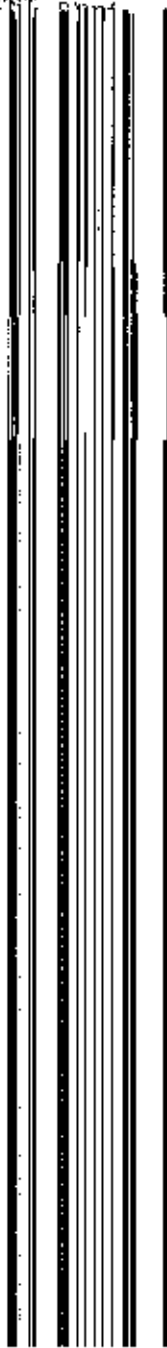
13th April, 1941.

A. J. C. NEVEILLE IN MALAYA.

The Camp Bugler hasn't been himself the last two mornings. Normally he is on time and blows a clear, stirring call. Yesterday he faltered, tried again and produced a call all out of tune. This morning he didn't blow at all. We all said - "Ah! he's been on the spot in K.L. last night again", but as it was Sunday morning we forgave him. It subsequently turned out that the night picket had failed to wake him. Orderly Room for the picket at 0930.

After being on army routine for a while one automatically wakes around six. Here it is quite dark but, if five minutes too early, one can lie and listen to the night-jars doing their stuff. They produce a noise exactly like a carpenter hammering.

we first



18th April, 1941.

The C.O.'s Orderly Room has just finished. The usual wild offenders appeared, including the cook's offender, whose lurid language is constantly getting him into trouble. Then came a "shrewd head" who has been up three times but always produces two witnesses to say black is white for him. I've had to let him off previously for lack of evidence, but this morning he talked too much and let slip the fact that, although he was in bed at "lights out" he wasn't there at midnight, so we altered the charge and caught him for ten shillings. I saw his lips moving as he marched out of the room with the escort.

Then came Private R, a gentle soul, whose christian names are Harold Hector. Harold is a willing worker, with a face like a moo-cow, and is quite unconscious from the ears upwards. Harold has been rescued from the H.Q. clink after a bout of drinking at the Eastern "hong tong". He says that all he can remember is having a drink with an Englishman and then waking up next morning in a strange bed in a strange house belonging to a strange Chinese lady. (We will watch him closely on the medical inspection next week.) This morning Harold was all remorse and, as he is a faithful Catholic, I think Padre Quirk will probably take him better than I can. Fined 10/-.

Mrs. R. G. H. Brett, the Police Officer's wife, told us a good story of the Australians. She has a very fat Chinese Amah and a week or two ago the amah came in out of breath and said, "Boof, those Australians! I go shopping down the street in K.L. and I meet five Australians coming in jinrickshaws. I set my face so that I shall not smile. They all wave and say 'hallo', except the last one. He say - 'Hullo Annie, where's yer tugboat?' (A picture called "Tugboat Annie" has just been showing throughout Malaya).

Easter. Up to the Hills on Easter Monday as the guest of the Resident at "Ben Lornie", Fraser's Hill. Beautifully cool and our first let up from the humid heat - thick virgin jungle over the last part - the Gap - where the road narrows and winds as it climbs. Heard dogs barking in the tree tops and got out to look, but it was only a crowd of wild-gibbon monkeys. We parked back and they did their Tarzan of the Apes stuff for us up in the highest tree tops. On ^{of} the best monkey acrobatic displays I've seen.

Tom.

21st April, 1941.

DISEASE OF THE A.I.F.

Major Fisher met me just outside the Medical Ward. After discussing the severe splenic pain of our first patient with benign tertian malaria (a dispatch rider from the Loyals) and showing me the confirmatory slides under the microscope, he casually shoved another slide under the lens and said - "Have a look at this one, you'll never guess who it comes from". I looked, saw clumps of gonococci and groaned inwardly - "Surely not another of our chaps?"

"Nope, we're lucky - its young "Angel Face" from the Motor Convoy. You know his father, don't you?"

I did know his father, a fine chap on the H.Q. Staff, and what's more, I had promised him I'd look after his young handful of a son. The troops call the boy "Angel Face" because of his looks. He is a tall, fair stripling of nineteen and his boyish face has the ethereal quality sometimes seen in choir boys. Temperamentally he is a bit of a "deer".

The story is that he was in Kuala Lumpur on Good Friday - of all days - and, despite the care of a fatherly old sergeant, got too much to drink in a cafe at the top end of Batis Road, slipped away for a while and when found again and brought home was so drunk that all they could do was put him to bed. Worse still, he did not have sense enough next day to report at our P.A.C. room for treatment. This is typical of many similar stories that we hear and attach to case-history sheets, but I'm proud of the fact that so far only one of my own men has been involved.

I saw the kid and found him suffering all the pangs of remorse. "Better let me ring your father, son, and get it over." "All right sir, thank you."

I got his old man down and let him have a period alone with his son, then I took him down to the Mess for a drink. We talked about everything else under the sun, but when he was going he gripped my hand and said - "Thanks, Colonel", and I could tell from the grip he meant it.

"All right", I said, "I'll get him down on the night train to the Tanglin Hospital, Singapore, and I'll write a personal note to Major Jose to get him better as quickly as possible."

The train pulled out an hour later. Someday that Captain will do me a good turn.

24th April, 1941.

My sleeping hut neighbour, the Quartermaster, has a menagerie in a big tea chest which is steadily increasing. His baby cobra escaped - I hope it's not growing bigger and brighter in the soil under my floor boards - and he now has a slightly bigger one. It wriggles round in the sand at the foot of the box like a young express train. He has a snail with a shell as big as an ice-cream cone and a colour-changing tree-frog, which perches all day long on the perpendicular wall of the partition between our rooms. Last night my batman caught the father of all scorpions on the floor of the Mess Hut. It was as big as a young crayfish and comfortably filled a jam jar. He naturally gave it to Capt. Lee; and Major Fisher and I were called in for a demonstration of how an angry scorpion could "sting itself to death". In spite of prodding with a long wire the scorpion refused to do this, but it certainly swung a wicked tail at the wire. I suggested that, when the cobra grows a bit bigger, he stage a contest - Hamadryad versus Scorpion.

This menagerie and two monkeys outside our verandah relieve the sleeping quarters of any monotony. "Toots" the little monk, is growing a big girl now. She doesn't like the tail-less gibbon belonging to the Sergeant, but is becoming very tame.

Last night, just before dinner, I was sitting with Capt. Chalmers and the Padre, contemplating three lovely mugs of Cascade Beer on the table in front of us. Suddenly Toots dropped down from the rafters above, where she had been hunting the little cheka lizards, bounded across my outstretched arm and, putting her head half way down the mug, took a drink of my beer. It's the first time in my life I've been done out of a beer by a monkey.

Tomorrow is Anzac Day and it coincides with the arrival of seven more officers and two hundred more troops - just fresh from Australia - into my camp area. They are going into Indian Army tents, which are beautifully made and designed for the tropics, and we are busy making arrangements for their reception. Anzac Day reminds me of my 1st Field Ambulance celebration at Rutherford last year, when, being short of a flag we gravely stood at the "silence" and salute to a Red Cross linen bed-ban cover on the flagstaff.

27th April, 1941.

ATTENDING A DANCE -- MALAYA.

"Would I care to bring Capt. Chalmers and attend a dance at the Lakes Club on Saturday night?" I said that I certainly would, but I did not realise I was in for a strenuous night.

Nicely dhobied, we departed for Kuala Lumpur in the rickety village taxi, driven by an irresponsible Chinese syce. By dint of saying "kirri" (left) and "triss" (straight on) we managed to steer him to the Selangor Club where our host, Mr. Churchill, a cheery pudicund little Englishman, looking remarkably like a cross between a Koala Bear and his famous namesake, met us at 7.45, pushed a "strength" into our hands, and departed in search of his other guests. While he was away the Spotted Dog Orchestra struck up and we filled in the time pleasantly yarning and dancing with Major and Mrs. West. I found out from the latter that no one dreams of attending a dance before eleven p.m. Then our host returned took time off for another stengah, and rode with us in our rickety car (four dollars for the night) to his bungalow on a bukit overlooking the Gardens. Here we found the Hengglers (Anglo-Oriental Tin Mining Co., and near-millionaires) - very Swiss; Mrs. Tuck - very Norwegian ("Ma husben, he do not like to dance, he like to be alone") - the Garbo touch; Mr. Carry - very Cambridge; Miss Blum - very beautifully English and dumb; and a few Australian officers.

Then the leisurely rounds of stengahs, small talk, and a beautifully served dinner at ten dished up by three grave Chinamen in spotless white and wearing bowyangs (as Capt. Chalmers calls them) round their ankles.

Thence to the Lakes Club, looking a perfect picture with its surroundings of beautiful gardens and lawns. There the usual collection of Tuans and Mems, one or two generals, and a motley collection of officers from famous British and Indian regiments; they were friendly and funny - Major Hayward of the Royal Berks., (The Berkshire, my dear!) an amusing chap with a slow Oxford drawl and a face like "goofy" of the Mickey Mouse cartoons, came over and said - "You know, old boy, no one will believe me, but a syce has just come to tell me a python is swallowing the chickens at the back of my bungalow. A man must really do something about that, old boy - what!" I suggested a little more soda in his stengahs but got a shock when he turned up twenty minutes later with a fourteen foot python still warm and wriggling slightly. He

27th April, 1941.

- 2 -

wanted to put it on our table ("must have somewhere to put it, don't you know") but we wouldn't let him so he towed it out to the entrance porch and (nobody in the Camp will believe this, but I actually saw it with my own eyes) a lady picked up the tail of the python and, with the gallant Major swining the head and, they used that python as a skipping rope and, what's more, a sprightly dowager, beautifully gowned, stepped in and skipped as the python swung round her - and didn't miss a beat either.

A fine Malay orchestra was playing but nobody seemed to bother much about dancing, and it was very pleasant wandering from table to table meeting people. My bug included a full Colonel from the "Queens", the allied battalion to the City of Newcastle Regt., two ladies from Glasgow and another funny Major who insisted on telling me "how the Jodpur Lancers beat the Australians in the last War into Haifa by a quarter of an hour - and, do you know, old boy, the Australians were damned annoyed, because there was nothing left for them to loot." John Chalmers and I made him tell it over and over again so that we could watch his false teeth wobble, and every time he retold it he gave John another stengah (I had long since retired on to "ayer lima" - lime juice and water) so John was very content.

Our Norwegian and Swiss ladies had by this time lost their husbands (we rescued them from underneath the crowd in the bar) and said "Ah tiak ah go home". Going home consists of everyone standing on the porch steps and yelling their ayees names - "Hassan!" "Latib", "Avan", "Lew Tok", etc. We didn't know our bloke's name so we trudged down the drive, woke him up, kicked the old engine to life and sloop till we got home. He had looked after us for eleven hours for 4 dollars (12/-). We gave him an extra dollar for luck and called it a day.

Chalmers says, this morning, that dances are no b. good.

MALAYA, 5th May, 1941.

IN WHICH I VISIT KLANG AND PORT SWELTENHAM.

Having been detailed to send one of my trio of Padres to Port Sweltenham each Sunday in order to conduct a service for the A.I.F. details there, including the inhabitants of the clink, I decided that it would be a desirable Sunday trip to make myself. An additional incentive was an invitation to curry tiffin with Dr. Jones, M.O. Health for Klang, where the Sultan of Selangor resides. Therefore, away early in the staff car; a call in at H.Q. to pay my respects to the A.D.M.S. and also to "wangle" some extra mosquito nets; thence down the road to Sweltenham - a road leading past palm groves, native kampongs and tin dredges, including the great Retaling mine.

Port Sweltenham is more utilitarian than picturesque. It consists of the usual wharves and jetties fringing the estuary of the muddy Klang River and is surrounded by low mangrove swamps harbouring many crocodiles and other slimy denizens of tropical rivers. The quarantine station is set on flat land amid palms and behind the mangroves. It is divided into compounds surrounded by barbed wire, one of which is used for the bad boys of the A.I.F., mainly gentlemen, who, in their cups, are given to the playful habit of basking sergeants. While the Padre was going his rounds I had a yarn to one of them and he seemed a nice, quiet, well-spoken chap. Incidentally, there were only twelve prisoners all told, so that is not bad for the A.I.F. in Malaya, and they are very well treated.

Thence to Klang and curry tiffin. Instead of sleeping afterwards, as one should, Dr. Jones took us to the Sultan's Palace or Istana, where we signed the visitors' book.

There is a big modern mosque below the Palace Hill, which appears on the Malayan stamps. We were invited to remove our shoes and go through; the Padre being duly reminded by us that his Presbyterian ancestors would slowly turn in their graves if they thought he were there on the Sabbath. The mosque was most impressive inside and several Malays obliged by going through their praying antics while we were there - beiding down with lowered knees, and bodies pointed in the direction of Mecca, then touching their foreheads to the ground three times on the praying mats. We were standing just behind them and some wag murmured "what a beautiful arsepect".

5th May, 1941.

Then the Kathi's offsider wanted to take us 167 steps up to the Muezzin Tower, from which the faithful are called to prayers five times daily. He put over a call for our benefit - a most haunting yodel - "Allah il allah" and so on, but with some of the romance taken out of it by the fact that it was done through a microphone and loud speaker to save him the trouble of mounting the tower. However, two of the younger officers essayed the tower steps, the lad in the sarong leading the way. I heard one whisper hoarsely "Don't go looking up his skirt, Bill!" They assured me the view from the top was fine, but I took their word for it as stair climbing is too damn hot in this climate.

Then to a refreshing cup of afternoon tea on Dr. Jones' lawn, a cool run to Kuala Lumpur, a fine bath at the Selangor Club, pahits and an hour and a half of fine music in the club lounge. This programme, followed by a fine meal of fish and an early return to bed, made what the New Yorker called a "poifect day".

8th May, 1941.

BERSILAT (MALAY FENCING).

Three hundred and fifty lusty sons of Australia in the midst of Rubber and Jungle in Central Malaya have to be kept amused in their off hours from Army routine. From a C.O.'s point of view it isn't always an easy task to visualize anything beyond the routine football and cricket games interspersed with an occasional route march. However, yesterday's brain wave was a distinct success. Dato Muda Mohamed Royali bin Hadji, to give him five of his eight names, happened in at the Officer's Mess. I offered him a glass of his favourite soft drink and said "Dato, isn't there a village in the Ulu Langat, about twelve miles away, where the Malays still indulge in musical sword play. If so, would they mind coming to the Camp and giving my men a demonstration? The Dato, who is a quick thinker, tied a knot in his handkerchief, smiled and, after discussing details, said - "I will arrange everything" He was as good as his word. Promptly at five o'clock about a dozen Malays, of a more wiry and fiercer men than the placid town Malays, entered the Camp and were welcomed to the ring which we had roped off under the grassy bank of the Padang. Soon, they set up their iron gags, six small ones and two large ones, which they suspended from the overhanging limb of a flame tree. Meanwhile the diggers, in informal attire - shirts and shorts, or just shorts - were gathering thickly round the ringside; and officers, from chairs perched on the Bank, were endeavouring to photograph the scene in the dull tropical light. A whistle blew and the ring cleared. Then the native musicians started the gongs throbbing with a rather pleasing "one in five" rhythm. Four natives advanced slowly to the centre of the ring, dressed in brown, green and red badjous and short sarongs worn over loose cotton pants. Two wore Malay fighting turbans and two the usual song-kok or cap. They circled gracefully to the music, crouching, swaying and diving in rapidly toward their opponents. As the gong music livened up they quickened their movements, drew * tumboks (short knives) from their sarongs and plunged and thrust at their partners in the dance. They sprang past one another, delivering a high foot-kick as they did so, then wrestled together like lithe, agile wild-cats. The wrist work with the knives was remarkable. Each man disarmed his opponent in turn and then fought, in rhythm with the music, for possession of the knife.

* tumbok-lada . short knives.

8th May, 1941.

A demonstration of a dance employing two long pedangs (curved swords) then followed, the two opponents circling and making wide, quick sweeps from a crouching position. As one digger said - "If I met one of them blokes on a dark night, I'd kick 'im in the guts and run for me bloody life."

A saucer dance followed as an interlude - a most expert business of swaying saucers and tapping them with rings on the forefingers, in time to the music.

To entertain our Malay visitors, we then got some of the "puga" among our men to demonstrate boxing and wrestling (Australian style). This amused the Malay audience greatly, as seen by smiling brown faces and flashing white teeth. The Ulu Langat headman, just behind me, was so excited over it that he registered every blow by saying "ugh". The delight of the Malays when two of the boxers turned their attention to the referee was very apparent. They are a happy, gracious, child-like race.

Prior to the last Malay dance, which was a circular "silat" or "boxing with knives", employing six performers, a very slow boxing exhibition by two diggers took place. The ringside made attempts to liven them up; one wit crying out "Come on mugs, Mother's Day isn't till next Sunday"; then they yelled out - "Take them orf."

Four of our nursing sisters have arrived now that our surgical work is growing. They are located in a bungalow half a mile from the Camp and are looked after by a Chinese Amah and a "boy" who cooks for them. Their presence in the Camp is always a good thing, as the men unconsciously smarten up when they are about - but the job of finding a "powder the nose" room for them is a fair b

11th May, 1941.

PADRES AND CHURCH PARADES.

I have three padres in the Camp and find it a hard job to keep them occupied during the week days when everyone else is busy. On Sunday, however, there is no difficulty as they all spring into activity from dawn.

The R.C. lad is up bright and early and starts his early morning Mass at 6.20. He used to hold it in the Sergeant's Mess, but the sounds from the adjacent cook-house disturbed him so much that he came to me and begged permission to hold it down in the village church. So now the parade marches a mile and a quarter to Mass and then marches back again. This morning it didn't get away until 06.50 and I saw padre walking briskly round the tent lines rounding up the back-sliders, who, although religiously inclined, didn't like marching.

The combined Protestant service follows at nine a.m. This morning we had new Y.M.C.A. hymn books and, in the absence of a piano, Padre Jones (rather deaf and very Welsh) started the men off on a hymn to which none of us knew the tune. He faltered when he found he was on his own, grinned sheepishly, and asked if anyone knew a more familiar hymn. I was in front of him and turned my book over hastily. To my horror I was confronted first with "Jingle Belle" and on the other page "The Old Grey Mare, she ain't what she used to be!" By the time I had recovered from my amazement he had found "Onward Christian Soldiers", which is the great Army stop-gap at Church Parades and which the men beef out in great style. On investigating my hymn book during the sermon I found that it was a combined hymnal and community song book, specially got up for Australian troops. It reminded me of an incident three Sundays ago when the Padre announced that two sergeants would sing a sacred duet. It turned out to be Bankoy's "There is balm in the Blood of the Lamb" and, to the great joy of the digger audience, the tune was the same as "There is Beer in the Quartermaster's Store". Padre Basford's face was a study, but everyone hid the grins.

The lads, spurred on by the Padres, all wore white frangipanni flowers to-day, in honour of Mother's Day in Australia. This was one occasion on which a Commanding Officer has to shut an eye to irregularities in the men's dress.

15th May, 1941.

Yesterday I travelled fifty miles to the coastline by car to attend the Sports of the A.I.F. at Port Dickson. They ran off without a hitch and it was spectacular to see one hundred and sixty athletes, including a team from the Malay Regiment, march on to the field to the stirring music of the A.I.F. bands. Except for the presence of the Malays and the palm trees fringing the padang, one might have been at a Dunn Shield Meeting in Sydney. The spectators also were all in uniform, except for a small collection of local residents, European and otherwise. Among the latter was a wealthy Chinese lady with her husband. Her dress conformed to the Chinese floral type, slit down each side, and her diamond ear-rings and wrist watch must have been worth a considerable amount. She put the European ladies quite in the shade.

Wealthy Indians, Mr. and Mrs. Talalla, were also there, as they are on holiday at Port Dickson.

At the conclusion of the athletics, where the Australians easily outclassed the Malays (and who can wonder, seeing that we had two Empire Games Champions competing), Mr. Talalla invited six visiting officers from N.S.W. and me to "take pot-luck at his little seaside cottage." This was a very modest description, as our cars drove into fine grounds of a large bungalow bordering the beach. There seemed to be three or four garages and at least six servants. Every bedroom had a bathroom, each fitted with every modern accessory. The front of the bungalow led out on to a terrace right at the beach edge, and we sat out there and watched the Southern Cross rise over Cape Rachado, the nearest point to Sumatra - just twenty miles to the westward. It was a lovely starlit night - the Cross to the South and the Great Bear to the North. With the sea murmuring in on the shingle at the foot of the palm trees and the light-house winking from the Cape every few seconds, one could almost picture a N.S.W. beach on a warm Summer's night. We lolled in the peace of it all until nine and then sat down to a fine meal of Indian curry, with numerous side dishes - fish, chicken and rice, with spices, - all mixed together and belying the modest claim of "pot-luck".

I slept all the way home in the car.

MALAYA, 20th May, 1941.

Since joining us in this Camp, George, our 21 stone Army Service Corps Major, has been complaining about the rations. In fact, at one stage the whole Camp was in danger of moving to the tune of George's voluminous intestines, and the Mess President - whose hackles had been steadily rising - was on the point of telling him he could try running the Mess himself. I thought it better for the C.O. to intervene tactfully, so I said last night - "George, if you can trot out your "Spitfire" at 7 ack. omma to-morrow, we'll go into Fudu Road and see the Supply Depot for ourselves".

The "Spitfire" is George's luridly camouflaged "Humber Snipe", a powerful job with a mean whine in the engine when it's revved up in top gear.

Punctually at seven we sailed down the main road and reached the Royal Indian Army Service Corps Depot within half-an-hour. A dapper Indian Lieutenant came out and received us with a snappy salute, so I turned George over to an equally fat English Quartermaster, with the request that he be shown that all was fair and above board with the Camp supplies.

I then got the Indian Officer to show me round the Indian and Malay troop sections and found them most interesting. The centre of the depot consisted of a large godown (shed) containing a 90-day supply for all the fighting units. Our own ration-scale has been cut to the British one, inasmuch as we only have a choice of twenty-two items as against forty-four in Australia. I think this slowly dawned on George during his inspection. On the other hand, the Indian troops - whose food is largely rice and grain - had a most varied range of all the spices of the East, and I saw hundreds of bags of peppercorns, tumeric, cloves, garlic, ginger, cinnamon, cardamoms and many other items with strange names. Ghee, or clarified butterfat, was there in 28 pound boxes, and, behind the godown, a small mechanical mill was grinding out "atta", a coarse flour combined from many grains and used in the making of "chopattica", a staple Indian food. For the Malays were various types of Malayan fish and fresh mutton, brought on the hoof from Australia and slaughtered according to the Muslim ritual.

George was quite thoughtful on the way home to breakfast, and his only remark was "What a pity I can't be on A.I.F. rations all the time, plus the Indian, plus the Malayan." What a stomach. No wonder he claims the Chinese girls call him "Tireless Master of a Thousand Nights."

24th May, 1941.

RANDOM RETROSPECT

I am sitting in the quiet coolness of a Head Master's office in a Malayan High School, now occupied by the A.I.F. It is Saturday afternoon and there is a restful atmosphere which seems to be part and parcel of quiet Saturday afternoons the world over. Down below I can hear the Orderlies moving about in the rooms now equipped as hospital wards, and from the nearby padang falat shouts from two inter-unit teams engaged in a tense Rugby Union struggle, under a leaden sky, and pouring sweat in the humid heat. An electric fan purrs overhead, and I have to adjust the blotter frequently to prevent the paper becoming stained by the drops of perspiration from my forehead. One has got used to the constant sweating, the mould on the leather parts of equipment, and the daily routine of the camp. We have been nearly four months away from home and I find myself looking back to find if they have been wasted.

To my satisfaction I can answer "no". Apart from the fact that one feels one is filling a useful part in the war game, there is the awakening that has come with it - an awakening to the finer things in life - love of one's family and home, now intensified a thousandfold; freedom from the base business of money grubbing, in which I was fast becoming self centered and selfish; freedom from the petty happenings and gossip of a small town and, best of all, the command of men - over three hundred of them.

What fine men they are, and what a soul-saving glow one gets from earning their friendship and respect. When one becomes gloomy from the enforced isolation from home, there is the simple remedy of looking round for someone in a worse plight. There are men on five shillings a day with many greater responsibilities than I have. Knowingly or not, they carry their troubles with a grin. Businesses have been sacrificed and homes broken up temporarily. Young fellows have stopped their education and careers mid-way. Ask some of them why and they don't appear to know, but mention the comradeship of the A.I.F. and the understanding expression on their faces tells you the answer.

The gramophone in the ward below has been switched on to "Home, Sweet Home". Six months ago I would have sneered and called it hackneyed. Now I'm not so sure. The simple melody seems to have

24th May, 1941.

taken on a new dignity.

I stopped in at the Quartermaster's Store of the 2nd/3rd this morning, wiped the sweat off my face and lingered for a cigarette and a yarn with the crew - two brown-skinned men from New South Wales, both stripped to the waist and shining with perspiration and grime. One grinned and said - "How would you like to be coming in on the fourth breaker at Bar Beach now, sir?" I recognized him as an ex-King's School man who had gone in for motor engineering in Newcastle. His assistant came from Newington College. Both dropped good prospects to join up as privates and are liking the life. They are almost young enough not to worry overmuch about the after-math of the War - "Tidapa", as the Malays have it - "Let to-morrow's worries wait until to-morrow." Analysing my own thoughts on the future, I find I am without fear. I have a wife, children and home. What a sheet-anchor they are for a man to fasten on to. What an incentive they give one to work, live, and look forward to. Without them, nothing would matter much; but I have a "hunch" - and never have I had a surer hunch - that the miracle of peace will come again and one can resume normal life, enriched by the experience and surer of one's soul. Yes! It has been worth while coming away!

Last week my unit had its first typhus case. The Orderlies worked day and night, steered him through his crisis, and left me with the feeling that we had at least one good Australian life to our credit - for never have I seen a man look so near death and yet recover from such a deadly disease.

The football game seems to be over and I hear the men pass along the balcony below, some whistling noisily - all in search of a shower and a cup of tea. I note that the ink is running here and there where the moisture from my hand has dampened the page. I've been writing as I've been thinking - much to my surprise - but now the thoughts are down on paper they seem to form the first link in my "After the War" Sheet-Anchor.

27th May, 1941.

GOLF IN MALAYA.

Of course I had heard of the delights of the Selangor Golf Club. On Sunday morning last I sampled them as one of a bankers' and planters' four-ball. It was what might be called a "de-luxe" game. Arriving at the Club House, amid a contingent of Malay syces and caddies, our clubs and personal gear were taken to the dressing rooms by a Chinese "boy". We changed while cool, soft drinks were being brought, and sat comfortably in lounge chairs in a shady lounge commanding a comfortable view of the course. No rude jostling round the first tee in Malaya; the starting times are announced by numbered discs, plainly visible from the lounge. Then one plays over perfect fairways to well-bunkered greens and, by the time the fifth hole is reached and one is feeling warmish, a cool drink kiosk pops into view in charge of a Chinese steward in immaculate whites. Here a "panjang" orange crush sustains one until the 9th is reached, and a ten-minute retirement to the cool shade of the lounge is in order.

There are three separate courses and they all seem to converge so that the drink programme is never interfered with. If you lose a ball, no one dreams of helping to look for it. This is exclusively the job of the Asiatics, and the "tuans" do not even bend to pick the ball out of the hole or lay a hand on the flag-stick. The language and general demeanour of the players are also on a more refined scale than in Australia; one was tempted at times to say "tut-tut".

Then the nineteenth, to which one is lured by the laughter and splashing from the swimming pool. Undress, plunge into the pool, sit under a gaudy umbrella by the side, while a quietly-moving "boy" places stengans on the marble-topped table, and one feels at peace with the world.

Being a continental Sunday, the very excellent band of the Frontier Force Regiment was in attendance.

Need I mention the presence of talcum powder, brilliantine, ear drops and other toilet perquisites on the dressing tables in the palatial change room, plus a "boy" to remove the grass seeds from golf hose, brush one's shoes, even bath the "tuan" if required. What a game! What a hot-house life!

31st May, 1941.

Col. Kay, noted Sydney surgeon, commanding the General Hospital in Crete, has been reported severely wounded, and missing.

The above cable from Australia was laid on my desk yesterday, just as I had concluded a wearying enquiry into the nocturnal activities of two drivers from the Motor Ambulance Convoy. They had stolen a car, broken through four police barriers and, finally, using a steel telephone pole as a springboard, piled the car up in a patch of jungle as a mass of tangled wreckage. Marvellous to relate, neither was injured beyond a few contusions.

I was in no mood for further grievous news. My mind flew back to big, handsome, smiling Bill Kay, D.S.O. from the last war and one of the best army friends I've ever had.

When he was given command of the 5th General Hospital I wired him and said "Take me with you." Over a noggin in the "Northern" at Newcastle, a week later, he grinned and said - "No, Tom, stay on and wait for a command of your own" - advice which may have saved my life, because to-day I am in peaceful Malaya and he is in the maelstrom of Crete. Archie Cunningham was with us too, and Archie's grave is now in an oasis near Benghazi, where his First Field Ambulance was badly bombed.

I passed the cable over to Captain Newton Lee, my Adjutant. "Newton, I'm fed up! I'm going to accompany you into Kuala Lumpur to-night and see if I can get my mind off a depressing day." Lee suggested dinner at the Selangor Club and a visit to the pictures or the Bukit Bintang, a Chinese version of Luna Park. I didn't feel like watching the "March of Time" and War Gazettes, so we decided on the B.B.

We were fortunate, for a Chinese Dragon Festival was in full swing. Covering four acres, brightly lighted booths and three Chinese theatres supplied open air refreshment and entertainment for many hundreds of Chinese, Malay, and Indian visitors. An amazing variety of dishes, from blatchang (fermented prawns) to eggs of great antiquity, were on sale at the booths, and rice bowls and chop sticks were in constant action.

31st May, 1941.

Cymbals clashed and gong clattered incessantly, while Chinese dancers and boxers sprang into the air with agile, wild grimaces. At another theatre a stately Mandarin play, beautifully costumed, was proceeding dramatically, while the stage manager strolled about behind the players - in his underpants and with a cigarette dangling from his lips. The hearty laugh at the strange sights did me good and I returned home wondering at the weird ways of the East.

3rd June, 1941.

OH, LOVELY LOTUS FLOWER OF A THOUSAND DELIGHTS.

Choo Kia Peng, Chinese Towkay and Millionaire of Kuala Lumpur, entertained us to a Chinese dinner in lavish style on Sunday night. For days beforehand it had been an amusing topic of conversation and persiflage in the Mess. The Dental Officer, who is very young and innocent, was regaled with tales of slant-eyed damsels sitting on his knee and feeding him with chop-sticks, and our older and staidier members were gravely informed that the correct thing to do after the 12th course was to belch loudly and appreciatively and, after the 15th course, to visit to vomitorium, subsequently returning to the feast.

Our host, however, relieved all apprehension by restricting the dinner to six main courses. Shark's fin soup led the way, followed by various types of dried fish mixed with the chopped up entrails of animals whose names I did not enquire. The dishes were served in little china rice bowls and flavoured by dipping the various pieces into soya bean sauce.

The piece de resistance was a beautifully cooked "ikan banwa", a red Malay fish somewhat like our snapper. We let ourselves go on this, but dodged the hundred-year-old eggs, and then tackled lotus seeds served in a fruit sauce.

The Chinese servants - bare-footed women in black silk trousers and blue shirts fitting tightly up round the neck, - entered into the spirit of the dinner and wore broad grins on their otherwise impassive faces, at our efforts with the chop sticks.

I was seated on the right of the host and managed to get some coaching, but even then I made a hell of a mess of the table-cloth owing to the gravy not being under control. The Dental Officer, on whom I had bet a dollar as the champion eater, was manifestly uncomfortable with the sticks and, when he was seen surreptitiously substituting a spoon at the fish course, Captain Chalmers - his opponent - claimed a forfeit.

Major Campbell, our 21-stone gourmet, was in his element. He had been chief loader in the tales of the lovely Chinese ladies, so the juniors took their revenge by getting the head "boy" to park him next to Choo Kia Peng's youngest grand-daughter - aged nine - who could not speak English.

3rd June, 1941.

After dinner, we stayed at the little tables in the huge marble dining hall and Choo announced that we would have some chamber music. Major Campbell was heard to growl - "It's wonderful the instruments they get music out of nowadays." I don't think our host heard him, for he produced a huge cello on which he proceeded to grind solemnly, after explaining gravely that he had only been learning violin music for two years. We had all been warned about his 'cello music, so we listened with a great show of interest, helped along by coffee and some lovely Chinese liquors, and cheered him on to two or three encores. The lads, by this time, were ready to cheer anything, and we all got up feeling rather replete. We wandered through the huge mansion inspecting Choo's treasures and household gods - lovely lacquers, teak cabinets set with mother of pearl, chinese silver ware and priceless bronzes. In one alcove we came on Major Campbell and a couple of Indian Army Officers inspecting an oil painting of one of Choo's ancestors.

I said "Well Major, how do you feel after dinner?"

He drew his great stomach in with a tremendous effort and said - "Fine, Sir! Getting thinner every day."

The effort was too much for his waist band. It slipped down over his indrawn belly and his pants fell like a stone to the floor, leaving him standing, in amazement, in his little white underpants and anchored by a mass of trousers round his ankles. We howled with joy and the ladies, stifling their mirth, bolted discreetly for another room.

7th June, 1941.

OF OFFICERS AND ASIATICS.

"Malay Mail", Bangkok,
3rd June, 1941.

"A Foreign Office spokesman gave Reuter an unvarnished version of what an Axis report occasionally dramatised into a frontier "incident". The spokesman said two Australian officers, armed with revolvers and cameras, stayed across the Thai-Malaya border by ear. The local Thai authorities seized the revolvers and cameras and detained the officers, who has since been conducted back across the frontier and released. - Reuter."

Incident (1). Two little innocent subalterns from Lt. Col. Varley's show went up to the Frontier on holiday. They found it so interesting that they wandered over and were promptly interned. Was N.Q. annoyed - or was it? The General nearly had a baby!

The subsequent Court Martial was all brushed up, but our underground wireless, via the Quarter Master's Store, tells us that the two bright lads are now on their way back to Australia labelled "Services no longer required".

Incident (2). Two other officers from the "Anti-Tanks" are the envy of the whole force. They have been entrusted with the task of taking home the returning draft and bringing back reinforcements. It is believed they will have eight days leave in Sydney. When we heard the rumour our minds turned over rapidly the possibilities if we had eight days leave at home. Major Fisher said he would have a hot bath in a cold bathroom; he would stop smelling of sweat; he would seek out a cold wind and let it blow on the prickly heat of his back; he would enjoy the warmth of an overcoat on a N.S. Wales winter night and he would wear fine linen instead of sweaty khaki drill. Another Major, married, said he would emulate the Tired Gunner from Dunkirk (N.B. This story is for married folks only and will be retailed on my return). Another said he would be like the Broadcaster (also a very coarse jest and unfit for the tender ears of maidens).

Incident 3. Our Mess "boys", Lim Ah Tong and Lee Ah Tong, are picking up Australia quicker than we can pick up Malay. Ah Tong was serving in our improvised bar the other night and an N.A. Convoy Lieutenant, wishing to order four drinks, was stammering out the order in Malay to him. Suddenly the Lieutenant burst out - "What the b... hell is Malayan for 'four'?" Before any of us could answer him, Ah Tong,

7th June, 1941.

Incident (3) Continued: grinning all over his bronzed dial, and his slant eyes looking up at the roof, said - "Emphat". This correct answer brought a loud laugh all round and confusion to the Lieutenant.

POTTED PLAY ... THE C.O.'s PANTS.

Personal

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. The C.O. - a Lt. Colonel | 6. The Major - |
| 2. The Padre - C. of R. | 21 Stone "Gargantua" |
| 3. The Quartermaster | 7. A Chinese Tailor - Ah Nam |
| 4. Batman - Paddy Maloney | (No speaks English) |
| 5. Another Quarter Master | 8. Wong - Canteen Manager and |
| | Interpreter |

Narrative: At Royal Park the Camp C.O. tossed me a pair of drill pants as I passed through his store in a rush. "They'll fit you like a glove, sir." En route to Malaya in a huge transport I found they would 'nt meet round the middle. My Q.M. had 'no larger' pairs in stock. On arrival, there seemed to be none in all Malaya. The Padre has been hustled aboard the "Queen Mary" at three days notice. "Could the Quarter Master give him a pair of drill pants?" He couldn't, but I gave him mine and they fitted well. He kept them on the understanding that he signed for another pair and gave them to me.

"Gargantua" arrived in camp on Anzac Day - waist 54 inches. "Goddam the Army! They make me a pair of pants at Sydney on a special order and they won't meet on me." A great chance - "Will they fit me, Major? You can have my 'little boy's pair' in exchange." He laughed - "Take the bloody things; I hate the sight of them! My Q.M. Sergeant will make the necessary exchange."

No sooner said than done. I wallowed in them. One round the major, twice round the gas-works. I summoned the batman. "Paddy, get a hold of Ah Nam and we'll get him to take these pants in a bit." Ah Nam arrived, grinned at me in the elephantine pants and said - "I fix, fifteen cents." His first move was to take in the waist line. This left the seat of the pants dangling round my knees like a rhino's bottom. The interpreter was called in. Ah Nam returned with the surplus seat folded over and stitched in a flap. This produced an astonishing Dutch peg-top effect. Paddy got the interpreter again. Ah Nam went away and came back two days later. The pants fitted marvellously well - but somehow looked different. They were not the same pants - only the same regimental label. I said, "Whaffor?" Ah Nam smiled sadly. "Old pants cut too much; we give Kurnel new pair." "Oh Yeah? And for how much?"

"Fifteen cents." And so everybody was satisfied. Ah Nam probably sold the original bags to a Tamil for three times the amount he charged me.

17th June, 1941.

THE CHINESE CIRCUS.

Great excitement prevails in Kajang. A Chinese Circus is visiting the village; The Tan Thean Girls Circus from Shanghai - complete with elephants, tigers, and a thirty-foot long python lying asleep in a steel cage, his fifth coil bloated by a partially digested sucking pig.

The village air reverberates in the day time to the noise of the big drum supported by an inharmonious cacaphony from a battery of Chinese gongs.

Of course the Camp must visit the Circus! For the modest sum of 40-cents (1/3 $\frac{1}{2}$) we gained admission to the ring-side seats and seemed to be the only Anglo-Saxons in a vast crowd of Malays, Chinese, Tamils and Indians. Never had I seen a "big-top" so closely packed. There must have been at least two thousand natives of all shapes and sizes, and all neatly dressed in freshly laundered sarongs, saris, or Shanghai pyjamas - according to their racial origin.

The children attracted me most, particularly two little Chinese girls with neat hair ribbons and impassive faces. Never have I seen children sit throughout a circus without a change of expression or a restless body movement; they did it. Not so the Malay children. As the graceful performers (all Chinese) twirled on the trapeze bars, rode horses, dived through knives protruding through the sides of a hoop, and finally through flaming hoops, they cheered loudly with many "Waus!" and called out "Beh! Beh!" (More, more!)

Here and there in the humid gloom beyond the glare of the flood-lights could be seen groups of Tamil children. They were quieter than the Malays, but the whiteness of their teeth and eyeballs, gleaming against their dark faces, testified to their enjoyment of the scene.

Not the least picturesque part of the audience were the Australian "giggers" in the front rows. Owing to the crowd they flowed over the sides of the ring but quickly cleared when two Malayan tigers, in beautiful condition, were brought on - much to the amusement of the crowd.

The performers gave an excellent show; even the Chinese clowns were good and played and tumbled with great dexterity. A band blew manfully on a raised dais in melodies varying from the shrill tunes of old China to the tanelful semi-swing of modern Malaya.

21st June, 1941.

SCHOOL CONCERT - MALAYA.

Miss Foss, prim and capable headmistress of the Pudu Girls' English School, wanted to entertain my men.

Leaving George, our burly Transport Major, to curse the convoy drivers and get them along the Kuala Lumpur Road on time, I took the staff car round by Sungei Besi and enjoyed the drive in the cool air of early evening.

The Malayan scene is particularly attractive at that time of the day. The plodding oxen are off the roads, the Malays in their kampongs are sitting round the street-vendors' stalls eating concoctions of fish and rice, while the Chinese are chattering the events of the day round low tables and plying busy chop-sticks in the huge bowls of rice. Smoking oil-lamps light their open shop fronts and, against the red glow of dusk, the huge wooden gentrys of tin mines rear their ugly shapes.

It was dark when we reached the large group of school buildings on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, but the glow from the Assembly Hall enables me to watch the Convoy of fifteen army lorries pull in and park in formation on the padang.

George had made it, with one minute to spare, and he was all smiles; The men were in good spirits and marched up the stairs to the hall, eyeing with friendly interest the crowd of Chinese, Indian and Eurasian school girls who, dressed in their brightest saris and silks, and with a liberal allowance of rouge on their impassive oval faces, were peering over the verandahs and displaying an equally intense interest in the Australians.

A Chinese girl, beautifully dressed in her national costume, showed us to the front seats and the show opened with a Chinese fair in which the junior girls took the principal parts. Among them I could pick out two Indians, three Chinese and three Eurasians - the latter distinguishable by their thinner lips, fuller busts and lack of the broad oriental nose. The enunciation, in English, as the girls sang, was of the purest, and their soft voices, with here and there a little mannerism of the Orient, made the singing most attractive.

Next came an Indian temple scene, the musicians and dancers being all as graceful as gazelles; Southern Indian and Tamil girls grouped

21st June, 1941.

round their own native string instruments. With flashing eyes and white teeth showing as they smiled, they sang soft Indian love songs. The troops must have understood, despite the difference in language, because they cheered them again and again.

Behind me I heard one love-starved "digger" murmur - "Gawd! They are getting whiter every minute." His pal advised him to keep his mind above his waist-line.

The school-girls part of the concert finished with a fascinating little Chinese playlet, in which the authentic Chinese costumes of long-age were presented. Then the troops were asked to contribute a few items.

"Alf" our low comedian, took the stage and played his mouth-organ from all angles, in between "gags". Fortunately, he remembered my instruction to "keep it clean". His rendition of "I'm for ever blowing bubbles" brought the house down, especially as he sang it first as a psalm and then as a Salvation Army Hymn.

I enjoyed watching the Chinese and Indian children instead of "Alf." The little Chinese girls laughed loudly at his grimaces, but the little Tamil girls seemed shy and more reserved. Only their rolling eyes and rapt expressions gave any indication of their amazement. I don't think any of them had ever seen anyone like "Alf" before.

Our tap dancer, Private Garland - nick-named "Judy" by the troops - then bounded on to the stage and further entranced the schoolgirls with some intricate foot-work. I saw one Indian girl, who had danced most gracefully in Indian fashion, follow his feet with eyes which showed she was counting and memorising every step.

As C.O. I made a short speech of thanks to our hostesses and led the convoy home.

This morning I found a Major and a Captain, garbed in bath towels and sarongs, doing an Indian dance in the shower room.

Extract from a letter to George from an Officer with the A.I.F. in Libya

"You b-----s in Malaya are having the cream of the War. May all your little troubles be half-castes!"

June 24th, 1941.

Choo Kia Feng

THE STORY OF CHOO HOCK TAI.

Choo Kia Feng, whose actual autograph, written on a leaf from my field pocket book, is above, leant back in his chair and pointed over the valley to the high escarpment of Pahang. My eyes followed.

From the terrace on the crest of Ginting Sempang, where we were having round cups of fragrant Chinese tea, could be seen the wild sweep of the Bentong Valley bounded by jungle-studded hills surging up to 4,000 feet.

The mist cut crazy patterns on the deep green of the forest background, partially obscuring the topmost peaks.

"A lovely view, Kia Feng" I commented. "I suppose you stay here very frequently." He shook his head slowly. "No, Colonel, I visit the bungalow on odd week-ends but I never stay after dusk. I have not slept on the estate property since I bought it some seventeen years ago. It was the scene of a great tragedy in my life which might have been averted had I known what I know now. As you are a medical man, it may interest you to hear of it."

I did not interrupt his train of thought but signified my interest in his story by settling back more comfortably in my chair and lighting one of his excellent cigarettes.

I admired old Choo Kia Feng. He had risen from a long lineage of peasant Cantonese and, by hard work and ambition combined, had achieved education, great wealth and an honoured position in the community of Malaya. The letters C.B.E. after his name had been well earned.

Quiet-voiced, and speaking in faultless English, he related to me the sad catastrophe which had overcome his family amid the roses and tea plants of Ginting Sempang.

His marriage was a happy one and his happiness was increased by the arrival of three children - all girls. He and his wife longed for a son because it is an ancient Chinese tradition that the son shall perpetuate the family name. To his great joy the fourth child was a son and his proud father gave him the name "Choo Hock Tai".

June 24th, 1961.

- 2 -

The boy became the apple of his eye and grew to be a fine, sturdy child of twelve years of age. About this time Choo Kia Peng, who meanwhile had prospered, purchased a tea estate perched high on the top of Ginting Simpang. On the summit of the hill was a humble attap house. A winding stone-stepped path led up to it, overlooking a waterfall and a brook of crystal clear water. Choo Kia Peng was so thrilled with his new estate that he took his family there one week-end to see their new country home and the place where he planned to replace the thatched hut with a fine summer bungalow. The children were delighted with their new surroundings. The girls planned a swimming pool at the foot of the waterfall, and young Choo Hock Tai spent a good part of the day gazing down into the clear rippling water of the brook and dreaming of the fish he was going to catch.

The family slept overnight in the attap house but found their sleep broken by troublesome mosquitoes, and they suffered many bites. They were unaware that among the mosquitoes were many which carried virulent malaria, being named by scientists "Anopheles Maculatus."

The family returned to their fine city home but, later, all became ill with malaria, young Choo Hock Tai suffering worst of all. In forty-eight hours from the onset of his illness he lay dying and, despite the prayers of his father and mother and the skilled aid of the best physicians in the land, little Choo Hock Tai died.

His father was also very ill, but recovered. His mother was deeply grief-stricken so that she could not rest by day or night. Against the advice of her friends she insisted on sleeping each night in the little boy's room, saying that, according to the teachings of Confucius, the great Chinese God who lived nearly two thousand five hundred years ago, her dead son's spirit would come back to visit her.

Incense was burned, and food, money and flowers put out each night in readiness for her son's return. On the first two mornings, when she arose heavy-eyed with weeping, the food had not been touched, but on the third morning the bereaved mother awoke refreshed and pacified, for the food had been touched and the flowers disarranged.

She told Kia Peng, her husband, that her son had at last returned to bid her farewell before departing to join the spirits of his ancestors.

June 24th, 1941.

- 5 -

In her vision the boy told her that, on being freed from his bodily sickness, he had wandered back to the lovely garden of Ginting Siapang and had awakened by the bank of the little stream. He played on the grassy sward in the sunlight and then felt drawn to cross the narrow foot-bridge to join the spirit friends who, he felt, were playing on the other side. As he stepped on to the footbridge, the minnows darting about in the sunlight and shadow of the clear pool attracted his attention. Boy-like he bent down and placed his hands gently in the water. To his amazement he saw his fingers and hands disappear as they went under the surface of the clear water. He realised then that he was a spirit and no longer in the land of the living. Having died, he must immediately return home and say the traditional farewell to his parents. Harriedly he returned, to the great joy of his mother, and bade her a tender farewell before journeying on to the Spirit World.

As a memorial to Choo Hock Tai, his parents then decided to turn Ginting Siapang into one of the loveliest gardens in all Malaya. First it must be freed from the dread Malaria. Experts were given a free hand. Swampy areas were drained and concreted; bad patches of jungle were cleared; quinine was given to the Chinese coolies; streams were oiled and fresh water kept running by means of suitable locks below the waterfall; gold-fish were placed in the lily-ponds to feed on the mosquito larvae; and then a fine stone bungalow was built incorporating every modern anti-mosquito device.

Choo Kia Peng then sent to Australia and England for the finest rose plants, and Malaya supplied orchids and tropical shrubs, until the whole place assumed the aspect of a lovely mountain garden, a fitting memorial to little Choo Hock Tai.

Choo Kia Peng leaned back in his chair. "And even yet, Colonel, I cannot bring myself to stay long at Ginting Siapang."

The End.

3rd JULY, 1941.

RETURN TO SINGAPORE.

Five days leave, obtained after much wangling! As soon as I had events well in train to allow me to push off with comparative ease, three Generals, including the G.O.C. Malaya, decided to visit the Camp. However, as I explained to the A.D.M.S. - "Generals always decide to visit my area when I propose taking leave. Besides, I have three very competent Majors to receive them in my absence." The A.D.M.S. agreed I'd better go. The Majors were not so enthusiastic. "That a bloody let-out you're going to have" they moaned. They went off mumbling in their beards; but one of the trio, an hour later, presented himself in my office with a leave pass. "Can I have two days leave in Singapore, Sir?"

I grinned and signed his pass. "How are you going, car or train?" "Car, Sir, with Brett, the D.O. Police."

"That's strange, Brett asked me to go with him."

"I know, that's why I begged him for a lift: I don't mind sitting in front with the Byre. Oh, incidentally, Sir, I've also booked a bed in your suite at Raffles. I thought you'd like some help with the expenses."

I gulped. "Of all the cool cheek! I suppose you've also invited yourself to Brett's party at the Tanglin Club on Saturday night?"

Ted laughed and gave me a fag. "Now you mention it, I have".

I was glad of Ted's company. He has a proper appreciation of the finer things in life and the saving grace of a sense of humour which, on first acquaintance, is not suspected.

Singapore greeted us with her famous seven smells - the drain alongside Raffles being the worst. Raffles is now a wee bit dilapidated and needs part rebuilding and part repainting. The service was good and it was a pleasure to get a hot bath at will after having lived for four months in an atap military hut.

As we lay long abed on Monday morning - normally a busy time in Camp, Ted looked up at his mosquito net and called softly across the room - "There's a General visiting the Camp to-day sir." Then we both said - "B..... Generals!"

RETURN TO SINGAPORE (CONTINUED).

Unlike the remainder of Malaya, Singapore has been tainted by tourists, as evidenced by the novelty shops in Raffles - Sena's selling wonderful examples of Siamese craftsmanship in silver; Japanese photographers; an Indian "Bombay" shop; and lastly, the team of Indian snake-charmers lounging in the sunshine on the approach drive. We admired Sena's but did not buy. One cannot do too much on Army pay. For a modest dollar, however, the snake-charmers turned on their show and we were quickly surrounded by a motley crowd of Malayan and Chinese youngsters.

The snake-charmer's off'sider acted as a "stooge" while the boss crooned - "Nice cobra, pretty cobra, see cobra dance." - interspersing his speech with teetlings on a flute shaped like a bloated enema syringe. The cobra did dance too - a nasty brown piece of work with black spectacle markings on its distended collar. A python found itself tied in a knot and then wriggled its way round the ring and flicked its tongue out at the bare legs of the brown urchins, who didn't waste any time getting out of its way, calling as they did so - "war besar!" (Big snake).

The Indian then turned to conjuring, calling "Up Charlie;" "Up Willie;" while the coloured balls on a stick obeyed his bidding. He then turned an egg into a live pigeon and produced an amazing variety of articles from the most unexpected places.

Apart from the snake-charmers, we avoided the stereotyped tourist resorts. The R.A.A.F. Aerodrome; the Singapore General Hospital - a modern development of an old cantonment hospital; and the Gap at sunset; combined to fill in a busy and instructive day. The Gap is lovely if one arrives around six-thirty and watches the sun drop over the Siren Shoal, producing all the soft pinks and blue greens of an early evening in Malaya. As we sat in cane chairs with the inevitable "stengah" close by, we could look down on the Singapore roadstead protected by its unruly minefields, and watch the lights come up on Pulau Bukom Island, and Raffles Lighthouse winking in the gathering gloom.

5th July, 1941.

The Saturday night dance at the Tanglin Club (Singapore's most exclusive) should not be missed. Never have I seen so many Generals and Admirals in the one room. A brilliant refugee Hungarian engineer said "Colonel, I feel so good, but not so hot". On analysing this remark it transpired he was referring merely to the cool weather. I found him interesting and he pointed out all the personalities, including the icy-looking blonde who had formerly been the "great friend" of Count Ciano and was now the wife of the Manager of the French Bank. Brett, of the Malayan Police, pointed out all the prominent Fifth Columnists in the immaculately dressed throng. Later, I ran into C. C. Deakin, a Colonel of the 2nd. Punjabis and a damned good soldier, who had formerly been G.S.O. "One" with a New South Wales division.

An air-force squadron-leader told me of a much-decorated pal who, after Dunkirk, was sent out to Malaya with his squadron. He horrified Singapore society by attending the Tanglin Club one Saturday night dressed in a tiger-skin and wielding a kris, which he proceeded to stick into the anatomy of the guests through the gaps in the seats of the cane chairs. Although he protested that he was only trying to liven up the party he was sent back to England in the next ship. The R.A.F. did not approve such antics.

Our next party was even more interesting; dinner at the home of Loo Chuan Guan (pronounced g'wan) - Singapore's wealthiest Chinese widow and an O.B.E. highly regarded by His Majesty's Government. The lawn of her home was lit by Chinese lanterns and we enjoyed the cool sea-breeze, although she was bemoaning the loss of her seventy-thousand dollar beach pagoda which the Admiralty had blown up recently, because it obstructed the range of the search-lights. The old lady was beautifully upholstered in Chinese velvet-silk and had more diamonds than I've ever seen before on the one person. Her ear-rings, alone, were worth a small fortune. Her home was a weird mixture of Oriental treasures and Western Continental bad taste - the latter exemplified by third-rate oil paintings of Vienna and Switzerland, which she had evidently picked up on her travels.

5th July, 1941.

I managed my chop-sticks fairly well and kept off the Chinese brandy. I gave due thanks to my previous experience and also gave the decayed fish and the hundred-year-old eggs a "miss".

The old lady, accompanied by her nephew - Lee Chim Tuan - a Legislative Councillor from Malacca - later insisted on taking us to the New World Cabaret, of which she is part-owner. There we saw another side-light on Singapore: the play-ground of the troops on leave from ships and camps, the "swing" ground of the taxi-dancers and the "Bomber Babies from the Kinta Valley"; in fact, every racial type from Negrito to the almost-European.

It closed promptly at twelve and Brett and his wife wanted to show us the dives of the Jalan Besar, but we were firmly determined on bed and said "Not in this uniform, son! Take us home to Raffles."

MALAYA, 25th July, 1941.

"Joe", our favourite camp monkey and mascot of the Sergeants Mess, killed himself last week, and caused much sorrow in the Camp. His relatives (the Sergeants) received many letters of condolence from the privates.

He had grown into a handsome big gibbon and had the free run of the Sergeants' quarters. However, his mischievous soul caused him to start mixing their boot polish and tooth paste together, and when he finally got into bed with the Sergeant-Major it was decided to curb his activities. They tied him on the end of a long, light chain, attached to a little collar. He sulked for a few days and then got excited one day and took a long leap for the hut roof. His chain caught in a beam, tightened in mid-air and dislocated his neck. Poor old Joe - everyone liked him.

"Tots" the other monkey is still thriving and is going to have a baby. This has rather confounded the Diggers who, when they first got her, christened her "Gerald".

The A.I.P. in Malaya, after five long months of the trying climatic conditions, have stuck it well and their morale is still good. We expected trouble with them after two months, but it has not turned up. In fact, my Camp is now much happier and more comfortable than when we first arrived. A move is due soon, but it will not be out of Malaya for the time being, unless Japan starts something.

Health has been good and the lads are wonderfully fit, tackling strenuous work and sport with a zeal which is surprising.

TOM.

MALAYA, 31st July, 1941.

ARMY MEDICAL BOARDS.

To-day I have to sit as President of a Medical Board and, with two A.A.M.S. Majors as assisting members, decide the fate of eight other ranks whom the R.M.O. has decided are medically unfit.

It is a wearying job. In order to be fair to both the Army and the man, one has to assess not only the physical health of the patient but also his mental health.

The latter is sometimes the great unknown quantity, like the mystery letter "X". In selecting the men for my own unit I tried to overlook physique a little, provided I was of the opinion that the man could "take it" mentally. "Taking it" means that the man must be able to stand physical strain - monotony, separation from home and womenfolk, poor living conditions and lack of social amenities. This reminds me of a Colonel, under similar conditions, who said - "My men, are you capable of withstanding ridicule, contempt, ingratitude and abuse?" The applicant said - "Yes, Sir. I was an army cook in the last war."

About twenty of the men under my control had "cracked" already, fortunately, not from my own particular unit. As soon as they found the job hard and monotonous they rediscovered old ailments which had been relegated to the background during the glamour days of their enlistment and voyage on the transport. Two of the Officers have been near the breaking stage but we have been able to detect it in time and a four-days "leave", plus a change of duty, has worked wonders. The morale of ninety per cent of the personnel is still as high as when they landed. The wiry, little fellows, and some of the older men, are shaping better than the big brawny chaps. One in particular, whom I passed over in the preliminary selection at Royal Park Depot, but went back and selected because I liked his Scotch accent, has turned out one of the most reliable and popular men in the unit.

In spite of his forty-five years "Wally" can rough it with the best of the younger lads, and on Anzac Day I found him modestly admitting to having been present on the beach at Anzac Cove during the famous landing in 1915.

On the other hand, a well educated churchman, ready for Ordination in the Methodist Ministry, has found himself in the wrong groove in this unit, and this after travelling 700 miles at his own expense to enlist under me. His first break was to go on a "blinge" in Kuala Lumpur, challenge the veracity of a Scottish Sergeant-Major's birth certificate, and come home with a lovely black eye. I sent him down as a Medical Orderly to Fort Swettenham and he settled down there. Now he has asked for a transfer to the Provost Corps, where they think so highly of his work at Swettenham that they are prepared to make him a Sergeant: - truly a strange transposition from a Methodist parson to a Military "Jack".

I find that the best method of dealing with misfits, from a C.O.'s point of view, is to get rid of them. Many do well in other units; others are hopeless no matter where they go. I suppose they finally drift back to Australia and the constant care of the taxpayer.

If a man has a controlled sense of humour he is worth his weight in gold. One learns to pick them out in preference to the introspective, brooding types who never smile unless at the expense of a good deal of cerebral effort. As somebody once said - "It takes all types to make an Army."

As I was writing this, an Officer from H.Q. entered unannounced and asked me if I would receive Sir Hubert Wilkins, the explorer, who was paying a visit to the A.I.F.

I found him a likeable, interesting personality, and it was a pleasure to show him round the hospital and converse with him. He noticed my ears and on "nose types" and said he agreed with me that mental stamina ranked of even prior importance to physical stamina. He should know! He's been isolated himself, in Arctic and tropical regions, with a crew of men, for months at a time.

Tom.

THE LEPROUS SETTLEMENT.

Gedric Gow, a frequent visitor to the Mess, said - "Why don't you take your Medical Officers to Sungai Buloh, Colonel?". Knowing Gedric's flair for making interesting statements about Malaya, I waited for him to continue. He drained his glass and I refilled it.

"It's the biggest leper settlement in the Empire; has about two and a half thousand patients, and is exceedingly well run by Dr. Hyvie, a friend of mine."

"All right, Gedric", I said, "please arrange it for us."

One week later found us shaking hands with the Medical Superintendent at the entrance to the settlement. Along the road in front of us lay a vista of a rather pleasant looking valley, fringed by low jungle-covered hills. Sprawling along the lower slopes of the hills were five or six hundred tile-covered huts and buildings of the bungalow type; on our right the staff bungalows and, all around us lepers. A staff of thirty - two only of whom are European - are the only non-leprous members of the settlement. Nurses, orderlies, postal and other workmen in the community, are all beyond hope of eventual cure, but with many years of life ahead.

Although our medical training had given us an elementary knowledge of leprosy, never had we seen so many cases at once, literally by the thousands. In our clinical excitement we kept firing questions at the Doctor: did he believe in segregation, or was it any more dangerous than F.B. in the community; were his patients allowed to marry and bear children; what was the expectation of life once the disease got beyond the reach of Chauliugra Oil? All these and many other queries he answered by conducting us to a clinic specially arranged so that we could see for ourselves.

On the way, down a long concrete corridor with open sides, we saw a racial children-pot: Chinese (in the majority), Tamil, Sikh, Malay, and one European patient. They lay or lounged about everywhere. Here for stolid Chinamen sitting in the middle of a patch of shade, gashing their small pittedness away at naj-johag; behind them, lounging in the shade, a group of Malaya, waiting for the frightful tropic ulcers on their legs and arms to be dressed; squatting in smaller groups, Asiatic style, and completing the

Oriental picture, were numerous Tamils of all ages and sexes, from little brown, smiling children to dignified, grey-bearded elders. All had a smile or a friendly greeting for the Medical Superintendent. "They depend so much on me", he explained, "it is so hard to get others to take up work of this nature. When my wife and I came here ten years ago the patients were little better than beasts. The medical officer used to do rounds with an armed guard of Sikh policemen; no patient was allowed to come within ten feet of him." He smiled wryly. "That means he must have had an X-Ray eye and a damned long tube on his stethoscope." "It was common knowledge that each new woman patient was put up for auction as soon as she arrived. Patients were allowed to lie in their beds after death until the stench proved too much for the other occupants of the ward, when lots were drawn as to who should move the body."

The Doctor gestured towards the distant huts. "Now I try to give them some sort of communal life. There are just as many babies born whether they intermingle and marry or not. In the placid philosophy of the East it matters little. Now I marry them when required and get the family up in their own little hut, where they are happy in their household tasks. There is a grim brotherhood among lepers; in fact, a high compliment which I received from one grateful patient was - "It is just as though you were a leper yourself, Doctor."

I had been marvelling at the changes which the Doctor depicted as we walked along, and wondering why he stuck it so courageously. As though reading my thoughts he said - "This work gets so damned interesting, it grips one. There is no particular danger in it. We have orderlies who occasionally steal into the hutments at night and sleep with women patients, but they do not seem to come to any harm - until I hear about it," he interposed with a twinkle. "When I first came here I found a patient who had been wrongly diagnosed and had been incarcerated here for eighteen years, yet in that time he did not contract leprosy and was discharged as a healthy patient."

"Shades of Santa Christa" I thought, "and this actually happened only ten years ago. What does cause leprosy?"

The Medical Superintendent lit a cigarette. "No one knows. There are other factors besides the Bacillus Leprosae. Wheat-eaters don't get it; rice eaters do, especially the children. Speaking of children,

20th August, 1941.

we must not keep them waiting. They are waiting for us over at the school".

We drove round in care to an open examination shelter next the school. The children sat in rows behind us. Each one marched up with his clinical card and the boys took their shirts off to show us their lesions. Each one, in fairly good English, said - "Good afternoon, Doctor." He had a smile for all of them. I felt sick at heart when I thought of my own children and the contrast afforded by the sight of these poor little nits, some with their faces already scarred and twisted into caricatures by the ravages of the disease. Most pitiful of all were the clean-lined, happy-looking boys and girls with perhaps only an early patch of anaesthesia on an ear or arm - the tell-tale spot which the Doctor stroked gently with a wisp of cotton-wool. He looked up. "In ten years time they will have the scarred and twisted faces too", he said gently, "but they won't die. Chaulmoogra Oil will ensure further life for fifty years perhaps. The very early ones we may cure."

What a future to look forward to. The sunshine and the smiles of the children seemed out of place. The cloak of ignorance of their fate seemed more hateful. As they passed in front of us our trained eyes saw the life stories ahead reflected in the small harmless looking spots on their skins. There was one touch of Kasebre humour. The Doctor beckoned to a Muselman orderly, who came up wearing a fez and a loose khaki drill uniform. I was aroused from my reverie about the children by hearing the Doctor say - "He knoweth not English. He is the only outside attendant we have who has contracted Leprosy. He often sleeps on the sly with leprous women patients, but I don't think that that has anything to do with his infection. He probably just has a poor resistance to the disease. Strange, because he is somewhat of a sea-athlete - the type of man" - he smiled ironically - "who, as it were, has to go home twice for lunch or he isn't happy. Isn't that so, Ali?" He dismissed him with a playful pat on the shoulder. Ali grimed, looked as though he understood, saluted and departed.

"Now," said the Doctor, "what about a cup of afternoon tea?"

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CAMP COMMANDANT.

After many months of camp training one learns to awake automatically as Reveille is approaching.

In Malaya, dawn is invariably at six and so that one's sub-conscious impulses are assisted by the grey light of a new day penetrating the dim night shadows of the sleeping hut. The mosquito net looms above like a curtain of white fog, and it is not easy to visualise objects beyond.

Who wants to anyway? It is much more pleasant to stretch out, ease the ache in one's back - which a night on a narrow camp stretcher always seems to produce - and listen drowsily to the quickening tempo of camp noises.

The bell from the Mohammedan Mosque in the village sounds faintly in the distance. The Kathi, or more likely his less sonolent assistant, is calling the faithful to prayer. Then comes six whangs on the steel gong at the little Malayan Police Station not far from the Mosque. This indicates a quarter to six, for a reason which I have been unable to ascertain, and saves me stretching out my arm for my watch. I yawn and rub a lazy eyelid. Woodchopping and a snatch of song from the cook-house are interrupted by the grind of self-starters and the strident roar of exhausts from the Mechanical Transport lines on the fringe of the camp.

This is unusual at such an hour, but I recollect that it will be the sub-section of five waggons getting away to an early start on the long drive to Singapore.

I hear footsteps on the wooden verandah and turn over. I see the legs of my diminutive batman silhouetted against the growing light from the open doorway.

"Morning Paddy. Bugle gone yet?"

"Two minutes to go, but here is your tea and the Orderly Officer is waiting."

Paddy's morning formula never varies.

"Thank you. Still smells of rubber-wood smoke. Tell the Orderly Officer to come in."

The Officer of the Day enters and salutes as I emerge from the enveloping folds of the mosquito-net. I note that he is fully dressed and that the Orderly Sergeant and Orderly Corporal are in the back-

ground. Although having them report to me at Rawville is highly inconvenient, it gives me the comforting assurance that the Camp's day will start promptly on time and under supervision.

His recital of the guard and night pickets' doings is interrupted by the cheery note of the bugle - cheery because on this occasion I've been able to anticipate it by rising, but not so cheery when one is suddenly aroused by it after a heavy "guest night" in the Mess. What robust tipplers these Malayan Planters are!

I give him an outline of the projected activities for the day, and it being Wednesday, remind him of the G.O.'s parade on the Padang at nine - our weekly tribute to "epit and polish".

Then to bath and shave. As I dress, the rising sun sends long yellow rods through the branches of the flame trees in front of the hut. I whistle from pure joie de vivre. My whistle is echoed from the tree in a most unmusical note. "Toots", our pet monkey, has returned after a week's absence from camp and is evidently hungry. She grabs the morning-^{my} tea crust from ^{my} out-stretched hand, does not look a bit grateful, and retreats to a topmost branch. I make a mental note that Paddy must catch and tie her up before she gets amongst my toilet gear on the hut table. It's amazing the mess a monkey can make with a tube of tooth-paste.

A brisk walk round the Camp, noting deficiencies here and there; a look-in at the men's Mess where three hundred healthy Australians are stowing away lashings of porridge, steak and strong tea, and a passing greeting with those who are not too fully occupied to notice me reminds me that it is high on eight. Simultaneously the bugle bursts into the joyous notes of the "Officers Mess" call.

Breakfast in the long attap-covered wooden mess hut is like most Officers' Mess breakfasts the world over. Twenty-six lusty men, clean shaven and with two hours of their daily tasks already behind them, have to be fed. A grin or a grunt and a brief "Good Morning" is their prelude to an attack on platefuls of porridge and bacon and eggs; or, if the financial tide of the Mess should happen to be ebbing, tinned herring or bully-beef "hash" from the Army rations.

I find myself next to a fat Major - a jovial gourmet and chief critic of the Mess fare. He is not loved by the Mess Committee on this account. This morning he waves the Asiatic Mess-boy away as he brings a plate of porridge. "Porridge is a subtle device used by boarding-house landladies to distract the boarders' attention from the more expensive forms of nutriment" he rumbles expansively to no one in particular, but just loudly enough to be overheard by the Mess President.

The President, who always refers to the Major in private as "Gargantua", is not biting this morning. He smiles amiably and pushes a jar of golden syrup down the table. "Try some 'Cockey's Joy' on it, Major; glucose is somewhat of a liver stimulant."

I chuckle inwardly and mentally congratulate the Mess President on his neat riposte.

The Major smiles as he feints for a new opening. "Golden Syrup, referred to by the vulgar as 'Cockey's Joy', is a cheap refinement of sugar-cane dregs, and is eaten in place of jam by the most impoverished classes in Australia."

This brings a guffaw from two subalterns opposite. The thrust and counter-thrust of an argument between the two Majors always appeals to them. On this particular occasion it is ended by the entry of the Orderly Officer, who announces, with an eye on his watch - "Camp time, gentlemen, is exactly 0820 hours." Ribald banter arises from the end of the table as everyone checks his time-piece.

"Where did you get that from - the Messing bells?"

"I'll bet he took it from the Sergeant Major's alarm clock."

"The gauge not fair! He's five minutes ahead of yesterday's time."

The O.O. being used to all this, just snorts and slides into a vacant chair. "Pass the butter along and stop belly-aching. Next week I'll arrange a special time signal from the B.B.C."

Cigarettes are now being pulled out and pipes lit. One of the padres blows clouds of smoke from a Malayan cheroot. The Hygiene Officer registers alarm - "Padre, you ought'nt to have a thing like that outside the Gas Chamber; and so early in the morning too!" His

53rd August, 1941.

- 4 -

assistant chimes in - "That's nothing. I saw him smoking one in the shower the other morning."

The Padre beams, evidently not ill-pleased by the indirect tributes to his status. "One cent each at Ali's in Kuala Lumpur, if you're interested."

They are interested, as Cigarettes are becoming scarce. The conversation becomes general. The Quartermaster twiddles the wireless set, endeavouring to separate Melbourne from a mass of "static" on the air. The others buckle on belts and other items of equipment in preparation for the "Nine O'clock" parade.

ELBOW - AND NOW.

We put "On Active Service" on the letters that we write,
It helps to make the folks back home think we came here to fight;
Our coppers in the Middle East must think it quite a joke
When they get letters headed thus from some poor Elbow bloke.

We are Malayan Anzacs, just the legion of the lost
Who've got to stay in this darn place no matter what the cost;
We've read some tales about us by a girl from our home town,
No wonder if she saw us with our transport well bogged down.

We know she never saw us gaily sportive in kampongs
With girls in multi-colored skirts or natives in sarongs;
We think she was well kidded right up the wattle tree
And told hair-raising stories of marauds on the spree.

So then we had to lay it on and make ourselves look tough
And started in to writing home some highly colored stuff,
We prayed to Amazin then to help us on our way
And think of all the awful "balah" that we could write or say.

The world has never ever seen the panthers that we shot
In fact we couldn't shoot 'em all, our Bren guns got so hot,
The cobras, lions and tigers would stack a blooming pop,
But just for breeding purposes we had to leave a few.

Some said they hunted Talle, though I'm sure they meant Toties
And others had adventures out amongst the wild Chinese;
We told about Malacca where the streets ran red with gore
But never tell that that took place in 1644.

So that's how it got started up, this story telling game,
No couldn't sell be beaten by some darn newspaper dame;
We're just Malayan Anzacs, who can take it with a grin,
So please don't think the worst of us if awful balah we spin.

We've learnt this jungle warfare and all we can acquire,
We knew the range of every hill and every field of fire;
We've plodded through the jungle with our bodies dripping sweat
And slept out in the thunderstorm amongst the mud and wet.

We've marched through towns and villages and sickened at the smell
We've itched until we've told our pale to go to blooming hell;
Dysentery has tried us and typhus, ague and heat,
In fact we think we're doing well to keep upon our feet.

We'd like to get near Jerry and wipe him off the map
But as a mild aperitif we'll polish off the Jap;
And if Yavell should want us and send the transports here,
We'll drink his health with all our wealth in good old Aussie beer.

(anon)

* "Elbow" - original code name for Peres in Malaya.

A CAMP COMMANDANT'S DAY.II

The parade of all the personnel in Camp is always impressive. I watch the four hundred men assembling on their unit parade grounds; then, as the bugler blows the "Advance", they swing forward into "close column" formation on the Padang. The green field with its white goal-posts and background of rubber-treed hills enhances the setting. The rising heat of the morning sun is noticeable through one's drill shirt, and I vow that I won't keep the men exposed to its glare for long. Their brown knees and loose stride convey an impression of physical fitness. "Not bad" I muse - "Good fighting material - a trifle tough on pay-nights but, when properly handled, the easiest-going fellows one could find anywhere." The bark in the Parade Commander's voice arouses me, and the snap and thud of the rifle butts to the "order arms" follows: I reflect that the senior Major is doing his job rather well this morning. He approached and turns the parade over to me. I stand the troops "easy", remind them of a few points of discipline, appeal to them to avoid beer and women when on leave, and finally march them off in column of route to their individual unit training areas. Everyone is now perspiring with the oven-like sun glare and I'm glad to escape to my office and get under the coolth of a fan.

The Orderly Officer and the Regimental Sergeant-Major follow me a few minutes later and marshal the "defaulters parade" outside on the balcony. I grin at some of the remarks, faintly overheard through the open doors:

"Get in line, there!"

"I'm in line, Sergeant-Major. (Sottovoce) "Strike me dead, he must think a man's a b-----at square."

"Cut out the talk! Atten-shun! Laf' weel, qui-ck mar-rah!"

In they tramp, with the escort fore and aft. I suppress a desire to smile or say something facetious ... wouldn't do in C.O.'s orderly room. They are all on the one charge, overstaying leave on the previous night, and they all agree to be dealt with collectively and by me.

This cheers me up; evidently there are no "bush lawyers" among them. I mentally deduct half-a-dollar from their fines, and another half-dollar when the evidence shows that they missed the last "leave bus" from Kuala Lumpur by a whisker. "Fined a dollar". The punishment is milder than they expected and their anxious expressions relax. Two, with previous

MALAYA, 30th August, 1941.

A CAMP COMMANDANT'S DAY.

II.

- 2 -

A.W.L. records on their conduct sheets, are fined two dollars. As the latter clear the doorway on taking their departure one remarks to the other - "Taney the old man remembering."

I reflect moodily on my forty-two years of oldness, and turn to routine matters.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CAMP COMMANDANT.

III

"Rumf" is the name given in not-so-polite circles of the Australian Army to all the routine orders, amendments and documents which a Commanding Officer receives from day to day via Headquarters, unless that august establishment is otherwise engaged in the art and practice of War, when it all vanishes like magic.

I looked at the pile on my desk disgustedly and selected one from the top because it looked interesting and impressive. It was marked "Secret" and embossed with three blobs of sealing wax.

"A possible order for a sudden move" I thought. Inside the outer envelope was another, also marked "Secret". I extracted from it a scroll, the contents of which so amazed me that I read it aloud -

"8/5/406. Subject:- Rum, issue of -

Please furnish this Office the number of rum drinkers on the strength of your Unit. Please treat this as very urgent."

The Orderly Room Sergeant, standing to attention nearby, laughed at my expletive. I turned to him. "Put every one in the Unit down, as the answer, Sergeant, including the eight nursing sisters. We'll have rum at least, if we have nothing else! Give Captain Leigh the rest of the mail and ask him to do me the favour of disposing of it as best he can. I'm fed up. Any callers?"

"Yes, sir, the Dato's compliments and could you see him for a few minutes."

"Why certainly. Show him in."

I turned to find the Dato Muda Mohamed Royali bin Haji Menad smiling in the doorway. A Malay of the finest type, educated at Oxford and on the Continent, Royali had climbed through the stiff examinations for the Malayan Civil Service and was now District Officer for the Langat. Related to the royal family of Perak, he had been a good friend to the A.I.F. personnel in his district and had recently made me the generous gift of a finely-carved parang.

"Morning Dato" I said, giving him the courtesy title of a Malayan Chief.

The D.O. beamed. "Good morning, Colonel. I want to enquire if Friday will suit you to have a visit from the British Resident. I should like him to see your Camp."

"Why, sure! Tell him to come at eleven and he can meet the Officers at morning tea."

This seemed to please the Dato and he promptly invited five of us to a curry tiffin at his house on the following Saturday. The Dato's curry tiffins are always popular, because they are cooked and served in the best Malayan style, but one's innards always have a "burnt-up" feeling for a few days afterwards.

He brought me the latest gossip from the Village. Apparently the Tamil community are extremely upset over the discovery that two gold plates are missing from under their idol in the village temple. The idol weighs over a ton and only the High Priest has access to the holy of holies in which it reposes. The plates were dedicated at a special ceremony twenty years ago and it appears that they are only produced at twenty-year intervals.

The time is now approaching for the ceremonies connected with this event and, as there have been no less than five high priests in the meantime, it looks as though the robber will be hard to trace.

The O.C. Police, discussing the problem with me after the Dato's departure, was of the opinion that the present high priest must have a guilty conscience, because, although the ceremony is not for a month yet, he danced all round the idol and claims he missed the plates while engaged in this task.

Meantime he has provided the Tamil coolie lines and the village coffee shops with a topic of conversation far displacing War, wages, and the most recent murder: and does the Tamil love to talk! He talks not only with his mouth but with eyes, head, neck and elbows. I often start them off with a few queries just to see the entertaining responses.

A 'phone call intrudes, with the Asiatic operator's voice asking me to stand by for "Seangapoorah" (Singapore). I wait patiently for ten minutes thinking it is a personal call from the Director of Medical Services, who had promised to ring me. However, it is only one of the Padres asking for an extension of his Singapore leave. He enthuses

MALAYA, 30th August, 1941.

- 3 -

about the revais at the enthronement of the new Bishop; but I'm
stony-hearted and remind him he is already A.W.L. about twelve
hours. He admits he hadn't thought of that, so I win the argument
hands down, and he promises to return on the night train.

MALAYA,
28th September, 1941.

CASUALTY CLEARING STATION ON THE MOVE.

We left Kajang at 2230 hours on the 25th, by the night train - a really comfortable outfit with "sleepers" and conveniences that would make a N.S.W. train blush for shame. The men, in charge of Major Hobbs, had gone by the earlier train and the convoy had departed by road at 1200. The convoy looked imposing - forty-three vehicles (3-ton trucks) - and covering about four miles of road when spread out at anti-aircraft distance.

Our calculations proved correct; not a truck wasted and not a spare inch of room. I felt like a successful furniture remover and circus proprietor combined. One of the Asiatic mess boys - Lee Ah Tan - wouldn't part with his bike, so it was decided to take it on the early train.

Major Hobbs has just reminded me that the bike and four chickens (alive) belonging to the Nursing Sisters' mess, caused the F.M.S. Railways to mulet him a surcharge of four dollars. Capt. Lee, a very efficient Quartermaster, had said afterwards - "How the hell can a long-suffering Q.M. be expected to read the minds of nit-wit Celestials?"

All our planning functioned efficiently and within 24 hours of the convoy arriving at our new camp site (the southern wing of an Asiatic Mental Hospital) we had 50 beds established and were ready to take in patients.

If one can visualize what shifting a modern hospital really means, and realize that it was all done in thirty-six hours, one will realize that our men work like tigers and do a very efficient job.

I feel sure that they could do just as well under fire. Fighting and bombing planes from Singapore Island circle and stunt above us all day long, so that we are steadily getting used to the noise and can distinguish two types of planes by their peculiar engine "arcs" already.

The men are all bucked at getting some harder work to do and they had quite a glow of pride in their new hospital when they carried in their first case yesterday. He happened to be our own

MALAYA.
28th September, 1941.

- 2 -

Sergeant Dispenser who had been away on detached duty in an un-protected area and had contracted malaria. Fortunately, it is a mild "benign tertian" infection and he will soon recover. He is the first man in our unit to go down with Malaria, so that we have been very fortunate - and careful, because we insist on the men rigidly following all the precautions. A man who is careless in the use of his mosquito-net at night is paraded and promptly fined 10/-; each subsequent offence doubles his fine.

We were sorry to leave Kajang, where we had one of the leveliest and best appointed camps in Malaya. Here we are miles from anywhere and the only worth-while leave the men will get is an afternoon and evening in Singapore, once in a fortnight. However, they are happy, while there is work to be done and the Padres have promised us a few extra amenities. It will take about a month to get the lay-out of the surrounding country and, if they are the Diggers I know they are, it won't be long before they've made a home-from-home for themselves.

Four of the privates in another Camp, tiring a little of the monotony, wrote to Sir Ibrahim, the local Sultan, and invited him to their Camp Concert. He set the whole camp - from Lt. Col. Jeater downwards - into a flurry by accepting the invitation and drove up with an escort of Johorian motor-cycle out-riders and three sides-de-camp. They thoroughly enjoyed the concert. I'm told, and history doesn't relate what the G.O. said to the four privates.

I'm happy and proud that my unit has carried out its first "move" so successfully. Apparently the M.Q. staff were watching us pretty closely because within three hours of our arrival I was visited by two "Full Colonels", two Lieut. Colonels, one Major and one Red Cross Representative. The A.D.M.S. asked me where the men were getting all the building materials to construct duck-boards and side-wings for the tents. Fortunately, some one interrupted my reply. I didn't want to tell him they were pinching it from the Contractor's dump on the other side of the fence, but, being an old soldier himself, he probably won't enquire too closely. Our haul to date is nine bags of cement, two loads of bricks, three of sand and heaven knows how many planks. Why worry! The Contractor probably is more than covered by Government graft.

MALAYA, 1st October, 1941.

2/4 C.C.S.

Our new camp kite in Johore is located in the southern extremity of a Mental Hospital - an Asiatic one at that. There seems to be only one human being madder than a mad Chinaman and that is a mad Tamil.

We are fenced in with them by a steel fence, spikes on the top and twelve feet high. Fortunately, the authorities intend removing our portion of the fence and replacing it between the "Giggle Palaces" (as the troops call it) and our tent lines. Although I have been trained in mental diseases I've never experienced mental hospital sanitary convenience before. We are using the latrines at the ends of the big empty wards. They are of the "Asiatic squat" type, and are a bit of a strain on unaccustomed knee joints, to say nothing of one's powers of balance.

The barred windows, high up on the bare walls, supply a pleasant touch reminiscent of a penitentiary. At three minute intervals the whole system flushes automatically. The troops call the sound of rushing waters "Niagara Falls". Even a Lieutenant-Colonel finds it difficult to retain any dignity in such surroundings. The showers are high up in the ceiling. To operate them one stands on a brass plate in the floor and waits for the deluge to descend, like the sword of Damocles. Still, it's all lots of fun! Major Fisher, our austere Medical and Hygiene Specialist, is building individual partitions. To his great annoyance we have christened him "Chic Sale", after the famous author of the "Specialist".

During the day our hours are enlivened by wandering but happy Tamil lunatics who poke their noses into the cook-house and the garbage bin - principally into the latter. They don't understand the cook's profane Australian "Get the 'allout'are!", or the Orderly Officer's Malayan "Pergi Paha-tahas". They just smile sadly and stand still, like children who have been wrongfully reprimanded.

One simple Simson has a piece of gas-pipe and appears when the R.A.A.F. planes roar over. Standing on the small mound (bukit) near our flag-staff, he aims his pipe, like a Malayan blow-pipe, at the planes and counts solemnly - "satu (one), duar (two), tiga (three)", as he brings them down in flames. He then runs over to the wreckage of the crashed planes and "shoots" the crew with his pipe.

MALAYA, 1st October, 1941.

- 2 -

This is number one favourite vaudeville act with the denizens of the cook-house, and they delight in pointing out the plans for him. The first time I saw them at it I thought the whole Army had gone "Nuts".

We haven't seen the Tamil editions of Napoleon or Julius Caesar yet, but we are hoping.

HARI RAYA.

Yesterday was the Muslim festival, hari raya, which marked the end of the Fast of Ramadan. Since the first of October all devout Mohammedans have been fasting between sunrise and sunset-----"too scared to swallow their own spit"-----as one Digger put it.

I decided to visit Ft. Colonel Sheppard at Serangoon, and set off after lunch in solitary state, with a driver.

After sweltering for half-an-hour while the bridge at the Johore Causeway was raised to permit the passage of a pleasure steamer filled with gaily clad Malayses----all in their best sarongs and bright bajus-----we joined the throng of holiday cars filled with "boonge", as our men call the Asiatics, and eventually reached Serangoon.

There I met Mac and many old friends from Newcastle who had served under me in the old Militia days in New South Wales----swapped a few jokes and had afternoon tea.

On the way home we found ourselves in the traffic stream blocked by an Air Force funeral----band and all-----so I got out of the car and was joined by a Naval officer who seemed to take me for a Mourner and had arrived late himself. Finding that the funeral was a State event in honour of one of the Wing Commanders who was killed in the crash in which the C. in C. of the Netherlands Indies perished, I decided that I might as well represent Australia, so I settled into a slow march, with the Naval Officer, on the tail-end of the Official Service Representatives, passed it between the ranks of muffled drums and then woke up to the fact that I was only dressed in shirt and shorts, while everybody else had on tunics. A somewhat similar feeling to finding oneself naked in a ball-room; so I retired gracefully behind the firing party and beat it back to the car. The driver said "Must have been a quick funeral, sir!" It was, for me. Home through Singapore where most of the big shops were shut and all the people on fete.

The streets were colourful with youngsters in bright pinks and greens and the Indian women wore magnificent saris of all colours embellished with beautiful embroidery in gold and silver.

MARI RAYA.

Page 2

Road side groups of Malays in equally gay attire were passed as the car swept into Johore along the fine broad highway. Passing the Sultan's Istana I was startled to see two cars ahead meet in a terrific head-on collision, somersault drunkenly into a swaying roll and finish with a crash in the roadside gutters.

I stopped and pulled into the kerb. From the first car three scared Indians climbed out and seemed to be free from serious injury so I turned in the direction of the other tangled heap, from which came a wild and hideous wailing.

Lying in the gutter was a young Malay with his skull bashed in and breathing his last. Surrounding him were a small crowd of passers-by and two kneeling Indians, who were frantic with grief and kept up a frightful din, but did little else. Blood trickled into the gutter.

I turned to the other injured youth lying nearby and was just in time to prevent some Malays from pulling on his badly fractured limb.

Aided by a few of our own men who, true to form, seemed to spring up out of the ground as soon as the excitement started, I fixed a box-splint round the leg and got the patient into a police "Black Maria" which had arrived meantime.

One of the assisting Diggers told me he didn't think the splint was put on right as he had just been doing an 8-day Army Medical course and knew all about it. I assured him I would probably take time off to do the course myself.

The fatalism of the crowd was most marked. With silent impassive faces they looked on. No one made a move to cover the dead man until finally an Aussie driver contributed his pull-over. Our lads shone by comparison, but maybe it's the Asiatic temperament, or the will of Allah!

The final denouement was the passage of the Sultan, who didn't bother to enquire what was going on, and the arrival of a palatial Ambulance containing everything in the luxury line except electric egg-beaters.

The driver barely glanced at the distorted body by the roadside, murmured "mate" (dead); remounted his Ambulance and drove swiftly off, leaving the body, the pool of blood, the crooning Indians, the Malay crowd and a few astonished Aussies.

MALAYA, 23rd November, 1941.

MOVING CAMP

We loaded and moved Camp from the New Mental Hospital, Tampoi, at an early hour this morning.

The 13th moved in. They are fairly green and did not seem to know much about setting up in tents, especially with the handicap of heavy tropical rain at intervals and a fair amount of mud.

We left our tents there. This was a good dodge, as it gave the 13th a welcome into tents already soundly pitched and secured for my unit on the new camp site fifty new Indian (I.P.) pattern tents fresh from the makers in Agra and Campore. The life of a tent in this humid climate is only eleven months and the ones we left were starting to look from mildew erosion.

I told my mob not to skin the old camp site too cleanly. With a Scottish C.D. they've learned the old army trick of never leaving anything behind which may prove useful. Other units accuse us of a "scorched earth" policy, but it makes for comfort in a move. Already we are very comfortable and it is only just 7 p.m. I am writing this in my office tent, already lit by electric light, and listening to a wireless set drawing power from the same source. The programme happens to be "Evensong" from St. Andrews Cathedral, Singapore. Sapper Dixon, our diminutive little electrician with the sly grin, is an expert at tapping any nearby sources of current, although his methods with "recoiled" flax, which is as precious as gold here, make the Johore electrical authorities scream with rage.

About an hour ago an Asiatic contractor drew my attention to the fact that my men were "pinching" bricks and timber from the back of the hospital. I knew this long before he did. They wanted to keep their "Boxes, Soldier", off the deep ground and I didn't blame them. I restored a gleaming smile to his face when I assured him that he had but to send me a bill for his losses and he would be paid in full. I knew I had over 600 Straits dollars in my Unit Trust Fund from the profits of our very successful canteen at Johore Bahru.

Tomorrow I shall check on the camp kitchen and see if the Hospital Cook, Private Harrison, has any new cooking utensils that he didn't have before. He passed me yesterday in the corridor at Tampoi pushing a hand-cart filled with 13th cooking gear -- all brand new. I knew he

MALAYA, 23rd November, 1941.

MOVING CAMP

- 2 -

didn't do jobs like that just to be nice and friendly to a brother unit, and he had a purposeful gleam in his eye. It is possible that some of the barang (gear) may have drifted our way.

"Waltzing Matilda", our unit newspaper, which we publish concurrently with the 2/2nd Motor Ambulance Convoy, was pushed out hurriedly before we moved. We are parted from the 2/2nd for the first time since we left Malaya. It was "cleaner" than usual owing to the fact that I left the production of it exclusively to Rev. Bernard Quirk, our P.C. Padre. I think, if Padre had been a little more knowledgeable and less innocent, he wouldn't have passed the item in the personal column stating that our bugler, Private Smith, was a well-known exponent of "Ho Ho Ho Swing" and formerly played with Jack Strapp and his Elastic Band. This was in answer to an editorial query as to what Jazz Band the bugler played in prior to joining the Army.

All the personnel are chuckling over the item. At anyrate we dubbed the issue "Christmas Number" and it sold five hundred copies before it was off the presses. I could have sold another five hundred easily but the Paper Controller stuck his nose in and wouldn't issue us the extra permit.

All this gives us lots of amusement and, most important of all, keeps the men's tails up; or, as the Army ponderously puts it, "improves the morale of the Force."

THE DURIAN.

The sole came off my walking-shoe. I proposed to Major Hobbs that he accompany me in the one-ton truck to the adjacent town of Kluang and show me the shop where he vowed I could purchase made-to-order shoes for seven dollars. Arriving at the emporium of Ngai Hoe Lee, we stepped over three or four Chinese urchins playing among the food debris in the gutter and entered the shop. Seven Chinese were busily employed, squatting amongst piles of leather and shoes of all descriptions, plying their trade.

We roused the most intelligent looking of the seven, and in a smattering of Malay, Australian and Mandarin, managed to convey to him our requirements. "Would the tukang kasut (shoe-maker) make kasut kasut (shoes) for the tuen?" In voluble Chinese he intimated that he would. "Tujan ringgit!" (seven dollars, 21/-); not unreasonable for hand made shoes.

Feeling like some exercise we dismissed the truck and decided to walk back to Camp, exploring the other kerdi kerdi (shops) on the way. One shop with a fine display of Malayan fruits interested us, and we purchased lichi, rambutan and mangosteens. The latter are delicious, having a mingled flavour of passion fruit and persimmon. Near the entrance I spotted a big basket of durians. Durian is the prickly covered fruit of which Bruce Lockhart in his "Return to Malaya" said, "If one can get it to one's mouth without becoming unconscious, and can abide the smell, the fruit is delicious." We smelt one and agreed that it was pretty mild. Alan Hobbs said he was game to join me in one at breakfast next morning, even if, as alleged, it did have aphrodisiac properties; so next morning our Chinese boy, with a wide grin placed half a freshly cut Durian in front of us. We watched the reaction on our Mess colleagues. The dentist smelt the odour first and looked suspiciously at the Padre. The latter shifted uneasily, looked under the table and sniffed. Major Andrews came in and said, "Gawdstrooth, what's dead around here?" I explained with great gusto that we were sampling Durian. Meantime the fumes of the first two spoonfuls were playing strange tricks with my gullet. Major Hobbs suddenly pushed his aside and said, "I've had enough." Major Andrews made a rude allusion to the nocturnal activities

of the camp eat, which coincided with an extra strong whiff from my Durian. My spoon faltered, another whiff and I laid it down. The Durian had won easily.

It was lunch time before I got the taste out of my mouth. No aphrodisiac effects have been observed.

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MALAYA, 9th December, 1941.

Toots, darling,

Yesterday was the anniversary of the day I left Newcastle. The Japs celebrated it by a sudden attack, caught Singapore with its pants down, lit up like a gin-palace, and plunked a nice big bomb plumb in the middle of Raffles Square. This annoyed everyone intensely and was like putting a stick in an ants-heap, the army being the ants, and everyone started to scurry about in a great hurry. I followed all the excitement on the radio up till about eleven a.m. and then started to be as busy as a cat having kittens. Would I move my G.G.S. into a Rubber estate? With great pleasure. My situation wasn't too healthy in view of the bombing possibilities and I had a nice bungalow up my sleeve with plenty of cover around, and another for the nurses, which I was dying to grab in preference to the patch of Malarial jungle which H.Q. were suggesting for me. Col. Alf. Berham approved, patted me on the back and then told me to get going with what transport I could beg, borrow or steal. This was a tall order, as normally it takes forty trucks to move the unit and I had exactly three, plus eight ambulances. We did it---how, I'm not quite sure---worked well into the night, and boy! did that soft bungalow bed look good afterwards.

So now I am the temporary owner of a landed estate. It was the first time I've ever homed in on anyone's private home, fully furnished. Fortunately the owner and his family are in India, and the Army will compensate him, I hope! I've warned the lads to respect the household Gods, and they are very good. There was a touch of pathos in seeing in the telephone diary "Dec. 8th--Children's Christmas party and tennis at Pratts". That, and the sight of all the youngster's toys in the playroom made my eyes misty and my throat gulp, for it seemed to show out far as a grim business by contrast. It also reminded me of my own nippers and I had to plunge into a fury of orders and quick work to regain control of the old emotions. I worked till I was tired and then I located a delightful smell of rum as John Chalmers came up and gave me a report. He saw me grin and said,

"A snifter might help you along, Sir!" It did; on an empty stomach it gave me such a pleasant glow, that when I was making my final rounds before turning in, I leant over the verandah rail, listened to the snores of tired men asleep, kissed my hand to the moon and said,

"Poof to the blawky Japs."

To-day, in our peaceful clearing, all is quiet, sunny and home-like. Officers in tin helmets and revolvers rush in and out and my staff makes 'em happy with big mugs of hot tea. I've had three impromptu conferences over the location map while I've been writing this, and I've asked my Q.M. who is going South to bring me back a newspaper so that I can read about the War!

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MALAYA. 11th December, 1941.

I feel my diary would be incomplete without giving an impression of the impact of actual warfare on my own feelings. I started this morned with a feeling of pessimism engendered by the news that our fine Eastern battleships "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse", had just been sunk by the Jap 'planes, but discontinued after the first line and went out into the sunshine to see if I could shake off the "blues". Hard work, pitching tents in the Rubber, combined with the facetious chaff of the men--great lads all of them--put new heart into me. Now, after a dinner of roast lamb, mint sauce and steamed pudding, I've come to the conclusion that things could be a lot worse. Thank Heaven our Chinese cook, scared stiff by the war excitement, didn't carry out his threat to bolt into the "ulu".

I meant to write seriously about the troops; of how each chap is carrying out the first duty of a man, to wit, the defence of his homeland and kith and kin; of the feeling, deep down, that one would sooner pass out than let the beastly Japs get down on Australia; but the mood has evaporated and the theme seems fatuous.

A travel-stained officer came up the bungalow steps while we were dining and flopped into a chair. His eyes bulged when we offered him a stengah. "Gosh," he said, "I haven't seen anything so good for a long time. How do you blokes manage it?" We didn't tell him of the toil and sweat expended to get ourselves dug into our new location, but enquired for news of the Infantry. "Fine", he said, "but I've just left a bloke from the Artillery who has got the jitters badly--you know, a sort of long streak of gloom, with a vertical breeze-up. Was starting to get like it myself when I left him, so thought I'd drop in and see somebody laugh for a change." We offered him another drink, but he declined and asked for a bath instead. "Got ^{to get} back to H.Q. by midnight and relieve the A.D.M.S." he explained. We told him the latest jokes as he changed, and saw him off past the picquets. "Thanks a lot", he said, "I'll let you take my appendix out sometime, for nothing!" We grinned.

The crowd are just coming in to my end of the verandah to listen to the Radio. It is a power set, and we've got it hooked on to the engine of the X-Ray plant.

We signal to the engineer, Sapper Dixon, who has his power house installed in a youngster's garden play-ground; he starts his box of tricks up with a crashing "putt-putt" roar and, above the din, we try to hear the latest bulletins from Singapore. Outside in the darkness, our men cluster to hear the latest news of the War and to add their own comments--some jocular, some lurid.

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Christmas Eve in a tropical country town with the anxiety of war did not appear a cheerful prospect. I therefore welcomed the invitation for the Adjutant and myself to drop in and have an evening stengah with the Executive Engineer and his wife, and to do likewise with the Estate Manager, Mr. Pratt, and his wife. Driving to the Engineer's house through the tomb-like, blacked-out native village was an eerie experience and a strain on the driver's ability.

Somewhat cheered by the soft interior lighting at the Engineer's house, the sight of his youngster's "Stocking" and Christmas tree--all ready for the young hopeful in the morning--we wished them the traditional greetings and drove over to Pratt's, within our own estate. We met his car in the driveway, held up by two big Aussie sentries, grim-looking in steel helmets and anti-gas gear, but withal filled with the Kiwi spirit. They wanted to know the pass-word, which happened to be "Cocilbab", a difficult one for an Englishman. After teasing him a bit they said they would only let him pass on condition that he proceeded the twenty yards to the Sergeant's tent and drank their health in a pint of beer. I had the pass-word, which I so managed to avoid the ordeal by beer, but had to enter on a long, humorous argument with the Sergeant, a "Tommy" signaller and two diggers, on the unsporting fighting methods of the Jap. The Sergeant clinched the argument by remarking, "And mark me words, Colonel, with all apologise to your rank, Sir, the flamin' b----- might even drop "gas" just after we've 'ad our plum puddin' tomorrow." This melancholy statement almost moved the cluster of faces round the hurricane lamp to tears, so, to avoid more beer, we hastily slid away in the darkness, and joined Mrs. Pratt at the bungalow. I had a box of sweets for young Anthony's "stocking" and at midnight, before steering home through the long, dark avenues of silent rubber trees, we filled it up and laid it ready for him in the morning.

All of which reminded me of my own home and youngsters. It was so easy to picture their flushed, happy faces as they took part in the Christmas excitements.

Christmas Day dawned with a burst of sunshine in the promise of a

cool morning. Paddy, my batman, had arranged to go to early Mass, so he let me lie in and didn't rouse me until 6.30. This pleased me mightily as I hadn't been looking forward to the bugle at 6 am, so I told him he'd better go to early Mass every Sunday. The Padres were up bright and early. They seemed to be having a contest as to who could hold the most services among adjoining Units. The H.Q. bloke double-crossed his rival, a prodigious eater, by skipping breakfast, so I should say he won by a short head.

After breakfast the Quartermaster and I issued each man with his Comforts Fund hamper, and added a bottle of beer each from Unit funds. Meantime the cooks were busy serving up three fine pigs, and the lads had a pork dinner, nicely roasted, and topped off by plum pudding. After dinner we let them snooze, apart from the picquets and plane spotters, who kept reasonably alert. The Sisters added to the improvised Christmas festivities by gathering blooms from the shrubs round the bungalow and adding them to the men's tables.

The Officer's dinner was a happy affair and we did not omit to remember our home folks and the youngsters. When the Chinese "boys" brought the turkey in someone murmured, "Did anyone say there was a war on?"

In the evening it was reassuring to hear NISCOM, the powerful Dutch radio come on the air from Batavia with a re-broadcast of the King's speech, and then the various greetings from Service men all over the Empire. One felt proud to belong to the Empire family, united as never before. The holiday has completely refreshed the men after their hard toil, and they are completely ready for anything the war can bring them. The Camp is a hive of activity, as the Chinese don't do anything but work, even on Christmas day. A well is being dug, and the concrete slabs for the operating and X-Ray tents finished off. One of my main worries is to keep the lady concrete-mixers from raiding the Unit garbage tins in search of toothsome morsels of pork. I never knew women so hard to chase away. They just grin aimably and "No sevee." In between bouts of concrete shovelling they sit down and do EMBROIDERY! Can you beat that!

MALAYA (What's left of it.)

25th January, 1942.

It is just noon. At midnight to-night we close down on taking in wounded, pack up and start another "bum's rush" down the Singapore Road. Napoleon, in his retreat from Moscow, had nothing on us; but it is warm weather, with tropical rain; we still have all our wits about us; everyone is cheery and well-fed. Better still, our teams are handling the wounded well, and we don't look like losing a single stick of equipment. Our drivers have done marvellous work, helting along the estate tracks and congested main roads day and night. By making frequent trips they are overcoming the lack of transport and, with the help of Ambulance cars, we are able to save losing valuable medical and surgical gear. The Japs seem to be "playing ball" with the Red Cross and haven't molested it unless it has been close to an Ammunition or Petrol Dump.

I chased an Ammunition Column wide of my camp area yesterday. The Captain said - "Where am I to go?" - so I soon told him, and it was a warmer place than Malaya. He knew damn well he had no business herning in near my wounded. In the last ten days we have cleared eleven hundred wounded and sick through the U.C.S., so haven't done so badly. A good many of them were cases of exhaustion, so the figure by no means represents a total loss to the Army. After my experience with Indians and Indian Units filtering through, I'm all in favour of giving India back to the Indians - for keeps.

Fortunately, a good many of the Aussies who were cut off are managing to get back. We were overjoyed to see Lloyd Cahill, a Medical Officer, come through the other night. He was unwounded but had his bare feet badly cut about, and we didn't recognise him in the dim light of the hurricane lamps till we had looked under his whiskers and washed the mud off him. A plate of stew, a snifter, and a clean pair of pyjamas worked wonders with him. His party were all tired but cheerful - even young Lieut. Austin, with a bullet through his shoulder. They mainly wanted sleep. As one tent-orderly remarked to me - "If they lie down-they sleep; if they stand up, they sleep; and if I bloody well sit 'em in a corner till I get a stretcher ready-they still sleep."

MAYALA,

25th January, 1942.

- 2 -

We do get time off to laugh - more often than one would suspect - and it keeps us in good form.

Now for more work, even if, as I suspect, it is a Sunday.

STORIES OF THE BATTLE.

One advantage of being at a Casualty Clearing Station is that first-hand information of the Front Line is always available from incoming casualties. I'll give the first prize for courage to Major Jones, a Brigade Major who was brought in the night before last with a shattered shoulder and head wounds.

He and Major Hayes, an English Medico, had encountered Japs in an ambush and had hopped into an Indian Bren carrier. The carrier stalled and the driver "panicked". They shoved him out of the driving seat and Major Jones took over but stopped a shot on the side of his head. Major Hayes then lifted him into the back seat, where he stopped another one in the left shoulder, but Major Hayes managed to start the "carrier", get the wounded Major and the driver out, bound up the wounds and brought them to us. I gave Hayes a drink - he needed it badly, but he told me Jones wouldn't rest until we had 'phoned H.Q. and got a Staff Officer over to take down the enemy strength and position of the Ambush. While awaiting the latter's arrival I went down and gave Major Jones what aid was possible, but he asked me for a cigarette and asked me to delay the anaesthetic till he had told his information, which was most valuable. He went off to the Ambulance Train last night in good condition and still able to grin faintly.

A cheerier story is that of the "digger" with a bullet in the left buttock. He said disgustedly - "I was pickin' them off nicely one by one, when a Jap up a tree potted me in the back-side. 'Ow the 'ell can I write home and tell me girl friend where I'm wounded."

Our cheeriest visitor of all, yesterday, was Peter Campbell, the Senior Supply Officer. Peter said. "Colonel, could your patients do with a truck load of beer and nourishing stout?" I said - "Oh yeah! They could also do with a movie show and a swimming pool for the convalescents." He laughed - "No kidding, I've got in over at the Railway Station, and if you fellows don't take it, the Railway Maintenance Corps will drain it to the last drop." I then introduced him to the Quartermaster to arrange the details. Peter told me he was pulling 6,000 gallons of petrol out of Muar to save it from the Japs. While his fellows were loading the trucks, they heard shots from across the river, so they gave up their "smoke-ch" to have a crack back at the Japs.

MALAYA, January 18th, 1942.

- 2 -

Having done this they finished loading and got the trucks over the safety line. Then they parked by the roadside and discovered a case of brandy as they were having a "bite of tea". Peter let them have a double "tot" each as a reward for their good work. He said it was good brandy, because later on he had great trouble in restraining them from leaving the lorries and going back for a crack at the Japs.

Cheeriest of all - he told us Air and Men reinforcements were arriving.

6th February, 1942.

Heigho! We've had to move again, even on the Island. The Jap guns found our range yesterday and while they respect the Red Cross we found ourselves ringed round by Australian and British Artillery units, whose salves were even more noisy than the Japs. So it seemed a fair thing to leave the gunners to it, for, as the Scotchman said, "They might get a wee wheen careless", and we had no desire to see a 25-pounder lob in our backyard. Every place on the Island is so crammed with troops that I had difficulty in locating a nice quiet spot for a hospital. Finally I found a little country club, but unfortunately the R.A.F. were in possession - using it as a rest camp. When I reported this to the A.I.F. they snorted and said the R.A.F. had been doing too much damned resting. This agreed with my own views so I breezed along and started to take possession, like the "oukoo in the nest". This annoyed the Air Force intensely - "Such utter cheek, what! What! I said - "I quite agree, Wing Commandah, but here I am; do join our Mess." The poor bloke is so dithered by being swamped with cheerful Aussies that he is thinking of abandoning all claims to the property. It is a lovely place - fine tiled swimming pool in a tropical glade, a skittle alley and a netty little clubhouse nestling among the trees at the top of a winding path leading up from the pool. One could imagine the colorful scenes of peace time - say a Sunday morning in the lazy warm sunshine, with Mems and their youngsters splashing in the pool and the Tuans sipping stengahs round the bakka, after a hard game of tennis on the fine courts.

To-day we bathed there in the nude. All the women have gone away to parts unknown.

My fellows flung themselves from the springboards with gay abandon, dived like otters and came up to the surface with roars of laughter. "Gee, the Old Man (that's me) sure picked us a good possie this time".

It was their first swim for months and they've certainly earned it; and to think that this time yesterday I was nearly forced to locate them in a gravel quarry.

The guns to-night are quiet and the whole place is extremely restful. We've been given a 48-hour lull from taking in casualties - the first spell since the outbreak of hostilities - and it is most

MALAYA (SINGAPORE)

6th February, 1942.

- 2 -

welcome, besides affording us a chance to get the tents up, and a new
wards arranged. I felt so skittish yesterday that I "zagged it"
for two hours, skipped into town with the quartermaster and went to the
movies. We were as thrilled as big kids. It was back to earth
with a vengeance when we found bombs being dropped a mile away from
the Camp and had to bound into a trench for safety. As the Q.M.
said - "Gimme a bottle of Bidonak for me nerves."

2/4th CASUALTY CLEARING STATION ASSOCIATION

REPORT OF 25TH ANNUAL RE-UNION DINNER

"OUR SILVER ANNIVERSARY RE-UNION"

Our 25th Annual Dinner on 17th April, 1971 was an occasion to gladden an organiser's heart!

The function took place in the Derwent Drill Hall at Anglesea Barracks, Hobart, per kind favour of Colonel P.H.G. Oxley, Commander, Tasmanian Command. Willing volunteers assisted the Secretary on the Saturday morning to decorate the hall and Len Stanfield deserves special thanks for getting up at "Reveille" to cut branches off the gum trees around his home and "freighting" them into the drill hall. These were placed around the walls and partitions and further decorated with large crepe paper flowers made in the Unit colours. We are greatly indebted to Len's two sisters, Misses F. and S. Stanfield for volunteering to make the flowers and also for their suggestion - which was adopted - to sell the flowers off for funds at the end of the night's entertainment. I have formally written to the Misses Stanfield expressing the appreciation of our Association for their generous efforts.

Whilst on the subject of funds, it will be noted from the accompanying financial statement that our balance is pretty good as it stands at \$489.92. Our profit from the 1971 Dinner was \$20 but a close examination of the statement will show that the profit was due to a generous "subscription" from one member attending the Dinner and to the sale of flowers - otherwise we would have been in the "red". I have always tried to ensure that the costs of the Dinner are met by those attending the Dinner and that the costs of that function are not borne by donations sent in by "absent friends". We have managed to do this to date but we may have to raise the charge a little above the \$5.00 per head in future.

"Back to the decorations etc! The Secretary had prepared cards on which were printed the place names of the various jungle camps where members had been located. Also, some of the cards had familiar names and terms eg: "HIGUCHI", The "BB", The "B.B.C.", "ASOIA", "NAGATOMO", "ITCHI, NEE, SUN", "BENJO" etc. etc. The cards were pinned around the walls and acted as memory joggers for the usual "reminiscences". One area was partitioned off for the main dinner to which everyone, including wives, sat down, and another area was set aside for the subsequent short, but effective, session when members of the Unit participated in the formal toasts.

Lt. Col. N.D.B. Abbott and his wife attended the function as official guests representing the Tasmanian Commander, Col. Oxley. They were formally met by our own Lt. Col. Jack Coombe and his wife Cynthia. Jack officially represented Lt. Col. T. Hamilton who, as he was unable to be present, had asked Jack to do the honours on his behalf.

There were 51 persons who sat down to Dinner. These included Lt. Col. and Mrs. Abbott, 30 members of the 2/4 C.C.S., 17 wives and 2 friends of Unit members. In addition, 2 more Unit members, Milton King (repatriated home from Kajang) and Gerry Byrne were present for part of the evening.

The success of the night was further enhanced because of our mainland representation viz: Jack Coombe and his wife, Cynthia (Jack will kill me because he still claims he and Cynthia are Tassies - temporarily seconded to the mainland), Bill Fisher, Milton Smith, Joe Long (and son Terry), Les Graham and Alan Clark and his wife, Betty. We really enjoyed having these people with us.

We were sorry more couldn't come, but we were glad to receive greetings and apologies from Lt. Col. T. Hamilton, Trevor Taylor (new address - 75 Upper Maude Street, West Ulverstone, Tas. 7315), Barney Mulgrew (now on an overseas trip to U.K. and Europe - lucky beggar!), Arnold Jordan, Major Syd Krantz, Major Bon Rogers, Bert Moorby, Harry Hill (new address - 35 Julia Street, Burleigh Heads, Qld.), Tom Munn, Jim McRae, George Reid, Ted Goulston, Snowy Hawkins, Charlie Paul (took sick right on the Dinner date - Hard luck, Charlie! We know you

Stuart Simpson, Dave Stuart, Harry McCarthy, Jack Shurreff, Major Alan Hobbs, Capt. Tom Brereton, Capt. John Higgin (new address - C/o, Bloomfield Hospital, Orange N.S.W., 2800) and Win McColl.

The official toasts were proposed by Jack Coombe ("The Queen"), Reuben Boxhall ("The Unit"), Bev. Browne ("Absent Friends") and Milton Smith ("Departed Comrades").

Lt. Col. N.D. Abbott, representing Tasmanian Military Command, commended the Unit on its record both during war service and during the 3 years 8 months of captivity. He said that members had provided a medical service under extreme and deplorable conditions and, as a doctor himself, he recognised that our devotion to duty and necessary improvisations had resulted in many servicemen surviving the ordeals of jungle captivity and being returned to their families in Australia at the end of the war. (Lt. Col. Abbott is the Tasmanian Minister for Health).

Those at the Dinner will remember that Fred Atherton of Launceston didn't look too well and Fred is currently in the Reparation Hospital at Hobart undergoing tests. Hobart members, who have not already done so, might like to visit him. We hope you will soon be up and about again and your old cheerful self, Fred.

As part of our Anniversary Report, I am enclosing the current list of our mates who have passed on. The name of Fred Prior has been added (His name was given to me at the Dinner). I think I have already reported the passing of Bill Benson, Lloyd Wicks and Jack Kemp since our 1970 Dinner. The list now totals 42. If anyone knows I have omitted any names I would be grateful to be informed. While we continue to meet, these former comrades will be remembered.

As usual, a few of us marched on Anzac Day and, here in Hobart, we carried the Unit flag and laid a wreath. We were glad Jack Coombe was here to join us this year.

Well, that wraps it up for another Dinner. The 1972 Dinner will be in Hobart on Saturday, 22nd April, 1972. You have been given plenty of notice so put the date in your diary and make it a must for 1972. We would really be happy to see some more of you mainlanders next year.

Best wishes for health and happiness to you all.

Regards,

(Reuben Boxhall)

Hon. Secretary/Treasurer

25th May, 1971.

LEST WE FORGET

2/4TH

C.C.S.

L/Cpl. Keith Anders	Major Ted Fisher	Pte. Keith Miller
Pte. Eric Ball	Sister P. Farmaner	Pte. Paddy Maloney
L/Cpl. Joe Barrow	Major Carl Furner	Pte. Les Pitcher
Padre Fred. Bashford	Sister S. Gardam	Major Harry Phillips
Sister E. Balfour-Ogilvy	Pte. George Gaudion	L/Cpl. F. W. J. Prior
Cpl. Bill Benson	Pte. Ernie Grainger	Sister M. Raymond
R.S.M. Max Bossward	Pte. Arthur Harrison	Pte. Harold Riley
Pte. Ted. Brettell	Padre Hugh Jones	Cpl. Jim Roberts
Major John Chalmers	Sister K. Kinsella	Pte. Wally Roberts
Spr. Ted. Dixon	L/Cpl. Ron Kemp	Pte. George Rossiter
Matron I. Drummond	Pte. Jack Kemp	Pte. Clarry Seabrook
Sister M. Darsch	Pte. Eric Lupton	Capt. Alex White
Pte. Doug Eyles	Pte. Clarrie McDougall	Pte. Lloyd Wicks
L/Cpl. Eric Eagle		Sister B. Wilmot